

# Waban Surveys Summary

Future Planning  
Working Group



# How Created

- Sub committee of the WAC tasked to pursue future planning with the community.
- Findings and presentations of those meetings have been posted on our website.
- Content for surveys was culled from 4 years of future planning and has gone through much copy editing and reviews WAC board 2016-2017.
- Like all surveys, not perfect, they will never be - they are a work in progress. There will be more.
- The questions themselves were designed to give us opinions and attitudes from a greater amount of Villagers so we have a better understanding of their positions.

# What the information does for us

- Help us do a better job of representing villagers concerns and needs
- Focus our efforts on key concerns
- Have quantifiable statistics to help the city be responsive and do better planning
- Learn information that will help WAC efforts currently underway

# How and When

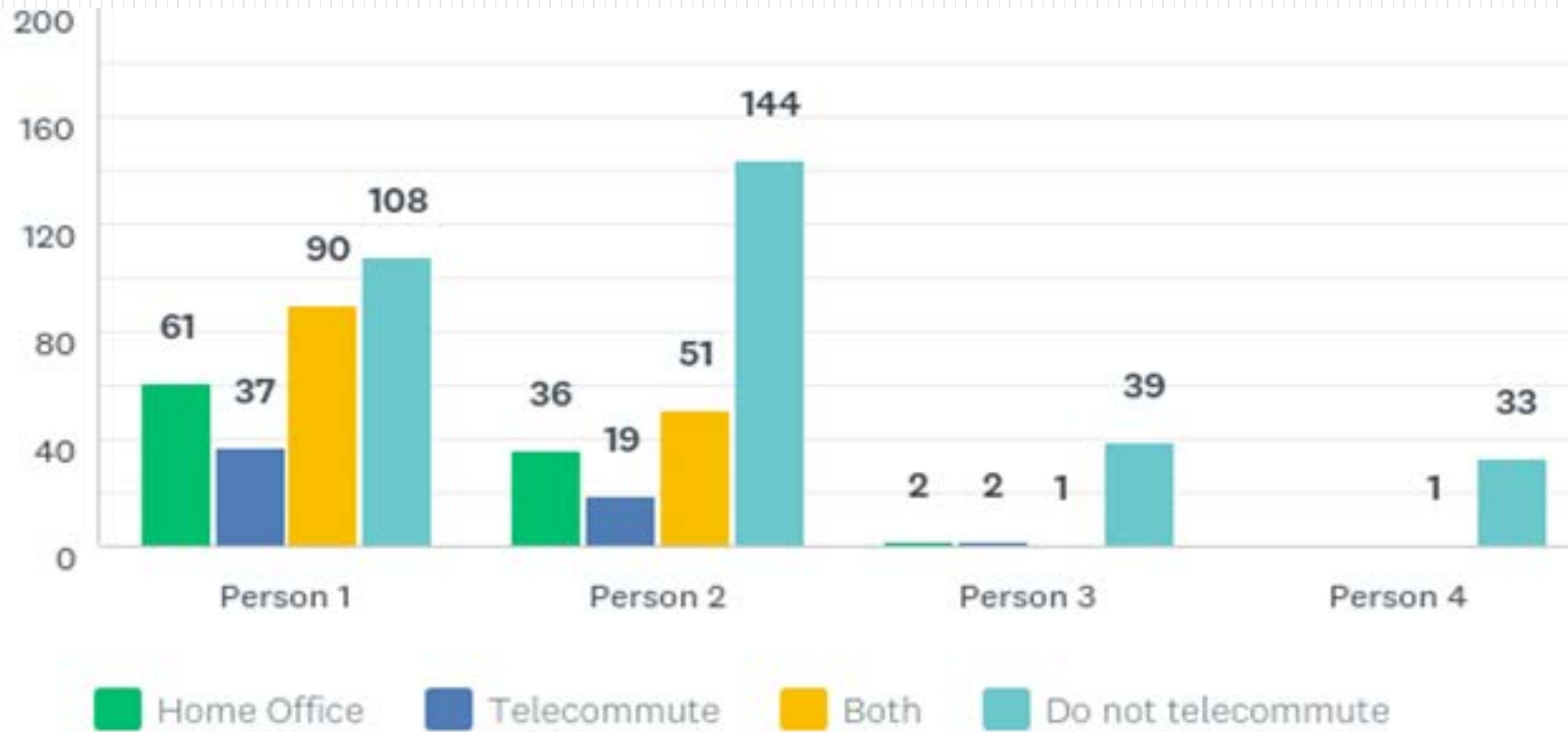
- Three surveys were given to Waban residents who subscribed to the Waban Area Council newsletter.
- During June 2017, approximately 310 people responded.
- Some answers had 300 respondents or more, and almost all had more than 250

# Transportation

We asked if members of their household work from home (e.g. home office, clients come to your home), telecommute (e.g. use messaging/skype/phone to work with others) or do both. We gave the option to answer for up to 4 people and respondents could only choose one answer per person:

- Data for Person 1 suggests that of the 296 individuals counted, 64% (188) work from home or engage in telecommuting, while 36% (108) do not, or **more than half of Person 1 work from home.**
- Person 2, however, we find that of the total of 250 individuals, 42% (106) work from home or telecommute, while 58% (144) do not, or **a little less than half work from home.**
- **Most people who telecommute do so several times or more per week.**

# Telecommuting



Respondents could only select one answer

# Transportation

- **Those who travel to work, their mode of transportation is approximately:**
  - 70% car
  - 13% subway
  - 2% bikes
- **They make 4-5 round trips per week**
  - most travel 5-10 miles one way
- **Of the few people that ride bikes, only a small fraction do so on a regular basis.**
- **People would ride bikes more often if not for safety concerns.** They cited insufficient bike lanes, increasing automotive traffic, bad weather conditions, and poor road conditions as the primary deterrents. Some comments included:

# Comments Included

- *"I am not in favor of adding bike lanes. Traffic is already too congested."  
"After our biker was hit by a car in Waban we bike much much less."*
- ***"I used to ride my bike to work in Boston, but given how many fatalities occur because of distracted driving and poor road conditions, I no longer do so"***
- *"The more "development" and dense housing we get in Newton, the less safe it is to ride a bike. It is unfortunate b/c we moved here for the green open spaces (and less dense housing) which = quieter streets where children can safely ride bikes, and the Mayor and others in city government seem to want to turn Newton into Brookline. We would have moved to Brookline if we wanted to live in a semi-urban area.*
- ***"We do not feel safe using bikes in traffic, regardless of bike lanes."***
- ***"I do not ride a bike. I am elderly and would not ride except on bike trails."***



# Transportation

- **62% of households have two gas autos, 18% have one, 15% have three**
  - 11% had hybrids, and only 2% had electric cars
- **Almost half of students get to school by car, followed by 30% by bus, and 20-30% walk.**
- **On average, people take 10 trips per week from the house for non-work or school-related trips - almost all by car.**
- **Most people feel that traffic congestion is bad and of those, many feel that it has gotten worse over the last 5 years**

# Public Transportation

- **Of the 300 who responded, nearly 160 respondents said they NEVER use the bus, commuter rail, or the RIDE**
- **Of those who did use public transportation:**
  - **most respondents - 126 (47%) - selected Taxis (including Uber and Lyft) a few times per year, 77 monthly, 30 weekly**
- **117 respondents said they take the T a few times per year**
  - **74 (25%) on a monthly basis**
  - **53 (18%) weekly**
  - **34 (11%) daily**
- **Reliability:**
  - **82% said the T was acceptable or excellent vs 3% intolerable, and 10% poor**
  - **85% thought Taxis were acceptable or excellent**

# One person commented

- "Uber/Lyft are great options for times when being a 4 person, 1-car family doesn't cut it. City making it easier for ride-share type services like this is key. **Being without an auto in this city and raising kids who do lots of activities = highly unrealistic.** biking/walking only work for certain situations. **The green line stinks. The buses are unreliable and can take forever.** What's left? Hop in your gas-guzzling SUV that sits idle in your driveway 95% of the time or do ride-share. Smart ride-share is absolutely the way forward."

# Open Spaces in Newton

- 275 People estimated **they frequented open spaces in Newton 40 times in the past year Cold Springs was the number 1 destination** followed by Hemlock Gorge, the Aqueduct trail, Quinobequin trail, Cutler Park, Nahanton Park, Norumbega Park. A quarter of respondents visit spaces in neighboring cities on a weekly basis.
- **59% of the people thought we had the right amount of open space, but 41% thought we should have more.**
- 38% thought the conditions of the parks were "OK", while 32% thought there was room for improvement, 24% thought they were well maintained, another 7% said poor condition or worse.

# Open Spaces in Newton

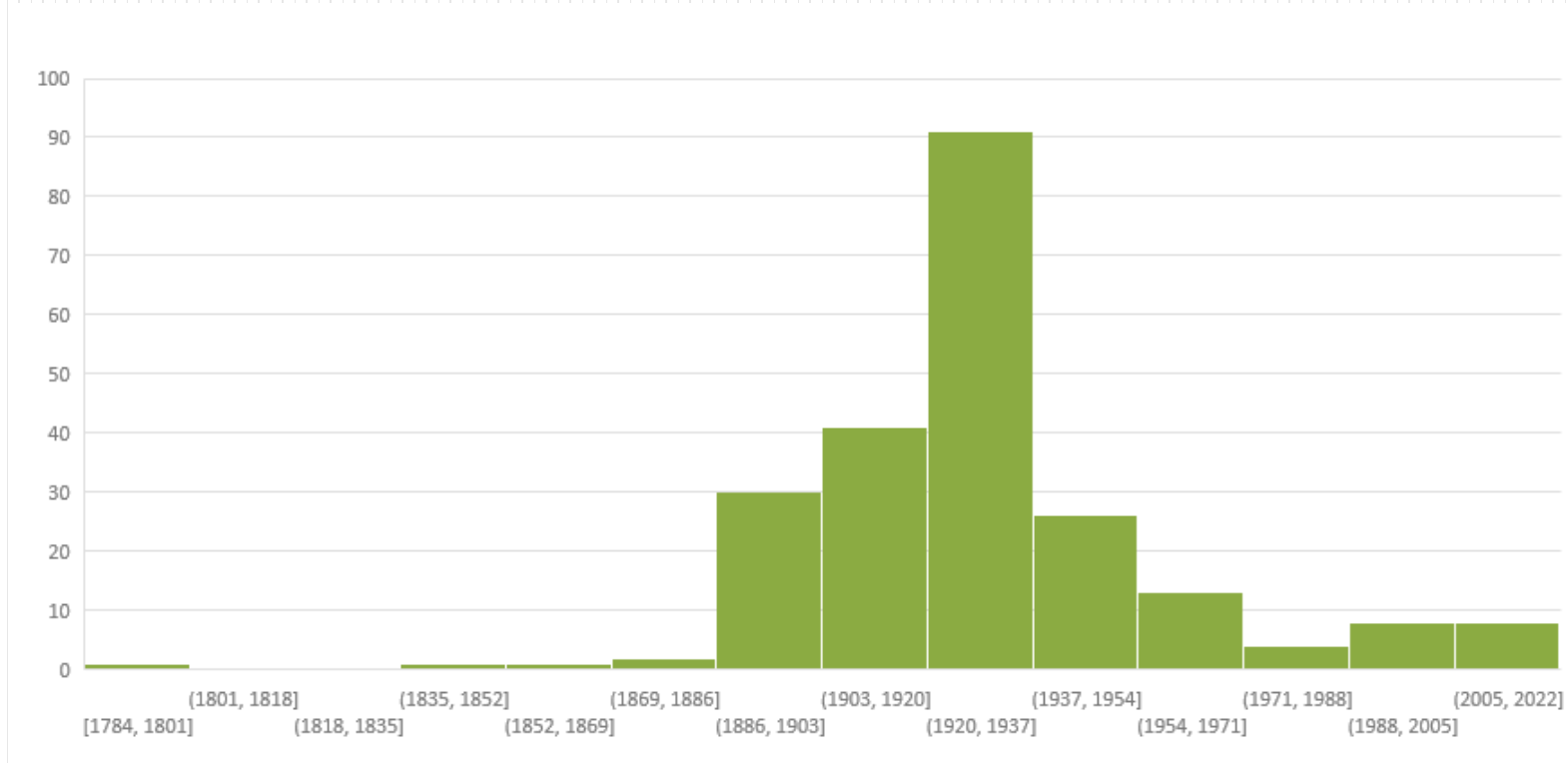
- **87% thought all the various open spaces: public and private greenery in Newton - open space, parks, pocket parks, street trees, front lawns and backyards, were Very Important, 35 Somewhat Important, and 2 said Not Important.**
- **Did people know that the Quinobequin Trail and Park was state land:**
  - 64% yes
  - 36% no
- **Would they support advocating to the DCR and/or the State for condition improvements and better utilization of the Quinobequin Trail and Park?**
  - 69% yes
  - 27% were uncertain
  - 4% no

# Historic Preservation

- **Most people think their neighborhood has historic character and it was important in their decision to move there.**
- The vast majority of respondents knew the year their home was built but most did not know who was the architect.
- **Most were confident they knew the architectural style of their homes, ranging from most to fewest: Colonial (Colonial revival, Center Entry Colonial, Gambrel), Garrison Colonial, Dutch Colonial, English Colonial, Tudor, Cape, Victorian, Ranch, Medieval Revival, English Cottage, Arts & Crafts, Post War Contemporary, Prairie, Mediterranean, French Normandy,**

# Historic Preservation

- The construction dates of their homes ranged from 1784 to 2014 with major clusters 1886-1903 (30), 1903-1920 (40) 1920-1937(90), 1937-1954(25)



# Historic Preservation

- **Most people were open to participating in a community trust to purchase and protect community assets.**

Comments ranged from:

- *"Some of these historic buildings are being well protected, like the Library. I am not convinced that a historic trust is necessary. Waban Hall could certainly be improved, but I'm unclear what the optimal approach would be."*
- *"Don't have the resources to do that" to "If it will raise taxes, absolutely not."*



# Historic Preservation

- **Most people were open to participating in a community trust to purchase and protect community assets.**

Comments ranged from:

- *"Some of these historic buildings are being well protected, like the Library. I am not convinced that a historic trust is necessary. Waban Hall could certainly be improved, but I'm unclear what the optimal approach would be."*
- *"Don't have the resources to do that" to "If it will raise taxes, absolutely not."*

# Development

**Waban is one of the Newton villages experiencing the most tear downs over the last 10 years. About the new homes:**

- **69% of the respondents said some were OK and some were not**
- 21% did not like the new houses
- 6% said the new house were OK
- 3% liked the new homes

# Development

## **What they didn't like:**

- "They look like McMansions and are out of character with the neighborhood and the size of the lot"
- "Houses are too big - most of them lack character and do not blend into the neighborhood"
- "Very large buildings on small lots. Nondescript architecture out of keeping with neighbors."
- "Very large, lacking in character and taking up most of the lot."
- Some went further such as:
- "Poor architecture, poor construction. Two houses next on either side of us were majorrenod and the people who bought the reno either moved because of problems or had to put significant money into repairing poor construction."
- "Many are too big which translates to too expensive, and so the neighborhood is becoming less diverse and new families cannot afford the neighborhood."

# Development

## **What they liked:**

- "A few have been nicely done, that are in scale and character with the neighborhood."
- "At least many are architecturally in keeping with the neighborhood. Except that disastrous brick house opposite the Windsor Club."
- "Some are beautiful, especially those with architectural detail that fits well into their neighborhoods."

# Development

## **There were a couple of interesting twists:**

"Waban residents are partly to blame over the last 20 years as they want bigger and more flashy homes. Let's remember, Waban and all of Newton are a MIX of many different styles and costs. It used to be that everyone respected the have and the have nots....not any more. The entitlement in Waban has gotten out of control. It is no one's business who built your home unless you personally want to brag."

"New constructions have increased the implicit value of my little house (selfish, yes, but would be hypocritical to say this isn't a Good Thing, all else equal), people moving into these houses are often nice young families. Property tax increases that come from the new big residences must be a Good Thing for Newton's finances (e.g., more \$ for the public schools, to fix/maintain streets & sidewalks, police, etc.). \*Some\* of the new houses are actually architecturally really cool. Can we get smarter about local regulations? E.g., the Problem (as I see it) is more the cut-the-corners, highly standardized template for each new construction method of some developers. Some regulations about what does/ does not go into new builds that can make this practice less profitable for those doing it (probably more effective than things like making them wait 12 months if a petition is filed to the Historical Commission to delay the construction...they just plan for it and the new construction goes on anyway). New dev is going to happen: my concern is staying ahead of the regulatory curve so that it isn't a bunch of gaudy, low-quality McMansions that kill the character of the neighborhood. I'm fine with \*quality\* new construction, however."

# Development

- **Generally the new homes are 2-3 times larger and 2-3 times more expensive.**
  - 61% said it was bad for Waban
  - 20% didn't think it mattered
  - 20% thought it was good for Waban

## **They added:**

- "Like I mentioned. **Housing prices are rising too high and are unaffordable. When I was a child growing up in Waban in the 1960s and 70s, our neighbors were doctors, engineers, teachers, clergy, lawyers, professors, businesspeople, etc. A nice socio-economic mix. That has evaporated, and I resent raising my children in a bubble.**"
- "it is outpricing many families that might want to settle here."
- "It's terrible. Unless the original house was very small and not historically significant."
- "property values continue to rise, as location is location, and we're in a very good one. I just won't be able to afford to stay!"
- "Whatever people choose to buy/build is their business. If someone is moving from Waban and stands to make a lot of money going forward, WAC has no right standing in their way."

# Development

- Could you afford to buy your current home at today's prices?
  - 39% yes
  - 33% no
  - 20% uncertain

**In terms of Waban changing in the future, we asked which of the following communities best represents the direction Waban should look like going forward?**

- **69% said Waban should stay the same**
- **14% said Wellesley**
- 10% Brookline
- 2% Weston
- 2% Somerville
- almost none said Framingham, Cambridge, or Sherborn

# Development

- “Our village still maintains the character and charm of the old days!”
- “We deeply appreciate the green, trees, and natural landscape of Waban.”
- “We were drawn to Waban because of how many trees there are in our area.”
- “If it ain't broke don't fix it.”
- “At the moment, it is still very; lovely”
- “I feel the mayor and the proponents of affordable housing seem to give no say to the actual people who live here and pay taxes. As a friend who also lives in Newton - on Fuller Street where houses are coming down - Newton should aspire to Wellesley, not bemoan the fact that we don't look like Watertown or Brookline. Traffic on Chestnut is already a nightmare in the morning, as early as 7:15. Pointing out the existing congestion that exists in the city seems futile.”



# Aging in Waban

**We wanted to get feedback on a number of assumptions people make about Wabanites and growing older. One thing is certain, their answers reveal that much uncertainty prevails tackling this issue.**

- **With assessments and taxes rising, were people planning to stay in Waban as they age?**
  - 62% yes
  - 33% were uncertain
  - 5% already plan to leave
- **Did people plan on adjusting their homes to accommodate:**
  - 51% were uncertain
  - 30% no
  - 41 yes
  - 9 already have done so
- **What about having in-home care?**
  - 53% were uncertain
  - 33% yes
  - 14% no
  - none of the respondents already has
- **Did they anticipate having issues with transportation as they aged**
  - 42% uncertain
  - No 29%
  - Yes 29%

# Aging in Waban

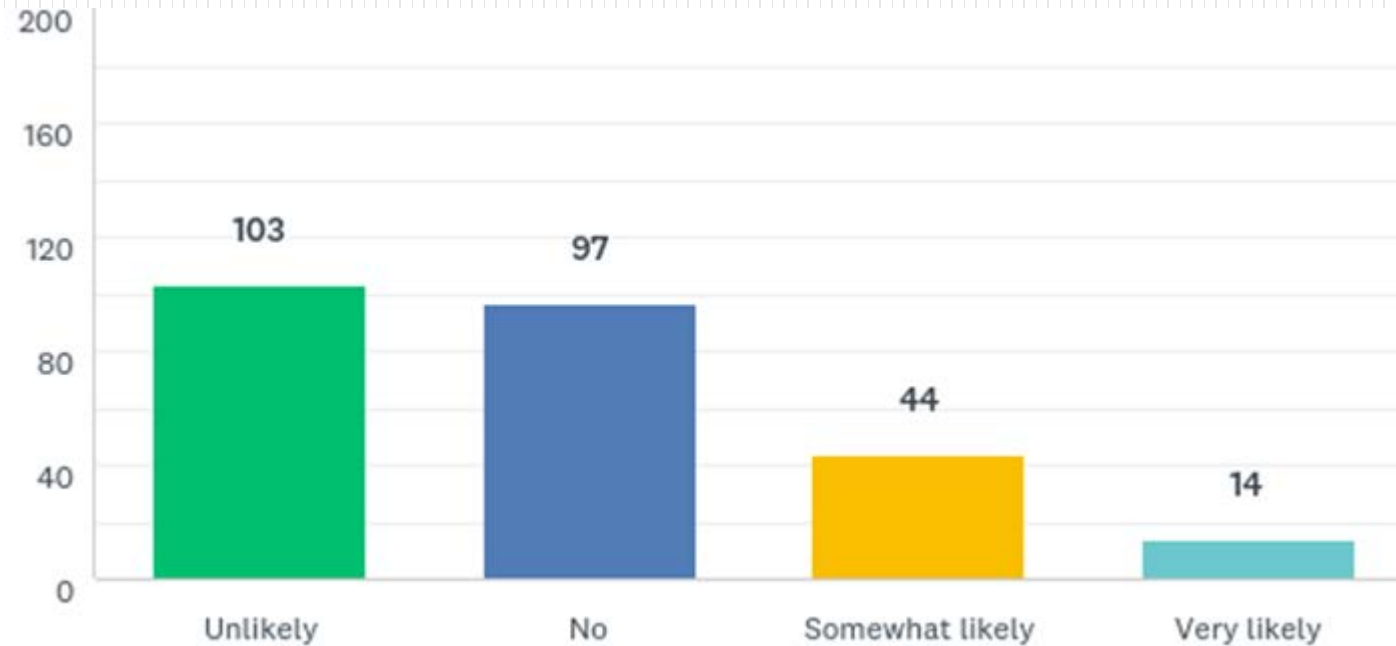
When asked if people were using the following services: **Council on Aging, Newton at Home, the Ride, consumer protection, TRIPPS**, almost everyone skipped the question.

- We asked those who are using **Newton at Home** if they were pleased?
  - **11 no**
  - **2 yes**
- While most people are not having **trouble clearing snow or getting their trash receptacles to the curb**, a noticeable amount said sometimes, and some said often.
- With regards to **snow clearing**, people complained **about costs to hire companies, and plows piling snow up, expressed doubt about continuing to clear it themselves, some thanked their neighbors who did it for them, and some mentioned having trouble with being corner lots.**

# Aging in Waban

- 66% single generation homes,
- 32% two generations,
- 2% citing 3 generations or more.

**We asked people if they might consider accessory apartments to share their homes and create income and 77% replied negatively.**



# Waban's Commercial Center

- **Was important to their decision to move here, 84% said yes.**
- **How often people went into Waban center:**
  - more than half weekly
  - another quarter daily
- Asked how they got there: 170 drive, 158 walk, 17 bike
- **They could almost always find parking in the village center.**
- Waban Market was the top destination with 79% followed by:
  - Post Office 57%,
  - BofA and Starbucks around 46%,
  - The new Stone L'oven Pizza got 24% and
  - Barry's deli 22%.
  - The new hardware store had not opened when the survey was created but many people wrote it in.

# Waban's Commercial Center

- **Was important to their decision to move here, 84% said yes.**
- **How often people went into Waban center:**
  - more than half weekly
  - another quarter daily
- Asked how they got there: 170 drive, 158 walk, 17 bike
- **They could almost always find parking in the village center.**
- Waban Market was the top destination with 79% followed by:
  - Post Office 57%,
  - BofA and Starbucks around 46%,
  - The new Stone L'oven Pizza got 24% and
  - Barry's deli 22%.
  - The new hardware store had not opened when the survey was created but many people wrote it in.

# Waban's Commercial Center

- **Villagers stated preference for new business in Waban Center would be a Bakery/Cafe 80%**
- **Specialty foods and/or prepared foods establishment 64%.**
- **How do villagers view Waban Square:**
  - **57% OK but it could be better**
  - **34% said they love it**
  - The remaining 9% had comments ranging from "Looking downtrodden" and "boring" to "love it" and "Pizza is a big add". **People reaffirmed that they do not want parking meters**, and added concerns about traffic and parking.

# Waban's Commercial Center

- As for improvements:
  - 75% said cafe table and chairs outdoors
  - 42% wanted community gardens
  - 20% wanted more parking
- We asked what would make their experience at Waban Square better?
  - 43% said different shops,
  - 35% asked for better-defined gathering space, and
  - 24% said general appearance.
  - 17% did say it was fine the way it was.
- Comments included "fix the clock" and "More Trees", and "keeping "old village" upscale charm"

# Waban's Commercial Center

Asking the same question differently, would you come to Waban Square more often if:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
There were more places to hang out	51.39%	111
There were community events at the stores, eg wine tastings	44.44%	96
Shops stayed open until 7PM	28.24%	61
Nothing would change the time I spend in Waban Square	18.98%	41
It looked cleaner and /or brighter	14.81%	32
There were special sales events lowering prices	10.65%	23
Other (please specify)	10.65%	23
There were electric charging stations	1.39%	3
Total Respondents: 216		



# Arts & Entertainment

We wanted to see how often people partake in the arts and what their preferences were.

- **Most people said they went 1-3xs per year for music, theatre, visual arts, dance/ballet.**
  - 22-24% said 4-6xs per year (not dance/ballet)
  - 14 - 19% went 7-12xs per year
  - 8% went to see music more than 12xs per year
- 61% said they had not visited the **Newton Arts Calendar** but 39% said they had.
- **Should Newton should pursue developing an Arts Center.**
  - 50% were not sure
  - 33% yes
  - 18% no
  - Comments included: great idea but don't raise taxes for it, not in Waban please, hard to compete with Boston. and..who would pay for it??
- We mentioned that the Waban Library Center hosts a variety of cultural events and asked if villagers had been to any?
  - 55% yes
  - 45% no

# Arts & Entertainment

- We asked: **If you could invent your favorite event** with no restraints, check off items it would include:
  - 80% Live Music
  - 70% appetizers
  - 65% Wine, Beer, and alcoholic beverages
  - 55% Specialty Foods (Crepes, desserts, chocolates, etc)
  - 45% seating
- **We asked what people's preferences for a variety of events.**
  - **They favored free live concerts with professional talent, followed by paid concerts with professional talent**
  - They don't seem to like talent contests or Karaoke
  - Classical music, Jazz, Folk, Blues, and Rock topped the list of preferences but they don't like Funk or Hip Hop.

# Arts & Entertainment

- House concerts - music or theatre performances hosted in a home to a small audience - are becoming more frequent, would you be interested attending in Waban?
  - 50% yes
  - 33% uncertain
  - 16% no
- Would they be willing to host a house concert?
  - 65% NO
  - 25% uncertain
- 9% yes

Newton Piano Summit May 5th, 12th, 19th 1-3pm

