

Howard County Circuit Courthouse Re-Use

Advisory Group Meeting | August 17, 2021



Mahan Rykiel Associates

Introduction

Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Survey Results
3. Other Observations
4. Facilitated Discussion
5. Next Steps



| Introduction

Introduction

Team Members

- County Administration
- Department of Public Works (DPW)
- Mahan Rykiel Associates
- Chartwell Enterprises

Introduction

Project Overview

- Department of Public Works (DPW) is leading this outreach for the planned re-use of the courthouse building and site
- This outreach effort is in preparation for the potential issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the re-use of the site and associated buildings, per the Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan
- Howard County is exploring ownership options
- County intention is that this is a private sector initiative and not a capital project. County focus is on flood mitigation

Supporting this Effort:

- DPW filed a Zoning Map Amendment proposing to change zoning from “HO-Historic Office” to “HC-Historic Commercial” to maximize potential uses to the property
- Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) is the technical reviewer in the zoning effort
- Preservation Maryland

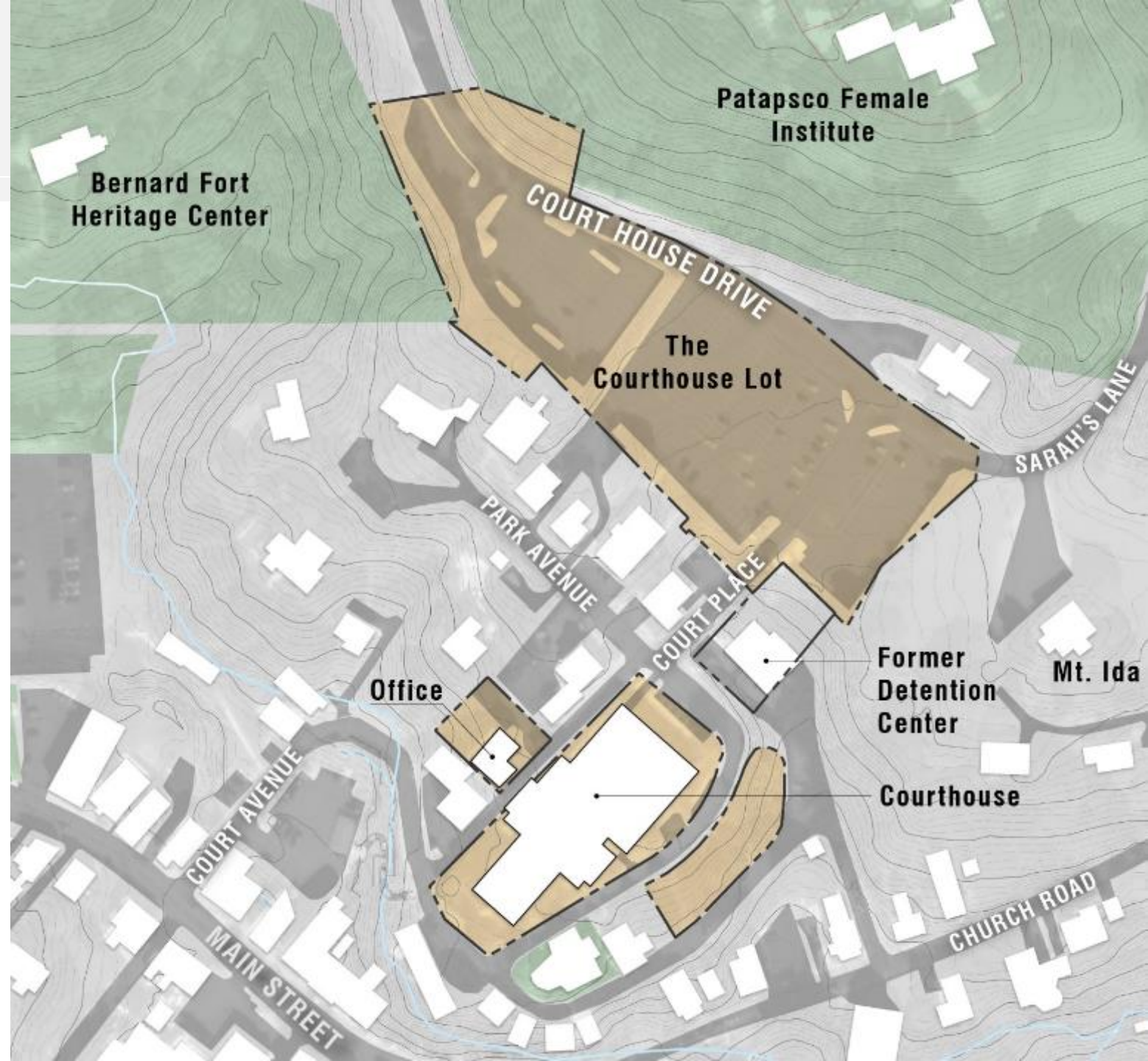
Introduction

Property

4 Parcels-6.19 Acres

- **Courthouse**
- **Office Building**
- **Parking (Courthouse Lot)**
- Former Detention Center

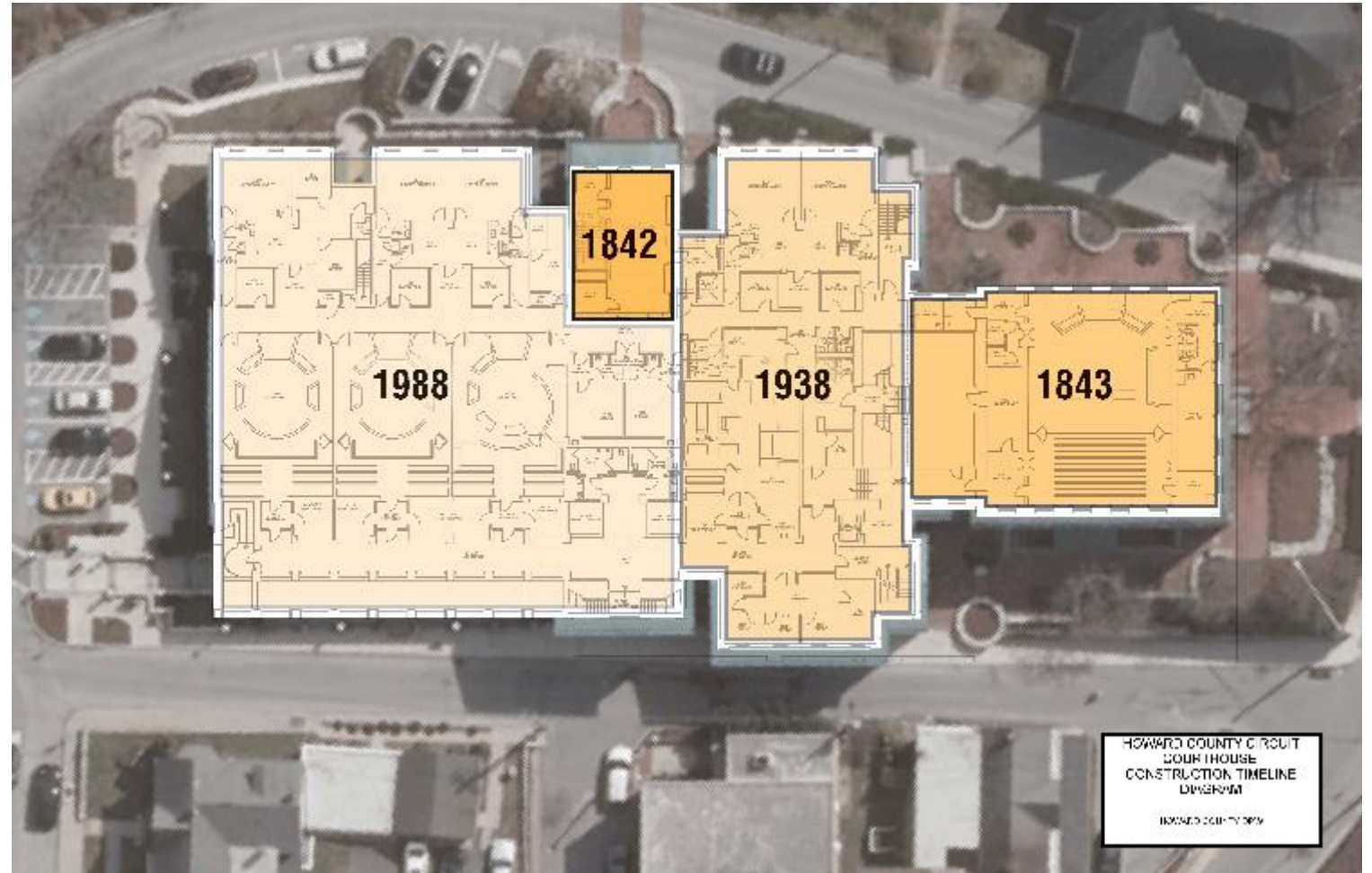
* Potential RFP Area (In Bold)



Existing Property

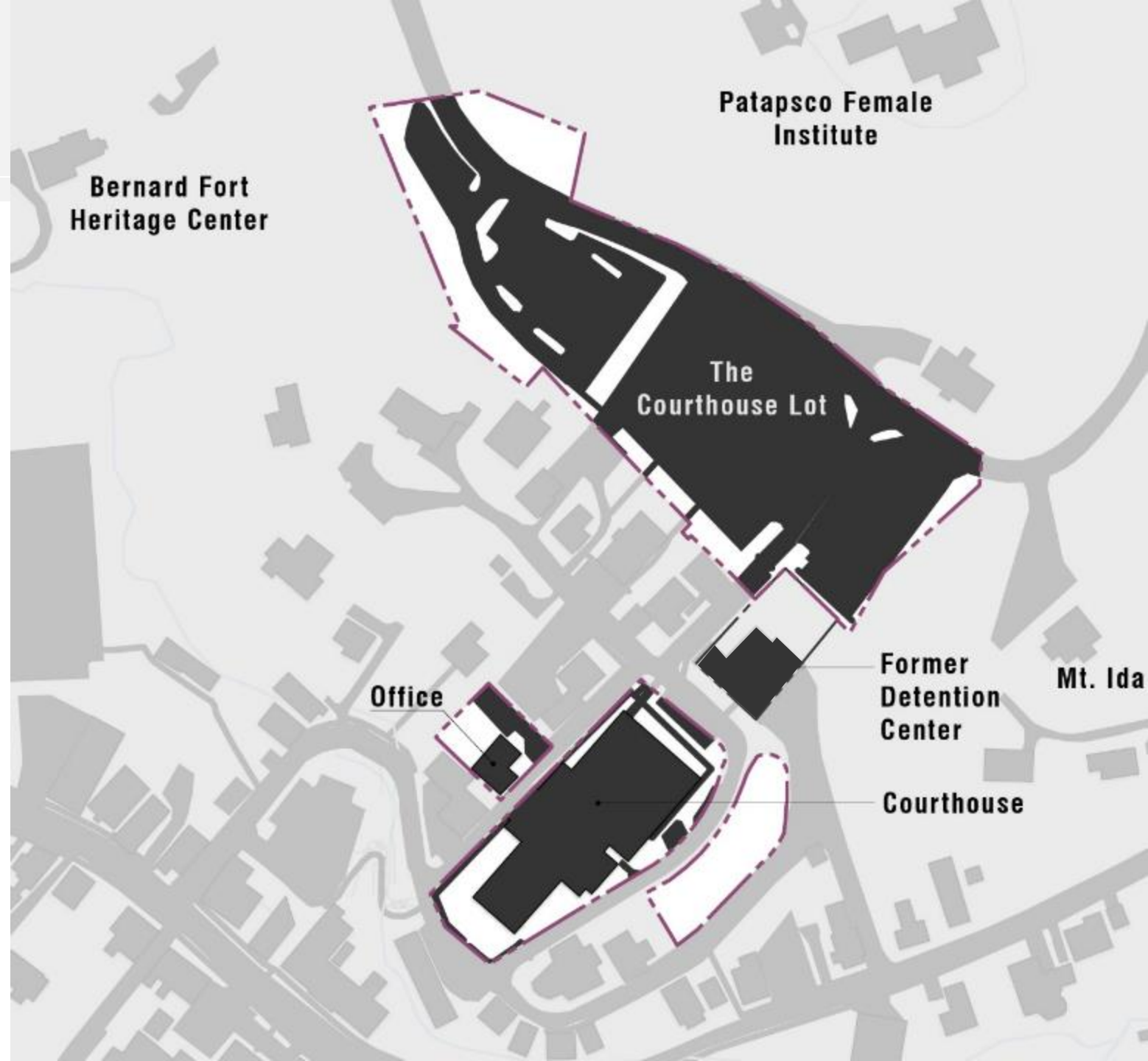
Courthouse Building

- Four principal structures, multiple floor levels
- Served many municipal functions
- Multiple renovations over the years
- 1988 Addition reoriented building, with main entry towards Courthouse Lot (parking) and away from Main Street



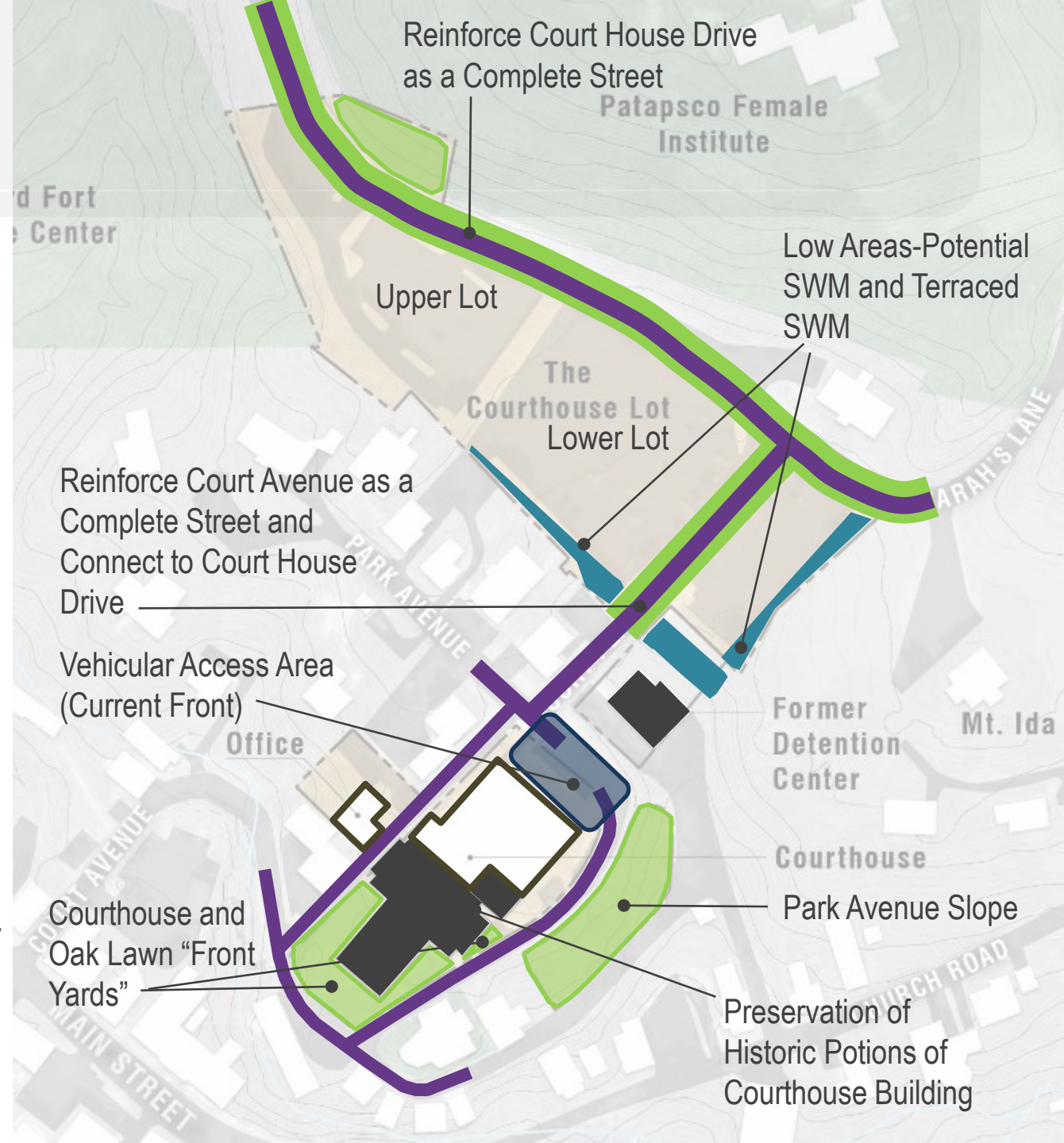
Existing Property

- Impervious Surface Coverage



Re-Use Assumptions

- **Preservation of historic portions of courthouse building with re-use**
- Defined street design for Court House Drive with pedestrian and bike accommodations (street alignment could change)
- Defined extension of Court Place to Court House Drive with pedestrian and bike accommodations (street alignment could change)
- Courthouse and Oak Lawn “front yards” and Park Avenue slope remain as open space
- **Stormwater Management and potential reduction in impervious surface; development subject to Stormwater Regulations for the watershed signed into law by County Executive Ball in 2019**
- Vehicular access at current front of courthouse



Re-Use Opportunities

Courthouse

- **Re-use** of courthouse building in its **entirety** as **destination use**
- **Re-use** of courthouse **building** (with selective “editing” of 1988 addition) as **destination use**
- **Re-use** of courthouse building in its **entirety without a destination focus** (such as office use)

Office Building

- **Re-use** of office building for office or other uses
- **Replace** office building with **open space**

Open/Flex Space

- Create a **public parking area/flexible use space** adjacent to Mt. Ida
- **Introduce useable open space** near Mt. Ida
- Maximize **open space adjacent to courthouse** along Park Avenue

Parking

- **Maintain some public parking** (surface parking) on the **upper lot** while introducing tree canopy, pervious surfaces and pedestrian connections
- **Maintain some public parking** (surface parking) on the **lower lot** while introducing tree canopy, pervious surfaces and pedestrian connections
- **Maintain existing parking** in front of **east façade** of courthouse building along Park Ave.

Parking Lot Development

- Introduce **new construction** on the **lower lot**
- Introduce **new construction** on the **upper lot** and **western portion** of the **lower lot**
- Introduce **new construction** on the **upper lot**
- **Re-align Court House Drive** to expand upper lot parcel to make more viable for new construction

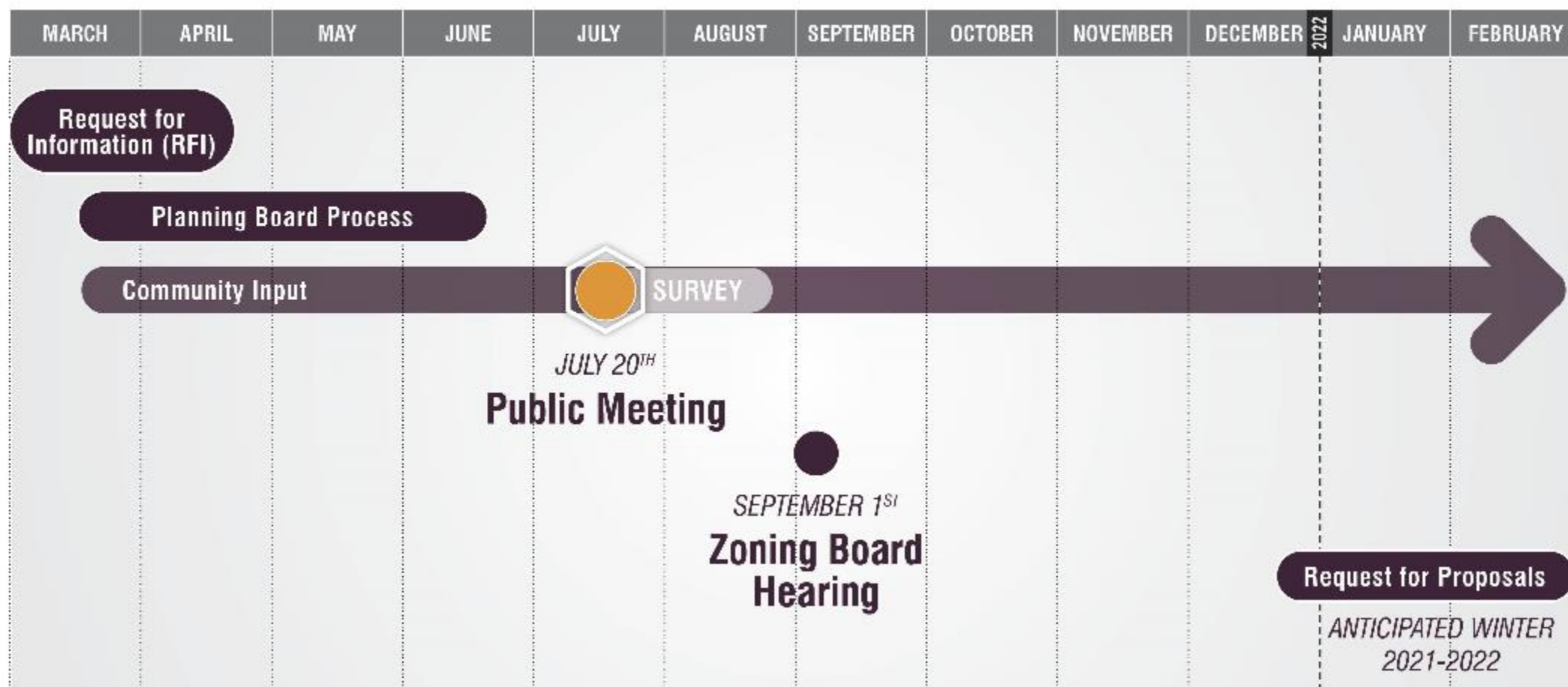
Introduction

County Goals and Intent

1. Redevelopment of the Court House Campus should **complement and enhance**, but **not compete** with existing **businesses on Main Street**.
2. Any redevelopment/reuse should be **historically appropriate** and follow the Ellicott City **Historic District Guidelines**.
3. Reuse of the property should, whenever possible, **emphasize clear visual and physical connections** to Main Street, seek to **increase foot traffic to the entire historic district**, and should be **sensitive to the adjacent properties** not included in the redevelopment.
4. At least **some portion** of the Court House Campus should be **dedicated to community use**, if possible.
5. Every effort should be made to **leave adequate parking** available for **public use**.
6. Creative **Environmental Site Design practices** should be utilized whenever possible, including but not limited to green roofs, green walls, and solar panels.

Introduction

COURTHOUSE RE-USE | Timeline and Process



Introduction

Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan Relevancy

- **Adopted by County Council**
- **Guides potential redevelopment of the site**

III.12 Courthouse Area

Policy 12.1 Courthouse Property Reuse

*Explore different options to dispose of the courthouse property with **creative solutions** for redevelopment that **complements and enhances** Ellicott City's downtown and reinforces – **rather than competes with** – the **economic importance of Main Street.***

Policy 12.1 Implementing Actions

- Requests for Information and Proposals (RFI and RFP)
- Key considerations that include **creativity**, **sensitive interface** with adjacent properties, and **holistic**-master planned approach
- Street and pedestrian network with clear **visual and physical connections** to Main Street, PFI and Mt. Ida
- **Uses determined** as part of **disposition process** with **new structures sensitive to the historic district**
- **Open space network** and amenity areas **connecting** to adjacent open spaces
- Stronger **connections with the PFI** and respect for PFI viewsheds
- Sensitivity to **viewsheds** to and from Mt. Ida
- Use of **Environmental Site Design (ESD)** practices and **green technologies**
- **Public art and interpretation**
- **Public parking component** with aesthetically treated **surface parking and/or parking structures**
- **Brand identity** for the area such as “Courthouse Hill”
- Interim use of the exterior site during the disposition process
- Connected to other parts of downtown with the “**Green Cultural Trail**”

Introduction

Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan Relevancy

The map shows an aerial view of a portion of Ellicott City, Maryland. Key landmarks include the Bernard Fort House, Patapsco Female Inst. (PFI), Historic Courthouse, and Mount Ida. A yellow-shaded area represents the proposed development. Various points and lines are marked with letters and symbols to indicate planning relevancy:

- Point A:** Clear Circulation Connection to Historic Courthouse (indicated by a red arrow pointing from the development area towards the courthouse).
- Point B:** Street Frontage Along Prominent Street (indicated by two 'B' labels along the red-shaded development boundary).
- Point C:** Focal Point (indicated by a red 'X' symbol at the intersection of the development area and a street).
- Point D:** Pedestrian Connection Between Upper Levels and PFI (indicated by a green dashed arrow pointing from the development area towards the PFI).
- Point E:** Relationship to Outparcel to be Considered in Master Development (indicated by a black arrow pointing from the development area towards an outparcel).
- Point F:** Visual Connection to Mount Ida (indicated by a black arrow pointing from the development area towards Mount Ida).
- Point G:** "Front Lawn" Image (indicated by a green dashed line along the edge of the development area).
- Point H:** SWM Opportunity (indicated by blue dots along the edge of the development area).
- Point I:** Trail Network Connection between Bernard Fort House and PFI (indicated by green dashed arrows forming a loop between the Bernard Fort House and the PFI).

LEGEND

- (A) Clear Circulation Connection to Historic Courthouse
- (B) Street Frontage Along Prominent Street
- (C) Focal Point
- (D) Pedestrian Connection Between Upper Levels and PFI
- (E) Relationship to Outparcel to be Considered in Master Development
- (F) Visual Connection to Mount Ida
- (G) "Front Lawn" Image
- (H) SWM Opportunity
- (I) Trail Network Connection between Bernard Fort House and PFI



Figure 218: Courthouse Area Concept Sketches

Figure 214: Conceptual Redevelopment Framework for Courthouse Site

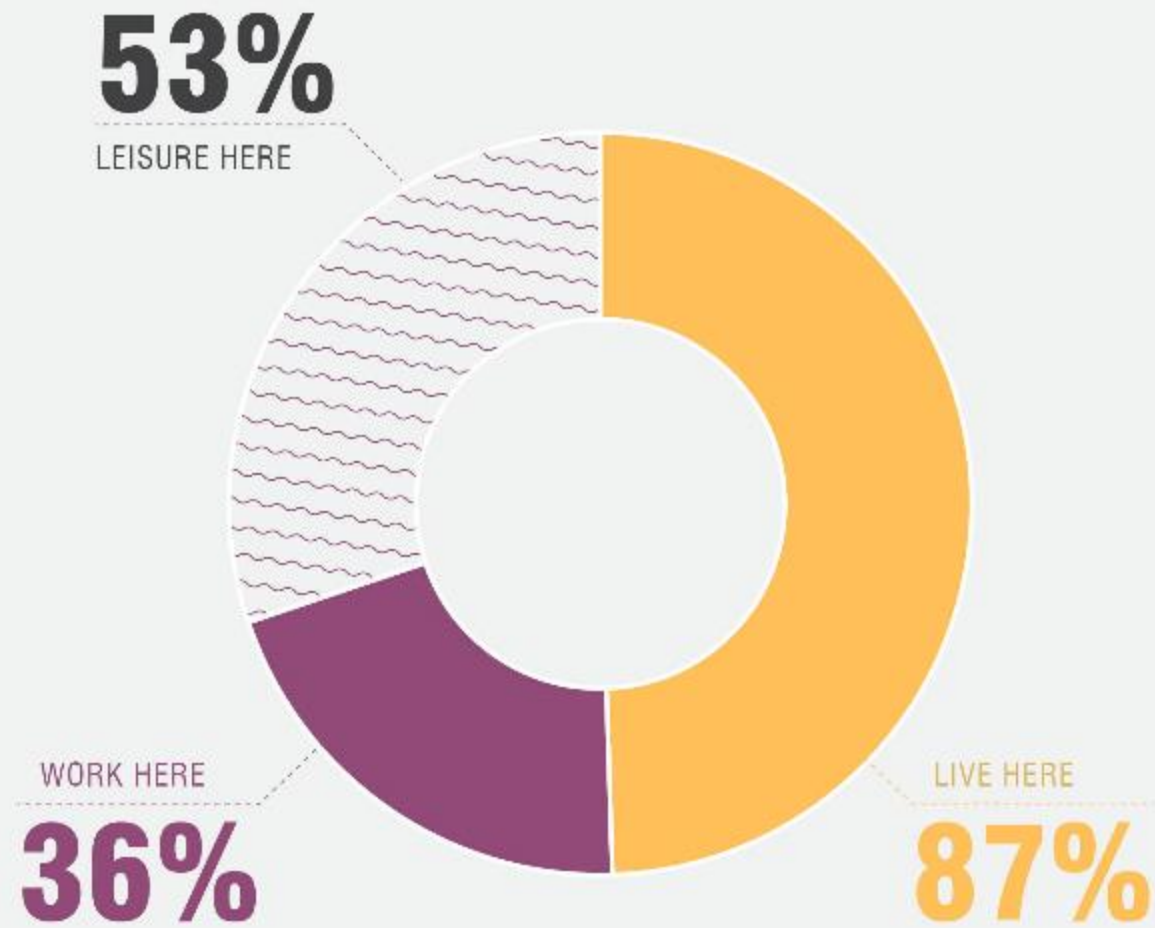


| Survey Results

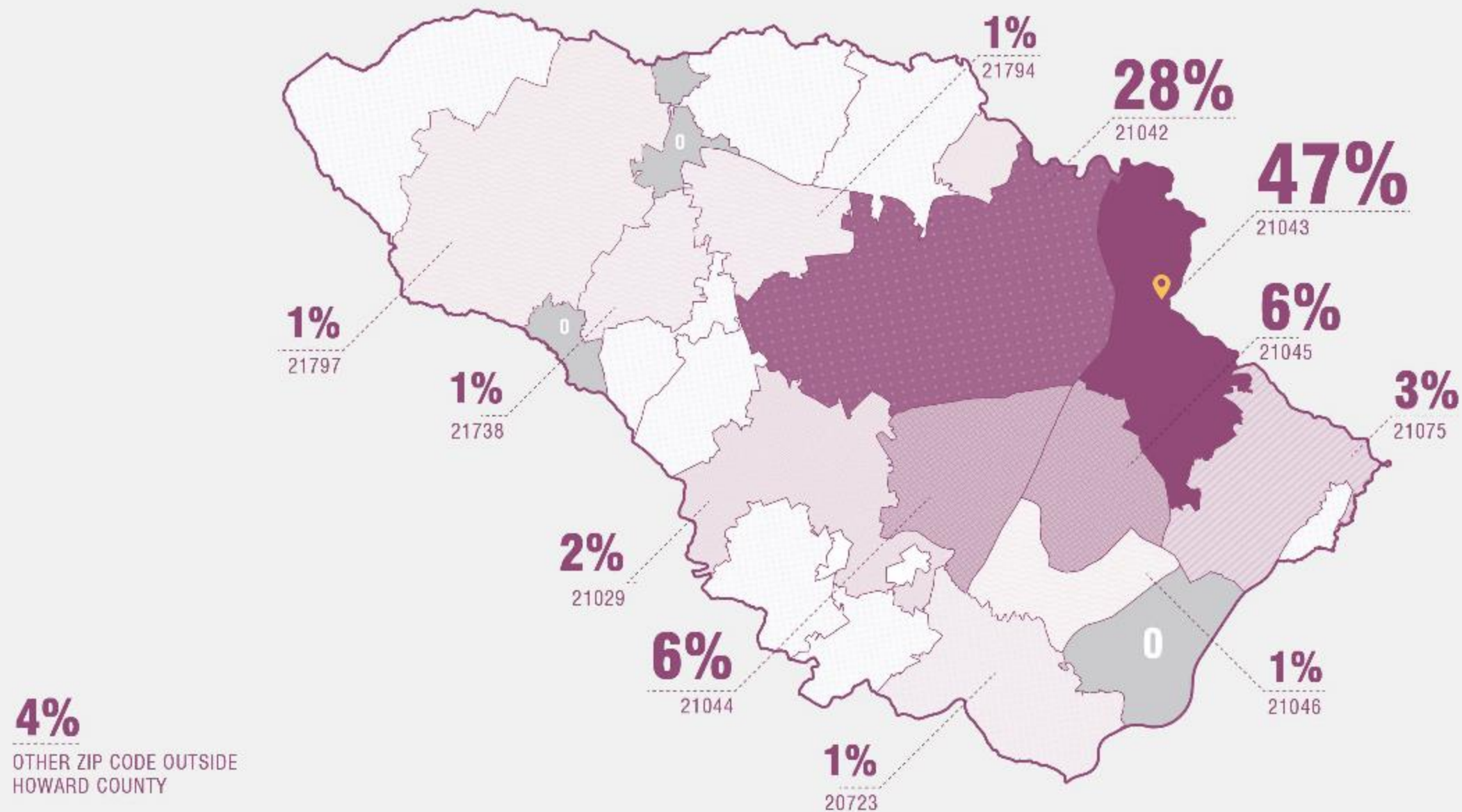
General

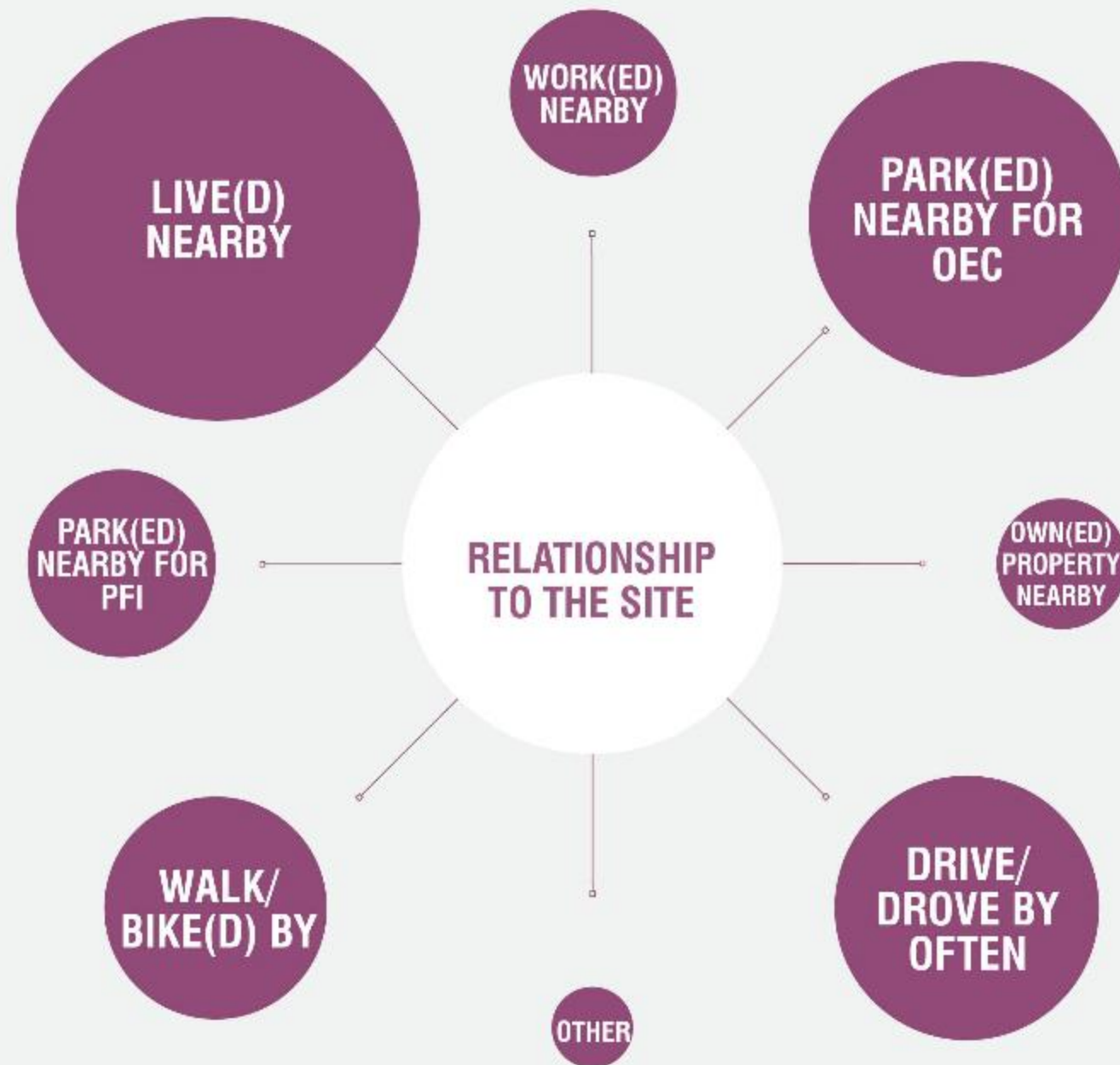
1. 555 total respondents
2. 1,081 responses to open-ended questions

WHAT'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO HOWARD COUNTY?



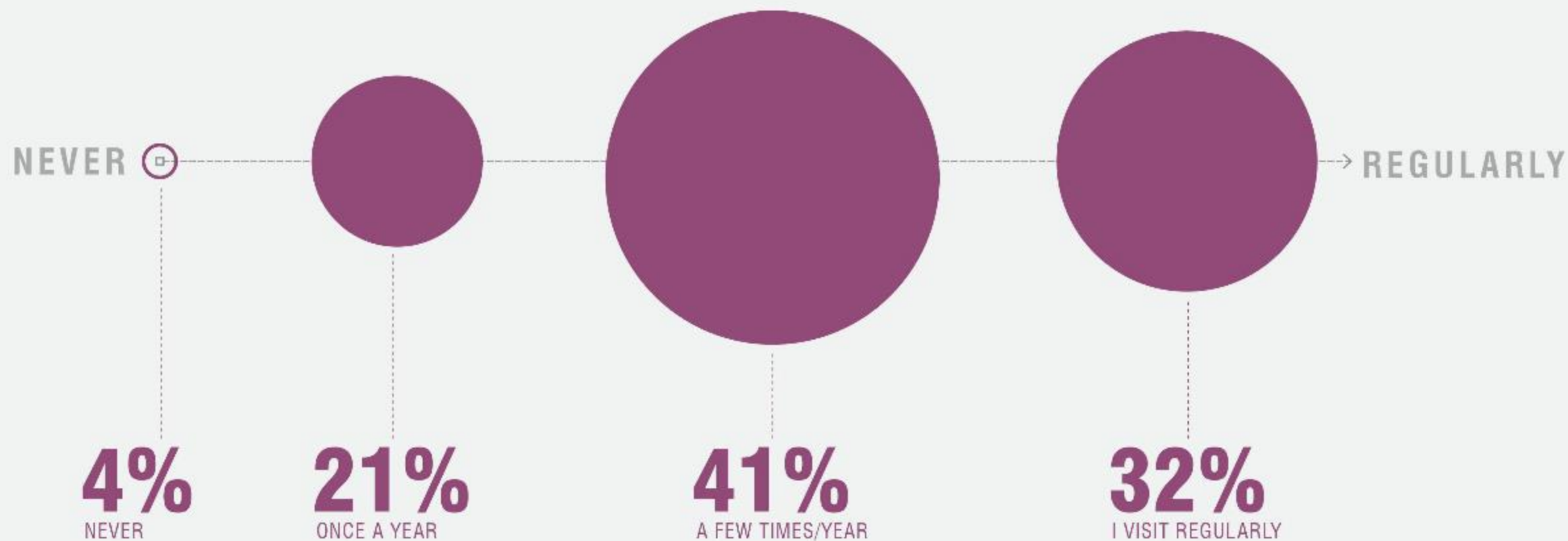
IN WHAT ZIP CODE DO YOU LIVE?





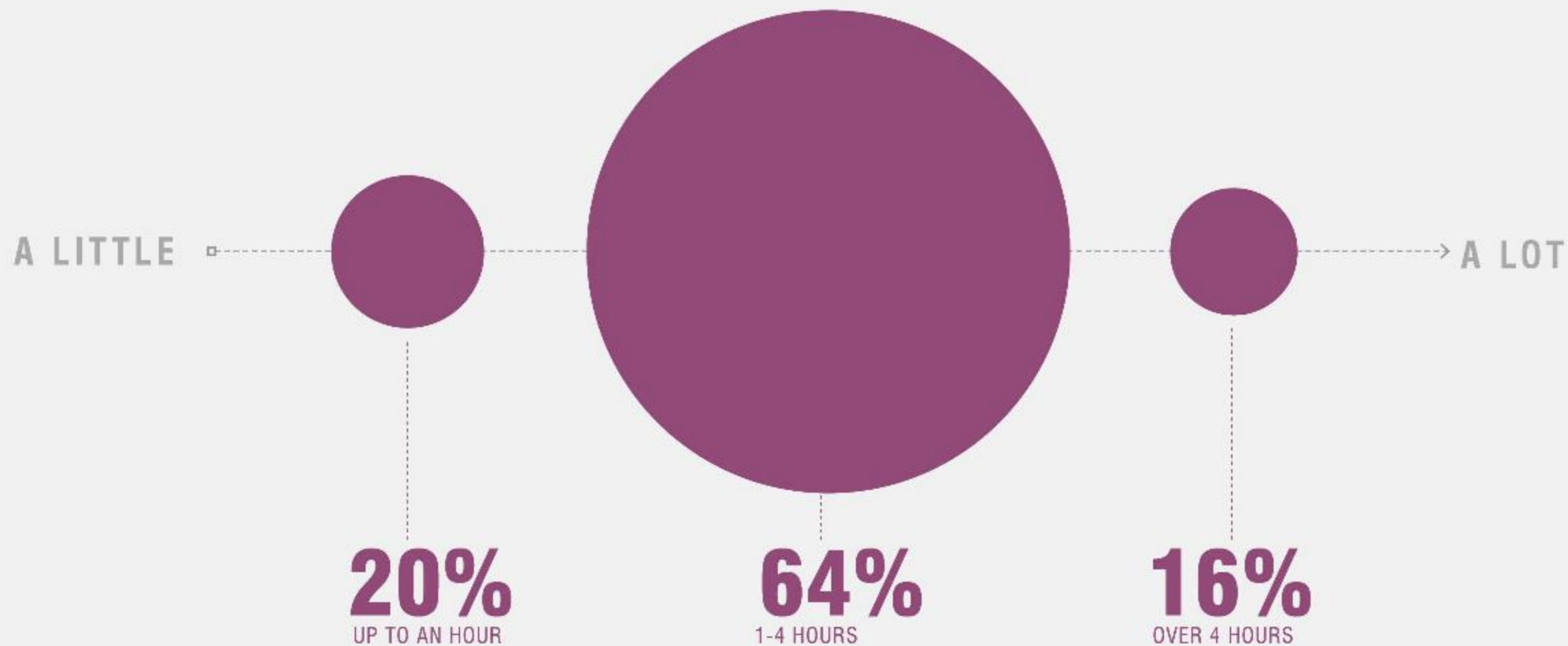
FREQUENCY OF VISITS

How often have you physically visited or used the site each year?



TIME SPENT

How much time do or did you typically spend at a destination here when visiting?



MODE OF ARRIVAL

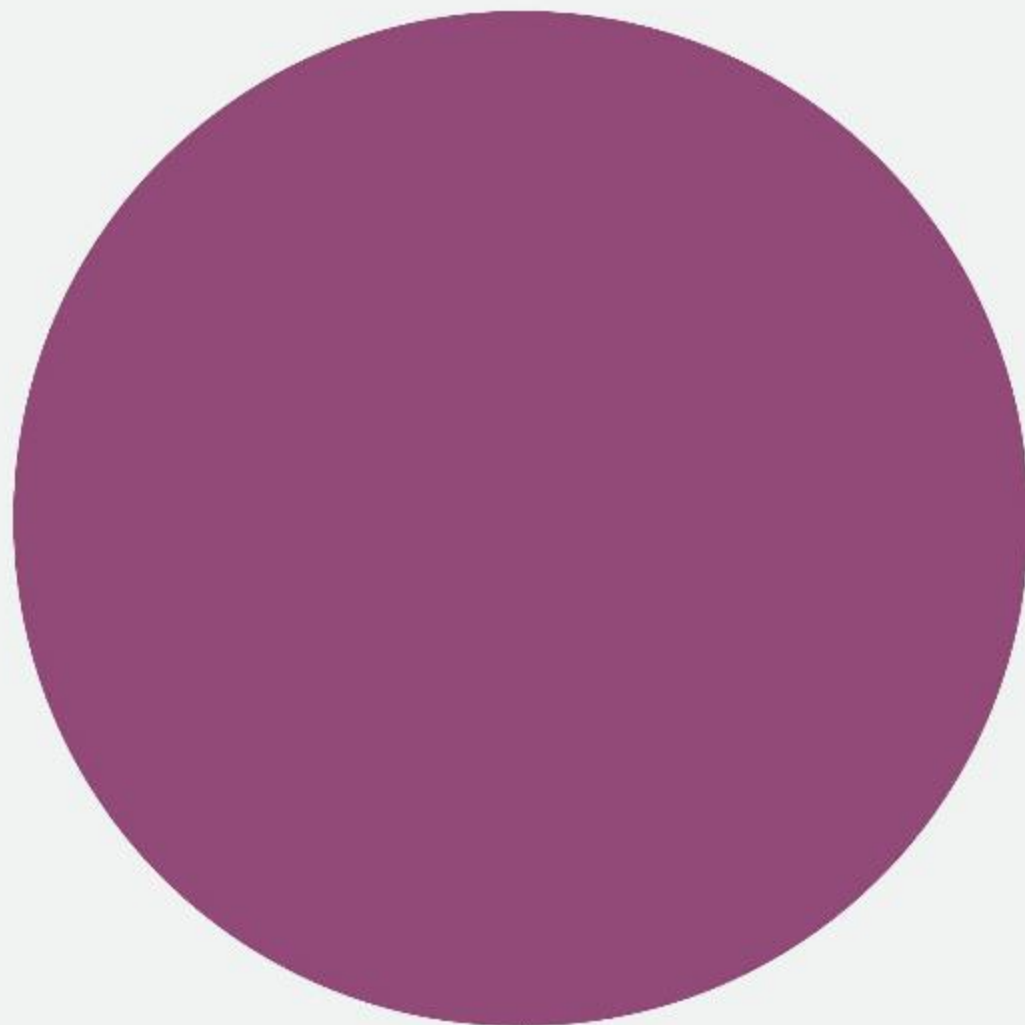
What is the mode of travel you typically use when visiting?

1 PERSON
PUBLIC
TRANSIT

1%
BIKE

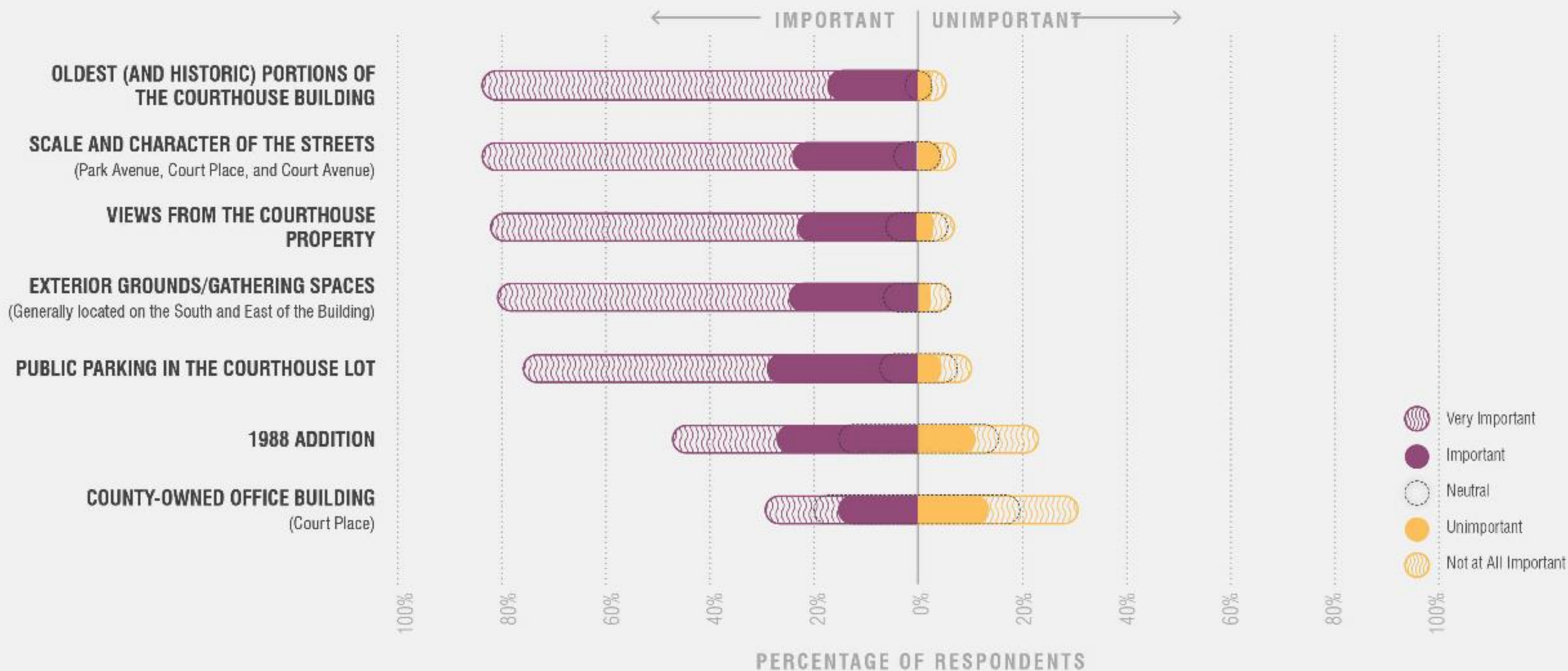
16%
WALK

82%
CAR



IMPORTANT ASSETS

The site includes many assets and unique characteristics. Please rate how important the following are to you?



Important Asset Conclusions

1. County-owned office building is least important, but an equal number find it important as unimportant.
2. While the 1988 Addition ranks second in being least important, more respondents see it as important vs. unimportant (but not as important as other site assets).

CONTRIBUTION TO THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE

How positively or negatively do each of the following CURRENTLY contribute to your experience when visiting the courthouse site?



Overall Experience Conclusions

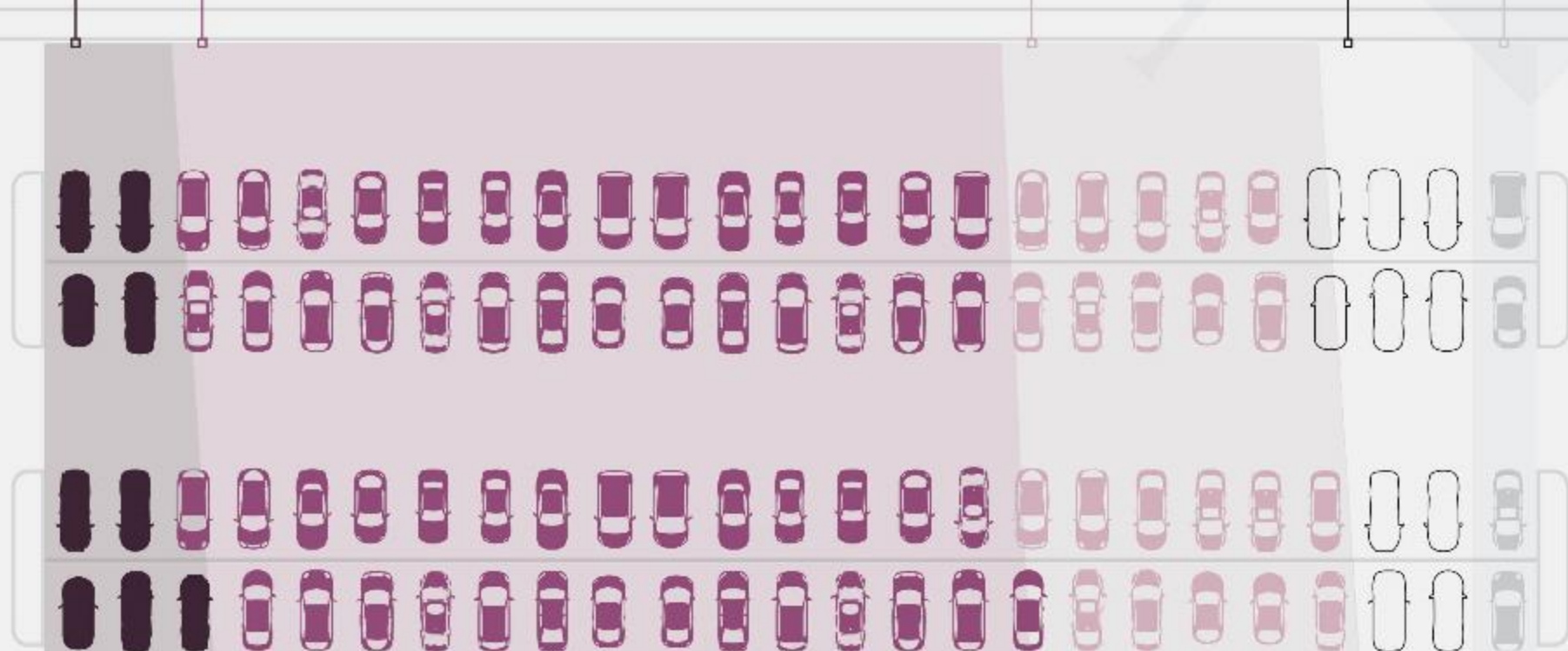
1. Views are clearly very important or important.
 - *With re-use, perhaps in addition to protecting views, there are opportunities to enhance them or take better advantage of them.*
2. Respondents believe there is good clarity of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation. Based upon comments about poor clarity along Court House Drive, the assumption is that respondents were focused on the immediate area around the Courthouse building.

FREQUENCY OF PARKING IN THE COURTHOUSE LOT

9% **56%**
ALWAYS OCCASIONALLY

21%
RARELY

10% **4%**
NEVER OTHER



MOTIVATIONS FOR CURRENT COURTHOUSE LOT USE

"Other than to attend Courthouse functions or events at the PFI, I primarily use the Courthouse Parking Lot because ..."



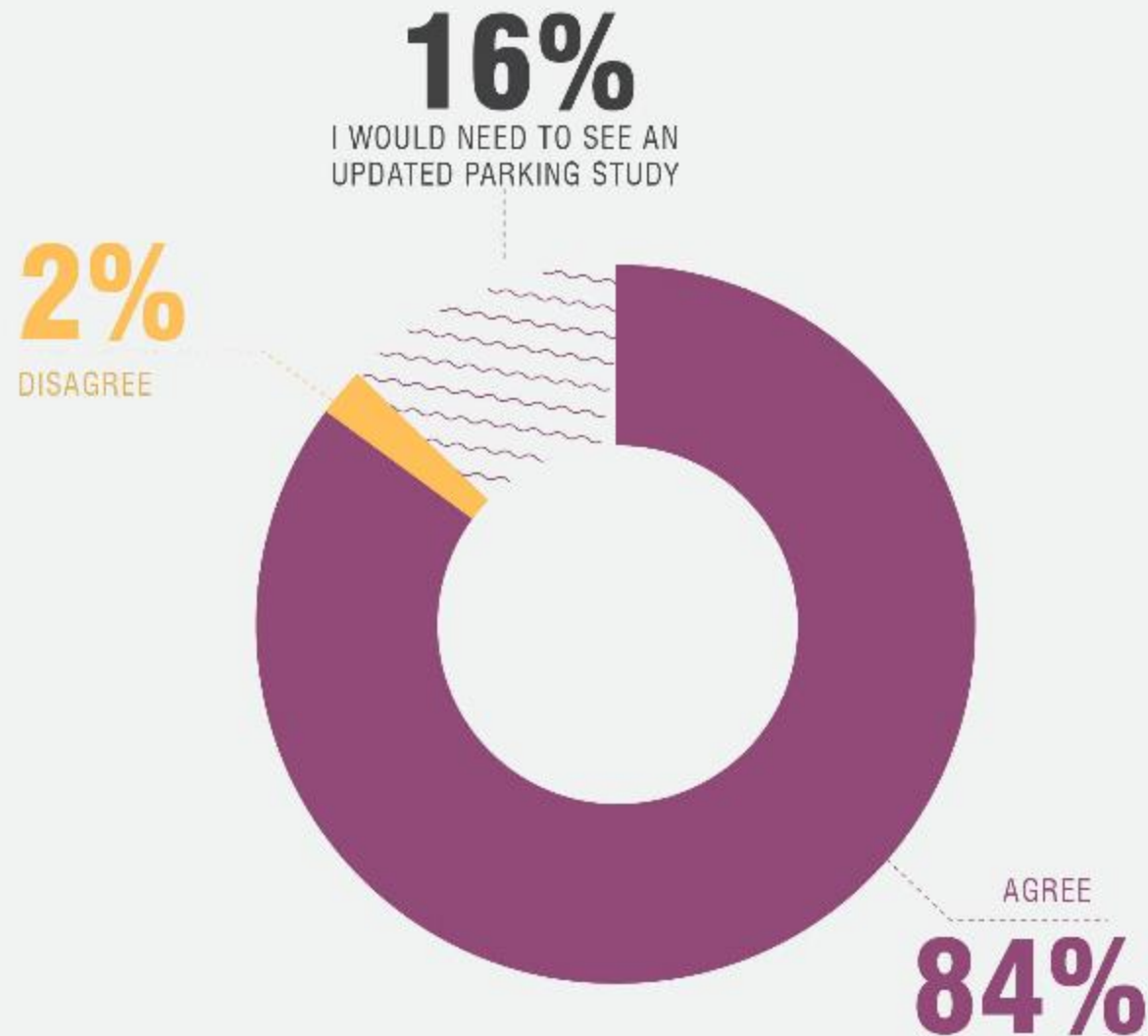
MOTIVATIONS FOR FUTURE COURTHOUSE LOT USE

"In the future, I will likely use the Courthouse Lot if ..."



DESIRE FOR FUTURE ON-SITE PUBLIC PARKING

In the future, this site should always have some component of public parking that is available throughout the day, evening, and week.

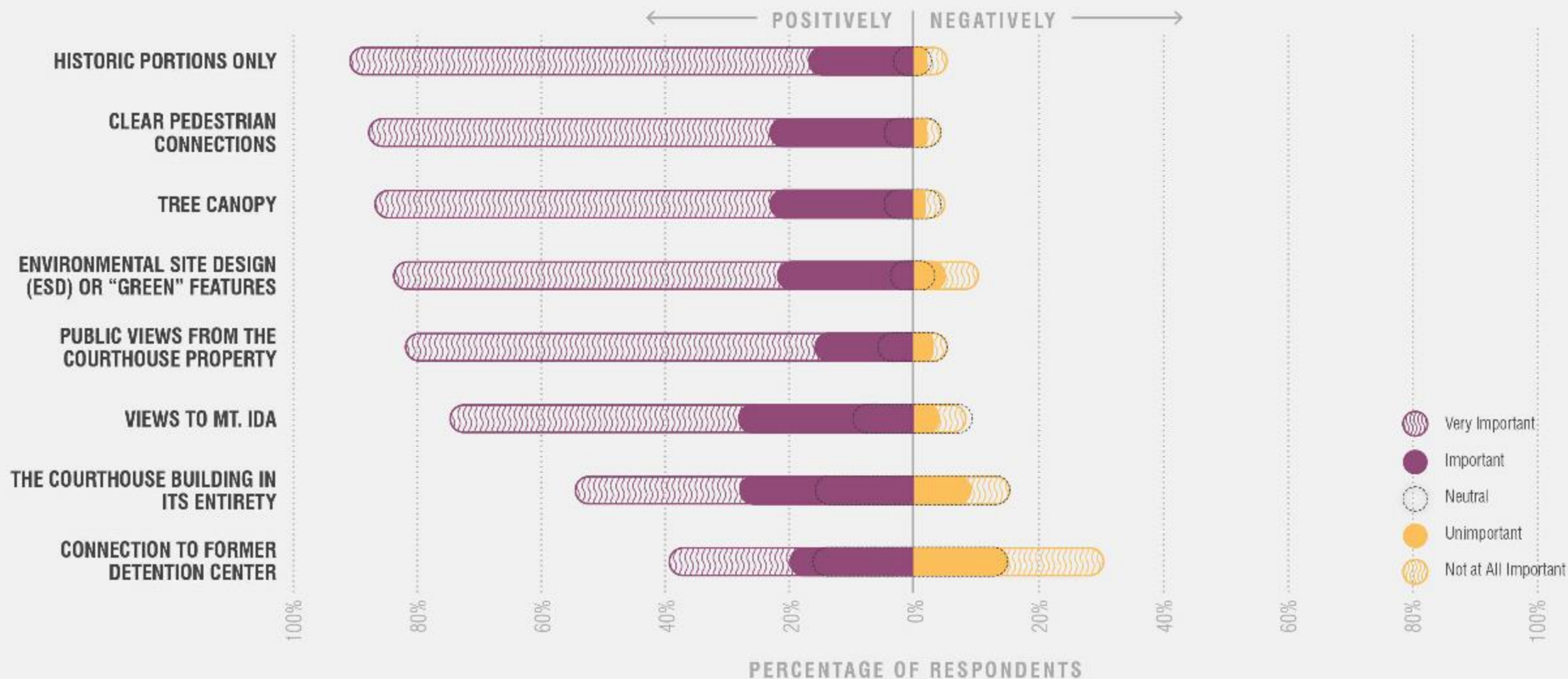


Parking Conclusions

1. There were many comments about parking here remaining free (if other lots do implement a fee). Potential re-use may place more demand on the parking resource.
2. Some component of public parking will be important in the future.

IMPORTANT IMPROVEMENTS

How important is it to protect, improve, and/or add the following?

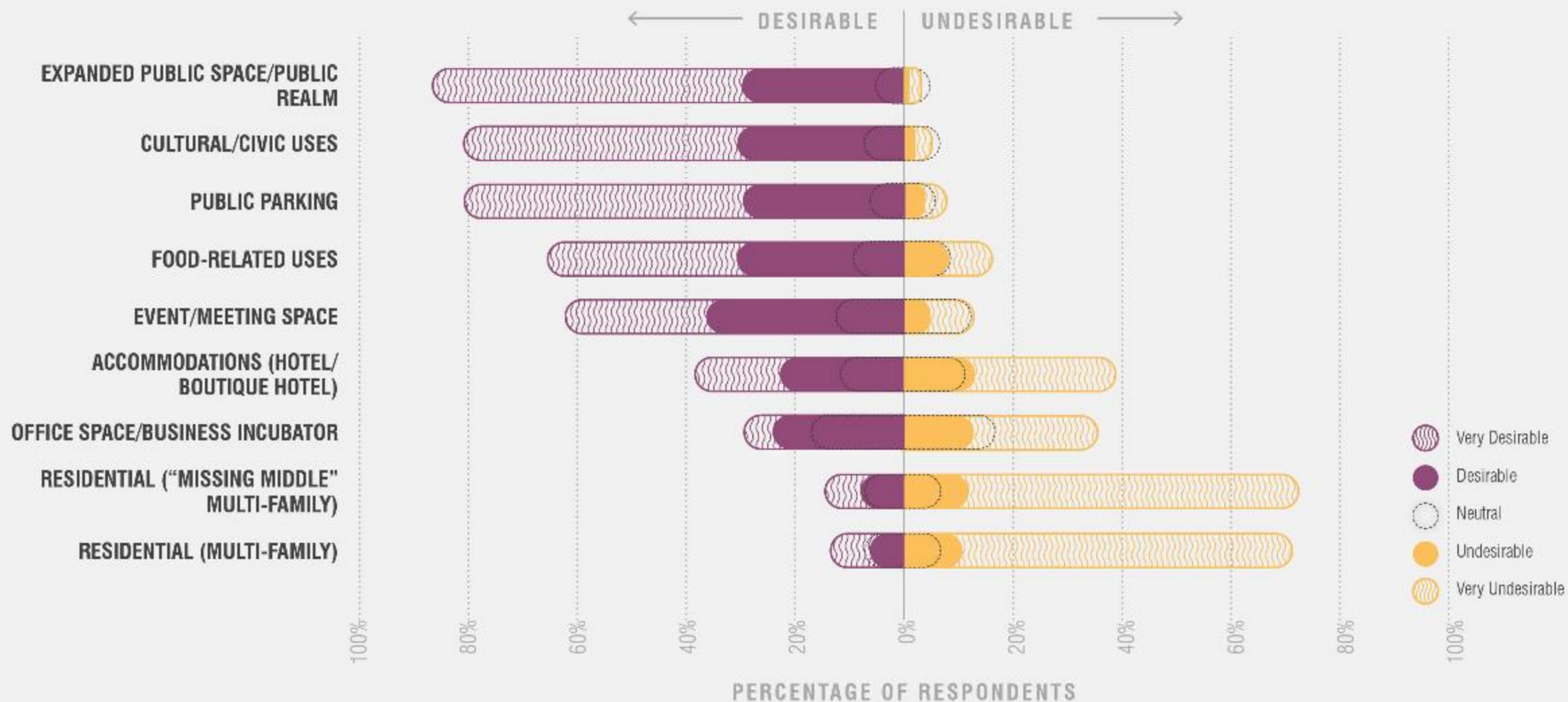


Important Improvements Conclusions

1. Protecting historic portions of building viewed as most important. There is some belief that the historic portions could be demolished, however, the building is protected by an MHT easement and is under HPC purview.
2. The connection/relationship with the former detention center is the least important. Topography may contribute to this belief.
3. Over half of respondents believe that the existing building **in its entirety** is important or very important, however, it is not clear how respondents feel about selective removal of portions of the 1988 building since the question was not asked.

DESIRABILITY OF POTENTIAL PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Please indicate the desirability of the following potential program elements on the site in the future.



Potential Program Elements Conclusions

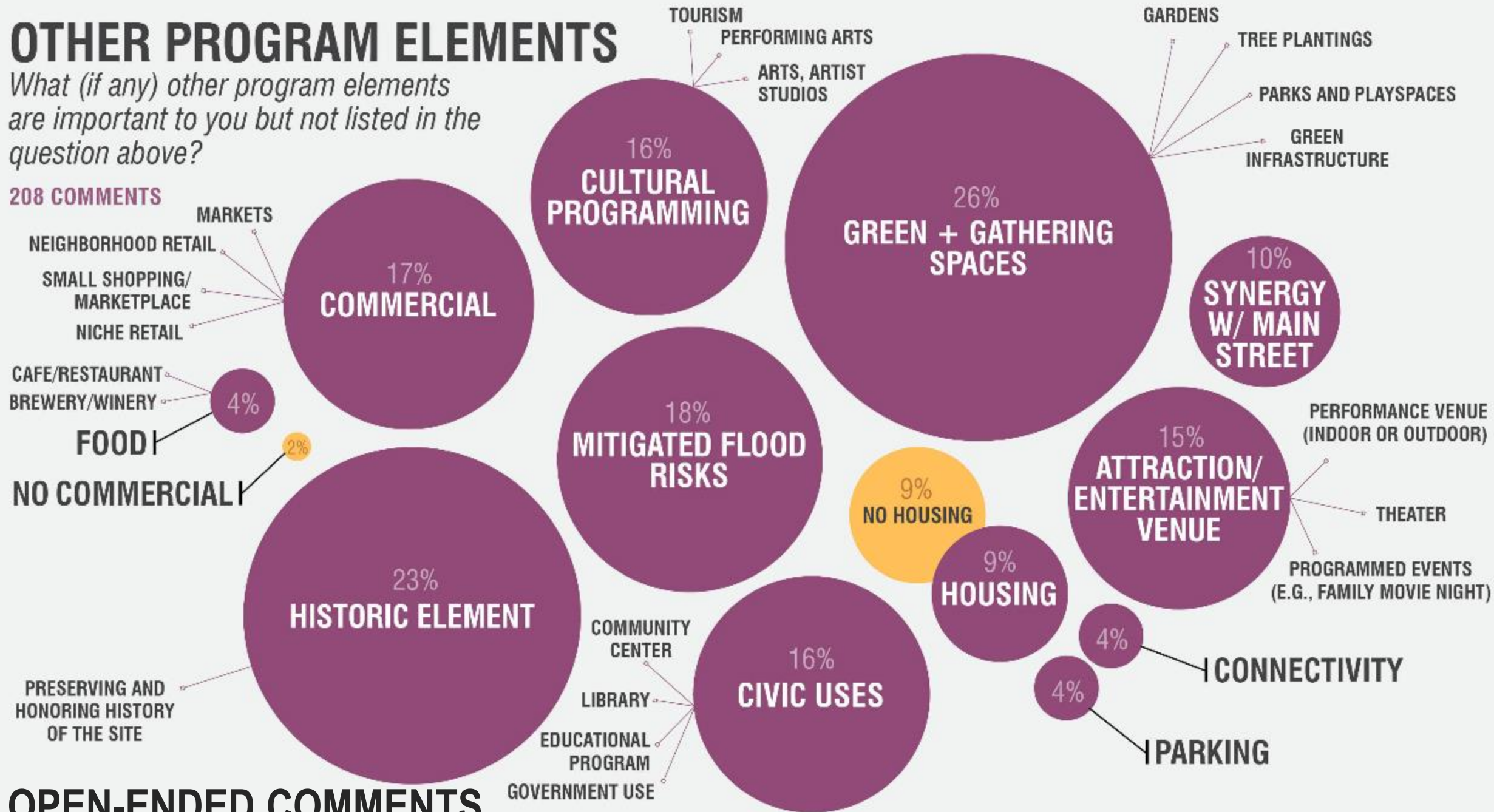
Conclusions

1. Strong desire for public/cultural uses and food-related uses. Comments indicated support for retail- particularly a marketplace.
 - *The challenge with retail is the vertical separation with Main Street. There would need to be a critical mass/destination type retail use, complementary to Main Street.*
 - *The EC Watershed Master Plan retail market study indicated a demand for accommodations, restaurants, and food-related uses that could work anywhere in the Core. There is also a demand for home furnishings, specialty shops, clothing stores, antique stores, and jewelry stores but on Main Street.*
2. Limited support for residential.
 - *Some beliefs that residential development (specifically) causes more flooding despite increased SWM that would be required for it or ANY re-use.*
 - *Some beliefs that it isn't possible to have contemporary residential design be compatible with historic districts (any development is subject to HPC approval).*
3. Evenly distributed beliefs about hotel
 - *There were many comments about supporting businesses, increased foot traffic, etc. A hotel use would certainly help this.*

OTHER PROGRAM ELEMENTS

What (if any) other program elements are important to you but not listed in the question above?

208 COMMENTS



OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

OTHER PROGRAM ELEMENTS

“Here's a chance to take down structures that exacerbate runoff and create a much-needed park amenity with small scale restaurants and shopping, with a large green space for civic and cultural events.” *(NOTE: No historic structures will be removed)*

“I would like to see more availability for tourism.”

“... If part of the lot is used for arts, dining and community uses and the rest reserved for parking and a little park or picnic area, that would be great...”

“Would be nice to see something similar to Savage Mill.”

“If you add retail, dining and/or residential space, how does it positively affect the unoccupied areas of Main Street?”

“Whatever is proposed should IMPROVE the environment and INCREASE plants and trees while REDUCING the water that floods Main Street.”

“Maintaining some County presence as the site has historically been the county seat.”

“Great opportunity to create a cultural space that will include all members of the HoCo community.”

“It should be a destination like Main St. is but in its own right. So it can stand on its own but compliment Main St.”

“Avoid residential...”

“Multi-use destination for families with theater, arcade, restaurant, bowling, outdoor space....”

“A mixed-use model that included residential and retail configuration. A look/feel similar to the Oella MillWe grow the Main Street business community by bringing them more consumers.”

Other Program Elements Conclusions

1. The comments reflect the survey response with an emphasis on having a component for cultural and public uses.
2. Again, with comments there seemed to be some belief that the historic structures are threatened. This belief is incorrect.
3. There were many comments about increased green space, tree cover, and flood mitigation/stormwater management. With more restrictive stormwater management regulations in place, signed by County Executive Ball In 2019, **any re-use of the site** will improve these conditions.

TEMPORARY USES

What are some temporary uses that might be considered in the near-term for underutilized portions of the parking lot?

256 COMMENTS



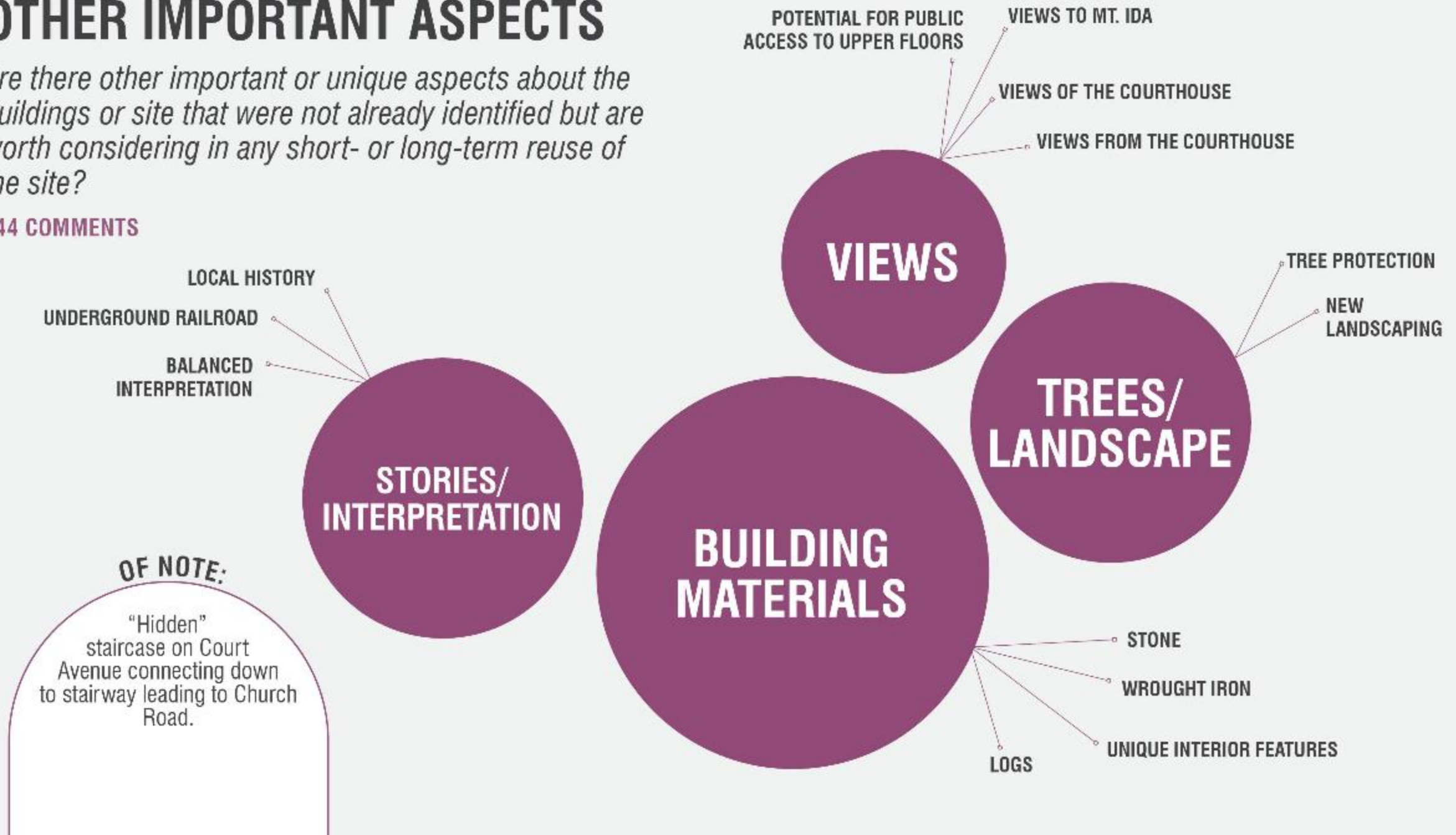
Temporary Uses Conclusions

1. Using the site for pop-up/weekly markets and festivals/events clearly rose to the top regarding temporary uses.
 - *Some respondents noted that it is important to NOT move festivals from Lot D to this location because the synergies with Main Street would be lost. Important that this be a parking resource for festivals elsewhere.*
 - *There may be some opportunities for occasional festivals or events here that have relationship with PFI.*
2. An interesting idea that was noted a couple of times suggested using underutilized portions of the lot for demonstration areas-testing different permeable pavings, food gardens, etc.
3. Temporary uses can often provide an opportunity to market the property and attract investors (for whatever the desired ultimate use may be).
4. There is the potential that temporary uses become so popular that there can be opposition to transitioning to the planned permanent uses. Intent and expectations should be clearly set at the beginning of establishing any temporary uses.

OTHER IMPORTANT ASPECTS

Are there other important or unique aspects about the buildings or site that were not already identified but are worth considering in any short- or long-term reuse of the site?

144 COMMENTS

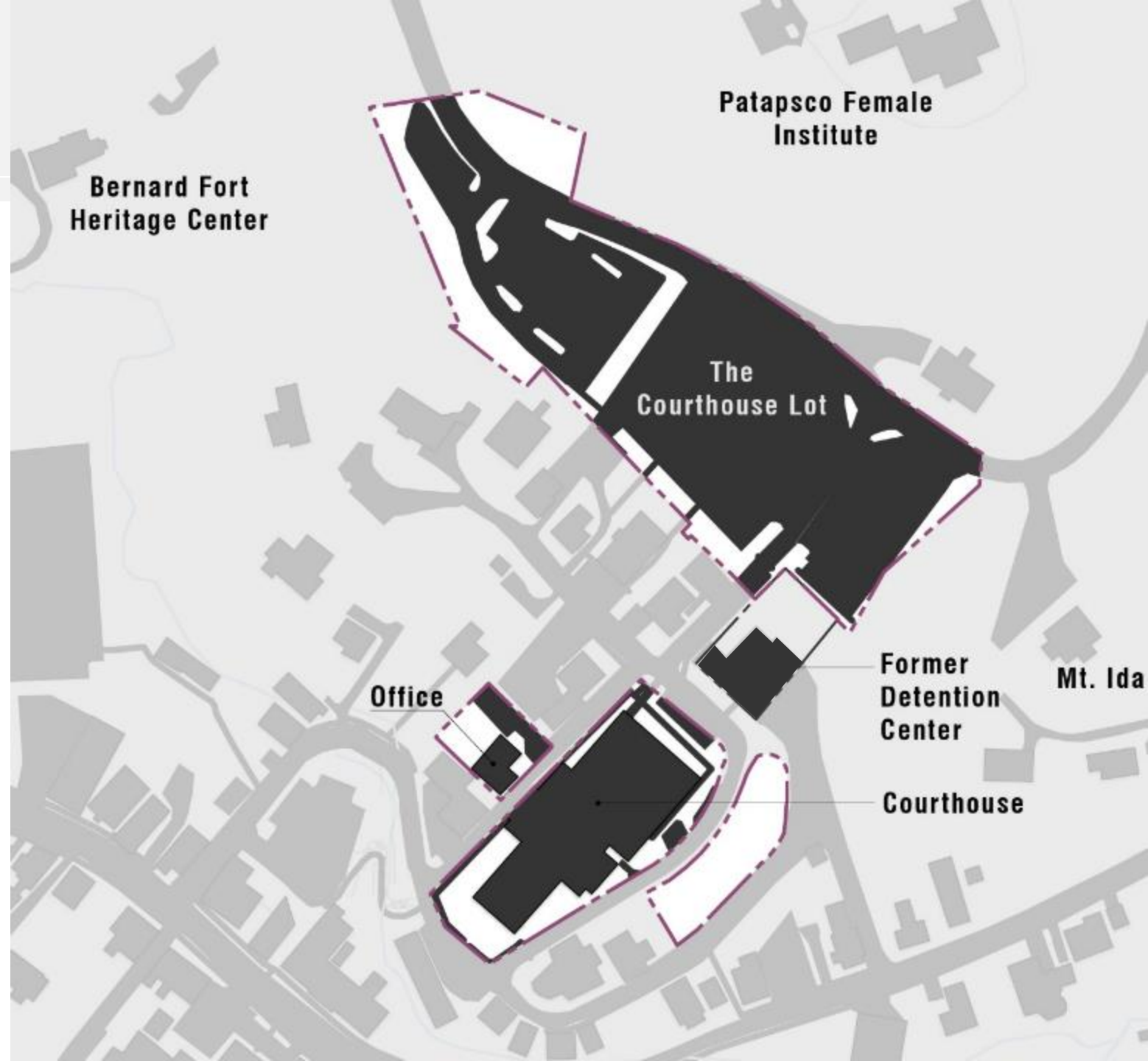


Other Important Aspects Conclusions

1. The percentages here are low because many of the comments in this section didn't really answer the question or repeated comments about program elements made earlier.
2. Protecting and not removing existing trees came up repeatedly in the comments. There are very few existing trees on the site since it is mostly paved.

Existing Property

- Impervious Surface Coverage



SUCCESS IS

290 COMMENTS

a destination

preserved historic character

increased foot traffic

serving the community

reduced flood impacts

a mix of uses

non-residential spaces

more green space

24%

21%

19%

16%

15%

13%

7%

6%

SUCCESS IS

"That visitors to Historic Ellicott City make the Courthouse Property a part of their visit."

"Historically preserved, fully occupied."

"...historical features and a vibrant multi-use facility."

"...becomes a natural extension of all things Old Ellicott City."

"...balancing nostalgia and practicality..."

"...it is used by the community weekly."

"...reducing stormwater runoff ...reducing contribution to flooding downslope."

"A green space that is being used as a community hub...."

"Increased visitor count and increased revenues for existing businesses."

"Return of cost to develop/rehab..."

"It adds amenities that do not currently exist in Old Ellicott City."

"Maintenance of the historic character, connected cohesive transition between Main Street and the courthouse...."

"...a balance of long-term sustainable residential, public, commercial goals."

"That it isn't developed into housing..."

Success in 20 Years Conclusions

1. In comments related to this area becoming a destination, the majority of comments talked about the importance of the site and its re-use being an extension of “all things OEC”. The site needs to be clearly integrated into the broader Core.
2. Related to increased foot traffic, this is the comment that most appeared under a broader collection of comments related to positive metrics such as increased business revenues, success of tenants in Courthouse as well as all of EC, return on investment, etc.
3. These comments can potentially form the foundation of re-use goals included in the RFP.



Other Observations

Other Observations

1. Re-use will occur on the portion of the site that is predominantly developed and is asphalt or building. It is not green/open space. **Regardless of use, the reuse will result in an increase in green space, tree cover, and stormwater management.**
2. Economic development is important for historic districts to remain viable and thrive. There are safeguards in place to ensure any redevelopment is complementary and appropriate for the District.
3. Redevelopment is a more responsible approach to growth.
4. Any re-use of the site will likely enhance wildlife habitat beyond what a large surface parking lot offers for wildlife.
5. Delaying redevelopment until after flood mitigation is implemented would result in the potential loss of economic benefit from redevelopment; especially to businesses recovering from floods and the pandemic.



Facilitated Discussion

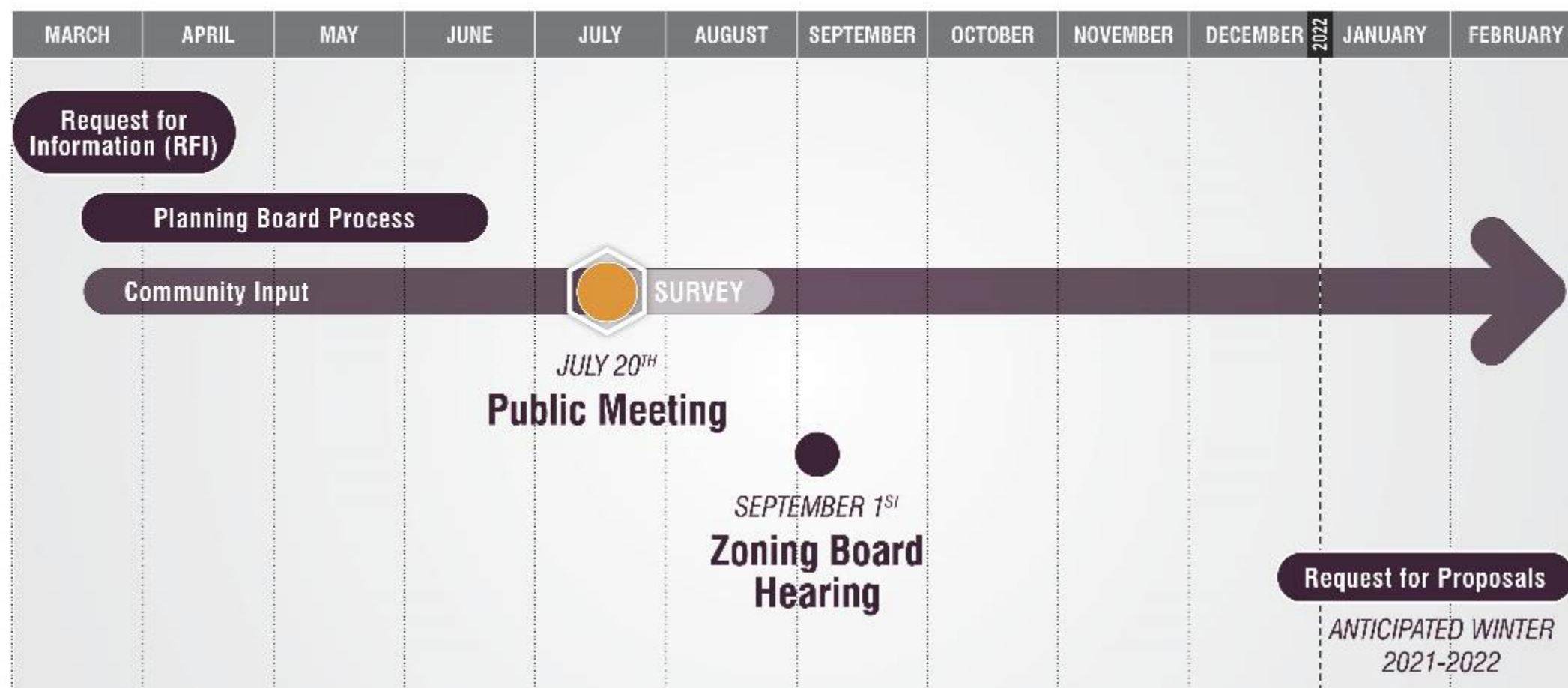
 | **Next Steps**

Next Steps

1. September 1 Zoning Board Hearing
2. Use Survey Input to Inform Requests for Proposals
3. Winter 2021/22 Requests for Proposals

Next Steps

COURTHOUSE RE-USE | Timeline and Process



Thank you

