City Priorities Survey for Priority Based Budgeting

APRIL 2021

City of Battle Creek

Survey

Methods

Polco, web-based survey platform.

Survey was opened on March 10, 2021, and closed on April 16, 2021.

Survey posted in English, Spanish, and Burmese.

Promotions included the city's website and social media (with shares by other organizations); a half-page Shopper News ad; postcard mailing to 16,000 households; city updates in various media; city website home page and PBB page.

> **Final response numbers:**
>
> **English: 834; Spanish: 2; Burmese: 0**
>
> **Total: 836**

We offered our 311 Information Center phone number as a survey option for those without internet access, or uncomfortable with an online survey. We took 10 calls, nine in English and one in Burmese. The interpreter line dropped, and the Burmese neighbor completed the survey online. Overall, this was a smooth option.

Staff added response numbers from the English and Spanish surveys to determine final totals for each survey question.

Each section included an open-ended option for respondents to submit additional ideas for results and definitions. Neither Spanish-speaking respondent offered any open-ended responses. Find a summary of the open-ended responses in each question section.

Community results

We asked neighbors to choose up to eight community results, or city goals – reasons our government exists.

In ranked order, those are:

1. **Safety – 640 / 77 percent**
2. **Economy – 590 / 71 percent**
3. **Utilities – 575 / 69 percent**
4. **Education – 527 / 63 percent**
5. **Environment – 471 / 56 percent**
5. **Recreation – 471 / 56 percent**
7. **Physical Appearance – 403 / 48 percent**
8. **Transportation/Mobility – 375 / 45 percent**

9. **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion – 334 / 40 percent**
10. **Arts and Culture – 299 / 36 percent**
11. **Community Engagement – 295 / 35 percent**
12. **Governance – 254 / 30 percent**
13. **Community Design – 194 / 23 percent**
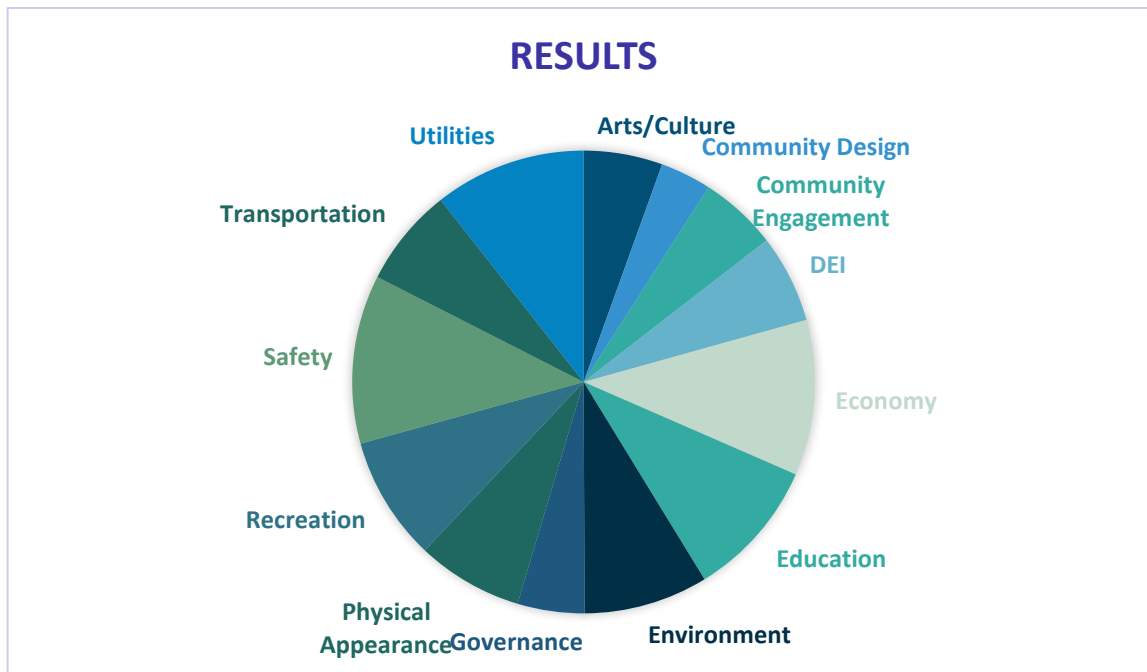
RESULTS

As a follow-up question, we asked neighbors to offer any other broad city goal they did not see on the list. We received close to 200 comments, and most fit within the 13 result choices we offered in question one.

Many comments mentioned taxes, homelessness, and roads and infrastructure. The comments more often resembled definitions of the broader results. For example, "Less city government as a whole," could fall under Governance; "Policing services" defines Safety; and "Citywide green initiatives" defines Environment.

Mentioned seven times was health and health care. This is common result/goal for some communities. Because our county handles public health, not the city, we did not include that in the list of result options in question one.

Every question following asked neighbors to choose the importance of city actions that define each result. This survey used logic, so for every result neighbors chose in question one, the accompanying definition questions would appear. This way, for example, only neighbors who prioritized Safety as a result would choose their definitions of Safety.

After choosing the importance of definitions the survey offered, neighbors again could comment with their own.

SAFETY

- Provides fire services
    - 81 percent critical; 19 percent important = **100**
- Provides safety from violent crime
    - 83 percent critical; 16 percent important = **99**
- Enforces laws fairly and justly
    - 79 percent critical; 20 percent important = **99**
- Provides police services
    - 73 percent critical; 24 percent important = **97**
- Supports ambulance or other emergency medical services
    - 70 percent critical; 28 percent important = **98**
- Supports feeling safe in your neighborhood
    - 69 percent critical; 29 percent important = **98**
- Is prepared for emergencies, like natural disasters and epidemics
    - 66 percent critical; 32 percent important = **98**
- Provides crime prevention
    - 66 percent critical; 30 percent important = **96**
- Supports feeling safe in downtown and commercial areas
    - 65 percent critical; 32 percent important = **97**
- Creates safe travel through the city for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists
    - 61 percent critical; 36 percent important = **97**
- Provides fire prevention and education
    - 40 percent critical; 54 percent important = **94**

Additional definition suggestion:
- Provides police/community engagement in non-emergency situations, particularly for elementary children

Other suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – provide fire-based EMS service; make sure police and fire have adequate staffing; enforce traffic violations; provide school liaison police officers; consider subscription services for fire and police (like LifeCare) to reduce community cost; offer community training from FEMA and Community Emergency Response Team; more police patrol

One comment also suggested providing safety equally to all people, and providing programs where mental health workers respond instead of police, when appropriate.

ECONOMY

- Encourages and supports local businesses
    - 71 percent critical; 28 percent important = **99**
- Creates a business-friendly environment that encourages business and economic growth
    - 56 percent critical; 42 percent important = **98**
- Encourages quality job creation and growth, and workforce training
    - 58 percent critical; 38 percent important = **96**
- Works in collaboration to attract, recruit, and retain a diverse mix of businesses
    - 53 percent critical; 41 percent important = **94**
- Encourages and promotes sustainable development and redevelopment
    - 47 percent critical; 47 percent important = **94**
- Provides a place to live with quality housing, safety, and access to basic needs
    - 53 percent critical; 39 percent important = **92**
- Provides transportation and utilities that support business expansion and development
    - 40 percent critical; 51 percent important = **91**
- Offers vibrant downtown and commercial areas
    - 41 percent critical; 50 percent important = **91**
- Is attractive to visitors and for tourism
    - 40 percent critical; 47 percent important = **87**

Many of the open-ended definition suggestions are specific examples of how to accomplish the above definitions. Examples include supporting small- and medium-sized businesses; workforce education; development of restaurants; lower, reasonable taxes; support businesses outside of downtown; offer events and festivals.

UTILITIES

- Provides access to safe drinking water
  - 90 percent critical; 9 percent important = **99**
- Provides sewer services
  - 71 percent critical; 28 percent important = **99**
- Provides storm drainage
  - 59 percent critical; 40 percent important = **99**
- Provides flood control (dams, effective storm water management)
  - 56 percent critical; 42 percent important = **98**
- Provides affordable high-speed internet access
  - 44 percent critical; 37 percent important = **81**

Additional definition suggestion:
- Provides education on how community can help maintain utility infrastructure, like how to report illegal dumping into sewers

Other suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – use green energy sources to reduce utility costs to community; offer greater diversity of internet company options; reduce utility fees

EDUCATION

- Supports pre-K-12 education
    - 73 percent critical; 25 percent important = **98**
- Supports affordable, quality child care and preschool
    - 59 percent critical; 35 percent important = **94**
- Supports adult education
    - 41 percent critical; 52 percent important = **93**

Additional definition suggestions:
- Encourages college-level education pathways or alternate forms of education
- Supports education about ways to support marginalized community sectors
- Supports education and educational resources for people with special needs
- Supports alternative means beyond public education

Other suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – specific types of adult education, like budgeting – and those that school administrations would have to address – in-person learning; consolidating the Battle Creek area districts; offering the same resources to all students; offering more art education; teaching life skills; providing after-school programs.

ENVIRONMENT

- Protects and conserves water and other natural resources
    - 65 percent critical; 35 percent important = **100**
- Maintains utility infrastructure system for water, wastewater, and storm water
    - 74 percent critical; 25 percent important = **99**
- Supports air quality
    - 60 percent critical; 39 percent important = **99**
- Ensures protection, conservation, and preservation of parks, open spaces, rivers, other natural areas
    - 60 percent critical; 38 percent important = **98**
- Practices energy efficiency and sustainability
    - 45 percent critical; 52 percent important = **97**
- Educates about waste reduction, recycling, and conservation
    - 42 percent critical; 54 percent important = **96**
- Supports renewable and alternative energy sources
    - 45 percent critical; 44 percent important = **89**

Additional definition suggestion:
- Enforces proper recycling/hazardous waste disposal

Other suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – less cutting and more replacing of trees; restoration of Kalamazoo River; educate on illegal dumping; beautification in the Dickman Road median; address noise pollution.

RECREATION

- Offers community parks, neighborhood parks, green spaces, and lakes
    - 49 percent critical; 50 percent important = **99**
- Supports an active lifestyle
    - 36 percent critical; 56 percent important = **92**
- Offers recreation facilities
    - 35 percent critical; 60 percent important = **95**
- Offers recreation programs
    - 31 percent critical; 64 percent important = **95**
- Connects the community with pedestrian and bike trail/path network
    - 33 percent critical; 55 percent important = **88**

Additional definition suggestion:
- Maintain all parks pristinely, including playground equipment

Other suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – make sure facilities are affordable to all; develop more parks; develop along the river; invest in Binder Park Golf Course and Linear Park path; develop more indoor recreation facilities.

A variety of comments suggested focusing on activities and facilities for children, teens/young adults, and families.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

- Maintains overall community appearance, including cleanliness
    - 59 percent critical; 41 percent important = **100**
- Offers garbage collection
    - 58 percent critical; 36 percent important = **94**
- Offers recycling
    - 49 percent critical; 40 percent important = **89**
- Provides code enforcement (property maintenance, long grass, abandoned buildings, etc.)
    - 45 percent critical; 48 percent important = **93**
- Offers yard waste pick-up/disposal
    - 45 percent critical; 46 percent important = **91**
- Maintains public buildings and community facilities
    - 43 percent critical; 54 percent important = **97**
- Offers attractive transportation corridors, streetscapes, entrance gateways
    - 35 percent critical; 54 percent important = **89**

Additional definition suggestions:
- Provides programming to assist home owners to increase their personal property
- Enforces property maintenance codes equally

Other suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – reinstate citywide leaf pickup; more parking enforcement in neighborhoods; program to help disabled and elderly maintain yards and sidewalks; make sure landlords maintain their properties; increase street sweeping and snow plowing; better signage

One comment noted to apply the definitions to all city neighborhoods equally.

TRANSPORTATION/MOBILITY

- Removes snow
    - 61 percent critical; 38 percent important = **99**
- Plans for, builds, and improves road systems and bridges
    - 61 percent critical; 37 percent important = **98**
- Maintains street lights
    - 56 percent critical; 42 percent important = **98**
- Makes it easy to travel by public transit
    - 49 percent critical; 48 percent important = **97**
- Works with partners and community to develop and improve transportation infrastructure
    - 47 percent critical; 49 percent important = **96**
- Maintains sidewalks
    - 45 percent critical; 53 percent important = **98**
- Enforces traffic laws
    - 38 percent critical; 50 percent important = **88**
- Makes it easy to walk
    - 37 percent critical; 57 percent important = **94**
- Makes it easy to travel by car
    - 35 percent critical; 56 percent important = **91**
- Provides a network of paths, trails, and bike lanes that are safe and accessible
    - 29 percent critical; 61 percent important = **90**
- Makes it easy to travel by bicycle
    - 27 percent critical; 57 important = **84**
- Makes it easy to park in public spaces
    - 26 percent critical; 65 percent important = **91**

Additional definition suggestion:
- Sets sustainability goals, like moving toward zero emissions, and switching to electric vehicles

Other suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – improve and maintain city roads; later public transit hours and more bus stops; remove snow on sidewalks; public transit access for Fort Custer employees; accessible bus stops and sidewalks; make it easier to use a wheelchair throughout the city

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

- Offers services and programs available to every person, no matter their race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic class, age, or ability
    - 77 percent critical; 22 percent important = **99**
- Partners and commits to the equitable treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, no matter their race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic class, age, or ability
    - 76 percent critical; 23 percent important = **99**
- Provides accessible public spaces for people with disabilities
    - 70 percent critical; 28 percent important = **98**
- Supports community partnerships that welcome and encourage participation by every person, no matter their race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic class, age, or ability
    - 67 percent critical; 32 percent important = **99**
- Supports and collaborates with community activities that advance economic improvement for every community member
    - 60 percent critical; 38 percent important = **98**

Additional definition suggestion:
- Supports learning experiences around diversity, equity, and inclusion

Other suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – work toward diversifying community leadership; provide reparations to African American community

ARTS AND CULTURE

- Offers shopping, dining, entertainment venues
    - 49 percent critical; 49 percent important = **98**
- Offers cultural, arts, and music activities
    - 47 percent critical; 51 percent important = **98**
- Offers diverse and inclusive events and venues for cultural enrichment and celebration
    - 46 percent critical; 44 percent important = **90**
- Supports the arts
    - 41 percent critical; 55 percent important = **96**
- Provides and promotes a diverse mix of leisure and athletic activities and festivals that are open to all
    - 39 percent critical; 58 percent important = **97**

Suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – bring in nationally renowned acts/theater; reopen the Kingman Museum and Regional History Museum; public art displays; museum or other venue dedicated to city's African American heritage; events and venues should be affordable and offer transportation; promote youth involvement

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Gives people a chance to express their views before making decisions
    - 57 percent critical; 42 percent important = **99**
- Welcomes community involvement
    - 49 percent critical; 48 percent important = **97**
- Encourages a sense of community
    - 46 percent critical; 49 percent important = **95**
- Offers opportunities to participate in community matters
    - 41 percent critical; 54 percent important = **95**
- Encourages a sense of civic and community pride
    - 39 percent critical; 57 percent important = **96**
- Offers opportunities to participate in social events and activities
    - 33 percent critical; 60 percent important = **93**
- Encourages neighborliness of people who live here
    - 28 percent critical; 63 percent important = **91**
- Offers opportunities to volunteer
    - 21 percent critical; 69 percent important = **90**
- Offers opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities
    - 18 percent critical; 46 percent important; 22 percent not important = **86**

Other suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – offer youth involvement in all things that pertain to them; encourage Neighborhood Planning Council participation; city department heads and commission should engage with community; listen and respond to input

GOVERNANCE

- Uses good financial management practices
  - 86 percent critical; 14 percent important = **100**
- Is honest
  - 84 percent critical; 16 percent important = **100**
- Generally acts in the community's best interest
  - 72 percent critical; 27 percent important = **99**
- Provides valuable services for taxes paid
  - 71 percent critical; 28 percent important = **99**
- Is open and transparent to the public
  - 70 percent critical; 29 percent important = **99**
- Is responsive, open, and transparent to the community
  - 69 percent critical; 30 percent important = **99**
- Treats community members fairly, and with respect
  - 66 percent critical; 34 percent important = **100**
- Informs community about issues that affect them
  - 65 percent critical; 34 percent important = **99**
- Follows regulations, policies, and safety measures for lower risk
  - 54 percent critical; 42 percent important = **96**
- Hires a workforce focused on service excellence
  - 53 percent critical; 45 percent important = **98**
- Offers community access to elected officials
  - 44 percent critical; 52 percent important = **96**
- Plans for positive community future
  - 41 percent critical; 51 percent important = **92**
- Collaborates with community stakeholders, like private sector and nonprofits
  - 34 percent critical; 58 percent important = **92**
- Collaborates with other governments on regional issues
  - 33 percent critical; 62 percent important = **95**

Additional definition suggestion:
- Provides opportunities for city staff development and growth
- Holds accountable city employees and community members for their responsibilities

Other suggestion gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – work for the entire community without preference or bias

Several comments pointed out that many of the offered definitions – including honestly and transparency – should be a given related to good governance.
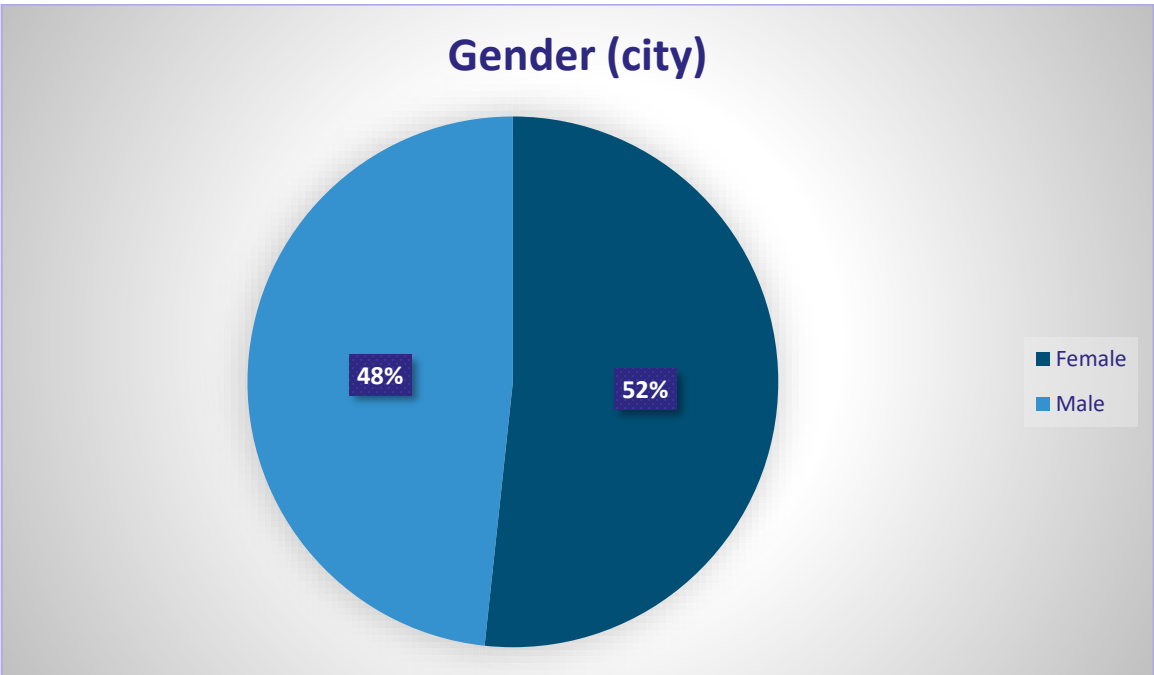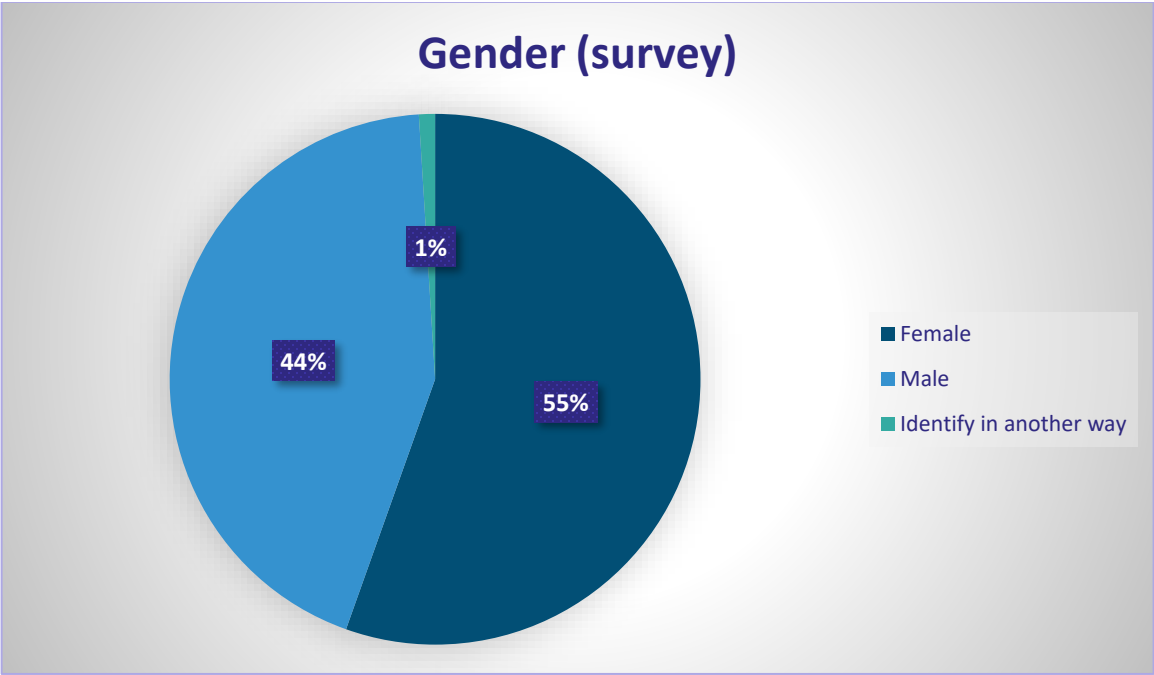
COMMUNITY DESIGN

- Offers desirable, quality neighborhoods
  - 62 percent critical; 37 percent important = **99**
- Assists in the redevelopment and revitalization of parts of the community that need it
  - 53 percent critical; 44 percent important = **97**
- Offers public places where people want to spend time
  - 52 percent critical; 45 percent important = **97**
- Offers downtown or other areas with a strong sense of place
  - 50 percent critical; 45 percent important = **95**
- Supports commercial development
  - 40 percent critical; 51 percent important = **91**
- Protects and preserves historically significant buildings and sites
  - 38 percent critical; 49 percent important = **87**
- Oversees overall quality of new development and existing redevelopment
  - 37 percent critical; 54 percent important = **91**
- Collaborates to provide a variety of available, affordable, quality housing
  - 33 percent critical; 53 percent important = **86**
- Supports residential development
  - 30 percent critical; 59 percent important = **89**
- Manages growth in line with the city's Master Plan
  - 30 percent critical; 54 percent important = **84**
- Preserves the community's character
  - 28 percent critical; 47 percent important = **75**
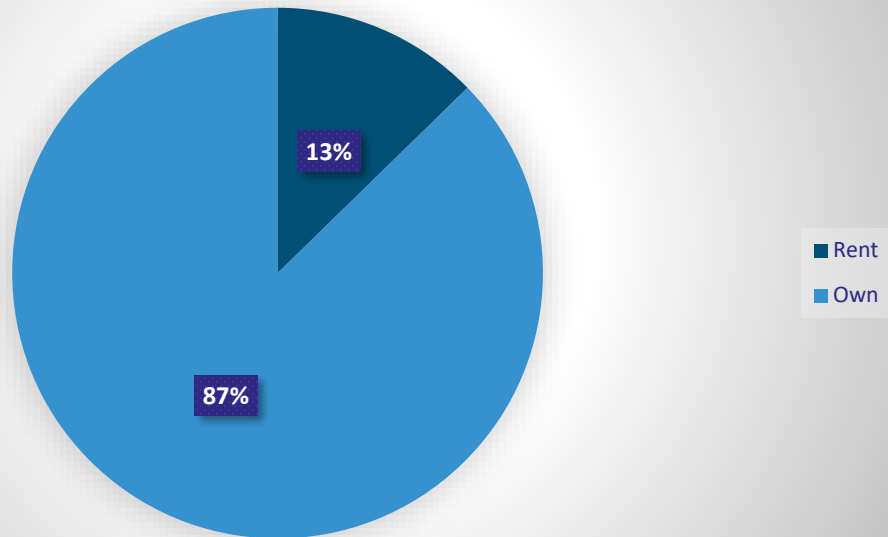
Additional definition suggestion:
- Ensures ease of use, making public transit and sidewalks accessible to all people at all times of year

Other suggestions gave specific ways to meet the offered definitions – realize and avoid unintended consequences of gentrification; river restoration downtown; exercise-friendly amenities; code enforcement; direct people's habits (walkable)
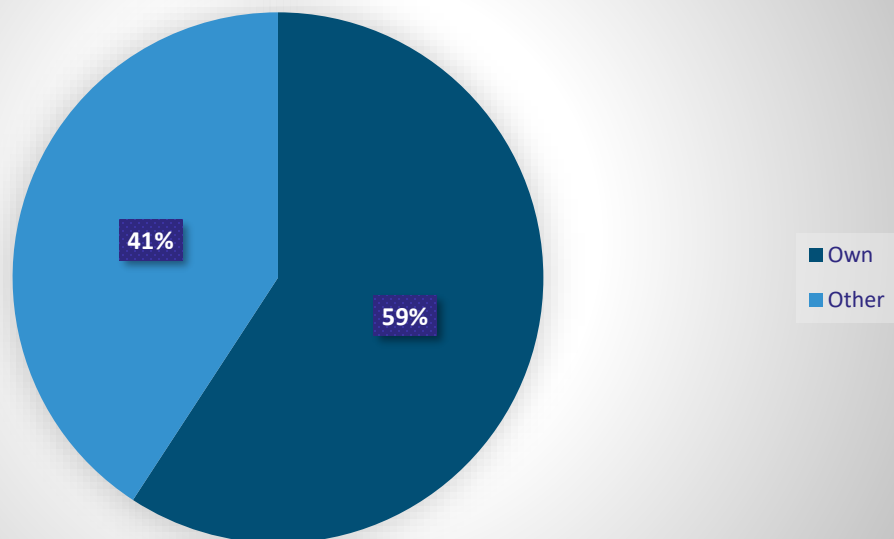
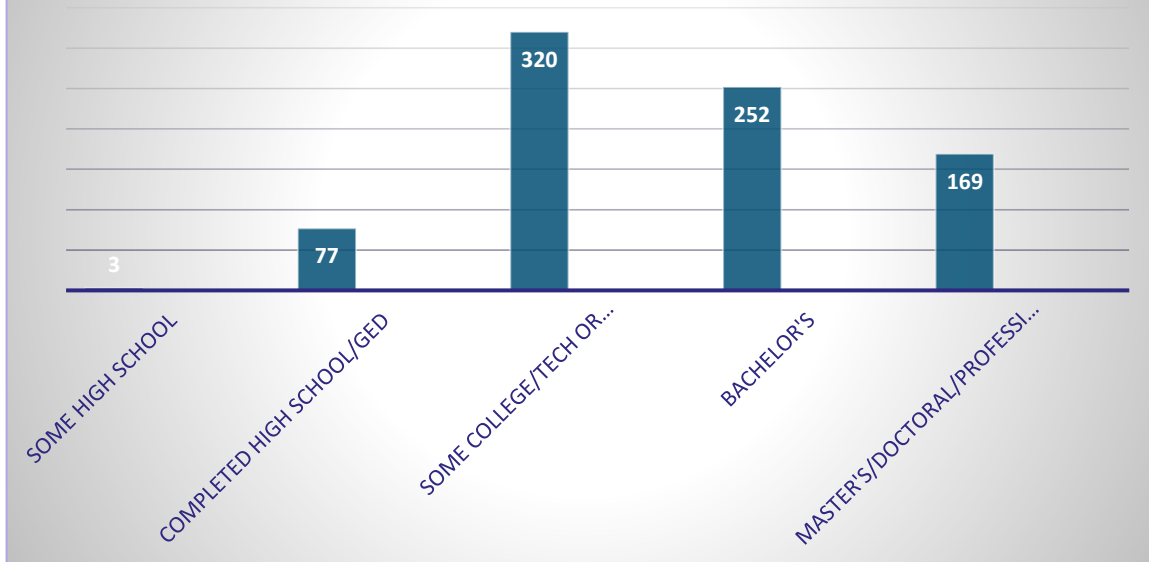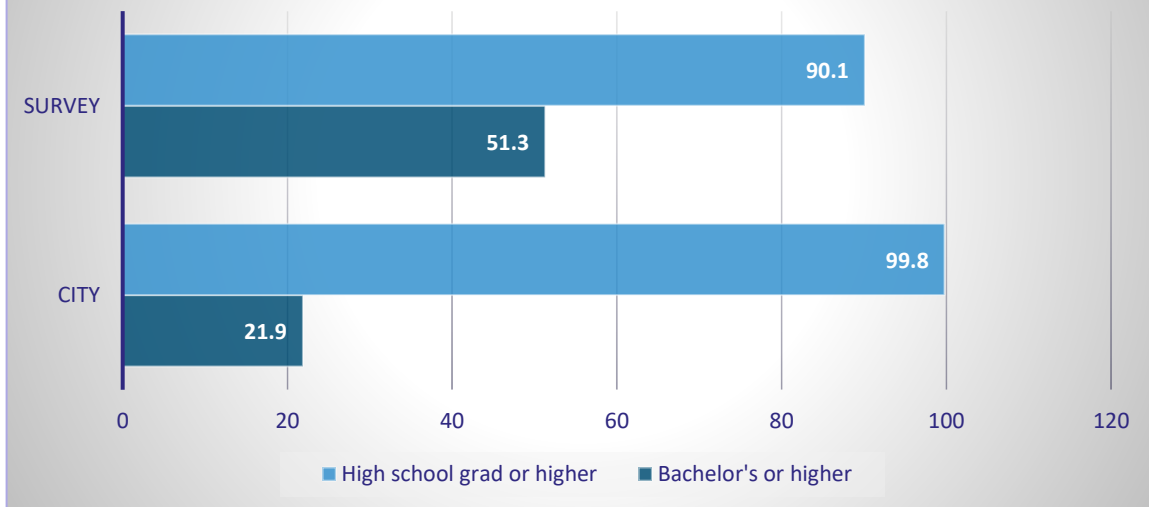**DEMOGRAPHICS – Survey response and city (2019 U.S. Census estimates)**

Gender (survey)

1%

44%

55%

- Female
- Male
- Identify in another way

Gender (city)

48%

52%

- Female
- Male

Homes (survey)

Legend: Rent, Own

- Rent: 13%
- Own: 87%

Homes (city)

Legend: Own, Other

- Own: 59%
- Other: 41%

Highest completed education (survey)

Bar chart values:
- SOME HIGH SCHOOL: 3
- COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL/GED: 77
- SOME COLLEGE/TECH OR...: 320
- BACHELOR'S: 252
- MASTER'S/DOCTORAL/PROFESSI...: 169

Education
(based on Census data; percentage)

- SURVEY — High school grad or higher: 90.1
- SURVEY — Bachelor's or higher: 51.3
- CITY — High school grad or higher: 99.8
- CITY — Bachelor's or higher: 21.9

Legend: ■ High school grad or higher ■ Bachelor's or higher

Racial/ethnic identity (survey)

Legend:
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian/Asian Indian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Middle Eastern/Arabic
- Hispanic
- White
- Other
- Two or more

Values shown: 2%, 1%, 1%, 6%, 0%, 6%, 3%, 81%

Racial/ethnic identity (city)

Legend:
- American Indian
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic/Latino
- White
- Two or more races

Values shown: 3.60%, 6.50%, 0.08%, 17.80%, 7.50%, 70%
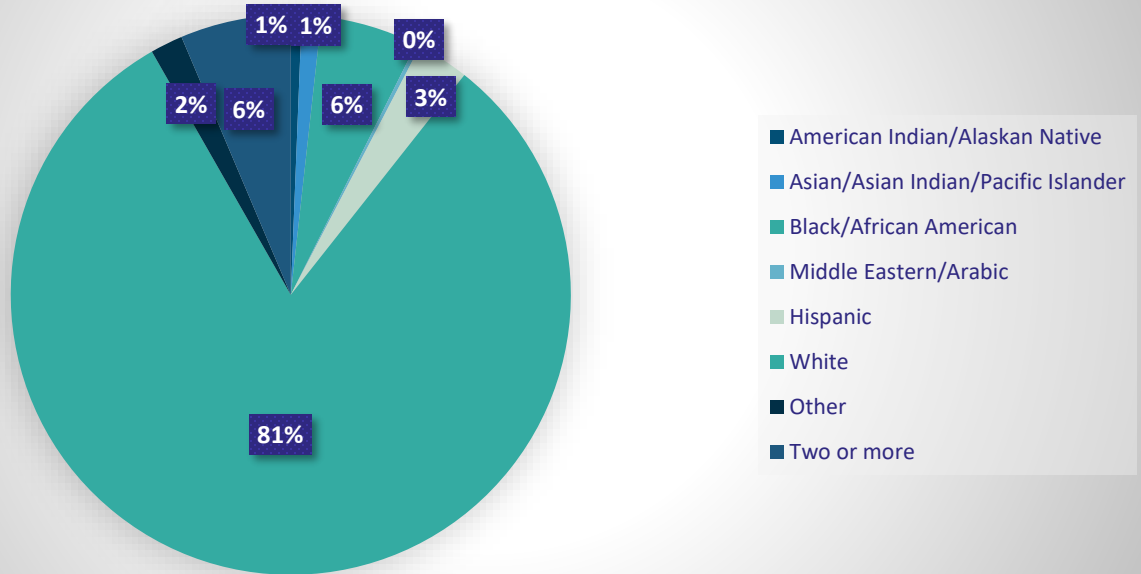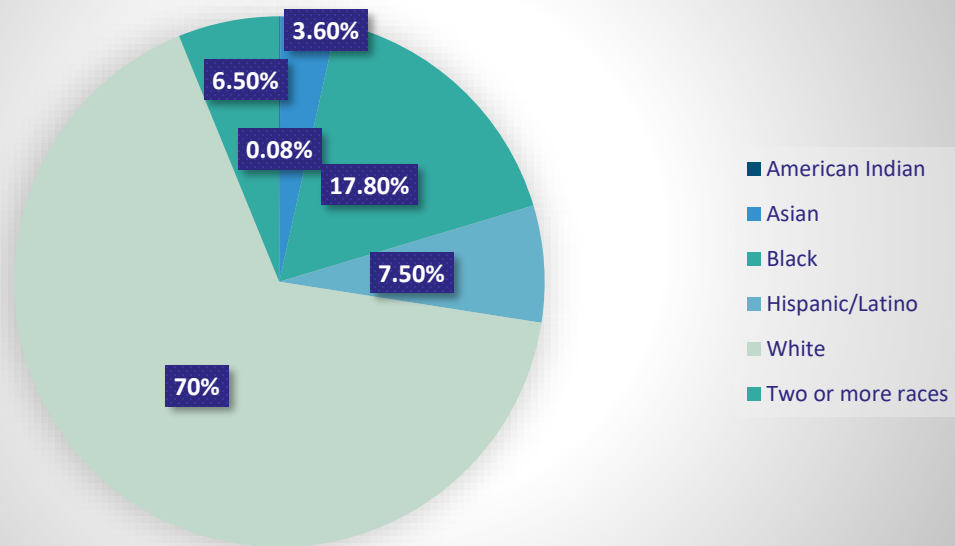
Children 17 or younger at home? (survey)

35%

65%

- No
- Yes
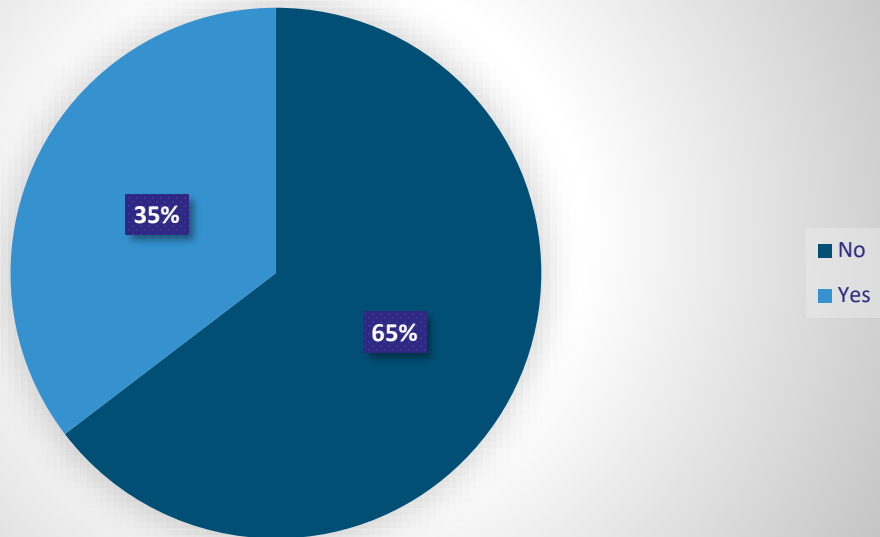
Children 17 or younger at home? (city)

25%

75%

- No
- Yes
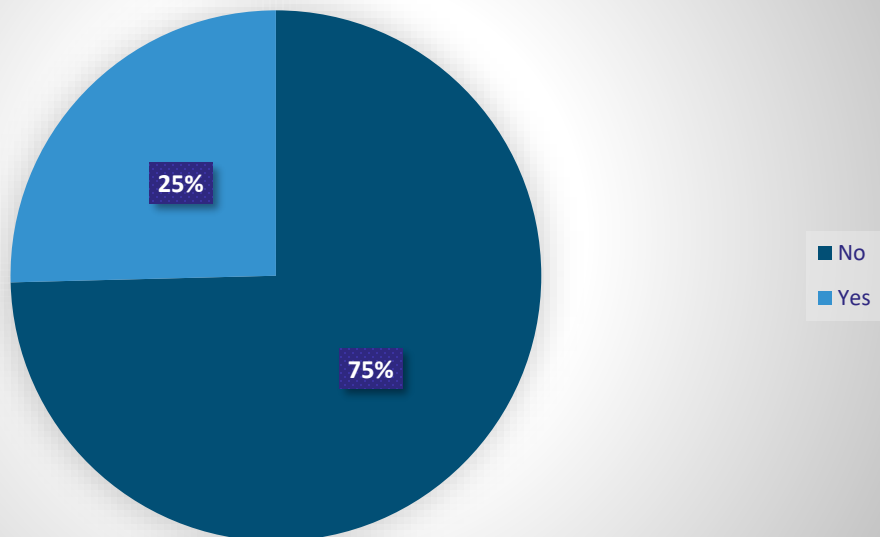
Adults 65 or older at home? (survey)

- No
- Yes

25%

75%
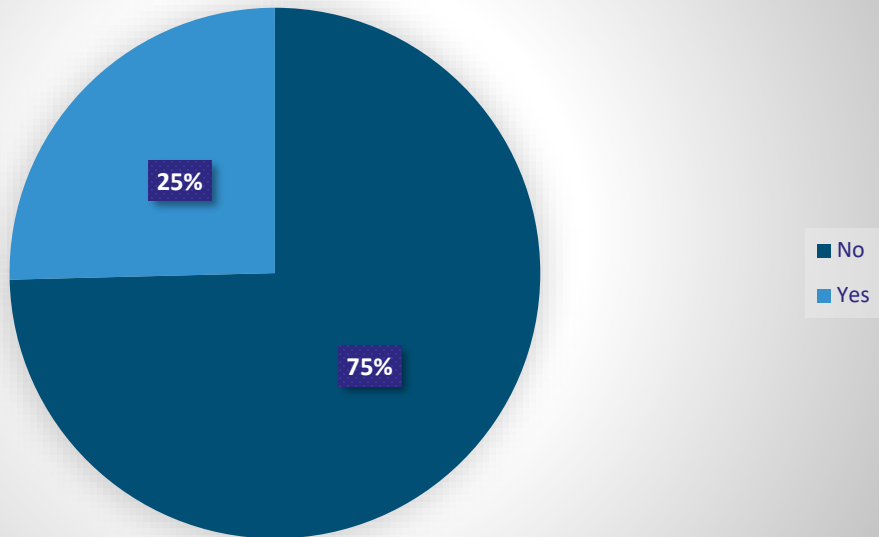
Adults 65 or older at home? (city)

- No
- Yes

15%

85%

Total household income before taxes (survey)

Total household income before taxes (survey)