

## Survey Demystified – by Raj Jain

The city of Oak Ridge through the League of Women Voters commissioned a telephone survey to measure the pulse of the residents of Oak Ridge. The League of Women Voters engaged **John M. Scheb, Ph.D.** of Knoxville, TN at a cost of about \$5000. The results of the survey were published on February 26<sup>th</sup> 2007.

There were 405 Oak Ridge residents over the age of 18 who participated in the survey. The margin of error of the results is +/- 5 percent points at 95% confidence level.

What did the survey try to determine?

- Oak Ridge residents' knowledge about the proposed development and attitude towards it.
- Oak Ridge residents' willingness to support city expenditures for the project.
- Oak Ridge residents' opinions on speculative "repayment" and "benefits"
- Oak Ridge residents' shopping behavior and how it would be affected by the proposed shopping center .

What were the findings of the survey?

Oak Ridge residents are informed about this issue. The proposed development is well publicized and the residents have a fairly good understanding of the issue at hand. There is a lack of decisive mandate in support of the project with 43% in favor and 37% against (within the +/- 5% margin of error).

Over half (55%) of the residents are aware of the private investment in the project but only a small minority (27%) support providing city funds to assist the development.

Two thirds (65%) of the residents are aware of the \$10.5 million request but only 17% favor contributing this amount of City funds to assist the development.

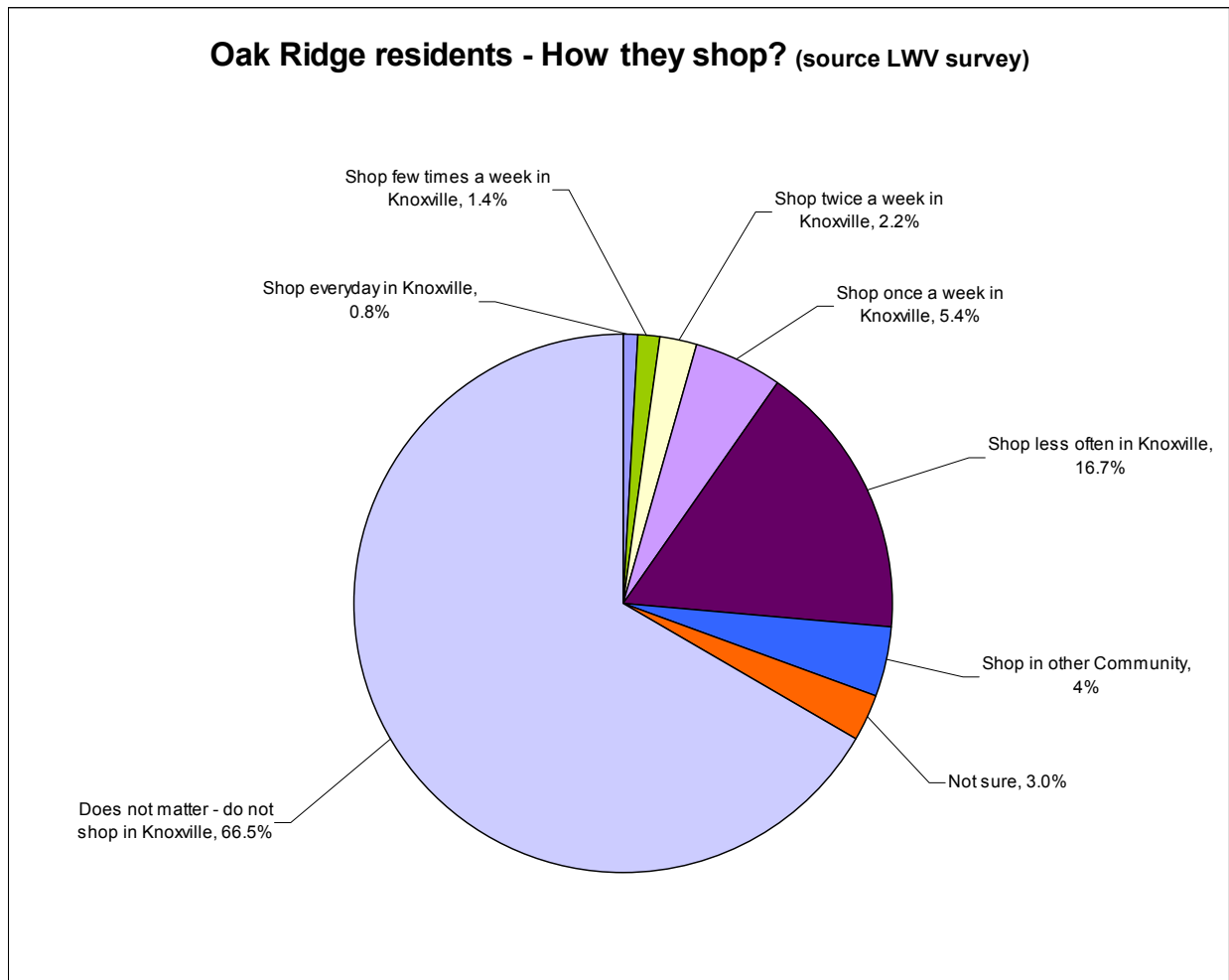
Through two questions residents are asked to speculate on "what if" hypothetical scenarios. When asked about the possibility of the city's contribution getting "repaid" by additional sales tax revenue, residents are equally divided in favor and against the request. When asked their opinion of the proposal if it made more money available to the schools, 47% responded favorably.

These questions are similar to approaching somebody randomly and asking if they would buy a piece of paper. The over whelming response will be "no". But if the question is changed to say that the piece of paper is a lottery ticket with a one in 10,000 chance of winning, then there will be some interest. But if you say that there is a 9,999 in 10,000 chance of losing, then the interest evaporates quickly.

**The most significant information gathered from this survey is on the shopping behavior of Oak Ridge residents.**

The majority (66%) of Oak Ridge residents say they do most of their non-grocery shopping in Oak Ridge. Another 27% say they do most of their shopping in Knoxville.

About half (53%) said that the proposed shopping center would increase the amount of shopping they do in Oak Ridge. When that figure is applied to the main target group for this center, the 27% who do most of their shopping in Knoxville, we can estimate that the center could cause about 14% of Oak Ridge residents to bring their shopping dollars back to Oak Ridge from Knoxville.



The citizens of Oak Ridge are loud and clear. Most of them rarely shop outside Oak Ridge and they do not want to borrow \$10.5 million and pay for Super Target.