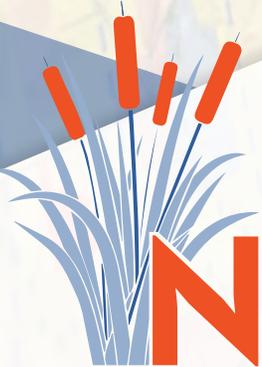


SOUTHSIDE, AL

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

A SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT FINDINGS



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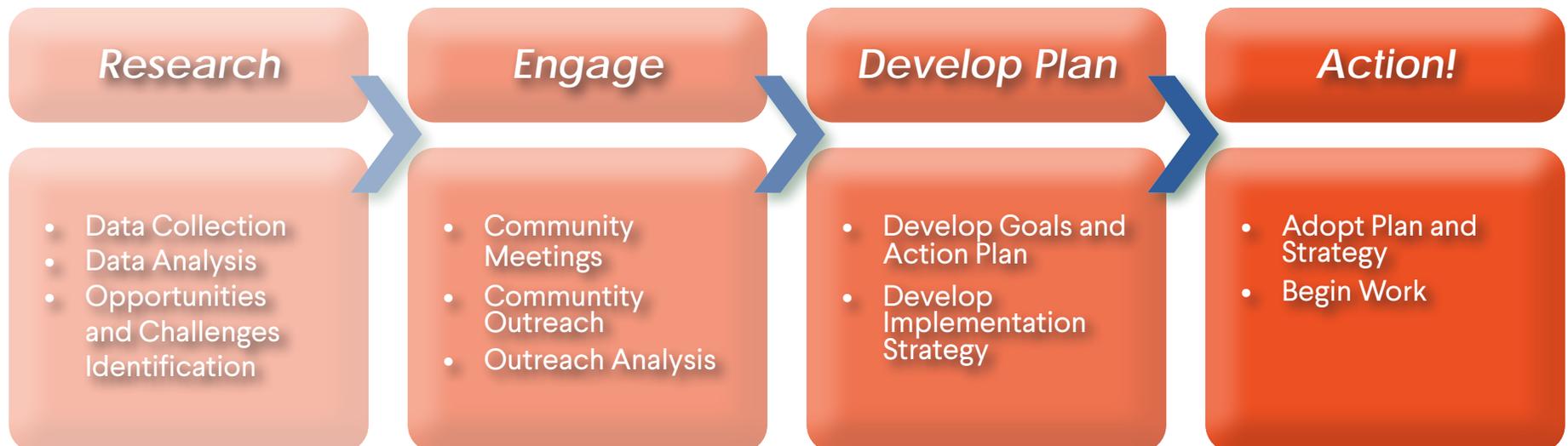
SOUTHSIDE SPEAKS

Southside Speaks is an analysis of the public input gathered from the people of Southside. It is the second step in a four pronged approach to create and implement a strategic master plan for the community. This report was compiled using the guidance and direction of Southsiders residents as communicated through stakeholder and public meetings as well as online surveys and comments. As an objective analysis, this document reports the input of Southsiders as given, without drawing any final conclusions or recommendations. Along with the trends and conditions identified in step one, the findings in this report will be used to help generate specific development goals in the upcoming plan development phase. This report should be used to spark critical thinking and conversations about the future of Southside and to identify important topics for further exploration.



The city of Southside in the Spring of 2021 initiated a strategic master planning process to develop a new comprehensive plan and draft a new corridor overlay zoning district. Known as Southside Next, this process will draw upon statistical analysis, community and stakeholder vision, and strategic recommendations to generate an action plan that can be used by Southside to guide future development practices. The final product will be a living document forged by and for the community.

PLAN PROCESS



METHODS + PARTICIPANTS

The following summarizes the outreach methods used throughout the public input phase of the planning process as well as the demographic makeup of participants. Outreach was conducted via stakeholder and general public meetings along with the online community survey and comments left on the project website (*southsidenext.com*).



Stakeholder Interviews

The outreach campaign began with a group of stakeholders (elected officials, business owners, long-time residents, etc.) that was selected by the city to represent a variety of groups in the larger community. This group of roughly 12 citizens engaged in small group discussions where key topics such as mobility, housing, economic development, etc. were explored with the project management team. They helped the project management team develop an early understanding of Southside's needs, challenges, and opportunities as the planning process and introductory research were getting underway. They also helped provide guidance and feedback on existing trends and conditions prior to the larger public meeting.



Public Meeting / Charrette

The focal point of the outreach campaign, a public meeting and workshop, was hosted in the Southside Community Center on November 4, 2021. Drawing in a diversity of interested citizens, the public meeting had about 45 people in attendance. Participants skewed slightly older and whiter, with underrepresentation of young adults and racial minorities. Findings from the existing trends and conditions research were presented to the public, after which attendees completed a questionnaire in which they rated the importance of various development priorities. The meeting concluded with a mapping exercise in which small groups suggested improvements they would like to see included in the draft master plan.



Online Survey & Comments

The broadest reaching part of the public outreach campaign was conducted using online platforms to maximize the amount of input from the community and to give those unable to attend in person events the chance to let their voice be heard prior to plan development. In addition to several comment forms submitted through the project website, 327 responses to the online survey were collected primarily during the last two weeks of October 2021 leading up to the public meeting at the beginning of November 2021. 92% of respondents were current residents of Southside, 17% currently work in Southside, and 7% own a business in Southside. 50% of the responses were from long-term residents who have lived in Southside for more than 15 years.

RESULTS

The following section summarizes the input from all portions of the public outreach campaign. Findings are grouped by topic and are not intended to be exclusive or absolute as there was wide variation in opinions received during the campaign.



1. General Opinion (pg. 4)

Overall, Southside residents love the city and a substantial majority would like to see both continued population growth and the development of a walkable town center. The local park system was rated the lowest of city services while city facilities and water/ sewer received the highest ratings.



2. Parks & Recreation (pg. 6)

A strong majority of residents feel that there are insufficient opportunities for outdoor recreation and that more public events should be hosted by the city. The top requested recreational amenities were:

1. Parks/ playgrounds
2. Walking/ biking/ hiking trails
3. Splash pad/ pool



3. Transportation (pg. 7)

Roads were a primary area of concern for residents, who stressed the need for new cycling and pedestrian infrastructure as well as road repairs and/ or upgrades at the following locations (top 3):

1. Cedar Bend Road
2. Coosa River Bridges
3. Highway 77



4. Housing (pg. 8)

A large majority of respondents felt that housing options in Southside are affordable, while they were split almost evenly on whether more housing should be developed to accommodate the city's growing population. The most requested types of new housing were:

1. Single-family detached (larger lots)
2. Apartments/ townhomes
3. Garden homes (smaller lots)



5. Economy (pg. 9)

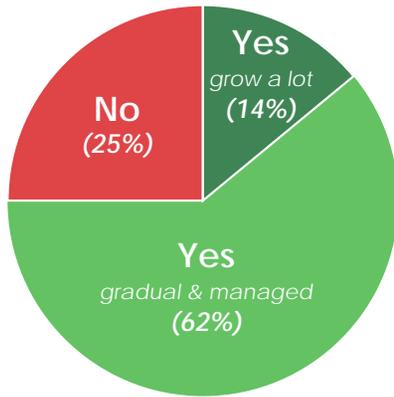
By a large margin, fast food is the most used type of business in town, followed by dine-in restaurants and grocery stores. 88% of respondents felt that Southside needs to increase the number of businesses located in town. The most requested types of new businesses were:

1. Dine-in restaurants
2. Grocery
3. Retail

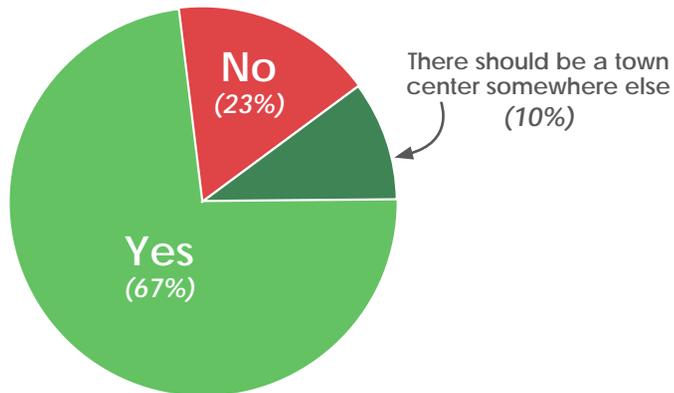
1. GENERAL OPINION

Future Growth & Development

Would you like to see continued population growth in Southside?



Would you like Southside to have a walkable town center on the Hwy 77 commercial corridor?



Municipal Services Ratings

Parks & Recreation Opportunities



2.4
avg. rating

Road Conditions



2.8
avg. rating

Visual Character



2.6
avg. rating

City Facilities (city hall, fire station, etc.)



3.5
avg. rating

Water & Sewer Services



3.5
avg. rating

Telecommunication Services (internet, cell, etc.)



3.1
avg. rating

Favorite Things

What do you love about Southside?

	Votes		Votes
1. People/ community	81	6. Location/ convenience	15
2. Small town feel	63	7. Agricultural lands	13
3. Safety/ fire & police	54	8. Housing/ cost of living	12
4. Coosa River	45	9. Natural beauty of land	11
5. Schools	24	10. Local businesses	10

Development Priorities Ranking

		total score
1.	Encourage Southside's growth while protecting its charm.	171
2.	Improve roads as Southside continues to grow.	164
TIE 3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the "look and feel" of Hwy 77. Proactively recruit retail businesses. 	156
5.	Develop walking trails in the city.	155
TIE 6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become a more engaging city for seniors and youths. Continue to expand and improve city parks. 	152
8.	Expand the city's local job market.	150
9.	Increase and improve public access to the Coosa River.	141
10.	Develop a retail town center in Southside.	135

Opportunities

Throughout the public outreach campaign, the following opportunities were identified by participants as potential building blocks for the draft master plan:

- Coosa River
- New town center
- Riverfront dining
- New grocery store
- Land availability
- Hwy 77 commuters
- Marketability as a good place to live
- New parks/ outdoor recreational spots
- Campground
- Green Mtn. hiking
- Proximity to the auto industry
- Vineyard
- Good quality of existing housing
- New housing types
- New light industry
- Cafe/ bakery
- Interstate access
- New river bridge
- Sewer expansion
- Outdoor event spot

Challenges

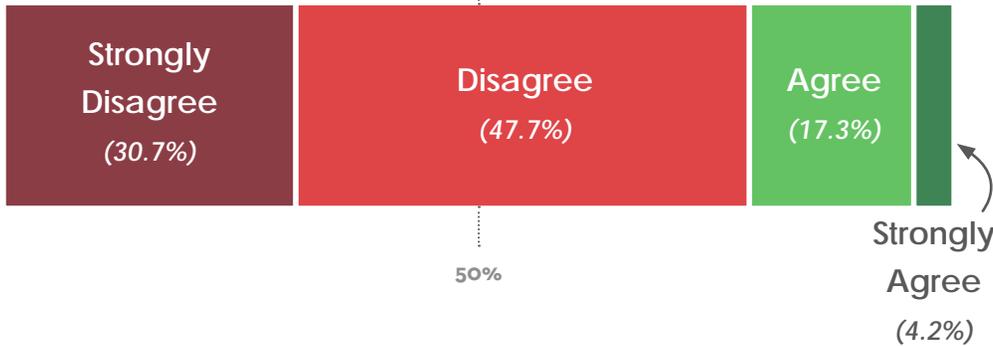
Throughout the public outreach campaign, the following challenges were identified by participants as potential obstacles to success that the master plan must address:

- Traffic congestion
- Conflicting visions among residents
- Business vacancies
- Building conditions
- Working with large scale landowners
- Lack of town center
- Condition/ capacity of local bridges
- No long term vision in new construction
- Population growth
- Back roads narrow/ in poor condition
- Limited dining/ retail
- No free debris pick up
- Flooding/ drainage
- No sidewalks
- Tax base too small
- Unregulated design
- Racial inequities
- Limited entertainment
- Cost of living
- Current zoning
- No real public parks

2. PARKS & RECREATION

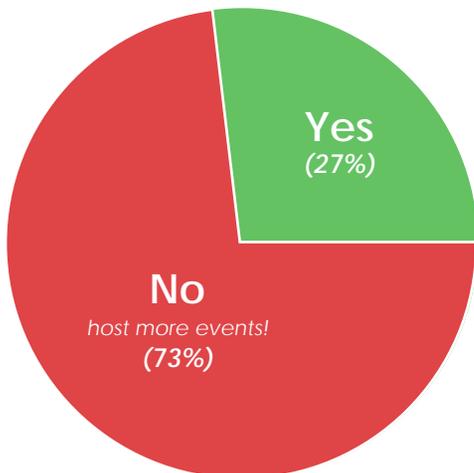
Current Opportunities

Southside has enough public parks and open space to support all of my recreational needs.



Community Events

Does Southside have enough public event opportunities? (such as Southside City Fest)



New Recreation Wanted

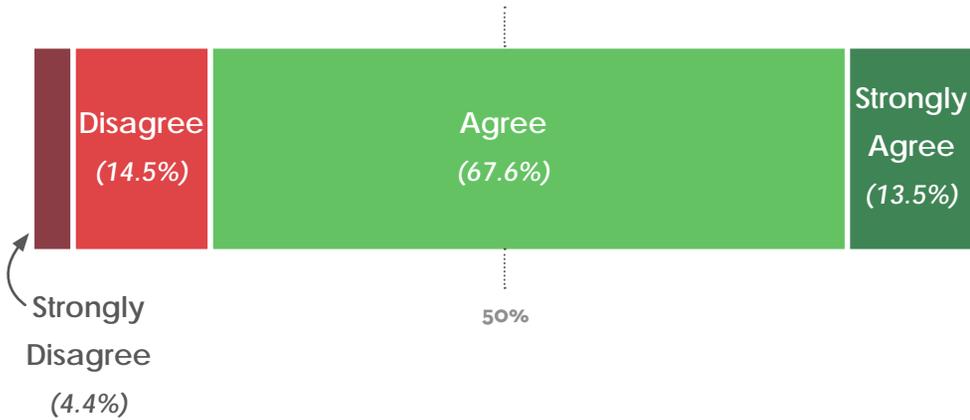
What recreational opportunities does Southside not have that you would like to see added?

	Votes
1. Parks/ playgrounds	101
2. Walking/ biking/ hiking trails	71
3. Splash pad/ pool	60
4. Riverfront recreation	27
5. Boat rentals, kayaking, etc.	21
6. Tennis courts	20
7. Dog park	18
8. Basketball courts	12
9. Fitness center	11
10. Teen recreation (arcade, etc.)	9
11. Riverfront restaurant	8
TIE 12. Golf	6
12. Rubberized track	6
TIE 14. Pickleball	4
14. Camping sites	4
14. Outdoor music venue	4
14. Movie theater	4
TIE 18. Stuff for seniors	3
18. Archery/ shooting range	3
18. Disc golf	3

4. HOUSING

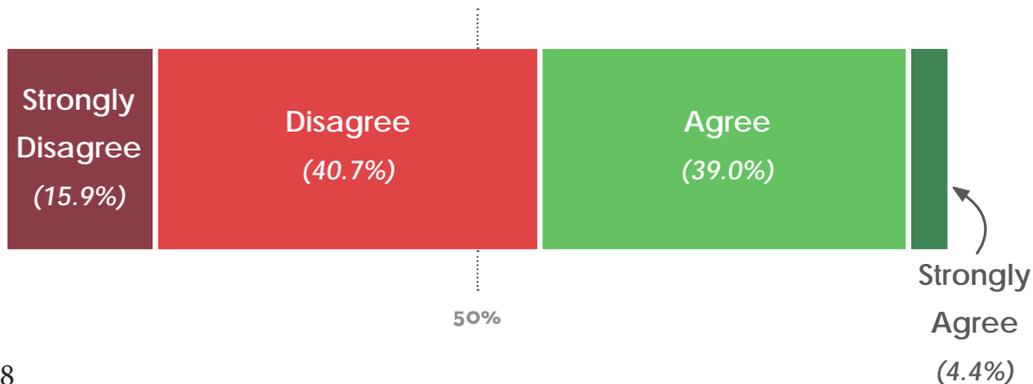
Affordability

Housing opportunities in Southside are affordable to me.



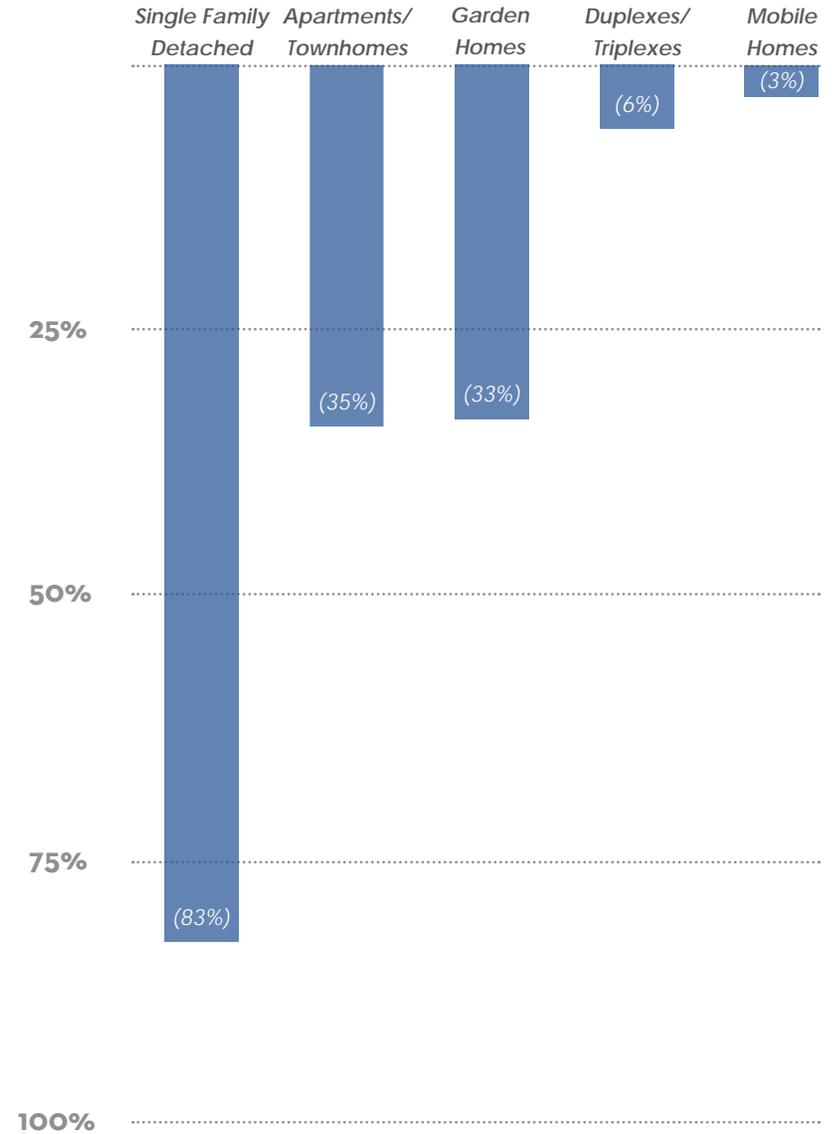
New Development

Southside needs to develop more housing to accommodate its growing population.



Housing Types

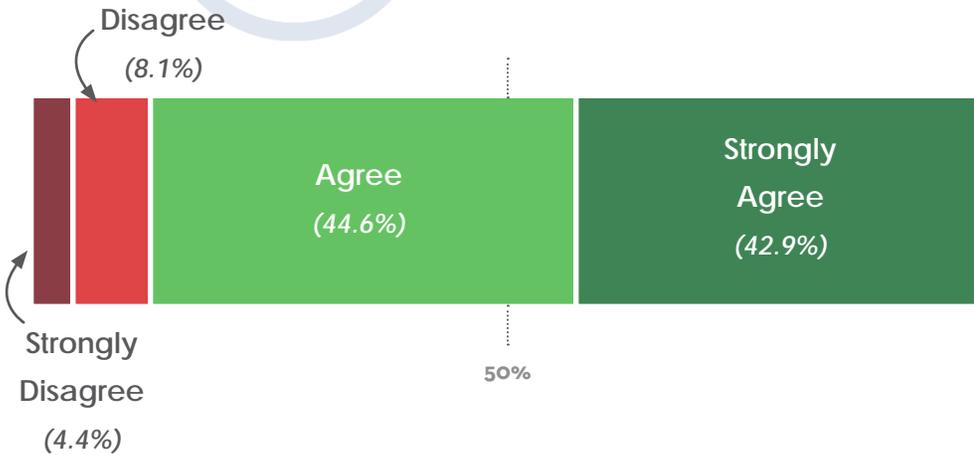
What additional types of housing are needed in Southside, if any?



5. BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Business Development

Southside needs more businesses in the city.



Patronage

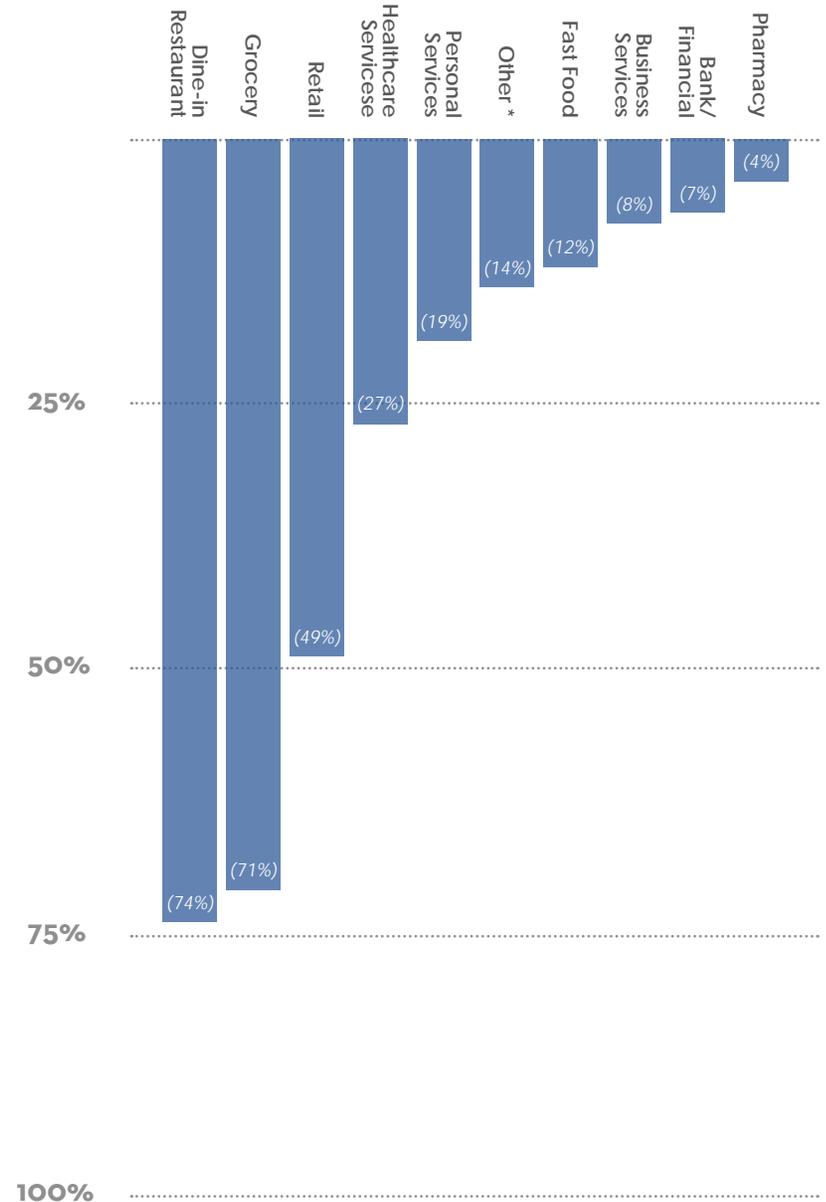
What kinds of businesses do you commonly utilize in Southside?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Fast Food (84%) | 6. Bank/ Financial (26%) |
| 2. Dine-in Restaurant (46%) | 7. Healthcare Services (22%) |
| 3. Grocery (45%) | 8. Personal Services (18%) |
| 4. Pharmacy (37%) | 9. Other * (17%) |
| 5. Retail (35%) | 10. Business Services (11%) |

* gas stations / convenience stores / vets, etc.

New Business Types Wanted

What kinds of businesses would you like to have more of in Southside, if any?



* entertainment & recreation / light industrial / bars / auto shop, etc.



EXIT



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