

CITY OF BEL AIRE COMMUNITY SURVEY

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Prepared by
Wichita State University
Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs
Public Policy and Management Center

*Mark Glaser,
Professor and Principle Investigator*

*Misty Bruckner, Director
Craig Crossette, Graduate Assistant
John Tingley, Graduate Assistant
Kevin Ash, Graduate Assistant*

Wichita State University
1845 Fairmount
Wichita, Kansas 67260-0155

Contents

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
2	SECTION 1. BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY: A STRATEGIC AGENDA GUIDED BY THE PUBLIC INTEREST.....	2
	Part 1: Division and the Loss of Capacity	2
	Part 2: Commitment to the Public Interest and Community Wellbeing	3
3	SECTION 2. COMMUNITY SUPPORT OF PLANNED/CURRENT INVESTMENT DEMONSTRATED TRUST	4
4	SECTION 3. COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENTS IN THE FUTURE	5
	Part 1: Approval of Investment in Basic Infrastructure	5
	Part 2: Willing to Pay for Investment in Basic Infrastructure	6
5	SECTION 4. APPROVAL OF HOUSING RELATED INVESTMENT ...	7
6	SECTION 5. PARK AND RECREATION INVESTMENTS	8
	Part 1: Approval of Development of Park and Recreation Venues	8
	Part 2: Willingness to Pay to Develop Walking/Bicycling Paths	9
	Part 3: Approval of Investment in a Large Community Park	9
	Part 4: Willingness to Pay to Develop a Large Community Park	10
7	SECTION 6. A GRADUATED ASSESSMENT OF SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENT: CREATION OF A TOWN CENTER	11
	Part 1: General Support for Downtown Development	12
	Part 2: Support for the Use of Incentives to Promote Downtown Development	12
	Part 3: Recognition of Opportunity Costs of Downtown Development	13
	Part 4: Willingness to Pay Increased Taxes or Fees to Fund Downtown	13

1. Executive Summary

A number of forces are converging, including fiscal and global economic challenges that are metaphorically referred to as the “perfect storm”. Division within communities is both a product of and a contributor to the perfect storm. Division robs communities of capacity as citizens’ instinctively retreat into self-interest. In response, it is exceedingly important that public leaders engage citizens in strategic decisions and that they use engagement processes that are less about self-interest and more about the public interest. This research uses input from nearly 650 Bel Aire residents to infuse public investment decisions with the will of the community framed by the public interest and community wellbeing. This research develops a graduated assessment of citizens’ values as they relate to a strategic agenda.

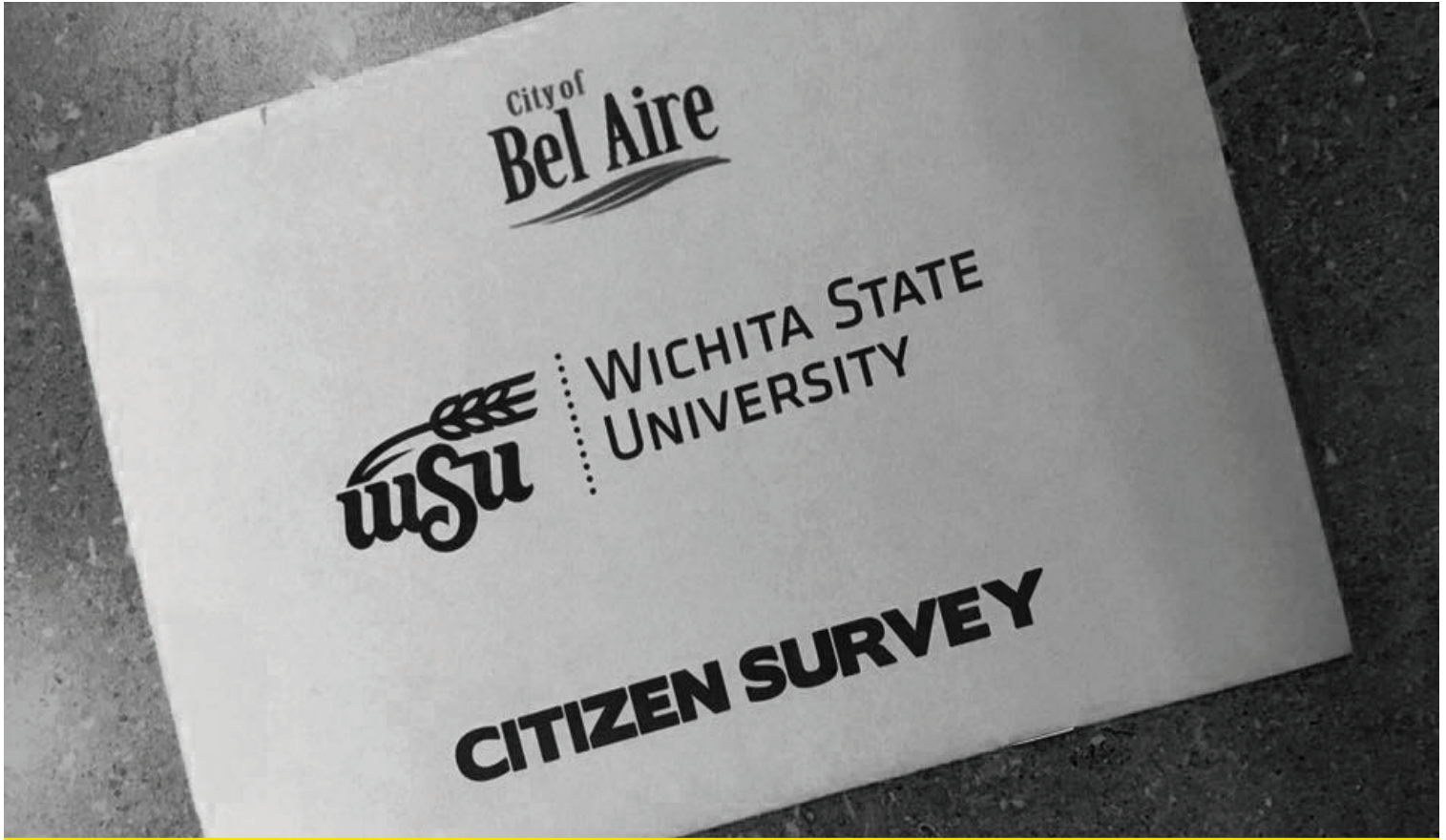


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Section 1. Building Community Capacity: A Strategic Agenda Guided by the Public Interest



PART 1. DIVISION AND THE LOSS OF CAPACITY

Building collaborative capacity within communities begins with an understanding of just damaging division can be and how important it is to respond as a community to national and global challenges.

- **Concern about Division within Our Nation** – National politics have been extremely divisive and this sort of division is inconsistent with the long-term wellbeing of our country. Approximately 83 percent of the responding Bel Aire residents indicated concern about growing division in America.
- **Prepared to Respond as a Community** – Almost all (94.5%) of responding Bel Aire residents recognize that it is important that they come together as a community to solve problems and to create a place where people want to live.
- **Commitment to Bel Aire** – Eighty-eight percent of the responding residents indicated that they expect to be living in Bel Aire 5 years.

Public servants who act and invest public resources in ways that are consistent with the public interest are much more likely to enlist a response on the part of the citizens they serve that is consistent with the long-term wellbeing of the community. The findings that follow are segmented consistent with the three dimensions of the public interest.

- **The Paradox: Balanced Concern for Personal and Community Wellbeing** – Societal wellbeing assumes that citizens are able to act in ways that reflect balanced concern for personal and community wellbeing. As uncertainty grows about the perfect storm and politics that divide the nation, citizens instinctively retreat into narrow bands of self-interest and increasingly focus on personal wellbeing. Citizens who have retreated into self-interest tend to make demands on government that are more about personal and less about community wellbeing. When this happens, community capacity is lost. If government disproportionately responds to self-interest over community wellbeing, they create more of the same. Citizens and the public servants that serve them must consistently strive to use resources in ways that reflect the public interest and balanced concern for individual and community wellbeing.

Nearly three-quarters (72.8%) of the responding residents report that they are personally willing to put community above personal interests. In sharp contrast, approximately a quarter (26.3%) of the responding residents are confident that most people are willing to put community interests above personal interests. If a person feels that they can put community interests above self-interests but does not have confidence that most people can or will act accordingly, that person may be less likely to act on their predisposition. Therefore, local government and collaborating community organizations must work collaboratively to build the bonds of trust between citizens and between citizens and government.

- **Intergenerational Responsibility: Balanced Concern for Current and Future Generations** – The viability of a community depends in part on the willingness of the current generation to make strategic investments in the future. This means that each generation must be prepared to balance the concerns of current and future generations. A surprisingly large percentage of responding residents (85.3%) report that they are willing to make personal sacrifices for the well-being of future generations. Unfortunately, residents are much less likely (37.3%) to feel that most people are willing to make personal sacrifices for the well-being of future generations and as a consequence, may fail to honor their predisposition. Almost all responding residents (96.0%) feel that the community should strive to balance the needs and concerns of current and future generations. Local government that engages citizens in public decisions and can demonstrate that it is investing public resources in ways that advance the wellbeing of future generations are likely to enlist broad public support.
- **Creation of Opportunity: Balanced Concern for All Individuals** – It is incumbent on public agencies to create opportunity for all citizens regardless of their socioeconomic station in life. Communities that create opportunity for all classes of citizens strengthen their capacity to respond to formidable challenges on the immediate horizon. Consistent with this understanding, four-fifths (89.9%) of the responding residents indicate that the community should invest should invest resources in ways that create opportunity for all households regardless of income. Support for this strategy does not vary significantly based on household income.

Section 2. Community Support of Planned/Current Investment Demonstrated Trust



Local government must continuously strive to develop improved methods of engaging citizens' in important public policy decisions. These engagement processes are more effective when local government can demonstrate to citizens that it can be trusted to invest public resources in ways that advance the long-term wellbeing of the community. Demonstrated trust closes the feedback loop between citizens and government by articulating how public dollars have been invested and by soliciting feedback from citizens about the appropriateness of the investment.

- More than four-fifths of the responding Bel Aire residents approved or strongly approved of the intersection improvement at **45th and Woodlawn** (86.7%) and **Woodlawn expansion to three lanes** (37th Street to 45th Street) (83.9%).
- Nearly, three-quarters (70.2%) of the respondents approved of the intersection improvement at **45th and Oliver**.
- Even the least popular intersection improvement (**45th and Rock Road**) enjoyed approval from almost two-thirds (61.8%) of the responding residents.

Section 3. Community Support for Investments in the Future



PART 1. APPROVAL OF INVESTMENT IN BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Approval of Aggressive Street Improvement Strategy** – Nearly 87 percent (86.6%) indicated their approval for investment that include aggressively improving neighborhood streets before road surfaces get rough and potholes.
- **Commitment to the Public Interest and Approval of Street Improvement** – Residents registering the strongest attachment to community and to the advancement of the public interest (93.8%) are more likely than those with the weakest commitment (80.8%) to support investment involving road surface improvement.
- **Approval of Aggressive Road Improvement** – More than 91 percent (91.4%) of the responding residents indicated approval for the use of public funds to improve roads before traffic congestion becomes a problem.
- **Approval of Preemptive Strategy to Replace Water and Sewer Lines** – Ninety two percent of the responding citizens indicated approval for infrastructure investment including replacing aging water and sewer lines before they break and service disruptions occur.
- **Approval of Systematic Improvement of Drainage System** – Eighty four percent of the responding residents indicate approval of efforts to systematically improve the city drainage system to reduce damage from flooding.

PART 2. WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR INVESTMENT IN BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Willingness to Pay for Aggressive Street Improvement Strategy** – Almost three-quarters (74.5%) of the responding residents indicated a willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for a more aggressive street improvement strategy, including improving road surfaces, number of lanes, turn lanes, intersections, etc.
- **Community Attachment and Willingness to Pay for Street Improvement** – Residents who registered the strongest level of commitment to the community and the public interest (86.2%) are much more likely than those registering the weakest commitment to the public interest (60.8%) to indicate a willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to support a more aggressive street improvement strategy.
- **Willingness to Pay for Aggressive Improvement to Water and Sewer Systems** – Approximately three-fifths (60.2%) of the responding Bel Aire residents indicate a willingness to pay for a more aggressive strategy for replacing water and sewer lines and storm water drainage improvements.
- **Community Attachment and Willingness to Pay for Water and Sewer System Improvements** – Residents registering the strongest attachment to the community/ commitment to the public interest (75.0%) are much more likely than those with the weakest commitment (44.0%) to indicate a willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for a more aggressive strategy for replacing water and sewer lines and storm water drainage improvements.

Section 4. Approval of Housing Related Investment



Bel Aire is divided on housing-related policy

- **Approval of Policy that Encourages Apartments and Duplexes** – Approximately 24 percent (23.9%) of the responding citizens approve of housing related policy that encourages investment in apartments and duplexes. The highest income respondents (19.8%), are much less likely than the lowest income (66.7%) to approve of housing related policy that encourages investment in apartments and duplexes. Renters (54.6%) are much more likely than homeowners (22.6%) to approve of housing related policy that encourages investment in apartment and duplexes. Those with the highest commitment to the public interest (37.6%) are more likely than those with the weakest commitment (17.3%) to support housing policy that encourages investment in apartments and duplexes.
- **Approval of Policy that Encourages Housing for Seniors** – Two-thirds (63.4%) of the responding residents approve of housing related policy that encourages in housing for seniors. The oldest class of citizens (71.5%), are more likely to support policy that encourages investment in housing for seniors compared to the youngest class of respondents (38.5%). Those registering the strongest commitment to the public interest (71.9%) are much more likely than those with the weakest commitment (46.6%) to approve of policy that promotes housing for seniors.

Section 5. Park and Recreation Investments



PART 1. APPROVAL OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARK AND RECREATION VENUES

- **Dog Park** – About a third (34.7%) of the responding residents approve of investment to develop a dog park. Those who have lived in Bel Aire three years or less (48.8%) are much more likely to approve of investment in a dog park compared to long-time residents (29.4%).
- **Small Neighborhood Parks** – Approximately half of the respondents (48.2%) approve of investments in small neighborhood parks. Those who are between the ages of 25-35 years of age (65.0%) are more likely to approve of investment in small neighborhood parks compared to those 65 years of age and older (44.3%). Those who have lived in Bel Aire 21 years or longer (37.7%) are much less likely to support investment in small neighborhood parks compared to those who have lived in the community 3 years or less (61.1%).
- **Walking/Bicycle Paths that Connect Bel Aire Parks** – Two-thirds (65.6%) of the responding citizens support the development of walking/bicycle paths that connect Bel Aire parks. Nearly three-quarters (72.7%) of residents that have lived in Bel Aire three years or less approve of investment in walking/bicycle paths that connect parks in Bel Aire compared to 58.2 percent of those who have lived in Bel Aire twenty-one years or longer.
- **Walking/Bicycle Paths that Connect to Wichita Paths** – Nearly 60 percent (59.8%) of the responding residents approve of the development of walking/bicycle paths in Bel Aire that connect to walking/bicycle paths in Wichita. Residents between 25 and 35 years of age (82.9%) are particularly likely to approve of investment in walking/bicycle paths in Bel Aire that connect to walking/bicycle paths in Wichita while those 65 years of age and older (46.3%) are much less likely.

PART 2. WILLINGNESS TO PAY TO DEVELOP WALKING/BICYCLE PATHS

- **Walking/Bicycle Paths with Connections between Bel Aire Parks** – Approximately two-fifths (43.1%) of the responding residents indicate the willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to fund the development of walking/bicycle paths including connections between Bel Aire parks. Residents between 25 and 35 years of age (61.5%) are twice as likely as those 65 years of age and older to indicate a willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to develop walking/bicycle paths connecting Bel Aire parks. Those registering the strongest commitment to the public interest (48.5%) are much more willing to pay increased taxes or fees to support investment in walking/bicycle paths with connections between Bel Aire Parks compared to those registering the lowest level of commitment (14.6%).
- **Walking/Bicycle Paths with Connections to Wichita's Paths** – Slightly more than a third (35.6%) of responding residents report a willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to develop walking/bicycle paths that connect Bel Aire and Wichita paths. Residents between 25 and 35 years of age (55.1%) are more than twice as likely as those 65 years of age and older (23.2%) to indicate a willingness to pay to develop walking/bicycle paths with connections between Bel Aire and Wichita. Residents with the strongest commitment to the public interest (48.5%) are much more likely than those who register the weakest commitment (14.6%) to report a willingness to pay increased taxes or fees in support of the development of walking/bicycle paths with connections between Bel Aire and Wichita.

PART 3. APPROVAL OF INVESTMENT IN A LARGE COMMUNITY PARK

Slightly more than half (59.0%) of the responding residents indicate approval of investment in a large community park. Approximately 48 percent (47.6%) of residents 65 years of age and older support a community park compared to more than 83 percent (83.4%) of those between 25 and 35 years of age. Residents that registered a “very high” (81.2%) commitment to the public interest are much more likely to approve of creating a large community park compared to those with a low level of commitment (35.7%).

Approval of Recreational Venues in a Large Community Park

- **Pond/Lake** – Slightly less than half (47.0%) approve of the creation of a pond or lake in the community park. Long-time residents of Bel Aire, those who have lived in the community 21 years or longer (40.0%) are much less likely to approve of the creation of a pond or lake compared to those who have lived in the community three years or less (63.9%).
- **Dog Park** – One-third (36.1%) of the responding residents approved of building a dog park in the community park. Two-thirds (69.3%) of the youngest class of residents approve of a dog park compared to a quarter (24.7%) of those 65 years of age and older.
- **Splash Pad** – Half (51.8%) of the responding residents approve of the creation of splash pad for children if a large community park is created. Much as expected, younger households, those most likely to have children, are much more likely to approve of the creation of a splash pad. Three-quarters (75.5%) of those between 25 and 35 years of age support the creation of a splash pad in the community park.
- **Tennis Courts** – Two-fifths (42.4%) of the responding residents support the creation of tennis courts in a large community park. Those with the strongest commitment to the public interest (56.9%) are twice as likely as those with the weakest commitment (25.7%) to approve of the construction of tennis courts in a community park.
- **Basketball Courts** – Approximately half (48.0%) of the responding residents approve of basketball courts in a community park. Residents who have lived in Bel Aire three years or less (64.1%) are much more likely than long-time resident (39.4%) to approve of investing in basketball courts in a large community park.
- **Frisbee/Golf Course** – There is limited support (37.2%) for a frisbee/disc golf course in the community park. Nearly two-thirds (61.6%) of those below 25 years of age approve of a frisbee/disc golf course in a community park compared to about a quarter (25.8%) of those 65 years of age or older.

- **Walking/Bicycle Paths** – Nearly two-thirds (63.3%) of the residents approve of the creation of walking/bicycle paths in a large community park. Nearly three-quarters (72.0%) of the responding females approve of the creation of walking/bicycle paths. Those registering the highest level of commitment to the public interest (84.7%) are more than twice as likely to approve of investments in walking/bicycle paths in a large community park compared to those with the weakest level of commitment (40.6%).

PART 4. WILLINGNESS TO PAY TO DEVELOP A LARGE COMMUNITY PARK

Approximately two-fifths (39.4%) of the responding residents indicate a willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to support the development of a large community park with a variety of recreation options. Those 65 years of age and older (28.6%) are much less likely than those between the ages of 25 to 35 years of age (60.2%) to report being willing to pay increased taxes or fees in support of investment in a large community park. Females (46.1%) are more likely than males (36.8%) to indicate a willingness to pay increased taxes to support investment in a community park. Generally speaking, those who have lived in Bel Aire eleven years or longer are less likely to indicate a willingness to pay for investment in a large community park. Nearly half (48.4%) those who registered the strongest commitment with the public interest indicated that they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees in support of investment in a large community park compared to less than fifteen percent (14.7%) of those registering the weakest level of commitment to the public interest.

Section 6. A Graduated Assessment of Support for Investment: Creation of a Town Center



A home in Bel Aire provides close proximity to employment and shopping but at the end of the day residents are able to retreat to a place where they can escape the hassles of urban living. Accordingly, there are legitimate questions about whether it makes sense to create town centers in newly formed urban communities that are in the immediate orbit of a larger central city like Wichita. Section 6 provides a graduated assessment of whether the creation of a town center makes sense from the perspective of Bel Aire residents.

PART 1. GENERAL SUPPORT FOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Part 1 provides a general assessment of the merits of creating a downtown without specific references to cost except for an introductory statement. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate the truthfulness of a series of statements as they relate to downtown development.

- **Establish Identity/Image Separate from Wichita** – Approximately one-third of the respondents (34.2%) feel that Bel Aire should develop a downtown to establish an identity and image separate from Wichita.
- **Place to Come Together as a Community** – Two-fifths (39.7%) of the responding residents feel that Bel Aire should develop a downtown because it will give residents a place where they can come together as a community. The youngest class of residents, those less than 25 years of age (72.7%), are much more likely to see downtown as an important socio-geographic space compared to the oldest class (65 years of age and above, 35.8%) of residents. Those registering the highest level of commitment to the public interest/community attachment (64.6%) are more likely to support the creation of the town center compared to those registering the lowest commitment (17.4%).
- **Leverage City Owned Land Adjacent to City Hall** – Two-fifths (39.7%) of the responding residents feel that Bel Aire should use land (owned by the city) adjacent to city hall to develop a downtown. Household registering the highest level of commitment to the public interest (62.5%) are more likely than those registering the lowest level of commitment (16.0%) to support the creation of a downtown adjacent to city hall by leveraging city owned land.
- **City Center and a Park** – Nearly two-thirds (62.3%) of responding residents feel that Bel Aire should develop a city park adjacent to downtown to bring people together for recreation and relaxation.

PART 2. SUPPORT FOR THE USE OF INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Part 2 informs the respondent that public assets or dollars will be necessary to support downtown development.

- **Use of Tax Incentives to Promote Unique Shops/Restaurants** – Less than half (44.5%) of the respondent feel that Bel Aire should use tax incentives to encourage investment in unique shops and restaurants downtown. Households 35 years of age or younger are nearly twice as likely to support downtown development through the use of incentives compared to those 65 years of age and older. Residents that registered the highest level of commitment to the public interest/community attachment (68.3%) are much more likely than those registering the lowest level of commitment (17.6%) to feel that Bel Aire should use tax incentives to encourage investment in unique shops and restaurants downtown.
- **Use of Tax Incentives to Promote Shops/Restaurants Different than Wichita** – Less than half (43.9%) of the responding residents feel that Bel Aire should use tax incentives to encourage investment Downtown that is different than shops and restaurants found in Wichita.
- **Use Free Land to Promote Shops/Restaurants Different than Wichita** – Less than a third (29.7%) of the responding residents feel that Bel Aire should offer free land (owned by the city) to encourage investment downtown that is different than shops and restaurants found in Wichita. Long-time residents (19.3%) are the least supportive, while those who have lived in Bel Aire three years or less (39.8%) are the most supportive of using free land to entice downtown development that is different than Wichita.

PART 3. RECOGNITION OF OPPORTUNITY COSTS OF DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

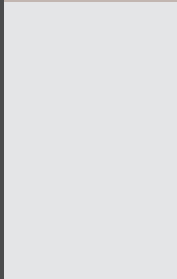
Part 3 assesses support for downtown development from the perspective of opportunity costs, decisions to not develop downtown creates opportunity.

- **Commercial/Retail Centers Outside Downtown** – Nearly two-thirds (64.0%) of the responding residents feel that Bel Aire should **not** develop a downtown but should encourage the development of pockets of commercial/retail activity at selected intersections in the community.
- **Basic Infrastructure Versus Downtown** – More than three-quarters (77.0%) feel that Bel Aire should not develop a downtown and should use tax dollars on more basic needs such as streets, water and sewer improvements. Long-time residents (87.4%) are particularly supportive of infrastructure investments rather than investments downtown.

PART 4. WILLINGNESS TO PAY INCREASED TAXES OR FEES TO FUND DOWNTOWN

The last and probably the most important set of findings describes willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for downtown development. It is one thing to support an activity or investment and quite another to be willing to pay increased taxes to fund that investment.

- **Willing to Pay for Downtown Development** – Less than one-quarter (23.2%) of the responding residents are willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for the development of a town center/downtown area. The youngest residents (30.8%) are more willing to pay for downtown development compared to the oldest class (16.2%) of residents. Residents with household incomes between \$20,000-\$39,999 (13.3%) are the least willing and those with incomes between \$40,000-\$59,999 (25.9%) are the most willing to pay increased taxes or fees to fund downtown development. Those who registered the strongest commitment to the public interest (44.6%) are much more likely than those registering the weakest commitment (4.0%) to indicate a willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for the development of a town center/downtown area.



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