

# Phase 1 Engagement

## Purpose

The first phase of community engagement for the Greater Downtown Plan focused on **identifying broad community goals for the future of Greater Downtown and community sentiment on a variety of topics**. Using data from pre-engagement, staff identified six broad goals and presented them to the community for prioritization and comments through pop-up engagements and the community survey.

## At a Glance

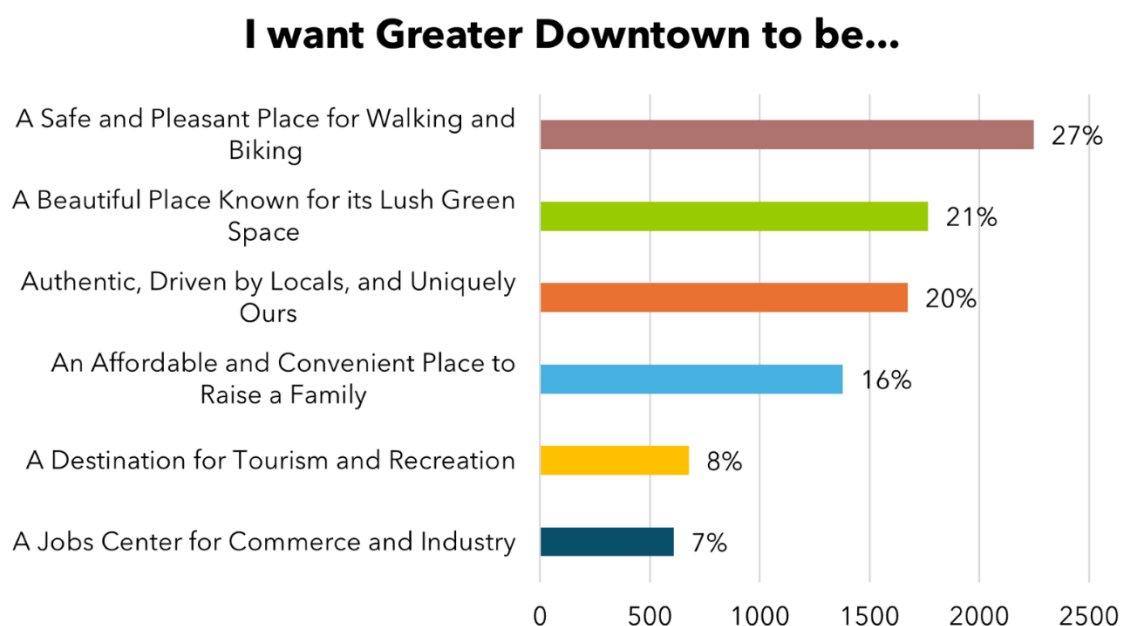


Figure 2.1. Phase 1 combined pop-up engagement activity responses and Q1 Survey responses

## Pop-Up Engagement

The first phase of pop-up engagement included an input activity that replicated the survey's first question. Engagement at community events included six jars with the following labels:

- A Jobs Center for Commerce and Industry,
- A Safe and Pleasant Place for Walking and Biking,
- An Affordable and Convenient Place to Raise a Family,
- A Destination for Tourism and Recreation,
- Authentic, Driven by Locals and Uniquely Ours, and
- A Beautiful Place Known for Its Lush Green Spaces.



Participants were given three pom-poms to vote on the goals most important to them, with the option of choosing three different jars or placing multiple pom-poms in one jar to highlight the importance of that goal to them. Staff received positive feedback about the activity during pop-up events with residents noting how easy it was to participate, the effectiveness of capturing broad community concerns, and the visual created by voting with the jars.



Additionally, staff presented the community with a map of the Greater Downtown region. Using green and yellow flags, participants were prompted to identify places they love or want to change and why. This activity generated 345 location-specific comments.

No race, age, or region information was collected during pop-up engagements. Staff worked to target many different types of events across neighborhoods to reach diverse audiences. Data collected at each pop-up event can be found in the Appendix.

## Pop-Up Event Information

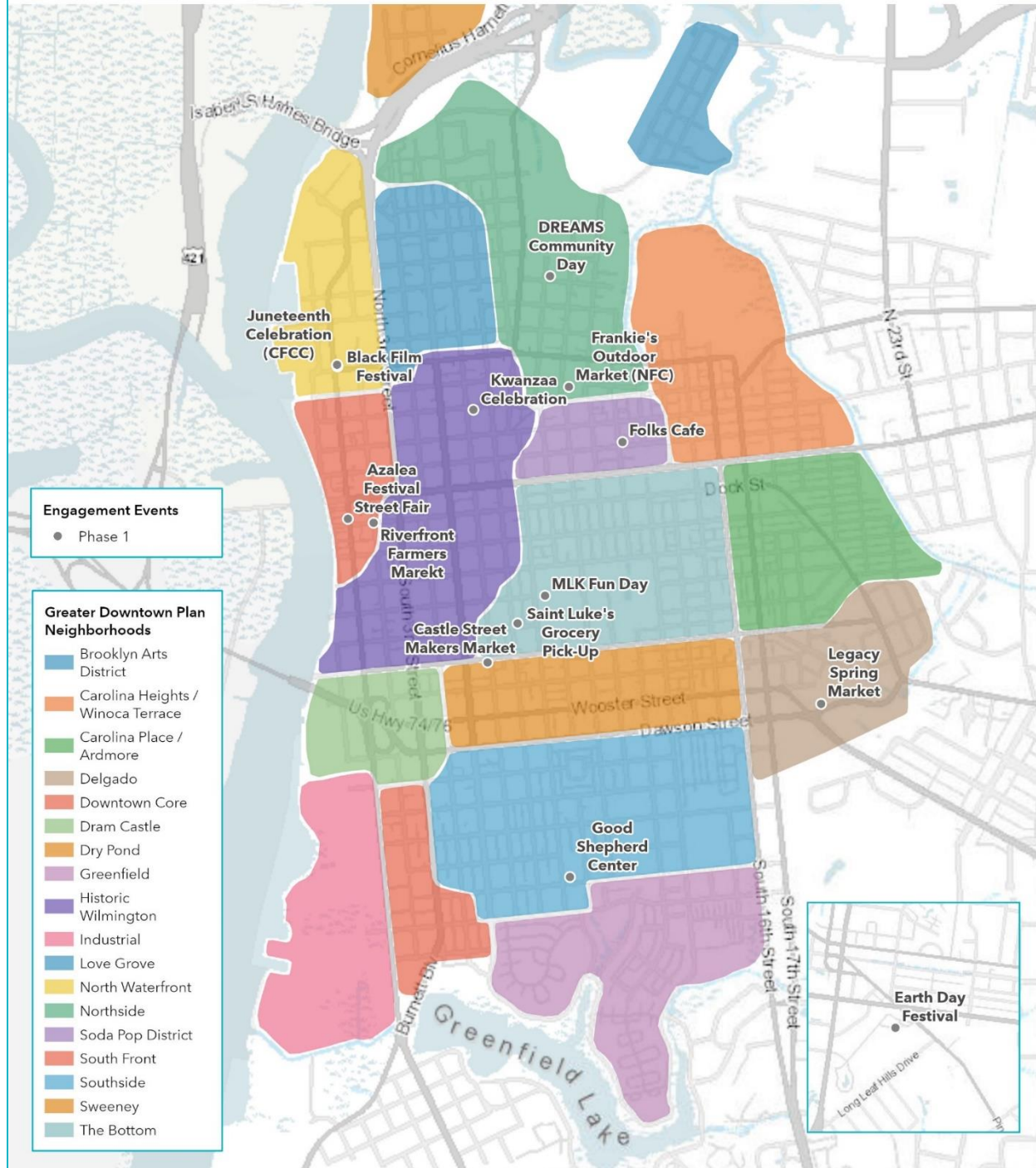
| Event                                      | Date                   | Neighborhood             | Jar Activity | Map Responses |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Kwanzaa Celebration*                       | 12/26/2023             | Historic Wilmington      | N/A          | 14            |
| MLK Fun Day*                               | 1/13/2024              | The Bottom               | N/A          | 0             |
| Azalea Festival Street Fair                | 4/6/2024               | Downtown Core            | 726          | 105           |
| Riverfront Farmers Market                  | 4/13/2024              | Downtown Core            | 90           | 16            |
| Earth Day Festival                         | 4/20/2024              | Outside Greater Downtown | 258          | 76            |
| Castle Street Makers Market                | 4/27/2024              | Dry Pond                 | 48           | 18            |
| Legacy Architectural Salvage Spring Market | 5/4/2024               | Delgado                  | 88           | 44            |
| Good Shepherd Center                       | 5/29/2024 and 6/5/2024 | Southside                | 31           | N/A           |
| DREAMS Community Day                       | 6/8/2024               | Northside                | 15           | 13            |
| CFCC Juneteenth Celebration                | 6/18/2024              | North Waterfront         | 52           | 18            |
| Frankie's Outdoor Farmers Market           | 6/22/2024              | Northside                | 12           | 15            |
| Saint Luke's Grocery Pick Up               | 6/26/2024              | The Bottom               | 31           | 1             |
| Folks Café                                 | 7/11/2024              | Soda Pop District        | 19           | N/A           |
| Archie Blue Community Connections Events   | 8/15/2024              | Love Grove               | N/A          | 15            |

Figure 2.2. Phase 1 pop-up engagement event dates, location, and activity participants

\*The Kwanzaa Celebration and MLK Fun Day events occurred between Pre-Engagement and Phase 1 Engagement. Staff held valuable discussions with residents and collected minor input, but neither event included the Phase 1 pop-up activity or survey. The Comprehensive Planning and Urban Design staff teamed up with Historic Preservation staff to conduct a mapping activity and brief survey. The mapping activity asked residents to pin a place that is important to them and Wilmington's history and share why. The survey gathered more information for the mapping activity and prompted residents to describe their ideal vision for their neighborhood.

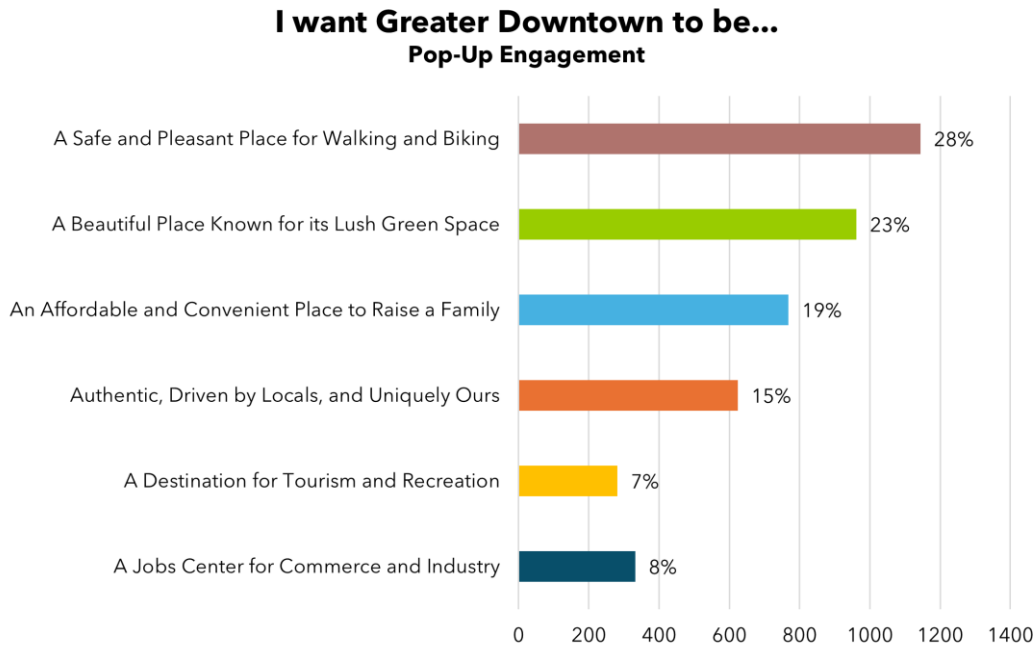
# Wilmington Greater Downtown Plan

## Phase 1 Engagement Locations



## Data Summary

Pop-up engagement participants prioritized a safe and pleasant place for walking and biking, a beautiful place known for its lush green spaces, and an affordable and convenient place to raise a family.



*Figure 2.3. Phase 1 pop-up engagement activity responses*

Several key themes arose from the mapping exercise. Participants highlighted their love for emerging districts like the Cargo District, Soda Pop District, and Castle Street, historic homes and businesses, and active green spaces like Greenfield Lake Park and the Riverwalk. As for locations needing improvements, many participants noted the need for additional and more regular maintenance of downtown public spaces such as parks, the Riverwalk, and streets, safer and more frequent crosswalks, and improvements to streetscapes. Graphics displaying the most commonly heard themes are found on the following page.

## ♥ Residents LOVE...



Figure 2.4. Phase 1 pop-up engagement mapping activity key themes for things participants love in Greater Downtown

## ⚠ Residents want to IMPROVE...



Figure 2.5. Phase 1 Pop-Up Engagement mapping activity key themes for things participants want to improve in Greater Downtown

## 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 and on the project website. See the Appendix for snapshot examples of social media posts, flyers, and newsletter excerpts.

## Data Summary

### Q1. I want Greater Downtown to be...

Participants were asked to select the three goals that were most important to them. Most participants want Greater Downtown to be a safe and pleasant place for walking and biking, authentic and driven by locals, and a beautiful place known for its lush green spaces.



Figure 2.6. Phase 1 Survey Q1 responses

## Q2: I would be more likely to visit Downtown if there were...

Participants were asked to rank the following recommendations from 1 to 6, with 1 being the most important, to increase their interest in and likelihood of visiting Downtown. The following were ranked as the most important (1). Participants shared that they would be more likely to visit downtown with better public spaces and easier parking.

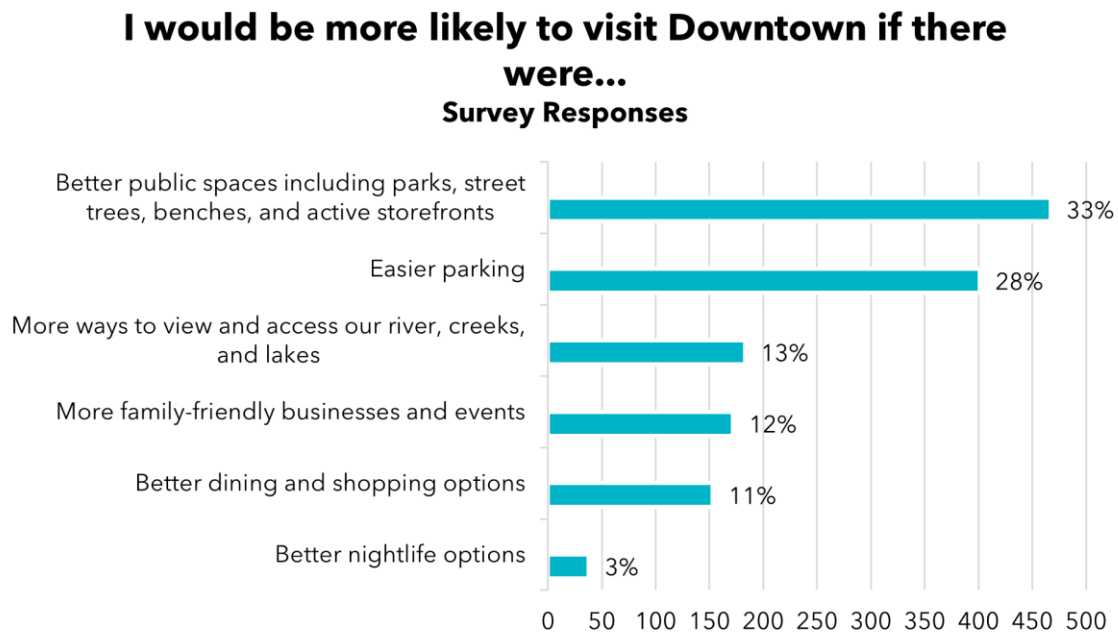


Figure 2.7. Phase 1 Survey Q2 responses

### Q3: I would walk or bike more often in Greater Downtown if there were...

Participants were asked to rank the following recommendations from 1 to 4, 1 being the most important, for increasing walking and biking in Greater Downtown. The following were ranked as the most important (1). Participants are most interested in safer bike lanes and sidewalks, as well as creating more pleasant sidewalks with trees and benches.

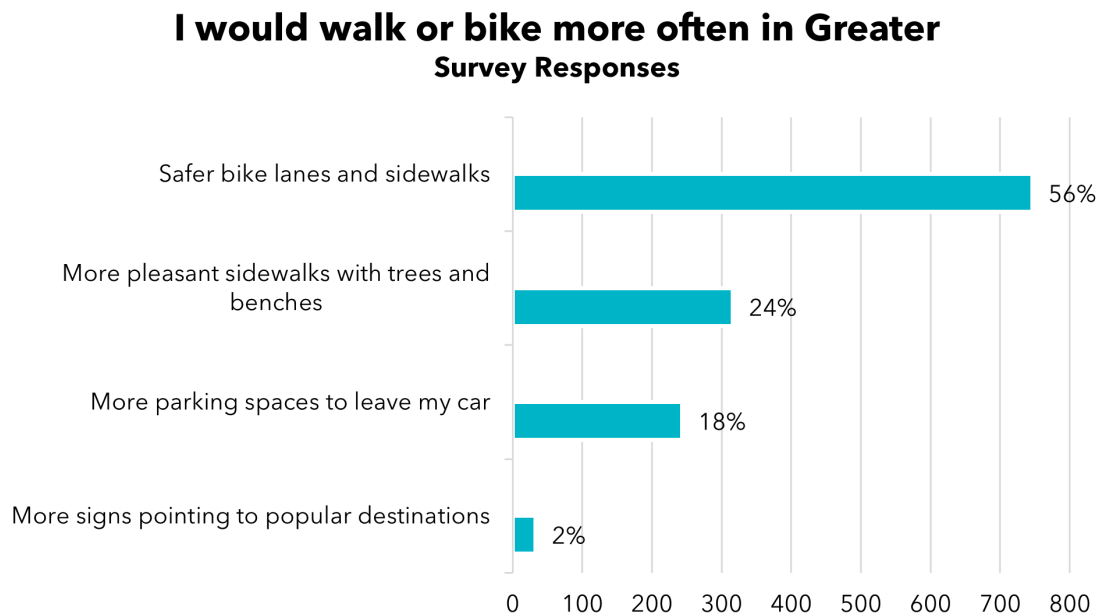
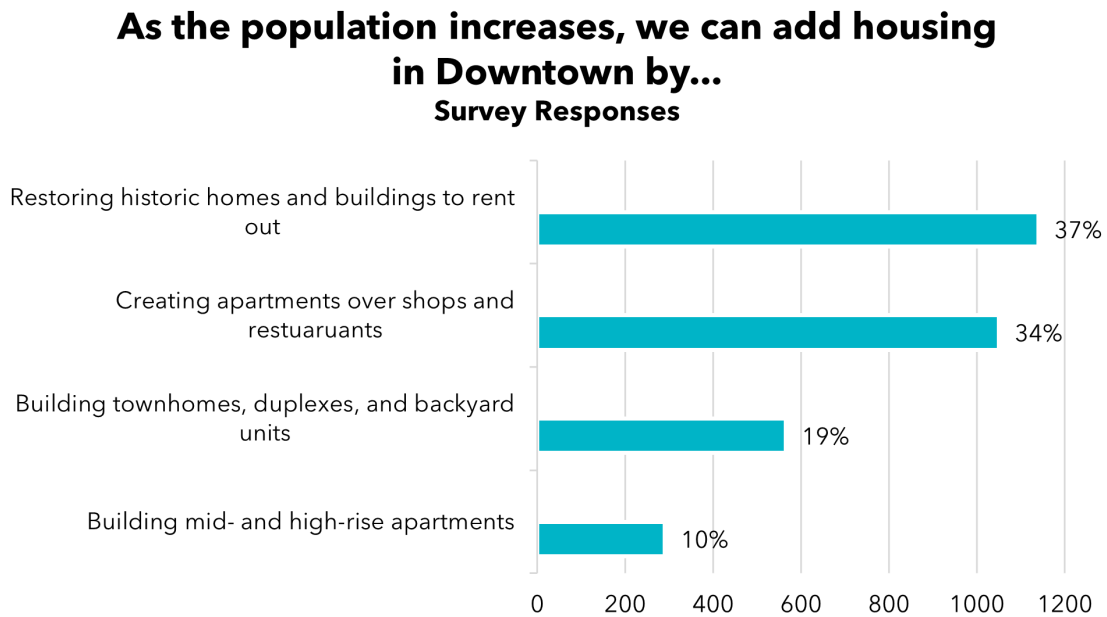


Figure 2.8. Phase 1 Survey Q3 responses

#### **Q4: As the population increases, we can add housing Downtown by...**

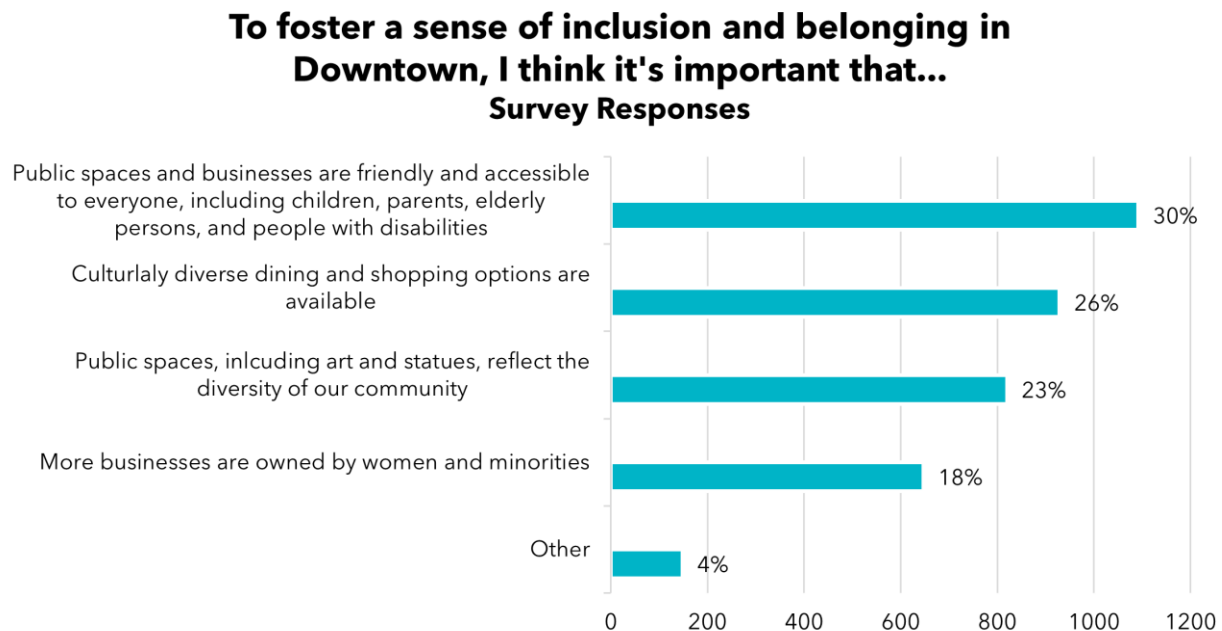
Participants were asked to select all that appealed to them as methods for increasing housing options in the Greater Downtown. Participants found restoring historic homes and buildings to rent out and creating apartments over shops and restaurants to be most appealing.



*Figure 2.9. Phase 1 Survey Q4 responses*

### **Q5: To foster a sense of inclusion and belonging in Downtown, I think it's important that...**

Participants were asked to select all that appealed to them as methods for fostering inclusion and belonging in Greater Downtown. They found creating friendly and accessible public spaces and businesses and culturally diverse dining and shopping options to be most appealing.



*Figure 2.10. Phase 1 Survey Q5 responses*

### **Open-Ended Questions**

The Phase 1 survey also included two open-ended questions prompting responses for things respondents like and want to keep in Greater Downtown and things they would like to see more of in Greater Downtown. Many respondents shared an interest in maintaining Greater Downtown's walkability, historic buildings, and charm and preserving the tree canopy. Survey participants were interested in more accessible parking, affordable housing, biking infrastructure, culturally diverse spaces and events, family-friendly activities and places, and a grocery store. A complete table of participant responses can be found in the Appendix.

## Demographic Data

### Q8: I live in...

Respondents were asked to share the region they live in. 65% of respondents live within the City of Wilmington, 24% within the Greater Downtown Plan boundary.

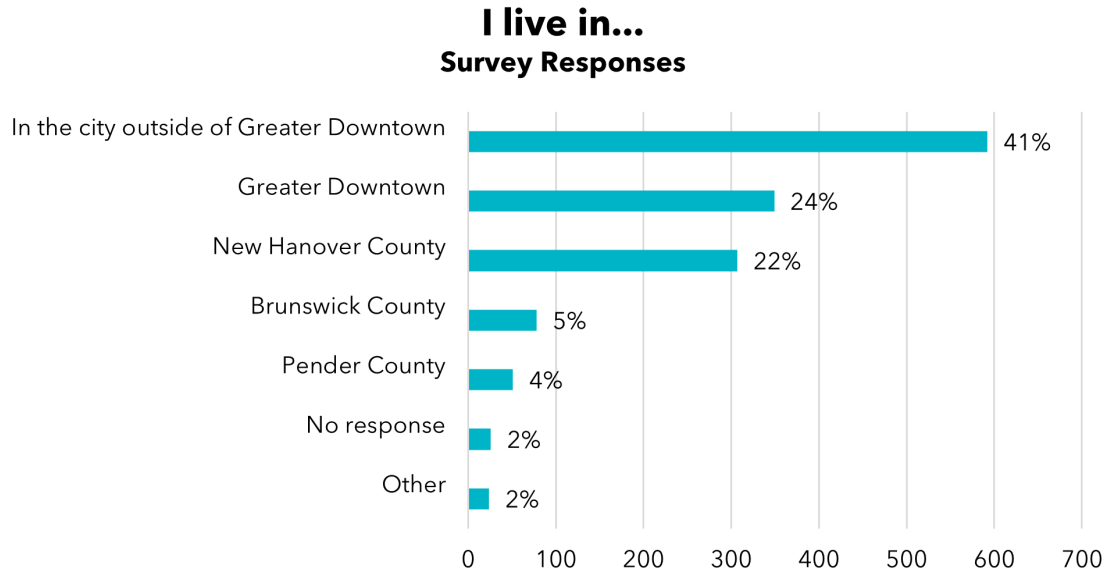


Figure 2.11. Phase 1 Survey Q8 responses

### Q9: I work or go to school in...

Respondents were asked to share the region where they work or attend school. 58% of participants work or attend school within the City of Wilmington, 27% within the Greater Downtown Plan boundary.

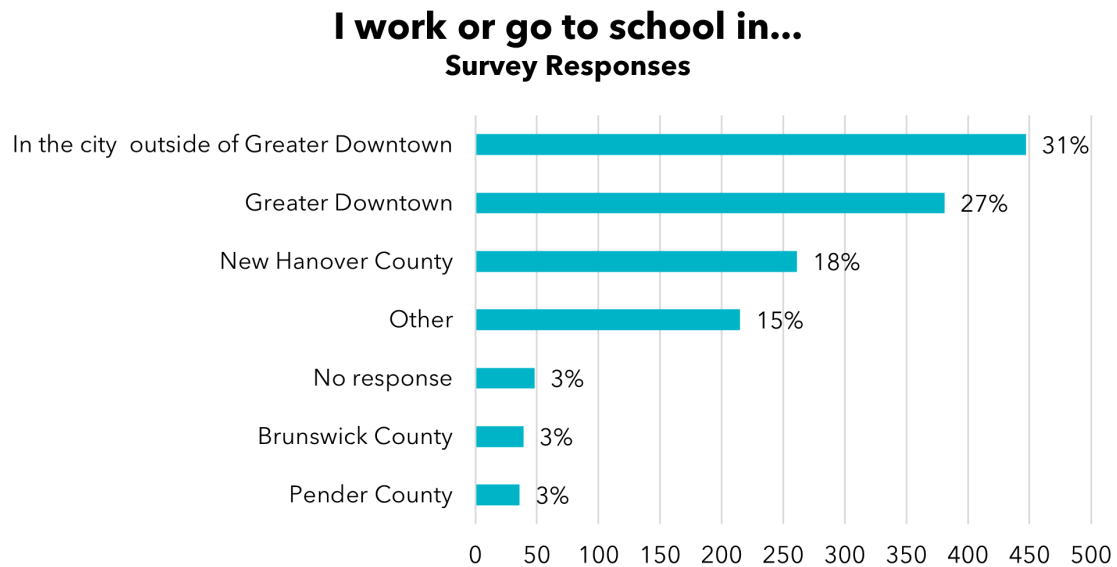


Figure 2.12. Phase 1 Survey Q9 responses.

### Q10: I identify as...

Participants were asked to identify their race. 80% of respondents were White. The racial breakdown of Greater Downtown is provided below as a point of comparison.

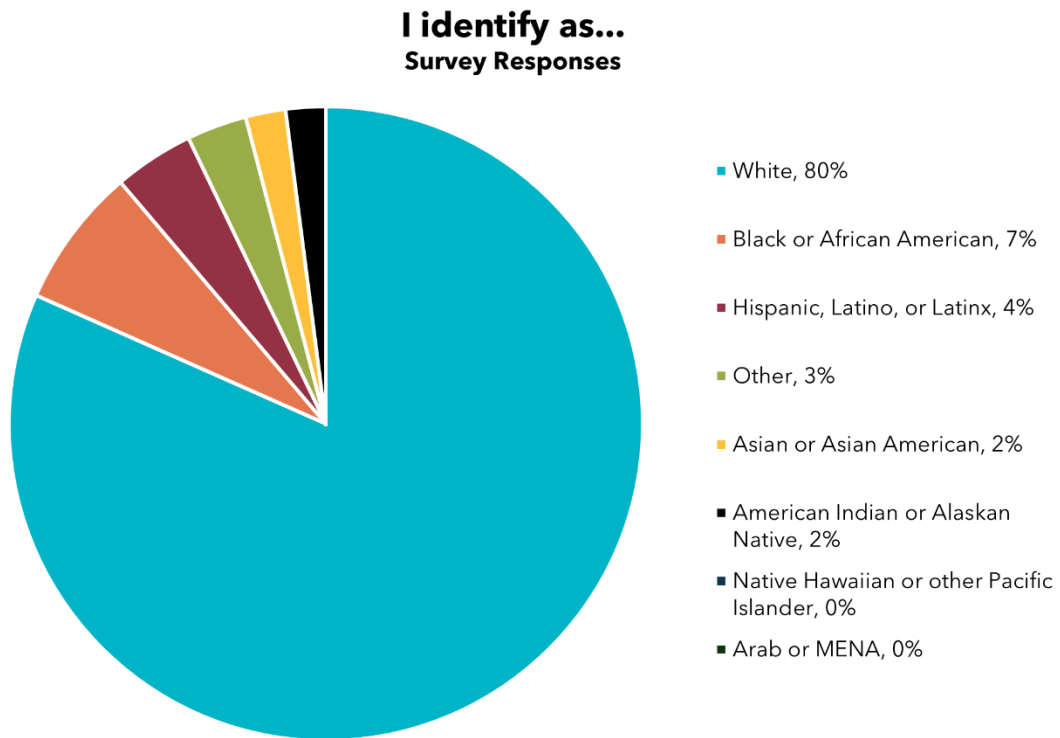


Figure 2.13. Phase 1 Survey Q10 responses

### Greater Downtown Race/Ethnicity Breakdown

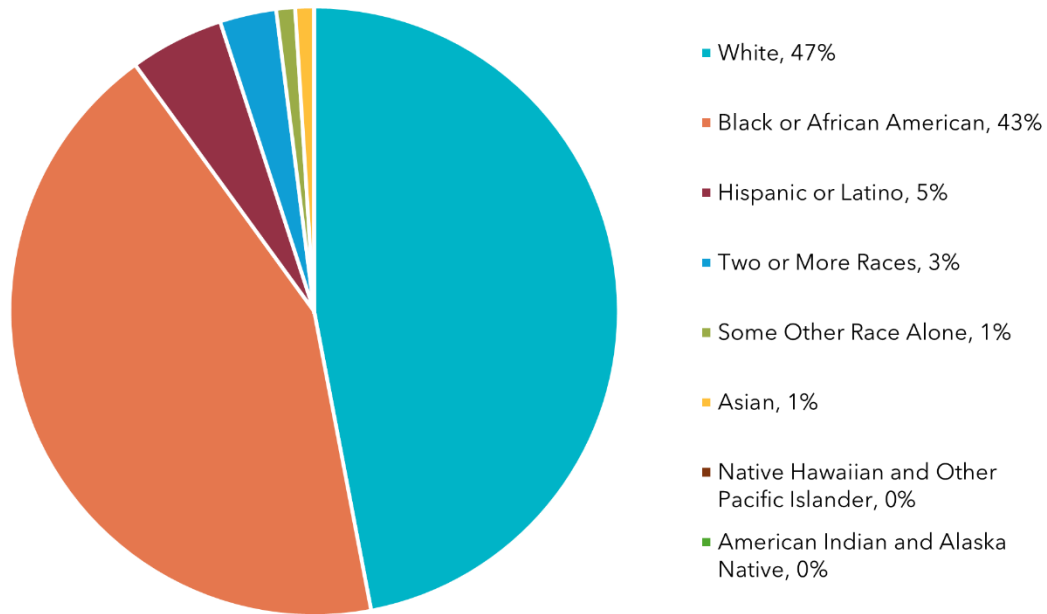


Figure 2.14. Racial breakdown of the Greater Downtown region (U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05)

## Q11: I am...

Participants were asked to identify their age range. The majority of respondents, 35.8%, were between the ages of 45 and 64 years. The age breakdown for the Greater Downtown region is included below for reference.

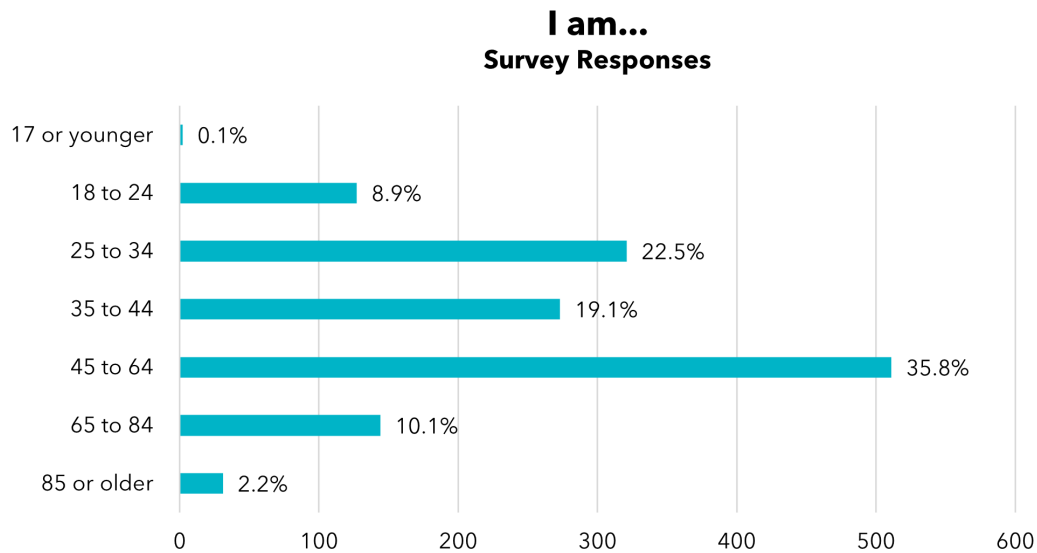


Figure 2.15. Phase 1 Survey Q11 responses.

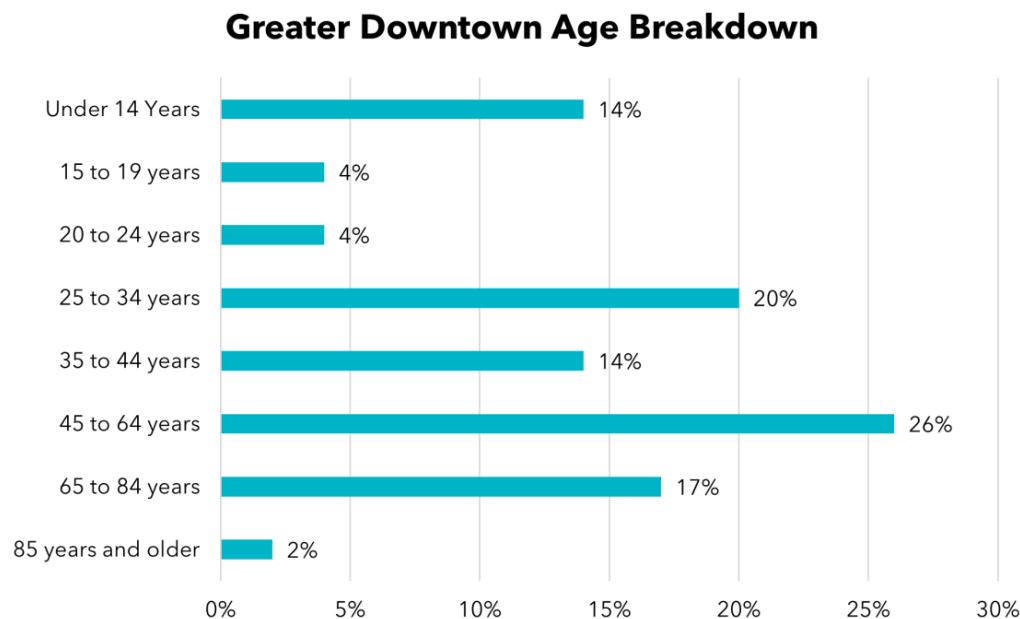


Figure 2.16. Age breakdown of the Greater Downtown region (U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05).

# Open Houses

## 1. The Harrelson Center, May 2024

The first official Open House for the Greater Downtown Plan took place on May 16, 2024, at the Harrelson Center's "Plaza on Princess" from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and occurred at the midpoint of the Plan's first phase of public engagement. In advance of the meeting, the Project Team worked with Corporate Affairs on social media posts, posted flyers at various businesses and organizations around Greater Downtown, and worked with the members of our Steering Committee to help spread the word. Additionally, we collaborated with Boombalatti's Handcrafted Ice Cream to provide free ice cream to all attendees, and attendees received branded grocery bags and water bottles.



As attendees arrived, they were greeted with an introduction to the project and the event, and asked to peruse five stations at their leisure, each staffed by project team members. The first four stations focused on the key themes highlighted throughout engagement efforts: Local Character, Economy, Small Business, and Mobility. At each station, information collected to date

was presented, and members of the Project Team were present to answer any questions.

Additionally, attendees were asked to provide their thoughts on specific questions within each theme. For example, attendees were asked:

- What improvements would encourage you to walk more often?
- Where should various types of businesses be allowed to operate within Greater Downtown?
- How can Greater Downtown grow and evolve while staying true to its identity?
- What changes would you like to see to improve living in Greater Downtown?

Finally, at the final station, attendees were asked to think big and provide ideas on what they thought the future of Greater Downtown could be, specific to each of the four themes or in general.

In addition to participating in the Greater Downtown Plan, attendees could also learn about services and receive information from several other city Departments, including Emergency Management, Fire, Housing and Neighborhood Services, Parks and Recreation, and Sustainability, who were present to meet with community members. We were also grateful to have the support of the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization and Engineering Department for their assistance in staffing the Mobility station.

We received significant input from approximately 85 attendees at this event. Key points are summarized below. Additional comments and data can be found in the appendix.

- Desire for increased safety for walking and biking at intersections, through crosswalks, pedestrian signals, and other infrastructure, while also ensuring that existing infrastructure is safe and accessible for all persons;
- Interest in quality streetscape across all of Greater Downtown;
- Support for increasing mobile businesses and vendors in parks, public spaces, and along sidewalks, and increasing the different types of businesses present within the Central Business District and throughout Greater Downtown, including home-based businesses and corner stores; and
- Support for multi-family and mixed-use spaces in numerous parts of Greater Downtown, including along various segments of N. 4<sup>th</sup>, Castle Street, and Dawson Street, particularly in the vicinity of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets.

## **2. Northside Food Co-op Community Dinner, July 2024**

The Greater Downtown Plan's second open house occurred as a joint effort with the Northside Food Co-op, with this event serving as the final engagement opportunity during the first phase of public engagement. Every other Thursday, the Co-op hosts community dinners at DREAMS Center for Arts Education on Fanning Street, where they invite the community out for a free meal and to learn more about the co-



op effort, with each community dinner also having a specific theme. The July 25, 2024, community dinner was held from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., with the Greater Downtown Plan serving as the theme.

The Project Team used guidance from Co-op staff to approach this effort much differently than the first open house or other engagement efforts we had done. An information table was set up to provide attendees with basic information on the project and opportunities to get more involved, and representatives from the Wilmington MPO and Engineering Department were also in attendance to give an update and gather feedback on the Downtown Trail project. However, most of the Project Team intermixed itself into the crowd, having dinner and information conversations with community members. Approximately 75 people attended this event.