

BEDPG Survey

Business and Economic Development Planning Group

Belmont Residents' Perspectives on Business Districts

Final Report

1/26/04

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BEDPG Mandate

Develop recommendations for:

- Preserving and enhancing current businesses
- Attracting desirable new businesses
- Facilitating the opening of new businesses

Survey Objectives

- Identify types of changes residents believe would improve Belmont's business districts
- Define “desirable” new businesses
- Gauge residents’ views on restaurants, parking and traffic and other hot button issues

Methodology

- Conducted 9/05/03-10/31/03
- Questionnaire designed by BEDPG
- Administration modes: hardcopy mailed to 1000 residents and available in six Town office and business locations; also available on the Town website
- Responses encouraged through local media, Town listserv, Town website, electric bills, letters, and reminder postcards
- Responses of 525 respondents (216 random, 309 volunteer) are combined and treated as a single group of volunteer respondents for this report

Respondent Characteristics

women, people ages 46-55, and homeowners are overrepresented

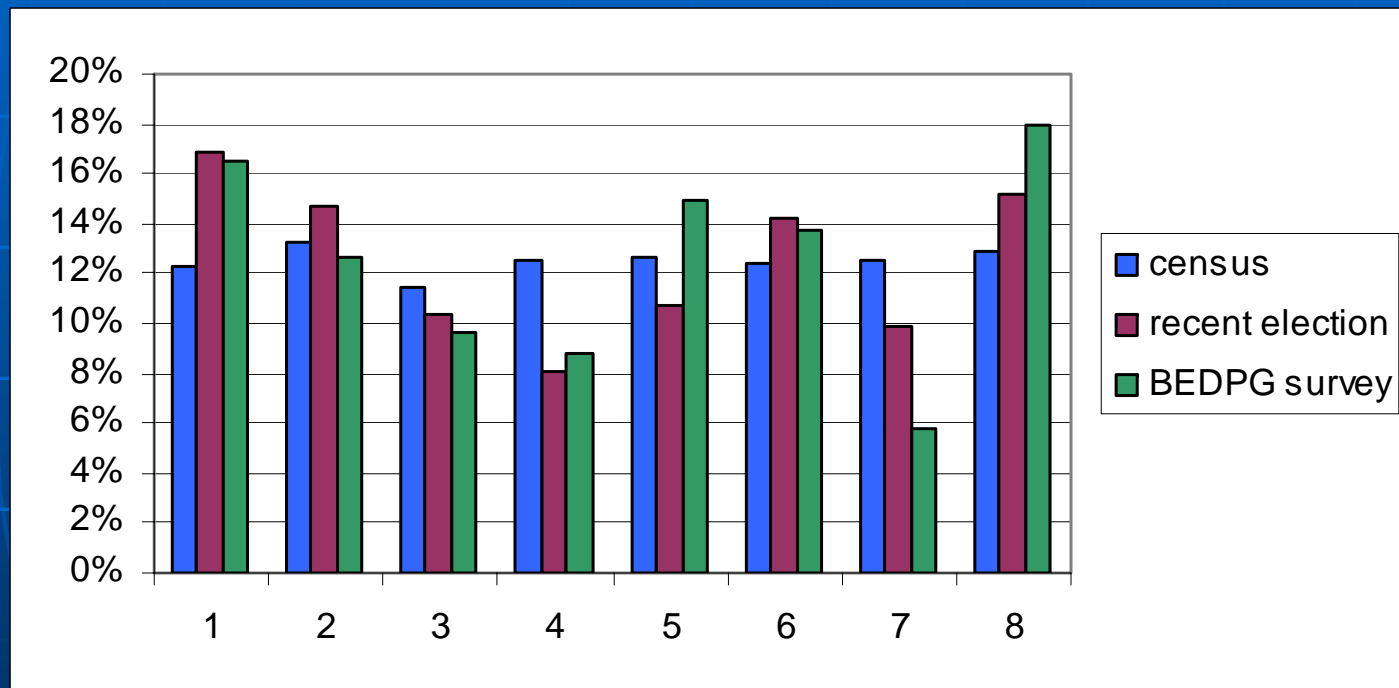
GENDER	Respondents	Census
Female	65%	53%
Male	30%	44%
Not reported	5%	3%

OWN/RENT	Respondents	Census
Own	81%	61%
Rent	15%	39%
Not reported	4%	0%

AGE	Respondents	Census
18-35	12%	27%
36-45	26%	22%
46-55	27%	19%
56-65	18%	13%
> 65	13%	19%
Not reported	4%	0%

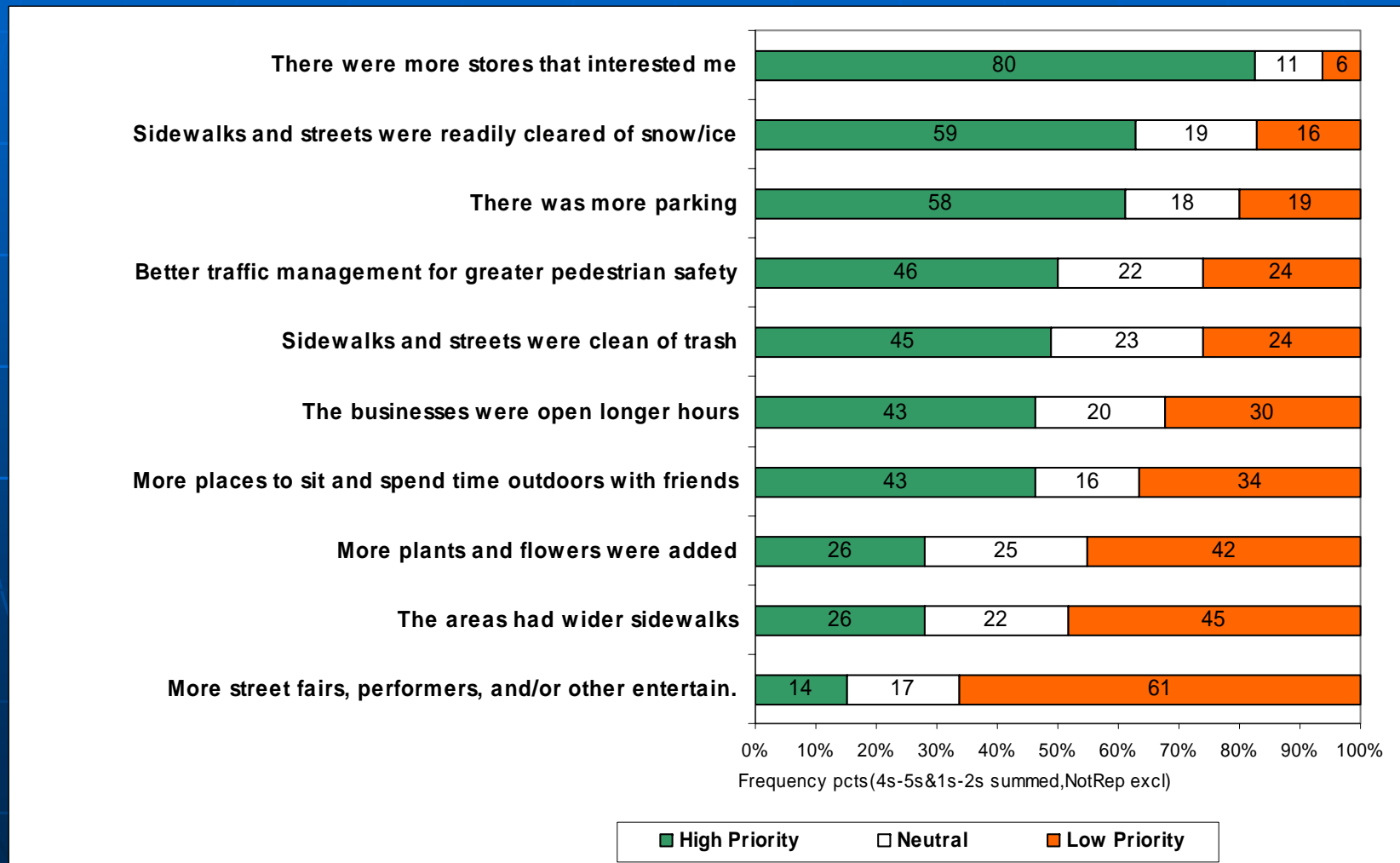
YEARS in BELMONT	Respondents
< 3 years	9%
3-5 years	12%
6-10 years	17%
11-30 years	31%
> 30 years	21%
Not reported	11%

Response Rates by Precinct



Question 1:

“I would go to Belmont’s business districts more often if ...”



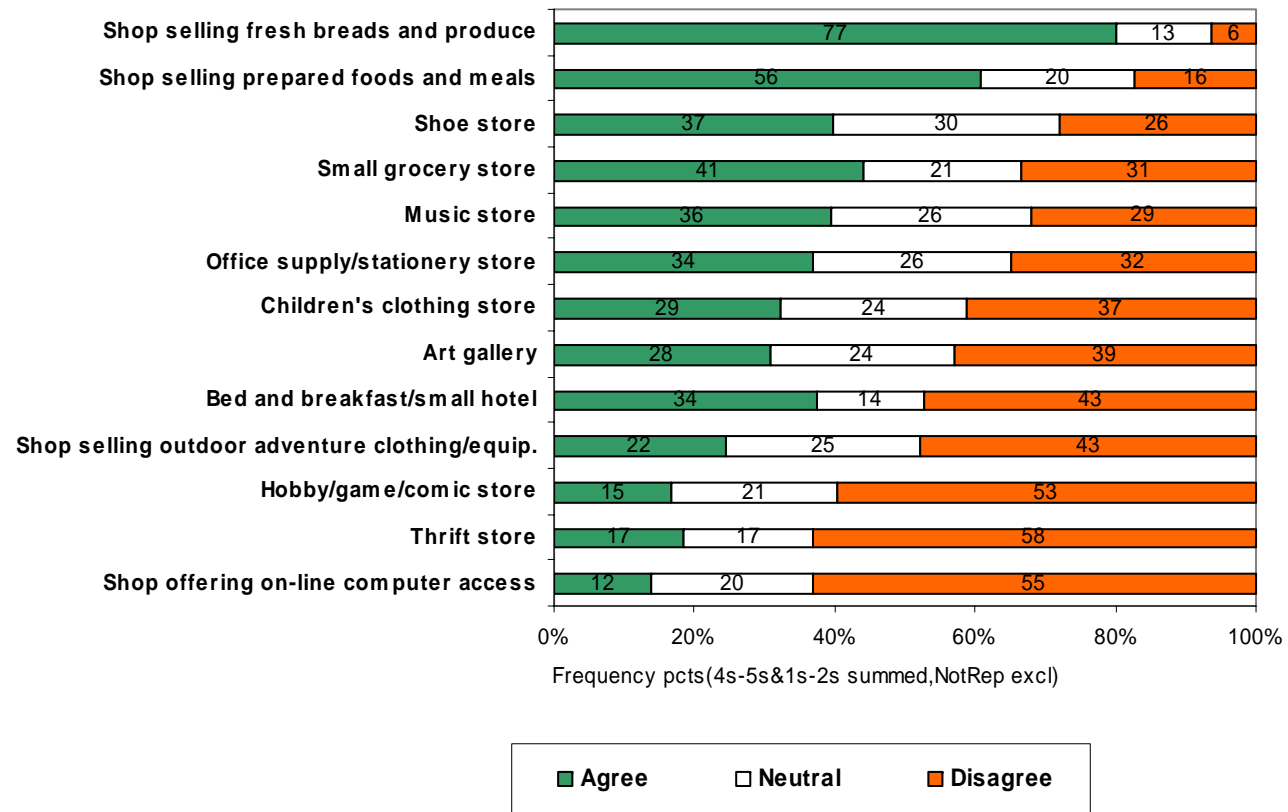
Question 1 (Other):

“I would go to Belmont’s business districts more often if ...”

	# of Mentions (>10)
Sidewalk/street conditions (trash, snow, pavement conditions, curbs, space, crosswalks)	60
Non-restaurant store, general comments (general comments about stores)	39
Retail mix (comments about too much of one thing or another, balance of types of businesses)	38
Restaurant specific type (comments about specific restaurant names, chains, categories)	30
Non-restaurant store, specific type (comments about specific stores, businesses)	21
Traffic	21
Parking	19
Restaurant general comments (comments about more restaurants, appearance of them, locations)	19
Other comments	11

Question 2:

“I would like to see the following new types of business open in Belmont.”



Question 2 (Other):

“I would like to see the following new types of business open in Belmont.”

	# of Mentions (>5)
Restaurant (all types)	112
Food, Specialty (e.g., cheese, ice cream, bread)	56
Liquor/Wine	31
Clothing-Adult	26
Art/Craft/Hobby/Fabric	24
Houseware/Gifts/Jewelry	23
Book	22
Movie/Video	19
Other	15
Food, General (markets, grocery, convenience stores)	12
Hardware	12
Clothing-Other	11
Sports/sporting goods	9
Health/Beauty/Drug (nails, hair, pharmacy)	7
Electronic/Computer	6
Stationary/Card/Office supply	6

Question 3 (open-end):
 “Please list one or more type of business that
 you’d rather not have more of in Belmont.”

	# of Mentions (>10)
Banks	231
Beauty Salons (Nails, Hair)	129
Pizza	116
Chain Drug Stores	68
Dry Cleaner	57
Asian (Chinese, Indian, Thai)	42
Auto Body/Auto Sales	31
Department (Target, Walmart)	31
Food, Specialty (e.g., Cheese, Ice Cream, Bread)	29
Houseware/Gifts	21
Food, General (markets, grocery, convenience stores)	19
Fast food	18
Store comments in general	16
Liquor/Wine	14
Real Estate Agencies	12
Clothing-Adult	11

Question 4 (open-end):

“Please list three specific restaurants or types of restaurants that you wish were located in Belmont.”

Types	# of Mentions (>10)
Italian	217
American	135
Seafood/fish	91
Family	82
Café	76
Mexican	70
Deli	54
Upscale/Gourmet/Fine Dining	51
Other	40
Steak/Beef	37
French	33
Asian	27
Breakfast	27
Pub	23
Vegetarian/Healthy	21
Continental	20
Greek	15
BBQ	13
Ice Cream	13
Japanese/Sushi	12
Thai	11

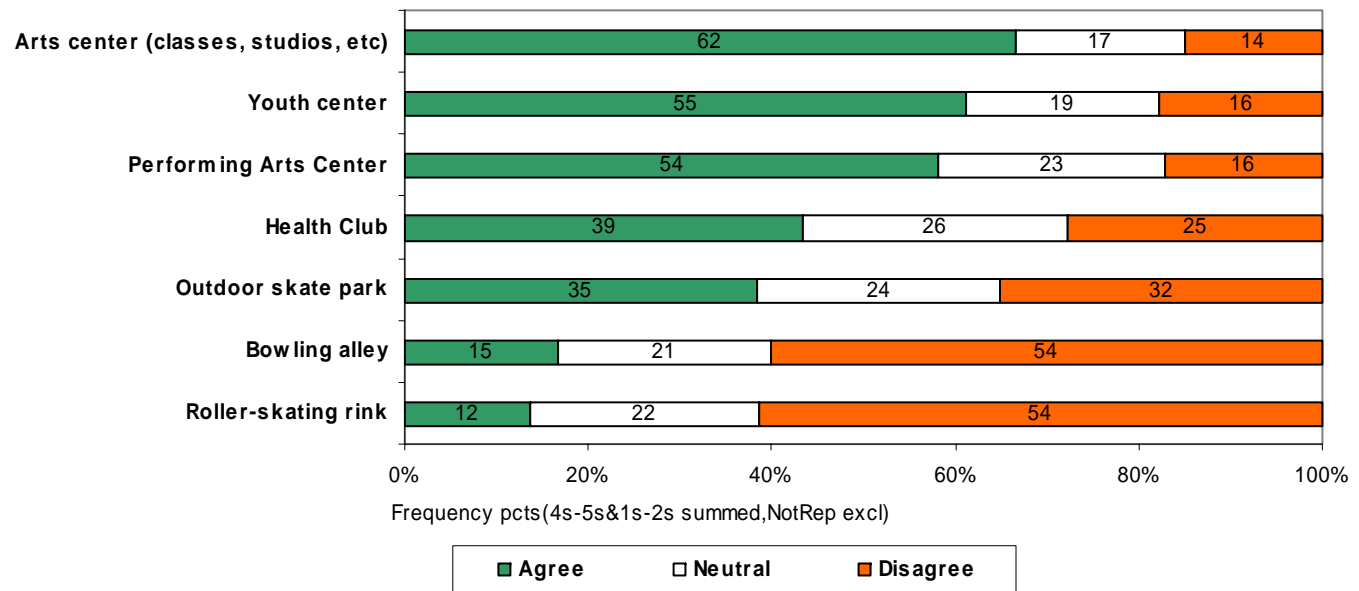
Specific	# of Mentions (>10)
Legal Seafood	29
Full Moon	20
Panera Bread	20
Bertucci's	19
Not Your Average Joe's	16
Jimmy's	14
Flora	11

Question 5 (open-end):
 “Please list three businesses located outside of Belmont that you wish were in Belmont.”

General	# of Mentions (>10)
Food, General (markets, grocery, farm stand)	134
Food, Specialty (e.g. bread, cheese, other)	114
Restaurant, General	97
Clothing – Other	93
Department (Target, Walmart)	44
Houseware/Gifts	43
Art/Craft/Hobby/Fabric	39
Clothing - Adult	38
Stationary/Card/Office supply	30
Sports/Sporting goods	26
Movie/Video	21
Liquor/Wine	21
Clothing - Childrens	19
Music	18
Book	13
Hardware	13

Specific	# of Mentions (>10)
Trader Joe’s	55
Gap	28
Bread & Circus	26
Michaelson’s	22
Crate & Barrel	16
Wilson Farm	16
Russo’s	15
Iggy’s Bakery	13
Talbots	13
Target	12
Staples	11

Question 6: “I would like it if the following new venues/activities were available in Belmont.”



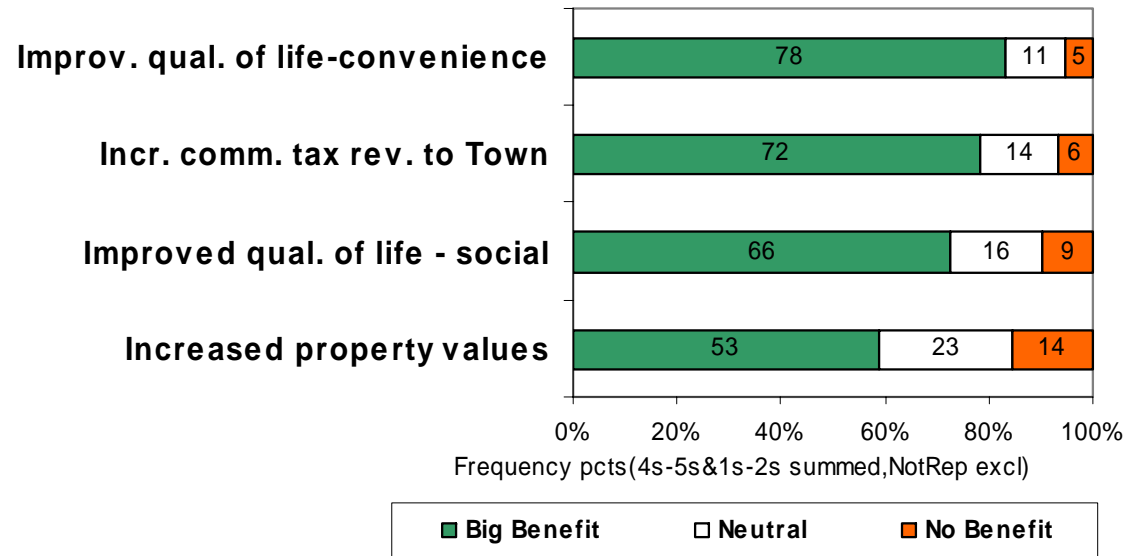
Question 6 (Other):

“I would like it if the following new venues/activities were available in Belmont.”

	# of Mentions (>5)
Sports Centers (batting cages, bowling, golf, etc.)	26
Movie/Film	16
Senior Center	16
Arts Center/Space/Studios	13
Community/Youth center	11
Retail stores, all	9
Bike path/Biking	8
Kid Center/Day Care	8
Gardens/Parks	6

Question 7:

“To what extent will Belmont benefit if changes are made to improve our business districts?”

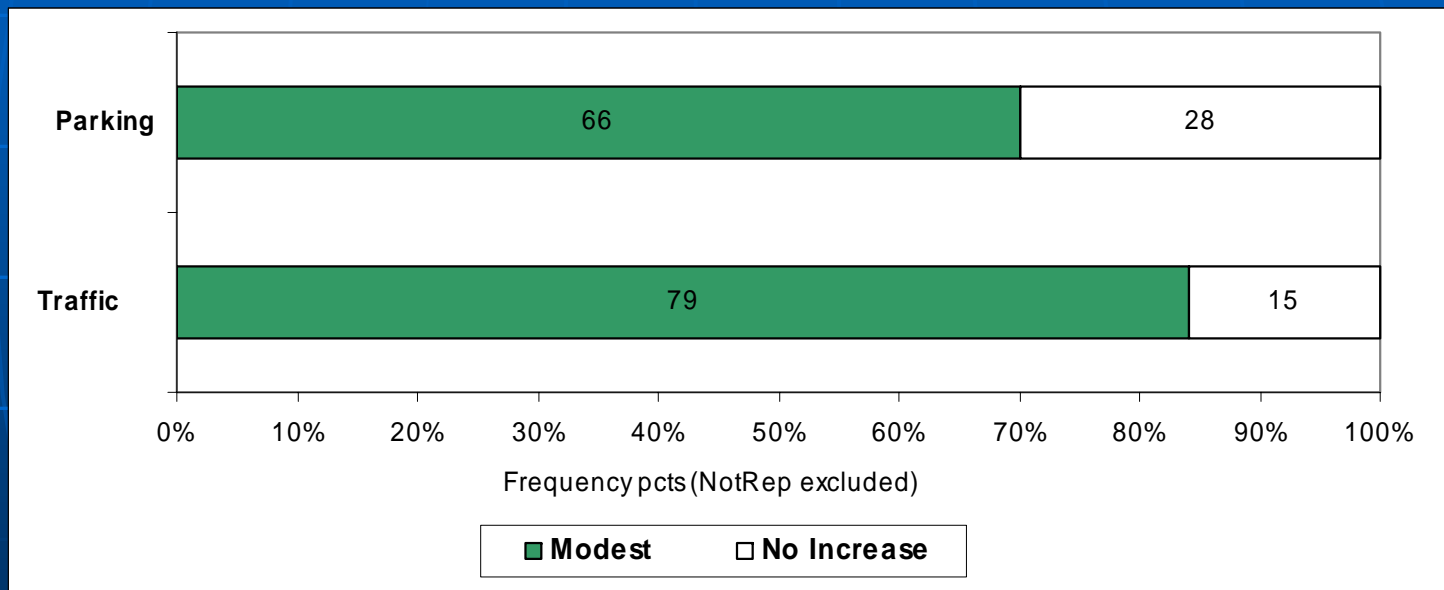


Question 7 (other):

“To what extent will Belmont benefit if changes are made to improve our business districts?”

	# of Mentions (>5)
Community spirit	13
Image/Reputation	13
Tax revenue	13
Aesthetics, Beauty	8
Other	7
Diversity, cultural and ethnic	6
Improvements for youth, keep kids here, kid-friendly town	6

Question 8: Modest or no increase in traffic/parking if it occurred as a result of revitalizing our business districts



Question 9:

“Are there other issues we missed but that you consider important?”

Travel/Access

- Parking - enough; not enough; not well managed
- Traffic - too much; only too much during commute time; to be expected with vital business districts
- Improve pedestrian safety and access
- Improve bike safety and access (e.g., more racks)
- Introduce cross-town transportation
- Extend store hours

Appearance and Appeal

- Distressed and abandoned buildings and spaces - do something!
 - Most often cited example: the pink building in Belmont Center
- Appearances matter - redevelopment and design enhancements are needed
- Variety of shops
 - Need greater variety and more unique selection to attract customers
 - Need more basics so more/all errands can be run in one stop
- We need more places to congregate to build community

Other Issues

- What is the role of the Town in determining what businesses locate here?
- What is the role of commercial taxes in the Town's financial health and in encouraging/discouraging small business development?
- Residents perceive that commercial rents are too high for many small businesses.

Conclusions

Although not representative of the Town demographic profile, the respondents to this survey nonetheless expressed some compelling views.

Survey respondents:

- Prefer a greater variety of businesses with fewer banks, pizza places and beauty salons.
- Favor the retail/restaurant mix of other towns.
- Want more food! In particular, they want more fresh and prepared food options and more places to go out to eat.
- Will tolerate moderate increases in traffic and parking hassles if that's what it takes to revitalize our business districts.
- Agree that Belmont will benefit in a variety of ways if improvements are made to our business districts.