



# PERCEPTION SURVEY OUTLINE

PRESENTED BY

**WMEAC**



## WHO IS WMEAC

West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC) has been West Michigan's preeminent resource for environmental education and advocacy since 1968. Founded by a diverse group of concerned citizens and organizational stakeholders, WMEAC is a non-profit, 501C3 organization uniquely positioned to respond to emerging issues and new threats to West Michigan's natural and human ecologies, strategically focused on building sustainable communities and protecting water resources.

Our service area includes the eight-county West Michigan region: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo and Ottawa, with primary emphasis on the Grand Rapids, Holland and Muskegon metropolitan areas.

WMEAC's focus is on building sustainable communities and protecting water resources in West Michigan by advocating for clean energy, healthy water, and healthy air. By working through education, advocacy, and programming, WMEAC has the ability to connect a variety of community stakeholders and support individuals, communities, and businesses through their own environmental journey.

## PERCEPTION SURVEY

The following charts are represented from a conducted "Perception Survey" during the 25 deep-listening sessions as a part of the IDEAL Initiative during the summer of 2014. WMEAC representatives were engaging in "deep-listening" to learn about challenges, opportunities, and interests of non-traditional environmental communities. In order to get impressions on a variety of environmental issues without guiding the conversation, WMEAC implemented a perception survey with deep-listening participants to gauge their "feeling" about environmental issues without WMEAC representatives influencing their answer.

Participants were asked to rate environmental themes based on their community as doing well, needs improvement, or not applicable. Communities were self-defined and ranged from a specific neighborhood to West Michigan. WMEAC representatives did not provide education or definitions of the various environmental themes to avoid projecting any bias towards the environmental theme as good or bad.

The complimentary information was sourced from a variety of sources to show how perception of an environmental issue compares to data or reality of an environmental issue.

## IDEAL TIMELINE

### 2013

Wmeac's strategic plan recognized a need for increased inclusion in policy, programs and outreach.

### SUMMER 2013

The IDEAL initiative was created.

### FALL 2013

The IDEAL Advisory Board was formed.

### JANUARY 2014

WMEAC creates the Community Activism position to staff IDEAL and hires the first IDEAL scholar.

### SPRING 2014

WMEAC updates internal hiring and inclusion policies.

### SUMMER 2014

IDEAL scholars and WMEAC staff engage in 25 deep listen sessions with community leaders.

### FALL 2014

WMEAC analyzes deep listening sessions and begins implementing the self identified needs of the community.

### 2015

Implement the IDEAL initiative holistically as a part of WMEAC's policy, programs and outreach.

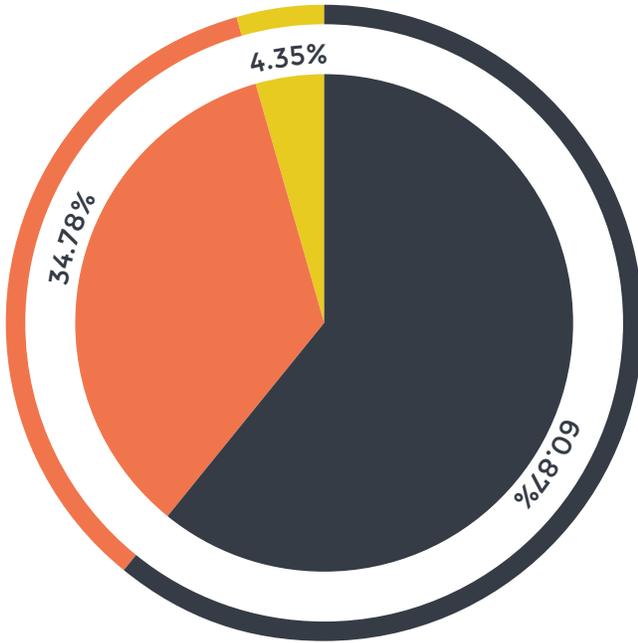
## WHY IDEAL

WMEAC has served as a community organization reacting and responding to the community's priorities. However, as WMEAC has developed into a space as environmental issue experts in technical, complicated themes the organization inherently "left behind" individuals and communities who were not already self-identified environmentalists.

WMEAC recognizes that underrepresented communities are among the most vulnerable to environmental deterioration. So, in order to strengthen West Michigan's environment as a whole, it is important to involve all communities in the process, especially underrepresented communities. This realization brought about the IDEAL Initiative.

This nationally unique approach was intentional comprehensive to cover internal policies and external engagement practices including communication and program design. Organizational response to lack of racial diversity in the environmental movement and in environmental organizations. IDEAL's intent was to recognize this gap of service and start from listening to the concerns and opportunities directly from the communities we were not adequately serving/interacting with.

This initiative was supported by the efforts of Progressive Strategies and a team of community members and WMEAC stakeholders who have experience in diversity and inclusion strategies, and a passion for environmental protections. A special thanks and recognition of WMEAC's leadership from the Board of Directors and leadership to prioritize and support the IDEAL initiative required to become integrated within the culture and organization.

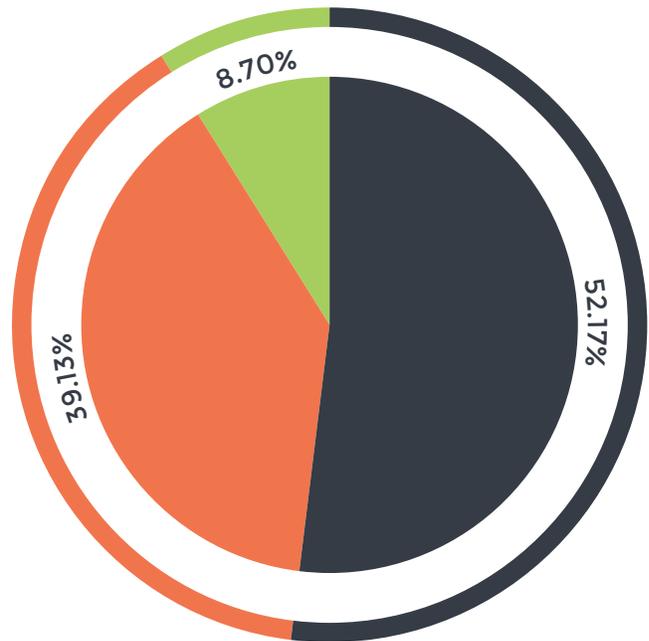


### AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

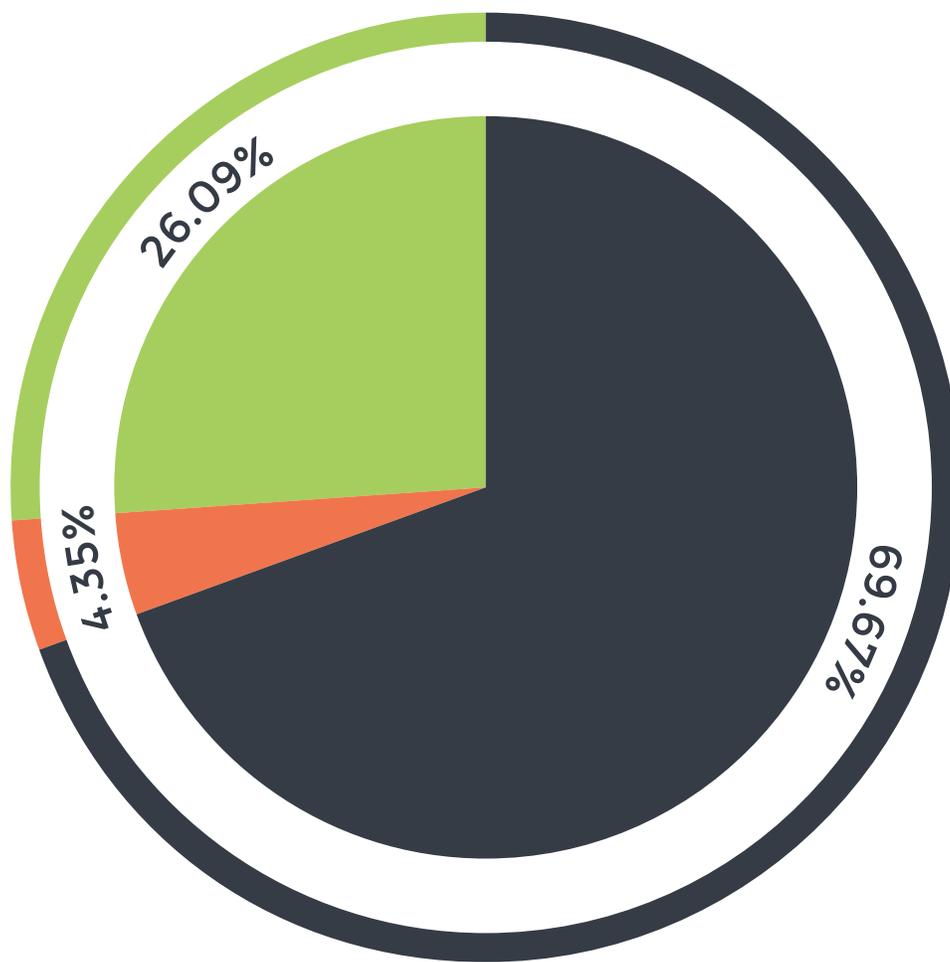
Kent County has 170,117 acres of farmland. Its 1,193 farms produce a market value of crop and livestock sales of nearly \$195 million, fifth highest of any county in the state (Steketee, D. (2013) Associate Professor of Sustainable Business, Aquinas College. WMEAC Climate Resiliency Interview via CRR)

### ENERGY PRODUCTION

Michigan is relatively limited in most energy resources and imports 97 percent of its petroleum needs, 82 percent of its natural gas and 100 percent of coal and nuclear fuel from other states and nations. These imports account for about 72 cents of every dollar spent for energy by Michigan's citizens and businesses. Michigan spent a total of \$31.3 billion on all forms of energy in 2009 and of that amount \$22.6 billion was for the energy resources imported from other states and nations. ("Michigan Energy Overview," Michigan Public Service Commission, LARA, October 2011)



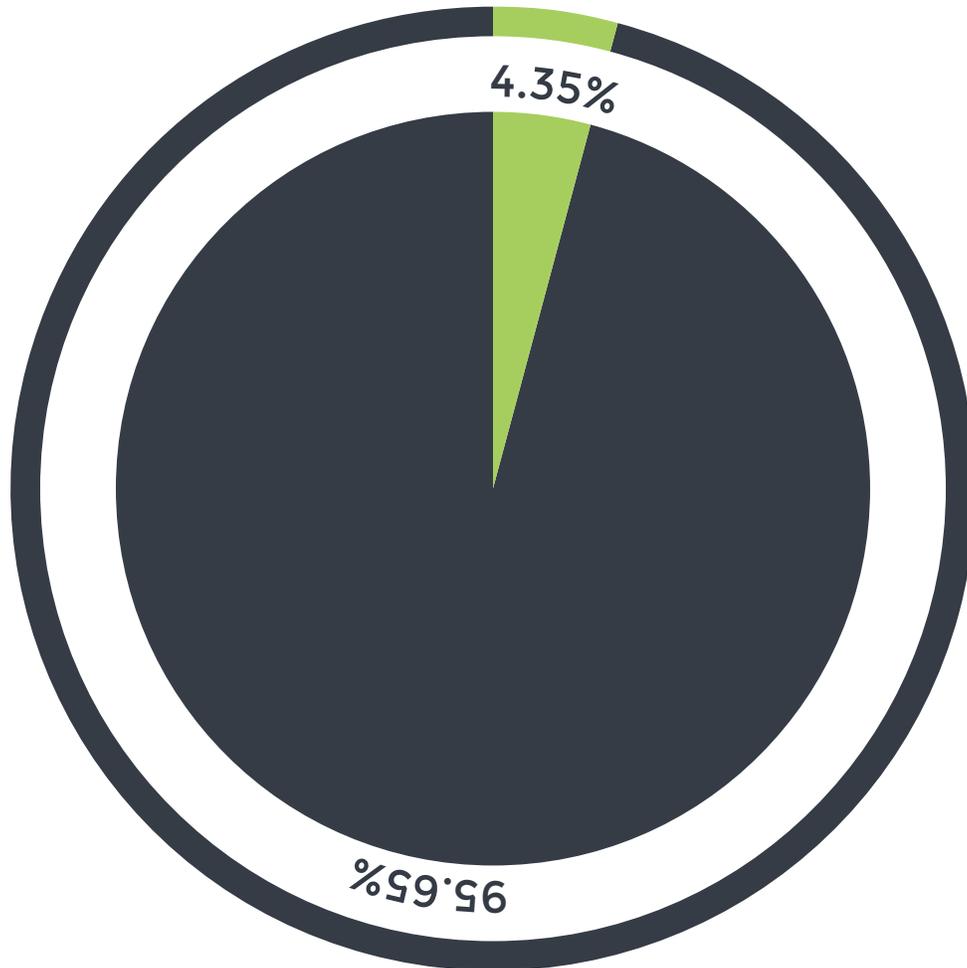
## AIR POLLUTION



### AIR POLLUTION

Air pollution comes from many different sources, ranging from factories, to power plants, to vehicles, to volcanic eruptions. Quality of the air people breathes can be affected by these different sources of pollution. American Lung Association on Kent County rated the ozone in the area with an F. F is the lowest rating and is declared unhealthy. Kent County received a B for 24-hour particle pollution.

## STREETS AND ROADS



### STREETS AND ROADS

Transportation infrastructure in Grand Rapids currently requires \$33 million a year to maintain. The 2013 Grand Rapids Sustainable Streets Task Force estimates that it costs \$22 million per year to keep 70% of Grand Rapids streets and sidewalks in good or fair condition. Approximately 60% of the city's 588 miles of streets are in poor condition today. Almost 250 miles of those in poor condition are local or neighborhood streets. 88% of commuters in Grand Rapids use personal vehicles as their primary mode of transportation. Alternative means of transportation include walking, 2.9%; public transportation, 2.8%; other modes at 2.0%; while the remainder work from home.

■ DOING WELL ■ DOING WELL BUT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT ■ N/A

■ N/A BUT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT ■ NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

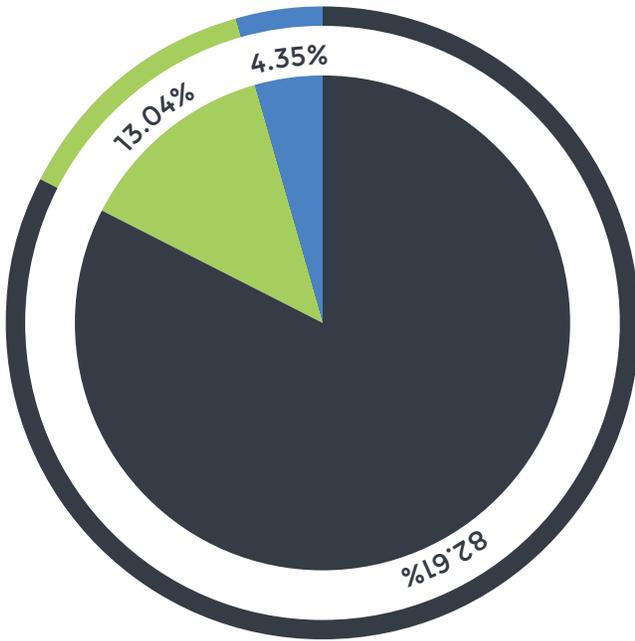


*In three years, Grand Rapids has gone from zero miles of on-street bike facilities to 35 miles as of October 2013*



*The Rapid has seen ridership nearly triple from 4.5 million in 2000 to 12.5 million in 2014*



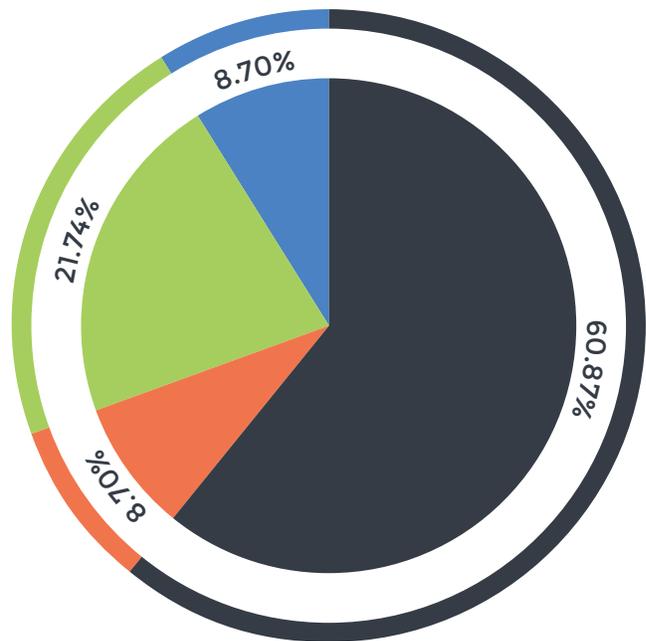


### HOUSING QUALITY

Some key challenges associated with poor housing include air quality, safety, noise, humidity and mold growth, indoor temperatures, asbestos, lead, radon, volatile organic compounds, lack of hygiene, and mental distress due to living conditions. In Kent County, nearly 40% of homes were built in 1980 or later. More than 70% of these homes are worth at least \$100,000. In contrast, almost 80% homes in Grand Rapids were built before 1979. Additionally, the value of homes in Grand Rapids are not as high as Kent County as a whole. More than 40% of the homes in Grand Rapids are worth less than \$100,000 (CHNA)

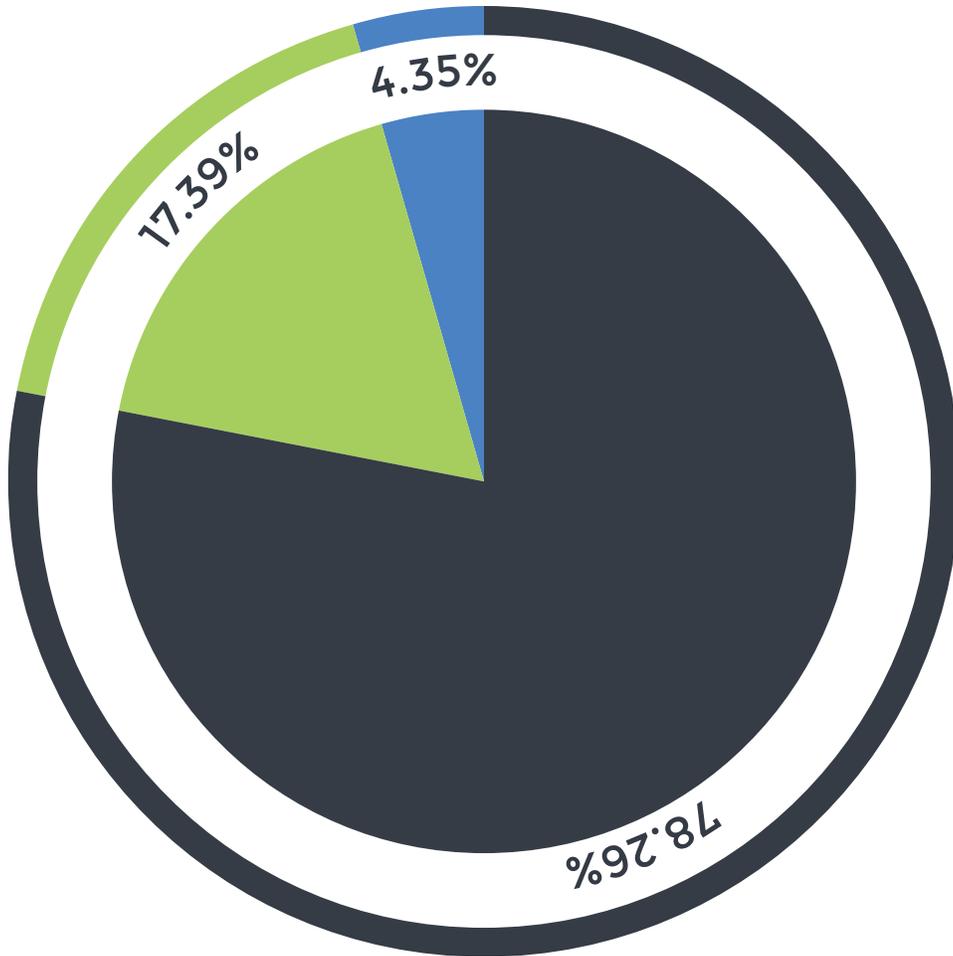
### GREEN SPACE

In Kent County, land development occurred three times faster than the population from 1960 to 1990.



- DOING WELL
  DOING WELL BUT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
  N/A
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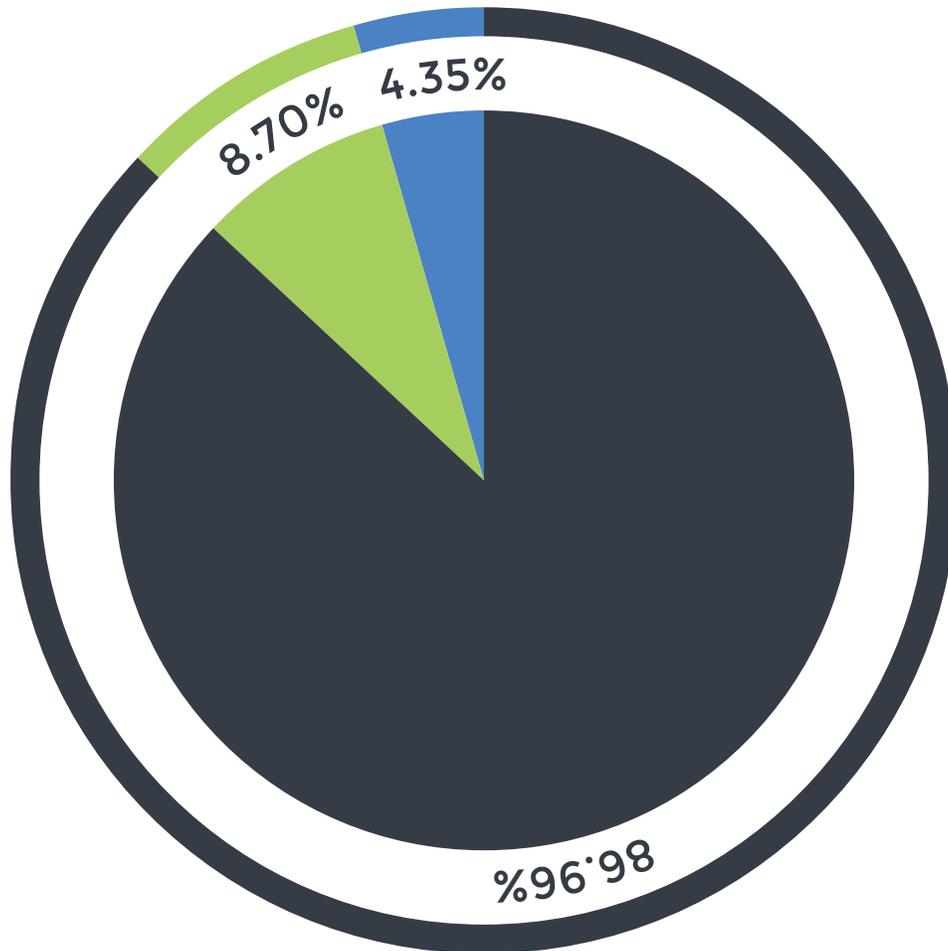
## HEALTHY FOOD CHOICE OPPORTUNITY



### HEALTHY FOOD CHOICE OPPORTUNITY

In Kent County, 14% of middle school-aged youth and 14.8% of high school-aged youth are considered overweight, while 9.7% of middle school-aged youth and 11.4% of high school-aged youth are considered obese. Mirroring the trends observed both statewide and nationally, the rate of obesity in Kent County has continued to increase since 1993, showing an almost 11-point lift (from 17% in 1993 to 27.6% at present). Less than one-third of Kent County middle school-aged youth and about 25% of high school-aged youth report eating the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables regularly. (CHNA)

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF HOMES



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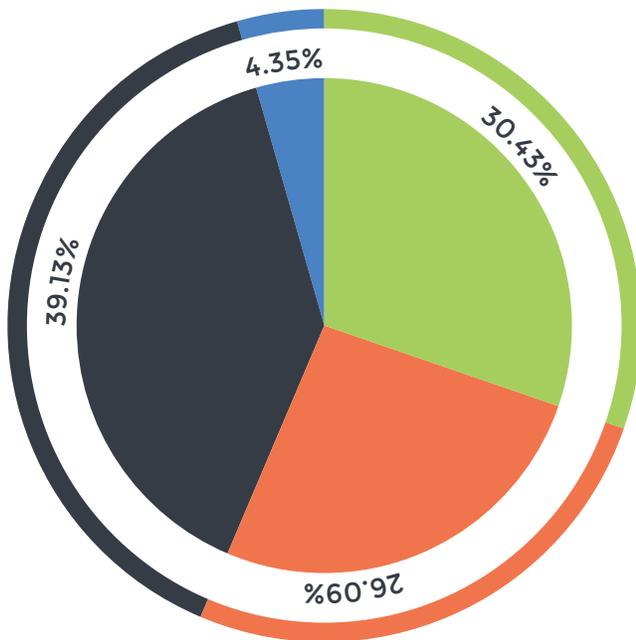
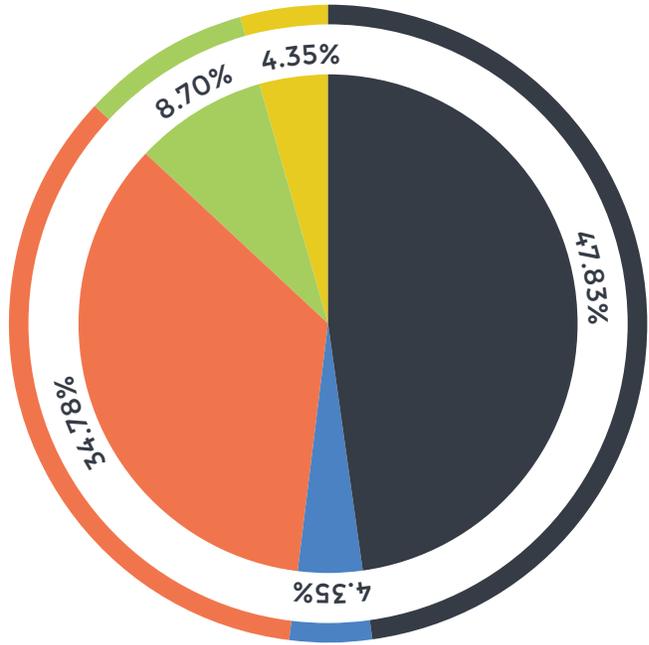
Residential homes account for 22% of the total US energy consumption. Michigan residents suffer from high household energy usage. The average resident spends an average of \$2,100 per year on energy costs. For example, Oakdale neighbors were experiencing over \$300 in monthly utility bills while being exposed to asbestos, gas leaks, mold, and knob/tube wiring. While only 28% of all homeowners are spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs, 50% of all renters in Kent County are experiencing housing burden (US Census Bureau: American Community Survey, 2006-2008). (Kent County Home Energy Efficiency Program)

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### ASTHMA MANAGEMENT

African Americans frequent the emergency room for asthma attacks three times as often as white Americans, and roughly 30% of childhood asthma is due to environmental exposures, with average costs of \$4,900 per patient (mlpp.org) Has a doctor, nurse, or other health professional EVER told you that you have any of the following? Asthma: 13.9% (CHNA)



### RECYCLING

The state's most current and best estimate of recycling in Michigan is 14.5 percent based on 2008 data >>Access to convenient recycling varies throughout Michigan, but is not yet widespread. According to the Michigan performance dashboard, only 24 counties report that their residents have convenient access to recycling (State of Michigan N.d.). In total, these counties make up only 12 percent of Michigan's total population. ("Improving Recycling Performance in Michigan," Public Sector Consultants, 2013)



Does your community have access to fresh water? Potable water? Or, riparian water?



Are you aware of your community (individuals, neighborhoods) being exposed to chemicals or toxins? What about in the house? What about the neighborhoods built environment?



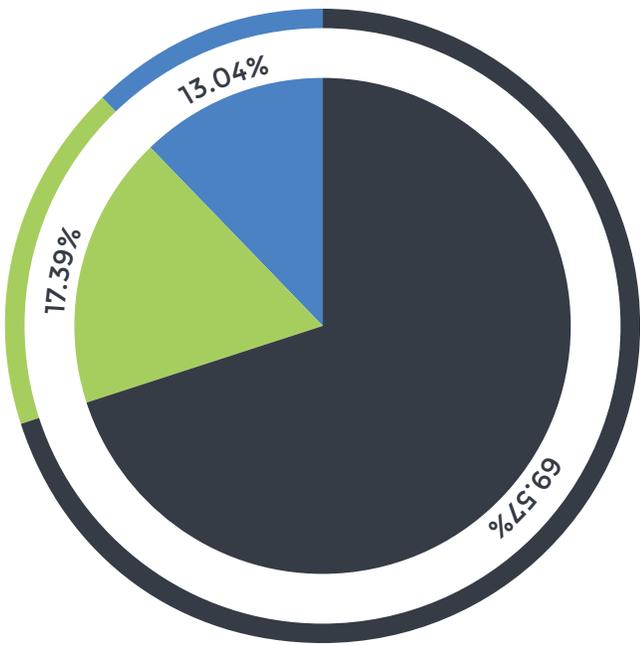
Does your community have community gardens? If yes, are there enough to match the demand from the neighbors? If no, is there a demand?



Does your neighborhood/community have access to composting options? Is there interest and opportunity to compost?



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 ■ N/A 
   
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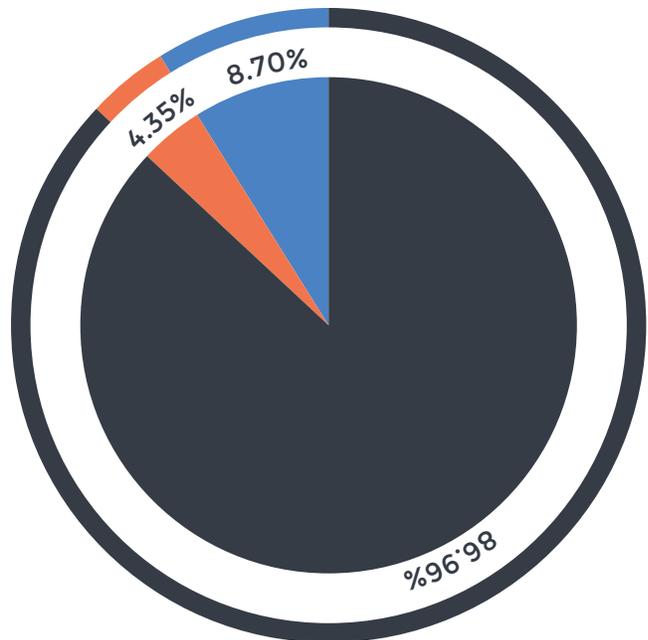


### TREE CANOPY

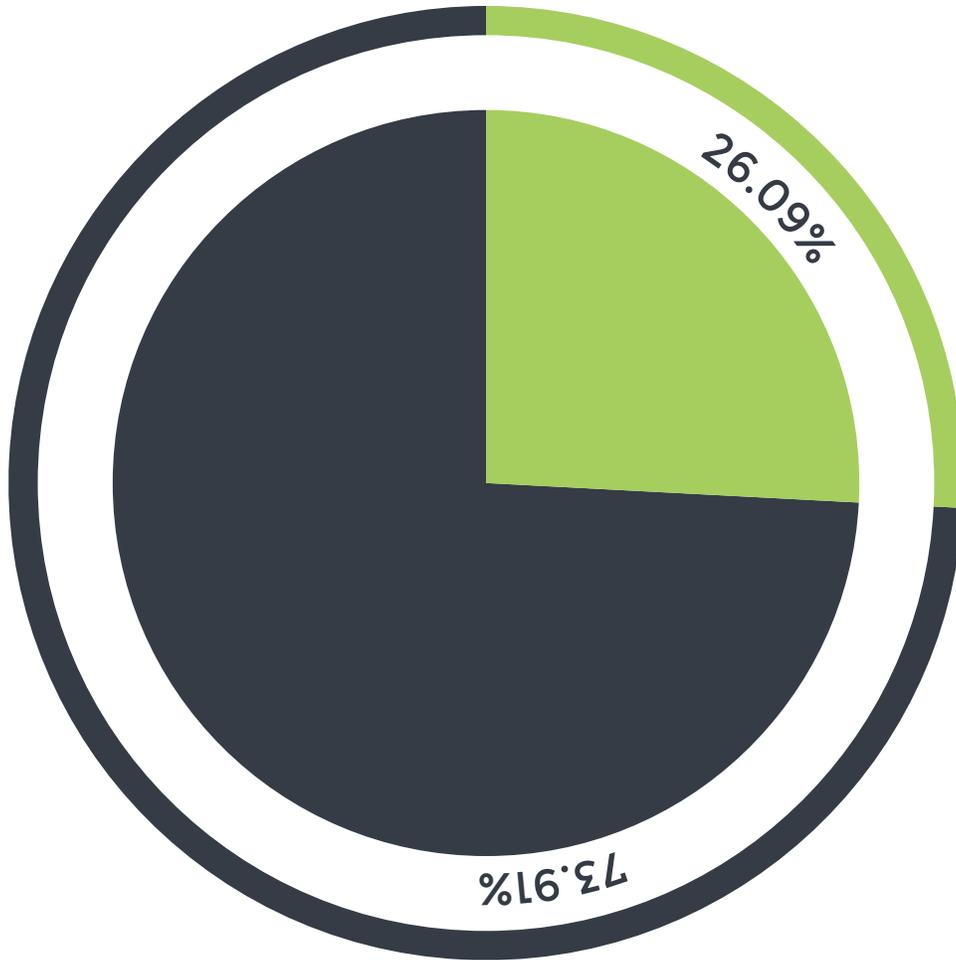
95% of Grand Rapids trees are privately owned. The city owns approximately 82,000 trees (62,000 along streets and 20,000 in parks). The total number of trees in the city is 1.5 million. Grand Rapid's urban canopy provides around \$32 million in stormwater benefits and \$1.7 million in clean-air benefits every year. The total asset value of trees in Grand Rapids is at least \$71 million. Total canopy in Grand Rapids = 34.6%

### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

WMEAC programs include Teach for the Watershed and Rain barrel workshops.



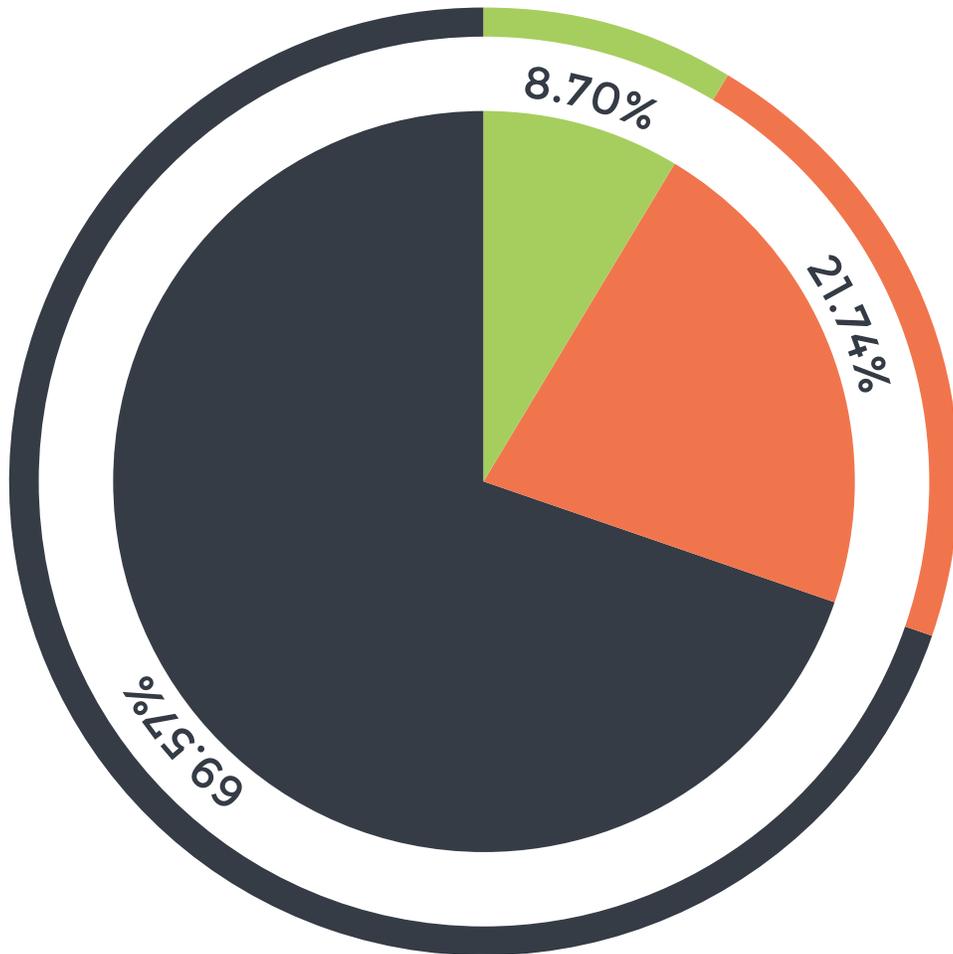
## PUBLIC PARKS ACCESSIBILITY



### PUBLIC PARKS ACCESSIBILITY

Not only do parks improve physical health through promoting an active lifestyle, they have also been shown to have a positive impact on psychological and social health. Additionally, parks provide children with safe places to play and develop, build healthy communities by stabilizing neighborhoods and strengthening community development, and increases social capital. Park acreage in Grand Rapids is 7.88 acres per 1,000 residents. In comparison to other Midwestern cities. Grand Rapids falls below the 12 to 15 acres per 1,000 residents average.

## WATER AND STORMWATER POLLUTION



### WATER AND STORMWATER POLLUTION

Grand River which runs through much of Kent County, had multiple contamination reports in the section of the river that runs through the City of Grand Rapids and the south western part of Kent County. (CHNA)

