

---

# Reading, MA

District Management Feasibility  
Massachusetts Downtown Initiative

---



Authored by: Ann McFarland Burke

 **Ann  
McFarland  
Burke**  
Consultant  
Vibrant downtowns,  
healthy communities.

---

# Project Overview

The Town of Reading, MA secured a Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Grant to evaluate the feasibility of creating a district management organization in downtown Reading, MA. The creation of a downtown management organization was intended to establish a dedicated organization that would provide supplemental programs, services, and advocacy for the downtown. The downtown organization would undertake activities to attract businesses, investment, customers, and residents to downtown Reading. These activities could include marketing and events, placemaking, business development and advocacy. The goal of the MDI project was to determine the appropriate downtown management organization model for downtown Reading. With no existing organization in place, this feasibility project was a unique challenge for the Reading community, downtown property owners and businesses. The approach included extensive outreach and community education to explore program priorities, financial sustainability, different organizational models, build consensus and find champions from both the private and public sector for the preferred district management model.

Previous Economic Development Plans for downtown Reading had included the recommendation to establish a sustainable downtown organization to support the economic and social health of the downtown. The town of Reading spearheaded efforts to launch the process of community and property owner engagement to explore what model would be appropriate for downtown Reading.

This included:

- Identification of staff and financial resources
- Creating a community outreach and engagement strategies
- Research to identify community priorities / recommendations
- Create peer learning events featuring directors from other communities
- Consensus building among stakeholders
- Transition of leadership to private sector

## **District Management Organizational Model Alternatives**

The Town of Reading had no predetermined organizational model at the outset of this MDI feasibility study. The town and consultant intended to lead the community-based process through an analysis of different models and reach consensus on the preferred model for Reading that had broad community and business support. The advisory committee considered two organizational models for district management in downtown Reading. These were:

- Voluntary “Main Street” type district management organization. Voluntary Management Districts engage stakeholders to develop a plan, utilizing a program that includes organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. Participation is voluntary and funding is through

---

donations, grants, and other voluntary stakeholder support. Many voluntary district management organizations model themselves after the preservation-based economic development Main Street program model. The advisory committee looked at models from Beverly, Wakefield as similar communities

- Business Improvement Districts – A Business Improvement District (BID) is a legally designated area, within which property owners design, fund and manage an improvement plan for the district. BIDs are funded primarily by fees assessed to property owners. BID fees are supplemented by grants, sponsorships and other revenue generating opportunities. There is a legislative process to form a BID that requires the support by over 60% of property owners and a vote by the elected body in the municipality. Once formed, participation by property owners is mandatory. BIDs are reauthorized every five years by the property owners within the district.
- Parking Benefit Districts – In addition to the district management models listed above, Town planning staff provided additional research on the possible use of parking benefit districts as a tool to supplement and complement funding for a district management organization. The advisory committee and Town felt that, while the parking benefit district concept had merit, it did not have the requisite support to be approved at this time.

### **Community Outreach / Education Process**

**Staff and Funding** - The Town of Reading secured a Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance funding for technical assistance support. Additionally, the town committed staff to and support the study. The town planning and economic development staff, and other town departments were instrumental in launching and supporting this study by providing base line maps, a database of property owners, research, event coordination, survey management and administrative support. With no existing business association or other downtown organization in place to lead this effort, the town has been the major champion at this phase in the project. In addition to providing staff support for the feasibility project, the planning and community development staff also provided additional research on parking benefit district concepts and other potential strategies to support the organization.

**Working Advisory Committee** • The community outreach and engagement effort in Reading was inclusive and thorough and Town staff welcomed all stakeholders to participate in the process. A broad-based community advisory/ working group of over thirty-five members was formed to provide input and feedback. Several working sessions were held with the Advisory committee to discuss organizational model alternatives, financial models and the pros and cons of each alternative approach. The advisory committee included residents, cultural organizations, nonprofits, retailers and commercial tenants, property owners, chamber, community organizations and town officials. Participating organizations included Reading Rotary, Reading community singers, Walkable Reading, Arts Reading, the Reading- North Reading Chamber of Commerce and many others. Each participant brought their unique perspective to the type of organization they felt would be most sustainable for

downtown Reading. The advisory committee remainder actively engaged throughout the feasibility phase of this project.

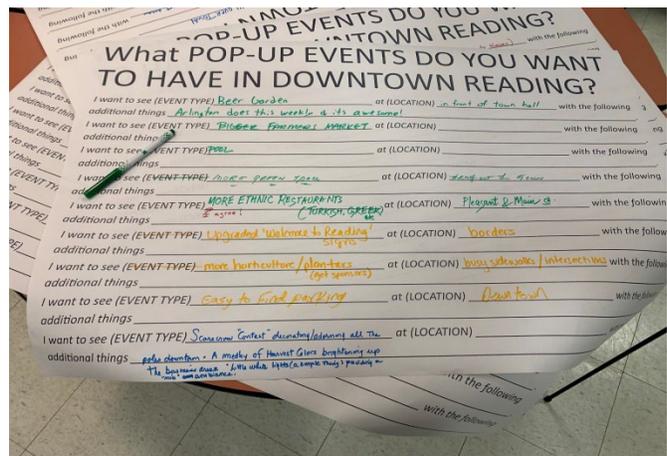
### Community Outreach and Engagement –

The Town of Reading was committed a well thought out and highly inclusive community engagement process. The goal of this process was two-fold - first to get input from businesses, citizens and other stakeholders about their aspirations and priorities for downtown Reading, and second, to educate these stakeholders on different organizational models that could implemented to help achieve those priorities. A variety of different tactics were employed in this process.

- **Ice Cream/ Pizza Social** - In September 2019, the town hosted our first 'ReImagine Reading' event: a community-wide ice cream and pizza social to highlight what place-making could look like for downtown Reading and to launch a significant public engagement process. Over 150 participants attended the event and the Town gathered important feedback on public priorities from a wide range of ages including youth and teens. Community members participated in a hands-on workshop to brin forth their ideas and suggestions about how to create a more vibrant downtown. This visioning session examined how residents currently used the downtown, how they navigated the downtown environment, their priorities and vision for the future of downtown Reading. The addition of a Children's room, staffed by planning dept professionals and volunteers, created an opportunity for children to talk about what they would like to see in downtown Reading. The event was approachable, fun, and highly interactive and generated a positive response from participants.

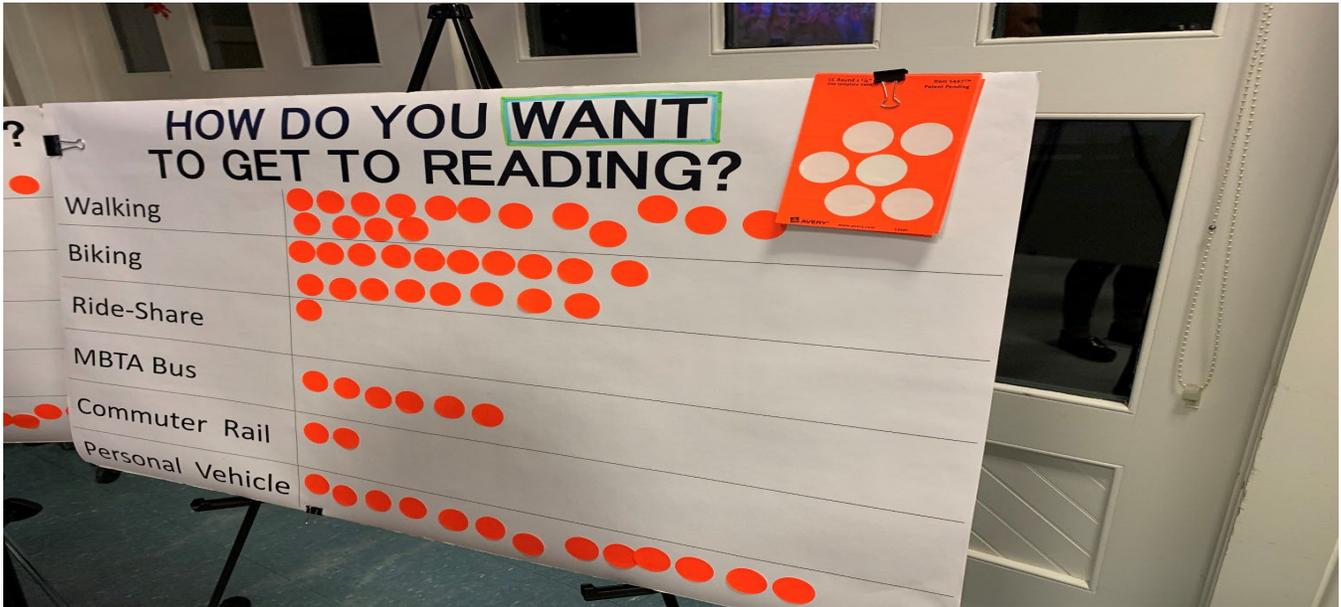
In addition to the community workshop, speakers from two communities with BIDs and Main Street type programs provided a high-level presentation of their organizations and the

programs and services they provided. Presenters educated stakeholders on different district management models and answered questions.



ice cream social community workshop

*ice cream social community workshop activities*



- **Survey** - The town and working group created a community wide survey that was broadly circulated through the town website, Chamber, businesses, social media, and local organizations and to gain feedback on a wide range of issues related to the downtown. Over 1500 responses were received providing insight into program priorities and community preferences.



The survey requested feedback on a range of topics including access to the downtown, frequency of visits, preferences for public and private programming, activities, and businesses. Respondents also described how they used the downtown, and what they would like to see added to make it more attract to live, work or visit.

---

**Key Survey and Workshop Findings** – The public feedback through the survey suggests the following priorities:

- Enhance existing creative placemaking events that reach a broad audience and bring people downtown.
- Create unique experiences through business offerings
- Attract more anchor businesses that create more reasons to visit downtown
- Market and brand the downtown as an attractive place to live, work, play or locate a business by providing a coordinated and comprehensive strategy (like calendars, joint advertising etc.).
- Attract and promote small businesses through technical assistance, financial support (loans, educational programming, façade grants or other incentives).
- Make downtown more accessible through public/ private partnerships and infrastructure investment.

For more detailed information, please see the Reading survey and Survey Finding presentation in the addendum.

**Addendum 1 – Reading Downtown Survey**

**Addendum 2 - Survey Findings PowerPoint**

- **Community Forums- Learning from Peer Communities**



*Reading Community Forums*

The purpose of community forums was to provide information on each district management organization model under consideration by the advisory committee. Presentations were made on each type of organization, the financial structure, approval requirements, typical programs and services and pros/ cons for each type of organization. Additionally, the forums provided stakeholders the opportunity to learn from executive directors in other downtowns with district management organizations. The Executive directors from Wakefield Main Street program, Beverly Main Street Program, Amherst BID, and Hudson BID participated in presentations and Question and Answer sessions with the Advisory committee and community. These discussions allowed participants to learn first-hand the programs, challenges, and opportunities of each type of organization. It also provided the opportunity to gain experience from communities about the programs and impact their

---

organizations have had on their respective downtowns. The forums were informative and candid and gave the advisory committee valuable insight to inform their decisions.

- **Other Community Outreach - One on one conversations with key stakeholders**

Town staff, consultant and working committee members held individual conversations with key stakeholders and city officials. These meetings included larger property owners, new developers and investors, community groups, and neighborhood organizations. The purpose of these meetings with stakeholders was to identify their concerns, priorities and perceived opportunities that may be addressed by the proposed organization. Additionally, the one-on-one conversations were helpful in evaluating interest and potential leadership for a more formal steering committee to form the district management organization.

### **Consensus On District Management Organizational Model of Downtown Reading.**

The highly inclusive process to evaluate the feasibility of various organizational models created the opportunity to build consensus and leadership around a preferred approach for downtown Reading. The advisory committee reached consensus to recommend that a Business Improvement District be formed for the downtown. The committee made this recommendation for the following reasons:

- **Consensus of advisory committee**– The advisory committee represented a cross section of stakeholders including residents, property owners, tenants, nonprofits, and elected officials. Each of these groups brought their perspective to the process. The committee reached a consensus that a Business Improvement District was the preferred organizational model for downtown Reading to pursue.
- **Interest of new property owners/ developers** – New mixed use developers expressed interest and support for the development of a BID in Reading. These new developers had experience in other communities with BIDs and had a positive perception of the impact a BID could have for downtown Reading. Two new developers expressed interest in helping to form the new organization.
- **Interest from anchor tenants** – Key anchor tenants and destination drivers in the downtown expressed support for the BID. These businesses felt a BID would provide the best vehicle to provide supplemental programs and services that would enhance their businesses and the downtown. Additional, larger anchor institutions like local banks and utilities were supportive of the BID model.
- **Financial sustainability of district management organizational model** - The advisory committee concurred that the BID model provided the most financial sustainability for the organization to support the desired supplemental programs and services to be offered to downtown Reading. During the feasibility stage of the project, the team analyzed the property ownership and value of the district, as well as basic criteria to verify that the proposed district met the requirements to form a BID. The district has the appropriate land use and value to support the development of a BID in Reading.
- **Support for steering committee for implementation- Key** business and property owners indicated a willingness to serve on a steering committee to undertake the process of forming a BID in

---

downtown Reading. The ability to recruit support for this process was critical to move to the next step in the planning process.

- **Ongoing municipal support** - The town of Reading committed ongoing support for the planning process through the planning and economic development offices. Select board members have also indicated support for the effort.



## **Next Steps**

The town and advisory committee have recommended that a Business Improvement District is the preferred organizational model for downtown Reading. The project will begin the planning phase of the project. This phase will include the following steps:

- Transition from city led effort to Steering committee comprised of property owners, businesses, and other stakeholders to lead organizational effort to form a BID.
- City staff will provide continued staff support and securing additional MDI TA grant support for the planning process.
- Formation of a BID Steering Committee – the town and consultant will recruit property owners, businesses, and other stakeholders to provide the leadership and organizational structure to form a BID.
- Develop the BID Improvement Plan, budget, boundaries, fee structure, MOA with Town and other stakeholders, and petition components
- Develop signature petition campaign and timeline for legislative approval.

---

# Addendum

1. Downtown Reading Participant Survey
2. Survey study finding power point

## ReImagine Reading -Downtown District Management Organization Survey

The Town has received a grant, from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, to work with a consultant to explore models of downtown district management organizations (i.e., Business Improvement District or Main Street organization.) that may best serve the community.

A district management organization is a partnership with the Town, property owners, businesses, community organization representatives, and residents working collaboratively to create a vibrant downtown.

District management organizations organize and encourage collaboration among downtown businesses; advocate for economic development initiatives; develop and implement an authentic downtown branding and marketing strategy; write grants and fundraise; lead creative place-making initiatives and other activities that will enhance the downtown for everyone.

Before an organization can be created, we collectively need to understand existing conditions, a future vision, objects, and an action plan for our future district management organization.

Please take 10 minutes to complete this survey and share widely. Hardcopies of the survey are also available for pick-up and/or drop-off at Town Hall, Reading Public Library, and the Pleasant Street Center.

The survey will be available through Tuesday, October 15, 2019.

For more information about this initiative or to participate in the working group, please contact Erin Schaeffer, Economic Development Director at [eschaeffer@ci.Reading.ma.us](mailto:eschaeffer@ci.Reading.ma.us).

*More people make better and bigger things happen!*

*Tell us about yourself.*

Age

<25  25-34  35-44  45-54  55-64  65-74  75+

Do you live or work in downtown Reading? [Check all that apply]

Live downtown  Yes |  No

Work downtown  Yes |  No

Are you a regular commuter on the MBTA commuter rail or bus?

MBTA Commuter Rail  Yes |  No

MBTA Bus  Yes |  No

Where do you live?

**Tell us what you do in downtown Reading.**

Which of the following activities has brought you to downtown Reading in the past year? [Select all that apply.]

- Housing (live downtown)  Work  
 Shopping  Dining/Take Out  
 Banking, medical, or other professional Services  
 Salon, spa, or other personal services  
 Private Events and Classes  Commuter Rail  
 Public Events or Festivals  Senior Center  
 Government Services (Town Hall or Post Office)

How often do you visit downtown Reading to **shop**?

Daily  Weekly  Monthly  Quarterly  Never

How often do you visit downtown Reading to **eat**?

Daily  Weekly  Monthly  Quarterly  Never

How often do you visit downtown Reading to receive **professional services**? (medical services, banking)

Daily  Weekly  Monthly  Quarterly  Never

How often do you visit downtown Reading to receive **personal services**? (spa and beauty services)

Daily  Weekly  Monthly  Quarterly  Never

How often do you visit downtown Reading to attend in local **events and classes**? (book club, trivia nights, music, fitness class)

Daily  Weekly  Monthly  Quarterly  Never

## Tell us what you love about downtown Reading.

What do you love about downtown Reading?

---

What draws you to downtown Reading?

---

How much time do you spend on an average trip to downtown?

>15 minutes  30 minutes  1-2hrs  2-4hrs  All day

How much do you agree with the following statements? (Please mark with the following letters. A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree)

Downtown Reading:

- \_\_\_ Opportunities to meet with friends for night out
- \_\_\_ Has adequate opportunities to eat/dine
- \_\_\_ Has adequate opportunities to shop
- \_\_\_ Has adequate work space/office space options
- \_\_\_ Has adequate entertainment options/fun things to do
- \_\_\_ Has adequate public art, festivals, and public events
- \_\_\_ Has adequate parking and transportation options

## Tell us how you access downtown Reading.

How do you get to downtown Reading?

- Walking  Biking
- Ride -Share (Uber, Lyft)  Commuter Rail
- MBTA Bus  Personal Vehicle

How do you **want** get to downtown Reading?

- Walking  Biking
- Ride -Share (Uber, Lyft)  Commuter Rail
- MBTA Bus  Personal Vehicle

Is downtown Reading accessible to you?

Yes |  No If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

## Tell us how you shop so businesses can continue to invest in technology to reach customers.

Do you frequently use online ordering and delivery services for purchasing food from local businesses?

Yes |  No

Do you primarily shop online for retail items?

Yes |  No

## Tell us what additional businesses you want.

What additional **food and beverage** business types would you like to have in downtown Reading? [Select all that apply]

- Full Service Restaurants  Grocery Store
- Brewery with a tasting room  Healthy Fast-Food
- Other/None \_\_\_\_\_

What is your favorite food and beverage business in another Town that you would like to see in downtown Reading?

---

What additional **retail** business types would you like to have in downtown Reading? [Select all that apply]

- Kitchen and Cooking  Furniture and homewares
- Consignment/clothing store  Games/Kids Toy Store
- Other/None \_\_\_\_\_

Many communities have **shared space** for office, commercial, or light industrial uses that are used to support small businesses and/or serve as business incubator spaces. What kinds of private shared spaces do you want to see in downtown Reading? [Select all that apply]

- Co-working office space  Commercial Kitchen
- Corporate Event Space  Community maker-space

If these shared spaces were managed well, priced right, and fit your needs, would you utilize a shared space?

Yes |  No

## Tell us what additional experiences and events you want.

What additional **entertainment** options does downtown need? [Select all that apply]

- Performing Arts/Theater  Live Music
- Movies  Bowling alley/candlepin
- Ice Skating Rink  Giant Sidewalk Chess/Games
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What additional **public events** would you like to see in downtown Reading? [Check all that apply]

- Farmer's Market  First Thursdays (downtown stroll)
- Restaurant Week  Bag Day (Discount Shopping Event)
- Pop-Up Events (Food Trucks, Beer Garden, Live Music)
- Music Festival  Film/Movie Festival

Where would you like to see these public events take place?

---

## For Businesses and Property Owners

Tell us how a future community-driven downtown district management organization can help take your business to the next level.

What best describes you? [Check one.]

- Property owner  Business owner  
 Property owner AND Business owner  Business manager  
 Business Employee/Associate (non-owner/manager)

How many years have you been in business or a downtown property owner?

- <1 year  1-3 years  3-5 years  5-10 years  10+

How have sales been compared to last year?

- Sales are up  About the same  Sales are down

If sales are down, why? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your business type or sector? (I.e. Retail, restaurant)

\_\_\_\_\_

What methods of marketing and advertising do you find to be the most effective for your business? [Check all that apply]

- Social Media  Business Website  
 Flyers  Foot Traffic  
 Pop-up events  Event Sponsorships  
 Cross-promotion with other businesses  
 Word of Mouth/Referrals/Recommendations

Does your business cross promote or advertise with other businesses?

- Yes |  No

If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you attend pop-up events, markets, or industry events to advertise your business?

- Yes |  No

Who is your target market for products or services?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your business reach?

- Local (Within 15 miles of Reading)  
 Within 50 miles of Reading  State-wide  
 National  Global (International)

What current or new businesses would complement your downtown business?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is a challenge of doing business in Reading?

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the best things about doing business in Reading? [Select all that apply]

- Ideal Customer Base  Streamlined Permitting  
 Charming Downtown  Market Demand/Economy  
 Sense of Community  Utility Rates  
 Location  Favorable Tax Rates  
 Workforce Housing  Downtown Commuter Rail

What business financing tools would you like to see a downtown business district management organization develop and implement? [Select all that apply]

- Storefront and Signage Improvement Program  
 Small Business Loan Program

What business education topics for trainings would you like to know more about? [Select all that apply]

- Back to Basics – Starting a business guide  
 Social media and website design  
 Money – Financing and Long-Term Management  
 Real Estate Investment and Development topics  
 Creative Design- Product Display and Interior Lighting  
 Customer Service and Engagement  
 Event Planning - Creating a Customer Experience  
 CRM- Relationship Management Tools (Sales Force etc.)

What public events would you like to participate in to increase visibility and sales for your business?

- Farmer's Market  First Thursdays (downtown stroll)  
 Restaurant Week  Bag Day (Discount Shopping Event)  
 Pop-Up Events (Food Trucks, Beer Garden, Live Music)

What could the Town do to help draw customers to businesses?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you or your employees use public transportation to get to work?

- Yes |  No

If yes, are you familiar with the MBTA's Perq Work employer/employee discounted transit pass program?

- Yes |  No

## Thank you!

Thank you for completing this survey! There are many ways to continue to be engaged to help launch a downtown district management organization. If you would like to continue to be involved, please let us know.

For business and property owners, the Town Planning and Economic Development staff continue to be available for any additional feedback and business support. We look forward to continuing to work with you. To make an appointment, please contact Erin Schaeffer, Economic Development Director at [eschaeffer@ci.reading.ma.us](mailto:eschaeffer@ci.reading.ma.us).

### (OPTIONAL)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Affiliation (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your preferred method of communication for us to follow up with you? [Check all that apply]

Phone

E-mail

I want to continue to be engaged and contribute to the following: [Check all that apply]

Planning and Organization Creation:

Working Group to plan and create a downtown organization structure (estimated quarterly meetings)

Peer-to-peer stakeholder interviews to inform organization structure, vision, goals, and action plan

Topic oriented focus groups to inform organization structure, vision, goals, and action plan

Organization Involvement:

Volunteer of a district management organization for key events and initiatives

Volunteer member of a district management organization (501c3)



# REIMAGINE READING Data Analysis

November 4, 2019

Please write down your questions/comments  
for discussion at end of presentation.

Why Are We Here?

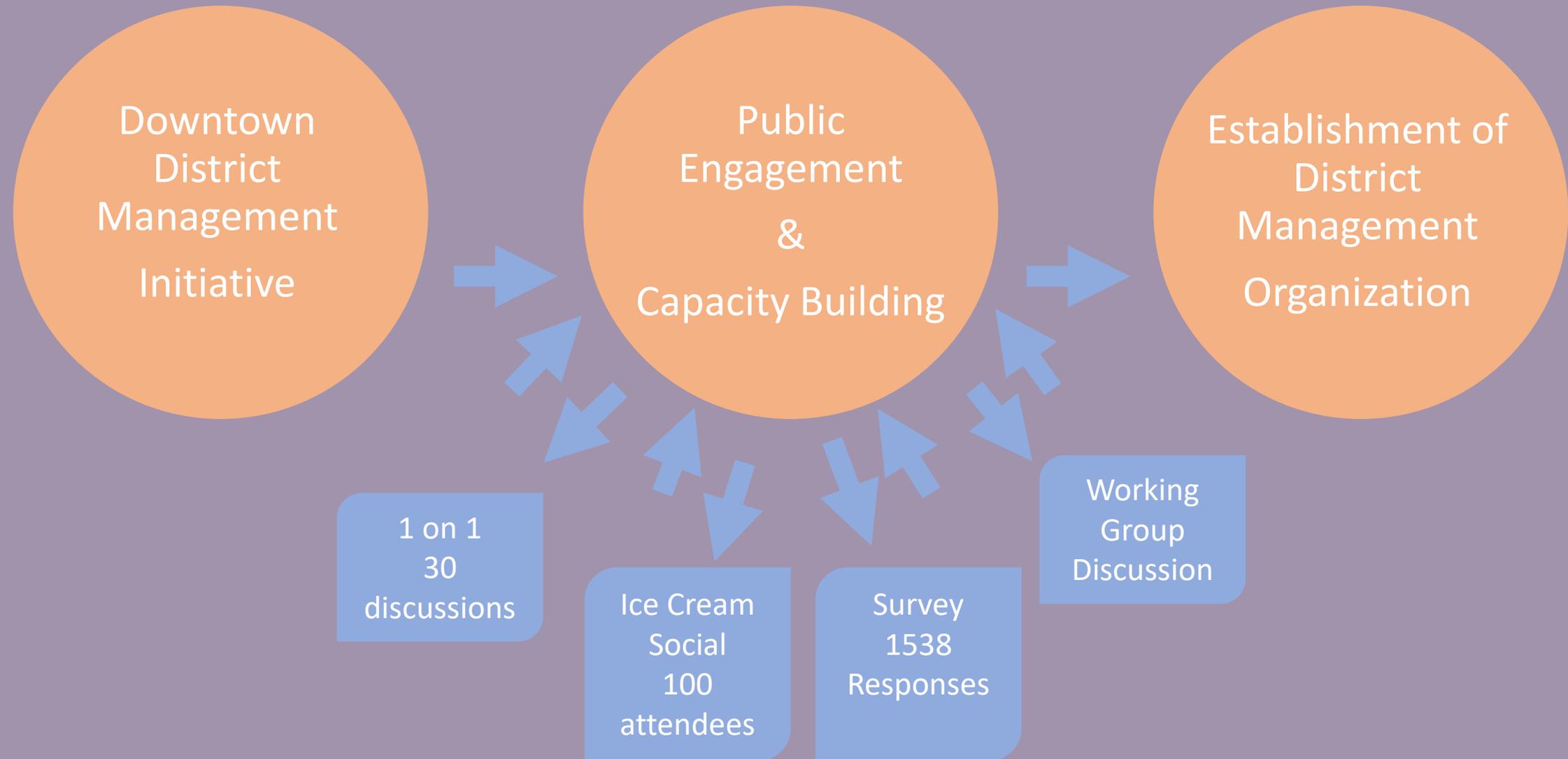
WE ARE ALL STARTING A DOWNTOWN  
ORGANIZATION *TOGETHER*.

# *What is a District Management Organization?*

A downtown management organization is a non-profit partnership with businesses, organizations, residents, property owners, and the Town to provide supplemental services and continued investment to create a more vibrant Town for everyone.



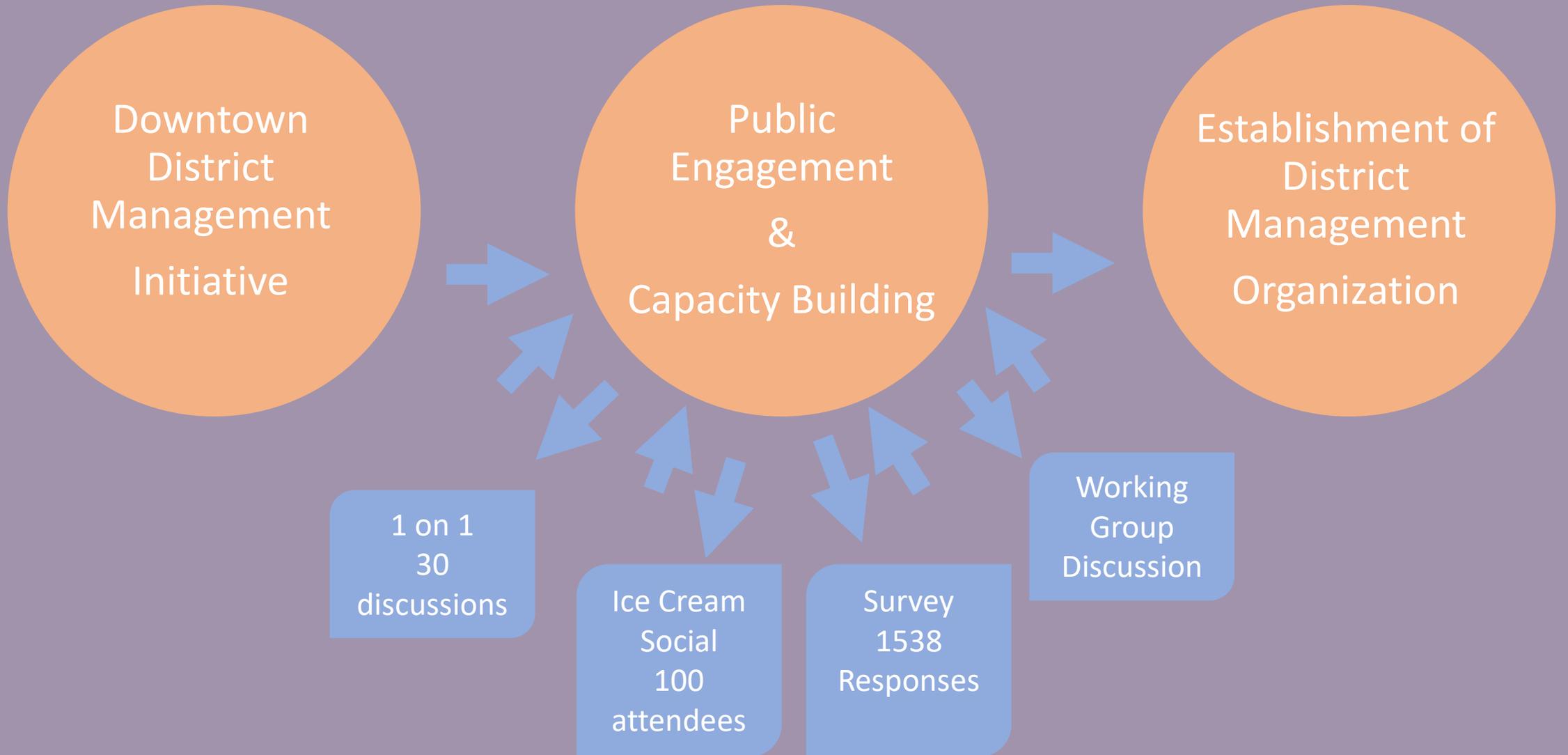
# District Management Organization Initiative Process



# Working Group Purpose

- Build community/partnership capacity
- Identify community priorities (data driven)
- Explore organization models
- Develop a preliminary vision statement
- Develop preliminary goals
- Develop preliminary action plan

# District Management Organization Initiative Process



# Town Lead Public Engagement Goals

- To spark interest and inspire positive changes for a more vibrant downtown
- Provide different levels of engagement and create a partnership
- Build capacity for working group to identify community priorities (data driven), explore organization models, develop a vision statement, goals, and preliminary action plan for a future organization.

# Town Lead Public Engagement Strategy

## ReImagine Reading Survey!

Creating a more vibrant Town for everyone



Please complete this survey and share widely by October 15.

Hardcopies are available for pick-up/drop-off at Town Hall, Reading Public Library, and Pleasant Street center. It is also available online through the QR code or Town website: <http://www.reading.ma.gov/reimagine-reading>

ReImagine Reading is a partnership of more than thirty-five business owners, property owners, community organization representatives, Town staff and residents working together to start a non-profit organization to create a more vibrant downtown. Your feedback will help shape the future of this organization and its public initiatives.

For more information about this initiative or assistance taking the survey contact:  
Erin Schaeffer, Town of Reading Economic Development Director at [eschaeffer@ci.reading.ma.us](mailto:eschaeffer@ci.reading.ma.us)



- Face-to-face conversations with business and property owners about initiative
- Press releases, social media posts, face-to-face conversations, flyers, postcards, Town website
- Community Pop-Up Ice Cream Social Event
- Community wide survey
- Hosting working group meetings (4 to date)
- Working Group notes/communication

# What Did This Survey Include?

## ReImagine Reading Survey!

Creating a more vibrant Town for everyone



Please complete this survey and share widely by October 15.

Hardcopies are available for pick-up/drop-off at Town Hall, Reading Public Library, and Pleasant Street center. It is also available online through the QR code or Town website: <http://www.reading.ma.gov/reimagine-reading>

ReImagine Reading is a partnership of more than thirty-five business owners, property owners, community organization representatives, Town staff and residents working together to start a non-profit organization to create a more vibrant downtown. Your feedback will help shape the future of this organization and its public initiatives.

For more information about this initiative or assistance taking the survey contact:  
Erin Schaeffer, Town of Reading Economic Development Director at [eschaeffer@ci.reading.ma.us](mailto:eschaeffer@ci.reading.ma.us)



- Demographics
- What Draws People to Reading
- Access to Reading
- Frequency of Visits
- Length of Stay for Visits
- Public Preferences for private/public uses
- Public Preferences for public experiences

Let's See What We Have Learned!

# ReImagined Reading Survey

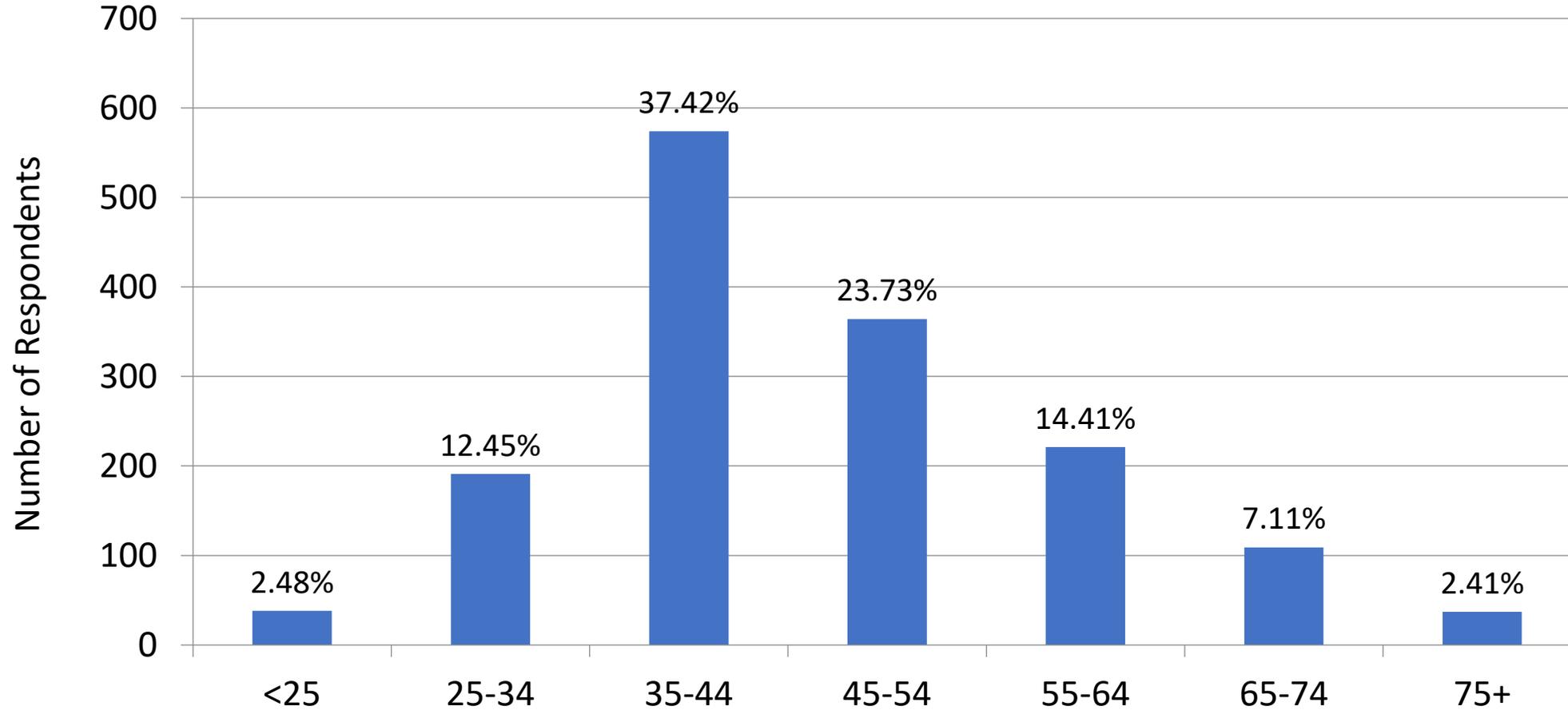
1538 Total Respondents

1512 Online

26 Paper

Who Are the Survey Respondents?

## Age of Respondents



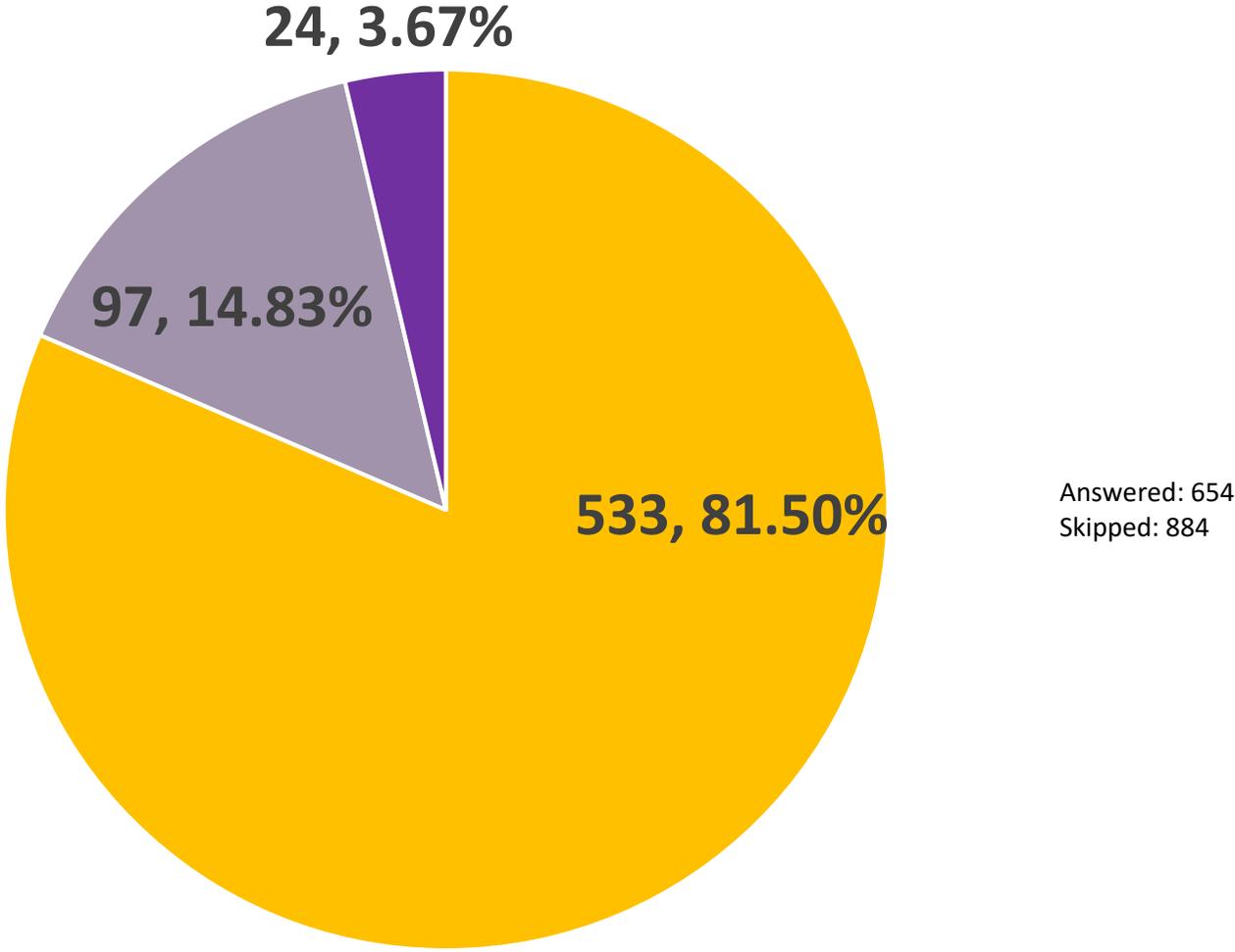
Number of  
Respondents:  
1538

Answered: 1534  
Skipped: 4

# Where Do You Live?



# Do you live or work in Downtown Reading?



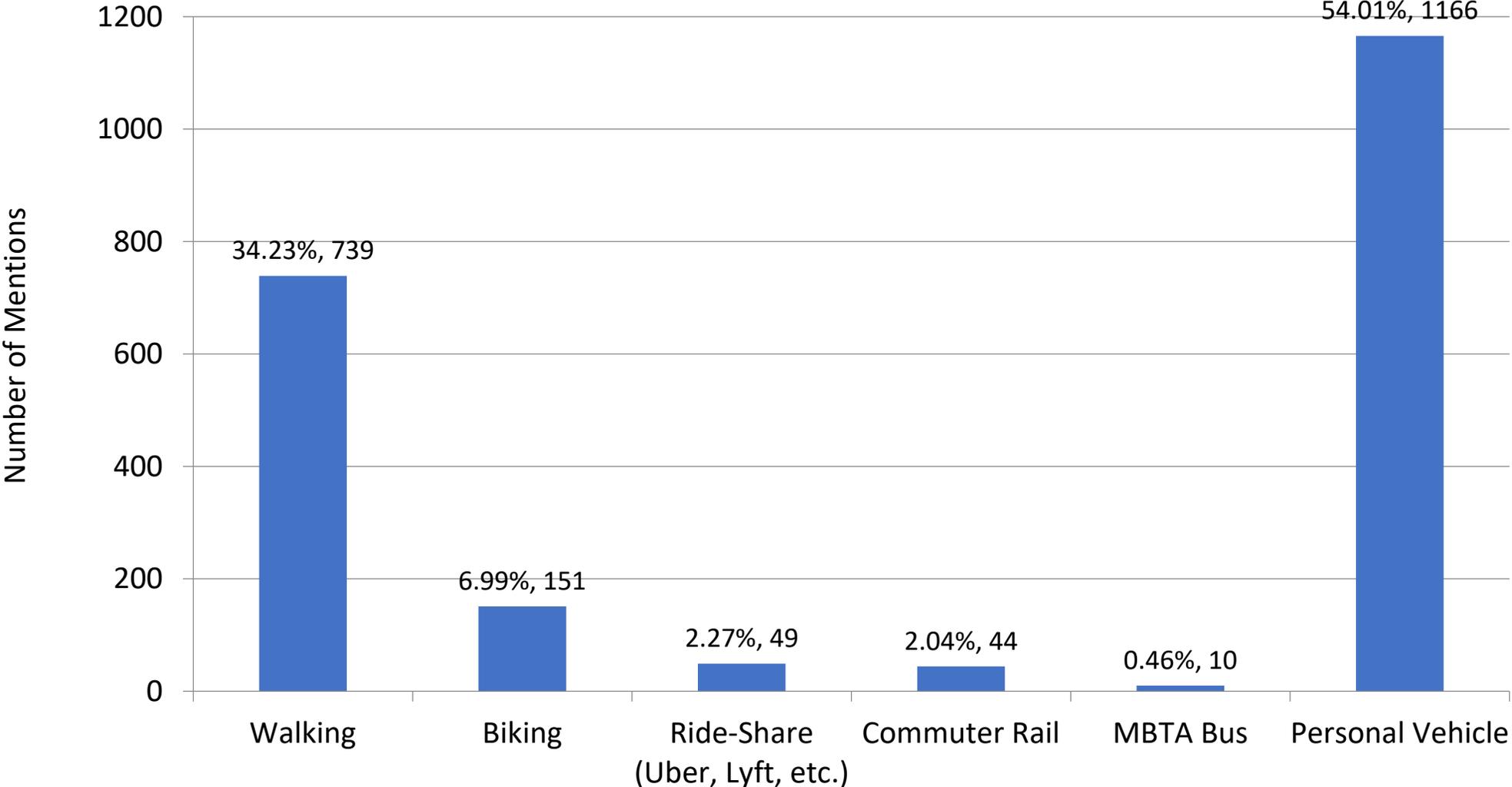
■ Live Downtown

■ Work Downtown

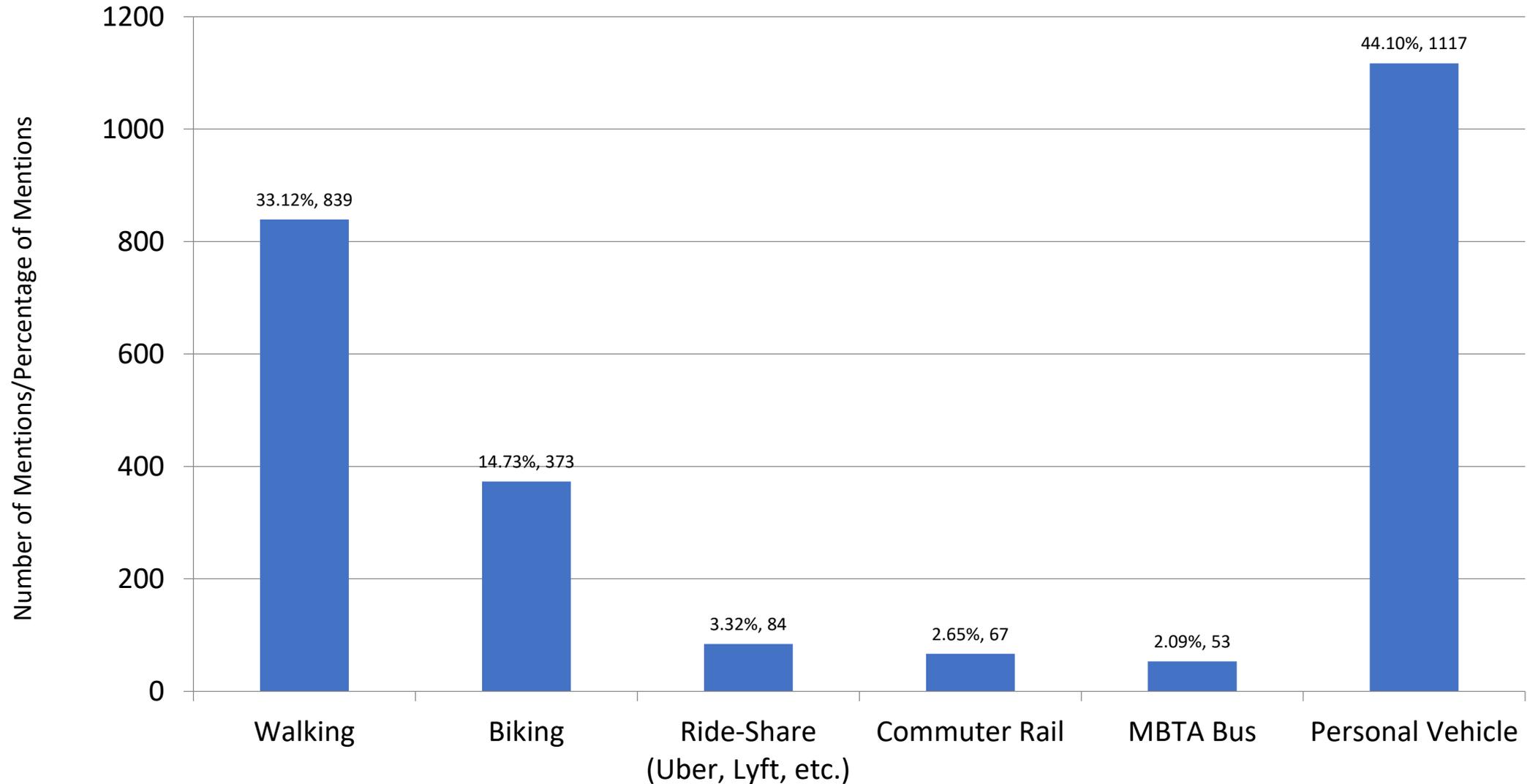
■ Live and Work Downtown

Is Reading Accessible?

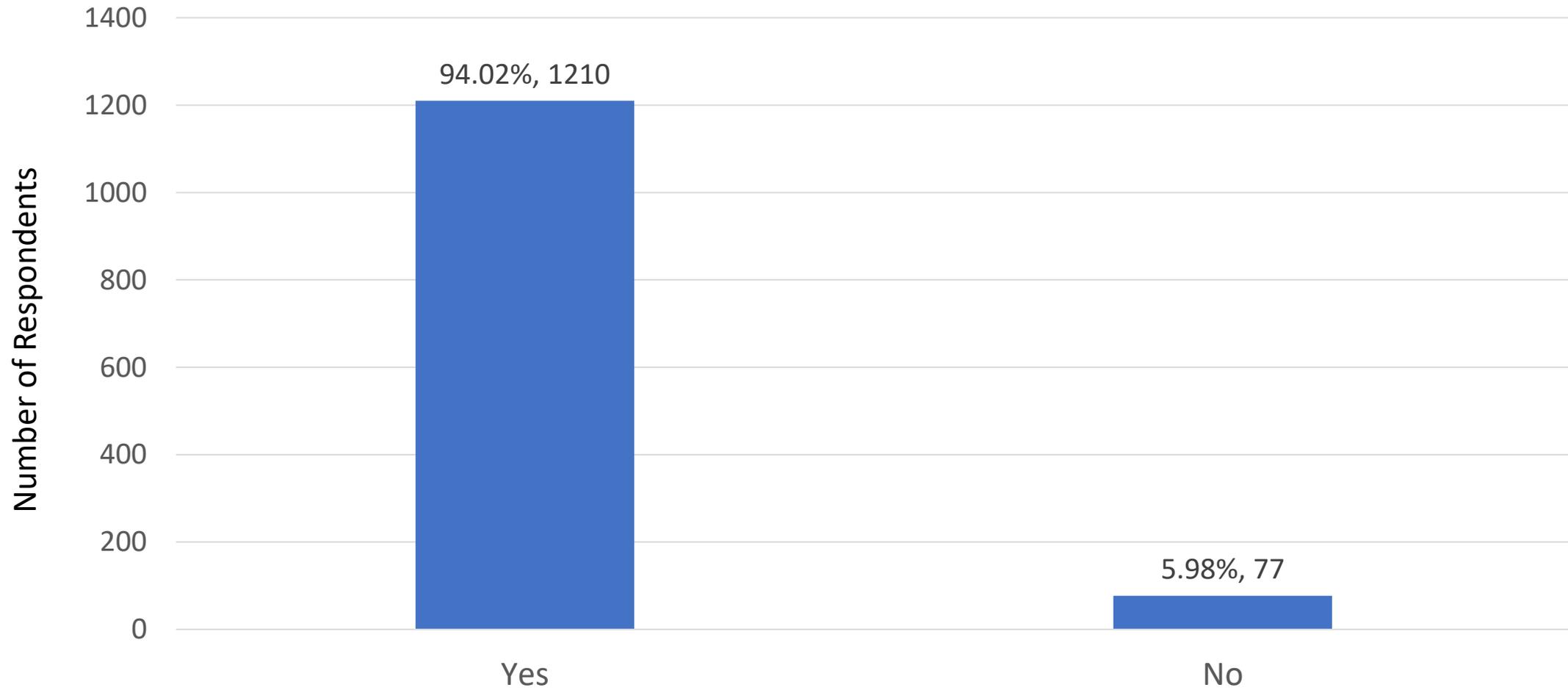
# How Do You Get to Downtown Reading? Select All That Apply



## How Do You Want to Get to Downtown Reading? Select All That Apply



# Is Downtown Reading Accessible to You?



If Downtown is *not* accessible to you, why not?

# Quotes From “No Access” Responses

- *Accessible by car but would be great to have a dedicated bike lane on main streets and bike racks to encourage more biking to/from downtown*
- *Lack of local transportation options*
- *But the sidewalk to get across MBTA is now gone and crossing Main Street is a death wish. Need to add more sidewalks down by tracks and across Main Street all the way to the mobile station. It should be 30 MPH along that stretch with blinking and raised crosswalks. (Ash Street + Main Street)*
- *Multiple times have had to leave due to lack of parking. We go to Wakefield center and have no problem.*

# What We Have Learned About Access:

Public request is for the Town to be more accessible in a variety of ways including:

- Biking Infrastructure
- Public transportation options
- Connectivity to improve walkability
- Parking Management

Lack of access = Leakage

What Draws You To Reading?



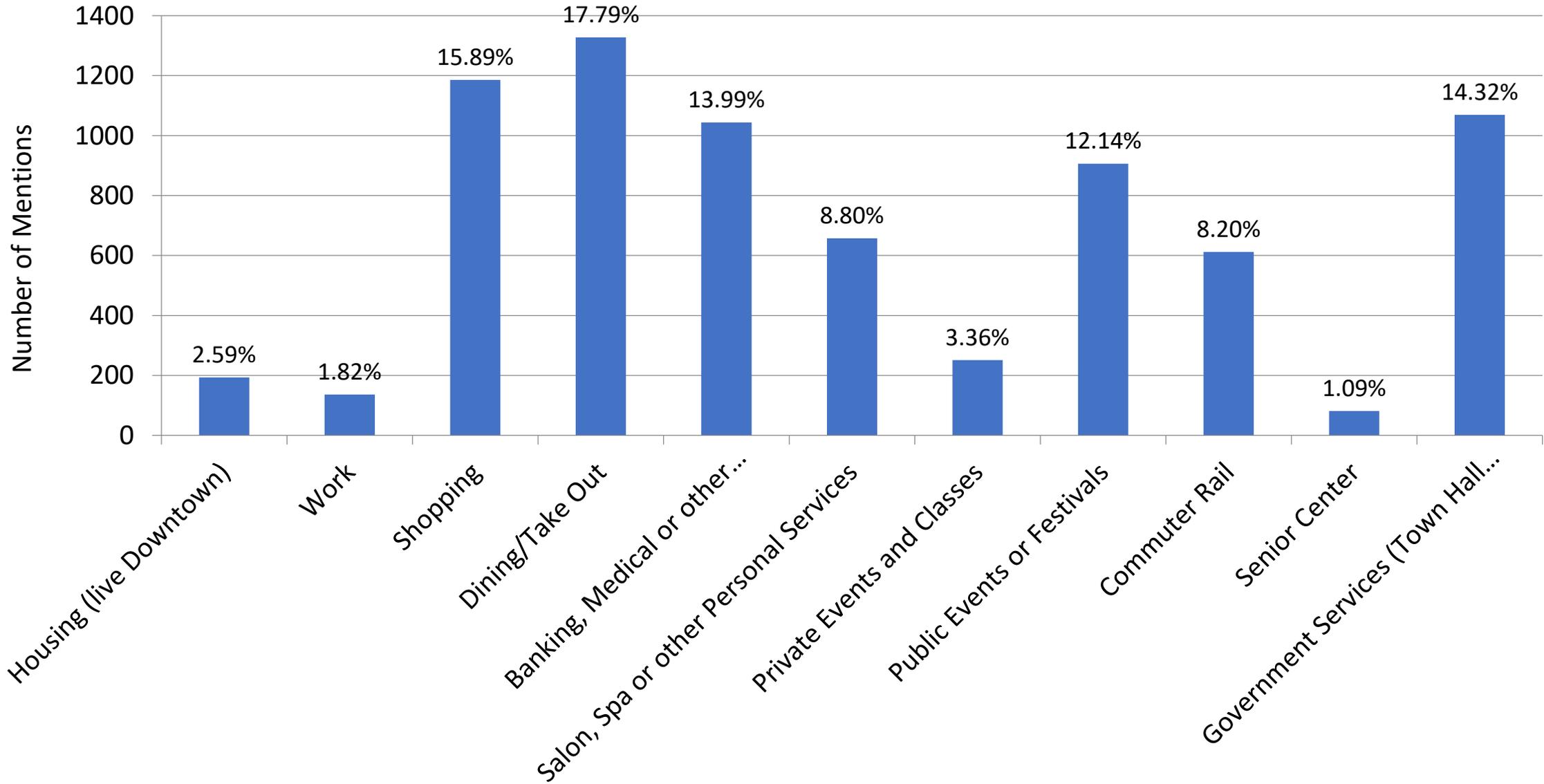
# What We Have Learned About What Draws People to Reading

Jobs  
Transit  
Safety  
Environment  
Schools  
Businesses

Social Offerings (We need more)  
Openness  
Aesthetics  
Feel  
Sense of Community



# Which of the Following Activities Have Brought You to Downtown Reading in the Past Year?

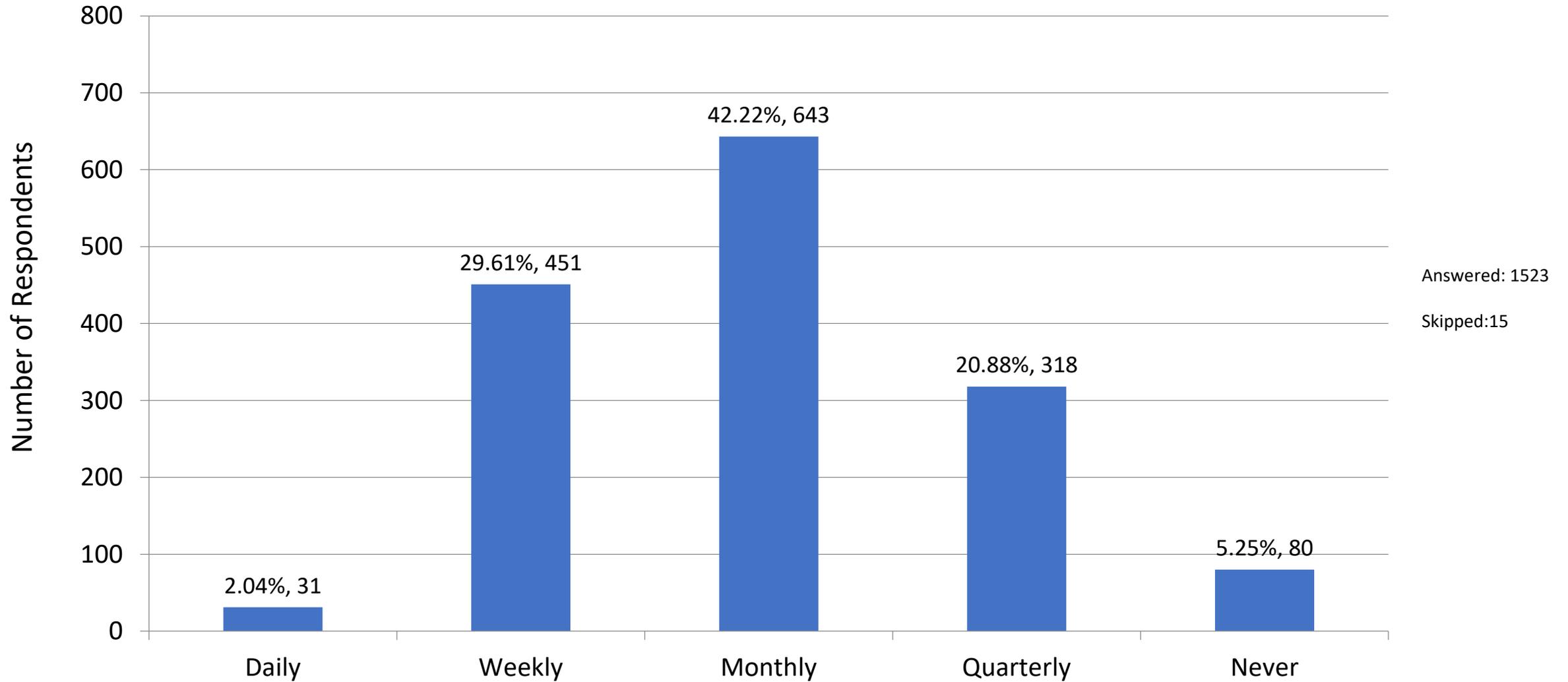


HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT READING?  
(Frequency and Length of Stay)



EAT AND  
DINE

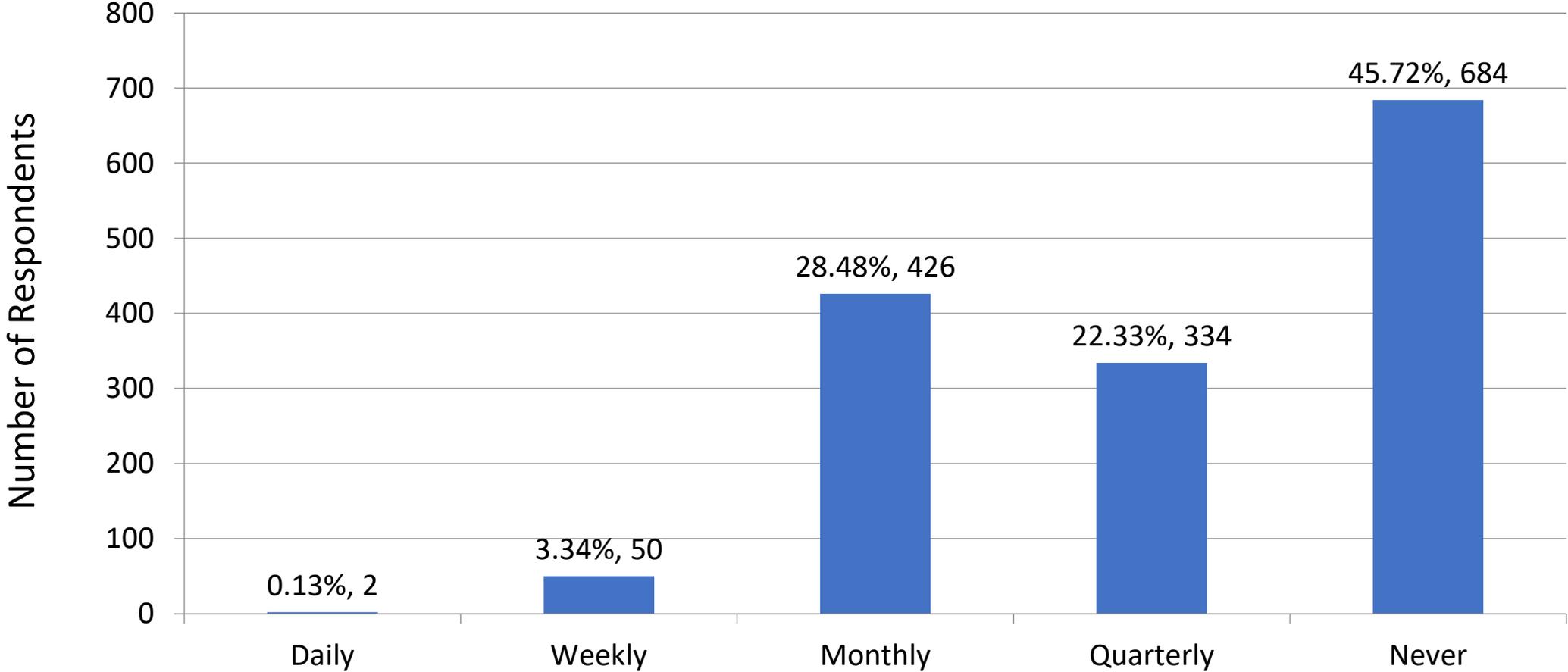
# How Often Do You Visit Downtown Reading to Eat?





# Personal Services

# How Often Do You Visit Downtown Reading to Receive Personal Services? (spa and beauty)

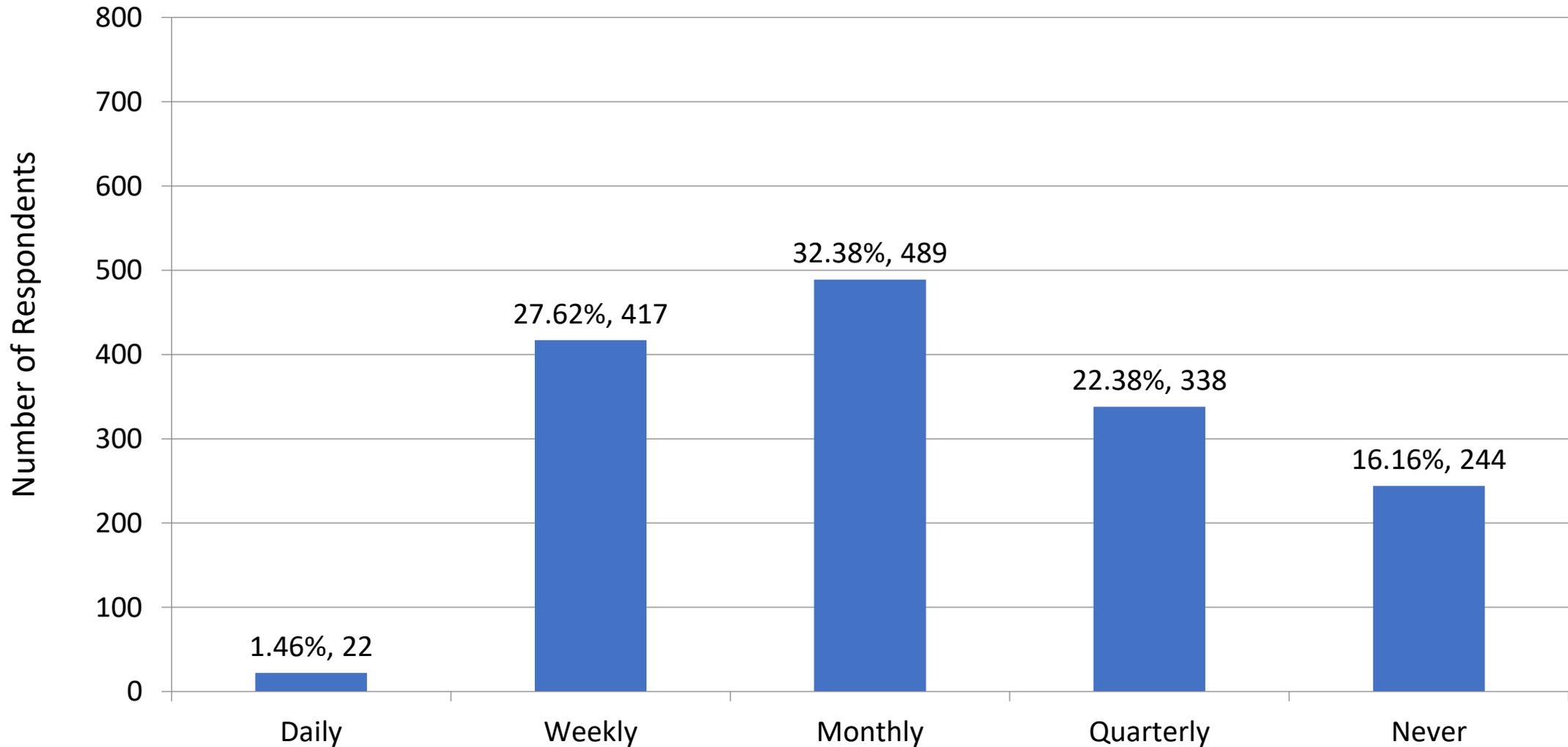




# Professional Services

(Banking, Medical)

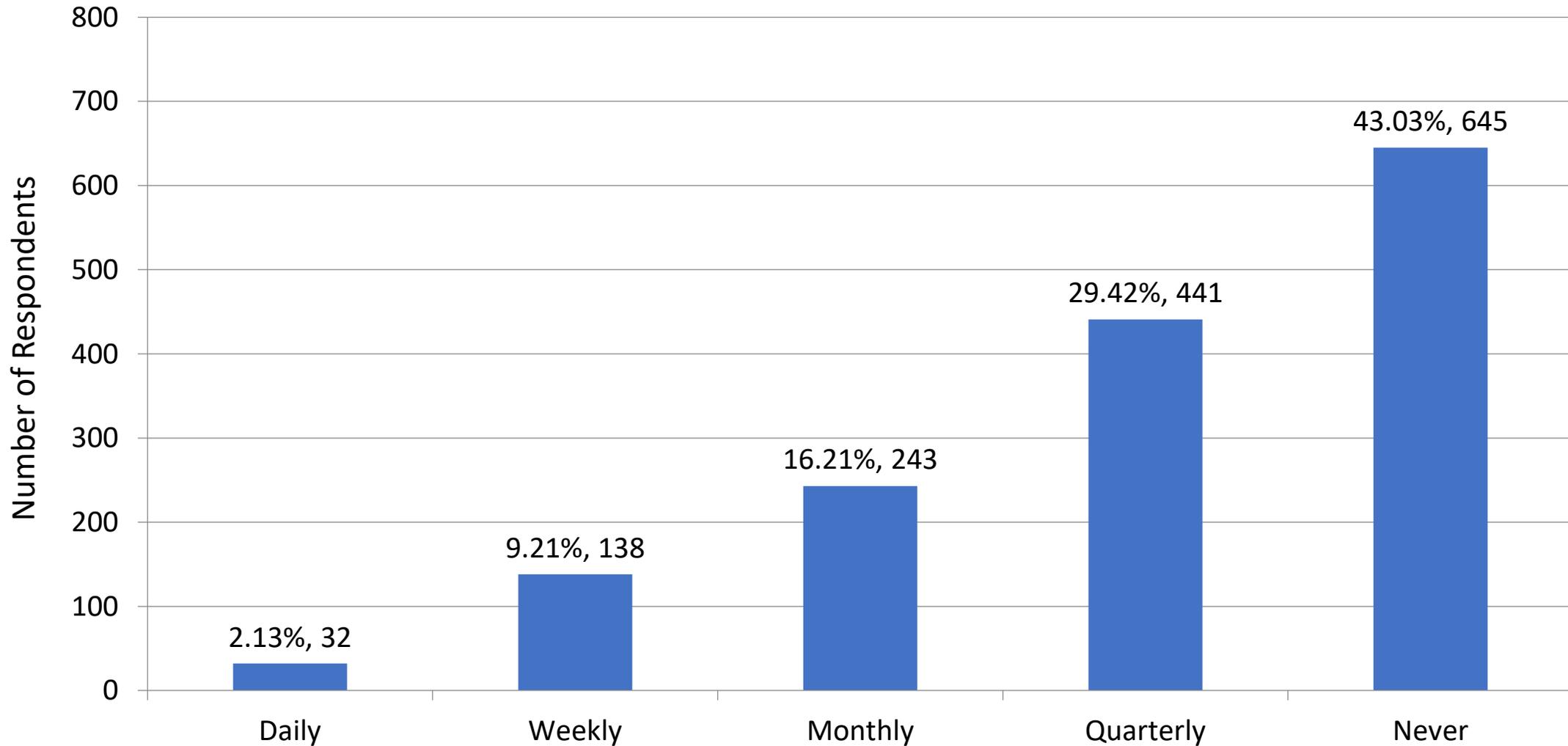
# How Often Do You Visit Downtown Reading to Receive Professional Services (banking, medical)?





# Local Events and Classes

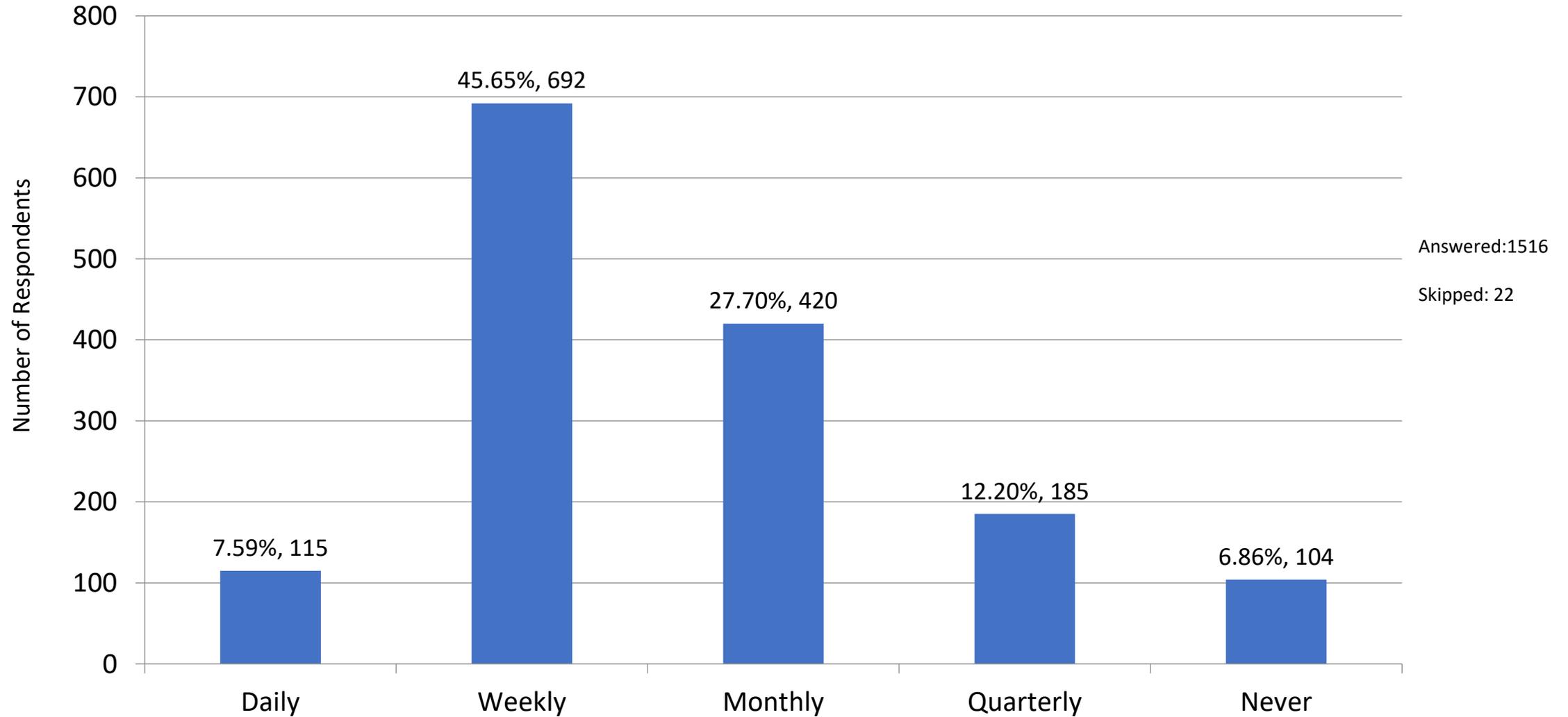
# How Often Do You Visit Downtown Reading to Attend Local Events and Classes?



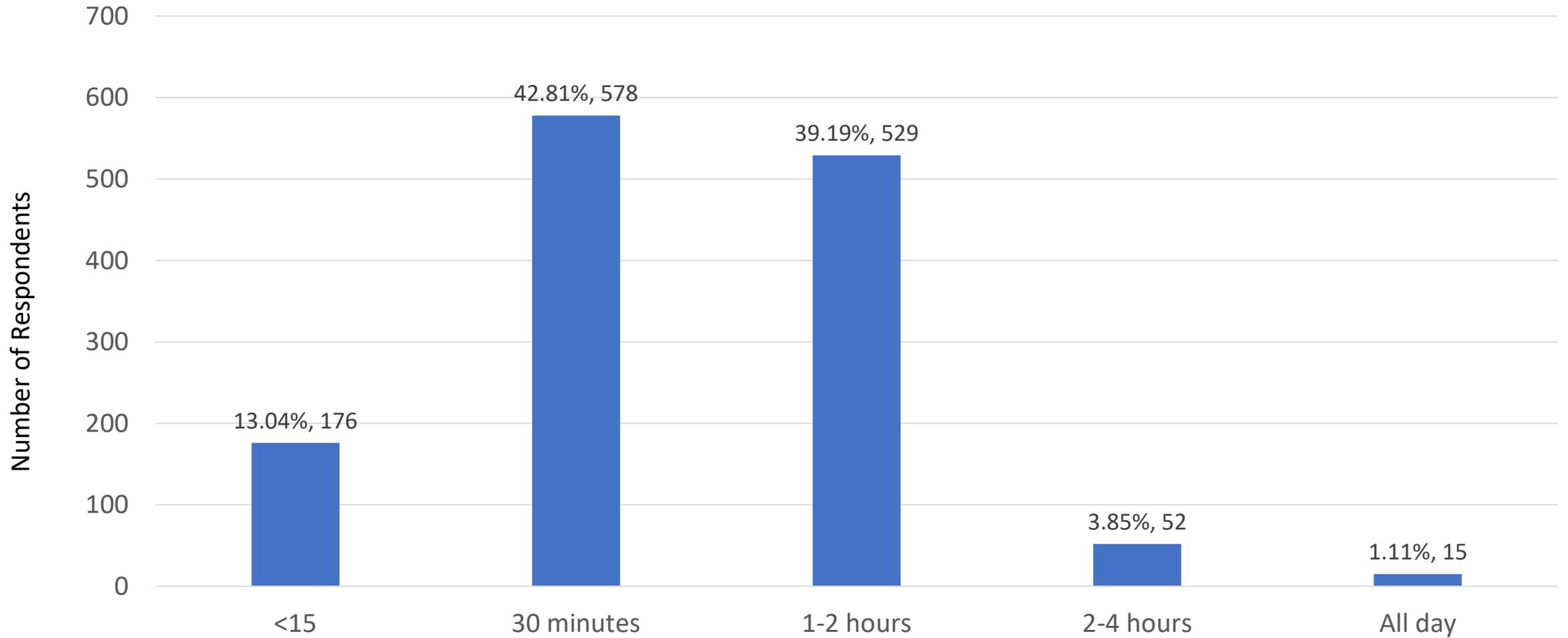


Shopping

# How Often Do You Visit Reading to Shop?



# How Much Time Do You Spend on an Average Trip to Downtown Reading?



# What We Have Learned About Length and Frequency of Visits

\*Airports are like mini cities -Offer unique and interesting things and people will spend more time=more \$\$\$\*

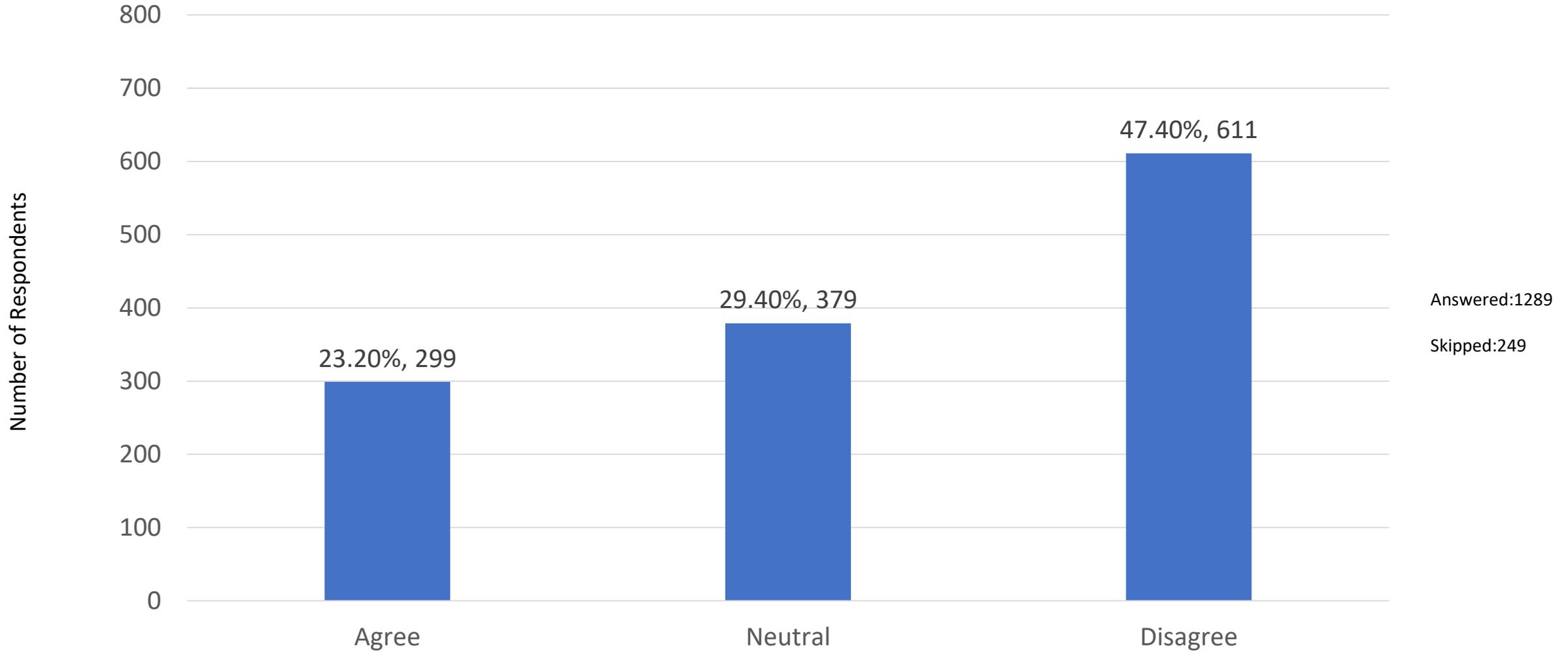


What are your preferences for eating, shopping, work space, entertainment, and public events?

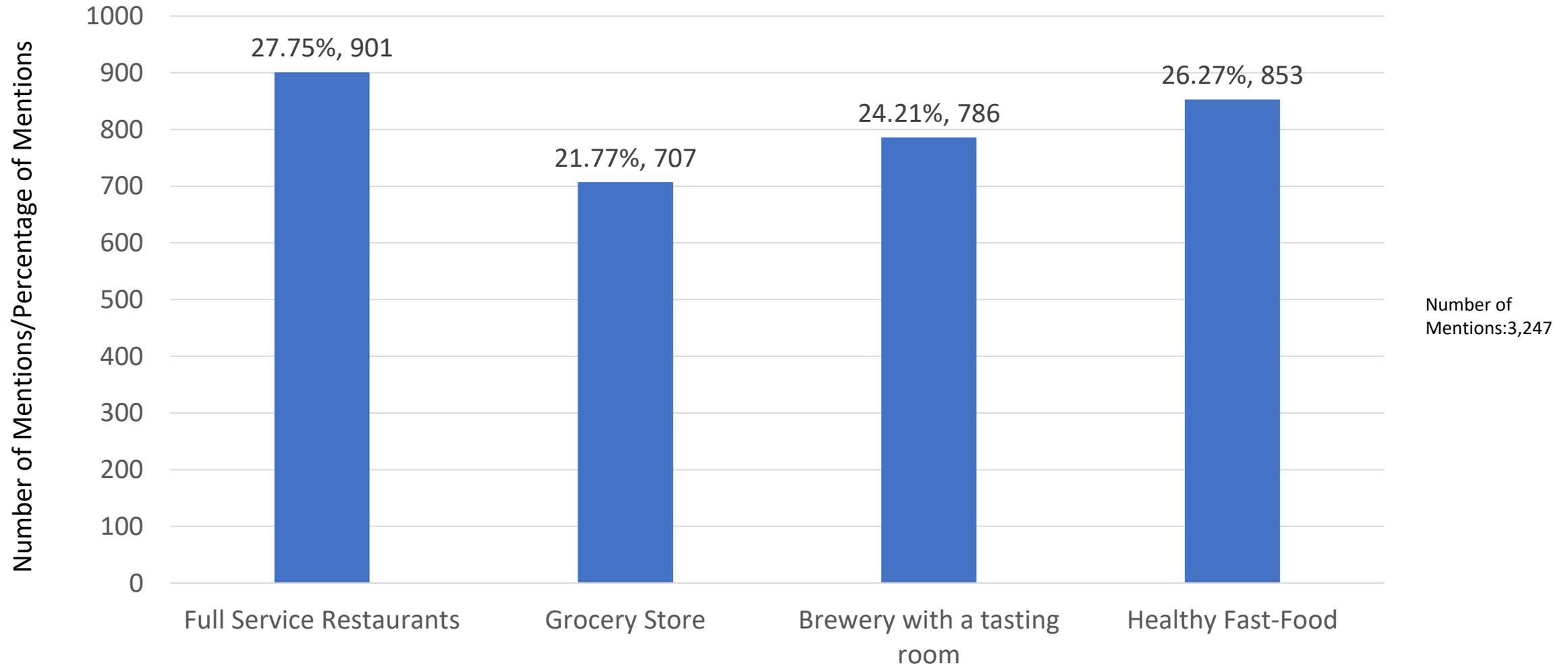


EAT AND  
DINE

# Downtown Reading has adequate opportunities to eat/dine



# What Additional Food and Beverage Types Would You Like to Have in Downtown Reading? Select all that apply.



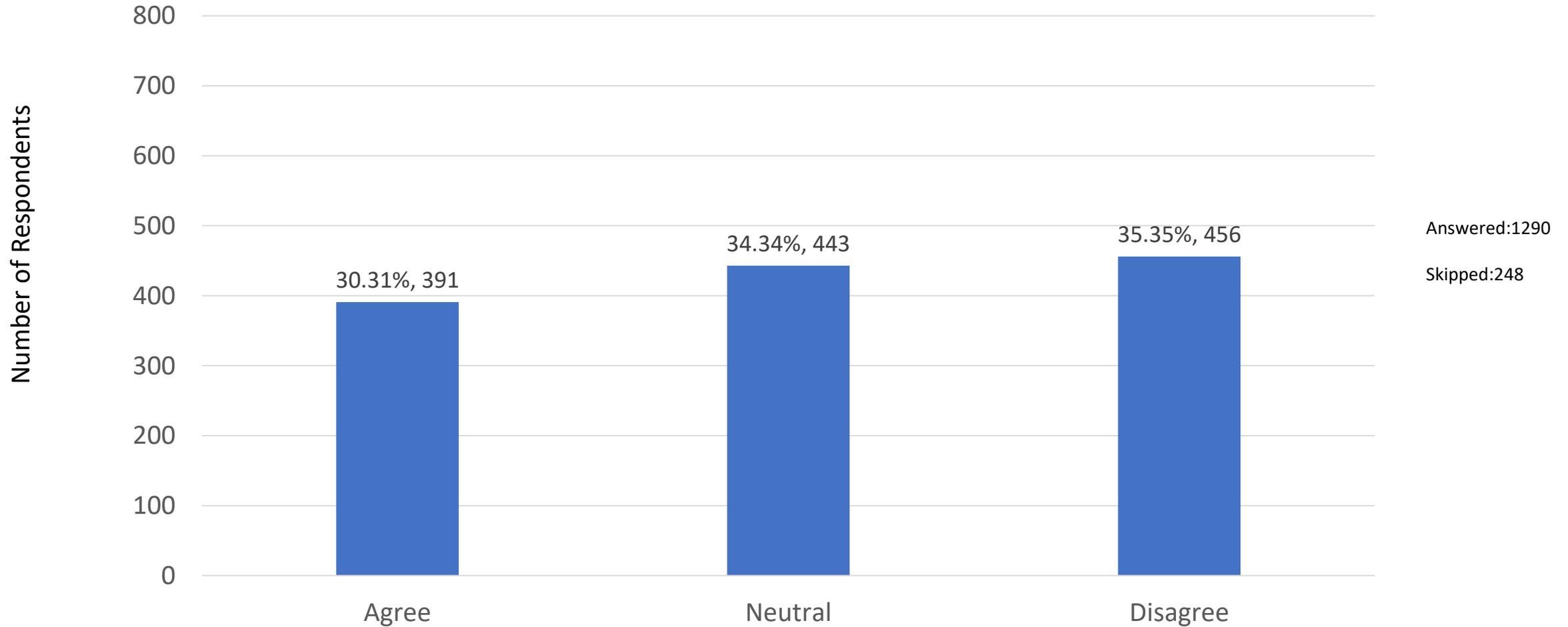
Panera, Brew Pub, Chinese, Thai, Sushi, Blue Ox, Paul's Bakery, Bread Shop (Wakefield), Farmland (Wakefield), Sweetgreens, Whole Foods, B. Good, Tonno, Public Kitchen, Maya Indian, Leaf and Ginger, Mexican, Casablanca, Ledger (Salem), Lucia's (Winchester), Tendergreens, Falafel King, Artichokes, Flatbread, Sugarcane (Peabody), Clover, Life Alive, When Pigs Fly, Press Café (Burlington), Trader Joes, Matadora (Woburn), Lord Hobo, Nightshift Brewery, A Tavola, The Waterfield Kitchen, Boloco, Capitol Grill, Nature's Harvest, Elm Square Oyster, Turners Seafood, The Stones, Sweet Tomatoes, Yard House, Tora Japanese Restaurant, Sakura, Wu Burger, Red Heat Tavern, Remedy Exchange, La Qchara (Melrose), Eat Well Kitchen (Marblehead), Sol Bean (Middleton), Toto Ramen, Giacomos (Melrose), Oak and Iron Brewery, Bon Me, Joe's, Tempo (Waltham), Dig Inn, Cravings (Beverly), Flip the Bird (Beverly), Pit Stop, Tennessee BBQ (Danvers), Bueno Y Sano, Rancatore's, Flour, Boloco, Bancroft, Nightshift Brewery, Shake Shack, 5 Corners Kitchen (Marblehead)





# NIGHT OUT

# Downtown Reading Has Adequate Opportunities to Meet with Friends for a Night Out





# What We have Learned About Eating/Dining

Public preference for all types of food and beverage businesses

Stronger preference for quality full service restaurants and healthy fast food

Interest in breweries with tasting rooms (for “community vibe”)

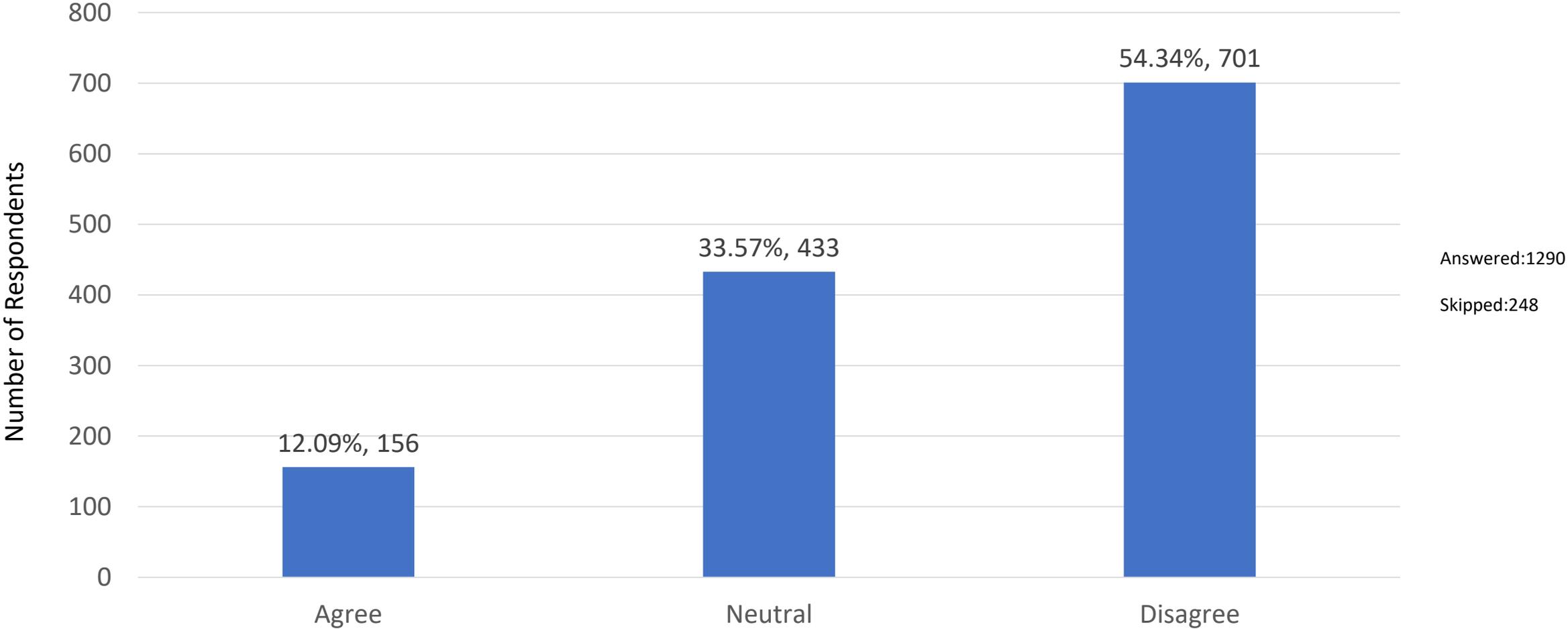
Specific preferences for grocery stores like Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods

Leakage to *regional* competition, not just Wakefield.

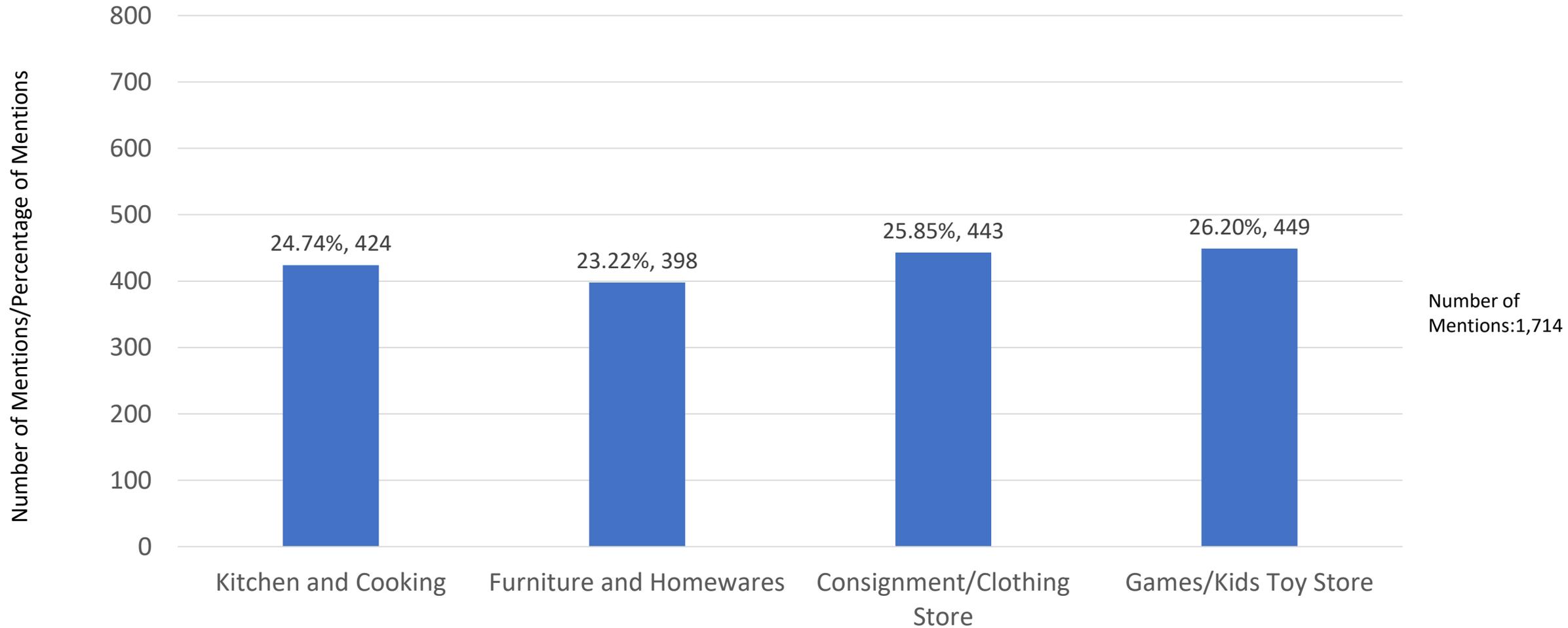


Shopping

# Downtown Reading Has Adequate Opportunities to Shop

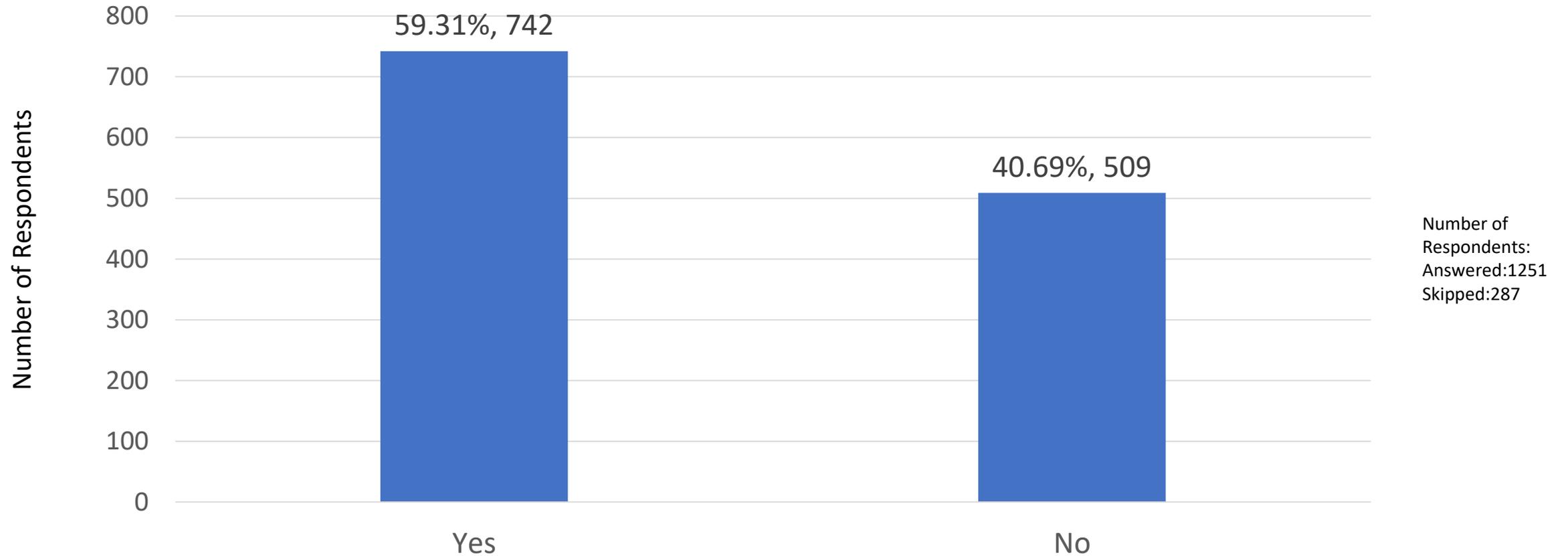


# What Additional Business Types Would You Like to See in Downtown Reading? Select all that apply.





# Do You Primarily Shop Online for Retail Items?



# What We have Learned About Shopping Preferences

Online competition for everyday items (Convenience)

Shopping = purchasing *experiences* (customer service/entertainment)

Shopping = High curated specialty items

Leakage *“People would shop locally if there were more options to do so.”*

*\*Cheese Shop does both with partnership – Food Tours\**

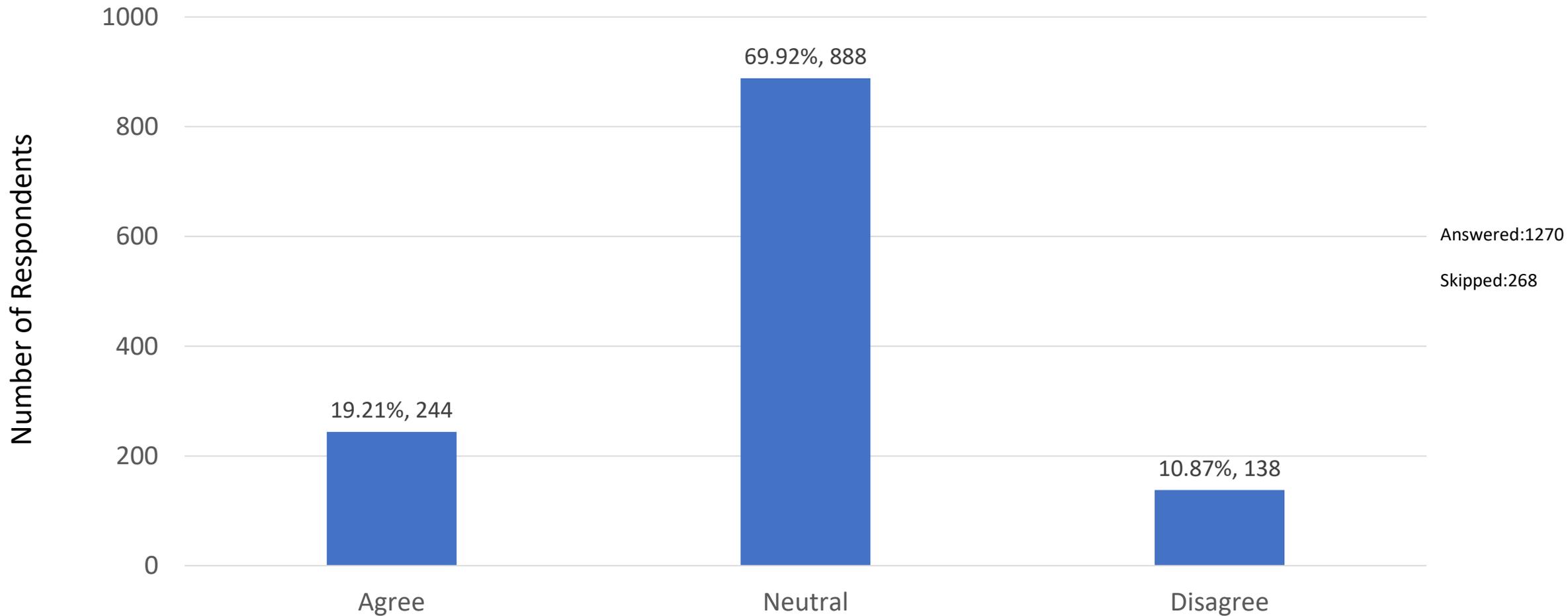


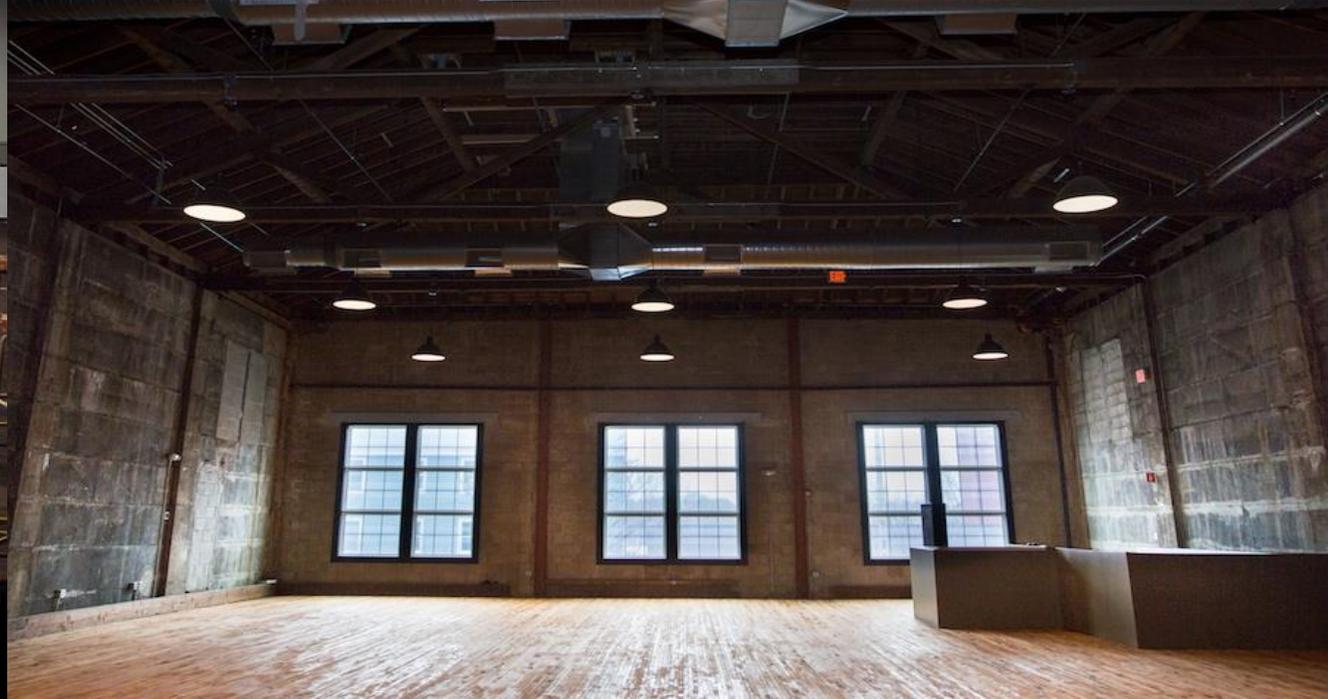




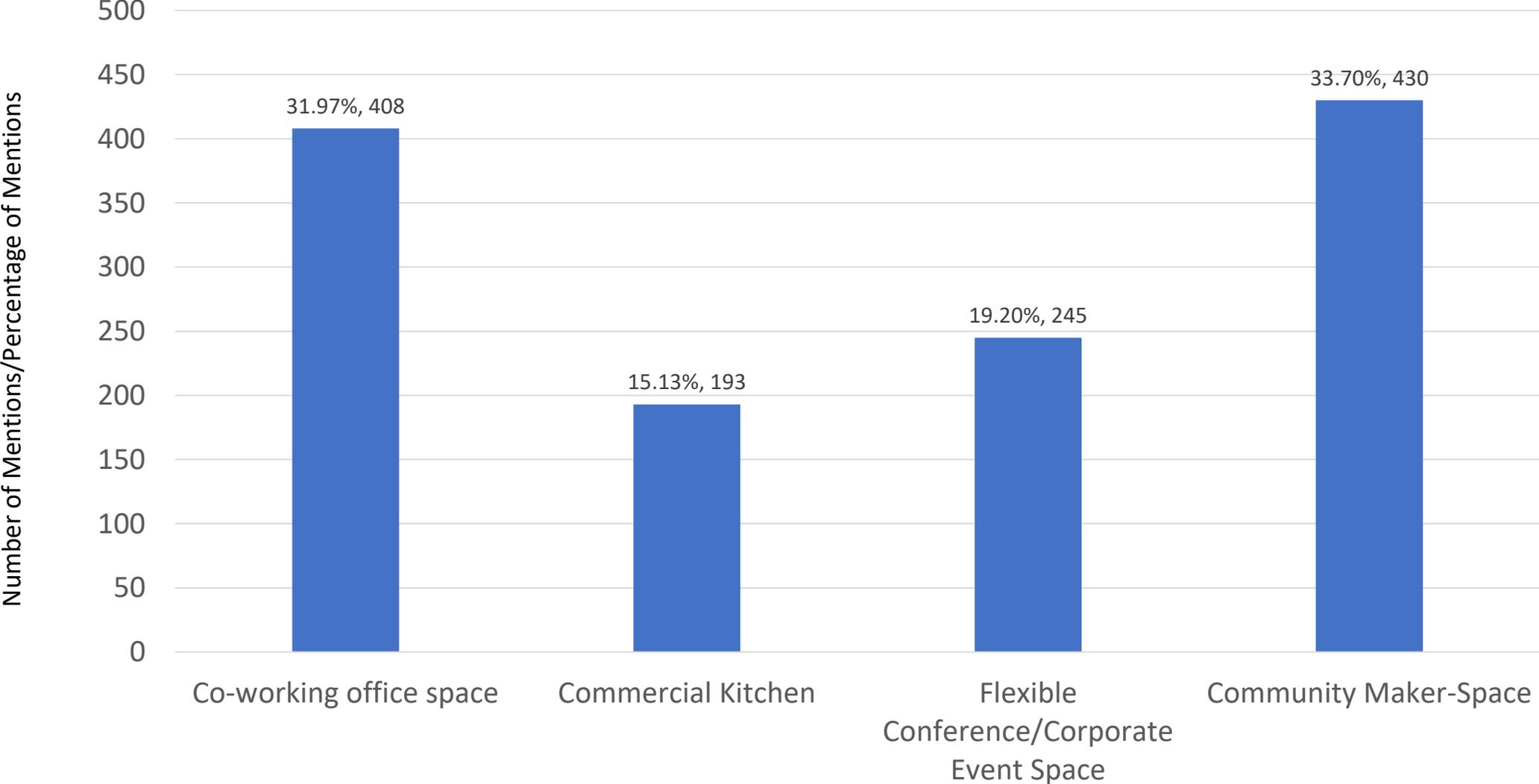
Work Space

# Downtown Reading has Adequate Work Space/Office Space Options

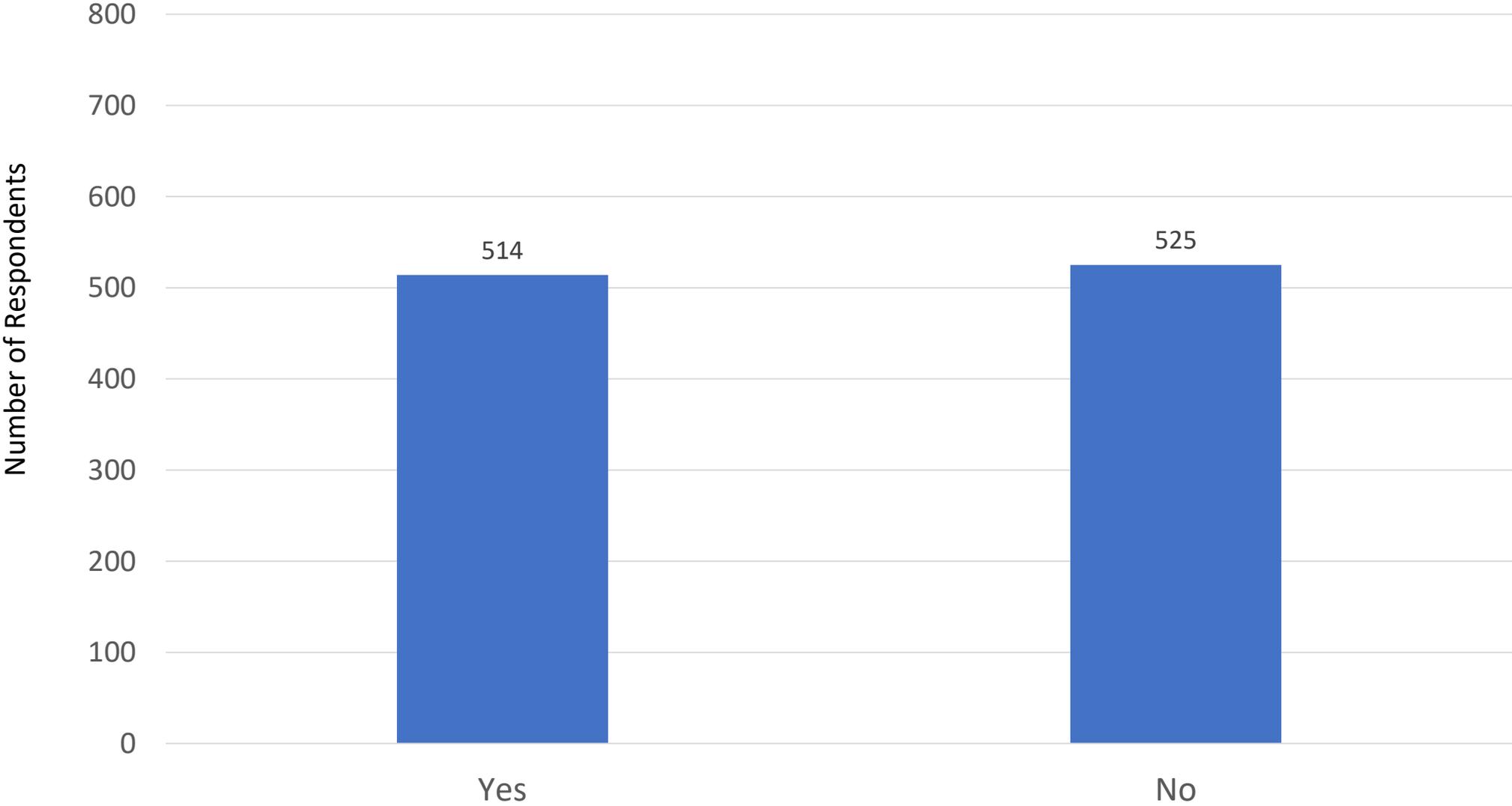




# What Kind of Private Shared Spaces Do You Want to See in Downtown Reading? Select all that apply.



# If These Shared Spaces Were Well Managed, Priced Right, and Fit Your Needs, Would You Utilize a Shared Space?



# “Other” Quotes for Collaborative Spaces

*I think you could create a space that met the co-working, maker and commercial kitchen guidelines, all in one place.*

*Startup incubator, adult learning spaces*

*Medical bio tech*

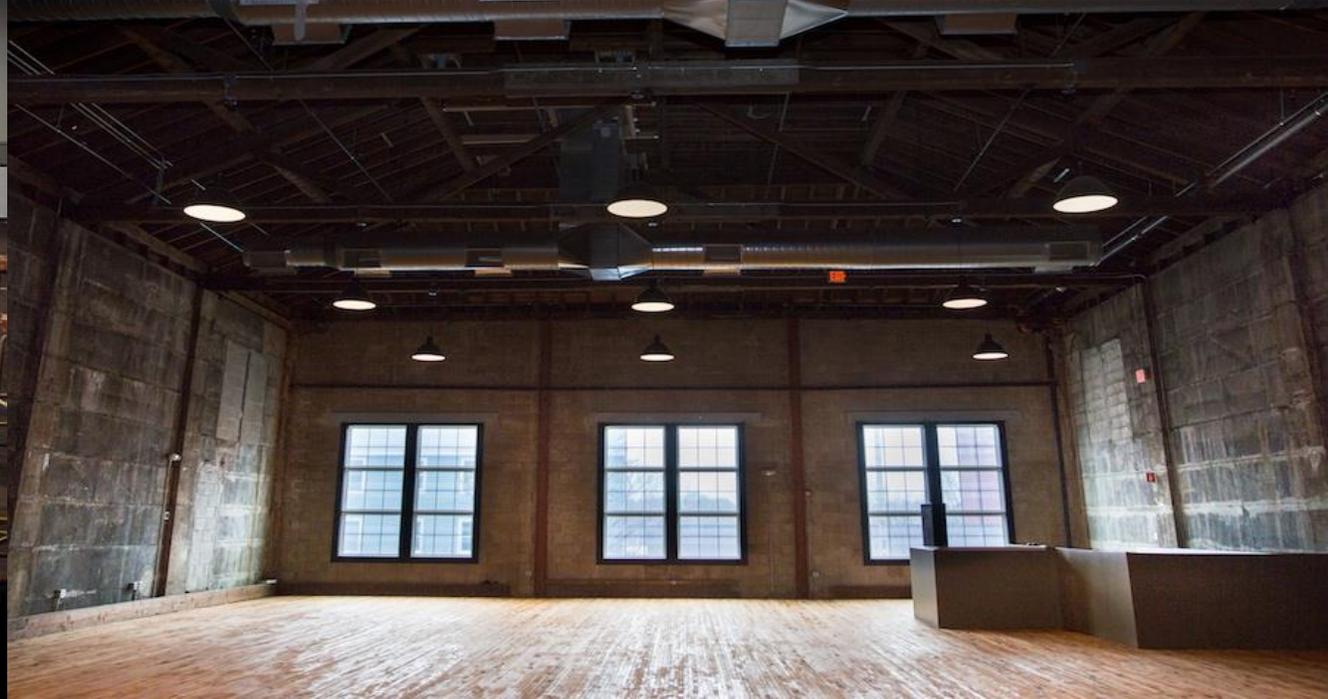
*Artisan (all types) shared space*

*Music rehearsal space*

*I'm new here so not really sure - but always see a lot of people working & studying from Cafe Nero & the library - I feel there is demand for a co-working space*

*Teen hangout/game/innovation center*

*I don't know what a community maker-space is.*



# What We Have Learned About Work Spaces and Other Collaborative Spaces

Collaborative spaces can serve a variety purpose and uses

Public interest in all kinds of collaborative spaces

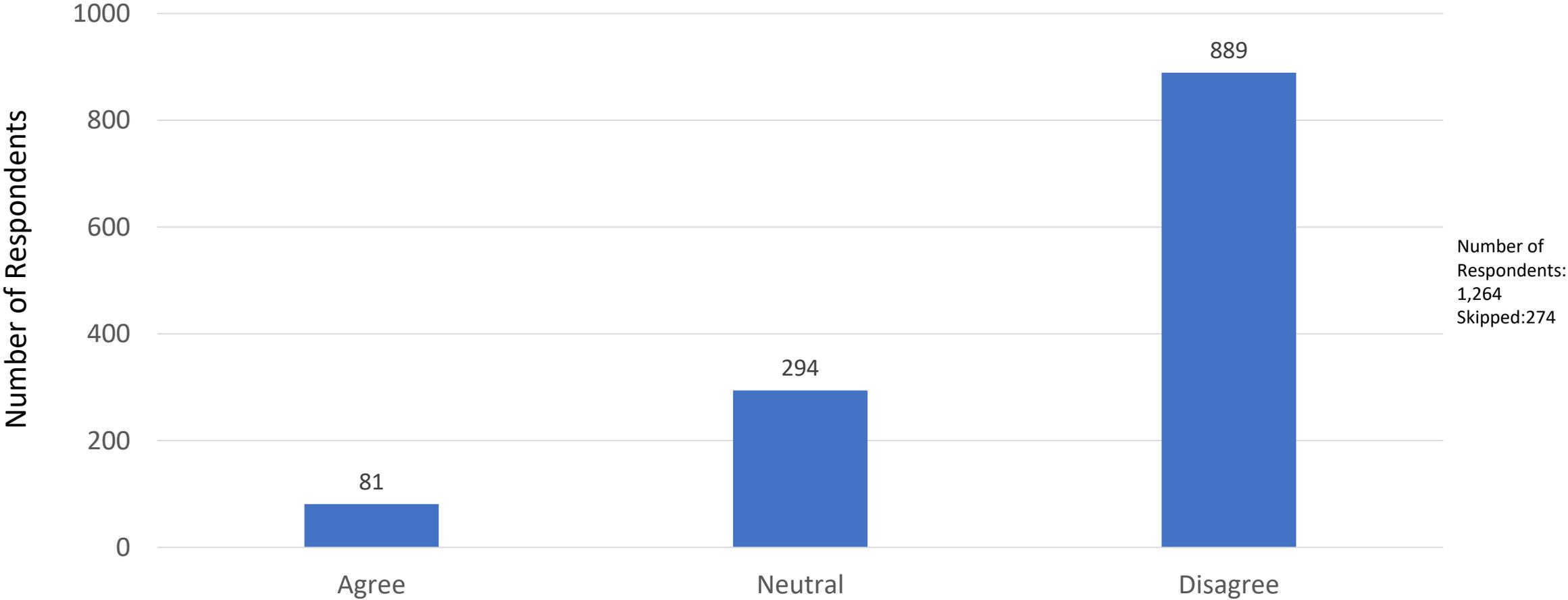
Public preference for co-working space and maker space

Need for public education about these spaces

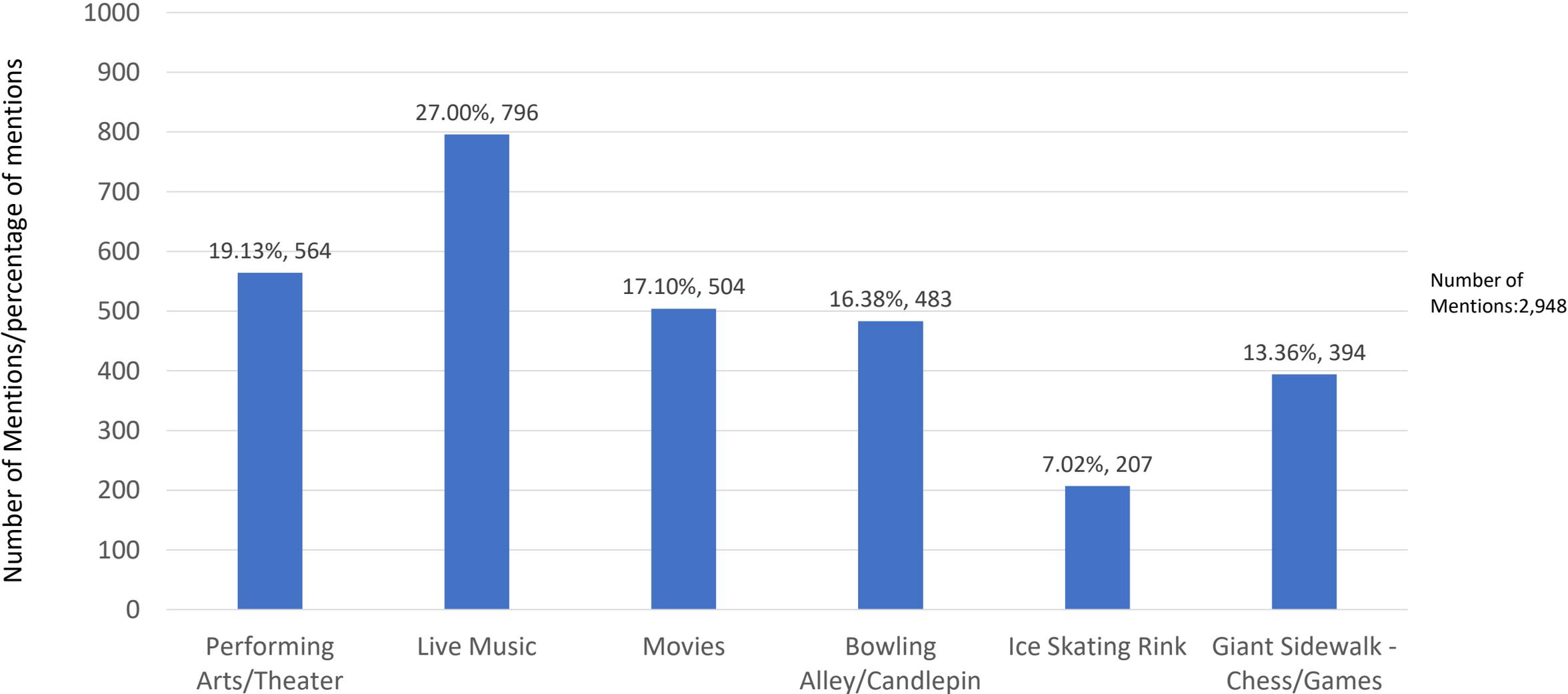


Entertainment  
Fun Things  
To Do

# Downtown Reading Has Adequate Entertainment Options/Fun Things To Do



# What Additional Entertainment Options Does Downtown Reading Need? Select all that apply.



# What Additional Entertainment Options Does Downtown Reading Need? Open Ended Responses

*Currently Reading has Sunday concerts in the summer. However, they are not well attended because 1.) the layout is not conducive 2.) the acts are not good 3.) there aren't any other ancillary activities, food/truck options, etc*

*There are no real entertainment options, especially for young people.*

*STEM-based venue/school, Community maker space, space like Mill No. 5 in Lowell, Pop-up Events, Beer Gardens*

*I would love to see a theater downtown that can be used by CCP and QP, and also that could have live music acts, something like Natick or Newburyport.*

*I'd love to see a paved rail trail for biking (maybe along the commuter rail path?). Rail trails are proven to improve property values and encourage biking and walking. You could connect Reading to Lake Quannapowitt and beyond. I think any entertainment options would be good...let the market dictate.*

*Outdoor eating; Indoor kids entertainment*

# What We Have Learned About Entertainment Options

There are not enough options!

Preferences for live music, performing arts, movies

Multiple things to “do” at the same time

Preferences for options for all ages

Fun Things Can Happen *ANYWHERE*

MILL NO. 5 & MILL CITY GROWS  
PRESENT

# THE FARM MARKET

SUNDAYS BUY LOCAL 10 TO 2:30

5

FEATURING

FRESH PRODUCE  
ARTISANAL FOODSTUFFS  
LIVE MUSIC

INDOORS

250 JACKSON STREET  
LOWELL, MASS

FARMLOWELL FARMLOWELL

THEFARMMARKET







× DERBY LANES ×  
1 2 3 4



NOTCH

BIERGARTEN

CANINE  
FRANCHISES



# THIS WEEK AT GULU...

DRINK N  
DRAW

EVERY TUESDAY 8PM-10PM

KARAOKE

EVERY WEDNESDAY 9PM-12AM

OPEN  
MIC

EVERY THURSDAY 8PM-12AM



THE  
HONEY  
BADGERS

FRIDAY 9/27 @9PM  
FOLK AMERICANA



STENO  
GRAPHER

SATURDAY 9/28 @9PM  
MELODIC

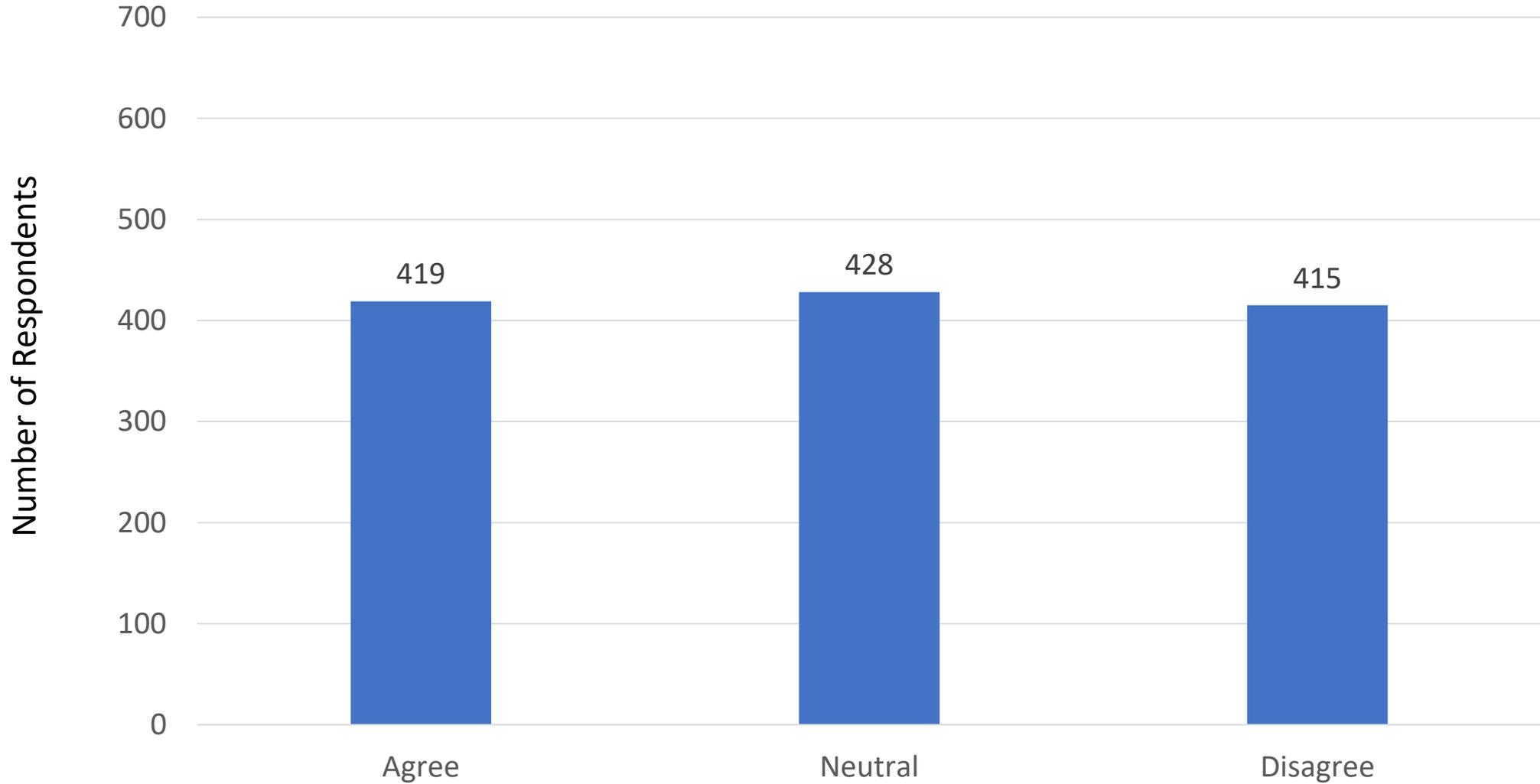
BINGO!

EVERY SUNDAY 6PM-8PM

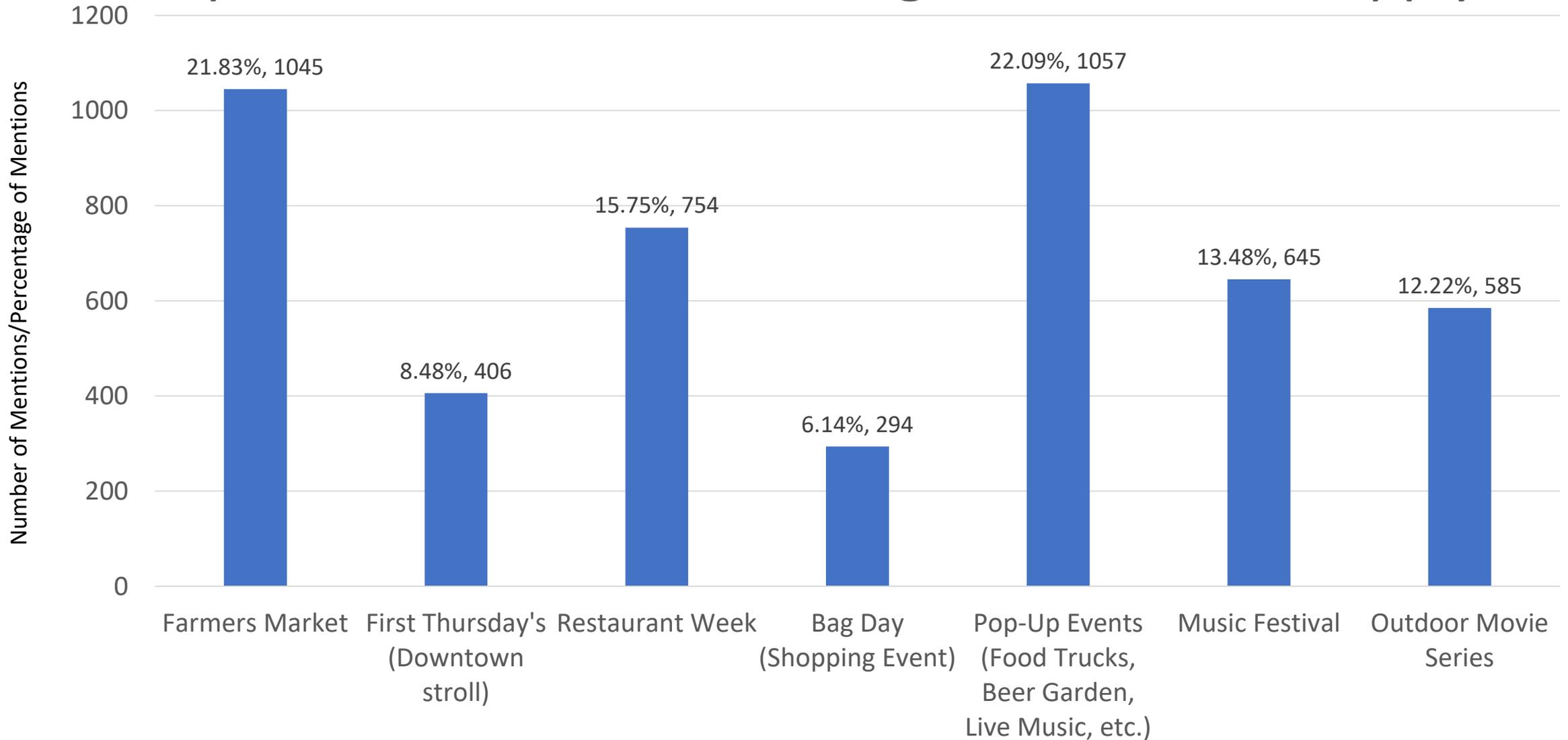


# Public Events

# Downtown Reading Has Adequate Public Art, Festivals, and Public Events



# What Additional Events Would You Like To See Or Expand in Downtown Reading? Check all that apply.



# What Additional Events Do you Want?

*All of this stuff, plus more!*

*Anything that brings people to the downtown*

*A family friendly beer garden with rotating food trucks would be amazing.*

*Porchfest was fabulous, should be a yearly event. Saw people of all ages all over town enjoying the music and neighborhoods*

*With all the no-child car-free developments going in there should be a need for evening entertainment and fresh food retailers*

*Pop up children's museum- Check out Peabody they have lots of Pop up events*

*All of these would be amazing! We need to catch up with what towns are doing around us.*

*Restaurant week if more restaurants!*

*Can't do First Thursday, Restaurant Week, or Bag Day until quality/volume of businesses improves*

# Where Do You Want These Events?

*All over town, fields, empty parking lots. I thought the food trucks for the anniversary week finale with the concert was excellent.*

*The town common seems like a great place to have something that brings the community together for more than just Fall Faire and tree lighting.*

*Reading Common/Town Hall Lawn, Memorial Park, Washington Park*

*Taking over parking lots as well as in parks, to get people to re-imagine these spaces*

*Downtown - close Main Street if needed*

*Remove the parallel parking spaces in front of the town hall to create a bigger and better town green to accommodate these events.*

*A music festival would probably have to be just outside downtown, at Memorial Park. Food trucks/beer garden could be behind CVS (big parking lot), or in the parking lot behind the new condos on Haven St (the old Atlantic Supermarket lot).*

# What We Have Learned About Public Art, Festivals, and Public Events

Strong support for more!

Farmer's Market, Pop-Up Events, Restaurant Week, Music

Public Art, Festivals, and public events ANYWHERE/ANYTIME











NO PARKING  
ANY TIME  
→

1861

POLICE

QUESTIONS + BREAK-OUT DISCUSSION

Small Group Exploration of trends and priorities

How do you identify with these survey responses and trends?

What are some trends and priorities that you see from this survey and your experiences?

What supplemental services would like to see a future district management organization provide?

How can existing organizations be supported by a district management organization/community partnership?

# What Can A District Management Organization Do?

Provide supplemental public services including, but *NOT* limited to:

- Technical or/and financial support for existing and new businesses
- Advocate for economic development and infrastructure initiatives
- Market the Town as a place to live, work, and play
- Fund and lead creative place-making initiatives/events



*Next Working Group Meeting:*

Panelists from other communities to visit working group to explore how district management organizations can support priorities and provide value to existing organizations/businesses

# District Management Organization Initiative Process

