Town of Danvers, Massachusetts

Community Survey

greatblue

Presentation of Findings

27 July 2017

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Evidence-based research across diverse industries

Our experience in instrument design affords our clients actionable analytics to help them identify, address, and improve offerings to, and the way they communicate with, their key constituents.

With more than 35 years of experience in diverse markets, our consultative approach ensures our data can be the basis to make important business decisions.

Our clients most commonly fall under markets such as government and municipalities, public and private utility companies, healthcare administration, and education.

Cross-functional engagement teams ensure a complete view of the issues and solutions.

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Expertise in a diverse set of research methodologies

Having conducted millions of surveys and thousands of focus groups over the past 30+ years, our experience in instrument design, data collection and the presentation of those findings in manageable, actionable ways allows us to serve our clients across the spectrum of research studies.

Telephone Interviews
In-house, multi-lingual interviewing capabilities

Digital Surveys
Web + mobile-based survey programs

Focus Groups
State-of-the-Art facilities in CT and MA

In-Depth Interviews
Trained researchers allow us to dive deep in a 1:1 setting

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Solutions that focus on strategic and operational needs of clients

Whether direct to clients or through their agencies, we apply our core research methodologies, often applying a mixed methodology to ensure a study that captures both quantitative and qualitative information, to ensure our solutions exceed client expectations.

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Project Overview

- GreatBlue was commissioned by the Town of Danvers, Massachusetts (hereinafter, “the Town” or “Danvers”) to conduct comprehensive research among its residents to gain a deeper understanding into satisfaction with town amenities and future development needs.

- The primary goal of this research study was to assess current perceptions of the Town, drivers and barriers to increased visitation or patronage, and priorities for future economic development initiatives.

- In order to service this research goal, GreatBlue conducted 400 telephone interviews among randomly selected residents and collected 311 online survey responses. Call-backs were set up for respondents who could not complete the survey at the time of the call. A URL link was provided to the Town to collect online responses.

- The outcome of this research will enable the Town of Danvers to a) clearly understand the key elements that affect quality of life in the Town, b) uncover opportunities to drive economic development and, c) identify near-term strategies to increase business growth and likelihood to visit businesses in Danvers.

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Areas of Investigation

The Town of Danvers Community Study leveraged a quantitative research methodology to address the following areas of investigation:

- Quality of life & satisfaction with Town Services in Danvers
- Town involvement and barriers to participation
- Reasons for visiting or doing business in Danvers
- Priorities for driving economic development in Downtown Danvers
- Satisfaction with current business landscape and suggestions for future planning
- Perceptions of housing needs and future plans for residency
- Overall opinions of the Town
- Demographic profiles of respondents

Research Methodology Snapshot

Methodology	No. of Completes	No. of Questions	Incentive	Sample
Telephone & Online	711 (400 telephone + 311 online)	53*	None	Registered voters / procured cell phone records & URL link on Danvers town website

Target	Quality Assurance	Margin of Error	Confidence Level	Research Dates
Residential	Dual-level**	+/- 3.6%	95%	Jan 16 - Jan 31

* This represents the total possible number of questions; not all respondents will answer all questions based on skip patterns and other instrument bias.

** Supervisory personnel in addition to computer-aided interviewing platform ensure the integrity of the data is accurate.

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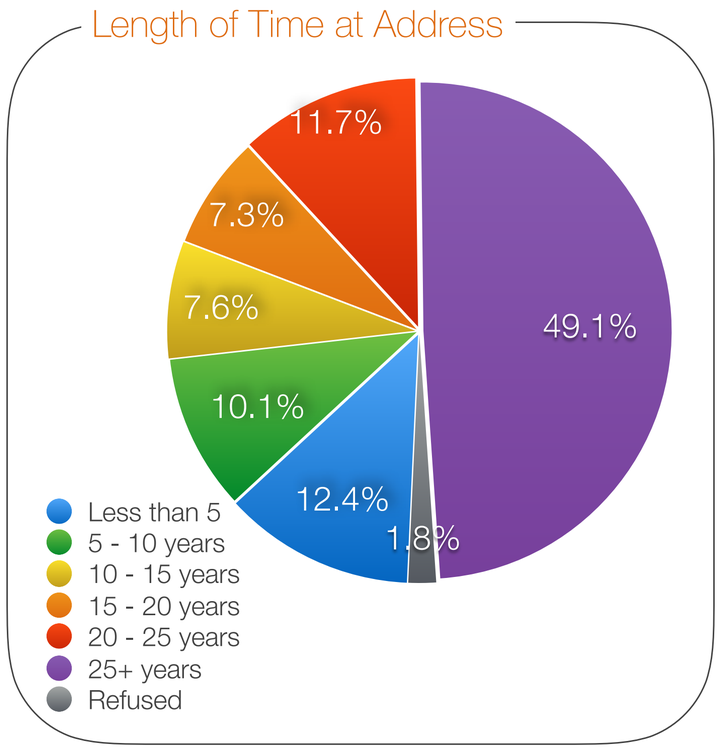
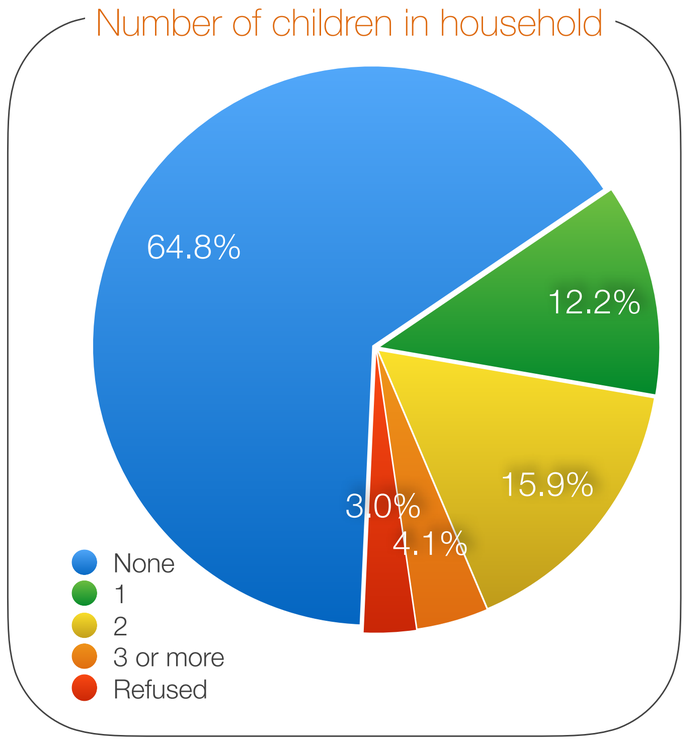
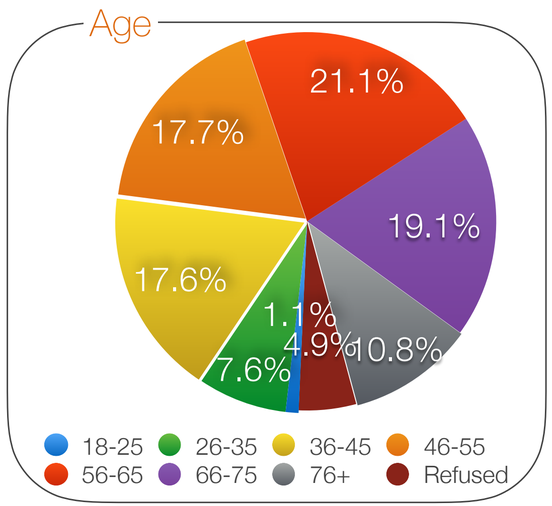
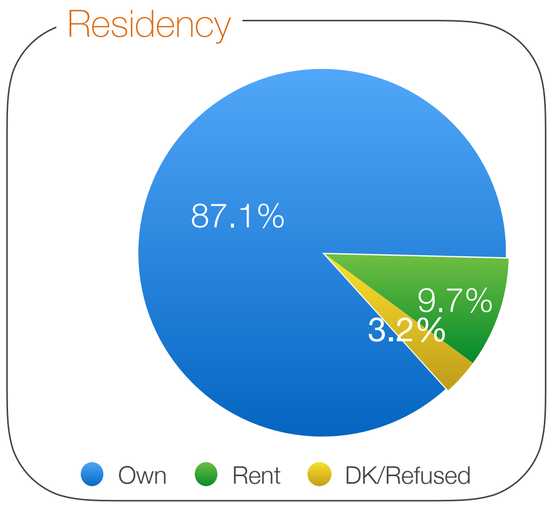
Respondent Snapshot

This slide quantifies select data points to provide context for this research study. The data is not meant to be statistically significant, rather to provide an empirical view into the demographic profile of the participants.









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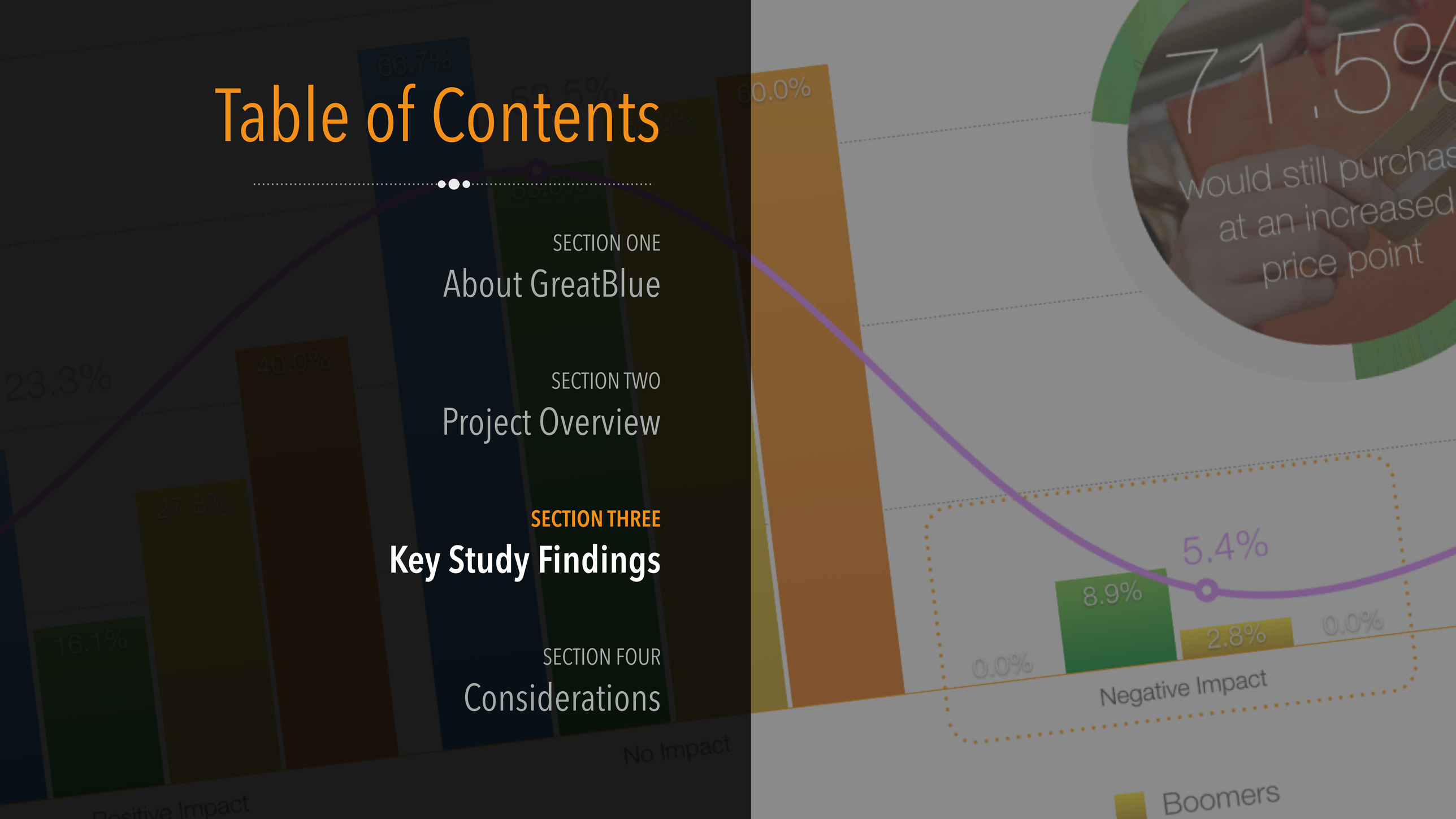

Key Study Findings

- The majority of Danvers residents (95.1%) reported the overall quality of life in Danvers is “excellent” or “good,” while only a small number (4.8%) reporting the quality of life as being “fair” or “poor.”

- When asked to provide the single biggest issue facing Danvers, two characteristics noticeably stood out; “traffic” (21.9%) and “taxes” (20.3%).

- Danvers residents provided strong satisfaction ratings for fifteen (15) different town services, with nine characteristics receiving satisfaction scores greater than 80%. Areas that received lower scores, such as “senior services” or “social services,” were due to a greater frequency of “don’t know” responses, as opposed to negative ratings. When “don’t know” responses were removed twelve (12) of the fifteen (15) town services received satisfaction scores greater than 90%.
  - “Planning and zoning” was the only characteristic to receive a less than 80% satisfaction rating when “don’t know” responses were removed from the data. Potential for increased usage exists in a number of categories that received higher “don’t know” responses.

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Key Study Findings, (continued)

- One-quarter of residents (25.2%) have attended a public meeting within the last 12 months, and slightly less than half of residents have been in contact with a town official (47.1%) over the same period of time. Among those who have been in contact with a town official, the majority (85.1%) reported being “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the interaction.

- Roughly two-thirds of residents (67.1%) reported they trust local government to make positive decisions on behalf of the Danvers community; that figure increases to more than four-fifths (86.6%), when the “don’t know” and neutral responses are removed from the data.

- Three “issues facing Danvers” stood out as the top priorities for Town Officials to focus on: “traffic congestion” (58.2%), “improving local infrastructure such as sewer systems, roadways, etc.” (30.9%) and “preserving open space” (27.6%).

- Residents indicated they most frequently leave Danvers for “entertainment,” to “visit family,” for “nightlife,” and if they are “guests for attractions.”
  - Residents remain in town for local services and amenities such as: recreation, outdoor activities, shopping, town hall/town services, parks, banking, library, and family activities.

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Key Study Findings, (continued)

- The main factors for patronizing downtown shops & restaurants are the “ease of parking” and “travel,” along with the types of businesses and a good variety of options. Locally-owned restaurants, small to medium size retail stores, and arts & entertainment prevail as the preferred types of downtown development for the future.

- The types of housing needing more development in the future are affordable housing for first-time buyers, affordable housing for seniors, and condos/ apartments. These three groups also received the highest frequency of poor ratings with respect to quality of options available.

- More than three-fifths of residents (61.5%) reported being aware of Massachusetts Proposition 2 1/2. One-quarter (24.6%) reported being unaware that special approval from a Town Meeting would be needed to increase property taxes by more than 2.5% annually.

- While 85.2% of respondents reported no town projects, initiatives or services that warrant a 2.5% property tax increase; the top items that were that were reported centered on education and local infrastructure such as “to support school budget” (17.0%), “improving local infrastructure” (9.4%), or “improving school buildings and facilities” (9.1%).

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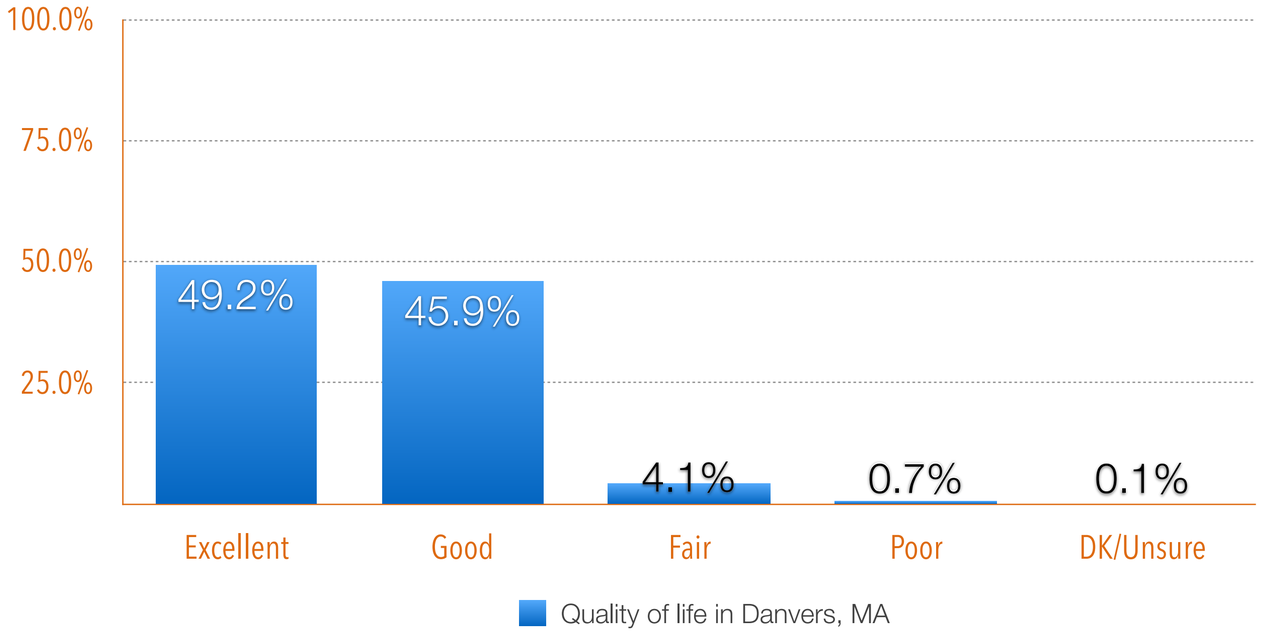
Danvers, MA provides great quality of life

The majority of Danvers residents (95.1%) reported the overall quality of life in the Town is “excellent” or “good,” compared to only 4.8% reporting the quality of life as being “fair” or “poor.” Typical of community surveys, two characteristics that stood out as the issues facing Danvers were “traffic” (21.9%) and “taxes” (20.3%).



Single Biggest Issues Facing Danvers

- 21.9% Traffic
- 20.3% Taxes
- 4.9% Lack of affordable housing

Strongest Impacts on quality of life in Danvers

- 30.0% Not one single thing / multiple aspects
- 14.9% Sense of community & togetherness
- 7.7% Size of the town / small town feel

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Satisfied with Town Services

Danvers residents provided strong satisfaction ratings for fifteen (15) different town services. Areas that received lower scores, such as “senior services” or “social services,” were due to a greater frequency of “don’t know” responses, as opposed to negative ratings.

When “don’t know” responses were removed from the data, twelve (12) of the fifteen (15) received satisfaction ratings from over 90% of residents.

The town services that received the highest frequency of dissatisfied ratings were “planning & zoning” (15.1%), “town website” (12.7%) and “public works & road maintenance” (12.4%). Areas for exploration of potential growth can be found in library services, recreation services, public health services, town website, and marina & waterfront.

	Total Satisfied	Total Dissatisfied	Don’t Know	Total Satisfied (w/o DKs)
Police services	95.4	2.4	2.3	97.6
Fire services	94.5	0.7	4.8	99.3
Electric Department	94.2	4.7	1.0	95.2
Parks & Open Space	92.5	4.3	3.1	95.5
Library services	89.6	1.0	9.4	98.9
Town Hall services	87.3	5.9	6.8	93.7
Public Works & Road Maintenance	86.6	12.4	1.0	87.5
Recreation services	86.5	2.6	11.0	97.2
Schools	80.3	5.0	14.6	94.1
Public Health services	72.0	4.2	23.8	94.5
Town Website	68.4	12.7	19.0	84.4
Marina & Waterfront	65.1	3.2	31.6	95.3
Planning & zoning services	57.0	15.1	28.0	79.1
Senior services	55.6	3.0	41.5	95.0
Social services	49.4	2.2	48.4	95.6

“Planning & Zoning” was the only characteristic to receive a total satisfaction score of less than 80% when “don’t know” responses are removed from the data (79.1%).

Top three reasons for dissatisfaction with town services were: “website is outdated/difficult to navigate” (16.5%), “poorly maintained roads/sidewalks” (13.1%), and “too much expansion/development” (12.4%).

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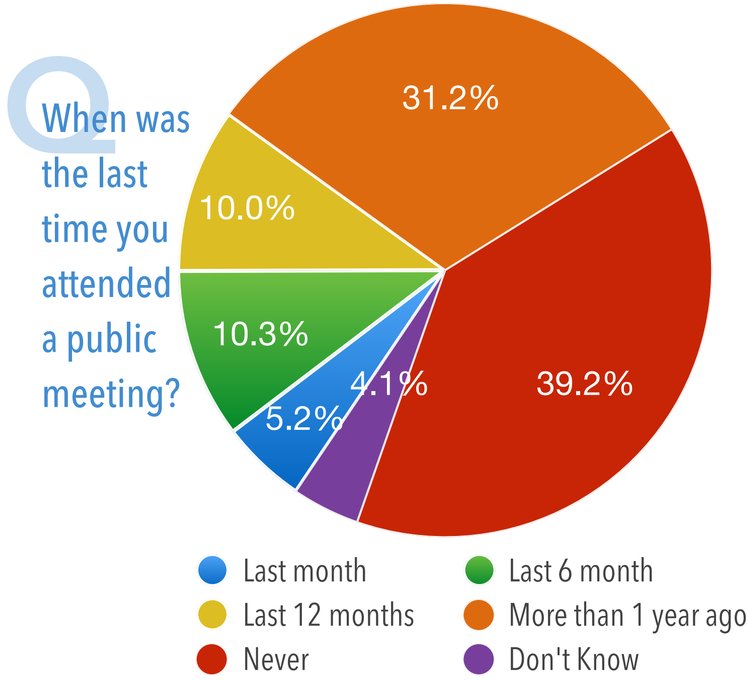
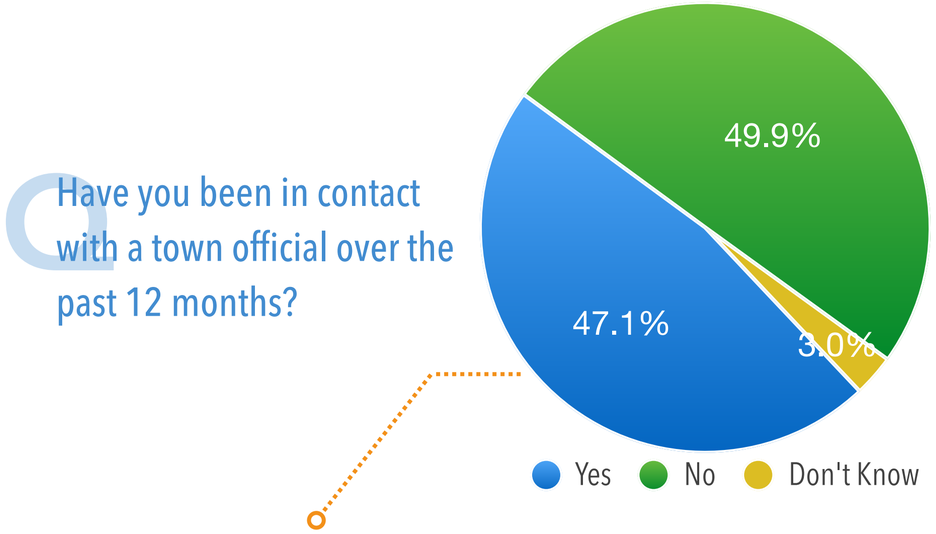
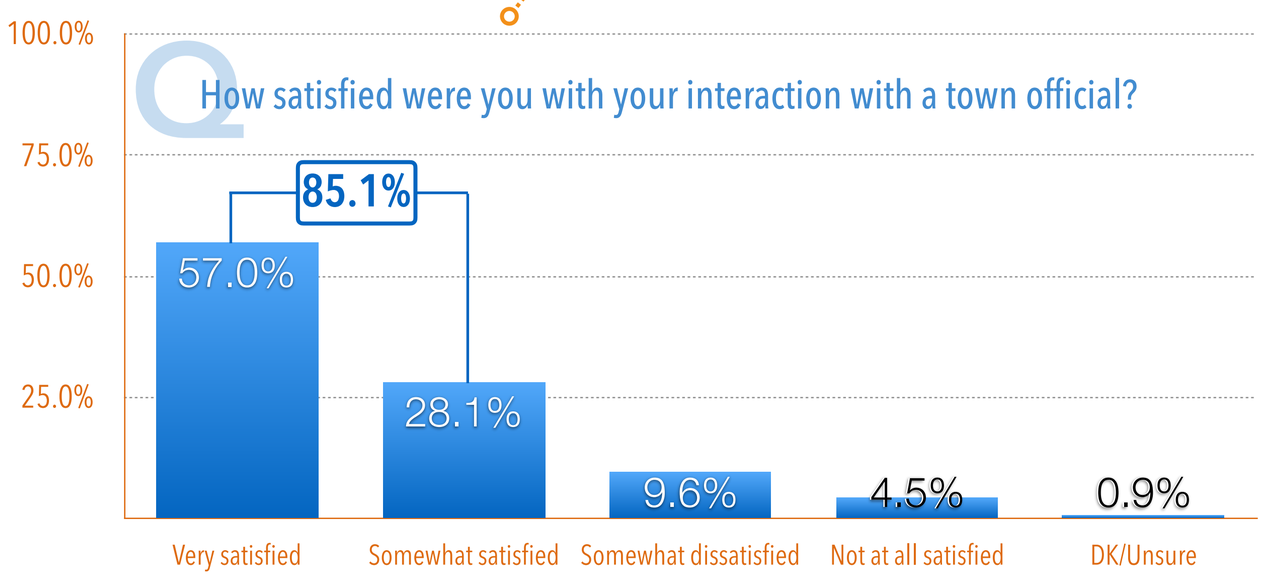
Moderate rate of contact & attendance

Less than half of respondents (47.1%) have been in contact with a town official over the past 12 months; among those in contact, a majority (85.1%) reported being satisfied with their interaction. Only one-quarter of respondents (25.5%) have attended a public meeting within the last 12 months.







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Residents prefer both digital + standard info

While 30.2% of residents reported preference to receive information about the Town of Danvers from “multiple methods,” the top single responses were “email” (17.2%), “newspaper” (11.8%), and “town website” (10.1%).

This suggests that residents seek out information through a variety of channels, thus important town notifications or updates should be delivered through both traditional and digital media. Further, as one of the reasons for dissatisfaction with town services was the website, updates may be need to ensure residents continue to see it as a viable outlet for information.

Preferred ways to get information about the Town of Danvers	2017
Prefer multiple methods	30.2
Email	17.2
Newspaper	11.8
Town website	10.1
Direct mail	8.9
Phone call	6.2
Internet	5.6
Social Media	3.7
TV	1.3
No opinion/no preference	1.3
Word of mouth	1.0
Utility company bill inserts	1.0
Don't Know	0.8

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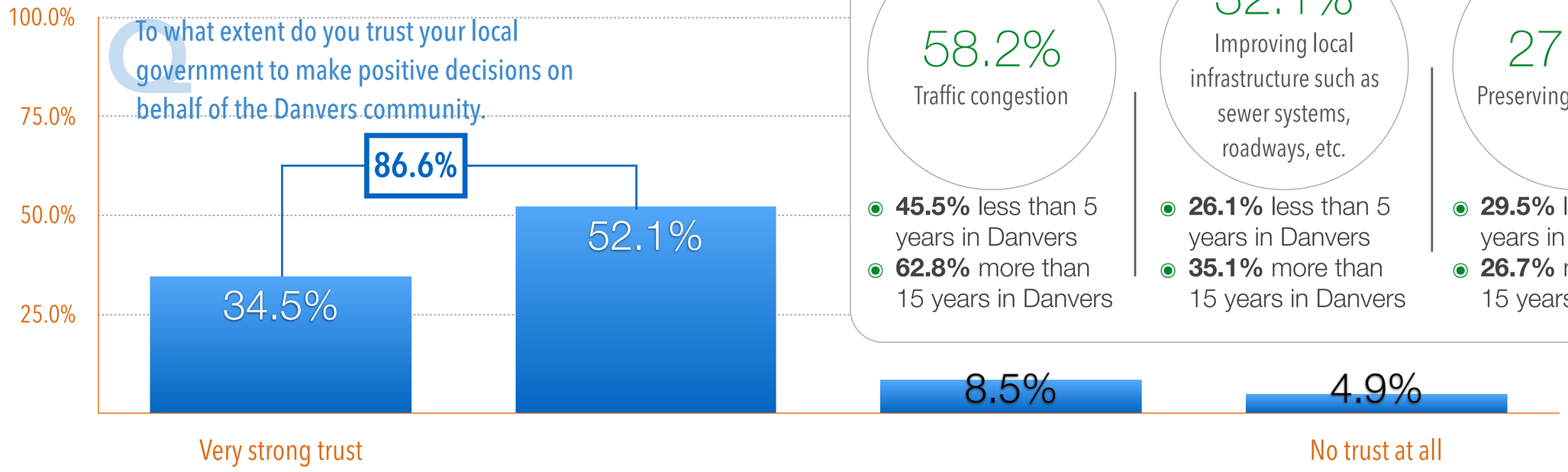
Strong trust of Danvers officials

When “don’t know” and neutral responses were removed from the data, over four-fifths of residents (86.6%) reported that they “trust” local government to make positive decisions on behalf of the Danvers community. Moving forward, three “issues facing Danvers” stood out as the top priorities for Town Officials to focus on: “traffic congestion” (58.2%), “improving local infrastructure such as sewer systems, roadways, etc.” (32.1%) and “preserving open space (27.6%). It should be noted that the top two priorities were more concentrated among respondents who had been in Danvers for longer (15+ years) compared to newer residents to the town (less than 5 years).



Top 3 Priorities for Danvers

58.2% Traffic congestion

- **45.5%** less than 5 years in Danvers
- **62.8%** more than 15 years in Danvers

32.1% Improving local infrastructure such as sewer systems, roadways, etc.

- **26.1%** less than 5 years in Danvers
- **35.1%** more than 15 years in Danvers

27.7% Preserving open space

- **29.5%** less than 5 years in Danvers
- **26.7%** more than 15 years in Danvers

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Residents staying for town amenities

When asked to indicate what activities they are doing most frequently in Danvers, versus leaving town to do, residents reported staying for various services and amenities available within the Town. Top activities included shopping, restaurants, recreation, outdoor activities, banking, and visiting the library and parks.

Respondents only reported to leave town more frequently for four of the eighteen services/activities: employment, to visit family, nightlife, and guests for attractions. Interestingly, residents leaving Danvers for "employment" tended to earn more than the general survey population.

Professional services, such as appointments or conducting business, showed a closer range in the frequency of in-town versus outside-of-town.

	Activities done **IN** Danvers	Activities done **OUTSIDE** of Danvers
Shopping	49.4	34.0
Restaurants	48.0	40.5
Recreation	32.8	19.7
Outdoor activities	35.0	19.3
Banking	27.4	4.4
Library	24.6	0.6
Parks	23.8	4.2
Appointments (doctor, dentist, etc.)	23.8	21.8
Visit friends	22.2	21.1
Family activities	19.3	9.7
Visit family	16.9	28.6
Other	1.7	10.1
Town Hall/Town Services	15.6	0.8
Employment	13.2	29.0
Conduct Business	11.1	9.7
Attend school	7.3	2.8
Senior Center	6.9	0.7
Night life	3.7	16.3
Guests for attractions	1.1	4.8

64.6% of the residents "leaving Danvers for **employment**" reported a household income of $70,000 or more. Further, 40.3% of these residents earned $110,000 or more.

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Young residents leave more for leisure + work

When looking at the activities that residents leave Danvers for based on their age, data indicated that respondents under age 45 tended leave the town for “restaurants,” “recreation,” “outdoor activities,” and “employment” more frequently than their counterparts age 45 or older.

A similar gap existed for “visiting friends and family” suggesting that the younger population may be more transient and, thus, less tied to the Town of Danvers. It is important to be mindful of this population’s desires for town amenities as they grow and become a larger segment of the overall population.

It is important to note, this line of questioning was designed to measure current behavior. Moving forward, it may be important in future surveys to ask a follow-up to respondents to gauge whether they would prefer some of these activities to be located in Danvers.

	Activities done **OUTSIDE** of Danvers	Respondents **under** 45 years old	Respondents **over** 45 years old
Shopping	34.0	34.8	34.6
Restaurants	40.5	44.5	39.5
Recreation	19.7	24.1	18.0
Outdoor activities	19.3	26.2	16.2
Banking	4.4	5.9	4.1
Library	0.6	1.1	0.4
Parks	4.2	8.6	2.9
Appointments (doctor, dentist, etc.)	21.8	25.7	21.5
Visit friends	21.1	27.3	19.2
Family activities	9.7	17.1	7.0
Visit family	28.6	42.2	24.3
Other	10.1	3.7	11.7
Town Hall/Town Services	0.8	0.5	1.0
Employment	29.0	49.2	22.5
Conduct Business	9.7	15.5	7.8
Attend school	2.8	5.9	1.6
Senior Center	0.7	0.0	1.2
Night life	16.3	31.6	11.5
Guests for attractions	4.8	11.2	2.7

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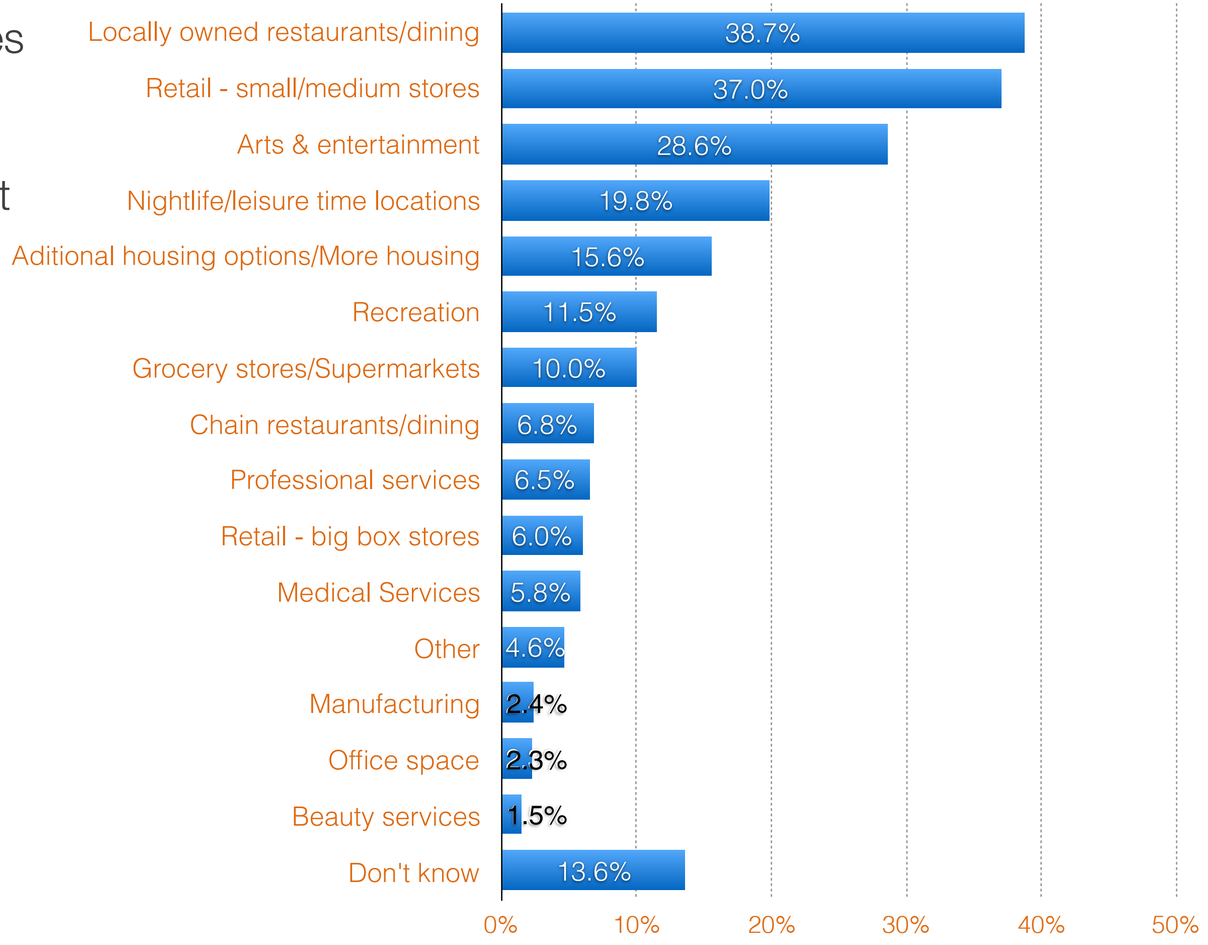
Ease of access and amenities will drive Downtown Danvers

The main factors playing into patronizing downtown shops & restaurants are the ease of parking and travel, along with the types of businesses and a good variety of options. Locally-owned restaurants, small to medium size retail stores, and arts & entertainment prevail as the preferred types of future development for Downtown Danvers.

Factors to increase patronage to Downtown shops or restaurants?	2017
Ease of parking/travel	40.6
Type of shop of restaurant	40.5
Variety of shops and restaurants	31.1
Value for the money	27.0
Quality of service	24.5
Walkability	23.1
Festivals and events	21.1
Atmosphere	18.8
Outdoor dining	18.4
Family-oriented	18.0
Community of park space	14.5
Location/convenience	13.5
Don't know	10.1
Other	1.3

What types of development would you like to see more of in Downtown Danvers?



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The Survey at Work

- **Posted on May 31st on Danvers Patch:** “What kinds of businesses would you like to see come to Town?”
- **Generated more than 25 responses,** including:

Independent book store	Topless BBQ (???)	Starbucks
Software tech companies	A & J King Bakery	Seafood / raw bar
Specialty Italian market	Our own Market Street	A little taco shop
Clothing boutiques	Fabric / quilting store	Pottery studio

Danvers, MA Patch

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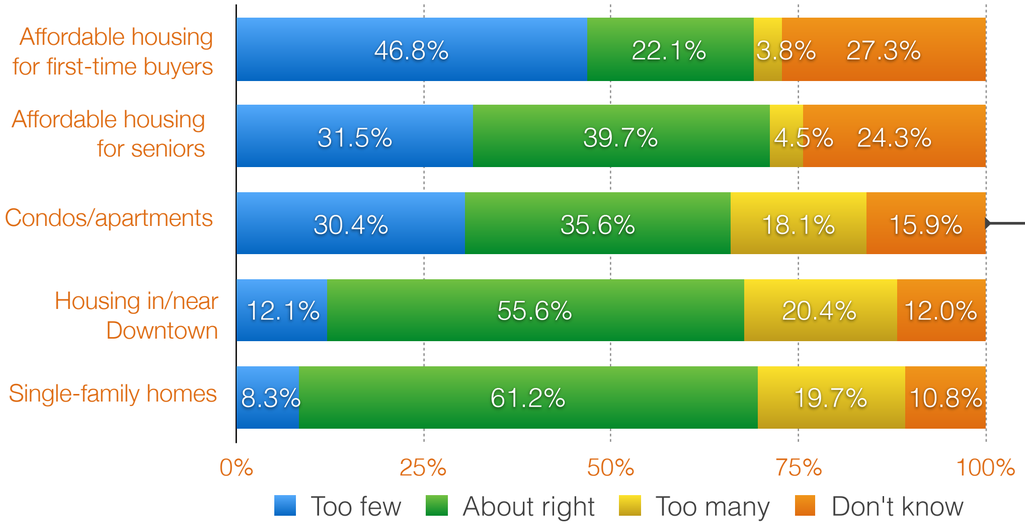
Focus on affordable housing and condos

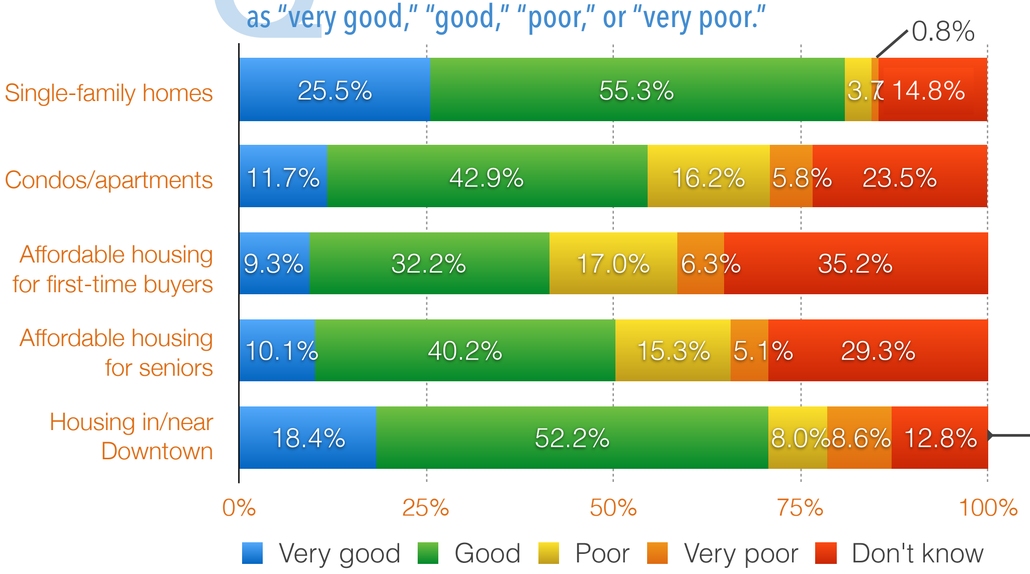
The types of housing in Danvers needing more development in the future are affordable housing for first-time buyers, affordable housing for seniors, and condos/ apartments. These three groups also received the highest frequency of poor ratings with respect to quality of available options (23.3% for “affordable housing for first-time buyers,” 22.0% for “condos/apartments,” and 20.4% for “affordable housing for seniors”).

I would like to ask you about the mixture of housing available in Danvers. For each please tell me if you believe there are too many, about the right amount, or too few in Danvers today.



39.0% of residents **under age 45** perceived there to be “too few” condos/ apartments in Danvers.

Then I would like you to rate the quality of each housing option as “very good,” “good,” “poor,” or “very poor.”



31.0% of residents **under age 45** perceived the downtown housing to “poor” or “very poor”.

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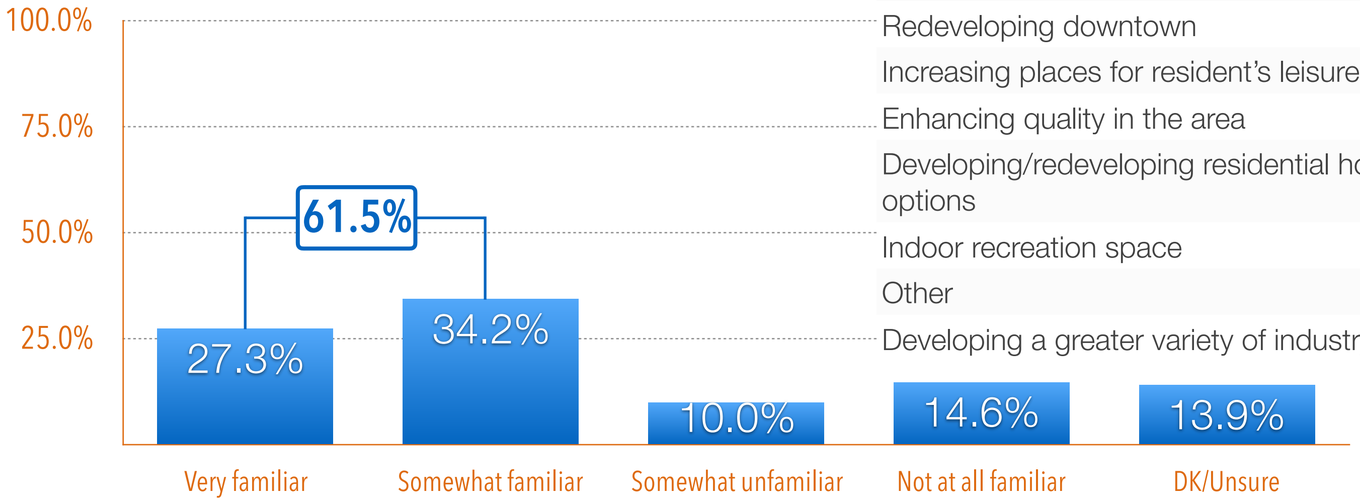
Proposition 2 1/2

More than three-fifths of residents (61.5%) reported being aware of Massachusetts Proposition 2 1/2, while one-quarter (24.6%) reported being unaware. The top projects, initiatives, and services that residents feel would warrant a 2.5% property tax increase are "to support school budget" (17.3%), "improving local infrastructure" (9.4%) or "improving school buildings and facilities" (9.3%). In addition, the interest in these top projects, initiatives, and services was higher among younger residents in 2017.

How familiar are you of Proposition 2 1/2 which requires approval from the Town Meeting to increase property taxes by more than 2.5% annually?



Town projects, initiatives or services that warrant a 2.5% property tax increase?	2017	Respondents under 45 years old	Respondents over 45 years old
None/nothing	85.2	67.9	91.2
To support school budget	17.3	43.3	8.2
Improving local infrastructure	9.4	15.0	7.6
Improving school buildings or facilities	9.3	18.2	6.4
Purchasing/preserving open space	8.9	13.9	7.2
To support municipal services	6.6	11.8	5.1
Public transit	4.1	5.9	3.7
Park amenities	3.7	9.1	1.8
Minimizing environmental impacts from development	3.4	3.7	3.3
Redeveloping downtown	3.4	4.8	2.9
Increasing places for resident's leisure activities	2.5	6.4	1.2
Enhancing quality in the area	2.4	4.8	1.6
Developing/redeveloping residential housing options	2.4	2.1	2.7
Indoor recreation space	1.8	5.9	0.4
Other	1.8	1.6	2.9
Developing a greater variety of industry types	0.6	0.5	0.4

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Property taxes in context

Among its 7 neighbors (light blue) and 7 NW of Boston (green) geographic peers (light pink), **Danvers** residents enjoy the **4th lowest residential mill rate** and pay the **3rd lowest residential tax bill.** The Town also enjoys the **highest CIP as a % of total grand list** (25%) in the region.

Res. Mill Rate = $14.20 / $1,000

Average Res. Tax Bill = $5,775

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Connectivity makes Danvers good place to live

While residents provided a wide variety of factors that made Danvers a good place to live, the primary reasons coalesced around the small town feel and closeness of the community in town.

Q What makes Danvers a good place to live?

What makes Danvers a GOOD place to live?	2017
Small town feel/nice town	13.2
The people/friendly people	12.1
Sense of community/good community	12.0
Convenient location	10.3
Low crime/safe	9.8
Well run government/good municipal services	8.6
Family friendly	6.0
Good public school system	5.1

Moving forward, “reducing traffic” would be a primary driver to making Danvers a great place to live. This reflects the responses collected when residents were asked what should be the priorities for the town.

Q What would make Danvers a great place to live?

What would make Danvers a GREAT place to live?	2017
Less traffic	14.6
Fine as is/already great place to live	12.9
Lower taxes	8.4
More affordable housing/more housing options	4.1
More activities for residents	3.8
Improved Downtown	3.5
Less housing developments/no more new housing	3.2
Better school system	3.0

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- **Increase town service usage.** Some local amenities, such as library, recreation, and marina/waterfront, are not age dependent services (such as schools or senior services) and can be utilized by anyone; yet these groups had larger frequency of “don’t now” responses from residents who have not utilized these services. Advertise these services, opportunities & events that exist, and how they can benefit people of all ages.

- **Grow public meeting attendance & volunteerism.** Residents want to get involved and be a part of helping Danvers; however, they often don’t know what opportunities exist, the commitment level required, and timing/calendar of when activities are happening. Social media, the Town’s website, and email can all be used to advertise and report on town meetings, open forums, elections, recreational/family activities, and volunteer opportunities.

- **Keep that “small town” feel.** Danvers is anticipating growth, with respect to population and residential & commercial building, in the coming years. While this may affect the perception of the quality of life and open space in Town for some, opportunities exist to mitigate those concerns with forward planning. Keeping a “small town feel” and having a “sense of community & togetherness” was feedback that appeared consistently from a segment of residents. Planning accordingly through zoning, design-review processes, and other steps can help ensure the growth coincides with the culture Danvers has cultivated over time, while still being beneficial and productivity to the new and growing population in Town.

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Considerations

- **Address traffic & road maintenance concerns.** While there is interest in the vitality and growth of Downtown and Danvers at large, residents are concerned with potential traffic implications and road quality issues, noting traffic, congestion, road quality & maintenance, and sidewalks needing repair as current concerns with Danvers. Efforts can be made to let residents know that traffic is a concern and it is being addressed by the Town.

- **Improve website and social media presence.** When seeking information on Danvers, residents noted having difficulty using the Town's website, with respect to navigation, accuracy/timeliness of information, and overall user experience; consideration could be given to a re-design of the layout and information present on the website. Respondents also noted that they would utilize social media and email to receive information; increased usage of these cost-effective forms of communication can increase awareness of and participation in various activities in Danvers.

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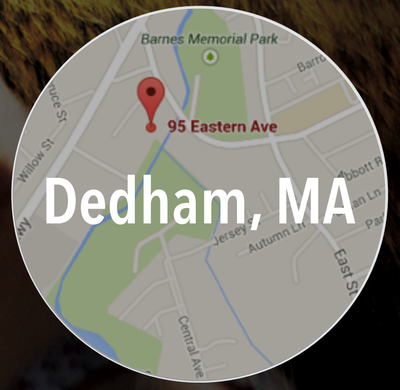

Dedham, MA