

Dover, Massachusetts

# Village Center Visioning Process Summary

April 2022

**Prepared for**  
Planning Board  
Town of Dover, Massachusetts

**Prepared by**  
Civic Space Collaborative

# Executive Summary

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The visioning process for Dover Village Center was conducted between September 2021 and February 2022 by the Dover Planning Board with assistance from Civic Space Collaborative, a planning and design consulting firm. The process consisted of stakeholder engagement, a visual preference survey, and a final summary with design and use recommendations.

Throughout the process, residents and stakeholders were asked questions to help them consider desired characteristics for Dover Village Center in its current and future forms. A visual preference survey was developed to collect feedback about different building features such as height, facades, and setbacks.

There were 213 respondents who completed the survey. In general, respondents felt that it is most important to retain the Village Center's feeling of small-town community as demonstrated presently by the town house, library, churches, indoor community spaces and open space. There was a desire to see greater cohesion and walkability between destinations, as well as to have a place to meet for a beverage or meal.

The visual preference survey results highlight several key preferences for building features and use in the Village Center. Below is a summary of the respondent's preferences.

- **Building Features:** Overall the respondents favored the following types of building features.
  - Two-story buildings
  - Brick façade
  - Pitched roof perpendicular to the street
  - One or multiple small retail establishments
  - Outdoor patio seating, overhang awnings
  - Close proximity to the public right-of-way
- **Building Use:** Respondents preferred the following uses for new buildings.
  - Ground Floor uses that include small retail/shop space (less than 5,000 square feet), a café, a restaurant, and/or a bar/wine bar
  - Ground floor uses that promote foot traffic and patronage
  - Higher level floors were preferred to be used as office space and professional services

The recommendations in this document are based on public input and are intended to help guide the Town of Dover Planning Board in its effort with any zoning changes in Dover Village Center.

# Table of Contents

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Executive Summary .....	2
Introduction.....	4
Visioning Process .....	5
Design + Use Survey Results Summary.....	6
Massing + Site Plan Options .....	7
Summary + Next Steps .....	10
Appendix A: Stakeholders Interview List .....	11
Appendix B: Survey Questions + Responses.....	12

# Introduction

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Dover Village Center, for the purposes of this process, is an approximately 60-acre area in the center of the Town of Dover. It comprises municipal and institutional features such as the Dover Town House, Dover Public Library, Department of Public Works, Caryl Community Center, Public Safety Building, Charles River School, Sawin Museum and several churches. Commercial features are also present, such as a deli, gas station, bank, and dry cleaners, as well as other professional offices and small businesses. In addition to hosting Highland Cemetery, it features robust open space abutting the Town House, the library and Charles River School.

The Village Center is about to experience significant change due to the redevelopment of the Caryl Community Center, and future redevelopment projects at 10 Springdale Ave and potentially 14 Springdale Av. In anticipation of this change and other future development, the Town is seeking to create a cohesive vision for Village Center which may potentially lead to a rezoning effort, ensuring that any future development is complimentary to the character of the town and of maximum benefit to residents.

The following document describes the visioning process which the Town's Planning Board has undertaken with Civic Space Collaborative, a planning and design consulting firm. It includes an overview of stakeholder engagement which helped guide the development of a visual preference survey, the main method for public input for the process. A complete summary of results for the visual preference survey is provided.



*St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church*



*Dover Market*



*Dover Town House*



*Caryl Community Center*



# Visioning Process

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The visioning process for Dover Village Center took place between September 2021 and February 2022. The Dover Planning Board selected Civic Space Collaborative (CSC) for this process. The process consists of three components.

1. Stakeholder engagement: interviews, stakeholder meetings, and small group meetings
2. Visual preference survey
3. Design and use recommendations

Below is a summary of the process.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Ten individual stakeholder meetings were conducted in Fall in an effort to guide the development of the visual preference survey. Topics of discussion related to Dover Village Center included but were not limited to the following.

- The important and enjoyable characteristics in Dover Village Center's present form
- Elements that perhaps went away but would like to be revived
- Features that have not existed that would be nice to see

In November 2021, a stakeholder meeting was convened for the Council on Aging, providing an opportunity for Dover residents 60 and older to share their experiences in the Village Center. Fourteen participants joined from the Council on Aging and general public.

## Visual Preference Survey

A visual preference survey was developed to collect public participation for the visioning process. A combination of question types included short-answer, multi-choice, photos of building features to select, and open-ended questions and was open for two months.



**Dover Village Center: Visual Preference Survey**

The Town of Dover would like to hear from you to help create a cohesive vision for the Village Center!

Please take our 5-10 minute survey to help inform potential zoning changes and design standards for the Town of Dover.

## Distribution

An outreach plan was developed to ensure an effective distribution of the visual preference survey for both print and digital outreach. The outreach materials and survey were distributed using the following channels.

- Town of Dover Newsletter
- Council on Aging Newsletter
- Town of Dover Website
- Town of Dover Social Media
- Planning Board Contacts
- Other Dover-centric social media



*Outreach Material Example*

# Visual Preference Survey Results Summary

Two hundred and thirteen respondents aged 18 to 84 completed the survey, and 96% have lived in Dover for at least one year. Eighty percent of survey respondents lived within two miles of Dover Village Center and most frequently visit for shopping/errands, the Town House, and the Dover Public Library. See Appendix for full survey results.

## Downtown Characteristics

Respondents were asked to fill in short answer questions to reflect upon current characteristics of Dover Village Center.

- What about Dover Village Center is most important to you?
- What places, amenities, or buildings do you think highlight Dover's character?
- What do you currently not enjoy about Dover Village Center?
- What do you want to do or see in Dover Village Center?

In general, residents believed it most important to retain the Village Center's feeling of small-town community, as demonstrated by the Town House, the library, churches, indoor community spaces and abutting open space. There was a desire to see greater cohesion and walkability between destinations, as well as to have a place to meet for a beverage or meal.

## Building Features

Respondents were asked for their preference about seven building features, as seen in the image below. Overall, respondents favored two-story buildings with brick façade, a pitched roof perpendicular to the street, one or multiple small retail establishments with outdoor patio seating, overhang awnings, and close proximity to the public right-of-way.



### Building Features

**Building height:** The number floors in a building.  
Examples: one floor, two floors, three floors.

**Façade:** The front of a building.  
Examples: brick, wood shingles.

**Roofline:** The shape of the roof covering the top of a building.  
Examples: flat, pitched.

**Ground floor use:** What the first floor of the building is being used for.  
Examples: Retail, cafes, and offices.

**Public space:** A place that is generally open and accessible to people.  
Examples: benches, picnic tables, and other amenities.

**Setbacks:** The distance between the building and the sidewalk or street.  
Examples: parking, lawn, landscaping, and public space.

*Definition of building features (Image source: 1856 Country Store, Facebook)*

## Visual Preference Summary

This table summarizes the top building feature results for Dover Village Center.

Feature	Top Scoring Images	
<b>Building Height</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two story buildings received two of top three results</li> <li>One story building scored second highest</li> </ul>	 <p>Two Stories</p>	 <p>One Story</p>
<b>Building Facades</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The three buildings that scored the highest were all brick</li> </ul>	 <p>Brick</p>	 <p>Brick</p>
<b>Building Rooflines</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The top two scoring images have pitched roofs that are perpendicular to the street</li> </ul>	 <p>Pitched perpendicular</p>	 <p>Pitched perpendicular</p>
<b>Ground Floor Uses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two small retail spaces under 5,000 square feet scored in the top three</li> <li>One retail space under 5,000 square feet was also in the top three</li> </ul>	 <p>One retail space</p>	 <p>Multiple retail spaces</p>
<b>Public Spaces</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Images with seating options scored highest</li> </ul>	 <p>Tables / picnic tables</p>	 <p>Awning + Benches</p>
<b>Setbacks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decks and patios received first- and third- highest results</li> <li>Flush with ROW and small lawns also scored highly</li> </ul>	 <p>Deck / patio</p>	 <p>Flush with right-of-way</p>



# Illustrative Building Concepts: Massing + Use

The following building options provide a visual representation of building features and use preferences expressed by respondents of the visual preference survey. The images are intended to provide guidance for zoning throughout Dover Village Center and are not intended for interpretation for any individual parcel.



*The Small Retail building option includes features like a brick façade, pitched roof, two stories, 8+ feet setback, public seating and landscaping. Its intended uses are a cafe, small shop or restaurant on the ground floor and offices on the 2nd floor.*



*The Small Retail + Narrow Building option introduces additional floor space for both the ground and 2nd floors.*



*The One Story with Multiple Storefronts building option includes features like a brick façade, flat roof, one story, 10-12 feet setback, public seating and landscaping. Its intended uses for cafes, small shops and restaurants.*



*The Two Stories with Multiple Storefronts option introduces an additional floor for professional offices and services.*

## Next Steps

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The visioning process for Dover Village Center is intended to serve as a guiding exercise for future planning and zoning efforts for the Town of Dover. It provides a cross-section of what survey respondents feel about the Village Center and may form the basis of public opinion for what future development may look like. Moving forward, it is recommended the Town Planning Board consider the following next steps.

- Present findings to key stakeholders, relevant municipal staff and members of the public
- Identify additional development in Dover and adjacent communities which embody the building features and uses preferred in the summary
- Undertake rezoning efforts to codify new preferences for building features and uses in the Town Center
- Consider restricting building features and uses that are not desired and should not be allowed
- Consider additional regulation to protect buildings that have desired building features and uses from redevelopment
- Develop programs to identify and provide assistance for changes for properties to update their buildings in alignment with new preferred features and uses
- Implement short-term actions, such as patio seating and short-term leases, to activate underutilized storefronts in a manner consistent with desired building features and uses
- Update zoning to promote parking in the rear of the building, which reflects preference about setbacks and interest in new public spaces

The visioning process generally confirms an alignment of preferences between survey respondents, the Town Planning Board and key stakeholders.



## Appendix A: Stakeholders Interview List

Organization	Title	Name
Board of Library Trustees	Member	Erin Rodat-Salva
Calumet Dover	Member	Mark Howe
Caryl Community Center	Process Leader	Ford Spaulding
Conservation Committee, Open Space Committee	Member	Justine Kent-Uritam
Dover Market	Owners	Gorka and Laurenzi Brabo
Corrigan Developments	Resident	Pat Corrigan
N/A	Resident	Andrew Pearsons
Open Space Committee	Member	Val Lin
Parks and Recreation	Member	Mark Ghiloni
Zoning Board of Appeals	Member	Erika alders

## Appendix B: Survey Questions + Responses

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# Building Heights

Select all the images below which contain **building heights** that you like.  
Leave the images which contain building heights that you do not like unchecked.  
(Building height is impacted by the number of floors or if the building has a pitched roof.)



1. Two stories



2. One story



3. Two stories



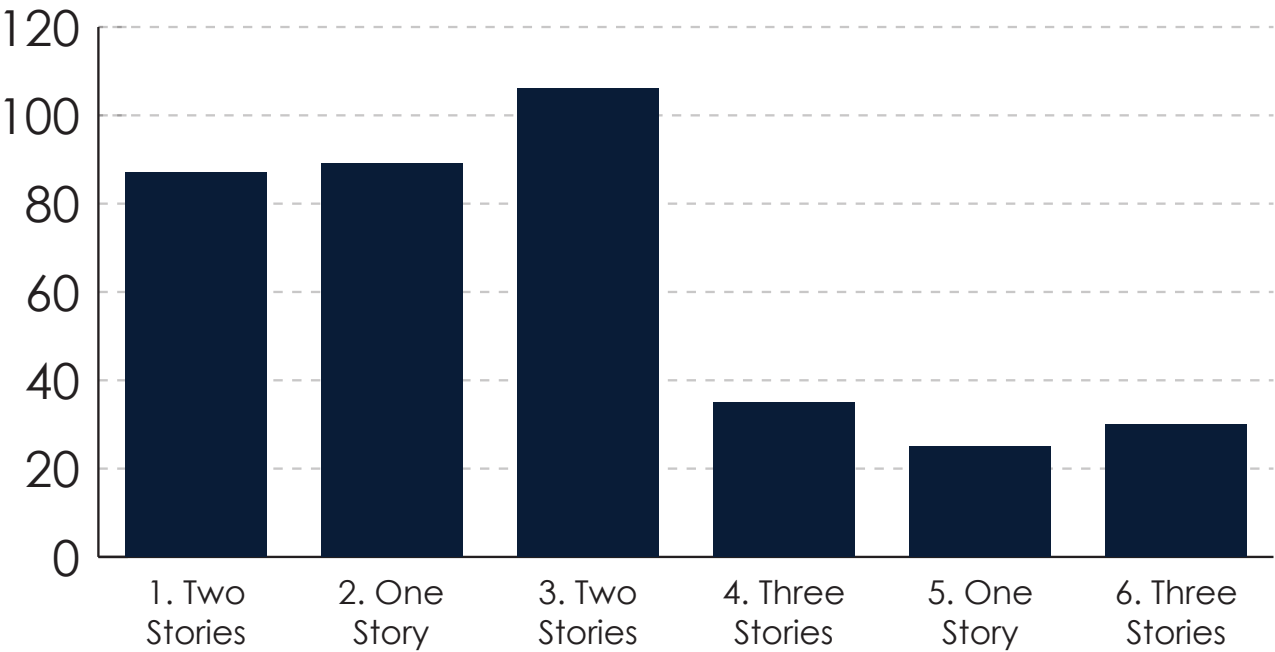
4. Three stories



5. One story



6. Three stories



# Building Façades

Select all the images below which contain a **façade** that you like.  
Leave the images which contain a **façade** that you do not like unchecked.  
(A façade is the front of a building.)



1. Brick



2. Brick



3. Brick



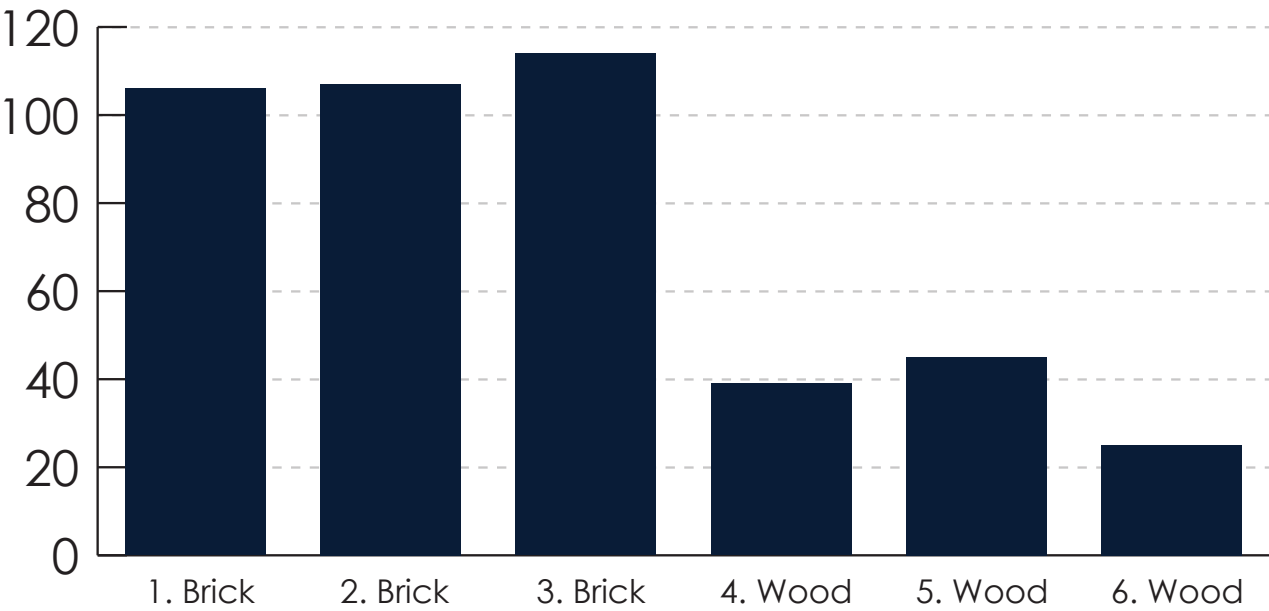
4. Wood



5. Wood



6. Wood





## Building Rooflines

Select all the images below which contain **rooflines** that you like.  
Leave the images which contain building **rooflines** that you do not like unchecked.  
(A roofline is the shape of the roof covering the top of a building.)



1. Pitched perpendicular to the street



2. Pitched perpendicular to the street



3. Flat



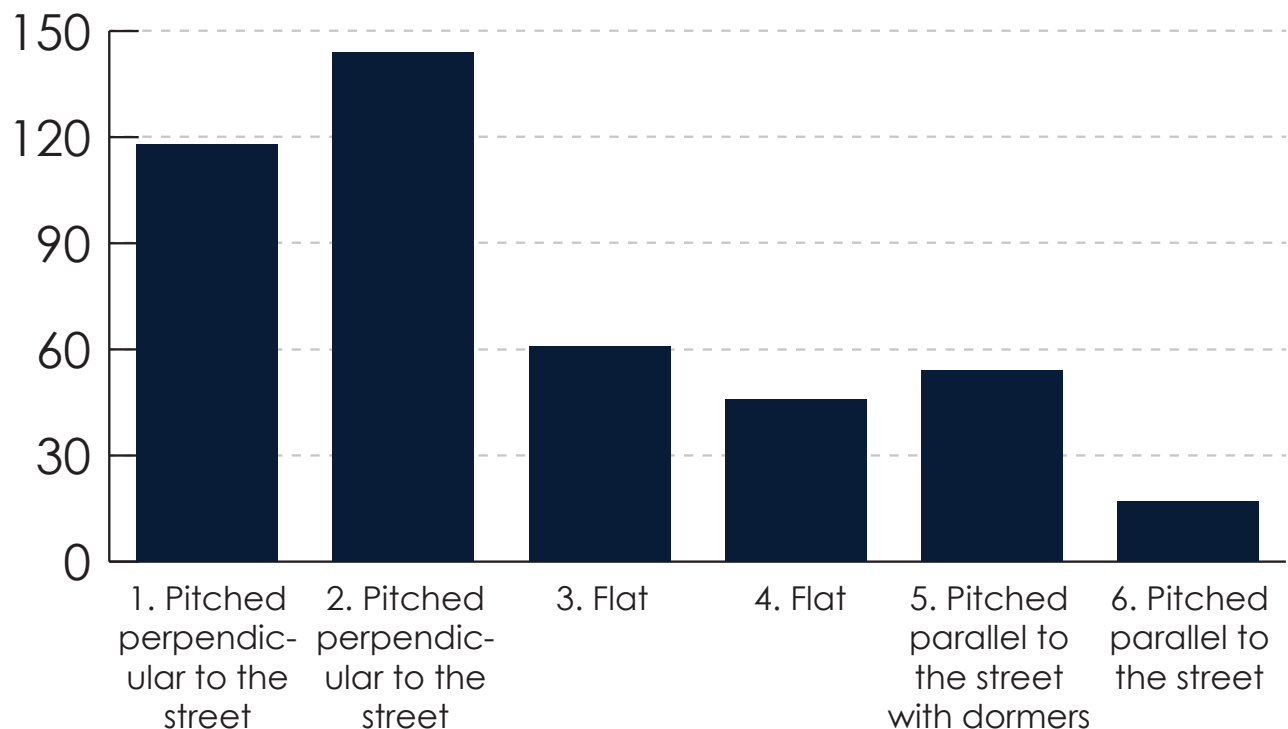
4. Flat



5. Pitched parallel to the street with dormers



6. Pitched parallel to the street



# Ground Floor Uses

Select all the images below which contain **ground floor uses** that you like.  
Leave the images which contain the **ground floor** that you do not like unchecked.  
(Ground floor use is what the first floor of a building is being used for, such as grocers, retail shops and professional services.)



1. One retail space



2. One retail space



3. Multiple retail spaces



4. One retail space



5. Multiple retail spaces



6. Multiple retail spaces





# Public Spaces

Select all the images below which contain **public spaces** that you like.  
Leave the images which contain **public spaces** that you do not like unchecked.  
(Public spaces, for the purposes of this survey, is the area in front of a building which is open and accessible to people.)



1. Driveway



2. Awning + benches



3. Benches



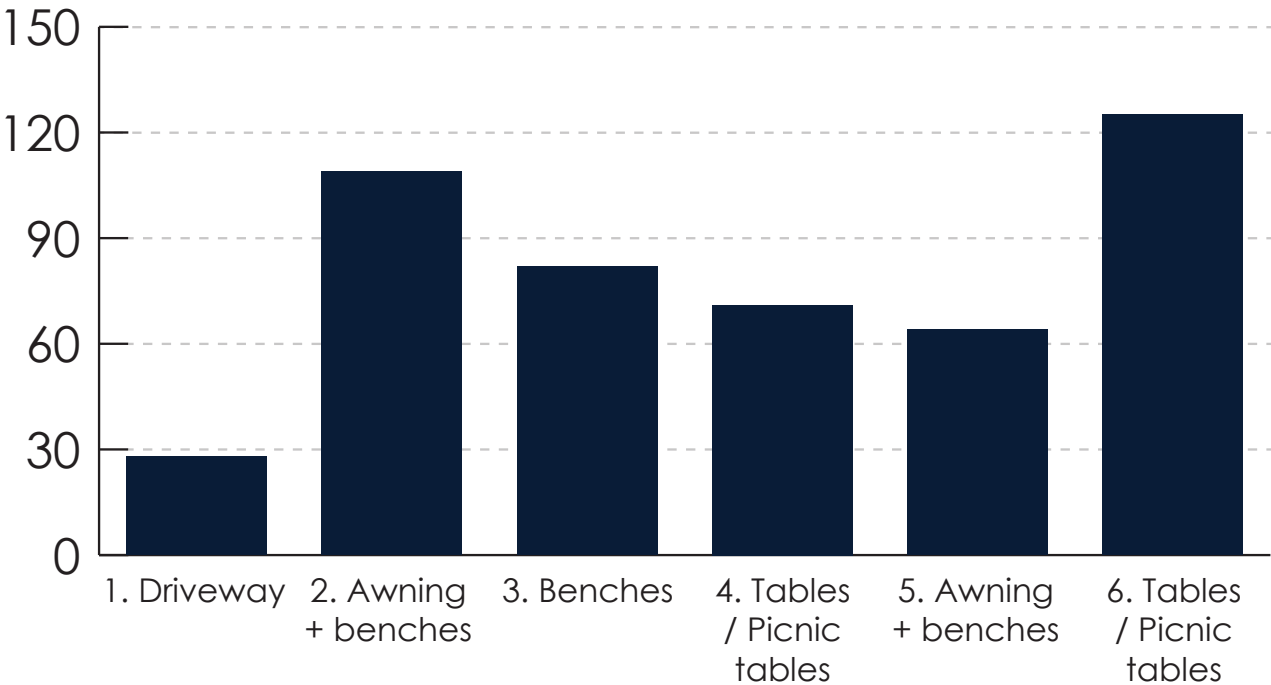
4. Tables / Picnic tables



5. Awning + benches



6. Tables / Picnic tables



# Setbacks

Select all the images below which contain the building **setback** that you like.  
Leave the images which contain the building **setback** that you do not like unchecked.  
(A setback is the area between the building and the sidewalk or street.)



1. Driveway with landscaping



2. Landscaping



3. Parking



4. Flush with right of way



5. Flush with right of way



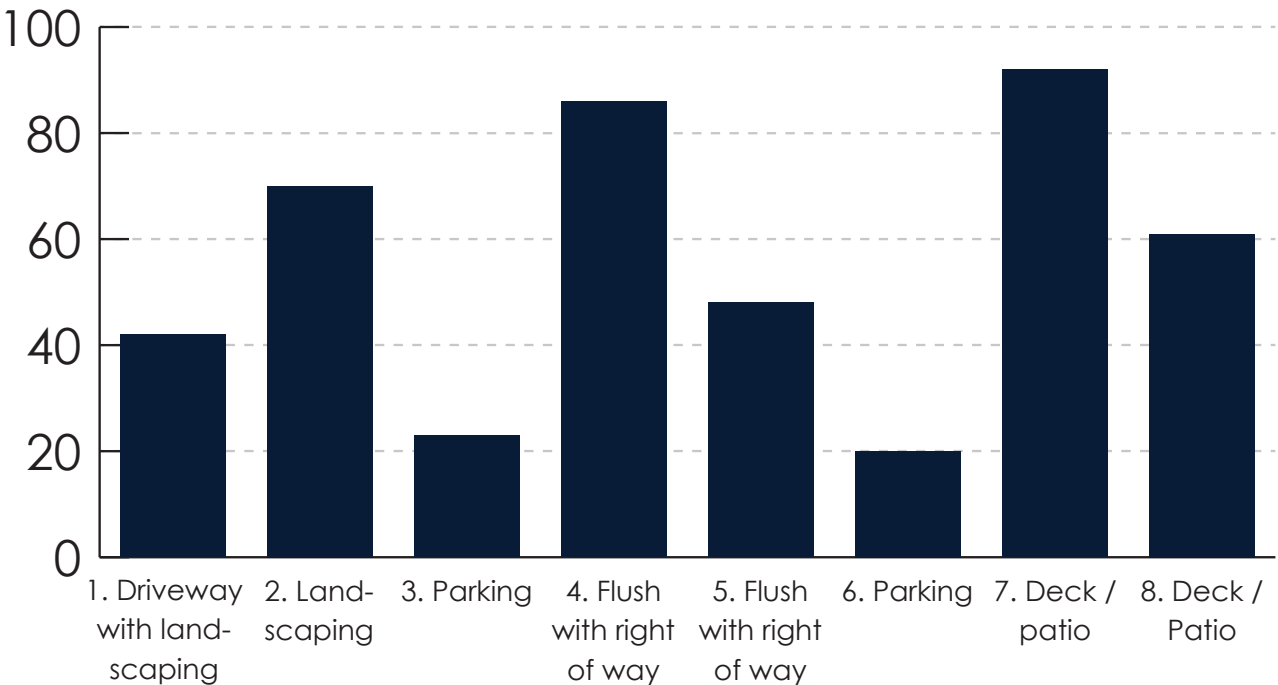
6. Parking



7. Deck / Patio



8. Deck / Patio

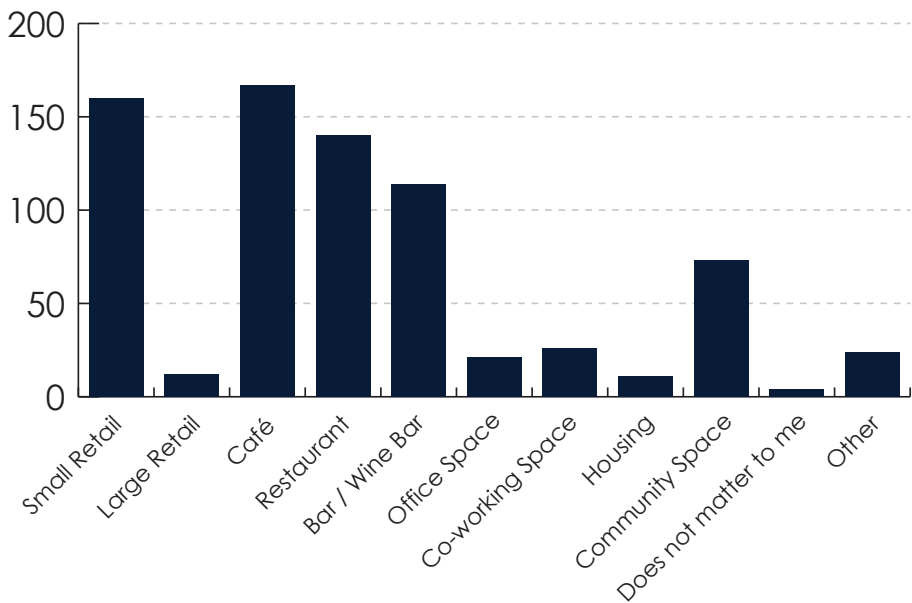


## Ground Floor Uses

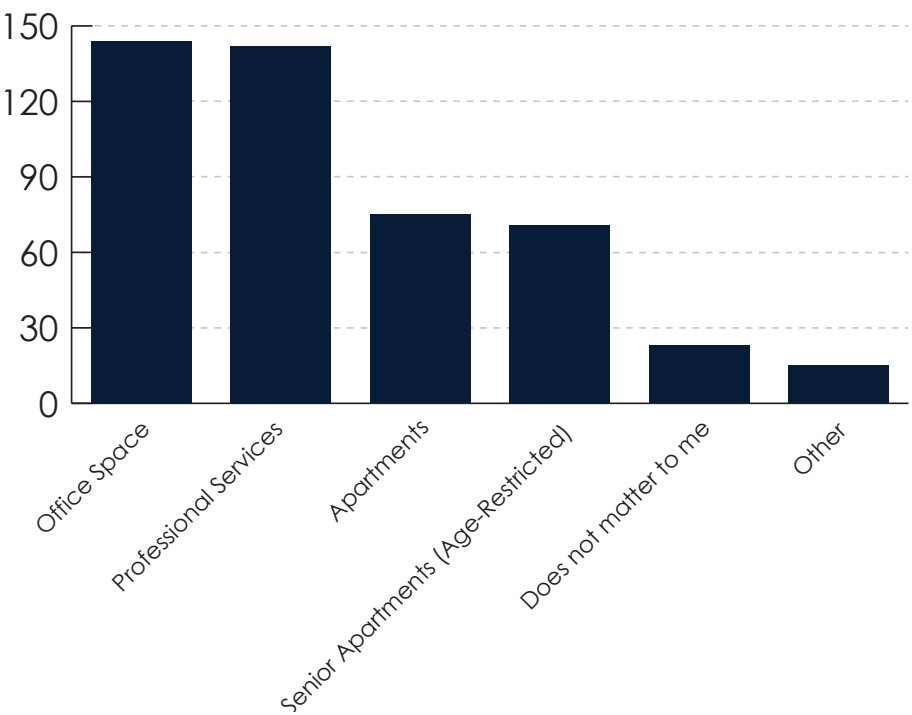
For building use, respondents preferred ground floor uses which promote strong foot traffic and patronage, including small retail/shop space (less than 5,000 square feet), a café, a restaurant, and/or a bar/wine bar. Additional community space also received favorable response and could perhaps be accommodated via outdoor dining/seating.

Higher level floors were preferred to be utilized as office space and professional services, along with some desire for apartments and senior apartments (age-restricted).

First Floor Building Use Preferences

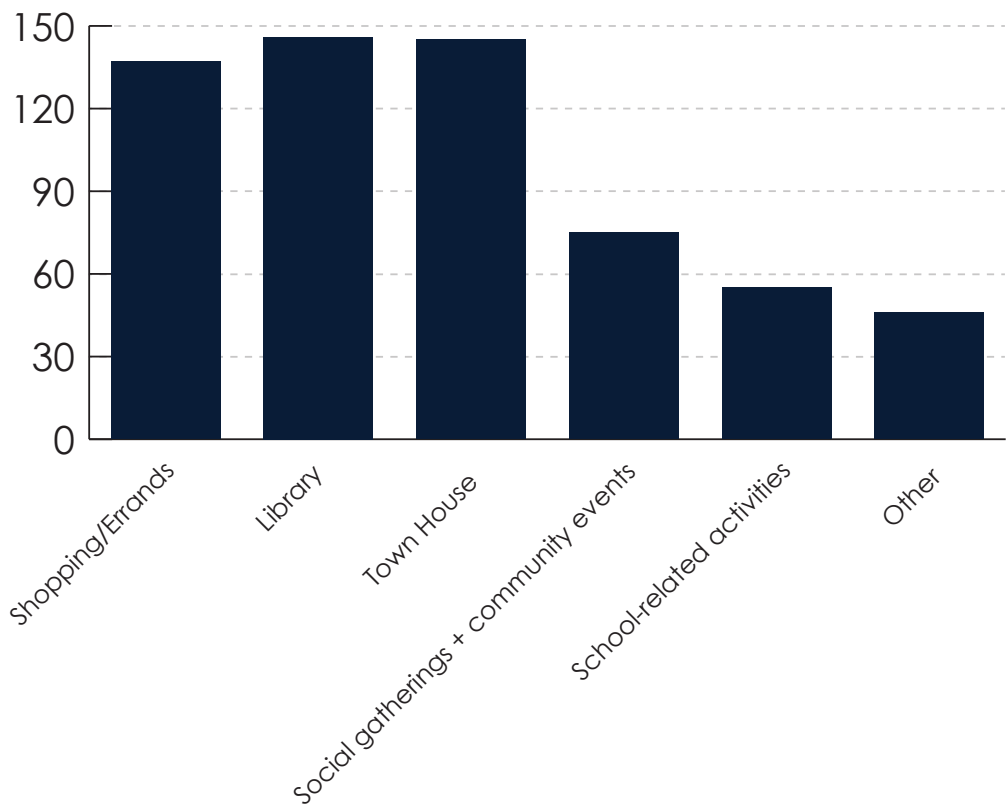


Additional Floor Building Use Preferences

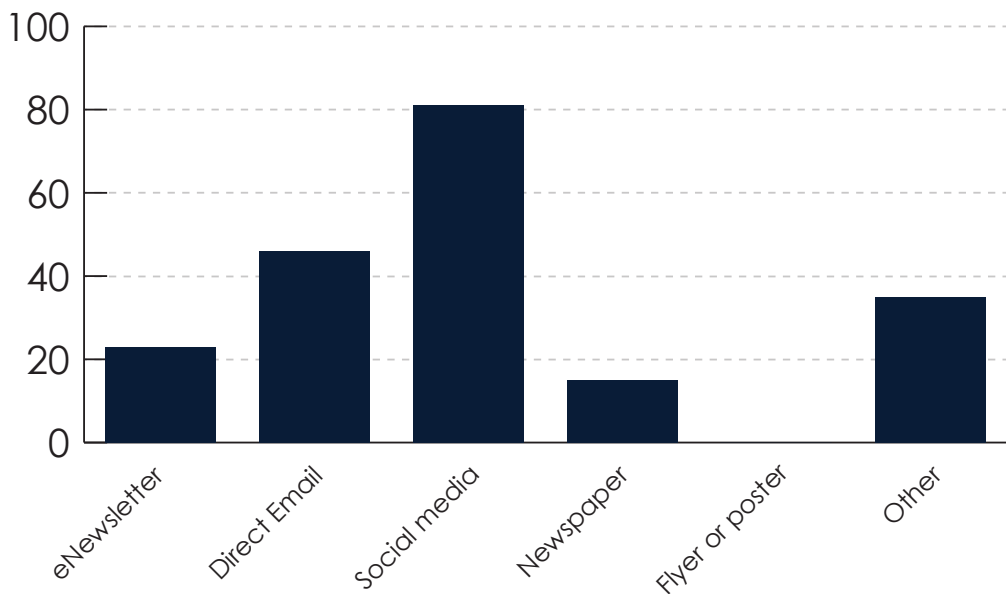


# Demographics

What do you do in Dover Village Center?

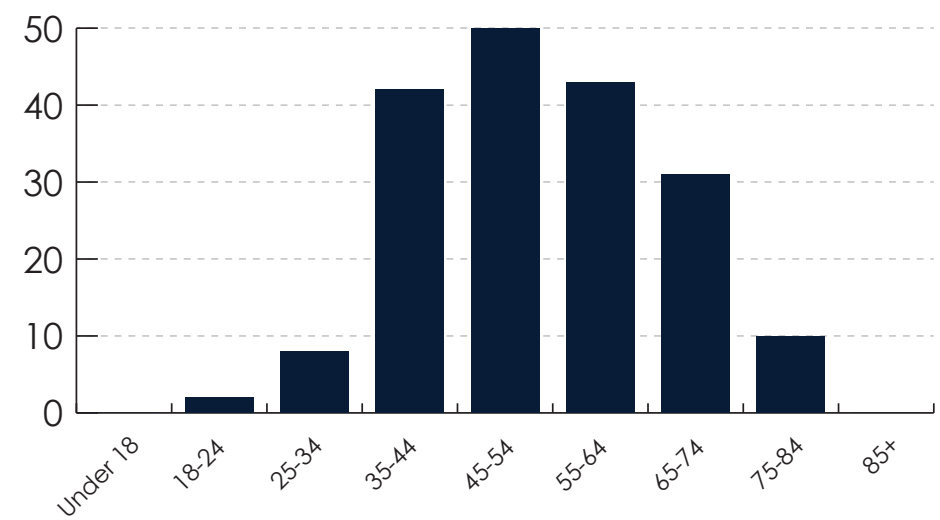


How did you hear about this or who shared the survey with you?

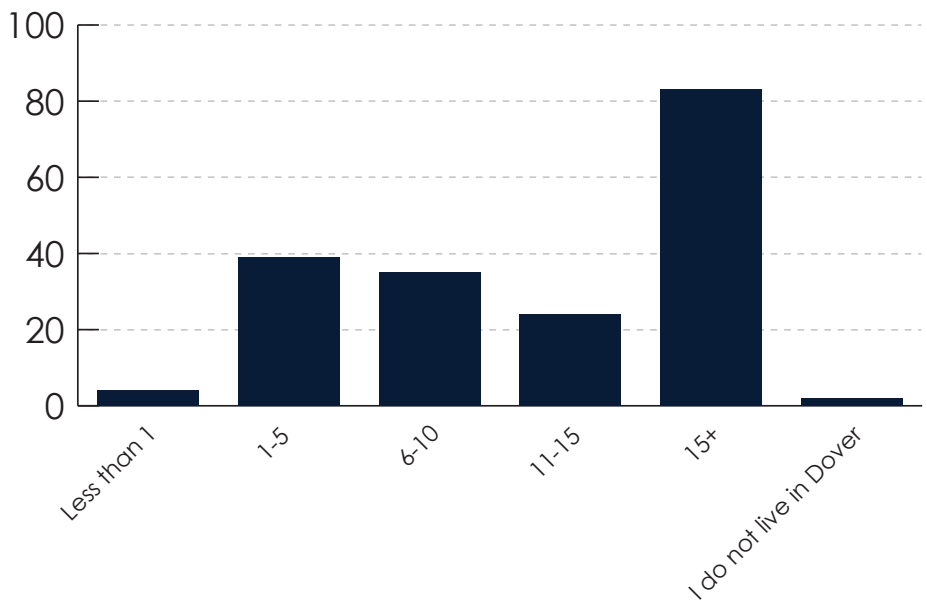


# Demographics

What is your age?



How many years have you lived in Dover?



How far away do you live from Dover Village Center?

