

Essex Zoning Bylaw Review Project

Survey Findings



March 2022



Townwide Survey

- **428 responses!**
- **Online survey open from Feb. 15 - March 1**
- **Distributed through Town website, boards and committees, social media, word of mouth, etc.**



Who took the survey?

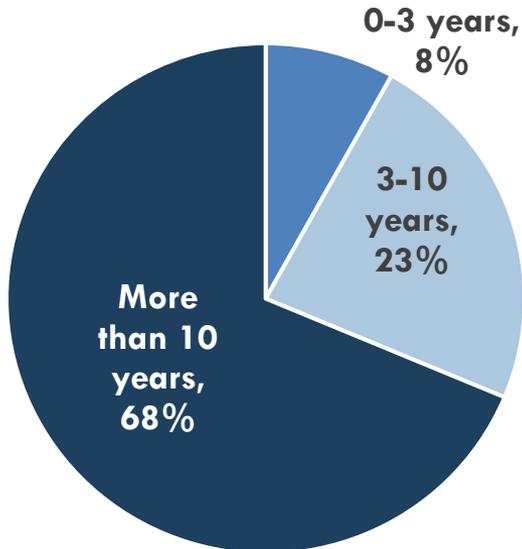


97% live in Essex

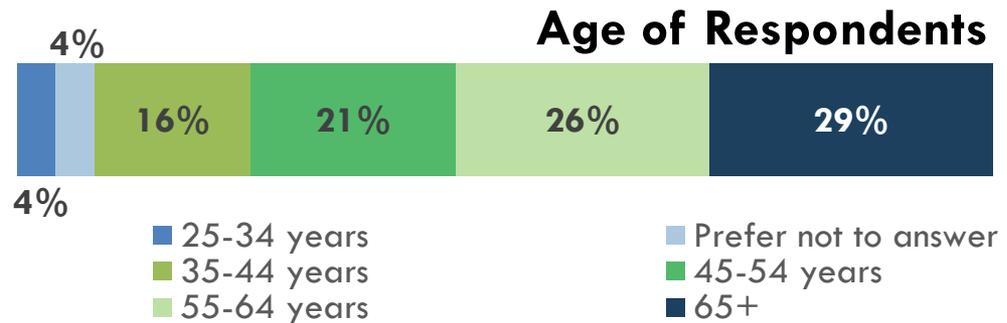


31% work in Essex

94% homeowners

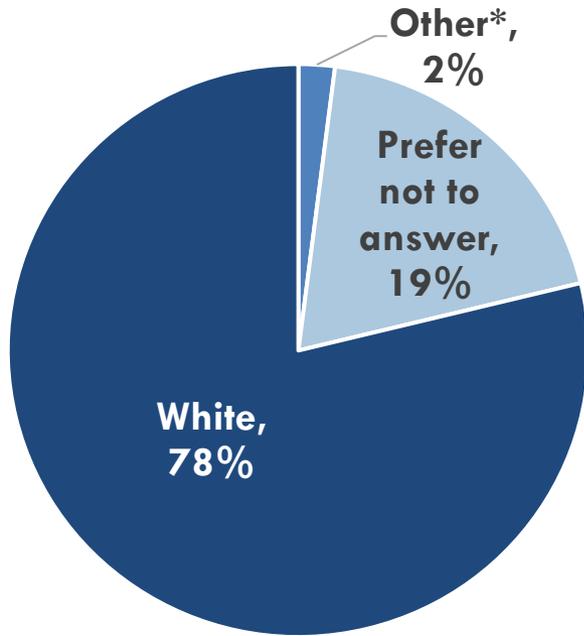


21% own a business in Essex



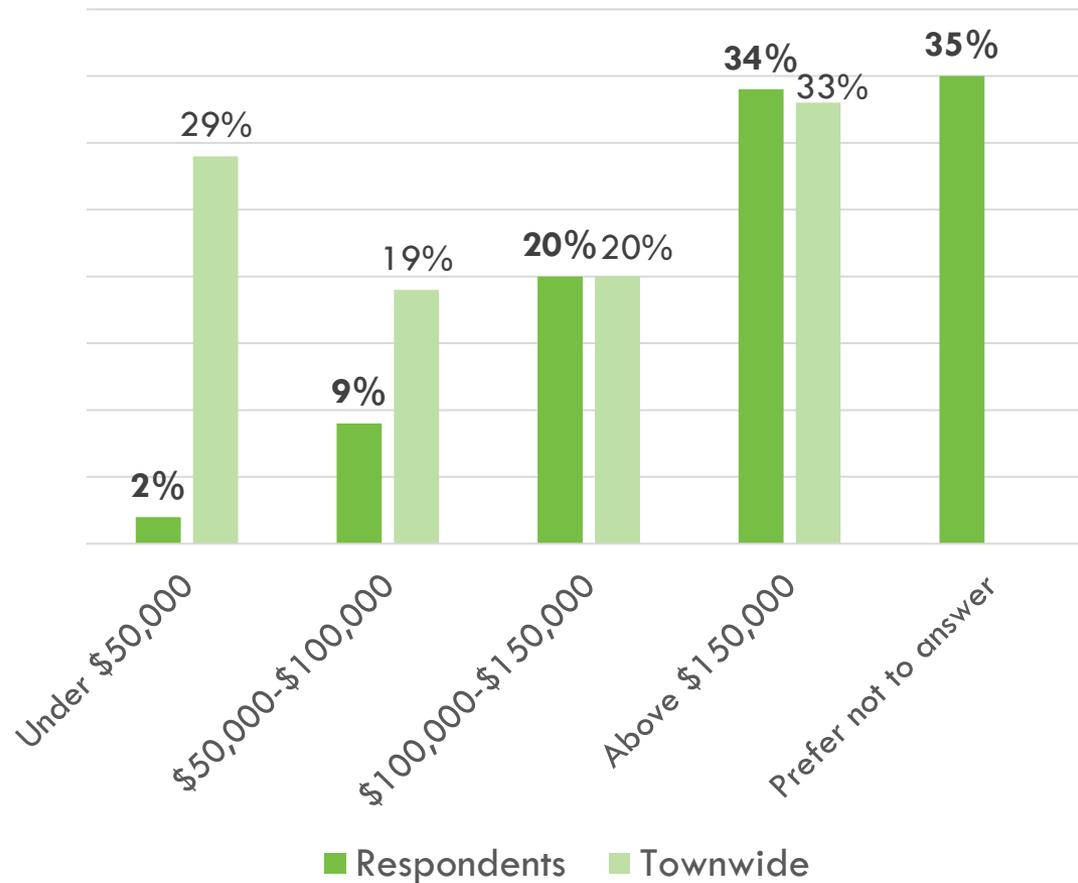
Who took the survey?

Race of Respondents

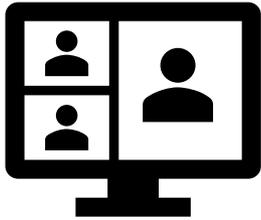


*Other than White, Black, Asian, or Latino

Household Income of Respondents

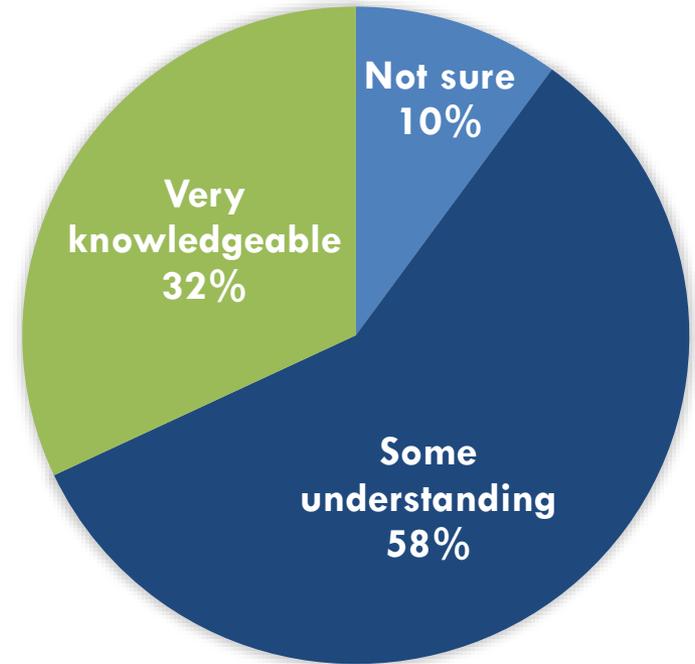
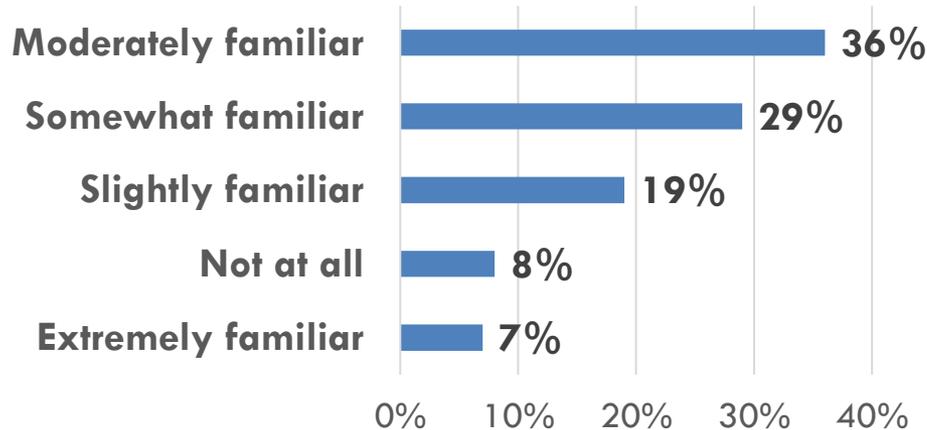


Familiarity with Zoning



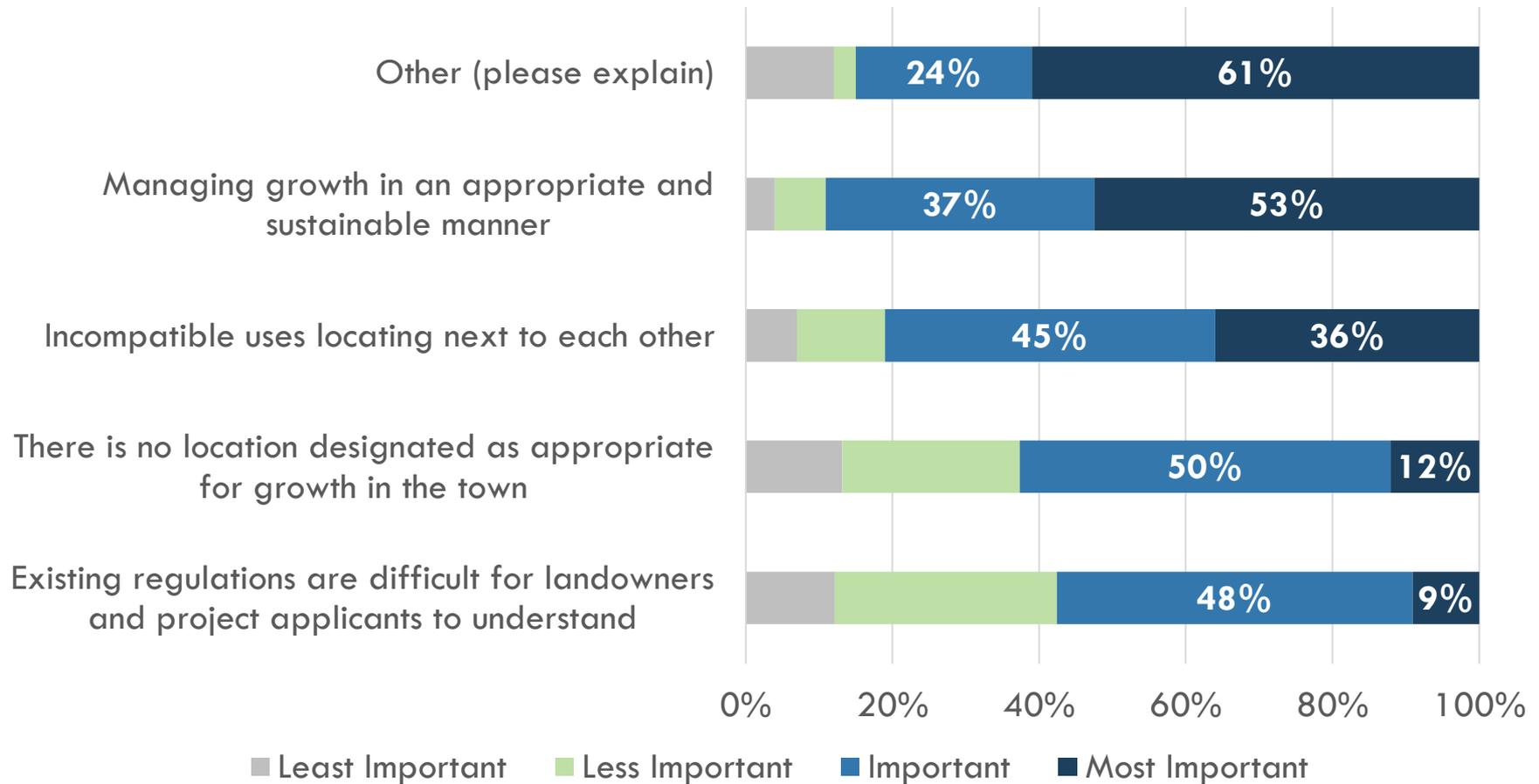
26% of respondents attended the Feb. 15 community forum

How familiar are you with Essex's Zoning Bylaw?

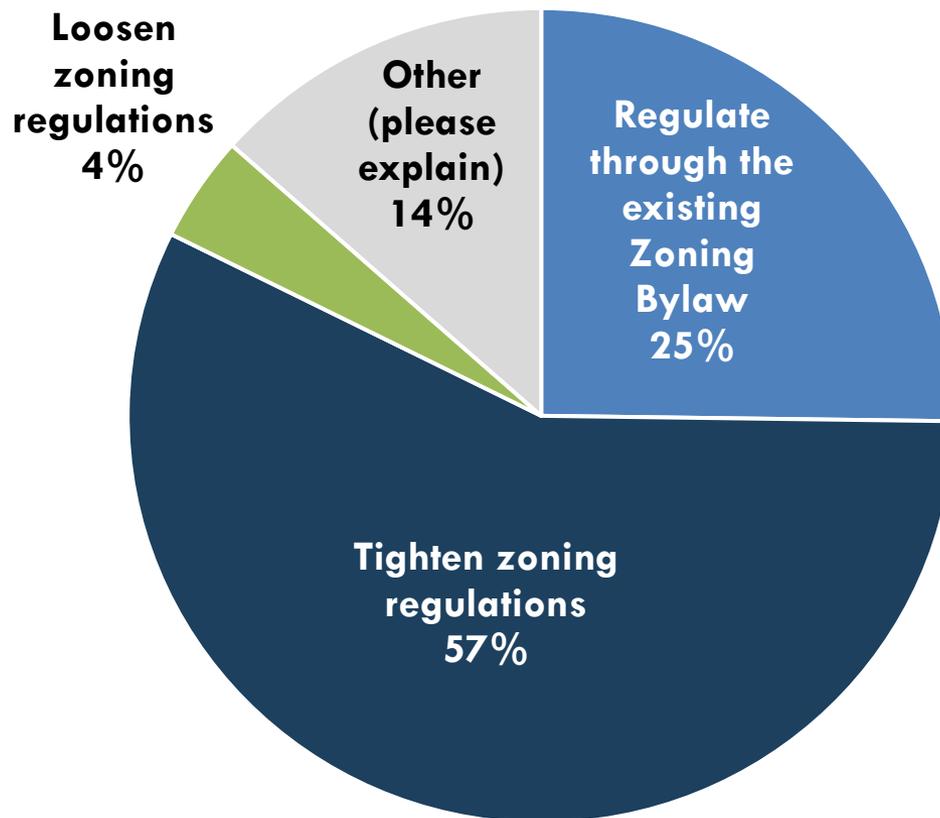


Level of understanding for how zoning affects personal property

What are the most important land use challenges?



What is the most important role the Town should play in managing land use?



What is the most important role in managing land use?

Modernize zoning to protect well-being and further community vision

“Articulate town’s vision of itself and the bring clarity to zoning bylaw; currently fairly vague - partly b/c of town’s historic aversion to zoning but also its lack of commitment”

“Create a whole new zoning by-law that takes into consideration what the town’s people want Essex to look like in the next 5, 10, 20 and 50 years. then create zoning districts that reflect that vision. first the town needs to create a major plan then change zoning.”

“Design zoning with a vision for well-being. SOP zoning is not progressive when the needs of the next generation are vastly different than a decade ago. A primary focus could be to create and preserve connections with the natural environment, smaller residential housing and small business all play a role.”

Create commercial & industrial zoning districts

“Real zoning is essential to reduce property owners’ uncertainties and establish areas as appropriate for varied uses.”

“Create commercial zoning... where commercial use is already there. Areas along Eastern Ave (RT 133) to the Gloucester line. Western Ave. from Apple St to the Hamilton line.”

**Preserve open space,
natural resources, and
Essex’s small-town feel**

What makes Essex special?

**82% of
respondents
said the Great
Marsh and
Essex River**

**76% said open space and
natural resources**



Is there anything you would change about residential areas in Town?

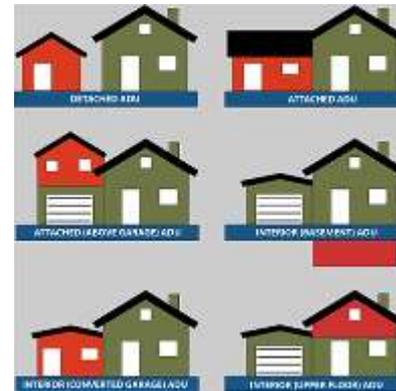
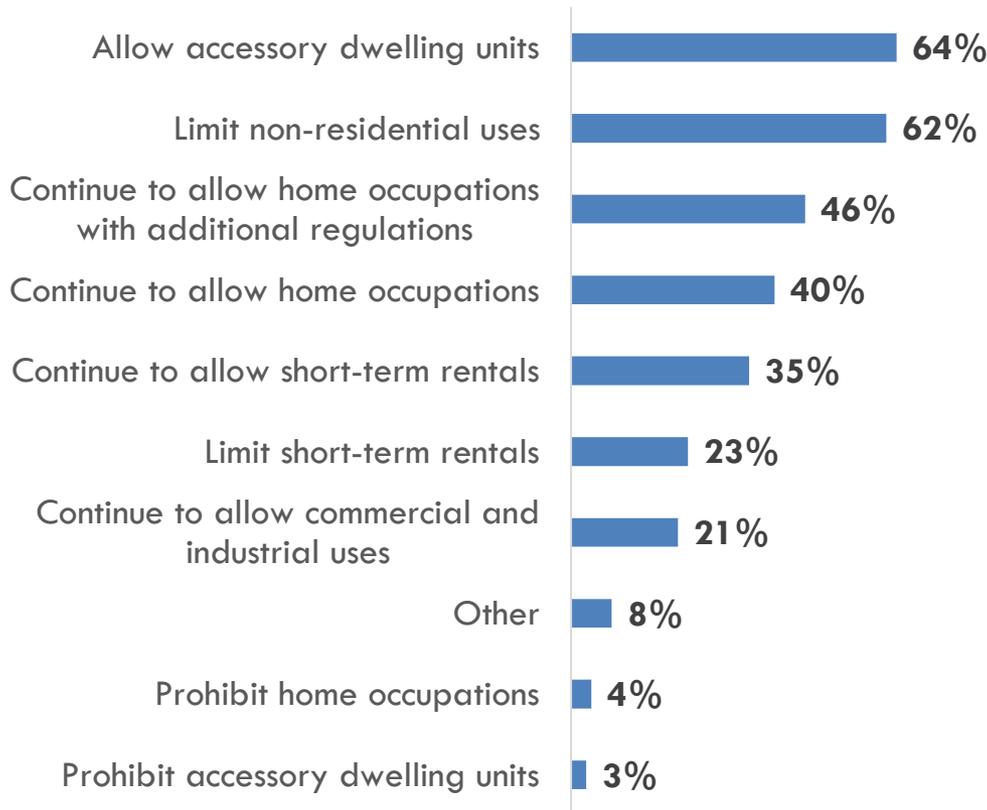


Photo credit: American Planning Association

64% of respondents want accessory dwelling units (ADUs)



62% of respondents want to limit non-residential uses



Is there anything you would change about residential areas in Town?

Designate appropriate areas for commercial and light industrial uses

“Limit non-residential uses based on the type of business, i.e., a factory should not be allowed in residential areas”

“I want to allow commercial and industrial uses but in their own zones. Not mixed in with residential areas (other than mixed-use downtown). I want to allow home occupations, but there needs to be clarity about what that means. Does a contractor who operates out of his/her home count as a home occupation if they store all of their construction equipment there? If so, I don't support that.”

Home Occupations

“Home occupations should not designate that house to be commercial when sold.”

“Enforcement” of the existing bylaw

Short-term Rentals

“Need regulations that require owner occupancy while renting and noise regulations, i.e., loud noise & conversation is not allowed after 10PM”

“Should be prohibited”

Accessory Dwelling Units & Conversions

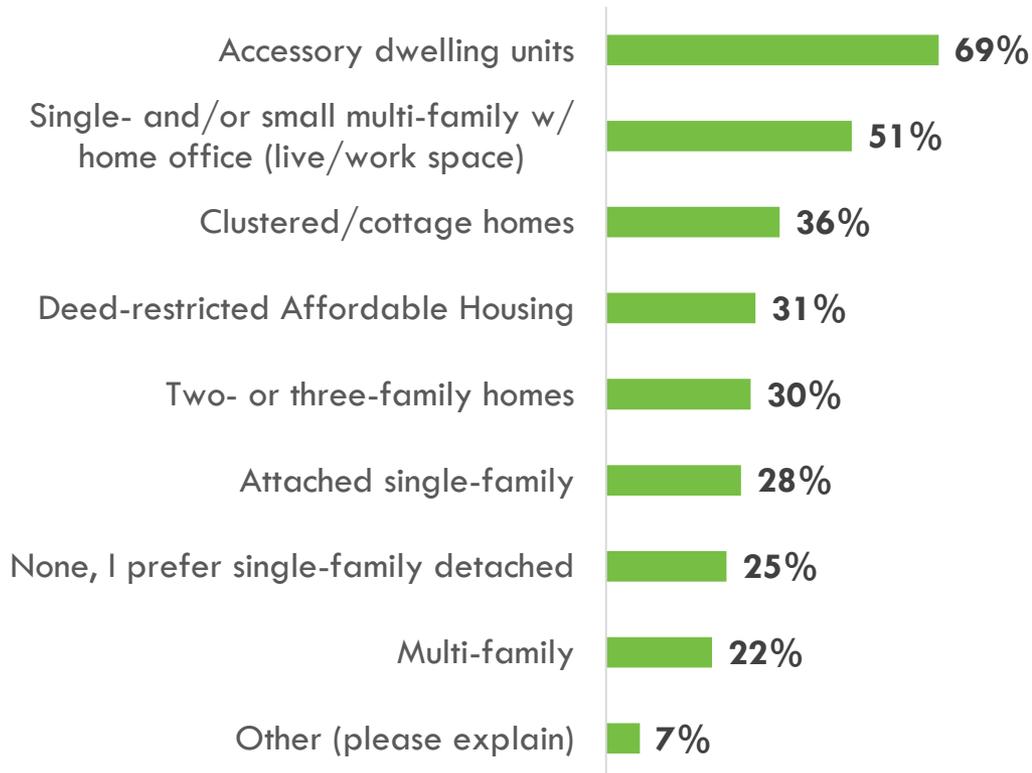
“Accessory units can help [increase affordable housing]”

“As long as septic requirements are met, allow a 2 family to become a 3-family dwelling.”

“Allow in-family apartments/split homes”



What other housing types would you like to see allowed in Essex?





Where would you like to see other housing options?

"It depends on where they will be allowed. I prefer to keep the character of some neighborhoods. clusters may be better in some cases when saving open space around. size and placing of accessory important."

"Depends on where located. If neighborhood character is high density (downtown) makes sense to permit 2-3 family and mixed-use housing there. If more rural, would not like to see that. Maintaining agricultural uses is very important"

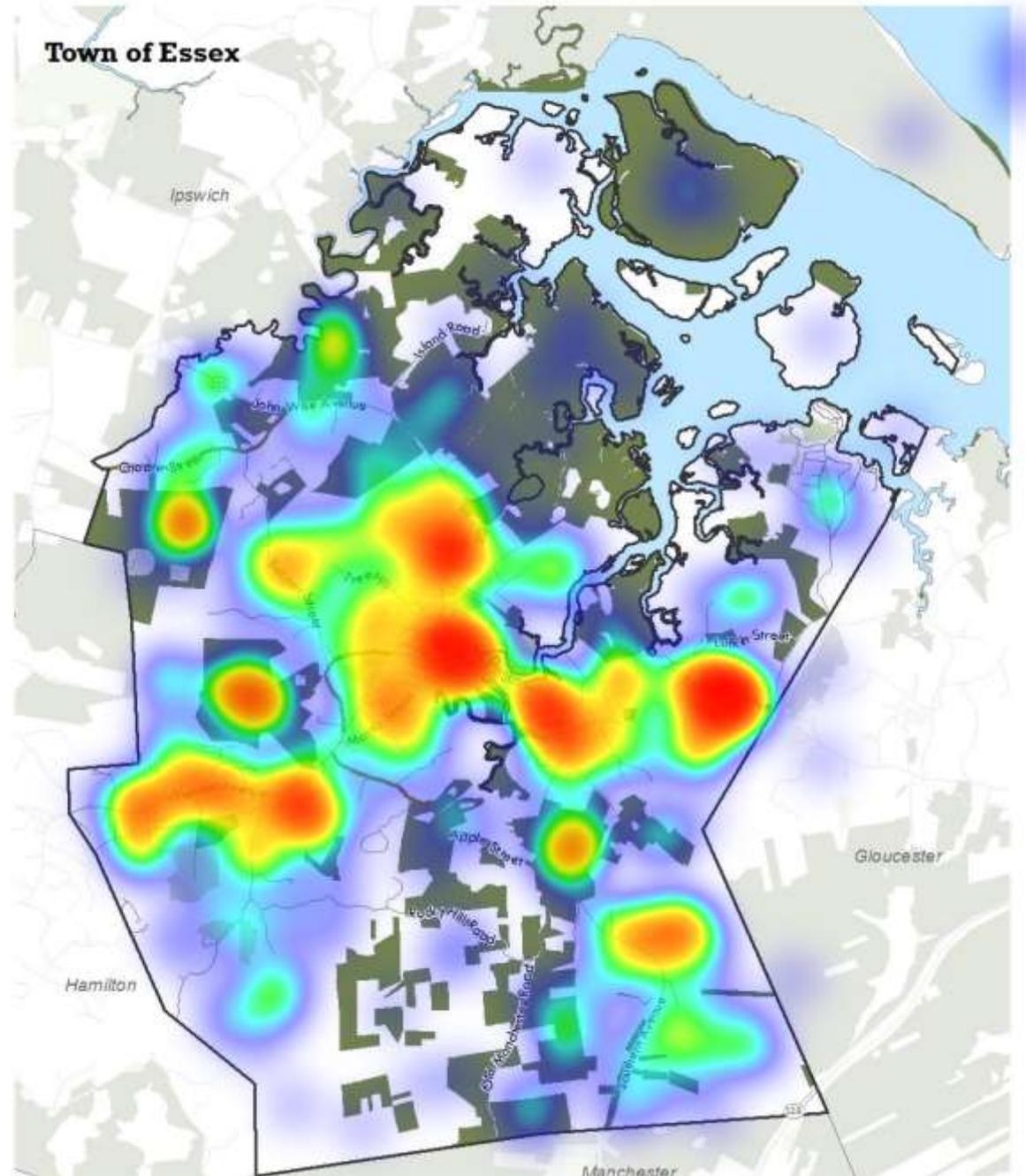
"We need to step up and create state-defined affordable housing units."

"Over 55 townhouse 40B development"

"Proactively court more affordable housing or someone will build it for us under Ch. 40B"

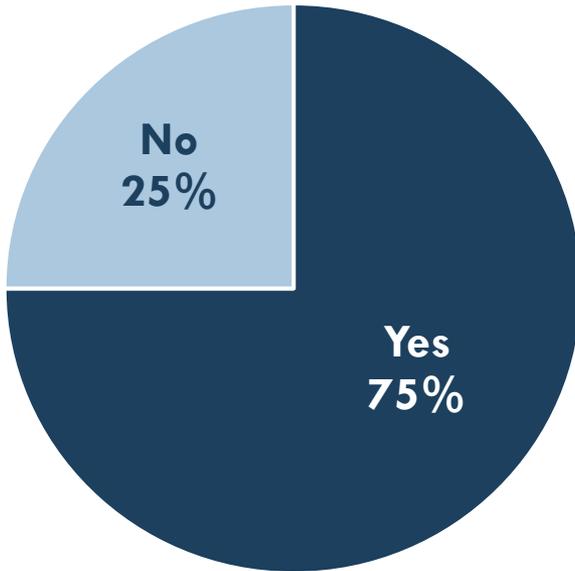


**Where
would
you like to
see other
housing
options?
(choose up to 5
locations)**



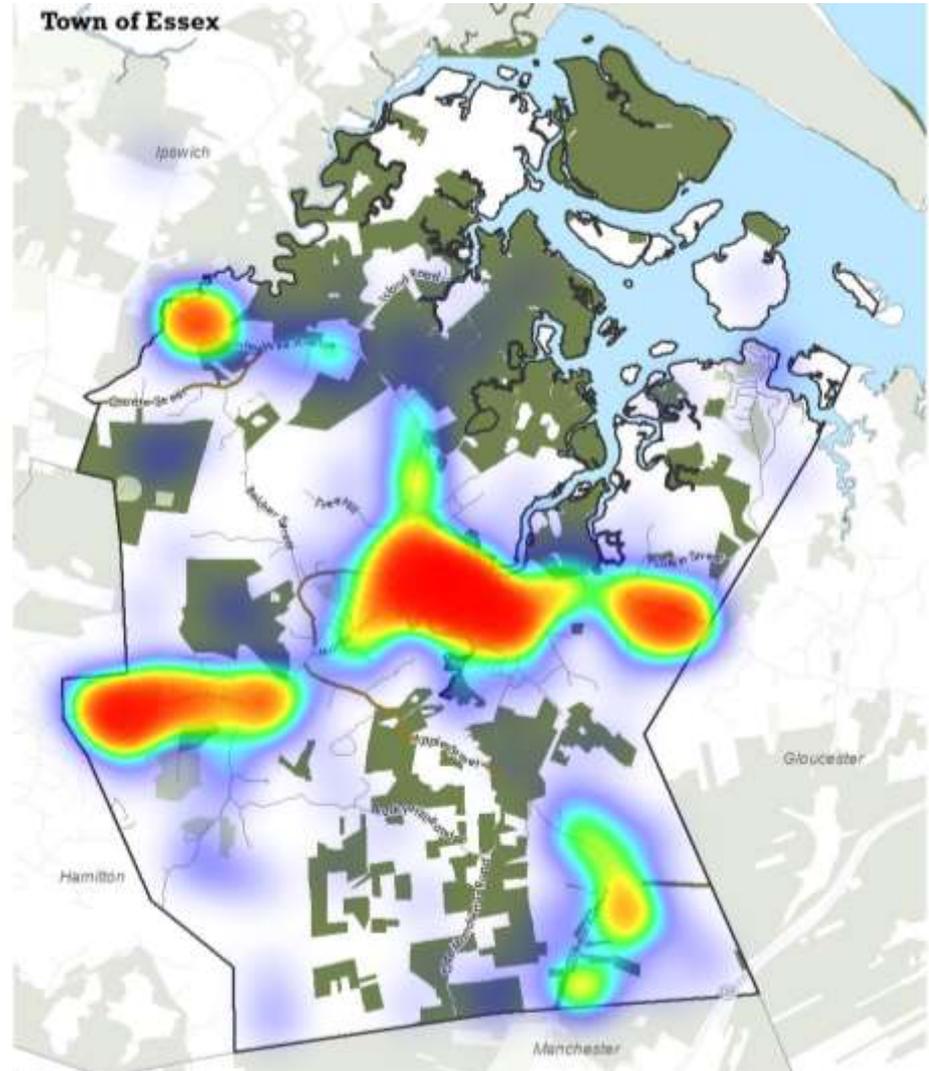


Would you like the Town to designate specific areas for commercial uses?



80 respondents would like to see commercial uses continue to be allowed throughout Town.

If yes, where should those uses go?





Why do some people want to continue to not establish commercial zones?

Some people believe Essex has enough businesses and do not want any new ones to occur

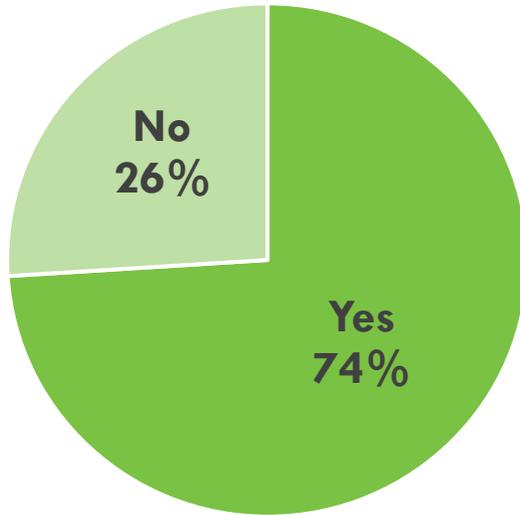
Add stipulations or require existing businesses to be redefined or upgraded

Some see commercial districts as attracting growth that would be inconsistent with “bucolic” feel

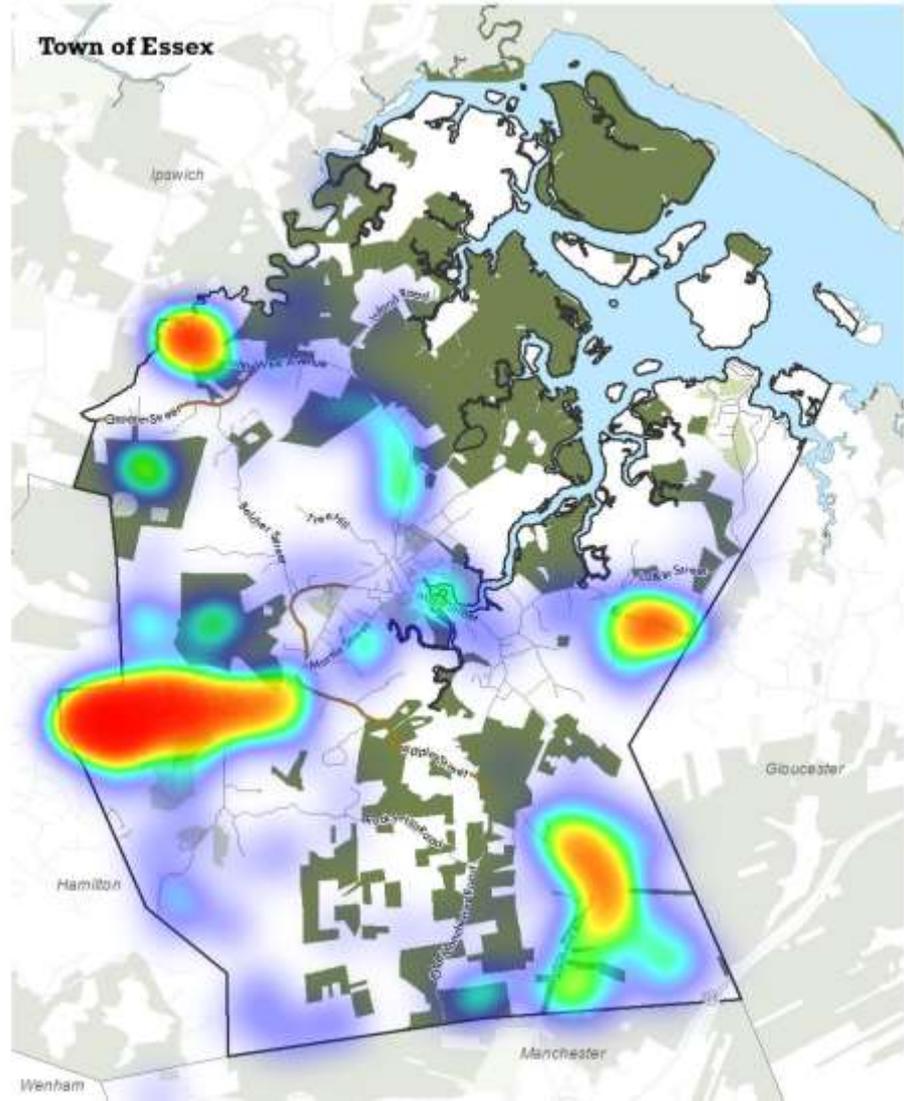


Would you like the Town to designate specific areas for industrial uses?

If yes, where should those uses go?



49 respondents would like to see industrial uses continue to be allowed throughout Town.





Why do some people not want to establish industrial zones?

Industrial uses are incompatible with small, rural characteristics of Essex

“Takes away from seaside community that we are. And when unmanaged increase potential pollutants to our fragile marsh”

“It ruins the feel of a cozy seaside town”

“The character of this town is rural, scenic and quiet; industrial business tend not to be.”

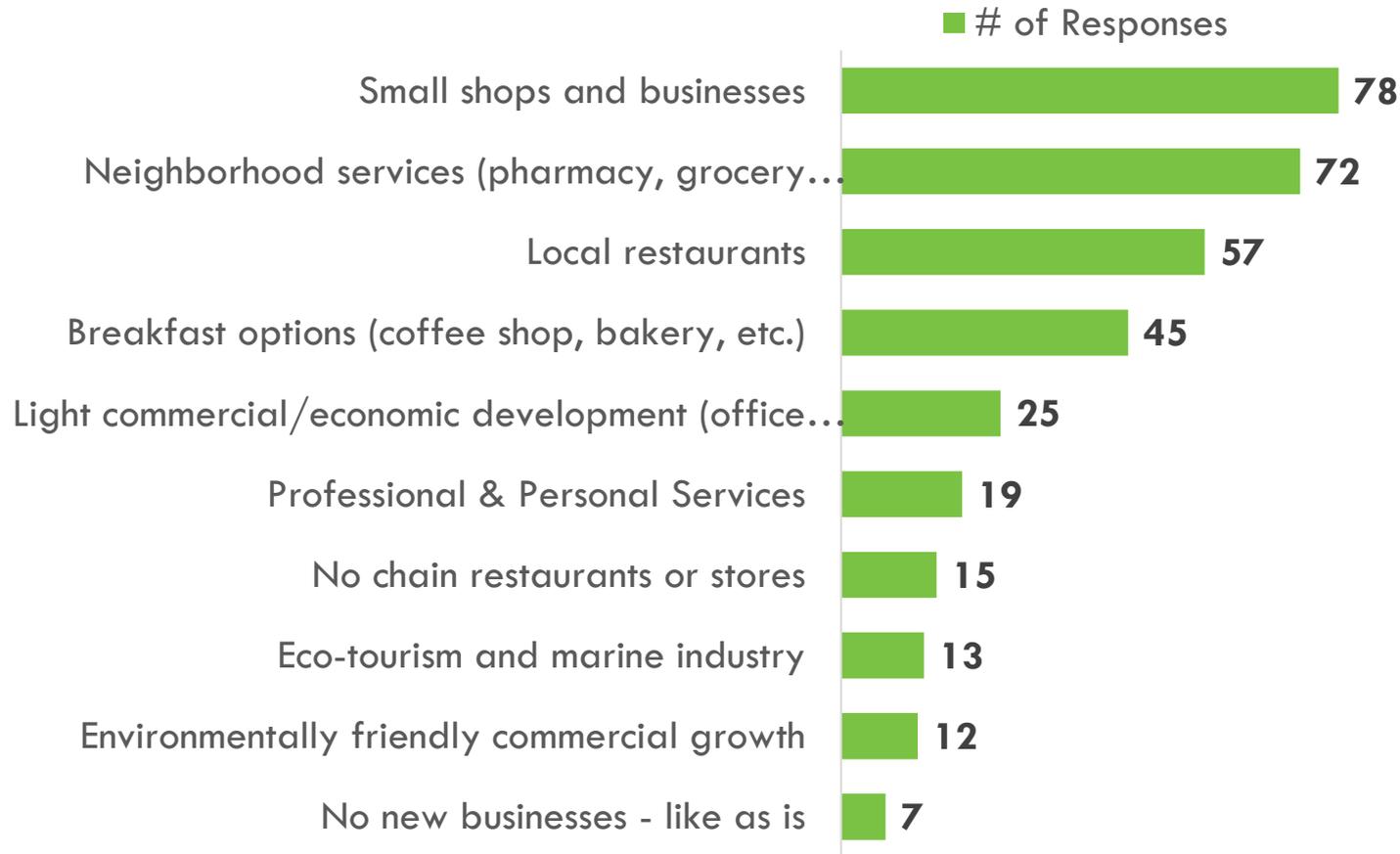
Concern over negative externalities (pollution, noise, etc.)

“They interfere with the small town/rural nature of the town -- loud, threatening to the environment, too apt to encroach on neighboring residential areas”

“Noise traffic and hazardous waste; not compatible with the Essex River and the Great Marsh”

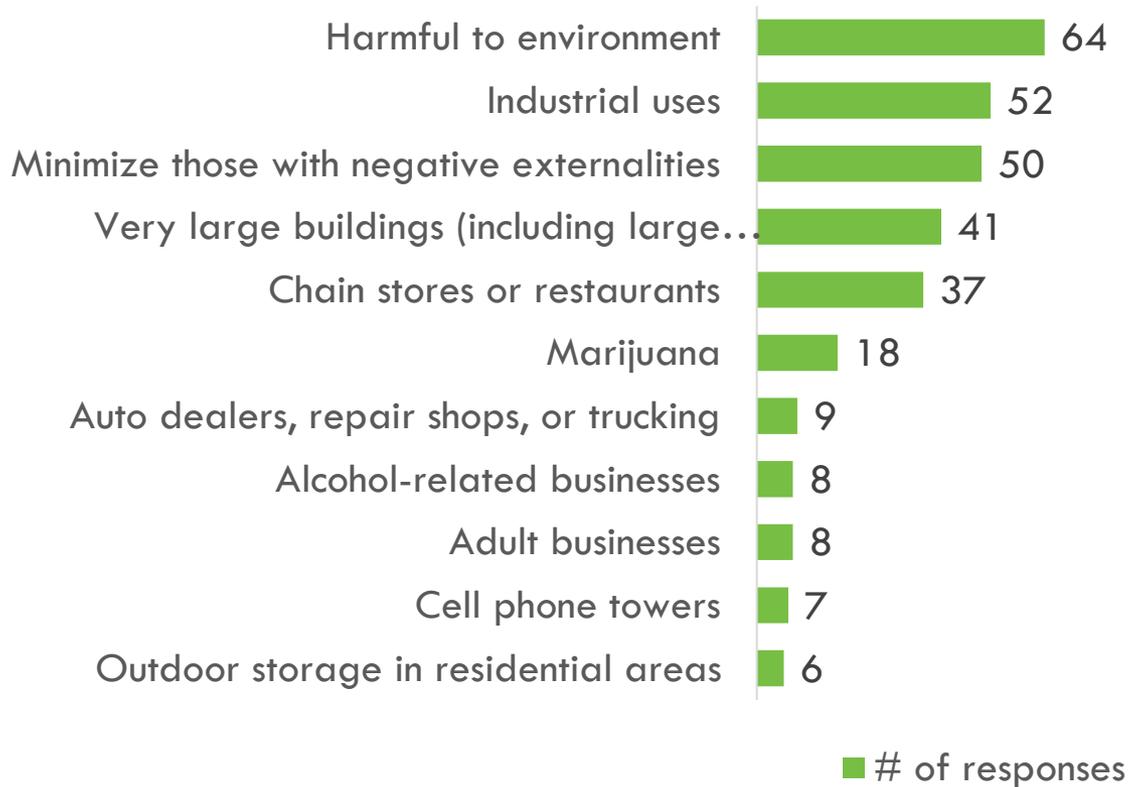


What kind of businesses would you like to see open in Essex? *(themes from written responses)*





If specific types of businesses were limited, what would you like to see restricted?



Development standards could address:

- Noise
- Lighting
- Traffic, including delivery traffic
- Hours of operation
- Building size and design
- Parking design
- Outdoor storage
- Buffers



Last thoughts about the different land uses that could occur in Essex



Protect **open space**



Opportunities to **add development standards** and improve site plan review process



Diversify **tax base** and reconsider existing code



Continue allowing **agricultural uses** that contribute to Essex's rural landscape



Expand **housing options**, ideally low- to moderate-density, especially for seniors and people with low incomes



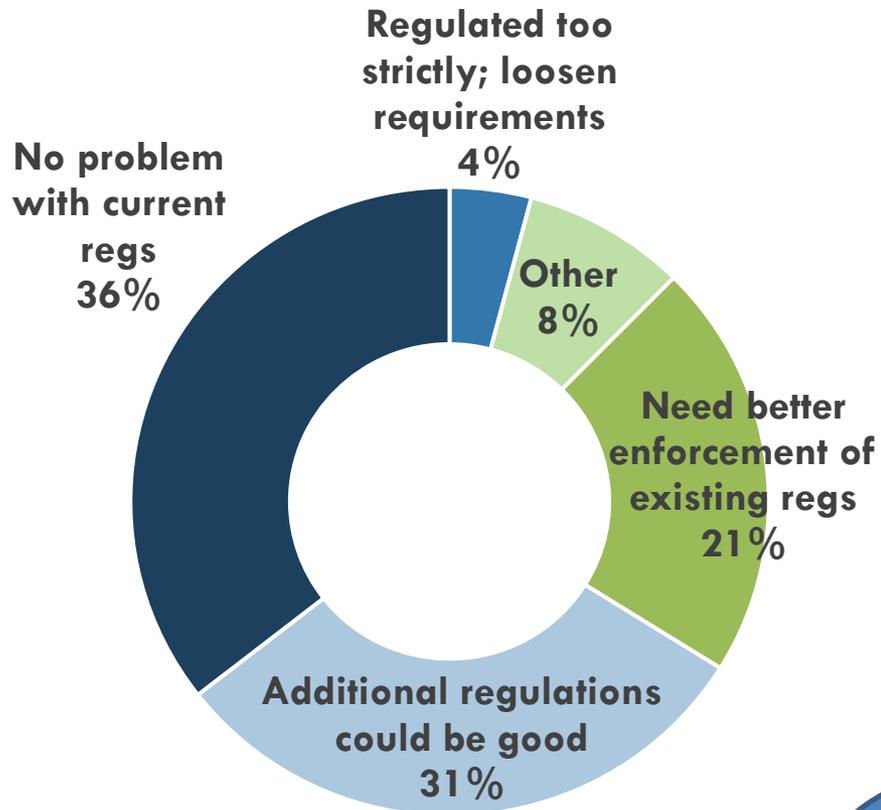
No change – **like zoning how it is** (flexible for home occupations and property owners)



Create and **preserve residential areas**



Home occupations



“Commercial use should be more restricted and NOT be less than Home Occupation requirements.”

“We need better and more evenly applied enforcement.”

“Traffic and noise limitations to protect residents are needed to avoid high impacts.”



Home occupations

**31% of
respondents said
additional
regulations could
be beneficial**

Regulations could better address:

- Noise
- Enforcement
- Parking
- Outdoor storage
- Traffic impacts, including deliveries
- Pollution
- Number of employees



How do you feel about the Town creating new zoning districts?

66%

“Very supportive” or “Generally supportive”



25%

“Generally concerned, or “Very concerned”



6% of respondents are neutral.



How do you feel about the Town adding more design or development standards for non-residential uses but continuing to allow them everywhere?

33%

“Very supportive” or “Generally supportive”



57%

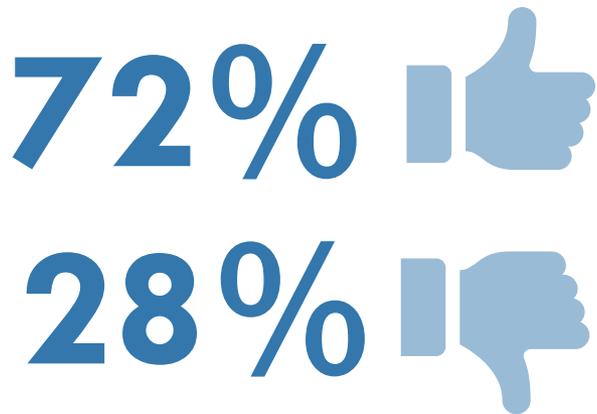
“Generally concerned” or “Very concerned”



7% of respondents are neutral.



Are you supportive of expanding the applicability of the Special Permit process?



What types of uses should require a Special Permit?

- All commercial and industrial
- Any change of use to non-residential when next to residential
- When certain thresholds are met (parking, building size, traffic impacts, etc.)



Are you supportive of expanding the applicability of the Special Permit process?

28% 

Why don't you want to see the Special Permit process expanded?

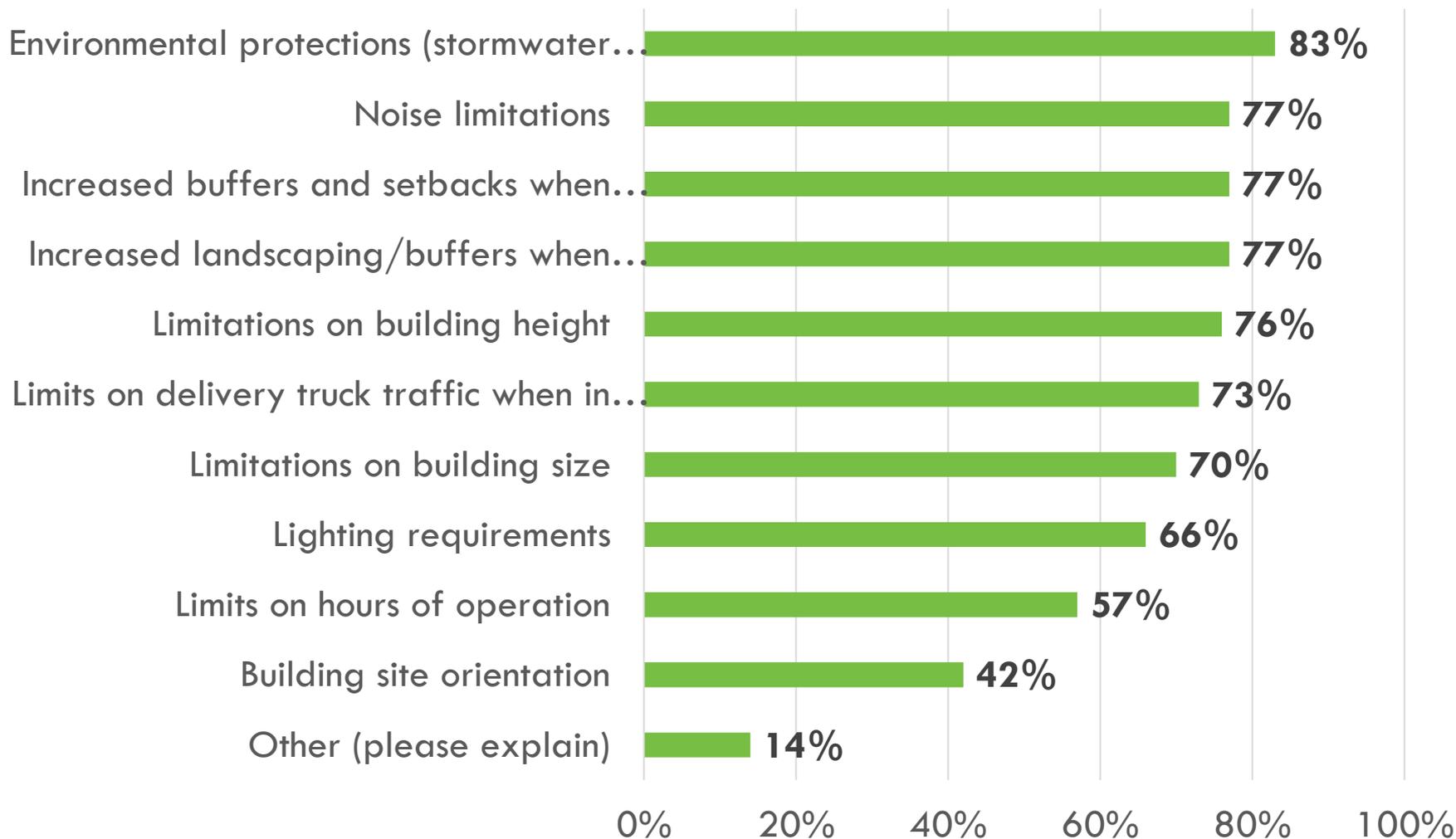
"Would prefer to see land uses regulated by zoning districts, it is more predictable and fairer, less discretion"

*"Appears **too subjective**, less clear cut than having defined zoning districts"*

"Because that gives the town the right to deny people and will end up ruining the current zoning."



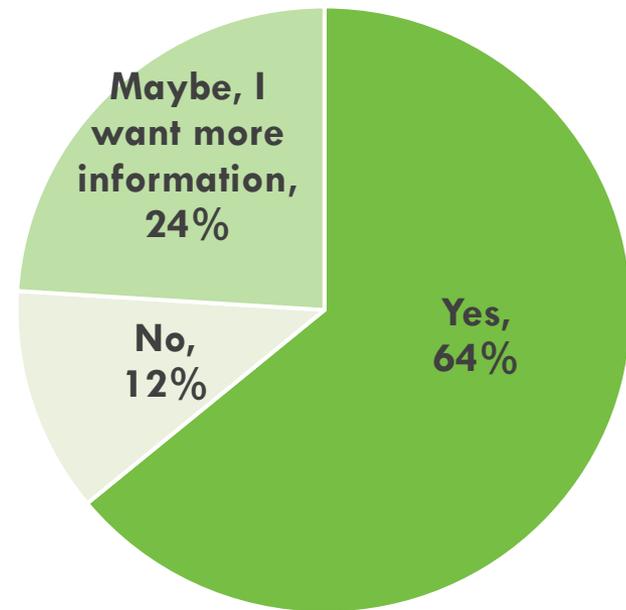
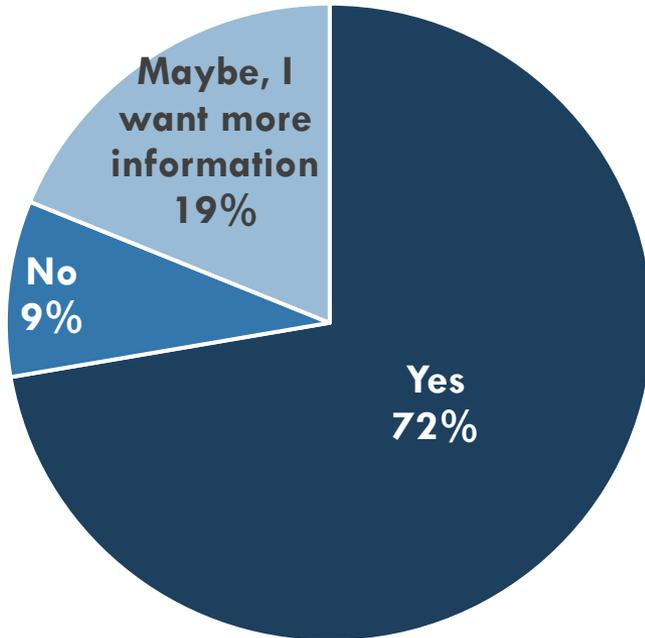
If the Town were to add more development regulations, what would you like to see?





Environmental Protections

Should the Town adopt a wetlands bylaw?



Should the Town promote more resilient development?