

Community Input Summary

The following document provides a summary of community input from the Los Alamos MRA Plan Community Questionnaire conducted in July 2024. 197 people responded to the survey. The survey was conducted to identify whether the goals and strategies from the Downtown Master Plan felt relevant to the existing planning process, and to identify priorities and concerns for downtown redevelopment.

Community Input Overview

Top 3 goals from the Downtown Master Plan

- Expanded local businesses and a strong economy
- A pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use downtown with retail, residential, and office development
- A variety of housing options at increased densities

Additional Goals Identified

- Promote a welcoming and livable downtown with businesses, services, and attractions geared towards residents and visitors
- Prioritize diverse, small local businesses
- Support affordable housing downtown
- Preserve and expand green space, open space, and public space

Top 3 Strategies from the Downtown Master Plan

- Enable, foster, and direct quality downtown development to address vacant and underutilized structures and land
- Expand opportunities for financial assistance to local business, such as grants and façade improvement programs
- Improve street life and walkability. Examples: widened sidewalks, increase pedestrian lighting, expanded roadway crossing

Additional Strategies Identified

- No new strategies identified, review list on pages 5-6 for additional supporting actions the County could take to support previously identified strategies

Top types of development that would make the downtown more beautiful, welcoming and accessible

- Entertainment options
- Retail options
- Affordable housing development
- Increased housing availability
- Open spaces and parks
- Sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, or paths

Top businesses and services that would complement existing business downtown

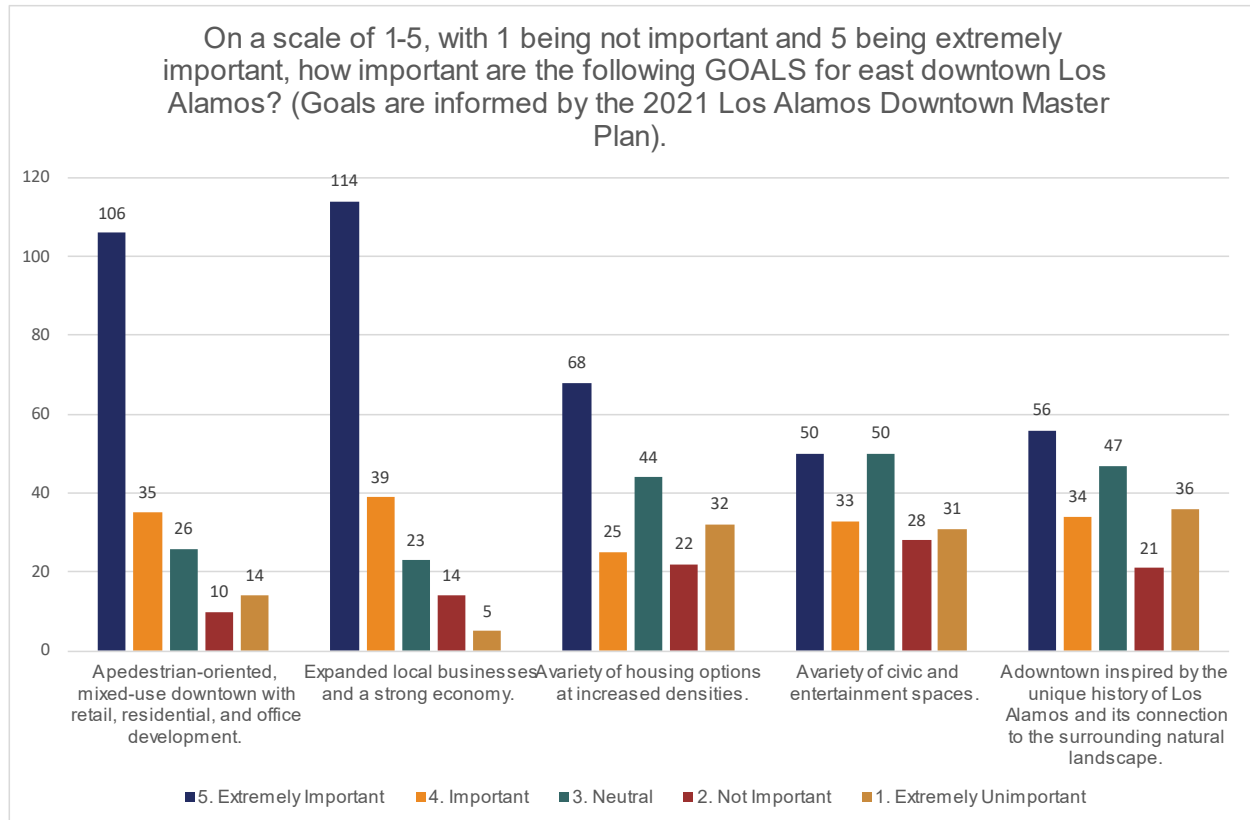
- Restaurants
- Entertainment – theaters, music venues, bowling, etc.
- Clothing/gift stores
- Outdoor stores and rentals
- Bookstores
- Bike shop and repair

Top Concerns

- Rent Affordability, barriers to development, and viability of small, local businesses
- Need for additional housing particularly higher density and affordable housing
- Transparency, public accountability, MRA administration, and County process
- Use of property for LANL office space
- Lack of clarity and vague language used in goals and strategies
- Parking garage development
- Protection of scenic and natural beauty

Data

How important are the following GOALS for east downtown Los Alamos



Are there any goals missing?

Survey participants shared additional goals that they felt were missing from the Downtown Master Plan goals listed in the survey. The missing goals identified speak to a desire for a livable community which is welcoming to visitors, prioritizes small local businesses, and preserves the scenic and natural beauty of Los Alamos.

Promote a welcoming and livable downtown with businesses, services, and attractions geared towards residents and visitors

- “More entertainment shops and things to do”
- “Non-customer facing office space should not be allowed on the ground floor. It's good for pulling a rent check but bad for revitalization.”
- “The development of the Merrimac/Hilltop needs to be a priority, and the Lab can't be its primary tenant in order to increase a sense of community. Rank: 5”

- “Nightlife for kids, teens and young adults”
- “Improved retail options...”
- “A place for young adults. 5”
- “Think of the youth as you make development plans. Kids 10-17 should be thought of when designing spaces.”
- “Do NOT let LANL take over any more properties in the Town Site! Scale of 0 to 5, this would be a 10. Stay on your own side of the bridge, LANL!”
- “Something special for children”
- “Livability for current residents”
- “Provide a space for older teens/young adults to hang and enjoy time with friends. More food options would be nice.”
- “Attract more stores that sell clothing and shoes, etc. Establish more restaurants!”
- “Think of the residents who currently reside and make the focus be related to the current needs of current residents.”

Prioritize diverse, small local businesses

- “...protect existing small businesses”
- “... diverse local ownership”
- “1. Small spaces for businesses to rent to make rent more affordable. Importance: high”
- “Protect existing small businesses”
- “...helping existing small businesses to thrive...”
- “Small business is at a crisis point in Los Alamos. Create a Small Business Advocate who can assist small business with county red tape without fear of reprisal”
- “Provide financial incentives for non-government/lanl small businesses”
- “#1 goal -Promote & Incentivize small businesses with affordable rental rates”

Support affordable housing

- “Keeping SOME downtown rental housing affordable for the poor (like me). #5”
- “Protect existing low-income housing”
- “Less expensive housing — particularly for lower-income residents,
- “Affordable condos and apartments”
- “Low-income housing”
- “Affordability”
- “Retain affordable housing if apartments inside the orange zone are removed. Rank it highly important.”

- “Affordable housing”

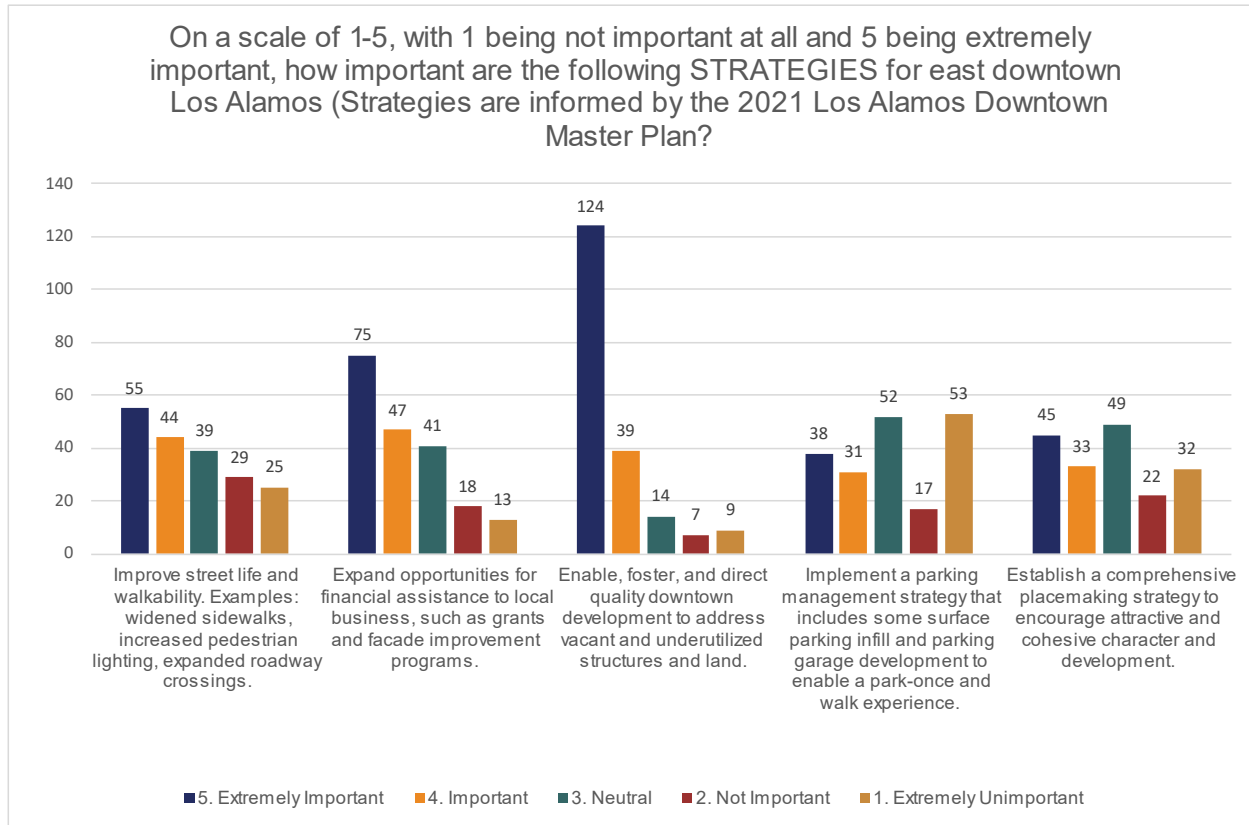
Preserve and expand green space, open space, and public space

- “Additional green spaces. Extremely important (5).”
- “Park space”
- “Preserve our open spaces”
- “Parks & Greenspaces”
- “Parks and rec only or green belt”
- “Public parks, outdoor county pool”

Promote quality and aesthetically pleasing development which preserves the scenic and natural beauty of Los Alamos

- “In Los Alamos we give little thought to the esthetics of what we do. Let's make it a goal to avoid building things that are hideous (see the construction at the old Black Hole site) and avoid impairing our beautiful vistas and site lines. I think this is a number 1.”
- “Enhance the ski vibes - build on the nature and scenery. Too many vacant buildings and same landlords”
- “Attractive entrance to downtown”
- “Priority 1: An attractive entrance to town to welcome visitors and residents alike”
- “Utilize and incorporate the natural views and scenery. 5”
- “Not destroying even more of the mountain views with tall buildings.”
- “A welcoming entrance to our community”

How important are the following strategies for east downtown Los Alamos?



Additional Strategies Identified

Survey participants wrote-in strategies that they felt were missing from the list of Downtown Master Plan strategies shared in the survey. Many of the strategies shared are reflected in the strategies from the Downtown Master Plan. It is worth noting that there are specific actions such as creating a Small Business Advocate program that the County could consider in support of previously identified strategies.

Expand opportunities for financial assistance to local business, such as grants and façade improvement programs

- “I would like to see the county own commercial spaces that are available for a fair rate to local businesses.”
- “Small business is at a crisis point in Los Alamos. Create a Small Business Advocate who can assist small business with county red tape without fear of reprisal”
- “Mix of businesses that appeal to residents and tourists (5)”

- Help local businesses with rent

Enable, foster, and direct quality downtown development to address vacant and underutilized structures and land

- “Downtown LA is filled with unsightly (ugly) and empty parking lots. Businesses need to reduce them and create green spaces that employees and the general public can enjoy. be encouraged to either”
- “Reduce current large, underused parking lots. For example, at some banks and credit unions. Rated as a 4.”
- “Fee or assessment on run-down and poorly managed properties.”
- “Multi purpose zoning”
- “Attract national chains”

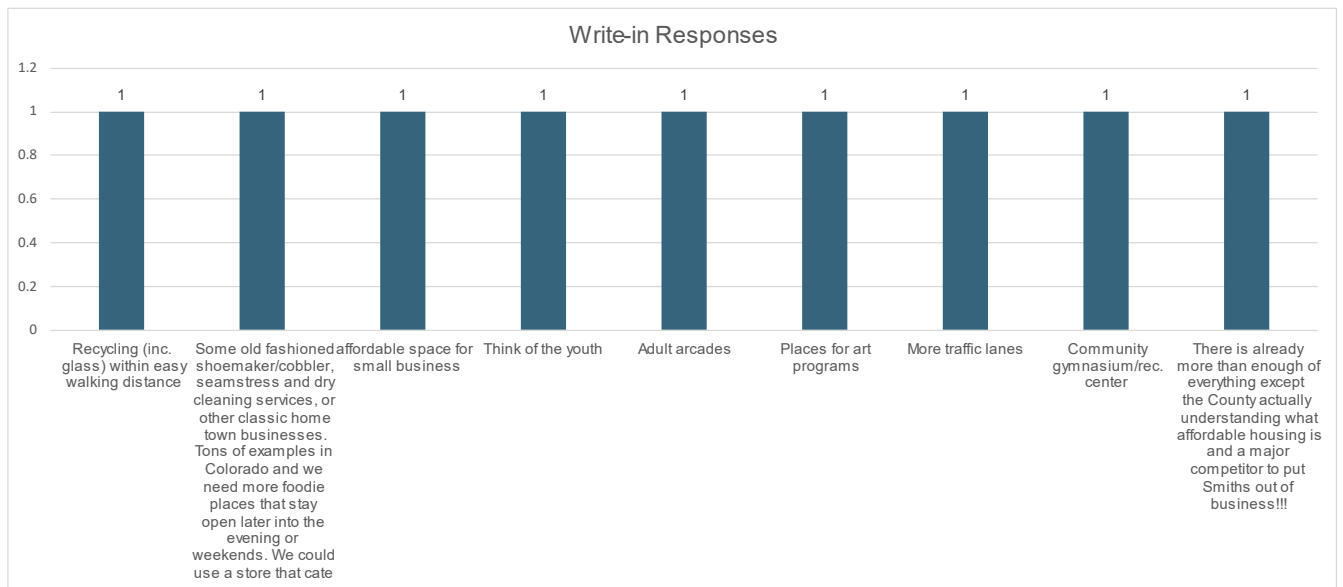
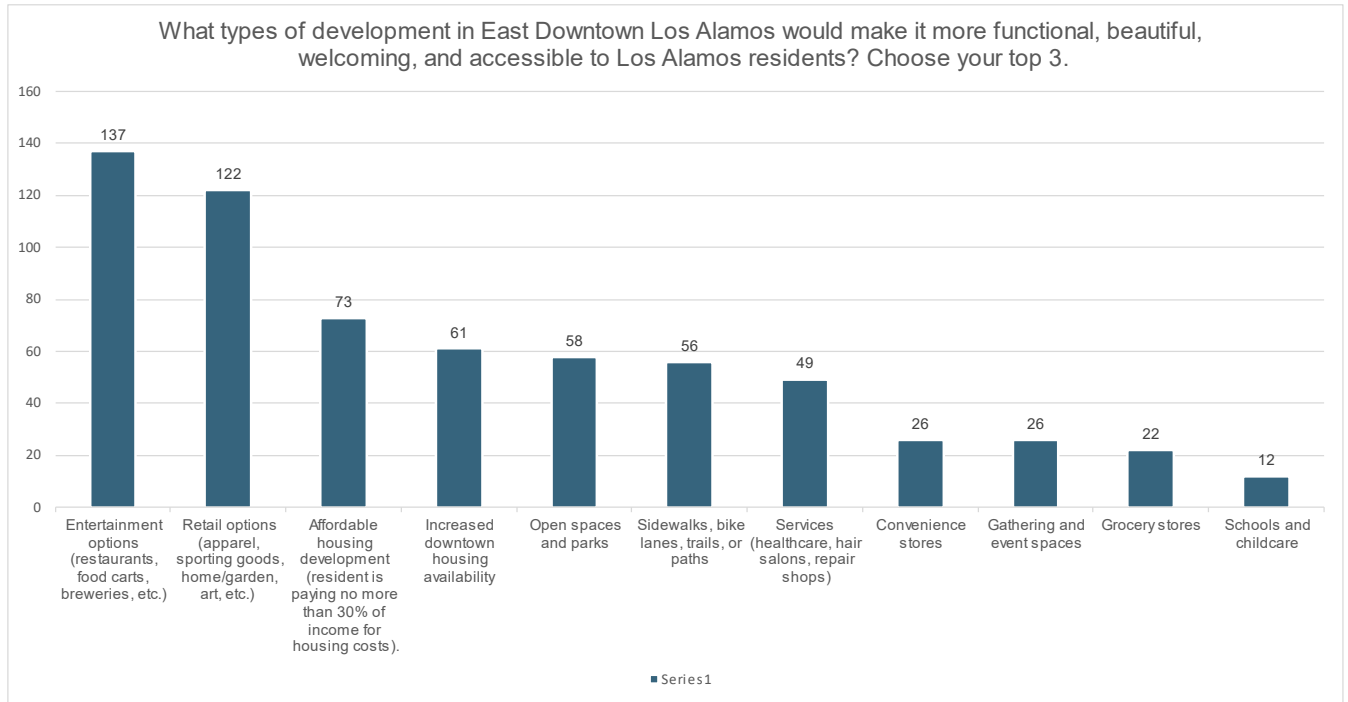
Improve street life and walkability. Examples: widened sidewalks, increase pedestrian lighting, expanded roadway crossing. ADDITIONAL: public transit

- “Improving public transportation to it, especially on weekends. Ranked 5.”
- “Transit improvement to Los alamos. Frequent busses up and down trinity and central to facilitate walkability and reduce the need for single use cars”
- “Incorporate existing public transit to make the space accessible to town residents without having to drive”
- “East LA should be tied to the westside more distinctly and the development should be intensified down Central Ave rather than Trinity, for the better pedestrian experience.”
- “Most important would be the development of mixed-use commercial-residential areas that within a walk-only zone. Parking may be nearby, but no street runs directly next to the building. See the German Fussgangerzone.”

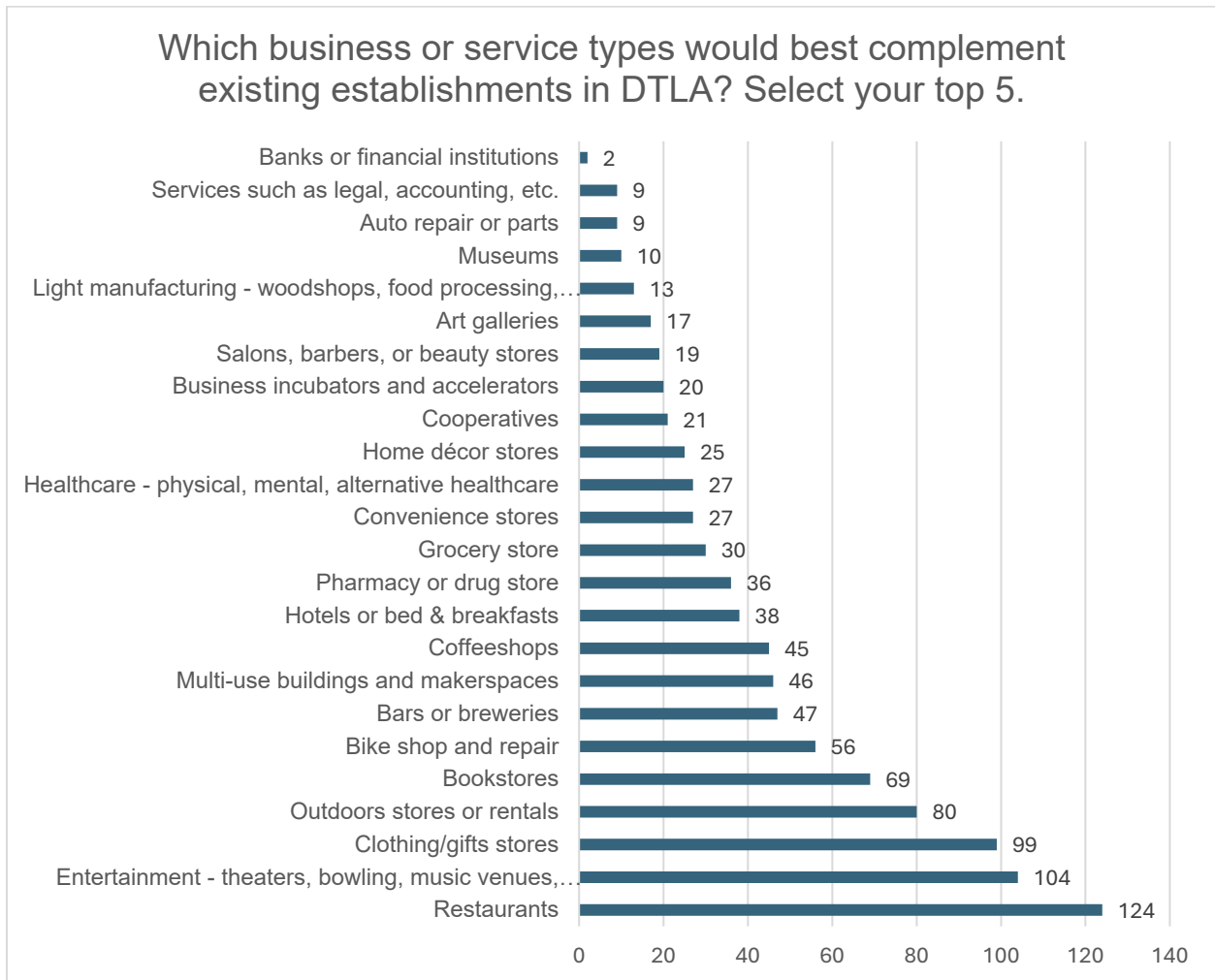
Protect scenic and natural beauty

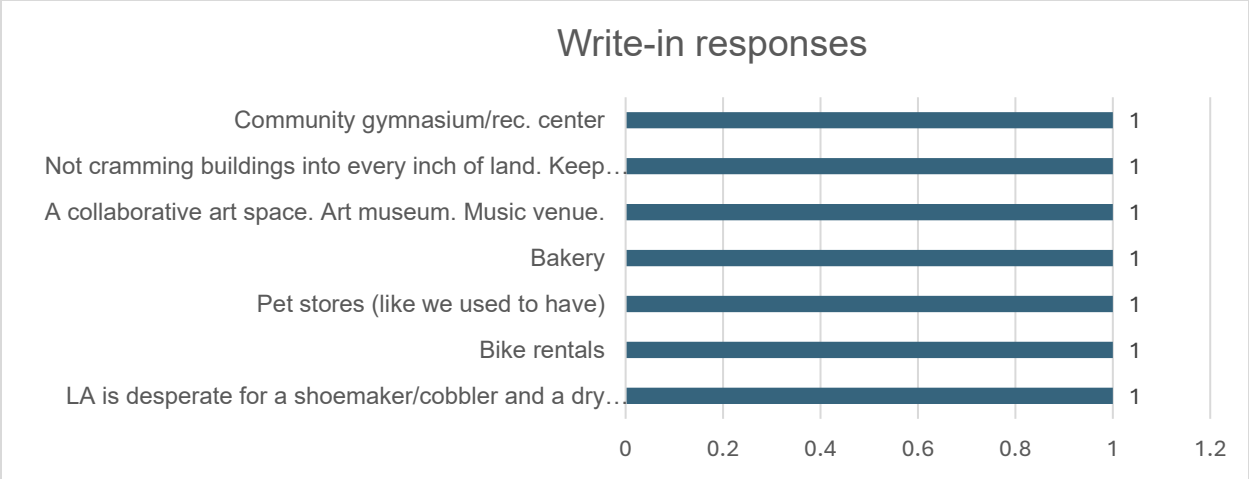
- “Priority 1: Add green space and minimize pavement, add more shade/sun protection”
- “Lighting that doesn't pollute the night sky views. 5”
- “Establish designed vegetation landscaping with designed pathways, perennials, mulching and regularly scheduled county maintenance.. Importance = 5”
- “Priority 1: Add green space and minimize pavement, add more shade/sun protection”

Types of development that would make the downtown more functional, beautiful, welcoming and accessible



Businesses or services that would best complement existing establishments





Priorities and Concerns Identified

Survey respondents shared concerns about and priorities for the redevelopment of downtown.

Rent Affordability, barriers to development, and viability of small, local businesses

- “Small business is at a crisis point in Los Alamos. Create a Small Business Advocate who can assist small business with county red tape without fear of reprisal”
- “Provide a climate for businesses to thrive and let free enterprise work.”
- “Make the spaces affordable for businesses to come revitalize the downtown area. At this point any business is better than empty buildings. I don’t think adding more stores or restaurants would make Los Alamos less “historic” either. Many times we would like more options to stay closer to home than having to drive 45 minutes or more away.”
- “None of this works if the county is not willing to work with small businesses to be successful and if current commercial property owners don't make rent more affordable. The county seems to actively work to make it difficult for small businesses to stay in business and commercial property owner arr charging too much. Our little town has the potential to be an awesome mountain town like Pagosa or Durango...if the county council can actually work toward helping the community.”
- “Why not encourage diverse, small, local ownership to facilitate development in Los Alamos that is sustainable and resilient against by eliminating taxes and unnecessary codes or streamlining permitting and inspection processes on productive activities like working for and running local small businesses or developing and improving local property? Why not discourage destructive activities

like land speculation and hoarding by replacing all other taxes with a single land value tax and using such revenues to foster economic vitality through a Citizen's Dividend?"

- “Los Alamos city council and leadership have to commit to either a rent free zone or a scenario where local commercial real estate owners don’t get to control and raise rents at will and have no recourse. The city also needs to do more with promoting local business districts, classy signage to capture tourist traffic coming through town and have a downtown CBD that feels more like a Breckinridge or Evergreen or Morrison, CO. Study those plans and how their city leadership has made those local shopping districts thrive and we might have a chance to succeed.”
- “Unless you can figure out how to offer lower rents or affordable rents for businesses, none of this will matter. Why aren’t we focusing on helping businesses fill the empty and already existing retail spaces?”
- “1. We need a pot of money businesses can apply for. 2. Spread the word: we know developers in Albuquerque who are interested but have heard nothing about LAC's efforts. 3. The county needs to please, please reduce bureaucracy and legal obstructionism.”
- “You have to get rid of the real estate mafia and apply some serious rent control so local entrepreneurs can actually make a long term investment and be able to make a profit and live local.”
- “Make Los Alamos County Development be less obstructionist- 100”
- “Kick out the slumlords that own the commercial real estate and don’t live in New Mexico”
- “County support of local businesses”

Use of property for LANL office space

- “Keep LANL out of the townsite! I cannot stress this enough!”
- “Block LANL or any of its contractors from ever leasing space in this area.”
- “Less space leased by LANL – 5”
- “Do NOT let LANL take over any more properties in the Town Site! Scale of 0 to 5, this would be a 10. Stay on your own side of the bridge, LANL!”
- “We do not need anymore office space for LANL, that is the bane of commercial real estate in Los Alamos”

Need for additional housing particularly higher density and affordable housing

- “The housing currently in this location is some of the lowest priced housing in Los Alamos. I do not want to see "improved" housing that raises the price of those units.

I feel like you are trying to fix something that isn't broken here. The only part of this area that is "unused" or abandoned is the property that belonged to Smith's-- focus on that property.”

- “I'm mainly concerned that I'll be able to continue to afford to live/rent in the MRA, and that, during demolition/construction in Meri-Mac, I can still walk through (Meri-Mac) to get to Smith's.”
- “Please for the love of all that is good, include affordable housing that people who will need to work at all these new businesses can afford to live in!!”
- “Given the dire need for housing due to the surge of positions at LANL, building additional housing should be the number one priority here. Far too much of Los Alamos is low-density "R1" zoning. The downtown area should be much denser. If the building code only allows for 5-over-1s to be built, well that's better than nothing, but the need is much greater than that. I want to highlight that the downtown area as a whole has far too much parking. I have to walk through the empty Mari-Mac parking lot nearly every day, and it is just a complete wasteland. Land needs to be used productively given the dire need for housing and other services here. All parking minimums in the entire downtown area (including the proposed MRA) should be removed. We need to prioritize density and housing. I take the bus most days and I imagine many people are willing to live without a car if they get to live close to work. Parking minimums only waste land and raise the cost of development. Get rid of them!”
- “We are extremely limited on land that housing can be built on, especially low-income housing. If you want any graduates from LAHS to be able to stay in town or entry-level workers to be able to live near the lab, we need low-income housing near the lab.”
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- “Affordable housing”

Transparency, public accountability, County capacity/process

- “Public accountability”
- “Going forward, find more ways to communicate with folks within the MRA and our community about planning sessions and meetings. More community involvement is needed than was evident at the Fuller Lodge meeting.”

- “Who decides what's quality downtown development? How about tax abatements on development and improvements?”
- “Need to ensure chains (+ non-local franchises) are not allowed in and keep non-public facing offices out of first-floor spaces. Make sure there is accountability! Codify that if funds are not used promptly, they will be reclaimed and repurposed. The long list of failed LEDA projects and situations like the WR DNCU are not a good track record to start from, so formal protections must be in place. Consider businesses that support a diversified tourist economy, such as outdoor gear/rental, B&B, etc. Avoid undermining existing businesses (i.e., bookstore would be great but don't hurt Samizdat)”
- “The County needs to address the issue that they created this blight by entering into an agreement with Kroger that has been debase to the residents of Los Alamos. The County should investigate the possibility of revising the agreement and pressuring Kroger in other ways so this community can have a choice of major grocery stores and other business types that compete with Smiths. This monopoly is the cause of the blight and the County needs to own it and fix it.”
- “The perception of greed of those owning large retail areas not buying into the strategy and investing in improvements almost needs to be a strategy in itself (rank 5)”
- “Not wasting more money on plans”
- “Spend money on business not plans”
- My understanding is that the city/county has some agreement with Smiths' which restricts development in and around downtown. I think any restriction of this sort is a major detriment to our community and removing said restriction would be a significant boon to our town. Importance – 5
- “Keep the government out of our sh*t”
- “Quit messing with stuff you know nothing about and let the current system correct itself.”
- “How were the choices for answers determined? Why was the MRA designated by an outside consultant who doesn't have an intrinsic understanding of the area and why were local residents who have been in the area for decades ignored when they expressed a desire to be removed from the designation?”
- “Was the MRA designed to assist Columbus Capital? Is Columbus Capital \$30M short for their redevelopment plans?”
- “Don't lose sight of the bigger picture - "east downtown" is underutilized, but attention, effort, and support is needed throughout the entire downtown. Don't subsidize projects unless they contribute to improved retail options, and less

expensive housing — particularly for lower-income residents, and helping existing small businesses to thrive. Can the County avoid getting so enamored with the new MRA discussion that the don't lose site of the broader picture? There is one predominant property owner in the area indicated - Columbus Capital. What have been any discussions with Columbus Capital about how and whether the MRA can help their plans? If they get help, will they tilt their plans toward achieving community needs for improved retail options, and less expensive housing — particularly for lower-income residents, and helping existing small businesses to thrive. Presumably the County has had these discussions with CC - it would help to understand the CC position and I would ask that the public be informed. Will the County publish the inputs being given through this survey? It would be helpful to publish the raw inputs together with the County's take-aways from the collective responses. The County generally does poorly with acknowledging input they have requested and sharing the input they receive.”

- “My worry is that, as usual, the survey responses won’t mean anything or be taken into consideration. A decision has more than likely been made already and this is a way to mask that.”
- “Please don’t screw this up. The county has decimated the downtown areas over The last 25 years thanks to a democrat run council that is more interested in regulations than it is in community and business development.”
- “I thought non affordable condos or apts were being built at Mari Mac. Lisa Shin is angry about this project. Since owners can choose to participate or not, please clarify that in advertising”
- “The county has to take into account the feedback from 800 Trinity and their wishes not to be included in these section. I don't like that one developer is the sole benefactor of any state-sponsored program. This developer has already taken advantage of our county counselors and the county itself. I don't want them to benefit even further. The county should then hold them accountable for what they said they would do.”

Lack of Clarity/Vague Language

- “What's missing is clarity. The last two ("placemaking strategy" and "surface parking infill" are too vague/jargony - what do those mean?”
- “What does the following mean? Establish a comprehensive placemaking strategy to encourage attractive and cohesive character and development.”
- “Don't like "comprehensive place marking strategy" sounds like an HOA, and the county is already waaaay too intrusive and controlling”

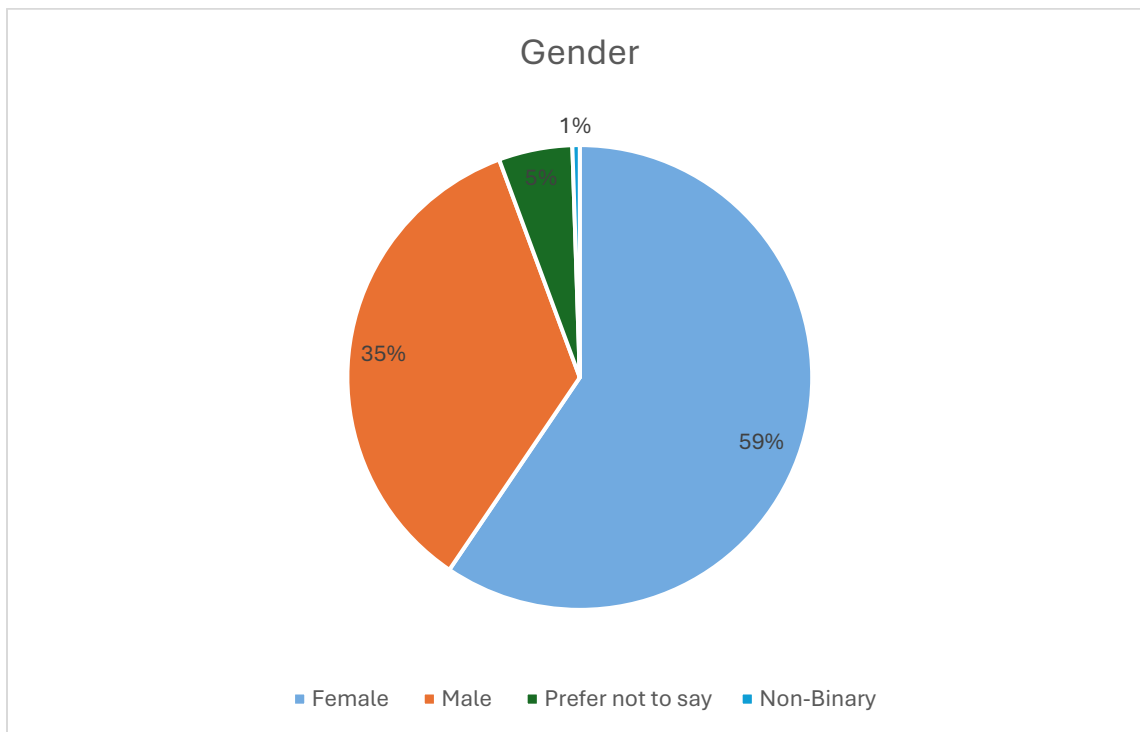
Parking Garage

- “How can you consider having a parking garage when there is no reason to park, no shops nothing to see here?”
- “We do NOT need a parking garage”
- “No parking garage. Los Alamos, unless you start to actually MARKET IT AS A MOUNTAIN TOWN, there is little need for multistory parking and funds could be utilized more for amenities for the residents.”

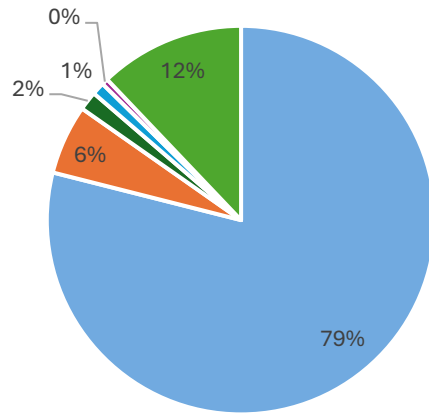
Impacts on scenic and natural beauty

- “Stop cutting down trees for all the county projects. Stop trying to please people who don’t even live here. Keep the rural nature of this town intact, and stop hiring outside contractors who don’t know the area, the area’s vegetation. We need service people and staffing more than we need yet another coffee spot.”
- “This will ruin so much about Los Alamos. Please consider putting back parks and more natural beauty”

Survey Participants

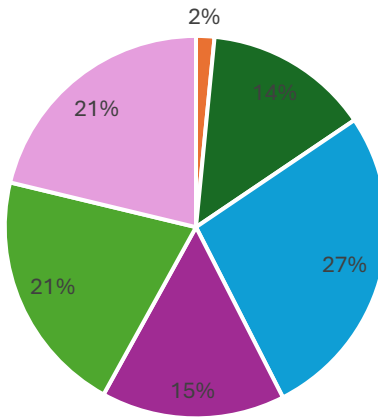


Race/Ethnicity



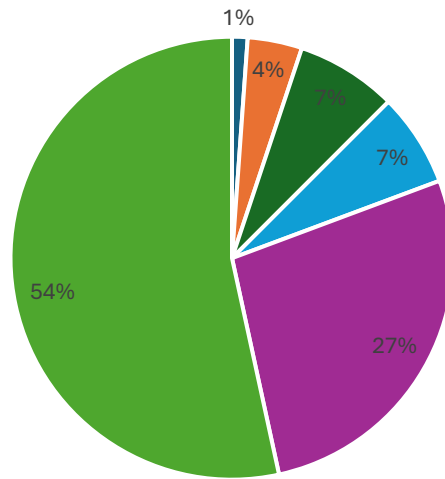
- White/Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Mixed Ethnicity
- Other Entries
- Prefer not to say

Age



- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-65
- Over 65

Annual Household Income



- Under \$15,000
- \$15,000-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$124,999
- Over \$125,000