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# OXFORD TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY SURVEY

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PREPARED BY



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## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This section summarizes the results of the Oxford Township community survey.

- The survey reports the opinions of 463 residents of Oxford Township. The response rate was 62.3%.
- 39.8% of the respondents have resided in of Oxford Township for more than 20 years while 23.4% of the respondents have been resided in the township for less than 5 years.
- Over 90% of the respondents indicated that they were "very satisfied" (47.7%) or "satisfied" (43.5%) with living in Oxford Township.
- 19.3% indicated that the quality of life in Oxford Township has "improved" in the past five years, while 53.0% of respondents indicated that Oxford Township has "stayed the same" during that same time period.
- When asked to "identify the three qualities that you *like* the most about Oxford Township," respondents identified the following:
  - lifestyle qualities (57.2%)
  - government services (15.6%)
  - access (proximity to work, recreation, and retail shopping) (13.9%)
- When asked to "identify the three qualities that you *dislike* the most about Oxford Township," respondents identified the following:
  - government services (29.3%)
  - other services (lack of recycling, cable television) (14.4%)
  - lifestyle qualities (13.8%)
  - nuisances (13.8%)
- When asked which statement best describes how you feel about Oxford Township, 84.5% of respondents selected "I am happy here and will probably stay for the next five years."
- When imagining Oxford Township five years from now, 54.7% of respondents think that the Township should "remain the same" in terms of growth.
- 78.1% of respondents were either "very satisfied" (32.6%) or "satisfied" (45.5%) with police protection.

- 66.2% of respondents were either “very satisfied” (24.5%) or “satisfied” (41.7%) with fire protection.
- 69.2% of respondents were either “very satisfied” (27.9%) or “satisfied” (41.3%) with EMS (emergency medical services).
- 71.0% of respondents were either “very satisfied” (20.2%) or “satisfied” (50.8%) with street and road conditions.
- The majority of respondents indicated that they were “satisfied” with street signage, highway route signs, speed limit postings, railroad crossing signs, pothole repair, and snow and ice removal.
- Nearly 90% of respondents agreed (52.6%) or strongly agreed (35.4%) with the statement: “I feel safe in my neighborhood.”
- 78.5% of the respondents were not aware of the planning for a park on Corso Road adjacent to the historic covered bridge.
- While 52.7% of respondents indicated that they were aware of the availability of scheduled drop-off recycling, only 29.4% use the drop-off sites on a regular basis.
- The majority of respondents get their information about Township meetings, activities, and issues from *The Oxford Press* (76.7%). Nearly 60% of respondents rated Township government’s communication of issues, policies, and operations to the residents as “average” (45.9%), “above average” (8.9%), or “excellent” (2.7%).

### **III. INTRODUCTION**

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A mail survey was conducted by the staff and students of the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs in consultation with officials from Oxford Township. The purpose of the Oxford Township Survey Project was to provide current measures of public opinion on issues relevant to the Township. The results presented here will help the Township Trustees as they plan for and address the significant issues facing Oxford Township.

The objective of the survey was to provide Township officials with information to address a variety of governance issues in Oxford Township as well as to establish some benchmark data for Township services. A public opinion survey can contribute to a better understanding of all citizens, not just those with resources and access to decision-makers, by reaching out to those who are less involved politically. The results of a survey of citizen attitudes can assist in planning future policy direction.

### **IV. SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

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The questionnaire was drafted by the staff and students of the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs in consultation with officials from Oxford Township. A copy of the survey instrument is included in Appendix D. The survey questions were designed to elicit responses in several forms. While the instrument comprised forced choice, ranking, and rating intensity questions, open ended questions allowed the respondent to describe in their own words concerns about a number of issues about living in Oxford Township. Furthermore, there were sections of questions asking respondents about specific Township issues, such as:

- Township streets, roads, and signs,
- public safety,
- parks and recreation,
- recycling/refuse collection, and
- zoning and enforcement.

## V. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

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One questionnaire was sent to all 784 households in the unincorporated area of Oxford Township. An electronic telephone directory combined with an electronic criss-cross directory provided addresses for all households in the Township. The mailing list was then cross-referenced with the City of Oxford Police Department's 911 Dispatch System to insure that only residents in the unincorporated area of the Township would receive a survey. The initial mailing was conducted in mid-April 2000. A second mailing was conducted two weeks later in early May 2000. The survey packet included a cover letter and a return-addressed, postage-paid envelope. The instructions asked that the survey be completed by one member of the household who is 18 years of age or older and an Oxford Township resident. A total of 463 usable responses were returned or 62.3%. A response rate of over 60% in itself indicates that the citizens of Oxford Township are very interested and concerned with Township government and services.

Based upon the response rate, the margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.75%. Overall, there is less than a 5% chance that the responses are not representative of all Oxford Township households.<sup>1</sup> The *instrument design, format, and timing* were chosen to increase the response rate and to minimize selection bias. There is little reason to suspect that the data collection procedures introduced any *significant bias*. The majority of respondents provided responses to all items in the survey. A small number completed only parts of the survey or declined to answer specific questions; their responses were included where appropriate and excluded where necessary. Due to rounding, reported percentages may not equal 100.0%.

## VI. TOWNSHIP LIFE

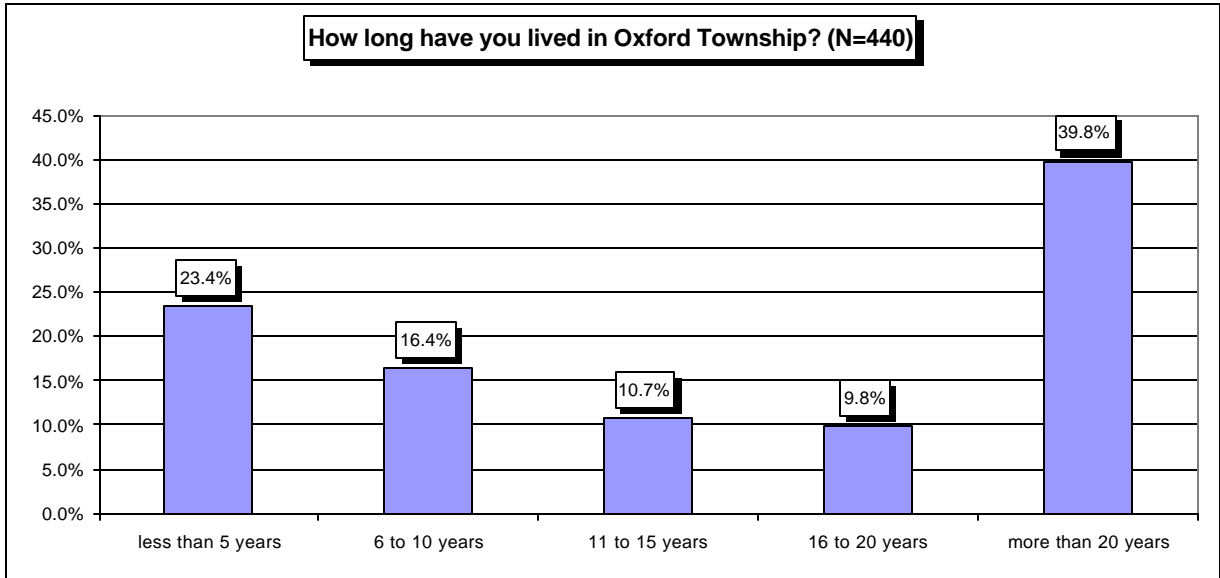
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The first section of the survey asked respondents to provide information about themselves and their overall views about life in Oxford Township. In response to the question, "how long have you lived in Oxford Township?" 23.4% have lived in the Township

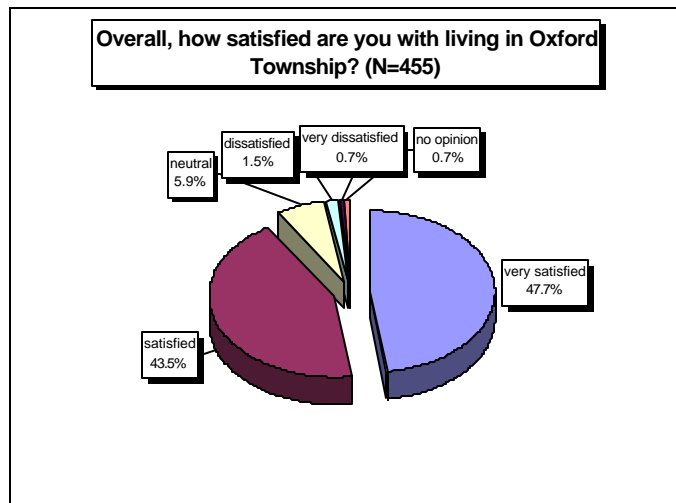
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<sup>1</sup> The findings reported can be taken confidently as an accurate reflection of respondents' opinions at the time they completed the survey. However, these opinions may and do change over time. Therefore, they reflect a snapshot of respondents' views at the time of the survey.

for less than five years, while 16.4% have lived in the Township for 6 to 10 years. The majority of respondents (39.8%) have lived in the Township for more than 20 years. Furthermore, 10.7% and 9.8% have lived in Oxford Township for 11 to 15 years and 16-20 years respectively.



Respondents were then asked, "overall, how satisfied are you with living in Oxford Township?" Over 90% of respondents (91.2%) indicated that they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with living in Oxford Township (47.7% and 43.5% respectively). Only 2.2% reported dissatisfaction with living in the Township.



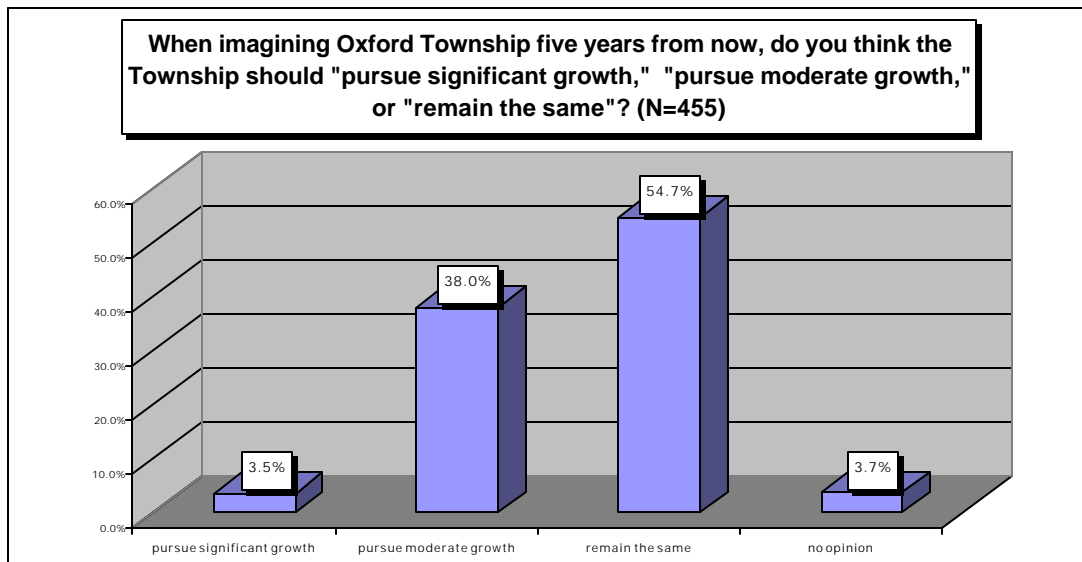
Furthermore, residents were asked, "in the past five years, how has the quality of life in Oxford Township changed?" Over half of the respondents indicated that it has "stayed the same" (53.0%). Another 19.3% responded that Oxford Township had "improved," while 12.4% responded that it had "declined."

Respondents were then asked to "identify the three qualities that you *like* the most about Oxford Township." This was an open-ended question that allowed the respondent to describe in their own words what they liked about Oxford Township. After grouping the responses into broad categories, people most frequently identified "lifestyle qualities" as something that they like about Oxford Township (57.2%). Respondents often mentioned "country living," "friendly neighbors/people," and "quiet" when describing what they like about the Township. A typical response was that residents viewed Oxford Township as being a "quiet and peaceful neighborhood" while one respondent wrote, "people are friendly." Other frequently mentioned items dealt with issues relating to the delivery of "government services" (15.6%), particularly road maintenance and the police department. Other respondents indicated issues relating to "access" (the proximity of the Township to work, recreation, and retail shopping opportunities) (13.9%).

Conversely, respondents were asked to "identify the three qualities that you *dislike* the most about Oxford Township." Once again, this was an open-ended question and respondents most frequently identified "government services" in the Township as something that they dislike (29.3%). Many respondents indicated that they disliked a lack of speeding enforcement and road maintenance within the Township. Another 14.4% disliked "other services" in the Township. For example, the lack of curbside pick-up of recycling and cable television were frequently cited problems that people dislike about Oxford Township. A typical response was: "I wish we still had curbside recycling." Furthermore, 13.8% identified certain "lifestyle qualities" and "nuisances" as problems that they dislike about the Township. For example, respondents often cited the loss of farmland and increased growth within the Township. Additionally, respondents expressed concerns about "nuisances" in Oxford Township. Included in the category of "nuisances" were problems with vandalism, noise, and traffic.

Looking to the future, respondents were given four statements and asked to choose the statement that “best describes how you feel about living in Oxford Township.” The overwhelming majority (84.5%) selected the following statement: “I am happy here and will probably stay for the next five years.” Another 10.9% selected the statement: “I am happy here but will probably move in the next five years.” Only 4.7% indicated that the individual was “unhappy here.”

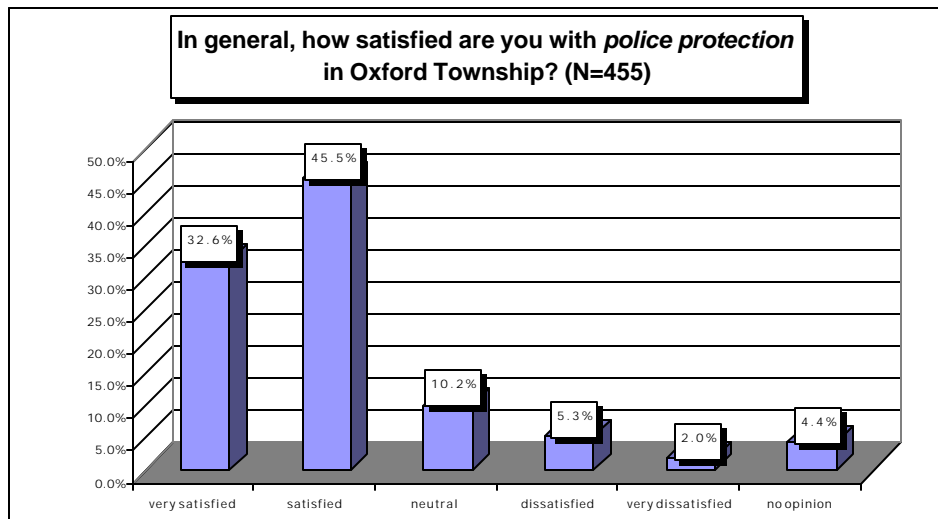
In terms of growth, respondents were asked “when imagining Oxford Township five years from now, do you think the Township should “pursue significant growth,” “pursue moderate growth,” or “remain the same?”” Over half of the respondents (54.7%) would like Oxford Township to “remain the same.” 38.0% would like to see the Township “pursue moderate growth.” Only 3.5% would like the Township to “pursue significant growth.” When given the opportunity to specify what types of growth should occur in Oxford Township, those who wanted growth typically desired growth in residential housing.



## VII. TOWNSHIP SERVICES

In this section, respondents were asked their opinion on the various Oxford Township services provided to residents. These services included: police protection, fire protection, EMS (emergency medical services), street and road conditions, and

zoning enforcement. Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with each of these services. Nearly 80% were very satisfied (32.6%) or satisfied (45.5%) with “police protection” in Oxford Township. In terms of “fire protection,” 66.2% were very satisfied (24.5%) or satisfied (41.7%) with the service. Furthermore, 69.2% of respondents were very satisfied (27.9%) or satisfied (41.3%) with Oxford Township’s “EMS (emergency medical services).” Respondents also indicated a great deal of satisfaction with “street and road conditions” in the Township as 20.2% were very satisfied and 50.8% were satisfied with this service. Finally, respondents were asked about zoning enforcement in the Township. 30.5% indicated that they were satisfied. 22.2% selected neutral for this question, while 22.0% had no opinion regarding zoning enforcement.



## VIII. TOWNSHIP STREETS, ROADS, AND SIGNS

This section of the survey asked respondents for their assessment of the condition and maintenance of the streets, roads, and signs in Oxford Township. Specifically, respondents were asked to rate specific individual conditions including street name signs, highway route signs, speed limit postings, railroad crossing signs, pothole repair, drains and ditches, and snow/ice removal. Finally, after evaluating how these conditions have changed over the past two years, respondents were asked to provide

any additional comments they might have regarding street, road, and sign conditions in Oxford Township.

The first question required respondents to evaluate their satisfaction with specific street, road, and sign conditions on a five-point scale consisting of “very satisfied,” “satisfied,” “neutral,” “dissatisfied,” and “very dissatisfied,” with a sixth choice of “no opinion.” Respondents seemed generally pleased with these conditions. A majority of respondents indicated that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with every street, road, and sign condition listed. Most respondents indicated that they were “satisfied” (66.9%) or “very satisfied” (20.9%) with street name signs. Highway route signs received similar scores with 69.1% answering “satisfied” while 20.6% answered “very satisfied.” Likewise, 71.1% were “satisfied” (56.0%) or “very satisfied” (15.1%) with speed limit postings. Just over 60% indicated that they were “satisfied” (61.9%) with railroad crossing signs with an additional 14.6% indicating that they were “very satisfied.” Snow/ice removal does not appear to be much of a problem as 52.9% were “satisfied” and another 28.3% were “very satisfied” with this service. Respondents also expressed satisfaction with pothole repair and drains and ditches as 56.0% and 49.7% were “satisfied” with these conditions respectively.

After assessing their satisfaction with each of the street, road, and sign conditions, respondents were asked whether each condition has “improved,” “stayed about the same,” or “declined” over the past two years. Responses were similar for each of the conditions as a large majority found that each has “stayed about the same” or “improved.” For each condition, over 80% of the households replied with one of those two responses. Only pothole repair and drains and ditches had close to 10% respond with “declined” (7.4% and 8.9% respectively).

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any additional comments regarding street, road, and sign conditions in Oxford Township. Many people indicated that they would like to see the speed limits reduced or more clearly posted, particularly on Bonham and Brown Roads. Another street/road condition that respondents frequently mentioned was that the mowing of grass/cutting of brush and weeds along roadways and ditches needs to be done more frequently. Many people also took the opportunity

to make positive comments regarding street, road, and sign conditions in the Township. One respondent wrote, “I have always been impressed with the quality of maintenance of the Township roads.”

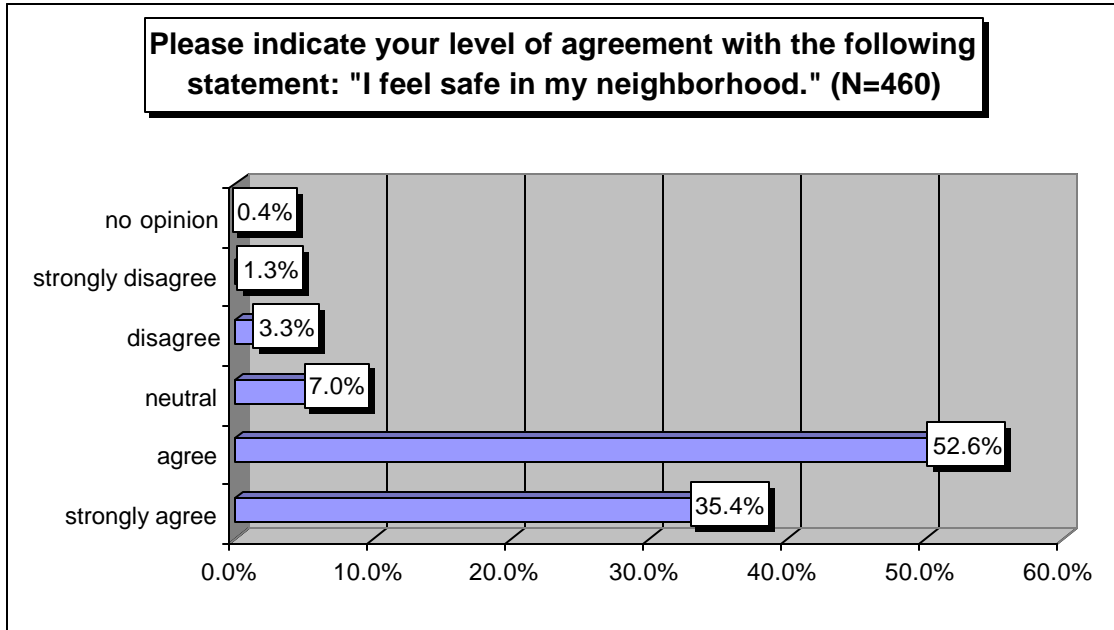
## **IX. PUBLIC SAFETY**

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The purpose of this section of the survey was to gauge respondents' views about the public safety services provided to Oxford Township residents. The respondent was asked to indicate their satisfaction with the level of police protection, fire protection, and EMS (emergency medical services) provided by the Township. Specific questions were asked to establish benchmark data about the police service in the Township. Finally, respondents were asked about the Township's new tornado warning system.

Respondents were asked to “indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: “I am satisfied with the current level of police protection provided by the Township.”” Additional questions in this section asked respondents the same question, with respect fire protection and EMS (emergency medical services). In terms of police protection, over 70% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement (49.1% and 23.3% respectively) regarding police protection. Results were similar for both fire protection and EMS (emergency medical services). Over 60% of respondents “agreed” (46.1%) or “strongly agreed” (15.9%) that they were satisfied with the current level of fire protection provided by the Township. Once again, over 60% of respondents “agreed” (43.2%) or “strongly agreed” (20.5%) that they were satisfied with the level of EMS (emergency medical services) provided by the Township.

Respondents were then asked a series of questions designed to collect benchmark data about the police service in the Township. Respondents were asked to “indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: “I feel safe in my neighborhood.” 87.1% of the respondents either “strongly agreed” (34.5%) or “agreed” (52.6%) with the statement.



The next question asked respondents: “Approximately how many times in the past month have you seen on-duty Township police officers patrolling near your home?” Slightly more than 10% responded (13.9%) that they see on-duty police officers patrolling near their home “at least once a day.” Another 38.1% responded that they see officers patrolling near their home “at least once a week” while 31.9% have seen officers patrolling near their home “at least once in the past month.” Finally, 16.2% indicated that they “never” saw on-duty officers patrolling near their home in the past month.

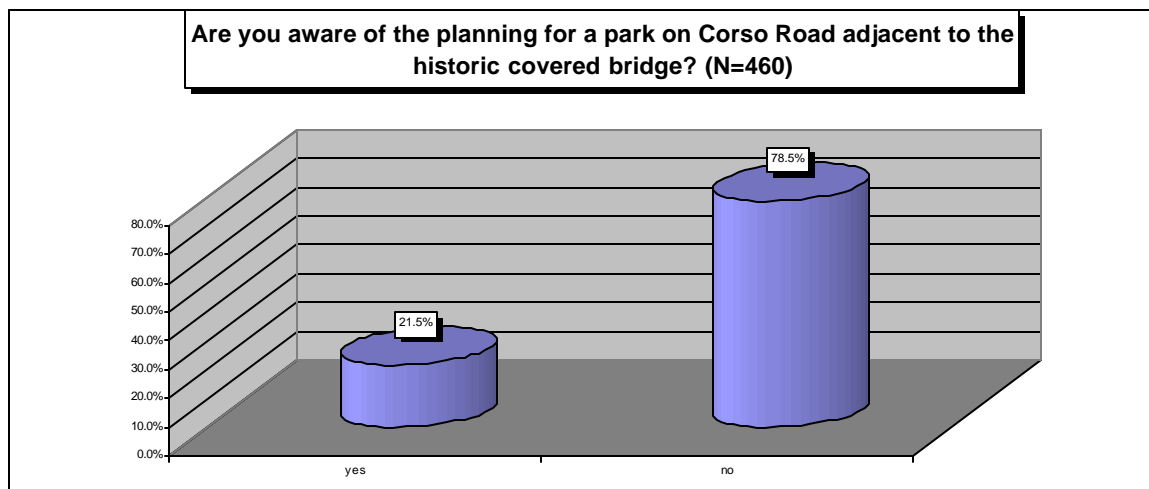
The final question in the section asked respondents to express their satisfaction with several specific areas of police service, including on-duty patrol, response time to requests for assistance, general community outreach, and the vacation check service. On-duty patrol received the highest satisfaction levels with 45.9% indicating that they were “satisfied” while another 20.6% were “very satisfied” with this aspect of police service. Response time to requests for assistance also ranked highly among satisfaction levels as 55.4% were either “very satisfied” (21.1%) or “satisfied” (34.3%) with this service. Furthermore, respondents also seemed satisfied with general community outreach and the vacation check service provided by the Township police.

Finally, respondents were asked about the new five siren tornado warning system that the Township planned to install. Only 7.6% of respondents were aware of the plans for such a system. Hopefully, the survey served to inform the other 92.4% of respondents about the Township's plans for such a system. Many respondents commented that they were pleased to know about the plans for the tornado warning system.

## **X. PARKS AND RECREATION**

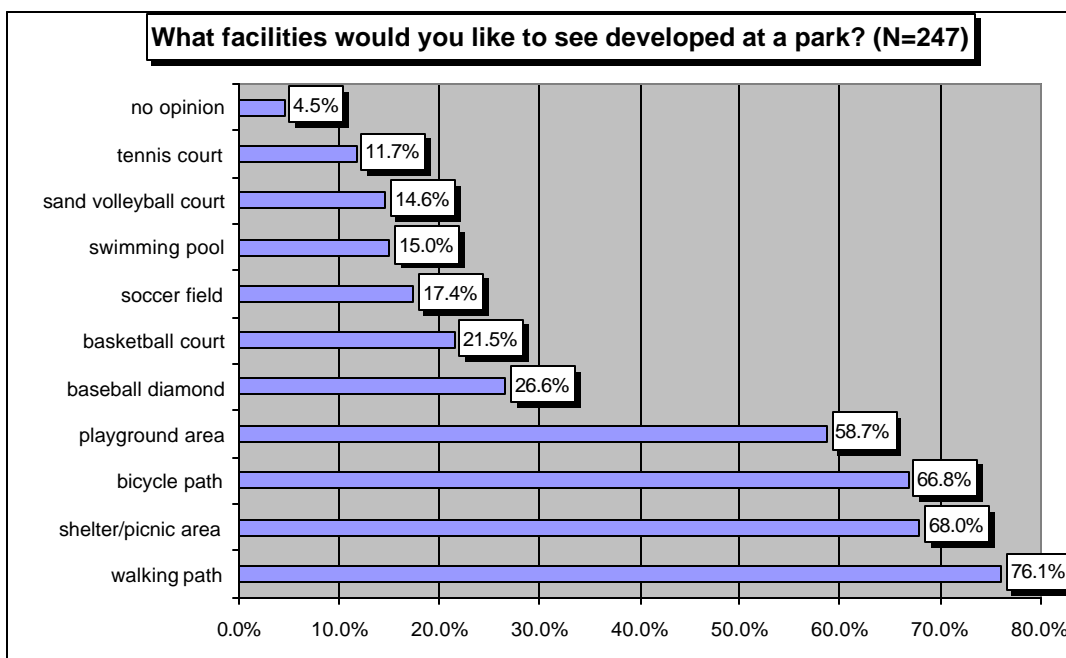
Oxford Township residents were asked a series of questions to provide information and feedback concerning awareness of the Township's plan for a park located on Corso Road adjacent to the historic covered bridge. Additionally, respondents were given an opportunity to indicate their preferences for more parks to be developed within Oxford Township and the types of facilities that might be developed at any future Township parks.

One concern raised during preliminary meetings with officials from Oxford Township involved Township residents' potential lack of familiarity with the plans for the development of a park adjacent to the historic covered bridge which would consist of areas for parking and picnicking. Just over 20% of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the plans for such a park, while 78.5% were not aware of these plans. Once again, the survey may have served as a means for familiarizing Oxford Township residents with the plans for the park.



Respondents were then asked: "In addition to the covered bridge park, would you like to see more parks developed within Oxford Township?" Nearly half of all respondents (48.0%) indicated that they would like to see more parks in Oxford Township. The remainder of the respondents were did not want more parks in the Township (27.2%) or had no opinion on the matter (24.8%).

As a follow-up to that question, respondents were asked "what facilities would you like to see developed at a park?". The graph below displays the facilities most frequently selected by respondents.

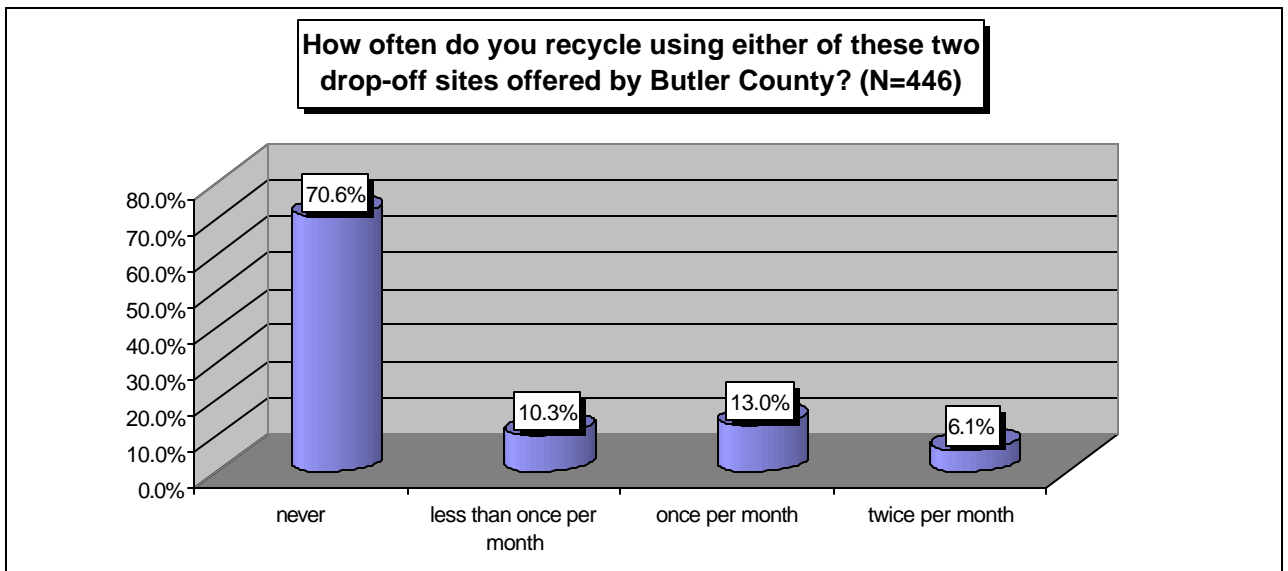


## XI. RECYCLING/REFUSE COLLECTION

The next section of the survey asked respondents to consider issues related to recycling and refuse collection. Questions in this section of the survey were designed to collect information about the recycling habits of Township residents and how residents dispose of their non-recyclable refuse.

Currently, Butler County offers drop-off recycling on the first Saturday of the month at the Oxford Wal-Mart and on the third Saturday of the month at Cook Field. When asked about their awareness of the availability of this service, 52.7% of respondents

indicated that they were aware of this scheduled service. As a follow-up question, respondents were then asked “how often do you recycle using either of these two drop-off sites offered by Butler County?” The overwhelming majority of respondents (70.6%) “never” recycle using these two sites. Another 10.3% of respondents recycle “less than once per month” at these sites. The remaining 19.1% of respondents recycle at least once per month using the sites provided by Butler County. The disparity between the number of respondents who are aware of the recycling service offered by Butler County and those who use the service is significant. Clearly, people know about the existence of such a program yet choose not to recycle through that program.



Respondents were then asked “how do you dispose of your non-recyclable refuse?” The overwhelming majority of respondents (78.9%) “contract with a private hauler.” Based on comments provided by many respondents, residents typically contract with Rumpke. Another 15.4% of respondents “self-haul refuse,” while 2.4% “incinerate refuse.”

Finally, respondents were asked to provide any additional comments about recycling and refuse collection in Oxford Township. 278 respondents took the time to provide comments on this topic and 42.1% of those comments pertained to curbside recycling. These respondents typically indicated that they were in favor of curbside recycling

and would like to see it re-instated and would use it if it were available. One respondent said, “Bring back curbside recycling! Please!” Because this was an open-ended question, it is important to note that these respondents took the time to make these comments and feel that curbside recycling is an important issue that needs to be addressed by the Township.

## **XII. ZONING AND ENFORCEMENT**

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The next section of the survey was devoted to issues pertaining to zoning and enforcement. Currently, Oxford Township is under Butler County zoning regulations and code enforcement. Respondents were asked if they think the Township should adopt its own zoning code. Nearly 40% of respondents (38.4%) thought that Oxford Township should develop its own zoning code, while 24.5% did not. The remaining 37.1% of respondents expressed no opinion on the issue.

Also, respondents were given a series of potential problems and were asked to indicate how much attention the Oxford Township Trustees should give to each item. Each item was ranked “on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is equal to “needs immediate attention” and 10 is equal to “does not need attention.” The list of items included unattended pets, maintenance of buildings, vegetation height (weeds and brush), junked cars, unregistered vehicles, storage of recreational vehicles, noise, fences, miscellaneous junk, litter, and commercial signs. Space was also provided for respondents to list items that were not listed in the question.

Of the items listed, litter was the most frequently cited item (18.8%) needing immediate attention. Another 12.7% of respondents assigned a value of one to junked cars, while 12.1% identified miscellaneous junk as needing immediate attention. In order to better understand what issues need the Trustee’s attention, the results for this question were collapsed into categories. When analyzing the responses and collapsing the values of one, two, and three, certain items are perceived as needing attention in the Township. Over forty percent (40.4%) rated litter with a value of one, two, or three indicating that this is the item that needs the most attention. Vegetation height (weeds and brush) was rated with a value of one, two, or three by 30.1% of

respondents. This data seems to reinforce the responses from the streets, roads, and sign conditions section of the survey where many respondents mentioned the need to more frequently mow weeds and brush, particularly along roadways. Fences (27.0%), storage of recreational vehicles (24.5%), noise (21.2%), unregistered vehicles (20.9%), and commercial signs (20.3%) were all assigned a value of 10 (does not need attention) by at least 20% of respondents.

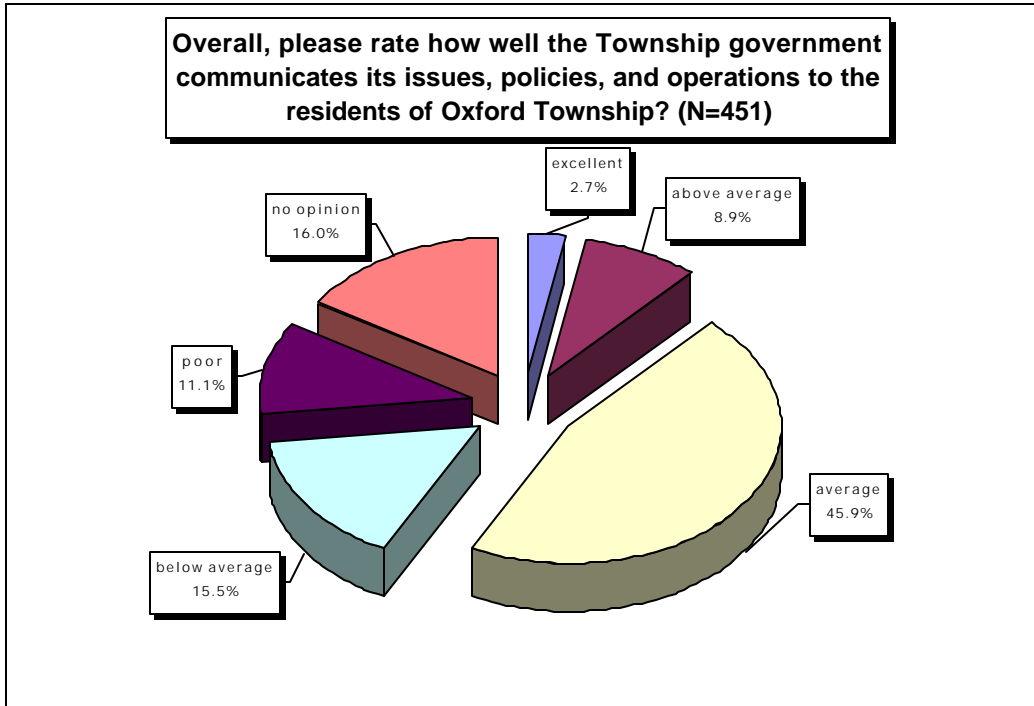
### **XIII. ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

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In this section of the survey, respondents were asked their opinions about the issues pertaining to Oxford Township government and their household. The section began by attempting to gauge the frequency with which respondents have attended Oxford Township Trustee meetings in the past two years. More than nine out of ten respondents (92.0%) indicated that *they have never attended a Township Trustee meeting*, while only 7.8% have attended 1-4 meetings in the past year.

Respondents were then asked: "In general, where do you get your information about Township meetings, activities, and issues?" The vast majority of respondents (76.7%) indicated that they receive their information from *The Oxford Press*. The next most frequently selected item was "word-of-mouth" which was identified by 39.0% of respondents. Additionally, 31.9% of respondents identified the *Hamilton Journal-News* as a source for information for Township meetings, activities, and issues.

The next question of the survey asked respondents, "overall, please rate how well the Township government communicates its issues, policies, and operations to the residents of Oxford Township." Township government communication was rated as average by 45.9% of respondents. Slightly over 10% rated communication as either excellent or above average (2.7% and 8.9% respectively). Another 15.5% of respondents indicated that Township government communication was below average, while 11.1% rated it as poor. 16.0% of respondents had no opinion on the matter.



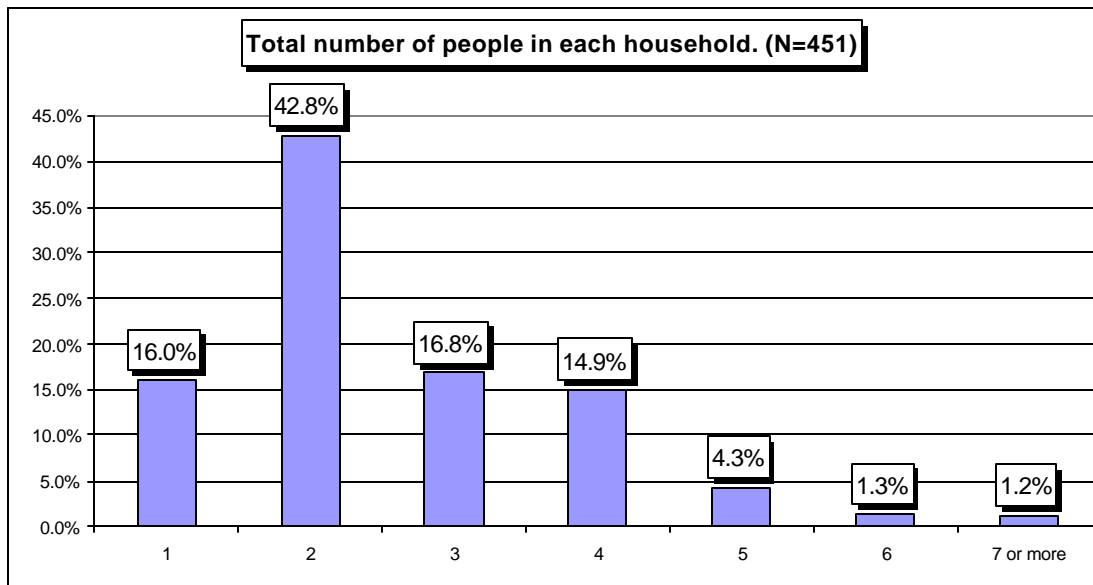
The final question pertaining to Oxford Township government asked respondents to “think about the information you receive concerning Township news, meetings, and events.” Respondents then were asked “from what sources would you prefer to receive this information?” Nearly 60% of respondents indicated that they would like to receive information about the Township from “a dedicated column in local newspapers.” Over half of the respondents (51.9%) would like a Township newsletter as a source of information about the Township. Far fewer respondents were interested in either a Township Internet home page (16.7%) or a cable television public access channel (6.3%).

The next set of questions within this section of the survey asked respondents to provide some information about their household. The intent of collecting demographic information is to define the profile of those responding to the survey according to variables such as age, gender, marital status, and household size. Additional demographic information, including length of residence in Oxford Township, contribute to this profile and can be utilized in analyzing the relationship of such data to opinions regarding specific responses.

Several questions were designed to gather household information from respondents.

Approximately nine out of ten respondents (91.9%) reported that they own their home, and 8.1% responded that they rent their housing.

Respondents were then asked to "indicate the total number of persons, including yourself, living in your household" by age categories. Slightly less than 30% of households had at least one child under the age of 18. The majority of responding households (42.8%) are composed of two members.



In terms of gender, 51.7% of the respondents were female and 48.3% were male. The traditional two adult household is the most frequent with 76.4% of respondents reporting that they were married. Non-married adults ("single-never married," "single-divorced," "surviving spouse," and "other") accounted for 23.6% of those responding.

The modal age group of respondents is the 46 to 55 years of age group, with more than 25% of the respondents falling into this category (26.4%). Further analysis reveals that 9.6% of respondents were under 35 years of age, 18.7% of respondents were in the 36-45 age group, 20.0% of respondents were in the 56-65 age group, and 25.3% of respondents were in the 66 and over age group.

Finally, respondents were asked to provide information on their employment status. Over 65% of respondents indicated that they were employed either full or part-time (56.5% and 9.9% respectively). Another 2.6% responded that they were currently unemployed, but less than 1% indicated that they were unemployed and actively seeking employment. Finally, just over 25% of the respondents are retired, which seems to coincide with the percentage of respondents in the over 66 years of age category.

A comparison of the overall profile of respondents to the survey with the 1990 Census of Population and Housing information from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census<sup>2</sup> shows that Oxford Township has undergone some demographic changes in the last decade. In several key demographic categories, including employment, home ownership, and length of residence, the survey results reflect changes since the 1990 Census. Unemployment has decreased, while home ownership has increased. Oxford Township also seems to have experienced an influx of new residents as demonstrated by the fact that 23.4% of respondents who have lived in Oxford Township less than five years.

## **XI. FURTHER DATA ANALYSIS**

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The collection of demographic information on each respondent not only provided a perspective on the characteristics of residents of Oxford Township, but also was used to conduct further data analysis beyond frequency distributions. Specifically, demographic information can be used to look for preference and behavioral patterns from certain types of respondents according to specific demographic characteristics.

Respondents' attitudes and opinions about Township services and activities were analyzed with relation to basic demographic information such as gender, the presence of children in the household, age of respondent, and length of residency in Oxford Township. Crosstabulating responses by these variables yielded no distinctive

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<sup>2</sup> This information comes from the 1990 Census of Population and Housing - Summary Tape File 3A - for Oxford Township, Ohio. The information is from CD-ROM disk (90-3A-44) provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

differences among respondents. In other words, opinions and attitudes vary little based upon age, length of residence, gender, or household size.