



Town of Kirkwood Comprehensive Plan Community Survey Results

February 2016

Public Outreach

Gathering public input is a key component of creating an effective comprehensive plan. Our first method of gathering input was via a survey that respondents could either mail-in or take online. The Town of Kirkwood Comprehensive Plan Committee identified topics to be covered in the survey and worked with the Broome County Department of Planning to develop a questionnaire. The survey was designed to gather the opinions of respondents on a wide array of topics. In the fall of 2015, the survey was mailed to 2,100 resident and non-resident property owners; a total of 439 completed surveys were returned for a response rate of 21 percent. Over 90 percent of the returned surveys were completed by Kirkwood residents. The surveys were entered into QuestionPro, an online survey service, and responses were tabulated automatically.

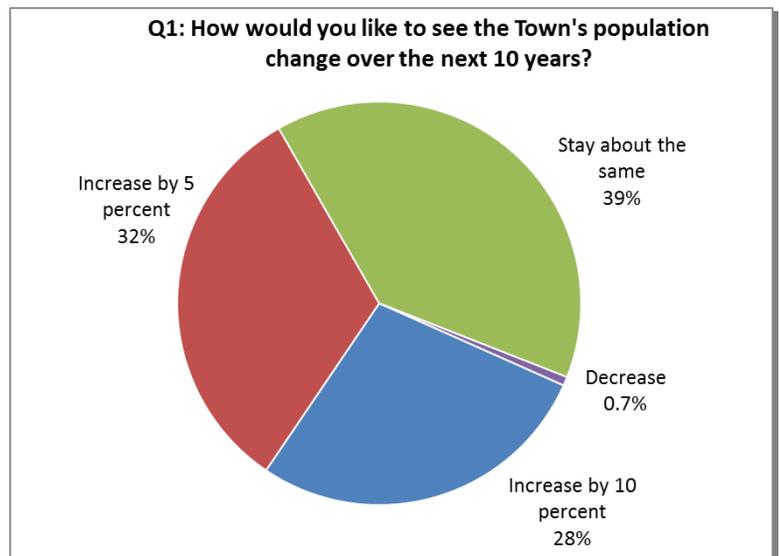
The community survey focused on the following topics:

Growth and Development
Land Use Change
Community Priorities
Community Concerns
Quality of Life
Assets and Shortcomings
Community Resources

In addition to the survey, the committee will hold two public meetings to provide additional opportunities for public input. During these meetings, the committee will review different aspects of the comprehensive plan and attendees will participate in a community assessment activity to help develop a vision for the future of Kirkwood. Near the end of the comprehensive planning process, the public will have an opportunity to provide comments on a draft of the Town's comprehensive plan.

1. Population

Respondents were asked how they would like to see the Town's population change over the next ten years. A total of 428 people responded to this question. The choice "Stay about the same" alone had the most (39%) number of responses. However, the majority of respondents would like to see Kirkwood's population grow in some way, either slightly increasing (32%) or significantly increasing (28%) over the next decade. Less than one percent of the respondents stated they would like to see the population decrease. The chart shows the distribution of responses.



2. Land Use Change

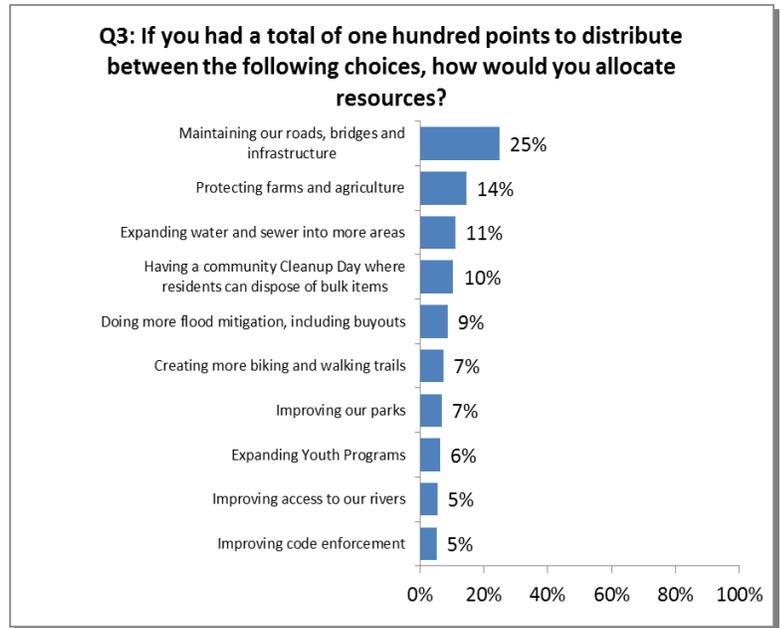
The comprehensive plan should guide decisions the Town makes regarding zoning and land use laws. This question asked what types of land use changes respondents would like to see in Kirkwood and were given three choices including: More, About the Same, or Less. The number of responses varied slightly by choice, but overall each had about 400 responses. The top five choices which respondents strongly indicated they would like to see more of were solar power (74%), restaurants (73%), wind power (69%), retail establishments (62%), and single-family homes (62%). The uses respondents would like to see less of in Kirkwood were mobile homes (62%) along with multi-family homes and apartments (34%). The table below summarizes the responses for each choice.

Q2: What land use changes would you like to see in Kirkwood?

Land Use Types	More	About the Same	Less	n
Single-Family Homes	62%	38%	0.7%	424
Multi-Family Homes and	15%	51%	34%	395
Mobile Homes	5%	33%	62%	397
Senior Housing Facilities	57%	37%	6%	412
Industrial	45%	43%	12%	417
Commercial	53%	39%	8%	413
Medical Services	58%	41%	1%	409
Entertainment	53%	41%	6%	394
Restaurants	73%	25%	2%	424
Retail	62%	35%	3%	404
Professional Offices	49%	46%	4%	403
Wind Power	69%	21%	9%	411
Solar Power	74%	19%	6%	407

3. Community Priorities

All communities have a limited number of resources to dedicate to numerous services. Respondents were asked to allocate one hundred points between ten choices to gauge which services they valued the most. The five choices which received the most points included maintaining our roads, bridges and infrastructure (11,366), protecting farms and agriculture (6,613), expanding sewer and water into more areas (5,019), having a Community Clean Up Day where residents can dispose of bulk items (4,758) and doing more flood mitigation including buyouts (3,946). Many written responses in the comment section reveal that for the most part people are satisfied with the conditions of the roads, however, “litter is a problem” and many believe this issue could be better addressed. The chart shows the percentage of points respondents allocated to each choice.



4. New Developments

The local zoning law governs the way land is used and developed. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of six elements of a development project from Very Important to Not Important. The number of responses varied slightly according to the different elements. Generally, responses indicated that most elements were “Somewhat Important” to consider when reviewing development proposals. The majority of respondents indicated constructing fewer and smaller signs, and not allowing LED or electronic signage was “Not Important” for the Town to regulate. About half of the respondents indicated it was “Important” or “Very Important” for development projects to include pedestrian and bicycle amenities such as sidewalks, benches and bike racks. In addition, almost 70% of the responses reveal people believe green infrastructure and stormwater management systems were “Important” or “Very Important” to require. The table below summarizes the responses by choice.

Q4: When reviewing new development proposals, how important is it for the Town to require the following elements?

Elements of a Development Project	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	n
Including pedestrian and bicycle amenities such as convenient sidewalks, benches and bike racks	18%	31%	36%	15%	438
Using exterior materials like stone face or wood siding instead of cinder block	8%	28%	36%	27%	430
Constructing fewer and smaller signs on commercial projects	3%	18%	38%	41%	426
Not allowing LED or other electronic signage	10%	14%	34%	42%	428
Using smaller building lots and reserved areas for green space on residential subdivisions	11%	28%	35%	26%	427
Using green infrastructure/ stormwater management systems	31%	37%	25%	7%	432

5. Community Concerns

One goal of the comprehensive plan is to address potential social, environmental and economic issues that may adversely affect residents' quality of life. This question asked respondents to rank fifteen potential problems from being a Major Concern to Not a Concern. The number of responses varied slightly according to the different choices. Responses indicated nine out of the fifteen choices were major concerns in the Kirkwood community, while the other six choices were considered minor concerns. The major concerns in the Town included increasing taxes (74%), potential future flooding (63%), declining home values (56%), and junk in yard (54%). Even though "Noise" was not a top concern in this question, many respondents wrote in the comment section that noise from the Five Mile Point Race Track and Interstate 81 is a major issue; one person stated, "I live on Grange Hall Road, the highway noise is just terrible. I don't even like to sit outside because that is all you hear" which shows noise issues in the Town are negatively affecting residents' quality of life. Many people expressed an interest in the construction of a noise barrier, similar to what was used in the City of Binghamton to help eliminate the noise from the highway. The table below summarizes the responses by choice.

Q5: How much of a concern are the following issues in Kirkwood?

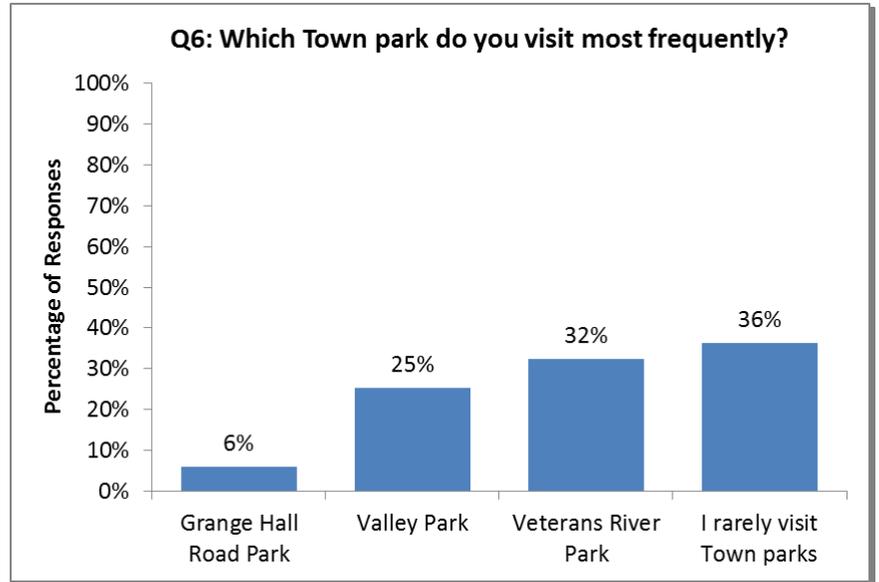
Community Concerns	Major Concern	Minor Concern	Not a Concern	n
Noise	23%	40%	38%	427
Vacant/abandoned homes	40%	42%	18%	426
Unkempt properties, long grass, peeling paint, etc.	46%	41%	13%	432
Junk in yard (home appliances, furniture and other debris)	54%	34%	11%	436
Junk motor vehicles	49%	34%	17%	431
Poor Internet / Cellphone Service	37%	37%	26%	432
Declining home values	56%	34%	9%	432
Increasing traffic congestion	17%	51%	33%	423
Loss of community character	33%	43%	24%	433
Potential future flooding	63%	29%	8%	435
Natural gas development	49%	26%	26%	437
Increasing taxes	74%	22%	4%	439
Loss of open space	25%	53%	22%	429
Development encroaching into the rural areas	30%	49%	21%	430
Lack of natural gas and other public utilities	43%	37%	20%	435

6. Quality of Life

Many cities, town and villages view parks and open space as important factors of building a sense of community and improving the quality of life. The following questions asked residents about their use of the Town parks and the local riverfront.

Parks

Respondents were asked to choose one park which they visit most frequently. A total of 438 respondents answered this question. About 63 percent of respondents indicated they visit Town parks frequently. Of the three parks, Veterans River Park was the most visited (32%) and Grange Hall Road Park was the least visited (6%). Numerous comments offered by respondents were directed towards the Town Parks. Overall, people think the parks are well-maintained and symbolize an important place in the community. Some respondents suggested adding more restroom facilities, creating an ice rink at River park in the winter,



creating more walking paths, improving the existing athletic facilities and having more community events at the parks. Just over one-third of respondents said they rarely visit Town parks.

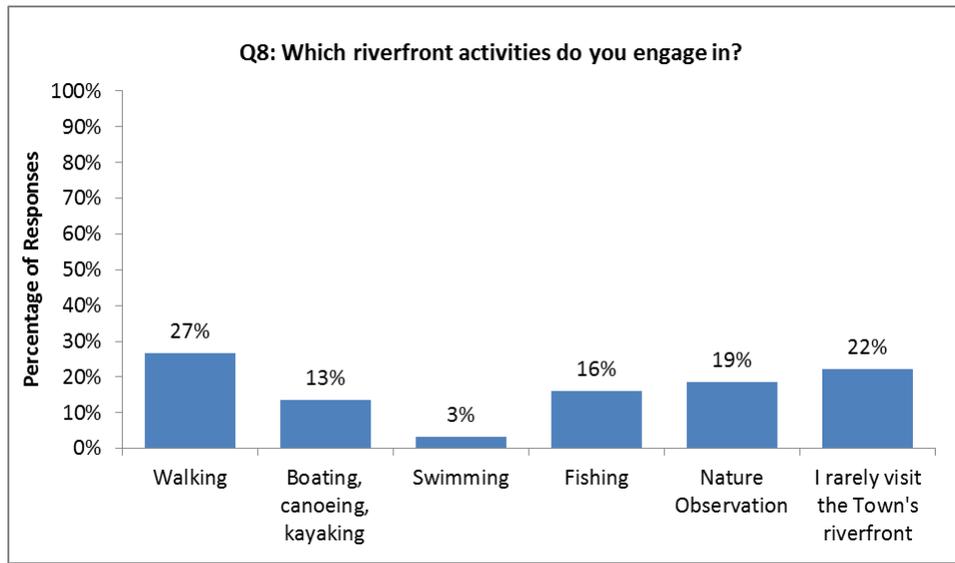
Next respondents were asked to rank six different types of parks facilities, with 1 being the most likely to increase their use of a park and 6 being the least likely to increase their use of a park. There were many incomplete or invalid responses to this question, so the results are not entirely conclusive. Some respondents indicated that none of the given choices would increase their use of a park. Almost 70 percent of the respondents indicated they would be more likely to use a park if there were available walking and biking trails. These results support the position of the respondents in Question 4 which revealed people want more pedestrian and bicycle amenities. The table below summarizes the responses for each given choice.

Q7: Which facilities would increase your use of a park? Rank the following choices from 1-6

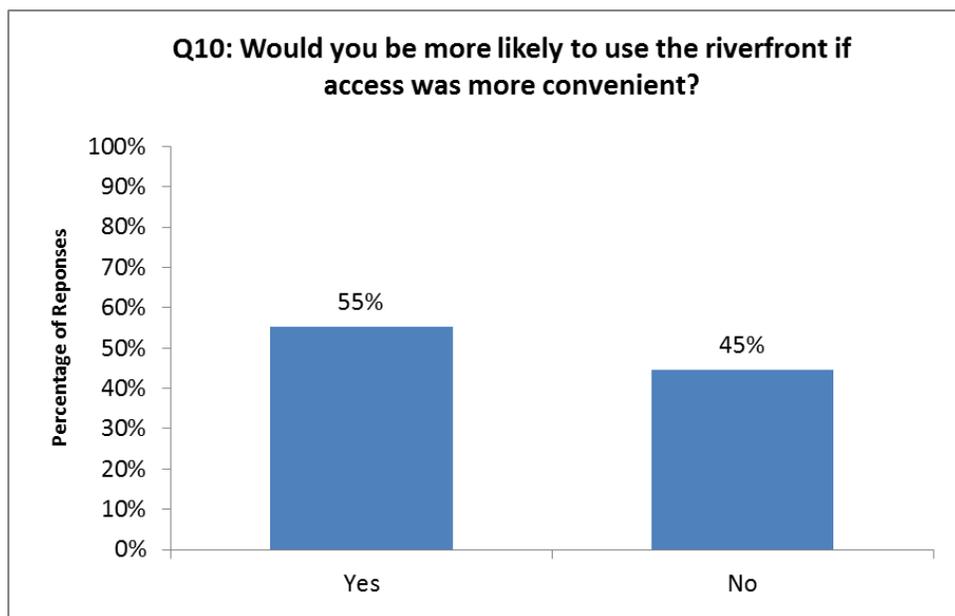
Park Facilities	1 Most Likely	2	3	4	5	6 Least Likely
Walking/ biking trails	50%	19%	16%	7%	7%	9%
Dog parks	10%	12%	8%	13%	14%	46%
Playgrounds	5%	16%	15%	27%	24%	12%
Picnic seating/ grills	7%	22%	27%	18%	15%	9%
Athletic fields	6%	10%	17%	19%	28%	16%
Community events	22%	20%	18%	14%	12%	10%

Riverfront

The majority of the Town borders the Susquehanna River on the west. Respondents were asked to choose all of the listed activities they engage in on the local riverfront. Again, respondents indicated a strong interest in walking trails; walking on the riverfront was the most popular riverfront activity (27%). The other activities which included boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, and nature observation scored fairly equal. About 1 in 5 responses stated they rarely visited the Town's riverfront. Written responses suggested there should be more walking trails along the river and more riverfront activities/ events, and tent sites where long-distance travelers can rest. The chart below shows the percentage of responses for each choice.

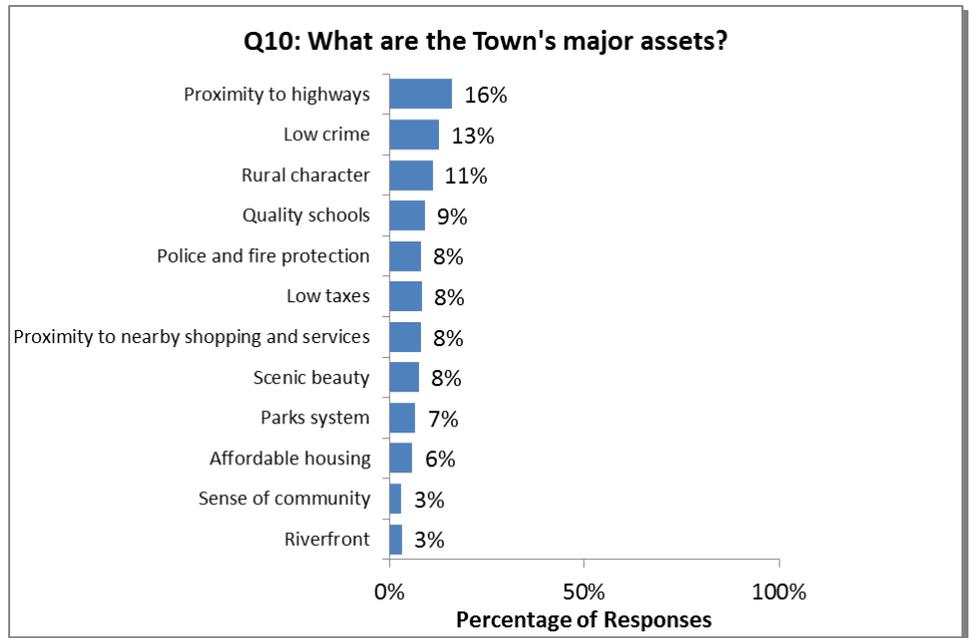


In many parts of the Town, the riverfront is considered inaccessible, so respondents were asked whether they would be more likely to use the riverfront if access was more convenient. A total of 439 respondents answered this question. Just over half of the respondents (55%) said they would be more likely to use the riverfront if access was more convenient. Some written responses expressed interest in improving boat access to the river, "I believe if a proper boat launch site could be found and developed, many people would use the river for all kinds of recreational purposes".



7. Town Assets

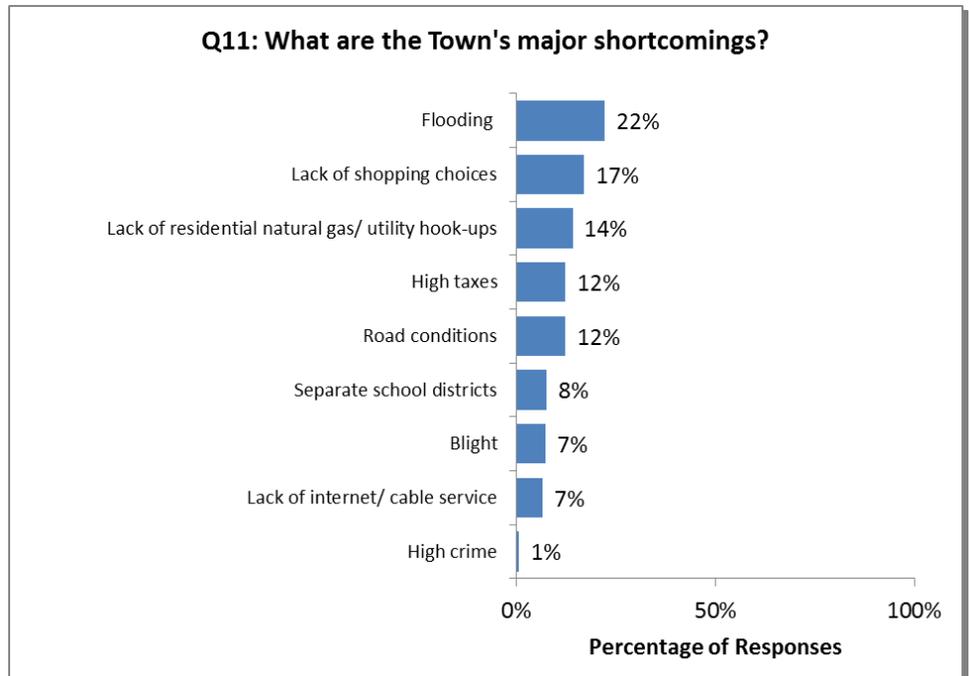
In order to create a comprehensive plan that promotes sustainable growth and development, it is important to identify the major community assets to build upon. Respondents were given a list of twelve different choices and asked to choose up to three which they felt most reflected Kirkwood's assets. There were some responses where respondents chose none or more than three choices. Based on the percentage of responses, the top three major assets identified were the Town's proximity to highways (16%), low crime rates (13%) and the Town's rural character (11%).



The least number of respondents identified the Town's sense of community as a major asset (3%). The chart shows the percentage of responses for each of the given choices.

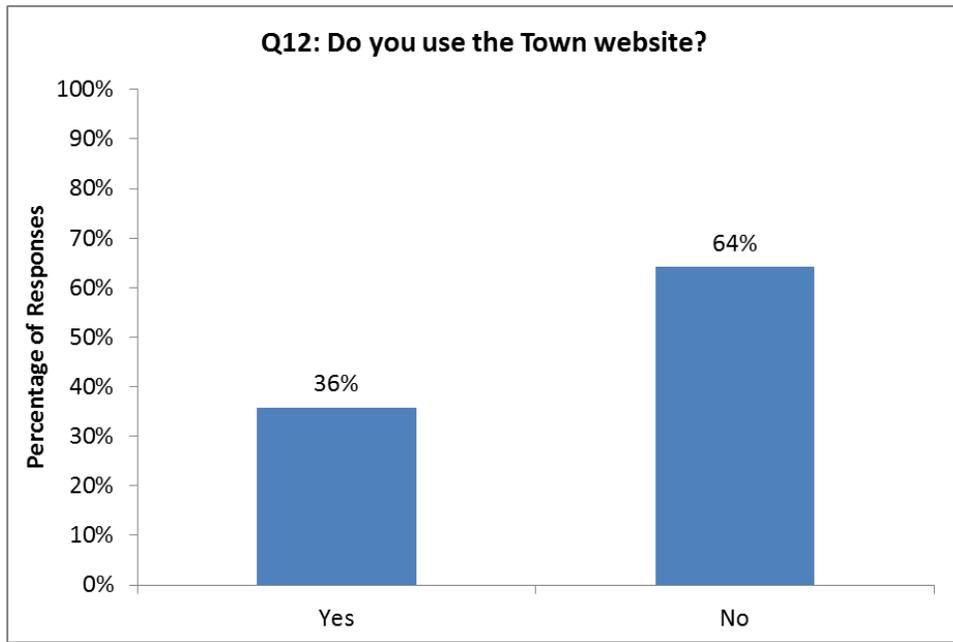
8. Town Shortcomings

Part of the comprehensive planning process involves identifying existing issues or problems of the community to be addressed in the future. Respondents were given a list of nine choices and asked to select up to three which they feel is a shortcoming of the Town. There were fewer responses for shortcomings compared to community assets. Similarly, there were responses which identified none and others which identified more than three shortcomings. The top three shortcomings identified by respondents were flooding (22%), lack of shopping choices (17%) and lack of residential utility hookups (14%). Numerous written comments also addressed the issues of flooding and lack of utility hook-ups throughout the Town. The chart shows the percentage of responses for each choice.

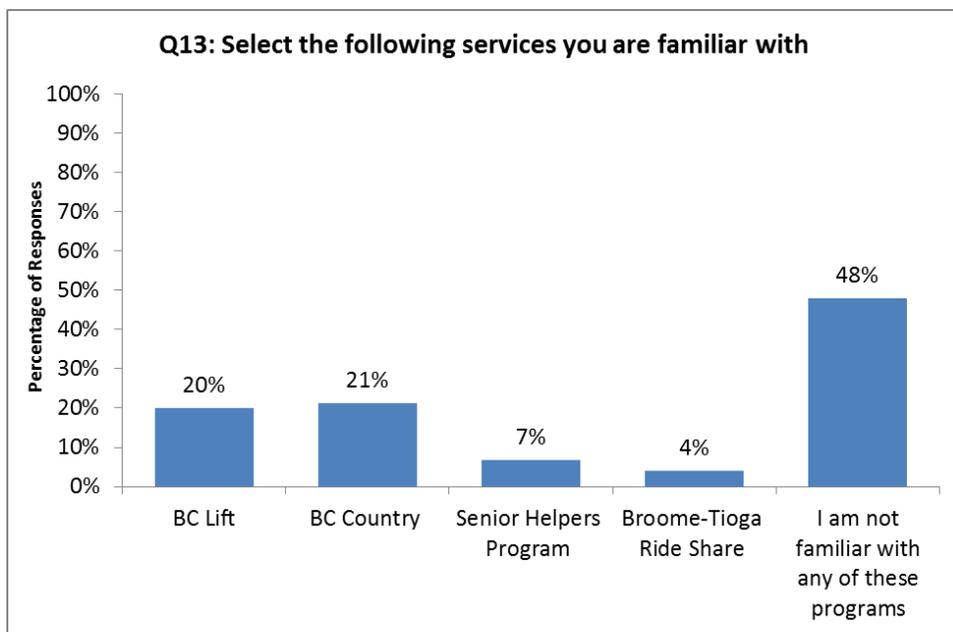


9. Community Resources

In order to evaluate and improve the existing resources available to residents, it is important to understand if they are being utilized. Respondents were asked whether they use the Town of Kirkwood website. A total of 435 people answered this question. Almost two-thirds of respondents indicated they do not use the Town website.



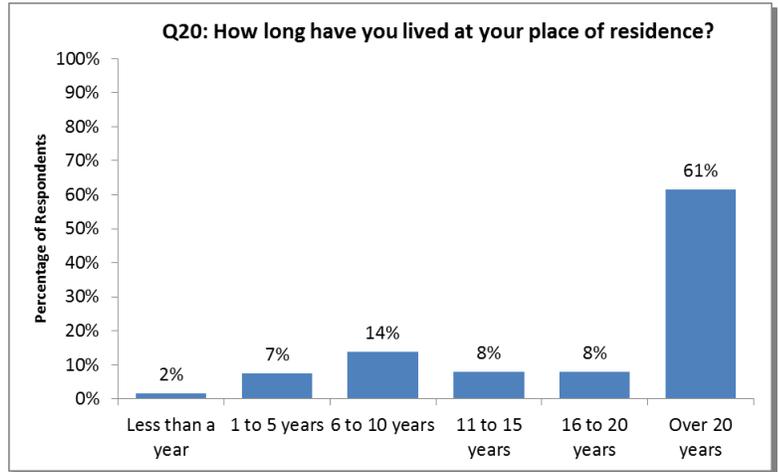
In addition, respondents were asked if they were familiar with four different transportation services available in Broome County. Almost half of the respondents indicated that they are not familiar with any of the programs. The programs which respondents were most familiar with were BC Lift and BC Country. The chart below shows the percentage of responses for each of the programs.



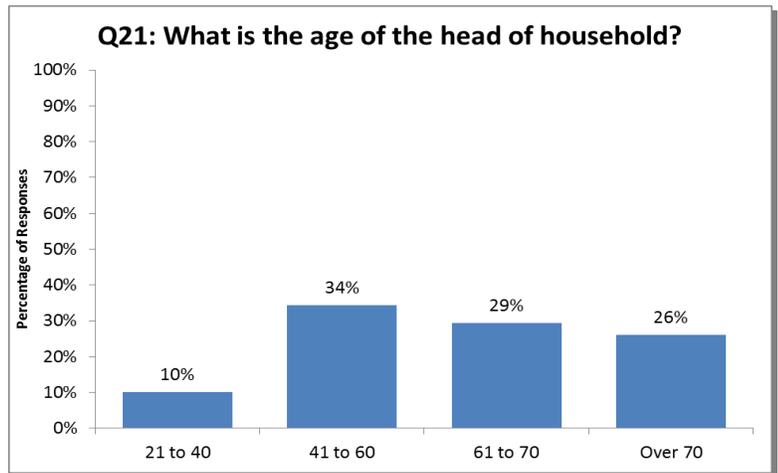
11. Respondent Demographics

The last section of the survey collected information about the respondents' age and household characteristics. This section was only to be completed by Kirkwood residents.

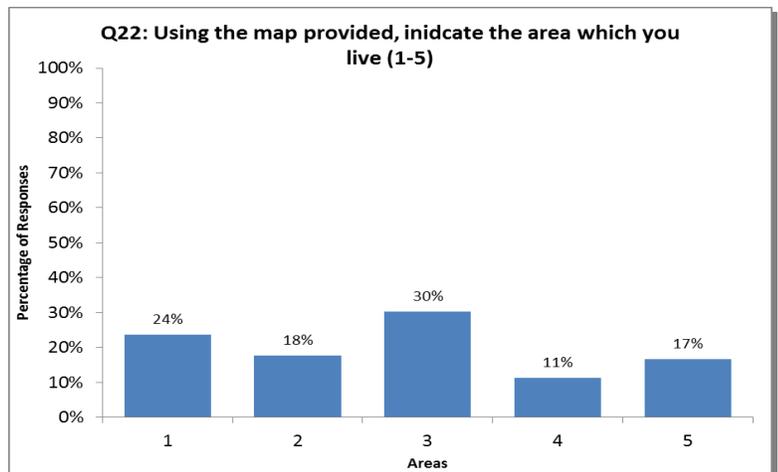
The first question asked respondents how long they have lived at their current place of residence. The majority of respondents are long-time residents; over half of them have lived in their residence for more than twenty years. Residents living in multi-family homes may be underrepresented in the results because surveys were only mailed to property owners. Numerous efforts were made to reach those residents by providing property managers with informational flyers about the survey and posting flyers in public places such as Schneider's Market.



The next question asked about the householder's age. About 90 percent of respondents indicated they were 41 years or older. Of this, over half were 61 years or older. Young adults had the smallest response rate (10%). No respondents which indicated the householder was younger than 20 years of age. The percentage of responses per age group generally correlates with the Census data for the Town, however, the number of responses for people 61 years and over had a slightly higher representation in the survey sample. The chart shows the distribution of responses by age group.



The final question asked respondents to indicate on a map which area they lived. There were five areas created using major roads as boundaries. A map of the boundaries is provided on the following page. The majority of respondents indicated they reside in Area 3, which boundaries include Colesville Road, the Town border with Widnsor, Trim Street and Interstate 81, which contains the hamlets of Langdon and Five Mile Point. The next highest response rate came from residents in northern Kirkwood, living north of Colesville Road. The chart shows the distribution of responses by area.



Map of Kirkwood provided in the public survey:

