

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA
Thursday, January 19, 2023
12:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting

1. Establish Quorum
(Administer Oath)
2. Disposition of December 1, 2022 Minutes
3. Election of 2023 Chair and Vice Chair
4. Cases

None

5. Communications

Zoning Change Recommendations in 2040 Comprehensive Plan

5. Reports from City Planner and Director of Development & Code Enforcement
6. Opportunity for citizens to speak about items not covered on agenda
7. Announcements & Other Business
 - Next Meeting: February 2, 2023
8. Adjournment

Anyone needing special accommodations to attend the meeting should contact the Mayor's Office, 8 East Washington Street, Athens, Ohio, (740) 592-3338.



Comprehensive Plan

City of Athens 2040



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3	North Side.....	54-55
Planning Process Objectives	4	Off Campus Student Housing.....	56
Vision Statement and Guiding Principles	5	Additional Survey Results.....	57-66
History, Culture, Artistic and Creative Spirit.....	6	Corridors	67
Where We Are	7	Stimson Avenue Corridor	68
What We Heard	8-11	West Union Street Corridor	69-70
Moving Forward	12	East State Street Corridor	71
Housing and Neighborhoods	13	Richland Avenue Corridor	72
Where We Are	14	Columbus Road Corridor	73
What We Heard	15-17	Uptown Corridor.....	74-75
Moving Forward	18-19	Summary of City Departments Future Planning	
Economic Development, Entrepreneurship, and Technology	20	Arts, Parks & Recreation	76-77
Where We Are	21	Engineering and Public Works.....	78
What We Heard	22-25	Office of Code Enforcement and Community Development.....	79
Moving Forward	26	Acknowledgements.....	80
Sustainability and Energy.....	27		
Where We Are	28		
What We Heard	29-30		
Moving Forward	31		
Multimodal and Active Transportation	32		
Where We Are	33		
What We Heard	34-35		
Moving Forward	36-37		
Diversity and Inclusion	38		
Where We Are	39		
What We Heard	40-42		
Moving Forward	43-44		
Neighborhoods	45		
Far East Side	46-47		
Near East Side	48-49		
West Side.....	50-51		
South Side	52-53		

INTRODUCTION

The Athens 2040 plan endeavors to establish a collective vision for our community and aims to achieve that vision by plotting courses of action in line with the vision. The plan identifies goals and ambitions as a community, seeks to understand citywide and neighborhood problems and sets recommendations for our city council and city leaders. This plan is the start of a new, more agile and responsive era for planning in our city. This plan offers short, mid, and long range recommendations. This plan is not intended to be static and should be updated and revised every five years.

PLANNING PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Increase opportunities for citizen engagement:

A variety of methods were utilized to gather public input including public meetings, online surveys, pop-up events, small group meetings, and meetings-in-a-box. Over 500 people participated in the plan through these efforts.

2. Seek out contributions from people who are typically underrepresented in planning:

Meetings and outreach efforts to include minority voices, students, people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and disabled people were made and are included in the plan.

3. Be responsive to citizen concerns:

The neighborhood section recommendations are primarily focused on addressing the key issues held by community members.

4. Be responsive to external influences and their impact on Athens:

External influences, which are often unpredictable as well as transformative, such as climate change, automated vehicles or electric scooters, can have a big impact on the fabric of a community like ours. It's important to keep pace with those changes, and it's important that our primary planning document reflects that and be prepared to respond to them in a thoughtful manner.

5. Keep expenses to a minimum:

This plan was almost entirely done in-house, relying on city staff, interns, and public participation to drive it. Costs for this plan are about 1/10th the amount invested in the 2004 plan.

6. Ensure that the plan is accessible and transparent:

This plan endeavors to address equity and accessibility issues and is being offered in multiple formats including plain-text, large print format. This plan provides an online mapping component where readers can view public input comments given during the planning process, and the final recommendations on a map.

VISION STATEMENT

Athens is a welcoming,
forward-thinking, and
diverse community that
celebrates its eclectic
college town roots while
growing sustainably.

The vision statement and guiding principles was created based on the information collected through the City of Athens Comprehensive Plan visioning opportunities in late 2017. Community outreach included a public workshop in September 2017 that was attended by about 75 people and an online survey that was completed by about 190 people. All of the information generated through the visioning process was sorted and grouped into common themes and topics that were important to the participants. This information helps to set the tone for the Athens 2020 plan.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We will build on the historic and cultural assets that make Athens one-of-a-kind.
- We will enhance our neighborhoods to maintain a high quality of life and to include a variety of housing choices.
- We will collaborate in economic opportunities that build on the entrepreneurial efforts of our community and its organizations and institutions.
- We will strengthen our long term sustainability by incorporating renewable energy, a healthy environment, and opportunities to connect with nature.
- We will leverage technology to expand our economic base and provide services for citizens and visitors.
- We will promote multi-modal and active transportation solutions that better connect our neighborhoods, our destinations, and each other.
- We will support the physical health, mental health, and wellness needs of our community.
- We will highlight the artistic and creative spirit of our community.
- We will be inclusive for all regardless of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin or ancestry, marital or familial status, religious belief, age, disability, or economic status.

**HISTORY,
CULTURE,
ARTISTIC AND
CREATIVE SPIRIT**

HISTORY, CULTURE, ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE SPIRIT

Where We Are

Athens has a long and varied history, and includes many historic buildings and sites, including one national landmark (Cutler Hall on the Ohio University campus) and dozens of national registry buildings including most of Uptown Athens. Athens has long been known as an artistic hub for Southeast Ohio and the Appalachian region. The arts and culture of Athens are rooted in fine arts at Ohio University, long-running arts organizations such as the Dairy Barn, PassionWorks Studio, and ARTS/West, and live music and art exhibits throughout Athens. The arts and history help to draw people to Athens and is a significant economic development tool.

In the last 10 years there have been several significant changes in the Athens historic landscape. In 2013 Athens City Council established the city Historic Preservation Board in 2013. In 2014 the city was recognized as a Certified Local Government (CLG) under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Athens County Historical Society has relocated to a larger space and has rebranded as the Southeast Ohio History Center. Preservation plans and outlines for future use have been put in place for The Armory, Mt. Zion Church, The Ridges, and College Green Small Houses. Property ownership issues regarding Mt. Zion Church have been resolved and the Mount Zion Preservation Society has been formed. Ohio University has developed a framework plan for the Ridges campus and the small homes surrounding College Green and is investing in maintenance and preservation efforts. The Armory is in stable condition and more details about its future use are available on the city's website.

Unfortunately, some historic buildings have been demolished including the Ridges Tuberculosis Ward and the original Ohio University Science Hall (later named President Street Academic Center). Several historic buildings were heavily damaged on West Union Street in a major fire in 2014. Historic buildings in Uptown Athens have had changes and alterations done to them that are not consistent with standards for historic properties; others are still threatened due to neglect.

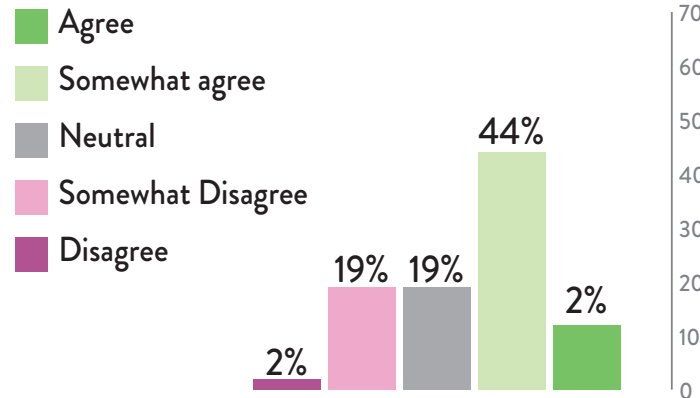
The Athens local art and culture movement has been growing steadily and includes street festivals such as Ohio Brew Week, Athens Community Arts and Music Festival, and Boogie on the Bricks; public art installations such as Art Outside the Box; the designation of the Athens poet laureate; Honey for the Heart Parade; and the Athens Armory Art Park. The Ohio Valley Summer Theater has been active for almost 70 years and includes an annual production and summer camp. Additionally, Ohio University's summer Tantrum Theater productions have been relocated from Dublin, Ohio to Athens and include an expanded all year round production schedule. Athens County has been designated as a Creative County by the National Association of Counties and has used this program to help increase arts engagement throughout Athens County. Also of note are two key studies-- the 2012 Athens Arts and Economic Prosperity report which validated the substantial economic impact of non-profit arts organizations in Athens and the 2014 Essence of Athens strategic plan which shaped public arts implementation.

HISTORY, CULTURE, ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE SPIRIT

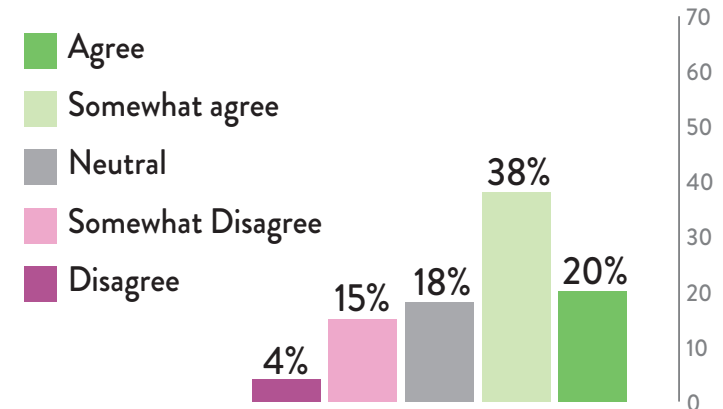
What We Heard

Throughout the planning process residents communicated strong support for history, arts, and culture; there is a great deal of support for more public arts and opportunities to engage in arts in Athens. Plan participants are supportive of the arts efforts that have been initiated in the last decade and would like to see this continue.

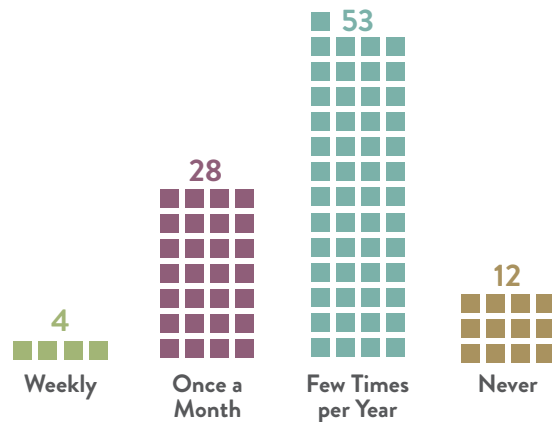
Agree or Disagree: The history and culture of Athens is well-portrayed in the built environment of Athens.



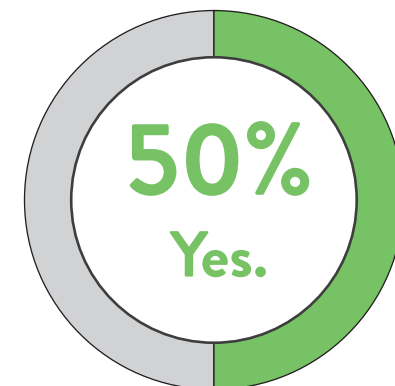
Agree or Disagree: The history and culture of Athens is well-portrayed in publicly available events and programming in Athens.



“How often do you engage with our local history or attend cultural events like exhibits at the Dairy Barn, Southeast Ohio History Center, performances at ARTS/West, or other such events?”



Are you aware that the city has an historic preservation commission that is charged with educational outreach, providing guidance to property owners, and making recommendations to City Council and the city administration on issues of historic preservation?



HISTORY, CULTURE, ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE SPIRIT

What We Heard

During the public input process, several priorities began to emerge as needing focus in this plan, including:

Mount Zion Baptist Church

This is a priority project in terms of preservation. The building is in disrepair but has a dedicated committee for its future and has been actively pursuing planning grants and opportunities to rehabilitate.

The Athens Armory

The Armory is in stable condition and will remain that way until a suitable use for it is found. For more details on the Armory view the Armory Framework document. (Here). The recently relocated and expanded Southeast Ohio History Center adds a third historic site to this area of Uptown Athens.

The Ridges

The Ridges are owned by Ohio University, and Ohio University has made a commitment to respect their historic nature as they redevelop those grounds. (You can view the plans for the Ridges here).

Historic Preservation

There are currently no city requirements for historic design standards in our historic districts, with particular concerns expressed for the Uptown area

Public Art and Events

More public art is desired throughout the city, including neighborhoods; there were repeated requests that art offerings should be diverse in format/medium and artists.

Frequently residents requested better coordination of festivals and arts events and that Athens incorporate arts into city infrastructure projects when feasible.

Increased Street Art

Utilize walls, steps, sidewalks, and alleys when feasible to encourage exploration and “selfie” spots.



HISTORY, CULTURE, ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE SPIRIT

What We Heard

“ Having first arrived here in 1963 to attend college, I fell in love with the old buildings on campus— Ewing with its lovely stained glass [is] gone, Howard with its massive staircase and marble, and all the old trees everywhere. Many of these trees are too old now to survive, but it is imperative the City plant other healthy, long-living shade trees in their place, not crab apples and other small flowering trees with short life spans. The preservation of The Ridges and the Dairy Barn, and these old churches, help to

make this community very special. I recently took my family from California to several events there and hiking at The Ridges and they loved it. Our Farmers Market is superb, another highlight of this area. And, of course, the university, with its history and its various academic departments that set us apart from other such institutions. Preservation of former homes of Booker T. Washington and other important historical figures help us preserve this lovely town.



HISTORY, CULTURE, ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE SPIRIT

What We Heard

“ We have a huge population, both students and OU employees at all levels, whose main knowledge of the community is the university. I think the city needs to work harder at helping people visualize our history beyond the university. So, for example, there are a few plaques around town, but it would be far more interesting to actually install photographic displays or etchings of old photographs that would impart a sense of how the town looked over the decades from various vantage points around town. This could then be contained in a guide for walking, biking, or driving tours.

“ Love the coal miner murals uptown, the mural at Stimson/East State intersection, the decorated waste/recycling/utility receptacles, the wheatpaste photography exhibit on the parking garage, and the poetry on the buses. I especially like the idea of decorating the parking garage frequently, in hopes that students will recognize town pride and be less likely to trash the town. The steps from Morris to Stimson, and others around town, would lend themselves to street art.

“ I would ask: ‘what would make life better for residents and create a pleasant atmosphere for visitors?’ More events that are suitable for families,

where healthy food is the cornerstone. Maybe encourage people to go out and mingle, like a picnic under the cherry blossoms, community walks in the evening, events for young families, events to highlight the many nonprofits in the area and encourage volunteering. Basically create a sense of community, especially for those of us who don't belong to a religious organization. I also am looking forward to the children's science center on Columbus Road— not sure if the city is involved, but it's the kind of thing that I think the city should support as this relates to culture/ community values, quality of life, and tourism.



Photo credit: Joel Prince

HISTORY, CULTURE, ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE SPIRIT

Moving Forward

- **Continued growth for the Athens Community Arts and Music Festival.** ACAMF street festival has been well received by the community. It should be nurtured and utilized as a connecting thread with The Dairy Barn, ARTS/West, OVST, Tantrum, local artists and artisans in order to increase arts visibility and collaboration.
- **The recently created Armory Park should be value-added.** Improvements should include art, programming, and lighting in order to draw people there and anchor the north end of Uptown. The park was created in collaboration between city staff, long time residents, and Ohio University students from all around the world and was dedicated during International Week. This park is a best practice in creative placemaking that should be replicated in other areas of the city.
- **An Athens Art Calendar should be integrated within the City Source app.** This should drive usage in order to increase visibility and collaboration as an excellent community resource. This should be further structured to better coordinate uptown street closure events to better space out events and minimize conflict and event fatigue. This plan recommends implementing design review of historic buildings and districts with primary focus on the Uptown area in Athens in order to better protect our historic assets.
- **Implementing a design review of historic buildings and districts.** The primary focus should be on the Uptown area in Athens in order to better protect our historic assets. Design review will ensure that future new construction and alterations to existing buildings are consistent with the historic character of the Uptown area. Such review would be conducted by the Athens Historic Preservation Board.
- **Formalize the funding process for public arts.** Currently, public arts funding is done on an ad-hoc manner based on available funds and the desire to implement a project. Formalizing the process and funding will increase transparency and reinforce the city's commitment to arts programming. More public art including murals, sculptures, and photography should be added around the city with particular focus on neighborhoods and gateways as well as Uptown.
- **Designate the Mt. Zion/Armory/Southeast Ohio History Center as "Heritage Square"; coordinate planning efforts among these three institutions.** This will allow Athens to leverage grants and other resources available. The close proximity of Mt. Zion, the Armory, and the Southeast Ohio History Center creates an opportunity to utilize these significant historic locations for larger events such as conferences and multi-venue curated performances.
- **Preserve existing brick streets.** Our brick streets add historic charm to the city and help to calm traffic. Some older paved streets in Athens have original brick pavers in the subsurface layers and can be restored as well.
- **Improve uptown sidewalks.** With particular focus on accessibility and incorporate local history during the design process as recommended in the Essence of Athens plan.
- **Make Creative Placemaking Week an annual event.** Focus on a different neighborhood and theme each year. The 2019 Creative Placemaking Week was the impetus for the Athens Armory Art Park.



Armory Park, June 2019

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Where We Are

Housing is a perennial issue in Athens. Census figures show that only about 25% percent of the housing units in Athens are owner-occupied. However in R-1 residential zones the housing mix is around 70% owner-occupied. The significant number of rental housing units skews Athens market heavily towards housing for Ohio University students and puts an immense burden on the limited resources of the city's Code Enforcement and Community Development office. In addition, the lack of rental and owner-occupied housing choices for professionals is a reason cited by business owners for locating elsewhere. Ohio University experiences difficulty attracting faculty and staff to Athens because of lack of quality housing options. Market pressures from student renters drive rents up beyond the reach of working class families in our area.

This problem is difficult to tackle for a number of reasons. Like most communities, Athens does not have deep pockets to devote financial resources to this issue. Historically, the University has not been involved in the business of off-campus housing, which is where the majority of Ohio University students live. Zoning changes made in the last 10 years have effectively eliminated duplex-style housing as a development option leaving only single-family detached residential and multi-unit rental style as the only two viable housing styles that can be built. Developing new R1 housing, as it exists currently in our code, is not feasible if the houses are to be in the \$150K-\$250K range. The costs of development including infrastructure (roads, utilities, curbs, sidewalks) and lot sizes and yard requirements effectively price all new single family developments above \$275K per home. If Athens creates areas where denser housing is permitted, even

marginally so, we can scale more units at lower costs for developers and lower prices for renters and buyers. This, along with denser housing on our neighborhood borders and a clear design on senior housing, represents the best path forward for Athens.

Although more housing options are desired in Athens we are lacking the physical space needed to significantly add housing to our urban core based on present land use conditions. Zoning, topography, and build-out limit the amount of usable land. Annexation is not a good solution for low-density housing because it extends city services without increasing revenue.



Near East Side neighborhood.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

What We Heard

Frequently during the planning process people requested that Athens “use zoning to stop rentals in R-1 zones.”

This is simply not possible. In the State of Ohio, the owner of a property in an R-1 zone can rent that unit out to up to 3 unrelated people, limited by the number of bedrooms.

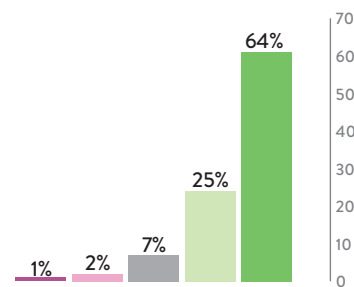
Owners of properties, if they so choose, can deed-restrict their homes and prevent them from being used as rentals in perpetuity. A petition-driven zoning overlay of neighborhoods could prevent additional conversion of owner-occupied to rentals.

Since Athens can't disallow rental units in R-1 Zones, efforts should be redoubled to ensure the safety and maintenance of rental properties in Athens.

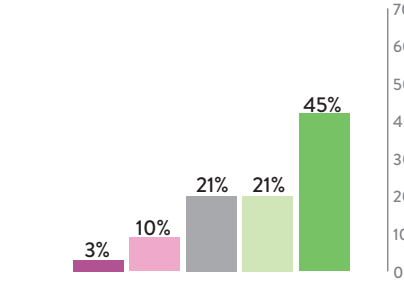
Planning participants were receptive to the idea of expanding housing options, and many of them expressed frustration with our existing housing situation. It is important to allow some change within our neighborhoods in order to accommodate more housing options.

The following statements have to do with housing options in Athens. Think about the housing options available to you and the possible housing needs of others. Please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

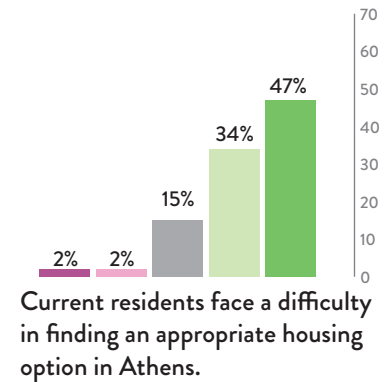
■ Agree
■ Somewhat agree
■ Neutral
■ Somewhat Disagree
■ Disagree



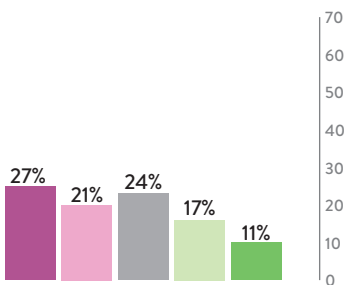
New residents face a difficulty in finding an appropriate housing option in Athens.



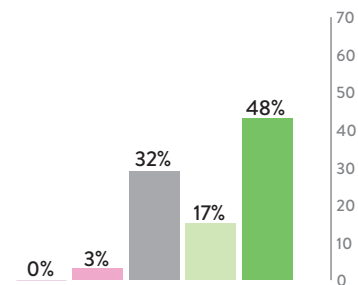
Graduate students face a difficulty in finding an appropriate housing option in Athens.



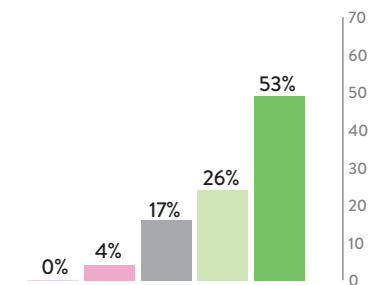
Current residents face a difficulty in finding an appropriate housing option in Athens.



Undergraduate students face a difficulty in finding an appropriate housing option in Athens.



People with disabilities face a difficulty in finding an appropriate housing option in Athens.

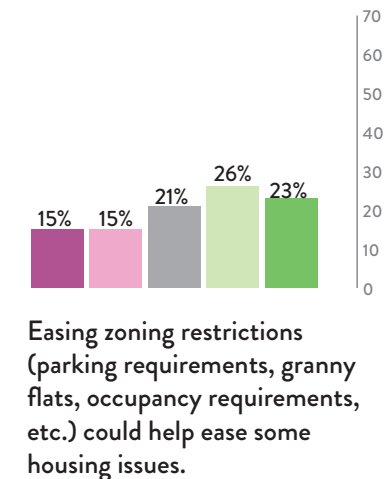
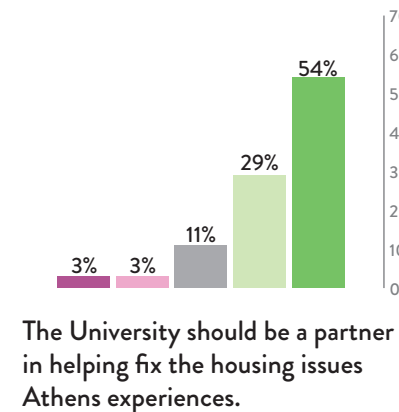
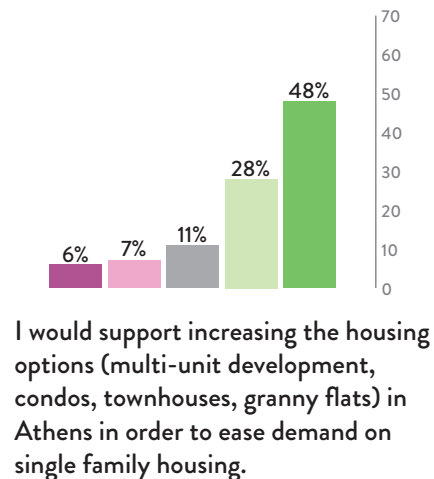


Seniors face a difficulty in finding an appropriate housing option in Athens.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

What We Heard

The following statements have to do with housing options in Athens. Think about the housing options available to you and the possible housing needs of others. Please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.



The results from the first question presented here reveal that survey respondents support a range of options to address housing needs in Athens. As mentioned already and with few exceptions housing stock in Athens is either single family residential (including many student rentals) or multi-unit apartment buildings that provide housing for undergraduate housing. Options such as senior housing, single floorplan townhomes, tiny homes, and granny flats (smaller units attached to single family dwelling or on the same property) are among the housing options that could benefit Athens

but due to development regulations are effectively impossible to build. While current zoning regulations have created the housing scheme survey results confirm that respondents are unsure or leary of supporting zoning changes that may allow for more housing options within the city. This scenario of recognizing and supporting a change but concerned with the potential of negative or unintended consequences that may be associated with change is a very common phenomenon. These concerns can be minimized by thoughtful and well communicated incremental approaches.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

What We Heard

“ I work with classified staff at Athens OHIO campus who cannot afford to live in Athens. It doesn't seem as if this will ever change. I know young professionals who can afford Athens rental prices, but who cannot find attractive rental options with amenities. There are waiting lists for these types of properties.”

“ Allow one person per bedroom instead of 3 per house. Allow dorm style (common shared kitchen) housing, allow transient house with any rental permit.”

“ It took my family 1.5 years to find housing in Athens once employed by Ohio University. Overpriced, poor construction, poor condition and didn't meet basic family needs was the problem over and over.”

“ The City zoning may need to be thoughtfully updated to ensure we provide flexibility to developers to address these needs in such a way that the City doesn't unnecessarily burden or prohibit creative development, but at the same time ensure that new development can enhance Athens.”

“ What about small or tiny home villages? Students seem to want them and the community it affords. This seems to be a violation of code, even though they environmentally and economically bring assets.”

“My biggest complaint about Athens is the price of real estate (both to rent and to buy) and the apparent inaction of the city on that issue. I don't know what they'd even do - I moved here from the rust belt, where this isn't an issue - but a LOT of good, productive people leave/have left because they just couldn't afford to live here any more and sometimes I think I'll be next. We're looking for a place without stairs and it's TOUGH. If I couldn't walk at all- I'd probably be gone.”



HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Moving Forward

Housing Priorities

Pursue the following 4 point strategy for improving housing conditions in Athens. Athens needs to prioritize: (1) expanding housing options overall, (2) incorporating senior housing, (3) improving the student rental experience, and (4) empower the Code Office.

Expand Housing Options

- Amend Athens city code to permit accessory dwelling units (garage conversion, accessory structure) in R-1 zones. This plan recommends amending Athens city code to permit duplex construction and conversion in R-1 zones as a conditional use if the dwelling is owner occupied. These changes have public support and should include design standards in order to enhance the feel of these R-1 neighborhoods while allowing options for aging residents or homeowners willing to take on a renter.
- Amend zoning and subdivision regulations so that projects that apply accessible design/universal design are be given design and permitting benefits.
- Amend zoning and subdivision regulations such that co-op housing be permitted as a conditional use in all residential zones.
- Amend zoning and subdivision regulations so that the minimum lot size for all residential housing types and in new subdivisions is reduced to 5,000sq ft., with conditional further reduction for projects that provide a mix of housing styles and options, serve seniors,

below median income residents, apply universal design standards, or sustainable design standards. This should also come with flexibility in setback and other bulk control and parking requirements.

- Amend zoning and subdivision regulations in order to facilitate denser residential development, limited, neighborhood-scale business development at the edge of our residential neighborhoods and at suitable locations within neighborhoods. (This will be done by performing the changes described above and below, and in conjunction with zoning changes across the city. More information on site-specific zoning changes can be found in the neighborhood sections.)
- Change zoning and subdivision regulations in order to facilitate more compact development at a lower price point. This will be spearheaded by a pilot project in University Estates and if successful could be replicated at other sites at UE and Oakmont Phase 4 on the south side.
- Utilize residential tax increment (TIF) financing strategies to bring down costs for development to create more housing at lower cost to buyers and renters. TIFs can help to support senior housing, affordable housing, and rental housing for people wishing to live or remain in Athens.

Continued on next page....

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Moving Forward (con't)

Senior Housing

- Senior housing is a consistent issue in Athens. We don't have sufficient eldercare facilities in the city and our existing code can make it difficult to age-in-place in Athens. Incentivize universal design, senior housing via zoning flexibility in close in areas and by utilizing TIFs in areas such as University Estates and evaluate areas near Uptown and campus as potential locations for senior housing.
- Permit senior co-housing that exceeds the 3 unrelated resident regulations.
- Allow for accessory dwelling units in R-1 zones, as stated above. These solutions are often attractive to seniors as they can allow the senior to take on a renter while retaining some privacy or allow seniors to move in with the younger family and still retain a level of autonomy.

Empower the Code Enforcement and Community Development office

- Add at least one more Code Enforcement officer and increase the administrative staff.
- Any legislative actions that would add additional responsibilities to the code office need to consider actions to provide additional code enforcement staffing.

Improve Student Rental Experience

- Increase staffing in the City Code office in order to improve efficiency and quality of service.
- Create an online searchable database of rental permit and rental code violation records.
- Recommend that Ohio University designate a person or persons to act as code and renter liaisons. This position would work to educate student renters about issues with their property that may get them in trouble with the code office to provide a non-punitive intervention about property upkeep and nurture students into responsible tenants. Additionally this position would develop educational outreach materials for student renters so that they know both their rights and their responsibilities; to assist students through code complaints.
- Add a section on City Source app that provides information to tenants on topics such as code violations, solid waste and litter control, rights and responsibilities, and payment of utilities.
- Limit new apartment construction to 3-bedroom units or less.
- Along with reductions in minimum parking requirements, consider adding off street parking for delivery and taxi vehicles.

**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT,
ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
AND TECHNOLOGY**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, TECHNOLOGY

Where We Are

For the last several generations the strength of the Athens economy has been directly linked to the growth of Ohio University. Recent trends in demographics (declining numbers of in-state graduating high school students) and steady but relatively low amounts of state financial support per student enrolled at state universities has impacted the economic bottom line on and off-campus. Diversifying our economy while still maintaining a university support role has been a goal going back to the 1970s when OU enrollment declined. City tax revenues are directly related to the enrollment numbers at Ohio University so it is important to be both supportive of the university and work towards a more diverse local economy to insulate Athens from downturns on campus.

As a university town, Athens has a steady flow of employable people including graduating students, accompanying spouses and partners of staff and faculty, and returning alumni. Many of those people experience a very tight labor market that leads them to leave Athens or accept long commutes to the Columbus area.

There is scarce land available for economic development based on topography, current land uses, and zoning. This is compounded by a lack of land available for housing prospective employers and employees. This two-fold land use issue is a substantial hurdle for siting a new business in Athens. Athens should protect our economically productive zoning and review the existing code language to make those more productive and Athens must incentivize more housing options.

The Athens County Economic Development Council has a roadmap for economic improvement for our region. This plan addresses the entire county but makes specific recommendations for the city of Athens, which we have incorporated into this plan.

The city will continue its policy of step-ahead regulation, which

is to say, that Athens attempts to be proactive rather than reactive to emerging technologies. Two examples of this would be microcellular technologies and electric scooter operation. These technologies would be coming to Athens regardless of many things the city can control, and by putting a regulation framework in place before they arrived, Athens is better equipped to manage the process of these changes.

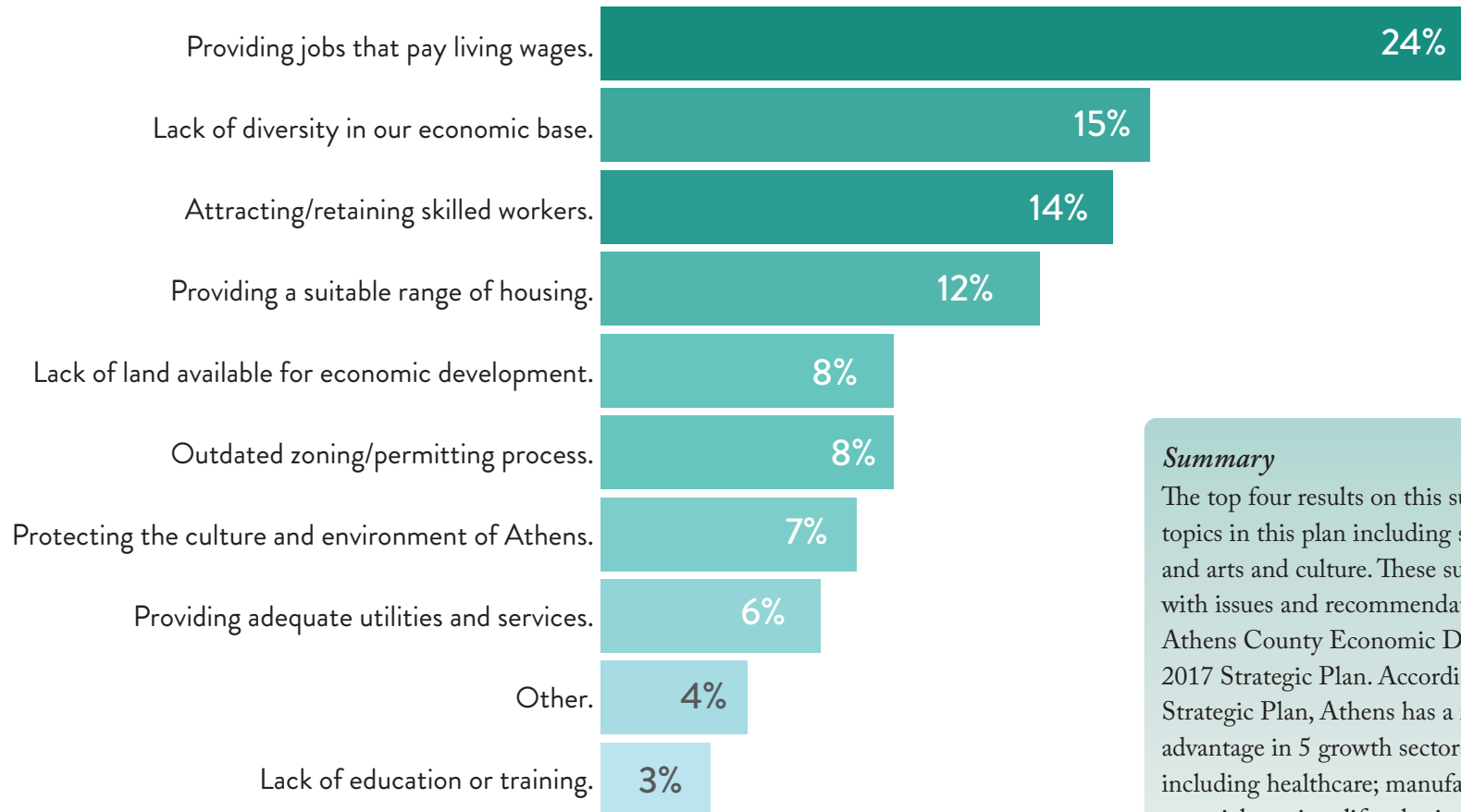
There are 4 new types of economic stimulus tools available to local governments that merit mentioning in this plan, as they affect the city of Athens. We'll talk more about how they can be applied later in this section.

1. **Downtown Redevelopment Districts (DRDs).** These districts, centered on a historic building, provide incentive to business by diverting property tax increases back to improvements in the corridor.
2. **Innovation Districts (IDs).** These are established within DRDs which have a connection to gigabit fiber. This designation expands the range of services the diverted property tax can be applied to.
3. **Opportunity Zones (OZs).** These are areas, designated by census block, which allow for investment without capital gains tax. The eastern half of Athens is covered by Opportunity Zones, including most of Uptown, Stimson Avenue and the East State Street. (Attach map)
4. **Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDDs).** This is where a municipality and an unincorporated township work together to develop land for commercial or industrial uses in order to fairly split taxes levied without having to annex the area.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, TECHNOLOGY

What We Heard

The Public was asked:
When it comes to economic development what is Athens
greatest challenge? Please select up to three (3).



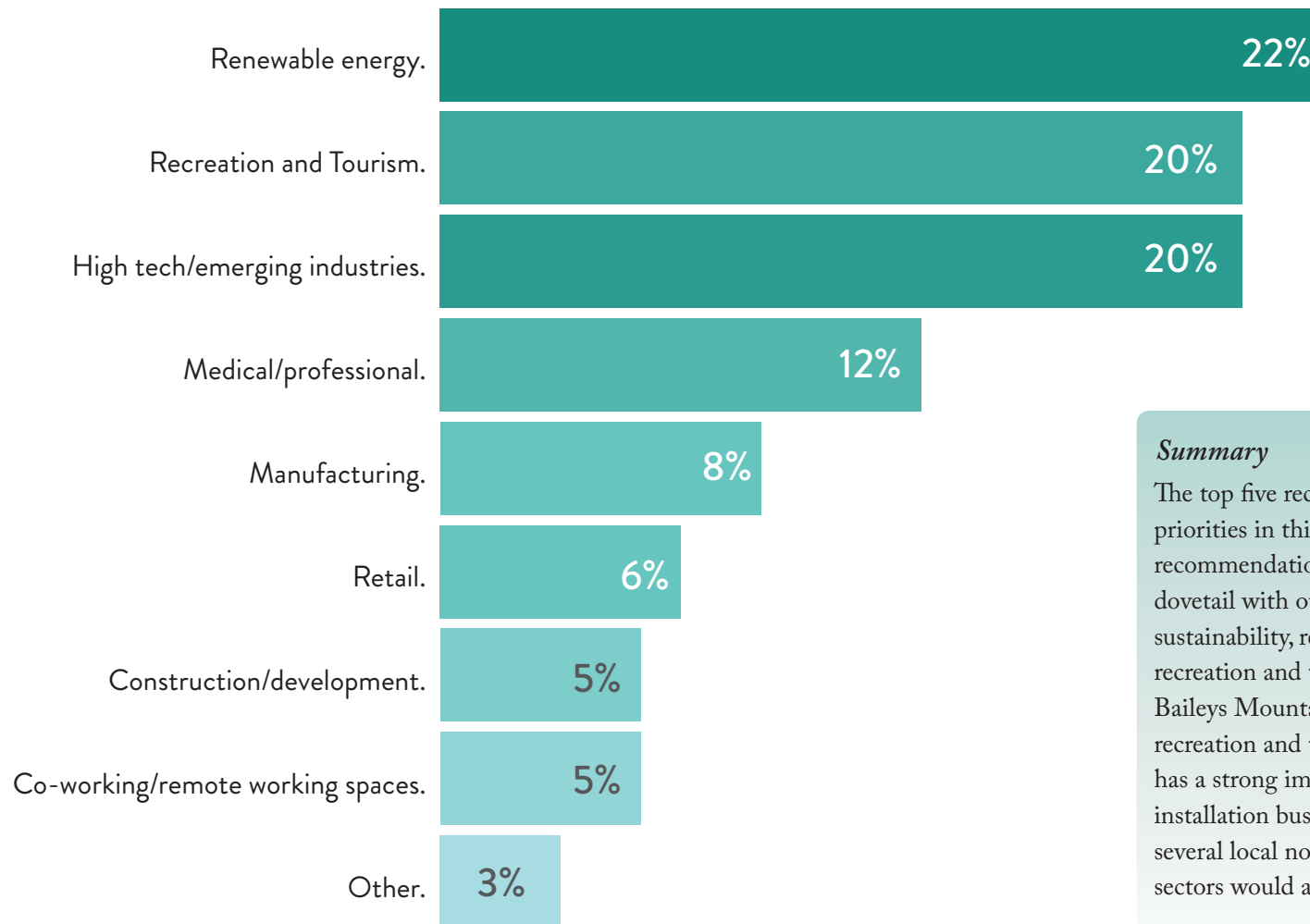
Summary

The top four results on this survey correspond to other topics in this plan including sustainability, housing, and arts and culture. These survey results also line up with issues and recommendations included in the Athens County Economic Development Council's 2017 Strategic Plan. According to the ACEDC Strategic Plan, Athens has a regional competitive advantage in 5 growth sectors that pay living wages including healthcare; manufacturing; transportation and material moving; life, physical, and social sciences; and architecture and engineering. Jobs in these emerging sectors play about \$32 per hour on average. Some specific challenges with expanding our job base and attracting new businesses in these sectors include lack of housing, lack of land, and lack of available infrastructure.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, TECHNOLOGY

What We Heard

The Public was asked:
What should be the top economic development priorities in Athens? Please select up to three (3).

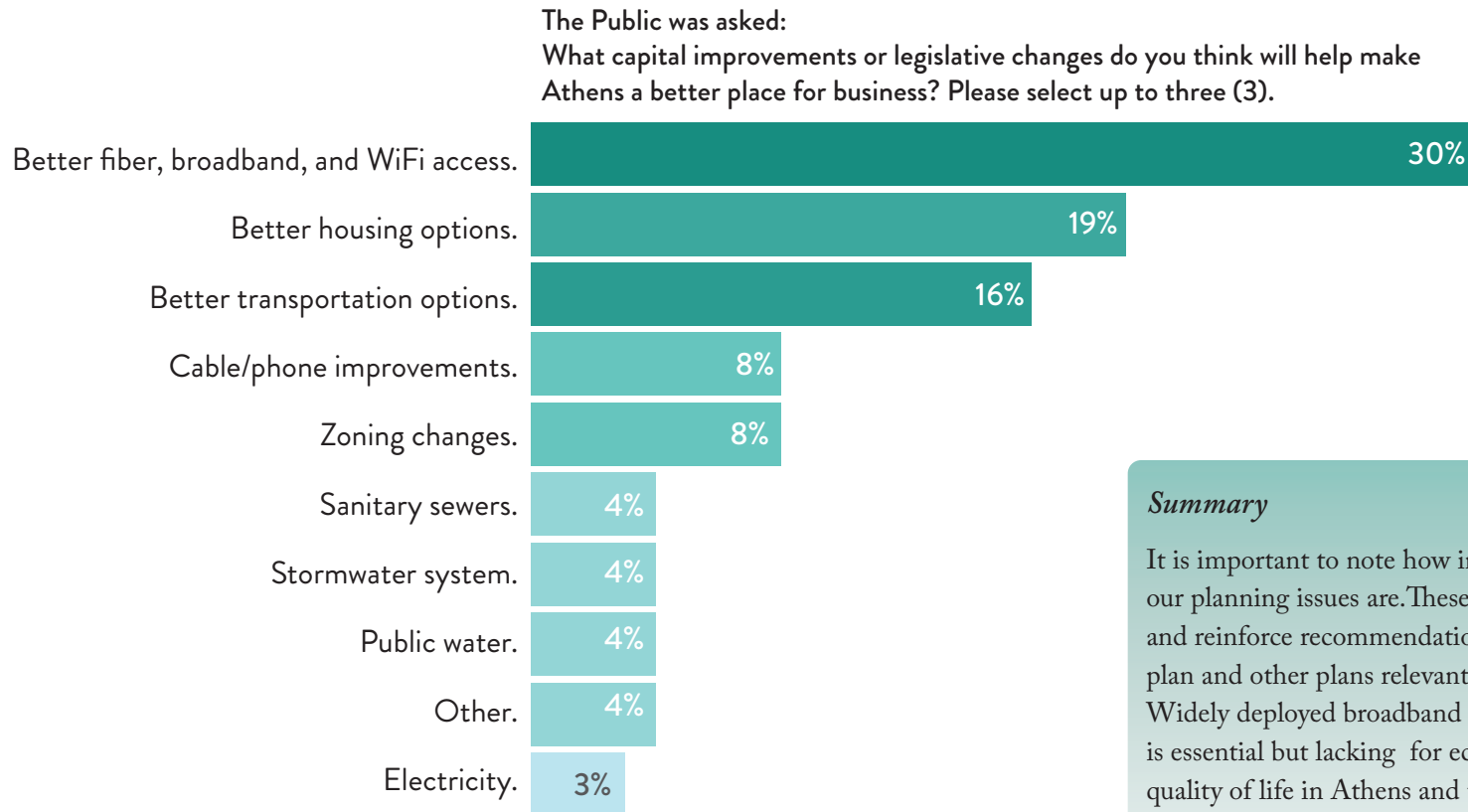


Summary

The top five recommended economic development priorities in this survey show public support for recommendations in the ACEDC Strategic Plan and dovetail with other priorities in this plan including sustainability, recreation, and arts and culture. Adding recreation and tourism options in Athens such as the Baileys Mountain Bike Trails will encourage more recreation and tourism related businesses. Athens already has a strong imprint in renewable energy with solar installation business and the efforts of SOPEC and several local non-profits. Many new jobs in these priority sectors would also pay living wages.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND TECH

What We Heard



Summary

It is important to note how interrelated so many of our planning issues are. These survey results confirm and reinforce recommendations that are found in this plan and other plans relevant to the city and region. Widely deployed broadband infrastructure and access is essential but lacking for economic development and quality of life in Athens and the Appalachian region. More housing options are needed in order to bring new business ventures and their employees to Athens.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND TECH

What We Heard

Plan participants said that diversifying the local economy was an important step towards economic sustainability. Many supported efforts to build on the green energy and entrepreneurial efforts of local businesses and innovators.

Broadband deployment was acknowledged as a key component of economic development and many other aspects of this plan. The lack of a reliable, affordable broadband throughout the Athens region puts us at a competitive disadvantage with other areas in attracting new business and people to Athens.

Plan participants also expressed love for local businesses and were concerned about the loss of such businesses as consumer activity moves more and more on-line to large corporations. There was a desire to see more variety in local retail and restaurant service, especially in the Uptown district.

“ If you're not working for OU or the one or two successful small businesses here, you're living at below subsistence. Even at OU, it's very hard to attract strong candidates. They look at the poor health care and lack of infrastructure (home internet, bad roads, etc.), and they decide they don't want to come.

“ Athens is somewhat distant from other major centers. It would be advantageous if the City (and collaboratively with the University) could establish some incentives/smart advertising to encourage non-service based business to relocate to Athens. It would be wonderful if Athens and the University could be known as a friendly hub for all kinds of businesses who want to take advantage of our quality of life.

“ The City along with the University need to invest more dollars and efforts to have any degree of success in the efforts related to Economic Development and housing.

“ More opportunities and guidance for would-be entrepreneurs, and more aggressive outreach to companies looking to relocate. We have so many empty buildings in Athens that could be used to house businesses.

“ To make high tech and, to a lesser extent, renewable energy doable, we need better digital infrastructure. High tech companies especially live and die by their connectivity. Even inside the city limits, our internet is not good, and in the country (where it would be inexpensive otherwise for a company to locate itself), the connectivity is abysmal.

“ To make high tech and, to a lesser extent, renewable energy doable, we need better digital infrastructure. High tech companies especially live and die by their connectivity. Even inside the city limits, our internet is not good, and in the country (where it would be inexpensive otherwise for a company to locate itself), the connectivity is abysmal.

“ Tighten the relationship between O.U. and the City. Help to promote the creation of smaller industry, innovative ideas for marketing, technology, and building of valuable products and services. Zoning & tax incentives are certainly important to this expansion. Marketing the business opportunities we have already, and the specialized healthcare products at O.U., such as bio-medical field, gene therapies, etc., is imperative to drawing more qualified persons to live here. Offering creative rental options to small clothing stores, artisans, technicians is important.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND TECH

Moving Forward

Implement the 7 point process to improve the Union Street corridor. Pursuant to the recommendations set out in the Athens County Economic Development Council Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan, the city should continue to pursue growth along the Union street corridor. This process should include:

1. Expanding B2D zoning along the north side of Union to the West Union Street Office Center (WUSOC).
2. Changing to B2D style zoning near the Shafer/Union and Shafer/Washington intersections.
3. Equitable relocation of the fairgrounds to another location, outside of the Athens city limits so that the fair is more easily accessible and has room for growth.
4. Relocation of the Athens Township garage further down West Union or on US-56.
5. Redevelopment of the fairgrounds site, including research, business, and residential uses.
6. The deployment of DRDs as economic development tools to draw business to this corridor.
7. The upgrade from DRDs to Innovation Districts as needed.

Develop a package of incentives to encourage economic development that includes Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), Downtown Redevelopment Districts, Innovation Districts, Historic Preservation tax credits, and zoning changes. Many of these state and federal economic development tools are seldom used in Athens but have proven effective elsewhere in Ohio. The Athens County Economic Development Council is able to assist the city and those wishing to utilize such tools.

Incentivize economic development and job creation that offers living wage standards as defined by the ACEDC. Ohio law prohibits cities from raising local minimum wages above the state minimum but many of the incentives recommended in this plan could be used as a strategy to encourage better paying and better benefit jobs. City leaders should draft a resolution and push state officials to raise the minimum wage in Ohio.

Deploy free municipal WiFi. This should be accessible in the uptown area, city buildings and parks, and other public areas including bus stops.

Increase the awareness of residents regarding the City Source application whenever possible, and look for new ways to add functionality to the app. This could include changing platforms if they would provide a broader range of services, and being

responsive in how people use the app. The more services that can be integrated into a single app, the better. Services requested for integration during this process were things such as city utility payment, payment of parking tickets, and notifications of boil orders, road closures and artistic and cultural events. Citizen engagement tools (such as pol.is or similar services) would help to overcome accessibility and exclusion issues and enable better decision making.

The city should explore bringing on a social media liaison. Responsibilities would include:

- (1) work with Arts, Parks & Recreation, the Athens County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Athens County Economic Development Council in order to develop an “Athens” brand and assist on all outward-facing communications.
- (2) To update and maintain outward-facing web pages and social media accounts—to provide weekly or monthly brief summaries of city activities.
- (3) To promote Athens as a destination and establish peers among other Ohio cities as well as college arts towns.
- (4) To document and catalog the economic impact of street closures, parking changes, music festivals and fests.

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENERGY

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENERGY

Where We Are

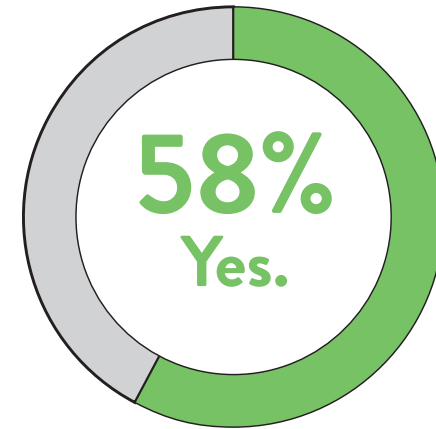
In 2012 the Athens Environment and Sustainability Commission was established as a means to implement environment and sustainability goals as outlined in the city's previous comprehensive plan and as stated by city council and the city administration. The commission is tasked with providing advice and guidance on measures and policies that protect the environment and insure greater sustainability. They have drafted the Athens Sustainability Action Plan which is updated annually.

The city has an urban stormwater program that meets the standards and requirements of the Ohio EPA Stormwater Phase II rule for Municipal stormwater separate sewer systems (MS4) (Stormwater Management Program.) This service is contracted out through the Athens County Soil and Water Conservation District, and represents Athens commitment to mitigation of pollutant discharges and commitment to the Clean Water Act.

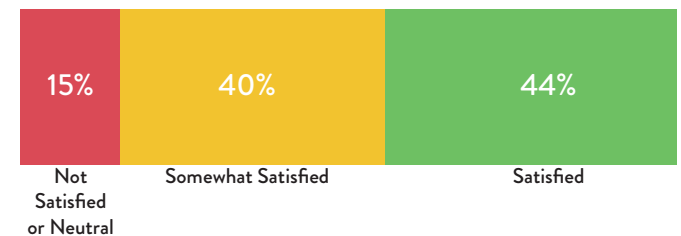
The SOPEC Carbon Fee was passed by a large majority in May 2018. Fees generated through this initiative will start to collect in 2020 and are anticipated to raise about \$100K annually. This ballot initiative is the first known of its type in the US and clearly demonstrates Athenians desire to address climate change at the local level.

Anthropogenically driven climate change is a well-established fact and will result in more extreme weather events more frequently. This will negatively impact our life as humans and drive species extinctions.

Are you aware that the city has an Environment and Sustainability Commission that that provides recommendations to City Council and the city administration on environmental and sustainability policies?



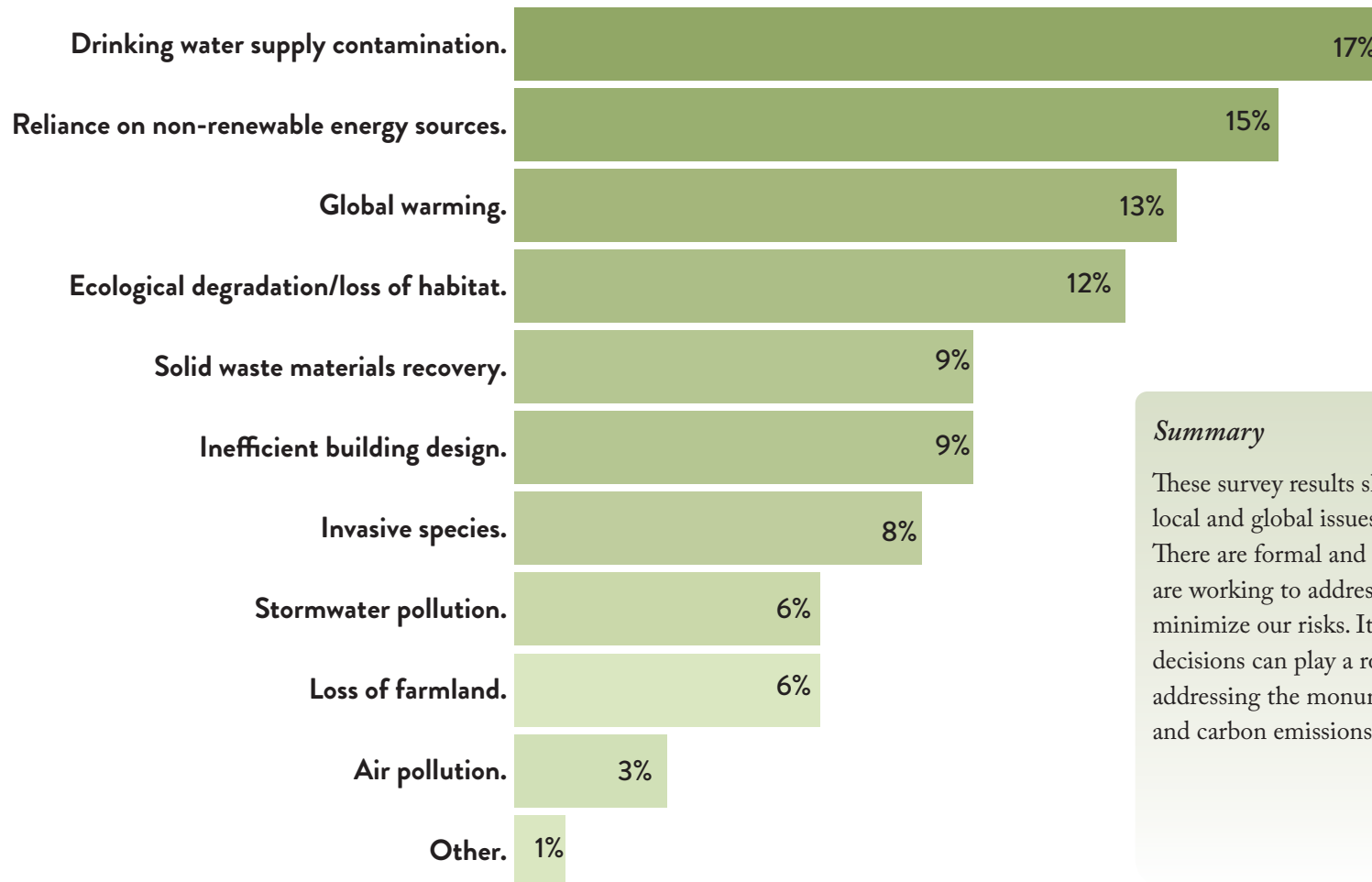
Please rate your satisfaction with the city's environmental and sustainability efforts.



ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

What We Heard

Which of these environmental and sustainability issues do you think are our biggest threats in Athens? Please select up to three (3).



Summary

These survey results show that respondents identify both local and global issues as threats to Athens sustainability. There are formal and informal groups in Athens that are working to address many of these issues in order to minimize our risks. It is important to note that local decisions can play a role in all of these issues, even in addressing the monumental challenge of climate change and carbon emissions.

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

What We Heard

Plan participants were very supportive of city sustainability efforts and desire to see contained and greater sustainability measures put in place. Among those most commonly heard in the planning process was a desire to see the city become carbon neutral, improvements to the non-motorized and public transportation network, and concerns about drinking water quality.

“ Athens needs an action plan for implementing the new community solar ballot measure, as well as for encouraging solar at residential and commercial scales (eg, more on the roofs of municipal and “big box” buildings, expanded solar carports). City should also explore for the standard community solar model, ie, developing megawatt-scale ground-mount solar in appropriate locations, and enabling residents for whom rooftop solar isn’t an option (renters, those with shaded roofs, etc.) to buy in to receiving their electricity that way.”



“ Athens is blessed with multiple in-town and nearby natural areas (Sells, Strouds, Ridges, Wayne NF, Zaleski, Lake Hope, Hocking Hills). The city should strengthen its relationship with the management of those areas (even those outside of city limits) to ensure that those areas continue to provide the ecosystem services that our residents value and depend on.

“ This is an area where Athens is generally unified. We passed the second carbon fee in the country by more than 75%. We should be more aggressive about the implementation of renewable energy and environmental initiatives.

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Moving Forward

- **Oversee execution of the SOPEC Carbon Fee.** This pool of resources will be collected starting June 1 2020, anticipated to generate \$100K per year. A Power Purchase Agreement similar to the one used to build the solar carport array at the Athens Community Center is one model that could work well. Goals might include visibility, opportunity for public education, diversity of public facilities, and PPA KH installed capacity.

Recommendations for these funds should focus on maximizing installed capacity in order to have the greatest impact on reducing the effects of climate change. A solar array can help provide an economy of scale if suitable land can be located such as a Power Purchase Agreement used to build the solar carport array at the Athens Community Center. The rate of fee collection on the carbon fee should be evaluated after a few years to consider the public's interest in supporting more projects then can be completed based with a higher monthly carbon fee rate.
- **Take Zero-Energy Commitment or Zero-Energy Building pledge.** It is the recommendation of this plan that (1) the city explore a net-zero building mandate for all new municipal construction. (2) The city (by action of council) takes a zero-energy pledge similar to the pledges taken by Cincinnati and Cleveland. Consider a dollar per square foot threshold-- anything above that threshold should be discussed for cost/benefit tradeoffs.
- **Outdoor recreation via Arts, Parks and Recreation that better connects us with nature, especially for children.** The Parks and Recreation department is poised to expand their outdoor recreation programming by opening an outdoor recreation office at the West Union Street "red schoolhouse". This staffed location could offer outdoor recreation programming, information, and equipment for rent.
- **Prioritize native species, pollinating plants and contiguous green space.** These should all be priorities for both the Grounds and Buildings crew as well as our Arts, Parks and Recreation and streetscape improvements. Those two departments should explicitly state these goals and develop a framework for maintaining these ideals in our outdoor maintenance scheduling.
- **Continued implementation of the Athens Sustainability Action Plan and recommendations from the Athens Environment and Sustainability Commission.** The commission is composed of community members, many of whom work within or have a strong background in sustainability issues and are dedicated to helping city elected leaders, the administration, and the community to achieve sustainability.

MULTIMODAL AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

MULTI-MODAL AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Where We Are

Athens development over the last 50 years has been automobile-oriented. This includes zoning requirements for off-street parking and separation of uses, annexations and growth on the periphery of town that encouraged auto oriented commercial development and shifted our commercial center from Court Street to East State Street and Columbus Road. Development patterns such as this became common throughout the US starting in the mid-20th Century and are now the de facto land use style across the United States. Such development has created cities where residents and commuters are reliant on the automobile to get around and requires an outlay of significant public dollars to maintain the roads. This pattern negatively impacts public health, small businesses, the environment, personal finances, and public resources. Athens also has a dense population that lives close to job centers such as Ohio University and uptown Athens and the large student population close to campus and student oriented amenities.

Many areas of Athens are in need of improvements to better serve pedestrians. There are buckled and uneven sidewalks, sidewalks continually overgrown, and areas where lack of snow and ice removal can create legitimately dangerous conditions.

Several city streets have been resurfaced recently and major projects have added sidewalks and bike lanes. The surface quality of the Athens road system is at an all-time high. While Athens will continue to improve its road surface quality, it is past time to turn attention to our sidewalk network.

Athens Public Transit (APT) provides \$1 rides to any of its stops, or free rides with a valid OU student/faculty/

administration ID. Bus passes for a reduced price as well as reduced price for seniors is available at City Hall. The APT has adopted DoubleMap as a platform to communicate bus locations in real-time. A fixed route system was adopted several years ago and due to route efficiencies and the Bobcat Pass program APT ridership has grown rapidly. Senior Deviation Pass and Athens On-Demand Transit are solutions available to Athens city seniors and the mobility-impaired.

Bus stops and solar lit shelters were installed at popular stops in 2019 and will be extending service to lines to Nelsonville and Albany. Athens is 2-time bronze level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists and was named the 20th best city in the US for bicycling by PeopleForBikes in 2019.

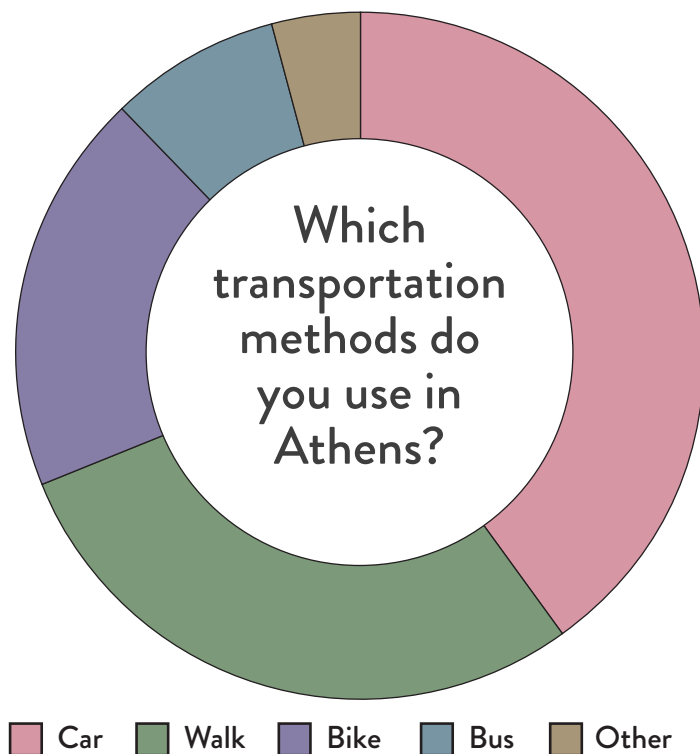


MULTI-MODAL AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

What We Heard

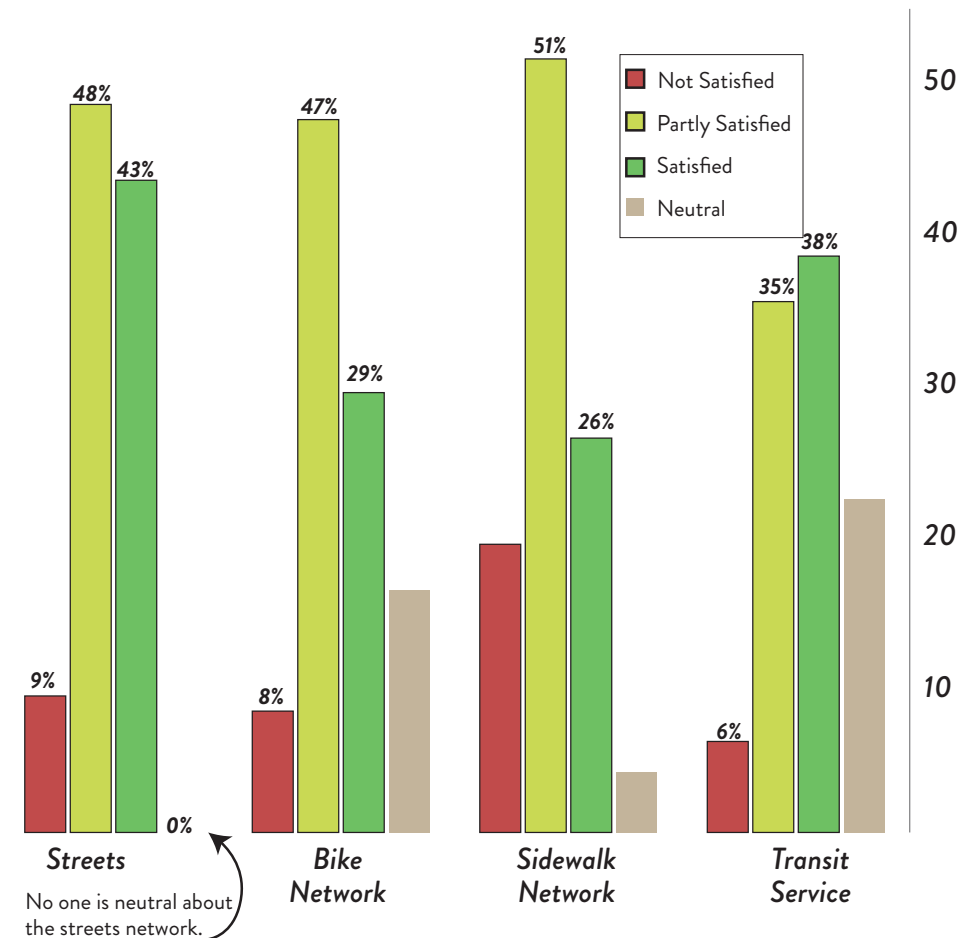
Throughout the course of our public input, there was a persistent request that bus lines, specifically those to State Street, run longer. Lines 3 and 4 already run until 10PM, and the rest of the lines currently do not have enough ridership to justify a longer running route. If ridership increases or a funding stream is located to cover costs, Athens could explore increasing run times or frequency.

There was broad support for strengthening the sidewalks and bicycling network and addressing accessibility challenges throughout town; Athenians want to be able to safely walk throughout town and sidewalk quality/coverage is the core issue.



QUESTION:

Please rate your satisfaction with the quality of our transportation network. This includes your experience with getting around the city and the quality of the infrastructure to support it.



MULTI-MODAL AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

What We Heard

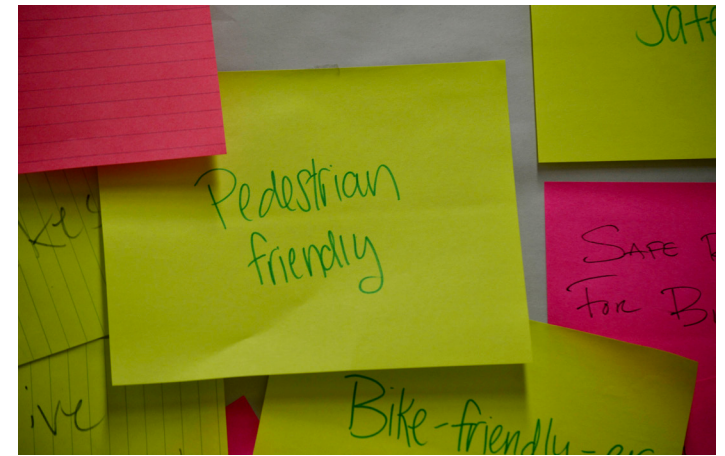
“ Fix the sidewalks and install lighting, especially on the West side. There are so many cracked, unsafe sidewalks and so little lighting that it’s unsafe to utilize. On some streets it’s safer to walk in the road.



“ The sidewalks are deteriorating and on some streets no sidewalk at all. Athens may be bicycle friendly but it’s not pedestrian friendly. Some sidewalks are ancient and in need of much needed repair.



“ Thanks to the city for further emphasizing crosswalk at Community Center. I’ve seen a reduction in cars running that light and threatening the lives of pedestrians. Continued work on this at dangerous intersections with high pedestrian traffic is good.



“ Continue to invest in traffic calming, bike- and pedestrian-friendly streets and neighborhoods, driver education, and public transportation. Fix potholes and sidewalk heaves (without sacrificing shade trees!), increase and improve protected crosswalks, bike lanes, bus stop shelters, bus frequency and route coverage, sidewalk connectivity, shade and benches for pedestrians and keep getting input from the public!

MULTI-MODAL AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Moving Forward

- **Zoning changes are needed to help shift development focus from cars to people.** This can be accomplished by converting parking minimum requirements to parking maximums while reducing the maximum allowable spaces permitted. Within neighborhoods, B-1 type zoning should be strategically placed to allow for walkable restaurant/retail locations close to where people live.
- **Improve the bike and pedestrian routes throughout the city.** This would be achieved by the adoption of a Complete Streets policy. This will include sidewalk leveling, increasing the minimum width of new sidewalks in the new subdivisions, expansion of total miles of sidewalk, ADA curb improvements, lighting improvements, and audible crosswalk signalization.
- **Improve the built environment for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).** Neuro-divergent people experience the built environment differently than neuro-typical people. They are more likely to walk places and are more likely to be disoriented due to unclear wayfinding. It is recommended that we initiate street signage on sidewalks and curbs to better address this and establish a support system for ASD with local businesses where people with autism know they can come in and get help as needed. Subdivision regulations and public works policies on minimum sidewalk dimensions/design should be reviewed. The Autism Planning and Design Guidelines 1.0 drafted by students in The Ohio State University City and Regional Planning program should be considered the guiding document to these improvements.
- **Increase the number of mobility options and improve the transit options we currently have.** This includes working with ordinances to accommodate e-bike and e-scooter stations in conjunction with the University. This also includes installing benches and covered shelters to facilitate APT ridership and pedestrian and bike-scaled signage.
- **Explore the city taking over snow and ice removal city-wide.** This would require a pilot project and significant study regarding costs and tradeoffs with other priorities but would protect and respect the investment of a Complete Streets program and make cold weather walking a much safer option.
- **Revert Court Street and some side streets in Uptown to two-way traffic flow.** There are many reasons why this is a good change for Athens. Bi-directional, one-way streets are a remnant of the times when state highways ran through the center of the city and were needed to move much larger traffic flows. One-way streets have been shown to have a negative effect on businesses that aren't on corners facing oncoming traffic, an effect known as retail-eclipsing. Two way reversions will improve dispersion of cars along the street parking if they can enter the street from both ends and allow for bicyclists to better access and move through Uptown. Two way reversions would decrease emergency response times and shorten average trip durations for most users. Two-way traffic would slow car speeds, which would be a benefit to cyclists and pedestrians.

Continued on next page...

MULTI-MODAL AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Moving Forward (con't)

- **Report regularly on our parking data.** The office of the Mayor should commit to transparency in parking data reporting which includes publicly reporting on annual revenues, citations issued, occupancy rates, and analysis of peak weekends and times when OU is not in session. It also includes reporting our annual revenues and ticketing citations issued. Athens should also perform clear communication regarding fee changes in parking zones.
- **Phase out brick sidewalks.** Brick sidewalks are difficult to impossible for people with limited mobility and are tripping hazards for pedestrians. Removed bricks will be preserved in order to continue maintenance on brick streets and other public projects.
- **Pilot traffic calming measures on the Near East Side, along Morris and May.** The purpose of these measures is to reduce traffic speeds along these wide roads and discourage cut-through traffic. Such installations should be temporary installations, designed in coordination with the city engineer's office, with the aim of identifying a suitable long term traffic calming device and siting for such a device. This program can then be replicated elsewhere in the city, such as Central Avenue when West Elementary is out of use and streets and neighborhoods with no sidewalks.
- **Implement people-scale wayfinding.** Use the historic obelisk street makers as inspiration. These updated markers will include information for bicyclists and pedestrians that let them know recommended routes to get to key areas such as uptown, campus greens, parks, and the bike path as well as estimated times to get to those locations on foot or bike.
- **Prepare for pilot projects concerning autonomous/connected vehicles (AV) that wish to operate within the city.** Some companies have already expressed that Athens has several desirable qualities for companies wishing to test AV; Athens possess significant topography and heavy pedestrian traffic, along with a young population who are more likely to adopt such technologies. As such, Athens City Council should have legislation on the books regarding how such companies would operate within the city before they arrive in order to mitigate potential hazardous effects and liability concerns.

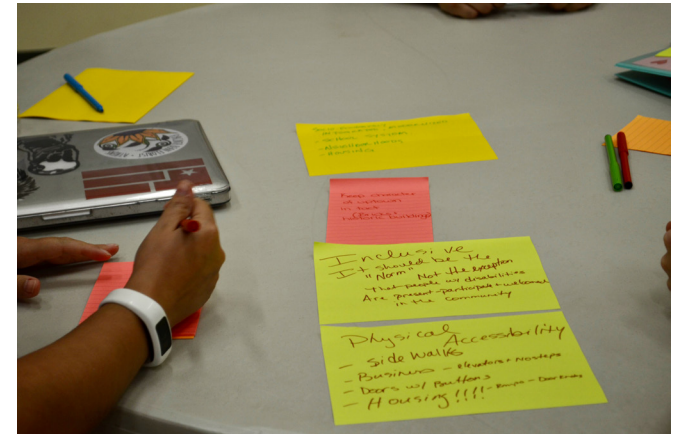
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Where We Are

Athens aspires to be diverse with respect to race, nationality, sexuality, and ability. The global imprint of Ohio University brings diversity to Athens that is unmatched in the region. Students and faculty come from all over the United States and around the world to study and live in Athens. This diversity of cultures is one of the defining characteristics of Athens. Ohio University helps drive diversity, and it is the responsibility of the city to nurture that diversity. In much the same way that Athens has difficulty providing employment for recent graduates, Athens lacks the cultural amenities and businesses that will keep people in the city. Diversity and inclusion are important to the residents of Athens and there is a need to better tell our multicultural story and ensure that Athens is a place where all people can feel at home.

There are several events and actions that are occurring in Athens that are helping to better showcase community diversity and inclusion. The first Athens Pride Parade was organized in 2017 and has grown larger each year since. In 2017 the Mt. Zion Preservation Society was organized to rehabilitate the historic Mt. Zion Baptist Church as an African American cultural center. The long running Ohio University organized International Week and International Street Fair continue to bring all Athenians and students together to experience and celebrate the many cultures to be found in Athens. The Athens City Community Relations Commission and the Commission on Disabilities are well established resources and advocates on diversity and inclusion and are both active in helping to shape city policies.



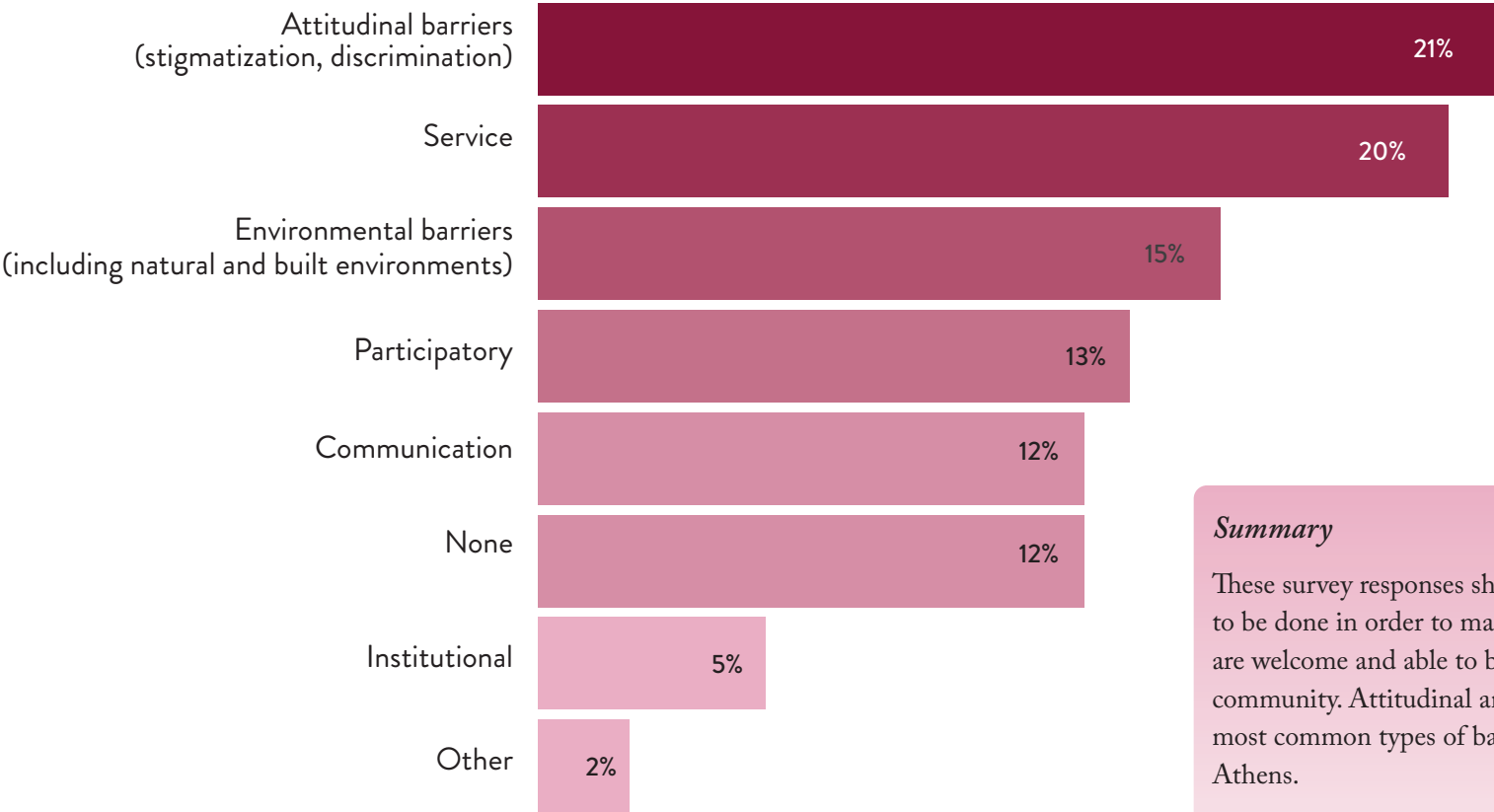
Ohio University International Week

Photo credit: Joel Prince

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Survey Results

What kinds of barriers to inclusion do you encounter in Athens?



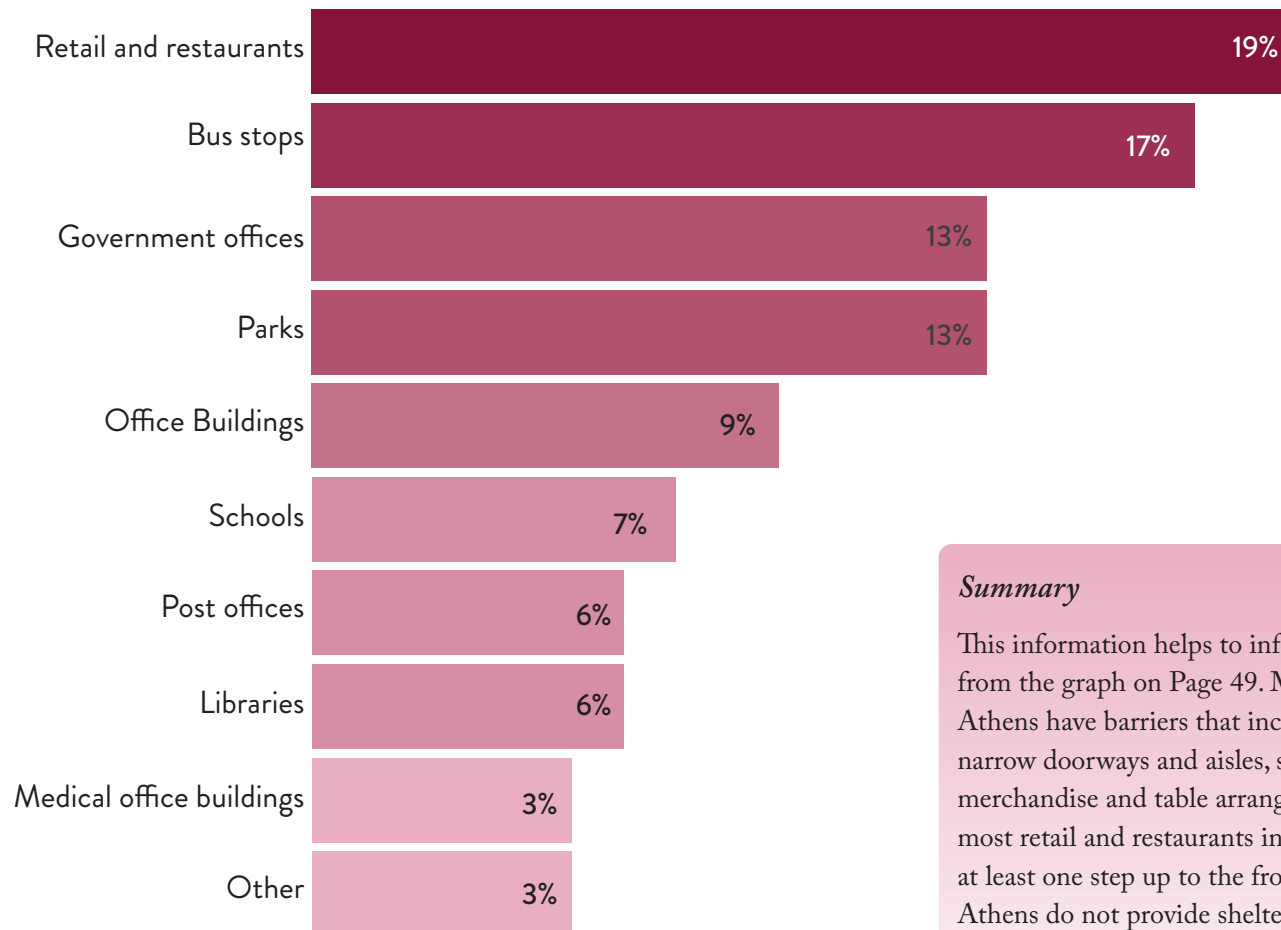
Summary

These survey responses show that there is a lot of work to be done in order to make Athens a place where all are welcome and able to be full participants in the community. Attitudinal and service were rated as the most common types of barriers people experience in Athens.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Survey Results

Select the destinations that you think need to have better accessibility in the city. Please add specific locations in the comments section.



Summary

This information helps to inform some of the results from the graph on Page 49. Many stores and restaurants Athens have barriers that include steps to entry, narrow doorways and aisles, small restrooms, crowded merchandise and table arrangements. In Uptown Athens, most retail and restaurants in the historic district have at least one step up to the front door. Many bus stops in Athens do not provide shelter or an appropriate area for riders to wait.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

What We Heard

Through the survey and engagement citizens expressed issues and suggestions that the community feel are spaces that need to be preserved and spaces that are needed in the city in order to make Athens more inclusive and welcoming. Among the key things learned was that Athens lacks some of the basic amenities that minority groups desire including organizations and businesses that serve traditionally underserved populations as their primary users such as ethnic grocery shopping or African American hair salons or boutiques.

Inclusive events in our community are ones where we make accommodations for people who are differently abled to participate in and enjoy community events. Such accommodations could include ADA accessibility or sensory insulation areas for people on the autism spectrum.

Some spaces that we heard are valued and should be preserved are Reuse on Union, Athens Makerspaces, ARTS/West, the Athens Public Library, Athens Uncorked, Athens Community Center, Village Bakery, the Historical Mount Zion church, Community events like the Brew Week and the Farmers Market.

“ Transportation is a huge barrier for people with disabilities, and DISPROPORTIONATELY people with disabilities who also live in poverty.

“ Athens is an amazing community but the built environment could be better. For example, more family restrooms, more gender neutral restrooms.

“ [T]he community seems to be very welcoming of LGBTQ community and accommodating for those with different abilities and integration of people and bringing them together in shared community spaces.

“ There is a small deaf community in Athens that often struggles to receive interpreters and linguistic access/ inclusion. For example, there is no deaf booth here at the disabilities festival although many political/ linguistic organizations exist.

“ People are generally very friendly. But little mixing of resident and student populations.

“ More businesses owned by (and for) people of color.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Moving Forward

- **Develop a city resource guide for inclusion and accessibility within the city.** This resource would be useful not only to current residents but visitors and potential residents. This is something that residents expressed and also a best practice from the visitor's bureau—that many of our visitors come to them seeking accommodations that suit their needs.
- **Focus on revitalizing the Mount Zion Baptist Church as a hub for the Athens African-American community.** Provide spaces that nurture diversity so frequently marginalized or underserved groups can self-organize and act as a base for interactions with other organizations. (Hosting ACEnet and ACEDC events there, developing a relationship with the city for potential non-profits or arts events, etc.)
- **Access to infrastructure like public transportation, parks and recreation, city walkability, comfortability and safety, and affordable housing.** Sidewalks and their ADA compliance should be a top priority for the city government. This is reflected in our Complete Streets recommendations in this plan. Accessible design standards as discussed in the Housing section are a crucial need.
- **Increase in the amount of gender neutral restrooms for LGBTQA+ community and accessibility.** We know that gender neutral, single user restrooms make all feel included and take out the barrier that many in the LGBTQA+ community feel. This will also remove the barrier that many caregivers have been caring for differently abled people. Communicate with different stakeholders the importance of single user gender neutral restrooms in city buildings, businesses, and events.
- **Sober events for community members who abstain from drinking, families, and students who are not of age.** This would require a champion organization or group of organizations to organize but would have broad reach. It would also provide an opportunity to highlight our non-alcoholic food products.
- **Training and workshops for sensory friendly, barriers within organization systems, and other inclusionary issues that were identified in the information gathering stages.** To address the need for community members and city employees to be inclusive to all people there will need to be training and workshops for specific issues that were addressed during the information gathering stages.

Continued on next page....

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Moving Forward (con't)

- Create processes, policies, plans, practices, programs and services that meet the diverse needs of those we serve. Many issues and barriers that were noted through engagement opportunities and the survey can be addressed through policies to show residents that the City takes diversity and inclusion as a priority. This can be done in collaboration with neighborhood associations, Passion Works, Student Senate, Graduate Student Senate, and other community and university stakeholders.
- **Tax incentives for economic infrastructure for businesses targeted toward a minority population.** It was noted that minority residents feel that they need businesses that are operated for them in mind. This can be done when owners are part of a minority population and dedicate their business model to include others in their community.
- **Follow the six feelings planning framework for Autism Spectrum Disorder** to better orient the city towards being autism friendly.

NEIGHBORHOODS |

FAR EAST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD (SELLS PLACE)

The Athens Far East Side Neighborhood was created in the 1920s as the Grandview Highland Addition. Most of the homes in the neighborhood were built in the post WWII baby boom. This is a mature neighborhood of mostly single family homes typified by a suburban vernacular design. The neighborhood is home to Sells Park and abuts the East State Street commercial corridor.

What We Heard

In the course of survey work and public input meetings, six major concerns/topics emerged. They are (1) ability to safely cross East State Street, (2) congestion at proposed Farmers Market site, (3) a lack of sidewalks within the neighborhood, (4) conformity with regulations regarding lawn and property maintenance, (5) how to support Sells Park, which was identified as a community asset, and (6) cut-through traffic/speeding.

Moving Forward

In order to increase pedestrian safety of East State Street crossings at Eden and Charles it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Monitor traffic speeds in the spring to evaluate effectiveness of road narrowing.
- Enforce speed limits heavily near residential neighborhoods if speeding persists.
- Consider eliminating a left turn movement from East State Street to Charles Street and add a traffic refuge island for pedestrians.

In order to address some of the underlying concerns regarding relocating the Farmers Market, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Create an itinerant path from the current dog park to Home Street, running parallel to the bike path using the old rail grade. Such a path should be open to cyclists and pedestrians at all times, available to be opened by emergency personnel as needed and open for Farmers Market vendors and customers before, during and after the Farmers Market.
- Develop plans to relocate the dog park to ensure that amenity remains for its users if the dog park is displaced for the Farmers Market.
- The Arts, Parks, and Recreation department should develop a campus plan for the Athens Community Center so that the entire campus is better connected, signed, and includes traffic management.

In order to increase the walkability of the residential streets as well as calm traffic in the neighborhood, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Convene public meetings and survey work to figure out the best solution for bike and pedestrian access within the neighborhood. Sidewalks are desired but sidewalk installation is expensive and can be financially burdensome for homeowners; a frank, transparent public process is the best way to manage this sidewalk expansion.

- Better define the neighborhood as distinct from the commercial corridor by adding gateway signage or markers, and chicanes/bump outs to the southern edge of the R1 zoning area (see page 15 of this document). These should incorporate signage indicating entering the Far East Side Neighborhood. This will help to clearly define the residential area from the commercial area and communicate to drivers that they have entered the neighborhood.

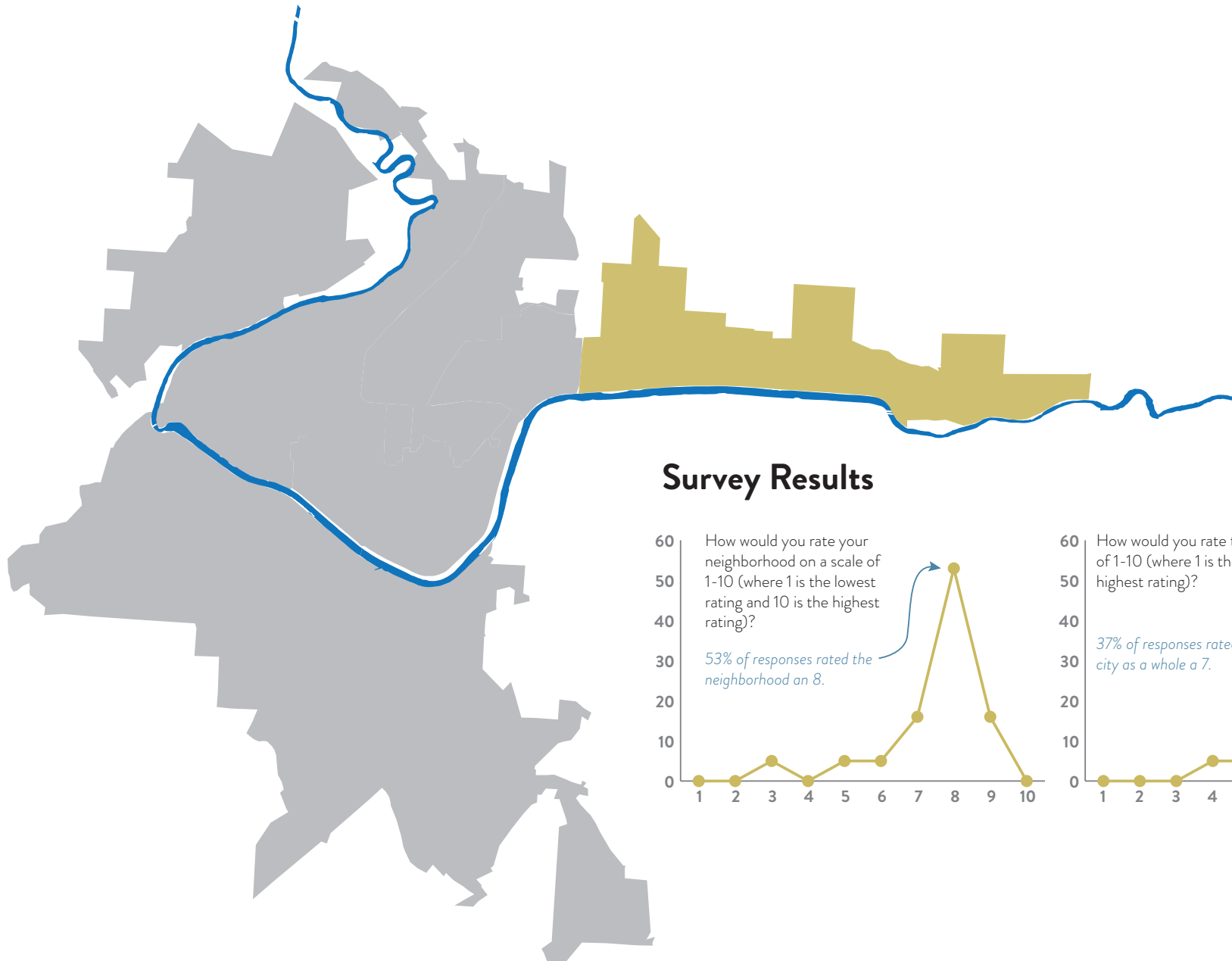
In order to better maintain adherence with city code it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Increase usage of the City Source app, which allows users to submit issues to the city administration and track their progress. This app should be mentioned on the occupancy form that goes in all rentals.
- Increase staffing at the code office, in accordance with recommendations made in the Housing and Neighborhoods section of this plan.

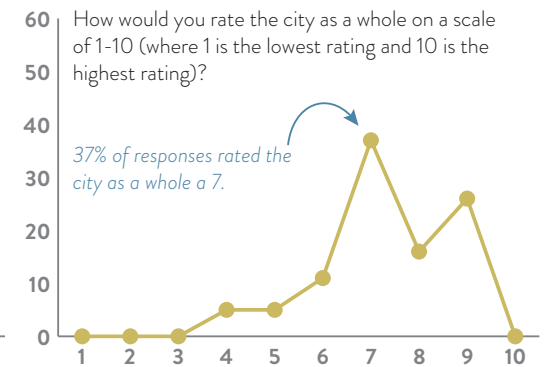
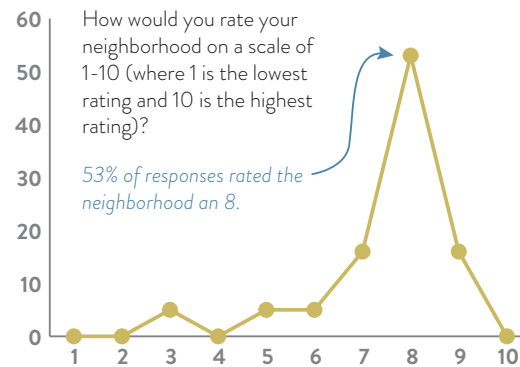
In order to support Sells Park it is the recommendation of this plan:

- Install a small shelter near the trailhead
- Coordinate outdoor recreation activities in Sells Park through the Athens Arts Park and Recreation Department.
- Create wayfinding in the park and to the park
- Street improvements, landscaping, and signage along Avon Place to better define it as a gateway to Sells Park

FAR EAST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD (SELLS PLACE)



Survey Results



NEAR EAST SIDE (SUNNYSIDE)

The Near East Side Neighborhood is one of the older residential areas in Athens. It is situated close to both Uptown Athens and the Ohio University campus. The neighborhood contains a National Registry historic residential district and includes several important anchors including an elementary school, a public library, and the Hockhocking Adena bike path. Much of the neighborhood is built in the 100-year flood plain.

What We Heard

Items presented as issues on the Near East Side are (1) the removal of street trees, which are fundamental to the character of the near east side, (2) deterring cut-through traffic/issues with Grant Avenue, (3) promoting access to green space, specifically access to the green space near the library/river (4) improving the Stimson Avenue corridor.

Moving Forward

In order to promote tree canopy and access to green space within the city it is the recommendation of this plan to:

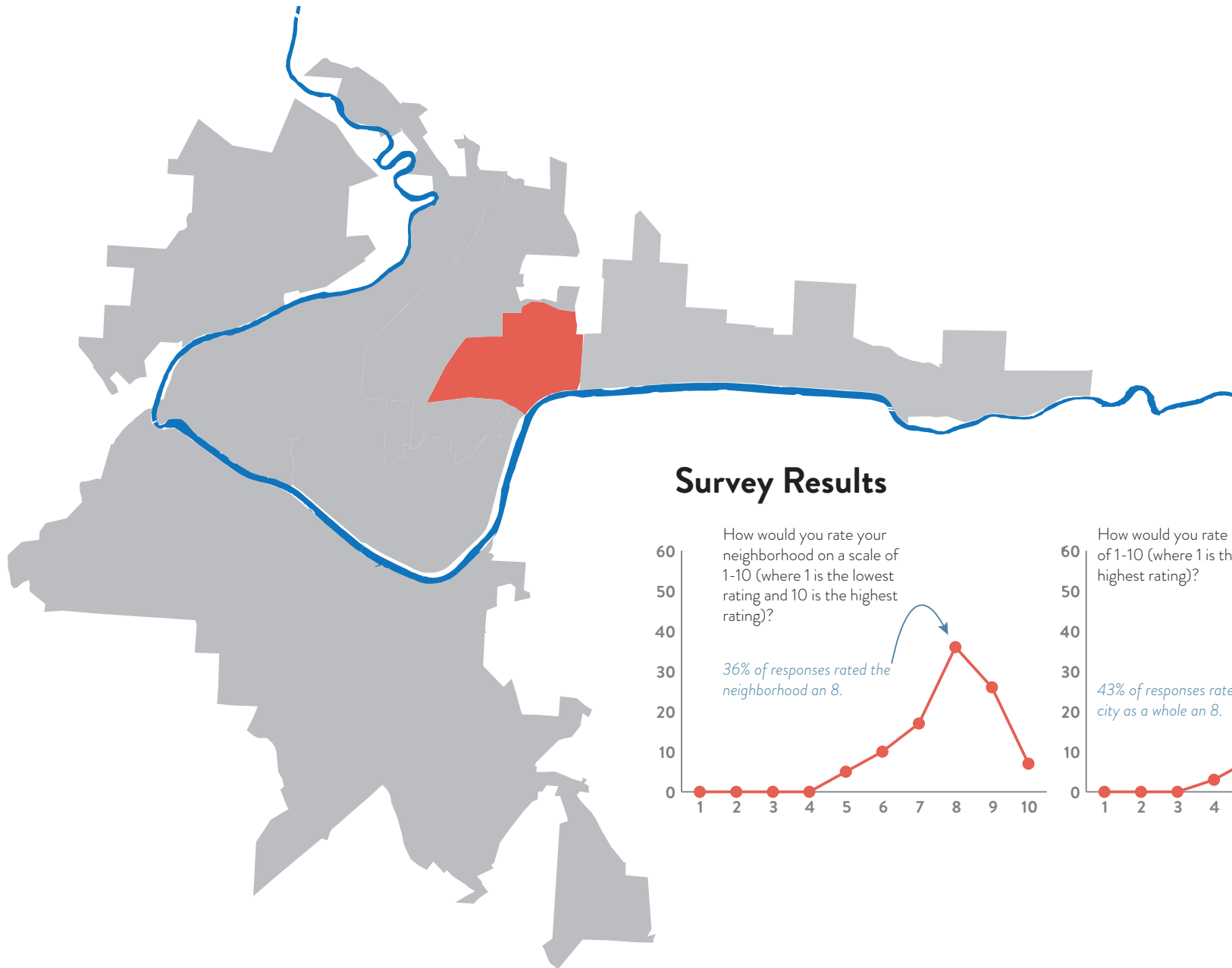
- Neighborhood residents should collaborate with the city's Shade Tree Commission to develop a program to retrofit gutters and provide low-cost leaf removal for seniors so that they are not incentivized to cut down shade trees on private property.
- Develop a clear plan with community input to better manage the city's tree canopy as it relates to environmental benefits, utility pruning, and development requirements. This should include consideration of other environmental options to include green infrastructure and building design. The city Shade Tree Commission, Sustainability Commission, City Council, and city administration should partner on this project.
- Develop a long term plan to develop sidewalks and streets that includes shade trees, landscaping and signage to lead people to public parks, trails, and the bike path.
- Formalize a parking area and signage at the far east of Morris Avenue for recreational access to the field and bike path.
- In order to control traffic within the neighborhood, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Pilot traffic calming projects in the neighborhood and expanding successful efforts to other neighborhoods. These will be temporary installations that we will monitor to determine if they are effective in reducing traffic speeds in the Near East Neighborhood. Mock-ups of what those installations might look like are available on page 11 of this document. Such pilot projects can be collaboratively done between the city administration and neighborhood residents.

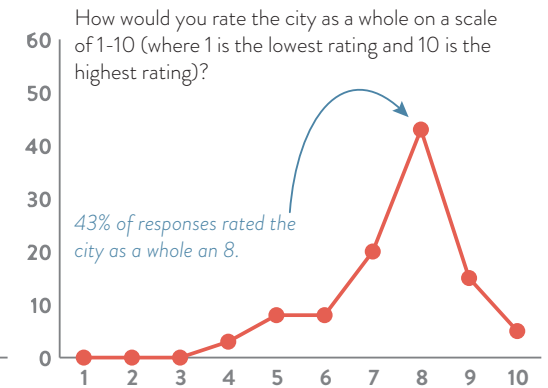
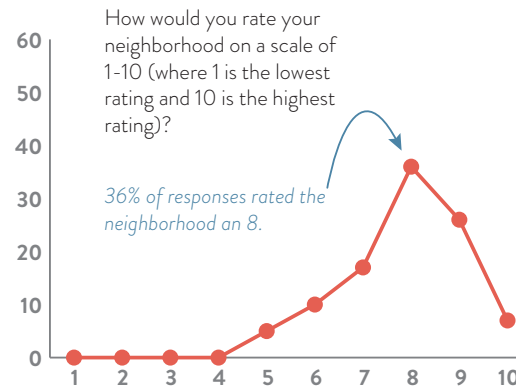
In order to cultivate a more vibrant economic corridor along Stimson Avenue, commensurate with citizen feedback, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Change zoning along Stimson Avenue to help remake Stimson as a transition zone between the single family Near East Side and the multi-unit off-campus Mill Street residential area. Such zoning changes should focus on high quality design that is pedestrian scaled.
- Improve pedestrian experience on Stimson with a shared use path that easily connects to the bike path.

NEAR EAST SIDE (SUNNYSIDE)



Survey Results



WEST SIDE (CAMP WOOL)

The Athens West Side is the oldest neighborhood in Athens. Housing is typified by modest, older homes on small lots. The neighborhood is a mix of owner-occupied and rental homes and includes several historic sites including a former Civil War training camp called Camp Wool, a home where Booker T. Washington was married, and the former Economy Supply store, which is the current Stuart MacDonald building. The University Estates subdivision on the far west end of the neighborhood is a large scale suburban PUD with ongoing development occurring. The West Side's anchors include ARTS/ West, West State Street Park, and the HockHocking Adena Bikeway. Another anchor, West Elementary School, is slated for closure in the next three years.

What We Heard

Athens West Side faces challenges that one might expect from a mixed renter/owner occupied neighborhood close to the Uptown Area; concerns about lighting and safety were the prevailing issues with Athens West Side residents. Additionally, there was a desire to see more effective bus service, and a desire to see improved sidewalks. These sidewalk improvements should be targeted towards the streets that serve as the largest pedestrian streets-- Lancaster, First, Second, Washington, State, Shafer and Central.

Moving Forward

In order to improve land use on the West Side, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Change the zoning of the Washington and Shafer area from B-1 to B2D. This is in conformance with desire to see more amenities sited on the West Side and will eliminate regulatory barriers to commercial/mixed use development
- Rezone the former Frank's Bait Shop location at Second and Central to B1. This will allow a neighborhood commercial use to return to that site.
- Rezone the parcels near Ohio University's Innovation Center to R3. Although this removes commercial zoning from the zoning map, these parcels would be ideally suited as denser housing development, especially in conjunction with changes to the fairgrounds and a connection street to Herrold Avenue.
- Future University Estates developments should consider needs for senior housing, accessibility, and environmental design.
- Build a connector road from University Estates to either SR 682 or Armitage Road.
- Pursue the change to the Central Avenue and Second Street intersection as detailed on page 8 of this document.

In order to increase quality of life in the neighborhood, pursuant to the input from public meetings it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Explore sites for public art.

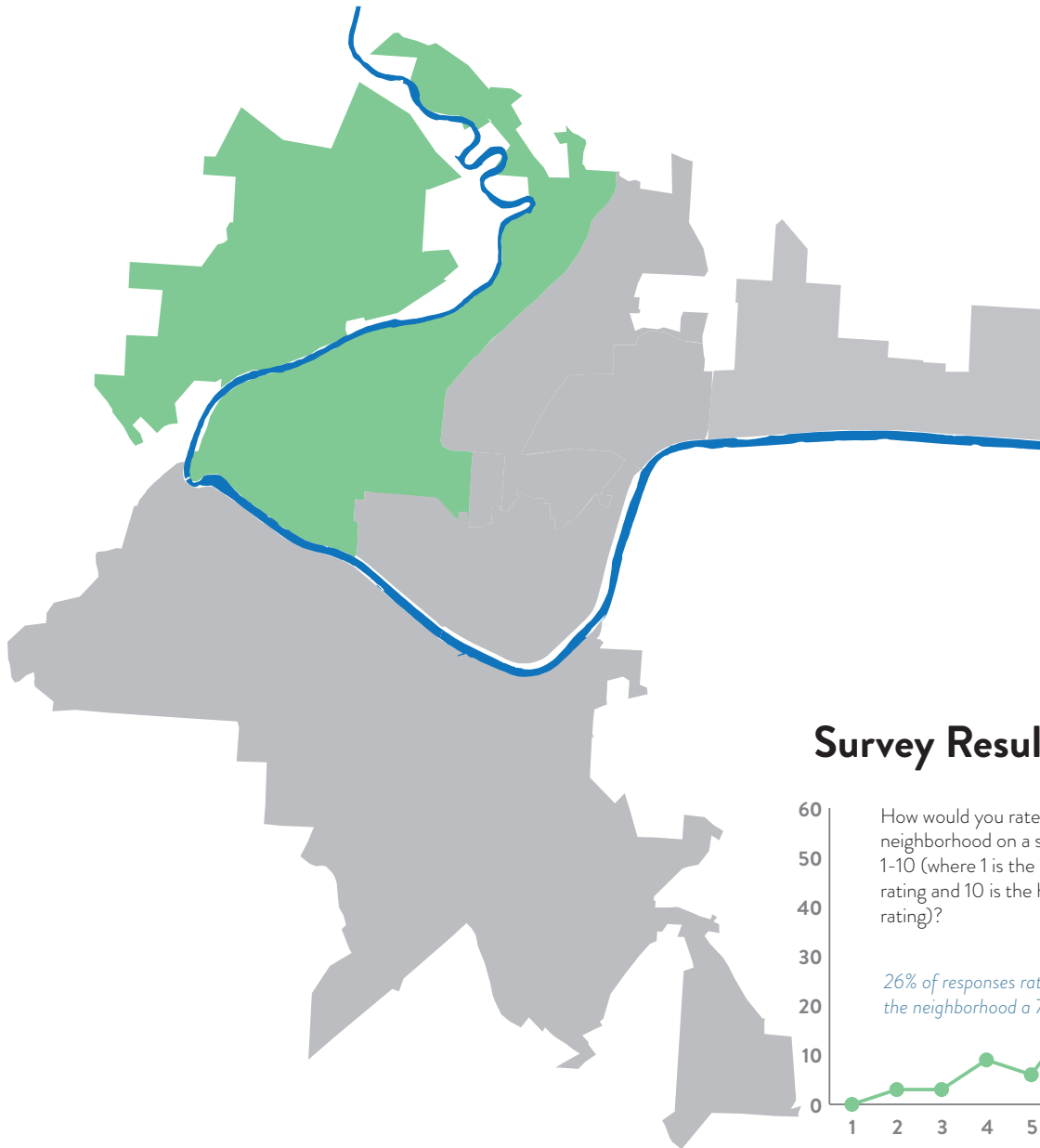
- Keep the site at West Elementary in use in the public interest, and support its thoughtful repurposing.
- Support ARTS/West and its importance as a community arts center by increasing city programming in the space.
- Explore the possibility of a pocket park. Potential locations include the ARTS/West grounds, West Elementary or the corner of Brown and Walker.
- Value-add to the Ohio Valley Museum of Discovery with outdoor public space that compliments the science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) focus.

In order to improve the quality of street lighting on the West Side, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Organize a city-wide evening walk-your-neighborhood. Use the event to have citizens report where lack of street lighting makes walking difficult.
- Promote use of the City Source application, which residents can use to report light outages
- Pursue taking ownership of the poles and fixtures from AEP. This would allow the city to perform faster maintenance as well as reduce costs. Incorporate citizen suggestions in streetlight redesign.

Continued on next page...

WEST SIDE (CAMP WOOL)

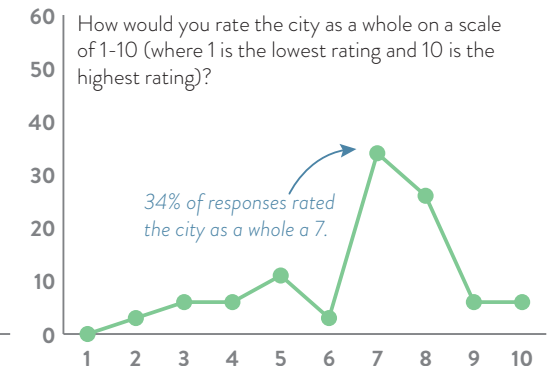
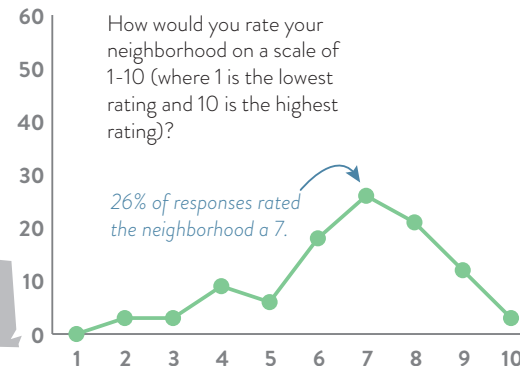


Moving Forward (con't)

In order to improve the quality of sidewalks within the West Side neighborhood, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Improve the sidewalks throughout this neighborhood, including overgrowth and lightning in addition to physical condition improvement. Priority should be given to Lancaster, First, Second, Washington, State, Shafer and Central, which function as high-capacity pedestrian streets.
- Organize a city-wide walk-your-neighborhood event. Use the event to have citizens report where lack of sidewalks or broken sidewalks makes walking difficult. This event could be spearheaded by the disabilities commission.
- Promote use of the City Source application, which residents can use to report sidewalk issues in specific locations.
- The city should explore costs and fees associated with moving the onus of snow/ice removal on sidewalks to the city.

Survey Results



SOUTH SIDE (MECHANICSBURG)

Most of the South Side was annexed into the city in the 1950s. Prior to the annexation of the area was the village of Mechanicburg. The South Side is primarily single family suburban development comprising mid-late 20th century suburban vernacular style and several large off-campus housing developments in the hilltops on either side of Richland Avenue. There are also pockets within the neighborhood that reflect a more rural character to include large tracts of meadows and forests. The South Side has significant topographic changes from the Coates Run floodplain along Richland Ave to the ridges of the developments around Canterbury, Mulligan, Longview Heights, Carroll, and Blackburn Road. Important anchors of the South Side include the South Side/Dairy Lane Parks, the historic Ridges, and the Camp Rotan/ Gawande Preserve/ Dowler preserve.

What We Heard

Athens' South Side neighborhood faces a unique set of challenges. Three topics were a common concern amongst South Side residents: connectivity to transit, the limited nature of sidewalks in the neighborhood and lack of common space, playgrounds, or a park in close proximity to residential areas.

Moving Forward

In order to better serve all users of public transit, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Increase awareness of the deviation pass available to seniors with limited mobility issues.
- Increase awareness of Athens On-Demand Transit for seniors with major mobility issues or

who can't be served by the deviation pass due to restrictions on bus access.

- Install benches and/or covered shelters at stops along the Line 3 route of Athens Public Transit on Richland Avenue. These should be installed at the stops which receive the highest ridership in order to maximize investment.
- In order to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists in the South Side Neighborhood, it is the recommendation of this plan to:
- Pursue a Complete Streets policy citywide. This would mean placing sidewalks on at least one side of all city streets, as well as reviewing street lighting.
- Pursue changes on page 16 of this document to help slow traffic in the Oakmont area.

In order to provide equitable access to community green space and public parks it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Improve the trails and amenities in the Camp Rotan trail/park system.
- Establish a "Friends of Camp Rotan" group to do organized trail maintenance and clean-up activities.
- Add signage on Longview Heights and Mulligan Road to help lead residents to the park .
- Including a playground/garden/parking adjacent to Camp Rotan on Longview Heights.
- Add parking at South Side Park to accommodate the very high demand at the playground area.

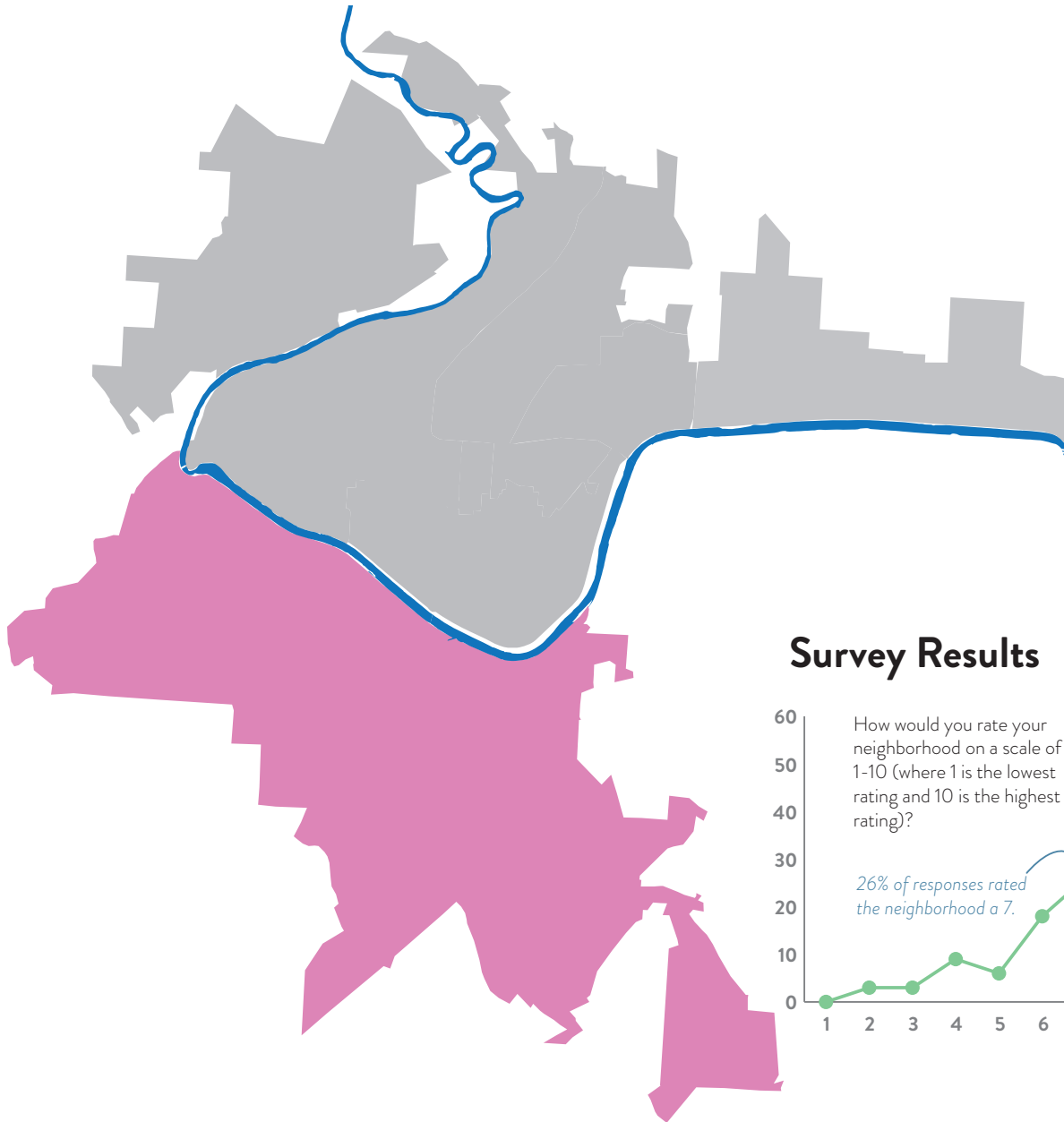
In order to ensure safety along the Blackburn Road/ US 50 intersection it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- The city administration and City Council request that the Ohio Department of Transportation commission a detailed study of the intersection and then invest in solutions to minimize safety risks there. It is important to note that any safety improvements here will likely decrease access by limiting some vehicle movements.

In order to accommodate more and denser housing options within the city, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

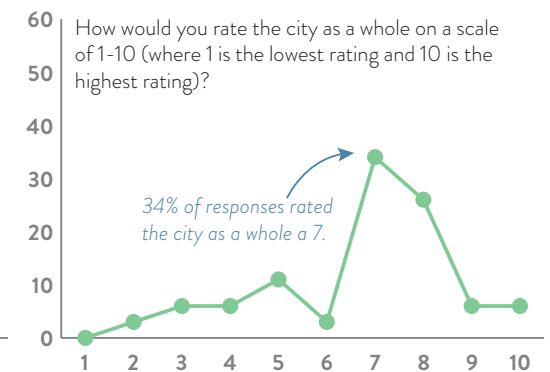
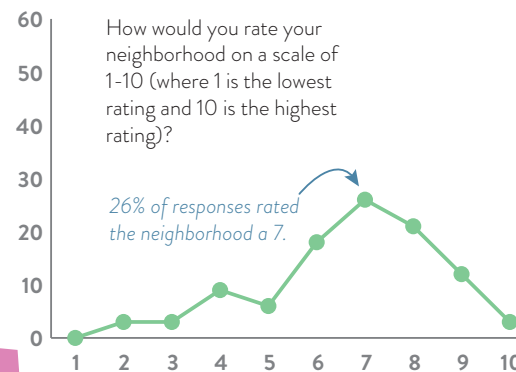
- Rezone Warren Road to permit higher density (R3) residential. Such an effort needs to be done in conjunction with public infrastructure improvements.
- Rezone large tracts between Blackburn Road and Richland Avenue to R3.
- Oakmont Phase 4 is an opportunity to add more housing options in the city. Current zoning for the land is R-1 and there is a requirement that any future Oakmont development include a public road that connects to Pomeroy Road. Based on the zoning and the infrastructure investments needed it is unlikely that this phase will occur. In order to facilitate a successful project it is recommended that the city allow zoning changes in Phase 4 that permits multi-unit, small lot, and townhome styles using universal design standards.

SOUTH SIDE (MECHANICSBURG)



- After several delays the county sewer corridor project is scheduled to begin in early 2021 and is intended to resolve existing environmental issues from failing septic systems in the unincorporated area outside the city limits. This project will connect approximately 1300 septic users to the city's public sanitary sewer system and provide for limited new residential and commercial development in the unincorporated area. The new sewer line coming across Blackburn Road and through an area in the city between Dairy Lane and Richland Ave may provide development opportunities for the Ridges Tier 2 area and additional housing in that area.

Survey Results



NORTH SIDE (NORTH HILL)

The North Side neighborhood is primarily single family residential with homes built throughout Athens history to include some of the oldest homes, mid-century suburban homes, and large estates. The area is well connected to the Uptown area but like the South and West Sides has significant topographical challenges. The North Side has a mature tree canopy and is heavily wooded. The area closest to Uptown Athens includes a mix of owner occupied and off-campus rental homes. Anchors in this neighborhood include the Armory, Mt. Zion, Highland Park, and a network of steps up the hills that help to address the steep slopes.

What We Heard

Public comments generally revolved around ways to make Highland park more accessible and how to calm traffic along certain cut-through roads such as Madison and Columbia. Additional concerns were expressed regarding housing and need for increased code enforcement.

Moving Forward

In order to improve the value of Highland Park, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Realign the parking and street configuration to reduce speeds of vehicles traveling past Highland Park. One possible design can be found on pages 5 and 7 of this document.
- Construct a new pavilion with ADA accessible-grade nearer the entrance (the existing pavilion needs extensive repairs)
- Pursue some community use for the area above the reservoir such as raised bed gardens

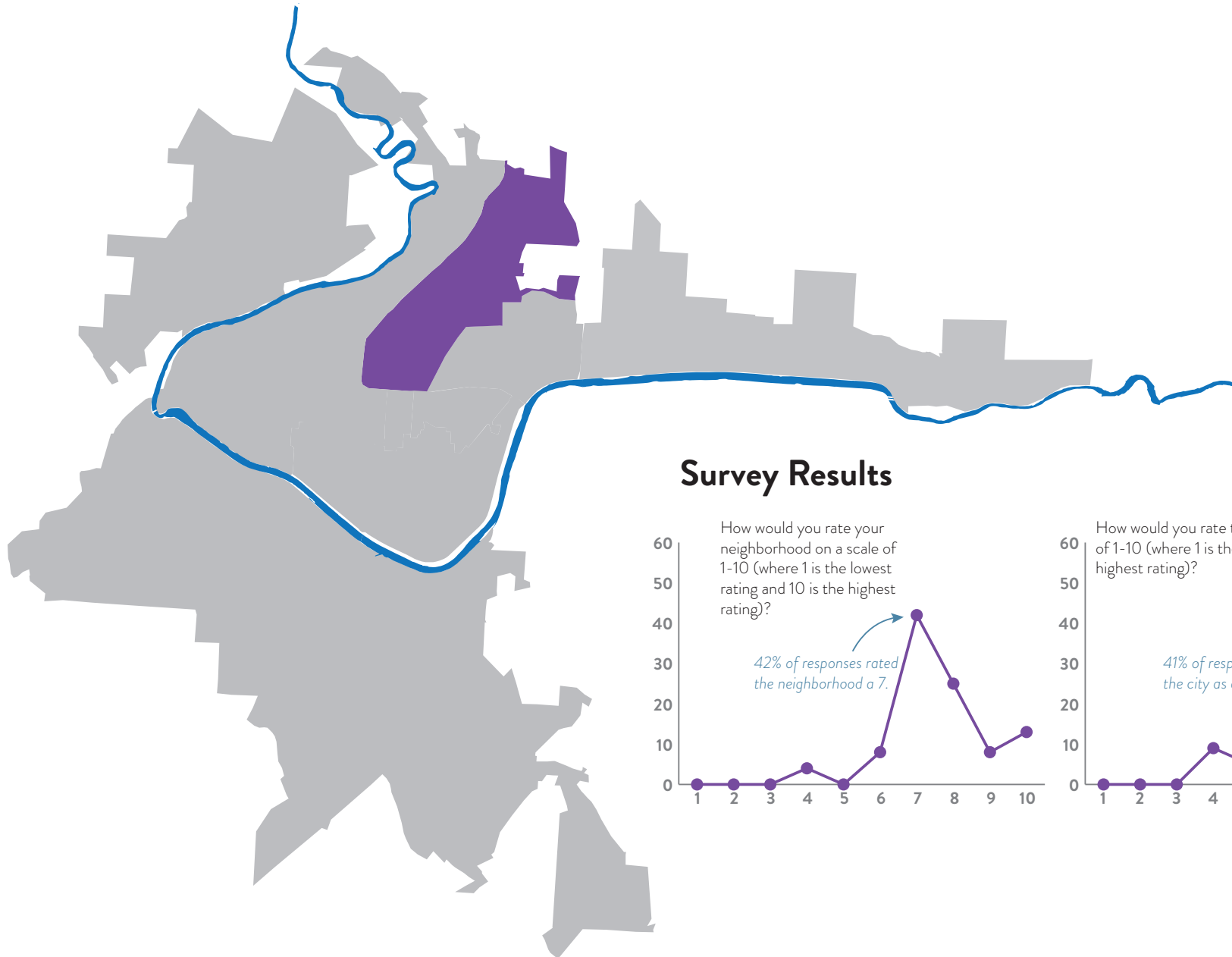
In order to improve sidewalk usage in this North Side neighborhood, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Implement a Complete Streets policy for the entire city. Priority streets for this neighborhood should be Columbia and Congress.
- In the event that sidewalks cannot be installed due to spacing or topography issues advisory signage should be installed indicating a lower speed and alerting drivers to the potential of pedestrians in the street.
- Improve signage and lighting at the stairs that connect Congress to Columbia.

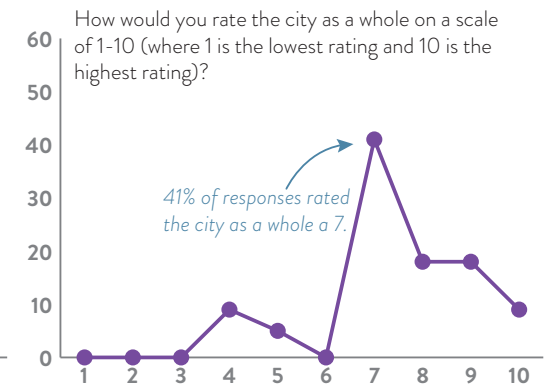
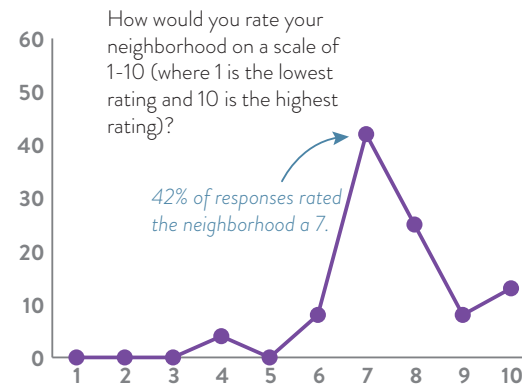
In order to address vehicular speed concerns in this neighborhood, it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Explore installing a digital speedometer adjacent to Columbia Avenue.
- Speed bumps have been installed along Columbia since the comment period for this plan. This plan recommends keeping these in place for the foreseeable future.
- The steep slope and length of Madison makes most traffic calming measures impossible or dangerous. Stairs along one side could provide some pedestrian refuge and narrowing the road could help to slow downhill traffic but would be costly.

NORTH SIDE (NORTH HILL)



Survey Results



OFF CAMPUS STUDENT HOUSING (CAMPUS HILL & CAMPUS CROSSING)

Off Campus student housing is a unique challenge for Athens. Student renters are transient and have fledgling experience with renting/managing a household. This can lead to a scenario where student residents are not performing required duties such as yard maintenance and snow removal, but also divestment in the housing stock. These challenges are particularly apparent in our Uptown and Mill Street areas of town, where student renters are the overwhelming majority of residents. For a more rigorous examination of student rentals in our other neighborhoods.

Athens has struggled in the past with how to best communicate to students renters their rights and obligations. The revamped occupancy form from the City Code office is part of the new process to aid in the student renter experience in a way that the former Owner-Occupant agreement failed. This form (1) identifies who a residents' landlord and maintenance contact person are, (2) informs renters about noise ordinances, litter and trash information, (3) identifies their responsibility for snow and ice removal.

Continuing to reach out to students and incorporate their experience into the Athens experience as invested residents, rather than just passive transients, will remain an ongoing goal for the Office of the City Planner.

What We Heard

Because most students live close to campus and Uptown Athens they are more prone to walk, cycle, or use public transportation than other Athens residents. Safety and sidewalks were frequent topics

students mentioned in our public outreach. This plan recommends changes to the way our city deals with these issues. The safer our sidewalks are and the more bike-friendly our city is, the better Athens is going to function for all users.

As part of our planning process, we reached out to students on campus to get their feedback on their housing situation. Students frequently commented that their housing quality was poor, but our survey work indicates that students are basically resigned to that fact-- although a majority responded that their housing was poor, they reported being satisfied with the cost. It also bears noting that few students feel the actual cost of their housing due to the forbearance and repayment structure of student loans, and many have no frame of reference in regards to the relative costs of housing.

Moving Forward

In order to increase pedestrian safety during inclement weather it is the recommendation of this plan to:

- Explore a comprehensive snow/ice removal by the city, (as described previously in this plan)
- Adopt a Complete Streets policy to address sidewalk maintenance and expansion.
- In order to increase the quality of the student renter experience; to improve the quality of our rental housing stock, it is the recommendations of this plan that:
- Increased staffing of the Office of Code Enforcement in order to efficiently and effectively perform their duties with Athens massive rental housing stock.

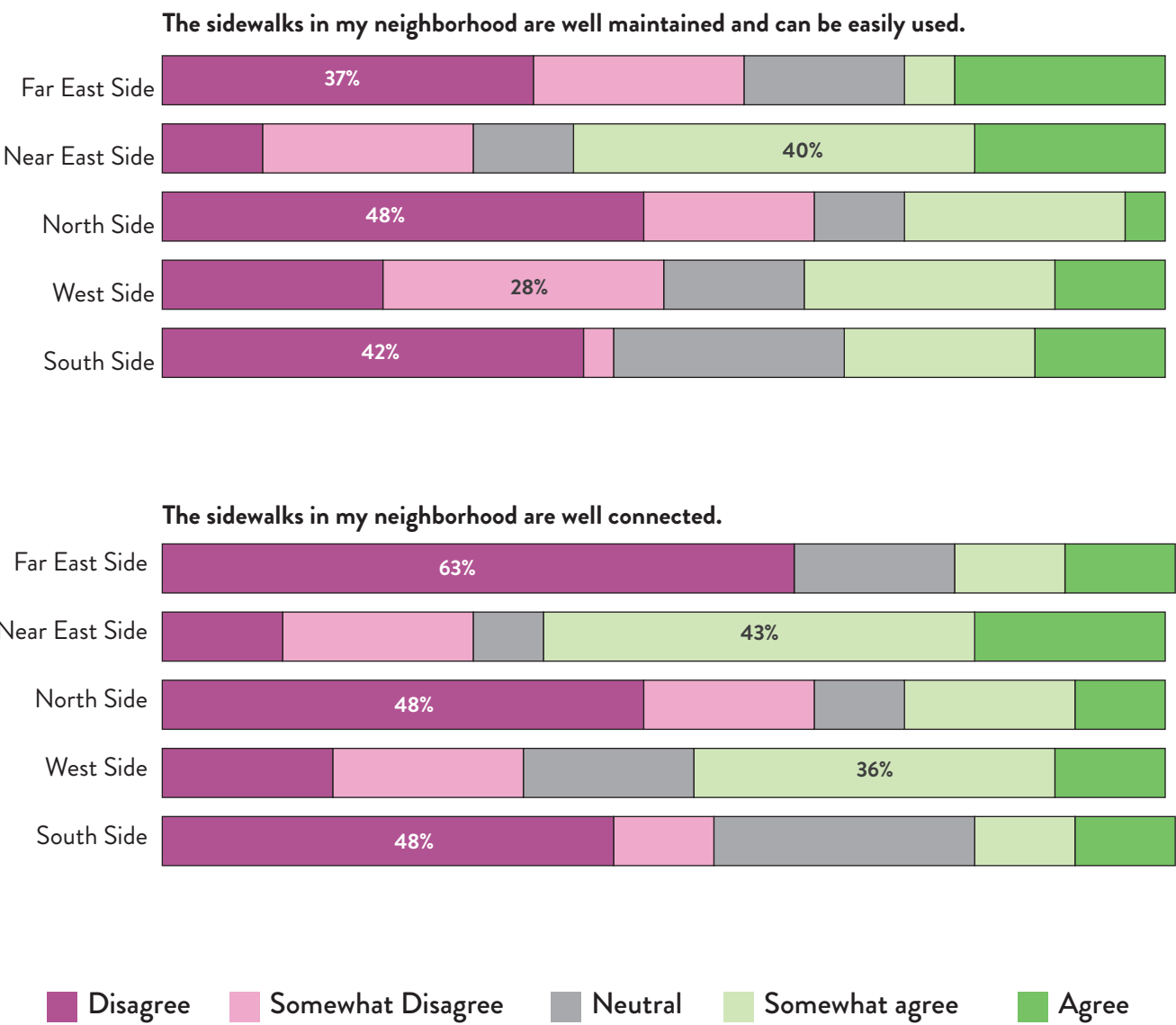
- Ohio University creates a student housing liaison. This position would work to educate student renters about issues with their property that may get them in trouble with the code office to provide a non-punitive intervention about property upkeep and nurture students into responsible tenants. Additionally this position would develop educational outreach materials for student renters so that they know both their rights and their responsibilities; to assist students through code complaints.
- The conditions for awarding and revoking conditional use permits for Greek housing should be reviewed with language added to Athens City Code to address building conditions and hazing issues. This review should include careful examination of the fraternity/sorority annexes and consideration of code changes to improve them as well. The condition of and activities within Greek houses and annexes has been a long standing concern in Athens. Under city code, fraternity and sorority houses are conditionally permitted uses in R-3 zones.
- In order to improve town/gown relations and improve the Athens experience for future years of student renters it is the recommendation of this plan to:
- Partner with the University to improve outreach, and engage with students, and incorporate their experience into the Athens experience as invested residents, especially during planning efforts.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Additional Survey Results

The following statements have to do with the transportation network in your neighborhood. Think about the transportation network in your neighborhood—the sidewalks, the streets, connectivity, bike usage, automobile usage—the whole thing. Please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

The percentages indicate the highest share of responses received for a given neighborhood.

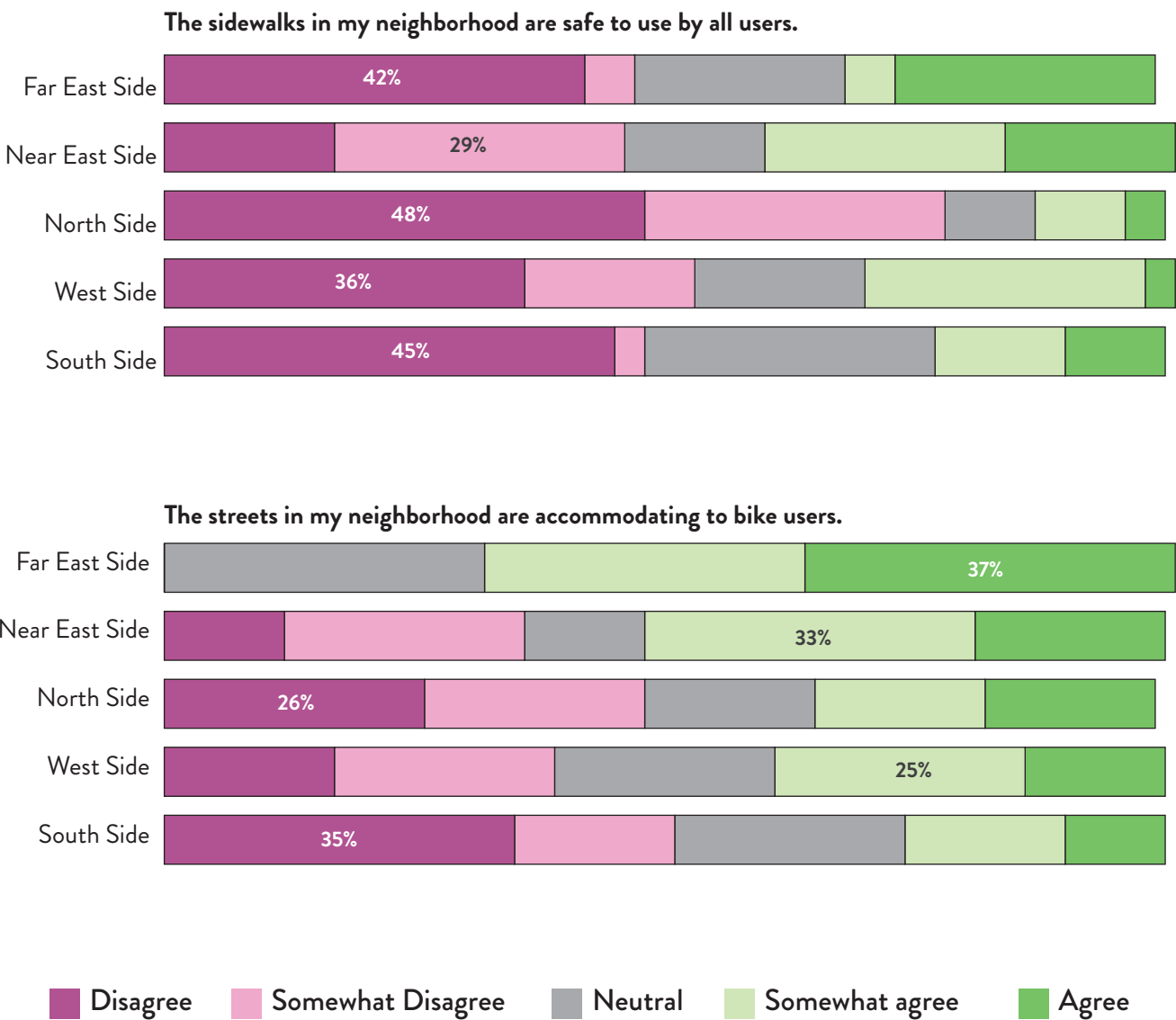


NEIGHBORHOODS

Additional Survey Results

The following statements have to do with the transportation network in your neighborhood. Think about the transportation network in your neighborhood—the sidewalks, the streets, connectivity, bike usage, automobile usage—the whole thing. Please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

The percentages indicate the highest share of responses received for a given neighborhood.

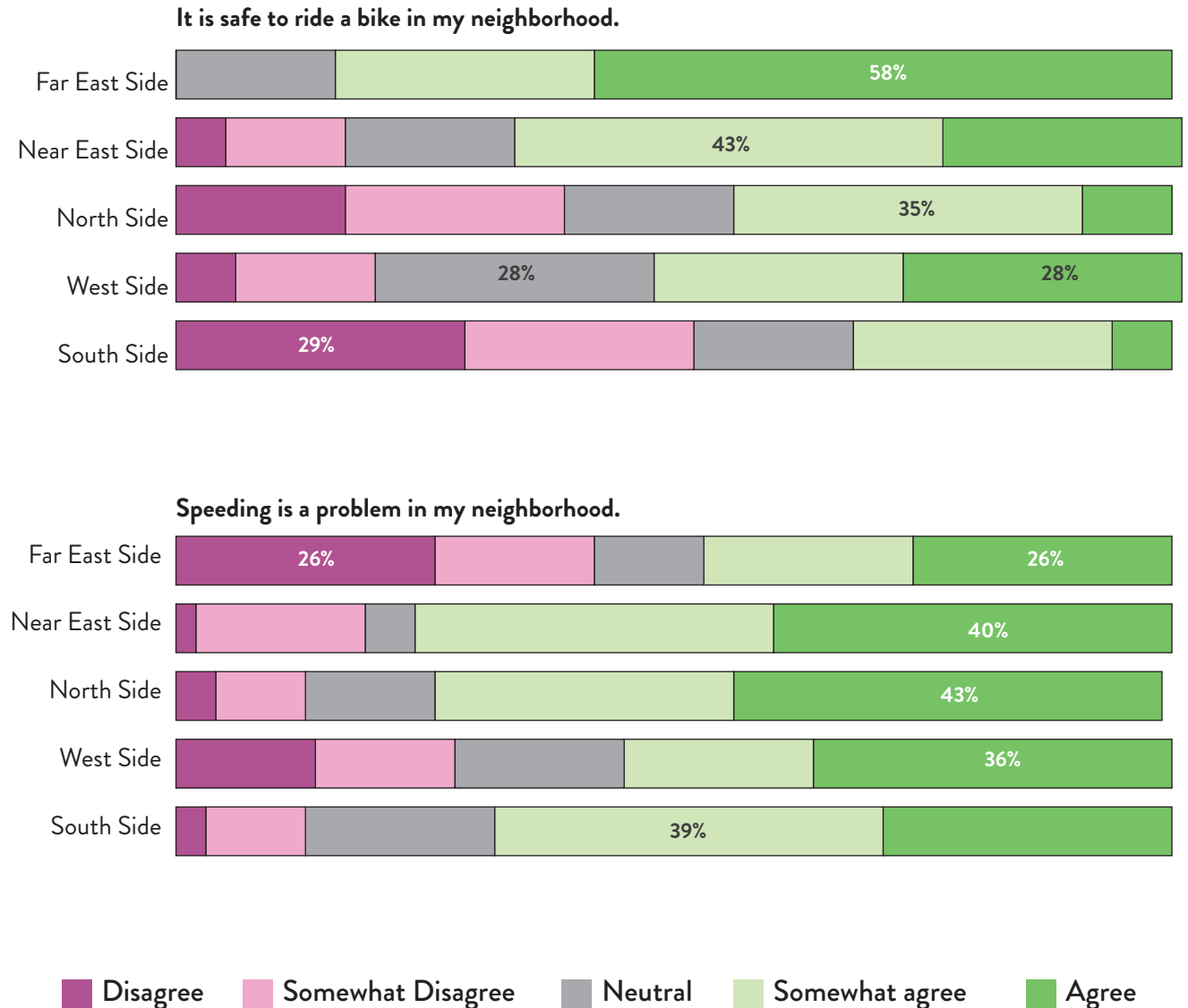


NEIGHBORHOODS

Additional Survey Results

The following statements have to do with the transportation network in your neighborhood. Think about the transportation network in your neighborhood—the sidewalks, the streets, connectivity, bike usage, automobile usage—the whole thing. Please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

The percentages indicate the highest share of responses received for a given neighborhood.

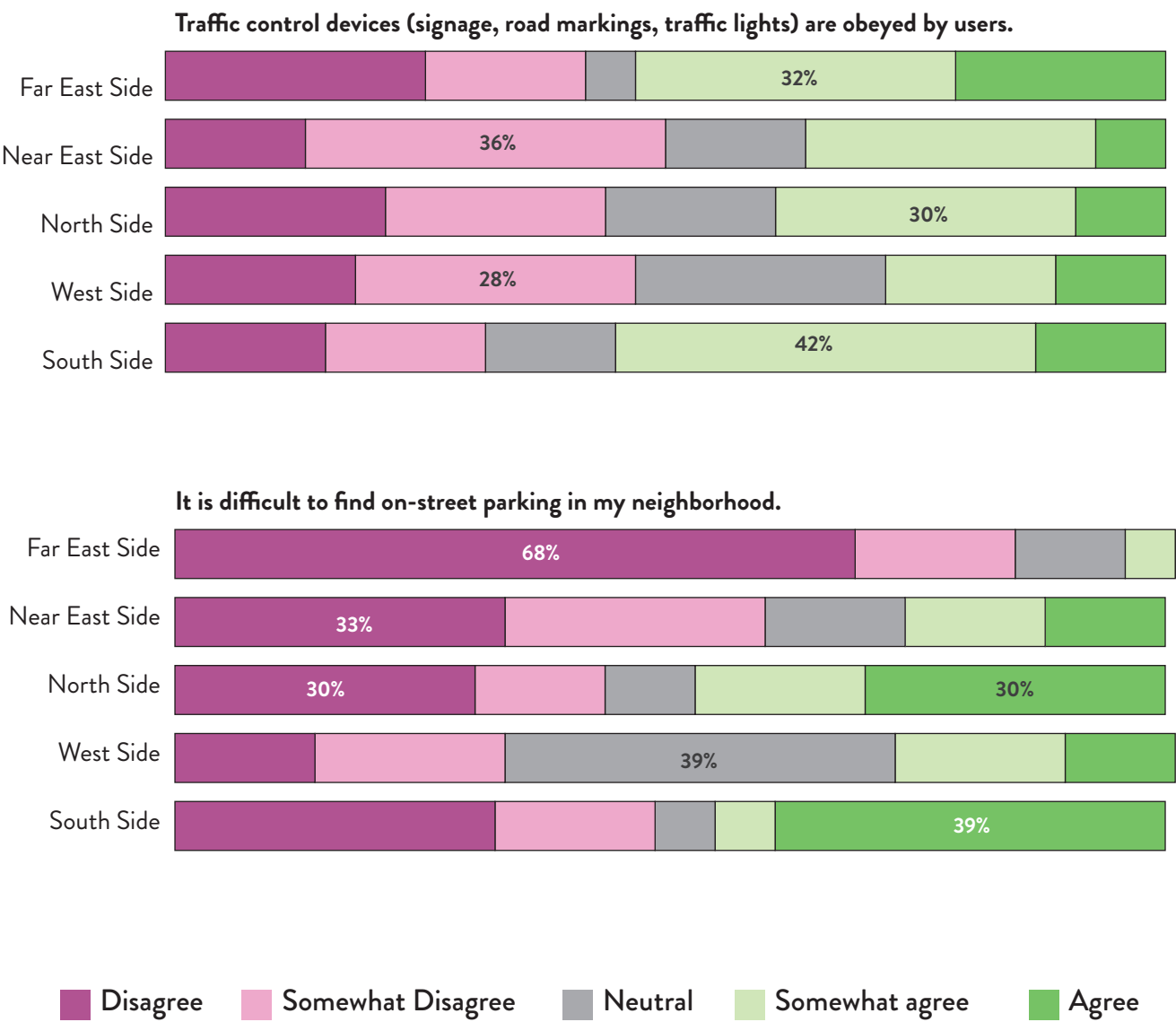


NEIGHBORHOODS

Additional Survey Results

The following statements have to do with the transportation network in your neighborhood. Think about the transportation network in your neighborhood—the sidewalks, the streets, connectivity, bike usage, automobile usage—the whole thing. Please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

The percentages indicate the highest share of responses received for a given neighborhood.

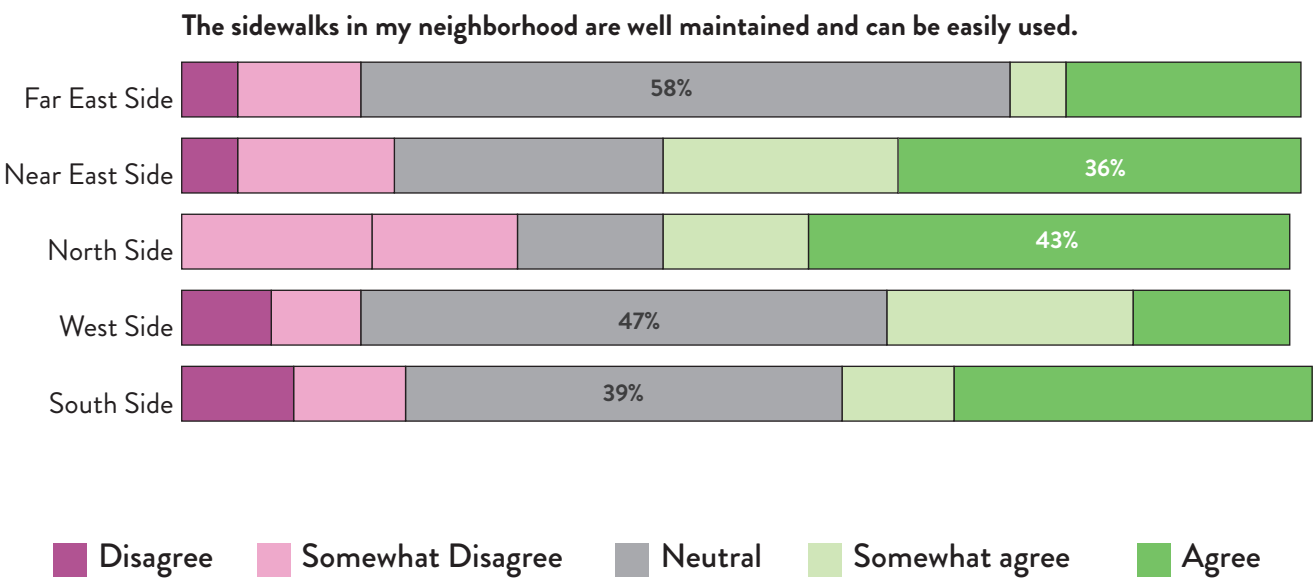


NEIGHBORHOODS

Additional Survey Results

The following statements have to do with the transportation network in your neighborhood. Think about the transportation network in your neighborhood—the sidewalks, the streets, connectivity, bike usage, automobile usage—the whole thing. Please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

The percentages indicate the highest share of responses received for a given neighborhood.

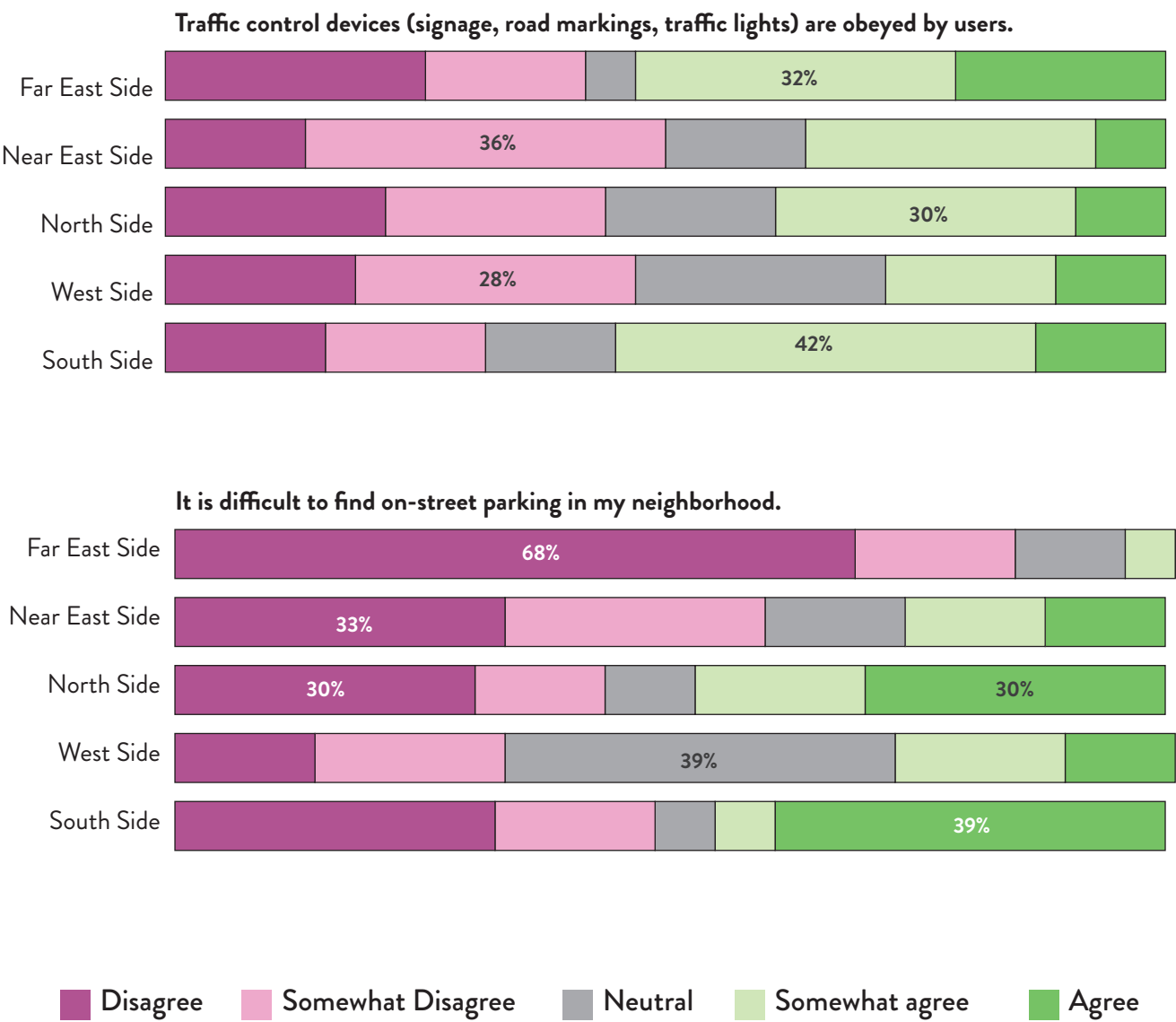


NEIGHBORHOODS

Additional Survey Results

The following statements have to do with the transportation network in your neighborhood. Think about the transportation network in your neighborhood—the sidewalks, the streets, connectivity, bike usage, automobile usage—the whole thing. Please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

The percentages indicate the highest share of responses received for a given neighborhood.

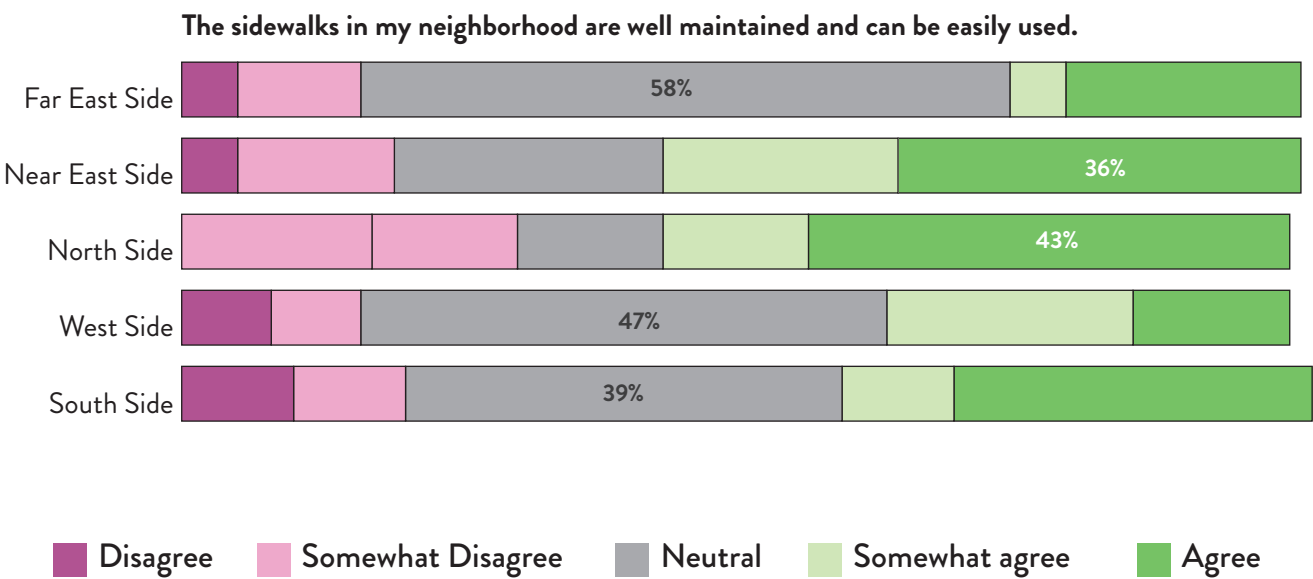


NEIGHBORHOODS

Additional Survey Results

The following statements have to do with the transportation network in your neighborhood. Think about the transportation network in your neighborhood—the sidewalks, the streets, connectivity, bike usage, automobile usage—the whole thing. Please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

The percentages indicate the highest share of responses received for a given neighborhood.

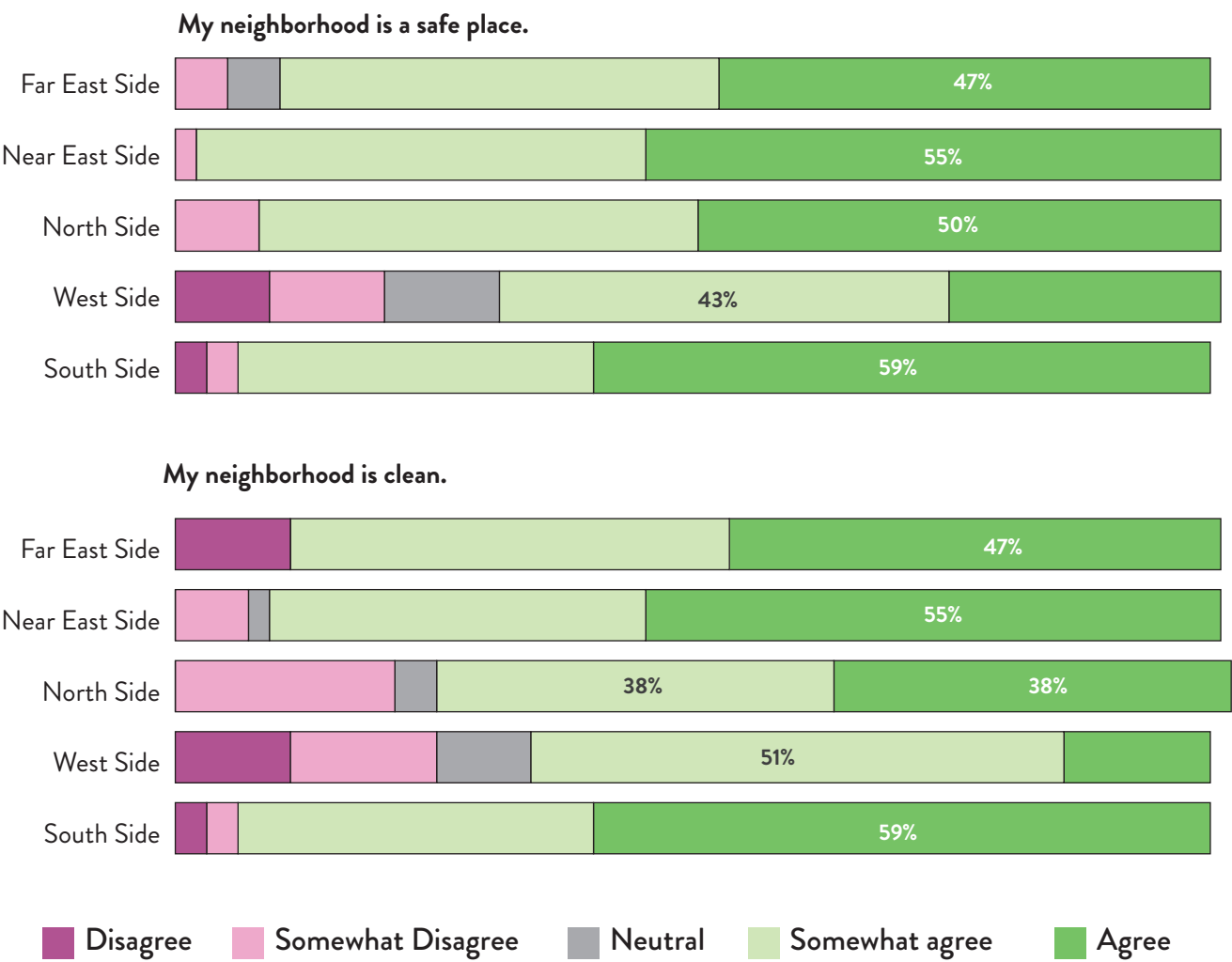


NEIGHBORHOODS

Additional Survey Results

Looking beyond just transportation, please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

The percentages indicate the highest share of responses received for a given neighborhood.

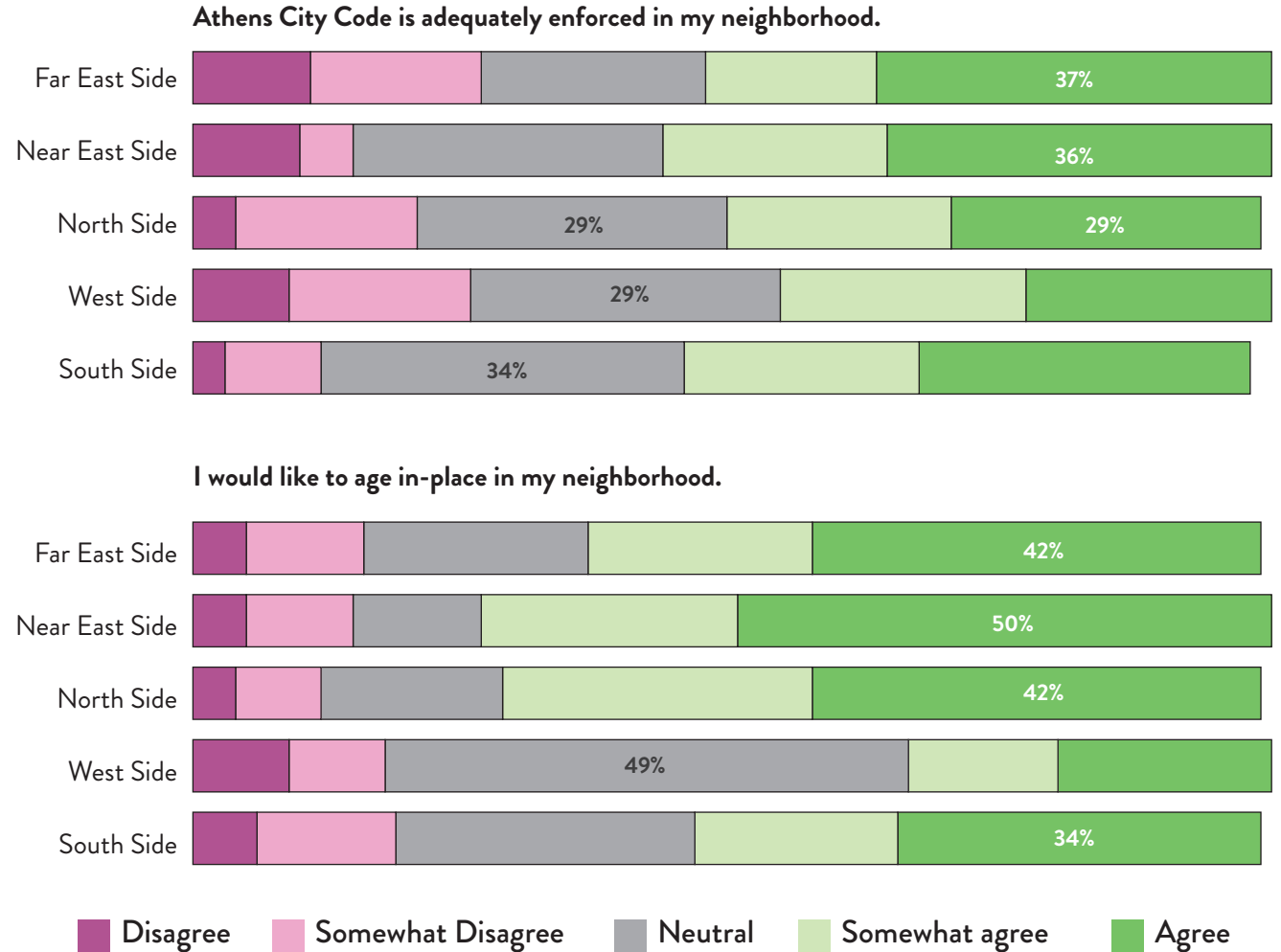


NEIGHBORHOODS

Additional Survey Results

Looking beyond just transportation, please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

The percentages indicate the highest share of responses received for a given neighborhood.

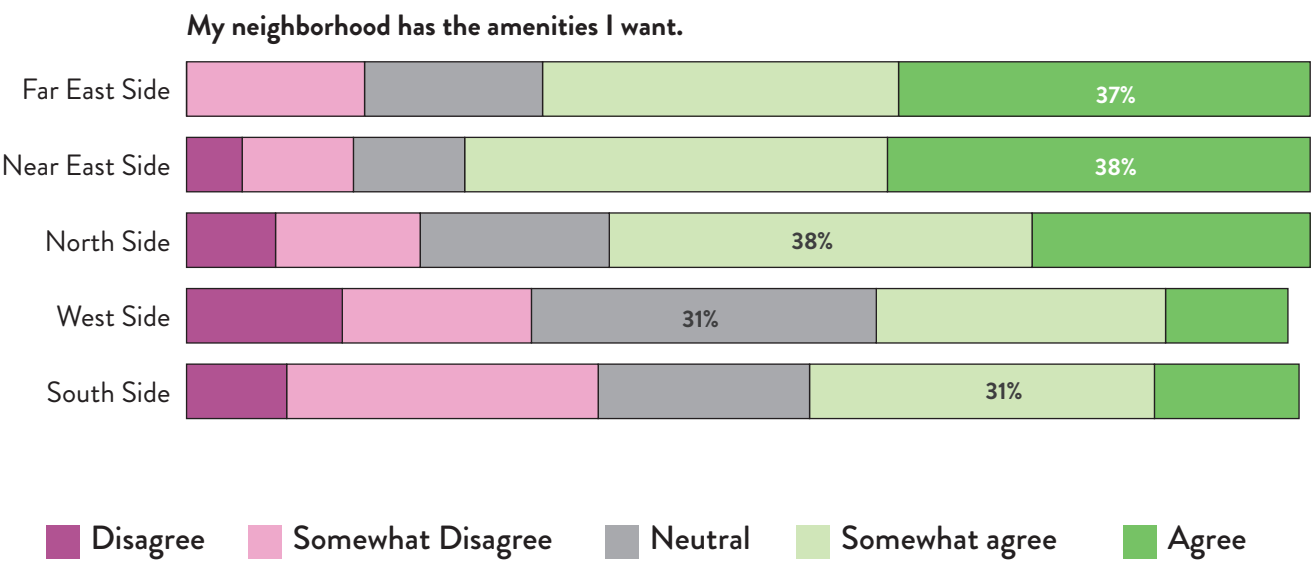


NEIGHBORHOODS

Additional Survey Results

Looking beyond just transportation, please tell us whether you agree, disagree, or are somewhere in between on these statements.

The percentages indicate the highest share of responses received for a given neighborhood.



CORRIDORS |

STIMSON AVENUE CORRIDOR

Background

The Stimson Avenue corridor is a half mile stretch of commercial zoning on Athens East side. This plan recommends a number of changes to the corridor to make it more usable for Athens residents, as well as allowing for change in development concurrent with the desire for neighborhood level amenities we heard in the planning process.

The Southeast Emergency Operations Response Center (SEORC) is planned for the northern side of the roundabout at the intersection of Stimson Avenue and North 1804 Way on land owned by Ohio University. This center would be a multi-department center used for training and administrative operations as well as a launch point for emergency services including vehicle and equipment storage. Community amenities including community rooms, outdoor space, and an amphitheater are anticipated at SEORC as well.

Portions of Stimson Avenue and adjacent areas are included in the federally designated Opportunity Zones. The Opportunity Zone designation gives private developers additional incentives in such zones. The likelihood of new development in this area is higher than it has been in several decades. In order for a successful project to occur the city will need to work closely with a developer to achieve a finished project that aligns with city goals for housing and economic development.

A long-term planning project is underway for this corridor. This project will re-organize our right-of-way to provide a more functional street for all users. Structural changes will include the widening of the south side sidewalk and restructuring on-street parking to extend further east. Changes made will also address drainage and ADA issues at curbs.

As part of the Stimson corridor improvements, we should consider the Carpenter Street corridor, and improvements that could be made there. Improvements and changes to the Carpenter corridor, along with two-way reversion of Court Street, are important support elements for Stimson.

Moving Forward

This plan recommends a change in zoning. The south side of Stimson from Campbell to the roundabout should be re-zoned to B2D or similar designation. Such a location could provide neighborhood-level amenities, such as convenience shopping or restaurants to the residents in the surrounding area. Such a development would also support restaurants in the area, and improve the walkability of the corridor overall. This type of development would serve as a needed transition zone from campus area to residential. This should include a zoning overlay that has reduced a building height limit for parcels adjacent to residential areas. By allowing 3½ stories on the South side and 2½ on the North, Athens can achieve a smoother transition from commercial to residential.

This plan recommends parking changes. These would be implemented as part of a broad set of changes to zoning regulation changes. These changes will include a reduction in parking minimums and allow the creation of shared-use parking agreements to satisfy parking requirements. These changes would heavily impact the Stimson Avenue Corridor.

This plan recommends that the city should also pursue the addition of a connecting service road from this Center to East Park. Such a connecting road would be useful for first-responders and other temporary users. As mentioned in the Near East Side section, this greenspace could be more formalized as a city park with recreational facilities.

This plan recommends exploring changes to the intersection of Carpenter, Stimson, and East State Street in order to increase pedestrian safety and ease of use. This plan also recommends changing the zoning to B2D or something similar that would reduce the need for more surface parking and encourage pedestrian scale design.



Stimson Avenue Corridor

WEST UNION STREET CORRIDOR

Background

Union Street has traditionally garnered less attention than East State Street, due to its lower traffic counts and lack of regional destination businesses except for OhioHealth O’Bleness Hospital and related medical care providers. Ohio University’s new Heritage College of Medicine development on Factory Street, the new College of Engineering Russ Opportunity Center in the current West Union Street Office Center (WUSOC) building, as well as potential changes to the Athens County Fairgrounds could have a large impact on this extensive commercial corridor. Union Street is an important arterial street to campus and Uptown for residents of western Athens County.

Union Street has 3 separate zones, with increasing the intensity of auto usage as you move away from the Uptown area:

The **Near Union** section runs from Congress to Shafer. This area features several bars and restaurants. Its proximity to the uptown central business district, campus, and commercial scale make this area a large and growing pedestrian corridor.

Significant changes are underway at the WUSOC building on Union Street. Ohio University will be renovating/performing new construction. There shouldn’t be a net change in the number of people utilizing the building but a change in the times the areas are used. The city is engaged with Ohio University in an ongoing effort to ensure that the

pedestrian experience in the area is safe. There are also ongoing discussions on vacating Factory Street to facilitate university expansion in the corridor and in turn connect Smith Street through the roundabout on West Union Street.

Mid Union runs from Shafer to the bridge near White’s Mill. The Ohio Health campus and Fairgrounds give this area a feeling of openness. This area has access to the HockHocking Adena Bikeway and most sections are in the floodplain. Seaman’s Grocery is an important neighborhood anchor business in this iarea. This portion of the Union Street corridor is to undergo an improvement process similar to the one on Stimson Avenue. This project would begin at the Shafer intersection and go to and include the intersection with 682. Planning began in 2019, with design beginning in 2020 and construction scheduled for 2022. Part of this project will include a connecting street from Herrold Avenue to West State Street. Such a project would improve flow of services for emergency vehicles, as well as the Innovation Center and Stewart MacDonald, as well as Athens Public Transit busses and vehicles accessing the city service garage. Truck access to these businesses is currently difficult, and such a road will alleviate large trucks traveling through neighborhood streets.

There are currently 2 downtown redevelopment districts (DRDs) within this portion of the Union Street corridor. This tool can help to support additional public improvements along the corridor to further economic development goals. DRDs use

a historic property as an anchor for the district and use a Tax Increment Financing- like tax collection structure to invest some real estate tax revenues back into the district to support infrastructure, historic preservation, and economic development.

Far Union is everything to the west of the State Route 682 interchange to the city boundary. This area experiences heavy traffic, especially large truck traffic servicing the Manufacturing zoning designation near the fringe of our city and Morrison-Gordon Elementary School which will be rebuilt in the next few years as part of the Athens City School District capital improvements project. There is some residential use in this area around Elliotsville Road and a few houses and a multi-unit complex on Union. Just beyond the city corporation limit is a large tract commonly known as the “Numbers Fest” property.

WEST UNION STREET CORRIDOR

Moving Forward

This plan recommends that the city should explore the possibility of connecting Depot Street to West Washington Street. This should be explored after changes at WUSOC are complete. This could be beneficial for businesses on Union, provide increased sense of safety for pedestrians, and should have minimal impact on Washington St. traffic.

This plan recommends that the Shafer/Union intersection should be rezoned to a B2D designation. This should support expanded services on the Ohio Health campus, changes to the WUSOC area and any changes that may come from the Fairgrounds.

This plan recommends that the city facilitate relocation of the Athens County Fairgrounds and Athens Township garage. These are two properties in this corridor that are underutilized from a land use perspective at present. Significant work would be necessary in order to equitably relocate the fairgrounds outside the city, but this would also represent an opportunity for the fairground to grow and increase its draw. Relocation of the township garage should be included in any planning for The Plains.

This plan recommends increased use of the former Athens County Habitat for Humanity headquarters. The Arts, Parks and Recreation department will be taking over the house that was formerly the Habitat for Humanity headquarters. This will serve as an office space and storage equipment space. As the

outdoor recreation programming expands, the site may be used as a launch point for bike path, West State Street Park, and Hocking River activities.

This plan recommends that the city should explore the possibility of a roundabout and realignment of the traffic interchange at Union Street/State Route 682. Peak demand time traffic (especially when city schools are in session) frequently causes congestion and dangerous driving scenarios.

This plan recommends that the shoulders of State Route 56 should be kept wide, clean, and paved, both to accommodate the wide vehicles that use the corridor and the cyclists that use the corridor to access other roads or businesses such as the Makerspace. Signage should also be improved for cyclists in this corridor.

This plan recommends that the Number Fest site should be annexed and zoned as either commercial or residential or mixed use. Either of these uses would be welcome, although any residential housing project would likely require significant transit planning.

EAST STATE STREET CORRIDOR

Background

East State Street, east of US-33, is Athens' most intense commercial corridor in terms of land use and traffic. It is a commercial destination for not only Athens, but the surrounding area as well, making it a regional destination. East State commercial area provides for a variety of business uses including grocery, auto sales, retail, food service, cinema, and medical services. This corridor also serves as the home to the Athens Farmers Market, Athens City Community Center, Athens City Swimming Pool, a dog park, and a community garden. The Far East Side neighborhood lies to the north of the corridor with streets that connect to East State Street. Portions of the development areas along East State Street are in the 100-year floodplain.

East State Street was recently resurfaced, with lanes being narrowed and bike lanes added in order to provide increased bike access and slow the speed of traffic. Roadside speedometers are in place to monitor speeding behavior. In addition, sidewalks were installed on the south side of the street, and bus shelters installed in 3 locations.

The Athens Farmers Market has been working towards finding a permanent home for several years. The most recent efforts have led towards a potential site on the Community Center campus. The city administration and council have been supportive of this effort and will work with the Farmers Market to pursue grants to build a permanent market and needed amenities to manage parking, traffic flow, and other needed improvements for the Market and the Community Center both.

The opening of Menards home improvement store towards the eastern end of East State Street will likely be the final major project along the corridor. This project will bring more traffic into the corridor from the US 50 interchange and then driving west. Additionally, Menards may negatively impact other businesses on East State that compete in the same retail space and could lead to some closures and vacant storefronts. Increased traffic towards Menards may make other areas close to it more viable for development including along Della Drive, the Holzer Clinic access road, and the US 50 interchange.

This section regards the East State Street corridor as being to the East of 33. For recommendations further west, please see the Near East Neighborhood section or Stimson Avenue Corridor section.

Moving Forward

This plan recommends a moratorium on extension of city services east beyond Holzer Clinic. The extension of city services is costly, and development should be directed elsewhere. No further eastward expansion/annexation is recommended due to costs for infrastructure needed to support development and floodplain issues. It is further downstream from the Wastewater Treatment Plant and would require pumping of sewage.

This plan recommends a change in zoning for the south side of East State Street from Manufacturing to B3. This change would allow mixed use development and give consistent zoning throughout the corridor. This could also allow for mixed use development that includes residential in the long term.

This plan recommends parking changes as part of a broad set of zoning changes. Reduce or waive parking requirements if a parking agreement can be met with an existing surface parking owner. Athens should examine an access road connector street to Home Street for the new identified permanent Farmers Market site that would help to address possible traffic congestion during the farmers market and be accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles only during non-market times. Athens should also explore different timings for the traffic signal at East Park Drive and East State Street. in order to keep traffic moving during the Farmers Market.

RICHLAND AVENUE CORRIDOR

Background

The Richland Avenue Corridor is the city's southernmost commercial corridor. The area serves several large housing developments as well as the Athens South Side Neighborhood. This corridor is home to the historic Ridges, a community park, the Dairy Barn Arts Center and the Ohio University Inn. This area experiences heavy traffic during Ohio University move-in/out, sporting events, Ohio University commencement and Peden Stadium and Convocation Center events. The Richland roundabout has been successful in providing a more efficient traffic regulation system during peak traffic hours. Richland Avenue was renovated in 2016 to better manage storm drainage, add bike lanes, and improve sidewalks.

There is a pedestrian underpass planned in spring 2020 on Richland at West Green on the Ohio University campus in order to provide a safe crossing of Richland Ave for pedestrians to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and motorists.

Ridges redevelopment is part of a long-term planning process, changes will likely take place in several phases. The University has produced the Ridges Framework plan that outlines this process. This may include a new "Welcome Center" at The Ridges. The University is supportive of revitalizing the historic buildings and the site would be used to provide a unique first impression. This Framework

may also include housing development as part of the Tier 2 Development Plan.

Much of the commercial area in this corridor is the 100-year Special Flood Hazard Area. New development in the area must be designed to reduce the likelihood of flood damage.

Moving Forward

This plan recommends connecting Camp Rotan, the Dowler Preserve, and the Gawande Preserve to create a neighborhood park for hikers. If real estate can be acquired or the front entrance area reconfigured, a parking/picnic area could be added adjacent to the Camp Rotan entrance on Longview Heights.

This plan recommends undertaking minor street improvements in the Richland Avenue corridor, including improving the crossing from eastern side of the street to western side; Improving the existing crossing near the Ohio University Inn (which also grants access to an isolated parking lot) to help pedestrians and bicyclists access the tunnel under 682 to reduce conflicts in the roundabout.

This plan recommends improving the signage for the bike/pedestrian underpass near the Richland roundabout. The purpose of this underpass is to provide a safe crossing of Rt. 682 for pedestrians and to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and motorists.

This plan recommends engaging in a branding and wayfinding campaign for this corridor. This could center on "Mechanicsburg" and the historical identity of the corridor. Wayfinding changes would relate to bike/pedestrian tunnel access as well as "destination" wayfinding signage. These are of increasing importance as Ohio University and the city may be undergoing bike/e-bike/scooter arrivals.

This plan recommends parking changes as part of a broad set of zoning changes. Reduce or waive parking requirements if a parking agreement can be met with an existing surface parking owner. There is little risk about overflow parking as there are no adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Support Ridges rezoning that is in accordance with the Ridges Framework Plan to enable productive reuse of this critical historical site.

This plan recommends resolving the Dairy Lane waterline issues with Le-Ax Water District in order to provide sufficient water service to existing customers on Dairy Lane and allow for more development over time. While this area is within the city, water service is provided by Le-Ax because of agreements when it was annexed. The service is only a 2" line and is insufficient for fire suppression and expansion.

This plan recommends improving pedestrian options on Dairy Lane by building a shared use path along the north side of the road.

COLUMBUS ROAD CORRIDOR

Background

Columbus Road is the northernmost access point for the city. This corridor houses many medical and office/professional services, the Devil's Kettle brewing facility, economic development non-profit ACEnet, as well as regional retail draws such as auto and motorcycle dealerships. This corridor has a new strip of retail space as well.

Much of this corridor is in the Wellhead Protection Area as codified in Title 39 of Athens City Code. Title 39 seeks to minimize the risk of contamination to the city groundwater supply and restricts the type of commercial uses that can occur within the Wellhead Protection Area. Office and professional uses are ideal for the wellhead protection zone as they have limited environmental risks with them. Much of the area is in the Special Flood Hazard area including the floodway and the 100-year floodplain.

This corridor can feel separated geographically from the rest of the city. There are no sidewalks connecting Columbus Road to the rest of the city, and the topography and vehicle speeds on the road can be challenging to cyclists or using transit. There is a bike path bridge and spur to connect Columbus Road to the HockHocking Adena Bikepath.

The area around the US 33/Columbus Road interchange is a potential development area that has not been explored in detail. This area is complicated by most of it being outside the city limits and infrastructure challenges on both the SR 13 and Theater Lane areas. Theater Lane has an opportunity

for more commercial development if annexation, infrastructure including a private sanitary lift station, and floodway/floodplain permitting issues can be resolved.

Finally, there are several improvements for the south end of Columbus (Near 2nd Street) that may become available in the next few years. Specifically, Athens Fire Station One is in need of constant maintenance due to the weight of the trucks and the engineering of the building. As such, the city is highly incentivized to relocate the fire service station rather than continue this expensive maintenance. The children's Ohio Valley Museum of Discovery (OVMoD) is scheduled to open in 2020 which will draw more traffic to that area. There's also the opportunity for a park in the lot between the Discovery Museum and the Fire Station One, if topography and funding are in place to facilitate.

Moving Forward

This plan recommends undertaking streetscaping improvements, aimed at improving the corridor for cyclists and transit users such as signage indicating that the cyclist may take the full lane.

This plan recommends utilizing the area of renovated brownfield at 83 Columbus Road in order to accommodate a park and go, sheltered bus stop, and small park area. Sheltered stops along Columbus Road as you near the 33 interchange would provide improved service for users who need to access the amenities nearer the 33 interchange.

This plan recommends parking changes part of a broad set of zoning changes. Reduce or waive parking requirements if a parking agreement can be met with an existing surface parking owner. There is little risk about overflow parking as there are no adjacent residential neighborhoods. Density of businesses and businesses with more varied hours will improve the productivity of this corridor.

This plan recommends exploring the formation of a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) with the township at the end of Columbus Road and avoid any annexation beyond the US 33 overpass.

UPTOWN CORRIDOR

Background

Located in the heart of Athens, the Uptown area is one of the most unique and memorable parts of Athens. Its identity is intimately intertwined in the image of not just the town, but Ohio University as well. It houses many historic buildings, city hall, the county courthouse, the public parking garage and the historic Athena Cinema. Uptown Athens is the center of Athens nightlife with a host of bars and restaurants that cater to many Athenians. It is also a significant residential area, with significant rental activity on the second and third floors of many buildings. This corridor is home to Athens Halloween, the Athens Community Arts and Music Festival, Boogie on the Bricks, Bounty on the Bricks, International Street Fair and will host the returning Athens Criterium bike race.

Most of Uptown Athens is within a National

Registry of Historic Places district, established in 1981. However, listing on the national registry does not provide any protection for these historic resources in terms of design and renovations. Buildings are generally eligible for nomination as historic places after 50 years. Since our district was established in 1981 that means it was only looking at buildings in uptown built prior to 1931. Several more modern buildings in the Athens area may now be eligible for national listing including the GTE building on West Washington Street and the Chase Bank building at Court and Washington.

The 1990 Brick Street District Ordinance was adopted by Council for historic preservation on key uptown brick streets. The maintenance and preservation is overseen by the Service/Safety Director. The streets included are all of Court, President, Mulberry, Park Place, University Terrace,

College, as well as parts of Union from Congress to University Terrace, State Street from Congress to College Street, and Mill Street to College Street.

The entire east side of Court Street north of Union Street and all of the block north of State Street to the south side of Carpenter Street are included in the designated Opportunity Zone census blocks. Opportunity zone investment tools could be utilized on the north end of uptown to help fund new projects including mixed use at the current Valero gas station and the area near the proposed hotel and former Cornwell Jewelers shop.

The uptown Special Improvement District was formed in 2019 and will provide resources for streetscape improvements. The SID will generate an additional property tax fund that can be used for coordinated maintenance like snow and ice removal, new public amenities, events, and marketing.

Moving forward

This plan recommends the maintenance of all currently existing brick streets. Brick sidewalks and brick alleys should be converted to another surface and the bricks retained for street preservation.

This plan recommends that parklets should be utilized to encourage more active use of the street, especially during times when Ohio University is not in session.

This plan recommends two-way reversion of Court Street and all one-way streets Uptown. This is a sweeping change that Athens should begin to work towards. It would have positive impacts on



UPTOWN CORRIDOR

response time of emergency vehicles, positive economic impacts for “eclipsed” businesses, would slow traffic speeds, and would allow cyclists to travel North on Court. Athens would need to install new traffic signals, change signal timing and engage in an awareness campaign beforehand but the benefits are substantial and are anticipated to be worth the cost. More details on this can be found in the Uptown Athens Active Transportation Plan.

This plan recommends changing the zoning of the single-family rental parcels on Carpenter to permit townhouse style development. This location could be ideal for new market rate senior housing or non-student housing for people who want to live near Uptown, campus, and public transportation.

This plan recommends wayfinding and signage improvements that better supports the needs of people with autism spectrum disorder and those with vision impairments.

This plan recommends that parking garage improvements should include reduced parking rates as compared to Uptown on-street rates and reduce the charge for using the parking garage and cessation of enforcement in the garage before on-street parking enforcement stops. Changes should also include permitting developers to pay into the Payment to Parking Garage Fund in lieu of building parking spaces required by zoning and reduced enforcement times of the parking garage during evenings.

This plan recommends that city council adopt design standards for uptown Athens such as Department of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation or create a local preservation design guidelines.



Something something brick preservation.



North Court Street at Congress Street.

SUMMARY OF CITY DEPARTMENTS FUTURE PLANNING

Arts, Parks and Recreation (APR)

The new city pool completed its first season in 2018 and adds an anchor to the community center campus. The Community Center will be undergoing some improvements to the playground equipment in order to make it more ADA accessible and relocate some elements out of a poorly drained area. There are also some repairs to the skate park that are needed, as well as expanding the skate park area to have more beginner-friendly obstacles.

The establishment of the new Athens Farmers Market at the site at the Athens Community Center will likely be the final major investment to the community center campus. This site will be funded through grants and vendor rents while being owned and maintained by the city. It will be important for the site to be designed for multiple purposes so the city can use the space for other events besides the bi-weekly market. Planning for this site may require a service road connection to Home Street to help with traffic demand and will require a new home for the dog park.

The city recently signed a memorandum with Ohio University to manage a piece of land behind the community center and between the bike path and river. Plans for this site are ongoing but are expected to include removal of invasive species, native species plantings, trails, and a canoe put-in to the Hocking River.

One of the most significant changes to the Arts Parks and Recreation Department (APR) will be the creation of an outdoor recreation program. This is something that was requested multiple times during the planning process,

particularly at the Sells Park and Hocking River channel area.

The APR will be taking over the former Habitat for Humanity location at 525 West Union. This space will be used for outdoor recreation staging activities. There may be an opportunity for collaboration with Ohio University Outdoor recreation regarding active entertainment opportunities in the Hocking River.

The city should explore increasing fines for speeding near the community center during daytime in order to deter speeding and make the front of the community center more accessible on foot or bike.

A small shelter is recommended in Sells Park in order to encourage daytime activity in the park.

The South Side/Dairy Lane Park should include such upgrades such as a splash pad and a passive sculpture garden.

The Gawande/Dowler/Camp Rotan properties should be connected together with paths to create a new southside park similar to Sells Park on the Far East Side. This will require additional real estate either through purchase, donation, or easement in order to complete. The Camp Rotan access area on Longview Heights should be expanded to provide a few additional parking spaces, and user information.

Highland Park has undergone some changes recently with new equipment installed that is more accessible to children of all ability levels. The pavilion at the park is

SUMMARY OF CITY DEPARTMENTS FUTURE PLANNING

Arts, Parks and Recreation (APR)

in need of repair and should be moved to a lower location so as to be ADA accessible as well as more inviting from the road.

The Hockhocking Adena Bikeway is a 21 mile bike path that has become a major asset to the Athens City and County community. Visitors come from all around the surrounding area to use the bike path and visit the city while doing so. The bike path in its current state restricts the use of motor vehicles to medical vehicles with a permit only. There is a controversy surrounding the possibility of electric scooters and bicycles coming to Athens and their proposed usage of the bike path. Data has been collected about the usage of the bike path within the last few years which suggest usage is going up. The bike path has also been criticized for its lack of signage and connectivity to other bike paths. These issues have been addressed and will be solved in the next few years.



Athens City Pool, 2018

SUMMARY OF CITY DEPARTMENTS FUTURE PLANNING

Engineering and Public Works (EPW)

The Engineering and Public Works Department (EPW) provides our most vital public service-- the sanitary and efficient circulation of water and wastewater are necessary to modern life in an urban environment. The EPW staff are responsible for the maintenance and repair of our plumbing and sewer systems, the operation of the facilities and machinery which clean and treat our water, the maintenance and upkeep of all public rights of way (including traffic signals, public mowing and street maintenance), and the maintenance of all city vehicles.

Existing challenges

A significant challenge for Athens will be the mitigation of wet-weather surges at the wastewater treatment plant. The city of Athens has a separated wastewater/stormwater system but this is still a problem for Athens-- there is infiltration from our older sewer lines, but it's also possible that there are cross connections or illegal hookups that can't be discovered until the pipes are exposed by excavation. This is a significant issue-- if the wastewater treatment plant goes over capacity, it will have to discharge directly into the Hocking River, which is a biological hazard and also a finable offense from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The pump stations at Depot Street and Richland Avenue are nearing the end of their expected service cycles-- they will need to be replaced, at a cost of about 3 million dollars each.

Challenges to future development

The Athens sewer infrastructure system can't accept much more greenfield development without increasing our capacity to pump wastewater-- the existing pumps are working at capacity.

There is a need for a water tower on the tier 2 development land on the Ridges. This is necessary in order to serve water to development on that land and provide better service to residents along Dairy Lane. This water tower would also represent an opportunity to remove some of the booster pump stations from the Richland area.

Oakmont Phase 4 and University Estates- both of these planned developments have the opportunity for changes that would produce a positive outcome for both developers and Athens. Both developments could use an additional connecting road to increase safety (by allowing multiple routes of egress in the event of a severe weather event/ natural disaster while allowing emergency vehicles multiple methods of ingress), as well as an opportunity to densify future housing developments and maintaining open space/ conservation area. By minimizing the footprint of our underground infrastructure we can minimize future upkeep and maintenance costs, while developers can get a larger return on a smaller piece of land with less up-front cost.

Although this plan has many aspirational goals for sidewalk improvement and expansion in the city, the revenue to fund these projects does not exist at present-- these improvements would require their own dedicated revenue stream in order to be brought to reality. Such a revenue stream should provide resources to build, maintain, and provide snow and ice removal on city sidewalks and pathways.

SUMMARY OF CITY DEPARTMENTS FUTURE PLANNING

Office of Code Enforcement and Community Development

The Office of Code Enforcement and Community Development is the primary licensing, permitting, compliance inspection, and enforcement agency for the City of Athens. The goal of the Code Enforcement Office is to provide a service to the community which maintains and enhances the quality of life for all citizens. Routine permit processing includes residential and commercial zoning for new construction and alteration, signs, use, flood hazard, land development, landscaping and subdivisions.

The code office oversees the inspection of over 5,000 rental units in Athens. Each rental unit must be inspected (and possibly re-inspected) yearly. This office is responsible for monitoring adherence to flood zone hazard mitigation policies for activities which take place in the flood zone as well as keeping the city Wellhead Protection Area safe (in partnership with Engineering and Public Works) as a source of potable water for our city.

- Many residents expressed frustration with the slowness with which blighted properties are addressed. The code office pursues blighted properties when they are able to within the bounds of the Ohio Revised Code and works closely with other partners including law enforcement, the courts, and the land bank in order to resolve these issues. At the time of printing this plan, there are 9 properties at various stages of being condemned within the city. The ORC sets out procedures must be adhered to before a property can be condemned.

- It is the recommendation of this plan to hire another code officer and bring the second administrative assistant up to full-time. This is necessary for the office to perform its job. There are too few officers for the amount of work to be done at present. Fee schedules and permit costs should be evaluated to pay for this.
- The city administration should explore the possibility of establishing a certified building department to better enforce the Ohio Basic Building Code.
- The City Source App is the best way for citizens to report code related issues. The more functional the app can be, the more likely people are to use it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MAYOR

Steve Patterson

ATHENS CITY COUNCIL

Chris Knisely, President

Beth Clodfelter

Sam Crowl

Chris Fahl

Sarah Grace

Peter Kotses

Jeffrey Risner

Arian Smedley

SERVICE SAFETY DIRECTOR

Andy Stone

ATHENS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

RJ Sumney, Chai

Nancy Bain

Christy Zempter

Steve Patterson

Andy Stone

PLANNING STAFF

Paul Logue, City Planner

Richard Linscott

Alicia Lundy-Morris

Katherine Holly

Brooke Siggers

Lauren Conner

DATA VISUALIZATIONS, MAPS, GRAPHICS & PUBLICATION DESIGN

Wesley Ratko

VISION AND WISDOM

The people of Athens