

SOUTH ACTON



Vision & Action Plan

Virtual Webinar
June 21, 2023



Project Team



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Agenda



- Project Background
- Vision for South Acton Village Zoning District
- What is Section 3A?
- Complying with Section 3A
- Next Steps
- Q&A



Project Background

Background



- Town of Acton hired MAPC to help lead a public engagement process to establish a vision for South Acton and make zoning/design recommendations that can best achieve the vision
- Through this process, we are also considering zoning that will comply with the new Multifamily Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities (often referred to as “Section 3A”)
- Project builds on considerable past planning work, including the 2022 Climate Action Plan, 2020 HPP, 2012 Master Plan, and 1995 South Acton Vision Plan

Project Timeline



- ✓ **Project start-up:** Summer 2022
- ✓ **Existing conditions analysis:** Fall 2022
- ***Visioning: In Progress***
- ***Section 3A compliance: In Progress***
- **Recommendations:** Summer 2023
- **Zoning drafted and plan released:** Fall 2023
- **Select Board and Planning Board vote:** Winter or Spring 2024
- **Town Meeting vote:** May 2024

Engagement To-Date



- Town-wide visioning survey completed by 972 residents and others who regularly visit the South Acton (postcard mailed to all registered residential mailing addresses in Acton)
- South Acton: Past, Present, Future open house events in January
- Focus group meetings with South Acton residents, Town staff, and local developers
- Digital communications



Vision for South Acton Village

South Acton Village

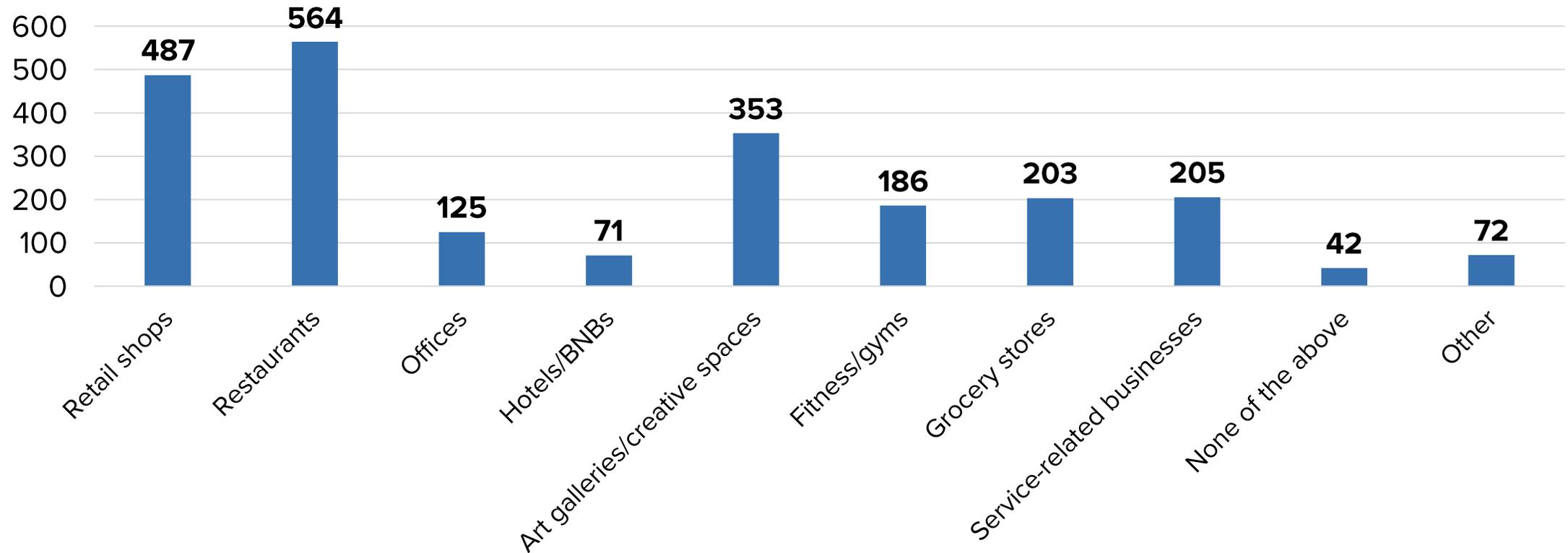


-  Discovery Museum
-  Exchange Hall
-  Faulkner Homestead
-  Jones Playground
-  Stonefield Farm
-  Village District
-  Historic District

Survey Findings



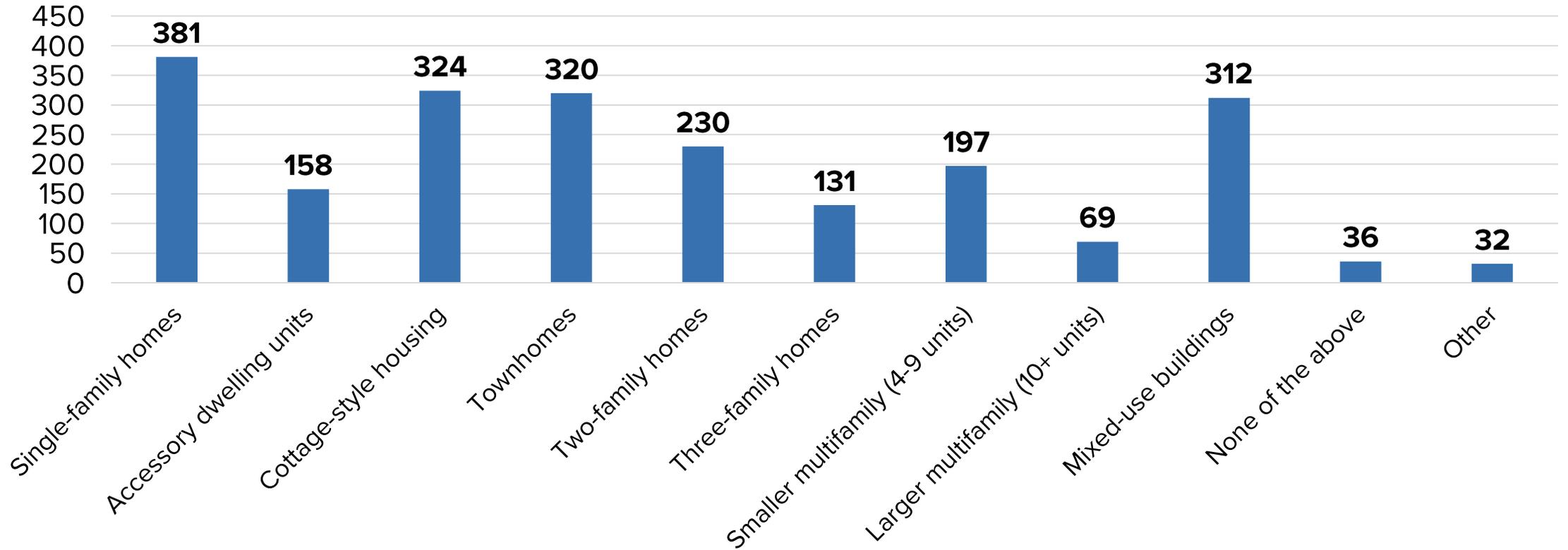
Which of the following commercial land uses would you like to have in South Acton?



Survey Findings



Which of the following housing types and styles would you like to have in South Acton?



Commercial Uses in South Acton Village



- **1 retail (Erikson's Grain Mill)**
- **0 restaurants**
- **2 historic nonprofits**
- **5 commercial recreation**
- **2 services**
- **2+/- offices**

Draft Vision



In the future, South Acton Village is a thriving, transit-oriented neighborhood that is welcoming to people of all ages and income levels.

The village center has retained its historic, “small town” charm while expanding its diversity of housing and business offerings.

With its convenient Commuter Rail access and location as a connector village between Kelley’s Corner, West Acton, and Downtown Maynard, South Acton draws in visitors to shop, dine, admire the many historic features, and visit recreational facilities such as the Assabet River Rail Trail and Great Hill.

It is safe and easy to travel within South Acton and from South Acton to other parts of Town, no matter the mode of transportation.

Draft Vision



The following series of aspirations provide greater detail about the vision of the future:

- Diverse housing options for all ages and income levels
- Enhanced pedestrian and bike connectivity
- Improved traffic safety and calming
- Vibrant commercial uses
- Strengthened historic assets
- High-quality, sustainable development
- Adequate infrastructure to support new development
- Investment in public spaces

Poll #1



Does this draft vision statement adequately reflect your priorities for South Acton Village?

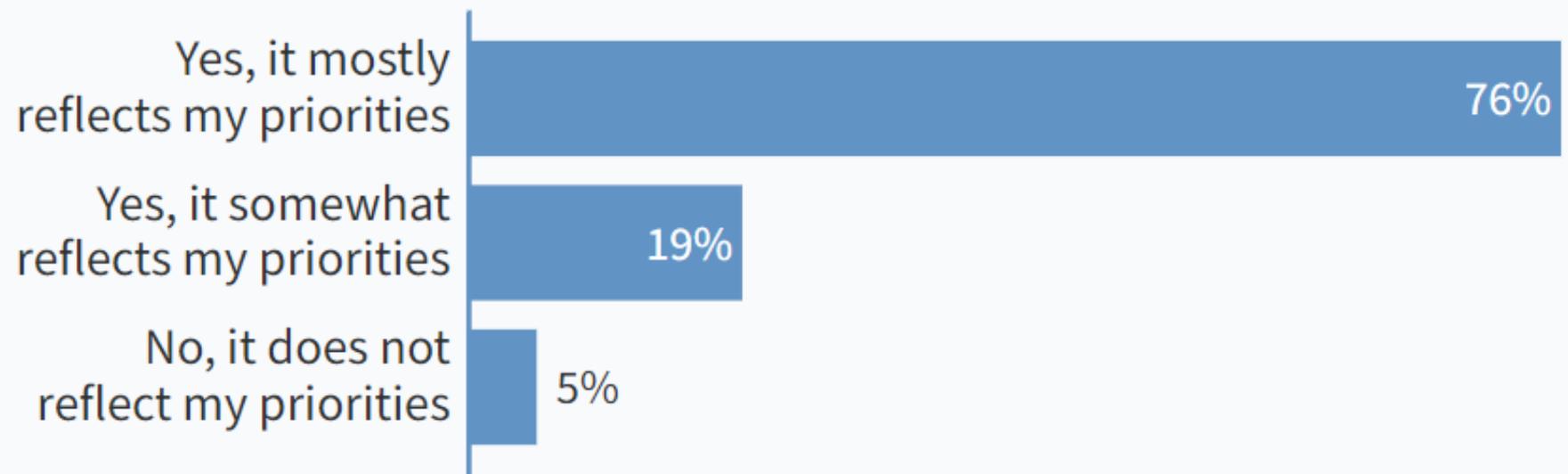
- Yes, it mostly reflects my priorities
- Yes, it somewhat reflects my priorities
- No, it does not reflect my priorities



When poll is active, respond at Pollev.com/mapcpoll

Text **MAPCPOLL** to **22333** once to join

Does this draft vision statement adequately reflect your priorities for South Acton Village?



Poll #2



What should we add, remove, or change?

Poll #3



Which photos show architecture that you believe would fit well in the South Acton Village District? Select as many as you like.

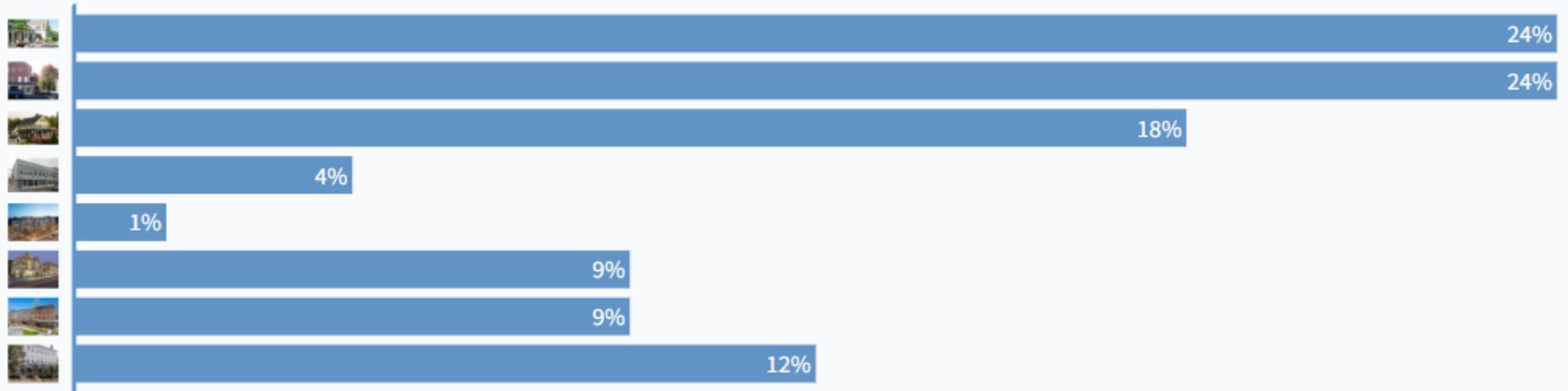




When poll is active, respond at [PollEv.com/mapcpoll](https://Pollev.com/mapcpoll)

Text **MAPCPOLL** to **22333** once to join

Which photos show development that you believe would fit well in South Acton Village? Select as many as you like.





What is Section 3A?

Poll #4



Before today, how familiar were you with the new Multifamily Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities Act (Section 3A)?

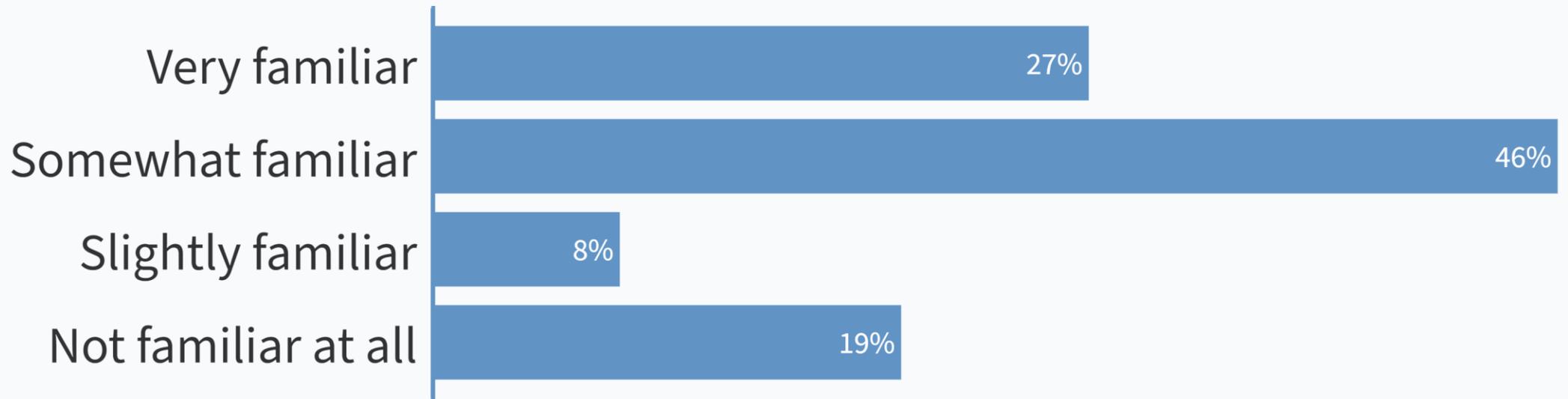
- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Slightly familiar
- Not familiar at all



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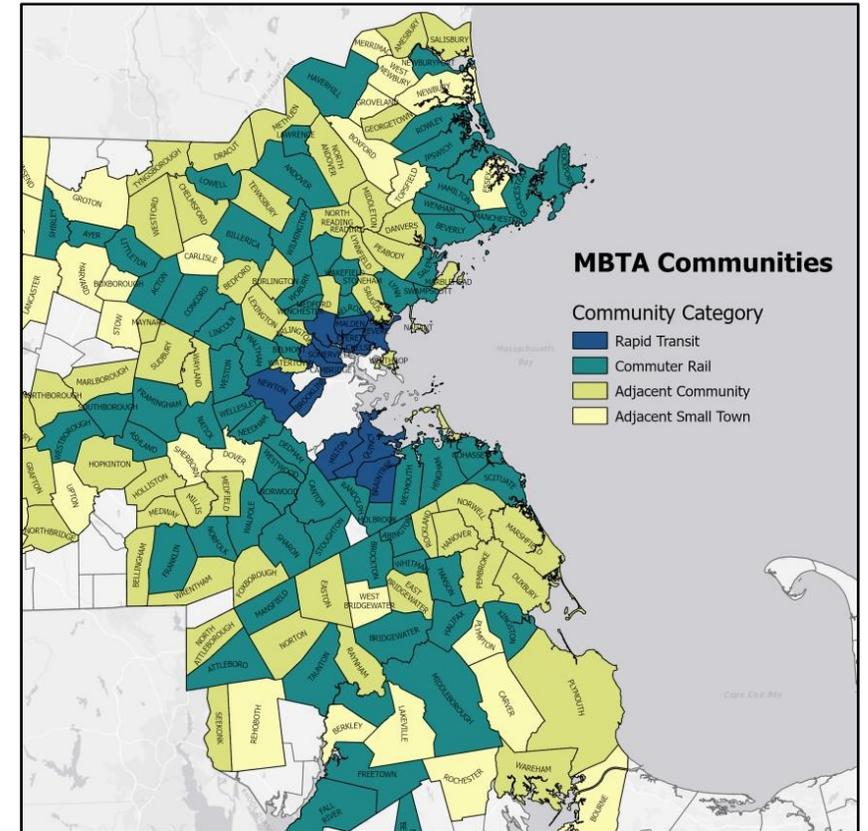
Before today, how familiar were you with the new Multifamily Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities Act (Section 3A)?



Section 3A Basics



- All MBTA Communities must have at least one zoning district that **permits multifamily housing by-right**
- Mandates a minimum gross density of **15 units/acre** (can vary by subdistrict)
- Part of zoning district must be located with a **half-mile** of the transit station
- District must be a “**reasonable size**”

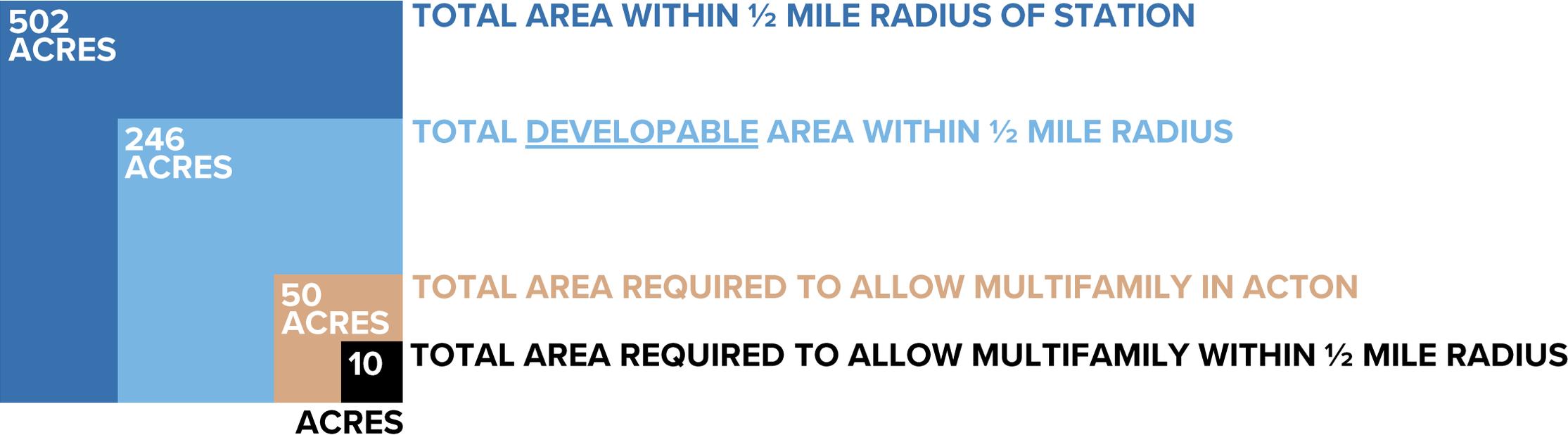


“Reasonable Size” for Acton



- Acton must have a multifamily zoning district of at least **50 acres**
- Of the 50 acres, at least **10 acres** must be located within a half-mile of the South Acton Commuter Rail Station
- Remaining **40 acres** can be outside this area
- District can be broken up into subdistricts, but at least half of the zoning district must be contiguous (**25 acres**)
- Subdistricts must be at least **5 acres** in size

“Reasonable Size” for Acton



Minimum Unit Capacity



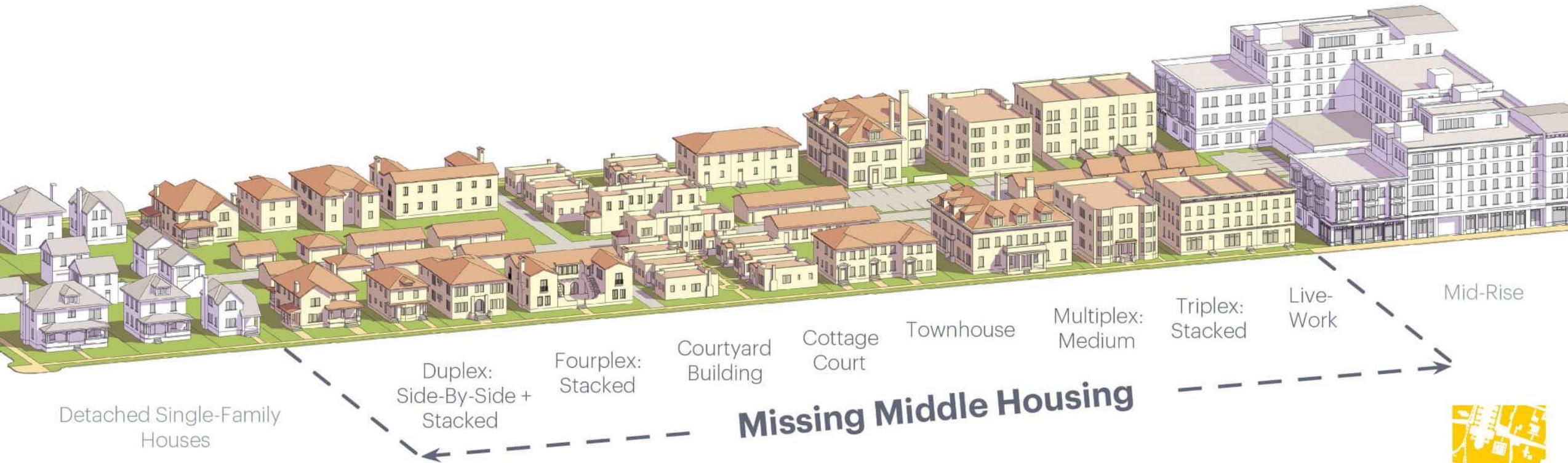
- Does not require construction of units (**no production mandate**)
- Minimum unit capacity for Acton is **1,383 units**
- Unit capacity measures the total number of units that **could be built** in the district under zoning requirements, not how many units already exist

Other Requirements



- Zoning district must be **feasible for development**: land that is not suitable, such as wetlands or conservation land, is **excluded** from 50-acre minimum district size
- Zoning cannot contain **age restrictions**
- Zoning must be **suitable for families with children** (no bedroom limits)
- ✓ **Site plan review** and **design standards** are allowed
- ✓ **Inclusionary zoning** is allowed: can require up to 10% of units to be deed-restricted affordable to incomes at 80% AMI (option for more affordability if financial feasibility analysis provided)

Missing Middle Housing



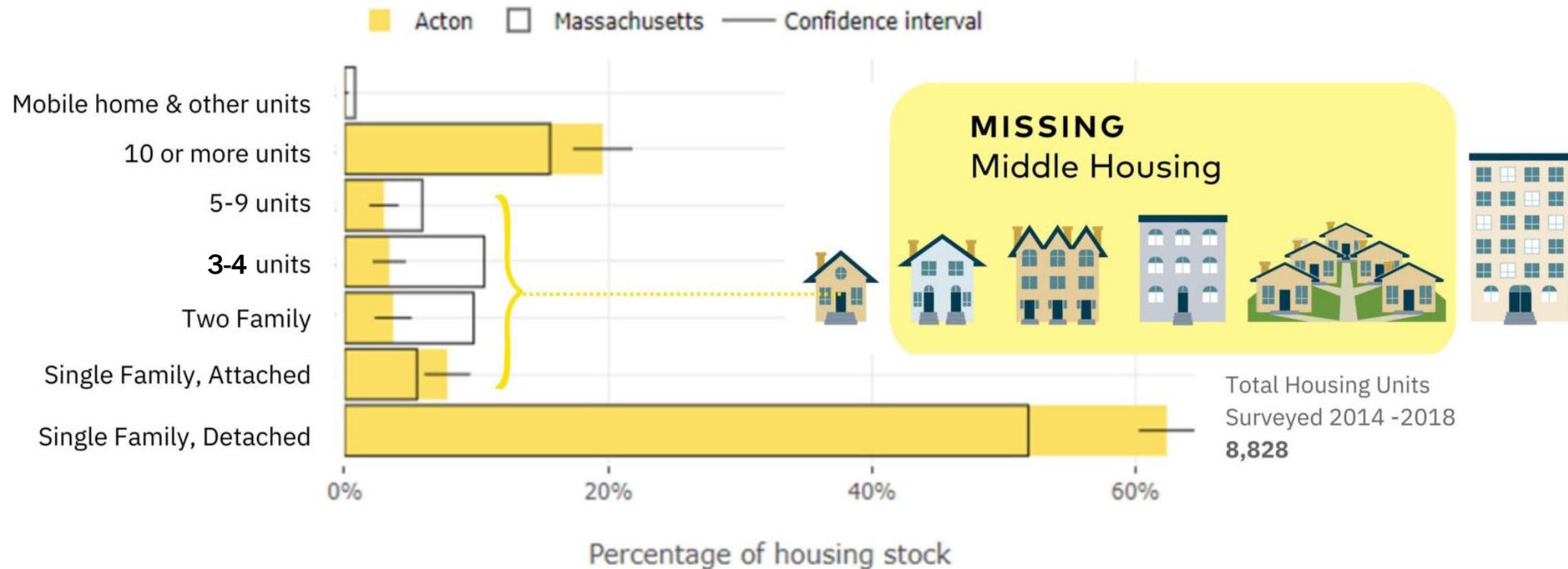
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Missing Middle Housing



Housing Units by Building Type Acton Vs. State



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-year estimates
Table S2504: Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units

Results of Non-Compliance



- Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office issued an “Advisory Concerning Enforcement of the MBTA Communities Zoning Law”
- MBTA Communities cannot opt out of or avoid their obligations under the law by choosing to forego state funding
- Failure to comply may result in civil enforcement action or liability under federal and state fair housing laws

Results of Non-Compliance



- If Acton does not comply, it will not be eligible for:
 - MassWorks
 - Local Capital Projects Fund
 - Housing Choice Initiative
- In the past **three years alone**, Acton has received **over \$3.5 million** from these funding sources

Results of Non-Compliance



- Impacts of losing Local Capital Project Funds:
 - **Acton Water District** would not be eligible for SRF loan discount program with Town's designation as Housing Choice Community
 - **Acton Housing Authority** would lose 10% of State public housing funds
 - **Acton Wastewater Treatment Plant** would lose access to 1.5% loan discount for WWTB Rehab Project



Complying with Section 3A

Draft Approach



Overlay District 1:
Small-Scale Multifamily
“Townhouse style”



Overlay District 2:
Larger-Scale Multifamily
“Avalon style”



Overlay District 1



Small-Scale Multifamily – *Townhouse Style*



West Acton – Across from True West Brewery



Main Street – Across from Discovery Museum

Overlay District 1



Larger-Scale Multifamily – *Avalon Style*



Draft Approach



Overlay District 1:
Small-Scale Multifamily
“Townhouse style”



Overlay District 2:
Larger-Scale Multifamily
“Avalon style”



Poll #5



Do you like the concept of the draft approach?

- **Allowing small-scale multifamily within half-mile radius**
- **Allowing larger-scale multifamily on three larger sites**
- **Requiring 10% Inclusionary Zoning**

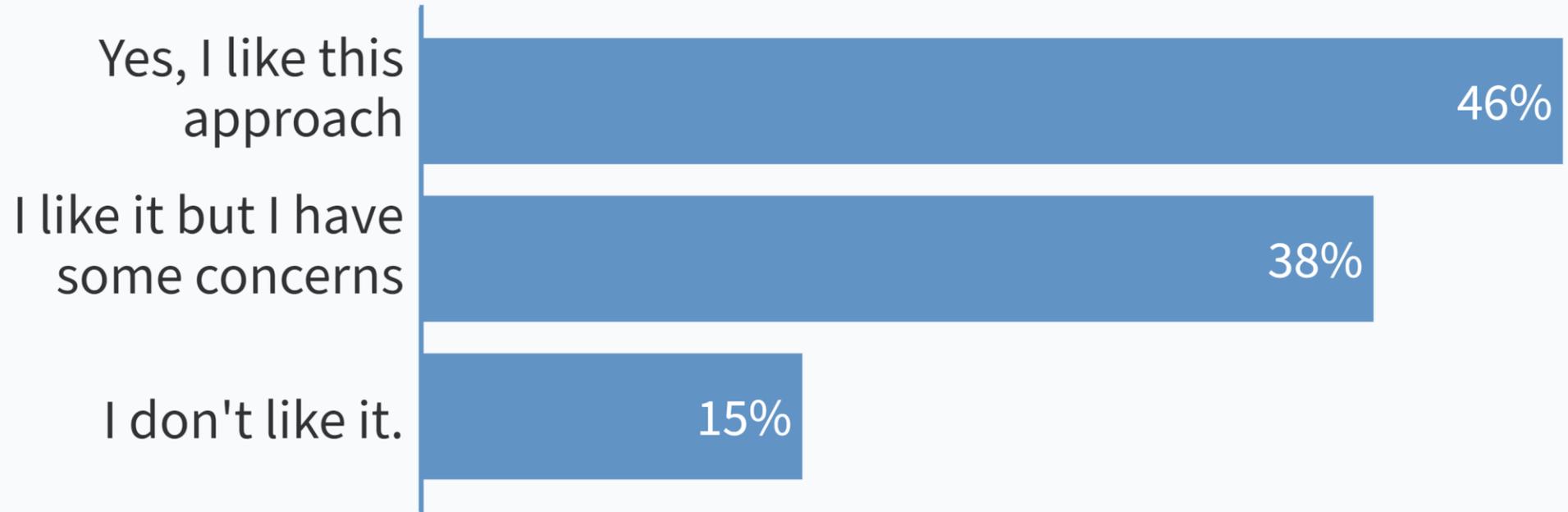
- Yes, I like it
- I like it but I have some concerns
- I don't like it



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Do you like the concept of the draft approach?



Location 1



Location 1



Poll #6



Do you like the idea of smaller-scale multifamily along Central Street and Main Street?



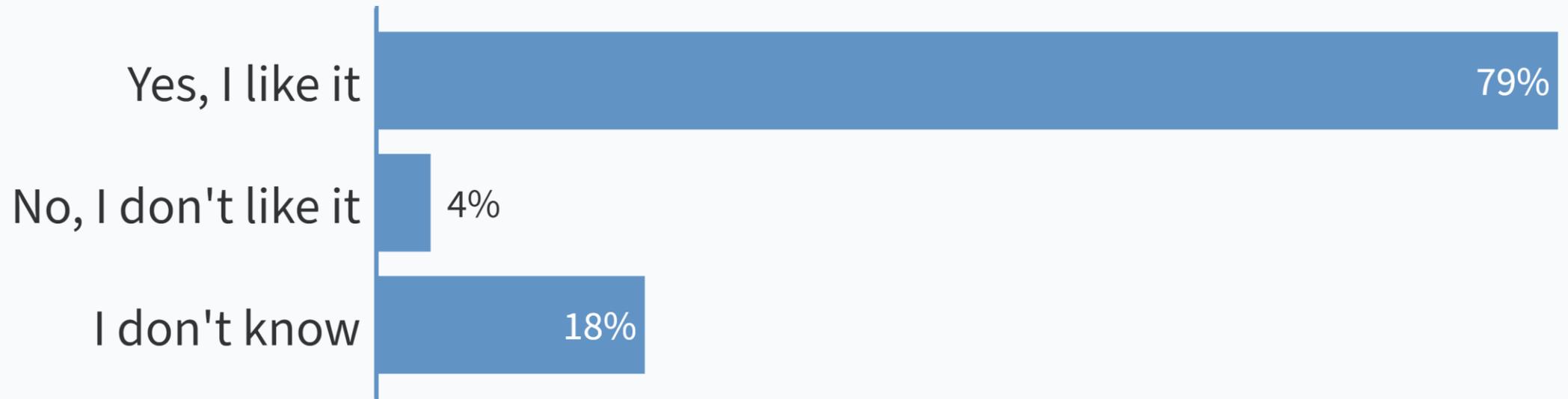
- Yes, I like it
- No, I don't like it
- I don't know



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Do you like the idea of smaller-scale multifamily along Central Street and Main Street in the areas shown?



Poll #7



Do you like the idea of allowing for mixed-use if commercial is on the ground floor?



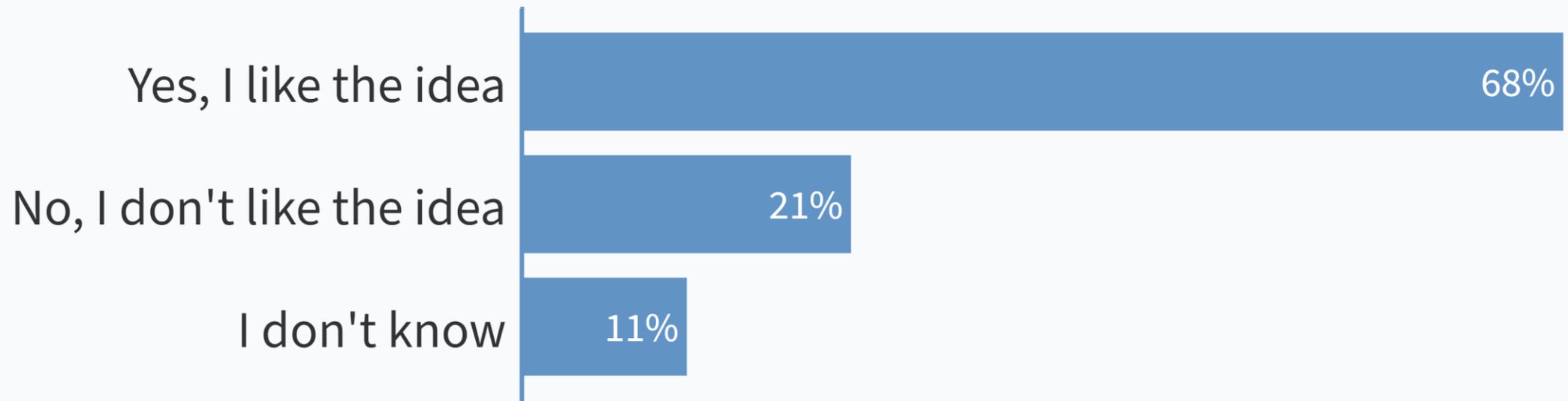
- Yes, I like it
- No, I don't like it
- I don't know



When poll is active, respond at PolleEv.com/mapcpoll

Text **MAPCPOLL** to **22333** once to join

Do you like the idea of allowing mixed-use if commercial is on the ground floor?



Poll #8



Which photos show housing that you believe would fit well for small-scale multifamily? Select as many as you like.

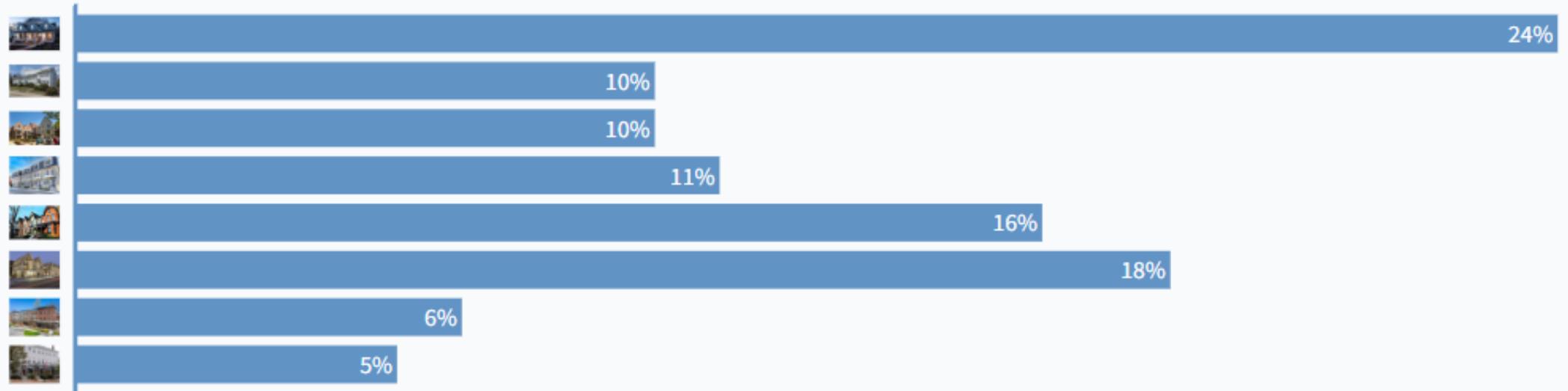




When poll is active, respond at Pollev.com/mapcpoll

Text **MAPCPOLL** to **22333** once to join

Which photos show housing that you believe would fit well for small-scale multifamily? Select as many as you like.



Poll #9



**Which types of rooflines do you prefer?
Select as many as you like.**





When poll is active, respond at PolleEv.com/mapcpoll

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Which types of rooflines do you prefer? Select as many as you like



9%



7%



21%



21%



20%



23%

Poll #10



Do you prefer homes with dormers or without dormers?

1 – NO DORMERS



2 – DORMERS



3 – I LIKE BOTH!





When poll is active, respond at Pollev.com/mapcpoll

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Do you prefer a home with or without dormers?



18%



21%

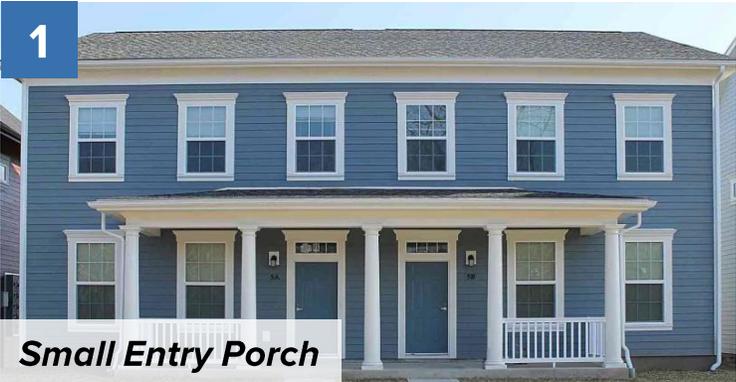


61%

Poll #11



**Which types of entryways do you prefer?
Select as many as you like.**

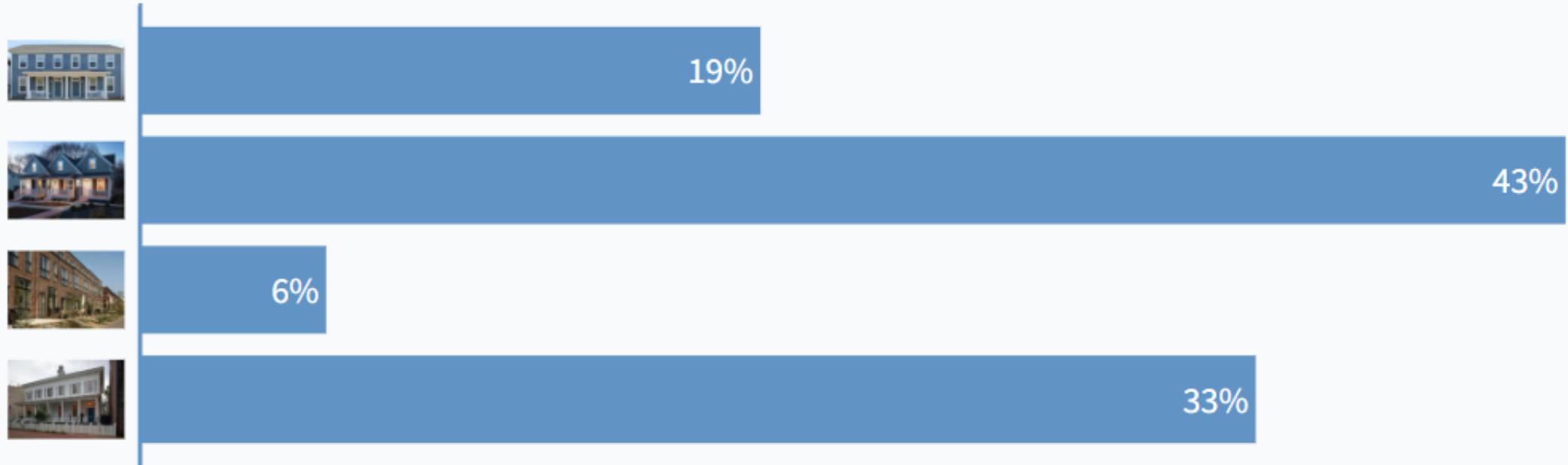




When poll is active, respond at Pollev.com/mapcpoll

Text **MAPCPOLL** to **22333** once to join

Which types of entryways do you prefer?



Larger-Scale 3A

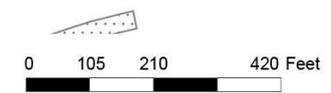


-  Discovery Museum
-  Exchange Hall
-  Stop & Shop
-  Larger-Scale Multifamily

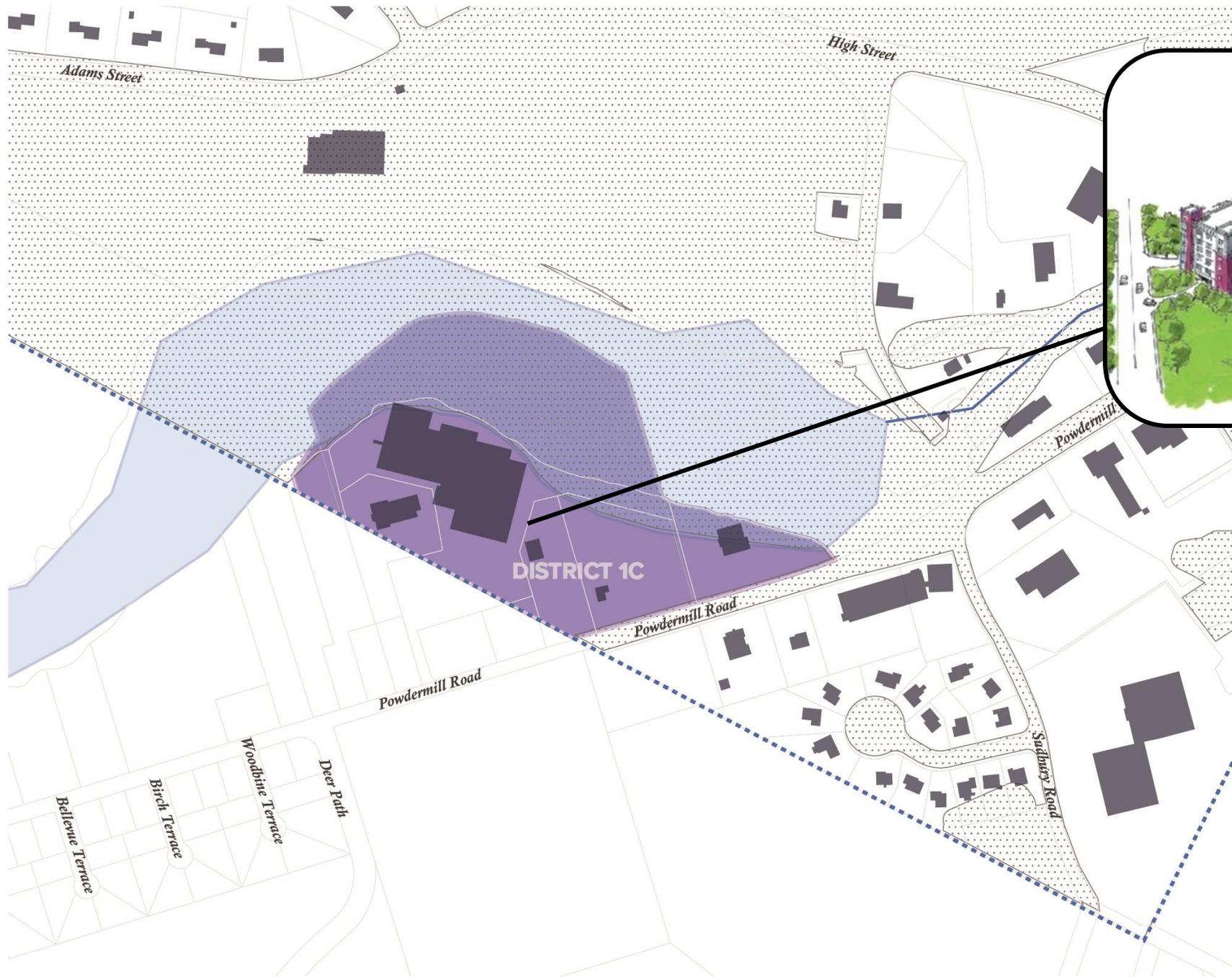
Location 2A



Location 2B



Location 2C



Poll #12



Do these three locations make sense for larger-scale multifamily housing complexes?



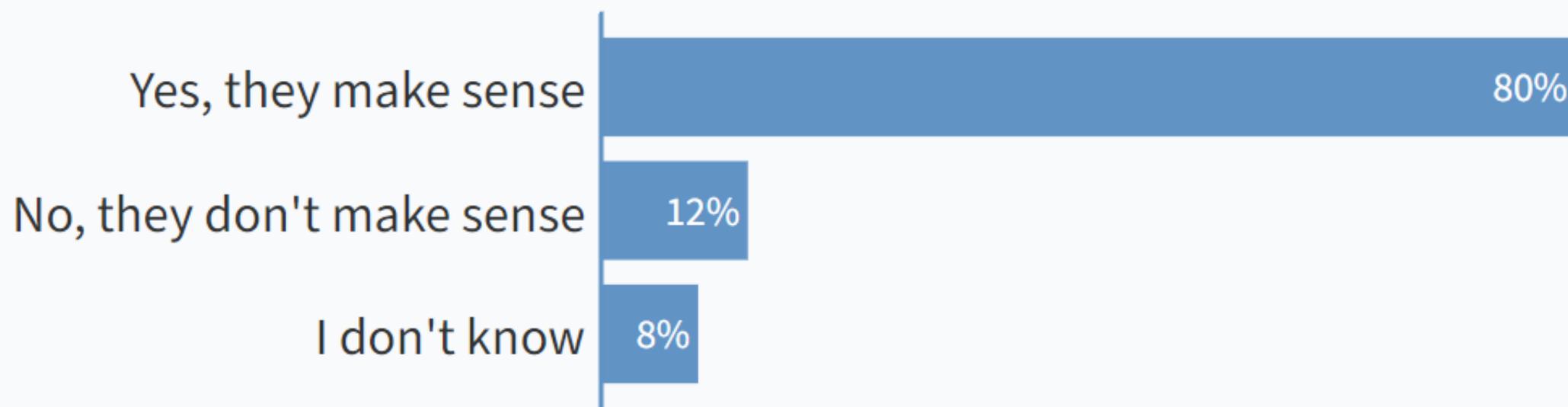
- Yes, they make sense
- No, they don't make sense
- I don't know



When poll is active, respond at Pollev.com/mapcpoll

Text **MAPCPOLL** to **22333** once to join

Do these three locations make sense for larger-scale multifamily housing complexes?



Poll #10



Which photos show housing that you believe would fit well for larger-scale multifamily? Select as many as you like.

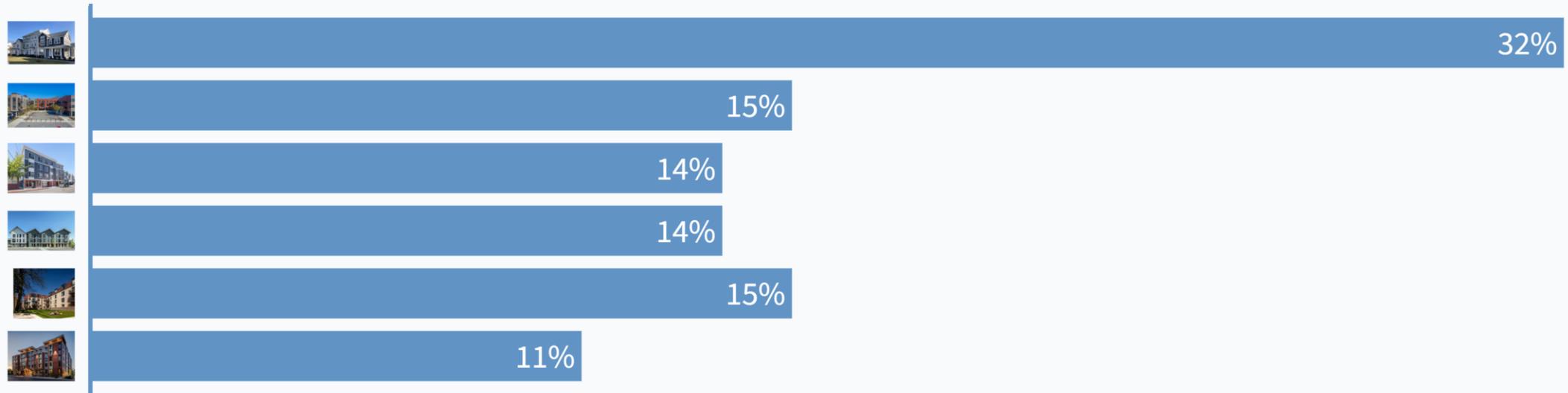




When poll is active, respond at PolleEv.com/mapcpoll

Text **MAPCPOLL** to **22333** once to join

Which photos show housing that you believe would fit well for larger-scale multifamily? Select as many as you like.





Next Steps

In-Person Engagement



- The same information covered at tonight’s webinar will be displayed on boards next week at Town Hall (472 Main Street) and the Acton Memorial Library (486 Main Street)
- Visit during operational hours on:
 - **Tuesday, June 27**
 - **Wednesday, June 28**
 - **Thursday, June 29**

Next Steps



- Analyze feedback from webinar and in-person engagement
- Draft recommendations for zoning, design, and infrastructure
- Create 3D visualizations of the type of new development allowed under recommended zoning
- Plan to hold next round of public engagement in September to get feedback on recommendations
- Deadline to comply with Section 3A (adopt zoning amendments) is **December 31, 2024**



Q&A



Thank you!

Visit our project webpage at www.mapc.org/south-acton-plan

Sign up for our email list at mapc.ma/south-acton-plan-news

Questions? Contact the Planning Division at **978-929-6631** or
planning@actonma.gov