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TOWN OF CHESTER
PLANNING COMMISSION
February 6, 2023, Minutes

Commission Members Present: Peter Hudkins, Tim Roper, Cathy Hasbrouck, Barre Pinske, and Hugh Quinn at Town Hall.

Staff Present: Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator/Town Planner, at Town Hall; and Susan Bailey, Recording Secretary, via Zoom.

Citizens Present: Jason Rasmussen of MARC, and Bill Lindsay at Town Hall; and Steve Mancuso via Zoom.

Call to Order

Chair Hugh Quinn called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Decisions Made: The regular meeting will follow the hearing on February 22nd.

Action Taken: Preston and Jason will continue to work with the flood maps; and the Community Survey will be put into an Excel spreadsheet for further information.

Agenda Item 1, Changes to the Agenda

Cathy wanted to add a status of the administrative amendments and where they were in the process. Hugh said in general, they weren't supposed to add anything to the agenda because it hadn't been warned but thought because it was a status, they could. Cathy wanted to update people where they were in the process. Preston thought it would be okay to do that. Preston mentioned Hugh used to include a roundtable on the agenda and Hugh thought maybe he would add it to the end.

Preston announced that per state law, when the short-term rental ordinance was passed on December 7th, people had 60 days to circulate a petition and call for a public vote which ended yesterday, so the ordinance became effective today.

Hugh asked Cathy if she wanted to give her an update. Cathy said she transmitted the proposed changes to the 9 abutting towns, the ACCD people, and Jason in his role as Regional Planning Commissioner. She heard back from all 9 towns that it was received. The hearing will be on Wednesday, February 22nd at 6:30 p.m. rather than being held on Monday, February 20th, President's Day. Preston thought it better than having the hearing on a holiday. Hugh said that made sense. There was discussion and it was decided not to meet on February 20th but to meet on February 22nd following the hearing. Barre asked if the Selectboard would hold a hearing after and Cathy said the Planning Commission would need to vote on it before it went to the Selectboard.

Hugh asked for any other status updates and there were none.

1 **Agenda Item 2, Review and Approve Minutes from January 16, 2023, meeting**
2

3 Barre moved to review and approve the January 16, 2023, meeting minutes and Peter seconded
4 the motion. Hugh asked if there were any updates to the minutes. Barre noted on page 5, line 11
5 that flood trench should be floodplain. Peter said it should be flood fringe and not trench. Preston
6 added that it was unfortunate to him certain terminologies had evolved. Floodway and flood fringe
7 were also called the floodplain and the flood hazard area. Preston added if you worked with the
8 terms, you knew what they were. A vote was taken, and the minutes were approved, as amended.
9

10 **Agenda Item 3, Citizen Comments**

11
12 Steve Mancuso read the packet and said after he did, coffee tasted better and when he walked
13 outside, the sun seemed brighter. He applauded their efforts. They've made it easier for business
14 to be business in Chester. At the end of March, Steve said they will be discussing the empty
15 buildings and what can be done. Steve said they are trying to get Bob Flynn from Regional
16 Development on board to speak, along with others. Steve couldn't believe the amount of work the
17 Commission had done in such a short time and turned things around as they had. It was
18 phenomenal. He thought the average Joe on the street in Chester had no idea. He asked if someone
19 from the Commission could attend their meeting in March and explain it to them.
20

21 **Agenda Item 4, Review Draft UBD Updates for the Village Zoning Districts**
22

23 Having completed the administrative section of the bylaw updates, the next step was to look at the
24 districts in the village area. That work had begun and there was a lot of information on the maps
25 that had been developed and proposed. Hugh wanted to focus on the open space part of the map,
26 initially. He wanted to scope the discussion around the portion of the map that outlined the new
27 proposed zone for open space. There will be other discussions going forward to consider proposed
28 adjustments for other zones. Hugh asked Jason if there could be an overlay with the current zoning
29 districts and the proposed, making it easier for someone like him to see where things are changing.
30 Hugh found himself looking at the draft map and the current map and tried to do an overlay in his
31 head. He found that difficult and thought it would help him and others to understand how zones
32 are changing with respect to what they have today. Jason would ask his staff to see if that was
33 possible. Cathy said she and Peter tried to do it and she suggested having a clear plastic overlay.
34 Preston said in the old days, they did it that way. Barre suggested printing it on acetate. Jason said
35 they could print it on a mylar sheet. Hugh thought that would be helpful.
36

37 Preston said the written document had to do with the Village Center district and the new open
38 space district. Preston said he wasn't a hydrologist and wasn't there during Irene. He said Williams
39 River has been straightened and armored and whenever that is done, the water moves fast. From
40 what he was told, during Irene, there was water behind Sunoco but basically the water went through
41 town fast and didn't do any damage. When it got down to the part of town where the railroad trestle
42 is, it was a wild caldron of fastmoving water that slowed down which is what a floodplain is
43 supposed to do. Preston felt weird that Brandy had zoned that area all general business. He thought
44 the problem was they didn't have anything else to call it. When Peter came up with the idea that
45 they could label it as its own district, Preston and Jason discussed it and agreed. Preston said he
46 had worked with Otis to try to exclude any buildings in the pea green colored district on the map.

1 What it meant was the floodplain and floodway were bigger in that district and within the district
2 was the Yosemite Firehouse, Smitty's, a stone house owned by D.D.A., the sewage treatment plant,
3 and American Legion, so they excluded them. They would still have to go through a flood review
4 but would be in a district that allowed you to build. They currently have a district that doesn't
5 allow it except for accessory structures related to recreation, civic, community, or arts. Jason
6 thought this area of flood fringe was worthy of extra protection. Jason asked if the map looked
7 right in terms of open fields where they don't want stuff to happen because of flooding. He
8 suggested having recreational activities or similar, but they were mostly shooting for open space.
9

10 Barre liked the idea of the open space and the recreational possibilities and was his idea for the
11 field next to the Legion. He was interested in what happened during Irene. He attended many
12 meetings, including where a guy from Springfield talked at the high school. Barre looked at
13 satellite maps after the meeting for runoff. Barre thought part of the problem was the railroad track
14 works like a dike and the low bridges got caught up with trees which blocked the river flow. The
15 road that goes to the sewage treatment plant used to be a bridge and a much larger culvert and
16 spillway on the side of the railroad tracks. Barre said part of his idea in making that land useful
17 would be investing in the idea of a spillway along the railroad tracks to get the water to move so it
18 doesn't go into the center of the field. He said the culvert that goes under the road to the sewage
19 treatment plant is small and what could serve as a spillway was filled in. He wondered if by making
20 rules like these would take away the possibility for mitigation or better ideas. Barre said keeping
21 the river cleaner would help the bridge from getting plugged up. He thought if they raised the
22 bridge, it would help the river flow instead of getting plugged up, but he didn't think they would
23 do that. Barre thought the map was more inclusive than needed. He thought if they got sewer up
24 where Route 11 meets Green Mountain Turnpike, they could have affordable housing there and
25 added that the lower part floods and not the higher part. Barre pointed out the north side of the
26 Green Mountain Turnpike where it heads back toward the Stone Village and floods across the road
27 and thought if there was drainage, a stream, and some type of mitigation, the land could be utilized.
28 He noted the lot next to the Legion is 7 1/2 acres and was an independent lot owned by the Legion.
29 He thought if their dimensional standards are 10 acres, they would jeopardize use of that lot. He
30 thought 10 acres was a lot and wasn't sure it needed to be that large. He suggested it may be easier
31 to acquire a smaller piece of land to do something on higher ground if 10 acres wasn't required.
32

33 Jason mentioned the little patch of green on the north side of Green Mountain Turnpike which was
34 in the open space district. Jason asked what the others thought about Barre's suggestion that it
35 could be excluded. Preston said when talking about Route 11 and Green Mountain Turnpike,
36 Preston thought he may have missed that there was a house in the field on the right which was
37 shaded and shouldn't be. Barre thought it was something that could possibly be developed, and
38 Preston said he was right, that it was a mistake with the house. Barre had kayaked the river and
39 was familiar with its depth and how high it could get and thought there was good ground there.
40

41 Peter said the background on his map is the Federal FEMA map and that was who calls it out.
42 Peter said the theory of Otis' map was to follow property lines as opposed to what Peter was saying
43 to just follow the FEMA map and use elevations. He said there was a bill currently in the
44 legislature, H.R. 29, where the State of Vermont will eliminate the local or municipal exemptions
45 for floodway, so Chester would no longer be able to have any jurisdiction in the floodplain. Tim
46 was expecting to see it follow contour lines rather than lot lines.

1 Barre said they had talked about it at the last meeting and talked about having difficulty in the
2 zoning rules working through a floodplain because it was part one way or another way but, in this
3 case, the open space was based on the floodplain it may make for a better argument. Barre thought
4 otherwise, you would include all of it and rather than having any dwellings allow for a possible
5 dwelling in a higher part of the ground and use appropriate language. Barre suggested if the lot
6 had a floodplain, but the entire lot wasn't in the floodplain but in that zone, they could build on
7 the high ground and wouldn't have to break it up.

8
9 Hugh said they had the discussion of creating the zone around lot boundaries or around elevation.
10 While it made sense to do it on elevation on the first cut, his question was if they did that, they
11 would include lots with structures on them. Peter disagreed and said most of the lots with structures
12 are not. Peter said what was usable like the big piece next to the Legion and that there was a big
13 section closer to Route 103 that was much higher and didn't flood, so that didn't bring the value
14 down to none. Peter said the other thing was the language included in the open space district. Peter
15 said they could say all applications for development required flood hazard review and must be
16 reviewed by the Development Review Board which they could include a phrase saying if it was
17 out of the floodplain, it matched X district. Peter was originally thinking the floodplain was called
18 out by elevation and the abutting district would call out lot sizes and uses. If you had a place split
19 by the elevation, rather than try to make separate rules, they could say on the east side of the river
20 they would follow a neighborhood district. If you went in there and were on that side on a piece
21 of higher ground, they would be in the district next to it. Peter said coming up Route 103 they were
22 talking mixed use and thought next to the Legion on the higher ground they would have mixed
23 use. The entire property would not become useless due to elevation.

24
25 Hugh wanted to restate what Peter said to make sure he understood. If Hugh had a lot, and part of
26 it was in the open space district because of its elevation, and the other part was on higher ground,
27 the part on the higher ground would fall under the rules of the abutting district. Peter agreed.

28
29 Barre didn't have a big horse in this race and wasn't saying he wanted to be able to build in a
30 floodplain but his concern was we live in a unique area without a lot of flat ground and they have
31 a coalition of people who don't want a lot of development in the woods so as a member of the
32 board, in considering people and affordable housing in the community, the fact that the 100 year
33 old floods happen every 100 years and he likely wouldn't see another one. He didn't want to
34 overstep the federal government but, if possible, they don't jeopardize opportunities for a neat
35 affordable housing project in a field somewhere because they were stating no development in a
36 place they may be able to do that to be close to town. He said all that area was close to town and
37 it was some of the only open ground they had.

38
39 Jason said there were a lot of other floodplain or flood fringe areas in town that were much more
40 extensive than the area they were discussing, and they weren't going away. He said any
41 development in those areas would need to go through the flood development process, so they
42 would consider whether it could be floodproofed. To him, the benefit of the district they were
43 discussing was that it went above and beyond the flood rules saying this area because of where the
44 tributaries converge and there was a lot of flooding and the experience during Irene and throughout
45 history, it was an area with particular risk of flooding and was also an area with nice fields that
46 was scenic. Jason suggested they could also have recreation trails or other things happen. He

1 thought it was an area that you would want extra protection and limiting the types of development
2 that would happen there. Hugh said that made sense to him but to Barre's point, when he thought
3 about it that way, the way they were accomplishing it was by saying in this zone there were no
4 permitted uses but these conditional uses which were limited. Hugh thought the only thing they
5 would need to discuss if they took that approach was if there were any other conditional uses, to
6 Barre's point, they might want to explore in this zone so they don't waste a piece of land that could
7 be used for something because they made it too restrictive. Hugh said he was just asking the
8 question. Hugh wondered to Barre's other point, what the significance of 10 acres was and why it
9 wasn't 2 or 5. Hugh didn't understand the logic behind the lot size. Jason said those were good
10 questions. Cathy pointed out that the green areas were fields. Nobody is chomping at the bit to
11 build there. Barre said that wasn't necessarily true and it was whether someone wanted to sell.
12 Barre knew that people had asked the Holdens, and they didn't want to sell. Barre said whether
13 someone wanted to build was whether land was available and said they also don't have water and
14 sewer which was a factor. Cathy found it interesting and saw wisdom in the way the land was, and
15 people did not want to build there, and it was still open land. She thought it would be wise for them
16 to support that. She said it has worked well during Irene and there were other places to build. She
17 said Jeff sold the part of his land that was elevated. Barre wasn't aware. Cathy said he is keeping
18 the fields and flat space and has sold the brushy hills.

19
20 Barre mentioned the high ground on the corner of Route 103 and Green Mountain Turnpike and
21 that he had an idea to build a barn and put it on a field in that corner. If he was able to secure
22 funding, it would be an interesting place for affordable housing. In the spirit of Cathy's comments
23 about preserving the land and the spirit of trying to help the community, if necessary, he thought
24 language for a funded affordable housing project in one of the places might bend the rules to have
25 something good happen for the community. Cathy understood but said there were a lot of other
26 places where they could put barns but not a lot of other places where they could put floodwater,
27 so she thought it was wise to work with Mother Nature who needs a place to put the floodwater.

28
29 Tim's assumption when he saw the 10 acres was most of the lots were smaller than 10 acres so
30 they would be non-conforming. He said if the big fields were sold, they couldn't be subdivided to
31 less than 10 acres and would remain fields. He asked if he was correct and that was the logic around
32 10 acres. Jason said he thought that was part of the thought process and asked Preston for his
33 thoughts. Hugh said it made sense but because of where it was, he questioned what they would
34 subdivide it for as there wasn't much that could be done. Tim said there was civic and institutional
35 which was government. Jason said the wastewater plant or something similar could go there.
36 Preston said civic or institutional were defined in the back. Preston thought they were trying to say
37 even though the only structures you could have were accessory structures, the lands would be great
38 places for certain kinds of events. Cathy noted they had talked about the Big Buzz. Preston said
39 they were trying to leave the door open if they could. Hugh noted the civic uses were non-profit,
40 religious, or public use such as a religious building, library, cemetery, public or private school,
41 hospital, or government-owned operated structure or land used for public purposes. Tim thought
42 it would be a bad place for a cemetery. Jason said they were thinking recreational like a trail or
43 ballfield. Jason said there may be outdoor space that could be used for festivals was their thinking.
44 Preston said Barre had the Big Buzz there once and that would be fine. Hugh thought it made sense
45 and would be required to go before the DRB so if it was something inappropriate for civic use, he
46 was sure it wouldn't be approved. Preston said some towns say only non-profit or governmental

1 but that there were some activities that didn't fit that category. Hugh was still struggling to
2 understand the logic behind the minimum lot size and whether it mattered. Barre thought it did.
3 Preston thought that was a fair question and it was true Jason and he had met, and they didn't want
4 much to happen there, so they made it a big lot district. Preston wasn't sure that was necessary.
5 Jason agreed and suggested 5 if that was a better number. Hugh suggested a lot size that wouldn't
6 create a lot of non-conforming numbers. Preston thought 3 or 5. Barre thought anything above 9.9
7 would go before Act 250, so 10 acres would require people to go through Act 250. Barre said with
8 respect to what he envisioned as festival grounds for the town which the Legion currently owns,
9 they are doing a little bit with it but not what he had hoped or envisioned. Barre said Act 250 was
10 tied to it because they ran the sewer up to Drews. His friend, Lee, spent \$10,000 or \$12,000 trying
11 to research the possibility of doing something with it and just dealing with Act 250 for something
12 that was done from a charitable perspective got to be too much. Barre said if he wanted to put a
13 sculpture park in and had to go before Act 250 to do that and it was a \$10,000 leap just to get
14 going, it would be a detriment. Preston said they don't want to make people go through Act 250.
15 Jason asked whether 3 or 5 acres sounded better. Cathy said the northwest corner of town was 5
16 acres and another area where they were cooperating with Mother Nature. She thought 5 acres. Tim
17 preferred 5 to 3. Hugh was fine with that and just didn't like 10. Peter said his original idea was
18 the abutting district would determine the lot size. He said the way the map was drawn was so that
19 the river would control the lot sizes. Peter said Jeff couldn't break anything up there even if he had
20 high ground because they had split it with the front lot. Peter said where the zoning district was
21 the principal structure would control the lot size if a lot was split. Hugh asked if he was talking
22 about the piece on high ground. Peter said there were parcels that were with the south branch of
23 the Williams River that could be broken up that was higher ground. Hugh said to him, that was an
24 argument for having a smaller lot size because if there was a chunk on higher ground that was less
25 than 10 acres, you wouldn't be able to do it. Peter agreed. Preston said they could make sure it was
26 extra clear in the bylaws. Hugh wondered if he had a piece of land there and a chunk was on high
27 ground that was 3 acres, could he subdivide it if the minimum lot size allowed for someone to
28 build a structure on those 3 acres. Jason didn't think as it was currently worded. Jason questioned
29 if you were on a high spot surrounded by flood waters if you should be subdividing.

30
31 Barre thought it was a good example. He was looking at the floodway/floodplain map and said
32 along Green Mountain Turnpike there was a cool field that was being used by the dairy farm and
33 probably needed all the corn they could get. He said if they sold it at some point, they probably
34 wouldn't subdivide it and put structures there. Barre said it was also flat ground and not far from
35 the sewage treatment plant and if part of what they were going to do down the road included
36 potential growth and housing, it was high ground, was flat, no tree cutting was necessary, and you
37 could run a pipe through the field to get sewage. Barre said according to the map, you wouldn't be
38 able to do that. Barre said Cheryl Joy Lipton didn't want to cut down a 100-year-old maple tree to
39 build a house. He didn't know if it was their job to be preservationists. Barre thought they should
40 have some balance and it wasn't likely anything would happen. It was part of their struggle. They
41 are always making rules for things that probably will never happen. He thought if they made rules
42 that prevented someone from doing something, they would have a problem. Barre disagreed with
43 Cathy that there was a lot of land that would accommodate a good-sized, cool looking apartment
44 building. He envisioned an old gothic roof barn on one of those fields that looks like a barn that
45 had been there 100 years. If the parking was hidden in an old shed, no one who came to town
46 would realize it was affordable housing. He didn't currently have funding but said they shouldn't

1 stand in the way, especially if it was a field with high ground. He thought it would look cool. He
2 didn't understand why they would put all of it in the zone when the water doesn't go up that high.

3
4 Cathy said the best place to put a barn is where the Jeffrey Barn is. Barre disagreed and said there
5 was no parking. Cathy said there was flat space around it. Barre thought it was too noisy. Cathy
6 said it had endured all those years so it wouldn't get washed away. Barre said you wouldn't want
7 little kids living on that road. He said parking was needed and it wasn't a good spot.

8
9 Jason said it was a proposed district and not something they had to do but they wanted to float it
10 by them and get their thoughts. Jason noted that too often affordable housing is in floodplains and
11 other risky areas, and he wasn't sure he would advocate for it. Jason said there was some opposition
12 to it which he was fine with but still wasn't sold on whether it was a good idea or not.

13
14 Barre liked the idea and the civic aspect and what they had included was good. The arguments he
15 had were where it includes high ground and if they could have structures on high ground with
16 language allowing affordable housing. Preston's thinking was to make the district smaller and keep
17 to stuff where it was not appropriate for building and eliminate high ground where they could.
18 Preston didn't want to create any unintended consequences. Tim asked what he would suggest
19 taking out and Peter suggested following the flood map and Preston agreed. Preston thought Barre
20 had a point about some of the land at the junction of Green Mountain Turnpike and Route 11 and
21 knew some people said not to include the land across from Green Mountain Turnpike to Jeff
22 Holden's. Preston said they would follow the flood map as best they could, and anything not
23 mapped as flood would be out. Peter agreed. Hugh liked following the flood map because they
24 were already in an area that they likely didn't want anything and if they did happen to have
25 something that was split with high ground and there was a structure that fell back to the abutting
26 zone, he thought it would account for not creating a lot of non-conformance. If the zone was in an
27 area that they truly didn't want to build anything, they wouldn't have to worry about the fact that
28 their list of conditional uses was small and relegated to stuff that wasn't going to be a meaningful
29 structure. Hugh didn't see a downside.

30
31 Preston suggested they let Jason and him play with the map some more and they would come back
32 with another version. It was agreed that they would shrink it down to five-acre lot sizes. Barre
33 thought there were some lots that were already defined and wondered if it was smaller than 5 acres
34 if anything could be done on it. Cathy said it was about subdivision. Preston said they have all
35 sorts of non-conforming lots and if you can jump through the hoops, you're fine. Cathy added in
36 the administrative bylaw changes they are allowing for a reduction in setbacks on tiny lots, so you
37 have more than 20 feet to construct a house on it. Barre echoed Steve Mancuso's sentiments that
38 they were awesome and asked them to keep up the good work.

39
40 Hugh asked if the other parts of town in the floodplain would become part of the open spaced zone
41 or would they do something else with them. Jason said they would not become part of the open
42 space district but be part of the flood hazard review. Hugh asked if they would stay as an overlay
43 and Jason said they could discuss that further. Peter said Vermont was talking about 30% open
44 space by 2030 and 50% by 2050 and wondered how they define open area. Jason would have to
45 doublecheck but said they were talking about permanent protection of certain types of land such
46 as forests and habitat areas, wetlands, and floodplains. He forgot everything that was in there.

1 Jason said it was early in the legislative session and things could change. Preston had looked it up
2 and said it was a very early bill and he didn't see anything in there about municipal action. It
3 looked to Preston like they wanted land that was either protected by ownership or easement and
4 not just zoning districts. Jason agreed. Preston said the thing about floodway and floodway fringe
5 is there should be no development in the floodplain but in the fringe, their bylaws and federal rule
6 allow if the building is elevated or floodproofed, you can have it there. Preston said the district
7 they were discussing had taken it off the table but elsewhere in the town, he thought they should
8 leave it on the table. Preston said they could choose to include the floodway everywhere in town
9 but once you get outside of the village, the floodplains narrow. Preston was thinking the current
10 district made sense for the particularly large area. Preston thought what was weird about this land
11 was it didn't make sense to include it in a residential or business district. It didn't belong there. He
12 said they would make it a smaller district, but it still would not be just a little strip. Jason thought,
13 practically speaking, there were a few other factors. Jason said FEMA was updating their flood
14 maps and there was House Bill 29 and if it went anywhere, would establish state jurisdiction over
15 floodplains. Jason said there were other things in motion that may make them rethink how they
16 approach it. Jason thought staying focused on this part of town for the reasons they were discussing
17 made a lot of sense and they didn't necessarily need to rethink it based on things that may or may
18 not happen. Barre said he liked everything about it. Barre said there is a landfill when you come
19 into Boston in Quincy that has walking paths on it and you know it's a landfill because of the way
20 it looks but there are always people walking there and it's beautiful. He said they have sculptures
21 there. He said Chester has a lot of walking areas in the woods and suggested having a walking area
22 on the edge of town, if it wasn't a field, with a warming house or a place to gather, like a meditation
23 structure. Barre thought it would be fun and give people a sense of belonging and something to do.
24

25 Hugh said the takeaway on this agenda item was that Jason and Preston would tweak the maps and
26 the language for the open space district. Preston said they would try to come up with overlays and
27 try to be more scientific about the boundaries. Hugh said that was progress and it was good.
28

29 **Agenda Item 5, Review the Results of the Planning Commission Community Survey**

30
31 Tim noted that 2,166 survey requests were sent out and they received 425 completed surveys,
32 which was almost a 20% return rate. They received a good representation from both full and part-
33 time residents, homeowners, and renters. They also received a good response from the business
34 community. Hugh thought it was good there was a good representation from rural areas so that
35 they weren't just listening to people in the village.
36

37 Tim gave a PowerPoint presentation on the results of the Community Survey which are attached.
38

39 Tim pointed out that arts and culture was the lowest on the first pie chart but as they would see
40 later, that was misleading. He said when they asked if people wanted to see more arts and
41 entertainment, 74% said yes yet only 3% said it was one of their top three priorities. Tim said
42 maintaining small town atmosphere was consistent throughout and the wishes of the majority. He
43 said it should be a guiding light for the Planning Commission. Walkability and affordable housing
44 were also seen throughout the results.
45

46 Tim said 50 responses had other for their top 3 visions for the future of Chester and 4 of those

1 responses included: increasing sustainable jobs for locals by allowing more industry; burying wires
2 and replacing with lamps on the Village Green; ensuring public safety; and a welcoming attitude
3 towards ideas or businesses that may not be what they are familiar with.
4

5 For quality of life in Chester, Tim noted that enough people jumped on water and sewer to make
6 it clear that some people recognize the importance of those things.
7

8 In the Village areas, respondents wanted to see more restaurants and a variety of shops and stores.
9 Hugh said on one hand, they wanted to maintain scenic vistas, open land, and undeveloped ridge
10 lines, and maintain the small-town atmosphere but on the other hand, they're also trying to create
11 more housing, reduce lot sizes, and create other elements to densify things and he thought maybe
12 it wasn't important to people to densify the Village Center. Tim replied that there would be a lot
13 of juxtaposing in the survey. While it was important to get public input, Tim also thought that there
14 were times as a planning commission they had to make tough choices that aren't always popular.
15 Cathy pointed out that they can't have many more stores if they don't have people to work in them
16 and Tim agreed. Tim thought it was possible to maintain a small-town atmosphere with higher
17 density. Hugh agreed. Barre quoted Henry Ford who said if he asked the public what they wanted
18 when he made the Model T, they would have said faster horses.
19

20 Tim said for the rural parts of town, people wanted viable agricultural, scenic views, and hiking.
21 He thought that made sense. He was thrilled to see the big return in agriculture and thought it was
22 important to maintain the small-town atmosphere and a New England feel. He wasn't sure how
23 they would encourage that. Tim thought it was interesting that increased housing density showed
24 up at 3% in the rural parts of town, along with businesses at 5%.
25

26 For housing development, Tim was thrown that 56% of the people didn't care either way. Hugh
27 didn't think there was a perception in Chester that there was a ton of new housing development.
28 Tim agreed and what they saw was the traffic. Barre said when you grow up in a place that's flat
29 with fields and you drive to your cousin's house and you see the bulldozers and roads and fire
30 hydrants before anything was even built, you grow up seeing all that development. Anytime he
31 travels anywhere like here with mountains and rivers, it's not developed the same. Barre said it
32 doesn't happen the same way because they don't have a lot of flat ground.
33

34 Tim said restaurants were at 24% for what should be encouraged in Chester. Light manufacturing
35 and/or food processing was second and Tim thought that was a good fit for a small town.
36 Agriculture also came in high.
37

38 Tim noted that 42% did not want to see higher density development but 38% indicated the village
39 area, so that gave them some direction.
40

41 Regarding ample housing, 56% said no, which was the biggest percentage on any one question in
42 the entire survey. It was obvious to the Planning Commission and most of Chester.
43

44 If they were going to alter regulations to permit more housing development, which of the following
45 would be more beneficial to the town, Tim noted that most people wanted to see single family
46 homes priced for working class families. Number two was two- and three-bedroom apartments,

1 and then one-bedroom apartments. 6% said they would be fine with multi-family. 22% said they
2 would want senior housing. Cathy said if there was more senior housing, they could move out of
3 their bigger homes which would help the issue. Hugh noted that people were not big fans of
4 manufactured home communities. Tim said tiny homes got a good reception at 7%. Hugh said they
5 were trendy.

6
7 74% said they would like to see more opportunities for arts, culture, and entertainment in Chester
8 even though only 3% said it was their top priority. Barre thought that was reflective that arts and
9 culture were a luxury. Other things like walking were different. Because arts and culture were a
10 luxury, Barre didn't think it would be in the top three. Tim thought Barre was spot on. Tim said it
11 was almost universal that people wanted it and liked it so it would add to the quality of life.

12
13 For recreational, hiking was at the top of the list, and then mountain biking, walking, and running
14 and/or sidewalks in the village. The hikers also like to walk in the village. Sidewalks are expensive
15 and the ones in Chester are tattered, and more are needed.

16
17 Relating to infrastructure improvements, increasing wastewater capacity for light industry came
18 in at 15%, sidewalks and bike paths were at 24%. Tim said they had no control over cell coverage
19 which came in at 23%. Cathy noted there were two more towers going up.

20
21 Tim said everyone is concerned about the rivers and streams and wildlife habitat. Tim was
22 surprised that number 3 was minimizing actions contributing to climate change. Barre asked Tim
23 if he expected more response for climate change. It didn't seem to Barre like a lot of people were
24 passionate about climate change at 13%. Tim expected the number would be higher. Tim was also
25 surprised that people were concerned about invasive plants and insects. There was discussion
26 among the members about the invasive plants in the area.

27
28 Tim hoped the survey would be something that could help guide them. He noted that Bill Lindsay
29 and Steve Mancuso attended all the meetings, and this was an additional 425 people who responded
30 that would help them even more.

31
32 Barre thought they should partner with a culinary school to run a food business. He said Phelps
33 Barn in Grafton is owned by a foundation, so they don't have to worry about going out of business.
34 Barre suggested partnering with a culinary school like Johnson & Wales and making it part of their
35 educational process. The kids would run it and if they had grant money to keep it open you
36 wouldn't be dependent on a family to support it. Barre thought it would be a good opportunity for
37 people to learn how to run a business. Peter thought there was a shot at having it post COVID. Tim
38 thought a restaurant would be coming to town. Bill Lindsay said the long building where Meditrina
39 used to be before the Post Office was going to be a restaurant. Bill suggested they read House Bill
40 126 and ask themselves if the current floodplain and the new one would be included in the corridor
41 to reduce the amount of property you could do something with and what the mitigation from the
42 state would be for the loss of those lands for tax purposes. Bill said one was a revenue concern and
43 one was a restrictive concern when you try to bring businesses to town. He thought it may be a
44 question for Regional Planning.

45
46 Hugh asked Tim if there was anything they should be doing with the information from the

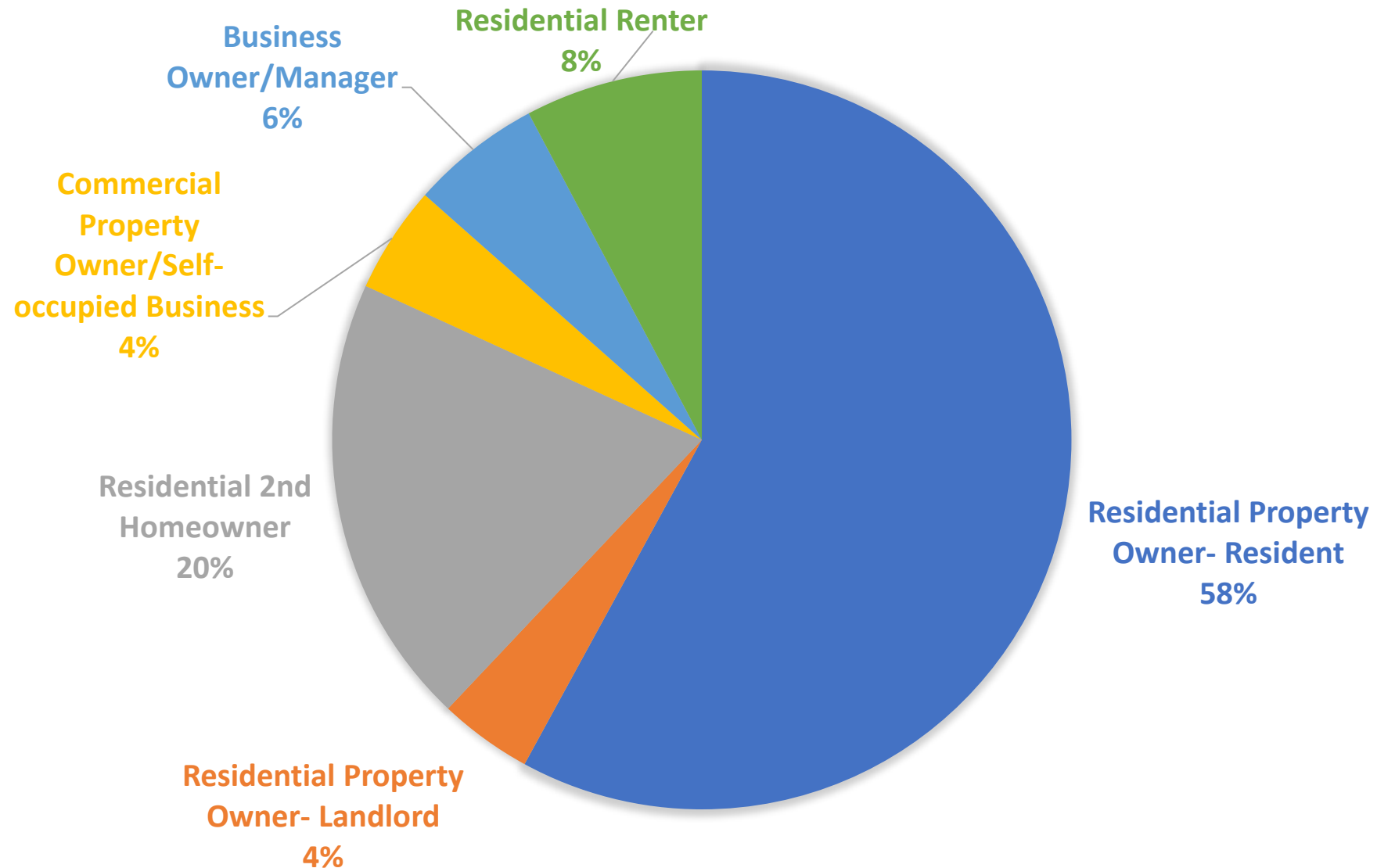
1 Community Survey. Tim wanted to dump the information into an Excel spreadsheet so they could
2 work with it some more. Tim said Malia was busy but was savvy about data and could assist with
3 grouping the answers together. Jason said Malia could help. Jason hadn't given it a lot of thought
4 and suggested they dive deeper into rural character and increased density. He didn't think they
5 were that far away from each other. Barre asked if they wanted to take it to a written summary to
6 use as a reference material like the downtown master plan. Hugh said he didn't have anything in
7 mind other than to realize the value in collecting the information is to keep it top of mind as they're
8 making decisions and not just put it on a shelf and forget about it. However, they're able to
9 accomplish that as they're doing their work because they're collecting a lot of feedback from all
10 over the place. The last thing they would want to do is forget about the insights that the survey
11 provides as they do their work. Tim thought putting it into an Excel spreadsheet would make it
12 more accessible and usable than looking at slides. Hugh agreed. Jason suggested looking at what
13 people wanted in the rural parts of town. They could pick the demographic and look deeper. Tim
14 agreed. Hugh suggested as they did the work, they should keep the information front and center so
15 if they were going to make a decision that conflicted with what the community wanted, they talk
16 about it and reconcile it. Peter said they were going through the general standards and if a use
17 permit was issued to modify a driveway and it was a commercial space, you could put in that the
18 DRB ask them to rebuild the sidewalk. Peter used the example of Rockingham Trust doing work
19 across from Smitty's and said if someone was going to do that work, they would fix the sidewalk.
20 Peter said with this DRB, it would need to be spelled out because they wouldn't put it out there.
21 Hugh said that was a great example. Peter said in Vermont, the only way you could walk on
22 someone's land without permission was to carry a fishing rod or a gun. The trespass law states
23 that. Peter noted that several pieces of land in Smokeshire have changed ownership so now people
24 are buying land in Vermont and posting it.

25 26 **Agenda Item 6, Adjournment** 27

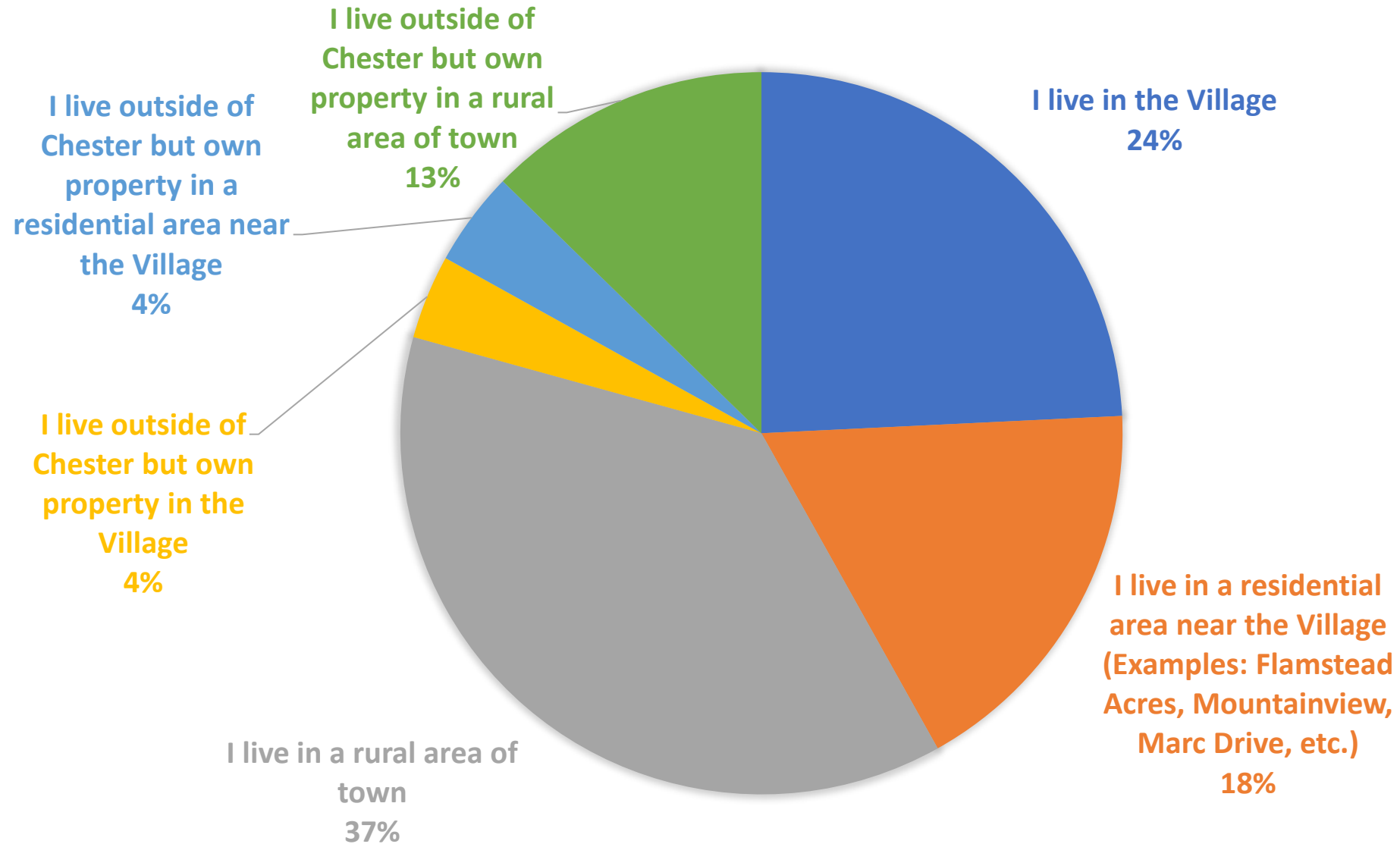
28 Hugh moved to adjourn, and Peter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and it passed
29 unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

2022 Chester Community Survey Results

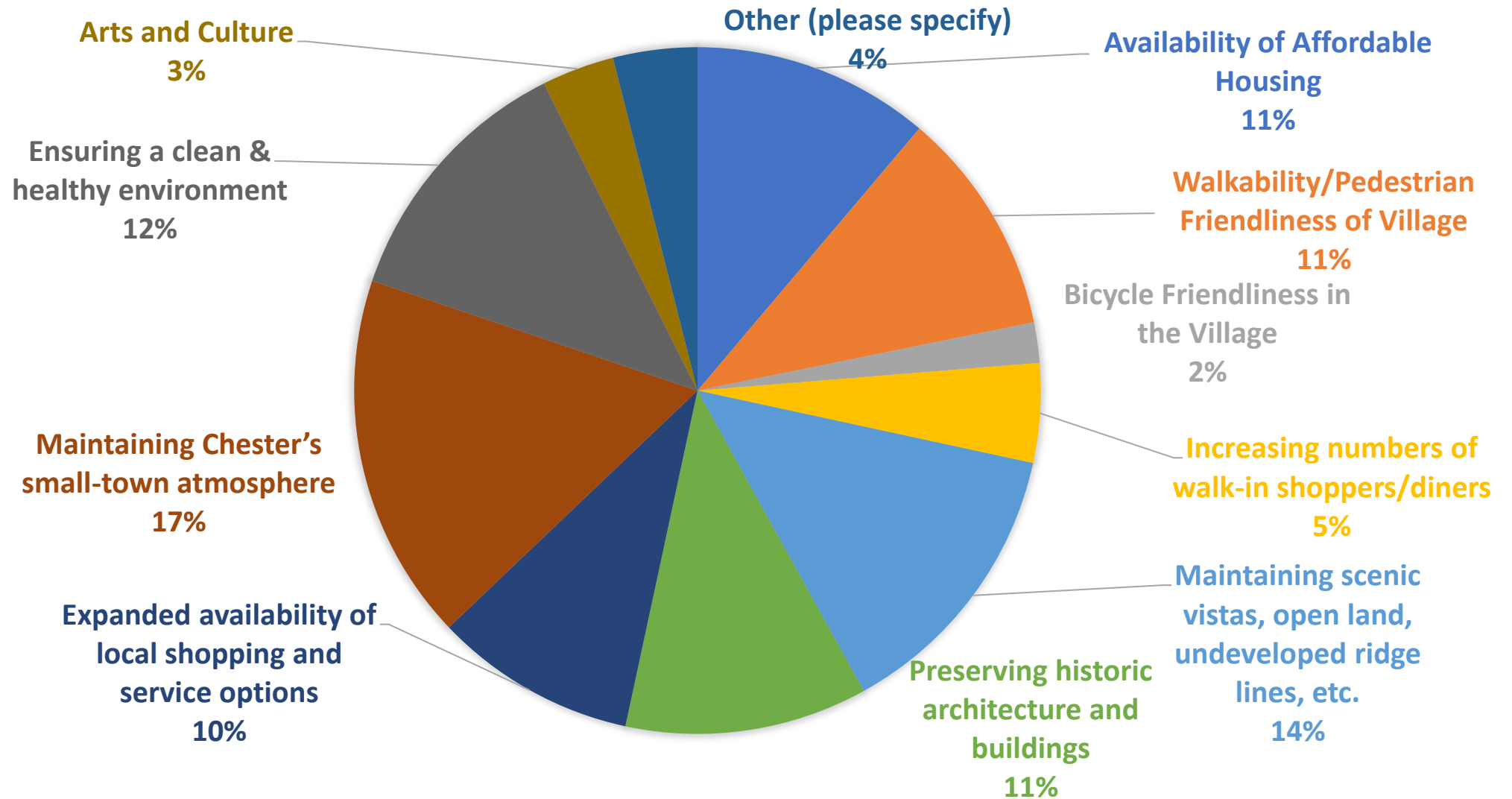
Please check all categories below that describe your property and/or living situation in Chester:



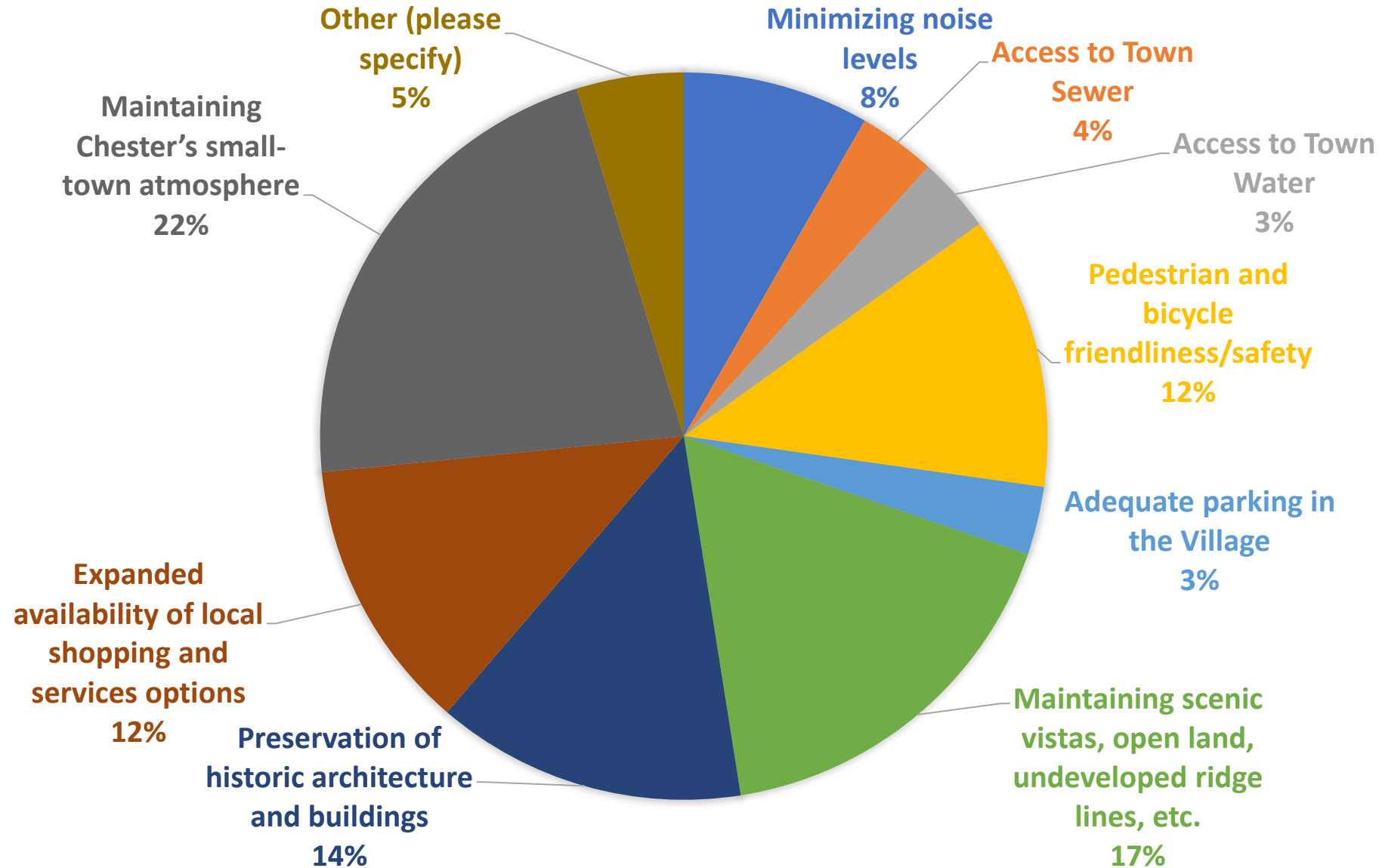
Which of these best describes where you live? (check one):



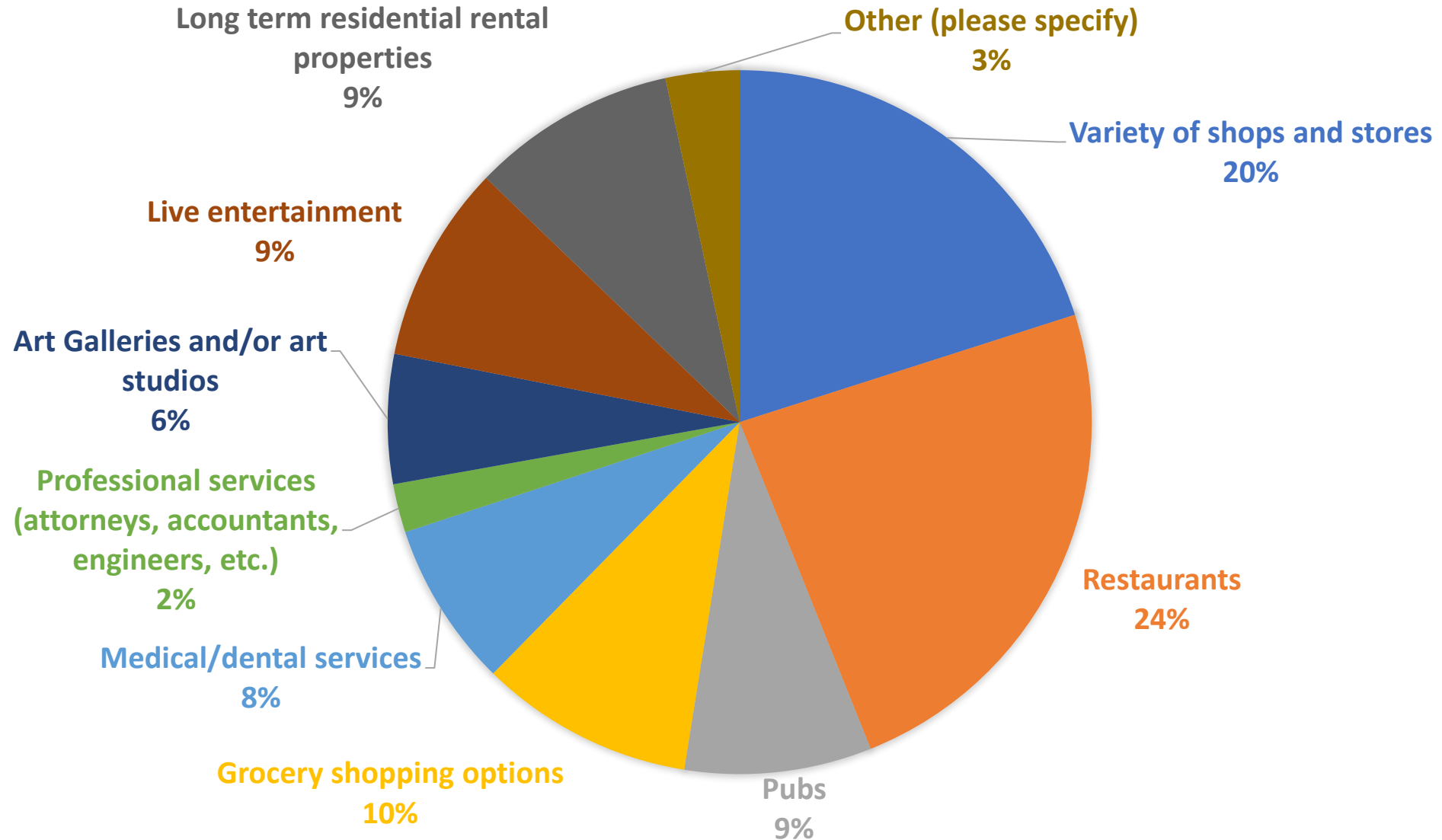
As you consider your vision for the future of Chester, please check the top three (3) for each set of priority considerations below. Please check the top three (3) items of importance to you.



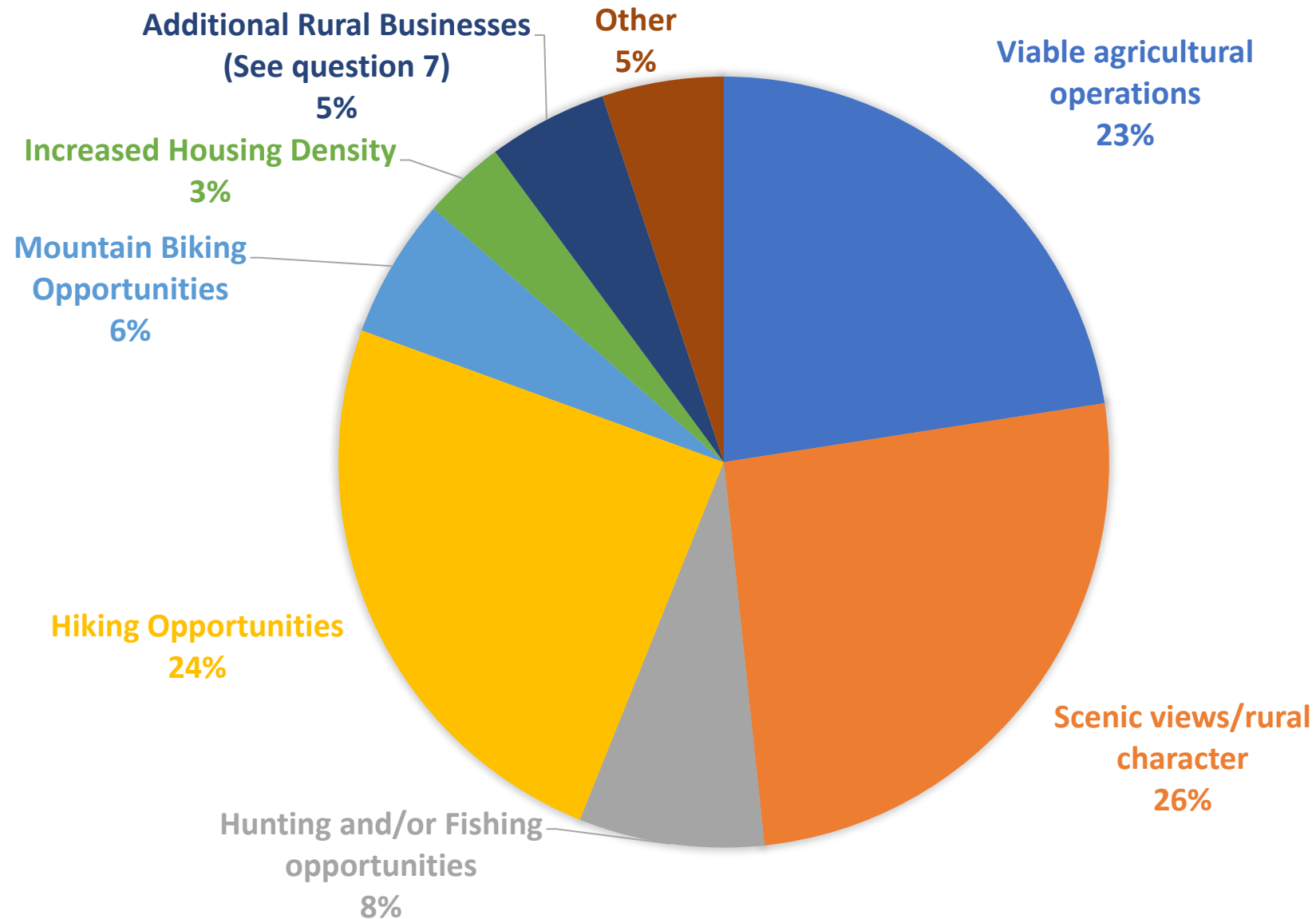
Which of these do you consider as top priorities for quality of life in Chester?
Please check the top three (3) of highest importance to you.



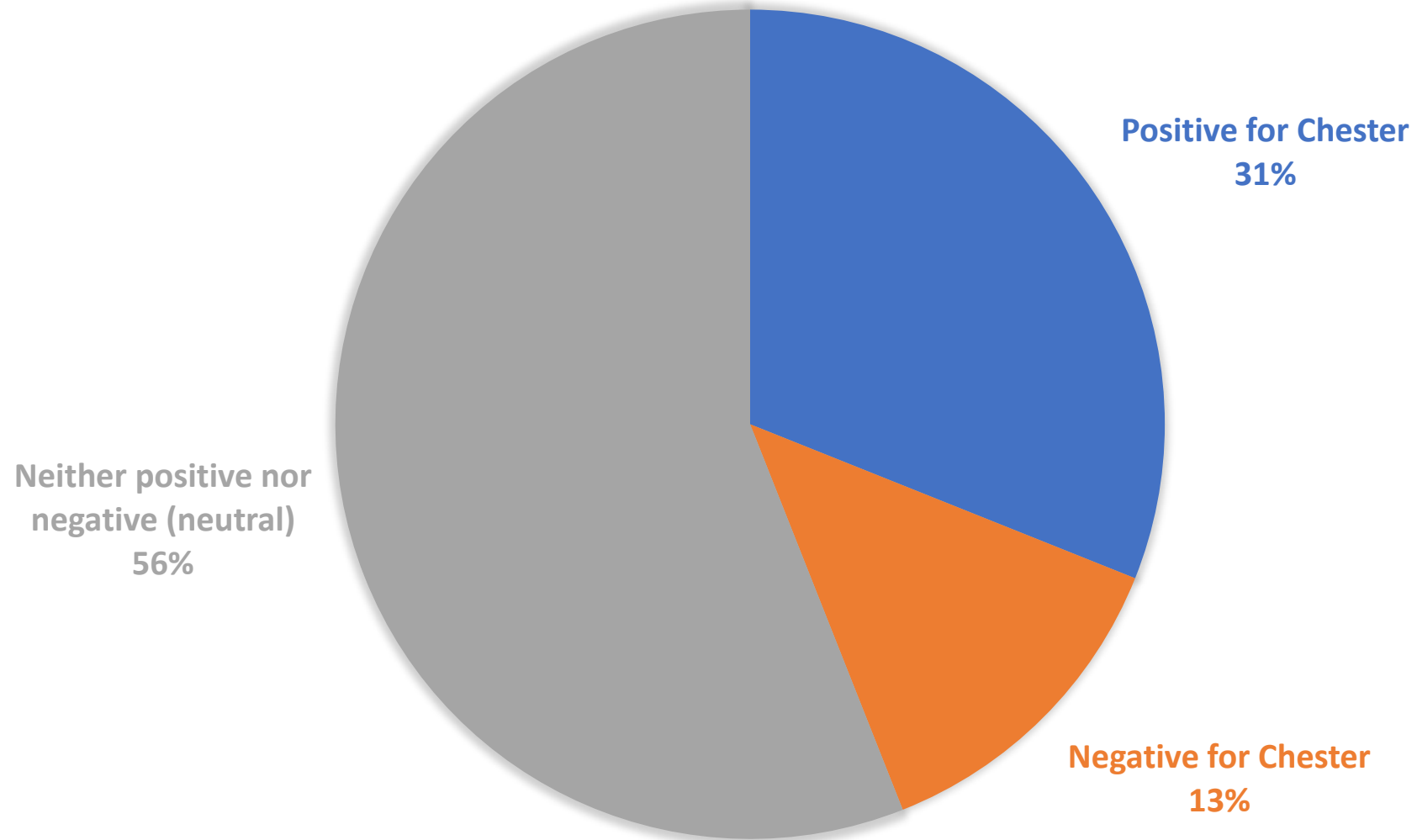
Which of these would you like to see more of in the Village areas of Chester? Please check the top three (3) of highest importance to you.



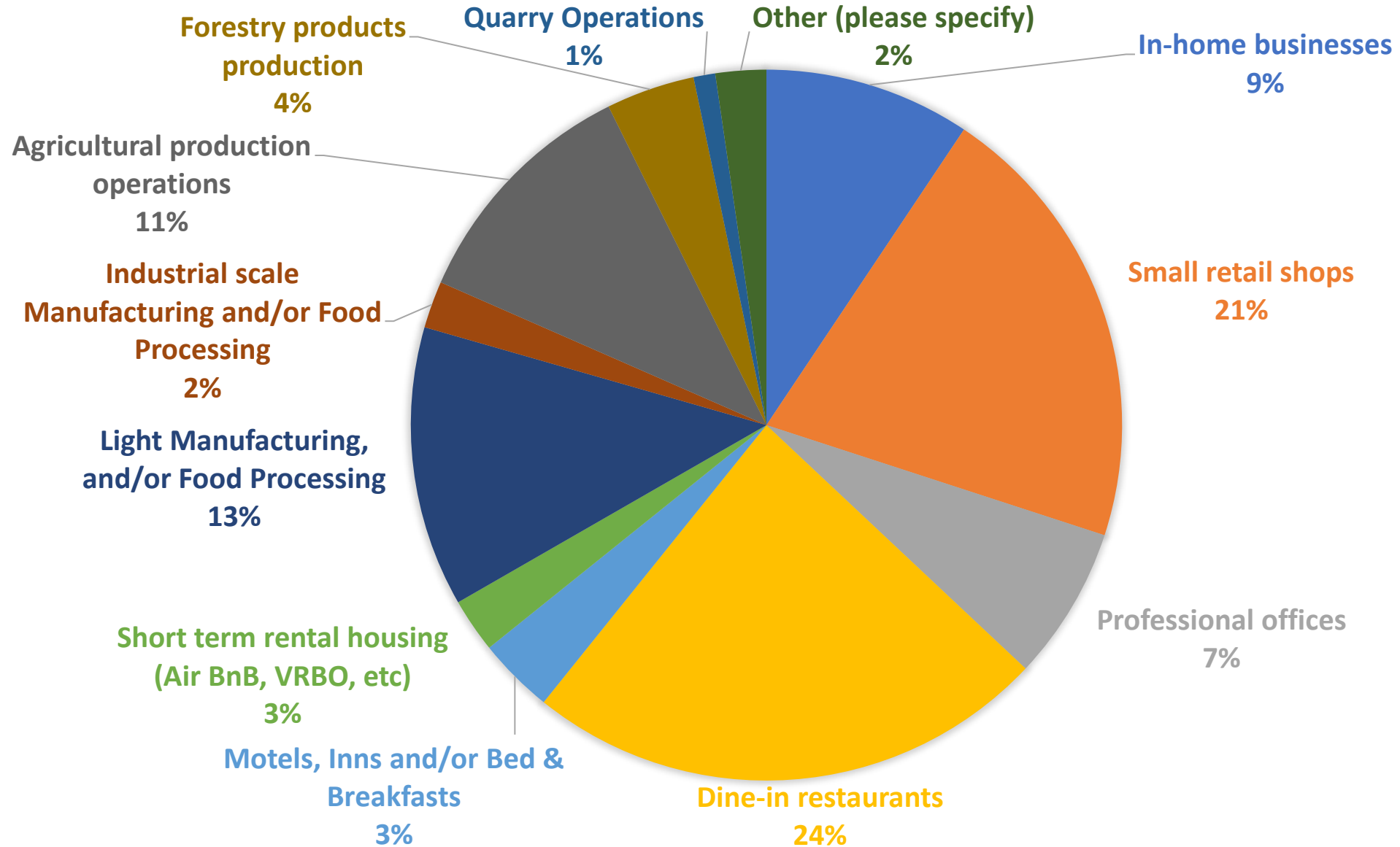
Which of these would you like to see more of in the Rural areas of Chester? Please check the top three (3) of highest importance to you.



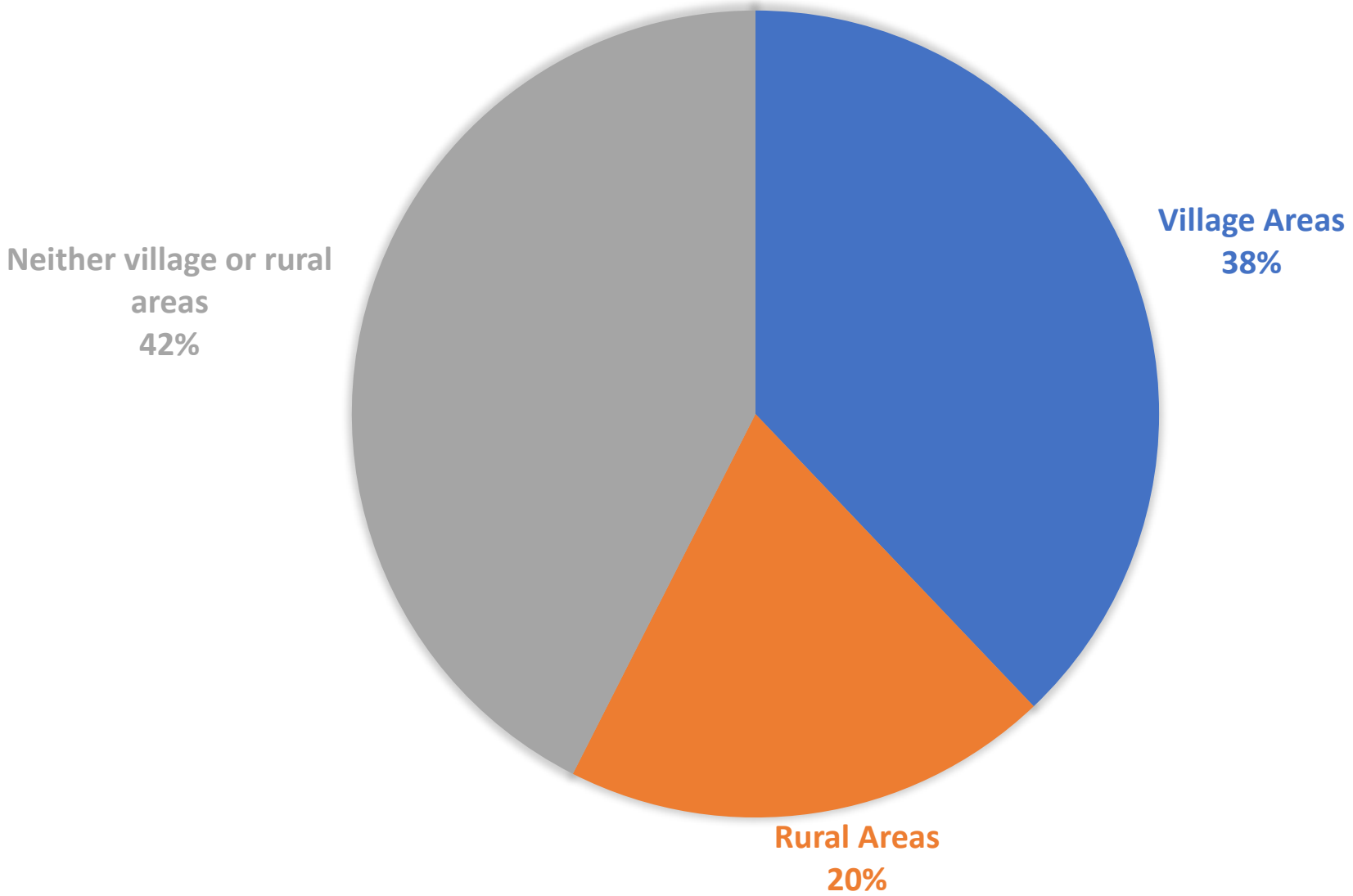
Balancing Growth & Conservation: Do you believe the recent increase in housing development has been: (Please check one)



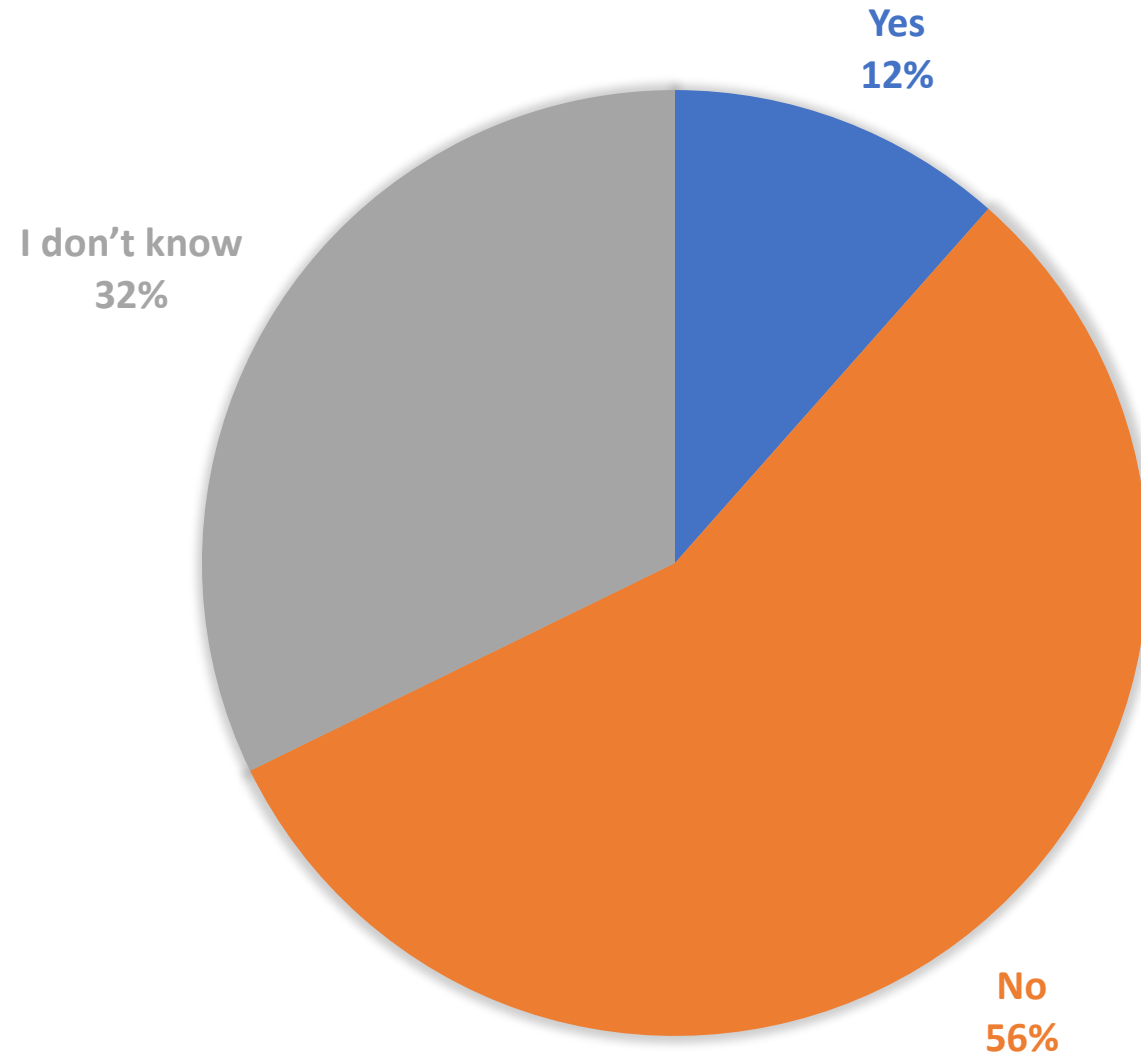
Which of the following commercial activities do you believe Chester should try to encourage? Please check the top three (3) you'd like to see more of in Chester.



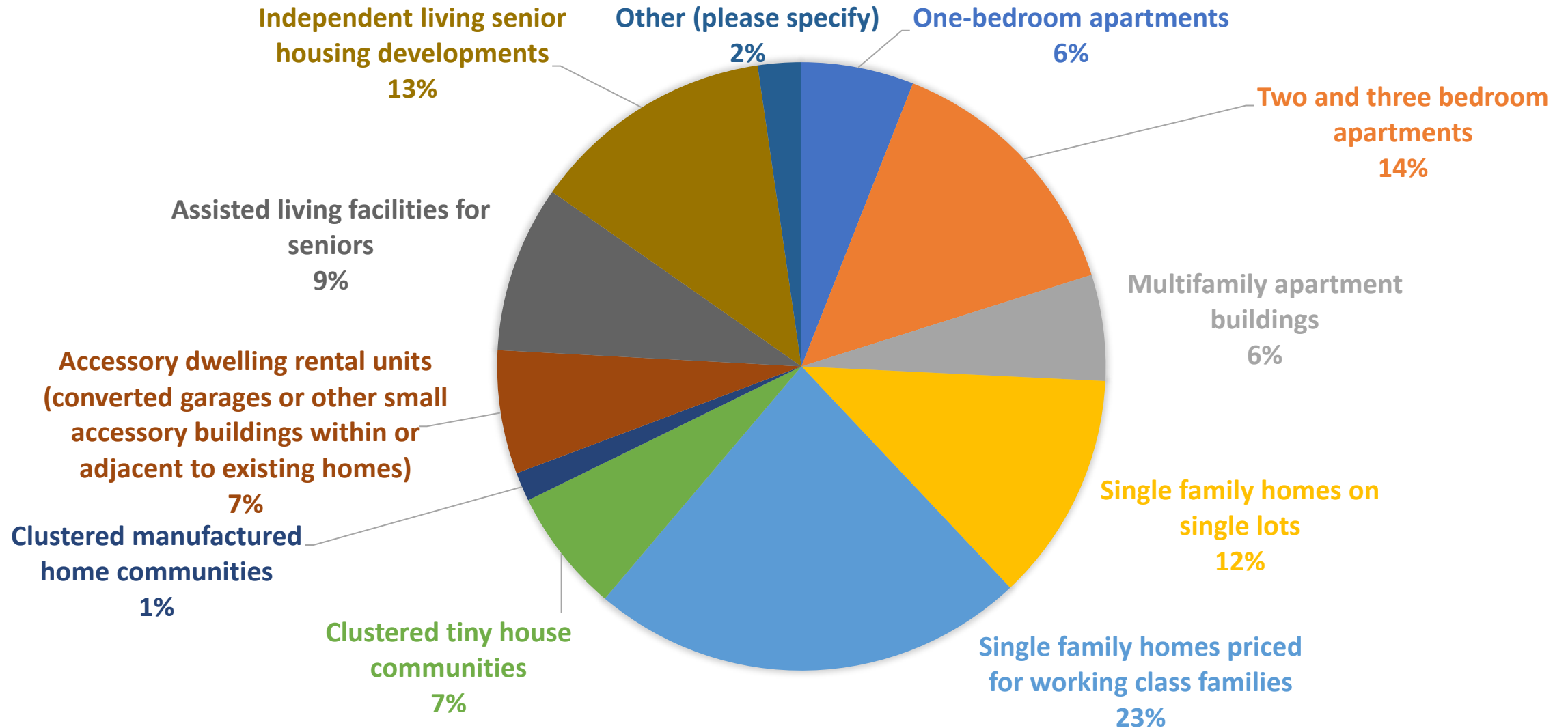
Would you like to see higher density residential development in: Please check all that apply.



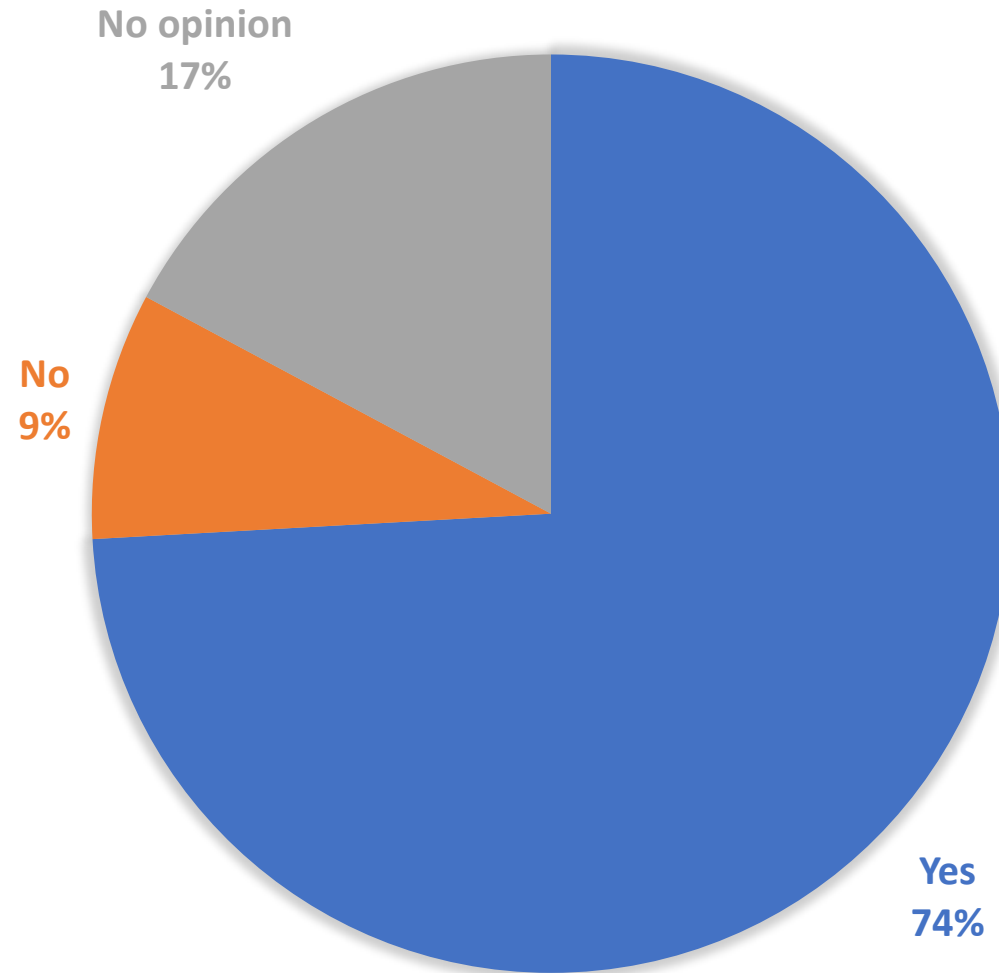
In your opinion, is there currently ample housing for residents of all income levels in Chester? Please check one (1).



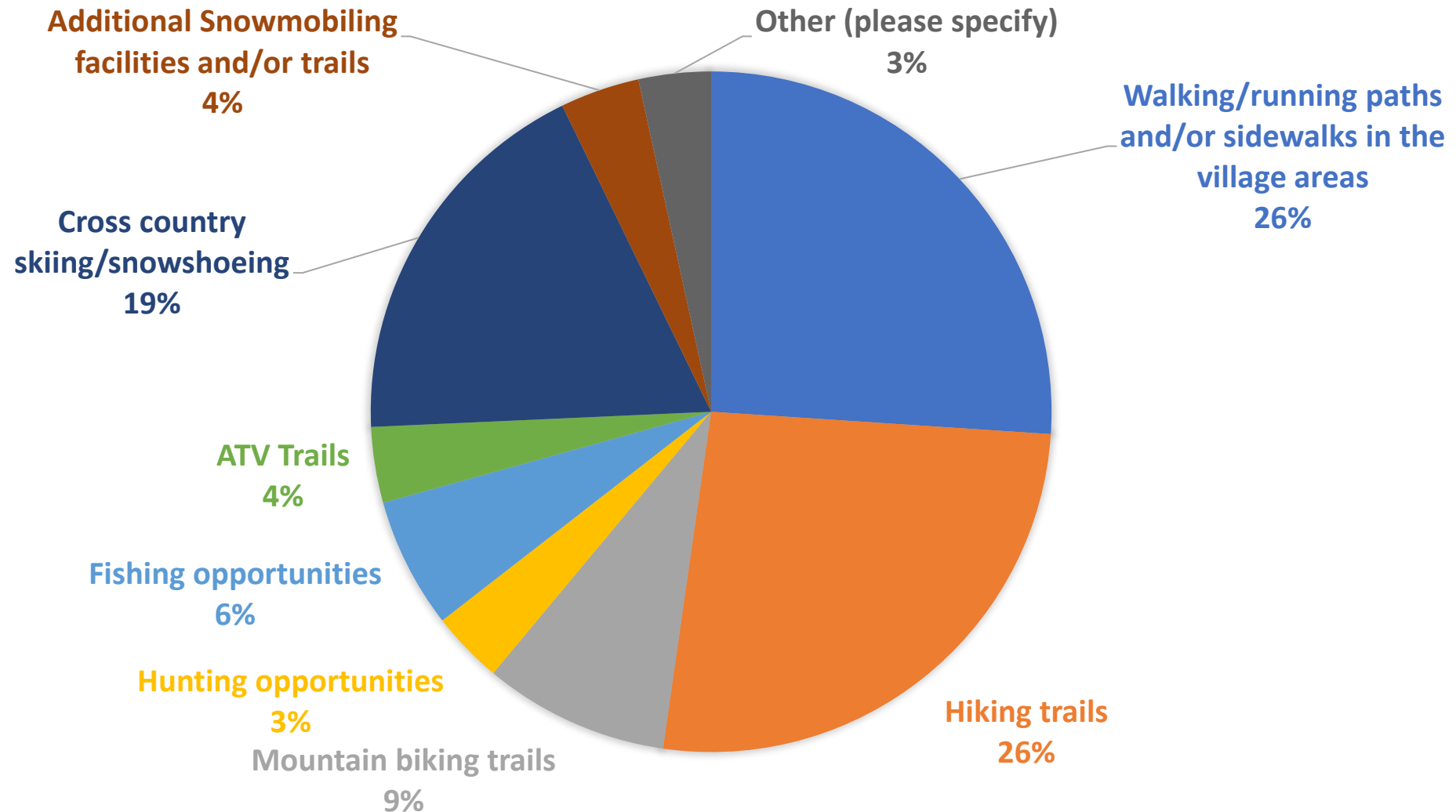
If Chester were to alter regulations to permit more housing development, which of the following types of housing do you believe would be most beneficial to our town? Please check the top three (3) of highest importance to you.



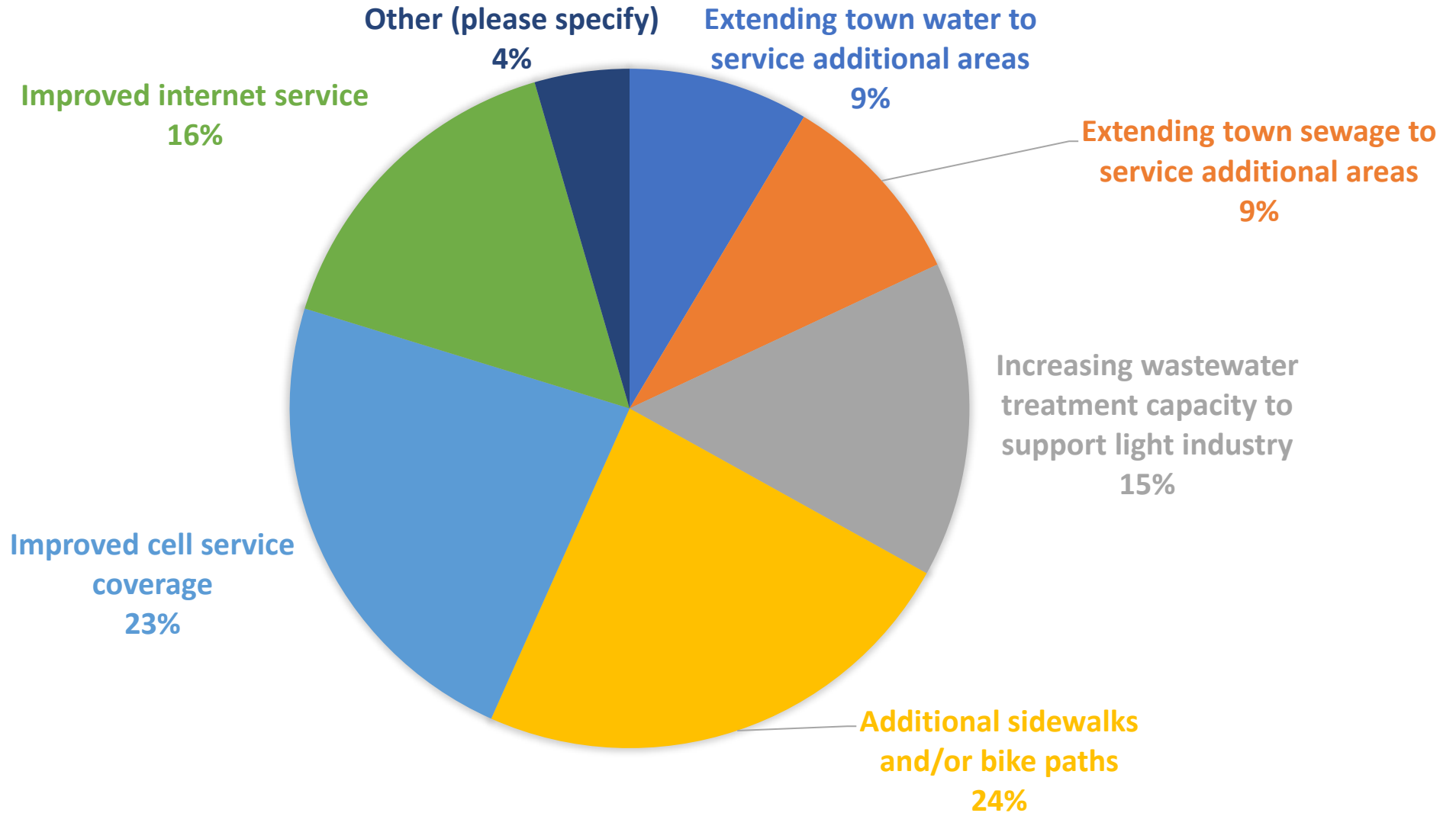
Would you like to see more opportunities for seeing arts, culture, and entertainment in Chester? (Examples: film festivals, live theatre, live music performances, art shows) Please check one (1).



Which of the following recreational opportunities do you believe would be beneficial to our town? Please check the top three (3) of highest importance to you.



Which of the following infrastructure improvements do you think should be prioritized by the town? Please check the top three (3) of highest importance to you.



Which of the following environmental concerns do you think should be prioritized?
Please check the top three (3) of highest importance to you.

