

Public Meeting

December 5, 2024
Kingston City Hall



MIDTOWN THRIVING
A Community Vision to Revitalize Vacant Properties



HUDSON VALLEY
PATTERN *for* PROGRESS

Spanish Language Interpretation Services

Rocío Sharrock



Agenda

5 minutes: Project overview / refresher

10 minutes: Neighborhood Conditions Analysis
Sample of Key Findings / Data Analysis

40-45 minutes: Community Input Methodology
and Summary of Findings + Public Survey
Results

Remainder: Q & A

Project Team



MIDTOWN THRIVING
A Community Vision to Revitalize Vacant Properties

City of Kingston

Bartek Starodaj, Director of Housing Initiatives, City of Kingston

Department of State

Susan Landfried, AICP, Office of Planning, Development & Community Infrastructure

Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress

Adam Bosch, President and CEO

Elka Gotfryd, Executive Director of the Center for Housing Solutions, Senior Planner

Eric Pierson, Executive Director Main Street: Hudson Valley, Senior Research Planner

Kate Stryker, Director of Resilient Community Planning, Senior Planner

Robin DeGroat, Vice President for Operations

Yasmine Aziz, Policy Research Associate

[Project overview / refresher](#)

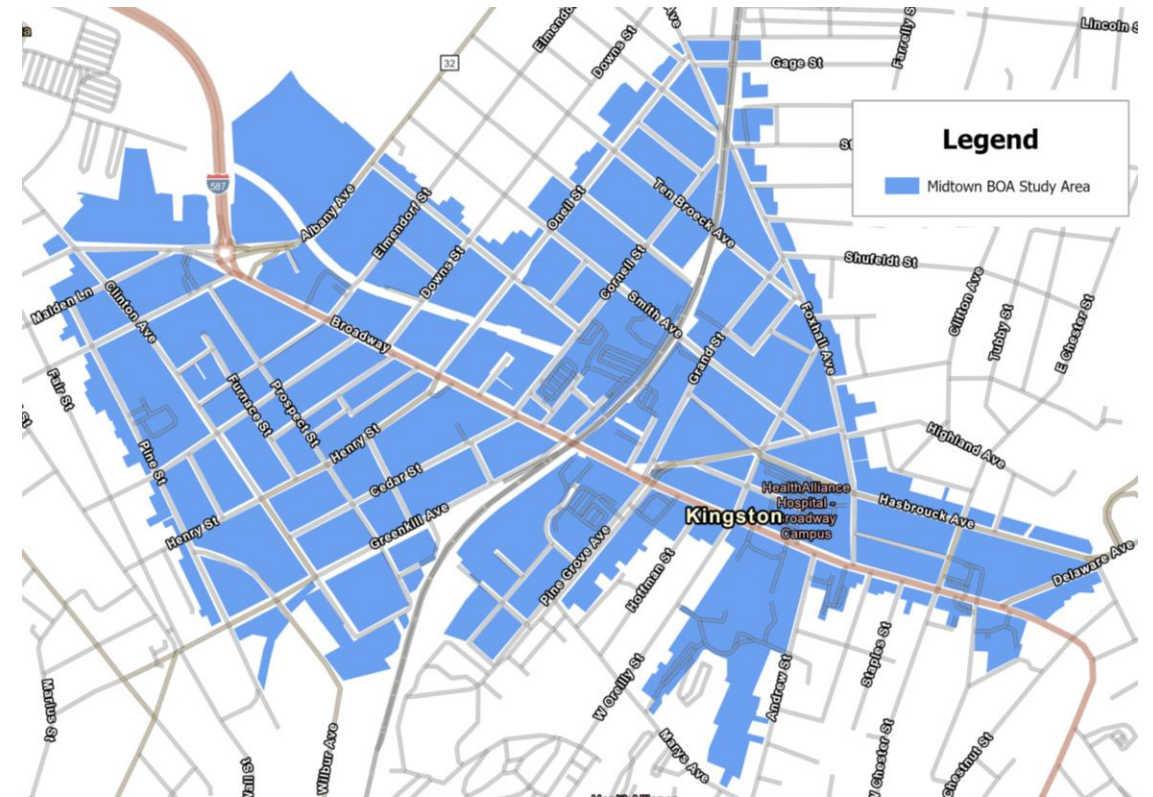
What is this project?

The Midtown Thriving Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) study is:

1. a community-driven plan to guide the redevelopment of **vacant or underutilized sites in Midtown.**
2. a neighborhood master plan, **driven by community vision and input.**

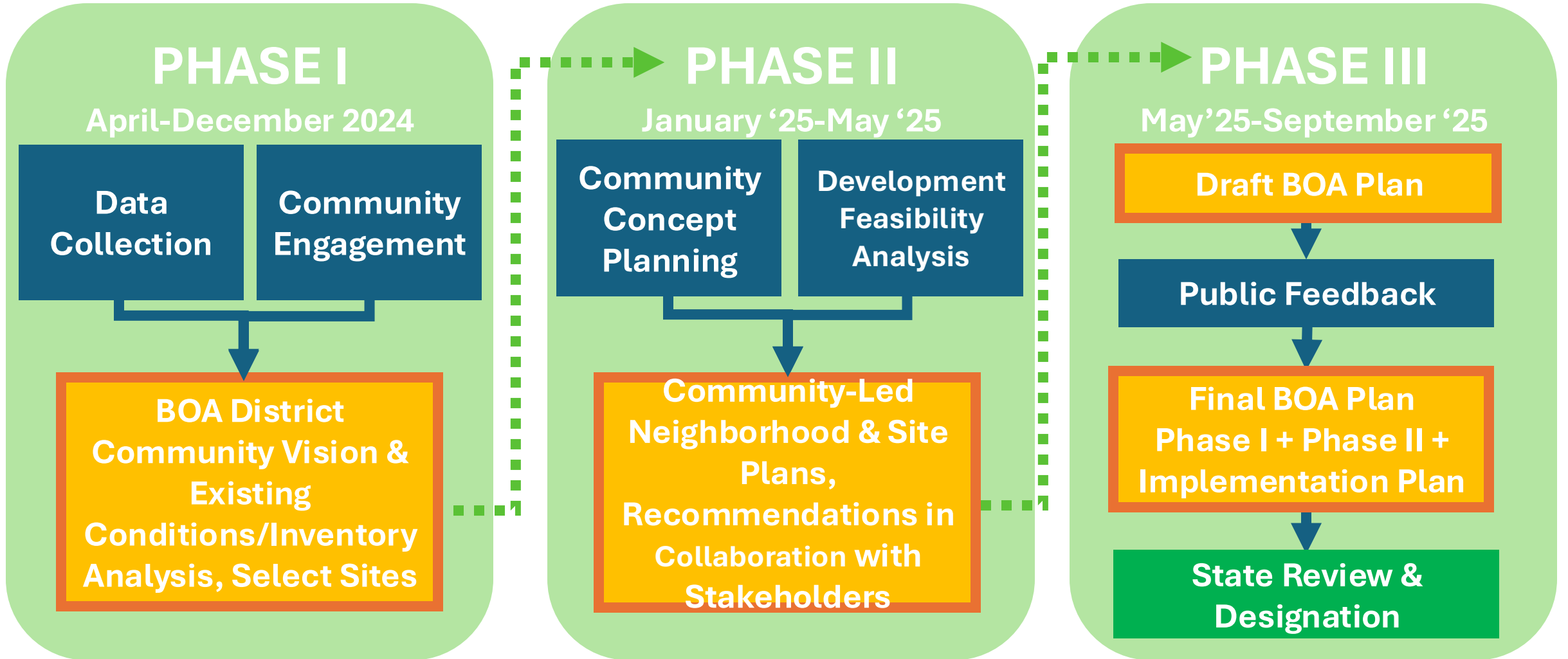
The process involves:

identifying the **needs and desires** of Midtown's diverse **residents** and **small businesses** and prioritizing those needs through **policy and planning strategies** and tools.



[Project overview / refresher](#)

Midtown Thriving Planning Process



Project overview / refresher

Household Income Has Not Kept Pace With Rising Housing Costs

Since 2010 in the City of Kingston...

- Housing costs for renters increased by **36%**
and inflation-adjusted household income of renters increased by just **3%**
- Housing costs for homeowners increased by **10%**
and inflation-adjusted household income of homeowners decreased by **-1%**

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2010 and 2022

The Cost of Housing is a Financial Burden

City of Kingston Housing Cost Burden



	AFFORDABLE
	COST BURDEN
	SEVERE COST BURDEN

Housing costs are **less than 30%** of total household income

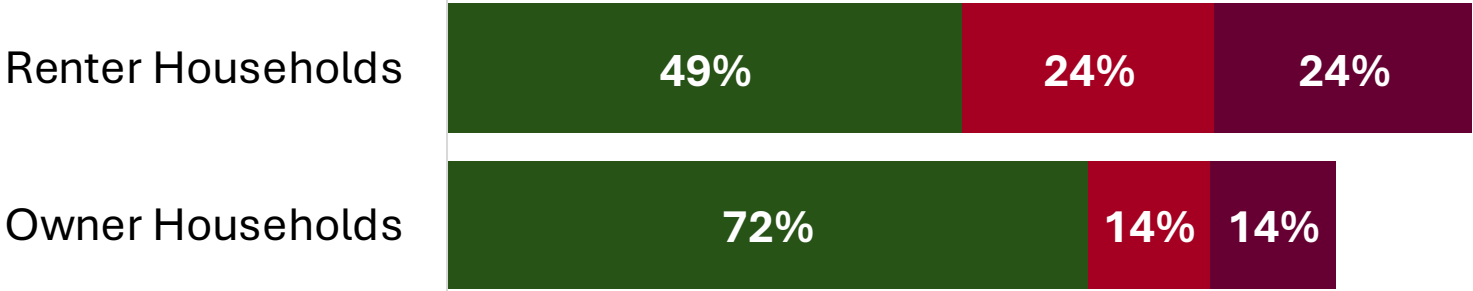
Housing costs are **between 30% and 50%** of total household income

Housing costs are **more than 50%** of total household income

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy, 2017-2021

The Cost of Housing is a Financial Burden

City of Kingston Housing Cost Burden by Tenure



	AFFORDABLE
	COST BURDEN
	SEVERE COST BURDEN

Housing costs are less than 30% of total household income

Housing costs are between 30% and 50% of total household income

Housing costs are more than 50% of total household income

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy, 2017-2021

Much of the Housing Stock is Old

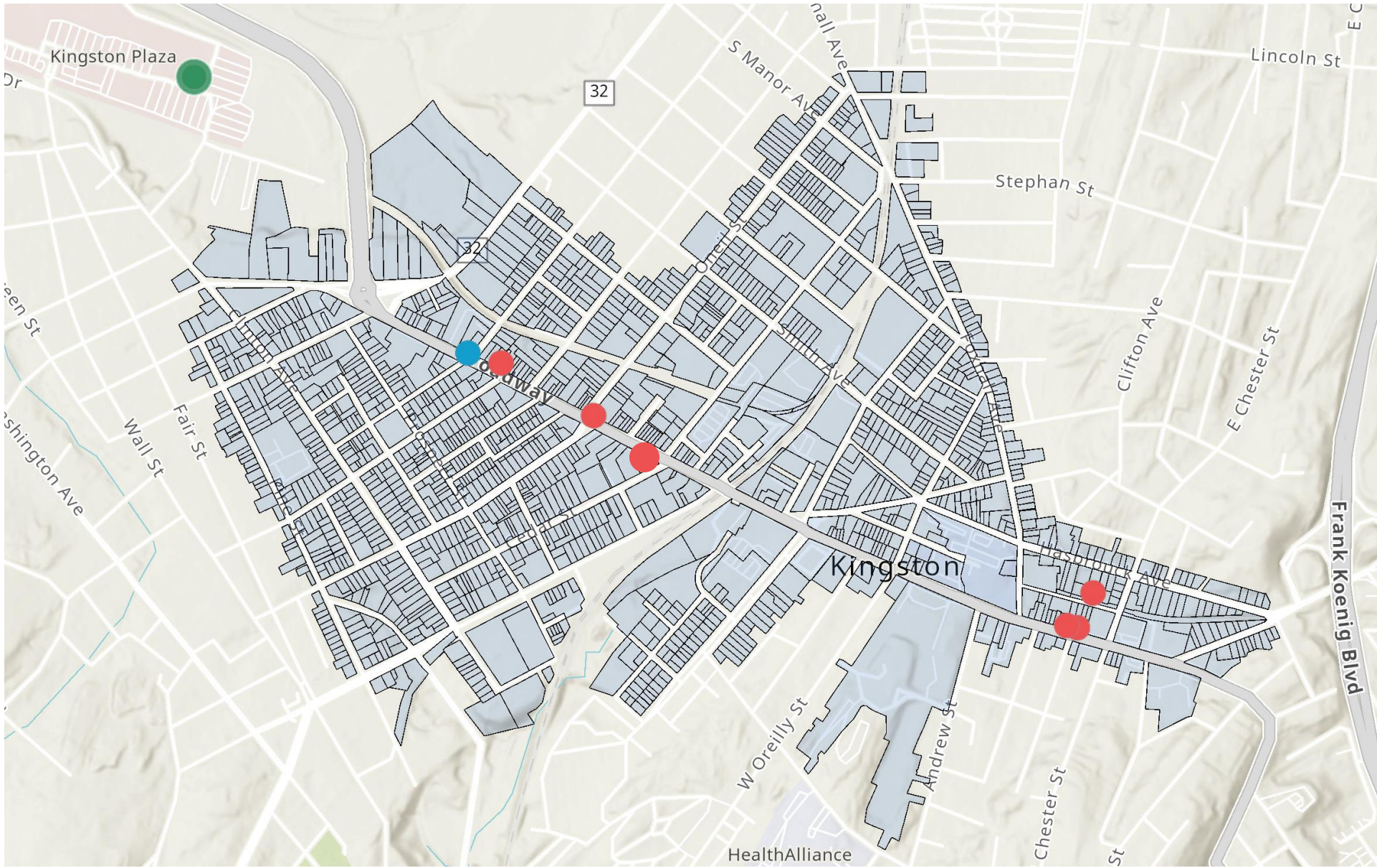
- In the City of Kingston
 - 93% of housing units built in 1980 or earlier.
 - 50% of housing units built before 1940.
- In the BOA Study Area
 - 92% of the housing units built before 1980.
 - **70%** of housing units built before 1940.
 - Approximately half of the housing units in Kingston built before 1940 are in the BOA study area

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2022

Limited Access to Food Stores

Food Stores

- specialty grocery
- quick mart/deli
- full grocery



Key Findings / Data Analysis

Limited Access to Food Stores

full food stores BOA



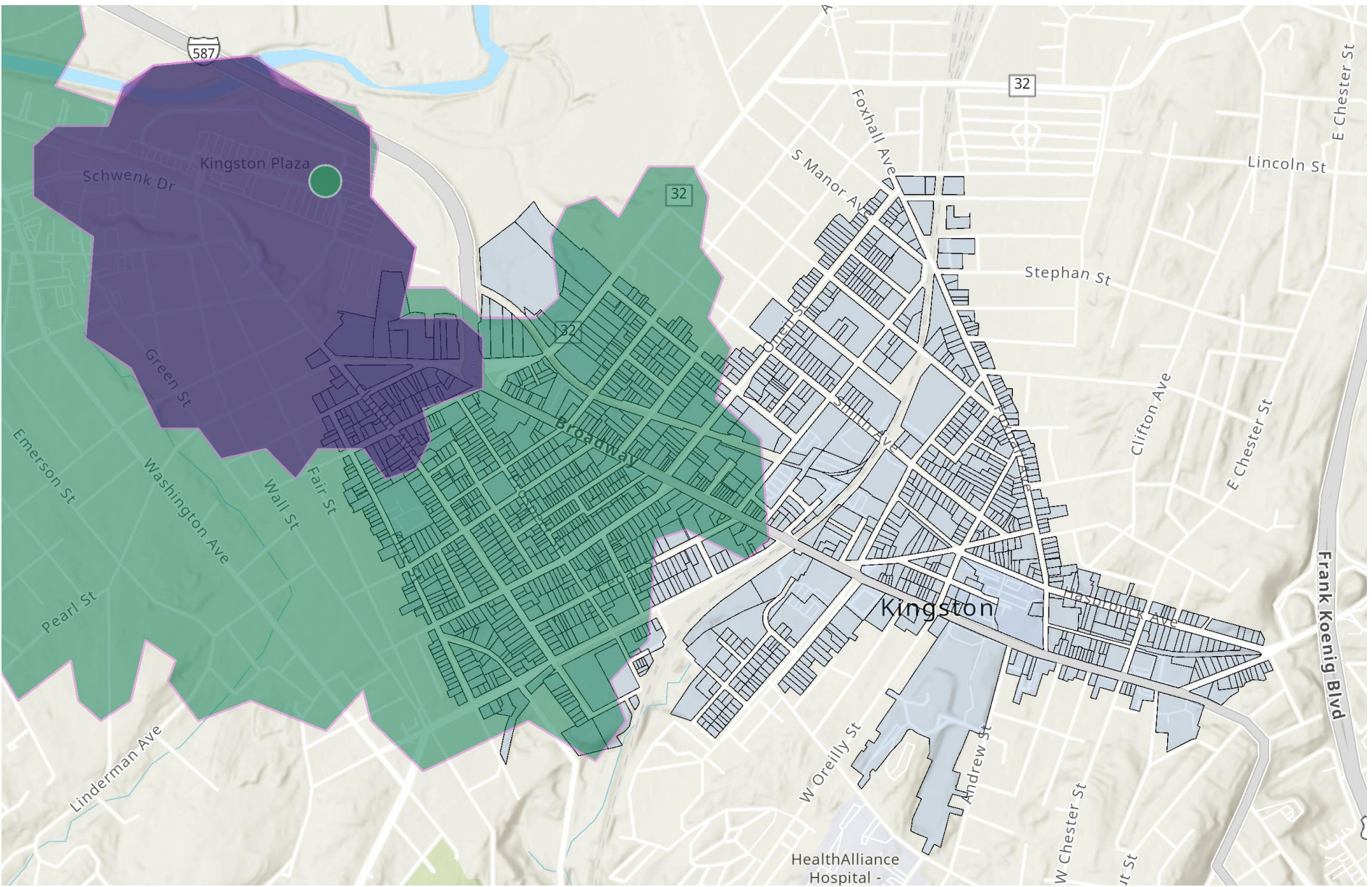
10 minute walk time full grocery stores



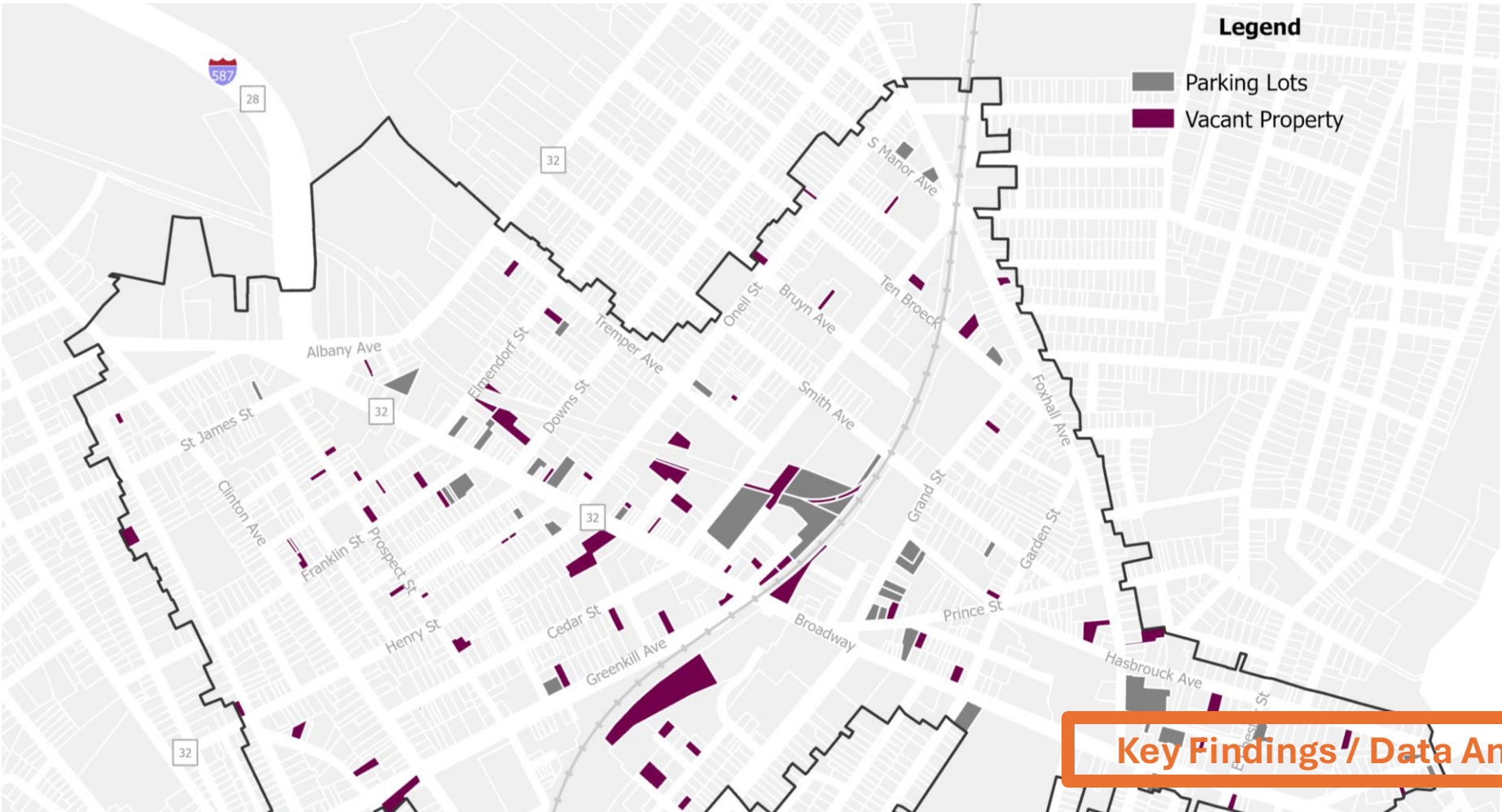
20 minute walk time



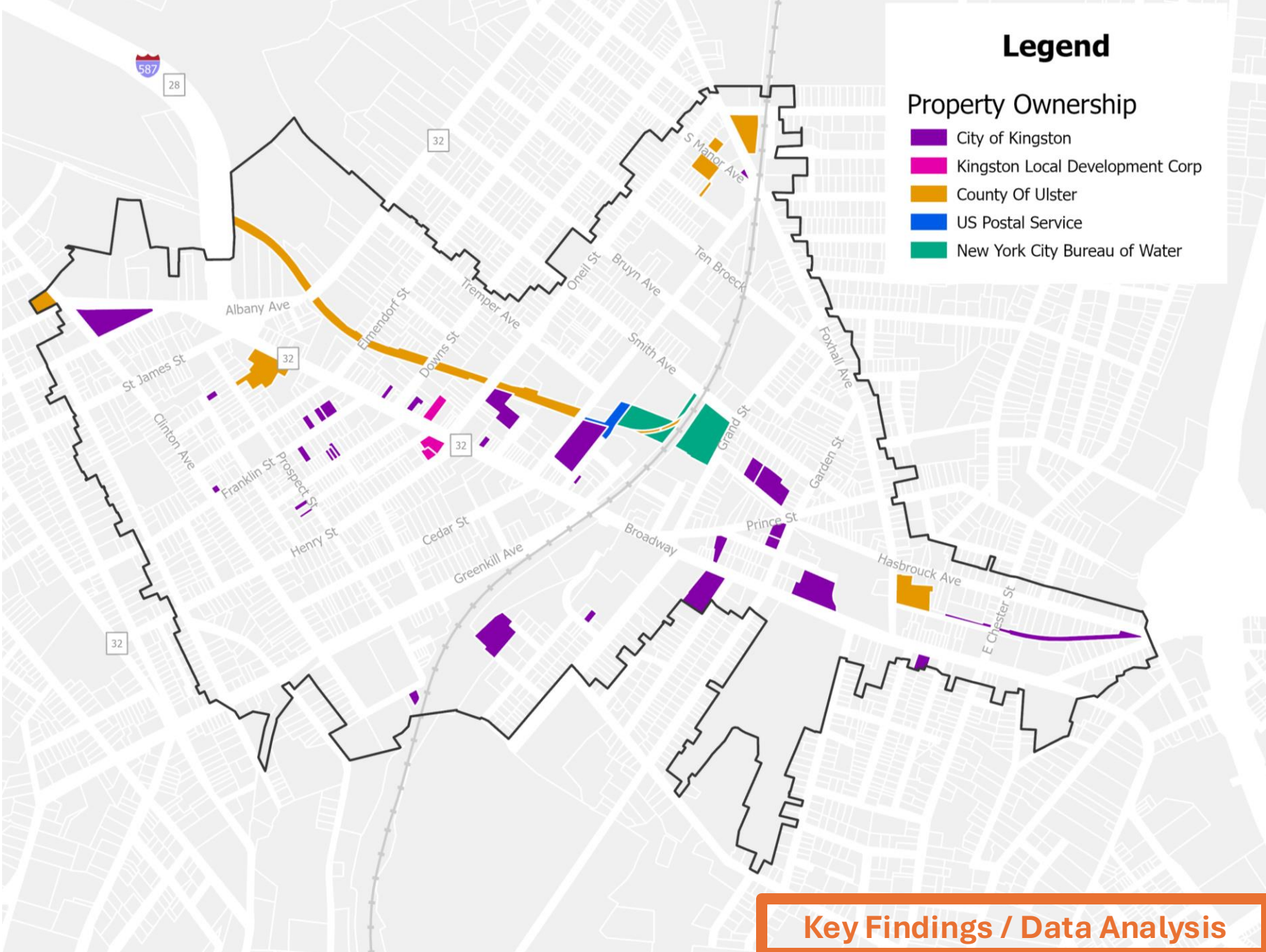
BOA_StudyArea



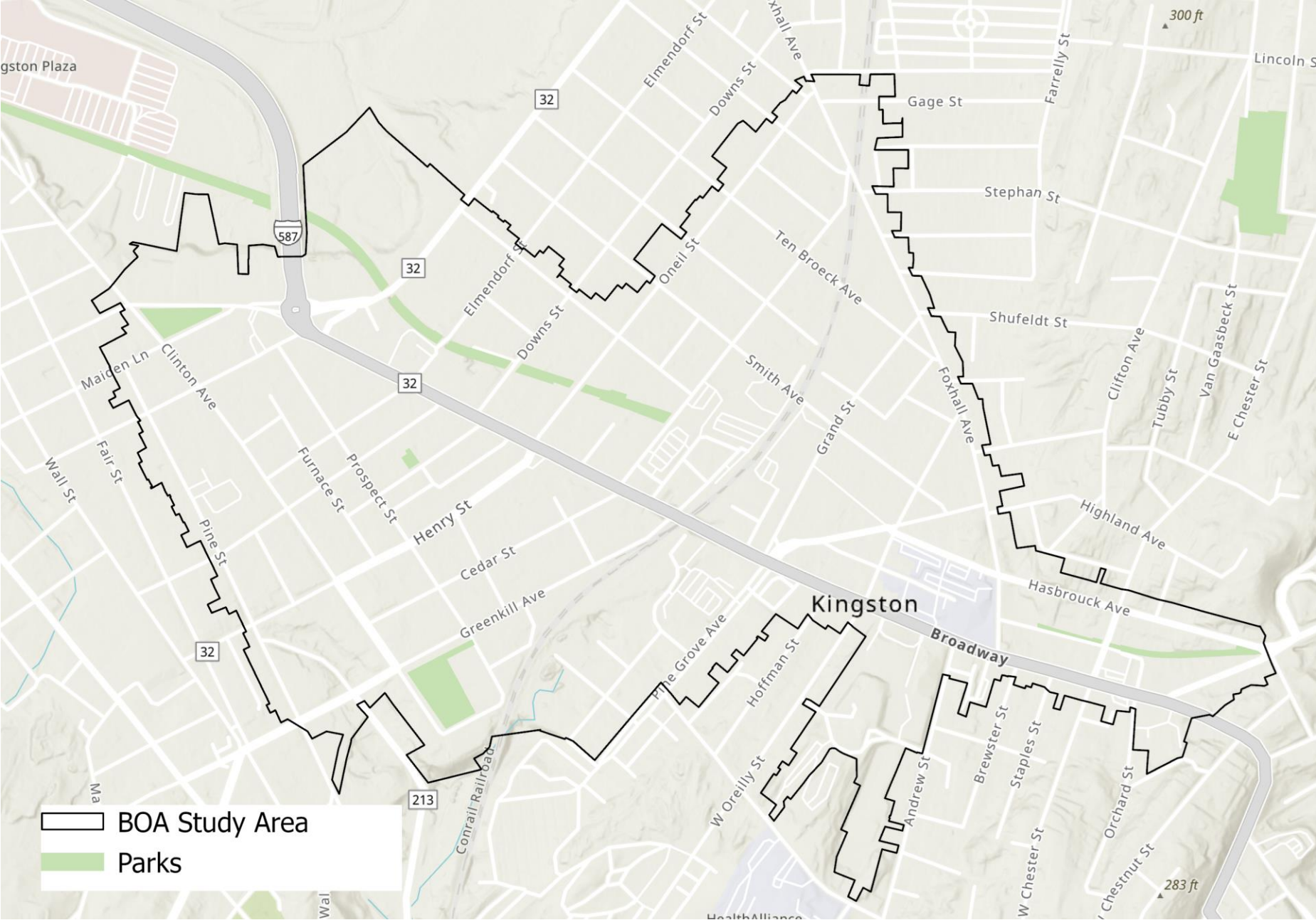
Significant Number of Parking Lots and Vacant Properties



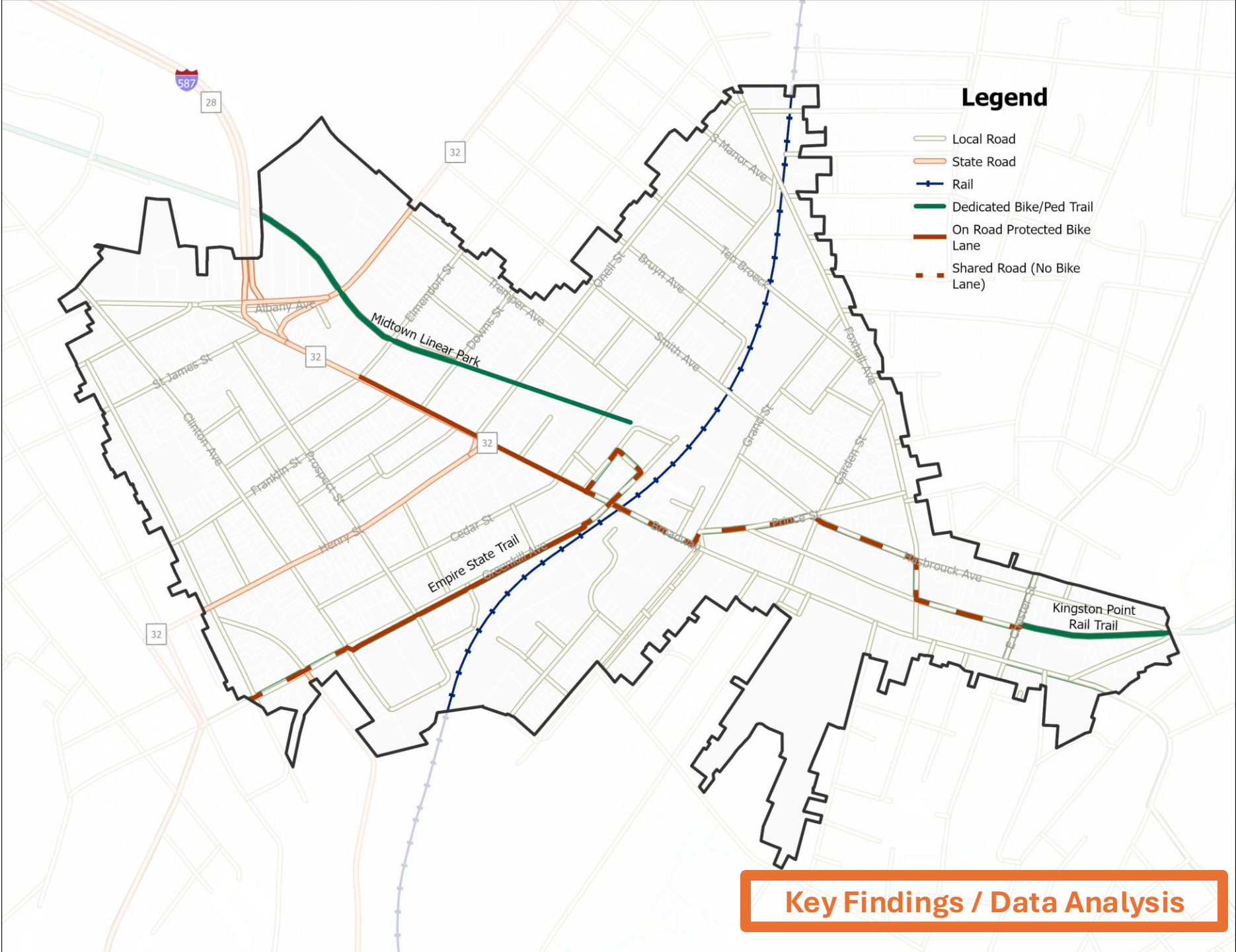
Limited Amount of Publicly Owned Land



Limited Amounts of Parks and Open Space in the BOA Study Area



Midtown is served by different types of transportation infrastructure



Market Analysis: Residential, Retail, Office Space, and Industrial

Persistent demand for diverse types of housing

The rise of remote work - The dynamic shift in work and living habits can make it very difficult to measure or predict a market like Kingston's using traditional metrics.

Retail vacancy rates in the Kingston area are 2.8% - close to a 15 year low of 2.5%

Kingston office space rents are about \$24 per square foot (1/3 < national average).

Industrial space rents in Kingston are lower than the national average. The sale price per square foot for industrial space has nearly doubled in Ulster County since the 2010s.

A city surrounded by logistics and highway access

Employment Market Analysis

City of Kingston has 1,009 fewer jobs than peak of employment in 2019 (NY, Department of Labor)

Although the Hudson Valley has seen most of its job growth come from the education and healthcare sectors, the City of Kingston has seen job losses in both.

1,004 fewer healthcare jobs since 2019

61 fewer education jobs

Employment Market Analysis

Job loss in information (-100), finance and insurance (-140), and real estate and leasing (-325) sectors.

Job growth in the city has been led by construction (+100), accommodation and food service (+150) and public administration (+300).

Median Earnings by Industry

Construction	\$44,598
Retail trade	\$35,171
Information	\$40,481
Finance and insurance, & real estate & rental and leasing	\$63,167
Educational services	\$53,493
Health care and social assistance	\$42,054
Accommodation and food services	\$25,833
Public administration	\$66,904

Key Findings / Data Analysis

Engagement Efforts

- **Public meetings at City Hall**
 - 4/10 Kickoff
 - 5/15 Brownfield Info Session
 - 12/5 (Today!) Interim findings
- **Engagement / tabling at events**
 - 5/4 Cinco de Mayo street festival
 - 6/28 Food truck festival
 - 10/5 Hispanic festival
 - 10/5 Boys & Girls Club sponsored tournament
 - 10/29 Tilda's Kitchen – sponsored Open Table
- **Small group discussions**
 - 4/25 Broadway Bubble – 15 participants
 - 6/30 PlaceCorps – 6 youth
 - 10/23 Unicorn Bar – 40+ participants
 - 10/29 Tilda's Kitchen – 20+ participants
 - 11/17 Walking Tour – 10 participants
- **Public Survey - 342 responses in 8 weeks**

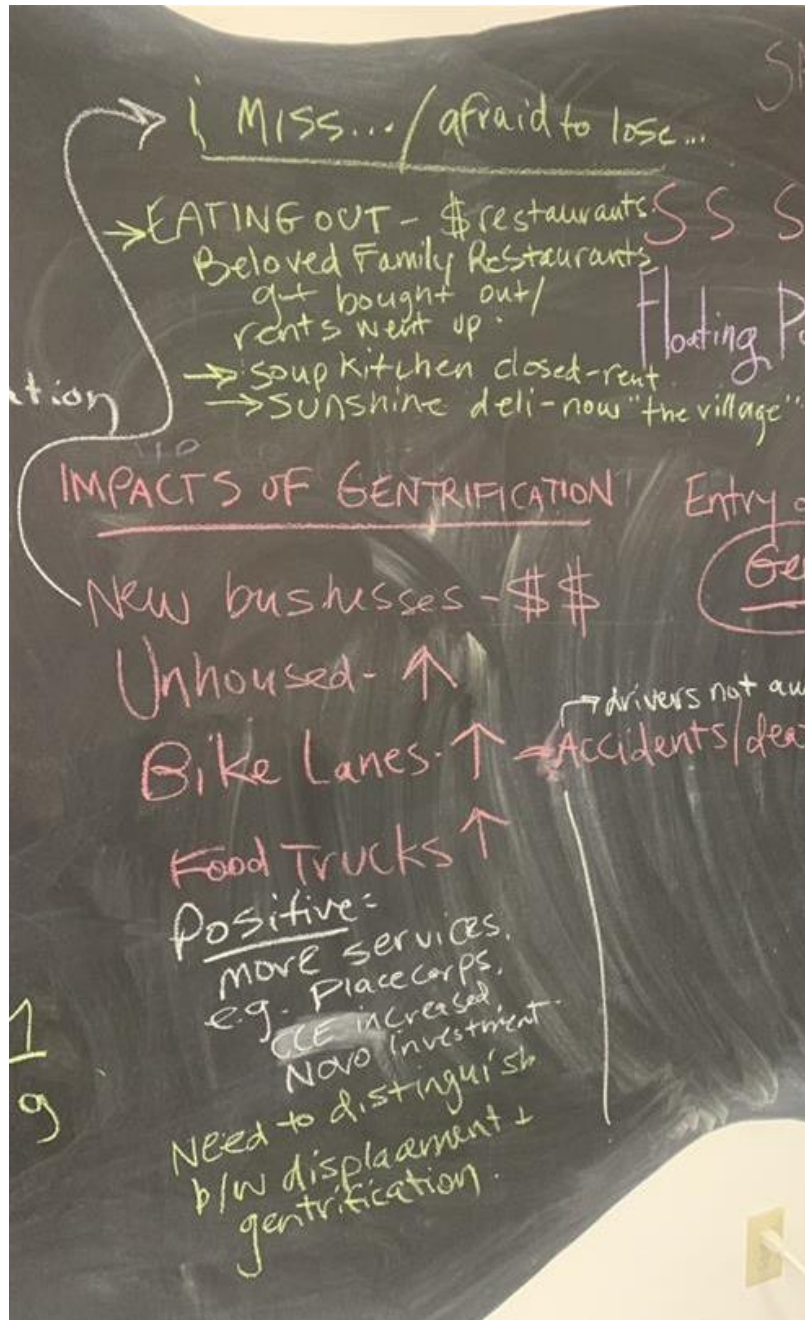


Engagement Events Summary of Input

Top concerns:

Affordability and Access to Basic Material Needs

- Affordable housing for existing residents
- Fears of gentrification and displacement
- Businesses affordable to the local community
- Protecting legacy biz + restaurants
- Food access – supermarket too far to walk

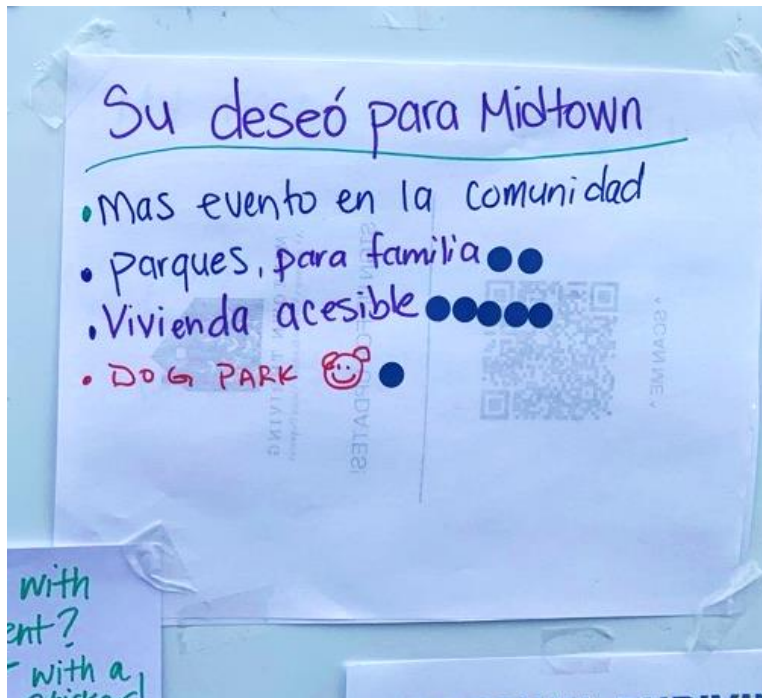
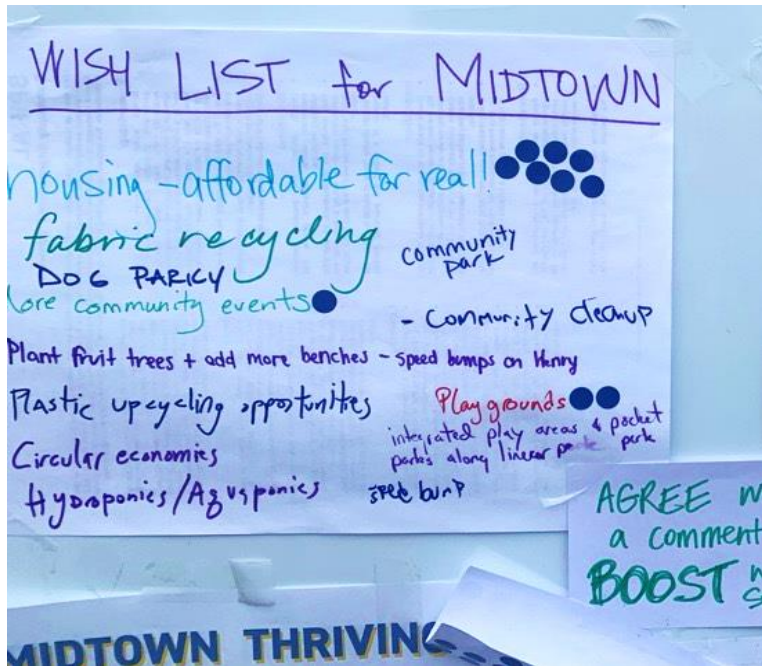


Engagement Events Summary of Input

Top concerns:

Connection, Safety, Public Space

- Affordable & safe opportunities for youth and seniors to socialize and interact
- Playgrounds and public gathering spaces
- Drug use impacts sense of safety in parks
- Mental health support & services
- Stronger relationships with growing Spanish-speaking communities



Public Survey – Process Summary

- Midtown Thriving selected as pilot for **WIATT (Wellbeing Insights, Assets, and Tradeoffs Tool)** with national org Full Frame Initiative
- 6 community members as credible messengers
- 1 organizational rep: Tilda's Kitchen
- Co-design of survey questions
- Opened 9/30. Initial deadline: 11/4; extended to 11/17.
- Review on 12/4 with credible messengers: **1300 comments reviewed!**



Community Input Summary

Why WIATT?

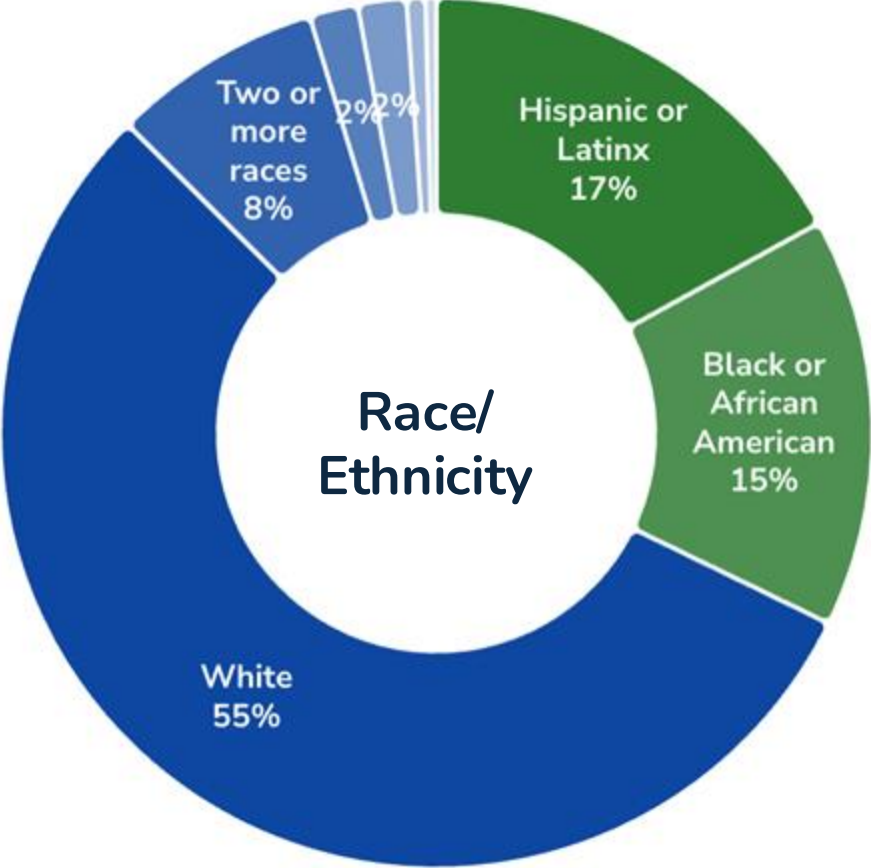
- Planning through a Wellbeing lens
- Representation Check
- Credible Messengers
- Community Ownership of Data
- Understanding Tradeoffs and Assets
- Not just what you *need* but what you *have*
- National cohort of partners moving toward systems change



Wellbeing is...

“The set of needs and experiences universally required in combination and balance to weather challenges and have health and hope.”

Who we surveyed



We prioritized collecting enough surveys from these communities:

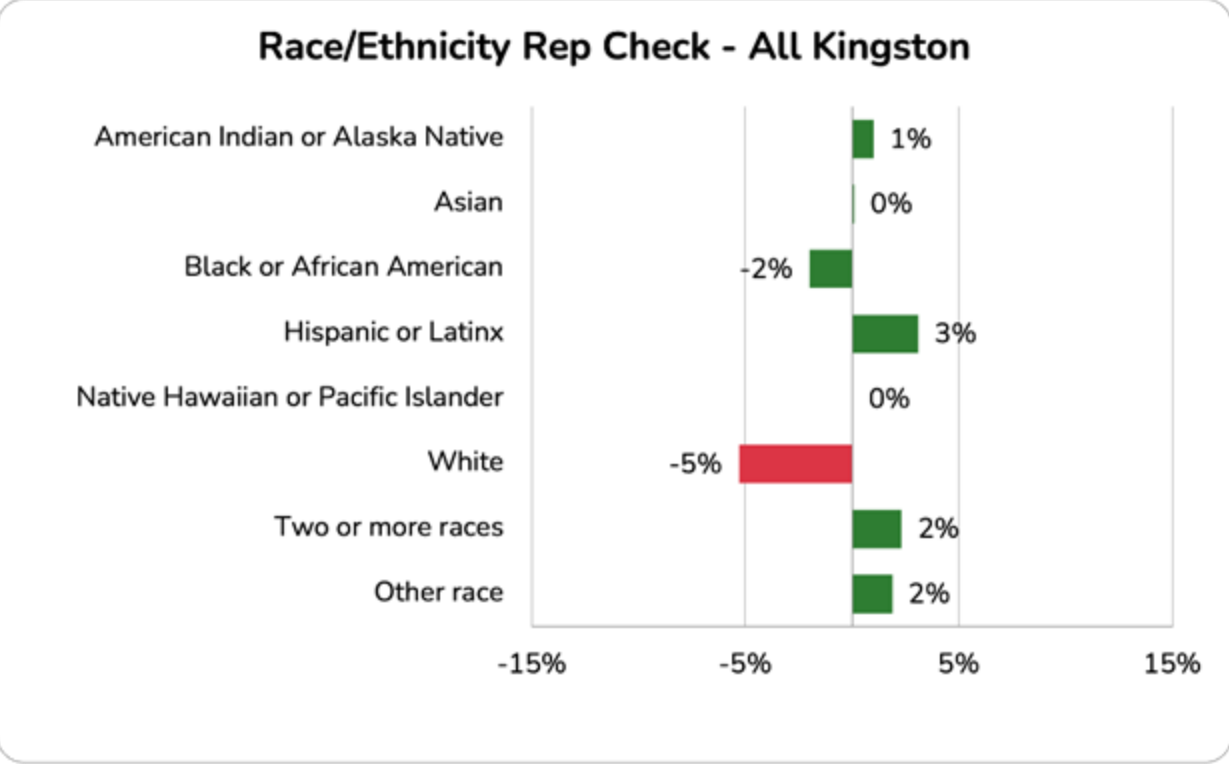
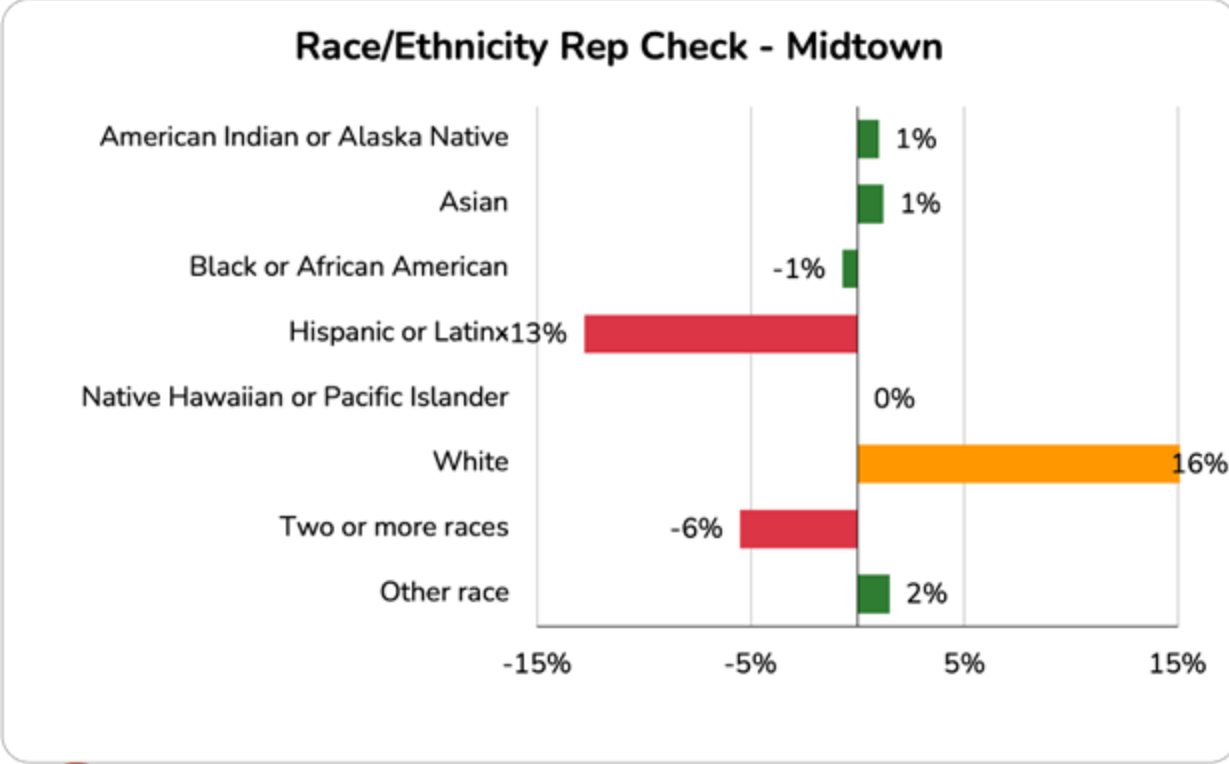
- Black or African-American
- Hispanic or Latino

 = Prioritized group

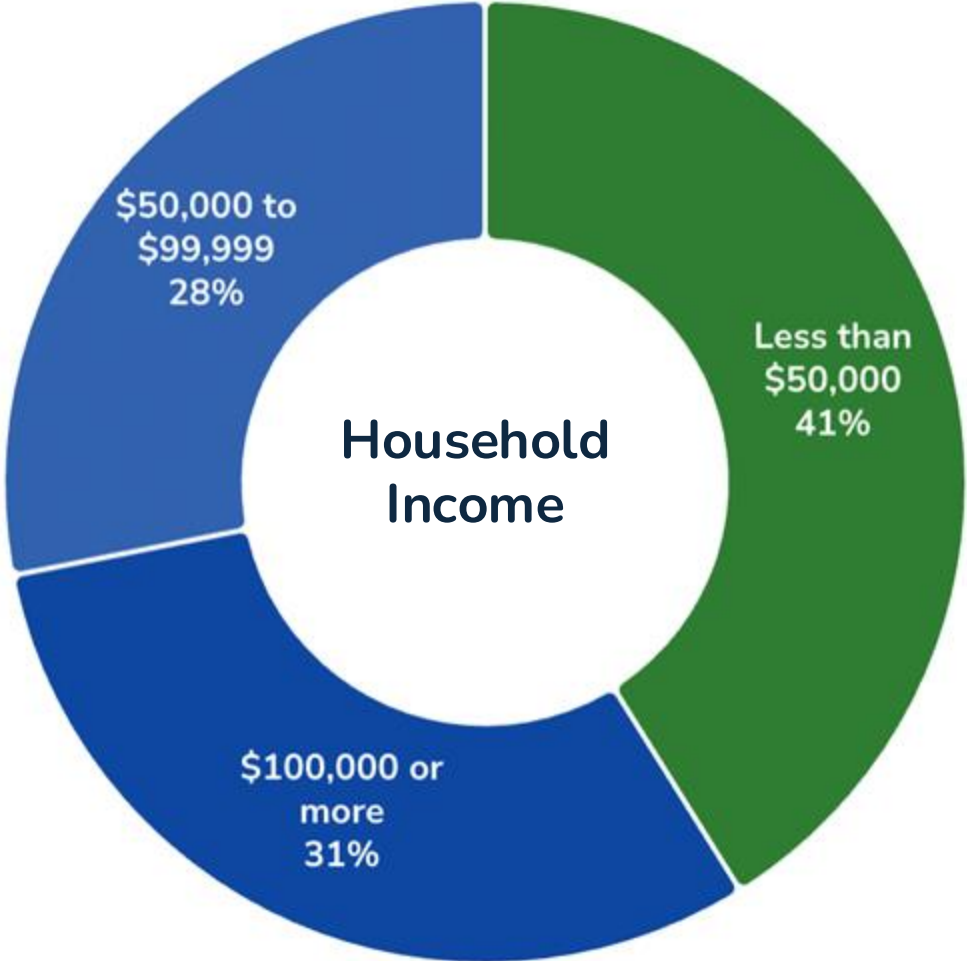
Chart excludes 59 “prefer not to say” responses

Are the surveys representative of the community?

Our survey respondents better reflect the race and ethnicity composition of all of Kingston, not the composition of Midtown Kingston



Who we surveyed



We were somewhat successful in reaching:

- Residents with household incomes less than \$50k

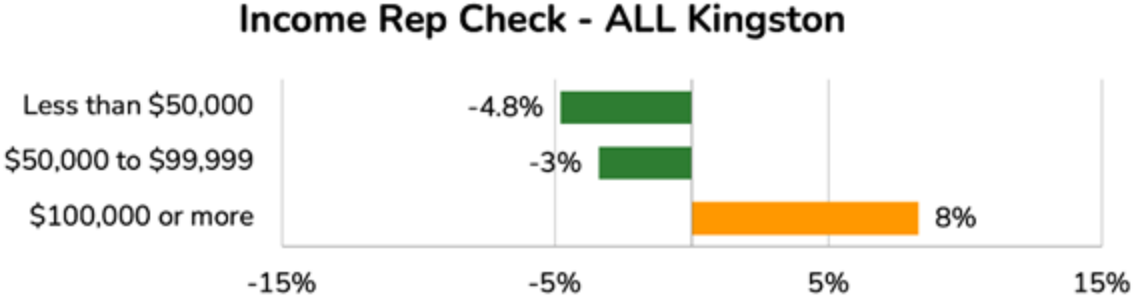
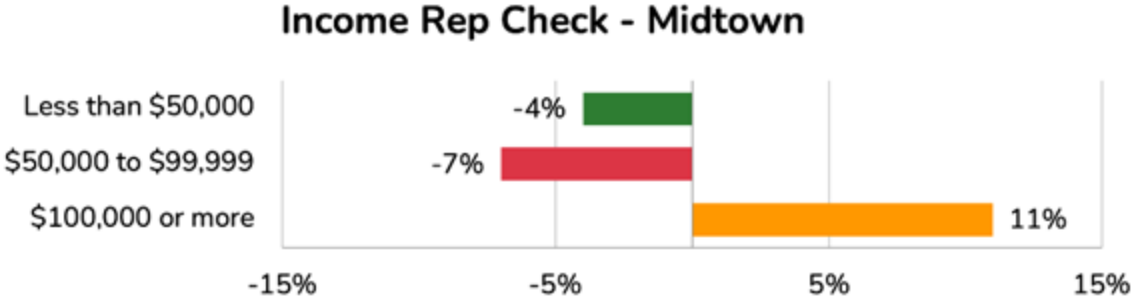


Chart excludes 88 “prefer not to say” responses

Who we surveyed

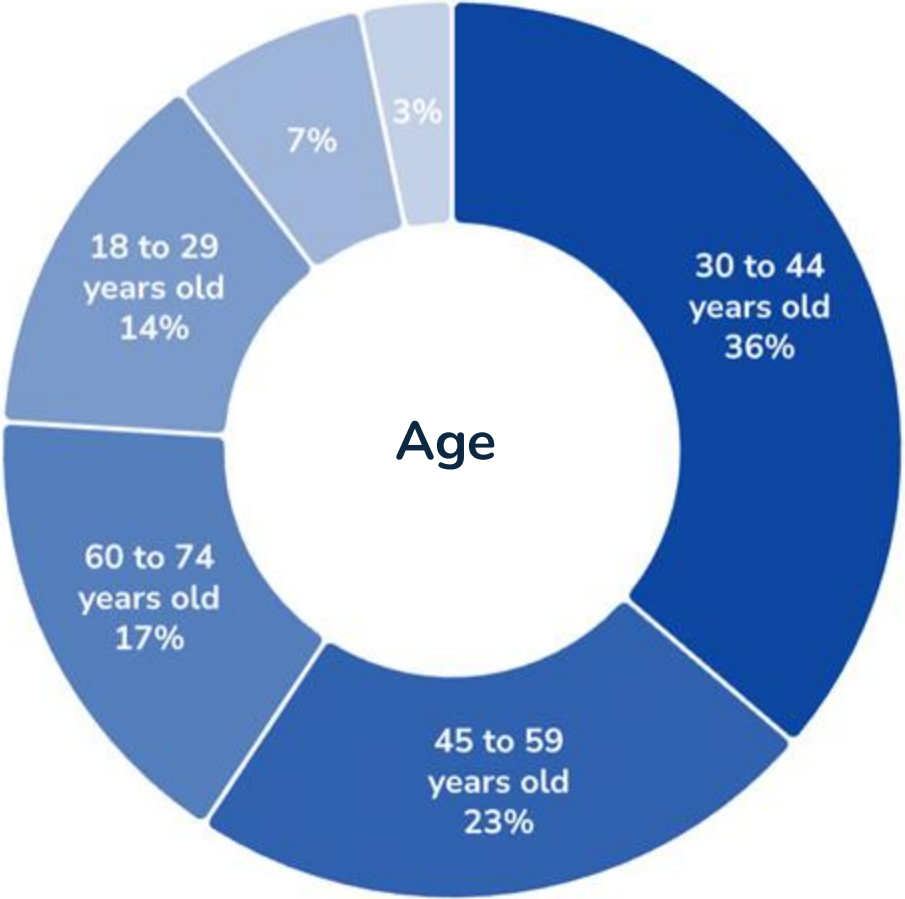


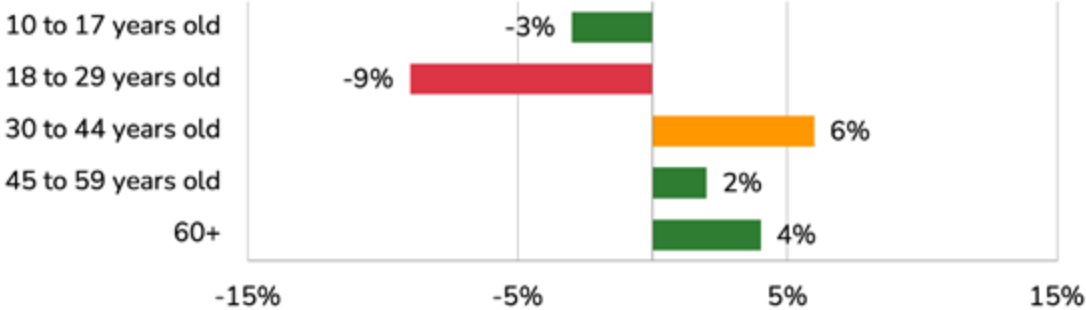
Chart excludes 41 “prefer not to say” responses



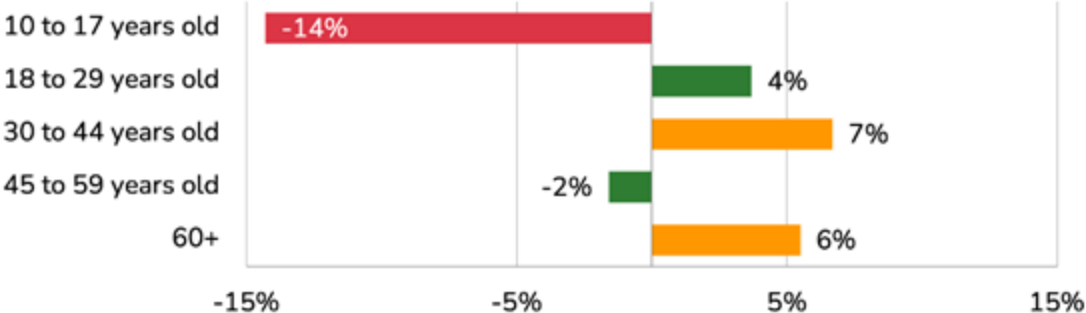
We were somewhat successful in prioritizing collecting input from:

- A diverse set of age ranges, including youth and elder voices

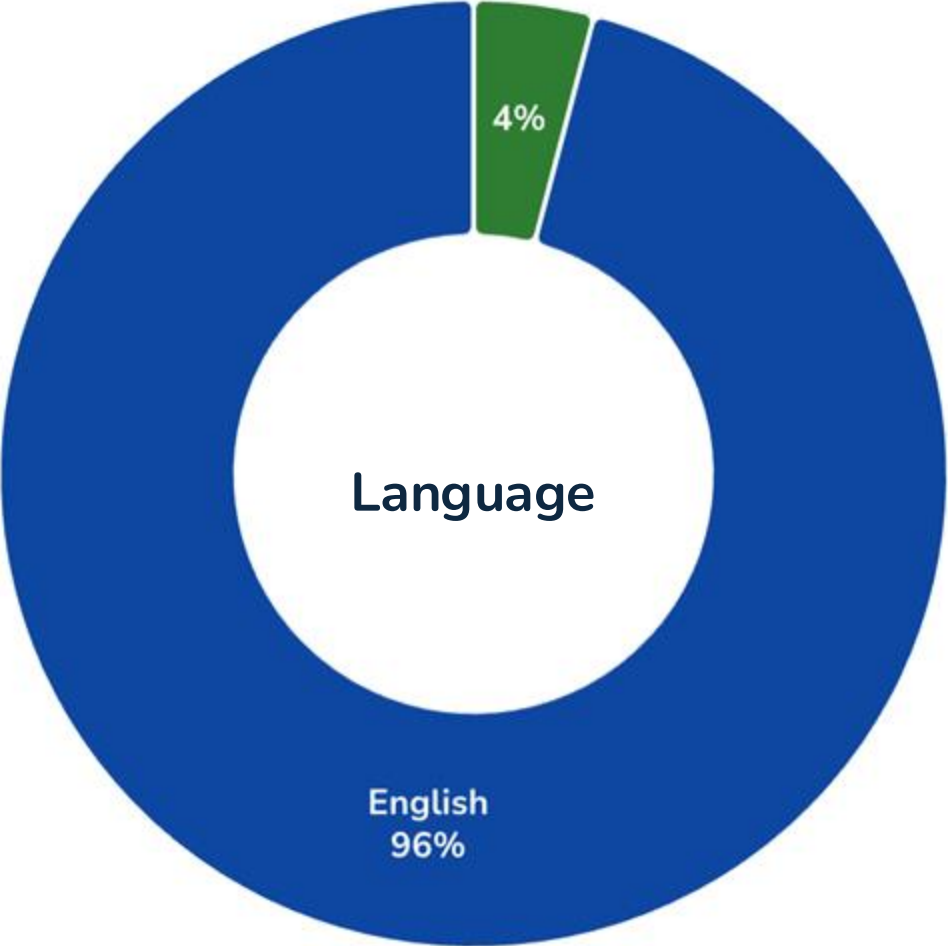
Age Rep Check - Midtown



Age Rep Check - All Kingston

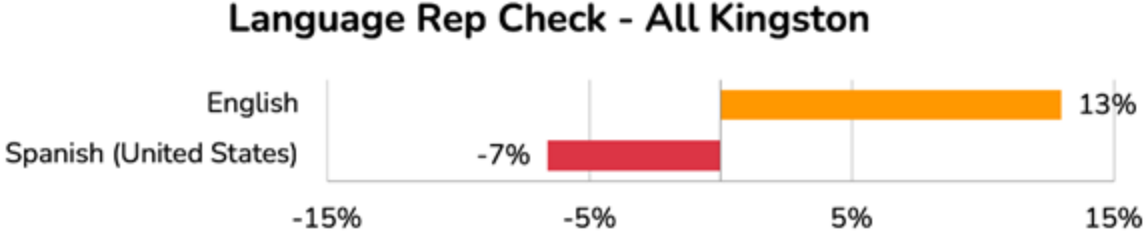
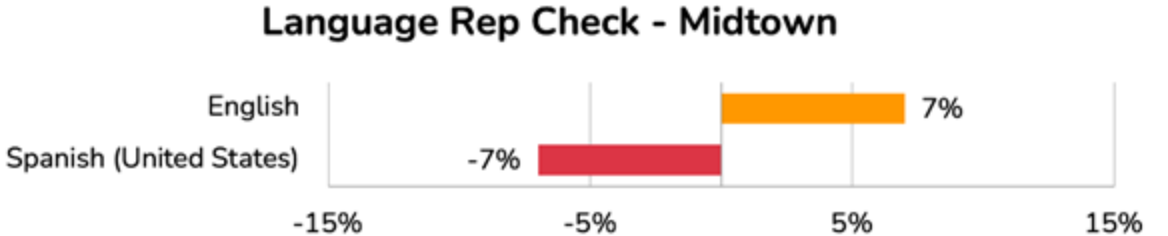


Who we surveyed



We were not successful in prioritizing collecting input from:

- People who speak Spanish or Q'eqchi as their primary language



Part 1: Vision Statement

Midtown Kingston is a diverse and welcoming place where all residents can thrive. Income is not a barrier to accessing safe and stable housing, fresh and healthy food, open space and nature, and opportunities for social connection. Midtown exemplifies how to pursue sustainable development without displacement.

The economy in Midtown is made up of local small businesses that are responsive to community needs and offer sustainable, living-wage employment. People of all ages, incomes, and abilities have ample options for affordable and accessible transportation.

Youth, who are the future of the community, feel hopeful and are engaged with their fellow residents and with activities they love. They are empowered by abundant and enriching resources to learn, to be creative, and to proactively shape their futures.

The communities of Midtown feel a strong connection to place and a sense of belonging. Neighborhood improvements and investments are designed to benefit existing residents. People who have been displaced due to affordability challenges are able to return to their communities. Land and people are protected from harm. Decisions about land and development have future generations in mind.

Do you like this vision? Yes? No? Why or why not?

92% of respondents said they like the vision!

Positive comments celebrated:

- the aspirational quality of the vision and embrace of change, hopefulness, and
- the focus on inclusivity of all communities, and
- the goals to avoid displacement.

8% of respondents didn't like the vision, and some who liked it still expressed concerns such as:

- the vision was too vague; left wanting more concrete action steps rather than a “wish list”;
- people were skeptical that the vision was *too* aspirational, or too good to be true;
- most skepticism came from respondents who self-identified their race as White.

Do you like this vision?

Yes? No? Why or why not?

“If Kingston can figure this out, we will be a singular world leader. It is great to set aspirational goals, but I think many people might read this and not take the endeavor seriously. I am very, very deeply invested in Kingston: I am a booster and a believer! But incremental, attainable goals are more important than a wish list to me.”

“It's well-intentioned, adolescent fantasy. First off, Midtown is engineered for cars, not people. There are no social structures in place to protect residents from the resultant gentrification that any development, well intentioned or not, will bring.”

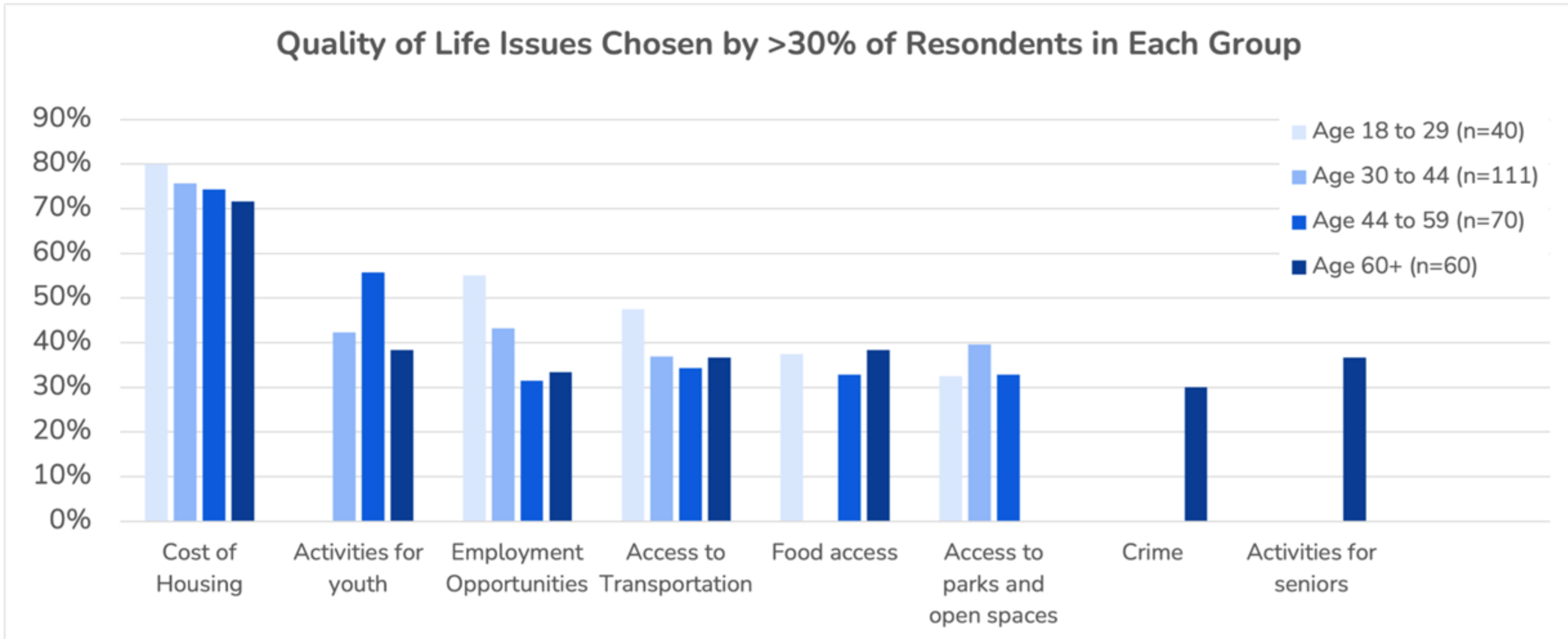
What people told us: top quality of life issues

We provided a list of 14 quality of life issues. We asked respondents to pick 5 of the following:

- Cost of housing
 - Access to transportation
 - Access to parks and open space
 - Access to public gathering spaces
 - Activities for youth
 - Activities for seniors
 - Access to businesses that meet my needs
 - Food access
 - Access to behavioral health services
 - Feeling welcome and treated with respect
 - Opportunities for civic engagement
 - Educational opportunities
 - Employment opportunities
 - Crime
 - Other - Write In
-

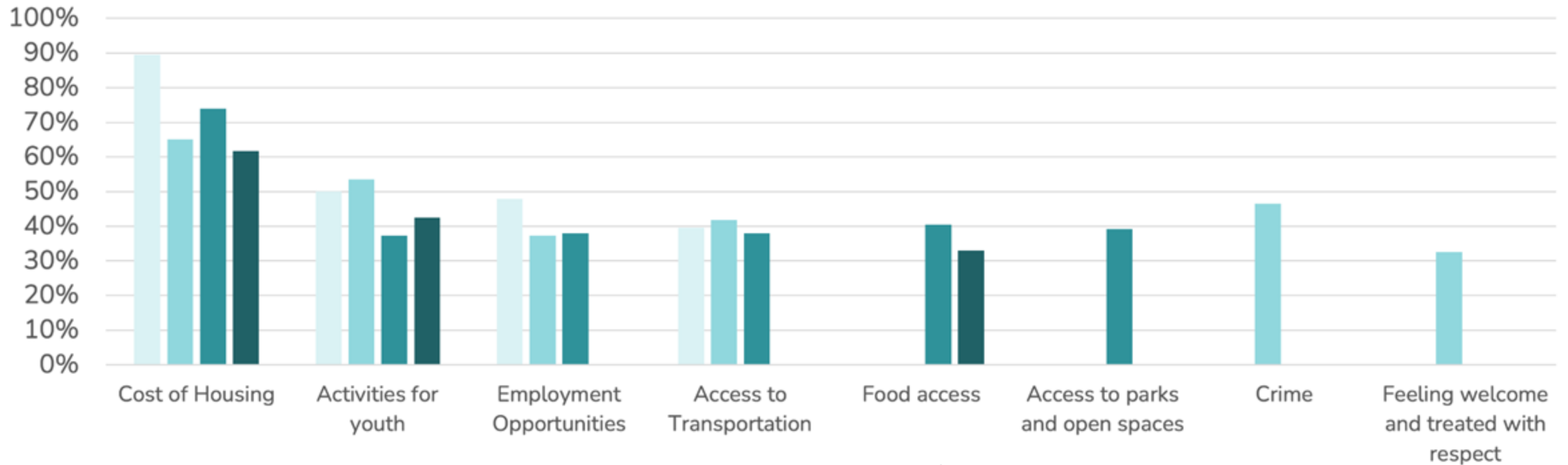
Community Input Summary

Quality of Life Concerns by Age



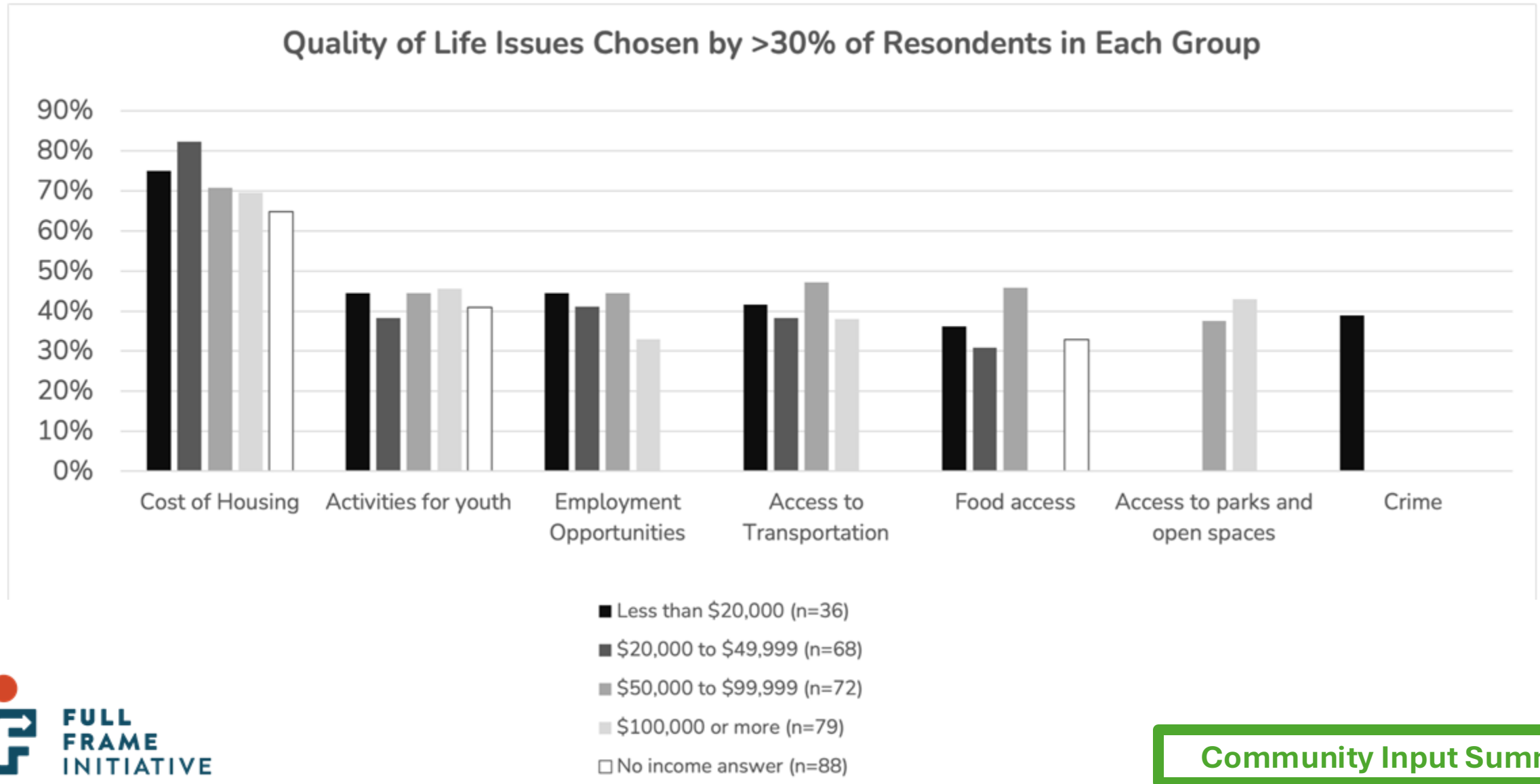
Quality of Life Concerns by Race / Ethnicity

Quality of Life Issues Chosen by >30% of Respondents in Each Group



- Hispanic / Latino (n=43)
- Black or African American (n=43)
- White (n=158)
- All Other (n=94)

Quality of Life Concerns by Household Income



How do people feel about new development overall?

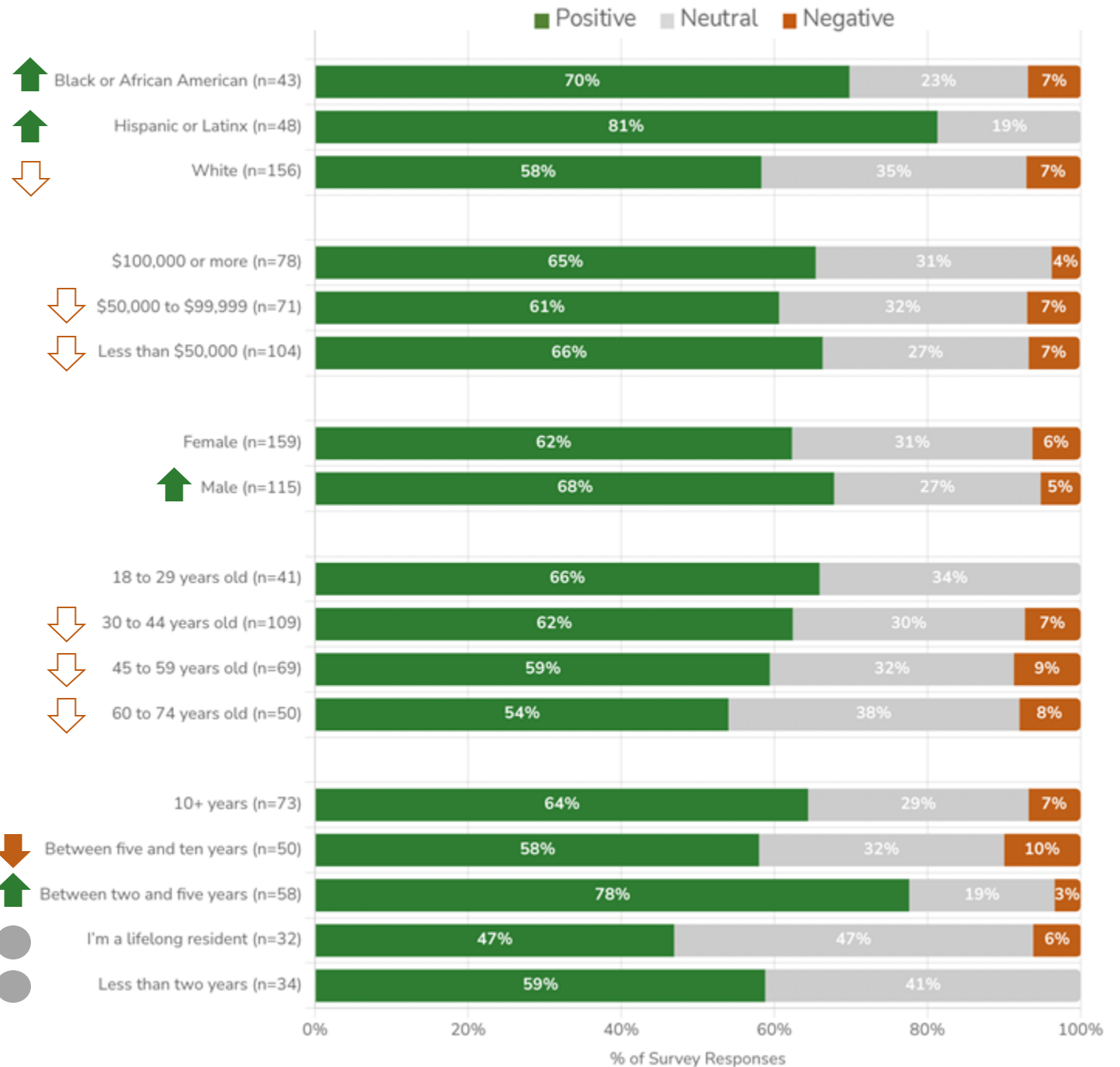
↑ 67%+ positive

● <40% neutral

↓ 7%+ negative

↓ 10%+ negative

Note: Groups with less than 30 responses are hidden: we don't have enough answers for their bar to be representative



How do different demographic groups perceive potential impacts of development?

Across all groups...

- Most neutral responses: stability (impact on routines) and mastery (sense of influence and hope)
- Most overwhelmingly positive impact is highest in social connectedness & access to resources
- Most divided / least neutral category is safety – overall positive, but also see the most negative (esp. lifelong residents and millennials).

Points of differences:

- Least positive & most neutral overall: lifelong residents.
- Pandemic arrivals were most positive / hopeful overall
- People who have been living here for 5-10 years had the most negative responses across all domains
- Most positive overall: Young people 18-29 years old, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino
- White respondents most negative / least hopeful

Open-ended feedback

On the survey, we asked these open-ended questions, and received 1300 comments...

- Do you like this vision?
- Why do you or don't you like it? What would you change, if anything?
- Could you explain why you chose these items?
- The Midtown BOA has a high concentration of vacant and/or underused land and buildings. If there was an opportunity to redevelop or activate one of these sites, what kinds of uses would be most beneficial for the neighborhood?
- What place in Midtown would you miss most if it were gone?
- Is there anything you'd like to explain about your answers above?
- Could you tell us more about why new development in Midtown might positively affect you?
- Could you tell us more about why new development in Midtown might negatively affect you?
- Thinking about what you're concerned about losing, or other negatives, what would make new development in Midtown more worth it to you?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share with the project team about your thoughts on the Midtown Thriving Project?

Theme 1: Housing Done Right & Fear of Displacement

- **Affordable housing** that mitigates gentrification & displacement trends (important across all demographic groups that responded to the survey)
- **TENSION between community and outside interests:** who does the developing and who benefits?
- **Interest in a variety of housing types and public ownership models**
 - community land trust, coops, multifamily homes, apartments, communal living arrangements were all suggested.

Theme 1: Housing Done Right & Fear of Displacement

“As I get older, I imagine living in an apartment instead of a house with property. I like the of this possibility being created in Kingston. Having more people, community, and businesses in Midtown will bring people together” (5-10 years, White, Female, 51, \$50,000 to \$99,000)

“It could appear to folks moving into Kingston that Midtown is more alluring to them and it could outprice different community members where Kingston could become even less affordable to folks who are already struggling.” (Lifelong, Black or African American, Female, 41, \$50,000 to \$99,000)

“As someone returning to the area post college, after coming back in hopes to utilize my degree for our community, that hope has slowly dissipated following the realization of the current housing market. I feel much of Kingston now represents the hopes of attracting new residents rather than working to better the lives of the current.” (Lifelong (multiple generations), White, Male, 27, \$20,000 to \$49,999)



Theme 1: Housing Done Right & Fear of Displacement

“I think it could be really an amazing opportunity to create social housing that is mixed income and permanently affordable. Even if people do not own a home, they could feel like they can put down roots here. Basic financial stability is essential for health of individuals and the community.” (2-5 years, White, Female, 39, \$50,000 to \$99,999)

“I am poor, young, and brown. Historically these projects harm my community as well as help.” (5-10 years, Two or more races, Non-Binary, 23, <\$20,000)

Theme 2: Local Businesses & Economic Health

- **Small/local businesses** that benefit a range of communities, not just wealthy shoppers
- Support **legacy businesses** to keep them in Midtown
- Retail opportunities so people **do not need to drive** to do their shopping
- Business **incubator** space
- Other development that generates **jobs with decent wages** locally

Theme 2: Local Businesses & Economic Health

“Better economic prospects will ultimately supersede the negatives because people across the community are able to work, save and engage in the activities they choose which is good for the mental well-being of the community” (2-5 years, Black or African American, Male, 44, \$20,000)

“I believe that a combination of local small businesses and larger orgs/corps would be more sustainable. Midtown small businesses are very expensive to patron so throwing a Trader Joe’s (as an example) into the mix, offers choices” (10+ years, White, Female, 42, \$50,000 to \$99,999)

“Midtown is the area of most commercial density and therefore potential to be the heartbeat of the city....Providing retail outlets for small business owners at a low cost is important. I very much don’t want to see chain stores move in and knock out the beautiful local vibrancy.” (2-5 years, Black or African American, Female, 54)

Theme 3: Venues to gather; more things to do

- Focus on **free/public** gathering spaces
- Across the board, desire for **more things to do** / entertainment – especially youth but relevant for all

Theme 3: Venues to gather; more things to do

“After school safe spaces to engage the youth – or after work places that don’t involve pub/restaurants – rather use of spaces that promote a cultural exchange of ideas outside of the traditional school to home, work to home scenarios.” (2-5 Years, Black or African American, Male, < \$20,000)

“People need places to gather, especially those that are low or no cost. (Money should not be a barrier to having a robust social life.) I think it’s great to build opportunities to meet people we may not otherwise meet!” (2-5 Years, White, Non-Binary, 25, \$20,000 to \$49,999)

“I think it is depressing that there are so little community events or events that are free and accessible to many in our community.” (<2 years, Hispanic/Latino, Male, 40, <\$100,000)

“affordable housing – community centers – community gardens – public parks” (lifelong, Hispanic/Latino, 42)

Theme 4: Keeping Things Local

- Make efforts to **prevent gentrification and displacement** (all demographics of respondents elevated these concerns)
- Center planning on **local needs** of diverse communities, especially **lifelong residents**
- Desire to maintain the **local personality** of Kingston
- Build upon and preserve **existing** assets.

Theme 4: Keeping Things Local

“Outside investors have too much control over what gets developed and how.”
(5-10 Years, White, Female, < \$100,000)

“We need to take care of our neighbors who are already here and struggling to keep and safe in secure.” (10+ years, 41, \$50,000 to \$99,999)

“New developments that don’t have the needs of the community in mind, and are just interested in turning a profit would not be something that I would be interested in.” (2-5 Years, White, Female, 37, < \$100,000)

“I just hope it serves the entire community, especially those in Midtown who are often forgotten.” (lifelong, White, Male, \$50,000 to \$99,000)

Theme 4: Keeping Things Local

“Does our money come back around within our own community?” (lifelong, Black or African American, 32, \$<\$20,000)

“New development would only be negative if the changes made do not reflect the opinions of those who live/work in the Midtown area.” (lifelong, Black, Female, 26 \$20,000 to \$49,000)

“If it’s not down for the right reasons and for the local people, it doesn’t belong.” (10+ years, White, Female, 39, \$50,000 to \$99,000)

Theme 5: Comments about the planning process

Overall support of this planning process & appreciation for diversity focus / depth of feedback sought.

However...

- **Mistrust and concern** that the process may not *continue* to be intentionally inclusive through future phases and implementation. For example:
 - Memories of previous planning projects that did not come to fruition (waste of time giving input) or were not equitable (specifically, negative impact on systemically marginalized groups)
 - The city needs to take the time to build relationships
 - Follow through on plans based on community input
 - Take the time to celebrate outcomes.

QUESTIONS?
¿PREGUNTAS?

Exploring Residents' Comments

On the survey, we asked these open-ended questions:

- Do you like this vision?
- Why do you or don't you like it? What would you change, if anything?
- Could you explain why you chose these items?
- The Midtown BOA has a high concentration of vacant and/or underused land and buildings. If there was an opportunity to redevelop or activate one of these sites, what kinds of uses would be most beneficial for the neighborhood?
- What place in Midtown would you miss most if it were gone?
- Is there anything you'd like to explain about your answers above?
- Could you tell us more about why new development in Midtown might positively affect you? (Feel free to share your thoughts in words, or include a link to pictures or video.)
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- Thinking about what you're concerned about losing, or other negatives, what would make new development in Midtown more worth it to you?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share with the project team about your thoughts on the Midtown Thriving Project?

Our work gathering input is not done

- Today's meaning-making work will focus on **subgroup findings**.
- We are committed to **identifying strategies that work for underrepresented communities** BEYOND this survey tool.

What does
this mean?

Thank you!

Email:

kstryker@pfprogress.org

bstarodaj@kingston-ny.gov

Project website:

<https://engagekingston.com/midtown-thriving>



MIDTOWN THRIVING
A Community Vision to Revitalize Vacant Properties



**Department
of State**

HUDSON VALLEY
PATTERN *for* **PROGRESS**