

Riverside Community Center

Survey Results



PORTAGE TOWNSHIP
TRUSTEE OFFICE

ST JOSEPH COUNTY, IN

J2 Marketing

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Executive Summary

- 427 people completed the survey.
- **60.9% supportive of the concept (a 2-1 ratio).**
- 76.6% anticipated using the center at least a few times per year.
- **14.5% were strongly opposed to the idea.**
- 40.1% said they would be willing to pay a fee to rent the center.
- A tiered rental fee was significantly important for supporters.
- **Cost to taxpayers is the primary concern.**
- 72.6% of the population have never personally rented a facility for a non-wedding event.
- There were no statistically significant differences for any demographic segment.

Taken together, these findings indicate that among supporters *the perceived investment and benefit to the downtown community is worth any potential costs.* For these respondents, the center could be an opportunity to create more community and connect with the arts.

At the same time, enough community members have raised legitimate concerns about the proposed center that they merit thoughtful consideration.



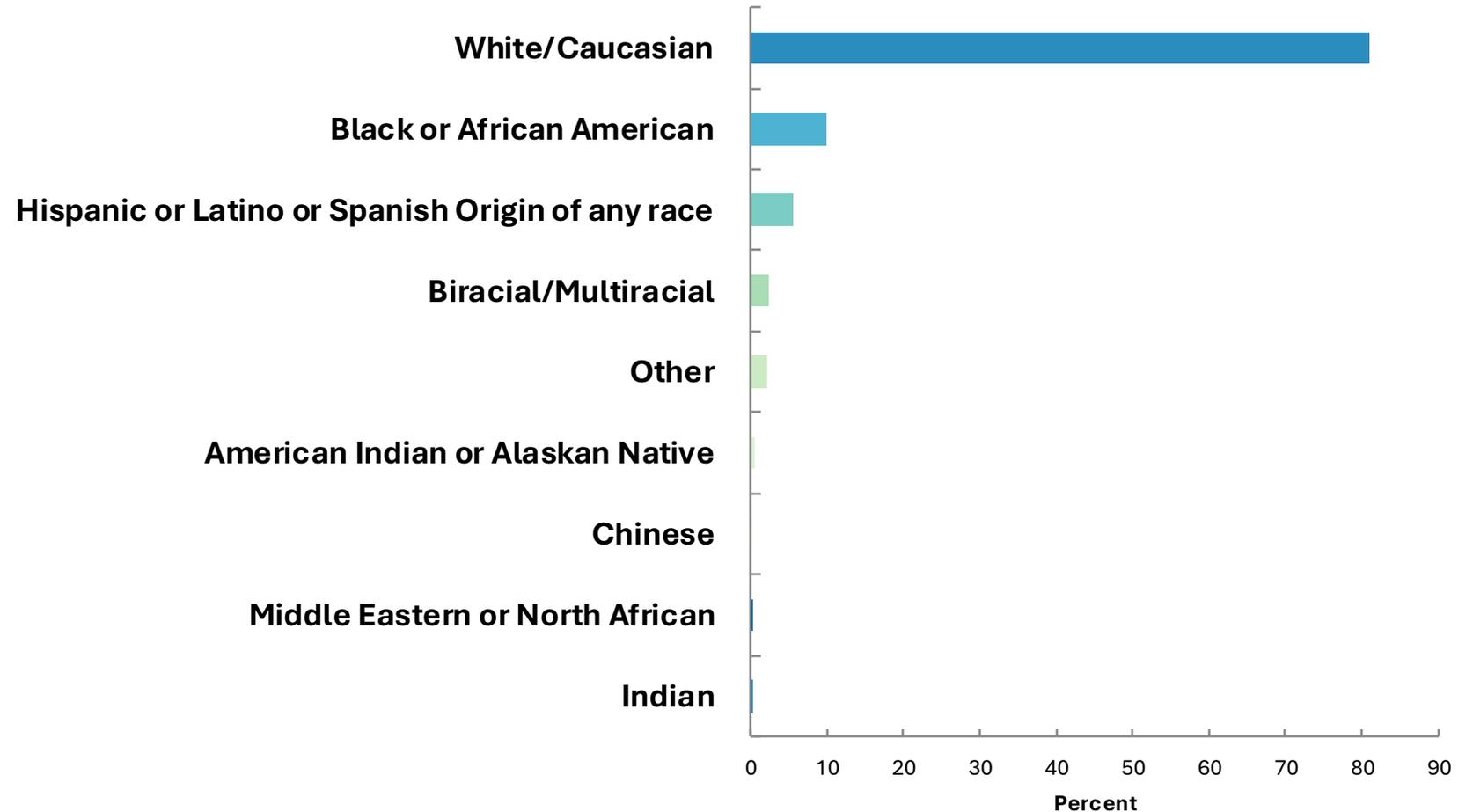
Executive Summary II

- Most non-supporters were concerned about the use of taxes for this project when there appear to be more pressing needs in the area.
- Across all levels of support, there was little endorsement of paying a fee and even among the strongest supporters, less than 50% stated they would pay.
- Community members emphasize the need for robust security measures, true affordability through tiered pricing, and programming that serves diverse populations beyond just event rentals.
- There is particular interest in seeing the facility integrate well with existing outdoor spaces and trails while providing genuine community benefit through expanded services beyond traditional event space rental.

Ethnicity of Survey Population

The population was *mostly* comprised of those who self-identified as White/Caucasian (81.1%), Black or African American (10.0%), and Hispanic/Latino (5.7%). This represents an under-*representation* of non-White populations.

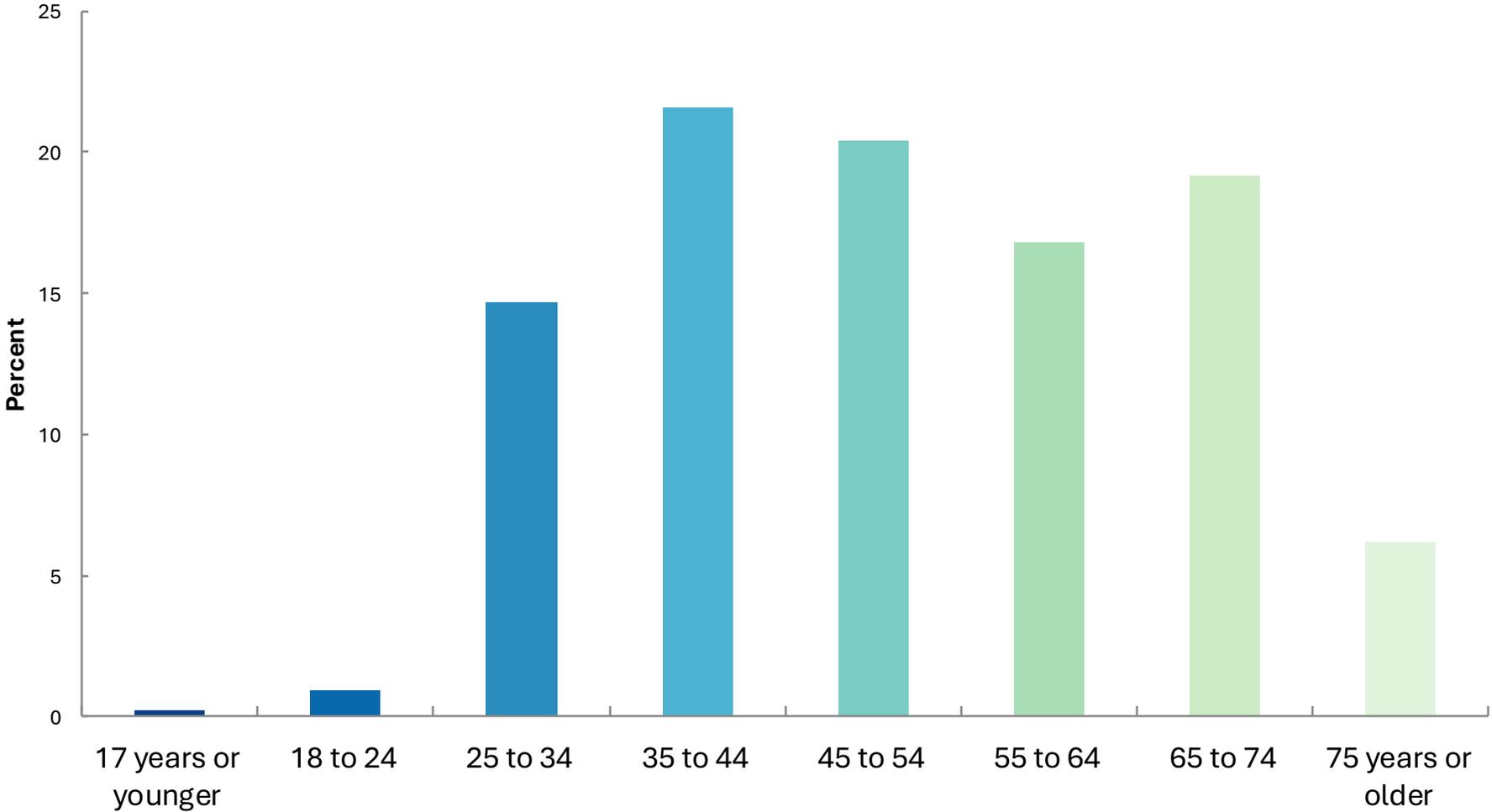
Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic background? (Check all that apply)



Age of Population

The age of this population had higher amounts of middle aged and higher elderly respondents.

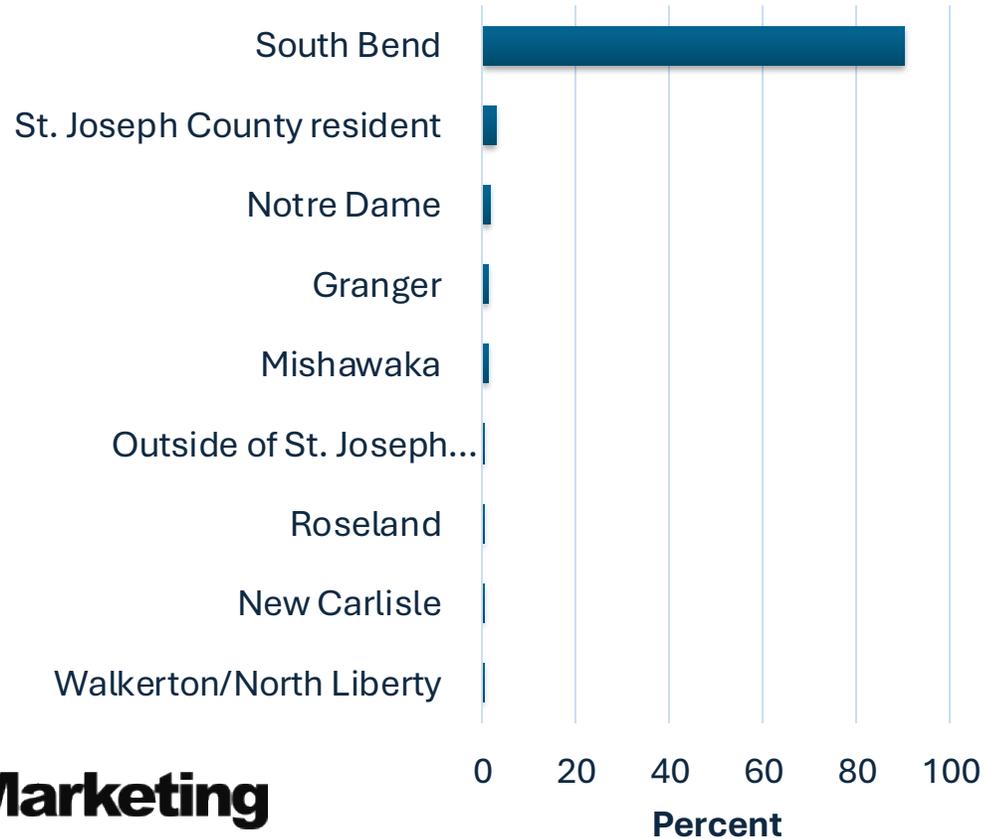
How old are you?



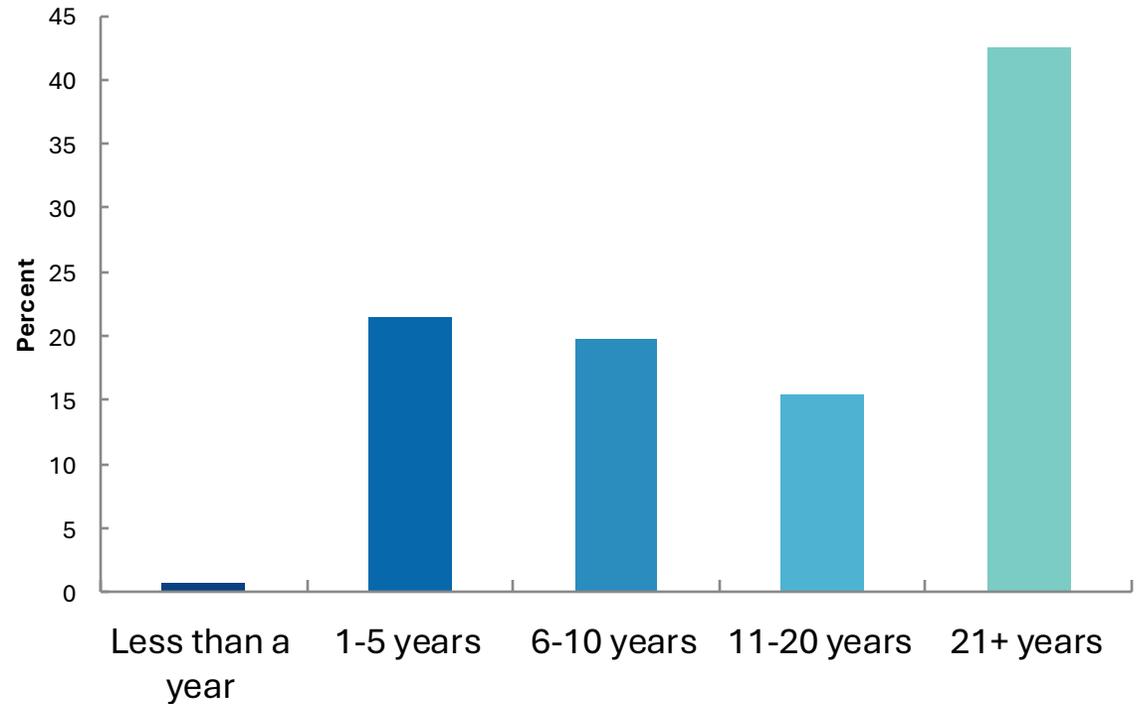
Residential Distribution

The population was dominated by residents of South Bend (90.5% of population. And 58.1% of the population has lived in Saint Joseph Township 10 years or longer.

What best describes where you live?

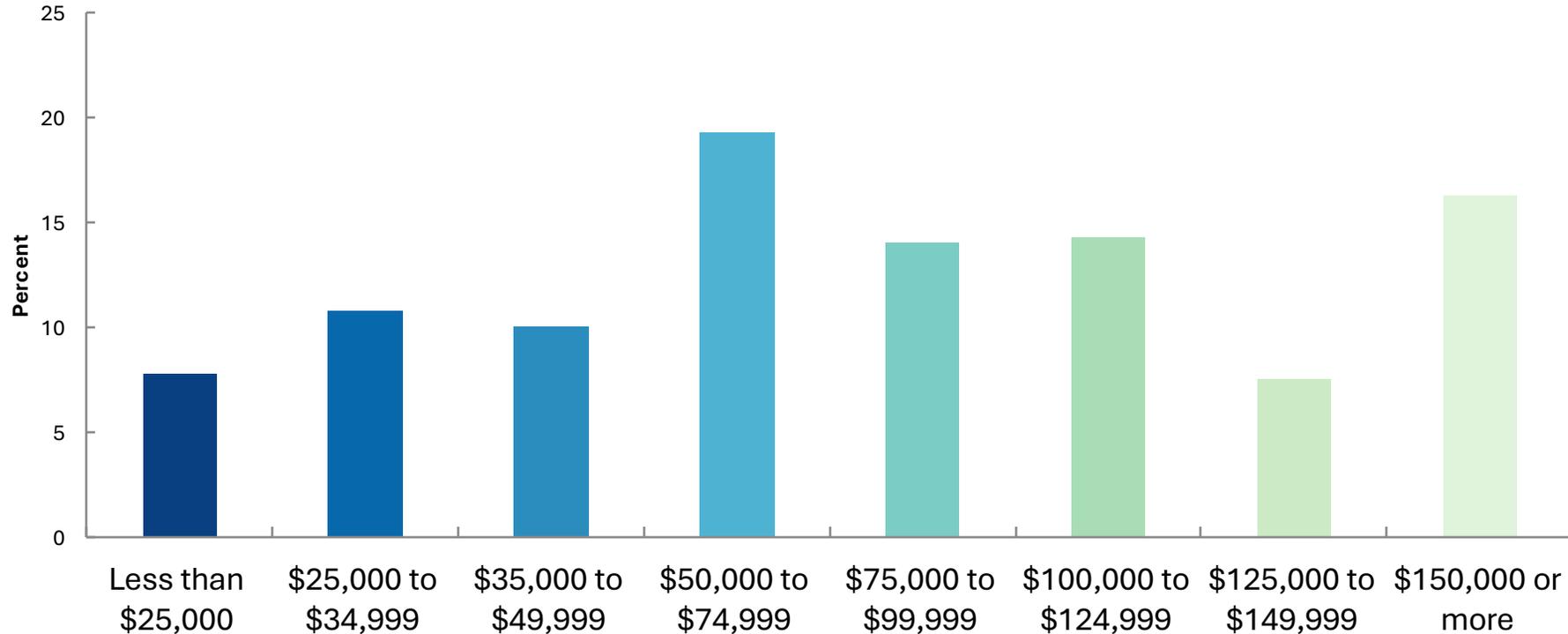


How long have you been a resident of this township?

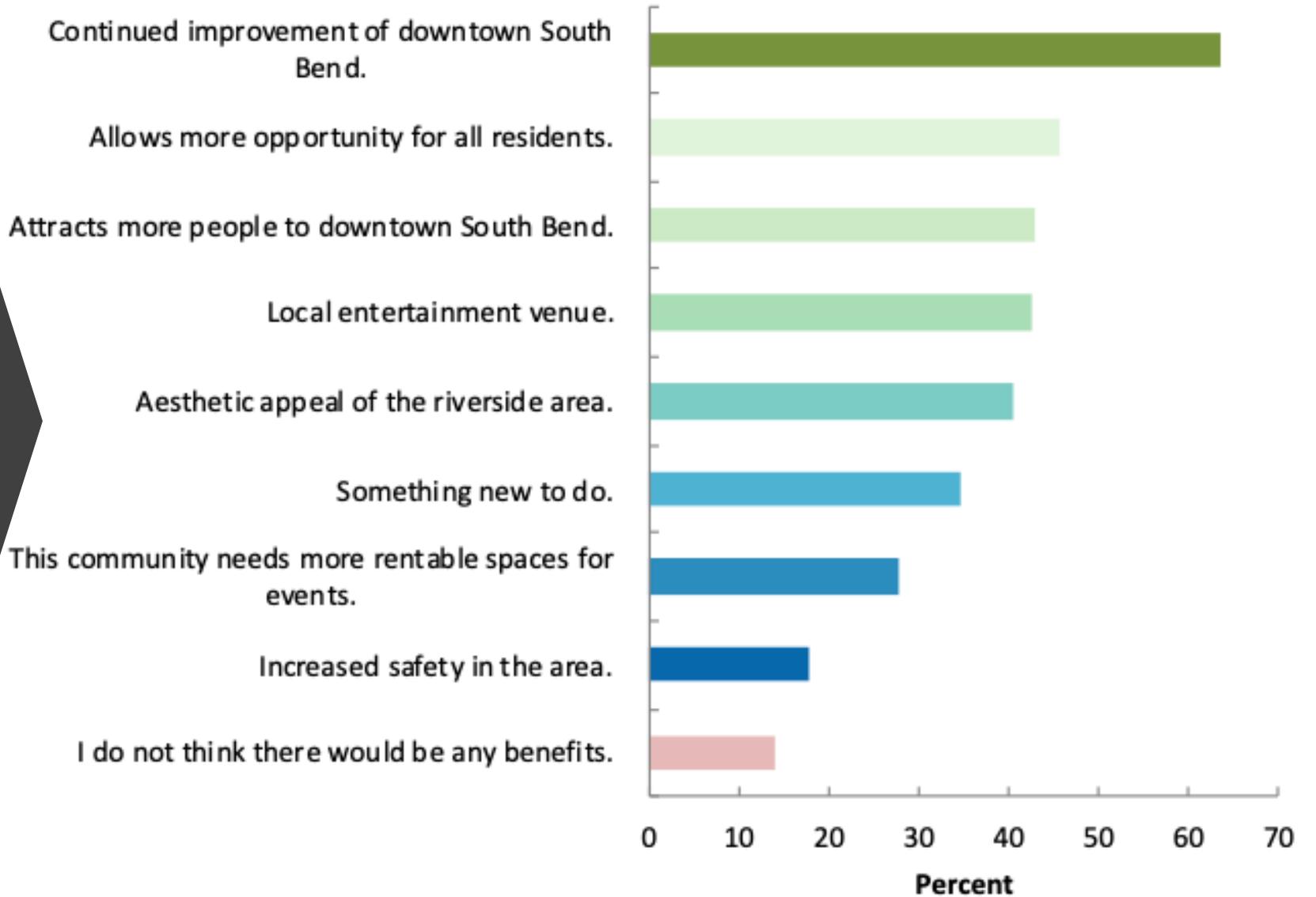


Household Income of Population

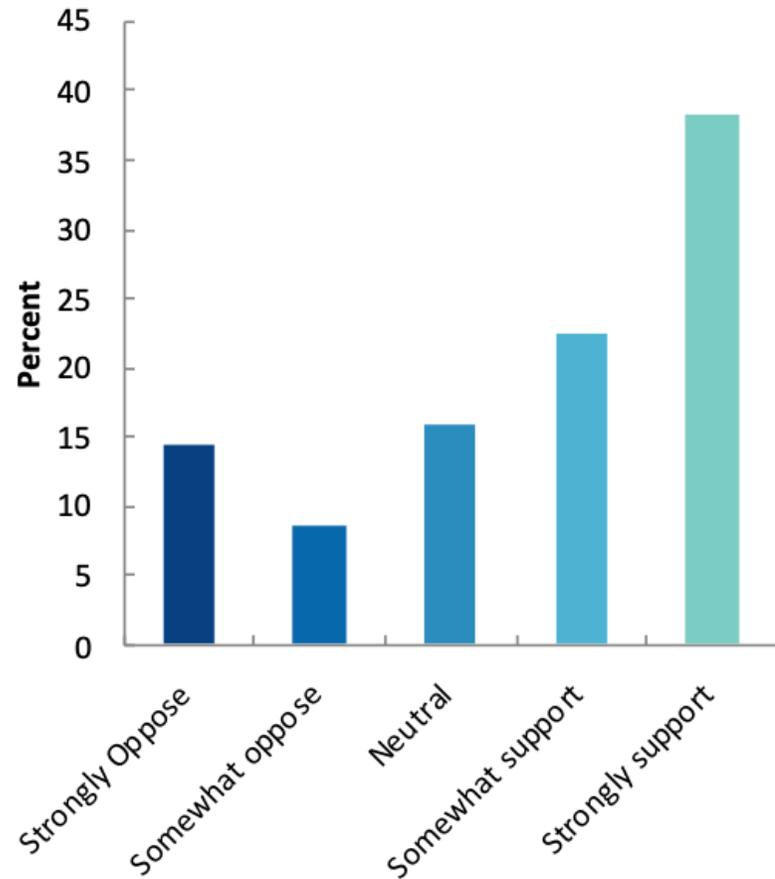
The sample shows an underrepresentation of lower-income households and an overrepresentation of middle to high-income households compared to the general US population. This income distribution skews notably higher than national averages, indicating that the study population is generally more affluent than typical US households.



What potential benefits, if any, do you think the proposed riverside event center would provide?



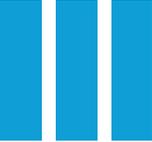
Which of the following best describes your opinion on converting the riverside building into a community center?



Opinion	Percent
Strongly Oppose	14.5%
Somewhat oppose	8.7%
Neutral	15.9%
Somewhat support	22.5%
Strongly support	38.4%

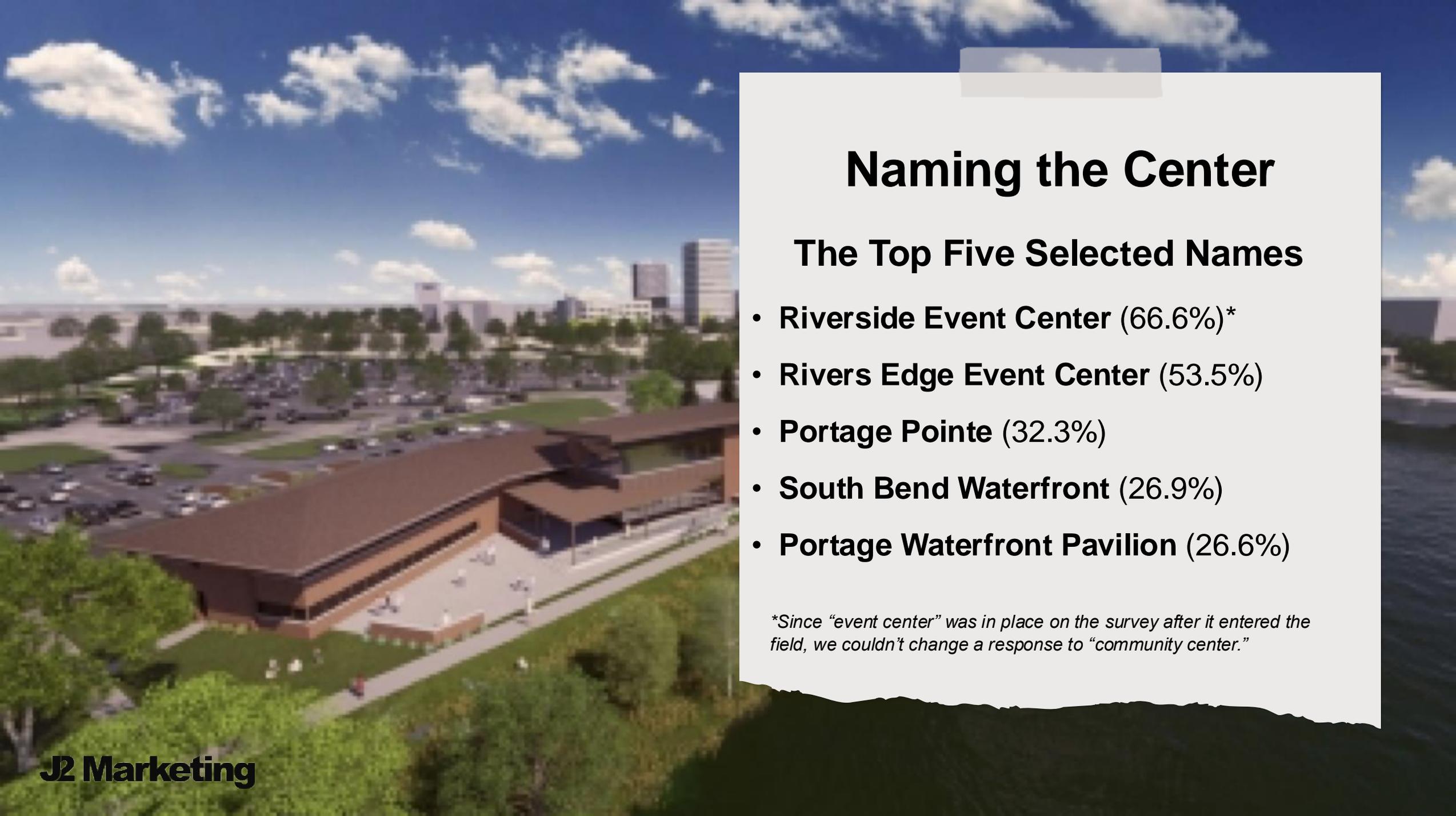
The Worries

- When people talked about **spending taxpayer money**, they almost always pointed to existing venues like Century Center as proof that another isn't needed. They worry that the cost could lead to higher taxes and would hurt the very people the center aims to help.
- The second worry is **location and safety**, especially parking lots, nighttime safety, and the homeless population.
- The third worry is whether putting an "affordable" community center on prime riverfront real estate makes sense...
- ... and there seems to be a small group, many active in the downtown community, who are very opposed to this idea.



What concerns, if any, do you have about the proposed riverside event center? (Select all that apply)

Concern	Percent
Cost to taxpayers.	57.5%
Won't be used often enough.	31.3%
Competition with existing venues.	26.2%
Environmental impact on the riverside.	21.6%
Parking problems.	21.4%
I do not have any concerns.	19.7%
Prefer other uses for the area.	16.0%
Increased traffic in the area.	14.1%
Changes to the neighborhood character.	7.5%
Potential noise disturbances.	6.1%



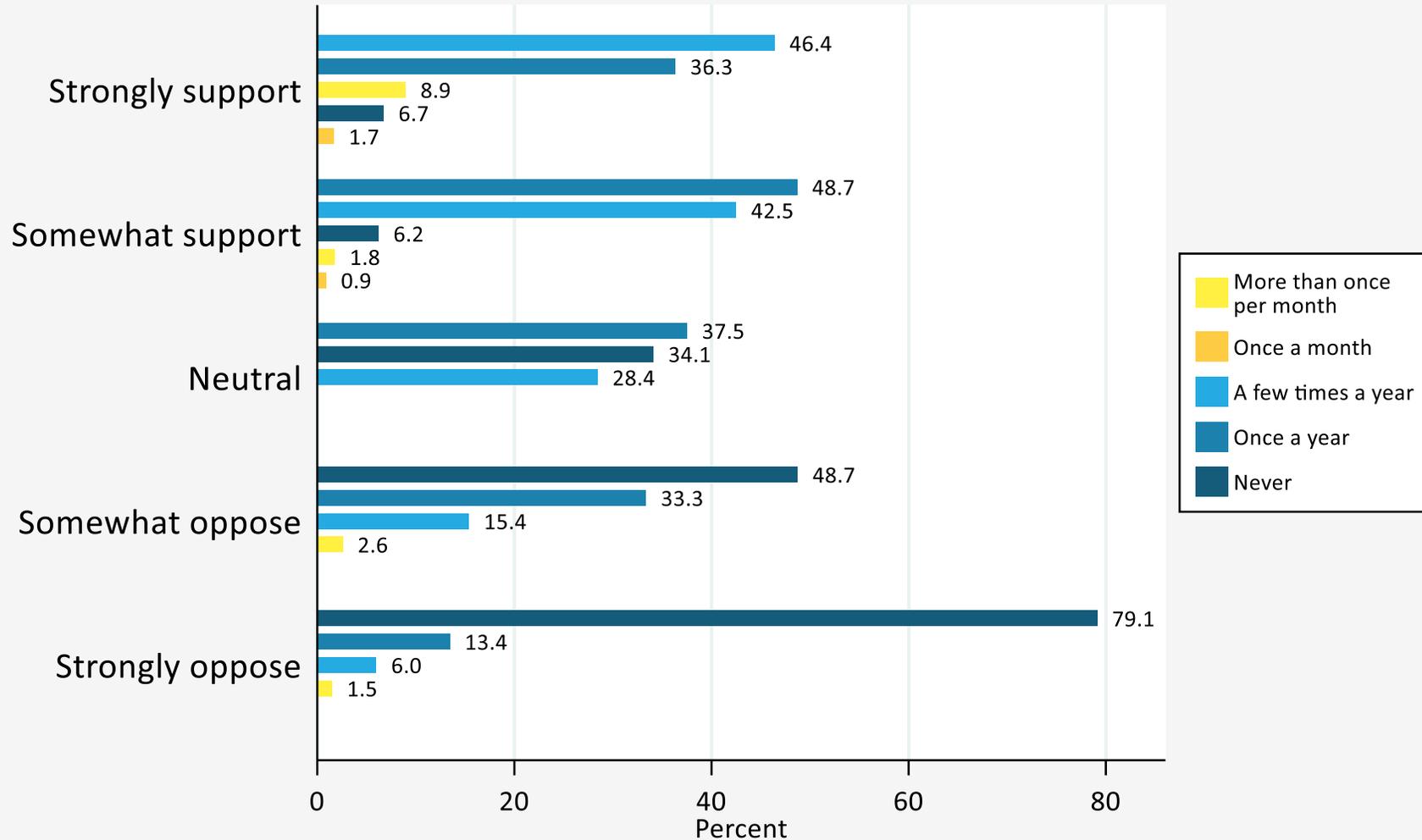
Naming the Center

The Top Five Selected Names

- **Riverside Event Center (66.6%)***
- **Rivers Edge Event Center (53.5%)**
- **Portage Pointe (32.3%)**
- **South Bend Waterfront (26.9%)**
- **Portage Waterfront Pavilion (26.6%)**

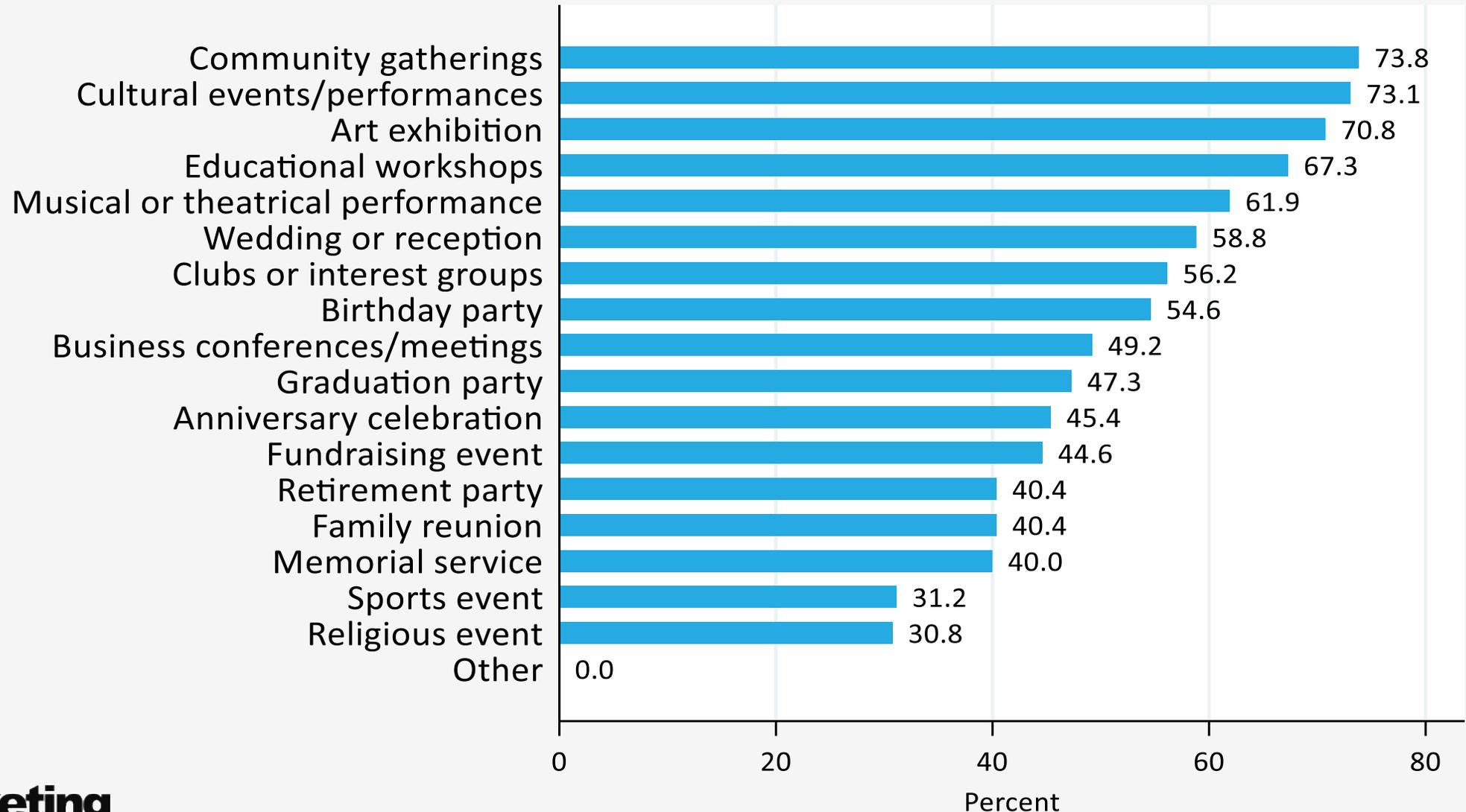
**Since “event center” was in place on the survey after it entered the field, we couldn’t change a response to “community center.”*

Anticipated Use of the Community Center by Levels of Support

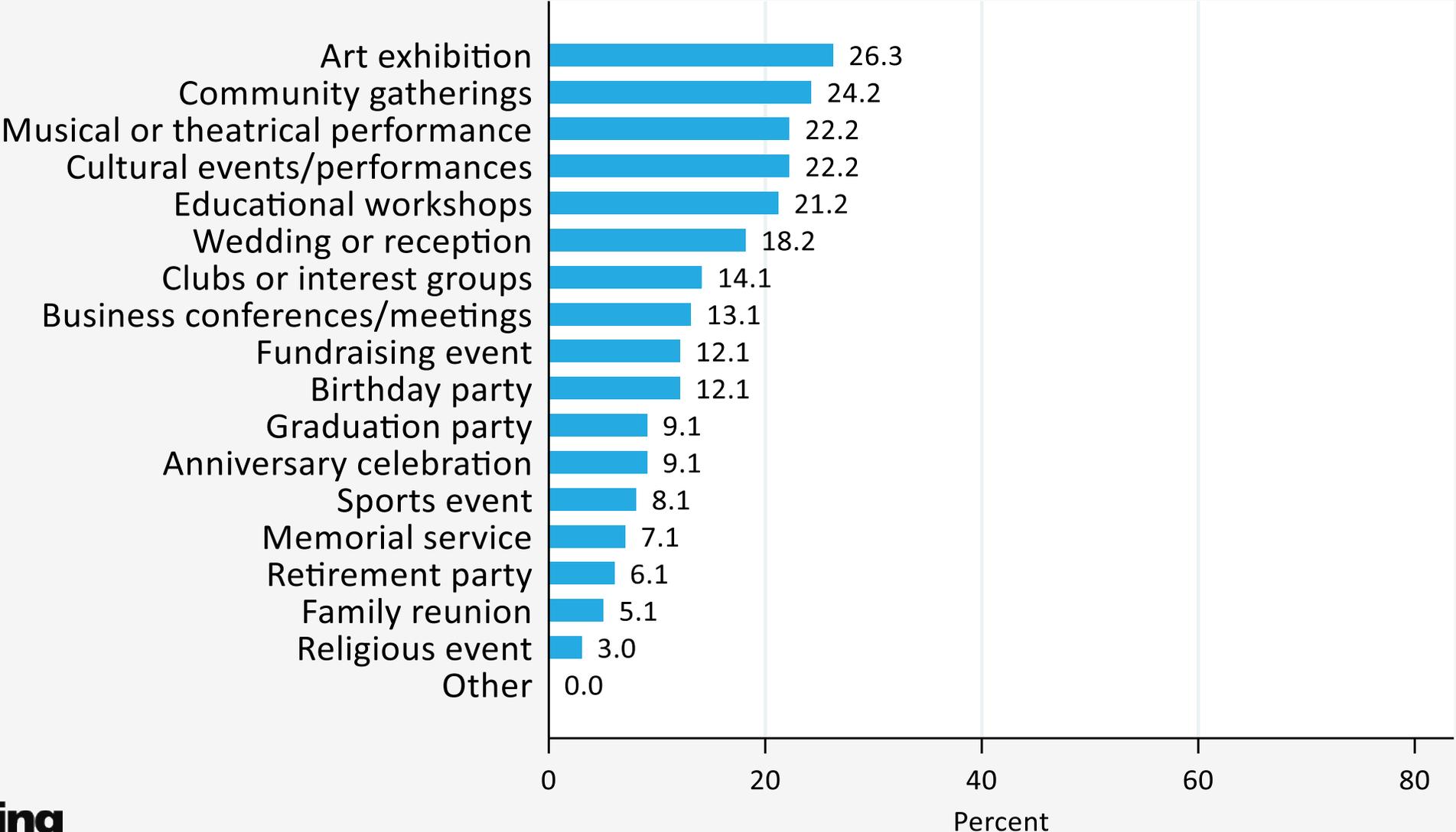


Frequencies are in ascending order within levels of support.

Potential Types of Community Events Supporters Would Attend



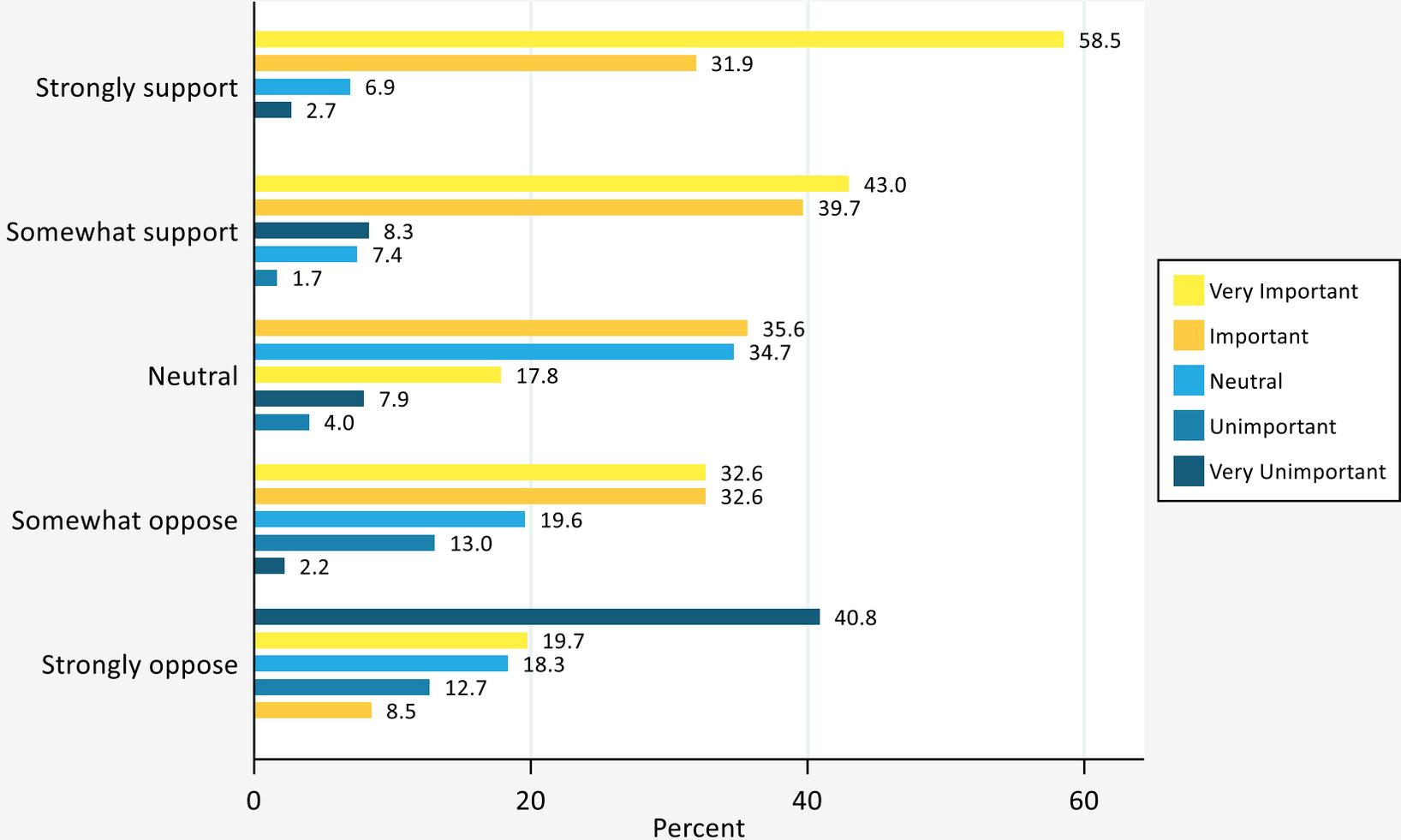
Potential Types of Community Events those Opposed May Attend



Interesting Findings

A tiered fee structure was important to supporters.

Importance of Tiered Fee Structure by Levels of Support



Frequencies are in ascending order within levels of support.

Dining Drives Downtown South Bend Visits

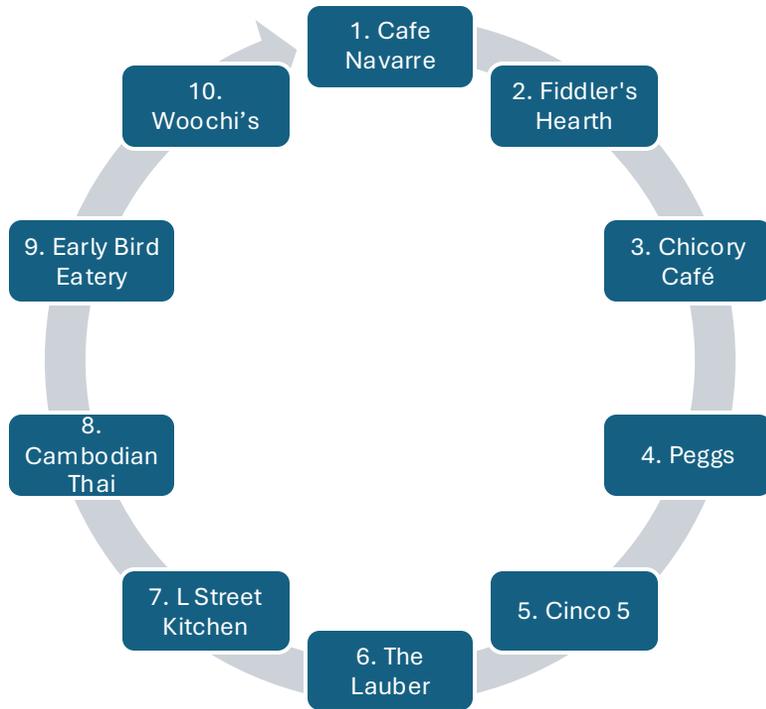
What are your primary reasons for visiting downtown? (Select all that apply)



Reason	Percent
Dining	73.4%
Using public services (e.g., library, gov offices)	55.3%
Socializing with friends/family	47.1%
Attending community events	45.2%
Entertainment (e.g., movies, performances)	38.2%
Exercise/recreation (e.g., walking, biking)	29.2%
Work	21.5%
Shopping	12.8%
I don't visit downtown	2.7%

Dining Drives Downtown South Bend Visits

Top 10 Most Frequently Mentioned Downtown Restaurants



Supporters of the proposed community center idea listed Peggs as their most frequented restaurant.



There is a direct correlation between promoting downtown South Bend and opinion regarding the proposed center.

The more positive for downtown South Bend, the more likely to support for the community center idea. The less likely to promote downtown South Bend, the less likely to support the community center.

In comparison to the survey's general population, those who expressed opposition to the center are more likely to also be Detractors (42.2% of those opposed) in recommending visiting downtown South Bend. In contrast, those who support the project are more likely to be promoters (41.0% of supporters) of visiting downtown South Bend.



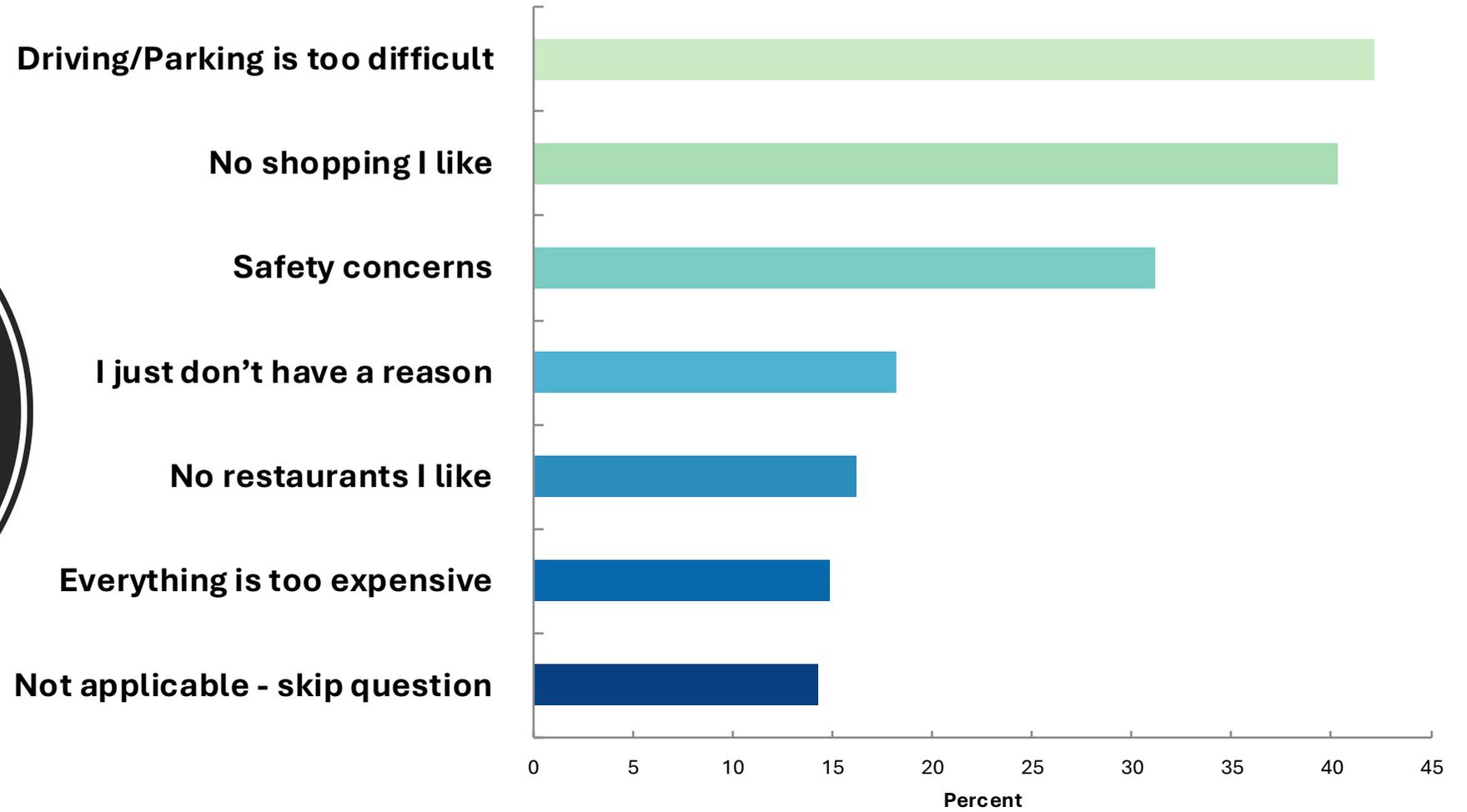


- Those Opposed were more likely to be downtown daily (33% of those Opposed).
 - The Opposed appear to have strong interaction and knowledge with the development processes related to downtown South Bend.
- Those who are “Neutral” were downtown once a month or less (49%).
 - The Neutral group seems less invested in downtown South Bend.
- Those who are Supportive are more likely to dine downtown (49%), socialize with friends and family (32%), and attend community events (33%) downtown South Bend than those who are Opposed.
 - The Supporters see downtown South Bend as a place to enjoy socially.



- Only about 10% of those Opposed say that they socialize or attend community events downtown South Bend.
 - In contrast to Supporters, those Opposed don't socialize as much downtown.
- Just 5% of those Opposed have rented an event center for a birthday party in comparison to 24% of Supporters.
 - It's difficult to infer why, but the contrast is stark.
- Those Opposed are more likely to rent a facility for a business meeting (15%) than Supporters.
 - Again, the reasons are unclear, but the are differences are worth noting.

If you do not visit downtown South Bend often, what are some of the reasons? (Check all that apply)





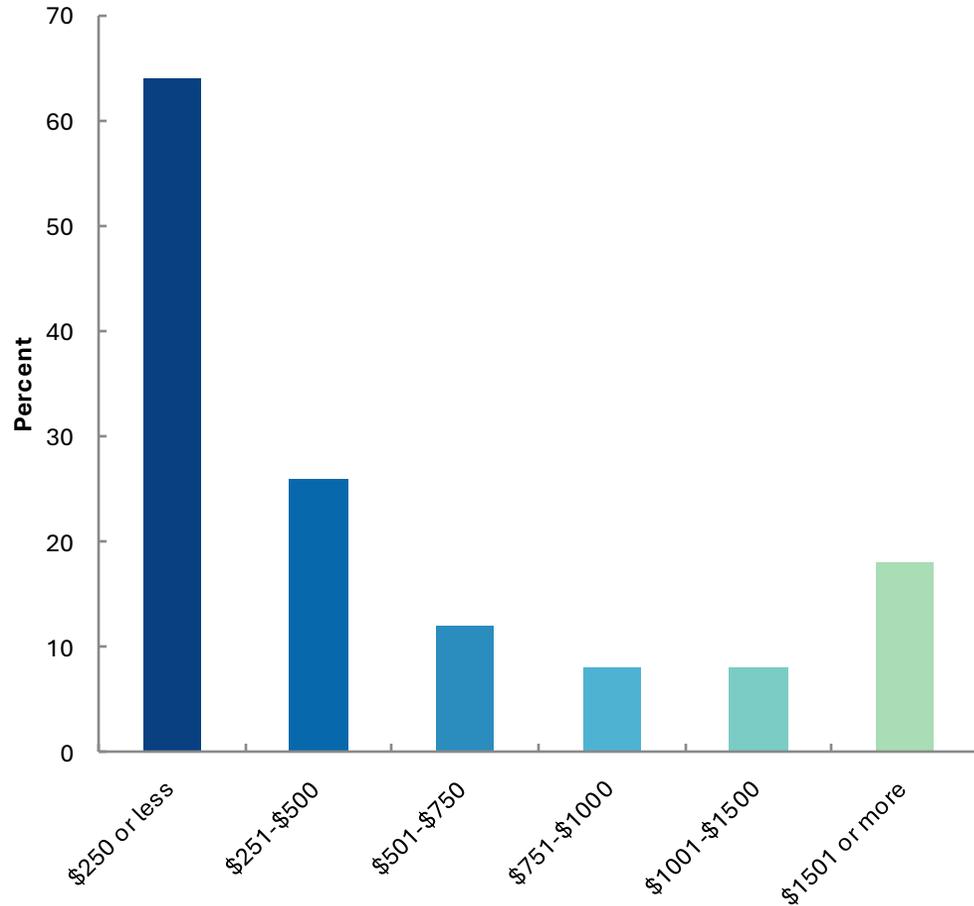
Event	Percent
Birthday party	35.2%
Community gatherings	24.1%
Club meetings or interest groups	23.0%
Family reunion	21.8%
Wedding or wedding reception	18.9%
Anniversary celebration	18.0%
Business conferences and meetings	16.9%
Graduation party	16.6%

Potential Community Center Usage

If you were to rent the new riverside event center in the next three years, which events would you be most likely to rent it for? (Select all that apply)

On Renting Event Spaces

For your rental event(s), approximately how much was the cost of the facility for your event(s)? (Check all that apply)



Amount	Percent
\$250 or less	64.0%
\$251-\$500	26.0%
\$501-\$750	12.0%
\$751-\$1000	8.0%
\$1001-\$1500	8.0%
\$1501 or more	18.0%

Other Rental Facilities in the Region

What local facilities were rented?

1. Century Center: 14
2. Howard Park: 14
3. Library/SJCPL: 14
4. The Brick: 7
5. Doubletree/Double Tree: 4
6. LaSalle Grill: 4
7. Armory: 4
8. Bar Louie: 3
9. Palais Royale: 3
10. Stockroom East: 3
11. American Legion: 3



Please review the following features for the proposed event center. Which four features would you consider most important? (Select up to 4 options)



Important Feature for Center	Percent
Catering kitchen	41.0%
River view terrace	39.4%
Outdoor event space	34.9%
Ample on-site parking	34.1%
High-speed internet and technology infrastructure	33.3%
Accessible facilities for people with disabilities	32.5%
Large multipurpose room	22.5%
Green building features (e.g., Eco-friendly)	20.9%
Flexible seating arrangements	20.9%
On-site security personnel	19.3%

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