

Character Homes



**VANCOUVER
HERITAGE
ACTION
PLAN**

**CHARACTER
HOME ZONING
REVIEW**

Questionnaire Summary
April 2017



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Consultation Overview

Background

The City of Vancouver is conducting the *Character Home Zoning Review* to explore retention of pre-1940 character homes in single-family zones (also called RS zones), while improving the compatibility of new homes in older neighbourhoods. This review was initiated in response to growing public concern over the loss of character homes and neighbourhood character in the city, the compatibility of new homes in older neighbourhoods, and rising property values. It was requested as part of the Heritage Action Plan, approved by City Council in 2013, which is a comprehensive program to review and improve how the City supports heritage conservation in Vancouver.

With the community, the *Character Home Zoning Review* explored ways to encourage the retention of character homes in single-family neighbourhoods in Vancouver, while also meeting other City objectives. The review explored a variety of options and ideas, including geographic areas, zoning tools, and the trade-offs and implications for new home development. It began with an assessment of challenges and opportunities, which informed the development and testing of options and ideas, followed by an analysis of the feedback received which includes this questionnaire summary.

Public Engagement

To help inform the review, we held four public open houses in various parts of the city in November and December 2016. These consultation events were very well attended, attracting over a thousand people that generated hundreds of conversations and written submissions, as well as significant media coverage. We invited members of the public to complete a questionnaire to share their thoughts and attitudes on ideas to encourage greater retention of character homes. The questionnaire was available for a seven week period between November 27, 2016 and January 15, 2017. It was broadly promoted with over 31,000 direct mail postcards, four newspaper advertisements, and posters in local community centres and libraries. There was an extensive social media campaign that generated over 8,000 webpage views.

The questionnaire was widely available, including:

- At four consultation open houses (Nov & Dec 2016)
- On the *Character Home Zoning Review* webpage (vancouver.ca/characterhomereview)
- Via the Talk Vancouver panel
- Through social media links (Facebook, Twitter)

Quick Stats

- 3,322 completed questionnaires
- 11,000 open ended responses
- 72% home owners and 25% renters
- 56% lived in a study area
- 64% lived in study area for over 10 years
- 62% lived in pre-1940 home in a study area
- 57% over 50 years of age



Consultation Overview

Executive Summary

The following is a high-level overview of the *Character Home Zoning Review* questionnaire summary.

Areas of Support

The highest levels of support were provided in the following areas:

- Grants for energy retrofits for character homes (77 percent);
- New homes should meet higher standards for energy efficiency (77 percent);
- Require site character retention when character house demolished (76 percent);
- Increase flexibility in zoning to retain character homes (75 percent);
- Use design guidelines to clarify requirements/support renovations for character home (75 percent);
- Include broad zoning relaxations to retain character homes (71 percent);
- The City should encourage the retention of character homes (68 percent);
- Explore the retention of character homes in the identified study areas (67 percent); and
- Increase floor area to retain character homes (67 percent).

Areas of Concern

A number of concerns were identified with the highest response rates in the following areas:

- Affordability of housing choices (80 percent);
- Property value increases (74 percent);
- Loss of pre-1940 character houses (73 percent); and
- Compatibility and fit of new houses built in older areas (73 percent); and
- Limited availability of housing choices (72 percent).

Neutral or Areas of Uncertainty

For some questions there was a wider range of opinions (including a higher proportion of neutral and uncertain responses) in particular those more technical in nature.

- 50 percent agree with the pre 1940 date to determine character homes and 50 percent were not sure (17 percent) or did not agree (33 percent);
- While decreasing floor area to better manage new homes in neighbourhoods was supported (59 percent), ideas to limit floor area for new construction (reduce to 0.5/0.4 FSR) is supported by 43 percent and 57 percent were neutral/not sure (32 percent) and disagree (25 percent); and
- Limiting new house construction (max 10,000 sq. ft.) is supported by 39 percent, with 31 percent neutral/not sure and 30 percent disagreeing.

Demographics

- Nearly three-quarters are home owners, and more than half lived in the study areas.
- Respondents were a broad range of ages, but more than half were 50+ years of age.
- The Central and Northeast study areas had a higher number of younger respondents.
- Nearly two-thirds lived in the study area 10+ years and a significant number 20+ years.



Part 1. Background



Part 1. Background

Question 1

When thinking about the single-family zones in Vancouver, how concerned are you with the following?

Snapshot

- Affordability of housing choices was identified as the top issue (80 percent)
- Respondents were least concerned (64 percent) about property value decreases
- Similar responses between those who own and those who rent with the exception of questions about property value increase and property value decreases where opinions differed
- Similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide, and across study areas

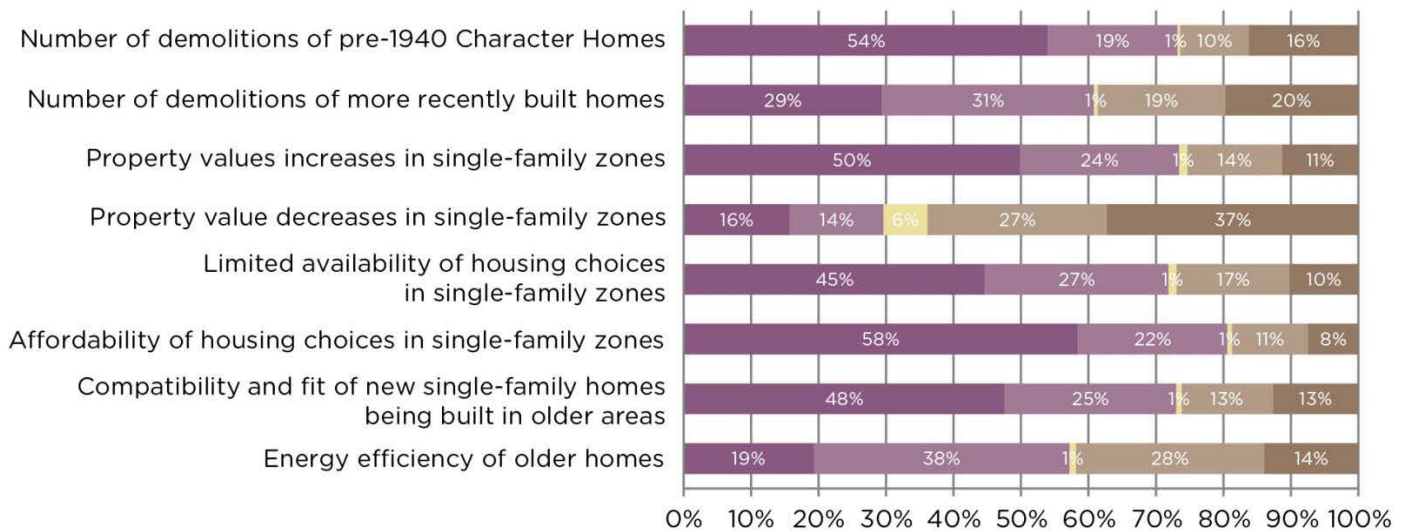
Top 5 Issues

1. Housing affordability (80 percent)
2. Property value increases (74 percent)
3. Demolition of pre-1940 character homes (73 percent)
4. Compatibility and fit of new houses built in older areas (73 percent)
5. Limited availability of housing choices (72 percent)

Results

All respondents (3,322 responses)

Very concerned
 Somewhat concerned
 Don't know
 Not very concerned
 Not at all concerned

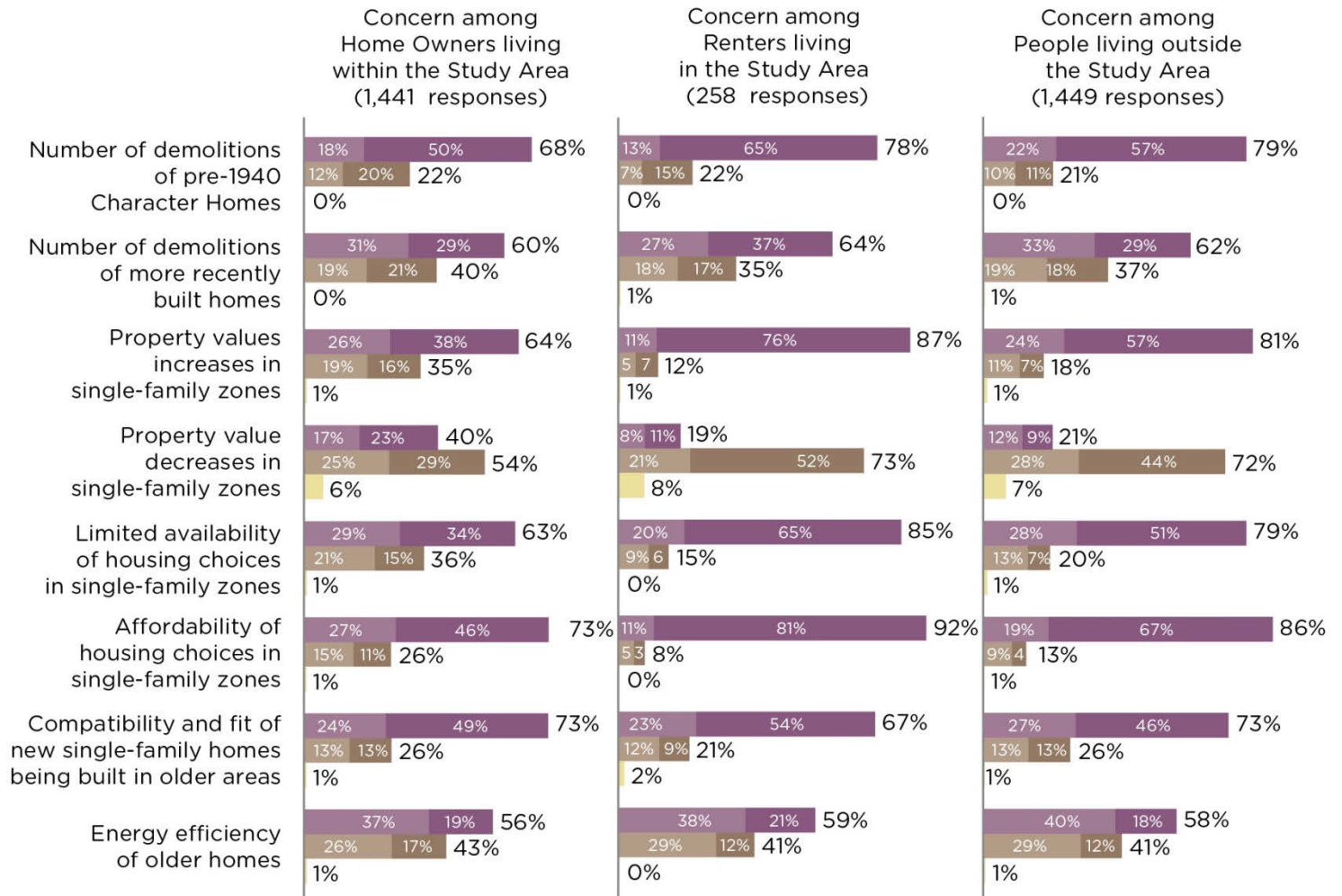




Part 1. Background

All respondents by residency type (3,148 responses)

■ Very concerned
 ■ Somewhat concerned
 ■ Don't know
 ■ Not very concerned
 ■ Not at all concerned

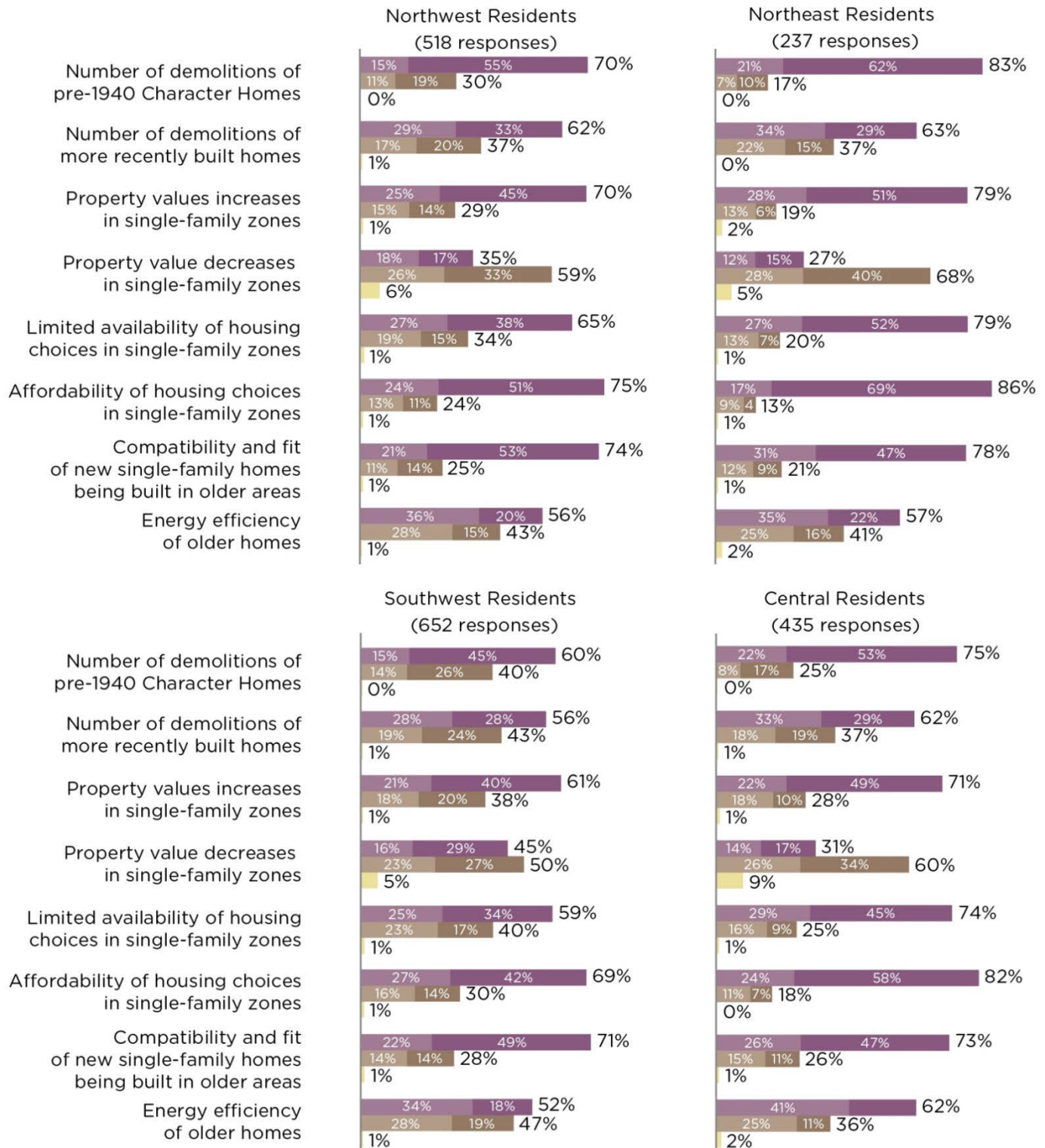




Part 1. Background

Respondents that lived a study area (1,852 responses)

Very concerned
 Somewhat concerned
 Don't know
 Not very concerned
 Not at all concerned





Part 1. Background

Other thoughts we heard

Main themes:

- The effect of new developments on established neighbourhoods, such as the look and feel of new houses, sense of community, impacts on local businesses, and environmental impact of demolitions
- Vacant and unoccupied homes and lots, and concern about lack of maintenance
- Zoning suggestions, ranging from maintain single-family zones to removed zoning entirely and thoughts on how to accommodate increased density, while maintaining heritage buildings across the city
- By-laws, permits, and building codes, including concerns about cost, complexity, and processing time
- The loss of greenery and green space, such as trees, plantings, and gardens

Sample comments:

- “YES! Lack of availability; EXTREMELY high prices, knocking most people out of the market.”
- “Very high assessment values and increase in taxes.”
- “Floor space ratios were increased a few years ago. It did not help affordability, it did not create more housing options. It was generally not used for secondary suites to increase density. In fact, many of these monster homes are vacant.”
- “Lack of housing diversity in these areas is contributing to those high prices and homogenising the neighbourhoods. More housing types would enable families and younger people to live in these neighbourhoods.”
- “I am a third generation Vancouverite and what I am seeing is the utter destruction of our narrative. By killing off these heritage homes we are destroying the very story of our own destination, of our culture, and the violence of this isn't lost on those of us who have grown up here—it's upsetting and it's a hopeless, demoralizing feeling to live here now.”
- “Large homes being built on lots designed for smaller footprints, making the neighbourhood look ‘all house’ and less greenery or yards.’ - Large homes that are not being occupied. - Homes bought and left to deteriorate.”
- “The single family zones will have a lack of children as families with children will not be able to afford them.”
- “City can help address affordability and housing shortage by relaxing the bylaws and policies to allow moderately higher density (duplex/multi family) in single family zones.”
- “Our house is pre 1940's and getting permits to Reno have been time-consuming and painful. It would be easier to start fresh and build a new house.”
- “Destruction of trees, gardens and plants to accommodate mega size homes. Destruction of good homes whose waste goes to landfill, contradiction with our green city claim.”



Part 1. Background

Question 2

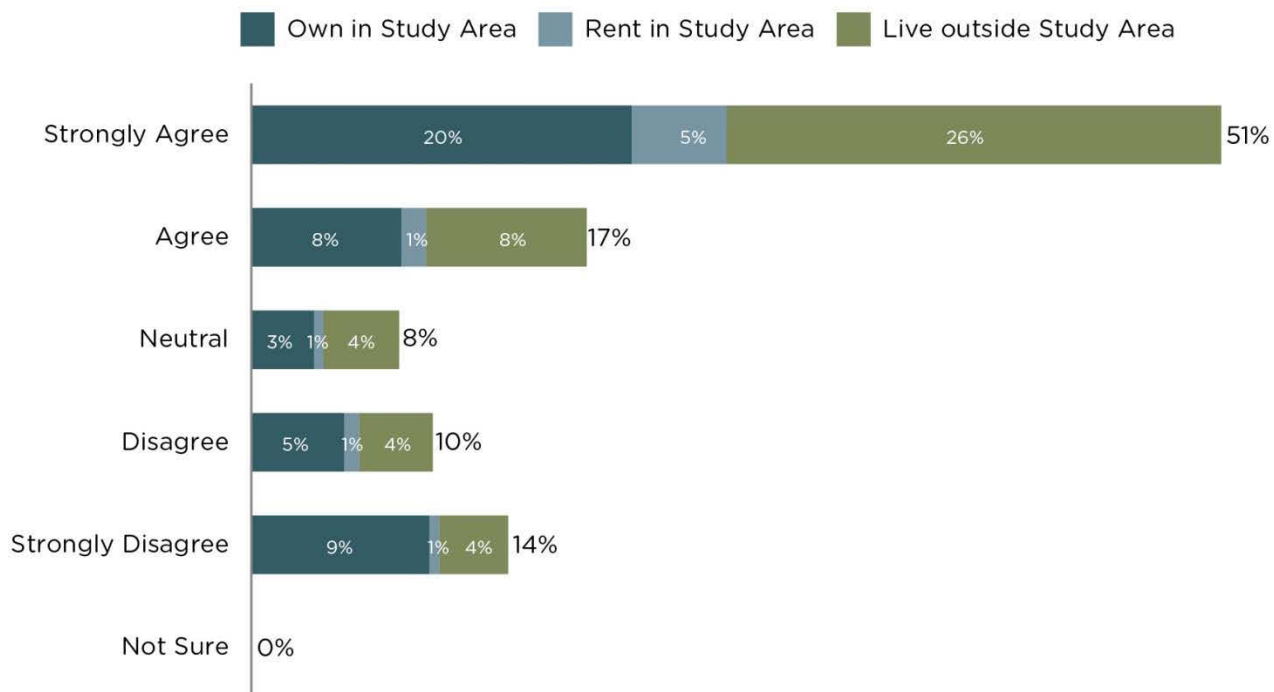
Overall, do you agree or disagree with the City taking actions to encourage the retention of character homes?

Snapshot

- The majority (68 percent) agree with the City taking actions to encourage the retention of character homes
- Strongest support in the Northeast (78 percent) and Central (71 percent) study areas
- Moderate support in Northwest (64 percent) and Southwest (54 percent) study areas
- Similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide

Results

All respondents (3,321 responses)

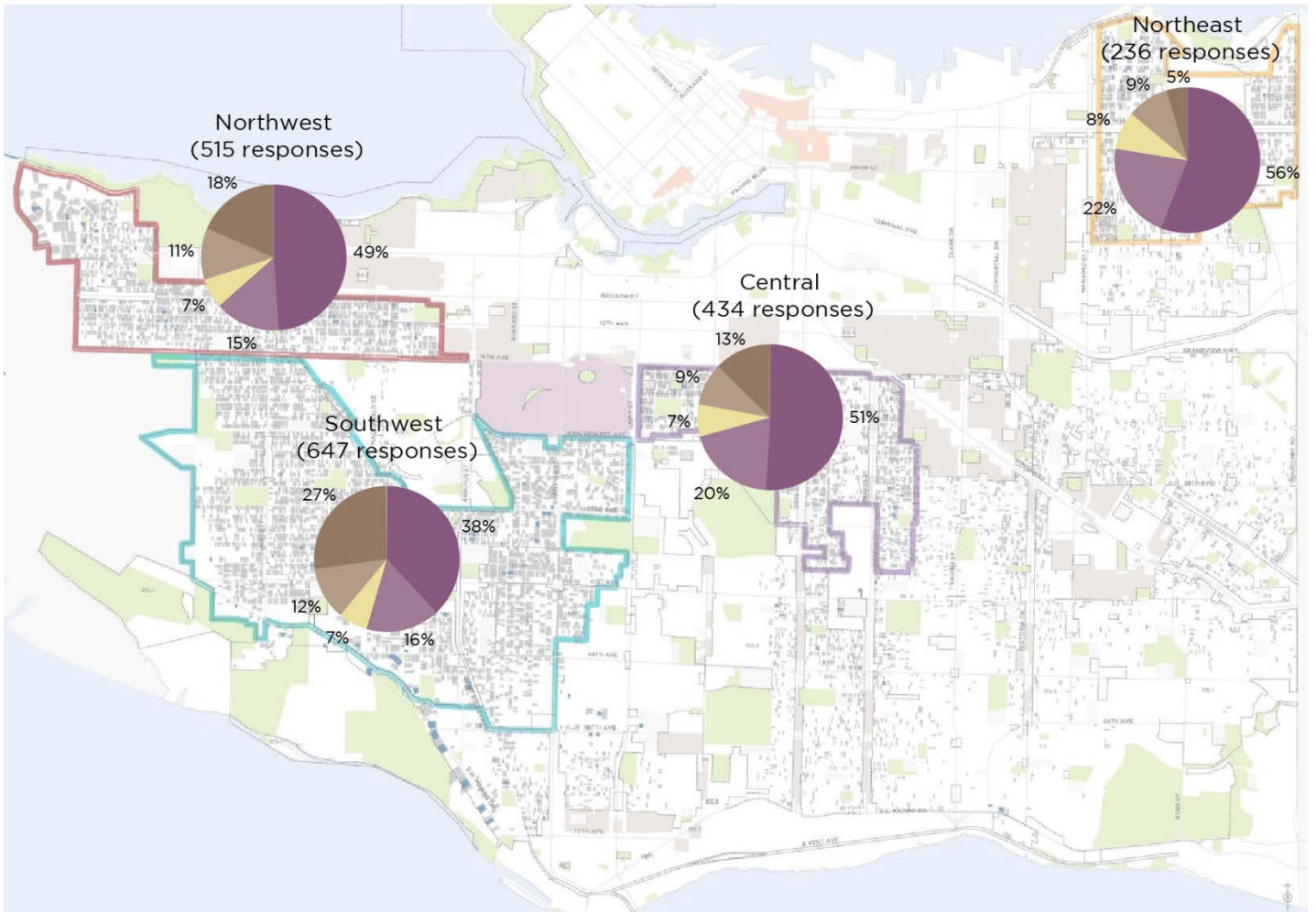




Part 1. Background

Respondents that lived a study area (1,832 responses)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree Not Sure





Part 1. Background

Other thoughts we heard

Main themes:

- The effect of new developments on established neighbourhoods, such as the look and feel of new houses, sense of community, and impacts on local businesses
- The pace of change and impacts of the loss of heritage on neighbourhoods, and Vancouver's identity and culture
- By-laws, permits, and building codes, thoughts ranging from heritage retention and preservation to demolitions and new buildings
- Support for the City's Greenest City mandate and environmentally sustainable practices, but noting the financial costs related energy efficiency and renovating and maintaining character homes
- Concerns about the lack of housing affordability, housing options, diversity, and supply, specifically rental
- Support for incentives to retain character homes, and concern of the effect on property values with an emphasis on the free market
- The importance of maintaining green space, and feelings about its loss or preservation
- The high quality of construction and materials in character homes.

Sample comments:

- "Too many wonderful homes, full of character, integrity, craftsmanship and aesthetics have been demolished in our city. Entire neighbourhoods have been obliterated, our history completely erased! This needs to stop! Whatever is left of our character homes, has to be preserved as much as possible."
- "Character homes add to the history and beauty of our city. They are an important part of our shared culture. Protecting them not only protects this culture, but also provides some respite from constant condo construction."
- "You need to offer incentives for retention and less restrictive upgrading requirements. It is now easier to knock a character home down and recycle none of it than it is to keep it and renovate or repurpose it."
- "Destroying a perfectly good well crafted home and carting it off to a landfill or only being partially recycled to be replaced by a new home that consumes more resources flies in the face of this city's so called green philosophy."
- "I question why this hasn't happened until now. The amount of demolition of single family homes, and HUGE amount of high density development has changed the character of the city immensely. It's not the Vancouver we loved 10 years ago and it's driving young people who aren't wealthy out of the city. They should be the future of our city."
- "I strongly agree with retaining Character Homes, and believe that Character Homes can help with the housing situation in the city if they become multiple-family dwellings and/or laneway housing is allowed in their backyards."
- "I am extremely concerned about home owner's rights being taken away from them. I am against restricting homeowners, with homes that were built pre-1941, from re-developing on the land that they own. These restrictions will cause financial damage



Part 1. Background

to those homeowners and it is shocking the city would do this and not compensate for the loss they cause. These homeowners are not supporting this.”

- “A lot of old-growth trees gave up their lives to build these homes and Vancouver now trashes them.”
- “I miss the beauty of trees, bushes, and flowers that disappear when character homes are replaced.”
- “Although not every old home has ‘character,’ those that do offer a historical context to this city, and the way they were built with the materials used will likely outlast most of the new construction going up today. So it’s important to maintain, upgrade and keep them if possible.”



Part 2. Character Home Definition



Part 2. Character Home Definition

Question 3

The City of Vancouver currently defines character homes as those that were built prior to January 1, 1940 and meet four or more of the following seven criteria:

- Original massing and roof form
- Original open front porch or veranda, or only partially filled in
- Original siding or replacement siding consistent with 1940
- Period windows (50% or more), with original location, size and shape
- Original casings or trim (50% or more) such as around windows and doors
- Period details or decorative elements (2 or more of brackets, beams, joist ends, etc.)
- Other period features (porch, roof, foundation, etc.)

a) Does the date of pre-1940 seem appropriate to you?

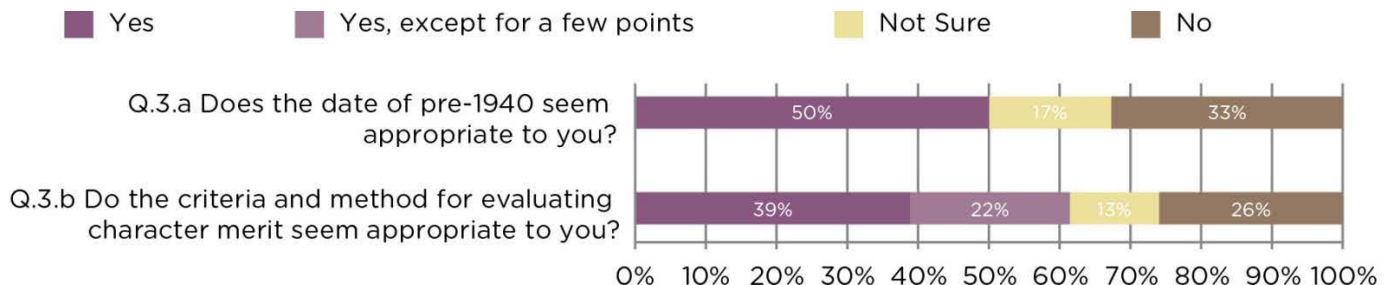
b) Do the criteria and method for evaluating character merit seem appropriate to you?

Snapshot

- Half of respondents felt January 1, 1940 was an appropriate date
- The majority (61 percent) supported the criteria and method for evaluating character merit, while a quarter (26 percent) did not
- Similar responses between pre-1940 and post-1940 home owners

Results

All respondents (3,321 responses)

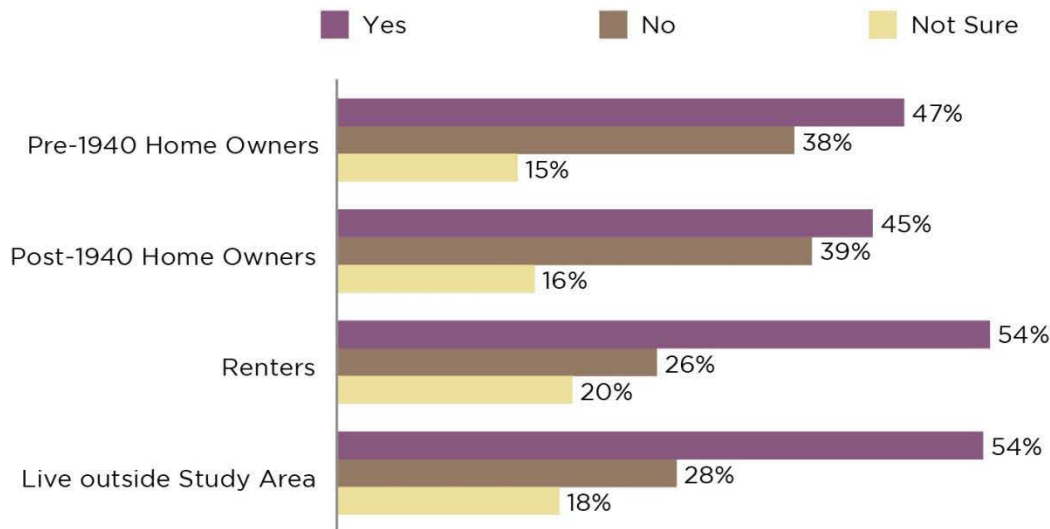




Part 2. Character Home Definition

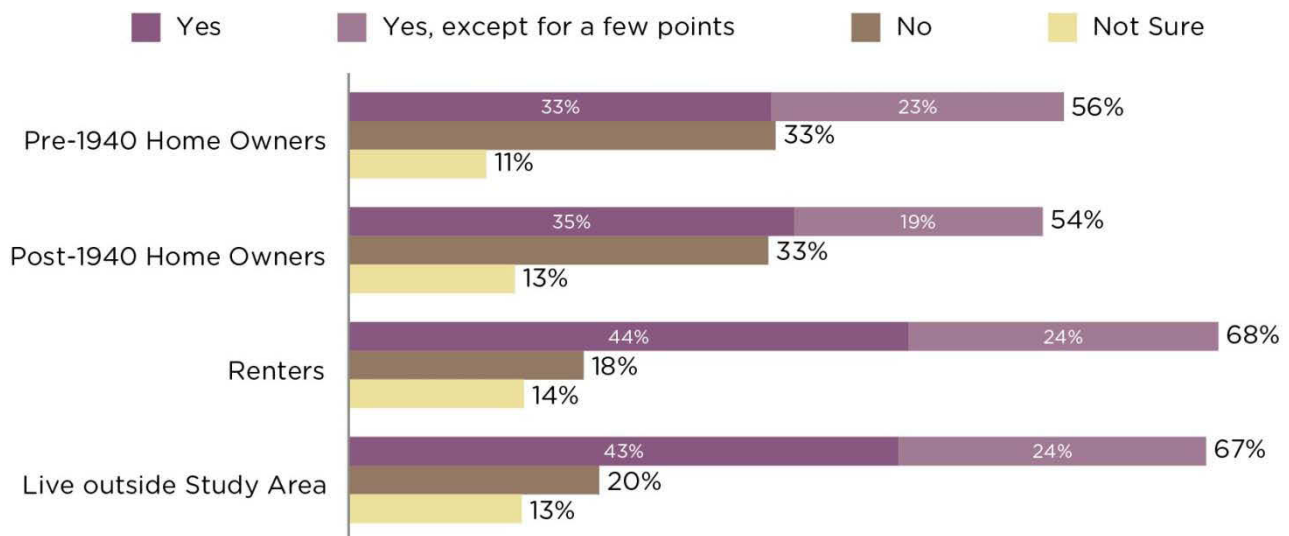
a) Does the date of pre-1940 seem appropriate to you?

All respondents by residency type (3,321 responses)



b) Do the criteria and method for evaluating character merit seem appropriate to you?

Respondents by residency type (3,321 responses)





Part 3. Study Areas



Part 3. Study Area

Question 4

This review identifies areas of the city with high concentrations of character homes. The following criteria were used to identify the study areas:

- Concentration of pre-1940 homes
- General character and quality of homes
- Zoning boundaries
- Community Visions boundaries
- Neighbourhood history and role in early Vancouver, and
- Adjacency to existing character areas.

Four study areas have been identified (see map on following page) where zoning changes to encourage retention are being explored. This means that for now, any options to encourage retention are not applicable to individual pre-1940 character homes outside of the study areas.

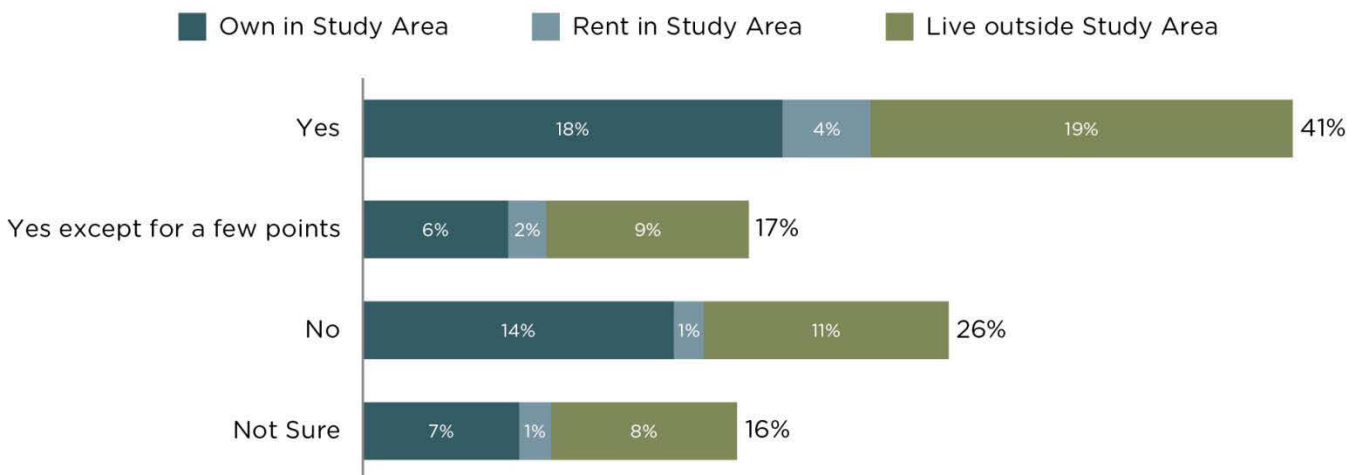
Does the approach to identify the study areas seem appropriate to you?

Snapshot

- The majority (58 percent) felt the criteria used to identify the study areas were appropriate
- Similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide

Results

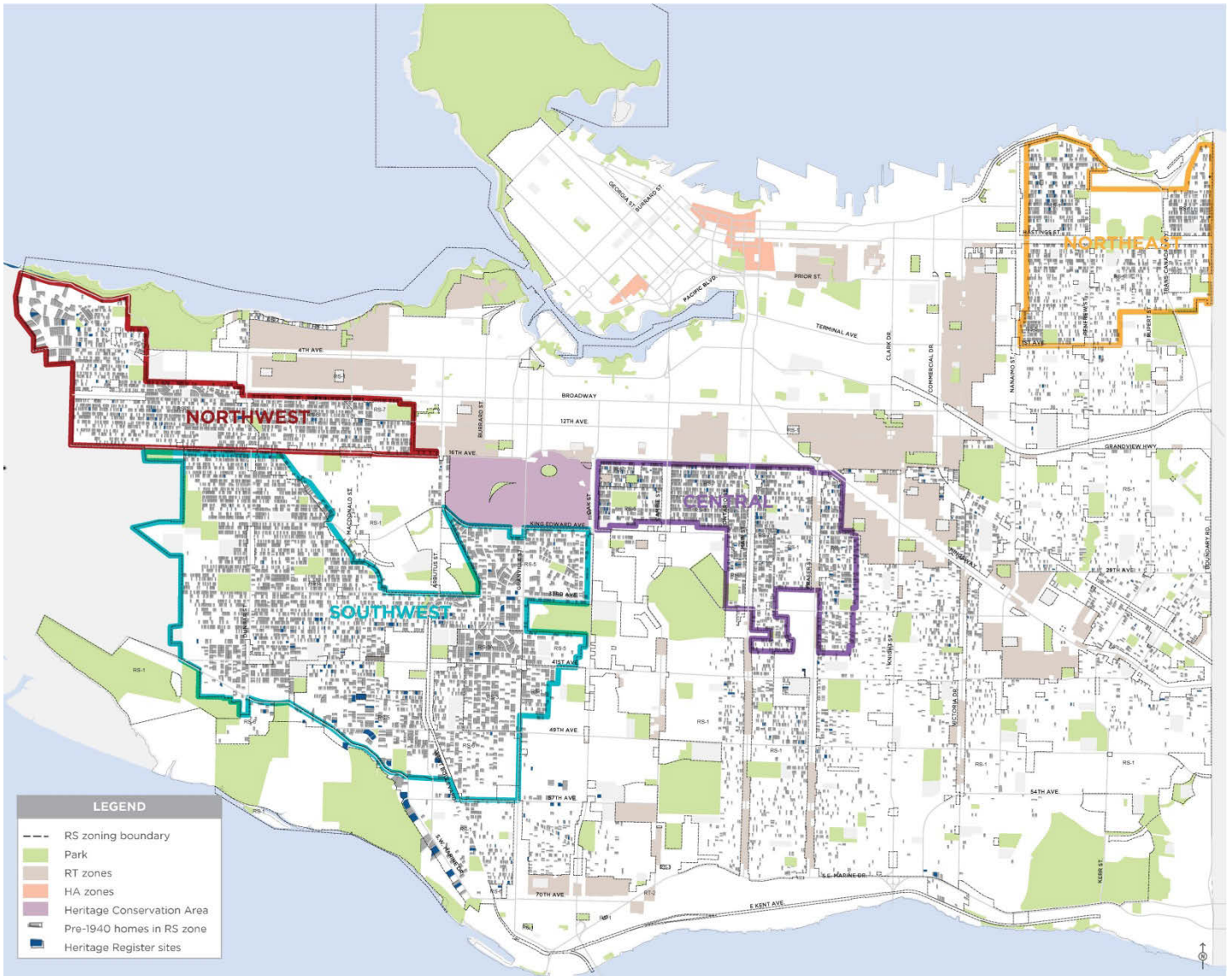
All respondents by residency type (3,321 responses)





Part 3. Study Area

Map 1 - Study areas





Part 3. Study Area

Question 5

Do you agree or disagree with exploring the retention of character homes in the:

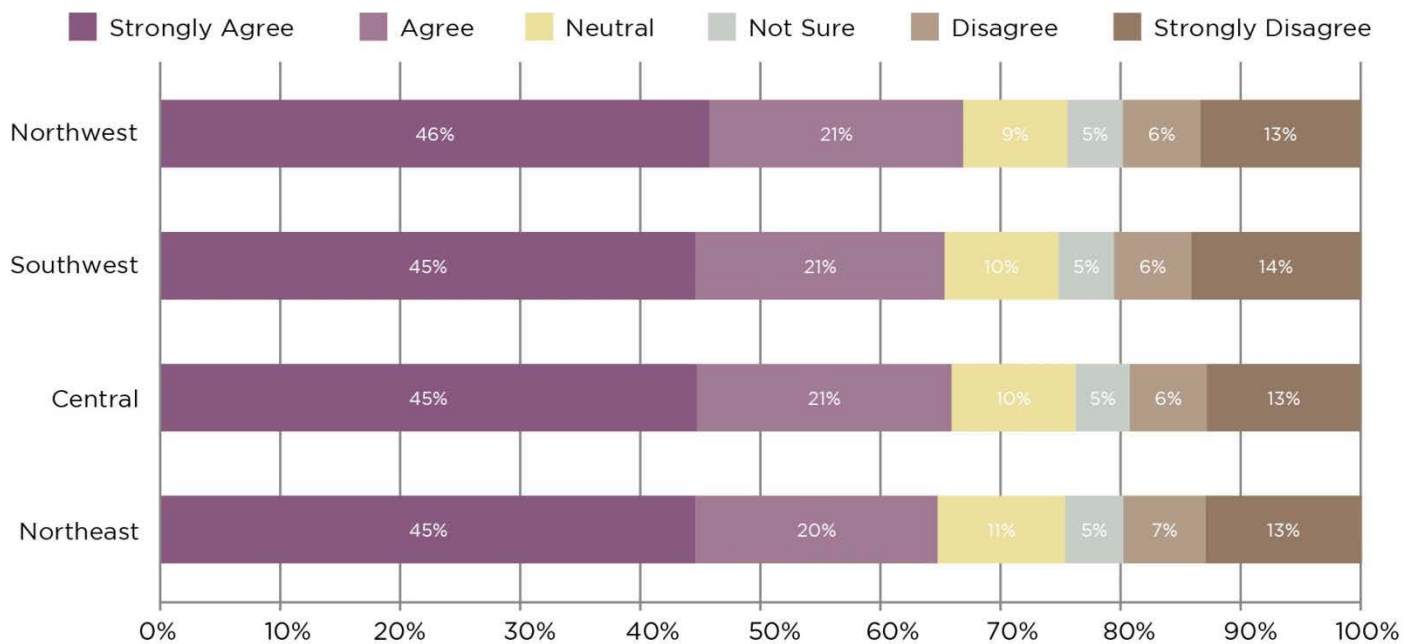
- Northwest study area?
- Southwest study area?
- Central study area?
- Northeast study area?

Snapshot

- Two-thirds (67 percent) agreed with exploring the retention of character homes in the identified study areas
- Generally similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide, with exception of greater agreement (75 percent) in the northeast study area (refer to map on next page)

Results

All respondents (3,272 responses)

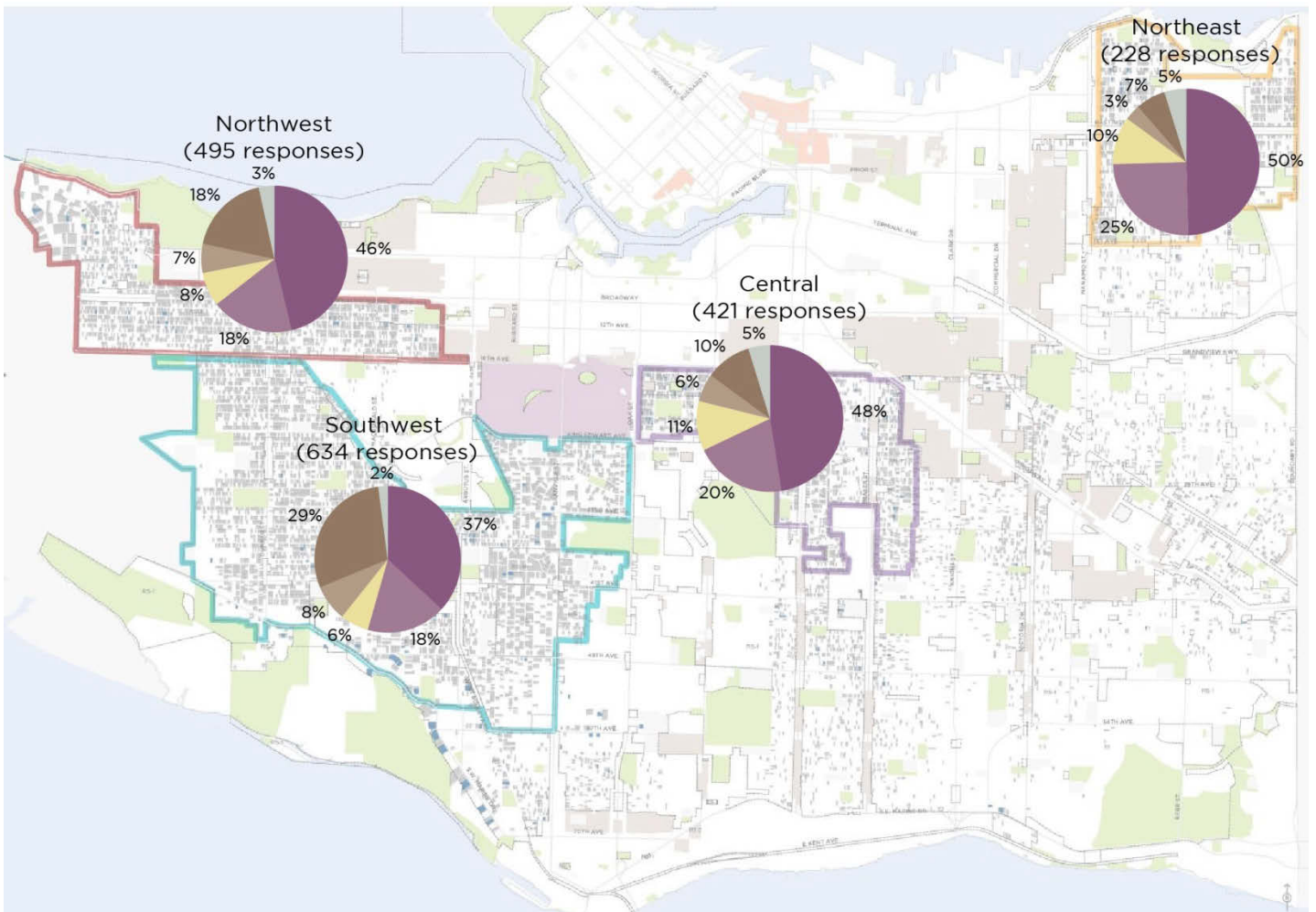




Part 3. Study Area

Respondents that lived a study area (1,778 Responses)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree Not Sure





Part 4. Zoning Options



Part 4. Zoning Options

Question 6 - Floor area options

For character home retention, do you agree or disagree with the following:

- The intent of options to improve opportunities to increase floor area?
- Allowing up to 0.75 FSR for a typical-sized site?
- Allowing up to 0.65 FSR for a large site?

Snapshot

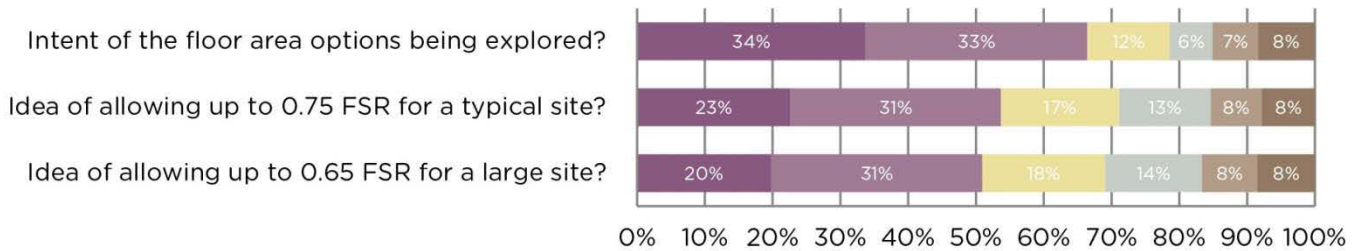
For character home retention:

- Two-thirds (67 percent) agreed with the intent to improve opportunities to increase floor area
- Over half (54 percent) agreed with allowing up to 0.75 FSR for a typical-sized site
- Half (51 percent) agreed with allowing up to 0.65 FSR for a large site
- Approximately a third were unsure about both floor area options
- Similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide

Results

All respondents (3,278 responses)

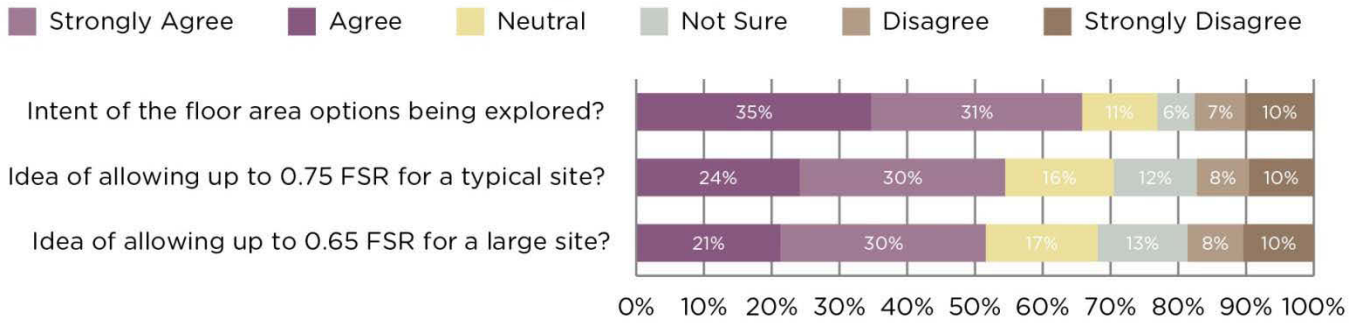
Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Neutral
 Not Sure
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree





Part 4. Zoning Options

Respondents that lived a study area (1,817 responses)





Part 4. Zoning Options

Question 7 - Floor area options

For new home construction, do you agree or disagree with the following:

- The intent of options to decrease floor area to better manage scale and neighbourhood fit?
- Allowing up to 0.50 FSR for a typical-sized site?
- Allowing up to 0.40 FSR for a large site?
- Allowing up to a maximum floor area of 10,000 square feet?

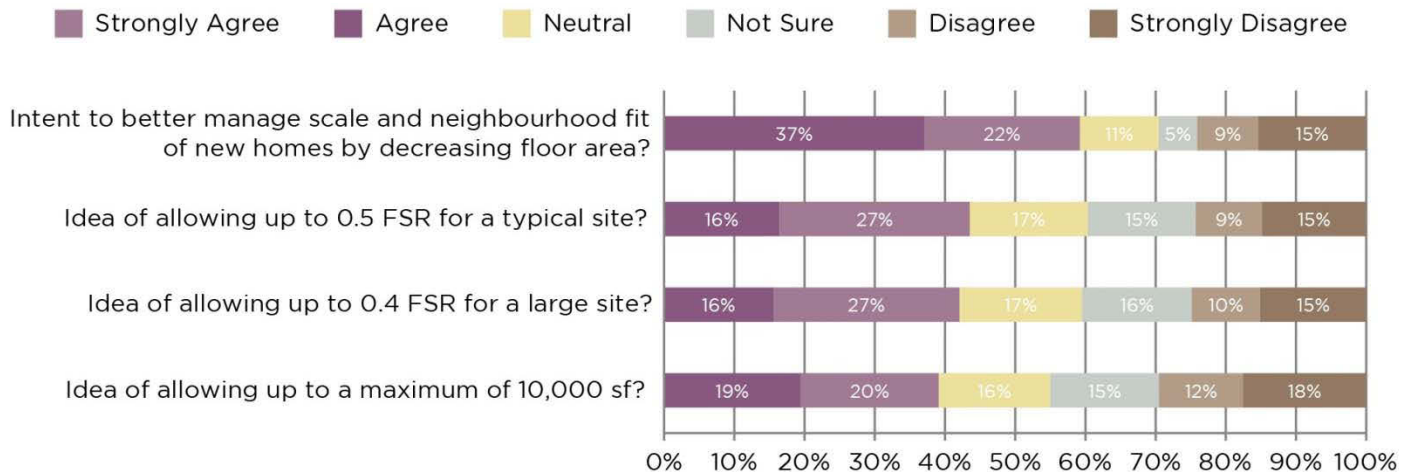
Snapshot

For new home construction:

- The majority (59 percent) agreed with the intent to decrease floor area to better manage scale and neighbourhood fit
- Less than half (43 percent) agreed with allowing up to 0.5 FSR for a typical-sized site, or allowing up to 0.4 FSR for a larger site
- Approximately a third were neutral or unsure for all three floor area ideas
- Two-fifths (39 percent) agreed with allowing up to 10,000 square feet
- Similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide

Results

All respondents (3,283 responses)

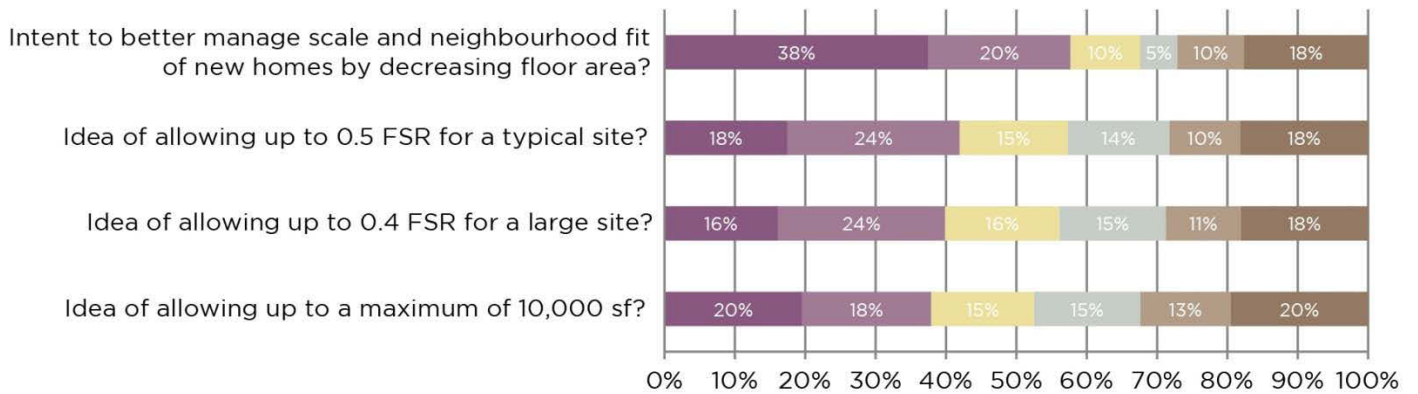




Part 4. Zoning Options

Respondents that lived a study area (1,818)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree





Part 4. Zoning Options

Question 8 – Building design and site options

For character home retention, do you agree or disagree with the following:

- The intent of the options to increase flexibility in zoning?
- Including broad zoning relaxations?
- Using design guidelines to help clarify requirements and support renovations that maintain character?

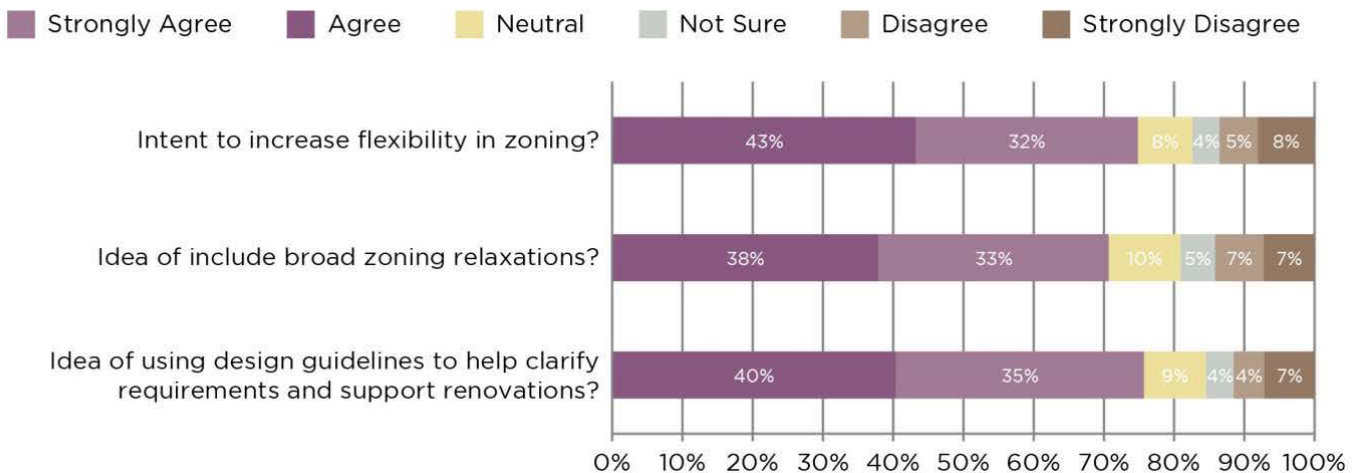
Snapshot

For character home retention:

- Three-quarters (75 percent) agreed with the intent to increase flexibility in zoning
- Over two-thirds (71 percent) agreed with including broad zoning relaxations
- Three-quarters (75 percent) agreed with using design guidelines to help clarify requirements and support renovations that maintain character
- Similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide

Results

All respondents (3,279 responses)





Part 4. Zoning Options

Question 9 - Building design and site options

For new home construction, do you agree or disagree with the following:

- The intent to simplify zoning regulations?
- Simplify floor area allocations?
- Including basic design regulations in zoning?

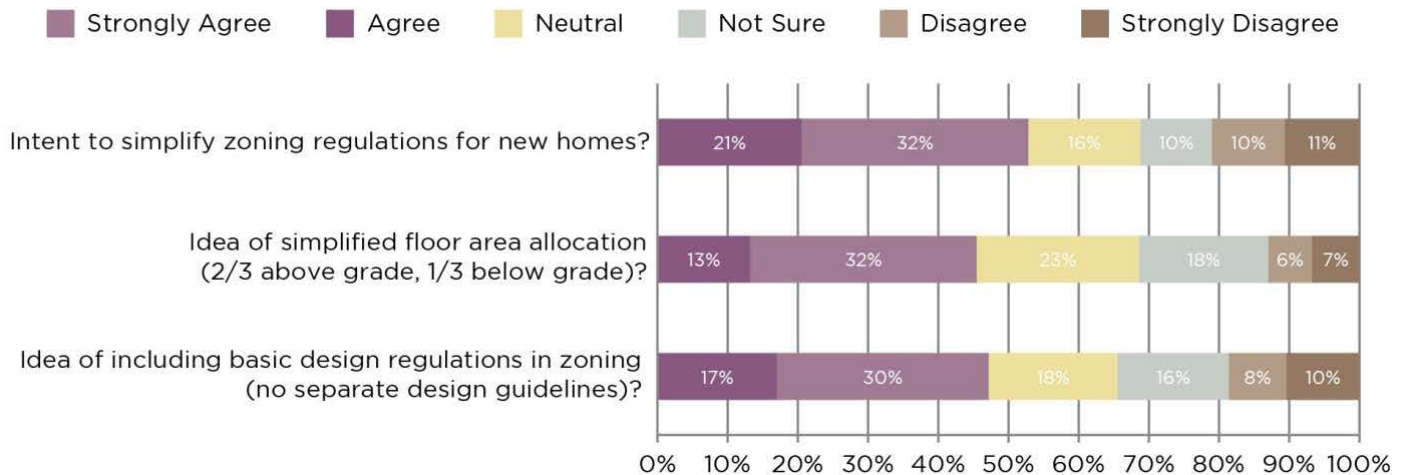
Snapshot

For new home construction:

- The majority (53 percent) agreed with simplifying zoning regulations for new homes, while over a quarter (26 percent) were neutral or unsure
- Less than half (43 percent) agreed with the idea of simplifying the floor area allocation, while a comparable level (41 percent) were neutral or unsure
- Less than half (47 percent) agreed with the idea of including basic design regulations in zoning, while a third (34 percent) were neutral or unsure
- Similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide

Results

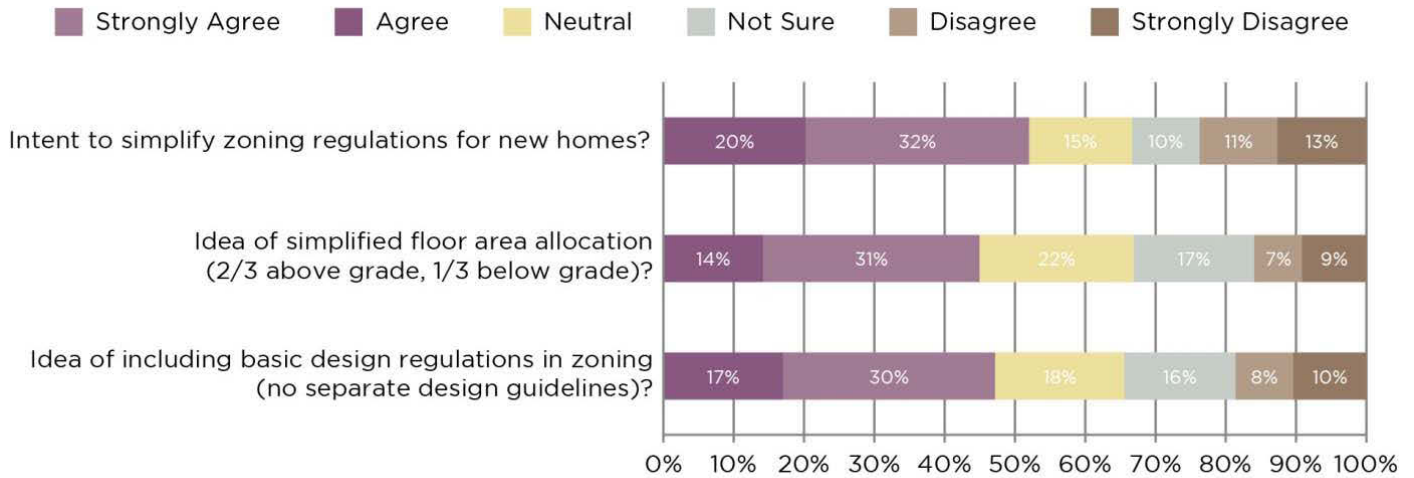
All respondents (3,275 responses)





Part 4. Zoning Options

Respondents that lived in a study area (1,814 responses)





Part 4. Zoning Options

Question 10 - Dwelling unit options

For character home retention, do you agree or disagree with the following:

- The intent to provide new dwelling units opportunities?
- Allowing multiple secondary suites?
- Allowing multiple conversion dwelling units?
- Allowing infill?
- Allowing stratification of multiple conversion dwellings and infill units?

Snapshot

For character home retention:

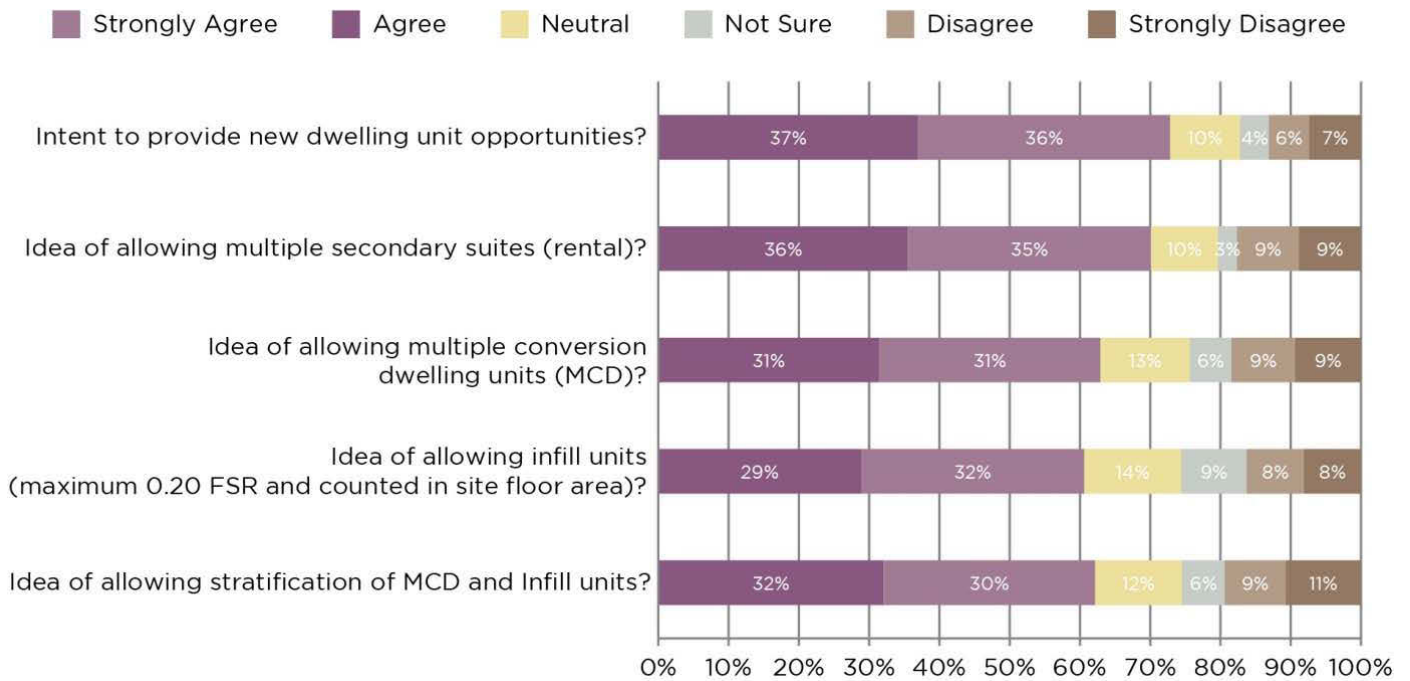
- Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) agreed with the intent to provide new dwelling unit opportunities
- Over two-thirds (71 percent) agreed with allowing multiple secondary suites
- Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) agreed with allowing multiple conversion dwelling units
- The majority (61 percent) agreed with allowing infill units
- Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) agreed with allowing stratification of multiple conversion dwelling units and infill units
- Similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide



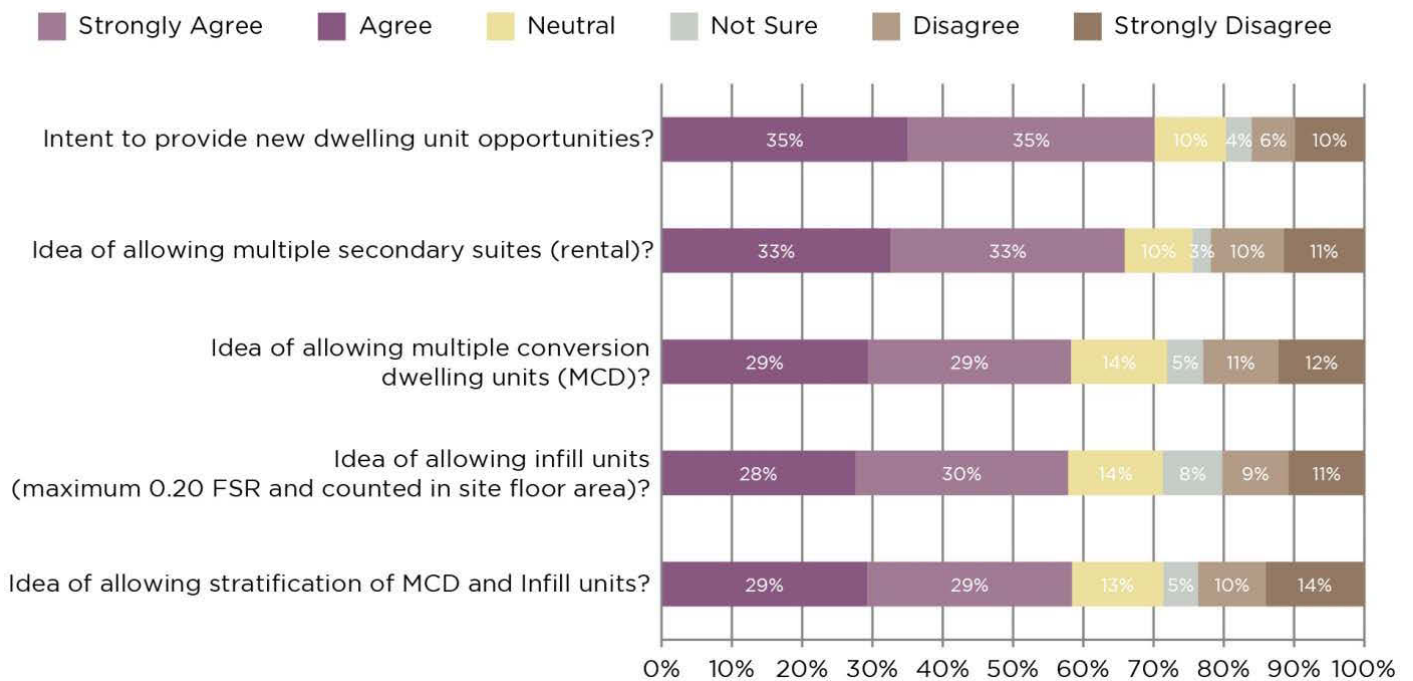
Part 4. Zoning Options

Results

All respondents (3,267 responses)



Respondents that lived in a study area (1,814 Responses)





Part 4. Zoning Options

Question 11 – Dwelling unit options

For new home construction, do you agree or disagree with the intent to maintain the number and type of dwelling units in current zoning (single family home, one secondary suite, and laneway house) with no stratification allowed?

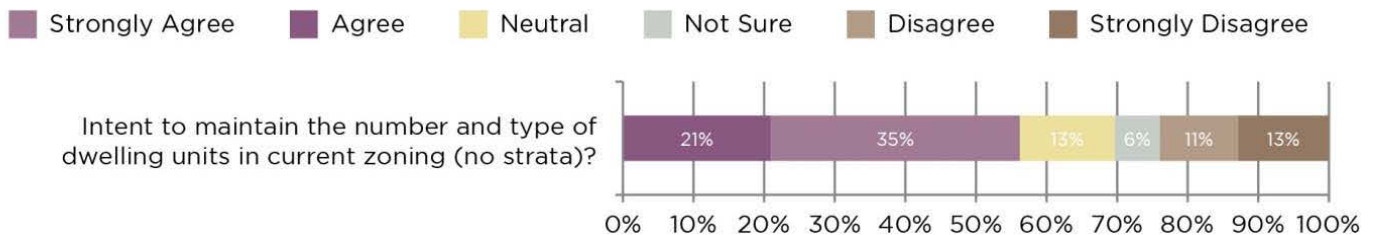
Snapshot

For new home construction:

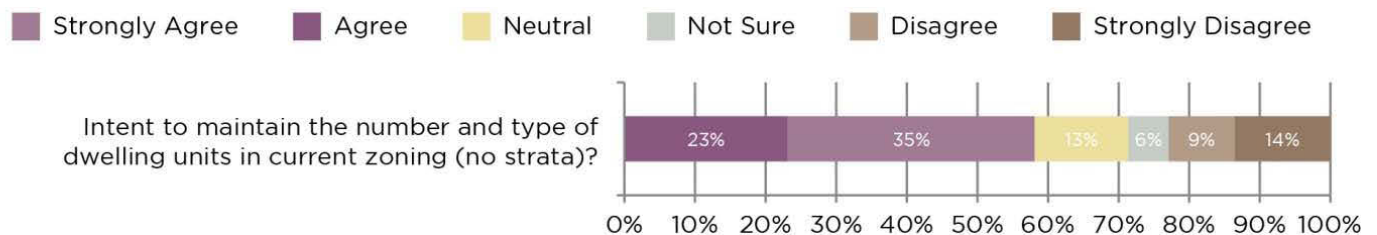
- The majority (56 percent) agreed with the intent to maintain the number and type of dwelling units in current zoning
- Similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide

Results

All respondents (3,282 responses)



Respondents that lived in a study area (1,820 Responses)





Part 5. Regulatory Approach



Part 5. Regulatory Approach

Question 12

The City could use one of two systems of regulations to encourage the retention of homes with heritage character in single-family neighbourhoods: Zoning approach or a combination heritage and zoning approach. The heritage and zoning approach includes elements of the zoning approach but with an overarching Heritage Conservation Area Official Development Plan guiding renovation and new home construction in the area.

Which system of regulatory approach do you prefer to encourage the retention of character homes in single-family zones?

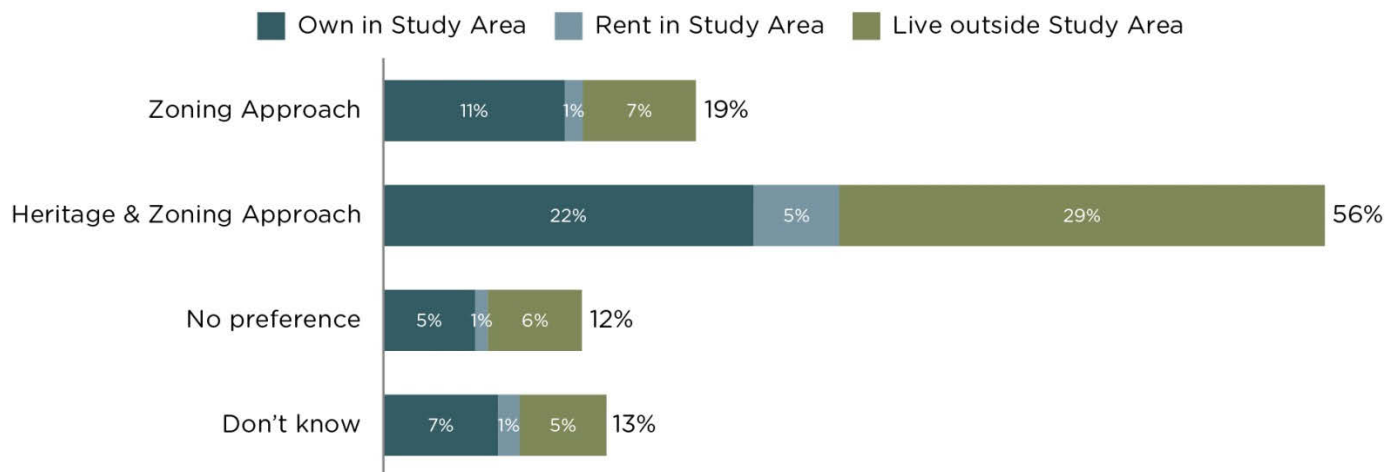
Snapshot

- The majority (56 percent) preferred a combined approach of both zoning and heritage conservation tools to encourage the retention of character homes in single-family zones
- Similar responses between those who live within the study areas and citywide, and across study areas

Results

All respondents (3,322 Responses)

Overall Preferred System of Regulatory Approach (3,322 responses)

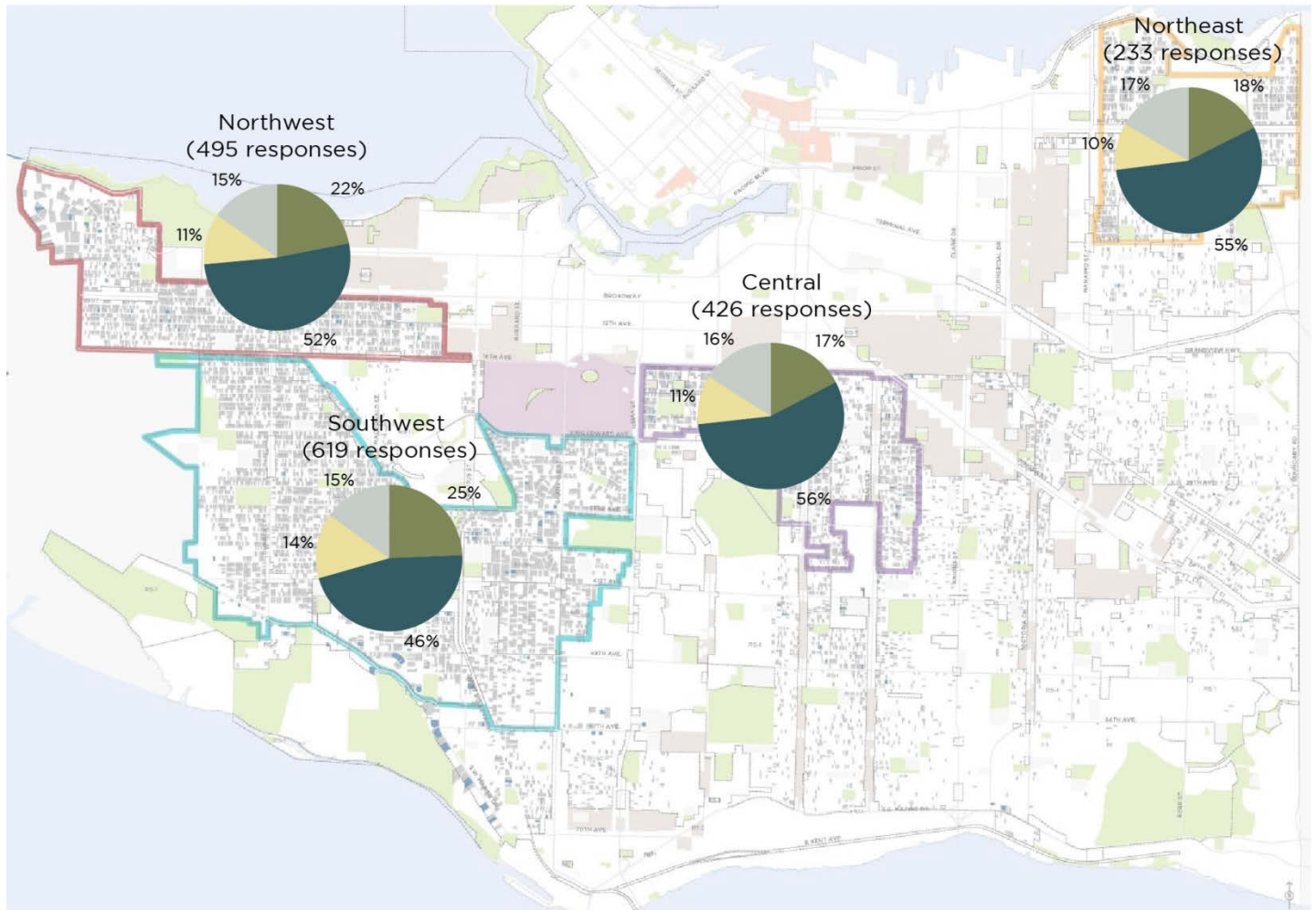




Part 5. Regulatory Approach

Respondents that lived in a study area (1,773 Responses)

■ Zoning Approach ■ Heritage and Zoning Approach ■ No preference ■ Don't know





Part 6. Other Considerations



Part 6. Other Considerations

Question 13

The City can support and encourage character home retention in a variety of ways. This could include special incentive programs, measures to discourage character home demolition and ensuring that replacement homes contribute to other City objectives.

Do you agree or disagree with the other options to support character home retention?

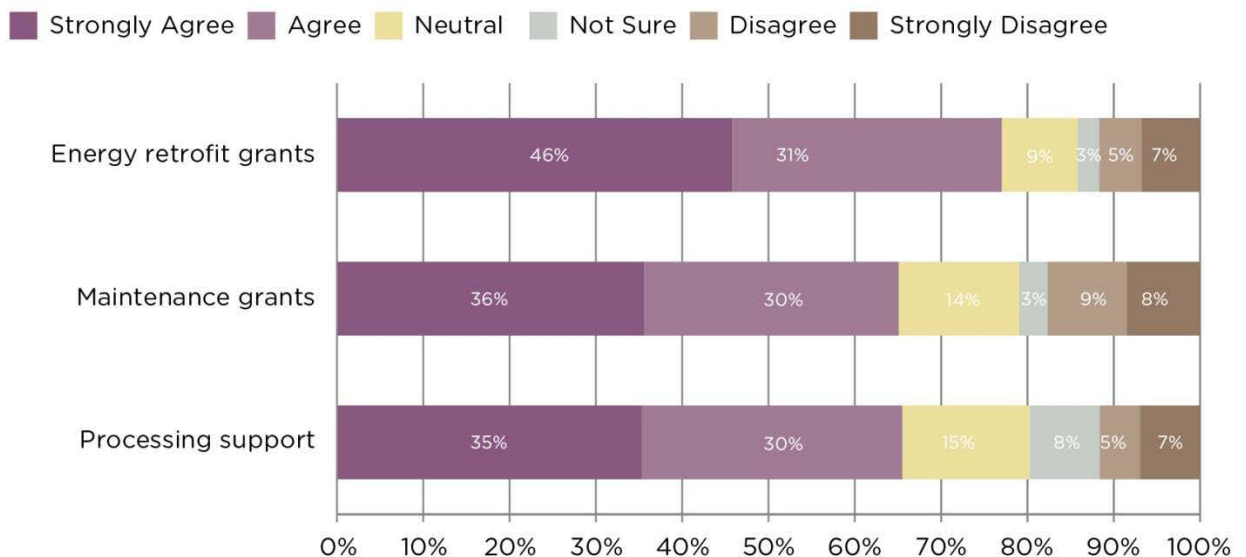
Snapshot

For character home retention:

- Over three-quarters (77 percent) agreed with exploring energy retrofit grants to support character home retention
- Two-thirds (66 percent) agreed with exploring maintenance grants
- Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) agreed with exploring processing support

Results

All respondents (3,322 responses)





Part 6. Other Considerations

Question 14

When a character home is demolished, the City can introduce special requirements aimed at meeting other City objectives.

Do you agree or disagree with the other options for replacement homes (new homes built in place of a demolished character home)?

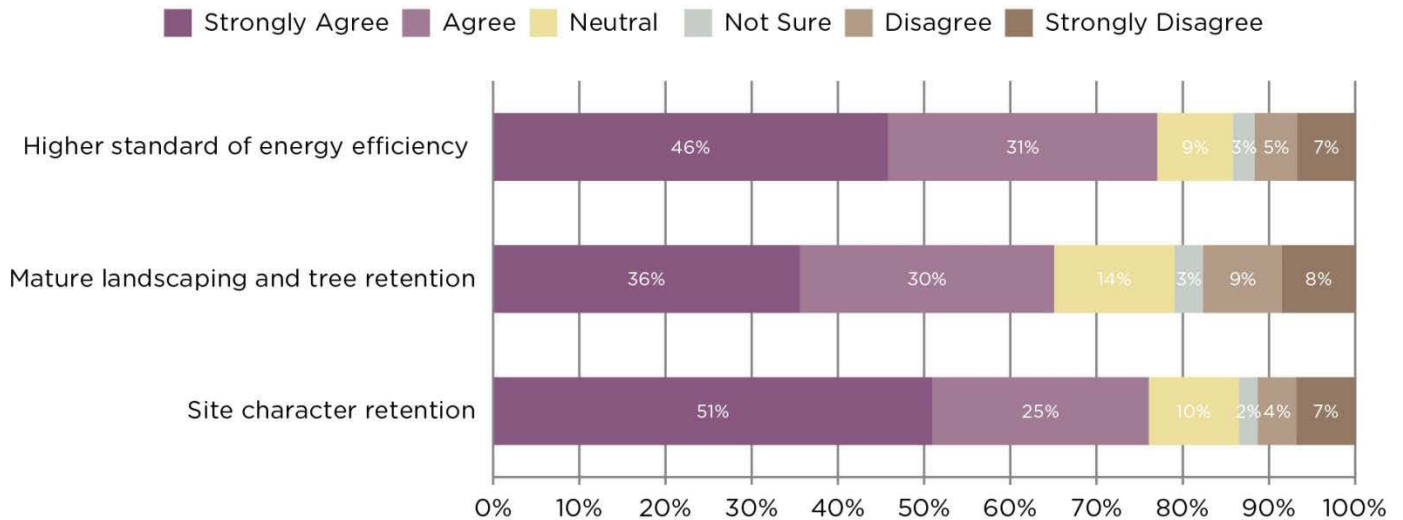
Snapshot

For new home constructed in place of a demolished character home:

- Over three-quarters (77 percent) agreed the new home should meet higher standards of energy efficiency
- Two-thirds (66 percent) agreed with requiring mature landscaping and tree retention
- Over three-quarters (76 percent) agreed with retaining site character

Results

All respondents (3,318 responses)





Demographics



Demographics

Question

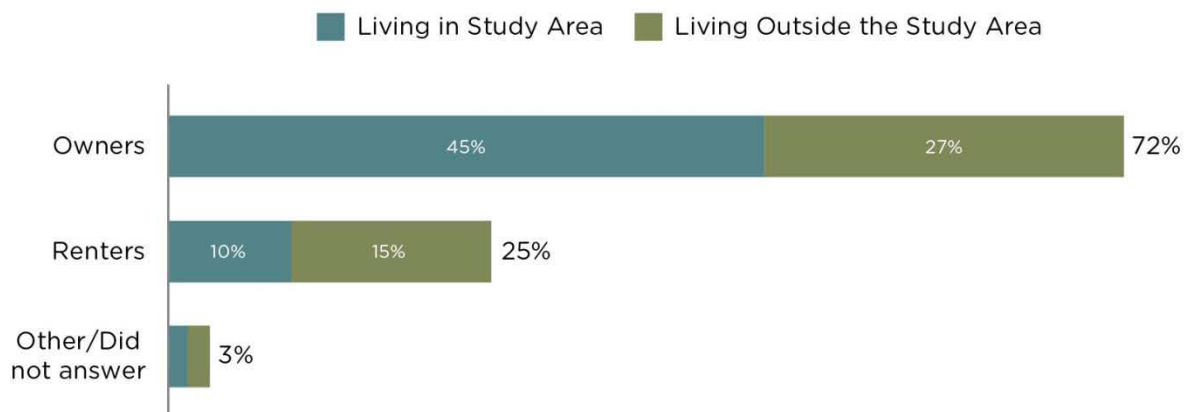
Do you own or rent your home?

Snapshot

- Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) are home owners
- Over half (55 percent) lived in a study area

Results

All respondents (3,322 responses)

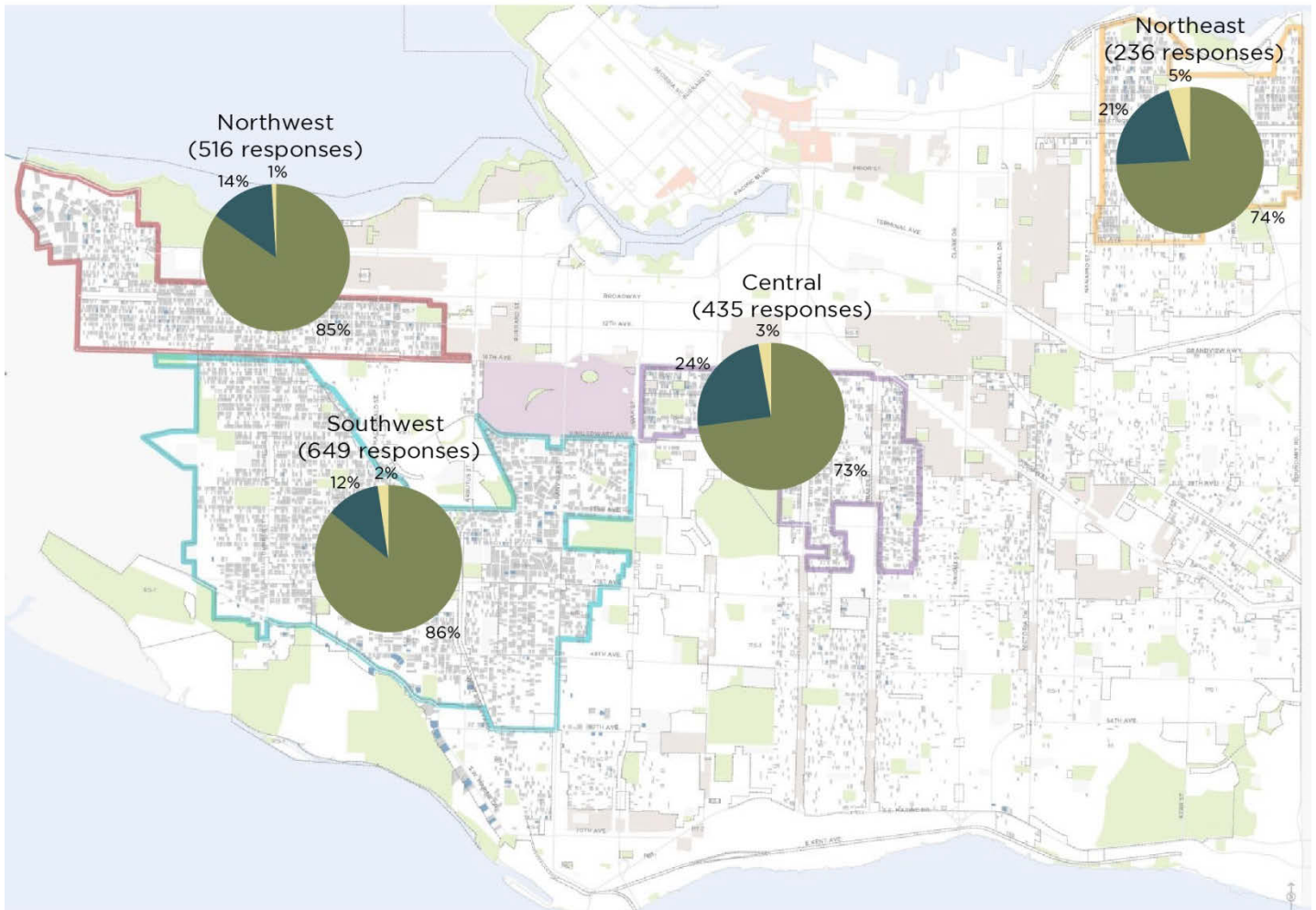




Demographics

Respondents that lived in a study area (1,842)

Own Rent Other





Demographics

Question

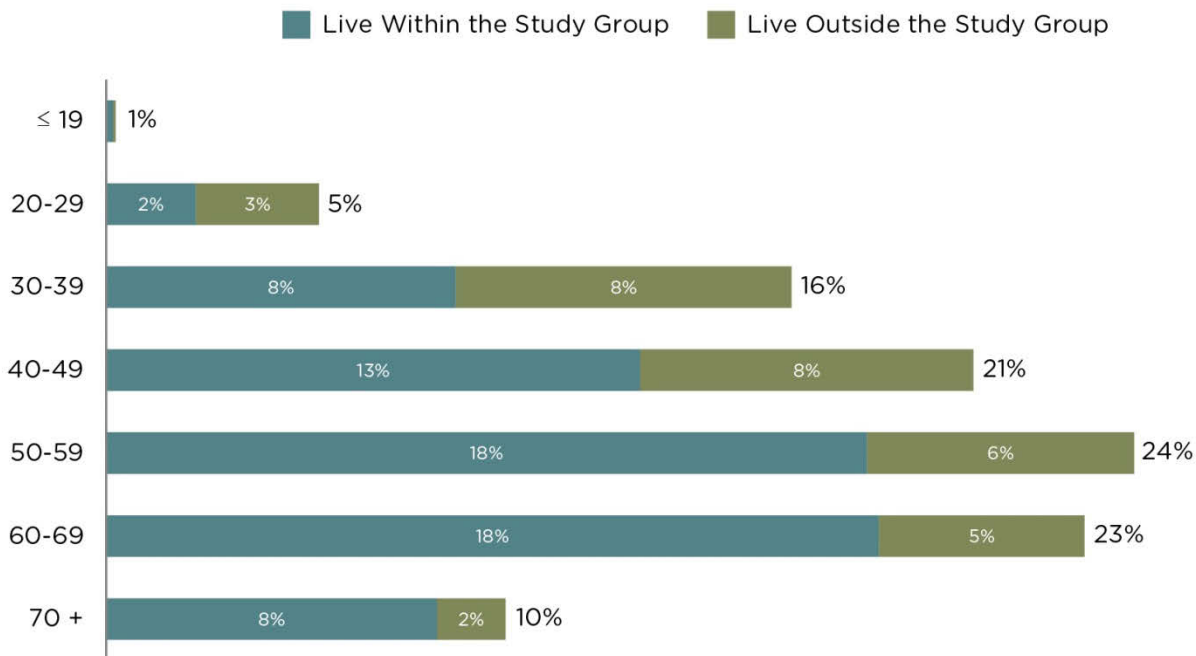
What is your age category?

Snapshot

- More than half (57 percent) were over 50 years of age
- One fifth (22 percent) of respondents were under the age of 40
- The Central and Northeast study areas had a higher number of younger respondents.

Results

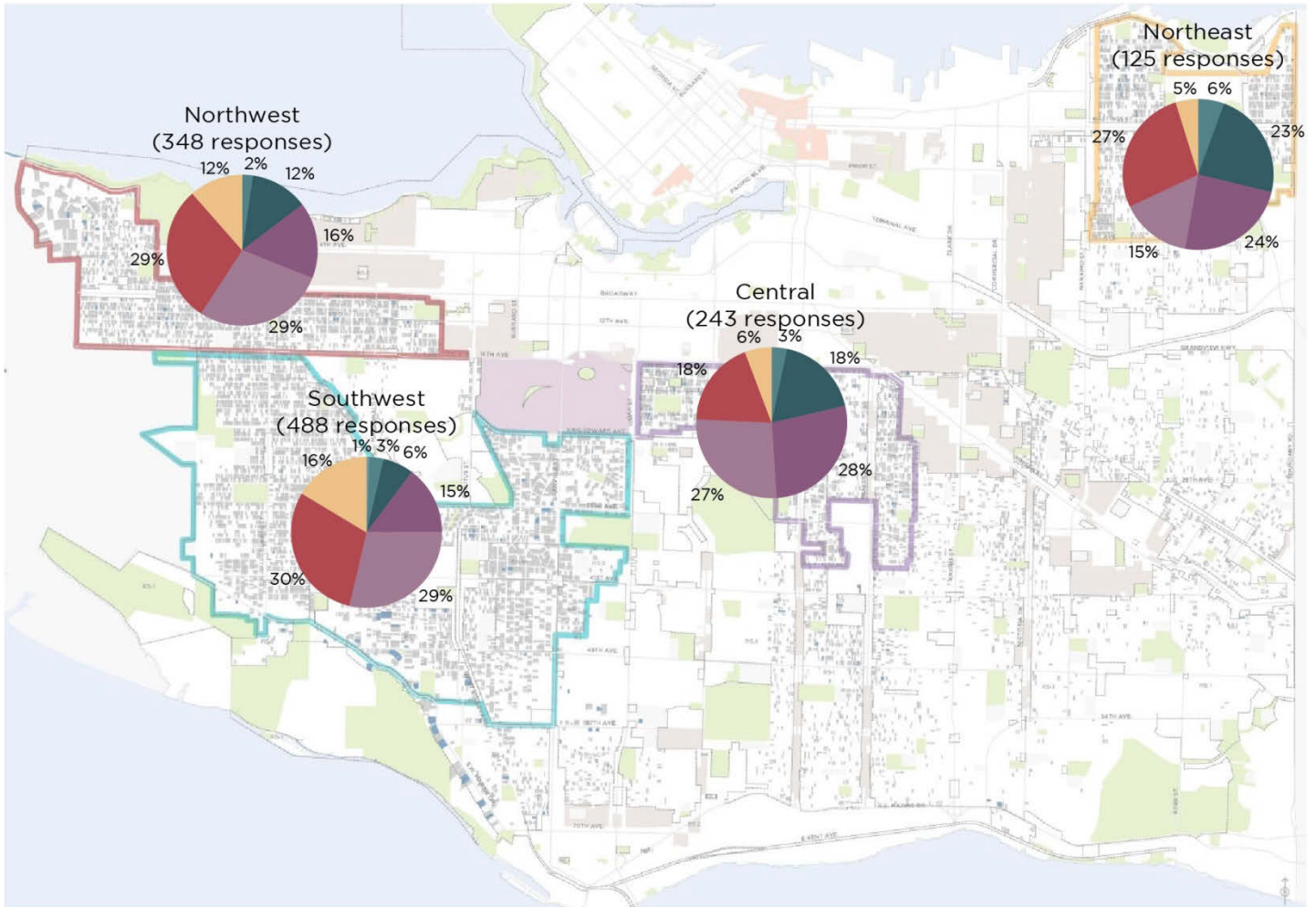
All respondents (1,769 responses)





Demographics

Respondents that lived in a study area (1,204 responses)





Demographics

Question

If you live in a study area, how long have you lived there?

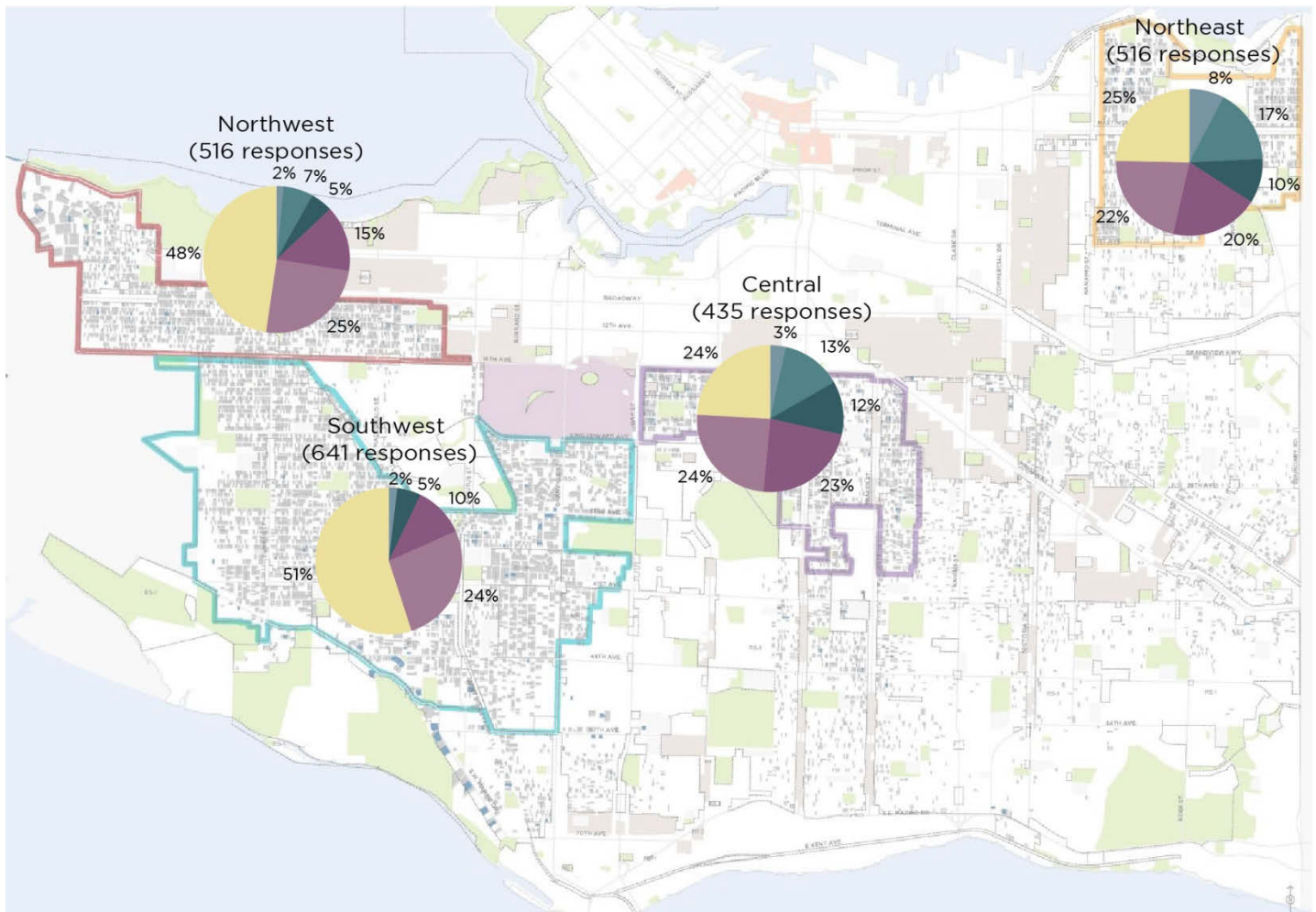
Snapshot

- Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) lived in the study area over 10 years

Results

Respondents that lived in a study area (2,108 responses)

< 1 year
 1-3 years
 4-5 years
 5-10 years
 11-20 years
 > 20 years





Demographics

Question

If you live in a study area, which best describes you?

Snapshot

- Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) lived in a pre-1940 home

Results

Respondents that lived in a study area (1,699 responses)





Demographics

Question

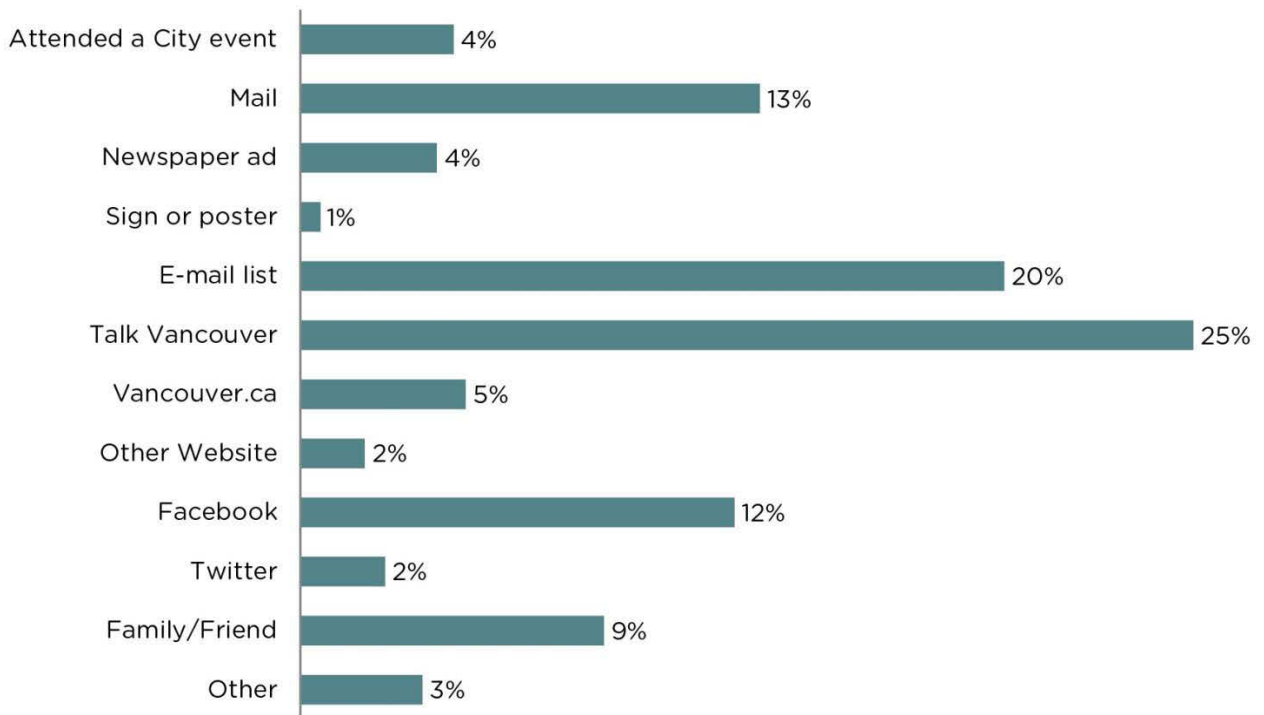
How did you hear about the Character Homes Zoning Review consultation?

Snapshot

- Two-thirds (66 percent) heard about the *Character Homes Zoning Review* consultation through an online source

Results

All respondents (3,291 responses)





Questionnaire Methodology



Questionnaire Methodology

Questionnaire Methodology

As respondents are self-selected, the results are an indication of general sentiment rather than a statistically significant test of responses. Respondents were not required to provide a response, and could respond only to the questions that interest them. As a result, the number of responses may vary by question. The responses to the quantitative questions are summarised below as percentages, charts, and graphs.

Respondents could also provide additional feedback through open ended questions. Over 11,000 comments were received, with the two initial questions generating the highest number of responses. However there was repetition of comments with later questions receiving similar comments provided in the initial questions. An in depth analysis was completed on the two initial questions in the *Character Home Zoning Review* questionnaire that asked respondents: a) what are other areas of concern for respondents, and b) how respondents feel about character home retention. Comments were grouped into the broad themes that emerged. A summary of the broad themes and a sample of comments can be found in the 'Background' section on pages 7, 10 and 11.