



**BOROUGH OF  
AMBLER**

# **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

## **STATUS UPDATE & COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS ANALYSIS**

**JULY 22, 2025**

*TIM KONETCHY, SENIOR COMMUNITY PLANNER  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION*



# AGENDA



Comprehensive Planning  
Process Status Update



Community Survey Results &  
Analysis

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROCESS TIMELINE (UPDATED)

| Winter 2024 | Spring- Summer 2024                                                                                       | Fall 2024                        | Winter 2024-25 | Spring 2025 | Summer 2025 | Fall 2025 | Winter 2025-26                    | Spring 2026  | Summer 2026               | Fall 2026 |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Kickoff     | <i>HIATUS</i><br><br><i>Planning Commission tasked with preparing amendments to the ROD regarding TOD</i> |                                  |                |             |             |           |                                   |              |                           |           |
|             |                                                                                                           | Background Research and Analysis |                |             |             |           |                                   |              |                           |           |
|             |                                                                                                           | Engagement Part 1                |                |             |             |           |                                   |              |                           |           |
|             |                                                                                                           |                                  |                |             |             |           | Planning/analysis and draft prep. |              |                           |           |
|             |                                                                                                           |                                  |                |             |             |           | Engagement Part 2                 |              |                           |           |
|             |                                                                                                           |                                  |                |             |             |           |                                   | Draft Review |                           |           |
|             |                                                                                                           |                                  |                |             |             |           |                                   |              | Public hearing & adoption |           |

Planning Phases

Public Engagement Phases

# STATUS OF BACKGROUND RESEARCH & ANALYSIS TOPICS

| Background Report                        | Date Reviewed                        |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Introduction to the Process              | January 2024                         |
| Demographics                             | February 2024; August 2024 (restart) |
| Open House Results Summary               | February 2025                        |
| Land Use Analysis                        | April 2025                           |
| Natural Resources, Open Space, and Parks | May 2025                             |
| Community Survey Summary                 | July 2025                            |

Open house  
planning  
throughout  
fall 2024

Open house  
January  
2025

| Background Report                              | Proposed Review Meeting   |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Transportation                                 | August 2025               |
| Housing & Neighborhoods; Cultural Resources    | September or October 2025 |
| Sustainable municipal operations; Institutions | October or November 2025  |
| Economic Development                           | November or December 2025 |
| Focus Areas & Public Outreach (part 2)         | Early 2026                |

# THINKING AHEAD: PROPOSED PLAN ORGANIZATION

**1. Introduction** – Process, Past Planning Efforts, and How to Use the Plan

**2. Implementation Plan** - Future Land Use Plan & Full Implementation Plan

**3. Demographics** - Background & Trend Report

**4. Housing & Neighborhoods** - Background & Trend Report; Implementation Plan

→ *Existing conditions and future needs;  
historic/cultural resources*

**5. Open Space & Sustainability** - Background & Trend Report; Implementation Plan

→ *Sustainable borough operations; natural  
environment; climate change; open space*

**6. Transportation** - Background & Trend Report; Implementation Plan

**7. Economic Development** - Background & Trend Report; Focus Areas; Imp. Plan

→ *The Main Street-Butler Avenue focus  
area is ultimately an economic  
development tool*



# **SURVEY RESULTS REVIEW**

## **SUMMARY**

**RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (Questions 1, 10, 39 & 40)**

**RESIDENT-ONLY QUESTIONS (Questions 2-9)**

**NONRESIDENT QUESTIONS (Questions 10-12)**

**HOW DO YOU RATE AMBLER AS.. (Questions 14-20)**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (Questions 21-25)**

**TRANSPORATION (Questions 26-35)**

**SUSTAINABILITY (Questions 36)**

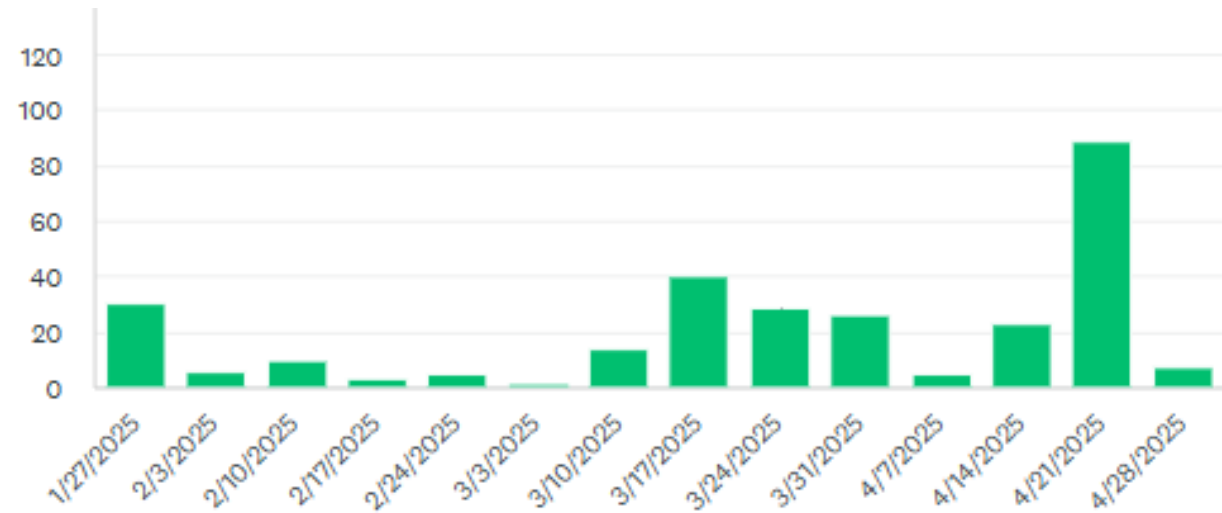
**TOP PRIORITIES (Questions 37)**

**OPEN-ENDED INPUT (Questions 38)**



## SUMMARY

- Community survey remained open from January through May 3, 2025
  - Publicized via postcard mailed to homes and businesses
  - Lawn signs and posters sited throughout borough
- 512 responses were received
- Responses will inform the goals and objectives related to implementation
- Future public outreach will be necessary to get more detailed information on specific topics, such as the focus areas (e.g., Butler Avenue Corridor)

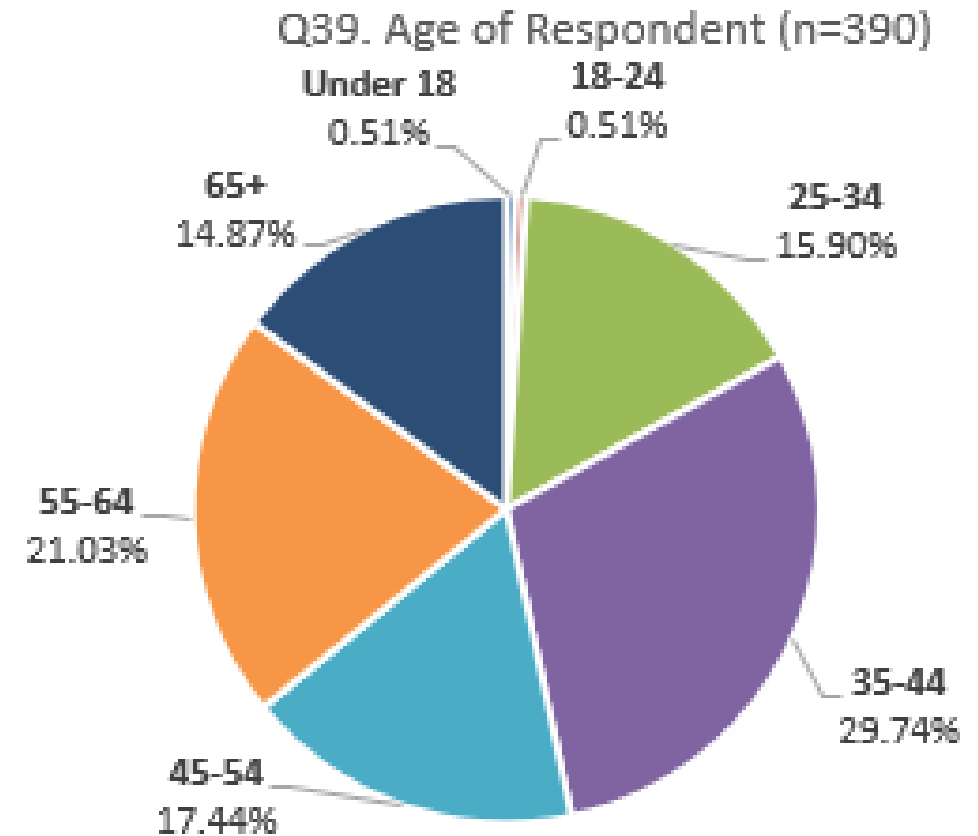


Responses by Week



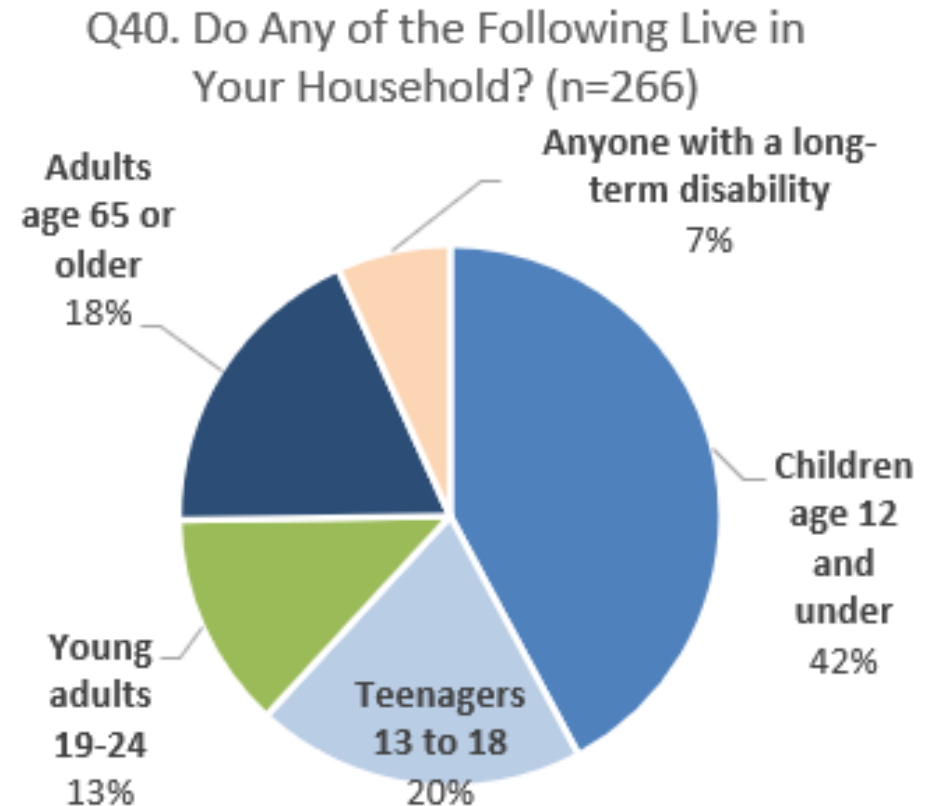
## RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (QUESTIONS 1 & 10)

- 90% of respondents (Q1; n=512) were residents
- If each response reflects an individual, 6.7% of the borough's population was reflected (pop. = 6,807)<sup>1</sup>
  - If each response reflects a household, 17.3% of all households were reflected (household count = 2,650)<sup>1</sup>
- 10% of respondents self-reported as business or property owners, frequent visitors, and former residents (Q1; Q10 – n=26)
  - 7 from Lower Gwynedd; 4 from Upper Dublin; two each from Upper Gwynedd, Horsham, and Philadelphia; and one each from Upper Moreland, Whitpain, Whitemarsh, Abington, Springfield, Warrington, Bethlehem, and Kentucky



## RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (QUESTIONS 39 & 40) CONT.

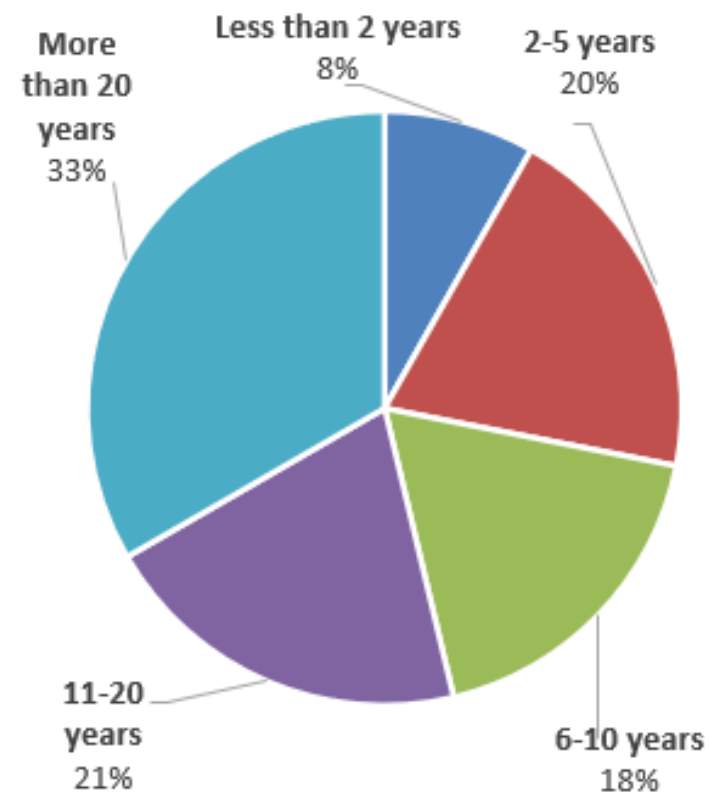
- Response rates reflected a healthy mix of ages (Q39; n=390), with the exception of a low response rate for those under 24.
  - 1% of respondents were under age 24
  - 16% of respondents were 25-34 years old
  - 30% were 35-44 years old
  - 17% were 45-54 years old
  - 21% were 55-64 years old
  - 15% were 65 or older
- When considering both respondents and those that live in their household (Q40; n=266), a very diverse population is reflected:
  - 18% of households included a person 65 years or older
  - 7% of households included a person with a long-term disability
  - 42% of households included a child under 12,
  - 20% of households included a teenager (ages 13-18)
  - 13% of households included a young adult (ages 19-24).



## RESIDENT-ONLY QUESTIONS (QUESTIONS 2, 4 & 5)

- Question 2 asked how long the respondent has lived in the borough:
  - 33% have lived in the borough 20+ years
  - The 2-5 year, 6-10 year, and 11-20 year resident population each made up between 18-21% of the respondent pool.
  - Less than 2 years totaled 8%
- Question 4 asked where respondents live:
  - 67% live in a single-family detached home (versus 36% of all dwelling units in the borough)
  - About 28% live in an attached single-family home (versus 38% of all dwelling units in the borough)
  - 5% live in an apartment (versus 26% of all dwelling units in the borough)
- Question 5 revealed that 90% of respondents own their home, a figure far greater than the 47% as of the 2020 Census

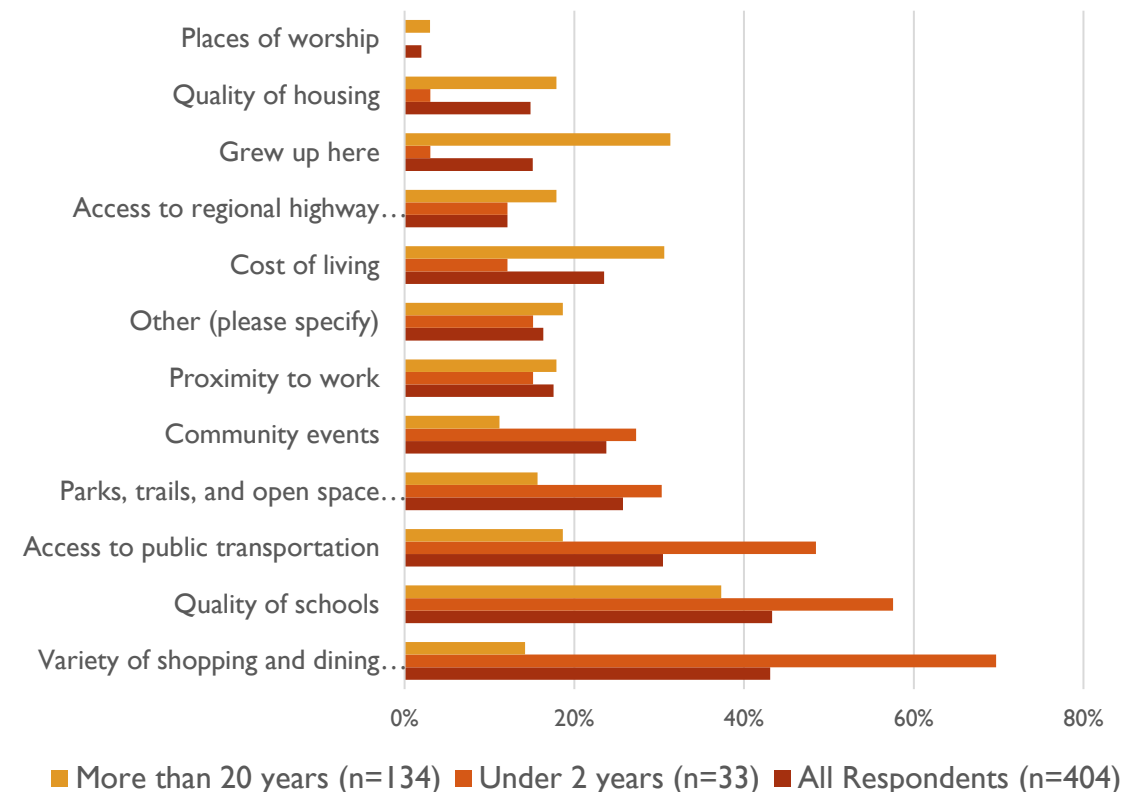
Q2. Resident Tenure (n=402)



## RESIDENT-ONLY QUESTIONS (QUESTION 3)

- Question 3 asked why respondents had chose to live in Ambler. The rate of response for 20+ years, under 2 years, and all respondents are reflected in the chart on this slide.
- Overall, the top 6 most common reasons were:
  - Quality of schools (43%; n= 404 responses)
  - The variety of shopping and dining choices (43%)
  - Access to public transportation (30.5%)
  - Parks, trails, and open space (25.8%)
  - Community events (23.8%)
  - Cost of living (23.5%)
- All other options fell below 20%.
- Write-in responses focused on walkability, the small-town character, and the desire to be near friends or family.

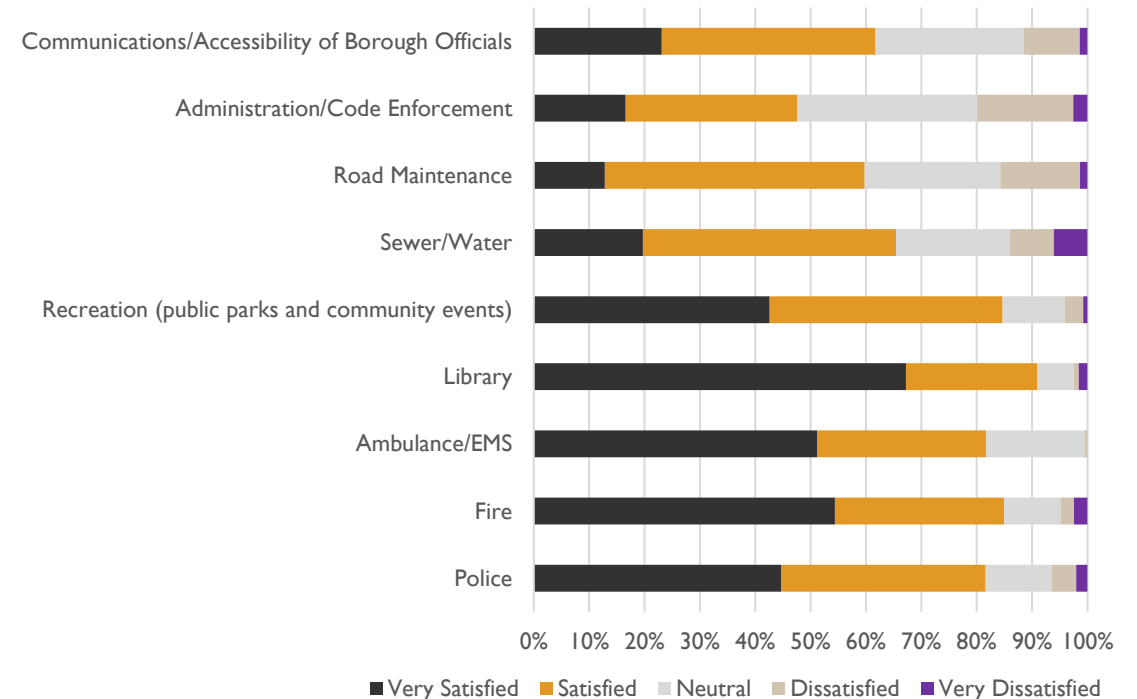
Q3. What Influenced Your Decision to Live in Ambler?  
(n=404)



## RESIDENT-ONLY QUESTIONS (QUESTIONS 6)

- Residents were then asked to rank their satisfaction with certain public services
- Satisfaction with all services other than administration and code enforcement exceeded 60%.
- When looking at dissatisfaction, administration and code enforcement saw the highest dissatisfaction at just under 20%; however, this is fairly similar to other public services.
- We often ask this type of question as part of a comprehensive planning process, but it is always unclear where it will lead. A common example would be a recommendation to provide more online resources and public alerts (re: administration).

Q6. Over the Last 12 Months, How Satisfied Have You Been With \_\_\_\_\_?



## RESIDENT-ONLY QUESTIONS (QUESTIONS 7-8)

- Question 7 asked if the respondent has interest in volunteering with the borough
- 195 responses to this question were received
  - Half of respondents were interested in helping with parks
  - 35% of respondents were interested in serving on an appointed board (e.g., Planning Commission),
  - 43% of respondents were interested in assisting with community events
- Another 27 respondents added a comment in the write-in box, with about a third of respondents indicating that they currently volunteer or formerly volunteered, another third stating they are not interested, and various other answers for personal situation (e.g., “my work schedule would not allow that” or “[I’d like to volunteer at] the Ambler Auto Show).
- Question 8 ended up being used to explain responses to question 7 and provided a few more write-in responses that were grouped with the above ‘other’ responses

# RESIDENT-ONLY QUESTIONS (QUESTION 9; N=228)

## Parks:

- Accessible playground equipment and swings!
- Better biking trails that connect.
- I love Ambler Borough Park and Green Ribbon Trail as they are the two easiest ways for me to experience some nature.
- I would love a dog park.

## Transportation, walkability, and safety

- My main concern is protecting the children from cars speeding through our neighborhoods. We have a community where children play outside and I worry for their safety with the traffic.
- Overgrown shrubs blocking sidewalks.
- Speed enforcement could be improved along the main access points into/out of town. People barely come to complete stops at any intersection, causing the speed issues to worsen.
- A beacon cross signal at Park and Butler is needed!

- I would like to see long term improvements to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure on all borough roads. Traffic calming, protected lanes where possible, street trees for shade and walkability.
- Please make some free Electric Vehicle Charging Station.
- I would like to see a EV fast charger in Ambler. In one of the main parking lots would be nice.
- Improved sidewalks! Many are cracked, slope the wrong direction, puddle, inconsistent corners - a walkable town should be walkable!
- The allure of Ambler for me is the walkability and public transit services.

## Economic Development

- The addition of a bakery and a butcher.
- I feel like Ambler lacks means of entertainment outside of breweries. I feel like more focus on recreational activities such as more themes and activities related to festivals and fun things to do like a bowling alley, mini golf, arcade, etc.

- Better variety of vendors and activities at festivals.
- This community needs a major grocery chain.

## Neighborhoods

- Historic buildings and elements- community feel.
- I love the tall trees and historic buildings. The character of Ambler should be maintained.
- Housing is priced too high.
- Rental properties often not maintained.

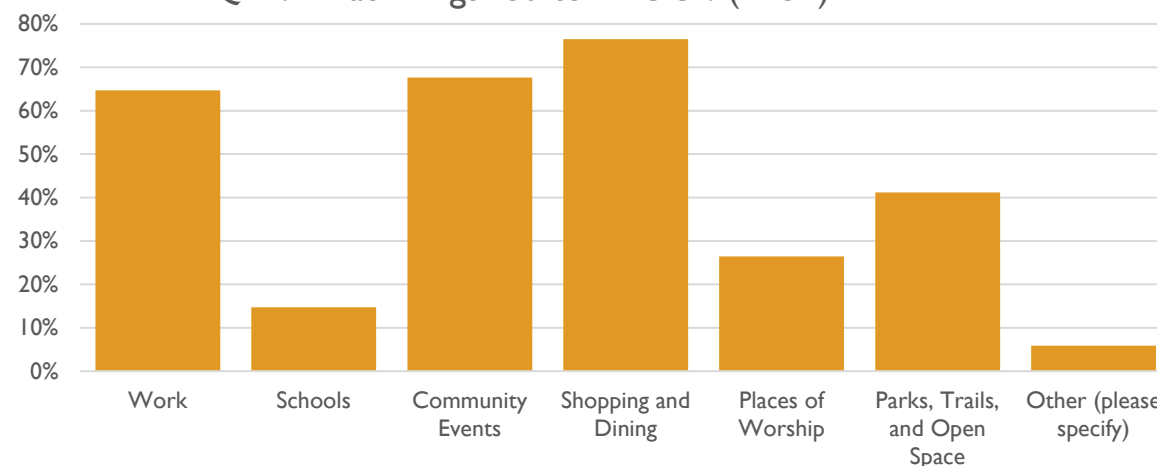
## Other

- Water treatment plant smells.
- Bury the overhead utility lines.
- The Alleyway is not maintained. Would be great to have insight regarding the ownership of the maintenance.
- The fire house alarm is a concern for both hearing and mental wellbeing.
- My neighbor's outdoor hoarding situation

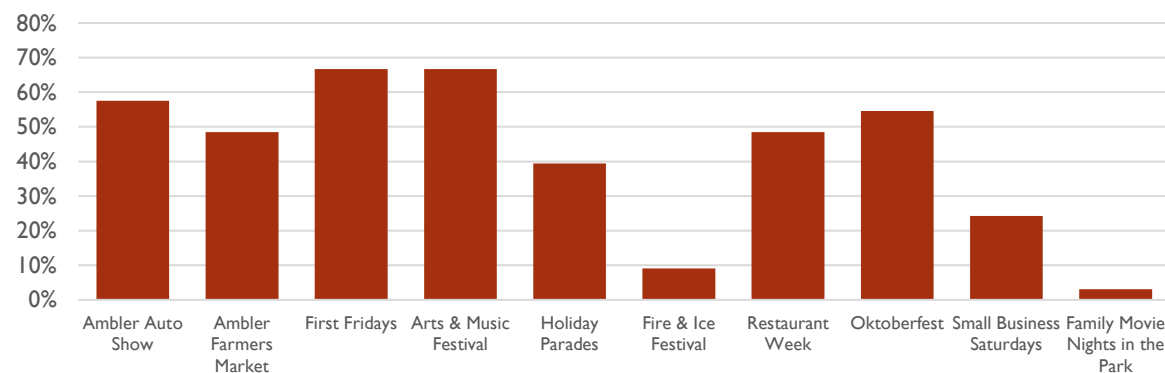
## NONRESIDENT QUESTIONS (QUESTIONS 11-12)

- More than 3 in four nonresidents visit the borough for shopping and dining and more than 2 in 3 visit the borough for community events (n=34).
- Work followed closely behind at about 65% of nonresident response.
- After a bit of a drop off, 41% of nonresidents visit for parks and recreation opportunities, 26% for places of worship, 15% for schools, and one response for visiting family.
- Nonresident visitors showed strong support of many community events, with First Fridays, the Arts & Music Festival, the Ambler Auto Show, and Oktoberfest as the most popular (n=29).

Q11. What Brings You to Ambler? (n=34)



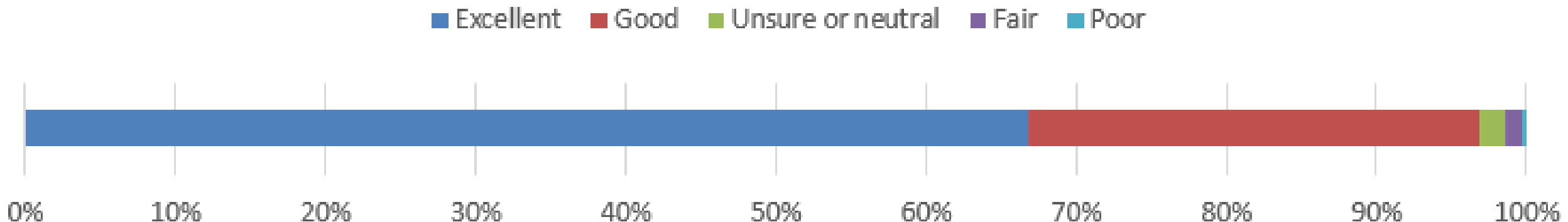
Q12. Which Community Events Do You Attend? (n=29)



## HOW DO YOU RATE AMBLER AS A PLACE TO LIVE? (QUESTION 14; N=422)

- Results were overwhelmingly positive! More than 2 in 3 respondents ranked Ambler as an 'excellent' place to live (n=422).
- Further, 30% of respondents selected 'good', leaving less than 4% of respondents indicating 'neutral' (1.2%), 'fair' (1.2%), or poor (0.2% or 1 response).

Q14. How do you rate Ambler as a place to live? (n=422)

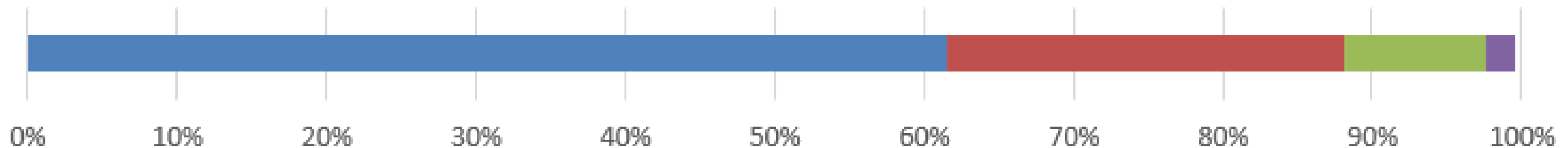


## HOW DO YOU RATE AMBLER AS A PLACE TO RAISE CHILDREN? (QUESTION 15; N=422)

- This question also saw extremely positive results! 61.6% of respondents selected 'excellent' and 26.5% selected 'good,' for a total of 88.1% of all respondents (n=422).
- Just under 10% of respondents were 'unsure or neutral.'
- Merely 1.9% of respondents selected 'fair and none selected 'poor.'

Q15. How do you rate Ambler as a place to raise children? (n=422)

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Unsure or Neutral ■ Fair ■ Poor

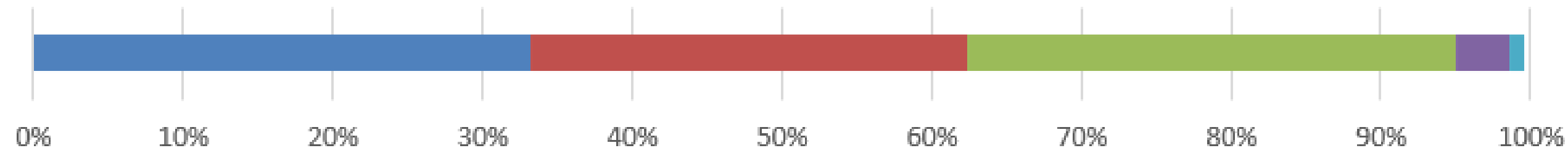


## HOW DO YOU RATE AMBLER AS A PLACE TO RETIRE? (QUESTION 16; N=422)

- Respondents were much less certain on how they felt about Ambler as a place to retire.
- About a third of respondents thought Ambler is an 'excellent' place to retire and other 29% thought it was 'good' (n=422).
- The 'unsure' group ballooned to 32.7% of all respondents, leaving less than 5% of respondents split between 'fair' and 'poor' (3.6% and 1.0%, respectively).

Q16. How do you rate Ambler as a place to retire? (n=422)

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Unsure or Neutral ■ Fair ■ Poor

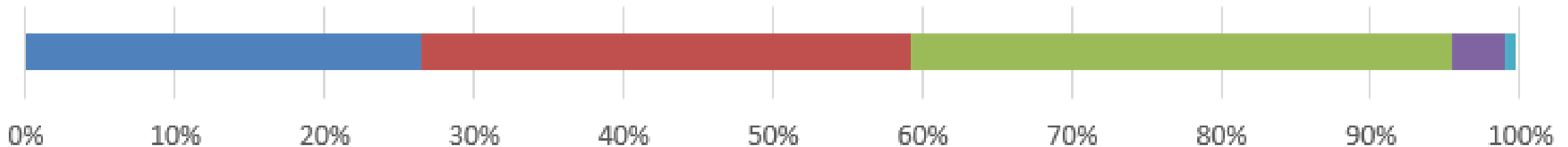


## HOW DO YOU RATE AMBLER AS A PLACE TO OPEN A BUSINESS? (QUESTION 17; N=422)

- More than 1 in 4 respondents, 26.5%, thought that Ambler was an 'excellent' place to open a business and another 32.7% ranked it as 'good' (n=422).
- The 'unsure or neutral' block remained high at 36.3%, once again leaving less than 5% of respondents ranking Ambler as 'fair' or 'poor' place to open a business (3.6% and 0.7%, respectively).

Q17. How do you rate Ambler as a place to open a business? (n=422)

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Unsure or Neutral ■ Fair ■ Poor

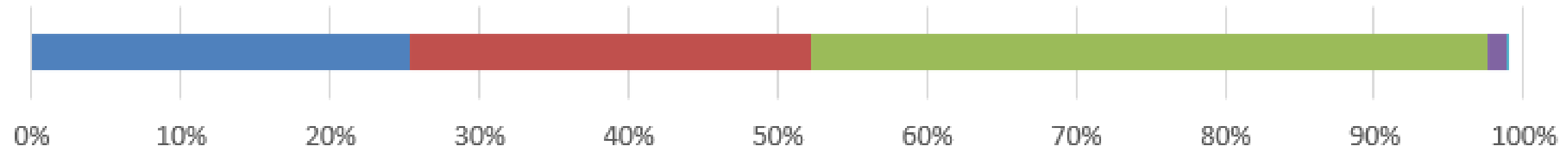


## HOW DO YOU RATE AMBLER AS A PLACE TO WORK? (QUESTION 18; N=423)

- The 'unsure' group made up the plurality at over 45% of respondents (n=423).
- The 'excellent' and 'good' ratings remained high at 25.3% and 27.0%, respectively, while the 'fair' and 'poor' ratings remained low, at 1.2% and 0.3%, respectively.

Q18. How do you rate Ambler as a place to work? (n=423)

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Unsure or neutral ■ Fair ■ Poor

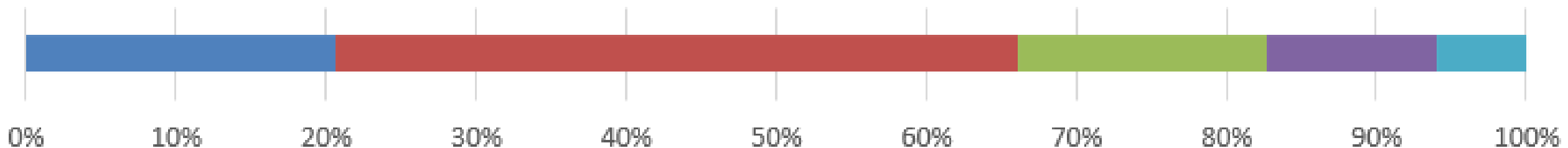


## HOW DO YOU RATE HOUSING OPTIONS IN AMBLER? (QUESTION 19; N=422)

- The 'fair' group accounted for over 11% and the 'poor' group accounted for just under 6%, for a total of 17.29%. No other category in this section saw greater than 5% combined between fair and poor rankings.
- Despite this high degree of fair-poor ranking, 'excellent' came in at 20.6% and 'good' came in at 45.5%. 16.6% of respondents chose 'unsure or neutral' as the most applicable option.

Q19. How do you rate housing options in Ambler? (n=422)

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Unsure or neutral ■ Fair ■ Poor



## COMMENTS ON “RATE AMBLER AS...” (QUESTION 20; N=124)

- Nearly all responses to this question related to the previous question related to housing.
- More respondents chose to write-in that they wanted to see the development of more and denser housing built in the borough (25) as opposed to stopping the development of apartments (14).
- 6 write-in responses directly related to housing affordability concerns.
- The issue of affordability and scarcity seems to have dragged down the scoring for question 19.

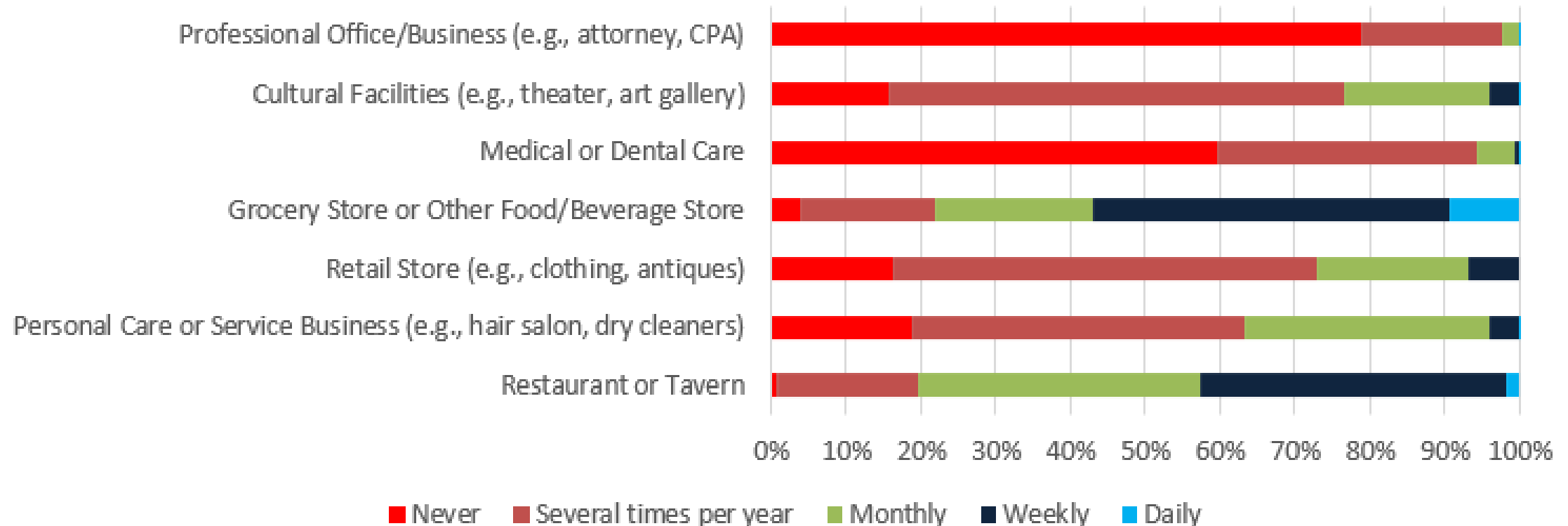
*"I like the mix of old and new housing options, diversity. Prices are high, just like everywhere else."*

*"This was the only single family house in our price range which was not astronomical but it was more than six hundred thousand.."*

*"Super low inventory of affordable housing."*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (QUESTION 21; N=410)

Q21. How often do you visit the following types of businesses within Ambler? (n=408)



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (QUESTIONS 22 AND 23)

- Question 22 asked respondents how far/long they would be willing to walk or roll to get to their destination
- A combined total of 30% of respondents indicated that they would only walk or roll up to 10 minutes to get to their destination (5.8% 5 minutes or less and 23.8% up to 10 minutes) (n=399).
- Nearly half of respondents would walk up to 15 minutes
- 18.3% would walk up to 30 minutes,
- 3.3% would walk over 30 minutes.
- Question 23 asked respondents to note any barriers to accessing their destination, with a few options provided.
- Over 50% of respondents indicated that lack of vehicle parking is a barrier to visiting a downtown business (n=399)
- Lack of sidewalk connections came in at 26%
- Lack of bicycle parking came in at 19%
- Accessibility issues with public facilities at 13% and accessibility issues with businesses themselves at 8%.
- The write-in responses under 'other' were wide-ranging, but largely were in support of other available responses

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS 23 AND 24

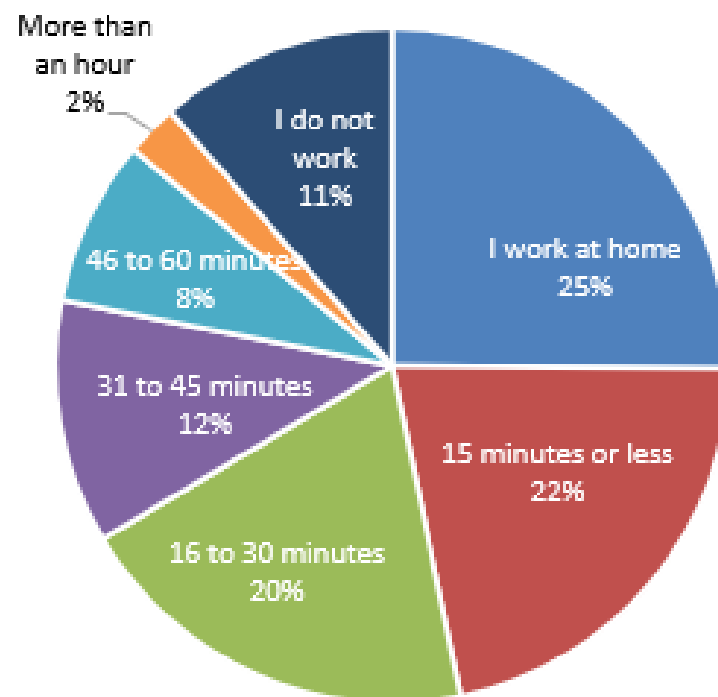
- Question 24 (n=408) asked respondents to rate their support of new businesses coming to Ambler: 44% strongly support, 36% support, 15% are neutral, 4% do not support, and 2% strongly do not support.
- Question 25 (n=279) asked respondents to identify what type of business they desire for Ambler. Any word that came up at least 10 times is included in the wordcloud.



## TRANSPORTATION (QUESTIONS 26-27)

- A majority of survey respondents primarily travel alone in a personal vehicle (Q26; n=402). Another 25% travel in a personal vehicle with family members.
- Walking comes in at around 15%, 'other' came in at 4%, and transit comes in at 3.3%. The 'other' responses generally included a note such as "I drive to work but walk around town"
- 22% of respondents have a commute time under 15 minutes, 20% have a 16-30 minute commute, 12% have a 31-45 minute commute, 8% have a 46 to 60 minute commute, and 2.5% of respondents commute over an hour (Q27; n=402).
- Census Bureau data generally aligns with this spread, as average commute time for residents of Ambler was just under 23 minutes and roughly 20% of residents work from home as of the 2022 American Community Survey.

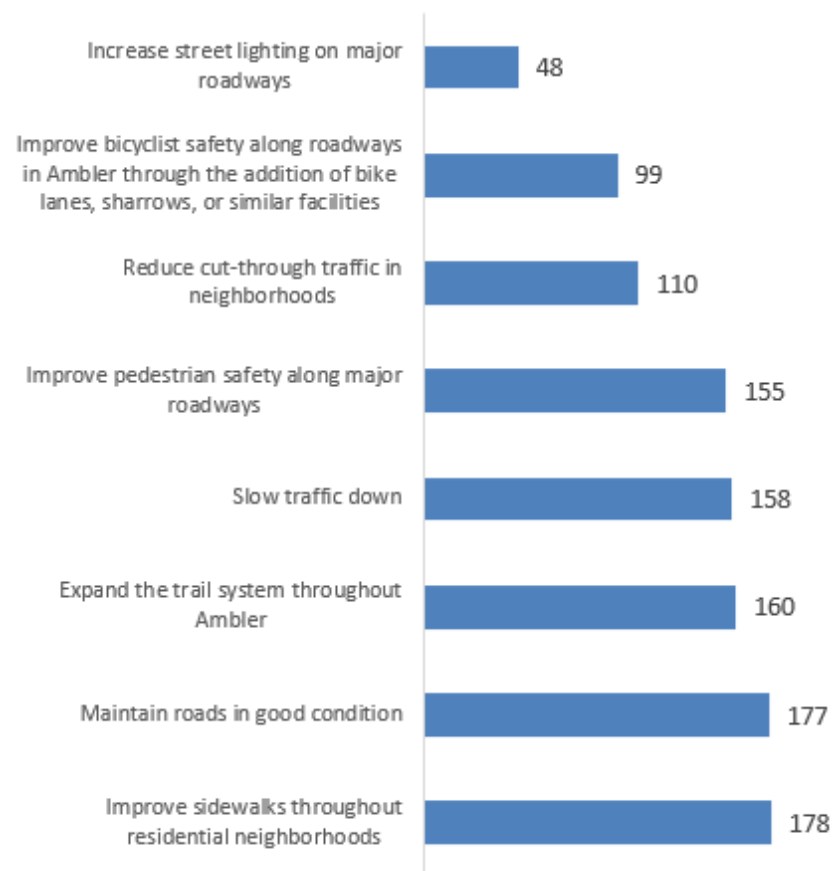
Q27. How long is your average commute to work?



## TRANSPORTATION (QUESTION 28)

- Overall, respondents ranked improvements for vehicles/drivers and pedestrians/sidewalks on equal footing, ahead of bicycle infrastructure.
- The highest priorities for pedestrians were, in order: “Improv[ing] sidewalks throughout residential neighborhoods”, “expand[ing] the trail system throughout Ambler” and “improv[ing] pedestrian safety along major roadways.” These ranked #1, #3, and #5, respectively.
- Similarly, “maintain[ing] roads in good condition,” “slow traffic down,” and “reduc[ing] cut-through traffic in neighborhoods” (110) ranked #2, #4, and #6, respectively.
- Improving bicycle infrastructure received 99 votes, which ranked it second to last.

Q28. What do you see as a priority for transportation investments? (Top 3)



# WHICH ROADWAY OR INTERSECTION IS YOUR BIGGEST CONCERN? WHY? (Q29; N=287)

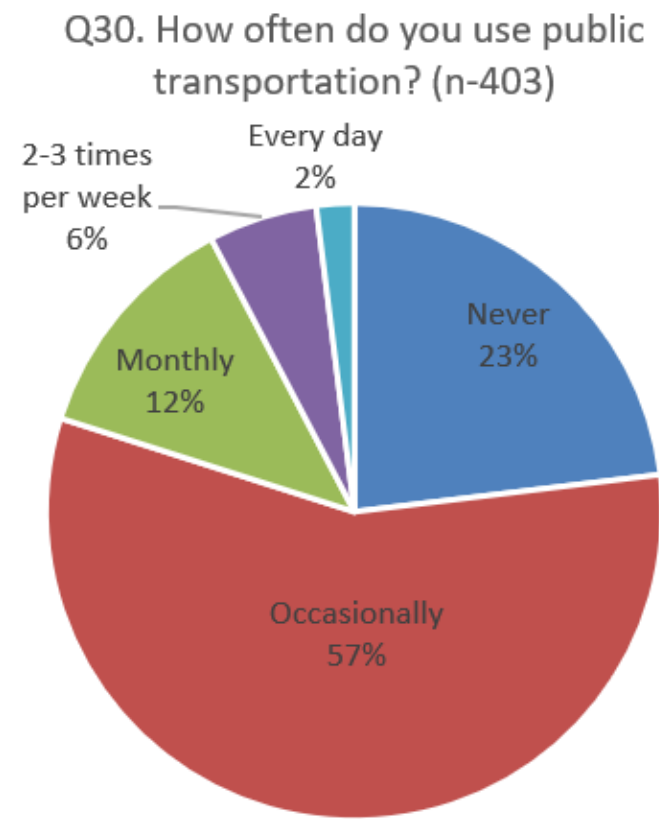
- The most commonly cited roadways of concern were (in order):
  - Butler Avenue at 100 responses
  - Tennis Avenue at 59 responses
  - Bethlehem Pike at 55 Responses
  - Mt. Pleasant Avenue at 37 responses
  - Spring Garden Street at 36 responses
  - Main Street at 24 responses
- *We will explore the identified issues with each of these when the Transportation Background and Trend Report is prepared.*

## TRANSPORTATION – PUBLIC TRANSIT QUESTIONS (QUESTIONS 30-33)

- Only 2% of respondents use transit daily, 6% use transit 2-3 times per week, and 12% use transit monthly (Q30; n=403) .The occasional share was the largest at 57% and never was second at 23%.
- Those that use transit less often were asked to answer a follow-up question related to ‘why’ they do so:
  - 15% of the ‘never’ transit riders are worried about their health and safety (n=78)
  - 17% of the ‘occasional’ transit riders find that buses and trains do not run often enough to be useful for them (n=213).
  - Many write-in responses related to working from home or lack of service to where they need it. Concerningly, many write-ins also said “I have a car” as a response to not using transit...

## TRANSPORTATION – PUBLIC TRANSIT QUESTIONS (34-35)

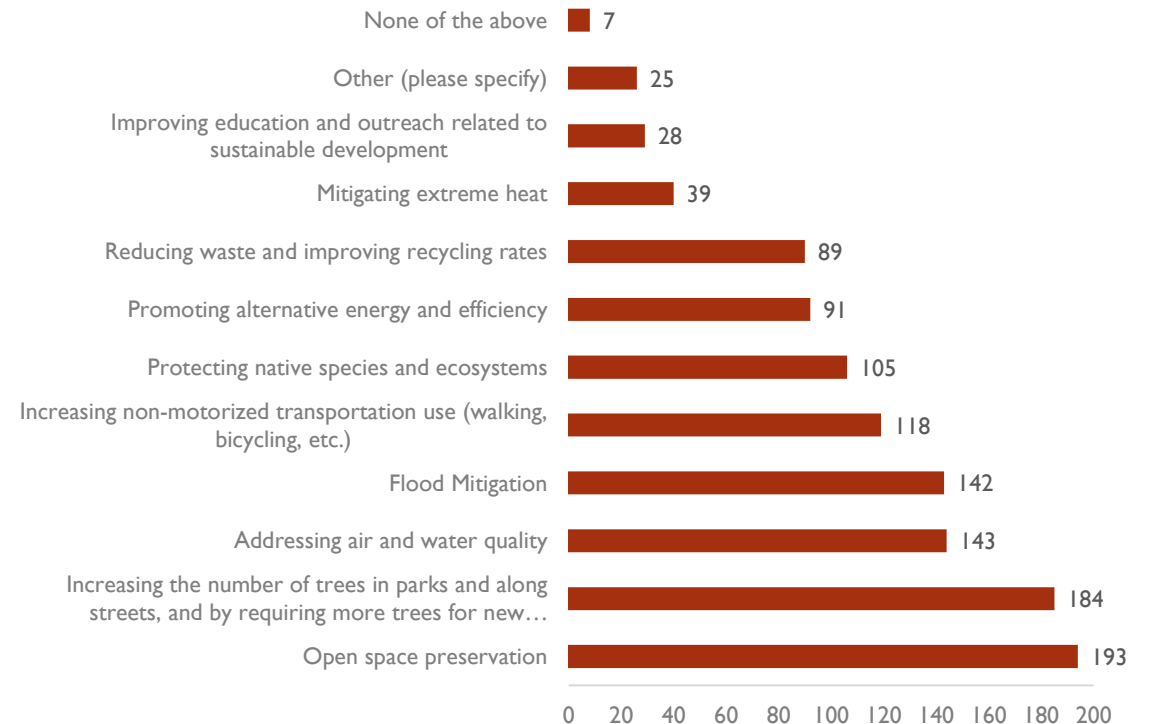
- The most desired improvement to the train station areas (Q34) were improved landscaping (43%; n=304), safer walking routes (31%), and 'other' options (27%).
  - About 1 in 8 respondents wanted more parking and about 1 in 5 wanted more seating.
  - Many of the responses under 'other' related to increased frequency, improved pedestrian access (e.g., tunnel), better signage, better protection from the elements for both riders and bikes, and a bike or scooter share docking station
- Desired upgrades to bus stops (Q35) include additional signage to relay routing/scheduling (38%), improved landscaping (30%) and lighting (23%), more seating (21%) and safer pedestrian access (18%).
  - 16% of respondents added a note under other, with the most common write-in being a desire for covered bus shelters with seating.



# SUSTAINABILITY (QUESTIONS 36)

- About half of respondents (193 of 398 responses) selected open space preservation as a top priority
- Increasing street and park trees was a close second (184).
- Then came air and water quality improvement (143), mitigating flooding (142), promoting non-motorized transportation (118), and protecting native species and ecosystems (105).
- The remaining six items saw fewer than 100 selections, but still include items that will be priorities (e.g., mitigating extreme heat)

Q36. Please select your top three priorities relating to sustainability.

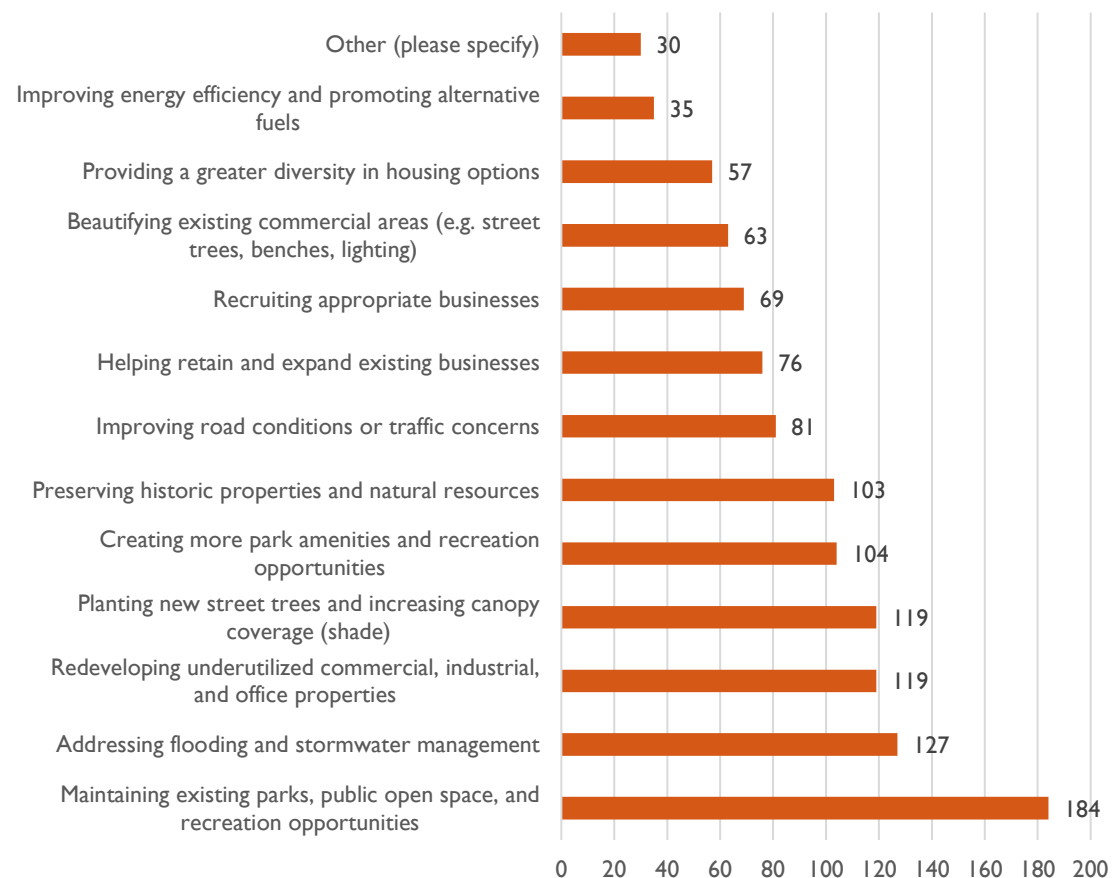


# TOP PRIORITIES (QUESTIONS 37)

1. Maintaining existing parks, public open space, and recreation opportunities (184 of 375 responses)
2. Addressing flooding and stormwater management
3. Planting new street trees and increasing canopy coverage
4. Redeveloping underutilized commercial, industrial and office properties
5. Creating more park amenities and recreation opportunities
6. Preserving historic properties and natural resources

All other options had less than 100 responses. Some options were ranked highly when asked in isolation but fell when put head-to-head with other ideas (e.g., transportation concerns)

Q37. Please select your top three priorities for the borough to dedicate additional time and/or funding towards.



## OPEN-ENDED INPUT (QUESTIONS 38) – QUOTES

*We have lived here for over 30 years, raised our family here, and is great to see how great Ambler has changed over the years with the parks, the community events, and the downtown business[es]*

*My wife and I have lived in Ambler for 25 years. We have witnessed its rebirth and have had two children born and raised here. They have attended Wissahickon Public Schools, and we are very happy with the education they have received. They will be off to college soon, but my wife and I have no plans to relocate. We envision retiring here and nothing would make us happier than to see continued improvements around Ambler. We truly love where we live. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to making Ambler Nice!*

*Public transit is underemphasized [and] under supported compared to personal vehicles*

# OPEN-ENDED INPUT (QUESTIONS 38) – COMMON THEMES

## Transportation

- Improve walkability (x16)
- More bikeable routes, bike lanes, and trails (x3)
- Consider creating a shuttle from a satellite parking lot to downtown
- Improve alleys (i.e., repave)
- Transit is deemphasized when compared to personal vehicles

## Housing

- Construct more housing
- Create more affordable housing
- Slow or stop the development of apartments (x5)

## Parks and Open Space

- Add recreational offerings for babies and toddlers at parks (x2)
- Build additional trails (x6)

- Additional seating at parks (Ambler Borough Park noted)
- New equipment and a public bathroom at Knight Park (x2)
- Construct a dog park (x3)
- Construct a splash pad (x3)
- Add more trees (x9) – Spring Garden Avenue; Butler Avenue; and Main Steets noted

## Downtown

- Parking meter pricing should be increased to promote turnover
- Close Butler Avenue for more events or close a section of Butler Avenue permanently (x3)
- Parking is difficult or scarce (x5)
- Consider more Butler Avenue events, such as a St. Patrick's Day parade
- The restaurants and other downtown offerings is the main reason we chose to live here

- More public seating
- Support local/small businesses (x4)
- Add more entertainment options

## Other

- Ambler is a great place to live (x11)
- Study installing solar panels over public parking
- Pursue more solar energy generally
- Develop policies to preserve historic landmarks (x10)
- Promote the redevelopment of underused properties
- More flowers
- Study promoting 'Dark Sky' lighting to reduce light pollution
- The library is a precious third space for the community
- Establish residential composting

## UPCOMING TOPICS



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Transportation

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Housing & Neighborhoods; Cultural Resources

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Sustainable Municipal Operations; Institutions

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Economic Development

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Focus Areas & Public Outreach (part 2)

