

# Community Questionnaire Results

Chester Township, Geauga County, Ohio  
October 27, 2020

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# What is a Community Questionnaire?

- Opportunity for residents to weigh in on key questions
- Opportunities for leaders to hear a wider range of residents' opinions in addition to those who come to public meetings
- Not statistically valid (very expensive in small communities) – represents respondents' opinions only
- Not an election or voting mechanism
- Communication and democratic discourse is an important complement to a questionnaire

# What Was the Questionnaire Process?

- 1) Committee, Trustees and CSU worked together to craft questions; included a community meeting November 2019 to discuss issues and process (Oct 2019-April 2020)
- 2) Township engaged mailing company to print, label, add postage and mail questionnaire packets (May 2020)
- 3) Township advertised questionnaire (May-June 2020)
- 3) Residents filled out packets, one per household, and returned directly to CSU (May-June 2020)
- 4) CSU entered all responses into Qualtrics software and produced software summary of response data (June-Aug 2020)
- 5) CSU analyzed response data and synthesized findings in report (Sept 2020)

# Questionnaire Response Rates

- Of 4,724 questionnaires mailed, 1,654 were returned and deemed valid, a 35% response rate (excellent)
- Of 1,672 questionnaires returned to CSU, 1,654 were deemed valid, a 98.9% validity rate (excellent)
- Not every respondent answered every question; every question was analyzed separately to maximize opinions counted
- Respondents wrote 4,501 open-ended responses across four questions (excellent)

*Excellent response rates indicate strong support and interest in the community and its future*

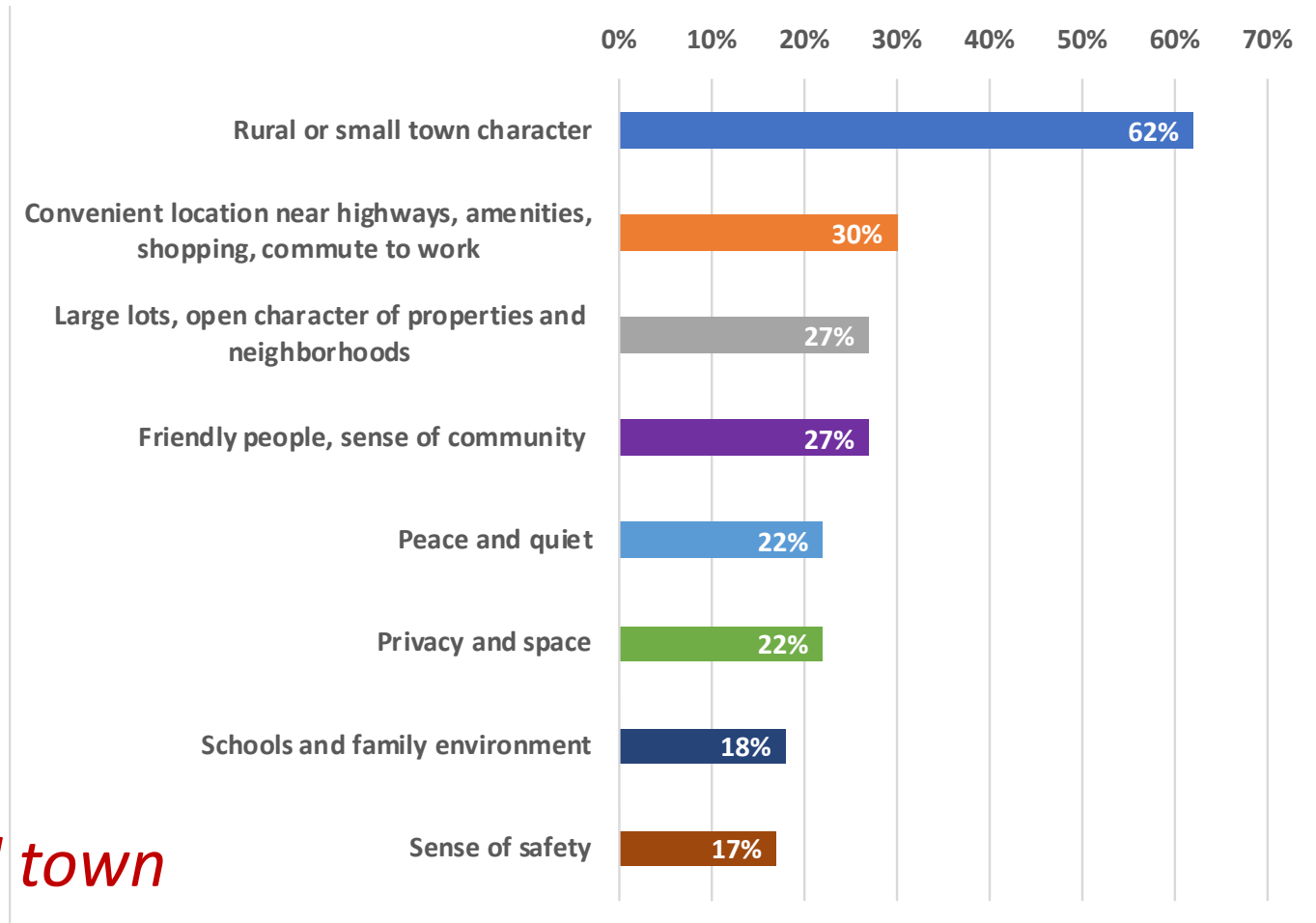
# Who Responded?

- 40% of respondents were over 65 years old, and another 39% were aged 45-65
- Average length of residence: 30 years
- 98% own their own homes
- 50% in 2-person households, 32% 3 or more
- 21% are in households with children under 18
- 66% live on 3 acres or less
- 53% employed or self-employed; 37% retired

*Respondents were generally older, long-term residents*

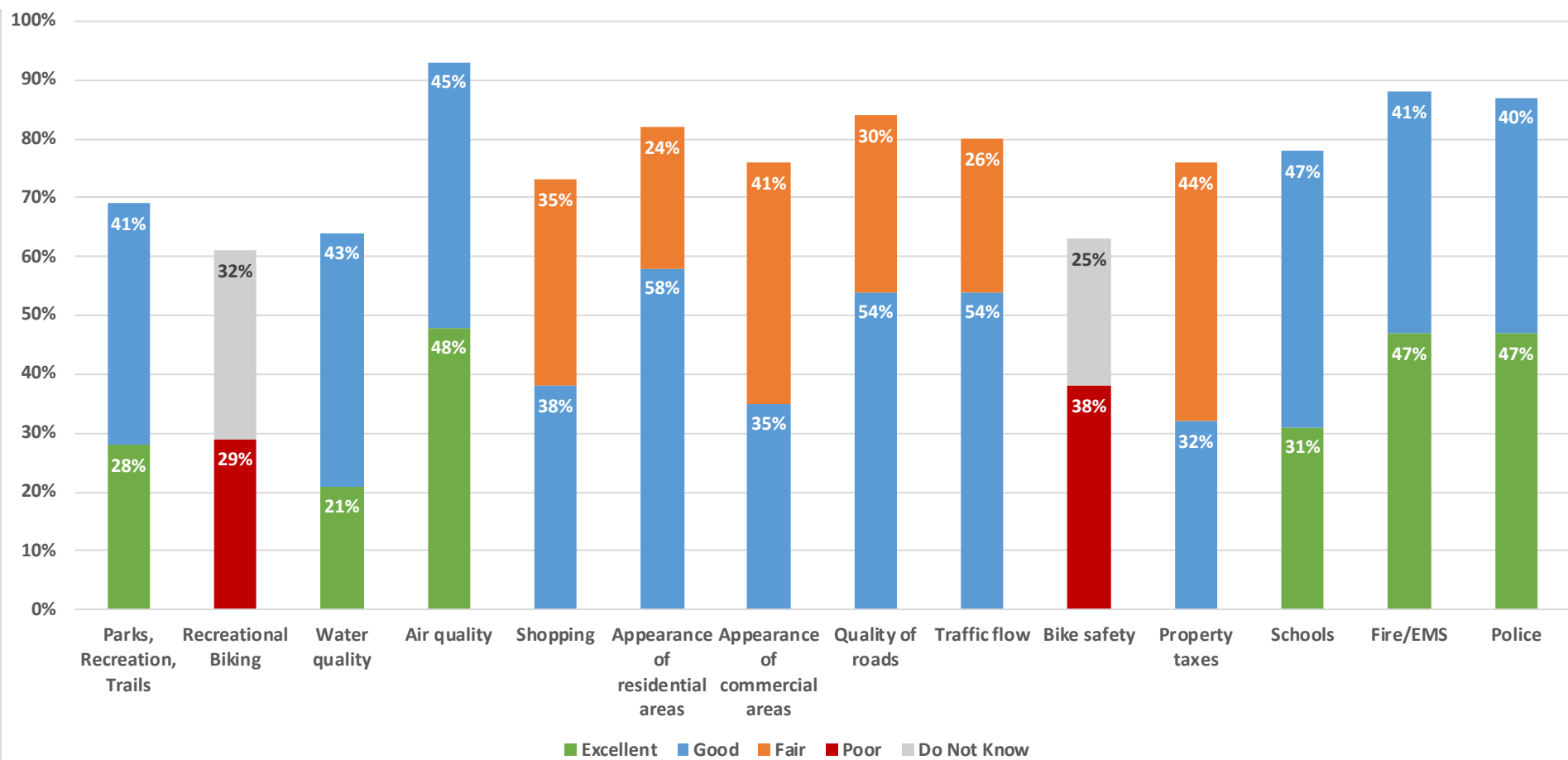
# Findings: Quality of Life in Chester

*What are Chester's Best Attributes? (open-ended; most common mentions)*



*Rural and small town character are very important to respondents*

# Existing Conditions in Chester: top 2 ratings



*Parks and recreation, water and air quality, schools, and emergency services are ranked very highly; bike safety ranks low; other conditions are good to fair*

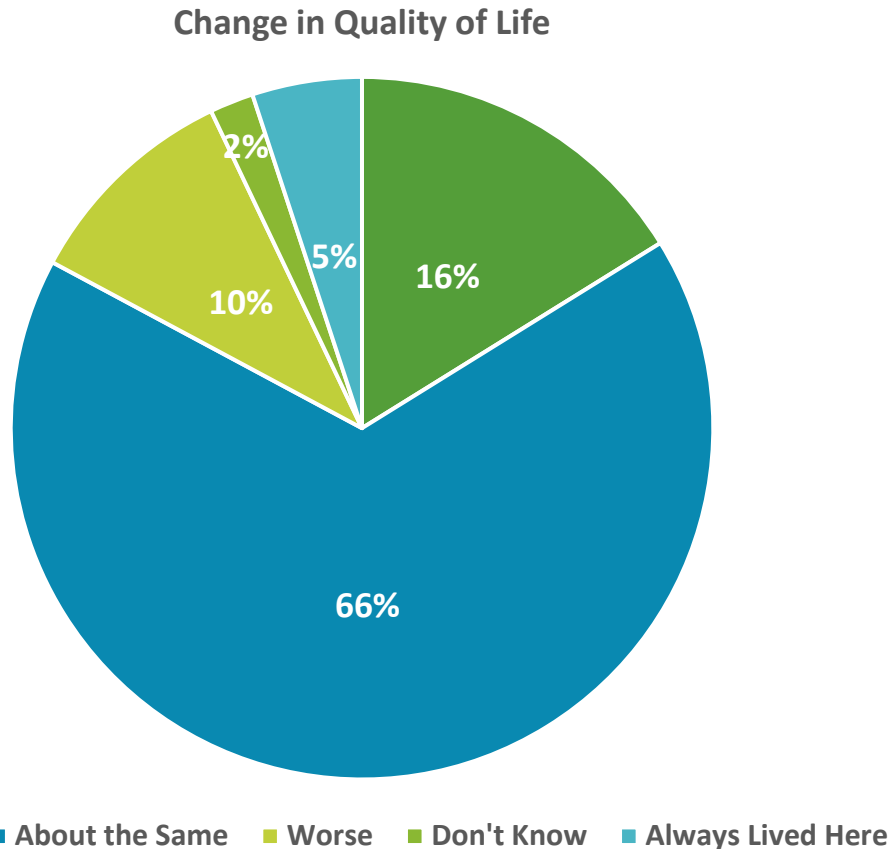


# ***Reasons for Living in Chester***

*Items ranked in respondents' top 5*

- Rural atmosphere 92%
- Safer Neighborhoods 84%
- Larger Lot Size 79%
- Access to Better Schools 56%
- Less Traffic Congestion 56%
- Lower Taxes 34%

# *Change in Quality of Life Since Resident Moved Here:*



*Most  
respondents  
feel their  
quality of life  
is better or  
the same as  
when they  
moved here*

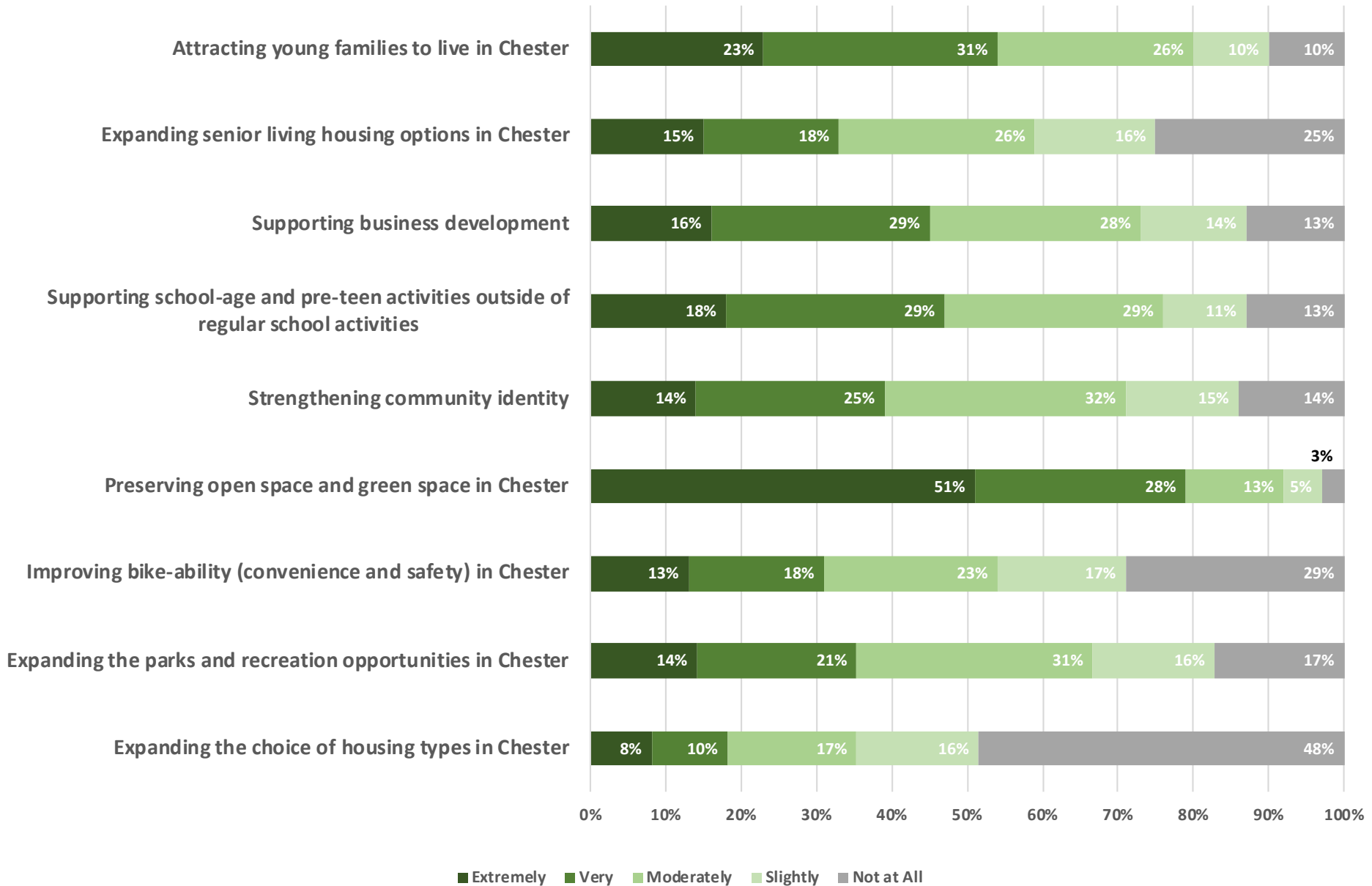
# ***Improving Quality of Life:***

## ***What can the Township do?***

*(open-ended; most common mentions)*

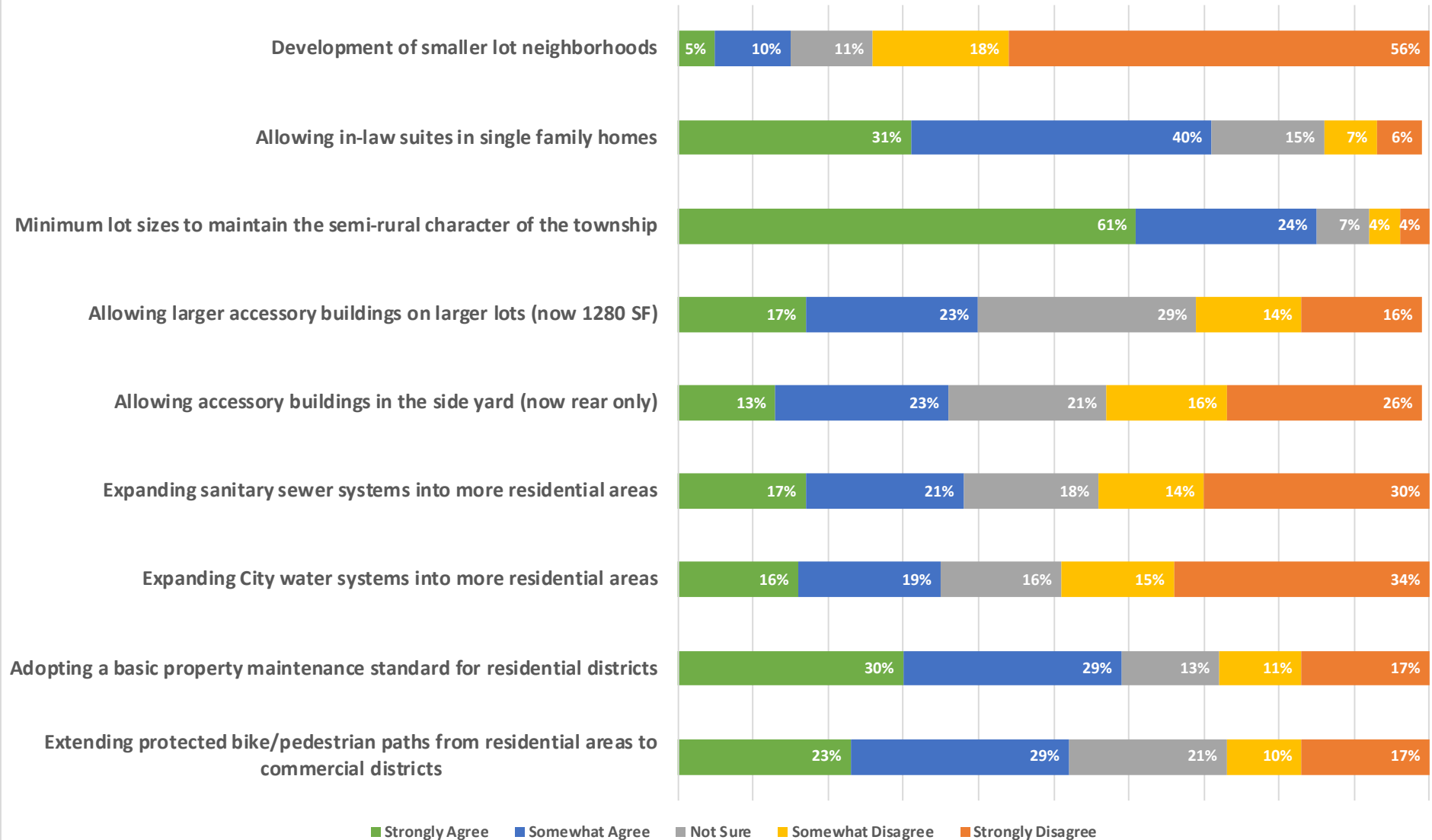
- Roads, access and mobility 32%
  - Improving traffic flow
  - Slowing down speeders
  - Installing signals and turning lanes
  - Adding bike paths and sidewalks
- Stores/shopping 31%
  - Grocery store
  - Restaurants
- Growth and development 24%
  - Keep the Township rural
- Provide gathering spaces 20%
  - downtown
  - community center
- Improve Services 17%
  - recycling center
  - roads
- Stop nuisances 13%
  - Off-road vehicles
  - Firearm noise
  - Property maintenance
  - Open air burning

# Looking forward: Rate How Important?



# Findings: Residential Areas

*I support...*

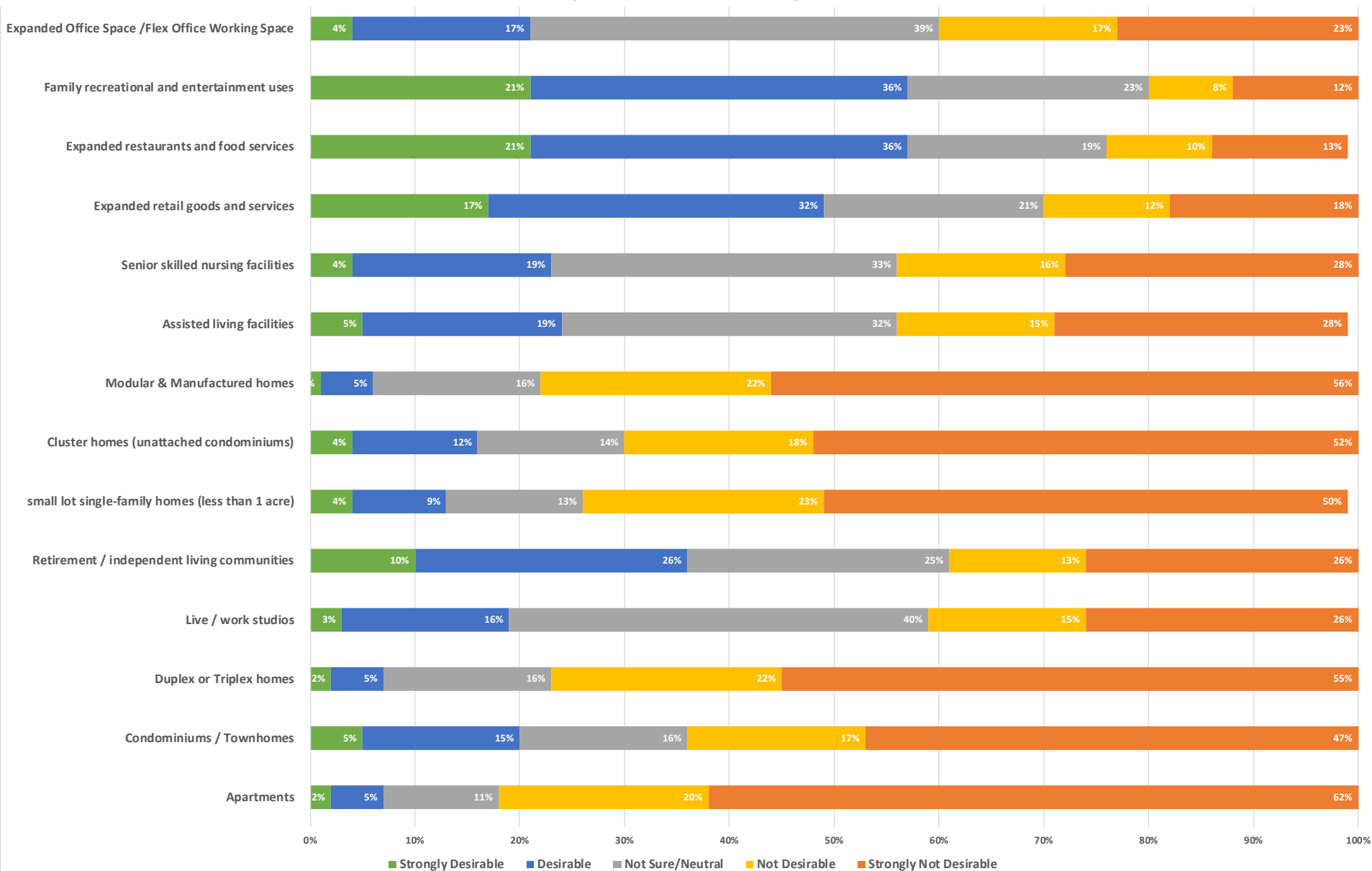


# Findings: Commercial District

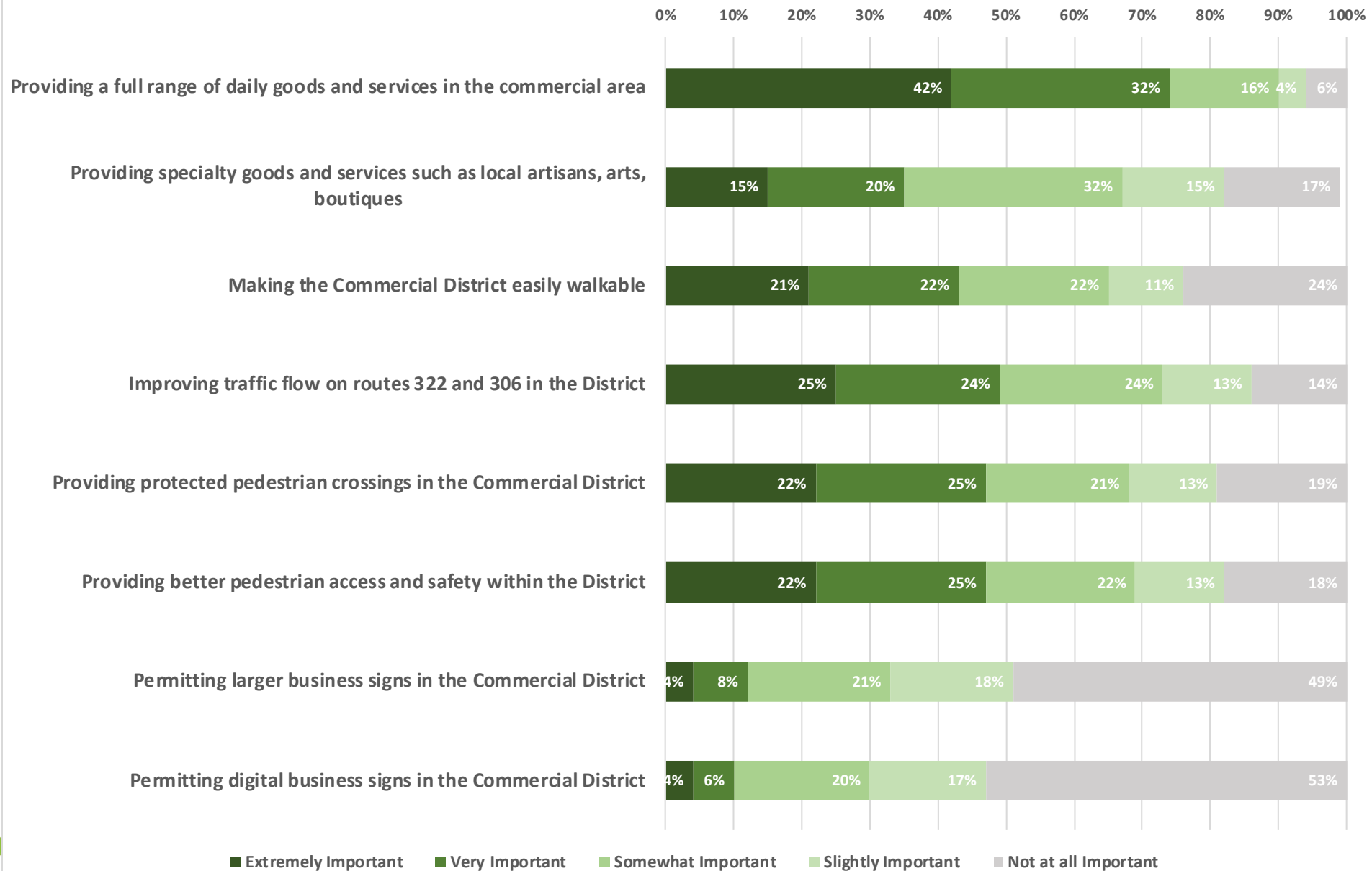
***What is your overall impression of the Commercial District? (open-ended; most mentions)***

- Appearance/Aesthetics 41%
  - Many ways of saying “ugly, not good, junky, old, rundown”
  - Many mentions of poor maintenance
- Limiting development of commercial center 34%
  - Keep it the same size
  - Fill vacancies first
- OK, fine, adequate, etc. 23%
- Disorderly and disorganized 16%
- Traffic is a concern 16%

# Desirability of Commercial District Development Options



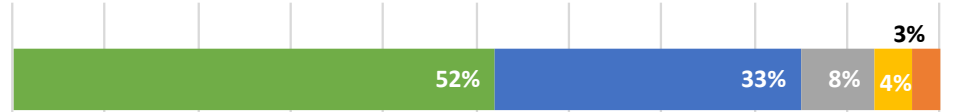
# Commercial District: Importance of...



# Commercial District Character

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

The Commercial District should have a quaint smalltown feel



Chester should strengthen the identity of the town center



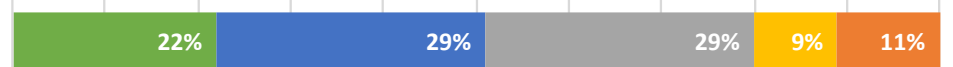
The Township should develop and adopt architectural building standards to ensure quality and consistency



The Township should develop and adopt landscape and tree planting standards



The commercial/shopping center districts should have dedicated ingress/egress lanes



The Township should adopt a property maintenance code for the commercial district



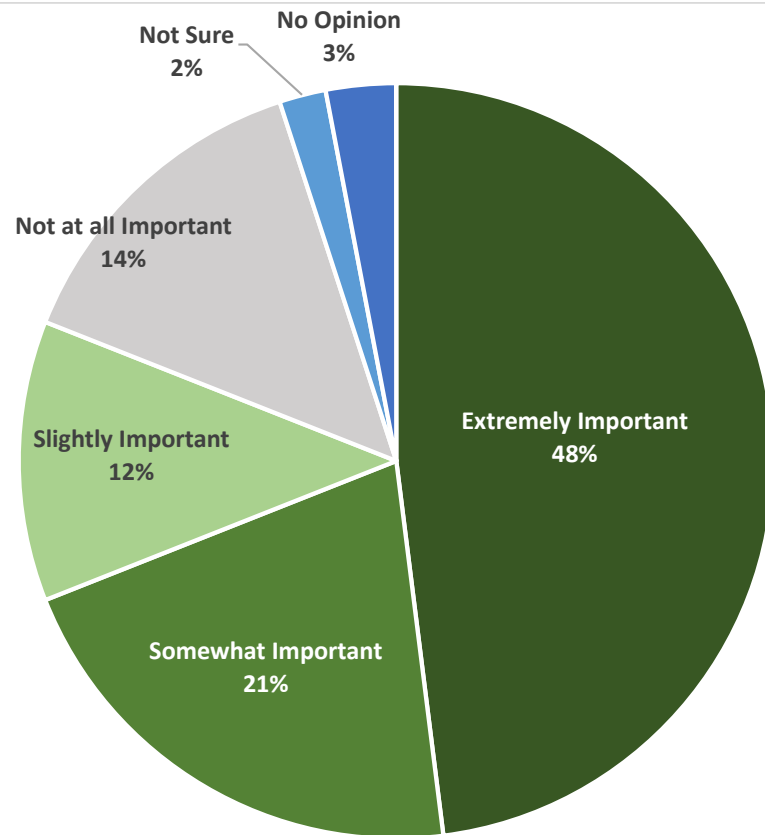
The Commercial District is too large



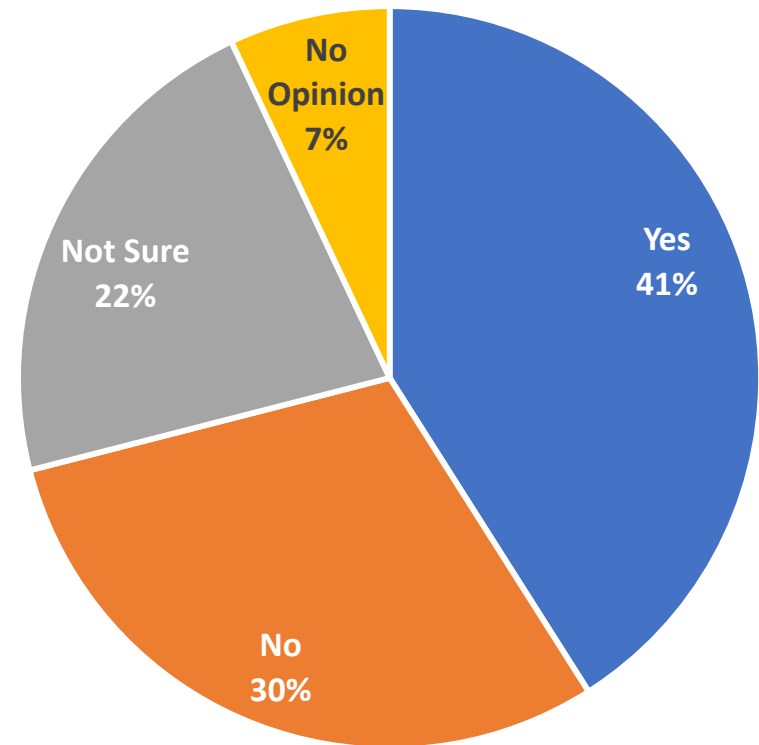
■ Strongly Agree   
 ■ Somewhat Agree   
 ■ Not Sure   
 ■ Somewhat Disagree   
 ■ Strongly Disagree

# Findings: Township Services

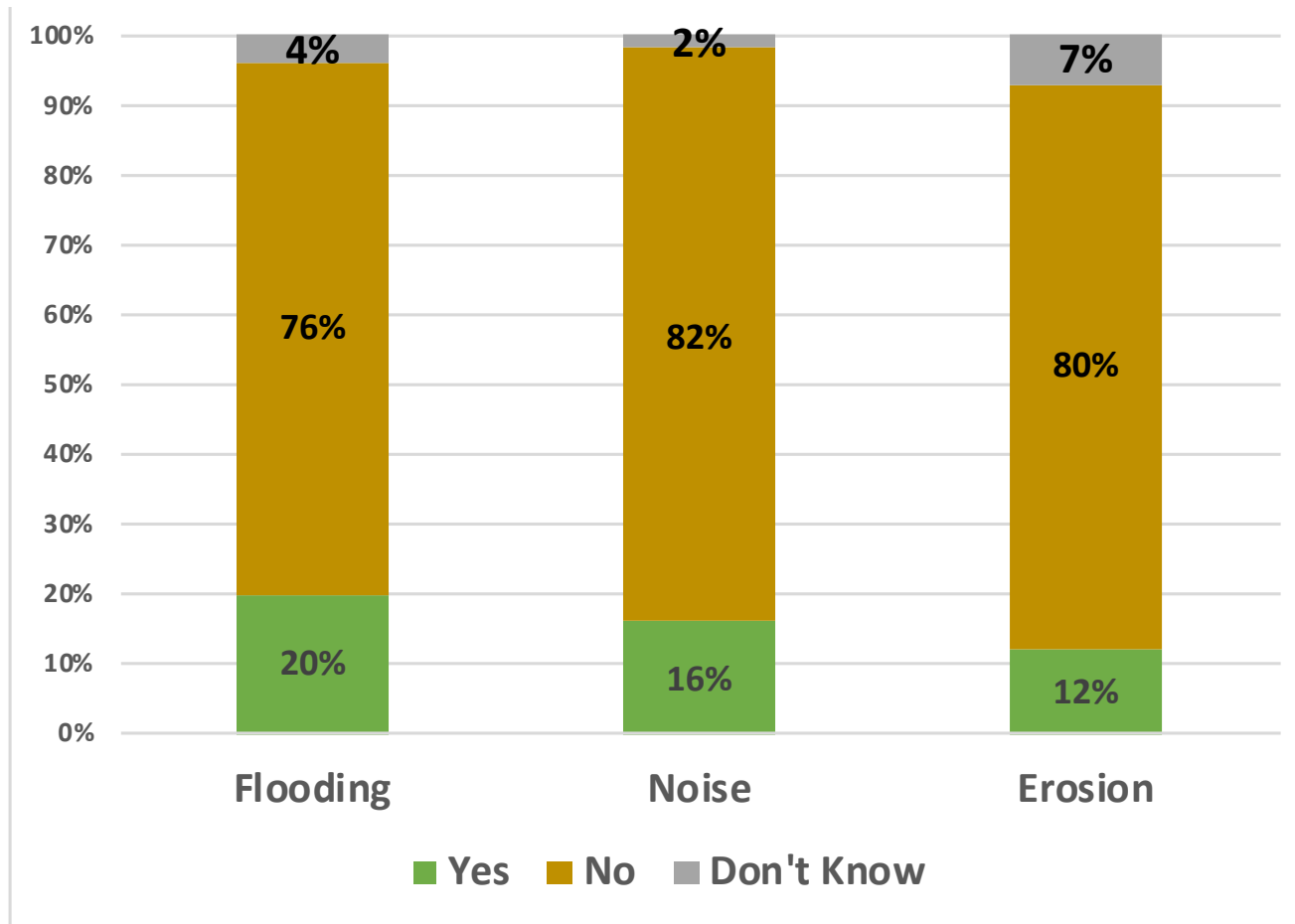
## *Importance of Recycle Park*



## *Support for Single Hauler Waste Removal*



# Environmental Issues in my Neighborhood



# ***Possible New Facilities in Chester Highest Ranking***

*Note that only 27% to 40% of respondents ranked these items – more conversation is in order.*

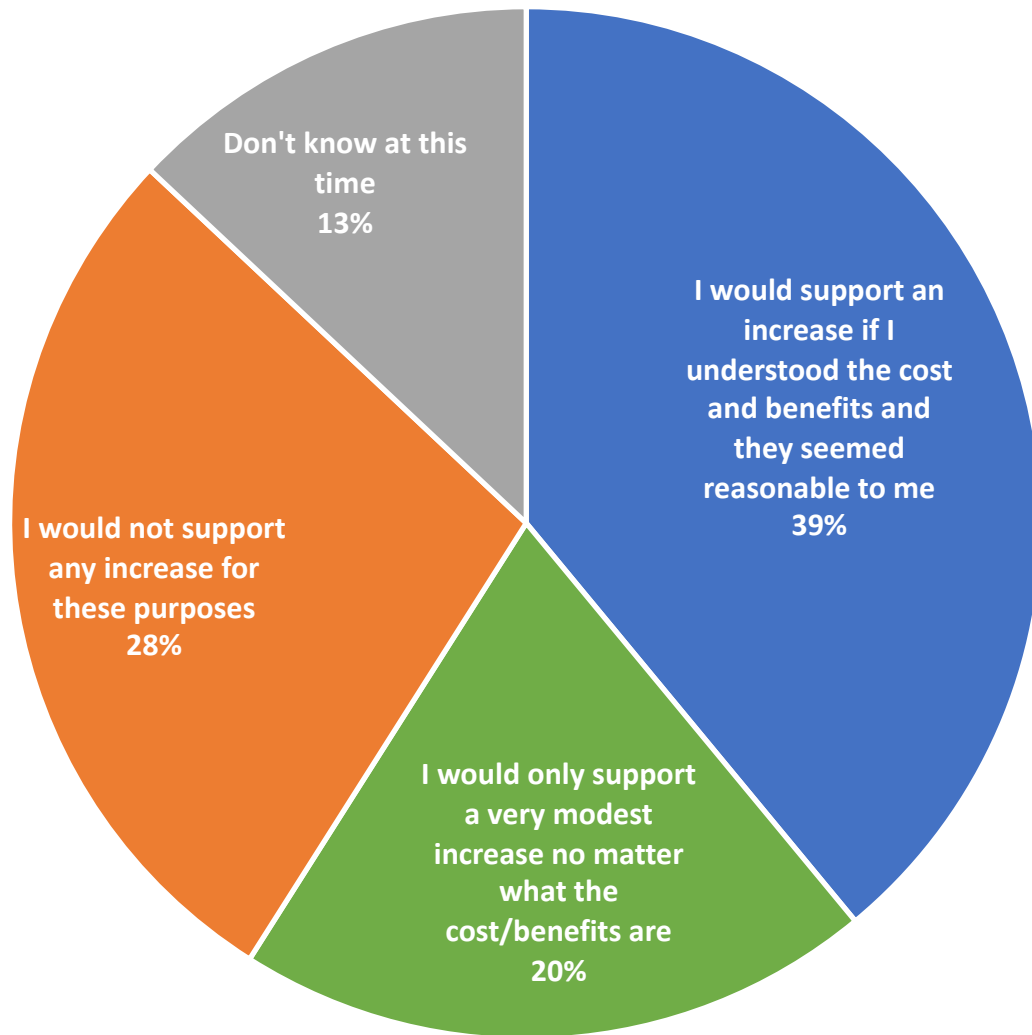
- New township complex 63%
- New police station 36%
- New fire station 28%
- New town hall 18%
- New road department building 15%

# ***Possible Community Enhancements Highest Ranking***

- Revitalizing the Commercial District 35%
- Streetscape enhancement on 306 and 322 34%
- Park and Recreation Space 32%
- Community Center 28%
- Sidewalks on 306 and 322 27%
- Biking and Hiking Trails 26%
- Economic and Business Development 23%

*Only 57% to 65% of respondents ranked these items*

# Cost of Improvements



*To what extent would you support an increase in tax dollars to support your highest ranked items?*

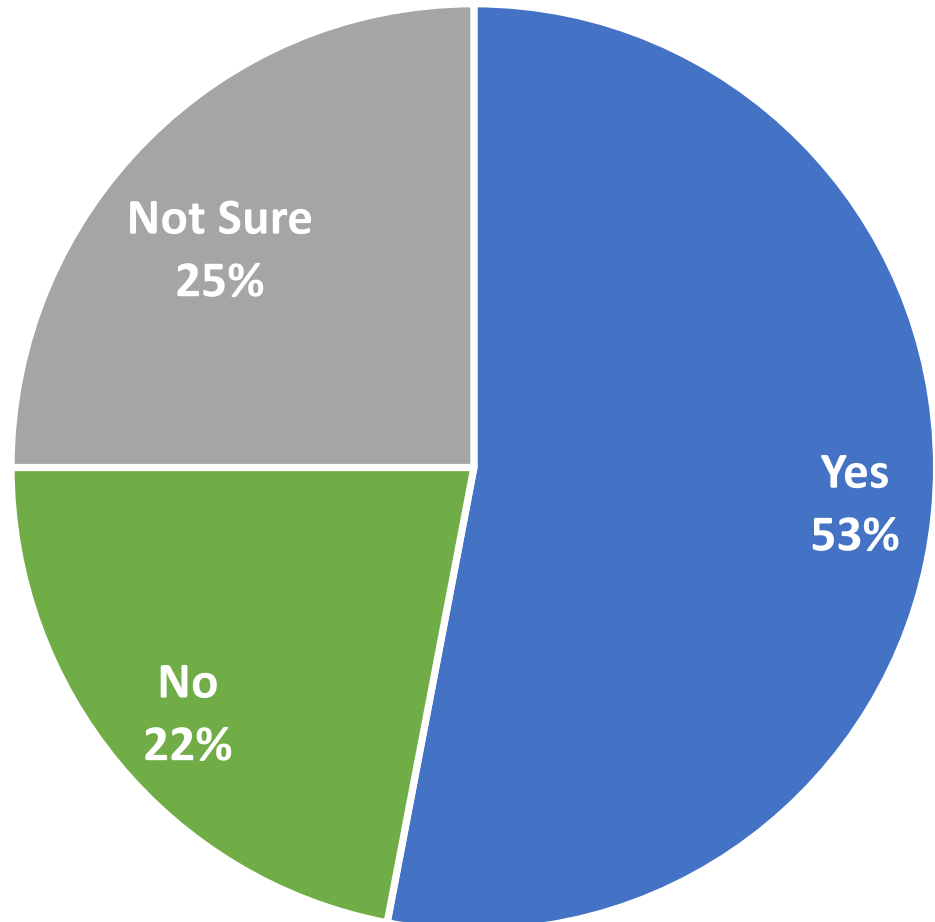
*(95% responded)*

# ***Comprehensive Plan***

A **comprehensive plan** is a community strategy to establish appropriate future policy for land-use related subjects such as zoning, site planning, design standards, types of land uses, housing, parks and recreation, and infrastructure. Chester Township's last plan was completed in 2009.

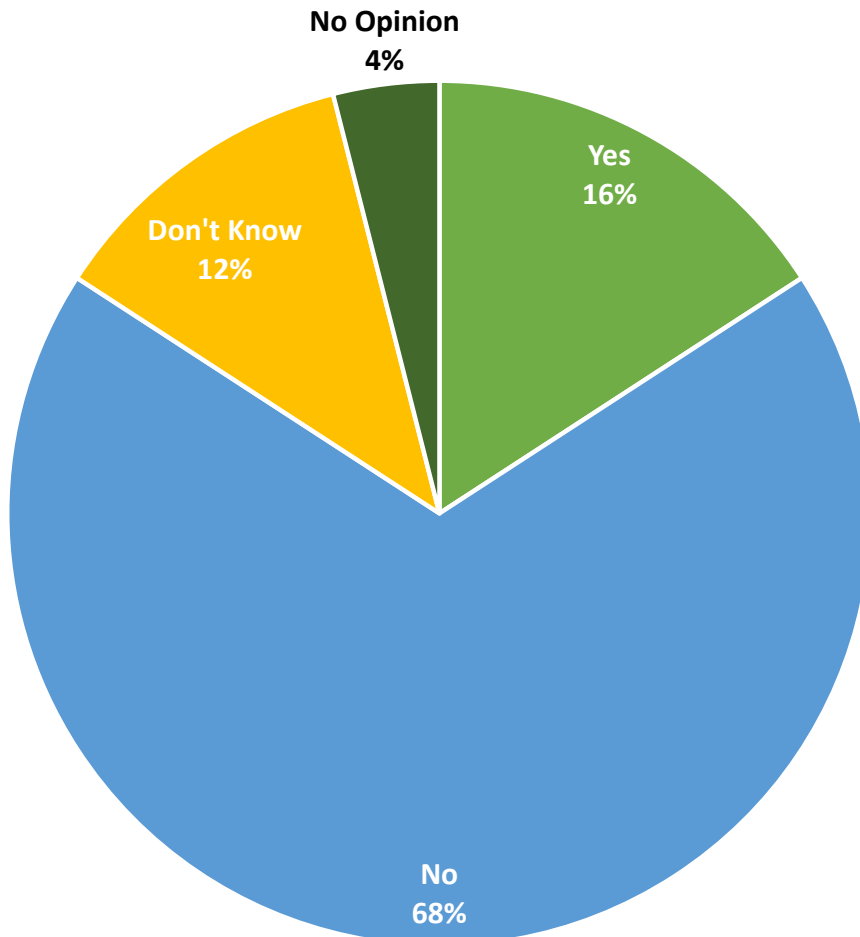
*More discussion and explanation is advised.*

*Based on the results of this questionnaire, do you support the Township exploring options for developing a comprehensive plan?*



# ***Becoming a City***

*Would you support the township researching the benefits and costs of becoming a City?*



Municipalities in Ohio (cities and villages) can provide expanded services to their residents such as parks and recreation services, community center services, senior services and expanded police and fire capability. Some municipalities approve special property tax levies to support police and fire and other services.

*This is a pretty strong “No”.*

# Overall Conclusions

- Chester's rural and small town character are very important to respondents, and they would like that to remain, with even more greenspace and open space protection, and retaining Township government.
- Respondents would prefer that residential areas remain the same, with the exception of bike/pedestrian connections to the commercial district.
- Respondents prefer that the Commercial District not be enlarged any further; but would like the Township to work on improving the existing Commercial District's traffic flow, aesthetics, maintenance, and filling vacancies.
- Respondents are generally not in favor of alternative types of housing in the Township and commercial district.

# Additional Conclusions

- Respondents are very happy with police, fire, and EMT services; and with parks and recreation
- Roads and the recycling center are very important, but need attention
- Support for single hauler waste removal is divided
- Right now there is not robust support for new township facilities
- But there could be support, including for a modest increase in taxes, if the need and cost/benefit analysis were well explored and understood – more in-depth discussion is needed, and perhaps a community survey

# Zoning and Planning Conclusions

- Comprehensive Planning is thought by many respondents to be a good idea, but needs more discussion
- There is support for property maintenance rules for residential areas; and property maintenance, design guidelines, and landscaping/tree planting rules, for the commercial district
- Minimum lot sizes should remain the same
- Nuisances are a concern (noise, open air burning)

# Questions?

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Development