

## City of Windsor Heights Improving Economic Development - A summary report of discussion July 20, 2017

### Background/Introduction

The report summarizes findings from a series of small and large group discussions that occurred on June 28, 2017 in the Windsor Heights City Council chambers. Members of the City Council, the City's Development Committee, Plan & Zoning (P&Z) Commission and local Chamber of Commerce came together to better understand and improve the City's role in economic development in Windsor Heights. This meeting was an outgrowth of the City's comprehensive plan that identified the need to revisit the City's economic development process for possible improvement.

The meeting was facilitated by Cory Scott, AICP and Pat Boddy, PE of RDG Planning & Design.

The agenda for this meeting included:

- Review of results from pre-meeting work, including questions provided to the meeting participants and to developers familiar with Windsor Heights
- Review of the current economic development process as outlined in the City's comprehensive plan
- Discussion of methods to improve that process
- Discussion / mapping of desired economic development locations and preferred economic development approaches/business characteristics

### Pre-work Results

Before convening the discussion, participants were invited to fill out a brief questionnaire. The consulting team received 19 responses, 18 complete. As expected, a mix of staff, City Council members, Plan & Zoning commissioners, Development Committee members and real estate experts responded. Some of the questions parallel queries sent to the business community in a May 2016 survey conducted to support the Comprehensive Plan (i.e., Destination Windsor Heights). Results for this survey align closely with those of the May 2016 study.

Survey participants call Windsor Heights' primary economic role in the metro as one of niche/boutique retail, restaurants and providing basic goods and services. According to these survey participants, restaurants are missing from Windsor Heights' commercial mix (15 of 19 respondents) plus small scale retail (11 respondents).

At the top of the list of what survey respondents say they would like to see more of are full service restaurants, clothing/clothing accessory stores, and sporting goods/hobby/books and music. The least favored stores are automotive dealers and grocery stores.

As for project types, they most value owner-occupied single-family condominiums and townhomes. For more information, the power point presented to the participants related to pre-work results is attached to this document for reference.





See Appendix.

### Process Improvement

The discussion was based on the nine-step process outline included in the Windsor Heights Comprehensive Plan.



FIGURE 2.1: Windsor Heights Approval Process (2016)

Strengths of the current economic development process identified in discussion included its potential for transparency, public involvement, and access to committees and the City Council. The fact that the process occurs in a smaller community was considered a plus.

At the same time, challenges noted included:

- An excessive number of steps in the process (9),
- Development could be stopped or stymied in this process,
- No path for tracking results and impacts,
- No clarity of roles, and
- It could be difficult to overcome the inertia generated by “fear of change.”



The Board of Adjustment's role in the process was also considered unclear.

Interest was expressed in streamlining the process and clarifying the Development Committee's role as one of pro-actively generating ideas and identifying opportunities for economic development. The Development Committee could further support the City Administrator's marketing activities related to development. The committee would not play a role in site plan review – that would be the purview of staff.

The options for changes in the process included:

- Step 1: Initial meeting with Building & Zoning Official and/or City Administration at a pre-development level, allowing the developer to receive checklists and receive early staff feedback on the project's alignment with City economic development goals. Review of conceptual plans as early as available. Concept review would be a staff function.
- Step 2: P&Z commission review and recommendation.
- Step 3: City Council review.
- Step 4: Staff/regulatory review/permitting.



In this scenario, the economic development committee's work would serve on a parallel but separate track – highlighting economic development interests and supporting the City's Economic Development Director in recruiting valued projects but not directly engaged in approval/disapproval of a particular project.

Participants were also interested in a process that would send a project requiring review by the Board of Adjustment (BOA) to go directly to the Board of Adjustment (BOA), bypassing P&Z input, which does not comply with the Code of Iowa Section 414.

Additionally, discussion touched on the role of the City Administrator and city finance staff in helping to support development by preparing funding package options to share with potential developers of projects considered desirable to the City.

Implementation of form-based code was also discussed as a way to create a more dynamic community that would allow for greater vitality and mixed uses in key economic development areas of the City.

**Key Findings: The participants seem to achieve consensus on the future role of the Development Committee as one engaged in defining and promoting economic development, but not directly engaged in approving or disapproving a given project, thus providing fewer steps in the economic development process.**

### Desired Economic Development Initiatives and Locations

The process improvement discussion was followed by mapping locations and preferred business interests to provide the City Administrator with direct and more specific guidance for economic development initiatives. This could be a future role for the Development Committee. While the University Avenue Corridor was the consensus priority for economic development, participants agreed locating businesses as strategically as possible would be of value.



The locales and business types that proved appealing to participants included the following:

Locale	Business/Economic Development Interests
University Avenue Corridor – Overall	Accessible mixed use with improved signage and upper story housing Restaurants, drinking establishments, wine bar Boutique/small retail, e.g., clothing, stationary, gift shop Bike shops Office supply Potentially additional service sector (e.g. dry cleaner) Technology
U Ave – West Gateway	Restaurants, shops – a “Bridge” building (from community to community) perhaps featuring lower level retail
U Ave – 73 <sup>rd</sup> and University	Office/commercial
U Ave – 63 <sup>rd</sup> and University	Senior and/or inter-generational housing / “active adult” condos
Sears Building	Bike Hub – including restaurants, bars, repair
Hickman & 63 <sup>rd</sup>	Restaurant
Sherwood Forest	Dave & Busters (adult / family play) Mixed use
Town Center	Bookstore

**Key Findings: The participants, while wanting to be strategic, do see University Avenue Corridor as the primary economic development engine for the City and their desire could likely be summed up as mixed use, emphasizing neighborhood scale amenities whose character might attract a larger audience. They see an “active adult” housing project at 63<sup>rd</sup> and University as a potential catalyst for the corridor.**

### Front Line Materials

This discussion concluded with a next steps conversation that focused on not just the steps to formalizing a streamlined process, but also what would be required in terms of materials to support this new wave of economic development in Windsor Heights.

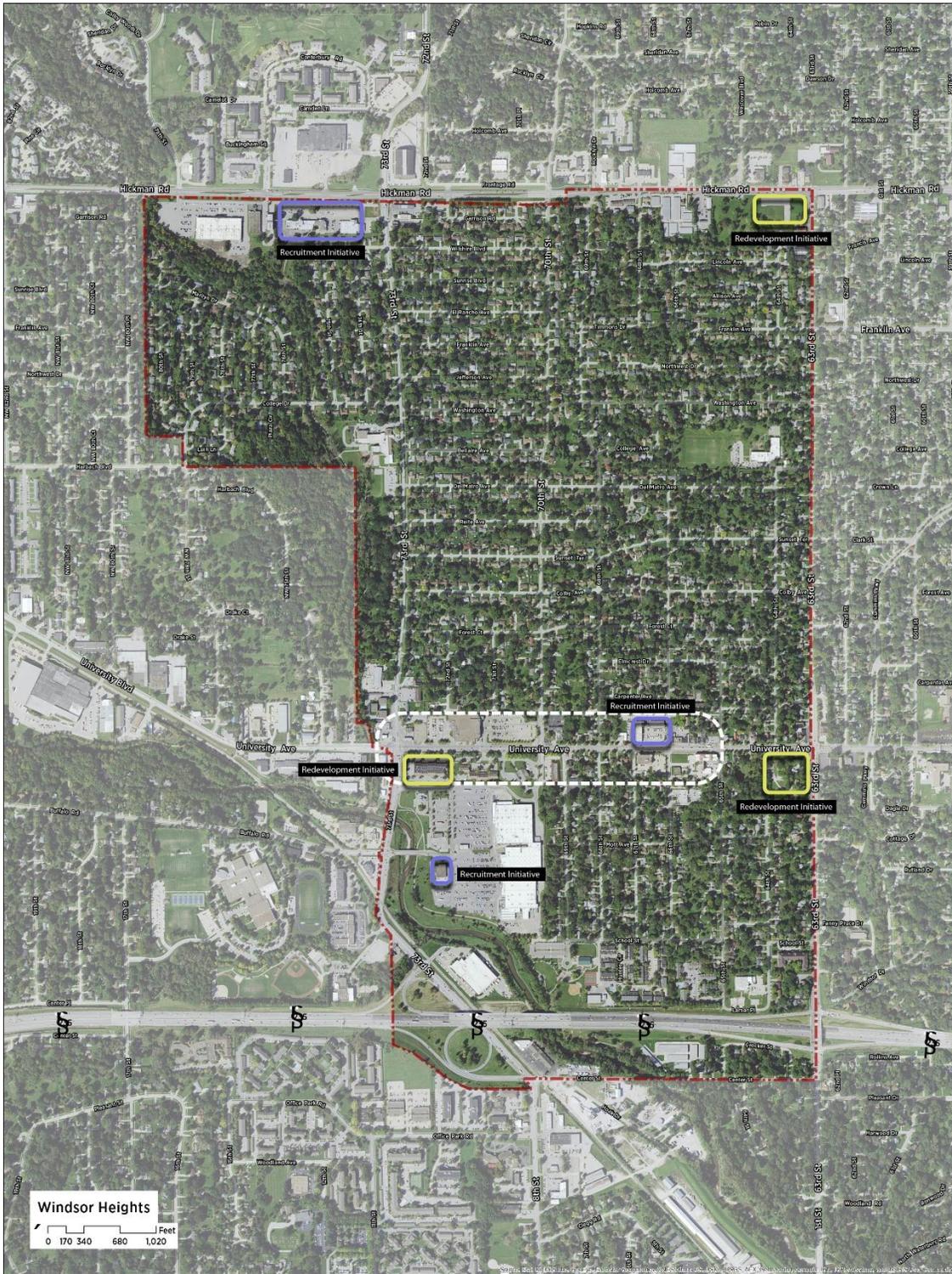
Participants are interested in checklists and easy-to-follow materials for developers and others. They would like to see timelines attached to these step-by-step approaches. They also see room for a formalized guide or brochure – a combination of basic information and promotion that outlines the City’s vision for economic development as well as “what it takes” to find success with projects in Windsor Heights.

As the new role for the Development Committee takes shape and this desired vision for economic development in Windsor Heights is further refined, participants see benefit to the community and to the developers in further articulating and defining the City’s development preferences. This will facilitate city-developer partnerships for the most effective, efficient approaches to economic development.

**Key Findings: Helping developers understand the streamlined approach and the desired economic development features and locations will prompt partnerships between the city and developers and create a new environment for economic development in Windsor Heights. Solid information on the process AND vision will be key to success.**



Map 1: Target Economic Development Locations



## APPENDIX – Power Point of Pre–Work Survey Results

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1. Introductions
  2. Review Session Outcomes
  3. Discuss the **Approval Process**.
  4. Review and Discuss **Survey Results**.
  5. Prioritize sites for the city to have an active role.  
(Proactive rather than reactive?)
  6. Deliverable: Summarize your discussion.

### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- Participants agreed with the agenda.

### **Session outcomes for this evening...**

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1. What businesses and where does this collective group of participants desire for Windsor Heights?
2. What materials need to be developed for approaching desired economic development interests and how do we improve our approach?
3. Related, but not precisely the same thing: What is the current and PREFERRED process for accomplishing economic development goals/securing ED projects – and what are the steps to move us toward that more ideal process?

#### **ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:**

- Participants agreed with the outcomes.

## Destination Windsor Heights Recap



### WHY

Windsor Heights' opportunity for growth rests with making the most of the existing property in the community through redevelopment. Maximizing the development yield for existing properties will support the community's tax base, while providing jobs and services in the community that otherwise exist in the surrounding communities. Our city is already a hub for large retailers like Wal-Mart and Hy-Vee, and we have a number of smaller niche retailers along University Avenue and Hickman Road. We want to retain these businesses and create opportunities for new ones. This is important as ~91% of the respondents to a public survey indicated that "Windsor Heights needs to do a better job creating a supportive business climate."

### OUR VISION

- Developers compete for the opportunity to develop in Windsor Heights.
- We have a mix of big and small retail to serve both local and regional customers.
- Windsor Heights is known for its ability to put together solid economic development packages that meet the needs of developers, businesses and residents.

### OUR GOALS

1. Attract new business to Windsor Heights.
2. Support strategic redevelopment along key corridors, including University Avenue, Hickman Road, 73rd Street, and 63rd Street.
3. Create a supportive business climate.

### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- None.

## Discuss Approval Process



FIGURE 2.1: Windsor Heights Approval Process (2016)

### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- None.



# Windsor Heights Economic Strategies Survey Results

Tuesday, June 27, 2017

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

**19**

**Total Responses**

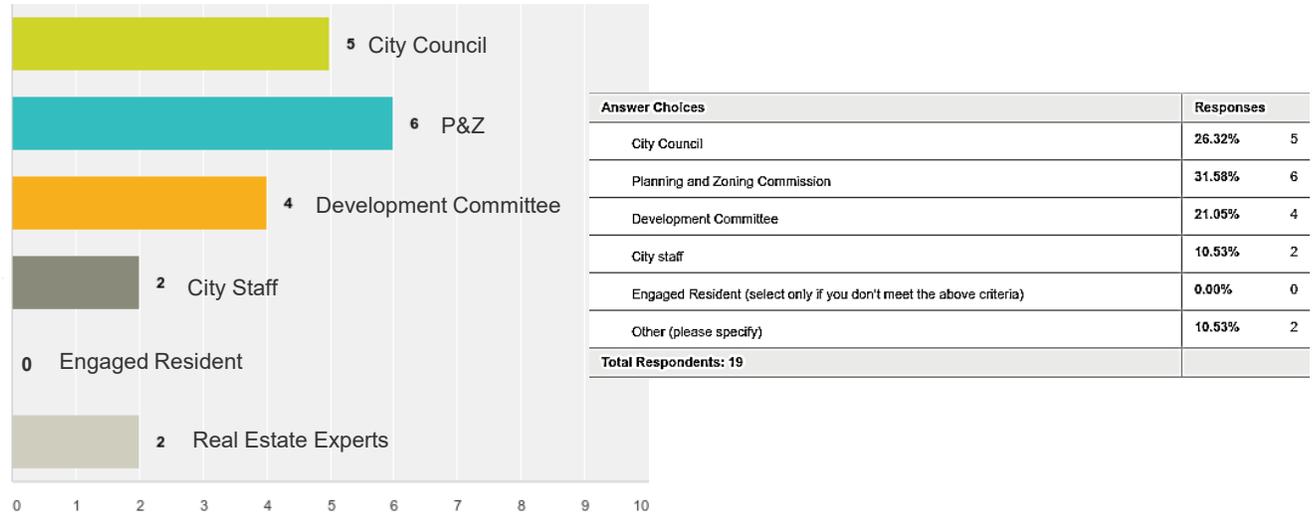
Date Created: Wednesday, June 07, 2017

Complete Responses: 18

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

## Q1: What's your role in the decision-making process?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

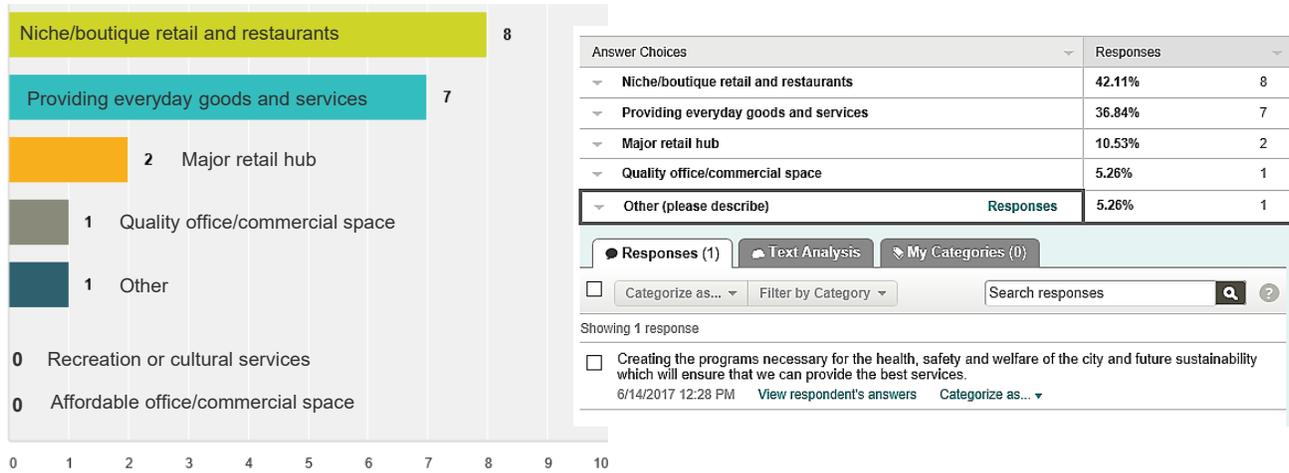


### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- City leaders showed a strong response to the survey.

## Q2: As a community, what do you think is the primary economic role of Windsor Heights in the Des Moines metro area?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

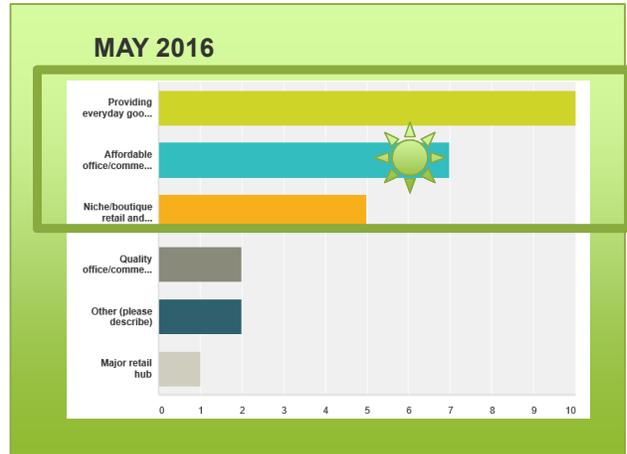


### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- Agreement that niche/boutique retail/restaurants is one of the primary roles of Windsor Heights in Des Moines.
- Agreement that providing everyday good/services is one of the primary roles of Windsor Heights in Des Moines.

## Q2: As a community, what do you think is the primary economic role of Windsor Heights in the Des Moines metro area?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

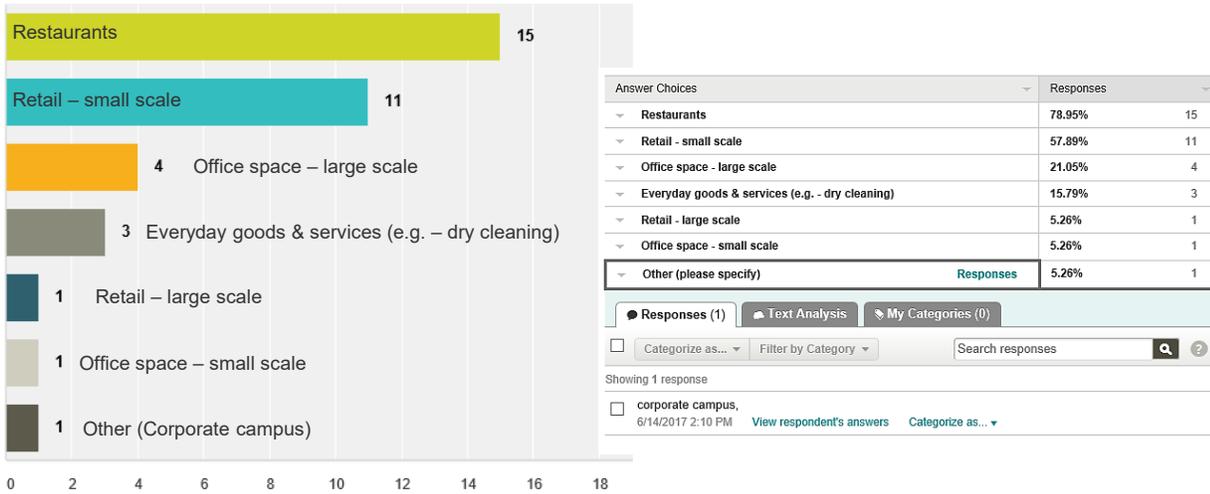


### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- Agreement between leaders and businesses that niche/boutique retail/restaurants is one of the primary roles of Windsor Heights in Des Moines.
- Agreement between leaders and businesses that providing everyday good/services is one of the primary roles of Windsor Heights in Des Moines.
- Businesses identified affordable office/commercial is one of the primary roles, while leaders did not indicate that as a primary role.

### Q3: What do you think Windsor Heights is missing from its commercial offerings? Select your top 2.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

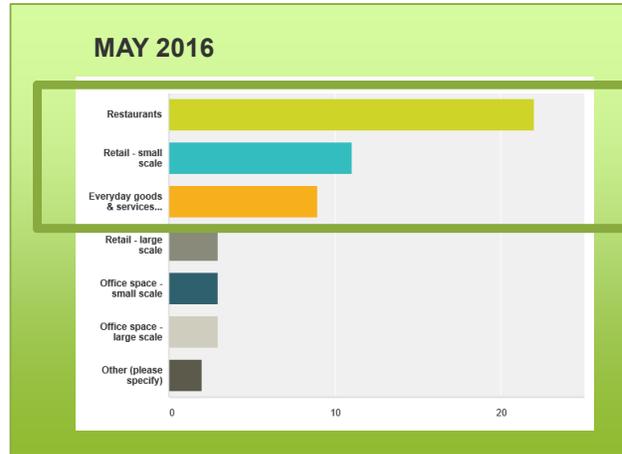
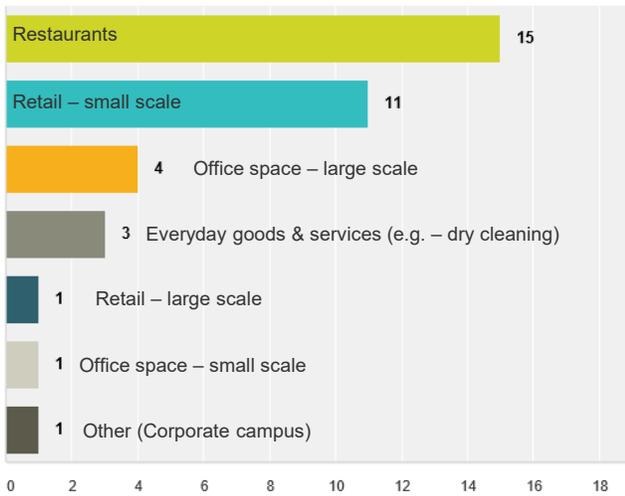


#### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- Agreement that restaurants and small-scale retail were missing from Windsor Heights.

### Q3: What do you think Windsor Heights is missing from its commercial offerings? Select your top 2.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



#### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- Agreement between leaders and businesses for what is missing from Windsor Heights' commercial offerings.

## Q4: What retail store types should Windsor Heights target?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

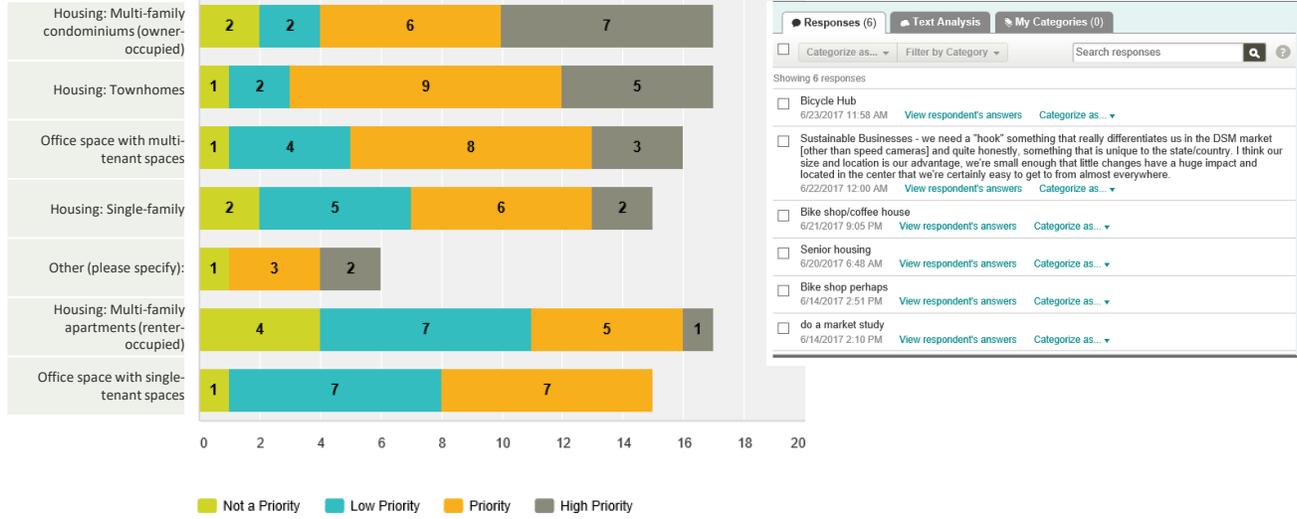
	We have too much.	We have the right amount.	We need more.	Total	
Full-Service Restaurants	1	1	16	18	
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	1	2	15	18	
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music	0	2	15	17	
Miscellaneous Store Retailers (niche)	0	4	14	18	
Drinking places	1	3	13	17	
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	0	6	12	18	
Special food services	1	5	12	18	
Electronics and Appliance Stores	0	5	11	16	
Specialty Food Stores	1	4	11	16	
Limited-service eating places	1	5	11	17	
Health and Personal Care Stores	0	8	9	17	
Building Material and Supply Dealers	1	8	8	17	
Lawn, Garden Equipment, Supplies Stores	0	10	7	17	
General Merchandise Stores	0	10	7	17	
Automotive Parts/Accessories	0	13	5	18	
Gasoline stations with convenience store	4	9	4	17	
Automotive Dealers	0	15	3	18	
Grocery Stores	1	13	3	17	

### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- Retail types above the line shows agreement by participants for businesses that should be targeted.

## Q5: What types of projects should we target?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 1



### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- Owner-occupied multi-family is a higher priority. This includes condominiums and townhouses. Single-family housing is still a priority.
- Office spaces that have multiple tenants is a higher priority than single-occupancy offices.

## Q6: Describe the type of economic development you most want to see in Windsor Heights

Answered: 14 Skipped: 5

"Bicycle Hub at old Sears Automotive"

"I want us to really push for some very innovative city planning and infrastructure as well as developments. For instance, solar roadways, hard lined dedicated bike lanes, unique mix of housing that works for young families in a walk-able community versus sending them and all their disposable income to the suburbs. Let's be the first suburb that people don't want to pass up. Need to get our economic development to also work with our schools...in order to get some of these families we have to be a community that is supporting our schools. In short, I think "sustainable development" would be great, such as: <http://hufft.com/project/green-circle/>"

"I think we need to do a better job of businesses along the trail. Get folks off the trail to stop in shops in Sherwood Forest that would be fun places to stop."

"Townhouses or brownstones in flood plans, High Rise on 63rd and university Finish a true town center on University with Business development: restaurants and shops along University - similar to Beaverdale or Valley Junction. Ace hardware Pharmacy Connected neighborhoods"

"Would like to see a shopping destination similar to Valley Junction and East Village. Meeting places. Walkable. Bike Friendly."

"Destination with restaurant and entertainment for all ages - David Busters"

"Projects that begin to reshape the housing stock-specifically around Colby Park."

"Businesses that provide needed services to the residents of WH and specialty type shops that will attract out of town folks."

"The city has been too restrictive on the types of development allowed. Stopping Aldi was a mistake. The city seems to think it's a developer and can pick and choose uses. They need to stop micro managing and let developers have free reign within zoning code."

"Would like to see some rental office suite development, for individuals, similar to what they have on 86th St in Johnston. Also perhaps a park and ride facility / transit hub."

"Redevelop old commercial areas. IE Sherwood Forest, Apple Valley 1"

"More **upscale Dining and retail** establishments."

"WH does not currently have a "Main Street" and will not have until we tackle the re-design of University Avenue. Traffic calming, removing the speed trap image will do more for the community and our ability to attract and retain retail and commercial opportunities..."

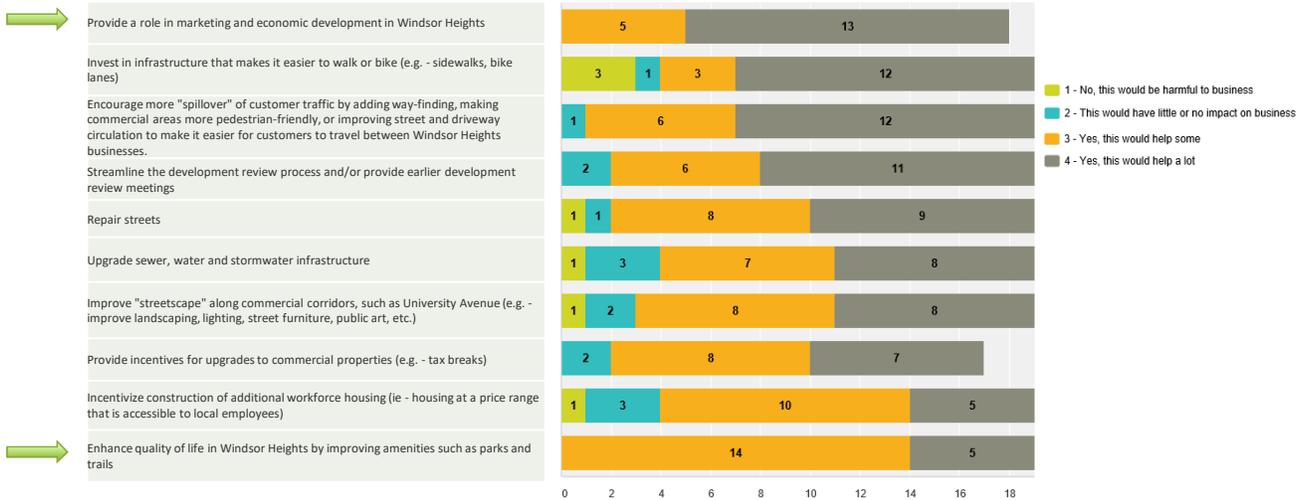
"**retail/restaurants/single/ family housing**"

### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- None.

**Q7: Below are some examples of actions that cities can take to assist businesses and developers. Would you like to see Windsor Heights do any of the following? Please rate your interest in each choice from 1 to 4, with 4 being the most favorable rating.**

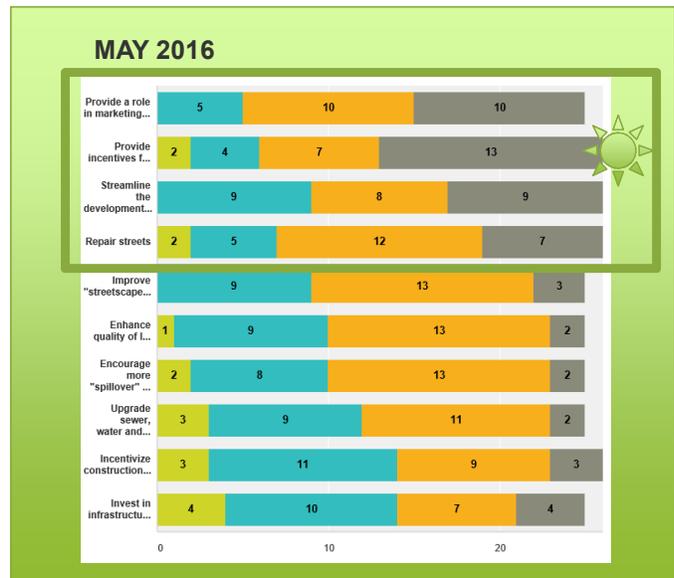
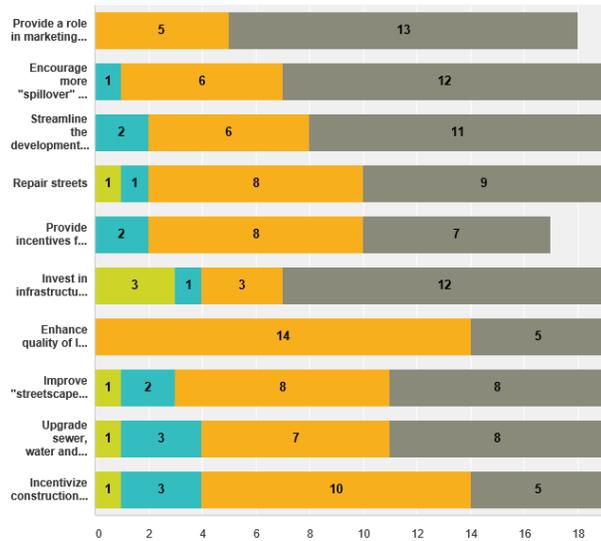
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



**ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:**

- General agreement that all actions will assist businesses.
- Unanimous agreement that the city should have a role in marketing and economic development.
- Unanimous agreement that the city should enhance the quality of life by improving amenities such as parks and trails.
- (Actions are ranked by items the will "Help a lot".)

**Q7: Below are some examples of actions that cities can take to assist businesses and developers. Would you like to see Windsor Heights do any of the following? Please rate your interest in each choice from 1 to 4, with 4 being the most favorable rating.**



**ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:**

- Agreement between leaders and businesses that the city should have a role in marketing the city.
- Agreement between leaders and businesses that the city should repair/maintain streets.
- Agreement between leaders and businesses that the city should streamline the development review process.
- Businesses identified that the city should provide incentives for development. While this action received strong support from leaders, businesses indicated that it will help a lot.

## Q8: What would make Windsor Heights a better place to do business?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 5

"Stop with all the **speed camera's** - it keeps people away. Colby Interests owns too much of the commercial property"

"1. We need to be unique...we're easy to get to, so make us an easy destination and provide a true **identity/theme**. "Keep Austin Weird" is a great example. 2. We need to get some more daily traffic that is here to stay and then satisfy many of their needs. I think we need some **larger commercial office space and some more unique multi-family housing.**"

"A clear purpose/vision of what Windsor Heights should be known for (other than the **traffic cameras**)-East Village is viewed as "funky, entertainment venues, hip. Would we want to target the young families that have young kids, and are looking to get out of apartment living and now want to move into a "family friendly hip" place?"

"...**revitalize Hickman**. ...put two story buildings like Clive is doing. Add residential housing in areas. add bike lanes and sidewalks. create a slower University Avenue. Find other ways to remove the speed trap mentality."

"Businesses that provide needed & attractive services... thus a reason to do business in WH. Ease of on street parking"

"Remove the **speed cameras**. Do not narrow University. Resurface university, 70th and 73rd. The businesses are you losing customers because of the defects in our infrastructure."

"Higher speed limits. No speed **cameras.**"

"New retail. We sorely miss Fitness Sports, Windsor Clock and the Rookie."

"I think providing **more options for individuals**, eg developing office suites for smaller businesses, turn-key offices with shared resources."

"Fix the streets!"

"1) Street calming on University to naturally slow traffic, so we don't have to constantly give **tickets**. This makes many so mad they avoid us altogether. 2) Quicker, smoother process from the start of an application for a business to move here to the approval date. This seems to take forever."

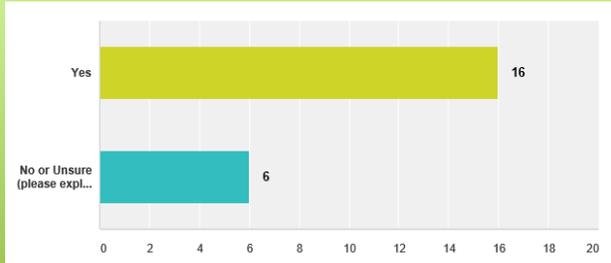
"A **more active role by the Chamber in economic development** efforts."

"Remove Development Committee and Planning and Zoning review and recommendation before it goes to the Board of Adjustment"

### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- Enforcement of speeding (speed cameras) is not a desirable community image.

## 2016 Survey - Looking ahead to the next 5-10 years, do you plan to keep your business in Windsor Heights? If no, please explain.



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	72.73% 16
No or Unsure (please explain below)	27.27% 6

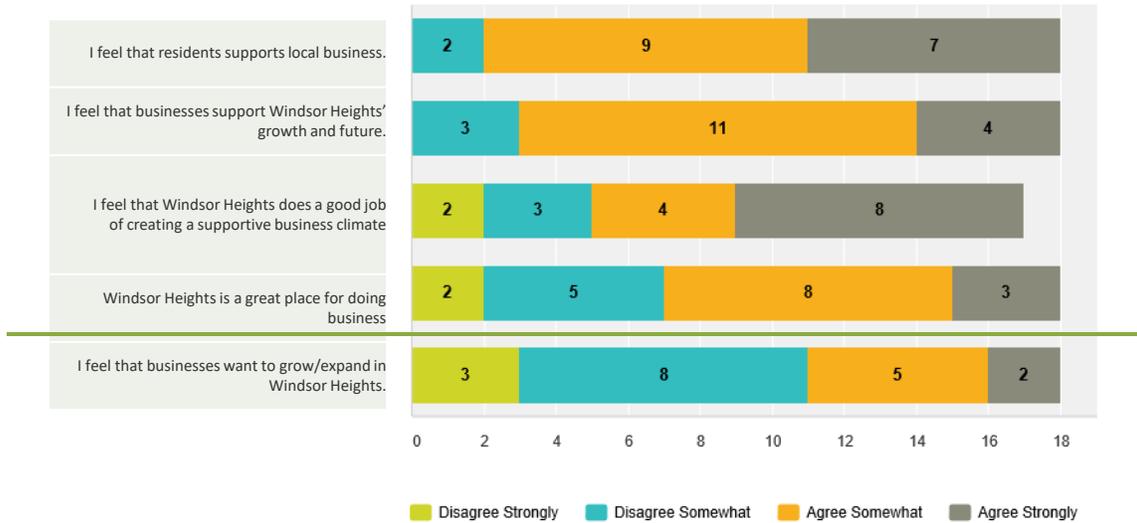
Responses (6)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	depends upon space necessary for growth/expansion, along with lease terms/cost 3/14/2016 1:29 PM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a> <a href="#">Categorize as...</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Would like to be in Urbandale 3/10/2016 10:22 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a> <a href="#">Categorize as...</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	May retire or may move to more walk-in traffic possibilities 3/8/2016 7:14 PM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a> <a href="#">Categorize as...</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	If they make updates to the Sherwood Forest, to keep its uniqueness while making updates to the property 3/8/2016 3:05 PM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a> <a href="#">Categorize as...</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure, our business is effected by the Des Moines Buccaneers and if the building is closed or demolished then our location no-longer makes financial sense and we will move our location. Or if another ice hockey facility is built in the west-metro it may make sense for us to move as well. 3/8/2016 2:21 PM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a> <a href="#">Categorize as...</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unfriendly Government Environment to work with. Neighboring cities much easier to work with. 3/8/2016 1:59 PM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a> <a href="#">Categorize as...</a>
Total 22	

### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- Participants perceive that businesses responding to the business survey in 2016 may have already relocated.

**Q9: For each of the following statements, please state whether you agree strongly, agree somewhat, somewhat disagree or disagree strongly. Compared to other communities in the Des Moines Metro...**

Answered: 18 Skipped: 1



**ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:**

- Statements above the line represent agreement, while the statement below do not represent agreement.
- Generally, participants perceive that businesses are not growing/expanding in Windsor Heights.

### Q10: Additional Comments

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Answered: 4 Skipped: 15

"I know that the **traffic cameras** generate a lot of income for the city, but I don't think it really does anything to make people slow down so they will stop and shop. I think people truly view the speed limits as Gotcha cameras, and it sheds a negative message about the city."

"I think the region believes that the residents aren't open to new ideas or economic development. In addition add the **Speed Trap** conversation and we are a negative city with negative people that don't want bike lanes or sidewalks. We are also known as the Walmart City. We are old and tired with no new development for many years."

"Don't understand last statement above. WH seems to have more emphasis on business development vs. taking care of residents needs...fixing streets & aging infrastructure. Understand **WH needs more tax revenues**, but the needs need to come first vs. the wants!"

"While improving the efficiency of the development process is a positive goal, adding additional uses is not something the city should pursue."

#### ABBREVIATED DISCUSSION NOTES:

- None.