



Cliftondale Community Forum

June 28, 2021 | M.E.G. Building

About the Cliftdale Revitalization Committee

- Town Meeting unanimously voted to establish at a February Special Town Meeting and first met on April 7th.
- We are here to provide recommendations to our executive branch and to better inform the MAPC who is drafting our Master Plan titled Saugus United 2035 that will inform the Town's direction for the next 15 years
- We have and continue to reference previous studies conducted over a 40-year period and brainstorm ways to implement several of the recommendations that were consistent across previous studies
- We are still in “data collection and discovery mode”. This forum and survey will be a large part of the report that will be issued in November as we synthesize this information.
- This committee has recommended short term goals to the Town Manager, preferred locations for flashing crossing beacons procured by the State and advocated for the application for the *Shared Streets and Spaces* grant offered by the state to spark investment into the square. The Town did apply for a \$100,000 grant which is still pending.

Previous Studies & Plans

- 1982 Cliftdale Square Revitalization Project - MAPC
- 1988 Master Plan
- 1990 Town of Saugus Land Use Policy Plan – Lozano, White & Associates
- 2004 Saugus Community Development Plan
- 2015 ULI Technical Assistance Panel Report for Cliftdale Square – Mass Development
- 2016 Cliftdale District Assessment & Market Analysis – Finegold & Associates
- 2018 Saugus Walk Assessment - WalkBoston

- *2021 Cliftdale Parking and Egress Assessment (Pending)*
- *2022 Saugus United 2035 Master Plan - MAPC (Pending)*

This Evening's Program



ANALYZE SURVEY
RESPONSES



Q&A



DISCUSSION /
WORKSHOP

Public Survey



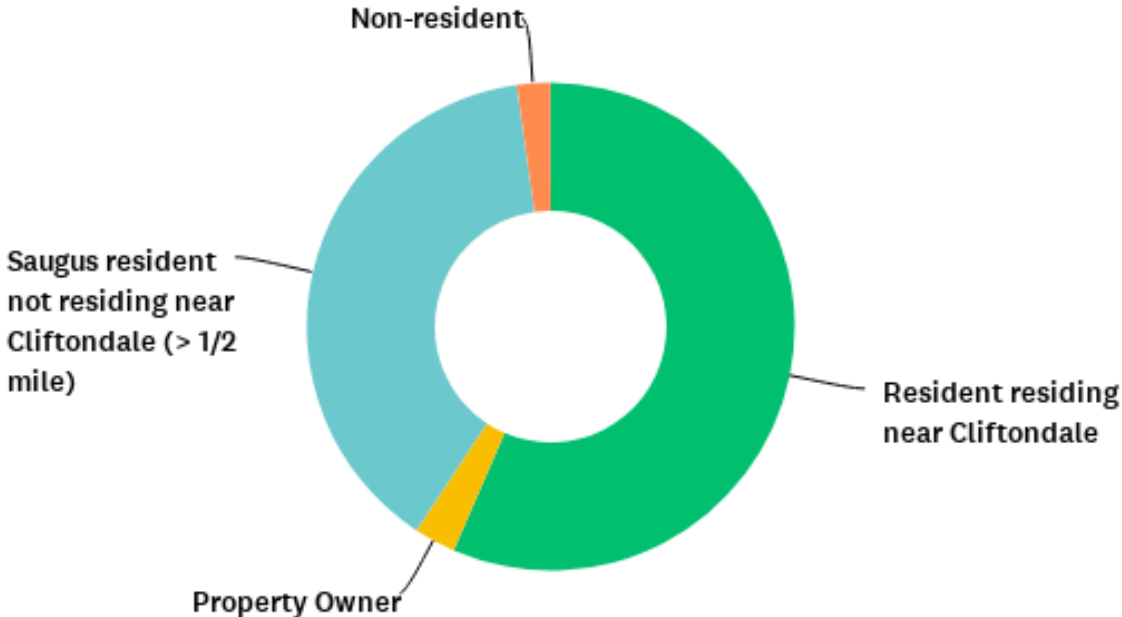
Survey Metrics

- Conducted from May 30-June 24
- 364 Respondents
- Majority of respondents have resided in Saugus for 10 years or greater with a critical mass of respondents residing here greater than 40 years.
- Most respondents are in the 45-54 year old demographic (Median age: 49)
- Most people have not participated in efforts to revitalize this neighborhood to date
- Most people do not know Saugus is in the process of developing a town wide Master Plan (57% of respondents)

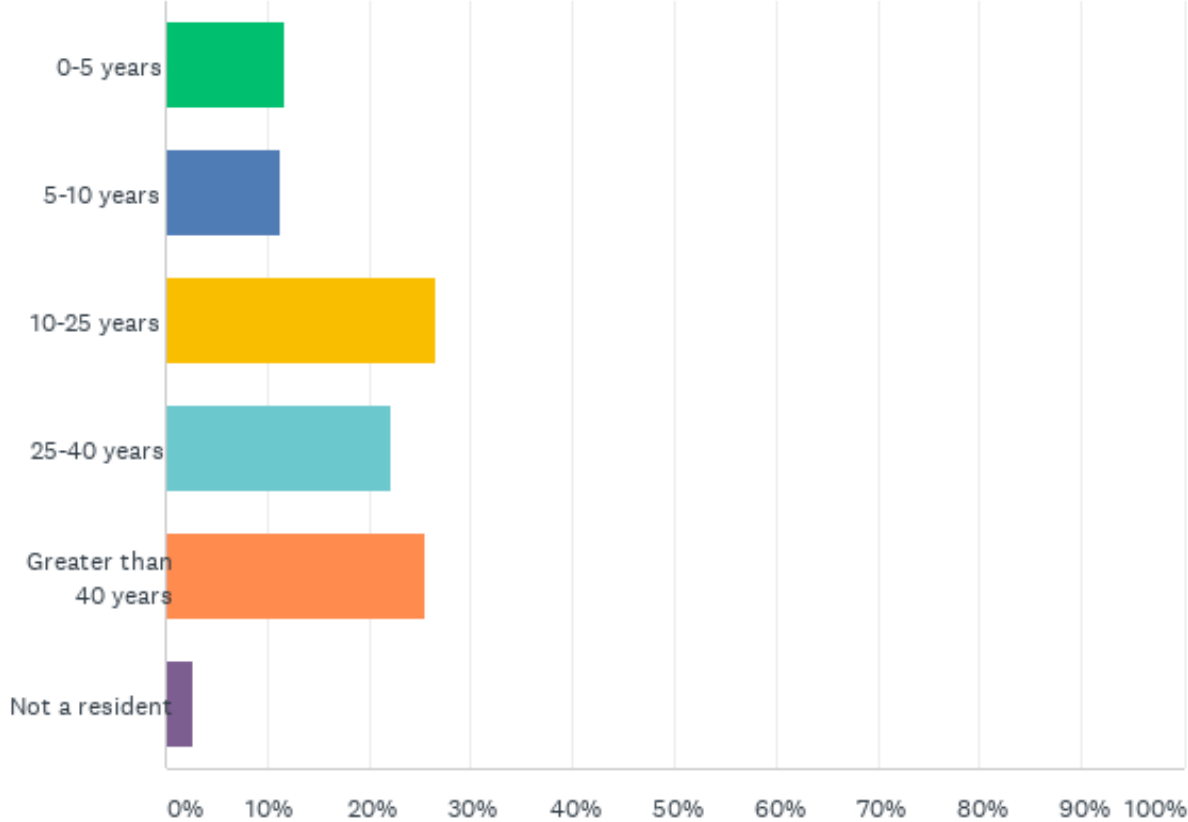
Demographics



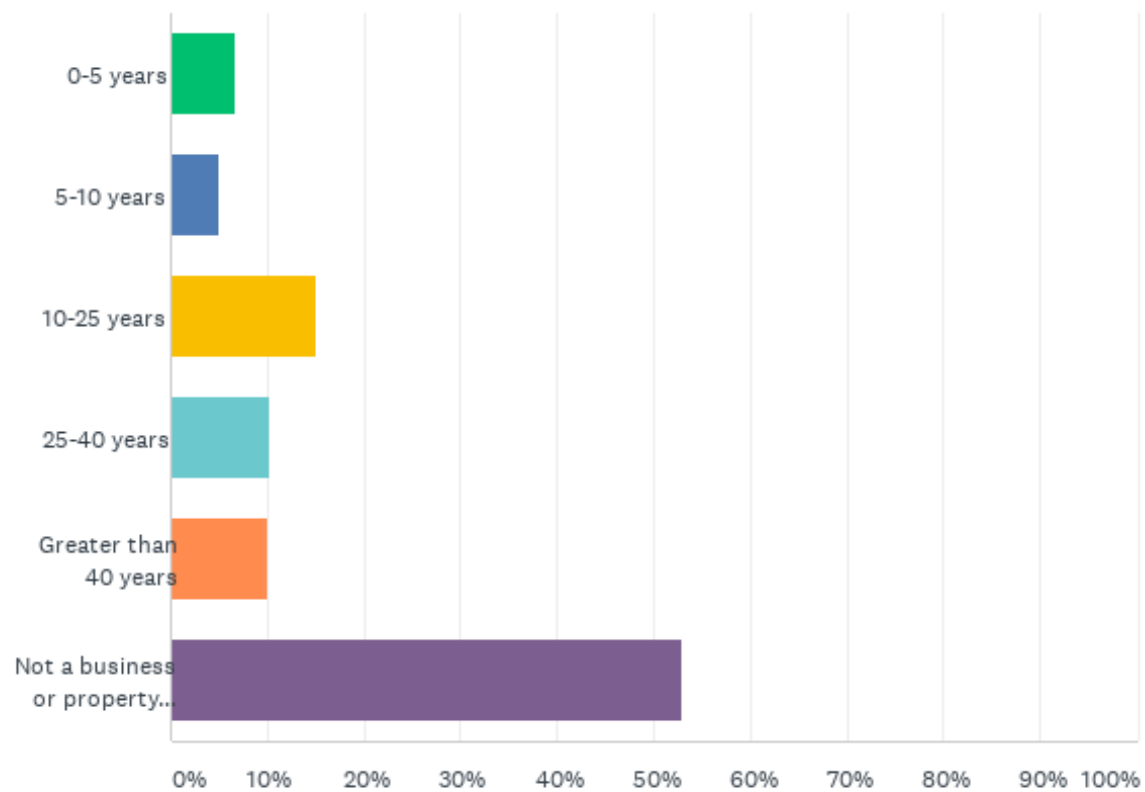
Q1 What best describes your relationship to Clifftondale?



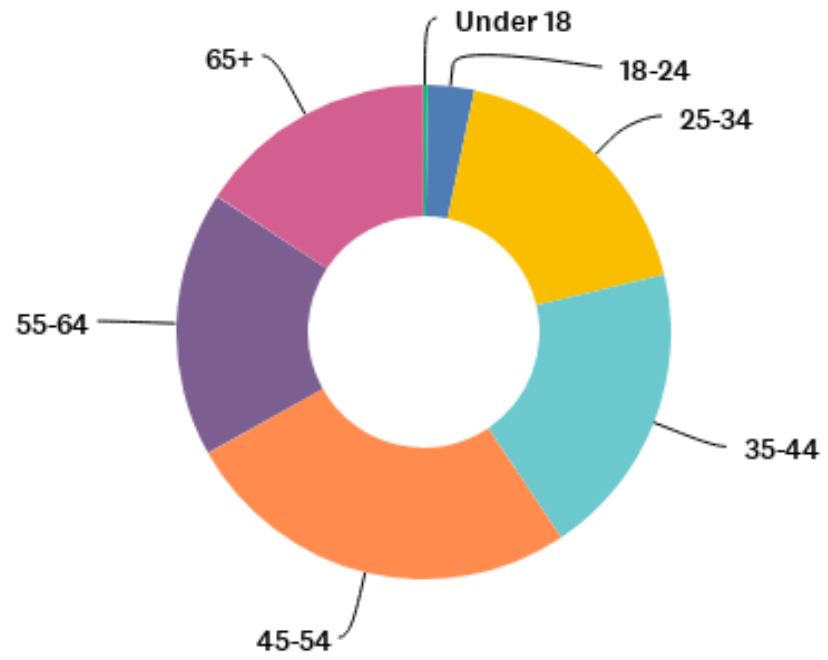
Q2 Residents Only: How long have you resided in Saugus / Cliftondale?



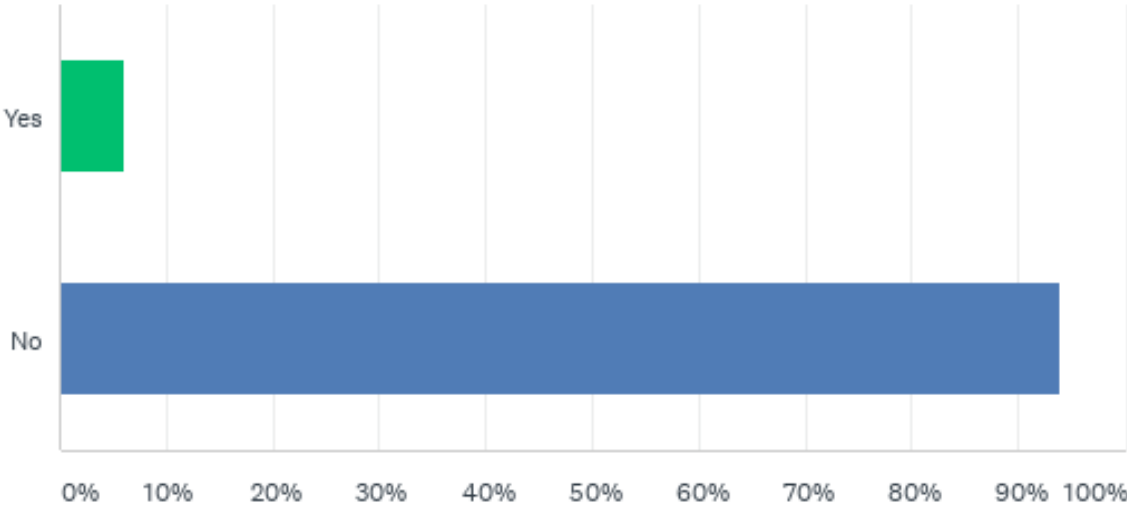
Q3 Business / Property Owners only: How long have you done business / owned property in Saugus / Clifftondale?



Q4 What is your age?



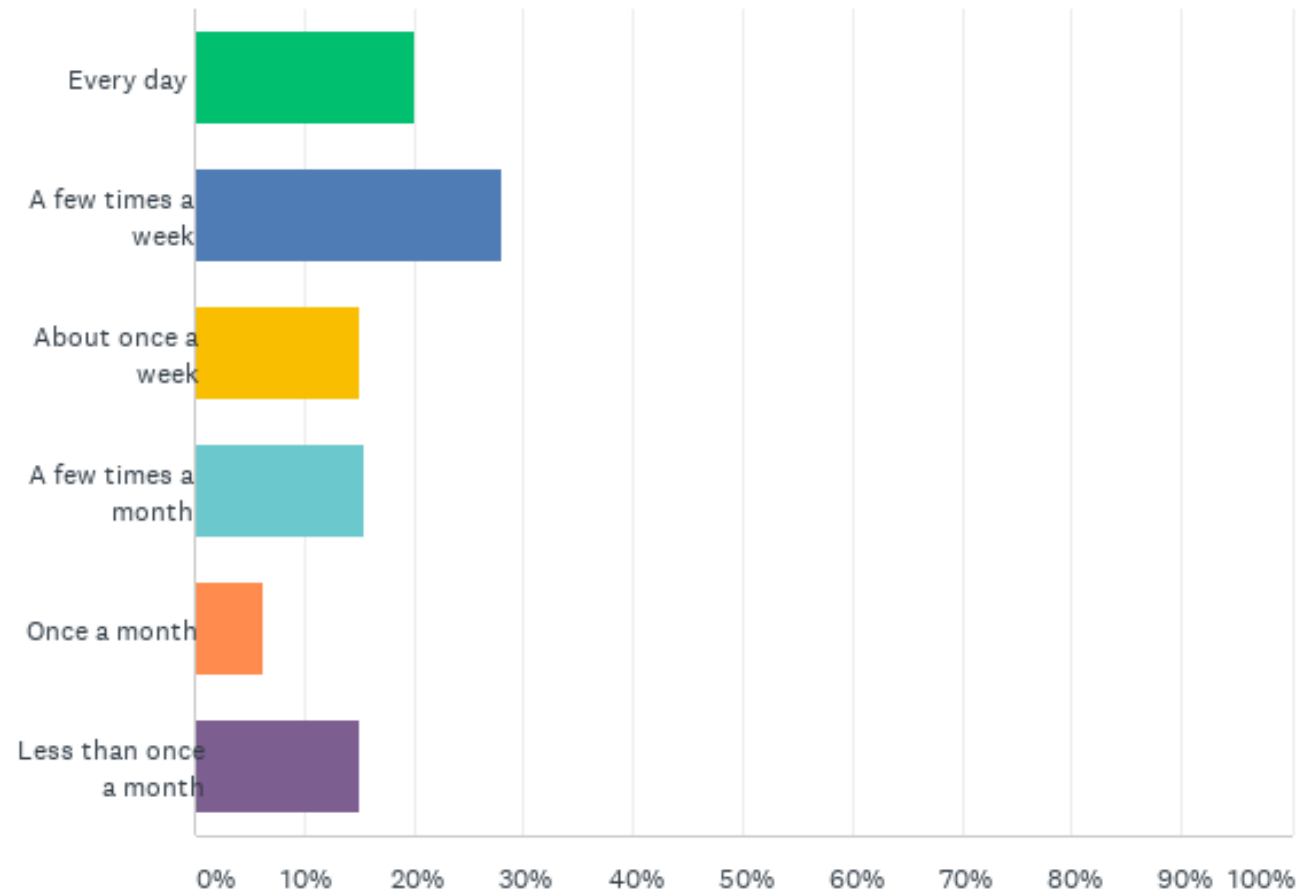
Q5 Have you been involved in any previous studies or efforts towards the revitalization of Clifftondale?



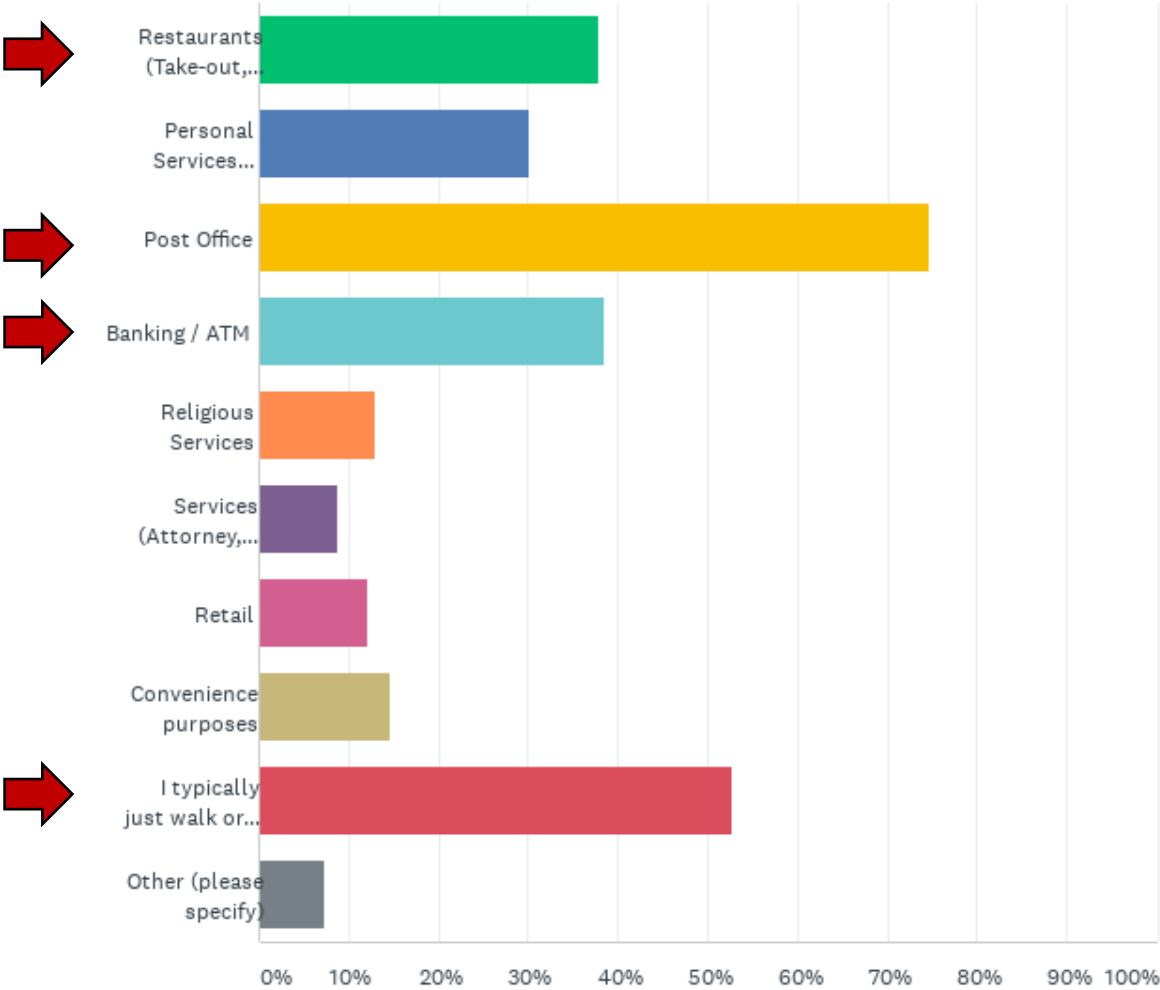
What Brings You to Clifftondale?



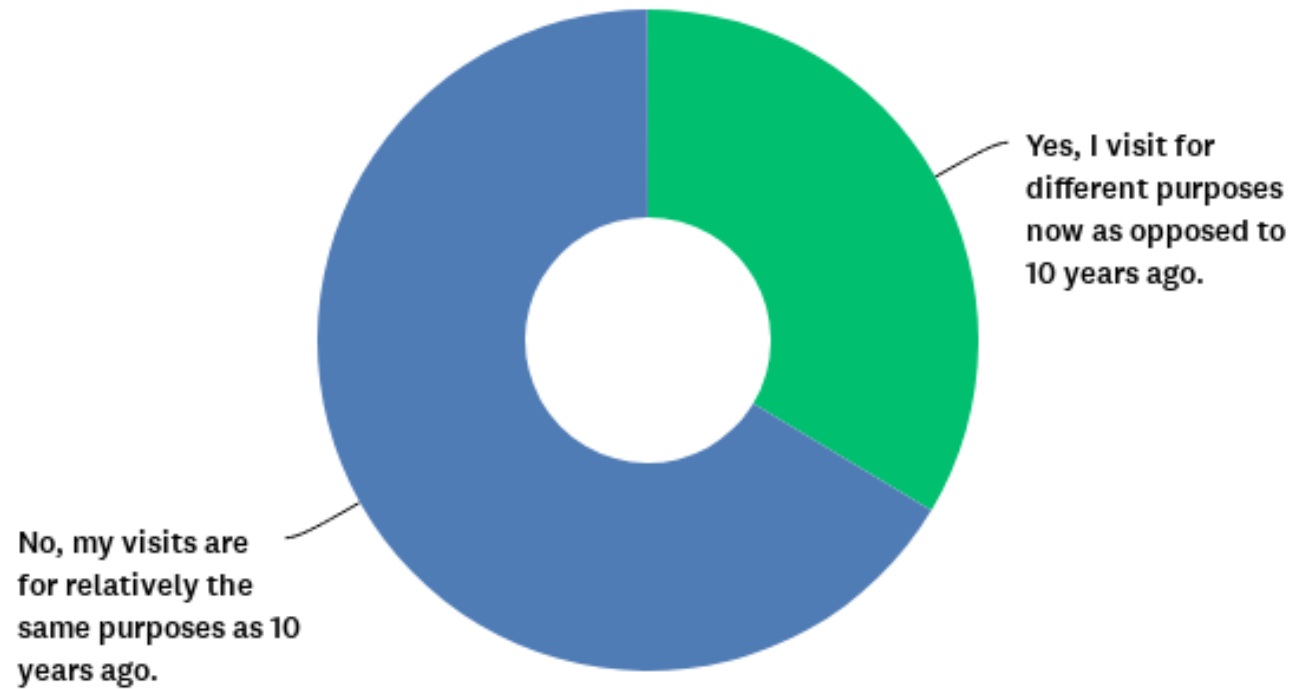
Q6 How often do you visit Clifftondale?



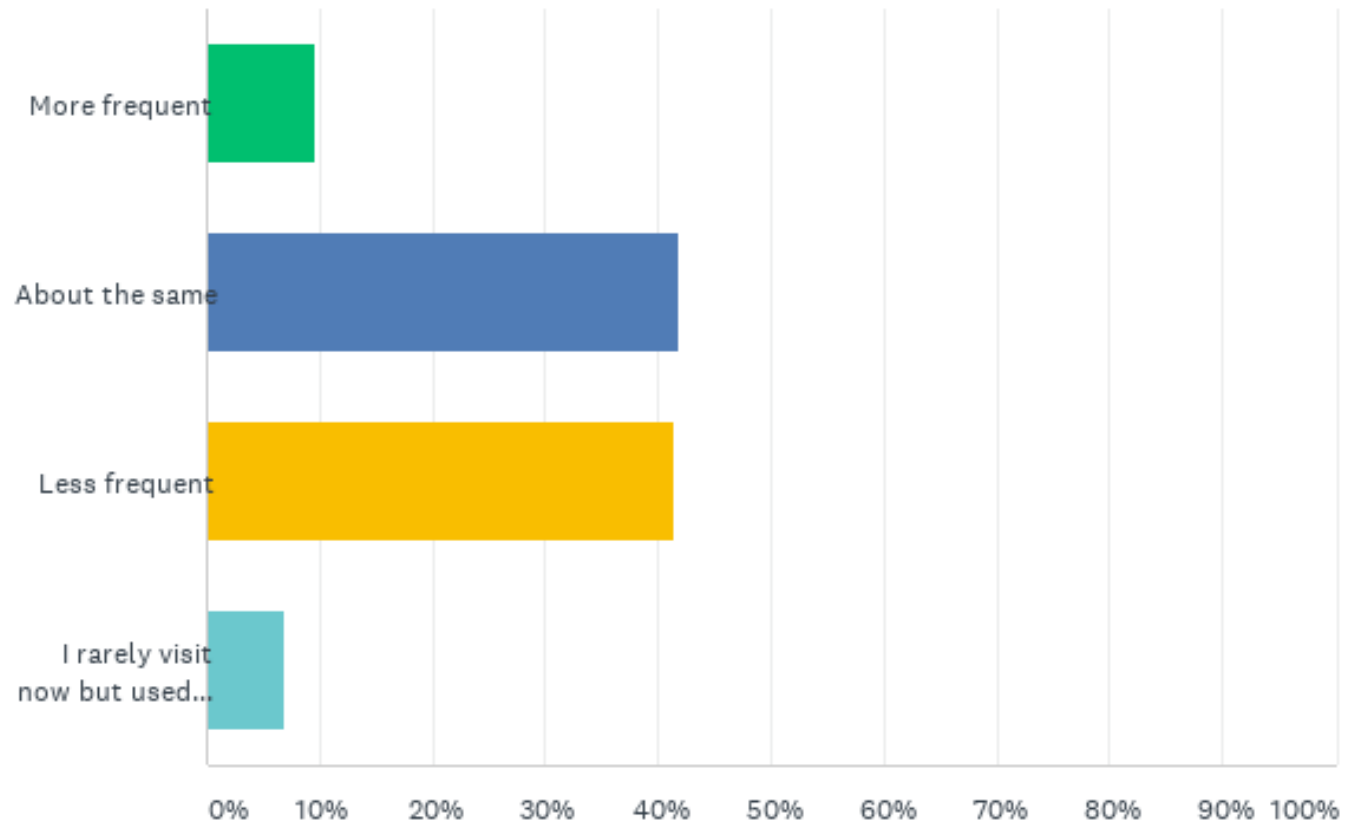
Q7 Why do you visit Cliftondale?



Q8 Have your visits changed in the past 10 years? If so how?



Q9 How frequent are your visits compared to 10 years ago?



What are the issues?



What are the most critical issues facing Clifftondale?

1. Parking (Shocking, isn't it?)
2. Lack of Amenities (No reason to visit) - #1 for those 34 years old and under
3. Traffic mitigation and Vehicular Circulation
4. Municipal / Stakeholder Inaction & Lack of Vision
5. Underutilized / Vacant Storefronts
6. Pedestrian Safety
7. Cleanliness / Rodent issues
8. Outdated Zoning
9. Limited housing stock / Investment Opportunity (lack of 24/7 vitality)
10. Public Transportation

Q10 What, if anything, prevents or discourages you from visiting Cliftondale?

storefronts Lack parking lack open Business left night used go trash nothing bring terrible
welcoming USE find seems whole convenience store narrow retail left variety everything
good Parking lack businesses less Nothing really bank really nothing Lack parking little
street depressing people anything visit great run around s limited shops Also
Lack speeding need issue restaurants want Nothing
parking sides businesses lack businesses Parking dirty
go really traffic offered stores things much etc post office
sidewalks Cliftondale feel interest old closed empty lot big looks
dangerous places retail stores nothing interest crossing streets walk anymore many
options see services cars cafes area new Parking lack vacant enough don t square reason go
appealing narrow street rotary s run worth ice cream congested

What discourages you from visiting Cliftondale?

- “Not much there, nothing of interest, no incentive to stop”
- “Lack of parking – [when] crossing the road, you take your life in your hands”
- “I’ve moved to online banking”
- “Businesses I used to frequent have closed”
- “Inconsistent, limited or unposted hours of operation for existing businesses”
- “Doesn’t feel safe to walk or bike there”
- “There are better downtowns in driving distance (Melrose / Wakefield)”
- “Lack of appeal: Everything looks rundown and dirty”
- “Inefficient rotary and people don’t know how to use it”
- “We just spend money on study after study and nothing happens”

Safety



How safe do you feel in Cliftdale (1 = Not Safe / 5 = Very Safe)

- Overall Average: 2.9 / 5.0
- Seniors (65+) generally feel that the square is not very safe (2.5 / 5.0).
- In the 35-64 demographic, while they typically feel safer than seniors in the square (3.0 / 5.0), they prefer an added police presence in Cliftdale (58%).
- The same percentage of seniors prefer an added police presence in Cliftdale (58%)
- Feedback references issues present in the square, particularly in the evening hours
- Residents who reside near Cliftdale generally believe Cliftdale is less safe than those who live outside of Cliftdale
- Younger People (34 years old in under) generally feel slightly safer (3.1 / 5.0). They also think, by a slight majority, that no additional police presence is required in Cliftdale (47%)
- Drug use and perceived crime in the square were two factors that were brought up by respondents

Pedestrian Safety – “Where are the most troublesome areas”

- Big picture: Per respondent’s answers, almost every part of Clifftondale was mentioned. The most mentioned areas were, in order:
 1. Crossing at Post Office
 2. Rotary (specifically Lincoln to Essex yield)
 3. Jackson Street (at junction of Essex Street)
 4. Crowds at Banana Splitz (primarily summer months)
 5. Corner coming around the curve at St. Margaret’s (speed)
 6. Congestion due to parking on both sides of Lincoln. Lack of crossing visibility
 7. Sidewalk parking limiting pedestrian access on sidewalks (lack of consistent enforcement)

Housing / Growth / Mixed Use

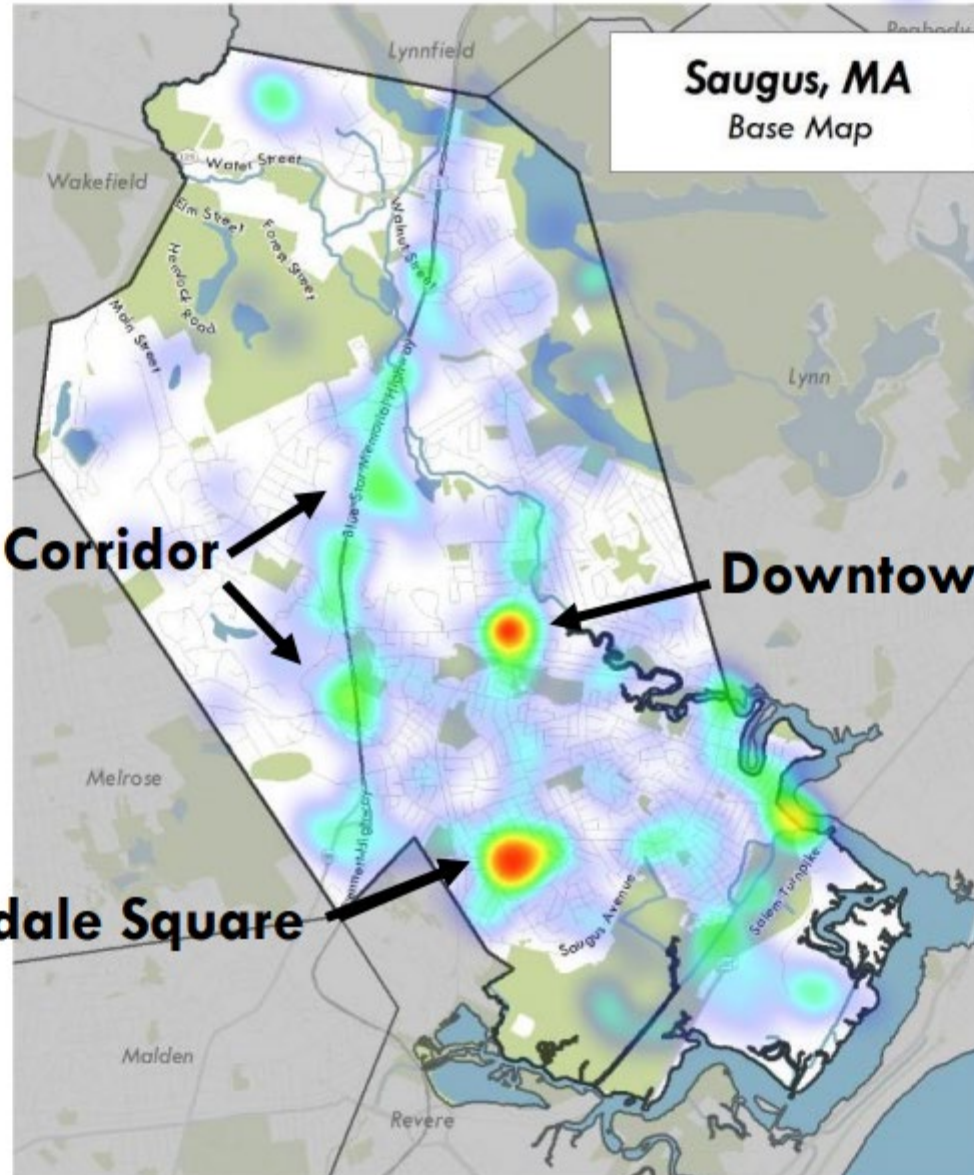


Where do you think future growth should occur?
Click (or tap) on the map

Route 1 Corridor

Downtown

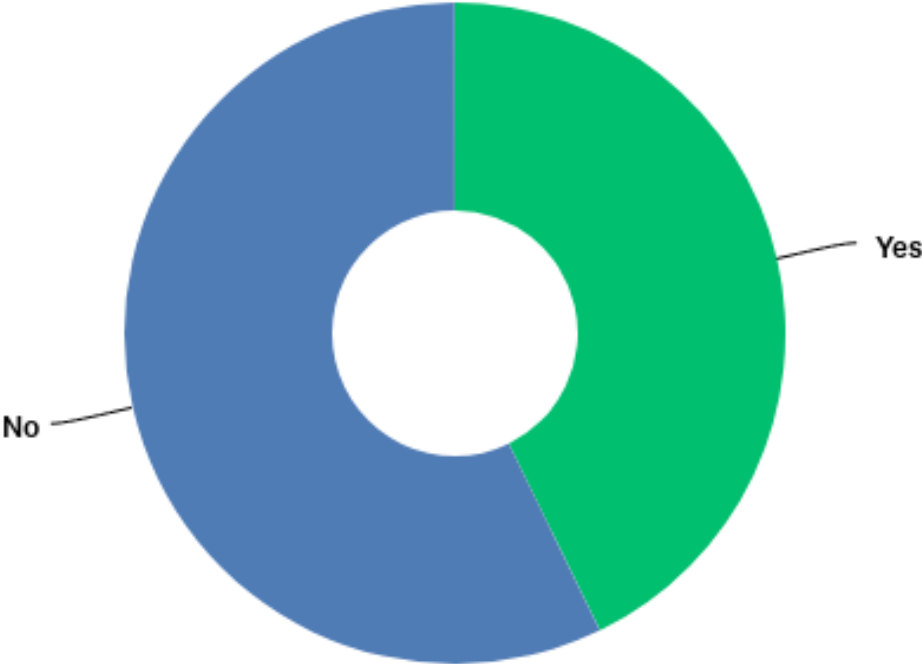
Clifondale Square



Mixed Use in Cliftondale Square

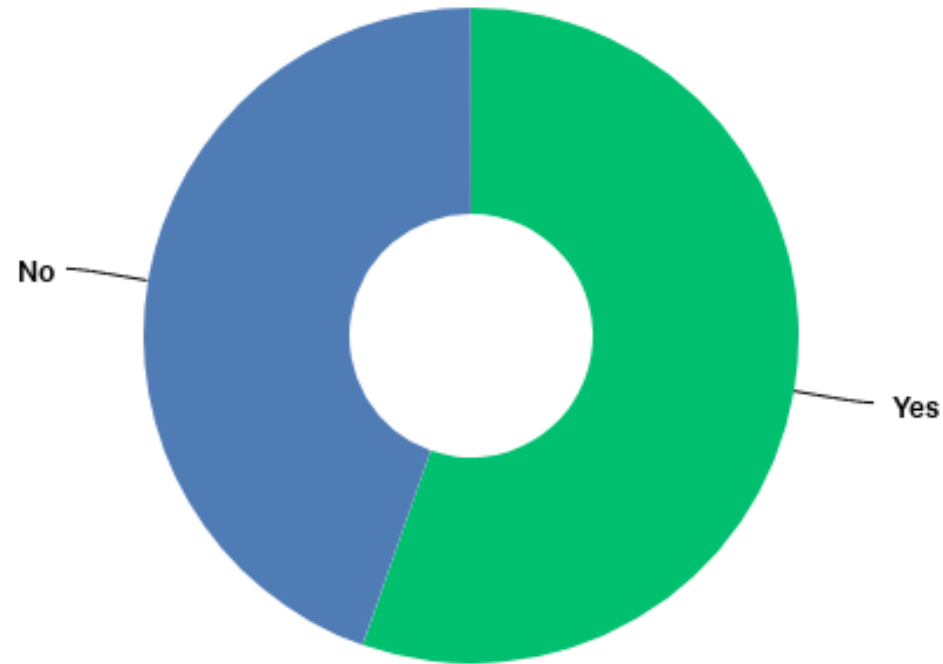
- Current zoning does not currently permit mixed-use or any housing use (B-1)
- Overlays have been adopted by Town Meeting in the past 10 years on Route 1, Mill District and Waterfront District
- Existing mixed use (3-4 story buildings near the rotary) is grandfathered in
- Attitudes on permitting mixed-use were the most varied of all questions within this survey. Analytics show a strong generational divide
- Younger respondents (18-34) along with seniors (65+) favor the permitting of mixed-use in Cliftondale whereas middle aged respondents (55-64) strongly oppose it
- Many respondents referenced “adverse” large scale residential developments on Route 1 has created a general distaste for “mixed use” and “smart growth” development
- The overwhelming majority of respondents who answered “Yes” to an overlay that permits mixed use prefer that development be at a modest scale that aligns with the existing grandfathered mixed use (3-4 stories)
- Respondents who live near Cliftondale Square are less receptive to mixed use (60% oppose) whereas respondents who live $> \frac{1}{2}$ mile from the square was a 50/50 split. This statistic implies that NIMBYism is present in Cliftondale Square.

Q15 Do you think housing / mixed use should be permitted in Cliftdale? Zoning does not currently allow mixed-use or residential development.



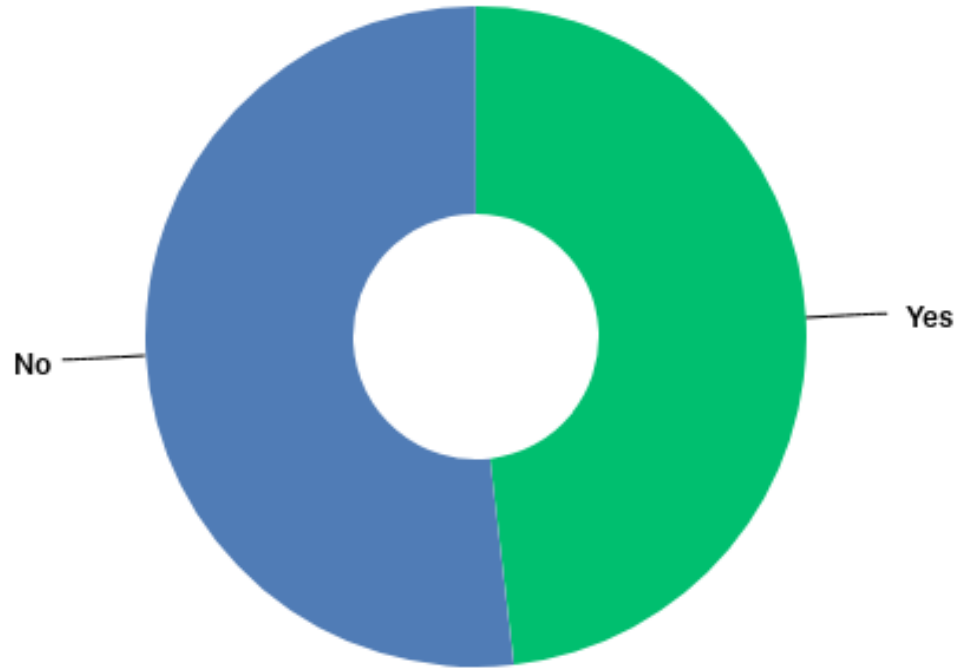
Overall Survey (60% No)

Q15 Do you think housing / mixed use should be permitted in Clifftondale? Zoning does not currently allow mixed-use or residential development.



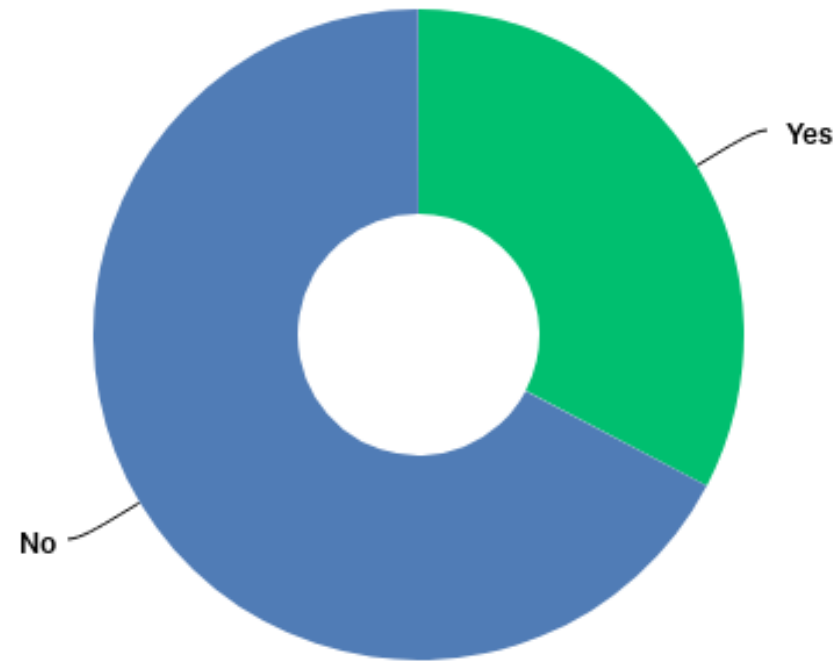
Ages 18-34 (55% Yes)

Q15 Do you think housing / mixed use should be permitted in Clifftondale? Zoning does not currently allow mixed-use or residential development.



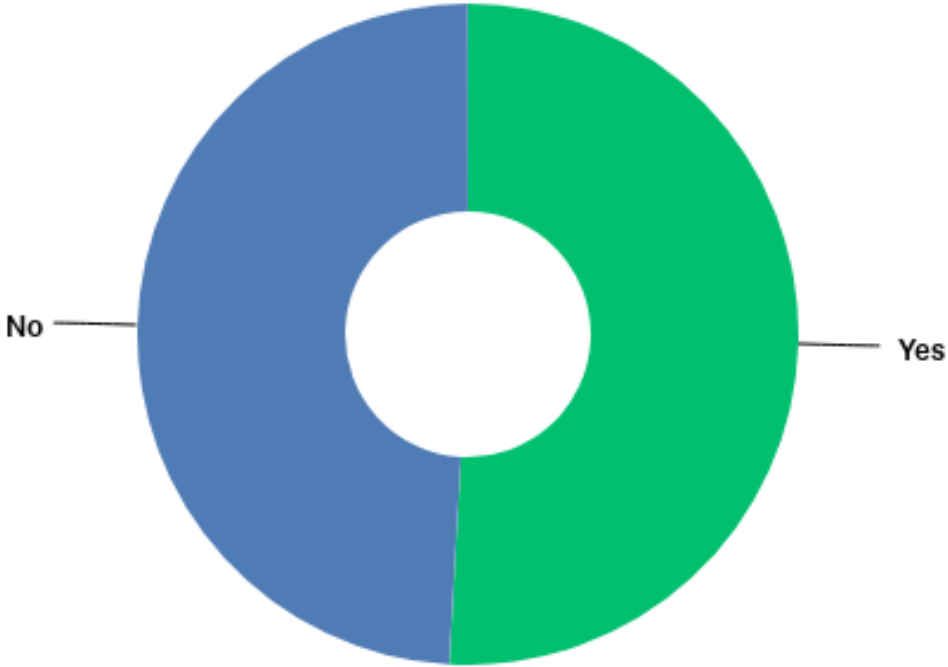
Ages 34-45 (Near 50/50)

Q15 Do you think housing / mixed use should be permitted in Clifftondale? Zoning does not currently allow mixed-use or residential development.



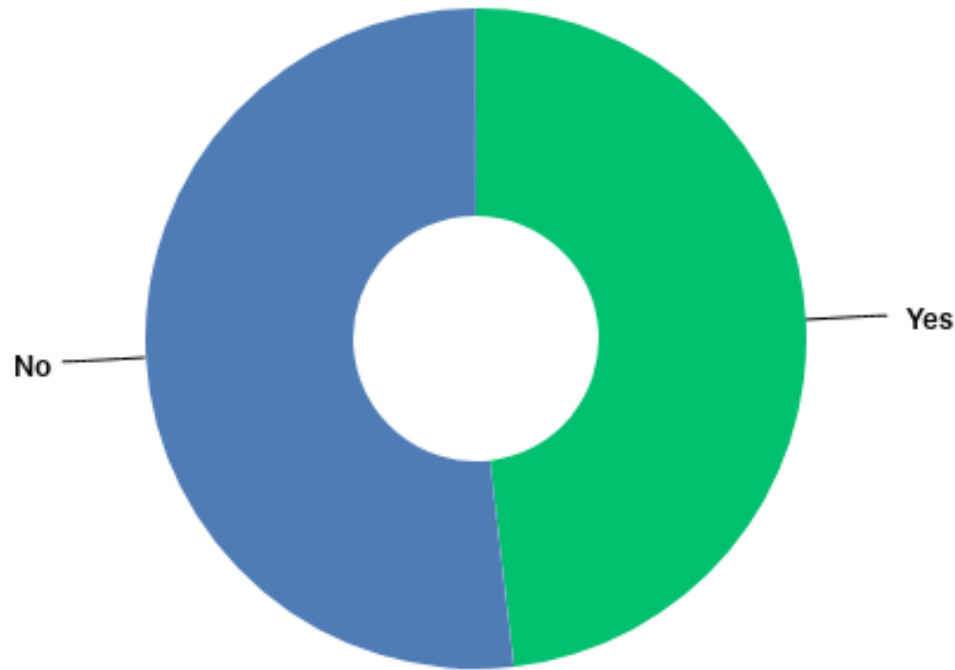
Ages 45-64 (67% No)

Q15 Do you think housing / mixed use should be permitted in Clifftondale? Zoning does not currently allow mixed-use or residential development.



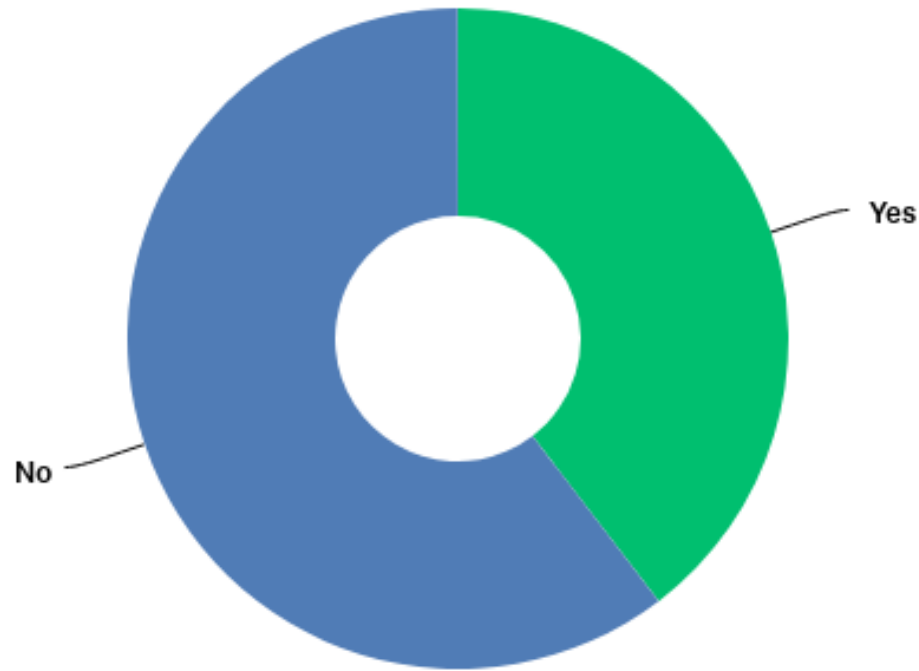
Ages 65+ (52% Yes)

Q15 Do you think housing / mixed use should be permitted in Cliftdale? Zoning does not currently allow mixed-use or residential development.



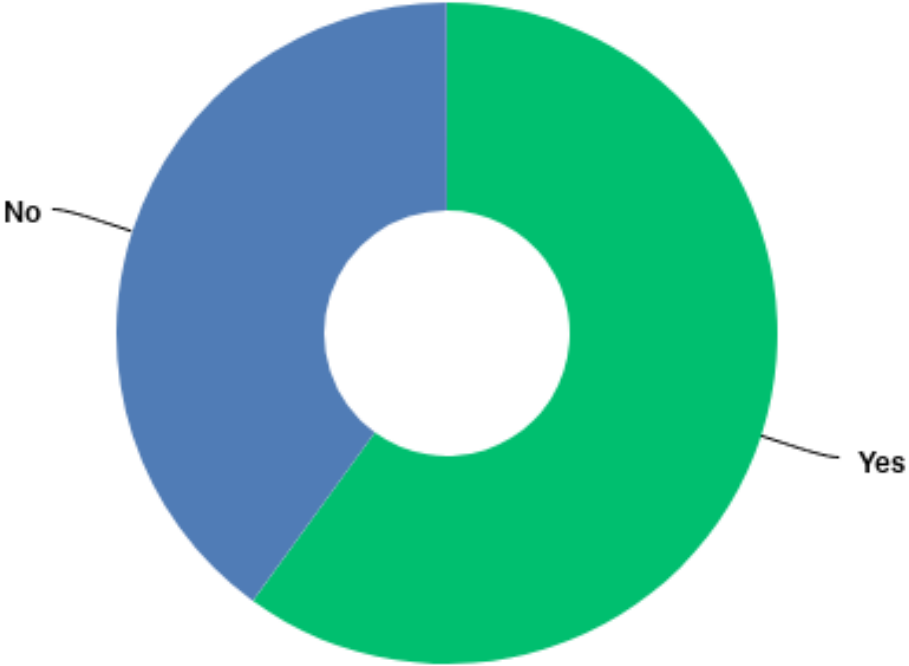
Residents who reside > 1/2 mile from Cliftdale (Near 50/50)

Q15 Do you think housing / mixed use should be permitted in Cliftdale? Zoning does not currently allow mixed-use or residential development.



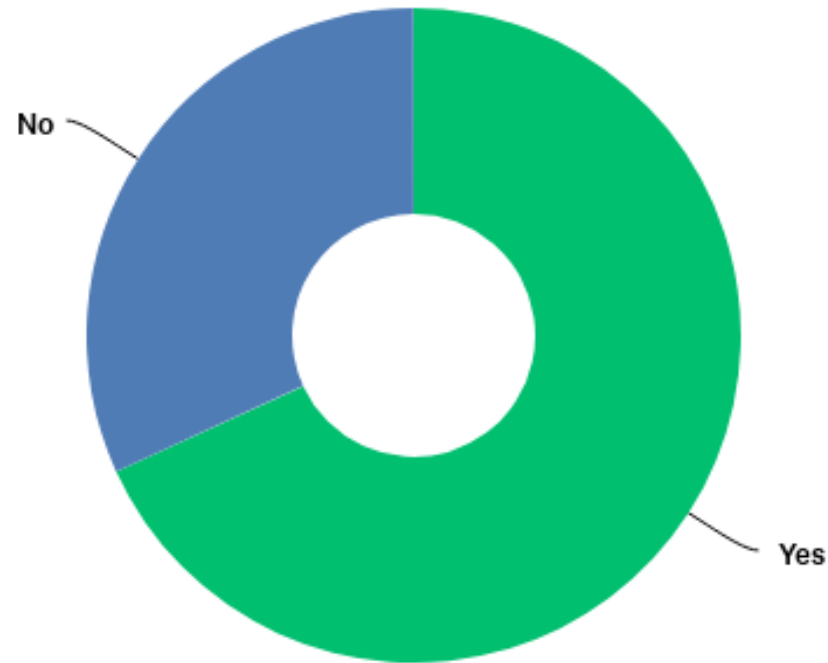
Residents who reside in or near Cliftdale (60% No)

Q15 Do you think housing / mixed use should be permitted in Clifftondale? Zoning does not currently allow mixed-use or residential development.



Property Owners (60% Yes)

Q15 Do you think housing / mixed use should be permitted in Clifftondale? Zoning does not currently allow mixed-use or residential development.



Respondents involved in Past Revitalization Efforts

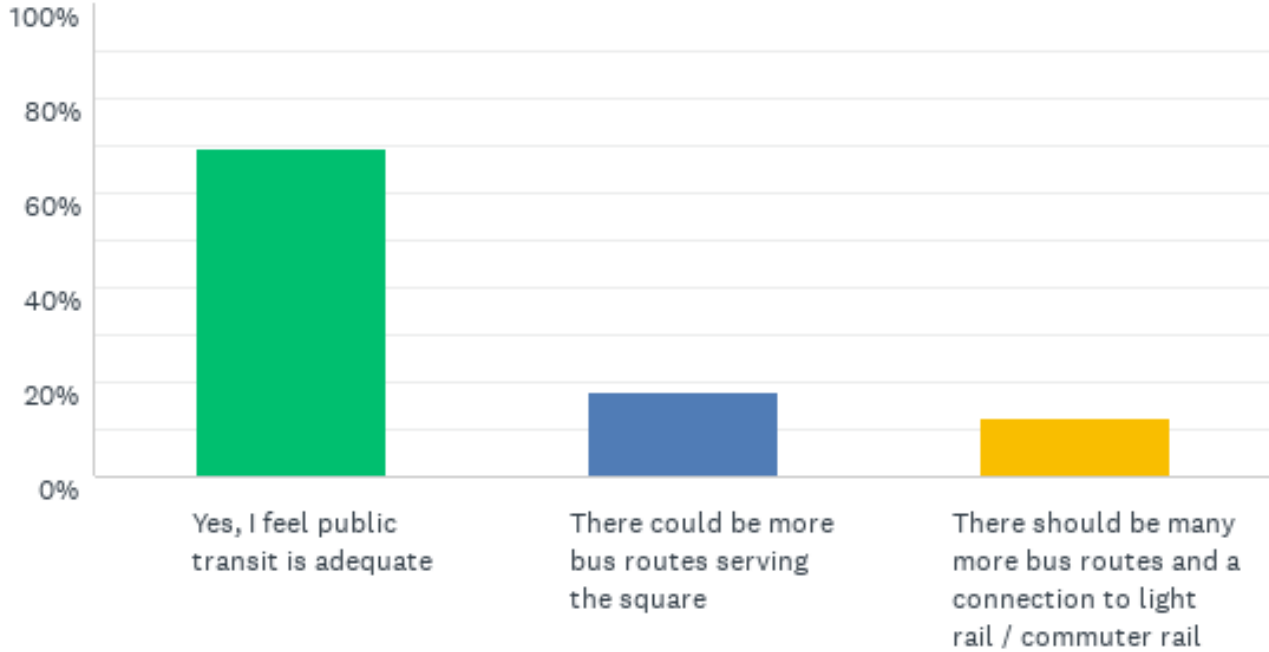
Transportation



Getting around in Cliftdale

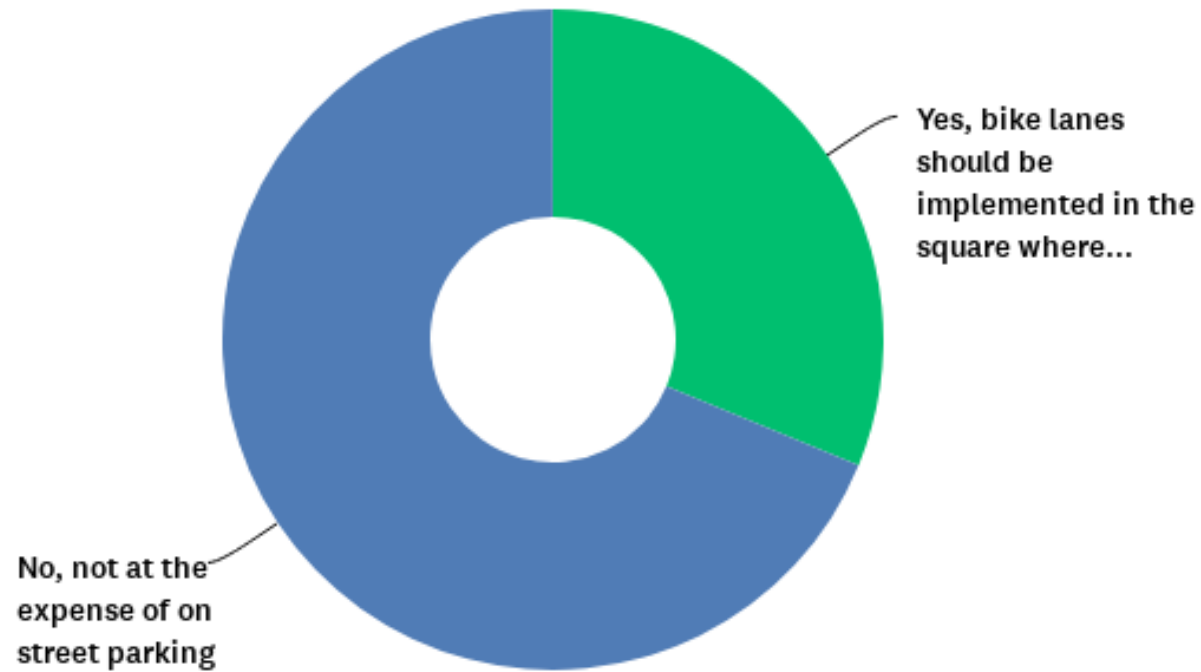
- 426 Bus to Haymarket / Central Square, 426W to Wonderland / Central Square, 429 Bus to Linden Square / North Saugus and 430 Bus to Malden / Saugus Center currently serve Cliftdale.
- Recent MBTA cuts removed 428 (Haymarket / Oaklandvale)
- “Car is king” in Saugus with 88% of people driving or carpooling to work per recent MAPC survey. Only 8% of respondents take public transportation to work
- In all demographics, the survey shows that we are well served in terms of public transportation in Cliftdale
- The bus shelter in Cliftdale Square is not currently ADA accessible
- While most respondents stated that they would not prefer bike lanes connected to the Northern Stand Community Trail, younger people were more receptive with 52% of respondents between 18-34 answering “Yes”.
- Transit oriented development (TOD), has been implemented in many communities nearby. Public transit is an asset in Cliftdale.

Q18 Do you feel that Clifondale is well served in terms of public transportation?



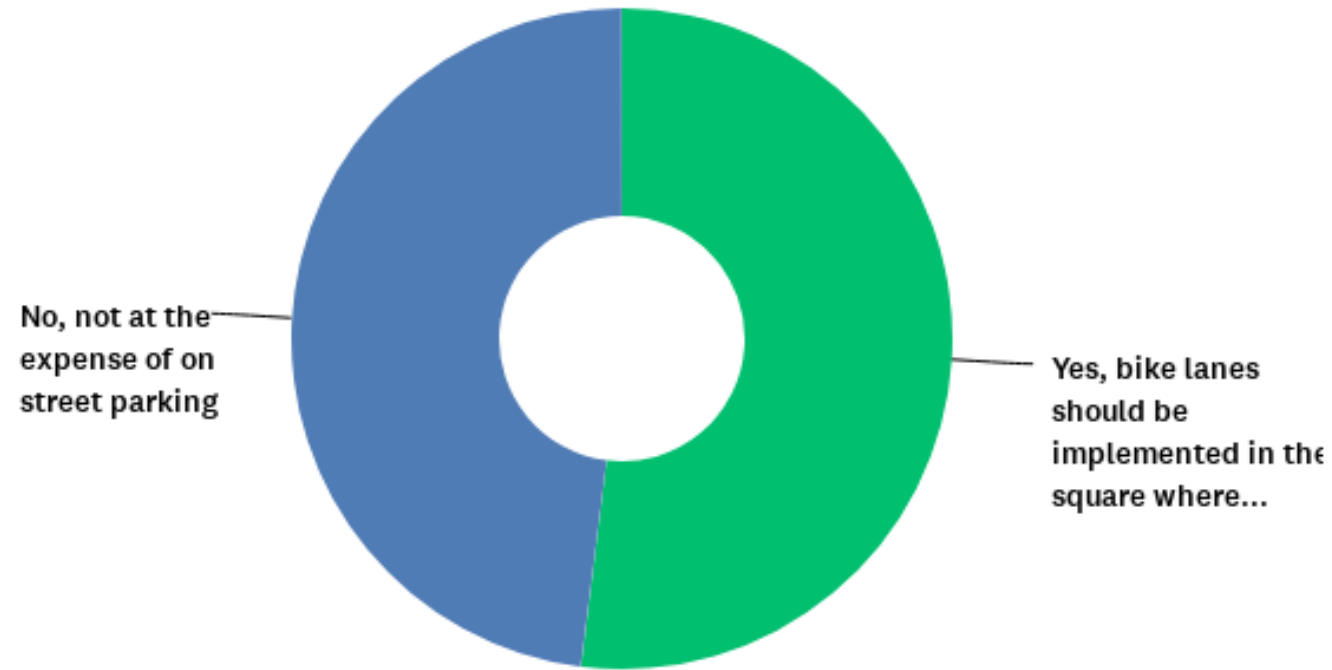
Overall Survey

Q20 Should there be a bike lane in Clifftondale that connects to the Northern Strand Community Bike Trail vis Lincoln Avenue?



Overall Survey (68% No)

Q20 Should there be a bike lane in Clifftondale that connects to the Northern Strand Community Bike Trail vis Lincoln Avenue?



18-34 (52% Yes)

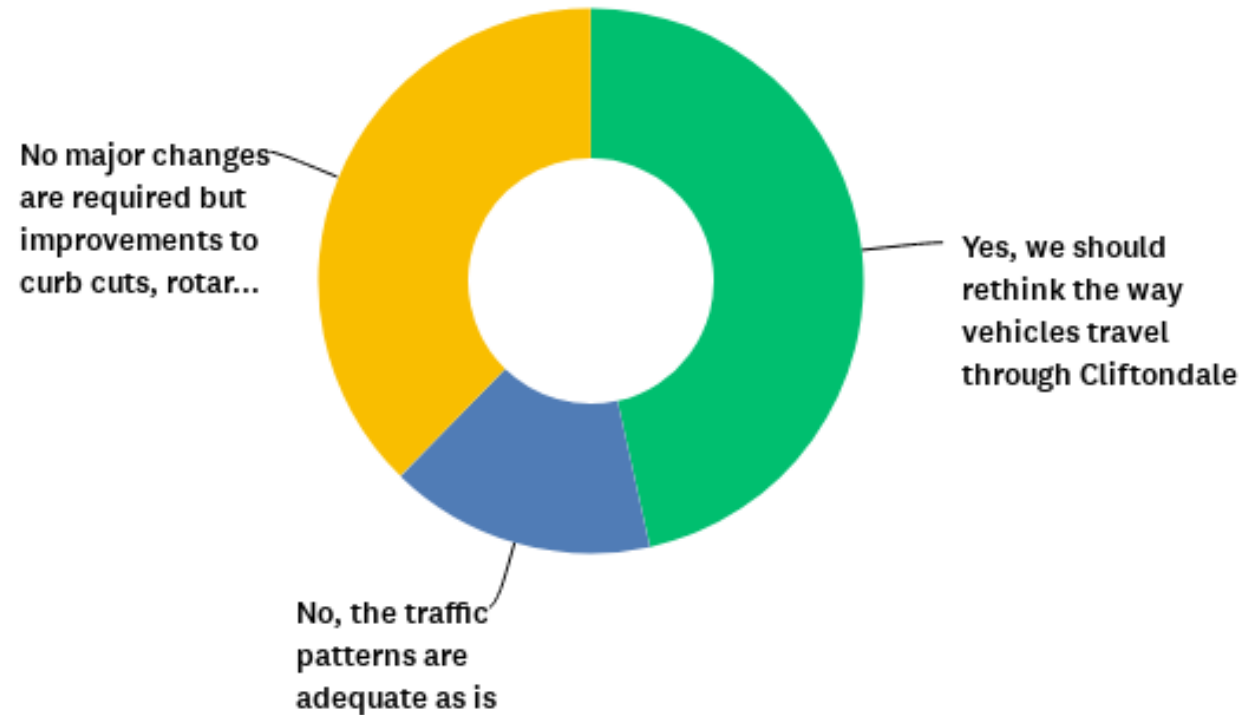
Infrastructure



Infrastructure in Cliftdale

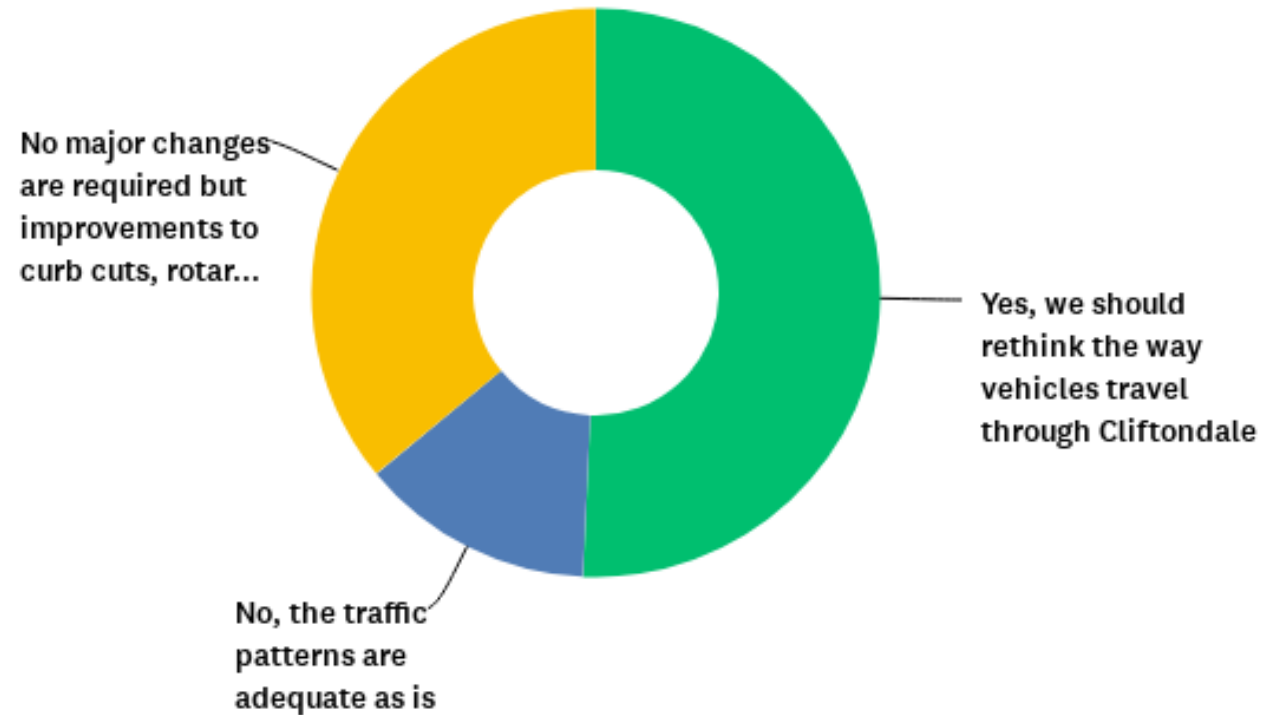
- Most people believe major realignments in traffic patterns are required in Cliftdale
- There is an incoming traffic and egress study to study the impacts of traffic realignments
- Jackson Street residents have expressed concern about potentially rerouting traffic and creating one ways to ease congestion within the square and provide better vehicular circulation / parking
- Most respondents think sidewalks within the business district should expand to allow sideway amenities or possibly small outdoor dining opportunities for future restaurant use
- Many respondents referred to heavy trucking through Cliftdale being an issue
- Potential curb cut extensions and traffic calming measures have been studied in the 2018 WalkBoston study conducted by the Town to create a more efficient rotary and clearly delineated traffic pattern

Q21 Do you feel that modifications in traffic patterns should be made in Cliftdale?



Overall Survey (47% believe major changes are needed)

Q21 Do you feel that modifications in traffic patterns should be made in Cliftdale?

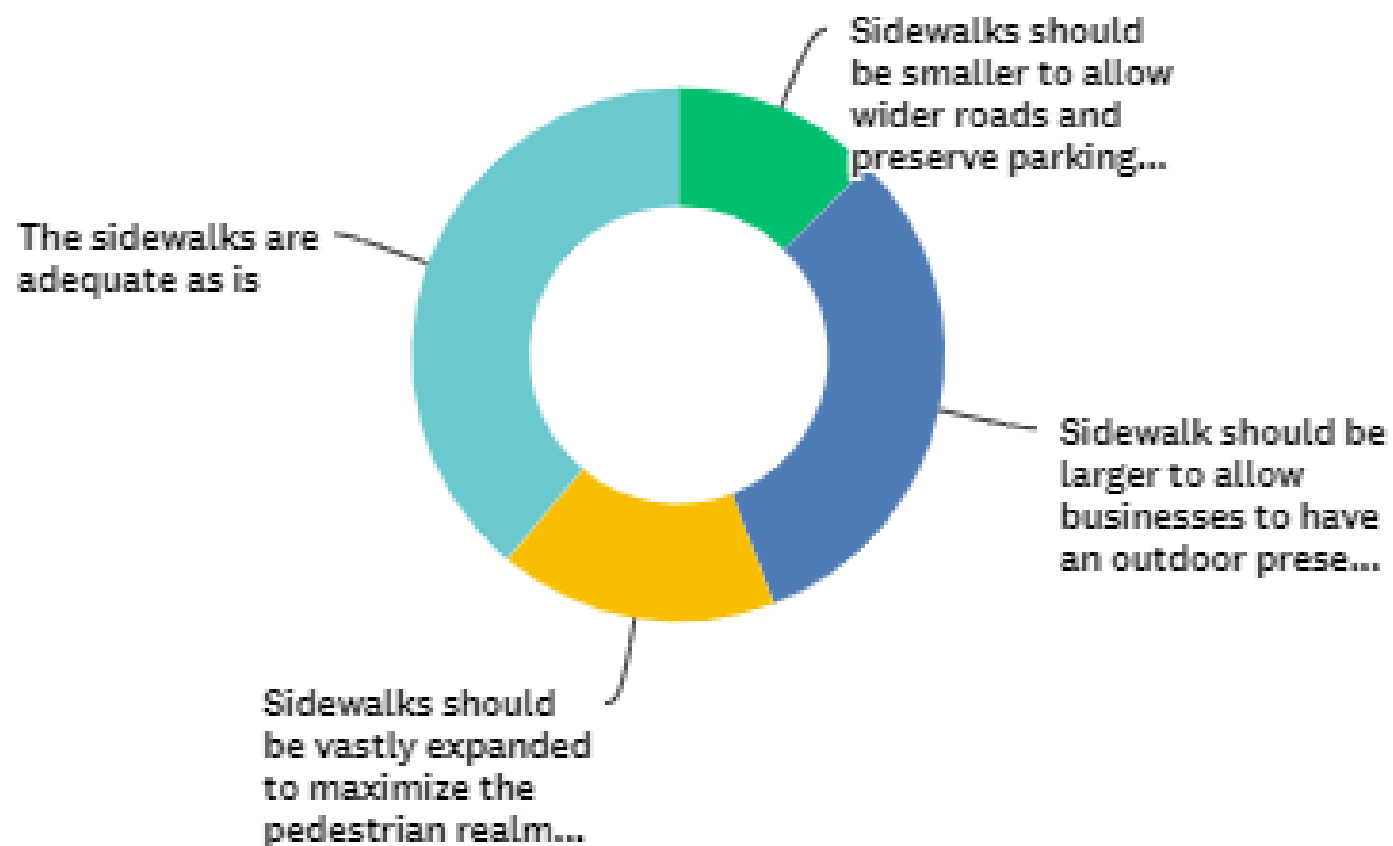


Residing near Cliftdale (51% believe major changes are needed)

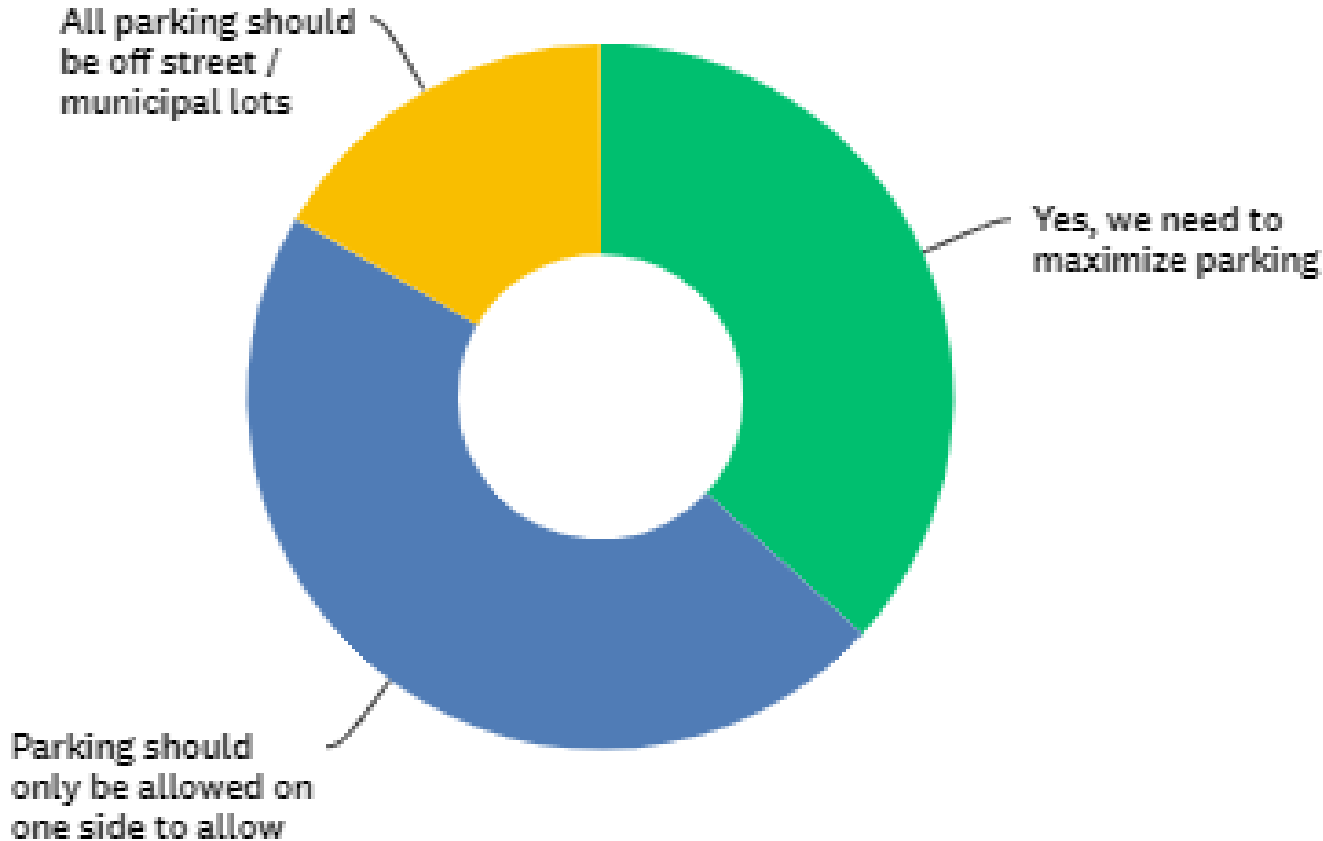
Parking.....



Q26 How should sidewalks be modified in Clifftondale?



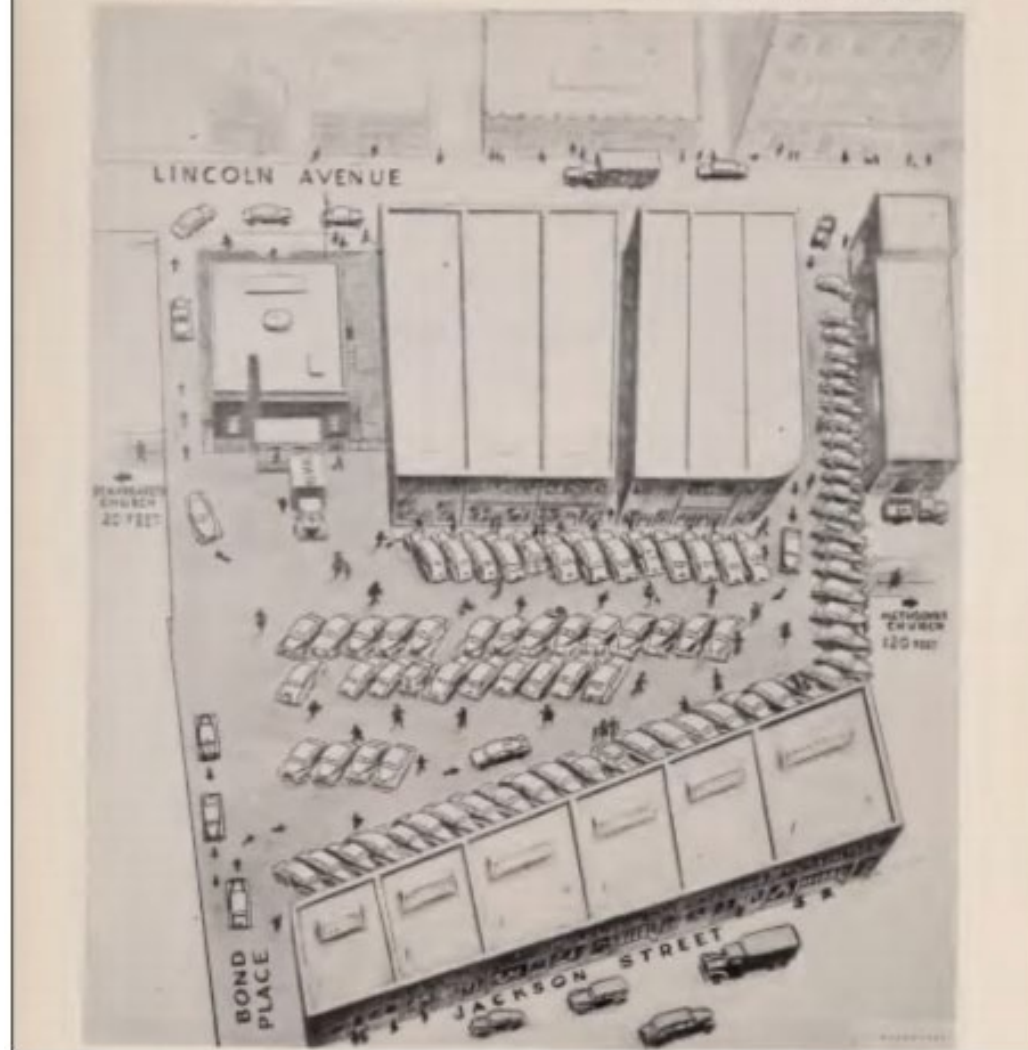
Q25 Should on-street parking be permitted in Clifondale on both sides?



The ever-present issue of parking

- It is without question that parking is the single most important issue in Clifftondale based on the respondent input and this committee has already reached out to various parties to understand the opportunities, challenges and doors that need to be closed for now.
- Main Issue: All off street parking is privately owned and the town needs to purchase, lease or make an agreement with a private entity in order to use the lot.
- For example...

Proposed Parking Area in Cliftondale Square



A 1950's era plan shows the vision for parking on Jackson Street surrounded by retail establishments.



May 6, 2021 –

“The [St. Margaret] parking lot is not in play for any of these discussions. It is simply not available, not for a garage, not for parking meters, not for use by anyone other than St. Margaret parishioners during church services, funerals, etc. We would strongly suggest you look elsewhere to solve the parking issues in Clifftondale Square.”

- Archdiocese of Boston

“Ownership” and lack of shared parking



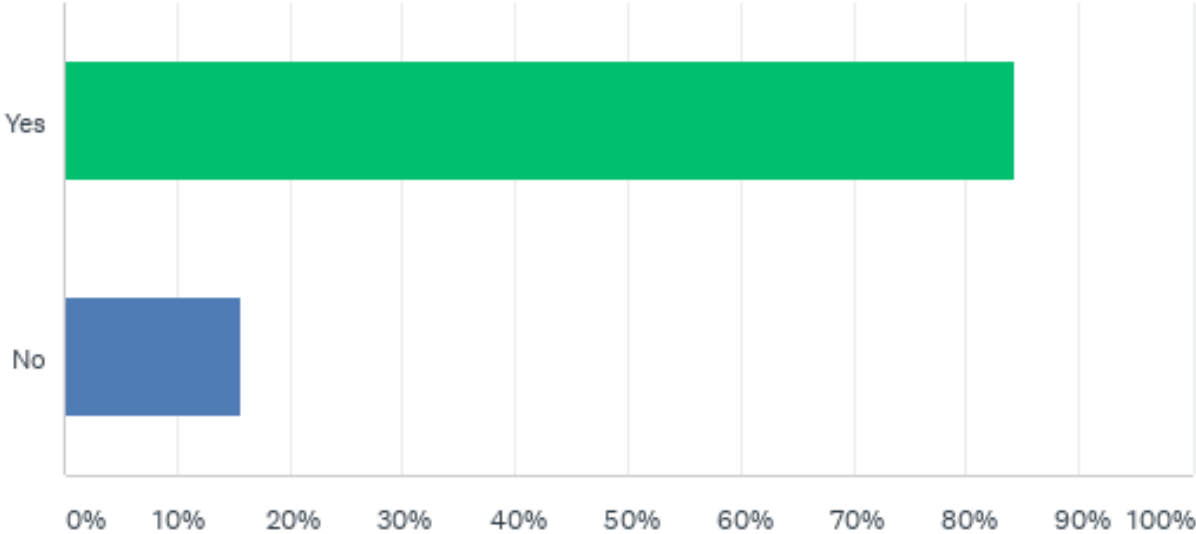


184 Privately Owned Lot Parking | 74 Public Street Parking

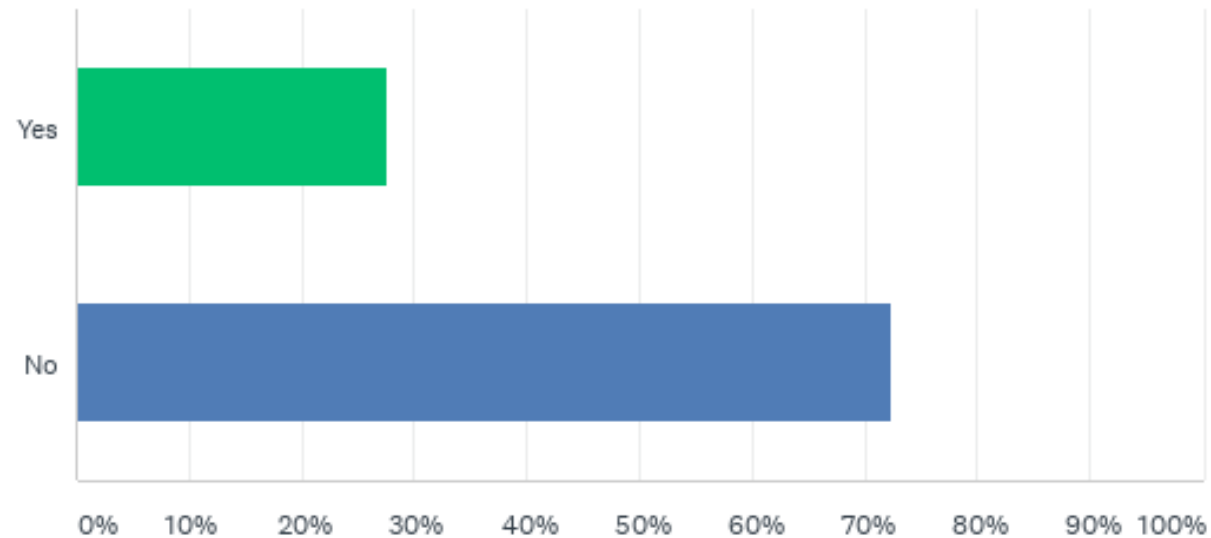
The ever-present issue of parking

- It is without question that parking is the single most important issue in Clifftondale based on the respondent input and this committee has already reached out to various parties to understand the opportunities, challenges and doors that need to be closed for now.
- Issues: All off street parking is privately owned and the town needs to purchase, lease or make an agreement with a private entity in order to use the lot.
- “Ownership” and lack of shared parking are contributing to the perceived issues of parking in the square. Opportunity for public / private partnership.
- In addition, fence barriers between properties greatly affect efficiency of lots
- No parking management plan is currently in place which leads to vastly underutilized parking that does not respond to the diversity of business hours in Clifftondale
- No painted line street parking on Lincoln which leads to inefficient use of existing spots
- Lack of enforcement or means to enforce timed parking. Meters vs. Consistent Enforcement

Q23 Would you support the town potentially purchasing property to mitigate the perceived issue of parking in Cliftondale?



Q24 Would you support the use of parking meters to better regulate parking in Clifftondale?



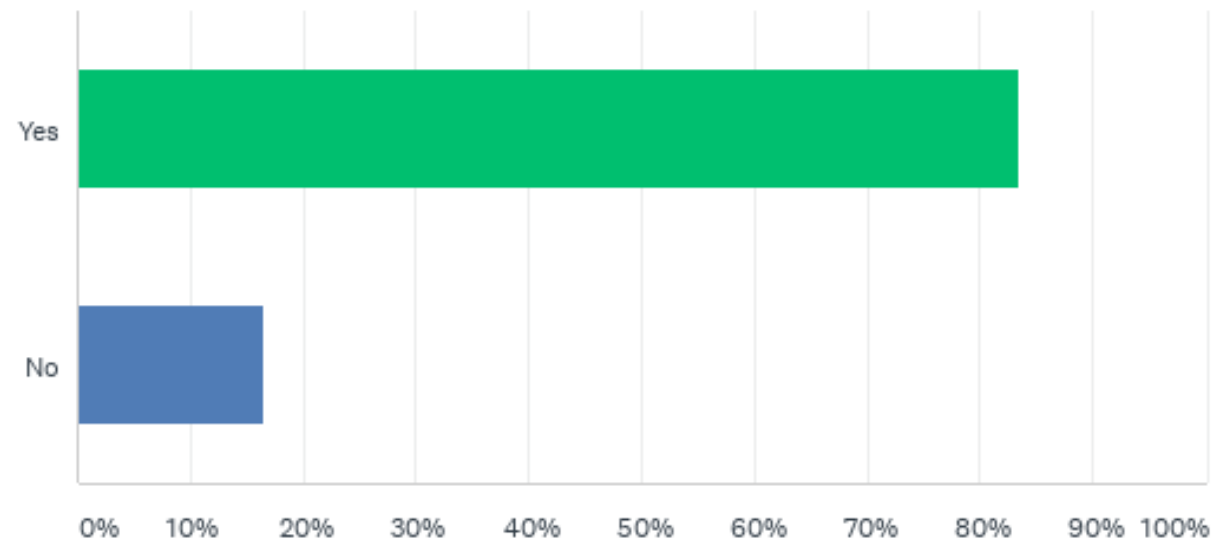
The future of Cliftondale



The big question - What's next?

- We asked respondents what they want to see short term, in the next 3-5 years, and 10 years down the line
 - How do we incentivize property owners and business owners to invest? How do we attract new businesses? How do we attract foot traffic to Clifftondale
 - What can be implemented to help facilitate revitalization?
 - What does revitalization mean to you?
- The answers to these questions vary significantly in this survey -

Q27 Would you support a storefront improvement program where the Town would subsidize a percentage of the cost of work to encourage improvements in the downtown district?



Nearby municipalities with related programs

Melrose Sign & Façade Program - provides grants to business applicants for up to 50% of the cost of attractive business signs and façade improvement. The maximum grant is \$1,000 for a sign and \$500 for a façade improvement.

Woburn Storefront Improvement Plan - provides matching grants of up to \$2,000 for signage improvements and matching loans of up to \$15,000 for façade improvements. Properties must be located within the Downtown (B-D) Business District and the property owner or business tenant must contribute \$1 for every sign grant or façade loan dollar requested.

Salem Storefront Improvement Plan - provides a one-to-one match for moderate to substantial exterior and/or façade improvements in the designated areas. The match from the city is up to \$5,000 for each project.

Beverly Façade Program - provides grants up to \$5,000 for façade improvements to property owners that meet eligible criteria. Number of grants awarded vary annually.

What should be permitted in Clifftondale?

- Restaurant / Bar / Café / Brewery
- “Anything”
- Independent Shops
- Housing
- Outdoor seating
- Pharmacy
- Hardware Store
- Open / Green Space

What shouldn't be permitted in Clifftondale?

- Marijuana Dispensary
- Hair / Nail Salons
- Vape / Smoke Shops
- Industrial Use
- Housing
- Banking
- Liquor Stores
- Post Office

Short Term / Inexpensive Improvements

- “Increase trash receptacles”
- “Beautification”
- “Update zoning. Initiate a "dress code" for businesses”
- “Uniform signage”
- “Increased and more consistent enforcement of parking and speeding / on foot presence”
- “Make the permitting process a bit easier”
- “Remove or replace the dead evergreen in the circle. Plant more trees”
- “The Clifftondale Square area seems to get short shrift as to Town inclusion during the holidays, especially at Christmas.”
- “A promotional campaign (something inexpensive maybe on the town webpage maybe) with a weekly coupon sponsored by the businesses each taking turns. Something to get the residents to pop up the square, because if there isn't anything appealing there, there's no reason to head there.”
- “Repair damaged sidewalks. Consider using brick pavers for a more attractive look”
- “Permit public art and murals”
- “Incentivize pop-up markets, community events, open air performances...like Market Street”

Longer Term Improvements

- “Parking increased; larger scale retail additions community events held in the square”
- “More walkable and pedestrian friendly - like a traditional main street environment. Give people a reason to go and to stay”
- “Allow 3/4 story housing. Maybe some nice condos with under ground parking and that also have business storefronts. I think that would change and upgrade the whole area”
- “Get the ‘small town feel’ back”
- “Possibly some sort of green space for town events (e.g., 4th of July celebration).”
- “A place for residents to live and shop for most items without going to Route 1”
- “Make Clifftondale like Melrose or Wakefield’s downtowns”
- “A hub for Saugus that has a quant but more refined feel. People can gather, shop in small boutiques, and get local drinks. Connect to nature and trails and more efficiently allows traffic to Rt.1, school, and Lincoln Ave.”
- “Revise traffic patterns for less congestion, don’t overbuild, have a cohesive look, put utilities underground”
- Implement an accredited Main Street program with an active Chamber of Commerce and business community. A vibrant mixed-use community. New buildings should be adequately sized to host restaurant use with a viable front of house space”

Takeaways & Next Steps



A diversity of opinions and ideas; the art of the compromise

- While there is a lot the town can do (apply for grants, create a zoning overlay, storefront program, consistent enforcement), stakeholders really hold the cards here, specifically in the mitigation of the number 1 issue in Clifftondale. A public / private partnership is required.
- Aside from parking, improved safety, walkability, and economic vibrancy are what most respondents want to see happen in Clifftondale.
- Like other communities, Saugus is experiencing a big generational divide in terms of what direction we should go in as a Town regarding the Clifftondale district.
- “Revitalization” means something different to everyone as it relates to Clifftondale. No matter what is implemented, there will be a sizable population that will oppose potential changes which may and has led to gridlock in the revitalization efforts. Compromise is necessary.
- Passive intervention (i.e., waiting for something to save Clifftondale) is not sustainable. Change is needed but change is something we historically challenged.
- Respondents were receptive of the Town financially investing in Clifftondale via storefront improvement program and purchasing property to aid the parking problem.
- Saugus’ geography and proximity to Boston (<10 miles) is going to result in an influx of new Saugonians in the coming years. We are likely to see substantial change in the makeup of our community in the next 15 years.
- We’d greatly benefit from an active Business & Property Owner Association that could facilitate discussions to better their district and their properties.

Next steps

- This survey will be on record (including raw responses not formatted for this presentation). This survey will be included as part of an overall report that is due November 1st.
- While the state has yet to announce awards for the Shared Streets and Spaces Grant, we will continue to monitor this opportunity
- We will further synthesize these results along with the discussions had within this forum, compare them with the recommendations from the previously procured studies, and provide this information to the Town Manager, the Department of Planning & Economic Development, and the MAPC, the curator of our Master Plan.
- This committee will meet again at the end of summer and early fall to begin the preparation of our report. In the meantime, we will continue to gather information, consult with stakeholders and town officials, and stay up to date on any opportunities present in Clifftondale while also closing the perceived opportunities that are not present at this time.



Questions?



Cliftondale Community Forum

June 28, 2021 | M.E.G. Building