

MERRIAM

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



**PUBLIC
ENGAGEMENT
REPORT**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. OVERVIEW.....	4
2. PROCESS + SCHEDULE.....	5
3. KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS.....	6
4. COMMUNITY SURVEYS.....	7
5. VISUAL PREFERENCING.....	26
6. MERRIAM EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY.....	30
7. SUB AREA PLANS.....	34
<i>Merriam Town Center</i>	35
<i>Downtown Merriam</i>	38
<i>Former Lee Jeans Site</i>	40



OVERVIEW

Public participation is a fundamental element in the comprehensive planning process. The Merriam 2040 Comprehensive Plan incorporated a variety of effective and innovative public engagement methods designed to provide ample opportunities for residents, business owners and city leaders to give their input on the long-term vision for Merriam. The public input process included traditional public engagement techniques such as special event booths, visioning exercises and steering committee meetings and workshops. Later phases of public input utilized an interactive engagement website due to social gathering restrictions put in place because of COVID-19. This website was advertised throughout the community through the use of yard signs, social media posts and advertisements. This interactive and engagement resource allowed the planning team to obtain the same valuable feedback that would have otherwise been gathered through in-person workshops and meetings. Further details on the interactive engagement website can be found later on in this report.

The results of the public participation process were instrumental in the formation of the Merriam 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The public consensus gathered help craft the goals, policies, and action items that will ultimately guide the implementation of this plan.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Merriam 2040 Comprehensive Plan utilized a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) to assist in the plan development and review. This committee was composed of elected and appointed officials and key city staff. Members of the CPAC included:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| - Chris Hands | - Daniel Anderson |
| - Nancy Hupp | - Kendra Miller |
| - Mitch Fowler | - Chris Caldwell |
| - Brian Dailey | - Jacob Laha |
| - Stoney Bogan | - Marcia Shami |
| - Kevin Killilea | - David Friederichs |
| - Robin Harrold | - Valerie Koetting |
| - Christopher Leitch | - Billy Crook |



COMMUNICATION PLAN + PROJECT BRANDING

Early in the planning process, a communication strategy was developed between the CPAC and the planning team. The Communication Plan identified the appropriate meeting types and dates, key stakeholders for the consultant team to meet with, and helped identify possible themes and questions for the community survey. The comprehensive plan update was also given a branding and identification: Merriam 2040 Comprehensive Plan, to help create a recognizable identity for the project. The logo and the color scheme were inspired by Merriam's current city logo.



PROCESS + SCHEDULE

The Merriam 2040 Comprehensive Plan was completed over four phases:

- Phase 1: Kick-off, Research and Analysis
- Phase 2: Vision, Input & Direction
- Phase 3: Draft Plan & Evaluation
- Phase 4: Final Draft Plan & Adoption



Phase 1: Kick-off, Research & Analysis

Kick-off, Research & Analysis involved an initial kick-off meeting with the plan's Steering Committee to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the group and discuss initial goals and priorities for Merriam. Data collection and the initial analysis of existing conditions within Merriam was also completed during this phase.



Phase 2: Vision, Input & Direction

Vision, Input & Direction covered most of the public engagement for the plan. During this phase, there was a virtual public workshop, community survey, stakeholder interviews, a Steering Committee meeting, youth workshop, and two special event booths. The results of the public engagement gathered in Phase 2 helped craft the recommendations and identify priorities for the final report.



Phase 3: Draft Plan & Evaluation

Draft Plan & Evaluation included the actual writing of the full draft plan. This is the longest phase of the planning process and also includes a meeting with the Steering Committee to discuss the progress made and receive feedback on the plan chapters.



Phase 4: Final Draft Plan & Adoption

Final Draft Plan included the finalizing of the draft plan and the public approval process. The public adoption took place through a Planning & Zoning Commission vote to recommend approval, followed by actual approval by the Merriam City Council.

Merriam Comprehensive Plan Schedule	JULY 2019	AUG 2019	SEPT 2019	OCT 2019	NOV 2019	DEC 2019	JAN 2020	FEB 2020	MAR 2020	APRIL 2020	MAY 2020	JUNE 2020	JULY 2020	AUG 2020	SEPT 2020	OCT 2020	NOV 2020	DEC 2020	JAN 2021	FEB 2021
Phase 1 Project Kick-Off, Research + Analysis																				
Kick-Off Meeting (CPAC #1)																				
Analysis Review (CPAC #2)																				
Analysis Review Joint Workshop (JW #1)																				
Phase 2 Vision, Input + Direct																				
Stakeholder Interviews (2-days)																				
Youth Workshop																				
Public Workshop (Publing Meeting #1)																				
Box City Event																				
Input and Goals Review Meeting (CPAC #3)																				
Input and Goals Review Joint Workshop (JW #2)																				
Special Event Booths																				
Phase 3 Draft Plan + Evaluation																				
Draft Review Meetings (CPAC #4 thru #7)																				
Draft Plan Public Open House (Public Meeting #2)																				
Draft Plan Review Joint Workshop (JW #3)																				
Phase 4 Final Draft Plan + Adoption																				
Final Draft Review (CPAC #8)																				
P&Z Hearing (Public Meeting #3)																				
Council Hearing (Public Meeting #4)																				



KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

One of the most important engagement exercises used in the development of this comprehensive plan was the completion of key stakeholder interviews. Members of the planning team met individually or in small groups with several different members of the Merriam community that represent a wide cross section of residents, business owners, school officials and city leaders. The small group setting conversations helped provide a safe and open environment for people to speak freely about any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges facing Merriam both currently and in the future. The feedback gained through these interviews were critical in the consultant team's understanding of the Merriam community.

Groups represented in the key stakeholder interviews include:

- Real estate professionals
- Local business owners
- Long-time residents
- Apartment complex managers
- Downtown Merriam building owners
- Merriam Park Elementary School
- Steering Committee members
- Former Planning Commission members
- Automotive dealer representatives

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Merriam Marketplace

- Well liked but some question attendance levels and think support retail needed in the area to attract users

Grocery Store

- Losing Hen House was a big loss for the community

Turkey Creek Streamway Trail

- Very popular
- Would like to see more trail connections

Downtown Merriam

- Good visibility from I-35
- Should attract entertainment / mixed-uses
- Some worry that buildings are run-down
- Too many junk car lots
- Some don't want to see much change or improvement

Great Location

- Merriam is convenient and offers good access to the metro
- Offers small-town feel with big city access

Flooding

- Stormwater is an issue
- Need stormwater master plan for the city

Merriam Town Center

- Important asset for the community
- Needs help
- Could use denser development

K-Mart Site

- High priority for redevelopment
- Mixed views on density / use
- Site could include combination of residential, entertainment, retail, greenspace

Home Rehabilitation

- Important to help blighted properties
- Some homeowners may need financial assistance



SPECIAL EVENT BOOTHS

Early on in the public engagement process, members of the planning team visited two community events to get valuable feedback. Being immersed in the community provides another opportunity to reach residents and visitors on their time and on their schedule. The following events were attended prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The planning team set up a temporary station for visitors to stop by and respond to visual preferencing exercises and give input on the general themes of the comprehensive plan. Visitors were also encouraged to fill out postcards that prompted them to imagine what the community will be like in the year 2040 and why a friend or family member would like to visit them in that year. The input gathered at these events has been incorporated into the findings later on in this report.

Merriam Farmers Market - September 28, 2019

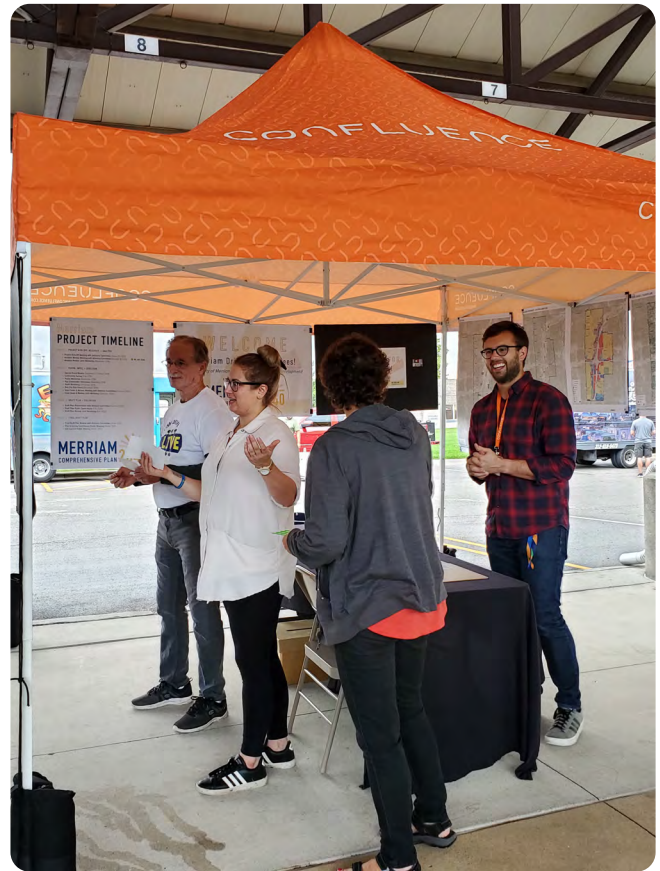
The Merriam Farmers Market operates two days a week at the Merriam Marketplace in downtown Merriam.

Merriam Drive Live - October 5, 2019

Merriam Drive Live combines the love of antique cars and live music at the Merriam Marketplace in downtown Merriam. This popular event also contains several food trucks and family activities.

Youth Workshop - February 24, 2020

Members of the planning team visited Shawnee Mission North High School on February 24, 2020, to meet with students from teacher Gary Bailey's Global Issues class. At this youth workshop, the planning team discussed the importance of comprehensive planning to a community and asked the students what businesses, amenities, and other aspects of a community were important to them. Public spaces to meet and gather, sports and recreation fields and courts, and retail stores for both shopping and part-time jobs were top on their list.



COMMUNITY SURVEYS

Several surveys were administered to the residents of Merriam which allowed residents to give their feedback on the positive and negative aspects of the city. Surveys are a great tool to get a sense of the wants, needs, challenges and opportunities of the overall community. Three total surveys were issued:

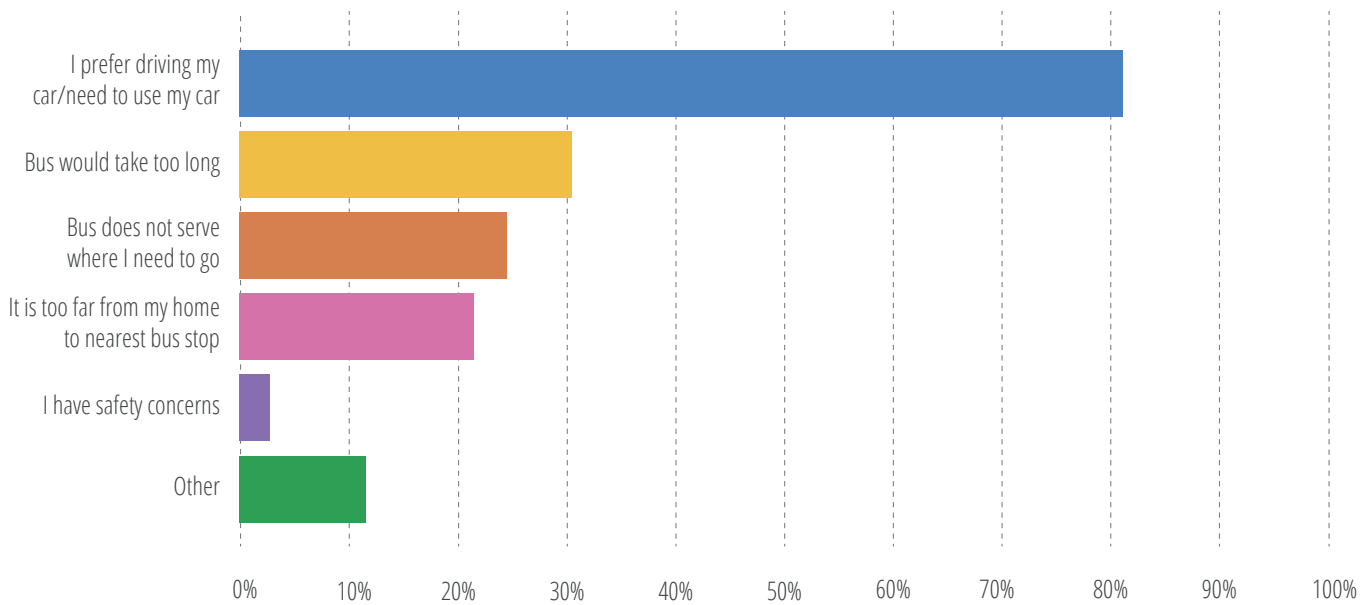
- ETC Statistically valid survey (Pages 8 - 15)
- Comprehensive Online Community Survey via Survey Monkey (Pages 16 - 25)
- Online Community Survey via the project's social engagement website (Pages 16 - 25)

The Comprehensive Online Community Survey was more detailed and thorough while the survey administered via the social engagement website was abbreviated and highlighted the core issues. The results and main key takeaways from these two surveys have been compiled and combined on the following pages.

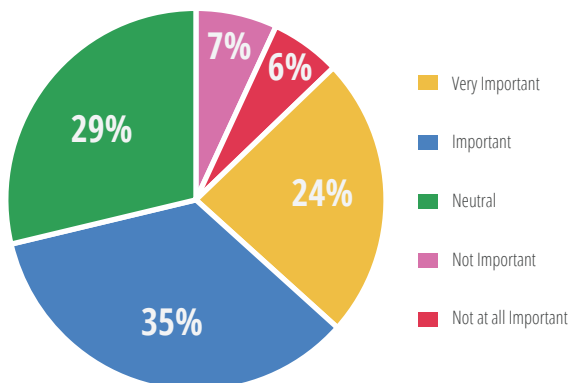


* The sequence and numbering of the following charts and graphs reflect the numbering found in the ETC Survey.

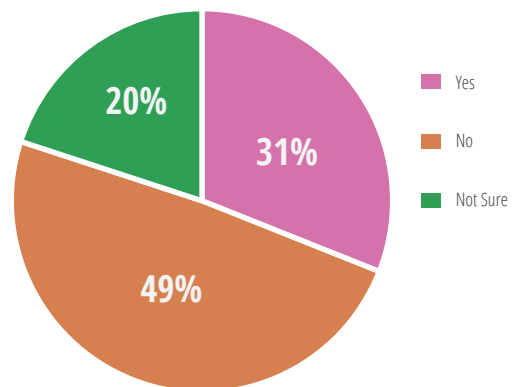
1. If you do not or have not ridden public transit in Merriam (RideKC), please select up to THREE reasons why from the options listed below.



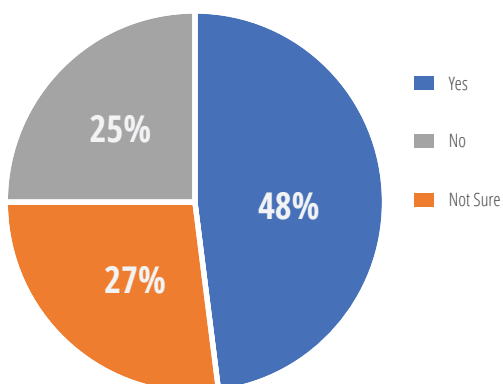
3. How important is it that the City allocate funds to invest in other modes of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and public transportation?



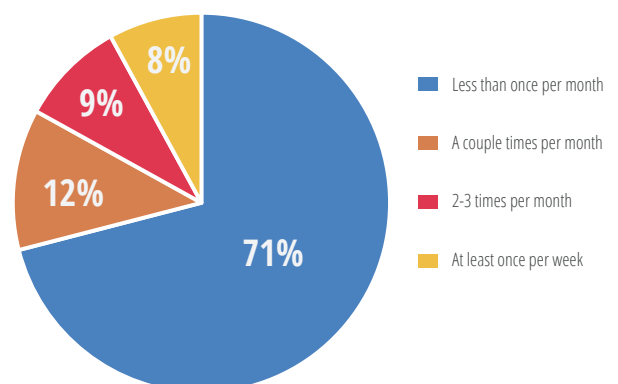
5. If bicycle infrastructure was developed in Merriam, would you use it?



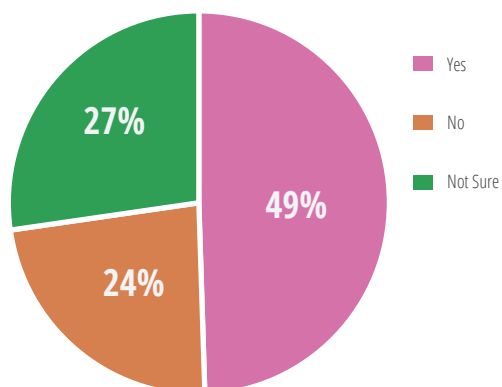
4. Do you think the City should focus on adding new bicycle infrastructure (bike lanes, cycle tracks, bike share options, etc.) to encourage different transportation options?



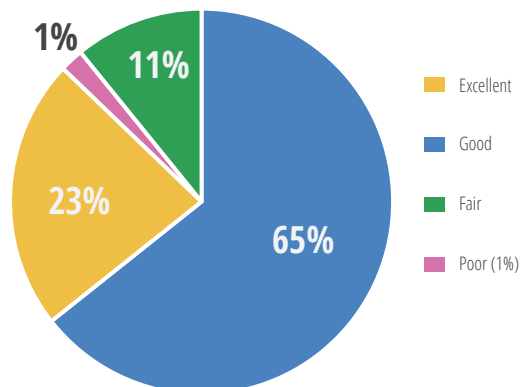
6. How often do you walk to places you need or want to go?



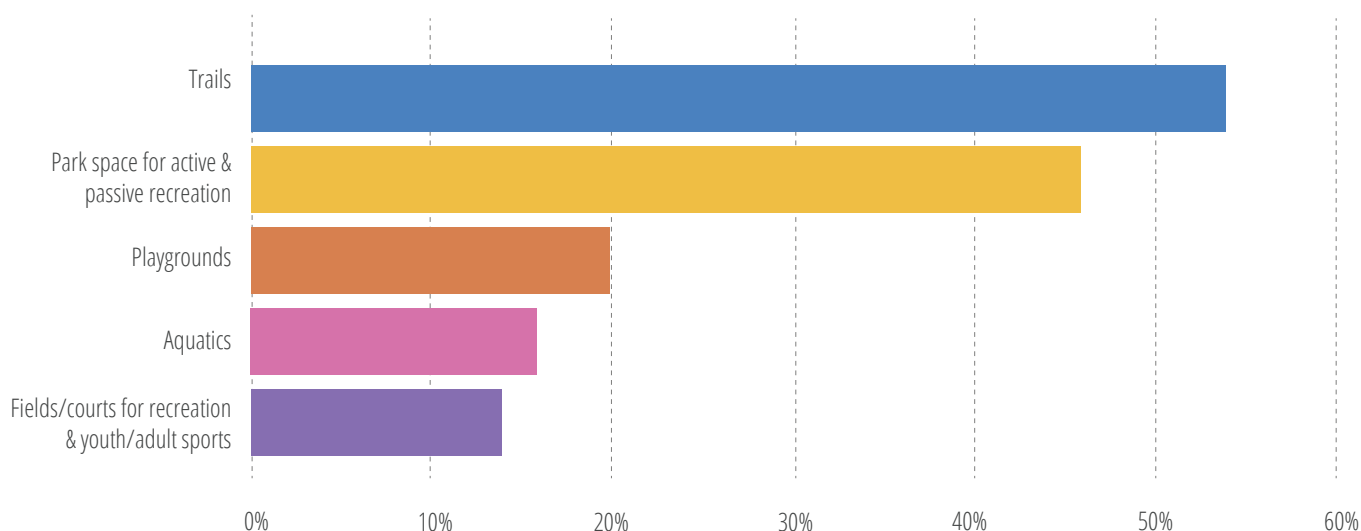
7. Do you believe the City needs more sidewalk or trail connections?



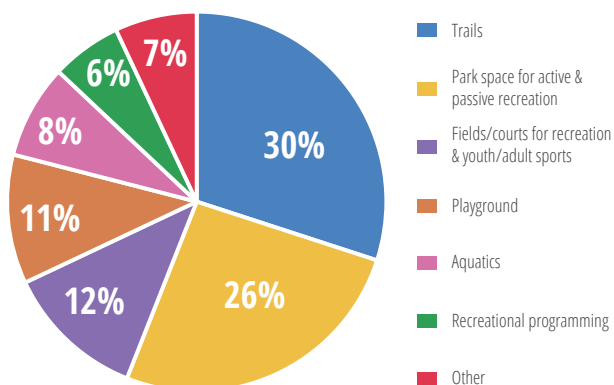
8. Overall, how would you rate the parks and recreational opportunities in the City of Merriam?



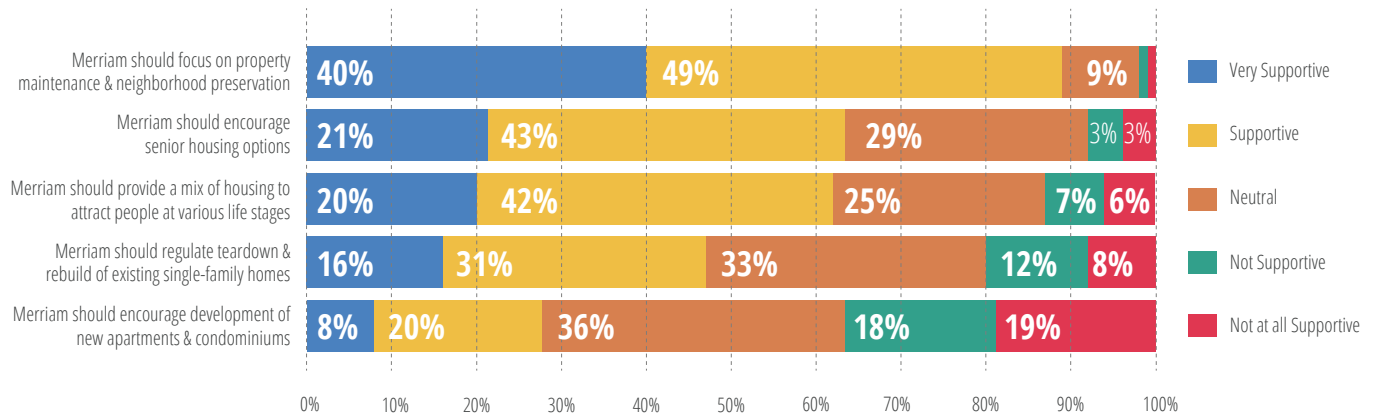
9. What types or parks and recreation amenities do you most frequently use outside of Merriam?



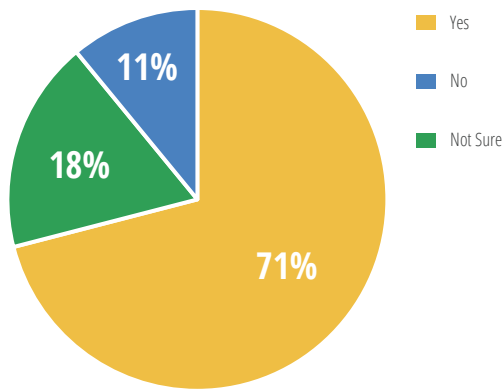
10. Which ONE park and recreation amenity should the City prioritize most?



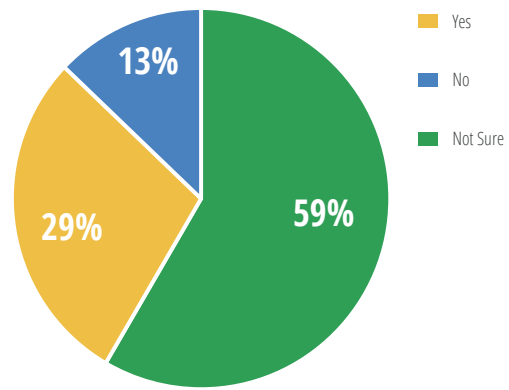
12. Level of support for actions the City of Merriam could take to address housing priorities.
(5 = Very supportive; 1 = Not at all supportive)



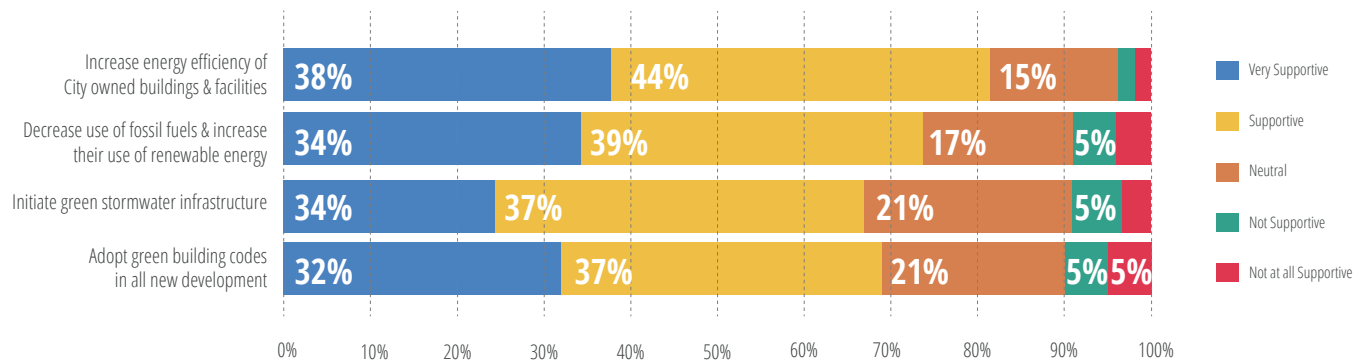
13. Do you feel the housing options available in Merriam match your price range?



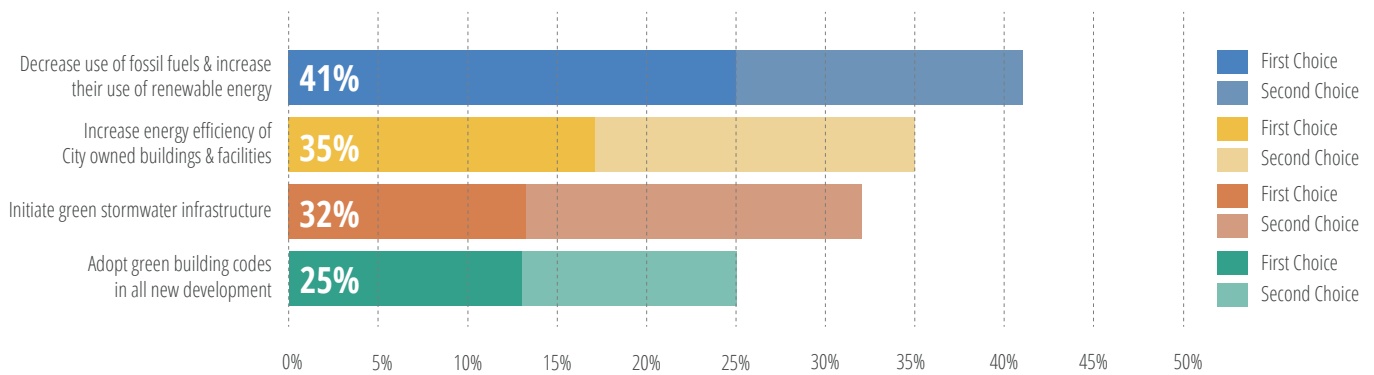
14. Is the City of Merriam doing enough to protect the environment?



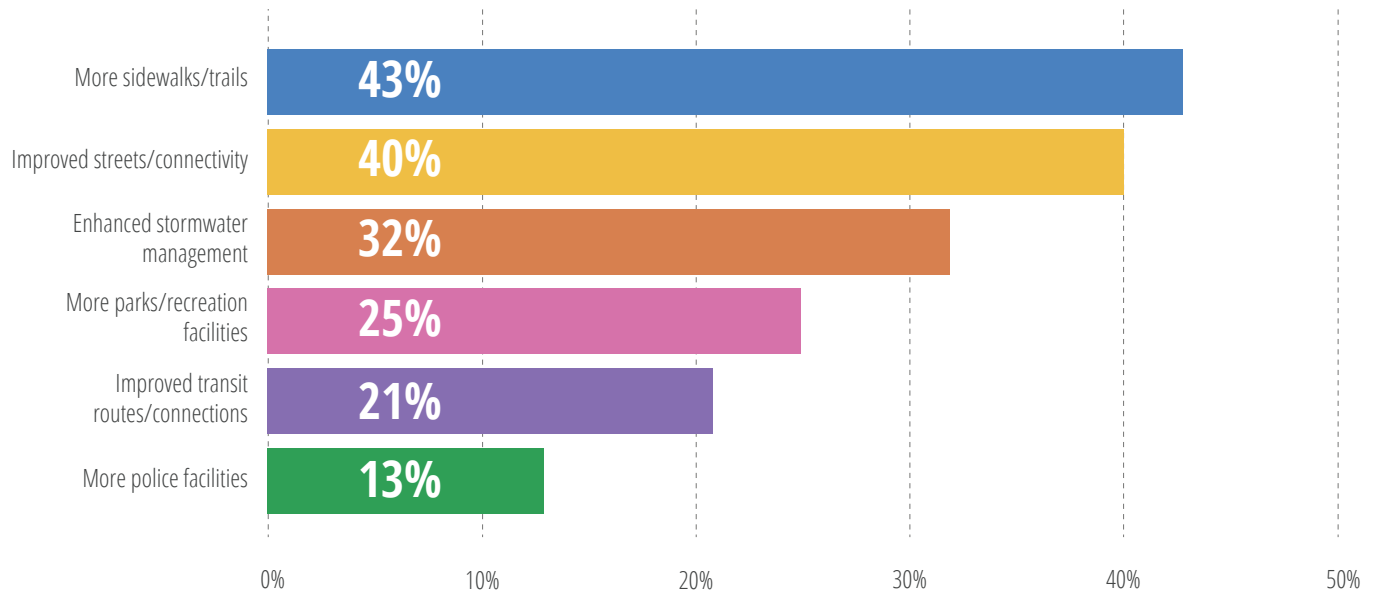
15. Level of agreement with the following statements.
(5 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree)



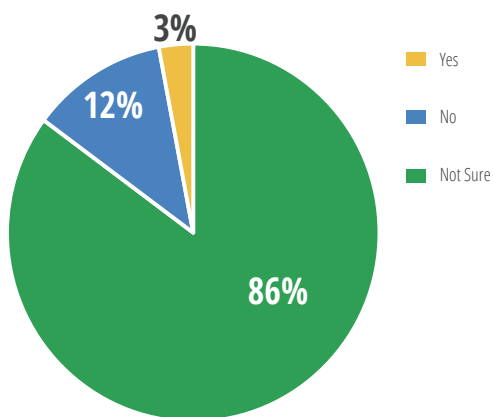
16. Which TWO of the items listed in Question 15 would you be most willing to fund with your City tax dollars?



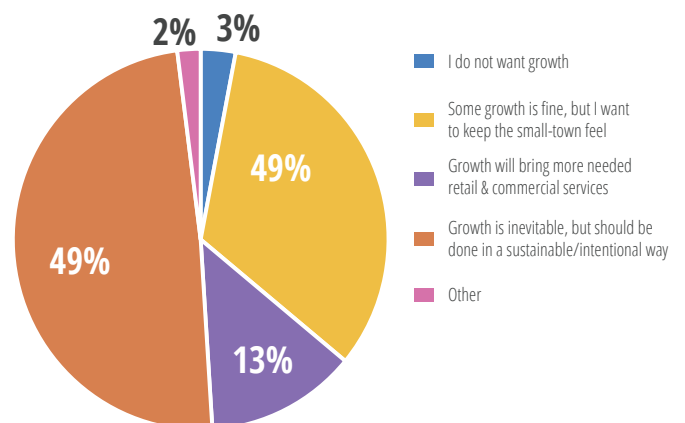
17. Which TWO public facilities are most needed in Merriam?



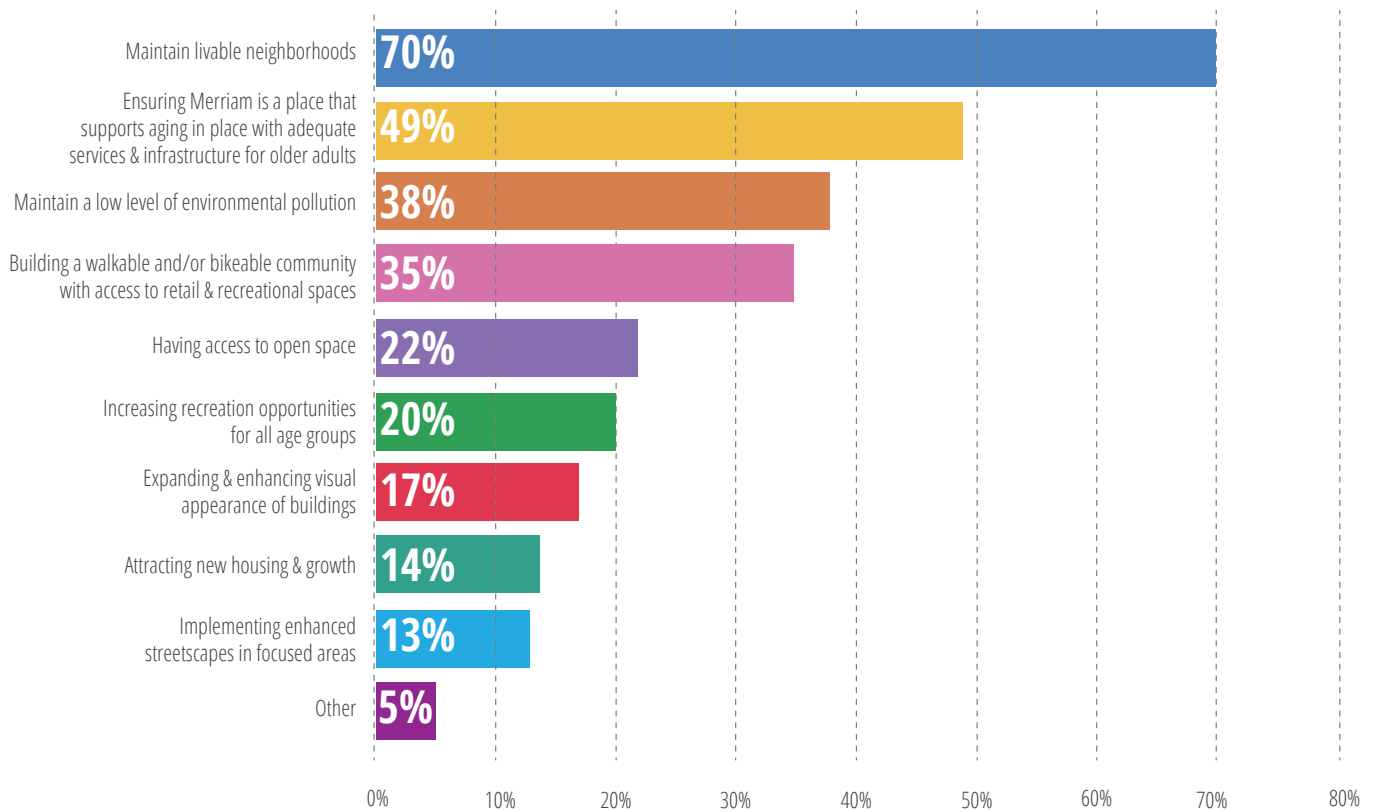
18. Do you have difficulty accessing childcare in Merriam?



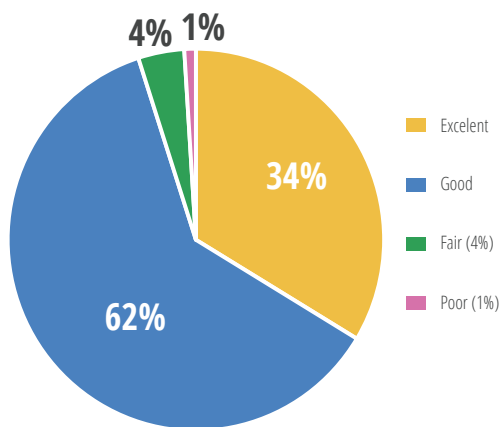
19. Which of the following statements best describes your view towards population growth in Merriam?



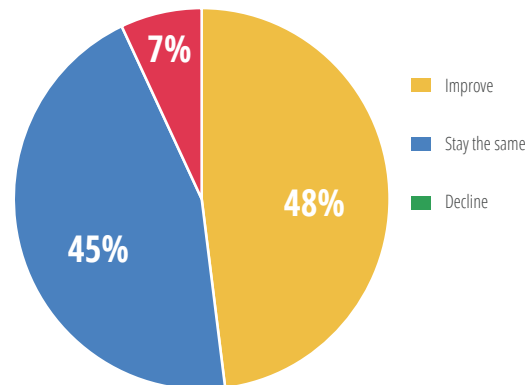
20. THREE most important objectives that should be used to guide future growth and development in Merriam.



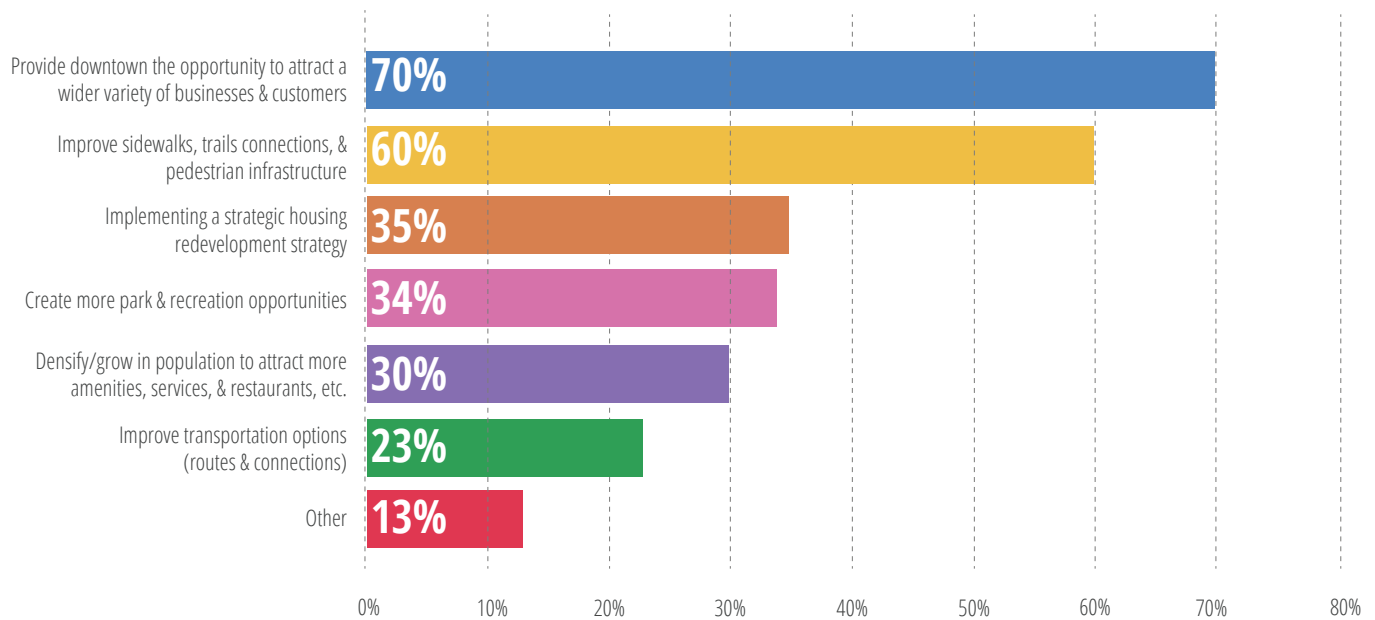
21. Please rate the overall quality of life in the City of Merriam.



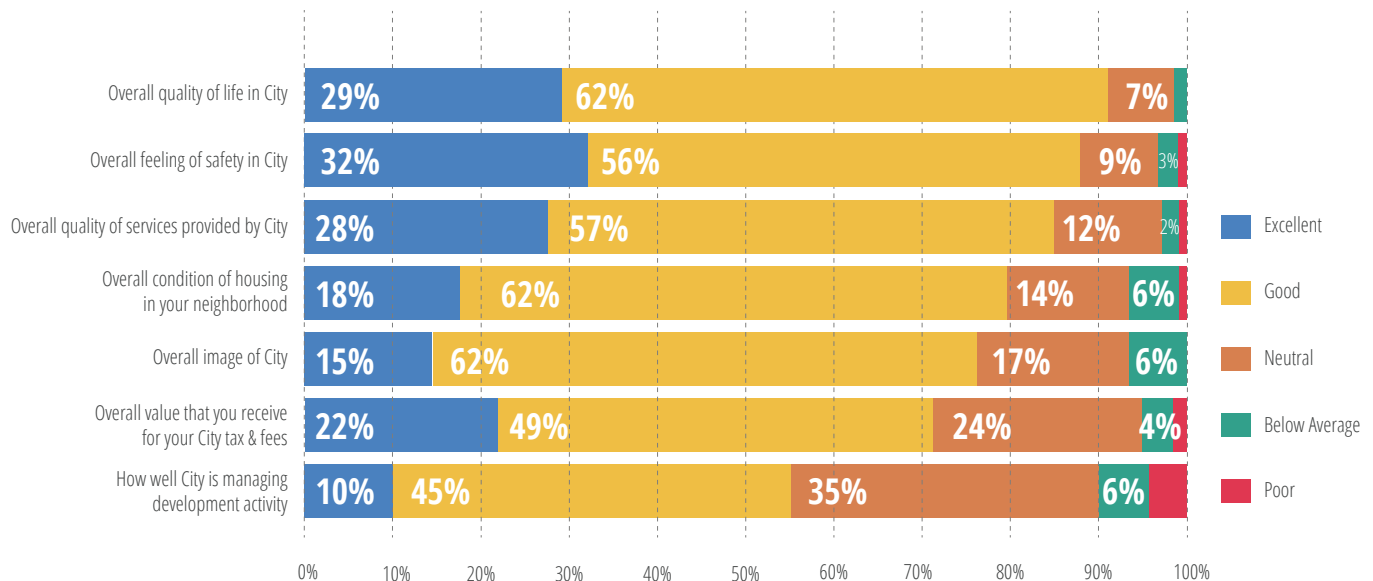
22. In the future, do you think the overall quality of life in Merriam will...



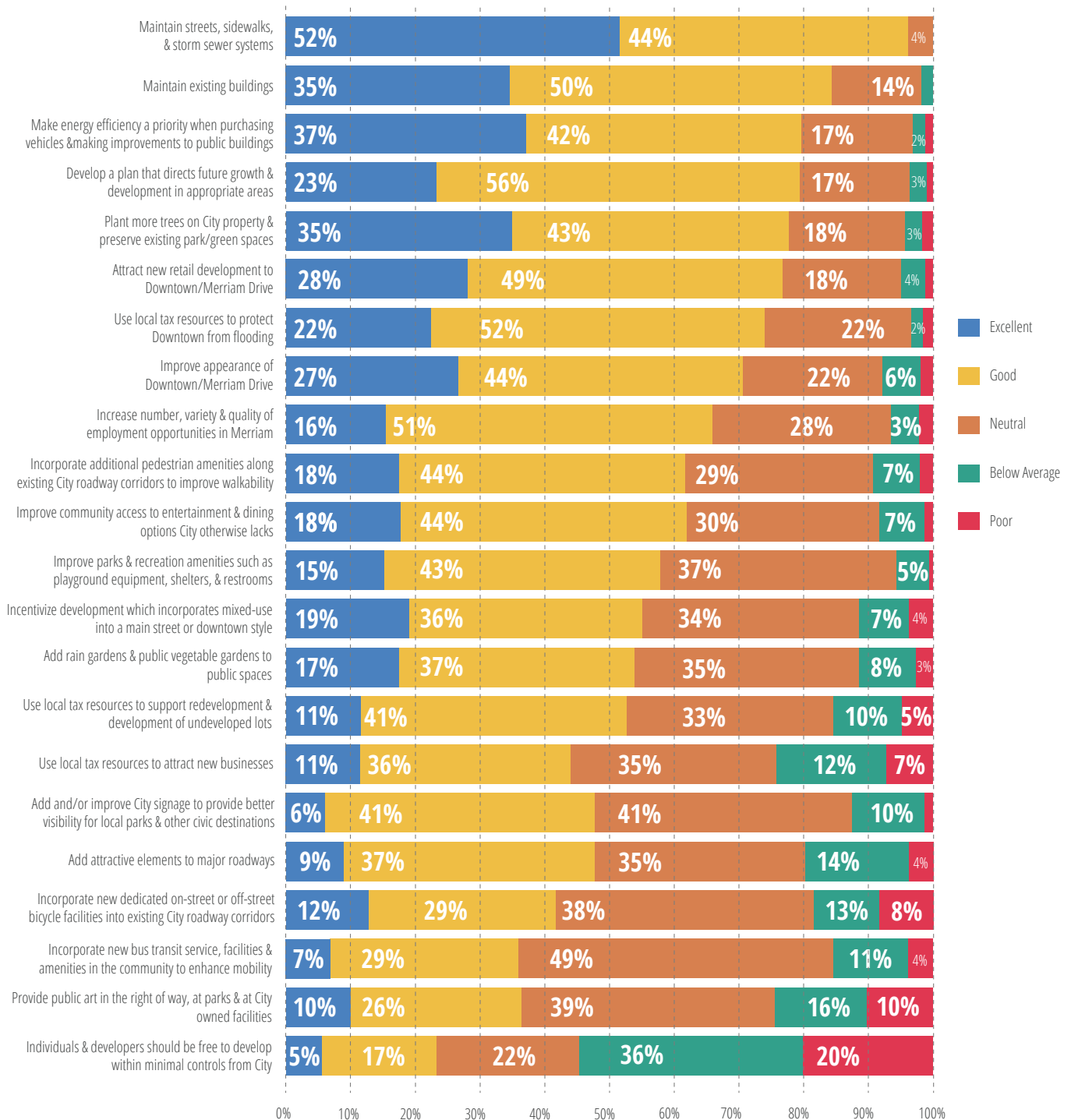
23. THREE actions you think would help improve the overall quality of life in Merriam.



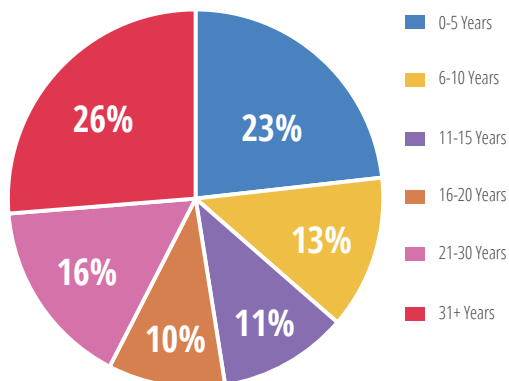
24. City ratings.
(5 = Excellent; 1 = Poor)



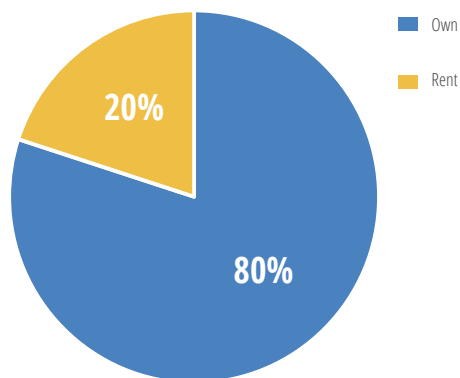
25. Level of agreement for the following statements.
(5 = Strongly agree; 1 = Strongly disagree)



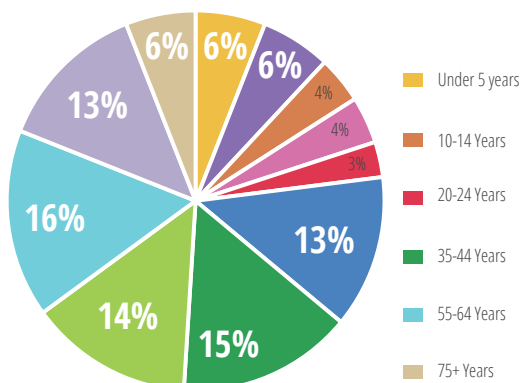
27. Demographics: How many years have you lived in the City of Merriam?



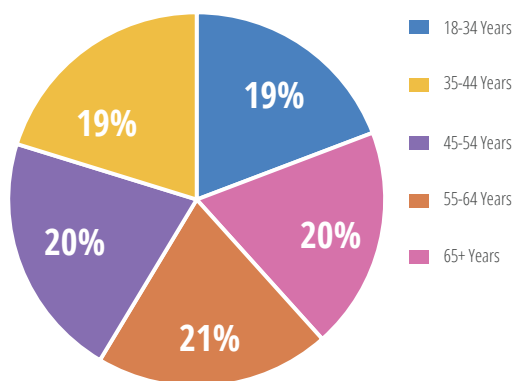
33. Demographics: Do you own or rent your home?



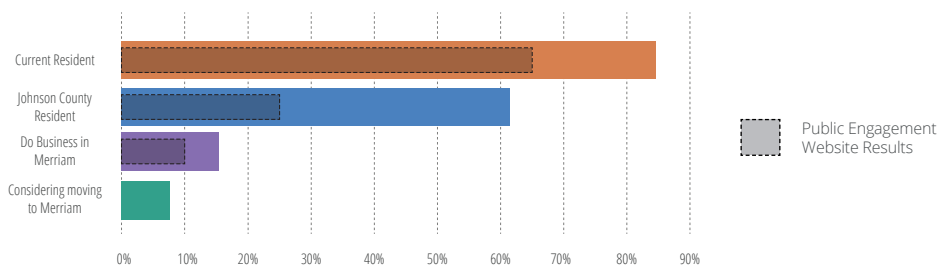
29. Demographics: Counting yourself, how many people in your household are...



30. Demographics: What is your age?



1. What is your current relationship to Merriam? (Mark all that apply.)

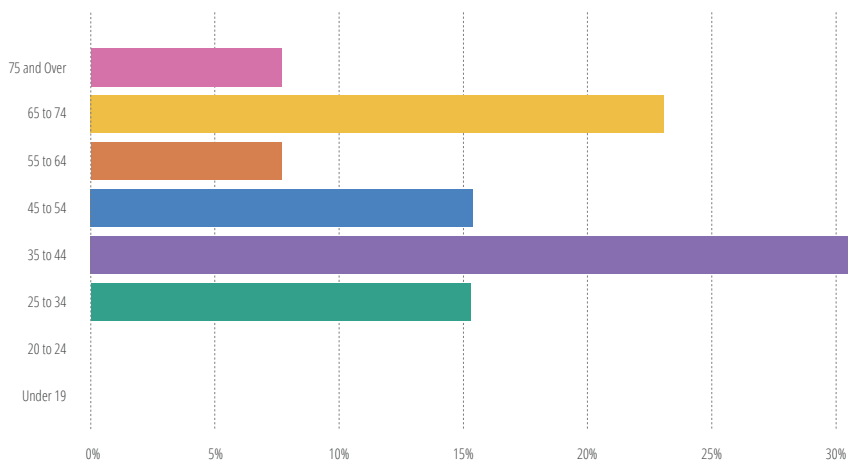


Key Takeaways

84% are current residents of Merriam

8% are considering moving to Merriam

2. What is your age range?

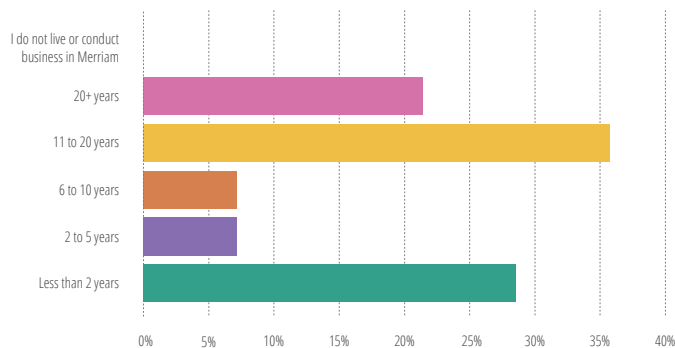


Key Takeaways

31% are between the age of 35 to 44

30% are over the age of 65

3. How long have you lived / conducted business in Merriam?

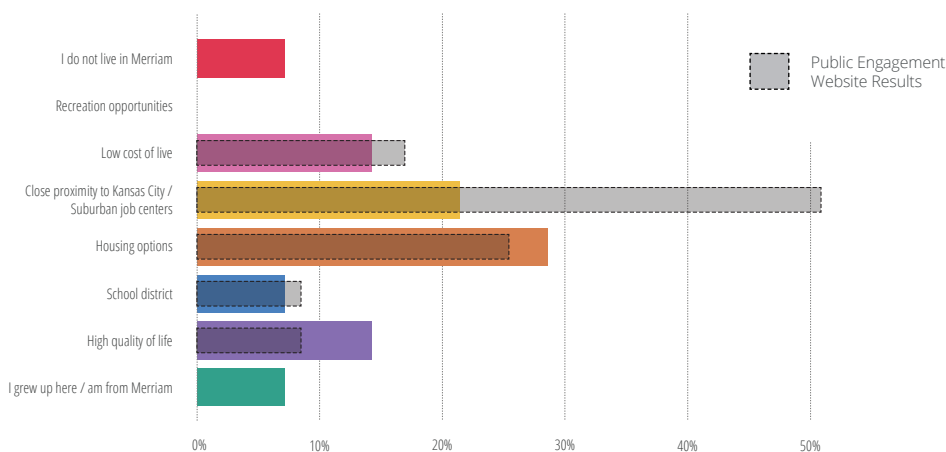


Key Takeaways

28% are relatively new to Merriam

36% have been in Merriam for 11 to 20 years

4. If you live in Merriam, which reason best describes why you live in Merriam?



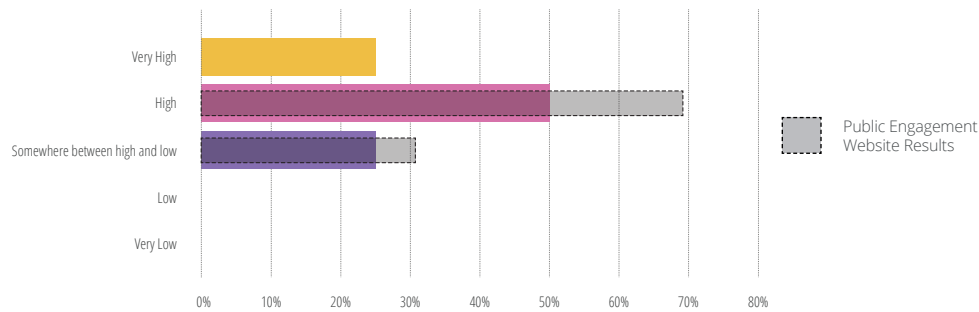
Key Takeaways

28% (26%) live in Merriam because of the **housing options**

21% (51%) live in Merriam because of its close **proximity to Kansas City / Suburban job centers**



5. How would you rate the current quality of life in Merriam?

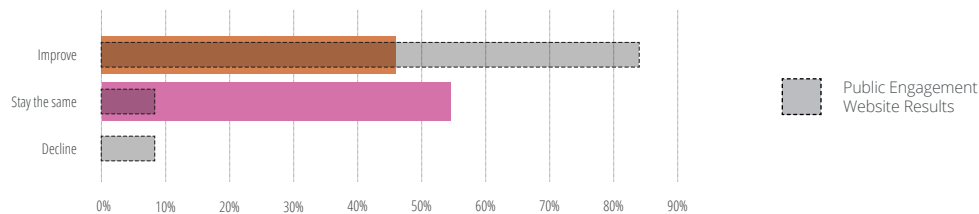


Key Takeaways

50% (69%) rate Merriam's quality of life **High**

No responses indicated a low or very low quality of life

6. Over time, you expect the quality of life in Merriam to...

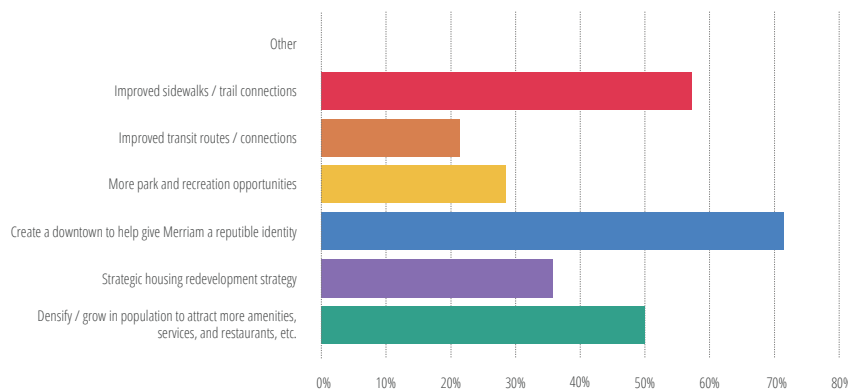


Key Takeaways

54% (9%) think Merriam's quality of life will **stay the same**

46% (83%) think Merriam's quality of life will **improve**

7. What actions would help improve the quality of life in Merriam? Select up to 3 responses.

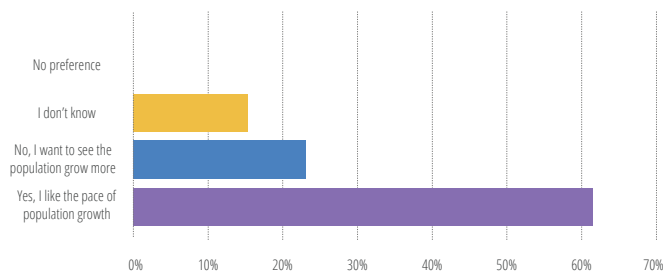


Key Takeaways

71% believe a **strong downtown** will help give Merriam a reputable identity

57% believe **improved sidewalks / trail connections** will improve Merriam's quality of life

8. Merriam has had minimal population growth over the past ten to fifteen years. Do you wish to see this trend continue over the next 20 years?



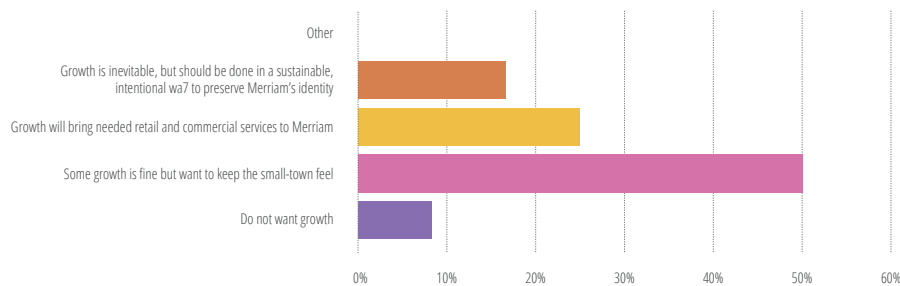
Key Takeaways

61% like the **current pace** of population growth

23% would like to see **more** population growth



9. Which statement best describes your views towards population growth in Merriam?

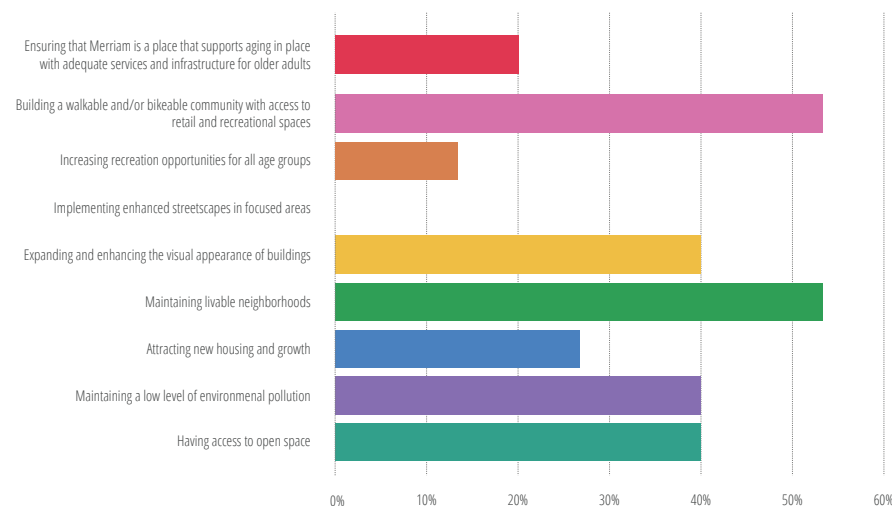


Key Takeaways

50% believe **some growth is fine** but want to keep the small-town feel

The majority of responses look at population growth favorably

10. Most important objectives which should be used to guide future growth and development in Merriam? Select up to 3 responses.



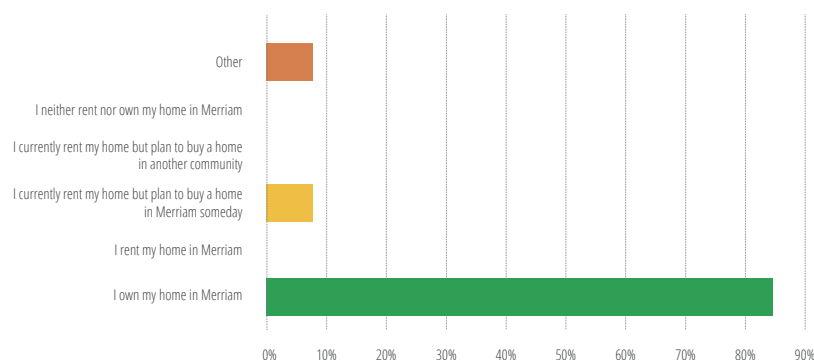
Key Takeaways

53% view **maintaining livable neighborhoods** should guide future growth

53% view **building a walkable and/or bikeable community** should guide future growth

Enhancing the visual appearance of buildings, maintaining low environmental pollution levels and having access to open space all had similar high rankings

11. Which of the following best describes you?



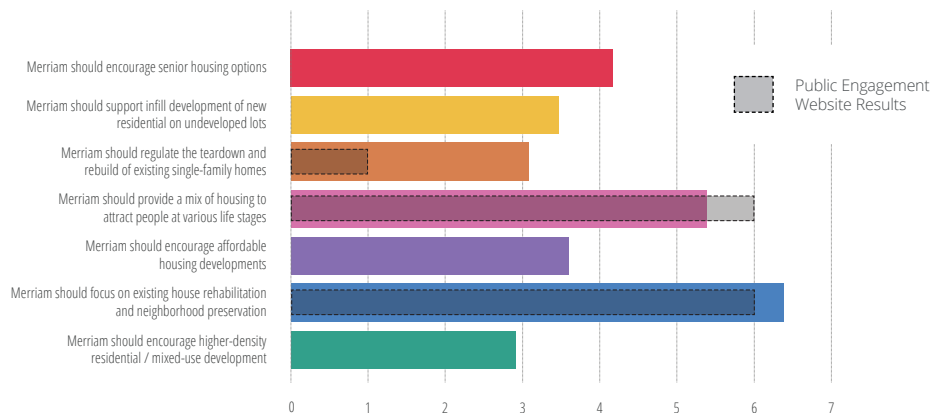
Key Takeaways

84% of respondents **own their home**

0% of respondents **rent their home**



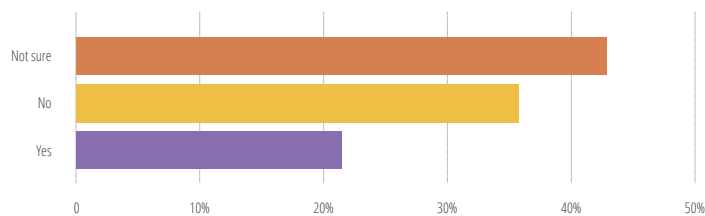
12. Please rank the following housing priorities for the City
(1 = Highest Priority, 6 = Lowest Priority)



Key Takeaways

Respondents believe focusing on **existing house rehabilitation** and providing a **mix of housing** should be the two highest priorities of the City of Merriam

13. If density increases in focused area of Merriam, should the city encourage 'transition development' (townhomes / "attached" single-family homes) between those areas and the existing single-family residential neighborhoods?

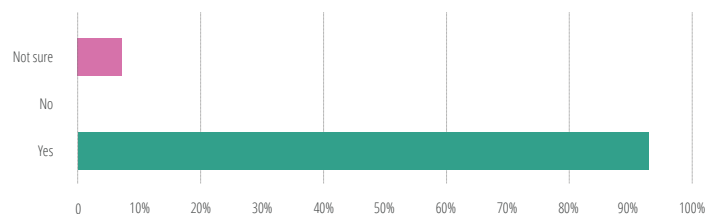


Key Takeaways

43% are **not sure** about encouraging transition developments

35% think Merriam **should not** encourage transition developments

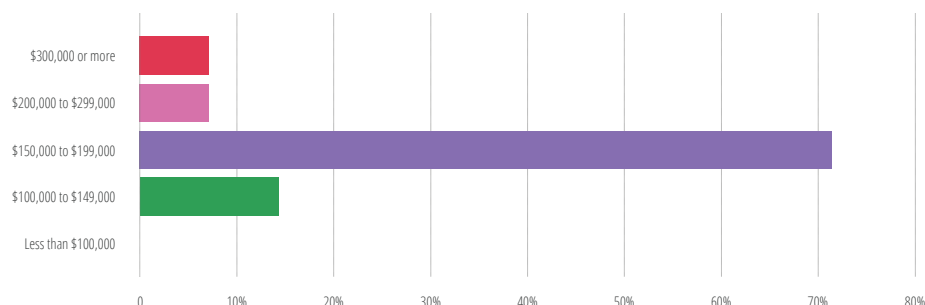
14. Do you feel as if the housing options available in Merriam match your price range?



Key Takeaways

93% believe housing options in Merriam match their price range

15. What do you consider an "affordable" single-family home value range?

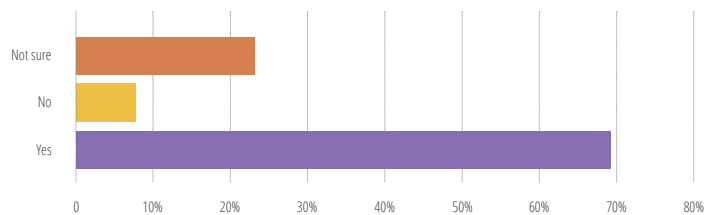


Key Takeaways

71% think **\$150,000 to \$199,000** is affordable for single-family homes



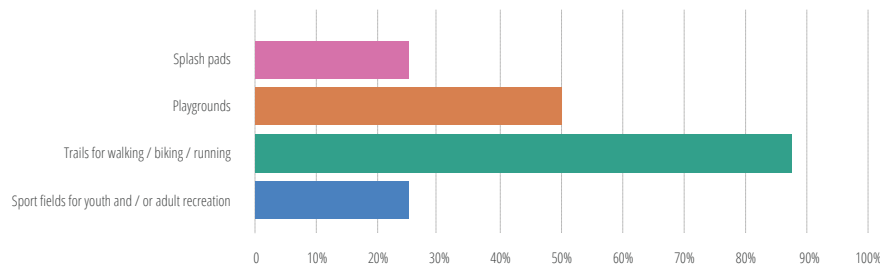
16. Do you feel the parks and recreation facilities in Merriam serve the needs of your household?



Key Takeaways

69% feel the parks and recreation facilities serve their needs

17. For which type of parks and recreation amenities do you most frequently leave Merriam to use? Select all that apply.

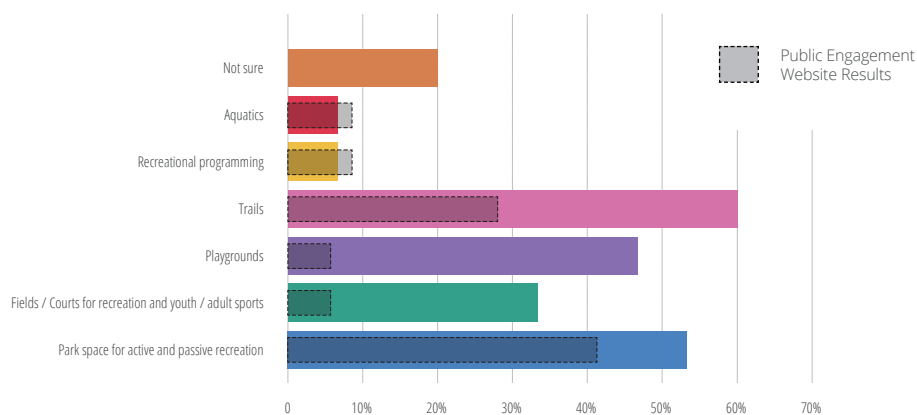


Key Takeaways

87% leave Merriam for **walking / biking / running trails**

50% leave Merriam to visit **playgrounds**

18. For a city the size of Merriam, what park and recreation amenities should be most prioritized? (Select up to three).



Key Takeaways

60% (29%) think trails should be prioritized in Merriam

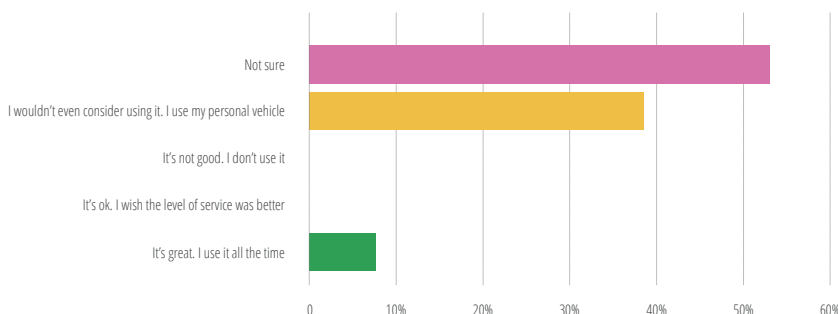
53% (41%) think additional park space should be prioritized in Merriam

Most respondents felt aquatics and recreational programming do not need to be prioritized in Merriam

19. What community events do you go to, if any?

Anything that the community center puts on
Art exhibits **Community center exercise classes**
None

20. How would you rate the level of service provided by transit services (RideKC) in Merriam?



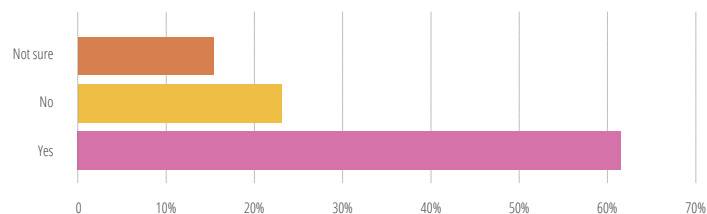
Key Takeaways

38% wouldn't consider using public transit

53% are not sure about the level of service provided by public transit; indicating they do not use these services



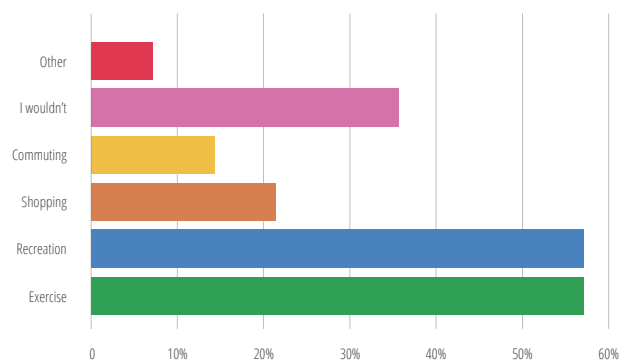
21. Do you think the city should focus on implementing bicycle infrastructure (bike lanes, cycle tracks, bike share stations, etc.) to encourage different transportation options?



Key Takeaways

61% think the city **should** focus on implementing bicycle infrastructure

22. If bicycle infrastructure was implemented throughout Merriam, how would you use it? Select all that apply.

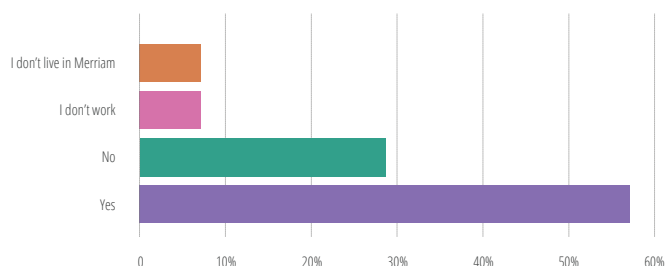


Key Takeaways

57% would use bicycle infrastructure for **recreation** and **exercise**

35% **would not** use bicycle infrastructure

23. Do you commute out of Merriam for work?

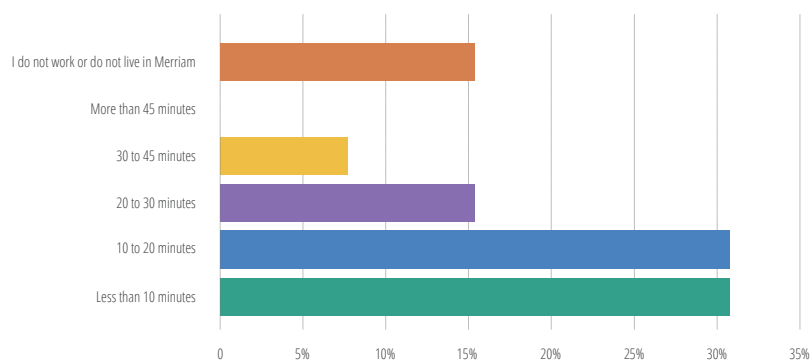


Key Takeaways

57% **commute out** of Merriam for work

28% **stay in** Merriam for work

24. How long is your commute (one-way)?

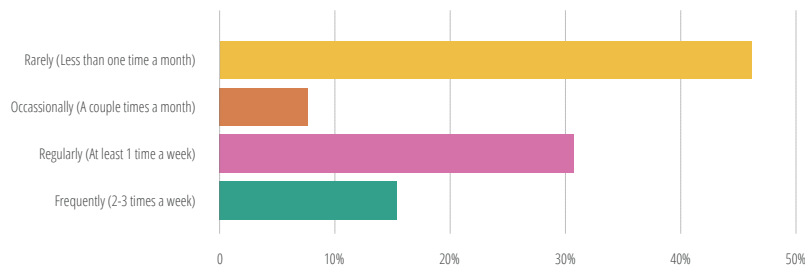


Key Takeaways

The majority of respondents have a commute time under 20 minutes



25. How often do you walk to places you need / want to go?

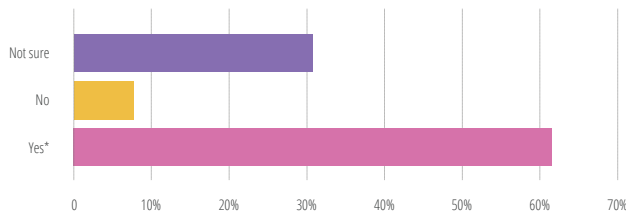


Key Takeaways

46% rarely walk to places they need / want to go

46% regularly walk to places they need / want to go

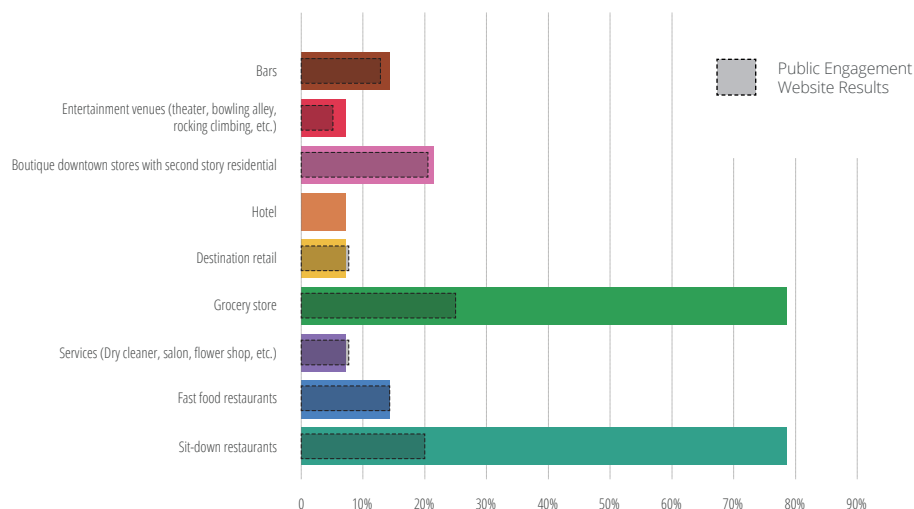
26. Do you believe the city needs more sidewalk or trail connections?



Key Takeaways

61% believe the city needs **more** sidewalk or trail connections

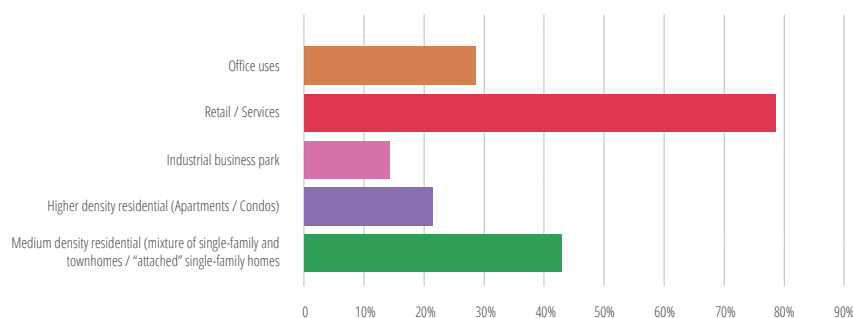
27. What type of retail / commercial development is most needed in Merriam? Select up to three responses.



Key Takeaways

78% think **sit-down restaurants** and a **grocery store** are most needed in Merriam

28. Which of the following land uses does Merriam need? Select up to three responses.



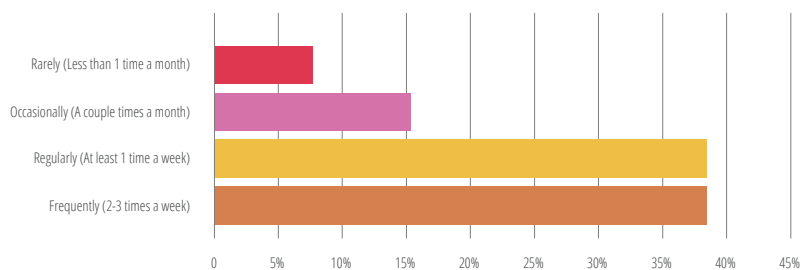
Key Takeaways

78% think Merriam needs **more retail / services**

43% think Merriam needs more medium-density residential



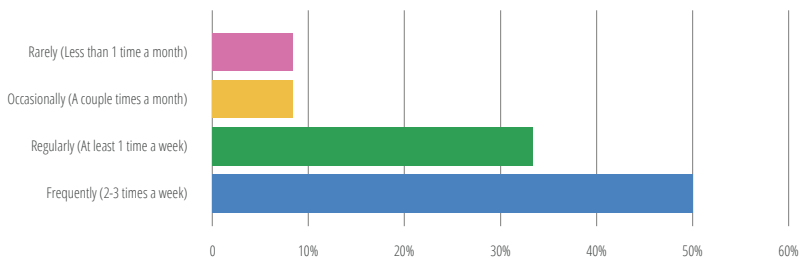
29. How often do you leave Merriam to eat?



Key Takeaways

76% leave Merriam at least **once a week** to eat

30. How often do you leave Merriam to shop?

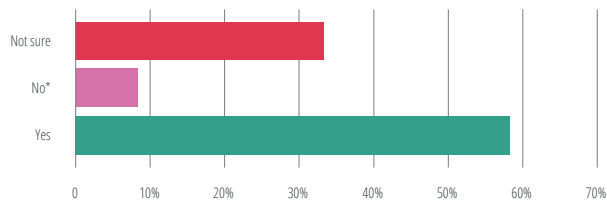


Key Takeaways

50% frequently leave Merriam to shop

33% regularly leave Merriam to shop

31. Is the City of Merriam doing enough to protect the environment?

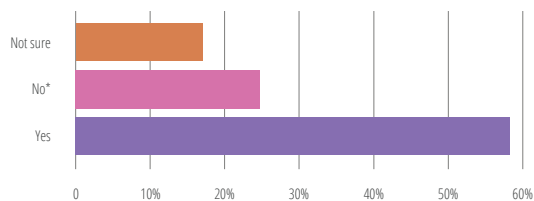


Key Takeaways

58% think Merriam **is** doing enough to protect the environment

33% are **not sure** if Merriam is doing enough to protect the environment

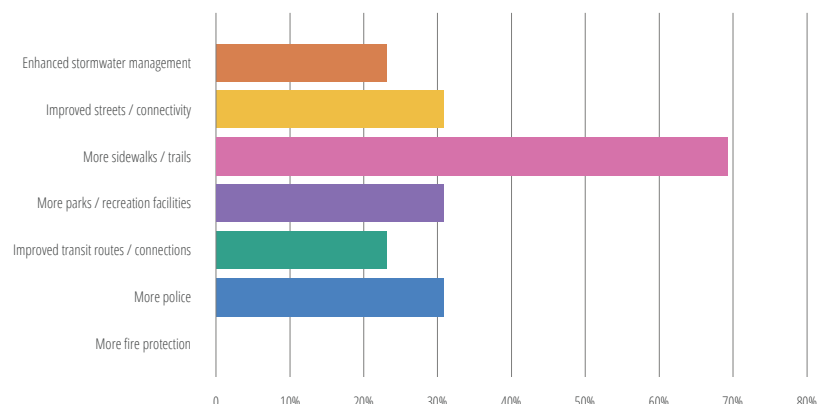
32. Would you support efforts by the City of Merriam to initiate green stormwater infrastructure?



Key Takeaways

58% would support green stormwater infrastructure

33. What public facilities are most needed in Merriam? (Select up to three responses).



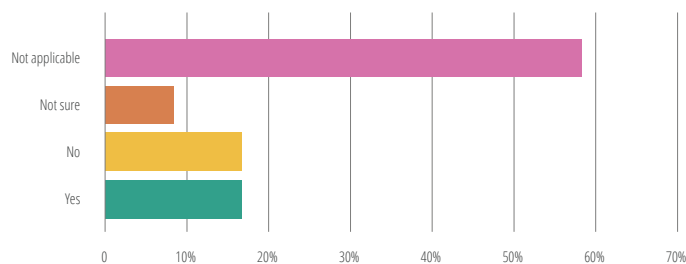
Key Takeaways

69% think more **sidewalks and trails** are needed

Equal amounts of respondents (**31%**) feel **improved streets / connectivity**, more **parks / recreation facilities**, and more **police** are needed



34. Do you have difficulty accessing childcare in Merriam?

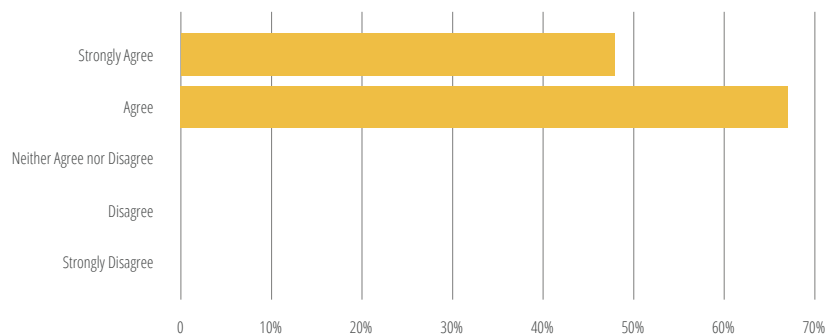


Key Takeaways

An equal amount of respondents (**16%**) say access to childcare is difficult and not difficult

35. Please indicate your feelings for the following goals and priorities:

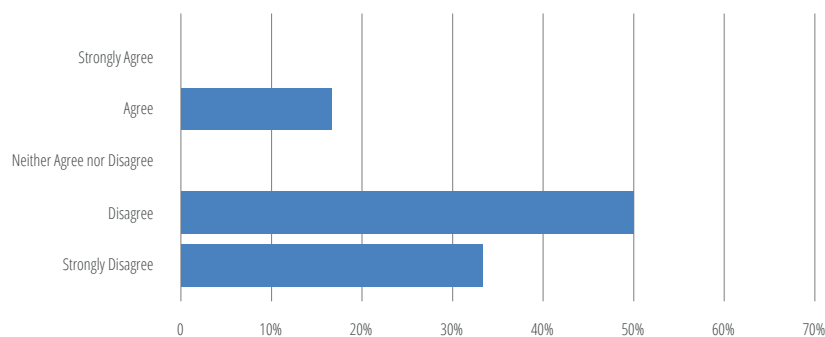
There should be an overall plan that directs future growth and development in appropriate areas



Key Takeaways

There is strong consensus that Merriam should use this comprehensive plan to direct future growth in appropriate areas of the community

Individuals and developers should be free to develop with minimal controls from the city

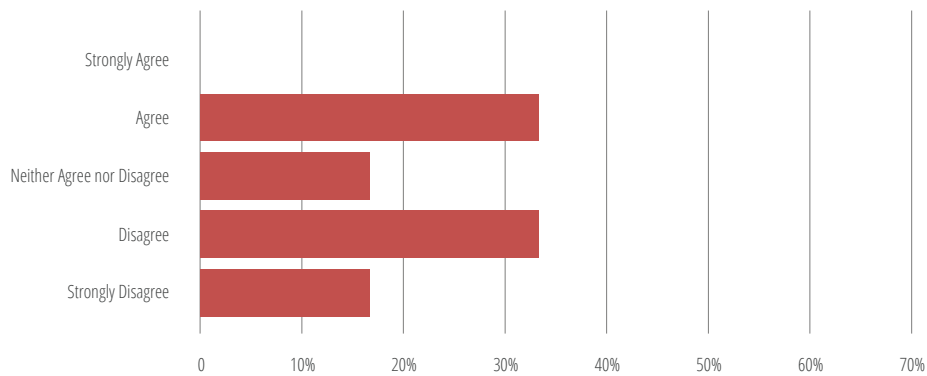


Key Takeaways

The majority of respondents feel the city should place minimal controls on developers and individuals though there were some mixed views on this issue



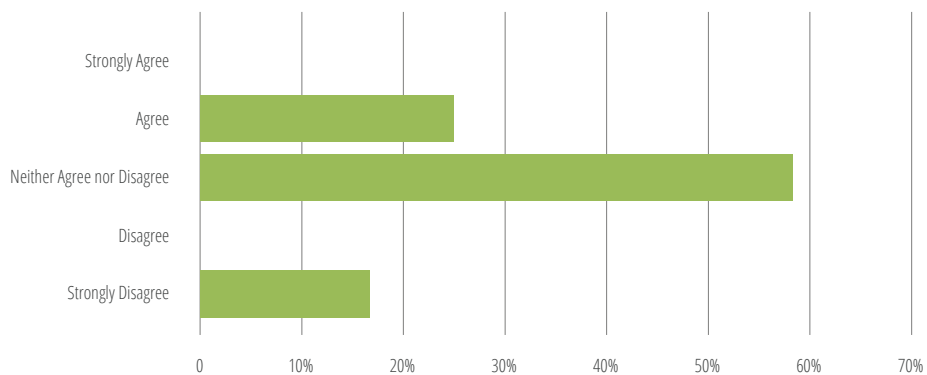
The city should use local tax resources to attract new businesses



Key Takeaways

There were mixed views on whether the city should use local tax resources to attract new businesses

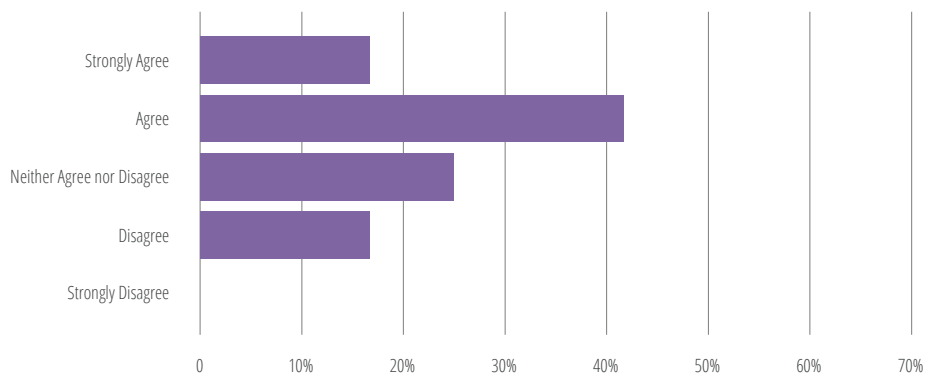
The city should use local tax resources to support infill and redevelopment



Key Takeaways

There were mixed views on whether the city should offer local tax resources to support infill and redevelopment with most respondents neither agreeing or disagreeing on the issue

The city should use local tax resources to protect Downtown from flooding



Key Takeaways

The majority of respondents think Merriam should use local tax resources to protect Downtown from flooding but there were several respondents who indicated they disagreed or were indifferent on the issue



VISUAL PREFERENCING

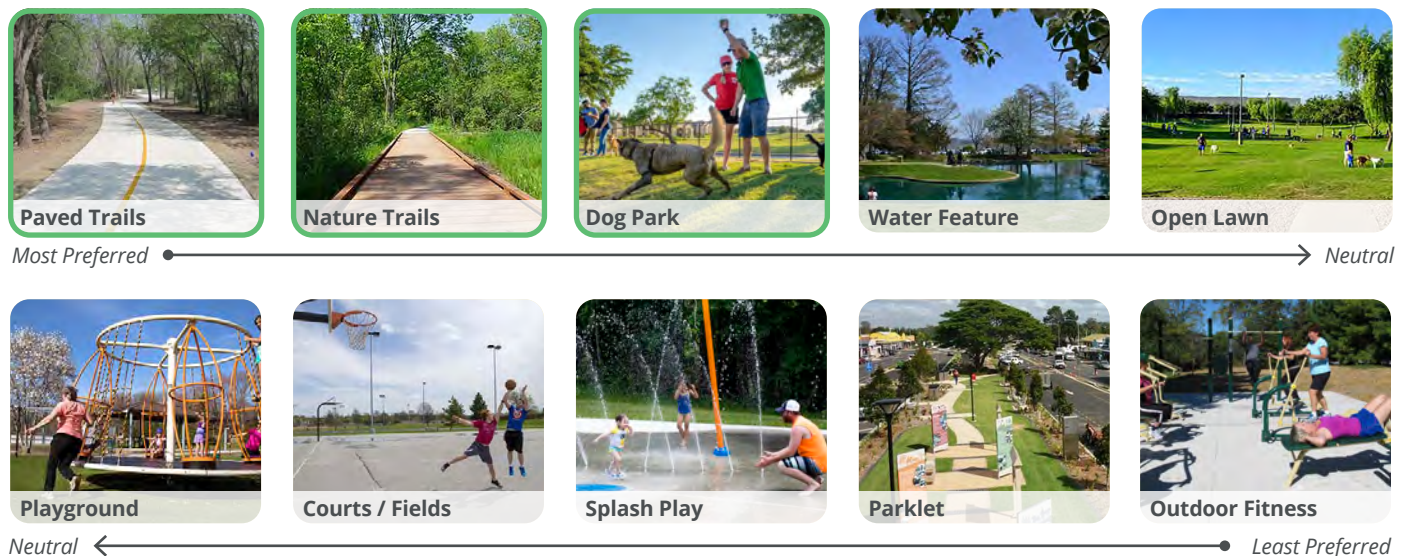
To understand which types of land uses, development types and public amenities that are preferred in the City of Merriam, several visual preferencing exercises were conducted. Residents were able to select the types/style of housing, parks, downtown enhancements, bike facilities and mixed-use developments they felt best fit the demand and character of the city. The following images are organized from most to least preferred for each of those categories.

HOUSING



Rowhouses were the most preferred type of residential development with many variations of single-family homes being the second most preferred. Understanding that Merriam is a primarily built-out community, respondents prefer condominium and garden apartments the most out of any higher-density housing types.

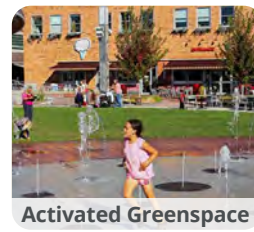
PARKS



The most preferred type of park amenity improvements were paved trails and nature trails, indicating residents desire to recreate outdoors and navigate throughout the community, separate from vehicular corridors. In general, passive amenities such as dog parks, water features and open lawns, in addition to the two trails, were the most preferred types of park improvements with more active features such as playgrounds, courts/fields and outdoor fitness equipment receiving less interest.



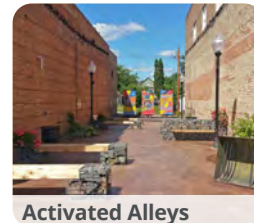
DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENTS



Most Preferred ●



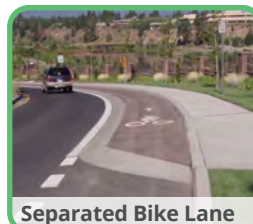
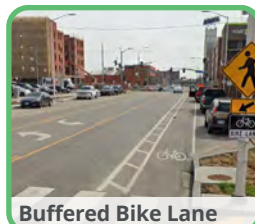
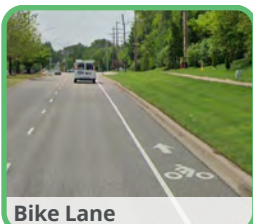
→ Neutral ←



Least Preferred

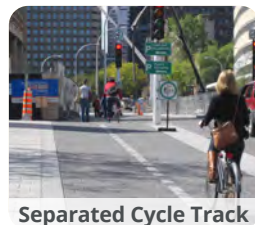
Downtown enhancements that refresh existing infrastructure, building stock and open spaces were the most preferred types of investments. Respondents indicated they desire a downtown that is activated through quality pedestrian-oriented public spaces and streetscape amenities.

BIKE FACILITIES



Most Preferred ●

Neutral



Least Preferred

The two most preferred types of bike facilities are variations of bike lanes, with buffered bike lanes providing more protection to cyclists from adjacent traffic. In the neutral area of the spectrum, respondents were open to more significantly separated and/or protected facilities. This indicates that a variety of bike facilities should be implemented throughout the community that make sense for certain existing physical conditions.



MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS



Most Preferred

Neutral



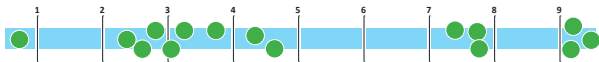
Neutral

Least Preferred

Mixed-use developments that centered around pedestrian-oriented spaces, streetscape amenities and outdoor seating were the most preferred type. Generally speaking, developments with a more traditional design aesthetic were also preferred, compared to a modern style.

PREFERENCE SCALE

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



I feel very safe walking or riding my bike

Mixed views on residents feeling safe walking or biking in Merriam.

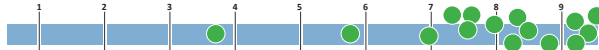
Low quality of life for Merriam residents



High quality of life for Merriam residents

Residents say there **is a high quality of life** in Merriam.

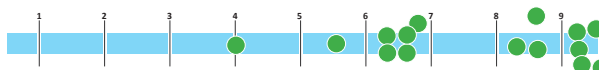
I do not feel safe in my community



I do feel safe in my community

Residents say they **feel safe** in their community.

Merriam should not try to attract growth + development



Merriam should try to attract growth + development

Most feel Merriam **should** try to attract growth + development.

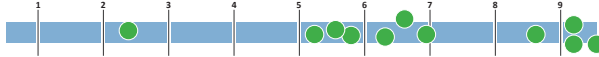
City should not invest more in struggling neighborhoods



City should invest more in struggling neighborhoods

The city **should** invest more in struggling neighborhoods.

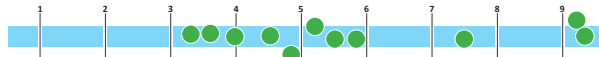
City should not offer tax or financial incentives



City should offer tax or financial incentives

Residents lean towards thinking the city **should** offer financial incentives.

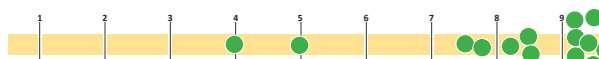
Not happy with the housing options right now



Happy with the housing options right now

Most think there should be **more housing options** in Merriam.

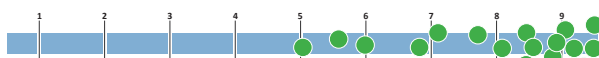
Sustainability should be a low priority



Sustainability should be a high priority

Sustainability **should be** a high priority for the city.

I am not proud of my community



I am very proud of my community

Generally, residents **are proud** of their community.



POSTCARD EXERCISES

At several meetings and input events, participants were given a small postcard with the following phrase:

*"Dear Friend/Family,
It is the year 2040 and you should visit me here in Merriam because..."*

Participants were then asked to finish the statement with Merriam's most promising attributes. This exercise identified the community's most cherished assets, values and potential tourist attractions.

Responses included:

*"We have a **vibrant** community that is focused on the community. We welcome everyone regardless of who they are and we all strive to support each other. We have done our best to be **forward thinking** for the last 20 years and hope to continue to look forward."*

*"We have a great community center with lots of programs. I need you to help me move to a senior living facility in Merriam. We have **wonderful parks** and a **variety of restaurants**. Everyone is **friendly**. Great shopping at IKEA and local businesses."*

*"Our person-scaled little city has so much to offer - locally owned businesses, lots of green space and **many great eateries**. Don't worry - over thriving businesses also offer all the public amenities you want from a big city, with **small-town charm**."*

*"Merriam is a vibrant, **healthy** community with **history** and a **vision** for the future. Merriam is **family-oriented** and **business-friendly** with diverse housing and commercial developments. Merriam has great parks, trails, streams and events."*

*"I'm so happy to still be living well in my **beautiful city** where we have folks from **diverse** origins and economic levels living in harmony. We're still accessible to all parts of the Kansas City Metro area via car or **public transit**."*

"Merriam Drive has become a hotspot on the weekends. Every week is different with outdoor concerts, vendors, food trucks, etc. The entire street has a park-like setting throughout the week."

*"Our updated and expanded downtown has added a new level of energy and life for our residents! Check out our restaurants, shops and brewery... all **locally owned**!"*

"We redeveloped the K-Mart parking lot into an exciting development. Also, we have the best school district in the state."

*"You will find Merriam as one of the most fascinating with tons of **history, art, parks, people** and **shopping**!"*

MERRIAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Merriam, Kansas

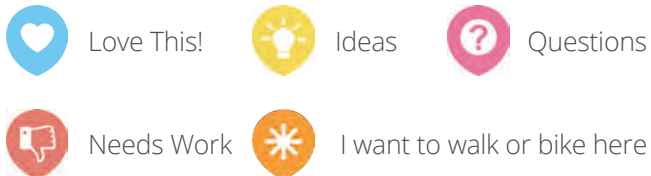
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

Dear Friend/Family,
It is the year 2040 and you should visit me here in Merriam because...



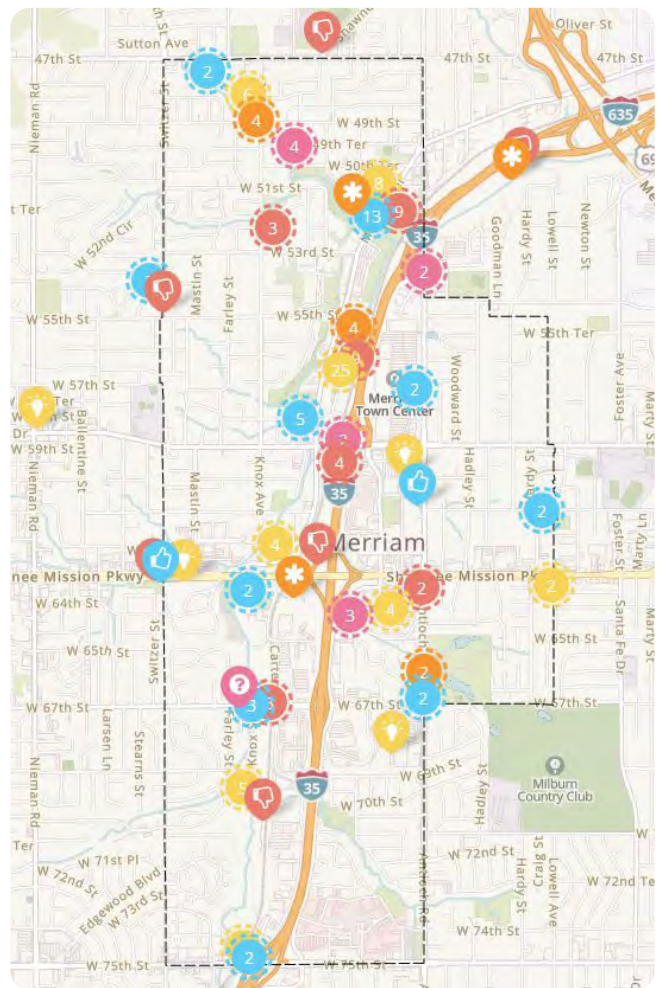
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Visitors to the public engagement website were able to leave comments regarding the existing conditions of the City of Merriam. Comment types included:



Over 150 comments provided a clear picture of how residents feel about certain physical aspects of the community. Comments related to wide array of elements in Merriam with most relating to:

- Commercial Development
- Transportation and Corridors
- Downtown Merriam
- Merriam Town Center
- Parks and Recreation
- Turkey Creek / Turkey Creek Trail



COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Overall, participants like the current scale and character of commercial buildings, especially in the downtown district, and think rehabilitation of these buildings should be incorporated into any redevelopment policies set forth by the city.

Residents see redevelopment opportunities throughout the community that support mixed-use, higher-density buildings.



K-Mart site has the opportunity to be transformed into a mixed-use center similar and book end the Slater Road commercial corridor with an exciting and vibrant development that includes green space.

Redevelop industrial / warehouse properties along Merriam Drive to promote more active uses.

Consolidate / reclaim bus lot north of downtown to allow land to be freed up for development and park amenity space.



K-Mart site needs to be redeveloped and not allowed to sit vacant any longer. Suggestion of implementing a vacant building policy to prevent long-standing vacant properties from negatively impacting the perception of the community.

Many unsightly properties along prominent corridors, particularly in downtown, that give a bad impression of Merriam.

Abundance of vehicle-oriented businesses within the community not the best land use.

Larger industrial / warehouse buildings should be better screened.



TRANSPORTATION AND CORRIDORS



Love what the city did with the Johnson Drive Bridge over Turkey Creek. The results added character, safety, better pedestrian access and architectural elements. Acts as a nice gateway into downtown.

Participants like the added sidewalks recently installed throughout Merriam.

Like the added crosswalk at W 67th St and Knox St that provides access to the indoor soccer facility.



Several intersections throughout the community are thought to be confusing and unsafe. These include the West 67th Street / I-35 interchange, Antioch Road / Merriam Drive intersection, West 47th Street / Shawnee Drive intersection, and West 50th Terrace / Merriam Drive intersection.

Pedestrian crossings on Shawnee Mission Pkwy are inadequate and dangerous.

Residents in the northern areas of Merriam are from public transit services.

No sidewalks on Shawnee Mission Parkway over I-35.



Implement plan for additional pedestrian crossings over/under I-35 to help alleviate the physical divide between the east and west sides of Merriam.

Enhance / create major and secondary gateways coming into Merriam along arterials and secondary streets.

Commuter rail line? Several locations along the rail corridor for the development of station platforms.

Work with railroad to implement above grade rail crossings - similar to what was done in Olathe.

Consider rerouting existing KCATA bus routes to give better access to residents throughout Merriam.

Add enhanced crosswalks along Shawnee Mission Parkway to make for safer pedestrian crossings.



Walking / biking along Merriam Drive is difficult with so many curb cuts. Consider consolidating driveways to make more pleasant.

DOWNTOWN MERRIAM



Love the Market area... hope it can get used more for a variety of engaging events in the future. It is an asset to the community.

Downtown has high visibility from I-35 for events and attractions.



Wish that stores in downtown were valued more in the community.

Kessler Lane is often used to illegally park cars.

Many unsightly buildings and parking lots.

Downtown needs a lot of work and does not reflect the community. Except for the Merriam Marketplace.



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Kessler Lane is often used to illegally park cars.

Many unsightly buildings and parking lots.

Downtown needs a lot of work and does not reflect the community. Except for the Merriam Marketplace.



MERRIAM TOWN CENTER



Agreement that Merriam Town Center needs to be redesigned for different future uses.

Likes the emphasis on the Johnson Drive entrance versus the Antioch Road entrances. At least one comment in support of the landscaped berm along Antioch Road.



Loss of the Hen House Market was a major blow to Merriam.

A fullservice grocery needs to return to Merriam. The Town Center would be an ideal location for this.



Recruit Aldi and Trader Joes to take over the former Hen House Market.

PARKS AND RECREATION



In general, participants are extremely satisfied with the existing parks of Merriam.

Parks have great amenities and participants appreciate recently added amenities.

Great that they connected the Sherwood Forest neighborhood to Chatlain Park.



Pedestrian crossing with landscaped refuge island on Merriam Drive would help to link Waterfall Park with Brown Memorial Park.



Opportunity for a greenway connection to Antioch Park from Chatlain Park underneath I-35.

Would be nice to travel to Antioch Park via foot or bicycle. Consider adding bicycle amenities to Antioch Road.

Explore opportunity for additional green space near Turner Walking Park. Could act as a trail head to the Turkey Creek Trail.

Extending the walking trail along Brown Park Creek would help link the more dense residential areas to the west.



Add lighting to the W 51st Street connection of Brown Memorial Park.

Green space at W 47th Street and Knox Street is ideal to serve as an extension and destination point on the expanded Turkey Creek Trail and park system.

Area around 1501 Merriam Drive a great location for a community garden, playground equipment and walking paths. These types of amenities could help support additional retail / shops and restaurants on adjacent streets.



Could a path run from the west edge of Antioch Park along the creek westward to E. Frontage Road? This would tie the hotel area to the park and potentially connect to Chatlain Park.

Where is the best location for a pedestrian / bike bridge over I-35?



TURKEY CREEK / TRAIL



Would love to see the Turkey Creek Trail extend further south into Overland Park.

Appreciate the trail crossing at W 67th Street.

Waterfall Park is a great section of the trail. It is separated from traffic, homes and industrial uses.



Area behind car dealerships has experienced deforestation, use as a dumping site and additional pavement. Anything that can be done to prevent this pattern would be good.

Pedestrian crossing over Turkey Creek on W 67th Street could be enhanced.

Maintenance issues north of Merriam (Overland Park) have caused the trail to be closed for some time.



A lot of trash in the creek. Wish there was more of an effort to clean it up.

It would be great if there were more water fountains located along the trail.

Area around Knox Street, behind the car dealerships, would be ideal for trailhead parking.

Add wayfinding signage along the trail and at strategic locations such as the Merriam Marketplace.

Use a natural approach to help control flooding issues.



Redirecting the trail to run along the creek and not Merriam Drive would help with safety north of downtown at 55th Street.

Would be great if the trail continued north and followed the creek to W 47th Street.

OTHER COMMENTS



Historic home on W 47th Street, oldest in Johnson County, should be acknowledged. Historic marker, longer-term preservation and integration into larger green space should be explored.

The small tributary streams are an asset to the community. Wild and natural feel.



There are very few postal drop spots in Merriam. Having a common postal location will help to build a Merriam identity.



SUB-AREA PLANS

Sub-areas call attention to specific locations that represent important and potentially catalytic sites to the overall quality of life and vibrancy of the community. The sub-areas in Merriam were selected by the steering committee by placing green, yellow and red dots on a map of the city.



Assets/areas of the city that are working well and need minimal focus.



Locations that are experiencing some challenges now or in the future.



Areas that represent major challenges, need redevelopment or additional thought.

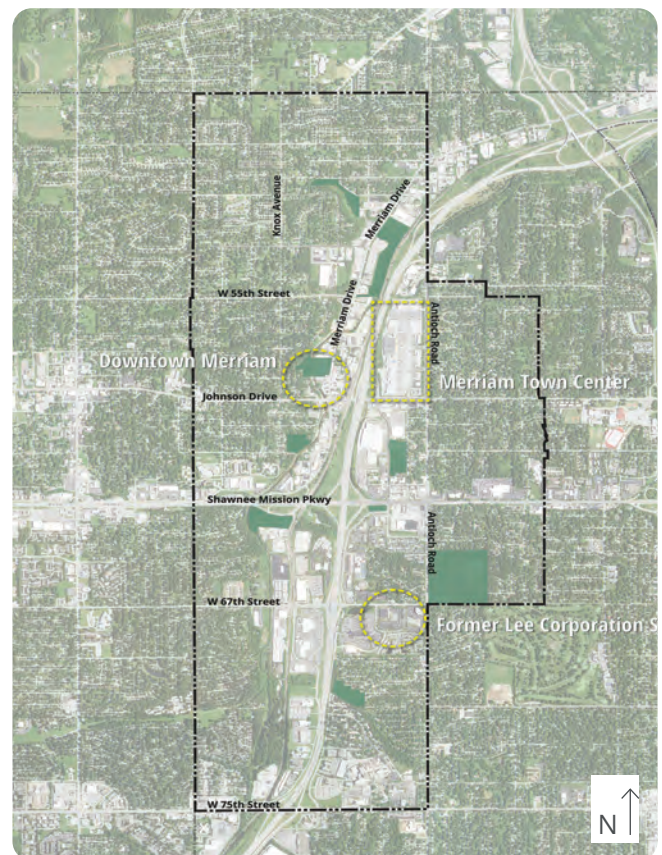
Following this interactive activity and discussion, three different sub-areas were determined to be a focus of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan update: Merriam Town Center, Downtown Merriam and the former Lee Jean's site on West 67th Street.

Merriam Town Center - A major commercial property in the heart of the city, Merriam Town Center was selected as a sub-area because of its prominence in the community and the unknown future of brick and mortar retail. Following the departure of Hen House, Merriam's only full-service grocery store, many in the community wondered what the future of the Town Center would be. It is the intent of this plan to provide a new vision for future development in Merriam Town Center.

Downtown Merriam - This subarea was selected because of long established challenges Downtown Merriam has experienced in attracting investments. There is the general feeling that downtown buildings are underutilized with many businesses geared towards automotive repair and that downtown is not the vibrant, walkable and charming environment that it has the potential to be.

Another major challenge in the downtown sub-area is the threat of flooding from Turkey Creek. Flooding events in the past have damaged properties repeatedly and with continued delays in flood mitigation efforts, investment in downtown has been hindered.

Former Lee Jean's Headquarters - Located on West 67th Street, the former headquarters for Lee Jean's has been vacant since Lee Jean's left. This site was selected as the third sub-area because it has the potential to be re-imagined to serve some of the many needs in Merriam including housing, offices or other services.

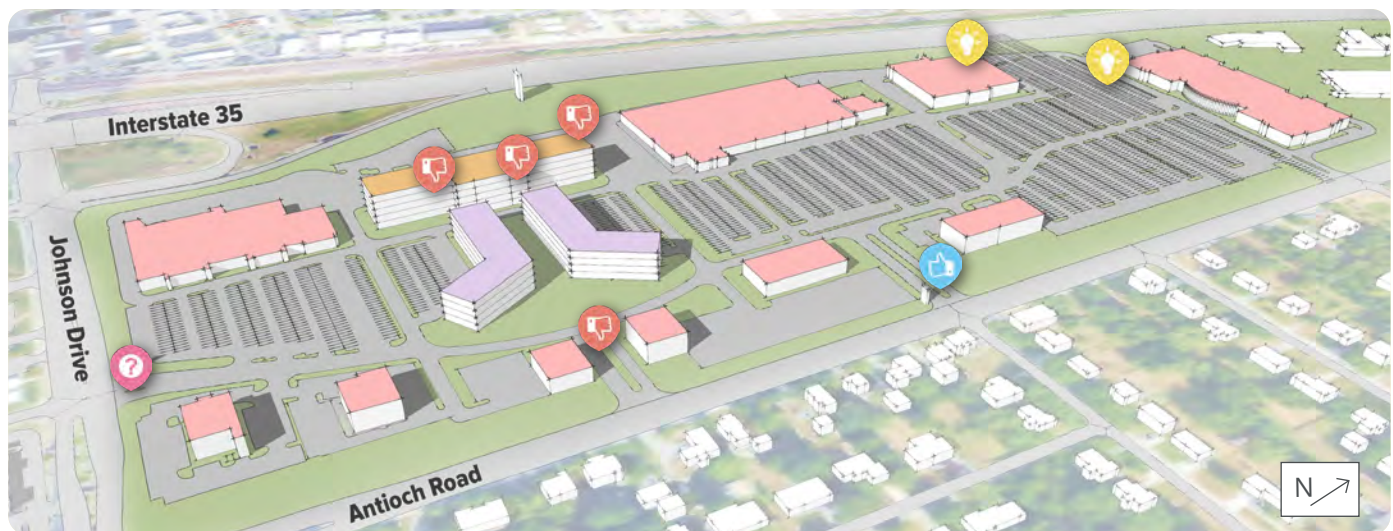
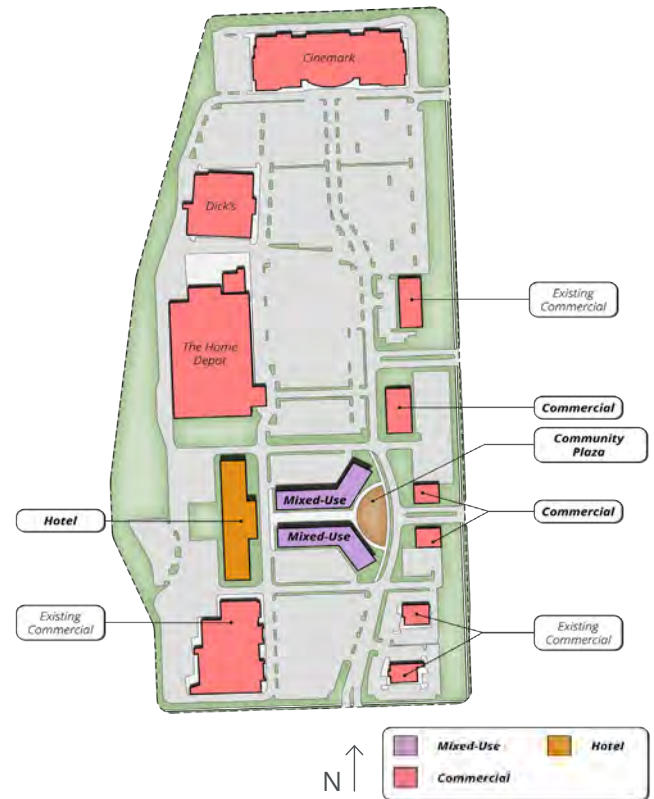


MERRIAM TOWN CENTER

For each of the plan sub-areas and their variations, residents were given the chance to provide their input. Comment types are the same as previously described for the existing conditions.

Merriam Town Center Concept #1

Concept 1 retains much of the existing commercial properties while reconfiguring a central portion of the shopping center. The southern most entrance off of Antioch Road brings visitor into a denser and more walkable mixed-use district with a large plaza designed for public gatherings, outdoor seating and community events. Two new commercial buildings flank the entrance drive which brings the walkable environment directly out to Antioch Road. The former Hen House Market as well as a few other retailers, are demolished to accommodate a new destination hotel. This hotel development is the terminus to the walkable mixed-use corridor and provides a cohesive backdrop for this district. The Home Depot, Dick's Sporting Goods, Cinemark Theater and several other commercial tenants remain as is, in this concept.



The green elements included in this concept, including the preservation of the landscaped buffer along Antioch Road.



Why de-emphasize the Johnson Drive entry? This entry is important because of future transit plans that will continue to use Johnson Drive as primary corridor east/west through the city.



Interrupting north/south sightlines with new development may isolate some businesses.

Hotel may not be the best use of the site. Other business types are more needed in this area.

Is a community plaza located at a busy intersection the best location?

Does this concept work for a full service grocery store to return to Merriam?

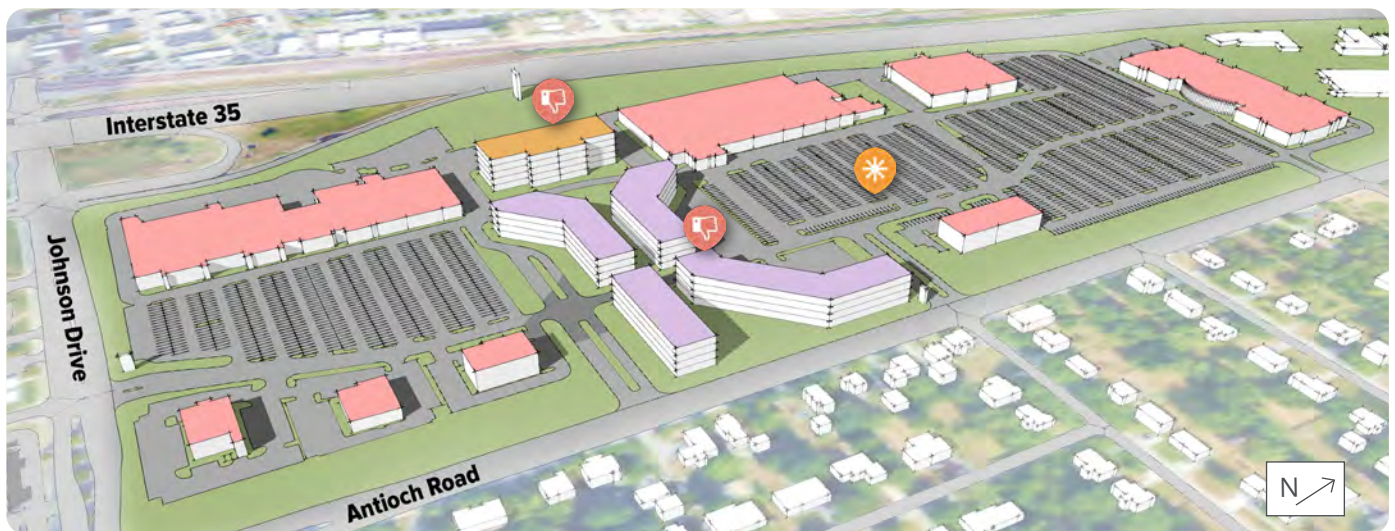


Possible pedestrian / bicycle connection over I-35 from this property?



Merriam Town Center Concept #2

This concept shares many similarities with Concept 1 but expands the mixed-use district directly to Antioch Road. A large community plaza fronts Antioch Road and brings pedestrians into the site towards the hotel, located where the former Hen House Market was located. This hotel is slightly smaller than in Concept 1 which allows more of the existing retailers, south of the former Hen House, to remain in place. Parking for the mixed-use district is located to the north and south of the proposed buildings and therefore, creates two separate big-box retail areas, with the Cinemark, Dick's Sporting Goods and The Home Depot located to the north, and various other existing retailers, located to the south.



Hotel may not be the best use of this space. A full-service grocery store is what is needed. Consider other locations in Merriam for a hotel.

Orientation of the site into a north and south district does not keep the site unified. Consider maintaining the central north/south axis.



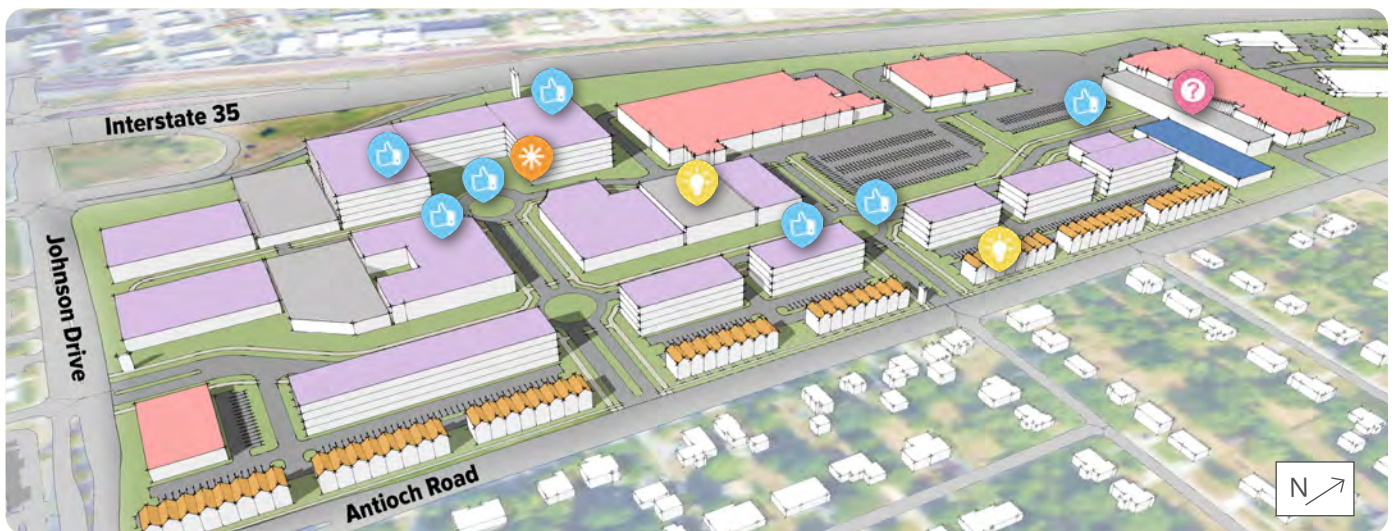
Being able to visit Merriam Town Center without having to cross too many busy streets would be great.

Access from west side of Merriam by foot or bicycle is cumbersome and somewhat dangerous.



Merriam Town Center Concept #3

Concept 3 dramatically reimagines Merriam Town Center as a dense and walkable urban mixed-use neighborhood. Along Antioch Road, the large berm is removed and replaced by medium-density residential units, either in the form of townhomes or rowhouses. These homes will buffer the single-family homes located on the east side of Antioch Road. A series of mixed-use developments are located directly behind the medium-density residential and along a realigned internal street. Roundabouts help circulate traffic at key intersections and provide opportunities for placemaking features. Adjacent to this street, a greenway provides recreational opportunities as well as easy pedestrian circulation. A large mixed-use building, designed to accommodate a new grocery store, is located in the footprint of the former Hen House Market. A prominent plaza directly in front of this development provides a dramatic visual backdrop for this pedestrian and vehicular corridor. Several other mixed-use buildings in this immediate area complete the overall neighborhood feel and ensure pedestrians are the priority in this walkable district. Cinemark, Dick's, and The Home Depot remain with an additional parking structure in front of the movie theater accommodating spaces taken up by redevelopment. Additionally, an office development near this end of the site, continues to diversify the tenants of this center.



Like the greenway that traverses the entire site.

A pedestrian-centric center like this will attract visitors and shoppers to stay longer and visit more stores.

The community plaza would be a great addition!

Yes! A space designated for a grocery store!



Would love to walk or bike here to grab a few groceries / a bite to eat.

Could see this space being similar in use and function as the Prairie Village shops off of 71st Street.

A second floor restaurant in taller buildings could provide nice westward views towards downtown - sunsets!



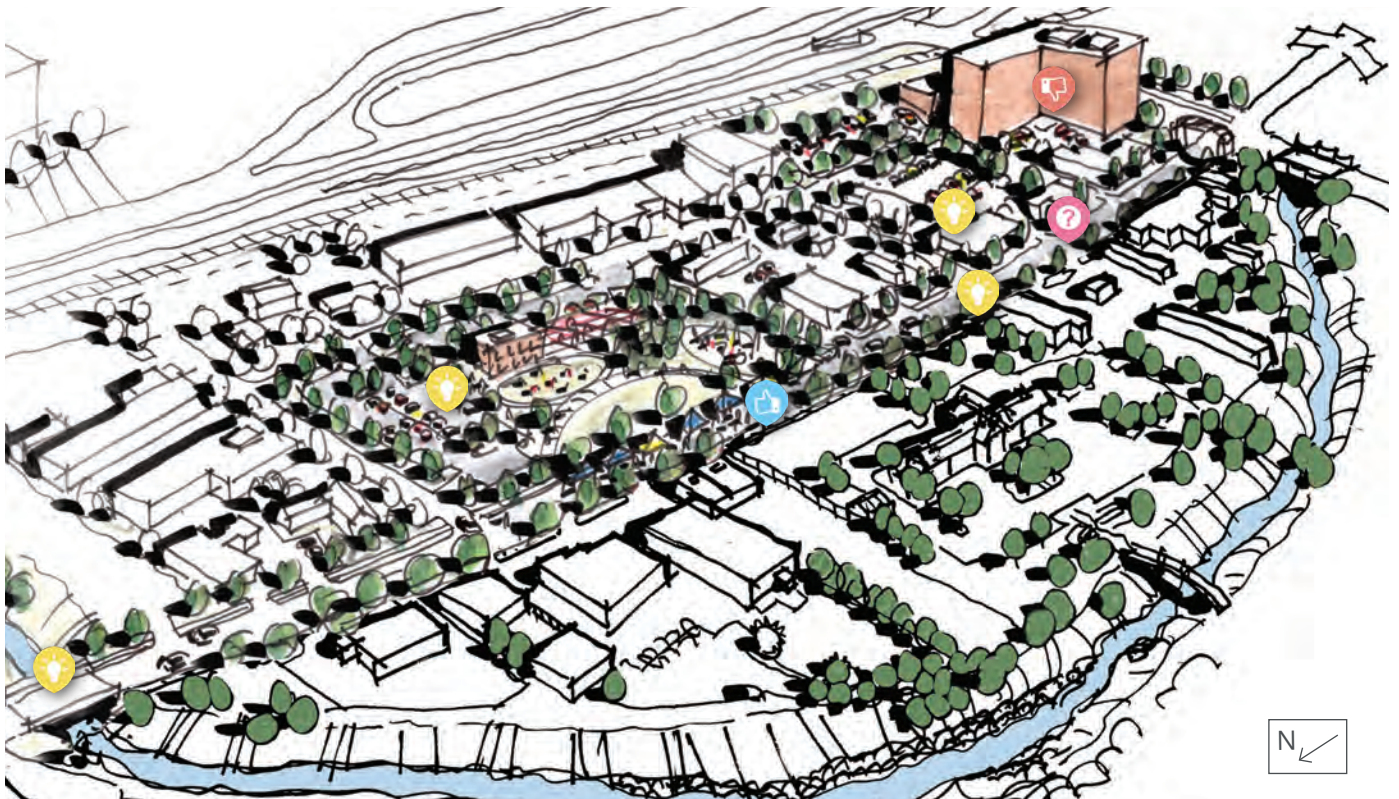
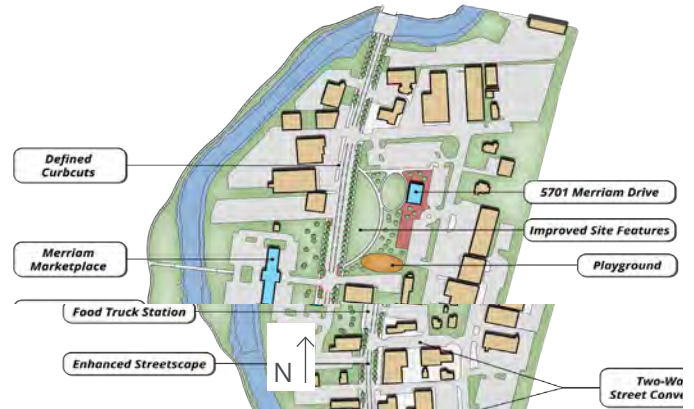
Look at the possibility of installing electric vehicle chargers throughout this development. Convenient location off of I-35 and could be aimed at long distance travelers looking to recharge, shop and eat.



DOWNTOWN MERRIAM

Downtown Merriam Concept #1

Concept 1 retains all of the current buildings, many of which are historic, in downtown Merriam and focuses on enhancing the streetscapes to provide a more cohesive pedestrian network of sidewalks and encourage foot traffic to support downtown retail and businesses. The streetscape treatments are unique to downtown Merriam and become a destination element within the community.



The Merriam Marketplace is nice - walking to it from nearby neighborhoods is more difficult.



Consider mixed-use higher density away from Johnson Drive and further into downtown.



Utilize old community center site for an amphitheater / park idea and include a Ferris Wheel.

Like this concept. It makes the downtown area feel like you could wander around it a bit more, and might open up opportunities for patios and outdoor dining / entertainment.



Would this keep the historic buildings, or at least the ones in good condition?



Downtown Merriam Concept #2

Concept 2 builds off of the strengths of downtown Merriam while reconfiguring large portions of the district to create a unique and iconic urban center for residents and visitors alike. Much of historic core of the downtown, immediately north of Johnson Drive is retained in this concept with enhanced streetscapes features, improved pedestrian walkways and revitalized building facades. As you move north along Merriam Drive, the segment located between the Merriam Marketplace and the Irene B. French community center is realigned to Kessler Lane. By doing this, a large public open space is created between those two civic assets with an amphitheater, pathways and seating areas within a park-like setting. The creek basin is expanded in this concept. In the likelihood of a future flooding event, the expanded basin will be able to accommodate more flood waters therefore mitigating property damage to downtown businesses all while creating a dynamic gathering area in the heart of the city.



Expanded creek basin would be aesthetically pleasing and help with flooding.

This concept can't happen soon enough.



Buildings in the sketch seem too tall. Fearful it could look like Lenexa's city center.



Restore the bridge at Hocker Drive and connect to Merriam Drive / Merriam Marketplace?

Could proposed parking structure also accommodate electric charging stations for I-35 travelers as well as serve a potential future commuter rail station?

Improve pedestrian connections along Johnson Drive to link future downtown development with new community center and library.



FORMER LEE JEANS SITE

Former Lee Jeans Site

This site is located in an area of Merriam primarily comprised of office and residential land uses. As such, this concept envisions this office-oriented site to remain primarily used for that purpose. The current parking lot configuration and circulation within the site is confusing and so this concept proposes a more cohesive internal street layout that provides ample parking for the individual office buildings. Two new commercial buildings are proposed flanking the entrance off of West 67th Street. These would be an ideal location for any restaurant or microbrewery type development that could serve the large daytime office population as well as the nearby residential neighborhoods. A larger office unit located in the center of the site is adjacent to a prominent water feature with landscaping and walking paths, allowing for office workers to have recreational opportunities throughout the work week.

The former Lee Jean's building is reconfigured to accommodate senior housing, office or mixed-use occupants. A large parking structure provides parking for this facility and a large amenity deck on the east side of the Lee Jean's building, adds amenities available for the building users. Associated with the site improvements, a cycle track is proposed along the north side of West 67th Street. This bicycle facility will connect cyclists from the Turkey Creek Trail to Antioch Park, by allowing for safe passage underneath I-35.



This rework of the site is OK but it repeats the same, not asking what can this site may be now that major tenants have left. Consider bringing an educational component into this site that could include features such as an auditorium, show spaces, adult teaching and be a softer use than more raw business. Also, each building could be done by a notable architect.



This is an improvement for this site. Like the water feature with a sidewalk around it. Could be a walking track for seniors.

