

GUILDERLAND COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

A. SURVEY OVERVIEW

As part of the public engagement component of the Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update, a community survey was developed. The purpose of this survey was to gather input from community members, business owners and other stakeholders about Guilderland. Survey respondent input will help inform the overall vision, goals and strategies for the Town and help shape the Comprehensive Plan update.



Community Survey Promotional Card Handout

The survey was created and distributed using Survey Monkey and was launched on March 13, 2023. The survey remained open until May 15, 2023 with 635 responses received.

The survey was advertised on the Town website, promoted during the Open House & Visioning Workshop held on March 20th, and advertised through communications from the Guilderland School District Superintendent during the survey period. Information and links to the survey were also distributed during the survey period on survey cards which included a Quick Response (QR) code so respondents could access the survey directly on their smartphone or tablet. Hard copies of the survey were also made available.

Data Limitations

The survey is one piece of multiple public engagement activities that help identify themes throughout the community. Because survey respondents are self-selecting, survey results are not a statistically valid representation for the entire population of the Town. The survey results alone cannot be used to find the “answer” or “solution” but, can help highlight values and concerns.

B. SURVEY TOPIC AREAS

The survey was divided into several topical areas to focus and sequence the questions. The survey topic areas include Demographic and Background Information, Quality of Life, and The Future. The following is a description of each survey topic area.

Demographic and Background Information

The demographic and background information provides important context on who is taking the survey. Getting a broad range of respondents from the local area is important to address the needs of different demographics. Knowing age, location, where respondents work, and where they get news can help inform how to address needs and where to broadcast information.

Quality of Life

The quality-of-life section asks respondents to indicate what they value most about Guilderland and what makes the Town unique. The information can be used to establish key features of the existing community character, in order to identify missing elements and shape future growth.

The Future

This section asks respondents questions about the future of Guilderland. Information about where residents see the community in 5, 10 or 20 years can help identify support for future projects that fit the vision of the community.

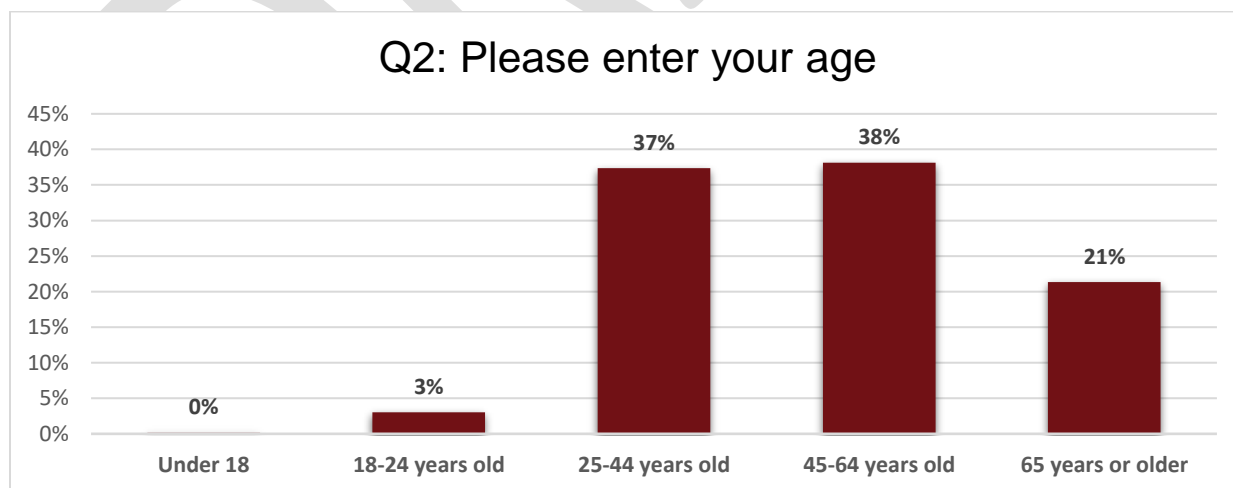
C. SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The following is a brief highlight of selected survey findings from each section of the survey.

Demographic Information

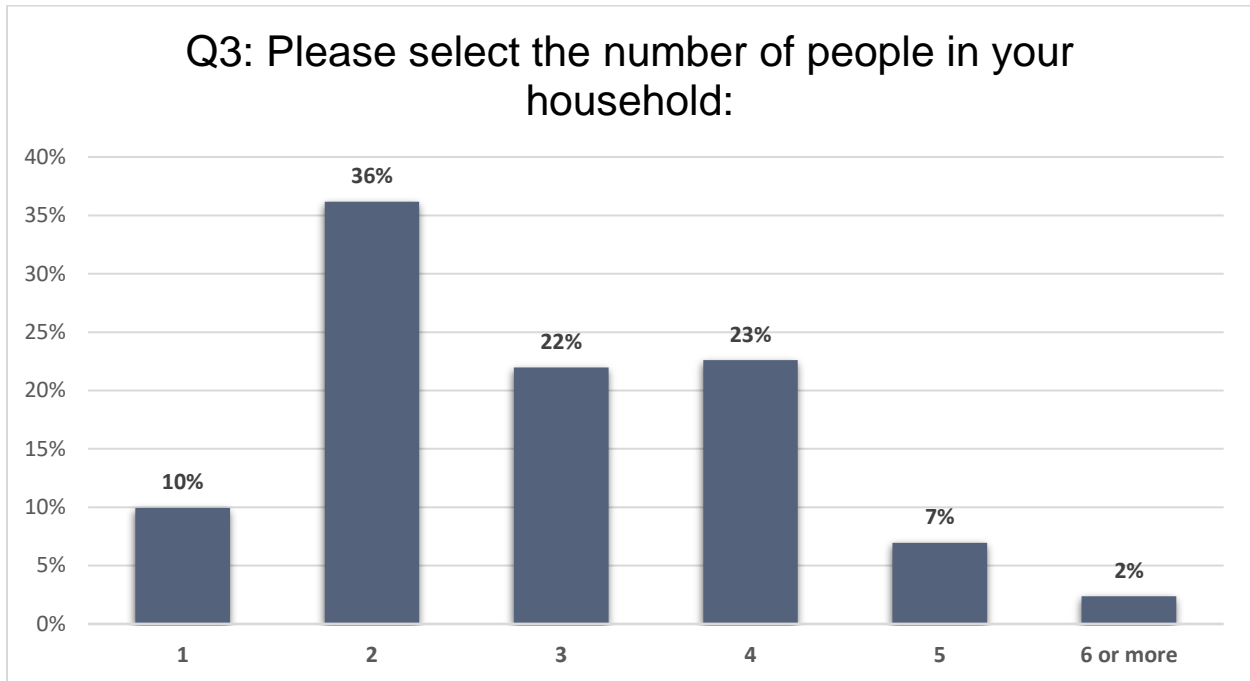
Question 1(Q1) of the survey asked respondents their home zip code. The greatest number of respondents lived in the 12303-zip code (109), followed by 12009 (97), 12203 (64), 12084 (44), and 12159 (30). These results demonstrate that respondents from a variety of neighborhoods and areas in the Town participated in the survey.

Question 2 (Q2) of the survey asked respondents to indicate their age. The age groups most represented among survey respondents were 25 - 44 and 45 – 64, nearly even at 37% and 38%, respectively. Twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents were in the 65 and above age group. The median age in the Town of Guilderland is 39.6, based on the 2021 American Community Survey Estimates.¹ This indicates that the age of respondents who completed the survey skewed slightly older than the estimated median age for the Town.

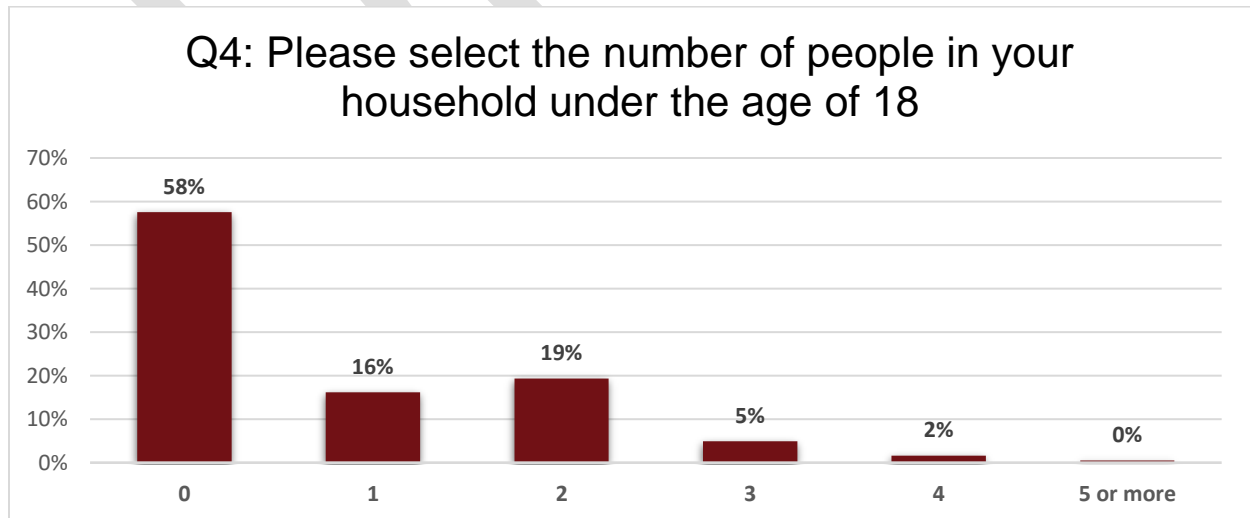


¹American Community Survey, 2021 Five-Year Estimates

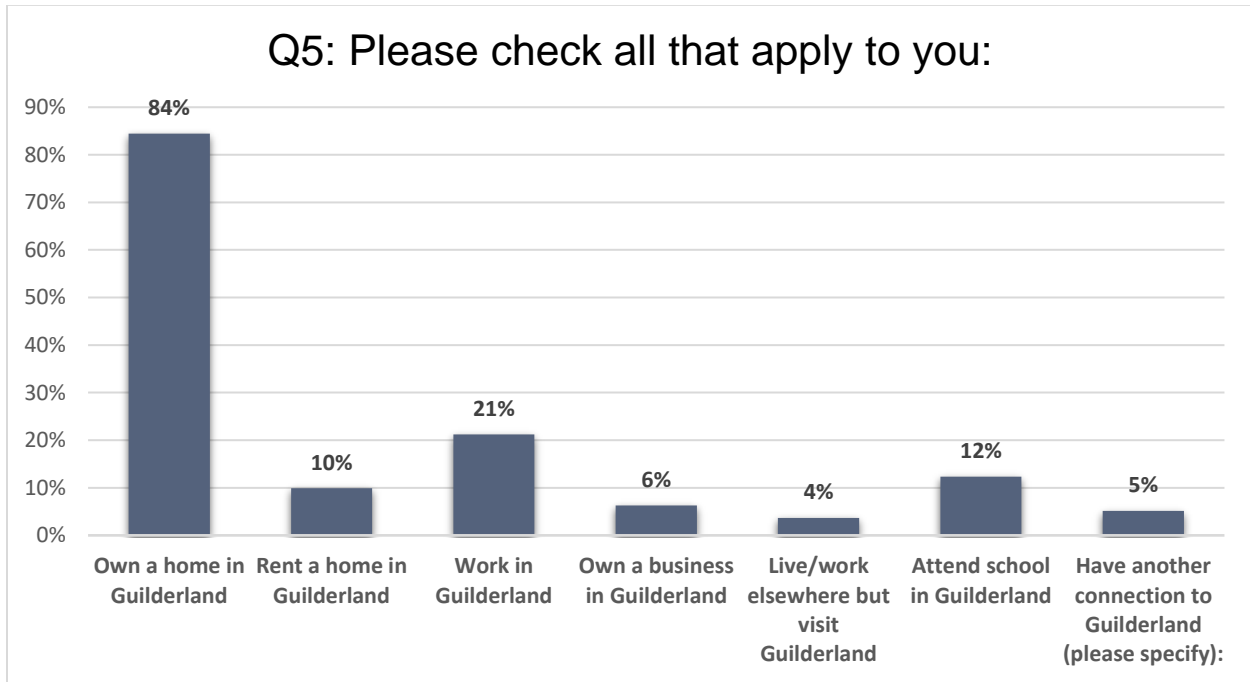
Question 3(Q3) asked respondents for the number of people in their household. The most prevalent household size among respondents was 2 people (36%). The percentage of households composed of 3 or 4 people is almost equal with 22% and 23%, respectively. Ten percent (10%) of respondents lived alone.



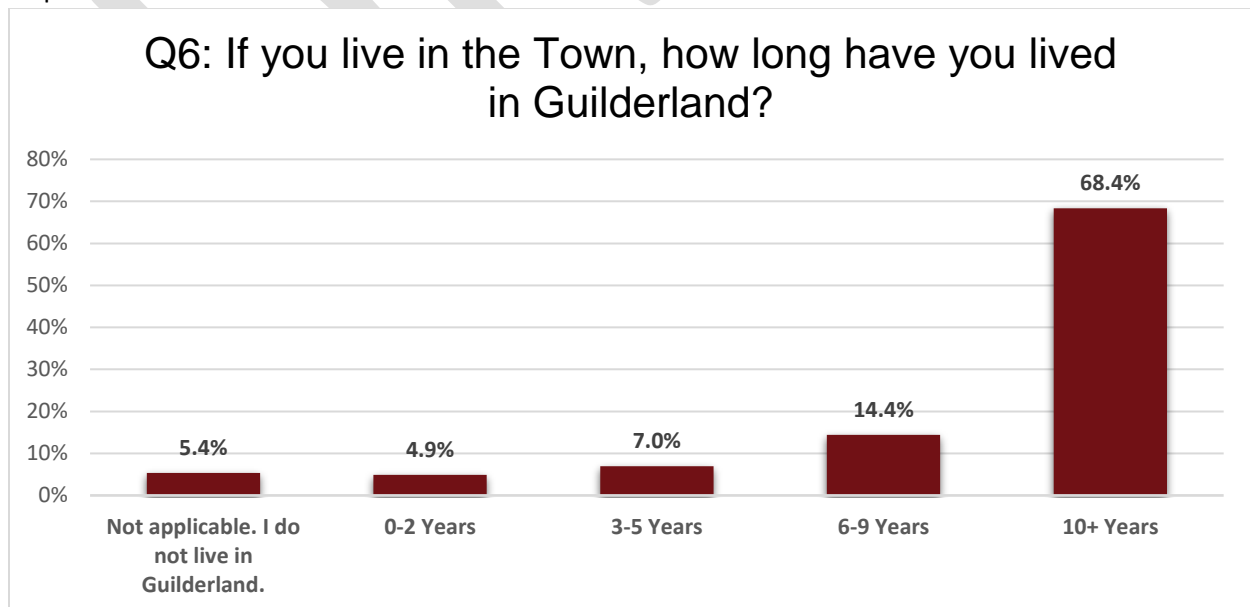
Question 4 (Q4) of the survey invited respondents to select the number of people in their household below the age of 18. This question helps the Town gain a better understanding of the population of young people who are growing up in Guilderland. Based on the response, 58% of respondents to this question have no children in their household below the age of 18. Approximately one-fifth of respondents (19%) had two people under the age of 18 in their household, while 16% of respondents had one minor living in their household.



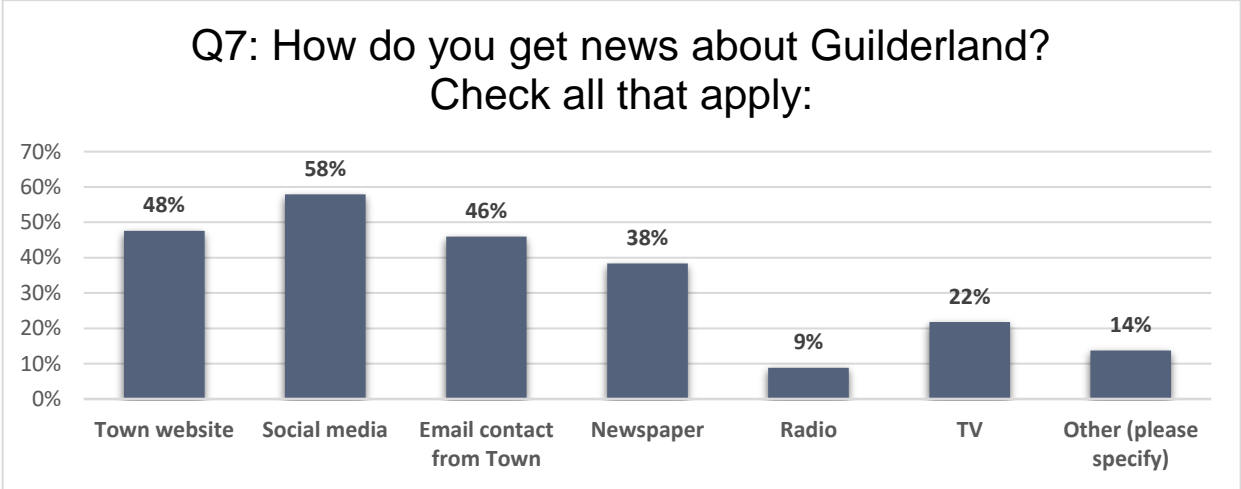
Question 5 (Q5) asked respondents their connection to Guilderland. The most prevalent connection was owning a home in Guilderland at 84% or 526 respondents. The next most prevalent connections were work in Guilderland (21%), attend school in Guilderland (12%), and rent a home in Guilderland (10%). The “other” connections reported by the survey included: respondent’s children have or are currently part of the Guilderland Central School District, have extended family that reside in Town, or have spent their childhood in or near the Guilderland area.



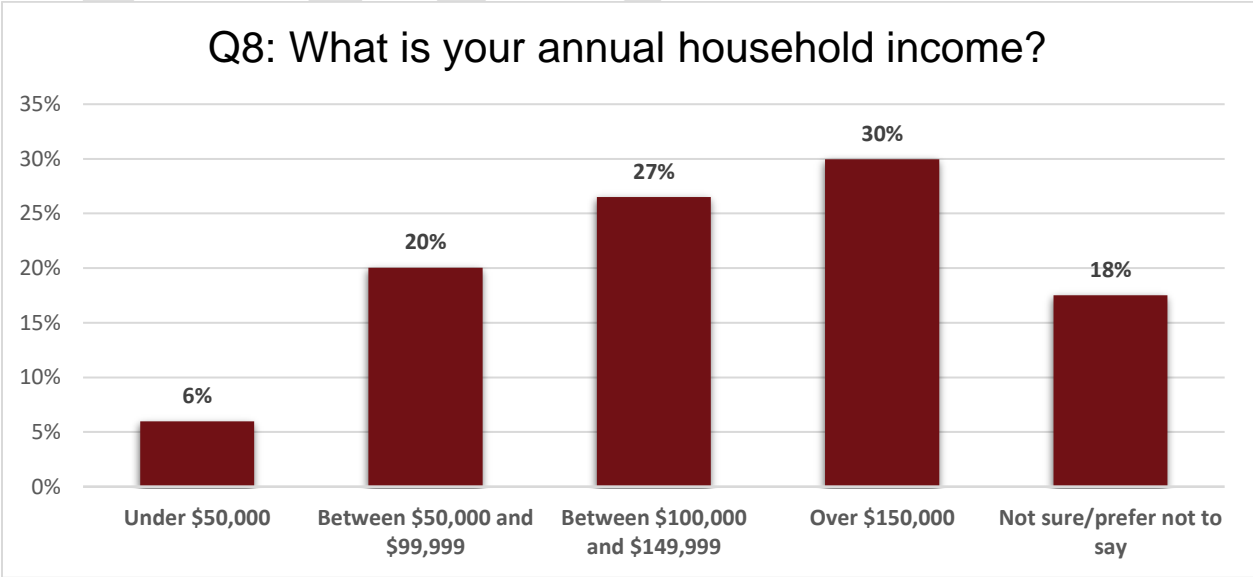
Question 6 (Q6) asked respondents how long they have lived in Guilderland. Out of 635 responses, approximately 68% or 432 respondents have lived in Guilderland for 10 or more years. The second most prevalent response category was 6-9 years of residency, indicating that the majority of survey respondents have called the Town home for a considerable amount of time.



Question 7 (Q7) asked respondents how they get news about the Town. Approximately 58% of respondents get news through social media as one of their sources. Approximately half (48%) of respondents utilize the municipal website for information. This is an important consideration for the Town to continue to update the municipal website if there are upcoming events or important information that needs to be released. Others cite their news sources from word of mouth, the monthly newsletter by the Guilderland school district, and a local Facebook group.

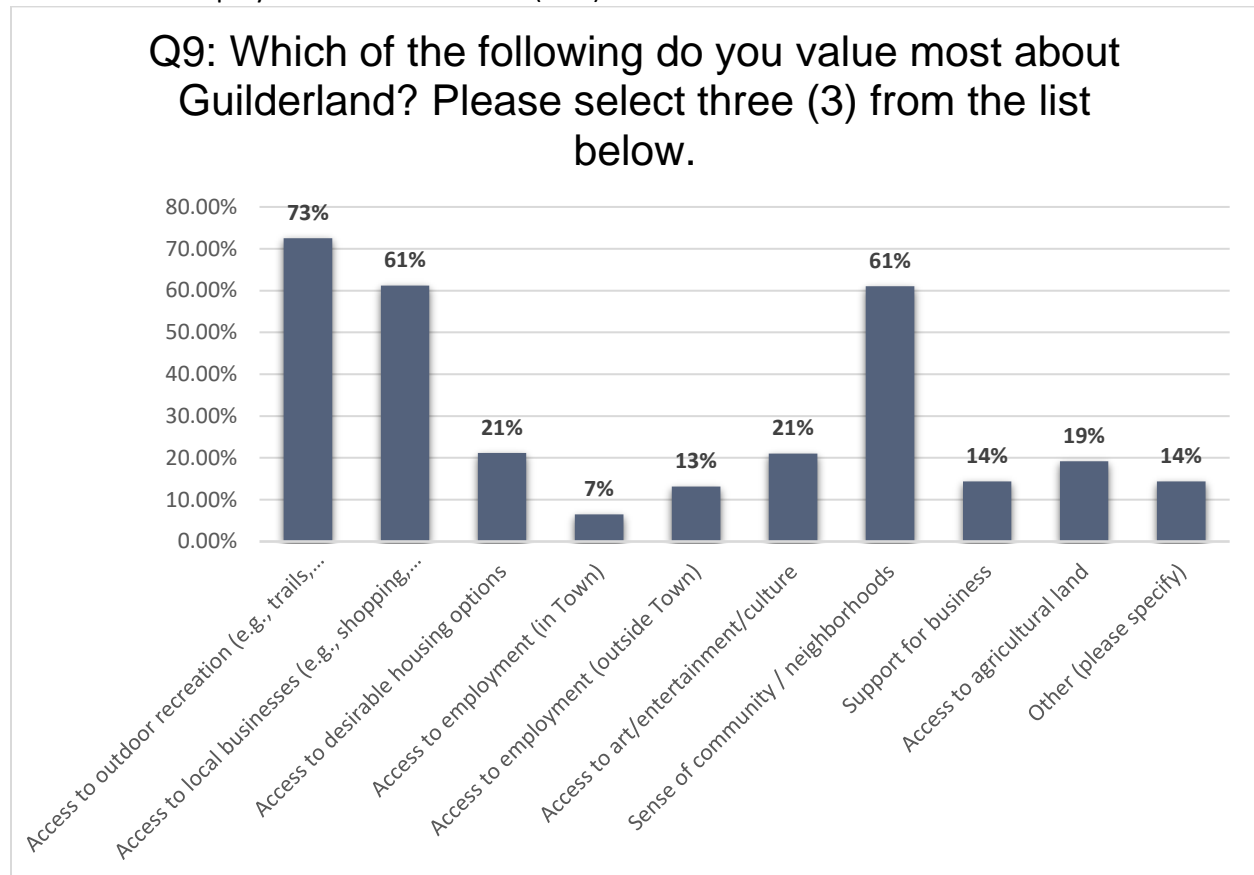


Question 8 (Q8) was the last question under the demographic section and asked respondents to self-report their annual household income. Household income data is an important factor in determining the affordability of housing options, among other considerations. Approximately 30% or 190 of the respondents had household incomes over \$150,000. Nearly 27% of respondents make between \$100,000 and \$149,999. 20% of respondents have an annual household income between \$50,000 and \$99,999. Approximately 6% have a household income that falls under \$50,000. Of those respondents who listed their household income, approximately one-quarter (26%) had household incomes below the median household income in the Town of Guilderland, which was approximately \$95,000 in 2021.



Quality of Life

Question 9 (Q9) asked respondents to select the top 3 things they value most about Guilderland. Of the responses, the most prevalent choice was outdoor recreation (e.g., trails, public parks, golf courses, etc.) at 73%. Next, in order of prevalence, were access to local businesses and sense of community/neighborhoods with 61% for each. Minimal support was found with access to employment in town (7%) and access to employment outside of town (13%).



Question 10 (Q10) was an open-ended question that asked respondents to list one place they felt is an important asset to Guilderland that makes the Town unique. The most frequently mentioned Town assets, in order of prevalence, were Tawesentha Park, the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, Guilderland Library, Western Turnpike Golf Course, and schools. The themes of using greenspace and community areas for recreation appear frequently in the succeeding questions.

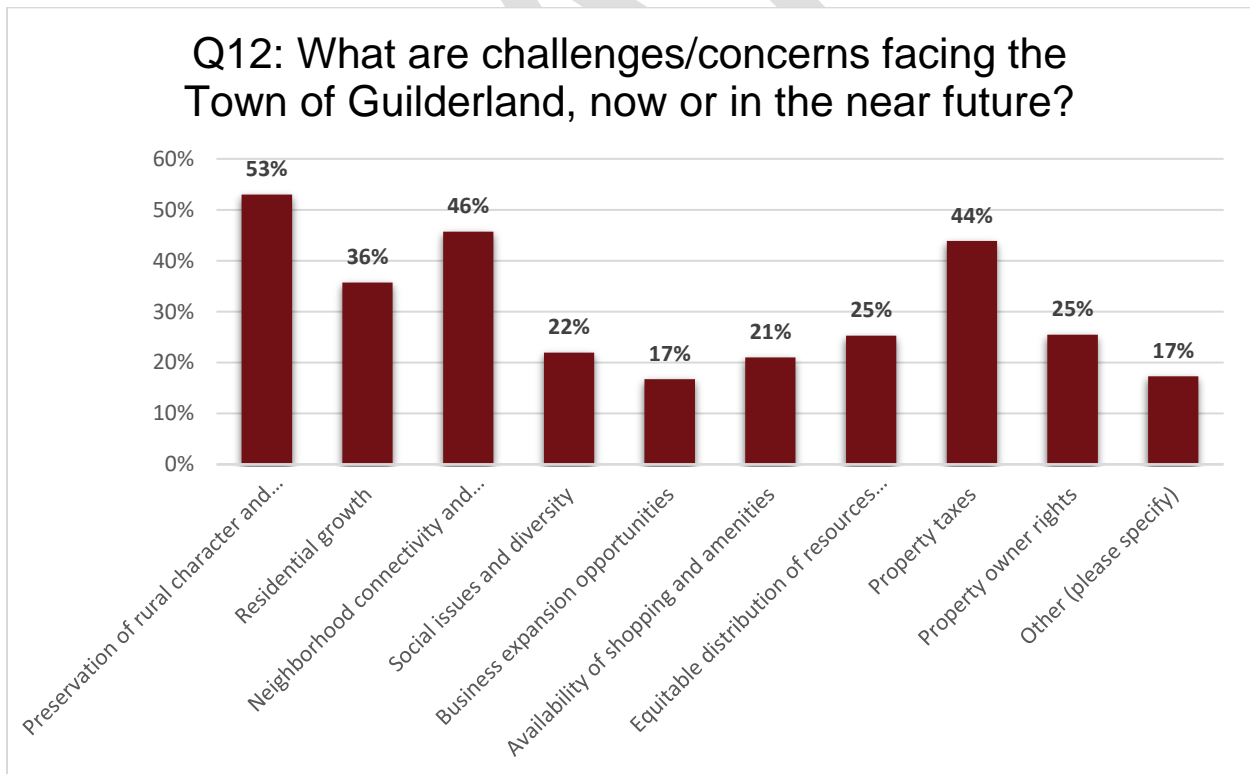
The Future

Questions 11 (Q11) was open-ended and asked respondents to describe their ideal vision for Guilderland. Common themes from the responses were more open/green space and parks, traffic management and walkability, affordable housing, and a focus of commercial development on Western Ave to redevelop existing vacant lots.

Many respondents mentioned the need to protect and maintain green spaces, parks, and natural areas. One respondent wrote, *“Preserved green space, country suburban feel, family and community focused”* as their ideal vision for Guilderland.

Other responses envision Guilderland as *“more walkable, [with] more sidewalks, [and] more pedestrian friendly infrastructure”* and another respondent wishes for *“...additional businesses on Western Ave where there are abandoned buildings”*.

Question 12 (Q12) asked respondents what concerns or challenges they saw facing the Town of Guilderland, now or in the future. Respondents were instructed to select 3. The most prevalent concern was preserving the rural character and farmland of Guilderland (53%). Next, in order of frequency, are concerns with neighborhood connectivity and walkability (46%) and property taxes (44%). Respondents also specified traffic and blight as other challenges for Guilderland.



Question 13 (Q13) was open-ended and asked respondents to specify three opportunities for Guilderland to improve in the future. The five most common ideas expressed were traffic improvements, support for

local businesses, preservation of open space and green areas, housing in a range of prices, and connecting the community with sidewalks.

For traffic improvements, respondents specified “*decreasing traffic, especially along Western Avenue*” as well as converting “*...congested intersections to traffic circles.*” Other respondents highlighted the importance of improving traffic flow within the Town while maintaining safety for drivers and pedestrians alike.

Regarding local businesses, respondents called for “*fostering small businesses and local restaurants*” and emphasized a “*small town, local feel [to] business development.*” Although respondents support businesses development, there is a general discouragement toward large retail or restaurant chains.

Preserving green space for recreation and natural habitat protection was expressed by most respondents. Areas of improvements called for “*retaining open green spaces...*”, expanding the hiking trail system, and expanding outdoor recreation to include skiing and swimming. In preserving green space, survey feedback also highlighted the additional benefit of “*...[preserving] the unique character of each neighborhood/hamlet/area*” within the Town of Guilderland.

In terms of housing, respondents supported making homes affordable for young families, with “*available housing for all income levels.*” There was a strong emphasis among respondents to make use of existing housing in the community and a desire to limit the negative community impacts – aesthetics and traffic— of multi-unit housing development.

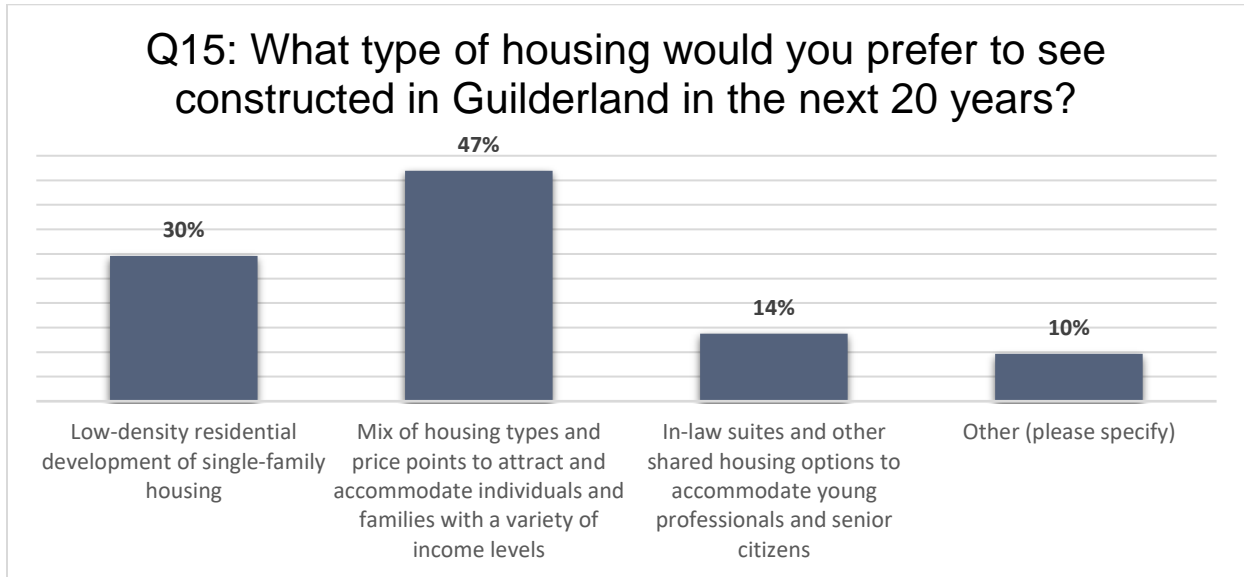
Respondents also expressed their desire for more walkable areas, sidewalks, and pedestrian accommodation in the Town. One respondent requested “*[improved] road shoulders for biking and walking*” and another suggested “*[establishing] pedestrian trails that connect parks and neighborhoods.*”

Question 14 (Q14) asked respondents to register their level of support for a range of topics on a scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Responses were assigned a numerical value between 1 (highest priority) and 5 (lowest priority). The highest priority concerns (i.e., the concerns with overall weighted averages closest to 1) were:

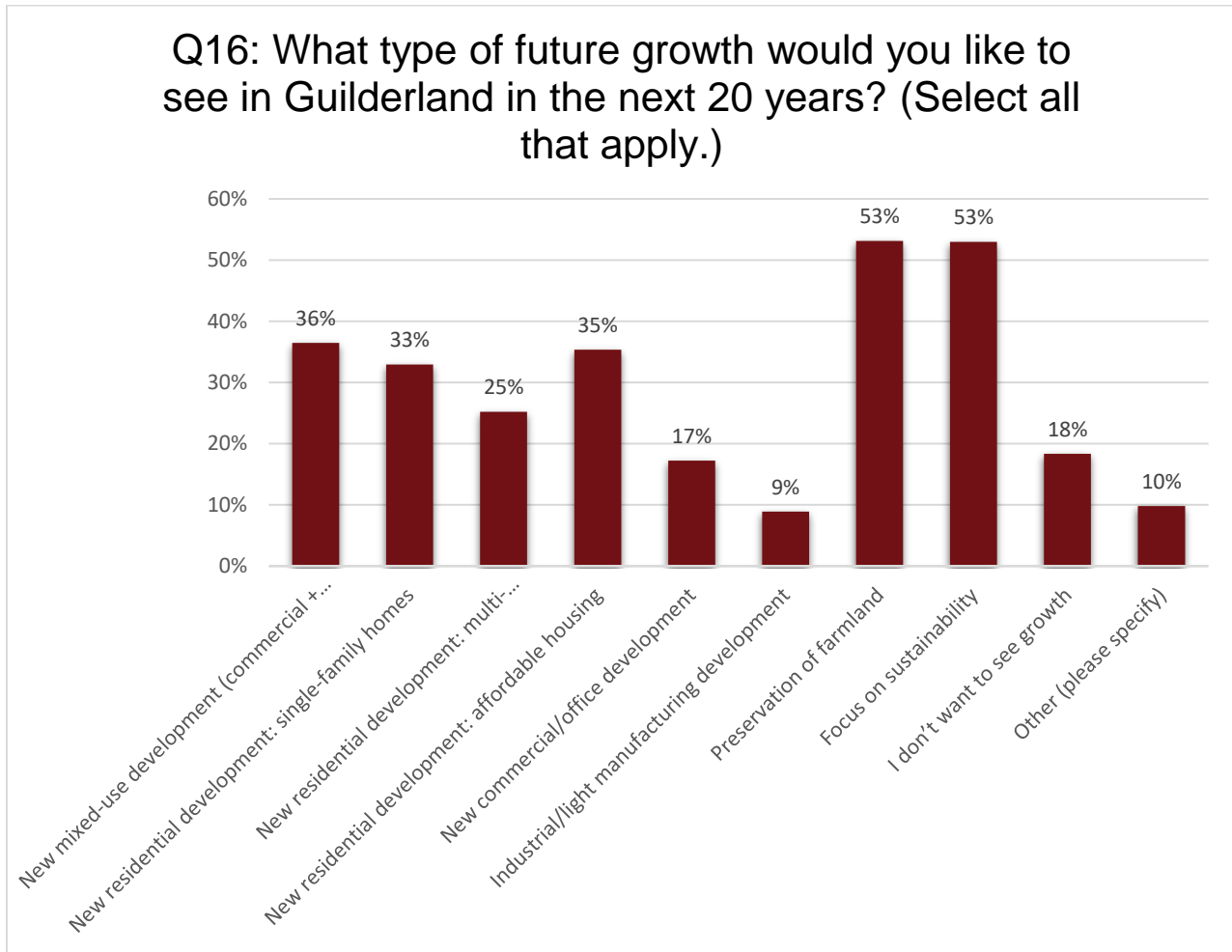
- Protecting natural resources and wildlife habitat is important (1.49)
- Support for agriculture is important (1.78)
- Expanding recreational opportunities in the Town is important (1.80)
- Walkability in the Town is important (1.87)
- Identifying and preserving historic buildings/sites is important (2.00)

Question 15 (Q15) invited respondents to select the preferred type of housing they wanted to see in Guilderland in the next 20 years. The most selected choice was a mix of housing types and price points (47%), followed by low-density residential development of single-family housing (30%). Among the ten percent (10%) of respondents who selected “Other,” there was a general theme of support for affordable housing of various types. Responses in this category included:

- *“Mix of owner occupied housing types...not rentals”*
- *“Affordable housing for our aging residents”*
- *“Entry level home ownership, people need to build equity”*
- *“Low to moderate density, single family, town home, in-law suites”*
- *“Why chase endless growth? Work with what you have. Stop overdeveloping, build on already developed land if you must build. Variety of housing would be good if you must.”*



Question 16 (Q16) asked respondents to indicate what type of future growth they would like to see in the next 20 years. Preservation of farmland and a focus on sustainability were the most prevalent choices (53% for both). The next most supported categories among respondents were new mixed-use development (36%) and affordable housing (35%). Many respondents who selected “Other” called for redeveloping vacant lots to reduce the loss of open space and land. The lowest amount of support among respondents was for industrial/light development at 9%.



Question 17 (Q17) asked respondents for any additional ideas for Guilderland. There was a general reiteration of affordable housing, supporting the growth of local businesses, and preserving the Town’s character. However, there were suggestions for more opportunity for community engagement, ranging from utilizing Town parks for community events to constructing a community center and funding public art.

Representative survey responses included:

- *“Clean up the already existing housing options and make vacant lots on Western Ave into green spaces/community gardens.”*
- *“Don’t develop new areas while lots are vacant.”*
- *“I’d like to see homes in Westmere and Mcknownville renovated by young families just starting out, we can make homeownership more affordable for the middle and working class, less McMansions.”*
- *“Control on where commercial development is located. Primarily on thoroughfares.”*
- *“Require rehabilitation and allow development only in derelict areas (SE corner of US 20 & Foundry Rd., for example)”*

Question 18 (Q18) was the final question of the survey invited respondents to upload a picture that depicts their favorite place or activity in Guilderland. The submitted photos are attached to this summary.

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