



ARLINGTON, MA INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT STUDY

Public Survey Summary

RKG

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August 2020

Prepared for the Town of Arlington



RKG Associates, Inc. is a multi-disciplinary consulting firm, founded in 1981. We serve public, private and institutional clients and provide a comprehensive range of advisory, planning, marketing, and management services throughout the US and around the world.

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PUBLIC SURVEY PURPOSE

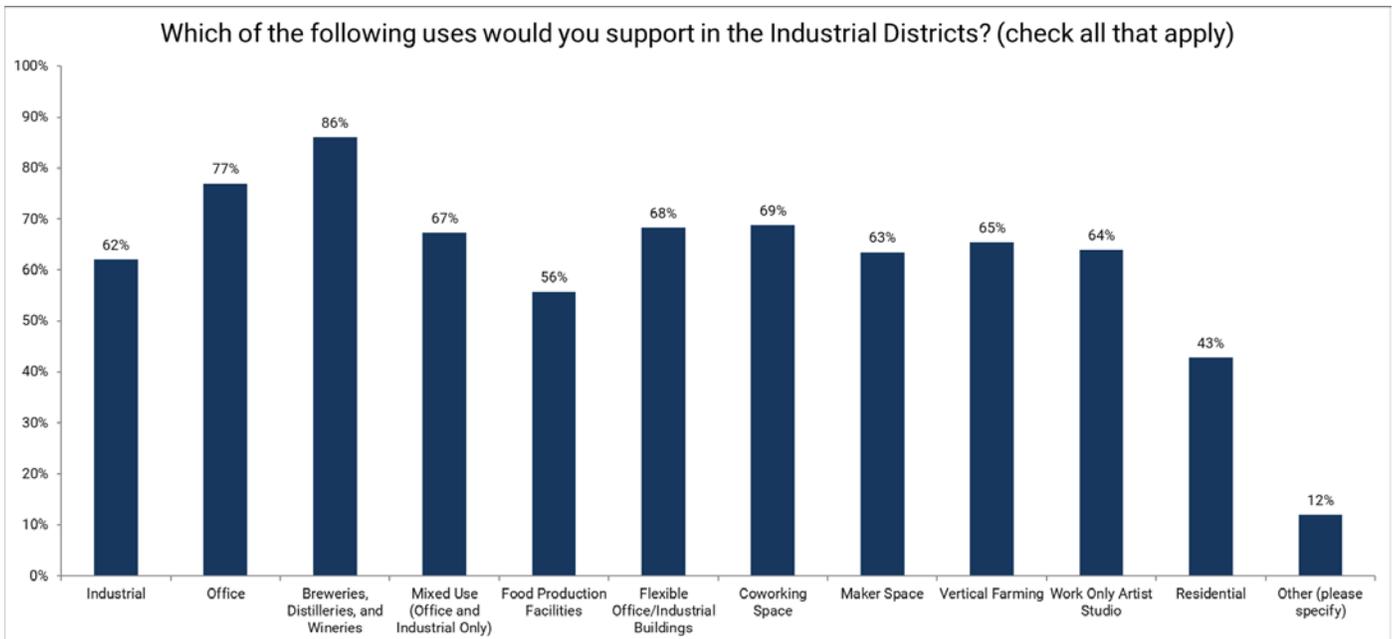
RKG Associates, in conjunction with our consulting partner Harriman and the Town of Arlington, developed a public input survey to garner early feedback on zoning concepts for Arlington's industrial zoning districts. Due to COVID-19 restrictions on large gatherings, the Town issued the survey with an introductory video about the project as a way to engage the public in this project and solicit feedback on the findings of the market analysis and zoning concepts.

The survey was sent out to all Town residents through public information channels and garnered 208 unique responses over the course of several weeks. The input received will be used to help further refine zoning concepts and recommendations. These recommendations will be reviewed by the Town's Zoning Bylaw Working Group (ZBWG) and ultimately will be discussed with the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB). Town staff plan to hold a second public information session for this project, likely via a video platform, unless such a time arises when large gatherings can be held in a safe manner compliant with all state and local restrictions during the project.

Zoning Question Summary

The first question in the public survey asked participants about the types of uses they would support in the Town's industrial zoning districts. Of the 208 respondents to this question, most were comfortable with a variety of commercial and industrial uses including industrial uses, office, commercial/industrial mixed-use, flexible space, co-working space, and more. Housing was included on this list as there are examples of housing in the industrial districts now. The most highly selected choice was breweries, distilleries, or wineries.

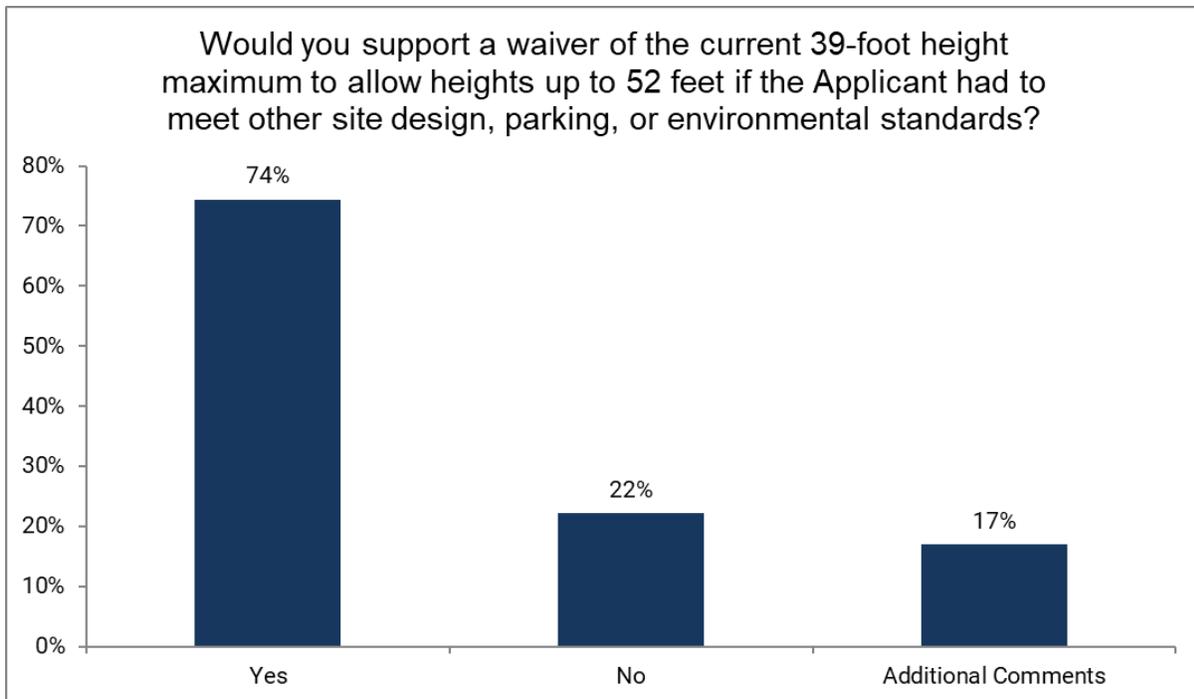
Some of the suggested "other" uses included larger shopping plazas, research labs, artist studios and cultural spaces, and public performance spaces.



Question 1 Responses, N=208.

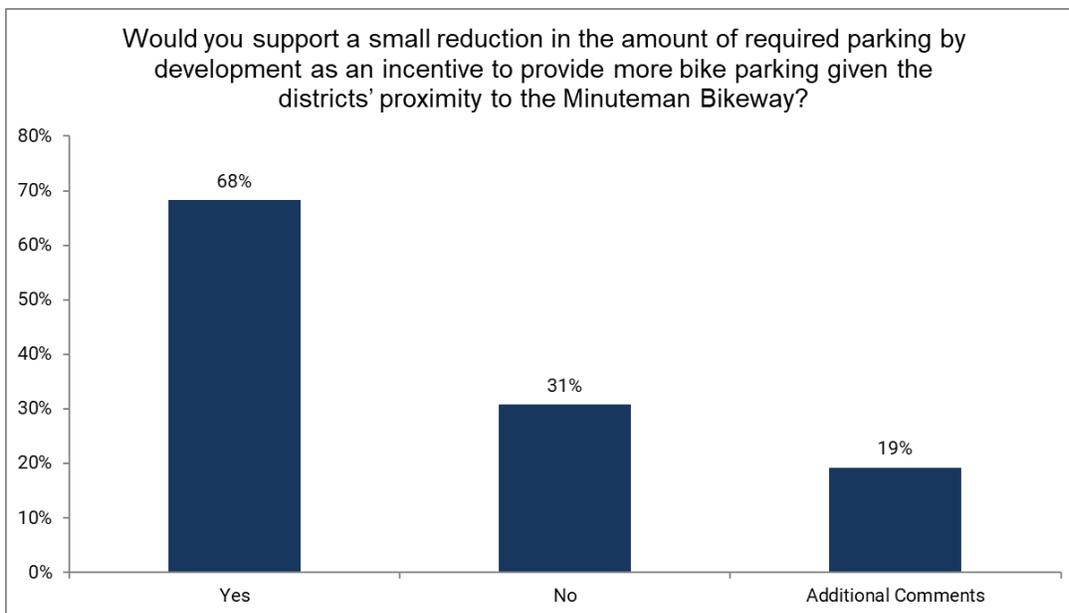
Question 2 asked participants whether they would support a waiver of the 39-foot height maximum for industrial parcels abutting residential districts in return for higher standards for site design, parking, or environmental protection. While 74% of respondents agreed with the waiver in return for higher standards and some of the comments supported a general increase in height, other comments brought up questions to consider. A sample of those comments included:

- Concern for how much parking would be needed to accommodate a taller building;
- Concern for residents who live adjacent to an industrial district if the height restriction is waived;
- Desire to focus on the pedestrian space along streets and buildings with sidewalks and trees to lessen impact of building heights; and
- Review of each development is necessary to gauge the impact and the benefits to determine if a waiver should be granted.



Question 2 Responses, N=207

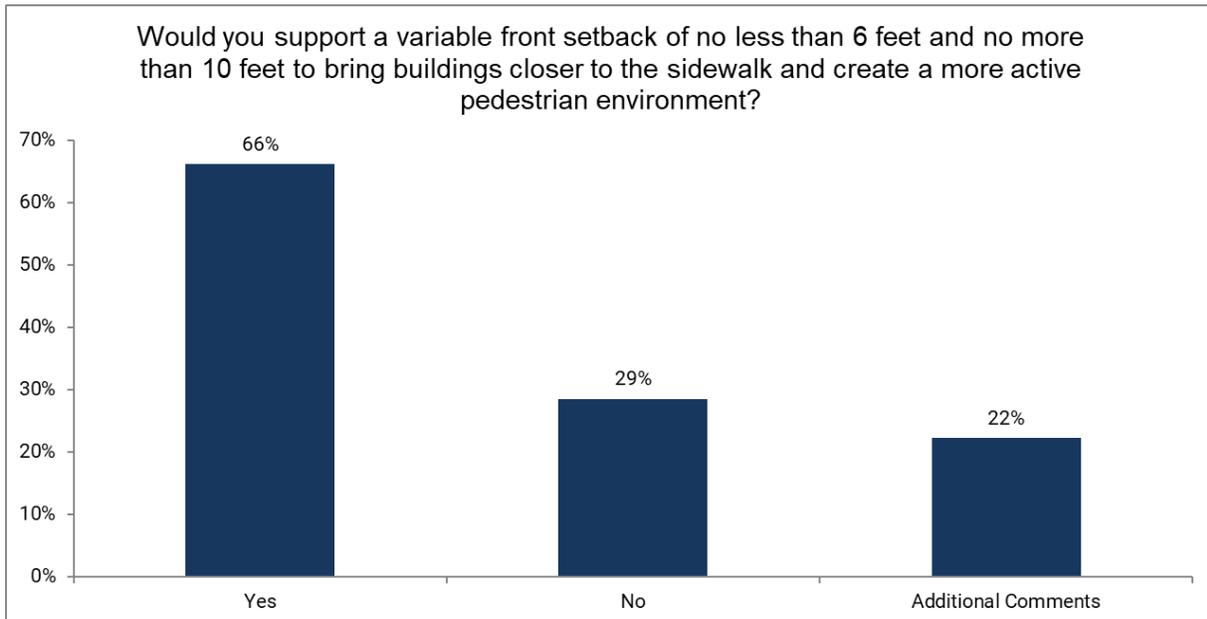
Question 3 asked participants if they would support a small reduction in vehicle parking as an incentive to require more bicycle parking given proximity to the Minuteman Bikeway. While 68% of respondents agreed with this concept, the 40 comments we received reflected a mix of opinions. Several people noted they would like to see parking for industrial reduced even if bike parking was not increased, others noted they would like to see other forms of transportation improved such as transit and walking, and several respondents noted parking should not be reduced at all. One commenter noted the need to understand where workers in the industrial district are commuting from and whether there are other means of transportation available to them.



Question 3 Responses, N=208

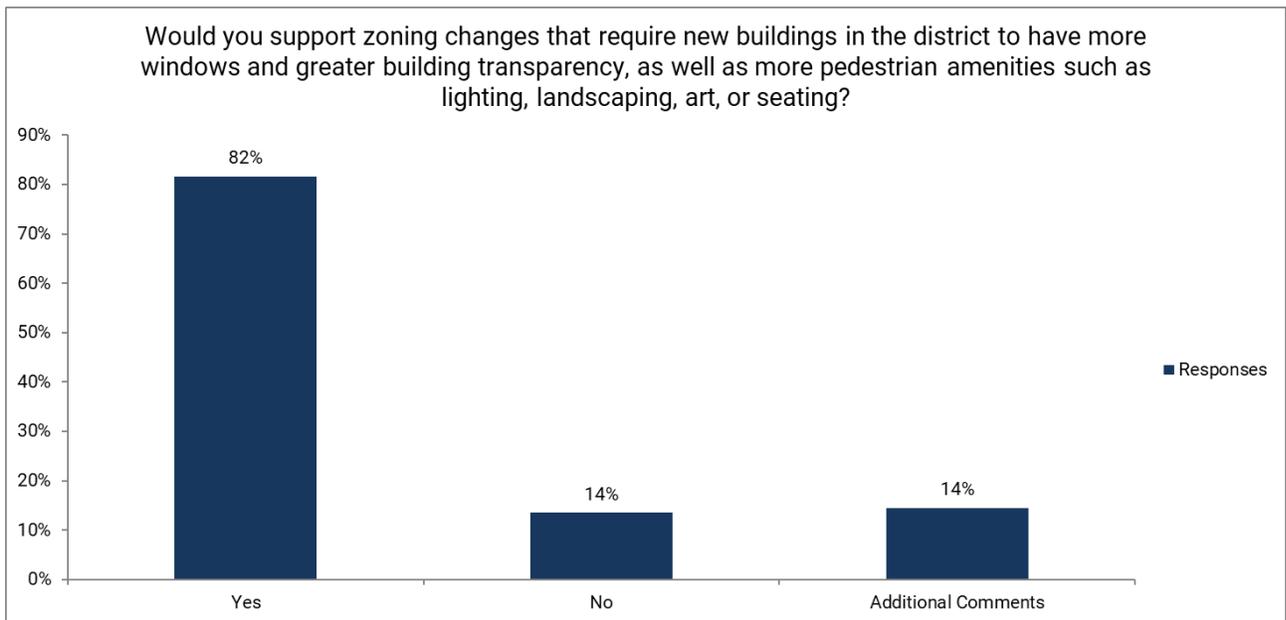
Question 4 asked participants if they would support a variation in the front setback of a building to be not less than 6 feet from the right of way and no further back than 10 feet. This variable setback would create an envelope where a building is close enough to the sidewalk to engage the pedestrian but not so close that landscaping, signage, or other public realm treatments would be prevented. Like Question 3, 68% of respondents answered in the affirmative but the 46 written comments provided more nuance to those responses. A sample of those comments included:

- It is undesirable to have buildings too close to the road and sidewalk. Ten feet should be the minimum;
- Do not crowd the street and sidewalk with large buildings;
- Agree that parking should not be in the front of a building, but there needs to be ample space for landscaping and trees;
- Support for active pedestrian environment, but industrial areas may not be the best place for that;
- In the age of COVID, we do not need narrower sidewalks, we need more space;
- If pedestrian amenities and landscaping were included, there would be support for reduced setbacks; and
- Several respondents noted the example of new buildings on Mass Ave being too close to the street and crowding out the pedestrian.



Question 4 Responses, N=207

Question 5 asked participants if they would support zoning changes that would require new buildings to have more windows and a greater level of visual transparency, as well as more pedestrian amenities such as lighting, art, or seating. This question garnered a very positive response with 82% answering in the affirmative. Interestingly, the written comments that accompanied this question noted the need to offer an incentive instead of a regulation. The concern expressed was that industrial uses would not be able to thrive if development requirements were too stringent. Respondents offered ideas such as a density bonus in return for amenities or better building design with more windows. There were also comments about this being an industrial district where windows and pedestrian amenities might not be as important as in other parts of Arlington; yet any new building should be well-designed nonetheless



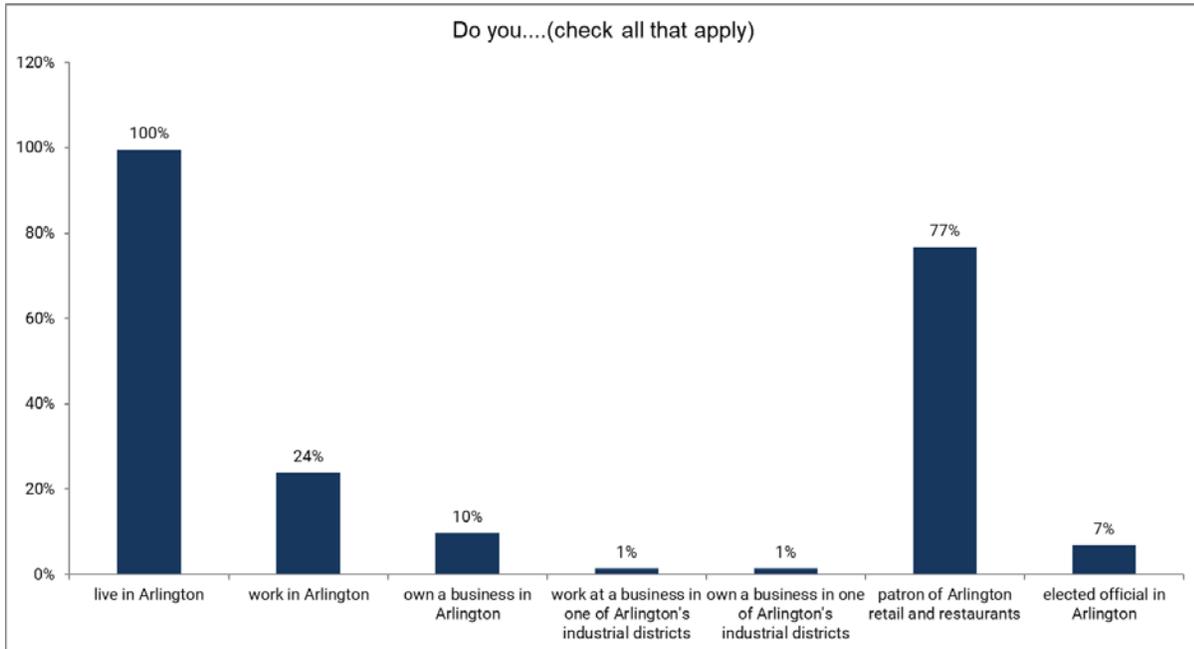
Question 5 Responses, N=207

Lastly, Question 6 was open ended and allowed participants to leave additional comments for the Town to consider. Respondents left a total of 78 additional comments which have been grouped and summarized at a high level in the bullet points below (in no particular order):

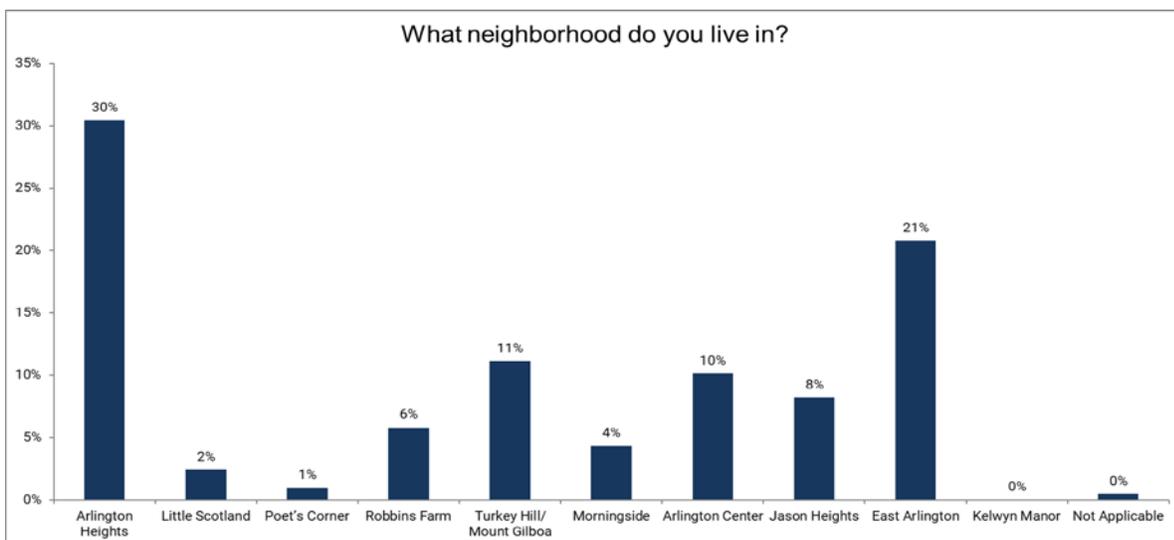
- Green space, trees, pedestrian amenities, and strong connections to the bike path should all be strongly considered alongside new development;
- Green buildings and energy efficiency should be a consideration as well;
- Improved aesthetics and building design, such as quality materials and underground parking, would be welcome;
- Need more parking and loading, not less;
- More public access to Mill Brook if possible;
- Housing does not belong in the industrial districts;
- Need stormwater management strategies and planning for climate change;
- Noise and pollution regulation for any manufacturing uses; and
- Support for more sidewalks and building setbacks.

Demographic Question Summary

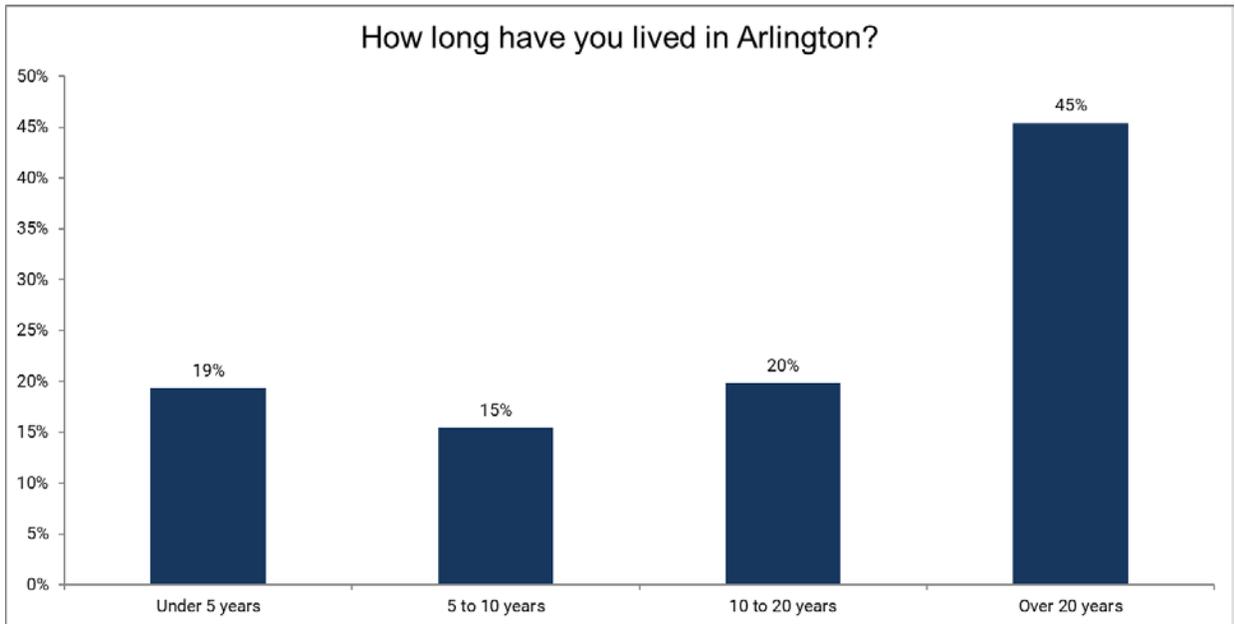
Several questions were asked in addition to the zoning questions to better understand the demographic and geographic composition of survey respondents.



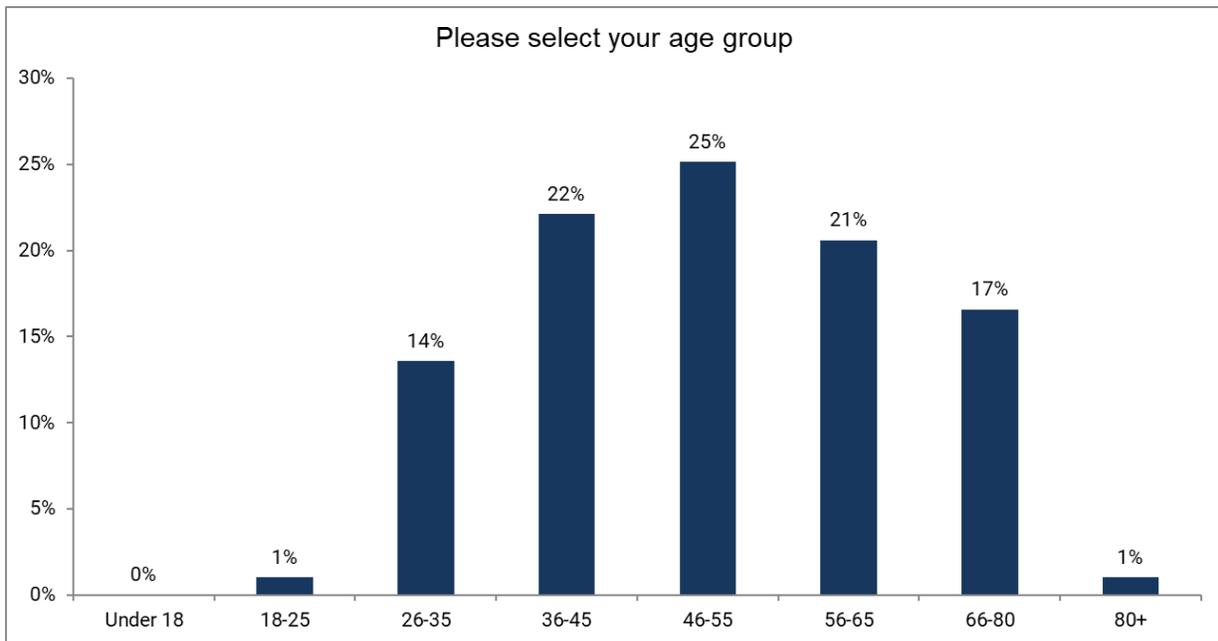
Question 7 Responses, N=206



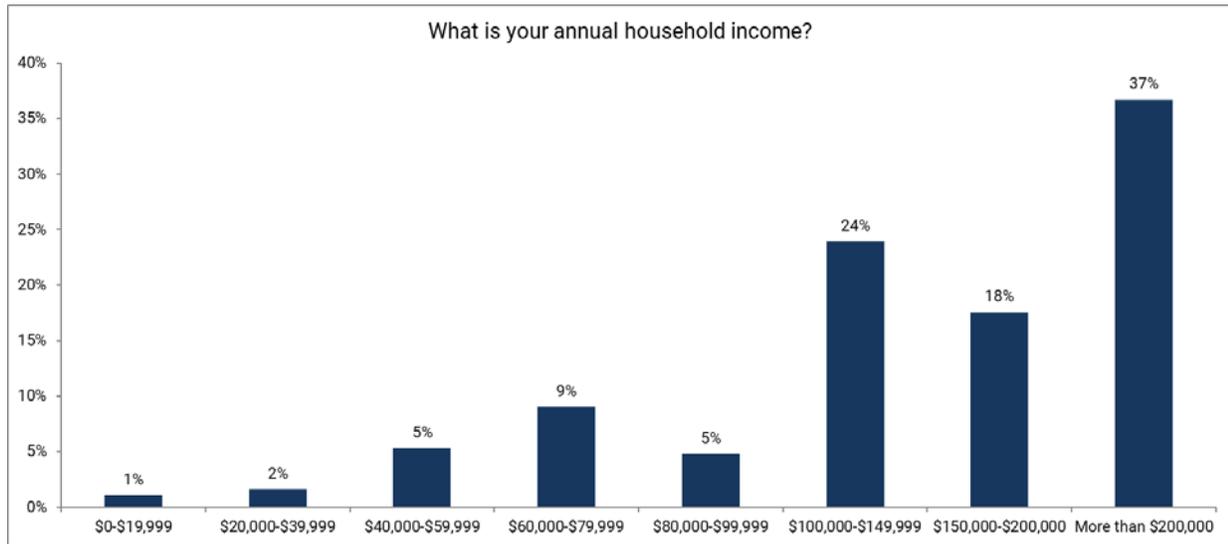
Question 8 Responses, N=207



Question 9 Responses, N=207



Question 10 Responses, N=199



Question 11 Responses, N=188