



Appendix C: Survey Summary



TO: The Town of Chester
FROM: SE Group
CC:
DATE: 12/5/2016
RE: Chester Village Center Master Plan: Survey Summary

GENERAL SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

The Chester Village Center is a highlight to the Town of Chester with art, antique and gift shops, restaurants and an abundance of historic culture and architecture. Based on the visitor survey results, Chester Village Center is generally frequented for either a quick visit or an extended multi-night stay. Both resident (i.e. live in Chester) and non-resident visitors were represented in the survey. Non-resident visitors generally came from neighboring towns or from primary residences in New England. The survey did not capture a high proportion of overnight visitors, in part due to the difficulty of reaching that group through a web-based survey.

The Town has a significant local accommodation business with a number of boutique lodges and inns. The non-resident visitors responding to the survey most often decide to stop by Chester Village Center through some previous experience on a trip to the area or they had received a recommendation for a specific dining experience in town. Awareness of Chester Village Center seems communicated through less targeted means such as word-of-mouth or more broadly cast social/web media.

When visitors recommend activities in the Chester Village Center, historic resources and dining experiences are typically shared within friends and family as the best things to do in Chester. When visiting the focus is on retail shopping, dining and the occasional special event, although these events and activities could receive increased marketing and promotion.

Based on comments from survey respondents, navigating town is not without its shortcomings and hazards as there are complaints of degrading or non-existent sidewalks and the need for installation of stop lights or lighting on street corners. Those in Chester with recreation on their mind are likely heading out of town to a nearby ski resort. Recreation resources in and around town are poorly maintained and without adequate signage and connectivity to direct you to and through those recreation amenities. Overall the majority of recreation resources go unnoticed or unknown unless you are aware of the amenities in town.

The differences in perspective between residents and non-resident visitors was interesting. For both groups the importance of "Small Town Charm" and "Historic Character" were important factors influencing why they visit. The "Location to home" was also very highly ranked; but with different meaning between the two groups. This combination of atmospherics and proximity appears central to

why respondents visit Chester; it is relatively close to where people live and has appealing and attractive qualities.

Non-resident visitors were more likely to have a more positive experience in shopping or dining than local visitors. Non-resident visitors also indicated they spent more per visit than resident visitors. The resulting average spend per visit increases from about \$193 per visit for residents to about \$659 per visit for non-residents. A large part of the difference between these values is the expenditure on lodging. The relatively small sample size of non-resident visitors and the time of year (peak foliage) likely skew the expenditure numbers upward, but the pattern of expenditure is typical of resident and non-resident visitors. The non-resident visitor also skewed younger than the resident population with a much larger percentage between ages 45 and 54.

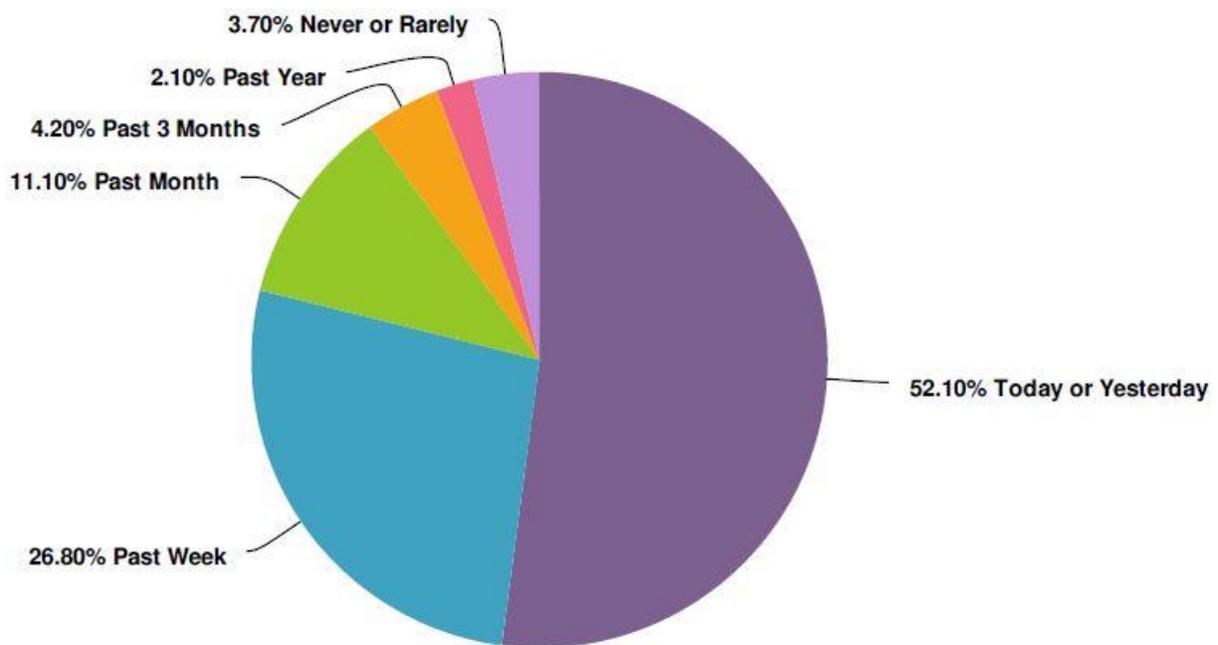
SURVEY RESPONSES

Respondents

197 respondents answered the survey, with resident visitors representing about 70% of total responses.

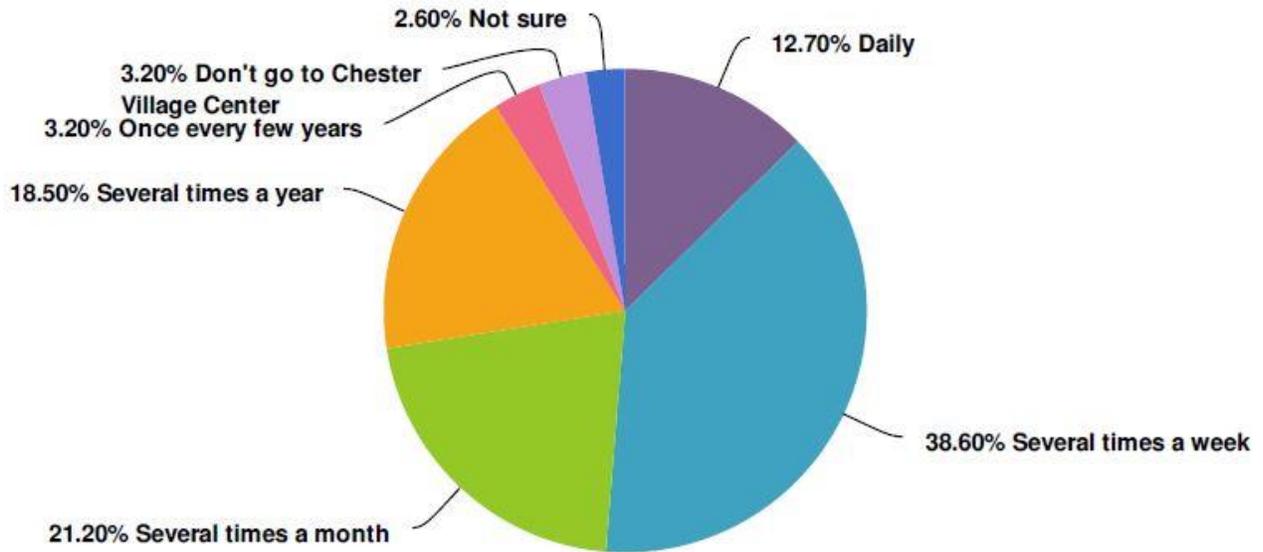
When was the last time you went to Chester Village Center?

90% of respondents visited Chester within a month of completing the survey.



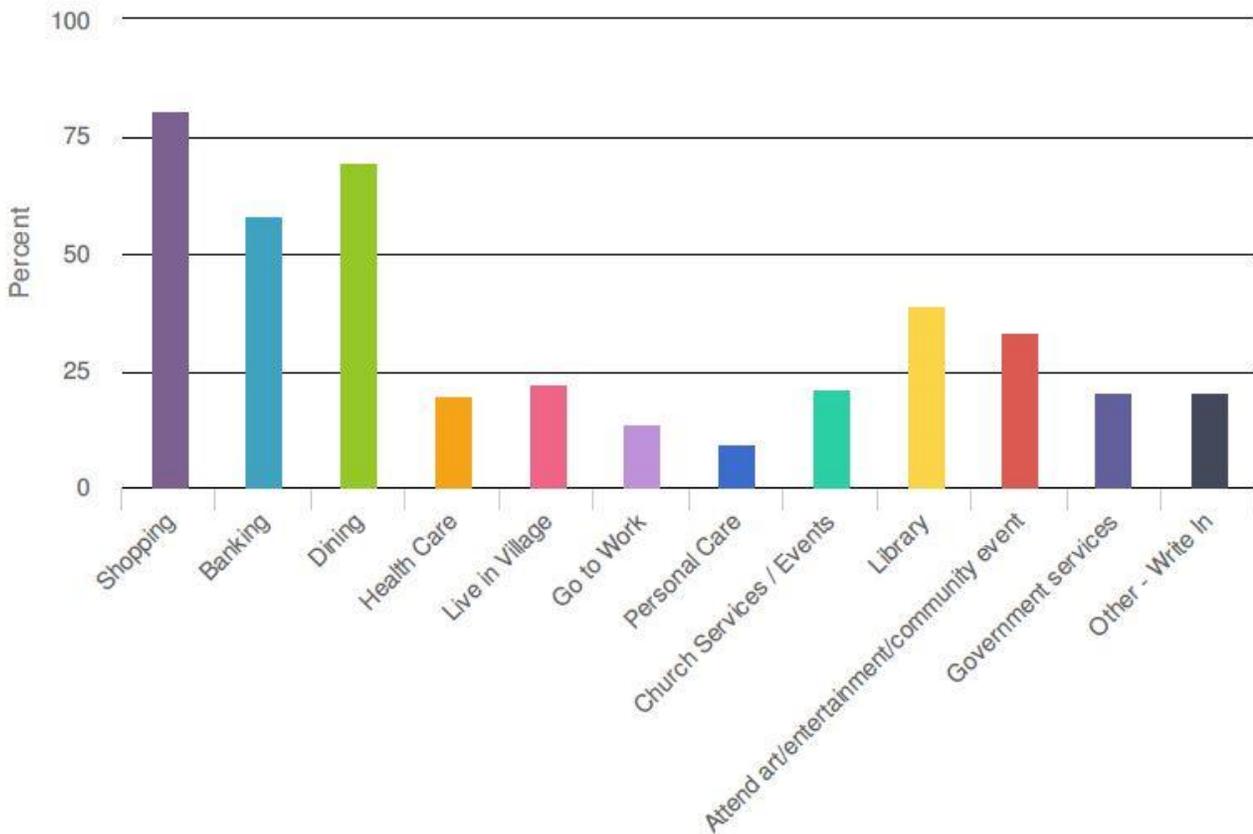
How often do you come to Chester to purchase goods and services?

The majority of respondents visit Chester Village Center several times a week (38.6%) to purchase goods or services.



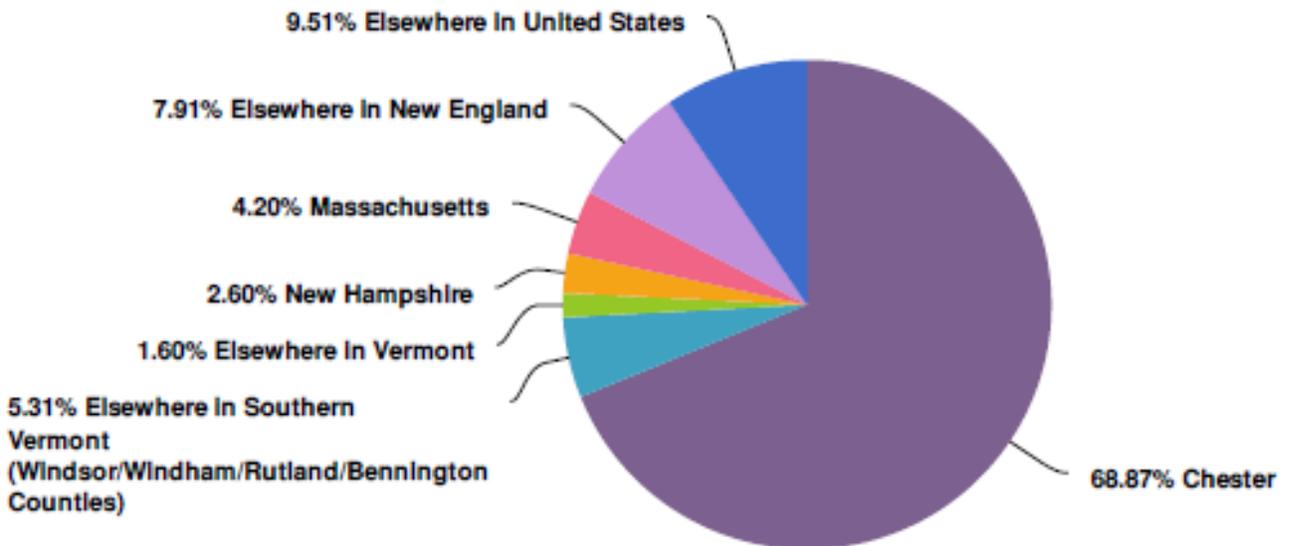
When you come to Chester Village Center, what are the usual reasons for your trip?

Shopping, dining and banking top the list, with nearly double the responses of other categories. The majority of write in responses were miscellaneous leisure activities (specifically “walking around”) and using the post office.



Where do you live year-round?

The majority (69%) of respondents live in Chester year-round, but the survey include results from respondents from 44 different zip codes.



Do you own or rent your home?

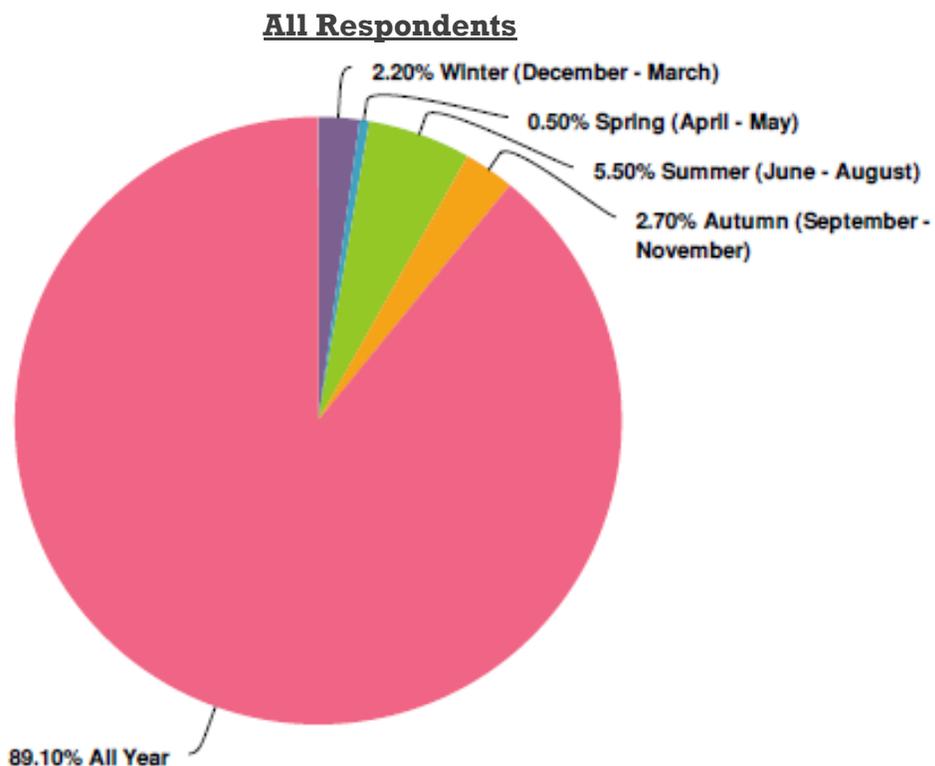
The vast majority (94.1%) of survey respondents own their home.

How long have you lived in Chester?

While some respondents who said they live in Chester full time have lived here for generations, others arrived more recently. Many referenced living in Chester part-time prior to moving to the community full time. The average respondent has lived in Chester 22.1 years.

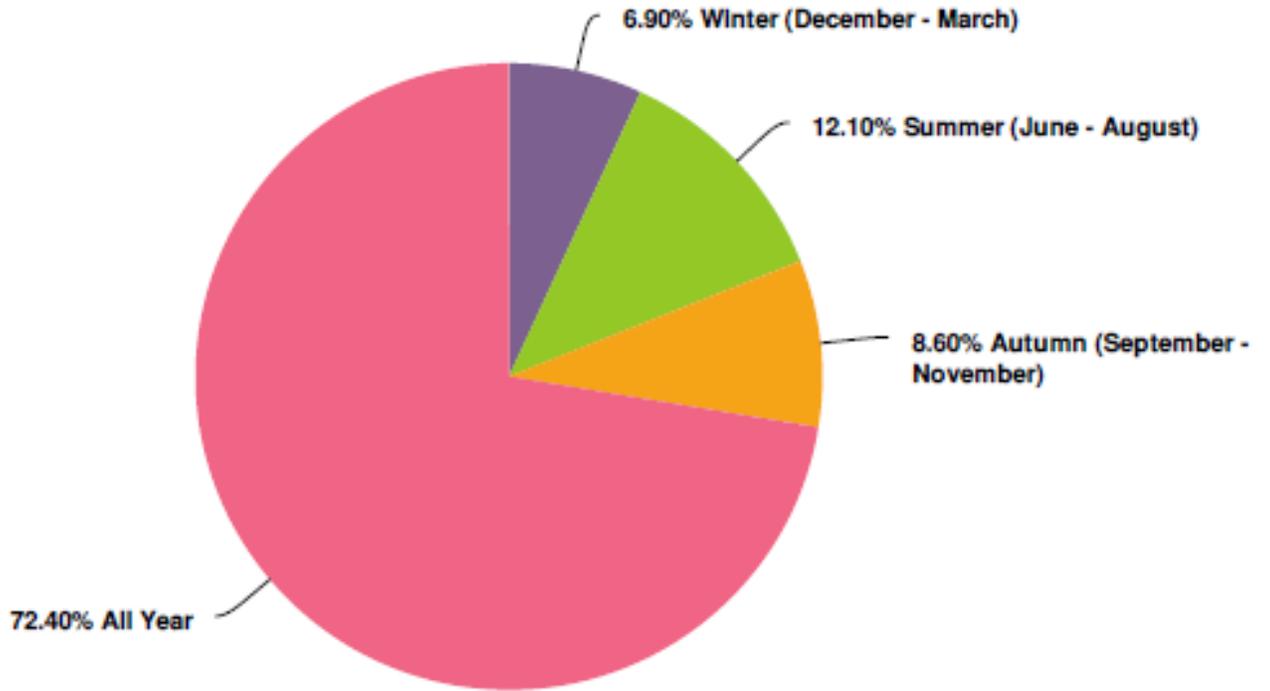
What time of year do you typically visit?

The vast majority of respondents, including residents and non-residents, visit Chester all year.



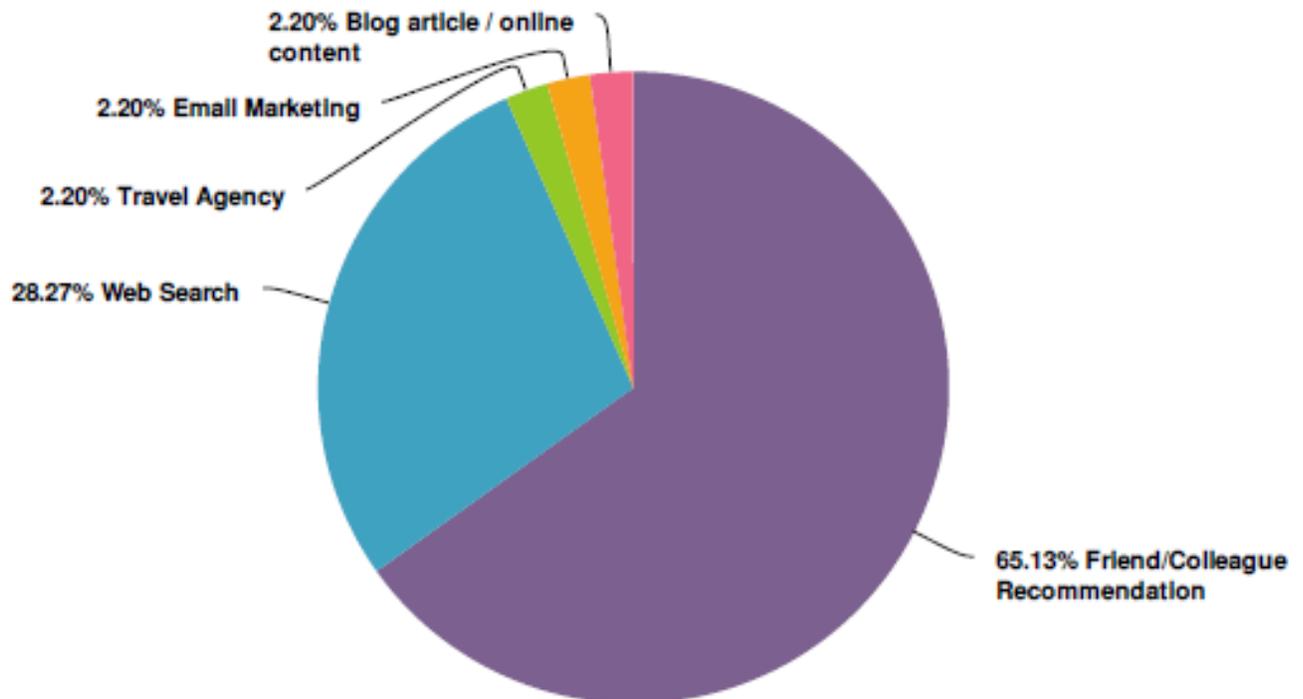
Surprisingly when responses are filtered by just non-resident visitors seasonality of visitation is only slightly more prominent.

Non-Resident Visitors



How did you hear about Chester Village Center?

Recommendations from friends and colleagues and web searches were made up a clear majority of how non-resident visitors heard about Chester Village Center.



Please rank these factors in order of importance of why you chose to visit Chester Village Center?

1. Location near to my home
2. Small town-charm
3. Historic Character
4. Near family and friends
5. Proximity to other attractions I wanted to visit
6. Cultural Program and Arts
7. I work there
8. Type of quality of lodging establishments
9. Was just passing through

How was your experience related to related to various activities in Chester Village Center (lodging, shopping, dining, cultural events, sightseeing, etc.)?

Dining by far received the highest experience ratings (60% reported the experience was above or far above expectations), while Arts Events or Programs received the lowest experience ratings (12% said the experience was below or far below expectations). Many respondents were neutral about their experiences in Chester.

Themes within the comments on Chester Village Center activities included the following

- Recreationist (runners, bicyclists, etc.) should avoid downtown
 - a. Hard place to safely get around
 - b. To many speeding vehicles
- Dining just ok, not enough options
 - a. Service is not consistent
- Poorly maintained properties and town amenities
- Lots of contradicting comments
 - a. Restaurants are good...restaurants are bad
 - b. Recreation is vast and satisfying... Recreation is limited
 - c. Not enough shops... too many shops
 - d. Need more events... too many events attracting tourists
 - e. Small town is a great feeling... small town is driving people away

Are the following Chester Village Center's characteristics excellent, good, fair or poor?

The following characteristics were generally rated as more positive:

- Customer Service
- Crime and Safety
- Cleanliness
- Traffic
- Quality of goods and services
- Location of Parking

The following characteristics were generally rated less positively:

- Selection of Restaurants
- Store hours
- Cost of goods and services

There was greater uncertainty regarding the following characteristics:

- Sales and Promotions
- Special Events

Below is a list of things that might be considered to improve Chester Village Center. For each action, check the box to indicate it if likely or not likely to encourage you to visit and shop more often.

The following list represents the rank order of actions that are likely to encourage more visitation among Chester residents:

1. More special events
2. Greater variety of stores
3. Greater variety of restaurants
4. More arts or cultural events
5. Better access to public restrooms

This list represents the rank order of actions that are unlikely to encourage more visitation among Chester residents:

1. More parking, more conveniently located parking
2. Better outside lighting
3. Improved handicapped accessibility
4. Improved traffic flow/safety
5. More attractive store displays

The following list represents the rank order of actions that are likely to encourage more visitation among non-residents:

1. More special events or festivals
2. Greater variety of restaurants
3. Greater variety of stores
4. More arts or cultural events
5. Better access to public restrooms

This list represents the rank order of actions that are unlikely to encourage more visitation among non-residents:

1. Improved handicapped accessibility
2. More Parking, more conveniently located parking
3. Improved traffic flow/safety
4. Improved pedestrian safety
5. Better outside lighting

Based on your last visit to Chester Village, approximately how much did you spend in the following categories?

As is to be expected, visitor spending per trip is much higher for non-residents than residents. Non-resident visitor spending per trip is much higher than the average Vermont tourist visitor.

Spending Category	Residents	Non-Resident Visitors
Food and Dining	\$62.30	\$121.20
Lodging	\$18.90	\$325.30
Retail Shopping	\$43.20	\$70.50
Grocery or Convenience Shopping	\$44.90	\$76.70
Event Admission or Tickets	\$8.90	\$31.60
Other	\$15.20	\$33.30
Total	\$193.40	\$658.60

How long did you stay in Chester?

A majority of resident (76%) and non-resident (and 65%) visitors stayed in the village center for only a few hours. Approximately 30 percent of non-residents stayed overnight.

Check the column that indicates where you primarily shop for or obtain goods or services.

Springfield, including North Springfield, is a clear competitor as a destination to shop for goods and services, as is mail order and internet purchases.

Chester Village ranked high in following categories

- Hardware/Home Improvement
- Books
- Gifts/Framing/Arts/Crafts
- Dining out

Chester Village did fair in the following categories

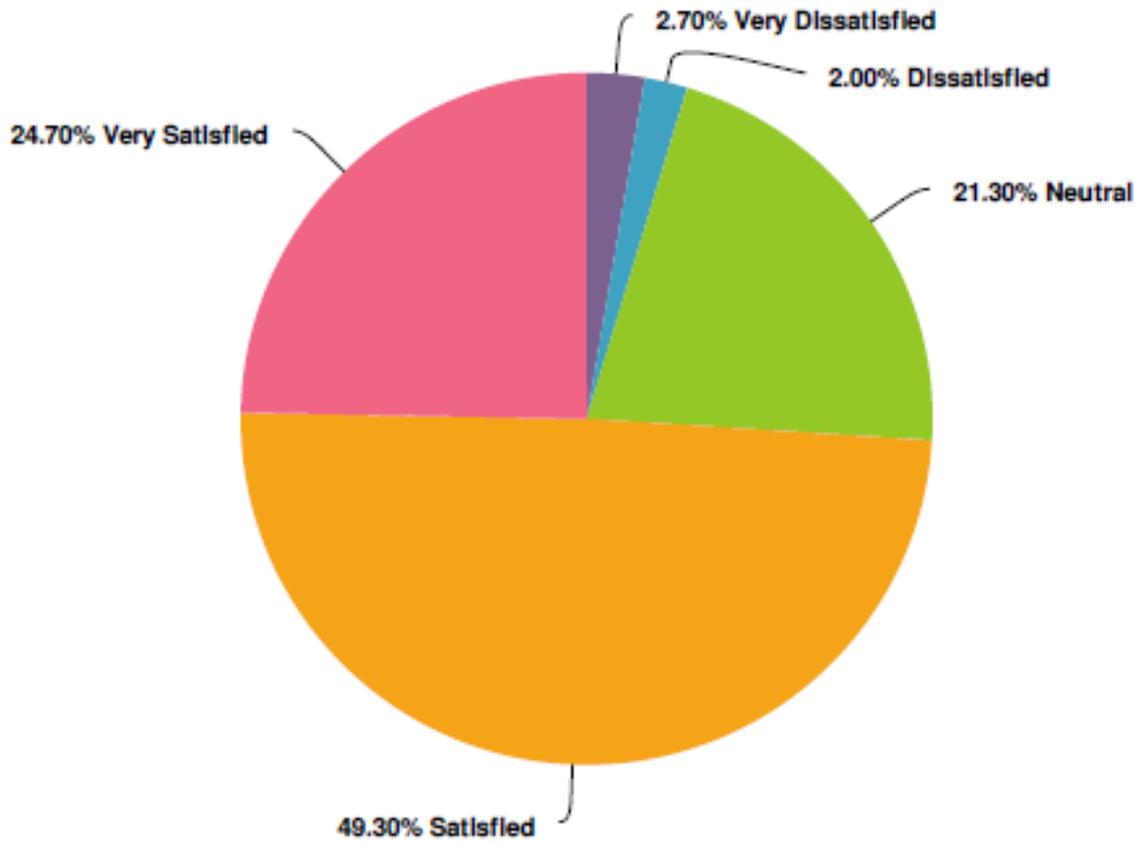
- Groceries
- Hair/Nail/Beauty Services
- Medications and Prescriptions
- Other Services
- Fast Food/Takeout

Chester Village did poor in the following categories (Most of these categories were strong in mail order or internet purchases)

- Clothing
- Home furnishing
- Sporting Goods
- Discount Stores
- Medical Services

Overall how satisfied were you with your visit to Chester Village?

The vast majority (74%) of survey respondents reported leaving Chester satisfied with 49.3 % reporting they are satisfied and 24.7% reporting they were very satisfied. Only 4.7% of respondents reported they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. 21.3% felt neutral about the experience.

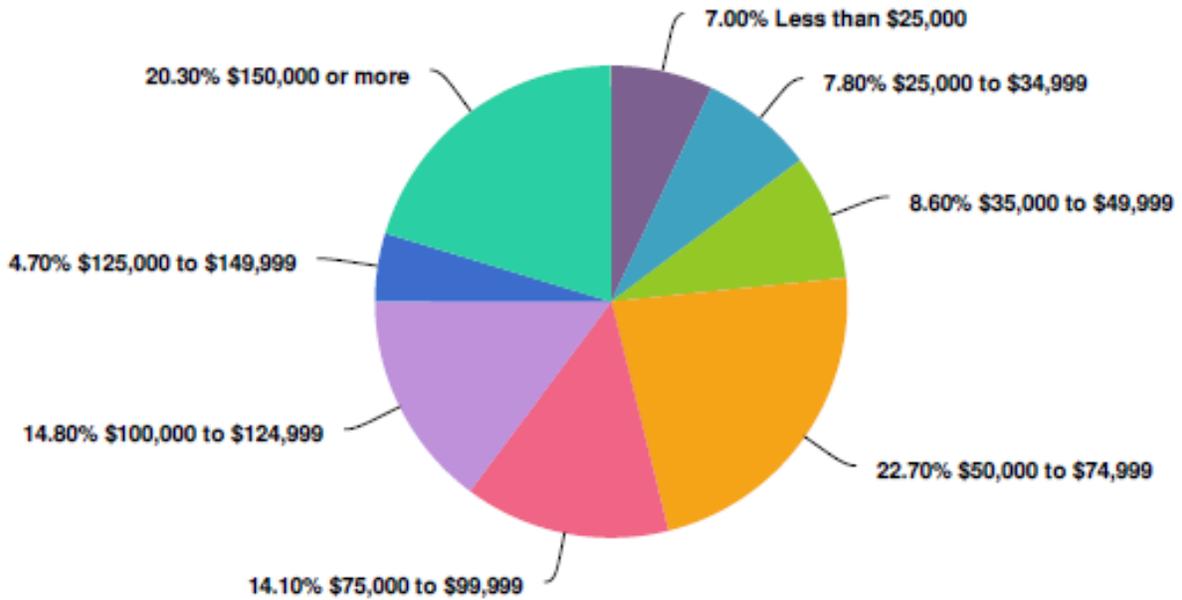


How old are you?

56% of respondents were between ages 55 and 74, while less than 19% of respondents were ages 44 and below.

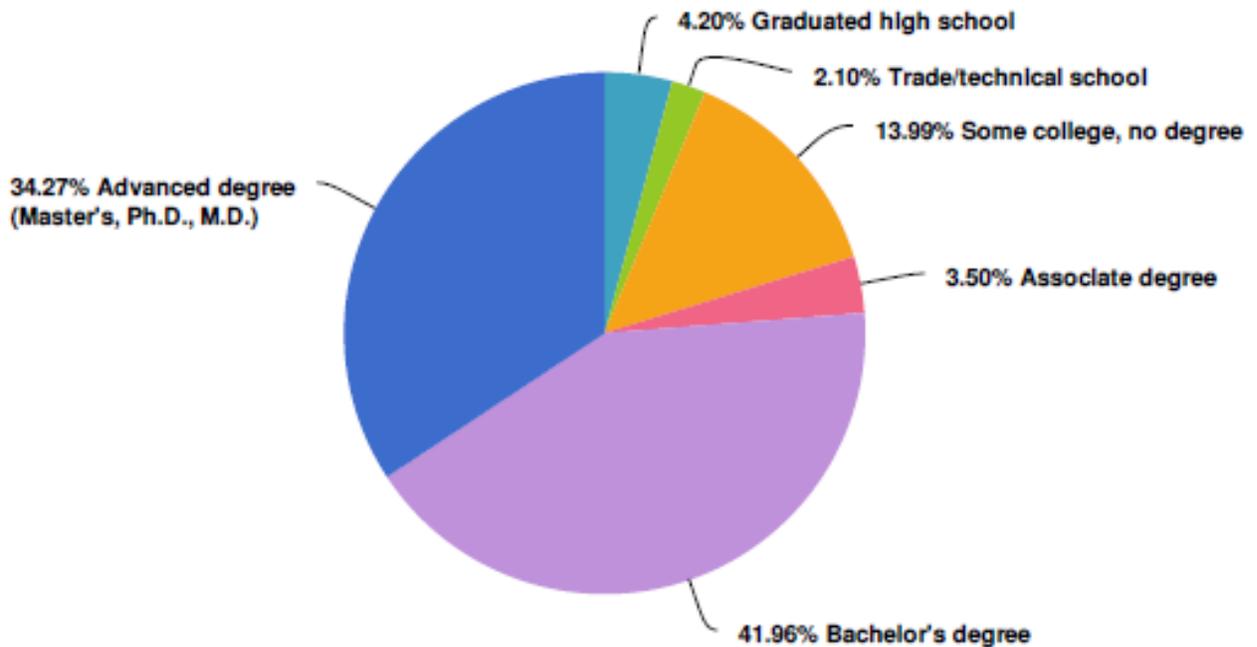
What is your Annual Household Income

The household income of survey respondents skews toward the higher income residents and visitors.



What is your highest level of educational attainment?

The vast majority (76.3%) of survey respondents have a bachelor's degree or higher.



How likely are you to recommend Chester Village Center to a friend or colleague?

More than half (51%) of survey respondents fall into the “Promoter” category, being very likely to recommend Chester Village Center to a friend or colleague, while 33% are passive and 16% are “Detractors.”

Themes within the comments on how likely respondents were to recommend visiting Chester Village Center to a friend or colleague included the following:

- Narrow range of offerings – good for day trips
- Safety hazards around town for recreation and pedestrians
- Proud of small town feel; charming, historic, peaceful and simplistic
- A few places/shop I would recommend but not overall
- I would recommend Lisai’s
- Not enough recreation opportunities and amenities. Those that existing are not promoted enough
- Not enough young people in and around town
- Unless you like antiques, there’s not much to recommend
- I would recommend for lodging, dining and special events
- Other than dining, there isn’t much to recommend

Any feedback you’d like to share?

Themes within the open-ended comments included the following

- Improve connectivity around town and signage to aid people navigating streets
- We like the character of the town but certain distracter, traffic and cleanliness/maintenance, hinder that character
- We value our local shops and not the corporate, big box shops
- This survey was not comprehensive and poorly designed
- Address 2nd home owner needs
- Did not address locals needs
- Focused on how to better attract tourists
- More needs to be done to preserve the character of Chester, utilization of historical resources
- We need to progress and build the entire community. Not just the Village Center
- Corporate stores must pay higher taxes if they are to open shops in Chester
- We need sidewalks, especially at Church Street
- Improved recreation resources/opportunities
- More emphasis/direction to the Green

Open Ended Comments Word Cloud

