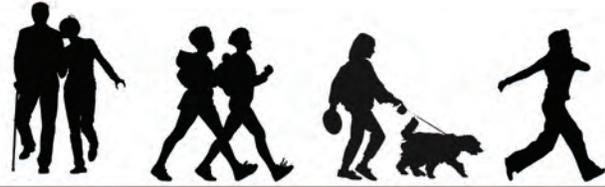


2020



Whitaker Property Master Plan

Town of Oak Ridge

North Carolina



WE RECYCLE





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Town of Oak Ridge wishes to express its sincere appreciation to those entities and individuals, who, in any way, contributed to the creation of the Whitaker Property Master Plan, some of which are identified below. Without the knowledge and expertise of these persons, in both individual and team settings, this document would not be possible.

Oak Ridge Town Council

Ann Schneider – Mayor
Jim Kinneman – Mayor Pro Tem
George McClellan – Councilman
Doug Nodine – Councilman
Martha Pittman - Councilwoman

Oak Ridge Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Tracy Street
Phyllis Anders
Brady Young
John Garrett
Kyle Anders
John Browning
Kyle Anders
Michael Kimel
Maureena Shepherd

Oak Ridge Town Staff

Terry Lannon – Parks and Recreation Director
Bill Bruce – Town Manager
Sandra Smith – Town Clerk
Ashley Royal – Deputy Town Clerk

Consultant

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Section 1

Project Overview

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Town of Oak Ridge recognizes the importance of planning as a means of improving recreation opportunities for all its residents and visitors. As a result, the Oak Ridge Town Council hired McGill Associates to create a Site Master Plan for the property behind Town Hall known as the Whitaker property. The Town has moved forward with the development of the site-specific master plan as part of the initial planning effort.

Public input was critical in understanding user needs and desires for the Park Master Plan. As part of the community outreach, (2) public meetings were held to solicit public opinion about possible improvements to the Whitaker property. During these meetings, participants were asked to identify and prioritize the recreation facilities and programs that were desired in the community. Oak Ridge residents were engaged in open conversations concerning their goals and concerns.

A Parks and Recreation Survey was distributed throughout the community to gather additional input for future facility needs and programming elements. A reoccurring theme among the study findings was the need for exercise opportunities, a place to share the outdoors with pet dogs, picnic opportunities, and support facilities, such as restrooms and ample parking.

McGill Associates and Town Recreation Staff worked with the Steering Committee to further analyze and evaluate the study findings along with other data collected throughout the planning process. These meetings highlighted the needs of both the community and the Parks and Recreation Department. Final recommendations and conceptual designs, which were drawn from these collaborative efforts, will be discussed further in this document in detail.

1.2 TOWN HISTORY

Oak Ridge boasts a rich history of agrarian culture and is known for such gems as the 250-year-old 'Old Mill of Guilford' and Oak Ridge Military Academy.

According to the Town of Oak Ridge Historic District Design Guidelines Handbook, in 1926, Thomas Early Whitaker described the setting of his beloved Oak Ridge Institute (now Oak Ridge Military Academy) as "in the hill country of northwest Guilford, 1,040 feet above sea level; noted for its healthfulness; accessible to the cities of Piedmont North Carolina; ... a rural community of law-abiding, progressive citizens."



More than a hundred years ago, Oak Ridge's J.A. Holt, the then principal of the Institute, said Oak Ridge was "finely wooded and well-watered with the finest of freestone water, and commanding an extensive view of mountain ranges and foothills. The Blue Ridge, the Pilot, Sauratown, Moore's Knob, the Pinnacles of Dan, all loom up ... within a range of fifty miles. The fine oak groves and natural shaded lawns make it an ideal place for a residence. "With affectionate pride, he concluded: "It has been called 'God's Country.'"



1.3 PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY AND HISTORIC SITES

The Town of Oak Ridge takes pride in their unique character and the historic places that have survived to tell the story of this Town. The Oak Ridge Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is charged with preserving history by providing review and guidance concerning exterior changes to existing buildings and the character of proposed new structures.

It should be noted that both the existing Oak Ridge Town Park and proposed park expansion on the Whitaker property directly behind Town Hall and along Oak Ridge Road exist within Oak Ridge's Historic District. New development on this site may require adherence to appropriate Town ordinances including review by the HPC.

The history of the Whitaker Property is one of agricultural use. The property now known as the Whitaker property was originally part of a larger 235-acre farm that had once been owned by the Benbow family. The Benbows were an influential local family in the early years of Oak Ridge and were instrumental in the development of several local institutions including the Oak Ridge Military Academy. The land has been in continuous use as farmland at least as early as 1902, yielding tobacco, corn and small grains. The farm's central location and bucolic landscape make it a cherished and easily identifiable feature in the Town Core of Oak Ridge. Preserving the property as **open space** and parkland was a priority in the decision of the Whitakers to sell the property to the Town in 2018.

1.4 GROWING COMMUNITY

The Town of Oak Ridge portrays a small, family friendly community with a proximity between Greensboro to the east and Winston-Salem to the west. The North Carolina State Demographer's Office puts the 2017 Oak Ridge population at 7,377. Steady growth and development reflect the larger trends for the State.



The mild climate, and rich history make Oak Ridge a natural choice for new residents looking for a strong small-town environment near larger employment opportunities. Population projections for Oak Ridge indicate there could be 8,218 residents by 2029. This growth points to the need to keep up with continuing demand for recreation amenities and facilities.

- END OF SECTION -



Section 2 Site Analysis



The Whitaker Property is centrally located in the heart of Oak Ridge.

General

The site of the Whitaker property is in the central-west part of Oak Ridge. The main vehicular access to the property is on Scoggins Rd on the north end of the property. The park is approximately 60 acres in size and is located within the historic district of Oak Ridge. The site is also located within short walking distance to Town Hall and Oak Ridge Elementary School. Oak Ridge Town Park is within proximity and

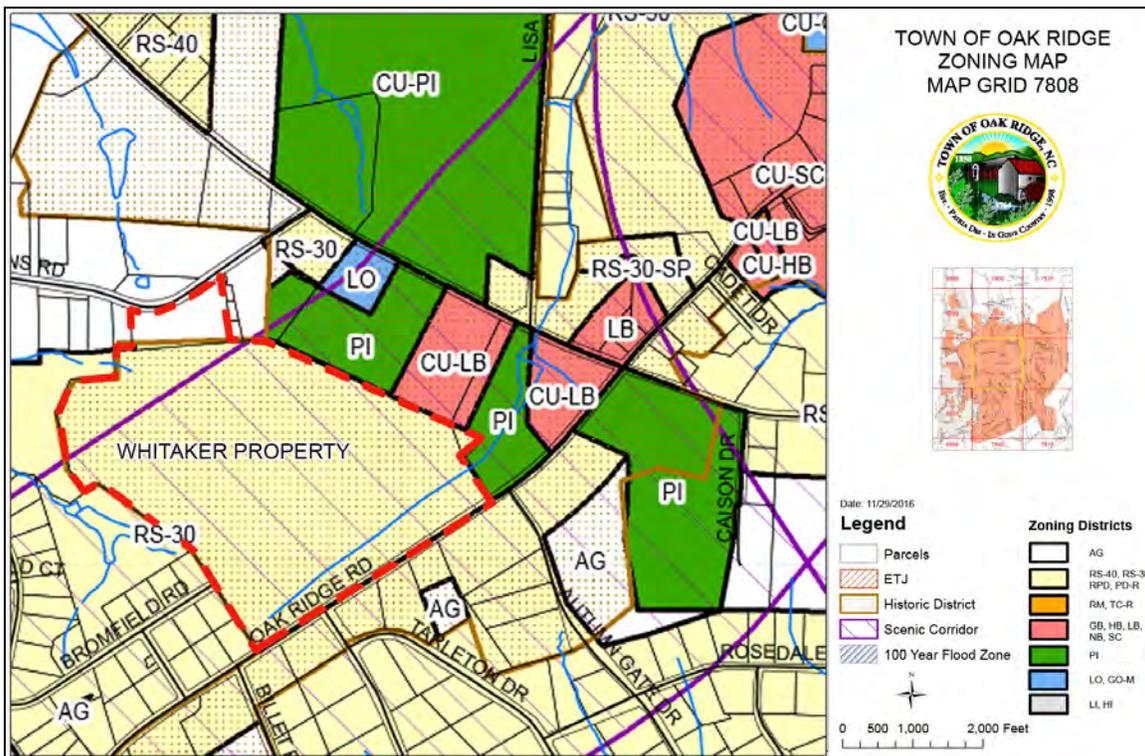


the Town has expressed the desire to link the two parks via off-street pedestrian methods.

The existing property is predominately **open space** surrounded by mixed woodland and was formerly used for agricultural purposes. A small gravel driveway leading to the former farmhouse structures currently exists on Scoggins Road.

Zoning

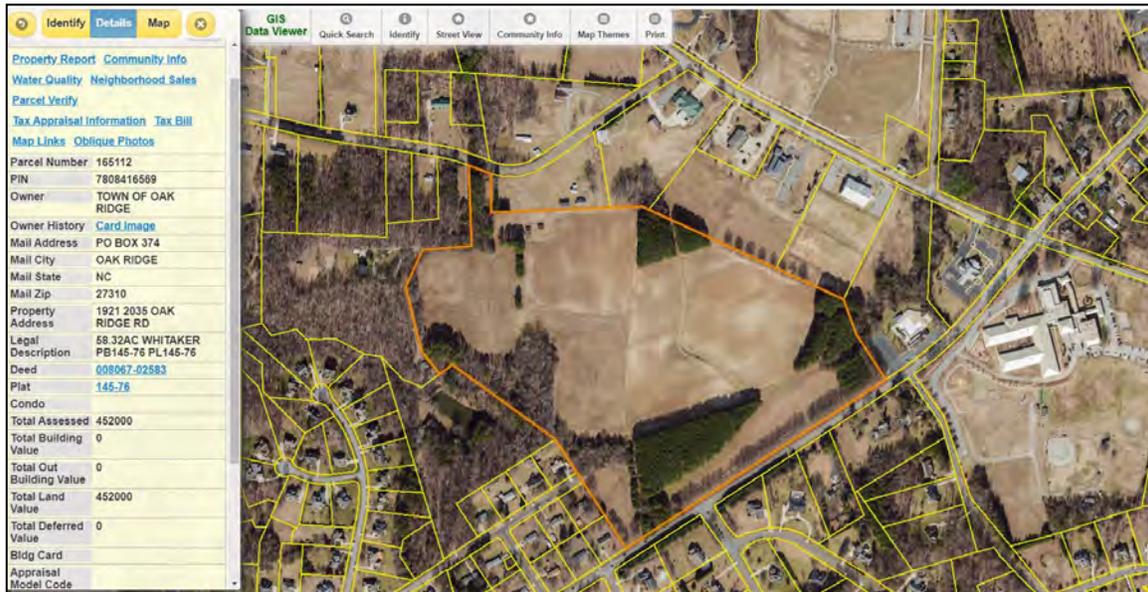
The site is zoned as RS-30 residential with a small strip of agricultural (AG) zoning on the north. Neither of these zoning designations limits recreational use of the land. The zone comprising the Whitaker property is surrounded by other RS-30 and AG properties with two PI (Public Institutional - intended for mid-sized and large-sized public, semipublic and institutional uses) and one CU-LB (Conditional Use – Limited Business - intended to accommodate moderate intensity shopping and services close to residential areas) parcel to the north. There are no land use conflicts that would prohibit recreational development of this property.





Surrounding Land Use

The surrounding properties mainly consist of residential homes, important civic properties and undeveloped land. The properties to the north consist of a US Post Office, Town fire station and Oak Ridge Town Hall. A private fitness center and Oak Ridge Swim Club are also adjacent on the north end of the site. The south/southeast side is bordered by Oak Ridge Road across the street from Oak Ridge Plantation neighborhood and nearby Oak Ridge Elementary School. The eastern border is surrounded by woods that buffer the park from surrounding residential areas.



Development of the Whitaker property would serve as an important hub of activity in Oak Ridge and would link to several other community destinations.

Utilities

The Park is served by public utilities provided by Duke Energy. Water and sewer for this property will be provided by community well(s) and on-site wastewater treatment.



Existing Structures

The site was once a farm and the original home, garage and barn are still located off Scoggins Road. The garage will be retained for use as a maintenance shop while the home and barn will be removed.



Original home and outbuildings from when the Whitaker Property was a farm.

Natural Features

Topography

The topography of the land at Oak Ridge Park is generally flat to gently sloping. The site drains predominantly to the south and west.



Picturesque land that reflects the history and traditions of Oak Ridge.



Vegetation

Vegetation on the site consists largely of turf grass with clover (Fescue, Clover mix). The property is surrounded by a mixed hardwoods (Oaks) and pine forest.



Soils

Soils found on the site consist mainly of Casville sandy loam (CaB), Clifford sandy clay loam (CIB2), and Nathalie sandy loam (NaC). Other smaller soils present include Clifford sandy loam (CkC, CkB). Sandy loams are soil types normally made up of sand along with varying amounts of silt and clay. These are soils typically well suited to farming and gardens. The soils may limit where septic drainage fields can be installed but generally are only somewhat limiting for the development of roads and don't pose major limitations for construction of buildings with basements.

Wetlands

Site analysis revealed that the site does not consist of wetland areas. A drainage pond lies off property near the western boundary of the site.



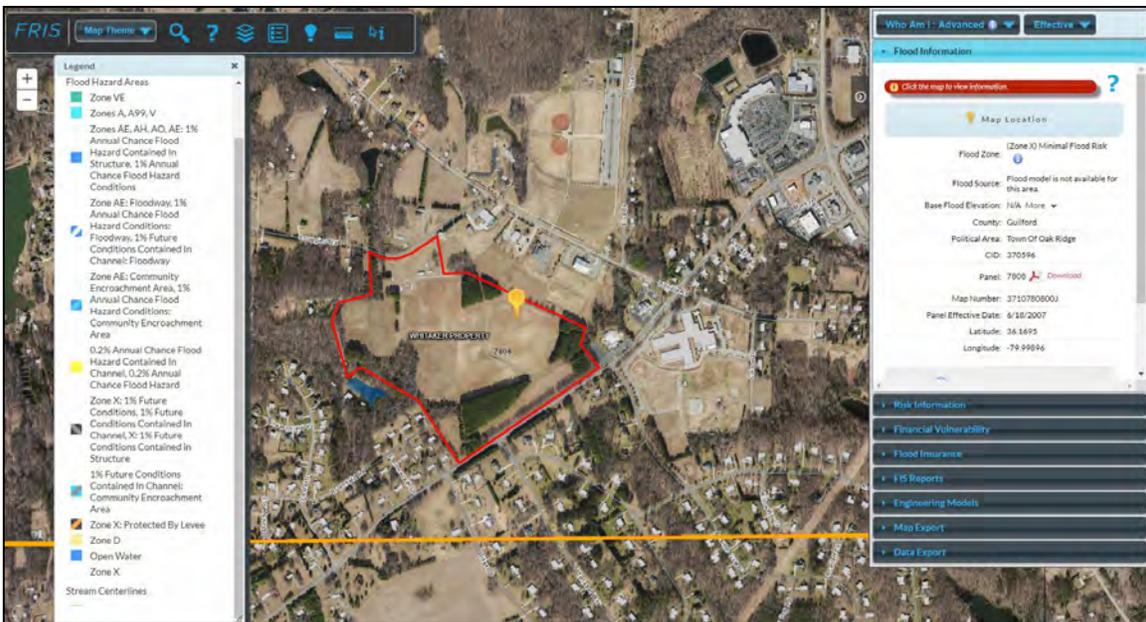
Drainage

Due to the sandy loam soils of the proposed Oak Ridge Town Park site, the site generally does not have any significant drainage problems. According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service soil report for Whitaker Property the site is generally well drained.

Flooding Hazard

According to the North Carolina Flood Risk Information System (FRIS) the Whitaker property site is within the Flood Hazard Area “X Zone”. X zones are areas with minimal flood risk.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Administration, these are areas listed as “X unshaded” are of minimal flood hazard, usually depicted on flood insurance risk maps as above the 500-year flood level. Zone X is the area determined to be outside the 500-year flood and protected by levee from 100-year flood.



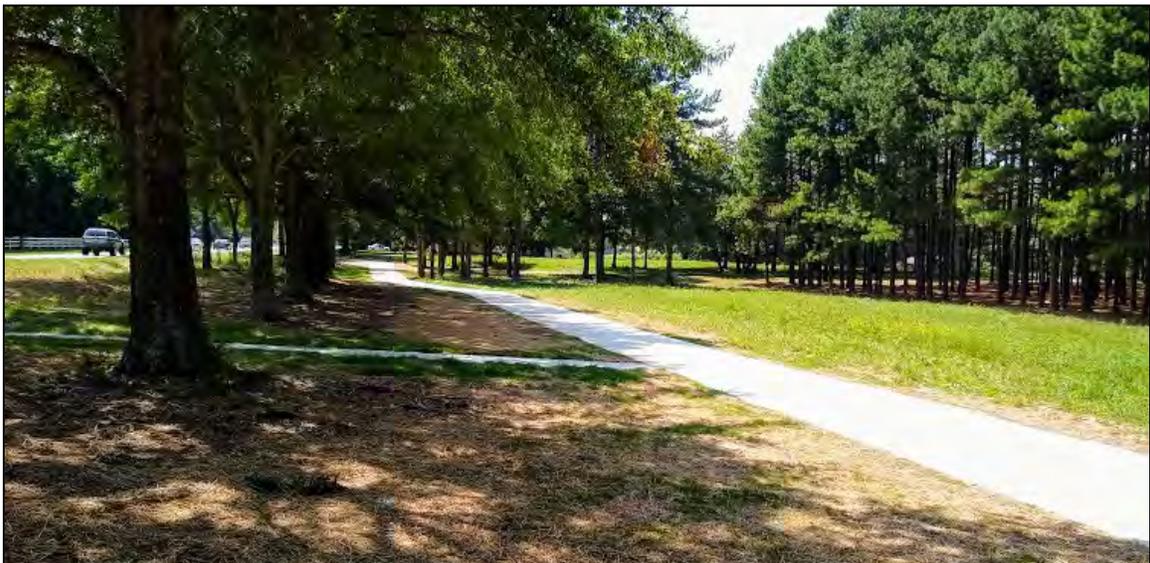
According to NC FRIS this property is not in a high-risk flood zone.



Other Whitaker Property Park Existing Condition Photographs



Stands of pines have been strategically preserved to enhance the environment and natural appeal of the site.



Recent sidewalk on the south end of the property along Hwy. 50/Oak Ridge Road.



- END OF SECTION -



Section 3 Community Input & Findings

Community Involvement

To facilitate community input, two public meetings and two focus group meetings were conducted during the planning process. The public workshops were held at existing community events on June 1st and August 21st, 2019. The public meetings, along with the community



survey, were advertised by the Town on their website and social media. The promotion of the public meeting and survey was also made available through word of mouth and project information cards that were distributed at different locations throughout Oak Ridge. These meetings were conducted so that residents would be able to voice their opinions on the topic of recreation. Approximately 237 participants attended the meetings and provided much needed feedback.

The community meetings were held at two local events. The first was during Ridgefest on Saturday June 1st, 2019 from 4:30-8:00 p.m. The second meeting was held during Oak Ridge Elementary School's Open House on August 21st, 2019 from 5:00 p.m-7:00 p.m. The information shared included mapping and visual preference exercises as well as open dialog and question/answer opportunities. The meetings encouraged attendees to interact and discuss their experiences with the Oak Ridge Recreation system in an open setting that promoted opportunities to share comments, see amenity examples, and ask questions. This is a crucial step to ensure that all who want to are able to be heard, voice their concerns, and receive clarification.

Focus group meetings were with Oak Ridge Youth Association, Oak Ridge Merchants Association. These groups were met with separately and discussion included their ideas for how the future of recreation may look in Oak Ridge. Each group was instrumental in encouraging public participation in general public meetings and survey participation.

During the planning for the Whitaker property, the COVID-19 disease developed and efforts to maintain social distancing added a new challenge to the process. As traditional methods of public outreach such as in-person public meetings were being cancelled, Oak Ridge used digital media to finalize their public input data collection. The results of this effort will be explained later in this section.



First Community Meeting - Saturday, June 1, 2019

The first community meeting was held at the Oak Ridge Ridgefest event. Approximately 95 participants engaged in open conversation related to their opinions on the state of the existing recreation system including facilities and programs as well as their concerns and questions. Written notes were used to record participant comments and opinions. Support for expanding recreation opportunities in Town was a common theme of discussion.

A visual preference survey of various park amenities gave participants the opportunity to place a sticker next to the amenities they felt would be good additions to the town park system. Each participant was limited to two stickers. Two large maps provided participants with the existing locations of each of the Recreation System's existing facilities and other destinations such as private facilities and schools. Participants were asked to provide insight into where potential new recreation facilities might be located. These boards gave everyone an opportunity to share their opinions and thoughts to create a list of hopeful changes to the existing recreation system.

Common concerns that were addressed included:

- The need for connectivity between Town Park and neighboring communities via safe pedestrian routes
- Desire for more trails and preservation of existing open space
- Desire for a Splash Pad
- Desire for tennis and basketball courts

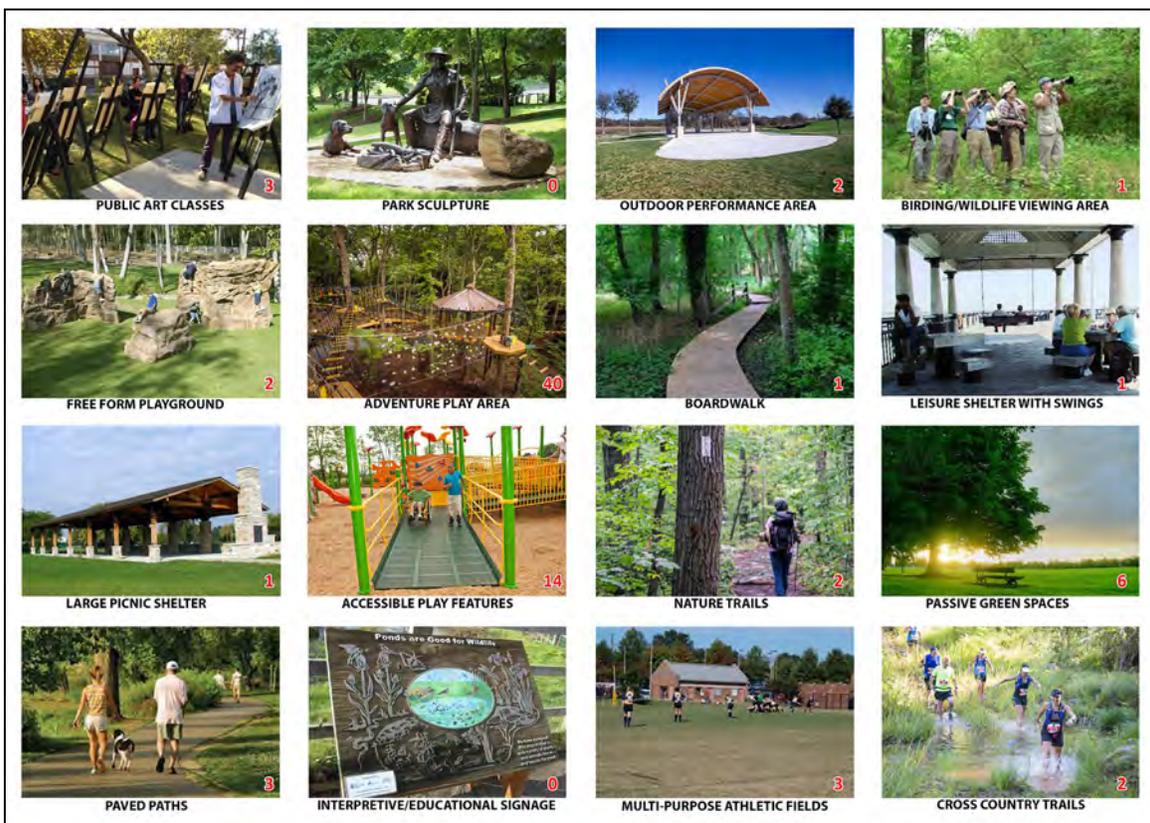
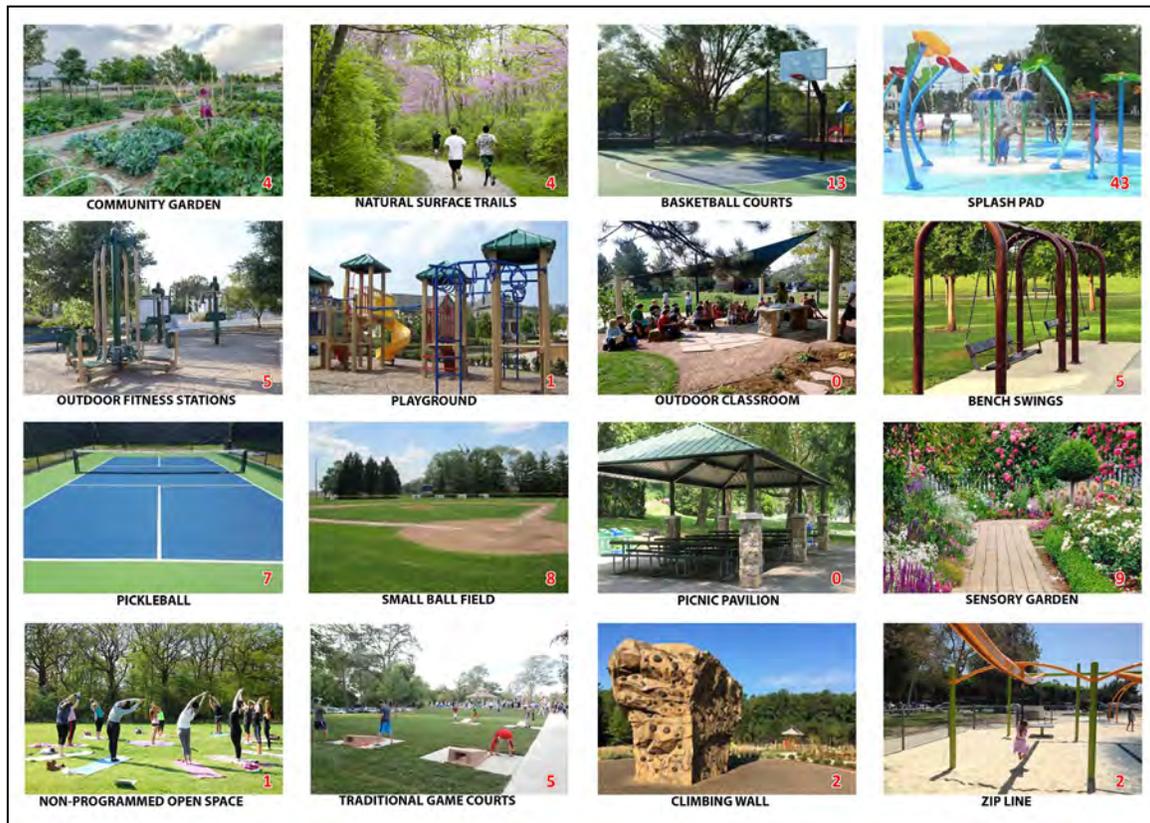
Meeting 1 - Visual Preference Exercise Results

The following is a compilation of the individual votes for each image presented on the meeting preference boards. (See Appendix B, Park Facility Preferences). Participants were asked to choose two amenities that they would most like to see offered by Oak Ridge's Parks and Recreation system. They were each given two yellow sticker dots and asked to place them next to an image that best correlated with amenities they would like to see. It is clear from the selections that the participants want facilities that provide spaces for both passive and active recreation.

Participants of the first meeting predominantly preferred the Splash Pad and Adventure Play Area in that order but following at third was Accessible Play Features and at fourth was Basketball Courts.

See meeting 1 visual preference results next page.

Town of Oak Ridge Parks & Recreation
Whitaker Property Master Plan





Second Community Meeting – Wednesday, August 21, 2019

The second community meeting was held at Oak Ridge Elementary School's Open House event. Participants engaged in open conversation related to their opinions on the state of the existing recreation system including facilities and programs as well as their concerns and questions. Comment cards and large writing boards were used to capture participant comments and opinions. A visual preference survey of various park amenities gave participants the opportunity to place a sticker next to the amenities that they felt would be good additions to Oak Ridge's recreation system. Each participant was limited to two stickers. Two large maps provided participants with the existing locations of the nearby recreation facilities and other destinations such as private facilities and schools. Participants were asked to provide insight into where potential new recreation facilities might be located. These boards gave everyone an opportunity to share their opinions and thoughts and help form a list of desired changes to the existing recreation system.

Common concerns that were recorded were similar to the first community meeting and included:

- Hope for additional trails and sidewalks throughout town
- Splash pad, adventure type play amenities and basketball courts
- Inclusion of additional multipurpose fields
- There were many comments related to the need for more playgrounds and a public pool. When asked why a pool, many participants noted not being satisfied with overcrowding and costs of the nearby private swimming pool.

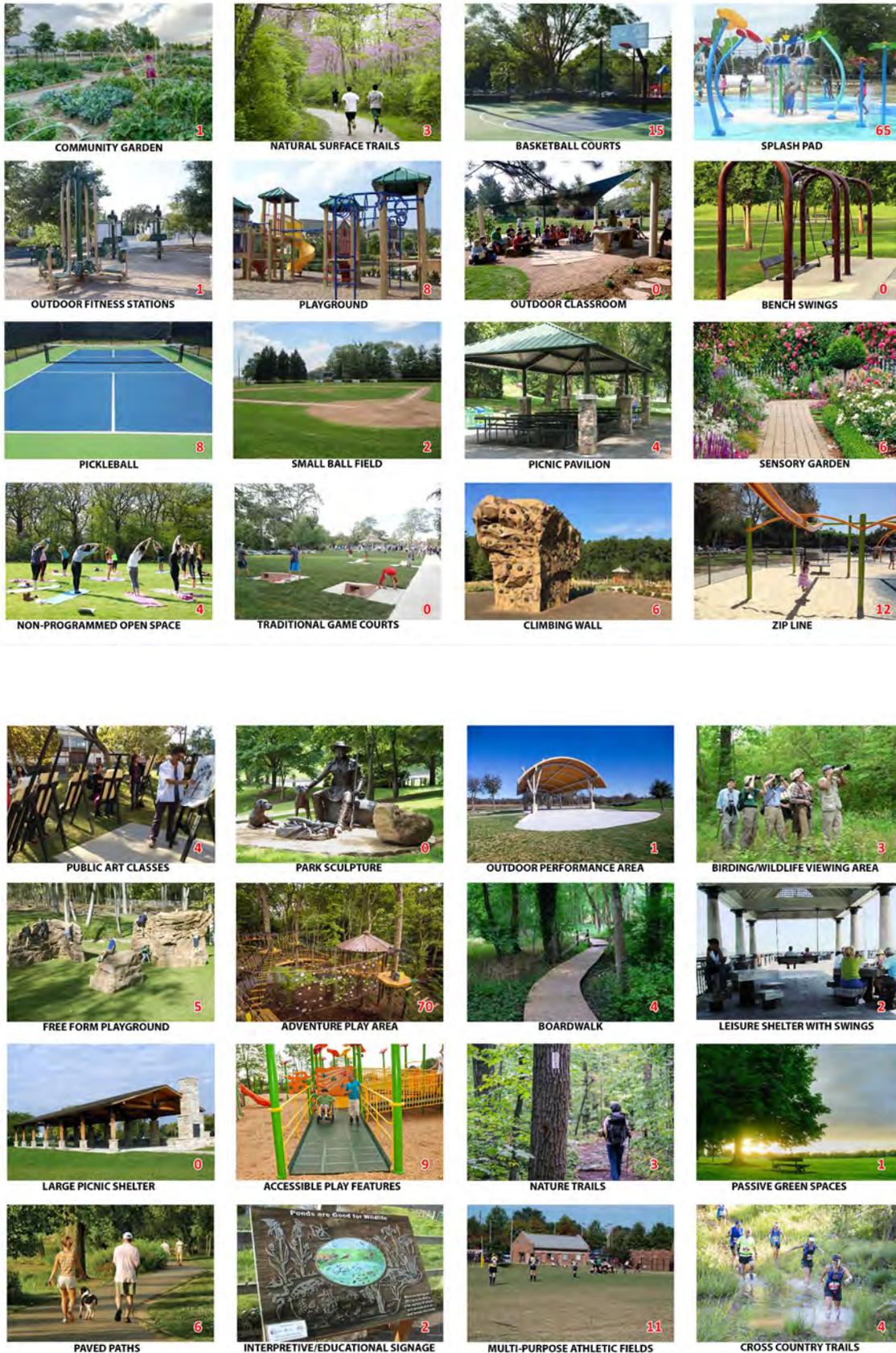
Meeting 2 – Visual Preference Exercise Results

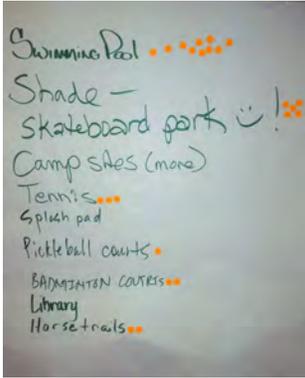
The following is a compilation of the individual votes for each image presented on the second meeting preference boards. (See Appendix B, Park Facility Preferences). Participants were asked to choose two amenities that they would most like to see offered by Oak Ridge's Parks and Recreation system. They were each given two yellow sticker dots and asked to place them next to an image that best correlated with amenities they would like to see. It is clear from the selections that the participants want facilities that provide spaces for both passive and active recreation.

Participants of the second meeting predominantly preferred the Adventure Play Area and Splash Pad in that order but following at third was Basketball Courts and at fourth was the Zip Line play feature.

See meeting 2 visual preference results on next page.

Town of Oak Ridge Parks & Recreation Whitaker Property Master Plan





In order to capture additional ideas not represented via the images shown on the visual preference boards, a large pad of paper was set up for participants to add other desired amenities. Participants had the option to add their vote sticker next to these options as well. Interestingly, a swimming pool was mentioned by at least ten residents, prompting discussion about a town pool since a private pool is already available in Town.

Overall, the combined responses from the two community meetings for the visual preference exercise included these top 10 preferences (with ties).

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1) Adventure Play Areas - 110 | 2) Splash Pad - 108 |
| 3) Basketball Courts - 28 | 4) Accessible Play Features – 23 |
| 5) Pickleball (TIE) - 15 | 6) Sensory Garden (TIE) - 15 |
| 7) Zipline (TIE) – 14 | 8) Multi-Purpose Athletic Fields (TIE) - 14 |
| 9) Small Ball Field - 10 | 10) Playground (TIE) - 9 |
| 11) Paved Paths (TIE) – 9 | |





Community Survey

The active participation of residents in the Town of Oak Ridge is crucial in developing a both the Town's Comprehensive Master Plan and understanding what amenities, facilities and programming best reflects the true needs of the Town. With this in mind, community input was solicited throughout the entire planning process. Together with Town

guidance, the project team created a public survey to gather information concerning the existing and future needs of the Town's recreation system. A project marketing card was developed to encourage awareness of the project and provide both a web address to the community survey as well as a QR code that interested individuals could use via smartphone/mobile devices to reach the online survey and provide their input. Cards were made available through Town Hall, Parks and Recreation, and they were distributed at all community meetings and focus group meetings. Members of each meeting volunteered to take stacks of cards to distribute throughout the community.



To gather further public input and reach the broadest cross-section of Town residents, a printed version of the Master Plan surveys was also made available at the town meetings and mailed out to residents using a Town provided mailing list. Over 2,600 surveys were mailed. The following sub-section summarizes the results of the community survey (See Appendix C for a summary of survey results for both the mail out and online based surveys.

The Town received a total of 845 completed surveys representing about 1,788 residents. These results included both the survey handouts, online survey, and mail out survey results. The surveys provided data collection from all persons in the household of the survey respondent. The survey data collected was a representative cross section of the Town of Oak Ridge in terms of age and household size.

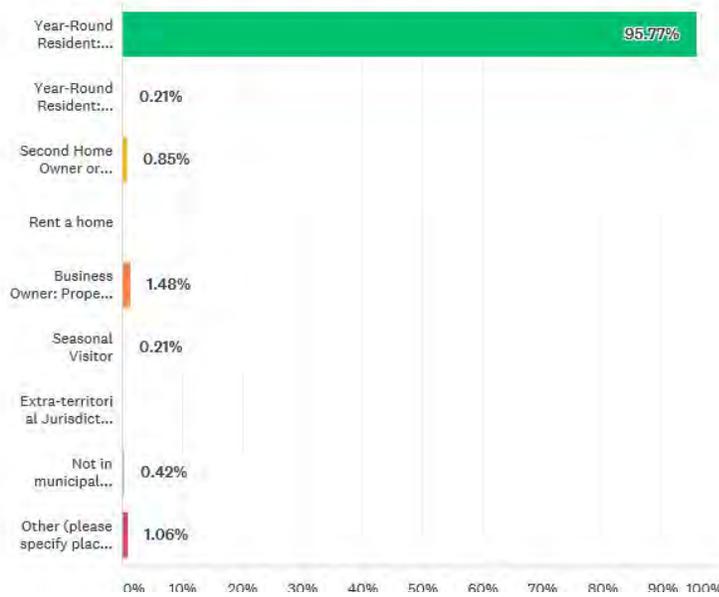
The surveys were designed to discover resident's needs and desires for recreation opportunities. It included a section where respondents rated their use of existing facilities both within the town limits and outside the town limits. The survey instructed respondents to rank the programs and facilities in order of importance to their household and to list the facilities they would like to see added to the Oak Ridge parks and recreation system. Results of the survey are as follows:



Town of Oak Ridge Parks and Recreation Master Plan Survey

Which statements describes your relationship to the Town of Oak Ridge?

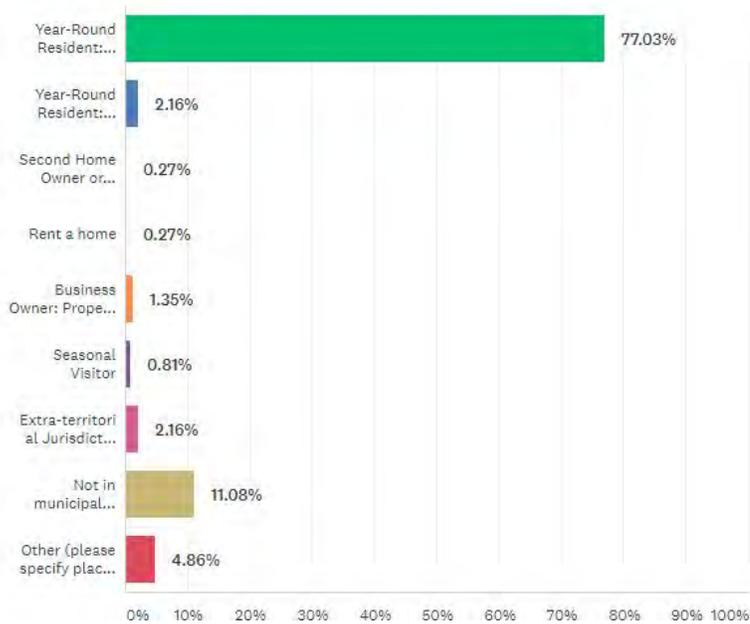
Answered: 473 Skipped: 1



Q1: Mail-out Survey

Which statements describes your relationship to the Town of Oak Ridge?

Answered: 370 Skipped: 2

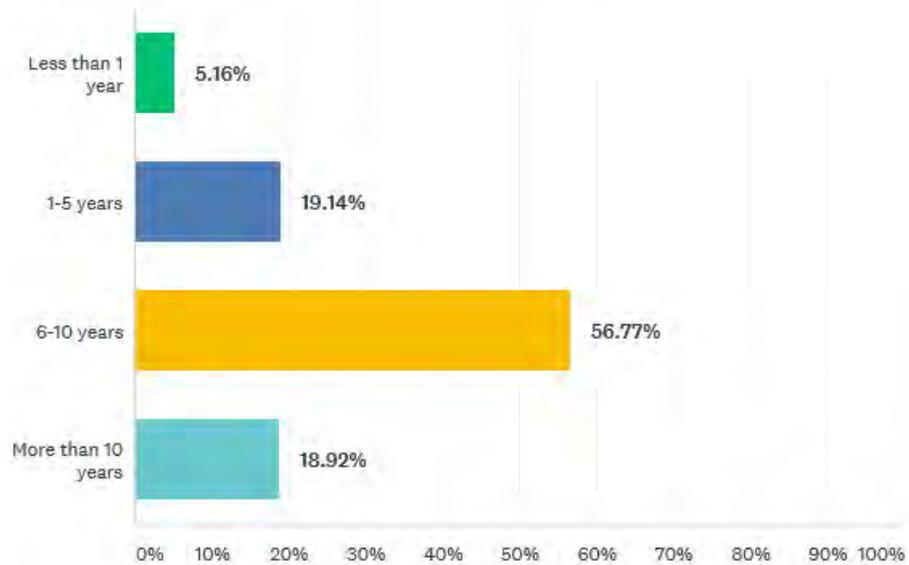


Q1: Online Survey



How long have you lived in the Town of Oak Ridge?

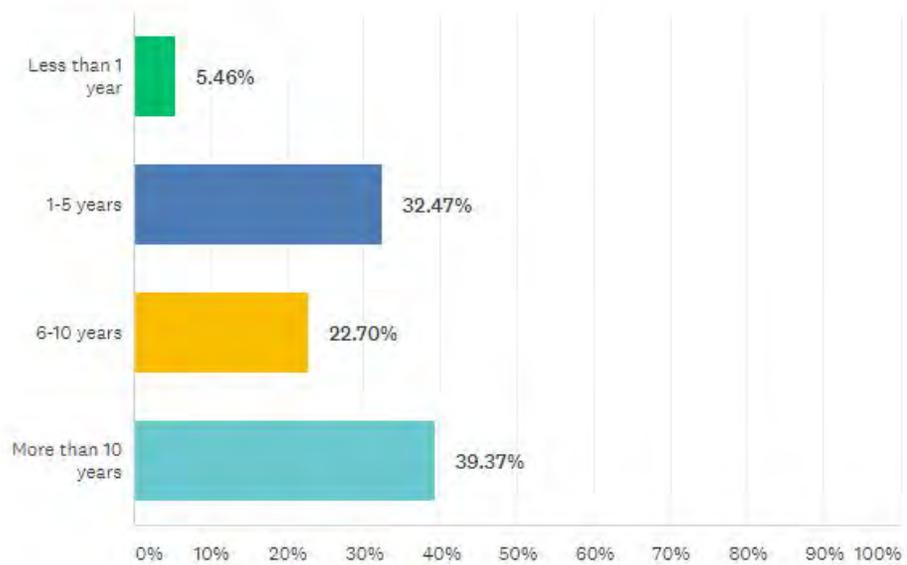
Answered: 465 Skipped: 9



Q2: Mail-out Survey

How long have you lived in the Town of Oak Ridge?

Answered: 348 Skipped: 24

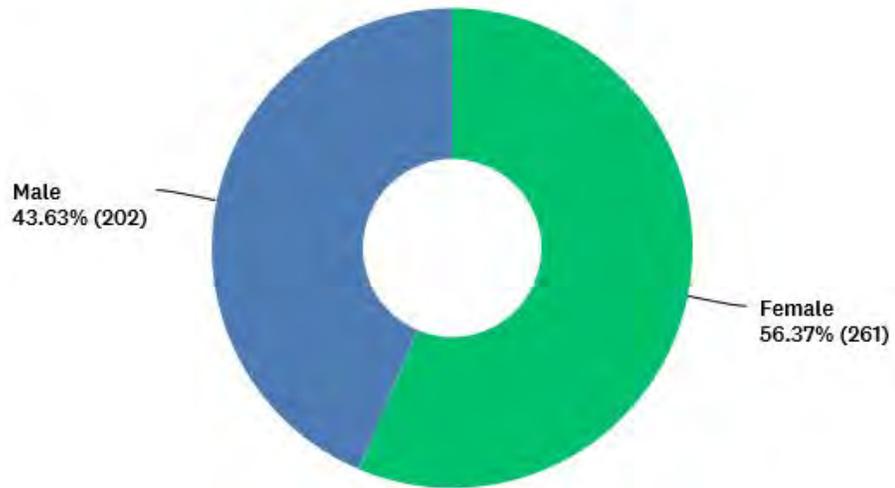


Q2: Online Survey



Please provide your gender:

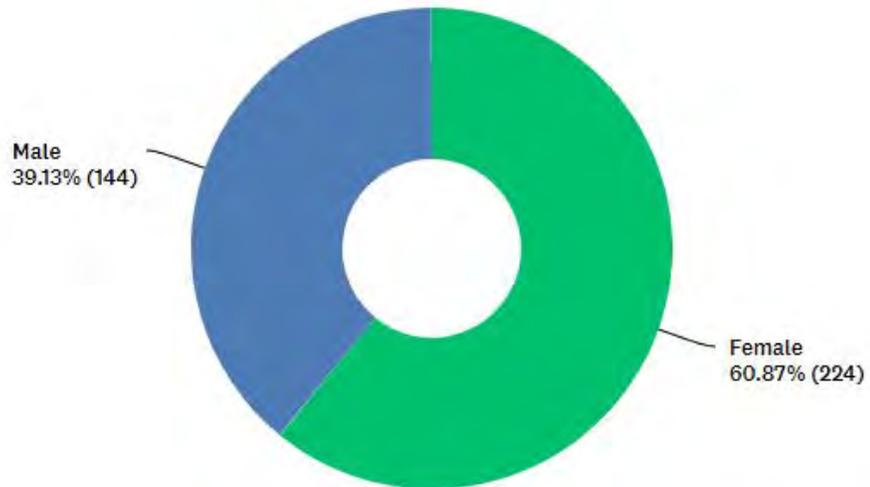
Answered: 463 Skipped: 11



Q3: Mail-out Survey

Please provide your gender:

Answered: 368 Skipped: 4



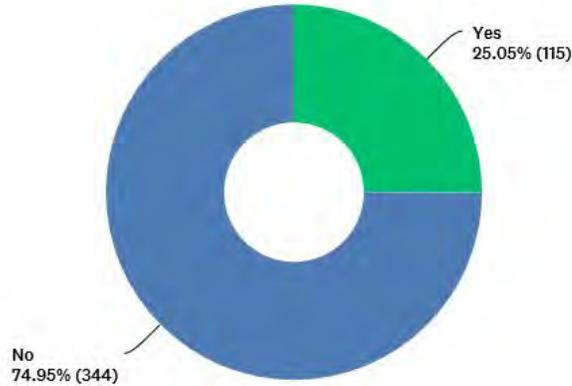
Q3: Online Survey



General Responses

Does a child in your family currently participate, or is likely to participate in the next three years, on any Oak Ridge Youth Association (ORYA) athletic team?

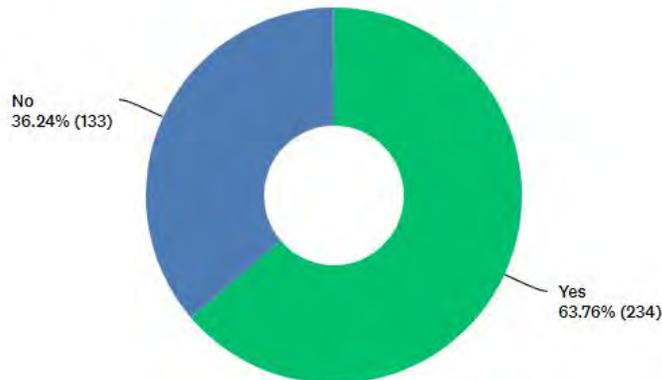
Answered: 459 Skipped: 15



Q4: Mail-out Survey

Does a child in your family currently participate, or is likely to participate in the next three years, on any Oak Ridge Youth Association (ORYA) athletic team?

Answered: 367 Skipped: 5



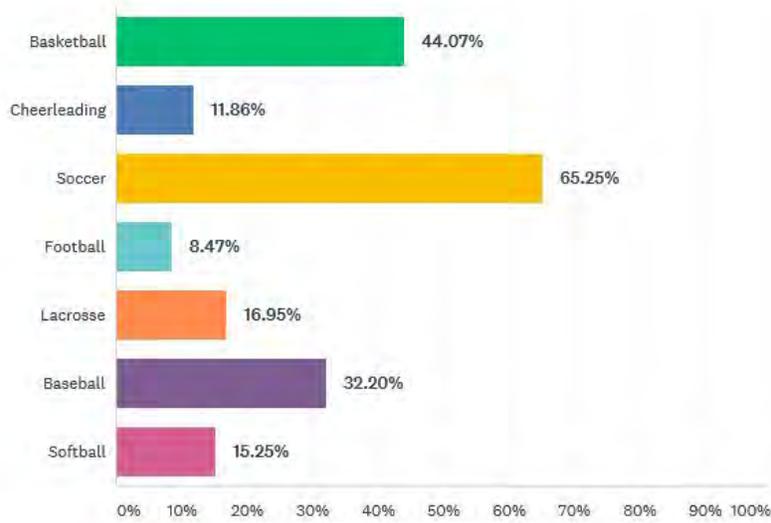
Q4: Online Survey

Q5: Mail-out Survey



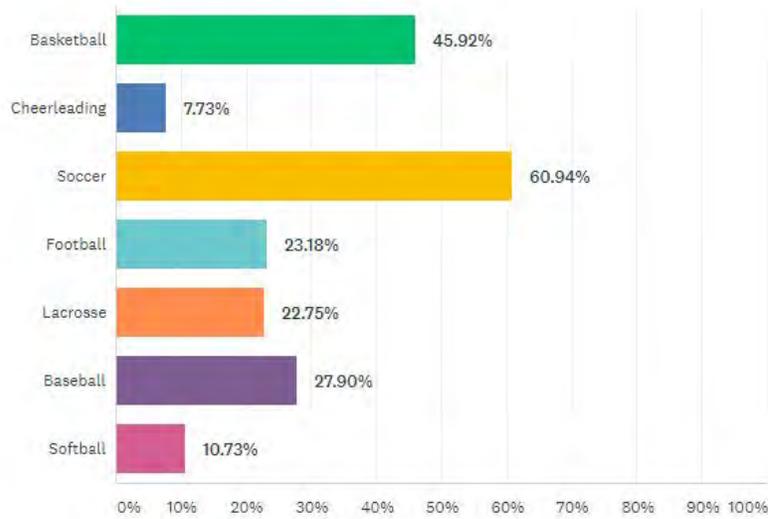
If you answered 'yes', with what athletic team does your child participate?

Answered: 118 Skipped: 356



If you answered 'yes', with what athletic team does your child participate?

Answered: 233 Skipped: 139

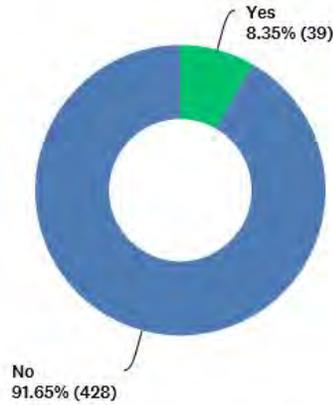


Q5: Online Survey



Do you or members of your immediate family, require special assistance facilitates (e.g. walkers, wheel chairs, handicapped tables or swings) when using Oak Ridge Town Park?

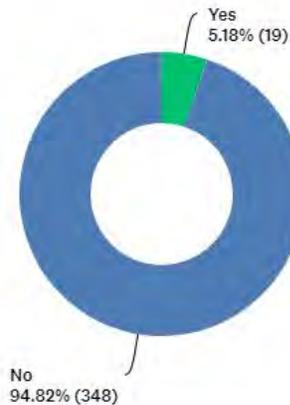
Answered: 467 Skipped: 7



Q6: Mail-out Survey

Do you or members of your immediate family, require special assistance facilitates (e.g. walkers, wheel chairs, handicapped tables or swings) when using Oak Ridge Town Park?

Answered: 367 Skipped: 5

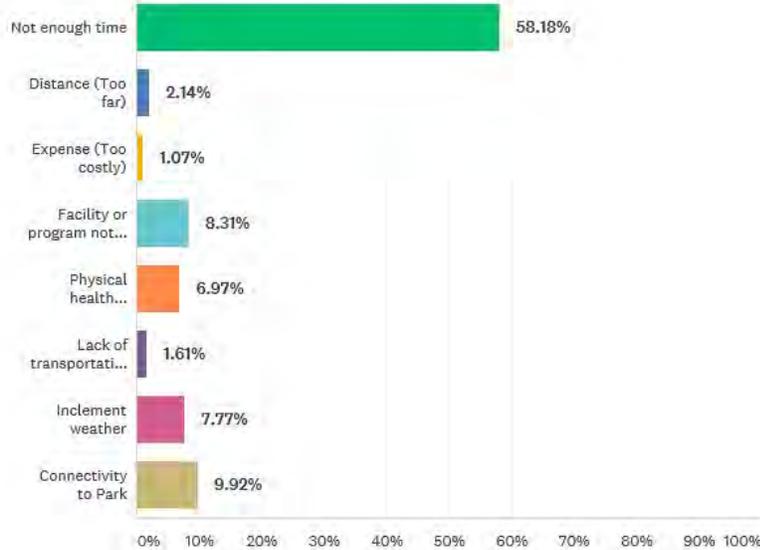


Q6: Online Survey



What is the greatest barrier to your household's regular use of public parks or recreational facilities?

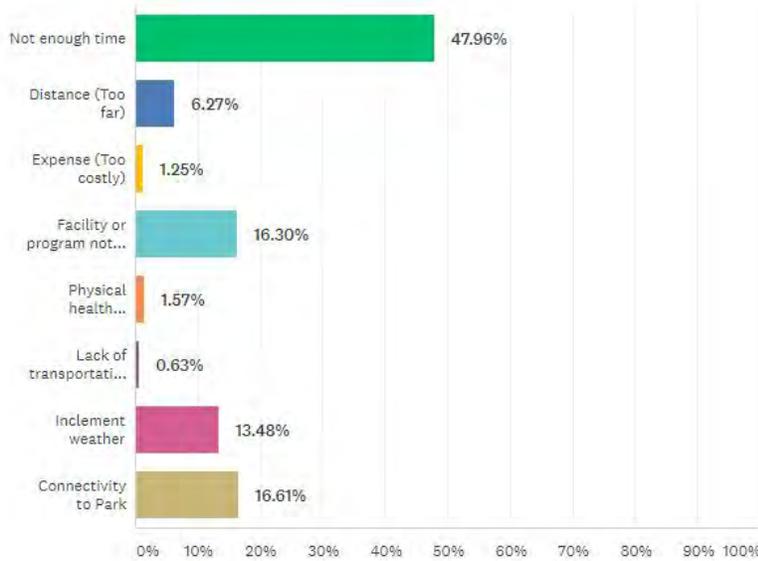
Answered: 373 Skipped: 101



Q7: Mail-out Survey

What is the greatest barrier to your household's regular use of public parks or recreational facilities?

Answered: 319 Skipped: 53



Q7: Online Survey



Select the number of persons in your household including yourself who are in the age brackets below:

Answered: 434 Skipped: 40

▼ 46-60 years old	197
▼ 61 and over	171
▼ 36-45 years old	110
▼ 6-12 years old	98
▼ 20-35 years old	96
▼ 13-16 years old	83
▼ 17-19 years old	58
▼ 5 years and younger	48

Q8: Mail-out Survey

Select the number of persons in your household including yourself who are in the age brackets below:

Answered: 372 Skipped: 0

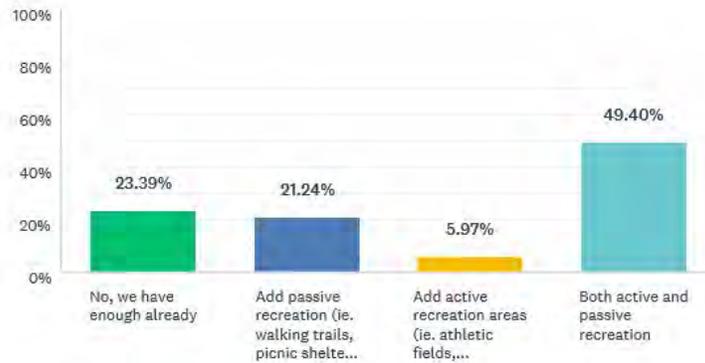
▼ 6-12 years old	208
▼ 36-45 years old	181
▼ 46-60 years old	147
▼ 13-16 years old	105
▼ 5 years and younger	102
▼ 20-35 years old	84
▼ 61 and over	56
▼ 17-19 years old	47

Q8: Online Survey



Would you support adding additional recreation opportunities in Oak Ridge?

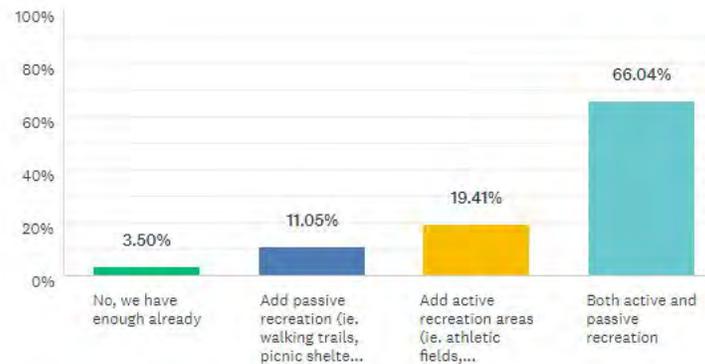
Answered: 419 Skipped: 55



Q9: Mail-out Survey

Would you support adding additional recreation opportunities in Oak Ridge?

Answered: 371 Skipped: 1



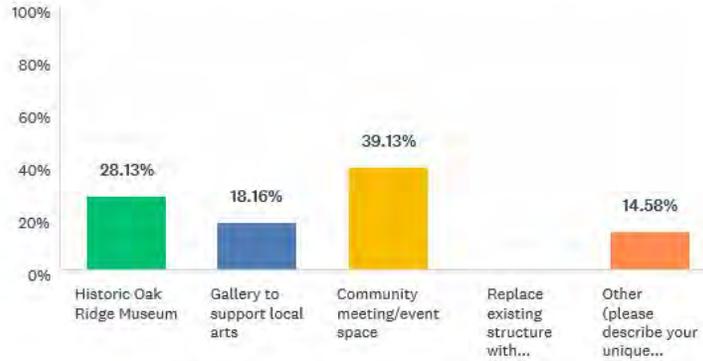
Q9: Online Survey

The mail-out and online survey respondents largely agree that both active and passive recreation opportunities are desired. The older demographic predominantly represented by the mail-out survey group reported feelings there were enough recreation opportunities. Families with children predominantly represented by the online survey desired adding more recreation areas. These responses appear to reflect stage of life differences between the predominant demographic groups represented in each survey.



Please select potential uses from the list below for the white house (life estate at Oak Ridge Town Park) on the corner of Lisa Drive and Linville Road:

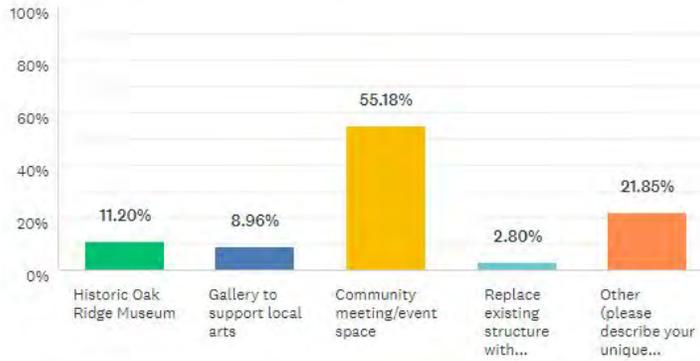
Answered: 391 Skipped: 83



Q10: Mail-out Survey

Please select potential uses from the list below for the white house (life estate at Oak Ridge Town Park) on the corner of Lisa Drive and Linville Road:

Answered: 357 Skipped: 15



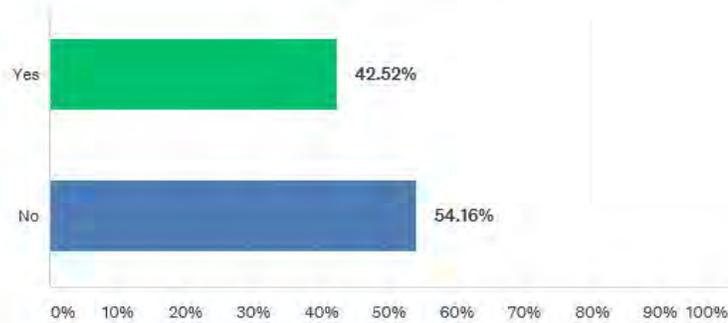
Q10: Online Survey

Survey participants agree that the best use for the white house on Lisa Drive is a community meeting/event space. This type of use would not preclude historic/educational signage components or gallery exhibitions. Other notions included demolition or replacement of the structure.



Within the last year have you needed to travel out of the Town of Oak Ridge to use a recreation facility or program? (excluding vacation trips)

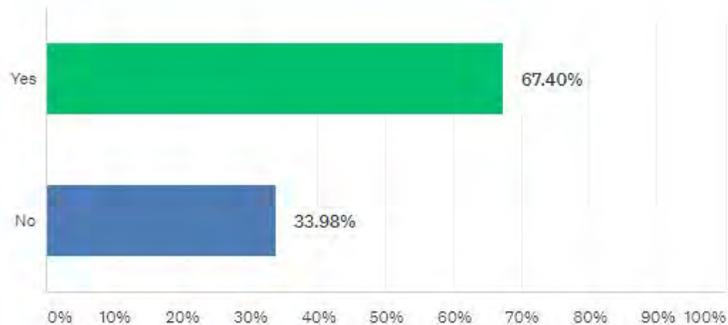
Answered: 421 Skipped: 53



Q11: Mail-out Survey

Within the last year have you needed to travel out of the Town of Oak Ridge to use a recreation facility or program? (excluding vacation trips)

Answered: 362 Skipped: 10



Q11: Online Survey



Check below how frequently you or others in your household have visited the following facilities in the past year.

Answered: 426 Skipped: 48

Walking Paths/Trails	39.00%	163
Biking Trails	9.14%	32
Baseball/Softball Fields	6.96%	24
Playgrounds	16.39%	60
Soccer/Football/Lacrosse Fields	14.45%	51
Amphitheater	7.50%	27
Bark Park	5.93%	21
Picnic Shelters	5.69%	21

Q12: Mail-out Survey

Check below how frequently you or others in your household have visited the following facilities in the past year.

Answered: 370 Skipped: 2

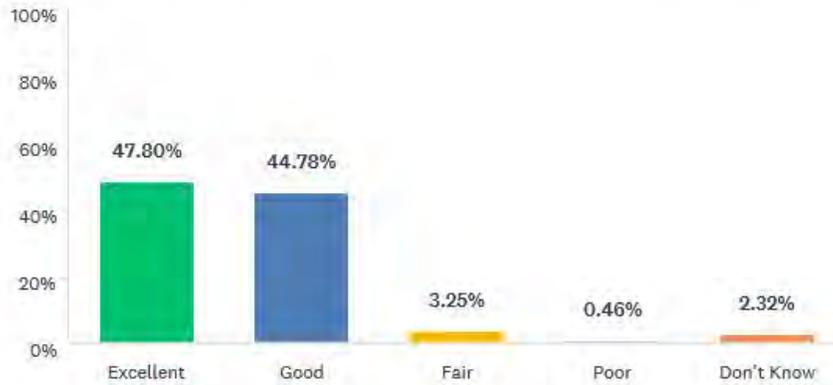
Walking Paths/Trails	39.24%	144
Soccer/Football/Lacrosse Fields	39.72%	143
Playgrounds	35.73%	129
Baseball/Softball Fields	19.43%	68
Picnic Shelters	12.01%	43
Biking Trails	9.71%	34
Amphitheater	8.50%	30
Bark Park	8.22%	29

Q12: Online Survey



Overall, how do you rate the Existing Oak Ridge Town Park?

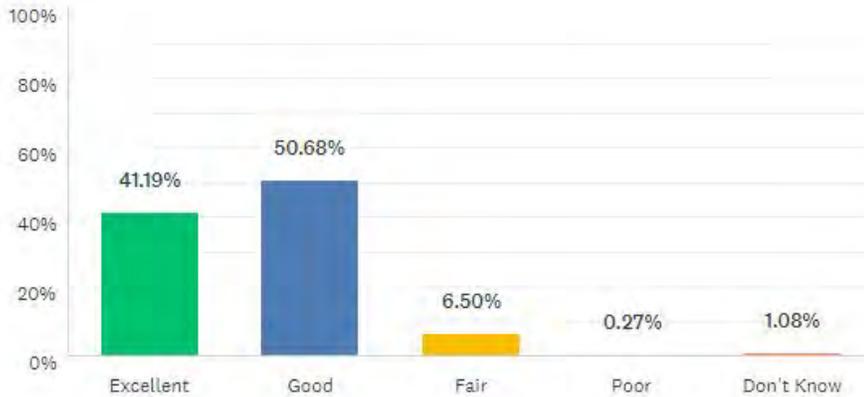
Answered: 431 Skipped: 43



Q13: Mail-out Survey

Overall, how do you rate the Existing Oak Ridge Town Park?

Answered: 369 Skipped: 3



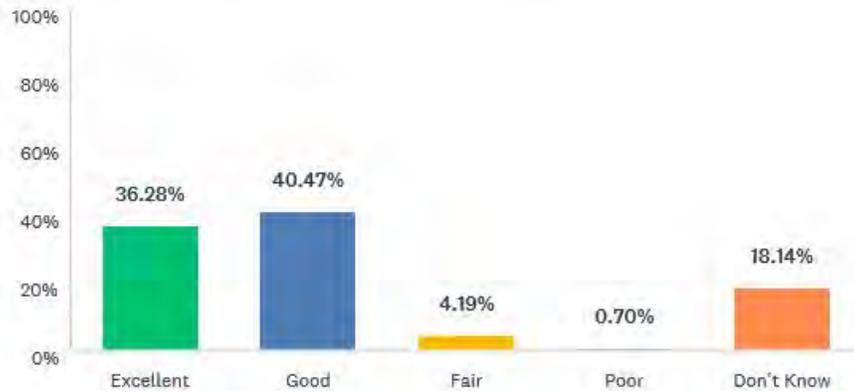
Q13: Online Survey

Respondents of both surveys report positive ratings for the existing Town Park.



Overall, how do you rate the Town playgrounds?

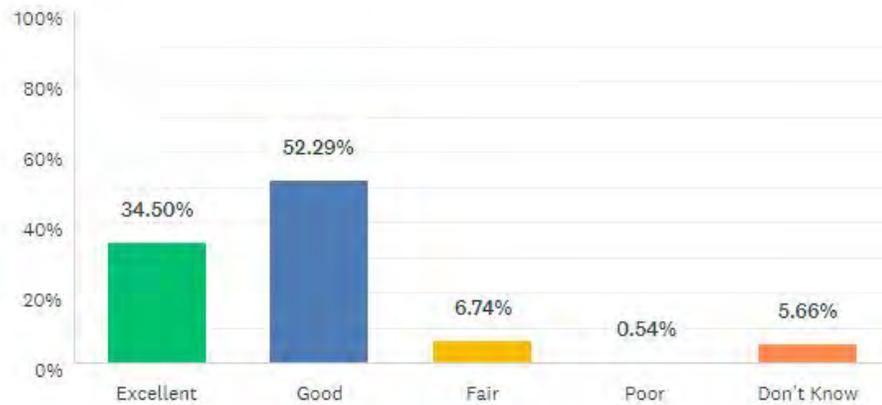
Answered: 430 Skipped: 44



Q14: Mail-out Survey

Overall, how do you rate the Town playgrounds?

Answered: 371 Skipped: 2

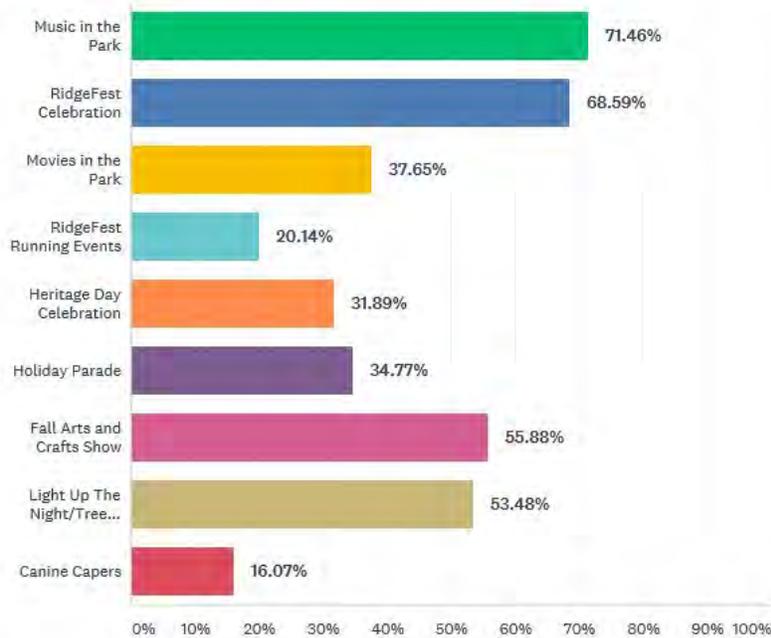


Q14: Online Survey



In which of the following recreation programs and special events would you or others in your household participate on a regular basis?

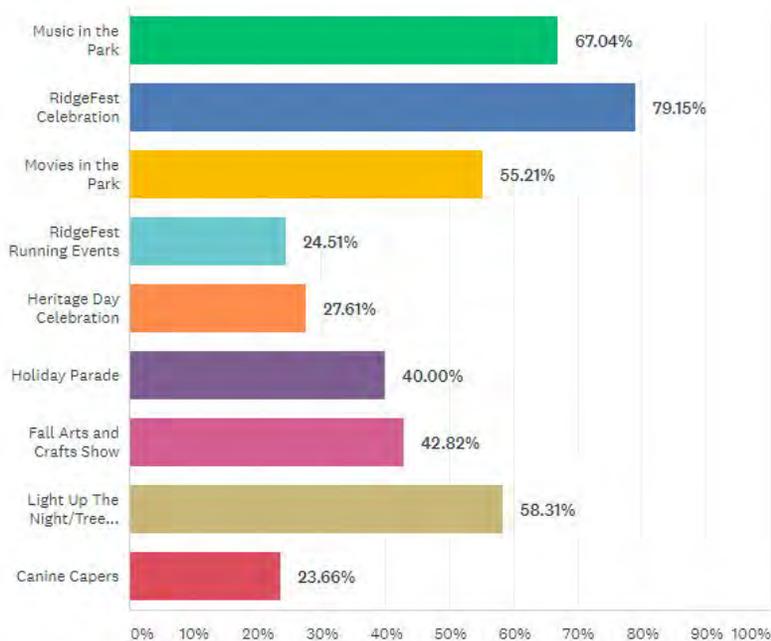
Answered: 417 Skipped: 57



Q15: Mail-out Survey

In which of the following recreation programs and special events would you or others in your household participate on a regular basis?

Answered: 355 Skipped: 18

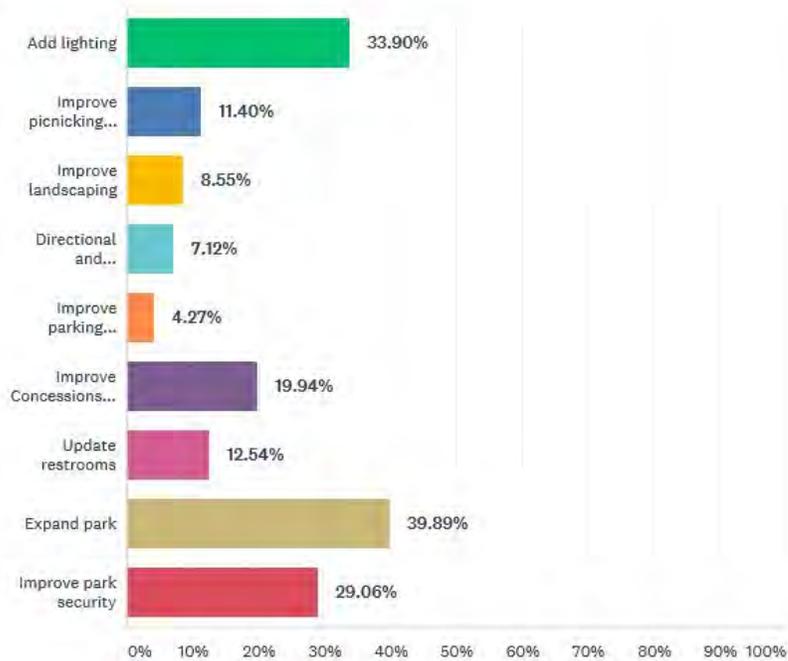


Q15: Online Survey



Check below improvements that you would like to see made to the EXISTING Oak Ridge Town Park.

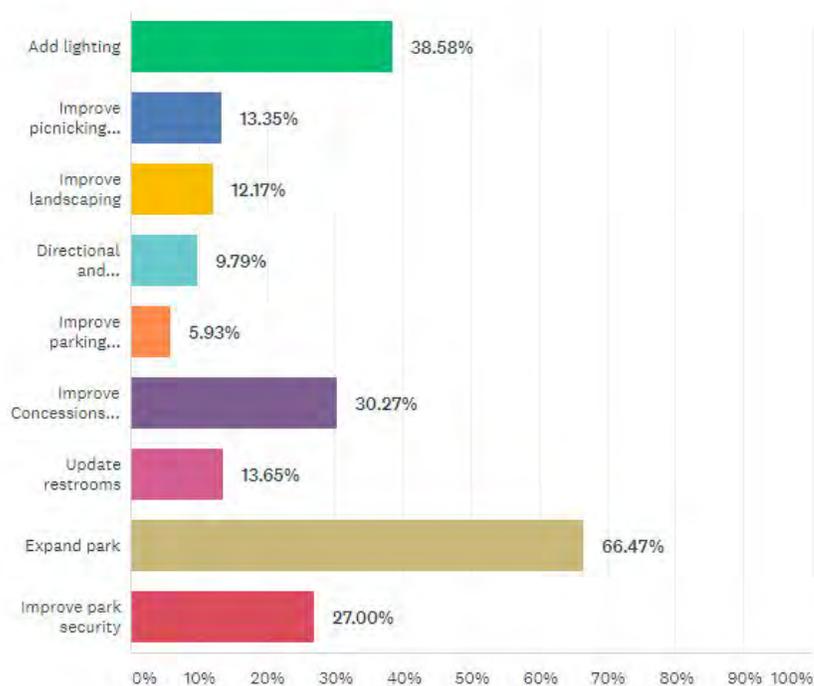
Answered: 351 Skipped: 123



Q16: Mail-out Survey

Check below improvements that you would like to see made to the EXISTING Oak Ridge Town Park.

Answered: 337 Skipped: 36



Q16: Online Survey



Please list below, any recreation programs or special events that you would like to see offered:

seniors Splash pad bike trails fairs trails car shows library Frisbee golf golf people Adult
walking trails food trucks pool see playground area Riding trails need
Horse show Tennis courts use park show tennis
expensive events Add tennis courts town Tennis pickle ball
basketball courts also kids movies Horse Arts crafts music bands

Q17: Mail-out Survey

Please list below, any recreation programs or special events that you would like to see offered:

soccer Yoga Outdoor teens love summer baseball fields walking trails Adult
kickball areas new community league fields softball
tennis courts Volleyball events tournaments
basketball courts Splash pad park added
kids Something Tennis great sports classes programs older
basketball playground love see exercise use play need meeting bike trails
children etc

Q17: Online Survey

The open-ended responses from both the mail-out and online surveys were analyzed using the word cloud method where frequency of words and ideas are counted to gain an understanding of what topics were most often shared by survey participants (topic most discussed is larger/bolder). Both survey groups mentioned several similar recreational amenities such as trails, tennis, basketball, etc. (see word cloud graphics above). Both groups expressed a general desire for improving the community and quality of life through enhancing recreation areas in Town. Most of the differences appear to reflect demographic aspects of the survey participants. The mail-out survey responses typically reflected an older group of long-time residents where the online surveys leaned more towards families with children that may have become residents more recently. The differences seem to point to stage of life differences between these groups. While both groups' opinions and concerns are valid the Town should consider what compromises must be made to best accommodate the broad range of residents that make up the Town.



The following is a list of recreation activities that could be offered or improved at a public park or recreation facility. Select from "Most" to "Least" important. Please consider other members of your household.

Answered: 365 Skipped: 8

	MOST IMPORTANT
Jogging/Walking Trails	73.93% 258
Open Space/Natural Areas	47.38% 154
Nature Based Recreation (Nature Walks, Wildlife Observation Areas)	45.65% 152
Bicycle Trails (paved)	30.15% 98
Tennis Courts	28.04% 90
Spray-ground/Splash Pad/Interactive Water Feature	26.32% 85
Outdoor Playground	28.05% 85
Picnic Areas	26.42% 84
Community Center	23.89% 75
Outdoor Performance Area	20.33% 62

Q18: Mail-out Survey

While respondents of the mail-out survey feel **trails** are the most important activity, they responded that less active types of programed spaces, like open areas and observation areas, are important.



The following is a list of recreation activities that could be offered or improved at a public park or recreation facility. Select from "Most" to "Least" important. Please consider other members of your household.

Answered: 365 Skipped: 8

	MOST IMPORTANT
Jogging/Walking Trails	38.64% 131
Outdoor Playground	33.64% 111
Spray-ground/Splash Pad/Interactive Water Feature	31.88% 110
Multi-purpose Field	31.87% 109
Outdoor Basketball Courts	29.71% 104
Open Space/Natural Areas	27.76% 93
Community Center	24.93% 85
Indoor Gymnasium	24.05% 82
Nature Based Recreation (Nature Walks, Wildlife Observation Areas)	22.29% 76
Tennis Courts	20.88% 71
Indoor Fitness Facility	21.26% 71

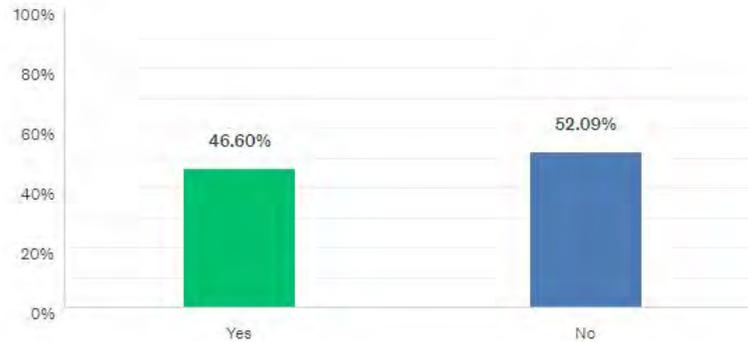
Q18: Online Survey

Interestingly, the online survey participants agree that **trails** are the most important activity, but they responded that more active type amenities are important.



Do you use any school or private facilities (Oak Ridge Swim Club, private fitness clubs, etc.) for recreation or leisure activities?

Answered: 382 Skipped: 92



Q19: Mail-out Survey

Do you use any school or private facilities (Oak Ridge Swim Club, private fitness clubs, etc.) for recreation or leisure activities?

Answered: 365 Skipped: 8



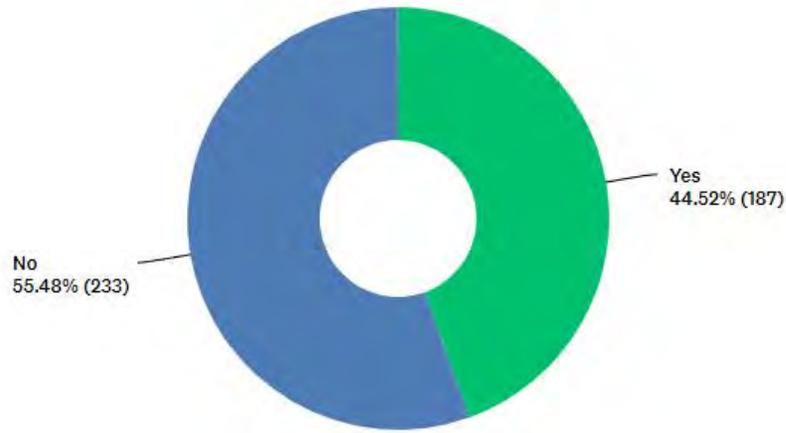
Q19: Online Survey

A narrow majority of respondents of the mail-out survey don't feel there is a need for additional park land in Oak Ridge.



Do you feel there is a need for additional park land in Oak Ridge?

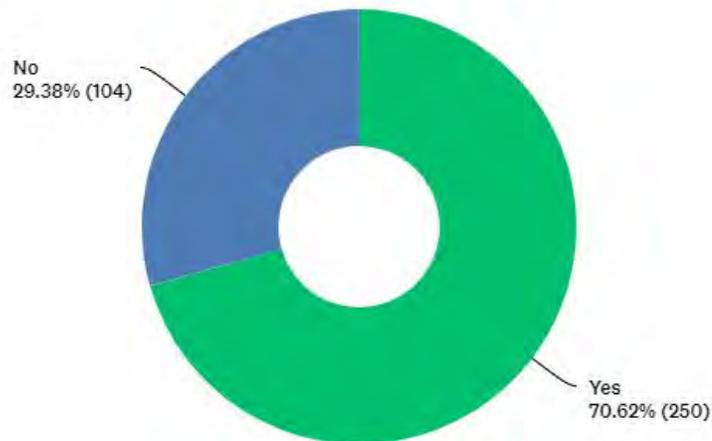
Answered: 420 Skipped: 54



Q20: Mail-out Survey

Do you feel there is a need for additional park land in Oak Ridge?

Answered: 354 Skipped: 19



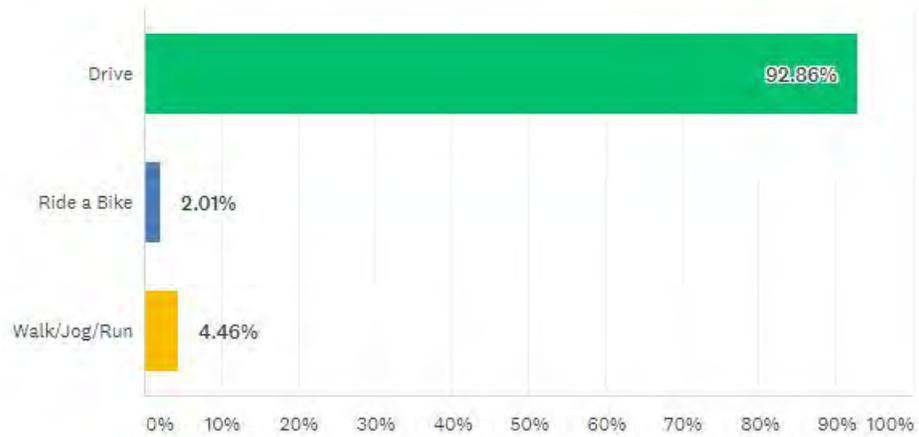
Q20 Online Survey

A large majority of respondents of the online survey feel there is a need for additional park land in Oak Ridge.



How do you typically get to Oak Ridge Town Park?

Answered: 448 Skipped: 26

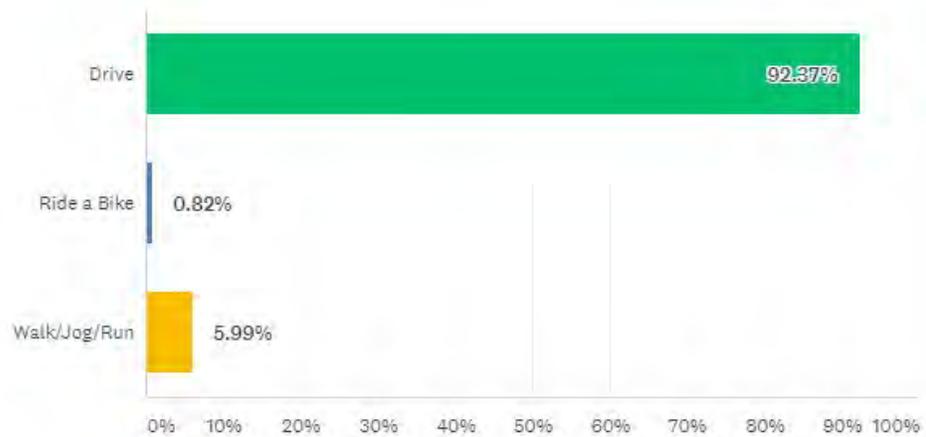


Q21: Mail-out Survey

Overwhelmingly, survey participants report driving to Town Park

How do you typically get to Oak Ridge Town Park?

Answered: 367 Skipped: 6

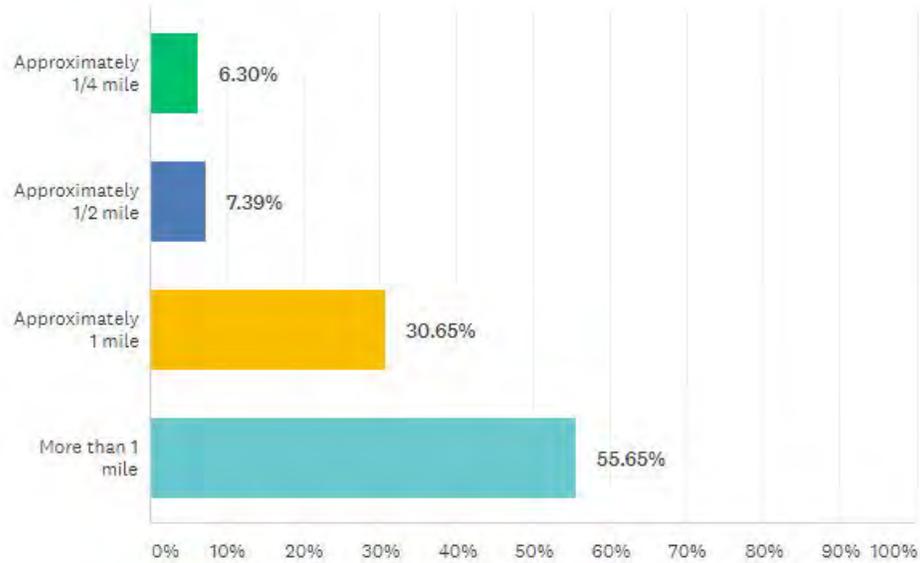


Q21: Online Survey



How far do you live from Oak Ridge Town Park?

Answered: 460 Skipped: 14

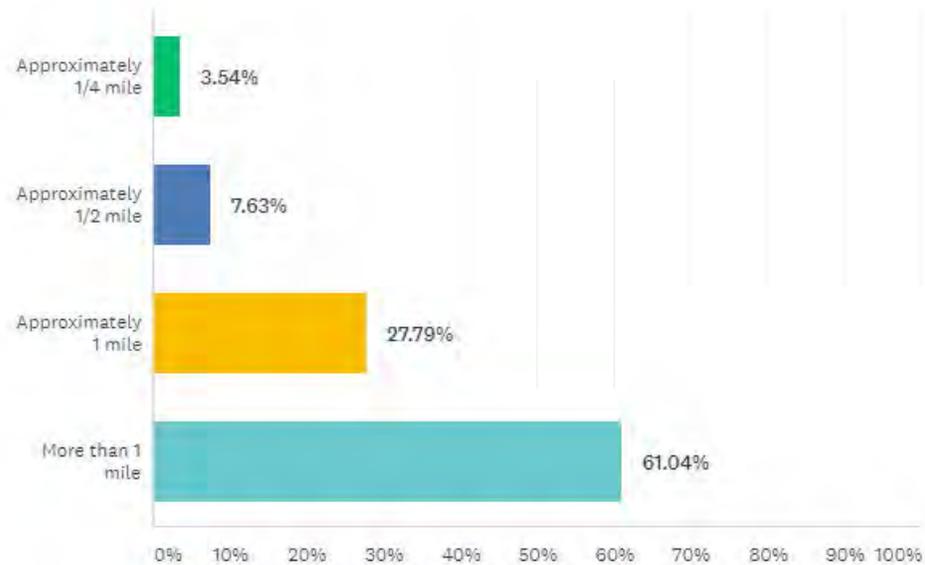


Q22: Mail-out Survey

The majority of participants from both survey groups report living more than a mile from Town Park.

How far do you live from Oak Ridge Town Park?

Answered: 367 Skipped: 6

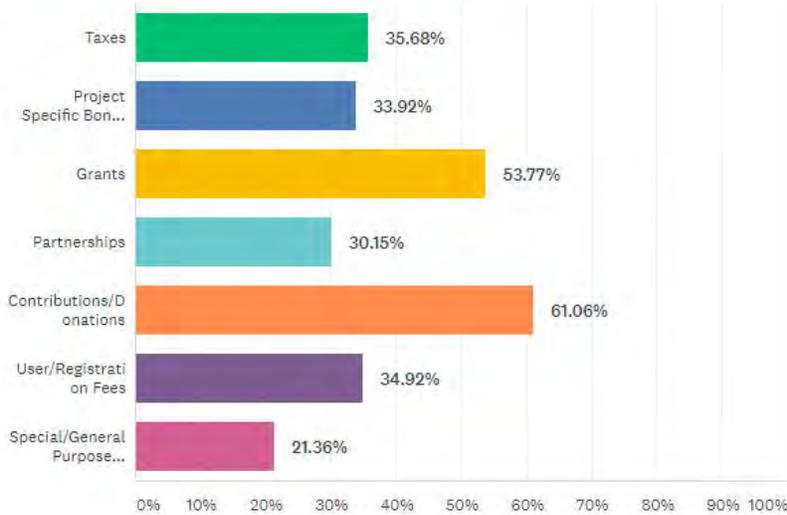


Q22: Online Survey



What, if any, sources of funding are you willing to support in order to make improvements, build new facilities, and create programs? Check all that apply.

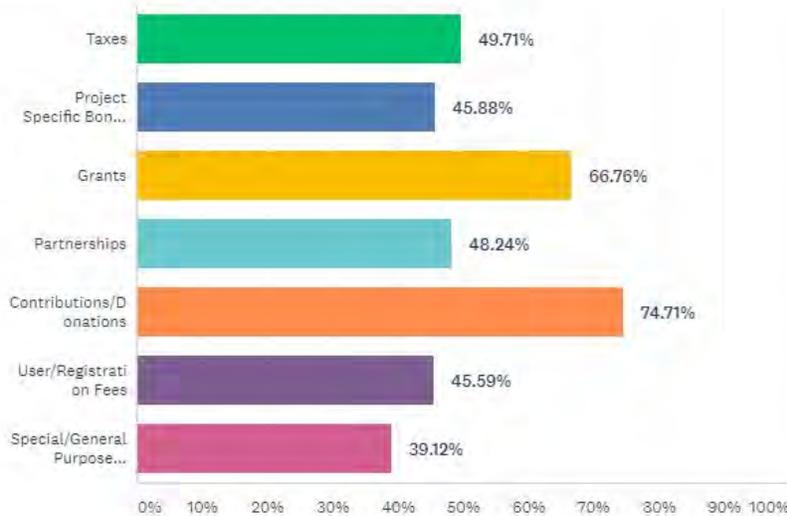
Answered: 398 Skipped: 76



Q23: Mail-out Survey

What, if any, sources of funding are you willing to support in order to make improvements, build new facilities, and create programs? Check all that apply.

Answered: 340 Skipped: 33

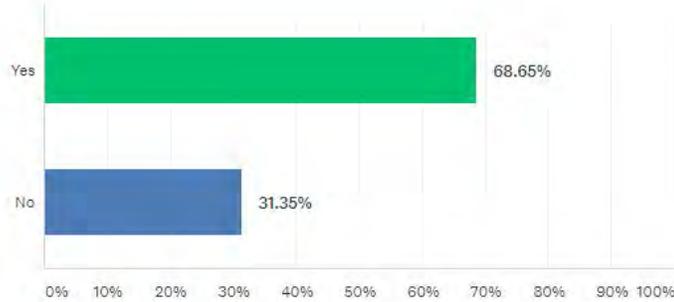


Q23: Online Survey



Would you be willing to pay a nominal fee to attend an event or use a special facility?

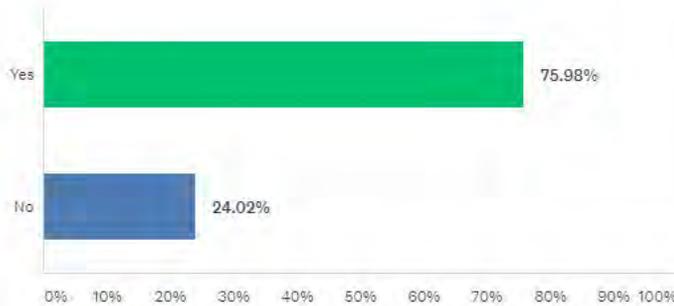
Answered: 437 Skipped: 37



Q24: Mail-out Survey

Would you be willing to pay a nominal fee to attend an event or use a special facility?

Answered: 358 Skipped: 15



Q24: Online Survey

Survey participants show support for paying nominal fees to attend events or use special facilities.



pay taxes love community small fields beautiful pay great think tennis used
sports need spending taxes spend money park funds town
Increase Oak Ridge ball fields want tennis courts sidewalks Walking
money raising taxes Keep Please trails people

Q25: Mail-out Survey

taxes much people way recreation attending great build additional athletic fields add offer
Thank nominal fee fee nice fields programs see questions Oak Ridge feel
use spaces town addition park love see need wonderful
facilities including keep increase think provide better amazing
community open space love residents pay local land know events move Oak Ridge
sports activities places

Q25: Online Survey

Question 25 was an open-ended opportunity for survey participants to offer any additional comments. These additional comments included: both praise for and critiques of existing facilities and the Recreation department, commentary on the need to assess how best to pay for recreation services, the need for both passive and active facilities, and the need for better connectivity and walkability within Oak Ridge. From the responses provided it was clear that survey participants appreciated existing recreation system facilities and programming, but comments regarding expanding the existing offerings were often noted.

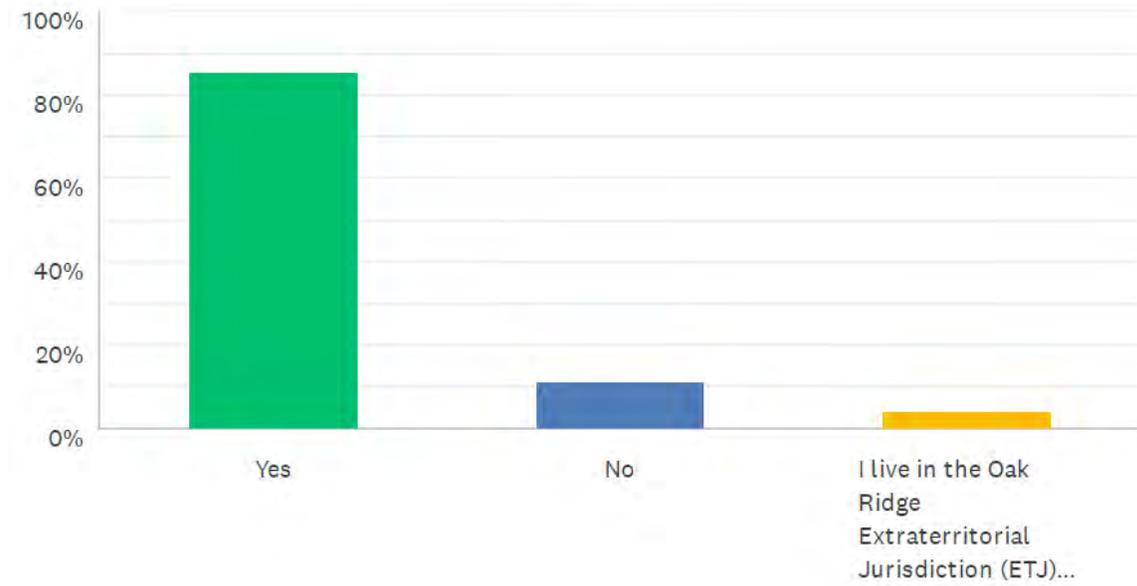
Public Input on Whitaker Property Recreation Development

Due to the need to mitigate public exposure to the COVID-19 disease all in-person public meetings were canceled and an online tool to collect additional public comment on the proposed development of the Whitaker property was created. This effort was promoted via the Town Web page, social media (Facebook) and via signage at Town Hall and by word of mouth. A total of 159 participants provided input. Below is the survey tool used and the public responses provided:



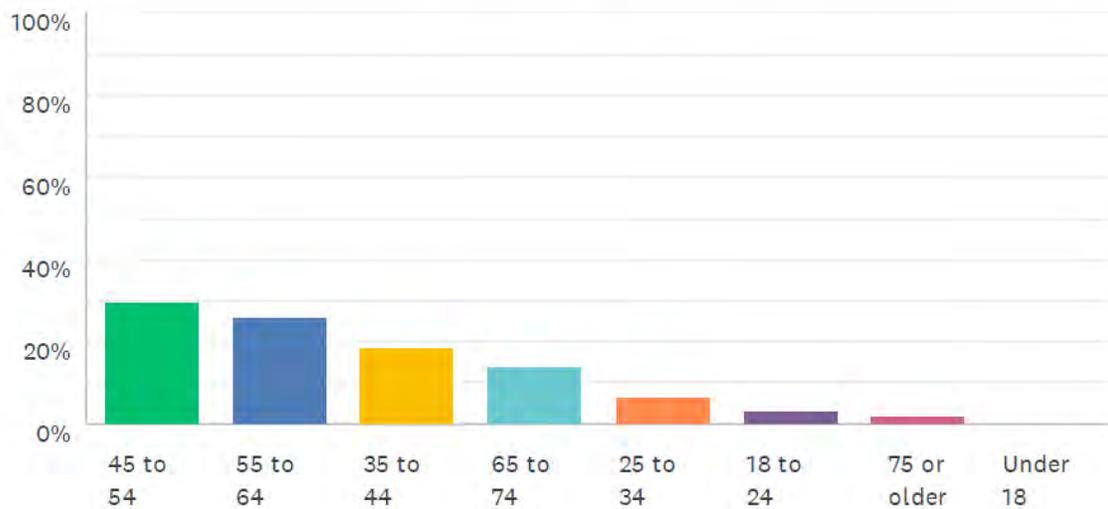
Q1 Do you live within Oak Ridge town limits?

Answered: 158 Skipped: 1



Q2 What is your age?

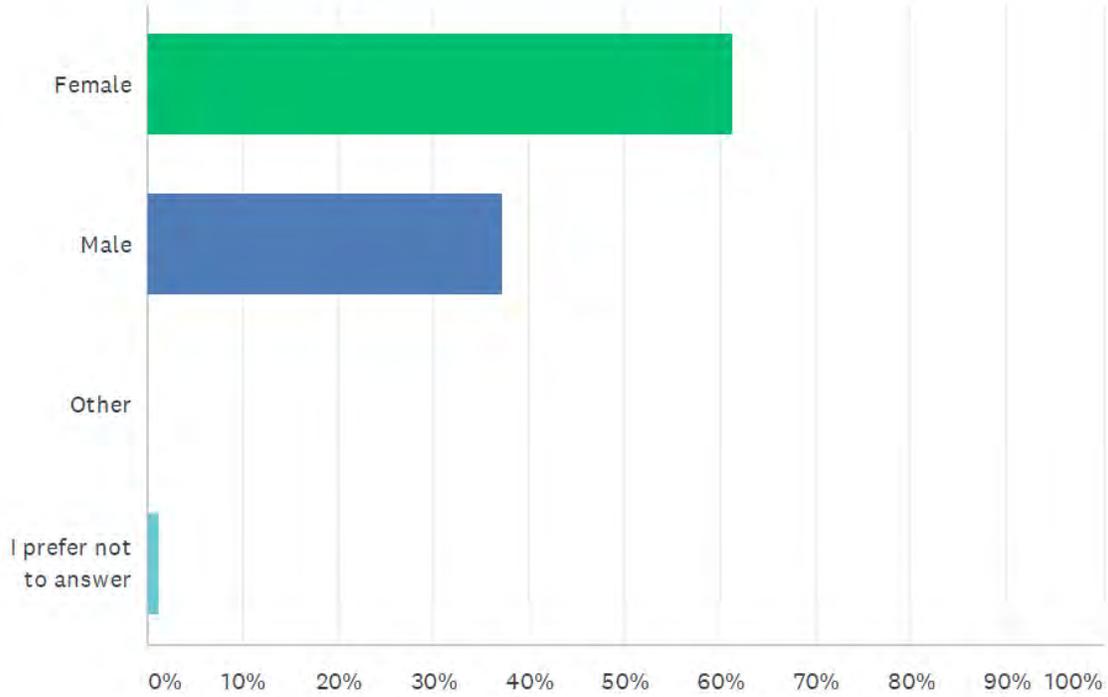
Answered: 158 Skipped: 1





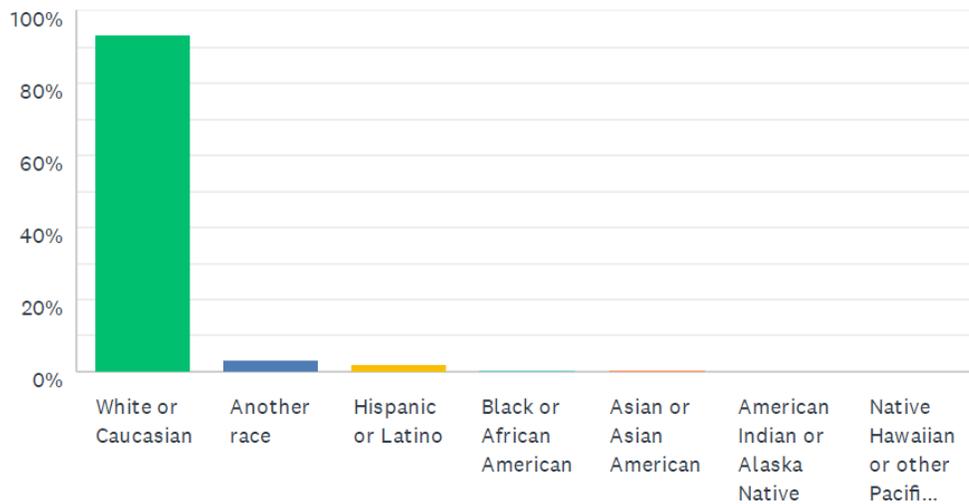
Q3 What is your gender?

Answered: 158 Skipped: 1



Q4 Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity

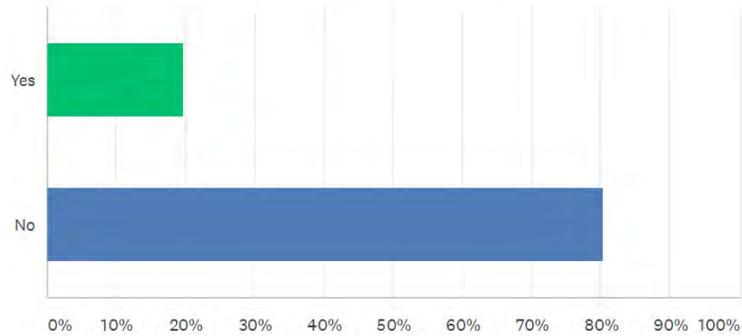
Answered: 158 Skipped: 1





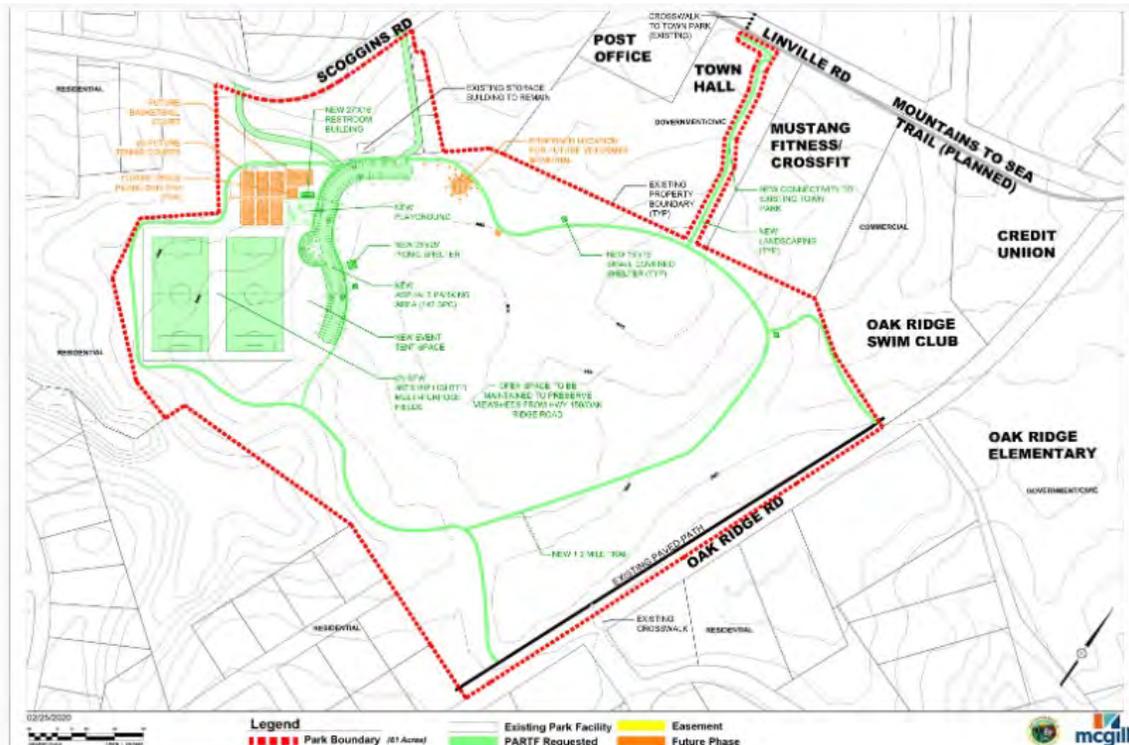
Q5 Are you or a member of your family a member of the Oak Ridge Youth Association (ORYA)?

Answered: 158 Skipped: 1



Q6 Please provide your ideas for concerns regarding the proposed park layout provide below. Consider how you or someone you know might use this park. Provide your comments in the space provided. Thank you.

Answered: 159 Skipped: 0





This open-ended question provided survey participants the chance to share any thoughts on the proposed park layout. Review and analysis of the comments provided useful information. The overwhelming majority of comments provided were positive and supported the conceptual layout for the Whitaker property. After listing the key amenities mentioned in the input collected, the top five amenities discussed included: Tennis/pickleball courts (55 comments), Equestrian trails (52 comments), trails (25 comments), basketball (16 comments), and a playground (7 comments).

49 of the 55 comments related to Tennis/pickleball courts were in favor of this amenity.

30 of the 52 comments related to Equestrian trails were in favor of seeing this type of amenity.

The remainder of the comments were in support of the amenity mentioned.

It should be noted that due to the positive responses related to the desire for equestrian trails, the Town has begun discussions with the neighboring Town of Summerfield on a partnership to provide this amenity on a large undeveloped tract of land near both communities.

Conclusions

The input provided by the community from previous public outreach efforts and via more recent survey responses indicate support for the amenities being proposed in the PARTF Site Plan. The development of the Whitaker property would help to meet the Town's goal of providing for resident needs and desires for expanded recreational offerings.

- END OF SECTION -



Section 4

Master Plan Development

Concept Master Plan

Utilizing information from the site analysis, input from the two (2) original community meetings, comprehensive recreation and site-specific survey data, and through discussions with Town Staff, McGill Associates developed alternate concept plans for the park. Utilizing the input received, the design team was able to establish the purpose and programming for the development of Whitaker property.

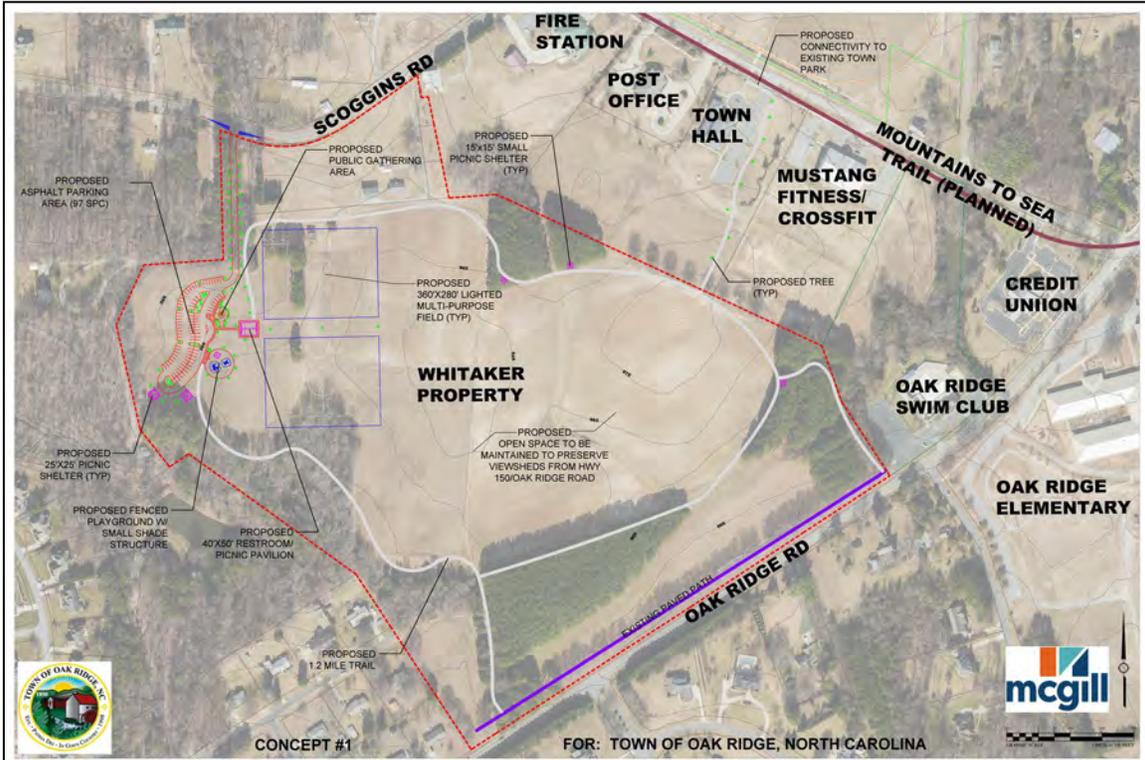
The goals and objectives of this park should be to serve the local community, Town residents, and visitors with multiple outdoor recreational amenities. The strategic planning elements of the park should be designed to offer a variety of activities compatible with both active and passive recreation in an aesthetically pleasing environment that promotes support for Oak Ridge's natural setting and environment. The expressed need and desires for a large open space, trails, picnic shelters, multi-purpose fields and traditional day use amenities by the respondents of the Comprehensive Master Plan survey were taken into strong consideration.

Two concept plans were developed that proposed several park improvements composed of providing a venue for socialization and exercise and organized sports, unprogrammed open space/recreation space for families, additional passive recreation, and critical facilities such as parking areas and public restrooms. These amenities were derived from the survey findings, community input, project oversight group, and Town staff input.

Accessibility for all park amenities was of great importance for each of the concept plans. The core area of Whitaker property is comprised of a paved trail that promotes walking around the entire park as well as paved access points to the proposed amenities. The parking area includes additional parking spaces for visitors to the park. The concept plans propose preserving a great deal of existing open space which provides programming opportunities for passive and active recreation that can accommodate groups of varying sizes.

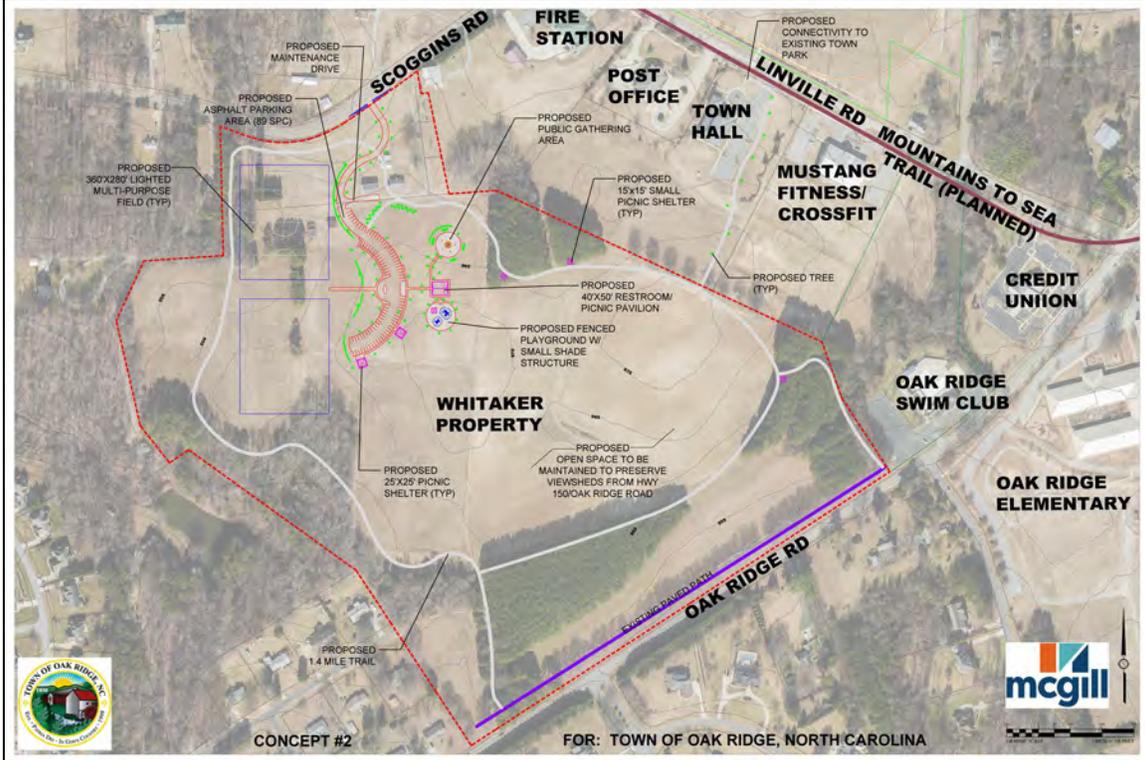
Connectivity to existing destinations including Town Hall, Post Office, Town Park, Oak Ridge Elementary and surrounding neighborhoods were very important to Town staff. Also, maintaining natural views and open space was a major design goal. Below are the two original concepts that were initially explored.

Town of Oak Ridge Parks & Recreation
Whitaker Property Master Plan



Option 1 Concept Plan

Option 2 Concept Plan





Accessible walking paths throughout the park provide the opportunity for a safe and equitable recreation experience for all park users. Picnic shelters are spaced around the trail to provide users with shade and respite as well as meeting places. This combination of amenities will provide opportunities to support healthy lifestyles.

Preliminary Opinion of Probable Cost

A preliminary opinion of probable cost was developed for the Master Plan. The anticipated cost (in today's dollars) for the proposed Phase 1 improvements to Whitaker property is approximately \$1,953,505. It should be noted that this estimate is based on master plan level of design. Final construction documents will need to be completed in order to present a more accurate opinion of probable cost. The Town should be aggressive with applying for grants and other funding mechanisms to reduce Town expenditures for capital improvements in approaching the development of the park.

OPINION OF PROBABLE COST FOR CONSTRUCTION	Total Item Cost
Development of Park Elements	
8' Wide Asphalt Paved Multi-Use Trail	\$288,000
6' Wide Concrete Sidewalk	\$37,275
25'x25' Picnic Shelter	\$75,000
Playground	\$120,000
2 – Lighted Multi-Purpose Fields	\$400,000
Restroom Building	\$250,000
Parking and Entrance Road	\$223,825
Site Development	\$304,600
Construction Cost to Develop the Project	
Contingency for the Cost of Building / Renovating – 5%	\$84,935
Costs Related to Design & Construction Administration	\$169,870
Total Project Cost (Not Including Land Value)	\$1,953,505

- END OF SECTION -