

Community Meeting

February 26, 2025

Summary

On February 25, 2025, the project team hosted its first, in-person community meeting following the virtual meeting held on February 19, 2025.

The Open House provided community members an opportunity to learn about the Comprehensive Plan, share their input, and meet the project team. The event began with a brief presentation providing background about the City BluePrint project, a project overview, and information about the room setup. Attendees then participated in an interactive stations, where they shared their thoughts and priorities for the future of Oak Ridge.

Event Statistics

100+

Meeting
Attendees

10

Engagement
Stations

300+

Comments
Collected



Key Takeaways:

- There was a **strong preference for mixed-use housing** that incorporated retail, particularly that is accessible by walking.
- **Recreation and natural amenities** were identified as a high priority, with strong support for sustained investment.
- The concentration of commercial amenities and entertainment on the east side of town presented **accessibility challenges for residents on the west side**.
- While driving remained the dominant mode of transportation, there was a **notable interest in enhancing mobility options** through improved infrastructure for walking, public transit, and biking.
- There is opportunity to **revitalize underutilized parking lots, aging buildings, and vacant properties** to support economic growth and community development.
- The community valued the City's historical areas and amenities but expressed a desire for greater investment in **maintenance and beautification efforts to preserve their character and appeal**.

Station 1: Housing Type Voting

More affordable housing attract more permanent residents

Not just luxury homes

We need to connect any and all new housing development and new industrial facilities like Kairos, Orano, Ultra Safe, etc. with extensions of the greenways network to enable recreation and transportation via walking and bicycling

HOUSING PREFERENCE

Accessory Dwelling Units



Townhomes



Duplex/Multiplex



Low-rise Multifamily (1-3 stories)



Low Density Mixed Use



Mid-rise Multifamily (4-7 stories)



Medium Density Mixed Use



Urban Walkable Mixed Use



Adding more housing close to existing City infrastructure is needed to avoid sprawl. Place one dot on up to three of the housing types you think would best fit Oak Ridge.

OAK RIDGE
2045
A CENTURY OF HERITAGE
A FUTURE OF PROMISE

Many seniors cannot maintain the house they have lived in for many years and need independent living they can manage and afford

[Whether] new development or updating current units. Affordability is #1.

Station Instructions

Housing availability and affordability has been a reoccurring theme in public input. From feedback provided on the Comprehensive Plan survey and project website, there appears to be strong agreement that additional housing is needed, and this station's purpose is to further define the desired housing types.

The board features examples of housing types varying in scale and density. Attendees were given three dot stickers and instructed to vote on their preferred housing type they want to see developed in the City by placing the dots on the applicable types.

Summary and Results

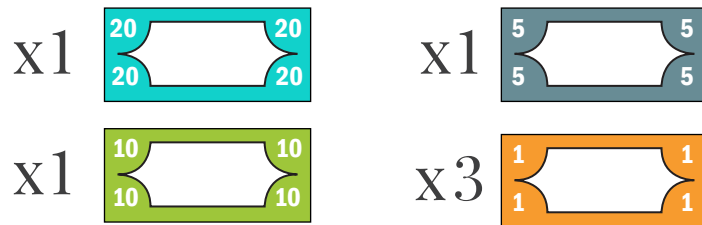
Community feedback indicated a strong preference for housing options that incorporate retail and commercial spaces, with walkable mixed-use developments ranking the highest.

In contrast, there was minimal support for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), townhomes, duplexes/multiplexes, and low-rise multifamily housing that lacks proximity to additional amenities. The least favored option was mid-rise multifamily buildings with a maximum height of seven stories.

Station 2: Priority Public Improvement Budget

Station Instructions

Each attendee was given \$38 "Oak Ridge Bucks" to distribute across different buckets representing potential public improvements. Attendees were given the bills pictured below. Attendees were encouraged to use their higher valued bills for their highest priorities.

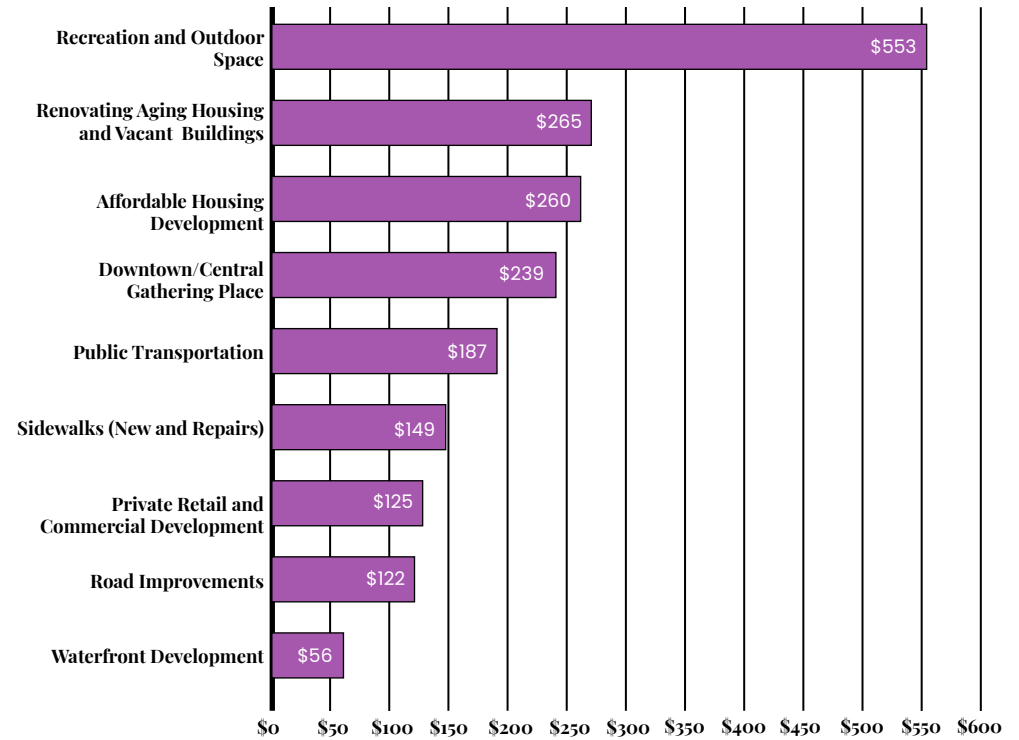


Summary and Results

Recreation and Outdoor Space emerged as the top priority, receiving \$553 in votes—nearly \$200 more than the next highest public improvement priority. Although it was not initially included as an option, community members referenced it so frequently that an additional category was created during the meeting to reflect its importance. Given its popularity, it's possible that even more votes would have been cast if it had been included from the start.

Renovating Aging Housing and Vacant Buildings, **Affordable Housing Development**, and **Downtown/Central Gathering Place** were the next highest priorities at \$264, \$260, and \$239 respectively. **Waterfront Development** tallied the least Bucks at \$56.

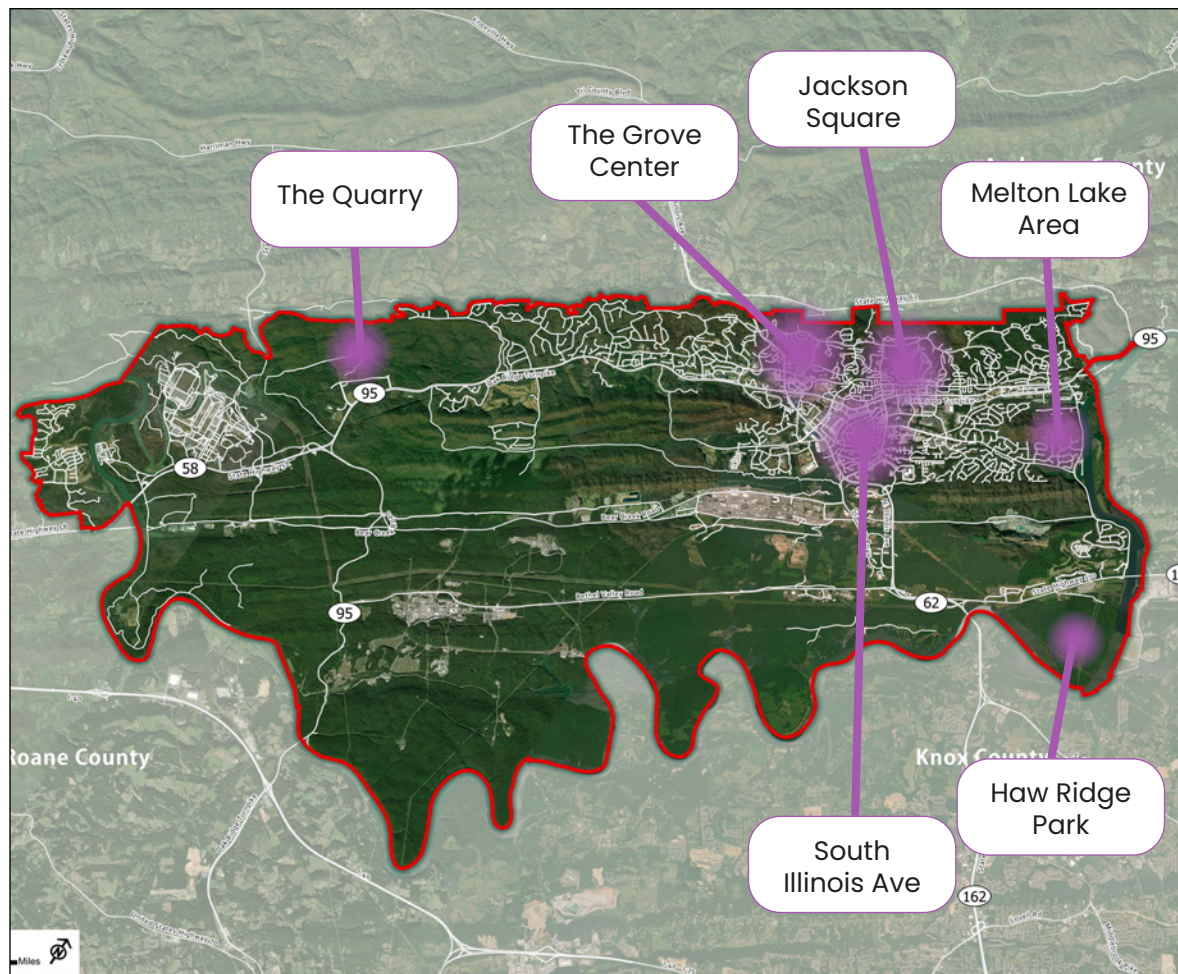
Priority Public Improvement Budget Results



Station 3: Points of Interest Mapping

Station Instructions

Attendees mapped their key points of interest by placing pins on a large map of Oak Ridge. Once the locations were marked, they used string to connect the points, illustrating common their most frequent trips. The final map provided a visual representation of frequently used paths, sparking discussion about accessibility and connectivity to shared points of interest.



Major Points of Interest

- **The Grove Center:** The City's only Kroger is located in this area, so many visits involve grocery shopping, especially after work and for residents living on the west side of town.
- **Jackson Square:** Various reasons for visiting involve restaurants, shopping, the theater, and participating in sport facilities.
- **Melton Lake Area:** Greenway is heavily used for general recreation and walking. Family-friendly amenities such as the playground were reference. The connectivity between Melton Lake and Haw Ridge Park is appreciated.
- **Haw Ridge Parking:** The longer trails for hiking and biking attract visitors to this area.
- **The Quarry:** Most drive to the trailhead to enjoy walking and hiking. Many commented on the beautiful and relaxing scenery.
- **South Illinois Ave:** Central area for shopping and access to commercial businesses.

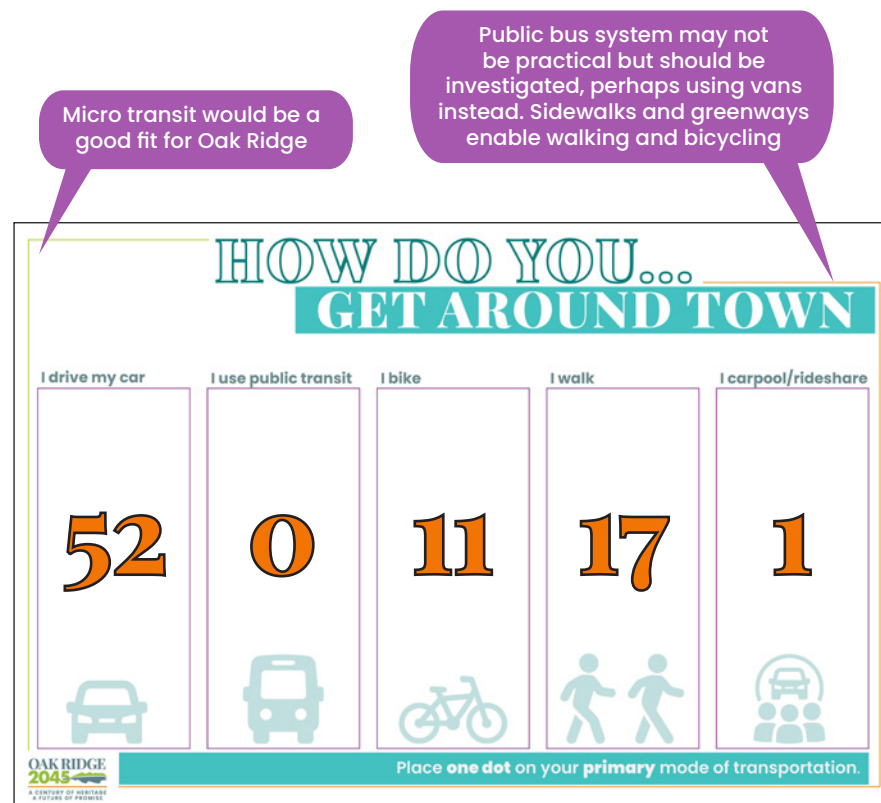
Challenges

- Residents living on the west side of town do not have easy access to any major grocery store or much commercial development.
- City-wide: New sidewalks in the Briarcliff area and repairs along West Outer Dr. were specifically mentioned.
- Most participants feel that driving is the only safe transportation option, so there is a need for new infrastructure to support alternative transportation.

Station 4: Modes of Transportation

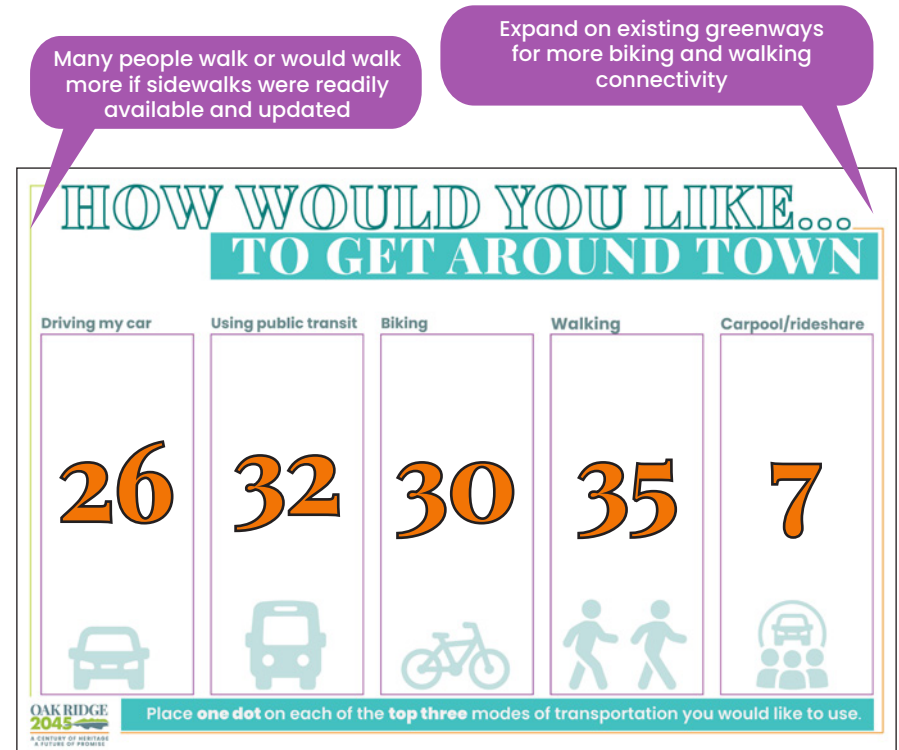
Station Instructions

Attendees were asked what modes of transportation they currently used and what modes they would like to use in the future. To indicate their responses, attendees placed dot stickers on the respective icons. Attendees were permitted to use as many dots as relevant for the exercise.



Summary and Results

The car is the dominant form of transportation within the community with small clusters of attendees that walk and/or bike around town. As seen in the “How Would You Like to Get Around Town?” responses, there is a large desire to diversify transportation options, preferably towards walking, public transit, and biking. There is little interest to incorporate carpooling or rideshare options.



Station 5: Small Area Opportunities

Station Instructions

Small area plans will be developed as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. For this station, attendees completed a MadLibs exercise that allowed participants to share their vision, preferred types of development, key priorities, and notable challenges for each identified small area. Participants also had the opportunity to place sticky notes on the maps with other ideas for the areas.

Small Areas

- Wilson Corridor (Downtown/Wilson/Bissell Corridor)
- South Illinois Ave Corridor (Tuskegee Shopping Area)
- Jackson Square (and Federal Headquarters)
- The Grove Center
- Melton Lake Waterfront (Please note this small area was substituted for the Warehouse and Belgrade Road Corridor)



MY IDEAL OAK RIDGE

Right now, I usually drive to
mode of transportation

The civic center when I want to swim.
small area activity

I think this area could become more intellectual by
adjective

adding more plays outside. One challenge here is
amenity

over-crowding, but if the city
issue in the small area

focused on cultural & Art + Roane Community College, it would
change you'd like to see

make a huge difference.

My one wish for this area is to see us keep more green space
amenity/type of space

where people can enjoy family activities while enjoying
verb

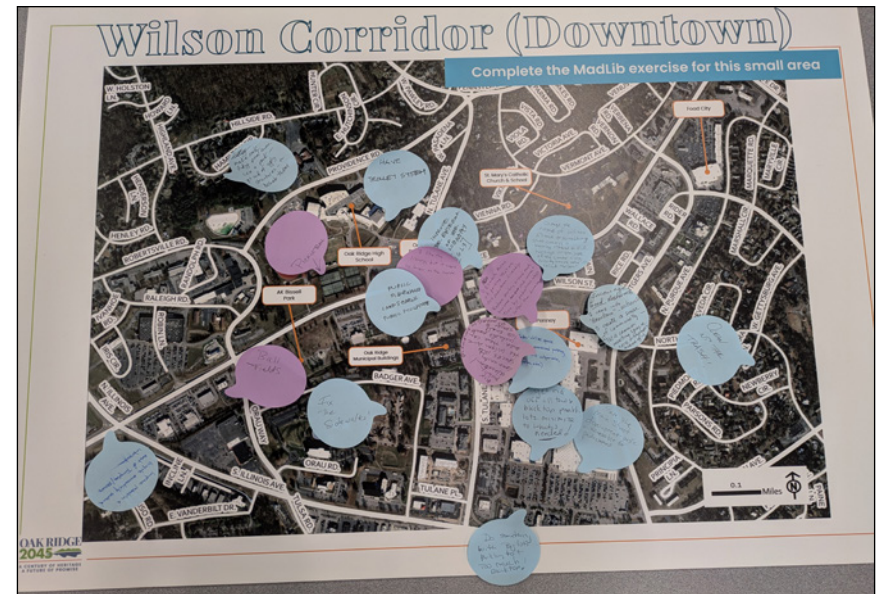
a picnic with family & friends
phrase/plural noun



Wilson Corridor (Downtown/Wilson/Bissell)

Key Themes

- Need more developments other than parking lots.
- Improve bicycle/pedestrian safety, connectivity to trails and other nearby amenities, and amenities.
- Improve the library and add more communal spaces.
- Serves as a central area for shopping and entertainment. There is an opportunity to more local shops, restaurants and to incorporate intentional gathering place for the community.

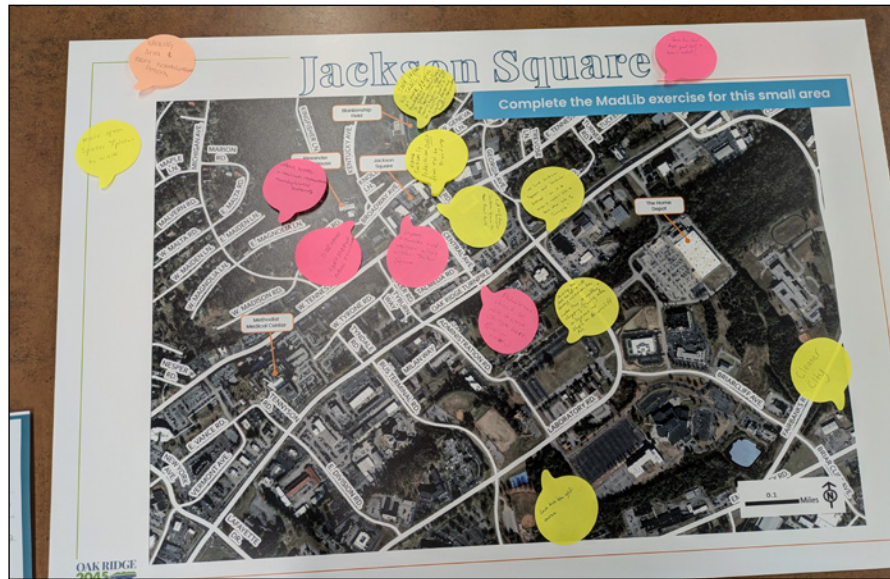


South Illinois Ave Corridor (Tuskegee Shopping Area)

Key Themes

- Incentivize owners of vacant commercial spaces in the area to sell or renovate. City could be collecting additional tax revenue from operating businesses.
- Fears of the corridor turning into Kingston Pike. Overall desire for the area to include more local restaurants and better retail opportunities.
- City center shopping area is not popular. The parking lots are too large and sit empty. Increasing walkability and tree coverage should be explored.
- Safety concerns crossing at S. Illinois and Turnpike. Consider a walkway that passes over major corridors and connects to the civic area away from heavy traffic.





Jackson Square (and Federal Headquarters)

Key Themes

- Most people drive but there is a desire to have this area be more walkable. Some comments advocated for this to be pedestrian only.
- Pedestrians should be able to cross/walk/bike more easily and safely in the area; improve sidewalks, make pedestrian access only in Jackson Square.
- Increase diversity in retail, restaurant, and entertainment options.
- Importance around protecting and maintaining green space, including more trees and around the Cedar Hill Trail/Blankenship Field.
- Issues with vacant properties, poor quality buildings, and under-utilized retail.



The Grove Center

Key Themes

- Strong consensus to keep the Oak Ridge Pool in operation and improve the area as it is one of the more popular amenities in the City.
- Improving the Grove Center; good opportunity for retail development if the site is spruced up.
- General acknowledgement of the need to beautify/clean up the area. Desire to see buildings modernized and the area to undergo landscaping to improve aesthetics.
- Areas of interest: pool, Kroger, and Grove Theater.

Melton Lake Waterfront

Key Themes

- Enhance access for safe pedestrians and cyclists in the area, particularly connecting Warehouse Rd to the Melton Lake trail using the old railroad tracks. Additional infrastructure and safety improvements were also mentioned.
- Concern about Noble Metals proximity to the nearby neighborhood with hopes that more productive uses of the area could be achieved for additional trails and parking.
- Renovate and expand the Life Development Center and improving the Haw Ridge Park area.
- Vehicular speeds in the area make pedestrians and cyclists feel unsafe. Having separation between the greenway and the road is desired.
- There are opportunities to increase outdoor events and encourage family-friendly activities.

*Please note this small area was substituted for one focusing on the Warehouse and Belgrade Road Corridor.

