

Duke Street Land Use Plan

Business Poll Summary

August 2025

Below is a summary of 77 small business owners' responses to the Duke Street Land Use Plan poll. The first part of the summary reviews the process the City and Public Engagement Associates (PEA) team used to organize the poll for business owners. The second part includes responses to all the business specific questions, both quantitative and qualitative. The third part will summarize the responses to all the general questions. Quantitative questions help to measure or quantify opinions, perspectives, and characteristics of those taking the poll and include the demographic questions. The qualitative questions in this poll helped the team to explore owners' responses a little more in depth to uncover other nuances and rationales.

Business Poll: The Process Used

The poll for business owners was conducted concurrently with the general community poll. All questions from the general community poll were included in the business poll, with additional questions tailored to business owners. Staff developed the poll in Spring 2025 to be ready for the June 9th launch meeting.

Originally, staff created a list of over 600 businesses along the four-mile corridor, regardless of size or whether they were locally owned or part of a national chain. This list was further narrowed down to approximately 150 locally-owned, non-chain, and brick-and-mortar businesses. The PEA team divided the corridor into three sections, each containing between 40 and 60 businesses:

- The **first section** stretched from East Duke Street, near Old Town, to Alexandria Commons and included businesses along Duke Street, S. Quaker Lane, Roth Street, and Taylor Run Parkway.
- The **second section** focused on Alexandria Commons and the neighboring industrial areas, targeting businesses along Covin Street, Duke Street, and S. Quaker Lane.
- The **final section** covered businesses along Duke Street near the Shoppes at Foxchase, extending in the direction of the former Landmark Mall. This included outreach to all businesses on and around Wheeler Avenue (including industrial businesses).

The PEA team began door-to-door canvassing of small businesses in the second week of July, reaching out to businesses during the workday five times, starting on July 9 and ending on August 8.

The team left flyers with staff at all business locations where the owner was not present and noted times, flagging whether a team member could return to conduct the poll at another time,

if possible. The team also contacted an additional two dozen small businesses that were in the three sections but not on the core list.

Overall, the team contacted or left information with about 180 small businesses. From that outreach, 77 business owners completed some portion of the survey. Not every owner responded to every question (no quantitative question received more than 69 responses; no qualitative question received more than 43 responses).

Executive Summary

In general, business owners who responded to this poll felt that traffic and congestion were the biggest barriers to their business, and this theme came up throughout the quantitative and qualitative responses. For example, several owners identified specific intersections that currently cause issues for them and their customers while others identified the general congestion as a disincentive for customers to visit. When asked what they would like to change about the corridor, a plurality primarily spoke to the congestion as well. Several owners specifically stated their belief that customers typically drive to their business (and not take any other mobility option) and so felt strongly that any changes should continue to support that travel mode.

Besides traffic, owners identified several other issues, such as external financial pressures (cost of doing business, inflation, etc.) and a need for increased customer traffic to their stores. In spite of these issues identified with Duke Street, almost two thirds of business owners indicated that they plan to stay on the corridor, though a small but significant number indicated some concern about their ability to remain long-term.

When asked about how their businesses could be better supported, many owners reiterated that addressing corridor traffic would help their business and would help them attract customers. Some additional suggestions included better wayfinding and promotional signage along the corridor and financial assistance. The majority of the comments regarding how their business could be better supported reflected the challenges they identified in a previous question.

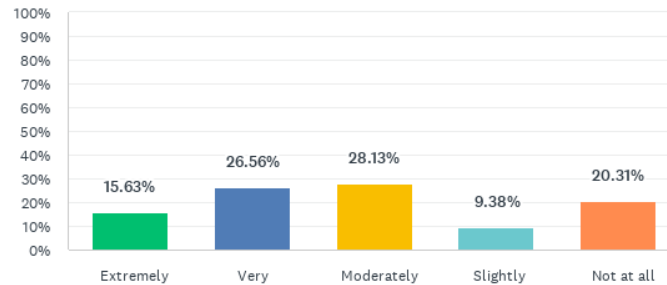
Business Survey Questions - Quantitative

Do you feel the Duke Street Corridor offers your business visibility and a customer base?

64 owners answered this question. Just over 43% said extremely or very well. Another 37% said moderately or slightly. Nearly 21% indicated 'not at all.' Thirteen owners skipped this question

entirely.

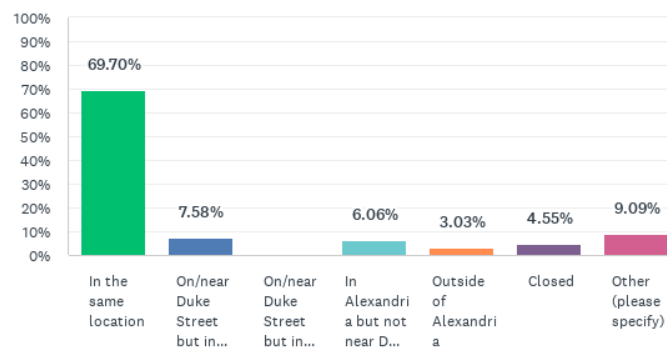
Q6 Do you feel the Duke Street Corridor offers the visibility and customer base your business needs to thrive long-term?



Where do you see your business in 10 years?

66 owners answered this question. Of those, 64 (almost 70%) see themselves in the same location, and 7.5% see themselves on or near Duke Street but in a larger building. About 6% of owners said they still see themselves in Alexandria, but not near Duke Street. 4.5% imagined that their businesses would be closed (though without an explanation why).

Q5 Where do you see your business in 10 years?



Six owners elaborated briefly about why they selected "Other." They:

- Want to stay but may need to find another space in Alexandria
- Are unsure
- Expect a move to Tyson's on high-end
- Want to expand
- Would love to stay in Alexandria, but mobility is an issue. We only have 5 WMATA stations in the City. That does not compare well with other similarly proximate cities

around DC: • District of Columbia: 40 • Montgomery County, MD (includes Bethesda): 11
• Prince George's County, MD: 15 • Arlington County, VA: 11, etc.

Business Survey Questions - Qualitative

Fewer owners answered the six qualitative questions, with the lowest being 43 responses (for two questions) and the highest being 53 (also for two questions). **Traffic** showed up as an issue across all six qualitative questions.

What is the biggest challenge to your business today?

53 business owners responded to this question. More than a third identified some dimension of traffic issues for this question. Most simply said "traffic." Others elaborated on their issues, which included:

- Causing patients to be late and/or miss their appointments
- Traffic impacts customers willingness and ability to reach their business
- Owners mentioned specific issues at:
 - Telegraph Road
 - Exiting from Roth onto Duke Street
 - Ingress and egress into Quaker Professional Square at the Duke/Quaker intersection.
 - Colvin Street (along with parking challenges)
 - Cross-section of Duke and Sweeley
 - Cars turning left onto Duke Street from Cambridge Road

A second significant issue owners identified were **financial** in nature, whether it was growing their business or simply staying in business and managing cost increases. These issues were identified by nearly 25% of owners. Responses included:

- Generating more business
- Lack of financial support for small businesses
- New business, more customers
- Need more business
- Cash flow
- Money \$\$\$
- Steady customer base
- Finding new clients
- Rising cost of ingredients, inputs, supplies
- Uncertain economy, rising prices, tight wallets

The other three issues, each of which were mentioned in different ways by about 10% of owners focused on:

- **Space issues:** retaining affordable space; needing more space (both industrial and health-related organizations)

- ***Trouble with customers finding their business:*** lack of signage; off of Duke Street (business park); finding the business using GPS
- ***Parking challenges:*** on Wheeler Avenue; due to construction, trucks, and limited spaces filling up fast;

What type of support would be most beneficial to your business today?

50 business owners responded to this question. Once again, ***traffic*** rose to the top as owners answered this question, with nearly one-third giving it mention. Many of the comments to this question mirrored answers to the top challenges owners experienced. Owners were usually concerned with the location of their business along the corridor, although many also expressed concern more broadly:

- Several were concerned that road diets would be established, constricting traffic flow even more than it is currently
- Several also mentioned the need to change and make more effective the timing of traffic signals, especially at certain locations (Quaker La, and Alexandria Commons; Roth and Duke St., etc.)
- In general, owners were hoping for better flow of traffic to ease commutes, make it easier for residents, customers, and patients to get where they're going, and even reduce the volume where possible)
- Other ideas involved incorporating more no right on red signs as well as wayfinding signs, and one with significant ambition: build a metro line from King Street Metro to West Falls Church Metro.

Seven owners mentioned ***marketing, promotion, and advertising*** along Duke Street combined with more small business outreach.

Four owners raised the issue of ***parking***, including dedicated street parking, expanding parking so more customers can patronize owners' stores, and one owner who indicated with his business having nearly two dozen trucks, parking for all of the vehicles was a problem.

Four owners also wrote about the need for ***financial support***, including one specifically talking about the need for a line of credit. Three mentioned the issue of ***taxes***, with two calling for lower taxes and a third looking for tax exemptions for small businesses and DBEs. Other issues mentioned once included:

- More community events
- More places to eat, new restaurants
- Youth programs and internships equals new customers
- Keep it safe and clean
- Rental moratorium, limit rent increases

General Questions - Quantitative

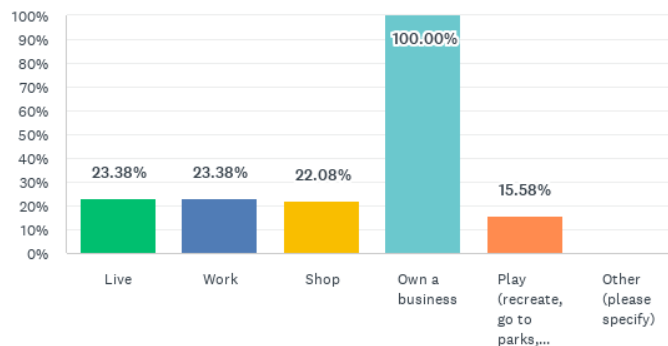
Requests for more background information

Only 17% of owners who answered this question requested additional background information on the plan. Seven owners skipped this question.

Relationship to Duke Street

Aside from owning a business in the corridor, which 100% of respondents did, 23.38% live in the corridor, 22.08% shop there, and 15.58% play there. All 77 owners answered this question.

Q2 What is your relationship to Duke Street? Select all that apply:



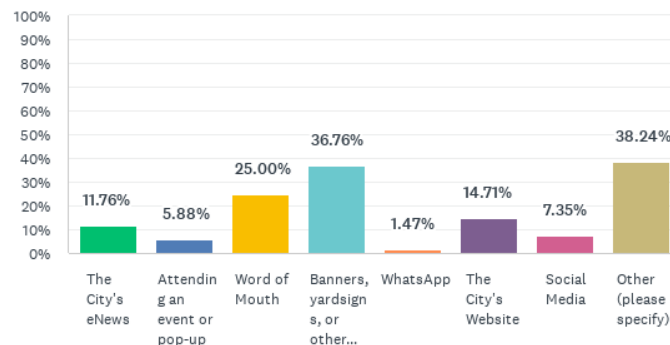
How did you hear about the plan?

Once again, owners could check all the options that applied to them. 68 owners responded to this question.

36.76% indicated banners, yard signs, or posters. 25% indicated by word of mouth. About 15% found out about the plan through the City's website, and another 12% from the City's eNews.

About 38% checked "Other." Nearly one-third indicated a "canvasser" or someone coming to their place of business. Others indicated signs, billboards, the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG) newsletter, and two said ALXNow.

Q9 How did you hear about the Duke Street Land Use Plan? Select all that apply



Which frequent community comments do you agree with (select all that apply)?

Three comments received more than 50% of the responses:

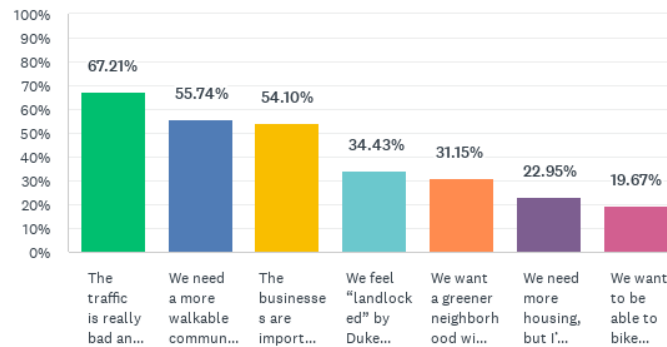
- The traffic is really bad and the roads are unsafe. (67.21%)
- We need a more walkable community with safer sidewalks and crosswalks. (55.74%)
- The businesses are important; having greater variety would be an improvement. (54.13%)

The other four responses received between 20% and 35%:

- We feel "landlocked" by Duke Street because it's hard to get in and out of our neighborhood (34.43%)
- We want a greener neighborhood with more trees, shade, and places to sit. (31.15%)
- We need more housing, but I'm wondering where it will go. (22.95%)
- We want to be able to bike around our neighborhood and to the grocery store. (19.67%)

Only 61 out of 77 owners (87%) answered this question.

Q12 We started pre-planning work in December 2024. Since then, we have held over 25 discussions with community groups, businesses, and property owners; presented at 15 community association and organization meetings; hosted 12 pop-ups in April, May, and June; and conducted strategic outreach in key areas in the corridor. Select any of these frequent community comments that you agree with:



Pick the 3 topics most important to you as we start the plan.

71 owners answered this question. Three topics received more than 40% of the responses:

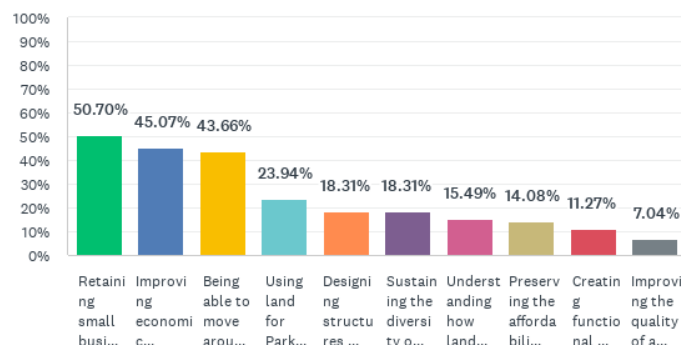
- Retaining small businesses in the corridor (50.70%)
- Improving economic well-being, growth, and stability in the corridor (45.07%)
- Being able to move around from one place to another along the corridor (43.66%)

Only one other topic rose above 20%:

- Using land for Parks & Open Spaces in the corridor (23.94%)

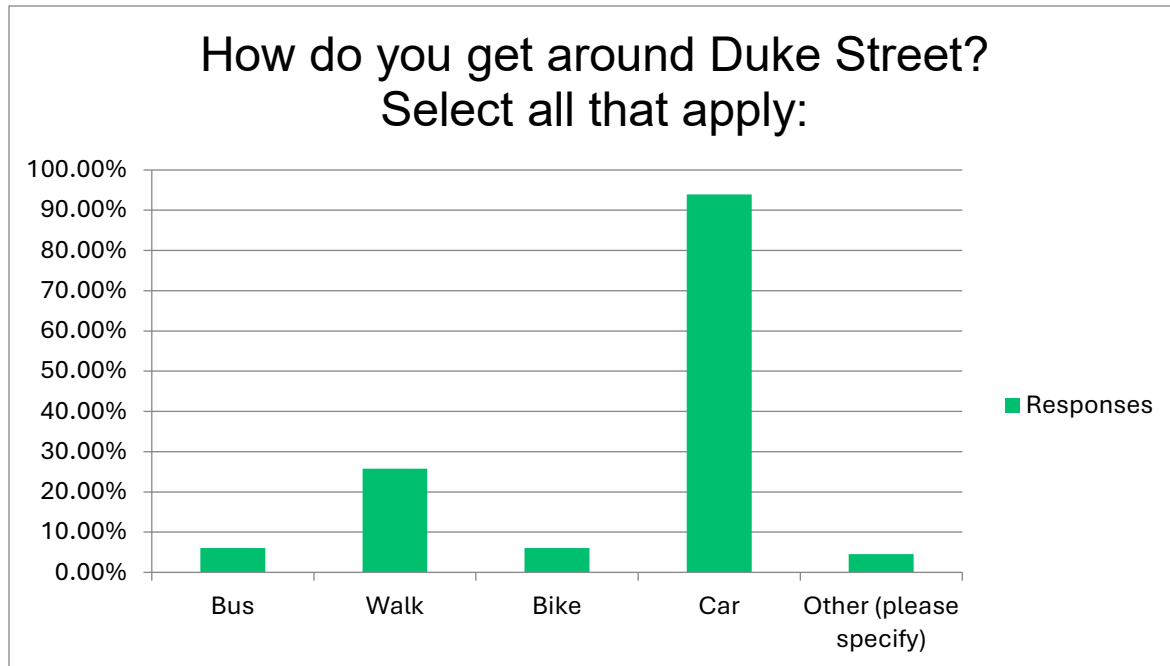
The other six issues were selected by between 7.04% and 18.31% of the owners.

Q10 Which of these topics is most important to you as we start the Plan? Pick three:



How do you get around Duke Street?

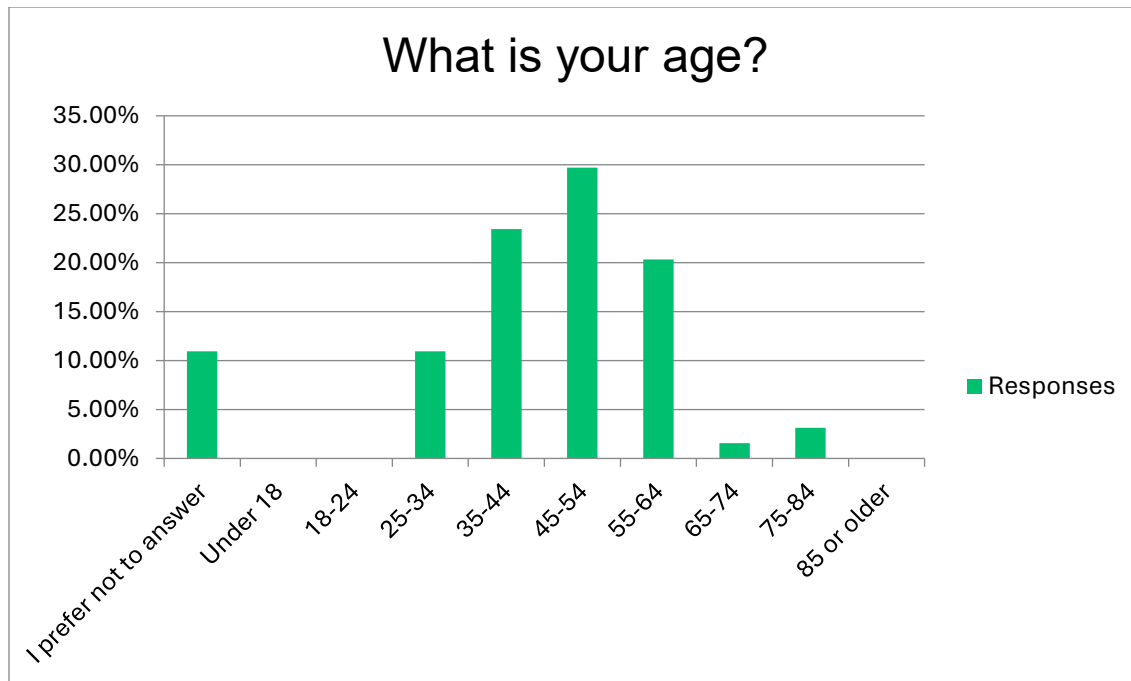
For this question, business owners could select all that were applicable for them. 68 owners responded to this question. The vast majority (94.12%) get around by car, while approximately one-quarter also walk. Owners using bikes and buses were almost 6% apiece. A few owners indicated they use a business vehicle, a car, DASH, or a Yellow Taxi.



What is your age?

66 owners answered this question. Owners largely fell into three age bands: 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64. They comprised *nearly three-quarters* of the 64 responses, with the 45-54 age band having the highest percentage of the three (28.79%) and the 55-64 age band having the lowest (19.70%).

6% were older than 65, including two owners in the 75-84 age band. Nearly 11% of owners fell in the 25-34 age band.



Which of the following languages do you speak at home? (select all that apply)

66 owners answered this question.

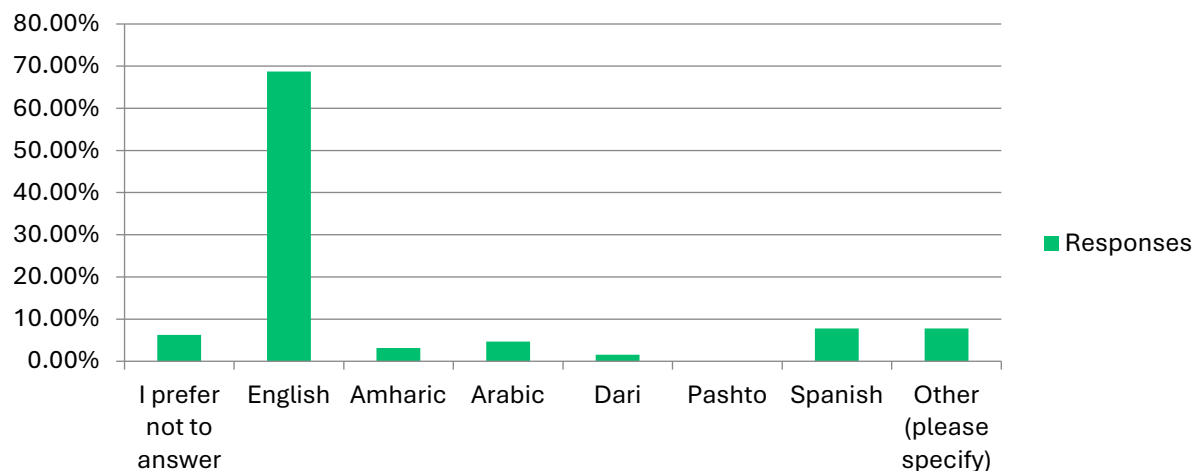
- 69.70% indicated English
- 7.6% said Spanish
- 4.6% indicated Arabic
- 3% said Amharic
- 1.5% said Dari

7.6% indicated another language, and 6.3% said they preferred not to answer.

Of those indicating another language, here were the responses:

- French
- Korean
- English and Greek
- English, Amharic, and Hindi
- Korean and English

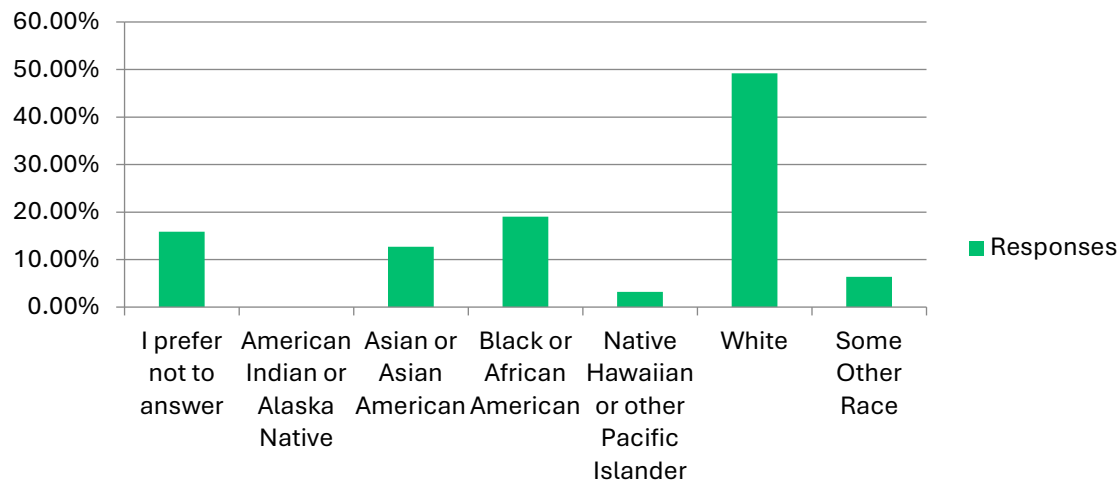
Which of the following languages do you speak at home? (Select all that apply)



What racial category best describes you? (select all that apply)

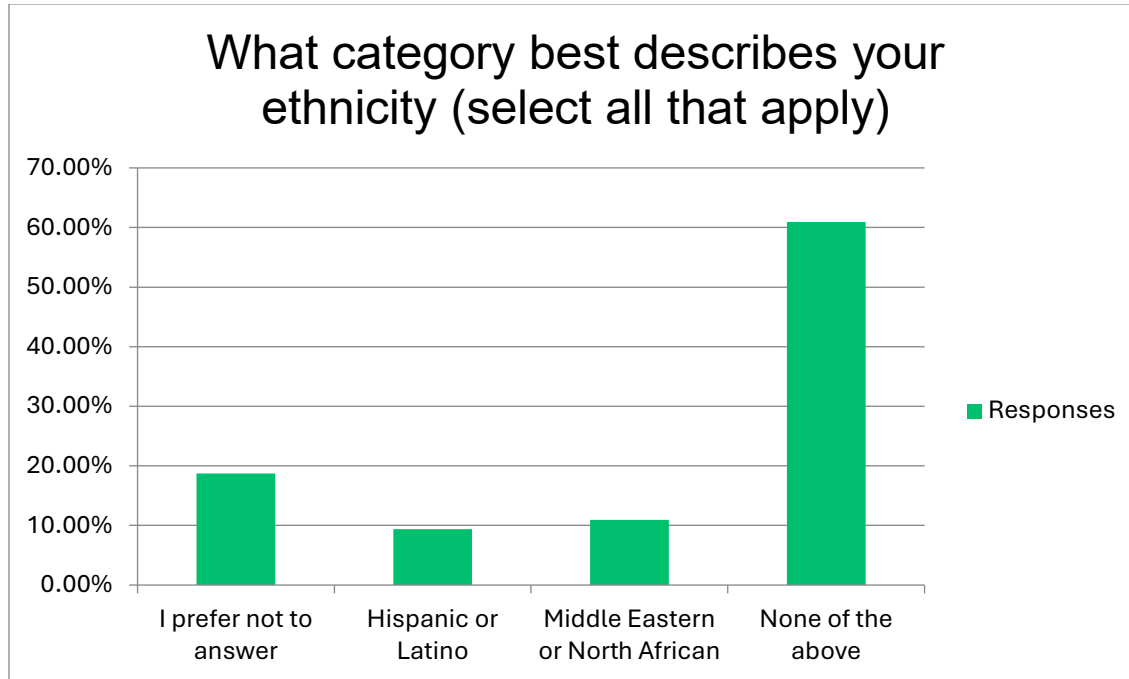
65 owners answered this question. Nearly half of the business owners who responded (49.23%) were White. Another 18.46% were Black, and 12.31% were Asian or Asian American. About 6% indicated they were of some other race, and about 3% indicated Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. Nearly 16% preferred not to answer.

What category best describes you? (select all that apply)



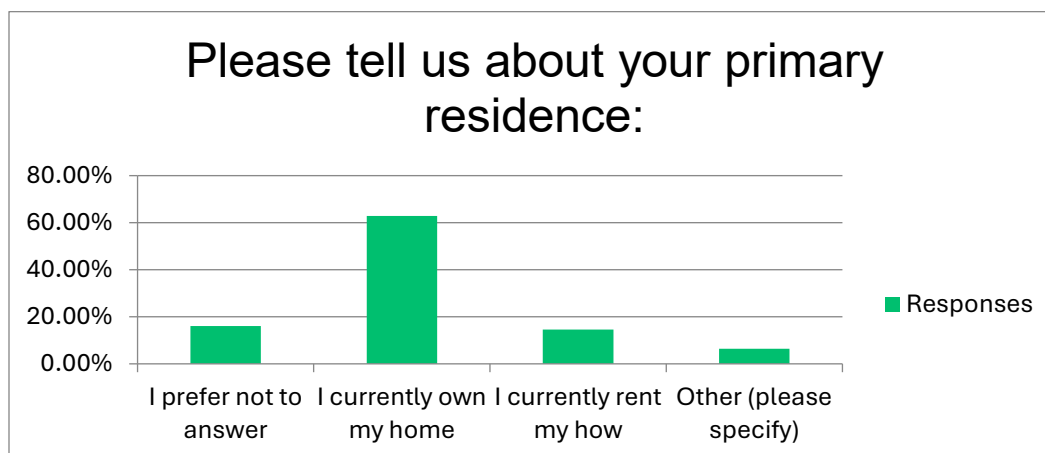
What category best describes your ethnicity?

66 owners responded to this question, with over 19% preferring not to answer and another 61% who indicated none of the above. Nearly 11% selected Middle Eastern or North African, and about 9% indicated Hispanic or Latino.



Do you rent or own your primary residence?

64 owners answered this question. Nearly 63% currently own their home, while 14% rent. 6.25% indicated other, and just more than 17% indicated they'd prefer not to answer. For those who said other, two indicated their business was a primary residence, another indicated they lived with a family, and one indicated a mobile home.



General Questions - Qualitative

What makes you want to be involved in the planning process?

43 owners responded to this question. About 20% of those who responded indicated that, as business owners and **stakeholders in the corridor**, it was important for them to be involved. One mentioned that he/she lived, worked, played, and owned business property in the corridor.

The issue of **traffic** was again raised, this time in about 20% of the responses. Many of the same issues were raised as in the above two questions: smarter traffic lights, ease of travel for patients, staff, and customers, commuter impacts, and how it impacts their businesses.

Six owners discussed their interest in improving their community, **helping their businesses thrive, and maintaining or increasing the viability of the corridor**. A few owners mentioned they got involved because they were worried either that the **plan could make things worse or that traffic might increase in the future**.

A few owners indicated a desire to **increase their revenues** or an **interest in buying and selling real estate** in the corridor.

What are some things that you like about the Duke Street corridor?

43 owners responded to this question. Over one-third of owners discussed the **wide range and diversity of businesses** in the corridor. Others discussed the convenience of retail shops, the accessibility to all businesses in the corridor, and the range of restaurants. On the West End, one owner appreciated the proximity of the businesses to Ben Brenman Park, the Holmes Run Trail, and specialty grocery stores.

About 16% mentioned the **location of the corridor itself**, including that it's centrally located, is close to a lot of amenities, provides access to other areas and neighborhoods (as well as the rest of the DMV), and provides a main entry into Old Town.

Some owners appreciated the **corridor's natural surroundings** and greenery, which were accessible and featured a good mix of recreation areas, clean parks, and lots of healthy trees.

For this question, a couple of owners praised **the good flow of traffic** and the easy ability to move from the west end to the east of the corridor quickly and efficiently. A couple of other owners praised **public transportation** on the corridor, including the bus services.

A few other owners appreciated the **affordability, diversity, and friendliness** of the area.

One owner emphasized here and in response to another question that he/she **didn't want to see any change** in the corridor and didn't like the bias of the poll that assumed change was inevitable.

What are some things you would change about the Duke Street corridor?

52 owners responded to this question. Over two-thirds of owners expressed interest in making changes to address the challenge of **traffic**. Below is a sampling of the 28 responses:

- Better road designs per the 21st century
- Move traffic better, especially during rush hour
- Lessen traffic
- Allowing traffic to flow smoothly within back roads
- Keep 4 lanes and use service roads for bikes
- Areas marked for pedestrian traffic and cyclists
- Make intersections a standard layout
- Wider roads, no road diets or bike lanes
- Improving the late afternoon eastbound traffic flow would be an ideal outcome.

Then there were **location-specific changes** recommended:

- The one-way connection to Telegraph Road (deal with cars trying to get to Telegraph)
- Fix traffic light timing at Duke/Quaker
- Add another lane on the Duke and Sweeley intersection
- Improve the late afternoon eastbound traffic flow
- Change the timing of lights at Cambridge to coordinate with Roth

Eight owners mentioned issues or ideas around **bikes and pedestrians**:

- One mentioned bike route
- Another mentioned more foot traffic
- A third indicated a desire for the Leibach bridge conversion to a linear park and pedestrian/bike entrance
- A couple mentioned the need for good sidewalks

Finally:

- Several owners mentioned addressing **safety, crime**, and community insecurity
- Several others mentioned cleaning up **parks** and making sure they're kept up with
- Others mentioned the need for **more housing**
- One person said **no change was necessary**

What is your hope for the future of Duke Street?

51 owners responded, generating 64 separate ideas. Just over half the ideas related to **improved traffic**. Specifically, they said:

- Less traffic, less congestion
- Better traffic flow, ease of movement
- Improve speed
- Get more traffic to businesses, especially small businesses

- Good signage and lights
- Address the volume of people and traffic
- Getting rid of some of the slip lanes
- One said BRT lanes for the entirety of Duke Street; another said no bus or bike lanes

Owners generated 20 ideas that were specific things they hoped to see in the corridor's future. Here is a sampling of them:

- A **thriving corridor** with updated accessible retail for cars
- Turn Duke Street, east of Quaker, **into a Main Street**
- **Make it beautiful**, and where it's possible to hang out
- A **multi-use trail** and good sidewalk with **inviting frontages**
- **More trees**, more **space for people** to exist, **mixed-use developments with plazas**
- It **stays affordable**, and the diverse residents have easier access to transportation
- Become a **magnet** for young people
- More **mixed-income housing**
- Become **more prosperous**, an area where people want to go
- **Maintain** as many **industrial businesses** as we can
- Programs are developed to improve the community, both for the neighborhoods and the businesses

Finally, this question also accumulated **concerns and complaints**, including:

- No more Cameron Stations and Landmarks
- Stop worrying about the affordability of housing
- By not creating LOCAL jobs, and just building housing, everyone will have longer commutes
- This survey was lopsided; I had to choose 3 options when I didn't agree with any of them. Need to keep things as they are
- Zombie communities that have little or no reason to go there unless you live there
- That Duke Street will still be here.