

Findings Report  
Metuchen Shopper Survey  
for  
The Metuchen Downtown Alliance

Through a service grant and with input by Main Street New Jersey



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# Metuchen Shopper Survey Findings Report

## Executive Summary

The Metuchen Downtown Alliance (MDA) sought consumer feedback about its operation and downtown commercial district as part of a Strategic Planning process. The purpose of the survey was to learn about downtown consumer preferences including what stores, restaurants, and businesses would make downtown Metuchen more appealing for shoppers.

Donna Ann Harris of Heritage Consulting Inc. worked with Isaac Kremer, Executive Director of MDA, to create a survey that provided enough detailed consumer insights to make recommendations about future MDA activities. The sixty (60) attendees at the November 2016 SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis workshop identified their major concerns which were then tested with a broader segment of the public through the shopper survey. The survey had 23 questions with several text boxes for write-in comments. The Metuchen Shopper Survey was open for three weeks from December 6, 2016 to January 2, 2017. The timely publicity generated an impressive 426 completed responses, a “statistically significant sample size” producing a ninety-five percent (95%) level of confidence such that the results of these survey are representative of the whole population of the Borough of Metuchen.

### Top priorities for downtown

There are ten (10) top priority projects that are most important to shoppers, based on survey responses.

The MDA, working through its Board and Teams, should take the lead on the following top priority projects.

- Reduce the number of vacancies in the downtown.
- Help existing downtown businesses to increase their revenue and profitability.
- Get more destination businesses to locate here.
- Plan new events to bring people to the downtown to shop or dine.
- Encourage shop owners to coordinate one night on which they are all open past 6 p.m.

Half of the top ten projects must be addressed jointly by the Borough of Metuchen, the Parking Authority, and the MDA in a spirit of a true public private partnership that is encouraged by the Main Street Four Point Approach. <sup>TM</sup>

- Light up the dark locations in downtown.
- Fix the broken sidewalks throughout downtown.
- Create an incentive program to encourage property owners to restore storefronts, place better looking signs and awnings.
- Create a free parking lot for Saturday shoppers.
- Improve pedestrian safety downtown.

Survey respondents overwhelmingly believe that the downtown is clean and safe. Respondents painted the following picture of downtown with their write in comments: parking is difficult, parking enforcement is lopsided, on-street parking is highly regarded (but often not available), pedestrians feel unsafe crossing streets and traffic circulation is both chaotic and potentially dangerous. Current parking and traffic conditions within the downtown not only inhibit the current functions of businesses but may prevent possible growth if left unresolved.

Survey participants want more retail options in addition to all the twenty-six (26) current dining establishments. Shoppers want expanded business hours and a mix of independent stores, chains, and franchises to meet their needs. There were sixty-four (64) direct requests for chain restaurants and sixty-seven (67) direct requests for name brand retailers.

When asked why shoppers did not visit downtown more often, the top five comments were:

- Too few stores or shops that interest me (61%, 259),
- Selection or quality of the merchandise in stores does not interest me (46%, 196),
- No anchor store, destination business, or performing arts venue downtown (37%, 158),
- Too much traffic congestion along Main Street (32%, 138),
- On-street parking is always full when I come to downtown (31%, 133).

### **Restaurants and dining**

The restaurants that local shoppers most want to see in downtown are:

- Ethnic Restaurants (170); Indian (29) and Mexican (7) were top responses
- Traditional Restaurants (139); Burgers (39), Seafood (13), Steakhouse (11)
- Chain/Franchise/Specified Restaurants (64); Chipotle (11) and Starbucks (11)
- Heathy and/or Light Eating Restaurants (43),
- Casual and/or Convenience Restaurants (32).

### **Retail business**

Retail businesses that survey participants wanted to see most in downtown were:

- Clothing, Shoes, and Accessories (121); general clothing store (23), shoe store (19),
- Home, Durable Goods, and Hardware (67); hardware store (20), home goods (5),
- Name Brand / Retail Chains (61), Trader Joes (6),
- Food Products / Grocery (49).

Specific retail stores, merchandise, or service businesses that survey participants most want are:

- Arts and Crafts (52%),
- Plants, Nursery and Gardening Supplies (52%) Book store, new or used (48%),

- Home Furnishings and Accessories (46%), and
- Card and Gift Store (45%).

### **Entertainment, club, arts venues**

The most requested entertainment, club, and arts venue establishments are:

- Bars, Pubs, and Drinking Establishments (64); a jazz club (4),
- Live Performing Arts Venues (64); comedy club (10),
- Movies and Film (62); movie theater (30),
- Businesses, Art Classes, and Activities (38),
- Renovate Existing Entertainment Assets (37),

### **Metuchen downtown events**

Eighty-three percent (83%) of Metuchen shoppers enjoy attending events downtown, and the highest rated events are:

- Metuchen Farmers Market,
- June Bug Arts Fest,
- Country Fair,
- Restaurant Week,
- Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade, and
- Small Business Saturday.

The Metuchen Farmers Market is a reoccurring, seasonal Saturday event and a foot traffic generator. One time special events like June Bug Arts Fest, Country Fair and the Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade are an important component for any downtown promotion effort as they are designed to acquaint people with the downtown so they will come back later to shop. Restaurant Week and Small Business Saturday are the retail events, designed to “ring cash registers that day.”

### **Downtown spending**

The most common sum spent by a shopper patronizing dining and drinking establishments is just over \$50 during a typical visit.

- Eleven percent (11%) spend less than \$20 at dining/drinking places during a typical visit.
- A third (33%) spend between \$20 and \$49 during a typical visit.
- Nearly a third (31%) spend between \$50 and \$79 during a typical visit.
- Twelve percent (12%) spend more than \$80 during a typical visit.

The most common sum spent by a visitor patronizing retail stores and shops is just over \$20 during a typical visit.

- Almost a third (31%) spend less than \$20 at a shop on a typical visit to a shop.
- Just over a third (35%) spend between \$20 and \$49 in a downtown shop.
- Nine percent (9%) spend between \$50 and \$79 during a typical visit to a shop
- Only five percent (5%) spend more than \$80 during a typical visit to a downtown store.

Retail spending is far lower than restaurant spending and may indicate that the current retail mix in Metuchen may not meet the needs of current shoppers, as they are spending money in shops elsewhere.

### **Recommended early action items**

We recommend that the MDA make progress on the following activities in the next two years.

1. The MDA must continue to work closely with both the borough and Parking Authority to address survey participant's requests for improvement to pedestrian lighting and safety, cracked sidewalks, parking lot management, parking enforcement, and traffic congestion.
2. MDA Economic Vitality team should work with property owners to reduce the number of vacancies and connect business owners with technical assistance providers to increase downtown businesses' revenue and profitability.
3. The new Retail Market Analysis information should be used by the Economic Vitality Team to change the business mix in the downtown, recruit more destination or anchor businesses, and use the suggestions for new retail, restaurants, and entertainment options discussed in this report.
4. New retail events that "ring cash registers that day" should be the focus of the Promotion Team rather than creating new special events, as there seem to be enough already.
5. The Organization Team should continue its work to recruit volunteers, grow the email list, secure sponsorships for organization-wide activities, and communicate about the MDA's work using the most effective traditional and new media tools identified in this report.
6. The Promotion Team can help all downtown stakeholders by creating and promoting a unified special event calendar.
7. Shop owners should be encouraged to coordinate one night each week when they are all open past 6 p.m. to meet the needs of customers.
8. To encourage quality façade improvements and better signs and awnings, the Design Team should work with the borough to create a matching storefront improvement grant program. The Design Team will need to create Design Guidelines in advance of implementing such a program.
9. The Design Team should focus on placemaking activities to beautify downtown by adding flowers, benches, and trees along with holiday lighting and other amenities over the next few years.
10. The borough should continue current downtown cleanliness and safety efforts, as they are highly effective.

## **How to use this report**

The survey findings provide fresh information from and about current shoppers and should be considered seriously as high quality intelligence to make decisions about downtown's future. The survey findings report is only helpful if it is employed by the MDA and local merchants to make changes in current marketing, business recruitment and retention, and advertising practices. We encourage the MDA to circulate this report widely and explain its significance to retailers and restaurateurs in the district.

## Introduction

As part of its first Strategic Planning process, the new Metuchen Downtown Alliance (MDA) organization wished to gain consumer feedback about its operation and the downtown. Main Street New Jersey provided consulting services to the organization to undertake an online survey. The purpose of the survey was to learn about downtown consumer preferences including what stores, restaurants, and businesses would make downtown Metuchen more appealing for shoppers. Donna Ann Harris of Heritage Consulting Inc. worked with Isaac Kremer, Executive Director of MDA to create a survey that provided enough detailed consumer insights to make suggestions about future activities for downtown Metuchen. Jef Buehler, State Coordinator for Main Street New Jersey, also provided advice and suggestions on survey questions and for this report.

Donna Ann Harris of Heritage Consulting Inc worked with Isaac Kremer, Executive Director of MDS, to create a survey that would be short, yet provide enough detailed consumer insights to make suggestions about future activities of the MDA.-The Metuchen Shopper Survey had twenty-three (23) questions with several text boxes for write-in comments. The survey was open for three weeks from December 6, 2016 to January 2, 2017. Requests for participation were sent via email, posted on the MDA's Facebook page, listed on the MDA website, and communicated in several email blasts. Several board members also sent the survey to area religious organizations and the new parking garage subscribers. The Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce sent a request for participation to its mailing list.

All this timely publicity generated an impressive 426 completed responses in the survey period. This survey passed the threshold of 385 responses required to accurately represent Metuchen's July 1, 2015 population of 13,886.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the survey results are considered a "statistically significant sample size" producing a ninety-five (95) percent level of confidence such that if the results of these surveys are representative of the whole population of Borough of Metuchen ninety-five percent of the time. Survey Monkey, an online surveying tool, was used as the survey instrument. One \$250 gift certificate in the form of Metuchen Money from the Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce, which could be used at any participating Chamber business, was offered to encourage survey participation. One random winner was chosen at the end of the survey period in January 2017.

This survey is an excellent snapshot of the enthusiasm as well as the concerns of current downtown Metuchen shoppers. Therefore, the findings should be considered seriously as high quality intelligence and as fresh information about current shoppers. This information will be useful to the MDA Board members, the borough's Economic Development officials, and the business owners in the commercial district. All groups should use this information to make changes in current marketing, business recruitment and retention, and advertising practices.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/3445690>

## **How this report is organized**

This report is organized in two sections: survey findings and an appendix with four (4) sections. The survey sought the same information from all participants. Survey findings are organized by survey question, and include the most important information from the survey for each question and a brief analysis. We also offer several paragraphs describing the Most Common Downtown Metuchen Shopper based on the demographic materials from the survey at the end of this findings report.

We provide four appendices at the end of the report. Appendix A contains graphs of the survey responses for each of the multiple-choice questions as a record of the responses. Appendix B contains answers to open ended Question 4. Appendix C contains all the responses for Questions, 11, 12, and 13 about preferences for new dining, shops, and entertainment in downtown. Appendix D contains all the answers to the open-ended Question 23. All appendices have been organized by topic with every response included. These are actual comments made by survey participants and they have not been altered in any way, except to correct obvious spelling errors.

## **Publicizing the survey results**

It would be wise to distribute and discuss this report with commercial real estate brokers so they can assist the MDA to bring high quality tenants to downtown to meet the needs of current customers. New entrepreneurs as well as current business owners and managers will benefit from these responses and may utilize them to expand and meet downtown customer preferences. Provide this report to other economic development agencies and the borough to determine how to align these findings with current economic development efforts for downtown.

We suggest making this survey findings report available on the MDA website, making copies for local merchants (on CD or flash drive), and hosting small gatherings of merchants or other local officials to explain the results to ensure that the value of the information is understood. The Borough of Metuchen is an important partner in downtown, and they should also hear about the survey findings because many of the most desired activities such as additional parking, better pedestrian lighting, and more pedestrian amenities downtown are traditional municipal functions.

## Summary of survey findings

### Top priorities for downtown

The 60 attendees at the November 2016 Metuchen SWOT analysis workshop identified their major concerns, which we then tested with a broader segment of the public in the shopper survey. Survey respondents overwhelmingly believe that the **downtown is clean and safe**; both are baseline concerns for any downtown revitalization effort, and here in Metuchen these matters are well in hand.

There are ten (10) top priority projects that are most important, per shoppers, and must be addressed jointly with the borough/Parking Authority and the MDA, in a spirit of a true public private partnership that is encouraged by the Main Street Four Point Approach™.

None of these ten high priority activities are quick fixes, and some are highly expensive to implement. Each project will require sustained work, over years, to address.

For five of the top priority projects, it is logical that the MDA, working through its Board and Teams, should take the lead in addressing the issues as they are private sector matters.

- Reduce the number of vacancies in the downtown.
- Help existing downtown businesses to increase their revenue and profitability.
- Get more destination businesses to locate here.
- Plan new events to bring people to the downtown to shop or dine.
- Encourage shop owners to coordinate one night on which they are all open past 6 p.m.

The remaining five top priority projects are matters where the Parking Authority and the Borough of Metuchen, working in close cooperation with the MDA's Parking and Design Teams, can make progress over the next several years.

- Light up the dark locations in downtown.
- Fix the broken sidewalks throughout downtown.
- Create an incentive program to encourage property owners to restore storefronts, place better looking signs and awnings.
- Create a free parking lot for Saturday shoppers.
- Improve pedestrian safety downtown.

Solving these large and complex traffic and parking problems will require expertise from professional traffic engineers and planners to ensure that downtown Metuchen's circulation problems are resolved, and that the existing parking resources are used most effectively. The MDA Parking and Design Teams will need to work collaboratively with the Parking Authority and borough over years to address these issues.

All the parking, infrastructure and safety priorities listed above will require extensive study before recommendations are made and solutions implemented with funds raised from county, state, and federal government grants or issuing bonds. All of them require a clear and long term vision of the future and dogged determination to see these projects through. The MDA may be helpful to identify possible grant sources or to serve as a conduit for grants and other resources as a nonprofit partner with the Borough if desired.

These top priorities were reinforced by Question 16 responses. We asked shoppers the reason they did not visit downtown more often.

- Too few stores or shops that interest me (61%, 259),
- Selection or quality of the merchandise in stores does not interest me (46%, 196),
- No anchor store, destination business or performing arts venue downtown (37%, 158),
- Too much traffic congestion along Main Street (32%, 138),
- On-street parking is always full when I come to downtown (31%, 133).

### **Cultivating a vibrant business mix**

Survey respondents indicated through both their responses to multiple choice questions as well as through nearly one-hundred unique comments that improving the current mixture of businesses within downtown Metuchen represents the most overall important need for driving more customer traffic into the commercial district. The bottom line is that survey participants overwhelmingly want more retail options in addition to all the twenty-six (26) current dining establishments.

The Economic Vitality Team should use the soon to be completed Retail Market Analysis information to change the business mix in the downtown, recruit more destination or anchor businesses, and use the suggestions in this report for recruitment of new retail, restaurants, and entertainment options discussed. It may also be important for the EV Team to implement an outreach campaign among bankers (small business lenders), brokers (realtors), and builders (developers) to educate them about downtown Metuchen and its opportunities, to forge relationships, and to establish a network of professionals to support strategic business recruitment.

Shoppers want expanded business hours and methods in place to make picking up food options more accessible for those commuting through downtown Metuchen on their way back home. Survey participants also indicated that the downtown should be open to embracing chain and franchise establishments. This last consideration was made through participants' sixty-four (64) direct requests for chain restaurants and sixty-seven (67) direct requests for name brand retailers. The sentiment behind this key finding is represented through the comment:

“Get rid of the failed protectionist policy that franchises are not allowed downtown. Look at Westfield. They have a mix of franchise stores and small, independent businesses and it is one of the best downtowns in our area!”

## **Business recruitment priorities**

### **Restaurants and dining**

When asked what kinds of restaurant businesses survey participants wanted to see downtown respondents provided the following categories as the top five responses:

- Ethnic Restaurants (170); Indian (29), Mexican (7),
- Traditional Restaurants (139); Burgers (39), Seafood (13), Steakhouse (11),
- Chain/Franchise/Specified Restaurants (64); Chipotle (11) and Starbucks (11),
- Healthy and/or Light Eating Restaurants (43),
- Casual and/or Convenience Restaurants (32).

When asked what types of food options would draw respondents to the downtown more frequently survey respondents provided the following answers:

- Full Service (sit down) Restaurant,
- Coffee Shop or Café open late hours,
- Pubs, Clubs, Brewpubs, or Taverns,
- Limited Service / Take Out counter service restaurants.

Although the above-mentioned restaurant options were popular, the distribution of responses between each of these answers was far higher than when compared to the question concerning retail stores, merchandise, or service businesses. We recommend that the Economic Vitality Team compare the Question 4 write in list with Question 11 responses with the Market Analysis results to plan which restaurants to assist through retention activities and recruitment for open spots in the downtown.

### **Retail business**

Retail businesses survey participants wanted to see downtown including these top responses:

- Clothing, Shoes, and Accessories (121); general clothing store (23), shoe store (19),
- Home, Durable Goods, and Hardware (67); hardware store (20), home goods (5),
- Name Brand / Retail Chains (61), Trader Joes (6),
- Food Products / Grocery (49),
- Gifts and Toys (43); toy store (11).

When asked would you visit the Metuchen downtown more often if it offered more of the following retail stores, merchandise, or service businesses, survey participants listed these stores most often:

- Arts and Crafts (52%, 213),
- Plants, Nursery, Gardening Supplies (52%, 212),
- Book store, new or used (48%, 197),
- Home Furnishings and Accessories (46%, 187),
- Card and Gift store (45%, 187).

It is interesting that a bookstore was not a top write in option nor were plants, and garden supply or a card store. We recommend that the Economic Vitality Team compare Question 4 write in list with Question 12 responses with the Market Analysis results to plan their business recruitment activities.

### **Entertainment, club, arts venues**

When asked specifically what kinds of entertainment, club, and arts venue establishments survey participants wanted to see downtown respondents provided the following five categories as the top responses:

- Bars, Pubs, and Drinking Establishments (64); a jazz club (4),
- Live Performing Arts Venues (64); comedy club (10),
- Movies and Film (62); movie theater (30),
- Businesses, Art Classes, and Activities (38),
- Renovate Existing Entertainment Assets (37),

The MDA should consider these requests by shoppers when filling downtown vacancies and working to bring in more destination businesses.

Survey participants identified two businesses that would attract them to the downtown more frequently. Both responses below were the top picks by a considerable margin.

- Movie Theater
- Music Venue, club, theater, etc.

### **Metuchen downtown events**

Survey respondents indicated that several downtown Metuchen events were both popular and well attended. These events included:

- Metuchen Farmers Market,
- June Bug Arts Fest,

- Country Fair,
- Restaurant Week,
- Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade, and
- Small Business Saturday.

The Metuchen Farmers Market is a reoccurring, seasonal Saturday event and brings foot traffic to downtown. One time special events like June Bug Arts Fest, Country Fair and the Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade are highly regarded and all have components that might appeal to children. Half (50%) of all Metuchen shoppers surveyed have children at home, so events catering to children may be highly popular for residents. Special events are an important component for any downtown promotion effort as they are designed to acquaint people with the downtown so they will come back later to shop.

Restaurant Week and Small Business Saturday are the retail events, designed to “ring cash registers that day.” Both events promote downtown Metuchen’s thriving restaurant and emerging retail scenes. It should be noted that Small Business Saturday was only launched in 2016 and the other events have much longer histories in the community.

The MDA’s Promotion Team should collaborate with these event organizers to both create a master calendar of events and aid regarding the most effective marketing and promotion methods noted in Question 7.

Eighty-three percent (83%) of Metuchen shoppers enjoy attending events downtown. Since Metuchen already has a full complement of special events throughout the year, we are recommending that the MDA focus its Promotion Team on developing retail events designed help businesses grow their profitability. Technical assistance to existing businesses to help them improve profitability was the second highest scoring (85%) activity that shoppers felt the MDA should implement, just after reducing vacancies (92%).

### **Getting the word out**

A significant number of survey participants expressed that they would make better use of the downtown if they had a better understanding of what was going on there. Respondents were concerned about the current effectiveness and reach of both marketing and promotional activities for downtown Metuchen.

Shoppers learn about events and activities from:

- Street banners (50%),
- Word of Mouth (48%),
- Event signs (46%) and
- *The Criterion News* (40%).

Social media resources that were popular among survey participants to get downtown information included:

- We Love Metuchen Facebook page (35%),
- the Metuchen Downtown Alliance Facebook page (33%), and
- the Main St. 08840 Facebook page (29%, 124).

Event organizers must use both traditional and new media to market events and activities downtown.

The Organization Team should continue to expand the MDA's email list, grow its presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and communicate about the work of the organization using the most effective traditional and new media tools identified here.

This data is extremely important to both the MDA Organization Team and to local merchants, so they can adjust their ad buys and be more effective in reaching customers. We recommend that this information be widely shared with all business and property owners in the downtown, so business owners can make changes in their advertising efforts with this new and fresh information from a large cross section of current shoppers.

### **Times when downtown is used**

A huge majority of survey respondents, eighty one percent (81%), pass through downtown more than three times a month.

Saturday during the day was another popular time to visit downtown Metuchen, as over two-thirds (67%, 286) of our survey respondents come downtown at that time. More than half of our respondents were in downtown on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (56%, 237) with this traffic continuing into the weekday evenings after 5pm (56%, 237). This result may be explained by the number of commuters traveling through downtown Metuchen to get home from work as well as by those visiting restaurants within the district after working hours. There may be potential to boost additional evening business activity during the weekdays based upon the results reported here.

A good showing of survey respondents, forty-three percent (43%, 183) visit downtown Metuchen on Saturday evening. Survey respondents indicated that one of their top reasons for visiting downtown Metuchen was to dine at a restaurant. Participants also reported that shopping at a retail store was another consistent reason for why respondents frequent the downtown.

Seventeen percent (17%, 73) of participants only USE the downtown for the train station as part of their daily commute.

## **Parking and traffic**

Survey respondents made their voices heard concerning parking and traffic issues facing downtown Metuchen in the Question 4 open ended comments, as well as other survey responses. Along with comments regarding downtown's current business mix, parking and traffic were among the most vexing concerns of current shoppers.

Respondents indicated that the current parking and traffic conditions within the commercial district not only inhibit businesses, but that these issues will prevent possible growth if left unresolved. The overall picture painted by respondents was that parking is difficult, parking enforcement is lopsided, on-street parking is highly regarded (but often not available), pedestrians feel unsafe crossing streets, and traffic circulation is both chaotic and potentially dangerous.

At present, survey respondents expressed that there is too much through traffic using the streets of downtown on a given workday. Additionally, a few respondents mentioned that some of the longer distance commuters using downtown Metuchen may be using more than their fair share of parking resources within the commercial district.

## **Downtown spending**

The most common sum spent by a shopper patronizing dining and drinking establishments is just over \$50 during a typical visit. The breakdown of consumer spending at dining and drinking establishments is:

- Eleven percent (11%) spend less than \$20 at dining/drinking places during a typical visit,
- A third (33%) spend between \$20 and \$49 during a typical visit,
- Close to a third (31%) spend between \$50 and \$79 during a typical visit,
- Twelve percent (12%) spend more than \$80 during a typical visit.

The most common sum spent by a Downtown Metuchen visitor patronizing retail stores and shops is just over \$20 during a typical visit:

- Almost a third (31%) spend less than \$20 at a shop on a typical visit,
- Just over a third (35%) spend between \$20 and \$49 at a downtown shop during a typical visit,
- Nine percent (9%) spend between \$50 and \$79 during a typical visit,
- Only five percent (5%) spend more than \$80 during a typical visit.

Retail spending is far lower than restaurant spending and may indicate that the current retail mix in downtown Metuchen may not meet the needs of current shoppers, as they are spending money in shops elsewhere.

Nearly seventy-five (75) percent of participants indicated that they are willing to shop locally even if it costs slightly more. The top three reasons provided by survey participants as to why they don't come downtown more often all concerned the current mixture of businesses within the district.

### **Recommended early action items**

We recommend that the MDA make progress on the following activities in the next few years.

1. The MDA must continue to work closely with both the borough and Parking Authority to address survey participants' requests for improvement to pedestrian lighting and safety, cracked sidewalks, parking lot management, parking enforcement, and traffic congestion.
2. MDA Economic Vitality team should work with property owners to reduce the number of vacancies and connect business owners with technical assistance providers to increase downtown businesses' revenue and profitability.
3. The new Retail Market Analysis information should be used by the Economic Vitality Team to change the business mix in the downtown, recruit more destination or anchor businesses, and use the suggestions for new retail, restaurants, and entertainment options discussed in this report.
4. New retail events that "ring cash registers that day" should be the focus of the Promotion Team rather than creating new special events, as there seem to be enough already.
5. The Organization Team should continue its work to recruit volunteers, grow the email list, secure sponsorships for organization-wide activities, and communicate about the MDA's work using the most effective traditional and new media tools identified in this report.
6. The Promotion Team can help all downtown stakeholders by creating and promoting a unified special event calendar.
7. Shop owners should be encouraged to coordinate one night each week when they are all open past 6 p.m. to meet the needs of customers.
8. To encourage quality façade improvements and better signs and awnings, the Design Team should work with the borough to create a matching storefront improvement grant program. The Design Team will need to create Design Guidelines in advance of implementing such a program.
9. The Design Team should focus on placemaking activities to beautify downtown by adding flowers, benches, and trees along with holiday lighting and other amenities over the next few years.
10. The borough should continue current downtown clean and safe efforts as they are highly effective.

We provide an analysis of each survey question below.

**Question 1: We are seeking feedback from customers, business owners, commercial property owners, and policymakers. Please check at least ONE answer, and any other that applies to you.**

Metuchen residents constituted the largest segment of respondents to Question 1 accounting for more than two-thirds (68%, 291) of all participants. In addition to Metuchen residents, nearly two-thirds of respondents to Question 1 classified themselves as customers of downtown Metuchen (65%, 275). The composition of these two categories of survey participants appears to demonstrate that most of the respondents participating in this survey were either residents or customers of downtown Metuchen businesses.

It should be noted that nearly a quarter (24%, 103) of respondents to Question 1 classified themselves as “commuters from Metuchen Railroad Station.” The combination of residents and commuters taking this survey may demonstrate how community members and workforce commuters using downtown Metuchen feel about the conditions, services, and issues facing the business district.

There was notable lack of participation from downtown Metuchen business and property owners who constituted just eight percent (8%, 34) and over just three percent (3.3%, 14) of all respondents to Question 1 respectively. Only thirteen downtown Metuchen business owners and commercial property investors (3.1%, 13) participated in the survey. Only twelve survey respondents, identified as an “elected or appointed official in Metuchen,” (just under three percent 2.8%, 12) participated. Low survey participation by these stakeholders is similar in other surveys we have conducted for Main Street New Jersey communities over the last seven years.

**Question 2: The Metuchen Downtown Alliance is working on projects with others in the downtown considering other events and activities to improve the shopping district. Please rate EVERY event/activity listed below. One answer per line please.**

There were 15 events or activities listed on the survey, and respondents were asked to identify which ones they attended and how they viewed them. Six (6) events stood out to survey participants as their favorite downtown Metuchen events. More than half (50%, 214) of all survey respondents found six (6) of these events to be either a “great success” or “some success” which we combined for the purposes of this illustration.

The downtown Metuchen events that were best received were:

1. Metuchen Farmers Market (79.5%, 337),
2. June Bug Arts Fest (73%, 307),
3. Country Fair (65%, 274),
4. Restaurant Week (55%, 233),
5. Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade (53%, 223), and
6. Small Business Saturday (49%, 206).

### **Not everyone attends downtown events**

Although well received, for two of the six top rated events, Restaurant Week and the Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade, nearly one-third of respondents had “no opinion / did not attend” with thirty-two (32%, 134) and thirty-one (31%, 133) respectively. The remaining four events that were well received by respondents all registered less than a quarter of respondents reported “no opinion / did not attend.”

We suggest working with these event organizers to undertake event surveys to learn how attendees viewed specific events and how they learned about them. Finally, one-third (33%, 140) of respondents either had “no opinion or did not attend” Small Business Saturday. This indicates that more work can be done to publicize all events, even the most popular ones.

### **No opinion/did not attend**

Four events, the Fuce 5K Run; Eat, Drink, and Buy Art; the Jingle Bell 5K Run, and the Pizza Throwdown showed that half (50%, 214) of respondents answered with “no opinion / did not attend.” These events seemed to be geared to adults, but were not as popular as the six events noted above.

Four events had “neutral” as their dominant response from survey respondents. These events included the Chamber of Commerce Cruise Night (18% or 76 respondents reporting “neutral” versus 13% or 55 considering the event a “great success), Metuchen Rocks! Outdoor Concert Series (13.98% or 59 respondents reporting “neutral” versus 13.74% or 58 considering the event a “great success), the Jingle Bell 5K Run (13% or 53 respondents reporting “neutral” versus 9% or 37 considering the event a “great success), and the Pizza Throwdown (13% or 55 respondents reporting “neutral” versus 10% or 41 considering the event a “great success). These four events also had very high (more than 40% each) reporting “no opinion/did not attend.” Event organizers of these events may wish to review these to determine if they are meeting their organization’s and the downtown’s needs.

### **Family oriented events**

For three events, the Music and Family events at the Old Franklin Schoolhouse (46%, 194), Metuchen Rocks! Outdoor Concert Series (49%, 205), and the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting (50%, 211), nearly fifty percent (50%) of participant reported “no opinion/did not attend.”

These final three events appear to be family oriented, and while they are not as highly rated, they are still important to host because they appeal to the almost half of (49.3%) our Metuchen shoppers that have children at home. Note that American Fact Finder, the 2015 estimate from the US Census says that 40.3 % of the borough's population is under 19 years of age.<sup>2</sup>

The MDA may want to work with all event organizers and share the results of this survey to help event organizers to better promote and position their events to meet the needs of current downtown shoppers. MDA may wish to use the MSNJ event assessment matrix spreadsheet located in the MSNJ reporting form to help evaluate all the current event calendar activities so that scarce volunteer and financial resources may be best prioritized moving forward.

**Question 3: The Metuchen Downtown Alliance is planning programs aimed at revitalizing or improving our downtown. Please rate the importance of ALL the following activities. One answer per line please.**

There were twenty-four (24) statements for this survey question and all participants were asked to rank them on a scale of most important to not important. We also asked if they disagreed or had no opinion. We have organized this analysis based on how these activities/projects ranked as:

1. Most important
2. Important
3. Less Important/Neutral
4. Not Important/No Consensus

**Most Important**

Ten (10) statements stood out as being the most important for survey respondents, and the activities that the MDA should focus on during its first formative years.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

<b>MOST IMPORTANT</b>			
Suggested Improvement or Issue to Address	Total Respondents considering idea as “most important” or “important” (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Number of Respondents	Likely responsible entity
1. Reduce the number of vacancies in the downtown.	92%   389	421	EV
2. Help existing downtown businesses to increase their revenue and profitability.	85%   360	422	EV
3. Light up the dark locations in downtown.	85%   359	422	Borough & Design
4. Fix the broken sidewalks throughout downtown.	84%   352	420	Borough & Design
5. Plan new events to bring people to the downtown to shop or dine.	83%   350	422	Promotion
6. Get more destination businesses to locate here.	79%   333	419	EV
7. Create an incentive program to encourage property owners to restore storefronts, place better looking signs and awnings	79%   332	420	Borough & Design
8. Create a free parking lot for Saturday shoppers.	78%   332	423	Borough & Design
9. Improve pedestrian safety downtown.	77%   325	422	Borough & Design
10. Encourage shop owners to coordinate one night on which they are all open past 6 p.m.	76%   322	421	Promotion

These ten statements covered two common themes but impact virtually all the MDA’s committees.

First, programs and improvements aimed at promoting a more prosperous, active, and diverse business district, including direct interventions such as “helping existing downtown businesses to increase their revenue and profitability,” and “reduce vacancies” and “get more destination businesses to locate here” are all activities that would fall under the Economic Vitality Team’s work.

Survey respondents want convenient hours and new events. They rated highly two other statements: “encourage shop owners to coordinate one night on which they are all open past 6 p.m.” and “plan new events,” both of which are likely Promotion Team projects. The MDA needs to serve as a conduit to connect business owners with technical assistance providers to increase downtown businesses’ revenue and profitability. Training and technical assistance gaps must be identified by the Economic Vitality Team, so that helpful workshops, training, resources, and other potential assistance can be made available to merchants and property owners to grow their businesses.

A third group of programs suggested physical improvements including ideas such as “fix the broken sidewalks throughout downtown,” “create more incentive programs to restore buildings,” “improve pedestrian safety,” and “create a free parking lot for Saturday shoppers.” These activities would fall under the Design Team’s mandate, working in concert with the Borough of Metuchen. Before any incentive or matching grant program can be implemented, the Design Team needs to create Design Guidelines for downtown.

### **Important**

A second tier of programs/improvements deserve mention, because they were viewed as necessary but also reported a high level of “neutral” responses. These proposed programs and improvements registered between fifty percent (50%) and seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents viewing them as necessary but also received between fifteen percent (15%) and thirty percent (30%) of respondents classifying them as “neutral.” We recommend that these projects be undertaken after the first group of ten are well on their way to being implemented.

These second-tier projects/improvements, viewed as “important,” are listed below.

<b>IMPORTANT</b>	Total Respondents considering idea as “most important” or “important” (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Respondents considering idea as “neutral” (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Number of Respondents
Suggested Improvement or Issue to Address			
Expand the Saturday Farmers Market.	72%   304	20%   84	423
Install flashing light crosswalks that are handicap accessible.	69%   286	21%   89	417
Work on business mix to lessen the number of duplicative businesses.	68%   284	20%   82	419
Add more pedestrian amenities such as flowers, trees, benches.	67%   280	23%   96	420
Communicate more about what is happening downtown through kiosks or downtown maps.	64%   272	21%   90	423
Install smart parking meters that take credit cards.	61%   257	20%   85	421
Create a free or low cost employee parking lot for worker’s downtown.	50%   213	27%   112	422

From the table above, the programs and improvements are less clearly aligned with apparent, short-term, and salient enhancements impacting either the prosperity of businesses or the convenience of the shopping environment. Survey respondents view improvements as “install flashing light crosswalks that are handicap accessible” and “create free or low cost employee parking for workers downtown” as useful but not immediately important.

Placemaking activities to beautify downtown including adding flowers, benches, and trees along with holiday lighting and other amenities should be a focus of the MDA Design Team’s work over the next few years in concert with the borough.

One possible explanation for the above finding may be that downtown Metuchen visitors more commonly identify fundamental, short-term needs that ought to be addressed. Secondly, certain items presented within the table above may better appeal to downtown planners,

business owners, district workers, and commercial property investors rather than everyday consumers, visitors, and those passing through downtown Metuchen. For example, strategies such as “work on business mix to lessen the number of duplicative businesses,” “install smart parking meters that take credit cards,” and “create a free or low cost employee parking lot for worker’s downtown” all appear to cater to business and/or commercial property owners and planners working within downtown Metuchen more so than to visitors and customers using the commercial district. Given the Metuchen Shopper Survey’s relative low participation from business and commercial property owners (8%, 34), this may explain why such strategies didn’t register a higher amount of Question 3 participants concerning these items as necessary (either “most important” or “important”).

One unique finding from those second tier or “important” strategies was that the idea to “expand the Saturday Farmers Market” did not rank higher. This finding is particularly notable given that the Saturday Farmers Market (“Metuchen Farmers Market”) was the mostly highly rated event in Question 2. Perhaps the Farmers Market is working well, and these shoppers did not see a great need to make improvements.

### Less Important or Neutral

A series of proposed programs, improvements, and ideas that were generally viewed as less important or neutral were:

<b>LESS IMPORTANT OR NEUTRAL</b>	Total Respondents considering idea as “most important” or “important” (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Respondents considering idea as “neutral” (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Number of Respondents
Suggested Improvement or Issue to Address			
Add handicapped on street parking spaces at several locations on Main Street.	48%   202	31%   131	422
Attract more volunteers to participate in MDA’s work.	47%   197	35%   148	421

Both lowest performing activities listed above may not come across as very appealing to the typical downtown shopper and survey participant. The addition of handicapped parking spaces may only appeal to a small segment of the population and the issues leading to this strategy might be best observed by downtown business owners. Additionally, it is possible that survey participants are not aware of MDA as an organization or do not have a particularly sound familiarity with their mission and work.

## Not Important/Disagree/No Consensus

The final table shows proposed programs, improvements, ideas, and strategies with a high combined percentage of those responding as “not important” or “disagree,” suggesting these are the least important projects or that there is little consensus among shoppers participating in the survey.

<b>NOT IMPORTANT / NO CONSENSUS</b>	Total Respondents considering idea as “most important” or “important” (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Respondents considering idea as “neutral” (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Respondents considering idea as “not important” or “disagree” (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Number of Respondents
Suggested Improvement or Issue to Address				
Work with New Jersey Transit about the low rail road bridge.	53%   222	24%   99	20%   83	420
There are too many personal service providers (hair salons, dry cleaners, yoga studios, nail salons, gyms) downtown.	37%   157	33%   141	26%   108	423
Add bike lanes in downtown district.	36%   152	30%   124	31%   132	420
There are too many professional service businesses (accountants, attorneys, insurance offices, banks) downtown.	24%   101	45%   189	27%   114	423
Do nothing more, Downtown Metuchen is great the way it is.	4%, 18	21% 89	68% 282	414

Each of the activities or issues presented in the table above represent ideas and strategies where there is no consensus as a third or more of survey respondents classified each as either “not important” or “disagree” when compared to the other options provided.

Finally, sixty-eight percent (68%) of survey respondents disagree with this statement: “do nothing more, Downtown Metuchen is great the way it is.” This finding suggests that the Metuchen Downtown Alliance has a relevant mission and its work cut out for years to come.

#### **Question 4: Please share any other suggestions on what Metuchen Downtown Alliance could do to improve your Downtown Metuchen experience and make it more likely that you would frequent more Metuchen businesses.**

Close to half of all survey participants (205 individuals or 48%) provided a written response to this question. Comments were organized based on topic and then counted by the number of times each general topic appeared. No comment was eliminated or altered, but we corrected obvious spelling errors. You can see all the comments in Appendix B.

Participants provided feedback on both the issues facing businesses as well as those larger daily concerns confronting the whole district. Although the concerns and proposed suggestions of survey participants varied widely, several common themes emerged for improvement within the commercial district and the unique challenges facing downtown Metuchen.

Survey comments were sorted into the following categories:

- Current Business Mix (92),
- Parking and/or Traffic Conditions (55),
- Services and Programs (49),
- Business Competitiveness / Visual Appeal (23),
- Infrastructure and Property Improvements (22),
- Pedestrian Improvements and Safety (14),
- Longer Term Improvements / Visions (9),
- Cleanliness (8),
- Miscellaneous comments not fitting any other category (29).

The desire for new businesses within downtown Metuchen was apparent, even as respondents expressed concern over the stability of current businesses within the district. There were numerous and impassioned comments about infrastructure, parking, pedestrian safety, cleaning, and traffic issues facing downtown Metuchen – most of which are fundamentally governmental responsibilities.

Our analysis of comments from open response Question 4 follows.

### **Current business mix**

There were ninety-two unique comments about the business mix; almost half of all Question 4 respondents had something to say about their desire for improved and increased retail and dining options in downtown Metuchen. Survey participants want more retail options in addition to all the dining establishments that currently exist. Two typical comments were:

“Business and consumer service businesses are fine but when there are so many duplicates there are going to be failures then empty stores. We need a good mix of businesses.”

“Farm to table restaurants (more NYC style, innovative eateries). More retail stores - create an "experience" for shoppers with a wide variety of shops that cater to various audiences. Have a mix of unique, sophisticated mom and pop places, with name brand retail. Shops should look nice and trendy. Encourage space for one or two pop up shops too.”

There were complaints about the need for local businesses to stay open later while others pointed to additional aspects of consumer friendliness, such as complementary stores and restaurants, to make coming downtown “worthwhile.” The convenience of being able to pick up items after work was specifically valued by some survey participants. Here are some typical comments:

“Also, shops need to be open when people get home from work. Shops that close at six are useless to me.”

“Having businesses open, when commuters get home, for at least one night a week, would be great.”

There were a mix of comments about attracting chains versus mom and pop type of businesses for downtown. Some survey participants wanted name brand establishments, and there were requests for sixty-four (64) different brand name retailers for downtown Metuchen in Question 12. However, many Metuchen Shopper Survey participants want to keep a unique, independent, and authentic feel throughout the district that promotes community identity. However, this pursuit was balanced among survey participants with comments like the ones below.

“Strong preference for local, small, authentic over chain stores. Metuchen should aim for high quality.”

“I know that people like the idea of mom and pops but a few franchise opportunities could bring people in from Route 1.”

Finally, there were comments about the business mix and providing a range of price points for families in town. Here is one typical comment.

“Although the median income is high, there are many middle-class families with budgets or that have to make choices about how and where to spend their money. There should be places and events that reflect diverse incomes. Metuchen should not look to be Westfield.”

The Economic Vitality Team should use the soon to be completed Retail Market Analysis information to change the business mix in the downtown, recruit more destination or anchor businesses, and use the suggestions for new retail, restaurants, and entertainment options discussed later in this report. It may also be important for the EV Team to implement an outreach campaign among bankers (small business lenders), brokers (realtors), and builders (developers) to educate them about downtown Metuchen and its opportunities, to forge relationships, and to establish a network of professionals to support strategic business recruitment.

### **Parking and/or Traffic Conditions**

Survey participants highlighted a series of parking and traffic concerns demonstrating their ongoing frustration. The overall picture painted by the fifty-five (55) unique comments was that parking is difficult, enforcement is lopsided, and traffic circulation is both chaotic and potentially dangerous. Survey respondents want easier parking, improved traffic circulation, and to sort out the distribution of parking resources between train commuters, employees, and shoppers.

The following comments represent various strokes of this overall painting.

“Improve traffic flow. It takes more time to get through downtown than it takes to get there.”

“Too much cut through and commuter traffic.”

“Do something about the traffic mess. I park in the new garage and it is ridiculous to have cars backed up so that it takes 15-20 minutes to get out when NJ transit is delayed.”

“I shop downtown a lot. Parking is an issue however I guess there are free hours on the deck. The downtown gets very congested and I worry what it will be like once Whole Foods is in operation.”

“Traffic is a huge problem around Central Ave and Rte 27. What is going to be done to ease that when the new shopping area – Whole Foods, etc. - opens? Improving traffic flow would perhaps encourage more people.”

These comments show shopper’s ongoing concerns about downtown Metuchen’s parking and traffic circulation issues. Survey respondents expressed that there is too much through traffic using the streets of downtown on a given workday. Additionally, a few respondents mentioned that some of the longer distance commuters may be using more than their fair share of parking resources within the downtown district. Several respondents noted that the amount of cut through traffic presents significant flow (speed) problems by which angry drivers are less courteous to pedestrians and consumers are inhibited by the area’s circulation problems.

The last two unique comments demonstrated above express a concern raised by numerous survey participants about the impact of new developments (both residential and large scale commercial) on downtown Metuchen especially in the context of poor traffic circulation (congestion) and limited access to convenient parking options. The examples listed here demonstrated the potential that negative perceptions about traffic and parking issues, even in addition to less than perfect realities, may present a publicity issue for downtown.

Solving these large and complex traffic and parking problems will require expertise from professional traffic engineers and planners to ensure that downtown Metuchen’s circulation problems are resolved and that existing parking resources are used most effectively. The MDA’s Parking and Design Teams will need to work collaboratively with the Parking Authority and borough to address these issues.

### **Potential Services and Programs**

Survey participants provided a series of unique comments concerning the provision of services and possible improvements that could make Downtown Metuchen into both a more inviting place and more competitive business district. Within a total of forty-nine (49) unique comments, top concerns expressed by survey participants within this category were the effectiveness and reach of current promotional activities as well as the availability of district businesses to customers, especially those commuting through downtown during the evening hours. These comments highlight issues facing downtown Metuchen. Possible programming and services voids to be addressed are demonstrated by the following:

“Direct mail and email advertising. As a commuter, I don't always notice signs or banners advertising events since it can be dark during the winter.”

“Do more to get the word out past the 1/2-mile radius that downtown promotes. I live down Durham and my Neighbors have no clue about things happening in town and never eat in town either.”

“Residents who are nearby but do not live in downtown Metuchen may not know the downtown well. I personally do not know many stores in downtown Metuchen. I think it is very important to promote it through local newspaper, advertisement, and various events.”

“There should be one website that lists what's going on in Metuchen and it would be great if residents submitted their email addresses and a calendar was issued once a month.”

“Vacant storefronts are a problem that needs to be solved asap.”

### **Business competitiveness and visual appeal**

There were twenty-three (23) unique comments concerning the commercial district’s competitiveness, primarily in terms of both attracting and retaining businesses as well as the downtown’s overall visual appeal to and/or perception by potential customers. Several respondents believe that current ordinances restrict certain businesses from locating downtown, so it might be wise to review policies concerning the types of businesses that can locate within the commercial district. A few of the more notable comments are as follows.

“There's is no reason for me to go downtown except at times for bagels and UPS store. Everything else looks so run down I don't even want to give it a shot. It's sad. It's a pretty depressing downtown.”

“Change the zoning laws so non-retail businesses can open on Main Street between 27 & Amboy. That's why I ended up opening my business in Edison - couldn't find much in Metuchen that was wheelchair accessible and fit the zoning laws.”

“Get rid of the failed protectionist policy that franchises are not allowed downtown. Look at Westfield. They have a mix of franchise stores and small, independent businesses and it is one of the best downtowns in our area!”

“The restoration of the store fronts is important and will attract more outsiders to consider Metuchen as a destination.”

In addition to comments about the above-mentioned issues, survey participants expressed numerous other comments concerning infrastructure and real-estate improvements, pedestrian safety, longer-term ideas, and cleanliness (see Appendix B).

Despite that some of the comments provided by survey participants were negative in Question 4, nearly all provided constructive feedback and useful direction for the types of issues facing both Downtown Metuchen and specific businesses within the district.

**Question 5: What times of the week are you in downtown? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that apply.**

Saturday during the day was the most common time to visit, when over two-thirds (67%, 286) of our survey respondents were in downtown Metuchen. More than half of our respondents were in downtown on weekday evenings after 5pm (56%, 237) and then weekdays from 9am to 5pm (56%, 237). This result may be explained by the number of commuters traveling through downtown Metuchen to get home from work as well as by those visiting restaurants within the district after working hours. There may be potential to boost additional evening business activity during the weekdays based upon the results reported here.

A good showing of survey respondents, forty-three percent (43%, 183), visit downtown Metuchen on Saturday evenings. There was a considerable decline of downtown usage on Sunday evenings, when just under twenty percent (19.72%, 84) visit downtown

It should be mentioned that seventeen percent (17%, 73) of respondents only come downtown to use the train station for their daily commute. Finally, just over one percent (1.17%, 5) of Question 5 respondents reported that they do not come downtown at all.

**Question 6: Over the last month, about how many times have you gone to downtown for these reasons? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that apply. One answer per line please.**

More than eighty percent (81%, 337) of survey respondents said they were “passing through” downtown Metuchen more than three times in the last month. This is typical of most of the other shopper surveys we have conducted for Main Street New Jersey communities over the last seven years. It would also explain why street banners (see Question 7 below) are such a popular way to promote downtown events, as such a clear majority of shoppers pass through downtown almost weekly on the way to the train, school, errands, etc.

Before reviewing the results of those respondents to Question 6, it is important to note the Metuchen Shopper Survey was active from December 6, 2016 to January 2, 2017, during the traditional holiday season. This may have impacted the results to Question 6 which are explored in the following paragraphs.

Attending a special event was the top reason for survey participants to visit downtown Metuchen at least once in the previous month, with approximately thirty-one percent (31%, 129) individuals registering this option. However, Question 6 results also demonstrate room for improvement in this area as around forty-two percent (42%, 177) of survey participants reported that they NEVER come downtown for a special event.

Eating at a restaurant was the second most often cited reason for visiting downtown Metuchen, with around twenty percent (20%, 86) of respondents visiting once a month; about twenty-two percent (22%, 93) visiting twice a month; nearly eighteen percent (18%, 75) visiting three times per month, and just over thirty percent (30%, 127) visiting more than three times per month for this reason. This finding demonstrates that downtown dining is the most consistent and all-around appealing attraction bringing customers to the business district.

Shopping at a retail store was another consistent activity to bring people into the downtown as nearly eighteen percent (17.5%, 73) came downtown at least once during the last month; almost twenty-two percent (21.6%, 90) visited twice; nearly eleven percent (10.8%, 45) visited three times, and over twenty-one percent (21.3%, 89) visited downtown more than three times for this reason. An important caveat for downtown retail, however, is nearly twenty-nine percent (28.8%, 120) of those surveyed did not come to the district over the last month to shop at a downtown retailer.

Downtown Metuchen currently supports a complementary mix of dining and retail establishments that are attracting individuals to spend both time and money within the district.

Survey participants reported that they did not come downtown for over the last month to “visit the library” (61%, 253), “go to religious services” (70%, 288), “visit other professional office, accountant, or real estate office” (75%, 312), and to “visit a doctor, dentist, or other health care provider” (76%, 316). Despite the high number of personal and professional service providers located in the downtown, they do not appear to be a major traffic generator or draw for the shoppers who participated in our survey.

**Question 7: When you are planning to visit downtown Metuchen, which of the following resources are most useful to you? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that apply to you.**

There was a very long list of 25 different informational channels where survey respondents might find out about downtown happenings. These informational resources spanned the gamut from traditional print and online newspapers to a host of social media outlets and downtown advertising fixtures like banners, in store posters, and signs. The survey results should inform the MDA Organization Team as they communicate about the MDA.

The most popular informational resources were divided into three tiers.

Survey respondents reported that they use the following **most often** to learn about downtown happenings:

- Street banners (50%, 213),
- Word of mouth (48%, 204),
- Event signs (46%, 194), and
- *The Criterion News* (40%, 172).

A second set of popular informational resources about downtown are the following:

- We Love Metuchen Facebook page (35%, 148),
- Posters in store windows (33%, 140),
- Metuchen Downtown Alliance Facebook page (33%, 139), and
- Main St. 08840 Facebook page (29%, 124).

A third set of informational resources were also used by participants to get information about downtown:

- Borough of Metuchen Website (19%, 81),
- Metuchen Chamber of Commerce News email (17%, 74),
- Metuchen Farmers Market News (15%, 63), and
- MDA Newsletter (12%, 51).

An important observation was that the Borough of Metuchen Website was used more often by survey participants than the Metuchen Downtown Alliance Website--nineteen percent (19%, 81) to eleven percent (11%, 47) respectfully. These findings are to be expected, as the MDA is just starting its work. The Chamber is a long-standing organization as is the Farmers Market.

The Organization Team should continue to expand the organization's email list, grow its presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and continue communicate about the work of the organization using the most effective traditional and new media tools identified here.

This data is extremely important to both the MDA Organization Team and to local merchants, so they can adjust their ad buys and be more effective in reaching customers. We recommend that this information be widely shared with all business and property owners in the downtown, so business owners can make changes in their advertising efforts with this new and fresh information from a large cross section of current shoppers.

**Question 8: Please note how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. Check at least ONE answer, and any others that apply to you. One answer per line please.**

This question offered 23 statements about downtown attributes both positive and negative for survey respondents to rate based on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. These statements were culled from the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

Workshop held earlier in the Fall 2016, and seemed to be the most important concerns of the sixty (60) people that attended. We combined “strongly agree” and “agree” together for these stats below.

The results for this question also broke down into four clusters. We discuss each cluster separately.

### **Strongly Agree**

Clean and safe are critical issues for any downtown, and here in Metuchen, the clear majority of current shoppers feel downtown is clean and safe. Survey respondents feel safe both when walking around downtown (87% strongly agree) as well as when using the parking lots throughout the district (73% strongly agree). A clear majority (67% strongly agree) of respondents also indicated that the downtown district is clean.

Second, seventy one percent (71%) of respondents indicated that downtown Metuchen has a good selection of restaurants and eateries and that they know where to find the businesses they are looking for when visiting the district (also 71%). Downtown already has a good cluster of restaurants at a variety of price points, so this is a strong niche for the MDA to market and promote. Since residents are the primary users of downtown it is logical that they know where the restaurants are located. However, when new retailers and restaurants arrive, they will need to be promoted so that residents can find them.

Third, over seventy-three survey respondents reported that they are willing to shop locally even though doing so may cost slightly more. In the dozen shopper surveys, we have conducted for Main Street New Jersey communities in recent years, this statement has never scored as high as it has in Metuchen. This presents a significant opportunity for the MDA to do more with “shop local” campaigns here, either by focusing on retail events/activities or by encouraging more personal service by local retailers and restaurants. For example, call ahead, curbside pickup for dry cleaning or evening hot food delivery to the train station platform for commuters coming home might be new services for merchants to try to reinforce that shopping local has real benefits for residents. Since more than two-thirds (72%) of shoppers already believe that customer service within downtown stores is good, this might present a real opportunity for the MDA to encourage merchants to build customer loyalty and profits with new services for their customers. Again, we are encouraging the MDA Promotion Team to focus on retail events rather than creating more special events, as there seem to be enough special events downtown right now.

Over two-thirds of all survey participants also saw value in the architecture of the district’s buildings by agreeing that more should be done to preserve such structures. This should be a key Design Team activity in the coming few years. Additionally, around seventy-two percent (72%, 300) of participants reported that they come downtown for special events. Finally,

seventy percent (70%, 295) feel that car traffic along Main Street is too heavy, the only negative attribute in this group.

STRONGLY AGREE	Total Respondents who either “strongly agree” or “agree” with the statement (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Number of Respondents
Positive Statement		
I feel safe when I walk in downtown.	87%   369	423
I am willing to shop local even if it costs slightly more.	74%   314	423
I feel safe in the parking lots in downtown.	73%   308	422
Customer service is good in downtown Metuchen stores.	72%   305	423
I come downtown for special events.	72%   300	417
I know where the new shops and restaurants are in the downtown.	71%   301	422
The Metuchen downtown has a good selection of restaurants and eateries that I enjoy.	71%   297	420
I think downtown is clean.	67%   283	422
More should be done to preserve the historic architecture downtown.	67%   281	422
Negative Statement	Total Respondents who either “strongly agree” or “agree” with the statement (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Number of Respondents
Car traffic along Main Street is too heavy.	70%   295	420

**Agree**

The table below demonstrates results for those statements in which over one-third of Question 8 respondents stated that they either “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement in question.

Generally, respondents agree more with statements within this category than those disagreeing with the same statements.

The results displayed within the table below demonstrate a few key findings that showcase both emerging strengths and significant issues facing of downtown Metuchen.

First, Question 8 respondents indicated that the presence of pedestrian lighting throughout the downtown district makes them feel safe – fewer than thirteen percent (12.9%, 54) disagreed with that statement. A second set of statements concerned a variety of matters covering shopping and dining experiences as well as the overall convenience of business hours for retail stores within downtown Metuchen. These statements seem to reflect that a fair number of downtown visitors like to combine shopping with either dining or making an appointment and that the district offers store-to-store versatility. However, it should be noted that about nineteen percent (19%, 81) of respondents had “no opinion” on the statement “When I visit downtown Metuchen for an appointment, I also visit a store or restaurant” – an unusually high figure. This may be explained by an earlier finding that relatively few Metuchen Shopper Survey respondents have gone downtown over the last month for an appointment.

The second cluster of statements had between half and a third of respondents in agreement. These statements were attitudes about combining shopping/dining/appointment trips downtown and poor conditions of public infrastructure, pedestrian safety facilities, and sidewalk amenities, most of which are municipal responsibilities. While these statements might not be the most important, they represent real problems to be solved in downtown. The MDA and the borough should view these as key infrastructure issues to address in the coming years. The Design Team may want to partner with others to add trees, flowers, and benches throughout the downtown.

<b>AGREE</b>	Total Respondents who either “strongly agree” or “agree” with the statement (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Number of Respondents
<b>Positive Statement</b>		
The pedestrian lighting in downtown makes me feel safe at night.	51%   215	420
I like to combine shopping and dining when visiting downtown Metuchen.	47%   199	421
I usually shop in several stores when shopping in downtown.	41%   171	420
Store hours are convenient for me.	40%   169	423
When I visit downtown Metuchen for an appointment, I also visit a store or restaurant.	39%   165	422
<b>Negative Statement</b>	Total Respondents who either “strongly agree” or “agree” with the statement (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Number of Respondents
There are not enough trees, flowers and benches downtown.	45%   191	422
The sidewalks are cracked and unsafe.	42%   177	421
As a pedestrian, I feel unsafe crossing the street.	40%   167	419

## **Disagree**

Respondents disagreed more with statements within this category than any others as shown. The results displayed within the table below demonstrate a few key findings.

First, survey respondents indicated that it is not easy to finding on-street parking throughout downtown Metuchen. Wayfinding might be an issue, or parking meter timing may not encourage fast enough turnover of on street-parking spots.

Second, in addition to the difficulty of finding on-street parking, only fourteen percent (14%, 60) of respondents prefer to park in a parking garage and only ten percent (10%, 42) indicated that they would make use of designated handicapped parking spaces if they were available on Main Street. Right now, there are no handicapped parking spaces anywhere in downtown.

An overwhelming majority of survey respondents did not agree that “Downtown Metuchen has a good selection of retail stores that I like and use.” This a significant finding and sadly, like most shopper surveys we have conducted for Main Street New Jersey communities, Metuchen shoppers are not happy with the current business mix. The MDA’s Economic Vitality Team can address business recruitment issues with the findings from the retail market analysis study being undertaken now and make incremental change to the business mix during the next few years.

Finally, and on a positive note, less than one-third of respondents also agreed that “the public trash cans frequently overflow” reflecting the generally positive sentiment that most survey participants indicated about the cleanliness of the commercial district.

<b>DISAGREE</b>		
Positive Statement	Total Respondents who either “strongly agree” or “agree” with the statement (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Number of Respondents
It is easy to find on street parking.	21%   89	422
Downtown Metuchen has a good selection of retail stores that I like and use.	19%   78	418
I prefer to park in a parking garage.	14%   60	421
I would use designated handicapped parking spaces if they were available on Main Street.	10%   42	419
Negative Statement	Total Respondents who either “strongly agree” or “agree” with the statement (percentage   number of respondents)	Total Number of Respondents
The public trash cans frequently overflow.	30%   126	424

### **Question 9: During a typical visit, in downtown Metuchen how much do you spend at dining and drinking establishments during one visit?**

The most common sum spent by a downtown Metuchen visitor patronizing dining and drinking establishments is just over \$50 during a typical visit. This sum indicates a dinner for two at a mid-priced restaurant or a family meal at a quick casual dining place. The distribution of consumer spending at dining and drinking establishments appears to reflect a relatively normal distribution with approximately two-thirds of respondents indicating that they spend between \$20 and \$80 dollars, indicating that there are a variety of restaurant price points available in downtown.

The breakdown of consumer spending at dining and drinking establishments is:

- Eleven percent (11%) spend less than \$20 at dining/drinking places during a typical visit,
- A third (33%) spend between \$20 and \$49 during a typical visit,

- Close to a third (31%) spend between \$50 and \$79 during a typical visit,
- Twelve percent (12%) spend more than \$80 during a typical visit.

These findings are important to share with restauranteurs in the downtown district.

### **Question 10: During a typical visit in downtown Metuchen how much do you spend at retail stores and shops during one visit?**

The most common sum spent by a Downtown Metuchen visitor patronizing retail stores and shops is just over \$20 during a typical visit. This sum is far lower than restaurant spending and may indicate that the current retail mix in Metuchen may not meet the needs of current shoppers, as they are spending money in shops elsewhere. The distribution of consumer spending at retail stores and shops appears to be skewed towards the lower (less money spent) end of the spectrum.

The most common sum spent by a Downtown Metuchen visitor patronizing retail stores and shops is just over \$20 during a typical visit:

- Almost a third (31%) spend less than \$20 at a shop on a typical visit,
- Just over a third (35%) spend between \$20 and \$49 at a downtown shop during a typical visit,
- Nine percent (9%) spend between \$50 and \$79 during a typical visit,
- Only five percent (5%) spend more than \$80 during a typical visit.

An important observation here is that more than thirteen percent of respondents (13%) indicated that they “don’t recall” possibly suggesting that survey participants are less accustomed to shopping at downtown Metuchen retail stores and shops. This compares with the less than five percent (4.9%) could not recall what they spent at dining and drinking establishments in the previous question.

Like the previous question, these findings should be shared with downtown retailers.

### **Question 11: We want to know what types of businesses would make you want to shop in downtown Metuchen more often. Please name two kinds of new restaurants or eateries you would like to see here. Please provide a response in words.**

Nearly 330 (327) survey respondents answered this question and provided a total of 590 suggestions on the types of new restaurants and/or eateries that they would like to see in

downtown Metuchen. Survey respondents were given two opportunities to write in comments, we have combined the list here for analysis purposes.

When survey participants were asked for restaurant and eatery options that would make downtown Metuchen a more common destination, respondents provided a full range of options from casual dining establishments to fine dining restaurants and even a variety of name brand establishments (64 names). As is common for any write in response, there were also many qualitative comments like, “a NICE burger shop,” “high end small plate restaurant,” or “old fashioned steak and potato place.” These comments, seen in Appendix C, will be useful for the MDA Business Recruitment Team as they start their work.

Since a diverse range of respondents provided a truly broad and dynamic series of different restaurant and/or eatery options, responses were grouped into several categories each encompassing similar suggestions. These categories were:

- Ethnic Restaurants (170): Indian (29), Mexican (7),
- Traditional Restaurants (139): Burgers (39), Seafood (13), Steakhouse (11),
- Chain/Franchise/Specified Restaurants (64); Chipotle (11) and Starbucks (11),
- Heathy and/or Light Eating Restaurants (43),
- Casual and/or Convenience Restaurants (32),
- Vegan/Vegetarian Restaurants (27),
- Wine/Bars/Pubs (20),
- Specialty and/or Desert Establishments (17),
- Grocery/Bakery/Butcher/Deli (17),
- Breakfast and/or Lunch Restaurants (15),
- Family Oriented Restaurants (13), and
- Miscellaneous others (48).

The top five restaurant and/or eatery categories reported from survey respondents were:

Ethnic Restaurants (170 responses) – Respondents suggested a range of ethnic restaurant options reaching around the entire globe. The most common suggestion was for an Indian restaurant (29 responses) followed by a Mexican restaurant (7 responses), and then succeeded by a series of Asian, Middle Eastern, and European restaurants.

Traditional Restaurants (139 responses) – Respondents provided a range of various traditional and American dining options from seafood and steaks to burgers and barbecue options. Burger related establishments were suggested by thirty-nine (39) respondents. Seafood restaurants (13 responses) were closely followed by steakhouse related establishments (11 responses).

Chain/Franchise/Specified Restaurants (64 responses) – Respondents provided a range of different chain restaurants. The two most popular options were Chipotle and

Starbucks (both with 11 responses). Most chain restaurant suggestions were also consistent with Metuchen Shopper Survey preferences for casual and/or convenience establishments which directly produced thirty-two (32) responses.

Health and/or Light Eating Restaurants (43 responses) – Respondents demonstrated a significant preference for healthy eating and the need for such establishments within Downtown Metuchen. Some of the more common suggestions included terms such as “salad bar,” “soup,” “light fare,” and “health.”

Casual and/or Convenience Restaurants (32 responses) – Respondents demonstrated a significant preference for quick and cheap dining options as a means of making downtown more appealing. Some of the more common suggestions used words such as “sandwich” and “fast.”

Although not reporting within the top five categories, survey participants also presented a range of other restaurant and/or eatery options. Vegan, Vegetarian, and other special dietary options were suggested along with a desire for more bars, pubs, and drinking establishments. In addition to these suggestions, participants suggested specialty eateries, dessert establishments, grocers, delis, and breakfast/lunch restaurants. See all the responses to this question in Appendix C.

## **Question 12: What kind of new retail stores would you most like to see here? Please provide a response using words.**

Nearly 310 (307) survey respondents answered this question and provided a total of 561 suggestions on the types of new retail store that they would like to see in downtown Metuchen. Survey respondents were given two opportunities to write in comments. We have combined the list here for analysis purposes.

When survey participants were asked for retail options that would make downtown Metuchen a more common destination, respondents provided a full range of options from clothing outlets to hardware stores and even a variety of name brand establishments. The responses were diverse enough to group into several categories each encompassing similar suggestions. These categories were:

- Clothing, Shoes, and Accessories (121); general clothing store (23), shoe store (19),
- Home, Durable Goods, and Hardware (67); hardware store (20), home goods (5),
- Name Brand / Retail Chains (61), Trader Joes (6),
- Food Products / Grocery (49),
- Gifts and Toys (43); toy store (11),
- Books, Music, Comics, and Games (43),

- Arts, Galleries, Crafts and Hobbies (42),
- Specialty Retail (37),
- Family and Children Oriented (29),
- General Retail and Supplies (14),
- Discount Retail (8),
- Personal Services (7), and
- Miscellaneous (39).

The top five retail categories reported from survey respondents were:

Clothing, Shoes, and Accessories (121 responses) – Respondents suggested a range of options for clothing, shoes, and other apparel items. There was no consensus on whether for women, men or children here. The most common suggestion was for a general clothing store (23 responses) followed by a shoe store (19 responses), and then succeeded by a series of unique and/or targeted clothing outlets.

Home, Durable Goods, and Hardware (67 responses) – Respondents provided a relatively focused range of retail suggestions providing for home goods, kitchen, and garden supplies. The most common suggestion was for a hardware store (20 responses), followed by home goods (5 responses), homewares (3 responses), and garden center (2 responses). Survey respondents were open to both small scale and larger chain style hardware and homeware stores.

Name Brand / Retail Chains (61 responses) – Respondents provided a range of different chain retailers. The most popular suggestion was for a Trader Joes (6 responses). Other popular options were Anthropologie (4 responses) and Urban Outfitters (3 responses) followed by a series of clothing, electronics, and home goods options.

Food Products / Grocery (49 responses) – Respondents demonstrated a significant preference for new food based establishments within downtown Metuchen. Some of the more common suggestions included terms such as “grocery,” “market,” “coffee,” and “bakery.”

Gifts and Toys (43 responses) – Respondents demonstrated a significant preference for gift and toy store retail options as a means of making downtown more appealing. The most popular suggestion was for a toy store (11 responses) followed by a gift shop (4 responses). Some of the more common suggestions used words such as “gift” and “novelty.”

Although not reporting within the top five categories, survey participants also presented a range of other retail options. The desire for a solid bookstore was well reported, as was the preference for music and game related shops. Art galleries, craft shops, and hobbies were well

represented along with a variety of specialty and niche retail establishments such as bicycle and frame shops. See all the responses to this question in Appendix C.

**Question 13: What kind of new entertainment, club, or arts venue would you most like to see here? Please provide a response using words.**

Just over 250 (251) survey respondents answered this question and provided a total of 414 suggestions on the types of new entertainment, club, and arts venues that they would like to see in Downtown Metuchen. Survey respondents were given two opportunities to write in comments. We have combined the list here for analysis purposes.

When survey participants were asked for entertainment, club, and arts venue options that would make downtown Metuchen a more common destination, respondents provided a full range of options from the renovation of existing venues (namely the Forum) to the addition of new bars and the establishment of businesses providing social and cultural activities. Responses were grouped into several categories each encompassing similar suggestions. These categories were:

- Bars, Pubs, and Drinking Establishments (64); a jazz club (4),
- Live Performing Arts Venues (64); comedy club (10),
- Movies and Film (62); movie theater (30),
- Businesses, Art Classes, and Activities (38),
- Renovate Existing Entertainment Assets (37),
- Art Galleries (31),
- Youth Focused (30),
- Physical/Lifestyle Venues (10),
- Food Non-Alcohol establishments (3), and
- Miscellaneous comments (75).

The top five restaurant and/or eatery categories reported from survey respondents were:

Bars, Pubs, and Drinking Establishments (64 responses) – Respondents suggested a wide range for different drinking establishments with many responses indicating that music and live performances should be hosted in such businesses. The most common suggestion was for a jazz club (4 responses) followed by wine and paint options (3 responses), and then succeeded by a series of pubs, bars, and other establishments – mostly watering holes.

Live Performing Arts Venues (64 responses) – Respondents provided a range of various live performing arts venues. The most common suggestion was for a comedy club (10 responses) followed by a theater (6 responses) and music venue (6 responses). Many

participants focused on music venues and concert style performances in a variety of other forms.

Movies and Film (62 responses) – Respondents provided a range of different movie and film related options. The most popular option was for a movie theater (30 responses) with an independent movie theater as the second most common response (3 responses). In many of the reported responses, participants suggested that the Forum Theater be renovated as a venue for hosting movies in Downtown Metuchen.

Businesses, Art Classes, and Activities (38 responses) – Respondents demonstrated a significant preference for the types of businesses that support artistic and cultural activities within Downtown Metuchen. Some of the more common suggestions included terms such as “art,” “paint,” “dancing,” and “cooking.”

Respondents displayed their interest in restoring or renovating an existing venue within downtown Metuchen as more than thirty-seven (37) respondents reported a desire to improve The Forum Theater. Commonly suggested uses for this venue were to fix it up for greater movie and film service, live performances, and other shows. Given the interest in the development of the arts scene in downtown, it might be appropriate for the MDA to work with its partners to develop an arts and entertainment strategy for bringing more cultural options into downtown Metuchen by building upon the area’s existing assets and strengths.

Although not reporting within the top five categories, survey participants also presented a range of other new entertainment, club, and arts venue options. Over thirty-one (31) respondents expressed a preference for art galleries while a nearly identical number (30) wished to add more youth focused businesses and activities catering to both children and teenagers. Additionally, physical fitness and lifestyle oriented businesses such as gyms and yoga establishments were also represented by survey participants. See all the responses to this question in Appendix C.

**Question 14: Would you visit the Metuchen downtown more often if it offered more of the following retail stores, merchandise, or service businesses? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that appeal to you. Yes Maybe No. One answer per line please.**

All 426 survey respondents answered this question. Survey respondents indicated the types of retail stores, merchandise, or businesses they would frequent if the choice was available in downtown Metuchen. The top responses are listed below, each receiving over forty-five (45%) percent of respondents answering “yes.” These are the stores that current shoppers would most like to see in the downtown:

- Movie Theater (74%, 303),
- Music venue, club, theater etc. (60%, 246),
- Arts and crafts (52%, 213),
- Plants, Nursery, Gardening Supplies (52%, 212),
- Book store, new or used (48%, 197),
- Home furnishings and accessories (46%, 187),
- Card and gift store (45%, 187).

This information when combined with the write in Questions 11-13 provides the Economic Vitality Team with a good list of recruitment candidates for any vacancies in the downtown in the next few years.

These results show that survey respondents desire to build upon the existing strengths of downtown Metuchen, especially its dining and restaurant scene, while also expanding to include entertainment venues and ultimately complementary retailers and specialty items. See all the responses in Appendix C.

**Question 15: Would you visit the downtown more often if it offered more of the following food or dining options? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that appeal to you.**

All 426 respondents answered this question. Metuchen Shopper Survey respondents are receptive to additional dining options. In general, survey respondents were more excited about casual dining options rather than specialty and formal establishments. The following five responses were the most popular, each receiving over fifty percent (50%) of votes as affirmative:

- Full service (sit down) restaurant (61%, 248),
- Coffee shop or café open late hours (57%, 237),
- Pubs, clubs, brew pubs, or taverns (53%, 220),
- Limited service / take out counter service restaurant (52%, 210).

This list when coupled with responses from Question 11 will provide the Economic Vitality Team with a list of possible restaurants to recruit for any vacancies.

**Question 16: Which of the following are the main reasons you do not visit downtown Metuchen more often? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that apply to you.**

All 426 survey respondents answered this question. The responses to Question 16 offer insight into some of the reasons that shoppers do not frequent downtown Metuchen as often as they might if circumstances were different. The top five responses are below:

- Too few stores or shops that interest me (61%, 259),
- Selection or quality of the merchandise in stores does not interest me (46%, 196),
- No anchor store, destination business or performing arts venue downtown (37%, 158),
- Too much traffic congestion along Main Street (32%, 138),
- On-street parking is always full when I come to downtown (31%, 133).

Per survey participants, the expansion of the retail offerings will drive consumer traffic back downtown. Additionally, the Question 16 results indicate that interventions to improve traffic on Main Street as well as to alleviate parking congestion will bring people downtown more often as the district will be more convenient.

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

### **Question 17: Do you work or live in Metuchen? Check at least ONE answer and any other that apply.**

All 426 respondents answered this question. The clear majority of survey responses came from people who live in Metuchen, at a staggering 71% or 304 respondents'. Twenty-three percent (23%, 98) of our survey responses came from people working in Downtown Metuchen. Just over twenty-one percent (21.4%, 91) of respondents live within Middlesex County, other than Metuchen. Commuters were well represented within those responding to the Metuchen Shopper Survey as about twenty percent (20%, 84) of participants reported that they work in New York City.

### **Question 18: What is your gender?**

All survey respondents answered this question. Far more females than males completed this survey. This might be indicative of the interest in downtown improvements being larger among the female population, or it might just reflect the reach of the survey. There was a very small minority of respondents who preferred not to answer (2.35%, 8).

- Female 61%, 260 respondents
- Male 37%, 156 respondents
- Prefer not to answer 2.35%, 10 respondents

We reviewed the 2015 information from Quick Facts web site of the US Census Bureau about the Borough of Metuchen. It showed the borough as comprised of 53.1% females and 46.9% males.<sup>3</sup> Far more women participated in our survey than the general population of Metuchen. This 60/40 ratio of male to female survey respondents is like other consumer and stakeholder surveys we have undertaken for Main Street New Jersey communities.

## Question 19: Which category below includes your age?

All 426 respondents answered this question. Most survey responses came from middle-aged persons, with nearly seventy percent (70%) of the surveys completed by people between 30 and 59. The top five age groups who participated in the survey were:

Survey respondents	Metuchen population 2015 <sup>4</sup>
- 50 – 59 (26%, 109)	14.6%
- 40 – 49 (23%, 98)	15.3%
- 30 – 39 (21%, 89)	13.1%
- 60 – 69 (16%, 70)	8.6%
- Over 70 (6%, 24)	9.0%

Four percent (4%, 17) preferred not to give their age.

These age groups break down into common demographics categories.

50-59-year-olds are the tail end of the Baby Boom generation, which is usually defined as those born between 1946 and 1964. Twenty-six percent (26%, 109) of all survey participants were in their 50s, which is almost double the proportion of Metuchen residents within this age bracket. For the purposes of this section we will call this group Younger Baby Boomers.

40-49-year-olds are the older half of the Gen X cohort usually thought of as those born between 1965 and 1984. Twenty-three percent (23%, 98) of the survey respondents were this age, but slightly higher than the general population of Metuchen now in their 40s. We will call this group Older Gen Xers.

30-39-year-olds are the younger half of the Gen X cohort being born between 1975 and 1984. These respondents represented twenty-one percent (21%, 89) of the survey total, which is double the 2015 US Census for this age group 8.6%. This group we will call Younger Gen Xers.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/3445690>

<sup>4</sup> [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_15\\_5YR\\_S0101&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_5YR_S0101&prodType=table)

60-69-year-olds are the start of the Baby Boom Generation, those born between 1946 and 1964. This group made up over sixteen percent (16%, 70) of the survey respondents, again, double the proportion of Metuchen residents. We will call this group Older Baby Boomers.

Those over 70 years old (often called the Great Generation) were just six percent (6%, 24) of respondents. This age group represents nine percent (9%) of actual residents of Metuchen per the US Census figures for 2015.

Shoppers that are 40 to 60-years-old represent nearly fifty percent (50%) of all downtown shoppers. This demographic profile will help you to clarify how to market events and recast your events to appeal to these two important consumer groups.

Survey respondents only included two young people age 20 and below. These young people represent 29% of Metuchen’s population, but these people did not participate in the survey. Those in their 20s make up 10% of Metuchen’s population, but only four percent (4%, 17) of current shoppers are that age.

## Question 20: How many people including yourself currently live in your household?

Small families and couples represent the largest proportion of survey respondent’s household size. The top three responses were:

### Survey Respondents

- 2 (30.3%, 129)
- 4 (24.7%, 105)
- 3 (24.2%, 103)

### Metuchen Borough NJ US Census 2010 version<sup>5</sup>

HOUSEHOLD SIZE		
Total households	16,790	100.0
1-person household	4,286	25.5
2-person household	4,825	28.7
3-person household	2,948	17.6
4-person household	2,644	15.7
5-person household	1,209	7.2
6-person household	497	3.0
7-or-more-person household	381	2.3
Average household size	2.70	(X)
Average family size	3.28	(X)

Downtown shoppers have more people living in their households than the general population

<sup>5</sup>[https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC\\_00\\_SF1\\_H013&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_00_SF1_H013&prodType=table) This is the latest information available.

of Metuchen. Two (2) person households represent a quarter (25.5%) of the population of Metuchen, but are 30.3% of all shoppers. Three person households (24.2%) are more common as shoppers than Metuchen residents (17.6%) per the US 2010 Census figures. Four person households are also close to a quarter of shoppers, but only 15.7% of residents.

## **Question 21: What is your approximate average household income?**

While twenty-six percent (26%, 112) of survey respondents indicated that they would prefer not to disclose their income range, those that did skewed toward higher income levels. Because of the high rate of non-disclosure of income, these results are suspect and cannot be relied upon for information about the current downtown Metuchen shopper.

We supply the top five responses below:

- \$175,000 - \$249,999 15.96%, 68
- \$250,000 or above 13.15%, 56
- \$125,000 - \$149,999 11.27%, 48
- \$100,000 - \$124,999 9.62%, 41
- \$150,000 --\$174,999. 8.45%, 36

The median household income for Metuchen was \$112,971 at the 2015 US Census, American Fact Finder information.<sup>6</sup> The median household income for the State of New Jersey was \$88,335.

## **Question 22: How many children age 17 or younger live in your household?**

The responses to this question support the previous findings of small families or couples along with older families with children being well represented in this survey.

- None (49.3%, 210)
- 1 (22.8%, 97)
- 2 (18.5%, 79)
- 3 (4.23%, 18)
- More (.47%, 2)

Twenty people preferred not to answer.

American Fact Finder, the 2015 estimate from the US Census, notes that 40.3 % of the borough's

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<sup>6</sup>[https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_15\\_5YR\\_S1901&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_5YR_S1901&prodType=table)

population is under 19 years of age.<sup>7</sup>

**Question 23: Please share any further comments about the Metuchen Downtown Alliance, our Main Street shopping district, this survey, or any other thoughts about Metuchen.**

Just over a quarter of all survey participants (117 individuals or 27%) offered a written response to this question providing for one-hundred and twenty-nine (129) unique comments. Comments were organized based on topic and then counted by the number of times each general topic appeared. No comment was eliminated or altered, but we corrected obvious spelling errors. You can see all the comments in Appendix D in the back of this report.

Participants provided both positive and negative feedback on the Metuchen Shopper Survey, MDA, and Downtown Metuchen in general. Overall the comments were optimistic of the future with great hope for the work of the MDA. Although these unique comments from participants varied widely, several common themes emerged.

Survey comments were sorted into the following categories:

- Complements to MDA (28),
- Community Reflections (Positive) (14),
- Parking Conditions and/or Traffic (14),
- Community Reflections (Negative) (13),
- Business Mixture (12),
- Suggestions about Programs, Services, and/or Events (11),
- Concerns about Current Business (11),
- Pedestrian Safety (5),
- Cleanliness (2),
- Miscellaneous comments not fitting any other category (19).

Overall the comments were highly complementary, optimistic, and realistic about the future of downtown and the MDA.

“Glad feedback is being sought from residents. Please keep a dialogue going. If we can strive to replicate what Westfield or Somerville have done, we'll be in good shape.”

“Love the job the MDA is doing! “

” Thank you for asking the right questions!!!”

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<sup>7</sup> <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

“We already have a lot of information about what we need, and good early steps have been taken. Identify a range of doable projects and improvements, set priorities, and begin pursuing them. We won't get an active, vibrant downtown in a few months or a couple of years.”

There is still great concern about the infrastructure that people use every day downtown, such as sidewalks and lighting.

“Unsafe crosswalks downtown is a real detriment to what we are trying to build there so it is of utmost importance to be addressed.”

The desire for new businesses within downtown Metuchen was apparent, even as respondents expressed concern over the stability of current businesses within the district. Some respondents talked about outmoded business practices.

“Stores closing on Sunday and Monday and at 5pm is an outdated retail model and keeps Metuchen from being a destination downtown area.”

“Great little downtown area that is unique to the area but still clinging on to the 20th century when it comes to change. The older generation are awesome people but many of them are adamant at keeping the town the way it's always been even though it is evident change needs to occur.”

There were numerous and impassioned comments about infrastructure, parking, pedestrian safety, cleaning, and traffic issues facing downtown Metuchen which are fundamentally governmental responsibilities. The most negative comments were about parking and traffic. Here is a small selection.

“When I get off the train, I just want to get away as fast as I can. The traffic is atrocious.”

“The parking on Main Street is getting harder to find.”

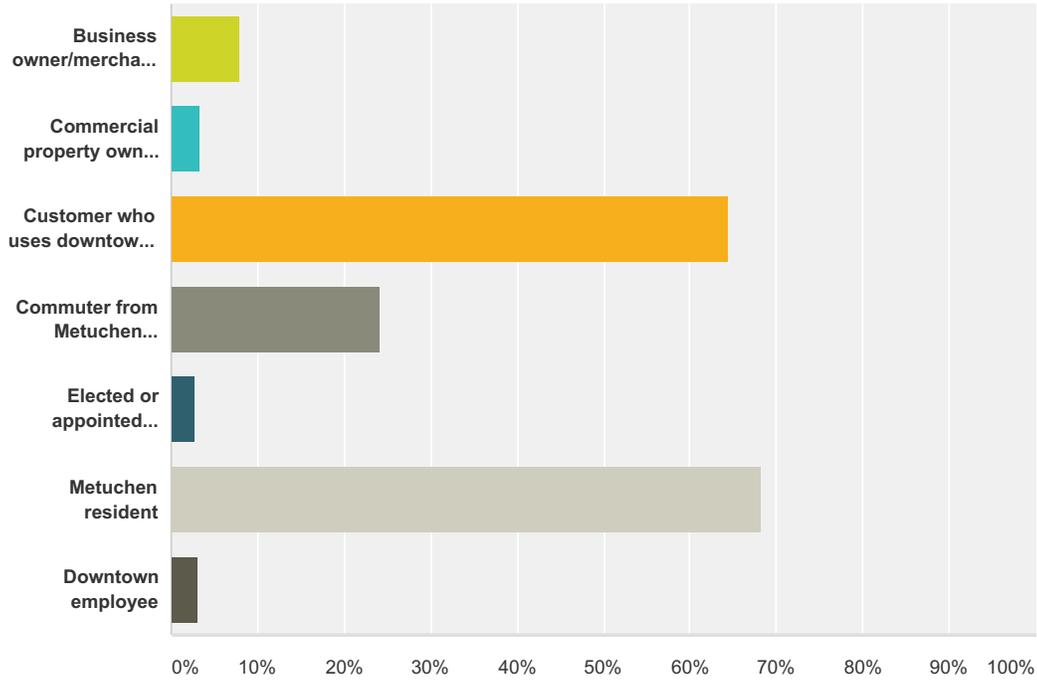
See all the comments from Question 23 in Appendix D below.

The appendix materials follow.

## Appendix A

**Q1 We are seeking feedback from customers, business owners, commercial property owners, and policymakers. Please check at least ONE answer, and any other that applies to you.**

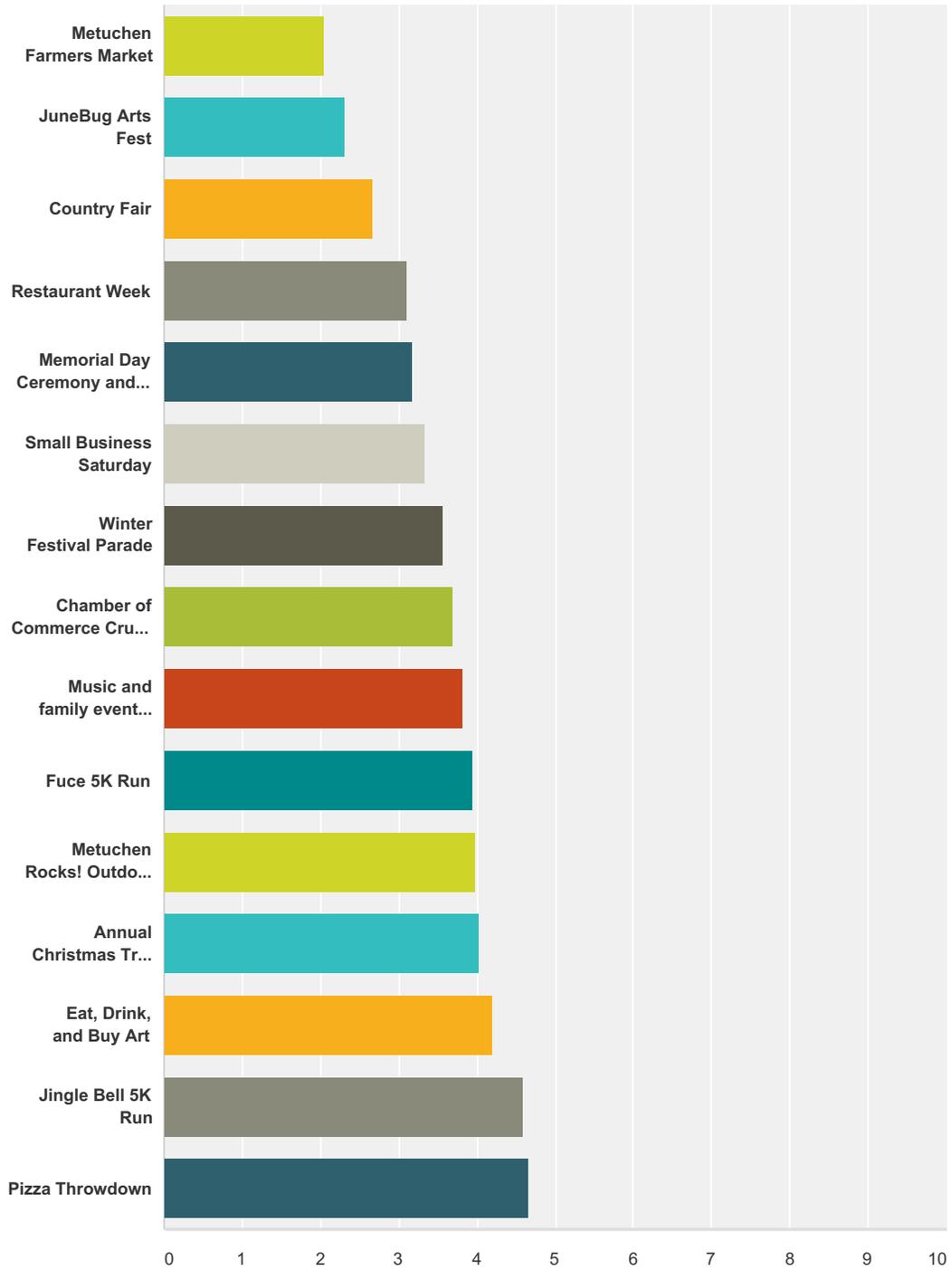
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Business owner/merchant in downtown	7.98% 34
Commercial property owner in downtown	3.29% 14
Customer who uses downtown Metuchen	64.55% 275
Commuter from Metuchen Railroad Station	24.18% 103
Elected or appointed official in Metuchen	2.82% 12
Metuchen resident	68.31% 291
Downtown employee	3.05% 13
<b>Total Respondents: 426</b>	

**Q2 The Metuchen Downtown Alliance is working on projects with others in the downtown considering other events and activities to improve the shopping district. Please rate EVERY event/activity listed below. One answer per line please.**

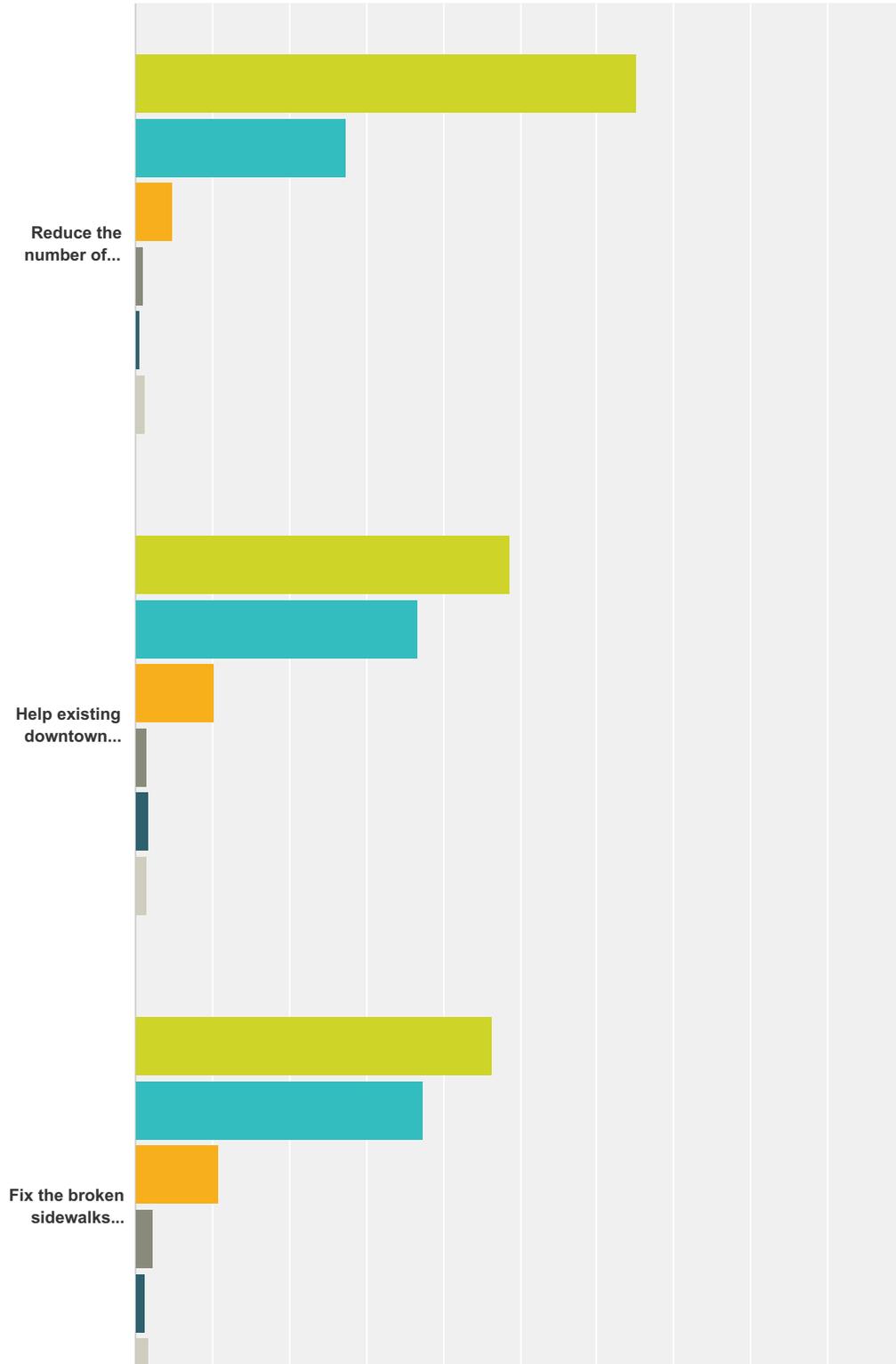
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0

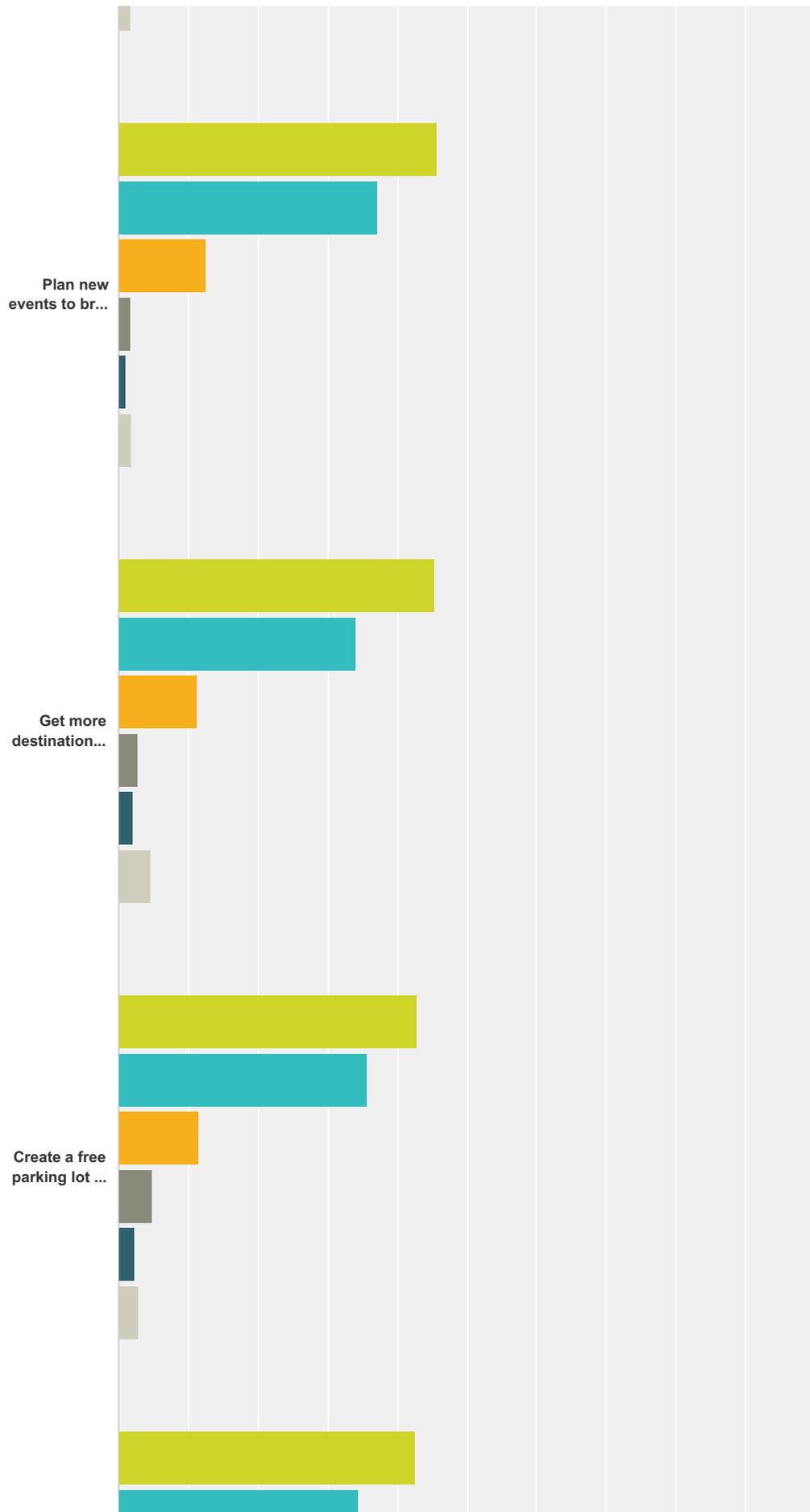


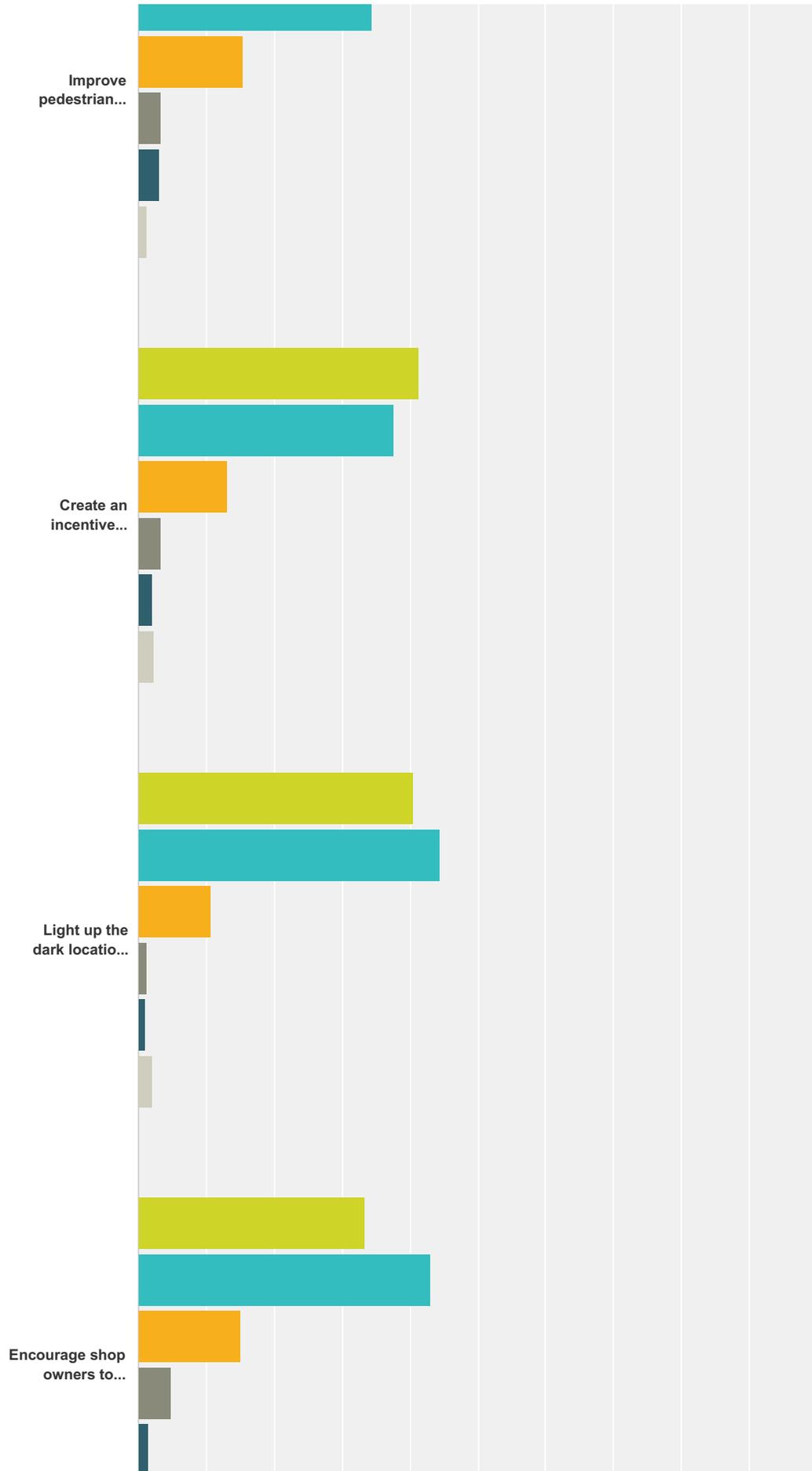
	<b>Great success</b>	<b>Some Success</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>Failure</b>	<b>No Opinion/Did Not Attend</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Weighted Average</b>
Metuchen Farmers Market	<b>50.71%</b> 215	<b>28.77%</b> 122	<b>7.55%</b> 32	<b>1.65%</b> 7	<b>0.71%</b> 3	<b>10.61%</b> 45	424	2.05
JuneBug Arts Fest	<b>51.54%</b> 218	<b>21.04%</b> 89	<b>6.86%</b> 29	<b>2.36%</b> 10	<b>0.95%</b> 4	<b>17.26%</b> 73	423	2.32
Country Fair	<b>38.68%</b> 164	<b>25.94%</b> 110	<b>8.96%</b> 38	<b>3.54%</b> 15	<b>0.47%</b> 2	<b>22.41%</b> 95	424	2.68
Restaurant Week	<b>31.59%</b> 133	<b>23.75%</b> 100	<b>9.98%</b> 42	<b>2.14%</b> 9	<b>0.71%</b> 3	<b>31.83%</b> 134	421	3.12
Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade	<b>25.94%</b> 110	<b>26.65%</b> 113	<b>14.39%</b> 61	<b>1.42%</b> 6	<b>0.24%</b> 1	<b>31.37%</b> 133	424	3.17
Small Business Saturday	<b>21.62%</b> 91	<b>27.32%</b> 115	<b>13.06%</b> 55	<b>3.33%</b> 14	<b>1.43%</b> 6	<b>33.25%</b> 140	421	3.35
Winter Festival Parade	<b>19.86%</b> 84	<b>23.88%</b> 101	<b>13.48%</b> 57	<b>3.31%</b> 14	<b>0.71%</b> 3	<b>38.77%</b> 164	423	3.57
Chamber of Commerce Cruise Night	<b>13.06%</b> 55	<b>26.84%</b> 113	<b>18.05%</b> 76	<b>1.66%</b> 7	<b>1.19%</b> 5	<b>39.19%</b> 165	421	3.69
Music and family events at the Old Franklin Schoolhouse	<b>19.48%</b> 82	<b>19.71%</b> 83	<b>12.59%</b> 53	<b>1.90%</b> 8	<b>0.24%</b> 1	<b>46.08%</b> 194	421	3.82
Fuce 5K Run	<b>23.92%</b> 100	<b>11.24%</b> 47	<b>12.92%</b> 54	<b>0.72%</b> 3	<b>0.72%</b> 3	<b>50.48%</b> 211	418	3.94
Metuchen Rocks! Outdoor Concert Series	<b>13.74%</b> 58	<b>22.27%</b> 94	<b>13.98%</b> 59	<b>1.18%</b> 5	<b>0.24%</b> 1	<b>48.58%</b> 205	422	3.98
Annual Christmas Tree Lighting	<b>15.60%</b> 66	<b>20.09%</b> 85	<b>11.11%</b> 47	<b>2.60%</b> 11	<b>0.71%</b> 3	<b>49.88%</b> 211	423	4.02
Eat, Drink, and Buy Art	<b>14.39%</b> 61	<b>17.45%</b> 74	<b>11.32%</b> 48	<b>2.36%</b> 10	<b>0.94%</b> 4	<b>53.54%</b> 227	424	4.19
Jingle Bell 5K Run	<b>8.77%</b> 37	<b>13.03%</b> 55	<b>12.56%</b> 53	<b>3.08%</b> 13	<b>0.71%</b> 3	<b>61.85%</b> 261	422	4.59
Pizza Throwdown	<b>9.76%</b> 41	<b>10.24%</b> 43	<b>13.10%</b> 55	<b>1.90%</b> 8	<b>2.38%</b> 10	<b>62.62%</b> 263	420	4.65

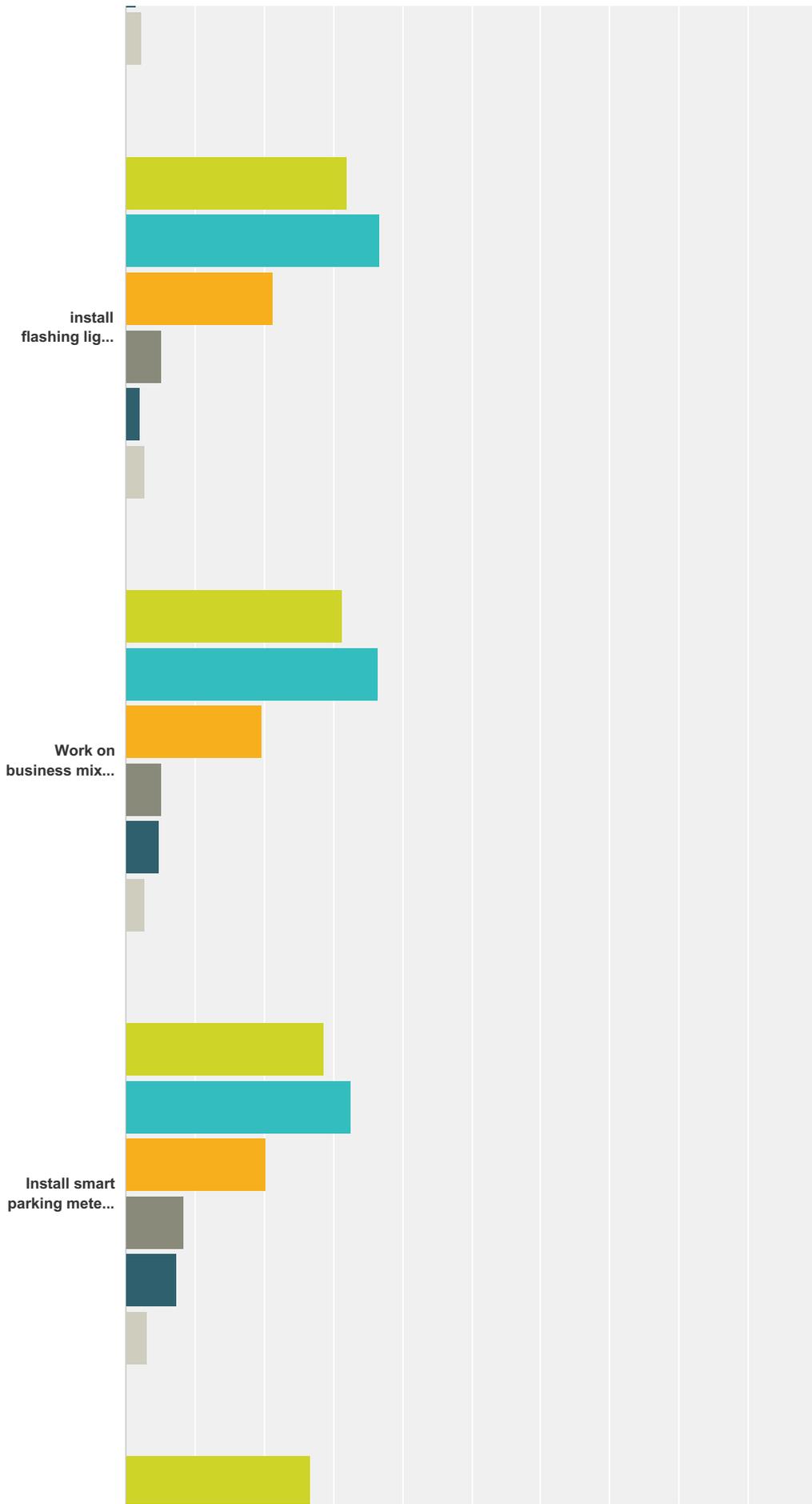
**Q3 The Metuchen Downtown Alliance is planning programs aimed at revitalizing or improving our downtown. Please rate the importance of ALL the following activities. One answer per line please.**

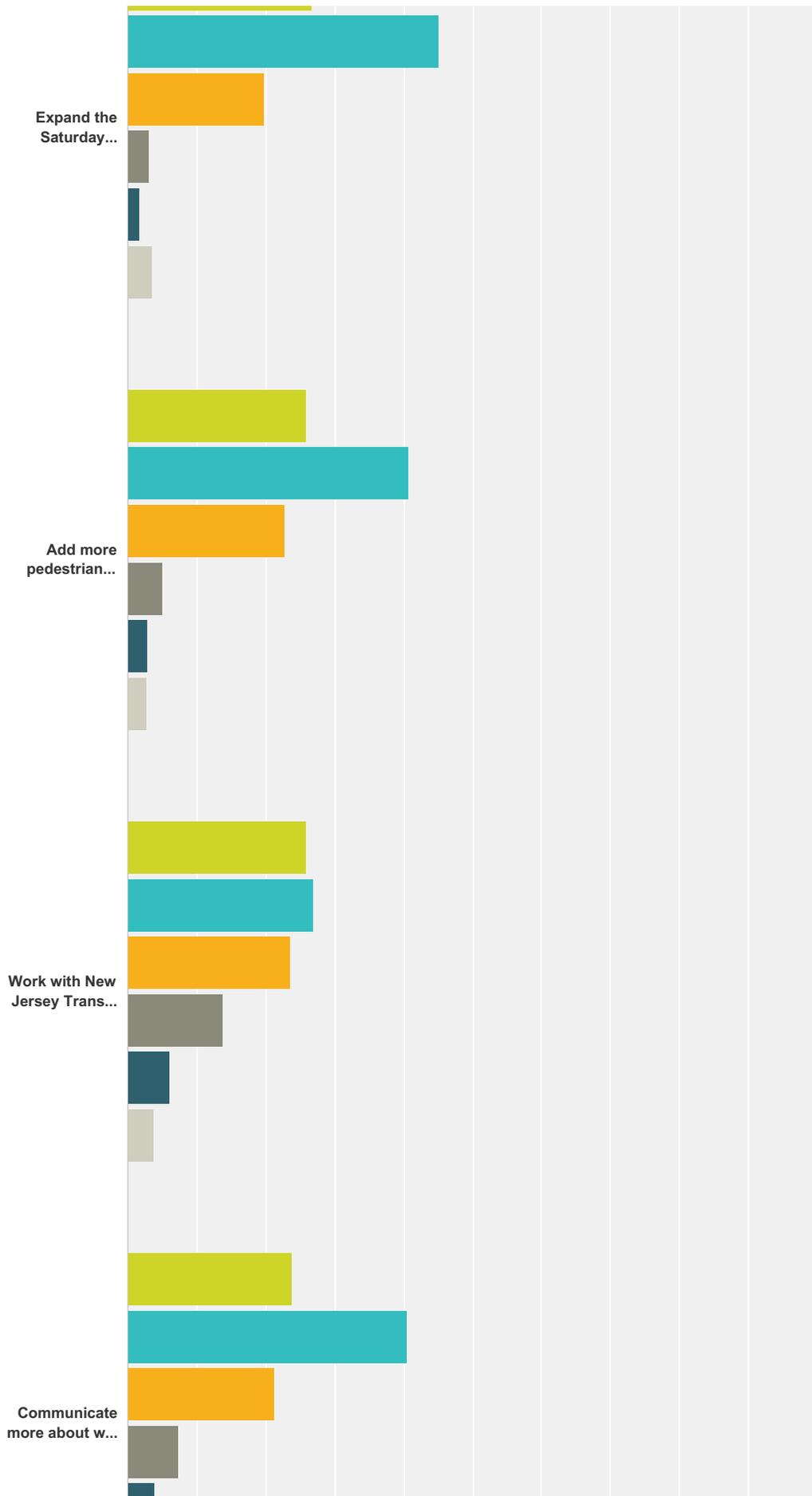
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0

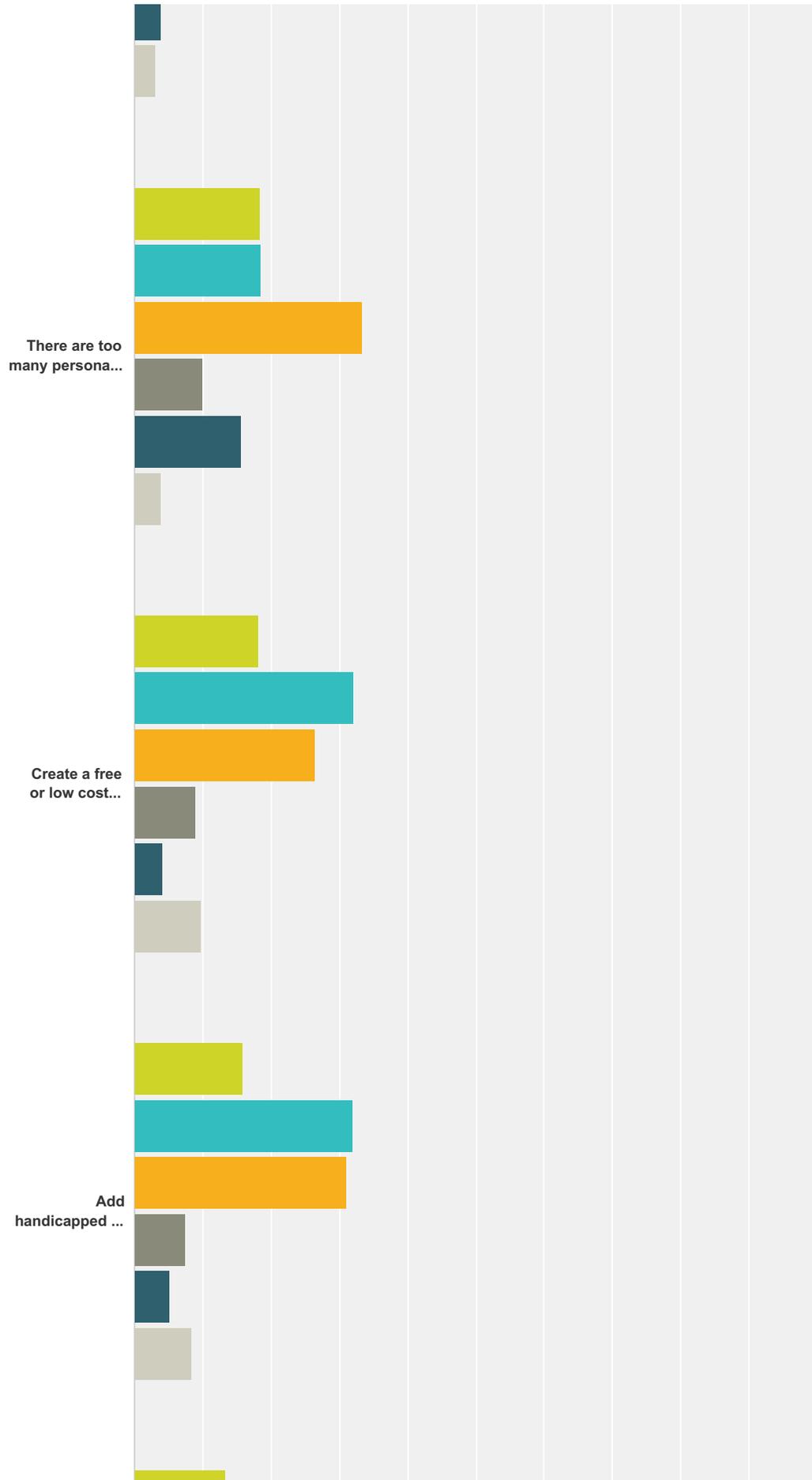


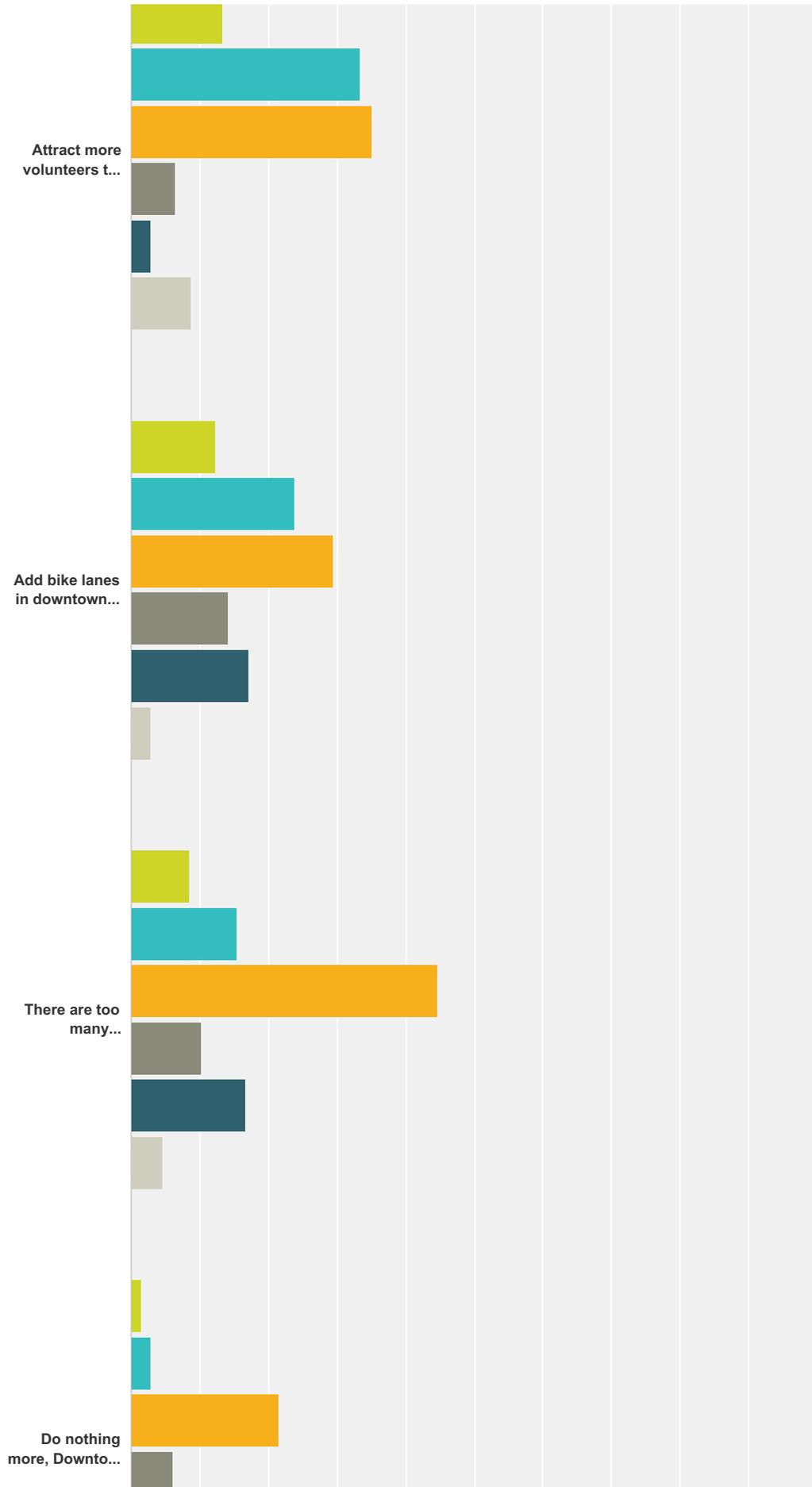


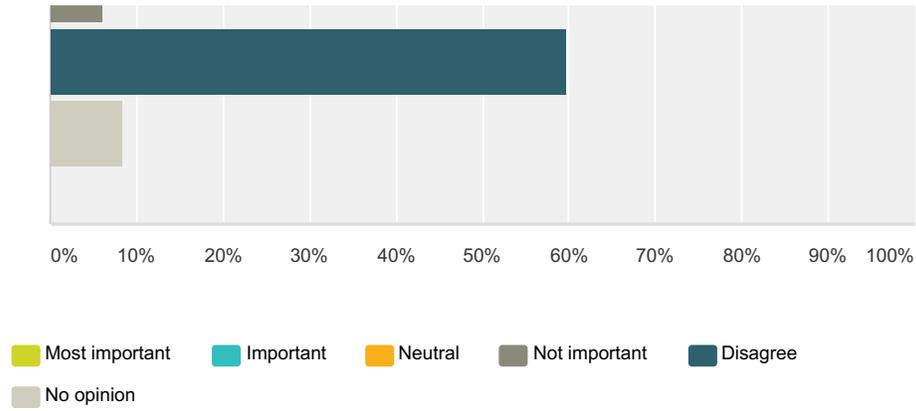












	Most important	Important	Neutral	Not important	Disagree	No opinion	Total
Reduce the number of vacancies in the downtown	65.08% 274	27.32% 115	4.75% 20	0.95% 4	0.71% 3	1.19% 5	421
Help existing downtown businesses to increase their revenue and profitability	48.58% 205	36.73% 155	10.19% 43	1.42% 6	1.66% 7	1.42% 6	422
Fix the broken sidewalks throughout downtown	46.43% 195	37.38% 157	10.95% 46	2.38% 10	1.19% 5	1.67% 7	420
Plan new events to bring people to the downtown to shop or dine	45.73% 193	37.20% 157	12.56% 53	1.66% 7	0.95% 4	1.90% 8	422
Get more destination businesses to locate here	45.35% 190	34.13% 143	11.22% 47	2.63% 11	2.15% 9	4.53% 19	419
Create a free parking lot for Saturday shoppers	42.79% 181	35.70% 151	11.58% 49	4.73% 20	2.36% 10	2.84% 12	423
Improve pedestrian safety downtown	42.65% 180	34.36% 145	15.40% 65	3.32% 14	3.08% 13	1.18% 5	422
Create an incentive program to encourage property owners to restore storefronts, place better looking signs and awnings	41.43% 174	37.62% 158	13.10% 55	3.33% 14	2.14% 9	2.38% 10	420
Light up the dark locations in downtown	40.52% 171	44.55% 188	10.66% 45	1.18% 5	0.95% 4	2.13% 9	422
Encourage shop owners to coordinate one night on which they are all open past 6PM	33.49% 141	42.99% 181	14.96% 63	4.75% 20	1.43% 6	2.38% 10	421
install flashing light crosswalks that are handicap accessible	31.89% 133	36.69% 153	21.34% 89	5.28% 22	2.16% 9	2.64% 11	417
Work on business mix to lessen the number of duplicative businesses	31.26% 131	36.52% 153	19.57% 82	5.25% 22	4.77% 20	2.63% 11	419
Install smart parking meters that take credit cards	28.50% 120	32.54% 137	20.19% 85	8.31% 35	7.36% 31	3.09% 13	421
Expand the Saturday Farmers Market	26.71% 113	45.15% 191	19.86% 84	3.07% 13	1.65% 7	3.55% 15	423
Add more pedestrian amenities such as flowers, trees, benches	25.95% 109	40.71% 171	22.86% 96	5.00% 21	2.86% 12	2.62% 11	420
Work with New Jersey Transit about the low rail road bridge	25.95% 109	26.90% 113	23.57% 99	13.81% 58	5.95% 25	3.81% 16	420
Communicate more about what is happening downtown through kiosks or downtown maps	23.88% 101	40.43% 171	21.28% 90	7.33% 31	4.02% 17	3.07% 13	423

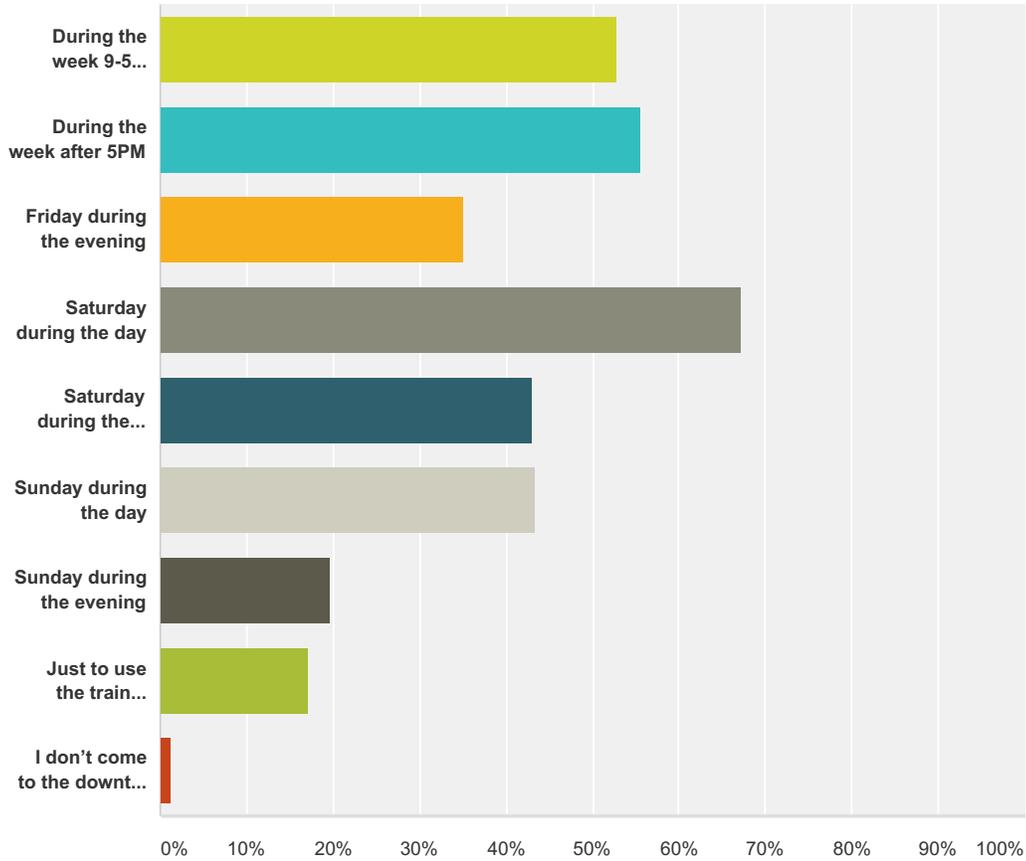
There are too many personal service providers (hair salons, dry cleaners, yoga studios, nail salons, gyms) downtown	<b>18.44%</b> 78	<b>18.68%</b> 79	<b>33.33%</b> 141	<b>9.93%</b> 42	<b>15.60%</b> 66	<b>4.02%</b> 17	423
Create a free or low cost employee parking lot for worker's downtown	<b>18.25%</b> 77	<b>32.23%</b> 136	<b>26.54%</b> 112	<b>9.00%</b> 38	<b>4.27%</b> 18	<b>9.72%</b> 41	422
Add handicapped on street parking spaces at several locations on Main Street	<b>15.88%</b> 67	<b>31.99%</b> 135	<b>31.04%</b> 131	<b>7.58%</b> 32	<b>5.21%</b> 22	<b>8.29%</b> 35	422
Attract more volunteers to participate in MDA's work	<b>13.30%</b> 56	<b>33.49%</b> 141	<b>35.15%</b> 148	<b>6.41%</b> 27	<b>2.85%</b> 12	<b>8.79%</b> 37	421
Add bike lanes in downtown district	<b>12.38%</b> 52	<b>23.81%</b> 100	<b>29.52%</b> 124	<b>14.29%</b> 60	<b>17.14%</b> 72	<b>2.86%</b> 12	420
There are too many professional service businesses (accountants, attorneys, insurance offices, banks) downtown	<b>8.51%</b> 36	<b>15.37%</b> 65	<b>44.68%</b> 189	<b>10.17%</b> 43	<b>16.78%</b> 71	<b>4.49%</b> 19	423
Do nothing more, Downtown Metuchen is great the way it is	<b>1.45%</b> 6	<b>2.90%</b> 12	<b>21.50%</b> 89	<b>6.04%</b> 25	<b>59.66%</b> 247	<b>8.45%</b> 35	414

**Q4 Please share any other suggestions on what Metuchen Downtown Alliance could do to improve your Downtown Metuchen experience and make it more likely that you would frequent more Metuchen businesses.**

Answered: 206 Skipped: 220

### Q5 What times of the week are you in downtown? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that apply.

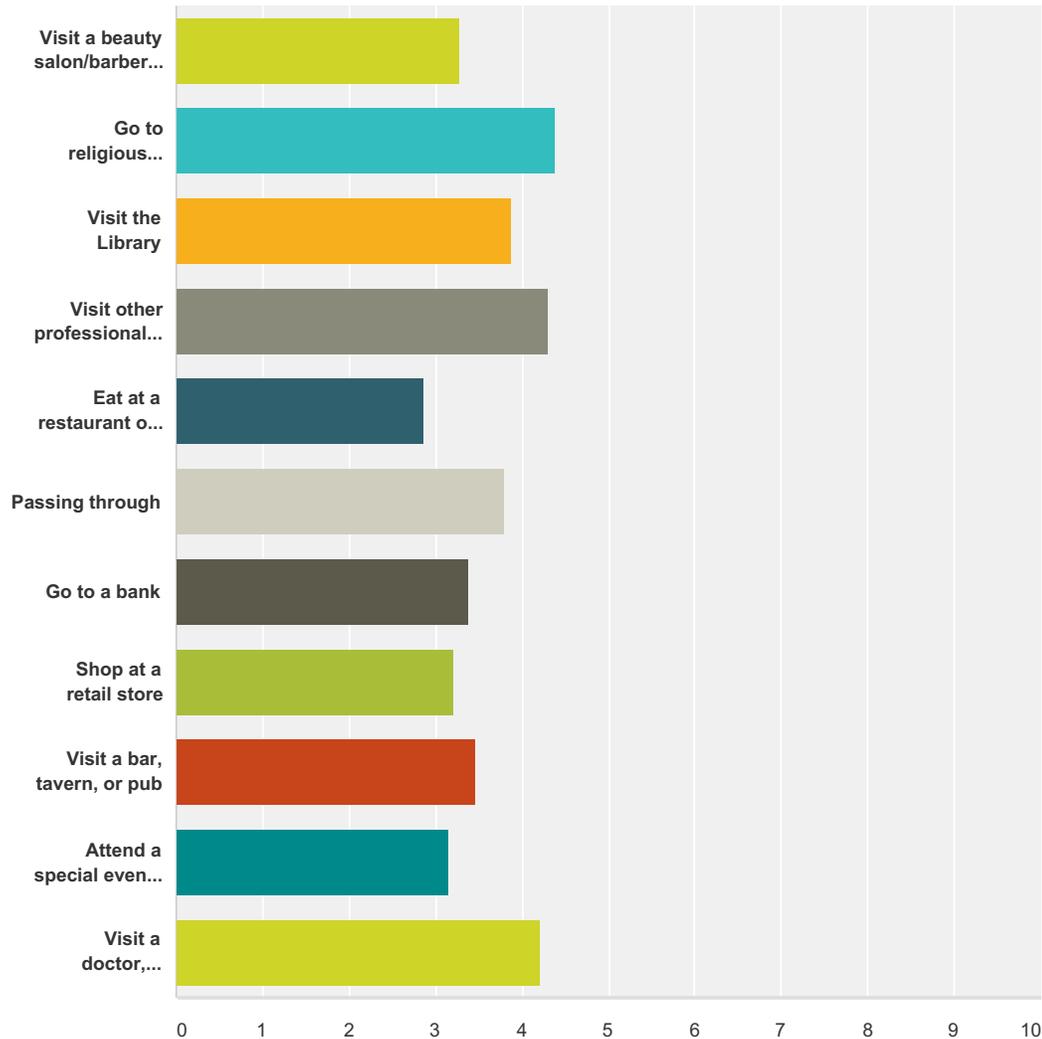
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
During the week 9-5 (Monday to Friday)	52.82% 225
During the week after 5PM	55.63% 237
Friday during the evening	34.98% 149
Saturday during the day	67.14% 286
Saturday during the evening	42.96% 183
Sunday during the day	43.43% 185
Sunday during the evening	19.72% 84
Just to use the train station to commute to work/school	17.14% 73
I don't come to the downtown at all	1.17% 5
<b>Total Respondents: 426</b>	

**Q6 Over the last month, about how many times have you gone to downtown for these reasons? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that apply. One answer per line please.**

Answered: 426 Skipped: 0

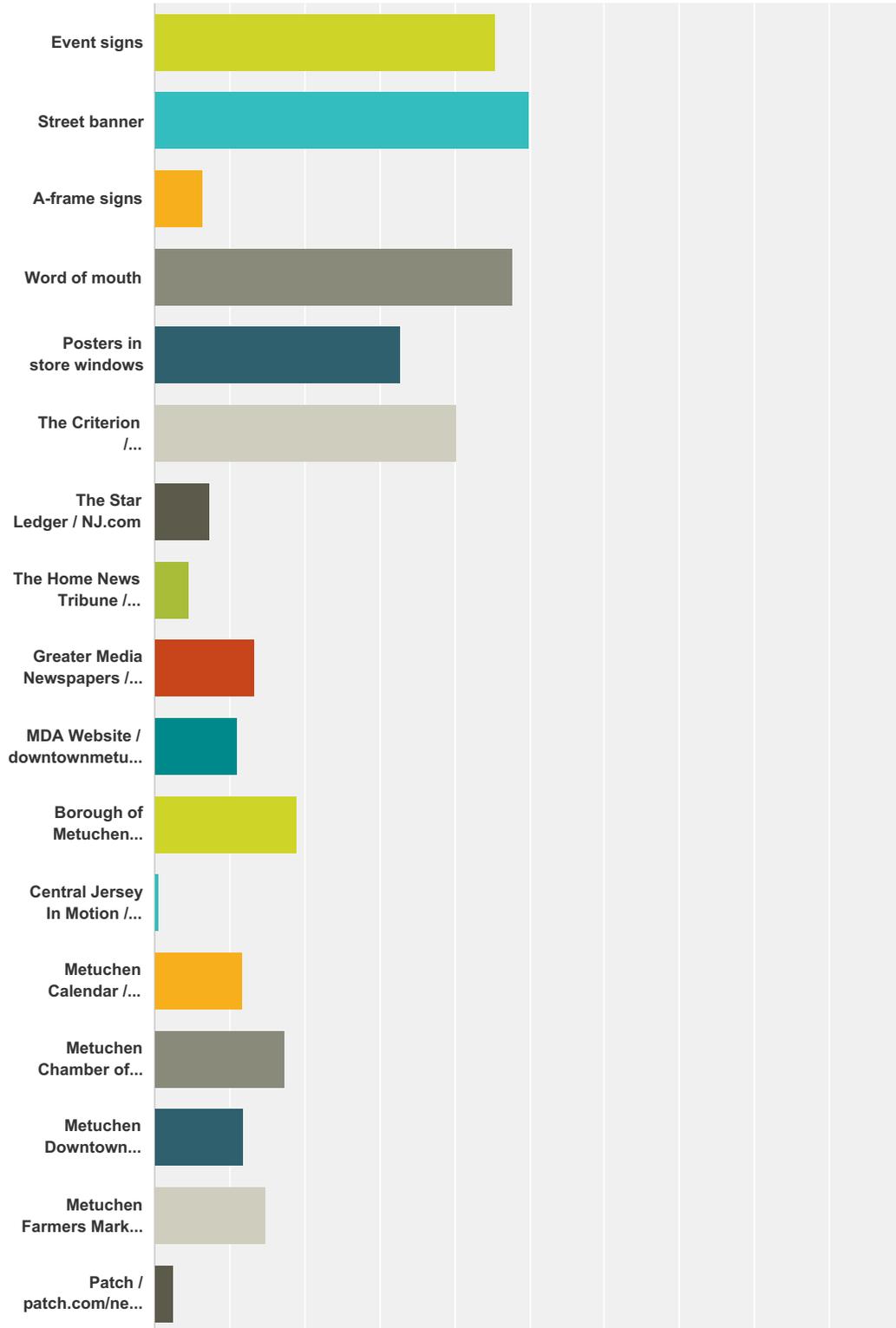


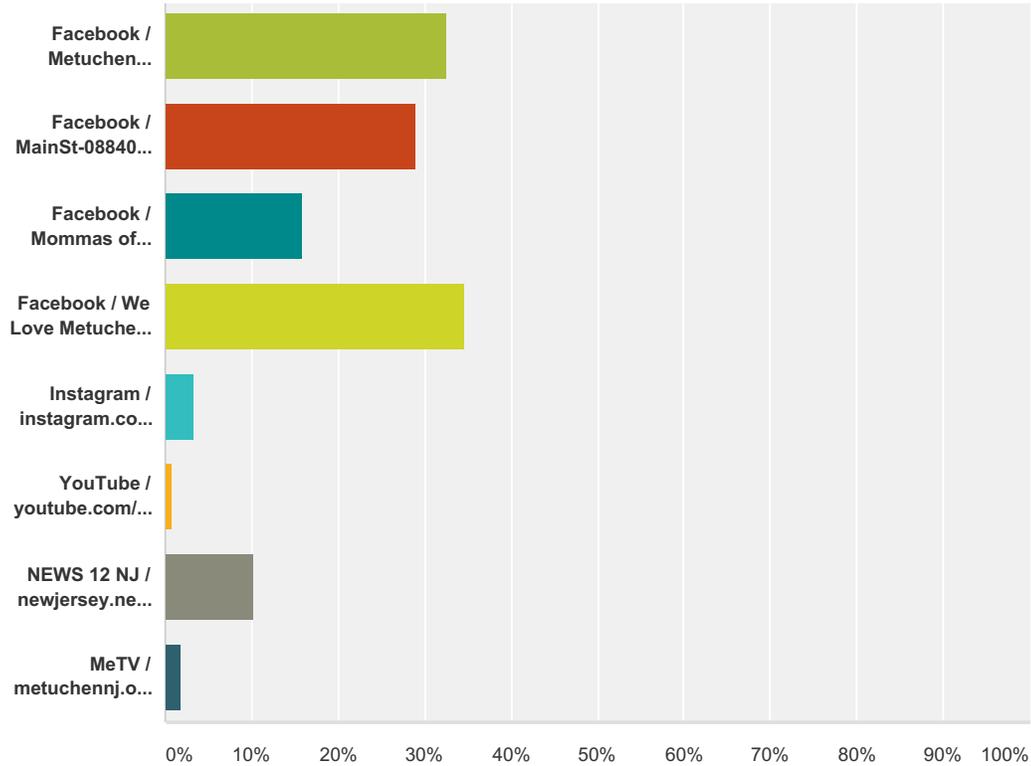
	Once	Twice	Three Times	More	None	Total	Weighted Average
Visit a beauty salon/barber shop/nail salon or other personal service provider	30.22% 126	12.47% 52	4.08% 17	6.71% 28	46.52% 194	417	3.27
Go to religious services	5.31% 22	4.59% 19	5.31% 22	15.22% 63	69.57% 288	414	4.39
Visit the Library	15.46% 64	9.90% 41	5.56% 23	7.97% 33	61.11% 253	414	3.89
Visit other professional office, accountant, or real estate office	10.07% 42	6.47% 27	1.68% 7	6.95% 29	74.82% 312	417	4.30

Eat at a restaurant or café	<b>20.43%</b> 86	<b>22.09%</b> 93	<b>17.81%</b> 75	<b>30.17%</b> 127	<b>9.50%</b> 40	421	2.86
Passing through	<b>3.37%</b> 14	<b>4.33%</b> 18	<b>6.25%</b> 26	<b>81.01%</b> 337	<b>5.05%</b> 21	416	3.80
Go to a bank	<b>17.55%</b> 73	<b>14.42%</b> 60	<b>11.30%</b> 47	<b>25.72%</b> 107	<b>31.01%</b> 129	416	3.38
Shop at a retail store	<b>17.51%</b> 73	<b>21.58%</b> 90	<b>10.79%</b> 45	<b>21.34%</b> 89	<b>28.78%</b> 120	417	3.22
Visit a bar, tavern, or pub	<b>21.22%</b> 87	<b>13.66%</b> 56	<b>8.05%</b> 33	<b>11.95%</b> 49	<b>45.12%</b> 185	410	3.46
Attend a special event in the downtown	<b>30.79%</b> 129	<b>14.80%</b> 62	<b>5.73%</b> 24	<b>6.44%</b> 27	<b>42.24%</b> 177	419	3.15
Visit a doctor, dentist, or other health care provider	<b>13.22%</b> 55	<b>6.73%</b> 28	<b>1.68%</b> 7	<b>2.40%</b> 10	<b>75.96%</b> 316	416	4.21

**Q7 When you are planning to visit downtown Metuchen, which of the following resources are most useful to you? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that apply to you.**

Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



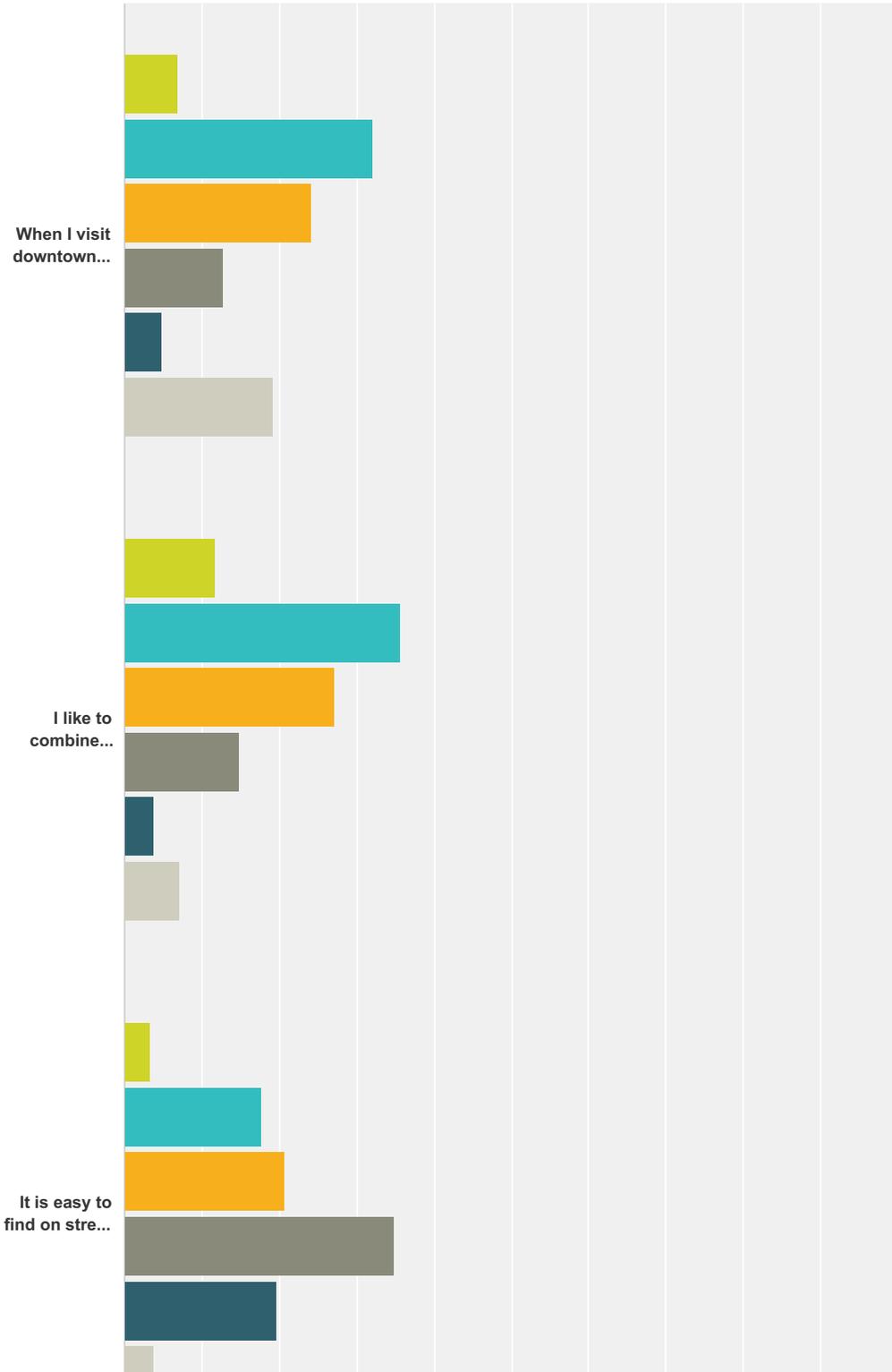


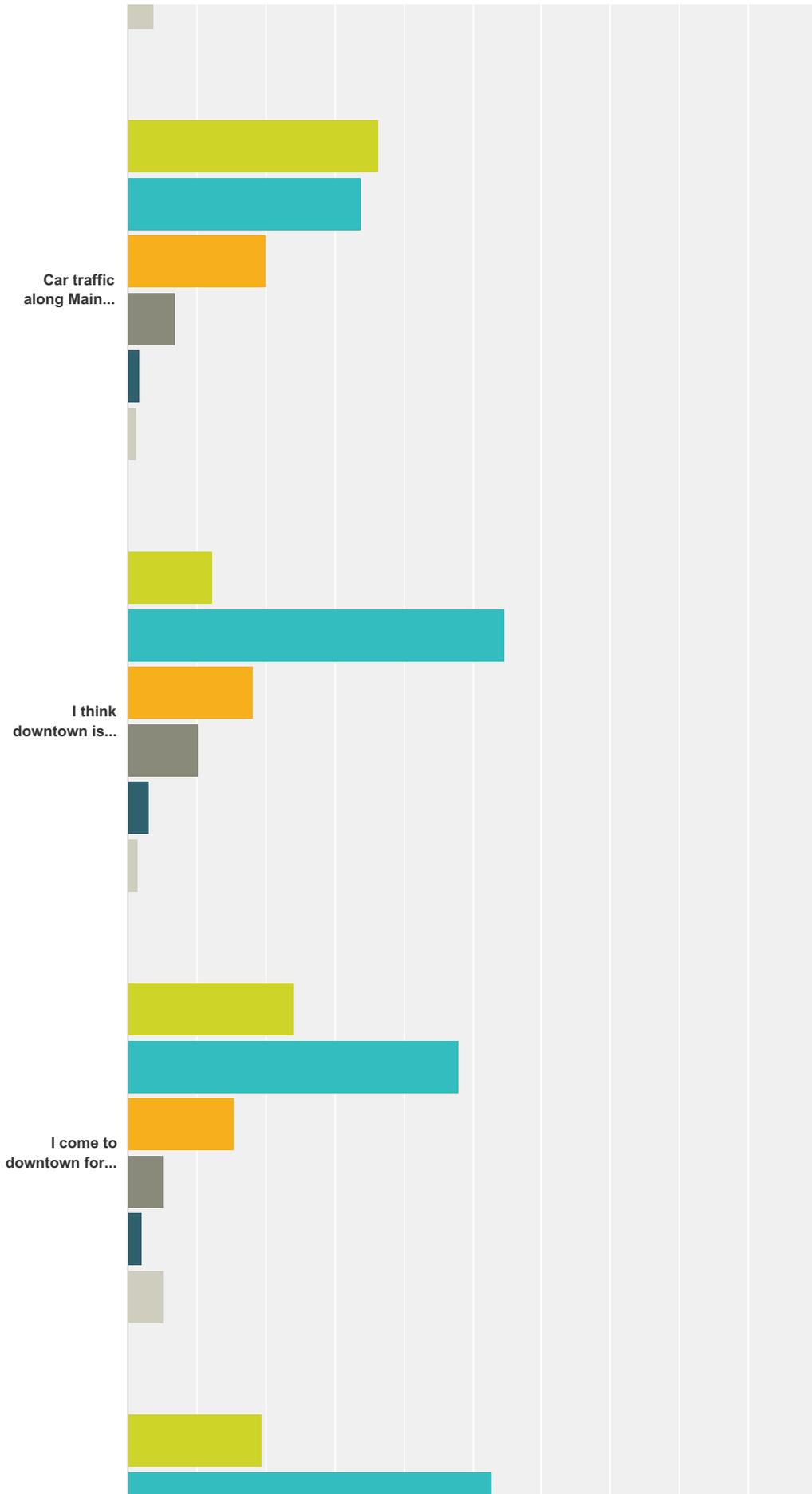
Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Event signs	45.54%	194
Street banner	50.00%	213
A-frame signs	6.57%	28
Word of mouth	47.89%	204
Posters in store windows	32.86%	140
The Criterion / criterionnews.com	40.38%	172
The Star Ledger / NJ.com	7.28%	31
The Home News Tribune / MyCentralJersey.com	4.69%	20
Greater Media Newspapers / The Sentinel / GMNews.com	13.38%	57
MDA Website / downtownmetuchen.org	11.03%	47
Borough of Metuchen Website / metuchennj.org/metnj/	19.01%	81
Central Jersey In Motion / centraljerseyinmotion.com	0.70%	3
Metuchen Calendar / metuchencalendar.org	11.74%	50
Metuchen Chamber of Commerce News (email)	17.37%	74
Metuchen Downtown Alliance Newsletter (email)	11.97%	51
Metuchen Farmers Market News (email)	14.79%	63
Patch / patch.com/new-jersey/newbrunswick or woodbridge	2.58%	11
Facebook / Metuchen Downtown Association	32.63%	139

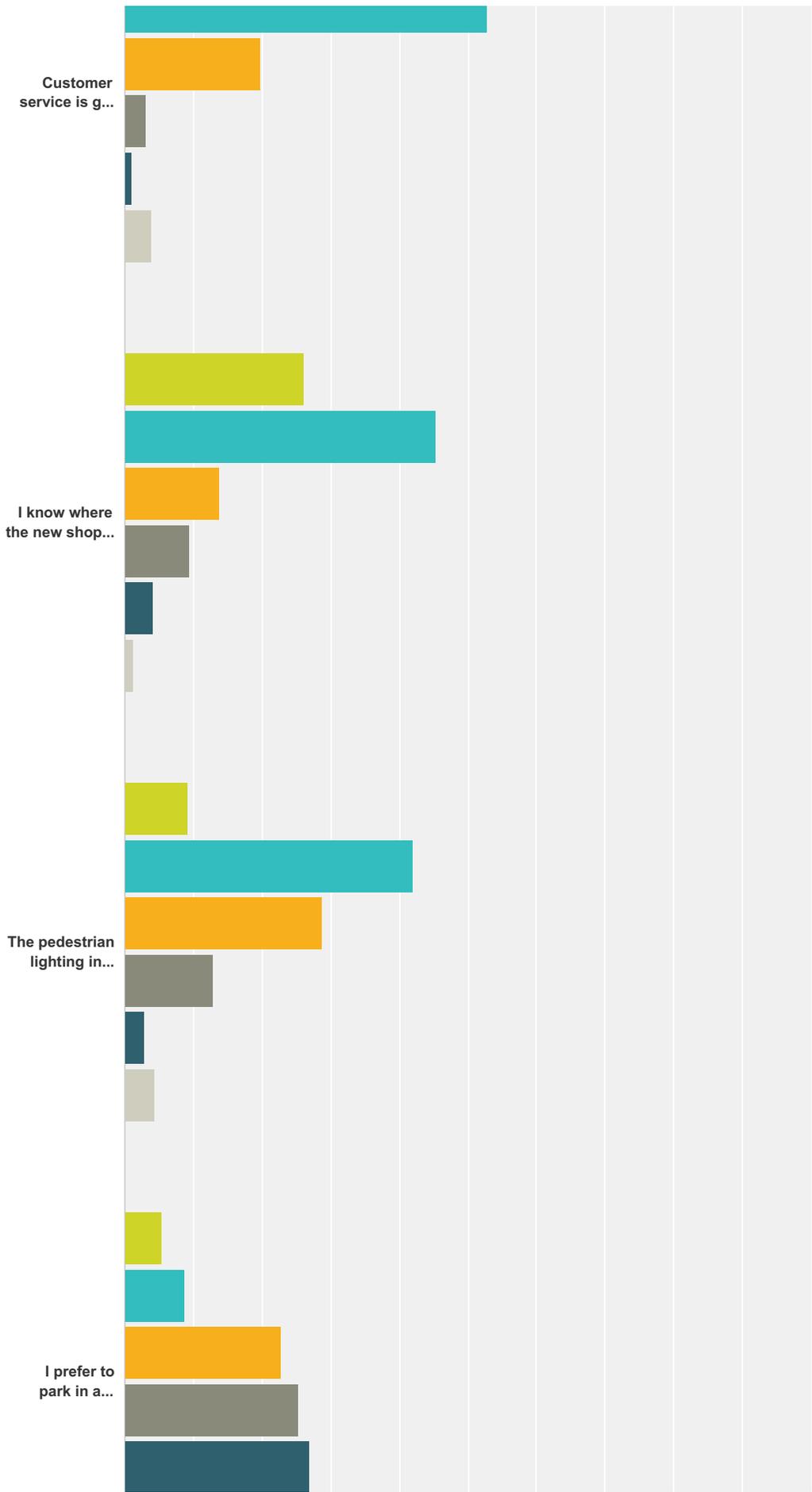
Facebook / MainSt-08840 facebook.com/groups/tbmetuchenmainstreet/	29.11%	124
Facebook / Mommas of Metuchen facebook.com/groups/MommasOfMetuchen	15.96%	68
Facebook / We Love Metuchen facebook.com/groups/welovemetuchen/	34.74%	148
Instagram / instagram.com/metuchendowntownalliance	3.29%	14
YouTube / youtube.com/channel/UCsw2OMozWWm7IkXOLS9szNg	0.94%	4
NEWS 12 NJ / newjersey.news12.com/	10.33%	44
MeTV / metuchennj.org/metnj/DEPARTMENTS/MEtv/	1.88%	8
<b>Total Respondents: 426</b>		

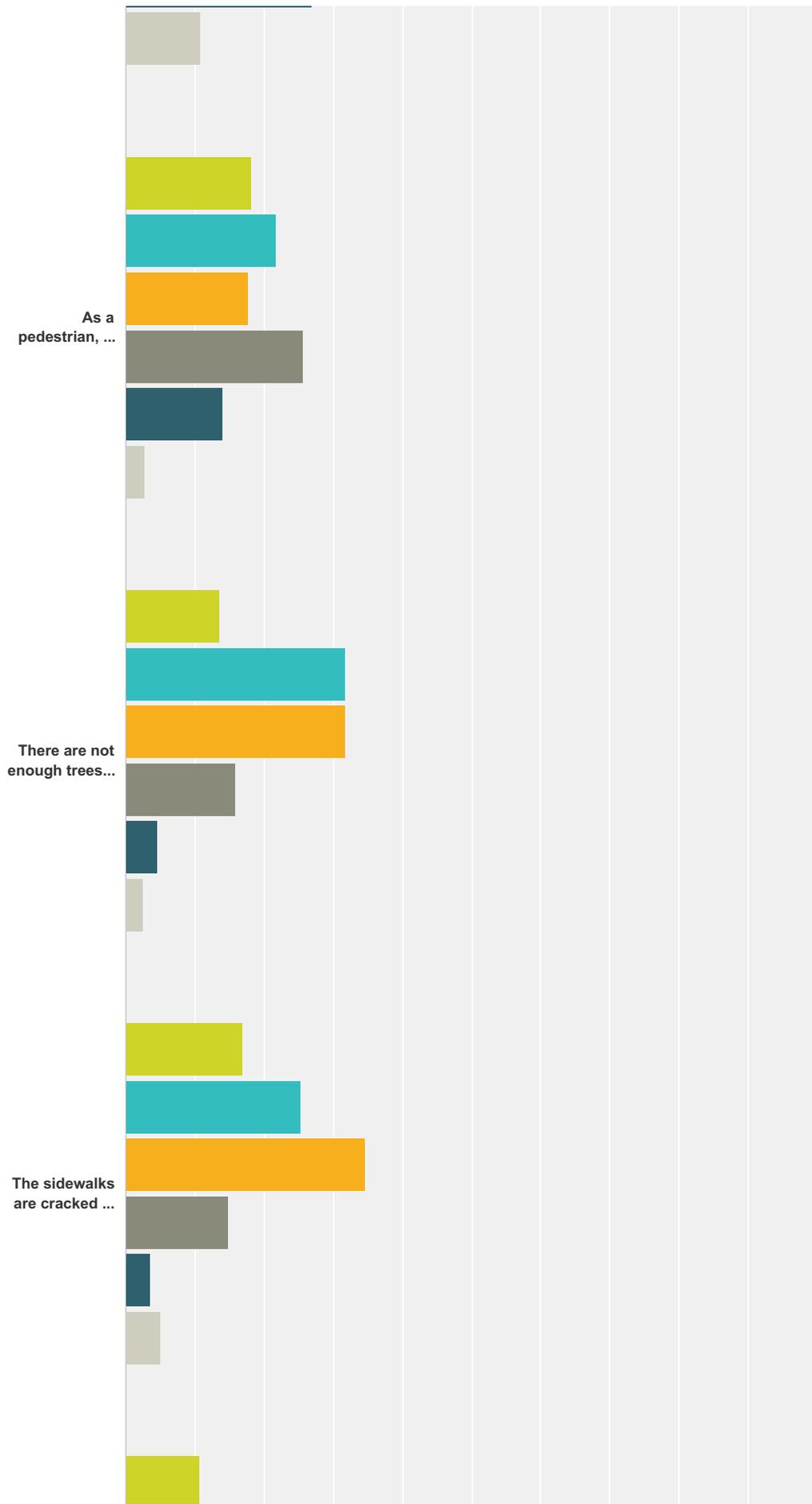
**Q8 Please note how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. Check at least ONE answer, and any others that apply to you. One answer per line please.**

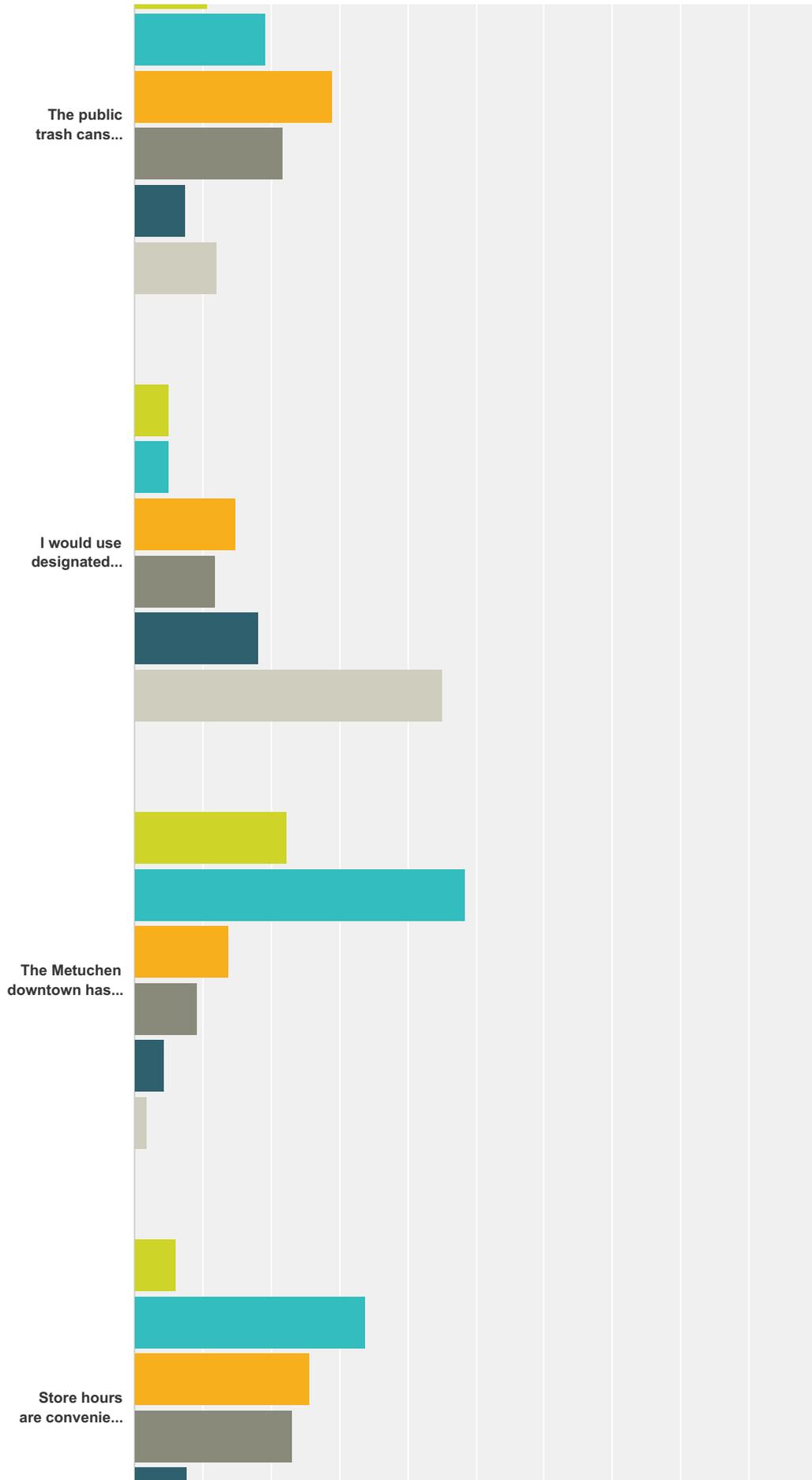
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0

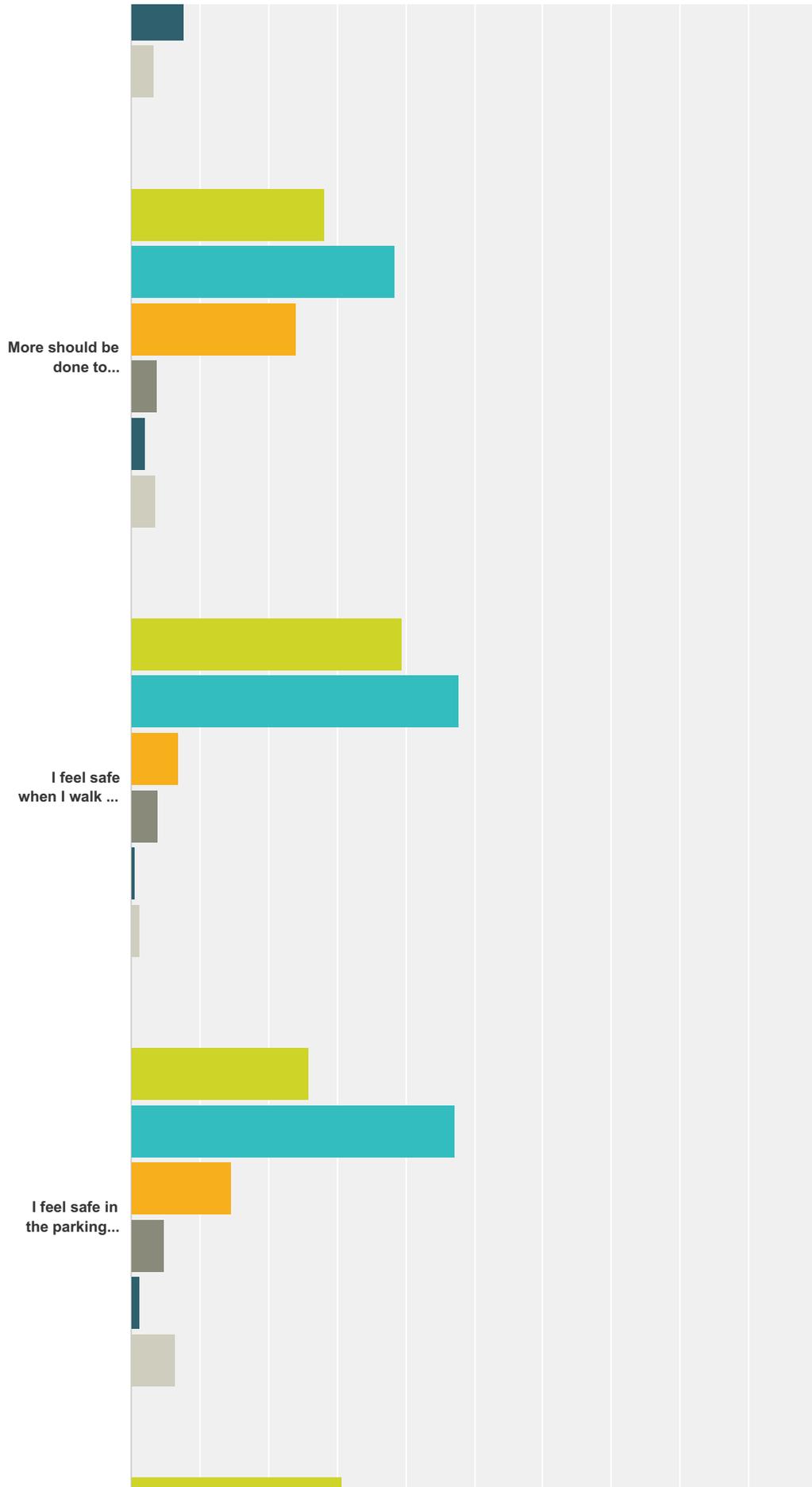


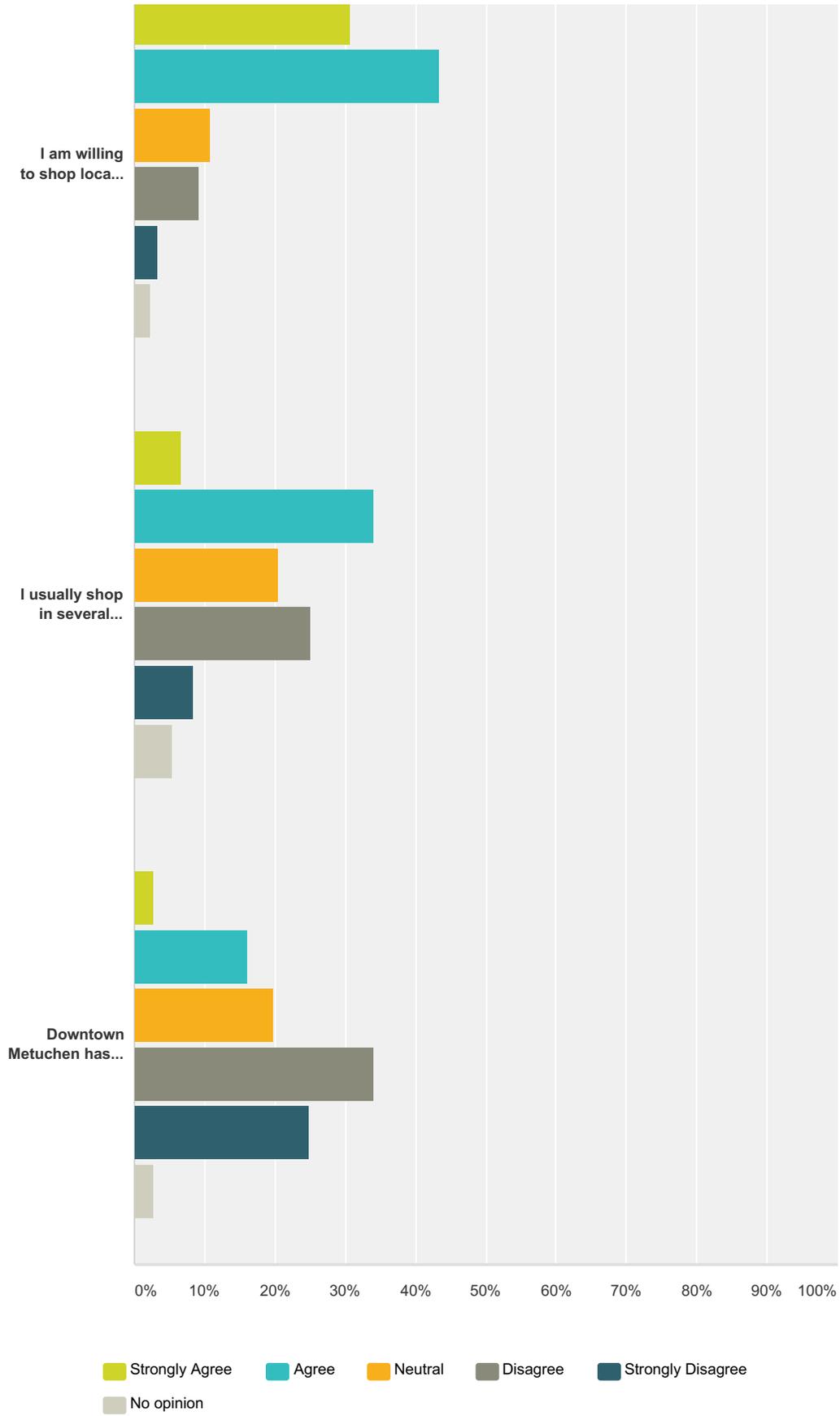








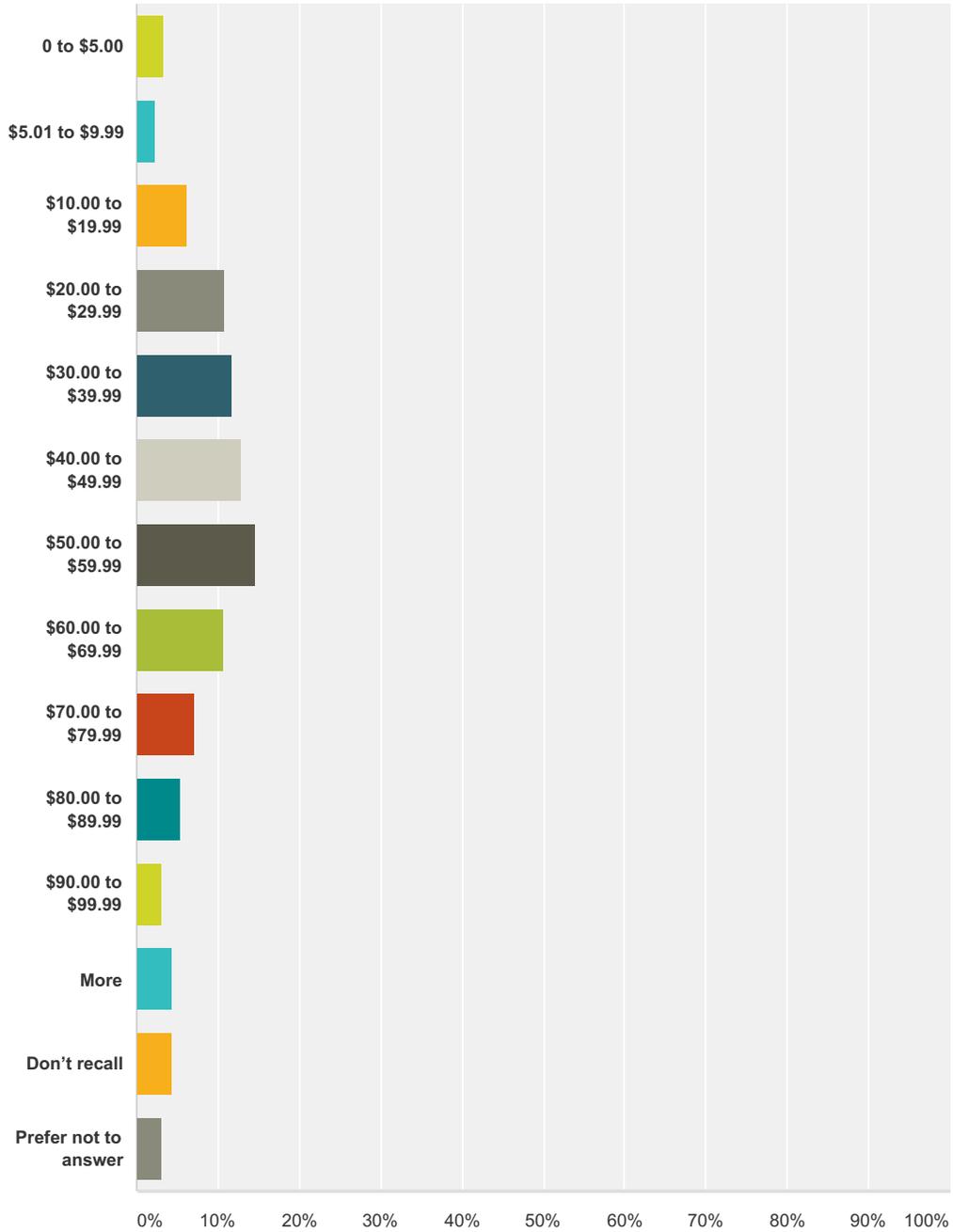




	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion	Total
When I visit downtown Metuchen for an appointment, I also visit a store or restaurant	6.87% 29	32.23% 136	24.17% 102	12.80% 54	4.74% 20	19.19% 81	422
I like to combine shopping and dining when visiting downtown Metuchen	11.64% 49	35.63% 150	27.08% 114	14.73% 62	3.80% 16	7.13% 30	421
It is easy to find on street parking	3.32% 14	17.77% 75	20.62% 87	34.83% 147	19.67% 83	3.79% 16	422
Car traffic along Main Street is too heavy	36.43% 153	33.81% 142	20.00% 84	6.90% 29	1.67% 7	1.19% 5	420
I think downtown is clean	12.32% 52	54.74% 231	18.25% 77	10.19% 43	3.08% 13	1.42% 6	422
I come to downtown for special events	23.98% 100	47.96% 200	15.35% 64	5.28% 22	2.16% 9	5.28% 22	417
Customer service is good in downtown Metuchen stores	19.39% 82	52.72% 223	19.86% 84	3.07% 13	0.95% 4	4.02% 17	423
I know where the new shops and restaurants are in the downtown	26.07% 110	45.26% 191	13.74% 58	9.48% 40	4.27% 18	1.18% 5	422
The pedestrian lighting in downtown makes me feel safe at night	9.29% 39	41.90% 176	28.81% 121	12.86% 54	2.86% 12	4.29% 18	420
I prefer to park in a parking garage	5.46% 23	8.79% 37	22.80% 96	25.18% 106	26.84% 113	10.93% 46	421
As a pedestrian, I feel unsafe crossing the street.	18.14% 76	21.72% 91	17.66% 74	25.78% 108	14.08% 59	2.63% 11	419
There are not enough trees, flowers and benches downtown	13.51% 57	31.75% 134	31.75% 134	15.88% 67	4.50% 19	2.61% 11	422
The sidewalks are cracked and unsafe	16.86% 71	25.18% 106	34.68% 146	14.73% 62	3.56% 15	4.99% 21	421
The public trash cans frequently overflow	10.61% 45	19.10% 81	29.01% 123	21.70% 92	7.55% 32	12.03% 51	424
I would use designated handicapped parking spaces if they were available on Main Street	5.01% 21	5.01% 21	14.80% 62	11.93% 50	18.14% 76	45.11% 189	419
The Metuchen downtown has a good selection of restaurants and eateries that I enjoy	22.38% 94	48.33% 203	13.81% 58	9.29% 39	4.29% 18	1.90% 8	420
Store hours are convenient for me	6.15% 26	33.81% 143	25.77% 109	23.17% 98	7.80% 33	3.31% 14	423
More should be done to preserve the historic architecture downtown	28.20% 119	38.39% 162	23.93% 101	3.79% 16	2.13% 9	3.55% 15	422
I feel safe when I walk in downtown	39.48% 167	47.75% 202	6.86% 29	4.02% 17	0.71% 3	1.18% 5	423
I feel safe in the parking lots in downtown	25.83% 109	47.16% 199	14.69% 62	4.74% 20	1.18% 5	6.40% 27	422
I am willing to shop local even if it costs slightly more	30.73% 130	43.50% 184	10.87% 46	9.22% 39	3.31% 14	2.36% 10	423
I usually shop in several stores when shopping in downtown	6.67% 28	34.05% 143	20.48% 86	25.00% 105	8.33% 35	5.48% 23	420
Downtown Metuchen has a good selection of retail stores that I like and use	2.63% 11	16.03% 67	19.86% 83	33.97% 142	24.88% 104	2.63% 11	418

### Q9 During a typical visit, in downtown Metuchen how much do you spend at dining and drinking establishments during one visit?

Answered: 426 Skipped: 0

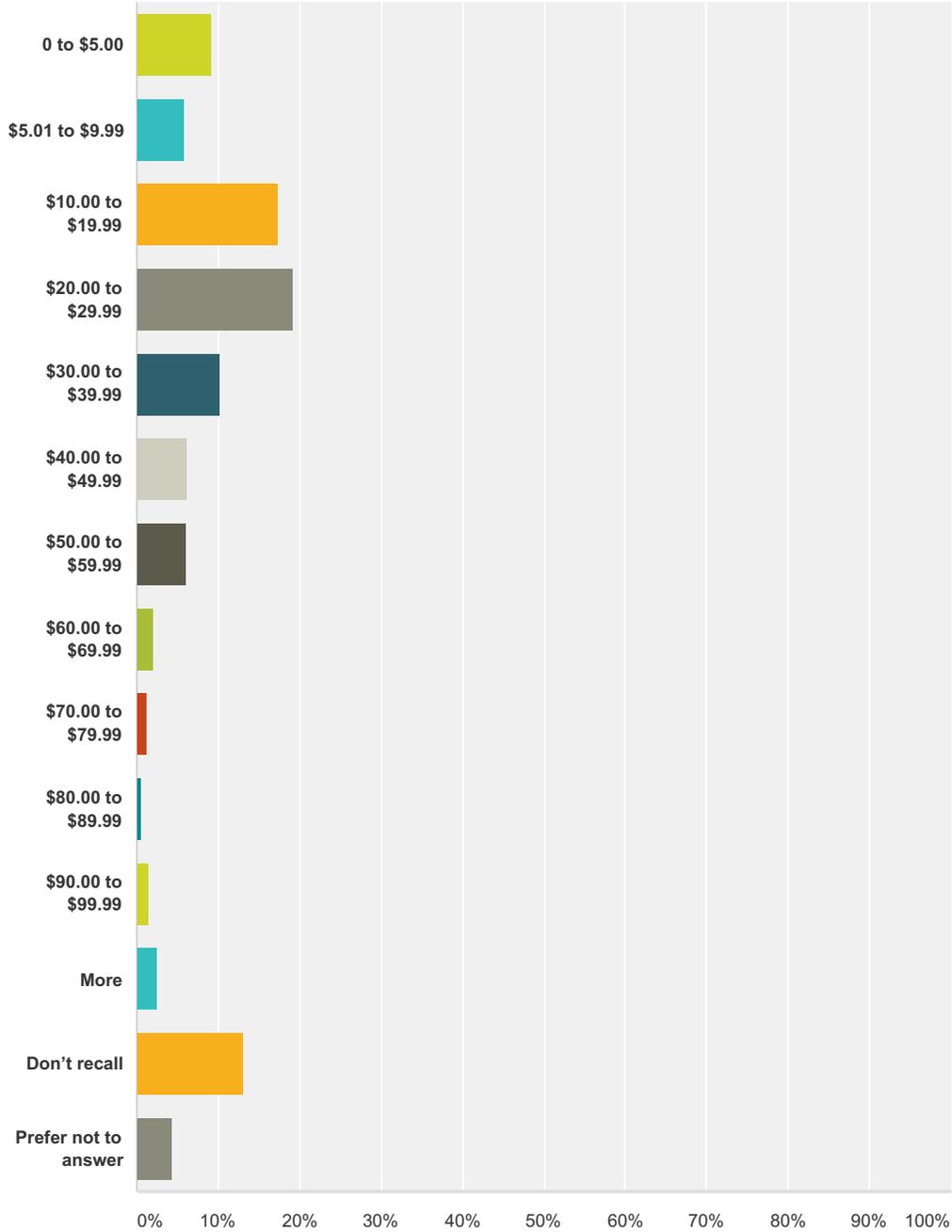


Answer Choices	Responses
0 to \$5.00	3.29% 14
\$5.01 to \$9.99	2.35% 10

\$10.00 to \$19.99	6.34%	27
\$20.00 to \$29.99	10.80%	46
\$30.00 to \$39.99	11.74%	50
\$40.00 to \$49.99	12.91%	55
\$50.00 to \$59.99	14.55%	62
\$60.00 to \$69.99	10.56%	45
\$70.00 to \$79.99	7.04%	30
\$80.00 to \$89.99	5.40%	23
\$90.00 to \$99.99	3.05%	13
More	4.46%	19
Don't recall	4.46%	19
Prefer not to answer	3.05%	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>426</b>

### Q10 During a typical visit, in downtown Metuchen how much do you spend at retail stores and shops during one visit?

Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
0 to \$5.00	9.15% 39
\$5.01 to \$9.99	5.87% 25
\$10.00 to \$19.99	17.37% 74

\$20.00 to \$29.99	19.25%	82
\$30.00 to \$39.99	10.33%	44
\$40.00 to \$49.99	6.34%	27
\$50.00 to \$59.99	6.10%	26
\$60.00 to \$69.99	2.11%	9
\$70.00 to \$79.99	1.17%	5
\$80.00 to \$89.99	0.70%	3
\$90.00 to \$99.99	1.41%	6
More	2.58%	11
Don't recall	13.15%	56
Prefer not to answer	4.46%	19
<b>Total</b>		<b>426</b>

**Q11 We want to know what types of businesses would make you want to shop on downtown Metuchen more often. Please name two kinds of new restaurants or eateries you would like to see here. Please provide a response in words.**

Answered: 327 Skipped: 99

Answer Choices	Responses	
First choice	100.00%	327
Second choice	85.32%	279

**Q12 What kind of new retail stores would you most like to see here? Please provide a response using words.**

Answered: 307 Skipped: 119

Answer Choices	Responses	
First choice	100.00%	307
Second choice	82.08%	252

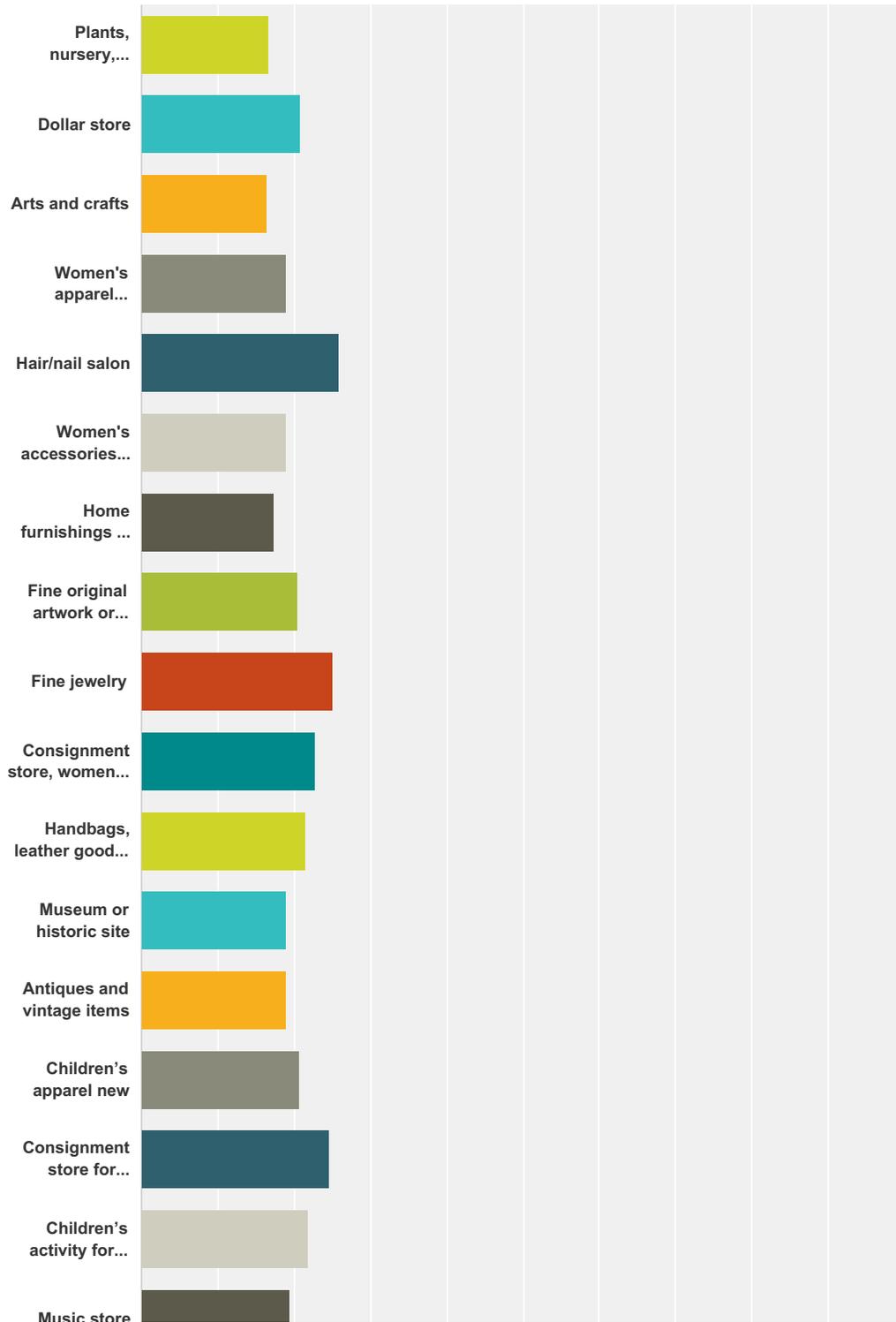
**Q13 What kind of new entertainment, club, or arts venue would you most like to see here? Please provide a response using words.**

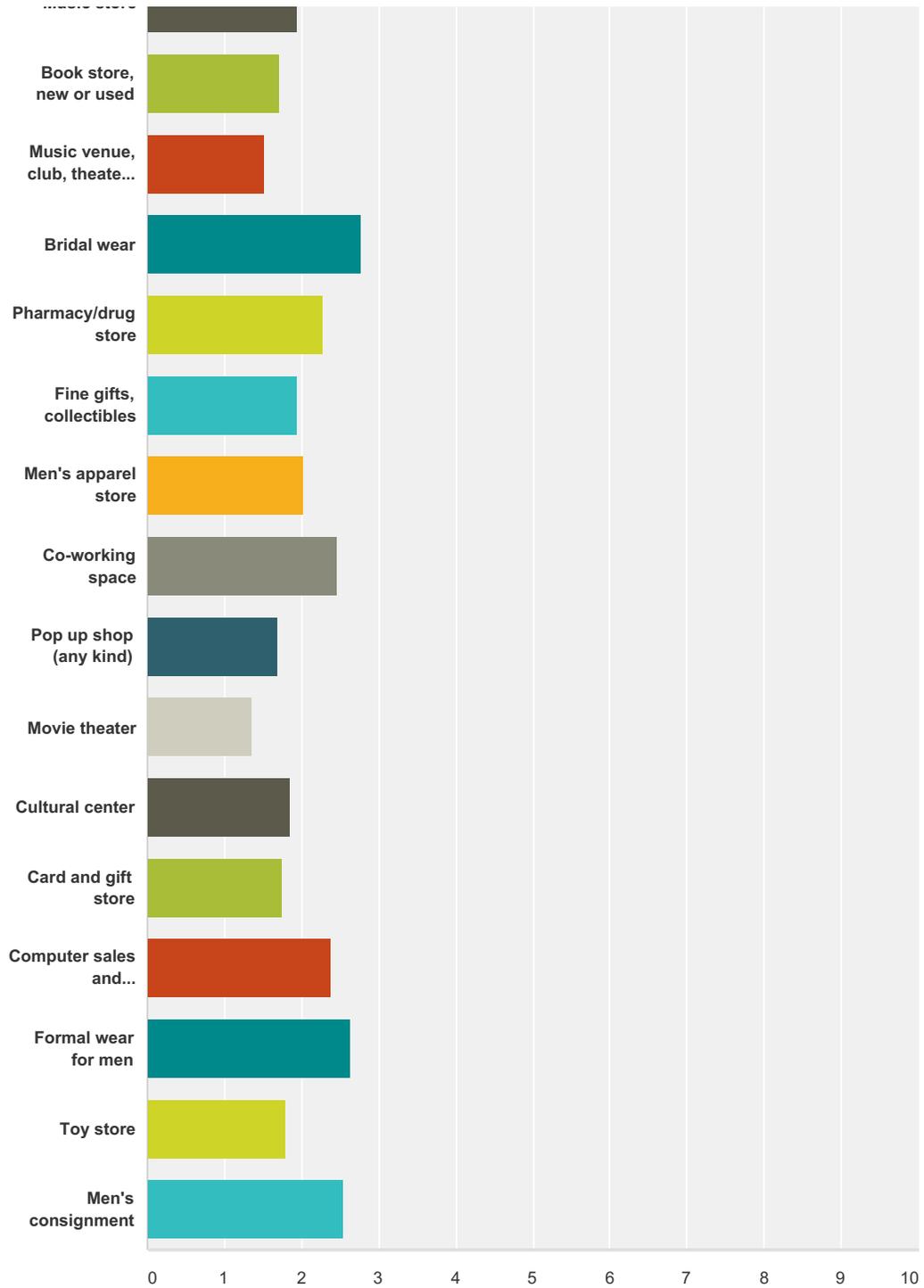
Answered: 251 Skipped: 175

Answer Choices	Responses	
First choice	100.00%	251
Second choice	67.73%	170

**Q14 Would you visit the Metuchen downtown more often if it offered more of the following retail stores, merchandise, or service businesses? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that appeal to you. Yes Maybe No. One answer per line please.**

Answered: 426 Skipped: 0





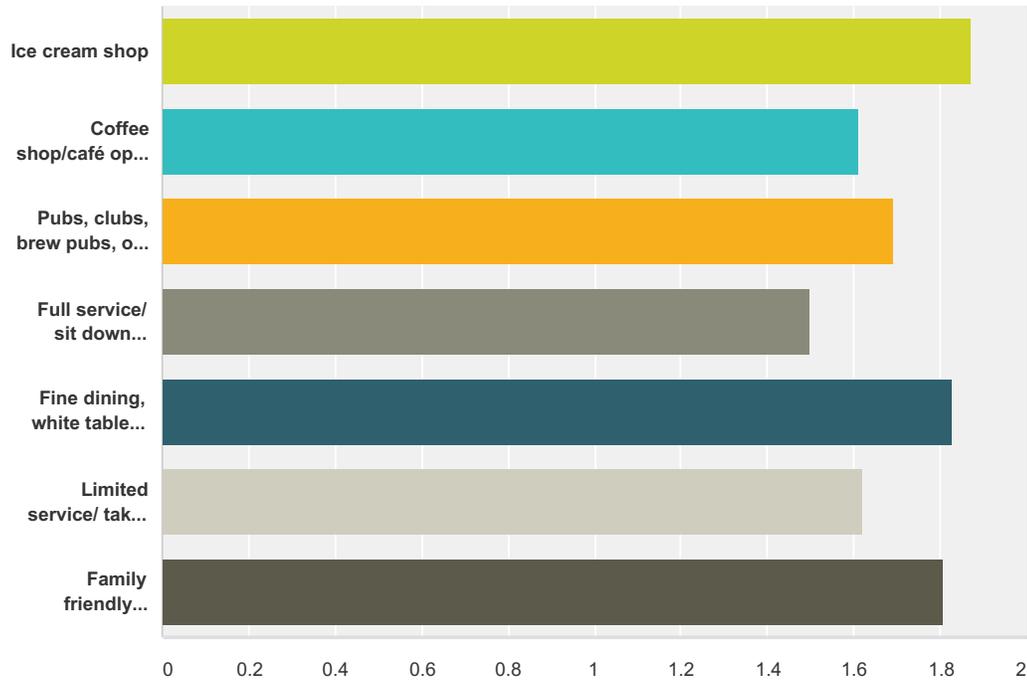
	Yes	Maybe	No	Total	Weighted Average
Plants, nursery, gardening supplies	51.83% 212	28.12% 115	20.05% 82	409	1.68
Dollar store	33.58% 137	25.00% 102	41.42% 169	408	2.08
Arts and crafts	52.21% 213	30.15% 123	17.65% 72	408	1.65

Women's apparel boutique	<b>40.69%</b> 164	<b>29.78%</b> 120	<b>29.53%</b> 119	403	1.89
Hair/nail salon	<b>9.45%</b> 38	<b>22.14%</b> 89	<b>68.41%</b> 275	402	2.59
Women's accessories store	<b>40.49%</b> 166	<b>29.51%</b> 121	<b>30.00%</b> 123	410	1.90
Home furnishings and accessories	<b>45.72%</b> 187	<b>34.47%</b> 141	<b>19.80%</b> 81	409	1.74
Fine original artwork or gallery	<b>28.75%</b> 117	<b>38.33%</b> 156	<b>32.92%</b> 134	407	2.04
Fine jewelry	<b>10.92%</b> 44	<b>27.30%</b> 110	<b>61.79%</b> 249	403	2.51
Consignment store, women's clothing	<b>22.17%</b> 90	<b>28.57%</b> 116	<b>49.26%</b> 200	406	2.27
Handbags, leather goods, luggage	<b>24.88%</b> 100	<b>34.58%</b> 139	<b>40.55%</b> 163	402	2.16
Museum or historic site	<b>39.07%</b> 159	<b>32.92%</b> 134	<b>28.01%</b> 114	407	1.89
Antiques and vintage items	<b>39.27%</b> 161	<b>32.68%</b> 134	<b>28.05%</b> 115	410	1.89
Children's apparel new	<b>34.81%</b> 141	<b>23.95%</b> 97	<b>41.23%</b> 167	405	2.06
Consignment store for children's clothing	<b>16.22%</b> 66	<b>21.38%</b> 87	<b>62.41%</b> 254	407	2.46
Children's activity for birthday parties, classes etc.	<b>30.52%</b> 123	<b>20.35%</b> 82	<b>49.13%</b> 198	403	2.19
Music store	<b>35.64%</b> 144	<b>34.16%</b> 138	<b>30.20%</b> 122	404	1.95
Book store, new or used	<b>47.93%</b> 197	<b>32.36%</b> 133	<b>19.71%</b> 81	411	1.72
Music venue, club, theater etc.	<b>60.44%</b> 246	<b>26.78%</b> 109	<b>12.78%</b> 52	407	1.52
Bridal wear	<b>4.70%</b> 19	<b>12.13%</b> 49	<b>83.17%</b> 336	404	2.78
Pharmacy/drug store	<b>22.83%</b> 92	<b>27.79%</b> 112	<b>49.38%</b> 199	403	2.27
Fine gifts, collectibles	<b>34.80%</b> 142	<b>35.78%</b> 146	<b>29.41%</b> 120	408	1.95
Men's apparel store	<b>31.68%</b> 128	<b>34.65%</b> 140	<b>33.66%</b> 136	404	2.02
Co-working space	<b>11.53%</b> 46	<b>30.83%</b> 123	<b>57.64%</b> 230	399	2.46
Pop up shop (any kind)	<b>43.67%</b> 176	<b>42.43%</b> 171	<b>13.90%</b> 56	403	1.70
Movie theater	<b>73.72%</b> 303	<b>17.27%</b> 71	<b>9.00%</b> 37	411	1.35
Cultural center	<b>40.80%</b> 164	<b>32.34%</b> 130	<b>26.87%</b> 108	402	1.86
Card and gift store	<b>45.34%</b> 185	<b>33.82%</b> 138	<b>20.83%</b> 85	408	1.75

Computer sales and service/repair	<b>13.18%</b> 53	<b>35.07%</b> 141	<b>51.74%</b> 208	402	2.39
Formal wear for men	<b>8.19%</b> 33	<b>19.85%</b> 80	<b>71.96%</b> 290	403	2.64
Toy store	<b>44.50%</b> 182	<b>30.56%</b> 125	<b>24.94%</b> 102	409	1.80
Men's consignment	<b>9.05%</b> 36	<b>27.14%</b> 108	<b>63.82%</b> 254	398	2.55

**Q15 Would you visit the downtown more often if it offered more of the following food or dining options? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that appeal to you.**

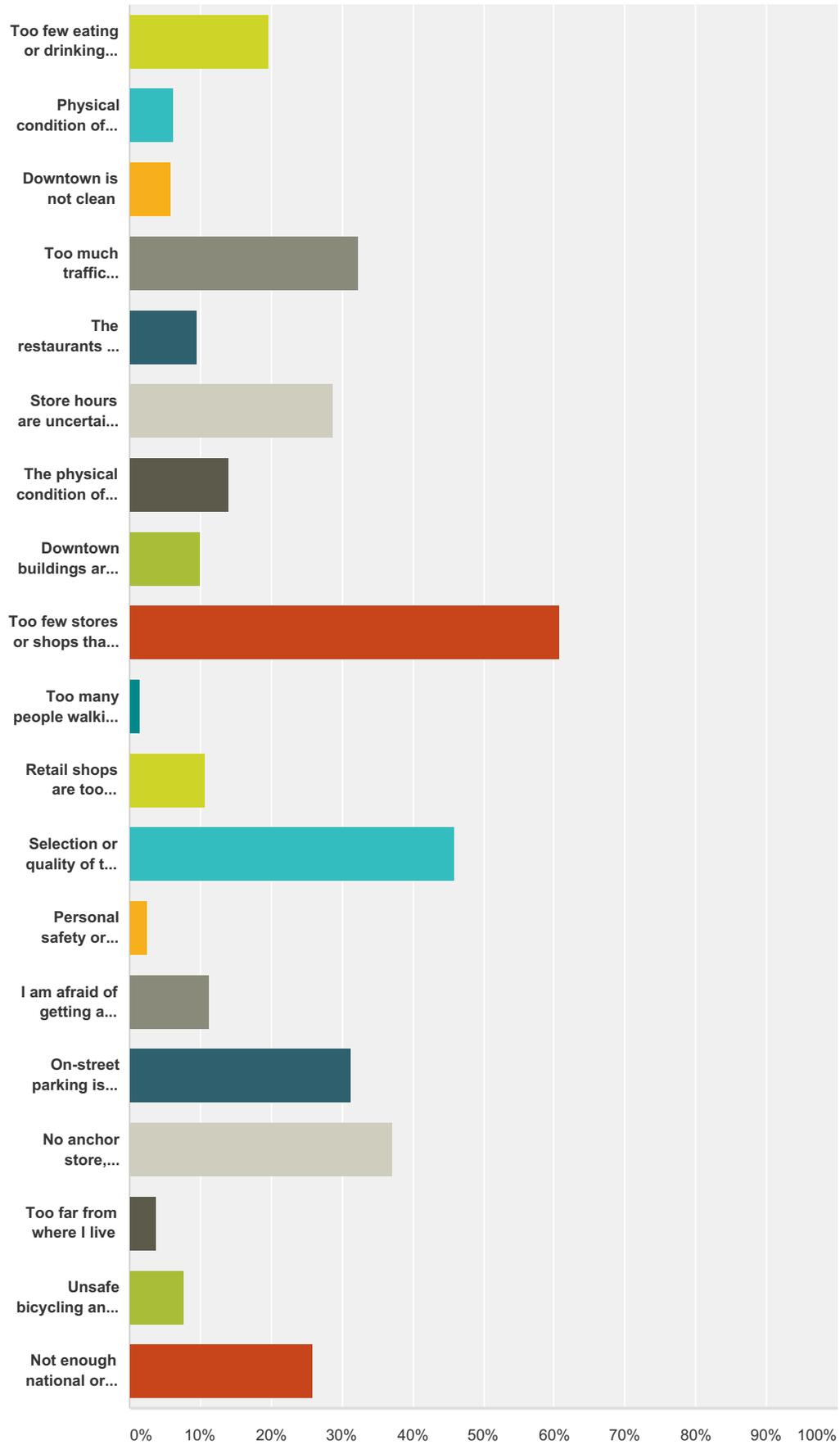
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



	Yes	Maybe	No	Total	Weighted Average
Ice cream shop	41.48% 168	30.12% 122	28.40% 115	405	1.87
Coffee shop/café open late hours	56.97% 237	24.76% 103	18.27% 76	416	1.61
Pubs, clubs, brew pubs, or taverns	53.27% 220	24.94% 103	21.79% 90	413	1.69
Full service/ sit down restaurants	61.08% 248	28.33% 115	10.59% 43	406	1.50
Fine dining, white table cloth restaurants	41.26% 170	33.98% 140	24.76% 102	412	1.83
Limited service/ take out counter service restaurant	51.60% 210	34.40% 140	14.00% 57	407	1.62
Family friendly restaurant with a kid's menu	46.57% 190	25.74% 105	27.70% 113	408	1.81

**Q16 Which of the following are the main reasons you do not visit downtown Metuchen more often? Check at least ONE answer, and any others that apply to you.**

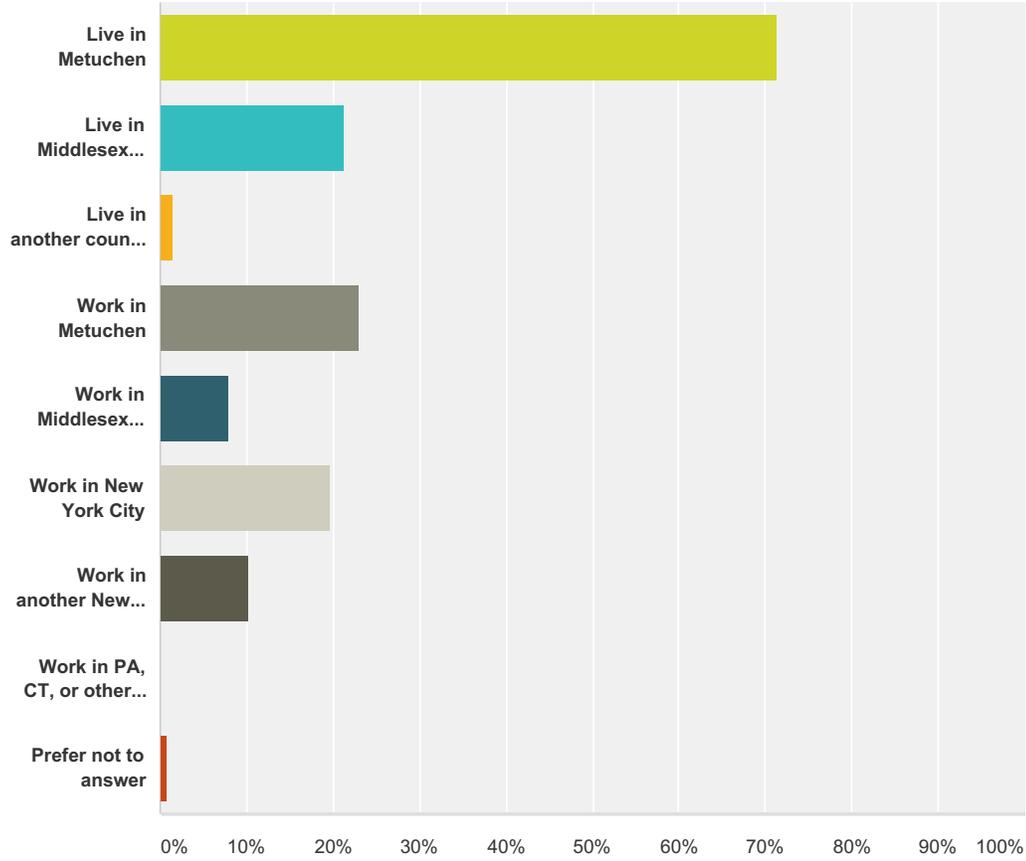
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Too few eating or drinking places that I patronize	19.72%	84
Physical condition of the streets and sidewalks in downtown	6.34%	27
Downtown is not clean	5.87%	25
Too much traffic congestion along Main Street	32.39%	138
The restaurants in downtown are too expensive for my family	9.62%	41
Store hours are uncertain or inconvenient	28.87%	123
The physical condition of the storefronts and downtown buildings is poor	14.08%	60
Downtown buildings are not well maintained or restored	10.09%	43
Too few stores or shops that interest me	60.80%	259
Too many people walking on Main Street in downtown Metuchen	1.41%	6
Retail shops are too expensive	10.56%	45
Selection or quality of the merchandise in stores does not interest me	46.01%	196
Personal safety or perception of safety	2.58%	11
I am afraid of getting a parking ticket	11.27%	48
On-street parking is always full when I come to downtown	31.22%	133
No anchor store, destination business, or performing arts venue	37.09%	158
Too far from where I live	3.76%	16
Unsafe bicycling and pedestrian conditions	7.75%	33
Not enough national or regional brand name stores	25.82%	110
<b>Total Respondents: 426</b>		

### Q17 Do you work or live in Metuchen? Check at least ONE answer and any other that apply.

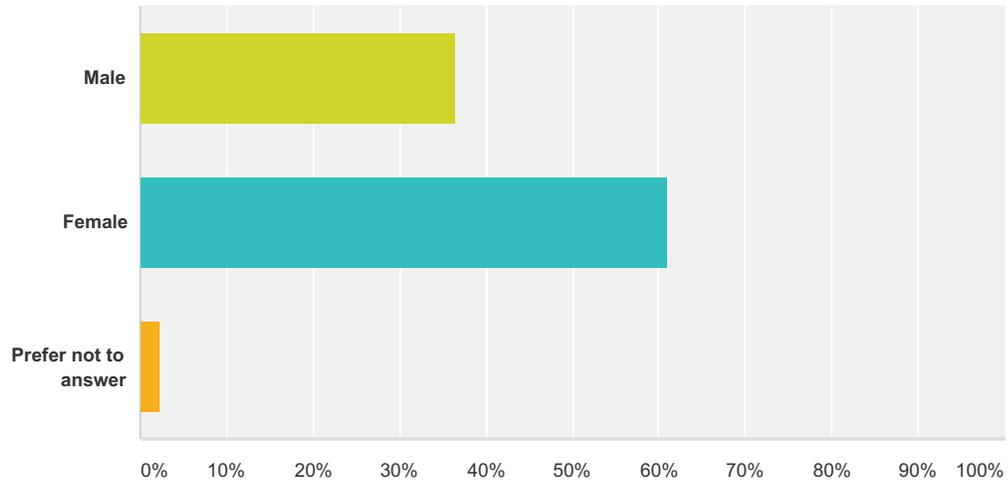
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Live in Metuchen	71.36% 304
Live in Middlesex County other than Metuchen	21.36% 91
Live in another county in New Jersey	1.41% 6
Work in Metuchen	23.00% 98
Work in Middlesex County other than Metuchen	7.98% 34
Work in New York City	19.72% 84
Work in another New Jersey community	10.33% 44
Work in PA, CT, or other state	0.00% 0
Prefer not to answer	0.94% 4
<b>Total Respondents: 426</b>	

### Q18 What is your gender?

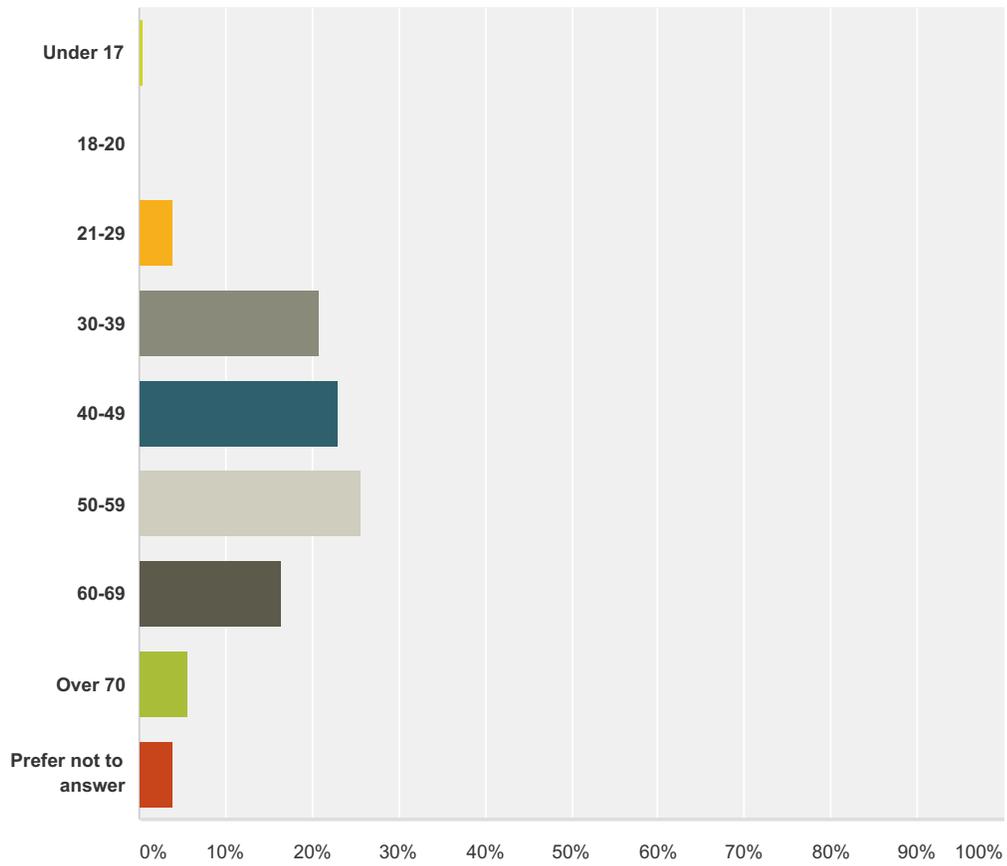
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	36.62%	156
Female	61.03%	260
Prefer not to answer	2.35%	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>426</b>

### Q19 Which category below includes your age?

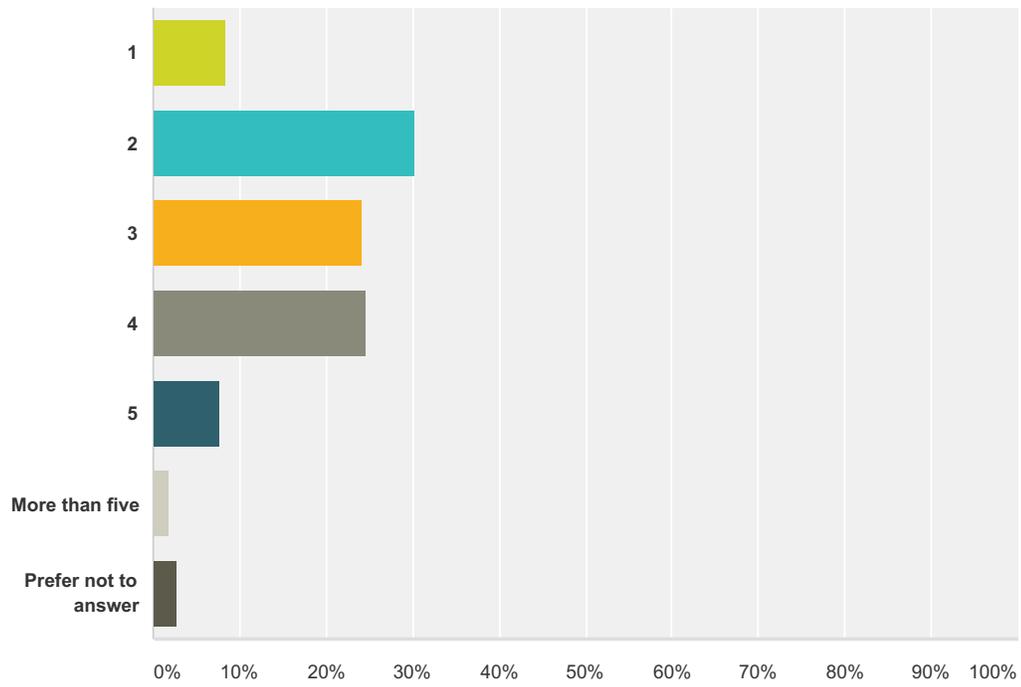
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 17	0.47%	2
18-20	0.00%	0
21-29	3.99%	17
30-39	20.89%	89
40-49	23.00%	98
50-59	25.59%	109
60-69	16.43%	70
Over 70	5.63%	24
Prefer not to answer	3.99%	17
<b>Total</b>		<b>426</b>

### Q20 How many people including yourself currently live in your household?

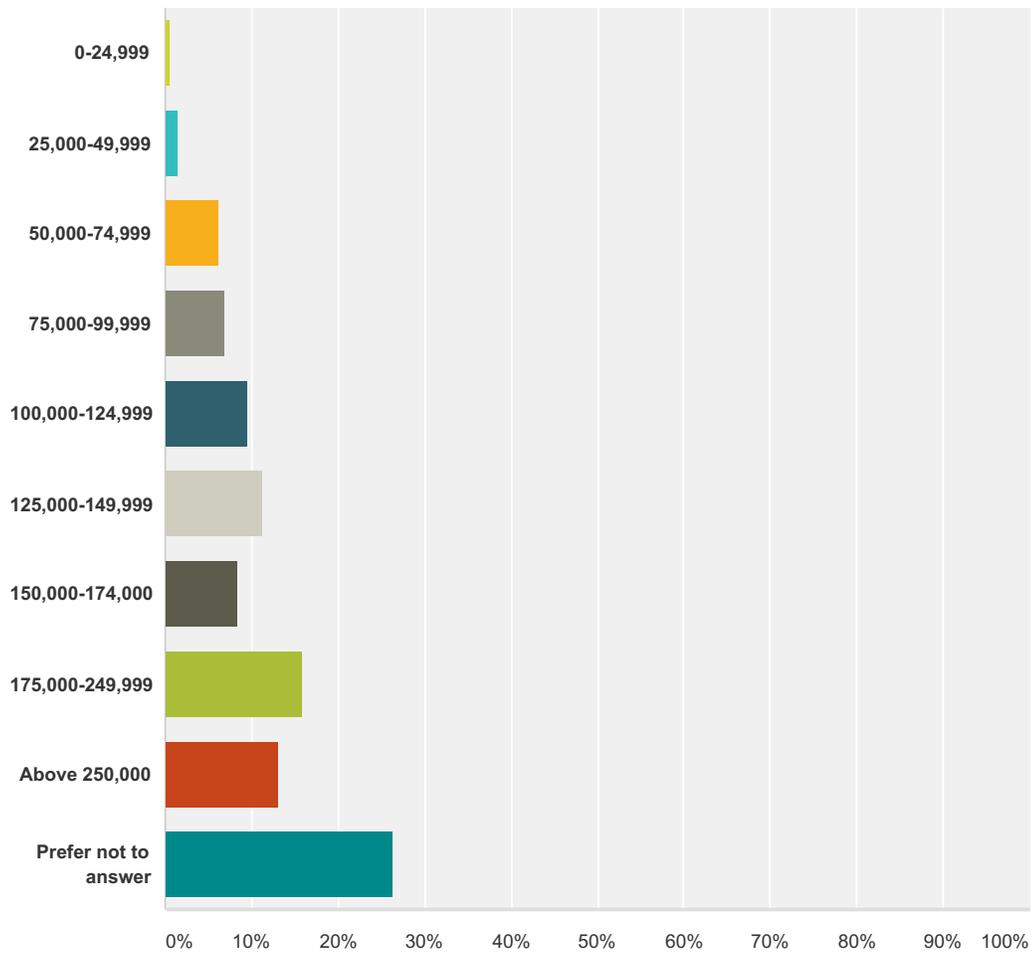
Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
1	8.45%	36
2	30.28%	129
3	24.18%	103
4	24.65%	105
5	7.75%	33
More than five	1.88%	8
Prefer not to answer	2.82%	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>426</b>

### Q21 What is your approximate average household income?

Answered: 426 Skipped: 0

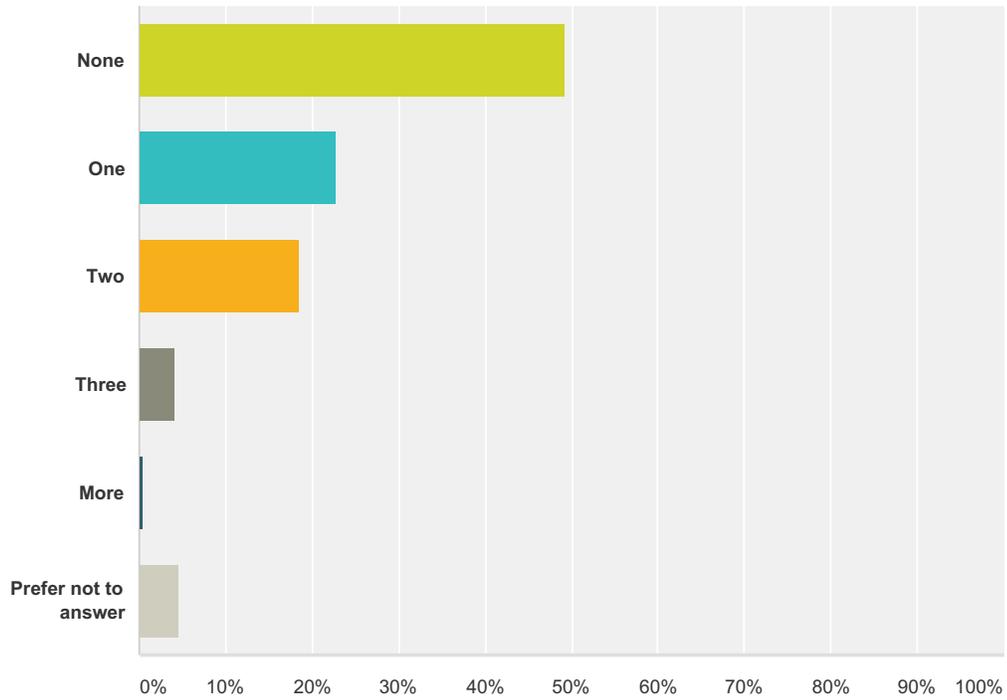


Answer Choices	Responses
0-24,999	0.70% 3
25,000-49,999	1.41% 6
50,000-74,999	6.34% 27
75,000-99,999	6.81% 29
100,000-124,999	9.62% 41
125,000-149,999	11.27% 48
150,000-174,000	8.45% 36
175,000-249,999	15.96% 68
Above 250,000	13.15% 56
Prefer not to answer	26.29% 112

Total	426
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### Q22 How many children age 17 or younger live in your household?

Answered: 426 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
None	49.30% 210
One	22.77% 97
Two	18.54% 79
Three	4.23% 18
More	0.47% 2
Prefer not to answer	4.69% 20
<b>Total</b>	<b>426</b>

**Q23 Please share any further comments about the Metuchen Downtown Alliance, our Main Street shopping district, this survey, or any other thoughts about Metuchen.**

Answered: 117 Skipped: 309

**Q24 If you would like your name to be entered our random drawing for one \$250 Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce Gift Certificate. The gift certificate can be spent at any participating Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce business member. Please provide all of the following information. This will be used to notify you of the drawing results. The random drawing will be held on January 2, 2017 and the winner will be contacted then.**

Answered: 220 Skipped: 206

Answer Choices	Responses	
Name	100.00%	220
Email address	99.09%	218
Phone number	97.27%	214

## **Appendix B**

**Question 4 responses. None have been omitted, changed or altered except to correct obvious spelling errors.**

**Question Four: Please share any other suggestions on what Metuchen Downtown Alliance could do to improve your Downtown Metuchen experience and make it more likely that you would frequent more Metuchen businesses.**

**Comments about the Business Mixture – 92 Comments:**

1. We need more shops in town so residents can purchase items locally (rather than through the Internet) which would draw people downtown. As I understand it, the town makes it very difficult to open shop fronts.
2. A book store and antique or gift shop would be terrific.
3. A couple national retailers
4. A mix of regional or national anchor stores with mom and pops to create a true destination. We are on that path with Whole Foods moving in.
5. Add more liquor licenses for restaurants.
6. Add more of a selection of businesses; clothing, toys, shoes, spa
7. Add more shopping options and different stores of that sort
8. Also, shops need to be open when people get home from work. Shops that close at six are useless to me.
9. Although the medium income is high, there are many middle-class families with budgets or that have to make choices about how and where to spend their money. There should be places and events that reflect diverse incomes. Metuchen should not look to be Westfield, that's why people like to come and live here.
10. Attract more restaurants to achieve critical mass for Metuchen as a restaurant destination, like Westfield and Cranford.
11. Better mix of retail.
12. Better variety of shops, so I would be motivated to be downtown.
13. Bring an anchor store Old Navy etc.
14. Bring in Designer Brands
15. Bring in some small shops
16. Bring me more businesses to frequent! I'd like to shop local for many things - it is currently impossible. More places with vibes like Gardenia's, Cai's, etc. Small and unique is what would make me happy.
17. Business and consumer service businesses are fine but when there are so many duplicates there are going to be failures then empty stores. We need a good mix of businesses.
18. Businesses that uphold Metuchen's fame as a "Brainy Borough"
19. Butcher, hardware store, sundry shop with reasonable prices, more flowers, quarters machine for sure
20. Chain stores
21. Change up the variety. Right now, there are only a few things I can get downtown. I wish (and hope it will soon be the case) that I can do all my shopping in Metuchen.

22. Clothing store (i.e., The Gap, Old Navy, etc.)
23. Creating a better mix of retail options would be good.
24. Definitely need more destination businesses. Right now, I go downtown for one or two things, but there is no incentive for variety of businesses that would have me "shop" for a time period at multiple stores, like I do in a town like Westfield.
25. Develop: Butcher shop Seafood store Ramen noodle shop Art coop Another pub Indie film fest / with dining coupon Jazz fest / with dining coupon
26. Do we try to keep chain stores from downtown?
27. Don't always have time for a sit-down meal.
28. Encourage less duplicative businesses which looks like it's happening, so thank you. like hearing there will be a wine bar and possibly toy store.
29. Farm to table restaurants (more NYC style, innovative eateries). More retail stores - create an "experience" for shoppers with a wide variety of shops that cater to various audiences. Have a mix of unique, sophisticated mom and pop places, with name brand retail. Shops should look nice and trendy. Encourage space for one or two pop up shops too.
30. Fill vacant stores, increase diversity of shops/restaurants, improve sidewalks, more pedestrian safety improvements, renovate Forum theater/establish regular art-house movies.
31. GET DIFFERENT VARIETY OF SHOPS TO MAKE WALKING DOWNTOWN WORTHWHILE
32. gift shops, shoe store, nice clothing store, variety-not all food related
33. Have interesting shops for various age groups: families, younger people/couples, and older people.
34. Have something for kids...like a pottery painting place or something that they can do so they want to be downtown and then they will naturally need to eat, etc. Also a sports store since they are all involved in school activities
35. I already frequent most businesses down town. It would be nice to have a variety of businesses, but I understand the logistics of why we don't have them.
36. I don't think you should necessarily restrict duplicate businesses, but we need more variety. Not just restaurants and nail salons.
37. I get the adverse feelings on some chain places coming into town. But I think they should be allowed with oversight from the MDA as to whom is allowed. Think of it like food trucks...one single truck won't attract that many customers, but if you group a 4+ it's almost an event that people will go to. You need to have a mix of chain and small business.
38. I hate shopping and only go to stores for specific items. I support downtown stores whenever possible. Downtown cannot compete with Malls, so needs stores that are NOT found in Malls. Personal service stores, including restaurants, fit this profile.
39. I know that people like the idea of mom & pops but a few franchise opportunities could be good to bring people in from route 1.

40. I live in Edison, commute everyday, park in garage. There isn't a restaurant to get a burger and good ice cream, I drive to downtown Westfield. We need good pastry shops. Could use an old fashion ice cream parlor/restaurant. Love Boyd's bust Eye Lash store(ugh). Only eateries that rock; The French, Hailey's, Brick Oven and Bagel Pantry. I go to Harold's for a good sandwich. So sorry A &P Liquor left and we could use a good chain frozen yogurt place. Just give the reason to stop and shop and please no more Nail places.
41. I think it is also important to bring a few of stores that are well known and popular, such as Trader Joe's or Whole Foods Market.
42. I think it's time to let in chains - I would rather have had a Starbucks replace Luca's than to have had to stare at that abandoned building for a decade - it blighted the entire street
43. I think there should be a better variety of businesses in town which caters to families and various interests. Toy stores, cooking stores, boutiques, etc. I also think small businesses which cater to healthy choices like a smoothie/juice shop or lunch offerings besides pizza.
44. I wish we had an Indian restaurant and a (good) bookstore.
45. I would love to see a store geared to children. Like a toy store or clothing store.
46. I'd rather see duplicate businesses than empty storefronts.
47. I'm happy we finally have a coffee shop with decent coffee. Not all residents are raising families. We have a need for stores that cater to other demographics.
48. Independent book store! (Look at Word in Jersey City)
49. It would be great to have more stores, cafes and restaurants that are chains that we know are successes at other sites.
50. Key priorities for me are bringing in more high quality flagship businesses and getting rid of vacancies and mediocre businesses.
51. Less hair/nail salon . Open a bike shop, kid's games store. Wine and cheese place like the one in Red Bank or wine library near Millburn.
52. More and varied retail.
53. More bars and restaurants with liquor licenses.
54. More chain type of stores like Westfield downtown
55. More diversity in businesses and dining options (although this has really improved lately!). Maybe a multi-purpose arts/entertainment gallery space could be a good draw for the town.
56. More modern stores for younger families.
57. More options to dine in
58. More places with a liquor license. I am a single mom, often go out with my kids and don't want to bring a whole bottle of wine for BYOB. More moderately priced places for browsing for unique gifts. I know a lot of people like brass lantern, but personally it comes across as stuffy and grandmotherly. This is a store in my former hometown that was always a draw for me: <http://helloessentials.com/> as was this: <http://thornesmarketplace.com/> I think Cai's is a nice addition and I enjoy it, but the layout for ordering could use a little help.
59. More ready to eat food businesses.

60. more stores like morris stores and marmax shoes also a good steak house.
61. More stores that carry clothing and gift items. Like the old Morris store.
62. More tween/teen-friendly places, activities.
63. Need less repetition of businesses.
64. Need to have businesses in town that people want to go to and no vacant stores
65. Need to have some main stream businesses in town not just the small mom and pop stores.
66. Only thing in town are a few places to eat but not much else to do.
67. Parking
68. Retail would have to be Outlet or Talbots, Brook Brothers, Chicos, and popular stores that are no longer in Menlo or Woodbridge in order to be an attraction.
69. something different already---fish market. cheese shop. vegetable market shoe store? enough with the same old same old!
70. Stop bringing in the same businesses. I don't take dance lessons, I don't go to salons, I don't wear jewelry, other than that it is only food
71. Stop shutting out corporate stores like Starbucks. They work well in downtowns like Westfield and Summit. Penalize landlord who leave stores vacant and run down.
72. Strong preference for local, small, authentic over chain stores. Metuchen should aim for high quality.
73. The merchandise and food in Metuchen are too expensive Toscano Firenze is good, but a fortune! Lollipop land looks like crap from the dollar store. The cupcakes are overpriced and not good. Nowhere got kids and families to eat.
74. There need to be more places to casually 'browse'
75. There needs to be a greater selection of restaurants and bars, which are businesses that will drive foot traffic and bring visitors into the town.
76. Too many hair salons and massage parlors.
77. try to get more retail stores...clothing, shoes, toys, miss the hardware store.
78. Um, gee, how about letting in the name businesses in that we all have to drive OUT of town to go to.
79. Varied businesses. I already shop at most but would like more options.
80. Variety of stores...clothing or shoe stores would be nice. Also a unique gift shop
81. very imp. to have a large grocery store in Metuchen.
82. we already have free Saturday parking in the center st lot
83. We definitely need a more diverse offering of store types - Variety of shopping options
84. We don't have many needs but it would be great to have a good bookstore, good toy store, some home and garden stores, and a hardware store, maybe a bike store though there is one close by on Route 27.
85. We have plenty of Italian and Asian...offer "Sunday Lunch" Menus like in The UK and Ireland for families..

86. WE need a GOOD NYC like Jewish Deli and a fixed up NJ Diner that fits into the new attractive surroundings.....
87. We need a really good used book store. We can't compete with B&N or Amazon, but a good, non-moldy bookstore that encourages browsing and hosts book groups, discussions, and cultural events would be an asset. I wish a store like Marafiki would also sell crafts by local and not-so-local artists. There are many creative people in the area who would benefit from a regular outlet for their goods, and not just at fairs or EDDBA or other seasonal events. While there are many service businesses and professional offices in town, that's where people go for these services, because they're convenient. Not all of downtown should consist of shopping. In fact, these services (bank, cleaners, yoga, pedicure) are the primary reasons why I go downtown. If there are too many, the market will sort that out.
88. We need more places to eat that could attract young people to walk around, similar to Somerville. We need more than one bar and perhaps a Chipotle or CVS.
89. We need more variety downtown. There are too many pizza places, nail salons etc. A chain (such as Starbucks) which is open extended hours would also help.
90. We need more variety. Antique shops, bookstores, concerts, art films, theater.
91. While it is a challenge, a greater variety of shops - apparel, home decoration, etc. would be a good addition.
92. Would love more health-conscious cafes that offer organic things! Shakes, clean eating, aisi bowls, options for people who want to eat healthy!!!!

**Comments about Parking and/or Traffic Conditions – 55 Comments:**

1. Free parking x 3
2. Agree the parking meters need to be addressed. I would suggest mirroring the metered system destinations like Westfield, Asbury Park, Long Branch etc. have. It's the newest technology; rather than installing individual meters with credit cards? (not sure of the reference/intention above)
3. Also increasing pedestrian safety and reducing traffic, especially large trucks, through downtown. I am very concerned about traffic on Lake/rt 27 through town
4. Also, keep the change meters!! I don't have a credit card and can't pay if you take away the change meters!!!
5. Also, large trucks should not be allowed on Main Street at all. They are unsafe. They are loud and make walking down Main uncomfortable and unpleasant. The exhaust from the trucks is disgusting to breath in, especially when you are walking and the truck is sitting in traffic, idling.
6. And make the streets wider. It's too crowded.
7. Better parking situation; garage is big plus as are coming signs.
8. Construction in new street is not safe by blocking traffic.
9. Do away with parking meters on Main Street, Pearl and New.
10. Do something about the traffic mess. I park in the new garage and it is ridiculous to have cars backed up so that it takes 15-20 minutes to get out when NJ transit is delayed

11. Drivers are not taking extra precautions for pedestrians. If I get honked at for stopping to let someone cross in the crosswalk one more time I am going to lose it. My children used to be in the jog stroller with me and people would not stop. It is getting worse and I worry about my children's safety overall.
12. Easier parking.
13. Employee parking
14. Extremely important is traffic safety for both pedestrians and cars. It seems that few people are aware of safety laws and rules and people continue to cross between the lights without looking for oncoming traffic. Likewise, cars make dangerous left-hand turns into oncoming traffic at Main and New Streets. Nobody seems to understand how to observe the stop signs on Pearl Street at the New Street intersection. Education about how to keep safe, especially in view of increased traffic downtown, will be vital. And if we haven't already, we absolutely need to deal with the increase in cars in the downtown area which will be arriving with the opening of the Woodmont apartments.
15. Free parking on Main St.
16. Get state and county to create a protected bike lane from St. Joe's down central to 27 and along 27 to Main and Main to Amboy. Also, tie bike lane to greenway
17. Have employees park in the lot and save the street parking for customers. Sometimes I need to run in a store and can't find a spot.
18. Have Metuchen bank open their lot after hours to free parking, people do it anyway, make it legal.
19. Have updated meters at train station to take credit/debit for long term parking and maybe have a sign at the parking garage showing number of available spaces.
20. Help improve restaurant business with the parking space
21. I shop downtown a lot. Parking is an issue however I guess there are free hours on the deck. The downtown gets very congested and I worry what it will be like once whole foods is in operation.
22. I wish there was close, short-term parking along main street. Often, I want to quickly pick up take-out or drop a package at the UPS store, but waste time circling looking for ANY parking spot. I often choose to go elsewhere in Edison, because there is no parking and so much traffic congestion in Metuchen.
23. Improve parking
24. Improve traffic flow. It takes more time to get through downtown than it takes to get there.
25. Improve traffic situation / ability to safely and easily get in and out during high traffic times
26. It's upsetting to see that there are no questions here that address the morning and evening traffic issues downtown. There is no police presence during this time, only blocked intersections. this is only going to get worse. M

27. Keep the commuters out of the lot behind the New Street shops. They block up parking spots for customers trying to access those stores, and no one monitors them to ticket them.
28. Lack of parking on the east side of Main Street is an issue.
29. No Bike lanes as the traffic is bad enough.
30. Once Whole Foods, etc. opens, traffic cops would help with MAJOR traffic issues.
31. Parking
32. Parking again is an issue...
33. Parking is a problem and parking deck is a hassle for residents. The pearl street lot is the only one I use.
34. Parking is a thing for me. I have bad feet, not bad enough to have a handicap thingy but I tend to frequent stores that have easy parking.
35. Parking is important - the new garage has helped, but more is always better.
36. Parking is now a nightmare because of the loss of Pearl Street lot. This must be resolved immediately before you can hope to attract people to downtown businesses.
37. Parking is recently improved with the new parking lot near the train station, but some of the stop signs are difficult to get through during peak hours
38. Parking is the number one obstacle!
39. Parking x 2
40. Parking, parking, parking
41. People do come to Metuchen for SERVICES and DINING Services bring people to town but access, traffic, and parking are problematic. Advertise local Taxi services and train schedules. Start thinking TAXI.... Having to worry about Parking is always a problem. Parking and Main Street traffic pattern is always a problem
42. Reconfigure the timing of the traffic lights in the area from Middlesex Avenue thru to Amboy. The traffic during rush hour both in the AM and PM is bad. The walkway from the train to the parking garage needs repaired, especially the walkway under the train bridge.
43. Reduce traffic congestion. Improve traffic and pedestrian safety.
44. Smart parking meters that take credit cards would be a huge help. The free 10 minutes the current meter's offer is wonderful though. A parking solution for the post office would be nice.
45. Something needs to be done about traffic and parking.
46. Stop jamming the stores about extortion about rental parking spaces for ok to rent
47. The biggest problem with using Downtown Metuchen is the lack of parking and the traffic flow hindered by parallel parking.
48. The popularity is important for downtown area giving the precondition that it does not cause traffic congestion and safety issues.

49. There needs to be a de-congestion of the traffic around the train station during rush hour. In its current state, people avoid taking Main Street entirely because of the huge delays for such a small distance. As it stands now, because of this, it's difficult for people to choose a restaurant on Main Street over one in a surrounding town for an after-work dinner.
50. Too many targeted traffic violations issued to the commuters who come on daily basis to park the car at station.
51. Too much cut through and commuter traffic.
52. Traffic flow
53. Traffic is a huge problem around Central Ave and Rte 27. What is going to be done to ease that when the new shopping area - Wholefoods, etc. - opens? Improving traffic flow would perhaps encourage more people

**Comments concerning Services and Programs – 49 Comments:**

1. Promote the use of Metuchen Downtown app through street signage.
2. Increase retail's "get acquainted" & discount offers on the app
3. Encourage retail establishments to offer Wi-Fi
4. A map on the website to show where all the businesses are located.
5. Add more artists to the planning committees.
6. Advertise where you can get a fast lunch.
7. Advertise!
8. Allow business not at street level to advertise.
9. Also - evening hours!
10. Also, all commuters could be given a booklet with restaurant menus and contact info so they can order food when returning home via NJ Transit bus and train
11. Also, having stores open on Sunday would be good.
12. Apply for grant money from govt. to improve the downtown shopping district.
13. Chai is lovely as opened. Encourage Chai to hold a regular series of talks by Metuchen and other residents from the area and musical performances.
14. Connect and work more with the schools.
15. Create an art walk to connect new developments with existing downtown businesses.
16. Develop shared product deliveries for all restaurants, e.g., high quality bread, fresh fish from a NY fish market, that would improve quality at all restaurants. Advise businesses about improvements they can make to appearance.
17. Direct mail and email advertising. As a commuter, I don't always notice signs or banners advertising events since it can be dark during the winter.
18. Do more to get the word out past the 1/2-mile radius that downtown promotes. I live down Durham and my Neighbors have no clue about things happening in town and never eat in town either.
19. Do the cultural inventory, create a plan, etc.
20. Downtown Metuchen is actually closer to some parts of Edison, than far reaches of Metuchen. You need to advertise/provide incentives and reach Edison residents as well.

21. Encourage business to open past 5 or 6 pm if they are service oriented.
22. For marketing, maybe create a scavenger hunt for families that allows kids or families to win prizes by visiting businesses.. even those beyond the train station that get overlooked.
23. Get the landlords to agree not to raise the rent when a store shows signs of uptick in sales. In other words - don't drive out any businesses through rent greed
24. Have more connections with young people and make Metuchen a cool place to hang out for kids.
25. Having businesses open, when commuters get home, for at least one night a week, would be great.
26. Hosting events that draw a regional crowd would be good. Went to a gingerbread house display in Morristown that drew lots of people. Perhaps we could be known for something at Halloween.
27. IMHO Need incentive programs for new startup businesses to get out of the house and into a storefront while they build their brands and establish their niches.
28. Investigate bringing in Creative NJ to help with a Creative Metuchen Call to Collaboration to really spark full participation from all the community in Metuchen planning and life.
29. Make it more lively! Attract both young and old. Right now, I think it caters more to older crowd, which is nice, but encourage little boutique stores (clothing), art gallery.
30. More advertising
31. More evening outdoor street closed events like the Junebug last summer.
32. Please reach out to the artists who participate as vendors for June Bug to possibly do pop ups during the holiday shopping season
33. Provide maps or other info to direct people to the businesses on both South Main Street, and Middlesex Avenue (over by Bridge Street).
34. Provide restaurant coupons to the commuters who spends lot of money to park in Metuchen.
35. Put beat cops on the street at major intersections; Main / 27, Main / Amboy.
36. Put more plants.
37. Residents who are nearby but do not live in downtown Metuchen may not know the downtown well. I personally do not know many stores in downtown Metuchen. I think it is very important to promote it through local newspaper, advertisement, and various events.
38. Restore our New Year's Fireworks and/or First night.
39. Similarly, almost all events planned are either for the very old or for families. There are numerous venues (including schools and houses of worship) in town for concerts; why don't we have any? We rarely have theater or films that interest a wide adult audience.
40. Source grant money for additional programming/investment
41. Stay open late!
42. The mall caters primarily to teenagers. Figure out if there are other retail businesses that could succeed downtown.

43. There should be one website that lists what's going on in Metuchen and it would be great if residents submitted their email addresses and a calendar was issued once a month.
44. Vacant storefronts are a problem that needs to be solved asap.
45. Visit other comparable towns to see if restaurants and other popular stores could be enticed to come to Metuchen.
46. We missed a lot of these amazing programs (Farmer's Market, Winter Parade, Tree Lighting, etc.) because we didn't know about them. Maybe a newsletter or something?
47. When it snows, the entire downtown is a disgrace you can barely park and the slush is absurd store owners should clear walk the town stinks at clearing the Main Street
48. Work with landlords to lower rents so businesses don't keep closing.
49. Work with the town to get points for the Culture actions in Sustainable Jersey (if they haven't already).

#### **Other Comments – 29 Comments:**

1. N/A x 2
2. A lot of doors aren't wide enough for my double stroller and/or there is a small step up.
3. After the whole foods and new apts are open.
4. Be dog-friendlier.
5. Be more open to public opinions. The committee is too ego driven. Tired of hearing that residents just complain. It seems a lot of work is done by the committee but it works in a silo. It appears that the tone comes across like the committee knows what it is doing and gets irritated when residents asks questions. If resident feedback is accepted there needs to be more communication to residents if those plans change.
6. Continuing Education Programs for Retirees (or whomever) like the Olli-RU program in Highland Park, would draw a luncheon crowd on certain days of the week....
7. Dog-friendly
8. Focus hard on what you are really trying to do. If downtown wants more business, then focus on that. Don't try to be everything for everyone. You cannot create an island of odds in the midst of everything that surrounds Metuchen. Creating apartments was really a bad decision that will attract all kinds of issues forever.
9. Grew up in Metuchen and I still live and work here. Love this town and believe we as a town have to continue to changes with the times and adapt.
10. I don't frequent shops on Main Street because there is nothing appealing to me.
11. I frequent 9 round, Novita, Haileys and the bakery.
12. I work in Metuchen and many other towns in NJ as I sell direct mail marketing programs. I have also lived in the area for many years. I am a HUGE fan of the improvements I see going on downtown and feel that we could be benefited by adding even more. Keep up the great work!!!!
13. Increase open spaces.
14. Make Metuchen Downtown more pet Friendly

15. Normally attend parades, tree lighting but this year one was cancelled due to rain and other weekend we were out of town.
16. Oh, and water bowls for dogs outside some stores: i.e.; Princeton!
17. On question 5, honestly, it's no offense to downtown. It's just that I work in Manhattan and I'm not home until at least 6:30, Saturdays I go to my parents in SI, Sundays is laundry and food shopping. I'm just too busy to enjoy downtown.
18. Open a marijuana dispensary next to Boro Hall
19. Some of the above are good goals but none should be at property taxpayers' expense.
20. Support local events and youth leagues if you want support returned. Support is a 2-way street.
21. Take steps to encourage habits of active living (Example: choosing to walk into town, not drive.) Assist in forming a coalition of the many different citizen and other groups and agencies advocating walking, cycling, safe streets, etc.
22. That is all I can think of now.
23. The MDA should be the focus for any activity/change in downtown. For example, the sign program being considered should be coordinated with the MDA.
24. These are some great ideas suggested above.
25. Unfortunately, Big Box Stores have killed places like Morris Stores, or Metuchen Hardware, the latter one being a place where one could buy a 4-36 Machine Tap, or an Egg Poacher, all the same store, what is left are restaurants, many of which I cannot afford, or don't care for, and multiple Pizza places. To add insult to injury, where once there were Parking Lots behind places like Metuchen Hardware, where one could park meter free, now those are gone, divvied up among the high-priced Loft Apartments created above where the store mentioned above once were, and meters that ONLY take Quarters. Unfortunately, the kinds of stores I need, no longer can survive in a downtown environment (Hardware, Machine Tools, and Auto Parts. In addition to that, the other types of businesses that used to be downtown, and I frequented, such as Morris Stores, cannot compete with places like Walmart, and eateries such as Applebees, McDonalds, etc., are but a short drive, have free parking nearby, and make partaking of what they must offer when I need it, much less of a hassle.
26. What about my end of town South Main Street!
27. Why do we need so many nail salons? This seems to be a poor use of space. And we have some small jewelry shops that look more like pawn shops.
28. Worry more about the residents of Metuchen than the businesses or the interests of the few.

**Comments concerning Business Competitiveness / Visual Appeal – 23 Comments:**

1. The main issues with downtown Metuchen: (1) the stores are shabby or closed down, and (2) the retail that IS open for business, is not open late. The presentation of the stores is not nice--old and rundown. The newest establishment, the Puerto Rican restaurant, is never open! They are overpriced as well and they did not promotion. How would I know they exist if I didn't live down the block? This business will not survive. You can get a better and cheaper product outside of Metuchen. The nail salons, for example, are terrible-looking inside. Who wants to get a salon treatment in a dump? The food at the Thai restaurant is just mediocre, at best, and it's overpriced for what you get. It's time to snazz it up and get some strong retailers in Metuchen. Perhaps it would help to have an advisor help small business owners on how to promote themselves, and restructure their business plans.
2. We need towards increasing foot traffic downtown.
3. There's is no reason for me to go downtown except at times for bagels and UPS store. Everything else looks so run down I don't even want to give it a shot. It's sad. It's a pretty depressing downtown.
4. When I think of successful downtown I think of Westfield that has municipal area in downtown line us but they also have destination shopping stores as well as local mom-and-pop stores with Trader Joe's etc. The opening of Whole Foods in a few months is great however their needs be other business to attract people. The younger shopper is attracted to brand names. Area should be include destiny store with the mom and pop and service providers. As a commuter who's in that area every day once I get off the train in the evening there's nothing there that makes me want to destress in the area and maybe stop and shop. If I don't have to get my nails done. I go back to my community
5. Construction permit takes too much time
6. There are way too many signs downtown and now we have these ugly parking signs. Hopefully they are temporary. There was a Rutgers study done a few years ago, which addressed this issue.
7. Change the zoning laws so non-retail businesses can open on Main Street between 27 & Amboy. That's why I ended up opening my business in Edison - couldn't find much in Metuchen that was wheelchair accessible and fit the zoning laws.
8. Get rid of the failed protectionist policy that franchises are not allowed downtown. Look at Westfield. They have a mix of franchise stores and small, independent businesses and it is one of the best downtowns in our area!
9. Landlords must lower rents so smaller concerns can survive...
10. Rents are too high for businesses therefore lots of vacancy. At least that's part of problem.

11. Also, adding retail space to New St project was ridiculous idea. Should just have been more one bedroom housing and more parking along the tracks to block the train noise. Town leaders need to understand that shop owners and even some landlords we know make very little - much less than anyone realizes. Give tax breaks to landlords to renovate buildings. The reason buildings such as the one with Antonios looks so bad for so long is that if owner puts money into it they have to pay more taxes. Should be reverse. A few owners look like they spent enormous amounts (What's the Scoop , Brass Lantern) and they should get reduced taxes for helping the quality of the town which then brings in more and better business.
12. Less involvement in business marketplace
13. I do not it like the way fliers look when affixed to store windows and doors. It is messy and not inviting. No more fliers taped to windows and doors!
14. It would be great to streamline the process of opening a business. If the town could give the business owner a checklist of what needs to be done, i.e.: approvals, inspections, licenses you need to obtain, that kind of thing, I think it would help a lot. I also think, they should change some of the ordinances so the business owner does not have to shell a significant amount of money for zoning approval. I'm specifically thinking about an ordinance pertaining to business name on awnings. Obviously, they approve these types of awnings but the review requires lots of extra time and money that a person opening a business probably doesn't have.
15. Overall, the shopping/food areas are dirty. Dirty storefronts are not welcoming.
16. Better signage
17. Keep your store clean. Especially food businesses! Wipe the windows. Vacuum the rug. Sweep your storefront but not into the street! Close the dumpster lid.
18. Please take pride in your business and make it clean, bright & welcoming.
19. The restoration of the store fronts is important and will attract more outsiders to consider Metuchen as a destination.
20. Encourage the council to make opening new businesses easier. It should not take so long for a non-change of use business to open.
21. More attractive store fronts would be an improvement.
22. The issue with downtown is not parking or rent but it is the duplicate businesses.
23. The businesses fail because there's no anchor or chain stores. How many nail salons do you need?

**Comments about Infrastructure and Property Improvements – 22 Comments:**

1. building and sidewalk upgrades
2. Clean up and Utilize the Forum on a regular basis (an acting college? Films and lectures? Concerts?)
3. Elevator for the Metuchen train commuter.

4. Ensure consistency of approach, look, feel and to prevent conflicts in use of the infrastructure.
5. Expand the side walk Area wherever possible...
6. Green is nice but too many trees along the sidewalk.
7. I think there could be some professional use of some properties that are not suited for retail. No reason why Danfords couldn't be a 1 attorney office for instance since there is very little parking. So no one in retail can make a go of that space.
8. If the Forum could be fixed to have it become a movie theater and a place for small concerts, it would be a great draw. People are clamoring for something like this. Participants then eat downtown either before or after.
9. In times past, downtown areas had arcades and transparent covered sidewalk areas for inclement weather shoppers plus mini parks or greens...People love to sit outside under the cover of umbrellas on the sidewalk....
10. Include south Main in the development
11. Make NJ Transit renovate their property.
12. Make Train Station more ADA Friendly and remove the walls.
13. Refurbish and use the Forum Theatre as a jewel of the town with quality programming.
14. Replace the sidewalks
15. Somehow get a new owner to the Forum so we can appropriately use that space successfully.
16. The bridge, station and walk ways are in horrid and unsafe condition.
17. The sidewalks must be fixed all down Main Street from South Main businesses going towards downtown. There are so many holes/raised concrete, it is difficult to walk with a baby carriage. I would go much more often downtown if the walk was more comfortable.
18. The streets are crumbling.
19. Very difficult to see signage.
20. Way too much development.
21. We aren't Westfield as much as our town leaders want us to be. Fox and Fox should be banned, they are ruining this town lot by lot.
22. Work with The Forum Theater owner to sell it to a community based 501(c)3 organization to turn it into a community arts/theater destination. Recently attended a show at The Lyric Theater in Blacksburg, VA (home of VA Tech) - the theater had been restored and had a very active schedule. I think it could add tremendous value to the community.

**Comments about Pedestrian Improvements / Safety – 14 Comments:**

1. At least one night per week close the streets to cars and let pedestrian traffic take over and open the stores to the street
2. Commuter friendly walkways
3. Have a program to get train riders to wear bright colors in the dark. They have the right of way but are invisible in the dark.

4. Hocus pocus crossing lights are not the answer to pedestrian safety. It only conditions drivers to ignore pedestrians in unlit spots. Strict enforcement of the current laws would be better in my opinion.
5. I think safer walking and crossings are key to encourage more people to come out.
6. Improve access to downtown from nearby neighborhoods so residents can walk more easily. High visibility crosswalks, per signals, better street lighting, opening pathways/walkable cutthroughs
7. Like in Somerville (Division St) and Jersey City (Newark Ave), close off a side street and make it open to only pedestrians to drive more foot traffic.
8. Make Rt 27 and Center St. safer to cross.
9. Metuchen has the opportunity to be a great "walking" town, but there needs to be a greater emphasis on pedestrian safety outside of just Main Street. This is particularly true for commuters who walk to their cars at night during the winter months when its dark. All in all, Metuchen should try and promote walking and biking as much as possible.
10. Not sure bike lanes are as important as bike parking so you can bike then walk.
11. Pedestrian safety is paramount. I have younger children and love going downtown but have more hesitation in letting them go on their own as they get older bc of the blatant disregard for pedestrian safety
12. Pedestrians need to be encouraged to use the lighted crosswalks.
13. Stop jaywalking on Main Street
14. We do frequent Metuchen businesses even if it were less expensive to go elsewhere. It's important to support our businesses.

**Comments concerning Longer Term Improvements / Visions – 9 Comments:**

1. Business district needs to be expanded to include along 27 to Central and Central to Durham.
2. Create a cooler, hipper atmosphere in the district. Your new holiday lights are a good start. Give people reasons to come downtown, walk around and explore.
3. Develop New Street to be a new Main Street, with shops and restaurants - tear down the windowless AP liquor store - make the walk from Whole Foods to Main Street a destination of its own.
4. In addition, it is important to have its historical and culture characteristics which is unique and different from the downtown in other cities. This kind of uniqueness could be shown through the type of stores, the styles of the architecture/buildings, and decorations of the streets, etc.
5. In any effort to improve downtown, please do not lose the small town feel downtown has now -- making any changes to downtown should be minimal.
6. Make Metuchen an Arts destination.
7. Metuchen as A Luncheon destination would bring people to town....

8. Play up our historic past. Graveyard walks ...
9. While this may fall outside the purview of the MDA, bringing a playground within a few minutes of the downtown would be wonderful. I feel like it would make the downtown more of a destination for people with children (grab coffee downtown, head to the playground). Right now, people with children must choose downtown or playground, but cannot do both.

**Comments about Cleanliness – 8 Comments:**

1. Clean the street and sidewalks EVERY WEEK.
2. Clean up leaves and garbage along all of main all the way to rte 1
3. Cleanliness of the area..
4. Help make them cleaner, attractive, and inviting.
5. Main is filthy with garbage, leaves and debris.
6. Make sure DPW keeps the downtown streets clean.
7. The downtown really should be much cleaner and more beautiful than it is; I don't want to linger in an unattractive place.
8. Work on trash pick up behind the main st store fronts. Right now, so many businesses use the trash cans on main st and they are often overflowing.

## Appendix C

Questions 11, 12 and 13 responses. None have been omitted, changed or altered except to correct obvious spelling errors.

**Question Eleven: We want to know what types of businesses would make you want to shop on downtown Metuchen more often. Please name two kinds of new restaurants or eateries you would like to see here. Please provide a response in words.**

**Ethnic Restaurants – 170 Comments**

Indian	29
Mexican	7
Italian	6
Chinese	5
German restaurant	5
Mediterranean	5
Ethiopian restaurant	4
Korean	4
Middle Eastern	4
Portuguese	4
Japanese	3
Indian Food	3
Tapas	3
Tex Mex	3
Vietnamese restaurant	3
Good Chinese	2
French	2
Greek	2
Korean BBQ	2
Ramen	2
Spanish	2
A good Asian restaurant, eat in	1
A good Italian restaurant	1
A good Italian restaurant. I don't think any in town are that great.	1
A good quality French restaurant	1
A Greek restaurant that has more vegetarian options. The new one does not have any so I do not go there.	1
a Lebanese/Middle Eastern restaurant	1
A MEDIUM PRICED RESTAURANT ITALIAN	1
A true French restaurant	1
Afghani food	1
Asian	1
Asian cuisine	1
Asian fusion like Mimi's	1

Asian restaurant	1
Austrian	1
Authentic ramen	1
Better Mexican	1
casual Mediterranean (gyro, hummus, etc. - less formal than Greek on Main)	1
Chinese food. American Chinese food, the new place has funky stuff.	1
Chinese/Japanese restaurant	1
Creole	1
Cuban	1
different ethnic restaurants (Indian, Ethiopian, etc.)	1
Dim Sum	1
Eastern Europe cuisine	1
Eastern European cuisine	1
Falafel joint	1
Falafel/vegetarian eatery	1
Fine Italian	1
French bistro	1
French Cuisine (better than Cafe Paris)	1
German/European food	1
Good Mexican food	1
Great Indian restaurant	1
Great Japanese Restaurant	1
Greek/Mediterranean	1
Indian !!!!	1
Indian food takeout shop	1
Indian/Pakistani with lunch buffet	1
Italian Deli Sandwiches or Specialty Burger	1
Italian family restaurant	1
Italian like the trattoria that closed	1
Italian restaurant	1
Italian trattoria	1
Jewish	1
Jewish/east European	1
Korean Fried Chicken	1
Korean/Vietnamese/Noodle Shop	1
Latino and/or Hispanic	1
Lebanese	1
lower-cost Italian— like, between pizza and fine dining	1
Malaysian	1
Mediterranean cuisine	1
Mediterranean or Turkish	1

Middle Eastern food	1
Middle Eastern or Lebanese	1
middle eastern/Mediterranean	1
more Italian (old school)	1
Polish	1
Polish or Eastern European	1
Polish/Eastern Europe	1
Ramen Noodles	1
ramen shop	1
Ramen!	1
Real French Bistro Not Cafe Paris	1
Scandinavian Restaurant	1
Shawarma / Falafel place	1
Thai	1
Traditional Chinese	1
Turkish restaurant	1
Vietnamese Noodles (pho)	1

#### **Traditional by Type – 139 Comments**

Seafood x 13	13
Steakhouse x 11	11
American x 6	6
BBQ x 5	5
Burger Joint x 5	5
Burger Place x 4	4
Farm to table x 4	4
Good Burger Place x 3	3
Burgers x 3	3
American cuisine x 2	2
Café x 2	2
50's style	1
A burger type place / no alcohol	1
A good burger and salad restaurant.	1
a NICE burger shop, w/variety including vegetarian	1
A Seafood restaurant	1
American / Burger	1
American bistro	1
American burger place/pub	1
American grill	1
American or Sweet Waters in Westfield	1
American/fine	1

Another kosher or fish restaurant	1
Barbecue	1
Barbeque place	1
better diner	1
Buffet Restaurant	1
Burger chain, 5 guys shake shack etc.	1
Burger King	1
Burger Place (Just burgers)	1
Burger Restaurant	1
Burger/steak place	1
Burger: malt shop	1
Cajun	1
casual American food	1
Casual burger type place	1
Chicken Joint (Barbecue or Fried Chicken)	1
Chicken/Wings or Empanadas	1
Classic American Bar food	1
Classic comfort food at reasonable price	1
Comfort food	1
comfort type food (home cooked typed foods)	1
Continental	1
Farm-to-table, high-end	1
Fine American	1
Fish	1
Fresh fish	1
Fresh Seafood	1
fried chicken	1
Good burger joint	1
Good fried chicken	1
good seafood	1
Gourmet Burger	1
Great burger joint, another option other than Haileys which is too loud at times	1
Hamburger place - good name brand	1
Hamburger place (i.e. Smashburger)	1
High end small plates like 100 Steps in Cranford	1
High end, newer burger place	1
High quality burgers, American bistro like Trap Rock in Berkeley Heights	1
high quality informal dining, like Lucas on rt 27	1
Kosher	1
Kosher bakery	1
Kosher foods	1

kosher restaurant or kosher bakery	1
More steak places!	1
New American	1
New American (like ABC Kitchen type place)	1
Nice burger or grill place	1
Noodle House	1
Noodle shop	1
old time sandwich shop, not subs	1
old-fashioned steak and potatoes	1
Pasta shop	1
Place for salads and burgers- like a bistro	1
raw bar	1
seafood (American not sushi or ethic)	1
Seafood /steak house because we have plenty of ethnic...No fast junk food!	1
Seafood store/restaurant	1
Seasonal dining	1
Soul food	1
Soul food BBQ	1
Soup and Salad/Burger joint	1
specialty hamburger place	1
Standard American food-burgers, steaks, etc.	1
Steak & Lobster Restaurant	1
Steak / seafood	1
Steak eatery	1
Steak place but can't be high end	1
steakhouse/American fare	1
Sushi	1
Texas BBQ, or good BBQ	1
Upscale American Bistro	1

**Chain / Franchise / Specified – 64 Comments**

Chipotle	11
Starbucks	11
Smash burger	3
Bareburger	2
Chic fil a	2
Five Guys	2
Hibachi	2
Qdoba	2
Turning Point	2

Benihana	1
Chipotle and an upscale bakery	1
Cracker Barrel	1
Fondue (Melting Pot)	1
Food franchise type name brand	1
Fridays	1
Fridays or Chilis	1
Heidi	1
Jersey Mike's subs	1
Mad Mex or Qdoba	1
McDonalds	1
Melissa	1
Olive Garden	1
Panera Bread	1
Panera Bread Express	1
PF Changs	1
Primanti Brothers	1
Primanti's	1
Ruth Chris steak house	1
Seasons 52	1
Seven Eleven	1
Shake Shack	1
Smash burger or another upscale chain	1
Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts	1
Surf Taco	1
Sweet Salad	1
Toast	1

**Misc. Comments & Other – 48 Comments**

None	7
N/A	3
No more restaurants	3
Toy store	3
Restaurants	2
a place like Dig Inn in NYC	1
A pub alternative to Hailey's	1
affordable bookstore with a large kid selection	1
Another trattoria-style restaurant.	1
anything tasty and reasonably priced	1
At least one or two 24 Hour places - no where to eat late at night or early morning	1

Bring back Main Street Tratorria - I miss it!!!	1
Cheese shop	1
CLOTHING	1
Decent restaurant that does not charge NY prices, but served NY quality food.	1
Eateries	1
Ethnic food (like New Brunswick)	1
Food	1
For now, there is no shortage of eateries.	1
Greek is too expensive	1
I'm very happy with the choice selection of restaurants	1
Keep out fast food places	1
Local food	1
Mexican rest service is horrible. Unfriendly	1
More retail, brass lantern can't hold it all! Maybe toy store?	1
NO more pizza stores, something open for kids to be at	1
Non-ethnic - already too many	1
Outdoor open air	1
Places with more live music	1
rodizio	1
take out	1
There are plenty of choices now	1
There are sufficient restaurants	1
Unique artisan shops	1
We have a sufficient number of restaurants now.	1

### **Health / Light Eating – 43 Comments**

Salad Bar x 3	3
Saladworks x 2	2
Soup & Salad x 2	2
A create-your-salad place -- for lunch	1
Fun, more health driven cafes!	1
Gluten free options	1
Health food/vegetarian	1
Health Foods, Gluten Free	1
Health/ vegan	1
healthier foods - salads, gluten free	1
Healthy choices	1
Healthy food like juice, smoothie and salads	1
Healthy Food store	1
Healthy meal choice sandwiches/smoothies	1
Healthy quick fast food type of place	1

Healthy take out	1
Healthy take out, prepared dinners	1
healthy vegetarian	1
Juice place	1
Just salad	1
Paleo	1
Salad	1
Salad / lunch spot	1
Salad bar type place	1
Salad place	1
Salad place - sort of on the lines of a Hale and Hearty or cosi- doesn't have to be a chain - just the same concept	1
Salad place (Cosi or Panera)	1
Salad Works	1
Salad works and Frozen yogurt - healthy option!	1
Salad works type of restaurant	1
Salad/Healthy option....quick in and out type place	1
Salad/Sandwich	1
Salad works, Italian or Indian	1
Soup	1
Soup and salad light fare	1
Soup shop	1
Soup/Salad	1
Vegan/healthy takeout grill	1
Vitamin shop	1

**Casual / Convenience – 32 Comments**

Sandwich Shop x 3	3
Panera x 2	2
A cheaper fast-food type restaurant	1
Casual soup and sandwich	1
Cheap salad and sandwich place to meet friends	1
chipotle, 5 guys, something quick but not a coffee shop, or bakery.	1
Fast casual Mexican - chipotle, or Oaxaca taqueria eg	1
Fast casual NON chain with sandwiches, salads, soups, baked goods fresh clean healthy	1
Fast Casual restaurant	1
Fast food	1
Fast food burger	1
Fast food Mexican (chipotle)	1
Fast Service Food such as Qdoba or Chipotle	1

Good Fast Food (like a Five Guys)	1
Panera type food - quick soup and salad / sandwich - Cai's is working on it!	1
places geared toward take out and not sit down (Mexican, chicken, Chinese)	1
Quick dining	1
Quick service - chic restaurant on the lines of chipotle	1
Quick service for lunch - ready made sandwiches, etc	1
quick/casual (Subway, Panera)	1
Sandwich shop	1
Sandwich shop / lunch counter	1
Sandwich shop with space to eat-in	1
Sandwich shop. Fresh bread and cold cuts, salads, wraps	1
sandwich/salad shop	1
Sandwich/salad shop - like Panera	1
Sandwich/sub shop	1
Quick gourmet place	1
Sub shop	1

#### **Vegan / Vegetarian – 27 Comments**

Vegetarian	10
Vegan restaurant	4
Vegetarian restaurant	3
Organic/vegetarian	1
Restaurant with vegetarian/vegan options (or entirely vegetarian/vegan eatery)	1
Something vegetarian friendly	1
Specialty—for GF, or vegetarian/vegan diets	1
Unique Vegetarian restaurant	1
Vegan	1
Vegan / vegetarian options	1
Vegan / Vegetarian Restaurant	1
Vegetarian (or at least restaurants with more vegetarian options)	1
vegetarian/vegan...I do not eat meat and I feel my options are pretty limited	1

#### **Wine / Bars / Pubs – 20 Comments**

Brewery	3
Pub	2
Another bar, with bar food. Nothing fancy. Burgers, wings, beers	1
Another casual bar/pub	1
anything with a liquor license	1
Bar and grill	1
Creative bar and grill	1
Decent bar with music for adults	1
Gastro Pub	1

Gastro pub or wine bar - something classy like you would find in Philly or NYC (e.g. Tria in Philly, not another Hailey's)	1
Jazz wine bar	1
local bar in addition to Hailey's	1
more restaurants with liquor license	1
Pub or tavern	1
Restaurants that serve drinks; too many BYOB	1
Sports bar	1
Wine and tapas bar	1

### **Specialty / Desert – 17 Comments**

Dunkin Donuts	2
Frozen Yogurt	2
Another coffee shop	1
Another specialty dessert	1
Artisanal ice cream (like Bent Spoon in Princeton--local made)	1
Bubble tea	1
Coffee shop	1
Dessert/Cafe-later evening	1
Desserts	1
frozen yogurt/ toppings	1
Gourmet Cupcake Shop	1
Ice cream	1
non-chain, non-franchise donut shop	1
Smoothie bar	1
Yogurt	1

### **Grocery / Bakery / Butcher / Deli – 17 Comments**

Bakery	3
Butcher	3
Deli	2
A deli like Jackie Coopers Celebrity Deli	1
A GOOD bakery	1
A good butcher shop	1
A good NYC (Jewish?) style Deli/Diner similar to the once Jack Cooper's in Tano Mall.	1
Deli/Quick Service	1
Good deli	1
Grocery	1
Sub shop and small market	1
Trader Joes name brand food type	1

### **Breakfast / Lunch – 15 Comments**

Pancake house	2
"Old style" coffee shop or grill specializing in breakfast, lunch, dinner not pastries.	1
A breakfast and lunch restaurant would do Very well in the old Durham Cafe.	1
a great brunch restaurant - the Metuchen diner is sub-par	1
Breakfast	1
Breakfast Cafe or Dinette	1
Breakfast place	1
Breakfast, Brunch open on Sunday	1
Breakfast/lunch	1
Farm to table (high quality) breakfast and lunch spot	1
Great breakfast place	1
Lunch	1
lunch/brunch spot -- something trendy, Park Slope-ish	1
Old fashion luncheonette	1

### **Family Oriented – 13 Comments**

a nice sandwich/coffee shop. Better quality than current choices, ideally with an area for kids to play in	1
American family fare	1
Casual family restaurant	1
Family friendly restaurant--burger joint?	1
Family Vegetarian Restaurant with kids menu	1
family-friendly but good quality with space, maybe outside space	1
Family-friendly gastropub	1
Kid friendly	1
Kid Friendly Italian	1
Kid friendly quick serve sandwich - burger shop	1
Simple family fair.	1
Something kid friendly.	1
Stromboli type/ kid friendly Italian	1

**Question Twelve: What kind of new retail stores would you most like to see here? Please provide a response using words.**

### **Clothing, Shoes, & Accessories – 121 Comments**

Clothing store	23
Shoe Store	19

Women's Clothing	12
Men's Clothes	4
Boutique clothing	2
Casual Clothing	2
A place to buy socks & ties & underwear	1
a shoe outlet	1
A women's clothing store -- Ann Taylor, for example	1
Affordable Apparel	1
Affordable clothing boutique	1
Boutique (women's dresses, tops)	1
Boutique with clothes from FLAX, soft linens, scarves and fair trade	1
Boutiques (not high-end)- clothing, shoes, etc.	1
Chic clothing boutique (not consignment and not cheap -- nice stuff that you can't find at H&M)	1
Clothes and shoes	1
clothing - maybe a chain like GAP-	1
Clothing - Men's & Woman's	1
clothing - moderately priced	1
Clothing (Gap, Children's Place, etc.)	1
Clothing (men's, women's)	1
Clothing accessory shop that sells, hats, scarves, belts, and possibly, sweaters and tee-shirts seasonally.	1
Clothing basics	1
Clothing boutique for women	1
clothing boutique of some sort	1
Clothing for mature women.	1
clothing store like Gap	1
Clothing that is not mall store or consignment	1
Clothing with plus sizes	1
clothing women& mens fashion	1
Clothing.....mens or womens	1
clothing/ shoes	1
clothing/shoe store	1
designer brands	1
Fancy second hand clothes for women	1
Fine hats	1
Fine menswear / tailor made suits	1
Gap-type store	1
Good women's clothing	1
Graphic tee shirts for women/women's clothing	1
High end women's clothing	1

High End Women's Consignment	1
High-end boutique	1
High-end clothing	1
ladies' clothes	1
Leather goods--accessories	1
Make up store	1
on-trend clothing	1
Reasonably priced clothing store	1
Recycled clothing chain like Buffalo Exchange	1
Sephora or make up store	1
shoe & accessories	1
shoe store or women's accessories	1
stores selling accessories, scarves etc hostess gifts	1
Trendy clothing stores	1
Unique women's clothing at reasonable prices	1
Upscale dress shop	1
We need a shoe store again!!	1
women's boutique	1
Women's boutique/clothing	1
women's causal/everyday clothing	1
womens clothing/ Marshalls type - a big selection not too expensive	1
Women's resale/consignment clothing shop	1
Women's specialty stores	1
Women's Trendy	1

### **Home, Durable Goods, and Hardware – 67 Comments**

Hardware Store	20
Home Goods	5
Homewares	3
Garden Center	2
a hardware store, not a chain.	1
a home store	1
a kitchen store - like Kitchen Kappers, SUr La Table	1
Cooking tools and maybe classes	1
Cooking/kitchen items and classes	1
Cookware - sur la table, Williams Sonoma etc.	1
Furniture Store	1
Garden Shop	1
Garden/hardware store	1
Good quality antique store	1
Hardware store - Miss Boro Hardware!	1

Hardware store!!! I hate having to drive to Home Depot	1
Hardware/garden store	1
hardware/mars	1
Home decor/gifts	1
Home furnishing, houseware	1
Home furnishings	1
Home goods/Marshalls/tj maxx	1
Home items	1
Home store (pottery barn-like)	1
Home/kitchen	1
Home goods	1
House decorating stores	1
Housewares/ home goods world market type stores	1
Kitchen supplies	1
Kitchen supply	1
Kitchenware (like Sur La Table)	1
Local General Hardware /tools ...	1
Plant/garden store OR antique/vintage shop	1
Small community hardware store	1
Small hardware store	1
small home furnishings/ decorative hardware	1
Something with home decor options that is more modern than what's offered in	
Brass Latern	1
unique home goods	1
Vintage furniture or home store	1
Williams Sonoma	1
Williams Sonoma type store	1

**Name Brand / Retail Chain – 56 Comments**

Anthropologie	4
Urban Outfitters	3
Apple Store	2
Gap	2
Loft	2
Pottery Barn	2
Alex and Annie	1
Ann Taylor	1
Ann Taylor / Loft / J. Crew type store for women	1
Athleta	1
Bar Method	1
Barnes and Noble	1

Bath and Body Works	1
Brand Name clothing stores	1
Chain anchor	1
Chico's	1
Crate and Barrel	1
Department	1
Destination stores to draw people in. Take a look at upper Montclair, which has a mix of local small businesses and chains like Williams Sonoma, gap, and Starbucks.	1
Dockers	1
franchise clothing	1
franchise gifts	1
Franchise Stores such as GAP, Eddie Bauer, Dick's Sporting Goods	1
Franchise type	1
Game Stop	1
Haberdasherie	1
Hallmark Gold Crown	1
Hibachi	1
J Crew	1
Joseph A Banks	1
Justice	1
Kohls	1
Lego store	1
Macy's	1
Maybe crate n barrel.	1
Melissa	1
Michelle	1
Novita	1
Old Navy	1
Osh Kosh	1
Pacific Sunwear	1
Picture People	1
Pier 1	1
Ross	1
Talbots, Chicos Brooks Brothers, & professional woman's clothing.	1
The Gap	1
TJ maxx	1

### **Food Products / Grocery – 55 Comments**

Grocery	7
Trader Joe's	6

Butcher	3
Fish Market	2
Good bakery	2
Produce Market	2
Starbucks	2
A better bakery than The Buttery	1
A good butcher / meat store	1
ASIAN MARKET	1
Bakery	1
Butcher (i.e. a place to buy bratwurst...I go to Philly for good brats)	1
butcher and/or fish market	1
Candy store	1
Cheese shop	1
Cheese, wine specialty	1
Coffee shop	1
Coffee shop with morning hours for commuters	1
Farmer's market	1
Food	1
Fresh produce market	1
Fresh produce store	1
Gourmet	1
gourmet cheese/bread shop	1
gourmet foods and produce	1
Grocery/Produce Stores	1
Indian Groceries	1
Kosher butcher	1
Organic Vegetable store	1
Produce/meats	1
Quality liquor store	1
Small grocery store (Marianna's Gourmet Table type)	1
Spice market or olive oil place?	1
Spice shop	1
Tea/gourmet shop	1
Whole Food Markets	1
Whole Foods	1
Wine library	1

**Gifts and Toys – 43 Comments**

Toy store	11
gift shop	4
A gift shop	1

A nice home accessories/gift shop would be nice. The Brass Lantern is too old fashioned and crowded.	1
Clever, ironic gift shop	1
Coin shop would be nice. The one we have is smarmy very unfriendly place. It gives me the creeps	1
Collectibles store	1
Costume jewelry and novelty shop. Something that attracts people in to browse and end up buying reasonably priced items.	1
Edgy gift shop with original art, funky cards, etc.	1
Educational Toy Store	1
Funky cards/books/stationery/gifts	1
Gift and or antiques	1
gift shop like Boyts gift area, but larger	1
Gift store unique	1
Gift/boutique	1
High end toy store	1
Kids toy store	1
Maker / hobby	1
Novelties/gifts -- more trendy, hip, timely, fun; toy store; trendy baby shop; antiques/vintage home goods (I know this is more than 2 but I have a million ideas)	1
novelty or like variety village merchandised	1
Shops that offer unique gifts	1
Toy / hobby / crafts store	1
toy store	1
Toy store like over the moon	1
Toy/book store	1
Toy/children's bookstore that offers programming for children	1
Toys, games and hobbies	1
Toys/gifts	1
unique gifts store like this- <a href="http://helloessentials.com/">http://helloessentials.com/</a>	1
unique gifts/artisan shop	1

#### **Books, Music, Comics, and Games – 43 Comments**

Bookstore	7
music store	4
A good bookstore	1
A real bookstore	1
Although I would not necessarily shop there, a comic book shop or magic shop, some sort of specialty shop would help to draw in more people	1
Boardgame store or cafe (or toys)	1

Book and record shops/more Men's apparel/ Hardware	1
Book store like Racontauer	1
Books	1
Books-Records	1
Bookstore gallrt	1
Bookstore open late, preferably with couches and coffee	1
Bookstore with good stock, readings (similar to Labyrinth, Town Book Store	1
cd store	1
Combination bookstore and record store. A Starbuck's without the food.	
Something like the original To Be Continued.	1
Comic	1
Comic book / gaming shop	1
Comic Book Shop	1
Comic/toy/ hobby shop	1
Comics/ games store	1
Entertainment - records, cds	1
Game store	1
Gaming store	1
good book store	1
good, high-quality used book store	1
Guitar/music store or art supply store	1
Independent book seller	1
INDY BOOK STORE	1
Music and or book store	1
Music/Games	1
Record store	1
records/music	1
specialty toy/game/comic book store	1
Video game shop	1

#### **Arts, Galleries, Crafts, and Hobbies – 42 Comments**

Art supply store	4
Craft store	3
Arts & Crafts	2
A knitting and sewing store.	1
A local (or NJ) arts & crafts co-op store	1
Affordable art supply shop or antique store	1
Art	1
Art craft hobby supply w focus on making/crafting events	1
Art galleries	1
Art Gallery	1

Art shops	1
Art supplies.	1
Art/Craft supply store	1
Artisan, hand-made goods (pottery, glass, jewelry, etc.)	1
Arts and antiques	1
arts and crafts (yarn)	1
arts/crafts and/or hobby shop	1
Craft	1
Craft Shop	1
Craft shop or book store	1
Craft Store (like AC Moore)	1
craft store with a range of inexpensive to designer crafts--all good quality, not froufrou Victorian	1
Craft, art supply or fabric store	1
craft-hobby	1
Electronics/Hobby	1
Handicrafts	1
Hobby	1
Hobby / craft shop	1
Hobby Shop	1
hobby store	1
Knitting Store	1
stationary	1
Stationary i.e. Hallmark	1
Yarn store	1
Yarn store with good mix of wools and cotton etc. not just acrylic	1
Yarn/knitting/beading store	1

### **Specialty Retail – 37 Comments**

Bike Shop	6
Antique Shop	2
sporting goods	2
Sports store	2
A retail store for children's extra-curricular activities like music, ballet, etc.	1
Antique stores/flea market	1
Antique, gifts	1
Bicycle	1
Bicycle store	1
Bike/Skate shop	1
Electronics	1
electronics/technology business	1
Fair trade	1

Farmhouse store	1
Frame Shop	1
mariachi	1
Natural products/soaps/oils/scents	1
Odd Lot type of store	1
Pet Shop	1
sex shop	1
Like Farmhouse (Westfield, Princeton)	1
specialty stores - i.e. Irish goods	1
Sport Store	1
sporting goods, with all the kids in town playing sports, this would really help and do well	1
Sports	1
sports equipment/memorabilia	1
Sports gear	1
Sports ware	1
Technology store	1

**Other – 34 Comments**

?	4
NA	4
Any	2
No opinion	2
A Justice	1
Any anchor store	1
Any good anchor store	1
Any other anchor store	1
Anything but pizza	1
boutique type stores	1
Boutiques	1
Can't think of	1
Can't think of anything	1
Don't know - can't afford the shops currently in town	1
incentivize pop ups	1
Local/regional branded merchandise	1
Marafiki back as a full-time store!!!	1
Marafiki-type store with gifts, costume jewelry, etc.	1
Marifiki	1
more consignment shops	1
More like Westfield stores	1
More upscale stores and boutiques	1

Movie theater	1
none	1
Not sure	1
Walk-in health clinic	1

#### **Family and Children Oriented – 29 Comments**

Children's clothing store	2
Family clothing	2
Children place	1
children's apparel	1
children's apparel, but not expensive boutique-style	1
Children's boutique with clothing and toys	1
children's clothes, toys, books, games	1
Children's clothing	1
Children's clothing and toys	1
Children's clothing chain like "Children's Place".	1
Children's Place (the kids clothing store) or other kids clothing store, but only if it is affordable	1
Children's shoes	1
Children's shoes and clothes but not expensive	1
Children's toy store -- to stir imagination and creativity	1
Coco beans cafe - place for young children to run around and play	1
Family activity.	1
Family Shoe Store	1
Good children's clothes	1
Gymboree type for children	1
I think a children's clothing store should be in a downtown area	1
kids	1
Kids clothes and goods	1
Kids Clothing Store	1
Some kind of family friendly store (a la toys store, janie & jack etc..)	1
Something for kids	1
Store that carries child clothes, toys, and/or supplies	1
Things for kids to do	1

#### **General Retail and Supplies – 14 Comments**

Office Supplies	3
Variety Store	3
Pharmacy	2
A place that I can buy everyday supplies and replace going to Target	1
General Goods	1

name brand pharmacy, cvs	1
Party supply store	1
pharmacy like rite aid	1
school supplies	1

#### **Discount Retail – 8 Comments**

Dollar store	3
Discount boutique	1
Dollar Store - similar to Variety Village with a mix of specialty items	1
Dollar store or 5 Below	1
Five and dime	1
Thrift store	1

#### **Personal Services – 7 Comments**

Clean and thriving nail salon, open late	1
Dry cleaning	1
Laser Hair removal	1
Massage	1
Or nail salons	1
Spa	1
Spinning Studio	1

#### **Health and Beauty – 4 Comments**

Bath body works type store	1
Beauty supplies	1
Beauty supply	1
Bed bath products	1

#### **Convenience Stores – 1 Comments**

7-11/Wawa/Quik Chek	1
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**Question Thirteen: What kind of new entertainment, club, or arts venue would you most like to see here? Please provide a response using words.**

#### **Bars, Pubs, Drinking Establishments – 64 Comments**

Jazz club	4
Wine and Paint	3
Bar	2
Whiskey bar	2

Wine bar	2
10 station place should become a club	1
A club featuring jazz and/or folk music.	1
A decent pub with live music no TV and good food	1
a good dive bar	1
A low-key jazz bar / wine bar - if anything	1
A sexy wine/tapas bar or lounge	1
Alamo Draft House-type club w/ films	1
Alamo Draffthouse!!! It would be a *killer* in downtown Metuchen and draw people from along the NE Corridor.	1
An adult upscale bar with music	1
Another hang out spot (bar, lounge, pub) like haileys but with American type apps and comfort foods	1
Another pub w live music	1
Another sports bar option	1
Any other bar	1
Bar / Pub	1
Bar / Restaurant that serves drinks.	1
Bar with open mike	1
Bar with Piano and vocals	1
Bar/dance bar	1
Barcade	1
Bars for 20-30 year olds	1
Beergarten	1
Brew pub like harvest moon	1
Brewery!!	1
Cheers type of bar	1
Club that would have local talent/comedy	1
cocktail bar	1
cocktail lounge	1
Craft beer	1
Decent bar with music for adults	1
Dinner club??	1
Jazz	1
Jazz Bar	1
Jazz Bar/Lounge	1
Jazz wine bar	1
Juice bar	1
light music at a restaurant or wine and cheese place	1
Lounge bar	1
Lounge/seat down bar (not pub)	1

martini bar	1
Micro brewery	1
Nice Pub	1
Pub	1
pub with music	1
Roof top bar/ restaurant	1
Sports Bar	1
Sports bar with GOOD food	1
Upscale bar - wine bar etc	1
we need another bar to attract younger people	1
wine bar/ pub	1
wine/chocolate bar	1
Yes. More bars, place to hear music. Used to b so many places to come to	1

**Live Performing Arts – 64 Comments**

Comedy club	10
Theater	6
Music venue	6
Live music	3
Comedy shows	2
Karaoke	2
More Live Music	2
Performing Arts Center	2
1000+ seat music venue with live national acts & touring companies of all variety (like the State Theater or Count Basie)	1
A Bandstand Where Local Musicians Can Play	1
a space for live music	1
anyplace for acoustic music to thrive! :)	1
BLUES	1
Concert hall for local/semi bigrock bands on a smaller scale like Irving plaza	1
Concert type theater like the Welmont in Montclair would drive people to our downtown like it does there	1
Concert venue	1
fine arts theatre/music hall	1
Indie rock shows	1
Live bands	1
Live music space	1
live music venue	1
live music venue/bar for local bands	1
Live performance music/comedy	1
Live theatre	1

Local theatre company/music concert venue	1
More Events with Food and Music	1
More places for live music for actual bands	1
Place with dance space	1
Place with outdoor music / seating	1
Playhouse / Theater	1
Restaurant with live music (variety)	1
ROCK MUSIC	1
small concert venue	1
Small ensemble music space	1
small music venue	1
Small performing arts space, dedicated - black box	1
Theatre like forum	1
Venue for bands and traveling shows	1
Venue for live music	1

#### **Movies and Film – 62 Comments**

Movie Theater x 30	30
INDY MOVIE THEATER x 3	3
A movie and stage theater	1
A theater that actually showed current movies	1
art house movie theater	1
Art movie house	1
art movie house (renovate Forum?)	1
Art Movie House at Forum	1
artistic movie cinema	1
Cinema Hall	1
Classic movies	1
Dinner theatre	1
film	1
Films, lecture series, concerts, & exhibits because there is nothing on TV...	1
Films/theater(heated)	1
Independent/Foreign Film	1
Indie / classic movie theatre	1
Indie movies	1
It would be nice if the local theater showed independent films.	1
Movie house	1
Movie theater - at the forum?	1
movie theater - could be the Forum if they would ever start showing movies again	1
Movie theater like Dunnellen	1

Movie Theater that serves food	1
Movies and Live Music at the Forum Theatre	1
Movies at the Forum	1
Non-mainstream movies	1
Small (3 to 4 Screen) Movie Theater (Like Red Bank Has)	1
Small Movie theater (Older movies)	1
Small movie theatre	1
small movie theatre with main stream or interesting movies not the old people	
movies shown at the theatre in town	1

**Businesses, Art Classes, and Activities – 38 Comments**

craft store	2
Dance Club	2
Pottery/Painting	2
adult dance studio	1
Adult dancing. Salsa, swing	1
Affordable teen and adult drawing and painting classes	1
antique shops	1
Archery club	1
Art school [dance, painting, etc.]	1
Arts supply shop	1
Billiards Hall	1
book club	1
Classy billiards or bowling	1
Coffeehouse with live arts events	1
Cooking classes	1
Cooking classes/ culinary	1
Courses in Continuing education for Seniors through Rutgers or Middlesex	
County College might create a luncheon crowd on certain days.	1
Craft Studio	1
crafts store - not to make crafts but to buy from artisans	1
Dance	1
Dance studio/rehearsal/studio space	1
Dancing	1
DIY Pottery	1
Flea Market Events	1
Hardware and home supplies	1
hardware store	1
Making pottery	1
New bookstore	1
Paint and Sip place	1

Paint and wine	1
Paint your own	1
Paint your own pottery	1
Painting (wine/painting classes)	1
painting or ceramics	1
VR Studio	1

### Existing Entertainment Assets – 37 Comments

An upgraded Forum Theater showing top-level (not necessarily top-box-office) films, bringing in popular but off-the-radar performers -- a full calendar of arts and entertainment.	1
Fix the forum	1
Fix the Forum!!!!	1
Fix up the Forum	1
Foreign films at the Forum	1
Forum Theater reimagined as a regional destination for documentaries and indies that people see in NYC. They should run for a limited time (2-3 weeks) so that people would return frequently.	1
Forum Theatre open on regular basis	1
Forum, need some attention going to south main too!	1
I would like to see the forum with more/better options I couldn't movies and shows. We would frequent often.	1
I'd like to see the theater revitalized	1
I'm saying the theater again because I think it's that important.	1
Improve forum theatre and hold film festivals via arts council	1
Just an active Forum (with heat) would be awesome!	1
more activity at Forum	1
Movies back @ the Forum!	1
Need to fix up Forum	1
Refurbish the theater	1
Refurbished Forum for art films and serious theater	1
Refurbished Forum for classical and jazz concerts	1
Rejuvenate the theater for movies and concerts like Rahway	1
Renovate Forum and have small concerts etc.	1
Renovated Forum	1
Reopen forum theater with classic movies	1
Reopen the Forum! Art movies	1
Revamp Forum use for comedy, plays poetry, a "black & white" monthly movie event etc.	1
re-vamp the Forum. As a person in the arts, I know- it has SO much potential.	1
Revitalize the Forum for live theatre	1

Revitalized forum theater	1
See above note about The Forum	1
Sell the Forum to the Wellmont in Montclair	1
The Forum playing movies again maybe like theatre in bound brook	1
The Forum refurbished!	1
updated forum - movies on non-play times	1
Use of film forum for films, but needs renovating	1
Use the existing Forum Theater to host more / better shows of all types	1
We have The Forum; let's fix it!	1
We have venues for concerts; we just don't have any	1

### **Art Galleries – 31 Comments**

Art Gallery x 15	15
Art x 2	2
Art gift gallery, done well	1
arts	1
arts center	1
arts venue	1
bring back the art gallery!	1
Contemporary Art Gallery	1
Craft gallery	1
Dedicated gallery	1
Fine art gallery	1
Independent Art venue for the independent artist	1
local artist gallery with various media	1
Local artist gallery/store	1
One or two galleries on Main St.	1
Original art gallery	1

### **Youth Focused – 30 Comments**

Kids Store x 3	3
Children's activities x 2	2
A place for kids age 13-18 could hang out. Dance, eat and do homework and feel safe	1
Activities that are family friendly.	1
Arcade	1
Children's gym	1
Club for 20's and 30's with teen nights	1
Craft for family/kids	1
For children, an arts and crafts place like Make me and Take me like	1
Functional theater - music and children's performances	1

Game boy	1
Indoor play area like iplay America	1
Isn't one idea enough? Ask the teens what they would like and use.	1
Kids arts and crafts	1
kids education and art	1
Kids gymnastics	1
Kids museum	1
Kids party	1
Kids reading club	1
Larger arcade in more visible location	1
Laser Tag	1
Safe Teenage Club (Like IPlay America)	1
Skate park	1
something directed to teens	1
Teen club, after school hangout	1
Things that would attract kids	1
Video game	1

#### **Physical / Lifestyle Venues – 10 Comments**

exercise place	1
Health club	1
Hot yoga	1
Hot Yoga Center	1
Indoor climbing gym	1
martial arts	1
Parkour gym	1
Sports Club	1
Women's gym/studio	1
yoga class	1

#### **Food – Non-Alcohol – 3 Comments**

Barbecue cook off	1
Chili cook	1
Tea shop	1

#### **Other – 75 Comments**

N/A	13
None	13
No opinion	6
Don't know	3
?	2

????? No opinion	1
A Community Arts Center	1
a place like Pino's in HP	1
Animal friendly spot	1
Before WF, dreamed of: Evolve the farmers market into a food coop	1
Can't think of	1
community center	1
co-op	1
Co-working space for creative professionals	1
Ditto	1
Dog Park	1
Don't know - the town is very tight and over-populated as is	1
Entertainment, HA I'm too tired after work	1
Escape rooms	1
Event space!	1
Flexible meeting/performance space	1
Gggggggg	1
Heidi	1
I can't think of any	1
I don't know	1
let the designer wharehous on Amboy open for retail	1
mall	1
Melissa	1
MORE coffee shops	1
Museum	1
Name brand type	1
no clubs	1
NO MORE BARS	1
No more coffee shops	1
NOT BARS OR WINE TYPE PLACES	1
Not sure	1
Park	1
Pop up fine art and craft gallery with retail	1
See above	1
See above!!	1
Unknown	1
venue for various pop-up events (cooking classes etc)	1
Yes, more Arts, more Music, maybe classes, fun interesting things to offer customers	1

## Appendix D

**Question 23 responses. None have been omitted, changed or altered except to correct obvious spelling errors.**

**Question Twenty-Three: Please share any other suggestions on what Metuchen Downtown Alliance could do to improve your Downtown Metuchen experience and make it more likely that you would frequent more Metuchen businesses.**

**Complements to MDA – 28 Comments:**

1. Glad feedback is being sought from residents. Please keep a dialogue going. If we can strive to replicate what Westfield or Somerville have done, we'll be in good shape.
2. Good Luck!
3. Grateful for the focus on downtown
4. Hope something works out from this!
5. I am thrilled that we are able to have the foresight to begin the Downtown Alliance Process.
6. I believe that MDA will be beneficial to creating and maintaining a vibrant downtown.
7. I have lived in Metuchen for many years and think that that what is happening downtown is very exciting! I am glad that the Alliance has been created to do the kind of planning, business development and marketing that Metuchen has never had.
8. I have seen some wonderful activity and improvements since MDA came along, so I really do believe we are heading in the right direction but need to continue to move forward
9. I look forward to what the new development will bring to our community in terms of people and shopping options.
10. I think this is a terrific idea that has been long needed.
11. I think you guys are doing a great job! Finding out what the local businesses want/ need !Cai's thanks you!
12. I would love to get involved!
13. I'm very impressed by the work being done by the dedicated volunteers of the MDA so far.
14. It's just like to say that I have noticed positive change in recent months. Thank you!
15. it is good that you are doing this survey
16. Keep up the good work. Professional marketing is evident to me.
17. Like all the events!!
18. Love the job the MDA is doing!
19. MDA is doing a great job so far!
20. Thank God for the MDA!
21. Thank you for asking the right questions!!!
22. Thank you for working to make our town a better place.
23. Thank you. The MDA will continue to make positive changes in Metuchen.
24. Thanks for all of your efforts. Glad MDA on board.
25. The MDA is a long overdue need to spark change and growth in town

26. We already have a lot of information about what we need, and good early steps have been taken. Identify a range of doable projects and improvements, set priorities, and begin pursuing them. We won't get an active, vibrant downtown in a few months or a couple of years.
27. You are doing a great job so far. I would love to hear about volunteer opportunities.
28. You are doing great work. Keep it up.

#### **Other Comments – 19 Comments:**

1. 48 Kempson Place
2. Also some comments about the survey. In question 3, two of the suggestions "There are too many personal service providers (hair salons, dry cleaners, yoga studios, nail salons, gyms) downtown" and "There are too many professional service businesses (accountants, attorneys, insurance offices, banks) downtown" is more of an OPINION than a "very important/not important" type of question. It was a bit confusing on how to answer that. Also even on desktop, the survey was difficult to take as you had to keep scrolling back to the top of categories to make sure you were in the right section. Last but not least- suggestion to define what you mean by "Downtown." I am familiar because of following your MDA planning but answers could be skewed by not knowing exactly where this area is for the purposes of this survey. For example, I certainly use a salon in town- its not downtown so I answer no to that. Others may think- sure I go to Metuchen for that and indicate yes. Thank you for this exercise and I look forward to seeing what the future of downtown holds.
3. Christmas lights ROCK!
4. Emphasize Bulldogs identity and blue&white colors
5. Great little downtown area that is unique to the area but still clinging on to the 20th century when it comes to change. The older generation are awesome people but many of them are adamant at keeping the town the way it's always been even though it is evident change needs to occur.
6. Honest feedback is always helpful
7. long survey
8. LOVE easy access to train station.
9. Make the Brainy Borough Brainy again!
10. Momentum will build following small, early successes and persistence. We should be in it for the "long haul". Look at Crawford
11. NA
12. no comments x 2
13. Oh love Torino's good food and service
14. Princeton is what I would consider the ideal downtown.
15. Stop housing developments
16. Survey was too long. Long surveys limit number of responses.
17. the overcrowding of our schools

18. Way too long.
19. While it is critical to know what works, it is more critical to know what does not.

**Community Reflections (Positive) – 14 Comments:**

1. Appreciate the many chamber events that consistently draw people downtown. Some need revamping others are classic as they are. Junebug was phenomenal this year.
2. Grew up here, love the town
3. Have lived in Metuchen forty-three years.....Big changes
4. I love Metuchen and am excited about the improvements. There are several successful businesses downtown. Analyze what they are doing right. The A Pub and coffee shop, for example, are "locals" that bring people together.
5. I love Metuchen, and I want to see it thrive!
6. I really want to see Metuchen downtown revitalized and would love to help in any way. Is there a way to get involved?
7. It's a wonderful place to raise a family. Once children are grown, there is little to keep us tethered here.
8. It's great now, looking forward to improvements!
9. Love Metuchen, it can only get better.
10. Metuchen has the reputation of being a great community for families to live. Beautifying the downtown area would certainly enhance this reputation. It should be done with grace and beauty without too much glitz
11. My family is excited to see the businesses opening, where they had been previously out-of-business!
12. Nice town with lots of potential to make rapid progress. Need to set goals and build consensus.
13. Want to see Main Street alive
14. We love Metuchen and are excited to see so many good things happening! We love the arcade!!

**Comments Related to Parking Conditions and/or Traffic – 14 Comments:**

1. ALSO big thing. Add the times for the parking meters. No one knows when they have to pay and when they do not. I get those questions when i park downtown all the time!
2. Business owners should not park at Meters and need better garbage service downtown
3. Do something with parking garages so that Metuchen downtown is free from commuter traffic yet making it convenient. Build a multi story car park just for shoppers and prevent all road side parking.
4. Fix traffic
5. I never have a hard time finding a spot to park. People who say they can't are not looking or want something immediately outside where they are going.
6. Improve traffic flow - too much congestion
7. let's work on the congestion of our streets

8. Metuchen will need very good traffic planning if the MDA succeeds in bringing in more commerce, or it will be a mess.
9. Parking
10. Parking is necessarily limited.
11. The parking on Main Street is getting harder to find.
12. The traffic problem is increasing.
13. Too many targeted traffic violations issued to the commuters who come on daily basis to park the car at station.
14. when I get off the train, I just want to get away as fast as I can. The traffic is atrocious.

#### **Community Reflections (Negative) – 13 Comments:**

1. Current landlords along Main Street are inept. Have no clue to the retail market. Why is Westfield downtown so successful and Metuchen's is full of vacancies? Inept landlords.
2. Don't need to spend taxpayer money on mda
3. I rarely go shopping there because there is no store which I buy things regularly from.
4. Listen more to resident's opinions, share more information. It seems that a small group plans everything. It is very annoying the ego attitudes if you don't agree with the committee. If you are not in the MDA click you get snubbed. I supported this town but now I have backed off from volunteering because I agree tired of the click group snubbing me.
5. Metuchen is already transformed for the worse.
6. Metuchen used to be different, quaint, unique little shops that offered interesting things, restaurants n pubs, that were fun to go to, it seems to have changed. We don't need another hair salon, bank, or some random service!
7. Our library is smelly, old and dirty. The librarian in the children area is rude. I detest going there.
8. Please think about the 18-45-year-old. The older people run this town and they are running it into the ground. Be inventive. By me I have new families moving in that have no connection to downtown. You need to reach out to those people, not the people that are complaining. They are the ones who have lived here forever and do not want any change. Do not forget about the other 1/2 mile past the advertising 1/2 that is usually done.
9. Property taxes are MUCH too high!
10. The mayor is ineffective. Council lacks leadership and inspiration not sure why these people run for office as they honestly don't seem too interested The Niger issue is the high school. It is not what itchiness be. Time to be honest and get people on charge who will do a good job the school is not strong
11. The MDA needs to be the focus for all things downtown. More clearly defined objectives need to be established with realistic goals and completion dates. In addition to making event information available, the MDA should publish what is going on behind the closed doors. Lastly, the town has become a victim of rainbows and bunnies so, unless you agree 100% with the "in crowd", you are written off as being negative.

12. This isn't the Metuchen I grew up in anymore.
13. We moved into this town because it had that small-town feel. The monstrosity (parking lot & complex) has begun turning it into something else and I see it going further down that track (if you had a vote by all Metuchen residents, building those things would have failed by a huge majority). So be smart with what you do and keep the residents of Metuchen in mind, not just the few people that control this town. Be smart.

#### **Comments Relating to the Business Mixture – 12 Comments:**

1. Better retail stores!
2. Boro Hardware was a community resource - we need a hardware store - we need stores that will keep people downtown.
3. Bring back Metuchen charm! Variety, bookstores, artwork, music! Good clean hang out cafes! And not so overpriced that only elite people can be here!
4. Destination stores and a stable movie theater would be attractive
5. Do not want national/regional stores like Starbucks or CVS or massage envy
6. Need one good anchor store
7. Recognizable named usable anchor stores.
8. Still mourning the loss of our jazz club; wish we could bring it back. (Novita is lame.)
9. Therefore, any new retail should be high value, low volume, and not compete with Mall stores. To the extent that people from a 10-mile radius can be attracted because of quality, specialist stores, they are also likely to dine at the many good restaurants.
10. We desperately need a yarn store.
11. We need a variety (dollar/ 5 and 10) I know a store like Morris Stores does not exist any longer
12. We travel to Red Bank and Point Pleasant for antiques and wonder whether Metuchen could also be a center for that. We also enjoy browsing craft stores and galleries when we travel to other communities such as Lambertville. I don't know if these niches would work in Metuchen but if the shops were nice, they might be compatible with the Brass Lantern and become a magnet for people in this region to come, browse, shop and then of course, eat and drink.

#### **Suggestions about Programs, Services, and/or Events – 11 Comments:**

1. Charity Runs are scheduled for Sunday morning when I am in church. A Saturday morning event would of this type would be appreciated
2. Coordination is good. Keep in mind the best mix between Main St. and the new stores, as well as South Main St.
3. I would love to see downtown be made more kid friendly and affordable. When the weather is nice there is no outdoor area to sit where kids can safely run around. The new piazza or a playground with good benches would solve this problem. Then we could get food at one of the businesses and eat it while watching our kids play.
4. Keep working on the MDA website...add a nice interactive map

5. Metuchen needs a public gathering space - like a park. There is no "center of town."
6. One thing we know for sure is apparently critics don't get out of the donut hole much. When you drive around NJ and come back to Metuchen it is doing fairly well. We just need NAME BRANDS to get it on the map !
7. Please don't forget about South Main Street
8. Realize that maybe 10%, if that, of the town is on Facebook.
9. Restoration of historic buildings coordination of storefronts with buildings they occupy, enforcement of sign ordinances
10. The Chamber of Commerce used to have an alliance with New Jersey transit and the small businesses to provide take out service and dry cleaning service to commuters that was a great service it was incredibly convenient and it just went away if you really if you resurrected that it would be very helpful and it would generate more business
11. We don't need a down town alliance jut easier zoning approval for new business to come here and not rent parking spots and other red tape

#### **Concerns about Current Businesses – 11 Comments:**

1. I definitely spend more in a store like Optique Unique because I like to support Metuchen businesses. It is a beautiful store with great personalized service. I cannot say the same about many of the businesses. There are too many hair salons, nail places and banks. The restaurants are mediocre, except for Joey D's which isn't downtown. Many of the stores are shabby inside and out. Metuchen definitely needs some upscale stores and restaurants.
2. I love shopping in downtown, it is just my hours and the business hours don't match. I miss the village variety store and the clothing stores that used to be on Main Street
3. If the streets looked nicer and there were more places to browse, no one would mind walking a block or two.
4. Not many good restaurants worth the money
5. Off street level business should be allowed to place signs outside - either on specific days or at specific times (i.e., rush hour at night)
6. Over charging of the retail rent, and maybe then try to get more people in
7. Retailers selling merchandise are going to be phased out over time as more and more shopping is online. Impossible for merchandise retailers to compete with big guys and guys working out of their houses because the main street retailer has much greater overhead. Only shot is for these businesses to have a strong e-commerce component. Consignment shops are the exception. I believe that very soon Main Street will be only services (dry cleaners, gyms, child care, dance studios, hair salons, professional offices) and food places (restaurants, bakeries, coffee shops).
8. Stores closing on Sunday and Monday and at 5pm is an outdated retail model and keeps Metuchen from being a destination downtown area
9. The stores we have lost over the past few years have taken a toll.
10. Too many empty storefronts....shameful

11. Too many of the restaurants don't serve alcohol. Make it easier for restaurants to get liquor licenses.

**Comments concerning Pedestrian Safety – 5 Comments:**

1. Pedestrian safety pedestrian safety pedestrian safety
2. Sidewalks are narrow and traffic is crazy.
3. Since there are going to be more people biking I think there should be a course given by the police with the rules of the road. Having to wear a helmet , what side to bike on and please no riding bikes on the sidewalks. I was almost badly hurt coming out of Fresco by a speeding bike and no sight line before stepping on to the sidewalk. Bikers do not seem to be aware of the safety issues. Very important for the kids to be aware of their responsibilities and adults too.
4. Unsafe crosswalks downtown are a real detriment to what we are trying to build there so it is of utmost importance to be addressed.
5. You have to work on pedestrian visibility.

**Comments Concerning Cleanliness – 2 Comments:**

1. All of main street from Lincoln Hwy to Rte 1 is filled with horrible lighting and is filthy
2. Clean up main. Include south main in everything

## Credits

This report was written by Donna Ann Harris and Thomas Gilberttown, an intern working at Heritage Consulting Inc.

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Prior to starting her firm thirteen years ago, Ms. Harris was State Coordinator for the Illinois Main Street program for two years and the Manager of the Illinois suburban Main Street program for Four years. During her tenure as State Coordinator, Ms. Harris served 56 Illinois Main Street Communities, led a staff of 12, and managed a budget of over a million dollars.

Since 2004, Ms. Harris has worked with state, countywide, and local Main Street programs in 23 States. For the last thirteen years, Ms. Harris has spoken at the National Main Street Center annual conference, and at the International Downtown Association annual meetings in 2013, 2008 and 2009. Ms. Harris has published six feature articles in the National Main Street Center's quarterly journal *Main Street News* on fundraising, business improvement districts and advocacy. She also writes regularly for The Main Street Story of the Week for the National Main Street Center. AltaMira Press published her book *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* in 2007.

## Thomas Gilbertson

**Thomas Gilbertson** is a planner focusing in strategic economic and community development programs for cities and business districts. Thomas is a graduate of the University of Oregon with a BA in Planning, Public Policy, and Management and a background in economics. Thomas is currently pursuing his Master of City Planning degree at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design. Thomas began his career working with Main Street Programs in his native Oregon by focusing on community involvement, downtown clean and safe services, and place-making activities. After moving to Pennsylvania, he has continued focusing on place-making projects along with guiding a Business Improvement District formation process that required extensive outreach to immigrant merchants. Through the implementation of strategic resource and program development support, Thomas is committed to the success of each commercial district in which he provides services. A native of Portland Oregon, he currently lives in South Philadelphia.

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