

# Town Center Public Engagement Update

October – November 2025



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# The City of Wilsonville Town Center Focus Groups

Presentation to Wilsonville City Council  
December 1, 2025



# Qualitative research and recruitment

## **The Purpose of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is designed to elicit the range of opinions and experiences that people in the community hold. The goal of qualitative research is to help us understand why people feel the way they do. The numbers and percentages in the report are descriptive of the focus groups but may or may not generalize to the public at large, nor are they intended to.

## **Recruitment**

Participants were contacted from a list of registered voters in Wilsonville. They were screened for their eligibility and asked about their demographic backgrounds. Quotas were set across the groups to best match participants' demographics with the community at large. Additionally, in the screening process, recruits were asked about their opinions on the Town Center, as well as state (gas tax) and federal (healthcare credits) issues. The purpose of the additional questions was to make it less obvious the purpose of the focus groups, though some participants understandably anticipated that the discussions would be about the Town Center. The groups were made up of participants who supported, opposed, and were uncertain of the Town Center Plan.

# Research purpose

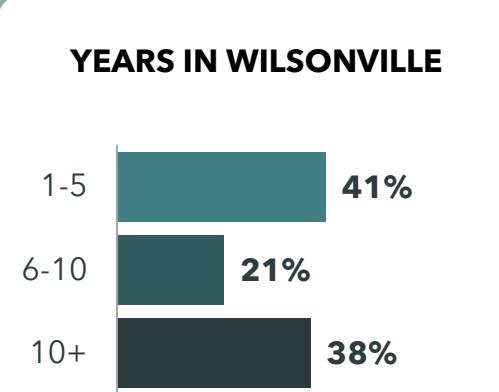
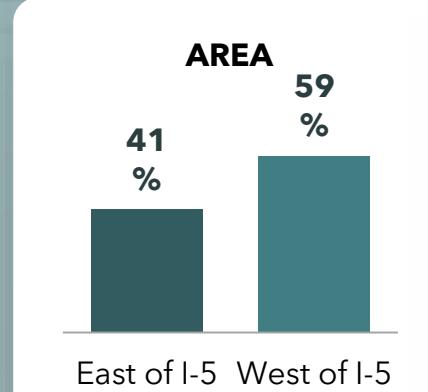
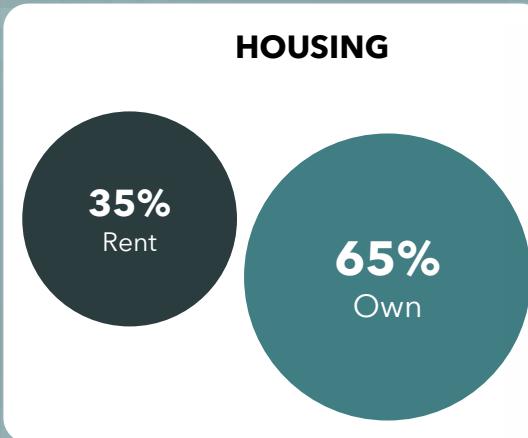
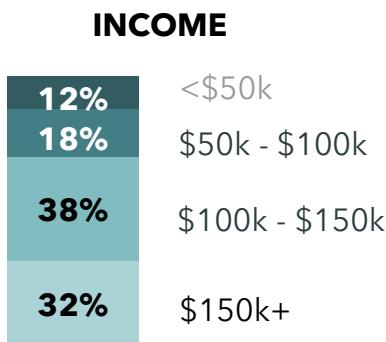
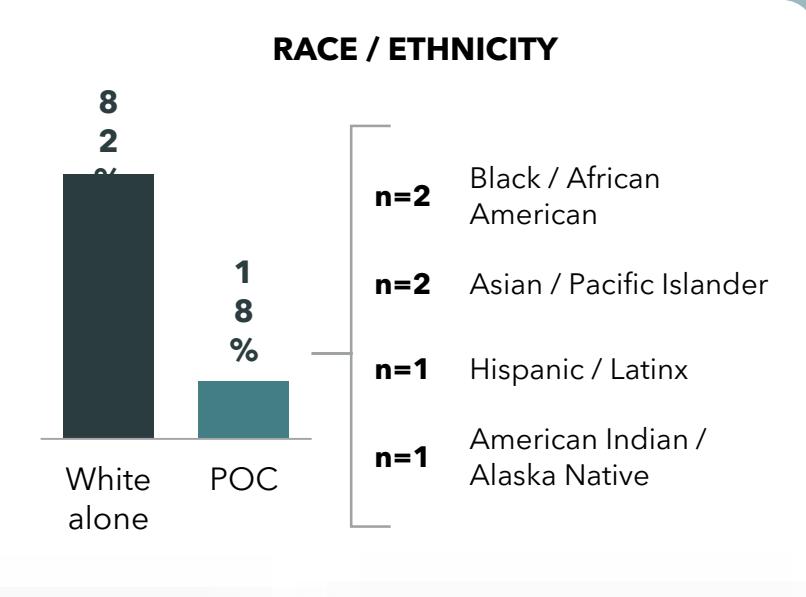
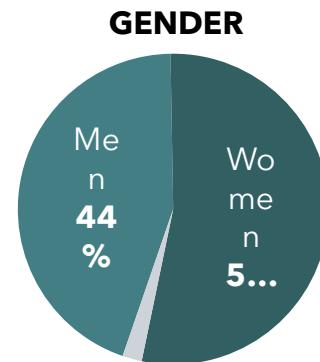
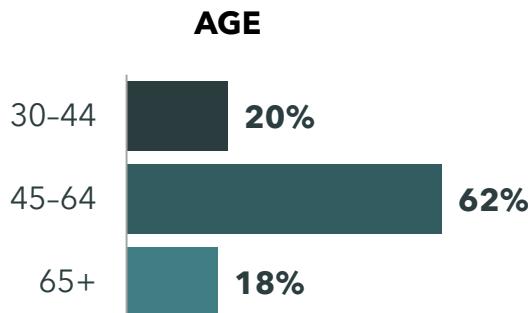
- Assess community support, concerns, and questions about the Wilsonville Town Center Plan
- Explore people's perspectives on using urban renewal as a funding mechanism
- Gauge reactions to information about the Town Center Plan

# Methodology

- Three focus groups with Wilsonville voters (N=34), which included supporters, opponents, and those who are uncertain of the Town Center Plan
- Conducted on October 23 and October 25, 2025
- Professionally moderated, in-person, two-hour sessions
- Sessions consisted of both written exercises and group discussion; quotes and commentary in the report are drawn from both written exercises and transcripts

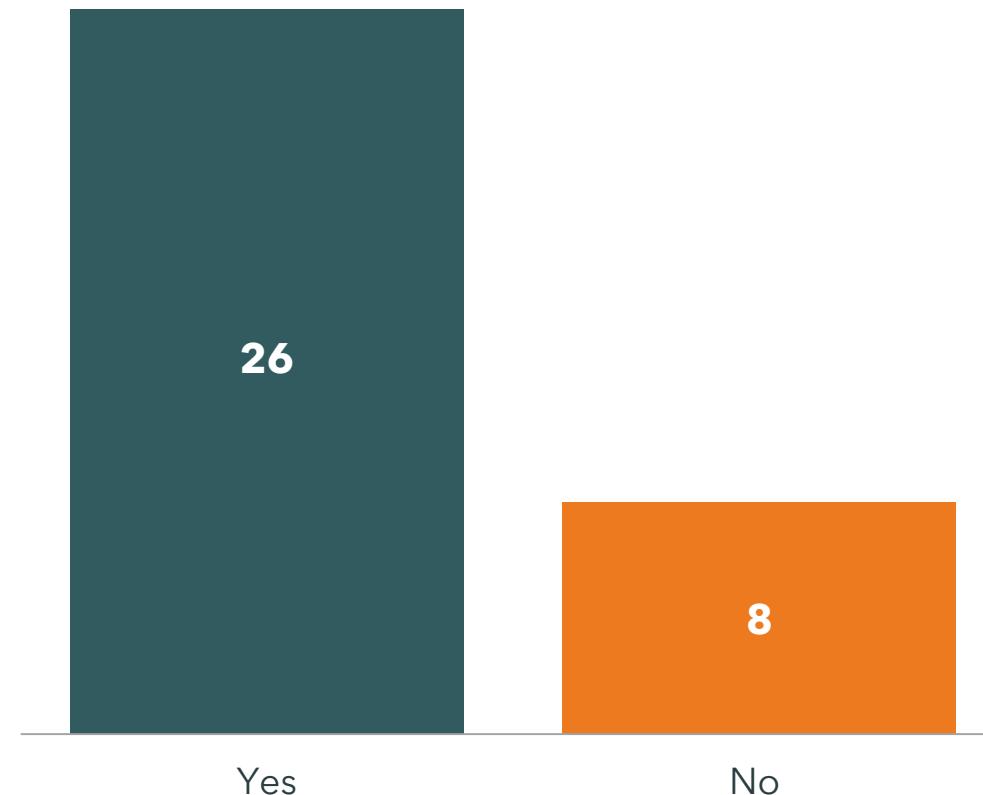
## Demographic breakdown of focus group participants

N=34 voters in Wilsonville



Most participants have heard of Wilsonville's Town Center Plan before the focus groups, although there is a high level of unfamiliarity with its details.

*Have you heard of Wilsonville's Town Center Plan?*



# Key takeaways: values and community

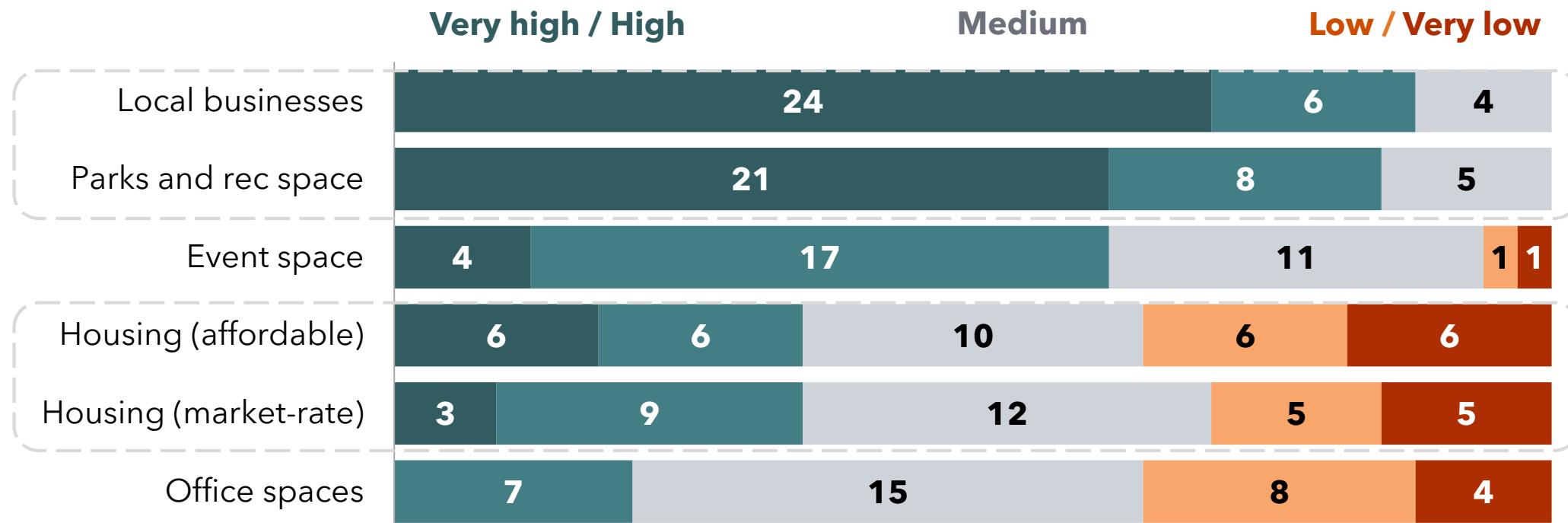
- Wilsonville residents value the safety, small-town feel, location, and natural beauty of the area.
- Participants express concerns about traffic and are ambivalent about growth.
- There is a desire to add local, small businesses for dining and shopping, and gathering and connecting in Wilsonville.

# Key takeaways: Town Center Plan appeal

- Participants are most excited about more local businesses and gathering places in Wilsonville.
- They appreciate the opportunity to spend their money within the community.
- Participants like the parks and open spaces shown in the plan. They like imagining the ability to walk and enjoy shops and restaurants in one place, close to where they live.
- For some, the addition of housing is appealing as it could help keep the community affordable and allow young people to stay in Wilsonville.

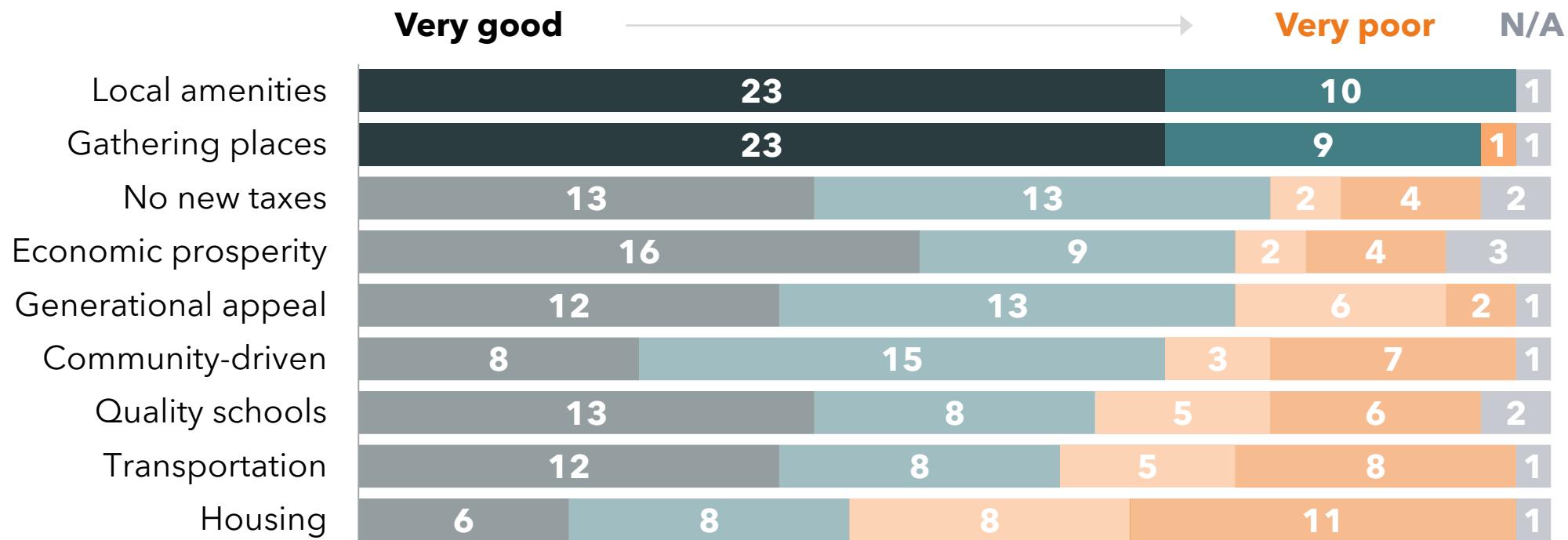
Participants rank local businesses and parks and recreation as the two highest priorities for the Town Center, while they are split on housing.

*How high should the following priorities be for the Wilsonville Town Center?*



# Participants say that local amenities and gathering places are very good reasons to support the Town Center Plan.

*The following are reasons some people support the Town Center Plan.  
For each, indicate if you think it is a good or poor reason.*

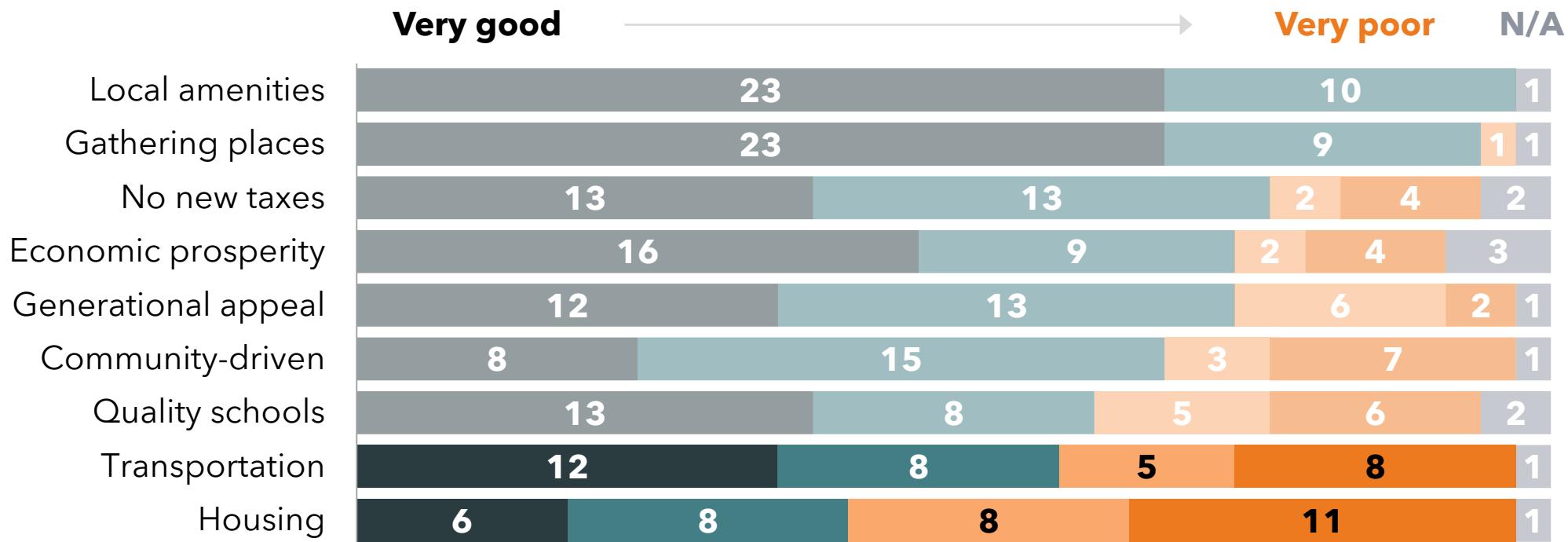


# Key takeaways: Town Center Plan concerns

- Several participants voice their dislike for the amount of housing the Town Center Plan allows. It raises concerns about traffic and losing the small-town feel. Some participants believe that crime is greater in higher density developments.
- In reviewing images about potential Town Center development, some participants provided critical feedback about the height and design of the buildings, finding them too tall, too modern, and too much like a big city.
- There is an equal split on whether affordable housing should be a priority. Those who dislike it have a mix of concerns, including that Wilsonville should prioritize single-family homes, and that lower-income residents won't be able to support neighborhood businesses.

# Housing and transportation are seen as the poorest reasons to support the Town Center Plan.

*The following are reasons some people support the Town Center Plan.  
For each, indicate if you think it is a good or poor reason.*



# Key takeaways: Town Center questions

- Participants have varying perceptions on how long the Town Center Plan will take to develop. Guesses ranged from a few years to several decades.
- Participants wonder why buildings have continued to remain vacant and the city has struggled to redevelop this area.
- Many are uncertain of the details of plan, including funding sources, and what it could cost to residents.

There is a wide range of perceptions on the time for completion, with some favorability for a gradual plan with immediate action to improve the city.

### Immediate

*In a way, I would love to ... get this thing up and running as soon as possible ... When you think of it in a more pragmatic way, there's a little bit of comfort to me thinking it's gradual.*

**Group 3**

*Can we, in the meantime ... do something with this space in our city? ... I feel that the city is slowly dying in the meantime while we're making plans about the future.*

**Group 1**

*I'd like to see it by five years or less.*

**Group 3**

### 5 - 12 years

*I'd say five to ten years.*

**Group 2**

*To me, it's probably a 10-to-12-year thing. That's what I would think ... That seems slow.*

**Group 1**

### 20 - 30 years

*With the vision, probably 30, but I'm talking about the basic skeleton, 10 [years].*

**Group 2**

*I think, they're projecting a 20- to 30-year buildout. A lot of the debts come in the first 5-10 years. There's going to be a lot of disarray for us for the next decade, while they try to create the future that they want.*

**Group 2**

Associations with urban renewal include development and improvements, a perception of increased taxes, government subsidies and debt, and heightened construction activity.

*What words or phrases come to mind when you hear "urban renewal"?*



# Key takeaways: urban renewal

- Participants are largely uninformed about urban renewal and tax increment financing. They want more information so they can thoughtfully engage with the planning process.
- There is a prevailing belief that urban renewal increases property values, and therefore property taxes, for all residents inside and outside the urban renewal area.
- Many participants are uncomfortable with the city incurring debt, because they don't know how much it is, how it is paid back, and over what timeframe.

# Key takeaways: urban renewal questions

- To feel informed about a future vote on urban renewal, participants want reassurance on the plan's details, timeframe, cost impact and potential tradeoffs, and execution.
- They want a better understanding of current conditions, and how the reasons for business closures may influence the City's ability to deliver on a town center plan. "We haven't been successful to date, so why will we be successful in the future?"

To feel informed about a future vote on urban renewal, participants want more clarity around cost impacts to taxpayers, funding sources, potential tradeoffs, and timelines.

### What will it cost?

*What is the **increased cost to taxpayers?***

**Group 1**

*...how much more is it going to cost me?*

**Group 2**

*What is it going to **cost me** over 10, 15, 20 years?*

**Group 1**

*How much will this **increase my taxes?***

**Group 3**

### How will it be funded?

*Having the **funding being transparent** would be something that's really important.*

**Group 3**

*Who is taking part; **private investors?** **Why are things the way they are now?***

**Group 1**

*What is being **sacrificed?***

**Group 2**

### Timelines?

***How long** will this take?*

**Group 1**

*It comes back to having some **clearer timelines or milestones***

*... That would help everybody to feel a little bit more at ease with the timeframe, even if it's going to take longer. If we knew, 'Okay, the **first five years, this is what's going to happen.** This is the best projection for five to ten [years].'*

**Group 3**



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# Wilsonville Community Outreach Findings

December 2025



**LET'S TALK,  
WILSONVILLE!**

- 12 questions
- Mix of open-ended, choice questio
- 555 volunteered responses

Reminder, this is qualitative res  
Percentages aren't statistically

## What do you value most about Wilsonville? (Top two reasons)

- Community/small-town feel and neighbors looking out for each other 
- Perceived safety and low crime environment
- Parks, trails and natural setting, including proximity to the river and open spaces
- Convenient regional access via I-5 and proximity to jobs and services
- Good schools and a family-friendly environment

## Most pressing issues facing Wilsonville? (Top two reasons)

- Economic vitality: vacant storefronts, perceived decline of local businesses and lack of retail/restaurant diversity 
- Growth and development: concern about multifamily housing increasing density and change in community character
- Governance and fiscal trust: skepticism about City Council decisions, tax policy and overall prioritization
- Transportation: traffic and congestion, particularly on key corridors and access routes
- Public safety and homelessness: smaller but recurring concerns about crime, Wilsonville Community Outreach Findings visible homelessness

## Familiarity with Town Center Plan? *(Single choice)*

- **Somewhat familiar:** 331 respondents (59.6%)
- **Very familiar:** 168 respondents (30.3%)
- **Not familiar at all:** 53 respondents (9.5%)
- **Not answered/other:** 3 respondents (0.5%)



## Importance of a vibrant town center? *(Single choice)*

- **Very important:** 300 respondents (54.1%)
- **Somewhat important:** 116 respondents (20.9%)
- **Nice but not essential:** 126 respondents (22.7%)
- **Not sure:** 7 respondents (1.3%)
- **Not answered/other:** 6 respondents (1.1%)



## Desired features of a town center? *(Ranked choice 1-9; Times 1)*

- Local restaurants: 400 respondents  72.1%
- Retail stores: 211 respondents (38%)
- Walkability: 193 respondents (34.8%)
- Entertainment venues: 186 respondents (33.5%)
- Street improvements: 171 respondents (30.8%)
- Parks: 162 respondents (29.2%)
- Housing that is affordable/attainable: 138 respondents (24.9%)
- More connectivity: 105 respondents (18.9%)
- A variety of housing choices: 73 respondents (13.2%)

## Models for Wilsonville town center? *(Up to three choices)*

- Lake Oswego: 176 mentions (31.7%)
- West Linn: 128 mentions (23.1%)
- Sherwood: 125 mentions (22.5%)
- McMinnville: 82 mentions (14.8%)
- Canby: 62 mentions (11.2%)
- Bridgeport Village: 56 mentions (10.1%)
- Oregon City: 41 mentions (7.4%)
- Wilsonville itself: 29 mentions
- Newberg: 24 mentions (4.3%)
- Sisters: 18 mentions (3.2%)
- Tualatin: 17 mentions (3.1%)
- Bend: 44 mentions (7.9%)
- Hood River: 12 mentions (2.2%)
- Corvallis: 12 mentions (2.2%)

## Sources of trusted information? *(Open-ended with up to three choices)*

- City website (or similar official online channels): 141 respondents (25.4%)
- Social media (e.g., Facebook, Nextdoor, other platforms): 108 respondents (19.5%)
- Local newspaper (e.g., Wilsonville Spokesman): 91 respondents (16.4%)
- City council / public meetings / City Hall: 89 respondents (16%)
- Neighbors / friends / word-of-mouth: 26 respondents (4.7%)
- City newsletters, mailers, and bill inserts: 21 respondents (3.8%)

## Favored Wilsonville Town Center features? (Top two features)

- Retail / local businesses (stores, shopping, boutiques, etc.):  
175 respondents (31.5%)
- Walkability / bikes / transit / connectivity: 166 respondents (29.9%)
- Restaurants / dining / cafes / bars: 127 respondents (22.9%)
- Parks / open space / plazas / gathering places:  
94 respondents (16.9%)
- Food pods / food carts: 6 respondents (1.1%)

## Desired Wilsonville Town Center plan changes? (Top two changes)

- Parking supply and management (more, better or structured parking): 151 respondents (27.2%)
- Housing amount and density mix (less housing, fewer apartments, different balance): 125 respondents (22.5%)
- Retail/restaurant mix or more/different commercial emphasis): 87 respondents (15.7%)
- Traffic and circulation (congestion, intersections, street performance): 62 respondents (11.2%)
- Financing /urban renewal / taxes: 26 respondents (4.7%)

## Support for Town Center urban renewal? (*Single choice*)

- Yes: 243 respondents (43.8%)
- No: 167 respondents (30.1%)
- Maybe: 140 respondents (25.2%)
- Not answered/other: 5 respondents (0.9%)

## Reason for urban renewal support, opposition or indecision? (Open-ended)

- **Supporters:** View urban renewal as a pragmatic tool to fund infrastructure and placemaking without broad new taxes; prefer coordinated build-out of the Town Center rather than incremental, uncoordinated projects.
- **Opponents:** Characterize urban renewal as corporate welfare, raise concerns about long-term debt and tax policy and express skepticism about the City's fiscal transparency.
- **Undecided respondents:** Request clearer information on mechanics, individual tax impacts, specific project lists and sequencing.

## What does 'The Wilsonville Way' mean to you? (Open-ended)

- **Positive framing** (majority of responses): Small-town, safe, family-oriented ethos; neighbors help each other; expectation of respectful, civil discourse and collaborative problem-solving; high service levels for Wilsonville's size.
- **Neutral/unfamiliar**: Some respondents report never having heard the phrase or not attaching any specific meaning to it.
- **Critical framing** (smaller subset): Use the phrase to describe perceived shortcomings in local politics, concerns about growth and development or a loss of historic community character.