



# Community Survey Results

## Plan of Conservation & Development Update

### Town of Woodbridge

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## Executive Summary

The Town of Woodbridge conducted a community-wide survey to begin gathering public input for the development of the Town's 2025 Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD); the community survey is the first of multiple public engagement opportunities planned for the POCD's development. The community survey was launched in June 2024 and available online and in-person (Town Hall) for approximately 5 weeks.

The community survey gathered 633 responses, or 7.0 percent of the Town's 2020 population (9,087).<sup>1</sup> Survey responses provide the Town with important insight from participants about their concerns, values, and priorities related to the Town's future. This report will summarize the results and present the major takeaways of the community survey. A detailed report of all survey responses is provided in Appendix A.

## Takeaways

The following list summarizes the largest takeaways from the community survey. Detail analysis of each question is provided in the following pages.

- **Quality of Life.** The community is generally happy with the quality of life in Woodbridge, giving it an average score of 7.6 out of 10. Over half of participants feel that the quality of life stayed the same or got better over the last 10 years, but top quality of life concerns in Woodbridge included a lack of nearby services/stores, a lack of sidewalks/sidewalk maintenance, and traffic speeding.
- **Community Pride.** Participants cited the Town's open spaces, school system, and proximity to regional destinations as key features that make the community special. There was also agreement that the community's amenities, people, and the small-town feel make Woodbridge special.
- **Housing.** Respondents generally feel that there is an appropriate mix of housing types in the community, but would like to see more small single-family homes, condominiums, and mixed-use options. Participants also note a need for more affordable housing; nearly 60 percent stated that Woodbridge's housing stock is not accessible and affordable to people of different ages and lifestyles and would like to see more affordable single-family structure options in the community.
- **Economic Development/Business.** Participants want to see more retail stores, restaurants, entertainment and cultural facilities, and mixed-use developments within in Woodbridge. They also indicate that the Business District needs improvement in business variety, aesthetics, and pedestrian and bicyclist safety. Just over a third of participants (37.9 percent) indicated that expanded sewer and water infrastructure would support more economic development in the community; however, a few participants express concern over additional sewer infrastructure as related to maintaining the community's current size.
- **Parks/Open Space/Natural Resources.** Participants generally felt there is an appropriate mix of active and passive recreation areas, open spaces, and farmland within the

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<sup>1</sup> SLR generally aims for a 2 percent response rate for a volunteer survey format.



community. They also agree that the Town is doing enough to protect its various natural resources.

- **Historic & Cultural Resources.** Over half of participants indicated that the Town should work to identify additional local historic resources and identify or create additional cultural resources within the community.
- **Community Facilities.** Community facilities are well-regarding in Woodbridge, especially the Public Library and Fire Department. The most sought-after additional community facilities/services include a community pool, a better business district, a community center, more bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and trash collection services.
- **Visioning/Top Priorities.** Top priorities for the community over the next 10 years, according to participants, are the schools, economic development, and open spaces. Pedestrian, bicyclist, and road infrastructure were also important to respondents. Participants also noted a need to reduce the residential tax burden within the community.
- **Other Common Discussion Points:**
  - **Country Club Property** - Many participants discussed the need for action on the Country Club property, however, opinions are varied. Some identified this site is an opportunity for mixed-use development, while other want to see it preserved as open space. Many participants also suggested something in the middle – development that would contribute to the Town’s revenues and tax base, but also preserves a large portion of the property for open space or community recreation.
  - **Taxes/Tax Base** - Survey participants expressed opinions about the community’s current tax rate and need to diversify the Town’s tax base to unburden residents. Some participants noted financial difficulty in their ability to stay in the community with current tax burden while others noted a disconnect between higher taxes and limited Town services for such things as trash collection, sewer service, and sidewalks.



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## 1.0 Demographics

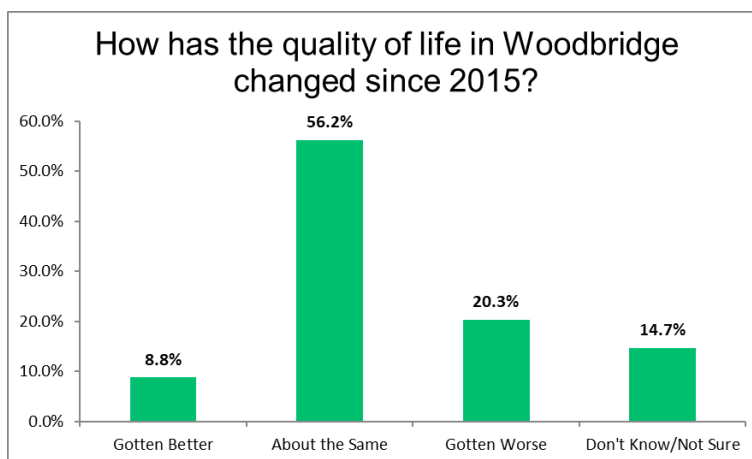
The Community Survey gathered basic demographic information from participants to better understand the population responding to the Survey. Questions addressed age, residency, employment, and why they have chosen to live in the community, among others. Takeaways include:

- Almost 80 percent of participants are 45 years or older and those ages 65-74 represent 23 percent of all survey respondents. Just over half of participants (52.9 percent) have lived in Woodbridge for 20+ years.
- 39.6 percent of participants describe their household as *couple with children living at home* while another 27.5 percent describe their household as *couple with children not living at home (including college)*.
- 32.4 percent of participants work within New Haven County, but not in Woodbridge. Another 27.3 percent are retired. 12.8 percent work within the Town.
- When asked why they chose to live in Woodbridge, 76.4 percent cited the Town’s general location, 64.4 percent cited the educational system, and 50.3 percent cited the housing and neighborhoods as their reason(s).
- When asked if they see themselves living in Woodbridge in ten years, 73.6 percent of respondents said yes.
  - Those that said *yes*, were also asked what type of housing they see themselves in; 79.7 percent said *their current home*, while 6.7 percent said a *smaller, single-family home*.
  - Those that said *no*, were asked why they do not see themselves living in the community in ten years; 42.8 percent cited the *cost of living / taxes* as their reason and another 19.7 percent said they were *interested in downsizing*.

## 2.0 Quality of Life

Survey questions 1-4 were crafted to identify how the community feels about the quality of life in Woodbridge. Participants were first asked to rate the quality of life on a scale of 1-10, with 10 indicating the highest quality of life – the average score from participants was a 7.6 out of 10. Participants were also asked how they felt the quality of life in Town had changed since 2015 and most participants (56.2 percent) feel it has remained *about the same* (see *Figure 1*).

Participants were asked about which quality of life issues they were concerned about, within their neighborhood and the Town as a whole; respondents have the most concern about the *lack of nearby*



services/stores, sidewalk maintenance and the lack of sidewalks, and traffic speeding – with 46.1,



37.0, and 36.8 percent of all survey participants reporting being concerned with these issues within the Town as a whole, respectively. Respondents from all neighborhoods cited *speeding* as a top three concern within their neighborhood. *Speeding* was the top concern from participants living in the northeast, southeast, and southwest portions of the community. *Reliable cell phone service* was the top concern for participants living in the northwest area of the community. *Power outages* were also reported as a concern by those living in the northwest and southeast areas of Town.

Finally, survey participants were asked to share what they felt was special about life in Woodbridge. Participants were given preset choices (see *Figure 2*) and had the option to write in additional responses. 101 participants added a comment using the *other* option – the top three written comments cited the amenities the Town offers (22.8 percent), the people within the community (18.8 percent), and the small and rural feel of the Town (16.8 percent).

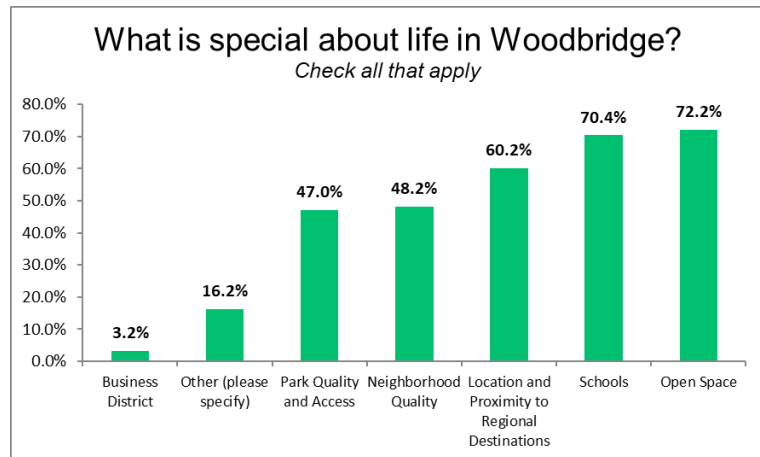


Figure 2

### 3.0 Housing

Survey questions 5-7 addressed housing within Woodbridge. Participants were asked to share how they feel about housing diversity, accessibility, and affordability within the community. Findings include:

- Over half of participants indicated that the Town has *about the right amount* of large, single-family homes (69.2 percent), nursing homes (59.7 percent), assisted living facilities (60.0 percent).
- 49.4 percent of participants feel there are *about the right amount* of small, single-family homes in Woodbridge, but another 39.7 percent feel there are *too few*.
- Participants feel there are *too few* condominiums/townhomes (37.3 percent), mixed-use (45.1 percent), and affordable housing (47.1 percent) options within Town.
- There are mixed opinions on the number of apartments and age-restricted options in Woodbridge. 33.7 percent of participants said there are *too few* apartments while 31.3 percent said there is *about the right amount*. For age-restricted housing, 35.5 percent said there is *about the right amount*, but 32.1 percent said there are *too few*.
- Over half of participants (57.3 percent) feel that Woodbridge’s housing stock is not accessible and affordable to people of different ages and lifestyles.
- When asked about what type of affordable housing they preferred, 56.4 percent of participants chose *single-family structures*, while 28.2 percent chose *townhomes*. Only 15.5 percent of respondents chose *multifamily structures* as their preferred choice.



## 4.0 Economic Development

Survey questions 8-10 asked participants to share their thoughts on Woodbridge’s existing commercial uses and the Business District, as well as the Town’s greatest need(s) related to economic development. Participants indicated the following related to the existing commercial uses within the community:

- There is *about the right amount* of large/corporate offices (50.4 percent), small offices (44.1 percent), light industrial and manufacturing facilities (38.7 percent), and recreational facilities (52.3 percent) in Woodbridge.
- There are *too few* retail stores (75.3 percent), restaurants (78.1 percent), entertainment and cultural facilities (64.1 percent), and mixed-use developments (resident above commercial) (43.9 percent) within in Woodbridge.
- Participants were split on their thoughts about medical facilities and research and development facilities. Regarding medical facilities, 43.1 percent of participants indicated there are *about the right amount* of medical facilities while another 38.1 percent indicated there are *too few*. 31.8 and 33.1 percent of participants indicated that there are *and too few* research and development facilities (respectively). An additional 32.9 percent of participants were unsure of the amount of such facilities within the community.

Survey participants were also asked about their opinions on the Town’s Business District, using a strongly agree vs. strongly disagree scale. Takeaways include:

- Over 60 percent of participants feel the Business District is lacking a good mix of shops, restaurants, offices, and amenities and that it is not a visually attractive or thriving district. Participants do agree, however, that the buildings feel like the right size relative to the setting (44.5 percent), that they feel safe from crime (59.8 percent), and that there is enough parking, and it is appropriately located (57.9 percent) in the Business District.
- Participants indicated that the pedestrian experience in the Business District is unsafe and that it is not easy to cross the street (54.5 percent), nor do they feel safe from passing traffic while walking (48.3 percent) or biking there (49.7 percent). Regarding sidewalk conditions, participants responded neutrally when asked if sidewalks are properly separated from traffic (40.9 percent) and wide enough (46.5 percent).

Finally, participants were asked *What are some of Woodbridge’s greatest needs related to economic development?* Participants were able to select all answers that applied to them and write in additional responses if needed; top responses chosen included business attraction and retention (83.1 percent), streetscape and façade improvements (40.2 percent), diversification of industries and services (39 percent), expanded water and sewer infrastructure (39 percent), and increased foot traffic (38 percent). 113 participants included written in comments, most of which were focused on quality-of-life improvements that would help attract new visitors, residents, and businesses. These improvements included better sidewalks, bus services, community areas, schools, open space, affordable and diverse housing, and more reliable utilities.<sup>2</sup> Participants also noted that the business district is lacking in charm and a strong sense of character, stating “*we need some charm in both*

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<sup>2</sup> Please see Appendix A for the full range of open-ended responses.

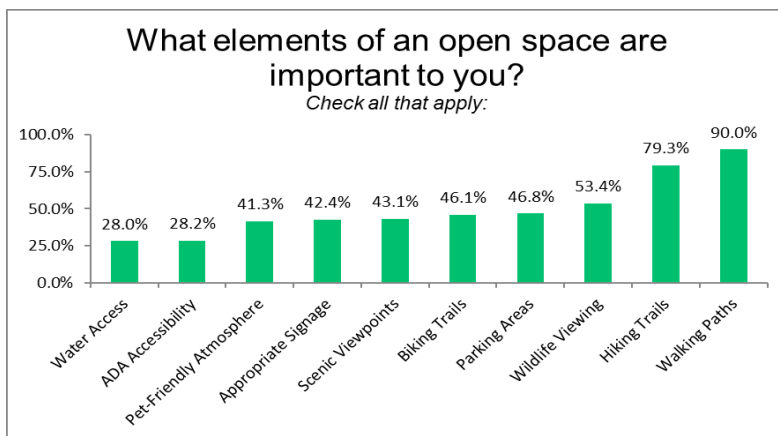


*architecture and business” and “an attractive shopping around a walkable town center like the Green in Guilford, Madison, Branford, and Litchfield”.*

## 5.0 Open Space & Natural Resources

Questions 11-13 addressed open space and natural resources with the aim of better understanding how participants feel about the amount of open space in Town, which elements of open space are most important to them, and how whether Woodbridge is doing enough to preserve and protect natural resources.

Over 60 percent of participants feel that Woodbridge has enough farmland, active and passive recreation areas, and open spaces. Survey respondents were asked to select which elements (from a preset list) of open space are important to them; the most important elements included walking paths, followed by hiking trails, and wildlife viewing areas (see *Figure 3* for the complete list).



Finally, participants were asked if they felt Woodbridge was doing *Figure 3*

enough to protect various natural resources. Over half of participants agreed that the Town is doing enough to protect wetlands, rivers and streams, lakes and ponds, and public open space. They also agreed that the Town is doing enough for significant plant and animal habitat (44.9 percent) and farmland (47.8 percent). There were more varied opinions related to groundwater/aquifer protections and ridgelines/scenic view protections - 39.2 percent and 45.2 percent held neutral opinions on the Town’s efforts related to these resources (respectively), while 43.8 percent and 41.5 percent felt the Town was still doing enough for them.

## 6.0 Historic Resources & Cultural Facilities

Question 14 asked participants to identify if the Town is doing enough to protect historic and cultural resources and whether the Town should expand its historic and cultural resources. Participants agreed that Woodbridge is doing enough to protect historic resources (48 percent) and 52 percent indicated the town should identify additional local historic resources. While 42 percent of participants indicated that Woodbridge is doing enough to protect cultural resource, another 43 percent responded neutrally or had no opinion. Just over half of participants, however, agreed that the Town should identify or create additional cultural resources within the community.

## 7.0 Community Facilities

Questions 15-17 collected information related to Woodbridge’ community facilities; participants were asked to report on the quality and quality of community facilities, amenities, and services. Takeaways include:



- Over half of survey participants feel that the Public Library and Fire Department are of excellent quality and 40.6 percent said the public schools were also excellent.
- Town Hall, the Police Department, Park Facilities, Senior Center/Services, and Transfer Station were all rated adequate.
- When asked about the quantity of recreational facilities in Woodbridge, participants felt there were generally *about the right amount* of all facilities, except that there are *too few* pools/swimming facilities (54 percent) and places to bike, skate, or skateboard (48 percent).
- Participants said there were *about the right amount* of recreational programming for children and adults. 36.5 percent of participants said they were *unsure* about the amount of recreational programming for teens, while another 36.3 percent said there was *about the right amount* of such programs.

Finally, participants were asked if they felt that Woodbridge was lacking any specific community amenities, facilities, or services.<sup>3</sup> 221 participants included a written in response and suggested the following:

- Community Pool (19.9 percent): Participants stated that the community was lacking “a public pool to build memories for growing young people of Woodbridge like the older generation had” and “we need a public pool for children safety! Kids need to learn to swim! It’s a public safety issue.”
- Better Business District (16.3 percent): Participants indicated the need to diversify the tax base. Some suggestions that came up included a “makerspace”, “restaurants”, “shopping and dining”, “coffee shop”, “cute breakfast/bakery to gather”, “a small format grocery store”, “UPS Store/FedEx”, and “pubs/bars.”
- A Community Center (7.7 percent): Participants would like additional places to gather within the community, stating “this town is lacking an actual recreational facility where community can meet and gather” and “Woodbridge is lacking natural gathering places.”
- Bike Infrastructure (7.2 percent): Participants would like to see more bike infrastructure in the community. Participants noted concern about road safety related to biking stating, “extremely unsafe town for children and any recreational activity on local roadways” and “road biking routes should be reviewed and made safer. Preferred routes should be marked.”
- Sidewalks (6.8 percent): Participants would like to see more sidewalks connecting areas in Town. Participant suggested that “It would be nice for Woodbridge to have a larger biking / walking path like the Farmington Canal” and that the Town needs “sidewalks on main thoroughfares (Amity Rd, Center Road) and SAFE bike lanes.”
- Trash Collection Services (6.3 percent): Participants are interested in a Town-run trash collection service. One participant suggested “or at least bulk trash removal service offered more frequently.”
- The Country Club Property (5.0 percent): Participants had a variety of ideas regarding the Country Club Property, ranging from preserving the property as open space, to adding more active recreational options for children and adults, to developing it into a boutique hotel or

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<sup>3</sup> Please see Appendix A for the full range of open-ended responses.



events place while keeping the rest of the property into a community open space/park facility, or restoring it into an active golf course.

## 8.0 Transportation

Questions 18-20 asked participants about the community’s roads, multimodal infrastructure, and public transportation options. Most participants (43.9 percent) indicated that traffic congestion is not an issue in Woodbridge and that road conditions are good (62.2 percent) and that they are safe (58.1 percent).

Regarding multimodal infrastructure (pedestrian and bicycle transportation options), 61.1 percent of participants indicated that there are not adequate pedestrian and bicycle transportation options in Woodbridge. 56.6 and 51.6 percent of participants indicated that they do not feel safe walking or biking on local roads, respectively. Finally, 60.2 percent of participants agreed that the Town needs more sidewalks while 58.6 percent agreed that the Town needs more bike lanes.

Regarding public transportation options, 50.3 percent of participants do not think there are adequate options in Woodbridge (31.2 percent had no opinion on the adequacy of public transportation options). Most participants (49.6 percent) had no opinion on the adequacy of transit options for seniors and people with disabilities, but 29.8 percent disagreed that there were adequate options for this population.

## 9.0 Sustainability & Resilience

Questions 21 asked participants how often they use various municipal or regional programs and services such as the Bulky Waste Pick up, the Regional Water Authority (RWA) Hazardous Waste Drop Off, and the Town’s Transfer and Recycling Station. Most participants (42.1 percent) use the Transfer and Recycling Station weekly while 37.1 and 36.1 percent of participants said they have not used the RWA Hazardous Waste Drop-off or the Bulky Waste Pick-up but would like to (respectively). Participants were also asked to identify climate related issues that they have experienced in Woodbridge over the last decade. The most commonly experienced issues were a loss of power, a loss of internet or cell service, and blocked roads, as seen in *Figure 4*.

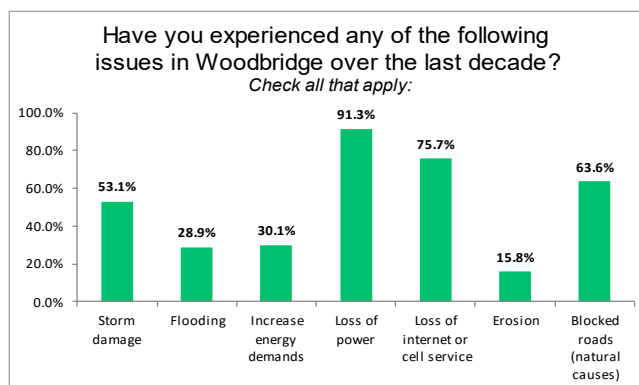


Figure 4

## 10.0 Visioning

To identify the priority focus areas for Woodbridge over the next 10 years, participants were asked to rank their priorities, from highest to lowest, from a preset list of options (see *Figure 5*). Participants identified Economic Development (58 percent), Schools (57 percent), and Open Space (30 percent) as their top three priorities for the future of Woodbridge. Survey Monkey applied a weighted score to each option (higher score means higher priority), results of which are presented in *Figure 5*.



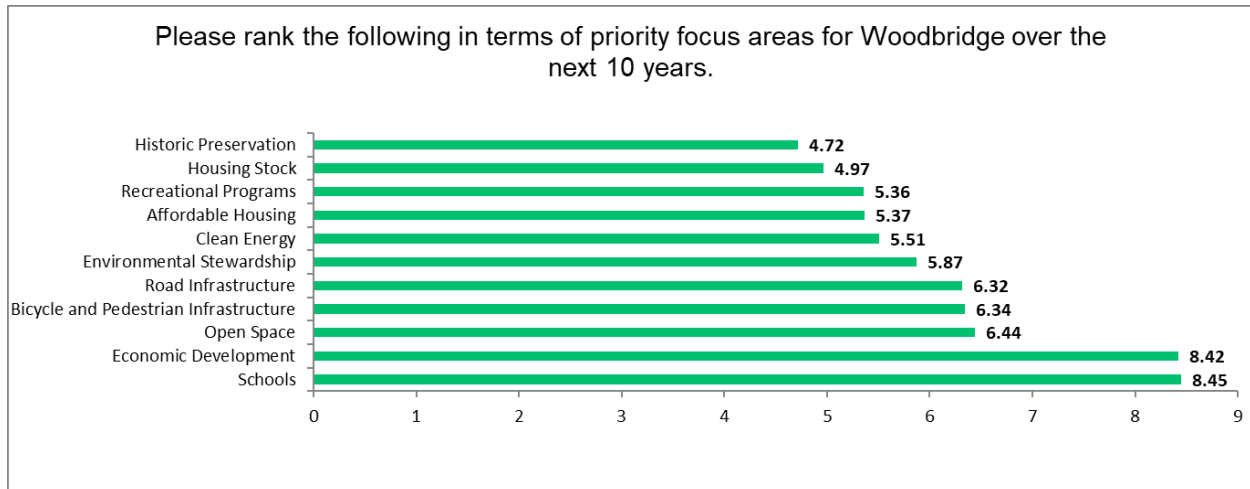


Figure 5

Participants were also asked about any other top priorities they have for the community over the next ten years. 264 participants responded to this question (Question 24) responded to this question; 21.2 percent identified reducing taxes as their top priority for Woodbridge, 18.9 percent identified economic development as a top priority for Woodbridge, and 16.3 percent mentioned that the Country Club Property was a priority for them.<sup>4</sup>

Question 25 was also open-ended, and allowed participants to write in any questions, comments, or concerns they had that did not have a chance to cover within the survey. 186 participants responded and results were similar to other open-ended responses; 12.4 percent identified their concerns with the Country Club Property, 10.2 percent emphasized their desire for more economic development, and 9.7 percent cited a need for reduced taxes. Several respondents also indicated that they want Woodbridge to stay small and keep its rural character (4 respondents).

<sup>4</sup> Please see Appendix A for the full range of open-ended responses.



# Appendix A

## Complete Survey Responses

### Woodbridge 2024 Community Survey

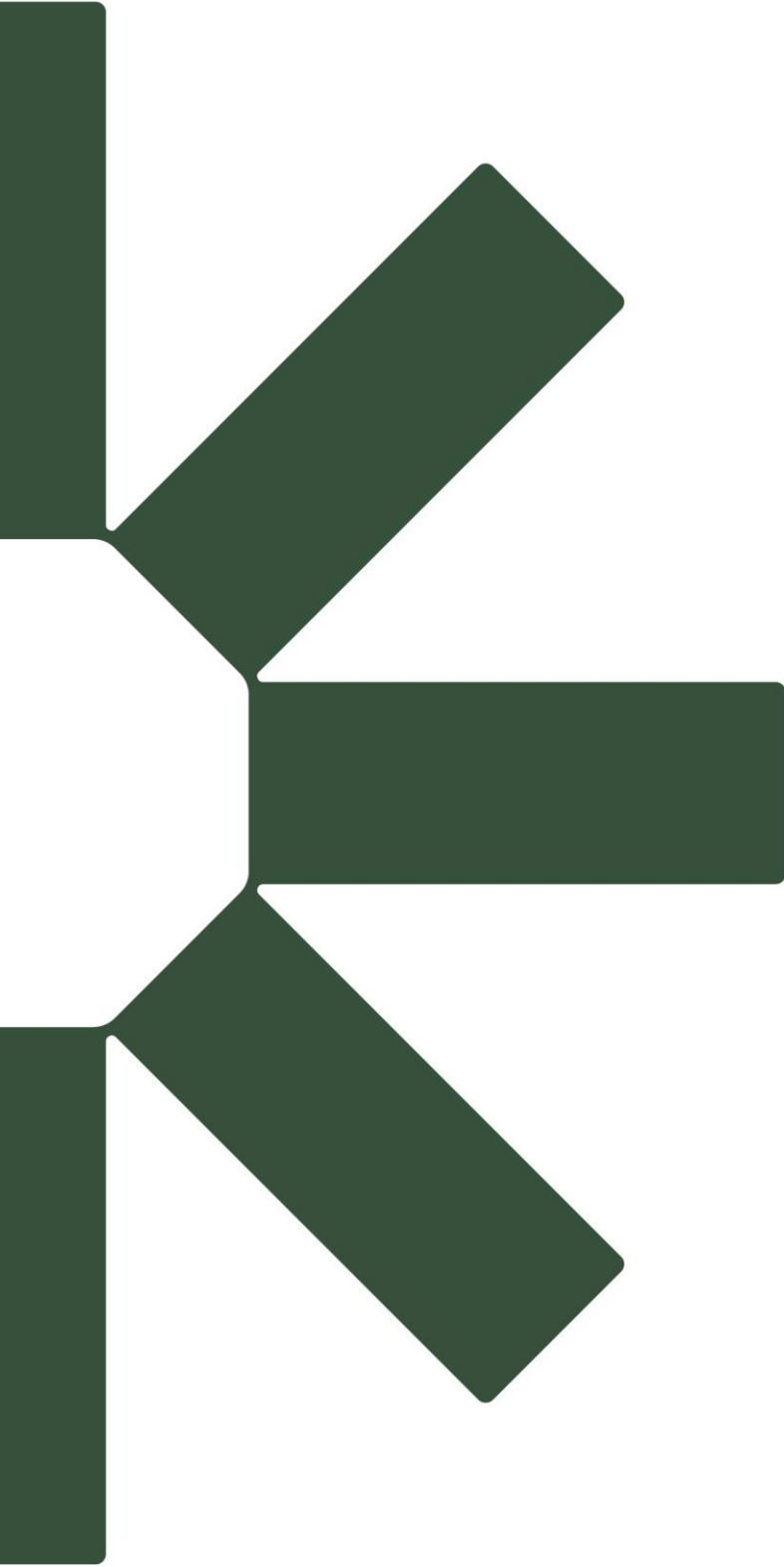
Survey Monkey Report

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Making Sustainability Happen