

# Comprehensive Plan Community Survey

December 2024–March 2025

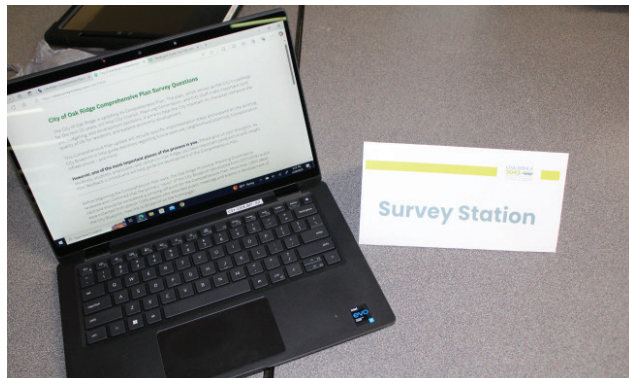
## About the Project

From December 18, 2024 to March 14, 2025, community input was collected through a mix of online submissions and paper forms gathered by ambassadors at local events. This outreach provided a snapshot of public feedback, reflecting a range of perspectives from residents.

The responses help illustrate community priorities and areas of concern, offering valuable insight into what matters most to those who live and work in Oak Ridge. While this summary captures input from this period, engagement is ongoing, and continued conversations will help shape the City's future.

## Event Statistics

- 331 Surveys Collected
  - 304 Online Surveys Collected
  - 27 Paper Surveys Collected
- 908 Total Comments



## Key Takeaways

- Improve roadways, sidewalks, and transportation options to ensure safe, accessible connections for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.
- Create a distinct identity that honors Oak Ridge's history while embracing innovation in STEM, nuclear energy, culture, and the arts.
- Foster a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive community with vibrant gathering spaces and activities for all ages and abilities.
- Expand quality, affordable housing options and revitalize vacant or aging properties to attract and retain residents.
- Strengthen downtown and key commercial areas like the waterfront, Jackson Square, and Illinois Avenue as hubs for shopping, dining, and events.
- Enhance parks, trails, and natural assets by improving connections between green spaces and key points of interest.
- Invest in citywide beautification, placemaking, and thoughtful development that balances modernization with Oak Ridge's unique character.
- Plan for long-term mobility and smart growth, ensuring sustainable infrastructure and economic resilience.

## Survey Questions

*The clear message coming out of the Blueprint was a shared vision to Grow Oak Ridge primarily within or immediately adjacent to existing City services areas. This is intended to encourage efficient service delivery and walkability in close proximity to existing development.*

*Residents emphasized a desire to be “Uniquely Oak Ridge.” This uniqueness is built on the identified ‘values’ of the Blueprint, which included:*

- *The importance of our foundation of science and technology*
- *Our commitment to public education*
- *The importance of our natural assets like greenbelts, waterways, and trails*

### Q1: What would you add to the Vision for the future of Oak Ridge, if anything?

- To connect people and places.
- Opportunity to improve our parks and recreation facilities by constructing outdoor pickleball courts.
- Make landlords responsible for maintaining their properties.
- An outdoor pickleball facility
- Keep Oak Ridge unique and ‘quiet’. Prefer a more peaceful landscape.
- Improve the road quality – why have they been allowed to deteriorate like they have?
- Find ways to attract and retain young, professional adults and adults with vocational skills. The Wilson Street Corridor is a good start.
- Annex all the way down the north side to TN 61, and Poplar Creek Rd to Blair Rd. Some of the people who live on Bacon Springs Rd already have to come up to Oak Ridge to vote due to the rearranging of districts. Might as well get their property tax too!
- Rails to trails on Warehouse Road. Clean up the huge trash dumps from Noble Metals and relocate them away from residents and into an industrial park site!!! They are an eyesore for Oak Ridge.
- Oak Ridge should be collecting an occupation tax from people who work here and don’t live in the city.
- Public transportation, specially to Y-12 and ORNL during rush hours.
- A comprehensive architecture design philosophy to further the unique feel of Oak Ridge and inspire through design. We don’t want a bunch of ugly squares. Let’s inspire through what we build and have to look at every day.
- Alleviating daily traffic congestion in the Solway area as people from ORNL and Y-12 head home at the end of the day
- Low light pollution
- Enhance emphasis on the beautiful skyline (underground power, shortened business signs).
- Expand the roads for commuters. Keep Oak Ridge simple, but a hub for surrounding communities like Oliver Springs and Solway.
- Get the area businesses signage cleaned up, it makes the city look so dirty and cheap.”
- Utilizing mixed use residential and light commercial to build towards city walkability. Such as allowing apartments above lower level shops.
- Establish a central walkable courtyard downtown with unique architecture, shopping and QUALITY non franchise restaurants with mixed-use development.
- Make the city neighborhoods and main roads more walkable and bikeable in addition to the greenways. Redevelop older, inefficiently designed buildings and parking lots into more space efficient housing and shopping.

## Q1 Responses Continued

- Our animal shelter needs to be open more often and have a better capacity.
- Fix the roads. They are in horrible shape.
- Leaving some “natural space”. With all the development, much of our natural beauty is disappearing.
- Enhancing the Melton Lake Greenway and park area to compete with Aspire.
- We need to be clear in the vision of what success is. It should be something like: “The nation’s leading community for the nuclear industry that has the best public education system in the nation and quality of life including ways to enjoy nature.”
- Clean up vacant buildings
- We need an area where people can eat, shop, stroll, and visit with other community members. The old downtown area (Jackson Square, E. Tennessee area) provided this for decades. The new “downtown” (WalMart, Movie theater and everything in between) area is not someplace anybody wants to go unless they have to
- Updated playgrounds
- Emphasize the natural assets
- Dedicated public land and public funds to be used to return Oak Ridge Schools to their leading role in our state’s academic fabric.
- Walkable streets with safe sidewalks
- Leader in sustainability and climate change
- New shopping places, update new facilities for daycare. Additional ways to leave out of Oak Ridge.
- A community embrace of progressive ideas that prioritize the greater good for the benefit of all
- Accessibility maintained and upgraded to all publicly own property
- Adding arts is possible but might dilute the other three.
- Upgraded building for businesses. Having more shopping places.
- Be more non-motorized & pedestrian commuter friendly in business/shopping areas (designated bicycle lanes and parking)
- Comprehensive preservation of green spaces in neighborhoods.
- Dedicated recycling drop offs for paper, glass, metal, and plastic with state of art reuse planning.
- Plant every species of oak trees in Oak Ridge to improve our municipal canopy
- Indoor walking for winter and rainy day
- Safe sidewalks in throughout West Hills and the West End of Oak Ridge
- Honor its history proudly. Where is our WWII monument? We have a BELL, that many in this town DON’T WANT
- Future is the children. A unique play area is needed for 10 – 16 year olds
- Improved roadways
- A specific plan for our schools. Our school system is top notch but quickly outgrowing its means
- A centralized “Main Street” retail area developed to encourage walking and includes small business and entertainment.
- The city needs to limit “box stores” and favor local, unbranded businesses.
- Perhaps a “theme” to the city. Take a look at Leavenworth, WA, and think along lines of a country and western/ Americana theme.
- Historic preservation, especially vintage housing & outdoor pool in it’s current size
- Create the neighborhood enclaves which previously existed, where small retailers were located to build a sense of community with a community. Many of those original small business buildings still exist
- More shopping and traffic management
- Maintaining and renewing the water, sewer, electric, fire protection and law enforcement. Include Internet communication for all
- Rail to Trails for safe roads to walk around town
- Modernize the city
- Want \*quality\* growth. We can start by taking care of what we already have. Find a way to condemn buildings that have sat empty for years. Require landlords to keep their properties up to code

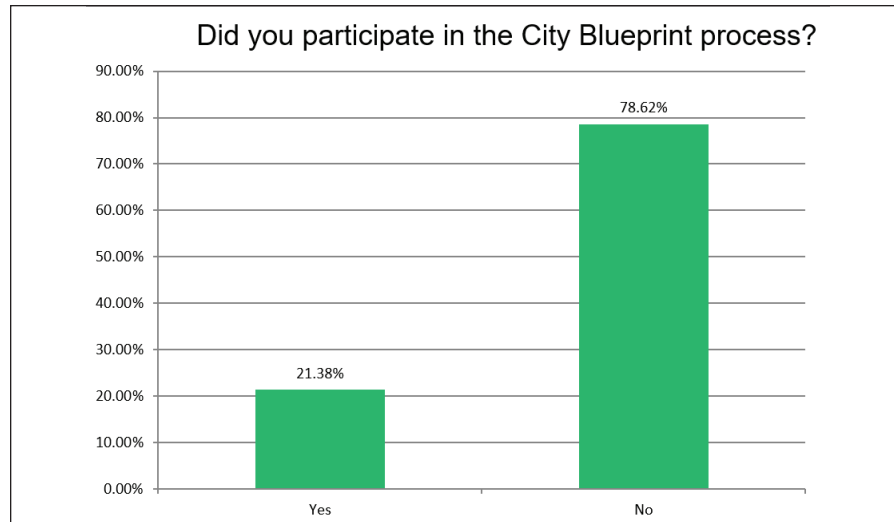
## Q1 Responses Continued

- The focus should be to grow in a manner that is “sustainable and addresses citizens goals. A prior found that access to a healthy environment and outdoor recreation opportunities were important goals.
- Be more inclusive to underrepresented areas of town so that no neighborhood is isolated such as Scarboro neighborhood
- Revise vision statement. It should not be “Grow Oak Ridge” that was not the result of the vision but rather to be uniquely Oak Ridge, And for any future growth to be climate -smart
- Outdoor sports, mountain biking/ trail running focused like Bentonville, Arkansas
- A commitment to affordable housing/ housing for all – prioritizing public housing
- Identity! Oak Ridgers have never considered ourselves West Knoxvillians
- Include all of Oak Ridge in the vision. The West where we live was omitted from the last plan
- Stuff and places for teens to hang out at and do things
- Waterfront amenities (shops, state of the art playground, housing)
- A commitment to Oak Ridge as an open and welcoming community to all who live and/or visit here
- Save the original historic houses & neighborhoods that were constructed during the war years
- Better public transportation.
- Accessibility for all groups. (Think accessible playgrounds, commercial expansion toward edges of city)
- Preserving the outdoor pool
- Restoring and revitalizing existing buildings, facilities and spaces
- The biggest thing to remember is not only what current residents want but to also acknowledge what newcomers want – what are the efforts to grow local community spaces for young adults in their mid-20’s to early 30’s?
- Overcoming our history instead of celebrating it.
- More “mom and pop” style shops and restaurants
- Activities for younger families
- Support STEAM not just STEM. The arts are equally important in both the development of children and cultural offerings and opportunities within our city
- The importance of inclusivity, multiculturalism, and collaboration across diverse communities
- Encouraging young adults to remain and keep developed talents in the area
- Continued support for the Senior Center and activities and services for seniors.
- Developing industry and high paying jobs in the nuclear corridor
- Civil rights trail
- A master traffic plan to divert traffic around the city center
- Development of individual neighborhood identity and retail
- Emphasize the DOE reservation’s potential as a unique biological treasure and legacy
- Work with DOE to plan and protect the expansive forested areas within Oak Ridge

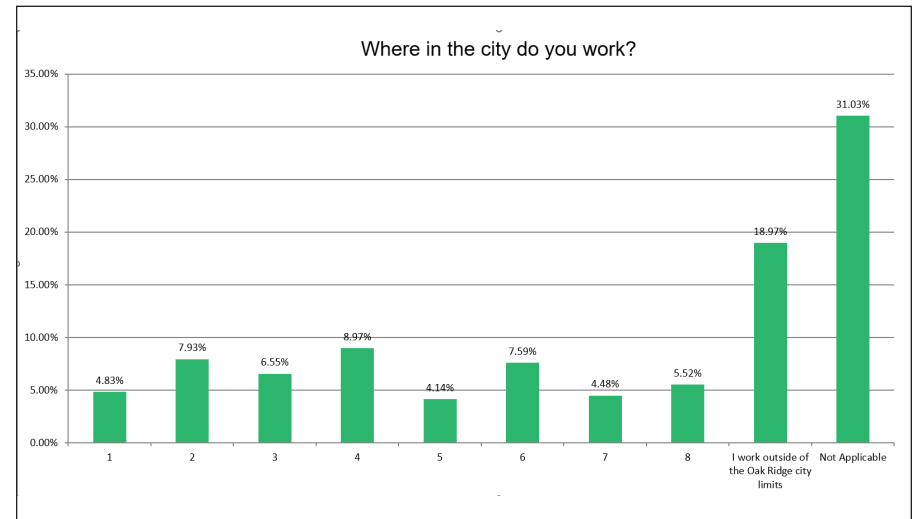
## Q2: What are some things you would consider to be “uniquely Oak Ridge”?

- The history of science and technology
- Nice parks and outdoor activities
- All the greenbelts with their trails and the rowing course
- The marina area
- Future regarding nuclear energy and technology
- The waterfront is a great unique feature
- Swimming pool
- Civic center, library, and park area as a wonderful central area for city celebrations
- Don't have all the hustle and bustle of a huge city
- Nature meets small town
- The Secret City aspect and the guard houses
- The alphabet streets
- Our connection and acknowledgement of the towns history
- Great schools
- Jackson square
- ORNL & Y12
- Oak Ridge History Museum
- Highland View Children's museum
- Manhattan Project heritage
- Oak Ridge is a true “melting pot” of people from various cultures and backgrounds
- Community Playhouse
- Excellent public school sports and support for arts (band, plays, etc.)
- Easily accessible medical facilities, including hospital
- Government buildings and housing
- Significant green spaces like Melton Hill Lake, Haw Ridge Park, and the Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement
- Oak Ridge is a small town, spread over the foot print of a city
- Vibrant arts community
- Wildcat stadium and Oak Ridge High School pride
- Excellence! As a city founded with a national goal and an unlimited budget we built in a very high level of excellence in our performance in city services and scientific expertise. We must continue that expectation and excellence
- Thoughtful, well educated population
- Vision for Rails to Trails. Long past due!!!
- Friendship Bell
- Massive inbound traffic from surrounding communities in the morning and equally massive outbound traffic in the afternoon as workers employed in Oak Ridge return home to spend dollars earned in Oak Ridge in their communities
- Poor streets, poor and shoddy street repair
- Alphabet houses
- The walking trails at Melton Lake.
- Friendliness, Progressiveness
- Pot holes, never seen so many in my life.
- The Arboretum
- The variety and uniqueness of the retail corridor
- Great education system
- Diversity of the DOE mission in the City
- Amount of people and organizations dedicated to charity work
- The squares (Jackson, Jefferson, and Grove)
- Lack of support for local businesses, especially retail
- Original SOM community design-built from scratch
- Beautiful out of the way location
- Being a global city in a rural setting
- Oak Ridge 85
- Scarboro Community Center
- Antique stores
- The people that grew up here

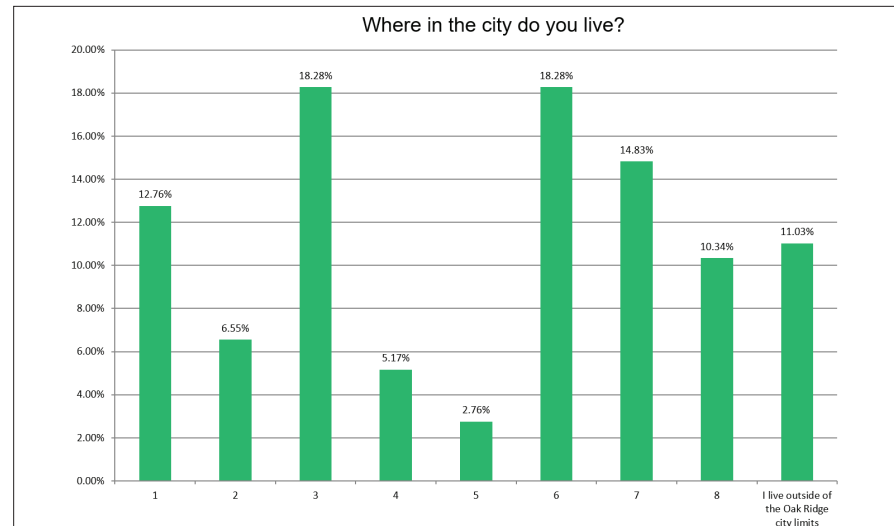
### Q3: Did you participate in the City Blueprint process?



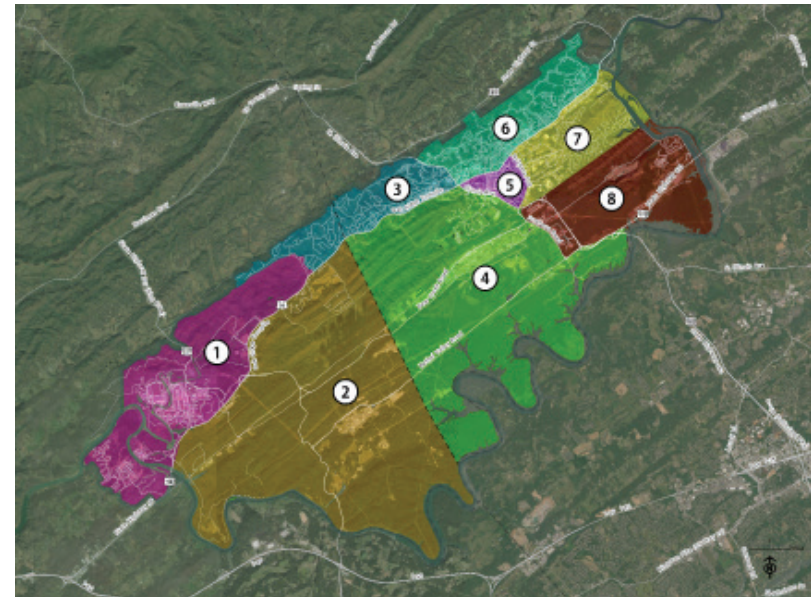
### Q5: Where in the city do you work?



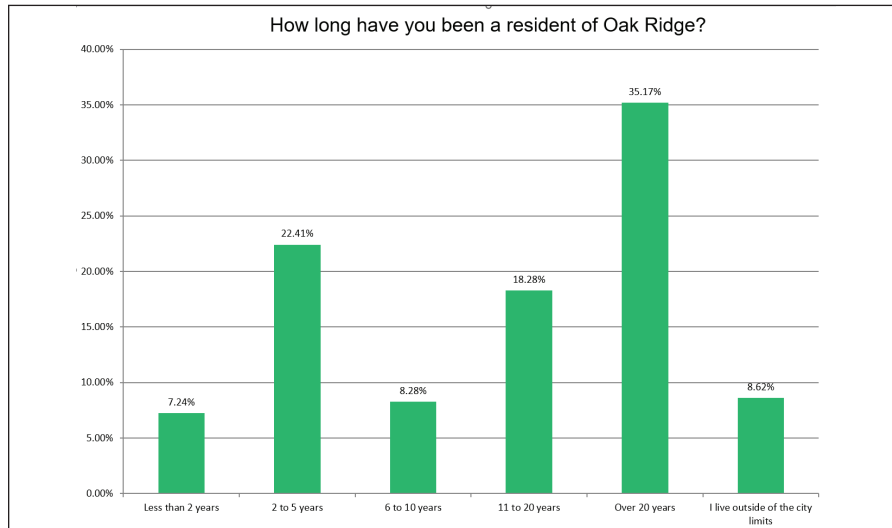
### Q4: Where in the city do you live?



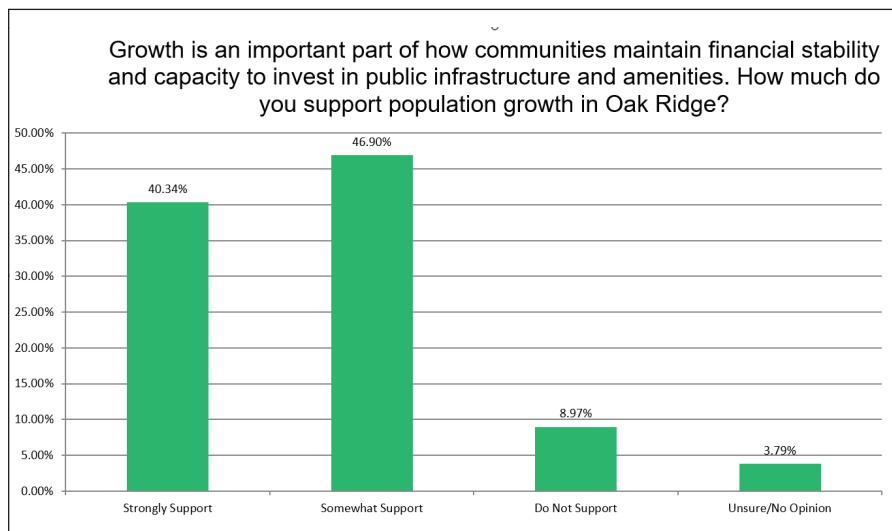
Reference Map for Questions 4 and 5



## Q6: How long have you been a resident of Oak Ridge?



## Q7: Growth is an important part of how communities maintain financial stability and capacity to invest in public infrastructure and amenities. How much do you support population growth in Oak Ridge?

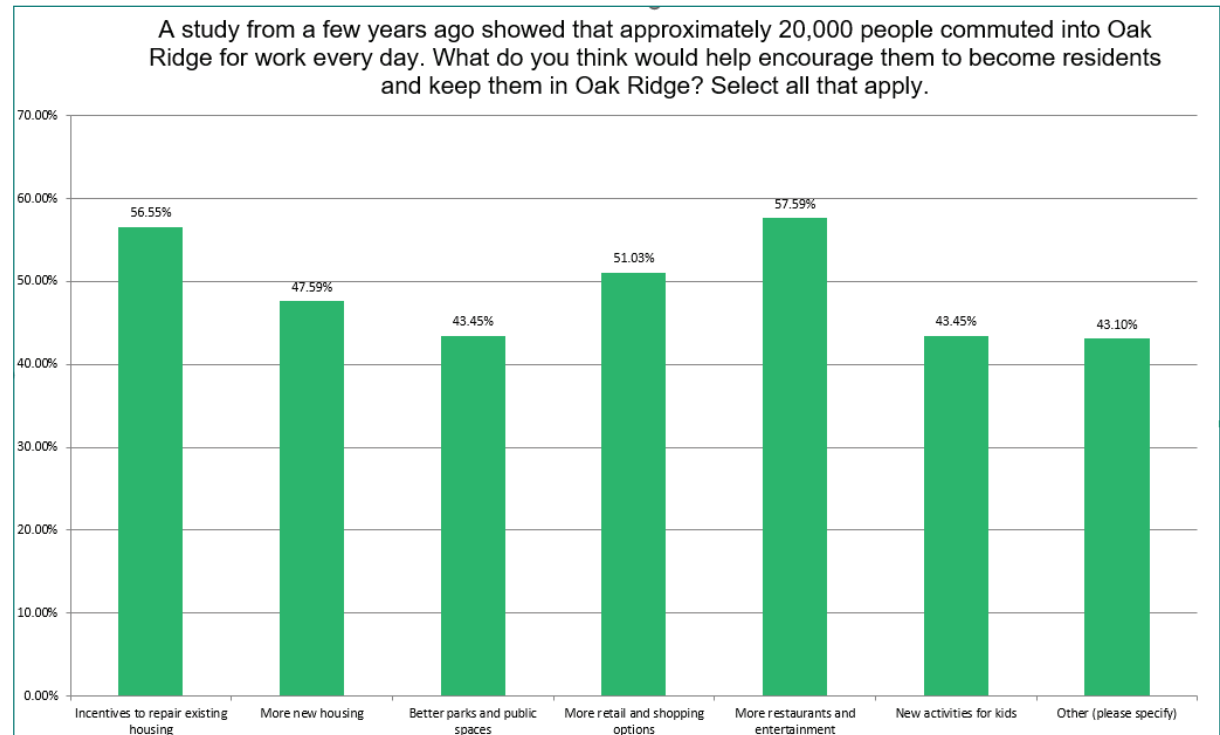


## Q8: A study from a few years ago showed that approximately 20,000 people commuted into Oak Ridge for work every day. What do you think would help encourage them to become residents and keep them in Oak Ridge?

Participants Selected All That Apply

### Other Responses

- More local restaurants
- Affordable housing
- Less blacktop and more green space
- Lower taxes–Oak Ridge City and Anderson County taxes too high
- A Whole Foods store
- Maintain population
- Don't widen roads!!! I come from Atlanta and it makes traffic WORSE. Work on round about and over passes to alleviate traffic.
- Better advertising of current town amenities. We can have as many new things as we want but if we don't show people it's here they won't come.
- Fix roads and force repairs or replacement of rundown businesses
- Create a downtown. This is different than retail and shopping and people confuse the two.
- Choose who we are and define ourselves
- Better schools. This is #1
- Renovation of existing retail rather than new stores (updating empty buildings / removing eyesores)
- Daycare facilities
- Grocery store and restaurants on west side.



## Q8: Responses Continued

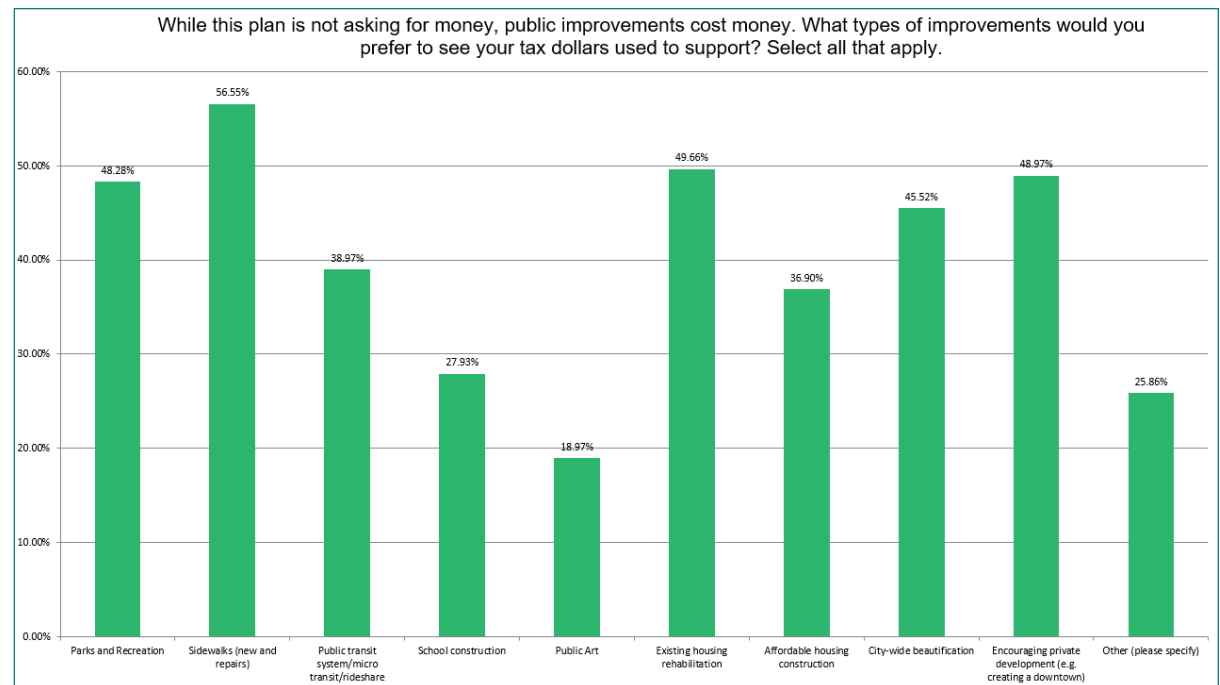
- Public areas need to be freshened.
- An inviting, beautiful space to eat, walk, live and spend money. The very least the city could do is maintain some beautiful flower pots as they do in Knoxville.
- Things for young adults 18-39, don't just gear it for the children or the elderly.
- Increased schools available
- Increasing the variety of available housing. Oak Ridge housing is predominately old and small relative to the needs of today's families
- More options for teens and young adults for entertainment. Laser tag, roller rink, axe throwing etc
- Lower property taxes compared to Knox and Roane counties
- Better and more accessible commercial and cultural venues.
- Educating people know about the many activities and opportunities in OR; Asking ORNL to tell new employees about OR rather than their current focus on Knoxville.
- Realtors and Places like DOE to stop telling people to not live in Oak Ridge and certain areas of Oak Ridge. A house divided against itself will not stand!
- Mountain bike trails
- Small owned businesses NOT massive chains. No more fast food places
- Hometown calm, safe, friendly, welcoming
- Make our goals of excellence and community participation known
- Walkable neighborhoods (sidewalks not on roadways e.g. Briarcliff)
- Better transportation/commute options
- Community Aesthetics
- Stop building apartments. New housing requires space, minimum property sizes vs on top of each other for "profit".
- More routes in and out of the city
- A beer garden with a playground/park.
- Somewhere the whole family can enjoy
- More free concerts at ORNL shell; the secret city festival
- We DO NOT WANT THEM TO MOVE HERE! The traffic is horrible, you idiots are DESTROYING our amazing schools! All these apartments are a blight. The vast majority of you need to be voted out!
- Anything that encourages walking and bicycling within the city, such as a Rails-to-Trails project.
- Better management of trees in public spaces (we are a Tree City USA, after all.) For example, not butchering mature trees needlessly.
- Large events that don't solely focus on the 1940's
- Controls on the cost of rent, people sitting on undeveloped property
- A rock climbing gym please
- Invest heavily in athletic facilities
- More places to meet and interact with people. Not just spend money
- A splash pad for children
- A unified, inclusive, optimistic and engaged community focused on the wellbeing of ALL residents
- Ways to reduce traffic in town
- A cutting-edge innovation center for our schools
- Sustainable transportation to/from ORNL and Y-12 from city center, downtown
- A performing arts center
- Better nightlife

## Q9: While this plan is not asking for money, public improvements cost money. What types of improvements would you prefer to see your tax dollars used to support?

Participants Selected All That Apply

### Other Responses

- Continued excellence of school education and programs. This was what enticed me to live in Oak Ridge vs Knoxville
- Roads – make developers maintain their roads, improve roads and the lighting around our shopping areas.
- Plant more native species and destroy invasive species
- Better animal shelter and keeping up current amenities. I honestly would love to see us go back to the old garbage pick up system.
- Support small businesses that currently exist
- Public development, not private
- Daycares
- Do something to improve Main Street Oak Ridge.
- Swimming Pool open all summer
- Old buildings removed for new businesses
- Rails-to-trails
- Planning monthly city wide trash pickup days. My street and the surrounding area (near high school) is constantly covered in trash. This cannot be managed by just one person :)



## Q9 Responses Continued

- More stores and restaurants along the turnpike towards I-40
- Activities focused on people who are 25-45
- Scarboro 85 Monument Project
- New roadways east/west, plus walkable core housing/retail
- Municipal internet
- Mountain bike trails
- Clark Park development
- Amenities like pigeon forge
- Attention to the historic assets especially Jackson Square. The Main Street project is a big box unsightly area and will never serve as the downtown of Oak Ridge due to the lack of a social gathering place. Wilson Street will never serve this purpose.
- A fun family day at outdoor pool for 4th of July
- Incentivize businesses to utilize existing structures and stop cutting down trees,
- Fix the roads and all the potholes. Put speed bumps on the neighborhood roads to slow the NASCAR drivers down
- Improvements to community spaces
- Developers maintaining as much natural space as possible
- Improve the plumbing infrastructures and baseline utilities.
- Sidewalks throughout the city of Oak Ridge to allow residents to walk around the city and be out walking around to various locations
- New construction that is not DR Horton or Ball Homes. Well made starter homes
- Less police force for traffic, increased support of addiction recovery
- Construction of new smaller single family homes
- Expanded mental health facility to help curb homeless population and other mental health issues
- Keep the roads in good condition and when they start a job on the road they finish it before they move on to the next job
- Fill empty retail spaces. Make it more advantageous to lease and maintain property than leave it empty
- Making more public places accessible to the disabled
- Greenways, rails-to-trails, community performing arts center.
- Creation of waterfront development
- Splash pad for children
- Development on Hillside
- Traffic management
- Free Curbs for seniors for parking in their yards
- More expansive Senior activities
- An ongoing, dynamic, grassroots connected community visioning process (especially considering the increasingly rapid rate of change in areas effecting all of our lives).
- Investing in small business owners
- Leading edge infrastructure and scientific activities
- Uniform Wayfinding Signs & Entrance to Oak Ridge Sign
- Road Maintenance and First Responders
- Reduce the amount of “free” programs
- Help with traffic noise for homeowners living adjacent to heavy traffic corridors.
- Support the development of neighborhood businesses and retail like Oak Ridge originally had
- A facility to host conventions and other events
- Public encouragement of development for downtown. Oak Ridgers tried the private route
- Create a vibrant livable downtown
- OR will need to embrace innovative construction concepts

## Survey Demographics

The following demographic questions were optional.

### Q10: How old are you?



**28%**  
65+ yrs old

**35%**  
45-64 yrs old

**32%**  
25-44 yrs old

**3%**  
<24 yrs old

**2%**  
Prefer not to  
answer

### Q11: How do you identify your gender?



**37%**  
Male

**58%**  
Female

**5%**  
Other/Prefer not to  
answer

### Q12: Which of these best describes your race/ethnicity?



**82%**  
White

**1%**  
Hispanic or  
Latino

**2%**  
Black or African  
American

**5%**  
Other

**10%**  
Prefer not to  
answer

### Q13: Do you own or rent your home?



**90%**  
Own Home

**7%**  
Rent Home

**3%**  
Prefer not to  
answer

### Q14: What is your annual household income?



**30%**  
>\$150,00

**23%**  
\$90,000–\$149,999

**15%**  
\$60,000–\$89,999

**10%**  
\$30,000–\$59,999

**3%**  
<\$30,000

**19%**  
Prefer not to  
answer