



Roanoke City Plan 2040

Community Response Report

Purpose

The City of Roanoke is working on a new Comprehensive Plan that will guide policy decisions and long-term investments in our community until 2040. The project overview for Plan 2040 has been categorized into six phases. As part of Phase 3, ten open house community meetings were scheduled and an online survey was posted to obtain community input. This report was created to analyze responses obtained from these outreach methods.

Prepared October 2018
for
The City of Roanoke
by
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City Planner II

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Open House Meetings

Design, Methods, and Results

Meetings were designed to address the guiding themes for the comprehensive plan, major points of interest for local families, and the community's overall vision for Roanoke's next 20 years. Approximately 200 community members were in attendance and engaged in six activities to determine trends in each of these areas.

Meeting Design

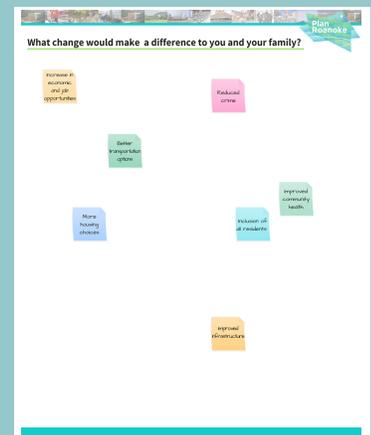
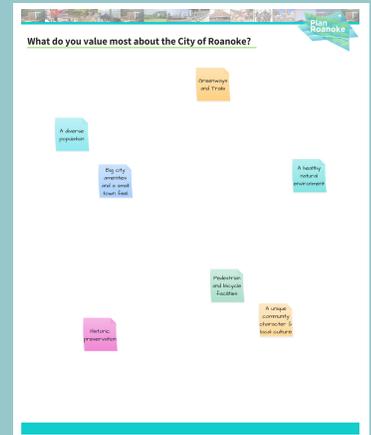
Community members engaged in the following activities during each open house:

- Value Board: The community was asked, “What do you value most about the City of Roanoke?”. Attendees were provided sticky notes to write their own responses and two stickers to vote. Stickers could be placed on member responses and pre-drafted responses. Pre-drafted responses were pulled from common themes found in responses to the online community survey and are as follows:

- A diverse population
- Big city amenities and a small town fee
- A healthy natural environment
- Greenways and trail
- Historic preservation
- Pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- A unique community character and local culture

- Change Board: The community was asked, “What change would make a difference to you and your family?”. Attendees were provided sticky notes to write their own responses and two stickers to vote. Stickers could be placed on member responses and pre-drafted responses. Pre-drafted responses were pulled from common themes found in responses to the online community survey and are as follows:

- Increase in economic and job opportunities
- Better transportation options
- More housing choices
- Reduced crime
- Inclusion of all residents
- Improved community health
- Improved infrastructure

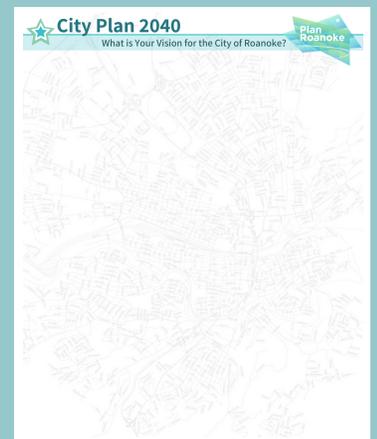
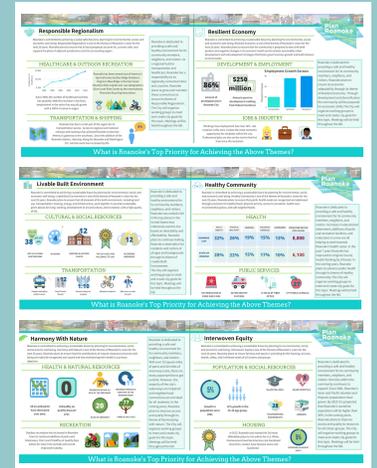


- Theme Boards: The community was asked, “What is Roanoke’s top priority for achieving the above themes?” for each of six comprehensive plan themes. Sticky notes were provided for individual responses. The themes were chosen based on recommendations by the American Planning Association and are as follows:

- Harmony with nature
- Healthy Community
- Interwoven equity
- Livable built environment
- Responsible regionalism
- Resilient economy

- Vision Board: The community was asked, “What is your vision for the City of Roanoke in 2040?”. Sticky notes were provided for individual responses.

- Mapping Exercise: Community members were provided with sticky dots to identify strengths, opportunities, and concerns on a large-scale map of Roanoke. Sticky dots were color coordinated to each identifier. The results from this activity were entered into a public, online mapping system and will not be addressed in this report.



Methods

Categorization

Public responses were sorted using the following method:

1. Public comments for each activity were manually entered into a spreadsheet with the corresponding number of votes.
2. A coding plan was created in bitext (an online text categorization tool) to sort responses into categories based on topics found within the text. Long responses were separated into sentences and phrases during sorting. This allowed better identification of multiple categories of interest within single responses. The following categories were used:

- Activities
- Arts and Culture
- Bike Access
- Community
- Connectivity
- Crime
- Development
- Economy
- Education
- Environmental
- Food Access
- Health
- Historic Preservation
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Jobs
- Local Government
- Outdoor Recreation
- Pedestrian Access
- Poverty
- Public Transportation
- Safety
- Senior and Disabled
- Tourism
- Transportation
- Youth
- Not Categorized

Data Cleaning

The following methods were used to improve accuracy:

1. Responses that contained multiple topics from a single category were removed to avoid duplication within a category.
2. Responses that were able to be sorted into more than one category were duplicated, so as to be represented in each qualifying category.

Calculations

Responses were quantified using the following method:

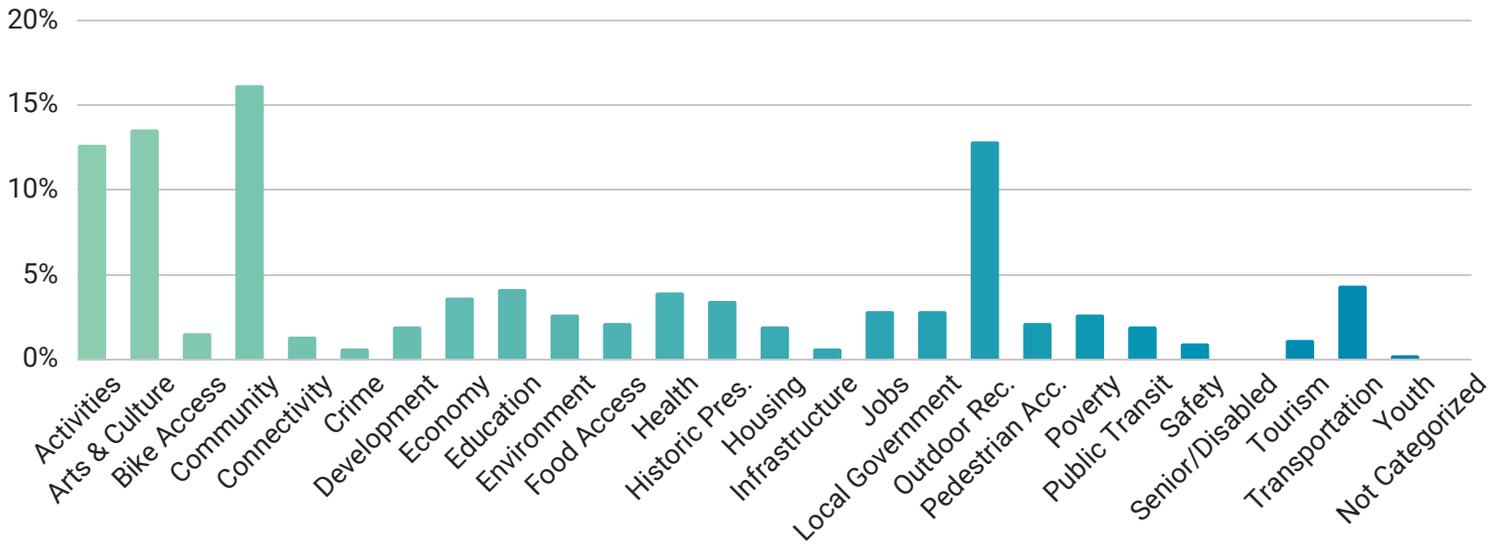
1. The quantity of responses within each category were calculated.
2. Votes for each individual response were added to the quantity of responses for each category.
3. The quantity of responses and votes for each meeting activity were calculated.
4. The quantity of responses and votes for each category were then divided by the quantity of responses and votes for each meeting activity, and multiplied by 100 to achieve a percentage.

Additional Analyses

Bitext was also used to identify positive and negative sentiments for the responses. Textfixer was used to identify the most common words mentioned for each activity.

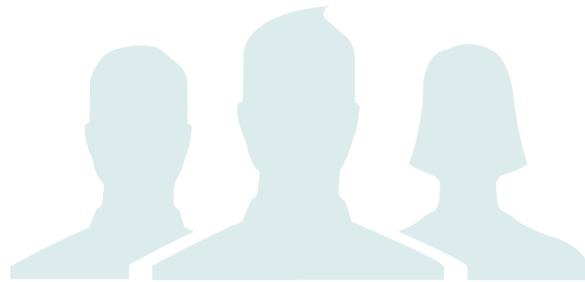
Results: Value Board

Response Categories



Community Topics

- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Resources
- Neighborhoods



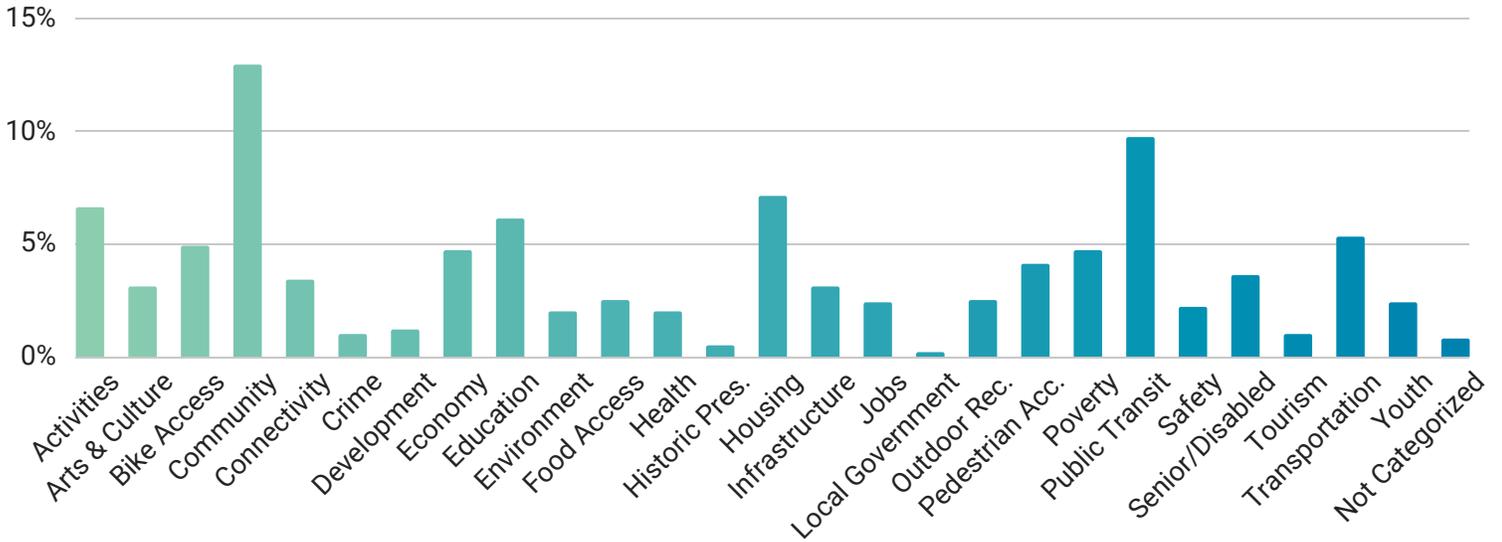
Common Words

- Downtown
- Community
- Greenways
- Parks
- Historic

Top Voted Categories

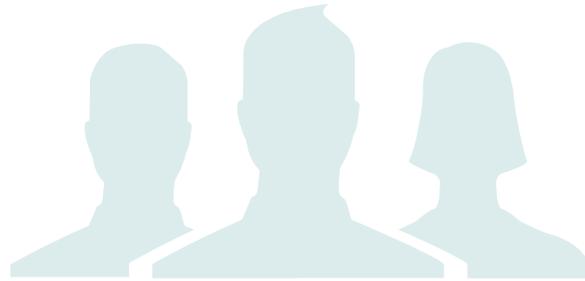
- Greenways & Trails
- Big City Amenities/Small Town Feel
- Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities
- A Diverse Population
- A Healthy Natural Environment
- Community Character/Culture
- Historic Preservation

Response Categories



Community Topics

- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Equity
- Services
- Neighborhoods



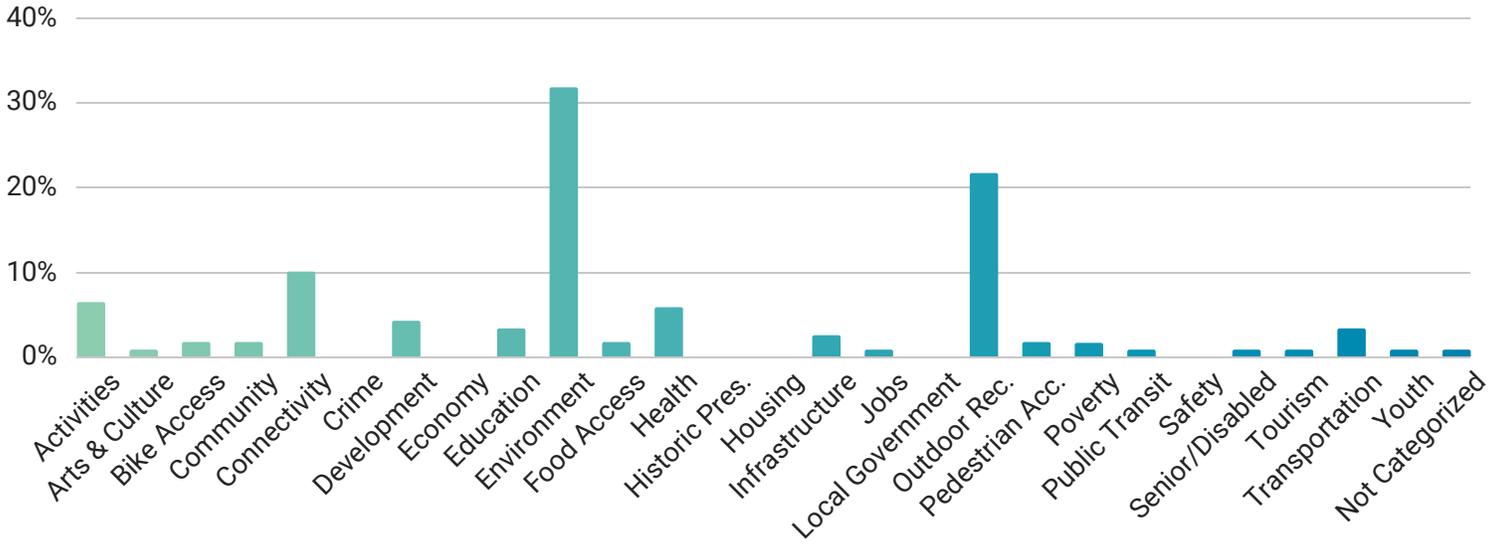
Common Words

- Bus
- Housing
- Public
- Community
- Transportation

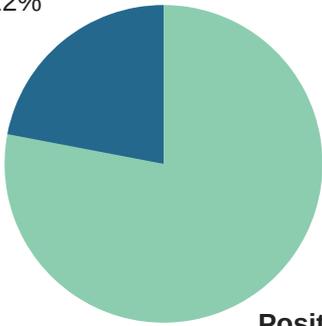
Top Voted Categories

- 1 Increase in Economic & Job Opportunities
- 2 Inclusion of All Residents
- 3 Better Transportation Options
- 4 Tree Planting
- 5 More Housing Choices
- 6 Improved Infrastructure
- 7 Improved Community Health

Response Categories



Negative
22%



Positive
78%



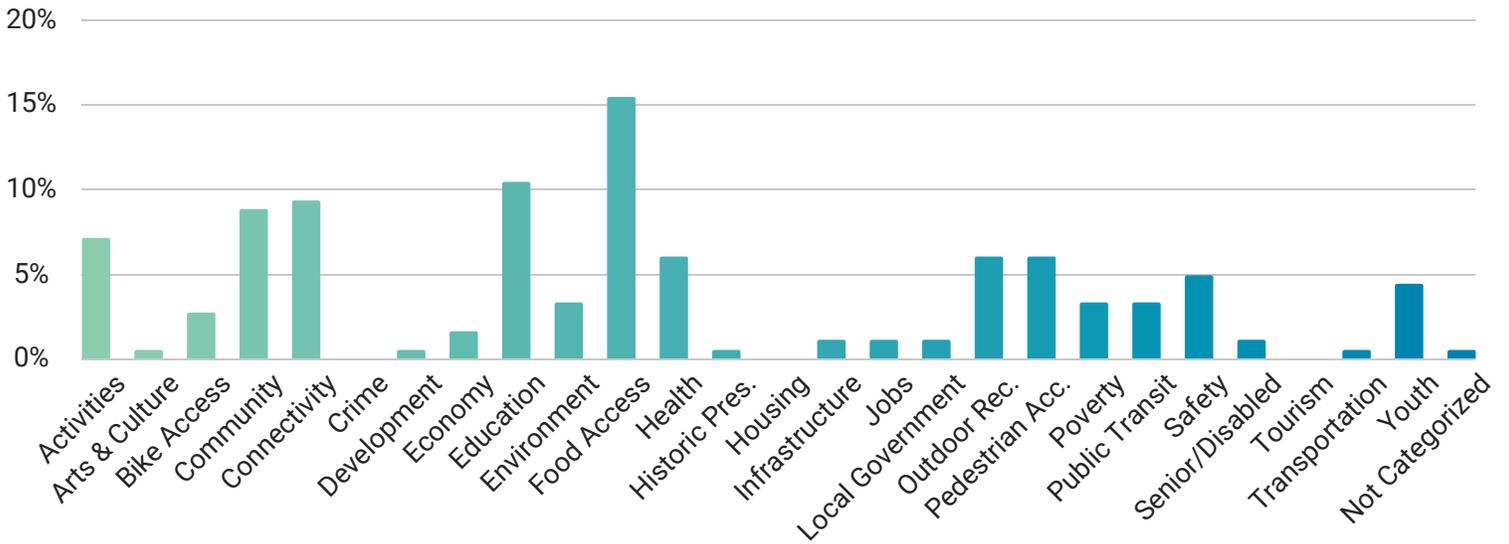
Common Words

- Greenways
- Clean
- Access
- Energy
- Solar

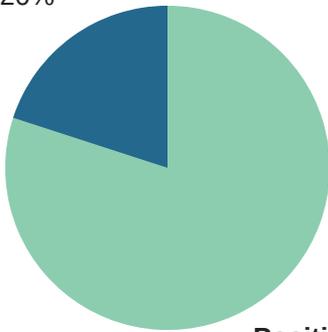
Environment Topics

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------|----------|-----------------|
| 1 | Clean Energy | 3 | Clean Waterways |
| 2 | Recycling | 4 | Tree Planting |

Response Categories



Negative
20%



Positive
80%

Top Priority
Food Access



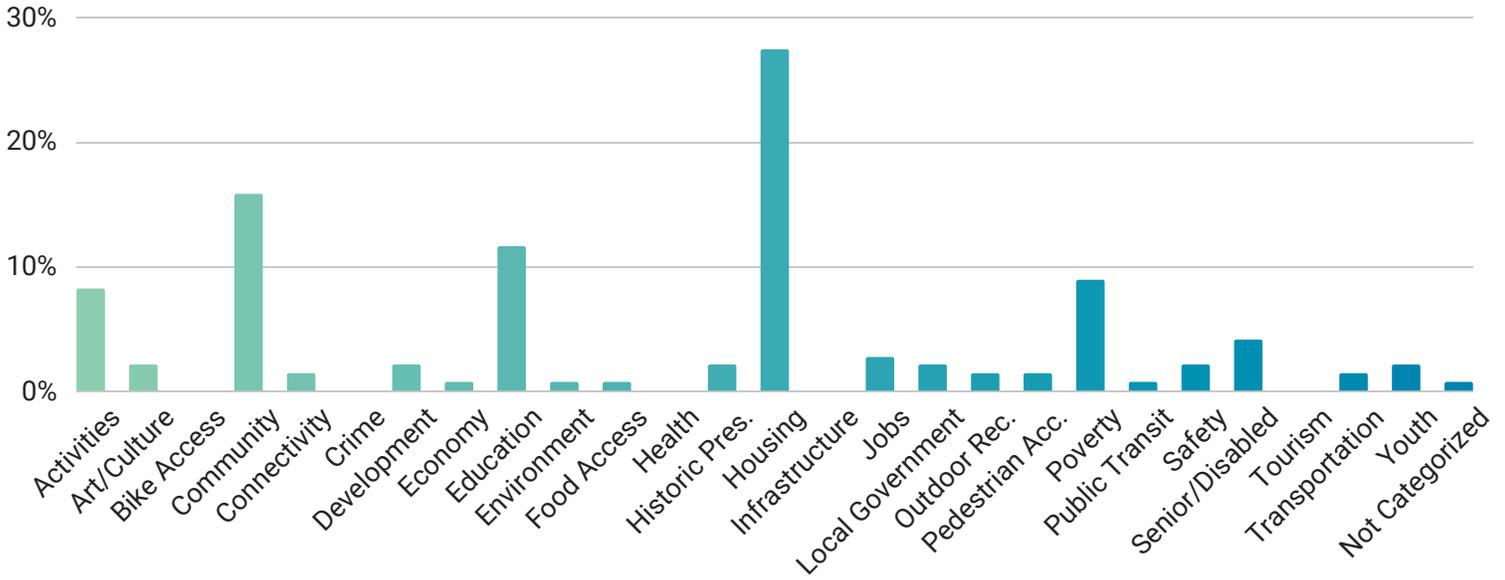
Common Words

- Food
- Health/Healthy
- Schools
- Public
- Access

Food Access Topics

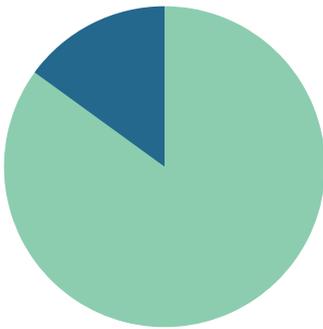
- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Availability | 3 Health in Schools |
| 2 Affordability | 4 Health Education |

Response Categories



Negative

15%



Positive

85%



Common Words

- Housing/House
- Homeless
- Community
- Activities
- Affordable

Housing Topics

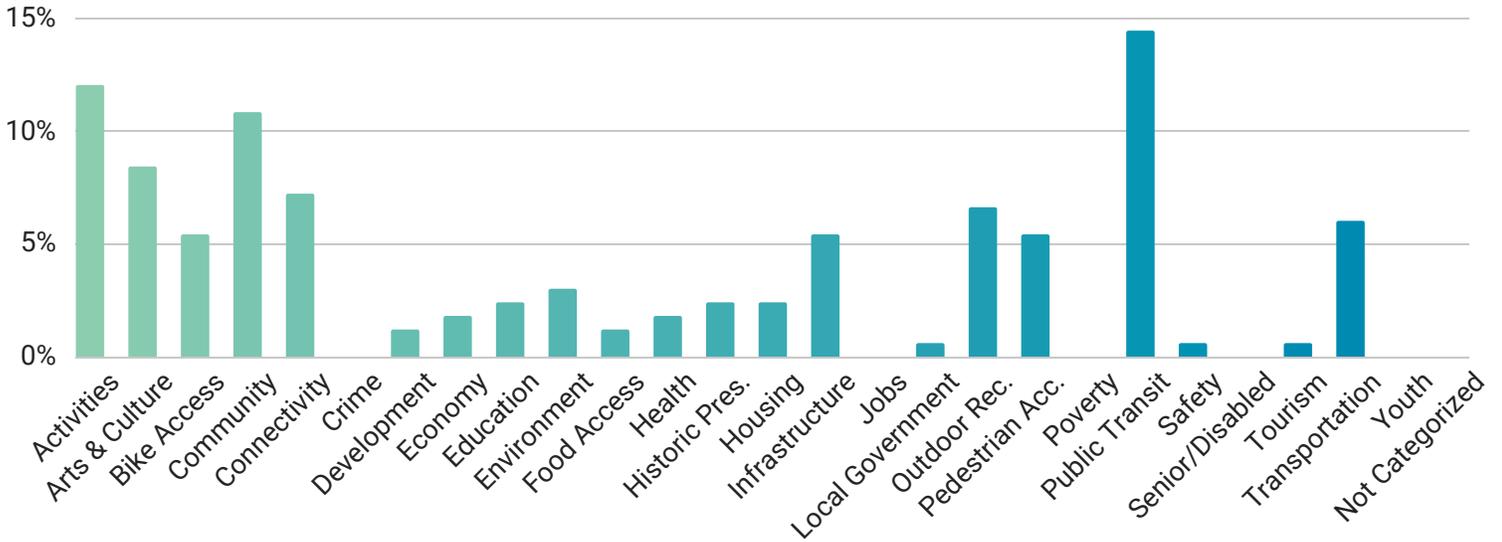
1 Affordable

3 Homeless

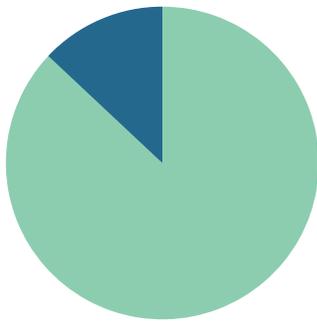
2 More Options

4 Senior and Disabled

Response Categories



Negative
13%



Positive
87%



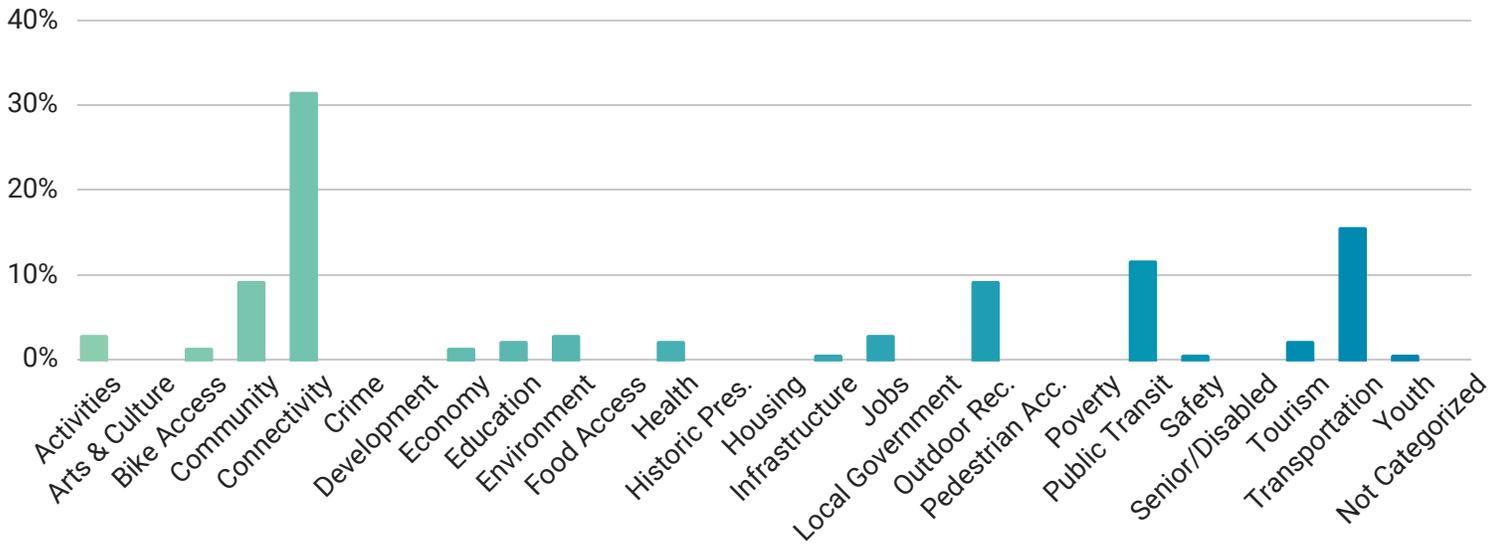
Common Words

- Transportation
- Public
- Greenway
- Better
- Bus

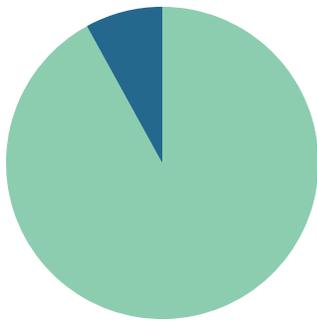
Public Transit Topics

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|----------------------|
| 1 | Extended Hours | 3 | Access/Affordability |
| 2 | Expanded Routes | 4 | Improved Service |

Response Categories



Negative
8%



Positive
92%

Top Priority
Connectivity

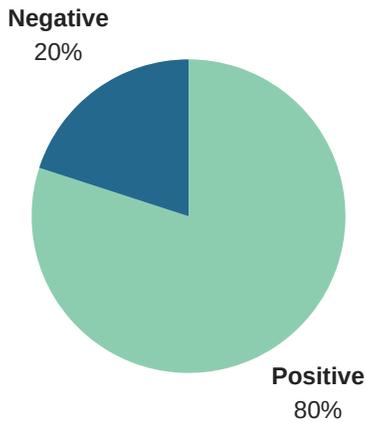
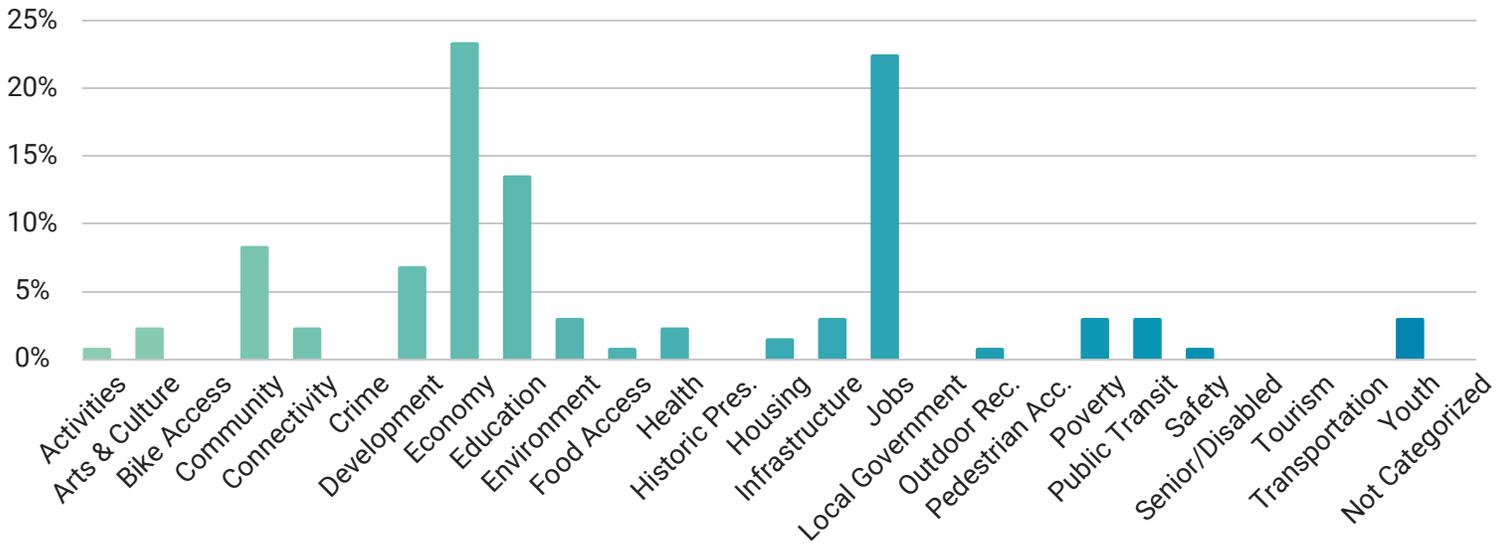
Common Words

- County
- Amtrak
- Regional
- Trail
- Community

Connectivity Topics

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Public Transit | 3 Partnerships |
| 2 Greenway | 4 Air/Rail |

Response Categories

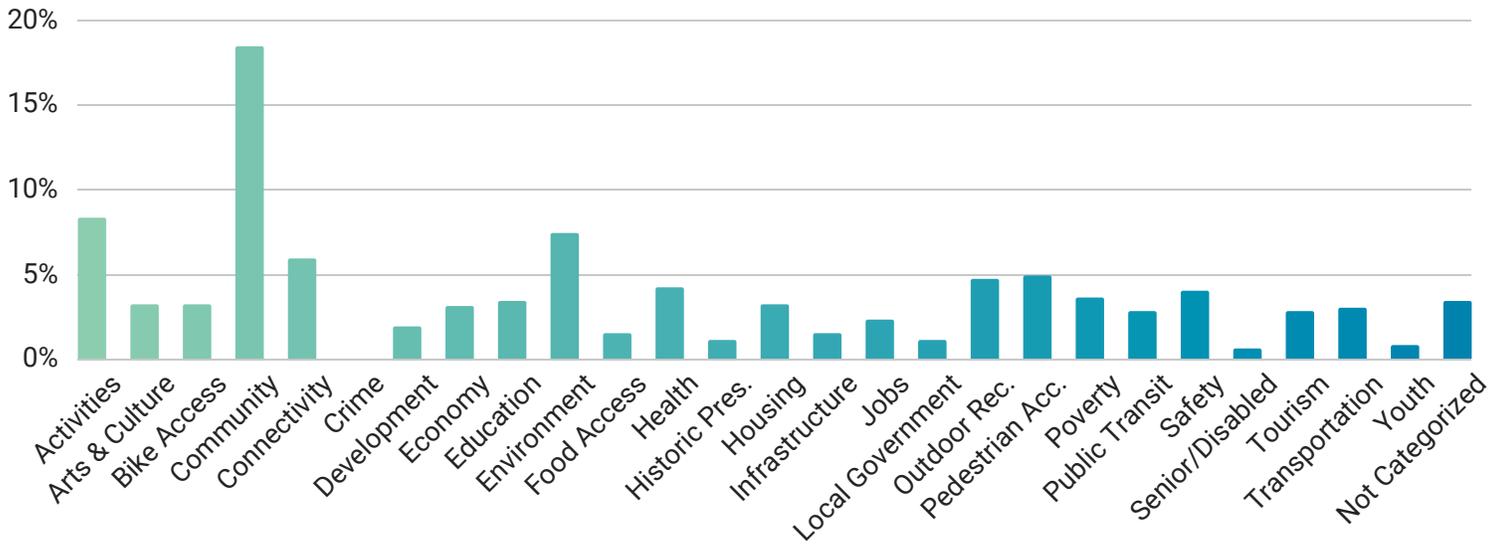


- Common Words**
- Jobs
 - Businesses
 - Tech
 - Development/Growth
 - Education/Training

Economy Topics

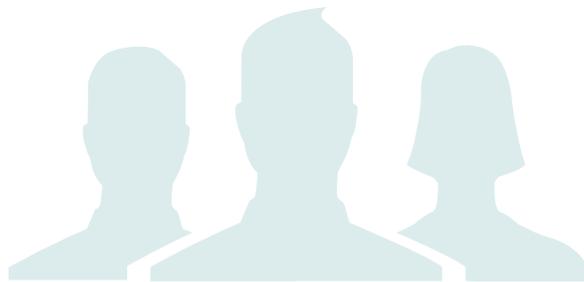
- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Diversification | 3 Incentives |
| 2 New Business | 4 Workforce |

Response Categories



Top Categories

- Community
- Activities
- Environment



Common Words

- Community
- Neighborhoods
- Opportunities
- Safe
- Environment

Community Topics

- | | | | |
|---|-----------|---|------------|
| 1 | Diversity | 4 | Connection |
| 2 | Equity | 5 | Service |
| 3 | Family | 6 | Inclusion |

Dream today. Shape tomorrow.

What do you think Roanoke should look like in 20 years? Help us build a Comprehensive Plan for the future.

Public Survey

Design, Methods, and Results

The public survey was designed to discern valuable community assets, concerns, and desires for the City of Roanoke in the next 20 years. Community members were able to access the survey online at PlanRoanoke.org. The survey was publicized through various methods, including: community meetings, distribution of handouts in public locations, local news outlets, and organizational promotions.

Survey Design

The public survey contained 31 questions that addressed strengths and challenges regarding Roanoke City's future. Questions included access, affordability, and quality of life measures. Each included survey question is detailed below:

1. What do you believe are the biggest strengths of the City of Roanoke? (Check all that apply)

- Housing choices
- Transportation options
- Economic and job opportunities
- Historic preservation
- A diverse population
- Educational opportunities
- A healthy natural environment
- A unique community character and local culture
- Relationship with the region and state
- Public safety
- Community health
- Pedestrian and bicycle facilities

Other (please specify)

2. What do you believe are the biggest challenges for the City of Roanoke? (Check all that apply)

- Housing choices
- Transportation options
- Economic and job opportunities
- Historic preservation
- Inclusion of all residents
- Educational opportunities
- Negative environmental impact
- Maintaining community character and local culture
- Relationship with the region and state
- Public safety
- Community health
- Pedestrian and bicycle facilities

Other (please specify)

3. The City of Roanoke provides a high quality of life for residents.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				

4. The City of Roanoke has a healthy mix of rental and home ownership units.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				

5. There is an adequate variety of housing types (apartment complexes, small apartments, townhouses, duplexes, condominiums, and single family homes) that are affordable to meet the needs of all citizens.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				

6. It is easy to travel (Check all that apply)

- Within the city (neighborhood to neighborhood)
- Within the valley (between Roanoke, Roanoke County, Salem and Vinton)
- Within the region (Blacksburg, Franklin County, Botetourt County, Lynchburg)
- Outside the region
- I do not find it easy to travel

7. My primary means of transportation (Check all that apply)

- Car - single occupancy
- Carpool/ride share
- Transit
- Walk
- Bicycle
- Hired Vehicle

8. My preferred means of transportation (Check all that apply)

- Car - single occupancy
- Carpool/ride share
- Transit
- Walk
- Bicycle
- Hired Vehicle

9. What barriers, if any, exist to prevent you from using your preferred means of transportation.

10. The City of Roanoke has a healthy natural environment including clean air and clean water.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

11. Littering is not a problem in my community.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

12. Developing greenways, trails, water access points, and improving park facilities is a good use of City resources as it capitalizes on our natural assets.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

13. The city and its residents understand the importance of energy conservation.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

14. The regional economy is likely to grow.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

15. The regional economy can adapt and grow if faced with an economic downturn or decline of a single industry.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

16. The City of Roanoke is an inclusive community where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and respected.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

17. I feel safe in my neighborhood.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

Categorization

Survey Monkey was used to administer the survey and quantify the results. In addition, bitext was used to categorize open-ended survey responses. The same categorization, data cleaning, and percentage calculation methods that were used for the public meeting responses were utilized for the public survey. Questions 1 and 2 used quantity of responses as opposed to percentages, since respondents were able to select more than one category. New coding plans were used dependent upon each survey question and are as follows:

"Other" responses from Question 1 used the following categories:

- Arts and Culture
- Community
- Events
- Infrastructure
- Local Government
- Location
- Outdoor Recreation
- Public Services
- Dining and Breweries
- Size
- Youth

"Other" responses from Question 2, and questions 26 and 27 used the following categories. Crime was excluded from categorization of questions 26 and 27.

- Activities
- Arts and Culture
- Bike Access*
- Community
- Connectivity
- Crime
- Development
- Economy*
- Education*
- Environmental*
- Food Access
- Health*
- Historic Preservation*
- Housing*
- Infrastructure
- Jobs
- Local Government
- Outdoor Recreation
- Pedestrian Access*
- Poverty
- Public Transportation
- Safety*
- Senior and Disabled
- Tourism
- Transportation*
- Youth
- Not Categorized

*The quantity of "other" responses sorted into this category were added to the corresponding multiple choice category provided in the survey question.

Question 9 used the following categories:

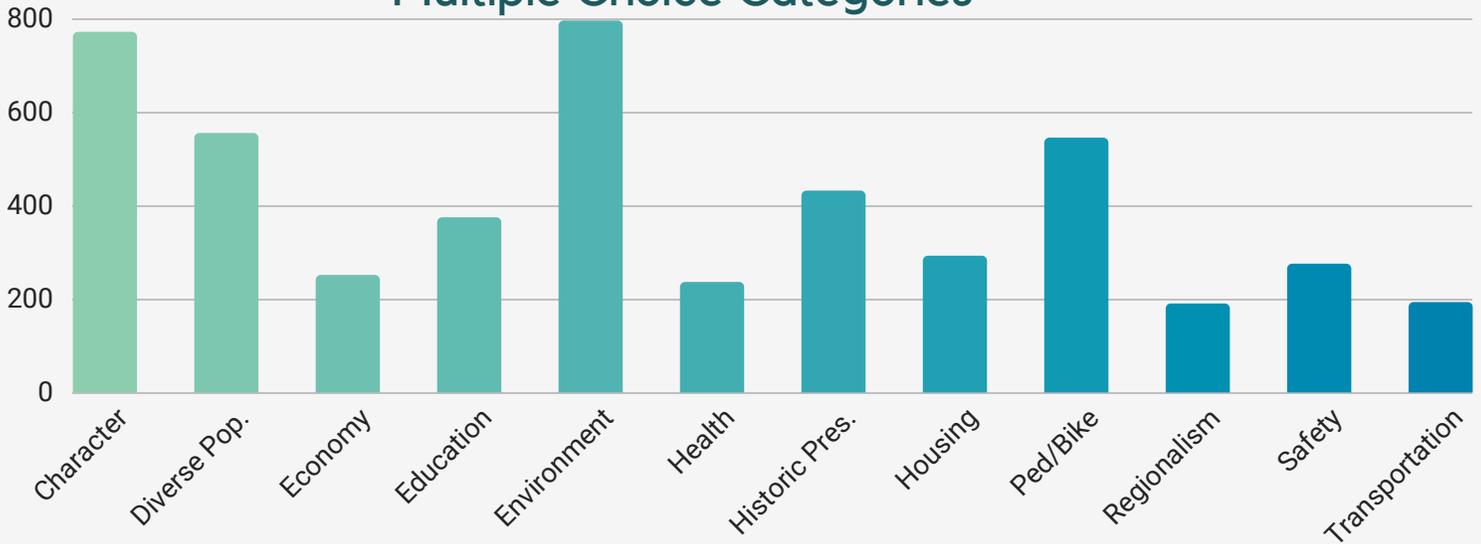
- Affordability
- Airport
- Bike Access
- Carpool/Ride-share
- Connectivity
- Convenience
- Distance
- Maintenance
- Parking
- Pedestrian Access
- Public Transportation
- Safety
- Senior and Disabled
- Traffic
- Train

Question 18 used the following categories:

- Aesthetics
- Community
- Crime
- Drugs
- Infrastructure
- Law Enforcement
- Poverty
- Time

Results: Strengths

Multiple Choice Categories



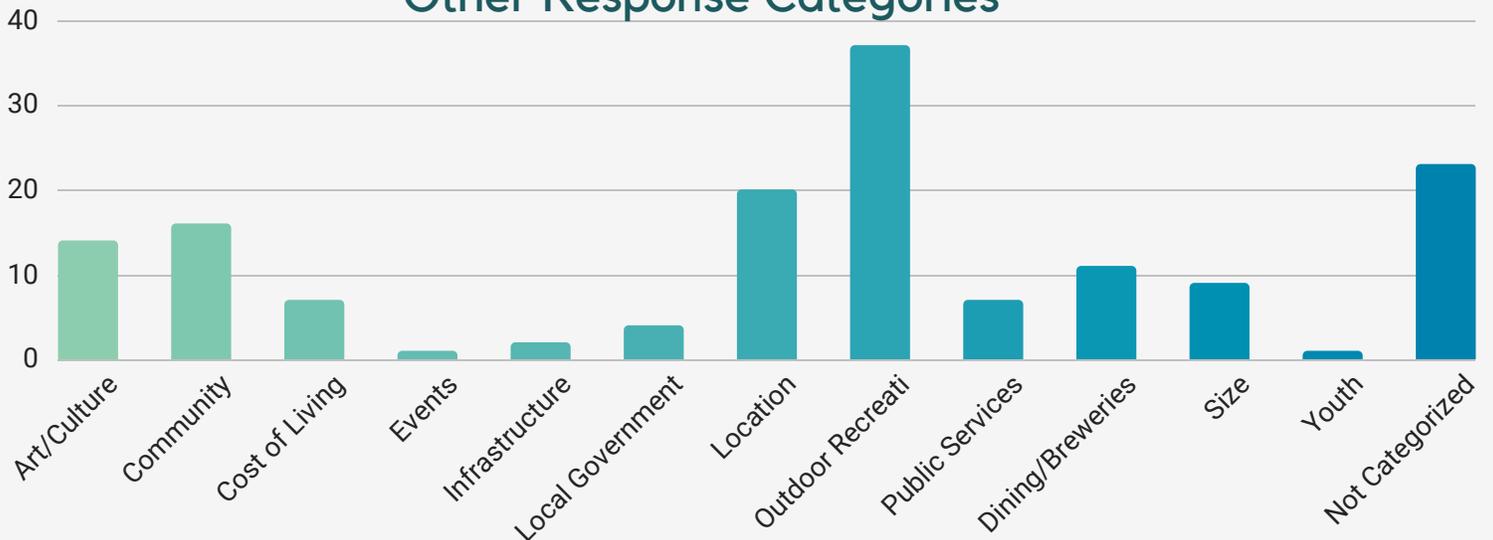
Top Multiple Choice Category

A Healthy Natural Environment

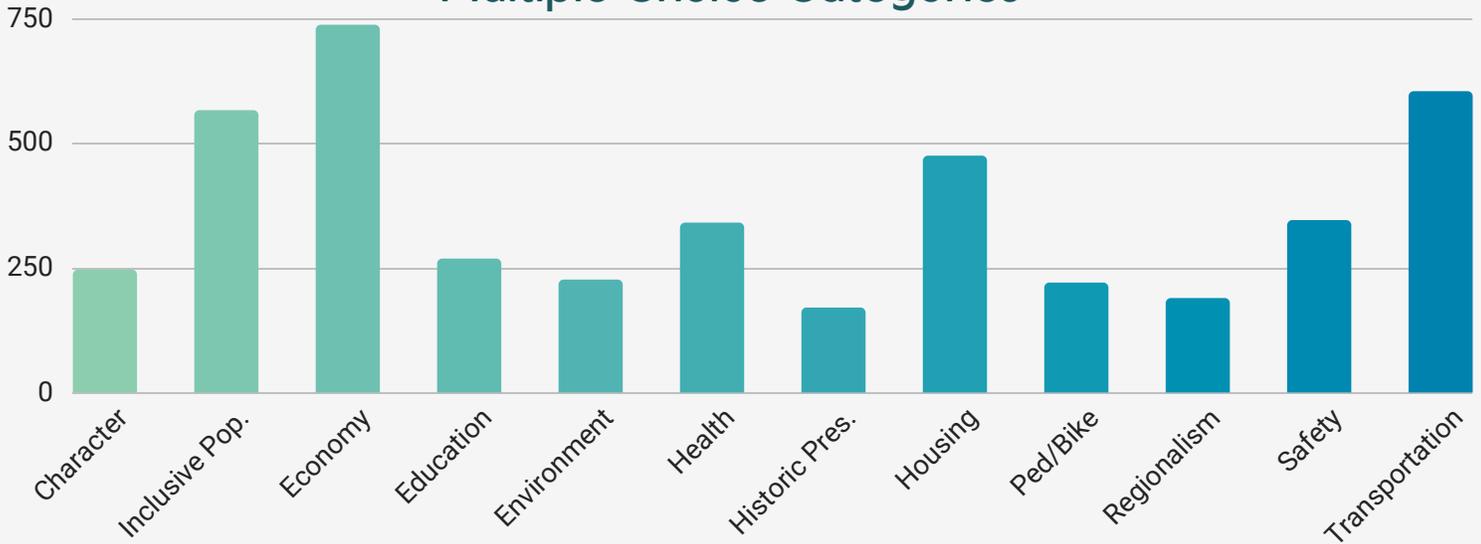
Top Other Response Category

Outdoor Recreation

Other Response Categories



Multiple Choice Categories



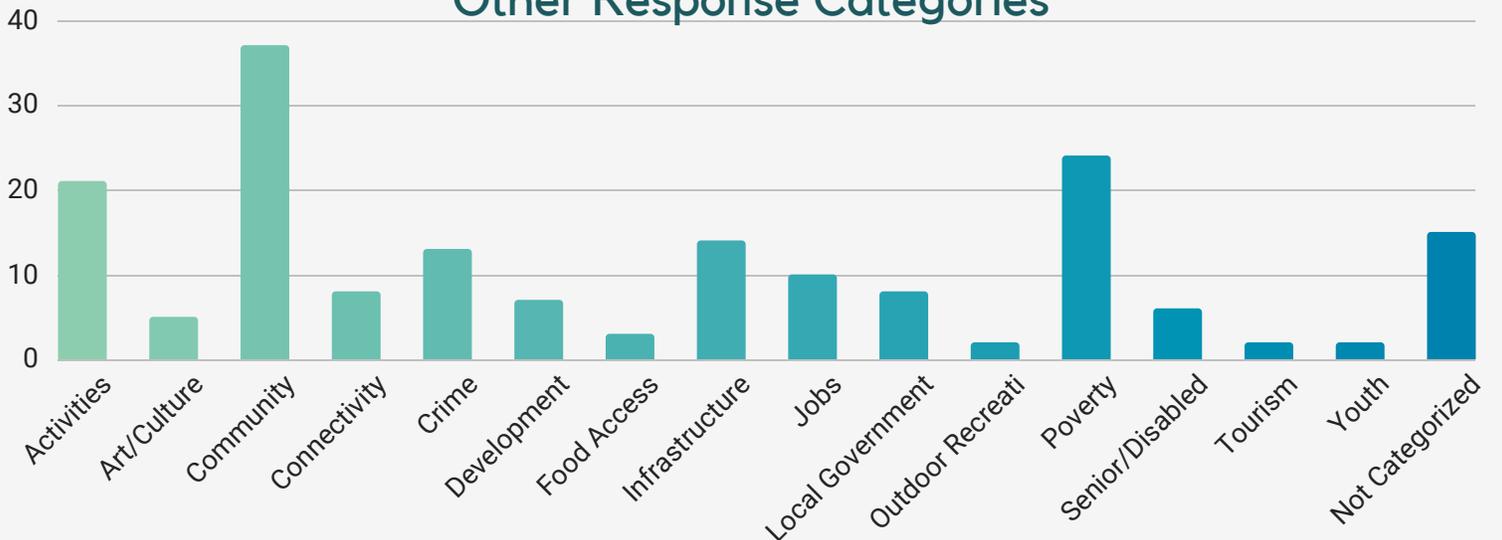
Top Multiple Choice Category

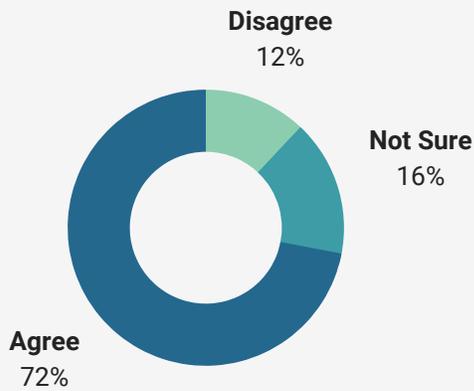
Economic & Job Opportunities

Top Other Response Category

Community

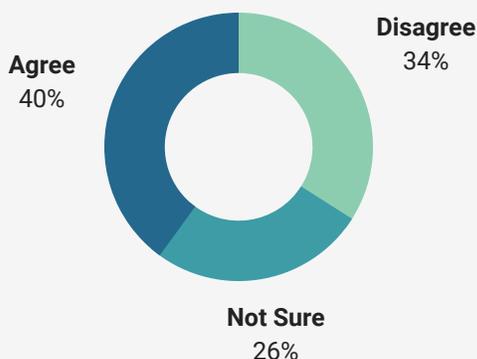
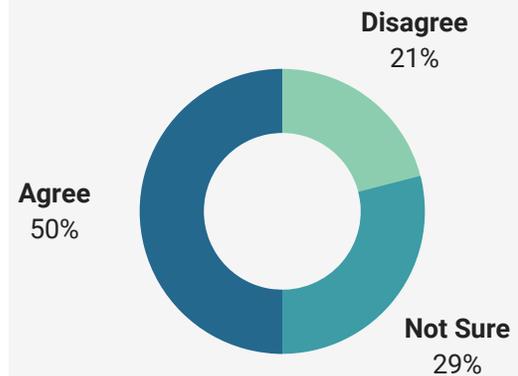
Other Response Categories





Most **AGREE** Roanoke provides a high quality of life.

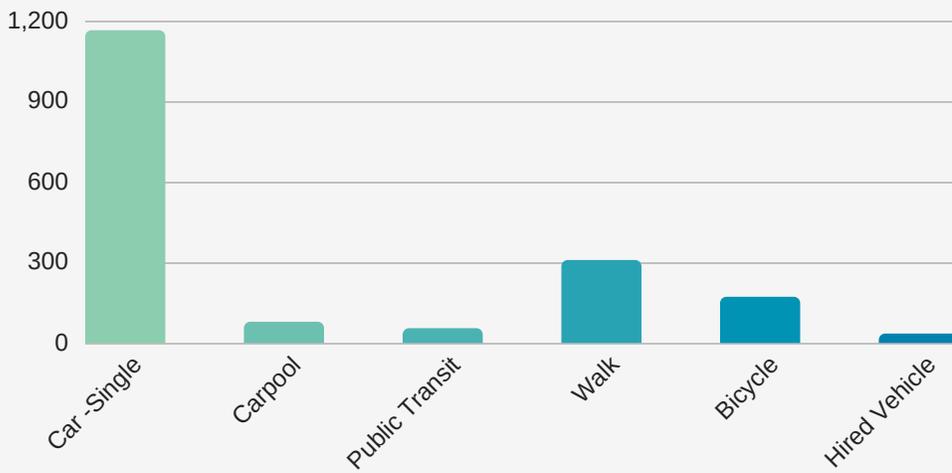
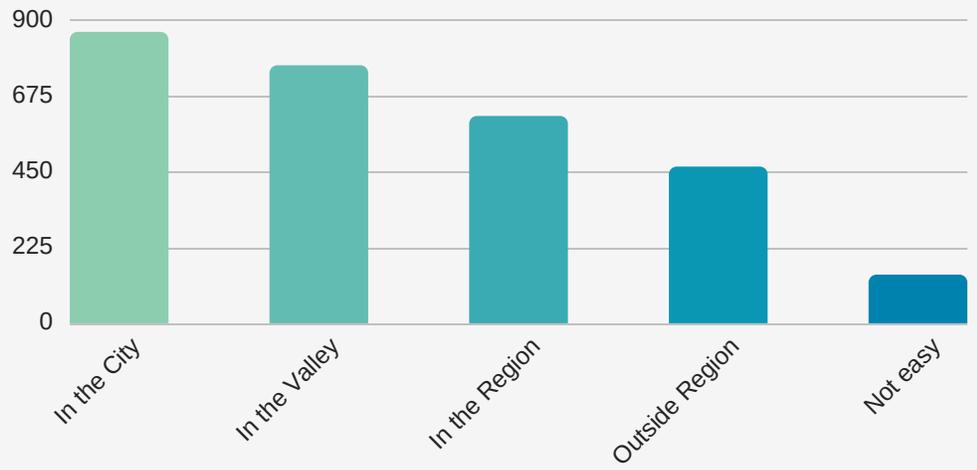
Most **AGREE** Roanoke has a healthy mix of rental and ownership units.



Most **AGREE** Roanoke has an adequate, affordable variety of housing types.

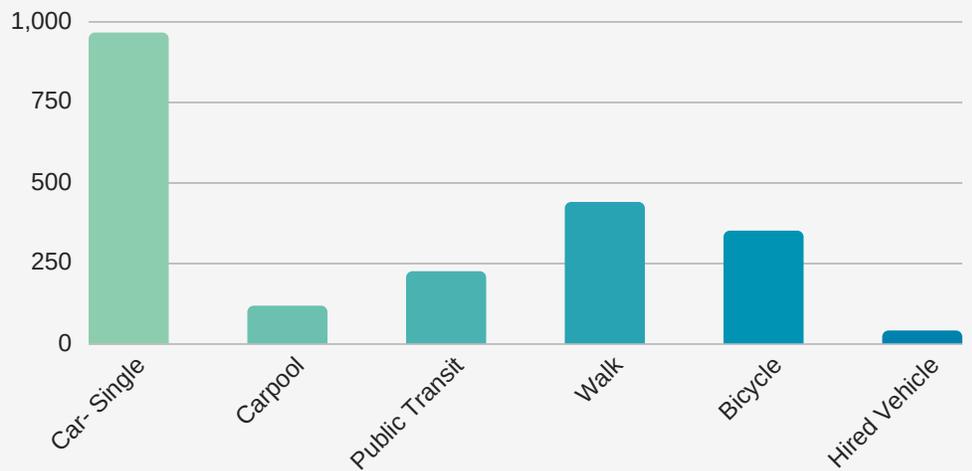
Results: Transportation

It is easy to travel...

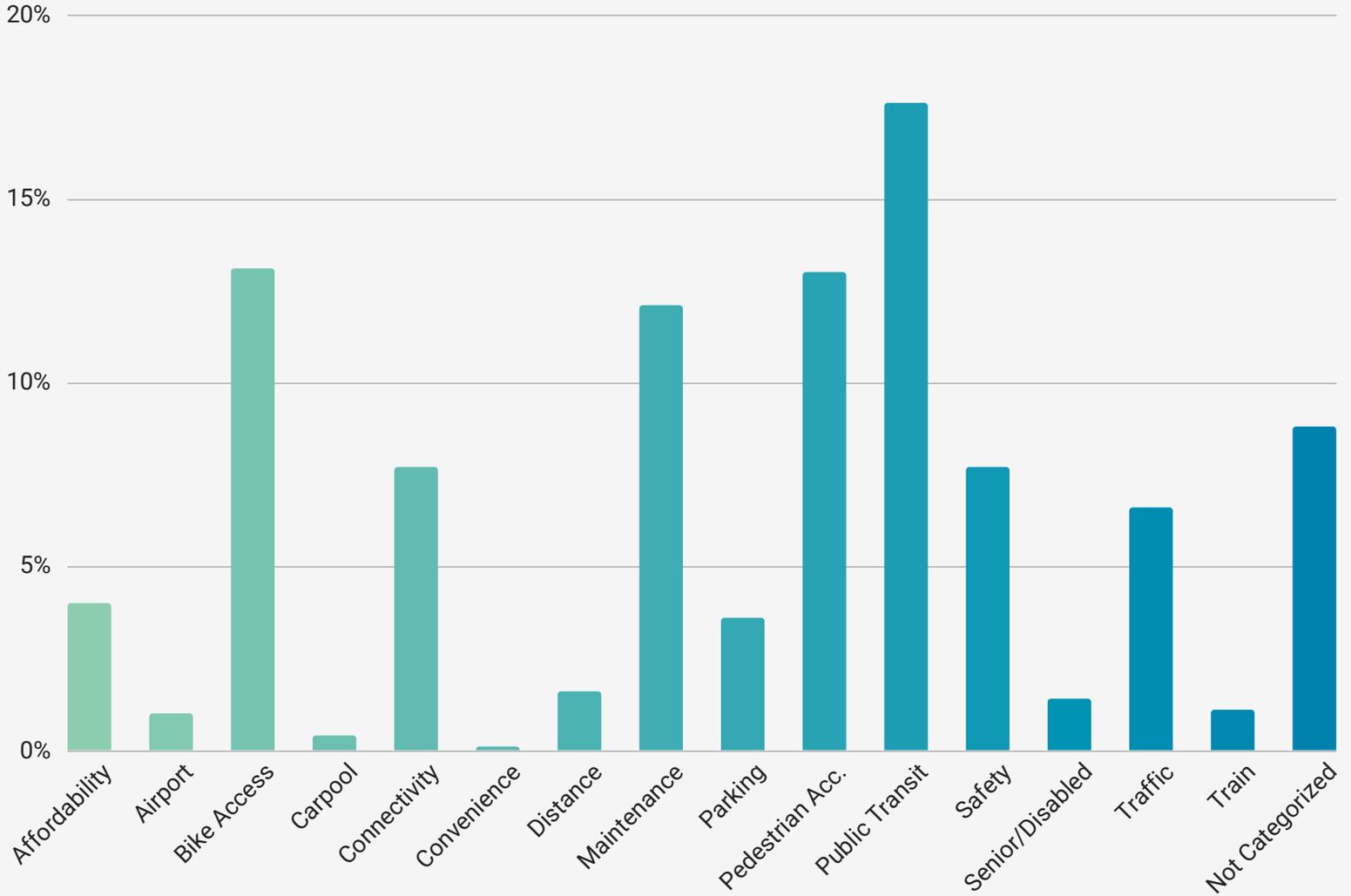


Primary means of transportation

Preferred means of transportation



Response Categories



Common Words

Bike
Lanes
Sidewalks
Bus
Traffic

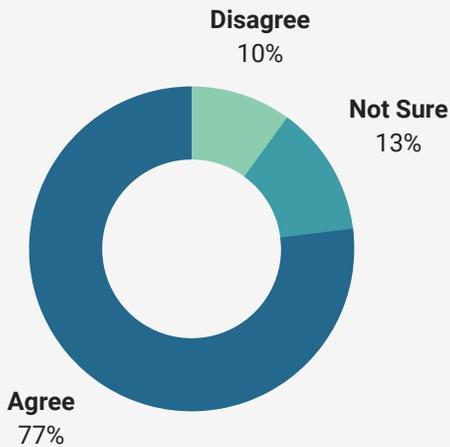
Top Category

Public Transit



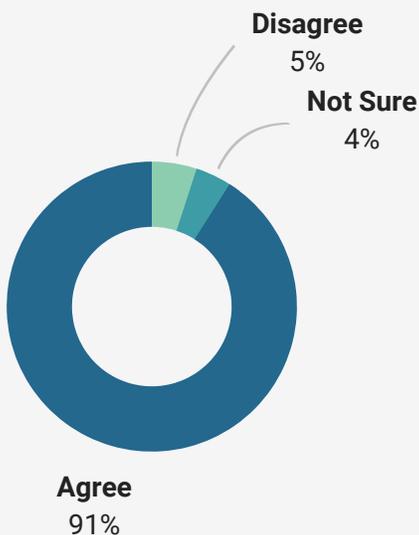
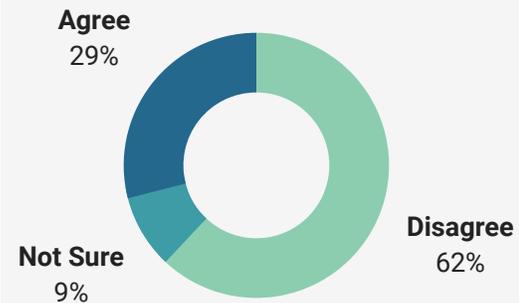
Public Transit Topics

Schedule
Routes
Access
Reliability
Connectivity

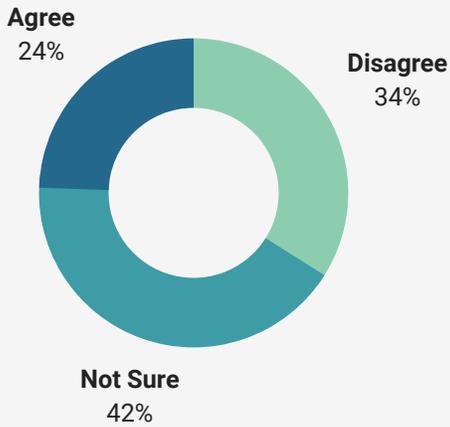


Most **AGREE** Roanoke has a healthy natural environment.

Most **DISAGREE** littering is **not** a problem.

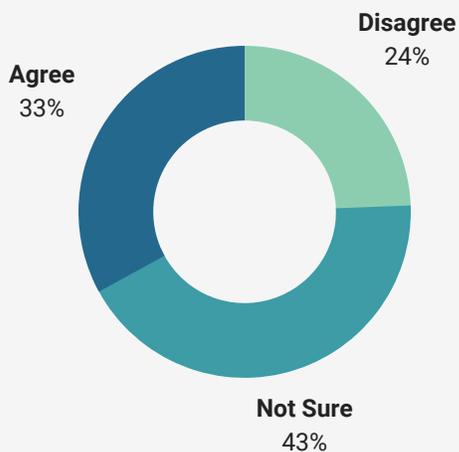
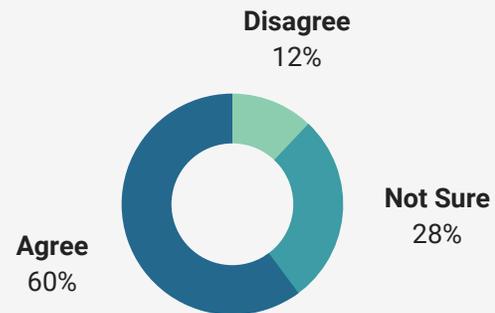


Most **AGREE** developing parks and recreation facilities are a good use of resources.

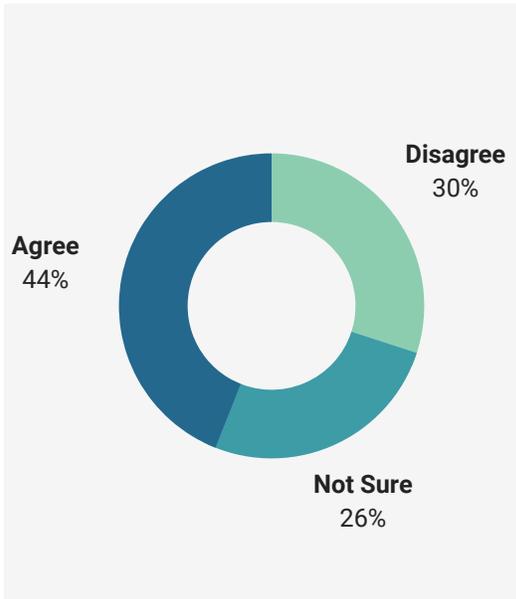


Most are **UNSURE** residents understand the importance of energy conservation.

Most **AGREE** the regional economy is likely to grow.

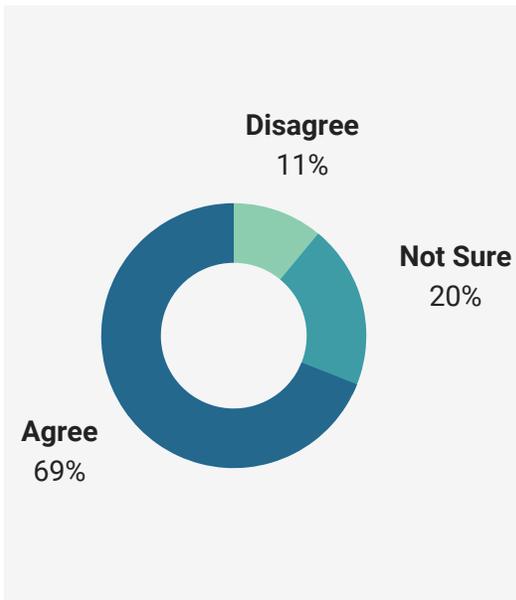
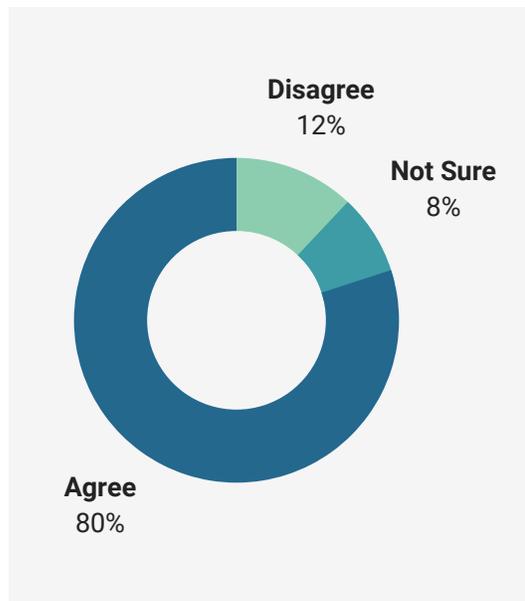


Most are **UNSURE** the regional economy can adapt if faced with downturn.



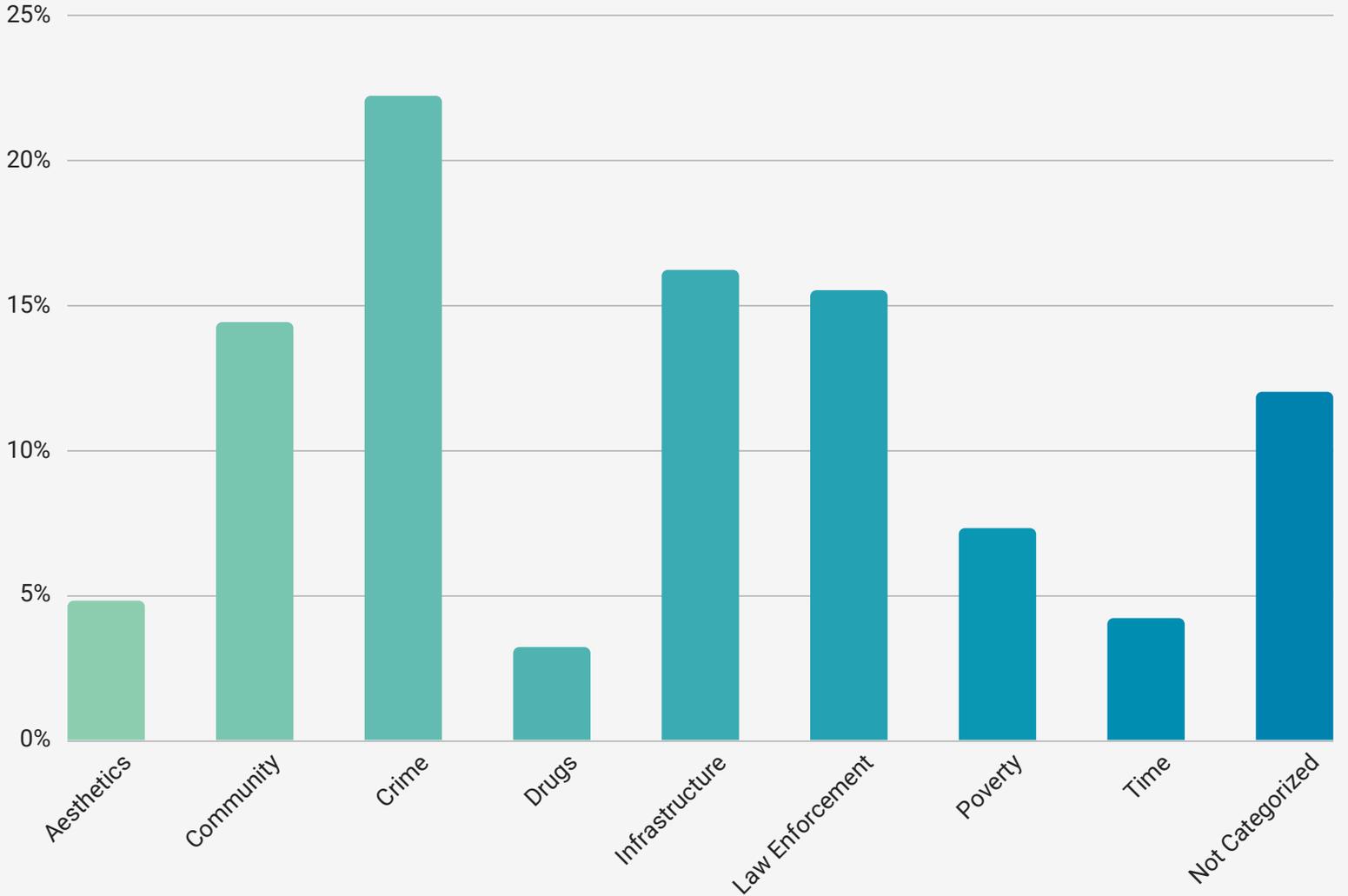
Most **AGREE** Roanoke is an inclusive community.

Most **AGREE** they feel safe in their neighborhood.



Most **AGREE** Roanoke is a great place to raise children.

Response Categories

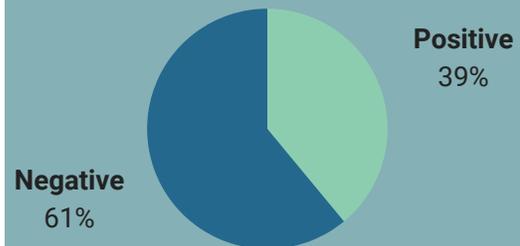


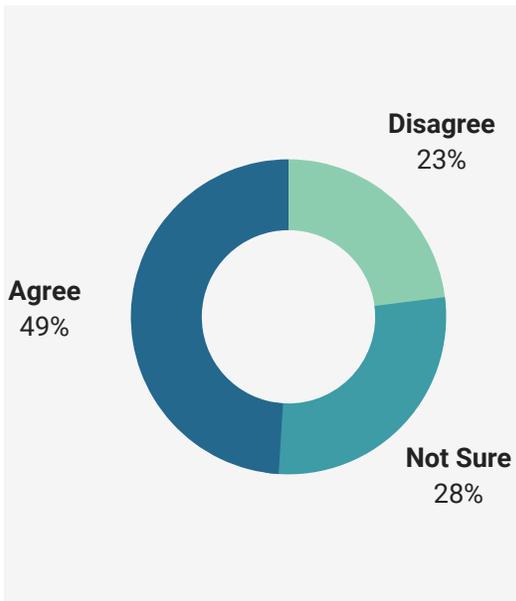
Common Words

Police
Crime
Neighborhood
People
Street

Top Category

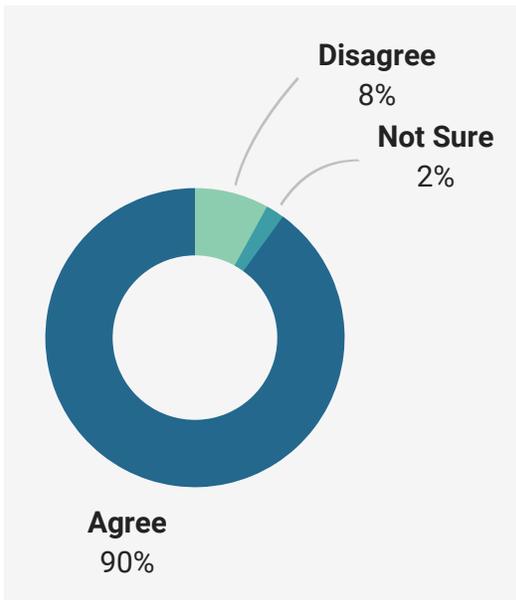
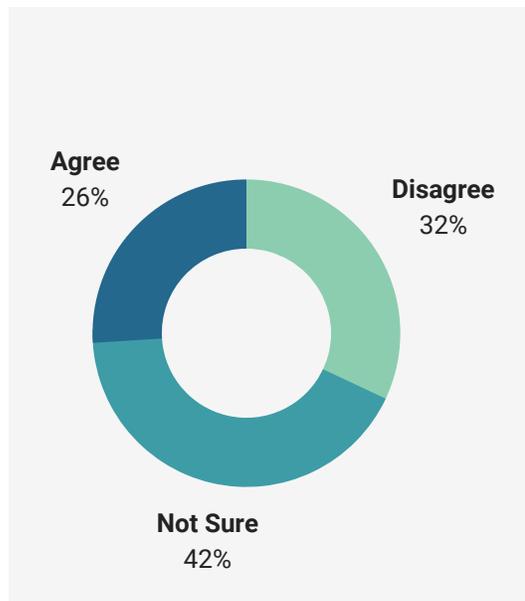
Crime



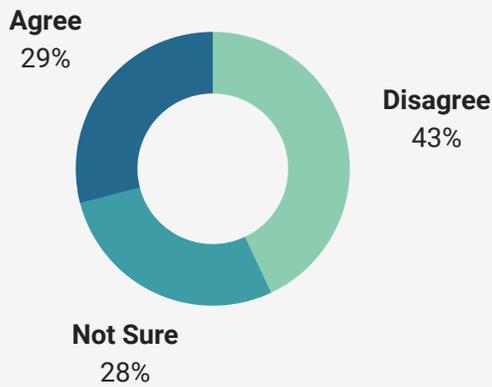


Most **AGREE** Roanoke provides quality educational opportunities.

Most are **UNSURE** Roanoke residents are healthy.

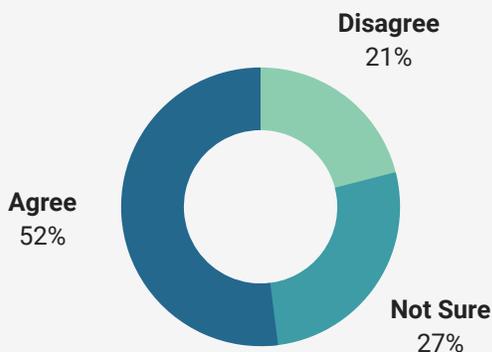
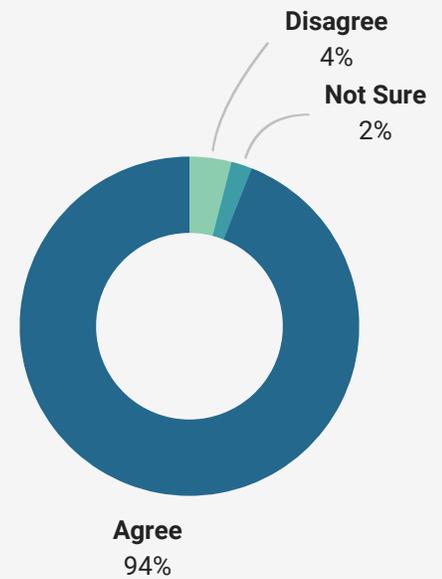


Most **AGREE** they have access to a grocery store and fresh food.



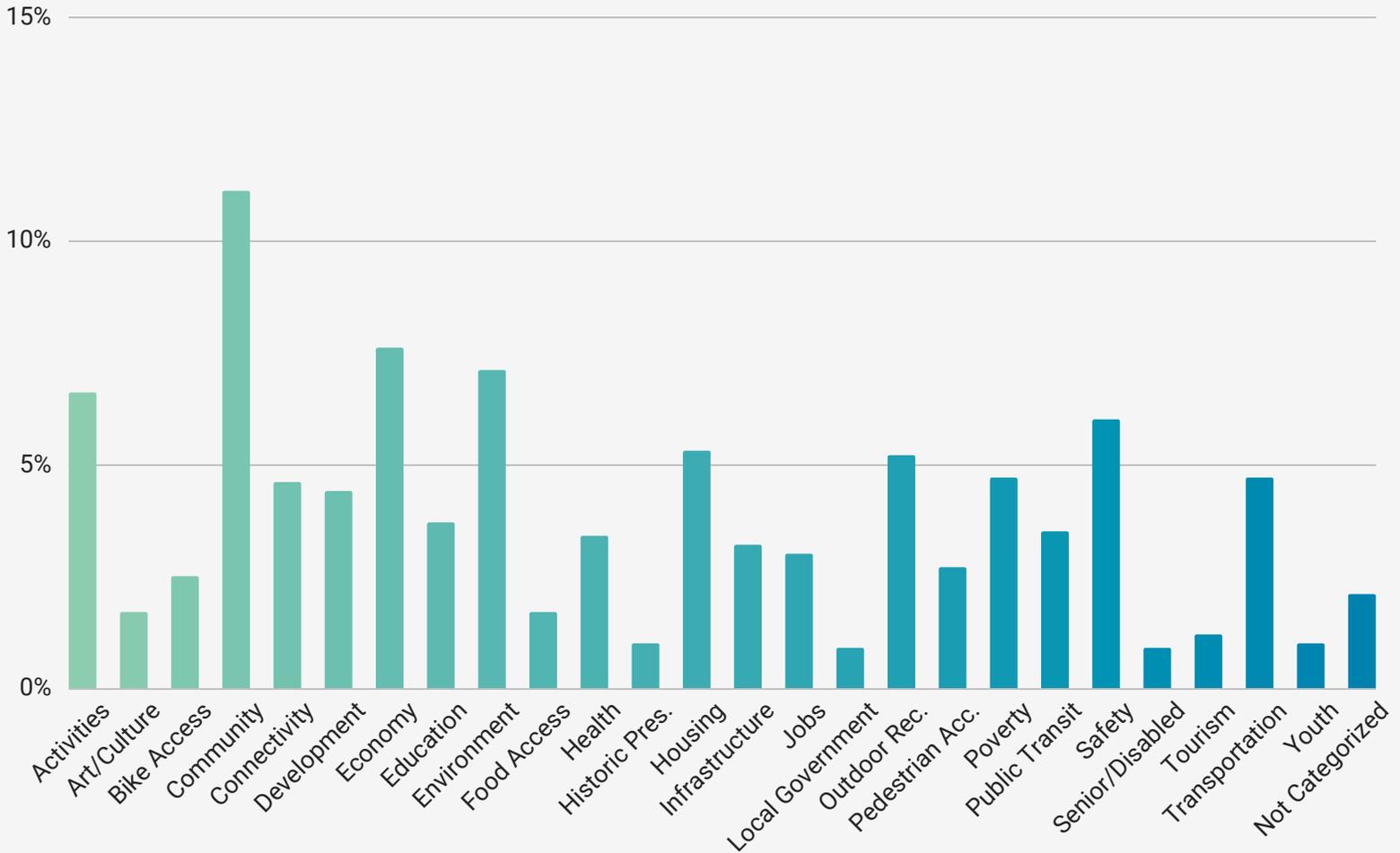
Most **DISAGREE** all residents have access to a grocery store and fresh food.

Most **AGREE** they have access to parks or recreation facilities.



Most **AGREE** all residents have access to parks or recreation facilities.

Response Categories

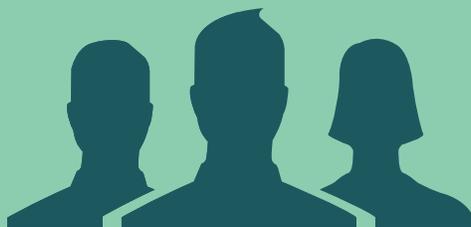


Common Words

Downtown
Housing
Public
Transportation
Neighborhoods

Top Category

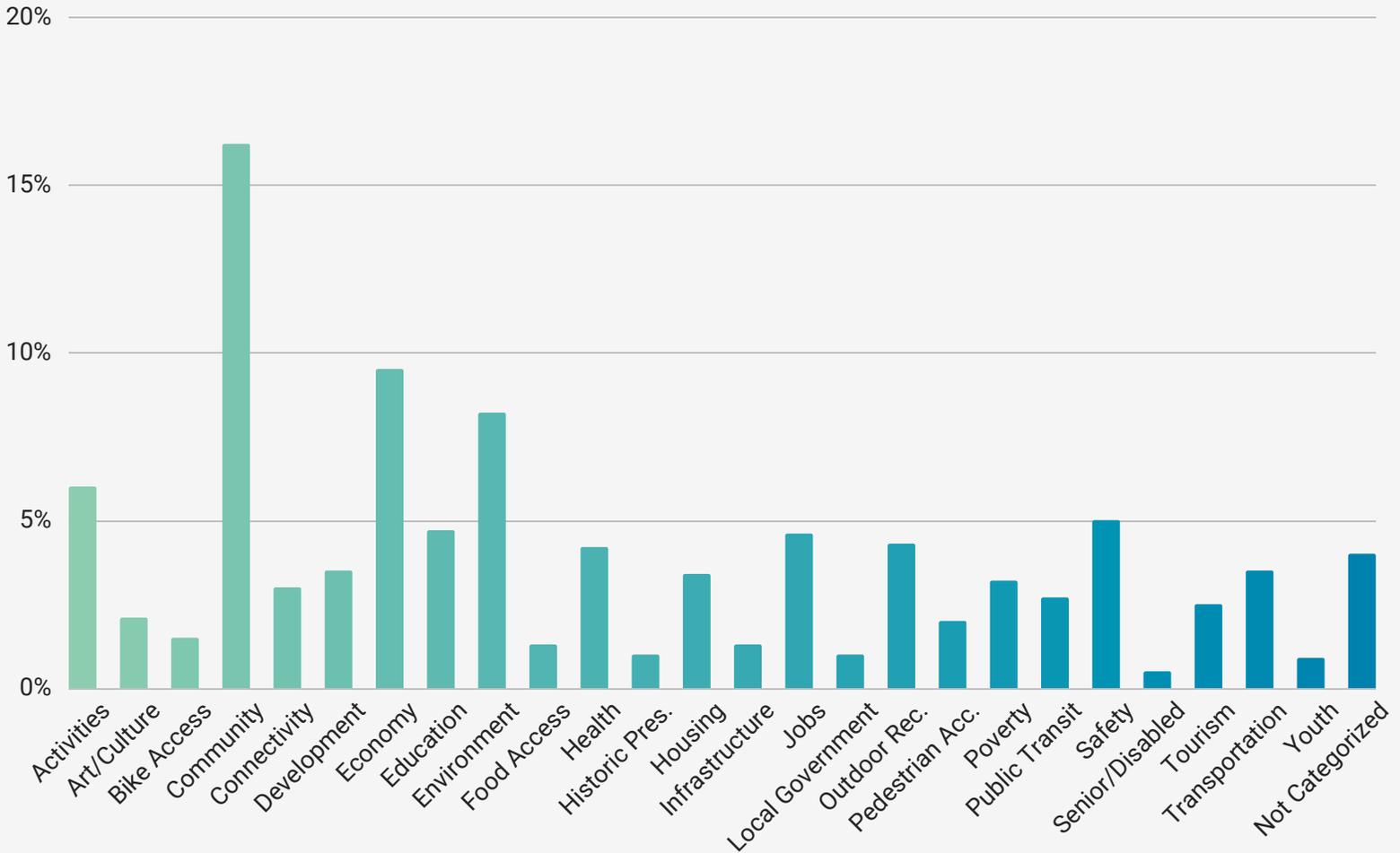
Community



Community Topics

Neighborhoods
Diversity
Family
Equity
Services

Response Categories

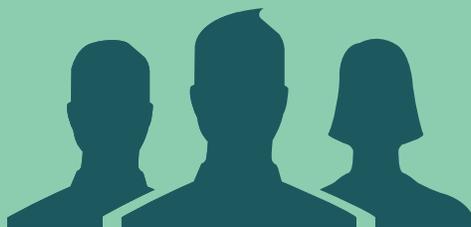


Common Words

Community
 People
 Opportunities
 Public
 Neighborhoods

Top Category

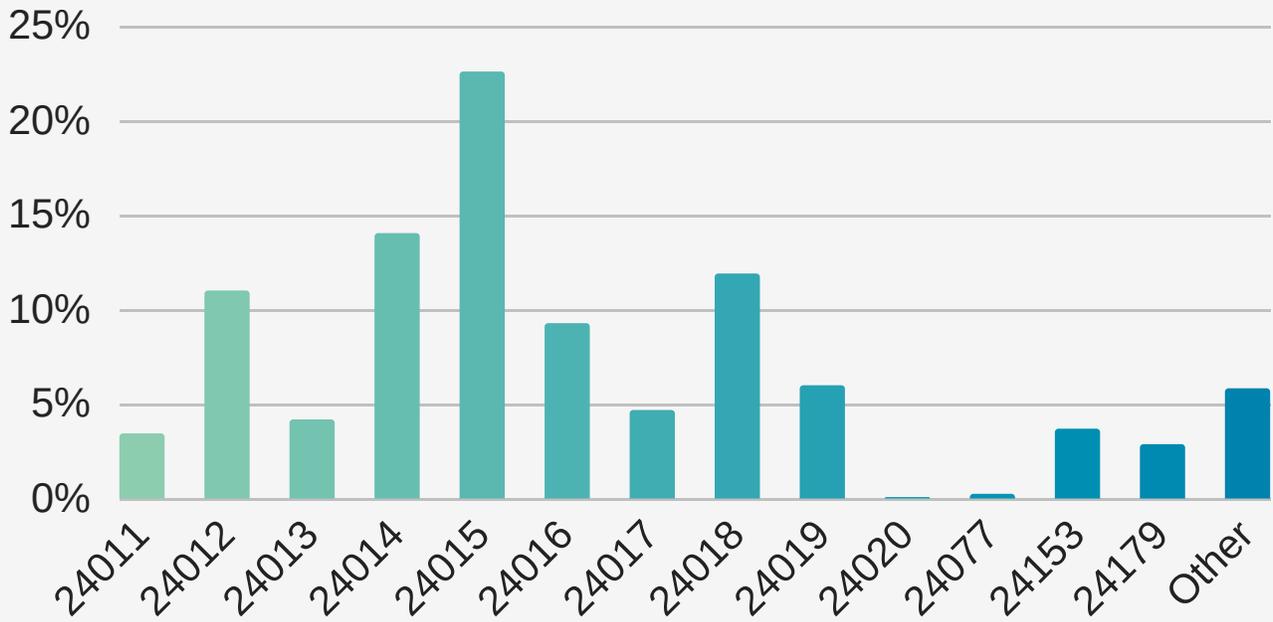
Community



Community Topics

Neighborhoods
 Diversity
 Family
 Equity
 Services

Respondent's zip code

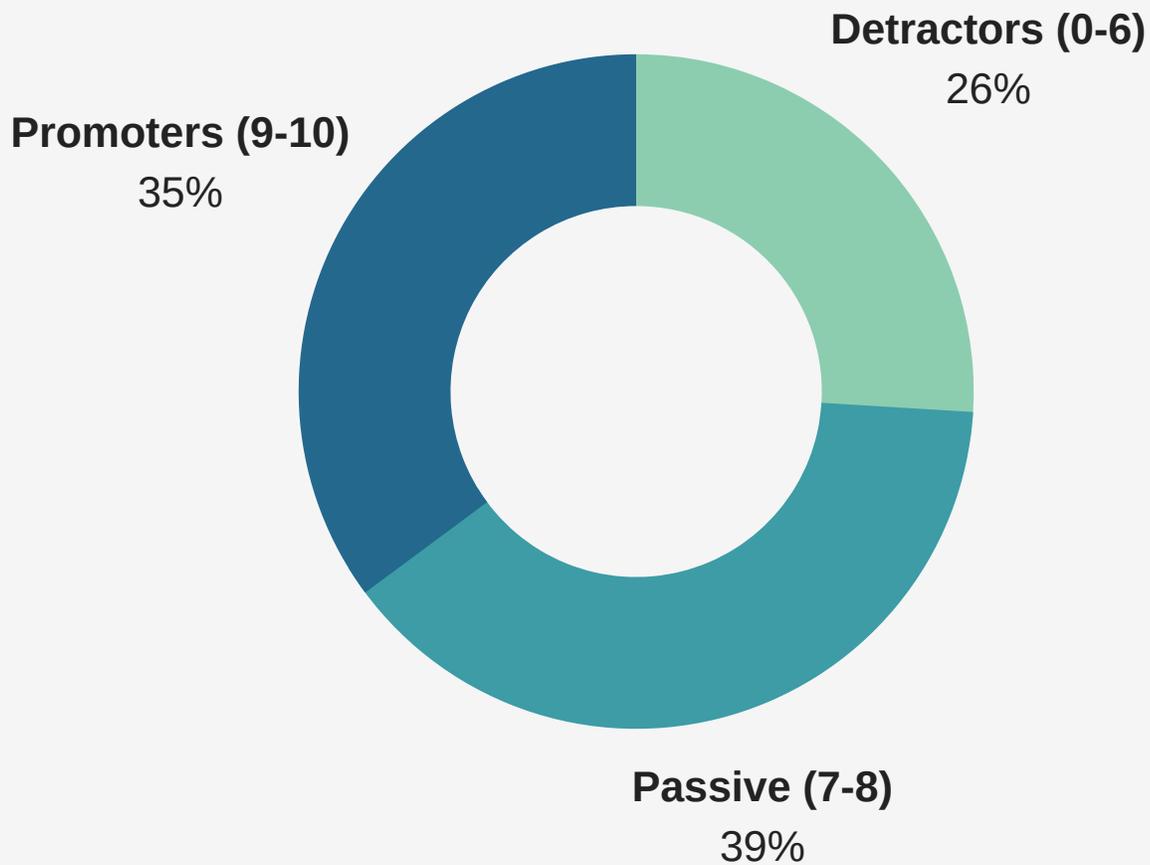


70%

Live in the
City

Work in the
City

63%



Most would

PASSIVELY

recommend the City of
Roanoke to others
(scale 1-10).

7.5

Average
Score



Findings

Community Needs

Open House meetings and survey responses aided in identifying and prioritizing means for addressing community needs. These outreach methods also helped to identify the community's vision for Roanoke's next 20 years.



Most said
Community

should be part of
2040's
Dream
Plan
& Vision

Residents are
concerned about
Health
Housing
& Economy

Priorities



Environment



Food
Access



Housing



Public
Transit



Connectivity



Economy

Top Categories

Community was the largest response category at 16.1%. Respondents highly valued the diversity found within the city and the friendly, inclusive nature of residents. The availability of amenities found within larger cities, while maintaining a small town feel was also important. The local culture and character was of interest to many. Respondents valued that Roanoke was a family oriented, safe, and cooperative community. Downtown and neighborhoods were mentioned in general terms, with specific comments on the City's revitalization efforts.

Arts and Culture represented 13.5% of responses. Libraries were a prominent resource for accessing art and culture within the community. Residents valued museums, cultural centers, and the general availability of art related opportunities throughout the city. Appreciation was shown for public art displays and the City's cultural diversity. Music, variety of foods, and festivals like Local Colors were also of interest.

12.8% of responses were categorized under outdoor recreation. Most responses focused on greenways and trails within the City. Access to mountains, hiking, the Blue Ride Parkway and the Appalachian Trail were meaningful to residents. Outdoor concerts and GO Fest were also mentioned.

Social activities were included in 12.6% of responses. Parks, breweries, restaurants, and shopping were all topics of interest. City events, programs, festivals, and concerts were valued social activities. Residents also appreciated recreation centers, library access, and parks and recreation events.

Selected Responses

Community

- "Like: low cost of living, green city, agriculture, clean air, diversity, low crime, education"*
- "Place where very little discrimination or racism, very supportive community, nurturing"*
- "Roanoke represents true values of "Virginia is for Lovers""*
- "Size of city allows for more opportunity to get involved and make change"*
- "Teamwork of residents and officials"*

Arts and Culture

- "A unique community character and local culture"*
- "Arts displayed throughout city"*
- "Arts opportunities - symphony, concerts"*
- "Roanoke Arts Commission's plan for more public art and art in general in funding!"*
- "Local colors"*
- "The arts!! The Taubman...Mill Mtn, Jefferson Center, Dumas)"*
- "Vibrant downtown: Elmwood Park Amphitheater"*

Outdoor Recreation

- "Connectivity- greenways provide for safe alternative transportation across the city"*
- "Go Fest"*
- "Love close by hiking and greenways"*
- "Mountains/Carvins Cover - Natural Beauty"*

Activities

- "City Neighborhood services and events"*
- "Free public computers and internet"*
- "Libraries and Parks and River"*
- "Like the events going on in Elmwood Park. Need to expand them into Downtowns."*
- "Playroanoke.com and parks and rec events"*
- "Really good restaurants!"*

Top Categories

The largest response category for the Change Board was community at 12.9%. Most community related responses centered around neighborhood improvements. A strong interest was placed on community centers with equally accessible amenities throughout the city. Services desired included better access to public transit and rail transportation, sidewalks, health and social services, Inclusion and diversity were also frequently mentioned. Focal points included: racial tolerance, access for handicapped and disabled individuals, and general acceptance for all walks of life. Many responses highlighted the need for equity, specifically in regards to economic opportunity and neighborhood resources.

The second largest category was public transit at 9.7%. Most comments focused on expanded bus routes and hours of service. Residents specifically requested Sunday bus service and later evening service hours. Bus routes extended into neighboring localities with connections to other alternative transportation options such as the Greenway were mentioned. Residents also requested benches and bus shelters at City bus stops.

7.1% of responses mentioned housing. The majority of housing related comments expressed a need for more housing choices, including: mixed income, mixed use, affordability, senior and disabled options. A need for homeless housing options was also expressed. Many had concern for code enforcement, revitalization of vacant properties, and renter protections.

Social activities represented 6.6% of responses. The largest portion of responses referenced activities for teens and kids, specifically, more after school activities beyond athletics. Many were interested in expanding activities related to arts and culture, combined with more event programming at City parks.

Education had the fifth highest percentage of responses at 6.1%. Most responses referenced some improvement to the public school system, including: connecting to sister cities through an international exchange program, a holistic approach to education, and preparation for standardized testing. The remainder of responses focused on increasing access to adult education. Educational opportunities for workforce development, trade and vocational school, and technology courses for seniors were noted.

Selected Responses

Community

- "Communities embracing those who live in the projects (Government housing)"*
- "An increased awareness, celebration of the unique characteristics and diversity of all the different neighborhoods in the city - increased dialog among different parts of the city."*
- "Ensuring our resources are shared equitably throughout the city!"*
- "All people should be welcomed and encouraged to live"*
- "Policies and procedures written with an Inclusive lens"*
- "Inter-generational Community Centers within walking distance to enhance neighborhood livability"*

Public Transit

- "More convenient and accessible bus schedules"*
- "Need more bus shelters (SE desperately needs them)"*
- "Extended hours of bus service"*
- "Expansion of bus route"*

Housing

- "Affordable housing and apartments"*
- "Better options: low income housing for disabled"*
- "Housing and Economic Development through increasing housing and employment opportunities and public assistance to the underprivileged"*
- "More mixed use, mixed income housing options"*
- "No homelessness (faster and immediate free housing will make us look good)"*

Activities

- "Increased culturally diverse festivals, restaurants and activities."*
- "I think Roanoke should have play festivals to bring out the best of local talents in the dramatic arts!"*
- "Racial healing and transformation through various city events: meals, conversations, collaboration and restorative work"*
- "After work hours, activities with parental involvement: sports, music, events"*

Education

- "More inclusion of higher education opportunities in area"*
- "Jobs: Job training (skilled); good pay; include minorities in computer technology, engineering, software, etc"*
- "More after school options for older students, or more mentors available to guide in better direction"*
- "Reintroduce vacation back into the education system"*

Top Categories

Environment was the top priority at 30.4%. Responses focused on renewable energy options, specifically solar powered energy. Recycling, tree planting, and improved cleanliness of waterways were all equally noted as priorities. Incorporation of wildlife protections and open space preservation policies were also highlighted as needs.

21.6% of responses mentioned outdoor recreation. Continued expansion and connection of the greenway system were included in the majority of responses, with a focus on equitable access. Several respondents suggested development of a campground within the City.

9.6% of responses were categorized under connectivity. The majority of responses focused on increasing greenway access including: connection to the Blue Ridge Parkway, expansion to surrounding cities and counties, and access for those with disabilities.

Activities were the fourth highest category at 6.4%. Responses centered on increasing the number of parks, with more options for children. There was also interest in increased river access and youth water recreation programs.

Selected Responses

Environment

"Recycling/composting; hold polluters accountable; clean energy; reduce traffic"

"Respecting and honoring wildlife"

"Have a minimum green quota for building (parking lots, e.g.)"

Outdoor Recreation

"Complete greenway systems, expand blueways, and grow residential access from 7% to 80%"

"Protect/add more open space by purchasing "campground""

"Working with low-income residents to learn about greenways, rivers, and other free opportunities"

"Advertising and promoting affordable opportunities through parks and rec. to increase usage"

Connectivity

"Better access to trails and equipment at parks for the disabled"

"Connect to Blue Ridge Parkway."

"More campgrounds with access to mountains and cities"

Activities

"Get more people in the river so they care about it - more kayak drops, more programs for kids."

"Make Roanoke a park with a city in it."

"More sensitization on the importance and the healthy impacts of exploring nature and the parks"

Top Categories

Food Access was the top priority for achieving a Healthy Community at 15.4%. The majority of responses focused on removing food deserts and providing healthy grocery options to all neighborhoods. Incorporation of nutritional education and healthy foods in schools was another priority, with an emphasis on support for local producers.

10.4% of respondents referenced education as a priority. Emphasizing health in the public school system was the most referenced topic, which included a focus on healthy local foods and physical activity. Other responses mentioned mental health education and bias training for those employed in health related fields.

Connectivity was mentioned in 9.3% of responses. The top priority was providing better access to healthy foods by integrating health into policy. Access to physical recreation through Greenway connectivity and expansion was also a point of interest.

8.8% of responses were categorized in community. These responses covered various topics, the overarching theme being unbiased treatment and equitable access to health related resources such as: food, community centers, mental health services, and safety personnel.

Activities were referenced in 7.1% of responses. The majority of responses mentioned increasing availability of parks, greenways, or parks and recreation programs. It was also suggested to provide inter-generational activities and free events at City parks.

Selected Responses

Food Access

"Cheaper and more available access to healthy food"

"Grocery options in SE and NW, especially Gainsboro and SE Belmont communities"

"Include local food/fresh produce access in schools"

Education

"Make Roanoke public schools the envy of the commonwealth."

"RC schools become a champion for safe routes to school; encourage children to bike and walk to school"

"Bias training for all healthcare city health employees"

Connectivity

"Continued bike and greenway expansions with focus on connecting more urban neighborhoods"

"More sidewalks/connectivity"

"A variety of healthy foods from other cultures, more public schools, access to public transportation"

Community

"Embracing all socio-economic walks of life as equal "

"More mental health services that are affordable without waiting lists and treat whole person not symptoms"

Activities

"Activities for integrating youth, adults and seniors physically and socially."

"Increase opportunities for self-directed recreation and traditional team sports"

"More parks and rec opportunities"

Top Categories

Public Transit was the top priority at 14.4%. All responses mentioned a need for improved bus service, with a vital need for longer evening hours and Sunday bus service. The need for expanded routes, bus shelters, and better access for impoverished residents were also mentioned

12% of responses mentioned activities. Most responses focused on the need for family activities through events, programming, and activity centers. Several comments suggested provision for greenway accessible businesses.

10.8% of responses were categorized in community. Responses highlighted a neighborhood centered approach. Recommended neighborhood improvements included: neighborhood hubs, connection to public transit and greenways, and sidewalks. Responses also concentrated on investment in family focused community development.

Arts and culture was the fourth highest category at 8.4%. Most responses appreciated public art initiatives and suggested expansion to the greenway and throughout all neighborhoods. Incentives for artists and an increase in art related educational opportunities were proposed.

Connectivity made up 7.2% of responses. Responses centered around full connection of public resources to all neighborhoods.

Outdoor Recreation was referenced in 6.6% of responses. Comments focused on continued development of greenway connections throughout neighborhoods, and in conjunction with main streets.

Selected Responses

Public Transit

"Accessibility to increase for impoverished to utilize buses (bus pass programs)"

"Better transportation, better hours, more options, more routes"

"Covered bus shelters"

"Expand bus service to county"

Activities

"Elmwood Park needs to be programmed better."

"More cost friendly family museums and activity centers (think kid's square) close in"

"Public meetups for physical activity and cultural conversations"

Arts and Culture

"Art in outside NW Roanoke like other neighborhoods"

"Art installations on the greenway"

"Arts District with incentives for individual artists"

Community

"Create neighborhood centers for health."

"Educating ourselves about the history of failed neighborhoods regaining trust"

"Growth of unique neighborhood hubs with access to healthy produce (grocery) healthcare and transportation"

Connectivity

"Connect current resources (Greenway, parks, neighborhoods)"

"Improved connectivity with greenways and main roads for bike/walk transportation"

"More businesses- Roanoke restaurants accessible to Greenway"

Outdoor Recreation

"Every neighborhood should connect to greenway system."

"More play houses for recreation, more play festivals, more access for bikers to public roads etc."

Top Categories

Housing was the top priority for Interwoven Equity at 27.4%. The largest portion of housing responses focused on a need for affordable housing options. Mixed-use and mixed-income housing options were also highlighted. More housing options were generally needed, including: smaller, senior, disabled, and homeless options. Aesthetic improvements and renter protections were also mentioned.

15.8% of responses were in the community category. Most comments revolved around building an inclusive and equitable community through outreach and communication. Suggestions were made for creating community centers and neighborhood hubs throughout the City. The need for better social programs to assist the homeless and those in poverty were also mentioned.

Education was referenced in 11.6% of responses. These responses focused on equitable public school improvements such as foreign language and inclusive after school activities. Vocational training and education for youth and adults was equally mentioned.

Addressing poverty was a top priority in 8.9% of responses. All of these responses addressed homelessness in some form. The main concern being new ways to house and provide work for homeless individuals.

The fourth largest category was activities at 8.1%. Responses focused on social activities and programs for all ages, races, and income levels.

Selected Responses

Housing

"Continue to invest in libraries, mixed-use development, and affordable housing"

"Job creation of homeless housing advocates (onbudsmans) who will immediately house homeless in their own section 8 house long term via affidavit (no document requirement)."

"Protection for renters from lead paint...and mold"

Community

"Better integration of social programs city needs - too many restrictions to provide family service."

"Develop cultural equity policy -Americans for the art example"

"Encourage diverse leadership in city government"

"Inter-generational community centers within walking distance to enhance neighborhoods"

Education

"Equity in quality of elementary schools"

"Expand job training resources and programs for youth and adults."

"Improve school to work paths"

Poverty

"Better services for the homeless population. Help them get involved. (E.g. a few cities are experimenting with hiring homeless people to pick up litter)."

"Police and sheriff task forces to house homeless in their own free house immediately without using HAT Teams which hurts in long run by making people look crazy behaviorally"

Activities

"Programs breaking down the barriers of cultures, religions, socio-economics, etc."

"Support integration by promoting and encouraging safe after-school activities for school age children"

Top Categories

The largest percentage of top priorities for Resilient Economy fell into the economy category with 23.1% of responses. Responses were evenly divided between interests in: job training, reinvestment and revitalization of older buildings, industry diversification, attracting new business, and providing incentives for business owners.

Jobs were the second largest category with 22.4% of responses. Most job related responses focused on less discrimination and equal opportunity employment for all individuals. The second major priority was an increase in wages and the need to bring in larger employers to provide higher paying jobs.

13.4% of responses referenced education. Responses focused on the need for job training and educational opportunities. These included a mix of trade and vocational schooling, as well as four year degree programs. Interest was shown in better utilizing and maintaining the City's partnership with Virginia Tech.

Community was the fourth largest category with 8.2% of responses. Community responses spanned various topics including: incentives for employers to invest in community projects, equitable development, and creation of neighborhood centers.

Selected Responses

Economy

"Grow business and economic investment incentives for minority business owners and developers-ensure equitable sharing of resources"

"Attract small businesses rather than large corporations that leave cities destitute when they decide to move"

"Workforce development, economic opportunity for all residents, not all growth is positive - prioritize SMART sustainable growth, local food production"

Jobs

"Equal employment opportunities for all races"

"Jobs that bring in big businesses to increase the pay/well-being of the workers here"

"Make jobs more fun for grown ups, get paid more"

"Job/employment initiatives for ex-offenders"

Education

"Continue to improve education quality and opportunities - partner with Virginia tech to fill education needs in region"

"Entrepreneurial training/education for youth/young adults"

"Re-use old industrial buildings to complexes as businesses to education centers - not lofts"

Community

"Effective economic incentives for reinvestment in older commercial, industrial and neighborhood centers"

"Invest in opportunity zone strategies"

"Big enough (and more) grants for arts, businesses, non profits, and individuals"

Top Categories

Connectivity was the largest category at 31.5%. The majority of responses referenced creating partnerships with, and connecting transportation to surrounding cities and counties. Comments recommended a regional approach to tourism and outdoor recreation.

Transportation comments made up 15.7% of responses. Increased train and air travel options were most commonly mentioned. General regional transportation connections and increased parking options were also noted.

11.8% of topics mentioned public transit as a priority. Responses centered on expansion of public transit routes to connect to surrounding cities and counties.

Selected Responses

Connectivity

"Make major regional connecting streets (419, 221, 460) into more attractive complete streets"

"More access to/from areas outside Roanoke (airlines and more Amtrak stops)"

"More cooperation with county, Salem, Vinton, etc."

"Work toward making Roanoke Regional airport a hub!"

Transportation

"Clean energy/ transportation"

"More Amtrak departures"

"ROA to become international airport"

Public Transit

"Buses that go into Salem, Vinton and Garden City not just the outskirts"

"Roanoke County bus line extensions connecting Hollins to County with the city"

Top Categories

Community was mentioned in 18.4% of responses. The largest portion of responses focused on maintaining a diverse, inclusive community with equitable access to opportunities and resources. Residents wanted a city that focused on provision of community resources and services to all neighborhoods. While residents wanted more amenities, they still wanted to maintain the small town feel and sense of community that Roanoke provides. Health and safety were also notable topics.

8.3% of responses were categorized under social activities. Many envisioned Roanoke as a cultural hub for tourism in 2040. Respondents mentioned the need for more inclusive and affordable social activities. Individuals wanted more activities like: festivals, sporting events, concerts, and performance art shows. Places of interest included: restaurants, breweries, shopping centers, parks and schools.

Environment included 7.4% of responses. Most respondents referenced preserving and expanding green spaces. Having a healthy, clean environment through sustainable practices was also envisioned. Residents wanted to see improved recycling, and a push for alternative energy and transportation options.

Selected Responses

Community

"A diverse and compassionate, affordable, safe, healthy city with a vibrant community and close connection to the outdoors."

"A culturally diverse community, that values equity, environment and future generations."

"Growing city that values arts and industry; cultural hub of SWVA, a city where all have an opportunity at success no matter socio-economic status; safe, family, friendly, innovative"

"Make all 5 quadrants feel included and equally valued."

"A thriving, active, healthy, inclusive, kind and safe community with trees and green space, clean air and water, where opportunities for a well-balance lifestyle and livable wage abound."

"An inclusive community over all!! Roanoke is still extremely segregated in housing, restaurants, craft breweries."

"An inclusive community that tells its full history and heals wounds of the past as it moves forward"

"More shelters for the homeless; better service for the homeless; don't let any homeless person be left out of service; no homeless person should be turned away"

Activities

"I want to see Roanoke become a major cultural hub for the whole of Virginia and a big tourist attraction as well in the next 20 years."

"Roads will be filled with people walking and bicycling to cultural/village hubs."

"A welcoming and multi-cultural city that provides intentional events and opportunities, that attract and provide access to all residents."

"Culturally diverse and accepted influencer of surrounding areas, able to attract sports and culture, economically sound and growing, high tech."

Environment

"Pacesetter for alternative energy application and use."

"A thriving, active, healthy, inclusive, kind and safe community with trees and greenspace, clean air and water, where opportunities for a well-balance lifestyle and livable wage abound."

"A vibrant walkable green city focused on preserving the natural environment and celebrating the diversity of its residents while providing outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike."

"Great tree canopy, more greenways, less emphasis on beer, healthy people, less poverty, bigger libraries with longer hours."

"Healthier city with easy access around city and continued emphasis on green spaces and outdoor recreation."

Top Categories

The top strength was outdoor recreation at 24.3%. Most comments generally stated outdoor activities or outdoor recreation. Specifically mentioned activities included: hiking, mountain biking, boating, and fishing. Greenways were a close second. Greenways were often mentioned in conjunction with parks and trails. The remaining comments generally referenced natural assets like mountains and the Roanoke River. Access to the Blue Ridge Parkway was also noted as a strength.

15.1% of responses remained uncategorized. Several uncategorized comments saw Roanoke as having no strengths or still in need of improvement. Some comments had the opposite opinion, stating that all options were strengths. The remaining comments varied from smiley faces to the City's general stability.

13.2% of responses mentioned Roanoke's location. The majority of comments saw Roanoke's natural beauty as a strength, which included its proximity to mountains, the river, and tree coverage. The remaining comments mentioned low cost of living and the City's small size.

Community represented 10.5% of responses. Respondents found their fellow residents to be strength. Individuals appreciated the diversity, cooperation, and welcoming nature of their community members. It was noted that the City's segregated nature detracted from its strength in diversity.

Art and culture had the fifth highest percentage of responses at 9.2%. Art and culture were largely mentioned in general terms, but appreciation for music, libraries, and performance arts were mentioned.

Selected Responses

Outdoor Recreation

"Convenient to several scenic outdoor activities: hiking, kayaking, fishing etc."

"Climate, cost of living, mountains, waterways, green ways, trails, sports facilities are all great strengths and should be enhanced as much as possible."

"Small enough for hometown feel, yet big enough to offer a wide variety of shopping, outdoor, entertainment and cultural opportunities."

"Roanoke's identity is outdoors, healthcare and beer."

"The Greenway and all of the parks are huge assets."

Not Categorized

"All above listed options are static or improving slowly."

"I don't see Roanoke lacking in any respect."

"Generational stability"

Location

"Cost of living; proximity to the parkway."

"Charm and natural beauty"

"A river that is underutilized and runs right through the city"

Community

"The community's willingness to work together"

"Neighborhood Development and Cooperation"

"We have a diverse population, but we also have defacto segregation, so the diversity isn't as much a strength as it could be"

"Citizen pride"

"Citizen services and social services for those who need help"

"Welcoming place for immigrants"

Art and Culture

"Thriving arts/music community and a vibrant city market."

"Excellent music, performing arts and culture"

"Cultural organizations"

Top Categories

The highest percentage of comments fell into the community category with 20.9% of responses. The three biggest challenges were inclusion, segregation, and services. Many felt Roanoke was struggling to include its poorest residents, with specific mentions of the homeless and public housing communities. Of equal concern was segregation, mainly among races, but also classes. Provision of adequate neighborhood and social services to all residents was a considerable challenge. Few respondents felt that services were being provided in excess. Roanoke's inability to embrace change was another concern. Respondents felt that more connection needed to be made between citizens and local government. Some individuals felt their voices and concerns were not being heard by the City. Creating equity for struggling areas of the community were also considered a challenge.

Poverty was the second largest category with 13.6% of responses. Poverty and homelessness were the two biggest challenges. Both of these topics were mentioned in general terms. Respondents cited panhandling less frequently and in separate terms from homelessness. Lastly, comments noted the need for affordability of necessities to coincide with the cost of living.

11.9% of responses referenced social activities. Restaurant and shopping options were the most commonly mentioned topics. The remainder of comments generally mentioned activities, events, and entertainment. Some specifics included inter-generational activities, nightlife, and social activities outside of pets and alcohol.

Selected Responses

Community

"Race relations"

"More free events for children and their family's, it is expensive to go to some events when people have more than one child"

"School quality, equity, and safety"

"Wage/Cost of living not equal."

"Poverty, lack of diversity within neighborhoods"

"Inability to change to create growth in neighborhoods and business."

"Segregation"

"While Roanoke has a diverse population it is segregated and we need to spend more time bringing people together."

"Too few people have the opportunity to have their voices heard."

Poverty

"Homeless/crime/panhandling"

"Generational poverty that puts youth at risk, opioid crisis"

"Economic difficulty in housing and transportation for single parent families, homeless, and people who have suffered tragedies."

"Care and inclusion of the homeless community"

Activities

"More free events for children and their families, it is expensive to go to some events when people have more than one child."

"An amusement park would be great!"

"Lack of restaurants and shopping"

"Shopping/things to do downtown - need investments in some of the downtown buildings in order to bring some unique shopping/dining options to the region."

"Stuff to do that doesn't involve beer & dogs"

Top Categories

Public transit was the biggest barrier to respondents' preferred mode of transportation at 17.6%. Bus routes were the most commonly mentioned topic. Most respondents felt the bus routes needed to be extended to more areas within the City as well as connected localities. After routes, the bus schedule was the second largest barrier. Respondents felt the bus schedule was too limited and in vital need of extended evening hours and Sunday service hours. A considerable amount of comments noted that public transit was generally lacking and needed improvement. Convenience, access, and time were similarly mentioned in numbers. Many felt access could be improved through an increase in quality and quantity of bus stops, with better options for those with disabilities. Respondents also felt the bus system was too complex or confusing. Others had concerns about safety and the stigma surrounding public transit. Other suggestions included addition of a light rail system and more payment options for Valley Metro.

13.1% of responses were in the bike access category. The majority of comments noted the need for improvements in the quality and quantity of bike lanes throughout the City. Concerns about safety were the second largest barrier. The overall attitude of drivers towards cyclists and lack of driver education about sharing the road were a factor. Respondents also felt unsafe due to the general lack of bike infrastructure, including bike racks. Challenging topography was also mentioned.

Pedestrian access was referenced in 13.0% of responses. The greatest portion of responses mentioned the need for improved, and additional sidewalks. Similar to bike access, safety was the second largest barrier. Again, individuals were concerned about driver attitudes and driver education regarding pedestrian right-of-ways and crosswalks. General lack of pedestrian friendly infrastructure was mentioned, as well as better greenway connections.

Maintenance was a top priority in 12.1% of responses. Most responses felt the condition of City roads were a barrier. Potholes were commonly mentioned with generally poor road conditions. Congestion and traffic were the second largest topic, followed by construction. Specific roads mentioned included: 460, I-81, 220, 419, and I-581. Widening of roadways and additional lanes were proposed. The general need for improved infrastructure and safety were also mentioned.

Selected Responses

Public Transit

"The weekend hours could also be longer so that we can ride downtown to dinner and back without worrying about a DD."

"Valley metro buses can only fit 2 wheelchairs on each bus and they do not always have bus stops that are accessible."

"The system is archaic, every city council member should try to figure out how to get from home to work to Walmart and back home."

"Concerns about public safety, maintenance of sidewalks in my neighborhood and complexity of public transit schedule between my home and place of employment."

"Current approach to transit (Campbell Court hub) makes it difficult to go from one place to another without going downtown."

"Length of time to get from A to B using the transit system, poorly marked bus stops, no shelters at bus stops, and short hours of operation for buses."

"Payment type, not enough areas covered and not fast enough."

Bike Access

"I believe the bicycle infrastructure, including bike paths, bike lanes, availability of bike racks, and education of drivers regarding sharing the road with bicycles should be improved."

"I would actually love to bike more places but many streets are too dangerous and not currently connected by greenway trails."

"Many bike lanes are also parking lanes, which forces me to weave in and out of the bike lane and into traffic to avoid parked cars."

"Seeing people's attitudes towards bikers and also widespread poor driving skills, I personally do not feel safe cycling on the road with cars."

Pedestrian Access

"Walking is at your own risk in the city of Roanoke."

"Unsafe conditions: sidewalks that end, speeding traffic, lack of driver awareness, feels uncomfortable at night time in certain areas."

"I live in SE where it's not always safe to walk & sidewalks are a mess & littered with trash."

"I am enjoying that sidewalks are being added, widened in some places, and handicap ramps on the corners being added to old sidewalks."

"Although more crosswalks have been painted recently, the public's lack of knowledge or caring makes the crosswalks pretty much void."

"Greenway is great but isn't well lit after dark or early in the morning."

Selected Responses

Maintenance

"All the current construction that is taking way too long. "

"Most of the roads in Roanoke need to be repaved!!! Too many potholes & asphalt that is old & has broken apart!!! The majority of alleys in Roanoke need to be surface treated at least so the gravel won't wash away!!!"

"I-73 needs to be completed and I-81 needs to be widened."

"The roads in NORTHWEST ROANOKE continue to be torn up by outside (not city nor VDOT) contractors who simply patch their damage and no one takes care of repair."

Top Categories

Crime was the biggest factor that affected safety at 22.2%. Most responses generally mentioned crime or the crime rate. Concern over violence or violent crimes were the second largest safety factor. Most of these responses mentioned gun violence or shootings. The third largest topic specifically mentioned low crime rates. Theft and break-ins were another prominent factor. The remaining comments addressed gang activity and poverty. Poverty was noted as a precursor to criminal activity.

16.2% of respondents referenced infrastructure as a priority. Most comments mentioned lighting. There is a vital need for improved street lighting throughout the city. Traffic was the second largest category. Vehicle related traffic responses included both positive sentiments about low traffic and negative sentiments regarding excess traffic. Pedestrian foot traffic was seen as both positive and negative depending on whether individuals were neighborhood residents. Sidewalks were the third largest safety factor. Respondents noted both the presence and condition of public sidewalks. Speeding motor vehicles were another notable concern. The remaining comments mentioned provision of services, time of day, and general infrastructure.

Law enforcement was mentioned in 15.5% of responses. The largest number of respondents saw visibility and presence of law enforcement as a positive safety factor. Low police presence was mentioned in both positive and negative terms. The second largest topic of responses mentioned law enforcement lacking in some respect. Various concerns were mentioned including lack of enforcement and racial bias. The third largest topic was patrols. Patrols were generally mentioned positively, though many felt the number could be increased. Community engaged law enforcement was another notable topic. Individuals appreciated friendly neighborhood police officers that maintain good community relations. It was generally preferred that police patrol on foot rather than by vehicle. Respondents mentioned both fast and slow response times from law enforcement as a safety factor.

14.4% of responses were categorized in community. People were the largest safety factor. Individuals noted that they knew and trusted their neighbors, and seeing people out walking positively affected their sense of safety. Safety was also neighborhood specific. Respondents' sense of safety varied based on their location within the city. Many felt safe in their own neighborhoods, but did not feel safe in other parts of town. Individuals also appreciated having neighbors that were involved in community activities and programs. Inclusion was a notable concern. While some respondents noted they felt included within the community, most responses referenced a lack of inclusion. Many felt racial inclusion and integration needed to be improved. Several comments generally mentioned sense of community as a safety factor.

Selected Responses

Crime

"Drug epidemic (the rise of opioids and heroin leads vulnerable addicts to turn to crime), lack of coordination of resources for the poor or homeless leads to vagrancy in the downtown area."

"Lower localized crime rates, less reported criminal activity, observing local PD and residence working together and safer schools."

"Crime, due to lack of economic opportunity for everyone; also, lack of safe transportation infrastructure, and places to recreate."

"I think we need to do more about gangs in our area, and not talking about it makes it worse."

"There have been shootings close by in the last year and previous years."

"I feel safe for the most part, but there seems to be crime in just about every neighborhood."

Infrastructure

"Street lights, visibility of police cars in my neighborhood, low speed limits, pedestrian crosswalks."

"Closeness of emergency services, community-building features like sidewalks."

"Street lighting, maintained properties, clean sidewalks, police presence, public spaces."

"I normally feel safe just about anywhere, but lighting and other people being on the streets makes me feel safer."

Law Enforcement

"Presence of police and regular patrols, lighting (my own plus street lighting), and community involvement by the police (i wish we knew our fire police and rescue folks better)"

"Gun Violence and robbery, and the police paying more attention to the cosmetics of the force and using fear rather than taking care of its community and protecting it."

"Slow police response, homeless population with nowhere to go, lack of rehab or mental health facilities for drug addicts and those suffering from mental illness."

"Seeing officers walking and communicating with people instead of just cruising in their cars."

"Roanoke City Police appears to pick and choose who they protect and who they respect. Officers disrespect minorities."

Community

"Sense of community feel and watching out for one another among neighbors."

"When residents feel that they can barely survive, we can't then expect them to consider the bigger picture, or have regard for the community as a whole."

"I am a queer woman. I feel comfortable holding the hand of my partner in some areas (Raleigh Court, Gainesboro), but ostracized and ridiculed in others (Cave Spring)."

"Roanoke is a segregated city and there are very few truly diverse neighborhood. In many areas, I'm often the only person of color."

"Friendly neighborhood that is welcoming of people with varying income and cultural backgrounds and watches out for each other"

Top Categories

Community was the top response category at 11.1%. The largest number of responses referenced the need for equity within the City. Respondents felt that all neighborhoods and residents should be recognized and have equitable access to resources such as: safety, funding, food, green spaces, opportunity, and overall good quality of life. Community services and neighborhood development were equally mentioned, closely behind equity. Respondents mainly wanted to see revitalization of weakened neighborhoods, but also mentioned community bolstering improvements for all areas. Improvements suggested included: pedestrian scale infrastructure, stormwater management, and better housing options. Service improvements and resources suggested included: homeless support, education, social programs, public safety, emergency services, infrastructure, public transportation, and health services. Inclusion, integration, connection, and healing were also significant topics. Respondents noted that while the Roanoke is diverse, it is largely segregated by race and class. For Plan 2040, individuals wanted to see greater effort made to include all residents through better connection of neighborhoods and community relations. There was interest in further development of community centers in various forms including: youth, recreation, technology, and village centers.

7.6% of responses mentioned economy. Most comments wanted to see economic growth in Plan 2040. Growth was generally mentioned, with some comments specifying job growth. Respondents wanted to see new and diverse businesses coming to the city. Some comments specified moving away from healthcare and breweries, and incorporation of research and tech fields. There was also strong interest in a localized economy through small business development. Incentives and quality of life improvements were recommended for attracting new business to the area. Respondents also wanted economic development to address equitable access to economic growth and opportunity for all residents.

7.1% of responses were categorized in environment. Most felt general cleanup of trash and litter throughout the city needed to be addressed. Clean waterways were a particular point of interest for both potable water as well as outdoor recreation. Closely behind cleanliness, respondents wanted further protection and development of green spaces throughout the City. Natural resources like the mountains and river were seen as valuable assets to the City. Alternative energy and alternative forms of transportation were also points of interest. A move towards sustainable energy sources like solar power and general energy conservation were recommended. Expanding public transit along with greenways and sidewalks were suggested to allow for less automobile dependency. The remaining comments generally wanted to see a greener, more environmentally sustainable Roanoke.

Top Categories

Activities were the fourth largest category at 6.6%. A large portion of individuals wanted to see park improvements. Respondents wanted to see more public spaces and types of parks, like skate parks. More City programmed events and activities were recommended for public spaces. Individuals wanted more: outdoor activities, sports, shopping, restaurants, youth and elder programs, inter-generational activities, concerts and events, and cultural programs. Increasing access for these activities were also important. Comments noted that better marketing and education about social events could be achieved, in addition to making them more inclusive.

Safety made up 6.0% of responses. Most responses generally mentioned public safety. The more specific comments mentioned drugs as a large concern. The police were mentioned closely behind drugs. Several comments only stated the police without positive or negative indication. Some specific points wanted to see improved visibility, response times, funding, and community relations. Others felt less policing was needed. Gangs, violence, and general crime were also notable concerns. Respondents wanted safer transportation through infrastructure improvements, and safer neighborhoods and housing through renter protections.

Selected Responses

Community

"Appreciation for cultural diversity and somehow aiding neighborhoods in mixing better (there are obvious racial divides)"

"These are historical and systemic issues, and I hope that the comprehensive plan will transparently and openly address inequity and inequality."

"Inclusion of all residents in an intentional manner through policies and procedures written through an inclusive lens."

"Increasing affordable housing opportunities and inclusion of individuals of all walks of life, ethnicity, income levels and races."

Economy

"...rehabilitation of the decaying old buildings in downtown, either to offer exceptional financing incentives to local small businesses or to re-purpose for community facilities like Center In The Square."

"Economic opportunities for young populations; work to include all populations - I think a lot of effort is placed into being inclusive, but more education and outreach efforts are needed."

"Focusing on building the "tech" industry so we don't rely so much on the medical and health fields."

"Economic development and employment opportunity growth for individuals with various levels of education."

"Lower cost and more options from the Airport to help attract new businesses and more jobs."

"If its possible to tap into the research coming out of VT for start ups..."

Selected Responses

Environment

"Innovation in sustainability and clean energy."

"Improved water quality in the Roanoke River and access to the river as a recreational resource."

"Reduce pollution, PROMOTE (or mandate) RECYCLING, preserve natural resources..."

"A long term water filtration system plan since it was designed before everyone started using prescription drugs and the one we currently have does not filter out those particles."

Activities

"Create easier access to local business, parks, recreation & other community resources for residents & tourist."

"...take more advantage of the Roanoke River (for recreation and commerce--Restaurants on the waterfront--Riverwalk)"

"More diverse food and beverage places for downtown....seems like there's too many places to drink alcohol and less fun things..."

"Giving residents more knowledge about the amenities available including parks, greenways and natural resources."

"Provide us with a gorgeous, family-friendly, cutting edge, place to be for shopping, dining, and entertainment."

Safety

"Opioid/Methamphetamine epidemic in the City."

"The increase in firearm injuries and fatalities needs to be reduced."

"Cracking down on landlords and property owners who will not adequately provide safe residences for their tenants, and ensuring that, as renovations continue in the city, that work adequately meets code and is safe."

"An actual safe and accepting shelter. I don't know anyone who wants to stay at the rescue mission or feels safe there unless they are in the family section."

Top Categories

Community was category at 16.2%. The largest number of respondents dreamed of a diverse Roanoke in 2040. Diversity mainly referenced the City's population and neighborhoods, but also included opportunities and business. Inclusion and integration were the second largest topic. Comments mentioned a welcoming, inviting, cohesive, and respectful community for all residents and visitors. Increasing neighborhood connections and cooperation was recommended. Equity was of as much interest as inclusion. Respondents dreamed of a city with equitable resources and opportunity, for all residents and neighborhoods. Providing for, and maintaining a family-friendly atmosphere were seen as important measures for population retention. Neighborhoods were also notably mentioned. Respondents want to see clean, revitalized, self-sustaining neighborhoods in 2040, with excellent resources. Better education, housing, transportation, infrastructure, and social programs were among the services desired. Residents also imagined engaged and active community members. Thriving and sustainable were key words used in the remaining comments. Many wanted to see Roanoke improve, but still maintain its small town character and culture into the next 20 years.

9.5% of responses mentioned economy. The majority of responses generally wanted economic growth and job opportunities. The second biggest topic more specifically referenced attraction of smaller, local businesses. An almost equal number of respondents wanted to see diversification of the economy and types of business industries within the City. There was also strong interest in attracting new companies to the area and increasing economic opportunity. Many wanted to tap into research, technology, and tourism fields. The remaining comments hoped to foster sustainability and collaboration through business partnerships.

8.2% of responses were categorized under environment. The largest portion of responses wanted to see a cleaner city, free from pollution and litter. Next, respondents dreamed of an energy efficient city powered by renewable energy sources. Many wanted increased environmental protections and preservation of green spaces. In addition, respondents wanted more ways to interact with the natural environment, through education, planning, and design. Individuals also wanted more options for recycling, and partnerships with businesses to recycle and reduce wastes. The remaining comments generally desired a greener and more sustainable Roanoke.

Selected Responses

Community

"To be a place that pursues innovation in providing quality education, health care, work and career opportunities, responsible stewardship of the environment, and greater regional cooperation so that all residents have the ability to improve their quality of life."

"A community that sustains itself with engaged citizens who are united with a common goal to live in a peaceful, thriving, healthy environment."

"An inclusive, welcoming, diverse, economically vibrant and healthy city that is a model for cities trying to address histories of segregation and division and move toward a more equitable future."

"I would love it if each resident could speak of their neighborhood/community with pride because each neighborhood/community receives equal investments/development."

"Roanoke is headed in a fine direction, but if you do not run in the traditionally in power circles, you are largely unaware of the opportunities to participate in the growth and outcomes."

"Citizens of all ages, nationalities, and beliefs working together to support each other in the acknowledgment that there is enough to go around for everyone - that every person should have the opportunity to share their skills and gifts, acquire knowledge and become a better human being through wisdom, have access to clean water and foods free of poisons, toxins, or cancer-causative agents, access to healthy housing and medical care that doesn't take their whole paycheck."

Economy

"A greener city thriving on a larger ratio of local small businesses (with only a small portion of chain/national/corporate conglomerates), with higher than average education, health, and personal growth opportunities."

"Use our diverse population to market Roanoke as a great test bed and incubator for small businesses and start-ups."

"That the neglected industrial complexes are re-purposed in artisan craft centers, educational complexes and areas for growth instead of abandoned factories of history."

"That tourism is part of the City's economic development plan, but it doesn't promote tourism/new development at the expense of ignoring communities and neighborhoods in Roanoke"

"The City of Roanoke will further its partnership with Virginia Tech/Carilion and gradually replace 20th Century industries with 21st Century industries."

Environment

"NOT developing mountains and other green spaces."

"Clean, environmentally friendly, resilient (flooding), beautiful, forests intact, abundance of fresh air, clean water, primarily uses solar energy in homes, urban gardens."

"Public transportation as the norm and transitioned to sustainable energy sources."

"Be rid of single use plastic/styrofoam (straws, bags, bottles, takeout containers)."

"That we are a town that runs completely off of sustainable energy free of pesticides and environmentally toxic building materials."