

Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Engagement



Final Report
November 2023

Worcester County ■ Maryland

Acknowledgements

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Thank you!

Worcester County thanks everyone who has participated in the Comprehensive Plan Public Engagement Program thus far, and reminds all that there will continue to be opportunities for public involvement throughout the upcoming planning process. To stay informed about project updates and future involvement opportunities, please visit the project website at <https://www.co.worcester.md.us/comprehensive-plan>.

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Introduction

In 2024 Worcester County is preparing to update its Comprehensive Plan, a process that will enable the County to reassess and update its vision, goals, objectives, policy statements, land use maps and actions that will guide the County's future growth and development through the year 2040.

In January 2023, the County initiated a Public Engagement process as part of its initial efforts to identify the community's needs and desires, priorities, expectations for future development, and perspectives on the tradeoffs among policy options that will help to guide the revisions to the Comprehensive Plan.

This Public Engagement Report serves as the culmination of the public engagement program.

Public participation is an important part of the comprehensive planning process, as it helps to ensure that the plan accurately reflects the vision of the community. To develop an effective plan that reflects the views, desires, and needs of Worcester County, the County's decisionmakers need to hear the ideas, thoughts, and opinions of their citizens and stakeholders.

The purpose of the Public Engagement Program was to communicate with and gain valuable insight from a broad cross-section of County residents, property owners, business owners and other stakeholders to frame a collective vision for the upcoming Comprehensive Plan Update.

The intentions of this process were to create an understanding among the public about the purpose and intent of the Plan, the role of the planning process in shaping it, and to generate interest in and goodwill about the upcoming Plan. The engagement process informed stakeholders about the regulations and laws relative to the Plan and land use planning in Maryland. To the extent that this process was successful in reaching the public, it enables residents and stakeholders to serve as knowledgeable participants in future discussions about the goals and directions of the next Plan and better articulate their visions for Worcester County's future.

Engagement Process

The County has undertaken an extensive public engagement process to identify community priorities and focus planning efforts. A range of outreach formats and tools were utilized as part of this initial engagement process, including an online community survey and pop-up booths at community events. The results of this engagement campaign are summarized in this report.

The public engagement conducted in 2023 represents the initial step in a broader comprehensive planning process. Having engaged more than 1,500 participants in online and in-person outreach activities, the Worcester County community has provided a staggering amount of input to identify the key planning issues and priorities that are most important for the County and its partners to address. It is the results of that broad-based engagement that is presented in this summary document.

Key Findings

Most Cited Issues & Actions

The overall most cited key issues and actions identified by the Worcester County community are presented below. While most frequently discussed topics are summarized in the following pages, there are numerous issues and opportunities that were discussed during the outreach process. Input from each event and activity has been noted to identify key planning themes.

KEY ISSUES

Preserving Community Character – 71.6%

Preserving the character of the various communities that comprise Worcester County is important to its residents. The “small town feel” is something to strive for, and that is threatened by the increase in traffic and development occurring within the County. Focus on enhancing what already exists within Towns (infill) as well as building community through the support for small businesses.

Loss of Natural Features – 70.3%

Overdevelopment is a concern for 70% of Worcester County residents, as farmland is sold to make way for apartments and commercial businesses. Encouraging the preservation of farmland, waterways, and open space would be beneficial for residents as well as for the environment overall.

Retention of Local Businesses – 67.8%

Supporting local businesses not only builds a sense of community, but also boosts the County’s overall economy. While there are certain needs that are unable to be met by small businesses, with buy in from local governments, these businesses can thrive. There is a need for pedestrian walkways and bikeways for accessibility – encouraging walkable communities and downtown areas would allow for smaller businesses to successfully remain open. Local businesses would also encourage more full-time residents as well.

Seasonal Traffic/Congestion – 62.3%

Traffic along the eastern shore continues to be an issue, as travelers head to the beaches nearby. Concern for pedestrians using the roadway as well as local motorists is amplified during these times. Adequate infrastructure would allow for the potential for more full-time residents, as well, as current infrastructure was not designed to handle the current loads.

Too Much Growth/Growth Pressure – 60.1%

Based on results from the survey, there is an overwhelming desire to preserve open space as well as the community character that comes with the “small town” feel of many of the Towns within the County. The pressure to allow for sprawl is something that residents would like to see handled responsibly and with an organized plan.

School Facilities/Education – 57.4%

Supporting the education of the younger population is a large concern among County residents. Communication between local governments and the schools is a concern as well. Worcester County historically holds a high reputation for its schools and will need the support of those in government to continue to perform at expected levels. Necessary funding for materials and support staff will need to be supported at a government level.

Loss of Farmland – 54.2%

Open Space and the agricultural community in Worcester County is a large part of what makes its character so unique. There is a need for a focused approach to sprawl and development through a Comprehensive Plan.

Affordability of Housing – 51.4%

Many residents feel as though they cannot afford to both live and work in the County. There is a need for affordable housing as well as mixed use housing to allow for year-round residents. Concern is growing for those who may not be able to afford to continue to stay within the County after graduation, etc. because of the lack of housing available to them.

Most Cited Community Assets

Community assets play a vital role in meeting the County’s safety, health, character, and welfare of existing and future residents. The following presents a summary of key assets identified by Worcester County’s community. These assets represent the positive aspects of the Worcester County community that should be preserved as the Comprehensive Plan provides recommendations for the future.

KEY ASSETS

Natural Resources & Open Space:

Natural resources were identified as a top asset to Worcester County. Natural resources, wildlife, Open Space, and recreation add to the community’s quality of life and character. The county heavily relies on these resources to also promote tourism, forestry, and agricultural resources.

Infrastructure:

Infrastructure is very important to the County because it supports growth and culture. It provides education, government infrastructure, facilities, and public welfare. The second key asset that was identified by the community was the strength of their higher education institutions.

Character & Identity:

The County is the easternmost county within the state of Maryland, bordering the Atlantic Ocean. It is known for its beaches, small town rural charm, and natural resources. Maintaining this character and way of life is essential to preserve the County’s existing and future growth.

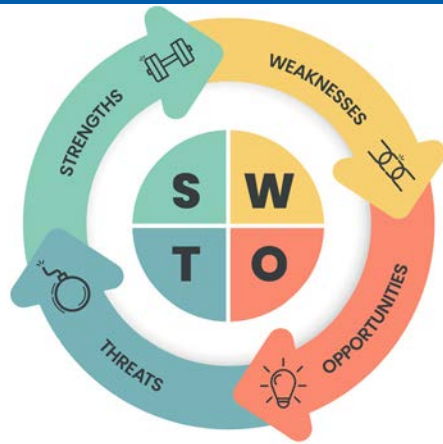
Quality of Life:

Quality of life was identified as a key asset as well because it forms the character and culture of the County. It is important to maintain for long-term residences and future development.

Economic Development:

Worcester County’s economy is supported by tourism, agriculture, fisheries, educational and commercial services. Smart growth is essential to maintain the County’s employment, businesses, tourism, and industry without compromising the sustainability.

Report Elements: SWOT Analysis



SWOT stands for “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.” A SWOT analysis is an analytical tool that planners and others use to identify and categorize significant internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) factors faced in a particular area.

Strengths are internal elements that give the County an edge or competitive advantage. These can be unique assets, skills, or resources that Worcester County can use to its benefit.

Weaknesses are internal elements that hinder the County’s ability to reach optimal performance and prevents Worcester County from reaching its goals. These areas provide opportunities for improvement.

Opportunities are external circumstances and potential situations that can be leveraged to benefit Worcester County. Some of these examples can be beyond the County’s control, but Worcester County can take steps to benefit from them.

Threats are external circumstances that pose a threat to Worcester County’s current or future ability to achieve what it wants to do. The County should mitigate these to avoid potentially damaging effects.

The following are the types of questions that are considered in this process. It should be noted that opportunities and threats are factors over which the County may have limited control, but should still consider as it develops the Comprehensive Plan.

- **Questions related to strengths:** What are the County’s advantages? What does the County do well? What relevant resources are located in the County? What do other people see as strengths of the County?
- **Questions related to weaknesses:** What does the County do badly? What could the County improve? What should the County avoid?
- **Questions related to opportunities:** What are the County’s good prospects? What are the interesting trends that are occurring (e.g., changes in governmental policy, social patterns, population profiles, lifestyles, economic development)?
- **Questions related to threats:** What obstacles does the County face? What is happening around the County, in other cities or counties that may negatively affect the County’s future? How is the economic situation changing? How is the state or federal policy environment or political situation changing? How is demography changing? Are there threats to the County’s resilience from climate change? Are major employers vulnerable?

As an initial task for the public engagement program, these types of questions were provided to Worcester County staff and Planning Commissioners. The following represents the summarized responses received through May 31, 2023.

Question 1

THE COUNTY'S CURRENT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WAS ADOPTED IN 2006, WITH LATER AMENDMENTS. HOW HAS WORCESTER COUNTY CHANGED SINCE THAT TIME?

1. Population Growth: The rate of population growth slowed during the Great Recession and population growth since 2006 has been slower than anticipated overall, but there has been an increase in the number of year-round residents. Worcester County has seen an aging population, leading to an increased need for medical facilities and services for aging adults.

2. Development & Infrastructure:

- Increased development along the Route 50 corridor from Ocean City to Berlin.
- Construction of the Samuel Bowen Blvd (service road).
- High development pressure along the Route 589 corridor with limited road improvements.
- New housing developments along the 707/611 corridors.
- Expansion of commercial development throughout the county, leading to traffic issues on major thoroughfares like Routes 589, 611, and 50.
- Expansion of public utilities (water and sewer) to meet the growing needs.

3. Land Use & Cover Changes: Changes in land use and cover have primarily occurred in the north/northeast areas of the county, including Berlin. The Route 611, Route 589, and Route 50 corridors have witnessed significant new commercial and some residential development. The town of Berlin has experienced annexations and increased retail and restaurant establishments.

4. Housing Market:

- Focus on fee simple ownership rather than condominiums.
- Reduced parking requirements.
- Limited availability of affordable housing, which has become a pressing issue

5. Other Changes:

- Expansion of gambling at Ocean Downs.
- Changes in the short-term rental market.
- Introduction of medical and adult-use cannabis.
- Growing business development but inadequate affordable housing for workers.
- Water quality degradation in northern coastal bays and loss of tidal marsh in some areas.
- Increased pressure on infrastructure due to the growth in southern Delaware, impacting roads, hospitals, coastal bays, and recreation sites.
- The need for adult day care services is not adequately met within the county.
- Increased frequency of heatwaves and warming trend impacting seagrass abundance and waterbird populations.

Question 2

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP PRIORITIES OR AREAS OF CONCERN THAT YOU HOPE TO SEE ADDRESSED IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE?

1. Updated Population Figures & Growth Evaluation:

- Updated population figures with a reasonable rate of growth.
- Evaluation of existing and future growth areas in collaboration with municipalities.
- Assessment of commercial land supply and needs.

2. Zoning & Land Use:

- Revisiting the E-1 Estate District zoning classification.
- Balancing reasonable development with maintaining the unique character of the county.
- Managing growth in collaboration with the town of Berlin.

3. Infrastructure & Transportation:

- Public facilities, particularly water and sewer systems.
- Multimodal transportation planning.
- Smart growth initiatives focusing on adequate roads and utilities for concentrated development areas.
- Managing growth on Route 50, 611, and 589 to maintain attractiveness and ease of travel, including preserving natural and safe routes for cyclists.

4. Affordable Housing & Workforce Needs:

- Ensuring the provision of affordable housing for workers and residents.

- Providing temporary housing for seasonal employees.

5. Pedestrian & Cyclist Needs:

- Improved consideration of pedestrian and cyclist needs in urbanizing areas.
- Incorporating recreational open space and alternative transportation planning in the West Ocean City area.

6. Open Space & Sprawl:

- Preserving open space and addressing concerns related to sprawl.
- Additional outdoor recreational facilities for youth.

7. Water & Sewer Planning:

- Updating the Water and Sewer Plan to account for future needs and not just inventory existing systems.

8. Services for Specific Populations:

- More services for older adults and the mentally ill.

9. Specific Locational Concerns:

- Water hook-up in the St. Martins by the Bay subdivision.
- Better internet access in parts of the county.

10. Funding & Response Time:

- Establishing a funding mechanism to ensure consistent response times for all residents.

Question 3

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST/LEAST ABOUT THE CURRENT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

MOST:

1. Focus on protection of natural resources and support for environmental site design.
2. Architectural guidelines that have created uniformity in design on major transportation corridors.

3. Emphasis on sustainability and preservation of natural resources.
4. Appeal process.
5. Protection of agricultural and rural lands through strong agricultural zoning.

LEAST:

1. Lack of essential sections like cover page, acknowledgements, table of contents, or reference list. Criticism of fluff content and poor editing.
2. Recommendation for a county green building program and capitalization of tourism opportunities.
3. Perception of excessive text amendments that diluted the original intent of the plan, liberal approval of variance requests by the Board of Zoning Appeals without considering future impacts, and granting of variances in critical areas.
4. Perception that the plan called for accommodating a larger population than has actually occurred, and the need for re-evaluating the analysis.
5. Insufficient efforts to eliminate E-1 Estate District zoning.
6. Absence of provisions for a sports complex that would benefit local youth and generate tax revenue through tourism.

Question 4

WHAT AREAS DOES THE CURRENT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN NOT ADDRESS THAT IT SHOULD?

1. Updated Visions & Housing Element:

- A need for updated visions and a comprehensive approach to addressing housing needs.

2. Impacts of Overdevelopment in Sussex County:

- Consideration of the impacts of overdevelopment in neighboring Sussex County and how it may affect Worcester County.

3. Short-Term Rental Market:

- Addressing the challenges and regulations related to the short-term rental market.

4. Emphasis on Alternative Transportation:

- More emphasis on promoting and accommodating alternative transportation modes.

5. Coordination with Towns:

- Improved coordination with the towns, especially Berlin, which is experiencing significant pressure for change.

6. Trails, Recreation, & Watershed-Based Planning:

- Enhanced development and fleshing out plans for trails, recreation, and watershed-based planning.

7. Alternative Energy Options:

- Inclusion of alternative energy options in the comprehensive plan.

8. Truly Affordable Housing:

- Addressing the need for truly affordable housing options.

9. Consistent Setbacks:

- Establishing consistent setbacks in zoning regulations.

10. Storm Drainage:

- Addressing storm drainage issues in the comprehensive plan.

11. Sports Complex & Activities for Older Adults:

- Consideration and provision of a sports complex that benefits local youth and offers activities for older adults.

The results from the Worcester County staff and Planning Commission members questions and public survey were compiled into the SWOT Analysis. The following tables represent the data from this analysis. Each table highlights a common key issue presented as well as the SWOT.

NATURAL RESOURCES	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County has a strong legacy of protecting natural resources. Natural resources, including woodlands, streams, creeks, and rivers are significant and abundant. Waterfronts, including the Atlantic Ocean, rivers, and beaches are very accessible to the public throughout the County. The County’s temperate climate supports a high quality of life. The County contains the Assateague Island National Seashore, a significant national park and natural and cultural resource. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County is vulnerable to sea-level rise, especially along coastlines. The public perceives that the County lacks a plan to protect natural resources.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offshore wind projects provide opportunities for energy independence. Natural plantings and buffers along roadways could be increased. The County’s temperate climate and resources draws visitors and tourists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offshore wind projects create environmental and visual impacts and threaten wildlife. Extreme weather events, the potential of increased and more powerful hurricanes, and rising sea levels threaten coastal areas. Global climate change and pollution require resiliency planning; the public perceives that local planning has not been sufficient to date. Beaches in the County are eroding and need replenishment.

Local governments use comprehensive plans to identify goals, objectives, policies and action items that protect natural resources and plan for future environmental changes. This issue has grown in importance as climate events have become more frequent and severe. Planning for resilience is particularly important along shoreline areas and in locations that are more prone to coastal flooding and erosion. These threats make this topic a particularly important one to Worcester County, and in the next plan.

The outreach process showed that the public supports the County’s priorities to preserve and protect natural resources. Residents enjoy the rural aspects of the area, the accessibility of the waterfronts, the year-round temperate climate, and the elements of green infrastructure present in the County.

The County’s economy also relies heavily on these natural resources for agriculture and tourism. There is a high concern for the future of natural resources due to the changing climate, erosion, and impacts from the growing population and development.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

- Examine policies and action items in the plan to continue to conserve and protect the County’s natural environment, open space, and waterfronts.
- Explore the viability and continue to integrate green infrastructure approaches to environmental protection.

LAND USE	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County has been successful at controlling growth to limit sprawl. • The West Ocean City harbor is a successful commercial hub. • The County has significant amounts of high-quality farmland and open space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed-use development projects are lacking throughout the County. • The public perceives an unequal allocation of resources between the northern and southern ends of the County.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County benefits from a strong agricultural sector. • Small-scale farms and value-added agriculture could be expanded. • More parks and green space could be developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development pressures threaten the County's established land use pattern. • Too many commercial spaces are vacant. • Development in neighboring jurisdictions is infringing on the County. • The County has perceived level of overdevelopment and a lack of infrastructure investment to support it.

The **Land Use Element**, or chapter, of the Comprehensive Plan provides information on land use categories and their distribution throughout the County; zoning districts; recently completed development projects; and recent development approvals. Because a jurisdiction's land use pattern influences almost every other element of a community, land use planning provides a framework for all infrastructure-related local planning decisions.

The outreach process provided significant input to the County on its land use policies. There is general recognition that the County's growth management approach has been successful, but concerns remain about the long-term effects of growth, especially as the region evolves. The County's agricultural sector is strong and has opportunities, including small-scale farms and value-added agriculture, so balancing planned growth with agricultural preservation and the continued success of agriculture in Worcester County should be a focus of the Plan.

Planning for the infrastructure to support developed areas is another theme. This includes planning for parks, recreation uses and Open Space. The amount and location of future growth are also issues that require further study and discussion. How to accommodate more housing options, especially workforce and affordable housing, through land use decision making should also be examined in detail.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

- Examine the County's future growth, both in terms of location and amount, and how this growth can and needs to be supported through infrastructure.
- Continue to promote and protect the County's vibrant agricultural sector and leverage local advantages.
- Consider how to address housing issues through land use and zoning changes.

HOUSING	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County’s existing housing stock is strong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonal workforce housing is lacking, especially in summer months when visitation is high. The cost of housing is relatively high. The County has a lack of diverse housing choices.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County lacks senior housing and age in place options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high cost of living and a lack of affordable/workforce housing makes it difficult for some residents to afford to live in the County, or close to jobs.

The availability of high-quality and affordable housing is important to the County’s quality of life. By enabling residents to take pride and ownership in their homes and neighborhoods, the County can reinforce a sense of place. Recent trends throughout the State, the region and the nation have made affordability an issue in most communities, and Worcester County is experiencing this phenomenon as well. Maryland also has recent legislative changes that require jurisdictions to address affordable and workforce housing, and fair housing, and the County’s next Plan will need to address these issues.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

- Support a variety of safe, quality housing choices that are affordable and accessible to households of all ages and abilities.
- Identify, evaluate, and analyze current and future housing needs and trends.
- Continue to identify opportunities to provide equity in housing and affordable housing opportunities throughout the County.
- Draft the Housing Element of the next Plan in keeping with the recent legislative requirements adopted by the state regarding affordable and workforce housing and fair housing.

ECONOMY	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County taxes are low. • The County’s location is ideal for tourism. • The County’s location is also ideal for the export of goods. • Ocean City is a major regional tourism destination. • The County has a robust fishing industry. • The County is home to many skilled and dedicated employees. • Local golf courses are numerous and serve as tourism destinations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local economy is heavily dependent on tourism. • The County has a need to attract more businesses. • In some areas, businesses lack pedestrian connections. • Many employees cannot afford to live and work in the County. • Childcare facilities are lacking.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce opportunities are abundant for high school/college graduates. • The expansion of teleworking opportunities is expanding the County’s attractiveness to remote workers. • The County is well established as a tourism destination. • Grant opportunities exist for new economic development opportunities. • The County has a robust sector of small businesses. • The future Worcester County Sports Complex in Berlin will provide recreational opportunities for residents. • Area for start-ups and business incubators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many businesses have workforce needs that are not being met. • Residents lack good job opportunities. • The future Worcester County Sports Complex is not supported by a significant portion of the community. • The County is being affected negatively by development in neighboring jurisdictions. • The advent of large-scale teleworking is creating emerging needs from residents who work from home.

Economic development refers to the set of policies, regulations and programs created to promote economic vitality, support local businesses, create local jobs, and ensure the highest possible quality of life for County residents. This topic in the Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for local economic development activities as the County’s creates the goals, strategies and action items it needs to support the County’s long-term economic viability.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

- Explore policies and actions that encourage redevelopment of existing residential and commercial properties.
- Examine potential partnerships and collaborations with the State to provide incentives to specialty and unique businesses to locate in Worcester County.
- Identify the impacts and potential impacts of teleworking on the County’s retail businesses and retail uses.
- Pursue non-retail businesses that will support the workforce throughout the County during the business day.
- Plan for the impacts of the Worcester County Sports Complex.

GOVERNMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County government staff is very knowledgeable. • The County benefits from quality schools. • Broadband access, where it exists, is very good. • The County has adopted strong design requirements for commercial buildings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County has limited sewerage disposal capacity. • Public sewer and water are not as available as needed in areas suitable for affordable housing. • The County development review process is perceived as lengthy. • The public is concerned about water quality. • Members of the public are critical of the mindset of some leaders and residents. • Some members of the public perceive County employee morale as being low and plagued by communication issues. • The County has areas where broadband is lacking. • The County lacks recycling options.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication changes. • Grants provide opportunities to enhance local infrastructure. • Opportunities for restoration and improved resilience. • Water/sewer availability and manufacturing job opportunities. • The County’s recycling opportunities could be expanded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State regulations and unfunded mandates put a burden on County government. • Some members of the public are concerned about a lack of awareness and exploitation of assets. • Public concerns about taxes and administration policies. • EDU Availability as growth/sprawl continue.

This topic includes the functions of County government generally, along with general local infrastructure issues. Infrastructure issues are addressed throughout the Comprehensive Plan, including within land use, community facilities, the Water Resources Element and a Growth Element, as needed. For purposes of this study, this topic also includes local government process issues, such as development review, and the public perception of County government, as shared in the survey instrument.

Infrastructure includes issues such as water supply, wastewater treatment, stormwater management, water quality, and climate change.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

- Partner with Worcester County Public Schools for essential services and schools with sufficient services demanded by the County’s communities.
- Work with the State of Maryland to plan for future needs as the County grows, including emergency services, schools, and community facilities.

CHARACTER & IDENTITY	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County has a strong rural character. • The County has a strong quality of life. • The County has a strong sense of community. • The County’s Mid-Atlantic location and temperate climate make it very desirable. • Ocean City, Assateague Island, and Berlin are attractive communities with a high quality of life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County lacks an arts district. • The County lacks diversity.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County’s small town charm can be leveraged. • Expanding cultural events can draw more visitors. • Moderate winter weather conditions make the County a pleasant place to live year-round. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An influx of new residents is perceived by some as a threat to the County’s long-established “small town feel”

Community Character and Identity include the issues that pertain to the community’s sense of place, identity, character, and general quality of life. The survey and other input provided in this process reinforced the public sentiment that Worcester County has a strong sense of community, strong rural character, and strong quality of life. The variety of destinations, events and facilities in the County generally support this and can be leveraged further to continue to enhance the community.

Some members of the public noted that, in general, the County lacks diversity, and some are concerned that newer residents may change the County’s long-established “small town feel”. Engaging the community in the Comprehensive Plan process will be an important platform to examine these issues in greater depth and identify policies and actions that can help to reinforce the community’s character while identifying opportunities for residents to work together to solve common issues.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

- Look at opportunities to preserve and enhance the small-town character of the County through an increase in community activities.
- Partner with other organizations to protect and preserve the County’s historical resources and make those records available to the public.
- Examine drivers of change that may be affecting the County as a whole.

TRANSPORTATION	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County has an adequate road network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The local population is heavily reliant on automobiles. Public transportation options are lacking in most areas. Route 589 is insufficient for traffic volume and needs to be widened.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Route 90 may need to be expanded. Bike and pedestrian pathways could be expanded. The Public Transportation System could meet unmet demand if expanded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over time, scenic vistas have diminished as traffic has increased. Despite the amount of tourism, the County is perceived as distant from major metropolitan areas. Another airport is perceived as being needed.

The Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, and multi-modal facilities throughout the County. Safe and connected transportation networks help to maintain community sustainability, livability, while serving and supporting current and future development.

The outreach process provided input into the strengths and weaknesses of the County’s current transportation facilities. The public observed that the current roadway system is generally adequate; however, certain roadways could be improved to accommodate growing traffic volumes. Residents would like to see the County strengthen multi-modal facilities so that vehicles will be relied on less. Preservation of the County’s scenic views and agricultural areas should also be incorporated into future transportation development.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

- Integrate walkability and multi-modal transportation into land use planning and development.
- Explore the viability of expanding and improving the transportation network.
- Conserve and maintain scenic roadway views to maintain the rural element of the County.
- Improve connectivity to recreational facilities and other points of interest by adding missing sidewalk or bicycle connections.

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents have good access to health care and health care facilities in the County. The community provides a variety of recreational amenities. Crime is low. Health insurance benefits for public employees is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County's population is aging, which is creating greater public health needs and demand for health care and health care facilities. The community would benefit from healthier food choices and greater selection in grocery stores.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County's recreational facilities and uses could be expanded in terms of type of facilities and the populations served by them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pandemics and the related need for health-related services tax County resources. As the population continues to age, the need for specialized healthcare is growing. There is a perception of public incivility and rising crime.

Public health and safety are considerations in supporting quality of life and promoting and supporting Worcester County as a sustainable and livable community.

The aging of the County population and phenomena such as the recent Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the need for health care facilities and access to health care, as well as the threat of future pandemics to public health. The Comprehensive Plan will provide one platform for the County to examine these issues.

The outreach process highlighted that residents rely on the current healthcare and recreational facilities provided but are concerned about meeting the needs of the aging population and current sizes of these facilities. There are also differing perceptions about crime levels, and the threat of crime throughout the County.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

- Coordinate with public, private, and nonprofit partners to provide more services to Worcester's community.
- Continue to work with the State and local agencies to plan for future needs, including emergency services, community facilities, recreational facilities, and healthcare options.

Pop-Up Events

Public participation is an important part of the comprehensive planning process, as it helps to ensure that the plan accurately reflects the vision of the community. To develop an effective plan that reflects the views, desires, and needs of Worcester County, the County's decisionmakers need to hear ideas, thoughts, and opinions of their citizens and stakeholders.

One part of the County's outreach strategy was to attend three public outreach events, which were planned with facilitated project booth spaces to educate County residents on the comprehensive plan, promote the community survey, and collect additional feedback from attendees. These three events are shown in bold italics. In addition to the pop-up event locations, County staff publicized the community survey at numerous additional events and through other outreach resources.

- Sturgis Museum Juneteenth Event (June 17)
- ***Snow Hill First Friday & Fireworks (July 7)***
- ***Pocomoke City Christmas in July (July 28)***
- Ocean City National Night Out (August 1)
- Ocean Pines National Night Out (August 1)
- Snow Hill National Night Out (August 1)
- Berlin National Night Out (August 1)
- Pocomoke City National Night Out (August 1)
- ***Berlin Peach Festival (August 5)***
- Snow Hill Blessing of the Combines (August 5)
- Berlin Evening of Jazz & Blues (August 26)



Let's Talk!
**COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN UPDATE**

Are you interested in the future of the County?
We'd love to chat!

HELP PLAN YOUR COUNTY'S FUTURE!

- multi-modal planning
- historic preservation
- educational needs
- housing/development

JOIN US!

POCOMOKE CITY 4TH FRIDAY: 5PM-8PM
FRIDAY, JULY 28TH

BERLIN PEACH FESTIVAL: 10AM-3PM
SATURDAY, AUGUST 5TH

SNOW HILL BLESSING OF THE COMBINES: 10AM-3PM
SATURDAY, AUGUST 5TH



Let's Talk! COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

WHAT IS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for jurisdictions to protect and enhance their community character and natural and cultural heritage, preserve environmental resources, and foster economic development by planning for their long-term land use, transportation, housing, water resources, and other public infrastructure needs and identify the actions the County will need to take to meet these needs and achieve the planning goals that relate to them.

WHY CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The State of Maryland requires that comprehensive plans be reviewed every ten years to evaluate the demographic, economic, growth, infrastructure, environmental and regulatory changes that have happened since the last comprehensive plan update. Worcester County is scheduled to conduct the ten-year review between 2021 and 2024.

WHY IS OUTREACH BEING DONE NOW?

Public participation is an important part of the comprehensive planning process, as it helps to ensure that the plan accurately reflects the vision of the community. To develop an effective plan that reflects the views, desires, and needs of Worcester County, the County's decision makers need to hear ideas, thoughts and opinions of their citizens and stakeholders. Our Community Engagement Plan lets us communicate with and gain valuable insight from a broad cross-section of County residents and other stakeholders to shape a collective vision for the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update.

**USE THIS QR CODE TO COMPLETE
OUR COMMUNITY SURVEY!**



Boards used at all pop-up events.



Let's Talk!

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Use your dots to let us know if you agree or disagree with the existing Comprehensive Plan Goal Statement and Objectives below? Is something missing? Do you have other comments? Let us know on the comment cards!

EXISTING GOAL STATEMENT

This plan's goal is to maintain and improve the county's rural and coastal character, protect its natural resources and ecological functions, accommodate a planned amount of growth served by adequate public facilities, improve development's compatibility and aesthetics, continue the county's prosperous economy, and provide for residents' safety and health.

EXISTING OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain and enhance the county's livability
2. Provide adequate public health, safety, social, recreation, and waste disposal services
3. Protect drinking water supplies
4. Preserve and protect natural resources and their ecological functions
5. Facilitate the county's economic activity
6. Provide for adequate housing opportunities for all income and age groups
7. Maintain and enhance the county's cultural and historic assets
8. Continue the viability of the agriculture and forestry industries
9. Accommodate planned future growth through designated "growth centers" with development standards designed to minimize environmental and habitat disruption
10. Undertake land preservation and other methods to preserve existing and establish new open space and "greenways" to ensure habitat diversity and corridors throughout the county
11. Provide for adequate public services to facilitate the desired amount and pattern of growth
12. Encourage development of traditional communities that reduce reliance on vehicles and are compatible with Eastern Shore vernacular architectural style

Snow Hill First Friday & Independence Day Celebration

Snow Hill held their First Friday/Independence Day Celebration on July 7, 2023. A County booth was set up to advertise the Comprehensive Plan update and to promote the public survey. Two information boards were displayed to the public to explain what a Comprehensive Plan is, show the survey QR code, and to list the goals and objectives of the plan. Flyers for the Plan survey were handed out to the public, a roll map of the County was provided for public comment, and index cards were laid out for the public to write what they like or don't like about the County/area they live in. Coloring pages were also provided for children who wished to participate. The public survey aims to assess respondents' perceptions of the County, desires for future development, and to identify community needs. Overall comments centered around maintaining connectivity within the County while also supporting sustainable development, as shown in the bullets below.

- More Community Emergency Response Training
- More parks
- Keep development up North – stop at Berlin
- Public transportation between towns/jobs
- Less building
- Permit tiny houses/communities
- Trails/bike connections
- Downtown Revitalization – Snow Hill & Pocomoke
- Mom & Pop shops with variety
- Affordable Housing
- Buffer Sussex, DE development
- Snow Hill – “America’s next coolest small town!”
- Snow Hill – Nice grocery stores; Wholefoods, Food Lion, or BJ’s
- Pocomoke – Starbucks
- Stockton – Wendy’s/ Fast food options



Pocomoke City Christmas in July

Pocomoke City held their Christmas in July event on July 28, 2023. A County booth was set up to advertise the Comprehensive Plan update and to promote the public survey. Two information boards were displayed to the public to explain what a Comprehensive Plan is, show the survey QR code, and to list the goals and objectives of the plan. Flyers for the Plan survey were handed out to the public, a roll map of the County was provided for public comment, and index cards were laid out for the public to write what they like or don't like about the County/area they live in. Coloring pages were also provided for children who wished to participate. Teams from both Wallace Montgomery as well as Worcester County were present to help with the event and collect feedback. No public comments were received at this event.

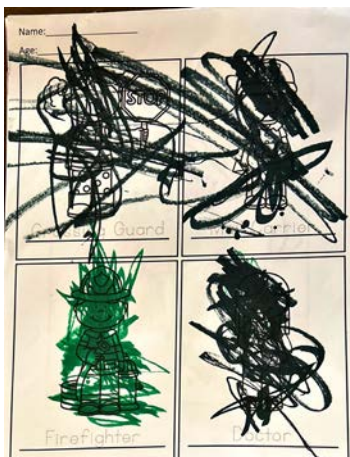
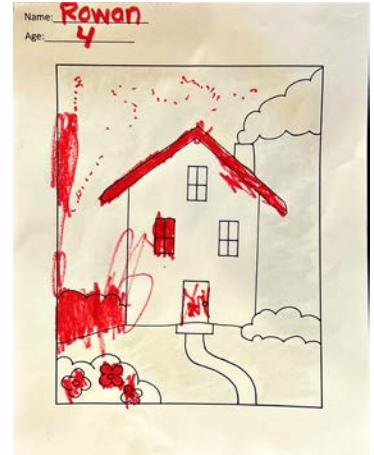
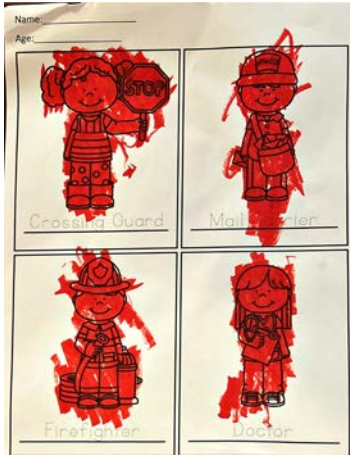
Berlin Peach Festival

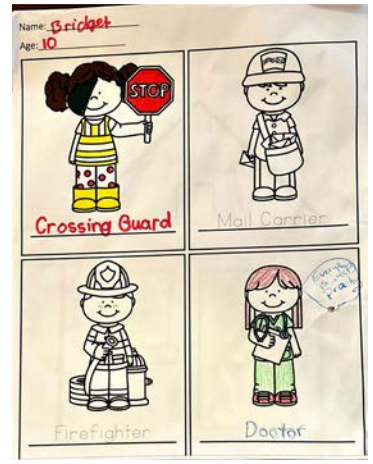
Berlin held their annual Peach Festival on Saturday August 5, 2023. Worcester County set up a booth at this event to advertise the Comprehensive Plan update and to promote the public survey. Two information boards were displayed to the public to explain what a Comprehensive Plan is, show the survey QR code, and list the goals and objectives of the plan. Flyers for the Plan survey were handed out to the public, a roll map of the County was provided for public comment, and index cards were laid out for the public to write what they like or don't like about the County/area they live in. Coloring pages and markers were also provided for children who wanted to participate. Comments focused on ideas to make the County more sustainable, connected, and less developed.



- Need more info online about County events (& municipal)
- No more development in/near Ocean City
- Too much run-off
- Parks & Recs programs are amazing and at a reasonable price
- Libertytown Road & other back roads from Berlin to Salisbury – signage for box turtle crossing (check with SHA)
- Grants for senior citizens for housing, flooding, and repairs
- More recycling
- Stop the wind farms off Ocean City
- Ocean City needs more natural environment
- Major flooding in Ocean Pines
- Skate Park
- Traffic light at Assateague Road & Stephen Decatur (or roundabout)
- Keep development centered on Towns
- Need more bike lanes
- Sound barriers along Rt 90 to buffer OP when 90 is expanded
- More natural vegetation for SWM resiliency
- Better road controls on 589/roundabout @ North Gate OP
- Make skateboarding legal in Berlin
- Need more public transportation so not everyone needs to drive
- Upgrade water supply – barely making EPA standards (OP, Berlin, “all over”)
- More food trucks
- Taxes are way too high
- Less development – protect Worcester County
- Need reliable internet
- America’s Coolest Small Town! – Berlin
- Commercial land use designation
- Another Park facility
- Sinepuxent Road & Rt 611 traffic controls
- Keep south end low development/open farmland

Completed Coloring Pages from the Berlin Peach Festival





Community Survey

In coordination with County Staff and the Planning Commission, consultants conducted a community survey for County residents, property owners, and students. Responses to the survey are used to assess respondents' perceptions of the County; desires for future redevelopment; identification of community needs; and other key topic areas.

The survey collected demographic and psychographic information about respondents. The survey's primary function was to collect data related to:

- Housing, employment, and livability
- Transportation and mobility
- Public safety and infrastructure
- Recreation and well-being
- Desired land uses
- Environmental-related concerns and behaviors
- Open space and agricultural preservation
- Other key topics

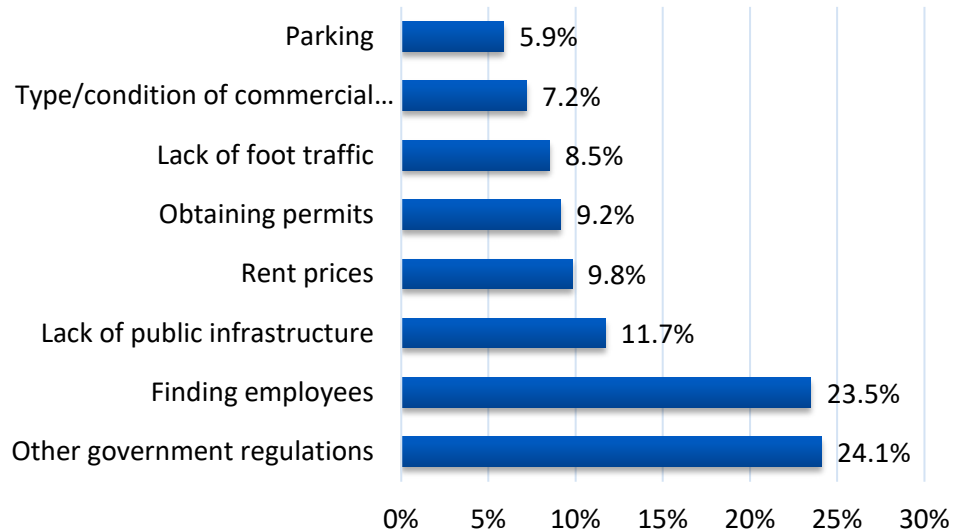
The survey was open to the public from June to August 2023. A total of 1,412 people attempted to take the Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey; however, only 1,333 indicated that they were either a Worcester County resident, property owner, or student. Of those, 1,117 responded sufficiently to the qualifying questions and, therefore, were able to take part in the full survey. Below is a brief overview of the survey, with a focus on a selection of the larger topics presented. A full copy of the public survey and the responses is available at the Department of Development Review and Permitting.

Overall, the survey revealed that the common concerns throughout the County appear to be the same – affordability of housing, availability of senior housing, funding of the public school programs, broadband access, and availability of high paying jobs.

Question 16

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST OBSTACLE OPERATING IN THE COUNTY? (BUSINESS)

There were 153 responses to this question. The most responses indicated other government regulations (37), followed by finding employees (36), lack of public infrastructure (18), rent prices (15), obtaining permits (14), lack of foot traffic (13), type/condition of commercial spaces (11), and parking (9).

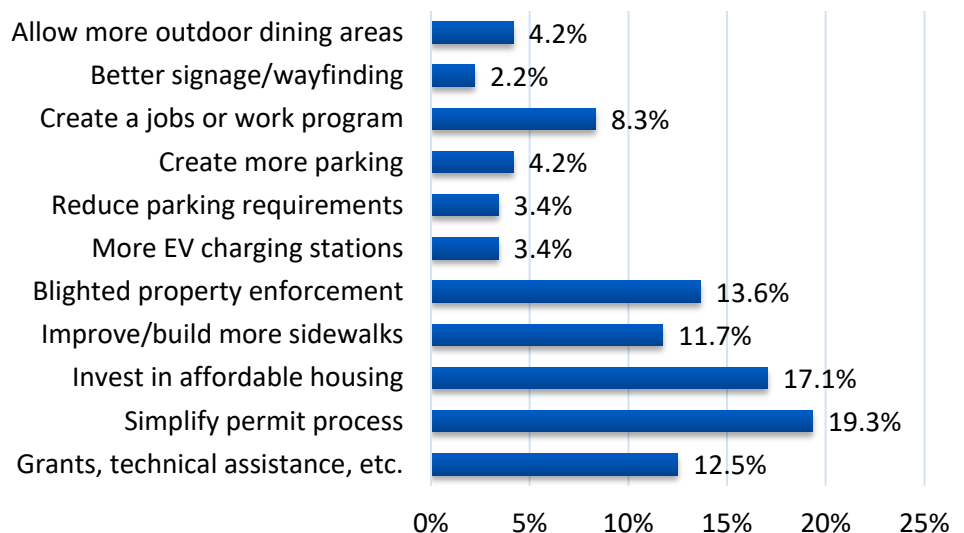


Question 17

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTY ACTIONS WOULD BE THE BIGGEST BENEFIT TO YOUR BUSINESS?

175 people responded to this question. Responses, in order, were to simplify the permit process (50), invest in affordable housing (44), provide enforcement against blighted properties (36), provide grants and technical assistance (33), improve/build more sidewalks (31), create a jobs or work program (21), create more parking (11), allow more outdoor dining areas (11), provide more electric vehicle (EV) charging stations (9), reduce parking requirements (9), and provide better signage/wayfinding (6). Several people also added write-in responses:

- Access to supplies
- Affordable utilities
- Better jobs
- Bike network
- Broadband
- Business park
- Cell service
- Commercial space availability
- Community planning
- Contact follow-up
- Ease regulations
- Education
- Listen to community input
- Lower taxes/fees
- Marine activity areas
- More housing
- Seasonal employees
- Seasonal housing
- Sewer service
- Soil District services
- Specialized employees
- Streamline Health Department inspections
- Support for agriculture
- Support for land development
- Vacation rental regulations



Question 24

ARE YOU ABLE TO AFFORD TO LIVE IN WORCESTER COUNTY?

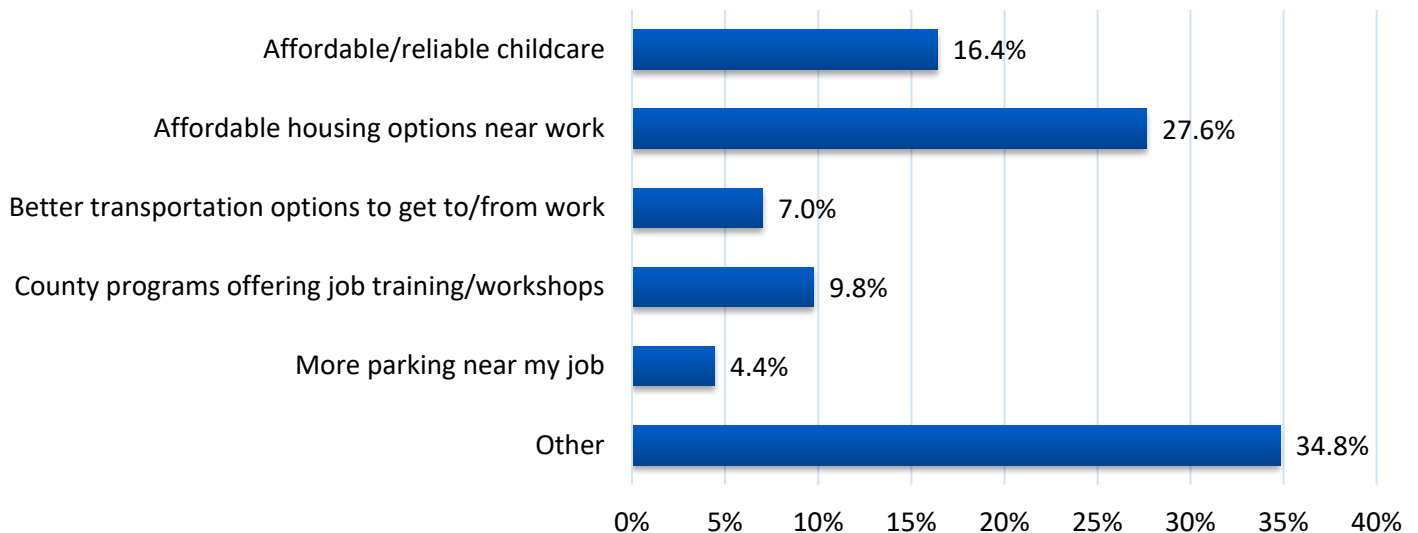
There were 582 responses to this question. The majority (75.6%) are able to afford to live in the County (440), while 21.7% are not (126), and 2.8% indicated the question was not applicable to their situation (16).

Question 28

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPACTFUL THING THAT WOULD MAKE WORKING IN WORCESTER COUNTY EASIER?

543 people responded to this question. Responses were affordable and reliable childcare (89), affordable housing options near my place of employment (150), better transportation to and from work (38), County programs offering training and workshops (53), more parking (24), and other (189). Several people also added write-in responses:

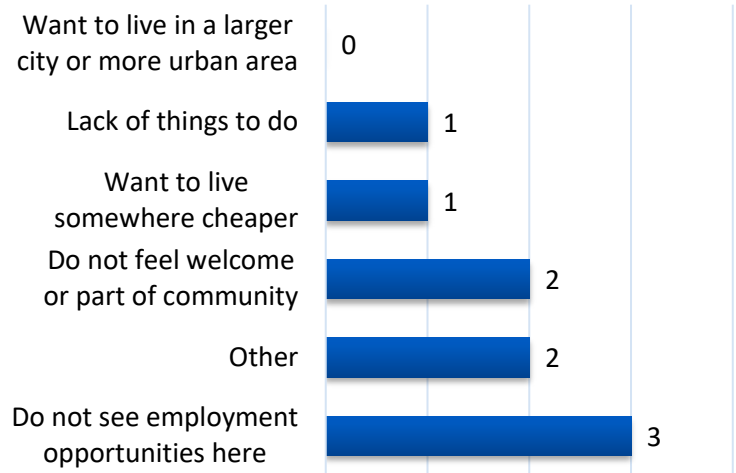
- Adequate/competitive salary/benefits
- Affordable housing
- Better/more employment opportunities
- Better signage
- Better/safer transportation options
- Bike paths/sidewalks
- Broadband internet/WiFi
- Business-friendly climate
- Cheaper gas
- Commissioners/BOE on same page
- Decrease in population
- Eased zoning regulations
- Fewer social programs
- Funding for public education
- Funding for public safety agencies
- Governance change
- Growth control
- Improved water quality
- Increase in population
- Less traffic
- Lower taxes
- Maintaining/bettering schools
- More activities
- More businesses
- More green space
- More healthcare providers
- More remote work
- More restaurants
- New bridge
- Public transportation
- Reliable childcare
- Roadway improvements
- Speed enforcement/lower speed limits
- Student summer programs



Question 33

WHAT REASONS DO YOU HAVE FOR LEAVING WORCESTER COUNTY?

Five students answered this question and were able to choose all options that applied. Three students indicated they were leaving because they do not see employment opportunities in the County, two do not feel welcome or part of the community, two had another reason, one wants to live somewhere cheaper, and one indicated there was a lack of things to do in the County.



Question 46

WHAT ONE BUSINESS WOULD YOU NOT WANT TO SEE COME TO WORCESTER COUNTY? (BUSINESS NAME/TYPE)

591 people responded to this question with the following write-in responses:

- Sports complex
- Fast food establishments
- Recreational shops
- Hotels
- Starbucks
- Casino
- Car wash
- Storage spaces
- Big chain stores
- Shopping malls

Question 52

WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE CHANGED TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN WORCESTER COUNTY?

635 people responded to this question with the following write-in responses:

- Improve biking options, walkability, and transportation
- Improve traffic
- Decrease development
- Protect the natural resources
- Improve broadband
- Make housing affordable
- Support green infrastructure
- Increase communication/outreach
- Improve the roadways
- Support and improve EMS
- Reduce crime
- Implement smart growth and zoning
- Decrease taxes
- More parks and open space

Question 53

WHAT ARE WORCESTER COUNTY'S GREATEST STRENGTHS AND ASSETS?

637 people responded to this question with these common write-in responses:

- Proximity to the coast & beaches
- Educational system
- Small town feel
- Slower pace of life
- Rural elements
- Tourism
- Safety
- Community

Question 54

WHAT ARE THE MOST CRITICAL ISSUES FACING WORCESTER COUNTY?

638 people responded to this question with these common write-in responses:

Today:

- Overgrowth and crowding
- Cost of living
- Traffic
- Educational funding
- Aging population
- Housing affordability
- Negative effects on natural features
- Increasing crime
- Water and wastewater availability and treatment

Future:

- Overgrowth and crowding
- Cost of living
- Traffic
- Preserving the natural resources
- Educational funding
- Aging population
- Broadband access
- Housing affordability
- Pollution to the water resources
- Infrastructure
- Security & services
- Climate change
- County and roadway capacity
- Residents moving away

Question 64

WHAT IS THE BEST STRATEGY TO MAKE LIVING IN WORCESTER COUNTY EASIER FOR SENIOR CITIZENS?

652 people responded to this question, the answers are listed below from best to worst.

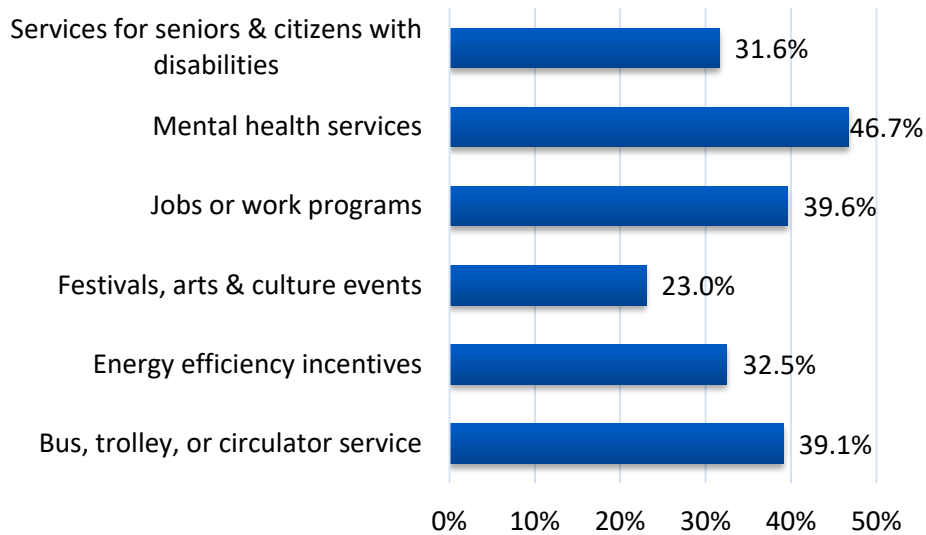
- Offer transportation options for those who can't drive - 40.0%
- Allow a greater variety of housing types - 37.2%
- Provide resources for home modifications (ramps, railings, etc.) - 18.4%
- Organize social events for seniors - 4.2%

Question 65

WHAT PUBLIC SERVICES DOES WORCESTER COUNTY NEED MORE OF IN THE FUTURE?

691 people responded to this question. The top three answers were:

- Mental health services - 46.7%
- Jobs or work programs - 39.6%
- Bus, trolley, or circulator service - 39.0%



Conclusion and Next Steps

Under the State of Maryland's enabling legislation, comprehensive plans focus on land use and development, first and foremost, but address many related community development issues such as housing, economic development, environmental and historic resources, transportation, and growth-related infrastructure that affect land use and are affected by changes in the community. Thinking about these issues and topic areas wholistically helps a community understand and identify the linkages among these issues, and plan effectively to meet local needs, especially as these needs evolve and grow.

The Public Engagement Process has enabled the Worcester County Department of Development Review and Permitting, and the Planning Commission, to begin to identify the issues facing the County, collect public input about these issues and the concerns that County residents have, and help to frame the direction and focus of the County's next Comprehensive Plan.

The effectiveness of this outreach, as quantified and demonstrated by the more than 1,500 residents who participated in the process, shows that the public is engaged in local issues and recognize the importance of the next Plan. The interest generated by this process should be leveraged by the County and its planning consultant to continue and enhance the public participation needed while the Plan is developed.

Many of the issues, topics and challenges identified in the Public Engagement process can and should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan and be discussed and prioritized by the Planning Commission and County decisionmakers as they launch the process.

The need for affordable housing and preserving community character are two important issues and considerations that will likely be at the forefront of these discussions. Affordable and workforce housing is a statewide and national issue affecting almost every community in Maryland and beyond. This is evidenced by recent legislative changes adopted by the Maryland Legislature that include new requirements for the Housing Element of the plan on affordable and workforce housing and fair housing.

The residents of Worcester County care deeply about their community and want it to thrive. They appreciate the rural character of the County and the many attractions, destinations, and services available in its communities. Many are concerned about how the County is changing and want County government to be proactive about protecting and enhancing the many assets and characteristics of the County that have supported generations of local residents and bring new residents and visitors every year.

Using the information gathered in this report, the County can work to identify the issues and concerns voiced by their citizens and stakeholders and move forward with a plan to create a prosperous and equitable future.

Several of the issues highlighted in the outreach can be addressed directly in the Comprehensive Plan, while others may require a more indirect approach. For example, the Plan will be able to directly address housing issues using established mechanisms such as the Zoning Ordinance and code enforcement; however, issues such as education and crime are less impacted by land use and development policy and infrastructure projects.

For these issues, the Comprehensive Plan can play an indirect role by identifying and addressing environmental contributors to the issue and raising awareness of community priorities that need to be dealt with outside of the County's comprehensive planning process.

Below are summarized many of the key findings of this outreach. These can serve as the beginning of the discussion as the Planning Commission and County staff develop the next Comprehensive Plan. These elements are taken from the SWOT analysis but regrouped to consider the linkages and connections among topic areas.

Key Findings and Considerations for the Comprehensive Plan:

- Examine the County's future growth, including location, amount and growth rate, and how future growth can and will need to be supported through public infrastructure.
- Examine drivers of change that may be affecting the County as a whole.
- Identify, evaluate, and analyze current and future housing needs and trends.
- Consider how to address housing issues through land use and zoning changes.
- Draft the Housing Element of the Plan in keeping with the recent legislative requirements adopted by the state regarding affordable and workforce housing and fair housing.
- Continue to identify opportunities to provide equity in housing and affordable housing opportunities throughout the County.
- Explore policies and actions that encourage redevelopment of existing residential and commercial properties.
- Identify the impacts and potential impacts of teleworking on the County's retail businesses and retail uses.
- Look at opportunities to preserve and enhance the small-town character of the County through an increase in community and cultural activities.
- Continue to promote and protect the County's vibrant agricultural sector and leverage local advantages.
- Examine policies and action items in the plan to continue to conserve and protect the County's natural environment, open space, and waterfronts.
- Explore the viability and continue to integrate green infrastructure approaches to environmental protection.
- Pursue non-retail businesses that will support the workforce throughout the County during the business day.
- Partner with Worcester County Public Schools for essential services and schools with sufficient services demanded by the County's communities.
- Plan for the impacts of the Worcester County Sports Complex.
- Integrate walkability and multi-modal transportation into land use planning and development.
- Work with the State of Maryland to plan for future needs as the County grows, including emergency services, schools, and community facilities.
- Examine potential partnerships and collaborations with the State to provide incentives to specialty and unique businesses to locate in Worcester County.
- Conserve and maintain scenic roadway views to maintain the rural character of the County.
- Improve connectivity to recreational facilities and other points of interest by adding missing sidewalk or bicycle connections.

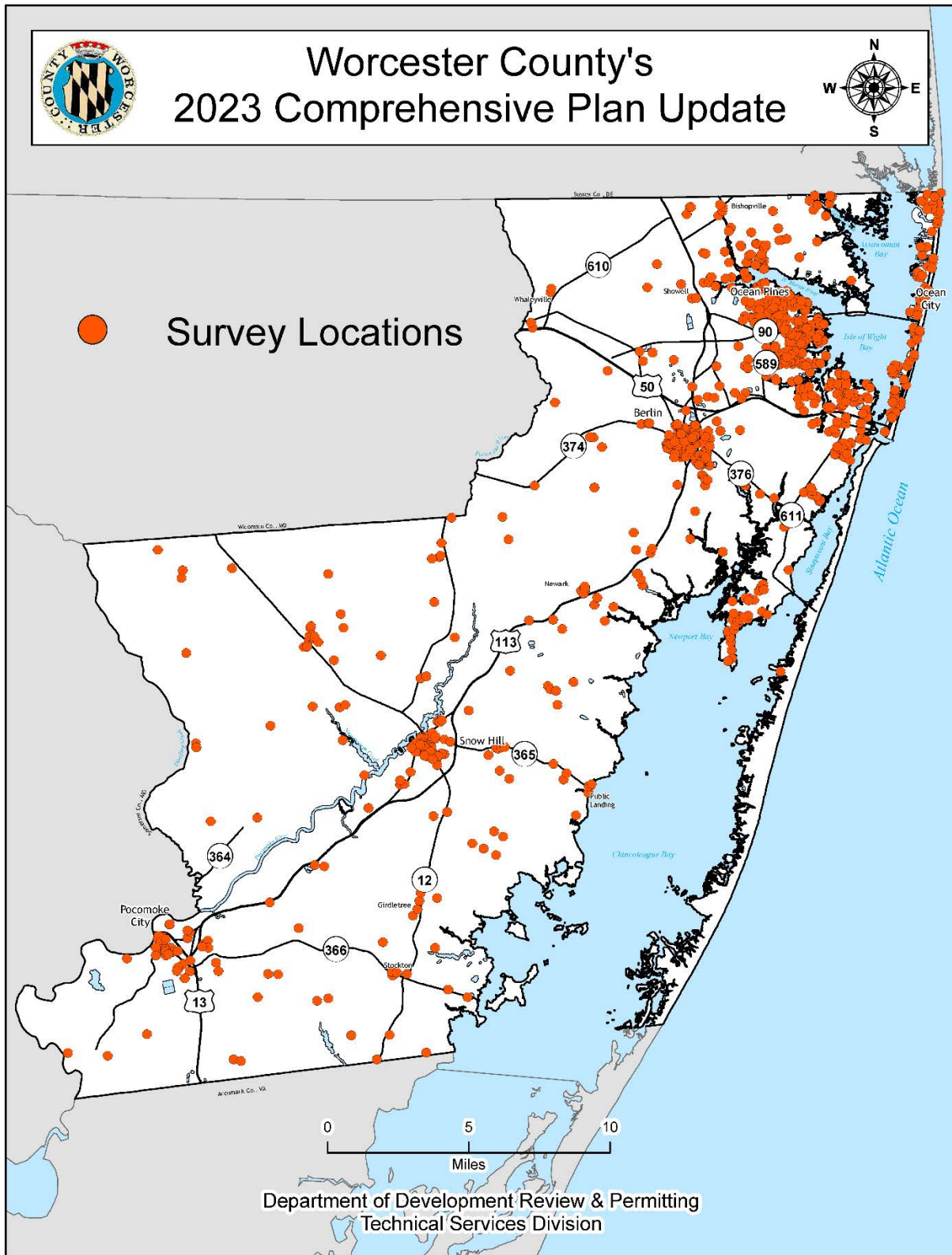
APPENDIX A

SURVEY RESULTS

SURVEY MAP

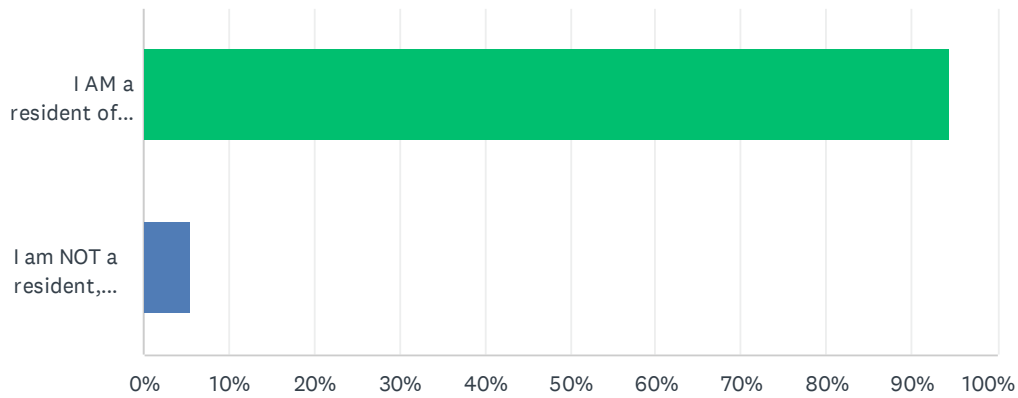
Appendix A – Worcester County Survey Map

The figure below shows the survey locations of all the County residents that were able to participate in the questionnaire.



Q1 Please choose one of the following:

Answered: 1,412 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I AM a resident of Worcester County, I own property in Worcester County, or I am a student in Worcester County.	94.41%	1,333
I am NOT a resident, property owner, or student in Worcester County.	5.59%	79
TOTAL		1,412

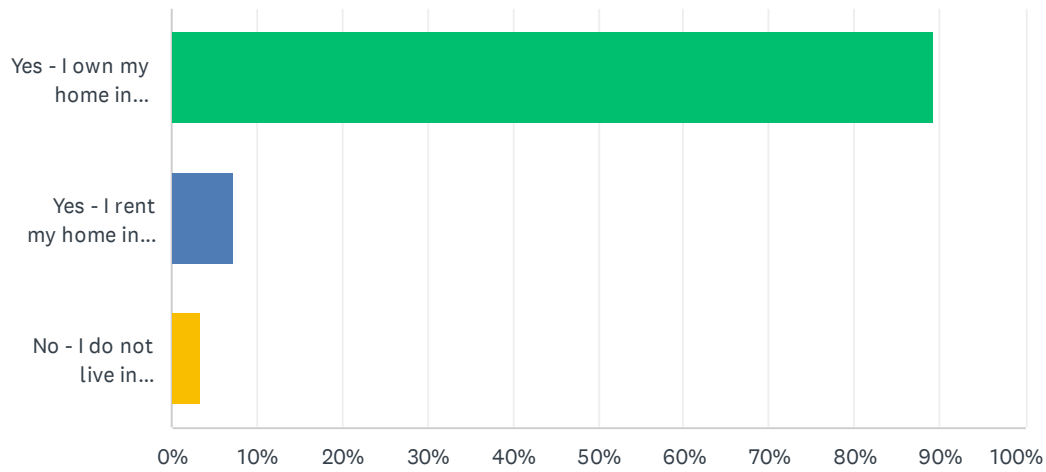
Q2 In Question 1, you indicated you were a County resident, property owner, or student. Please provide the related address for confirmation. This will remain confidential and will be used solely for confirmation purposes.

Answered: 1,125 Skipped: 287

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Name	0.00%	0
Company	0.00%	0
Address	100.00%	1,125
Address 2	0.00%	0
City/Town	100.00%	1,125
State/Province	0.00%	0
ZIP/Postal Code	100.00%	1,125
Country	0.00%	0
Email Address	0.00%	0
Phone Number	0.00%	0

Q3 Do you live in Worcester County (primary home)?

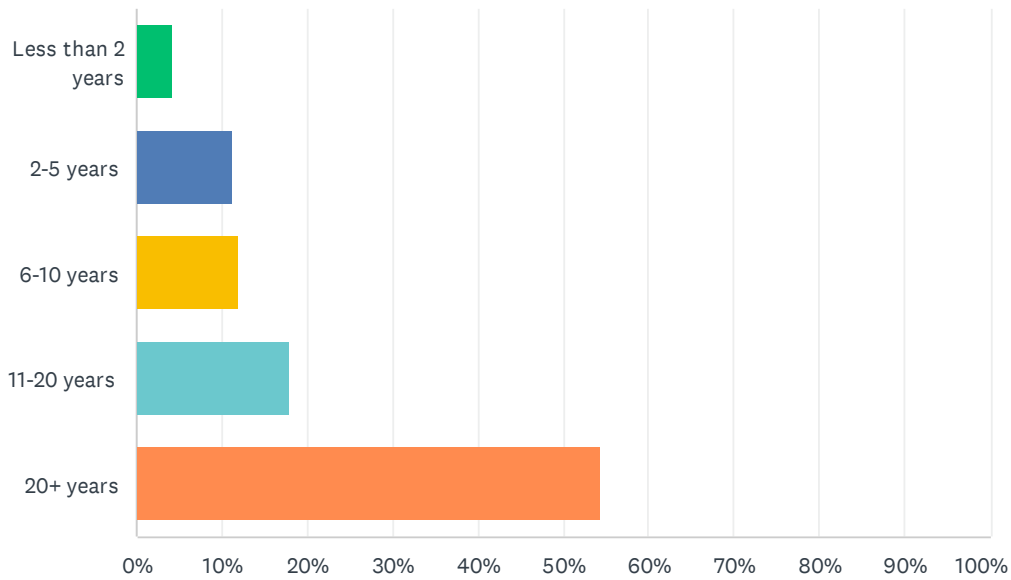
Answered: 1,119 Skipped: 293



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes - I own my home in Worcester County	89.28%	999
Yes - I rent my home in Worcester County	7.33%	82
No - I do not live in Worcester County (please specify)	3.40%	38
TOTAL		1,119

Q4 I've lived in Worcester County for...

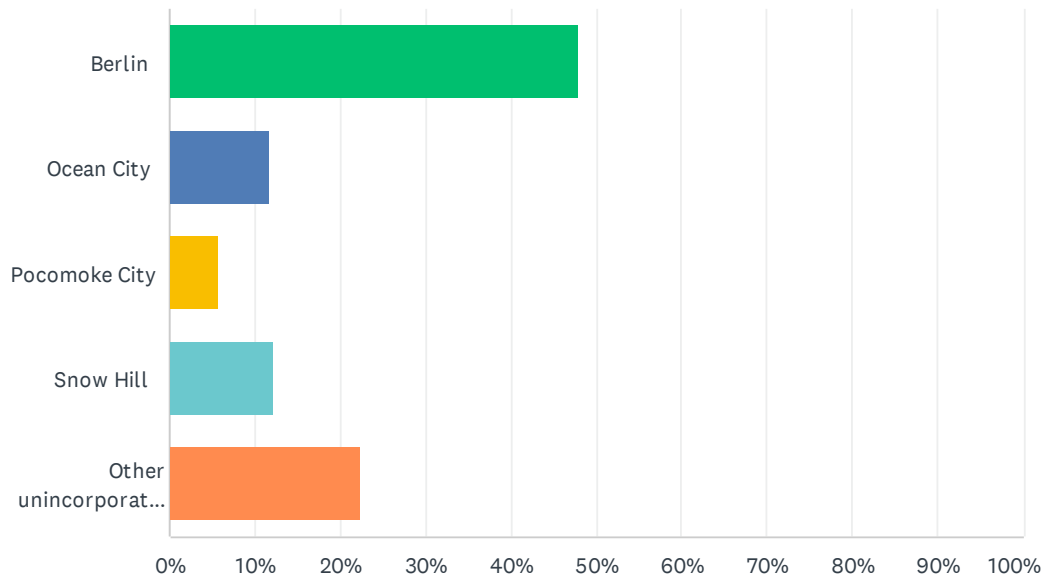
Answered: 1,057 Skipped: 355



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 2 years	4.35%	46
2-5 years	11.35%	120
6-10 years	12.02%	127
11-20 years	17.98%	190
20+ years	54.30%	574
TOTAL		1,057

Q5 Where do you live?

Answered: 1,060 Skipped: 352

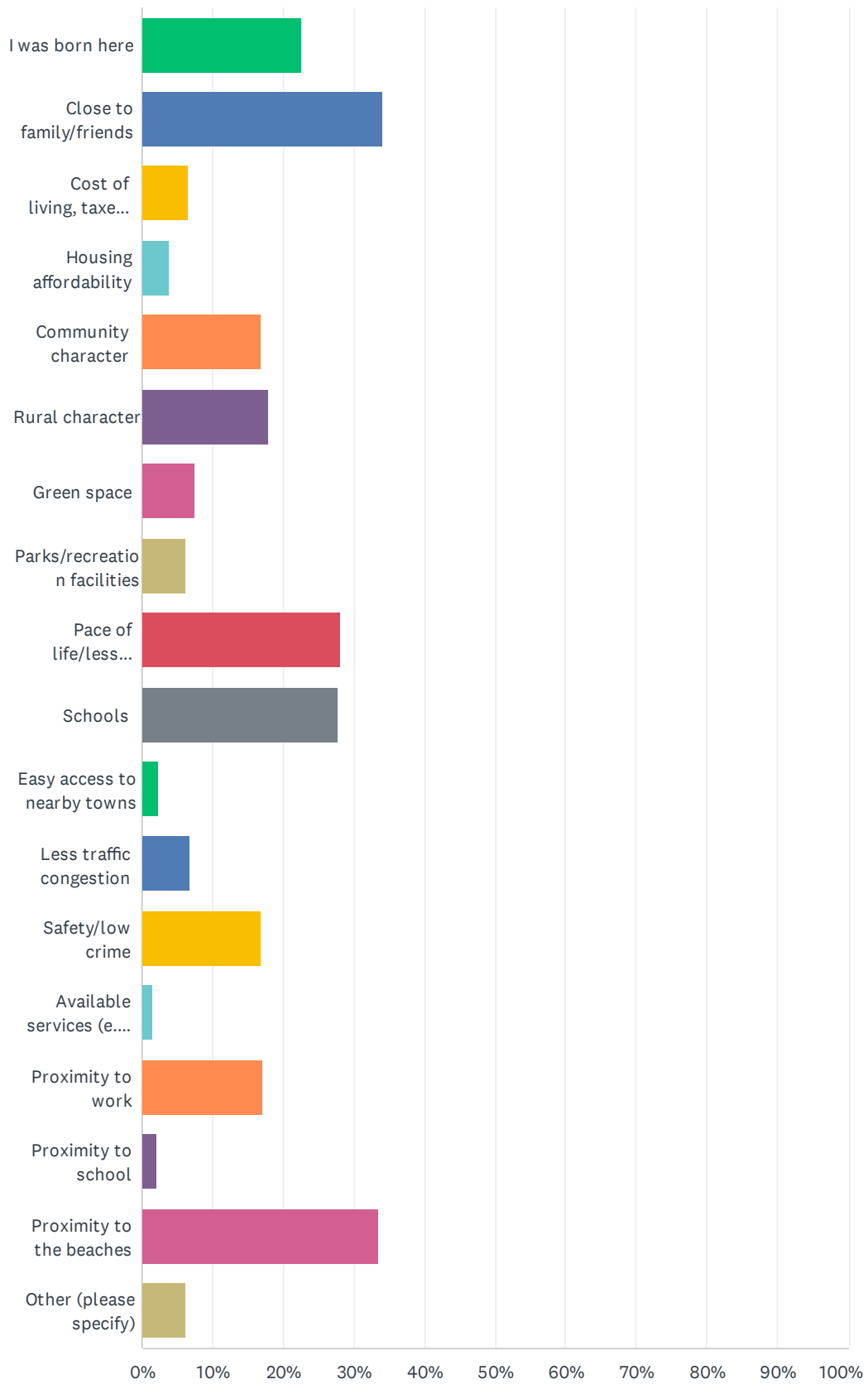


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Berlin	48.02%	509
Ocean City	11.79%	125
Pocomoke City	5.66%	60
Snow Hill	12.17%	129
Other unincorporated community within Worcester County:	22.36%	237
TOTAL		1,060

Q6 I live in Worcester County because: (top 3)

Answered: 1,061 Skipped: 351

Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

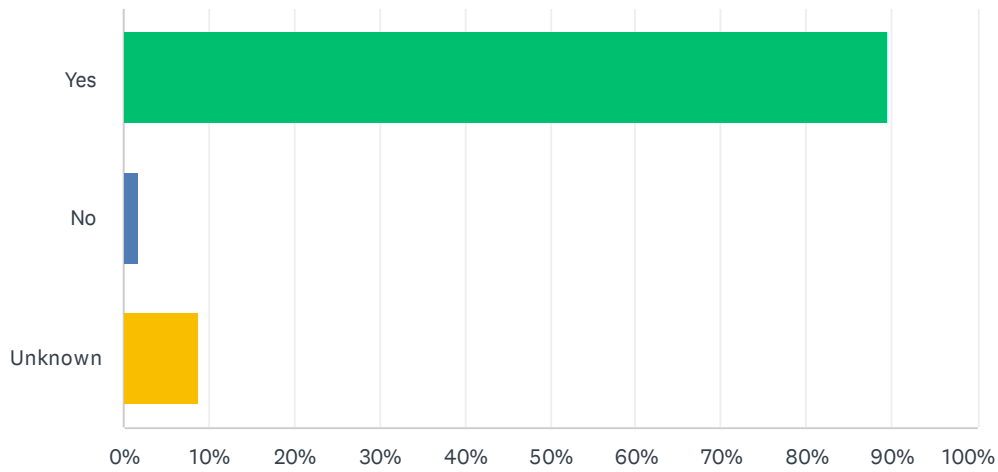


Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I was born here	22.53%	239
Close to family/friends	34.02%	361
Cost of living, taxes, utilities, etc.	6.60%	70
Housing affordability	3.86%	41
Community character	16.78%	178
Rural character	17.81%	189
Green space	7.54%	80
Parks/recreation facilities	6.13%	65
Pace of life/less hectic	28.18%	299
Schools	27.71%	294
Easy access to nearby towns	2.36%	25
Less traffic congestion	6.79%	72
Safety/low crime	16.87%	179
Available services (e.g., medical)	1.51%	16
Proximity to work	17.06%	181
Proximity to school	2.17%	23
Proximity to the beaches	33.46%	355
Other (please specify)	6.13%	65
Total Respondents: 1,061		

Q7 Do you plan on staying in Worcester County for the foreseeable future?

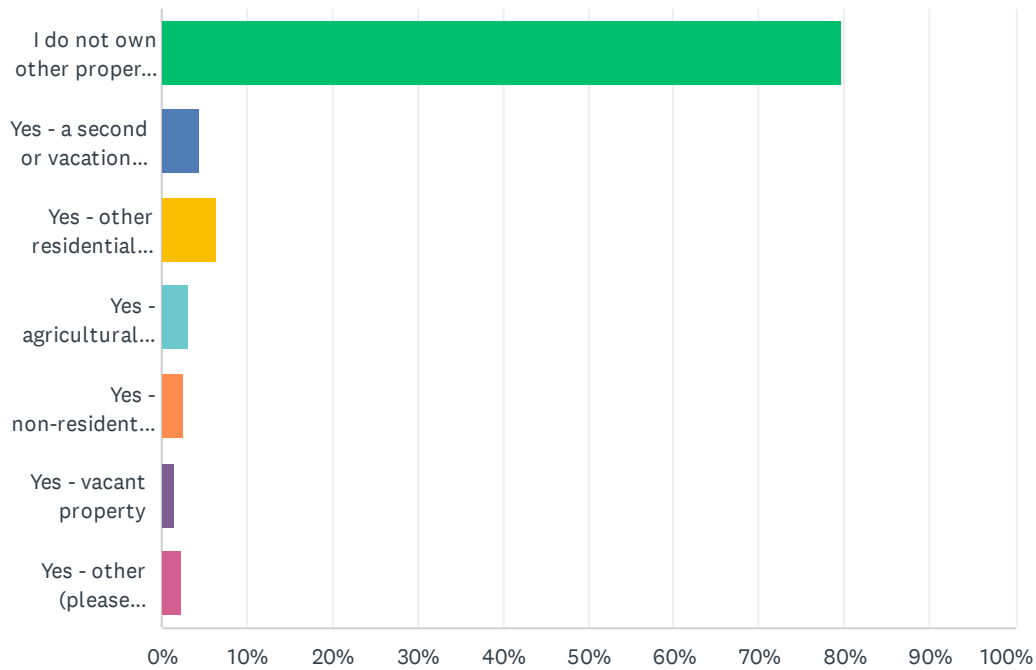
Answered: 1,058 Skipped: 354



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	89.51%	947
No	1.80%	19
Unknown	8.70%	92
TOTAL		1,058

Q8 Do you own other property in Worcester County?

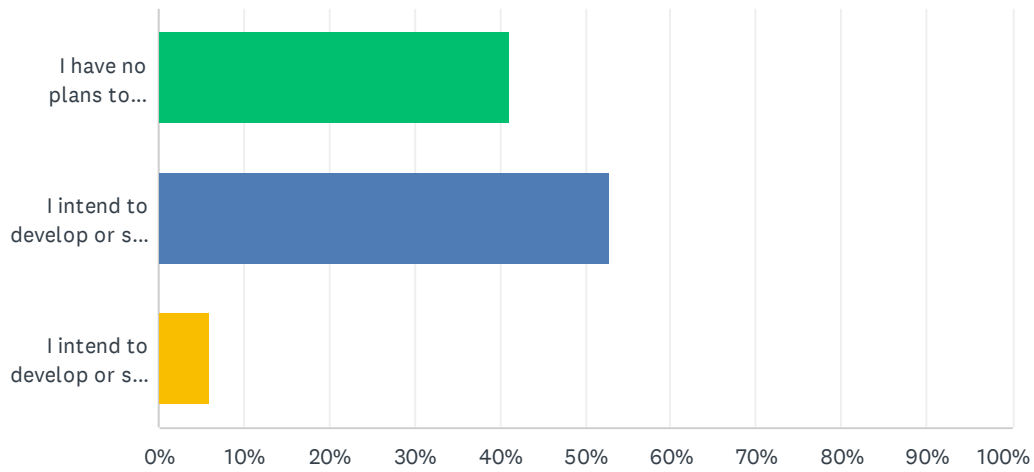
Answered: 1,091 Skipped: 321



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not own other property in Worcester County	79.65%	869
Yes - a second or vacation home	4.49%	49
Yes - other residential property	6.32%	69
Yes - agricultural property	3.21%	35
Yes - non-residential property	2.47%	27
Yes - vacant property	1.47%	16
Yes - other (please specify)	2.38%	26
TOTAL		1,091

Q9 What are your plans for the vacant property?

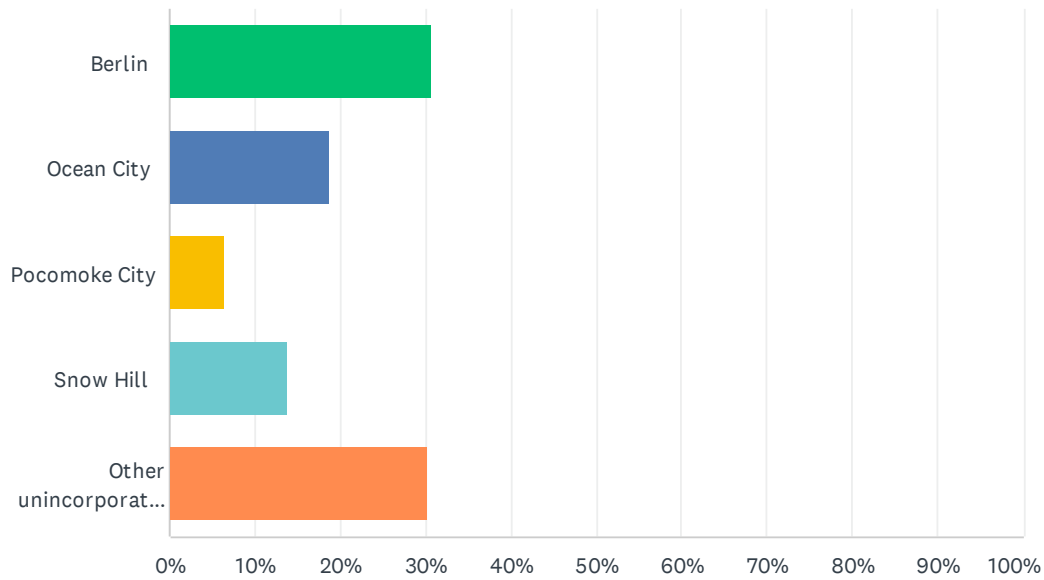
Answered: 17 Skipped: 1,395



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I have no plans to develop or sell at this time	41.18%	7
I intend to develop or sell within the next 5 years	52.94%	9
I intend to develop or sell in more than 5 years	5.88%	1
TOTAL		17

Q10 My other property is located in:

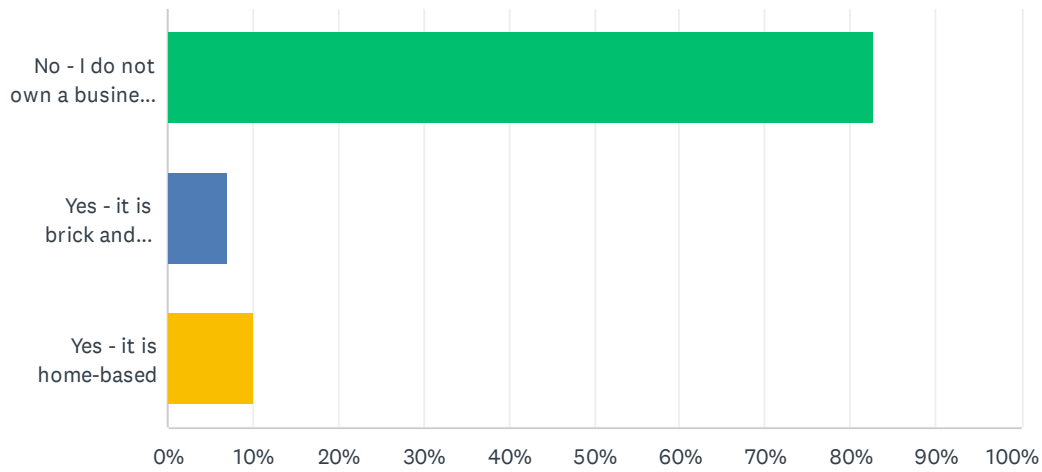
Answered: 218 Skipped: 1,194



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Berlin	30.73%	67
Ocean City	18.81%	41
Pocomoke City	6.42%	14
Snow Hill	13.76%	30
Other unincorporated community within Worcester County:	30.28%	66
TOTAL		218

Q11 Do you own a business in Worcester County?

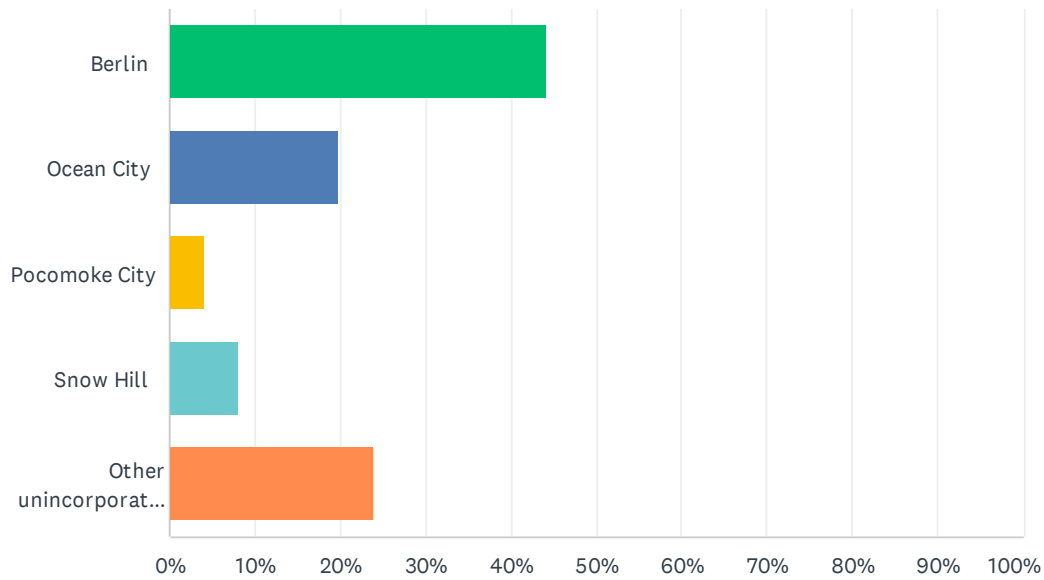
Answered: 1,088 Skipped: 324



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No - I do not own a business in Worcester County	82.81%	901
Yes - it is brick and mortar	7.08%	77
Yes - it is home-based	10.11%	110
TOTAL		1,088

Q12 My business is located in:

Answered: 172 Skipped: 1,240



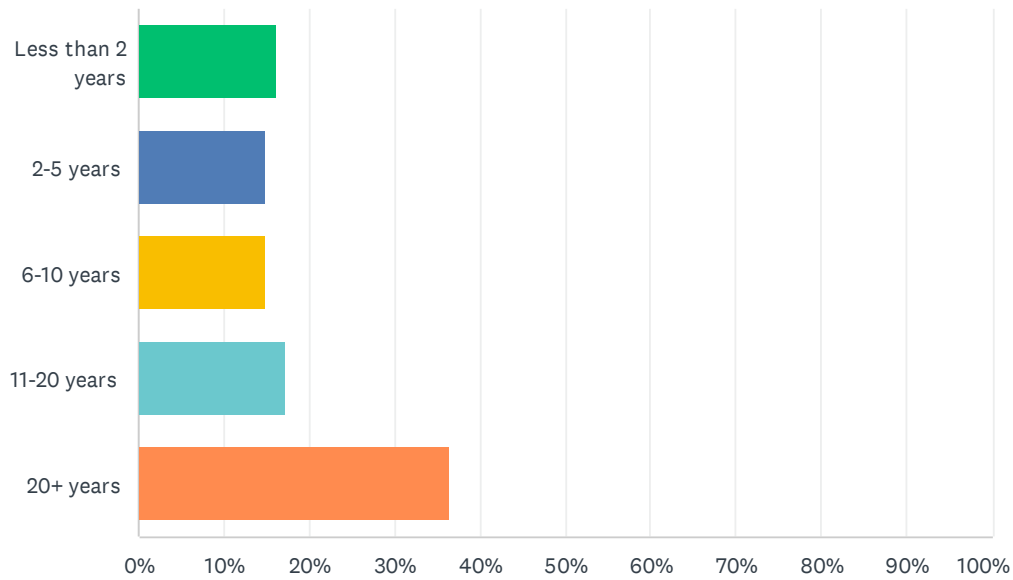
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Berlin	44.19%	76
Ocean City	19.77%	34
Pocomoke City	4.07%	7
Snow Hill	8.14%	14
Other unincorporated community within Worcester County:	23.84%	41
TOTAL		172

Q13 What type of business do you own?

Answered: 173 Skipped: 1,239

Q14 I've owned my business in Worcester County for...

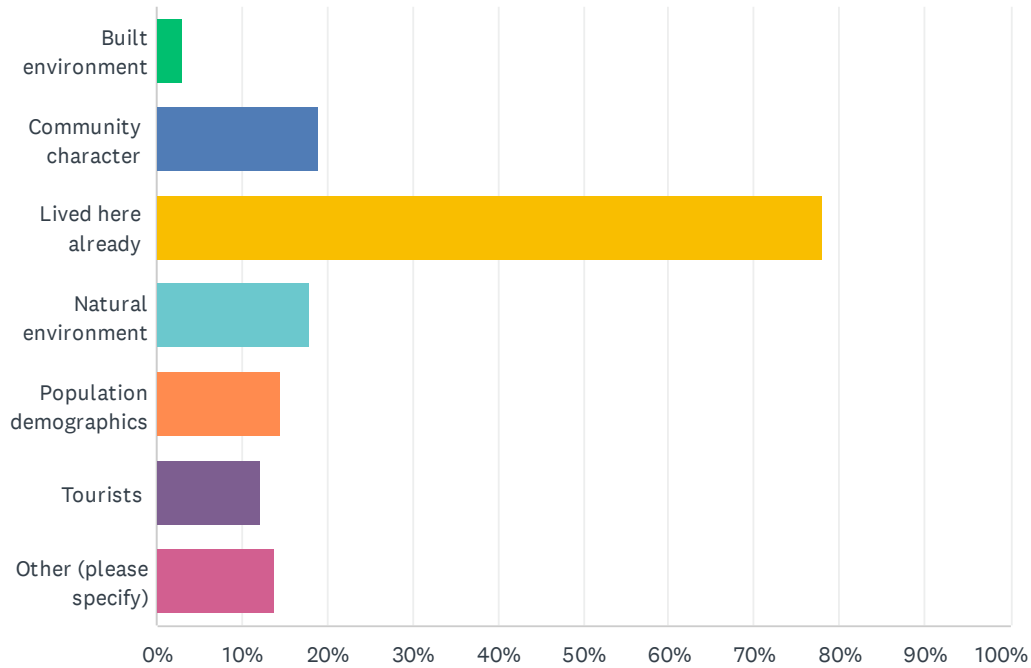
Answered: 173 Skipped: 1,239



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 2 years	16.18%	28
2-5 years	15.03%	26
6-10 years	15.03%	26
11-20 years	17.34%	30
20+ years	36.42%	63
TOTAL		173

Q15 What attracted you to open your business in Worcester County? (choose all that apply)

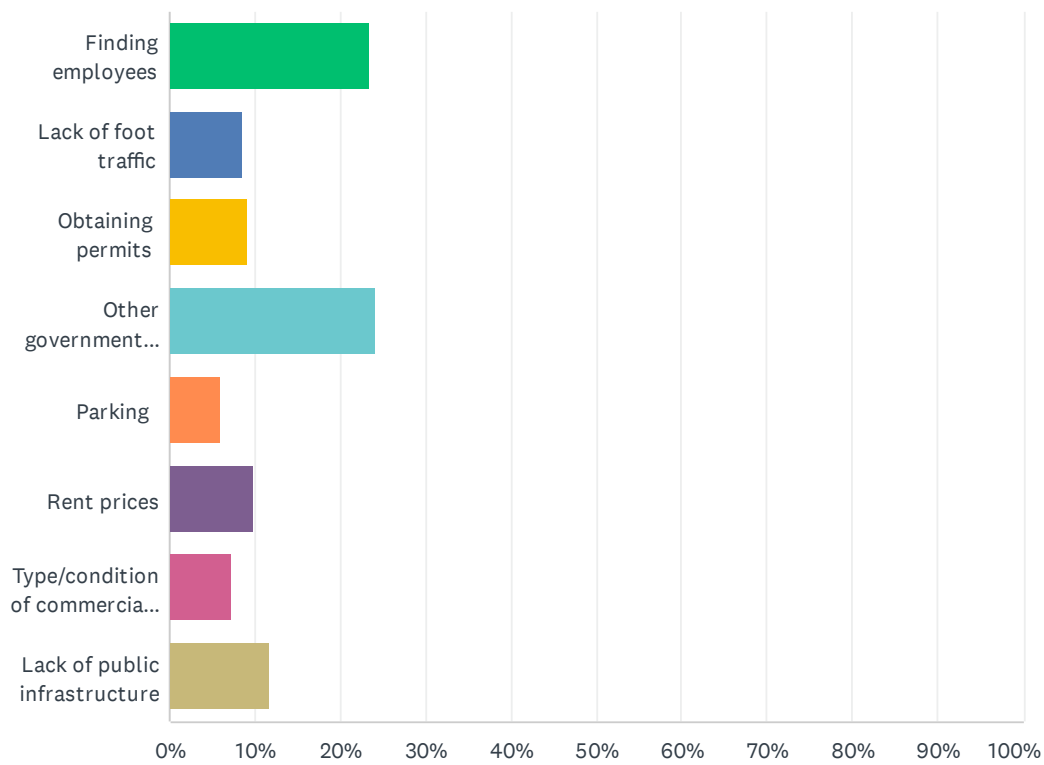
Answered: 173 Skipped: 1,239



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Built environment	2.89%	5
Community character	19.08%	33
Lived here already	78.03%	135
Natural environment	17.92%	31
Population demographics	14.45%	25
Tourists	12.14%	21
Other (please specify)	13.87%	24
Total Respondents: 173		

Q16 What is your biggest obstacle operating in the County?

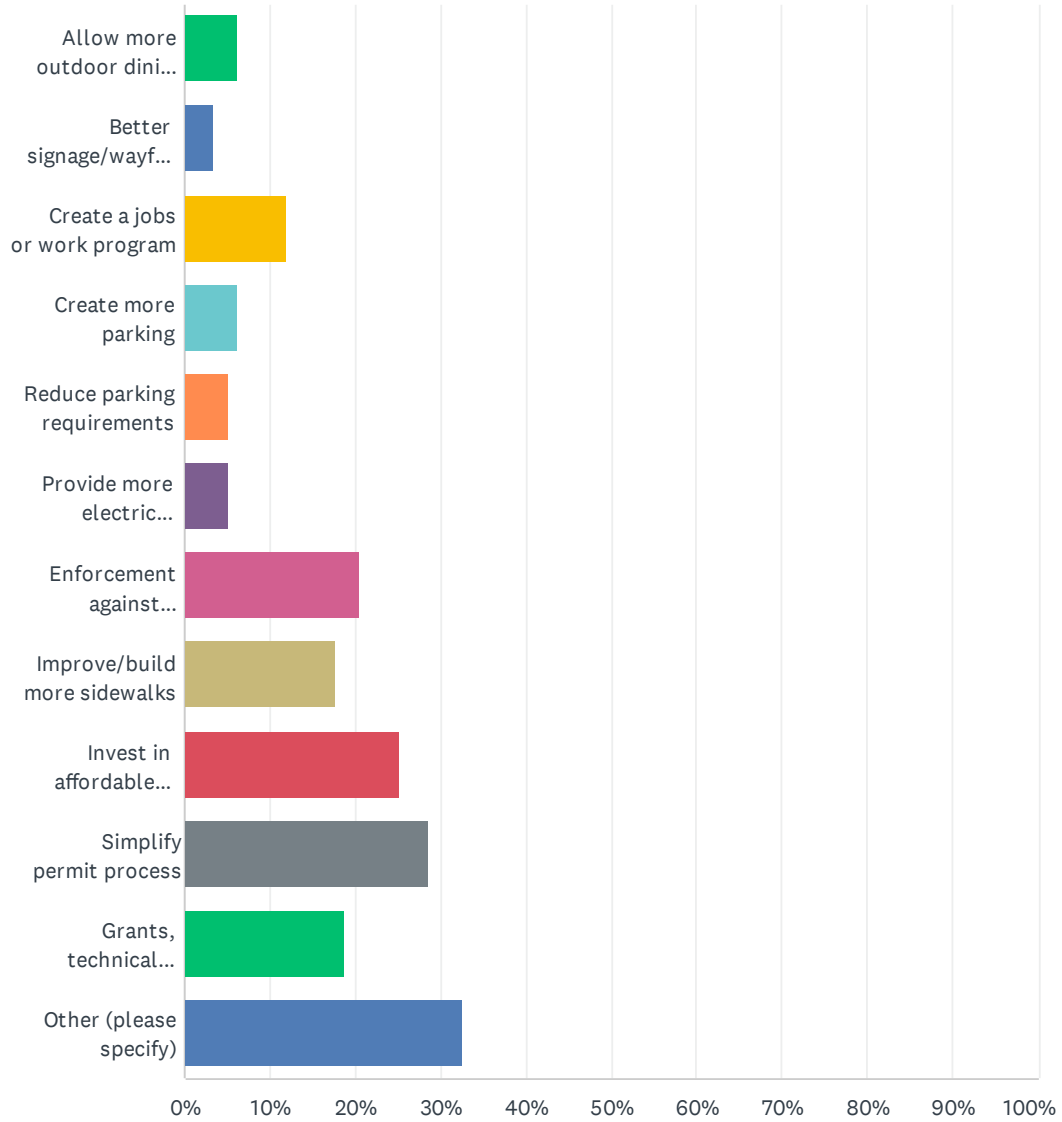
Answered: 153 Skipped: 1,259



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Finding employees	23.53%	36
Lack of foot traffic	8.50%	13
Obtaining permits	9.15%	14
Other government regulations	24.18%	37
Parking	5.88%	9
Rent prices	9.80%	15
Type/condition of commercial spaces	7.19%	11
Lack of public infrastructure	11.76%	18
TOTAL		153

Q17 Which of the following County actions would be the biggest benefit to your business? (top 3)

Answered: 175 Skipped: 1,237

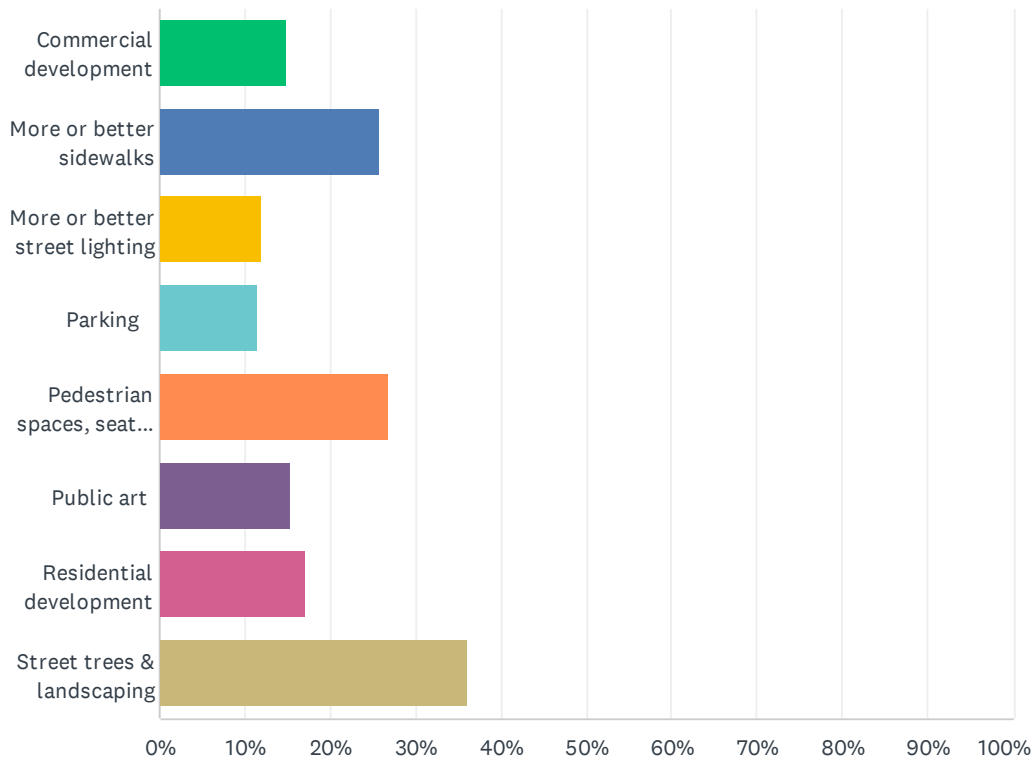


Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Allow more outdoor dining areas	6.29%	11
Better signage/wayfinding	3.43%	6
Create a jobs or work program	12.00%	21
Create more parking	6.29%	11
Reduce parking requirements	5.14%	9
Provide more electric vehicle (EV) charging stations	5.14%	9
Enforcement against blighted properties	20.57%	36
Improve/build more sidewalks	17.71%	31
Invest in affordable housing	25.14%	44
Simplify permit process	28.57%	50
Grants, technical assistance, etc.	18.86%	33
Other (please specify)	32.57%	57
Total Respondents: 175		

Q18 What do you want to see more of near your business? (choose 2)

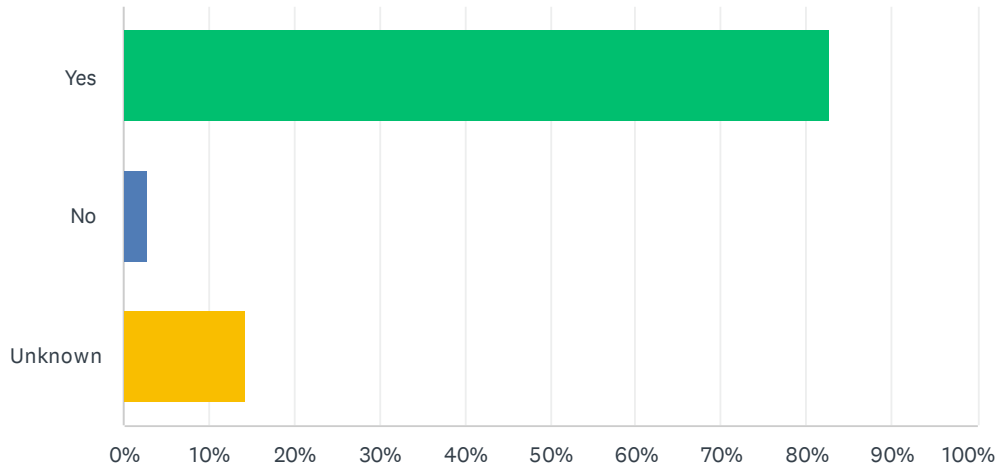
Answered: 175 Skipped: 1,237



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Commercial development	14.86%	26
More or better sidewalks	25.71%	45
More or better street lighting	12.00%	21
Parking	11.43%	20
Pedestrian spaces, seating areas, plazas & benches	26.86%	47
Public art	15.43%	27
Residential development	17.14%	30
Street trees & landscaping	36.00%	63
Total Respondents: 175		

Q19 Do you plan on keeping your business in Worcester County for the foreseeable future?

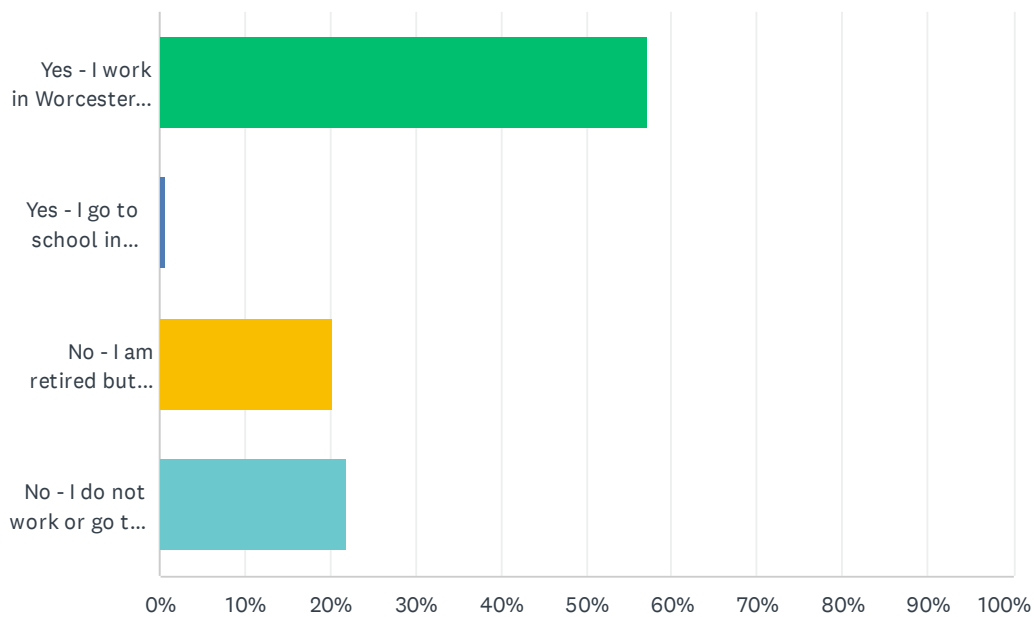
Answered: 174 Skipped: 1,238



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	82.76%	144
No	2.87%	5
Unknown	14.37%	25
TOTAL		174

Q20 Do you work or go to school in Worcester County?

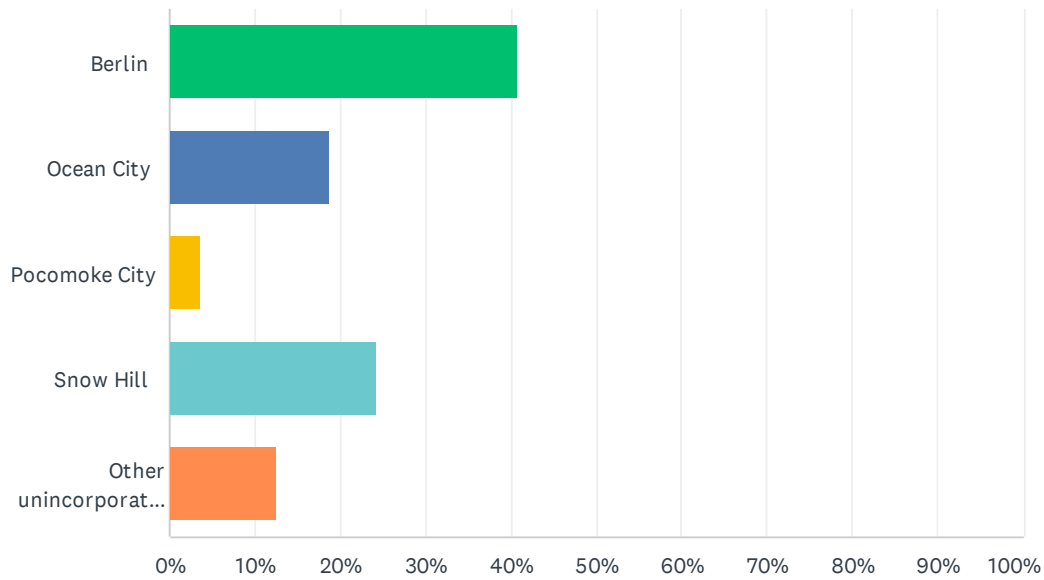
Answered: 1,073 Skipped: 339



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes - I work in Worcester County	57.22%	614
Yes - I go to school in Worcester County	0.56%	6
No - I am retired but live in Worcester County	20.22%	217
No - I do not work or go to school in Worcester County	21.99%	236
TOTAL		1,073

Q21 My business is located in:

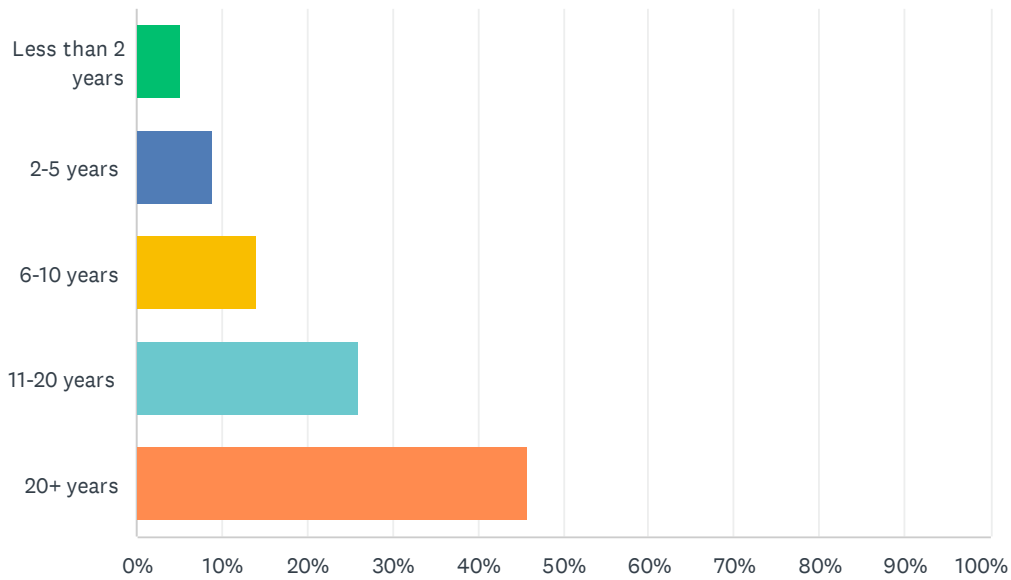
Answered: 537 Skipped: 875



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Berlin	40.78%	219
Ocean City	18.81%	101
Pocomoke City	3.72%	20
Snow Hill	24.21%	130
Other unincorporated community within Worcester County:	12.48%	67
TOTAL		537

Q22 I've worked in Worcester County for...

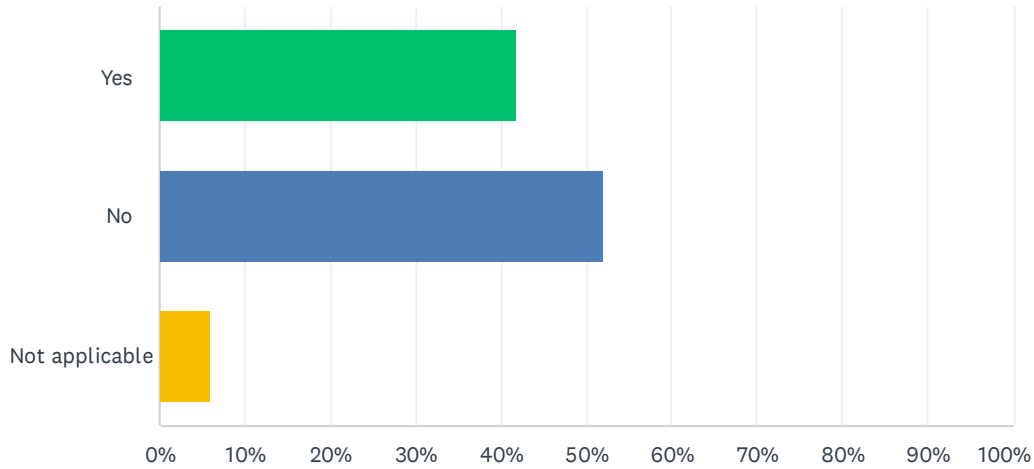
Answered: 579 Skipped: 833



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 2 years	5.18%	30
2-5 years	8.98%	52
6-10 years	14.16%	82
11-20 years	25.91%	150
20+ years	45.77%	265
TOTAL		579

Q23 Do you work more than one job or do you also take classes while working?

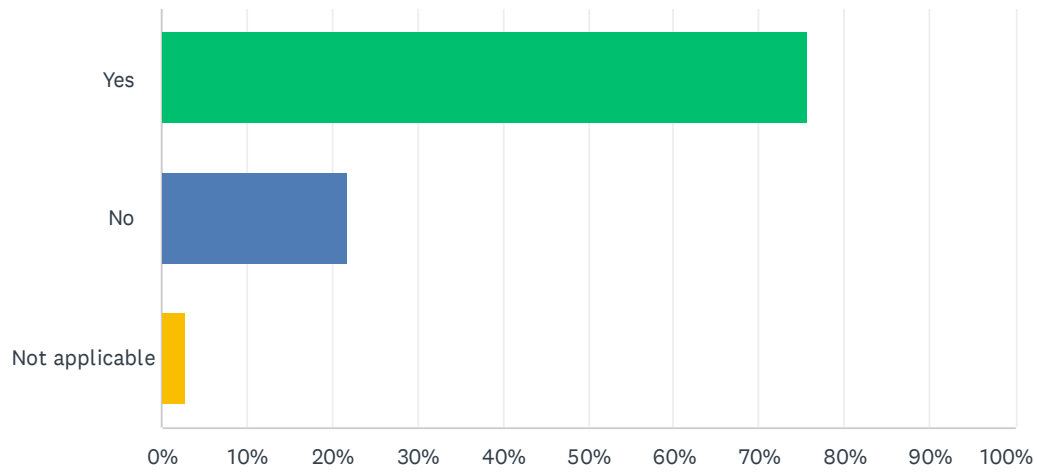
Answered: 580 Skipped: 832



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	41.90%	243
No	52.07%	302
Not applicable	6.03%	35
TOTAL		580

Q24 Are you able to afford to live in Worcester County?

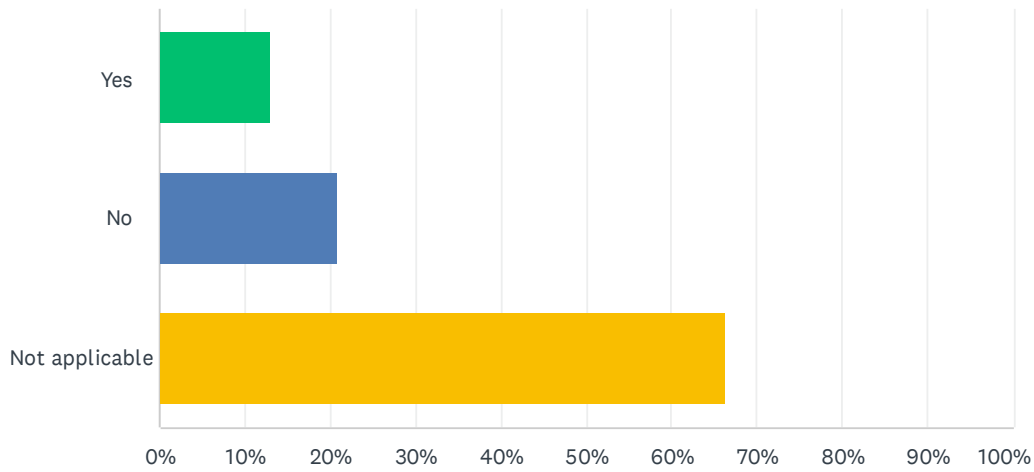
Answered: 582 Skipped: 830



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	75.60%	440
No	21.65%	126
Not applicable	2.75%	16
TOTAL		582

Q25 Are you able to consistently access reliable childcare services?

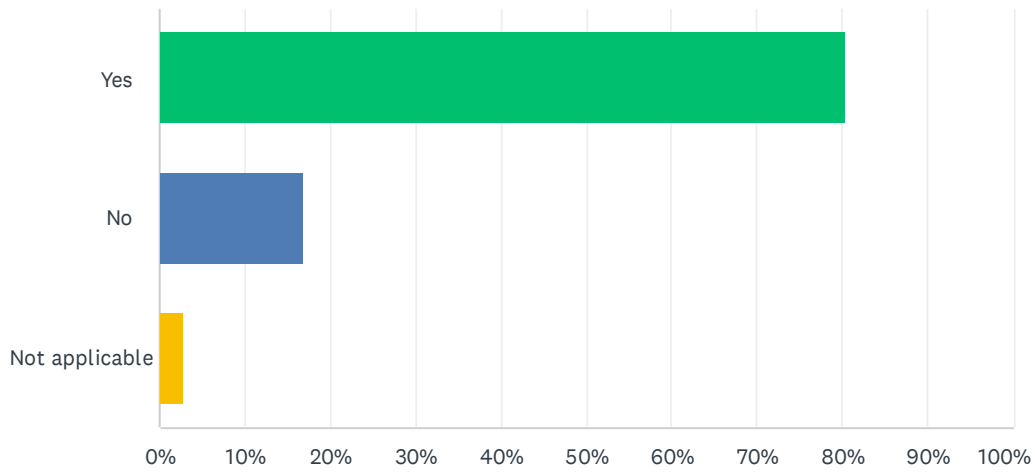
Answered: 581 Skipped: 831



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	12.91%	75
No	20.83%	121
Not applicable	66.27%	385
TOTAL		581

Q26 Are you able to locally access healthcare covered by your insurance?

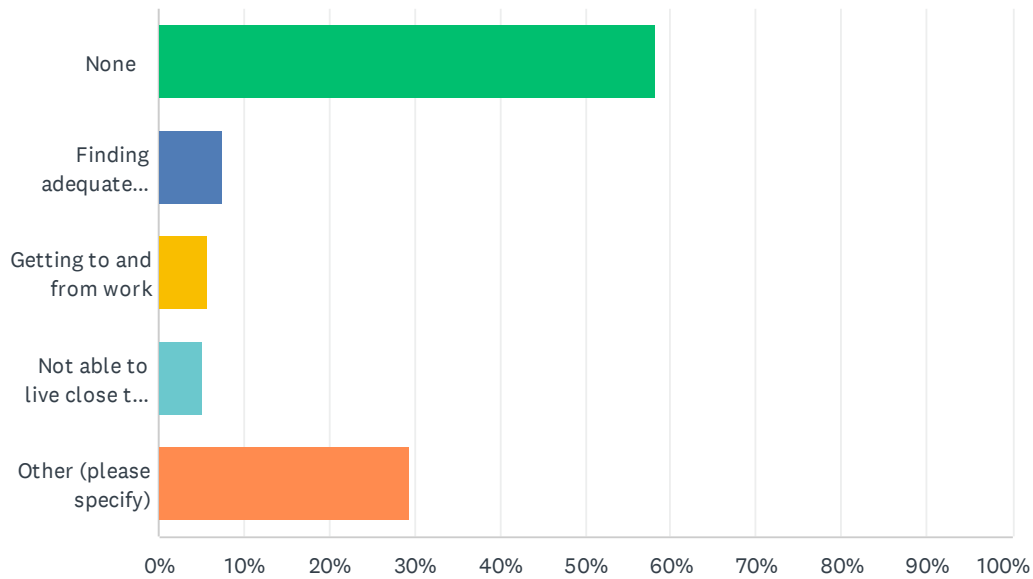
Answered: 582 Skipped: 830



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	80.41%	468
No	16.84%	98
Not applicable	2.75%	16
TOTAL		582

Q27 What challenges do you face working in Worcester County? (choose all that apply)

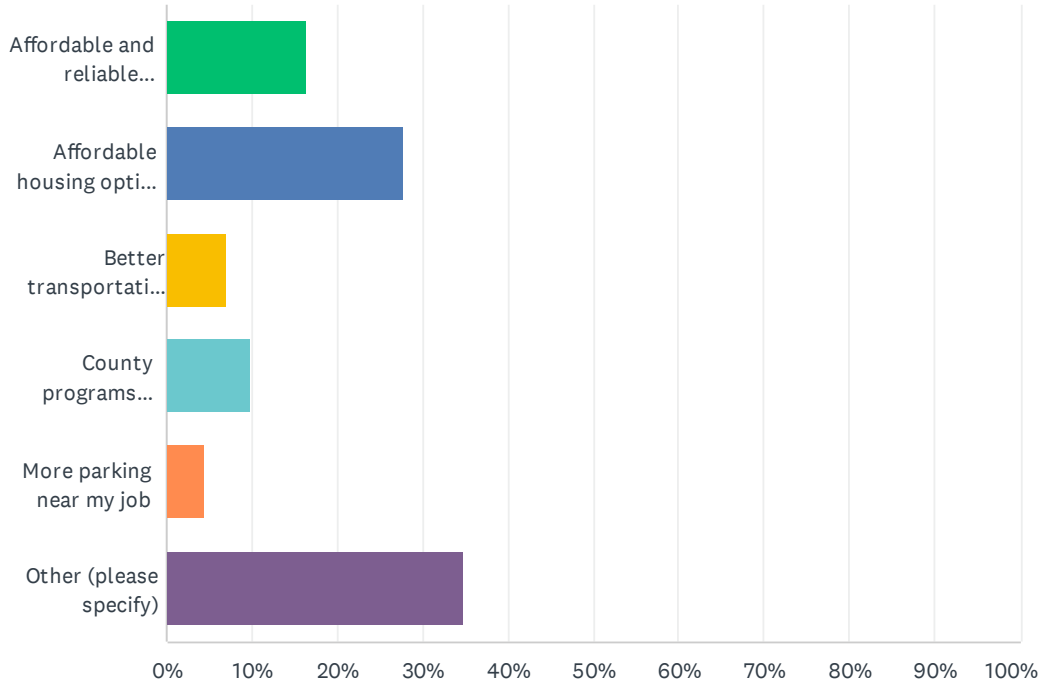
Answered: 566 Skipped: 846



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None	58.30%	330
Finding adequate parking near my place of work	7.42%	42
Getting to and from work	5.65%	32
Not able to live close to my job	5.12%	29
Other (please specify)	29.51%	167
Total Respondents: 566		

Q28 What is the most impactful thing that would make working in Worcester County easier?

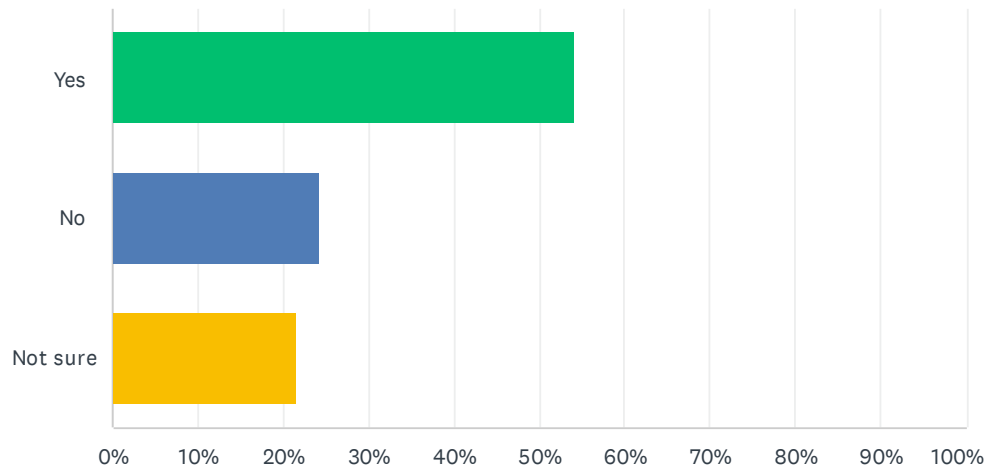
Answered: 543 Skipped: 869



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Affordable and reliable childcare	16.39%	89
Affordable housing options near my place of employment	27.62%	150
Better transportation options to get to and from work	7.00%	38
County programs offering job training and workshops	9.76%	53
More parking near my job	4.42%	24
Other (please specify)	34.81%	189
TOTAL		543

Q29 Are there options for upward mobility where you work?

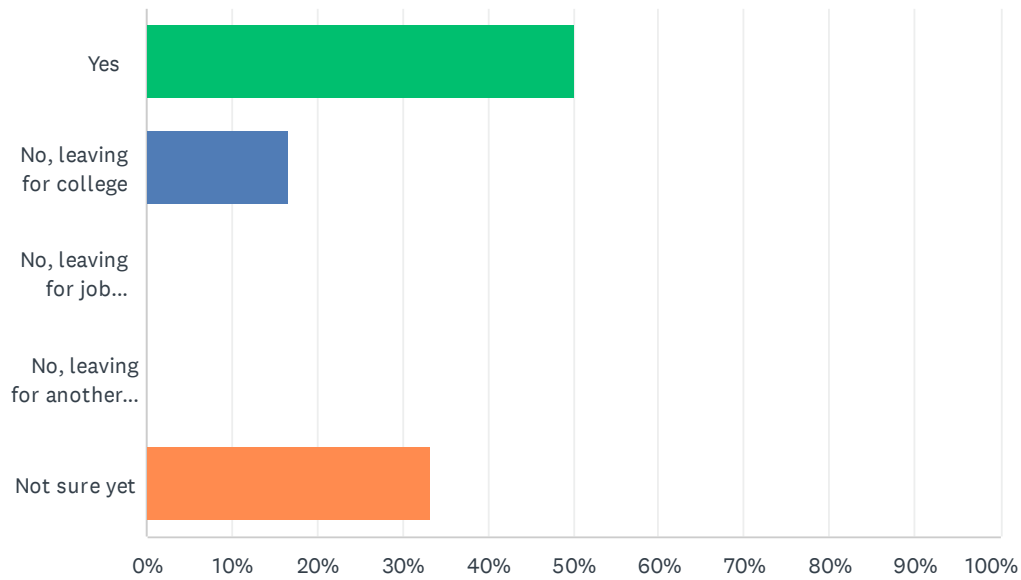
Answered: 574 Skipped: 838



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	54.18%	311
No	24.22%	139
Not sure	21.60%	124
TOTAL		574

Q30 Do you plan on staying in Worcester County after graduation?

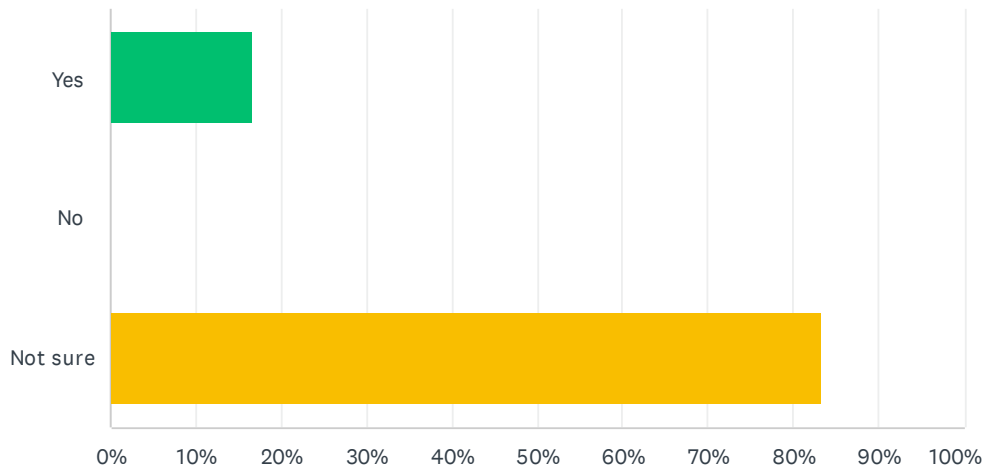
Answered: 6 Skipped: 1,406



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	50.00%	3
No, leaving for college	16.67%	1
No, leaving for job opportunities	0.00%	0
No, leaving for another reason	0.00%	0
Not sure yet	33.33%	2
TOTAL		6

Q31 Would you like to move back to Worcester County later in life?

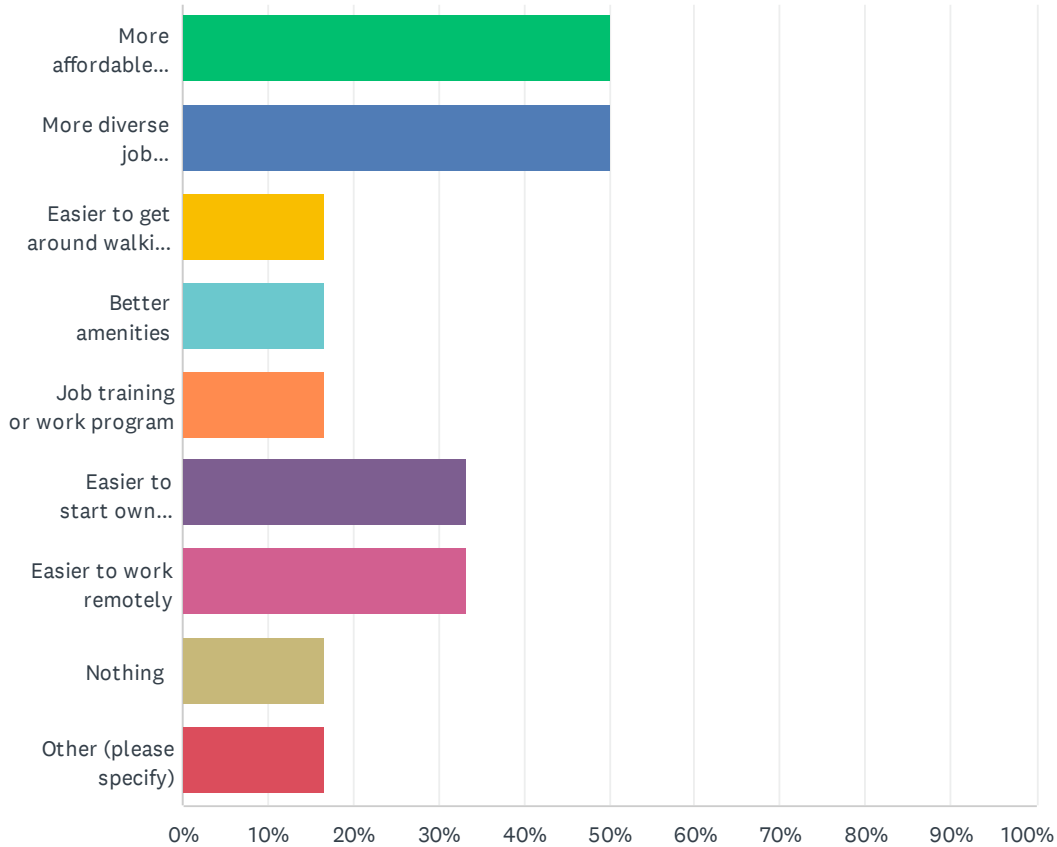
Answered: 6 Skipped: 1,406



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	16.67%	1
No	0.00%	0
Not sure	83.33%	5
TOTAL		6

Q32 What would increase your chances of staying or returning to Worcester County as an adult? (choose all that apply)

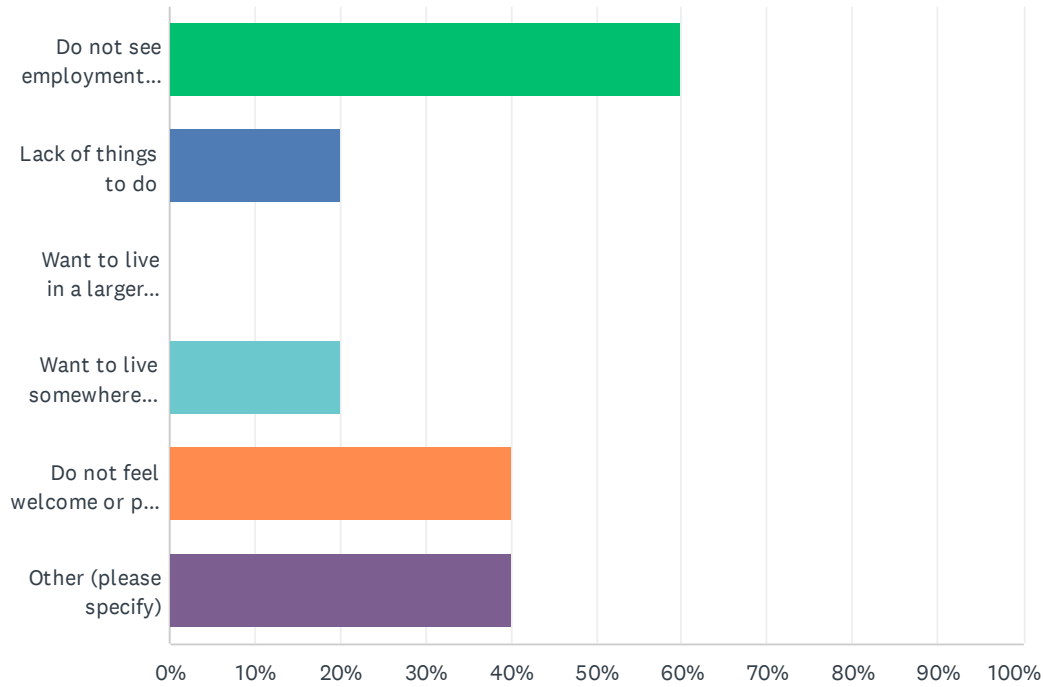
Answered: 6 Skipped: 1,406



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More affordable housing options	50.00%	3
More diverse job opportunities	50.00%	3
Easier to get around walking or biking	16.67%	1
Better amenities	16.67%	1
Job training or work program	16.67%	1
Easier to start own business	33.33%	2
Easier to work remotely	33.33%	2
Nothing	16.67%	1
Other (please specify)	16.67%	1
Total Respondents: 6		

Q33 What reasons do you have for leaving Worcester County? (choose all that apply)

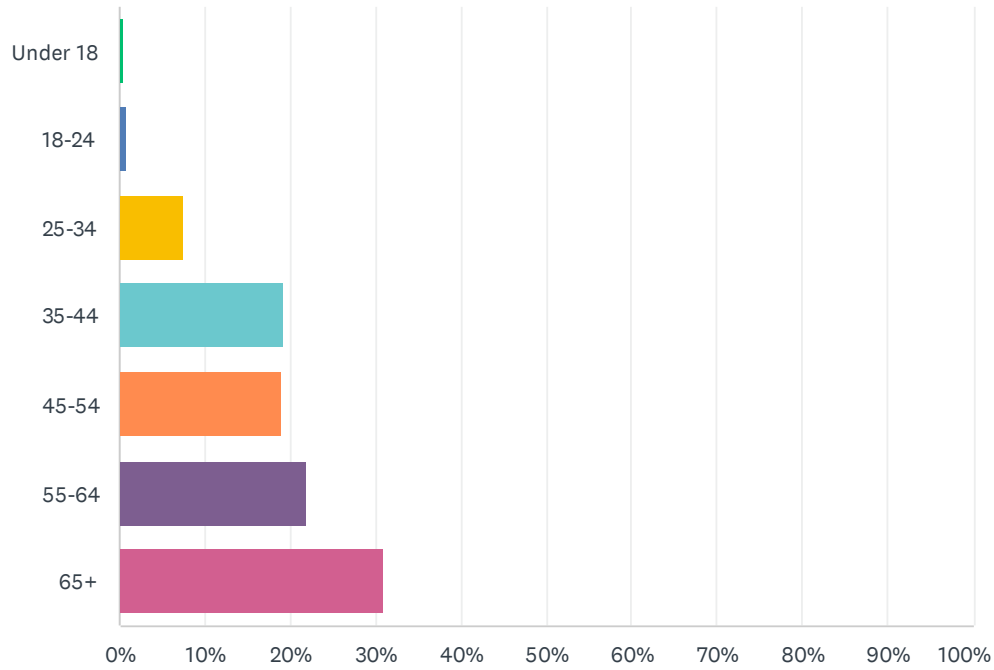
Answered: 5 Skipped: 1,407



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Do not see employment opportunities here	60.00%	3
Lack of things to do	20.00%	1
Want to live in a larger city or more urban area	0.00%	0
Want to live somewhere cheaper	20.00%	1
Do not feel welcome or part of the community	40.00%	2
Other (please specify)	40.00%	2
Total Respondents: 5		

Q34 My age is:

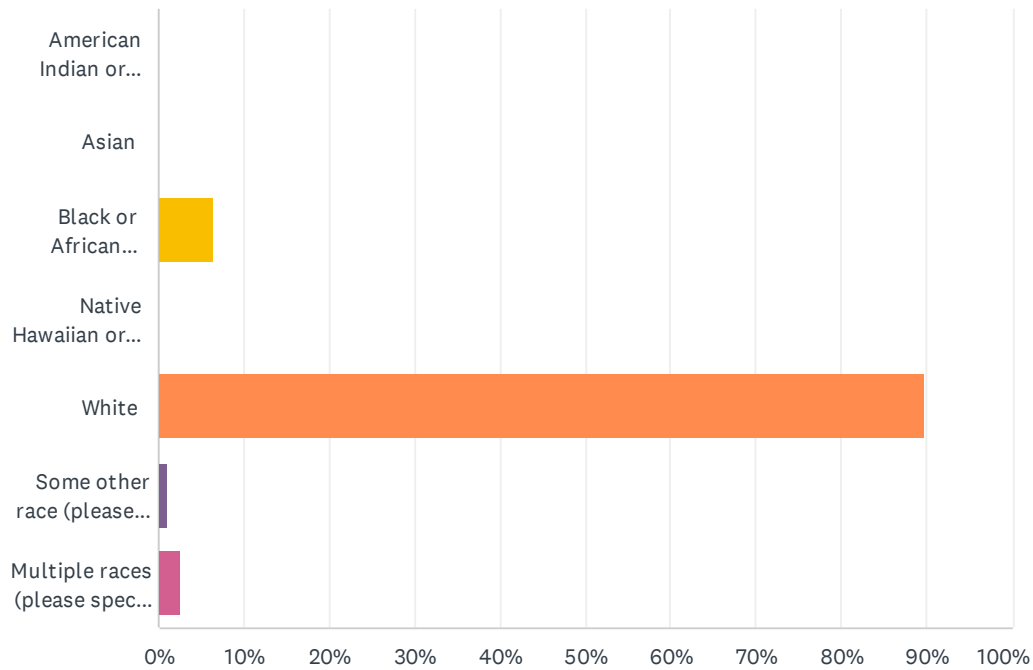
Answered: 1,020 Skipped: 392



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.49%	5
18-24	0.88%	9
25-34	7.55%	77
35-44	19.12%	195
45-54	19.02%	194
55-64	21.96%	224
65+	30.98%	316
TOTAL		1,020

Q35 My race is:

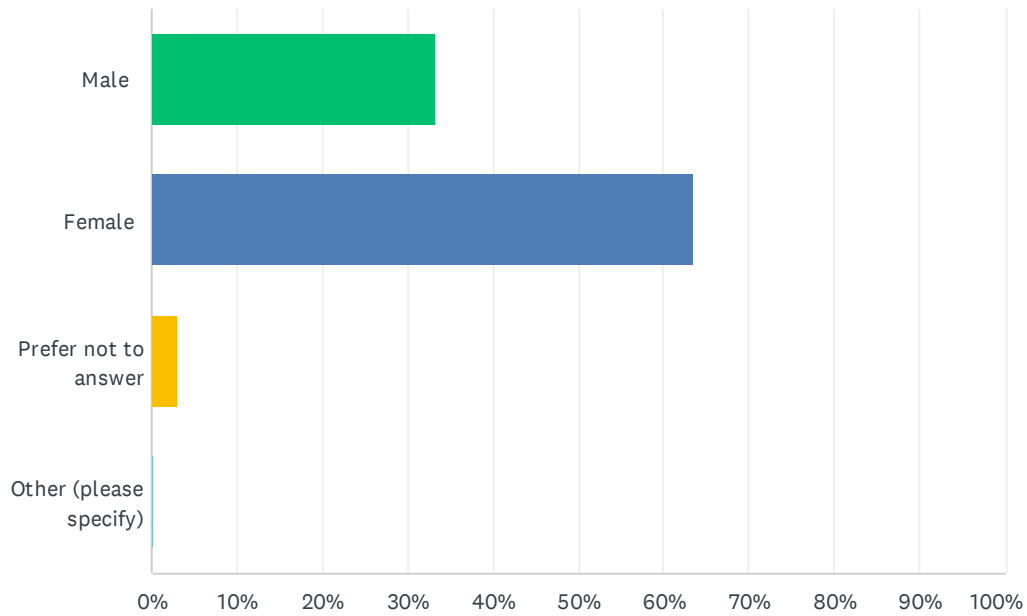
Answered: 1,006 Skipped: 406



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.10%	1
Asian	0.10%	1
Black or African American	6.46%	65
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.10%	1
White	89.76%	903
Some other race (please specify below)	0.99%	10
Multiple races (please specify below)	2.49%	25
TOTAL		1,006

Q36 My gender is:

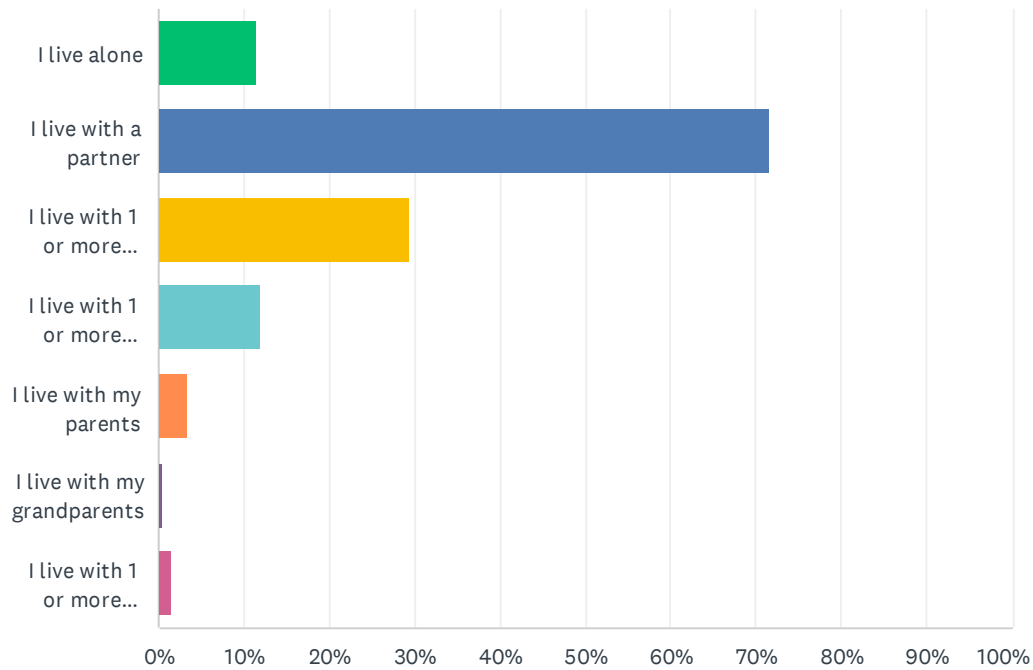
Answered: 1,018 Skipped: 394



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Male	33.20%	338
Female	63.56%	647
Prefer not to answer	2.95%	30
Other (please specify)	0.29%	3
TOTAL		1,018

Q37 My household status is (check all that apply):

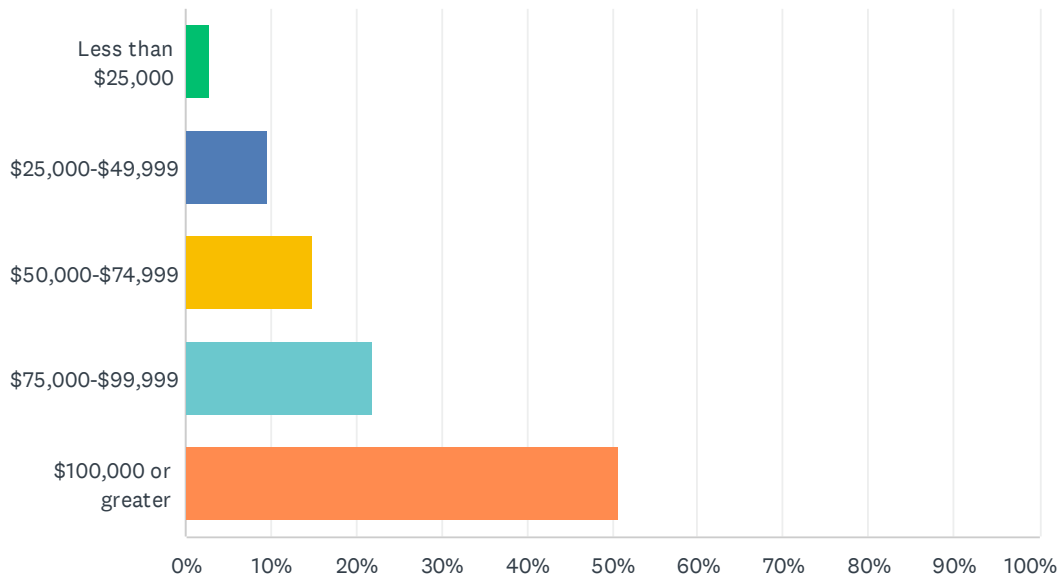
Answered: 1,016 Skipped: 396



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I live alone	11.42%	116
I live with a partner	71.56%	727
I live with 1 or more children under 18	29.33%	298
I live with 1 or more children 18 or over	11.91%	121
I live with my parents	3.35%	34
I live with my grandparents	0.39%	4
I live with 1 or more unrelated roommate(s)	1.48%	15
Total Respondents: 1,016		

Q38 The combined income of all members of my household is:

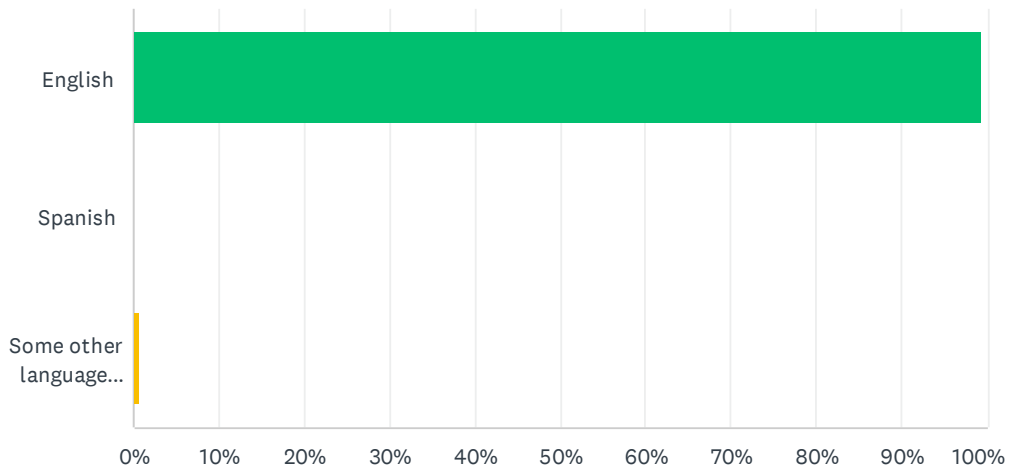
Answered: 992 Skipped: 420



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than \$25,000	2.72%	27
\$25,000-\$49,999	9.58%	95
\$50,000-\$74,999	14.92%	148
\$75,000-\$99,999	21.98%	218
\$100,000 or greater	50.81%	504
TOTAL		992

Q39 The language mainly spoken at my home is:

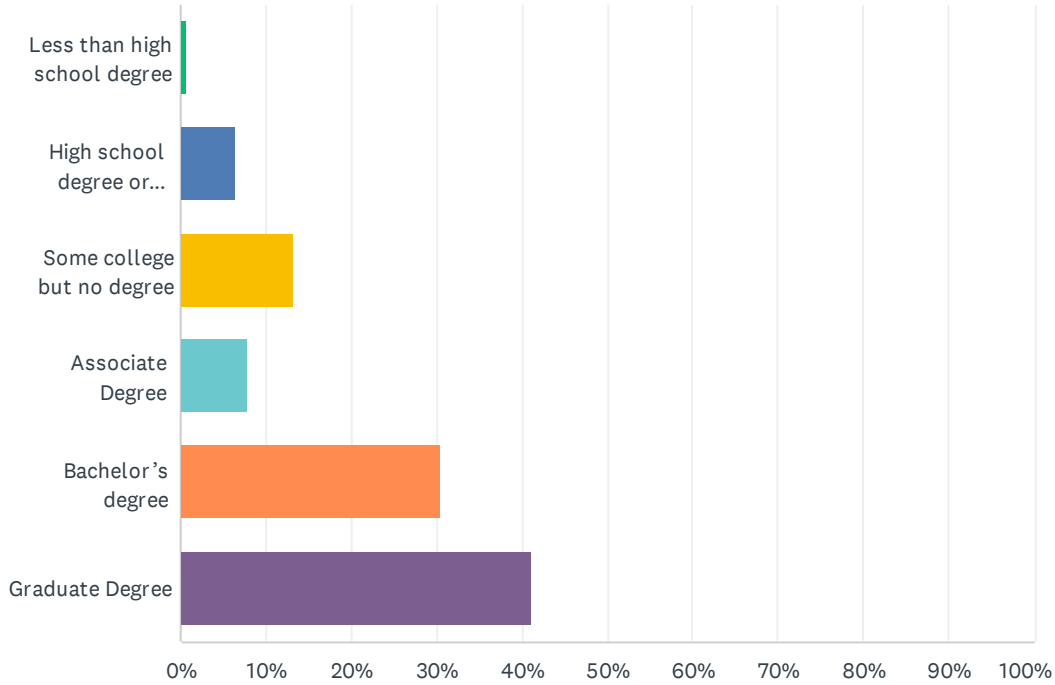
Answered: 1,016 Skipped: 396



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
English	99.31%	1,009
Spanish	0.10%	1
Some other language (please specify)	0.59%	6
TOTAL		1,016

Q40 The highest level of school I have completed (or the highest degree I have received) is:

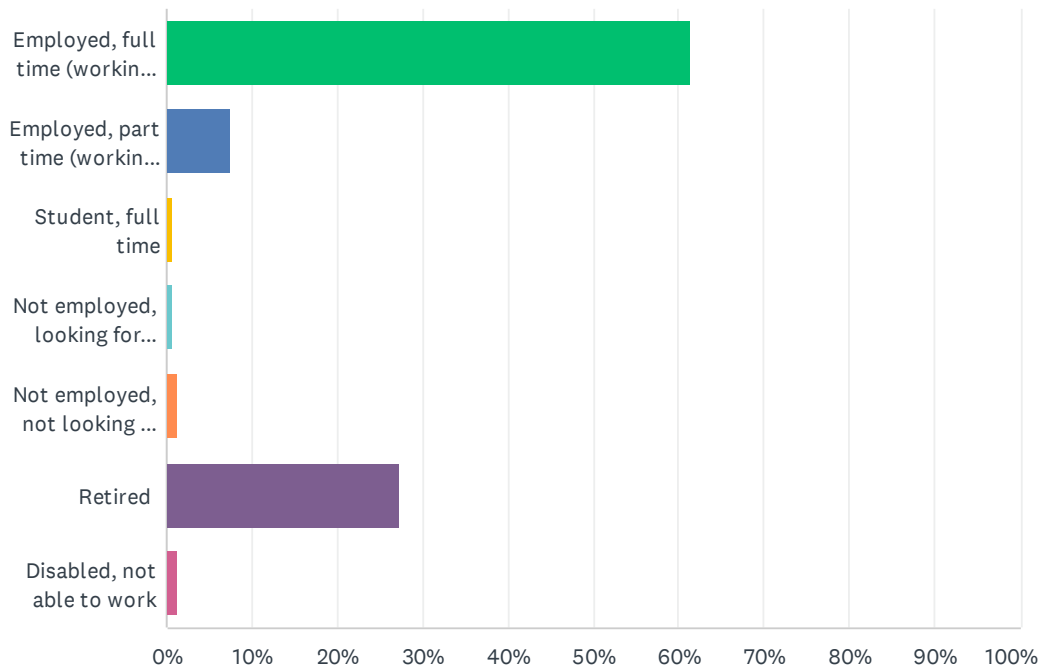
Answered: 1,017 Skipped: 395



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than high school degree	0.69%	7
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	6.49%	66
Some college but no degree	13.27%	135
Associate Degree	7.87%	80
Bachelor's degree	30.58%	311
Graduate Degree	41.10%	418
TOTAL		1,017

Q41 My employment status is:

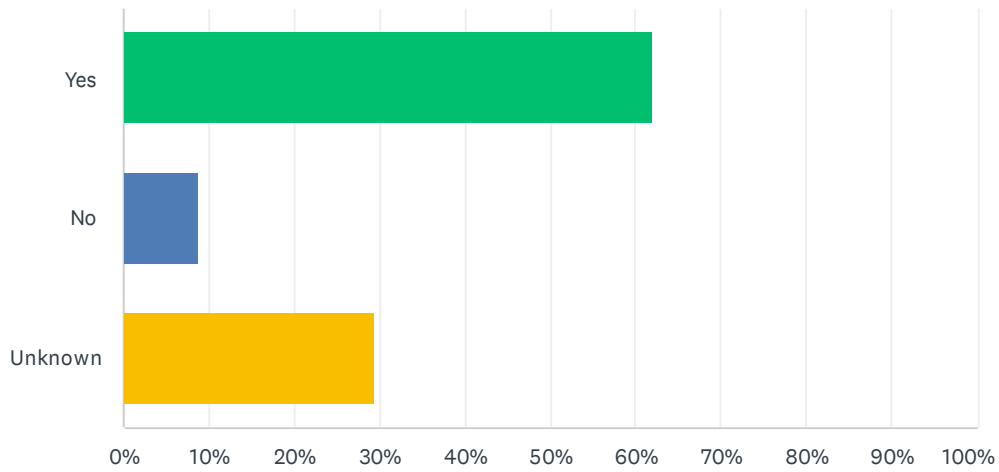
Answered: 1,018 Skipped: 394



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Employed, full time (working at least 32 hours per week)	61.49%	626
Employed, part time (working fewer than 32 hours per week)	7.56%	77
Student, full time	0.59%	6
Not employed, looking for work	0.69%	7
Not employed, not looking for work	1.28%	13
Retired	27.21%	277
Disabled, not able to work	1.18%	12
TOTAL		1,018

Q42 Do you plan to retire in Worcester County?

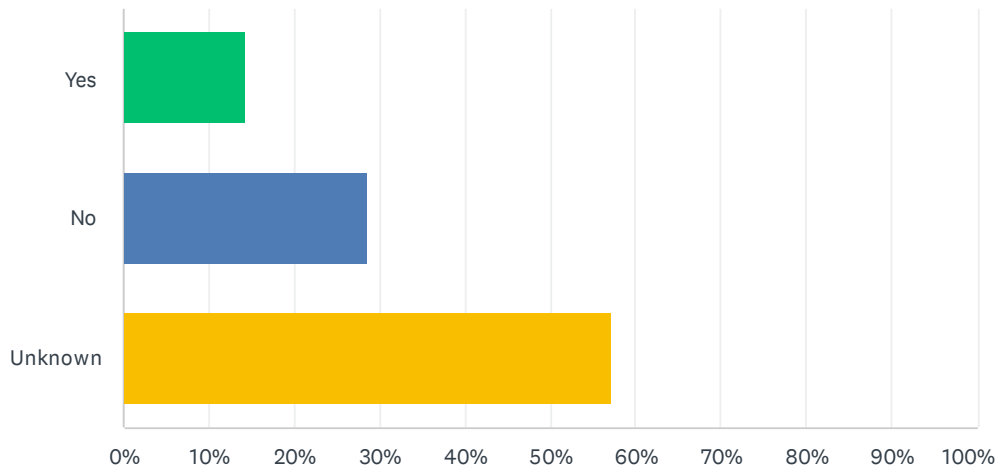
Answered: 736 Skipped: 676



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	61.96%	456
No	8.70%	64
Unknown	29.35%	216
TOTAL		736

Q43 Once you leave school, do you plan to stay in Worcester County?

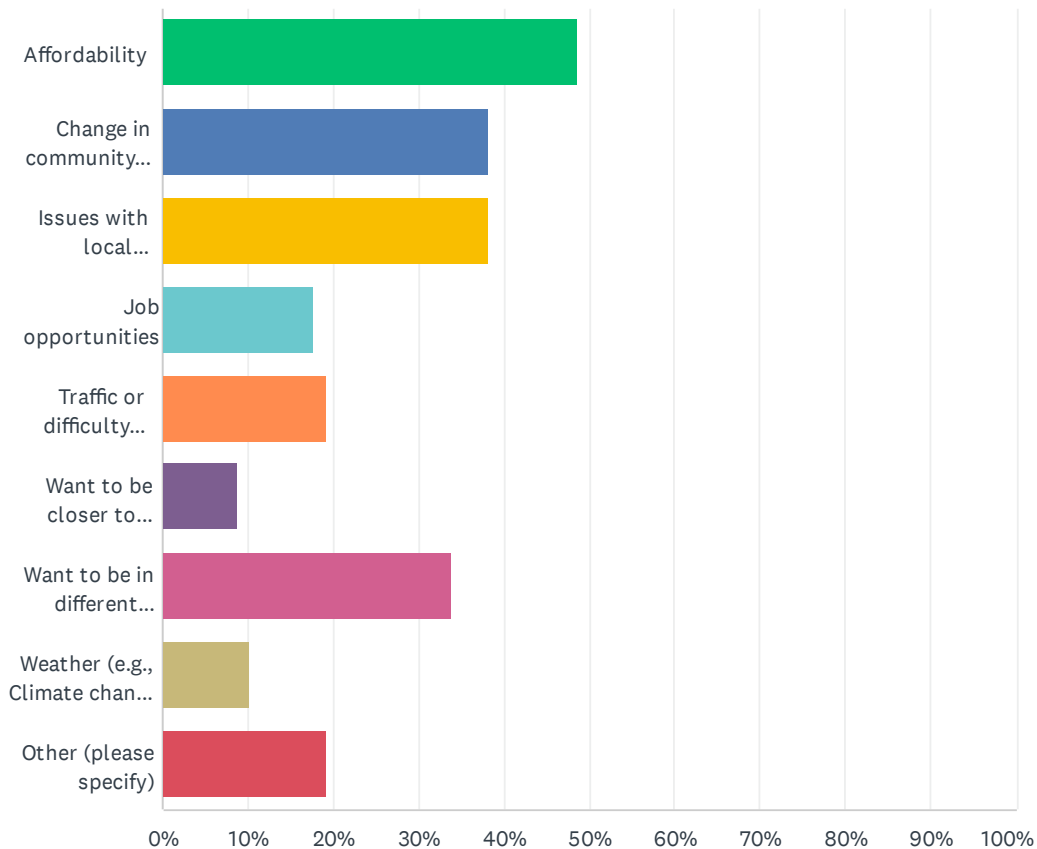
Answered: 7 Skipped: 1,405



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	14.29%	1
No	28.57%	2
Unknown	57.14%	4
TOTAL		7

Q44 If you do not plan on staying in Worcester County, why? (select all that apply)

Answered: 68 Skipped: 1,344



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Affordability	48.53%	33
Change in community character	38.24%	26
Issues with local government	38.24%	26
Job opportunities	17.65%	12
Traffic or difficulty getting around	19.12%	13
Want to be closer to friends/family	8.82%	6
Want to be in different environment	33.82%	23
Weather (e.g., Climate change, storm frequencies, hurricanes)	10.29%	7
Other (please specify)	19.12%	13
Total Respondents: 68		

Q45 If you could bring one business to Worcester County, what would it be and where would you locate it? (business name/type + location)

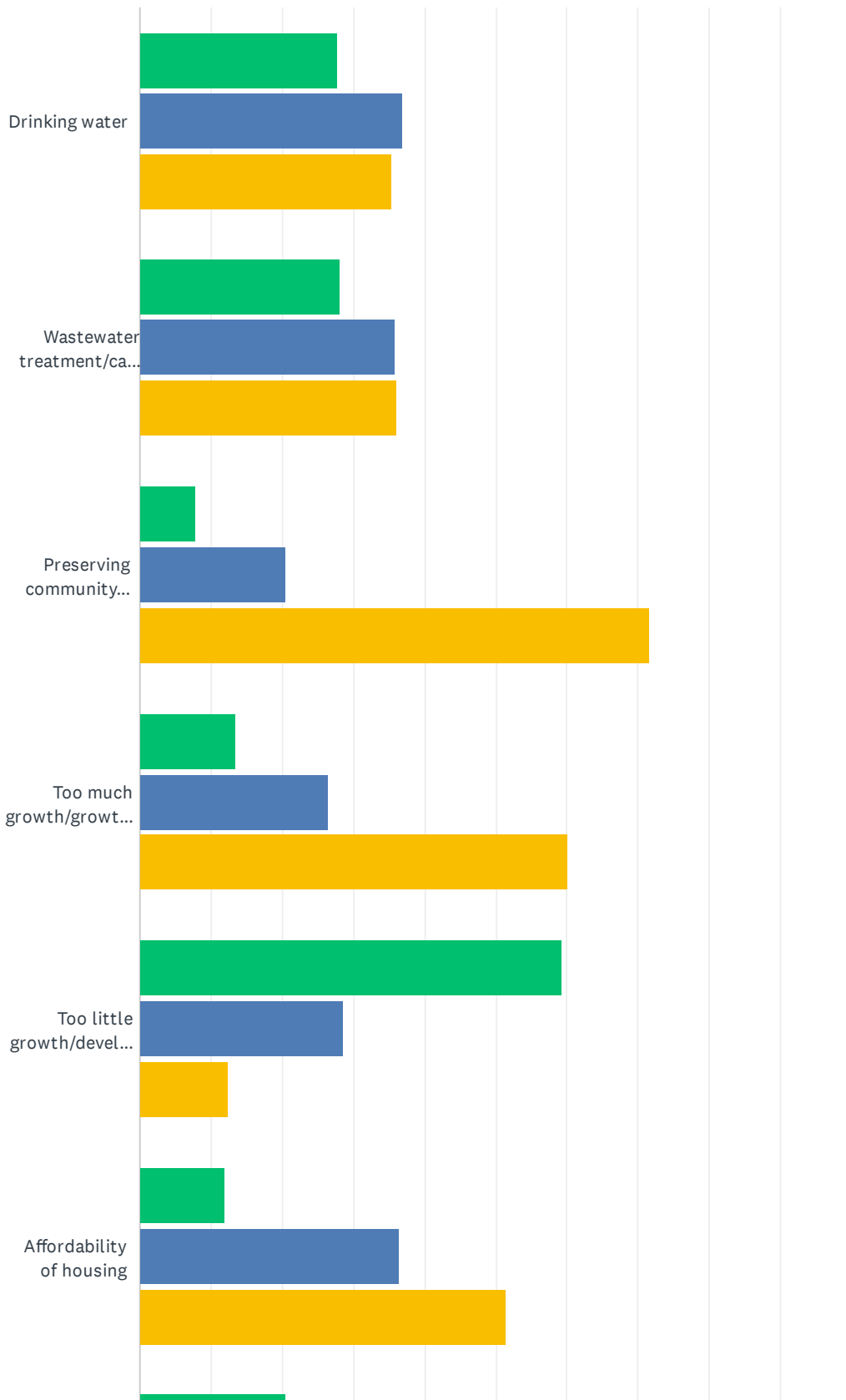
Answered: 637 Skipped: 775

Q46 What one business would you not want to see come to Worcester County? (Business name/type)

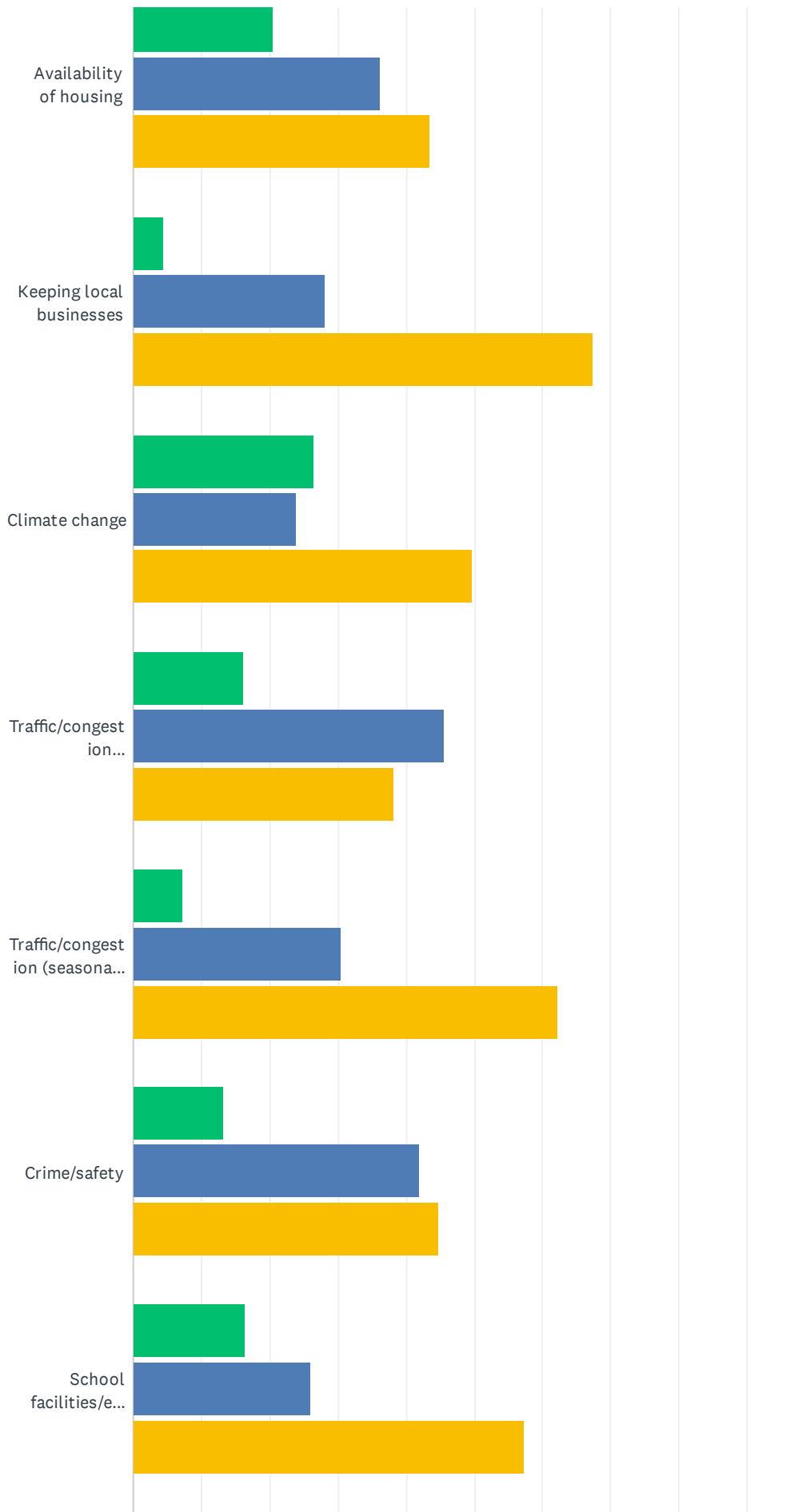
Answered: 591 Skipped: 821

Q47 How concerned are you about:

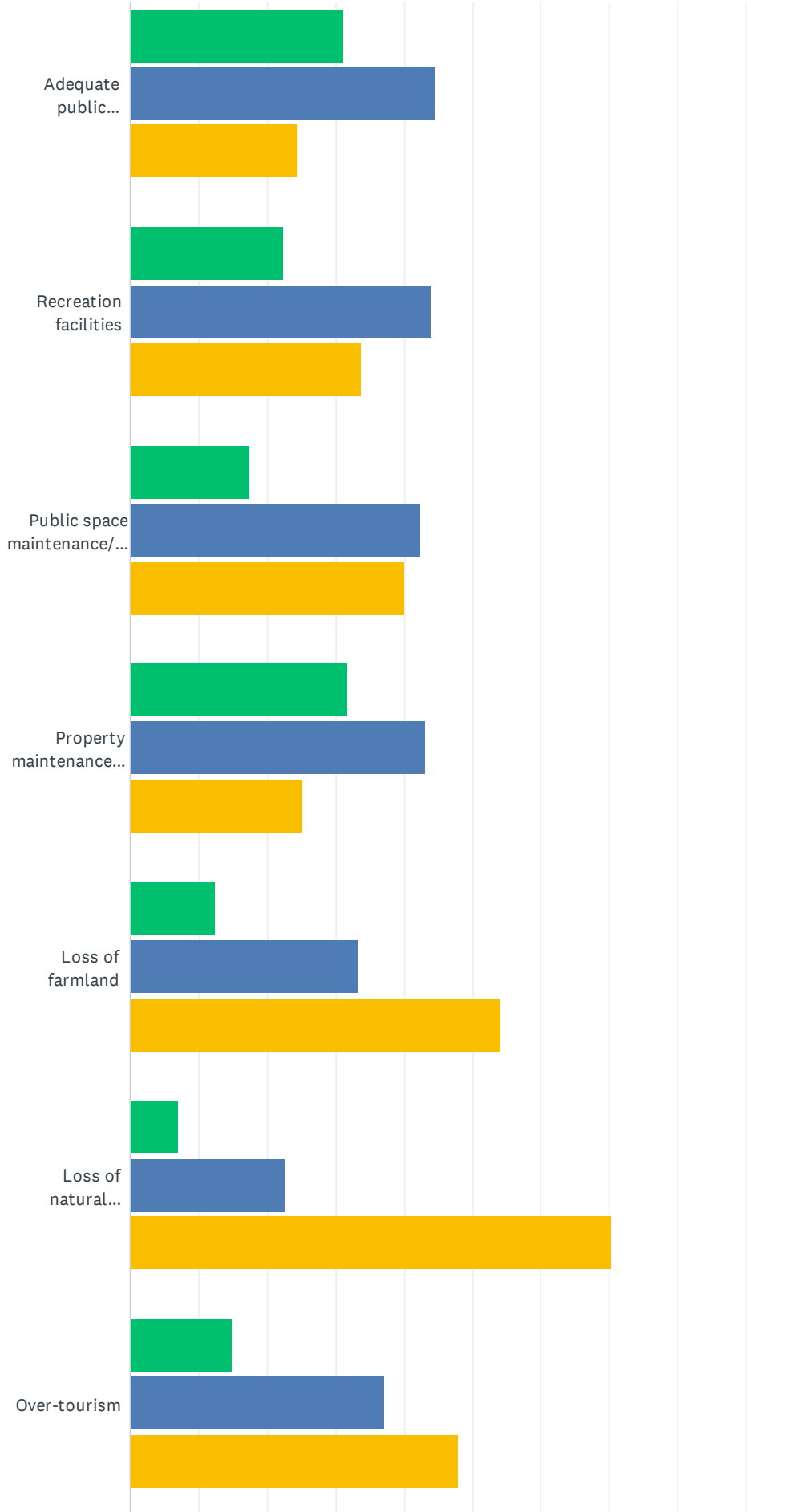
Answered: 705 Skipped: 707



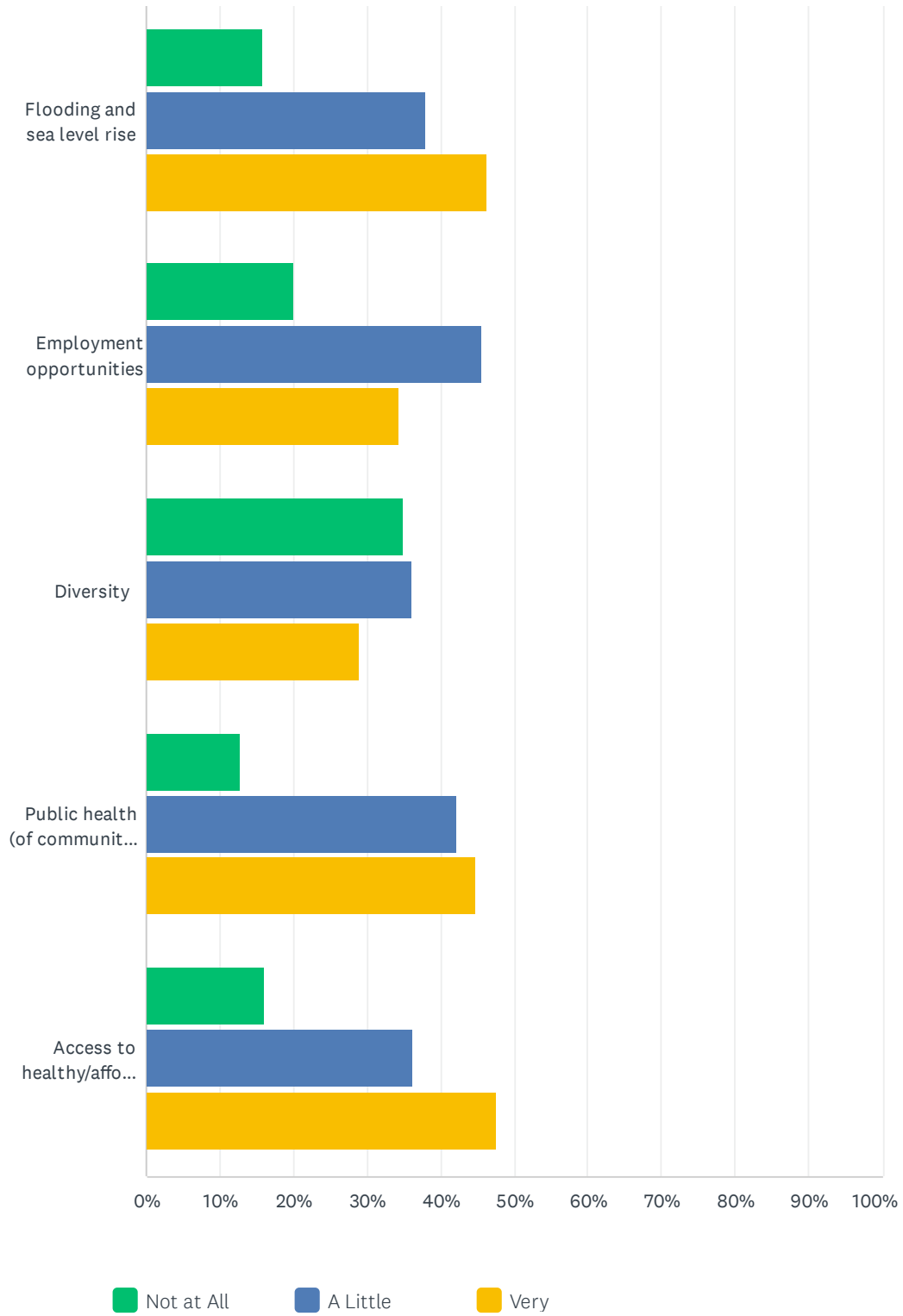
Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey



Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey



Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey



Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

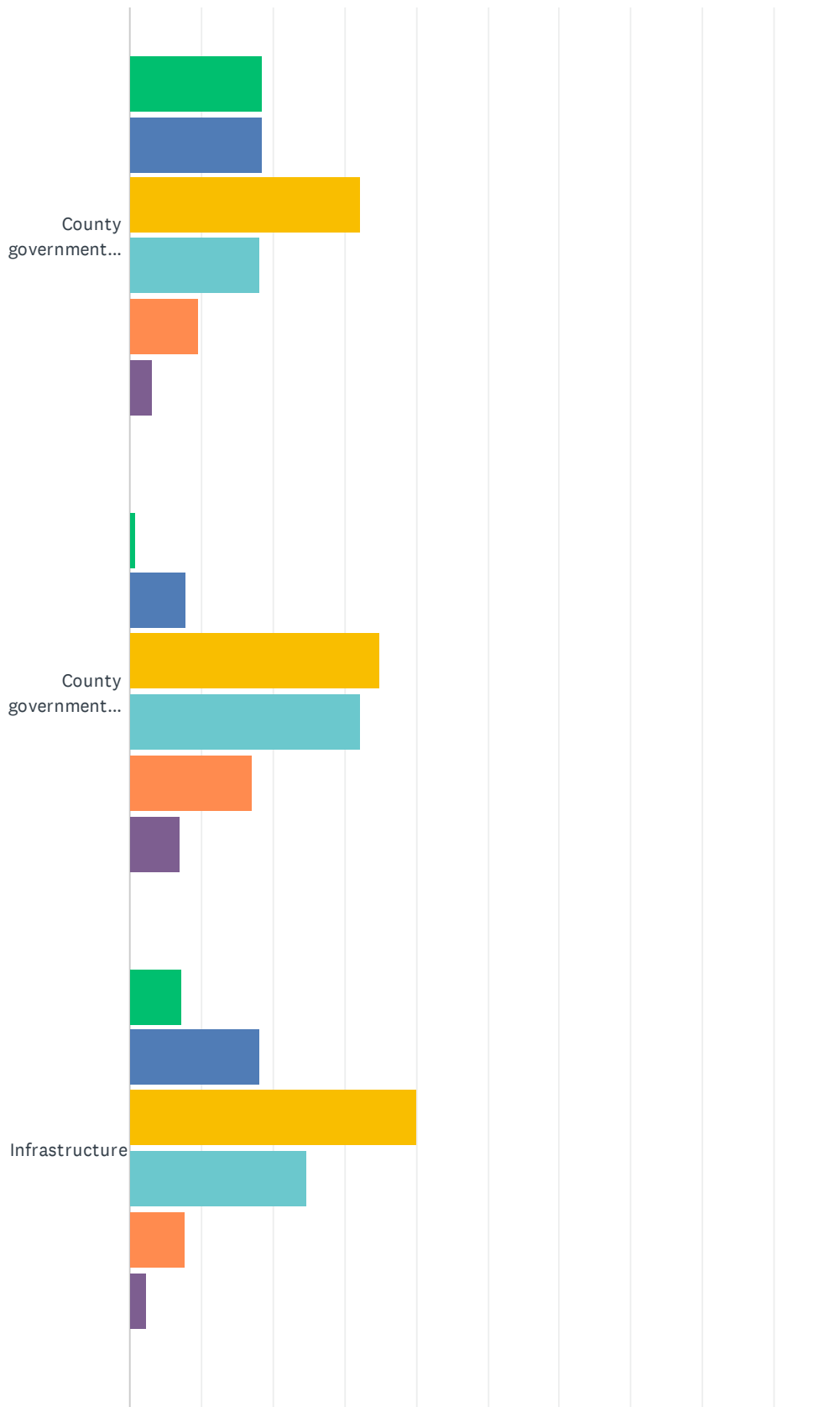
	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	VERY	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Drinking water	27.71% 194	36.86% 258	35.43% 248	700	2.08
Wastewater treatment/capacity	28.12% 196	35.87% 250	36.01% 251	697	2.08
Preserving community character	7.83% 55	20.51% 144	71.65% 503	702	2.64
Too much growth/growth pressure	13.53% 95	26.35% 185	60.11% 422	702	2.47
Too little growth/development	59.25% 410	28.47% 197	12.28% 85	692	1.53
Affordability of housing	12.03% 84	36.53% 255	51.43% 359	698	2.39
Availability of housing	20.37% 142	36.15% 252	43.47% 303	697	2.23
Keeping local businesses	4.58% 32	28.04% 196	67.38% 471	699	2.63
Climate change	26.36% 184	23.93% 167	49.71% 347	698	2.23
Traffic/congestion (year-round)	16.19% 113	45.70% 319	38.11% 266	698	2.22
Traffic/congestion (seasonal or summer)	7.28% 51	30.39% 213	62.34% 437	701	2.55
Crime/safety	13.12% 92	42.08% 295	44.79% 314	701	2.32
School facilities/education	16.52% 116	26.07% 183	57.41% 403	702	2.41
Adequate public transportation	31.04% 217	44.49% 311	24.46% 171	699	1.93
Recreation facilities	22.32% 156	43.92% 307	33.76% 236	699	2.11
Public space maintenance/upkeep	17.55% 123	42.37% 297	40.09% 281	701	2.23
Property maintenance (private)	31.86% 223	43.00% 301	25.14% 176	700	1.93
Loss of farmland	12.45% 87	33.33% 233	54.22% 379	699	2.42
Loss of natural features (e.g., trees, wetlands, dunes)	7.13% 50	22.54% 158	70.33% 493	701	2.63
Over-tourism	14.86% 104	37.14% 260	48.00% 336	700	2.33
Flooding and sea level rise	15.71% 110	38.00% 266	46.29% 324	700	2.31
Employment opportunities	20.00% 140	45.71% 320	34.29% 240	700	2.14
Diversity	35.05% 245	36.05% 252	28.90% 202	699	1.94
Public health (of community, access to)	12.86%	42.29%	44.86%		

Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

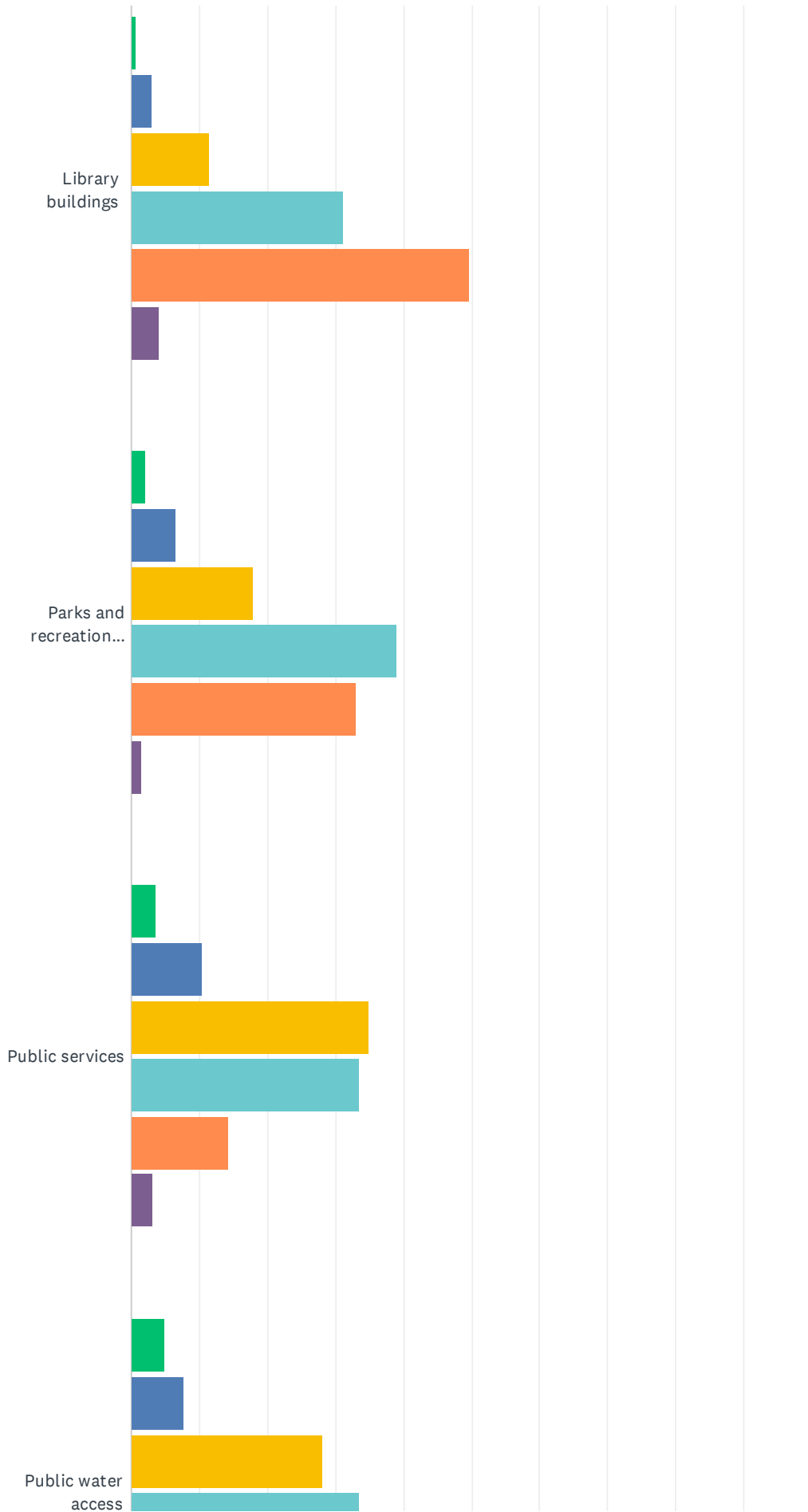
	90	296	314	700	2.32
Access to healthy/affordable food	16.02%	36.34%	47.64%		
	112	254	333	699	2.32

Q48 How would you rate the following?

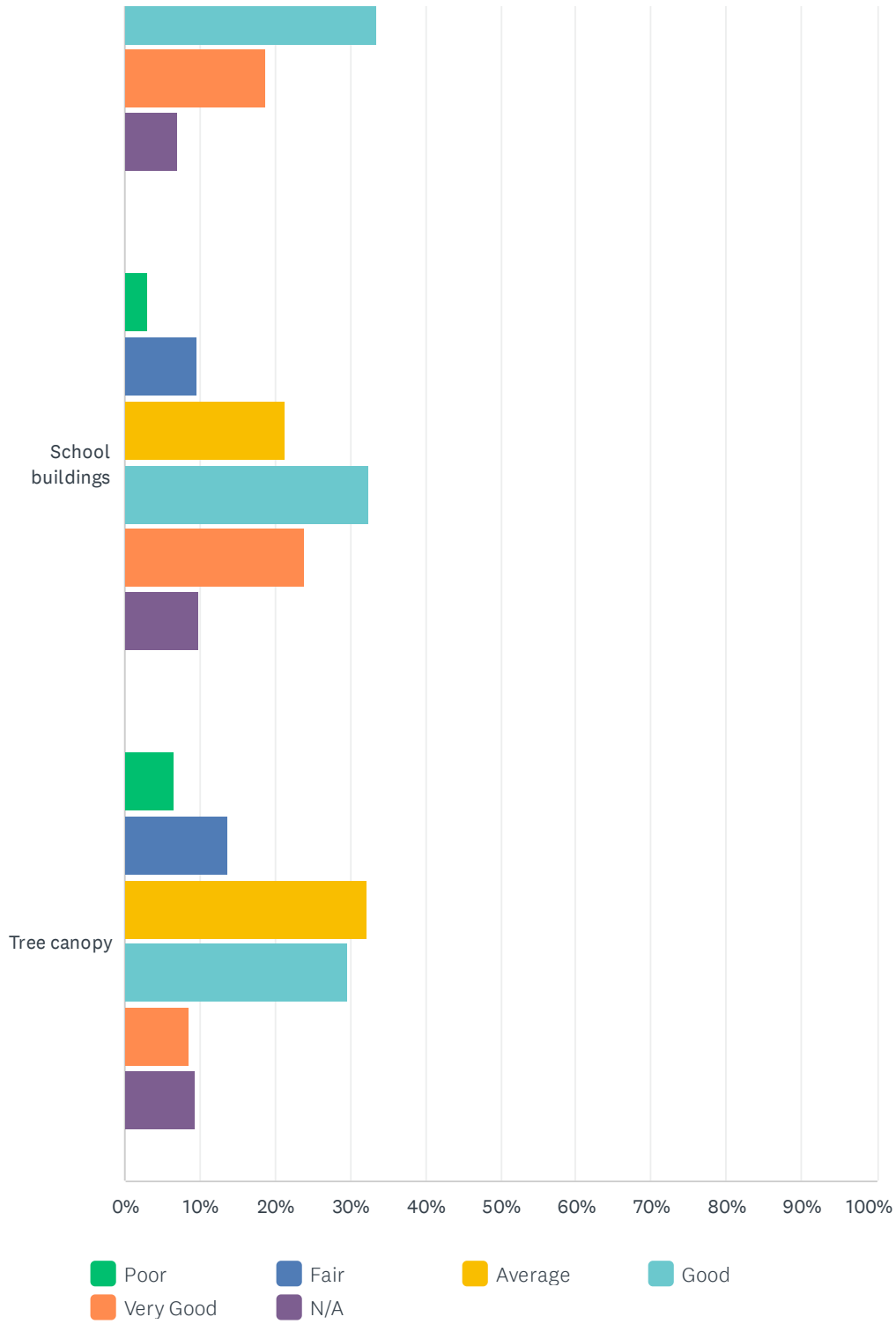
Answered: 705 Skipped: 707



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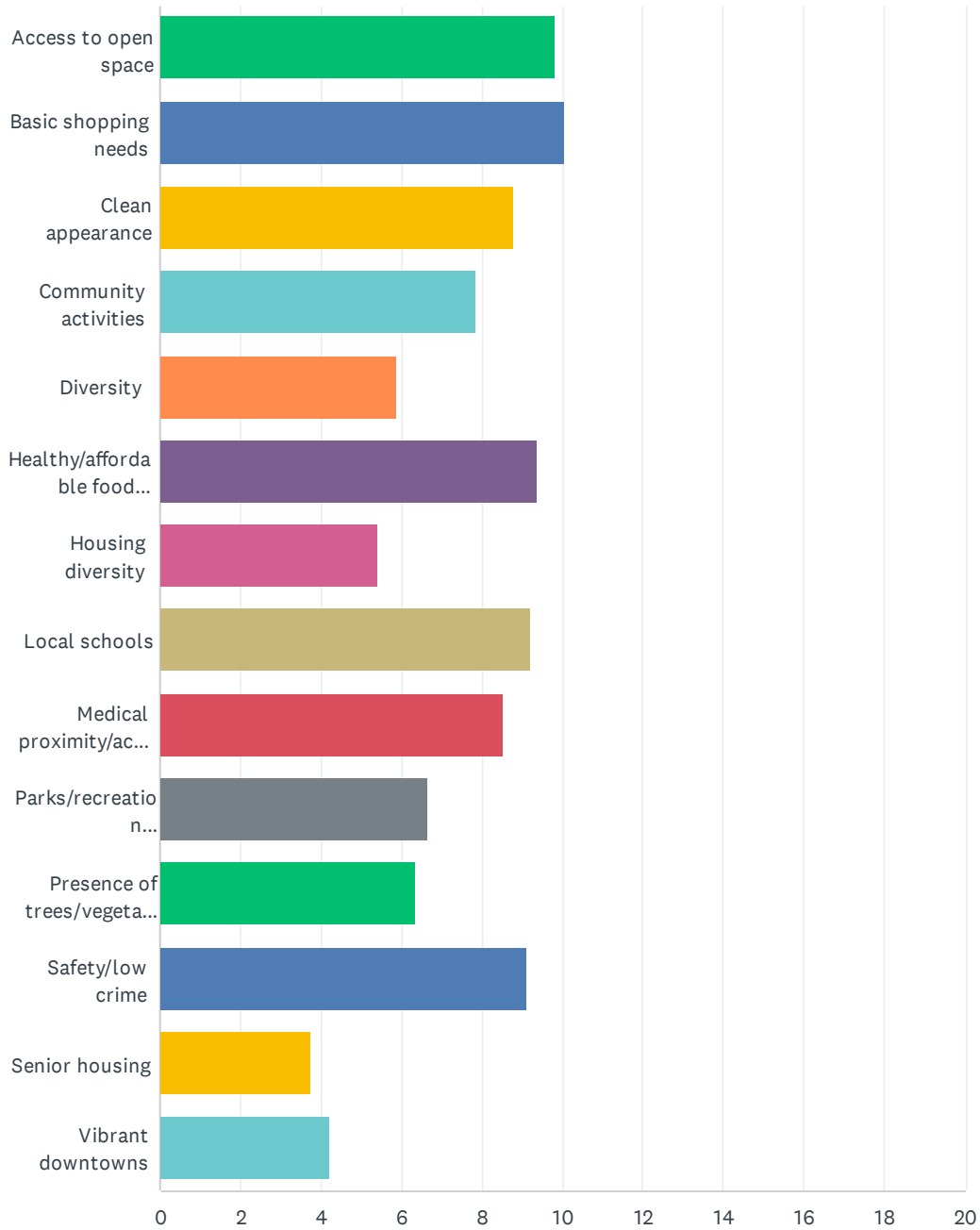


Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

	POOR	FAIR	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD	N/A	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
County government interactions	18.52% 130	18.52% 130	32.19% 226	18.09% 127	9.54% 67	3.13% 22	702	2.81
County government buildings	0.86% 6	7.85% 55	34.95% 245	32.10% 225	17.12% 120	7.13% 50	701	3.61
Infrastructure	7.31% 51	18.05% 126	40.11% 280	24.64% 172	7.59% 53	2.29% 16	698	3.07
Library buildings	0.71% 5	3.00% 21	11.41% 80	31.10% 218	49.64% 348	4.14% 29	701	4.31
Parks and recreation facilities	2.13% 15	6.53% 46	17.90% 126	38.92% 274	32.95% 232	1.56% 11	704	3.96
Public services	3.73% 26	10.47% 73	34.86% 243	33.57% 234	14.20% 99	3.16% 22	697	3.45
Public water access	4.86% 34	7.71% 54	28.14% 197	33.57% 235	18.71% 131	7.00% 49	700	3.58
School buildings	3.00% 21	9.57% 67	21.29% 149	32.43% 227	23.86% 167	9.86% 69	700	3.72
Tree canopy	6.61% 46	13.65% 95	32.18% 224	29.60% 206	8.62% 60	9.34% 65	696	3.22

Q49 Rank the importance of the following factors to quality of life: (#1 is highest)

Answered: 702 Skipped: 710

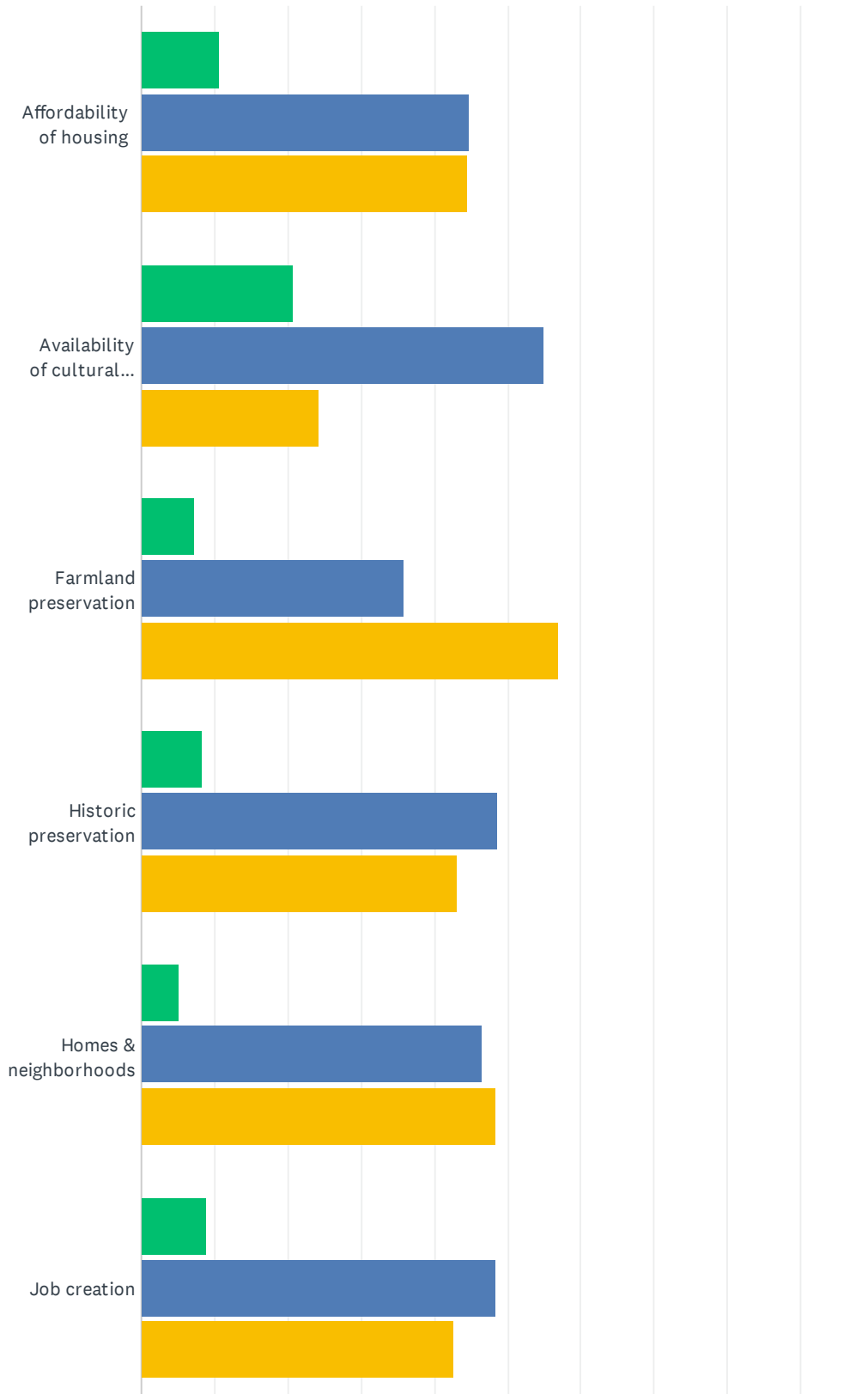


Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

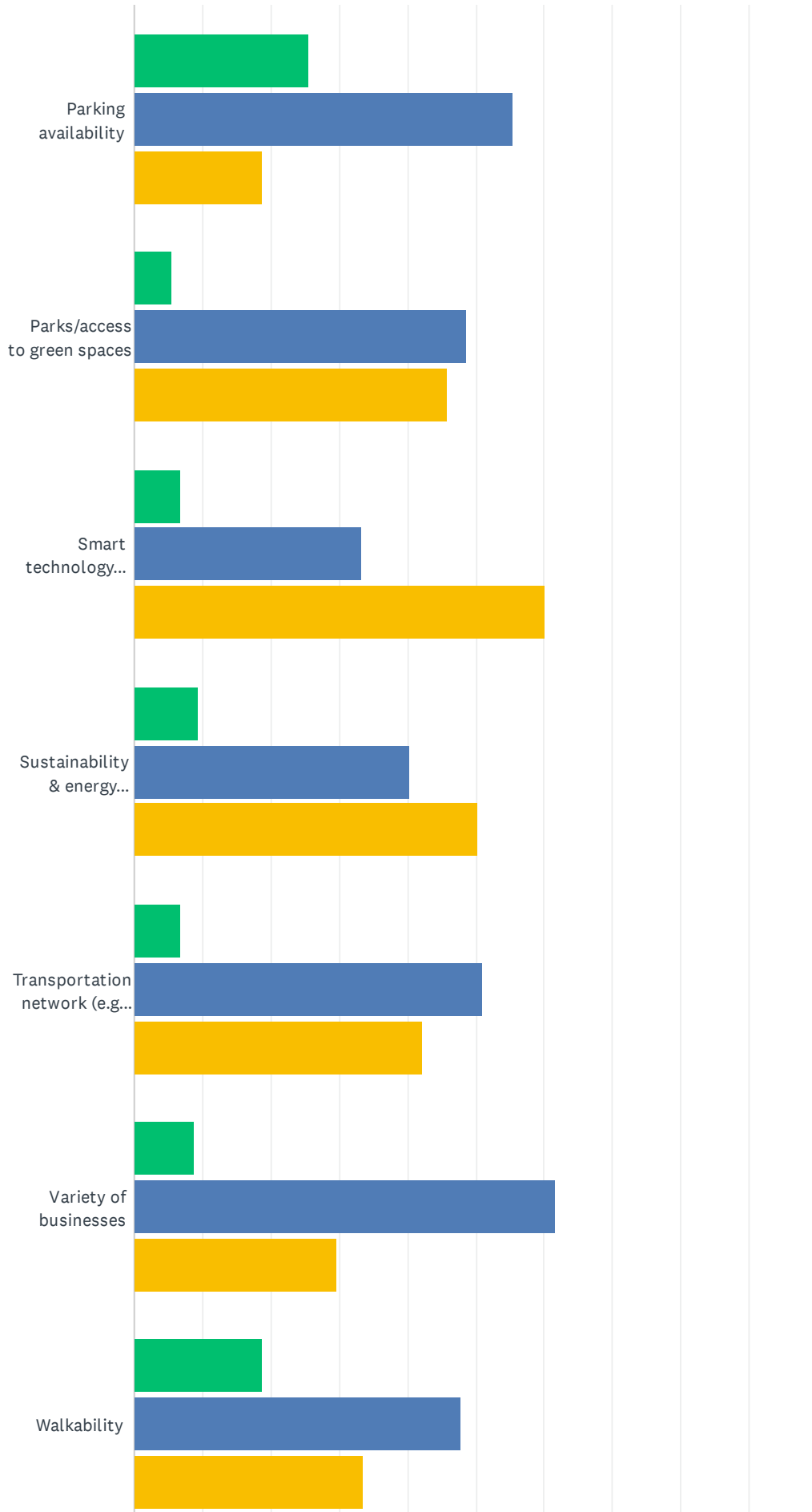
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Access to open space	17.52% 123	12.68% 89	9.83% 69	10.11% 71	7.69% 54	7.26% 51	7.41% 52	7.83% 55	5.84% 41	4.99% 35	3.42
Basic shopping needs	12.11% 85	14.10% 99	15.24% 107	10.97% 77	9.97% 70	11.11% 78	6.84% 48	4.42% 31	4.42% 31	3.70% 26	2.71
Clean appearance	2.14% 15	9.69% 68	14.53% 102	10.97% 77	11.68% 82	9.54% 67	8.83% 62	7.41% 52	6.55% 46	5.98% 42	3.13
Community activities	1.00% 7	3.70% 26	7.55% 53	11.25% 79	10.97% 77	9.40% 66	10.97% 77	9.54% 67	9.83% 69	10.11% 71	6.84
Diversity	2.14% 15	2.71% 19	2.14% 15	5.84% 41	8.40% 59	7.69% 54	7.41% 52	7.12% 50	6.13% 43	8.12% 57	7.69
Healthy/affordable food proximity/access	7.12% 50	10.97% 77	10.11% 71	10.11% 71	12.68% 89	12.68% 89	10.40% 73	7.41% 52	6.70% 47	4.84% 34	3.70
Housing diversity	1.85% 13	2.56% 18	2.42% 17	3.56% 25	3.42% 24	4.42% 31	8.55% 60	8.55% 60	7.55% 53	8.40% 59	10.68
Local schools	21.94% 154	8.55% 60	8.12% 57	5.70% 40	5.98% 42	5.70% 40	4.84% 34	10.68% 75	7.55% 53	6.13% 43	4.84
Medical proximity/access	5.41% 38	8.40% 59	11.82% 83	10.40% 73	6.55% 46	8.40% 59	7.55% 53	7.98% 56	13.11% 92	7.12% 50	5.56
Parks/recreation facilities/activities	1.71% 12	3.42% 24	3.70% 26	5.98% 42	4.99% 35	7.12% 50	8.12% 57	9.83% 69	10.68% 75	18.38% 129	13.25
Presence of trees/vegetation	4.99% 35	5.13% 36	3.42% 24	4.84% 34	5.13% 36	4.42% 31	5.84% 41	6.41% 45	7.26% 51	7.83% 55	18.52 1
Safety/low crime	20.09% 141	14.81% 104	7.55% 53	6.55% 46	6.84% 48	4.56% 32	3.99% 28	4.13% 29	3.56% 25	3.13% 22	3.70
Senior housing	0.28% 2	1.42% 10	1.42% 10	1.28% 9	2.42% 17	2.85% 20	4.70% 33	2.99% 21	5.56% 39	5.98% 42	8.26
Vibrant downtowns	1.71% 12	1.85% 13	2.14% 15	2.42% 17	3.28% 23	4.84% 34	4.56% 32	5.70% 40	5.27% 37	5.27% 37	7.69

Q50 How important are the following items in terms of future development?

Answered: 702 Skipped: 710



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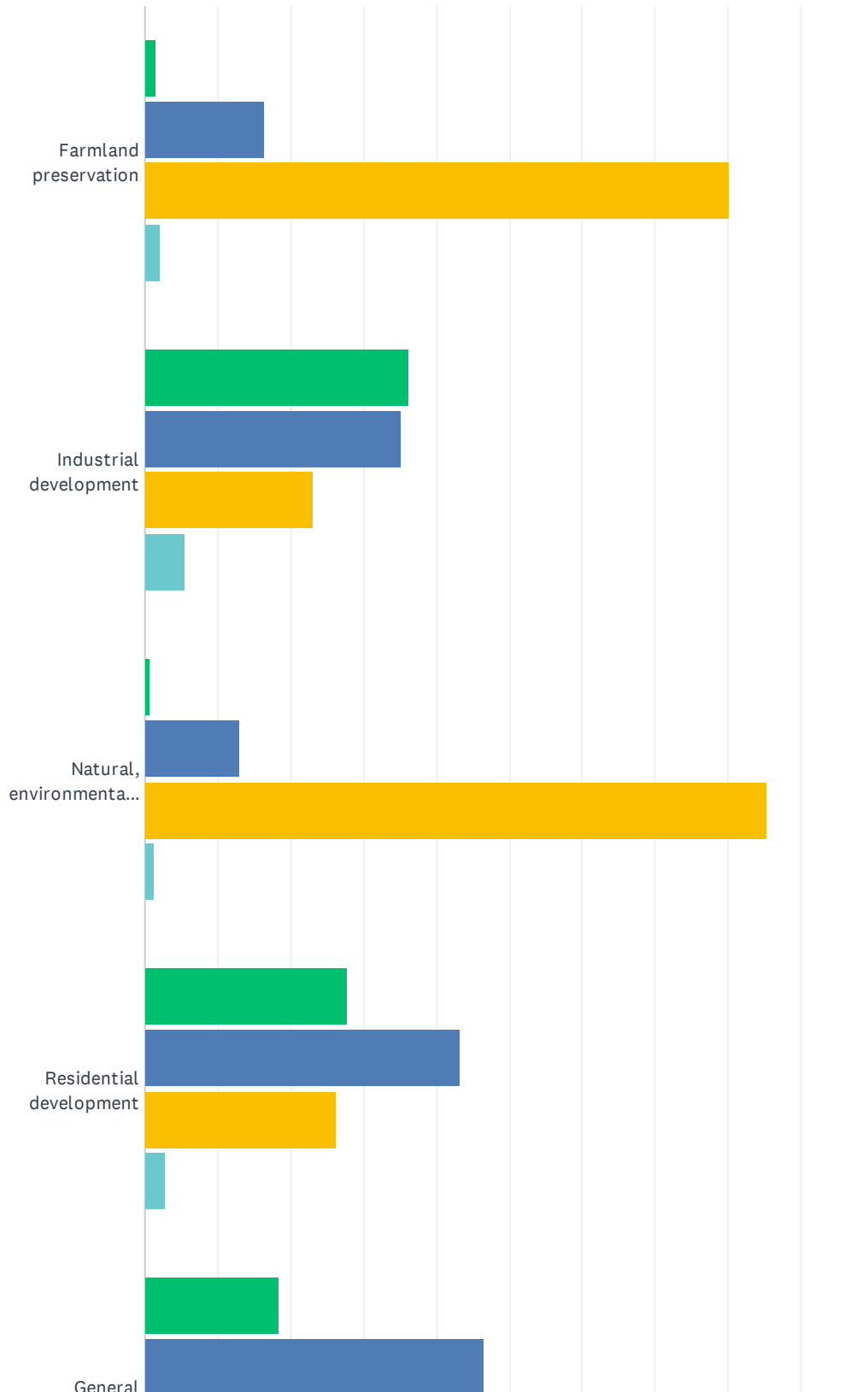


■ Not Import...
 ■ Important
 ■ Very Import...

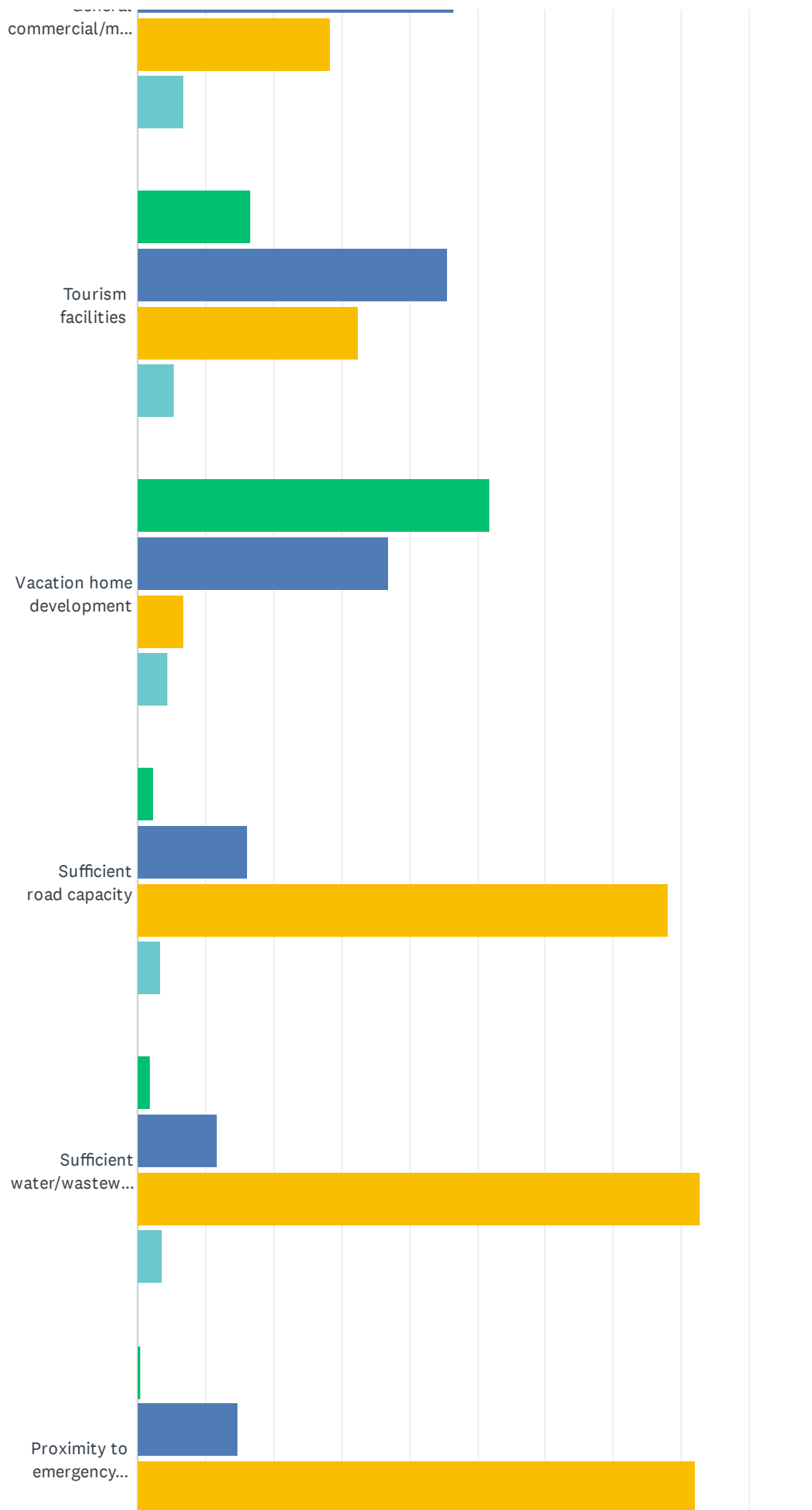
	NOT IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Affordability of housing	10.62% 74	44.76% 312	44.62% 311	697	2.34
Availability of cultural activities	20.69% 144	55.03% 383	24.28% 169	696	2.04
Farmland preservation	7.30% 51	35.77% 250	56.94% 398	699	2.50
Historic preservation	8.31% 58	48.57% 339	43.12% 301	698	2.35
Homes & neighborhoods	5.19% 36	46.40% 322	48.41% 336	694	2.43
Job creation	8.90% 62	48.49% 338	42.61% 297	697	2.34
Parking availability	25.68% 179	55.52% 387	18.79% 131	697	1.93
Parks/access to green spaces	5.46% 38	48.71% 339	45.83% 319	696	2.40
Smart technology (e.g., broadband, WiFi)	6.72% 47	33.19% 232	60.09% 420	699	2.53
Sustainability & energy efficiency	9.47% 66	40.32% 281	50.22% 350	697	2.41
Transportation network (e.g., roads, public transportation)	6.73% 47	51.00% 356	42.26% 295	698	2.36
Variety of businesses	8.75% 61	61.55% 429	29.70% 207	697	2.21
Walkability	18.79% 130	47.83% 331	33.38% 231	692	2.15

Q51 As Worcester County plans for future development, should local officials encourage, remain neutral, or discourage the following?

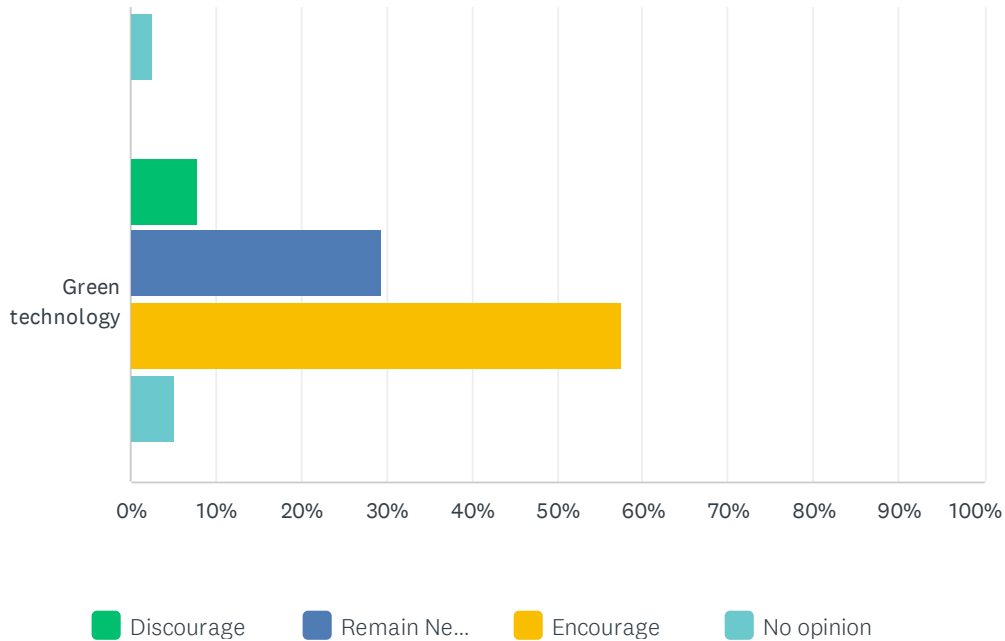
Answered: 704 Skipped: 708



Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey



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	DISCOURAGE	REMAIN NEUTRAL	ENCOURAGE	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Farmland preservation	1.42% 10	16.34% 115	80.11% 564	2.13% 15	704	2.83
Industrial development	36.14% 253	35.29% 247	23.00% 161	5.57% 39	700	1.98
Natural, environmental, and open space preservation	0.57% 4	12.93% 91	85.23% 600	1.28% 9	704	2.87
Residential development	27.74% 195	43.24% 304	26.32% 185	2.70% 19	703	2.04
General commercial/mixed-use development	18.26% 128	46.50% 326	28.39% 199	6.85% 48	701	2.24
Tourism facilities	16.69% 117	45.65% 320	32.38% 227	5.28% 37	701	2.26
Vacation home development	51.78% 363	36.80% 258	6.85% 48	4.56% 32	701	1.64
Sufficient road capacity	2.28% 16	16.24% 114	78.06% 548	3.42% 24	702	2.83
Sufficient water/wastewater capacity	1.85% 13	11.81% 83	82.79% 582	3.56% 25	703	2.88
Proximity to emergency service facilities/response time	0.43% 3	14.81% 104	82.19% 577	2.56% 18	702	2.87
Green technology	7.97% 56	29.45% 207	57.47% 404	5.12% 36	703	2.60

Q52 What one thing would you like to see changed to improve quality of life in Worcester County?

Answered: 635 Skipped: 777

Q53 What are Worcester County's greatest strengths and assets?

Answered: 637 Skipped: 775

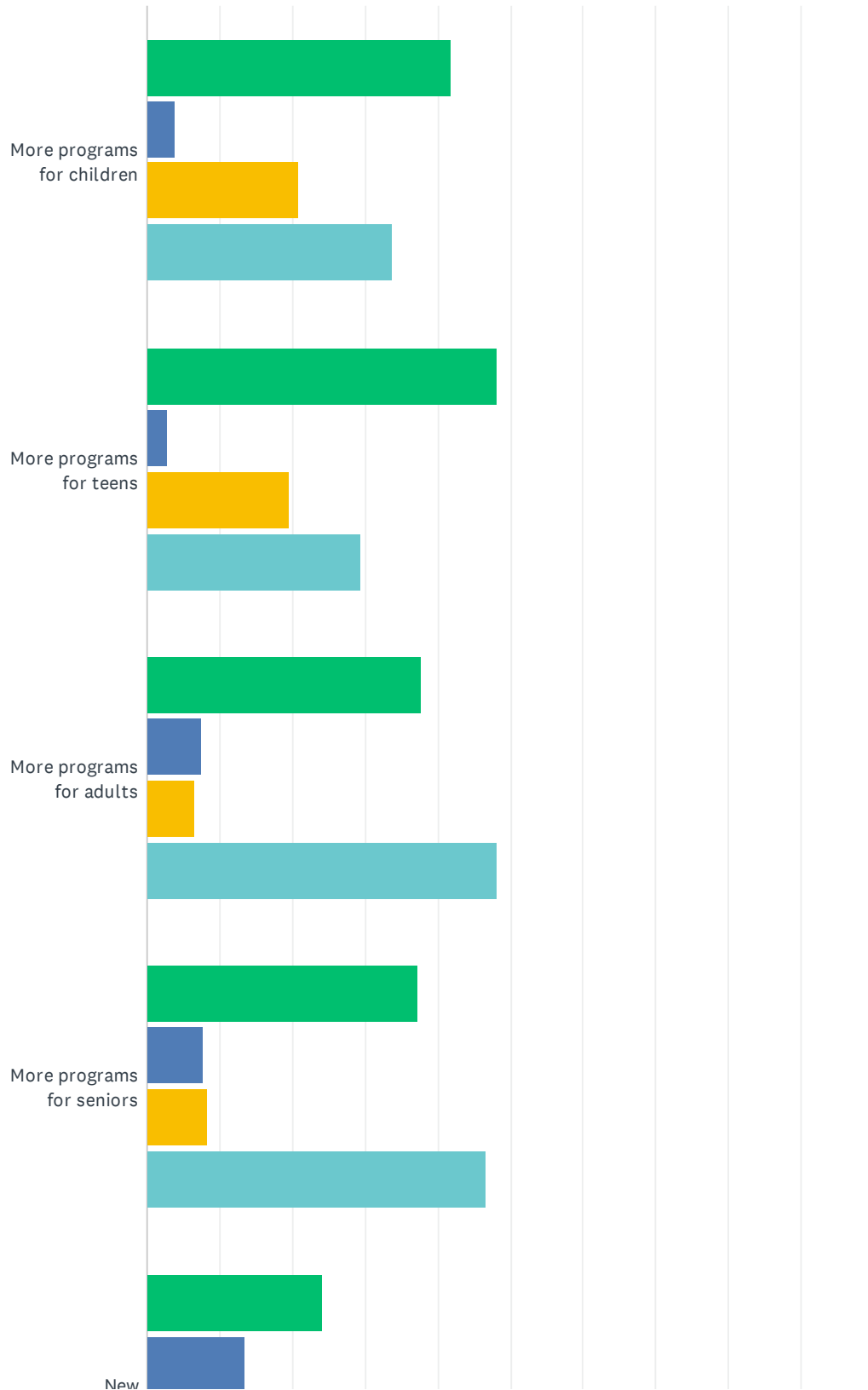
Q54 What are the most critical issues facing Worcester County

Answered: 638 Skipped: 774

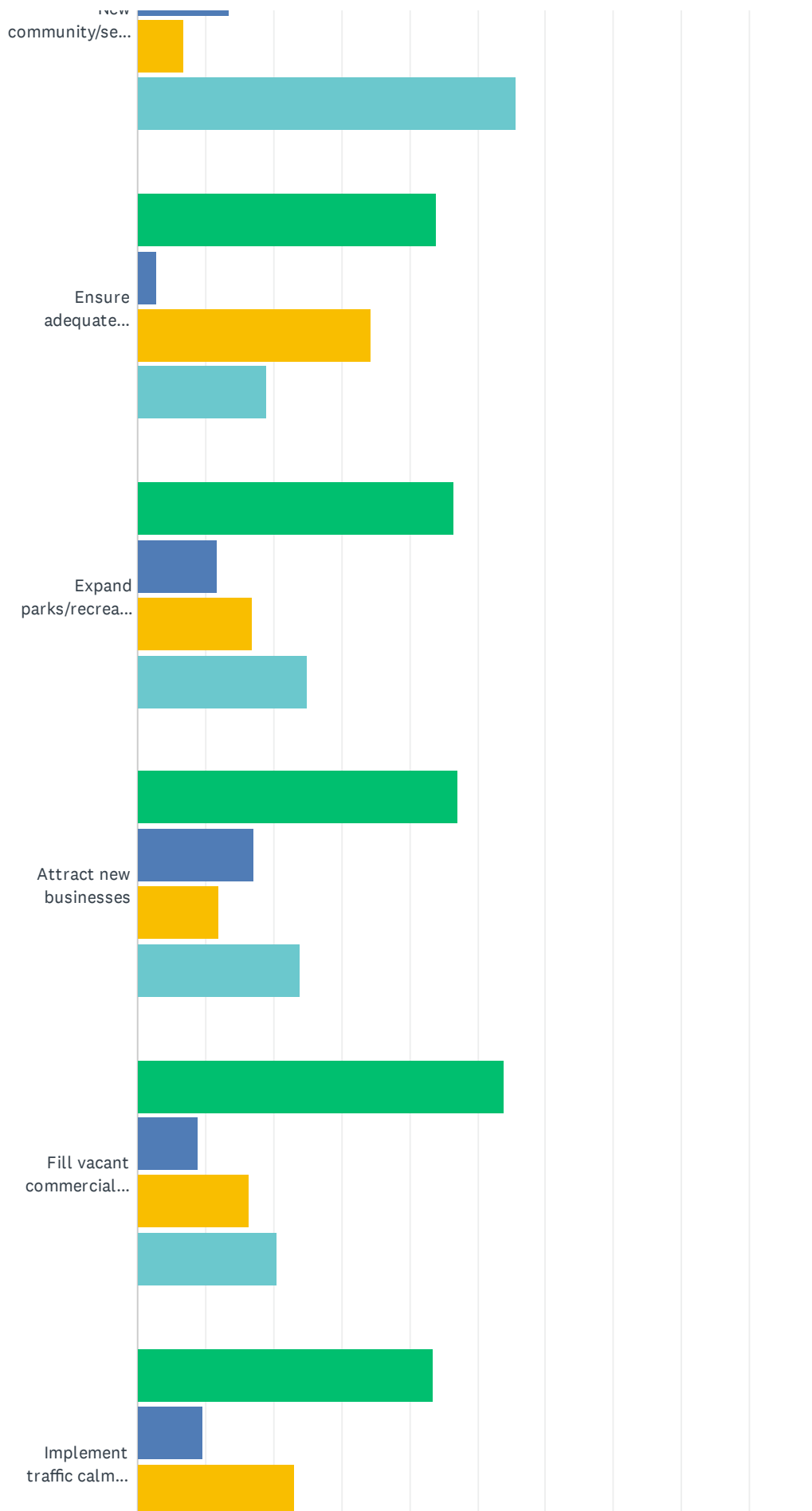
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Today?	99.22%	633
In the future?	96.39%	615

Q55 Would you like to see the following in Worcester County and, if so, where?

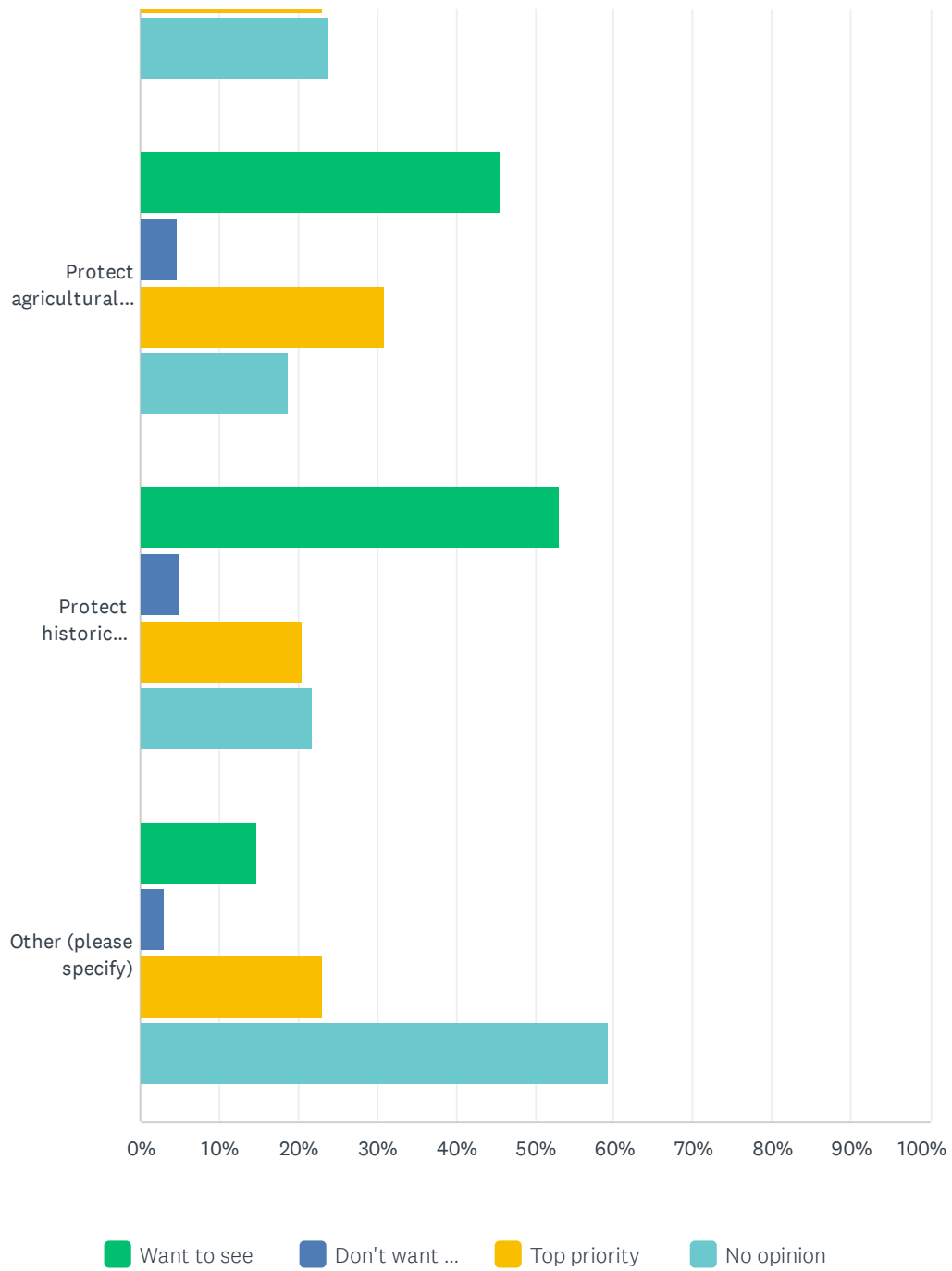
Answered: 702 Skipped: 710



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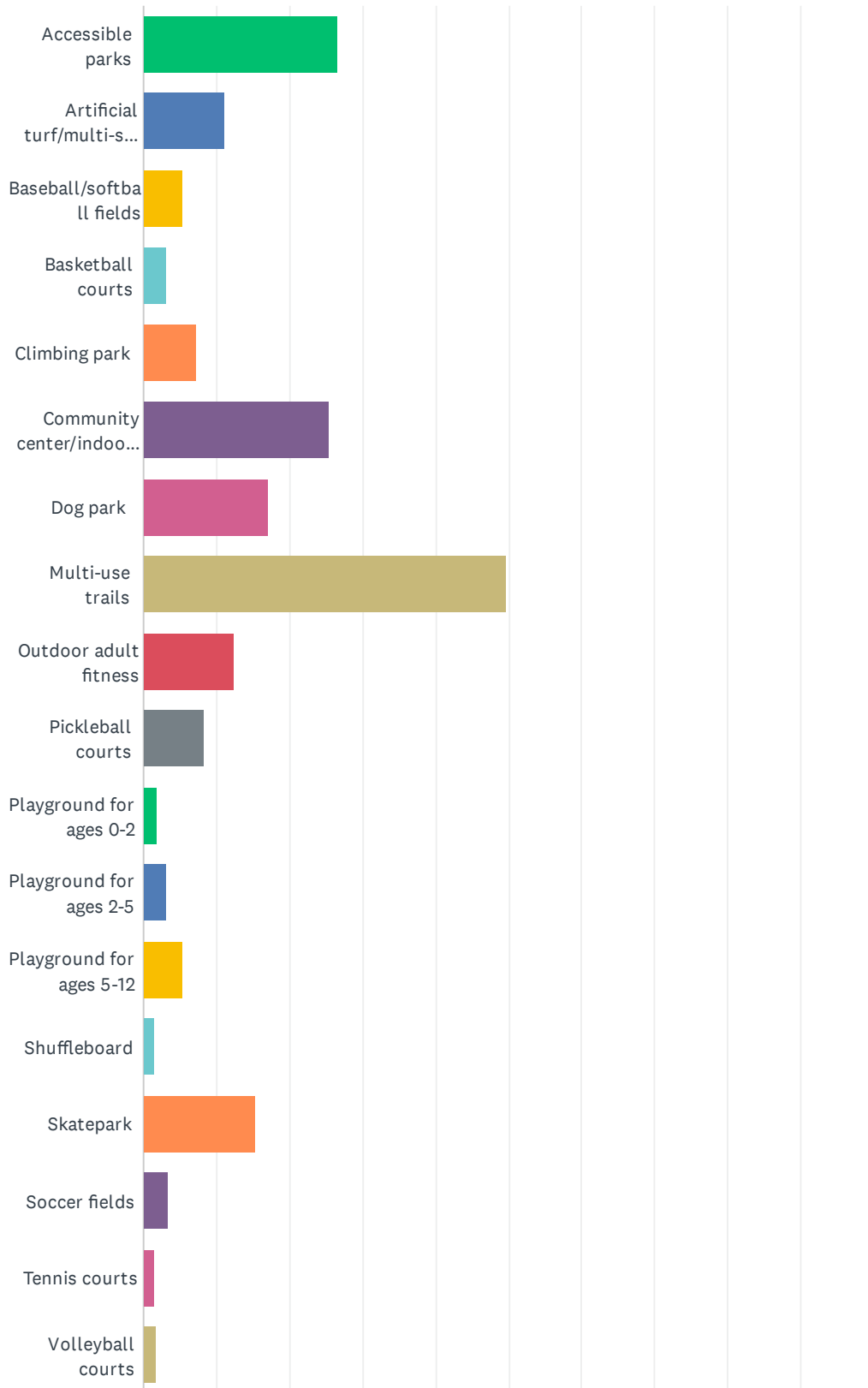


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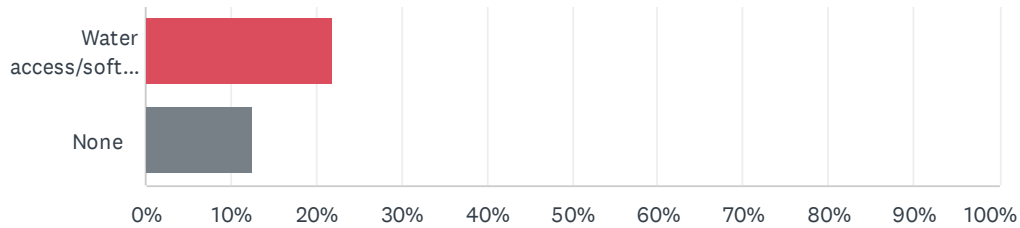
	WANT TO SEE	DON'T WANT TO SEE	TOP PRIORITY	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
More programs for children	41.70% 289	3.75% 26	20.92% 145	33.62% 233	693	2.46
More programs for teens	48.20% 335	2.88% 20	19.57% 136	29.35% 204	695	2.30
More programs for adults	37.83% 261	7.39% 51	6.67% 46	48.12% 332	690	2.65
More programs for seniors	37.25% 257	7.68% 53	8.41% 58	46.67% 322	690	2.64
New community/senior center	24.09% 165	13.43% 92	6.86% 47	55.62% 381	685	2.94
Ensure adequate water/sewer	43.99% 304	2.75% 19	34.30% 237	18.96% 131	691	2.28
Expand parks/recreation facilities	46.58% 320	11.79% 81	16.74% 115	24.89% 171	687	2.20
Attract new businesses	47.22% 323	17.11% 117	11.84% 81	23.83% 163	684	2.12
Fill vacant commercial spaces	54.00% 371	9.02% 62	16.45% 113	20.52% 141	687	2.03
Implement traffic calming measures	43.51% 295	9.59% 65	23.01% 156	23.89% 162	678	2.27
Protect agricultural land	45.61% 312	4.68% 32	30.99% 212	18.71% 128	684	2.23
Protect historic heritage	53.02% 360	4.86% 33	20.47% 139	21.65% 147	679	2.11
Other (please specify)	14.72% 34	3.03% 7	22.94% 53	59.31% 137	231	3.27

Q56 Considering Worcester County's existing facilities, what new or additional facilities are needed and where? (top 3)

Answered: 699 Skipped: 713



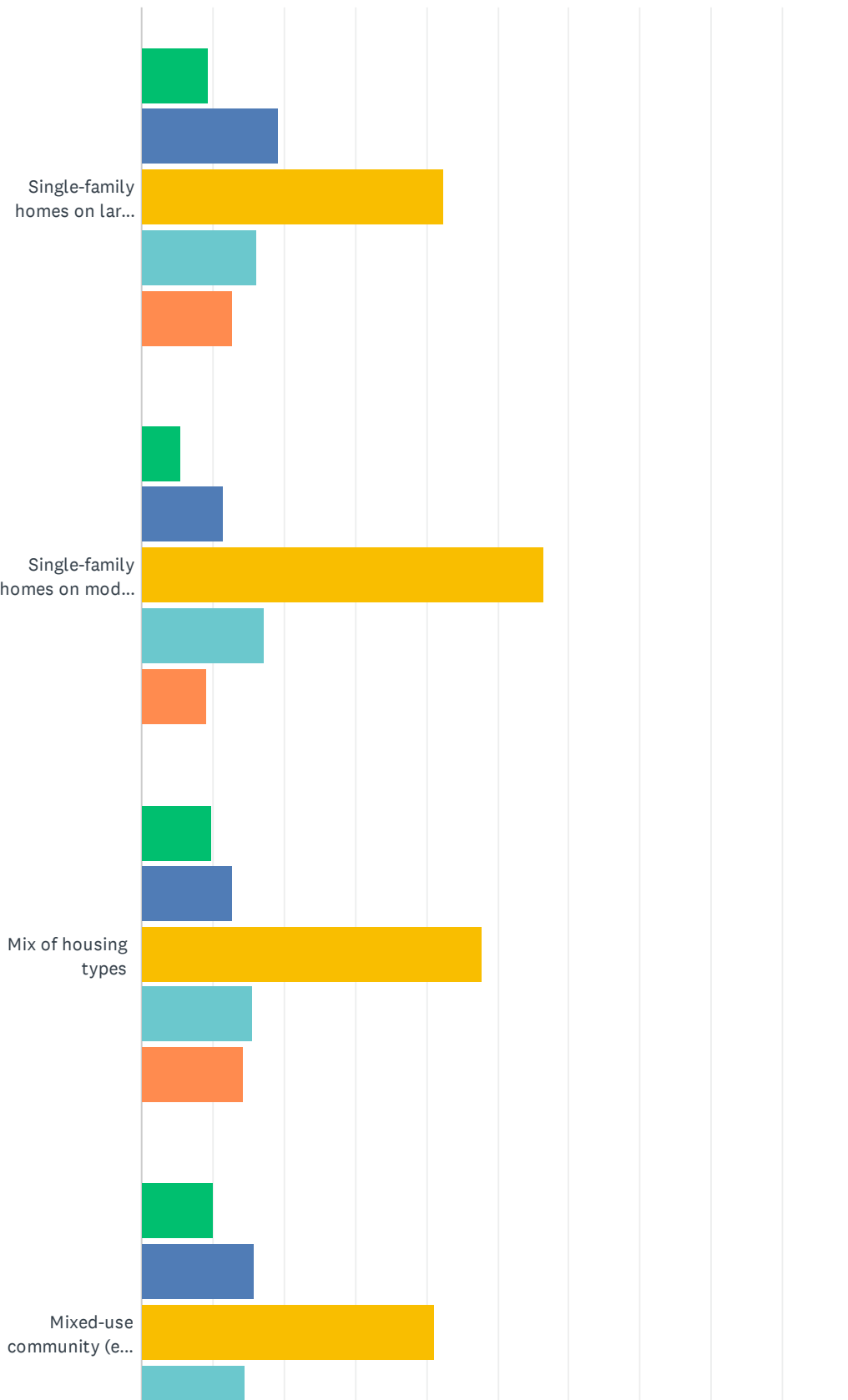
Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey



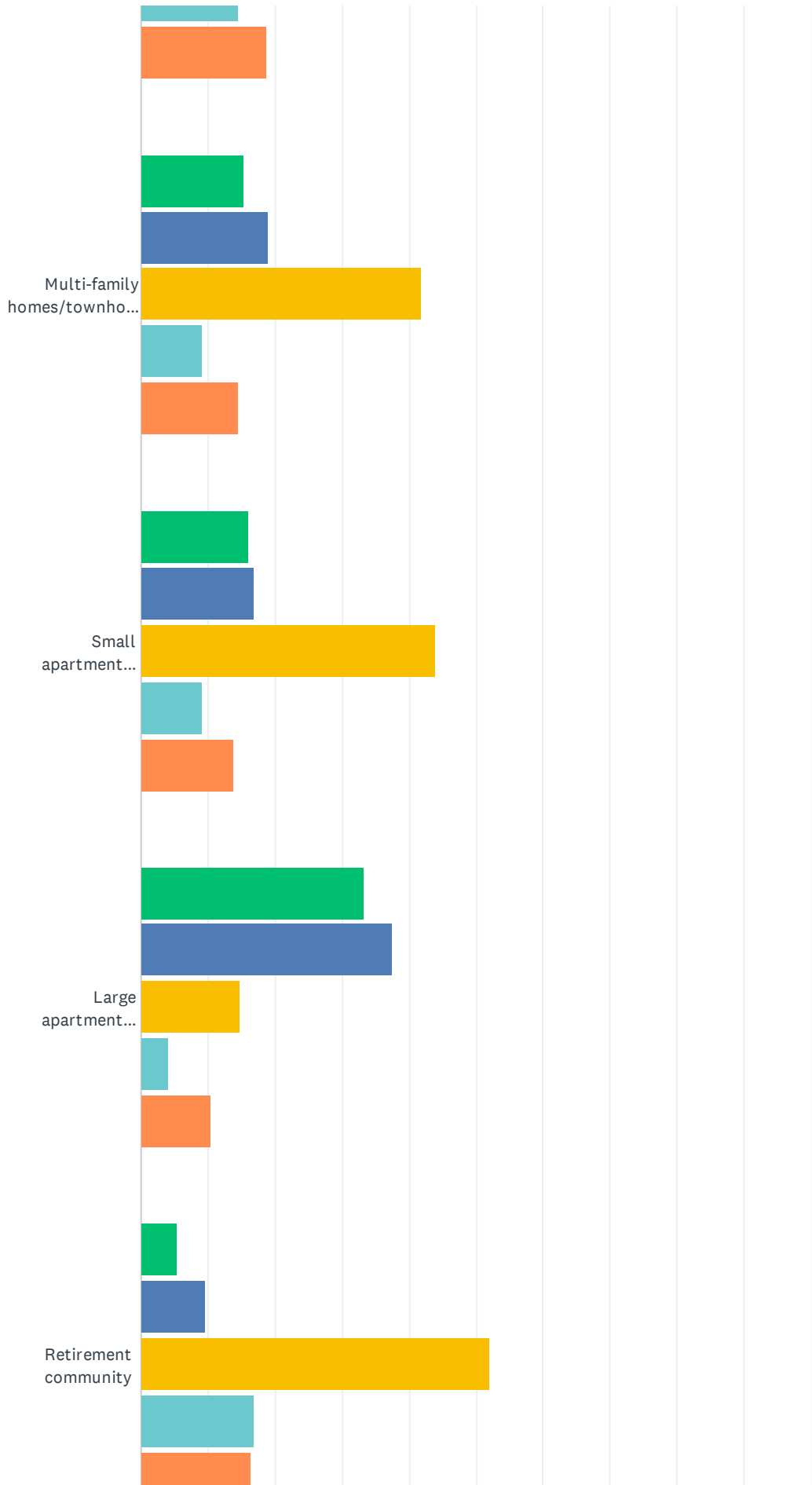
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Accessible parks	26.61%	186
Artificial turf/multi-sport field	11.02%	77
Baseball/softball fields	5.44%	38
Basketball courts	3.29%	23
Climbing park	7.15%	50
Community center/indoor facility	25.46%	178
Dog park	17.02%	119
Multi-use trails	49.64%	347
Outdoor adult fitness	12.45%	87
Pickleball courts	8.30%	58
Playground for ages 0-2	2.00%	14
Playground for ages 2-5	3.15%	22
Playground for ages 5-12	5.44%	38
Shuffleboard	1.43%	10
Skatepark	15.31%	107
Soccer fields	3.43%	24
Tennis courts	1.57%	11
Volleyball courts	1.72%	12
Water access/soft launch	22.03%	154
None	12.59%	88
Total Respondents: 699		

Q57 Do you support the following types of residential development?

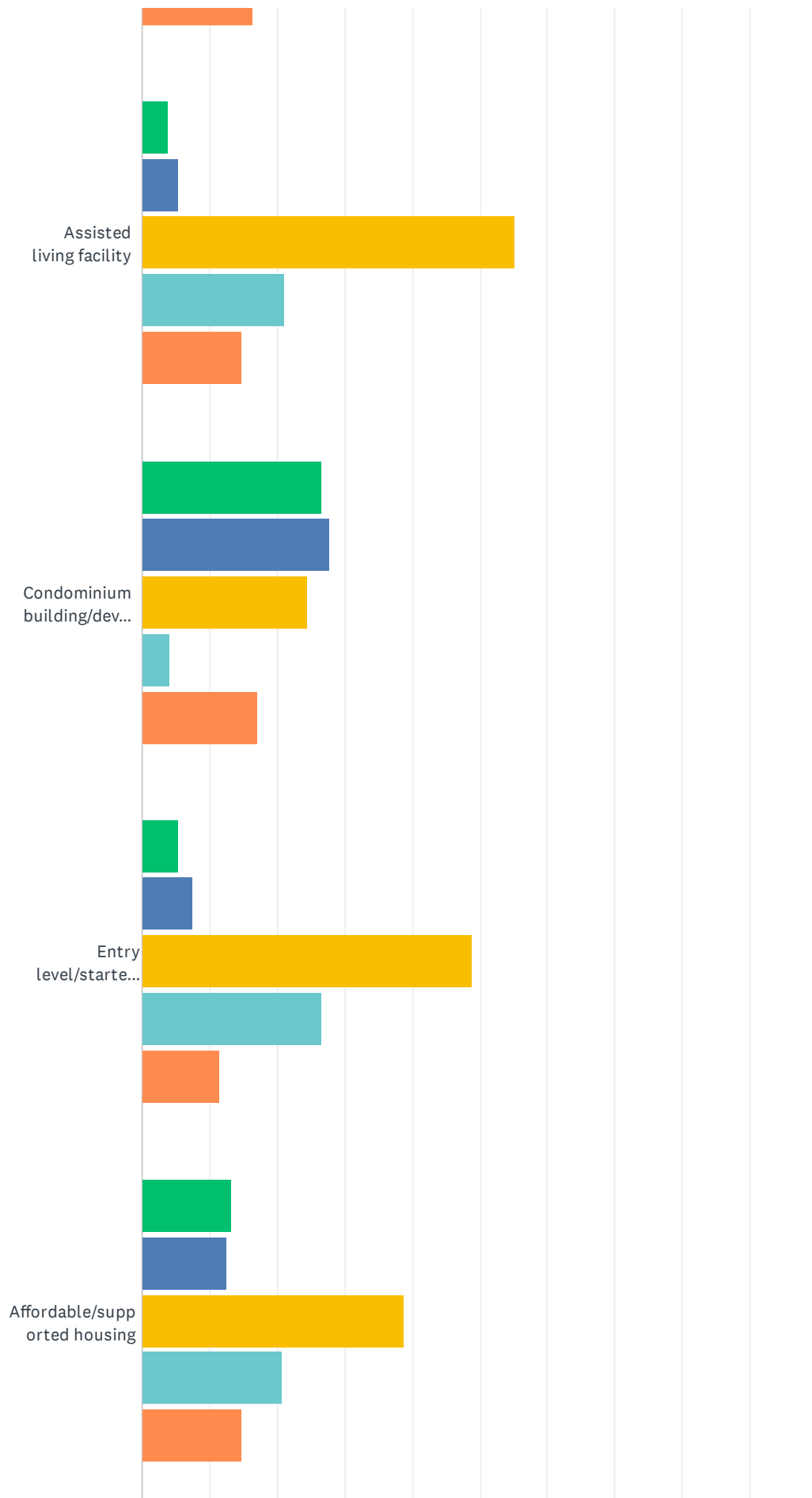
Answered: 702 Skipped: 710



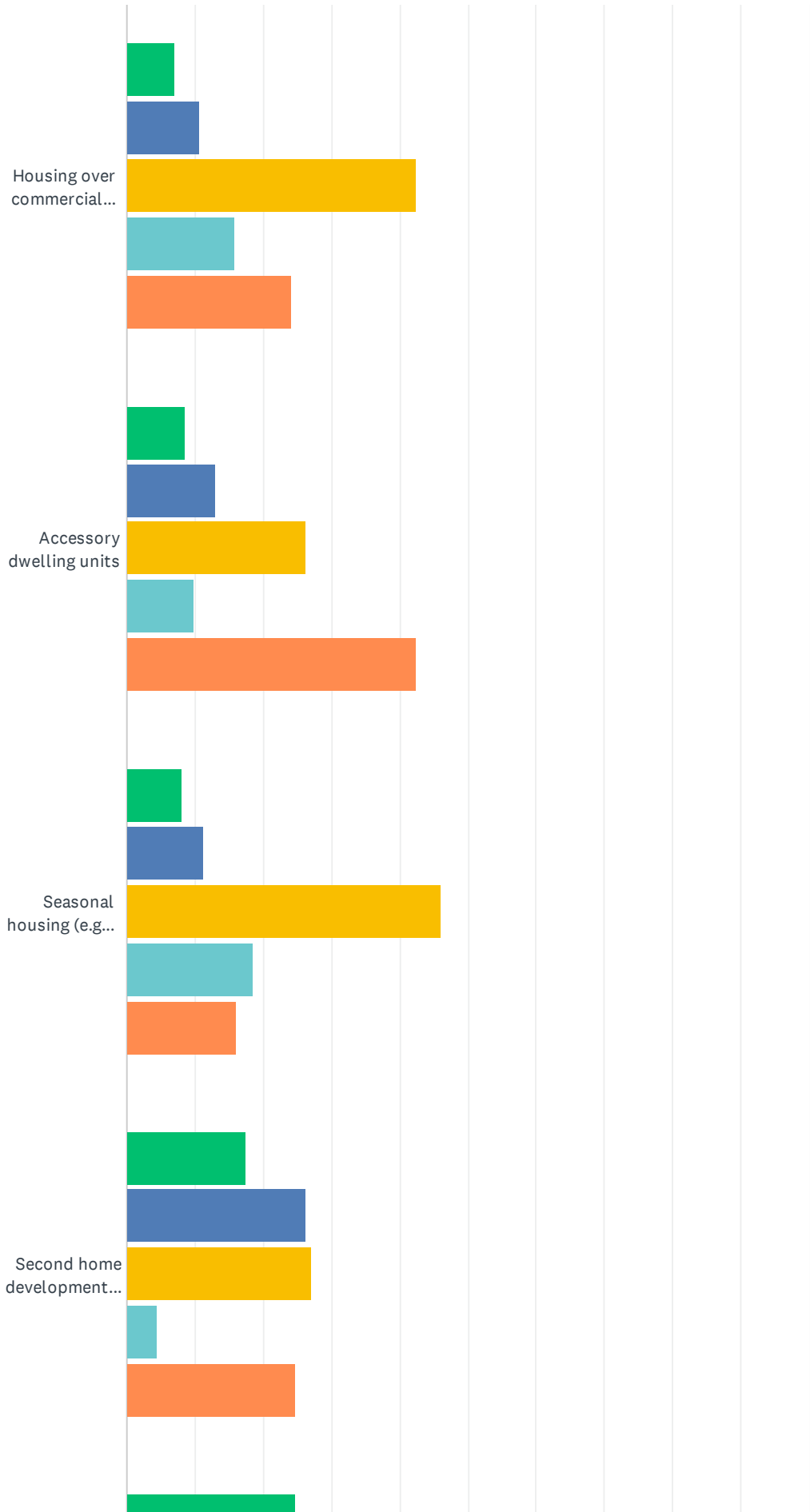
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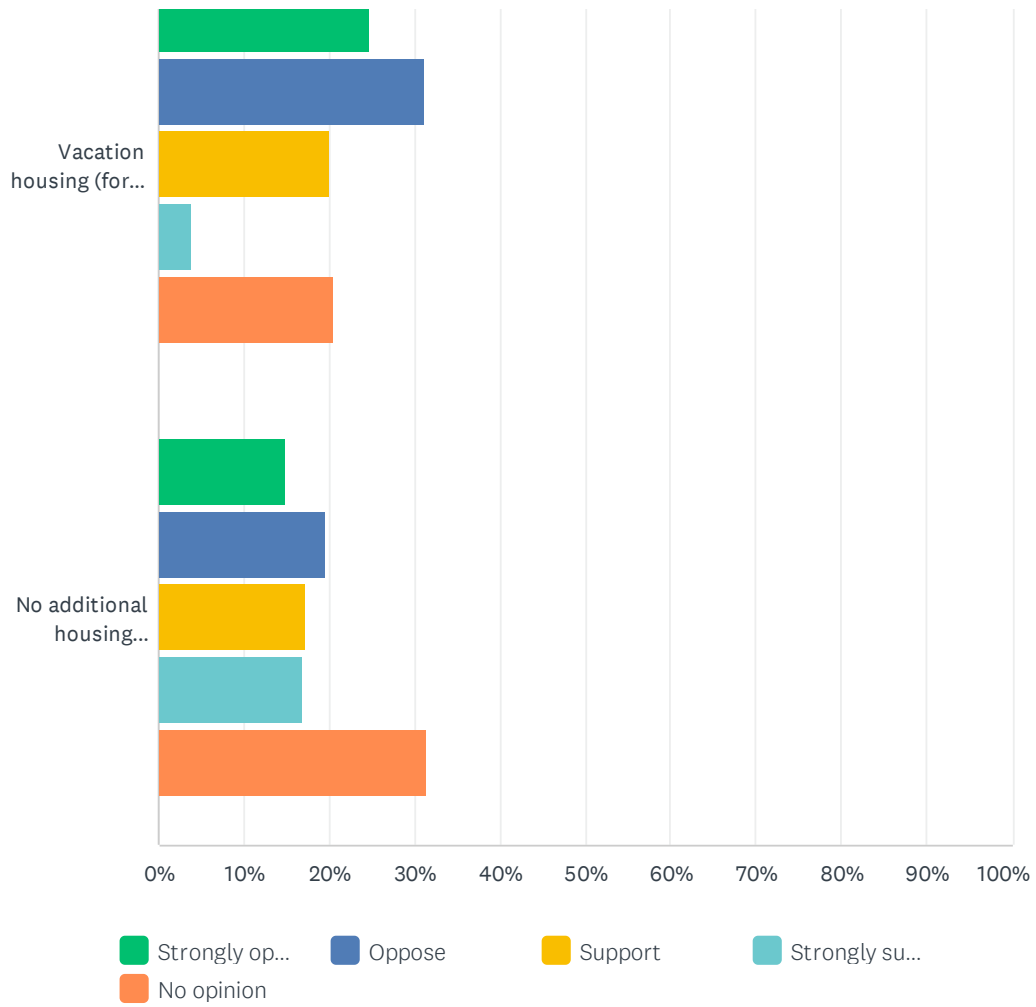
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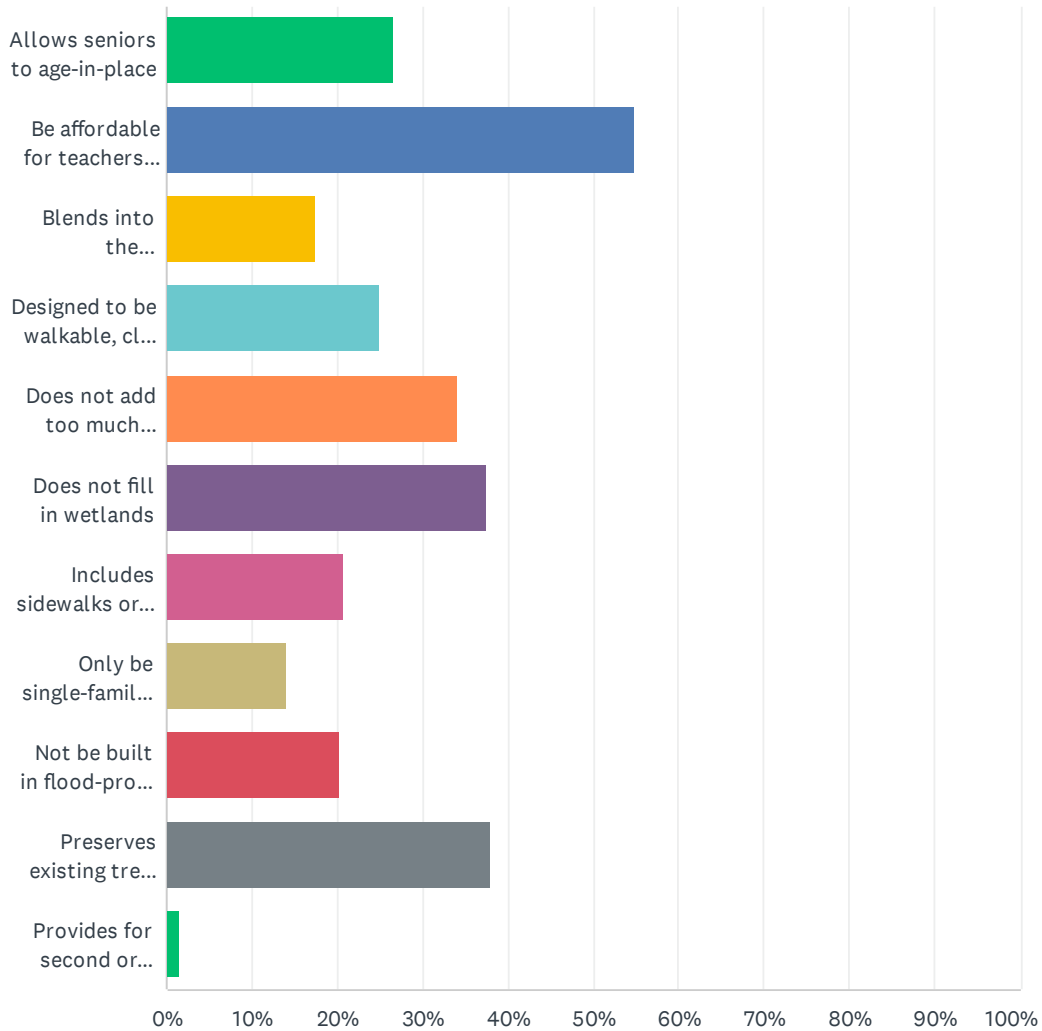


Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

	STRONGLY OPPOSE	OPPOSE	SUPPORT	STRONGLY SUPPORT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Single-family homes on large lots	9.28% 64	19.28% 133	42.46% 293	16.23% 112	12.75% 88	690	3.04
Single-family homes on modest lots	5.50% 38	11.58% 80	56.44% 390	17.37% 120	9.12% 63	691	3.13
Mix of housing types	9.71% 67	12.75% 88	47.68% 329	15.65% 108	14.20% 98	690	3.12
Mixed-use community (ex. residential & commercial)	9.94% 69	15.71% 109	41.21% 286	14.41% 100	18.73% 130	694	3.16
Multi-family homes/townhouses	15.44% 107	19.05% 132	41.85% 290	9.09% 63	14.57% 101	693	2.88
Small apartment buildings	16.02% 111	16.88% 117	44.01% 305	9.24% 64	13.85% 96	693	2.88
Large apartment buildings	33.28% 229	37.50% 258	14.68% 101	4.07% 28	10.47% 72	688	2.21
Retirement community	5.31% 37	9.61% 67	51.94% 362	16.79% 117	16.36% 114	697	3.29
Assisted living facility	3.74% 26	5.32% 37	55.17% 384	21.12% 147	14.66% 102	696	3.38
Condominium building/development	26.75% 183	27.78% 190	24.42% 167	4.09% 28	16.96% 116	684	2.57
Entry level/starter homes	5.34% 37	7.50% 52	48.92% 339	26.70% 185	11.54% 80	693	3.32
Affordable/supported housing	13.29% 92	12.57% 87	38.73% 268	20.66% 143	14.74% 102	692	3.11
Housing over commercial spaces	7.10% 49	10.58% 73	42.46% 293	15.80% 109	24.06% 166	690	3.39
Accessory dwelling units	8.53% 58	13.09% 89	26.18% 178	9.85% 67	42.35% 288	680	3.64
Seasonal housing (e.g., farm or tourism workers)	8.03% 56	11.33% 79	46.05% 321	18.51% 129	16.07% 112	697	3.23
Second home development (not for rent)	17.58% 122	26.22% 182	27.09% 188	4.47% 31	24.64% 171	694	2.92
Vacation housing (for rent)	24.71% 172	31.03% 216	19.97% 139	3.74% 26	20.55% 143	696	2.64
No additional housing development	14.83% 98	19.67% 130	17.25% 114	16.94% 112	31.32% 207	661	3.30

Q58 What are the most important characteristics for new residential development? (choose top 3)

Answered: 708 Skipped: 704

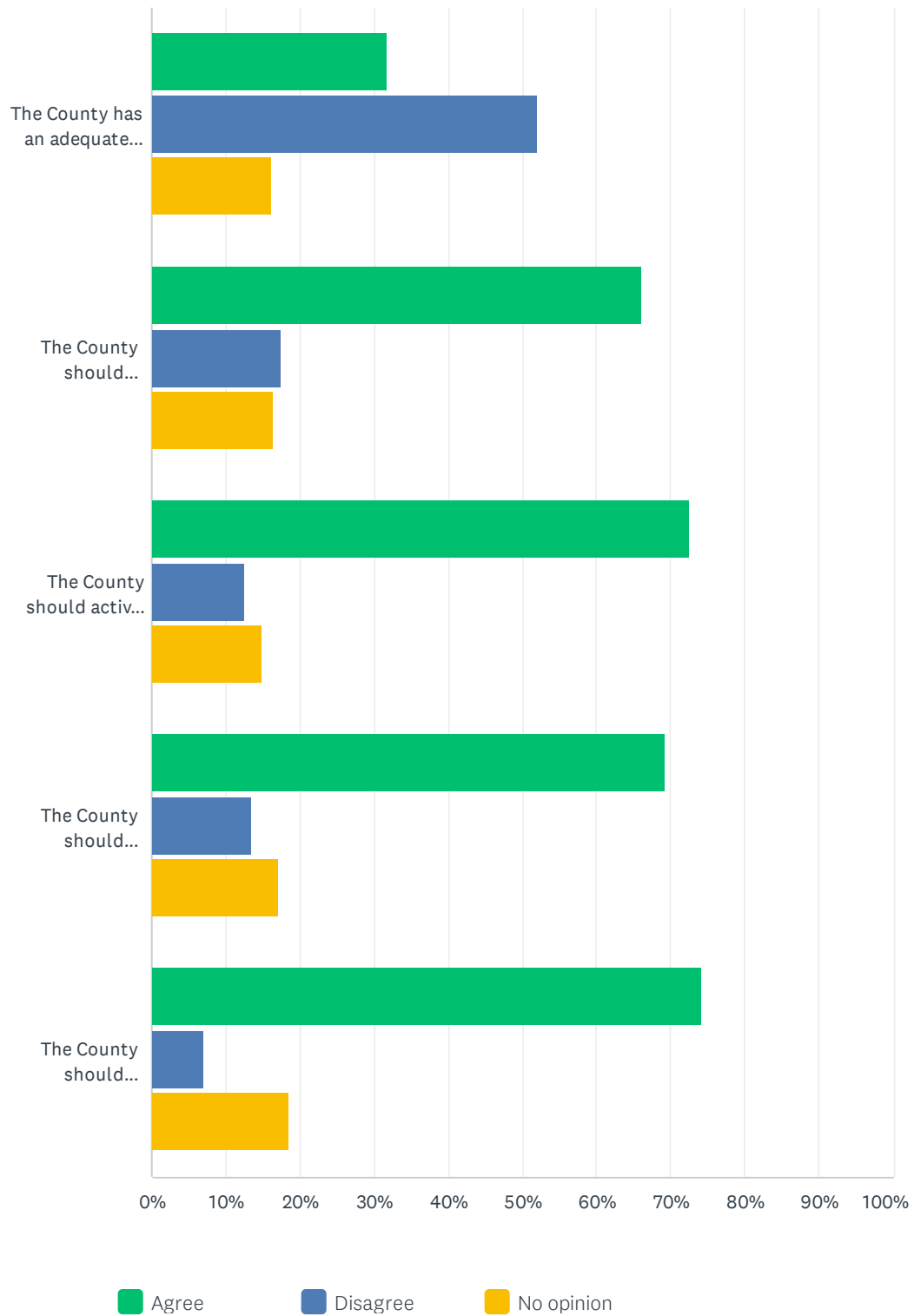


Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Allows seniors to age-in-place	26.55%	188
Be affordable for teachers, firefighters, students, etc.	54.80%	388
Blends into the neighborhood	17.51%	124
Designed to be walkable, close to shops and services	24.86%	176
Does not add too much traffic	34.04%	241
Does not fill in wetlands	37.43%	265
Includes sidewalks or multi-use paths	20.76%	147
Only be single-family houses	13.98%	99
Not be built in flood-prone areas	20.20%	143
Preserves existing trees and vegetation	37.85%	268
Provides for second or vacation homes	1.55%	11
Total Respondents: 708		

Q59 Do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

Answered: 705 Skipped: 707

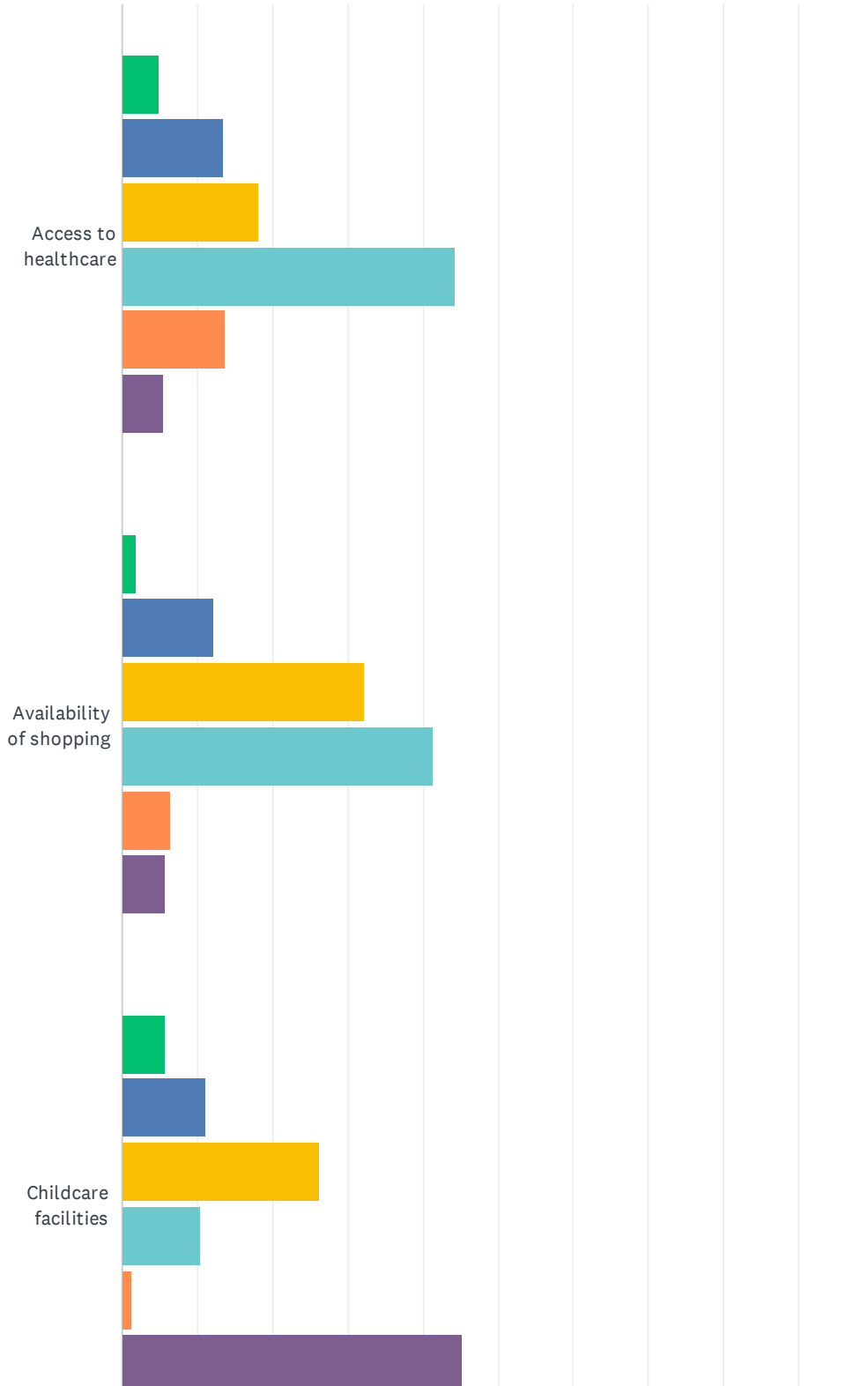


Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

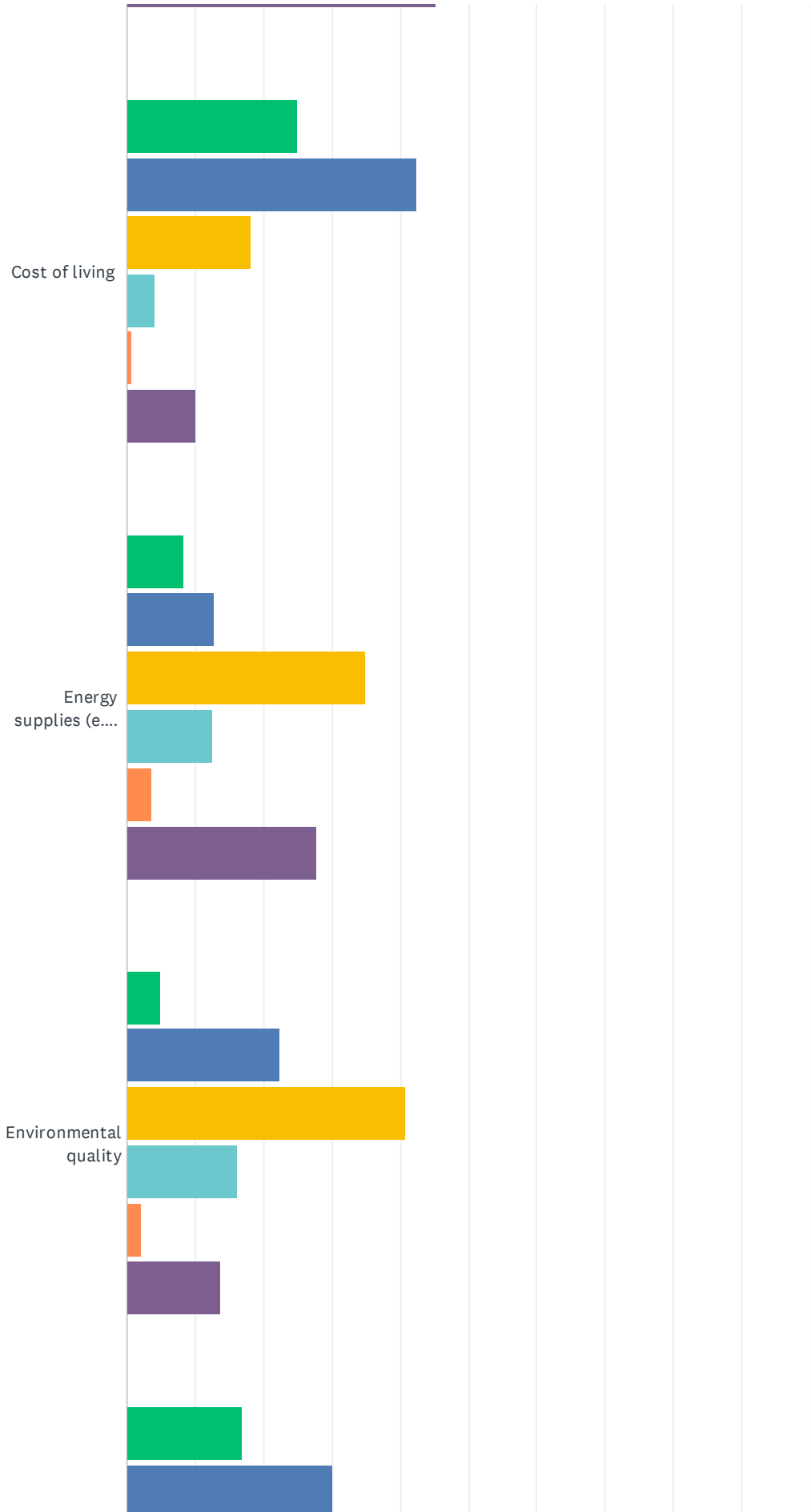
	AGREE	DISAGREE	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
The County has an adequate supply of housing	31.68% 223	52.13% 367	16.19% 114	704	1.85
The County should encourage more affordable housing	66.00% 464	17.50% 123	16.50% 116	703	1.50
The County should actively promote job growth	72.43% 507	12.57% 88	15.00% 105	700	1.43
The County should encourage new businesses to open	69.37% 487	13.53% 95	17.09% 120	702	1.48
The County should prioritize agricultural preservation	74.29% 520	7.14% 50	18.57% 130	700	1.44

Q60 Growth over the last decade has brought about some changes for Worcester County. For each of the following that you may have observed, please indicate what the local impact has been.

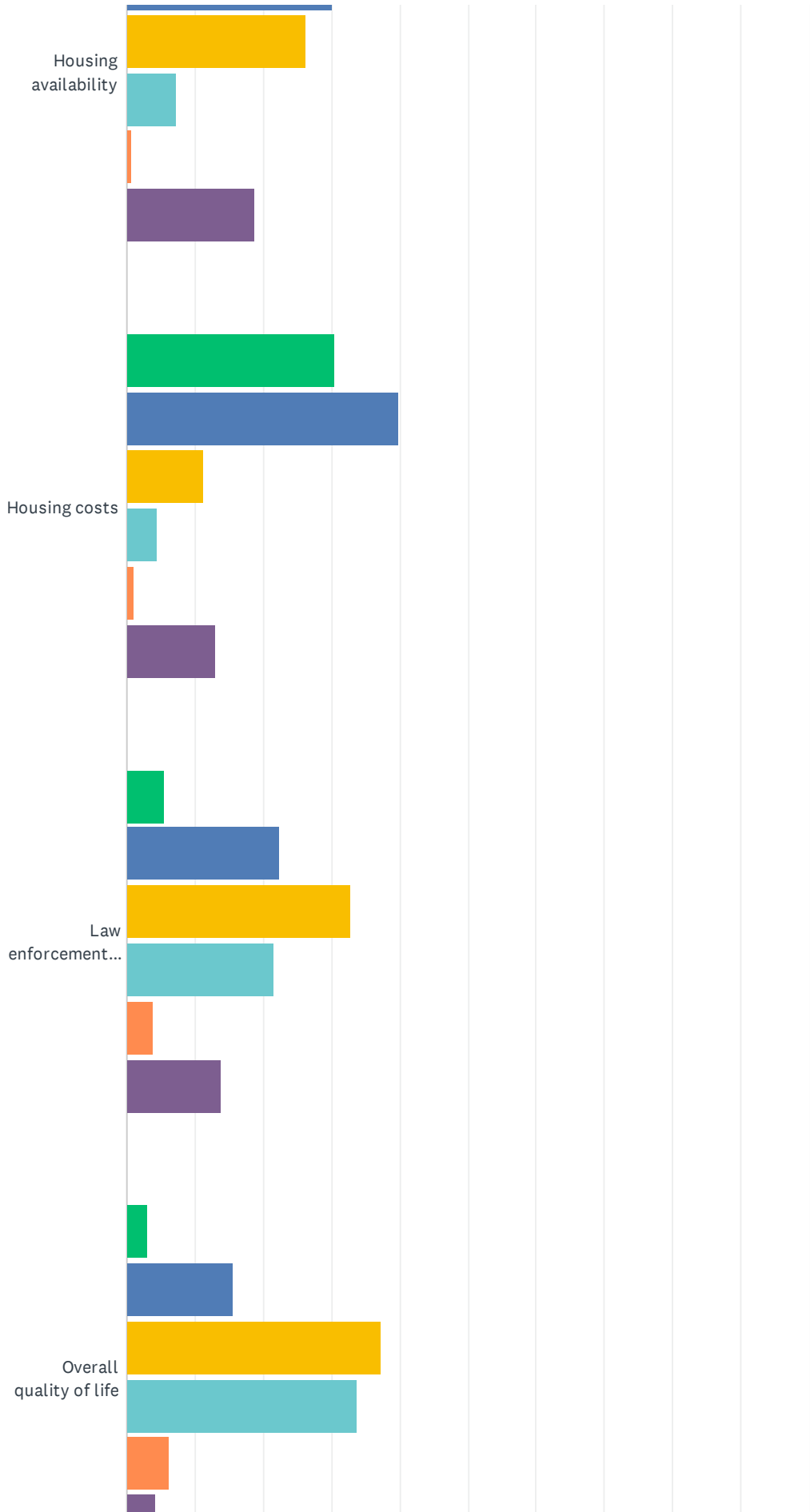
Answered: 701 Skipped: 711



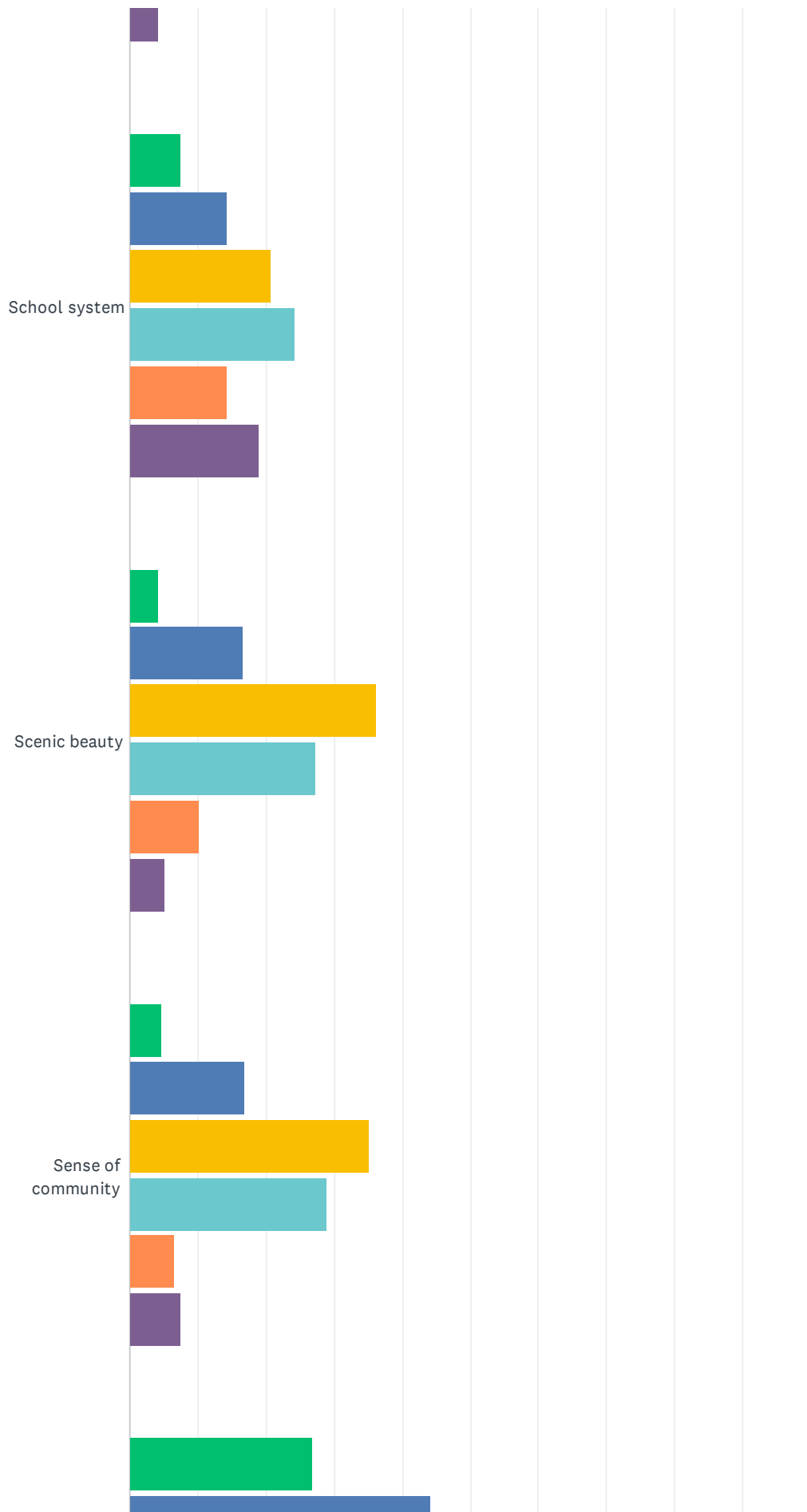
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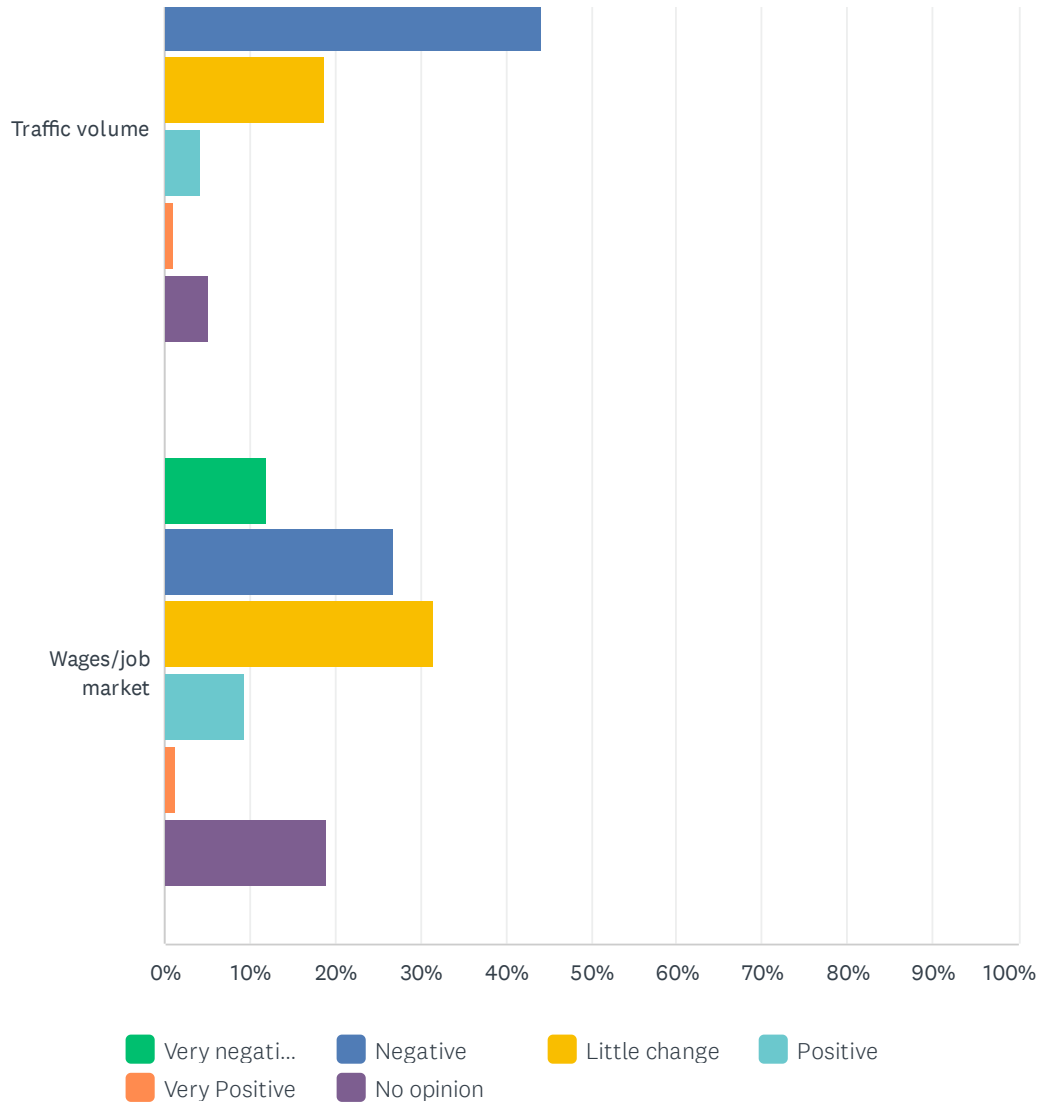
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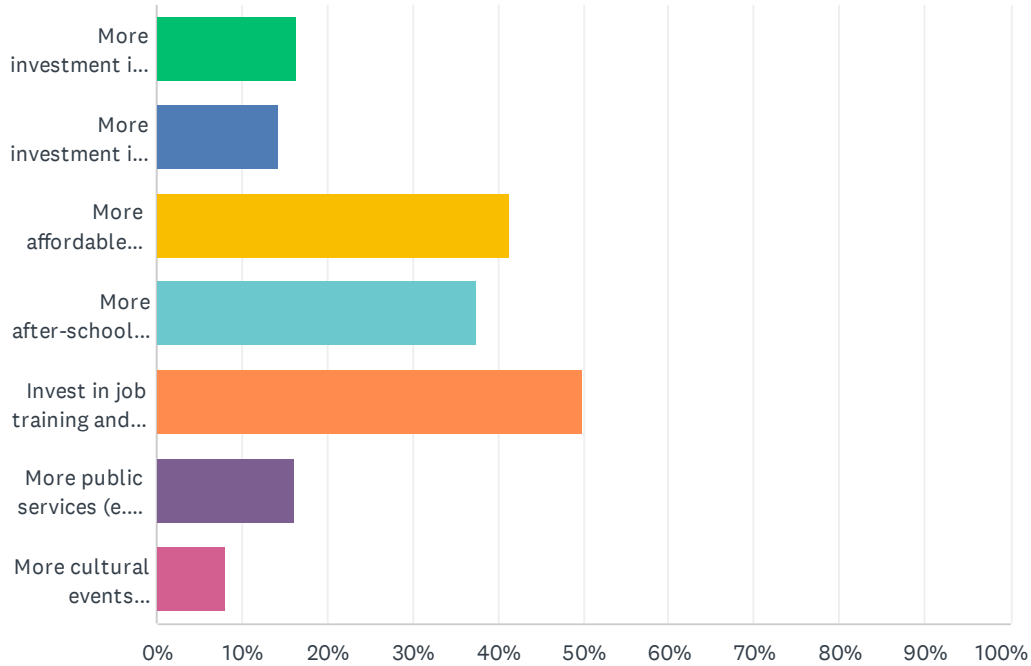


Worcester County Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey

	VERY NEGATIVE	NEGATIVE	LITTLE CHANGE	POSITIVE	VERY POSITIVE	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Access to healthcare	4.91% 34	13.42% 93	18.04% 125	44.44% 308	13.71% 95	5.48% 38	693	3.65
Availability of shopping	2.01% 14	12.23% 85	32.23% 224	41.44% 288	6.33% 44	5.76% 40	695	3.55
Childcare facilities	5.66% 39	11.18% 77	26.12% 180	10.45% 72	1.31% 9	45.28% 312	689	4.26
Cost of living	24.86% 172	42.34% 293	18.06% 125	4.05% 28	0.72% 5	9.97% 69	692	2.43
Energy supplies (e.g., solar wind, geothermal)	8.37% 58	12.70% 88	35.06% 243	12.55% 87	3.61% 25	27.71% 192	693	3.73
Environmental quality	4.92% 34	22.29% 154	40.67% 281	16.21% 112	2.17% 15	13.75% 95	691	3.30
Housing availability	16.84% 116	30.04% 207	26.27% 181	7.26% 50	0.73% 5	18.87% 130	689	3.02
Housing costs	30.40% 211	39.77% 276	11.38% 79	4.47% 31	1.01% 7	12.97% 90	694	2.45
Law enforcement needs	5.51% 38	22.46% 155	32.75% 226	21.45% 148	3.91% 27	13.91% 96	690	3.38
Overall quality of life	2.89% 20	15.63% 108	37.34% 258	33.72% 233	6.22% 43	4.20% 29	691	3.37
School system	7.55% 52	14.22% 98	20.61% 142	24.38% 168	14.22% 98	19.01% 131	689	3.81
Scenic beauty	4.34% 30	16.64% 115	36.18% 250	27.35% 189	10.27% 71	5.21% 36	691	3.38
Sense of community	4.78% 33	16.81% 116	35.22% 243	28.99% 200	6.67% 46	7.54% 52	690	3.39
Traffic volume	26.80% 186	44.09% 306	18.73% 130	4.18% 29	1.15% 8	5.04% 35	694	2.24
Wages/job market	11.94% 82	26.78% 184	31.59% 217	9.32% 64	1.31% 9	19.07% 131	687	3.18

Q61 What actions should Worcester County prioritize to support its minority populations? (top 2)

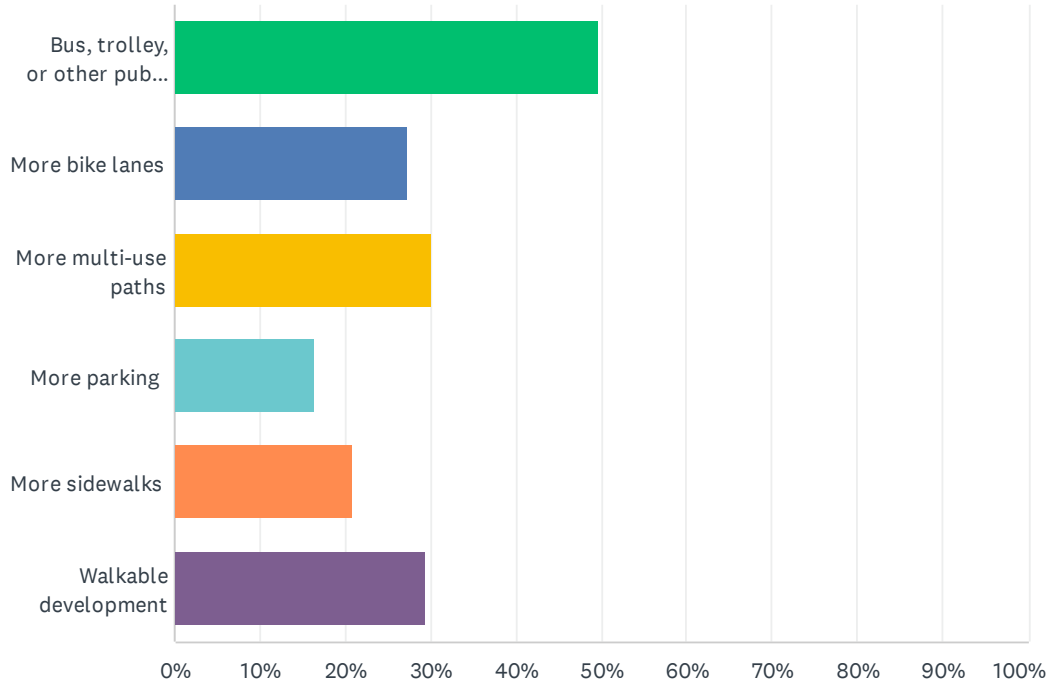
Answered: 708 Skipped: 704



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More investment in public facilities in areas with higher levels of minority populations	16.38%	116
More investment in roads and sidewalks in areas with higher levels of minority populations	14.27%	101
More affordable housing options in the County	41.38%	293
More after-school activities in the County	37.57%	266
Invest in job training and work programs	49.86%	353
More public services (e.g., healthcare)	16.24%	115
More cultural events celebrating diversity in the County	8.05%	57
Total Respondents: 708		

Q62 If funding were available, what transportation item should the County prioritize in the next 10-20 years? (choose 2)

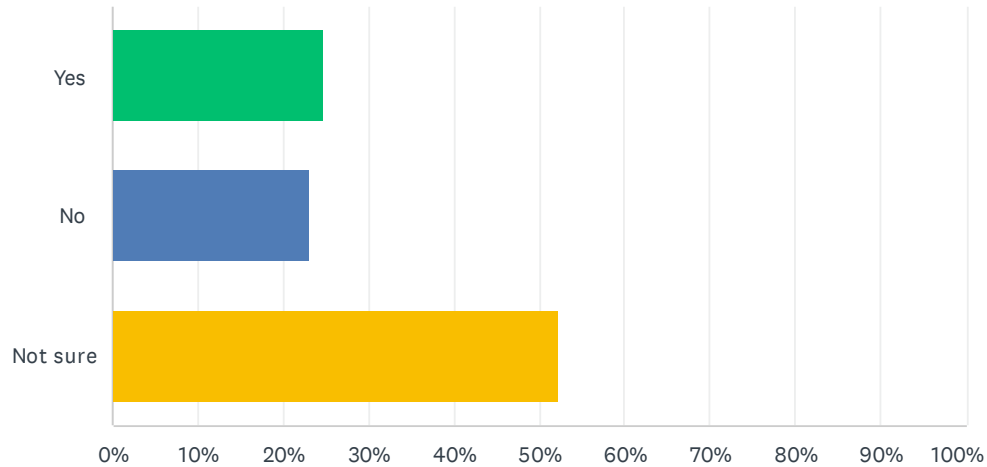
Answered: 708 Skipped: 704



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Bus, trolley, or other public transportation service	49.58%	351
More bike lanes	27.26%	193
More multi-use paths	30.08%	213
More parking	16.38%	116
More sidewalks	20.90%	148
Walkable development	29.38%	208
Total Respondents: 708		

Q63 Does Worcester County provide an environment that allows seniors or citizens with disabilities to live independently?

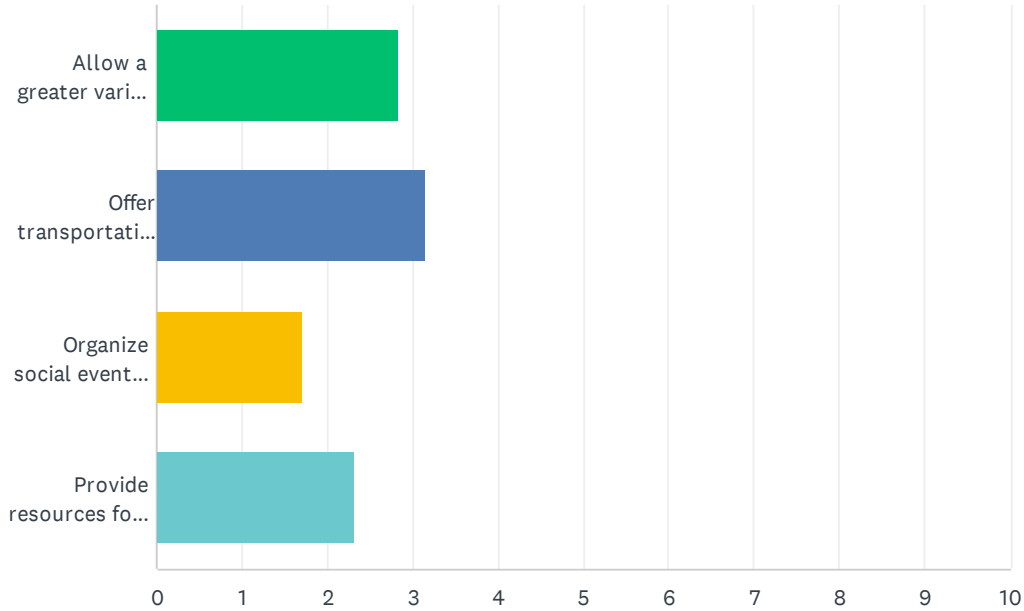
Answered: 705 Skipped: 707



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	24.82%	175
No	22.98%	162
Not sure	52.20%	368
TOTAL		705

Q64 What is the best strategy to make living in Worcester County easier for senior citizens?

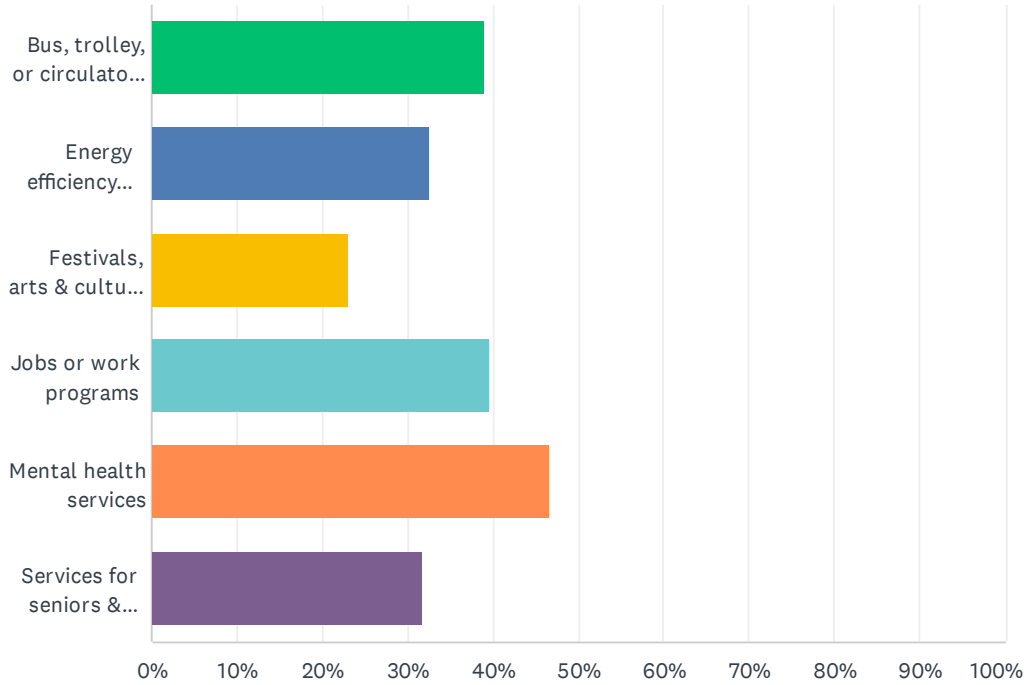
Answered: 652 Skipped: 760



	1	2	3	4	TOTAL	SCORE
Allow a greater variety of housing types	37.27% 243	23.62% 154	23.47% 153	15.64% 102	652	2.83
Offer transportation options for those who don't drive	40.03% 261	37.73% 246	19.79% 129	2.45% 16	652	3.15
Organize social events for seniors	4.29% 28	14.42% 94	27.91% 182	53.37% 348	652	1.70
Provide resources for home modifications (e.g., ramps, railings)	18.40% 120	24.23% 158	28.83% 188	28.53% 186	652	2.33

Q65 What public services does Worcester County need more of in the future?

Answered: 691 Skipped: 721



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Bus, trolley, or circulator service	39.07%	270
Energy efficiency incentives	32.56%	225
Festivals, arts & culture events	23.01%	159
Jobs or work programs	39.65%	274
Mental health services	46.74%	323
Services for seniors & citizens with disabilities	31.69%	219
Total Respondents: 691		

Q66 In the space below, please provide any additional comments on issues, suggestions, or solutions of importance to you for Worcester County's future that should be considered in the Comprehensive Plan's development:

Answered: 336 Skipped: 1,076

Q67 If you are interested in signing up for project updates, please provide the following:

Answered: 211 Skipped: 1,201

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Name	98.10%	207
Company/Organization (if applicable)	14.22%	30
Address	0.00%	0
Address 2	0.00%	0
City/Town	0.00%	0
State/Province	0.00%	0
ZIP/Postal Code	0.00%	0
Country	0.00%	0
Email Address	99.05%	209
Phone Number	0.00%	0

APPENDIX B

SWOT HOMEWORK RESULTS

WORCESTER COUNTY ♦ COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OUTREACH

AS AN INITIAL TASK FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM, THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE PROVIDED FOR INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATION. BELOW ARE THE VERBATIM RESPONSES FROM THE SWOT ANALYSES WE RECEIVED, THROUGH MAY 31, 2023.

QUESTION 1

THE COUNTY'S CURRENT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WAS ADOPTED IN 2006, WITH LATER AMENDMENTS. HOW HAS WORCESTER COUNTY CHANGED SINCE THAT TIME?

- The Great Recession dramatically slowed the rate of growth.
- Several anticipated growth areas have not been realized.
- Increased development along the Route 50 corridor from Ocean City to Berlin.
- Construction of the service road began (Samuel Bowen Blvd).
- High development pressure along the Route 589 corridor with little road improvements.
- Certain sanitary service areas are at or reaching their disposal limits, impacting future growth potential.
- More healthcare facilities have been constructed.
- Focus on fee simple rather than condominium ownership.
- Reduced parking requirements.
- Expansion of gambling at Ocean Downs.
- Short-term rental market changes.
- Medical and adult-use cannabis.
- While the population has only increased an estimated 3% since 2006, we have seen a tremendous amount of commercial development in the County. In turn this has created traffic issues on several major thoroughfares (589, 611, 50). In addition, we have seen an aging population with an increased need for medical facilities. Tourism related expansion migrating west over the U.S. 50 bridge and throughout the 10th Election District has obviously been very active along with a vast number of new housing developments along the 707/611 corridors. Public utilities (water and sewer) have been expanded to meet these needs.
- Land use/cover changes have mainly occurred in the north/north east—Berlin and north/northeast. Due to increased sewer capacity and economic changes at regional/national scale, Rt 611, Rt 589 and Route 50 corridor have experienced significant new commercial and some residential development. There has been a general increase in year-round traffic in this area of the county. A lot of this seems to be due to increased visitation on the “off season”, perhaps more people with second homes here now retiring and moving here permanently, and the explosion of development in southern Delaware. The changes in southern Delaware are putting generally increased pressure on Worcester County’s infrastructure including our roads, hospital, coastal bays, and parks and recreation sites. Farmers in the Showell/Bishopville area are complaining of significant through traffic on back roads they say they have never experienced in the past. This impacts farming activity at times. The town of Berlin has done some significant annexation including land adjacent to the high school and middle school that now has a large apartment complex that is out of scale for the size of Berlin—essentially up to 20% of the town’s residents, now, live there. However, this is not meeting the “affordable” housing need, as was anticipated. The need for affordable housing is even greater than it was in 2006, this is nearing crisis point, as too many people cannot afford to live where they work. Downtown Berlin has continued to experience a “renaissance” with increased number of retail and restaurant establishments. Wallops Island is experiencing growth that will likely put increased development demand on southern Worcester County. Water quality has degraded in the northern coastal bays, in particular Newport Bay for reasons not well understood. Water quality has improved in Chincoteague Bay. Heat waves are more frequent as well as a general warming trend, that has resulted in continued loss of seagrass abundance in the coastal bays since 2006. Waterbird populations have declined—some severely—since 2006. Mainly this is due to loss of nesting habitat (islands) in the bays

over this period. Since 2006 there has been identification of offshore nutrient plumes and episodes of harmful algal blooms not detected previously. Tidal marsh has disappeared, significantly in some areas.

- Higher population of year-round residents.
- The northern end of the County has experienced some growth with Covid. Looking at the most recent census the growth was not significant but more people are making Worcester County their permanent residence vs a summer retreat. For example, Glenn Riddle grew from 200 part time residents to 550 full time.
- Big growth in business development but not an increase in worker (affordable) housing.
- With the increase in development there has not been a look at the transportation network for congestion in the northern part of the County.
- The majority of the County has changed little physically but the northeast quadrant has undergone build out, largely in accordance with existing zoning. This has been especially true in the areas of West Ocean City and the MD Rt. 611 corridor and the Ocean Pines/MD Rt. 589 corridor. I also believe the major roadway corridors in the County are experiencing increased levels of use due to development in Sussex County, DE and also as alternate routes to the US Rt. 95 corridor.
- The County has grown its “gray” population. There needs to be more services for aging adults. You need to go to Wicomico County for adult day care.

QUESTION 2

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP PRIORITIES OR AREAS OF CONCERN THAT YOU HOPE TO SEE ADDRESSED IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE?

- Updated population figures with a reasonable rate of growth.
- Evaluation of existing and future growth areas with the municipalities.
- Evaluation of the commercial land supply/ needs.
- Revisiting the E-1 Estate District zoning classification.
- Public facilities (water/sewer).
- Multimodal transportation.
- Focus on smart growth initiatives where future development is concentrated in areas where roads and utilities are adequate to handle the development. Also need for affordable housing.
- A plan for managing growth on Route 50, 611, and 589. Route 50 is the gateway to Ocean City. It is starting to look like southern Delaware that has roadways choked by unplanned and excessive development. Ocean City is a economic engine for Worcester County and the state of Maryland. The entrance to it should be attractive and easy to travel, to the extent possible. Route 611 is the gateway to Assateague Island. Assateague Island is very important as well for the local economy. Most of the roadway to the park should remain undeveloped, attractive, natural and safe for cyclists.
- The town of Berlin is under pressure to develop as well. The county should work closely with the town to manage growth. The County identified residential growth areas outside of Berlin in the 2006 plan. This proposed growth should not be imposed on the town, but rather the town and county should work together to agree on where and what kind of growth is most beneficial. The town is also updating their comprehensive plan and the two should complement each other.
- There needs to be improved consideration of the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, in the areas experiencing urbanization. The pathways that have been established associated with commercial development on Route 50 are an excellent start. The LPPRP has already determined a deficit of recreational open space for residents in West Ocean City area. This is due to unplanned growth that started decades ago. To make this area more livable for residents and more attractive to business, the recreational and alternative transportation needs of residents should be incorporated in the planning process.

- Reasonable development while maintaining the unique character of the county.
- Increased outdoor recreational fields for the youth. Better internet access for parts of the County. Temporary housing for seasonal employees. A funding vehicle to provide consistent response time for all residents in Worcester County. For example, in West Ocean City, response time is 4 minutes and in other areas of the County it could be 8 minutes.
- Housing.
- Open space.
- Sprawl.
- Get rid of the E-1 Estate District zoning which encourages sprawl, if it is politically possible.
- Provide for affordable housing for the workers that keep Worcester County businesses, schools, public services operating.
- Need an updated Water and Sewer Plan, one that truly plans for the future and is not simply an inventory of existing systems.
- Conflict between zoning setbacks and critical area setbacks; they should be the same; the lesser one.
- More services for older adults.
- More services for the mentally ill.
- Water (County hook up) in the St. Martins by the Bay subdivision.

QUESTION 3

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST/LEAST ABOUT THE CURRENT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

MOST:

- Focus on protection of natural resources; encourage environmental site design; annexation conditions; “pay its way” development requirements; design standards for projects.
- Architectural guidelines have to some degree created uniformity in design on the major transportation corridors.
- focus on sustainability and preservation of natural resources.
- Appeal process.
- Like the protection of agricultural and rural lands through the Plan’s support for strong agricultural zoning.

LEAST:

- No cover page, acknowledgements, table of contents, or reference list. Recommendation for a county green building program.
- What I would consider an excessive amount of text amendments that have diluted the original intent of the plan. Also, perception that the Board of Zoning Appeals has tendency to liberally approve variance requests without regard to future impact on the Plan.
- Called for accommodation of a larger population than has actually occurred. The analysis needs to be re-examined and re-considered. Worcester County does not have to accommodate everyone who may wish to move here. However, the county does need to consider how to make sure a variety of housing is available so that people who work here can live here.
- Granting variances in critical areas.
- That the Plan has a fair amount of fluff, is poorly edited and did not do enough to get rid of E-1 Estate District zoning.
- It includes nothing about a sports complex that would be available to our local youth as well as a tourism vehicle to bring more tax revenue to the County from room tax.

QUESTION 4

WHAT AREAS DOES THE CURRENT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN NOT ADDRESS THAT IT SHOULD?

- Updated Visions, Housing Element.
- Sussex County overdevelopment impacts.
- Short-term rental market.
- More emphasis on alternative transportation modes. Also, address the situation where the original structure is not reviewed by Commission since its under 10,000 sq ft but then additions are made to exceed 10,000 sq ft. Would like a mechanism for the structure to come back for Planning Commission review as it now falls under the guidelines of the Plan.
- Coordination with the towns could have been better, especially Berlin, that is most under pressure for change.
- Trails and recreation could be more fleshed out.
- Watershed-based planning.
- Alternate energy options.
- Truly affordable housing.
- Consistent setbacks.
- Sports Complex.
- Activities for older adults.
- Storm drainage.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS: INTERNAL ELEMENTS THAT GIVE THE COUNTY AN EDGE OR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE. THESE CAN BE UNIQUE ASSETS, SKILLS, OR RESOURCES THAT WORCESTER COUNTY CAN USE TO ITS BENEFIT.

- Controlled growth to limit sprawl.
- Knowledgeable staff.
- Rural character.
- Quality of life.
- Quality schools.
- Broadband access.
- West Ocean City commercial harbor.
- Protection of natural resources.
- Proximity to health care.
- Access to ocean/streams.
- Varied recreational amenities.
- Design requirements for commercial buildings.
- Water access throughout the county and northern beaches are the two huge competitive advantages that no other county in Maryland can claim. The Pocomoke River State Park, including Shad Landing and Millburn Landing areas, are often overlooked but are true gems and should be exploited. And the latest state report card rating our school system as one of best in the state should be marketed and promoted.
- Adjacent to the ocean (only Maryland county).
- Coastal Bays.
- Contains a significant national park.
- Contains significant natural resources including contiguous woodland, streams, creeks, river.
- Significant high-quality farmland.
- Significant areas are undeveloped/open space.
- Excellent school system.
- Low taxes.
- Low crime.
- Sense of community.
- Location relative to major metro areas are ideal for tourism but also for export of goods.
- Proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and the finest beaches anywhere. Small town community feeling and the outstanding school system.
- Ocean City tourism, which funds 60% of the County's budget. The landscape of the County lends itself to eco-tourism. Agriculture such as farmlands and poultry production. Quaint towns such as Berlin and Snow Hill. Of course, the ocean, beach, Assateague, and open space.
- The fishing industry, sports, commercial, and recreational.
- Many golf courses.
- Employee's skill and dedication to their jobs.
- Command staff support.
- Flexibility with employee family issues.
- Great health insurance.
- Mid-Atlantic location, temperate climate, plenty of open space and parkland, strong agricultural zoning, good schools, professional staff, low tax rate.
- Ocean City.
- Assateague Island.
- Berlin.
- Great schools.
- Tourism.

WEAKNESSES: INTERNAL ELEMENTS THAT HINDER THE COUNTY'S ABILITY TO REACH OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE AND PREVENTS WORCESTER COUNTY FROM REACHING ITS GOALS. THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS TO THESE.

- Workforce opportunities for high school/college graduates.
- Lack of seasonal workforce housing.
- Lack of public transportation options.
- Heavy reliance on cars.
- Multi-modal transportation infrastructure.
- Limited sewer disposal capacity.
- Lengthy development review processes. Commercialization of agricultural uses/areas.
- There is a palpable perception of a definite schism between the north end and south end (Newark southward) of Worcester with county resources consistently being directed toward the north. The feeling is that the south end is the county's stepchild and an afterthought when resources are allocated. There is only one County Commissioner representing the population south of Berlin while the other 6 Commissioners represent the north end.
- County is one of the most vulnerable in Maryland to the effects of sea level rise. Ocean City and Assateague Island are at risk for significant damage and change.
- Lack of planning in the decades past that resulted in less than ideal development patterns in West Ocean City—e.g., lack of safe pathways for pedestrians/cyclists, extensive canal systems with no homeowners' associations in many cases to fund maintenance.
- Economy depends strongly on tourism. More diversification would be healthier.
- High cost of housing. Lack of diverse housing choices.
- The environment.
- Mindset of some of our leaders and residents who feel that Worcester County should remain like it was in the 70s. Revenue sources are always a weakness. We need to migrate from a 4-month tourism destination to a year-round tourism. We need better amenities such as grocery stores, etc. to attract families and retirees.
- We need to attract business.
- Increase vacation time off.
- Employee morale.
- Better communication with the employees from command staff:
 - Policy updates
 - Procedures
 - General information
- Lack of available public sewer and water in areas where affordable housing would be more likely to occur (less attractive for second/retirement homes). This links to the lack of a true water and sewer plan.
- Lack of broadband.
- Lack of affordable housing.
- Mental/emotional disconnect between the northeast portion of the County and the rest of it.
- Aging population and meeting their needs.
- Need more professional businesses that provide good paying jobs.
- Lack of an arts district.
- Clean up the St. Martin's River water quality.
- Widen Rt. 589.

OPPORTUNITIES: EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND POTENTIAL SITUATIONS THAT CAN BE USED OR

EXPLOITED TO BENEFIT WORCESTER COUNTY. THEY ARE BEYOND THE COUNTY'S CONTROL, BUT WORCESTER COUNTY CAN MAKE THE MOST OF THEM.

- Small town charm.
- Teleworking impacts.
- Communication changes.
- Tourist destination.
- Expanding cultural events (shoulder season).
- Route 90 expansion in planning.
- Off-shore wind.
- Small scale farms, value added agriculture.
- Grant opportunities.
- Recreational amenities.
- Moderate winter weather conditions as compared to western sections of the state and the northeast in general due to County's favorable climate location between bay and ocean.
- Development pressure is an opportunity. Worcester County has control over land use and can set and demand standards, rather than just accept what developers want.
- Strong agriculture—can be bolstered further with careful and appropriate regulations that support value added production, etc.
- Opportunities for restoration and improved resilience.
- Water/sewer availability and manufacturing job opportunities.
- The move to remote working. Folks can live anywhere so why not here? Trend for families to travel for children's sports tournaments. We would be a great destination if we had the facilities.
- Open space.
- State, Federal, County, and City Parks.
- Small businesses that think outside the box.
- Proximity to major metropolitan areas.
- Temperature, climate.
- Sports complex.
- Ample area to bring in start-ups or business incubators.
- More parks and green space for recreation.

THREATS: EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT POSE A THREAT TO WORCESTER COUNTY'S CURRENT OR FUTURE ABILITY TO ACHIEVE WHAT IT WANTS TO. THE COUNTY SHOULD MITIGATE OR AVOID THESE POTENTIALLY DAMAGING EFFECTS.

- Pandemic, other health-related threats.
- Weather events.
- Aging population.
- Need for more specialized healthcare.
- Lack of truly mixed-use developments.
- Off-shore wind.
- Public incivility/crime.
- Cost of living.
- Lack of affordable/workforce housing.
- Business workforce needs.
- State regulations/unfunded mandates.
- Vacant commercial spaces.
- Potential for hurricanes and overall rising sea levels with continued threats to low-laying areas.
- Diminished scenic view and increasing traffic on Route 50—gateway to our main source of economic vitality.
- People moving here from other places and not familiar with or aware of the county's amazing assets or

how to take care of them/outside entities (developers) with desire to exploit rather than contribute to and protect.

- Runaway development occurring in southern Delaware that is impacting Worcester County.
- Global climate change. Increased excessive heat and warm days in general are impacting the bays. Increased severe storms. Waterfront areas are increasingly at risk for severe damage.
- Pollution and global warming.
- Maryland's high taxes, the overly progressive administration in Annapolis.
- Threat to not maintain the inlet channel, which would destroy commercial, sports, and recreational fishing.
- Wind turbines 12 miles off the coast, which will affect property values and tourism.
- Overdevelopment.
- No investment into infrastructure (roads, water\wastewater, cell phone towers).
- Influx of new residents that are bringing their beliefs with them and changing the culture of the County.
- Distance from metropolitan areas.
- Lack of good job opportunities.
- Negative impacts from development in neighboring jurisdictions over which Worcester County has no control or input.
- Windmills in the ocean; unsightly and bad for fish, etc.
- Beach replenishment.
- Lack of airport to bring in larger planes and other carriers (applies to Worcester and Wicomico County).