



Overview: In 2023, Friends of White Oak issued our first “Reimagining White Oak” survey to gather community input on how to improve economic development in the White Oak area of East County in Silver Spring, Maryland. The survey received **675 responses** from a wide range of community members after promotion across various communication channels including email, social media, in-person outreach at community events, and media coverage in a local news outlet. The following is a report of the findings.

Key Takeaways:

- **“Independently-owned restaurants”** and **“small boutiques and retailers”** were listed as the top (2) development interests by respondents.
- The top five community and economic development needs in White Oak: **“safe community,” “affordable housing,” “access to transportation,” “access to healthy food,”** and **“business creation.”**
- **Nearly 98%** of all respondents expressed being **“extremely interested”** or **“somewhat interested”** in what happens to the Sears lot in White Oak.

Demographics: The following reflects some key demographic information on the 675 community members who responded to the survey.

- **Gender**
 - 65.8% were female, male (27.6%), 6.6% who identified as other or would rather not say.
- **Disability**
 - Yes 7.36%
 - No 92.64%
- **Length of time living in White Oak area**
 - 0-4 years - 20.60%
 - 5-9 years - 20.75%
 - 10-14 years - 16.69%
 - 15 or more years - 41.95%
- **Primary residence in White Oak area**
 - Rent 14.93%
 - Own 83.71%
 - Other 1.36%



- **Leisure Time in White Oak**
 - Nearly 76% spent time with family
 - Nearly 50% spent time with friends
 - 58% Engaged in listening to music
 - 53% Walking for pleasure
 - 40% Fitness/physical exercise
 - **Primary Form of Transportation in and to White Oak**
 - Public transportation 4.30%
 - Own a car 93.04%
 - Uber/Lyft (rideshare) -0.74%
 - Metro Access 0.44%
 - Walking or biking 1.48%
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Community Feedback on Economic Development: Respondents were asked to share their interests and ideas on community and economic development growth they'd like to see in White Oak.

- **Top community and economic needs in White Oak?**
 - **Safe community 32.44%**
 - **Affordable housing 21.19%**
 - **Access to transportation 13.19%**
 - **Access to healthy food 11.56%**
 - Business creation 5.04%
 - Job creation 3.70%
 - Beautiful landscape, parks and greenspace 3.11%
 - Youth programs and services 2.22%
 - **Ideas for growth in White Oak?**
 - **Independently-owned restaurants 62.67%**
 - **Small boutiques and local retailers 48.30%**
 - **Mixed retail and housing 30.96%**
 - **Trees and streetscapes 30.07%**
 - Walkability with lower traffic 29.63%
 - Park for children and family activities 29.33%
 - Venue for community meetings and events/performances 24.74%
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Sears Feedback: As a long-time landmark in the White Oak community, the survey included a couple of questions specifically on the redevelopment of the former Sears lot at White Oak Shopping Center, which has been a major business in the community since 1966. Sears closed 55 years later in 2021 and has been a vacant lot since then.

- **How interested are you in what happens to the Sears building in White Oak?**
 - Extremely interested 69.33%
 - Somewhat interested 28.59%

- **What percentage of respondents “strongly agree” with the following ideas for redevelopment of the former Sears building in White Oak?**
 - Restaurants and dining options 51.11%
 - Walkability or pedestrian-friendliness 50.22%
 - Activities and entertainment 44.00%
 - Family activities 39.26%
 - Retail and shopping 36.00%
 - Parks 31.26%

To access the raw survey data, [click here](#). To learn more or to contact the Friends of White Oak board, email info@friendsofwhiteoak.org.

Founded in 2017, Friends of White Oak is a nonprofit committed to community engagement, economic development, and advocacy that supports the ongoing development of a safe, diverse, vibrant, and sustainable greater White Oak community situated in the eastern region of Montgomery County, Md.

www.friendsofwhiteoak.org