



# Town of Buchanan

Community Survey Report

May 19, 2026





**Our mission is to help community leaders gather, organize, and use data to make strategic decisions.**

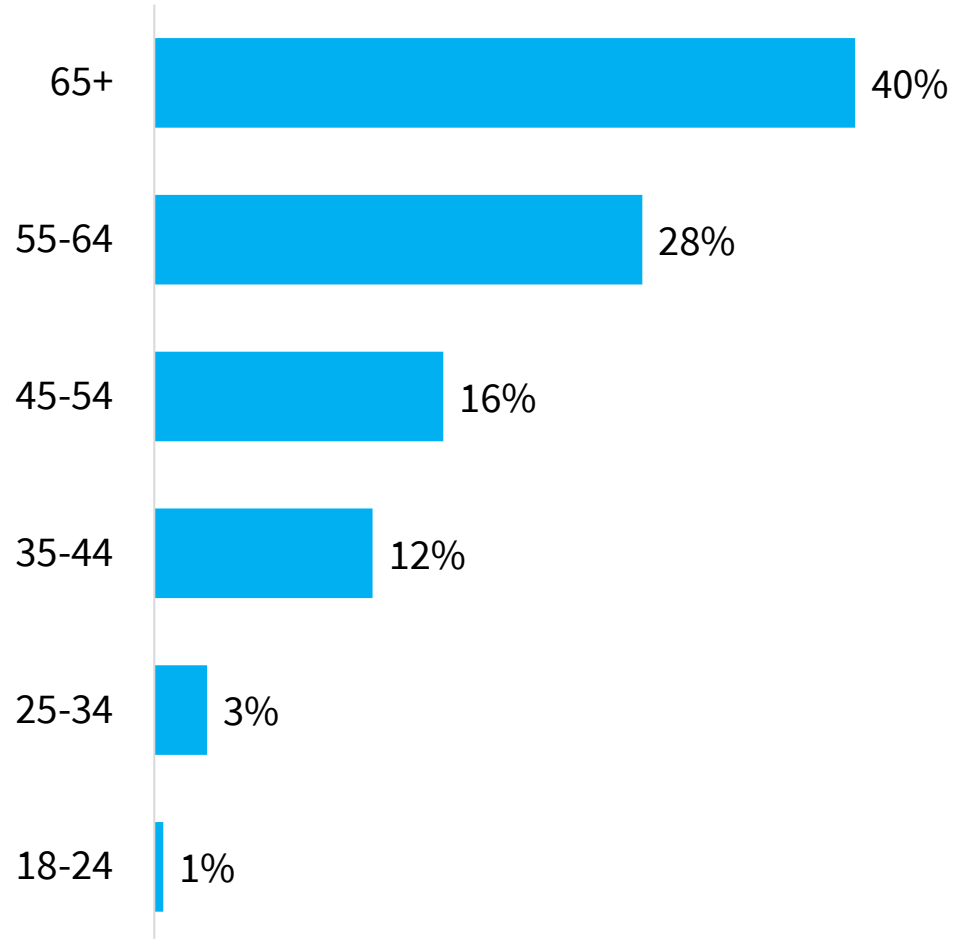
- Founded in **2002** to provide independent research
- Helped more than **1,400** communities navigate the strategic planning and referendum planning process

# Survey Information

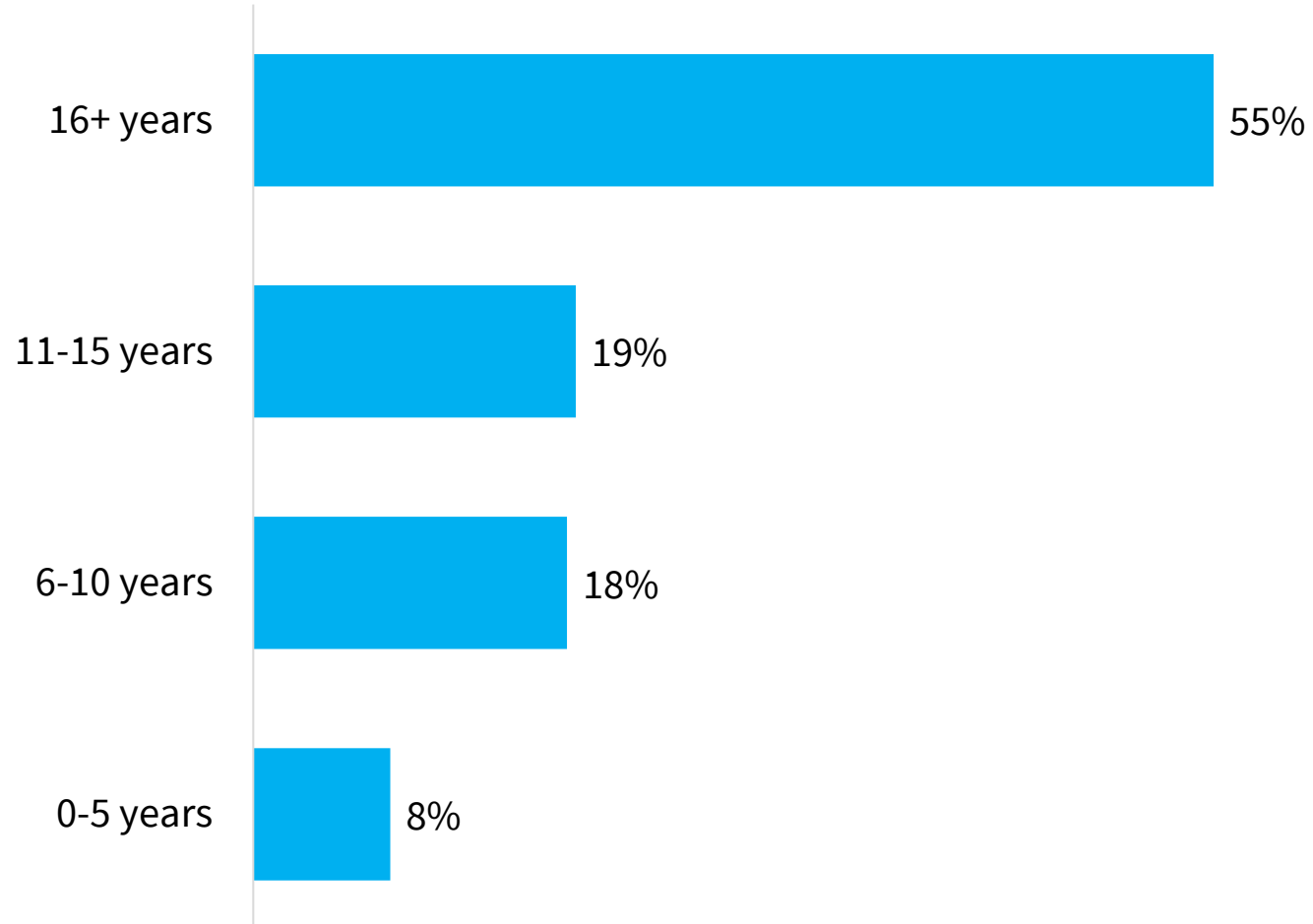
- **May 1, 2026** survey deadline
- **723** respondents
- **27%** response rate (average is 16-18%)
- **+/- 3.72%** statistical margin of error



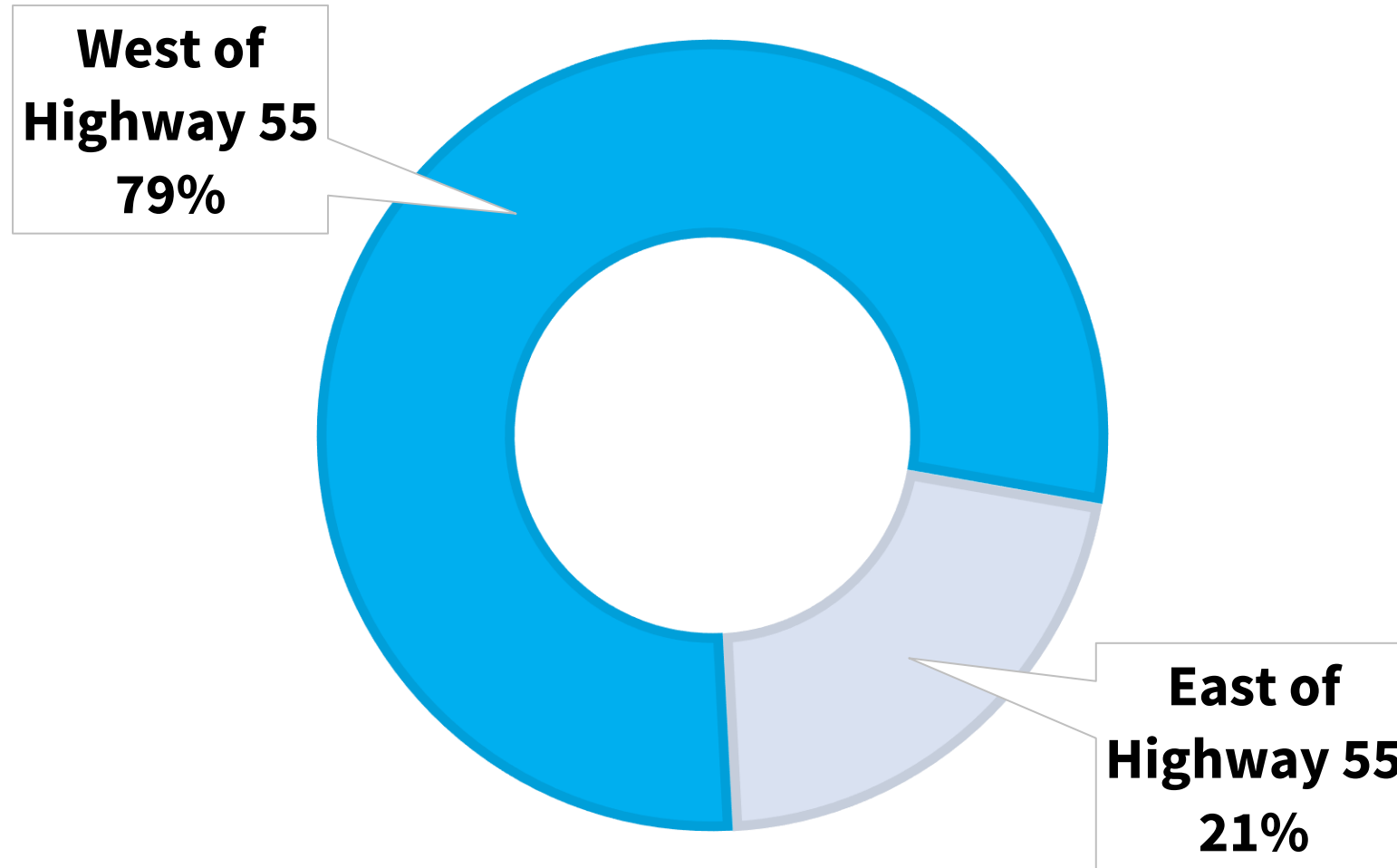
# What is your age?



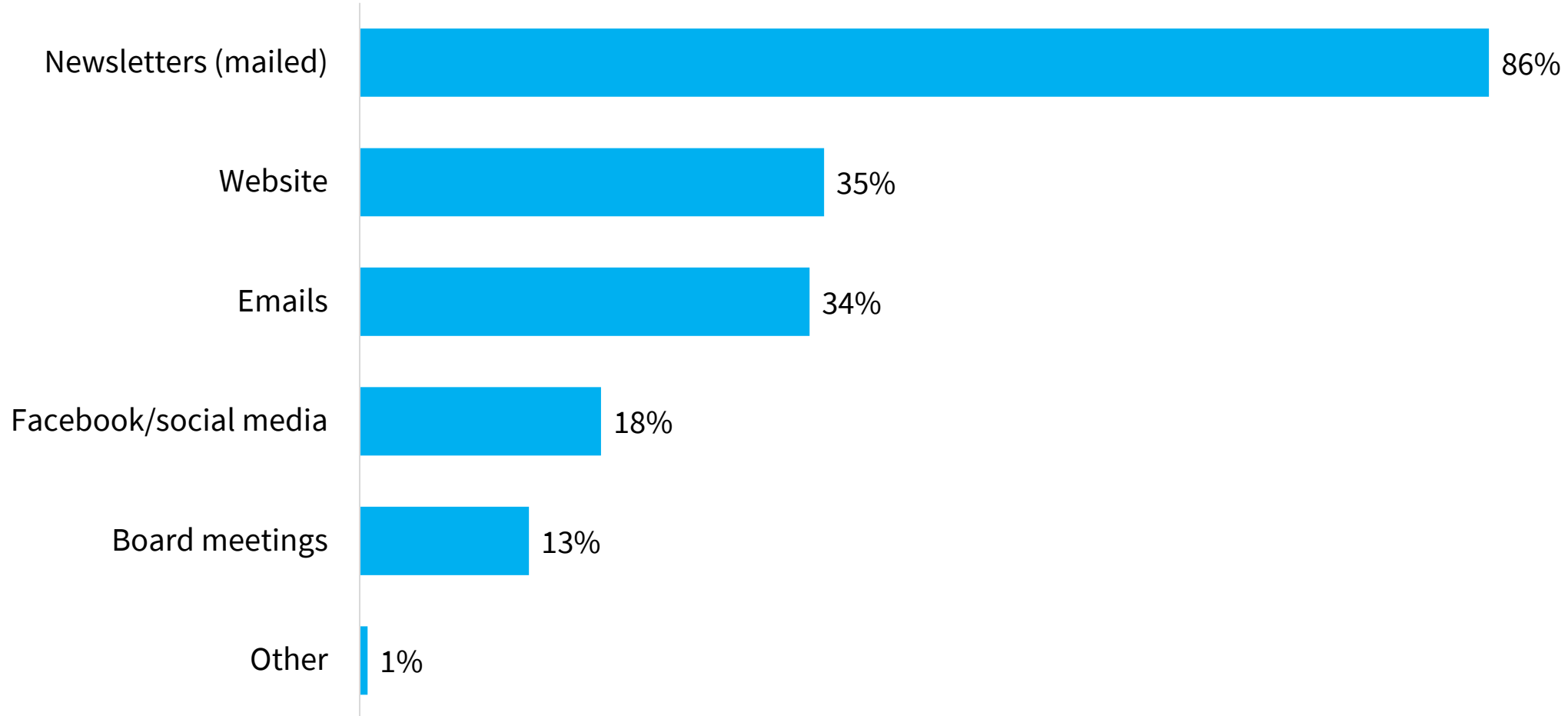
# How long to you plan to live in the Town of Buchanan?



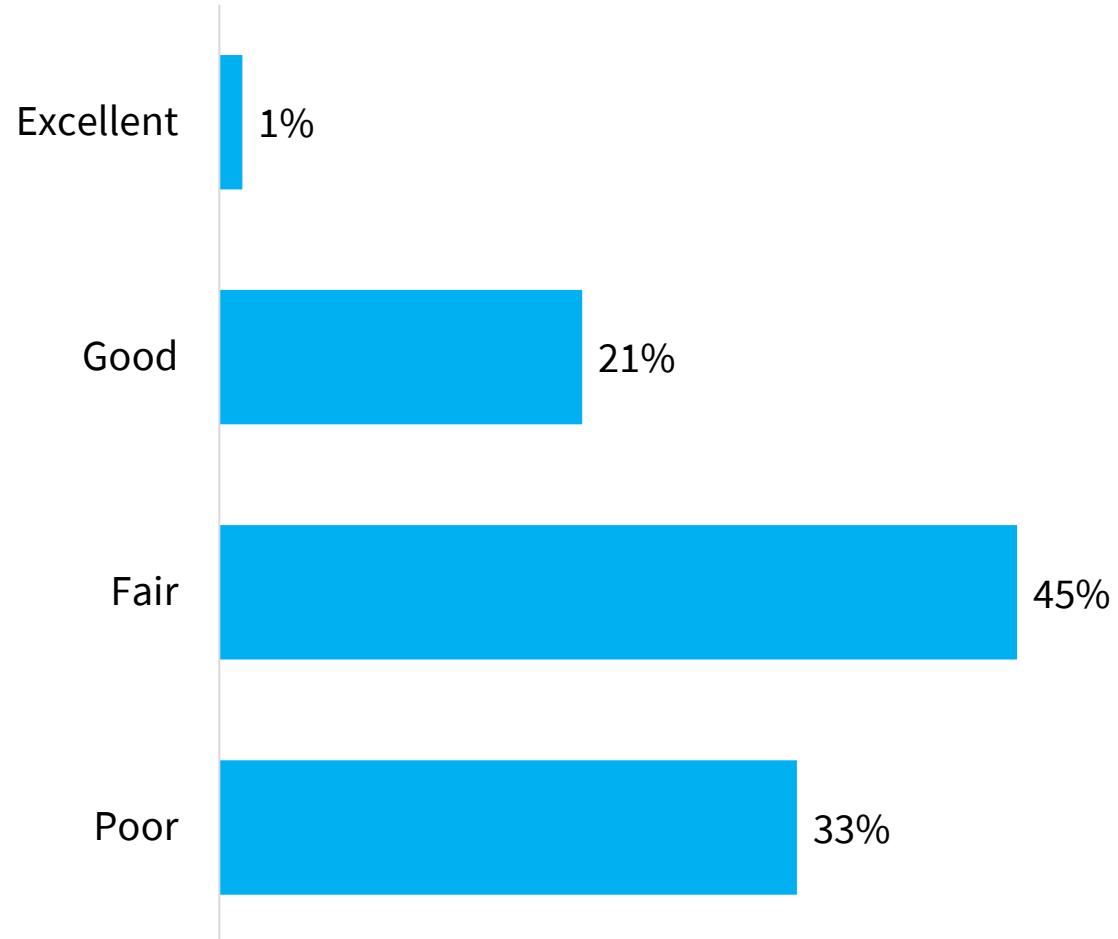
# Which area of the Town do you live in?



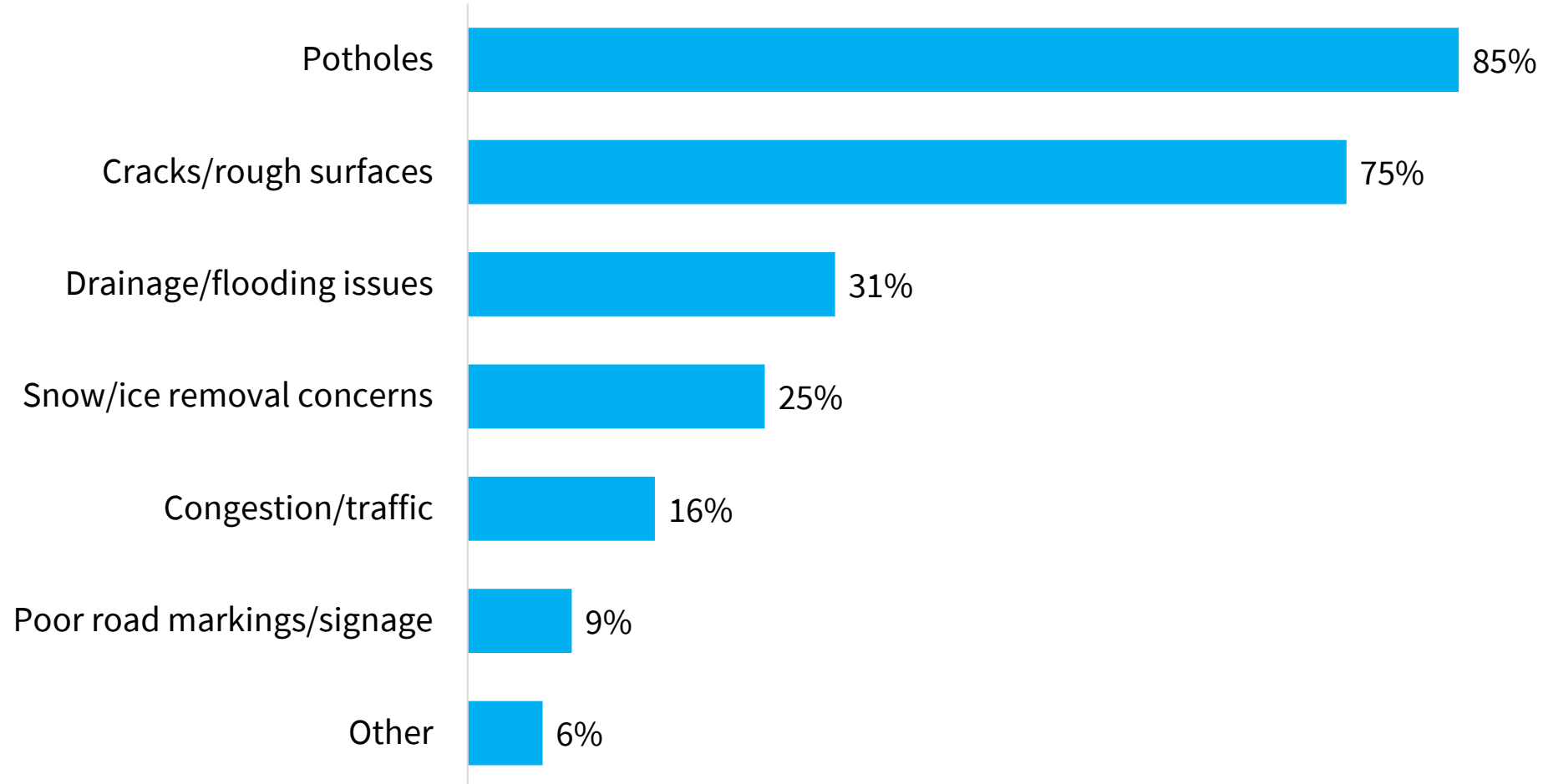
# How would you like to receive information from us?



# How would you rate the overall condition of the Town's roads?



# What issues do you encounter the most often?



# Does the road you live on have curb and gutter?



# Background Information



We budget annually to pay for road maintenance, but the current level of spending cannot keep up with our needs because costs for labor, asphalt, and fuel have increased.

At the same time, the state limits how much money we are allowed to raise through property taxes (the “levy limit”). The state froze the levy limit in 2011. At that time, the Town was not doing major road repairs, so the annual budget was low. Now, this means there is not enough money in our current budget to pay for the anticipated projects.

**Based on a recent engineering analysis, 15 miles (33%) of Town roads rate “poor” or worse, as seen in the table to the right.**

In 2019, voters told the Board they preferred to pay for road reconstruction through the Transportation Utility. However, in 2023, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that transportation utilities are not allowed for this purpose.

Rating	Miles of Town Road
9-10 (Excellent)	11.2
7-8 (Good/Very Good)	8.6
5-6 (Fair/Good)	11.1
3-4 (Poor/Fair)	12.4
1-2 (Failed/Very Poor)	2.7

*To see which roads have which rating, visit:*

*[townofbuchanan.org/town-services/finance-taxes/capital-improvement-plan](https://townofbuchanan.org/town-services/finance-taxes/capital-improvement-plan)*

# Road Design



When reconstructing a road, there are two options to manage stormwater:

## **Drainage ditches**

This is the approach the Town has used historically. It is less expensive when doing the reconstruction, saving money now. However, it can cause water drainage issues and shortens the useful life of the road. This means that a road reconstructed with ditches will have to be reconstructed again sooner, making it more expensive in the long-term. (Some areas of the Town have flat ditches that are unable to be improved to address drainage issues).

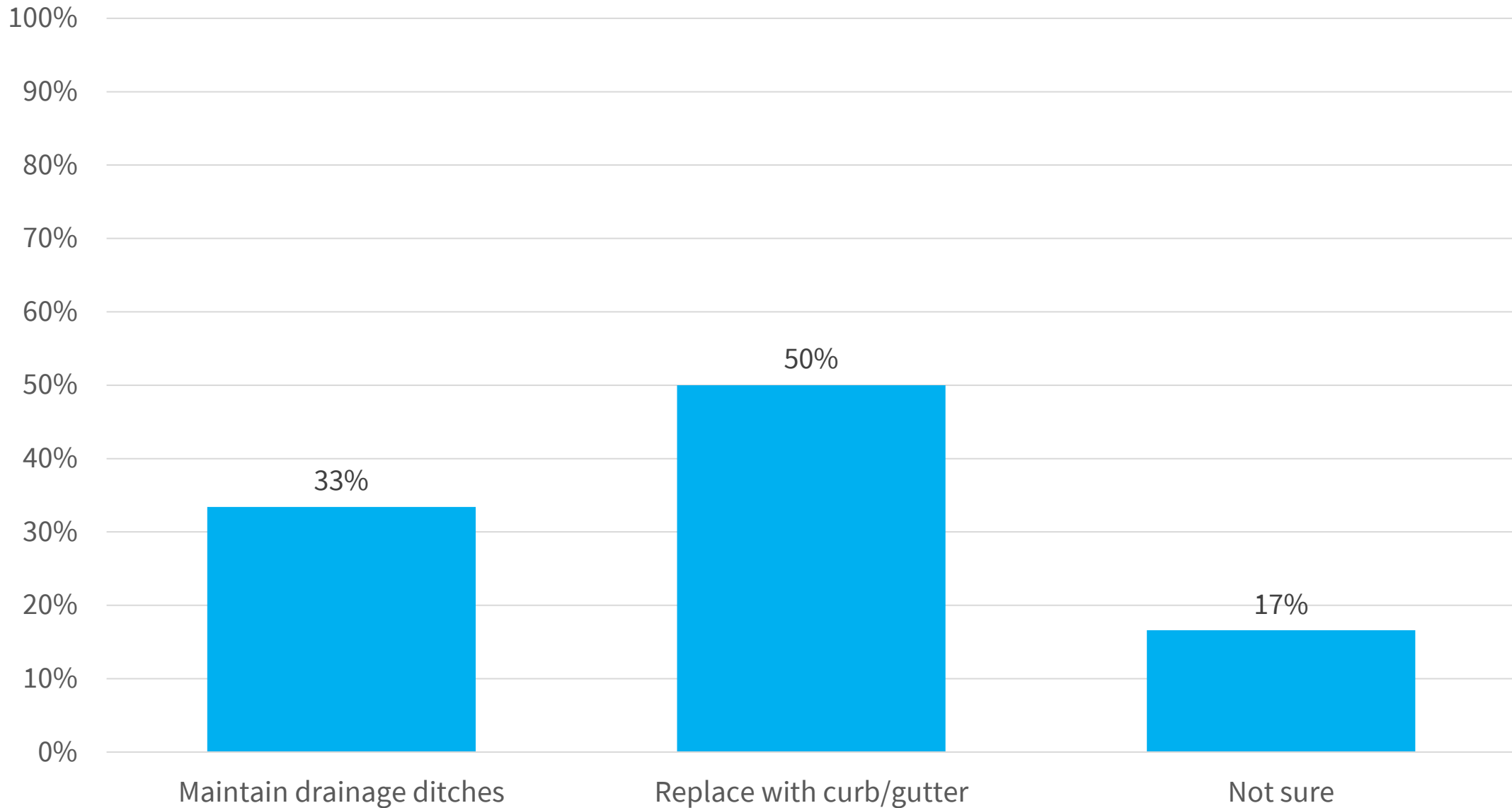
## **Curb, gutter, and storm sewer**

This option is more expensive when completing the reconstruction. However, it is more reliable in ensuring roads move stormwater effectively. It also increases the useful life of the road, saving money in the future because reconstruction is required less often.

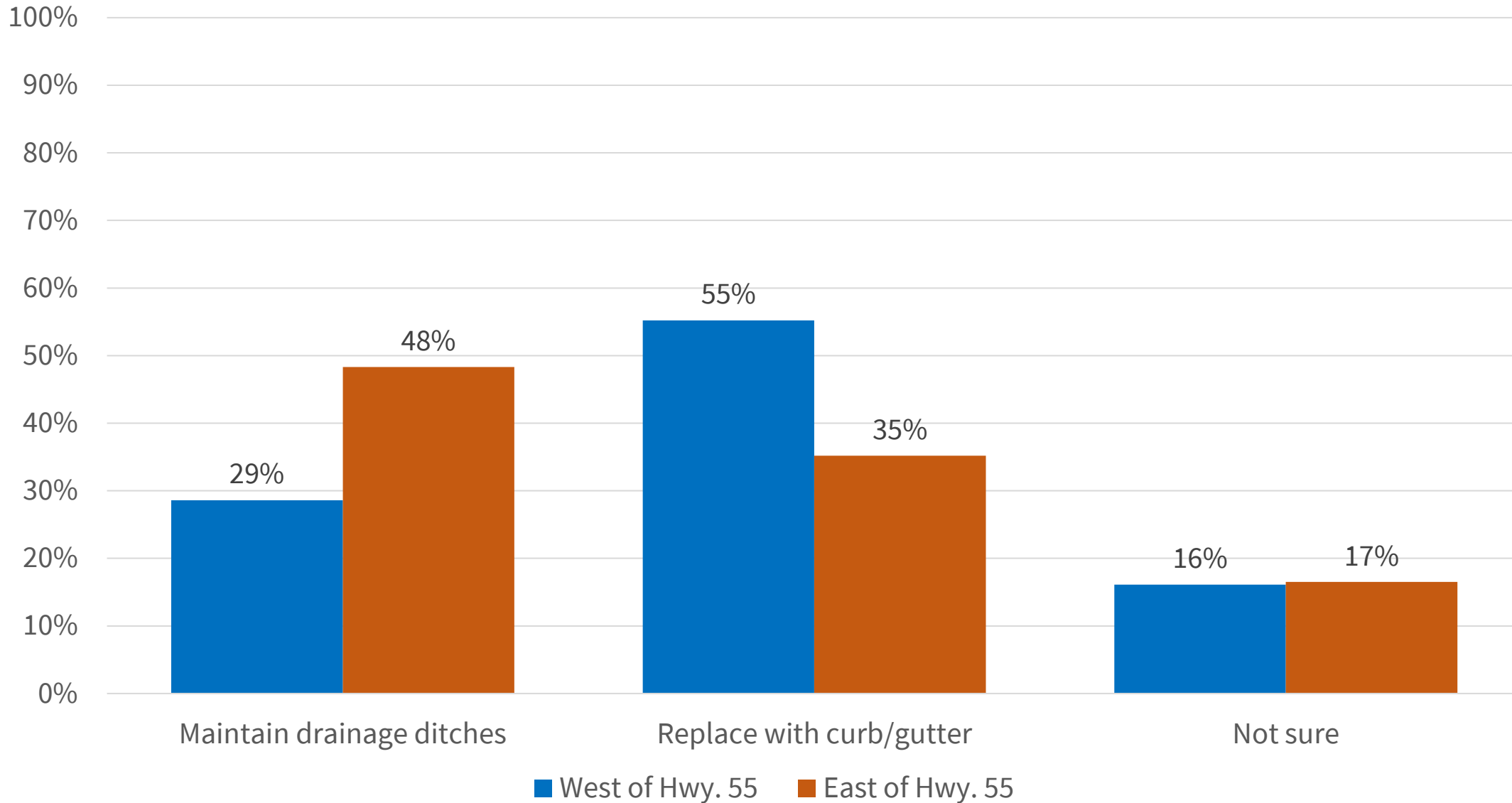
---

In recent years, the Board has planned to use more curb, gutter, and storm sewer. However, this has increased the cost of road reconstruction projects. We would like to understand our community's preferences before continuing with this approach. **Regardless of which approach the Town takes, it will require additional funding.**

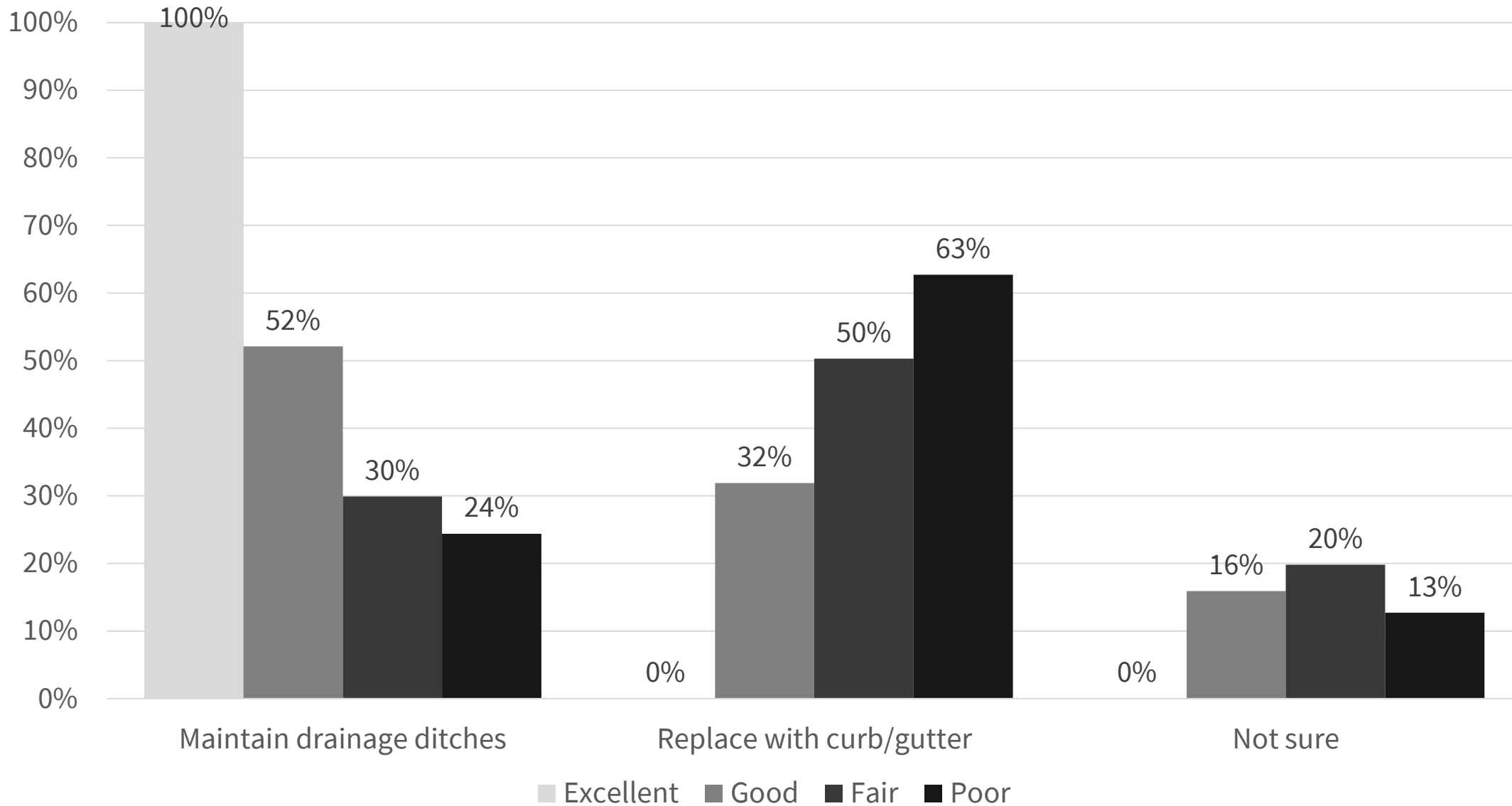
# Which road design do you prefer?



# Which road design do you prefer? *(by area of Town)*



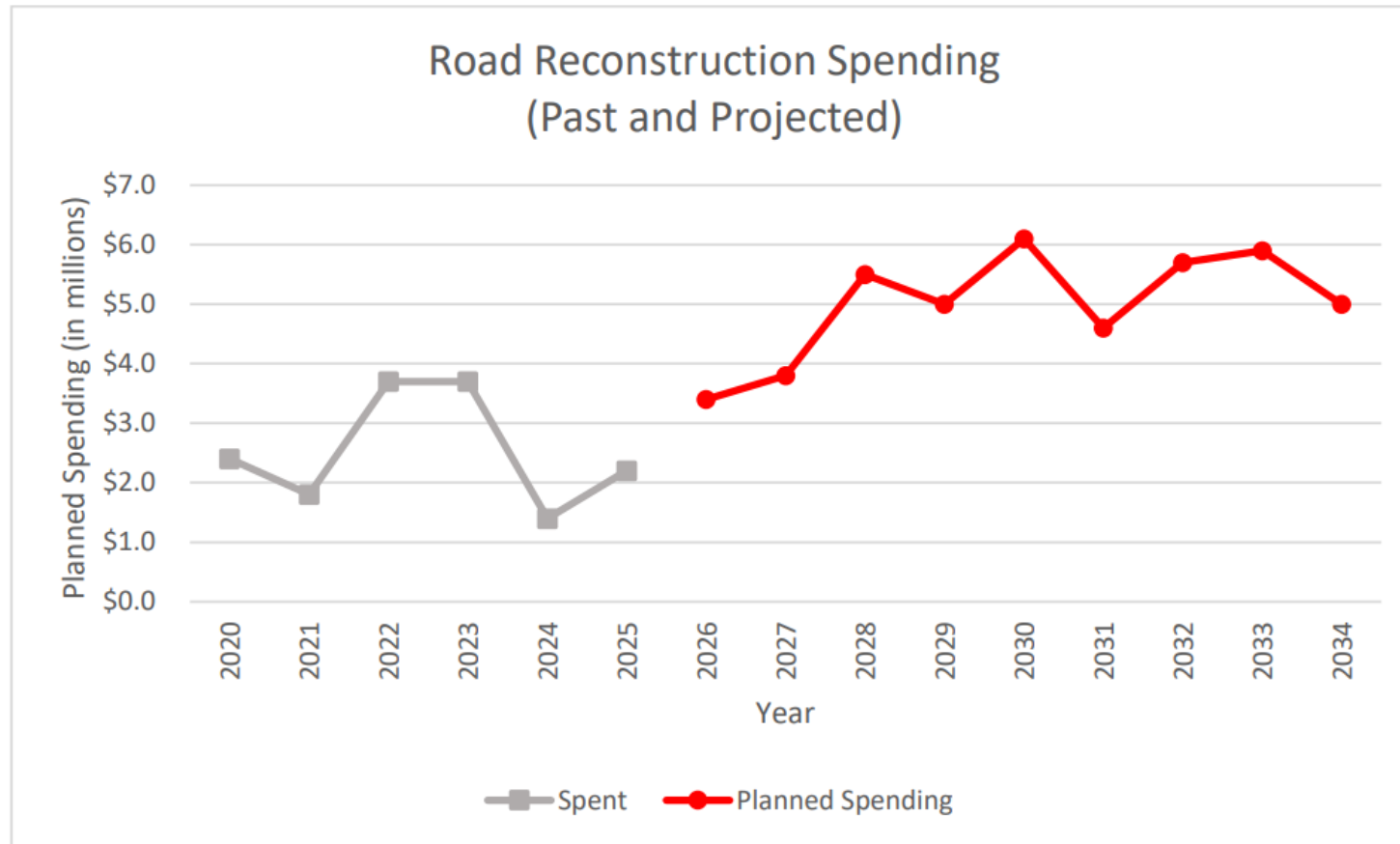
# Which road design do you prefer? *(by condition of Town's roads)*



# Financial Background



The Town has identified more than \$47 million in road reconstruction projects that will be needed over the next decade.

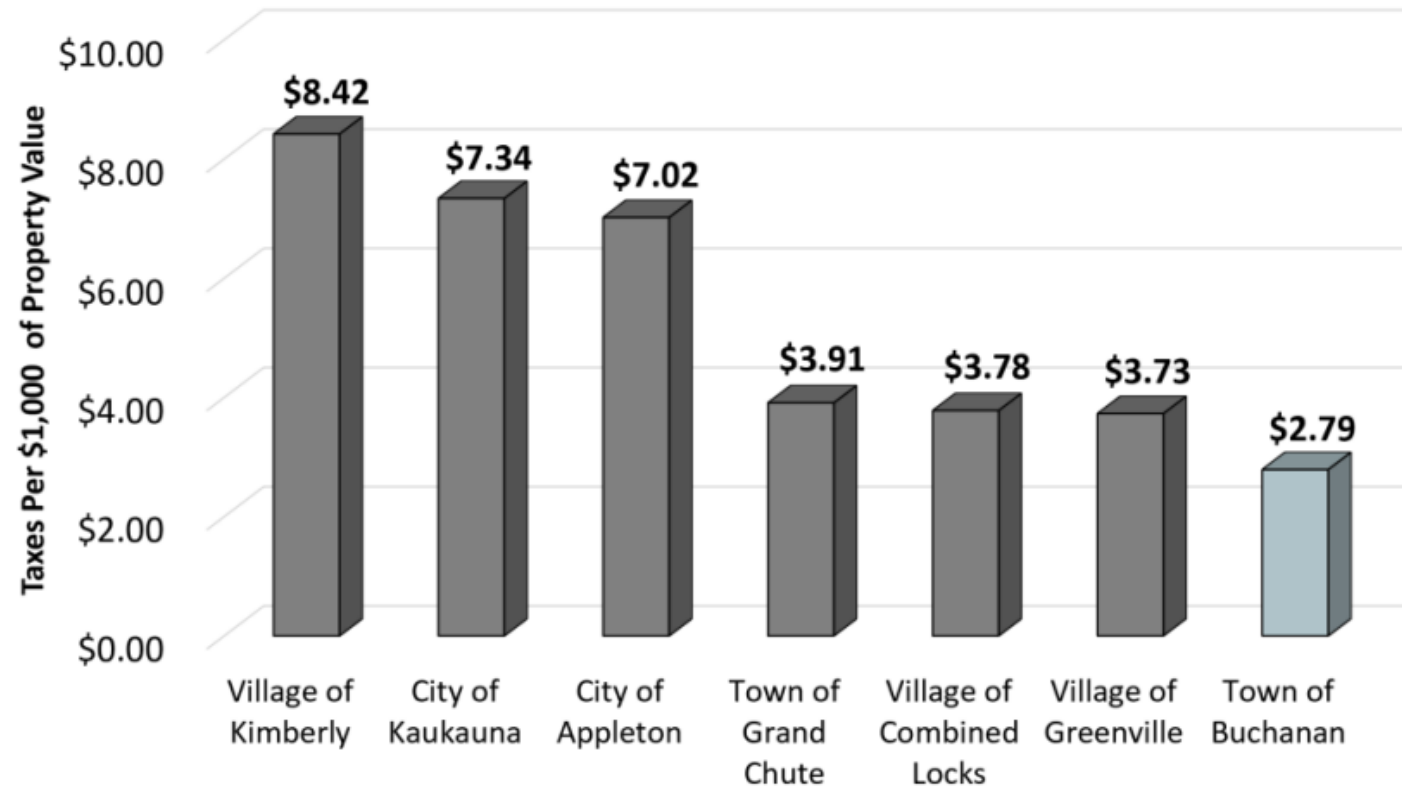


*Please note: A previous referendum provided \$350,000 annually for road repair. This money was intended for preventative maintenance. However, as costs have risen, this funding isn't sufficient.*

# Financial Background

The only option to pay for this work is to secure additional funding from local taxpayers. The Town's share of local property taxes is calculated using a mill rate. This rate is the amount of tax a property owner pays for every \$1,000 of their property's assessed value. Buchanan has the lowest rate in the area.

**Property Tax Mill Rates**  
*Area Comparison (2025)*



# Funding Options



The Town will need to secure an additional \$5 million each year to pay for the major road repair plan. There are two ways the Town can secure this funding:

## **Borrow**

Historically, the Town **takes out a loan** and pays it back over a period of many years. This spreads out the tax impact of road reconstruction over a longer time period, but requires interest payments, meaning it costs more in the long-term.

## **Voter-Approved Referendum**

This would be a new approach and require Buchanan voters to approve a referendum. This would secure the money each year on an ongoing basis **to pay for roadwork as it's needed**. Over the past 10 years, more than 75 Wisconsin municipalities have sought additional funding through a referendum.

*Please note: Borrowing would increase taxes less in the short-term, but the tax increase would get larger as time goes on before dropping again. A referendum would increase taxes significantly more in the short-term, but would not increase over time.*

---

The Town could also fund the work through a combination of the two approaches above. Half of the funding would come from borrowing, and half from a referendum. The tax impact of each approach is shown below.

# Funding Options



<i>How much would each funding approach option cost me?</i>				
Funding option		Borrow \$5 million	Combination: Borrow \$2.5 million + hold a referendum for \$2.5 million	Hold a referendum for \$5 million
Tax increase <u>over current</u> level per \$100,000 of property value by year	Year 1	\$18	\$216	\$412
	Year 5	\$174	\$254	\$334
	Year 10	\$347	\$305	\$263
	Year 15	\$304	\$265	\$227
	Year 20	\$265	\$230	\$195

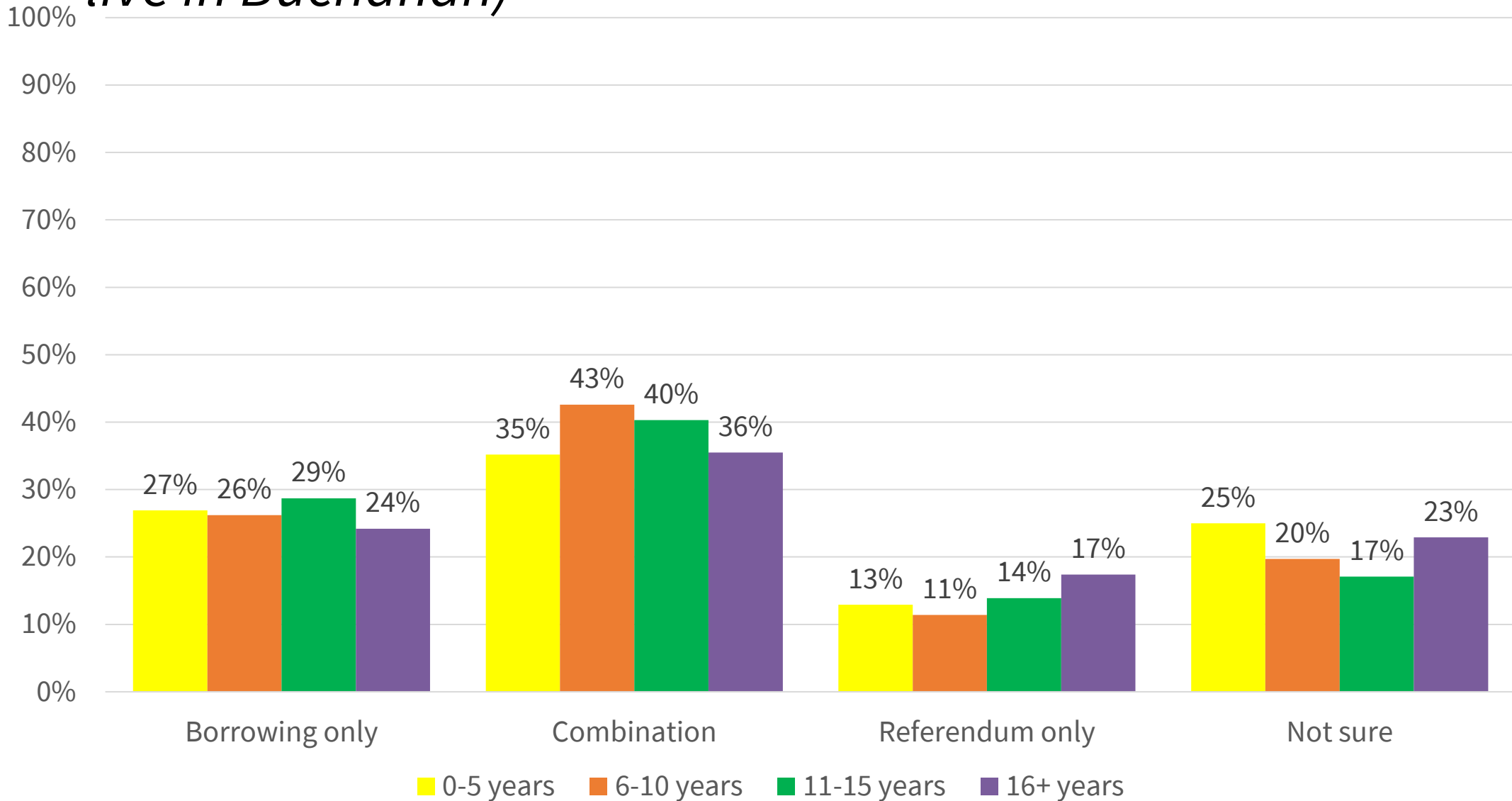
*\*Please note: In 2034 (year 9) and beyond, the projected tax impact of borrowing is higher than for a referendum compared to current taxes.*

*\*\*Total additional taxes paid because of borrowing surpasses total additional taxes paid because of a referendum in 2056 (the “breakeven point”).*

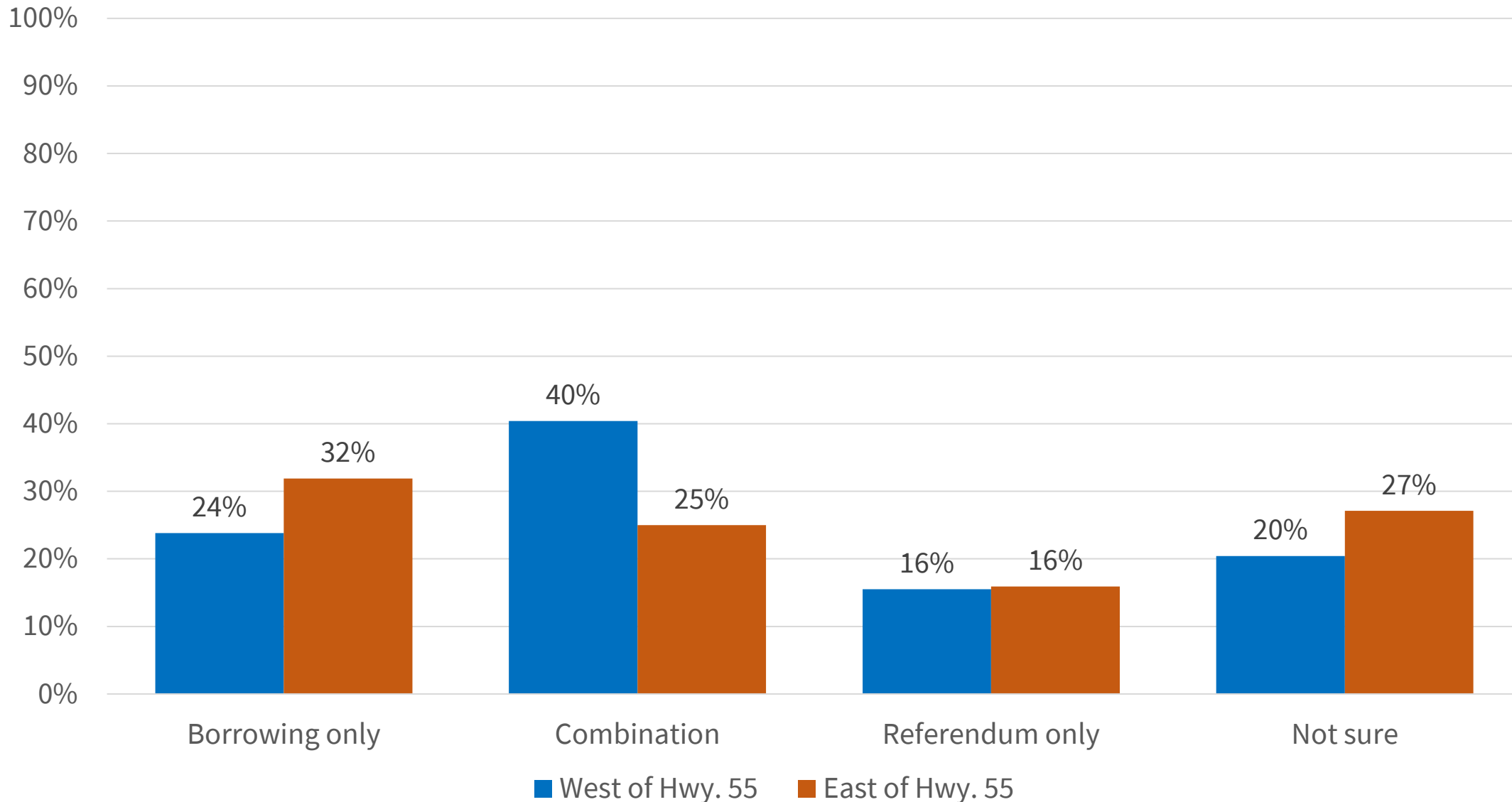
# Which approach should the Town Board take to fund the major road repair plan?



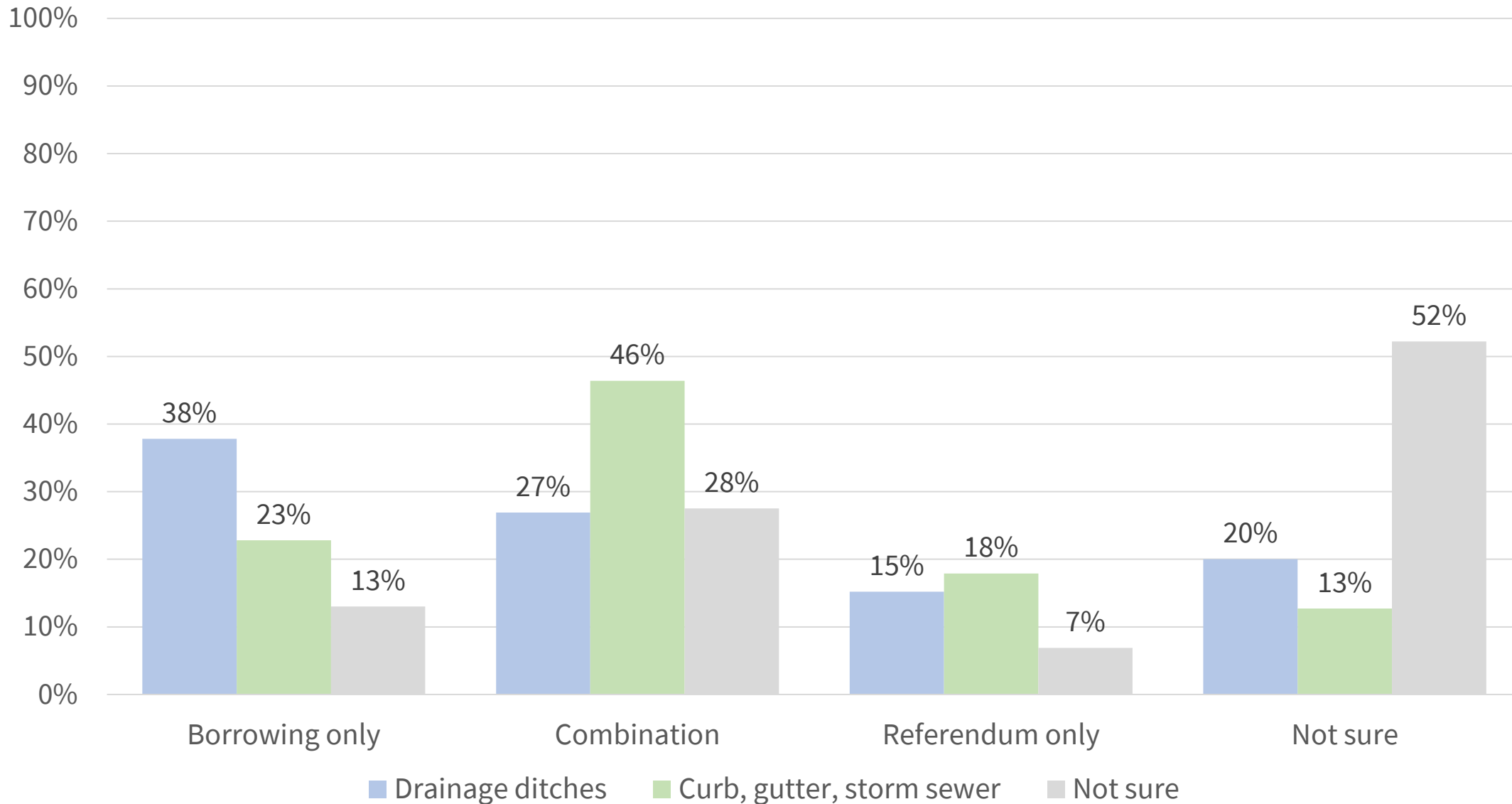
# Which approach should the Town Board take to fund the major road repair plan? *(by how long someone plans to live in Buchanan)*



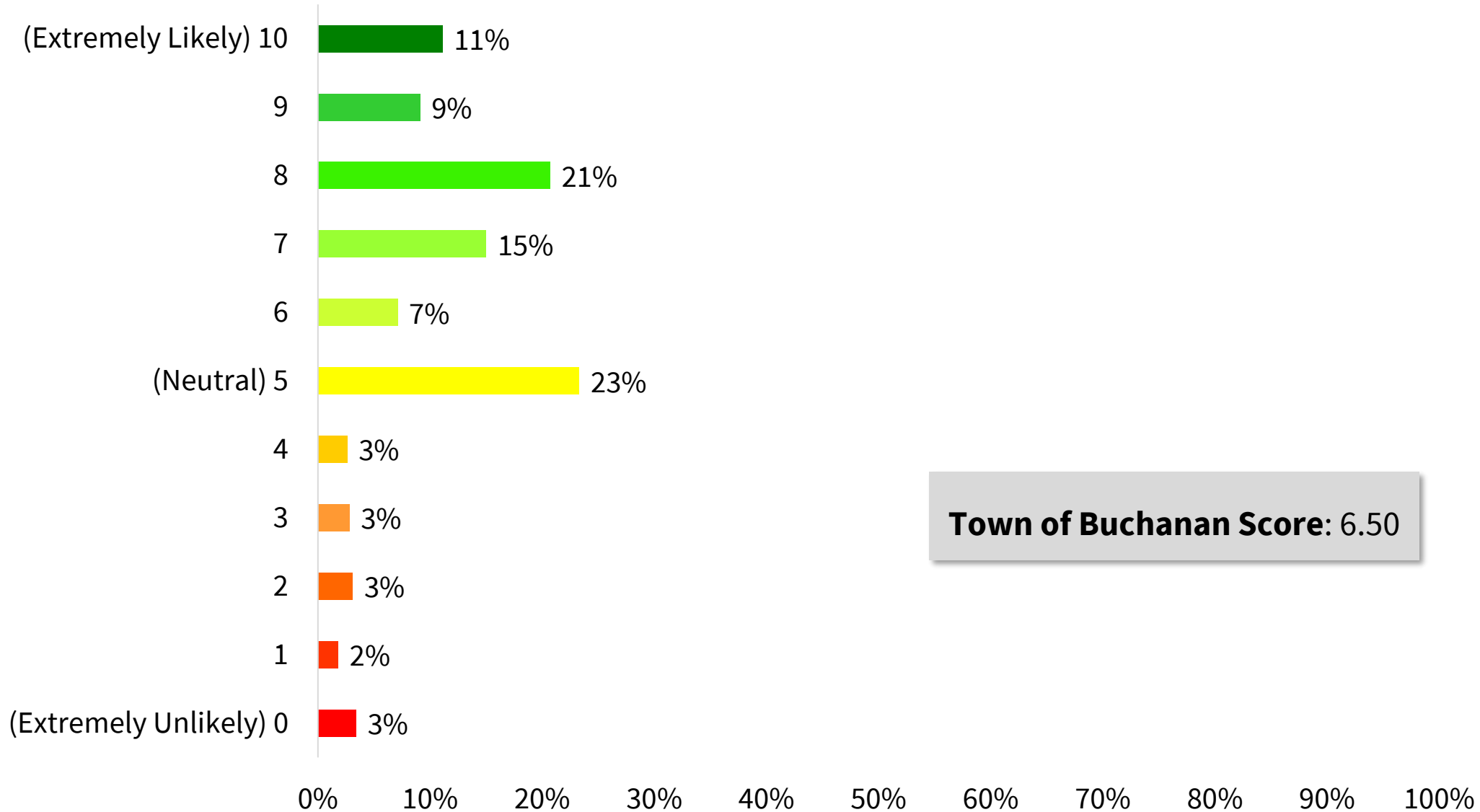
# Which approach should the Town Board take to fund the major road repair plan? *(by area of Town)*



# Which approach should the Town Board take to fund the major road repair plan? *(by road design preference)*



# On a scale of 0 – 10, how likely would you be to recommend the Town of Buchanan to a friend or family member?



# What did we learn?



- More respondents prefer installing curb and gutter when an engineer recommends it over maintaining drainage ditches.
  - Respondents who live East of Hwy. 55 prefer maintaining drainage ditches. Respondents who live West of Hwy. 55 prefer installing curb and gutter.
  - The worse a respondent feels about current road conditions, the more likely they are to prefer installing curb and gutter.
- None of the funding options had a majority. While “combination” had the highest percentage, it is not enough to be sure a referendum would be approved. “Borrowing only” had the second-highest level of support.



# Thank you!



COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

# Appendix



# Proposed Major Road Repair Plan



This plan would spend an average of \$5 million each year. Projects below include curb, gutter, storm sewer, new road base, and asphalt pavement. Bike/pedestrian paths are noted where applicable:

## 2026

- ✓ Reconstruct County Hwy. N with sidewalk on the west side and multi-use trail on the east side (between County Hwy. KK and County Hwy. CE).
- ✓ Reconstruct Springfield Drive with bike lanes (between Stoney Brook and Eisenhower Drive).
- ✓ Add multi-use trail to west side of Eisenhower Drive (between County Hwy. KK and Theater Way).

## 2027

- ✓ Reconstruct Block Road with sidewalk and bike lanes on both sides from State Park to Valleywood Lane; only sidewalk on north side of road to Berghuis, with bike lanes going the entire route (between State Park and Berghuis, split with Village of Combined Locks).
- ✓ Reconstruct Block Road with bike lanes on both sides and sidewalk only on north side/Village of Combined Locks side (between Berhuis and Debruin, split with Village of Combined Locks).
- ✓ Reconstruct Debruin Road East-West portion with sidewalk only on north side/Village of Combined Locks side (between Block Road and Curve, split with Village of Combined Locks).

## 2028

- ✓ Reconstruct Candlelite Way, Oakbrook Court, Brookmeadow Court, Ridgebrook Court, Oakmeadow Court, Fieldside Lane and Court, Kilsdonk Court, and Valleywood Lane (from Candlelite to Fieldside) with no sidewalks and no ditches (curb/gutter only).

# Proposed Major Road Repair Plan



## 2029

- ✓ Reconstruct the remainder of Valleywood Lane (from Fieldside to Block), Marion Avenue, Golden Eagle Court, St. Germaine Court, and Mueller Court with no sidewalks and no ditches (curb/gutter only).

## 2030

- ✓ Reconstruct the remainder of Block Road with sidewalks and bike lanes on both sides.

## 2031

- ✓ Reconstruct Clover Downs Court, Meadowbreeze Court, Gillian Court, White Pine Drive, Pinecrest Boulevard (from Springfield Drive to the cul-de-sac), Just About Lane, Lavender Lane, Sage Way, Thyme Way, and Cara Way with no sidewalks and no ditches (curb/gutter only).

## 2032

- ✓ Reconstruct Trumpet Lane, Alex Drive, Anmarita Court, Schmalz Circle, Gales Lane, Eastowne Lane, Glenbrooke Court, and Kamkes Avenue with no sidewalks and no ditches (curb/gutter only).

## 2033

- ✓ Reconstruct Gentry Drive, Saratoga Drive, Hillside Drive, Skyview Court, Wedgewood Court, Pioneer Court, and Frontier Drive with no sidewalks and no ditches (curb/gutter only).

## 2034

- ✓ Reconstruct Buchanan Road with sidewalks and bike lanes on both sides.

To see the full plan, visit: [townofbuchanan.org/town-services/finance-taxes/capital-improvement-plan](https://townofbuchanan.org/town-services/finance-taxes/capital-improvement-plan)

**Town of Buchanan**  
**Spring 2026 Community Survey**  
**Comment Analysis**

This comment analysis report identifies the prevailing themes from comments gathered in Buchanan’s community survey. A theme is identified when respondents reference similar suggestions, ideas, or concerns. *Because these themes represent diverse opinions, they may not align with each other.*

Of the 723 total survey respondents, 384 participants (53%) left at least one comment.

Comment frequency:

- 130 respondents wrote one comment.
- 79 respondents wrote two comments.
- 71 respondents wrote three comments.
- 34 respondents wrote four comments.
- 40 respondents wrote five comments.
- 30 respondents wrote six comments.

**Topics**

Comments, questions, or suggestions about background information ..... 2

Comments, questions, or suggestions about the major road repair plan..... 3

Comments, questions, or suggestions about road design..... 4

Comments, questions, or suggestions about financial background..... 5

Comments, questions, or suggestions about funding options..... 6

Overall satisfaction ..... 7

## Comments, questions, or suggestions about background information

**Lack of Planning:** Respondents express frustration with what they perceive as years of poor planning, neglect, and mismanagement by Buchanan's board. They state that the current road problems are a direct result of a lack of foresight and a failure to perform regular, preventative maintenance over the last several decades. This deferral of maintenance is seen as the cause for the current need for expensive, large-scale reconstruction projects.

**Poor Road Conditions:** Comments highlight the poor condition of the town's roads, mentioning potholes, cracks, and rough surfaces. Respondents name specific roads and intersections (such as Buchanan, Outagamie, Block, and Coop) that they believe are in terrible shape and pose a risk to vehicles. The repairs that are made, such as filling potholes with asphalt, are described as temporary fixes that do not last.

**Transportation Utility Fee Concerns:** Respondents voice disapproval of the town's previous attempt to fund road repairs through a transportation utility fee (TUF). The comments describe the TUF as an illegal or flawed mechanism and criticize the town board for pursuing it. Some feel that the options presented to voters at that time were biased or that voters were misled.

**Mixed Opinions on Infrastructure:** There are differing opinions on the necessity and desirability of infrastructure beyond basic road surfaces. Some residents strongly advocate for adding sidewalks, curb, and gutter to improve safety, walkability, and aesthetics. Others argue against these additions, viewing them as expensive, unnecessary, and detracting from Buchanan's rural character.

**Water Management Issues:** Comments point to problems with ditches holding standing water, poor grading, and inadequate stormwater management. These issues are linked to road deterioration, property maintenance problems, and overall nuisance for residents. Related comments note that past attempts to fix drainage problems have been ineffective.

## Comments, questions, or suggestions about the major road repair plan

**Timing/Inclusion of Roads:** Respondents express disappointment and frustration that their specific road is either not included in the current plan or is scheduled for reconstruction many years in the future. They argue that the condition of their road is already poor and cannot wait until its scheduled date, which is sometimes as late as 2034. Residents feel that the timeline does not accurately prioritize the roads in the worst condition.

**Mixed Opinions of Bike Lanes, Sidewalks, and Trails:** Respondents are divided on the necessity of including sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use trails in the road reconstruction projects. Those opposed view these amenities as expensive “wants” rather than essential “needs,” arguing that the money should be focused solely on fixing the road surfaces for vehicles. Some state that existing bike lanes are rarely used and that these additions are wasteful, making the overall plan unaffordable. Those in support suggest these amenities improve safety, especially on busier roads and for children.

**Questioning of Curb and Gutter:** Comments express opposition to the installation of curb and gutter, particularly in lower-traffic residential areas and cul-de-sacs. They argue that existing drainage ditches are adequate and that curb and gutter is an unnecessary expense that drives up the cost of projects. Some residents prefer the rural feel of ditches and believe that adding curb and gutter “urbanizes” the town against their wishes.

## Comments, questions, or suggestions about road design

**Support for Curb and Gutter:** Respondents in this group advocate for replacing drainage ditches with curb, gutter, and storm sewer systems. They describe existing ditches as ineffective, unsightly, and difficult to maintain, often holding standing water that breeds mosquitoes and damages roadbeds. Proponents of curb and gutter view it as a long-term solution that improves drainage, enhances property values, and modernizes infrastructure.

**Opposition to Curb and Gutter:** Residents argue that ditches are a more cost-effective solution and that the high cost of installing curb and gutter is not justified, especially on low-traffic streets. Some also express a desire to preserve the town's rural character, which they feel is compromised by the "urbanization" associated with curb and gutter.

**Case-by-Case Approach:** Respondents advocate for an approach that includes curb and gutter in some areas and maintains drainage ditches in others. These comments suggest that different parts of town demand different solutions.

## Comments, questions, or suggestions about financial background

**Concerns about Tax Increases:** Respondents express opposition to any increase in property taxes. They argue that their taxes are already too high, especially considering the level of services Buchanan provides. These residents believe the town should live within its means, cut spending in other areas, and manage its existing budget more effectively rather than asking taxpayers for more money.

**Questioning the Comparisons:** Respondents argue that the comparison to neighboring municipality mill rates is misleading because it includes cities and villages that offer a higher level of services, such as libraries, pools, and robust public works departments. They also point out the omission of the Village of Harrison as a concern.

**Acceptance of Tax Increases:** Respondents in this group acknowledge that the town's low mill rate is a primary reason for the poor condition of the roads. They express a willingness to pay higher property taxes to adequately fund road maintenance and reconstruction. These residents see a tax increase as a necessary step to address long-neglected infrastructure and improve the overall quality of the community.

## Comments, questions, or suggestions about funding options

**Affordability Concerns:** Respondents express that the proposed costs, regardless of the funding method, are unaffordable for residents. They highlight that the potential tax increases are significant and would create a financial hardship for many families, particularly those on fixed incomes. This sentiment reflects a belief that the town is asking for too much money and that none of the presented options are financially realistic for the community.

**Support for a Combination of Borrowing and Referendum:** This group of respondents sees the combination approach as the most stable and balanced, spreading the financial impact over time without incurring the full interest costs of borrowing everything. This approach is perceived as a reasonable compromise between immediate, high tax increases and long-term debt.

**Support for Borrowing Only:** Respondents suggest that borrowing makes the most sense given the lower initial cost. While they acknowledge the long-term cost, comments point out that there are significant uncertainties projecting that far into the future. This support is contingent on a clear plan to pay off the loans on schedule.

## Overall satisfaction

**Criticism:** Comments reflect dissatisfaction with the town's governance and operations. Respondents cite poor long-term planning, a lack of transparency, and services like snow removal and yard waste collection being inadequate. Comments also mention unresponsive staff, divisive small-town politics, and a feeling that the Buchanan's board does not listen to residents or act in their best interests.

**Positive Attributes:** Respondents giving positive ratings highlight the town's desirable qualities as a place to live. They mention the excellent school districts, safe and quiet neighborhoods, and friendly community atmosphere. The town's location, which offers a "country feel" while still being close to city amenities, is another key reason for their satisfaction.

**Poor Road Conditions:** The poor state of the roads and a lack of pedestrian infrastructure are major reasons for respondents' negative ratings of the town. Comments consistently mention bad road surfaces, potholes, and drainage problems. The lack of sidewalks and bike lanes is also a significant concern, making residents feel unsafe when walking or biking, especially with children.

**Concerns About Taxes:** Respondents express frustration with what they perceive as high property taxes, especially in relation to the limited services provided by the town. They feel that their tax burden is increasing significantly due to rising property assessments, even if the mill rate remains low. This leads to a sentiment that they are paying too much and not receiving enough value in return.