

Charlotte's East and West Villages Project:

Community Questions Survey Results (conducted Jan.-Feb. 2024)

Total Responses: 115

Age Breakdown:

Under 18: 0%	46-60: 25.2%
19-29: 1.9%	61-75: 31%
30-45: 34.6%	Over 75: 9.3%

Who do you live with?

With children: (34.13%)	With a partner and with children both: (3.17%)
With a partner: (32.54%)	With my parents or relatives: (3.17%)
By myself: (14.29%)	

(Note: due to the wording of the survey, some respondents who said “with a partner” or “with children” may also live with both.)

How often do you stop in the Village(s)? What for? What would make you stop in the Village versus driving through?

Respondents varied in how often they stop in the villages, ranging from monthly to almost daily. Those who stopped more frequently said they stopped for some of Charlotte’s major services, including the Childcare Center, Library, and Senior Center. Less frequent stoppers use the Post Office and Old Brick Store for light groceries.

Respondents overall stated that services that would make them stop more in the villages include more dining options, such as a restaurant, cafe, or market. Other desired amenities included shops, such as a local hardware store, health services, and public spaces like a park. Several respondents expressed a need for safer pedestrian infrastructure to reach these destinations.

What services do you have to drive outside of Charlotte to access that you’d prefer to have available locally?

Some of the most popular responses were: (affordable) food options such as restaurants, cafes, bakeries, and grocery stores; a larger gas station; public gathering spaces; shops and services, such as a hair salon, general store with everyday items, or hardware store; a community center for recreational/ after-school activities; and health services.

Several respondents also answered that they did not mind these amenities not being in Charlotte; they can and do travel to other towns to access these services.

What do you feel are the two most important obstacles to development in the villages now? What are your suggestions for how the Town can meet those challenges?

The responses to this question varied quite a bit, but several themes emerged:

1. **Many respondents believe that the community is resistant to development, although it is important to note that most respondents did not express personal resistance to development.** Instead, several respondents noted that this attitude was an obstacle. Some respondents did state they believe Charlotte has no need for development. Still, others noted this sentiment disproportionately impacts young families, who have more needs that must be met by traveling out of town. Some expressed frustration about a few residents blocking the planned rebuild of the Charlotte Family Health Center, which they saw as evidence of a vocal minority overriding the needs of the community.

Many respondents offered proactive solutions. Suggestions include defining and agreeing on the scope of increased density, including defining the size of buildings, mapping areas for development, and balancing development with a focus on ecological preservation. Several respondents suggested finding ways to balance the desires of different demographics, and promoting development that benefits various age groups.

2. **Perceived infrastructure limitations**, specifically regarding challenges to find sufficient water and wastewater capacity, as well as a need to protect Charlotte's wetlands, which limits development. Likewise, there were many respondents who were concerned that the town's aquifer could not provide adequate water supply for any new development.

Some proposed solutions included adding a town septic and water system in key village locations, potentially to be funded by state and federal grants. There were no "solutions" per se to wetlands limiting development. Instead, there was an expressed need to keep development away from these areas.

3. **The lack of parking and pedestrian infrastructure limits development.** Because of high level of speeding traffic in the villages, coupled with a lack of parking and safe pedestrian infrastructure, many respondents said this would make it hard to visit locations in town.

Proposed solutions included various traffic-calming measures to slow down vehicles, improving walkability in the villages, and creating more pedestrian-friendly environments overall.

What do you love about Charlotte's Villages now?

Many respondents stated they love the charm of their small, compact, and friendly villages. Some specific points of pride were the Library, Old Brick Store, and Stone's Throw Pizza. Respondents also said they loved the village's rural character, existing architecture, locally owned businesses, the surrounding natural environment, and the dark skies at night.

What type, scale, and amount of development would you like to see in the Village(s)? (e.g. residential, healthcare, restaurants? One-story, multi-story?)

Respondents expressed a preference for one or two-story buildings, with strong support for maintaining the scale and historic character of the villages. There was also support for mixed-use development, including multi-story buildings with residential and commercial spaces.

Regarding desired types of new development, one of the most popular answers was a healthcare center. Other popular responses include restaurants, cafes, and markets; more residences, including a desire for affordable housing and smaller multi-unit buildings like duplexes, as well as smaller single-family homes; and community spaces for gathering and recreation.

What is a challenge about living in Charlotte? What is a challenge for YOU in Charlotte? (e.g. housing prices, daycare, parking)

A key challenge mentioned by respondents was the cost of living. High housing costs, low supply, and high property taxes were cited. Many people also noted a lack of pedestrian infrastructure. Families with children were particularly affected by two challenges; they cited the high costs of childcare, and the inability to let their older children walk or bike around town due to the perceived danger of the town roads. The lack of pedestrian infrastructure is also related to frustration at the over-reliance on cars to access basic needs and services for residents.

Many respondents also felt there was a general lack of community activities in Charlotte. While the Library and Senior Center were lauded for their community-building efforts, many felt that there aren't enough community events and spaces geared towards younger residents. Some respondents noted that more restaurants, community spaces, and gathering places could help foster an increased sense of community.

Several respondents cited a need for a larger tax base, either through developing more businesses, building housing for new residents, or both, to help offset the high tax burden and pay for more public infrastructure. However, many noted that the high cost of living makes both of these options difficult at the moment.

How far (or amount of time) are you willing to walk to amenities? What would enable you to walk or bike more?

Many respondents said they would be willing to take short walks or bike rides to amenities, most commonly limited to thirty minutes, or one to three miles. However, most respondents stated that the roads in the villages now feel unsafe for either of those activities. This was tied to speeding traffic, combined with narrow shoulders for pedestrians and bikers. A small number of respondents expressed concern over how much building sidewalks or cycle paths would cost.

How many places besides your (primary) destination do you walk to (if any)? Why do you drive versus walk?

Many respondents stated they don't walk to many places within the village due to the perceived danger of walking on the streets. However, several stated they would walk more if safe, reasonable options existed.

As for reasons for choosing to drive, many said their destinations were too far to walk, making driving a necessity. Others stated they appreciate the convenience of using a vehicle.

Do you ever use "unofficial" park & ride lots (i.e., a town or church parking lot, etc.) in Charlotte to carpool? Would you like to see an official park & ride lot? If so, where?

An overwhelming majority of respondents approved of the idea of Charlotte having a designated park & ride lot. Several respondents stated that while they might not need one, owing to age, lifestyle, or other factors, they would not be opposed to having one available in town. Many respondents said they do currently use existing parking lots as unofficial park & rides in town, including the Town Hall lot, the Library, and the Post Office.

There were some recommendations on where a park & ride lot could go. Many people suggested on or near Rte. 7, while others suggested using the existing space at the train station; near the E. Charlotte General Store; or somewhere in the West Village, connected to the town link trail and Route 7 bus. There was also some support for a bus stop in addition to a park & ride. There was some pushback on the idea of adding more impervious surfaces to the town.

How do you (or how would you like to) reduce your solo car use? What would you need to enable you to do so?

Some respondents stated they use their bike for some trips, or aim to limit the number of car rides they take by combining errands and carpooling.

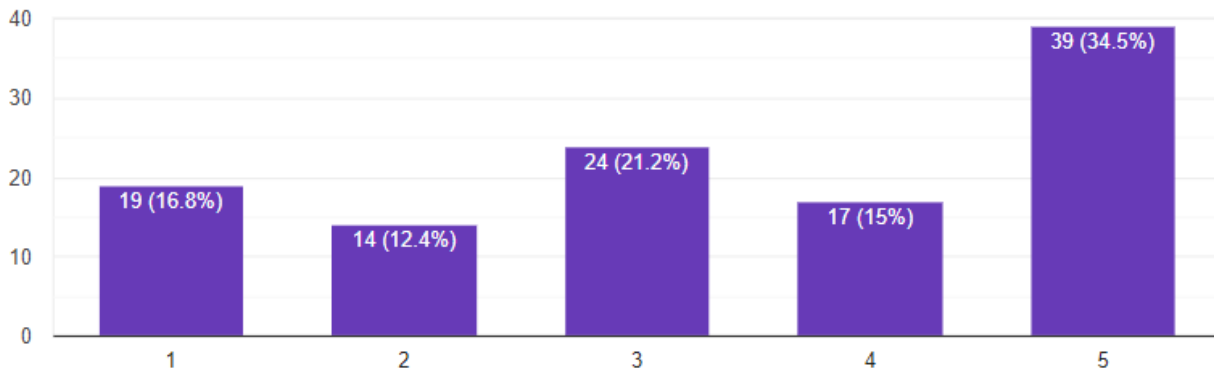
Strategies respondents said would enable them to take fewer solo car trips included:

- bike lanes and bike paths;
- public transport going from the East to West Village and back;
- public transport going around Charlotte in general; or
- adding commuter train service to Shelburne and Burlington.

Some respondents stated that offering more services in-town, such as health care, or groceries, would help them limit their solo car use.

A small minority of respondents said they have no interest in reducing their solo car use.

How much do climate/environmental concerns impact your reduction or interest in reduction of solo car use? 1 = not at all; 5 = very much.



Do you currently face mobility challenges, or are concerned about future mobility challenges? Are you adequately able to get where you need to go?

Most respondents said they have no mobility challenges now, and can get where they need to go. However, many of these respondents noted they are concerned with their ability to get around as they age, with some noting that they may have to leave Charlotte as a result if/when this came to be.

For those with mobility challenges, or those with family with such challenges, there were problems with getting around. One respondent noted that old buildings without ADA installations create a specific challenge for them. Public transport to community services, such as the Senior Center, was noted as an option that could help some residents with mobility challenges.

What other villages could be a model for Charlotte? (within or outside of Vermont)

The most popular responses were Bristol, Shelburne, and Richmond, VT. Many other villages both inside and outside of Vermont were mentioned. Several respondents also stated that Charlotte “as is” may be a good model for Charlotte.