



Wilmington Greater Downtown Plan Community Engagement Report

Prepared by City of Wilmington Planning and Development Department, Community Planning and Design

1. Overview and Summary

Wilmington Greater Downtown Plan Scope

The Wilmington Greater Downtown Plan is a Small Area Plan that will guide how the city approaches growth, development, and investment in the Greater Downtown area. Informed by extensive community input, staff expertise, and planning best practices, this plan will replace three older efforts: *Wilmington Vision 2020* (2004), *The Northside Community Plan* (2003), and *The Southside Plan* (2009).

Our goal is to develop clear, equitable, and actionable strategies that reflect what we've heard from the community while helping to implement key policies from the *Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan*.



Engagement Process

Community Engagement for the Wilmington Greater Downtown Plan began in Fall 2022. Staff intentionally collaborated with the Greater Downtown community to define goals, strategies, and action recommendations. Six engagement methods have been deployed, and over 6,300 participants have shared their voice in shaping the plan.

Phased Approach

PRE FALL 2022	Pre-Engagement	
	"Love" / "Needs Love" Engagement	6 Pop-Up Events
To kick off the project, staff collected community input on characteristics and places people love downtown and things that they would like to see changed. Data was used to inform the scope of work and consultant selection.		
1 SPRING-SUMMER 2024	Phase 1	
	Community Sentiment and Goal Development	14 Pop-Ups
	Phase 1 focused on understanding what residents want Greater Downtown to be and their general interest in different solutions.	1 Survey
		11 Focus Groups
		2 Open Houses
		1 Steering Committee Meeting
2 Implementation Committee Meetings		
2 SUMMER-FALL 2024	Phase 2	
	Strategy and Action Development	22 Pop-Ups
	Phase 2 focused on obtaining community feedback on whether proposed strategies and actions were on the right track and aligned with the priorities identified in Phase 1.	1 Survey
		1 Open Houses
		2 Steering Committee Meetings
		2 Implementation Committee Meetings
3 FALL-WINTER 2025	Phase 3	
	Draft Review	19 Pop-Ups
	Phase 3 shared a draft of the Plan with the community and asked for comments along with collecting community approval ratings and action priorities.	1 Survey
		1 Open Houses
		1 Steering Committee Meetings
		1 Implementation Committee Meetings

Engagement Methods

Throughout the process, we've prioritized meeting people where they already are—at community events, festivals, and gatherings. This approach has helped us hear from a wide range of voices, reflecting Wilmington's diversity in age, background, income, and experiences.

Pop-Up Engagements

To maximize reach and remove barriers to participation, staff attended **57 community events**, from local festivals to community dinners. These Pop-Up events connected staff with nearly **4,000 participants** in a relaxed and familiar setting. While demographic data was not collected, events were strategically chosen to reflect the geographic and cultural diversity of the Greater Downtown area.



Surveys

Six surveys were deployed. Surveying provided valuable input on key issues and helped guide plan development.

- **Phase 1 Survey** gathered input on community goals, housing needs, and amenity preferences.
- **Phase 2 Survey** asked participants to prioritize strategies across major themes and included demographic questions.
- **Phase 3 Survey** requested participants share approval ratings for strategies and their corresponding actions and prioritized actions within each strategy. Responses for each key plan theme with collected in four separate surveys.

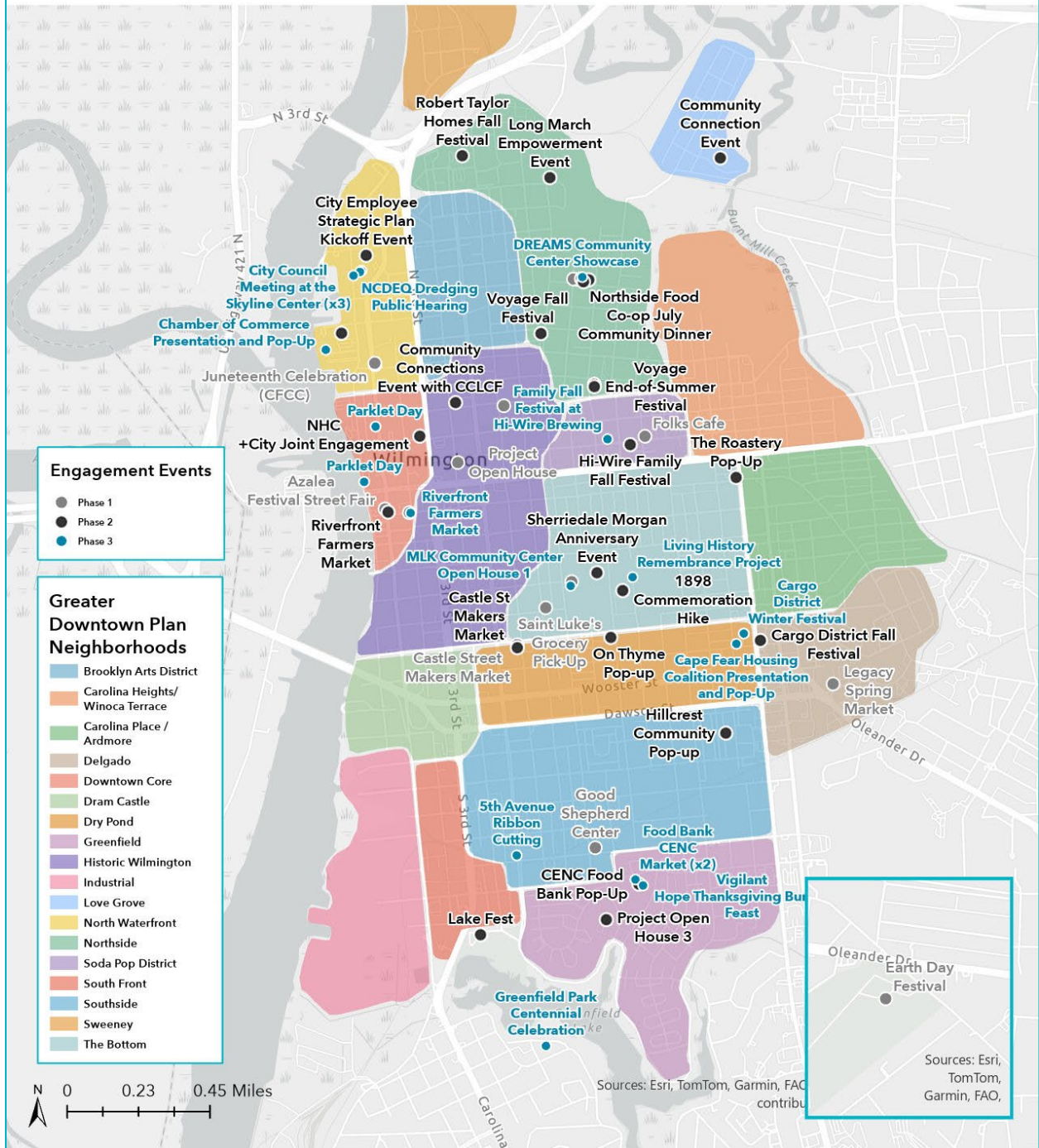
The surveys collected key responses from over 2,800 participants. They were available online and in paper form, in English and Spanish, and distributed at events to reach a broader audience.

Open Houses



Staff hosted four open houses. Open houses provided more time and space for residents to engage in focused, deeper discussions about the topics identified in earlier outreach.

Wilmington Greater Downtown Plan Pop-Up and Open House Locations



Focus Group Conversations

Focus group conversations provided a better understanding of the perspectives of specific sectors and communities. In total, **11 focus group sessions** were held, covering topics such as:

- Mobility,
- Economic Development,
- Black and Latino Wilmington,
- Justice and Belonging,
- 1. Housing, and
- Environmental Advocacy.

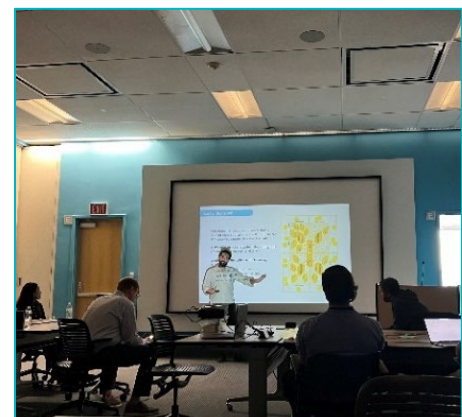
Organizations such as the City/County Workforce Housing Advisory Committee, Cape Fear Housing Coalition, Wilmington Housing Authority, Castle Street Collective, Residents of Old Wilmington, Cape Fear Craft Beer Alliance, Cape Fear Community College, African American Business Council, Genesis Block, Network for Entrepreneurs, and members of the building/development industry were also engaged to ensure alignment with ongoing efforts.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee helped guide the planning process, ensuring we stayed connected to the people and priorities of Greater Downtown. Members include stakeholders representing community organizations (5), business and development (6), public safety (2), greater downtown neighborhood residents (6), and other local agencies (4). Appointed by the City Council through a public application process, the committee met three times to review community input and guide the direction of the plan. Meeting summaries are available in the Appendix.

Implementation Committee

An internal Implementation Committee reviewed recommendations based on existing budgets, staffing capacity, and programs to ensure the final plan is grounded in reality. The Implementation Committee consists of executive city staff from the following departments: Transportation, Design and Construction, Asset and Property Management, Community Building, Police, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development, and the Deputy City Managers.



Data Summary

Demographics

Race

Participant race and ethnicity data was collected in the Phase 1 and Phase 2 surveys. Respondents were asked to answer the question, 'I identify as...', and select the race/ethnicity that most appropriately represented them. Approximately 2% of survey respondents did not choose a response to this question. Race and age data was collected to track population representation in staff engagement efforts with a goal of having the demographics of participants be similar to the overall demographics of the study area. Staff used this information to target locations and events to reach groups underrepresented in the survey. Phase 3 surveys did not collect demographic information due to the length and content of the survey as surveys with more than 10 questions often have fewer completions. While demographic data was not collected during pop-up engagements, staff observed more racial and age diversity in participants than in either survey.

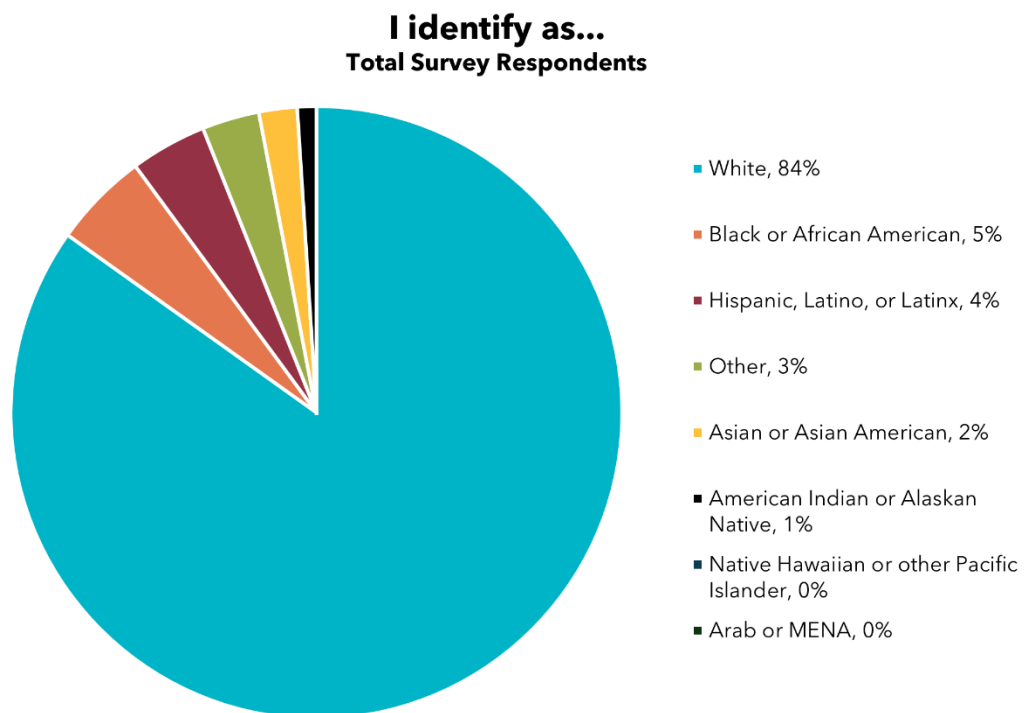


Figure 1.1. Combined Phase 1 and 2 survey respondent race/ethnicity

Greater Downtown Race/Ethnicity Breakdown

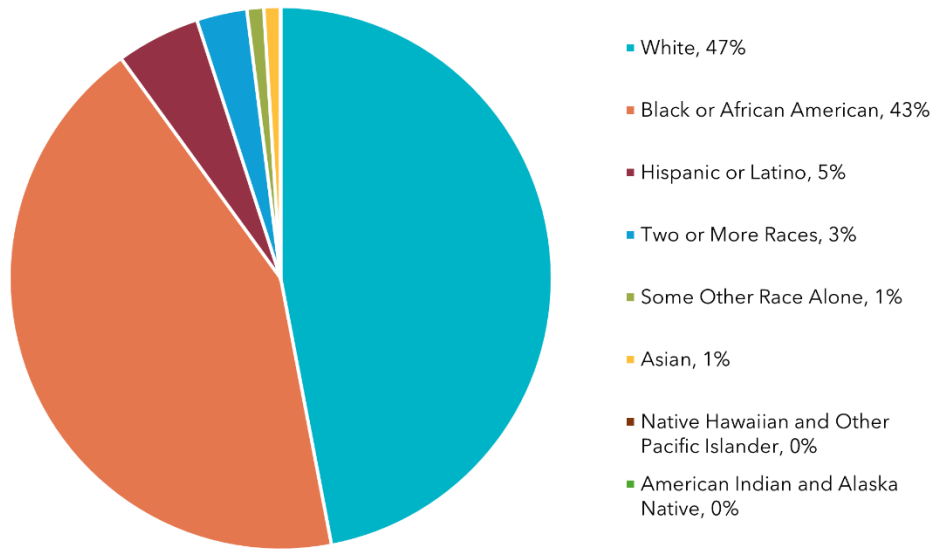


Figure 1.2. Race/Ethnicity make up of the Greater Downtown region (U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05)

Age

In the Phase 1 and Phase 2 surveys, participants were asked to share their age category. Most respondents were between 25 and 34 years old. The Phase 3 survey did not collect respondent ages.

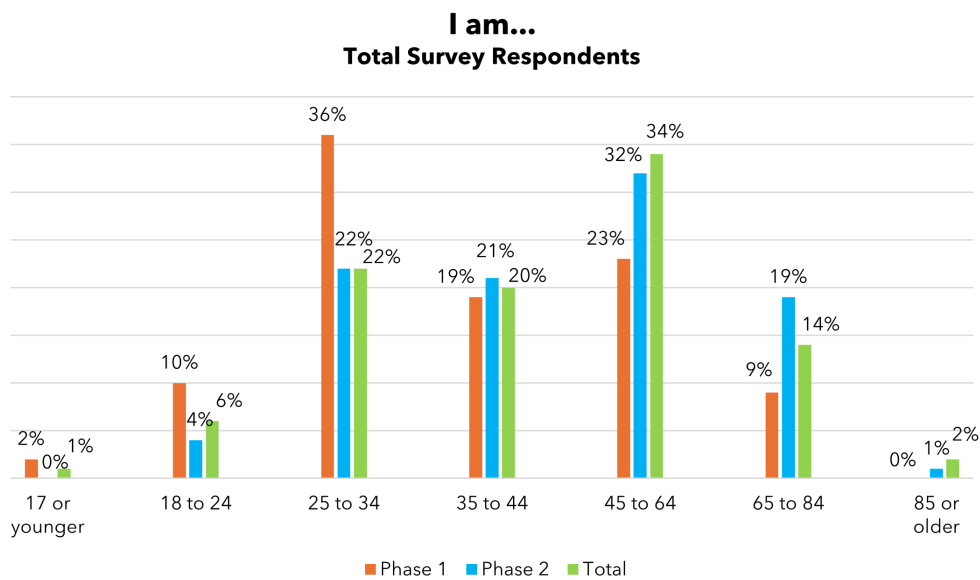


Figure 1.3. Survey respondent ages.

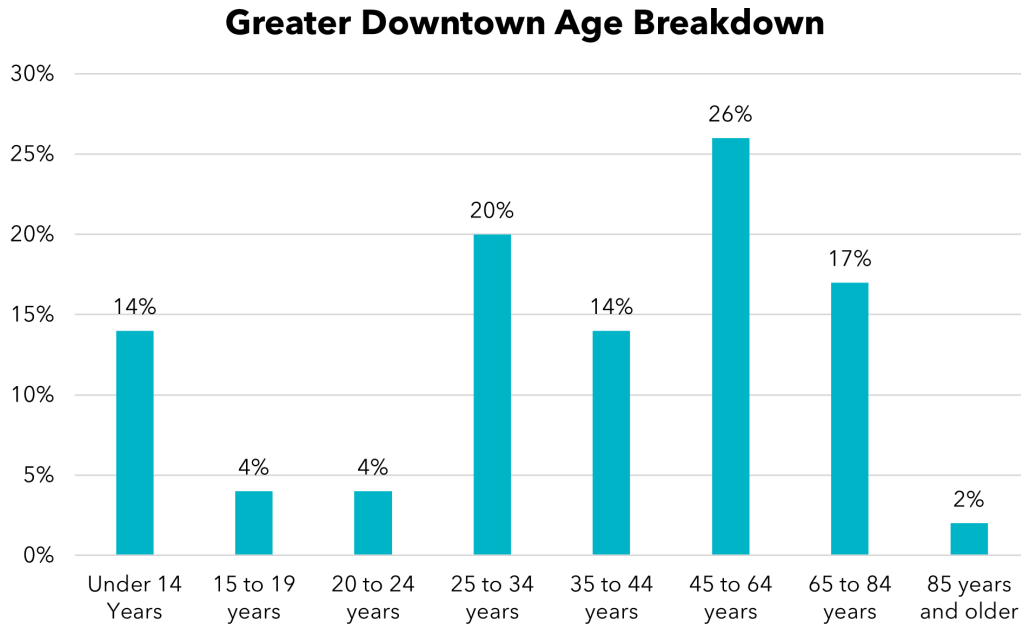


Figure 1.4. Greater Downtown region age breakdown (U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05)

Location

Participants of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 surveys were asked to select the area where they live. 68% of respondents were City of Wilmington residents, with 25% of respondents living within Greater Downtown. The Phase 3 survey did not collect respondent locations.

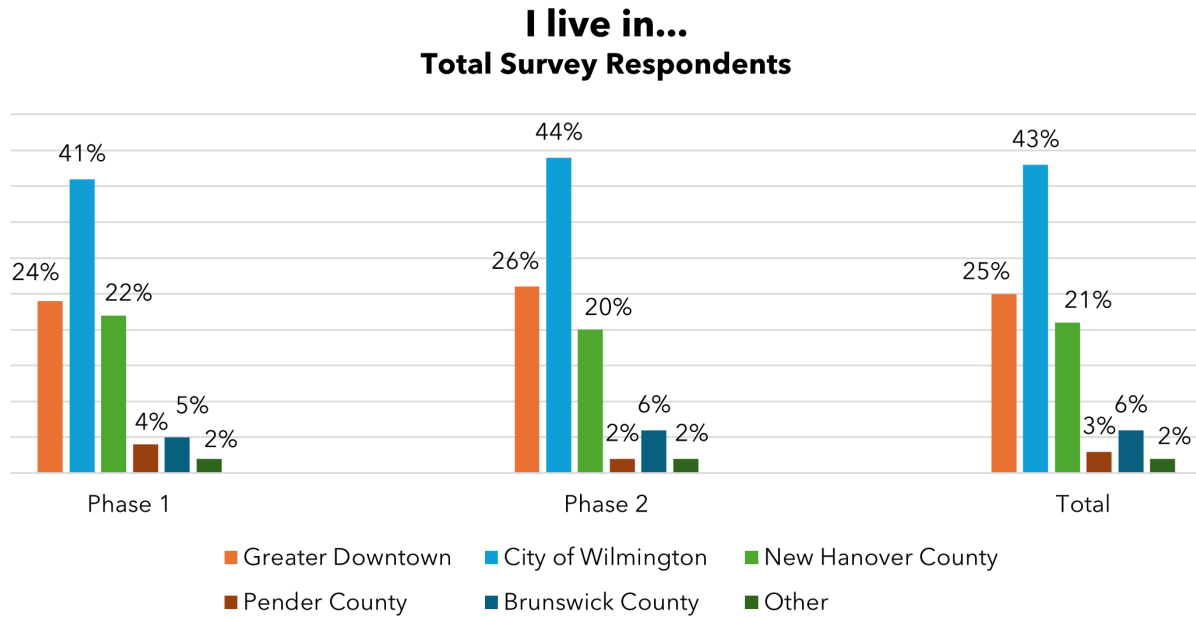


Figure 1.5. Survey respondent location

Key Themes

Throughout the engagement process, several key themes emerged from resident responses.

- Interest in creating and activating green spaces and parks with family and dog-friendly amenities and improved safety and maintenance;
- The need for affordable housing connected to services, jobs, and amenities;
- Interest in improving connectivity in Greater Downtown with reformed parking and multi-modal transportation options, and
- The need to improve and develop daily amenities such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and hardware stores accessible to residents of all neighborhoods was highlighted in all areas of Greater Downtown, but especially in the Northside community.

While all respondents want to see improvements to their neighborhoods and daily lives, many shared concerns regarding gentrification. The Wilmington Greater Downtown Plan seeks to create policies and programs to balance the need to improve quality of life in all neighborhoods while retaining existing residents.

Gentrification

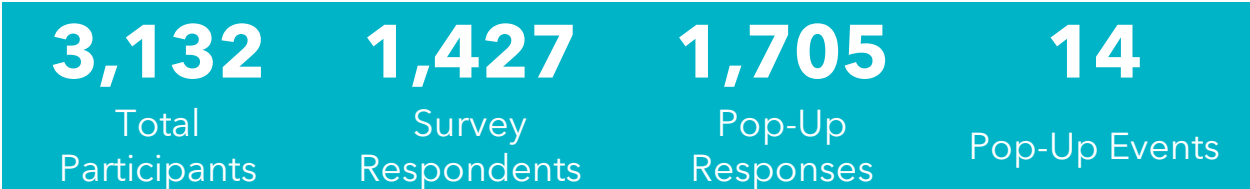
Gentrification is the displacement of existing residents, commonly low-income, from their neighborhoods due to rising costs as wealthier residents and new services move in.

2. 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



I want Greater Downtown to be...

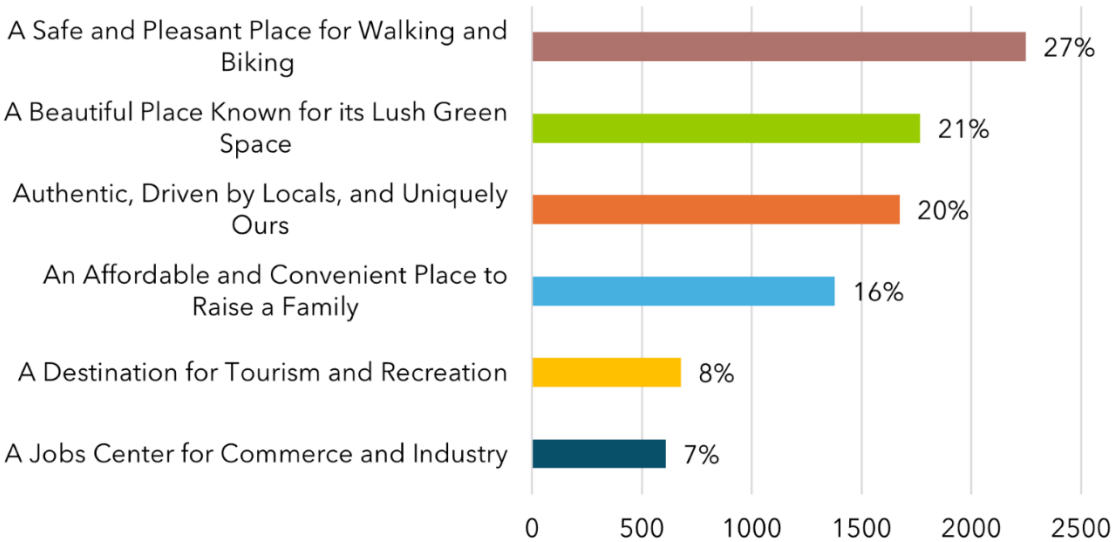


Figure 2.1. Phase 1 combined pop-up engagement activity responses and Q1 Survey responses

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.

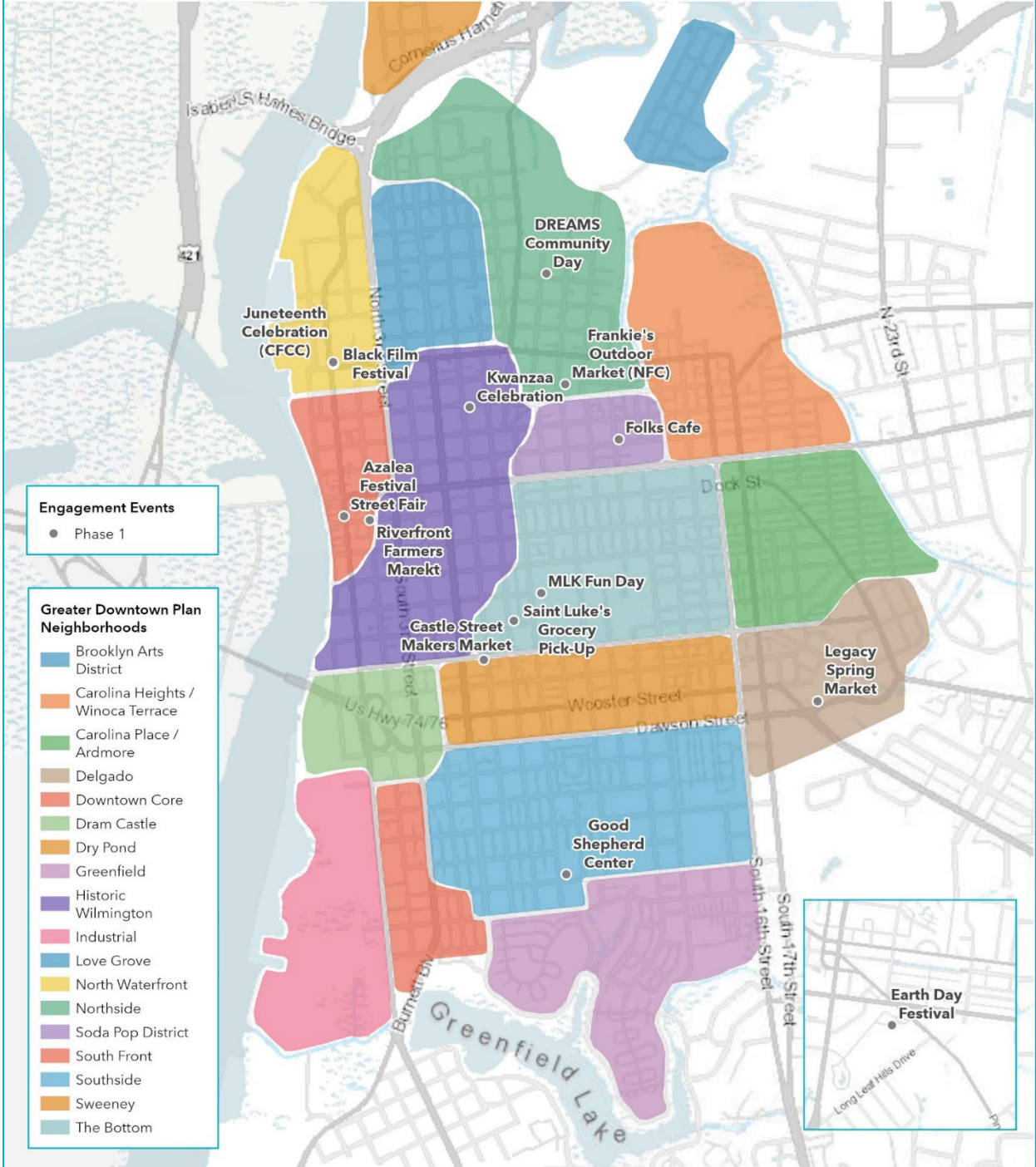
Pop-Up Event Information

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.

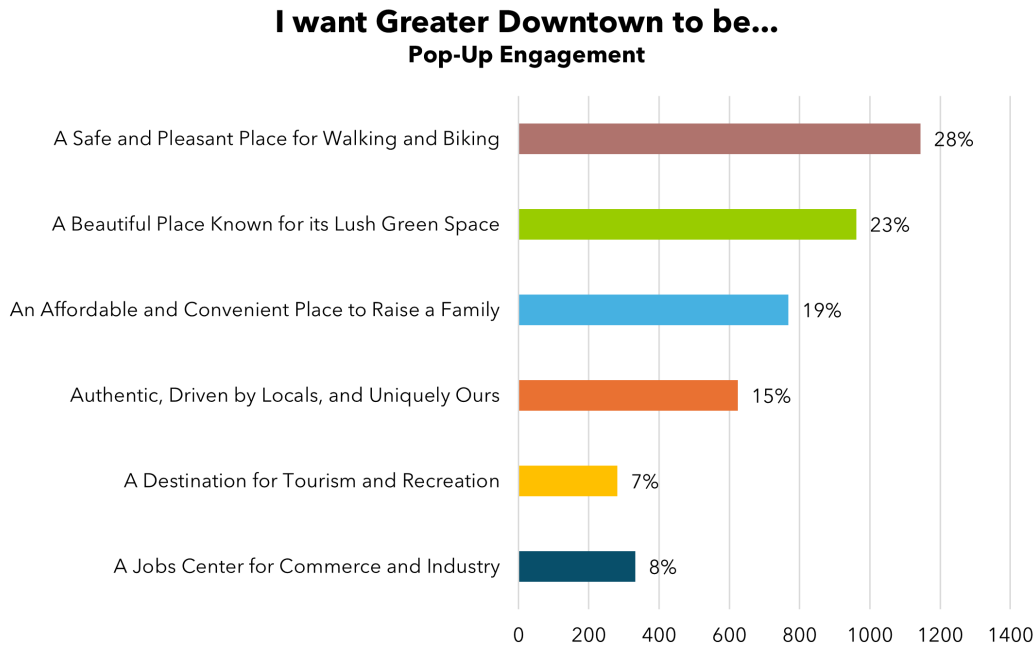


Figure 2.3. Phase 1 pop-up engagement activity responses

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.

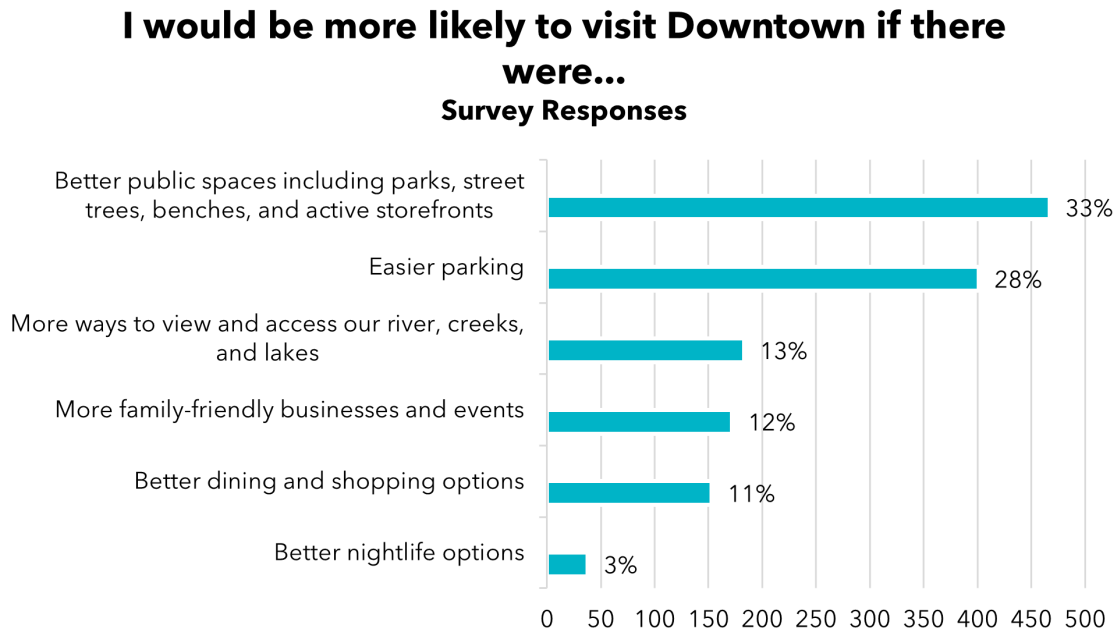


Figure 2.7. Phase 1 Survey Q2 responses

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.

I would walk or bike more often in Greater Survey Responses

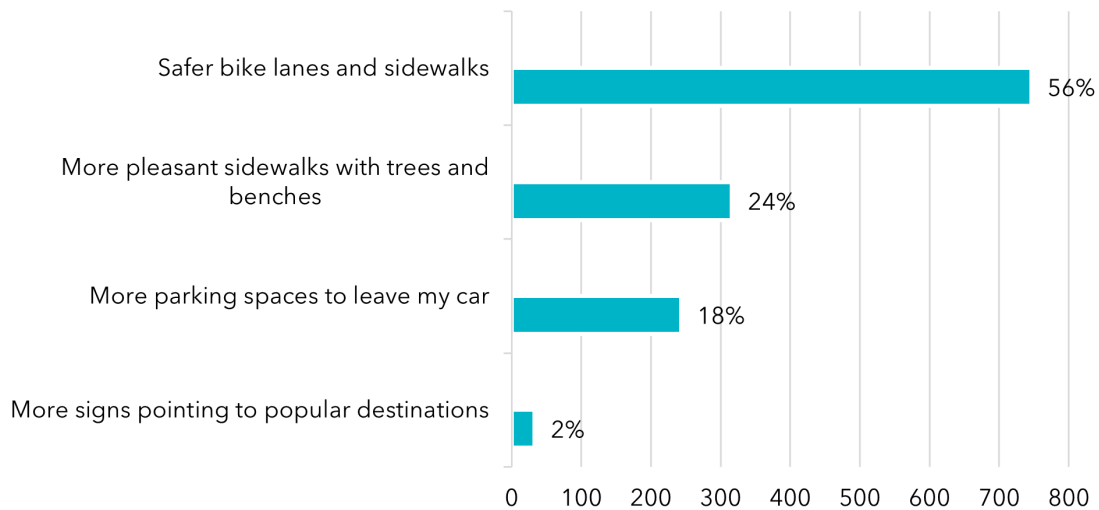


Figure 2.8. Phase 1 Survey Q3 responses

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.

As the population increases, we can add housing in Downtown by...
Survey Responses

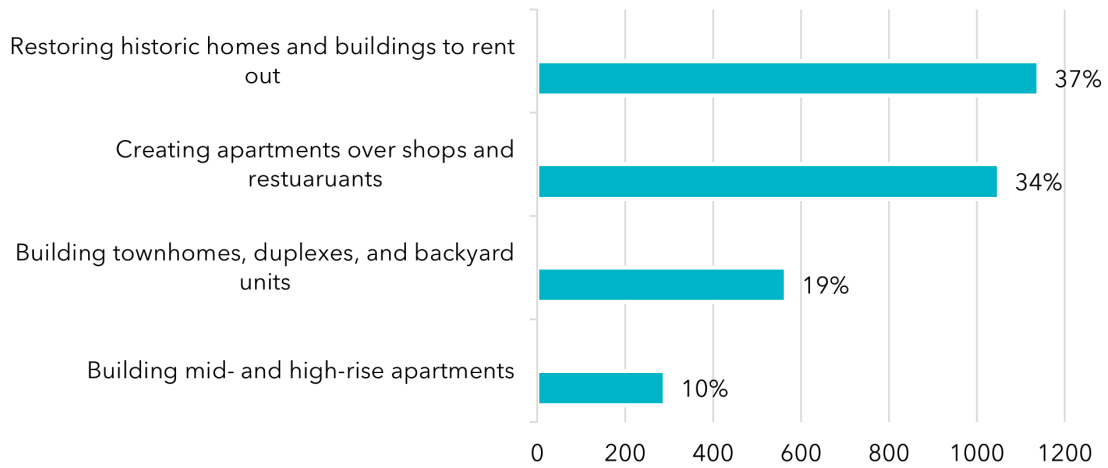


Figure 2.9. Phase 1 Survey Q4 responses

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.

To foster a sense of inclusion and belonging in Downtown, I think it's important that... Survey Responses

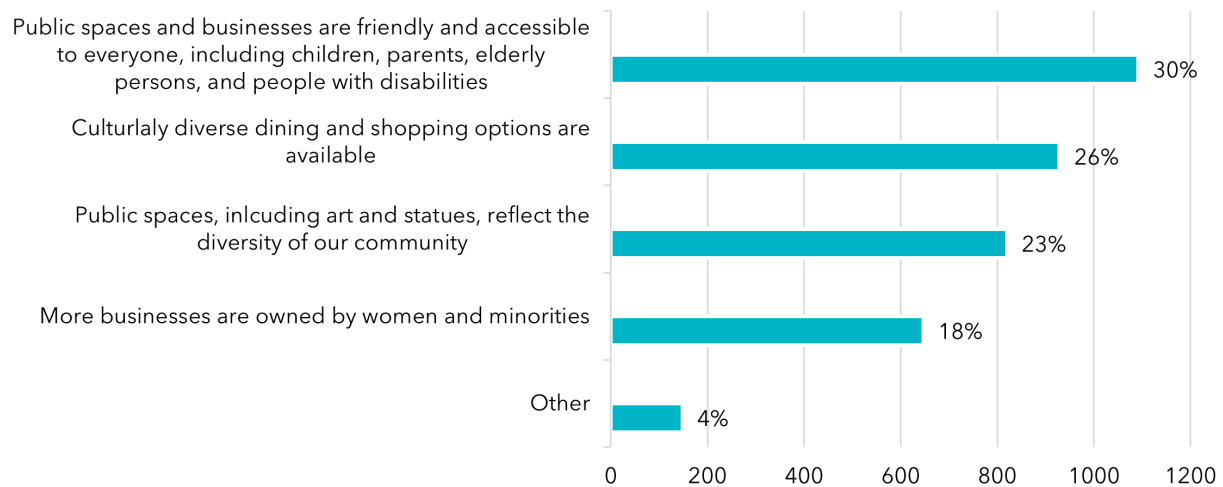


Figure 2.10. Phase 1 Survey Q5 responses

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.

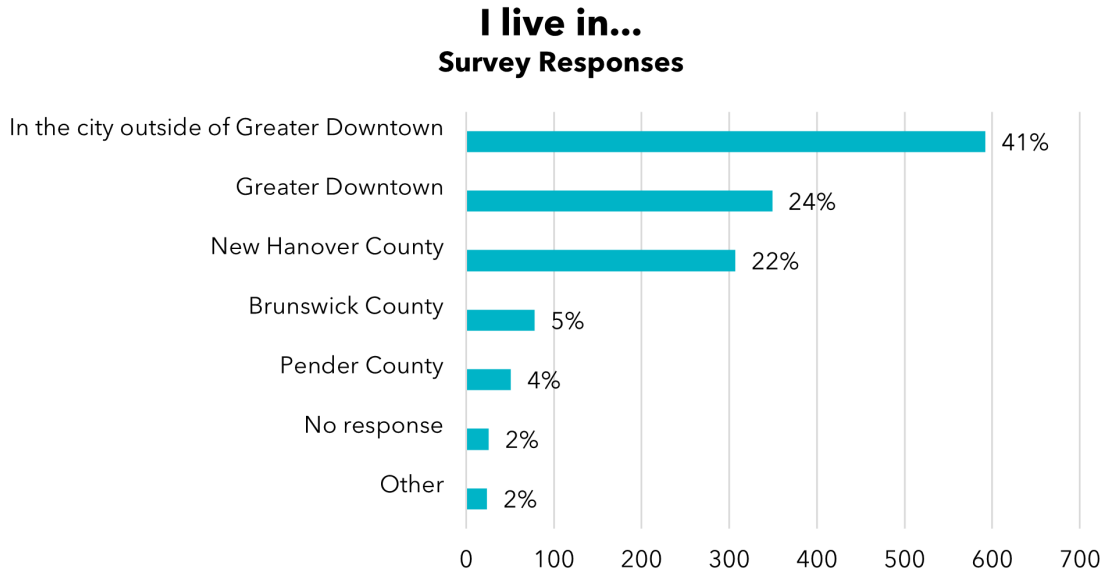


Figure 2.11. Phase 1 Survey Q8 responses

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.

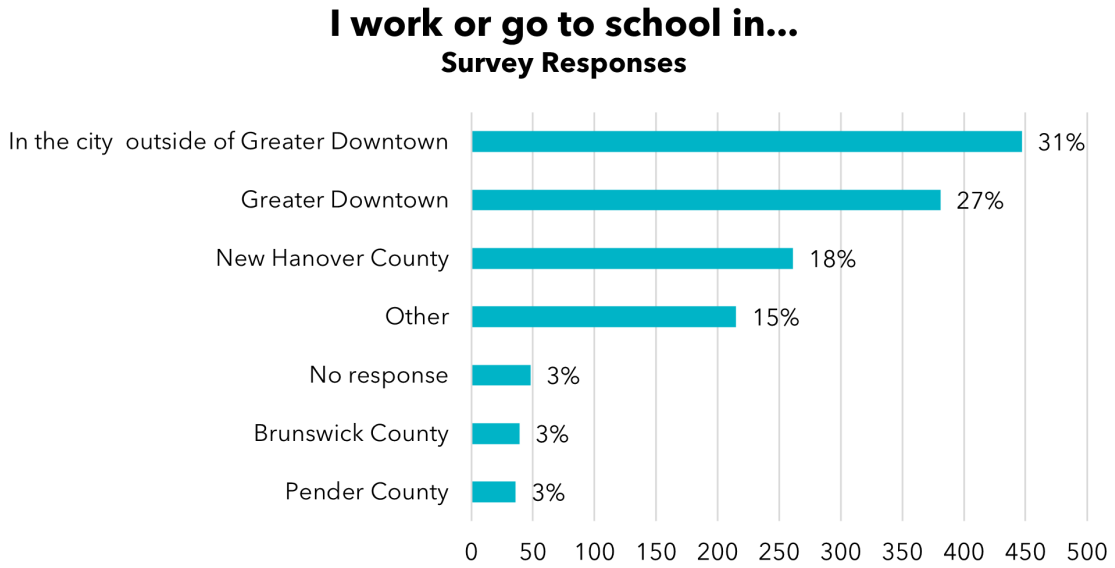


Figure 2.12. Phase 1 Survey Q9 responses.

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.

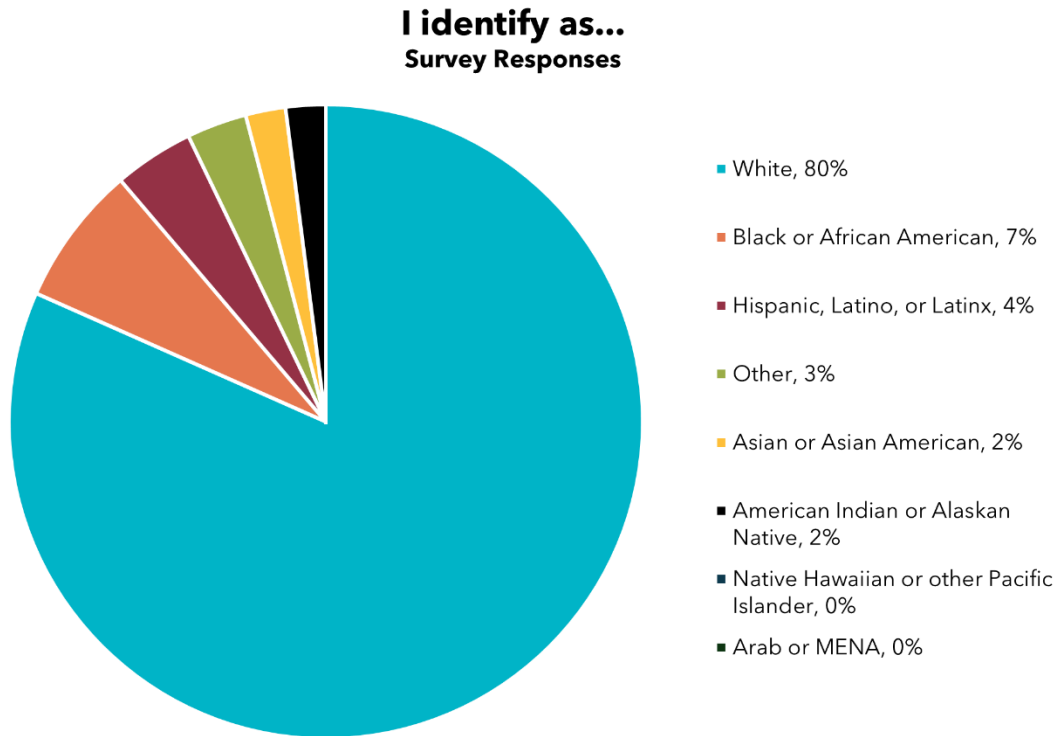


Figure 2.13. Phase 1 Survey Q10 responses

Greater Downtown Race/Ethnicity Breakdown

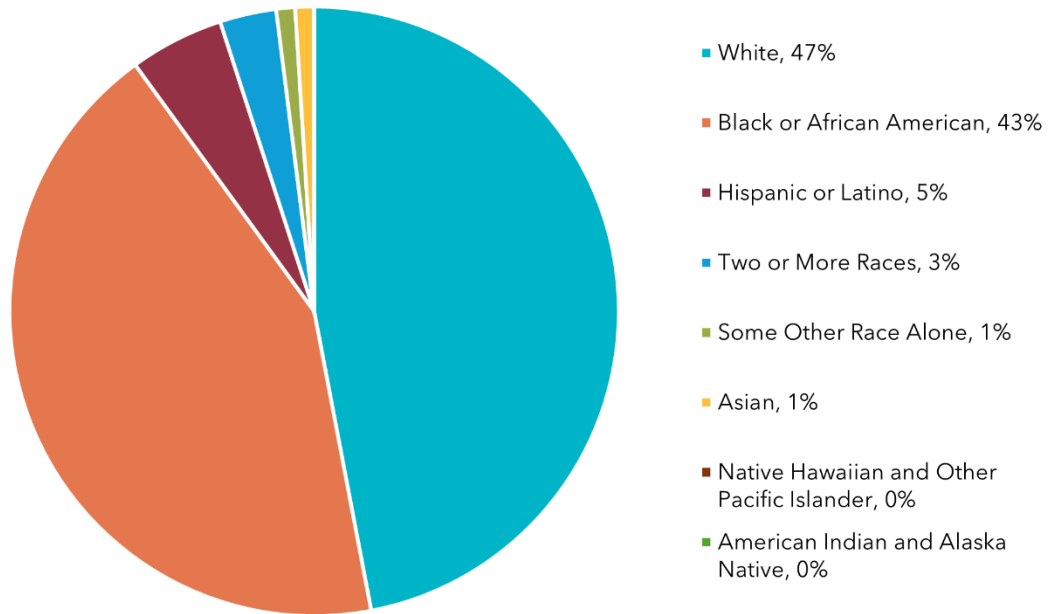


Figure 2.14. Racial breakdown of the Greater Downtown region (U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05)

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.

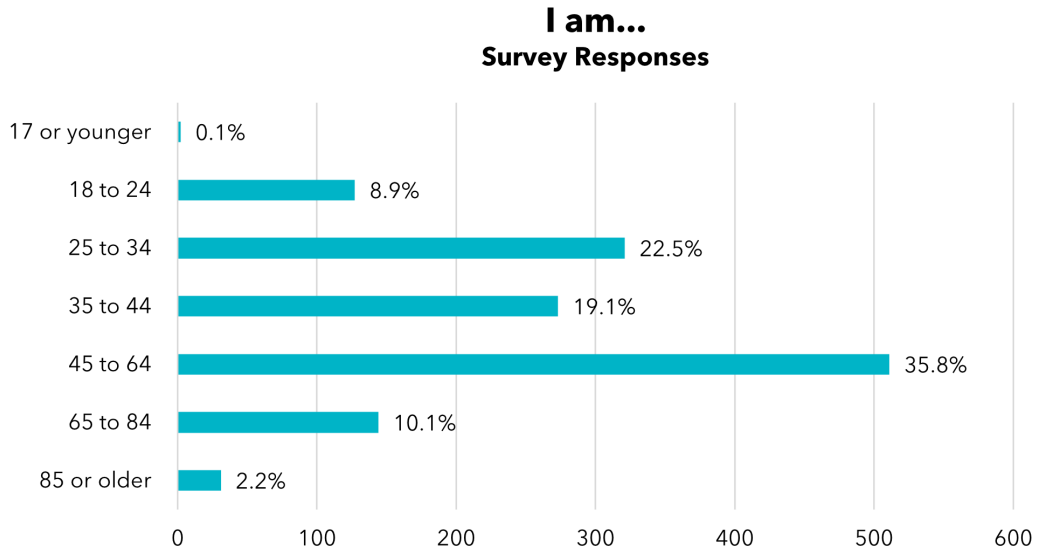


Figure 2.15. Phase 1 Survey Q11 responses.

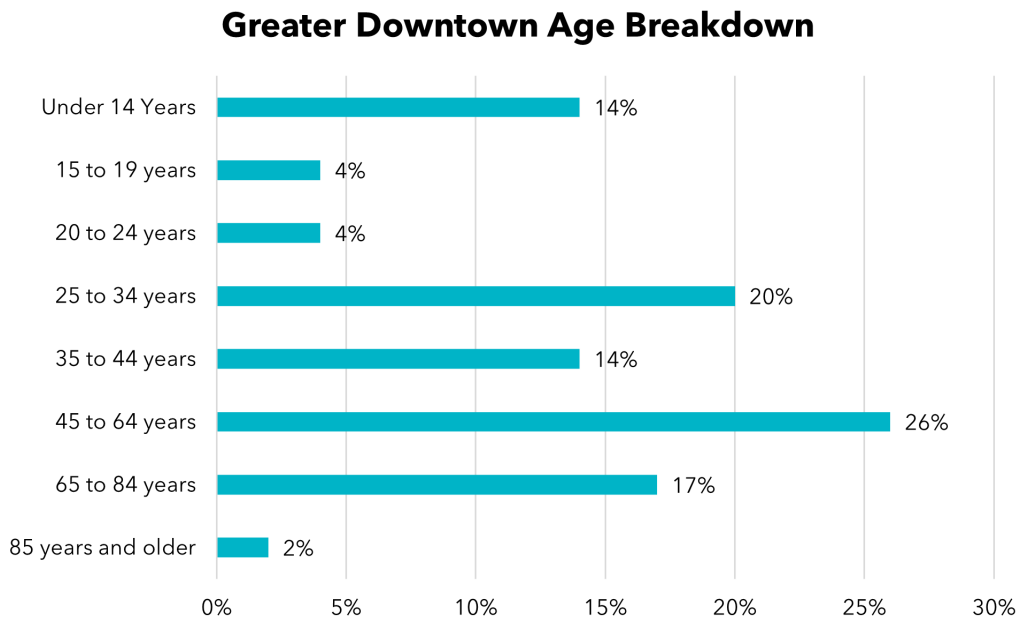


Figure 2.16. Age breakdown of the Greater Downtown region (U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05).

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. 4th, Castle Street, and Dawson Street, particularly in the vicinity of 16th and 17th 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.

3. 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

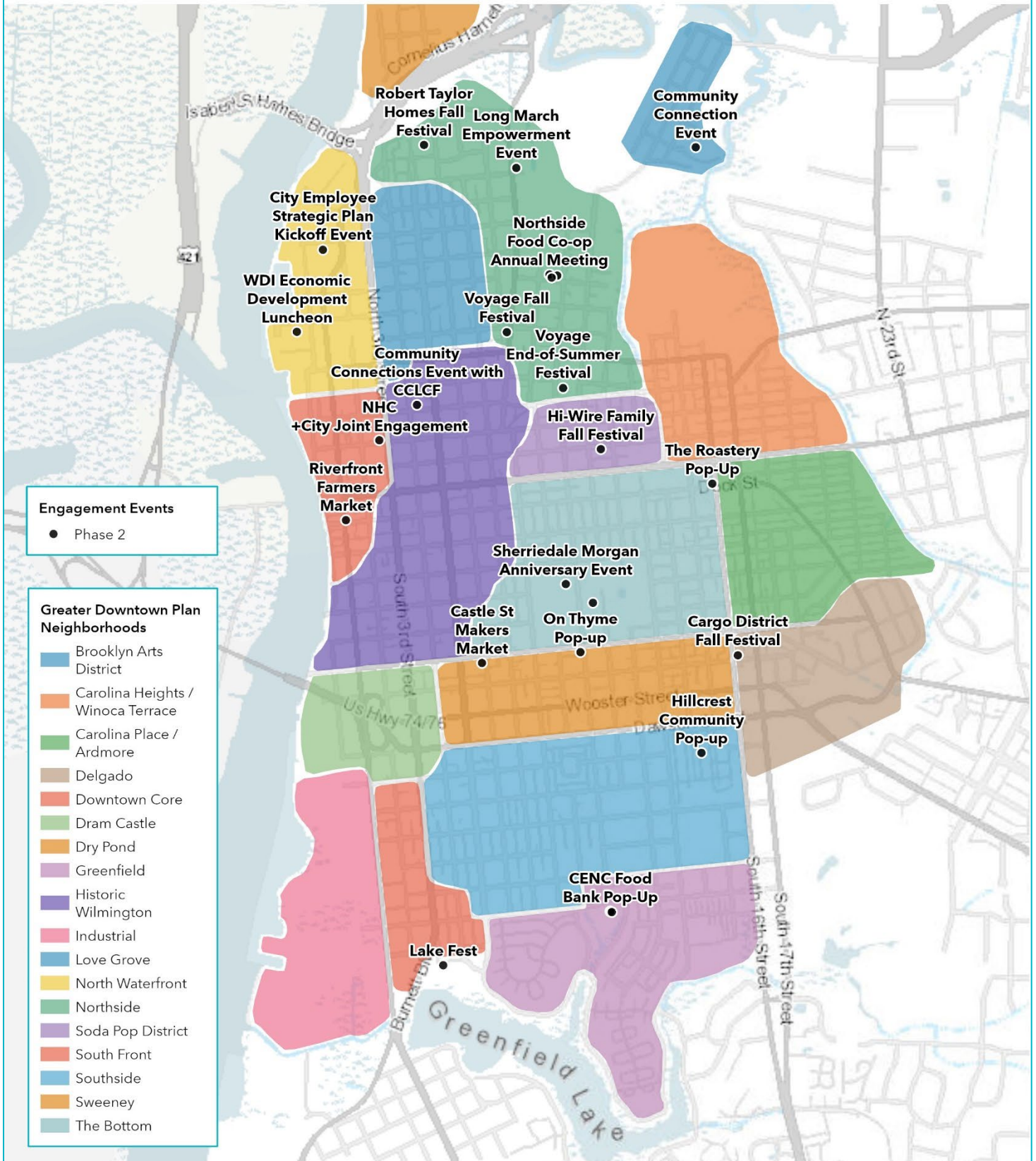
Event	Date	Neighborhood	Responses
Community Connection Event with Community Care Lower Cape Fear	9/12/2024	Historic Wilmington	44
Sherriedale Morgan Fit for Fun Center Anniversary Event	9/14/2024	The Bottom	67
Voyage End of Summer Festival	9/28/2024	Northside	72
Long March Empowerment Event	9/29/2024	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.

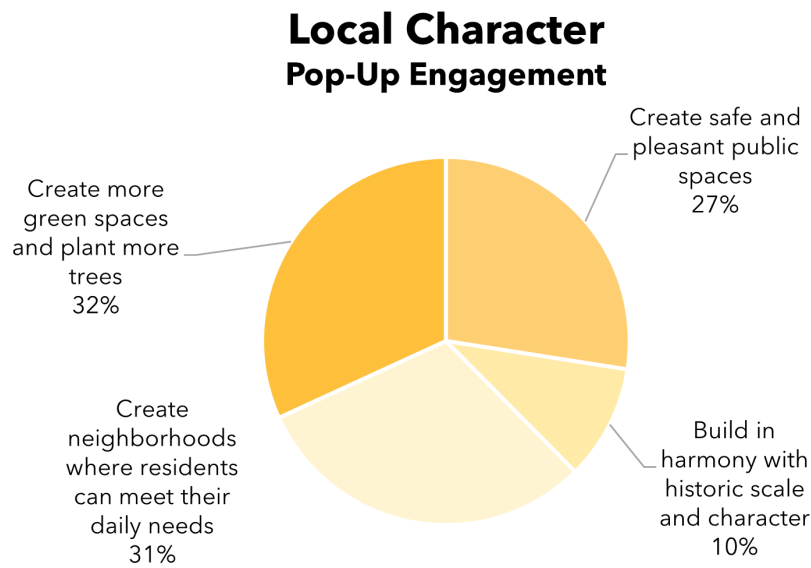


Figure 3.3. Phase 2 participant priorities under Local Character collected from the in-person Pop-Up Engagement.

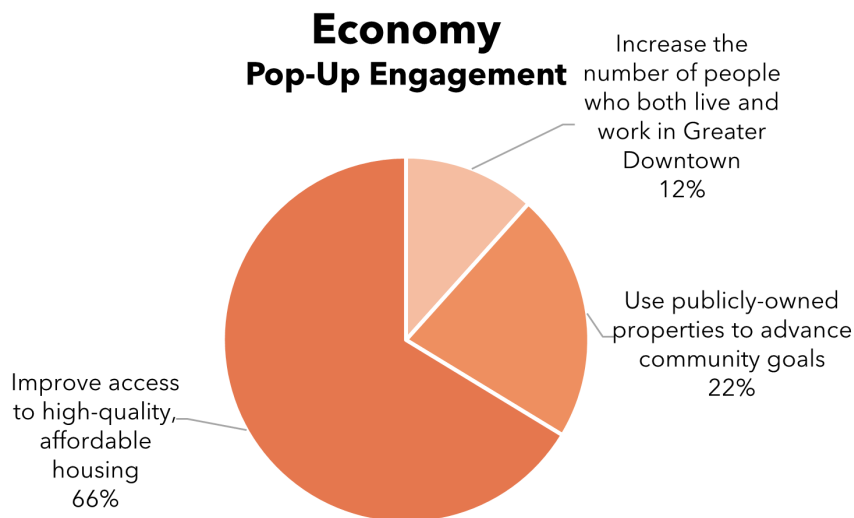


Figure 3.4. Phase 2 participant priorities under Economy collected from the in-person Pop-Up Engagement.

Small Business Pop-Up Engagement

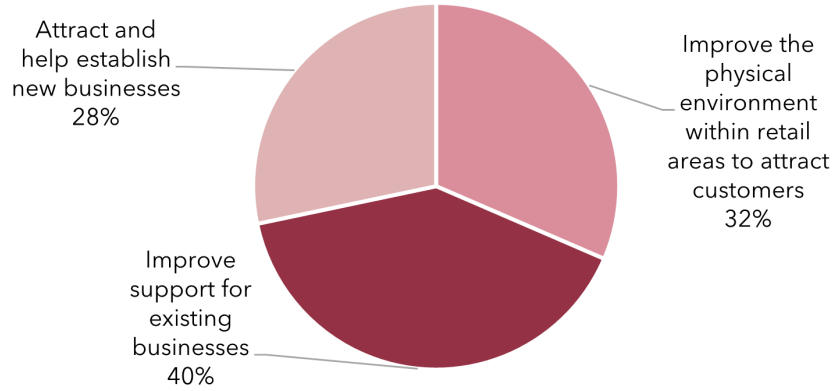


Figure 3.5. Phase 2 participant priorities under Small Business collected from the in-person Pop-Up Engagement.

Mobility Pop-Up Engagement

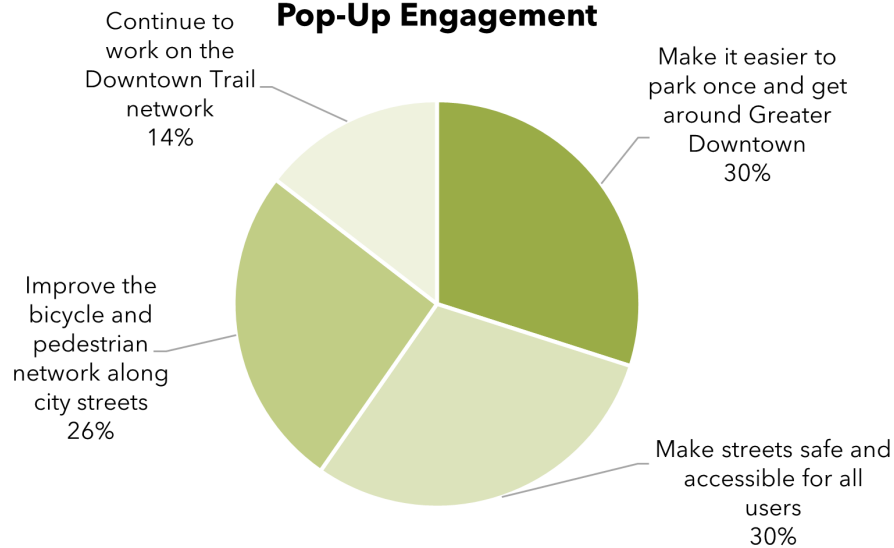


Figure 3.6. Phase 2 participant priorities under Mobility collected from the in-person Pop-Up Engagement

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.

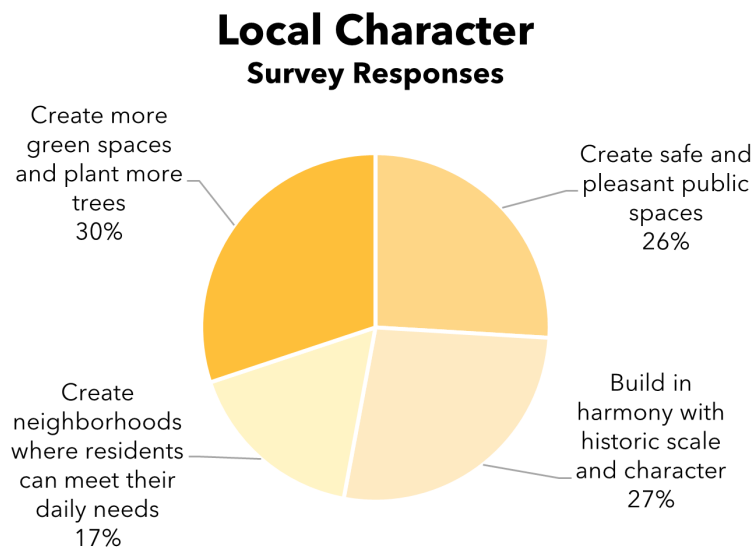


Figure 3.7. Phase 2 Survey Q1, Local Character, responses

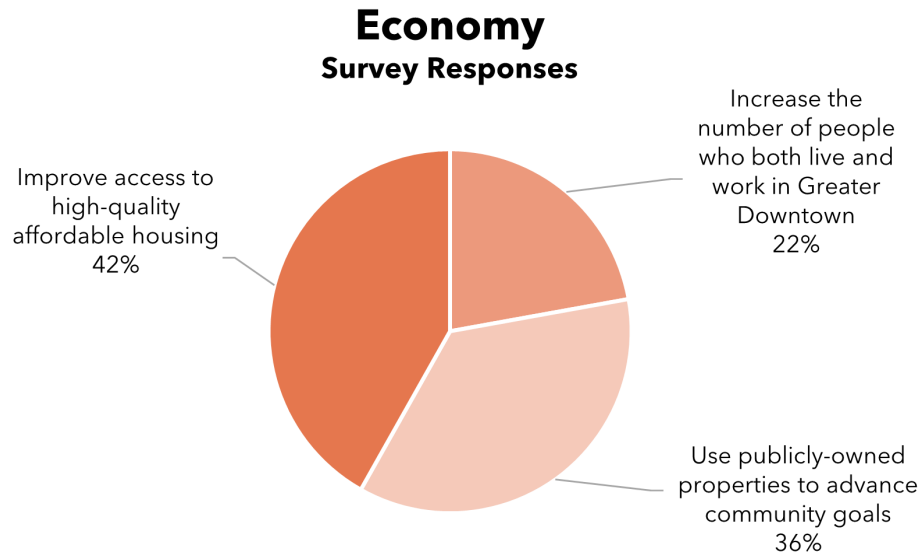


Figure 3.8. Phase 2 Survey Q3, Economy, responses

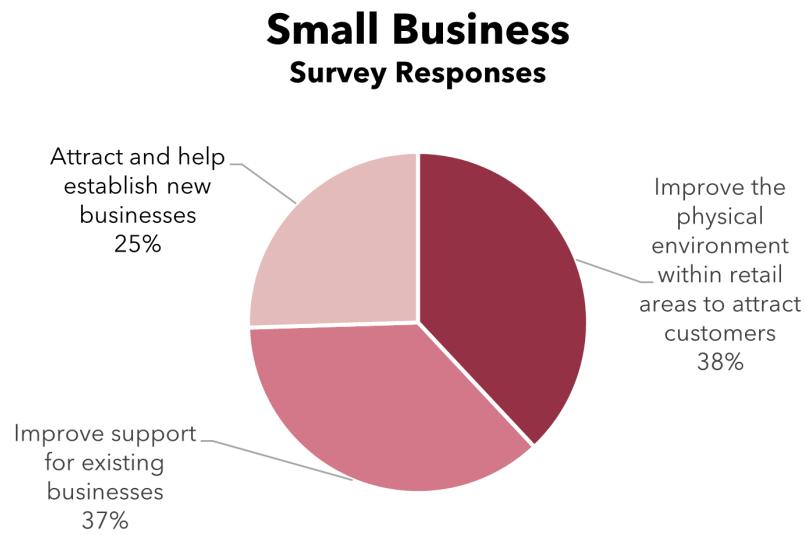


Figure 3.9. Phase 2 Survey Q5, Small Business, responses

Mobility Survey Responses

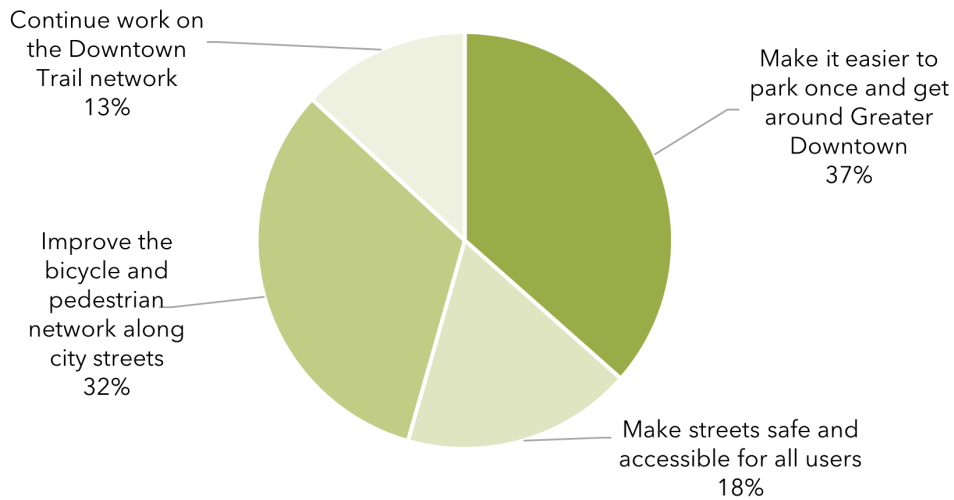


Figure 3.10. Phase 2 Survey Q7, Mobility, responses

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.

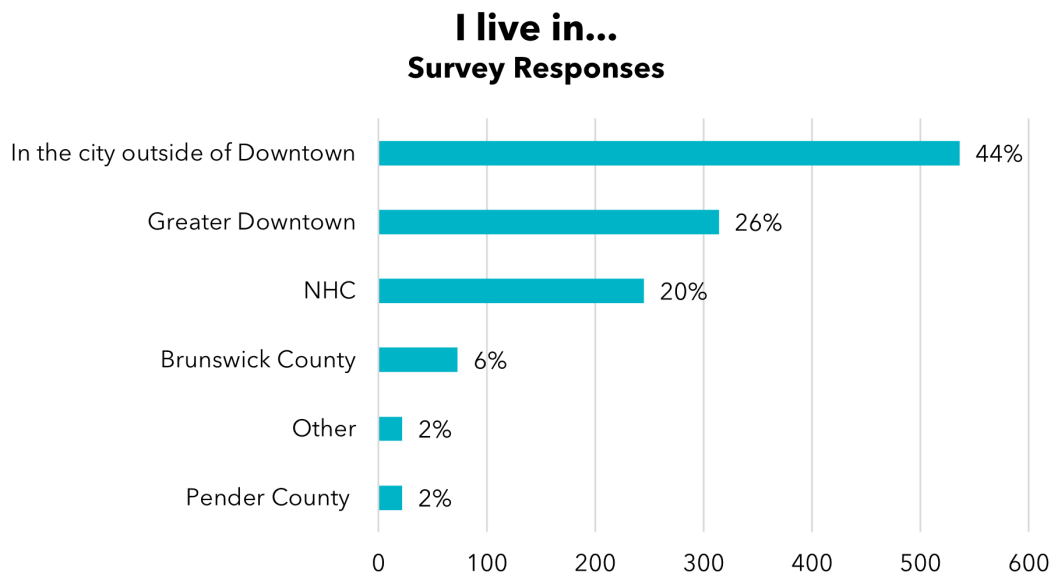


Figure 3.11. Phase 2 Survey Q9, dwelling region, responses

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.

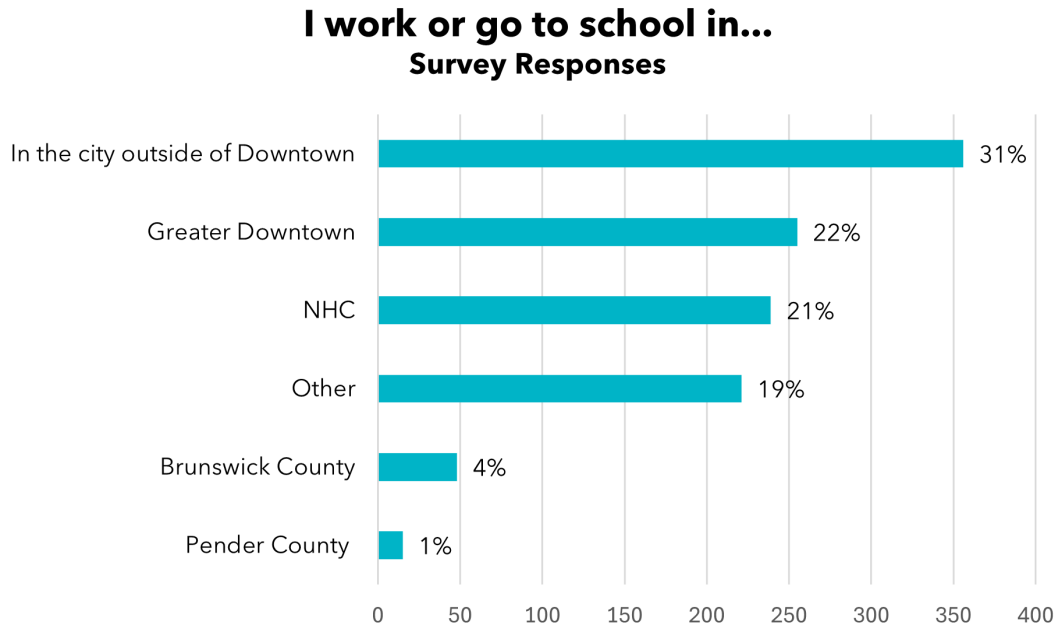


Figure 3.12. Phase 2 Survey Q10, work or school region, responses

Q11: I identify as...

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

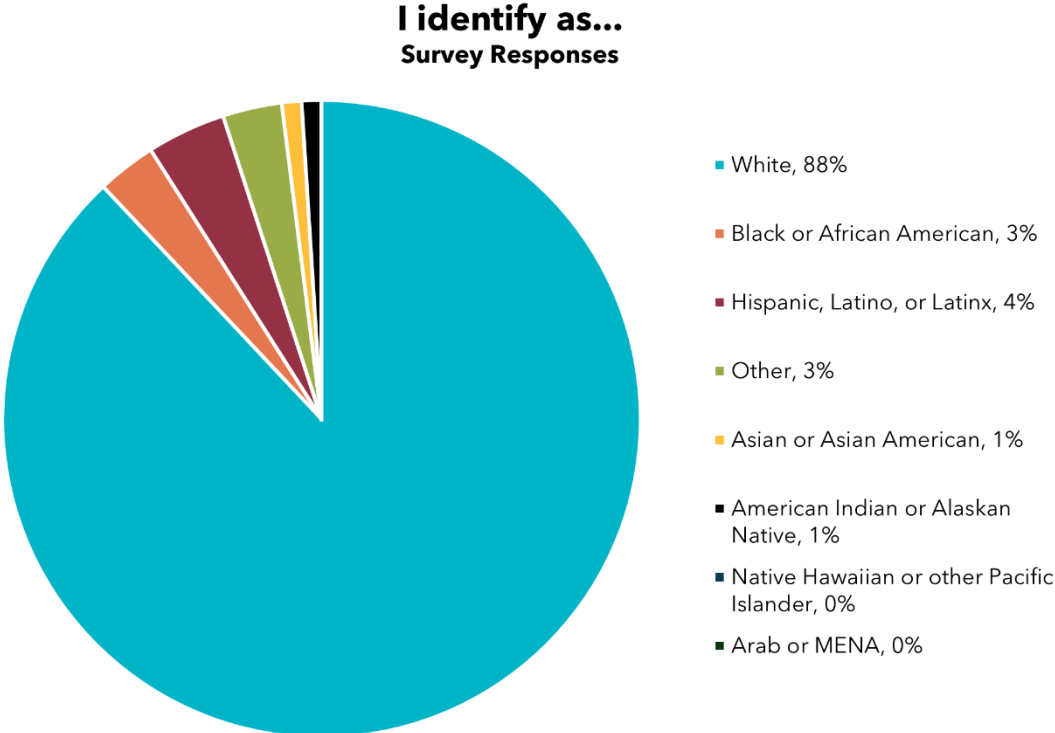


Figure 3.13. Respondent's race/ethnicity from the Phase 2 survey

Greater Downtown Race/Ethnicity Breakdown

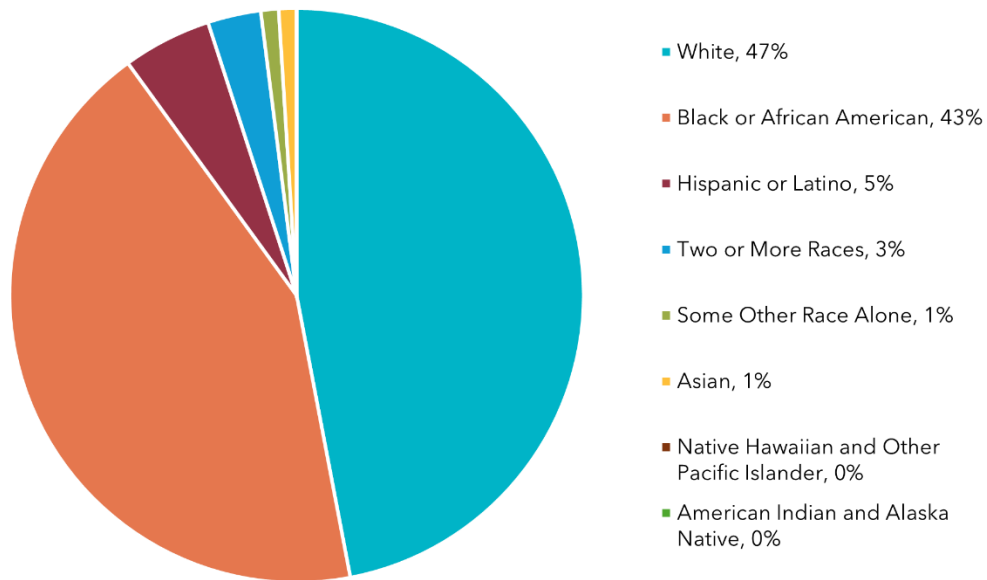


Figure 3.14. Racial breakdown of the Greater Downtown region (U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05)

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

I am... Survey Responses

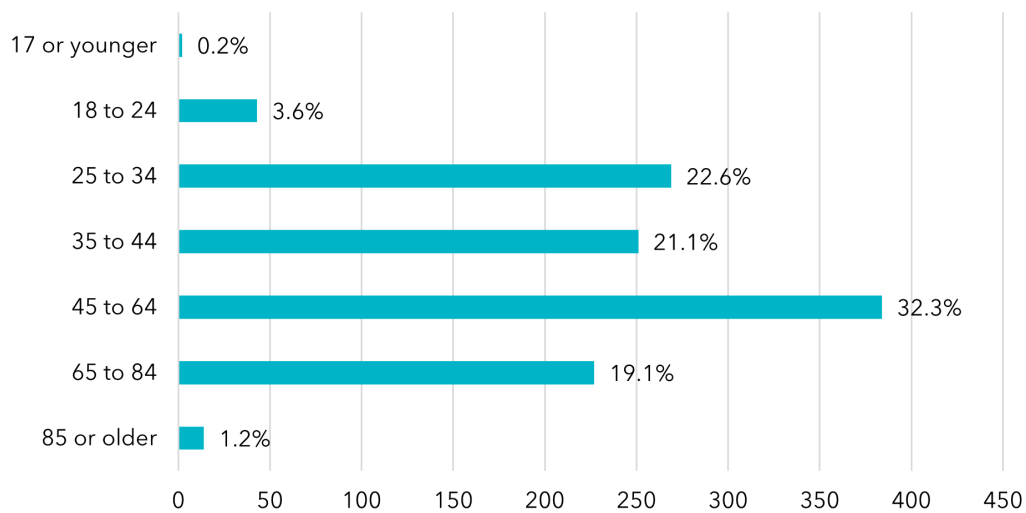


Figure 3.15. Phase 2 Survey Q12, age, responses.

Greater Downtown Age Breakdown

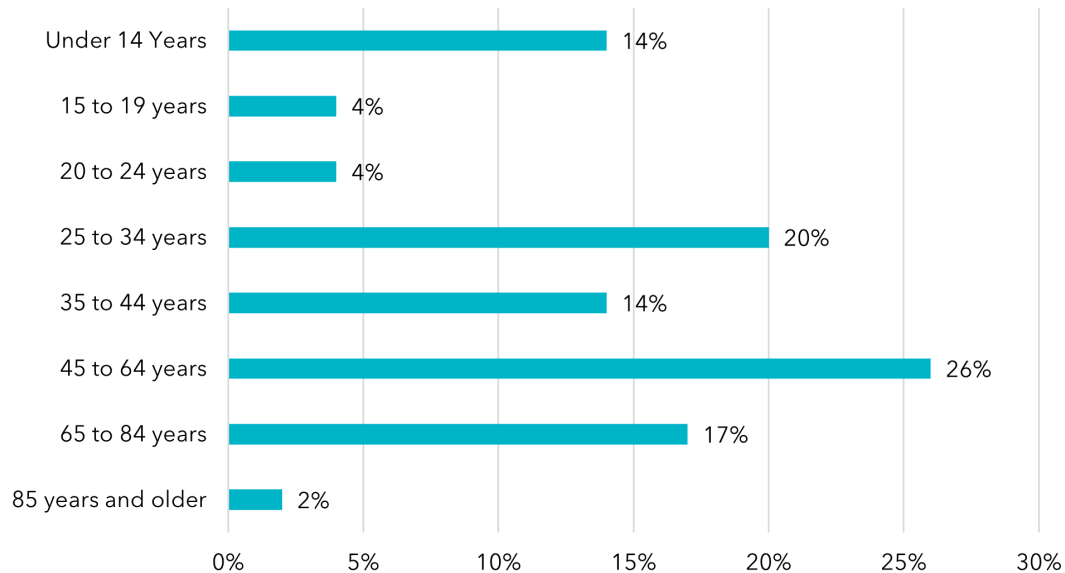


Figure 3.16. Age breakdown of the Greater Downtown region (U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. (n.d.). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05)

Open House

3. 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.

4. Phase 3 Engagement

Purpose

The third and final phase of engagement included a review of the public draft Plan, community approval ratings for the plan’s content, and prioritization of action items.

At a Glance

1,035	209	811	19
Total Participants	Survey Respondents	Pop-Up Responses	Pop-Up Events

Local Character		% of survey participants felt the action in this strategy nailed it!
1.1 Make public spaces safe, welcoming, and enjoyable.		36%
Highest Priority Action	Improve streets and parks to make them more welcoming.	
1.2 Ensure new development fits in with the area’s historic look and feel.		35%
Highest Priority Action	Launch an incentive program to reuse and rehabilitate older buildings.	
1.3 Encourage neighborhoods where everyone can meet their everyday needs.		41%
Highest Priority Action	Support urban mixed-use (UMX) zoning and mixed-use redevelopment of major housing developments.	
1.4 Create more green spaces and plant more trees.		29%
Highest Priority Action	Add green spaces.	

Economy		% of survey participants felt the action in this strategy nailed it!
2.1 Improve access to affordable, high-quality housing.		33%
Highest Priority Action	Turn around vacant or neglected homes AND Help more people access existing housing programs	
1.2 Ensure new development fits in with the area’s historic look and feel.		35%
Highest Priority Action	Launch an incentive program to reuse and rehabilitate older buildings.	

Small Business		% of survey participants felt the action in this strategy nailed it!
3.1 Make business districts more attractive and welcoming.		35%
Highest Priority Action	Expand grant programs for storefronts, signage, and art projects.	
3.2 Support existing businesses and attract new ones.		42%
Highest Priority Action	Expand grant programs for storefronts, signage, and art projects.	
3.3 Make local rules and processes more business-friendly.		36%
Highest Priority Action	Simplify the overall process for registering and opening a business.	

Mobility		% of survey participants felt the action in this strategy nailed it!
4.1 Make streets safe and accessible for everyone.		35%
Highest Priority Action	Build priority sidewalk and crossing projects from the 2023 Walk Wilmington Plan.	
4.2 Build a connected trail network for walking and biking across Greater Downtown.		46%
Highest Priority Action	Finish the Downtown Trail, all the way from the river to Forest Hills.	
4.3 Make it easier to get around Greater Downtown without a car.		39%
Highest Priority Action	Upgrade key streets for safer walking and biking.	

Figure 4.1. Phase 3 action priorities by theme and strategy collected through Pop-Up Engagement and online surveys.

Pop-Up Engagement

The third and final phase of pop-up engagement included an input activity for each theme with each event focusing on 1-2 themes. To prioritize action items under each strategy, participants were asked to ‘build their ideal Greater Downtown’ by building their food tray. Each strategy was assigned a food category, and actions were assigned to food items. Participants selected one action item and one piece of their meal for each strategy on an order slip. Additionally, respondents were asked to share comments and concerns. The pop-up display included an introductory board with the project description, goals, and the activity; menu boards with a photo example of each action item; and a vision board showing a scene of all the actions applied on the ground. Staff also shared handouts summarizing each theme’s chapter in the draft plan, with QR codes that link residents to the project’s webpage.

Action items were thoughtfully developed using public input from Pre-Engagement, Phase 1 and 2, Focus Group Conversations, Steering Committee and Implementation Committee guidance, and planning best practices. The goal of Phase 3 was to collect input to understand community buy-in for each action and to inform the plan’s “Implementation Framework,” which details timeframe expectations and cost estimates for each action.

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

Pop-Up Event Details

Event	Date	Neighborhood	Theme	Responses
Greenfield Park Centennial Celebration	11/1/2025	Greenfield	Local Character	46
City Council Meeting Pop-Up (1)	11/5/2025	North Waterfront	Local Character	11
Cape Fear Housing Coalition Meeting Pop-Up	11/13/2025	Downtown Core	Local Character	25
Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Pop-Up	11/13/2025	North Waterfront	Local Character	11
Hi-Wire Family Fall Festival	11/15/2025	Soda Pop District	Local Character	108
NCDEQ Wilmington Harbor 403 Dredging Project Public Hearing Pop-Up	11/17/2025	North Waterfront	Local Character	44
City Council Meeting Pop-Up (2)	11/18/2025	North Waterfront	Economy and Small Business	13
Riverfront Farmer’s Market	11/22/2025	Downtown Core	Economy, Small Business, and Mobility	101

Vigilant Hope Thanksgiving Feast	11/22/2025	Greenfield	Economy and Small Business	75
Williston Living History Presentation	11/22/2025	The Bottom	Economy, Small Business, and Mobility	18
Food Bank of the Central and Eastern North Carolina (1)	12/2/2025	Greenfield	Economy and Small Business	73
Chamber of Commerce Meeting Pop-Up	12/3/2025	Downtown Core	Economy and Small Business	32
Food Bank of the Central and Eastern North Carolina (2)	12/4/2025	Greenfield	Economy and Small Business	33
Parklet Day Pop-Up (1)	11/21/2025	Downtown Core	Mobility	80
City Council Meeting Pop-Up (3)	12/2/2025	North Waterfront	Mobility	21
DREAMs Community Center Annual Showcase	12/5/2025	Northside	Mobility	37
Cargo District Winter Festival	12/14/2025	Dry Pond	Mobility	3
5 th Avenue Ribbon Cutting Event	12/17/2025	Southside	Mobility	30
Parklet Day Pop-Up (2)	12/18/2025	Downtown Core	Mobility	50

Figure 4.2. Phase 3 Pop-Up event dates, locations, and activity participants.

Wilmington Greater Downtown Plan Phase 3 Engagement Locations

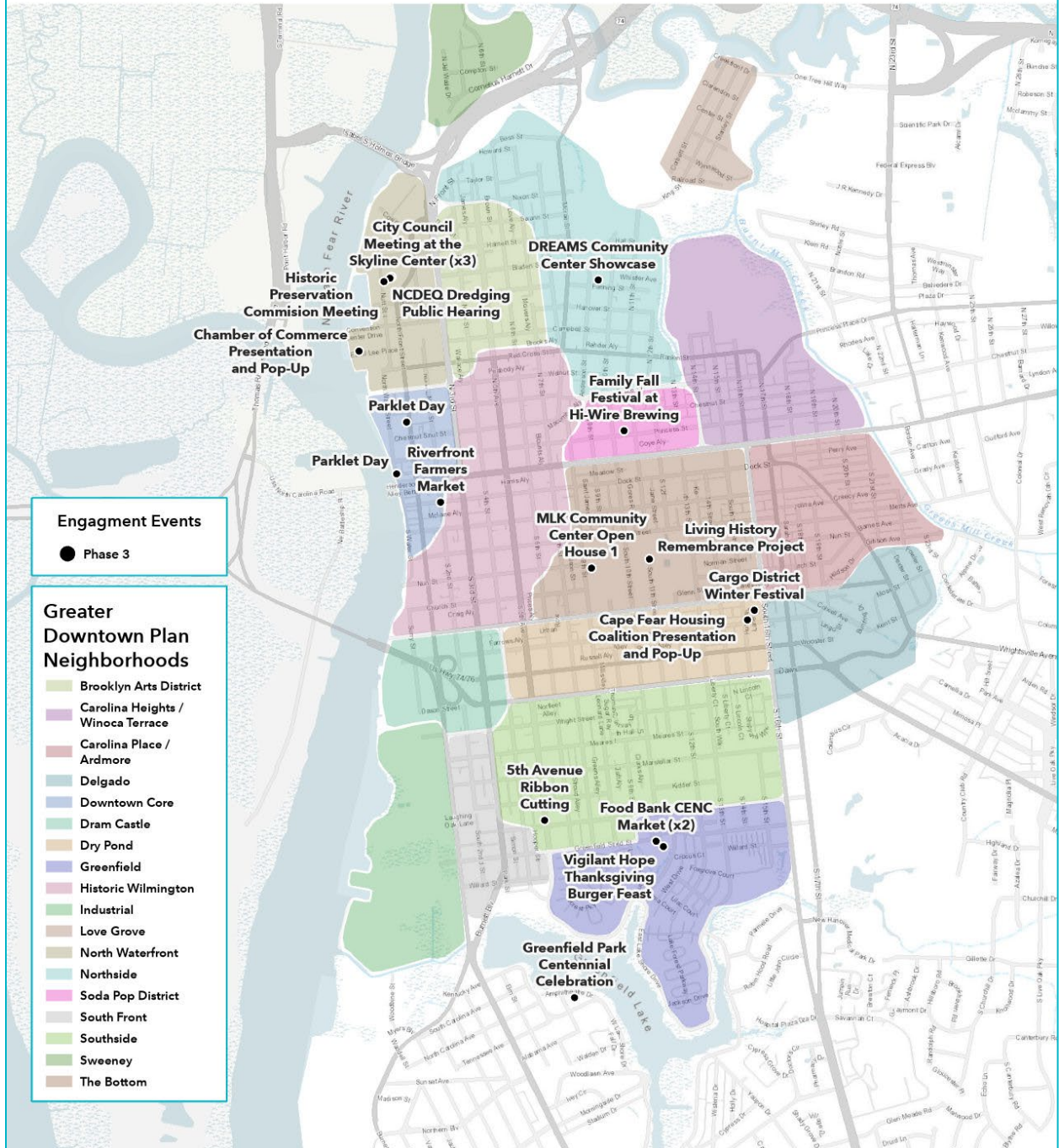


Figure 4.3. Phase 3 Pop-up engagement locations.

Data Summary

At in-person events, participants were prompted to 'build their tray' for each theme. Respondents completed a paper order slip, which prompted them to check the box for one action in each strategy they found to be most valuable. Action language was simplified and shortened to enhance the activity's accessibility and preserve participant time.

Local Character

For the purpose of the pop-up activity, Local Character became 'Local Character Bites.' Participants selected a main dish, side, drink, and dessert - creating a full meal, and an ideal Greater Downtown. As previously noted, strategies were represented by food categories and actions by food dishes. Participants found improving streets and parks to make them more welcoming, launching an incentive program to reuse and rehabilitate older buildings, supporting urban mixed-use zoning and mixed-use redevelopment of major housing developments, and adding green spaces to be the highest priority actions for enhancing Local Character.

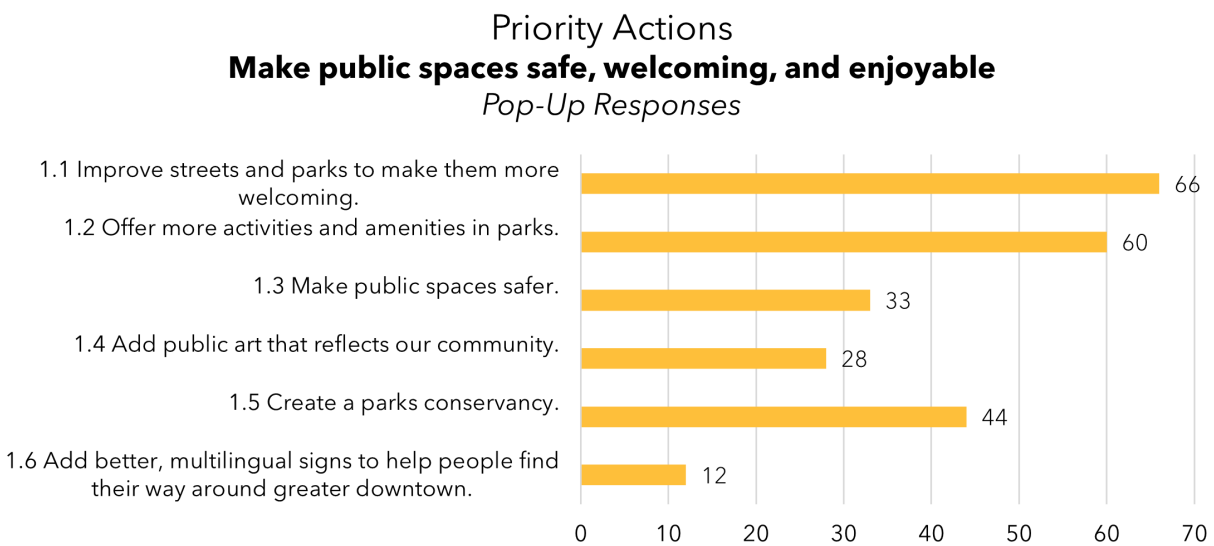


Figure 4.4. Phase 3 participant priorities for Local Character strategy one, make public spaces safe, welcoming, and enjoyable, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

Priority Actions
Ensure new development fits in with the area's historic look and feel
 Pop-Up Responses

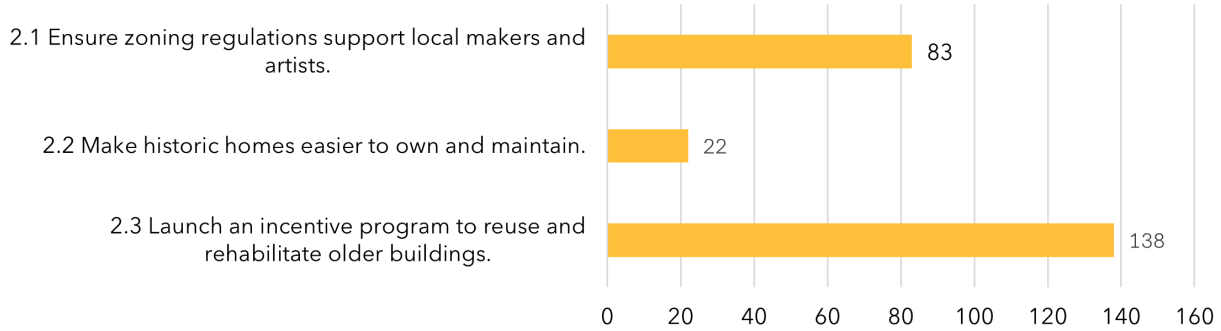


Figure 4.5. Phase 3 participant priorities for Local Character strategy two, ensure new development fits in with the area's historic look and feel, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

Priority Actions
Encourage neighborhoods where everyone can meet their everyday needs
 Pop-Up Responses



Figure 4.6. Phase 3 participant priorities for Local Character strategy three, encourage neighborhoods where everyone can meet their everyday needs, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

Priority Actions
Create more greens spaces and plant more trees.
Pop-Up Responses

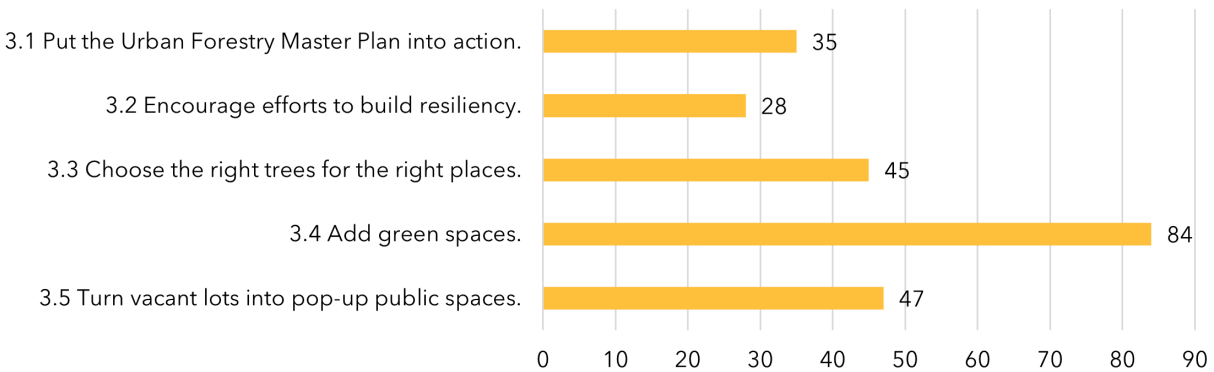


Figure 4.7. Phase 3 participant priorities for Local Character strategy four, create more green spaces and plant more trees, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

Economy

At pop-up events, Economy and Small Business were combined for one activity, 'Economy and Small Business Bites.' Participants selected an ice cream flavor, drizzle topping, cup/cone, sweet topping, and salty topping - building a delicious sundae, and an ideal Greater Downtown. The salty and sweet toppings covered the Economy section. As previously noted, strategies were represented by food categories and actions by food dishes. Participants found helping more people access existing housing programs and using publicly owned properties to help meet community needs to be most the highest priority actions to support the local Economy.

Priority Actions
Improve access to affordable, high-quality housing
Pop-Up Responses

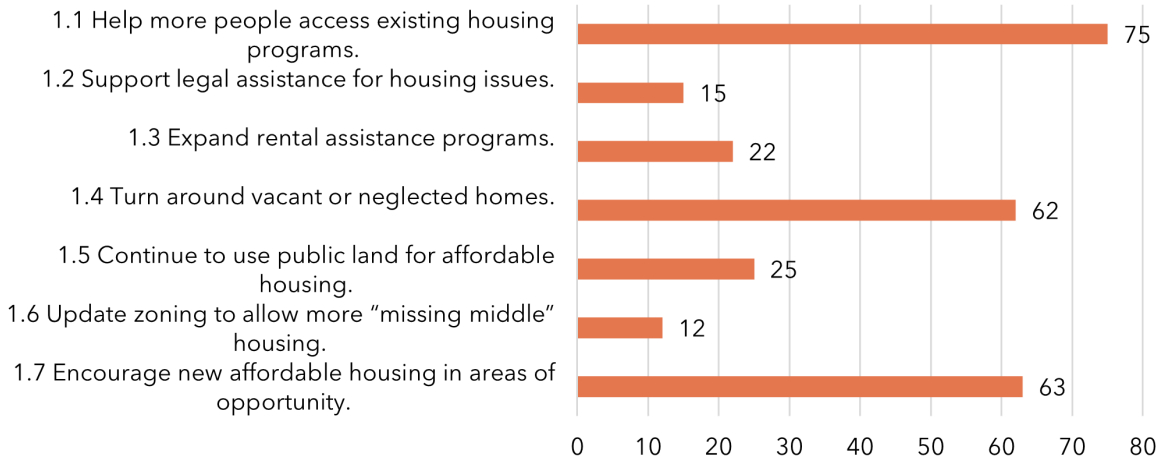


Figure 4.8. Phase 3 participant priorities for Economy strategy one, improve access to affordable, high-quality housing, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

Priority Actions
Use public land to support community goals
Pop-Up Responses

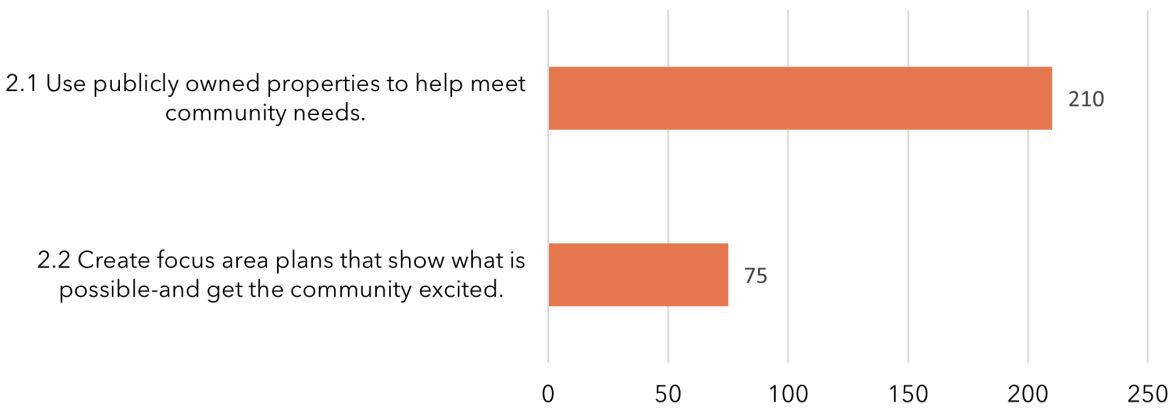


Figure 4.9. Phase 3 participant priorities for Economy strategy two, use public land to support community goals, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

Small Business

In tandem with Economy, participants built their ideal sundae and their ideal Greater Downtown. Selections for participant ice cream flavor, drizzle, and cup/cone prioritized Small Business action items.

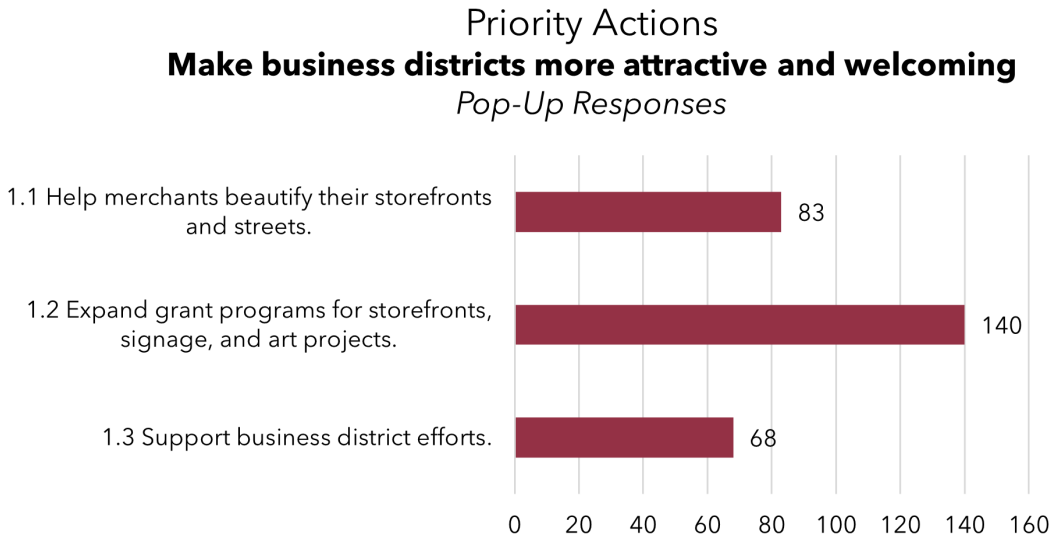


Figure 4.10. Phase 3 participant priorities for Small Business strategy one, make business districts more attractive and welcoming, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

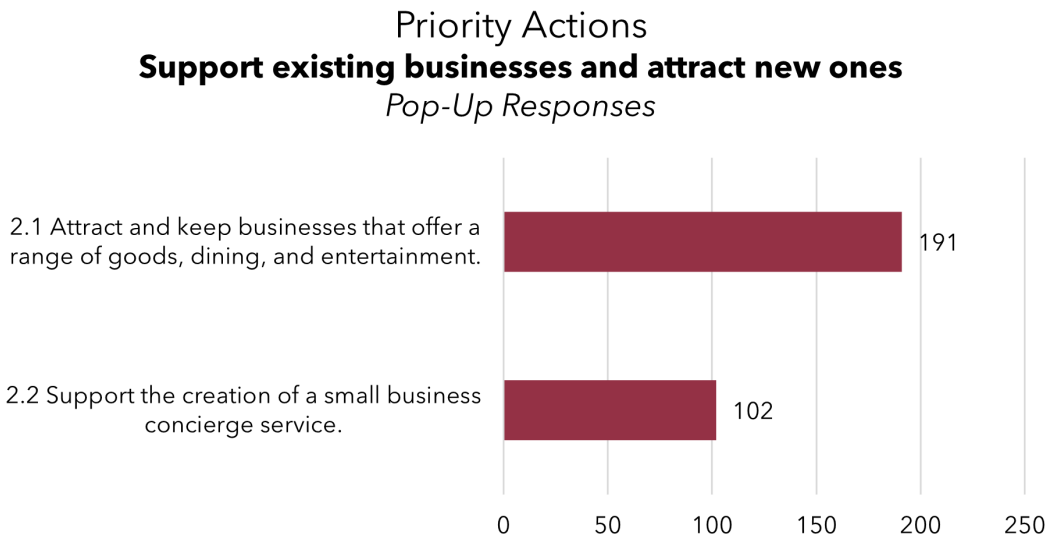


Figure 4.11. Phase 3 participant priorities for Small Business strategy two, support existing businesses and attract new ones, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

Priority Actions
Make local rules and processes more business-friendly
Pop-Up Responses

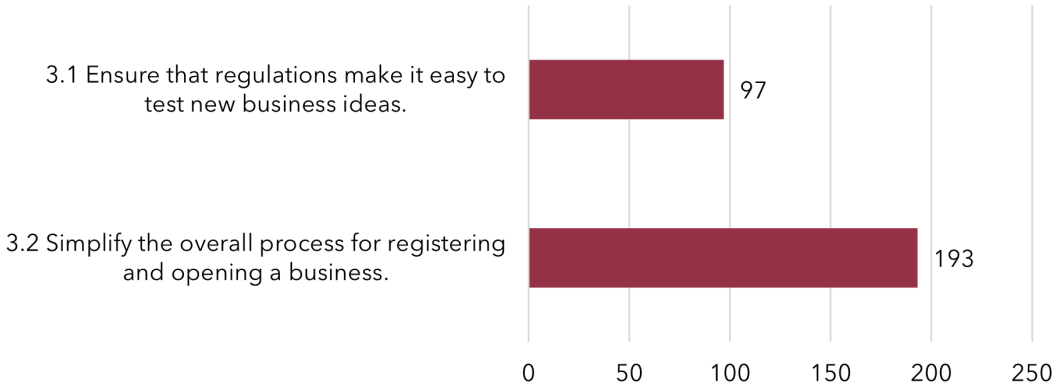


Figure 4.12. Phase 3 participant priorities for Small Business strategy three, make local rules and processes more business-friendly, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

Mobility

For Mobility, participants built their breakfast plate to prioritize action items. Respondents selected pancakes or waffles, protein, and side. Participants found building priority sidewalk and crossing projects from previous plans, finishing the Downtown Trail, and upgrading key streets for safer walking and biking to be top priorities for improving Mobility.



Figure 4.13. Phase 3 participant priorities for Mobility strategy one, make streets safe and accessible for everyone, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

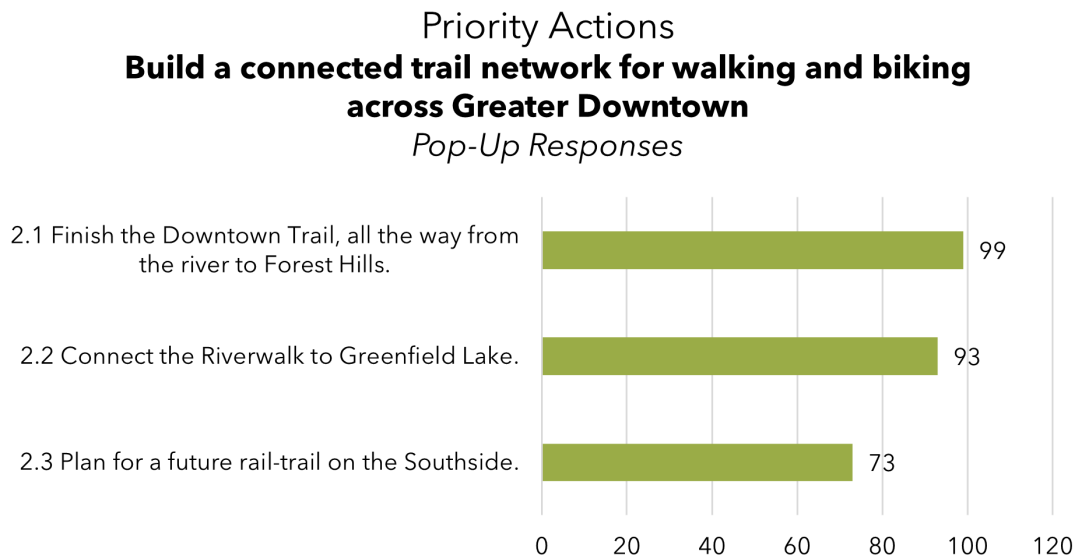


Figure 4.14. Phase 3 participant priorities for Mobility strategy two, build a connected trail network for walking and biking across Greater Downtown, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

Priority Actions
Make it easier to get around downtown without a car
Pop-Up Responses

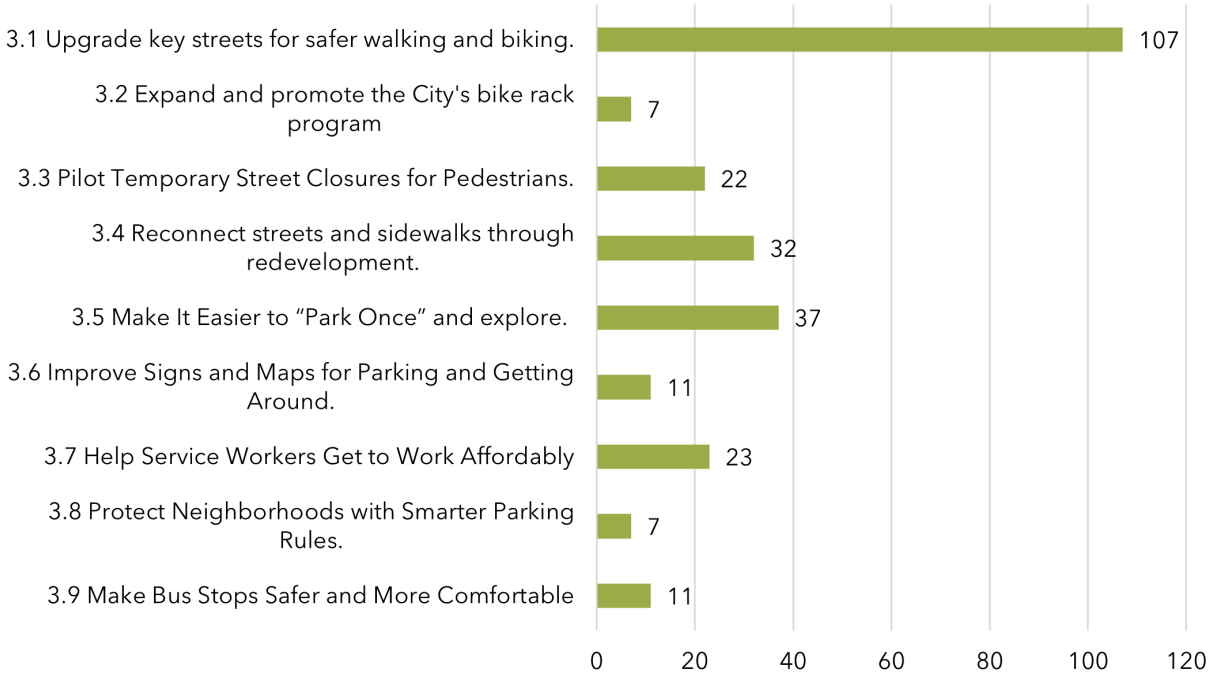


Figure 4.15. Phase 3 participant priorities for Mobility strategy three, make it easier to get around downtown without a car, collected through in-person, Pop-Up Engagement.

Survey Engagement

Requests for responses were shared on the city's social media, 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

Four Phase 3 surveys were collected online, one for each theme. Each Phase 3 survey collected the following information for each strategy:

- Overall Strategy Rating
Rate this strategy and its actions on a scale of not feeling it to nailed it.
- Highest Priority Action
Which action is your highest priority?
- Lowest Priority Action
Which action is your lowest priority?
- Action to Eliminate
What action would you eliminate?

Local Character

Strategy 1: Make public spaces safe, welcoming, and enjoyable.

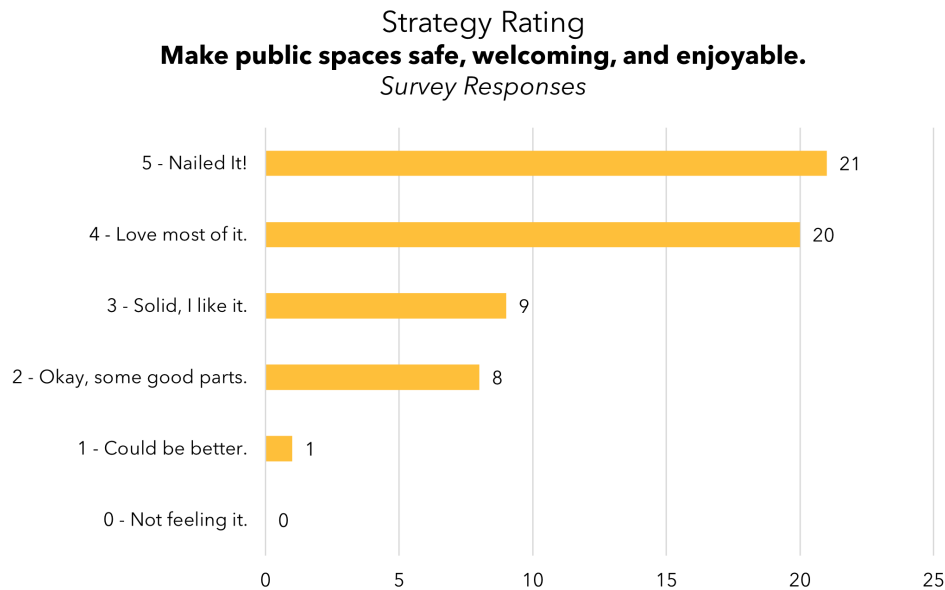


Figure 4.16. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant reactions to Strategy 1.

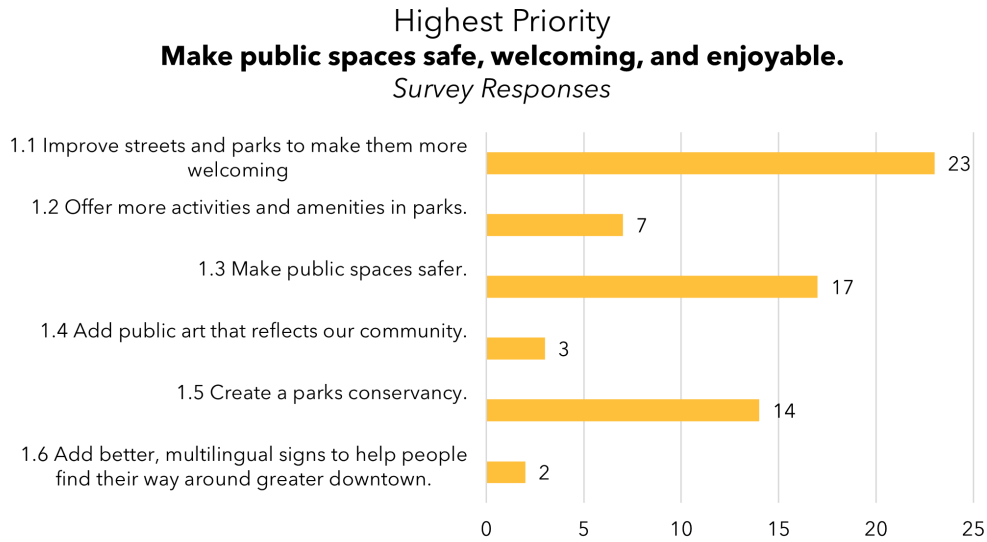


Figure 4.17. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 1.

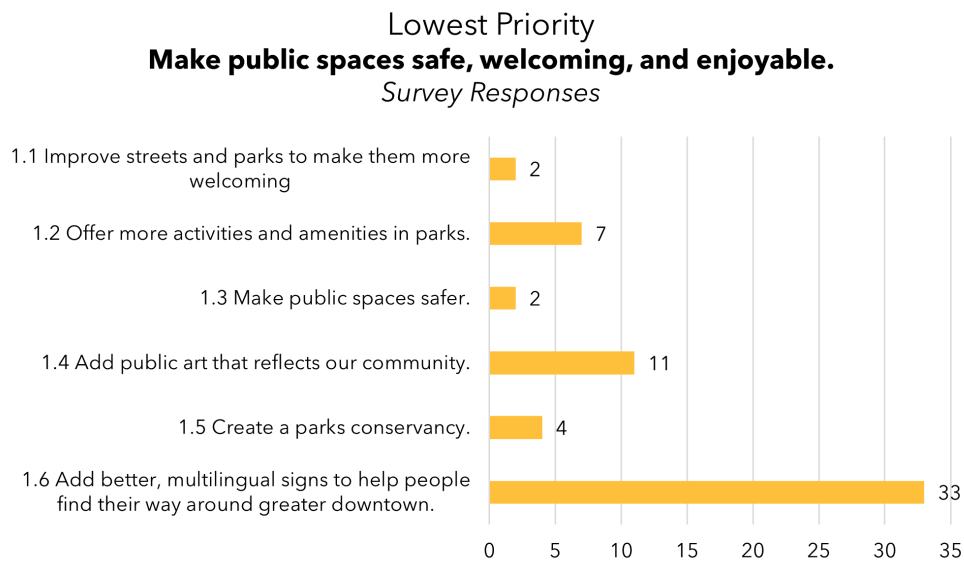


Figure 4.18. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 1.

Actions to Eliminate
Make public spaces safe, welcoming, and enjoyable.
 Survey Responses

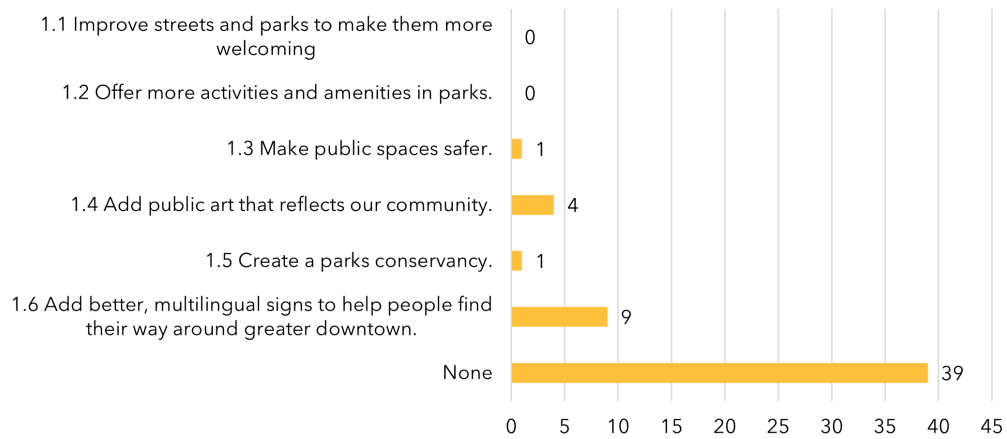


Figure 4.18. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 1.

Strategy 2: Ensure new development fits in with the area’s historic look and feel.

Strategy Rating
Ensure new development fits in with the area's historic look and feel.
 Survey Responses

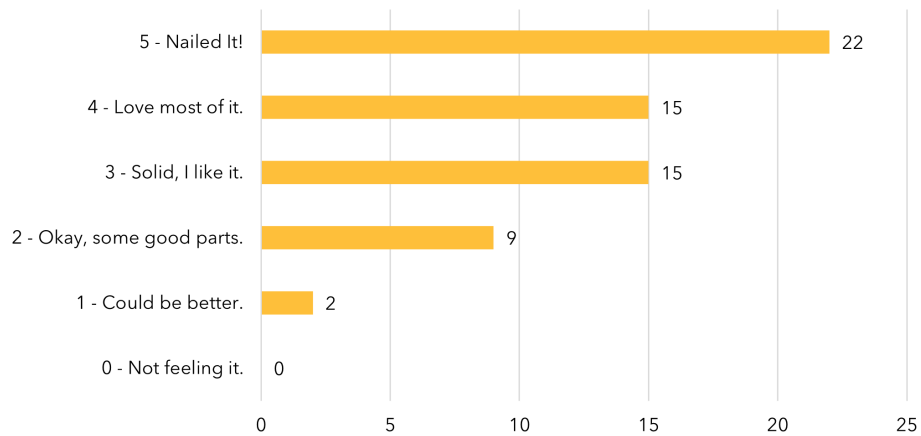


Figure 4.19. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant reactions to Strategy 2.

Highest Priority
Ensure new development fits in with the area's historic look and feel.

Survey Responses

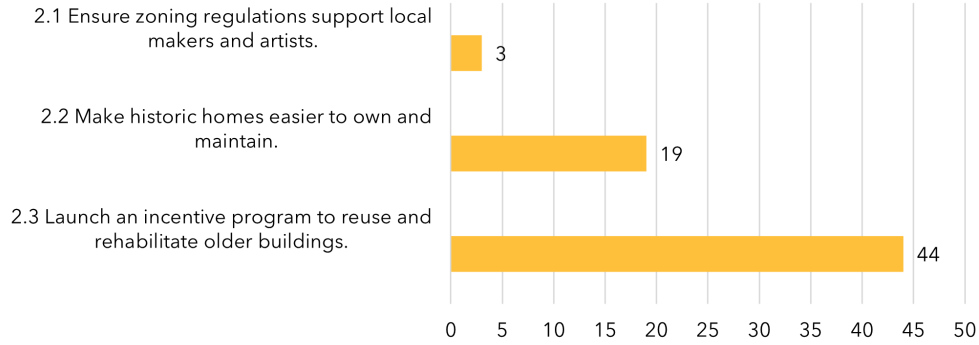


Figure 4.20. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 2.

Lowest Priority
Ensure new development fits in with the area's historic look and feel.

Survey Responses

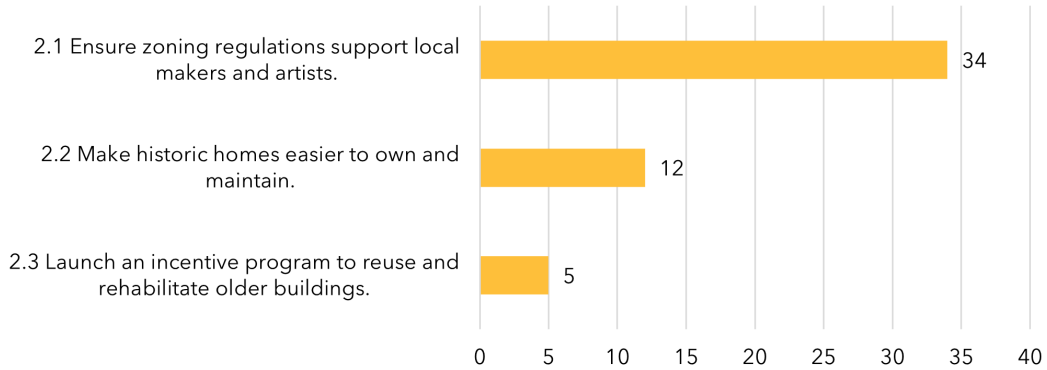


Figure 4.21. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 2.

Actions to Eliminate
**Ensure new development fits in with the area's historic look
and feel.**

Survey Responses

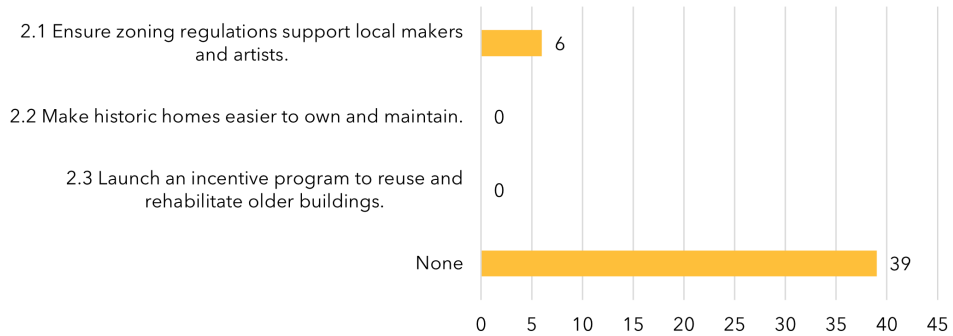


Figure 4.22. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 2.

Strategy 3: Encourage neighborhoods where everyone can meet their daily needs.

Strategy Rating
**Encourage neighborhoods where everyone can meet their
daily needs.**

Survey Responses

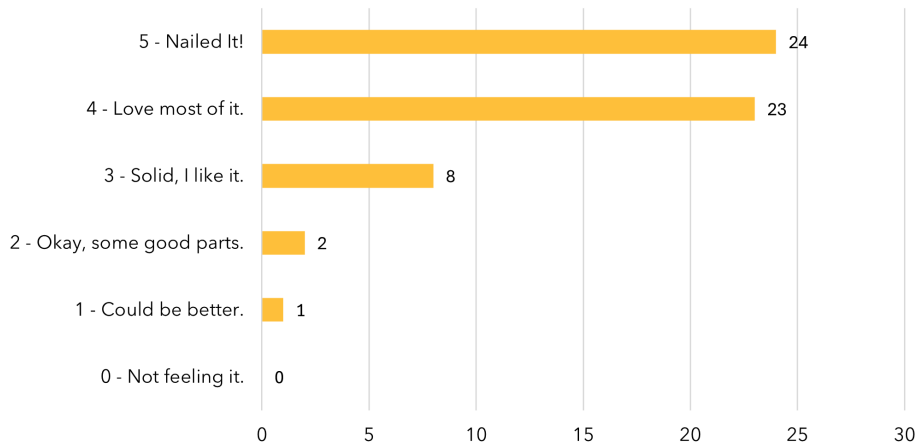


Figure 4.23. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant reactions to Strategy 3.

Highest Priority
Encourage neighborhoods where everyone can meet their daily needs.

Survey Responses

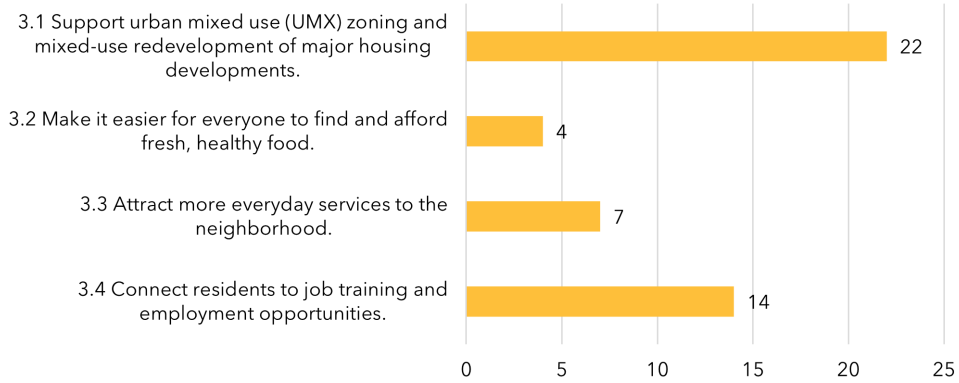


Figure 4.24. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 3.

Lowest Priority
Encourage neighborhoods where everyone can meet their daily needs.

Survey Responses

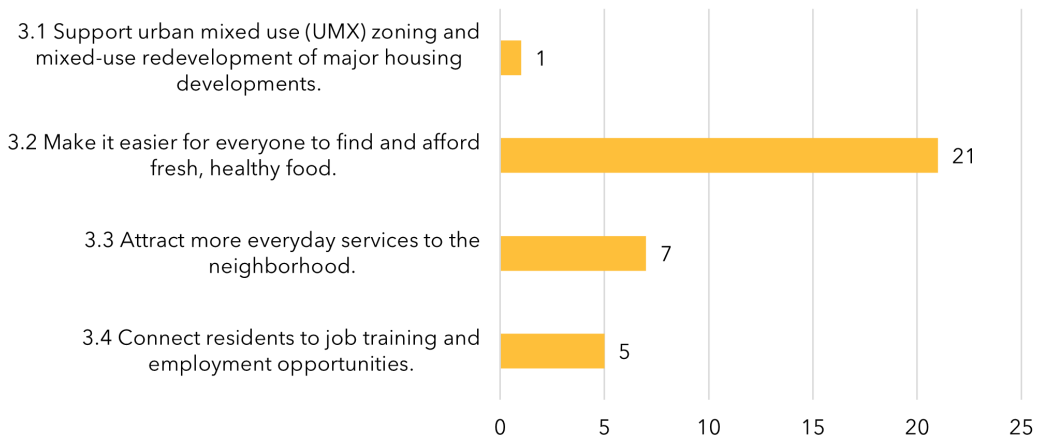


Figure 4.25. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 3.

Actions to Eliminate
**Encourage neighborhoods where everyone can meet
 their daily needs.**
 Survey Responses

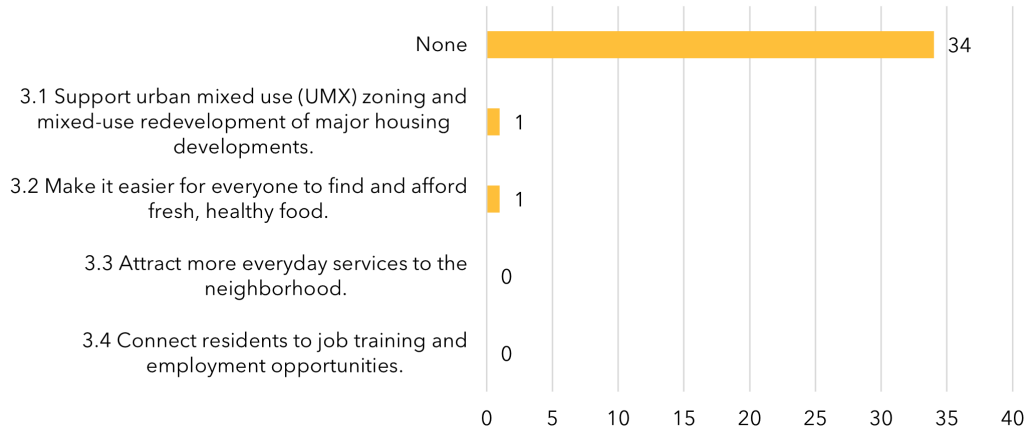


Figure 4.26. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 3.

Strategy 4: Create more green spaces and plant more trees.

Strategy Rating
Create more green spaces and plant more trees.
 Survey Responses

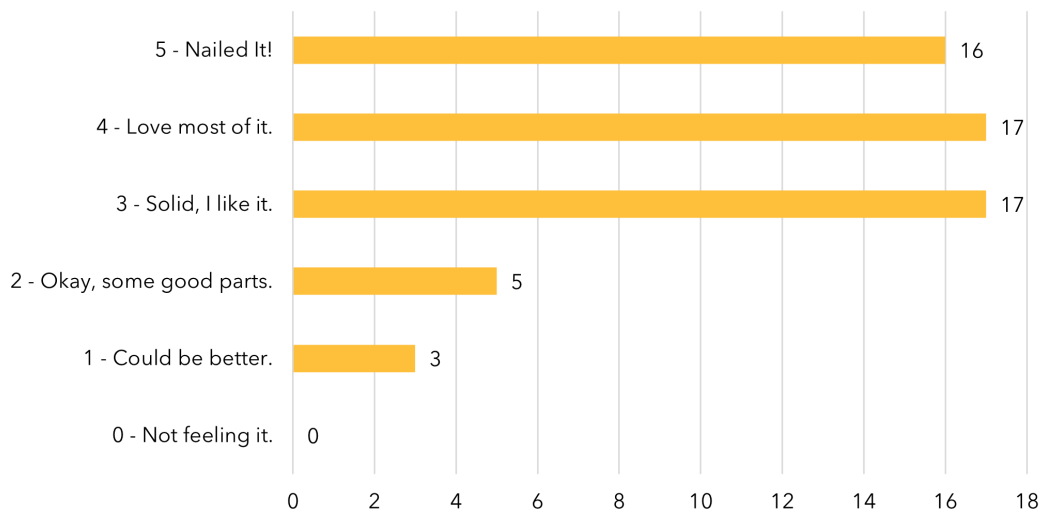


Figure 4.27. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant reactions to Strategy 4.

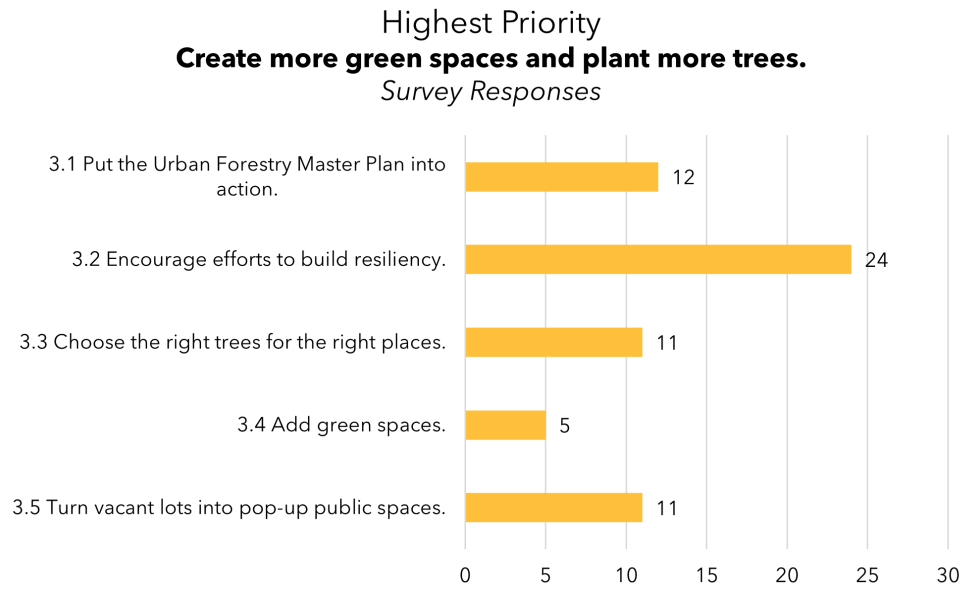


Figure 4.28. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 4.

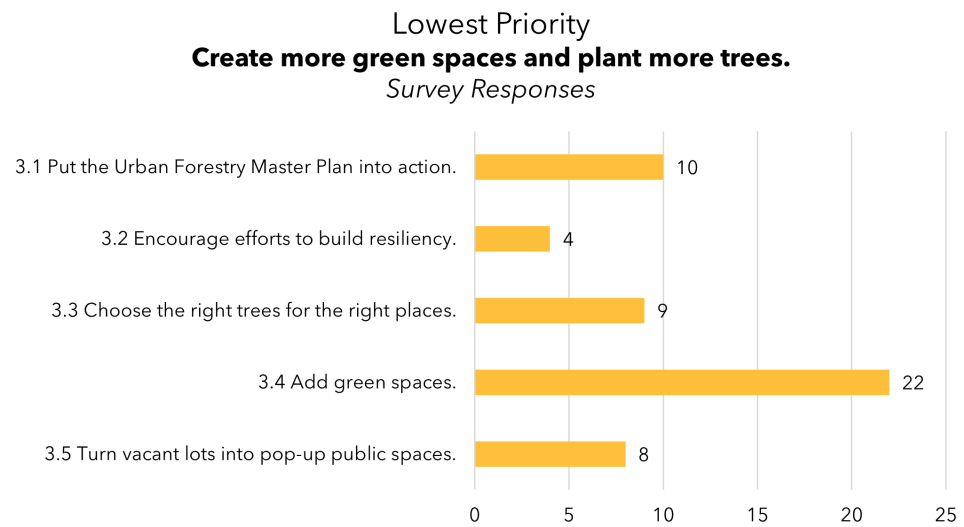


Figure 4.29. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 4.

Actions to Eliminate
Create more green spaces and plant more trees.
 Survey Responses

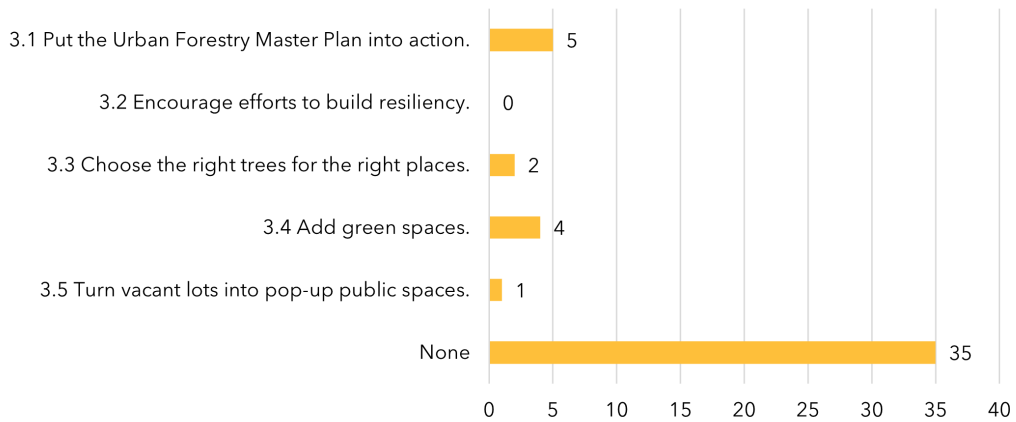


Figure 4.30. Phase 3 Local Character survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 4.

Economy

Strategy 1: Improve access to affordable, high-quality housing.

Strategy Rating
Improve access to affordable, high-quality housing
 Survey Responses

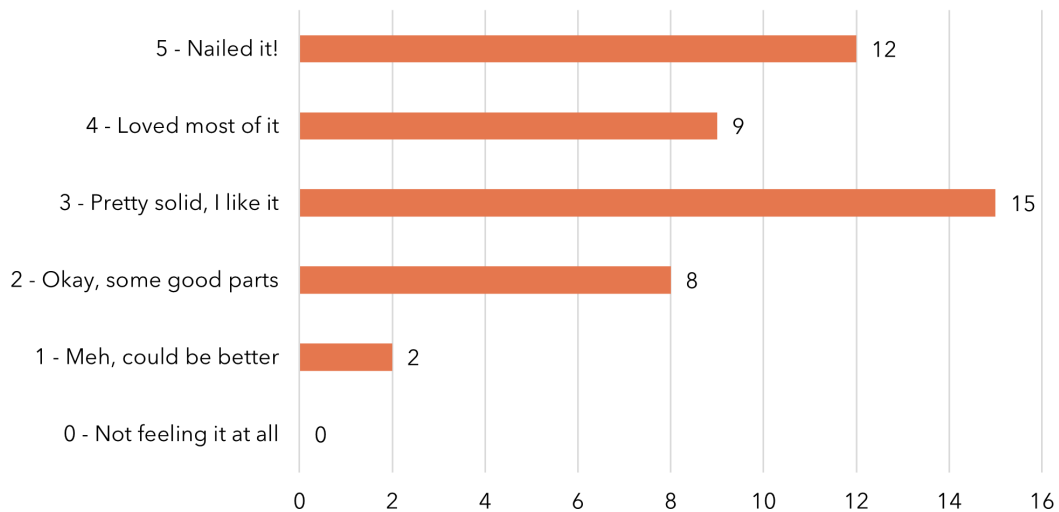


Figure 4.31. Phase 3 Economy survey participant reactions to Strategy 1.

Highest Priority
Improve access to affordable, high-quality housing
 Survey Responses

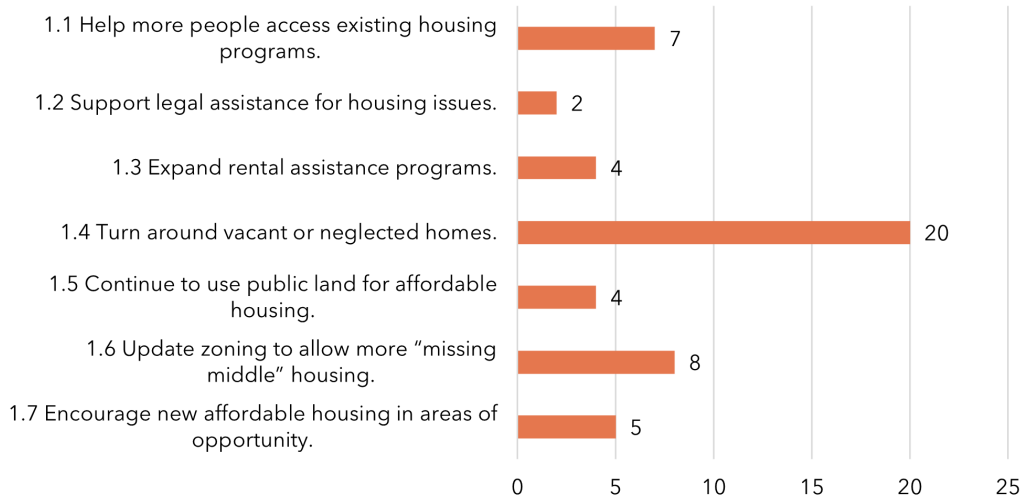


Figure 4.32. Phase 3 Economy survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 1.

Lowest Priority
Improve access to affordable, high-quality housing
 Survey Responses

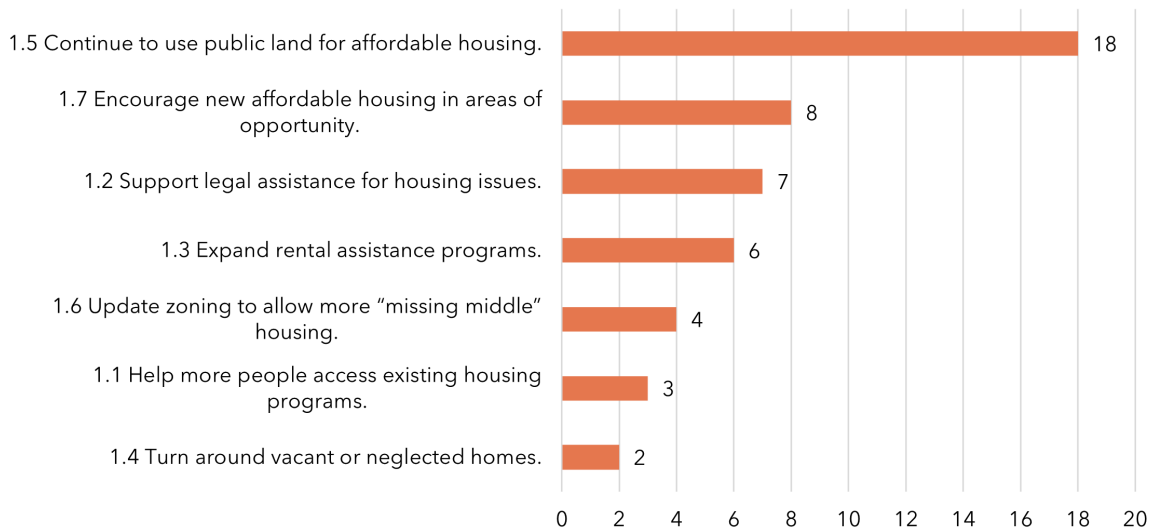


Figure 4.33. Phase 3 Economy survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 1.

Actions to Eliminate
Improve access to affordable, high-quality housing
 Survey Responses

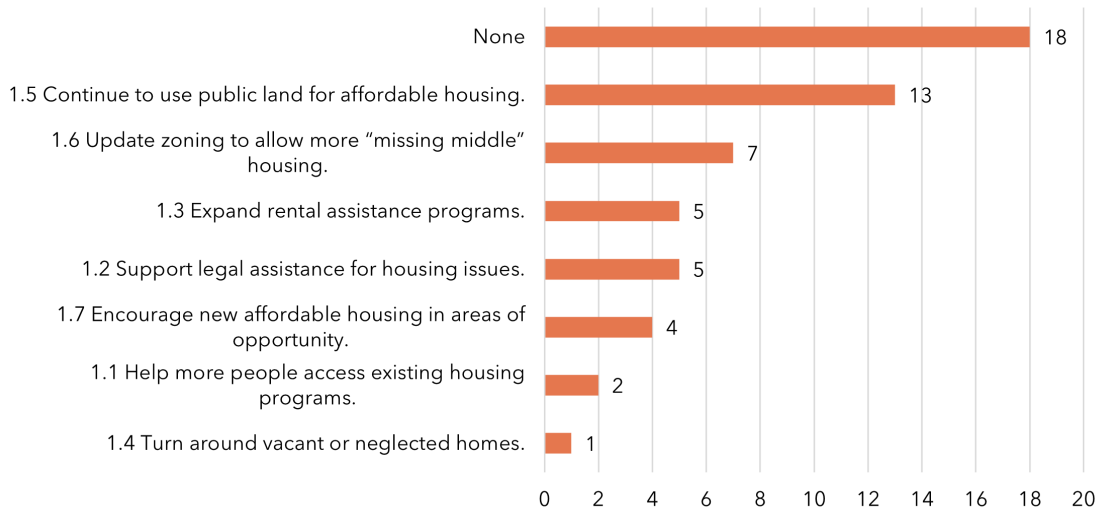


Figure 4.34. Phase 3 Economy survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 1.

Strategy 2: Use public land to meet community goals.

Strategy Rating
Use public land to support community goals
 Survey Responses

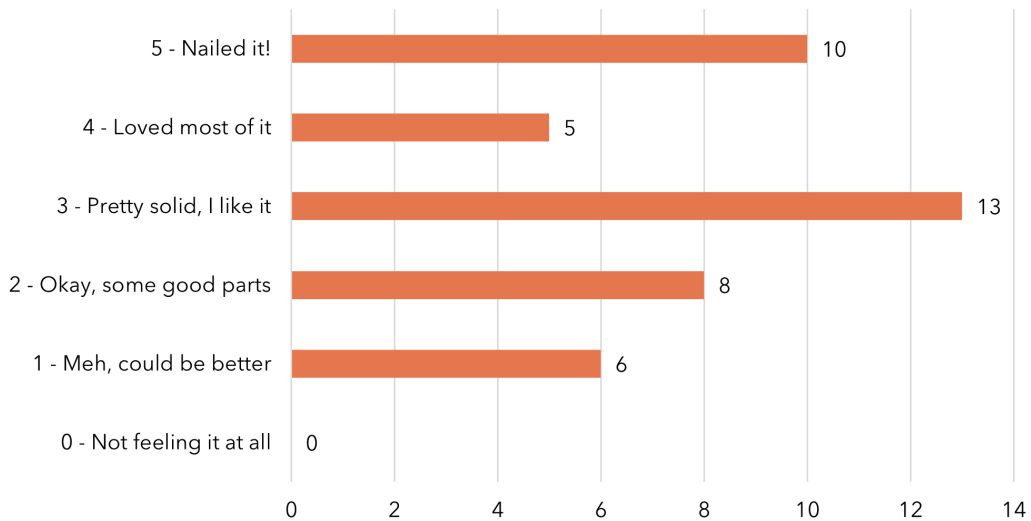


Figure 4.35. Phase 3 Economy survey participant reactions to Strategy 2.

Highest Priority
Use public land to support community goals
Survey Responses

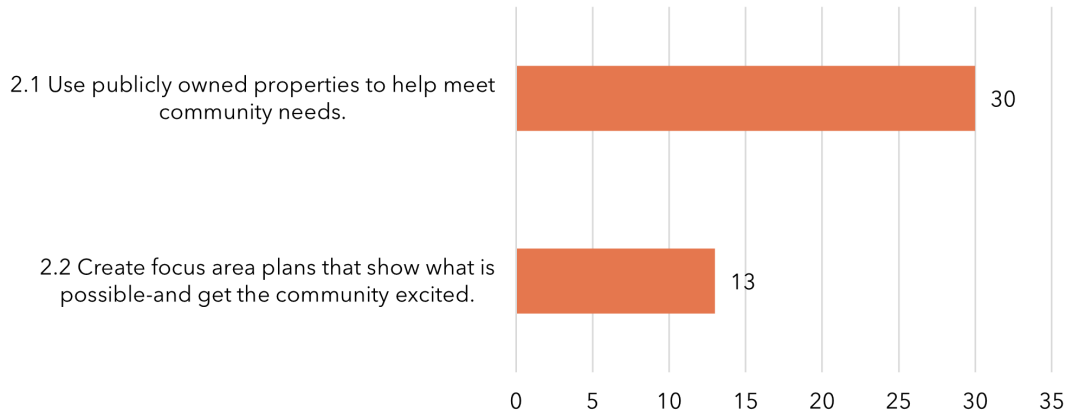


Figure 4.36. Phase 3 Economy survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 2.

Lowest Priority
Use public land to support community goals
Survey Responses

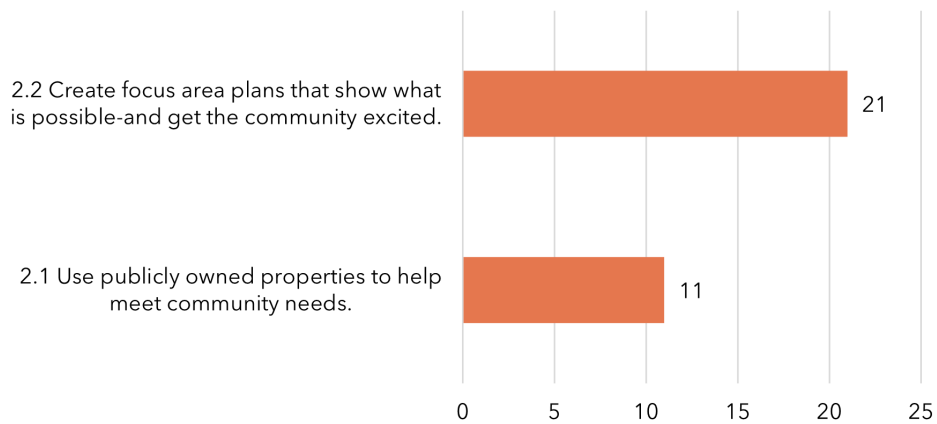


Figure 4.37. Phase 3 Economy survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 2.

Actions to Eliminate
Use public land to support community goals
Survey Responses

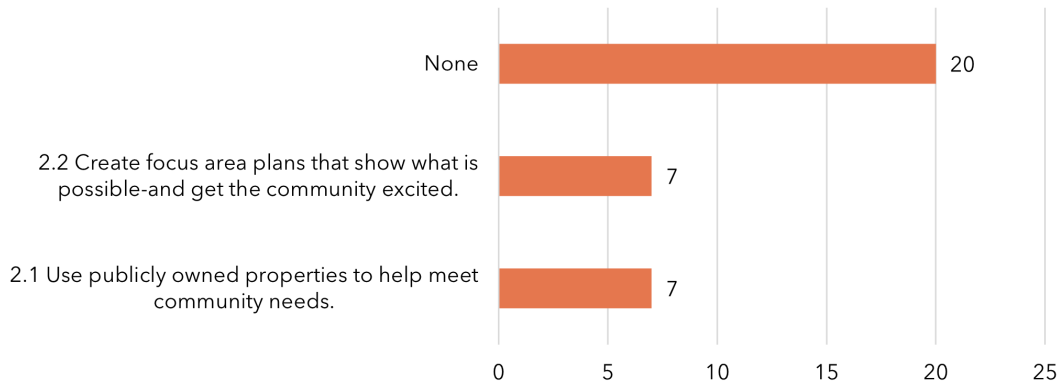


Figure 4.38. Phase 3 Economy survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 2.

Small Business

Strategy 1: Make business district more attractive and welcoming.

Strategy Rating
Make business districts more attractive and welcoming
Survey Responses

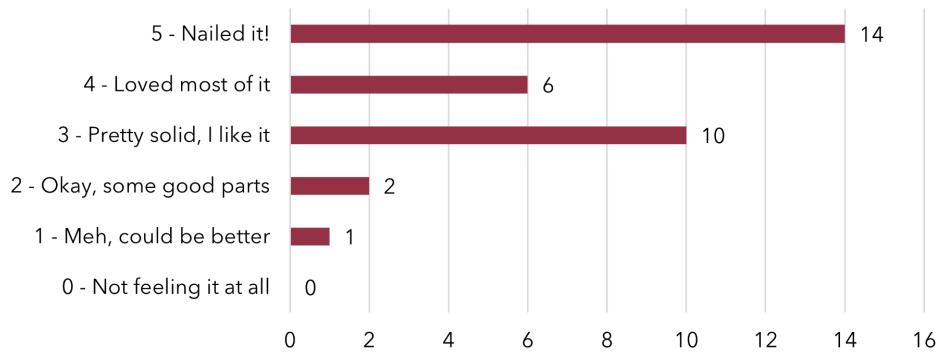


Figure 4.39. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant reactions to Strategy 1.

Highest Priority
Make business districts more attractive and welcoming
Survey Responses

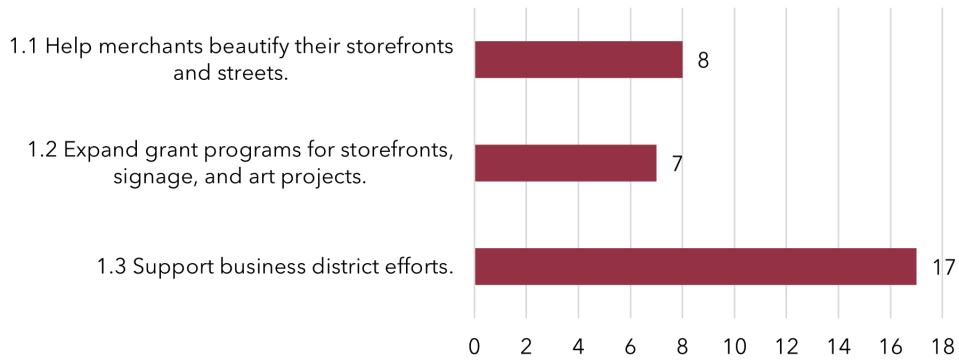


Figure 4.40. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 1.

Lowest Priority
Make business districts more attractive and welcoming
Survey Responses

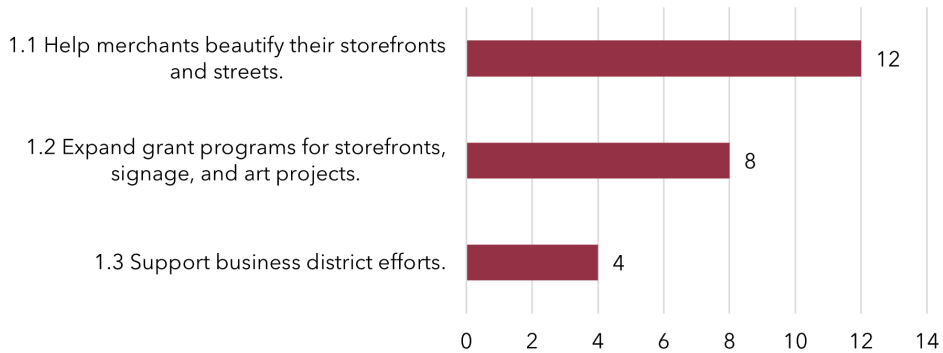


Figure 4.41. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 1.

Actions to Eliminate
Make business districts more attractive and welcoming
 Survey Responses

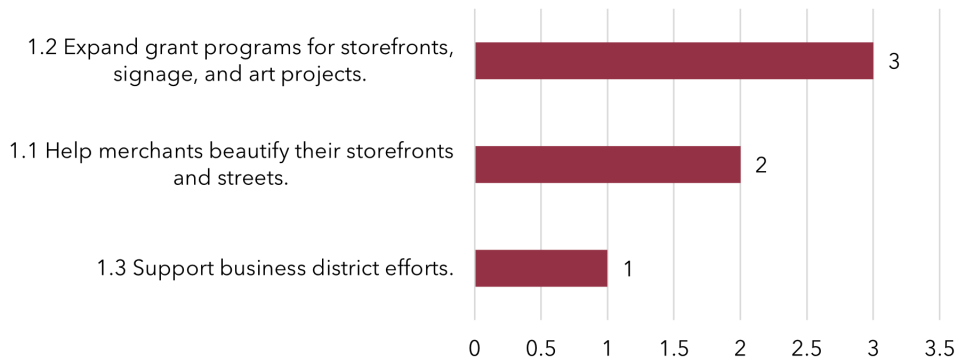


Figure 4.42. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 1.

Strategy 2: Support existing businesses and attract new ones.

Strategy Rating
Support existing businesses and attract new ones
 Survey Responses

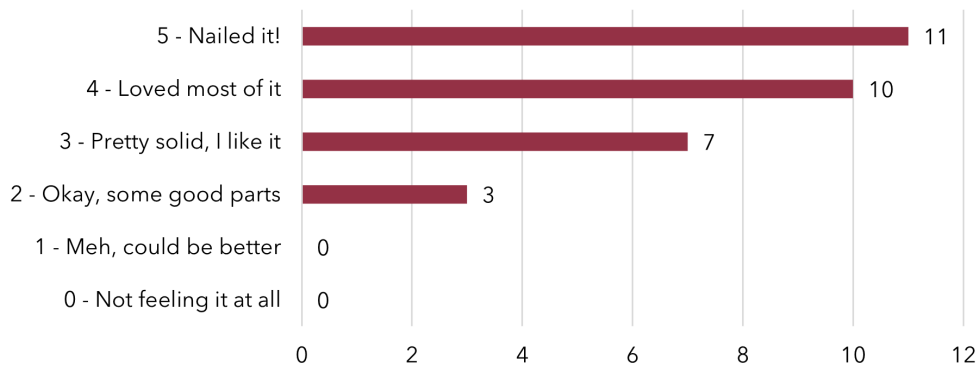


Figure 4.43. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant reactions to Strategy 2.

Highest Priority
Support existing businesses and attract new ones
Survey Responses

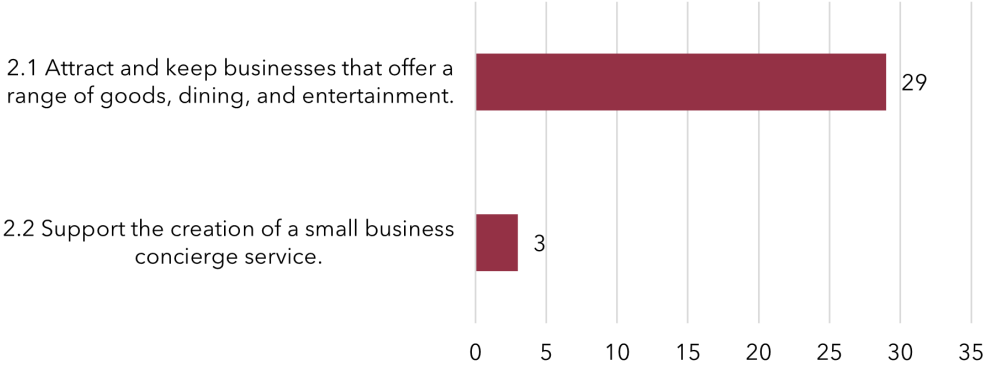


Figure 4.44. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 2.

Lowest Priority
Support existing businesses and attract new ones
Survey Responses

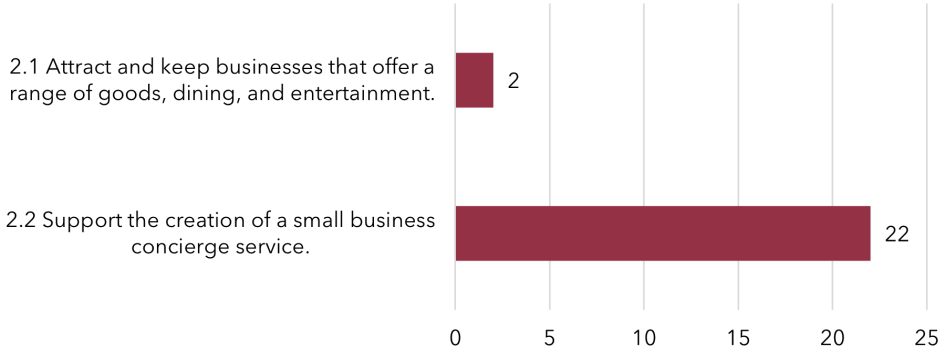


Figure 4.45. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 2.

Actions to Eliminate
Support existing businesses and attract new ones
Survey Responses

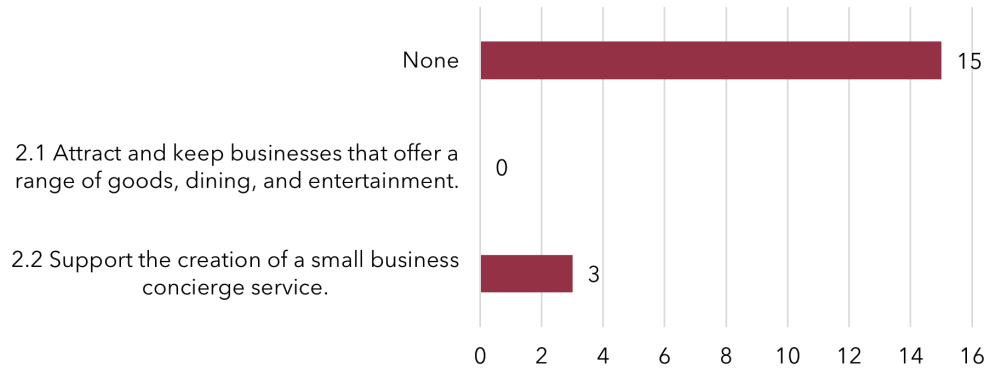


Figure 4.46. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 2.

Strategy 3: Make local rules and processes more business-friendly.

Strategy Rating
Make local rules and processes more business-friendly
Survey Responses

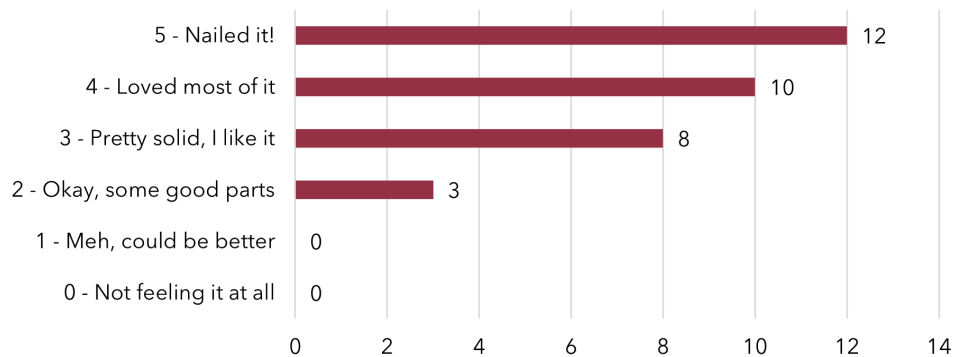


Figure 4.47. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant reactions to Strategy 3.

Highest Priority
Make local rules and processes more business-friendly
Survey Responses

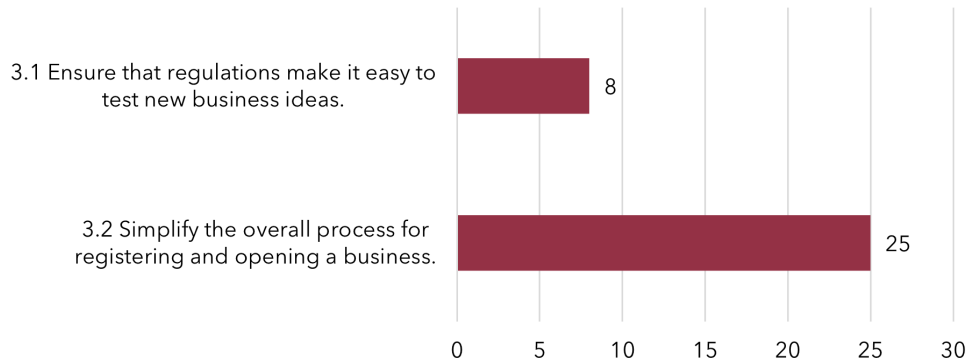


Figure 4.48. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 3.

Lowest Priority
Make local rules and processes more business-friendly
Survey Responses

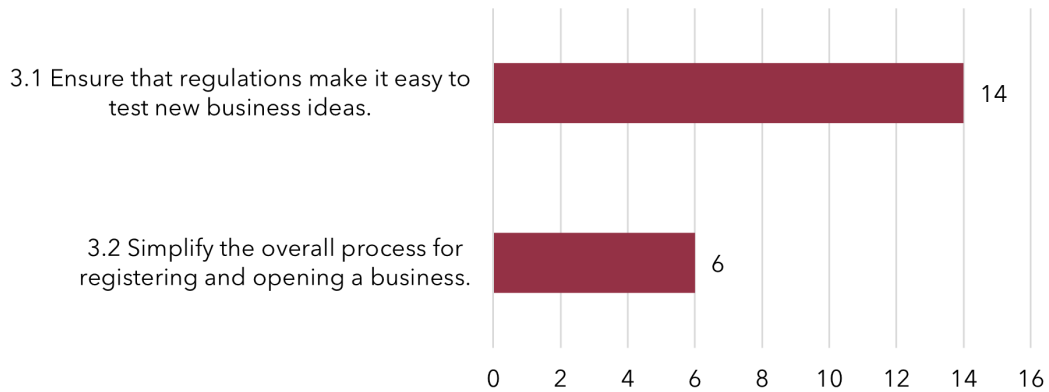


Figure 4.49. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 3.

Actions to Eliminate
Make local rules and processes more business-friendly
 Survey Responses

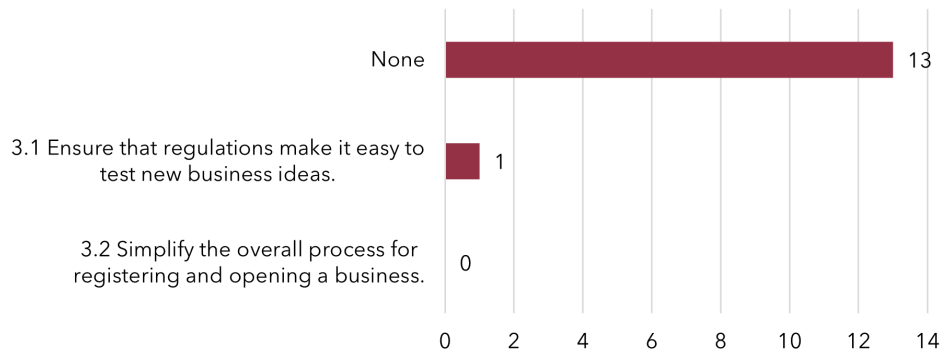


Figure 4.50. Phase 3 Small Business survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 3.

Mobility

Strategy 1: Make streets safe and accessible for everyone.

Strategy Rating
Make streets safe and accessible for everyone
 Survey Responses

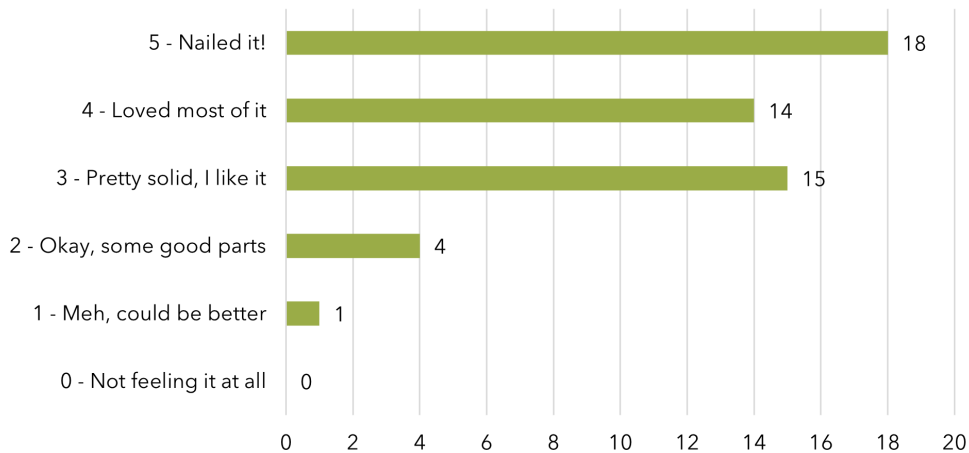


Figure 4.51. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant reactions to Strategy 1.

Highest Priority
Make streets safe and accessible for everyone
Survey Responses

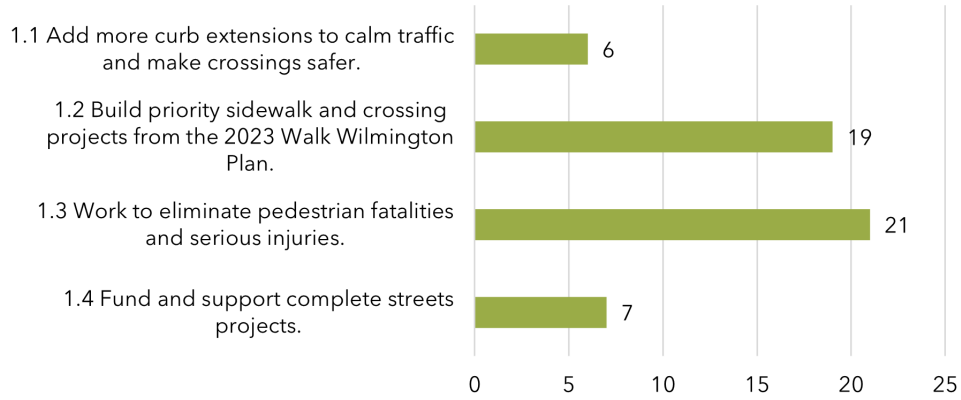


Figure 4.52. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 1.

Lowest Priority
Make streets safe and accessible for everyone
Survey Responses

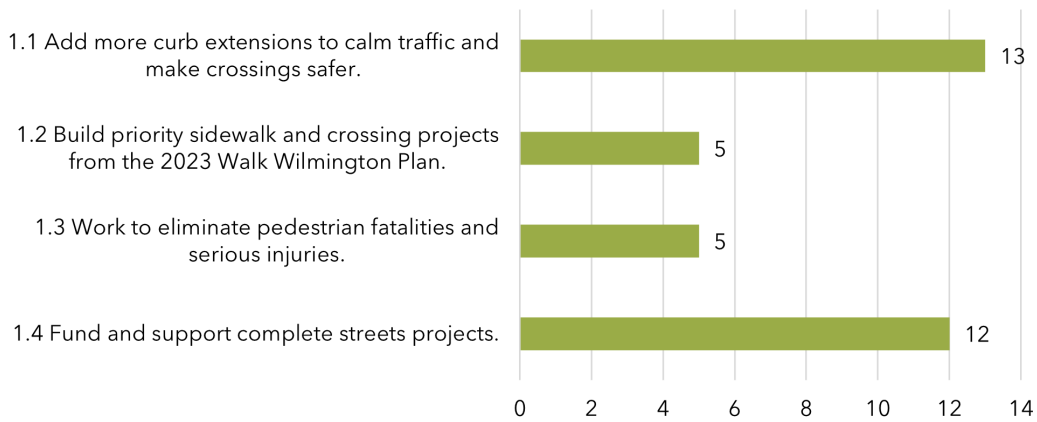


Figure 4.53. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 1.

Actions to Eliminate
Make streets safe and accessible for everyone
Survey Responses

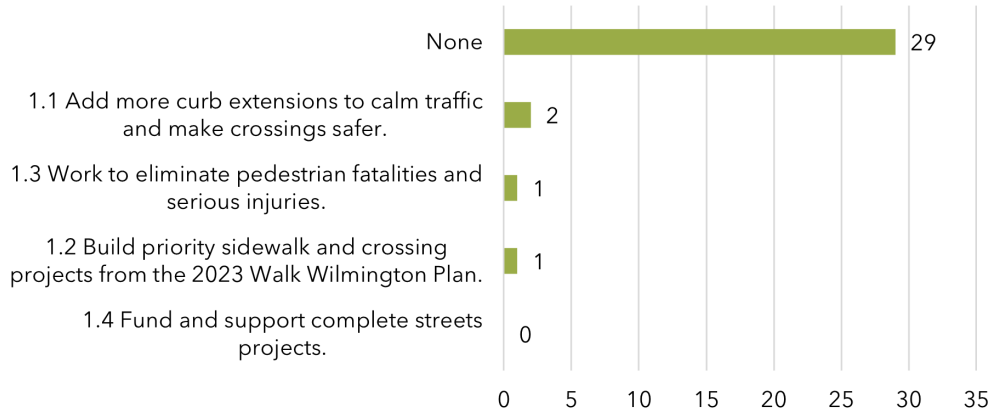


Figure 4.54. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 1.

Strategy 2: Build a connected trail network for walking and biking across Greater Downtown.

Strategy Rating
Build a connected trail network for walking and biking across Greater Downtown
Survey Responses

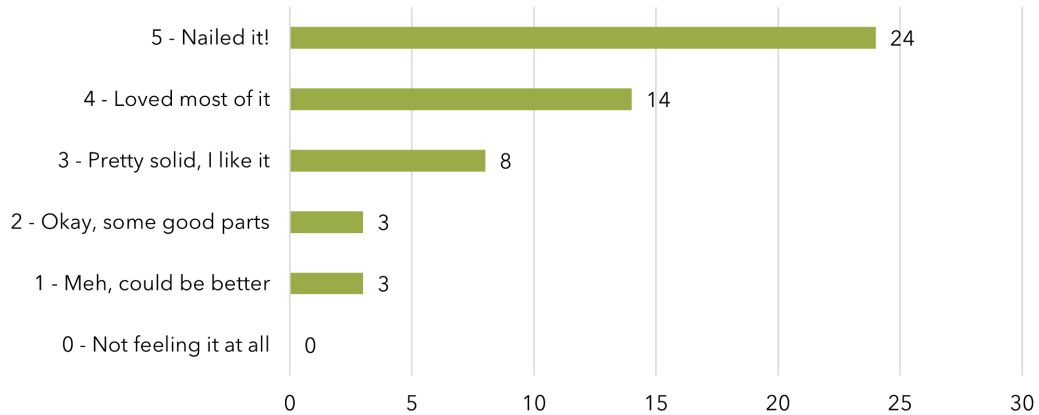


Figure 4.55. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant reactions to Strategy 2.

Highest Priority
**Build a connected trail network for walking
and biking across Greater Downtown**
Survey Responses

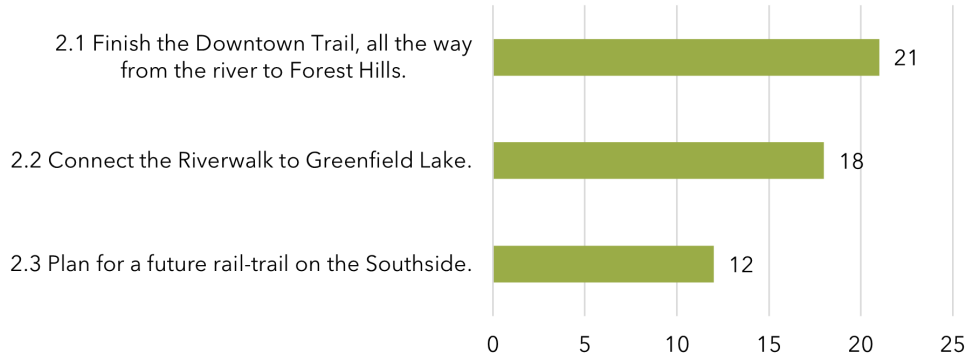


Figure 4.56. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 2.

Lowest Priority
**Build a connected trail network for walking
and biking across Greater Downtown**
Survey Responses

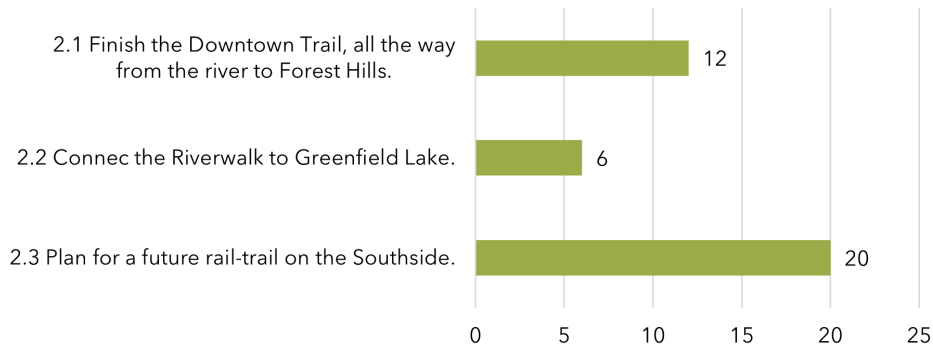


Figure 4.57. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 2.

Actions to Eliminate
**Build a connected trail network for walking
and biking across Greater Downtown**
Survey Responses

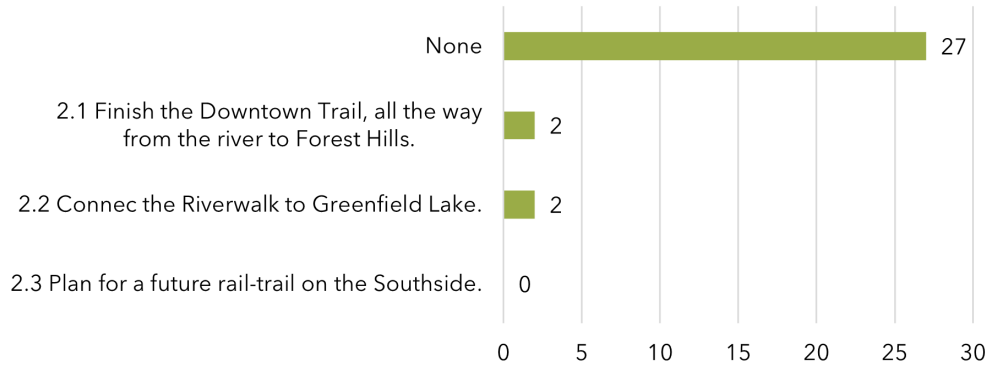


Figure 4.58. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 2.

Strategy 3: Make it easier to get around downtown without a car.

Strategy Rating
Make it easier to get around downtown without a car
Survey Responses

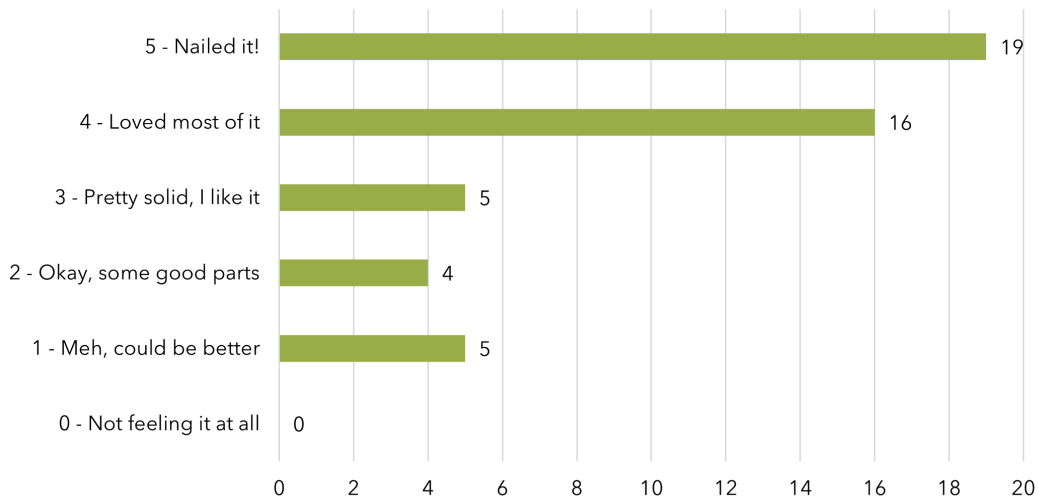


Figure 4.59. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant reactions to Strategy 3.

Highest Priority
Make it easier to get around downtown without a car
 Survey Responses



Figure 4.60. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant highest priority actions in Strategy 3.

Lowest Priority
Make it easier to get around downtown without a car
 Survey Responses

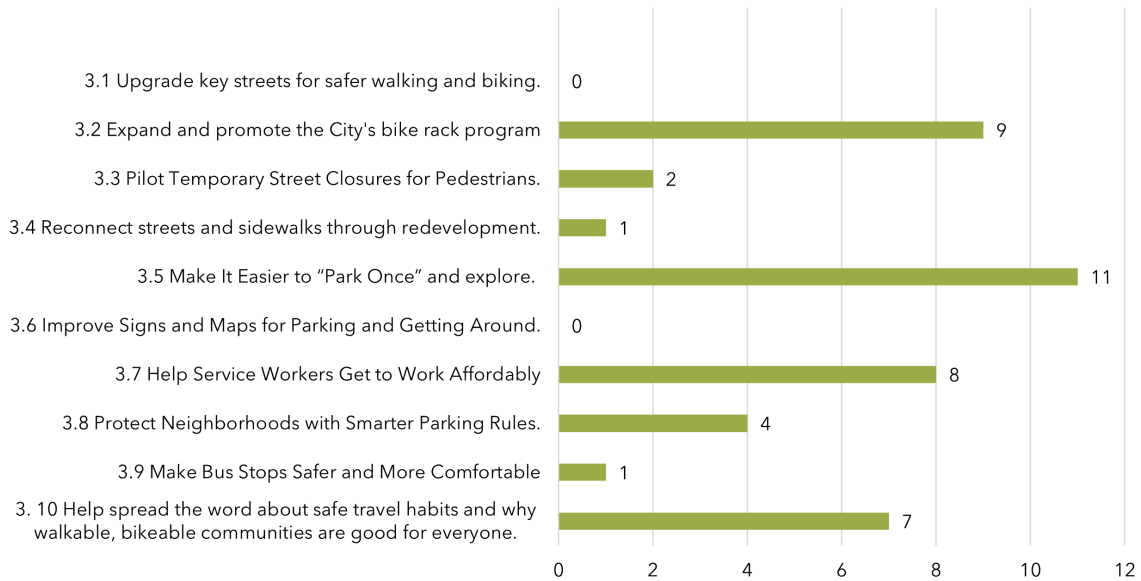


Figure 4.61. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant lowest priority actions in Strategy 3.

Actions to Eliminate
Make it easier to get around downtown without a car
 Survey Responses

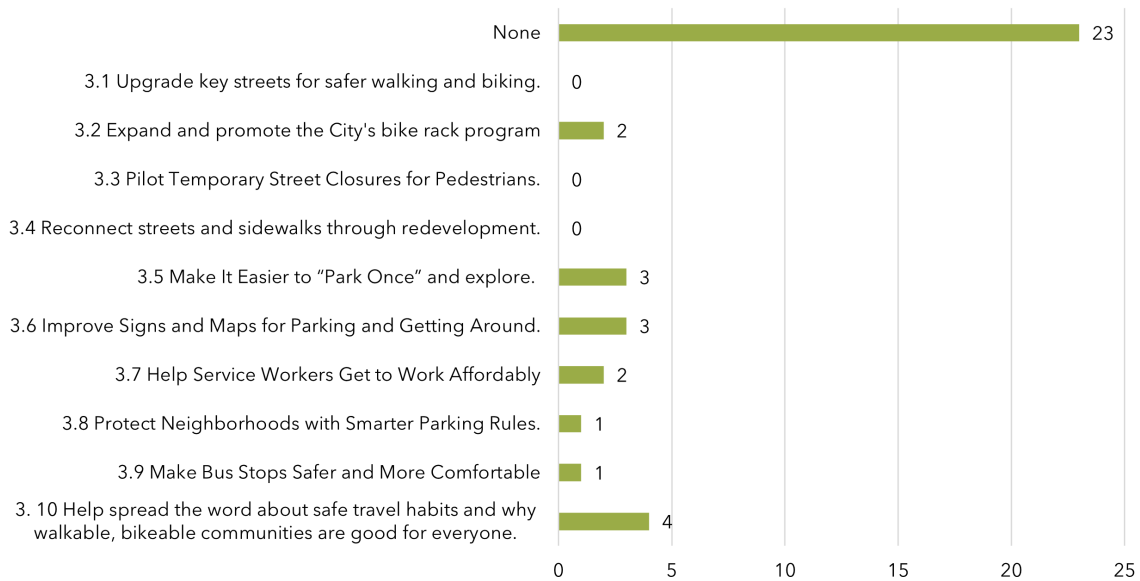


Figure 4.62. Phase 3 Mobility survey participant actions to eliminate in Strategy 3.

Open House

4. MLK Community Center, December 2025

The Greater Downtown Plan's fourth open house occurred from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on December 11, 2025, at the MLK Community Center in the Northside neighborhood. This event included three two rooms dedicated to activities to gain more detailed responses regarding Local Character, Economy, Small Business, and Mobility. Pizza and drinks were provided for attendees. In total, 12 residents attended this event.

Local Character

Open house participants flowed through the rooms freely. At the Local Character station, residents filled their cart by selecting five actions items from any strategies that matter most to them. Local Character action language was simplified and given an representative icon.

Strategies and Actions	Card	Responses
Make public spaces safe, welcoming, and enjoyable		
Improve streets and parks to make them more welcoming	More welcoming streets and parks	3
Add public art that reflects our community	Public art	1
Add better, multilingual signs to help people find their way around Greater Downtown	Multilingual and better signage	1
Offer more activities and amenities in parks	More activities and amenities	7
Make public spaces safer	Safer public spaces	2
Create a parks conservancy	Parks Conservancy Programming	4
Ensure new development fits in with the area's historic look and feel		
Ensure zoning regulations support local makers and artists	Support local makers	1
Launch an incentive program to reuse or rehabilitate older buildings	Revive older buildings	7
Make historic homes easier to own and maintain	Easier to maintain historic homes	1
Create more green spaces and plant more trees		
Put the Urban Forestry Master Plan into action	Put the Urban Forestry Master Plan into action	1
Encourage efforts to build resiliency	Encourage efforts to build resiliency	2
Choose the right trees for the right places	Right trees, right places	2
Add green spaces	Green space	5
Turn vacant lots into pop-up green spaces	Reactivate vacant lots	4
Encourage neighborhoods where everyone can meet their daily needs		
Support UMX zoning and mixed-use redevelopment of major housing developments	Urban Mixed Use Zoning	4
Connect residents to job training and employment opportunities	Connect residents to job training	5
Make it easier for everyone to find and afford fresh, healthy food	Fresh food options	4
Bring everyday services to neighborhoods (Attract more everyday services to the neighborhood)	Attract everyday services	1
Total Responses		55
Total Participants		11

Figure 4.63. Phase 3 open house responses to the Local Character activity.

Economy and Small Business

The Economy and Small Business input was combined into one activity and collected in the same room as the Local Character Station. At the Economy and Small Business station, residents were given five 'GDP Bucks' to spend on action items in any strategy. Action language was simplified for this activity.

Strategies and Actions	Dollars Dedicated
Small Business	
Support existing businesses and attract new ones.	
Attract diverse types of businesses	2
Create a small business concierge service	2
Make business districts more attractive and welcoming	
Support business districts	1
Beautify storefronts and streets	1
Expand grant programs for business improvements	2
Make local rules and processes more business-friendly	
Make it easy to test business ideas	0
Simplify processes for opening a business	0
Economy	
Improve access to affordable, high-quality housing.	
Help people access housing programs	8
Support legal assistance for housing issues	5
Expand rental assistance	7
Encourage affordable housing in the right areas	5
Revive neglected properties	6
Use public land for affordable housing	4
Encourage missing middle housing	7
Use public land to support community goals.	
Use public property to meet community needs	4
Create focus area plans	4
Total Responses	58
Total Participants	12

Figure 4.64. Phase 3 open house responses to the Economy and Small Business activity.

Mobility

Mobility stood alone in its own room with several tables set up with large, printed posters of a common street intersection. Participants selected three mobility interventions and placed them on the street.

Strategies and Actions	Representative Element	Responses
Make streets safe and accessible for everyone.		
Curb extensions for traffic calming	Curb Extension	5
Build sidewalks and crosswalks from previous plans	Crosswalk	1
Create Complete Streets	N/A	
Work to eliminate pedestrian fatalities	N/A	
Build a connected trail network for walking and biking across Greater Downtown.		
Complete the Downtown Trail	Trail	2
Connect the Riverwalk to Greenfield Lake	N/A	
Plan for future rail-trail	N/A	
Make it easier to get around Greater Downtown without a car.		
Improve walking and biking on key streets	Bike Lane	2
Promote the City's bike rack program	Bike Rack	2
Pilot temporary pedestrian streets	Pedestrian Street	7
Improve signs/maps for getting around	Sign	3
Help service workers get to work affordably	N/A	
Reconnect the street and sidewalk network	Sidewalk connection	4
Make it easier to park once and explore	Parking Sign	3
Protect neighborhoods with smart parking rules	Reserved Parking Sign	
Make bus stops safe and comfortable	Bus Stop	1
Spread the word about travel safety	N/A	
Total Responses		30
Total Participants		10

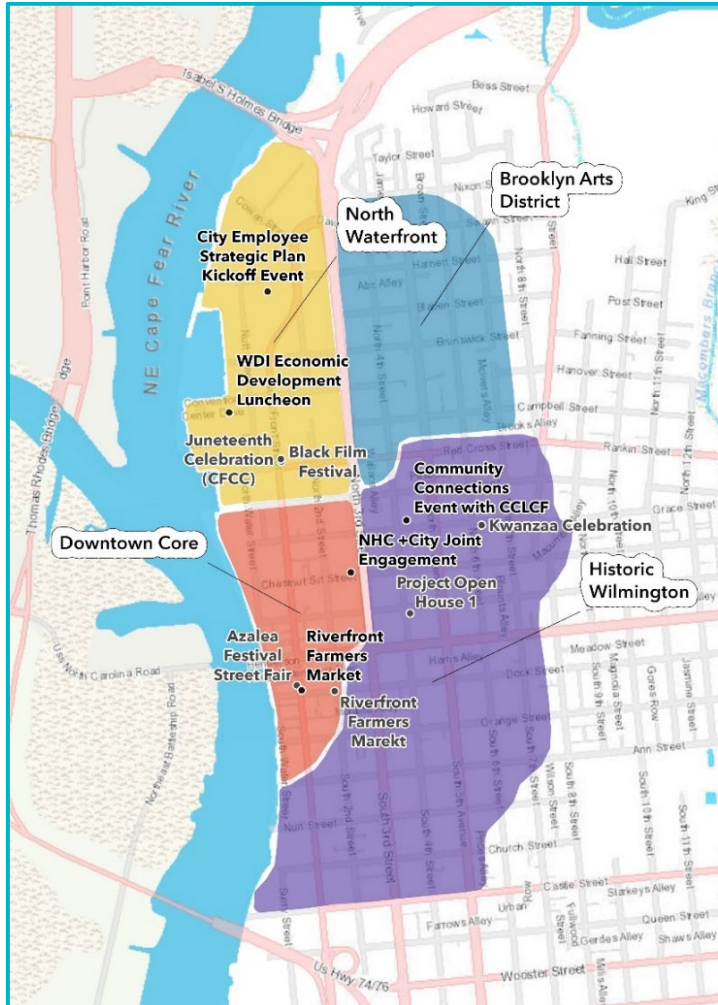
Figure 4.65. Phase 3 open house responses to the Mobility activity.

4. Engagement by Neighborhood

Northwestern Greater Downtown Neighborhoods

1,454
Pop-Up Participants

10
Pop-Up Events Attended



Phase 1	Responses
Kwanzaa Celebration	14
Azalea Festival Street Fair*	831
Riverfront Farmers Market	106
Project Open House at the Harrelson Center	71
Black Film Festival	N/A
CFCC Juneteenth Celebration	70

Phase 2	Responses
Community Cares Event w/CFCC	44
New Hanover County Comprehensive Plan - Greater Downtown Joint Engagement at the Main Library	5
City Employee Strategic Plan Kickoff Event	30
Wilmington Downtown Inc. Economic Development Luncheon	107

*Response rates in this region are significantly higher due to the volume of responses received at one of Wilmington's largest community events, the Azalea Festival.

Key Themes in Public Comments:

Respondents in the Northwestern Greater Downtown region shared public comments at pop-up events that highlighted participant interest in recreational and green spaces that are family-friendly and accessible, supporting arts and culture with murals and art in Greater Downtown and more diverse restaurants and entertainment options, improvements to services and amenities like adding a grocery store and community gathering spaces, investing in support for the unhoused population, improving multi-modal transportation options in Greater Downtown, and improving access to affordable housing.

Phase 1

Northwestern Greater Downtown Phase 1 Responses

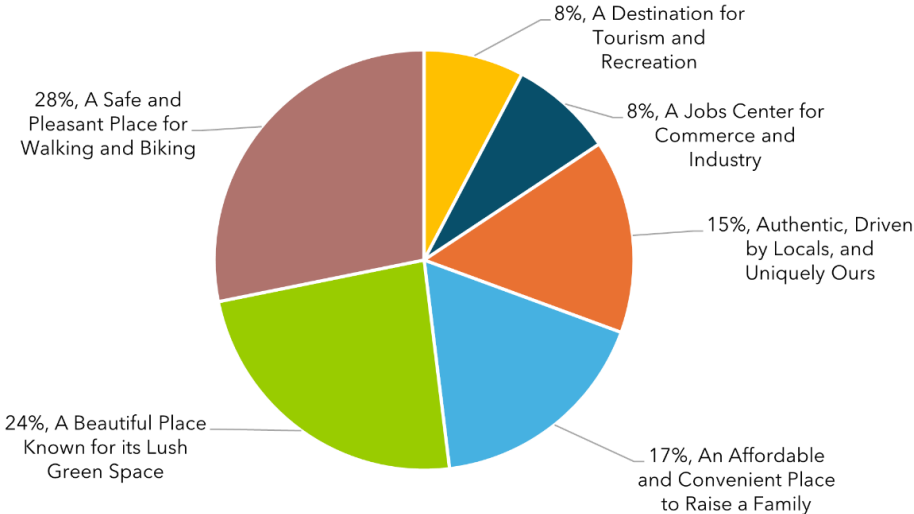


Figure 4.1. Phase 1 combined North Waterfront, Downtown Core, Historic Wilmington, and the Brooklyn Arts District neighborhoods, and the Pop-Up event responses

Phase 2

Northwestern Greater Downtown Phase 2 Responses

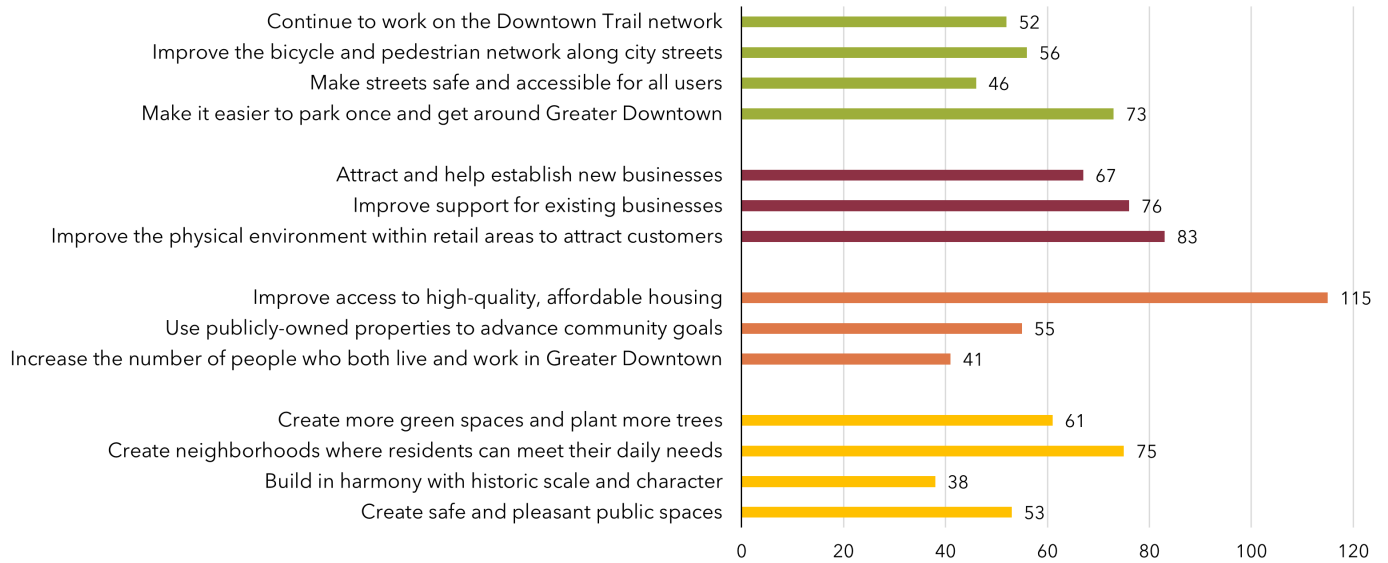
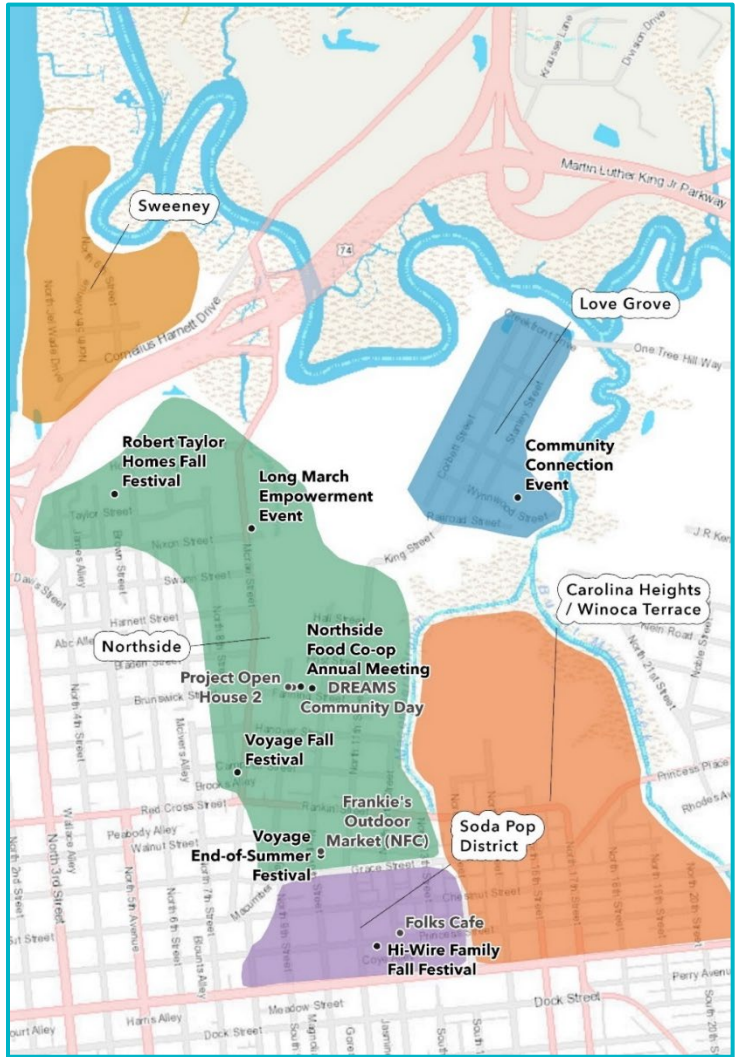


Figure 4.2. Phase 2 combined North Waterfront, Downtown Core, Historic Wilmington, and the Brooklyn Arts District neighborhoods, and the Pop-Up event responses

Northeastern Greater Downtown Neighborhoods

507
Pop-Up Participants

11
Pop-Up Events Attended



Phase 1	Responses
Project Open House 2 with the Northside Food Co-Op	N/A
Folks Cafe	19
DREAMS Community Day	28
Frankie's Outdoor Market with the Northside Food Co-op	12

Phase 2	Responses
Archie Blue Community Connections Event	15
Voyage End of Summer Festival	72
Long March Empowerment Event	66
Robert Taylor Senior Homes Pop-Up	28
Voyage Fall Festival	75
Northside Food Co-op Annual Meeting	35
Hi-Wire Fall Family Festival	91
Northside Food Co-op Thanksgiving Community Dinner	66

Key Themes in Public Comments:

Respondents in the Northeastern Greater Downtown region shared public comments at pop-up events that highlighted the need for a grocery store and additional community services in the Northside neighborhood, improvements to multi-modal transportation options with later bus services and improved stops, enhanced walkability with more and safer crosswalks, more accessible affordable housing, more community gardens and green spaces, and concerns regarding gentrification in Greater Downtown.

Phase 1

Northeastern Greater Downtown Phase 1 Responses

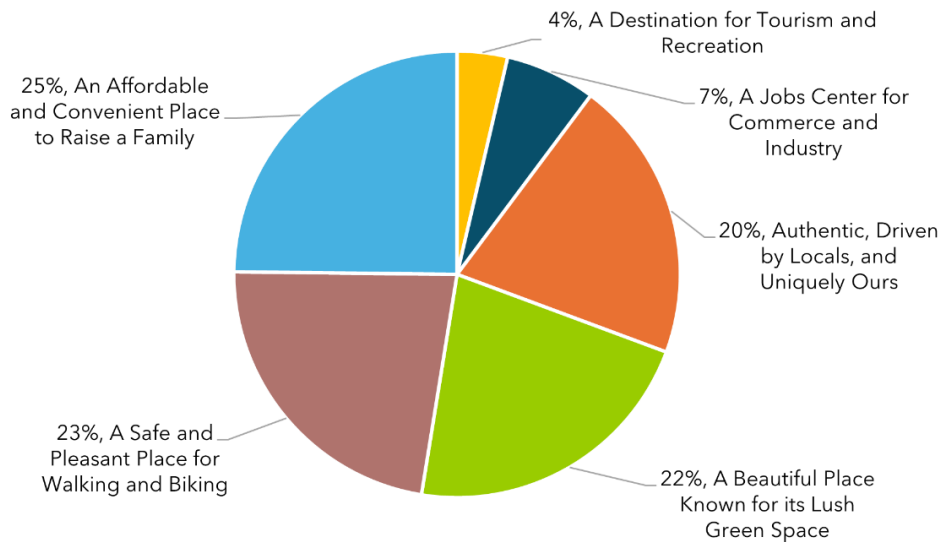


Figure 4.3. Phase 1 combined Northside, Soda Pop District, Love Grove, Sweeney, and Carolina Heights/Winoca Terrace neighborhoods Pop-Up event responses.

Phase 2

Northeastern Greater Downtown Phase 2 Responses

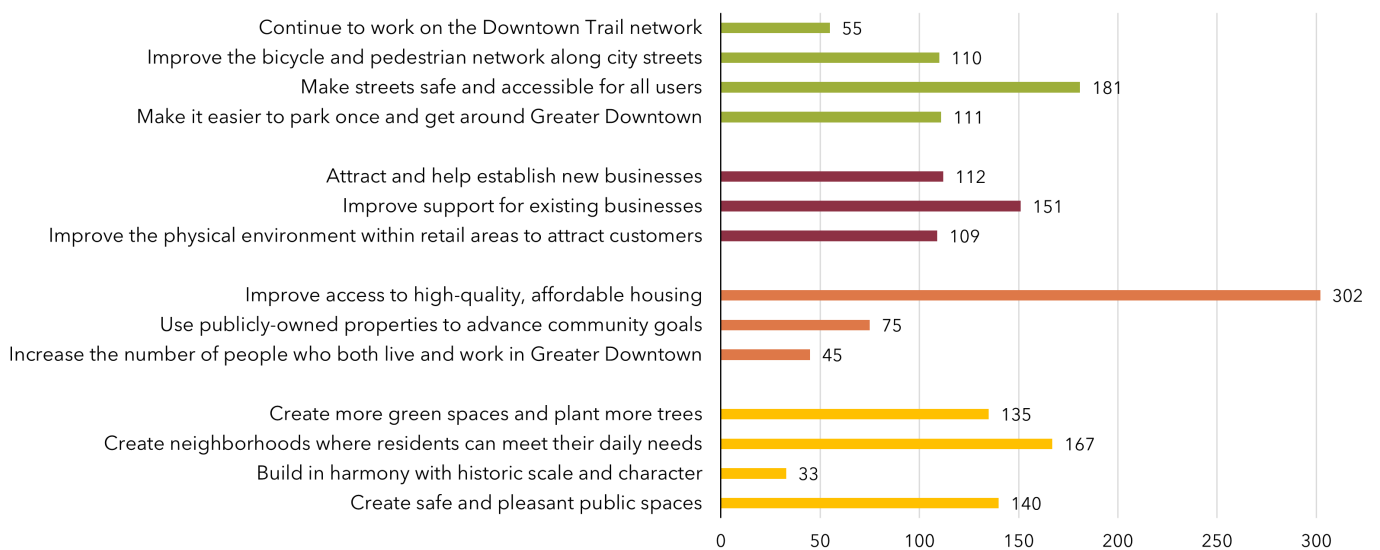
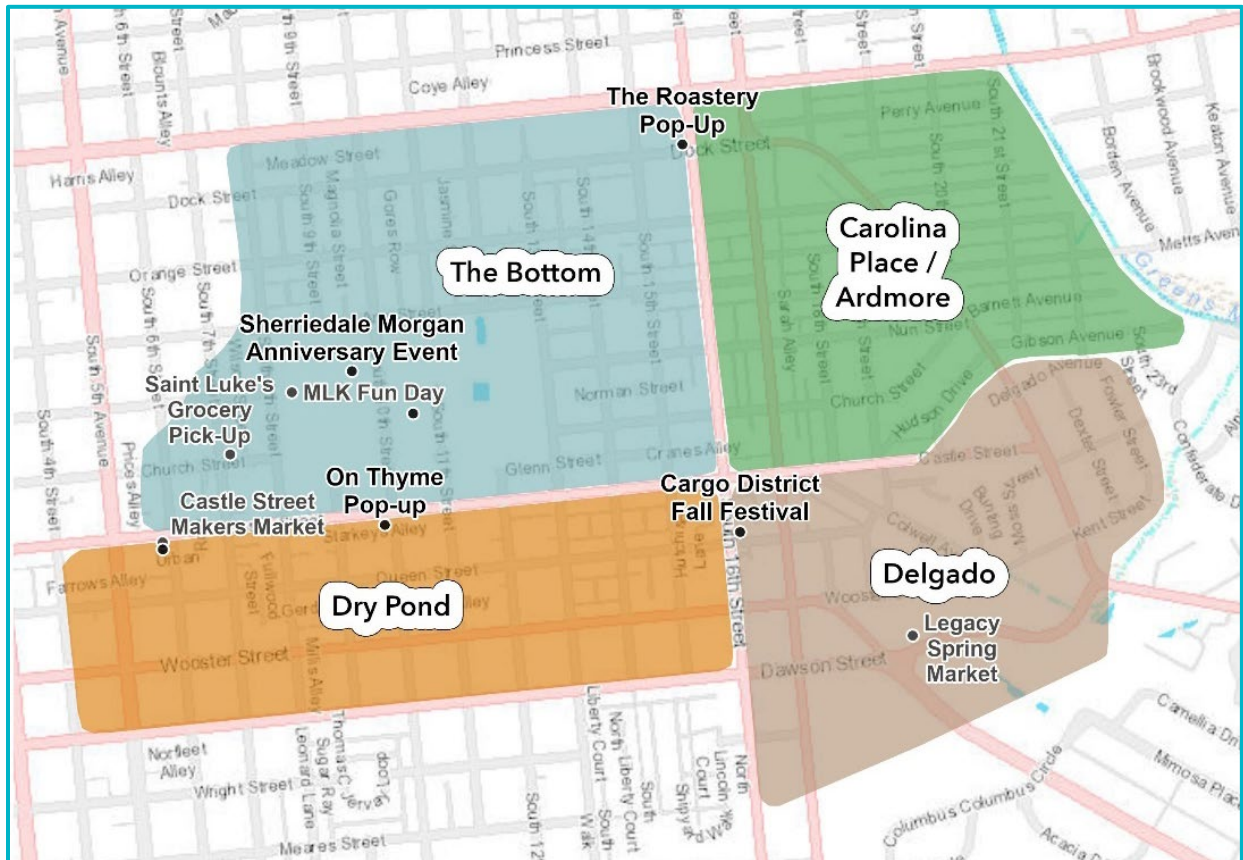


Figure 4.4. Phase 2 combined Northside, Soda Pop District, Love Grove, Sweeney, and Carolina Heights/Winoca Terrace neighborhoods Pop-Up event responses.

Central Greater Downtown Neighborhoods



545
Pop-Up Participants

10
Pop-Up Events Attended

Phase 1	Responses
MLK Fun Day	N/A
Castle Street Makers Market	66
Legacy Architectural Salvage Spring Market	132
Saint Luke's Grocery Pickup	32

Phase 2	Responses
Sherriedale Morgan Fitness Center Event	66
Cargo District Fall Festival	186
Castle Street Makers Market	16
The Roastery by Vigilant Hope Roasting	18
1898 Commemorative Urban Hike	13
On Thyme Pop-Up	16

Key Themes in Public Comments:

Respondents in the Northeastern Greater Downtown region shared public comments at pop-up events that highlighted the need for more green spaces like pocket parks, multi-modal transportation investments, better maintenance of roads, more affordable housing for students, improvements to public safety, and more parking options.

Phase 1

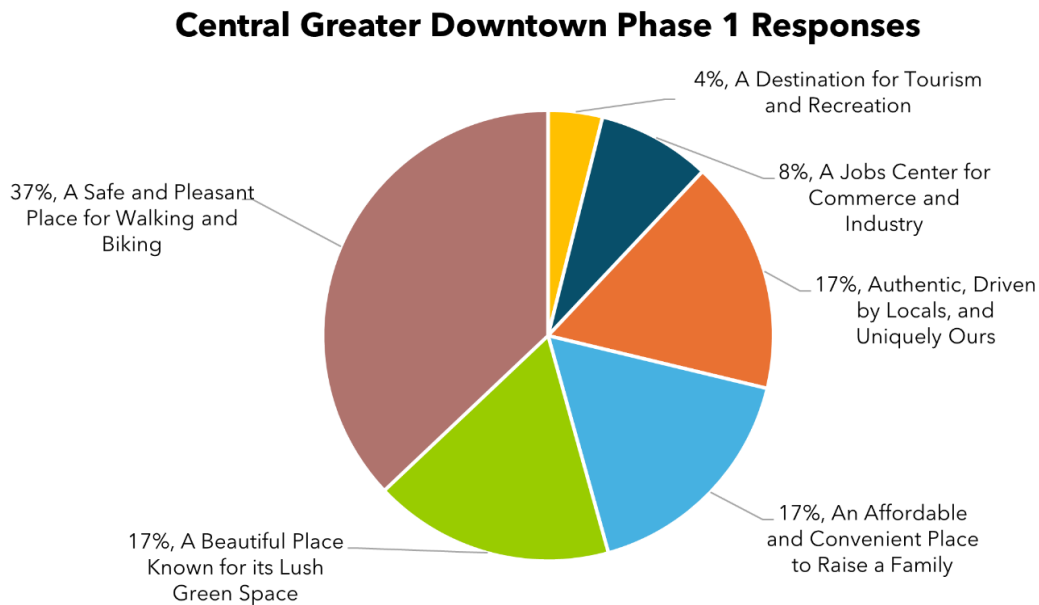


Figure 4.5. Phase 1 Dry Pond, The Bottom, Carolina Place/Ardmore, and Delgado neighborhoods Pop-Up event responses

Phase 2

Central Greater Downtown Phase 2 Responses

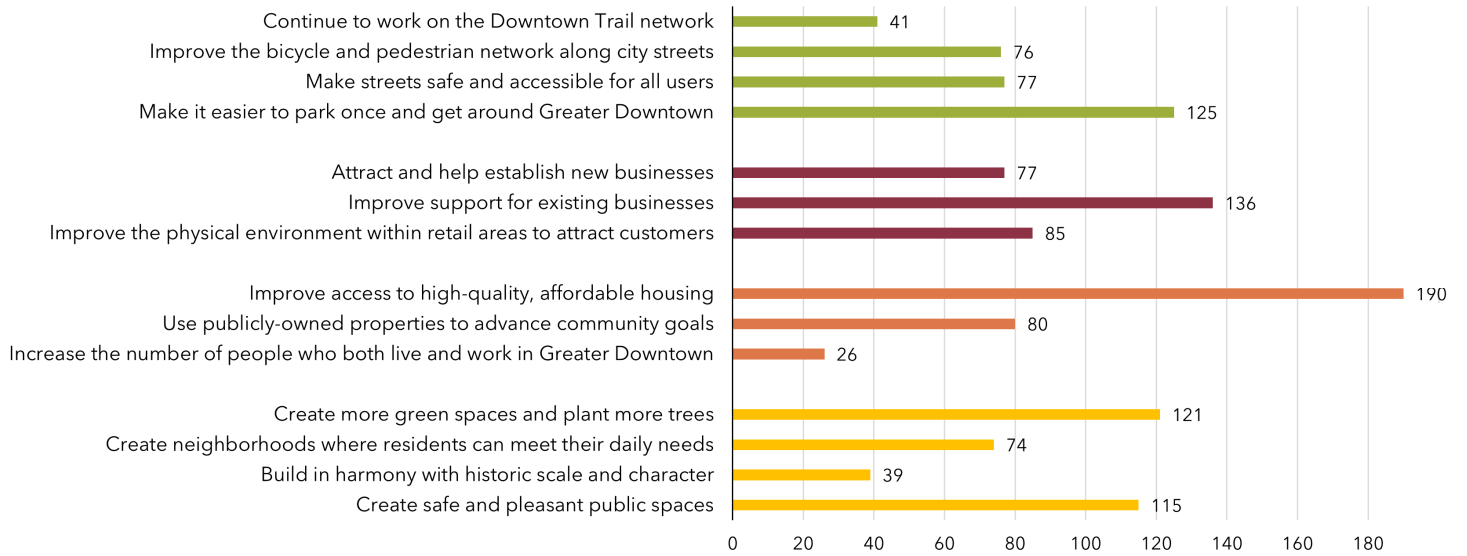
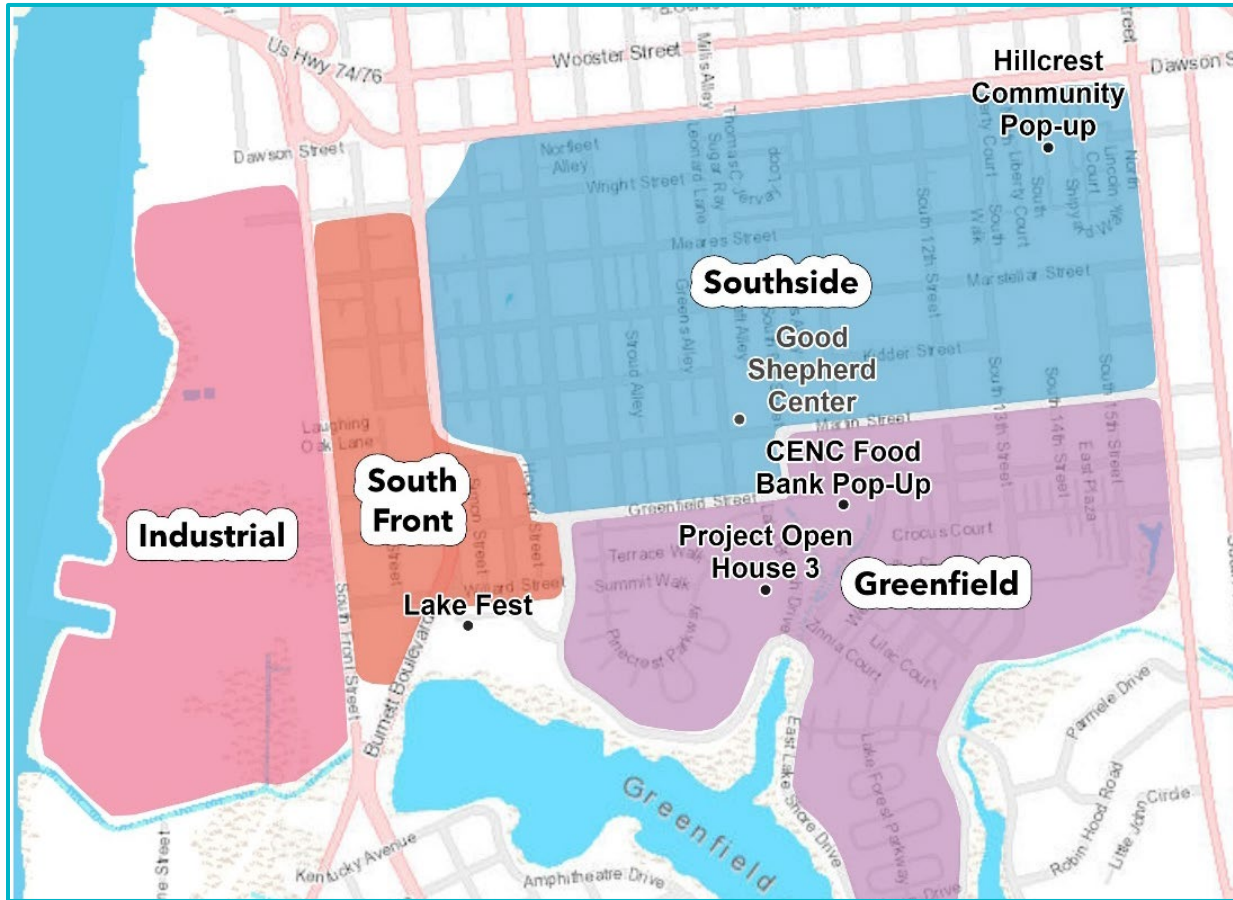


Figure 4.6. Phase 2 Dry Pond, The Bottom, Carolina Place/Ardmore, and Delgado neighborhoods Pop-Up event responses.

Southern Greater Downtown Neighborhoods



222
Pop-Up Participants

6
Pop-Up Events Attended

Phase 1	Responses
Good Shepherd Center (x2)	31

Phase 2	Responses
Project Open House 3 at Vigilant Hope	12
Lakefest at Greenfield Lake Park	103
Hillcrest Community Pop-Up	14
Food Bank of Central and Northern North Carolina	62

Key Themes in Public Comments:

Respondents in the Northeastern Greater Downtown region shared public comments at pop-up events that highlighted their interest in investing in vacant lots and storefronts for community services such as a grocery store, improving public safety, enhancing bicycle and pedestrian safety and connectivity, preserving and improving access to green space, and curbing the impacts of gentrification.

Phase 1

Southern Greater Downtown Phase 1 Responses

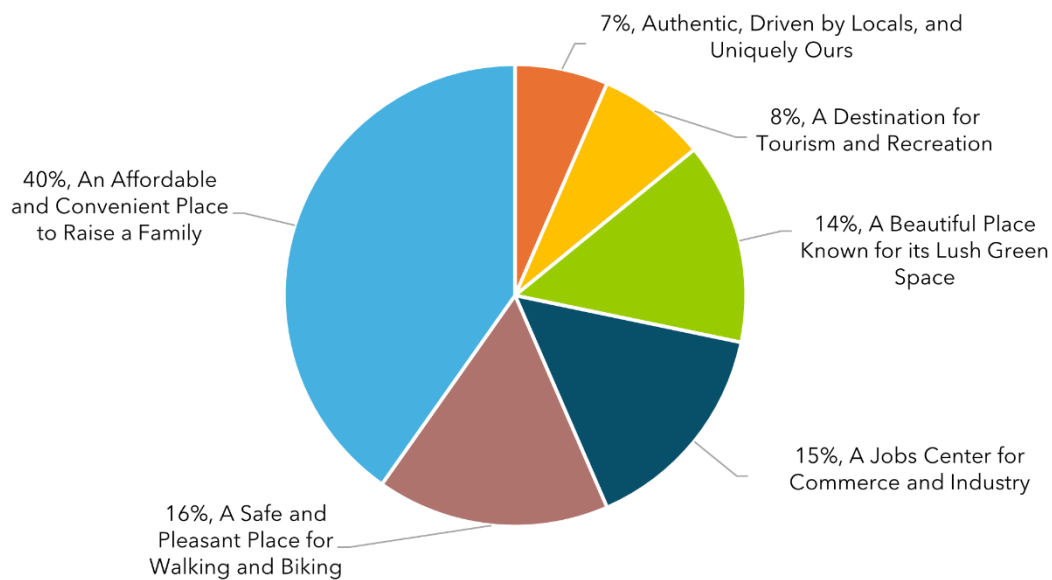


Figure 4.7. Phase 1 combined South Front, Industrial, Greenfield, and Southside neighborhoods, Pop-Up event responses

Phase 2

Southern Greater Downtown Phase 2 Responses

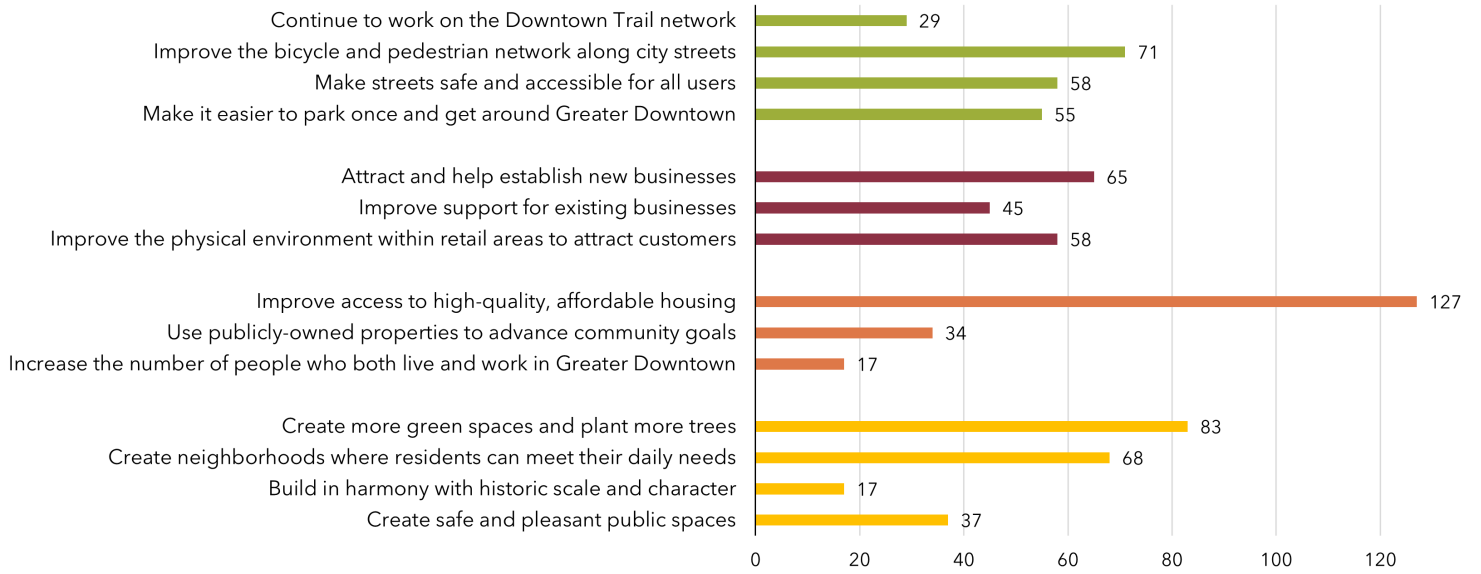


Figure 4.8. Phase 2 combined South Front, Industrial, Greenfield, and Southside neighborhoods Pop-Up event responses

Neighborhood Comparison

Below are the top three priorities identified in **Phase 1 Pop-Up Engagement** for all neighborhoods of Greater Downtown.

	Northwestern Greater Downtown	Northeastern Greater Downtown	Central Greater Downtown	Southern Greater Downtown
1	A Safe and Pleasant Place for Walking and Biking (28%)	An Affordable and Convenient Place to Raise a Family (25%)	A Safe and Pleasant Place for Walking and Biking (37%)	An Affordable and Convenient Place to Raise a Family (40%)
2	A Beautiful Place Known for Its Lush Green Space (24%)	A Safe and Pleasant Place for Walking and Biking (23%)	A Beautiful Place Known for Its Lush Green Space (17%)	A Safe and Pleasant Place for Walking and Biking (16%)
3	An Affordable and Convenient Place to Raise a Family (17%)	A Beautiful Place Known for Its Lush Green Space (22%)	An Affordable and Convenient Place to Raise a Family (17%)	A Jobs Center for Commerce and Industry (15%)
	Total Participants: 868	Total Participants: 46	Total Participants: 167	Total Participants: 31

Below are the top priorities in each theme identified in the **Phase 2 Pop-Up Engagement** for all neighborhoods of Greater Downtown. Strategy response percentages are the votes placed for that strategy per theme.

	Northwestern Greater Downtown	Northeastern Greater Downtown	Central Greater Downtown	Southern Greater Downtown			
Local Character	Create neighborhoods where residents can meet their daily needs. 33%	35%	Create more green spaces and plant more trees. 35%	40%			
Economy	Improve access to high-quality, affordable housing. 55%				72%	64%	72%
Small Business	Improve the physical environment within retail areas to attract customers. 37%	41%	Improve support for existing businesses. 46%		41%		
Mobility	Make it easier to park once and get around Greater Downtown. 32%	Make streets safe and accessible for all users. 40%	Make it easier to park once and get around Greater Downtown. 39%	Make streets safe and accessible for all users. 40%			
Participants	224	433	316	180			