



BEREA CITY OF BERE A 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BEYOND

PUBLIC SURVEY ANALYSIS

Total Responses: 468 // Survey Period: July 1 – October 31, 2025

INTRODUCTION

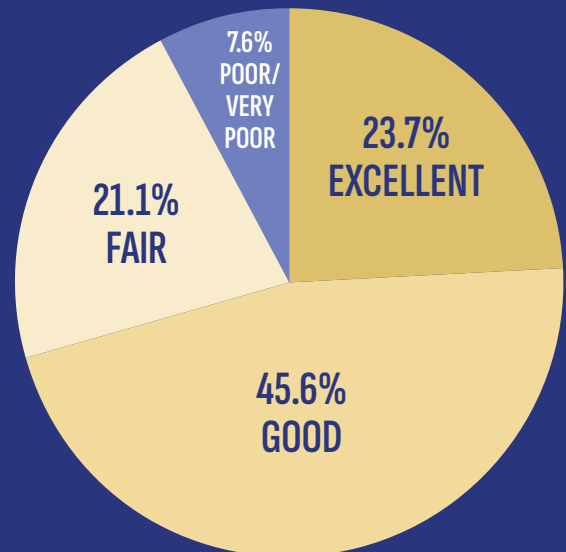
The Berea Beyond 2025 Comprehensive Plan public survey served as a key tool for gathering broad input from residents, workers, students, and other community members to guide long-range planning. With nearly 500 responses, this survey provides statistically meaningful insight into what Bereans value, what concerns they have, and what ideas they propose for the city's future. Responses came from a diverse range of ages, neighborhoods, and household types. This analysis summarizes both quantitative and qualitative feedback, with particular attention to core planning topics such as housing, transportation, parks and recreation, land use, economic development, and public services.

QUALITY OF LIFE IN BEREA

Respondents were asked to evaluate Berea as a place to live.

- **23.7%** rated Berea as an **excellent** place to live.
- **45.6%** said it is **good**, and
- **21.1%** selected **fair**.
- **Only 7.6%** rated Berea as **poor** or **very poor**.

Together, nearly 70% expressed satisfaction with life in Berea, indicating a generally favorable perception of the community. However, there are some important nuances.



In open-ended feedback, respondents praised the city's natural beauty, walkable downtown, access to arts and culture, and sense of safety and community. A strong sense of identity and "small-town feel" emerged as a recurring strength. However, concerns about affordable housing, economic stagnation, lack of youth opportunities, and gentrification were more frequently cited among younger residents, renters, and individuals with disabilities.

Segmented Responses:

- Residents **under age 35** were more likely to rate Berea as Fair or Poor, citing lack of affordable housing, limited nightlife, and job opportunities.
- **Homeowners** expressed higher satisfaction than **renters**, though both praised parks and local culture.

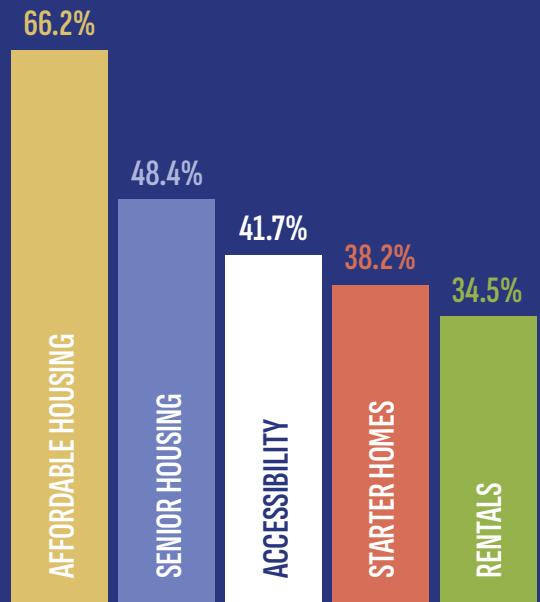


HOUSING NEEDS AND AFFORDABILITY

Housing challenges surfaced as a **top community concern** throughout the survey.

Top-ranked housing needs:

- Affordable housing — **66.2%**
- Senior housing — **48.4%**
- Accessible housing for people with disabilities — **41.7%**
- Starter homes (for first-time buyers) — **38.2%**
- Rental housing availability — **34.5%**



Open responses consistently described barriers to both renting and homeownership. Themes included:

- Escalating **home prices** and **rent levels**, even for modest dwellings.
- A mismatch between available units and **household size** or **income**.
- Inadequate **maintenance** or **quality** of some older rental stock.
- Seniors seeking to **age in place** were particularly concerned about one-story options, universal design features, and proximity to services.

Several respondents expressed support for **infill development** on underutilized land, as well as **small-scale multi-family units** such as duplexes

and bungalow courts. Others raised questions about limiting short-term rentals, which they believe are reducing local housing availability.

The housing results suggest Berea may benefit from a comprehensive housing strategy that blends affordability, accessibility, and infill opportunities.

Segmented Responses:

- **82% of renters** identified affordable housing as a top priority
- Respondents **under age 34** were overrepresented among renters and more likely to express housing insecurity
- **Seniors (65+)** ranked senior housing and accessibility needs significantly higher than younger age groups

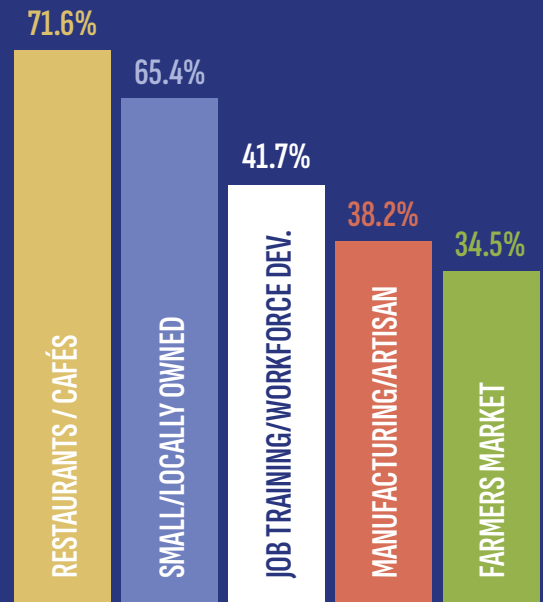


ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS PRIORITIES

When asked what types of businesses or economic investments should be prioritized, respondents favored a **locally grounded, quality-of-life-oriented economy**.

Most desired businesses or industries:

- Restaurants and cafés — **71.6%**
- Small, locally owned retail shops — **65.4%**
- Job training/workforce development centers — **54.2%**
- Light manufacturing and artisan trades — **46.9%**
- Farmers markets and local food businesses — **43.1%**



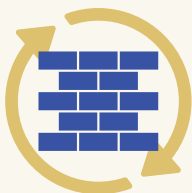
Many responses reflected a desire for walkable, everyday amenities and not just for tourists, but for residents. Others emphasized the need for good-paying, year-round employment, particularly in skilled trades, green infrastructure, and arts-related industries.

Some residents called for a re-imagining of Berea's tourism brand, focusing on authenticity, heritage arts, and eco-tourism, rather than mass-marketed chain development. There was also consistent interest in supporting entrepreneurship, especially for youth and BIPOC-led ventures.

KEY THEMES



Many residents want **quality jobs** in healthcare, education, trades, and clean industries



Support for revitalizing downtown and commercial corridors such as **Chestnut Street**



Frustration with an economy oriented **around tourism** at the expense of full-time residents



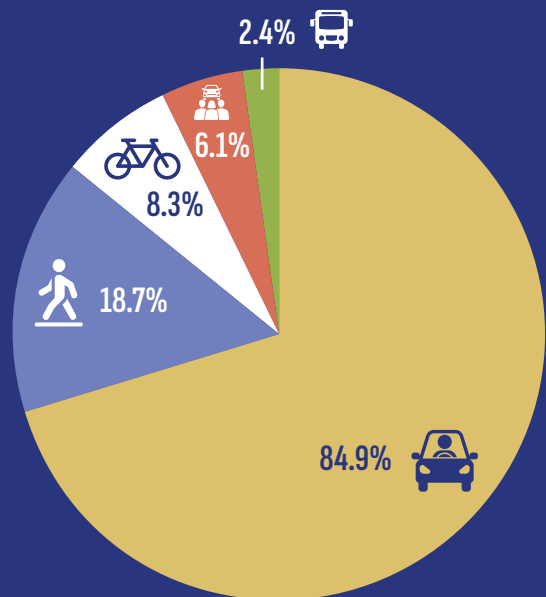
Calls for youth entrepreneurship programs and **minority-owned business support**

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

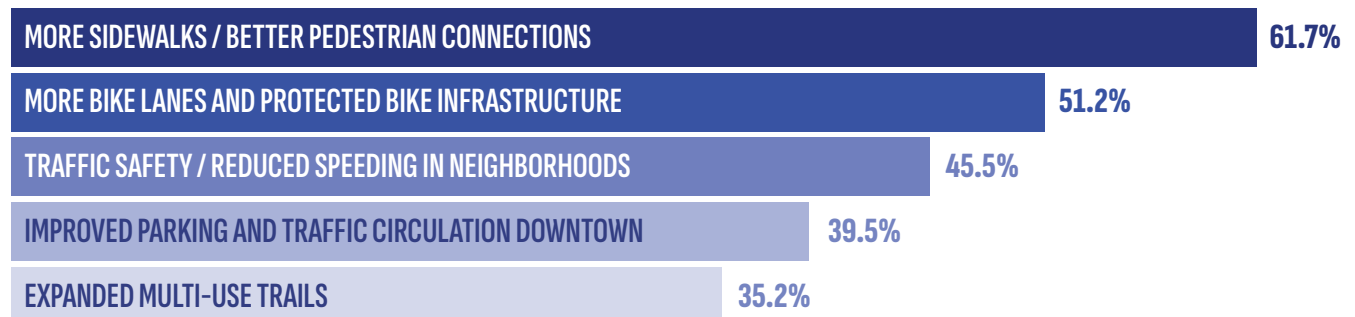
The survey asked about how residents get around Berea and what transportation improvements are most needed.

Modes of travel (select all that apply):

- Drive personal vehicle — **84.9%**
- Walk — **18.7%**
- Bike — **8.3%**
- Carpool or ride with others — **6.1%**
- Public transportation — **2.4%**



TOP TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED



Key Insights:

Comments frequently cited **incomplete sidewalks**, **lack of ADA accessibility**, and **limited safe crossings** on major roads such as KY-21 and US-25. Several residents also highlighted the importance of **safe routes to school** and **walkability for seniors**.

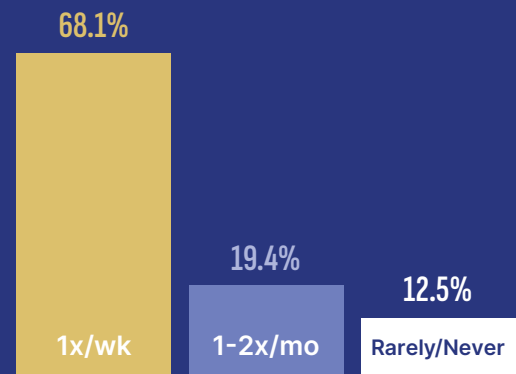
The very low percentage of transit users reflects both **limited availability** and **lack of awareness** of any existing services. There is likely opportunity for **micro-transit pilots**, **campus shuttles**, or enhanced **ride-sharing** partnerships to address this gap.

PARKS, TRAILS, AND PUBLIC SPACES

Recreation and green space were high on the list of valued assets and desired improvements.

How often do you use Berea's parks?

- At least once a week — **68.1%**
- Once or twice a month — **19.4%**
- Rarely or never — **12.5%**



DESIRED NEW PARK AMENITIES

(SELECT UP TO THREE)



74.3%

WALKING AND BIKING TRAILS



58.7%

COMMUNITY EVENTS / FESTIVALS /
GATHERING SPACES



45.6%

DOG PARKS / NATURE PRESERVES



40.9%

PLAYGROUNDS AND
KID-FRIENDLY AMENITIES



34.2%

OUTDOOR EXERCISE EQUIPMENT

In narrative responses, many residents praised Berea's existing **City Park**, **Indian Fort Theater**, and **forested trails**. However, they also pointed to **gaps in neighborhood-level access**, especially for families without cars. Others called for more **accessible play areas, benches, and shade structures** for elders and individuals with disabilities.

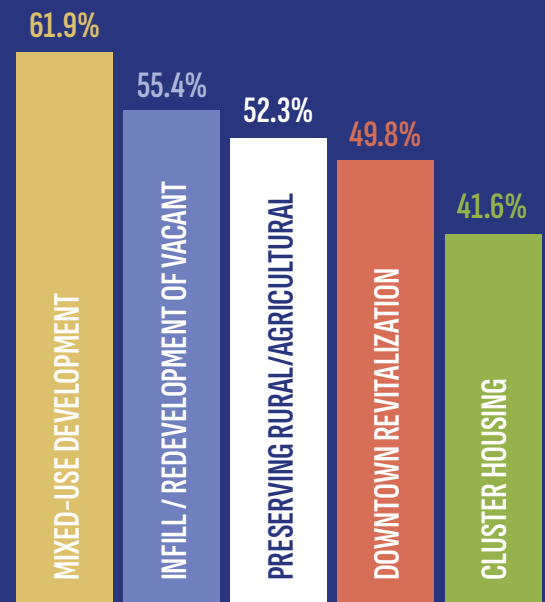
Green infrastructure features such as **pollinator gardens, rain gardens, and tree canopy expansion** were also mentioned as ways to connect ecology with recreation.

LAND USE, GROWTH, AND DEVELOPMENT

When asked about Berea's physical form and growth priorities, residents expressed a strong desire for **balanced, sustainable development**.

Supported land use strategies:

- Mixed-use development (shops + housing) — **61.9%**
- Infill development and redevelopment of vacant properties — **55.4%**
- Preserving rural/agricultural land — **52.3%**
- Downtown revitalization — **49.8%**
- Cluster housing or conservation subdivisions — **41.6%**



Respondents want Berea to grow, but **not at the expense of its charm or natural resources**. There was strong support for **reusing vacant lots**, particularly in existing neighborhoods, and skepticism about **sprawling subdivisions** disconnected from sidewalks, transit, or jobs.

Several comments suggested creating **form-based codes, design standards, or historic preservation guidelines** to maintain architectural integrity. Others emphasized the importance of **community character, tree preservation, and greenspace integration** in all new development.

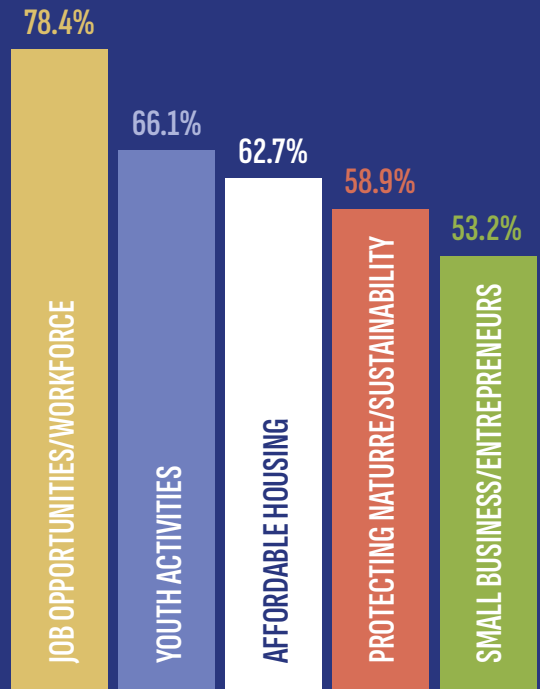


COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND GUIDING VALUES

In one of the final survey questions, respondents were asked to identify the **top priorities for the future of Berea**.

Most frequently selected goals:

1. Improving job opportunities and workforce development — **78.4%**
2. Providing more activities for youth — **66.1%**
3. Expanding access to affordable housing — **62.7%**
4. Protecting natural areas and promoting sustainability — **58.9%**
5. Supporting small businesses and local entrepreneurs — **53.2%**



Other common priorities included **improving health access, ensuring inclusive decision-making, and addressing homelessness and poverty.**

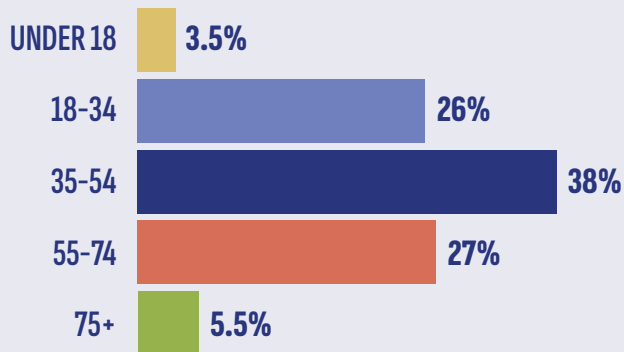
Across all demographics, there was a shared interest in **equity, belonging, and accountability** — ensuring that Berea works for all people regardless of age, income, or background.



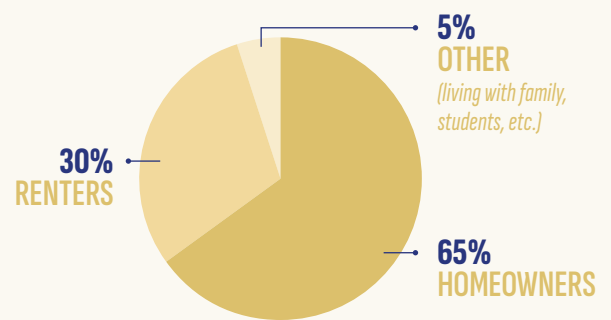
DEMOGRAPHIC HIGHLIGHTS



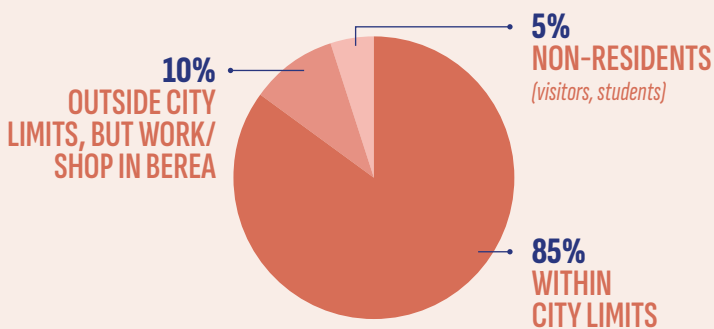
AGE



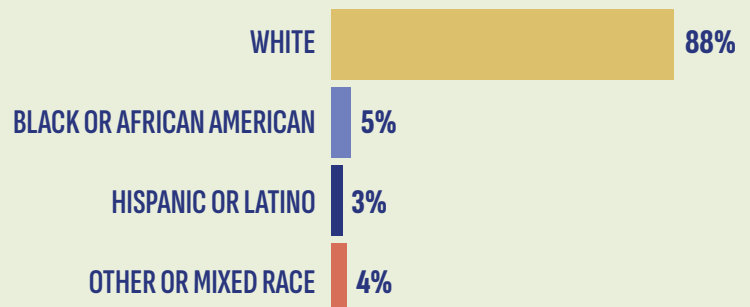
HOME OWNERSHIP



RESIDENCY



RACE/ETHNICITY

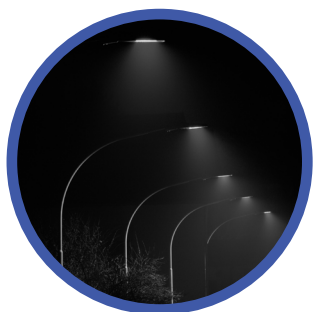


These demographics suggest broad engagement across the community, though renters, immigrants, and communities of color may be **slightly underrepresented**. Additional outreach may be needed for future engagement phases.

SAFETY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND PUBLIC SERVICES

While safety concerns were not directly addressed in a single question, several open-ended responses highlighted **traffic speed**, **crosswalk safety**, and **sidewalk gaps** as contributors to feelings of vulnerability, especially for children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

RESIDENTS ALSO EXPRESSED A DESIRE FOR:



Improved lighting
along sidewalks and
trails (especially near
schools and parks)



**Stormwater infrastructure
upgrades**, especially
in areas prone to
localized flooding



Code enforcement
for neglected or
unsafe properties

Multiple participants mentioned the need for **emergency preparedness planning**, particularly as Berea grows and faces more frequent extreme weather events.

City services (utilities, public works, etc.) were generally well regarded. However, some residents requested more **communication and transparency**, particularly when disruptions or maintenance work is scheduled.



HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND HUMAN SERVICES

Access to health services, particularly mental health care, services for seniors, and resources for low-income residents, was a notable concern throughout the open-ended responses.

KEY POINTS INCLUDED

- 1** | A lack of **mental health providers**, especially those who accept Medicaid or sliding scale.
- 2** | Limited access to **walk-in or urgent care clinics**, especially after hours.
- 3** | The need for **recreation and wellness programs**, particularly for youth and older adults.
- 4** | Ongoing **food insecurity** for some families, despite the presence of local food pantries.

Some respondents advocated for a **community wellness center**, with consolidated access to physical activity space, behavioral health counseling, and nutrition education.

There was also support for **mobile services**, **transportation assistance**, and expanded awareness of existing human service programs. This reinforces the need for a centralized resource hub or referral system for residents navigating assistance.

YOUTH AND EDUCATION

A strong theme throughout the survey was the **lack of youth-oriented amenities and activities** in Berea.

When asked what would improve Berea for future generations, many participants cited:

- The need for **structured afterschool programs** and **summer youth employment**.
- The desire for **teen-friendly spaces** beyond sports, such as art studios, maker spaces, and music venues.
- Enhanced **safe routes to school** and better lighting around school zones.
- Support for partnerships with **Berea Community Schools, Madison County Schools, and Berea College**.

In fact, **66.1%** of survey respondents selected “more activities for youth” as one of Berea’s top priorities.

This suggests a potential role for the City of Berea in **coordinating intergenerational investments**, including mentorship, public art projects, and teen-led advisory groups.





ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Environmental responsibility and sustainable practices emerged as a cross-cutting value, especially among respondents under age 35 and those with children.

TOP THEMES INCLUDED

- Expanding **green infrastructure** to manage stormwater and urban heat.
- Growing the **urban tree canopy**, especially in neighborhoods with low shade cover.
- Supporting **local food systems** and **community gardens**.
- Integrating **solar panels** and renewable energy incentives into new development.
- Establishing a **citywide composting or recycling initiative**.

More than **58%** of all respondents selected “protecting natural areas and promoting sustainability” as one of their top five future priorities, which suggests broad support for incorporating climate adaptation, land conservation, and environmental education into the Comprehensive Plan.

CULTURAL ASSETS AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Berea's identity as an arts and culture hub was frequently cited as both a point of pride and a concern.

On one hand, respondents **praised**:

- The city's history as a **racially inclusive community**.
- Strong support for **craftspeople, musicians, and storytellers**.
- Partnerships with **Berea College, the Festival of Learnshops, and local studios**.

On the other hand, several comments **reflected concerns** about:

- The **increasing commercialization** of local art spaces.
- A **loss of authenticity** as tourism shifts toward chain stores or "generic" amenities.
- **Limited access to cultural opportunities** for lower-income residents and youth.

Respondents suggested stronger investment in **neighborhood-based art, cultural history markers, and intergenerational storytelling events**. They also called for more support for **BIPOC artists, Appalachian heritage preservation**, and spaces where multiple cultures can be celebrated equitably.



INCLUSIVITY, BELONGING, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Many respondents — especially younger adults and renters — voiced a desire for **greater transparency, equity, and representation** in local decision-making.

Recurring themes included:

- A perceived disconnect between **city leadership** and **diverse community voices**.
- Barriers to civic participation, such as **lack of childcare** or **work schedule conflicts**.
- A lack of awareness about **how to get involved** in planning, zoning, or city commissions.
- Concerns that some communities, such as **immigrants, renters, or people with disabilities**, are underrepresented in planning decisions.

Respondents recommended more **multi-lingual communications, youth advisory boards, door-to-door outreach, and co-governance models** to ensure all Bereans feel seen, heard, and empowered.



LAND USE TRADEOFFS AND PUBLIC SENTIMENT ON GROWTH

Several open-ended responses reflected the tension between **welcoming growth** and **preserving community character**.

While there was general support for **infill development**, **walkable mixed-use districts**, and **higher housing density near services**, there was also apprehension about:



Traffic congestion
and overburdened
infrastructure



Loss of farmland
and natural beauty



**Cultural or
architectural
homogeneity**
in new subdivisions



The need to
maintain **distinct
neighborhood
identities**

These insights reinforce the importance of adopting context-sensitive planning tools like form-based codes, conservation development standards, and participatory design processes.



FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The Berea Beyond 2025 survey results illustrate a city with strong civic pride, natural and cultural assets, and emerging generational shifts in priorities.

There is clear support for:

- **Affordable and diverse housing options**
- **Safe, accessible transportation and public spaces**
- **Expanded youth and senior services**
- **Sustainable land use and climate resilience**
- **Authentic community identity and inclusive governance**