

Appendix – Public Participation Results

This appendix provides details of the results of various public participation exercises used in the plan. Often raw data and quotes are used. Other times data and thoughts are summarized, as appropriate.

Stakeholder/city leaders kickoff meeting – March 9, 2003, 7 PM, City Hall, 11 members in attendance plus one attending via zoom

At this meeting, we completed a survey to rate the Iowa Smart Planning Principles and Elements. This was to help SICOG understand where to focus the planning process. More important items should be given more focus and less important items should be given less focus.

Review Planning Elements (how important is each one) - 1 is low, 5 is high.

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Public Participation	0	0	2	7	1	3.9
Issues and opportunities	0	0	6	3	0	3.3
Land Use	0	0	0	3	7	4.7
Housing	0	0	0	1	9	4.9
Public Infrastructure and Utilities	0	1	0	1	8	4.6
Transportation	1	2	3	3	1	3.1
Economic Development	0	0	2	2	6	4.4
Agriculture and natural resources	1	1	3	4	1	3.3
City Facilities	0	0	1	4	5	4.4
Community character	1	0	0	2	7	4.4
Hazards	2	2	4	2	0	2.6
Intergovernmental collaboration	0	0	3	5	2	3.9
Implementation	1	0	2	3	4	3.9

Review Planning Principles (which ones are most important to you) - 1 is low, 5 is high.

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Collaboration	0	0	1	4	5	4.4
Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency	0	0	2	4	4	4.2
Clean, renewable, and efficient energy	1	2	1	2	4	3.6
Occupational Diversity	1	1	4	3	1	3.2
Revitalization	1	0	0	6	3	4.0
Housing diversity	1	1	1	4	3	3.7
Community character	1	0	0	1	8	4.5
Natural resources and agricultural protection	1	1	2	4	2	3.5
Sustainable design	0	0	3	3	4	4.1
Transportation diversity	1	1	7	0	1	2.9

Steering Committee Meeting 1 – May 16, 2023, 7 PM, City Hall, 12 members in attendance and one via phone

At this meeting we held several sessions to gain public comments. These include the following.

The first exercise was for each member in attendance to fill out a postcard, which read, “Dear Family/Friend, It is the year 2040 and you should visit me here in Earlham because...”

I live here still! This is a great community to live in and retire in. We are a self-sustaining town; you can do most anything here or from here.

Because I’ll still probably be city clerk at age 90.

Earlham still has the small-town appeal that people long for.

We have a great town with opportunities for fun, eating, and living.

We are a small town with slow, steady growth. We have a thriving business district with a standalone PK-12th grade school district.

I can’t drive to see you.

There is so much to do on the street for everyone in the family.

We are the example for small town Iowa. We do so by supporting small business, welcoming all visitors, educating youth on strong morals and values, and offering opportunities for young families to find a place to call home.

It’s an amazing town with all the amenities but still a small-town feel. “It is true today and I hope still true then.”

The second question asked was, “What are the biggest opportunities for Earlham?”

Proximity to Des Moines metro.

Small town feel or small-town living.

Bedroom community that is NOT just a bedroom community.

Good education system.

Great people.

Maintaining small town charm.

Bringing new families into the community.

Bike trails connecting to larger trails.

Grow residential and retail zoning.

PK-12th standalone school district.

Opportunity for growth – business and housing.

The great people who live here.

Commercial and residential growth.

Great place to raise a family.

Engage Chestnut St. with businesses to drive street traffic.

Grow housing strategically to match needed workforce.

Schools.

Small business support.

Small town environment.

Great school and almost every business you need.

The third question was, “What are the biggest challenges in Earlham?”

Lack of development land.

Acquiring land for growth – buildings for new businesses.

Housing.

Need more businesses and places for businesses.

Housing (affordability and availability).

Land acquisition.

New businesses opportunities.

Incorporating farmland in zones.

Land for expansion.

Shared vision of who we are, where we are headed.

Identify and address needs for a healthy (socially, physically, spiritually, financially) community.

Housing. Keeping up with our growth.

Being landlocked for development.

Calculated growth.

Appropriate zoning.

Housing development – sustained growth.

Housing growth.

School landlocked and growth.

The fourth question was, “What is your one big dream for Earlham?”

Growth while maintaining identity.

Nice, controlled growth.

A rec center.

More housing.

A place where people will want to come to visit/shop.

My biggest dream is for Earlham to maintain its small-town charm while accommodating just enough growth to keep the school district and community thriving on its own.

Expand residential base and grow to 2000.

Bypass highway around town.

One big dream is that we would function as a vibrant, responsive community with opportunity for all.

The fifth question was, “What is your one big fear for Earlham?”

Not growing and getting left behind – missing our opportunity.

Not being able to grow.

Losing the businesses we have.

Lack of growth and turning into a dying town.

My biggest fear is that Earlham will be swallowed up by urban sprawl from the east.

Losing the small-town feel.

Slow, steady growth that we are able to keep up with – infrastructure.

Smart growth.

Retained independent school district.

“Character” the metro admires.

I want Earlham to be a destination town for families to take roots and raise their family. They do so because the schools are strong, the town is safe, the community is supportive and self-sustaining.

Rec center.

More housing.

Having streets of gold.

My biggest fear is that uncoordinated/unplanned sprawl would result in a loss of community and pit neighborhoods and businesses against one another.

Not being able to keep up with our growth. No housing available. Landlocked.

That we look like DeSoto.

Growing too fast and losing the small-town environment.

Lack of housing = no growth for our town.

Zombies!

5 Specific Projects Exercise

Another survey was provided during the first steering committee meeting. It asked the steering committee to, “please list up to five specific issues, projects, programs, or policy changes you would like to see implemented either by the City government or partner organizations in Earlham in the next five to ten years.” These are organized into several coalescing categories.

Housing and businesses:

- Residential zone land expansion and retail on highway.
- Creation of neighborhoods (as we grow) and green spaces.
- Continue to look for grants to help homeowners keep properties updated.
- Look of uptown, including lampposts (cool and warm bulbs, etc.)
- Business district/chamber.
- Housing – more.
- Support for new small businesses.
- Housing.
- Modify zoning for first floor retail and hospitality on Chestnut Street to drive foot traffic and grow small business activity.
- Planned affordable housing to support workforce: i.e., educators, school staff, hospitality.

- Business listings near the town entrance.
- Housing growth stimulation – beyond just tax abatement – work with builders and landowners.
- Revitalize business district/growth stimulator/tuck point buildings/fill them up.
- Business recruitment.
- Chamber of commerce.

Streets, trails, and infrastructure:

- City sidewalk rehab.
- North side storm water drainage.
- Continue to improve storm sewers.
- Improve sewer system/wastewater and drinking water supply in town.

Parks, recreation, and community facilities:

- Update city park fields, etc.
- A recreation center of some type.
- Gendler Park development with trail to get there.
- Park and recreation department – sports complex.
- City shed.

Community character and environment:

- Civic program for youth to serve our community in a variety of ways.
- Attract community and tourists for economic impact.
- Pay attention to growing agritourism and entertainment venues on the periphery of the community.
- Build on Levitt Amp Series – be known for great music in the summer and a terrific Freedom Fest.
- Keep rules friendly for a rural community (i.e., golf carts, bonfires) yet be mindful of community safety.
- Chickens and egg layers ordinance in town.
- School to work program – trades – HVAC.
- Clean up air and debris from elevator.

Wallace Centers of Iowa Smart Communities Scorecard



The final exercise of the first steering committee meeting was the evaluation of Earlham on a more psychological level. The Wallace Centers of Iowa has authorized the use of the “Smart Communities Scorecard.” This asks seven questions that the Wallace Centers feel gauges the quality of life in the city in terms of community engagement. This follows the community character and collaboration Smart Planning Principles.

Investing right the first time

Average Grade: C+ Range: A/D, 1 did not give a grade

Comments (4 responses): I think we do a good job investing. I may be unaware, but in relation to housing, we are behind the times. Try but doesn't always work. I hope so.

Working together

Average Grade: B Range: A/B

Comments (5): Community does come together well. Levitt AMP Earlham. The people are what make Earlham great. The school and city communicate well and try to work together. Yes, but communication could be better, I'm sure.

Building on community strengths

Average Grade: C+ Range: B/C, 2 did not give a grade

Comments (5): There are good civic leaders that continue to grow. We tend to support local businesses. Development of park and courts northeast of town? There is sometimes a disconnect between city and community. Could be better at this.

Practicing democracy

Average Grade: C Range: B/D, 3 did not give a grade.

Comments (4): Hard to get people to run for council and/or boards and commissions. Too little people making decision. Do we value all voices? How? Vote/open meetings.

Preserving the past

Average Grade: B- Range: A/C

Comments (4): Bricker Price Block. We are looking at becoming a historic district. Many of the buildings look good and/or have been improved. Old school house and historical society. On our way with new business district/commercial district research and possible historic district.

Growing leaders

Average Grade: C+ Range: B/D

Comments (5): Difficult when many of our young leave. Maybe something there, but I am unaware. I do appreciate the openness and support of youth with project ideas. Not everyone knows who is on the council. We are trying. We have quite a few leaders (school and city) that are locals as well as new people from “outside.” We could do better.

Inventing a bright future

Average Grade: C+ Range: B/D, 3 did not give a grade.

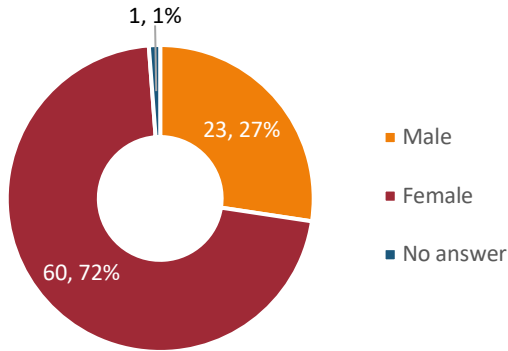
Comments (8): Difficult when many of our young leave. Examples? The people make this happen. Most of the time the city supports that. We're working on it. This is a great start.

Overall grade: _____ C+

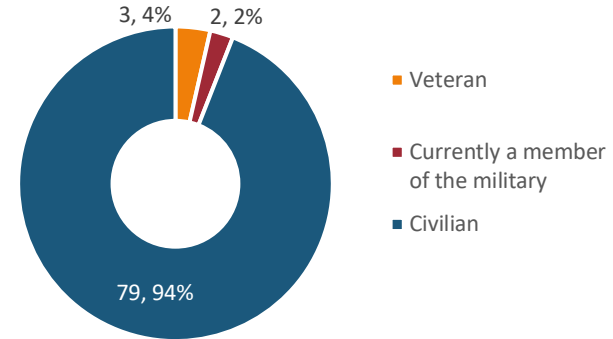
Community Survey

The major effort to gain mass community responses was through a paper and online survey open over summer 2023. Both methods were used in order to maximize response, as some people do not use computers or the Internet regularly. Eighty-one people completed the online survey and three completed the paper survey for a total of 84.

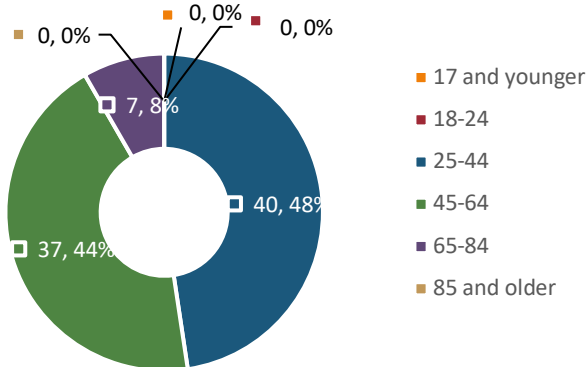
Question 1: What is your sex? (81 respondents)



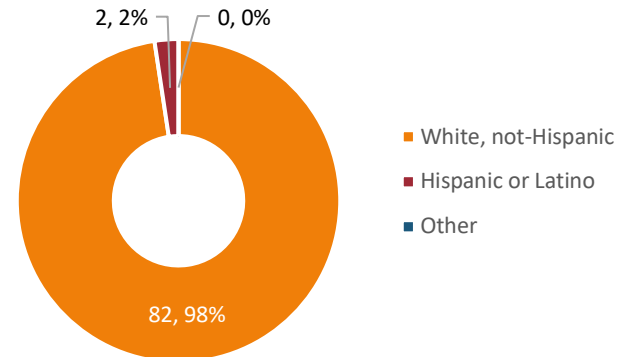
Question 4: What is your military status? (84 respondents)



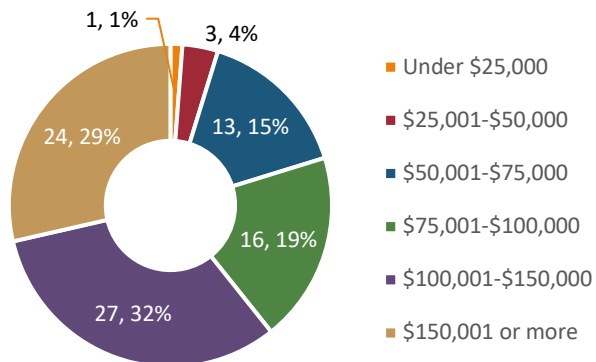
Question 2: What is your age? (84 respondents)



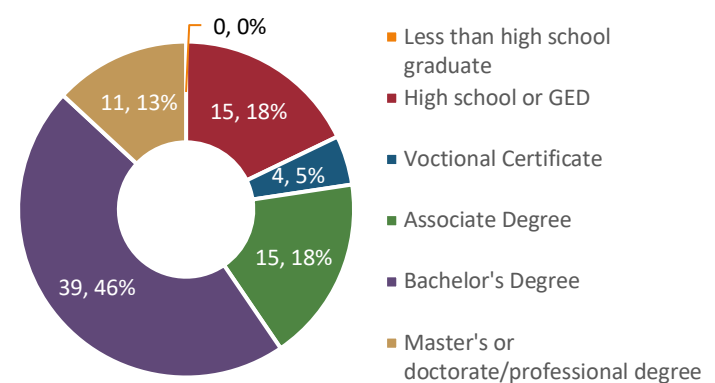
Question 5: What is your race/ethnicity? (84 respondents)



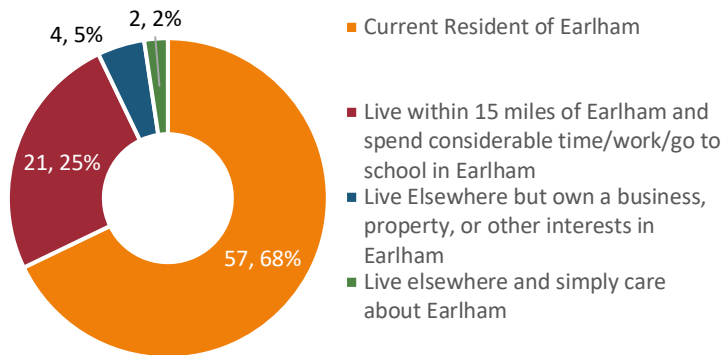
Question 3: What is your total household income? (84 respondents)



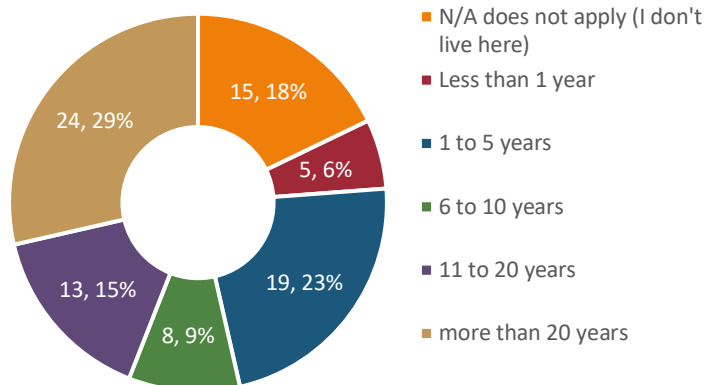
Question 6: What is your highest level of education? (84 respondents)



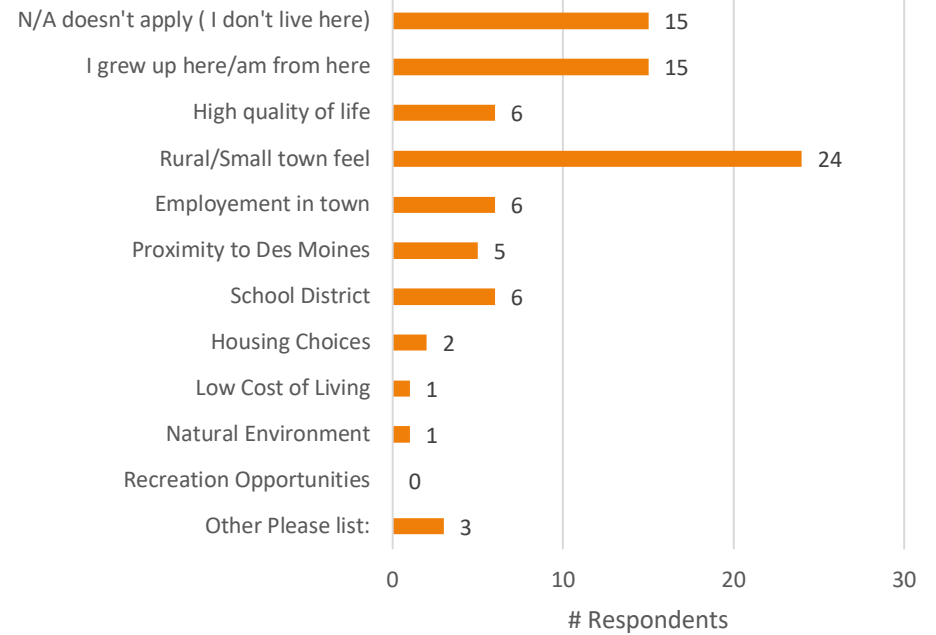
Question 7: Please check one answer that describes best your involvement with Earlham. (84 respondents)



Question 8: If you live in Earlham, how long have you lived here? (84 respondents)



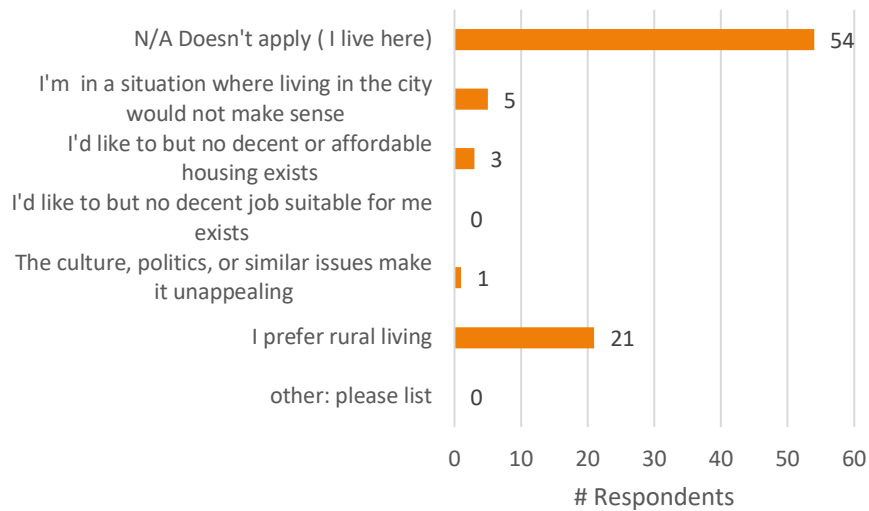
Question 9: If you live in Earlham, what is the main reason as to why you live in the city? (84 respondents)



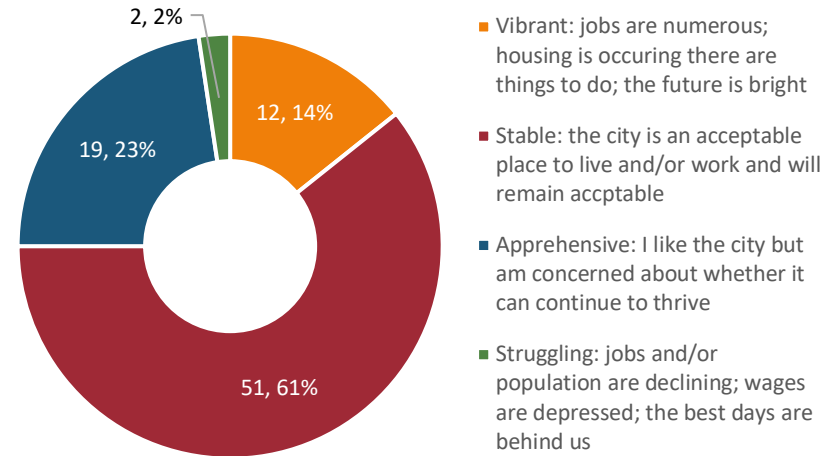
Other responses (3):

- Live in the country by Earlham
- To be near our grandchildren (2)

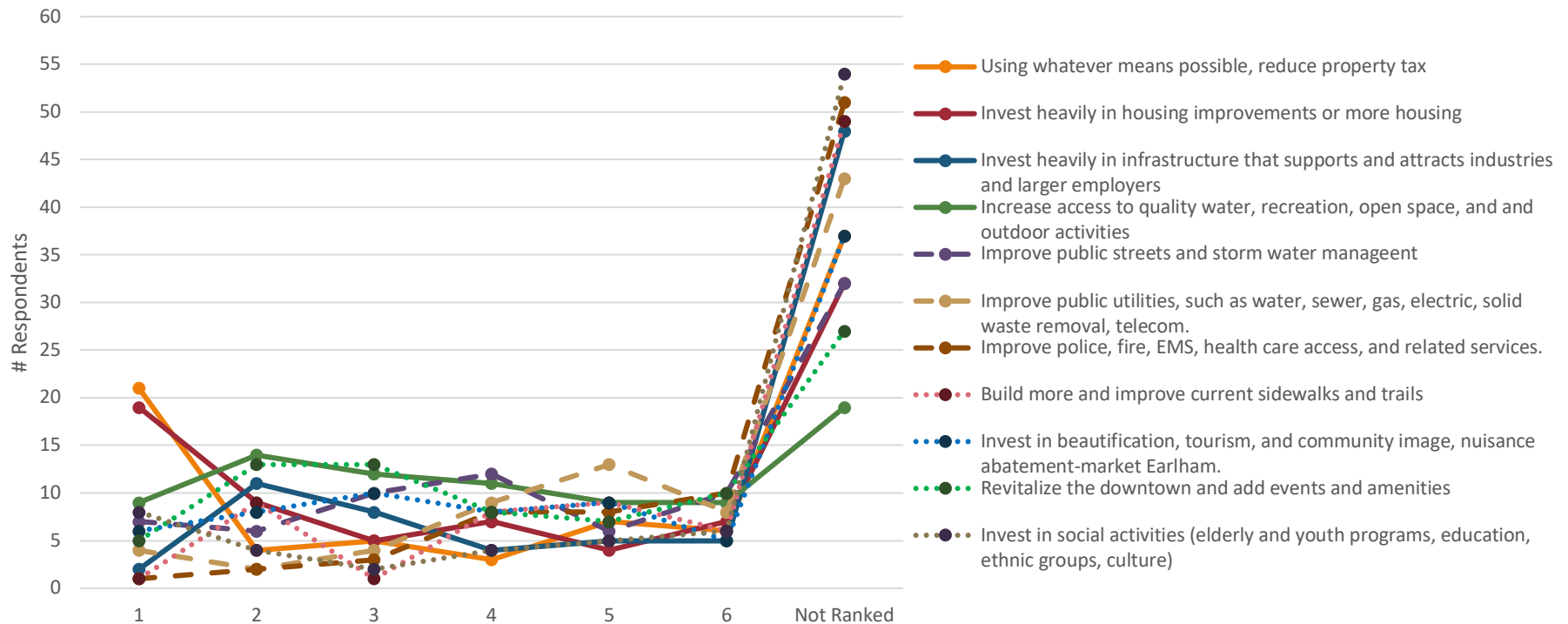
Question 10: If you live outside of Earlham, what is the main reason as to why you do not live in the city? (84 respondents)



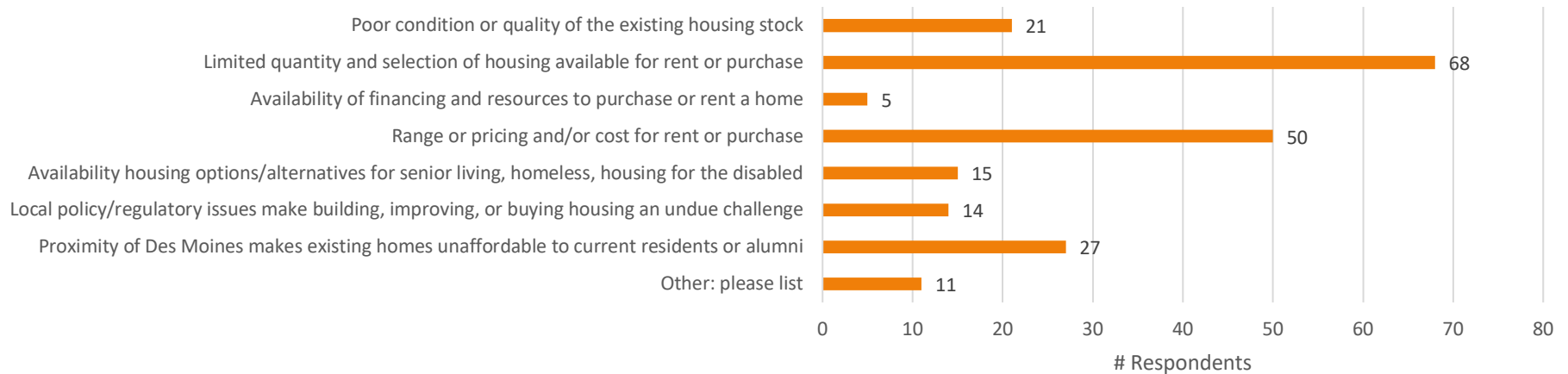
Question 11: How would you best describe Earlham? (84 respondents)



Question 12: What actions can the City take to improve the quality of life in Earlham? Select up to 6 of the 11 options and rank them based on importance to you personally, 1 being the most important and 6 being less important. (83 respondents)



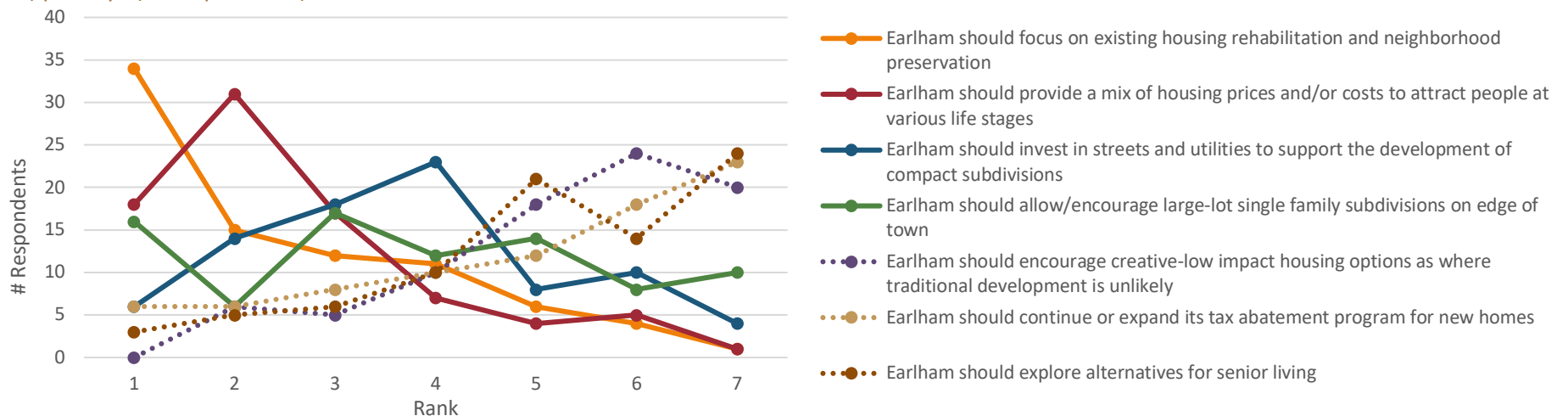
Question 13: What are Earlham's top 3 housing issues/challenges in your opinion? (84 respondents)



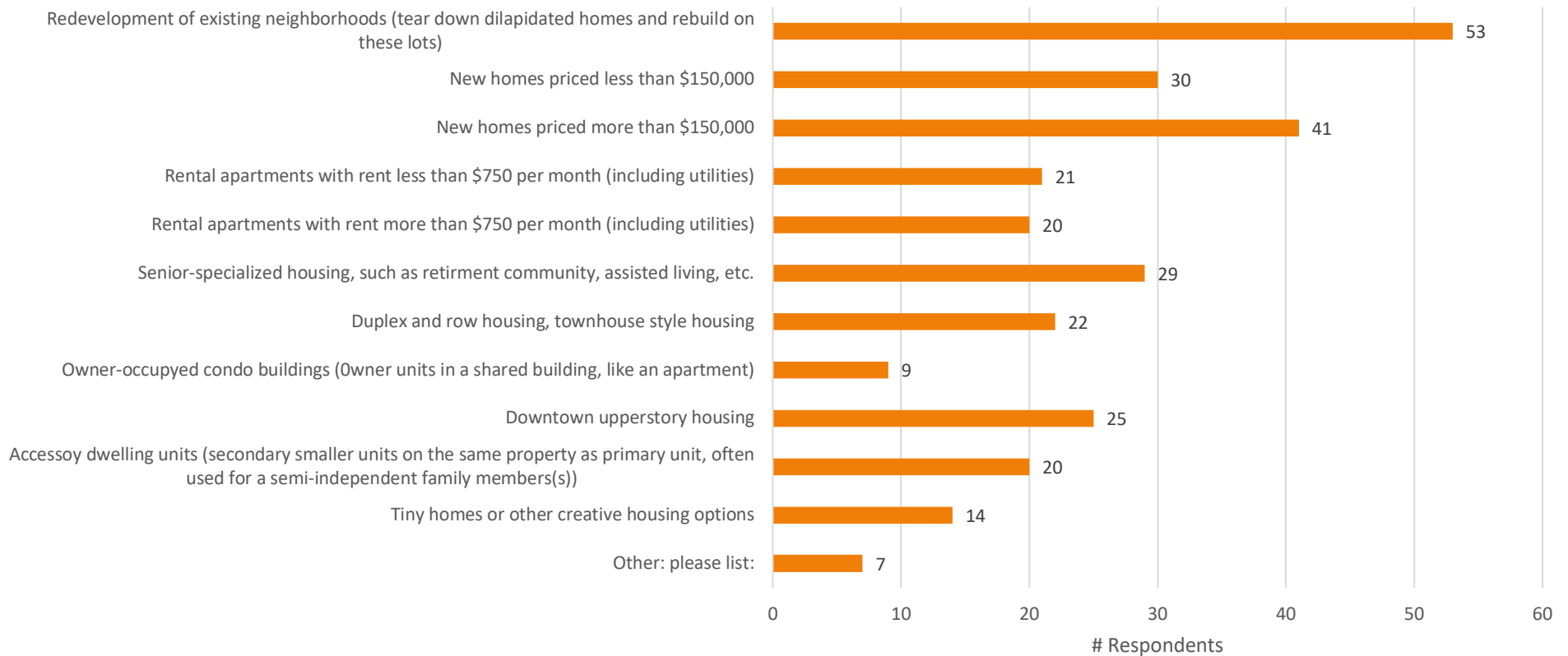
Other responses (11)

- None; no issues (2)
- Lack of land/lots for development (5)
- "I do not wish to see Earlham expand beyond our ability to grow (as Van Meter is experiencing). I do not wish for more cookie-cutter neighborhoods to pop up around the edges of town. I love that Earlham has a majority of unique homes and wish for it to stay that way."
- We have no development occurring and housing for sale.
- "The city not willing to invest in a lift station in the Williamson addition so more houses can be built. Earlham will never grow like the towns around."
- "Properties in and around Earlham are either very low-end (run down) or very high-end (million-dollar acreages). There is not a lot of "middle ground" housing."

Question 14: Considering your answer to the previous question about housing, please rank what should be Earlham's housing priorities from 1 (highest) to 7 (lowest) priority. (83 respondents)



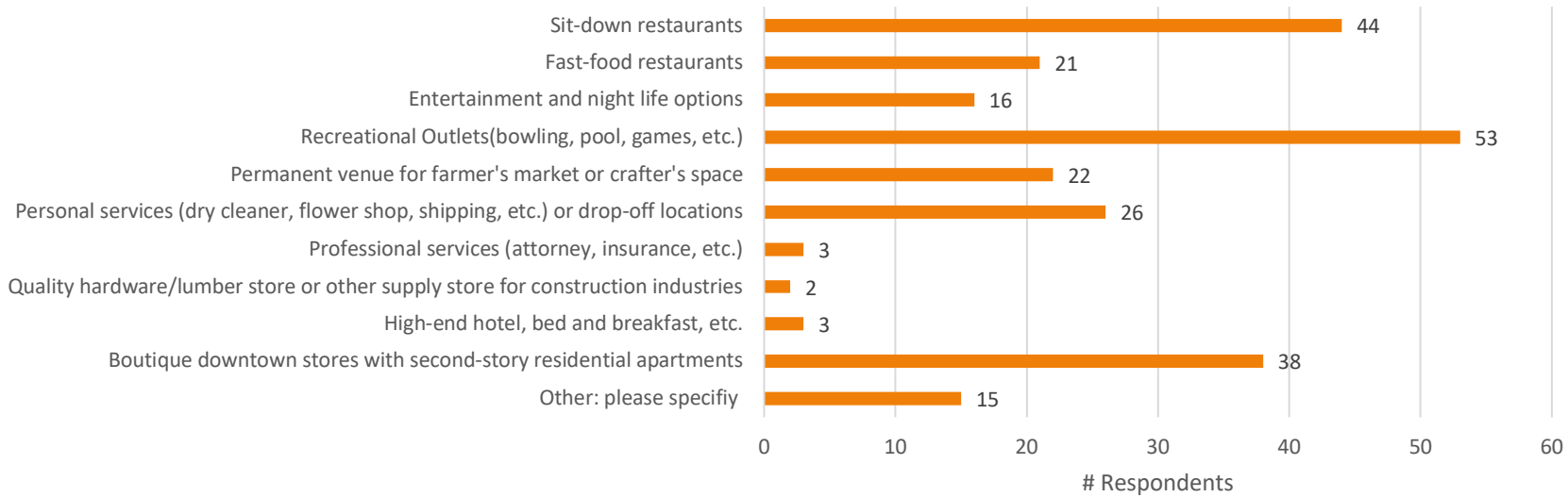
Question 15: What types of NEW housing should Earlham encourage/prioritize (such as with incentives, subsidies, easier zoning approval, etc.)? (83 respondents)



Other responses (7):

- “Leave the farmland surrounding town alone. We live in the country because we like our neighbors far away.”
- “\$750/mo. rent and house purchase does not appear reasonable in present market, overall focus on what is within reason, suggest \$1000/mo. or less rent and \$225,000 or less purchase price.”
- “No low-income housing should be allowed. We should encourage houses over \$300,000.00 and rentals at \$1,000.00 per month/utilities included.”
- “I do not want large single-home developments on the edges of town.”
- “No low-income housing or low-income community.”
- “Seriously a new home under \$150,000. Do the math that doesn't exist anywhere but your dreams.”
- “Need land surrounding for sale, but dislike traditional expensive subdivisions with tiny lots and cookie cutter houses.”

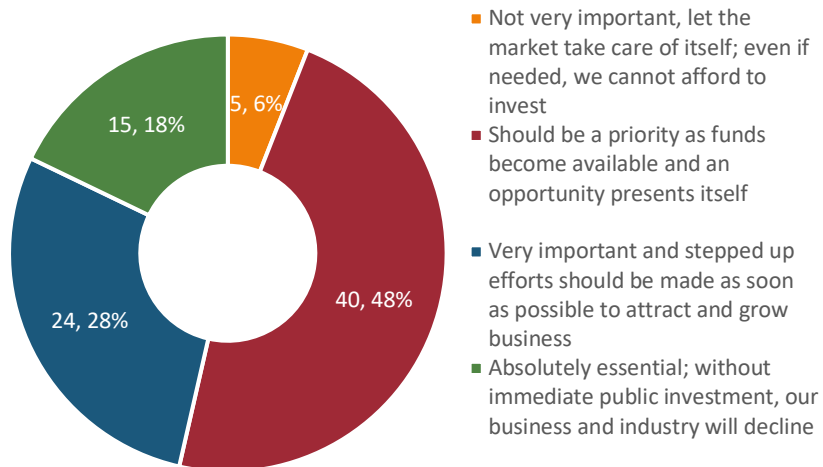
Question 16: What types of retail/commercial development are top 3 most needed in Earlham, either because they do not exist or what exists is inadequate? (83 respondents)



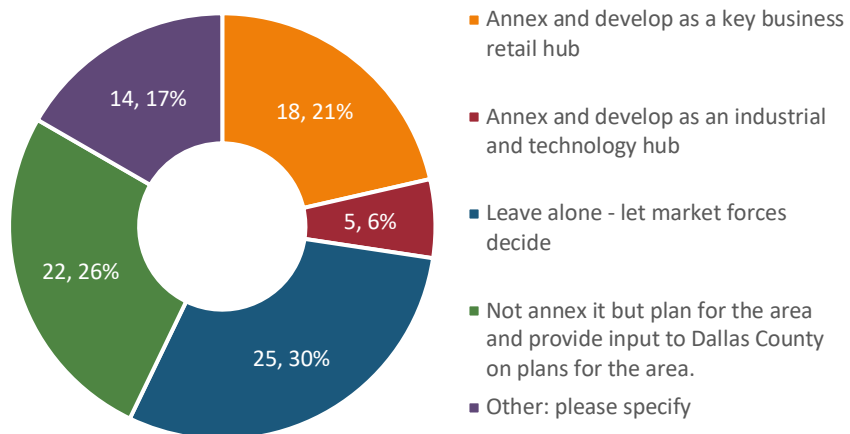
Other responses (15):

- Community recreation center
- Mechanical contractors (plumbing, HVAC, electric)
- None of these are needed.
- Unconcerned about what is in the downtown buildings as long as they are full and used.
- Dollar General or a similar store (2)
- Optometrist
- “We really have everything we need in town. Just need to keep supporting them.”
- Christian or family-friendly restaurant
- Retail
- Options for kids/teens
- Car wash (2)
- Laundromat
- Activity center for older school aged children other than Bricker Price
- Trail system to Gendler Park

Question 17: In your opinion, how important is it that local government and partnering organizations (such as the chamber and development groups) support existing businesses and industry and invest in expanding and new business and industry? (84 respondents)



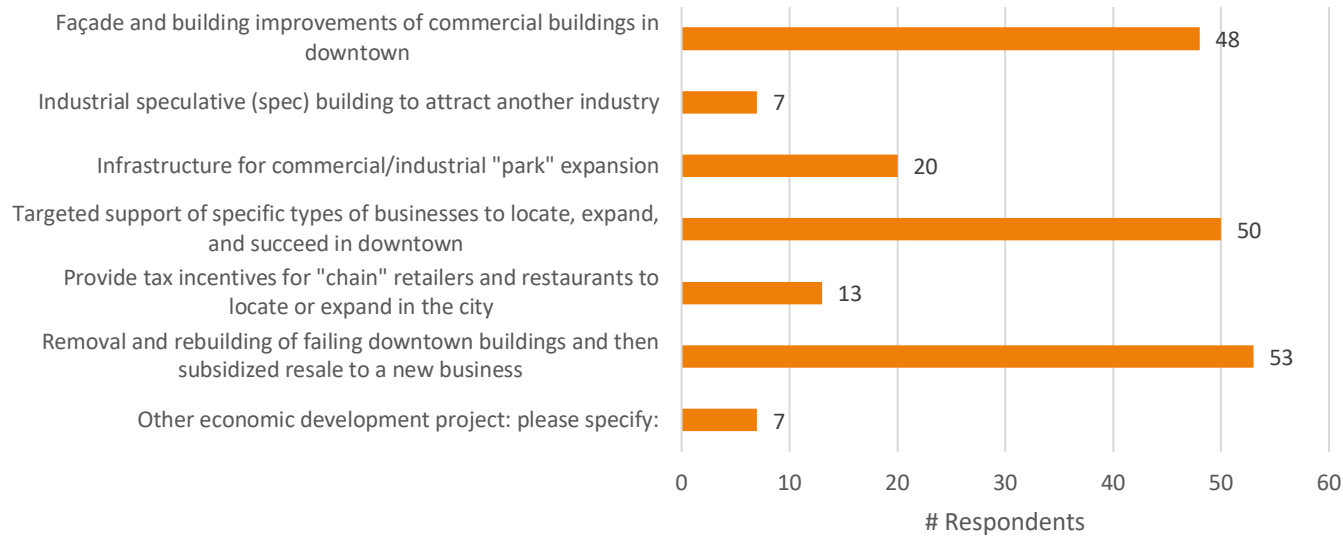
Question 18: In terms of economic development, what should be done with the area around I-80 Exit 104 (select only one best option)? (84 respondents)



Other responses (14):

- "Does the school need space to expand?"
- "Annex it and let market forces develop it/leave it alone." (3)
- "Additional gas options, fast food options, bring people from interstate into town to spend money and boost local economy."
- "I'd really prefer no huge businesses (like Dollar General or what the De Soto exit has turned into). If that area is developed, the downhill heading north and entrance ramp heading east would maybe need to be adjusted, as they can be difficult to navigate in poor weather conditions (and the blind spot while merging onto the highway at the hill angle can be quite dangerous).
- Leave alone. (2)
- "I'd like the city to have a say in what could happen out there - as the representative voice of residents - but I don't really want to see it developed at this time. Do not like what happened at the DeSoto exit area."
- Annex it and plan for long-term future.
- Annex it and develop it with large residential lot subdivisions. (2)
- Annex it but do not develop it.
- "Leave it alone! I appreciate that there is a "buffer" between the interstate and the city."

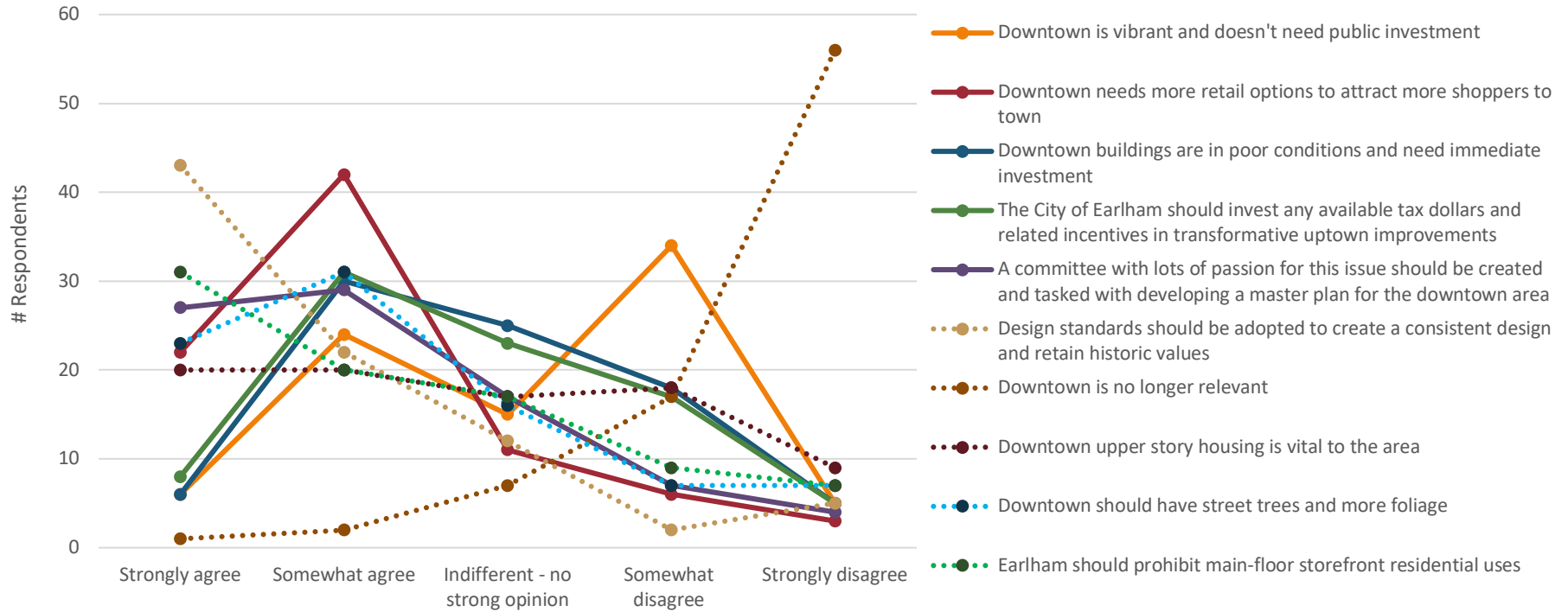
Question 19: Would you likely support the City of Earlham investing public taxpayer funds into the following projects on a case-by-case basis in order to incentivize development (check all that apply)? (83 respondents)



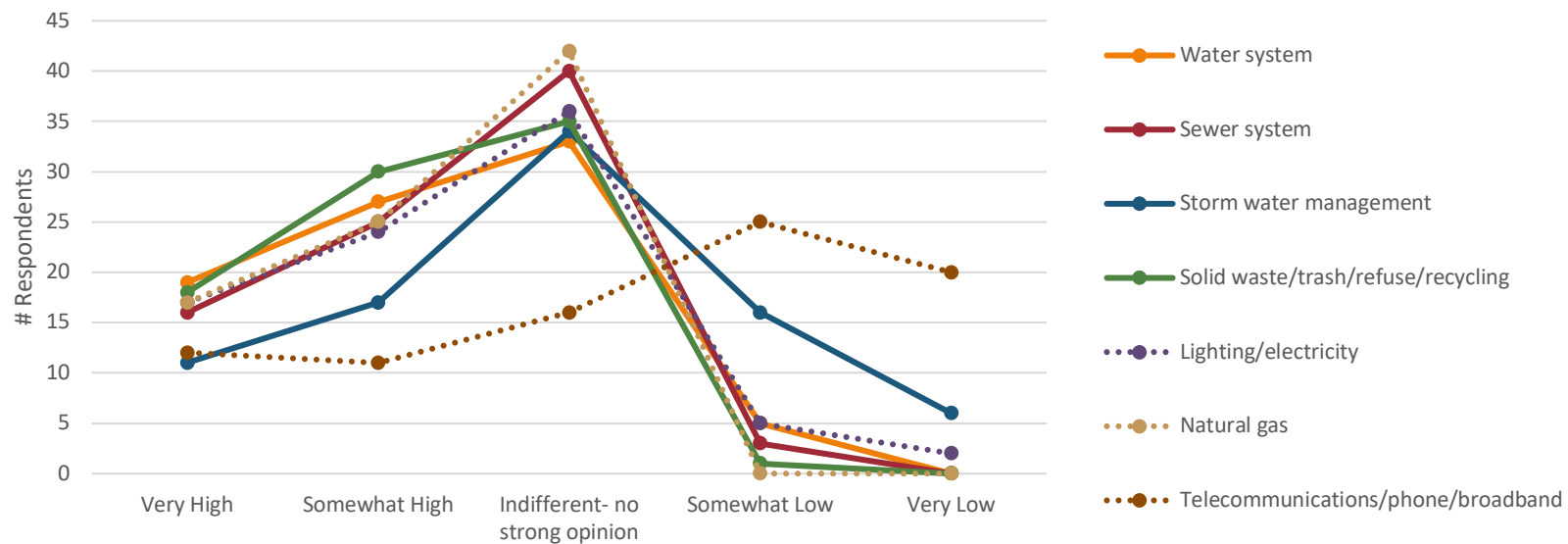
Other responses (7):

- “Development of bike/walking trails to connect to Gendler Park & Raccoon Valley trail system.”
- Housing subdivision
- It would depend on the project.
- Trail system to Gendler Park and the City sports complex
- “No Dollar General Please. Nothing that would run down our current local businesses.”
- None
- Parks and trails

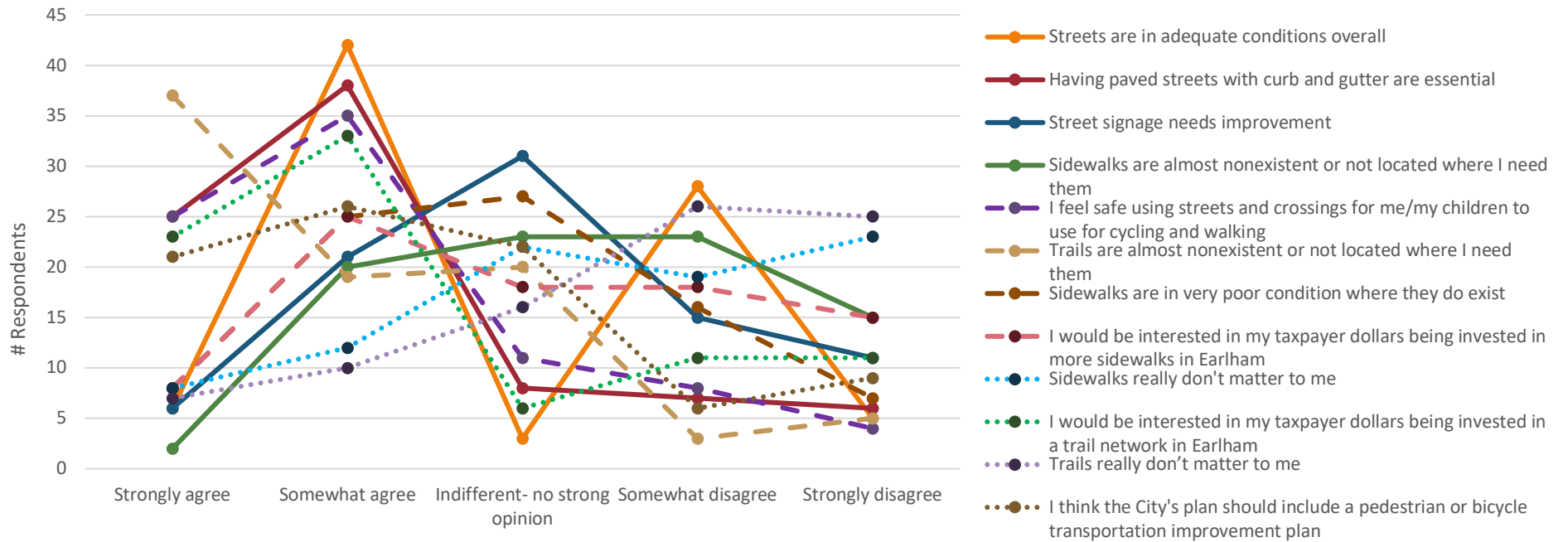
Question 20: Please rate how much you agree with the following statements about Earlham's downtown/business district. (84 respondents)



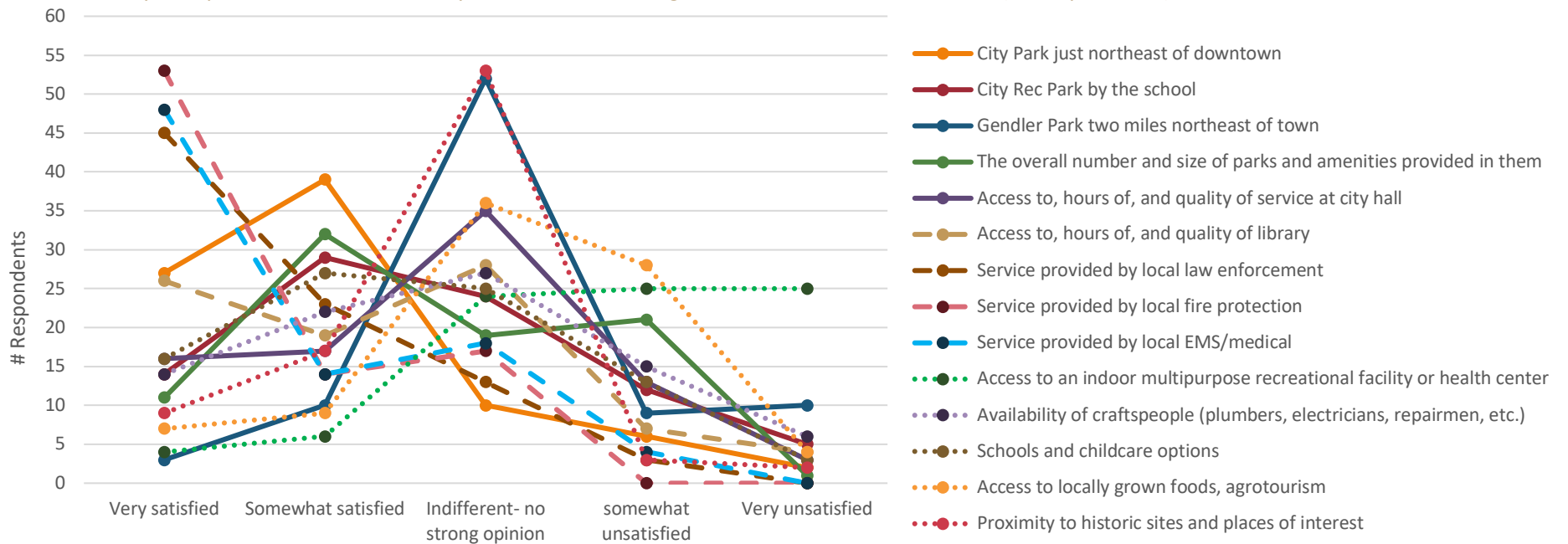
Question 21: How would you rate the dependability and quality of the following utilities and services? (84 respondents)



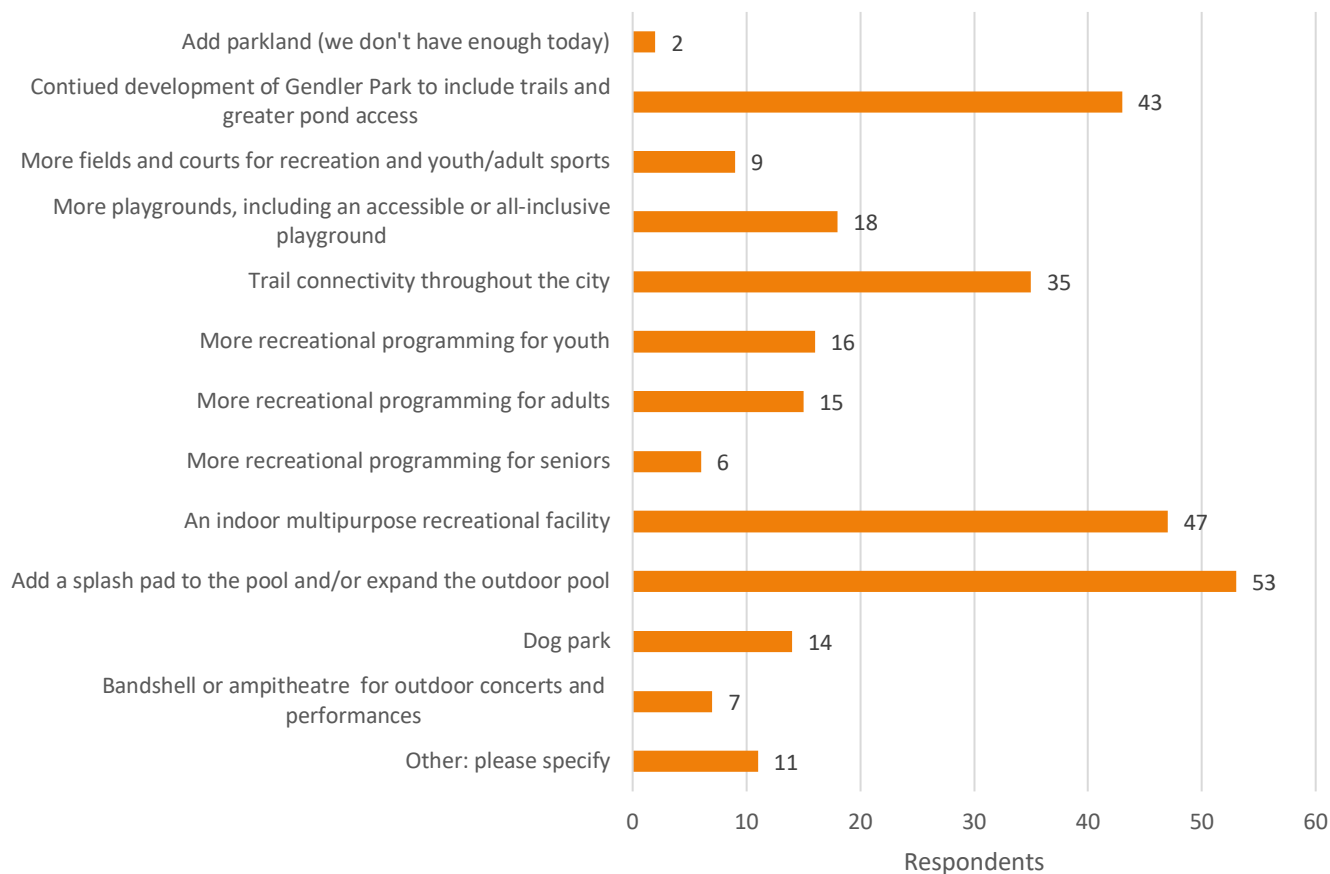
Question 22: Please rate how much you agree with the following statements about the street, sidewalk, and trail systems in Earlham. (84 respondents)



Question 23: In your opinion, how satisfied are you with the following amenities/services in Earlham? (84 respondents)



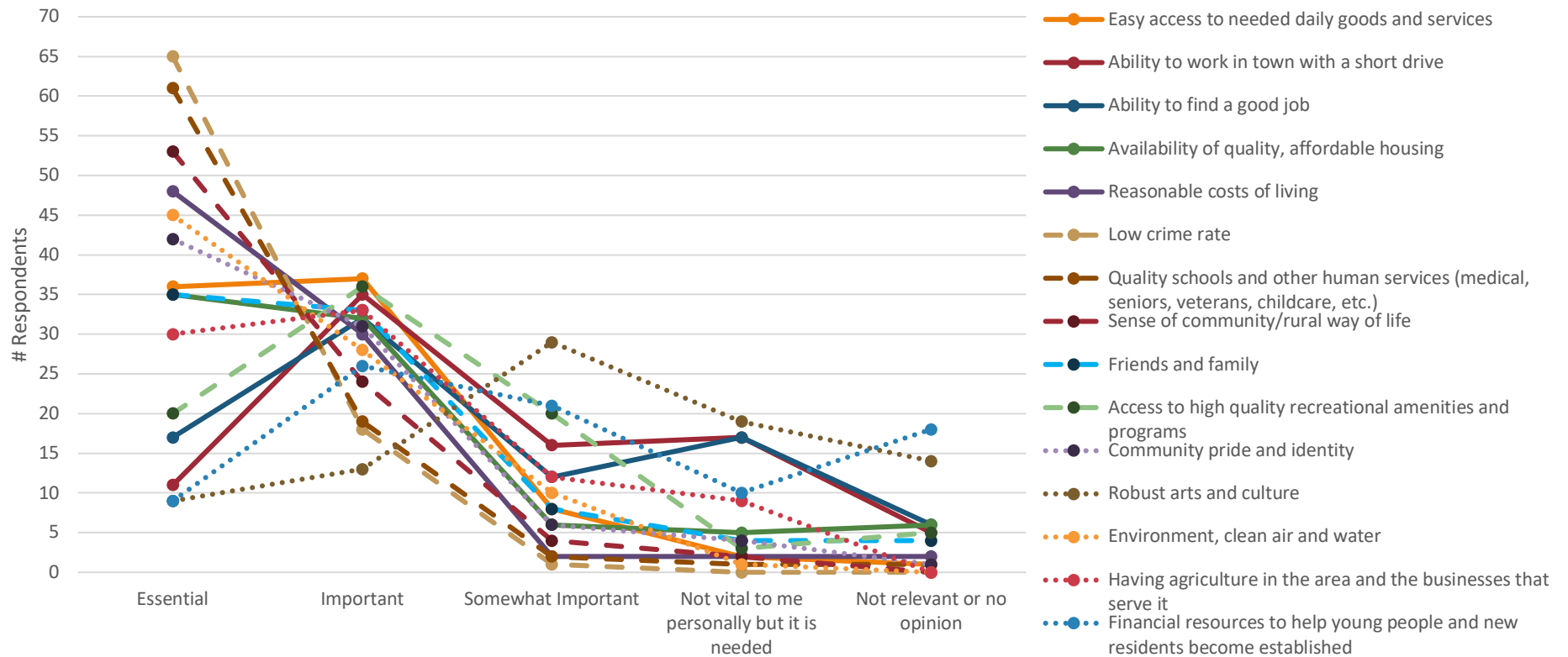
Question 24: For a town the size of Earlham, what park and recreational amenities should be most prioritized (check up to 3)? (83 respondents, some checking more than three, so there are more than 249 responses)



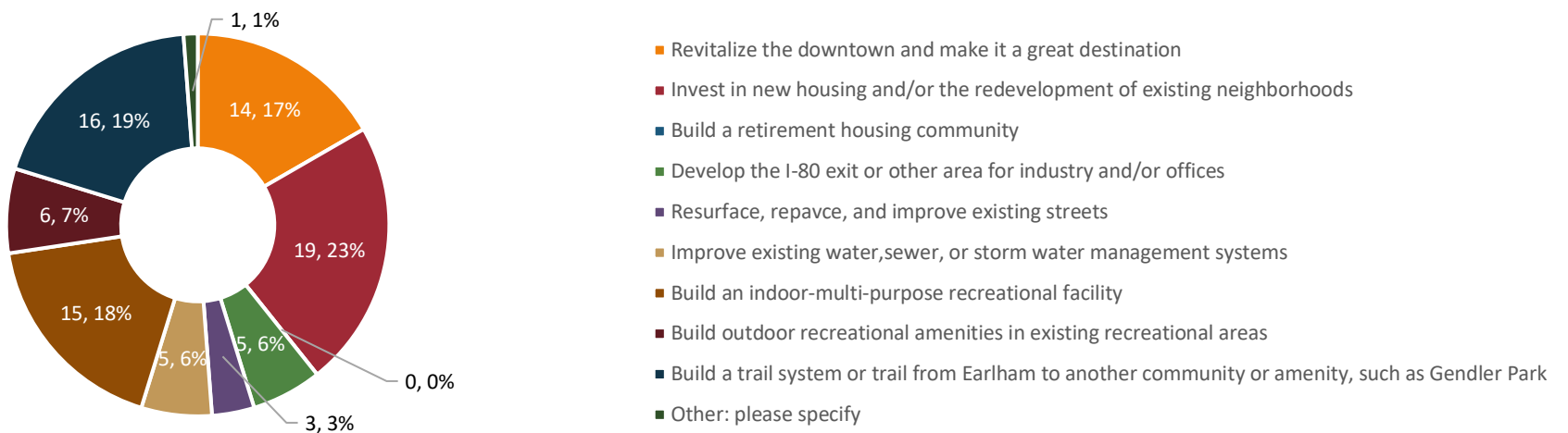
Other responses (11):

- Improve bathrooms in the city park.
- More swings for infants and toddlers
- “Finish the plan for the rec park from the 70's to have trails and trees. and connect a trail from Gendler to Earlham.” (2)
- None of these things/nothing new are needed (2)
- Indoor batting cages
- “City ball fields - higher backstops and golf cart parking areas for senior citizens to enjoy youth programs.”
- “New playground equipment at city park. Check out any news parks in Waukee for great ideas!”
- “Driving access to dog park at Gendler Park.”
- “Mature tree planting at Gendler should be a priority. And a hard surface trail at the rec facility to aid those with mobility issues or those with strollers.”

Question 25: In your opinion, how important are the following factors for WHY you would want to live in or near Earlham? (84 respondents).

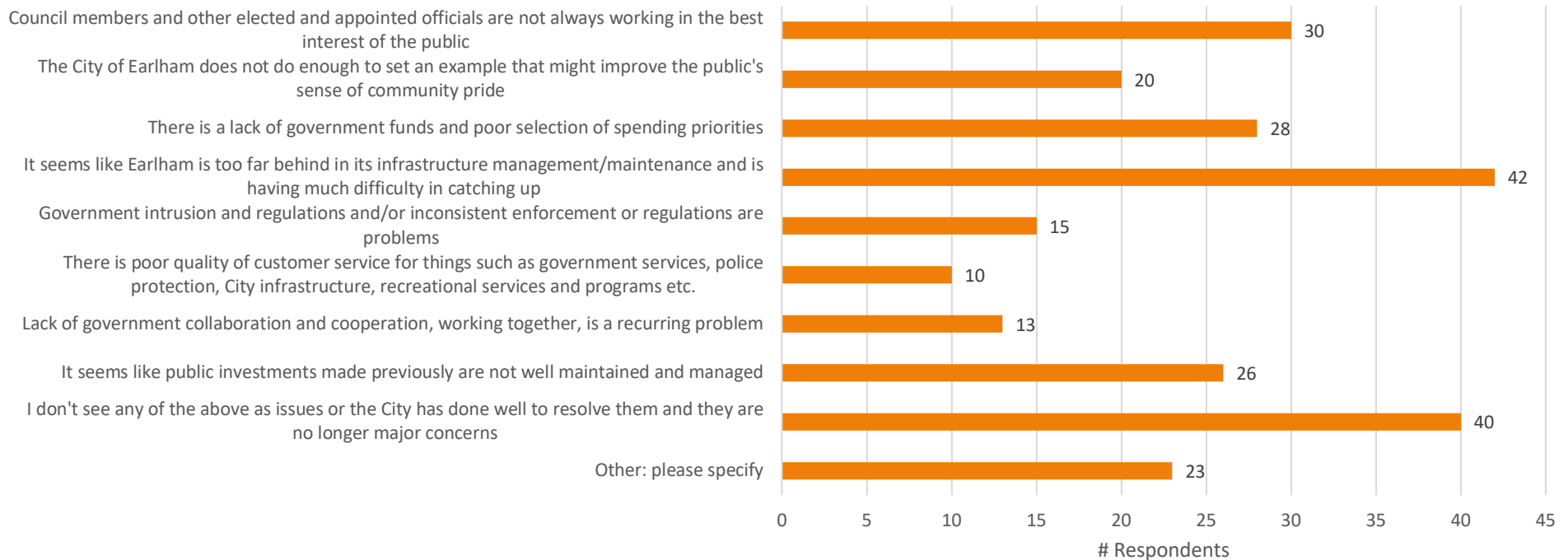


Question 26: If Earlham were to issue a \$5 million bond levy and match some grants for a \$10 million project, but it had to be one project that invested in the physical environment of Earlham, what should it be (select one)? (84 respondents)



Other responses (1): Don't raise taxes.

Question 27: Of the following choices, select the 3 best statements that describe the issues you see with the City of Earlham and its collaboration with other entities?

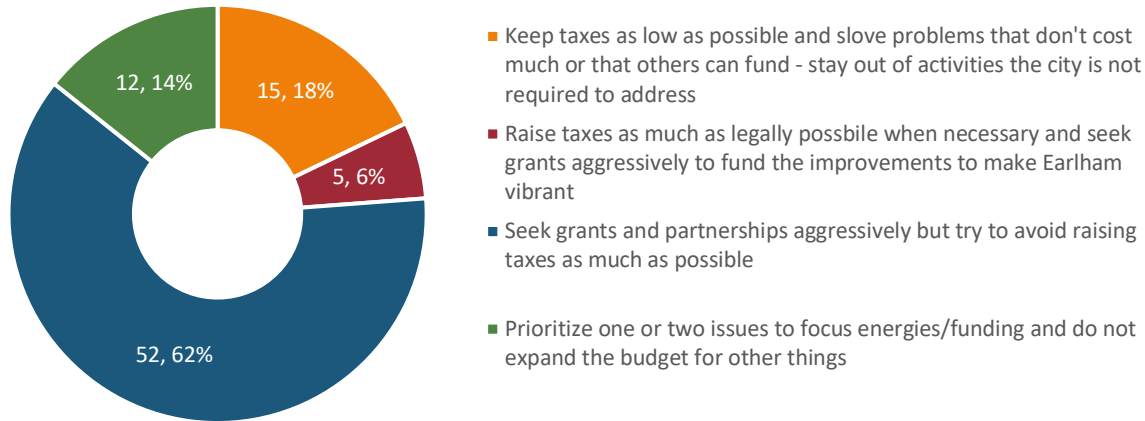


Other responses (23):

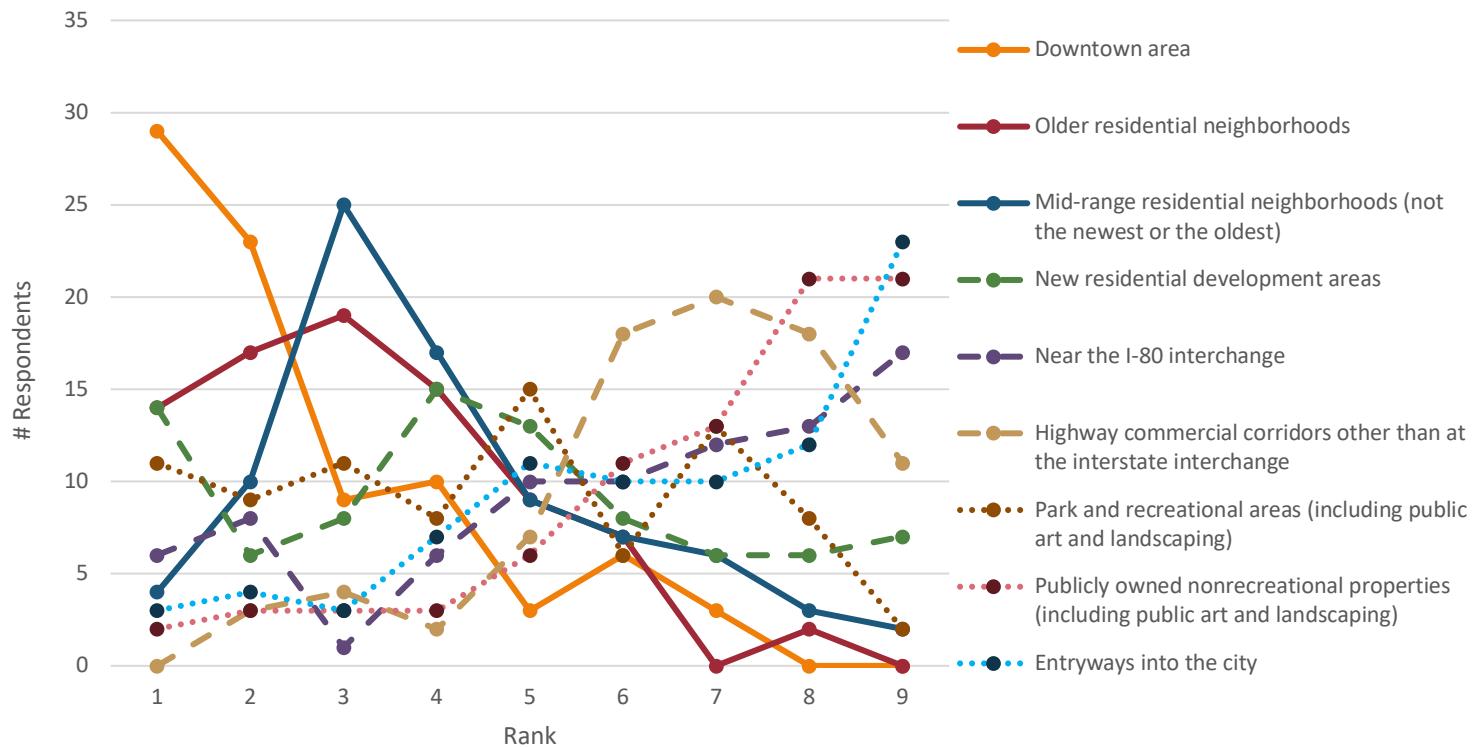
- Unsure, no comment/opinion, unaware about these issues (10)
- “When you are new to town, you have no idea what the city is doing.”
- “We threw lots of money at the pool this past summer and repeatedly there were very few kids using it.”
- “I would like to see long term planning for investment for expands area residential, businesses and appropriate infrastructure to support this, given the overall westward expansion of Des Moines, be prepared! It is coming, like it or not, better to be in front of it than sprinting to catch up with poor street planning, sewer, water, etc.; living in a community dealing with this now, and it is horrible.”
- “The lack of development in the community.”
- “Perhaps give some positive choices.”
- “In the times I have worked with City Council or paid government officials in town, I have been blown away with the hard work and dedication to our town. Thank you.”
- “Lack of proactive development to increase housing when there is a demand to get out of big city. We have so much to offer in a small town of essentials like school, grocery store, hardware store, restaurants & bank, but NO marketing effort to promote Earlham!”
- Lack of teamwork between the city and the school (2)
- Lack of forward thinking, reactive instead of proactive
- “There are zero opportunities for new businesses to move into downtown or commercial space on the outside of town for new business to move into town.”
- Need for utilization of external funding to help with needs

- Need for long-term planning for growth and development

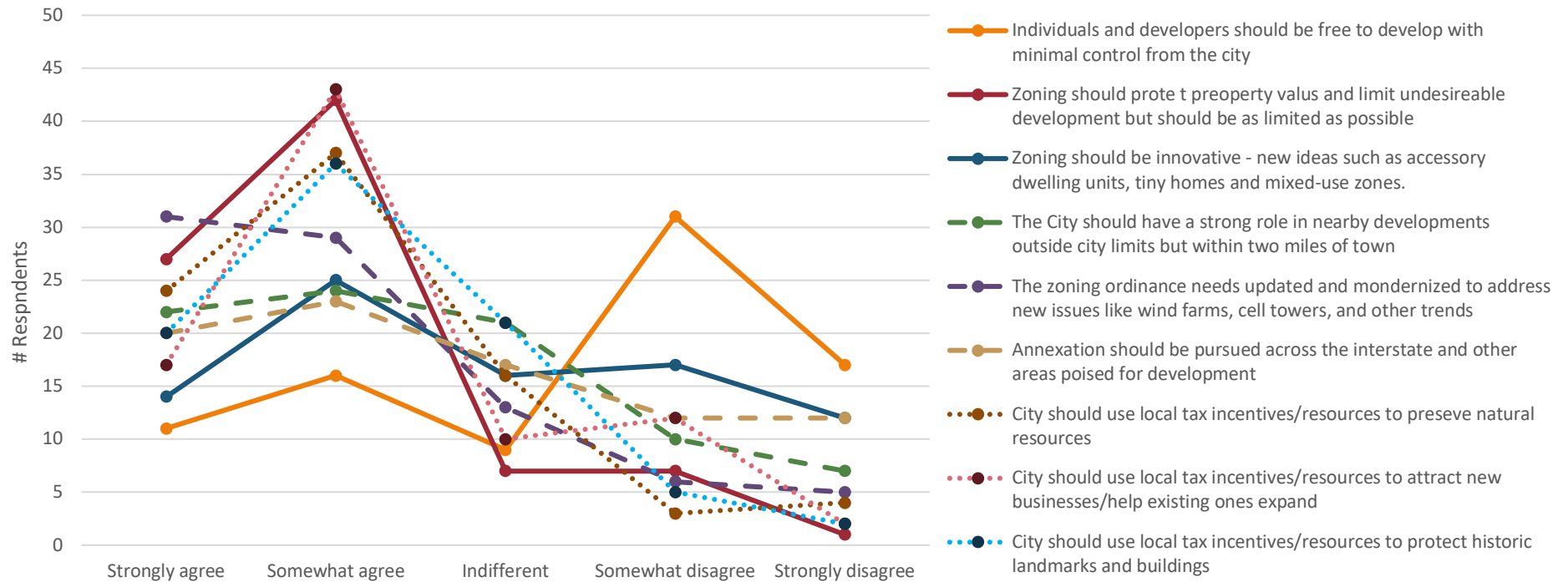
Question 28: In your opinion, which statements best describes how city leaders should address Earlham’s challenges (select only one)? (84 respondents)



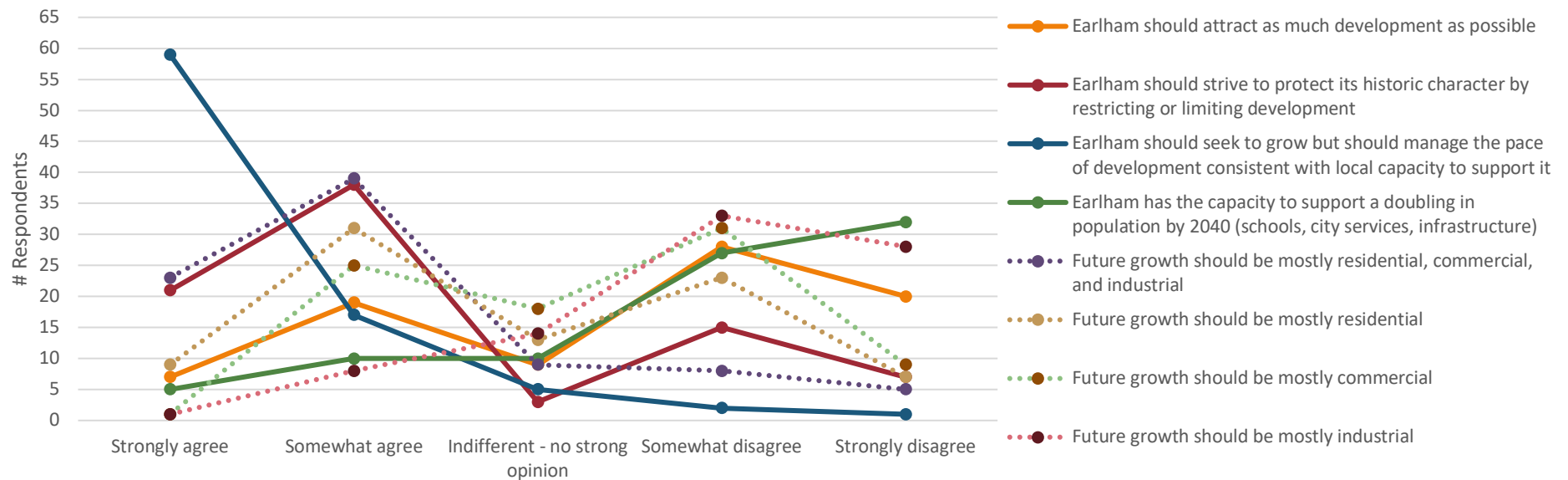
Question 29: Please rank (1 is top rank) the following as to where the local leaders should invest more resources (or focus higher percentage of existing resources) compared to the level of investment today. (83 respondents)



Question 30: How much do you agree with the following statements about planning and zoning? (84 respondents)



Question 31: Earlham's location makes it a prime target for future development. Please check how much you agree with the following statements about this future. (84 respondents)



Questions 32: Favorite thing about Earlham (type in one answer). (84 responses) – similar or repeated answers are summarized and the number are in parentheses.

- Rural small-town feel (42)
- Community activities (16)
- People (15)
- Community pride (14)
- School (14)
- Close to Des Moines/amenities (9)
- Services/amenities (9)
- Sense of safety (8)
- Sense of community (6)
- Historical Significance (3)
- Locally owned businesses. (3)
- Self-sufficient community (2)
- Potential travel destination (2)
- Beans and Beignets (café) (2)
- Hardware store (2)
- Clean (2)
- Hometown feel
- Family
- Well maintained
- Location
- Low crime rate
- “I love the small-town feel, I feel that can still be achieved even with expansion and growth. Engage the community, get individual and groups involved. Pull individuals into sub committees to help.”
- Shops
- Quaint
- “It has a charm to be an amazing attraction that people would want to stop and interact with in town. People love small towns that are well taken care of and pretty to look at. I could see Earlham being a destination for people travelling through, which would boost the local economy.”
- “The potential it holds. Continue to invest downtown and make it a destination locals and visitors can enjoy. Residential development will follow. Provide jobs for people downtown to keep local dollars in Earlham.”
- Downtown
- Grocery store
- Casey’s is on edge of town.
- No other big name brand stores are in town.
- “I would encourage us to use Winterset downtown, Dallas Center, or Walnut as examples of what our town could bring to the neighboring area and try to avoid Adel (all neighborhoods) or DeSoto (all industrial/gas stations/concrete). Van Meter exploded when that subdivision was built and the disconnect between “town” and the “new subdivision” is scary and something I would love to avoid in Earlham.”
- “Earlham is a safe place to raise a family. Part of that has been a result of its slow growth. As a community I feel our focus on future growth should take into consideration that sometimes bigger does not mean better. It’s ok to stay small, make improvements for our existing community. Being mindful of what growth would mean for the safety of Earlham should be the biggest priority. Making sure that our police, fire department and infrastructure can handle the growth before it is here.”
- Affordable cost of living.
- Parks
- Variety
- Proximity to Interstate
- Rural opportunities
- No HOA
- Slower pace of life
- Well-kept homes
- Respect for agriculture
- Incredible volunteer forces
- Forward thinking leadership
- Controlled growth

Questions 33: Least favorite thing about Earlham (type in one answer). (84 responses) – similar or repeated answers are summarized and the number are in parentheses.

- Lack of recreational space that is free or low cost to families (7)
- Lack of trail system (7)
- Behind in development/lack of future planning (7)
- Infrastructure, street, sidewalk, storm water drainage conditions, slow internet/cell service, lack of water pressure (6)
- Everything is closed on Sundays (4)
- Not inclusive, political and social environment keeps nontraditional families away (4)
- Old school building needs updating (3)
- Constantly raising taxes (3)
- No transport ambulance (3)
- Lack of retail/commercial options and opportunities (3)
- Unfriendly police, unequal/selective or lack of law enforcement (3)
- Nothing to do indoors during winter months, lack of social events (3)
- Landlocked for growth (2)
- Need a decent sized pool (2)
- Daycare options/childcare (2)
- Old rec/sports facilities (2)
- People that try to make Earlham a big city. (2)
- Lack of affordable housing (2)
- Long sign along the football field fence (2)
- People who want it to stay the same as it always was (2)
- Lack of investment in historic downtown (2)
- People need to drive to Des Moines or out of Earlham for needs/things to do (2)
- Lack of affordable things for teens to do (2)
- Reputation for cliques, difficult to feel one belongs in the city (2)
- Reports of loose dogs
- People not stopping at stop signs
- Lack of streetlights
- Lack of downtown restaurants
- Poor conditions of the downtown area.
- Lack of good paying jobs in Earlham
- People living in commercial spaces
- Few to no non-chain restaurants
- Everyone complaining about the car wash in town
- Older areas of town that need revitalization
- Limited dining options
- Expensive housing
- Limited housing options
- Not enough senior or singles houses/townhomes.
- Worried about aging population and worried about housing turnover in the next 5-15 years.
- Could be swallowed up by Dallas County growth
- Commercial retailers trying to come in.
- Same people buying properties, limits growth.
- Trains stopping on the tracks
- Railroad track crossing on Walnut, Chestnut, and Sycamore are in horrible conditions
- Stray cats
- Out of date veterinarian business
- “City Maintenance Manager’s lack of energy nor though leadership in partnering for enhancements, rather the manager is flat footed and band-aids issues with outdated methods.”
- The city council
- Lack of baby swings at city and school park
- Gendler Park could be used better.
- No golf course
- Larger park closer to town.
- Lack of CrossFit gym
- Lack of trails
- Poor or inadequate quality of city park and baseball/softball complex conditions
- No sidewalk on Walnut St. From 1st street going south.
- The cell towers
- Too close to the interstate
- School size is too small
- School academics are not adequate
- You need to know someone to buy or rent in this town
- People that complain but don’t suggest how to fix problems
- “People who move to Earlham to get away from the city, but then complain we don’t have enough amenities.”

Questions 34: What are the most important places in Earlham (type in one answer)? (84 responses) – similar or repeated answers are summarized and the number are in parentheses.

- School (51)
- Parks/City Parks/playgrounds (32)
- Grocery store (26)
- Downtown (22)
- Beans and Beignets/coffee shop (20)
- Hardware Hank (16)
- Rec Areas/sports complex/ball fields (14)
- The library (13)
- Hometown Market (12)
- Rescued Junk (RJ Homes) (8)
- Pharmacy (7)
- Restaurant (7)
- Dentist (7)
- Retail stores (6)
- Dr. Office/clinic (6)
- Pool (6)
- The post office (6)
- Bricker Price (5)
- Professional businesses (5)
- West Side (5)
- Timberpine Nursery (4)
- Casey's (4)
- Bank (4)
- Heartland Coop (4)
- Salons (4)
- Harmony Farm (4)
- Heirloom Farm (4)
- Grade A Gardens (4)
- Lillie's Plumbing and Heating (4)
- Montrose (3)
- EBC (3)
- Community Center (3)
- Chiropractor (3)
- Churches (3)
- Police/fire (3)
- Gathering spots (2)
- The museums (2)
- Community events
- Vet clinic
- Track
- Efit
- Daycare
- Cemetery
- Kuehn Conservation
- Gym
- Bar
- Older neighborhoods
- Home

Questions 35: As Earlham and the surrounding area grows, what should stay the same (type in one answer)? (84 responses) – similar or repeated answers are summarized and the number are in parentheses.

- Small town feel/rural (25)
- Sense of community/involvement/pride (20)
- Historic Downtown/district (11)
- School support (5)
- School does not consolidate (4)
- Low crime/safety (4)
- Stay separate from Interstate (3)
- No chain stores (3)
- Business (3)
- Limit/paced growth, no large housing developments (3)
- Identity (2)
- Limit housing developments, can't stay a small town with too much (2)
- Cleanliness, neat, and welcoming, good place to live (2)
- Keep trees/add more. (2)
- Support local (2)
- Everything (2)
- No dollar store or similar at entrance into town.
- "Earlham should not expand for the sake of expansion."
- "Keep surrounding areas from overtaking us."
- Keep it removed from Des Moines.
- No industrial parks
- "Town size does not need to double but does need to bring in more businesses."
- No HOAs
- No stoplights
- Historic nature
- Keep it quaint
- Honor current residents and values
- Social events
- Park use
- 4th of July
- Music in park on Sunday with vendors
- No more low-income housing
- Residential neighborhoods

- Awareness of police
- Coffee shop
- Respect farmers and their land
- Ease of getting around town

- “Don’t believe anything should have ‘to stay the same’.”
- “I don’t think things can stay the same with growth. Everything would need to adapt to what that growth brings.”
- Nothing

Questions 36: As Earlham and the surrounding area grows, what should change (type in one answer)? (84 responses) – similar or repeated answers are summarized and the number are in parentheses.

- More housing/affordable housing/rural and in town, more rental options (11)
- Park improvements/expansion, improve rec complex (11)
- Revitalize downtown commercial district, green spaces in downtown (9)
- More business, retail options, and restaurants (8)
- More opportunities- activity spaces for youth and families (5)
- More trails/new walking/bike paths (4)
- Update the School/growth (4)
- Prepare for what is to come, embrace, plan, and prepare. (4)
- Improved pool/access (3)
- More events, attractions, street dances, downtown activities (3)
- Local/city leadership; more open-mindedness to new ideas (3)
- “We are in desperate need of a recreation center. Partner with the school district to create a CTE and recreation facility like Woodbine did for their CREW Center.” (3)
- Improve/grow infrastructure (3)
- Trailer “park” conditions and vacant spaces, lack of maintenance (2)
- Improved community conditions, beautification (2)
- More job opportunities (2)
- Better street water drainage (2)
- Build new homes on land that is already available to the community.
- Cell and internet options (2)
- More revenue options, especially for future development needs (2)
- Repair/ rebuild sidewalks. (2)
- Address truck routes for future growth; The truck traffic through town (2)
- Flashing yellow stop lights instead of stop signs
- Increase streetlights.
- 360th street NE of town should be connected to Earlham on the east side by a paved road. Followed up by bicycle trails, making Gendler Park a place to visit.
- Water that doesn’t turn pink if it’s not dried up right away bathroom tub/showers
- Expansion of community driven businesses and opportunities
- Industrial development opportunities, but protect and improve residential areas
- “Don’t simply attract businesses-support them, shop there.”
- More investment opportunities and efforts, focus on community vitality
- New public spaces
- Focus on small town and agricultural support.
- Funding for fire and rescue
- Improved communications
- Paid position dedicated to parks and rec
- Enhanced senior services
- No residing in commercial spaces
- More/better gas stations
- Limit tax abatement & housing developments before the city’s core structures/utilities can handle.
- Updating zoning requirements for business districts.
- Enforce homeowners maintaining their yards/snow/etc.
- “Don’t need tax abatements for new construction.”
- Lower taxes
- Update bathrooms at all three parks.
- Update fencing at ball parks including safety fences.
- Need more industry to support more people
- More diversity
- Ability to have chickens in town
- More town/local involvement
- Accepting some change
- Do all we can to keep town as is, keep out big business.”
- “Earlham needs to stay small.”
- “Earlham isn’t in need of a makeover.”

Question 37: What would make Earlham a better place to live? (84 responses) – similar or repeated answers are summarized and the number are in parentheses.

- Trails/a trail from town to Gendler Park, developments of trails around the ponds (11)
- More local eateries/fast food and family options closer (10)
- More local businesses/industry; places to work; “if I could work here” (9)
- More affordable housing generally (8)
- Improved academic outcomes and competitive athletics and programs (7)
- An indoor batting cage/ recreation complex / training facility (7)
- New/expanded pool or splash pad (6)
- Even more community events, more things to do/entertainment (all ages), theatre/community playhouse (6)
- More things for children to do/places for kids to have options. Recreation options for kids (5)
- Controlled development including amenities/moderate steady growth (4)
- Improved parks. “City Park is nice but needs to be bigger.” (3)
- More retail/opportunities (3)
- Improve existing sidewalks (3)
- Bowling (3)
- Lower taxes (3)
- Keeping Earlham like it is: small-ish; quaint; not changing; “It’s perfect, leave it alone.” (3)
- More essential businesses (3) with a focus on preserving its past and small-town agricultural feel
- Better roads (2)
- Better cell/internet coverage (2)
- Improved school building (2)
- More investment and options for things (2)
- Improved housing conditions; “much of the housing, particularly to the south and west of the school, needs maintenance and improvement.” (2)
- Improved rec complex/more recreation space (2)
- Revitalize downtown (2)
- More support for our community and small businesses (2)
- More childcare options for pre-elementary age kids (2)
- Attract the right kinds of businesses to downtown or elsewhere in town for measured growth.
- A farmers market
- Dollar General
- Pool hall
- Having performing arts rent out the school's auditorium for shows.
- “People who grew up here being a bit more welcoming to us newbies (and I have been here for 23 years!) Overall, a great place to live though.”
- “Being especially welcoming to those willing to make our town better, such as the wonderful Bricker – Price Block investment, now a jewel of downtown.”
- Keeping the school local
- More housing- especially for teachers
- Affordable housing without sacrificing historical feel
- Welcoming spaces
- More willingness to accept those who are different from us (non-traditional families)
- Community fitness center
- “Tearing down the Casey’s and adding a Kwik Trip”
- Better storm sewers
- More people/population growth
- “Recognize that growth is positive if done properly.”
- “The promise that certain parcels of land will remain agriculture and will not turn into developments (or if developments happen, current residents will have a say opportunity to express their feelings)”
- Keeping the city clean
- Better customer service outside of town
- Being able to own chickens in town
- Incentives for current residents, not new buildings
- Get more local/ town involvement from all ages.
- More affordable cost of living
- “I feel like there is now almost too much as far as police & fire trucks. While I appreciate these items, I feel 3 cops is a lot when many other towns do not even have one. The fire staff seems to get a lot of new vehicles & keep the older ones.”
- More diversity
- Traipsing system, activities
- “Any way we could get Lutheran Church of Hope to open a site here?”

Question 38 is administrative and not recorded here. It asked for contact info for those who might be willing to participate in the planning process.

Question 39 asked for additional comments. The following are some of the most insightful comments not already covered in the previous questions.

- “Thanks for all you do and involving the community in these thoughts and processes.”
- “We do not need government housing. We pay too much in taxes, our school cannot handle more students and you can't add on anymore, and we cannot afford more taxes to pay for anew bigger school.”
- “If you are going to tell one person they can't have a trailer or cars parked in the yard everybody needs to follow that rule.”
- “Thank you for doing this and weeding through all of the comments. Jobs like this are so important and I am proud to be part of a community that cares about the input of its residents. This is a beautiful surprise of a survey and I am honored that my voice was heard. Also, people are willing to work hard and use our local money and keep Earlham small. Just because we don't explode like Waukee/Adel does not mean we will deflate. Let the community continue to support the efforts of the city and we can make our little Earlham a vibrant tiny town!”
- “Something definitely needs to be done in Earlham for more housing. Seeing all the surrounding towns like Stuart, De Soto, Adel and Van Meter growing, and Earlham is not.”
- “Maybe we should have a limit on animals in this town to maybe 1-2 dogs at max in a household.”
- “Please do not ruin this beautiful little community with more expansion!”
- “There are big and very old trees all over town. I believe in the near future, many of these trees will have to come down. A good use of taxpayer dollars could be a stipend to citizens for tree removal and new tree replanting. Thanks.”
- “Love it here!”
- “Small investments in Gendler now can greatly benefit future generations.”
- “Earlham is a great town. Excited to see what our future holds!”
- “Eliminate property tax abatements. They aren't needed to attract people to our town. They reduce bonding capacity making it more difficult to keep up with infrastructure needs and force higher tax levies for rest of the community. Not to mention, if they can afford the new house, they need to be able to afford the taxes on it too or they will just move when the abatement expires.”
- “Keep Earlham one of the best places to visit on the weekends.”
- “Probably a lot I didn't fully understand the whole implication of, such as - zoning, taxes, annexing ... I don't want Earlham to create a bubble at the I-80 area - I don't want to feel even more so like “an interstate town”. I want to protect our good, local businesses. I'm want more housing available but don't want to grow too much or too quickly. I also don't want “cheap housing”. I don't mind some industrial growth but not IN town or along the interstate corridor. I definitely don't want any more wind turbines! And, while I'd love to expand the town with bit more housing, I also fully respect those landowners who really don't want to sell.”
- “This is a personal bone to pick as I drive in and out of town from the interstate several times a day, but winter snow removal is a major problem. While the top layer of snow is usually removed quickly, main roads are often snow packed and icy compared to other surrounding towns of a similar size, and the highway hill is downright treacherous. I would rather have the roads cleared and salted thoroughly even if it takes a little longer than allowing them to become packed down.”
- “Focus should not be on growth but rather improvements of existing residential areas and local business/mainstreet. Thank you!”

Community Engagement Event – Thursday, October 19, 2023, over 70 attendees, community center

Facilitated by SICO, the event outlined the planning process, provided an overview of background information and plan findings, and included several engagement exercises. The following are the results of the exercises.

Roundtable Vision Statements

The first exercise was the handout of five sets of single-word pieces of paper with words such as “community,” “housing,” “progress.” Each table was to assemble the paper and add their own words to come up with sentences that described the vision of the future. Since the attendance far exceeded expectations, some tables did not have a set or packet, so they were asked to join another table. About two-thirds of the people in attendance helped with this exercise. The following are the results.

Group 1:

Earlham will be sustainable with inviting, affordable growth. Together we will have quality of life through preservation of culture and home/housing through a quiet, stable, attractive way of life, which will lead Earlham to strong success.

Group 2:

The Earlham community will maintain its current quality of life through culture and history while inviting opportunity to grow and succeed.

Group 3:

Earlham will become a vibrant, intergenerational community with a sustainable, affordable quality of life with recreational opportunities and trails that respects our agricultural roots and the community’s history.

Group 4:

Earlham is poised for great potential due to its proximity to Des Moines and our strong sense of community pride. We aim to be a vibrant community with a high quality of life that focuses on our history, culture, and the small-town way of life by attracting families with quality housing, recreational trails, and strong schools.

Group 5:

Preserve the unique history of Earlham. Grow with affordable housing while keeping our quiet attractive self-sustainable quality of life.

Guiding Principles Discussion

On a handout given to each person (only 50 were available), audience members were asked to come up with two short phrases for thoughts of guiding principles. Examples from Winterset’s new plan were given in the slideshow to generate understanding about what was meant by guiding principles. The following are from the plan.

- Small town values
- There is nothing wrong with being a small town
- Big is not always better
- Strong sense of community
- Safety!
- Small town feel
- Growth
- Maintain sustainability
- Excellence in education, sports, and arts
- Earlham is openly friendly
- Community open for growth and development
- Listen to all the people

- Careful growth
- Don't steal land to grow
- Affordable, sustainable, intentional growth
- Importance of close community
- Value of current community members
- Maintain small town feel with measured growth
- Generous, motivated people
- Maintain top tier quality of living within the state
- Strategic growth
- Slow steady locally owned growth
- Inviting to all generations
- Keep family values in mind
- We do not want the city to encroach and change the small town closeness
- Need to build businesses downtown
- Nursing home/assisted living with ownership to keep older residents and gain new

- Preservation of history
- Growth without subsidies (to avoid too fast growth like Adel/Waukee) yet remain affordable to live here
- Earlham should preserve business development through historic preservation and tourism
- Moderate growth balances with quality of life
- To grow but being proactive about the future growth
- Grow some housing and commercial
- Having things to do
- Small town
- Self-sustaining
- Safe and quiet town
- Housing options available
- Keeping Earlham small but sustainable
- No massive parking lot stores

Earlham TODAY in One Word



Biggest Opportunity for Earlham

- Raise children
- Keep an old fashioned culture
- Growth
- Controlled growth
- Something for teens/young adults
- More housing
- Increased housing
- Bring more businesses in
- Need more housing, I learned tonight!

Earlham in 2040 in One Word



- Update current housing
- Downtown area
- Growth
- More jobs
- Good growth for housing and businesses
- Controlled growth of community
- Importance of community
- People
- Recreation building/trails

- Affordable housing
- Showcasing our strengths
- One school/not combined
- Small business growth
- Historic preservation and tourism

Biggest Challenge for Earlham

- Keeping our small town
- Avoiding moral decay from city sprawl
- Money
- Lack of building lots
- Balanced growth
- Space
- Storm water
- Managing future housing
- Population growth for any incoming businesses
- Need more housing
- Lack of land
- Growth
- Lack of availability of housing
- Growth
- Housing, bringing industry
- Growing without going boom, like Adel and Waukee with rapid growth and maintain quality of life

One Big Dream for the Future

- Maintain
- Staying morally strong and continuing with a sense of community
- Lack of building lots
- Park and recreational programming
- Indoor recreational space
- Houses north of Casey's
- Exceptional lifestyle for all residents
- Recreational center
- Trails nearby
- Not sure
- Amusement park
- Indoor recreational facility

- Welcoming community
- Using storefronts rather than allowing them to sit empty
- Growth from within our community
- Young population interested in our community
- Self-sustaining

- Diversity, growth without rapid growth
- Space, condos
- \$, land
- Truly maintaining small town feel with urban sprawl
- Landlocked
- To keep growth from ruining what we have
- Landlocked
- Landlocked with agriculture
- Maintaining moderate growth without major disruptions
- Where they can grow
- Growing responsibly so we are still a smaller town
- Keeping businesses/farms locally owned
- Expanding with progression
- Empty storefronts
- Housing for new families

- Housing
- Aquatic park, outdoor recreation
- Trails, aquatic center, and recreation center
- Maintaining close community
- Generational longevity
- Vibrant downtown
- Connection to existing trail system
- Gendler Park expansion
- More signage or promotion of what we have
- Balanced growth
- Balance of quality of life
- More housing, recreation

- Bike trails
- Stay a small welcoming Iowa town

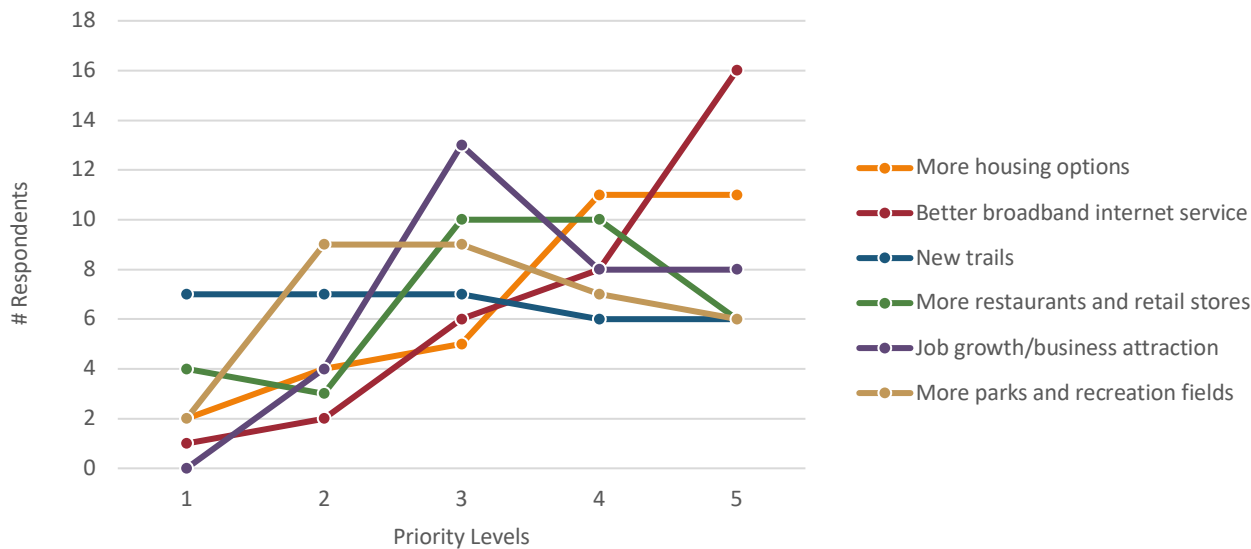
- Grow more commercial space
- No huge subdivisions

One Big Fear for the Future

- Uncontrolled growth, over-development
- Becoming too large
- Earlham growing too big
- Residential growth outpacing sports services
- Too much and too big of growth
- Unnecessary growth
- No houses north of Casey's
- Unmanaged growth
- Development blends into Des Moines
- Architecturally unattractive buildings that compete with our current businesses; we have a wonderful grocery store; we have a hardware store well stocked with varied stuff; no Dollar General!
- Earlham forcing others outside of town to be annexed, raising my taxes
- Town dies
- Excessive growth
- Loss of school, loss of identity
- Rapid growth

- Rapid growth that the city cannot cope with for school and infrastructure
- Going "boom" – large class sizes
- Taking farmland from families
- Too big
- Losing the small-town community feel
- Economic loss by chain retail and services
- To keep growth from ruining what we have
- Government assistance
- Too fast growth so we become like Waukee, pricing everyone out of living here with housing costs and property taxes
- Over-expansion
- Grow fast without proper infrastructure
- No businesses
- Turning into an Adel or Waukee
- Not changing with the times
- Huge subdivisions/too many "big box" stores
- Overrun

Level of Importance for Earlham in 2040 (1 is low, 5 is high) (33 responses)



At the public meeting, the planning consultants also set out several graphics and maps and asked participants before leaving to mark the documents with ideas. One of these was called an “preference scale” exercise. A series of topics were raised, and members of the public were asked to rate each one on a scale, where the thought on one end was the opposite of the one on the other end. The idea is to gauge where the public is on each thought. Roughly 30 people participated in this exercise. The next two graphics show the results.

Earlham Opinion Casting Preference Scales Exercise

Place a dot on each scale to indicate your feelings and preferences for [Earlham](#)

Walkability/bikeability

I don't feel safe walking or riding my bike.



I feel very safe walking or riding my bike.

Downtown Earlham

It should be left alone.



The City AND other groups should invest heavily in it.

Corridors and Entryways

They should be landscaped and made intentionally attractive.



They are okay like they are.

Housing Choices

Not happy with choices available.



Happy with choices available.

Growth and Development

Earlham should extend tax abatements and other incentives.



Earlham should limit use of tax abatements and other incentives.

Equity and Revitalization

Incentives and investments should be targeted to struggling neighborhoods.



Incentives and investments should chase the latest and best opportunities.

Earlham Opinion Casting Preference Scales Exercise

Place a dot on each scale to indicate your feelings and preferences for Earlham.

Environmental Sustainability

This should be a low priority.



This should be a high priority.

Community Pride

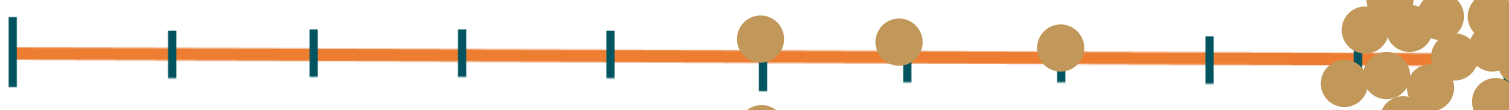
I am not proud of this town.



I am proud of this town.

Future development

City should target land for new development and secure it.



City should leave farmland alone – let private sector work.

Spending Priorities

Infrastructure should be top local spending priority.



Quality of life amenities should be top priority.

Growth of the Metro

Metro growth benefits Earlham.



Metro growth threatens Earlham.

Recreation

We should focus on new amenities and programs.

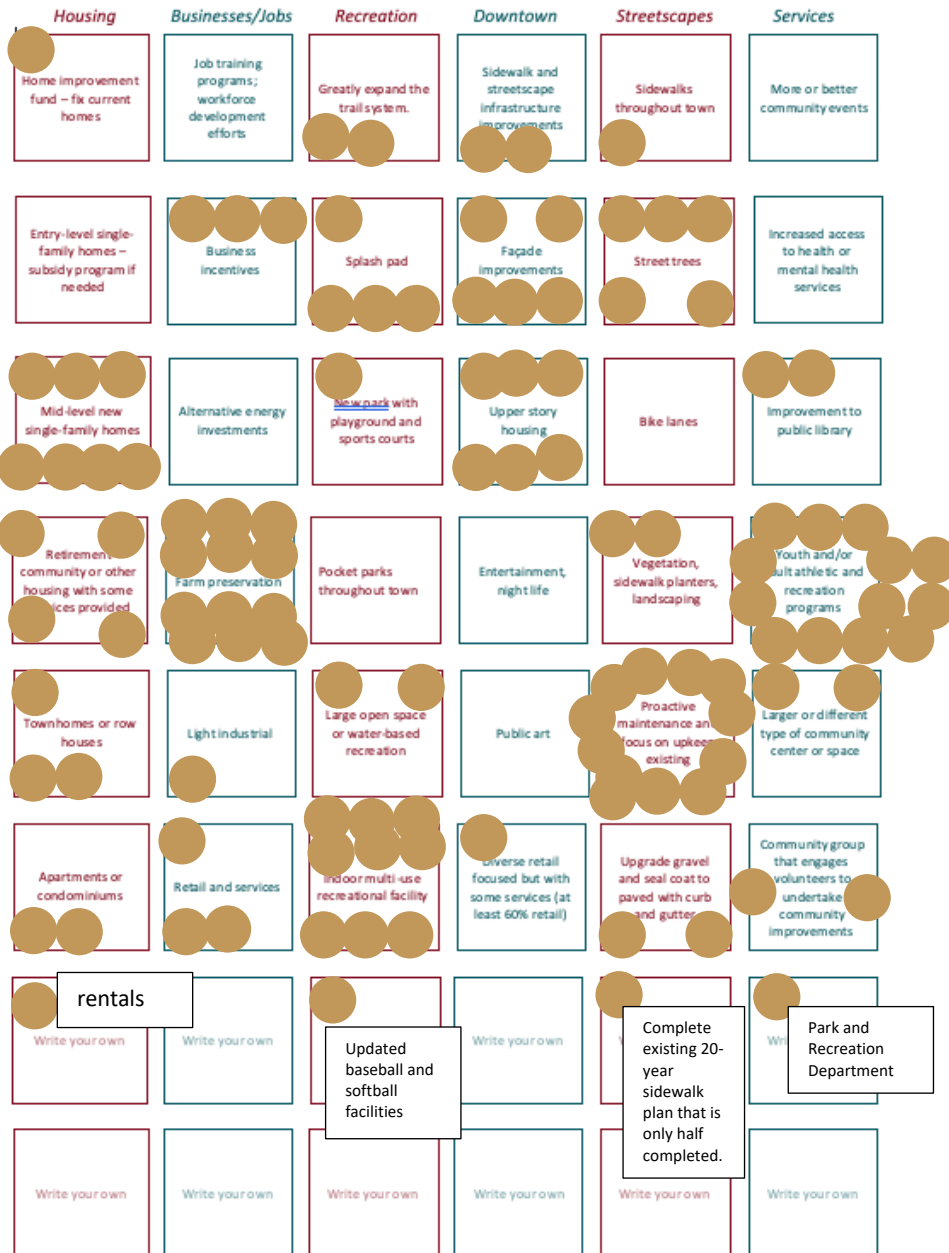


We should focus on maintenance of existing parks and programs.

The community was also given a chance to provide opinions on the types of projects to be done in certain categories. The following graphic shows the results. About 30 people participated.

Earlham Project Types Preference Exercise

Place ONE dot in each column to indicate your preference among the choices for each category. If you want to suggest a different amenity or feature, please write in and place dot on a "write your own" square.



Envision Earlham Exercise

Place a green dot on each item that appeals to you for Earlham and a red dot on each that is unappealing for the topic or location described

Housing



Businesses and Development

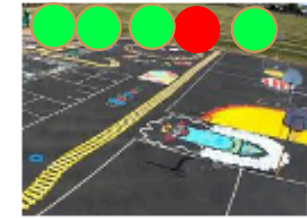
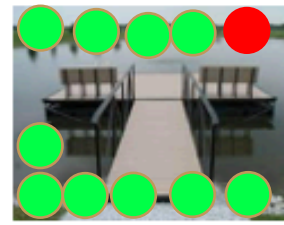


The community was also asked to participate in a visual graphics preference exercise. This was designed to learn the types of development the community wanted to see. The above graphic and the one on the next page show the results. Green dots represent positive additions for the community, and the red dots are images people do not want to see in the community. About 30 people participated.

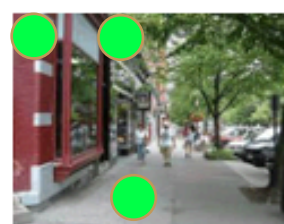
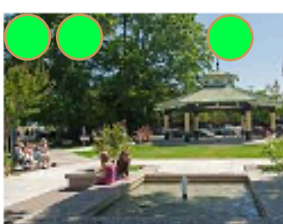
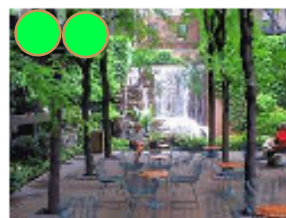
Envision Earlham Exercise

Place a green dot on each item that appeals to you for Earlham and a red dot on each that is unappealing for the topic or location described

Parks and Recreation



Downtown Revitalization and Streetscapes



Finally, the community visioning session participants were asked to provide input on three maps that were distributed around the room. The maps were a city map, a plannign area map, and a Gendler Park Map. The results of this effort are reflected in the future land use maps and Earlham:2040 chapters.

With a little urging, a pre-teen stood before the group and read his and his friend's ideas, mostly for recreation, focused on Gendler Park.

- Rocket station
- Bigger park
- Bigger pool
- Gendler's Lake
- Amusement park
- Cabins at lake
- Camp at lake
- Giant slide
- Recreational building
- RV park
- Arcade
- Hike and bike trail
- Rastaurant
- No stop signs (too many already)