



2017 School Planning Survey



APPLIED POLICY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE
at WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

Executive Summary

This report compares community preference and support of two different design concepts to address the needs of the aging Yellow Springs Village Exempted School facilities. The overall purpose of the survey was to obtain community perceptions about two potential facility plans for renovations/additions to the existing school facilities. A total of 339 individuals were interviewed and survey results indicate that 82.5 percent of voters would prefer the two-phase plan to improve the existing separate school facilities at the current locations (addressing the middle and high school facilities as the first phase and elementary school renovations as phase two at a later date) over the development of a comprehensive single-site K-12 facility at the Mills Lawn location. However, many respondents also expressed concerns regarding the cost of the renovations/additions addressing the middle and high school facilities, citing taxes that are already too high in Yellow Springs and increasing taxes is unaffordable for much of young adult population, young families, and the senior adult population with fixed or limited incomes. When asked to consider the cost of the renovations/additions for the middle/high Schools (property owners would pay an additional \$14 per month for each \$100,000 dollars of assessed property value and all residents an additional quarter percent income tax), 64.2 percent of respondents indicated they would be for the levy - 15.0 percent definitely for and 49.2 percent probably for levy supporting the plan.

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Introduction

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted on behalf of the Yellow Springs Village Exempted School District (YSVESD) as one of many steps in the planning process to address the district's aging infrastructure. The overall purpose of the survey was to obtain community perceptions about two potential facility plans for renovations/additions to the existing school facilities. Such information can be used with other data to guide facility planning development and funding decisions by district leaders in future planning and board meetings.

The survey instrument was designed by the Yellow Springs Village Exempted School District's School Board with guidance from researchers at the Applied Policy Research Institute at Wright State University. To view the survey instrument, see Appendix A. Data were collected from September 25, 2017 to October 18, 2017.

A sample of individuals was selected randomly from a voter registry database purchased from Survey Sampling International. Approximately one-third of the sample generated was cell phone numbers. A total of 339 individuals were interviewed to obtain a 95 percent confidence level/ ± 4.35 percent sampling error.

While researchers may use the phrase "people" or "respondents" to refer to survey respondents, it should be noted that these terms refer to voters registered in the Yellow Springs Village Exempted School District who voted in three or more of the previous five most recent May elections and is not generalizable to all households in the school district.

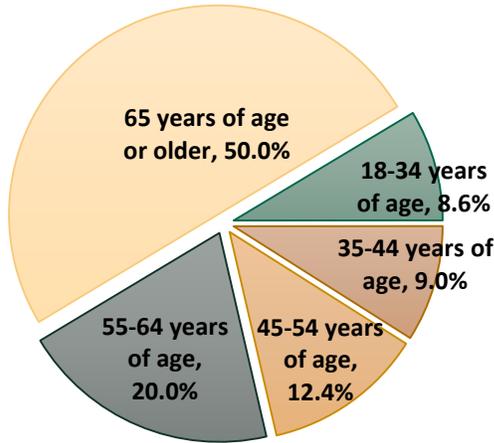
Data Analysis

Demographics

Sample demographics are presented to provide a snapshot of survey respondents and a context through which to interpret the findings of the survey. The following demographic characteristics were obtained from the survey: age, sex, race, income, employment status, educational attainment, number of children, and length of residency. The age and sex demographic characteristics were used to weight the data so that it better reflects the registered voter population of the school district.

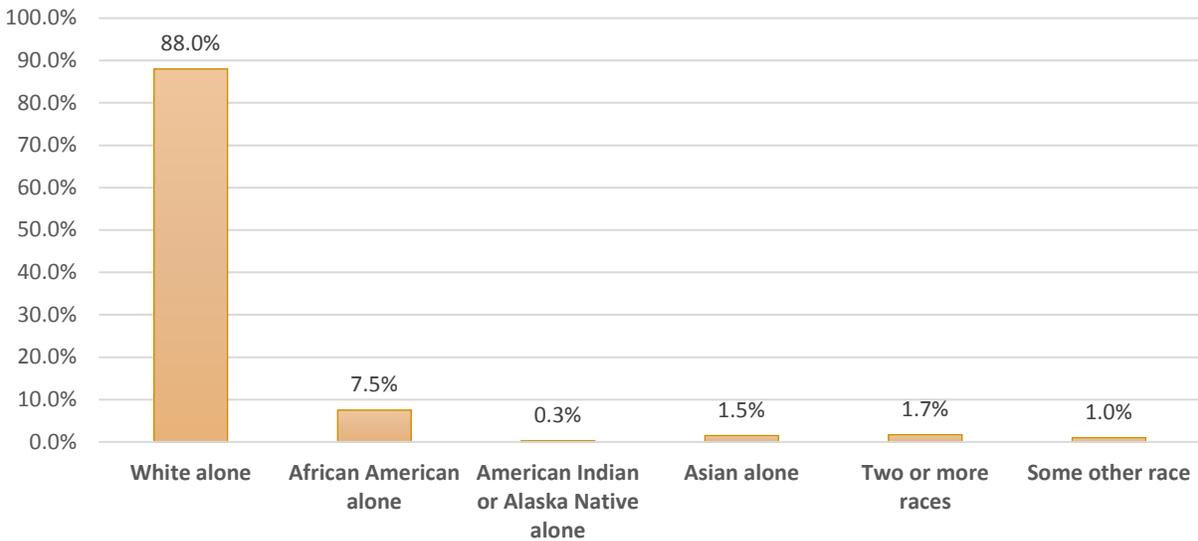
The gender of respondents was split with 44.0 percent of respondents being male and 56.0 percent being female. Responses were organized into five age cohorts, with 8.6 percent in the 18 to 34 age category, 21.4 percent in the 35 to 54 category, 20.0 percent between the ages of 55 and 64, and the remaining 50.0 percent being 65 years of age or older. A more detailed breakdown of ages appears in the following figure.

Figure 1: Respondent by Age Cohort



Ninety percent of the respondents provided their race when asked. The majority of respondents (88.0 percent) identified as white or Caucasian, while 7.5 percent identified as Black or African American alone, and the remaining 4.5 percent identified themselves as multiracial or some or race (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Race



Two-thirds of respondents have lived in the school district for 20 or more years and eight out of ten respondents own their own home. For a more detailed look at voter length of residency and housing tenure, refer to the following figures.

Figure 3: Length of Residency

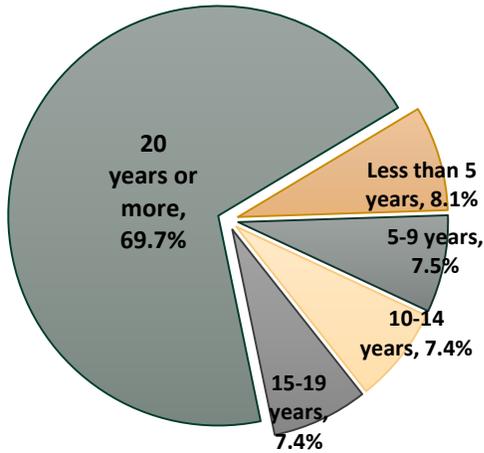
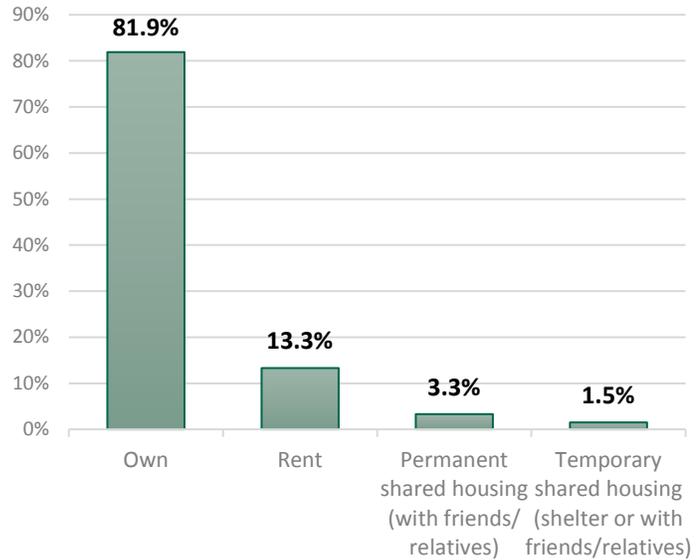
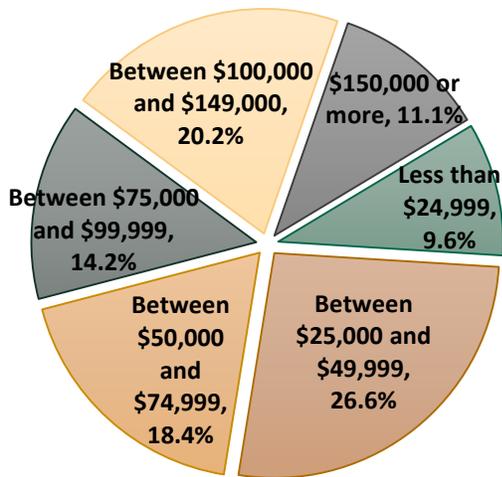


Figure 4: Housing Tenure



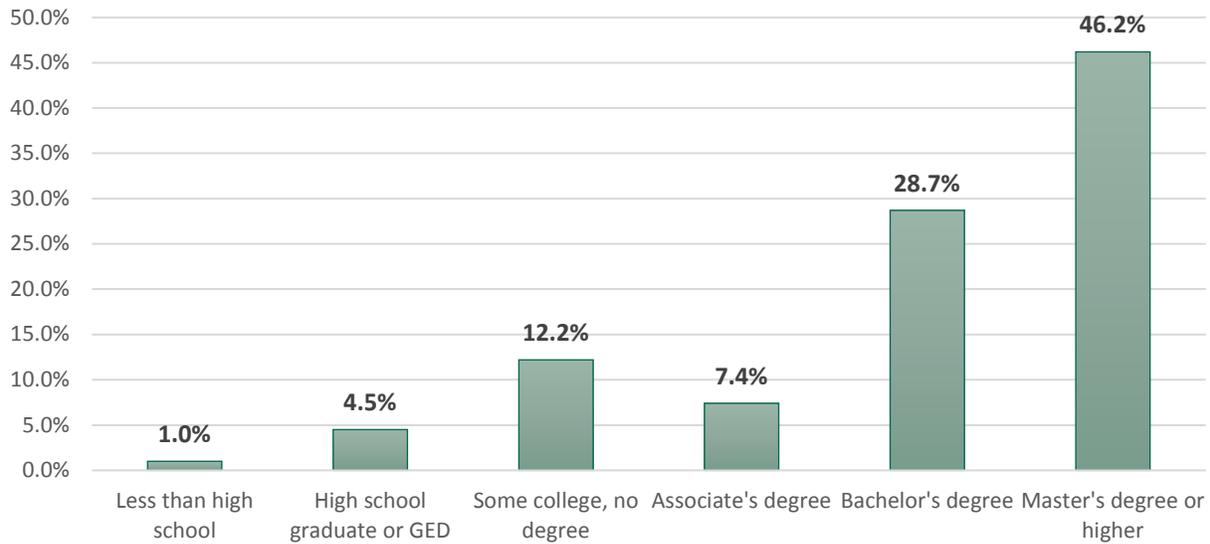
When respondents were asked to report their total annual household income before taxes, 36.1 percent reported an income of less than \$50,000. Of the remaining respondents, 32.6 percent have a household income between \$50,000 and \$99,999, and the remaining 31.3 percent have a household income of \$100,000 or more (see Figure 4).

Figure 5: Total Annual Household Income before Taxes



When asked about their level of education, a very small minority of respondents (1 percent) reported that they had less than a high school diploma (see Figure 5). Eight out of ten respondents (82.3 percent) reported that they are a college graduate, including those with Associate’s, Bachelor’s, and Post-graduate degrees. The remaining 16.7 percent of respondents reported that their highest level of education was either a high school diploma or some college.

Figure 6: Education



Roughly fifteen percent of respondents have school-aged children living at home (14.9%); 8.1% have elementary school age children, and 10.3% have middle or high school age children. Some households have children in each of these age cohorts, thus the individual percentages total more than 15%. Figure 2 provides the age distribution of children in respondents' households. To keep large enough samples to perform statistical analysis elsewhere in this report, these categories were collapsed into two groups: those containing school-aged children and those that do not.

Residents' Opinions about Yellow Springs Village Exempted School District Facility plans

All respondents were asked a series of questions about two potential facility renovation/addition plans: (1) a \$34 million dollar K-12 comprehensive facility plan addressing all needs for all students simultaneously at the Mills Lawn Elementary School site, and (2) an \$18 million dollar two-phase renovation project which would address the middle and high school facilities as the first phase and elementary school renovations as phase two at a later date.

First, respondents were asked how closely they have been following news about the school facilities planning process. Three-quarters of respondents indicated that they are following the news about school renovations in the Yellow Springs Village Exempted School District fairly (49.8 percent) or very (27.5 percent) closely. When asked to consider the possible ways to address planning for additions/renovations to buildings in the community, 82.5 percent prefer separate school facilities at the existing locations and 64.1 percent prefer to fund school facility projects with a combination of property and income tax.

Voters were asked to consider a \$34 million dollar K-12 comprehensive facility plan (addressing all needs for all students simultaneously) on a future ballot, which would cost property owners about \$26 per month for each \$100,000 dollars of assessed property value and all residents an additional half percent income tax. Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated that they would probably be for such an option on the ballot.

Voters were also asked how they felt about an idea being considered to construct a K-12 campus at the Mills Lawn Elementary site. This site was proposed because of its central location in the village and potential operational efficiency. Eight out of ten voters (81.9 percent) do not support the K-12 campus at the Mills Lawn location citing traffic congestion (34.5 percent), the loss of green space (18.7 percent), and the site not being large enough for so many children at one location (11.5 percent) as their primary physical concerns with the location. In addition, one out of five respondents who opposed the single-site location at Mills Lawn believe that younger and older children should be educated in separate facilities.

Eighty-five percent of respondents indicated that they would be for (49.3 percent probably for and 35.3 percent definitely for) a two phase renovation and addition plan. However when asked to consider that renovations/additions for the \$18 million dollar facility plan (addressing the middle/high schools as phase one of two) was on the ballot costing property owners about \$14 per month for each \$100,000 dollars of assessed property value and all residents would pay an additional quarter percent income tax, 64.2 percent of respondents indicated they were for the plan.

Respondents were provided an opportunity to request additional information from the board and insights about what may have influenced the probably for responses can be gleaned. Comments from respondents who said they were "probably for" the \$18 million dollar facility plan show that people are concerned about the community's ability to afford the levy and would like better understanding of the cost of renovations and the scope. Respondents also indicated that communication between the school board and the community could have been better and that additional community involvement/forums and information should have been provided during process. Respondents indicating that they were probably against the \$18 million dollar facility plan cited similar concerns.

One possible funding strategy being considered is a combination of local funds and applying for \$4.7 million dollars in state matching funds. The state funds could save taxpayers approximately \$5.50 per month. Four out of five (78.5 percent) respondents approve of applying for state matching funds as a funding strategy.

Cross-tabulations and chi square analysis was run by respondent demographic characteristics and revealed a strong relationship between respondents' inclinations by certain demographic variables: household income, age, and housing tenure status. Respondents living in households with incomes below \$50,000 per year were significantly less likely to support the \$18 million dollar facility plan if it were on the ballot than households reporting higher incomes. Adults 18-64 years of age and renters are significantly more likely to support applying for state matching funds as a funding strategy for school renovations/additions.

Respondents were also asked if they knew that the plans for renovations/addition to the existing school facilities would include a public/private partnership to build a performing arts center for school and community use included in the cost and how this would affect their vote. Two-thirds (66.5 percent)¹ of the respondents asked this question would vote for the renovations/additions to school facilities.

Conclusion

All in all, results show a high level of support for improving the separate Yellow Springs Village Exempted School District facilities and sentiment regarding the a potential ballot issue for the \$18 million dollar facility plan (addressing the middle/high schools as phase one of two) is encouraging. Results show the focus of any levy effort has to be on the middle categories, especially on those probably for it. Knowing this may assist the school district in its messaging.

¹ This question was modified after surveying began. Results are based on 160 respondents of the 339 interviewed.