

Phase 2 Engagement

Purpose

The second phase of engagement focused on confirming the key themes identified in Phase 1 and obtaining feedback on the appropriateness and priority of strategies identified for each theme. The following four themes and broad strategies were tested with the community during Phase 2:

Local Character

- Create safe and pleasant public spaces.
- Build in harmony with historic scale and character.
- Create neighborhoods where residents can meet their daily needs.
- Create more green spaces and plant more trees.

Economy

- Increase the number of people living and working in Greater Downtown.
- Use publicly owned properties to advance community goals.
- Improve access to high-quality affordable housing.

Small Business

- Improve the physical environment within retail areas to attract customers.
- Improve support for existing businesses.
- Attract and establish new businesses.

Mobility

- Make it easier to park once and get around Greater Downtown.
- Make streets safe and accessible for all users.
- Improve the bicycle and pedestrian network along city streets.
- Continue work on the Downtown Trail network.

Staff collaborated with the community to ensure strategy language reflected the community’s needs and concerns and requested public comments on potential action items to achieve the strategies. Engagement data collected in Phase 2 confirmed that staff were working in the right direction and further identified the priorities of the Greater Downtown community. This prioritization helped the project team develop an implementation matrix that identifies each action's timeline and urgency.

At a Glance



Figure 3.1. Phase 2 participant top priorities by theme

Pop-Up Engagement

The second phase of pop-up engagement included an input activity that replicated questions in the Phase 2 survey. Staff popped up at 22 community events with an activity resembling a game board where participants selected one strategy in each key theme they found to be most important. Each side of the board represented one theme, with one cup for each strategy. Respondents placed a pom-pom in the cup associated with the strategy they found to be most important for advancing the theme. Additionally, participants were asked to share



comments, concerns, and potential action items for achieving the strategies. Strategies were developed using public input from Pre-Engagement and Phase 1, Focus Group Conversations, Steering Committee and Implementation Committee guidance, and planning best practices. The goal of the Phase 2 activity was to ensure that staff are on the right track, prioritize strategies, and identify potential actions. Data collected at each pop-up event can be found in the Appendix.

Responses regarding race, age, or region were not collected during Pop-Up Engagement. Staff worked to target many different types of events across neighborhoods to reach diverse audiences.

Pop-Up Event Details

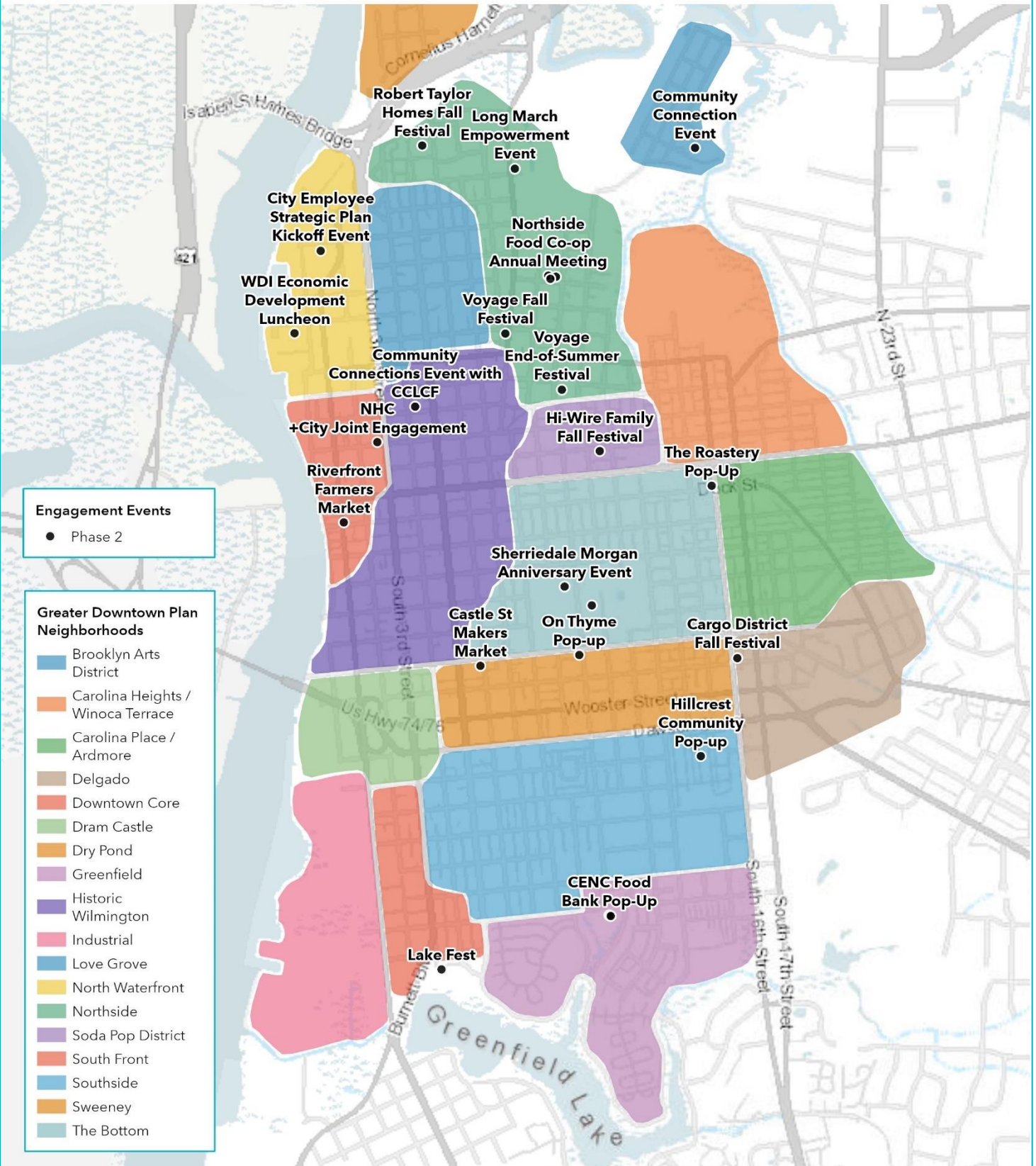
Event	Date	Neighborhood	Responses
Community Connection Event with Community Care Lower Cape Fear	9/12/2024	Historic Wilmington	44
Sherriedale Morgan Fit for Fun Center Anniversary Event	9/14/2024	The Bottom	67
Voyage End of Summer Festival	9/28/2024	Northside	72
Long March Empowerment Event	9/29/2024	Northside	66
New Hanover County Comprehensive Plan - Greater Downtown Joint Engagement at the Main Library	10/2/2024	Downtown Core	5
City Employee Strategic Plan Kickoff Event	10/3/2024	North Waterfront	30
Robert Taylor Senior Homes Fall Festival	10/10/2024	Northside	28
Cargo Fall Festival	10/13/2024	Delgado	186
Castle Street Makers Market	10/26/2024	Dry Pond	16
Voyage Fall Festival	10/31/2024	Northside	75
Lakefest at Greenfield Lake	11/2/2024	Greenfield	104
The Roastery by Vigilant Hope Roasting	11/13/2024	The Bottom	18
Northside Food Co-op Annual Meeting	11/14/2024	Northside	35
1898 Commemoration Urban Hike	11/16/2024	The Bottom	13
Hi-Wire Fall Family Festival	11/16/2024	Soda Pop District	91
Hillcrest Community Pop-Up	11/18/2024	Southside	14
Wilmington Downtown Inc. Economic Development Luncheon	11/20/2024	North Waterfront	108

Pop-Up Event Details

Event	Date	Neighborhood	Responses
On Thyme Pop-Up	11/22/2024	Dry Pond	16
Northside Food Co-op Thanksgiving Community Dinner	11/22/2024	Northside	66
Riverfront Farmers Market	11/23/2024	Downtown Core	37
Food Bank of Central and Northern North Carolina	12/3/2024	Greenfield	62

Figure 3.2. Phase 2 Pop-Up event dates, locations, and activity participants.

Wilmington Greater Downtown Plan Phase 2 Engagement Locations



Data Summary

Each pop-up event prompted residents to select the strategy for each theme they found most important. Residents prioritized creating more green spaces and planting more trees, improving access to high-quality affordable housing, improving support for existing small businesses, and making it easier to park once and get around Greater Downtown.

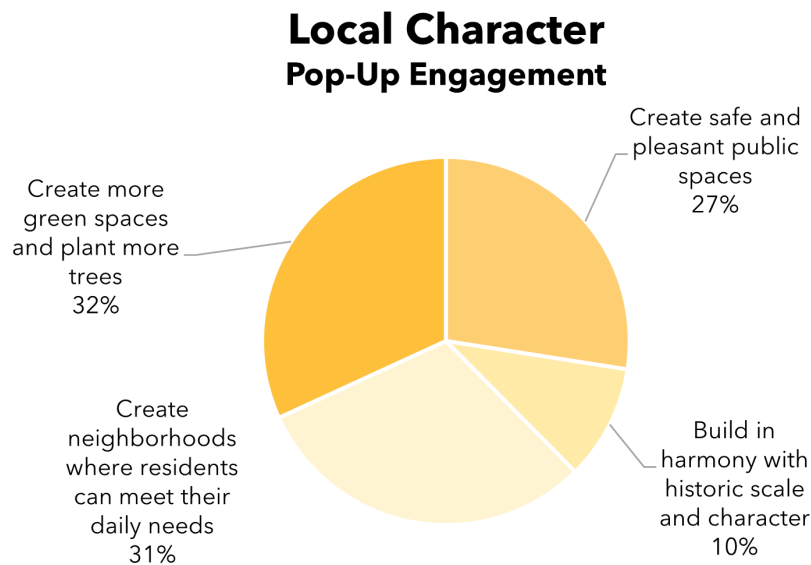


Figure 3.3. Phase 2 participant priorities under Local Character collected from the in-person Pop-Up Engagement.

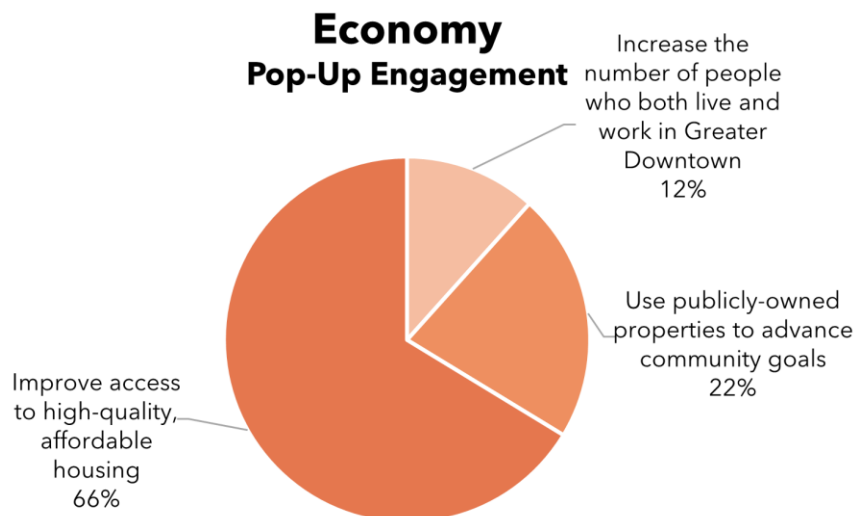


Figure 3.4. Phase 2 participant priorities under Economy collected from the in-person Pop-Up Engagement.

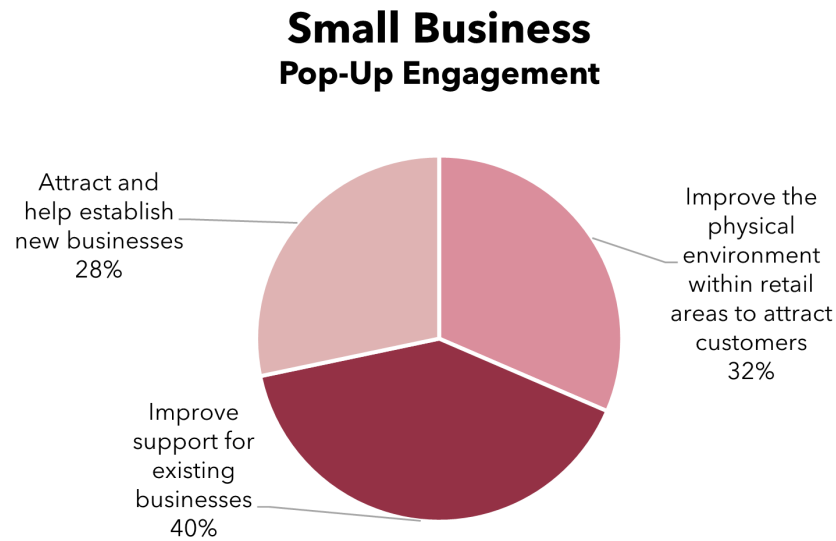


Figure 3.5. Phase 2 participant priorities under Small Business collected from the in-person Pop-Up Engagement.

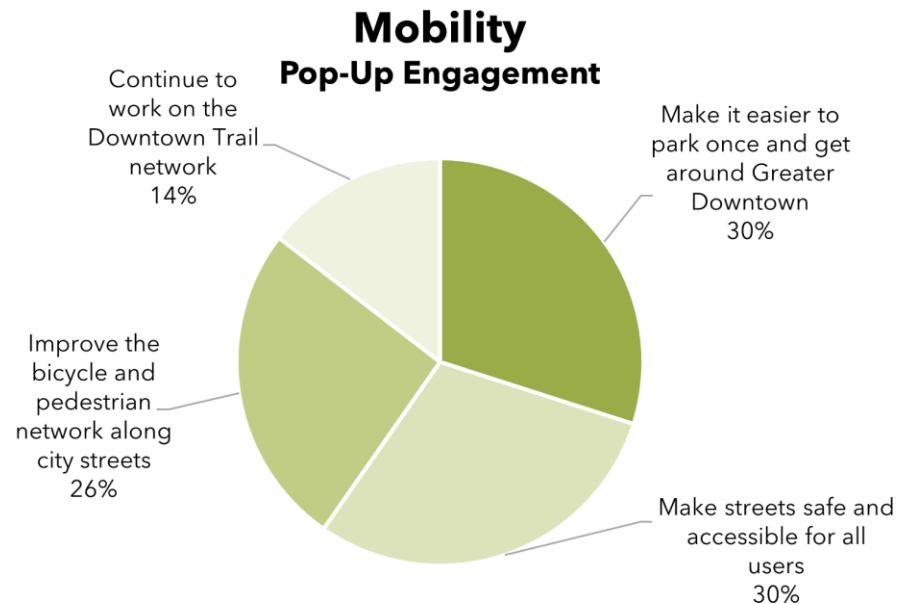


Figure 3.6. Phase 2 participant priorities under Mobility collected from the in-person Pop-Up Engagement

Survey Engagement

Requests for responses were shared on the city's social media, flyers in businesses and non-profits throughout Greater Downtown, postcards in local businesses, and handouts at pop-up events, as well as on the project website. A physical copy of the Phase 2 survey was shared in the city's mailed newsletter, *The Current*. The newsletter included the survey as a tear-out page with an envelope to return the complete survey. Staff received 241 mailed survey responses. See the Appendix, Public Notices, for snapshot examples of social media posts, flyers, and newsletter excerpts.

Data Summary

Q1-Q7: Which idea do you think will best improve each theme?

Respondents selected the strategy they felt would best advance each theme. They prioritized creating more green spaces and planting more trees, improving access to high-quality affordable housing, improving the physical environment within retail areas to attract customers, and making it easier to park once and get around Greater Downtown.

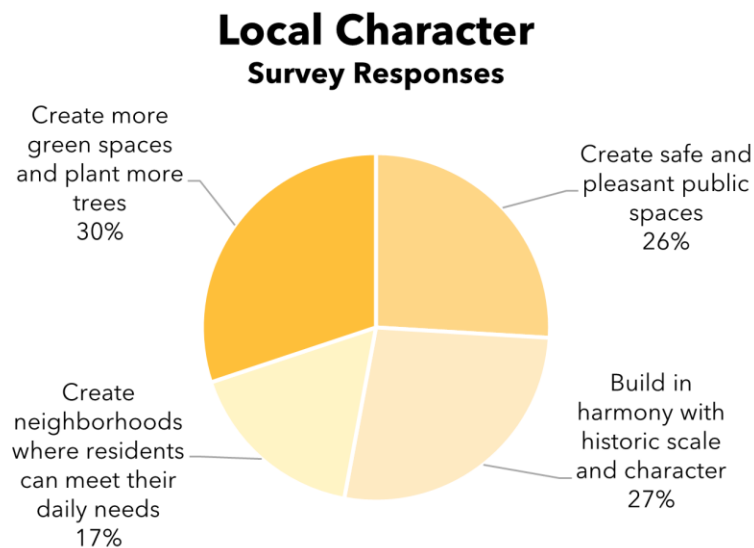


Figure 3.7. Phase 2 Survey Q1, Local Character, responses

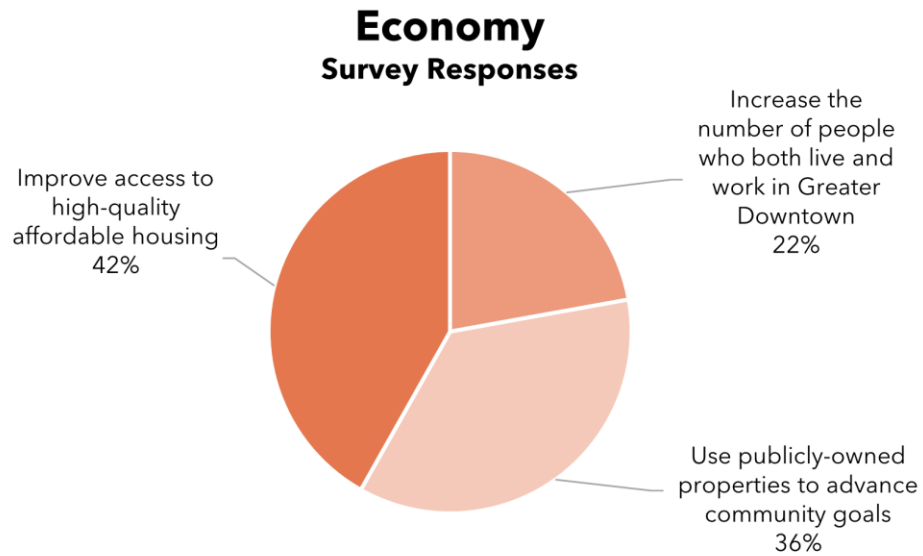


Figure 3.8. Phase 2 Survey Q3, Economy, responses

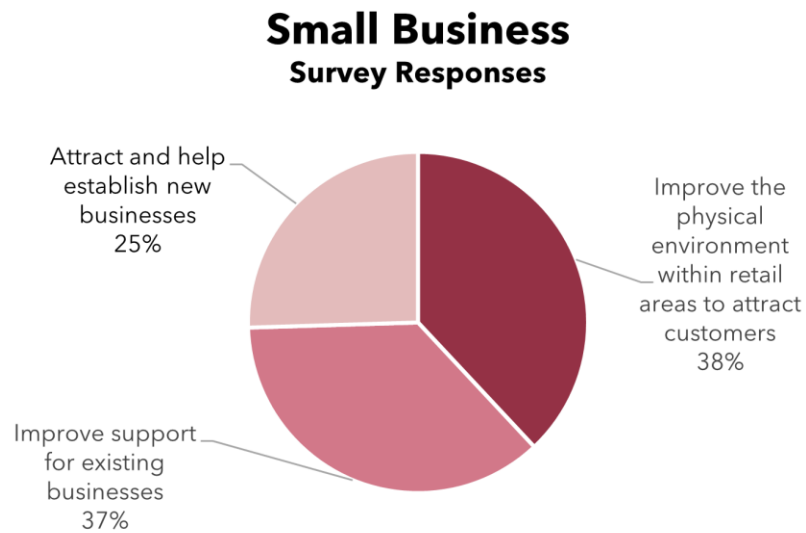


Figure 3.9. Phase 2 Survey Q5, Small Business, responses

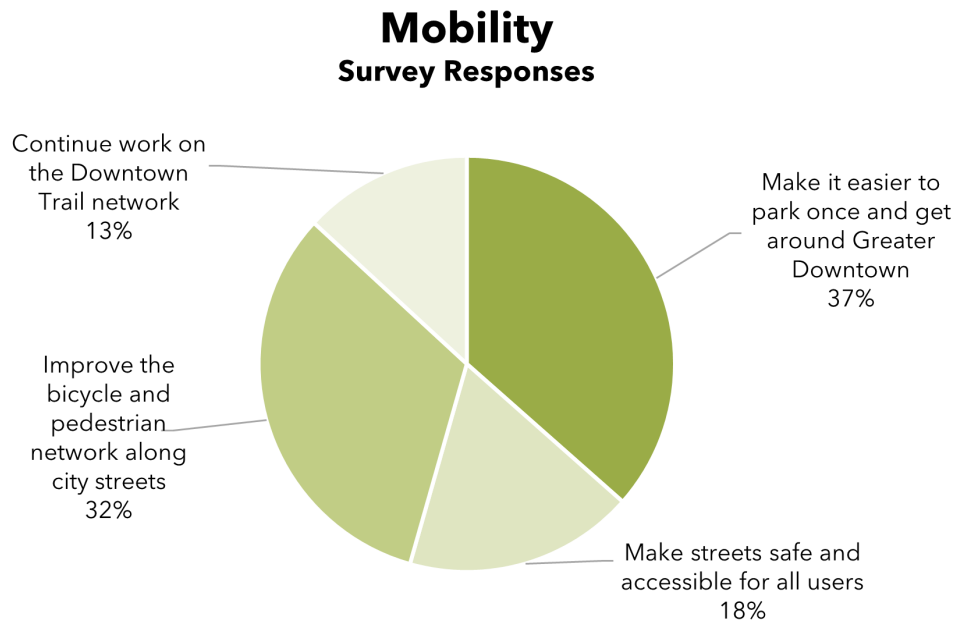


Figure 3.10. Phase 2 Survey Q7, Mobility, responses

Demographic Data

Q9: I live in...

Respondents were asked to share the region in which they live. 70% of respondents live within the City of Wilmington, and 26% live within the Greater Downtown Plan boundary.

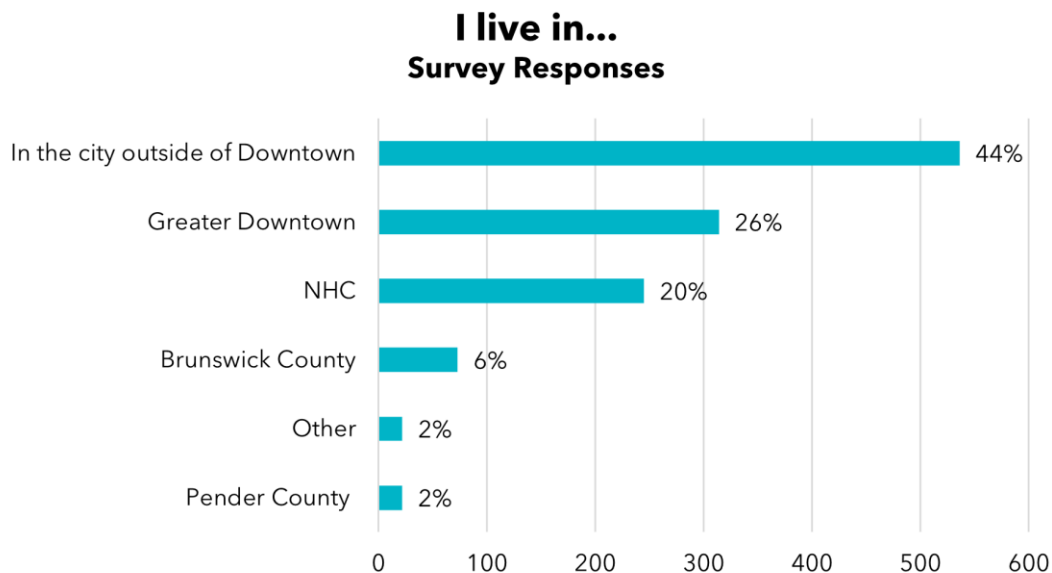


Figure 3.11. Phase 2 Survey Q9, dwelling region, responses

Q10: I work or go to school in...

Respondents were asked to share the region in which they work or go to school. 53% of participants work or go to school within the City of Wilmington, 22% within the Greater Downtown Plan boundary.

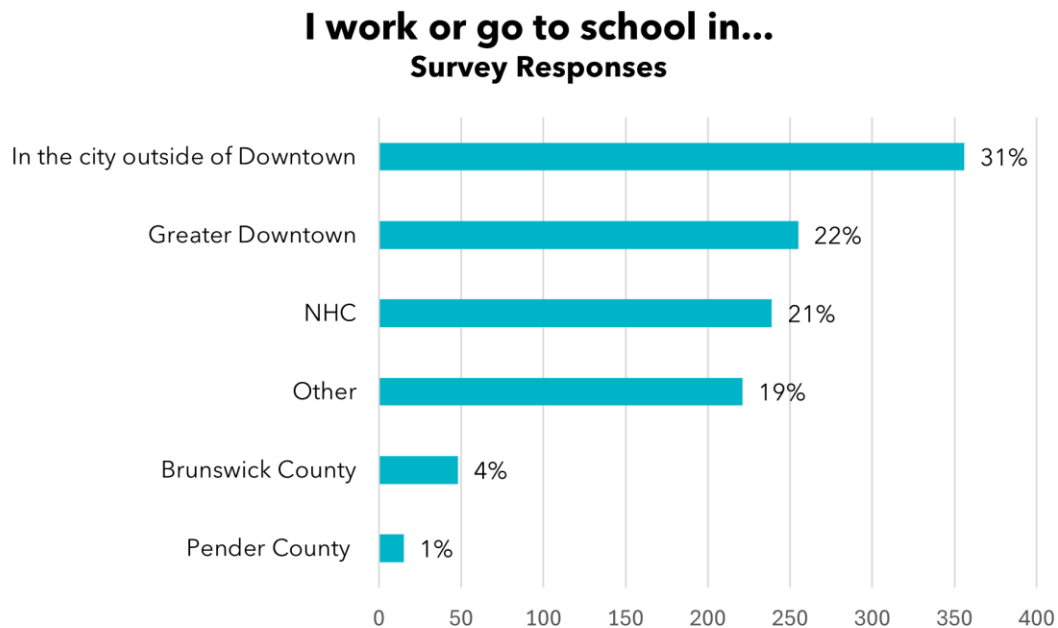


Figure 3.12. Phase 2 Survey Q10, work or school region, responses

Q11: I identify as...

Participants were asked to identify their race. The majority of respondents, 88%, were White.

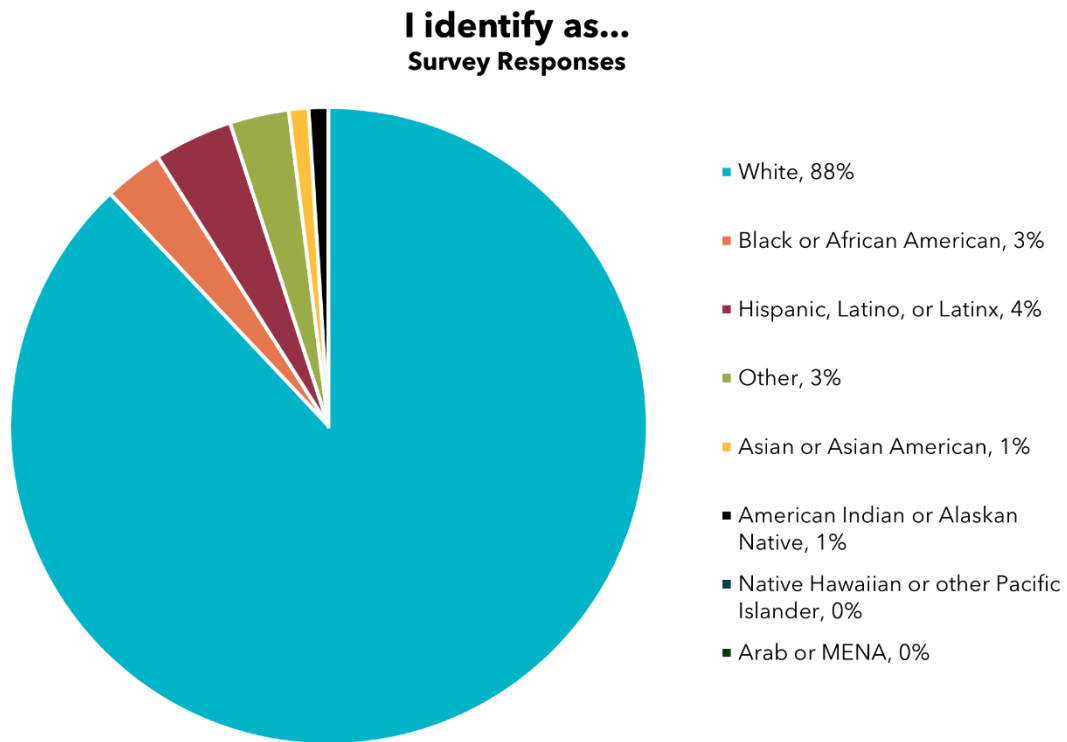


Figure 3.13. Respondent's race/ethnicity from the Phase 2 survey

Greater Downtown Race/Ethnicity Breakdown

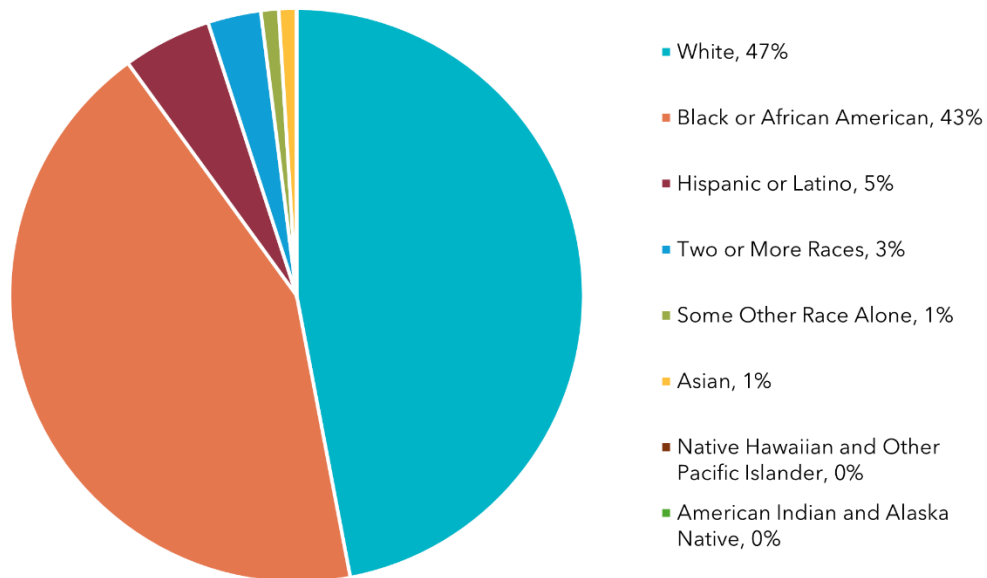


Figure 3.14. Racial breakdown of the Greater Downtown region (U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05)

Q12: I am...

Participants were asked to share their age range. The majority of respondents, 32%, were between the ages of 45 to 64 years

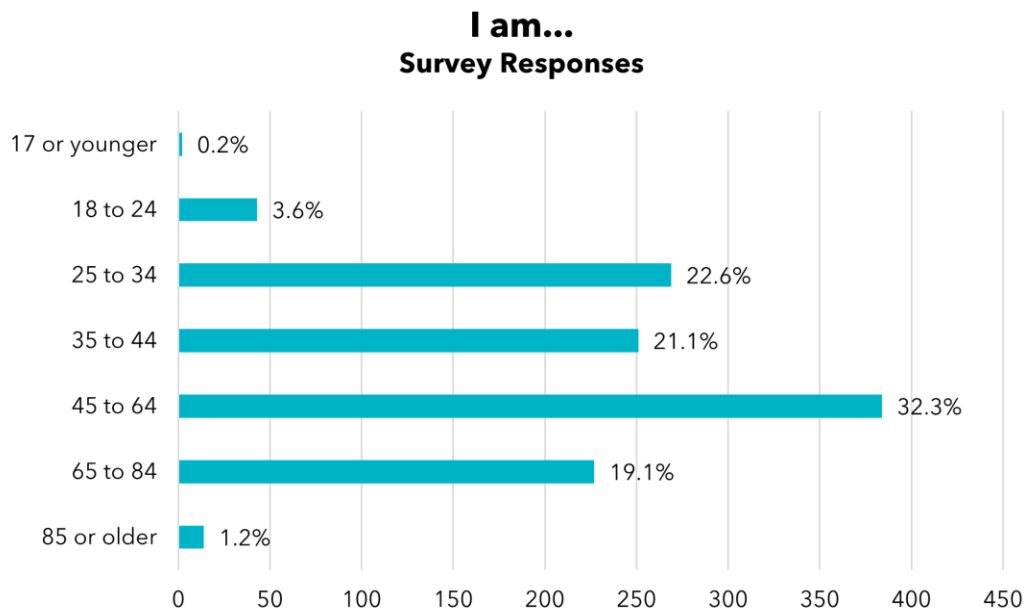


Figure 3.15. Phase 2 Survey Q12, age, responses.

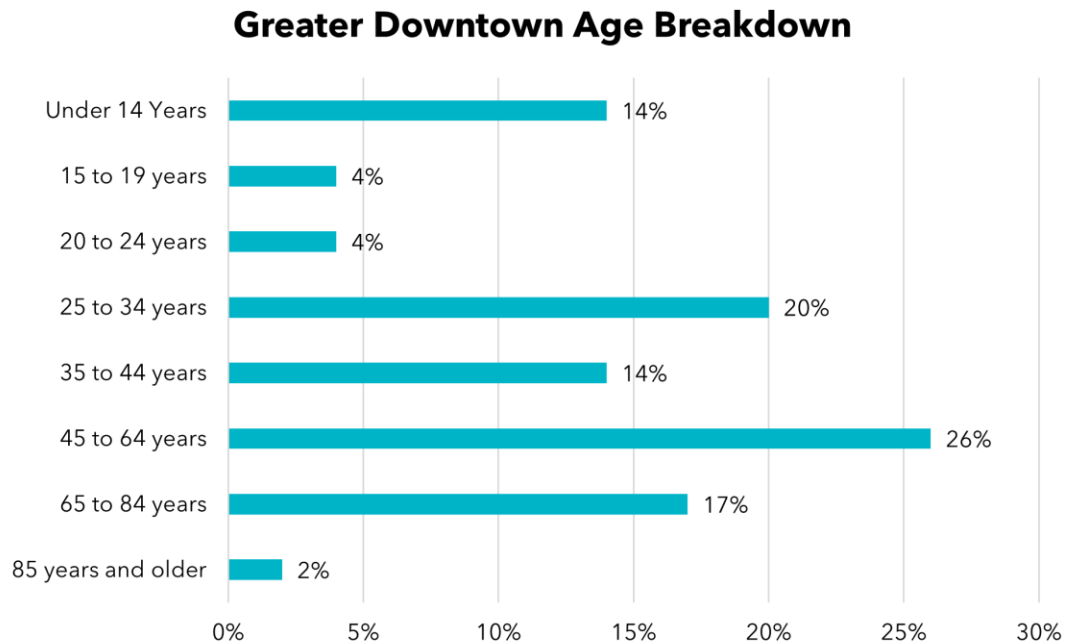


Figure 3.16. Age breakdown of the Greater Downtown region (U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05)

Open House

1. Lake Forest Baptist Church, October 2024

The Greater Downtown Plan's third open house occurred from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00pm on October 23, 2024, at Lake Forest Baptist Church in the Greenfield neighborhood. This event was possible due to a collaboration with the Vigilant Hope organization, and we also conducted a pop-up event at the Roastery (16th and Dock Streets) in November as part of this collaboration. In addition to social media and flyers to advertise the event, the Project Team also created signs and placed them at various places throughout Greater Downtown, particularly in the south side neighborhoods. Pizza and refreshments were provided to attendees as well.





In addition to the pop-up activity mentioned above, the project team provided a presentation outlining the project's vision, what priorities the community had identified to date, and how that feedback had translated into the strategies and actions attendees had just examined. Attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions throughout the event, and a Q&A was held at the end of the presentation.

Attendees also had the opportunity to provide more detailed feedback on each strategy and a preliminary list of actions, including identifying any potential concerns with any of the actions, ideas for additional actions, or suggestions for implementing the actions already listed.

Overall, attendees were far more focused on additional ideas than on identifying concerns with actions already identified. Below is a selection of community-identified ideas. Additional comments and data can be found in the Appendix.

- Increase the focus on green infrastructure, including urban gardens, electric vehicle infrastructure, and fruit trees/edible landscapes.
- Support any action to help existing residents and families remain in their homes and communities.
- Wide-ranging support for increasing business friendliness, particularly for small businesses, including removing code barriers, establishing incubators, and improving education for first-time business owners.