

# *Economic Development Commission Route 1 Corridor Study Survey Analysis*

The Town of Westerly is in the process of developing a plan to revitalize the Route One Corridor. The overall goal of the study is to encourage the type of development that improves functionality and reflects Westerly's character and charm. A survey to solicit community input was conducted.

Enclosed are the survey findings on data collected through May 9, 2022



*June 6, 2022*

The Route One Corridor study area encompasses the intersection of Granite Street and Tower Street to the Westerly-Charlestown town line

Study Area Map



This report analyzes survey responses, focusing on travel and aesthetics through the corridor, collected from March 7, to May 7, 2022

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**A concerted effort was made to gather opinions from the community**

- Letters sent to residents and businesses along the study area (~900)
- Media promotion on WBLQ and Westerly Sun
- Distribution of ~1,500 survey cards titled “Your Opinion Matters” throughout the community
- Posting to various social media sites
- Announcement at Town Council meetings
- “Word of mouth”



The effort paid off with 420 completed surveys received!



# Summary: 420 respondents is a strong barometer of citizens' views and desires for the Corridor

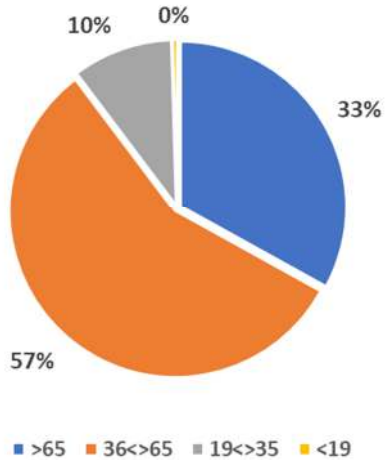
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- **COMMERCIAL FUNCTIONALITY:** the Corridor achieves its basic objective
  - Commercial uses dominate (good variety, centralization of services, meets the needs of the community, convenient)
  - More upscale, high-end, better-quality businesses and services are desired (Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Target, Starbucks)
- **TRAFFIC CONDITIONS AND FLOW:** Responses were mixed
  - Slightly more positive than negative responses on traffic flow, traffic design, safety, lighting
  - Business egress/ingress and parking lot flow leaves a lot to be desired
- **AESTHETICS:** Clear consensus that the aesthetics are poor and lack character
  - Buildings ugly, commercial signs confusing, asphalt parking use/flow poor, lacks proper landscaping, character not befitting of Westerly
  - Respondents consider aesthetics of the Corridor of primary importance to address
- **PEDESTRIAN/BIKE FRIENDLY:** Definitely "NOT"
  - However, deemed not of primary importance to the functioning of the Corridor
- **OTHER INSIGHTS CAME THROUGH**
  - Desire for more family-oriented recreation and public gathering sites
  - Better public transportation would be nice
  - Protect against commercial sprawl
  - Address the vacancy issue



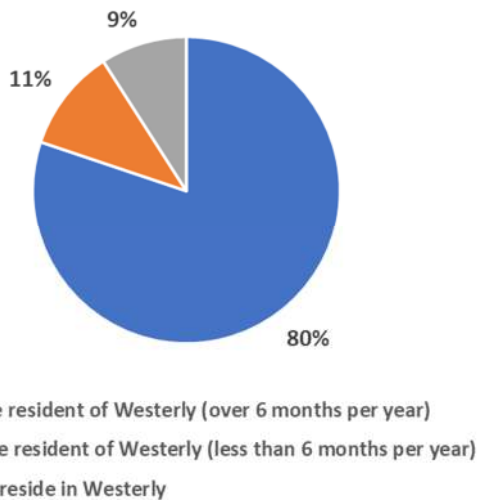
# Interesting demographics of the 420 survey respondents...

420 Survey Responses by Age Grouping

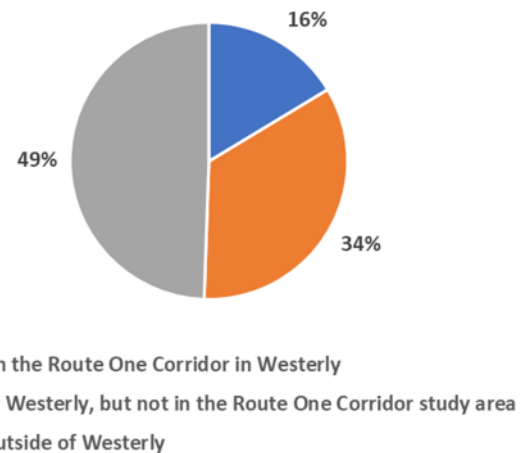


- Consistent with Westerly’s population, respondents tend to be middle-aged and older
- 80 percent of the respondents are full-time residents
  - There is representation from part-time residents and by people who do not live in Westerly
- 14 % of the respondents own a business
  - 5 percent on the corridor
  - Another 6 percent in Westerly
  - 3 percent not in Westerly

420 Survey Responses by Residency



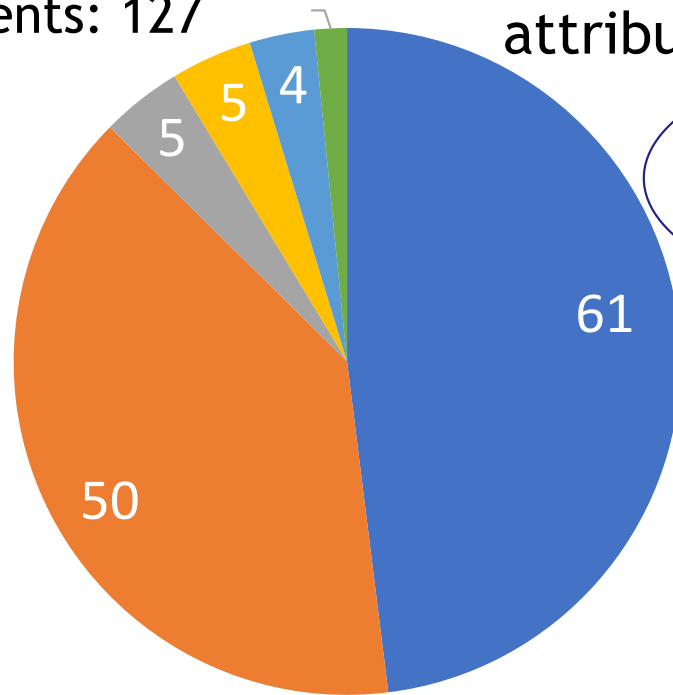
Of 275 working respondents (not retired, students or unemployed)



# In written comments, respondents like the variety of businesses and ease of travel to/from/through the Corridor...

While the question asked for positives attributes...

Written Comments: 127



■ Variety of services

■ No Sprawl

■ Aesthetics, character, charm

■ Ease of travel/access

■ Nothing to like

■ General

“It meets a lot of my family’s needs... ability to find a store that fits our needs”

“Convenient... easy access in and out of town”

“Convenience of multiple businesses in one area... variety of businesses and restaurants... businesses that I use”

“Big box stores and fast food all centrally located allowing for local business to thrive elsewhere”

## 8% of comments were complaints

“Nothing... not much... too congested”

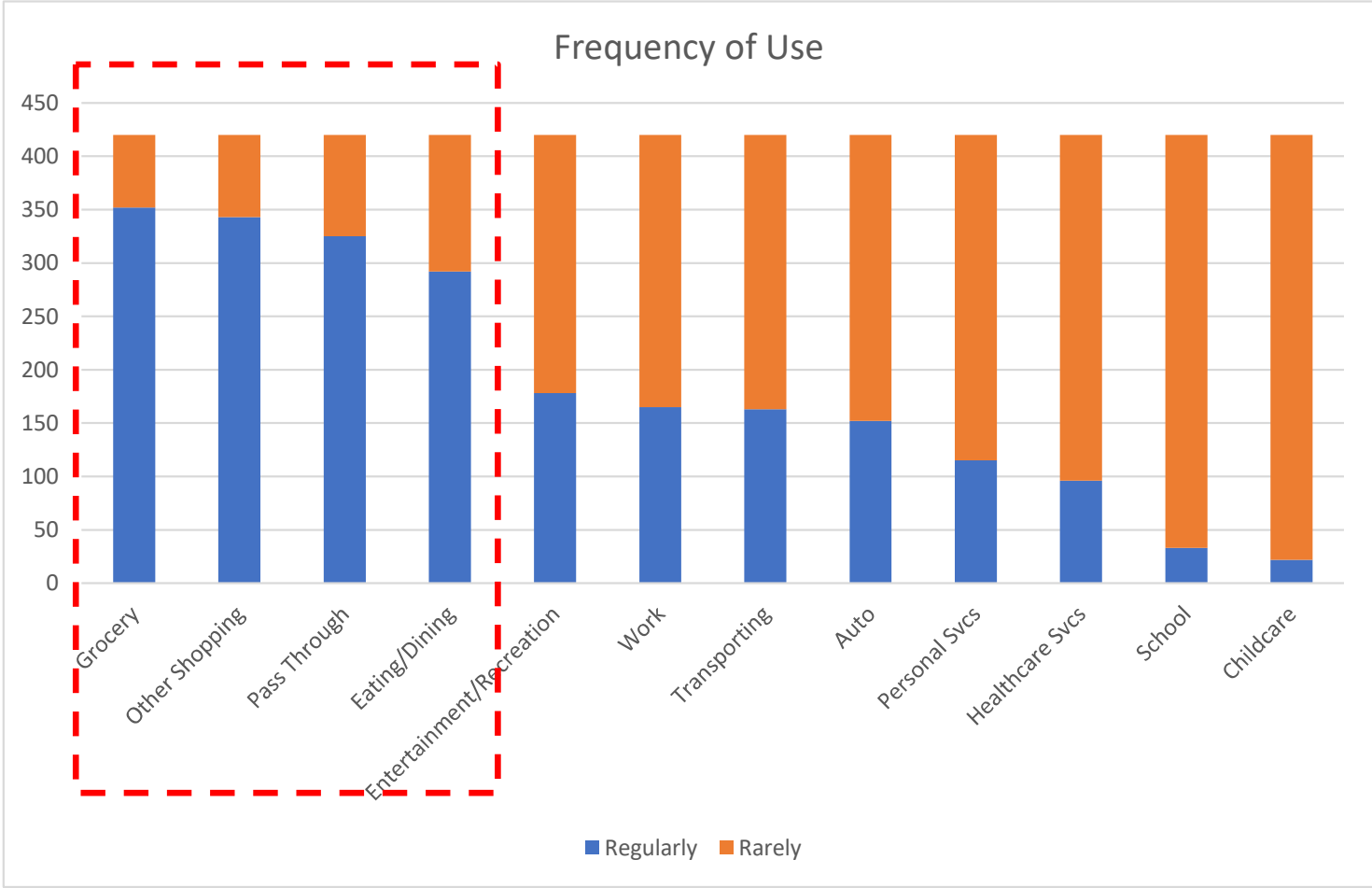
“I guess it’s functional”

“Generally efficient but less than visually appealing”

“I don’t want it overly developed”



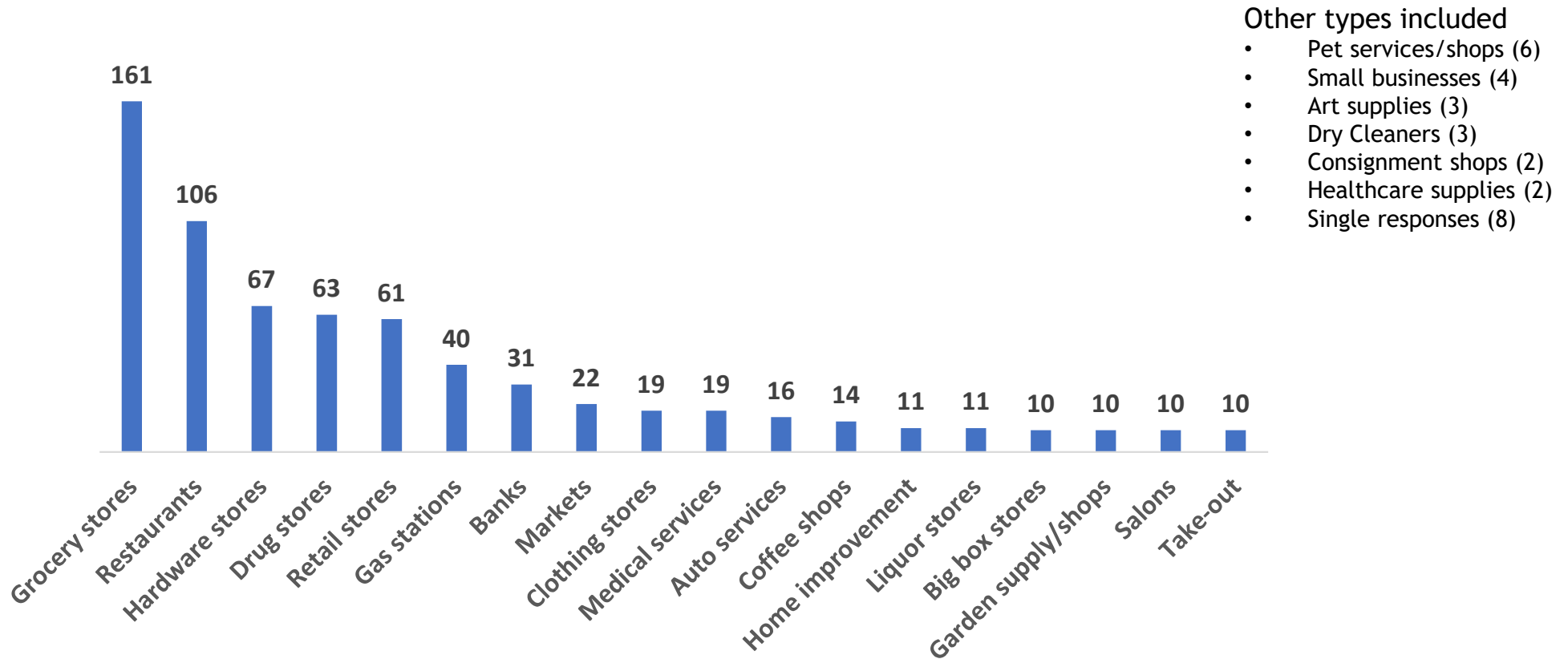
# The most frequent uses of the corridor are as a pass through or for grocery/retail shopping and eating/dining



- This demographically middle-aged to over-65 group tends not to use the corridor for school or child care (not surprising)



251 respondents identified 32 types of business most important to meeting their needs, Groceries and Restaurants were most noted...



Respondents, supportive of a diversity of businesses, cited an average of 3 types of businesses important to meeting their needs

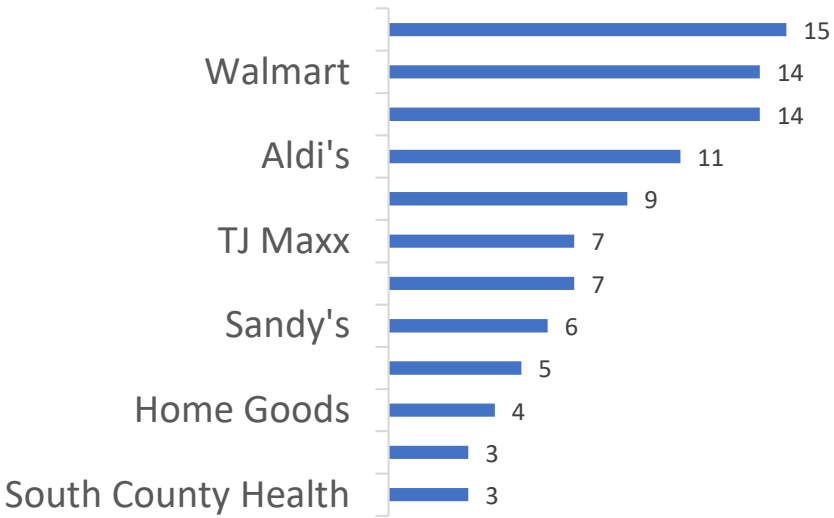




Although not asked, 22 respondents named 34 specific businesses that currently meet their needs...

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### Frequency of businesses cited:



### Cited Twice

- Dunkin Donuts
- Dunn's Corner Market
- JC Penny's
- Michaels
- Midas
- Vetrano's
- Washington Trust Bank

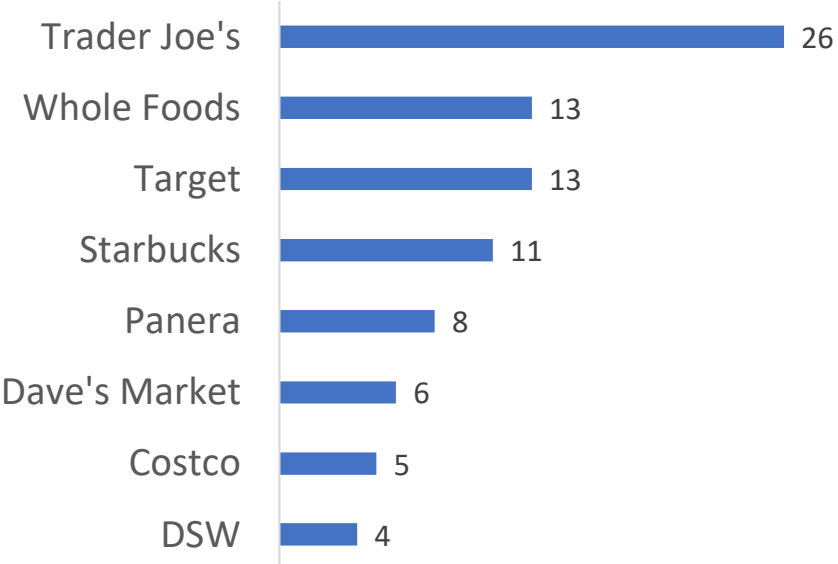
### Cited Once

- Bank of America
- Bomb Burrito
- DeAngelos
- Fed Ex Office
- Guytanos
- Joyce's Gourmet
- McDonalds
- Nam Kong Restaurant
- Seaside Pharmacy
- The Fishery
- True Value
- Uptown Salon
- Walgreens
- Westerly Crossings
- Yale New Haven



# Respondents also named 67 specific businesses they'd like to see on the Corridor including many upscale strong brand names...

Frequency of businesses cited totaled 133:



**Cited 3X**

- Belmont Market
- Chick-fil-A
- Five Guys
- Kohls
- Market Basket
- Taco Bell

**Cited Twice**

- Lowes
- Chipotle
- KFC
- Christmas Tree Shop

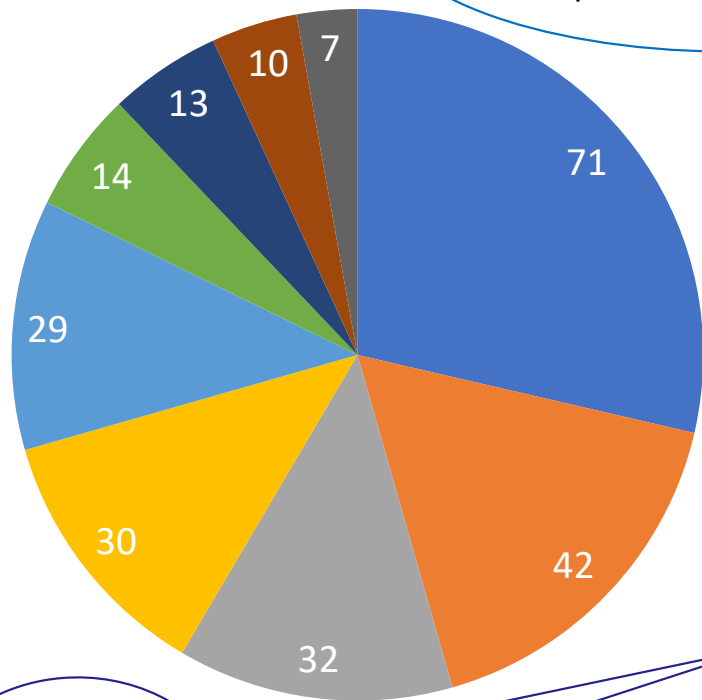
-----Cited Once-----

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applebee's</li> <li>• Bagelz</li> <li>• Dairy Queen</li> <li>• DMV</li> <li>• Einstein Bros. Bagel</li> <li>• Fresh Market</li> <li>• Harbor Freight</li> <li>• Hilton</li> <li>• IHOP</li> <li>• Joann Fabrics</li> <li>• Kebab Shop</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marshalls</li> <li>• Massage Envy</li> <li>• Micro Center</li> <li>• Papa John's</li> <li>• Planet Fitness</li> <li>• Sephora</li> <li>• Sweet Green</li> <li>• Texas Roadhouse</li> <li>• Top Golf</li> <li>• Wendy's</li> </ul> |
|---|--|



# In comments respondents ask for more “up-scale” versions of the types of businesses and services they currently enjoy

Respondents: 157  
Responses: 248



**RESTAURANTS:**  
“Fine dining... cuisine diversity... outdoor... classy... upscale but affordable”

**RECREATION:**  
“Family oriented... something for kids... entertainment... night-life... movie theater... gyms... social clubs... rec center... parks... bike path”

**RETAIL:**  
“Upscale retail... more diversity... big box stores... brand name... sporting goods... less low-end... boutiques”

**CLOTHING STORES:**  
“Dedicated women’s & men’s... higher end, quality... kid’s clothes... shoe stores... outlets”

**SPECIALTY FOODS:**  
“Farmer’s market... organic foods... ice cream parlor... bakery”

**LOCAL BUSINESSES:**  
“Smaller locally owned... mom & pop... boutiques”

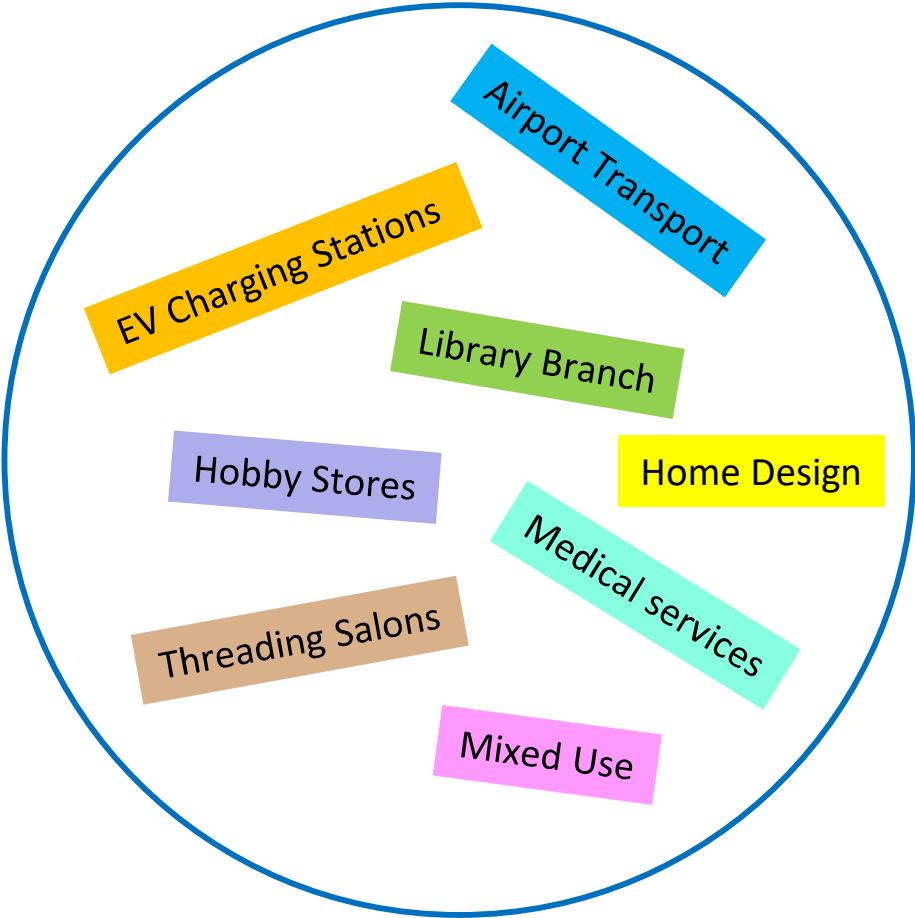
**GROCERIES:**  
“Higher end... top quality... brand name specialty”

**HOTELS:**  
“High end, top quality... strong brand”



# The “Other” types of businesses desired vary widely

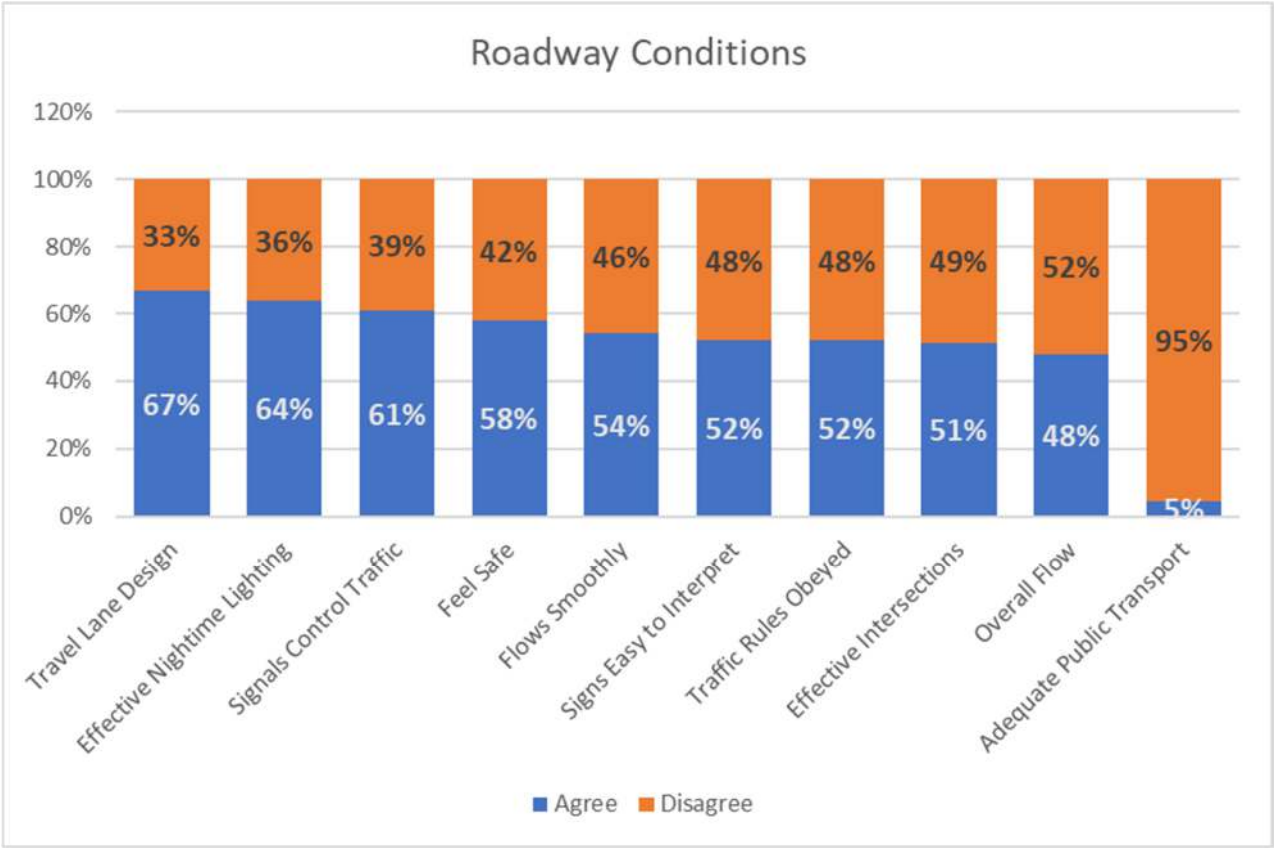
## Service Oriented



## Specific Retail



# There is ample criticism but, except for public transportation, many feel the corridor provides good transit and Roadway Conditions

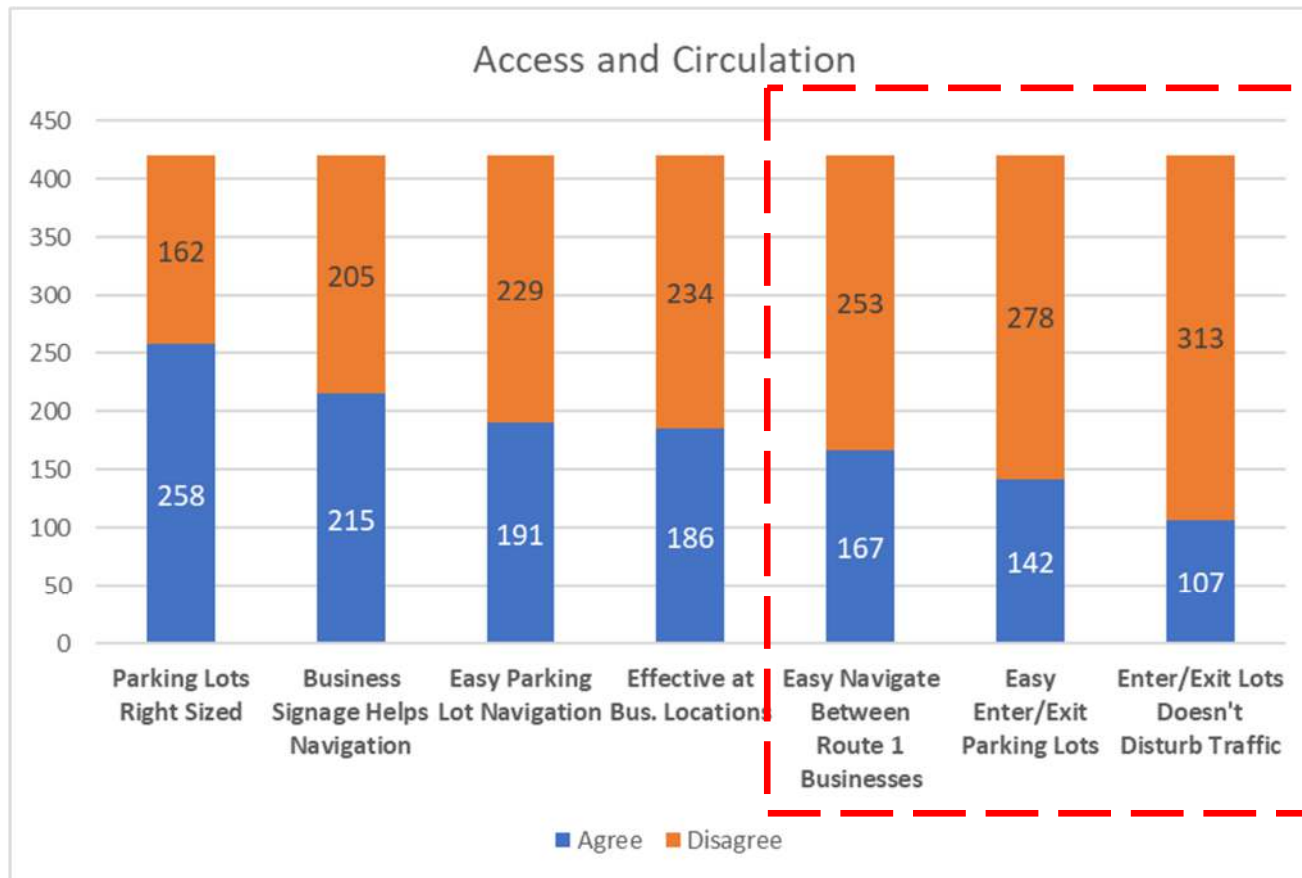


- Said otherwise, there is always room for improvement, but roadway conditions are likely not the prime concern of respondents



# The majority of respondents are unhappy with the current Access and Circulation situation

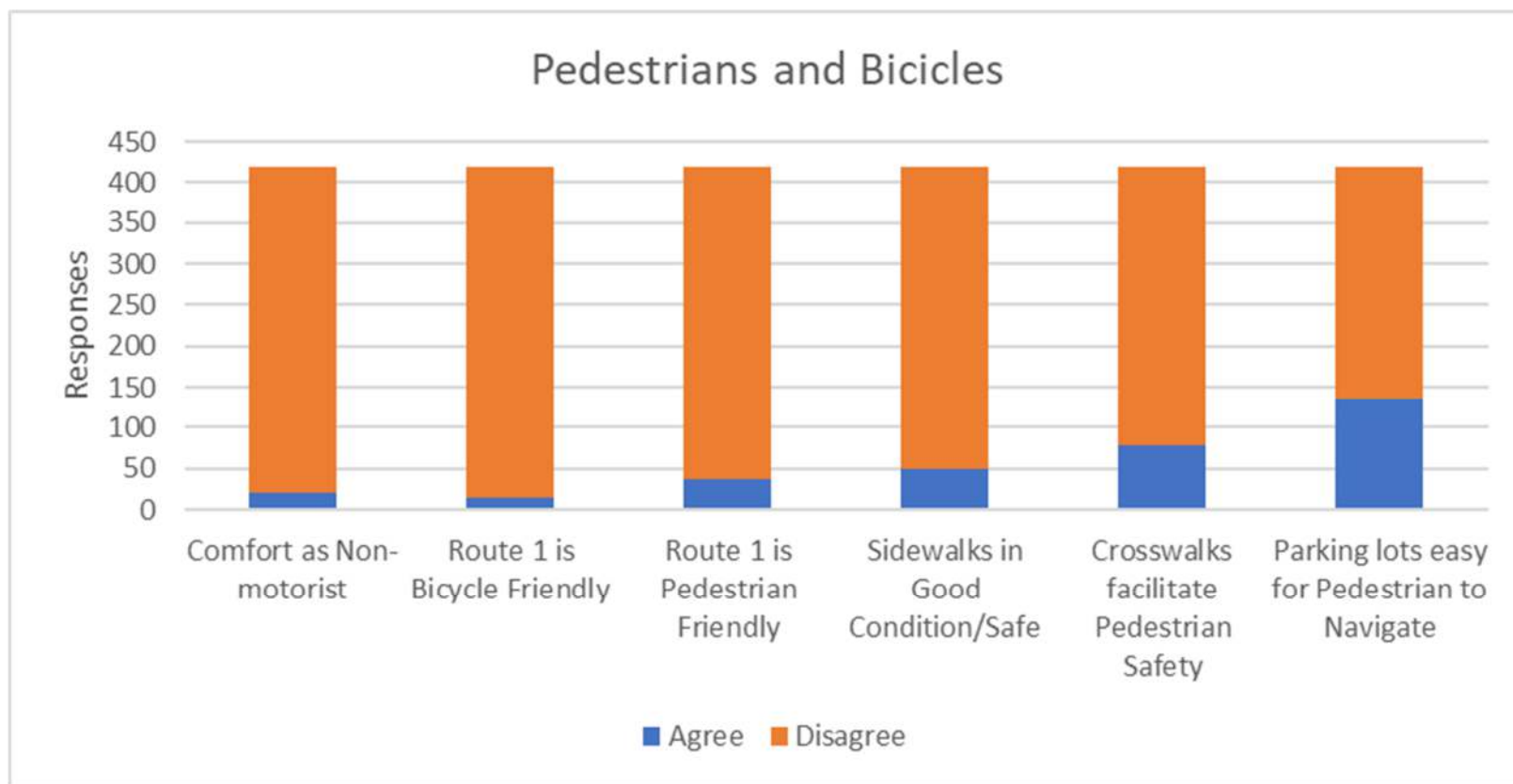
- The entrance and exit of parking lots, and navigation between businesses are the most questioned



None of these attributes are endorsed by respondents

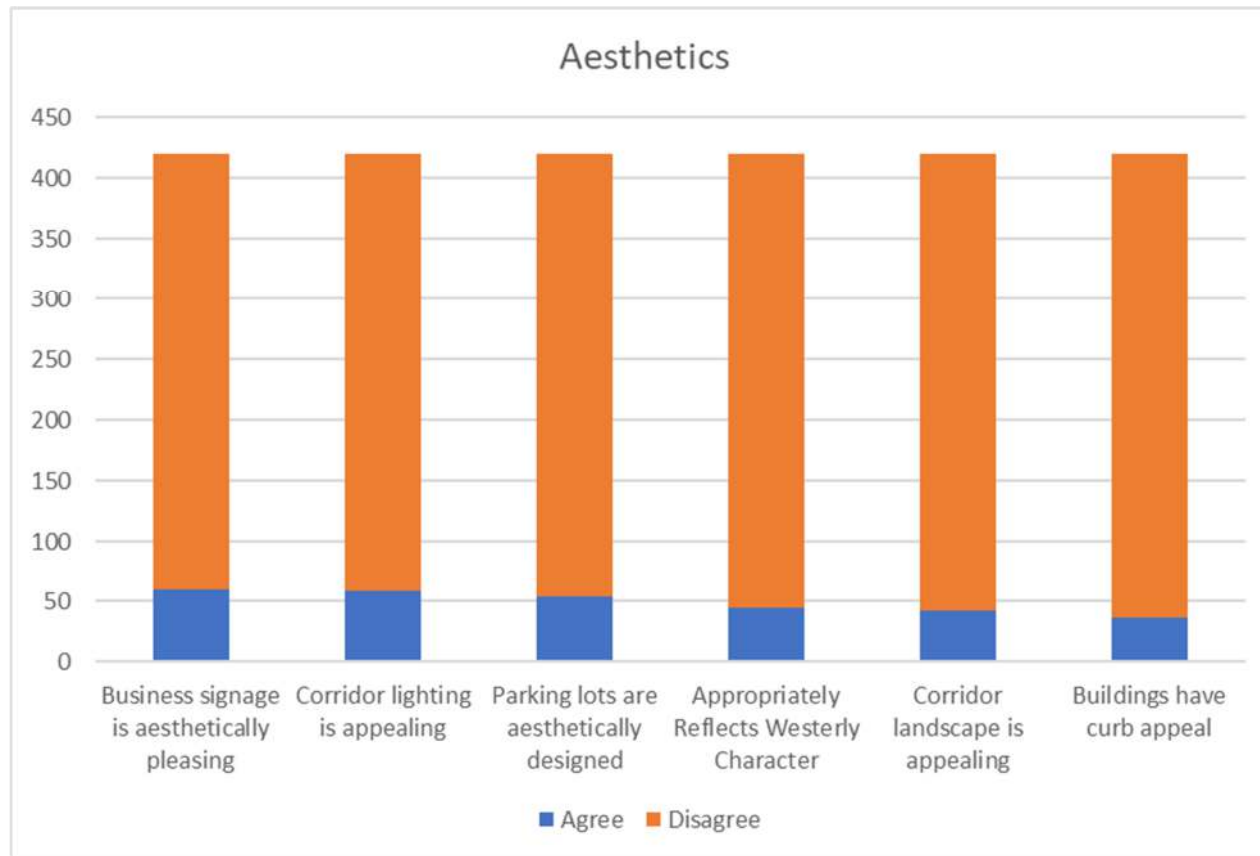


# Respondents clearly feel that the Corridor is not pedestrian or bike “friendly” ...



# With near unanimity respondents feel the Aesthetics of the corridor leave much to be desired

- Fully 88% of responses either have no opinion or disagree/strongly disagree with the idea that the aesthetics are what they could and should be

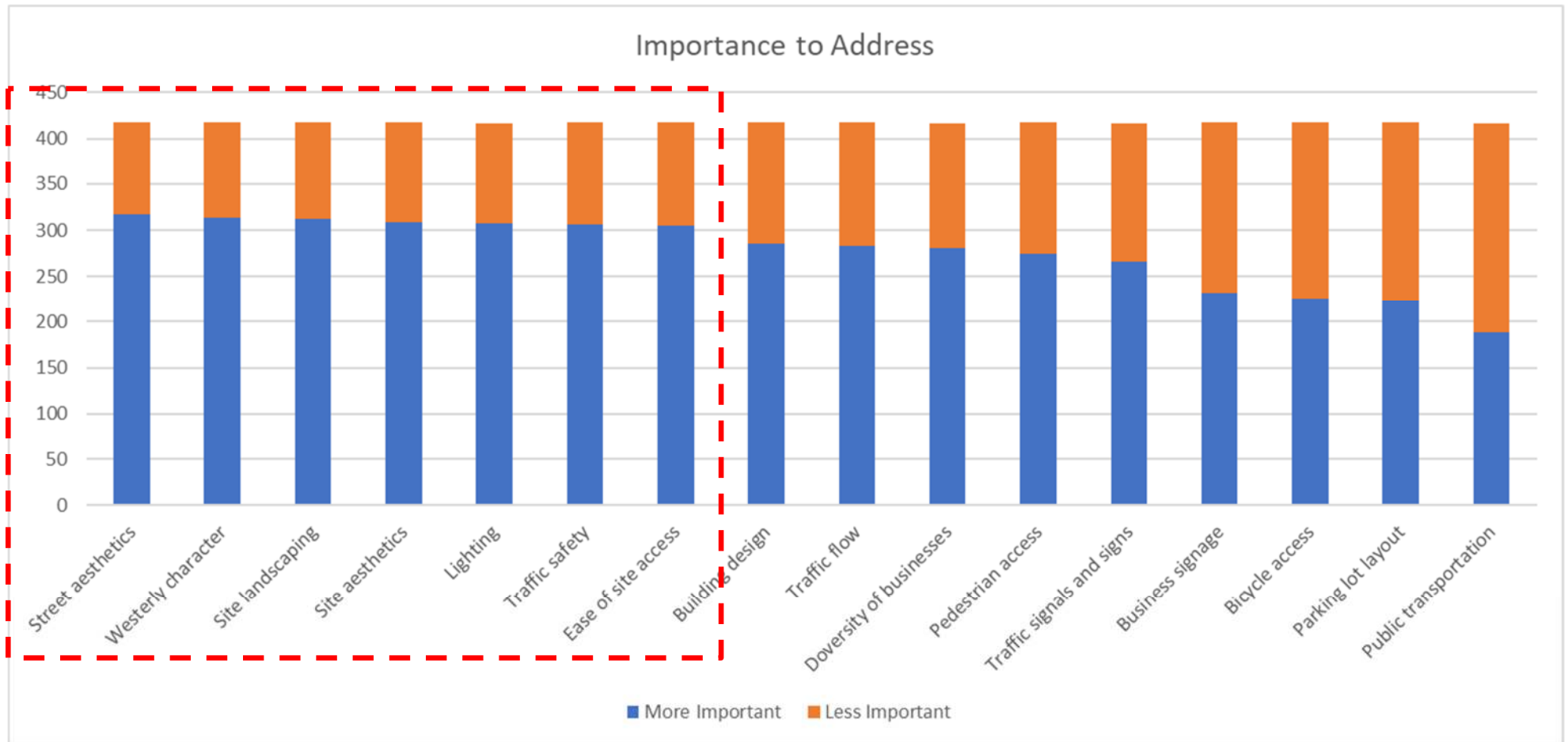


Barely 1% “strongly agree” that the aesthetics are good





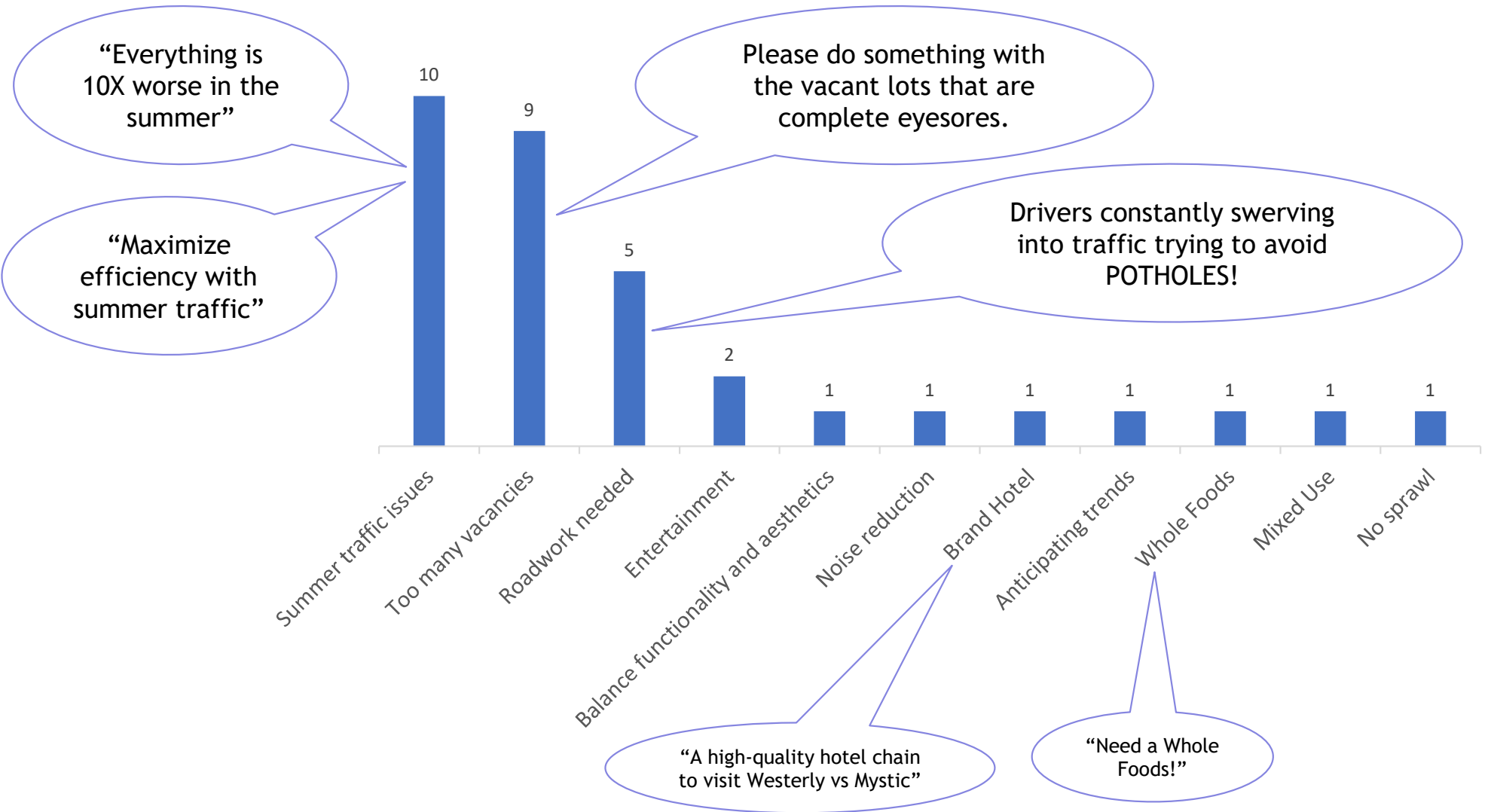
There is a broad consensus of importance to improve across all 16 categories, especially the first 7



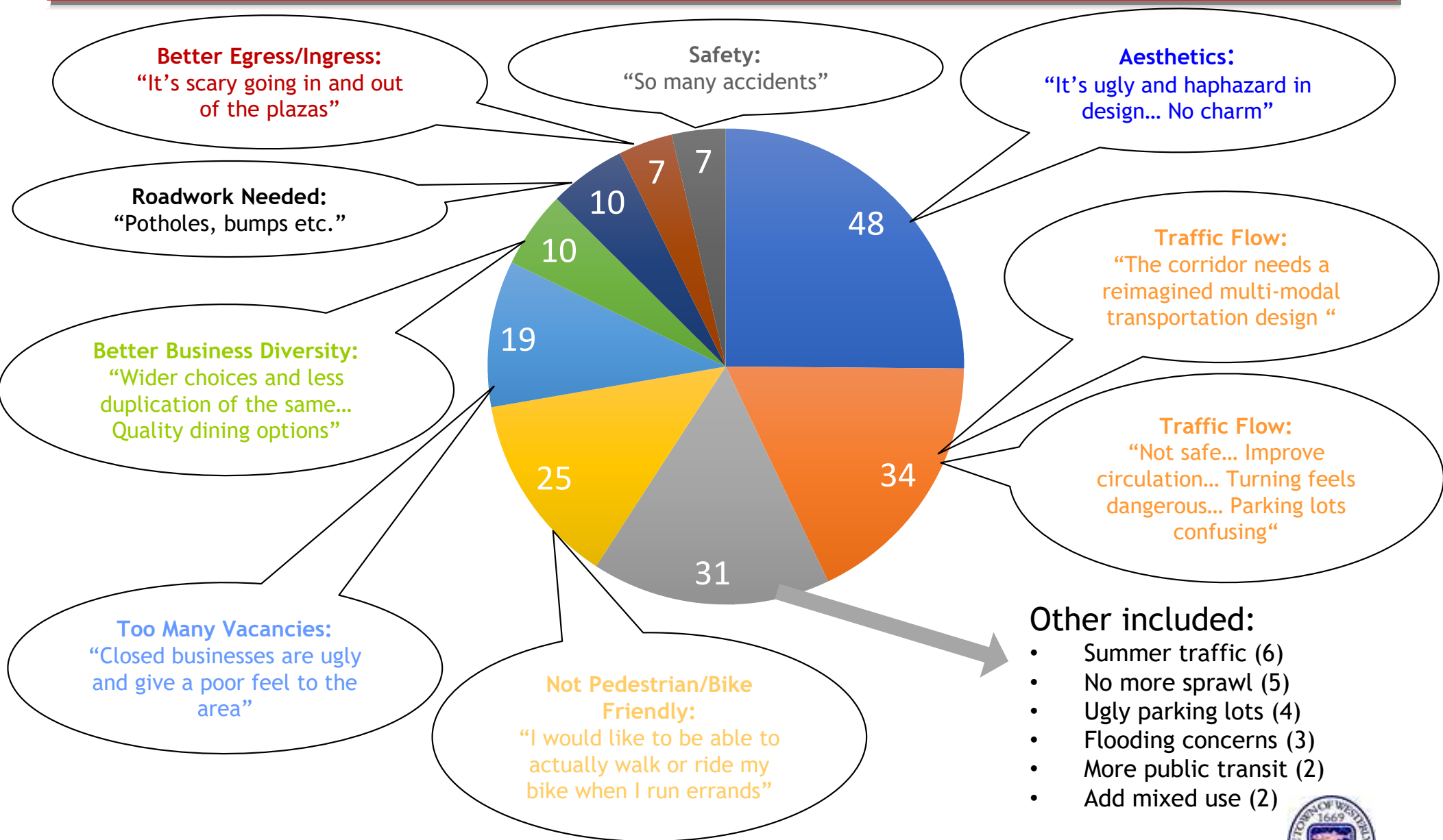
- Respondents want Westerly to improve the corridor in myriad ways. Keeping the status quo is not preferred



# Respondents offer seasonality challenges, business vacancies, and needed roadwork as additional areas of importance...



# Of 191 written comments on “What should change?” an overwhelming 43% include Aesthetics and Traffic Flow...



# Recap

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- A representative sample of Westerly residents and other users of the Route 1 Corridor gave significant feedback to the study
- The key areas of focus include:
  1. A desire to improve the aesthetics, in all forms, across the corridor
    - Empty lots
    - Strip-malls and early 70's building designs
    - Signage
  2. Challenging egress, ingress and navigation issues with businesses and with traffic flows, especially on the western end of Franklin
  3. A preference for more up-scale versions of the businesses and services currently available
  4. A recognition that the corridor is not pedestrian nor bicycle oriented but without an expression of need to significantly address this

