

City of Madison: Southwest Area Plan Survey Part 2 - Survey Results

Prepared by the City of Madison Planning Division | 2025



Introduction:

This report presents a research-based analysis of survey data collected from residents in Madison’s [Southwest Area](#). The primary goal of the survey was to gain a deeper understanding of residents' priorities related to housing affordability, transportation access, and neighborhood conditions.

Urban planning in Madison is shaped by resident feedback gathered through a variety of public participation methods, including community surveys. In 2024–2025, the City of Madison’s Planning Division, in collaboration with Ph.D. students from the UW–Madison Sociology Department, conducted a two-part survey to help inform the [Southwest Area Plan](#), a long-range vision to help guide how the physical parts of our community change over time. This includes things like land use, housing, transit, streets, and bike paths. This report focuses on **Part 2** of the survey, which received responses from more than **330 residents** and included questions on housing types, affordability, public transit, infrastructure needs, and neighborhood characteristics.

Data for this report were drawn from a household survey distributed across the Southwest area. The respondent pool reflects a broad range of **ages, income levels, and racial and ethnic backgrounds**. Both summary statistics and cross-tabulated visualizations are used to identify patterns in resident concerns and priorities, providing a nuanced picture of community needs to inform future planning decisions.

Methodology¹:

Approximately 4,800 postcards containing survey information and a QR code were mailed randomly to residential properties within the Southwest Area. Over 60 percent of the total survey responses were from the postcard mailings. In addition to the postcard mailings, multiple outreach strategies were used to increase participation and reach a broad cross-section of residents. Paper copies and QR codes linking to the survey were distributed at community events such as Meadowridge Library programs, the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church community

¹ This document was updated on December 2, 2025 to add more information about the survey methodology.

dinner, Bike to Work Week events along the Southwest Commuter Path, and local food pantries. These events were selected to engage residents of all demographic backgrounds and digital access levels.

The survey was also promoted through email updates to subscribers of the Southwest Area Plan mailing list and through a press release and social media posts issued by the City of Madison, broadening awareness across online and community networks.

A total of over 330 individuals participated in Part 2 of the survey, representing a diverse range of ages, income levels, and racial and ethnic groups. Responses were aggregated and analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations to explore variation in priorities across demographic subgroups. The resulting data provide a basis for identifying key community needs and shaping recommendations to be included in the Southwest Area Plan.

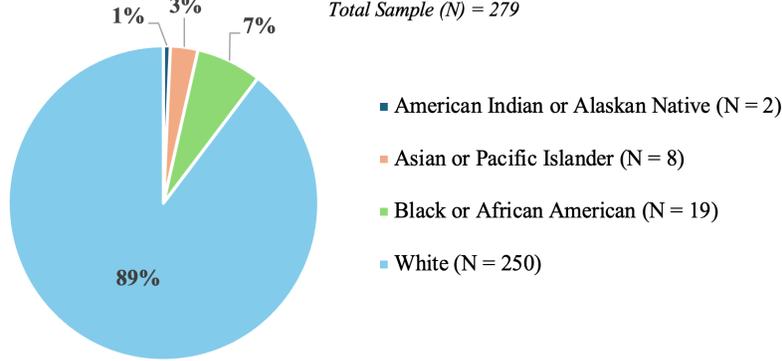
Respondent Demographics:

This section provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of respondents who completed Part 2 of the Southwest Area Plan Survey. Understanding who participated in the survey is essential for contextualizing the findings and recognizing the perspectives that are most represented in the results. Figures 1 through 8 illustrate key demographic variables, including race, ethnicity, age, education, gender, housing tenure, length of residence, and household income.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

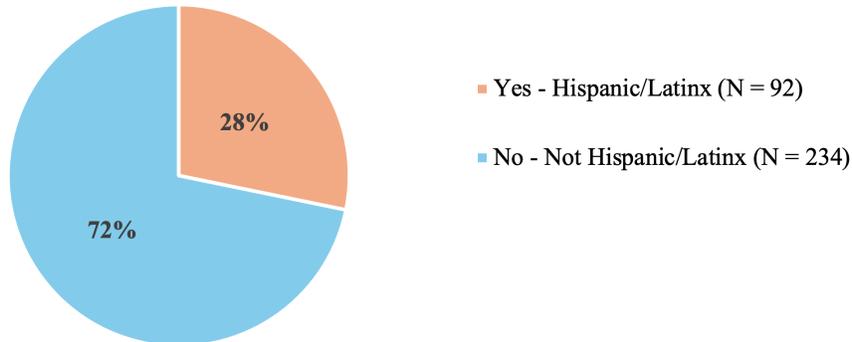
The survey sample was predominantly White, with 89% of respondents identifying as such, while a smaller percentage identified as Black or African American (7%), Asian or Pacific Islander (3%), or American Indian or Alaska Native (1%). While the racial composition of respondents does not fully reflect the broader diversity of the Southwest area, it does provide insight into the perspectives of a large segment of the population.

Figure 1 - Southwest:
Racial Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 279



In terms of ethnicity, 28% of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latinx, and 72% indicated they were not of Hispanic origin. This reflects a meaningful level of participation from Latinx residents, who represent a significant cultural and demographic presence in the Southwest area.

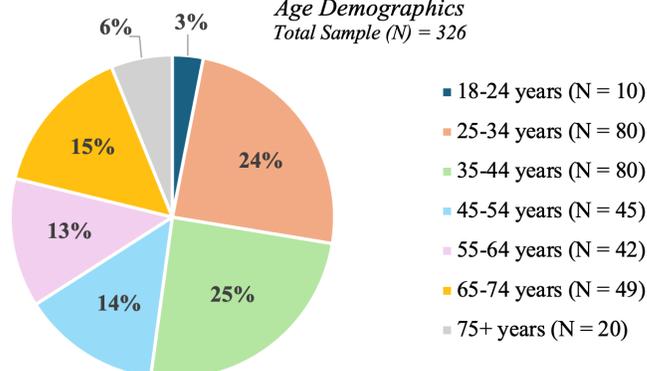
Figure 2 - Southwest:
Ethnicity Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 326



Age Distribution

Respondents represented a wide range of age groups, with the largest proportions falling within the 25–34 and 35–44 year brackets, each comprising approximately one-quarter of the sample.

Figure 3 - Southwest:
Age Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 326

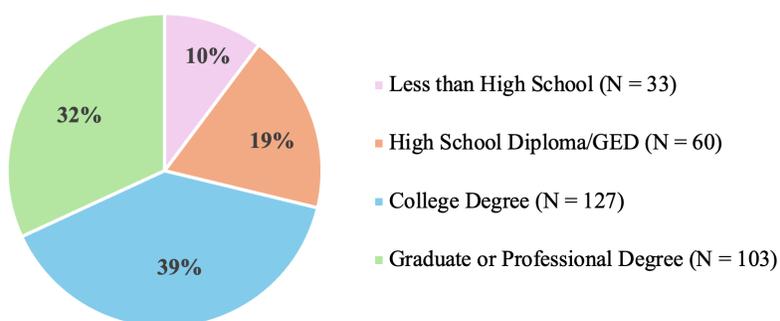


Middle-aged and older adults were also well represented: 14% of respondents were aged 45–54, 13% were 55–64, and 15% were 65–74. Smaller proportions included those over the age of 75 (6%) and young adults aged 18–24 (3%). This spread suggests that the survey captured perspectives across generational lines, with particularly strong input from working-age adults.

Educational Attainment

The survey population had relatively high levels of educational attainment. Over 70% of respondents reported holding a college degree or higher.

Figure 4 - Southwest:
Education Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 323

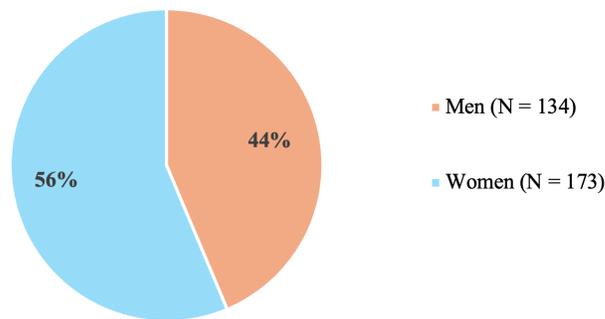


Specifically, 39% had completed a college degree, and 32% held a graduate or professional degree. Another 19% reported having a high school diploma or GED, while 10% indicated they had not completed high school. This suggests that the perspectives reflected in the survey may disproportionately represent residents with higher formal education.

Gender

Survey responses reflected a modest gender imbalance, with 56% of participants identifying as women and 44% as men. This distribution offers insight into the composition of the respondent pool and helps contextualize perspectives shared throughout the survey. Gender representation can play a role in shaping neighborhood priorities, particularly on topics such as transportation access, housing needs, and community development.

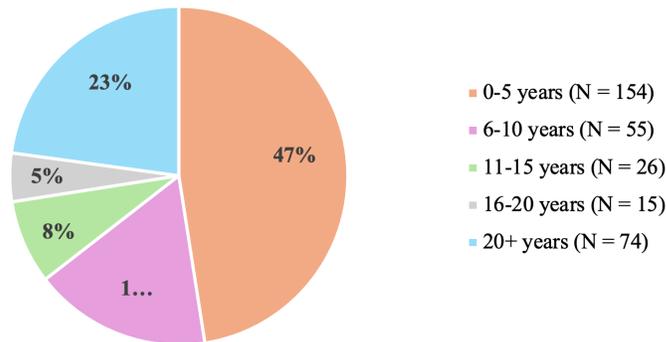
Figure 5 - Southwest:
Gender Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 307



Housing Length of Stay and Tenure (Rent or Own)

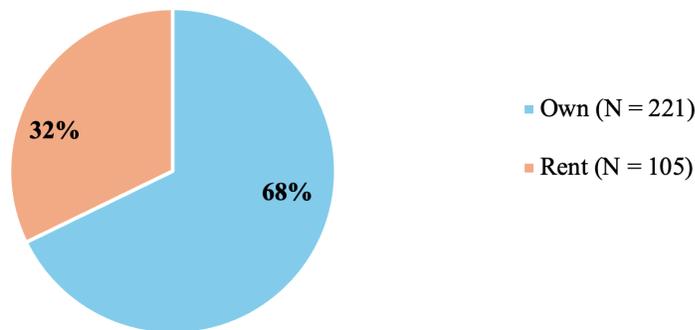
Nearly half (47%) of respondents reported having lived in their current residence for five years or less, indicating a substantial segment of newer residents in the area. Meanwhile, 23% had lived in their homes for over 20 years, with smaller portions spread across intermediate lengths of residence. This mix suggests that the Southwest area is home to both long-term residents and a significant number of newer households, each of whom may bring different priorities and perspectives.

Figure 6 - Southwest:
Length of Stay at Residence
 Total Sample (N) = 324



Approximately 68% of respondents reported owning their homes, while 32% reported renting their homes. These proportions indicate that while homeowners are the majority among survey respondents, nearly one-third of responses came from renters, a group often underrepresented in long-range planning processes.

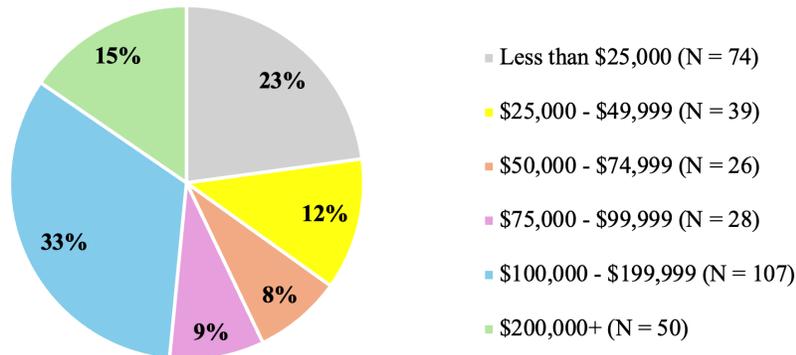
Figure 7 - Southwest:
 Residence Type: Rent or Own
 Total Sample (N) = 326



Household Income Levels

Survey respondents reported a wide range of household income levels, though higher-income households were more prominently represented. One-third of respondents reported annual incomes between \$100,000 and \$199,999, and 15% reported incomes above \$200,000. At the same time, 23% of participants had household incomes below \$25,000, and an additional 29% reported incomes under \$100,000. This distribution reflects economic diversity in the area.

Figure 8 - Southwest:
Income Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 324



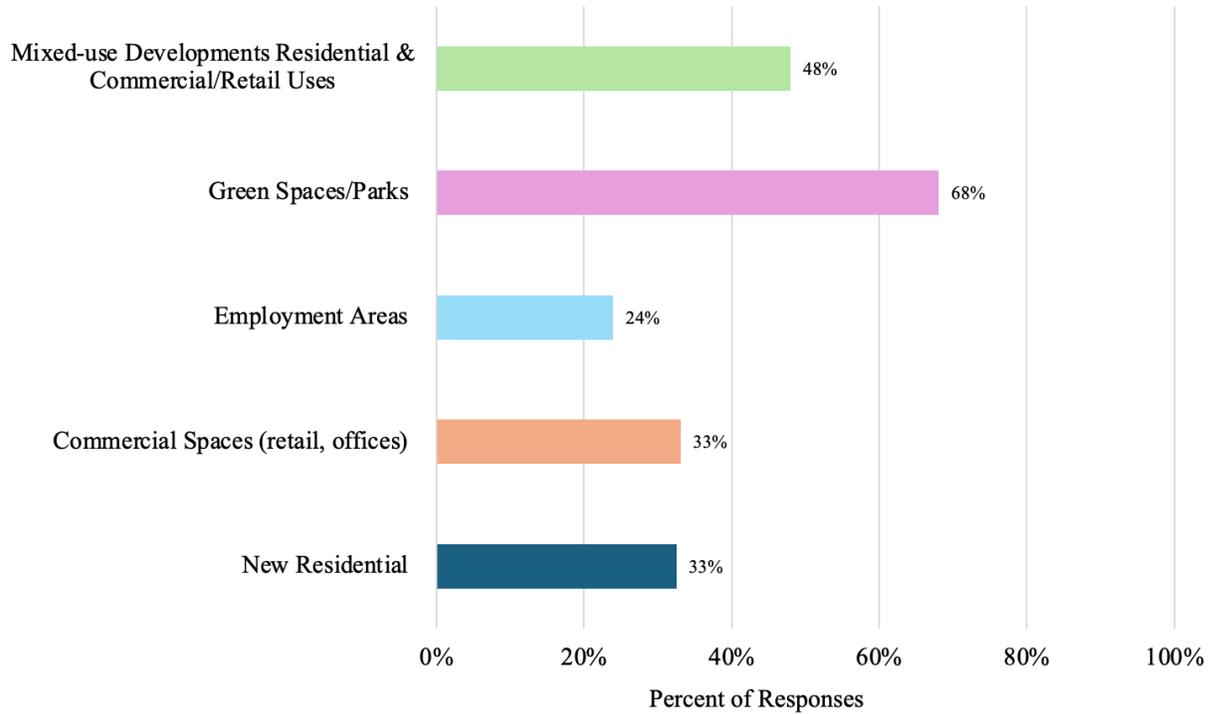
Survey Results – Part 2:

Neighborhood Development Preferences

To better understand community priorities for future land use and neighborhood improvements, the survey asked residents what types of development they would most like to see in their neighborhoods. Responses indicate a strong overall preference for recreational and mixed-use environments, with additional interest in residential and commercial expansion. It is important to note that many survey questions allowed respondents to select more than one option from the list so percentages in the figures will not add up to 100 percent. This applies to many of the charts in this report.

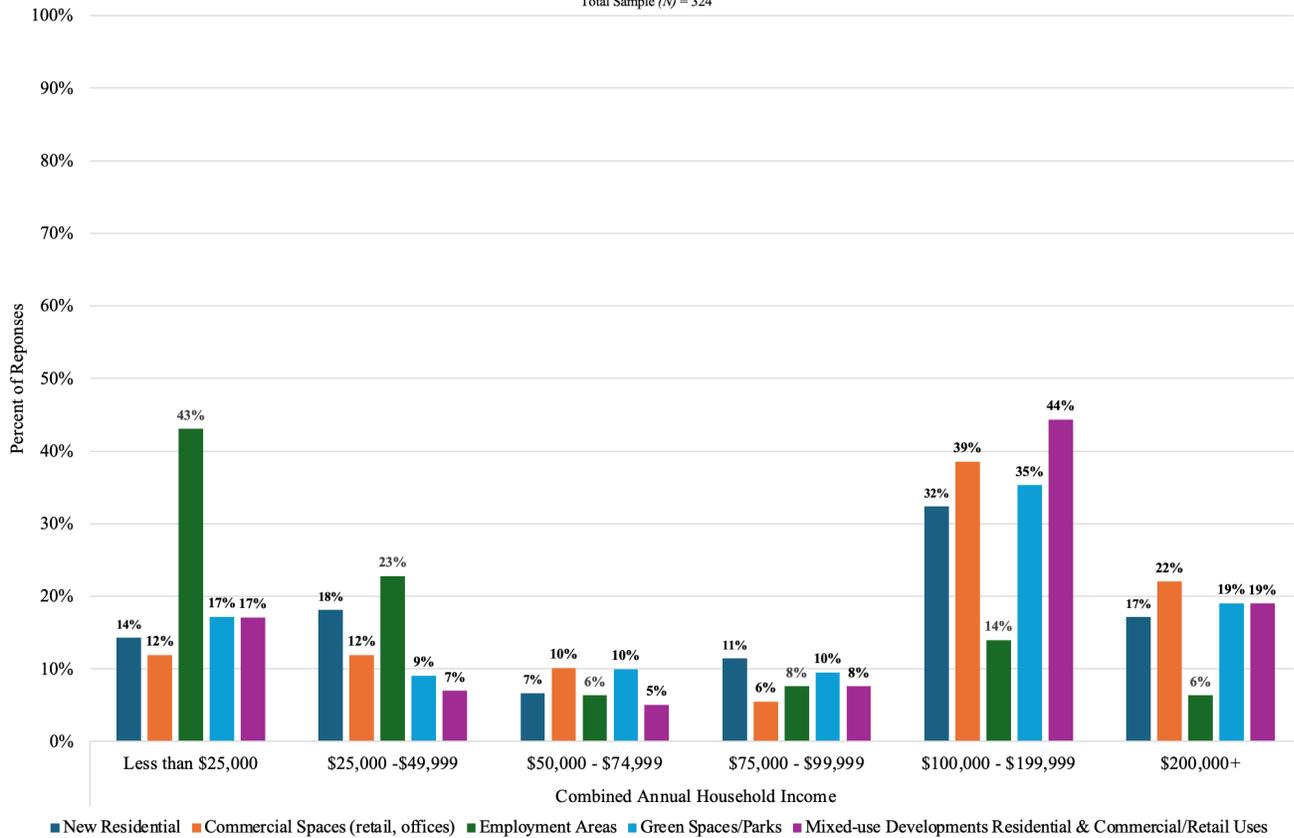
A majority of respondents (68%) selected green spaces and parks as a preferred form of development, making it the most frequently chosen option. This indicates that access to natural or recreational spaces is a key concern for many residents. Following this, 48% of respondents expressed support for mixed-use developments that combine residential and commercial or retail uses, suggesting interest in walkable neighborhoods. One-third of respondents selected either new residential development or standalone commercial spaces, while 24% prioritized the development of employment areas.

Figure 9 - Southwest:
Preferred Neighborhood Developments
Total Sample (N) = 329



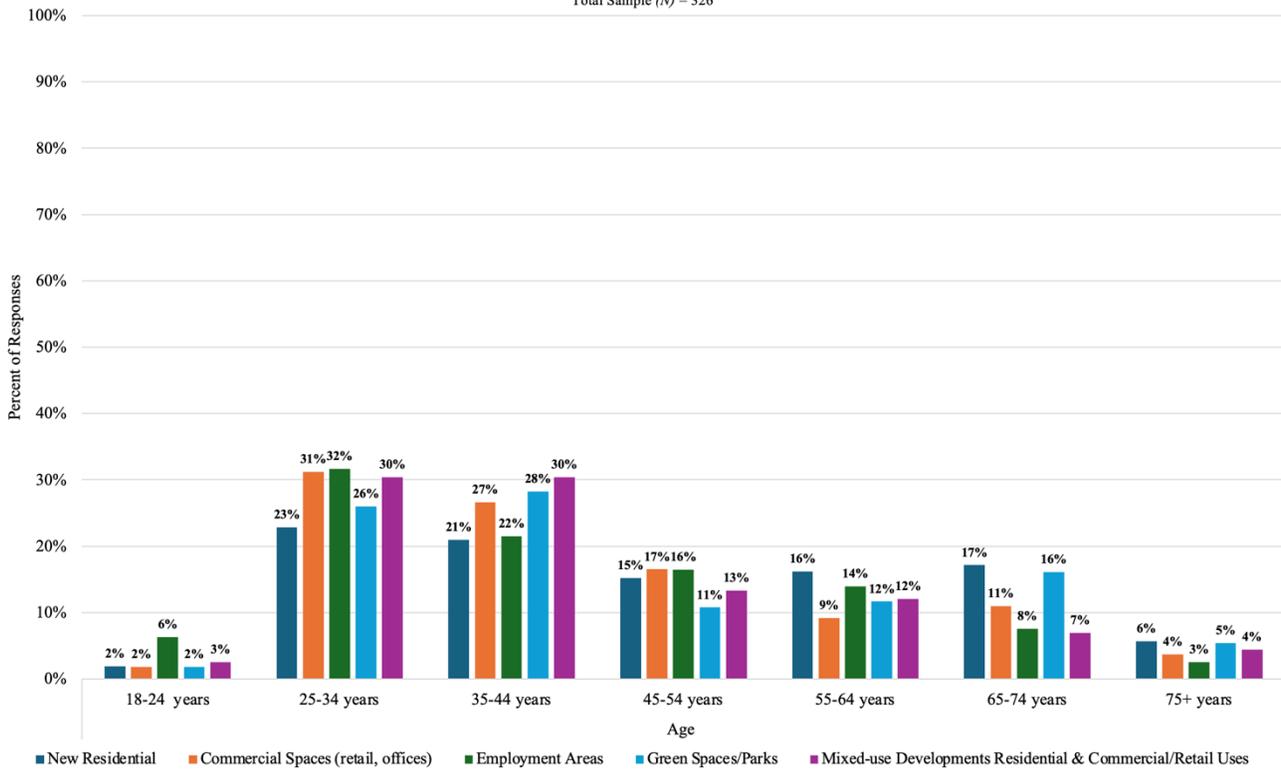
When preferences were disaggregated by household income, notable variation emerged. Respondents with lower incomes (under \$25,000) most frequently preferred employment areas (43%), while higher-income respondents, particularly those earning between \$100,000 and \$199,999, were more likely to favor mixed-use development (44%) and commercial spaces (39%). Those in the \$200,000+ bracket showed a more evenly distributed preference across several categories, with green space and mixed-use development tied at 19%. These differences may reflect the varying material conditions and lifestyle priorities across income groups.

Figure 10 - Southwest:
Preferred Neighborhood Developments by Household Income
Total Sample (N) = 324



Preferences also varied by age group, though not as sharply as by income. Respondents aged 25–44 were the most likely to select mixed-use development, green spaces, and commercial areas, with relatively even distributions across those categories. Interest in green spaces and new residential development was somewhat more prominent among older age groups, particularly those aged 65–74. Among the youngest respondents (ages 18–24), no single development type received more than 6% support, possibly reflecting lower response rates or differing priorities among young adults. As previously noted on page 7, because respondents were able to select more than one option from the list, percentages in many charts, such as Figure 10, will not add up to 100 percent.

Figure 11 - Southwest:
Preferred Neighborhood Developments by Age
Total Sample (N) = 326



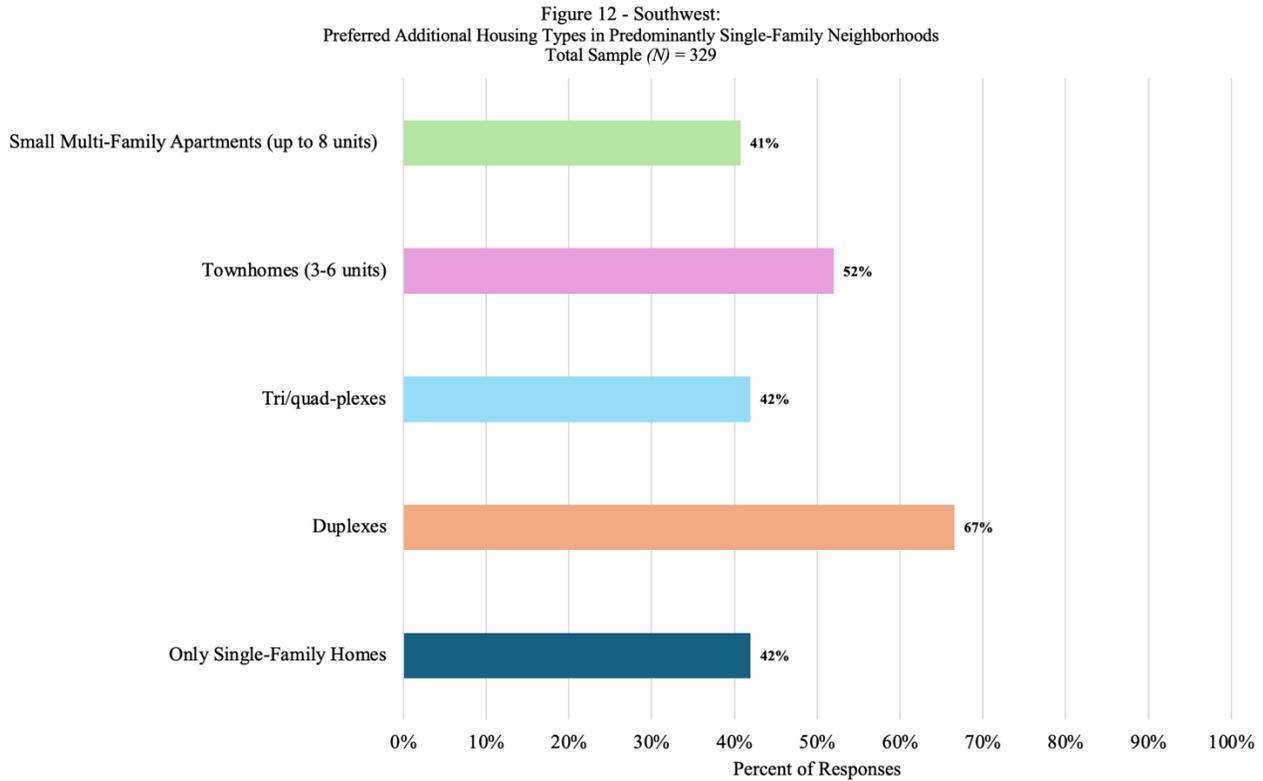
These findings suggest that while green space remains a high priority across the board, preferences for other types of development, such as mixed-use or employment areas, are shaped by both socioeconomic status and life stage. This variation underscores the importance of planning processes that accommodate a wide range of needs, especially across different income and age groups.

Preferences for Housing Diversity in Single-Family Neighborhoods

To gauge attitudes toward diversifying housing stock, the survey asked respondents which additional housing types they would support in neighborhoods currently developed primarily with single-family homes. The results suggest a general openness to a broader range of housing forms, though support varies by housing type, income, and age group.

Overall, duplexes emerged as the most supported housing alternative, with 67% of respondents selecting this option. Townhomes (3–6 units) followed, receiving support from 52% of

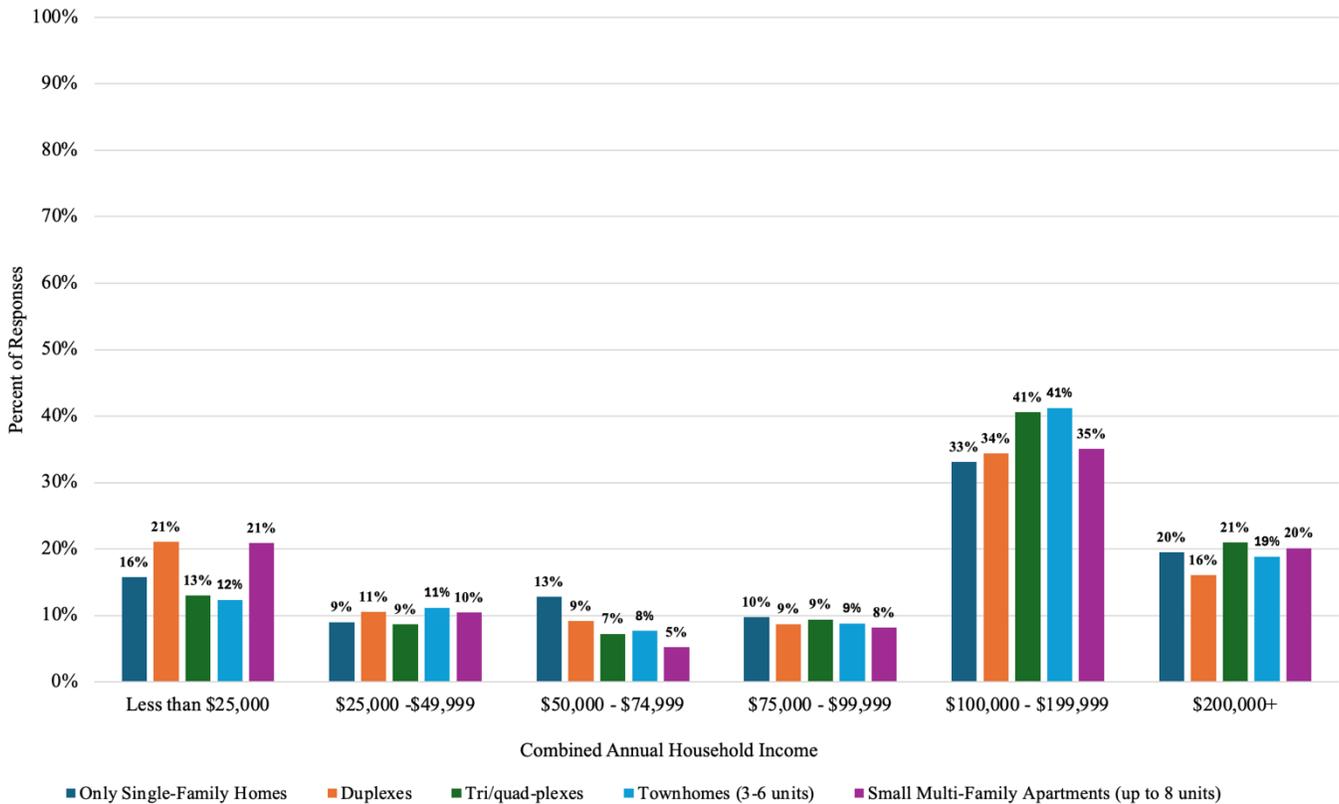
respondents. Approximately 42% supported the inclusion of tri- or quad-plexes, small multi-family apartments (up to 8 units), or maintaining only single-family housing. These results



suggest that while a majority of residents favor incremental housing density increases, views on multi-family apartment buildings having up to 8 units housing remain more mixed.

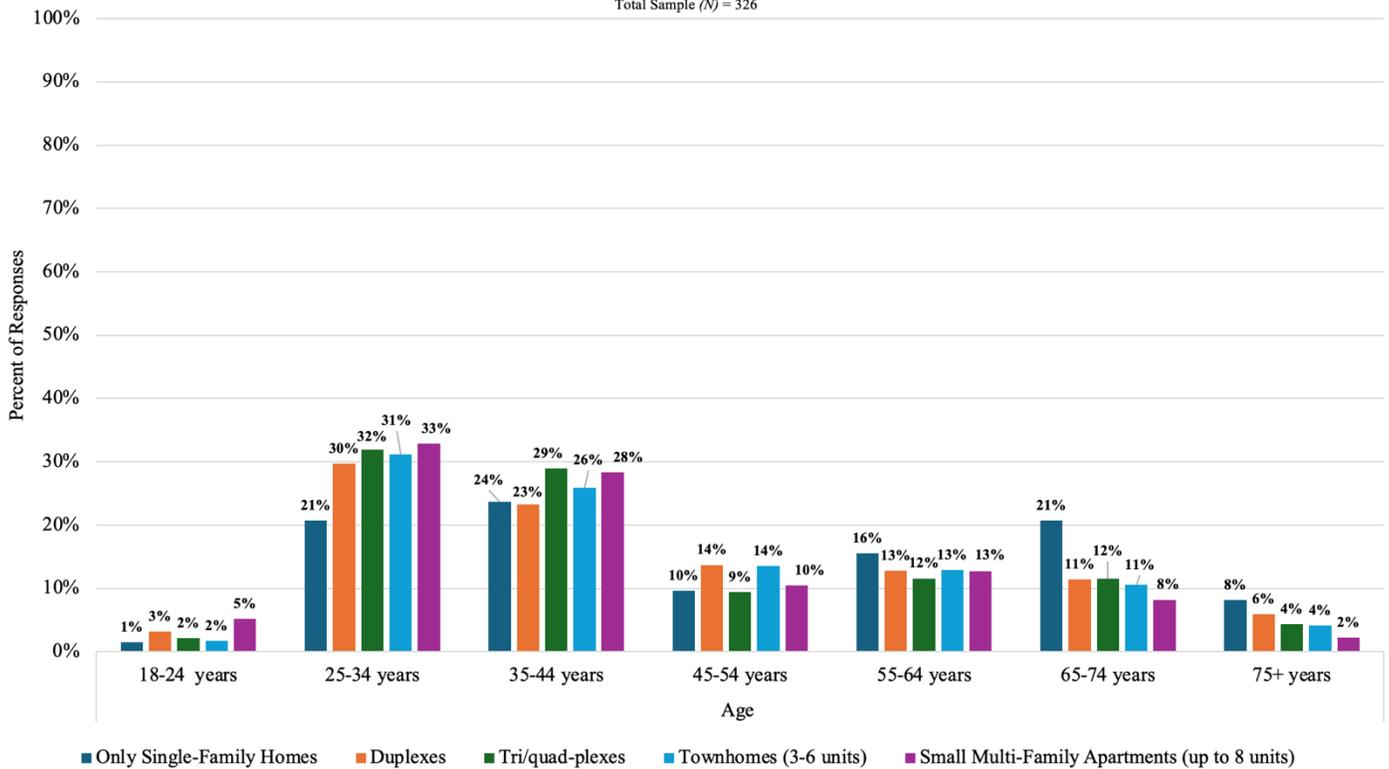
When preferences are broken down by income, residents with annual household incomes between \$100,000 and \$199,999 were most likely to support a wide range of housing types, including duplexes (34%), tri/quad-plexes (41%), and townhomes (41%). Conversely, support for diverse housing forms was lower among both the lowest-income (<\$25,000). Among those earning under \$25,000, duplexes and small multi-family apartments each received 21% support, while only 16% supported maintaining exclusively single-family homes.

Figure 13 - Southwest:
 Preferred Additional Housing Types in Predominantly Single-Family Neighborhoods by Household Income
 Total Sample (N) = 324



Age-based patterns reflect similar trends. Respondents aged 25–44 were the most supportive of allowing a range of additional housing types, with preferences relatively evenly distributed across duplexes, townhomes, tri/quad-plexes, and small apartments, all receiving support from roughly 30–33% of this group. Support declined with age, particularly among those 65 and older, who showed a greater preference for maintaining single-family homes and less support for higher-density options. Among residents aged 75+, only 6% or fewer selected any of the higher-density alternatives.

Figure 14 - Southwest:
Preferred Additional Housing Types in Predominantly Single-Family Neighborhoods by Age
Total Sample (N) = 326



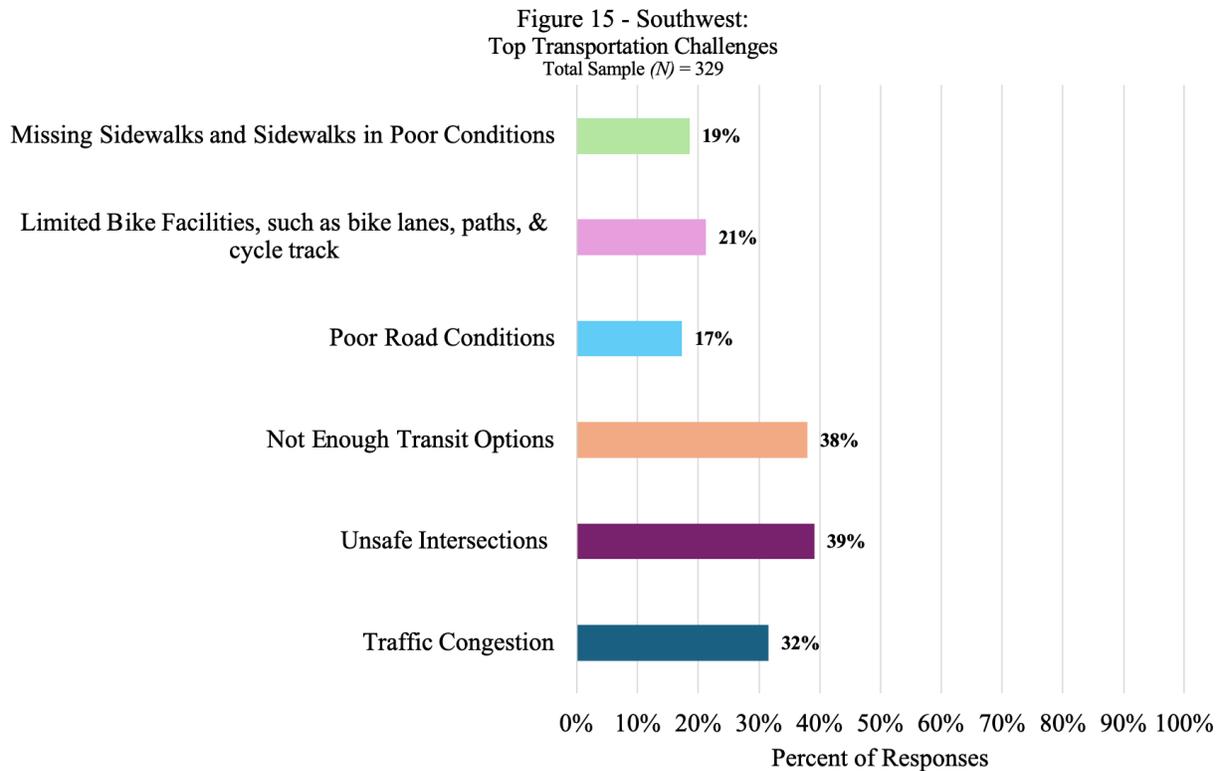
These results suggest that support for diversifying housing types is strongest among middle-income, working-age adults, who may be most directly affected by affordability and availability concerns. Meanwhile, older and higher-income residents appear more inclined to preserve existing single-family zoning. These patterns underscore the importance of balancing long-term neighborhood stability with expanded housing choices for future residents.

Transportation Challenges

The survey asked residents to identify the most significant transportation challenges they face in their neighborhood. The responses indicate a range of concerns related to transit access, infrastructure quality, and traffic safety, with particular emphasis on public transit availability and intersection safety.

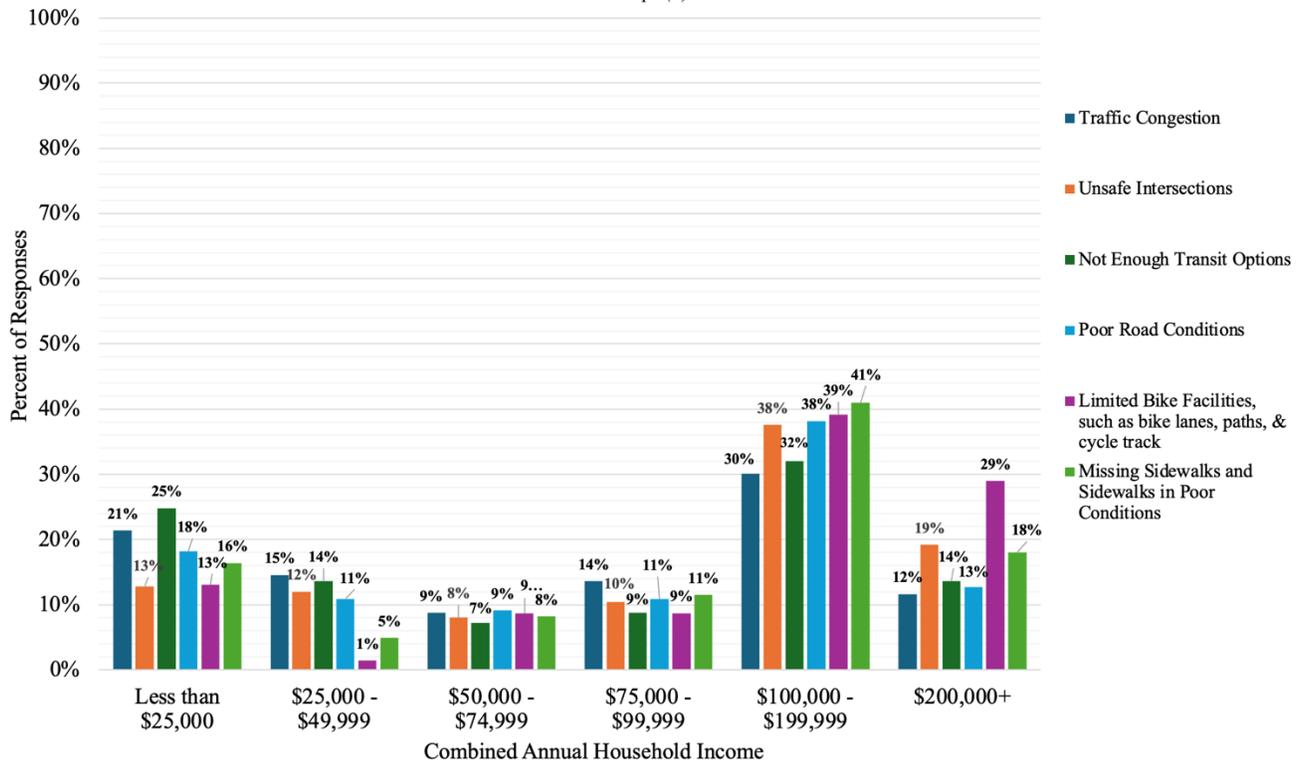
The most frequently reported challenge was unsafe intersections, cited by 39% of respondents. A nearly equal proportion (38%) identified a lack of transit options as a major issue. Traffic congestion also ranked high, with 32% of participants marking it as a concern. Other issues, such

as limited bike facilities (21%), missing or poor-condition sidewalks (19%), and poor road conditions (17%) were selected by smaller, but still significant, portions of the sample.



When analyzed by household income, some differences in transportation concerns became apparent. Respondents earning between \$100,000 and \$199,999 were most likely to identify all six transportation issues, especially missing and poor sidewalks (41%) and limited bike facilities (39%). In contrast, lower-income respondents (under \$25,000) emphasized missing sidewalks (16%), traffic congestion (21%), and lack of transit options (25%) at higher rates than middle-income groups. This may reflect greater reliance on walking, biking, and public transit among households with limited access to private vehicles.

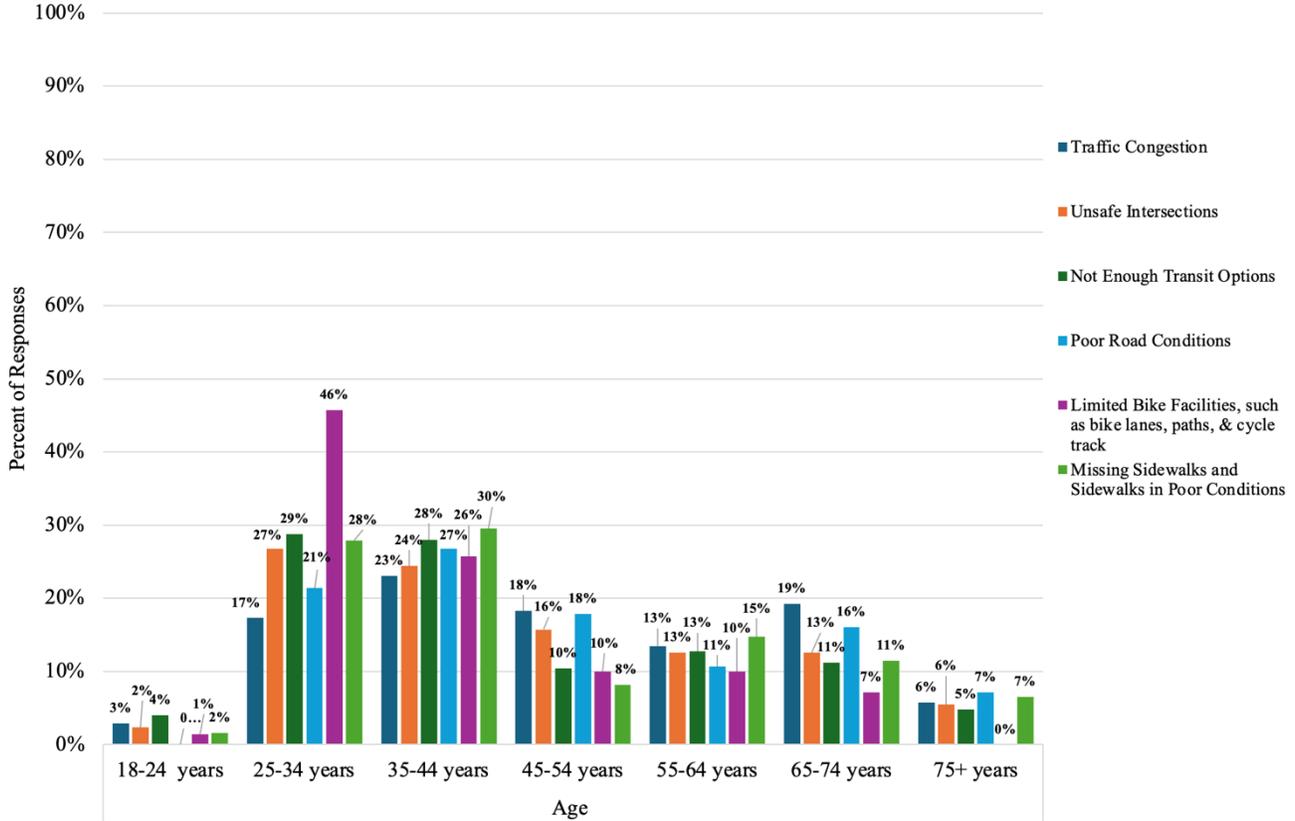
Figure 16 - Southwest:
 Top Transportation Challenges by Household Income
 Total Sample (N) = 324



Age-based comparisons also reveal variation in transportation priorities. Among respondents aged 25–34, 46% identified limited bike facilities as a key concern—the highest percentage for any category across all age groups. Younger residents (ages 18–44) also emphasized transit availability and intersection safety more than older residents. In contrast, older adults (especially those 65 and over) were more likely to highlight issues related to traffic congestion, poor sidewalk and road conditions, though overall percentages declined with age across most categories.

Overall, the findings point to a demand for safer, more multimodal transportation infrastructure. While traffic and transit issues affect residents across all income and age groups, the specific priorities differ depending on residents’ mobility needs and daily travel patterns.

Figure 17 - Southwest:
 Top Transportation Challenges by Age
 Total Sample (N) = 324



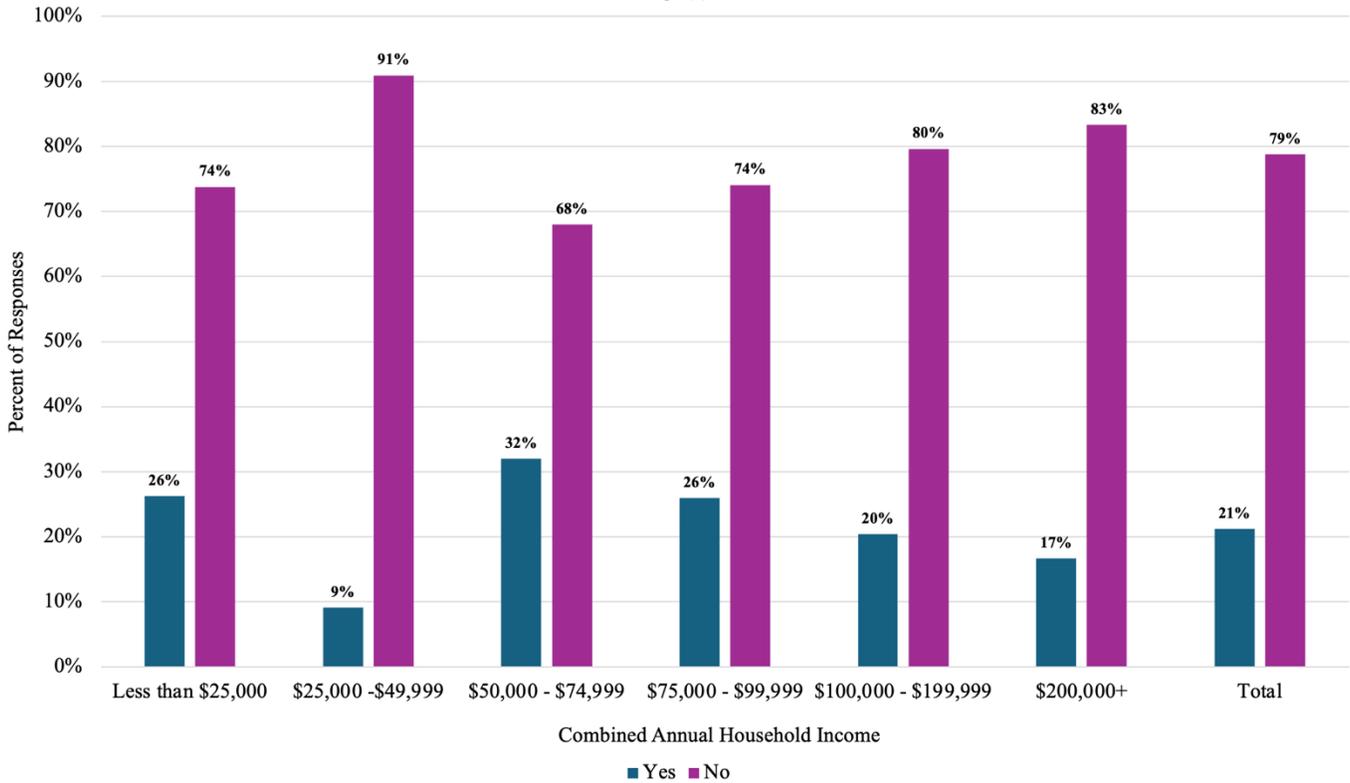
Addressing these varied challenges may require targeted improvements to transit service, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and road safety enhancements at intersections.

Sidewalk Access and Safety Concerns

To assess barriers to mobility and pedestrian access, the survey asked whether poor sidewalk conditions hindered travel to essential destinations such as schools, bus stops, and grocery stores. While the majority of respondents indicated that sidewalk conditions did not currently pose a challenge, a notable portion, especially among lower-income households, reported otherwise.

Overall, 21% of respondents stated that missing or poorly maintained sidewalks make it difficult or unsafe for them or their family members to access key destinations. When examined by household income, this concern was most prevalent among those earning less than \$25,000 (26%), those in the \$50,000–\$74,999 bracket (32%), and those in the \$75,000–\$99,999 bracket (26%). These households are more likely to rely on walking or public transportation and may experience disproportionate impacts from infrastructure deficiencies.

Figure 18 - Southwest:
Do Sidewalk Conditions Affect Access to Essential Destinations? Responses by Household Income
Total Sample (N) = 324



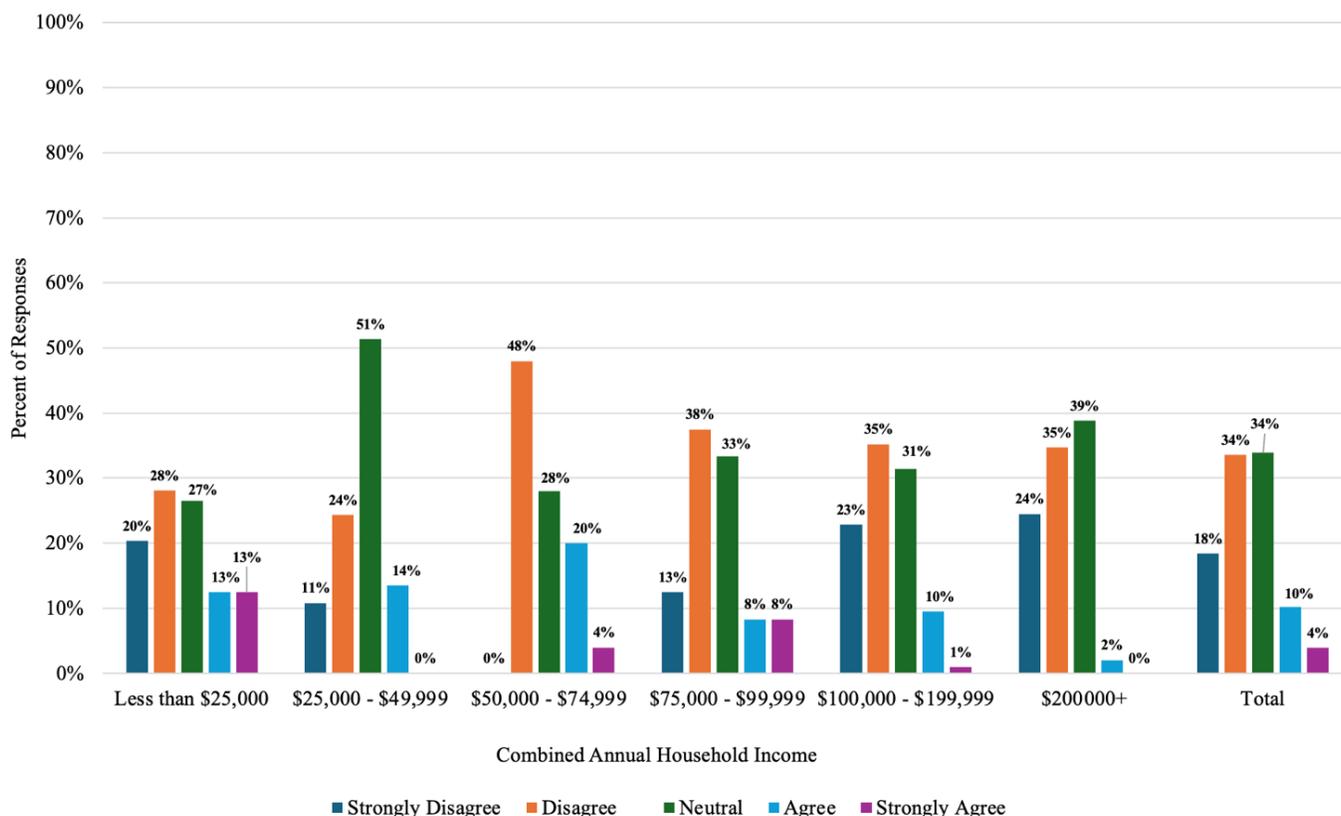
In contrast, only 9% of respondents in the \$25,000–\$49,999 income range and 17% of those earning over \$200,000 reported sidewalk issues affecting their access. Among the highest-income group, 83% reported no difficulty related to sidewalk conditions, suggesting that better infrastructure or access to private transportation may mitigate such concerns.

These results emphasize how sidewalk quality impacts various socioeconomic groups. For many lower- and middle-income residents, gaps in pedestrian infrastructure may present physical barriers to daily mobility. Addressing sidewalk accessibility may therefore serve both safety and equity goals in future planning efforts.

Residential Views on the Future of Meadowood Shopping Center

As part of the survey, residents were asked to share their level of agreement with the idea of preserving the Meadowood Shopping Center without significant changes. Responses varied considerably by household income, reflecting a diversity of opinions on whether the site should remain as-is or undergo redevelopment.

Figure 19 - Southwest:
 Agreement Levels on Preserving Meadowood Shopping Center Without Major Changes, by Household Income
 Total Sample (N) = 304



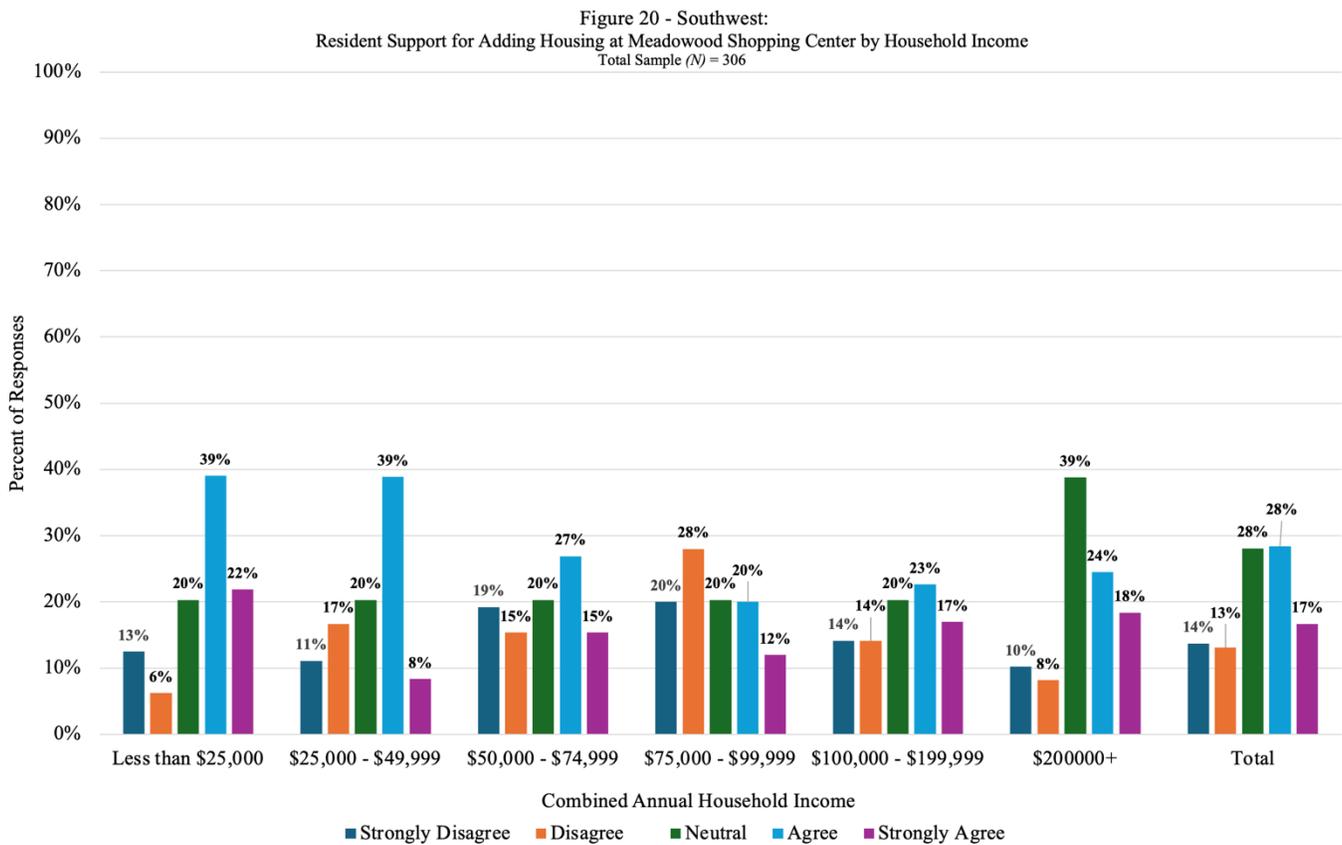
Preferences varied significantly across income groups. Respondents earning between \$25,000 and \$49,999 felt neutral about supporting the preservation of the center without major changes, with 51% agreeing and only 11% strongly disagreeing. Similarly, those earning over \$200,000 also leaned toward neutrality, with 39% neutral and 24% strongly disagreeing. In contrast, respondents in the \$50,000–\$74,999 income bracket showed the highest level of opposition, with 48% disagreeing. Those in the middle-income range of \$75,000–\$199,999 had more mixed responses, with a higher share selecting neutral or moderately supportive positions.

These patterns suggest that perspectives on Meadowood’s future may be influenced by economic considerations, neighborhood identity, and differing expectations for commercial redevelopment. While some residents favor maintaining the familiar layout and function of the shopping center, others may see opportunities for revitalization or reimagined land use. As planning efforts move forward, ensuring inclusive engagement and balancing both preservation and innovation will be key to building consensus.

Perspectives on Adding Housing at Meadowood Shopping Center

The survey also asked residents to share their level of support for incorporating new housing, such as apartments or townhomes, into the Meadowood Shopping Center site. Responses reflected a broad mix of opinions, with many residents expressing moderate support or neutrality toward this type of redevelopment.

Across the full sample, 28% of respondents agreed with adding housing to the shopping center, while another 17% strongly agreed. This indicates that nearly half (45%) of participants supported the idea to some extent. At the same time, 13% strongly disagreed and 14% disagreed, with 28% reporting neutral views.



Support for housing development at Meadowood varied by income group. Notably, the strongest agreement came from the lowest-income respondents (less than \$25,000) and those in the \$25,000–\$49,999 range, with 39% in each group expressing agreement and an additional 22% for respondents earning less than \$25,000 strongly agreeing. These patterns suggest that residents

with more limited financial resources may see added housing, particularly affordable or rental options, as a beneficial use of the site.

Among higher-income residents, support was more mixed. Respondents in the \$200,000+ income bracket were most likely to select a neutral stance (39%), with relatively lower levels of agreement (24%) or strong agreement (18%). Middle-income groups (\$50,000–\$99,999) showed varied responses, with disagreement and neutrality more common than strong support.

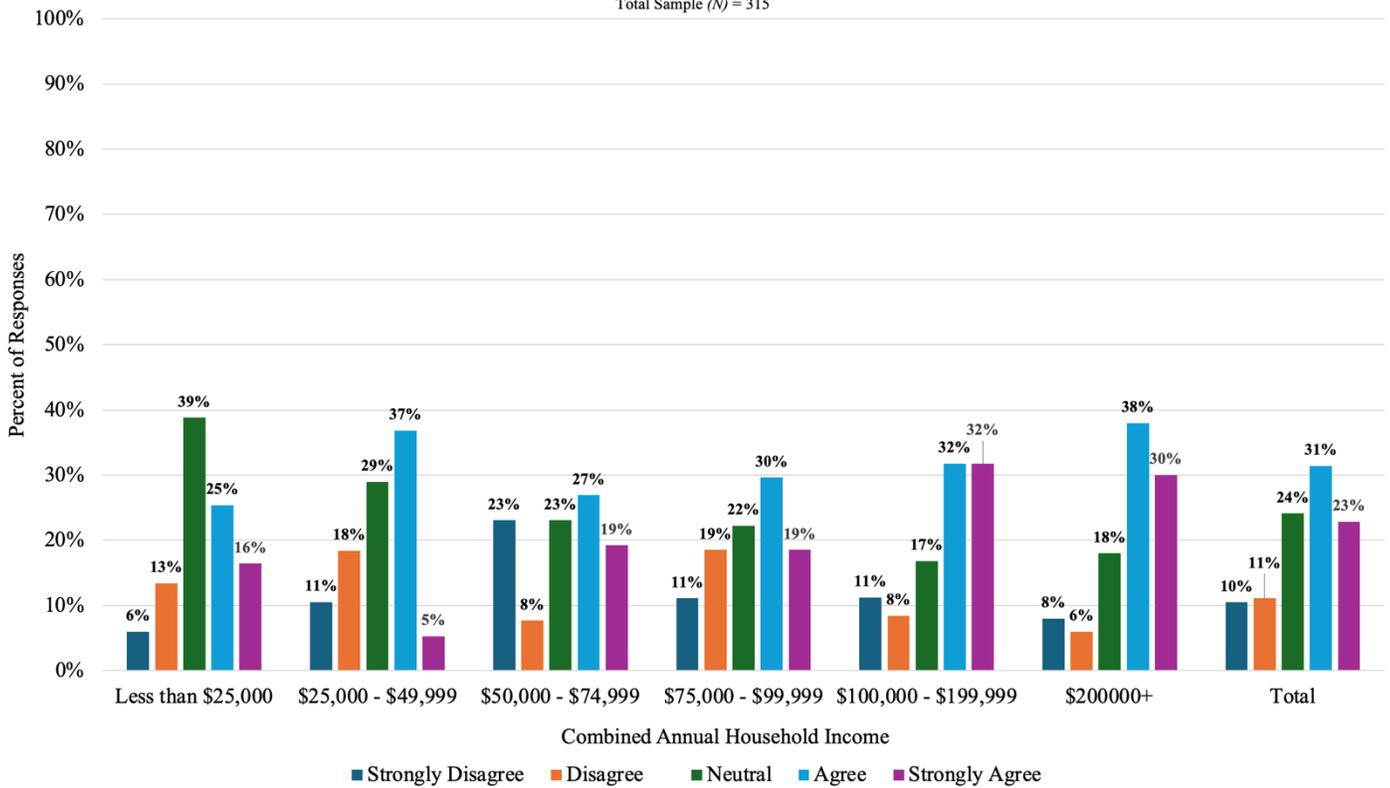
Overall, these findings highlight a modest but meaningful level of support for integrating housing into the Meadowood site, especially among residents with lower incomes. As the City considers options for redevelopment, the potential to create mixed-use environments that include housing may align with the preferences of those most likely to benefit from expanded residential opportunities.

Support for Redeveloping Auto-Oriented Commercial Areas into Walkable, Mixed-Use Centers

Survey respondents were asked to share their views on whether auto-oriented commercial corridors in the Southwest Area should be redeveloped into more walkable, mixed-use activity centers. This idea received broad support across income groups, with a majority of residents expressing agreement with transitioning away from car-dependent development patterns.

Across the total sample, 31% of respondents agreed with the proposal, and another 23% strongly agreed, meaning that more than half of all participants supported the idea to some degree. Only a small portion of respondents expressed opposition, with 10% disagreeing and 11% strongly disagreeing. A significant minority (24%) selected neutral, indicating that while support is strong, a share of the community may still be undecided or seeking more information.

Figure 21 - Southwest:
Support for Redeveloping Auto-Oriented Commercial Centers into Walkable, Mixed-Use Areas
Total Sample (N) = 315



Support varied by income. Among respondents earning \$200,000 or more, 38% agreed and 30% strongly agreed, the highest levels of strong support across all groups. Similarly, support was high among those earning \$100,000–\$199,999, where 32% agreed and another 32% strongly agreed. Among the lowest-income respondents (under \$25,000), agreement was still relatively high, with 25% agreeing and 16% strongly agreeing. However, this group also had the highest share of respondents selecting neutral (39%).

Overall, the data suggests broad-based community interest in shifting toward more walkable, mixed-use neighborhood centers. The concept appears especially appealing to higher-income respondents but is also supported by many low- and moderate-income residents. As planning efforts proceed, there is a clear opportunity to build on this support by engaging residents across income levels in envisioning the design, accessibility, and affordability of future activity centers.

Conclusion:

The Southwest Area Plan Survey results provide a valuable snapshot of how residents experience and prioritize key issues in their neighborhoods. The findings point to both shared values and divergent perspectives shaped by factors such as income, age, housing status, and transportation needs.

Across the survey, several recurring themes emerged, most notably concerns about housing affordability, transportation accessibility, and infrastructure quality. Many residents, particularly younger adults and those in lower- to middle-income brackets, expressed a strong interest in expanding affordable housing options and improving local and regional transit connectivity. Conversely, older adults and higher-income respondents were more likely to rely on private vehicles and placed less emphasis on public transportation needs.

The data also reflect a broad familiarity with diverse housing types. A significant number of respondents supported introducing duplexes, townhomes, and small multi-family units in single-family neighborhoods, suggesting openness to incremental changes in housing density. At the same time, views varied on specific redevelopment proposals, such as changes to the Meadowood Shopping Center or the transformation of auto-oriented corridors into walkable, mixed-use activity centers. Support for these ideas tended to be strongest among lower-income and working-age residents, who may be more directly affected by housing and transportation barriers.

As the City of Madison continues to develop the Southwest Area Plan, these voices will be essential in shaping inclusive, equitable policies that reflect the full range of resident needs and experiences.