

ENGAGEMENT MEMO

OVERVIEW

The Gambier Village Strategic Plan process is guided by the stewardship of a steering committee comprised of community leaders with local expertise and a passion for the future of Gambier. The steering committee collaborates with a planning team of Village employees and hired consultants to facilitate public engagement and ensure final recommendations properly reflect input gathered during the planning process. The general public was invited to participate throughout the summer; both in-person and online.

This memo provides an overview of the engagement process and summarizes feedback received thus far. A complete copy of community survey results will be provided in the final Plan.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Community Workshops

Bringing interactive engagement to existing community events helps ensure a wide audience is aware of the Gambier Village Strategic Plan and able to participate. The planning team set up a table at the annual July 4th Festival event and Party on the Patio (Saturday, Aug. 17th, 2019). The events offered an opportunity to introduce community members to the planning process and gather feedback on what the public would like to see in Gambier in the future.

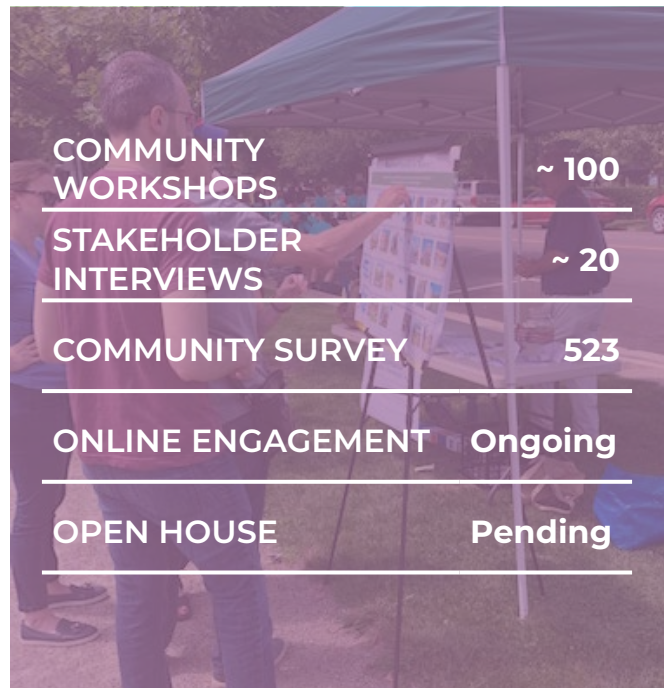
Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews, including both formal and informal discussions, were conducted with business owners, employers, and other prominent community members to add detail and specificity to the feedback received from the general public.

Community Survey

Hard copies of the community survey were available at in-person public engagement events, as well as through distribution by Village staff and steering committee members. The survey was also available

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS | ~ 100 |
| STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS | ~ 20 |
| COMMUNITY SURVEY | 523 |
| ONLINE ENGAGEMENT | Ongoing |
| OPEN HOUSE | Pending |

to complete online from June 27 through September 9, 2019. Questions encouraged participants to consider future growth, development, and the overall livability of Gambier.

Online Activities

The project website -KnoxCoPlans.com- provides updates, planning materials, and the activities conducted at community workshops. Business cards advertising the website were passed out to steering committee members and distributed around the Village to spread the word about online engagement. As the Plan is created, draft ideas will also be available online for viewing and comment.

Open House

An overview of the Plan will be presented to the public in the form of an open house before the final document is provided to Village Council for adoption.

ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

Community Survey Respondents

Understanding some basic demographic information about participants in the community survey provides context to the responses. Numerically speaking, about 20% of Gambier’s population participated in the community survey; though not all respondents live within in Gambier and may associate with the community through work, education, or as a visitor.

About 60% of survey respondents are Gambier residents and the same percent said they work within Village limits. The majority of those surveyed are affiliated with Kenyon College, with 43.8% current students and 40.5% a member of the faculty, staff, and/or board of trustees. About 25% live alone and just under 20% live with children.

General

According to community survey results and general feedback received at the community workshops and stakeholder interviews, some of the community members’ favorite things about Gambier are Kenyon College, its historical character, the rural and natural aesthetic, and Wiggins Elementary School. Some of the community’s least favorite things are illustrated by what they would change, including more retail, dining, and entertainment, improved pedestrian safety, and an increase in housing options (Figure 1).

When asked broadly what the community would like to see in Gambier in the future, July 4th activity participants gave the most votes to community events, followed by retail and restaurants (Figure 2).

Land Use & Development

When asked on the community survey “What do you think is the most important development priority for Gambier to focus on over the next ten years?”, more than one-third of respondents said attract, grow, and retain small businesses (Figure 3). This aligns with results from the second community workshop in which the project prioritization activity revealed a strong desire for dedicating funds to support small businesses. Expanding small and/or local businesses may provide opportunities to increase commercial offerings within Gambier, such as food or retail establishments. Some existing business owners said they struggle in the summer when students are gone and their customer base shrinks.

Figure 1. Community Survey Results: General

If you could change ONE thing about Gambier, what would it be?

Most common themes:

- More entertainment, dining, & retail options
- Strengthen relationship between Kenyon & the Village
- Improve parking
- More diverse and affordable housing
- Pave the Middle Path
- Improve safety of 229 / 308 intersection
- Expand regional connectivity
- Better lighting
- Diversify the architecture
- Revise traffic pattern
- Improve walkability
- Upgrade utilities
- Enhance public spaces

Figure 2. Community Workshop Results: General

What improvements are most important for Gambier?

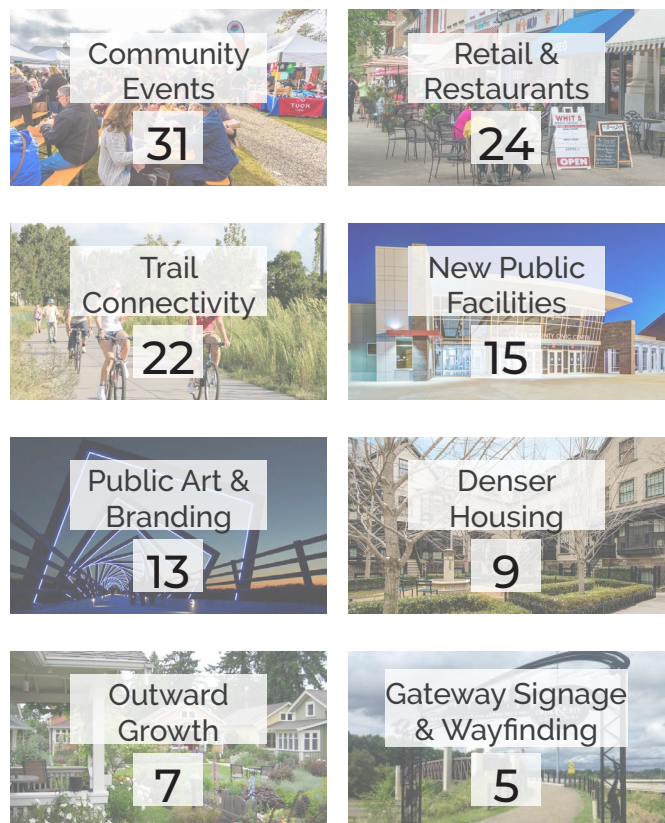
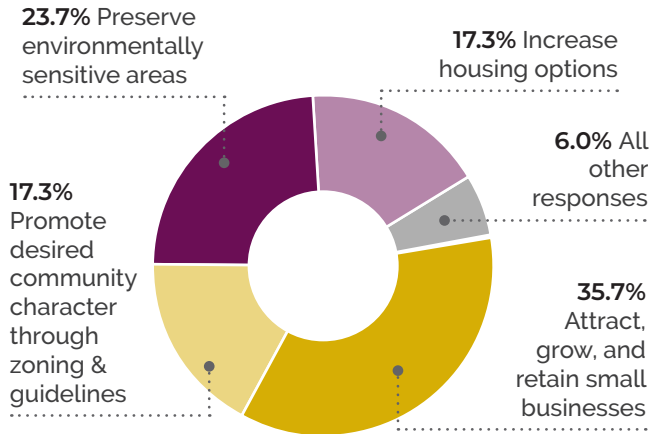


Figure 3. Community Survey Results: Land Use & Development

What do you think is the most important development priority for Gambier to focus on over the next 10 years?



The relationship between the Village and Kenyon College seemed to affect how the public perceives and talks about development issues. Ongoing construction at Kenyon, a singular architectural style, and a lack of diversity in developers and property ownership were frequent concerns voiced by survey respondents and stakeholders generally.

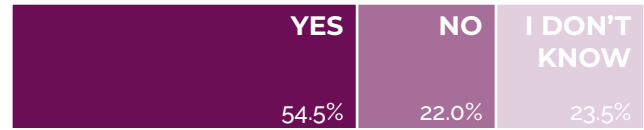
Housing

The cost and limited supply of residential options in the Village was a common theme throughout the engagement process across household types. The public voiced a need for housing to accommodate many different segments of the population including students, faculty, retirees and aging adults, and young families; demonstrating a broad interest for more housing. This general desire for an increase in housing supply was also communicated in the survey. Around half of respondents said their preferred housing type is available in Gambier and a variety of different housing types were considered appropriate for future development (Figure 4). Opinions on the greatest housing issue for the future of Gambier were also diverse, with affordability and providing workforce housing for Kenyon faculty and staff receiving the highest number of votes.

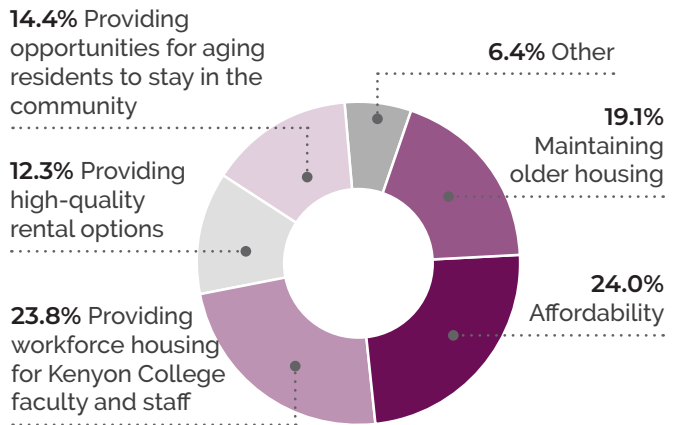
Redevelopment, infill development, and outward growth are options to consider in order to meet the community's demand and preferences relative to residential neighborhoods.

Figure 4. Community Survey Results: Housing

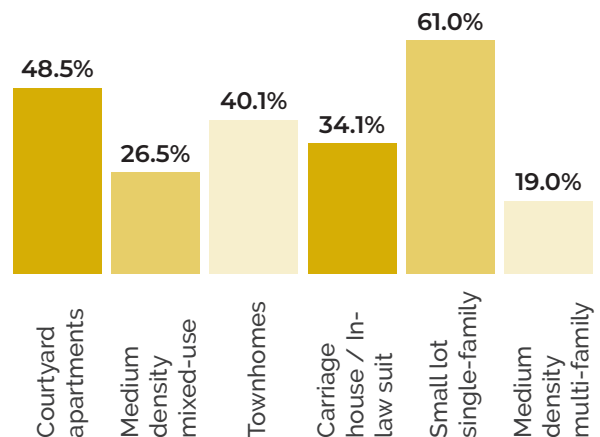
Is your preferred housing type available in Gambier?



Which housing issue do you think will be the most pressing for Gambier to address in the next 10 years?



What housing type is appropriate for future residential (re)development in Gambier? (select all that apply)



Mobility, Infrastructure, & Services

Connectivity, safety, and quality of utilities were the primary issues raised related to mobility, infrastructure, and services in Gambier. The greatest current challenge in Gambier according to about 21% of community survey respondents is the quality of, or access to, utilities (Figure 5). Frequent power outages and the cost and quality of water were infrastructure-related issues voiced by the community in open-ended survey questions. Looking to the future, planning and zoning services received the highest percentage of votes as the greatest challenge. Figure 5 shows the complete breakdown of responses for both current and future conditions. The majority of "other" responses were "I don't know".

These results are similar to feedback gathered at the community workshop and through stakeholder interviews. Generally speaking, community members value Gambier's quaint charm and its natural beauty; however, its isolated location is also one of their least favorite things. Its physical location atop a hill and limited transportation options (particularly for non-personal vehicular travel), create mobility barriers for residents.

Issues of safety also came up regularly in the engagement process. Examples include a lack of sidewalks, the speed at which vehicles pass through the Village, the intersection of 229 / 308, and the condition of roads and paths during winter weather.

Parks & Recreation

The community emphasized the importance of parks, trails, and open space for the present and future quality of life in Gambier. Survey participants rated the quality of existing parks and trails relatively high at 3.8 and 4.1, respectively (Figure 6). The quality of the Middle Path was rated lower at 3.0. Safety and comfort concerns about the Middle Path were voiced in open ended responses of the survey in regard to respondents' least favorite thing about Gambier. Several community members shared a desire for the Middle Path to be paved in order to be accessible and more easily traversed in winter weather conditions. The Middle Path is owned by Kenyon College and therefore outside the purview of this Strategic Plan, but serves as an important public space within the center of the Village.

Strengthening connections to the Kokosing Gap Trail was also a common theme throughout the

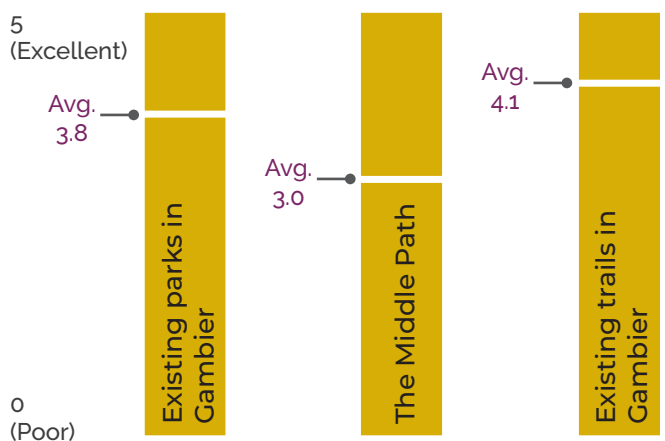
Figure 5. Community Survey Results: Mobility, Infrastructure, & Services

What is / will be the greatest challenge related to infrastructure and Village services in Gambier?

| Issue | % (currently) | % (future) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Quality of, or access to, utilities | 21.3% | 7.5% |
| Traffic | 15.5% | 14.6% |
| Planning and zoning services | 15.5% | 23.0% |
| Road maintenance | 13.8% | 7.5% |
| Maintenance of public properties | 8.5% | 15.8% |
| Village fiscal operations / taxes | 6.7% | 9.7% |
| Public safety services | 5.7% | 4.3% |
| Other | 13.0% | 7.1% |

Figure 6. Community Survey Results: Parks & Rec.

How would you rate the quality of the following parks and trails?



How would you rate the importance of parks and open space for the future of Gambier?



engagement. Trail connectivity ranked as the third most popular improvement at the July 4th Festival (Figure 2) and also ranked third at the Party on the Patio budget prioritization activity which provided more specific options.

Community Image & Brand

Gambier's "town and gown" relationship lends itself to unique strengths and challenges. Kenyon College is an important driver of the local economy, and population; though residents expressed feeling a lack of control over their own community. Many survey respondents, both residents and students, expressed a desire for stronger communal connections and a more unified identity of Gambier. In addition to a general consensus on a need for more housing, there was strong support from the majority of survey participants, regardless of affiliation to Kenyon, on a need for more commercial offerings and events in the downtown district (Figure 7). Expanding public gathering spaces and community activities Downtown would help strengthen Gambier's image and brand as a cohesive community.

SUMMARY

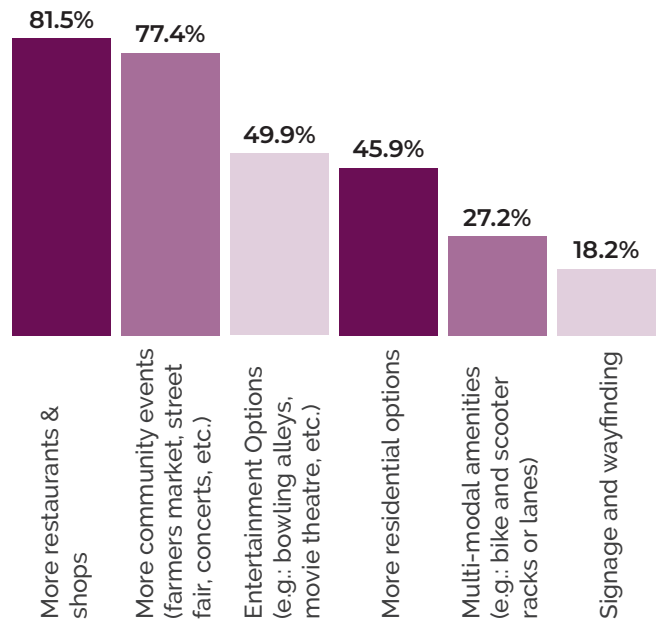
The following key takeaways serve as a summary of the feedback gathered from the Gambier community.

- Prioritize improvements in the downtown; including redevelopment of underutilized properties, parking upgrades, and public spaces;
- Improve connectivity of Gambier to the region through expanded trails, transportation options, signage/wayfinding, and events;
- Ensure a collaborative, symbiotic relationship between the Village and College;
- Expand housing options;
- Support small businesses;
- Enhance entertainment, dining, and retail options;
- Diversify development and architectural style;
- Preserve and capitalize on Gambier's historical charm and natural beauty;
- Utilize signage and wayfinding to increase safety and tourism; and,
- Improve the quality of utilities.

These opinions gathered from the community will be used to guide and direct the future recommendations for the Village Strategic Plan.

Figure 7. Community survey results: Downtown

Which three improvements do you think are the most important for the future of Downtown? (select your top 3)



Community members discussing the future of Gambier at the Party on the Patio event hosted by the Kenyon Inn in August.