

TOWN OF BEDFORD AGE-FRIENDLY SURVEY SUMMARY

Prepared by:

***SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE PLANNING
COMMISSION***

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**BEDFORD, NH AGE-
FRIENDLY PILOT
PROGRAM**

SOUTHERN NH PLANNING COMMISSION



AGE-FRIENDLY BEDFORD

Background

The Town of Bedford strives to be a truly welcoming place for residents, workers and visitors of all ages as demonstrated by programs provided by the Parks and Recreation Department as well as the Library. Planning staff were determined to incorporate age-friendly elements into the upcoming Master Plan revision, a long-range planning document that guides land use focus, local development, infrastructure improvement and town programming for the next ten years.

To ensure the Master Plan reflects the needs of those who live in the community, Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) worked with Town staff to conduct a survey focusing on residents' experiences with housing, transportation, recreation, and economic development. The results of the survey are summarized in this report and it is intended that they provide insight to the upcoming Master Plan process.

In spring of 2018, staff from SNHPC and the Town Planning Department collaborated to develop the Bedford Age-Friendly Survey. Survey questions covered topics on housing, transportation, recreation, and economic development. On June 6, 2018, the survey was launched. In an effort to gain a large audience, SNHPC and Town staff created small postcards with web links and a "QR code" directing participants to the survey. Postcards were handed out at farmer's markets, local grocery stores, and beloved local gathering spaces, as well as shared online through town websites, and various social media platforms. Additionally, Bedford Town staff shared the survey on a Bedford community Facebook group. By the end of August, 817 people participated in the survey, providing valuable information for the Town as they begin to update their Master Plan.

SNHPC planner
Cam Prolman
visits Bedford's
Farmer's Market
inviting
residents to
take the
Bedford Survey



Example of
the postcard
handed out
throughout
Bedford



AGE-FRIENDLY BEDFORD

Survey Summary

A total of 817 respondents participated in the Bedford Age-Friendly Survey, or roughly 3.5% of the town's population. The majority (72%) of respondents were between the ages 36 to 65 years old.

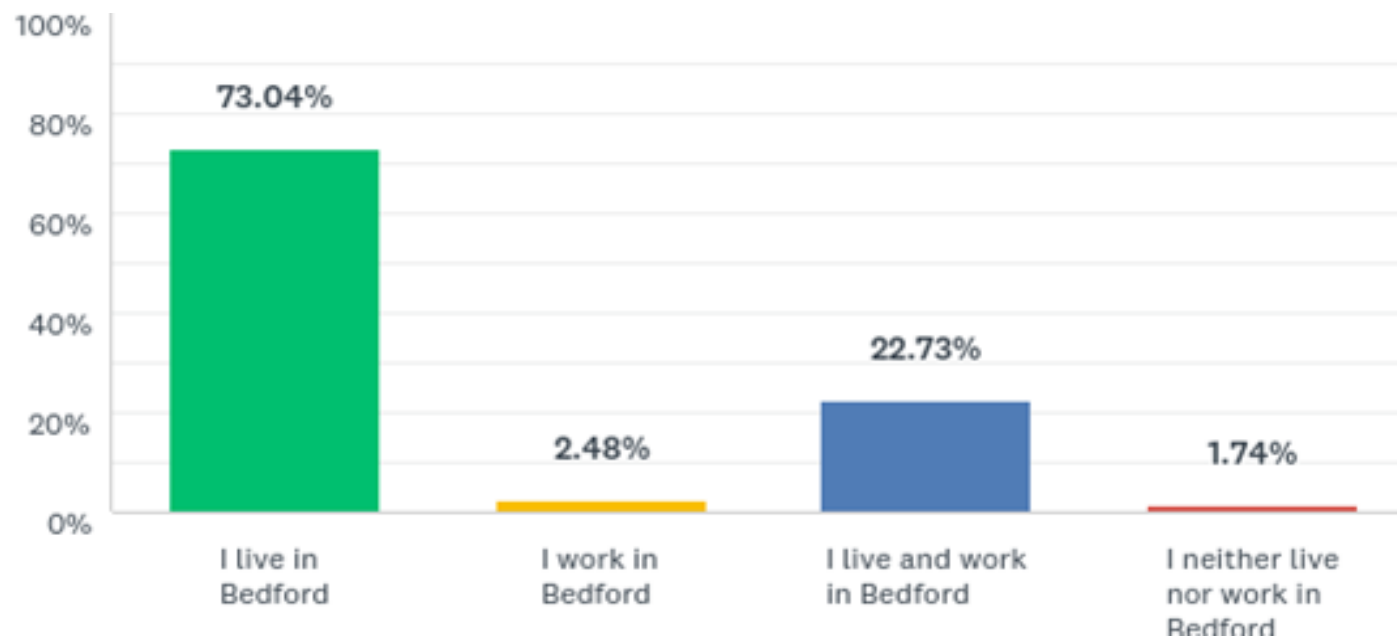
Respondents varied from being relatively new to town to having lived in town for over two decades. The following list broadly summarizes themes that occurred throughout the survey responses.

- Bedford respondents generally find that they have a good public school system, and are proud of their community character. Many residents moved to Bedford due to its character, schools, and good location.
- Respondents are happy with current recreational opportunities in town, but would like to expand opportunities for walking and biking.
- Many respondents commented that they feel the town lacks spaces for residents to gather - whether it'd be for cultural events, or just a centralized area where people to interact.
- Approximately 56% of the participants supported the need to build a community center, while only 47% stated they would support the use of taxes to fund a community center.
- New residents and some seniors find it difficult to learn what is happening in town and in making connections with other residents.
- The majority of respondents are content with their current housing, and feel comfortable about their housing conditions for their future. Additionally, respondents stated they prefer the single-family homes in Bedford, and prefer new housing to match the character of the community.
- The vast majority of respondents drive their own vehicle and have no problem getting around town.
- Respondents generally feel that the town could benefit from increased walkability especially around the Town Center and major public spaces.
- Respondents think the town could benefit from a shared-use path, however their support would depend on its cost and location.

The following pages summarize the survey results. Full survey response data will be available on the SNHPC website.

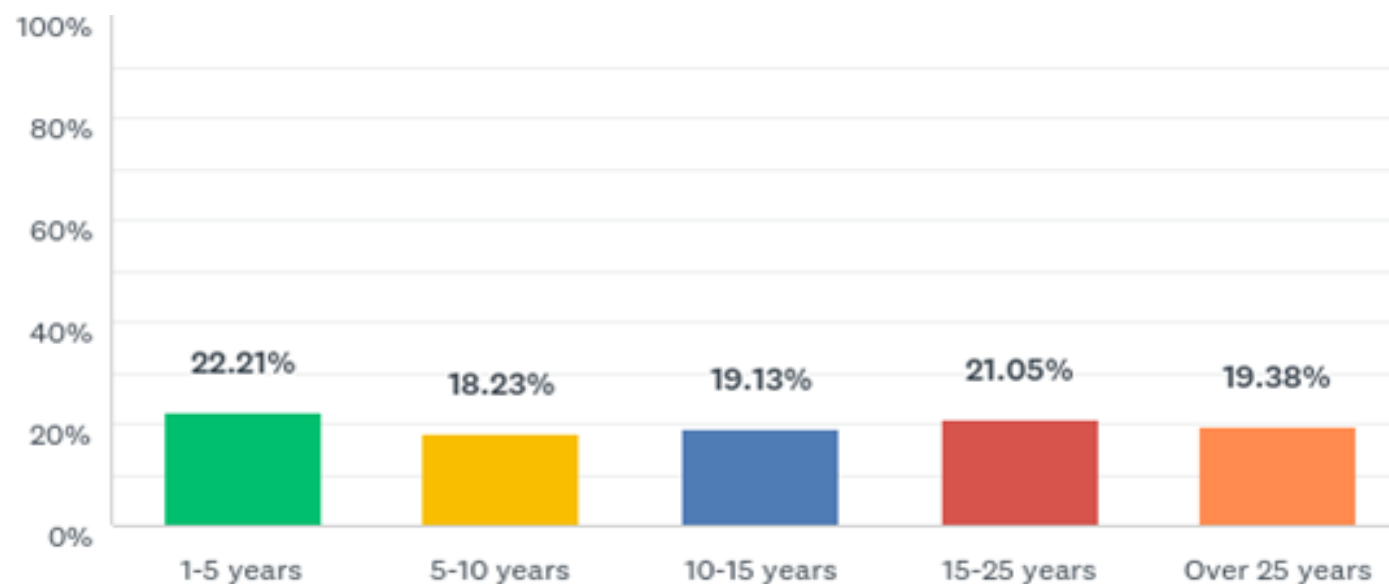
Q1: Do you live or work in Bedford?

Answered: 808 Skipped: 9



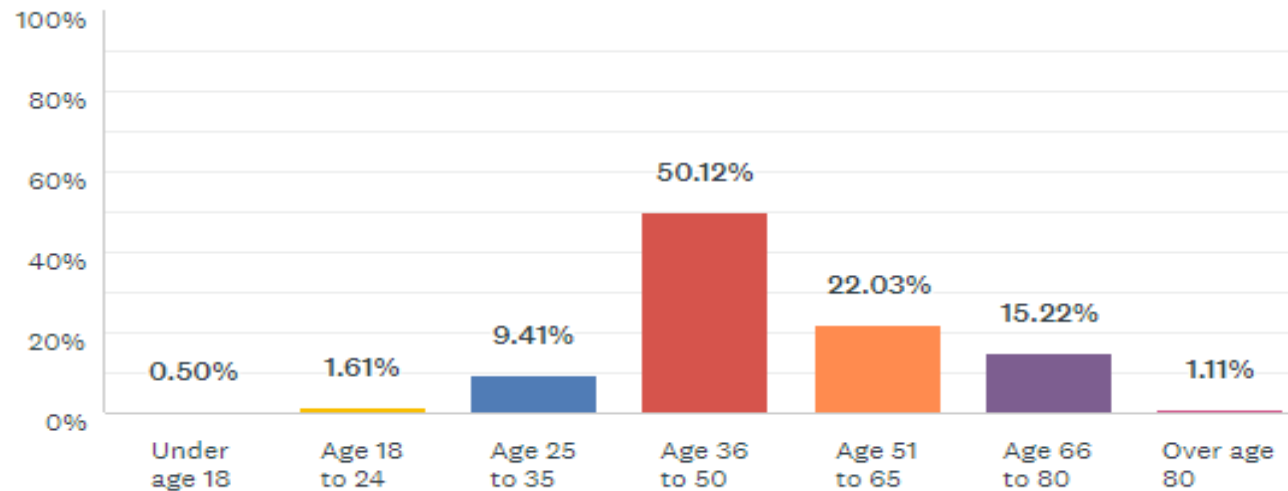
Q2: If you live in Bedford, how long have you lived in town?

Answered: 782 Skipped: 35



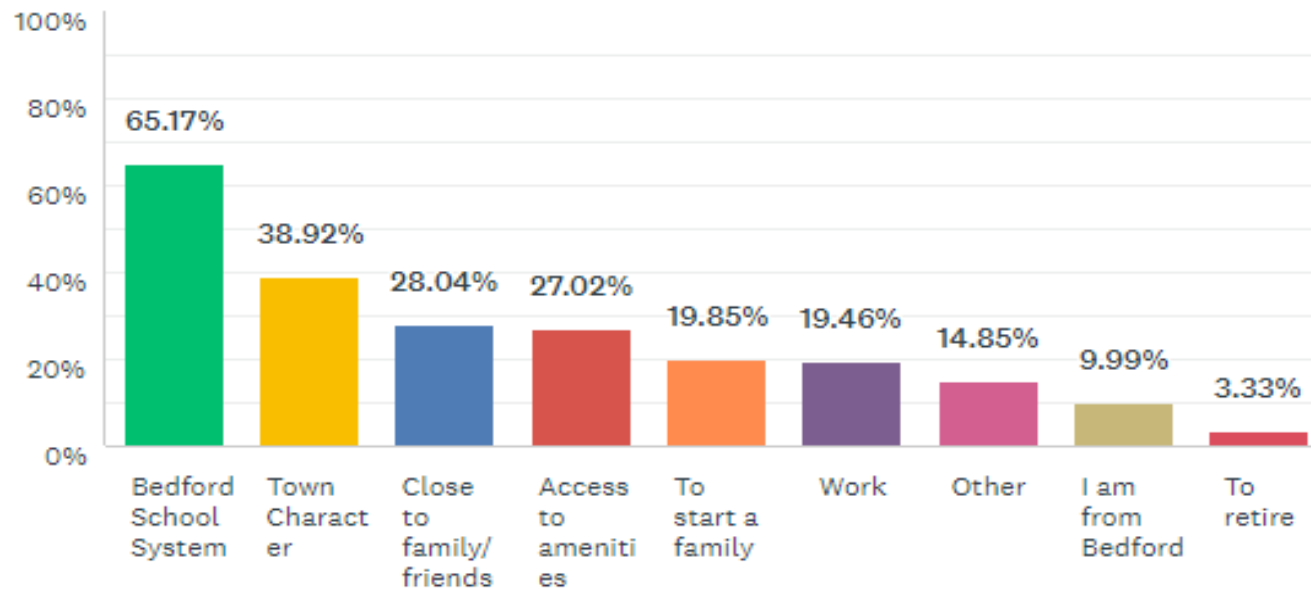
Q3: What is your age?

Answered: 808 Skipped: 9



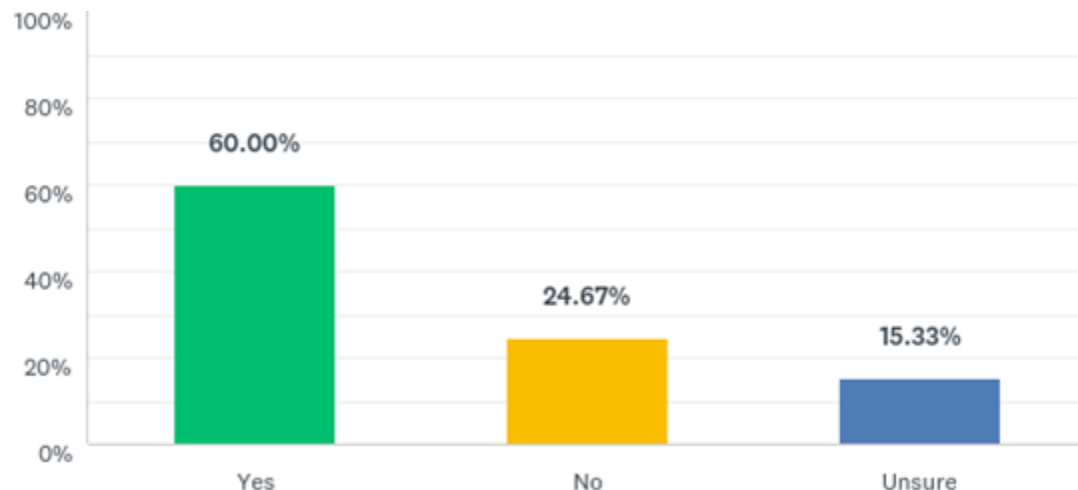
Q4: If you live in Bedford, why did you decide to move to town?

Answered: 781 Skipped: 36



Q5: Do you find it easy to stay engaged in the Bedford community and to maintain an active social life?

Answered: 688 Skipped: 129



Respondents who commented said that while there are opportunities to stay engaged in the Bedford community, such as through the school system, recreational sports, and events, many seniors and new residents have trouble connecting with their community.

Q6: In your opinion, are there steps the Town or non-profit sector could take to promote a better-connected, more socially engaged community? Please explain.

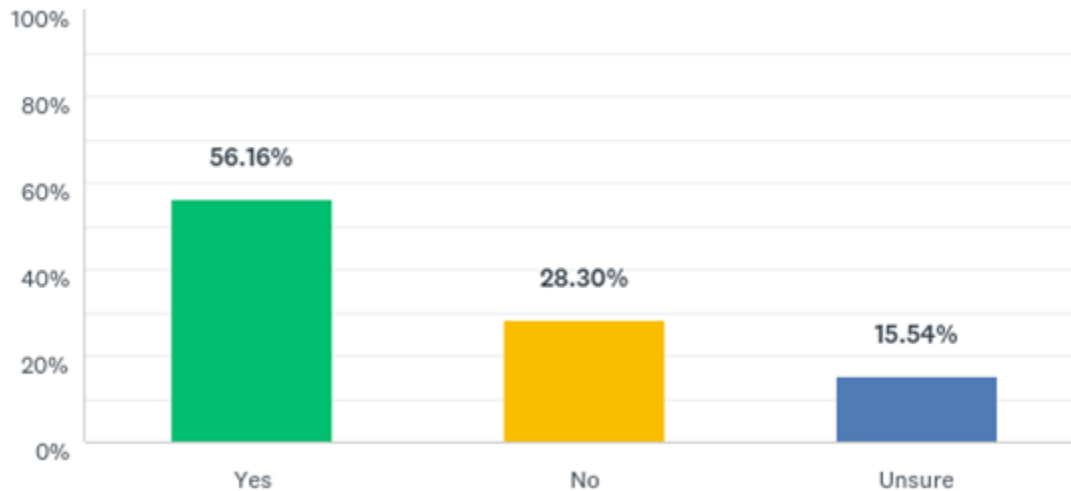
Answered: 348 Skipped: 469

Concerts Better Communication Meeting Houses Social Media Apartments
 Bike Playground Sidewalks Retirees Events Access
 Community Not that I can Think Town Clubs Center
 Neighborhoods Walk Parents Opportunities Character
 Downtown Unsure Socially Engaged Parks and Rec Programs

The majority of respondents who commented said that the town could benefit from a central gathering space for events. However, many respondents commented that they did not think this was the town's responsibility.

Q7: Do you think Bedford needs a Town Community Center to serve residents of all ages? A community center would provide a central gathering place for social and recreation programming in Bedford.

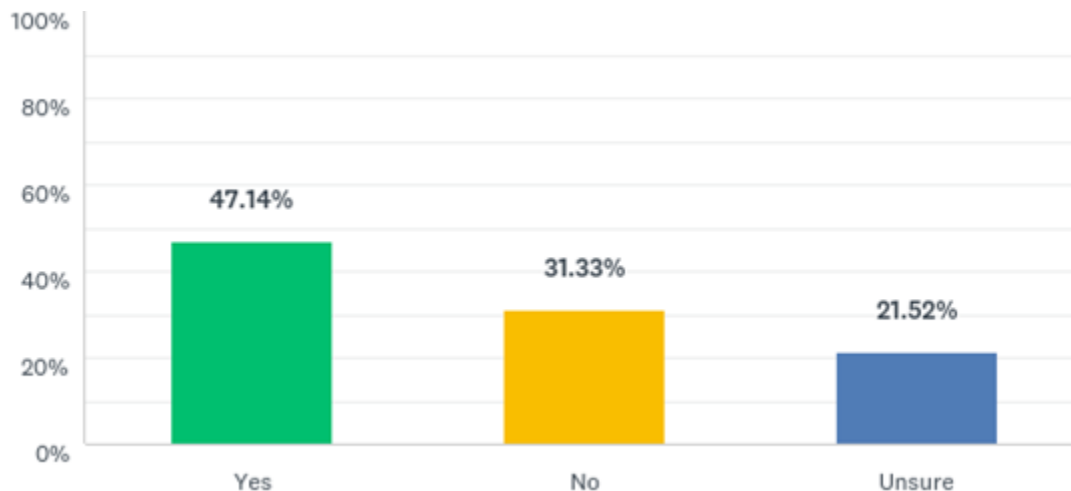
Answered: 685 Skipped: 132



The majority of respondents who commented said that existing town facilities, such as the schools, library, and Town Hall, could be used as a community center.

Q8: Would you support the use of taxpayer funds to create a Town Community Center?

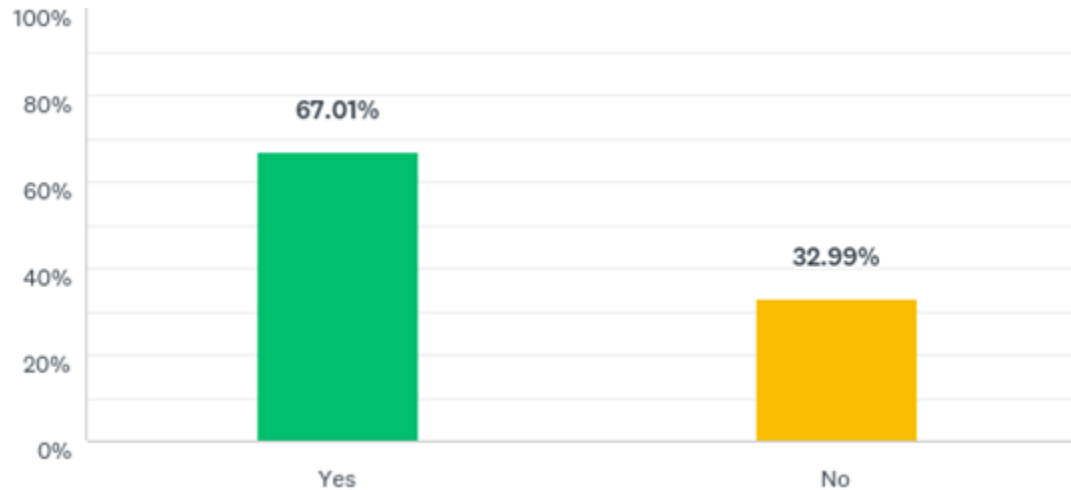
Answered: 686 Skipped: 131



The majority of respondents who commented said that the raise in taxes to fund a community center would be too high.

Q9: Have you attended any recreational or social programming sponsored by the Town of Bedford?

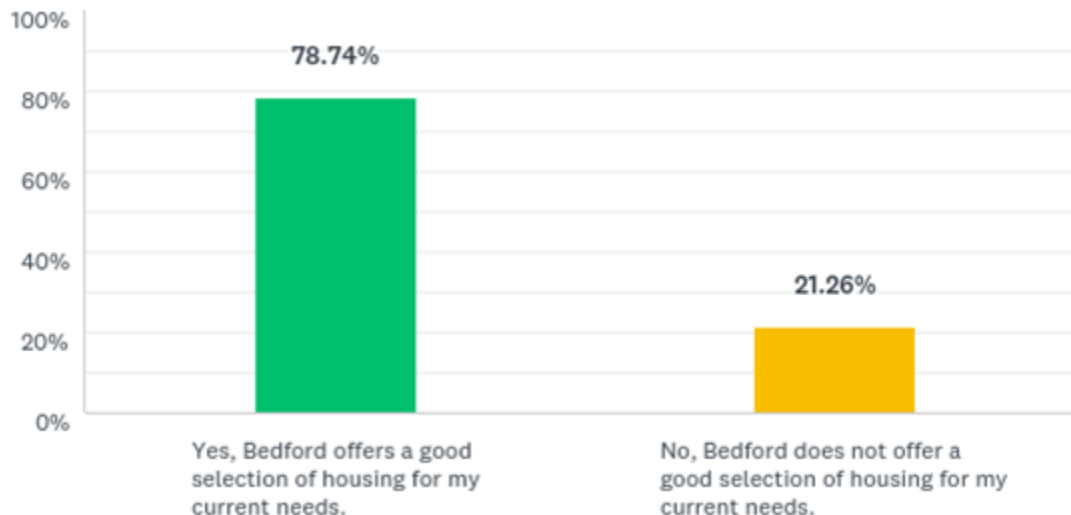
Answered: 685 Skipped: 132



Many of the respondents who commented said they would mostly attend recreational or social programming when their children were young. Additionally, many respondents who commented said they enjoy many of the recreational activities and facilities such as the pool and town events. Some respondents felt that there were not enough opportunities for senior residents.

Q10: Based on your current housing needs, does Bedford offer a good selection of housing?

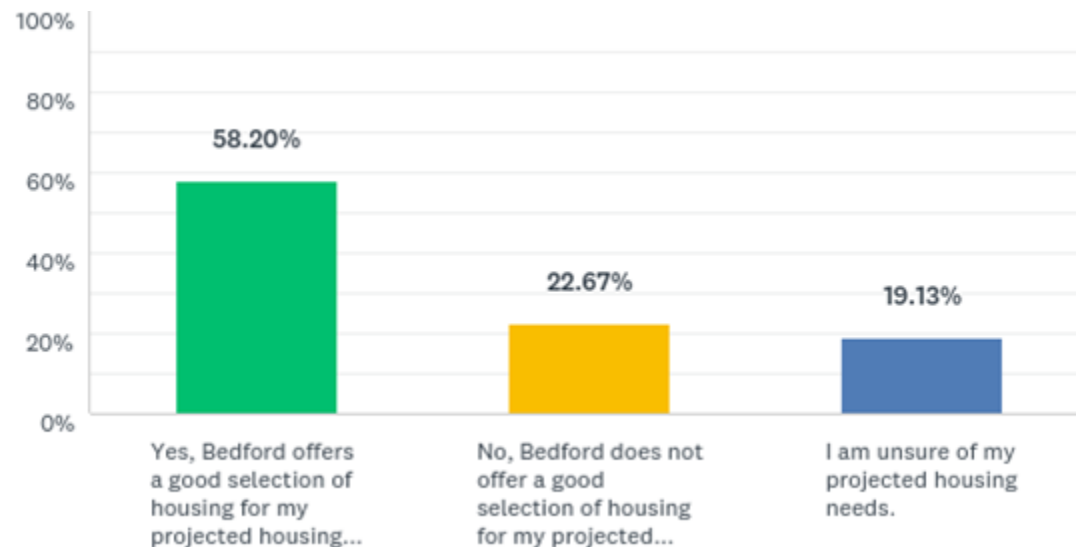
Answered: 624 Skipped: 193



Respondents who commented said that they had difficulty finding their home when it was first purchased. Some felt that the town did need more options for downsizing. Some respondents felt that the town is too built-out and would prefer no new housing.

Q11: Based on your best estimation, does Bedford offer a good selection of housing for your projected housing needs over the next 10 to 15 years?

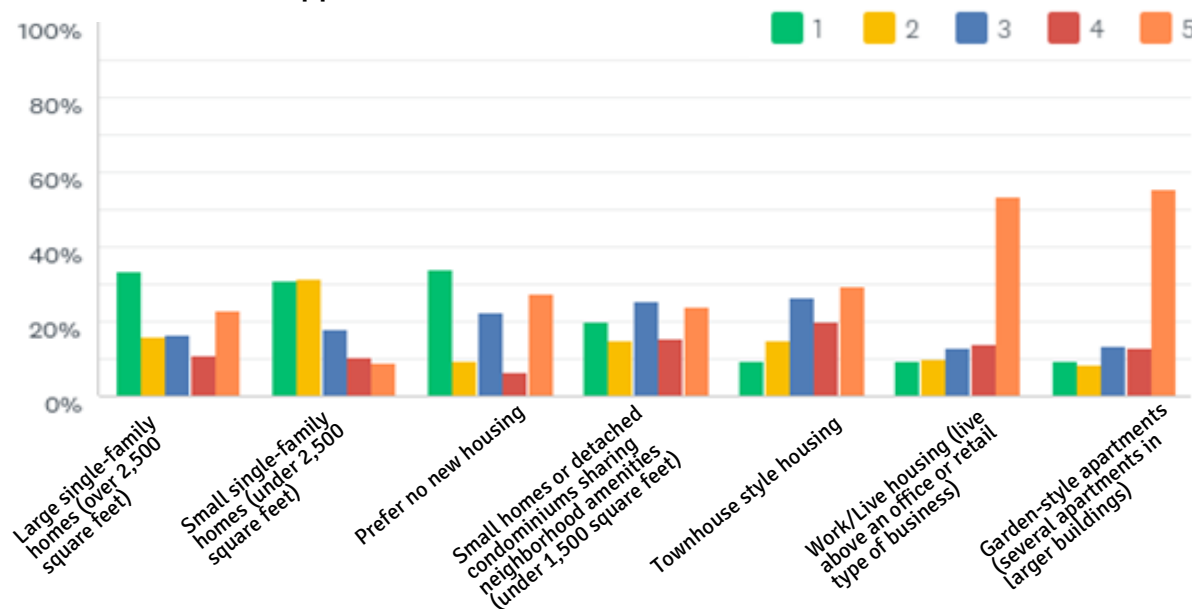
Answered: 625 Skipped: 192



Many respondents who commented stated they would like to stay in Bedford, but think there aren't enough affordable senior housing options in town.

Q12: When new housing is added to Bedford, please prioritize the following housing types based on how much you would like to see such housing on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing the most desirable option and 5 representing the least desirable.

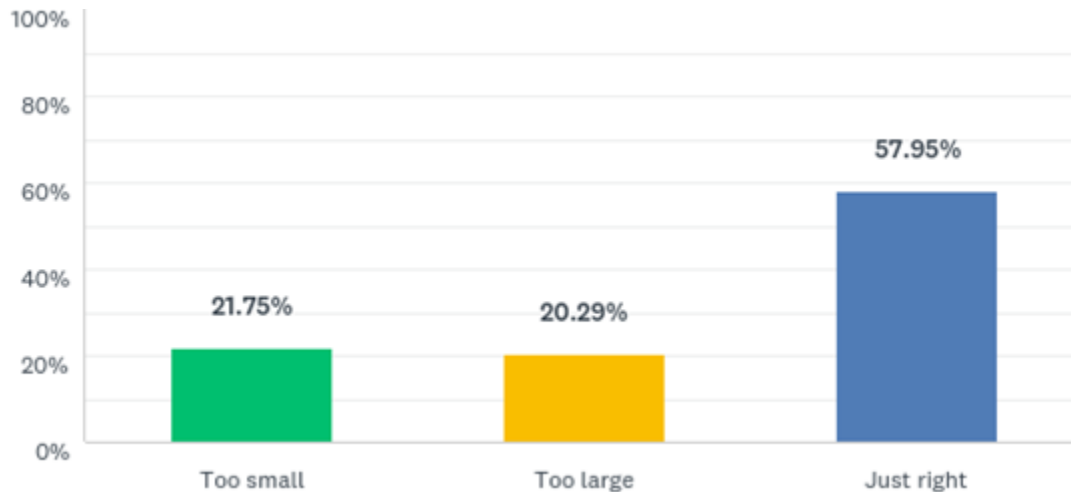
Answered: 621 Skipped: 196



The majority of respondents who commented said that they would prefer to keep the character of the current housing stock.

Q13: According to the Bedford Assessing Department, the median square-footage of a home in Bedford is approximately 2,400 square-feet. Is a 2,400 square-foot residence too small, too large, or just right for your needs? A typical 2,400 square-foot home

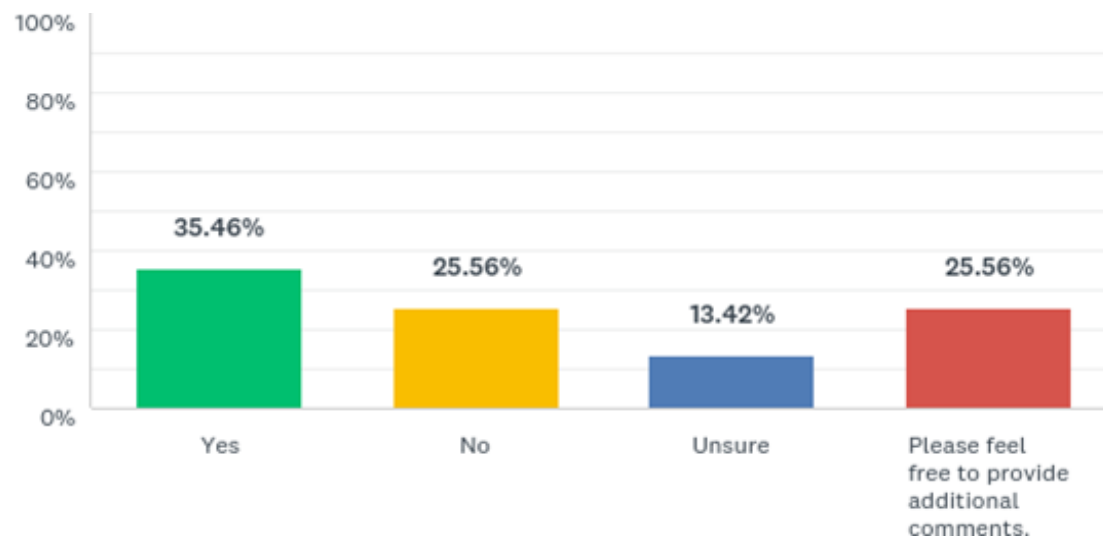
Answered: 619 Skipped: 198



The majority of respondents who commented said that this median square-footage is adequate for a family in Bedford.

Q14: The Town has discussed the possibility of permitting more pedestrian-oriented, higher density housing close to major corridors where amenities like stores and restaurants are within walking distance. Would you support this or not? Please explain.

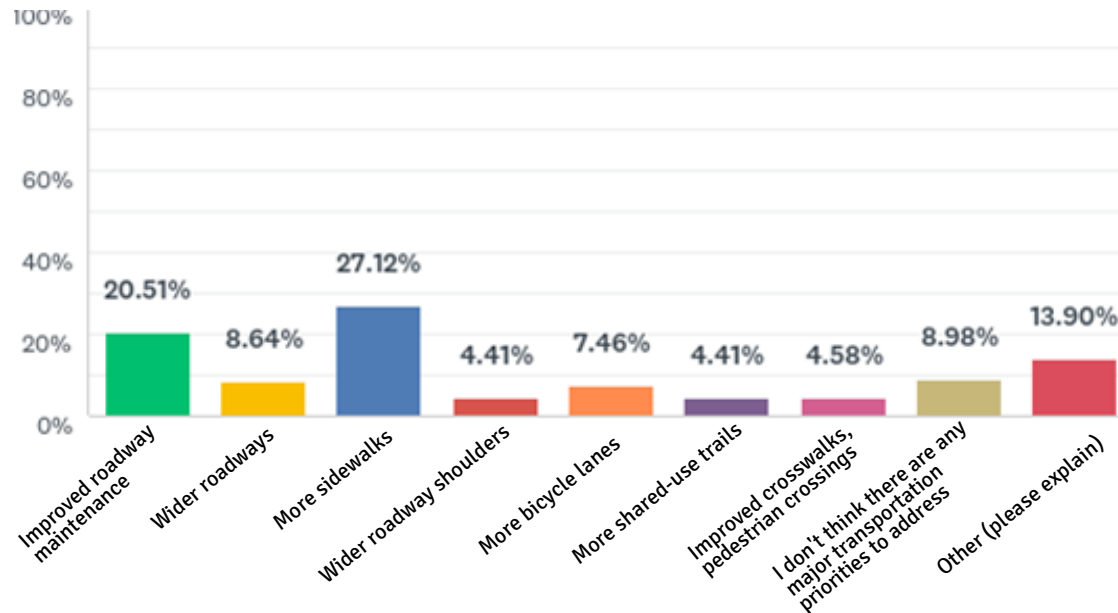
Answered: 629 Skipped: 188



Respondents who commented were generally in favor of keeping the rural character of the community. However, some respondents stated that if there were to be higher density developments, they would prefer them to be in areas such as South River Road.

Q15: In your opinion, what represents the highest priority for improving transportation in Bedford?

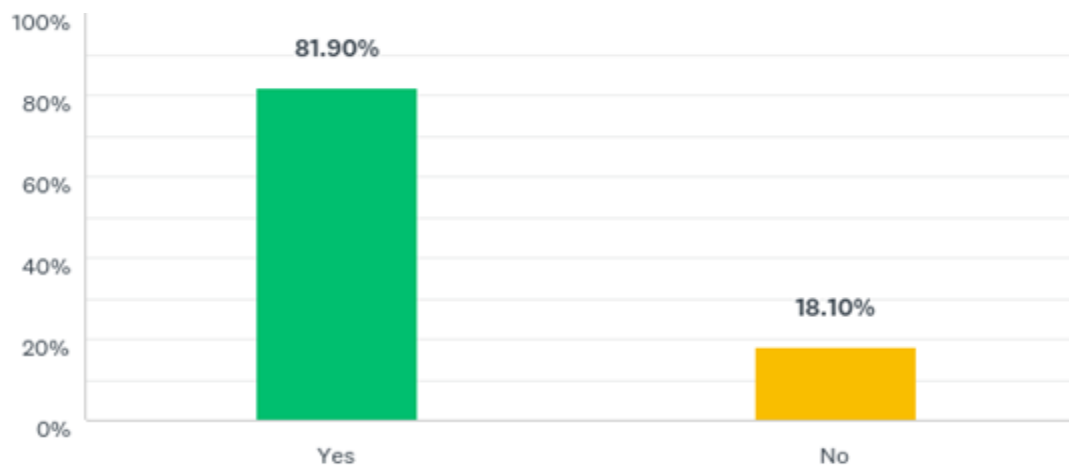
Answered: 593 Skipped: 224



Respondents who commented said that they would like to see more sidewalks in town, and better accommodations for bicycling.

Q16: Generally speaking, do you find it easy to get around Bedford?

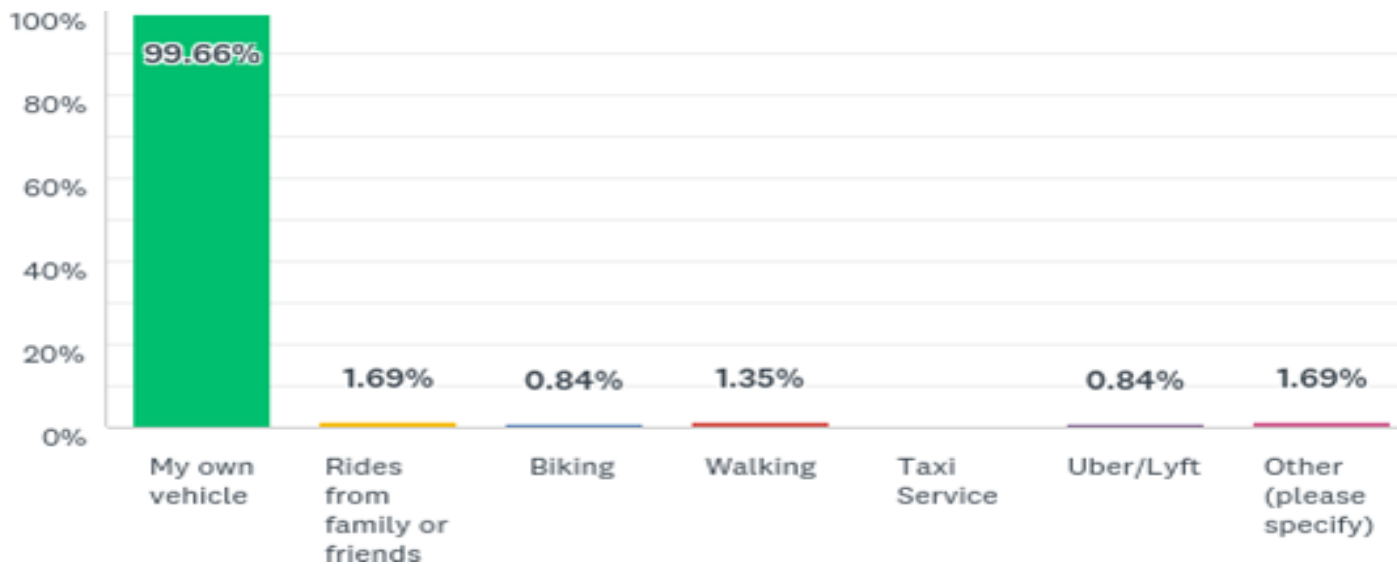
Answered: 594 Skipped: 223



The majority of respondents said that while it's easy to get around town in their cars, it is difficult to get around without one.

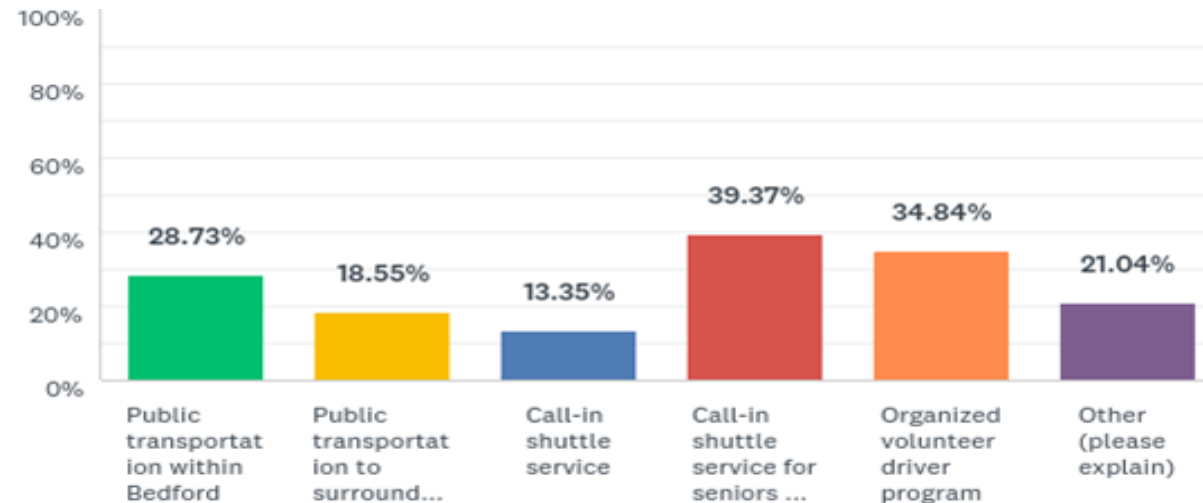
Q17: For most trips, how do you get around Bedford (i.e. to appointments locally and in other towns, grocery shopping, visiting local friends and family)?

Answered: 595 Skipped: 222



Q18: For those who cannot drive or choose not to, would you support the use of taxpayer funds to subsidize any of the following programs? Please select what programs you would support.

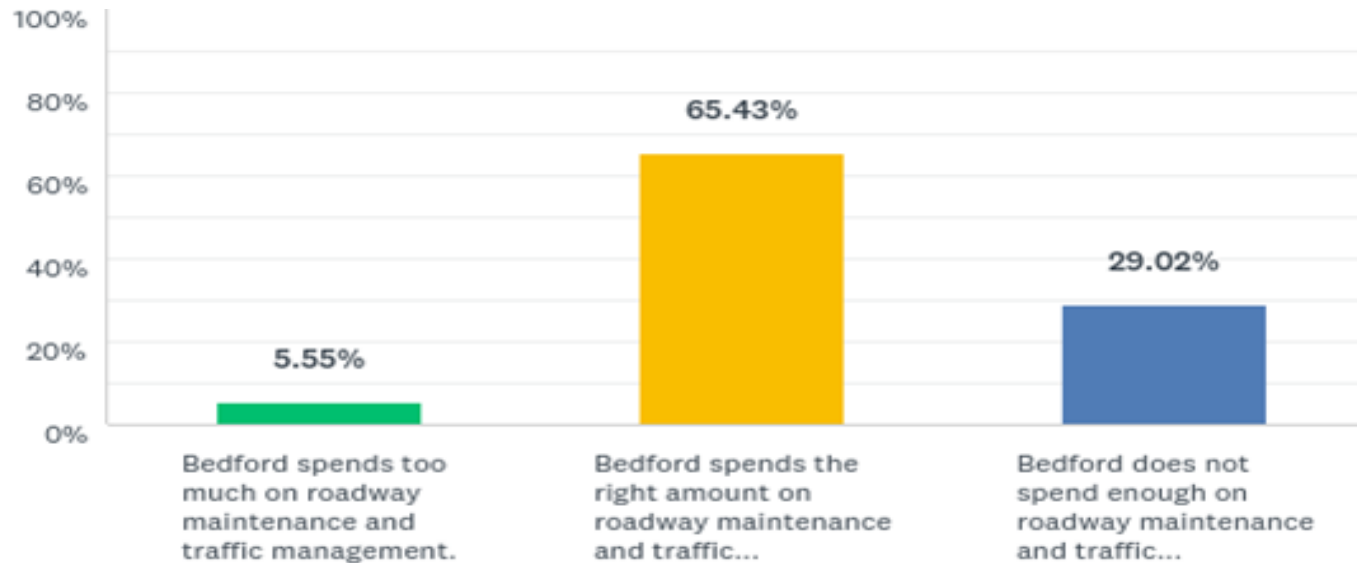
Answered: 444 Skipped: 373



The majority of respondents who commented (69) said that they would not support the use of taxpayer funds to subsidize any of the listed transportation programs.

Q19: How would you characterize the amount of resources Bedford devotes to roadway maintenance for cars and traffic management in the community?

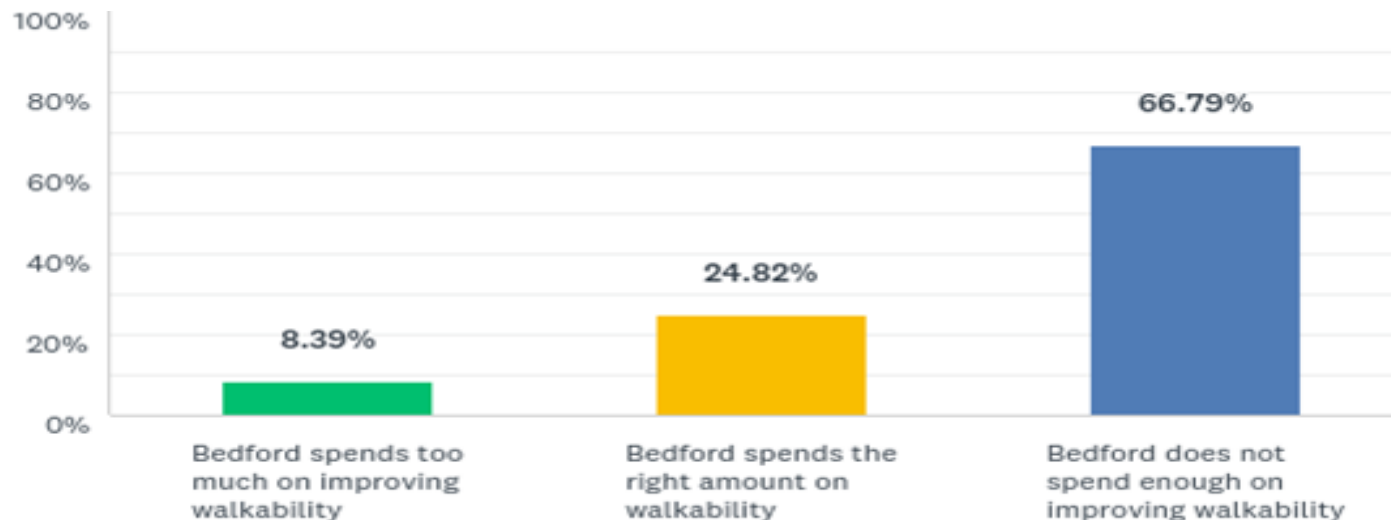
Answered: 544 Skipped: 273



Many of the respondents who responded said they would like to see roadway improvements near the schools.

Q20: How would you characterize the amount of resources Bedford devotes to improving walkability in the community.

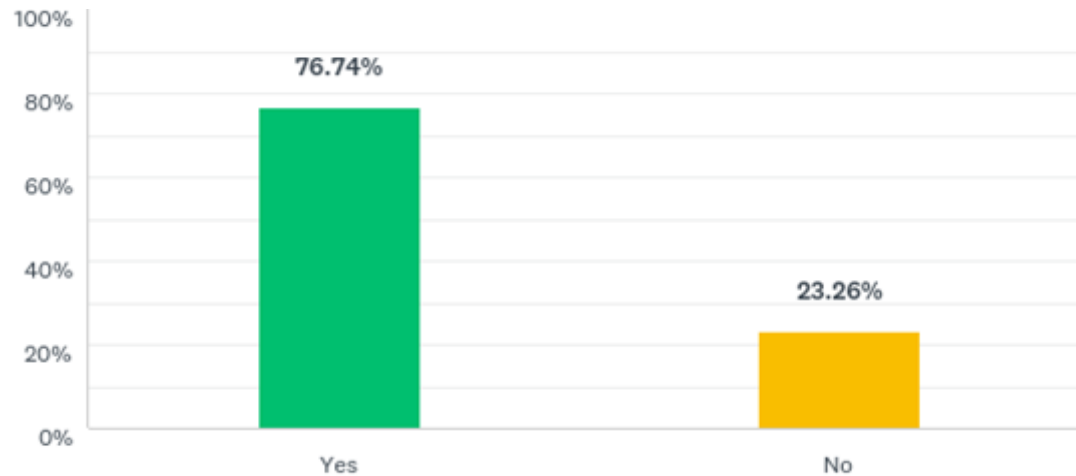
Answered: 551 Skipped: 266



Many of the respondents who responded said they would like to see more sidewalks in town.

Q21: Some communities have paved shared-use trails for bicycling or walking. If a shared use trail was available in Bedford, do you think you would use it?

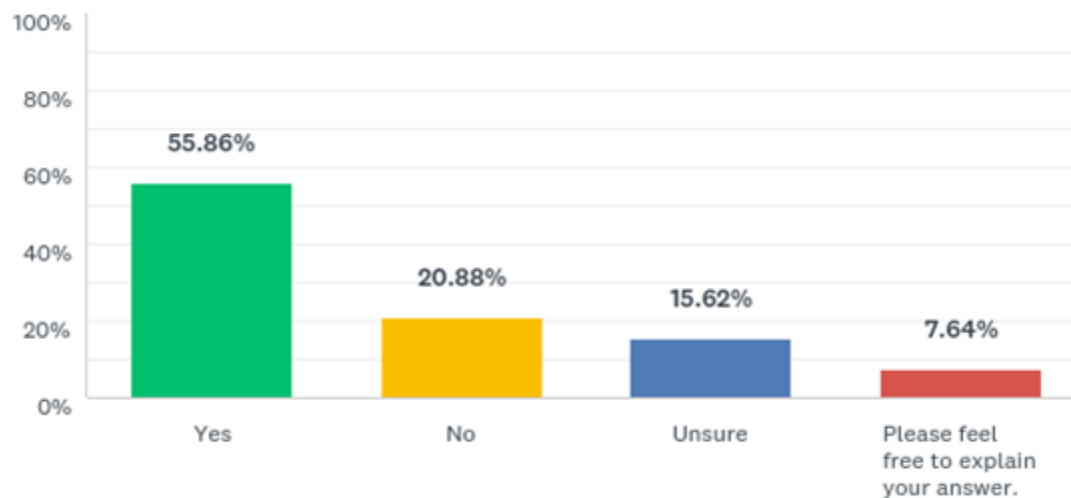
Answered: 579 Skipped: 238



Most respondents who commented said that they are in support of such a trail. Some comments suggested that there is no need for a trail, and that residents go elsewhere to use trails.

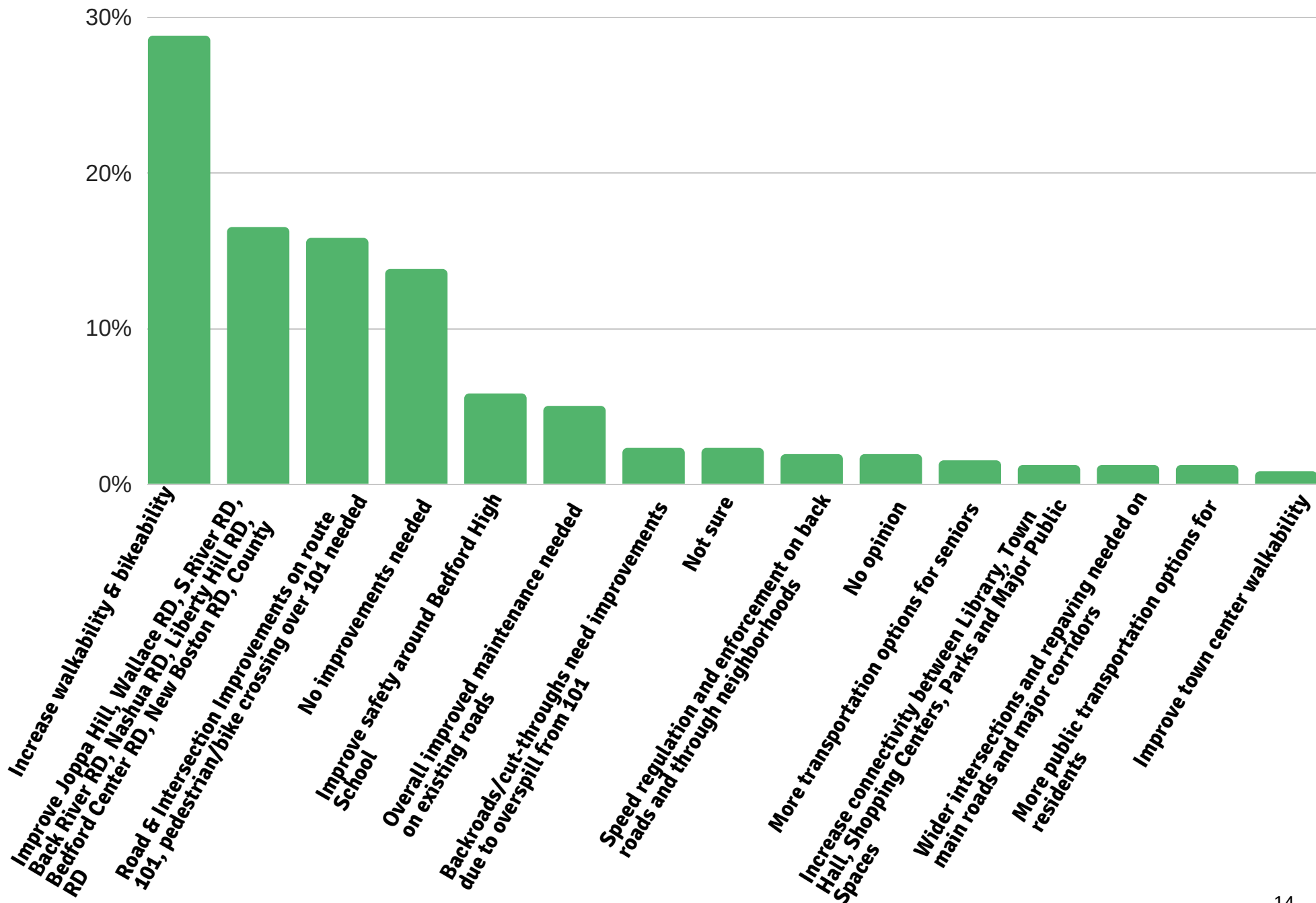
Q22: Would you support the use of taxpayer funds to create a paved shared-use trail in Bedford?

Answered: 592 Skipped: 225



Respondents who commented said that their support would depend on the cost of the trail, tax increase, and location of the trail

Q23: What specific area(s) of Bedford do you think most need additional transportation improvements? What types of improvements would you like to see? Please explain. Answered: 301 Skipped: 516



Q24: As the Town looks out over the next 10 years, what areas, if any, should the community be most focused on in supporting a multi-generational community welcoming of all age groups? Answered: 300 Skipped: 517

