

Policy Guidance Workshop Summary Report

5.2.23



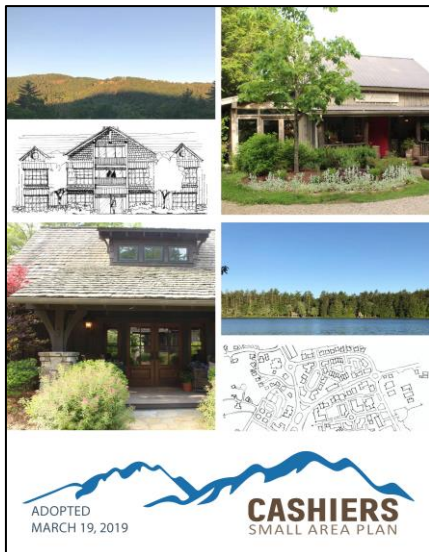
The Recodify Cashiers project is an effort to update the development regulations that apply in the Cashiers Commercial District. These standards are found in Section 9.3 of the Jackson County Unified Development Ordinance (or “UDO”). The standards in the UDO address what kinds of land uses may be permitted in what areas, how those uses must be configured, and the procedure used to establish those uses.

Task 2, Policy Guidance Review, of the Recodify Cashiers project took place in late February of 2023, and included a discussion of land use policy with the Cashiers Community Planning Council, a series of eight stakeholder interviews with community members and groups, and a Policy Guidance Workshop conducted on February 21, 2023, in the Albert Carlton Community Library. Details from the stakeholder interviews are summarized under separate cover. This report summarizes the Policy Guidance Workshop results.

Part 1 of this Report summarizes the applicable land use policy guidance from the Cashiers Small Area Plan adopted by the County in 2019, and the Urban Land Institute’s Advisory Services Panel Report on Cashiers finalized in 2022. Part 2 of this Report overviews the policy questions posed during the Policy Guidance Workshop and the responses provided by workshop participants. Part 3 provides some insights and conclusions about how the Cashiers Commercial District standards in Jackson County UDO Section 9.3 should be revised based on discussions undertaken during Task 2, Policy Guidance Review.

PART 1: SUMMARY OF APPLICABLE POLICY GUIDANCE

CASHIERS SMALL AREA PLAN



This Plan was adopted by the Jackson County Commissioners in March of 2019 as a means of guiding positive growth and development in the greater Cashiers area while also maintaining the rich natural environment.

Page 16 of the Plan identifies six “land use themes” as having considerable influence on the Plan’s recommendations. These themes were distilled from numerous meetings, interviews, surveys, and discussions. The themes include:

1. Additional density desired in the village core;
2. Need for additional housing [types] in the village;
3. Desire for a ‘connected’ community;
4. Permit a greater variety of architectural styles;
5. Maintain visual and/or physical connection to Cashiers Lake;
6. Provide for residential uses and design requirements.



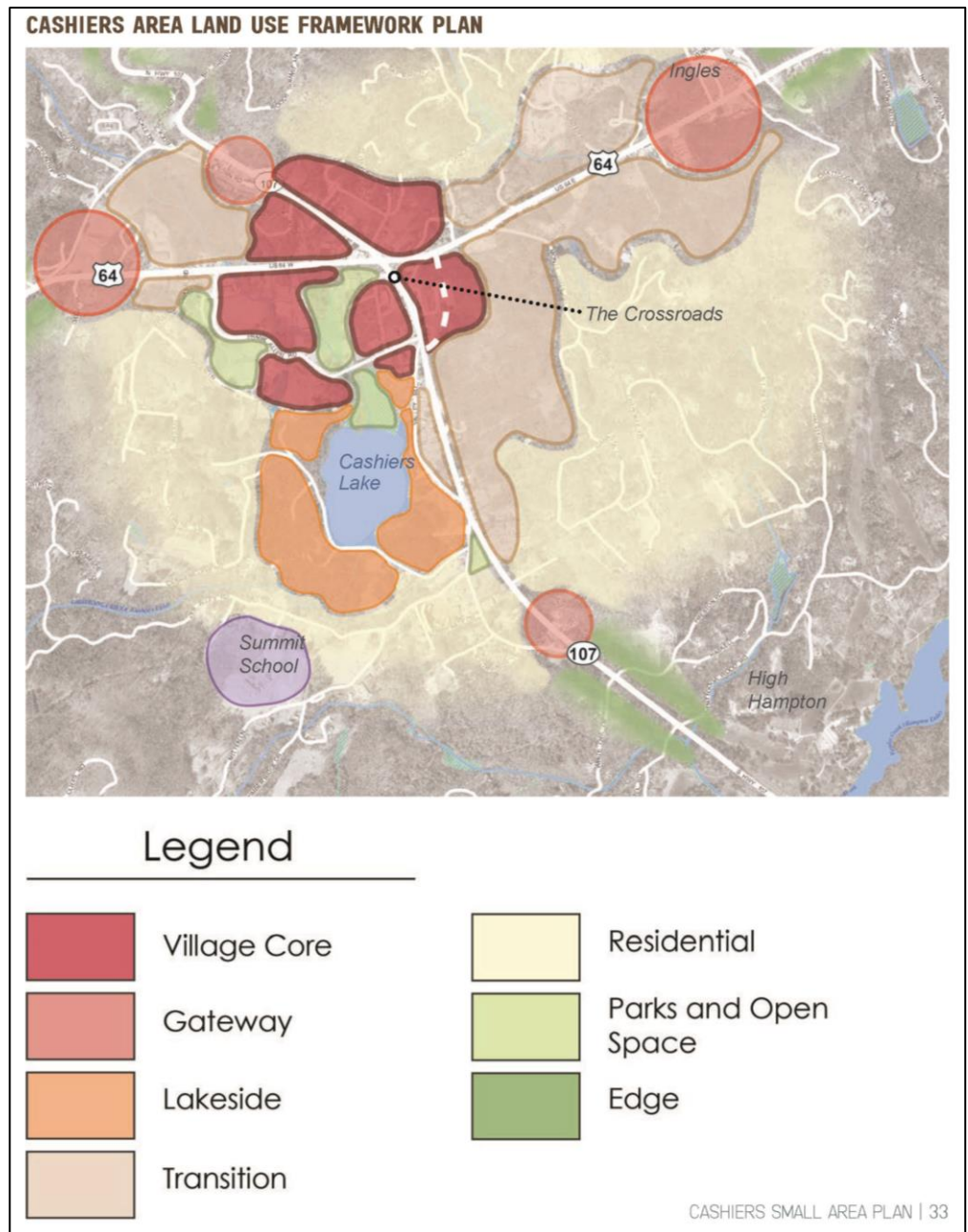
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The most relevant portions of the Small Area Plan to the Recodify Cashiers project are the **Village Framework** and **District Concept** recommendations (Pages 31-33 & 56-65), as well as the following five **topic-based recommendations** (found on Pages 34 through 53 of the Plan):

1. Land Use and Development Recommendations
2. Village Housing Recommendations
3. Park/Natural Resource Recommendations
4. Transportation Recommendations
5. Infrastructure Recommendations

Part 3 of the Small Area Plan includes a village framework map that establishes a series of seven different character areas within the greater Cashiers area. Part 4 of the Plan includes additional details and recommendations for each of the character areas. The map on Page 33 of the Plan is included to the right and shows the approximate boundaries of the different character areas. The summary table on the next page sets down the key recommendations in the Plan for each of the seven character areas.





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Cashiers Small Area Plan Key Recommendations by Character Area

Character Area	Description	Key Recommendations
Village Core	Central village core surrounding village crossroads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small to medium-scale multi-story buildings with 'active' uses on the street level and residential or office above. - Limit parking in front of buildings and bring building fronts to the street/sidewalk. - Allow a variety of uses: retail, restaurants, residential, lodging, and civic. - Encourage outdoor dining, plazas, and open space (greenspace). - Avoid suburban-style perimeter landscape buffers/screening except between incompatible uses. - Require short block lengths and street trees. - Include connected pedestrian paths and shared parking lots to serve businesses. - Encourage a mix of housing types (upper-story residential, townhomes, bungalow courts, accessory apartments). - Develop new design guidelines/controls for downtown.
Gateways	Four village entrances centered on roadways to the north, south, east, and west of the Village Core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide gateway monument signage. - This is an infill and redevelopment area. - Allow the area to have reduced setbacks. - Control the size and location of off-street parking. - Establish design standards to create a sense of arrival and apply these to existing commercial centers. - Allow larger buildings than in the Village Core. - Provide guidelines for signage, building color, and exterior materials
Lakeside	Land surrounding Cashiers Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrate new development sensitively into the landscape. - Improve visual and pedestrian connections to the lake in cooperation with landowners. - Establish natural/recreational shorelines. - Establish use and design guidelines along built and natural shorelines. - Develop stormwater BMPs for water quality and stormwater management. - Establish more pedestrian connections.
Transition	Areas proximate to major roadway corridors outside of Village Core and Gateways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transition between Core/Gateways and Residential areas. - Adds visual consistency to the main corridors. - Small to medium-scale buildings that are compatible with adjacent homes. - Require street trees and sidewalks behind roadside swales or curbs. - Configure buildings with entrances facing the street and parking to the side or rear. - Require cross-access between parking lots.
Residential	Residential neighborhoods abutting Transition and Lakeside areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mostly residential in character and scale. - Preserve tree canopy and sensitive environmental features. - Some resort and civic uses are appropriate. <p>(Note: This area is outside the boundaries of the Cashiers Zoning District)</p>
Park/Open Space	Park and civic uses on the southwestern quadrant of the crossroads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These uses and the wetlands offer green breaks in the village form. <p>(Note: This area is almost entirely controlled by public agencies or institutions)</p>
Edge	Areas bordering major roadways outside of the planned area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Separate buildings and parking areas with deep natural landscape buffers. - Residential building appearance with parking lot location flexibility. - Sidewalks not required or desired. - Require tree protection, landscaping, and site design to better define the village and protect viewsheds. <p>(Note: These areas are outside the boundaries of the Cashiers Zoning District)</p>





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The Plan also includes a series of topic-based recommendations, organized by land use, housing, natural resources, transportation, and infrastructure. Many of these recommendations are already included with the recommendations for the different character areas, or are not related to land use regulations. Development-related regulations not already identified in the character area recommendations on the prior page are listed below:

Land Use & Housing

- Increase building size thresholds to permit more development to be reviewed outside the special use permit process.
- Create greater distinctions between the two current commercial districts.
- Explore use of a maximum floor area ratio or maximum building square footage of 8,500 sf in the core.
- Prohibit auto-oriented uses/drive throughs and self-storage uses.
- Increase multi-family densities to higher than 2 units per acre.

Site & Building Design

- Consider use of maximum front building setbacks in core and gateway areas.
- Consider reducing off-street parking requirements, add caps for some uses, and add bike parking standards.
- Encourage visual transparency for building facades facing streets.
- Allow flexibility in building color in the core.
- Encourage architectural styles that honor historic patterns.
- Consider more opportunities for public art.
- Eliminate bufferyard requirements in VC district and reduce bufferyard requirements in the GC district.
- Reduce/eliminate side and rear setbacks in VC district.
- Permit greater deviations in minimum setbacks to be reviewed administratively.
- Increase maximum height from 30 feet to up to 4-story buildings in core and gateways.
- Reduce allowable sign height and face area.
- Abolish 50-foot minimum lot sizes in GC district.
- Consider a density bonus for provision of more open space or public amenities.
- Continue to require dark sky-style exterior lighting.

Natural Resources

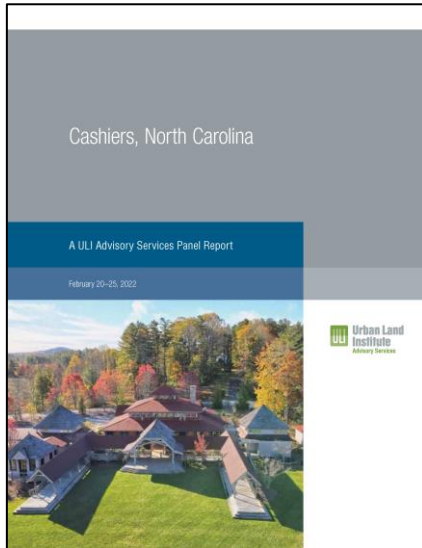
- Continue to remove invasive plants.
- Standardize landscaping and tree protection in the Transition Areas.
- Review open space requirements, raise required amounts, and add standards for active and passive open space features, based on use types.
- Limit development on steep slopes.
- Explore incentives for green stormwater features.

Transportation & Infrastructure

- Consolidate driveways/vehicular points of access.
- Require pedestrian facilities across frontages and to business entrances.
- Add standards requiring development to help build a better connected roadway system.
- Add pedestrian connectivity standards for new development.



URBAN LAND INSTITUTE ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT



This report was commissioned by the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce in late 2021, along with the financial participation of the County, the Tourism Development Authority, and numerous Cashiers residents and businesses. The Report was published in May of 2022, and while not formally adopted by the County, it continues to serve as an important part of public policy guidance for the Cashiers area. The Report is subtitled: “A vision for staying rural by design” and it includes a series of five main recommendations. Some of these recommendations are proposed as actions for the County to take with respect to its programs and regulations while others are directed at Cashiers community leaders and organizations. The recommendations are listed on Page 5 of the Report and are as follows:

1. Create a long-term conservation plan for the Cashiers area that identifies critical natural areas, steep slopes, green spaces, and scenic views that should be permanently protected.
2. Build a robust network of pathways, trails, and sidewalks to facilitate and improve walkability within the village core.
3. Work aggressively with state and county government to accelerate construction of critical infrastructure, including broadband, water and sewer, and a roundabout at the crossroads to reduce congestion and improve mobility throughout the village.
4. Create an organization focused on bringing in more diverse housing (both for sale and rental) to address critical workforce housing needs.
5. Work proactively with major landowners to ensure that development proposals respect local values and community character in scale, design, and architecture.

Recommendation #1, creating a long-term conservation plan, may already be underway through the efforts of community members. ReCodify Cashiers can support these efforts with new provisions related to amounts of open space provided, recognizing distinct roles for open space, and creating incentives for providing open space at rates higher than the minimum requirements. Based on the feedback collected to this point, the consulting team expects to incorporate new open space set-aside standards with requirements for active and passive recreation features. Most forms of development will be required to set aside open space, and there will be standards for the kinds of things that may or may not take place in required open space. We anticipate the current steep slope protection provisions to be carried forward without revision, though discussion of improvements to the current standards is welcome. The issue of scenic views also needs more discussion. There are two types of views: those out of the village area to the surrounding hills, and those from the surrounding hills into the village area. Given that the current Commercial District rules applies within village areas, scenic views into the village can be addressed via tree save and building placement standards. Protecting views outside the zoned area, while important, will not be affected by changes solely to the Cashiers Commercial District standards, and will require the County to consider development regulations and/or hilltop/ridgeline protections on a wider geographic scale.

Recommendation #2, fostering more walkability, calls for the establishment of a more robust pedestrian circulation system in the village core. Some community organizations are already working to improve walkability in the village. Inclusion of new provisions to require pedestrian connections (most likely via trails and multi-purpose walkways that connect uses to other uses and parking lots to building entrances) as a part of new





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development are anticipated to be an important part of the revised code provisions. Typical sidewalks are likely to be less featured since these depend on NCDOT acceptance and maintenance, the community has expressed concerns about visitors walking along streets, and because sidewalks are a more formal form of infrastructure that is at odds with Cashiers' more eclectic and informal development patterns. One of the big hurdles to address is how to connect existing, unconnected segments of pedestrian circulation infrastructure in areas that are already developed where new development is less likely to occur. Requirements for new development to install pedestrian infrastructure are effective and quite typical in North Carolina - however, this approach does not work as well in areas that are already built without pedestrian infrastructure. There is no new development to fund the pedestrian improvements. Creating pedestrian connections in the already built areas is where creative regulations and a strong public/private partnership can make the most difference.

Recommendation #3, accelerate construction of critical infrastructure, including aspects like water and sewer service, broadband, and completion of the proposed roundabout are vital parts of the effort to ensure Cashiers remains a viable community. The Recodify Cashiers project includes new development regulations and a new review process, which include minimum requirements for how new development will connect to or provide these kinds of services to individual lots. It does not address wider macro-level issues like the total available capacity of wastewater treatment or how a public potable water system should be deployed. The one thing that can be done is to ensure that the development regulations for the Cashiers Commercial District do not obstruct or impede progress on addressing these wider system-level improvements to wastewater, potable water, and public roadways.

Recommendation #4, bringing more diverse housing, calls for the establishment of an outside organization to facilitate a wider range of residential housing types (rental and purchase) in the village. While the creation of a new organization is not part of ReCodify Cashiers, revisions to the range of allowable residential use types in the Cashiers Commercial District is part of the project. The new district standards should permit a wider range of residential use types by-right (accessory dwelling units, upper-story residential, live/work structures, and duplexes). The project will also explore the ability to accommodate increased residential densities as part of the conditional rezoning process, or as part of the inclusion of sustainable development features. Accommodating higher development density can have positive and negative impacts, and the standards will help the village find the balance between the need for workforce housing and economic development and the need to protect environmental quality.

Recommendation #5, ensure development proposals respect local values and community character, addresses the scale, design, and architecture of new development. The intent is to ensure that new development is compatible and consistent with the community's expressed desires and objectives. This is very much a part of the ReCodify Cashiers effort. The ability to successfully address aesthetic and architectural goals directly depends on a variety of different factors, including:

- Clarification of the intent of the design controls;
- A clear articulation of what the established community character consists of;
- Examples of what is and is not consistent with the established community character;
- Discipline in the use of design controls to focus on the most impactful aspects of building design and appearance; and
- Inclusion of guidance about how flexibility can be integrated into proposed building design or site configuration.

The ReCodify Cashiers project will include a review of the current design controls and recommendations for revision based on best practice. Success with this part of the effort depends on broad and on-going public dialogue about what Cashiers' community character is, and how it can be directly translated into a series of statements and imagery that express the community's expectations for how new development will support the established community character.





PART 2: POLICY GUIDANCE WORKSHOP

This part of the Report provides detail on the Policy Guidance Public Workshop, focusing primarily on the polling exercise conducted with participants. On February 21, 2023, the consulting team and County staff conducted a public workshop on the policy guidance in place for Cashiers. The workshop included a poll of workshop participants about their ideas related to land use regulation-related questions. These poll results are not tools of inference, and they are not representative of the full range of community opinion. Participants were reminded that the polling exercise was not intended to set policy or serve as a directive for how to draft new rules. Rather, the polling exercise was a chance to collect and discuss opinions about policy guidance and its ramifications.

There were around 20 or so participants present during the polling exercise. Participants were shown a slide with a land use-related question. Each question had a range of potential responses, and participants were asked to select the response from those shown on the screen that most closely corresponds with their opinion about the question. Participants were given input devices that allowed them to select one response from a range of different response options. The devices registered people's responses to each question and then presented the results of each question for further discussion. The total number of respondents to any single question is not known, and participants were not required to respond if they chose not to. At the same time no single participant could respond more than once to any particular question. The following pages include copies of each question, the range of available responses, and the resulting percentages of selected responses. Some interpretation or ramifications from the polling responses are provided, by slide, where appropriate.

The poll included a total of 25 questions, organized into nine topical areas based on recommendations set out in the Small Area Plan or the ULI Report. The nine topic areas are identified in the slide below:

Recommendations for Discussion:

1. Residential development in the Village Core
2. Distinctions for Resident-serving vs Visitor-serving uses
3. Geographic boundaries
4. Vehicular Connectivity
5. Pedestrian Connectivity
6. Open Space
7. Site Design
8. Building Design
9. Redevelopment

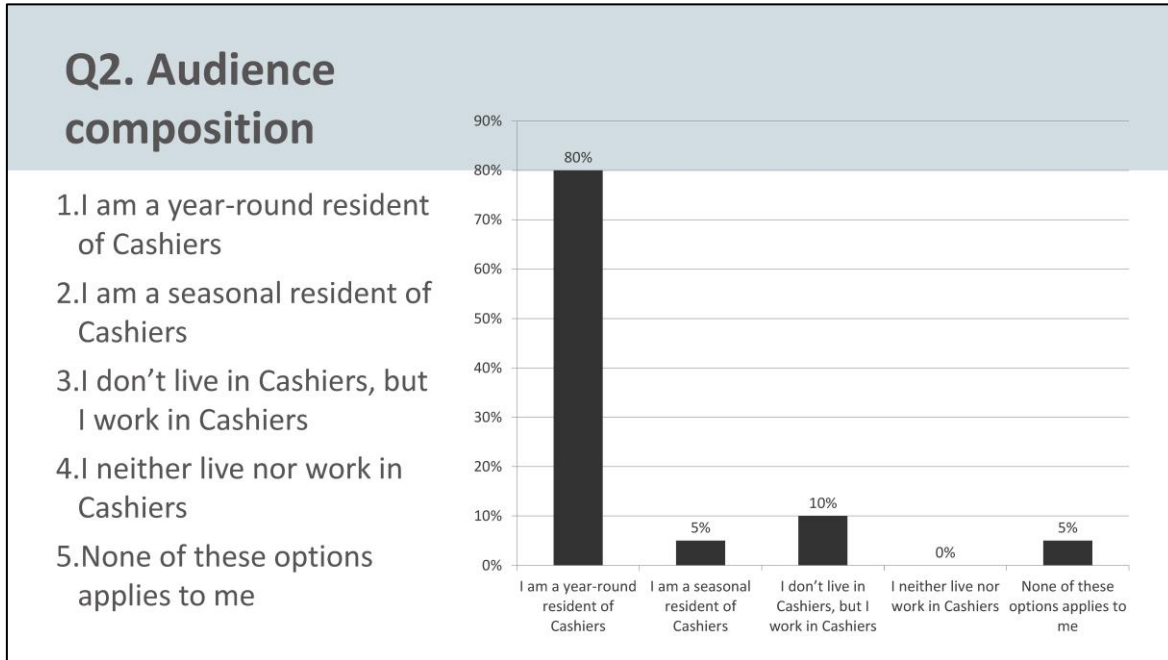




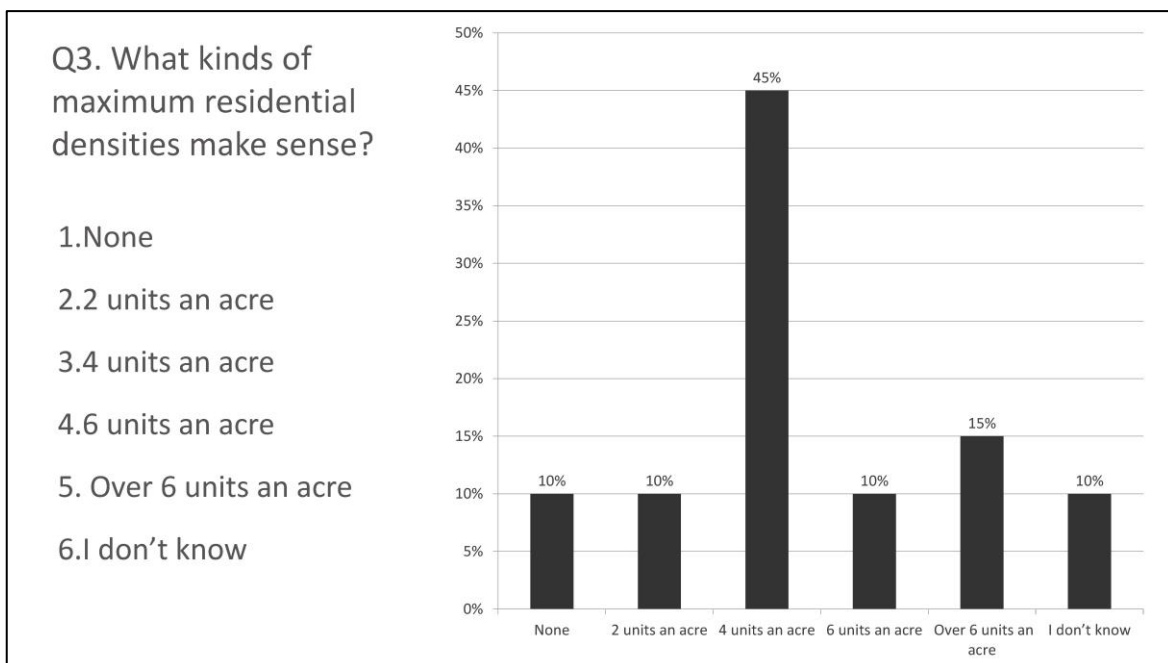
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The first question was a test question to show participants how the process would work. The slide below shows the results from the second question, which asks about the composition of participants of the polling exercise. It shows that 80% of those responding to the question are year-round residents of Cashiers.



Question 3 asked about maximum allowable residential densities, or the number of allowable dwelling units per acre in the village core. A maximum density of around 4 units per acre in the village core was the most frequently selected response option.

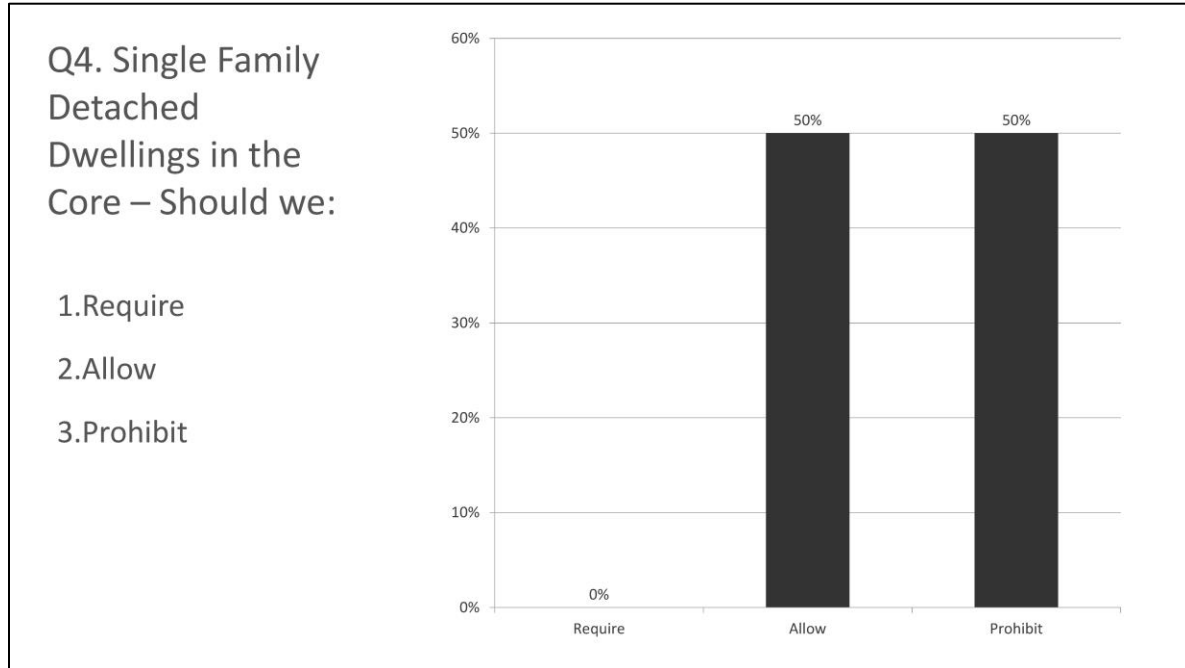




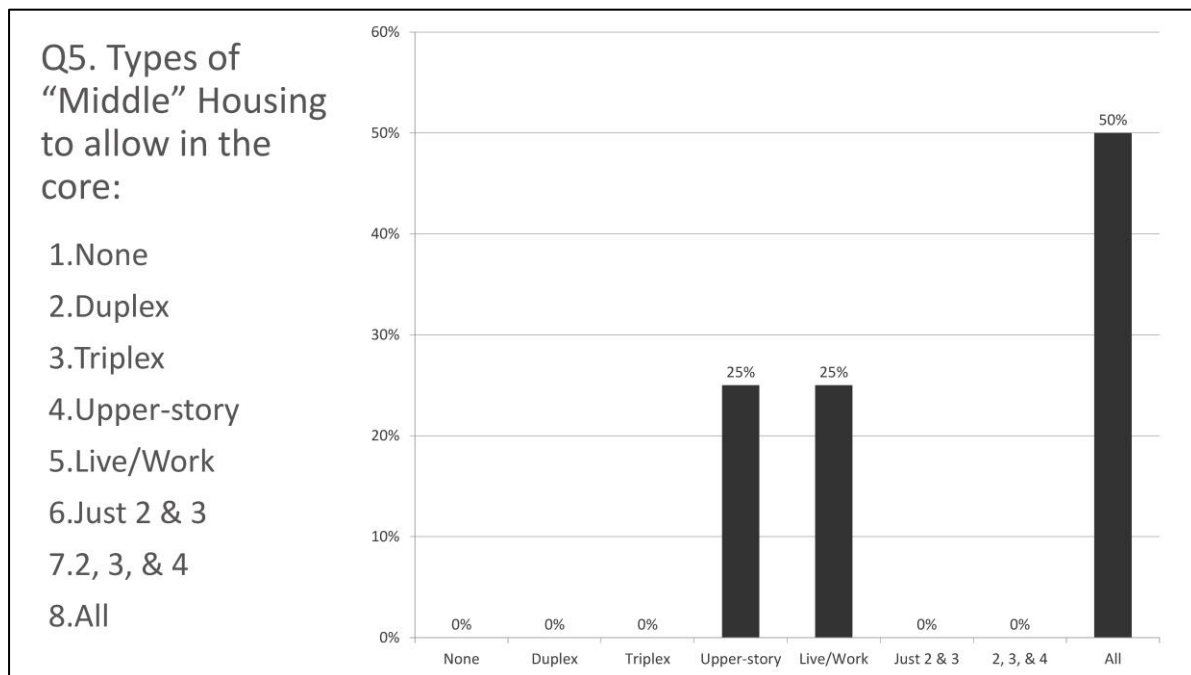
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Sentiment was equally divided with respect to Question 4, whether single-family detached dwellings should be allowed or prohibited in the village core. It is interesting that some participants felt single-family homes should be prohibited; this could be because higher densities in the core were seen as more appropriate.



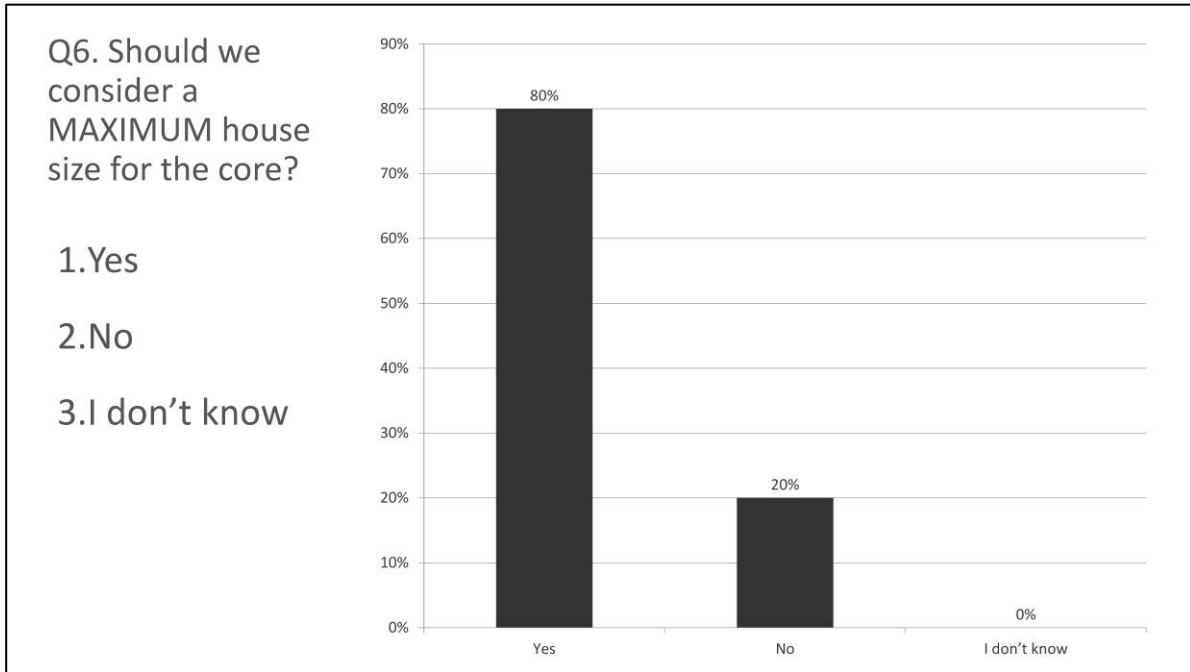
Question 5 digs a little deeper into the desired range of housing types in the village core. There were 8 different responses to choose from. Please remember that there was discussion with participants about how available responses differed from one another.



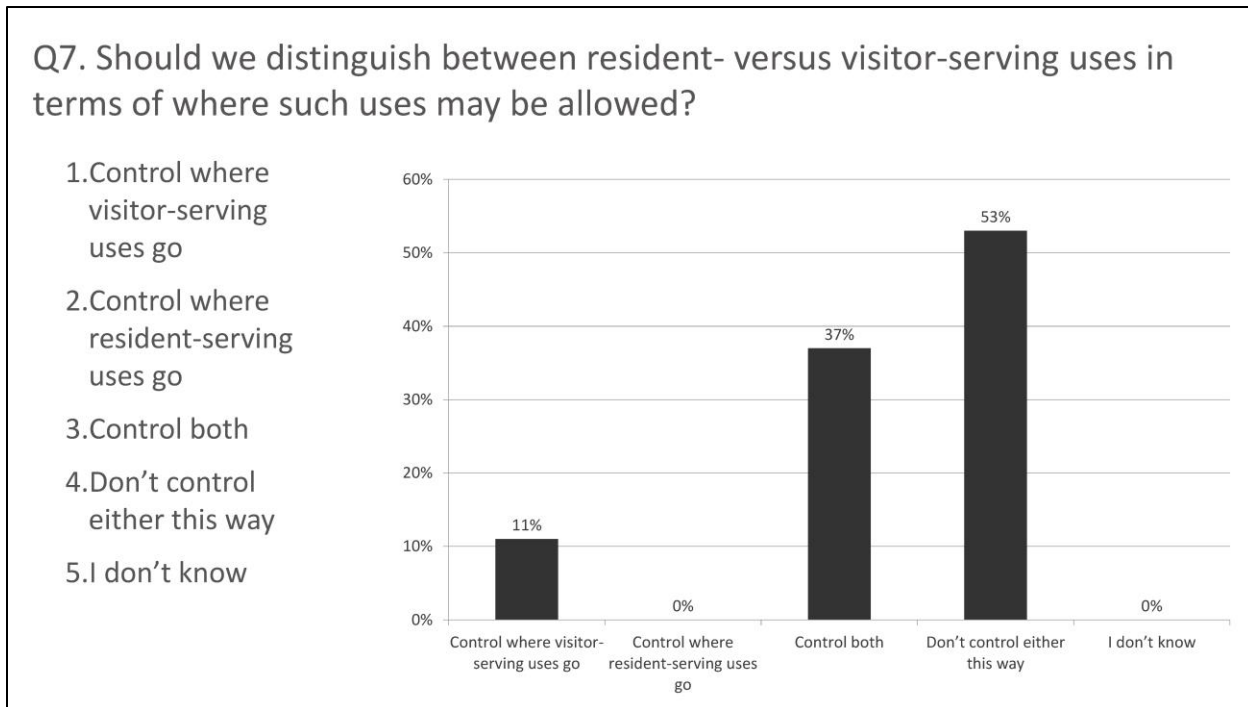
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Question 6 posed a question about scale of individual residential dwellings, or at least if residential scale should be regulated in the village core.



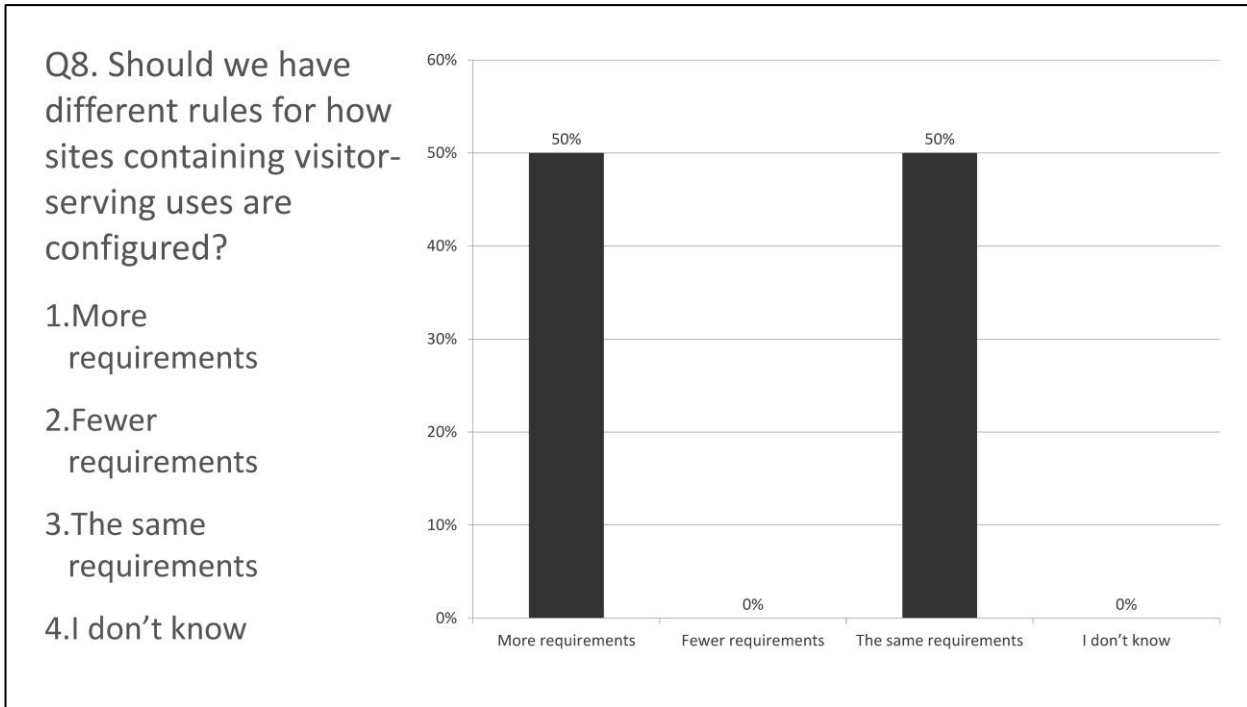
The next two questions dealt with resident-serving versus visitor-serving uses in Cashiers. Some examples from each type of use were provided. Generally speaking, these two questions were not as well explained as they needed to be, and the consensus among participants was question 7 was not that helpful.



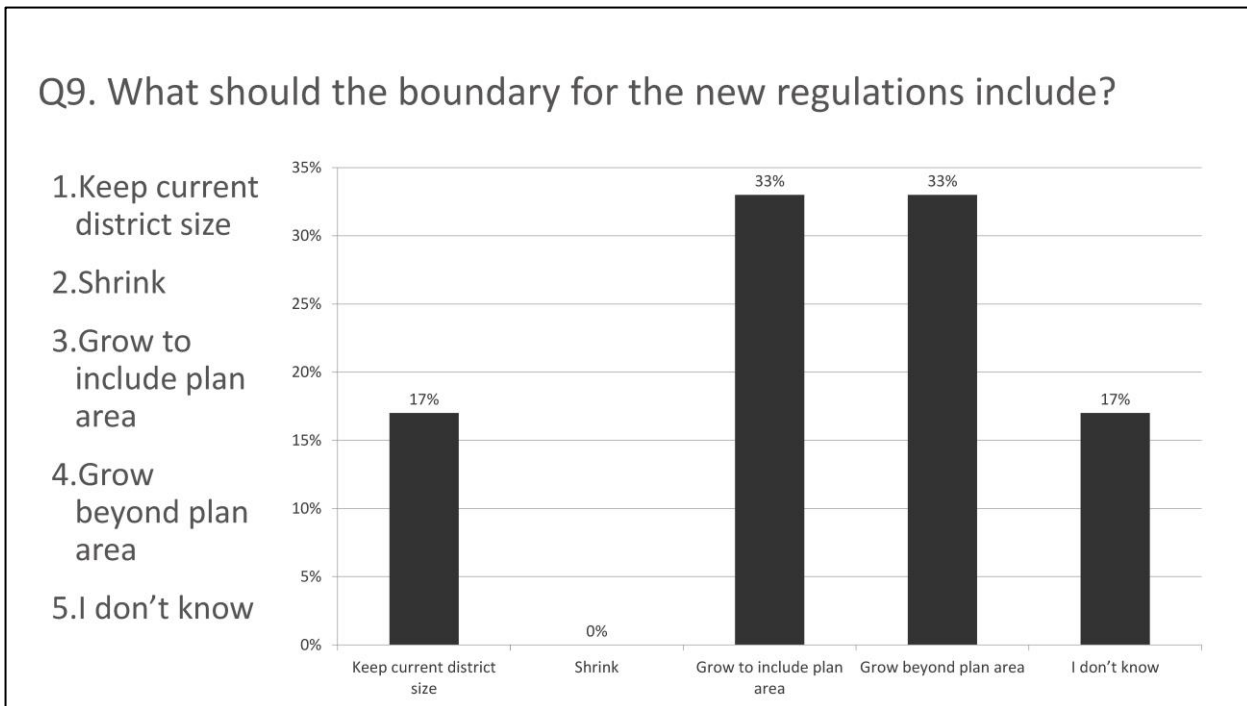
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Question 8 also dealt with the potential for distinctions between resident-serving and visitor-serving uses in terms of the sheer number of regulatory requirements that should be applied. Like Question 7, this one was not well explained or understood.



Question 9 deals with the geographic size of the Cashiers Commercial District, which has a different boundary than the Small Area Plan study boundary. Participants were asked if the size of the district should be changed as part of this project. There is significant variability in selected responses.

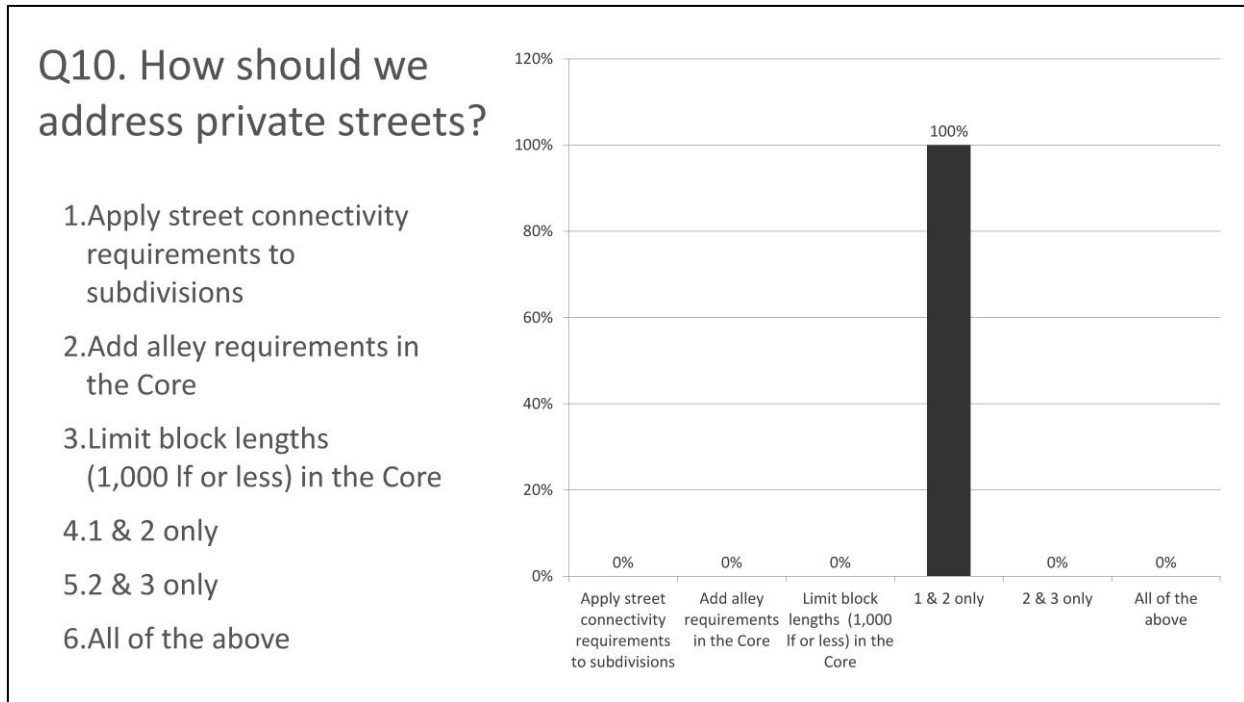




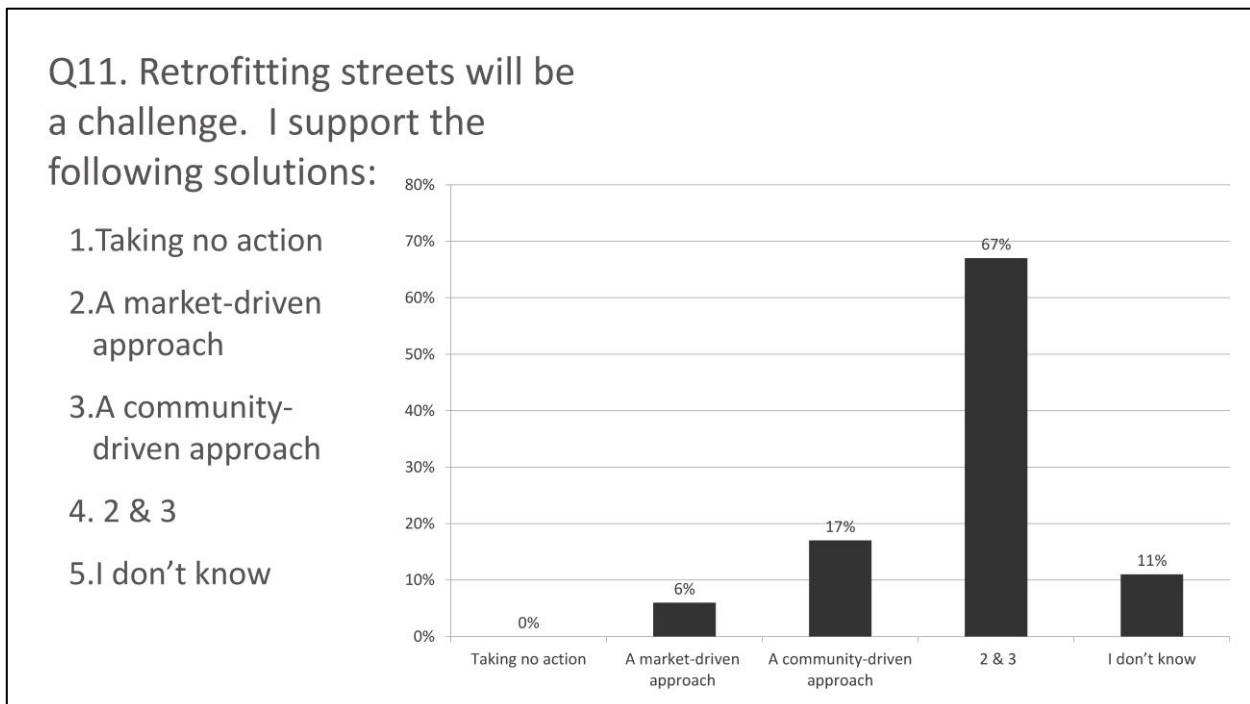
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Question 10 deals with the standards that should be applied to private streets. In NC counties may not own streets like Towns may, and as a result all public streets are NCDOT streets. Private streets are permitted, and this question asked about what kinds of features they should include.



Question 11 address the Plans goals for creating a connected street network, which will be difficult since the County can not own streets and making street connections in built areas (where little new private development will occur) or addressing existing but under-designed private streets will likely not be funded by new development.

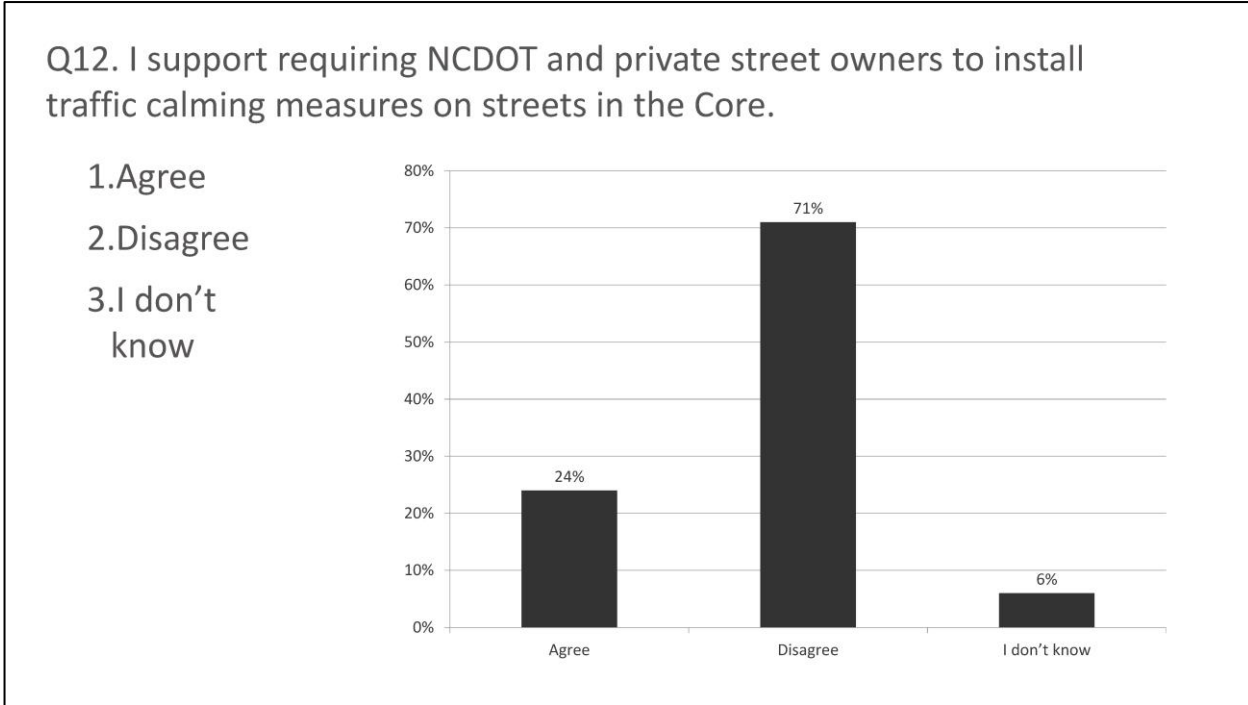




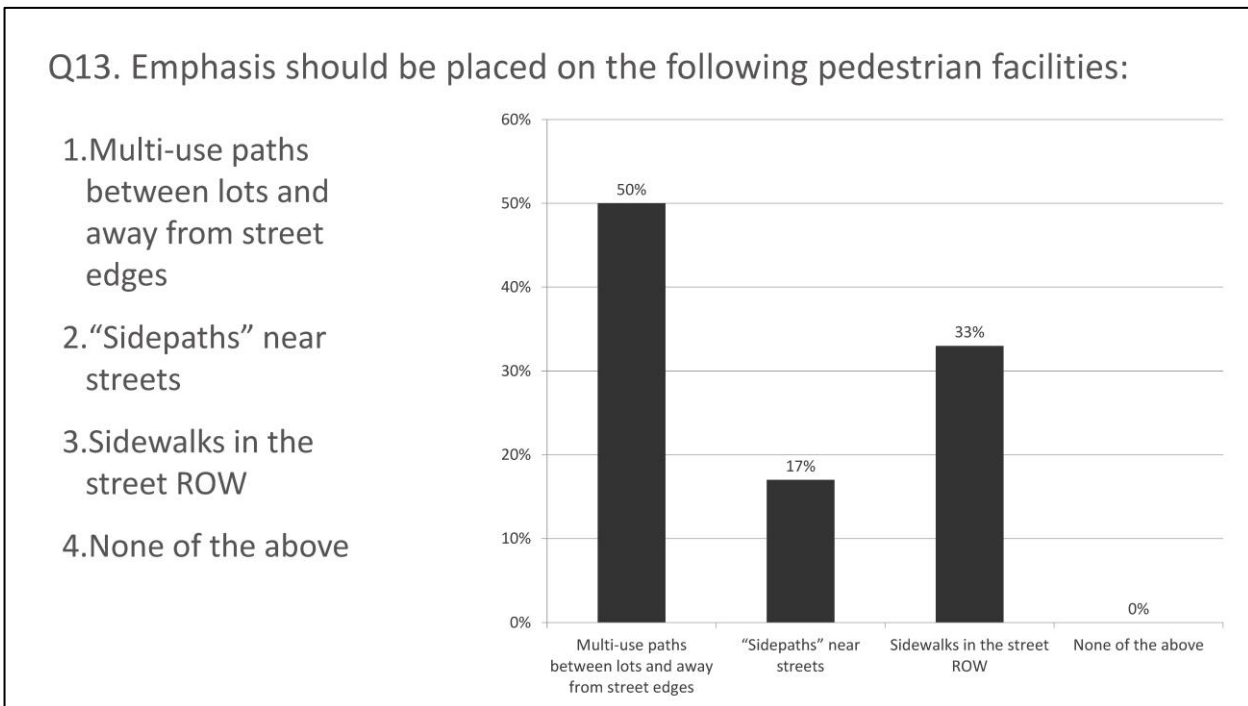
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Question 12 asks about the importance of traffic calming devices on streets in the village core. These devices slow traffic and contribute to the safety of those walking on sidewalks or crossing streets.



Question 13 asks about how pedestrian circulation should best be facilitated in Cashiers. While the optimal technique could differ based on context, there are also issues of street ownership and maintenance that must also be considered.

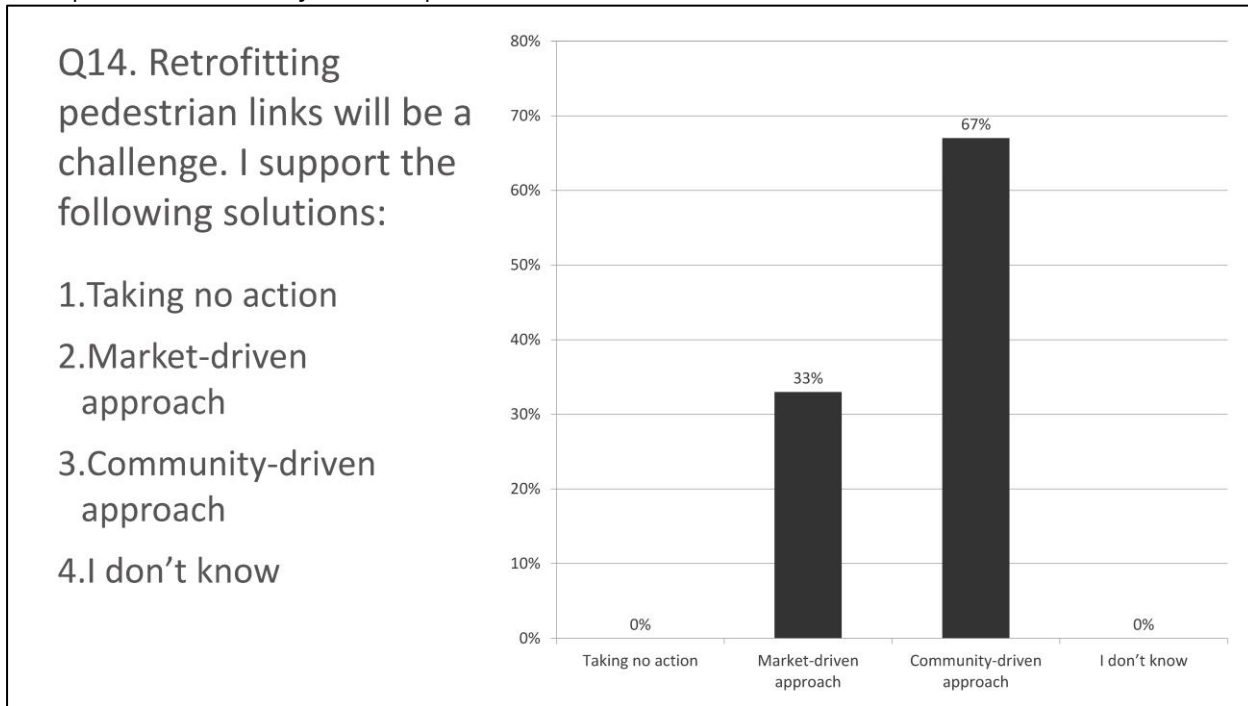




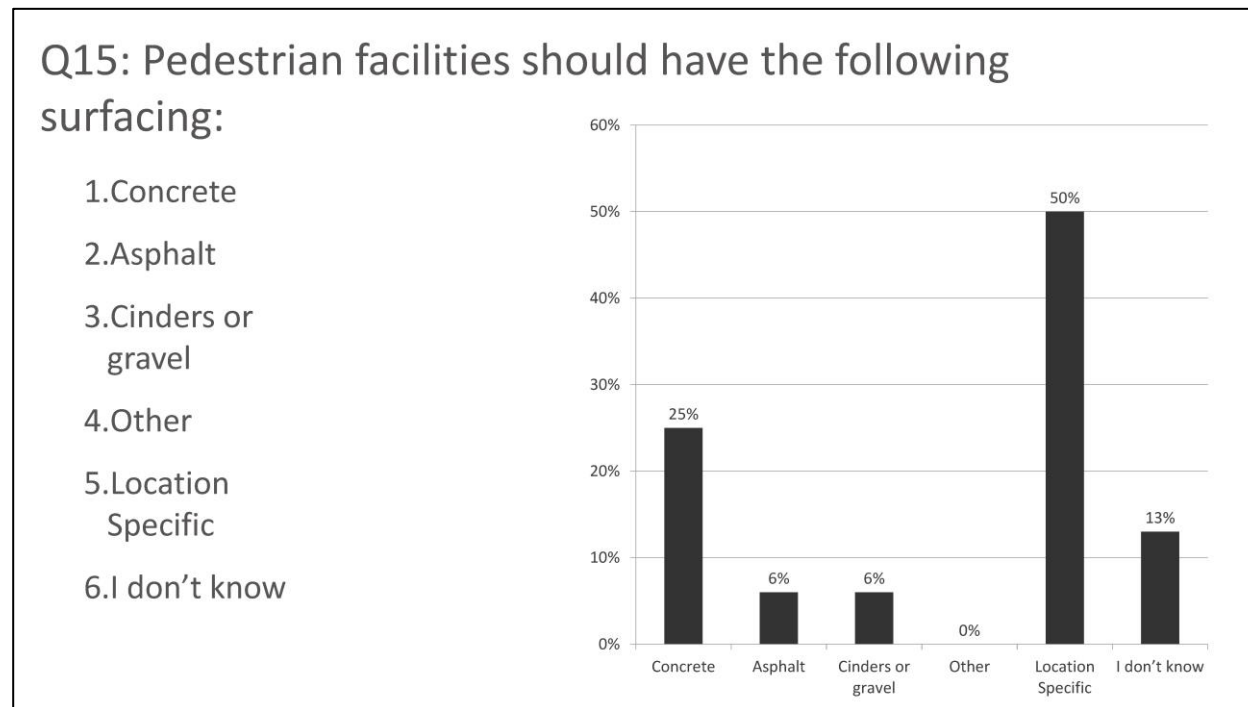
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Question 14 is like Question 11 in that it attempts to gauge the level of support for community participation in pursuit of making pedestrian network connections in already built areas where new development is not likely to fund pedestrian connections.



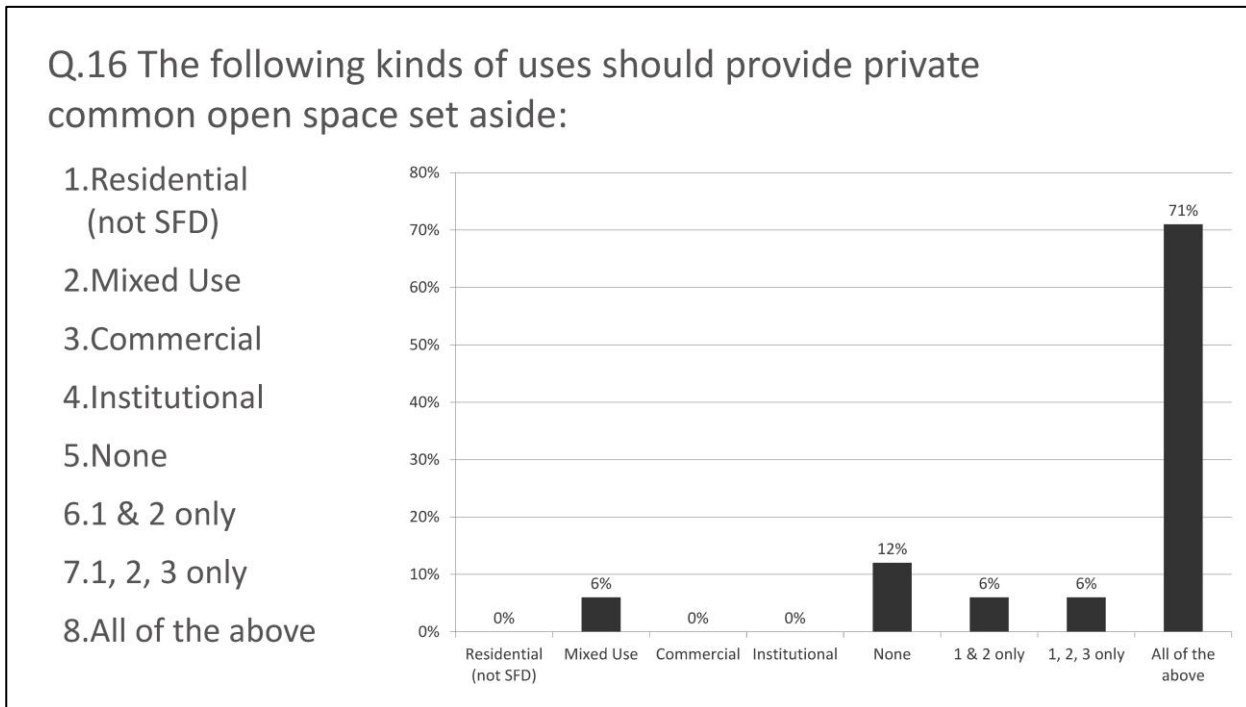
Question 15 asks about the surfacing for pedestrian routes. This has deep ramifications for installation and on-going maintenance costs. Half of the participants indicated that surfacing may need to vary by location based on usage, slope, runoff conditions, or safety.



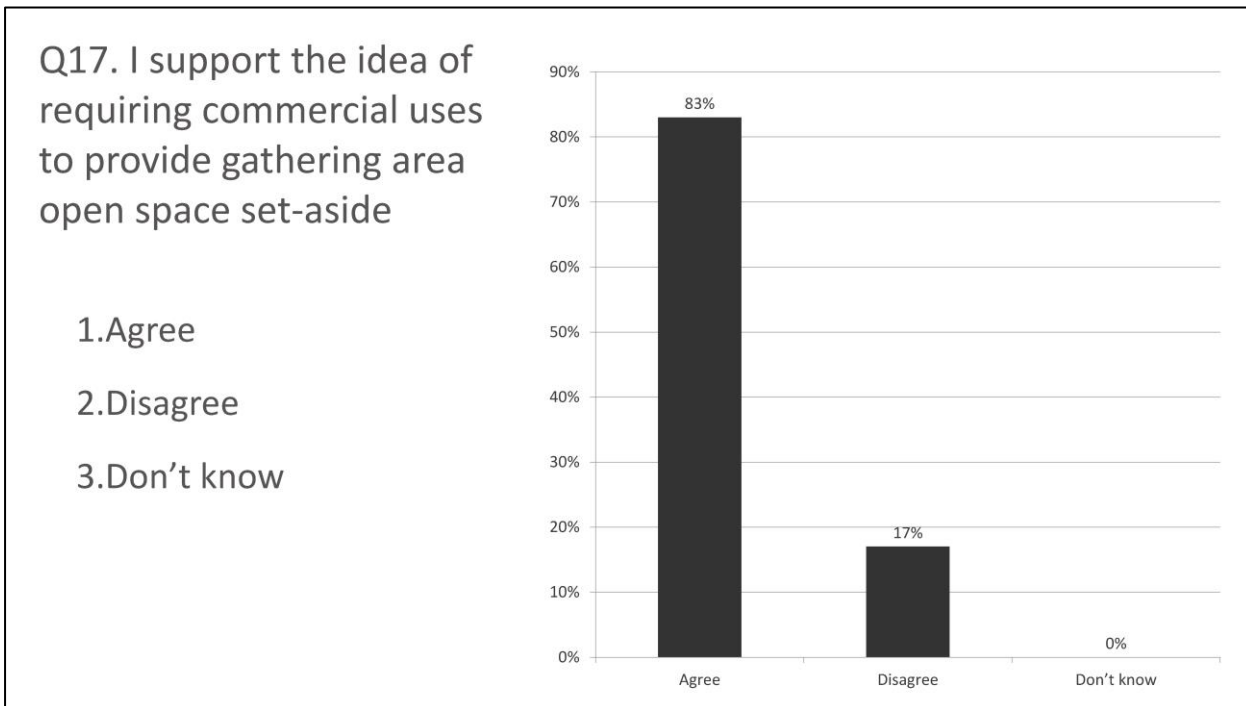
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Question 16 asks what kinds of uses should provide private common open space as part of new development. Private common open space is available to the users/owners of development, but the public may be excluded, at the discretion of the owner. Open space can take many forms.



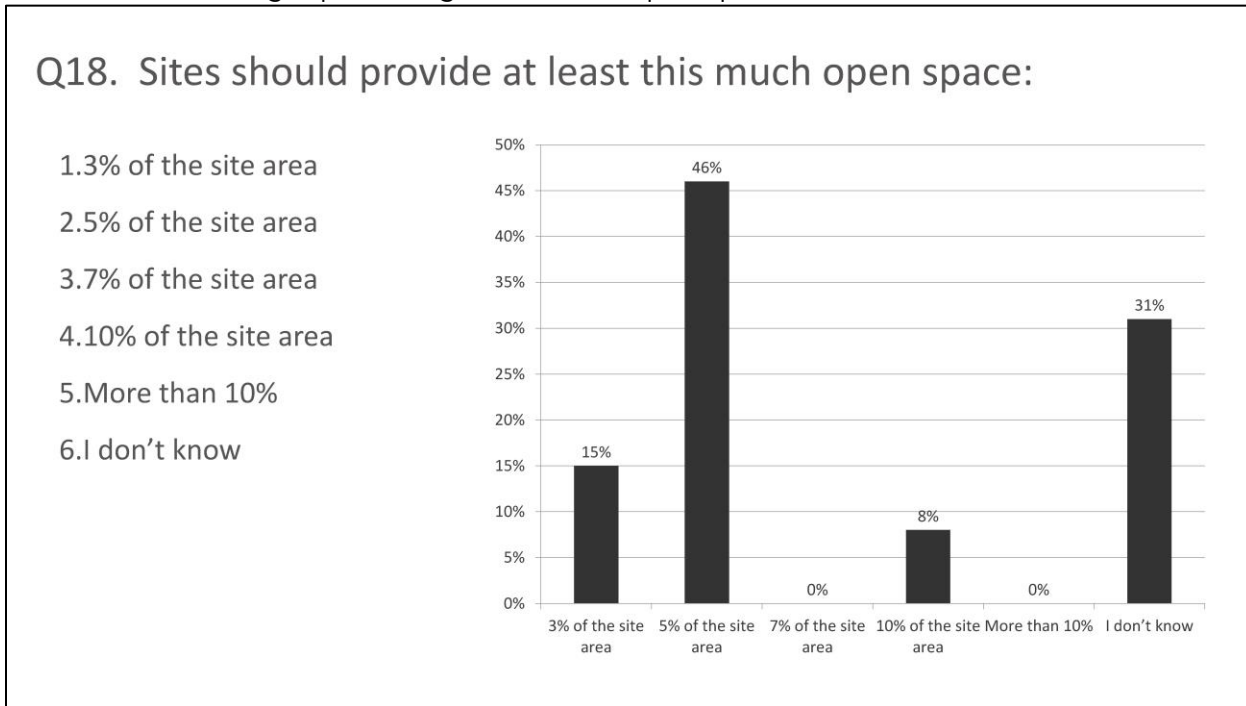
Question 17 asks about support for regulations that require commercial developments to provide open spaces that can serve as gathering areas (like outdoor seating or 'plaza' space) for patrons.



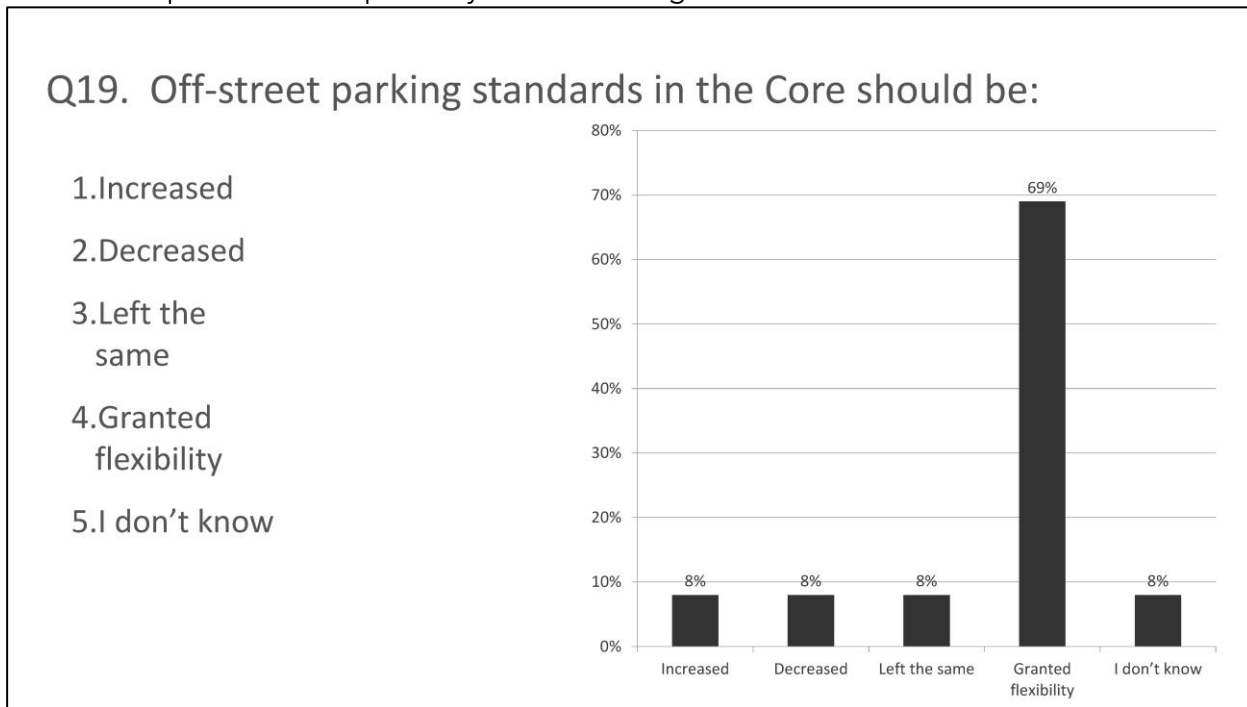
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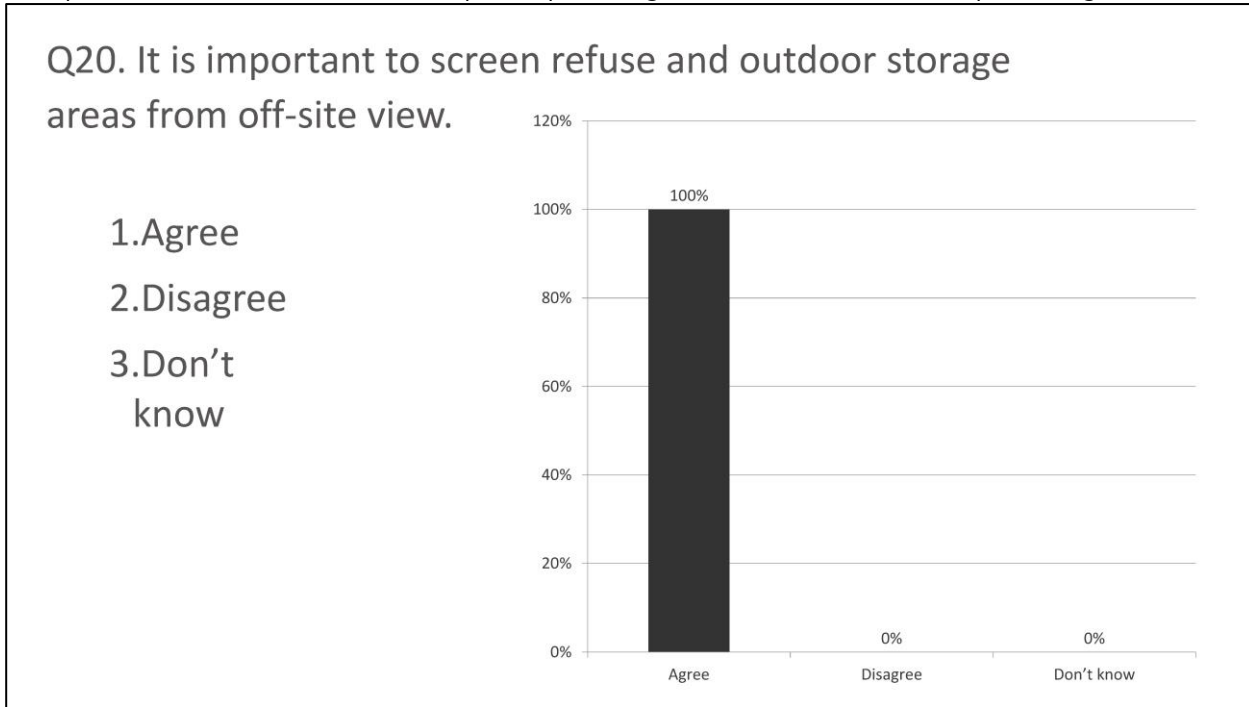
Question 18 asks about how much private common open space should be required (as a percentage of the total site area) for new development sites in Cashiers. It is typical for higher density residential uses to set aside a larger percentage of a site as open space than do commercial uses.



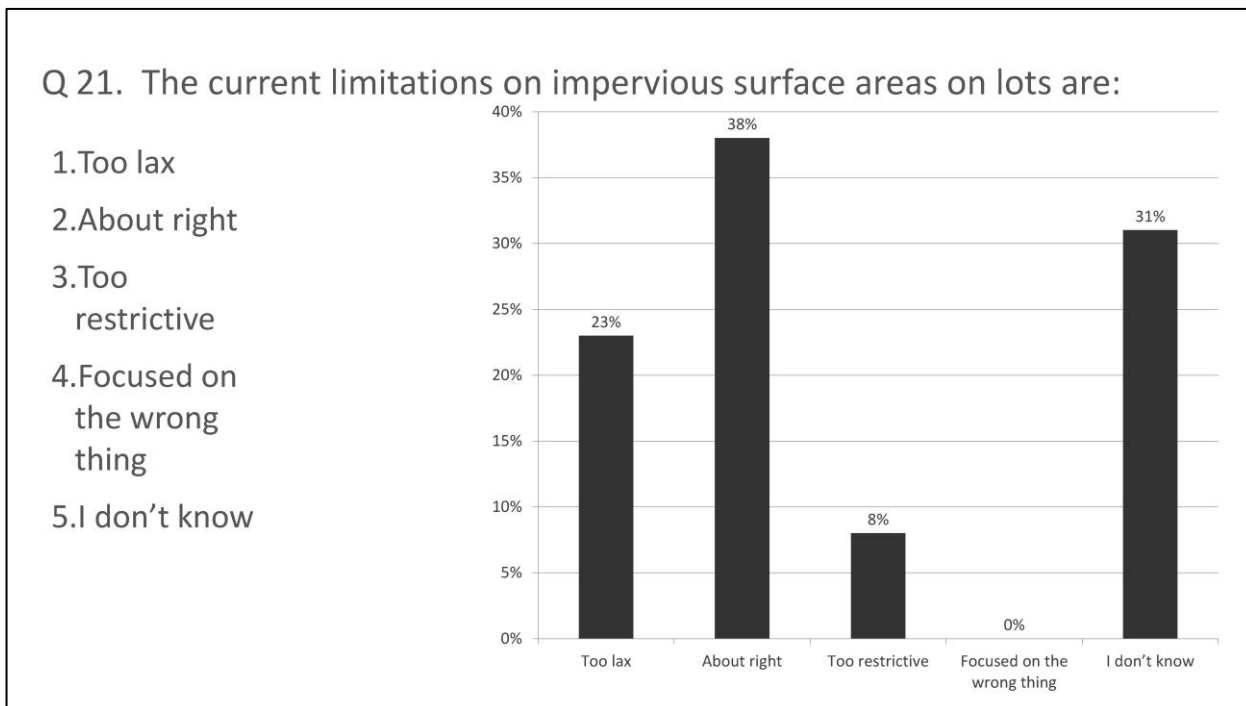
Question 19 asks about how much off-street parking should be required for new uses in the village core based upon what is required by the current regulations.



Question 20 asks about screening refuse and outdoor storage areas associated with non-residential development from off-site views. All participants agreed that this was an important goal.



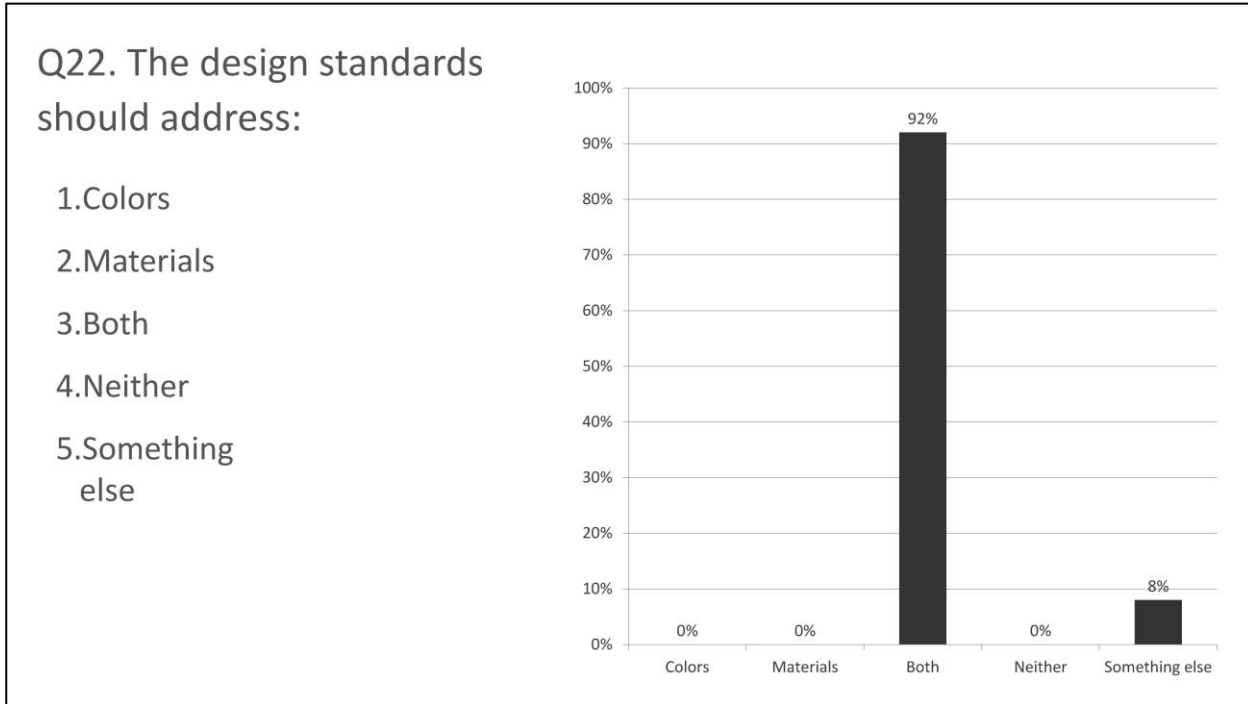
Question 21 asks about impervious surface cover, or the amount of a lot area that is occupied by paving, buildings, or other surfaces that don't absorb water. The questions asks participants about the current impervious surface standards (up to 70% of a site may be covered by impervious surface).



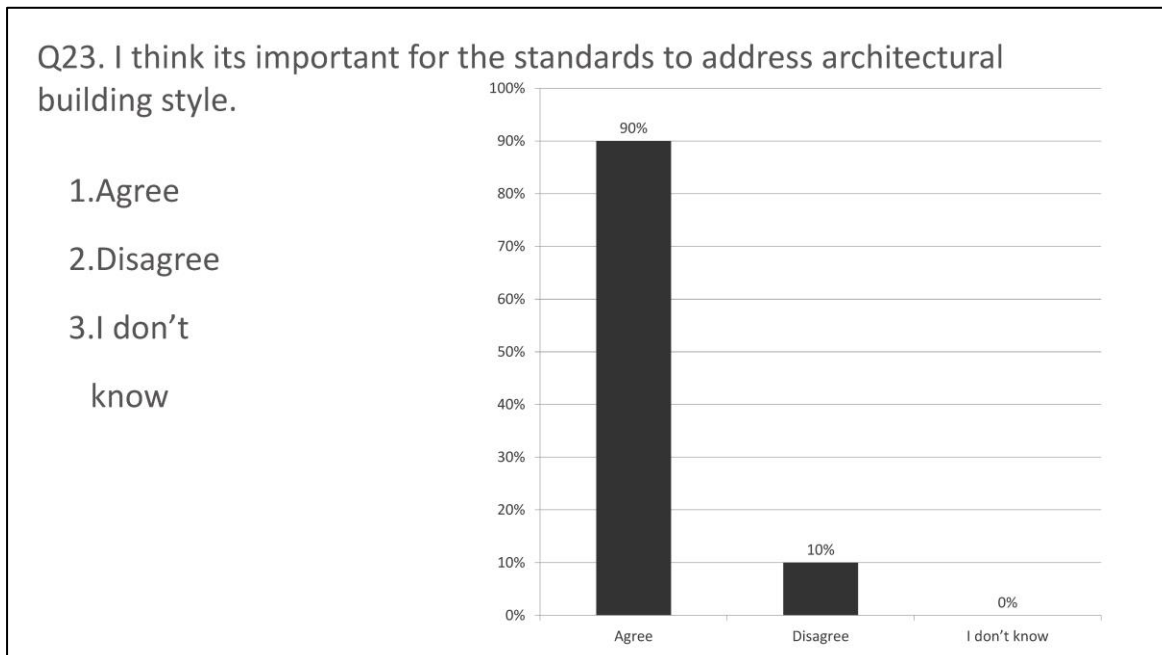
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Question 22 asks about building design standards, and whether they should control building colors and materials, both, or something else (the intent of the question was focused on non-residential, mixed-use, and multi-family use types).

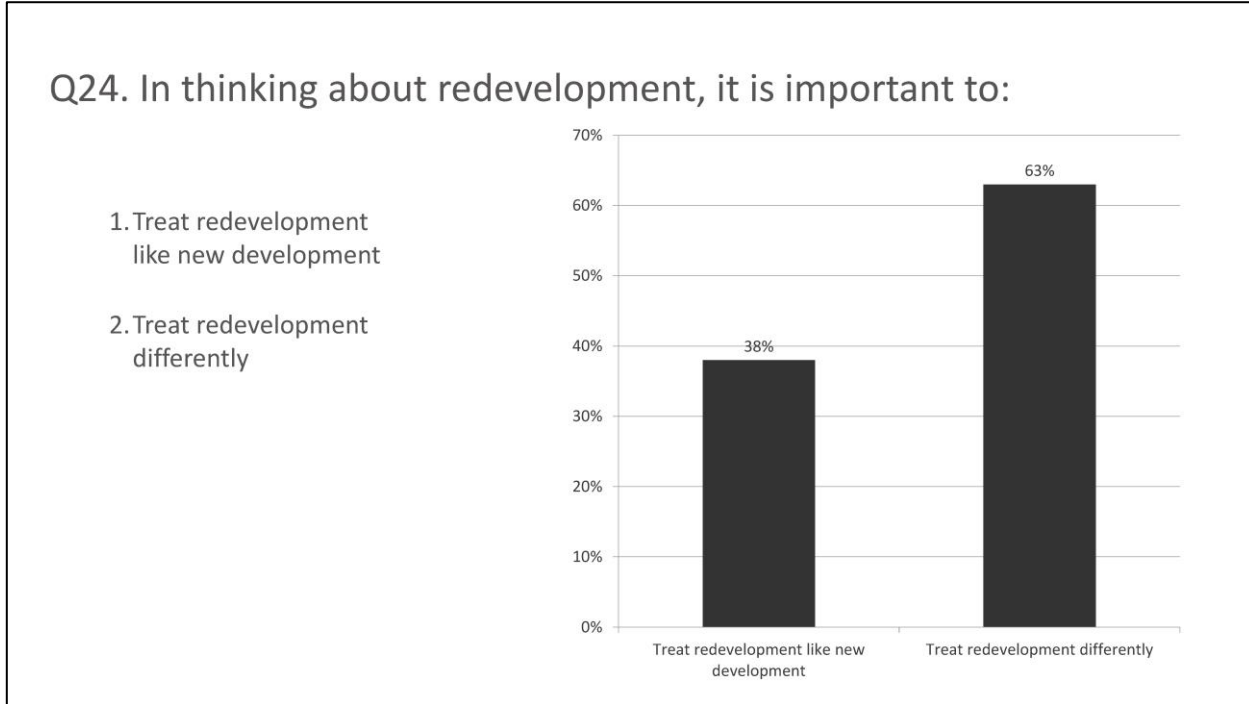


Question 23 also addresses design standards by asking if it is important for the new design standards to address architectural building styles. Architectural building styles are a set of building features, forms, details, and construction techniques that make a particular building identifiable as being built in the vein or pattern of other buildings in that same style. Common building styles include Victorian, Arts and Crafts, Bauhaus, Tudor, Art Deco, and many others.

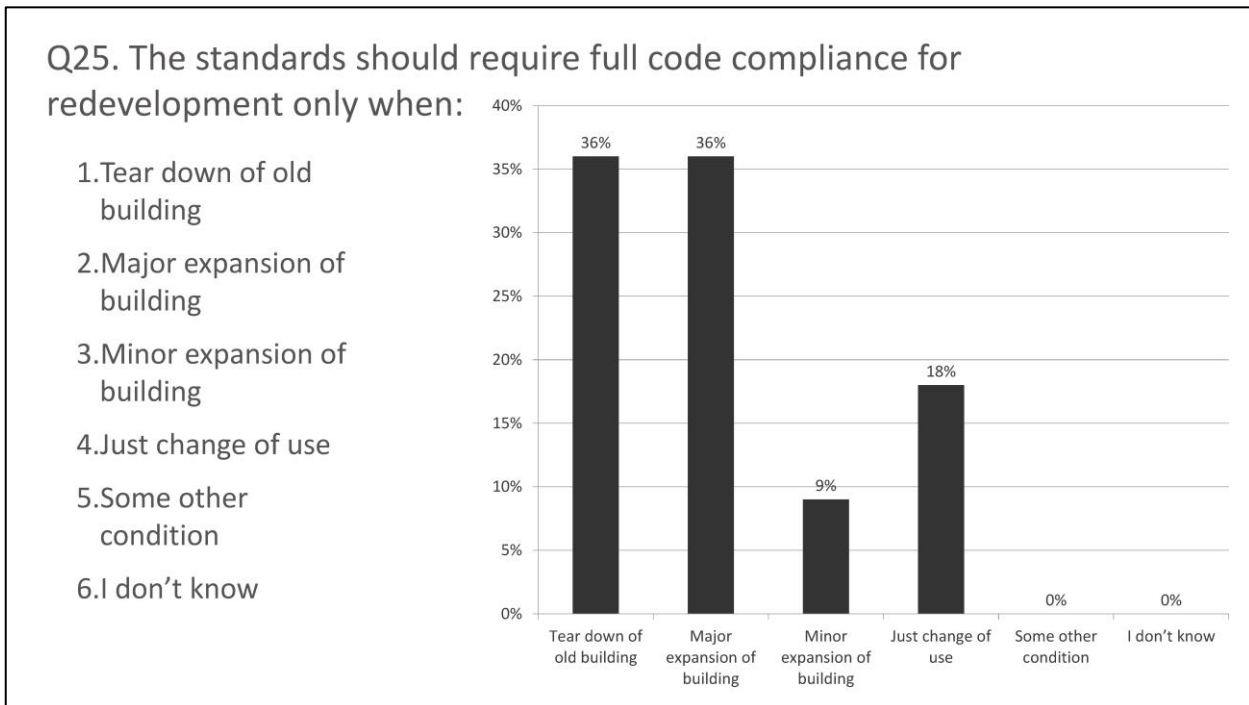


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Question 24 asks about redevelopment, and whether redevelopment of an existing building or site should be treated the same as or differently than new development. The question infers that redevelopment should be treated less rigidly than new building since redevelopment often requires additional effort to address prior problems.



Question 25 also asks about redevelopment and when an existing site should be compelled to reach full compliance with the development rules in effect at the time of redevelopment.





PART 3: INSIGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Policy Guidance Workshop and stakeholder interviews provided more insights into the challenges facing Cashiers that need to be addressed through updated development regulations. Cashiers is a desirable location in a desirable setting. In the past the difficulty in serving the area with wastewater and potable water services has made dense development difficult or even impossible. While infrastructure capacity and technology is improving, wastewater treatment and potable water will remain primary limiting factors on development for the foreseeable future. This is a **mixed blessing** in that it can help prevent what some would consider the worst forms of over-development. At the same time, when land is in limited supply, the decisions a community makes about how development will occur can become more vexing.

Input collected to date shows a need and desire for **more codified development standards** instead of reliance on what can be a more subjective (or at least opaque) development review process like the special use permit.

Cashiers faces some unique challenges in that it is an unincorporated community within a county. That means it has no ability to control its own **public streets**. Streets will be NCDOT streets built on NCDOT's schedule under NCDOT's standards, or they will be built by private enterprise. This private approach works well in developing areas, but is not as robust in making connections between existing un-connected roads in areas that are already built. The new regulations must address both situations - new private roads and standards in unbuilt areas, and support for non-regulatory measures to assist with necessary and desirable street connections in areas that are already built.

A situation like those affecting streets exists with respect to **pedestrian infrastructure**. Most counties in North Carolina do not permit public sidewalks to be built, and NCDOT is reluctant to build them (but will if pressed, as is the case in Jackson County). Like streets, this situation means that much of the pedestrian network construction will fall upon private developers. Like with streets, this situation works well in developing areas, but can be a challenge for retrofitting areas built without pedestrian infrastructure. Additional complexity results from the current non-formal development template in Cashiers and the feelings that the pedestrian experience should not just be walking along sidewalks at building fronts. The standards must address and encourage these different formats at the same time.

There is also the issue of **geographic boundaries**. The Cashiers Commercial District is zoned, the area outside it isn't. If the regulations are not carefully crafted development could simply cross the line into the unzoned portion of the County and avail itself of the market while disregarding the protections put in place by zoning. Further, the Small Area Plan boundary differs in some substantial ways from the current district boundaries. The Plan provides guidance on some lands outside the district, and fails to provide guidance on other lands located within the district. This issue needs further thought. Another challenge is that some of the recommendations in the policy guidance deal with protection of scenic views or environmental areas that are well outside the district boundaries.

Another issue is the **intersection of residential density and community character**. The current rules do not contemplate residential development, and the community would like that to change. At the same time, the challenges with respect to wastewater capacity mean that developments will be relatively small in terms of the total numbers of units, and these developments, while small in relative unit counts, will require fairly sizeable tracts to accommodate on-site wastewater treatment. One way





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that these problems are overcome in other areas is to increase building height - allow more units on less land so remaining land can be used for wastewater. The challenge in Cashiers is that by and large most buildings are two stories in height, and exceeding this height can present some significant challenges to community character.

Central to any discussion of regulatory evolution in Cashiers is **community character**. What is it? What is it not? These questions exist at both the macro level and the micro level. In thinking about the macro level, one question that arises is: "Is Cashiers a residential community that hosts visitors or a tourist area that has some residents?" The answer to this question influences the range of allowable uses, site configuration, and building design. At the same time there are concerns about community character at the micro level. How will this one new development preserve compatibility with its neighbors and remain consistent with the overall community attributes applied throughout the village? The Codify Cashiers project needs to explore community character in pursuit of clarifying language and precedent imagery that both clarifies what the Cashiers Community Character is, as well as what kinds of development features are not consistent with the community character. Another significant challenge that has yet to be discussed is signage, and the impact it has on community character, particularly in light of macro-level questions like what is the role of Cashiers in Jackson County.

The next step in the process is a deeper dive into community character in pursuit of new clarity about what the Cashiers Community Character is, exactly, and what it is not.

