
OCCIDENTAL COMMUNITY SURVEY

Community Action Planning (CAP) Committee
Occidental, Sonoma County California





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INTRODUCTION

The *OCCIDENTAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL* recently initiated a community-driven planning process to improve the quality of life for residents, friends and visitors.

The *COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN (CAP)* committee was formed to focus on developing a plan for improvements in the downtown area to support local community needs. Three sub-groups were formed to take action.

This *SURVEY* was created to gather feedback and confirm we are prioritizing and resourcing what is important to our community.

Group 1
Community Center
Improvement



Group 2
Downtown Space Design &
Landscape



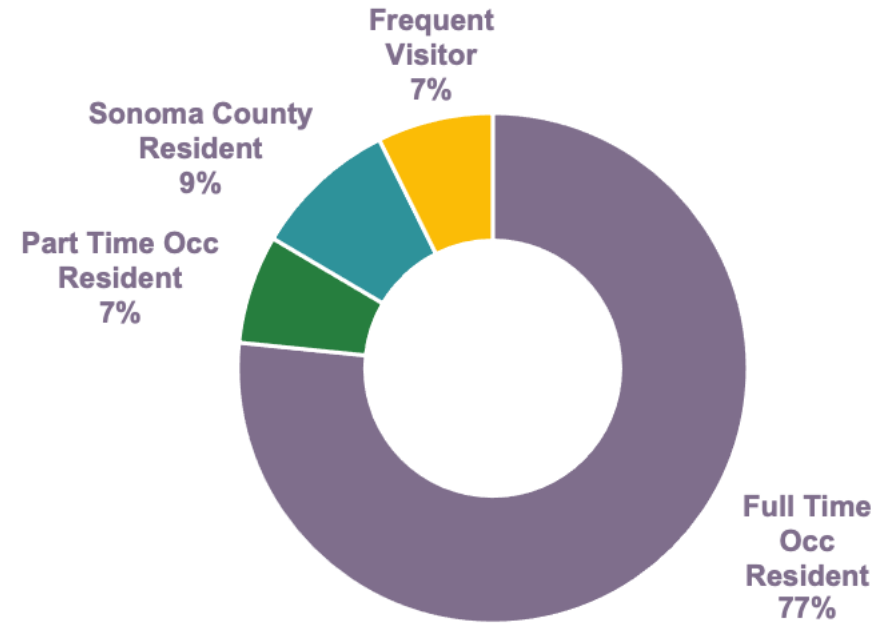
Group 3
Communication, Governance
& Infrastructure



WHO RESPONDED?

Total Completed Surveys: **218**

- Where do they live?
 - 56% Occidental West 95465
 - 31% Occidental East 95472
 - 6% Camp Meeker
 - 5% Sonoma County (separate from above)
- What age groups are responding?
 - 47% are over 60
 - 23% are in their 50's
 - 17% are in their 40's
 - 13% are under 40



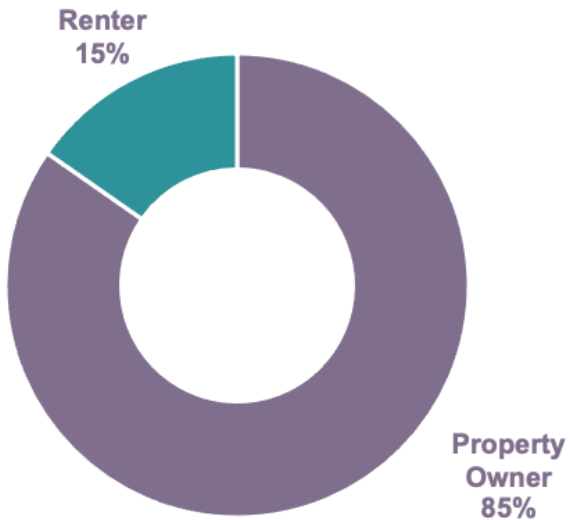
Over 75% are Full-Time Occidental Residents

- Connection to Occidental
 - 27% of Occidental residents are “New” (<5yrs)
 - 7% claim English as their secondary language
 - 16% live in Downtown Occidental
 - 9% are Sonoma County residents (beyond Occidental)
 - 7% are Frequent Visitors (beyond Sonoma County)

WHO RESPONDED?

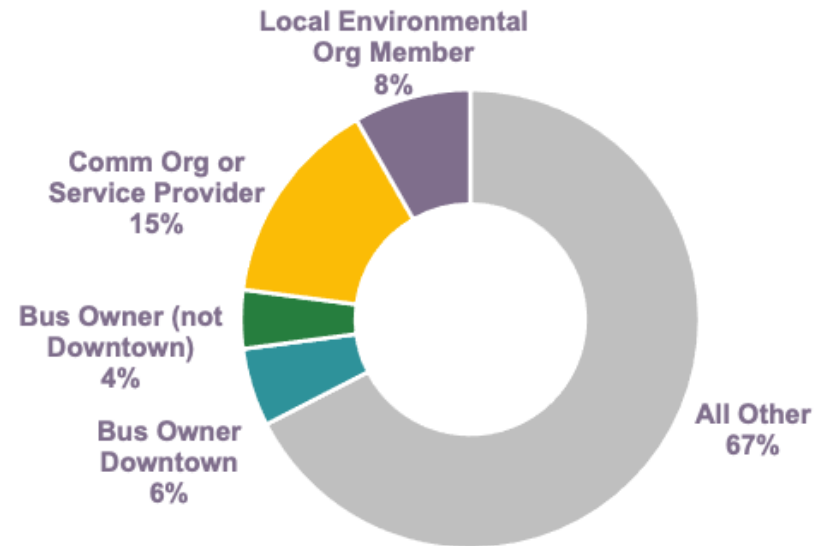
Property Status

- Most respondents are property owners
- 15% of Occidental renters are equally dedicated to improvements



Business in Occidental

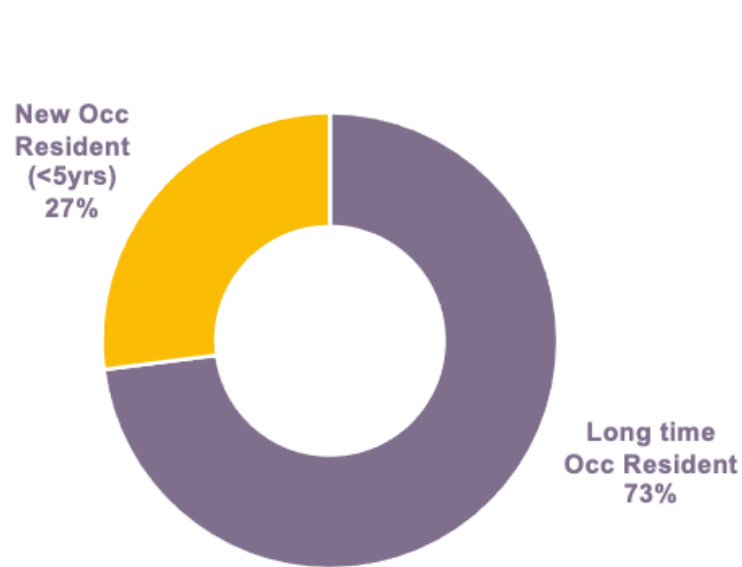
- 33% of responders own businesses or are associated with local organizations
- 6% own businesses downtown Occidental



RESPONDER DEMOGRAPHICS

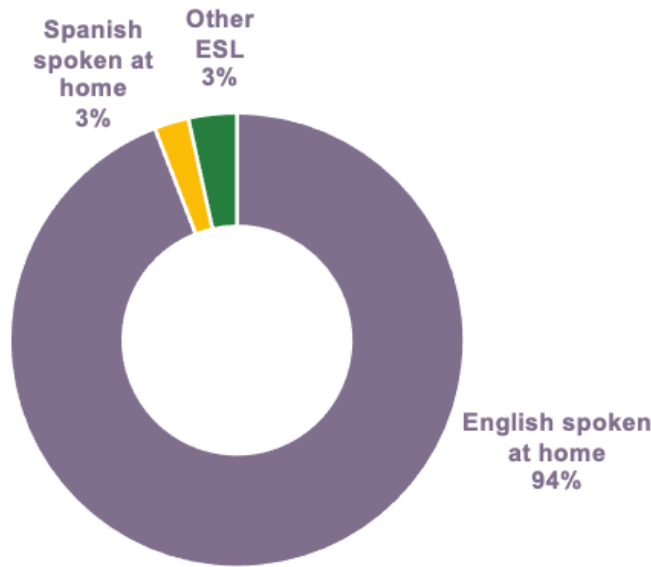
Residency

- 27% have lived in Occidental for less than 5 years



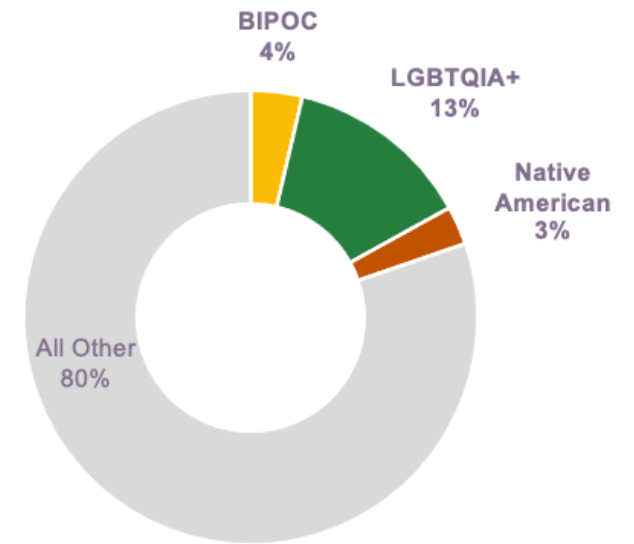
Primary Language

- English is not the primary language for 6% of responders



Identifications

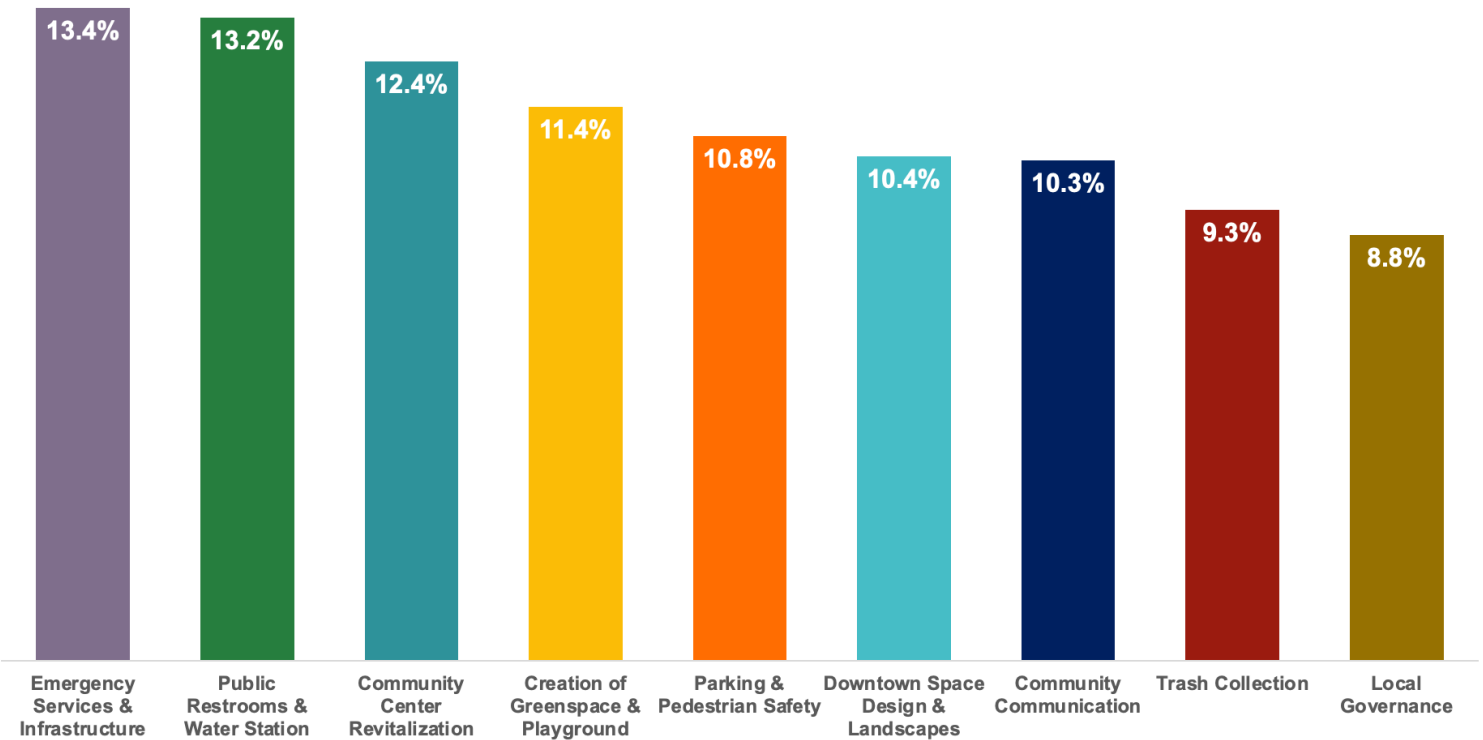
- 20% of identify as BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, Native American



CAP INITIATIVES

How would you prioritize the top 9 identified INITIATIVES?

- **EMERGENCY SERVICES** are priority in Occidental. This is the primary focus of our Community Services District (OCSD).
- The lack of public **RESTROOMS** is an ongoing and growing concern in Occidental. Current Porta-Potty's are not meeting community needs.
- The **COMMUNITY CENTER** is under-utilized and needs to be updated to meet safety and community needs.
- There are no **GREENSPACE** areas to gather and play in Occidental.
- **PARKING** and Pedestrian **SAFETY** remains a concern and needs to be addressed.
- Responders want to keep the quaint and quirky **DOWNTOWN**, but want gathering spaces, better landscaping and maintenance and trash collection.

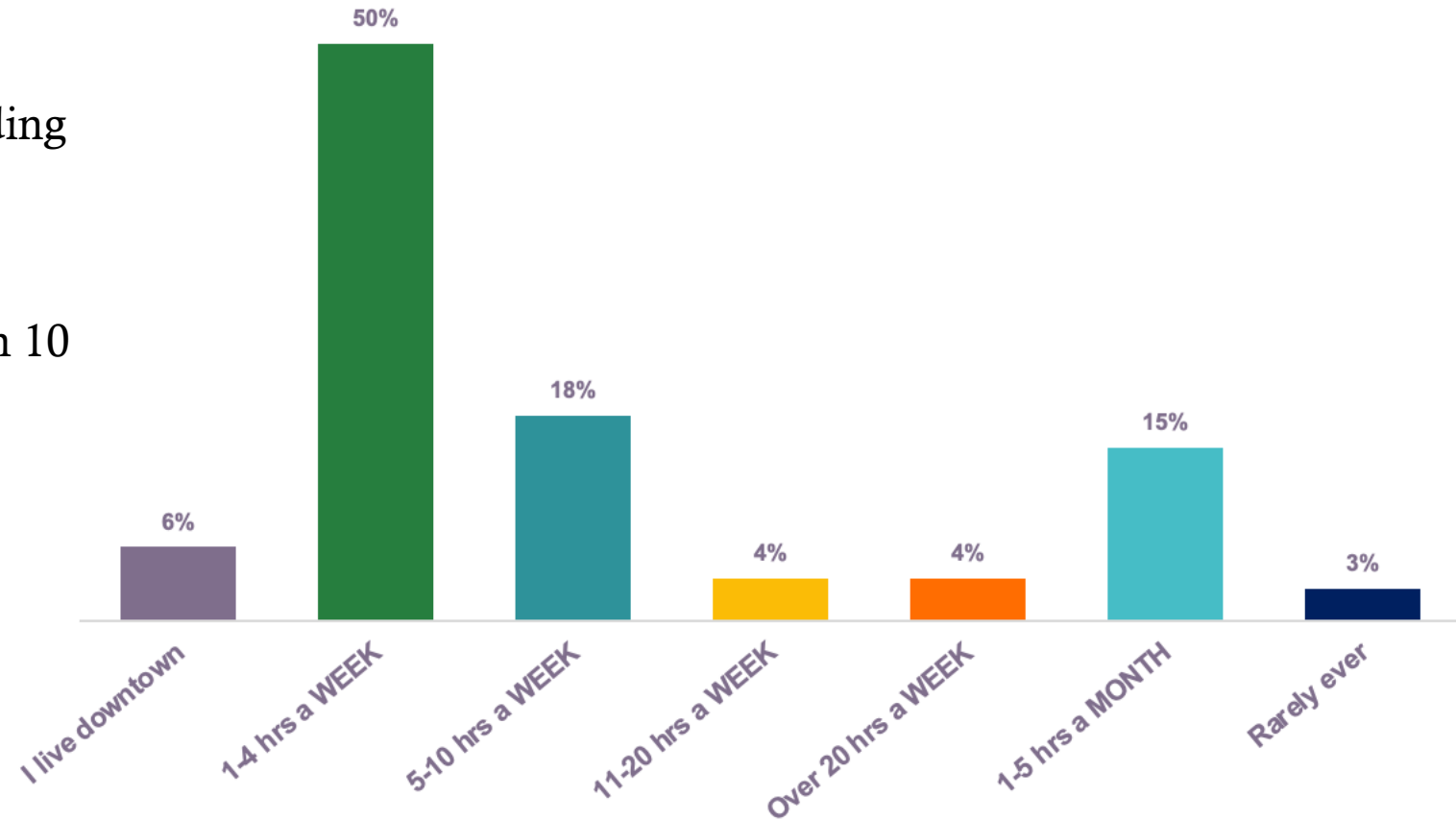


Weighted average priority results

DOWNTOWN

How much time do you spend in downtown Occidental?

- 82% of responders are spending time downtown weekly
- 6% live downtown *
- 8% are downtown more than 10 hours each week

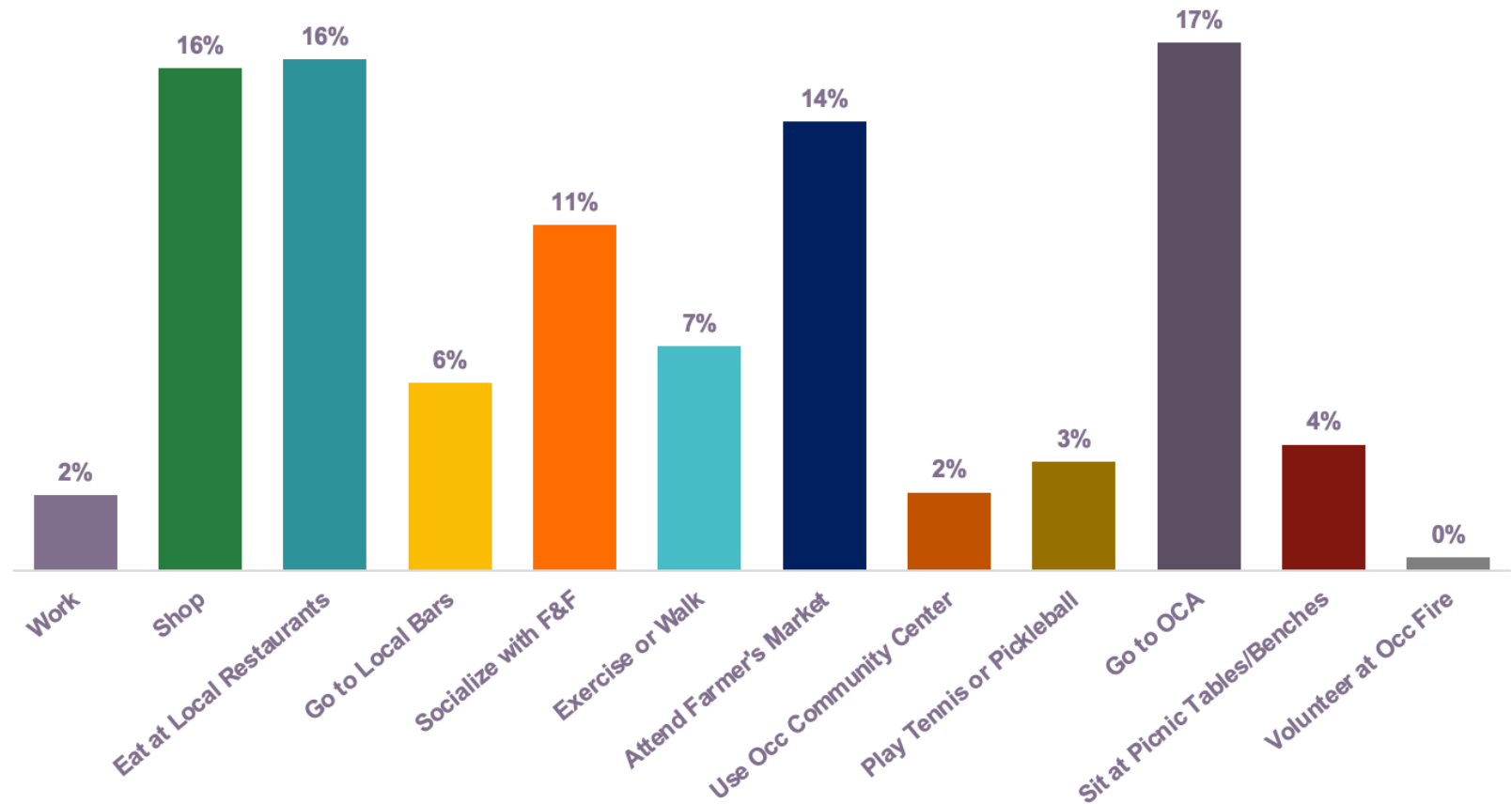


* Not included in other responses (i.e. "Over 20 hrs ...")

DOWNTOWN

What do you do when you visit downtown Occidental?

- Visiting Occidental Center for the Arts (OCA) was the most common response
- 22% of people go to local restaurants and bars
- 16% Shop
- 14% attend Farmer's Market

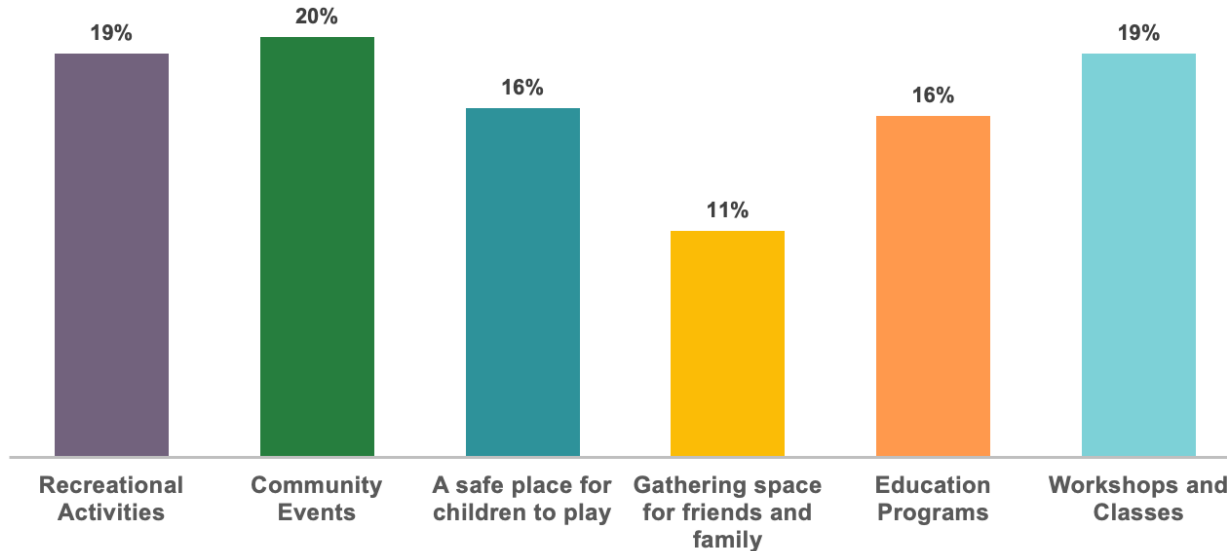


Underperforming activities include indoor and outdoor gathering spaces and low use of our Community Center

OCC COMMUNITY CENTER

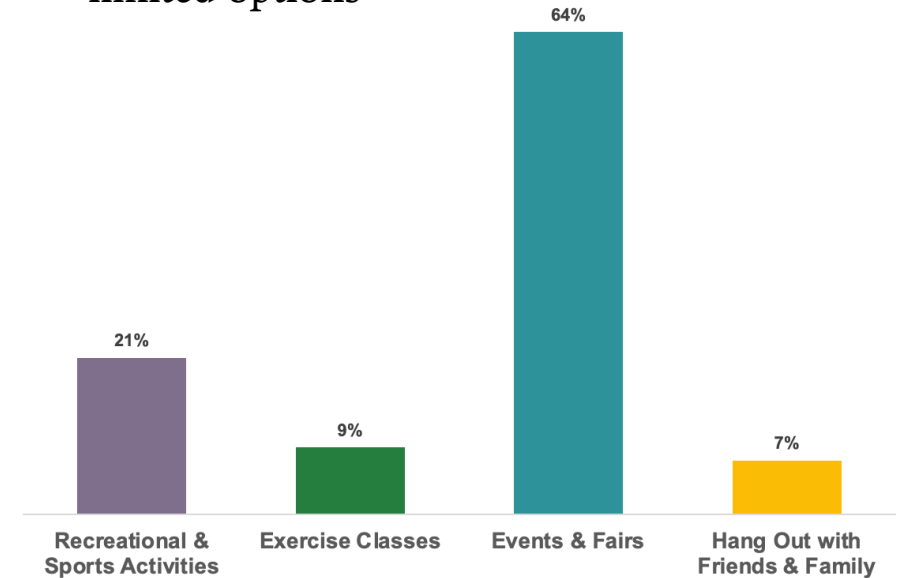
What is the VALUE of ANY Comm Center?

- Benchmark used as a gauge of expectations
 - *Community Events, Workshops and Recreation* activities ranked as highest values



Activities attended at Occidental CC?

- Current use of the Community Center
 - *Events & Fairs* and *Recreation* are some of the limited options

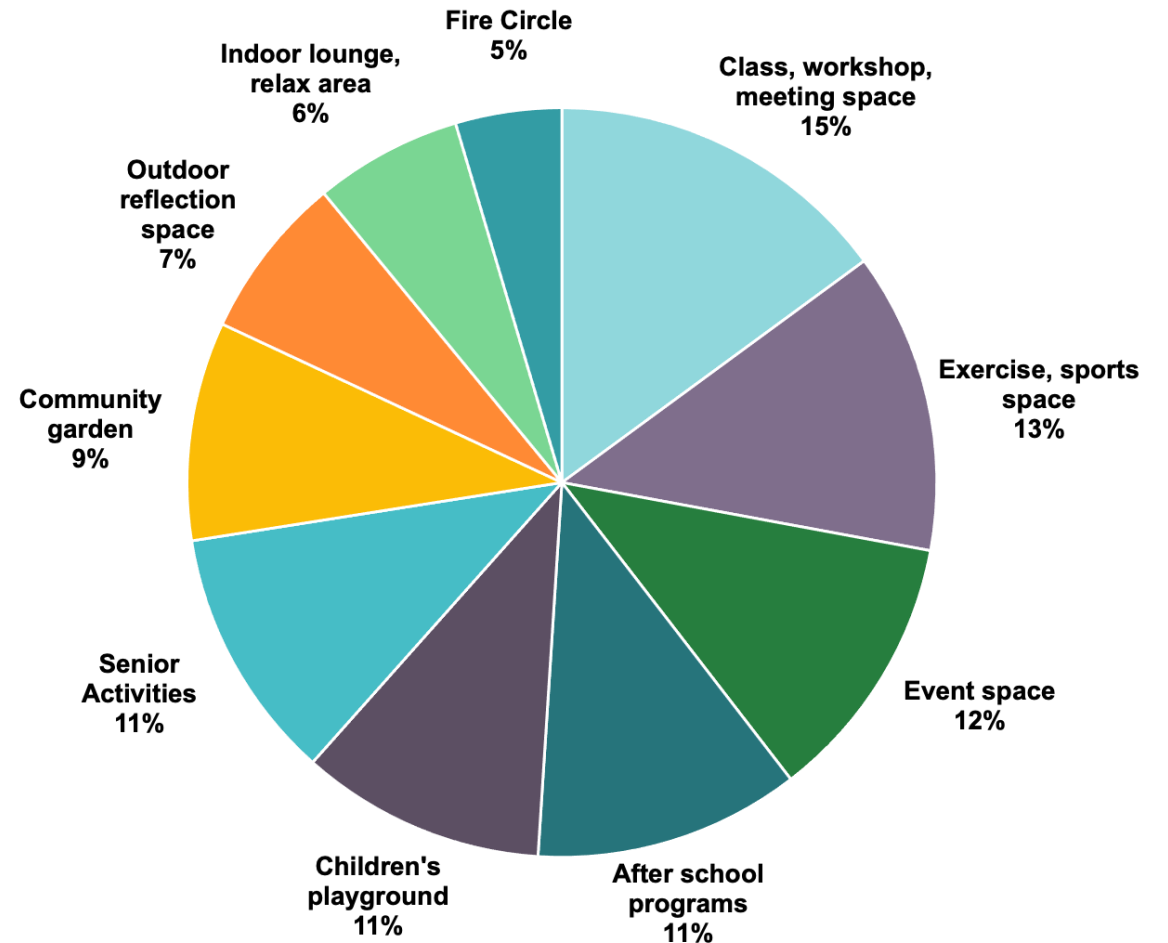


OCC COMMUNITY CENTER

What Future Activities would you like to be held at a newly renovated Center?

- *Classes and Meeting Spaces* are the top priority for 15% of the responders
- *Sports/Exercise* came in 2nd; noting people want to improve (not reduce) current areas and activities
- *Event Space* comes in 3rd
- *After school programs, Children's playground, and Senior Activities* show the desire for gathering of all ages
- *Community Garden, Outdoor Reflection space, Indoor lounge, and Fire Circle* round out the priorities

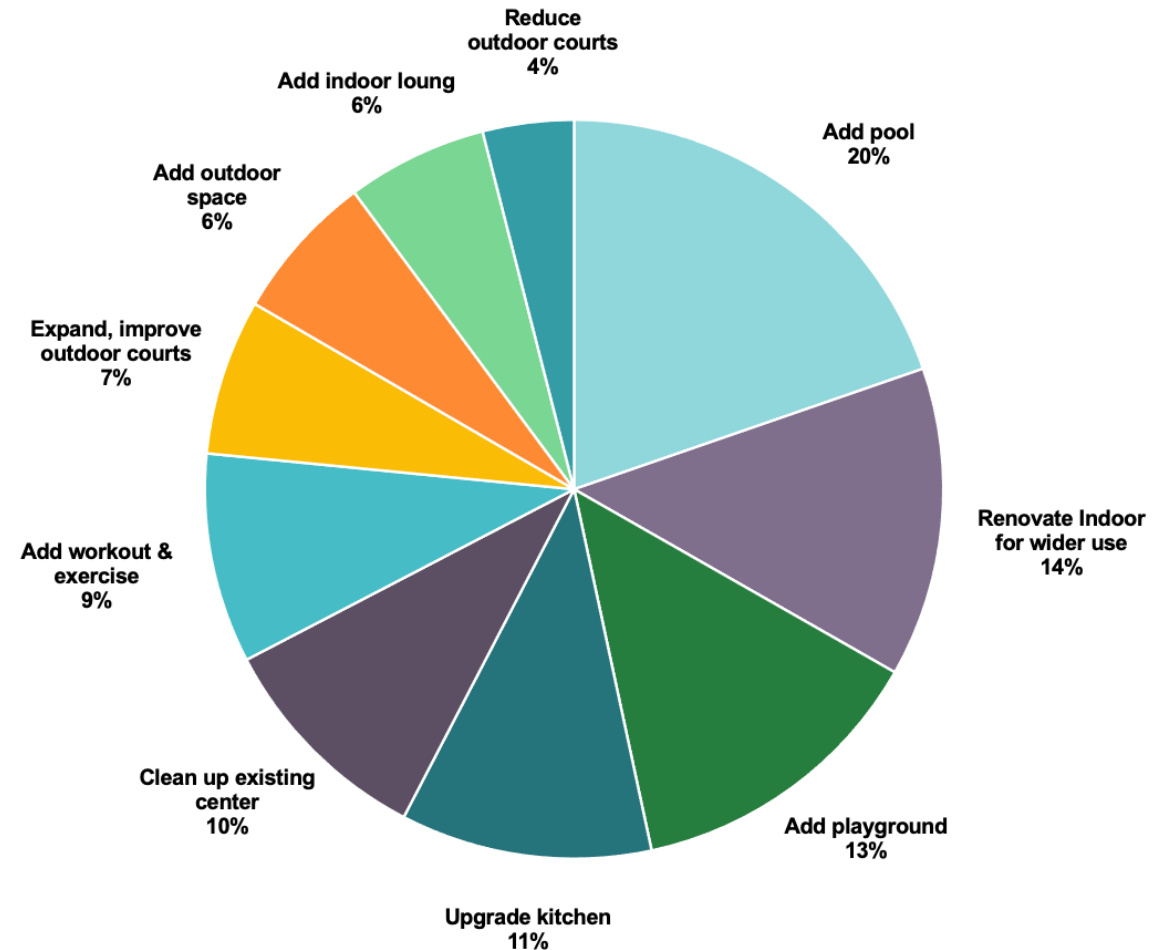
"Other" = add a Pool, Food Trucks, beautifying the grounds, adding Trees.



OCC COMMUNITY CENTER

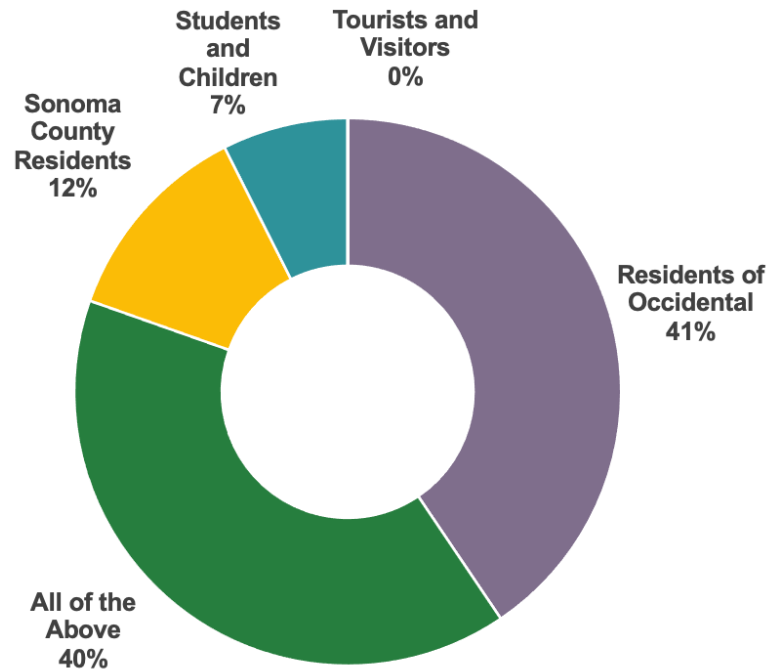
How would you prioritize the budget and resource allocation for improvements

- Adding a *Pool* ranked #1 with 52 people ranking in their Top 3
- *Renovate Indoors* and add *Playground* came in 2nd and 3rd with 65 people ranking indoor reno in their top 3 (61 for playground)
- 11% want a *Kitchen Upgrade* and 10% want to clean up the *Existing Space*
- Responders also want to add workout/exercise and improve the *Outdoor Courts* rather than reduce

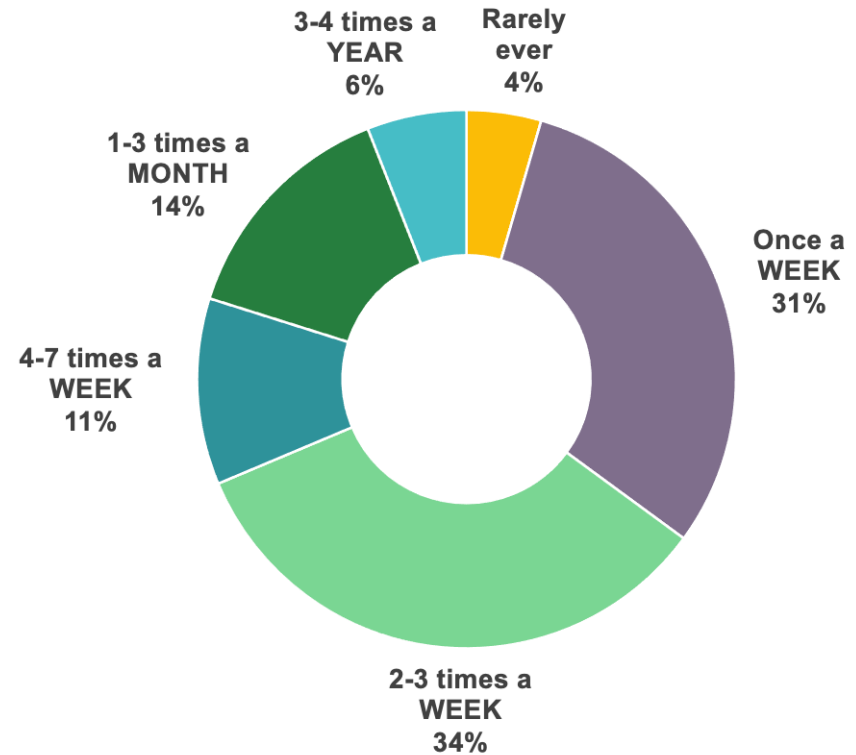


OCC COMMUNITY CENTER

Who do you feel the Center should serve?



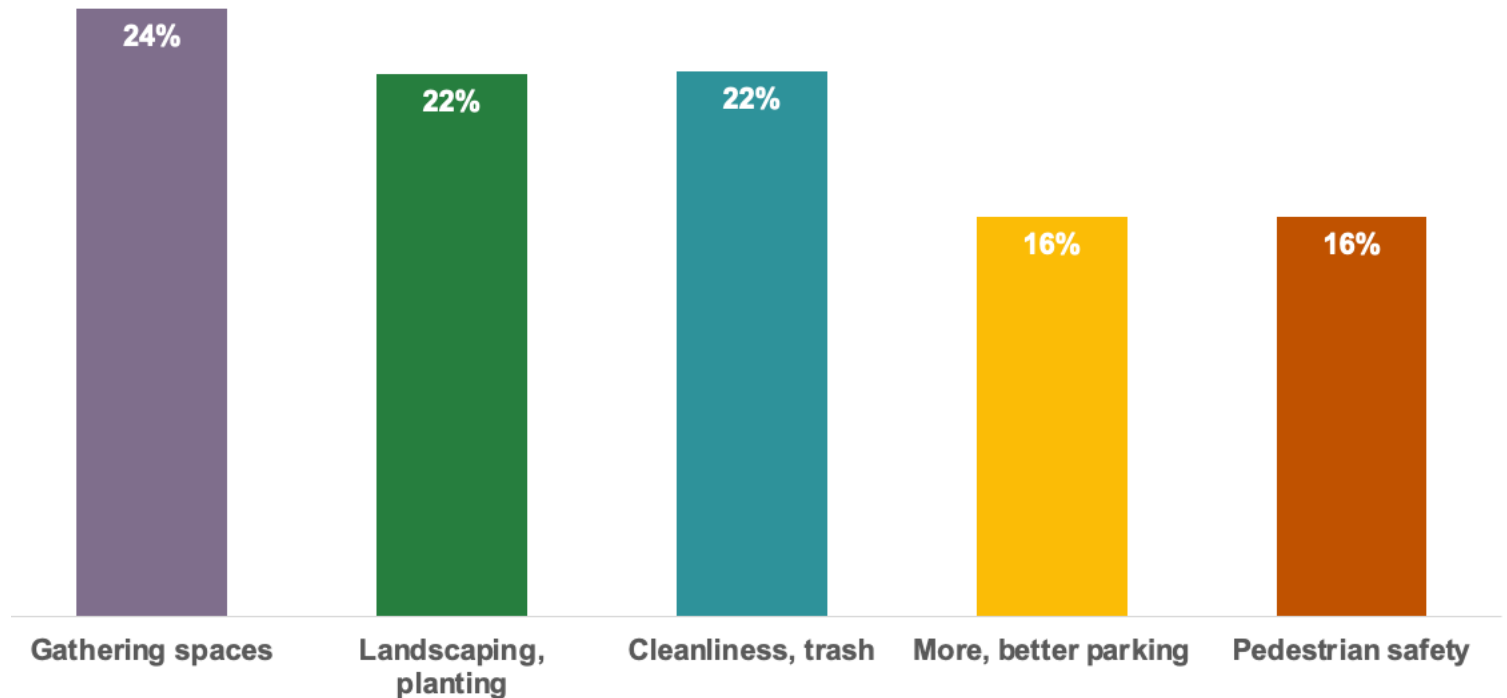
How often would you spend time there?



OCCIDENTAL DOWNTOWN

How would you prioritize IMPROVEMENTS to downtown Occidental?

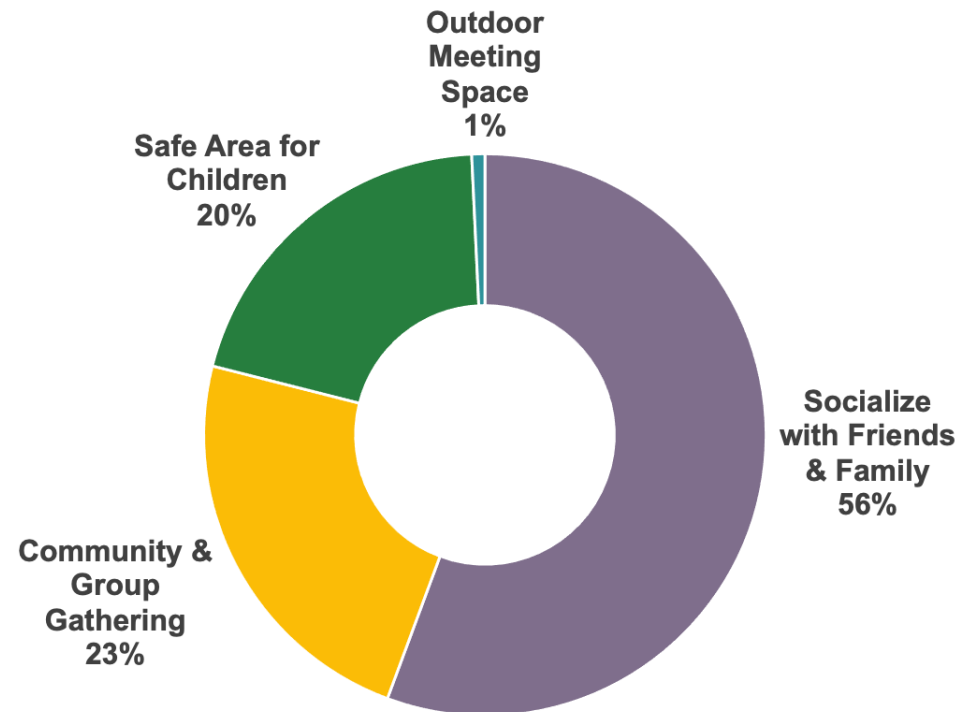
- Creating *Gathering* spaces is the top-ranking priority
- *Landscapes* and *Plants* are top priorities along with *Cleanliness* and *Trash* improvements & maintenance
- *Parking* and *Pedestrian Safety* also ranked high, showing the importance of the Top 5 priorities



OCCIDENTAL DOWNTOWN

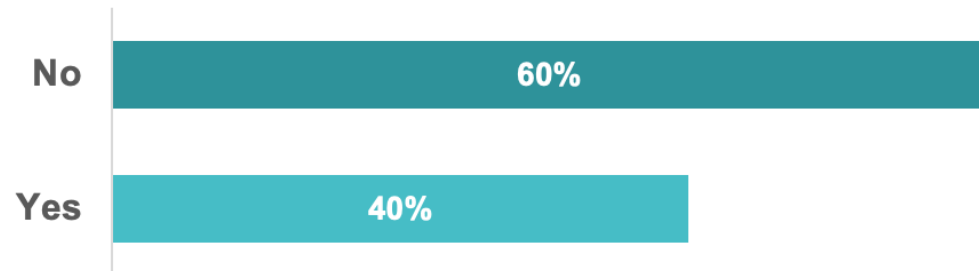
How would you **PRIMARILY** use an outdoor sitting and gathering space in Downtown Occidental? What would you do there?

- More than half the responders would use an outdoor *Gathering* space to *Socialize* with family and friends
- Nearly 80% want to meet up and gather, difficult to do with the current limited options

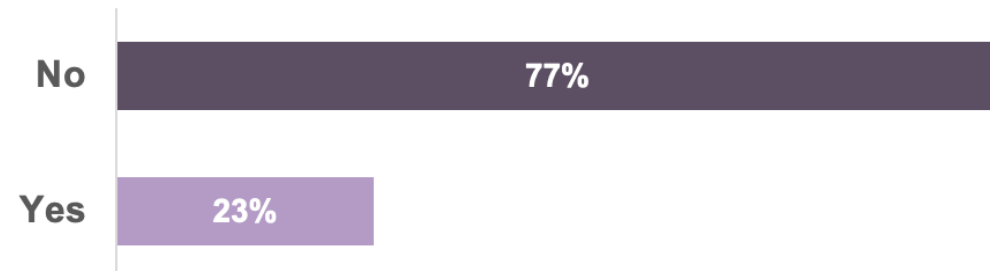


OCCIDENTAL GOVERNANCE

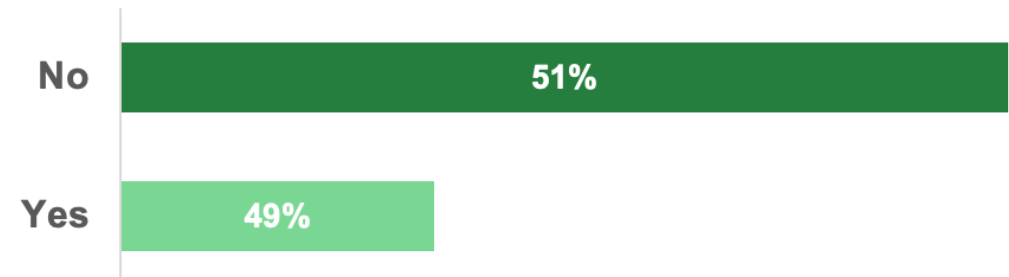
Are you aware of OCSD? (Occidental Community Services District)



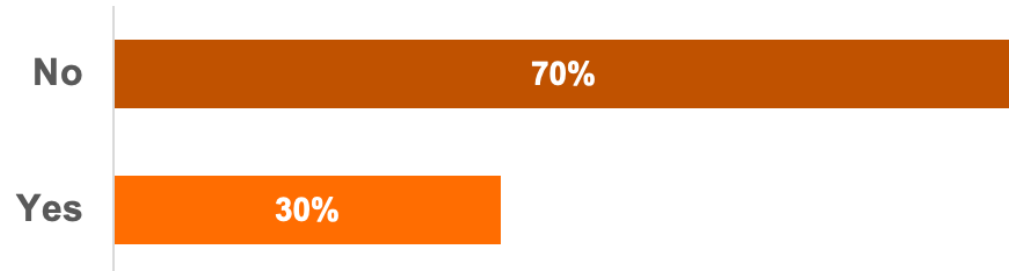
Are you aware of OCSD Election Process?



Are you aware of the Community Council?



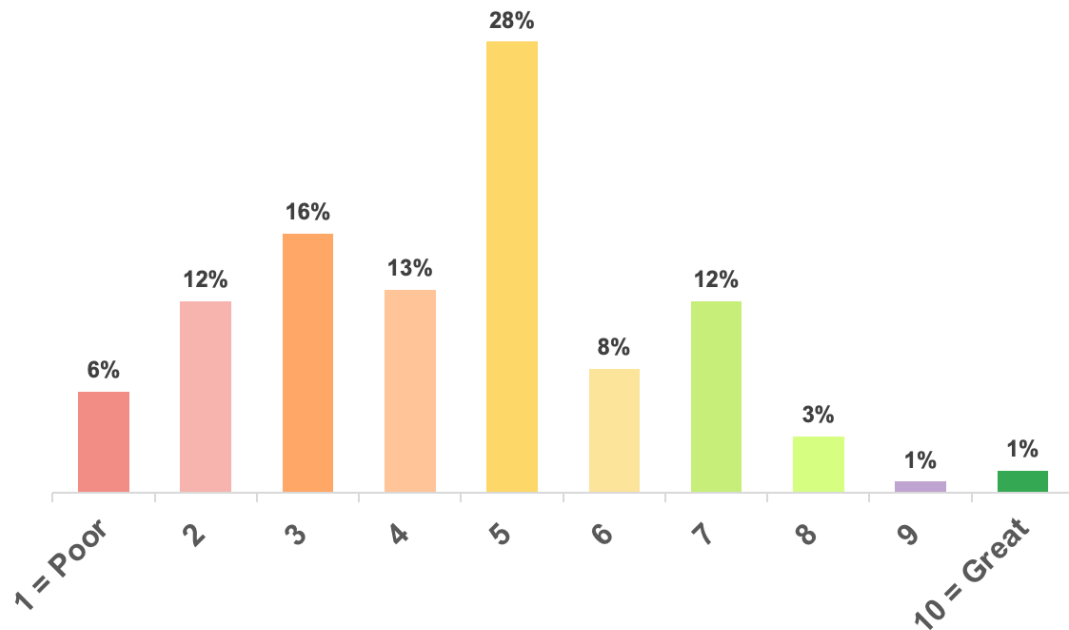
Are you aware of the Comm. Council website?



OCCIDENTAL COMMUNICATIONS

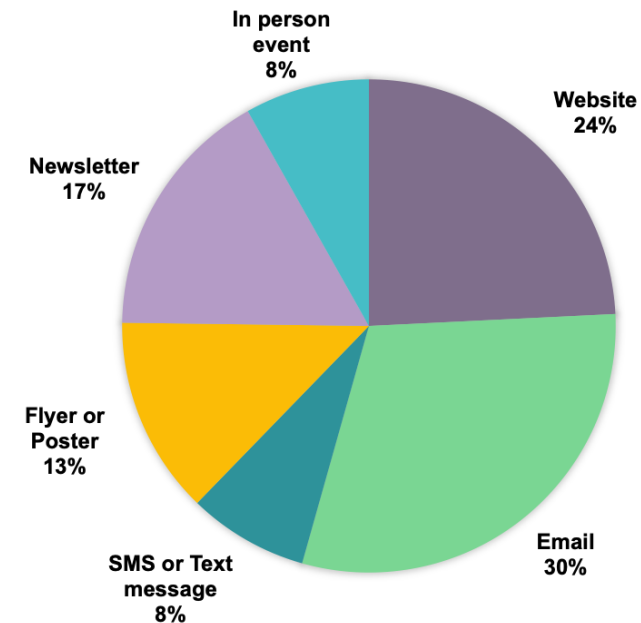
How would you rank Communications?

- 75% rank communication *Average or below*



What methods do you prefer?

- 62% prefer *Digital*, which means a mix of digital and traditional communication methods are needed



A close-up photograph of a tree trunk cross-section, showing concentric growth rings in shades of brown and tan. The texture is natural and organic.

**“THE SECRET OF MAKING
PROGRESS IS TO GET
STARTED.”**

Mark Twain



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on the 218 responses to the Occidental Future Improvements survey, it is evident that the community is seeking a balance between desired future improvements and preserving the town's cherished charm, 'feral' essence, and quaint Bohemian spirit.

Emergency services emerged as the top priority, reflecting the community's emphasis on safety. This was closely followed by the pressing need for public bathrooms and water stations. Additionally, there is a strong desire for communal spaces where people can meet, connect, and socialize, including improving the Community Center, and adding new greenspace and gathering areas.

Interestingly, the survey revealed that many respondents visit downtown Occidental for specific purposes, such as dining, shopping, attending the Farmer's Market, or attending OCA (Occidental Center for the Arts) events. However, only 15% come downtown to gather and socialize, underscoring the desire for more spaces and opportunities for interaction.

One striking finding is the perception of inadequate communication. An overwhelming 80% of respondents rated communication at or below average. This signals a clear need for enhanced transparency and information sharing concerning ongoing projects and decision-making processes in the Occidental community.

In summary, Occidental residents seek a careful balance between progress and preserving the unique character of their town. They prioritize essential services, community spaces, and effective communication as key elements in shaping the future of this vibrant Bohemian community.



THANK YOU!



APPENDIX

Community Values survey quotes

COMMUNITY VALUES (P1/6)

- Conscious Nonviolent communication, asking how we can help and showing up for each other. We must accept our differences
- Open Engagement with the public, clean local area
- Accountability, Trust, Cooperation, Safety, Equity
- Incursion, Kindness, Opportunity for a variety of activities
- Commitment to truth, listening, respect, diversity, active equity work, strong economy, quality infrastructure ensuring essential needs and community health are met
- Inclusive collaboration, caring consideration, awareness of other perspectives, hard work, and fun
- Connectedness
- Shared nature connection, inclusivity, diversity, creative expression, embracing of alternative views and lifestyles, in-person community engagement, engagement around healthy activities, kindness, spirit of care and helpfulness, positivity and optimism, togetherness
- Clean air, clean & abundant water, healthy & biodiverse ecosystems, non-toxic food & soil, community gatherings, music, art.
- Honesty, beauty, participation
- Safety, Mutual respect, Generosity (e.g. Willingness to help neighbors)
- Trees
- Everyone trying to do better
- Caring for your neighbors, recreation/activities, respect for one another
- Collaboration, communication, diversity, inclusion, togetherness
- A town that supports diversity, and helps prepare residents for impacts of climate change.
- Community resilience
- Stewardship of the land, sense of belonging, thriving small businesses, cultural activities and space
- trust, safety, outdoor spaces & events (eg, it could be fun to have a "first tuesday" type of event to fill in the early part of the week that is currently closed/quiet. Maybe a game night? With food)
- Openness, creativity
- A feeling that you belong
- Community gatherings and activities
- Tolerance for different points of view, while focusing on what we hold in common.
- Helping each other out, community building activities
- inclusion, openness, diverse involvement
- Shared activities and goals
- a broad tolerance for modality diversity
- cooperation

COMMUNITY VALUES (P2/6)

- Neighbors knowing and helping neighbors
- Hard work and friendship
- Love everyone as you would have them love you. Protect the natural environment for the future of our children.
- taking high value in the importance of community with actual effort that matches the value and shows commitment. That is, practice what you preach
- Respect & caring for other people
- Authentic communication, connection, & collaboration. (The 3 Cs!)
- "Sense of belonging-feeling safe, welcome and accepted. Community events for everyone-Farmers Market, parades, flea market, Christmas Crafts, music.
- Having a sense of pride in the community-streets are clean, pleasant landscaping , shops and local businesses are supported."
- A connected community! (This survey is fabulous)
- Common purposes;gathering locations that are attractive to as wide a range of folks as possible; wide scope of services
- multi generational, environmentally conscious/EMF reduced/free zones, organic ag with deep regard for water usage, local voices having an impact on local government boards, limitation of winery/vineyards and the consequential mono-cropping, water usage, pesticides and even elemental sulfur applications (at all hours of the night w/ no warning/regulations related to posting anticipated spraying so neighbors can at least take cover when needed), a health care center much like the one in Occidental tho with more availability for low income folks, a vibrant educational/arts center for all ages focused on experiential and community applied learning, a well designed set of short and long term plans that are actually foundational in steering community decisions.
- Willingness to come together when need, interested in the community's needs.
- A safe, clean public environment where people can interact without fear of crime and without the emotional toll that blight incurs.
- People minding their own business but willing to pitch in during events or emergencies.
- Being friendly with each other. Helping out others.
- Good Communications, making all Feel they Belong and that all we do is Equitable.
- Involvement
- Class equity, order, social mobility, representation, and financial wisdom
- Collaboration encouraged , enhancing Awareness, Diversity respected , Caring for the fragile
- Diversity. Safe, clean, beautiful public places to enjoy friends and family.
- Mutual support, ecological stewardship/care of the land, joyful and harmonious connection with each other
- Good communication, diversity and respect
- Kindness & communication
- Inclusion, diversity, respect, kindness, gratitude, generosity of spirit :)

COMMUNITY VALUES (P3/6)

- Ecological perspective, focus on healthy future generations
- vitality and honesty
- Engagement, respect, connection, and fun!
- Diversity, sustainability, stewardship
- Safety, kindness, open mindedness, and communication
- Affordability, diversity and engagement
- safety, cleanliness, good neighbors
- tolerance, helping your neighbors
- Community input, recognizing diversity, improved neighborhood relationships, cohesive communities, support, safe
- Inclusion, open dialog, events for town, seating, gardens
- Compassion, cooperation, generosity.
- Family
- transparency, honesty, accountability, team work, diversity, inclusion
- Cooperation, communication, and a focus on community needs and development.
- Everyone pulling their own weight and not be a burden on society.
- People need to care enough to contribute time and ideas; maybe money. People need to actively participate in the community.
- Transparency, inclusion and engagement, local economy.
- trust, empathy, creativity, flexibility
- Communication, Responsibility, Culture (including fun events)
- Services, people
- Consciousness, honesty, inclusive, equality, compassion, thoughtfulness, responsibility, fun loving, belief in democracy.
- Unity, communication, kindness, understanding
- Good communication. Healthy emergency departments. Good spaces to gather in and reasons to come together.
- Collaboration, kindness, caring for each others needs.
- diversity, equity, inclusion-- this survey is a good example!
- Meeting space not overwhelmed by tourist traffic
- Community activities
- Honesty, transparency, open to all ideas without judgement, willingness to get involved

COMMUNITY VALUES (P4/6)

- cultural events that bring people together, events that allow residents to get to know one another, a beautiful downtown area that attracts residents and visitors enhancing business opportunities for local businesses, a caring community that finds ways to give back and looks out for those in need, social and environmental concerns reflected in the communities commitment to conscious leadership
- A walkable town center with gathering spaces that are inclusive of children's needs
- when we all get along
- Pickle Ball courts at the tennis courts.
- Too many to go into here.
- Open space, places to sit outdoors, sharing food, good communication, all ages represented, diversity including the non-human world, reciprocity
- Tolerance, patience, having fun, helping each other
- Communication, community spaces, mutual goals, interdependence
- Friendly neighbors who work together for common concerns, such as wildfire protection
- Love, hope, joy and trust
- Working together for the good of the community, not just a select few. Also a place that values it's locals as much as the tourists
- Community pride and mutual support
- Community pride and mutual support
- Good communication
- Collaboration, integrity, respect, commitment to honoring diversity, inclusion, and equity, as well as our interconnectedness with each other and the environment.
- Parks, open space, cafes, library
- Supportive, resourceful, tolerant, kind, loving, caring, inclusive, diverse.
- Ownership, Communication, Investment, dedication
- Respect for all
- Communication, access to services, space available to gather, vibrant and diverse commerce, welcoming to all, affordable living options
- Respect for all people and spaces/property, transparent communication, and increased attention and focus on providing equitable services and opportunities.
- Inclusivity and Diversity, Collaboration and Empathy.
- care for one another
- Participation, celebration, opportunities, openness.
- "A place for our children have things to do in town. Basic services. A place to gather. Transparency in governing. Watching out for each other
- Cooperation, open & regular communication

COMMUNITY VALUES (P5/6)

- strong work ethic, open minds, respect for others and community spaces
- sense of community
- A healthy alcohol free space. We need a place to gather around poetry, music and group discussions. We need a place for people of all ages to gather in a creative way.
- Common cause
- connection, care, courteousness
- "A walkable community where we can get from one place to another without risking our lives. A diverse community, with balance of young families and older adults, ethnic diversity, age diversity, occupational diversity). Achieving this would require more affordable housing. Shared community space where we can come together and interact through events such as farmers' markets and festivals. A balance between commercial and residential uses. Decent infrastructure (including walkways, bike paths, better roads, good Internet, good mobile/cellular connectivity). Currently, it's dangerous to try to walk or ride a bicycle up Bittner Road, Coleman Valley or Joy Road. We should invest in creating walkways so our kids (and ourselves) can walk or bicycle to town safely and reduce our reliance on cars. This might also encourage younger families to join our community. We should pressure our telephone carriers to install more towers. Cell phone coverage is really terrible, which is both risky and inconvenient. This might require some investment from us. Fire protection (We should bury electricity lines; the current approach of weaving the lines through the trees is a TERRIBLE idea putting our community at risk and resulting in an unacceptable number of outages; we should insist PG&E bury the lines.). All of these things require money and organization. I'm very happy to learn that we have an Occidental Community Council to help focus our resources and coordinate improvement efforts."
- Attention to the environment
- Varied business, the arts, theatre, landscape art, and art center, natural setting, safety, parking availability, institutions, such as churches, school, post office, recreational opportunities. Service organizations, and social groups. Events, such as farmers markets, music venues, etc.
- participation connection
- Desire for community and healthy social and physical environment, altruism,
- awareness of & care for the diversity of needs & experiences within the community; tending to community members who need support.
- Safe and welcoming places to be active and to support our community and creating a sustainable environment for our wonderful locals families and people.
- Shared communication
- Working together for the greater good. Not just the interest of a few individual
- Multi generational, giving and receiving, inclusivity , respect , diversity , generosity
- Respect, inclusion and connection
- Community engagement and social inclusion
- Friendliness
- Taking care of the environment, safety and slowing speeds on roads
- a vibrant group of individuals who all care deeply about the residents and businesses

COMMUNITY VALUES (P6/6)

- Humility with an openness to divergent opinions, but also a shared goal of making the community a great place to be.
- respect and consideration of different life styles and opinions. Weather we like it or not, Change is a constant, being part of the change is important. Each and every person participating in keeping the town clean and safe. Community gatherings that include all the members of that community without prejudice. If one is new to the community, remember why you came, probably because of it's beauty and quaint sweetness, not because you needed to change it to your liking. Kindness!
- Stewardship- the individual feeling of responsibility over the places you reside and the want to take good care of them. Sovereignty- the confidence to control and manage and handle yourself and problems and challenges that arise in your own life and to ask for help when healthy to do so. Communication-The want to extend beyond your scope into others and to either share moments of joy or tackle a challenge together.
- Public green space, commerce, safe pedestrian areas, good parking and events
- shared common spaces and opportunities for people to connect with each these spaces, inclusiveness, care for the local environment and the human community, affordability, diversity.
- Class equity, order, social mobility, representation, and financial wisdom
- Tolerance for different points of view, while focusing on what we hold in common.
- Helping each other out, community building activities
- The Golden Rule
- Feeling connected with neighbors, helping those who need help in our community.
- communication, resources
- Consideration towards others, community events/traditions, use of town buildings for community based classes, activities. Being able to use parking areas in commercial places, gathering outdoor hangout areas. Places for children and teens to play. It would be nice to have a playground in town. More classes/activities at the community center. Maybe an email list of sorts for the people of occidental to sign up for to be notified of activities classes events in town. I'm a mother of two here and unless you've lived here a long time it seems like a very isolated place to raise children. I'm often going to sebastopol and santa rosa to find community and activities for my children and myself.
- A sense of shared purpose - which activities like this engender!
- Trust, inclusivity, arts and culture, healthy debate
- Opportunities for the public to connect. Safety plan. Downtown easy to navigate
- A safe and clean environment. Strong schools.
- Respect Harmony Happiness
- Family oriented, outdoor areas
- Communication, respect, pragmatism