

# What Americans Want: The Demand for Smart Growth

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**NEW PARTNERS FOR SMART GROWTH  
CONFERENCE**

**FEBRUARY 2, 2012**

**JOE MOLINARO, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
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# New Housing Sales (Single-Family Homes)

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|        |           |
|--------|-----------|
| ■ 2002 | 973,000   |
| ■ 2003 | 1,086,000 |
| ■ 2004 | 1,203,000 |
| ■ 2005 | 1,283,000 |
| ■ 2006 | 1,051,000 |
| ■ 2007 | 776,000   |
| ■ 2008 | 485,000   |
| ■ 2009 | 375,000   |
| ■ 2010 | 323,000   |
| ■ 2011 | 302,000   |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

# Residential Building Permits, housing units

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|        |           |
|--------|-----------|
| ■ 2002 | 1,747,700 |
| ■ 2003 | 1,889,200 |
| ■ 2004 | 2,070,100 |
| ■ 2005 | 2,155,300 |
| ■ 2006 | 1,838,900 |
| ■ 2007 | 1,398,400 |
| ■ 2008 | 905,400   |
| ■ 2009 | 583,000   |
| ■ 2010 | 604,600   |
| ■ 2011 | 611,900   |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

# 2011 Community Preference Survey

Conducted for the National Association of Realtors®



Opinion Research ■ Strategic Communication

# Methods

- 2 focus groups
- Nationally representative survey of 2,071 adults
  - February 15-24, 2011
  - Knowledge Networks web-enabled panel
  - Margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.2 percentage points

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# **Where we are now: Views of current housing and communities**

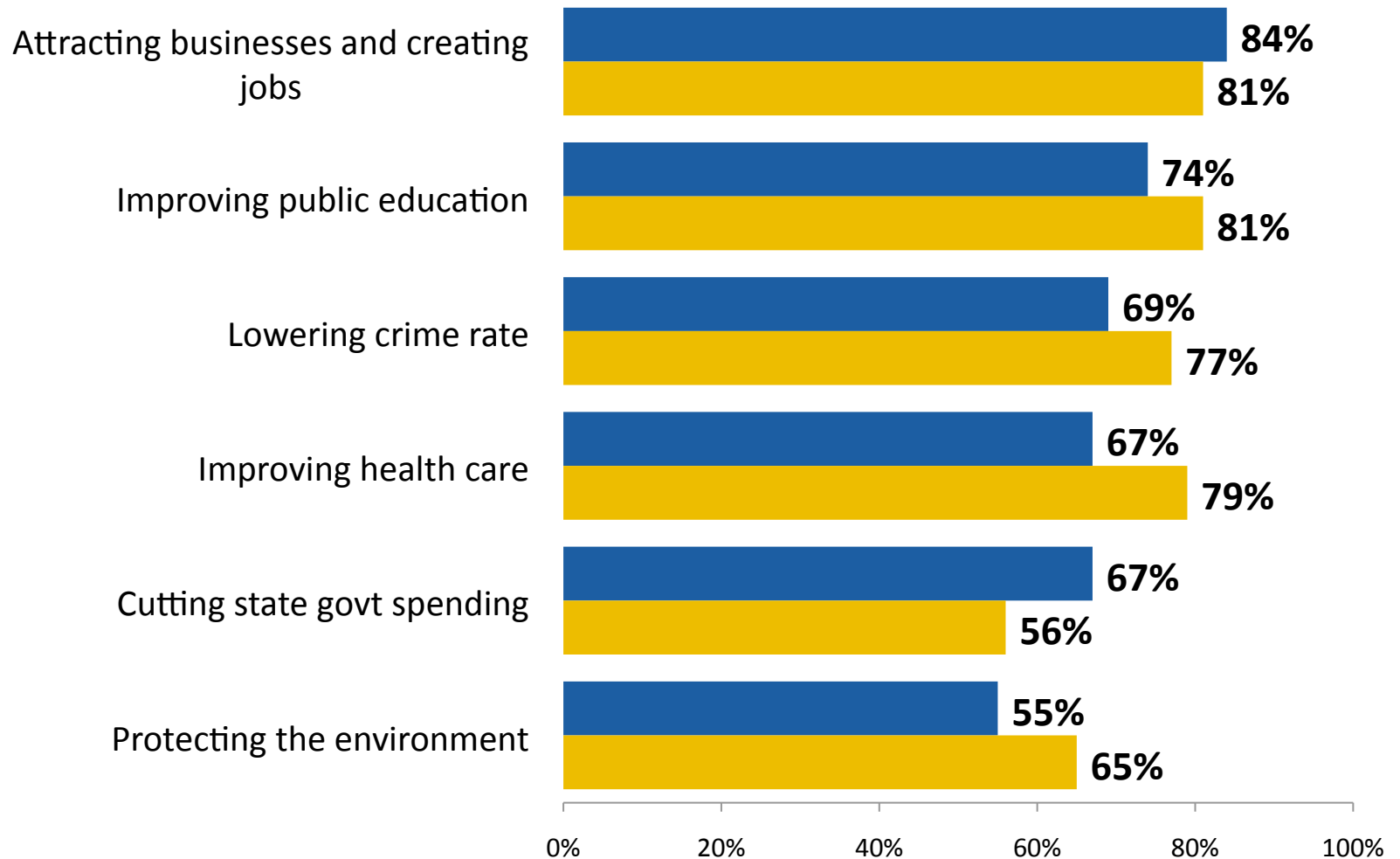
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# Priorities for State Government

% saying extremely high or high priority

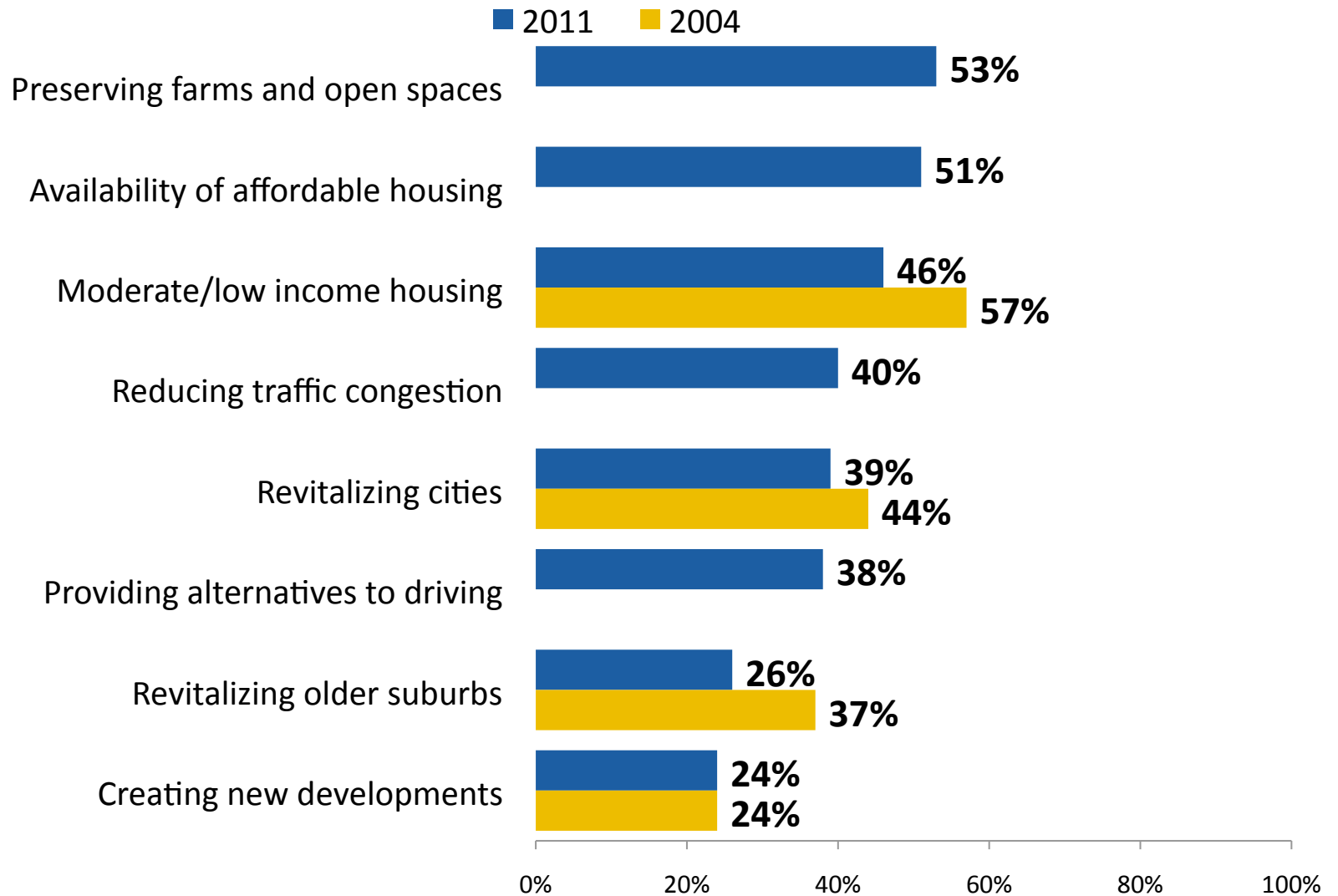
■ 2011 ■ 2004



Q2. Here are some issues [state] will be facing over the next few years. For each one please indicate how much of a priority it should be for your state to address: Should it be an extremely high priority, a high priority, a middle priority, a low priority, or an extremely low priority for your state government? (RANDOMIZE) i. Attracting businesses and creating jobs; d. Improving public education; c. Lowering the crime rate; a. Improving the health care system; b. Cutting state government spending; e. Protecting the environment

# Priorities for State Government

% saying extremely high or high priority



Q2. Here are some issues [state] will be facing over the next few years. For each one please indicate how much of a priority it should be for your state to address: Should it be an extremely high priority, a high priority, a middle priority, a low priority, or an extremely low priority for your state government? (RANDOMIZE) f. Preserving farms and open spaces from development; l. Improving the availability of affordable housing; k. Having housing for people with moderate and low incomes; m. Reducing traffic congestion; h. Revitalizing cities; n. Providing convenient alternatives to driving such as walking, biking, and public transportation; g. Revitalizing older suburbs; j. Creating new development outside the cities

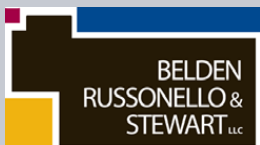


# Reasons for Buying a Home

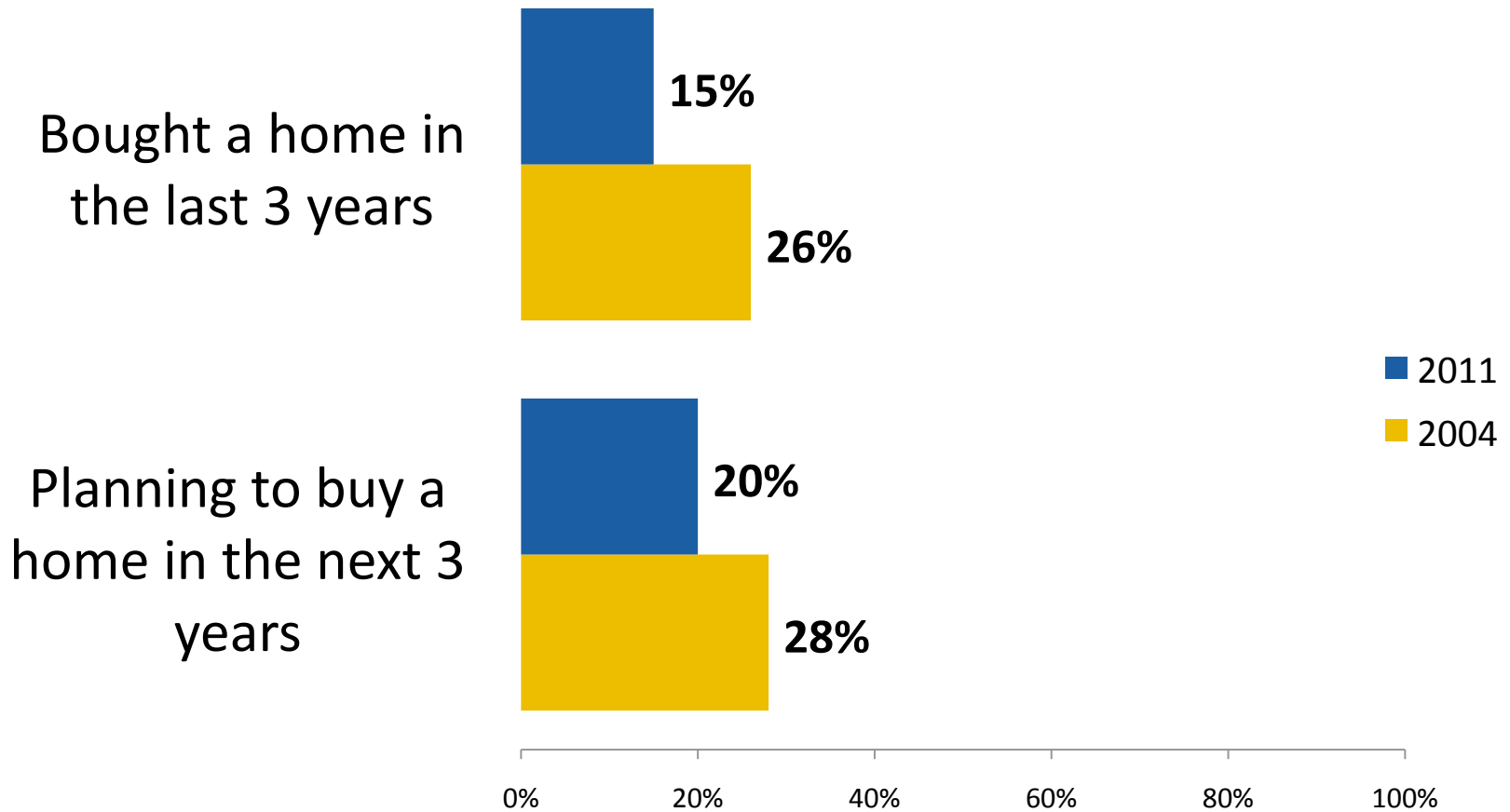
“We’ll probably be adding another member to the family. We don’t need a really big house, but we need more than we have now. There’s no room for a baby here. – *Urban/inner suburban man*

We want to move to closer to the grandkids, and it’s probably time to downsize. – *Outer suburban woman* ”

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## Change in Home Buying



D7. (IF OWN HOME, n=1,557) Have you purchased your home in the last three years? D8. Looking ahead to the next three years, do you think you will purchase a home?

## Importance of Staying within Budget

Willing to stretch budget



Important to stay within budget

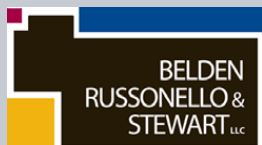


0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

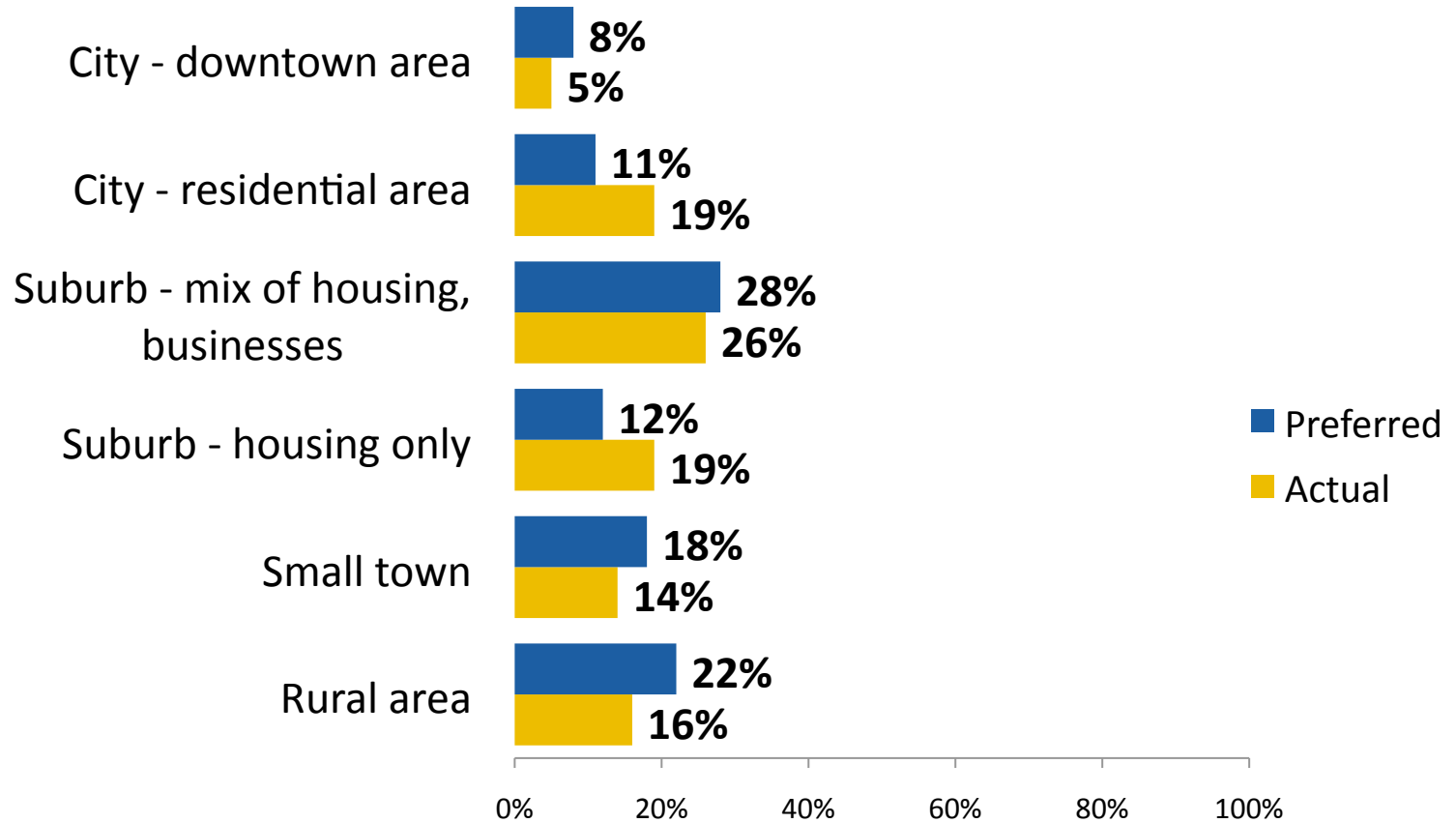
Q12. Which of the following best describes you: I would be willing stretch my budget to spend more on housing so I could live in my preferred community OR It is important for me to stay within my budget even if it means I would be unable to live in my preferred neighborhood

# Where we want to be: Priorities

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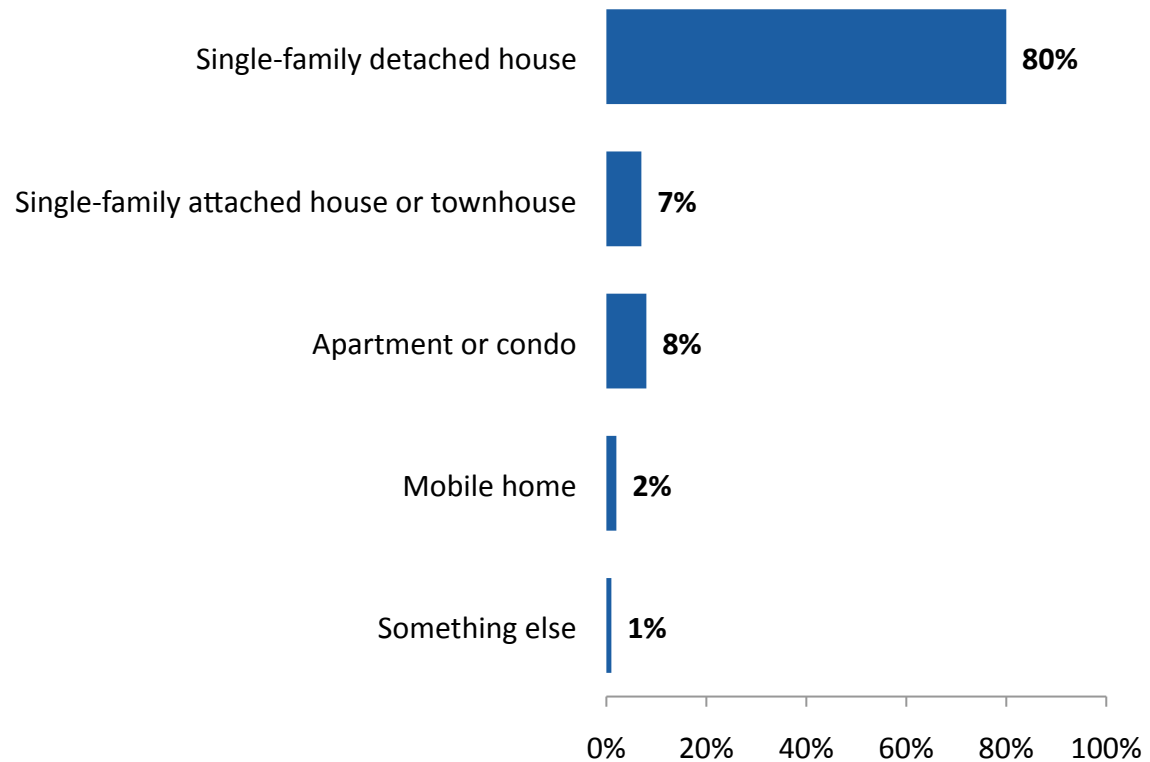
# Preferred versus Actual Community Type



Q4. Which of the following best describes the place where you live: City – downtown, with a mix of offices, apartments, and shops, City – more residential neighborhood, Suburban neighborhood with a mix of houses, shops, and businesses, Suburban neighborhood with houses only, Small town, Rural area

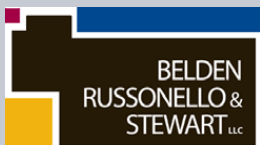
Q5. If you could choose where to live, in which type of the following locations would you most like to live? City – downtown, with a mix of offices, apartments, and shops, City – more residential neighborhood, Suburban neighborhood with a mix of houses, shops, and businesses, Suburban neighborhood with houses only, Small town, Rural area

# Choice of Housing Unit Type

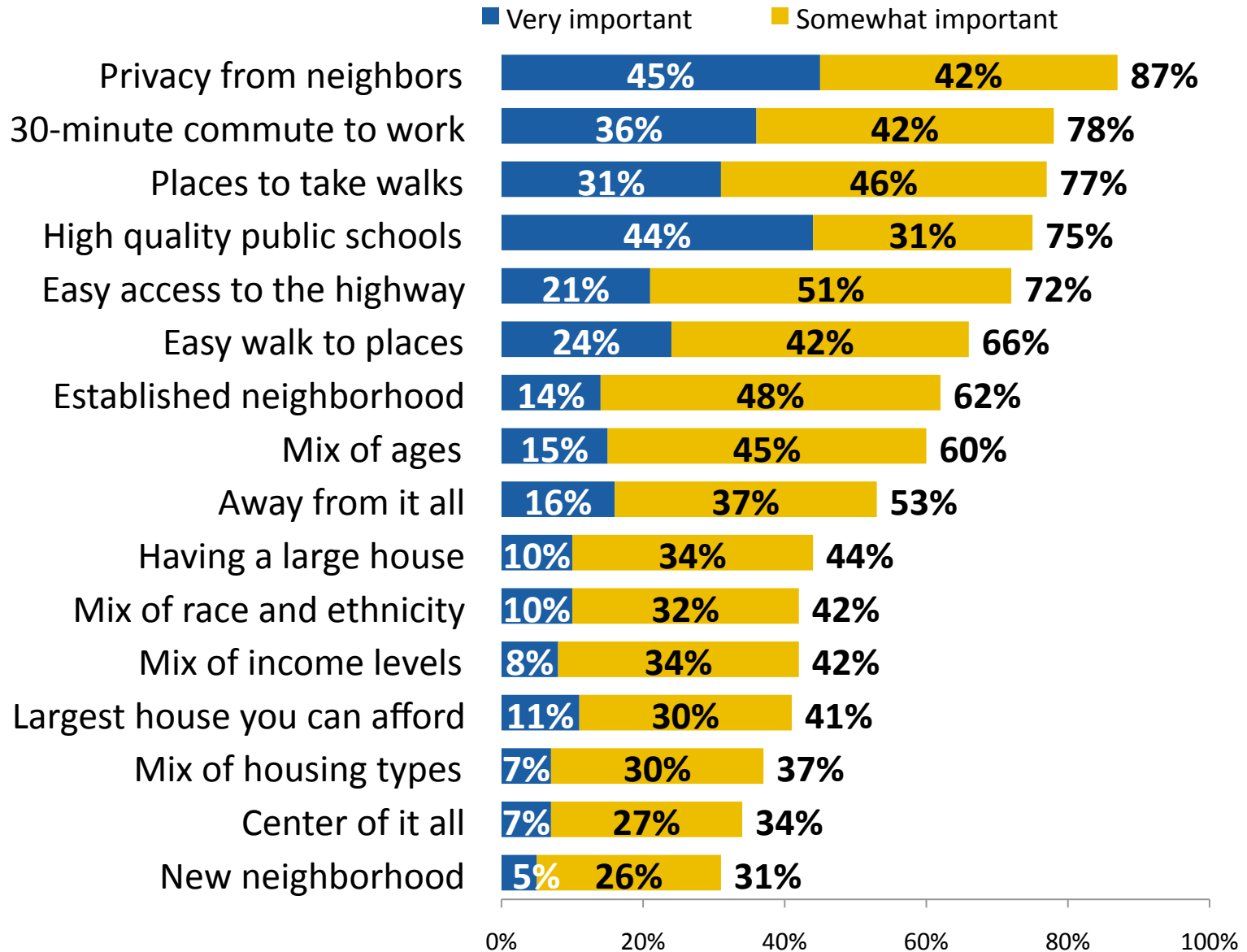


Q6. Right now, if you could choose, which of the following would you prefer to live in?

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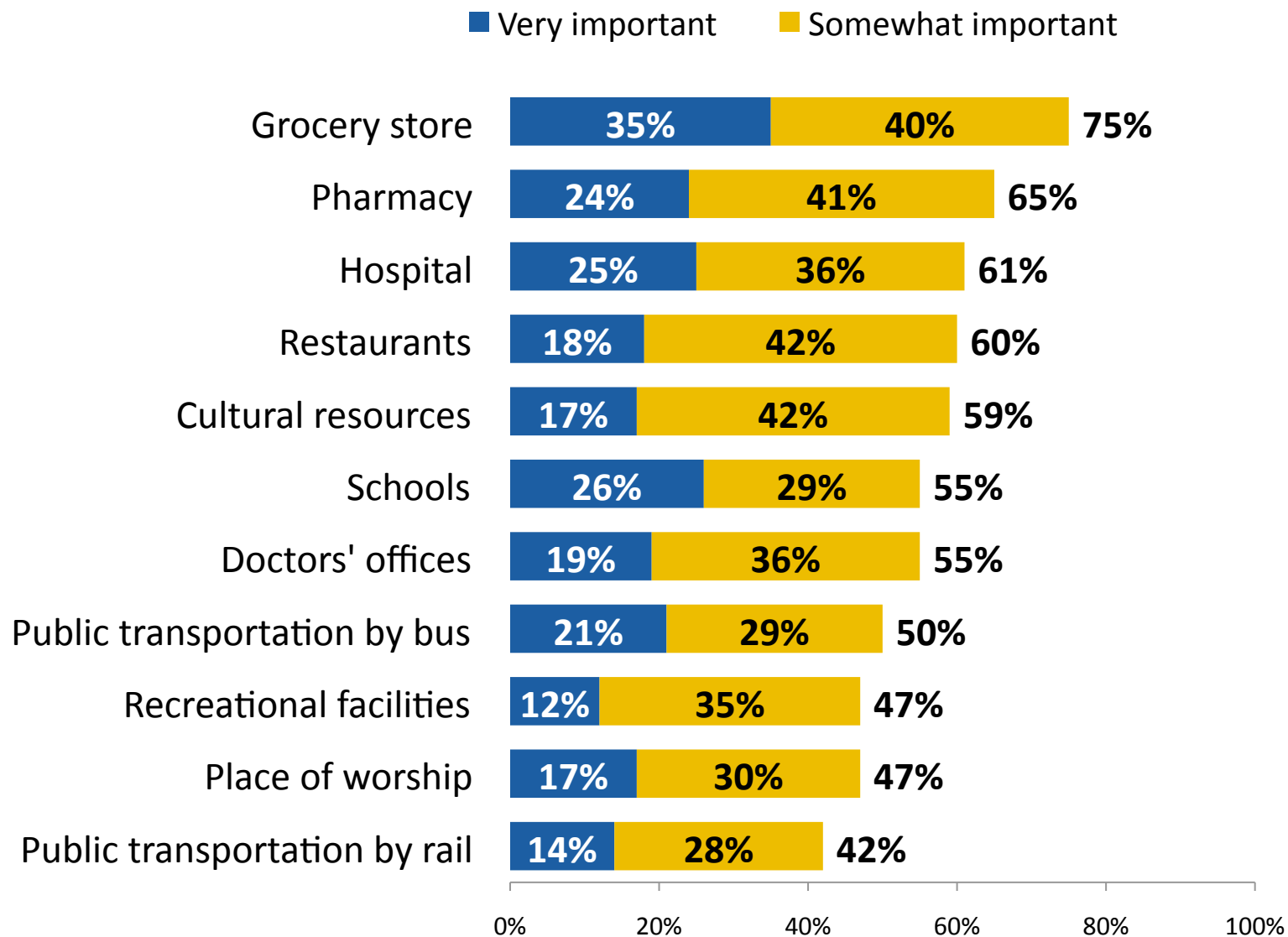


# Importance of Community Characteristics



Q17. In deciding where to live, indicate how important each of the following would be to you: very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important (RANDOMIZE)

# Importance of Walkability



Q18. In deciding where to live, indicate how important it would be to you to have each of the following within an easy walk: very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important. (RANDOMIZE) 16



# Making Choices: Community Tradeoffs

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# Community Descriptions

## Sprawl vs. Smart Growth

### Community A – 43%

There are **only single-family houses** on large lots

There are **no sidewalks**

Places such as shopping, restaurants, a library, and a school are within a **few miles** of your home and you **have to drive** most places

There is enough parking when you drive to local stores, restaurants, and other places

Public transportation, such as bus, subway, light rail, or commuter rail, is **distant or unavailable**

### Community B – 56%

There is a **mix** of single-family detached houses, townhouses, apartments, and condominiums on various sized lots

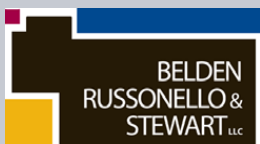
Almost all of the streets have **sidewalks**

Places such as shopping, restaurants, a library, and a school are within a **few blocks** of your home and you can **either walk or drive**

Parking is **limited** when you decide to drive to local stores, restaurants, and other places

Public transportation, such as bus, subway, light rail, or commuter rail, is **nearby**

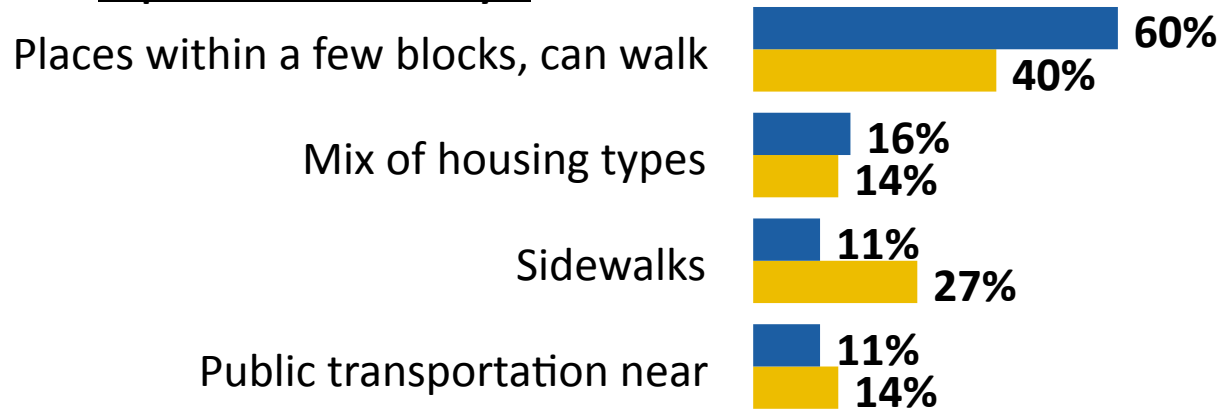
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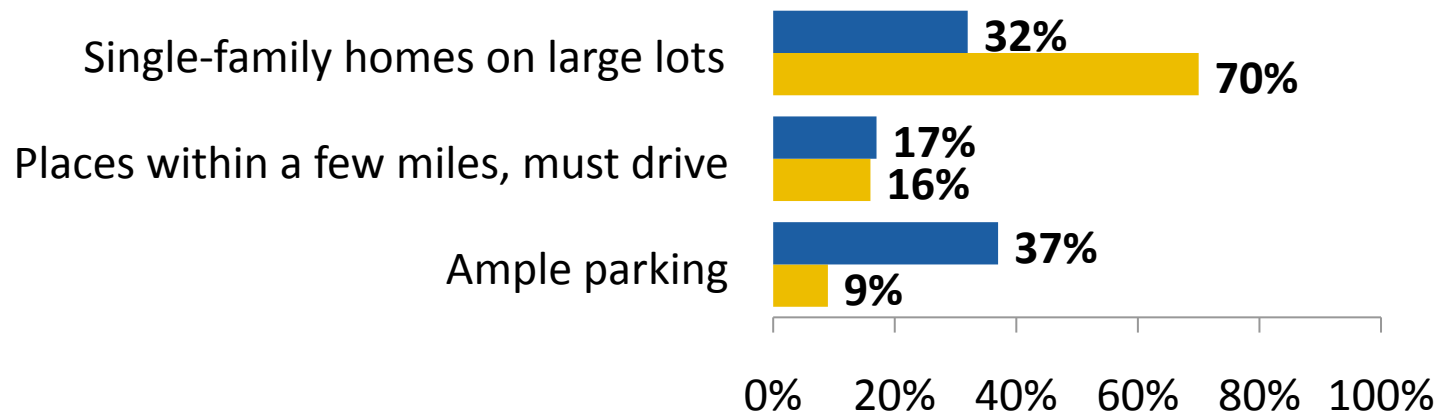
# Most Attractive Aspects of Community Descriptions

■ Smart growth selector   ■ Sprawl selector

## Aspects of Community B

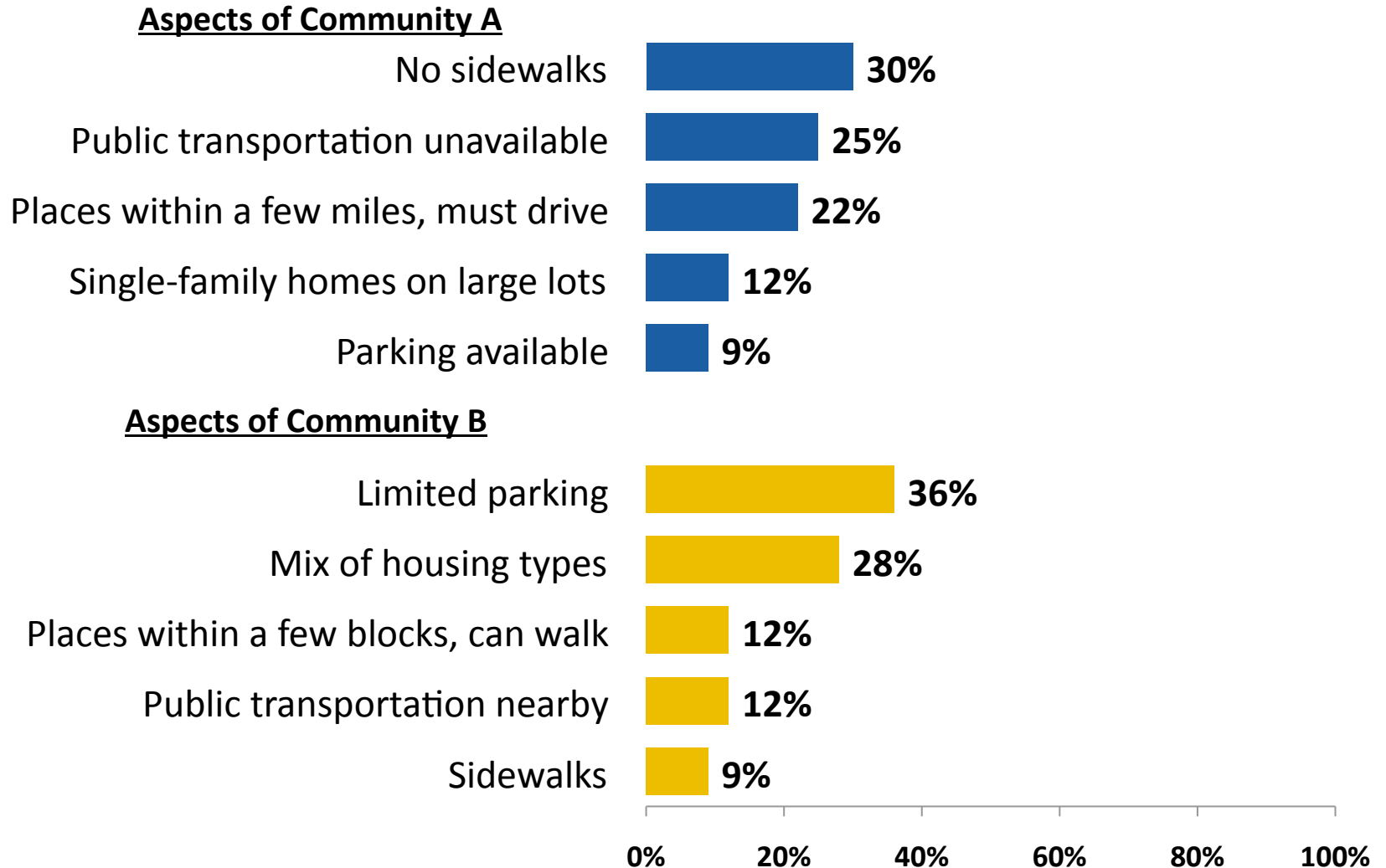


## Aspects of Community A



Q14. Look at the community you selected and choose the ONE most appealing characteristic of that community for you? Q15. Looking at the community you did NOT select, choose the ONE most appealing characteristic of that community you would like to have from that list? (Selected Community A, n=923; Selected Community B, n=1,138)

# Least Attractive Aspects of Community Descriptions



Q16. Looking at the community you did NOT select, choose the ONE LEAST appealing characteristic of that community? (Selected Community A, n=923; Selected Community B, n=1,138)

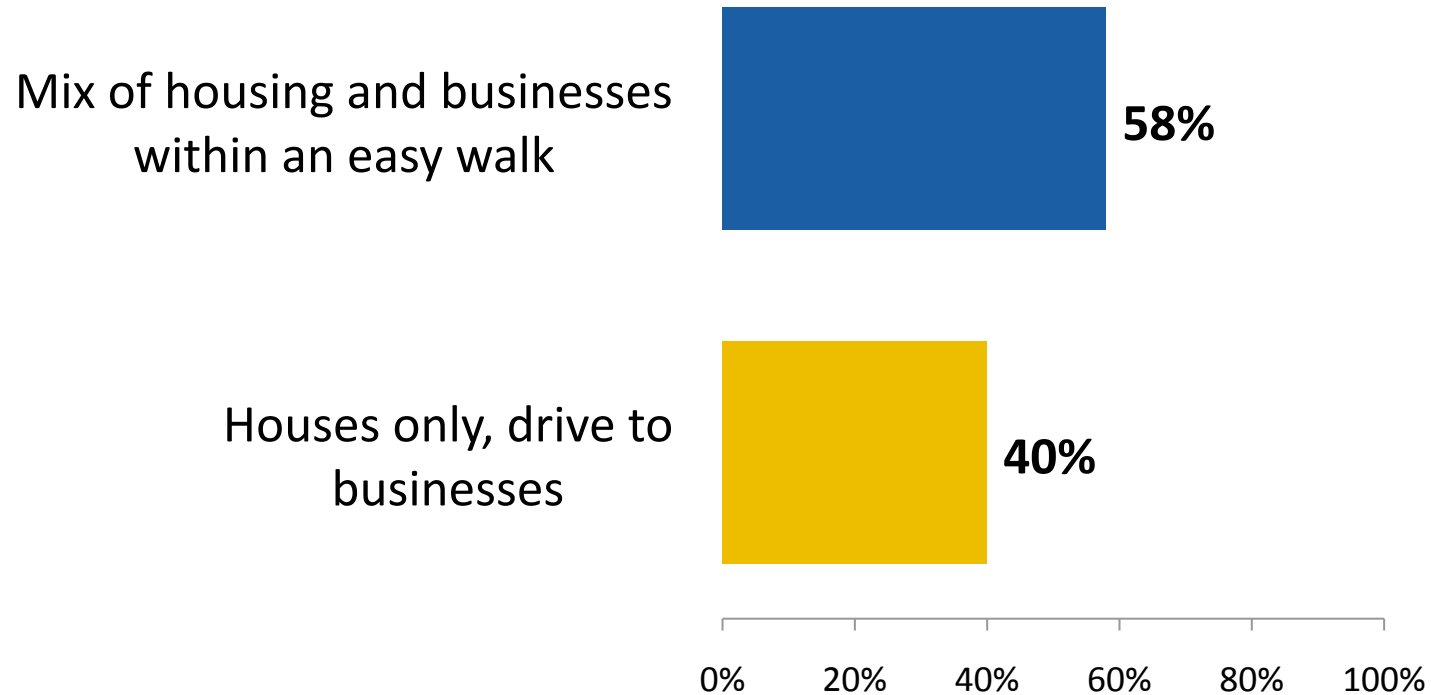
## Unappealing Community Characteristics

“There were no sidewalks where I lived so there were no people out and about. It didn't have that community feel that I like. – *Outer suburban man*”

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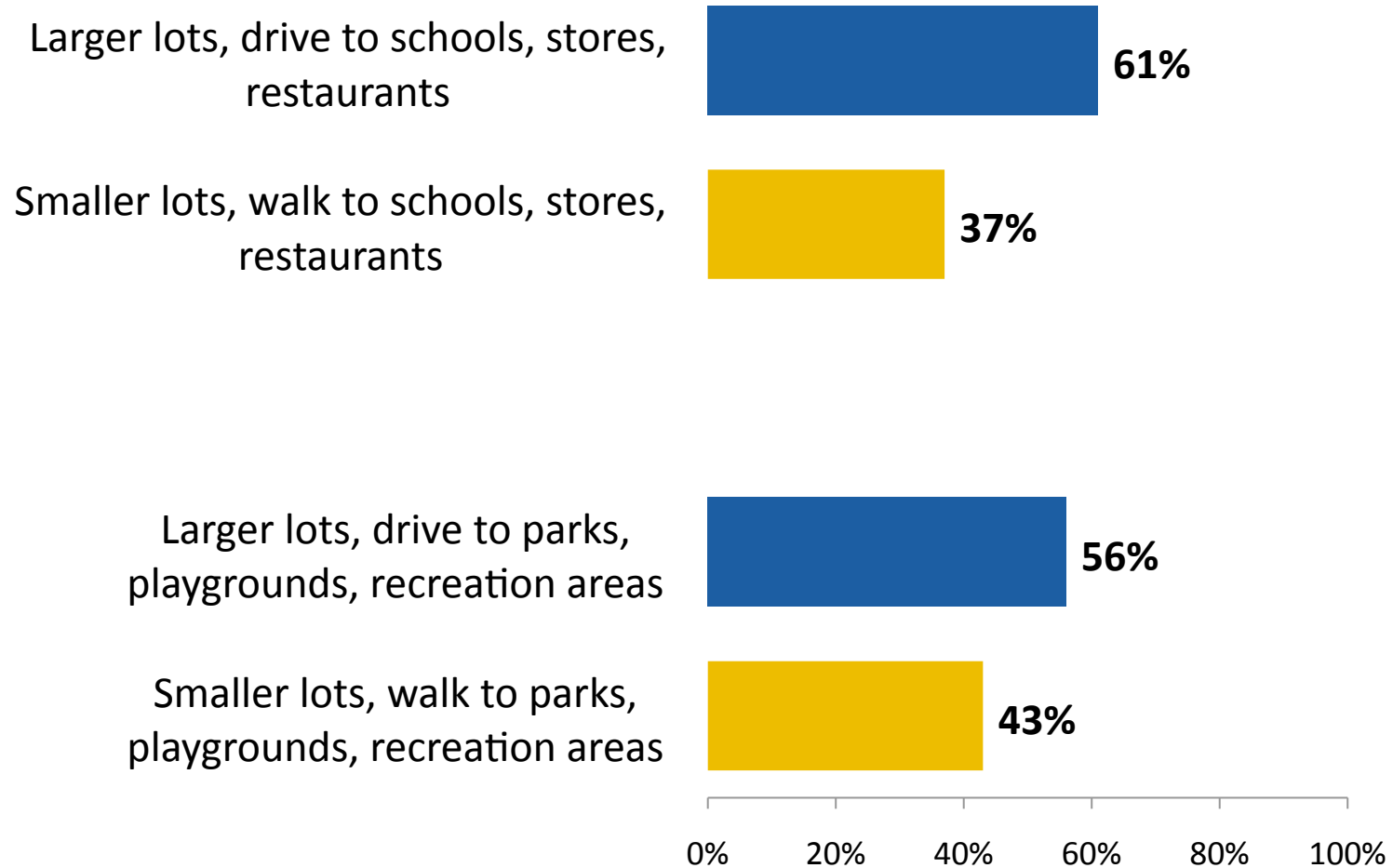


# Mix of Housing and Businesses versus Housing Only



Q10. Community A: The neighborhood has a mix of houses and stores and other businesses that are easy to walk to; or Community B: The neighborhood has houses only and you have to drive to stores and other businesses

## Space versus Walkability



Q8a. (SPLIT SAMPLE A, n=1,026) Community A: Houses are built far apart on larger lots and you have to drive to get to schools, stores and restaurants, or Community B: Houses are built close together on smaller lots and it is easy to walk to schools, stores and restaurants; Q8b. (SPLIT SAMPLE B, n=1,045) Community A: Houses are built far apart on larger lots and you have to drive to get to parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas, or Community B: Houses are built close together on smaller lots and it is easy to walk to parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas

# Desire for Space

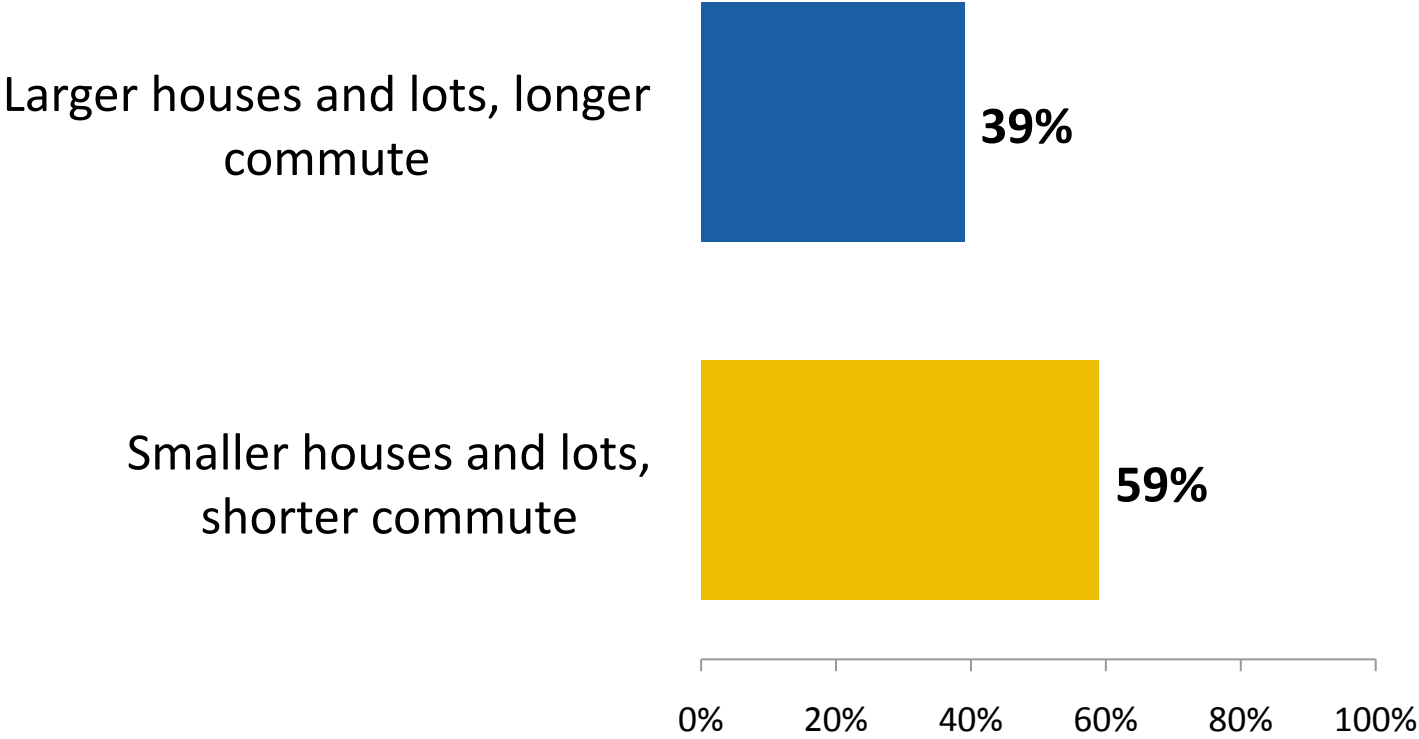
“It doesn’t even have to be a large house, I just want space between my neighbors and me. – *Urban/inner suburban man*”

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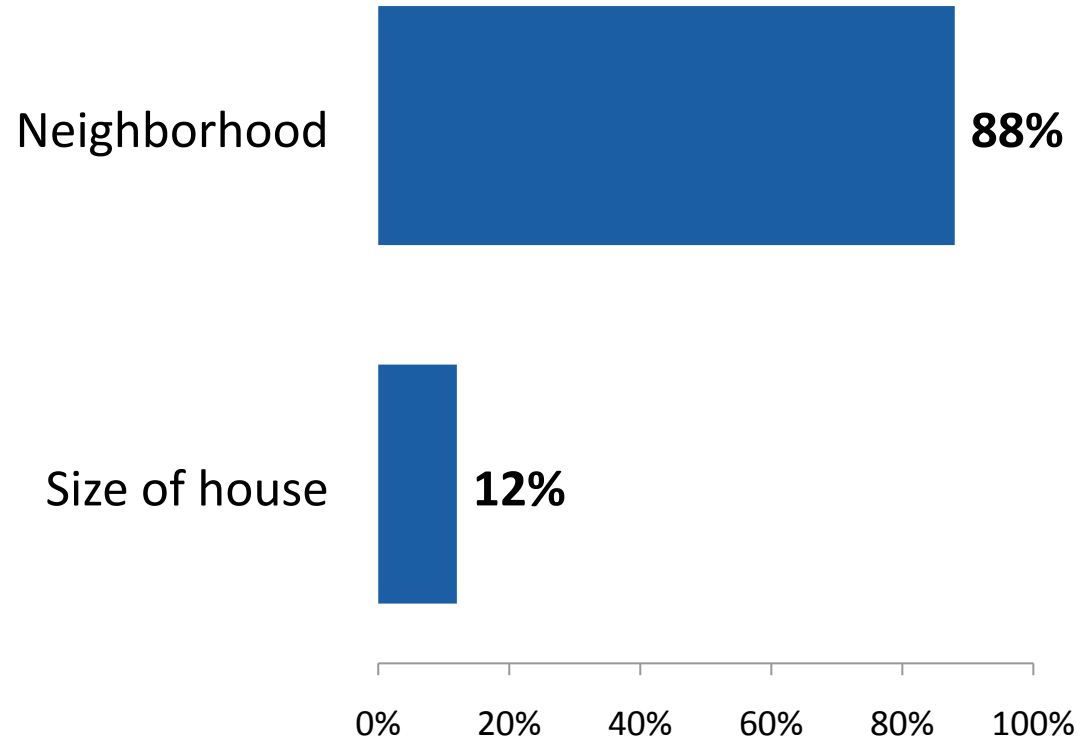


# Space versus Commute Time



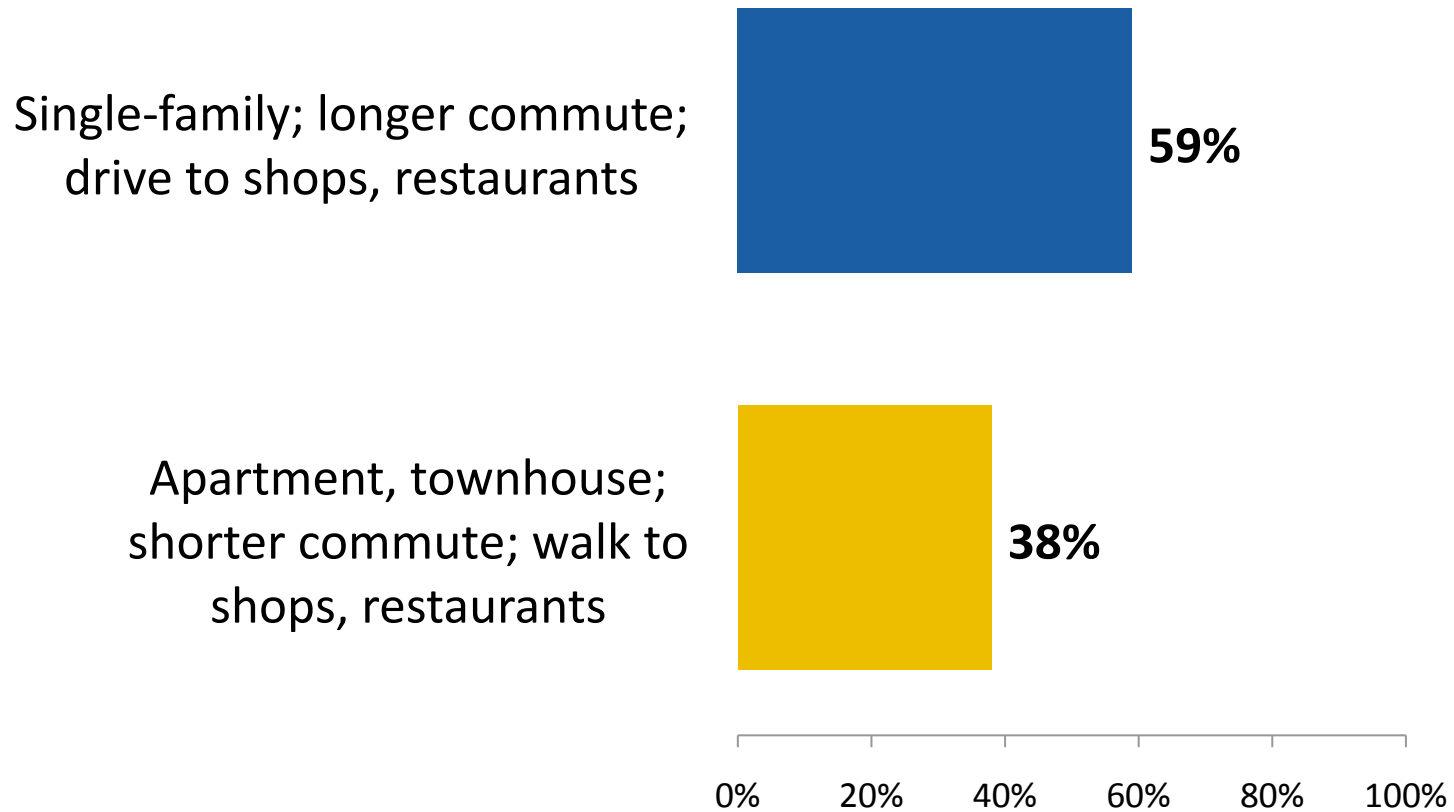
Q9. Community A: Houses are smaller on smaller lots, and you would have a shorter commute to work, 20 minutes or less; or Community B: Houses are larger on larger lots, and you would have a longer commute to work, 40 minutes or more.

## Size of House versus Neighborhood



Q7. Which is more important to you in deciding where to live: (ROTATE) The size of a house; The neighborhood?

# Single-Family, Detached versus Walkability & Commute



Q11. Community A: Own or rent an apartment or townhouse, and have an easy walk to shops and restaurants and have a shorter commute to work; or  
Community B: Own or rent a detached, single-family house, and have to drive to shops and restaurants and have a longer commute to work

# Demographic Differences

## Sprawl - 34%

- Age 40-49
- Men over 40
- Inland South region
- Those who live in housing-only suburb, a small town or rural area
- Married
- Recent homebuyers
- Republicans
- Conservatives

## Smart Growth - 35% Mixed - 31%

- Age 18-29
  - Women under 40
  - Midwest region
  - African Americans
  - Post-graduate education
  - Income less than \$25,000 annually
  - Renters
  - Those who live in cities or suburbs with mix of housing and businesses
  - Singles
  - Democrats
  - Liberals
- Age 30-39
  - Men under 40

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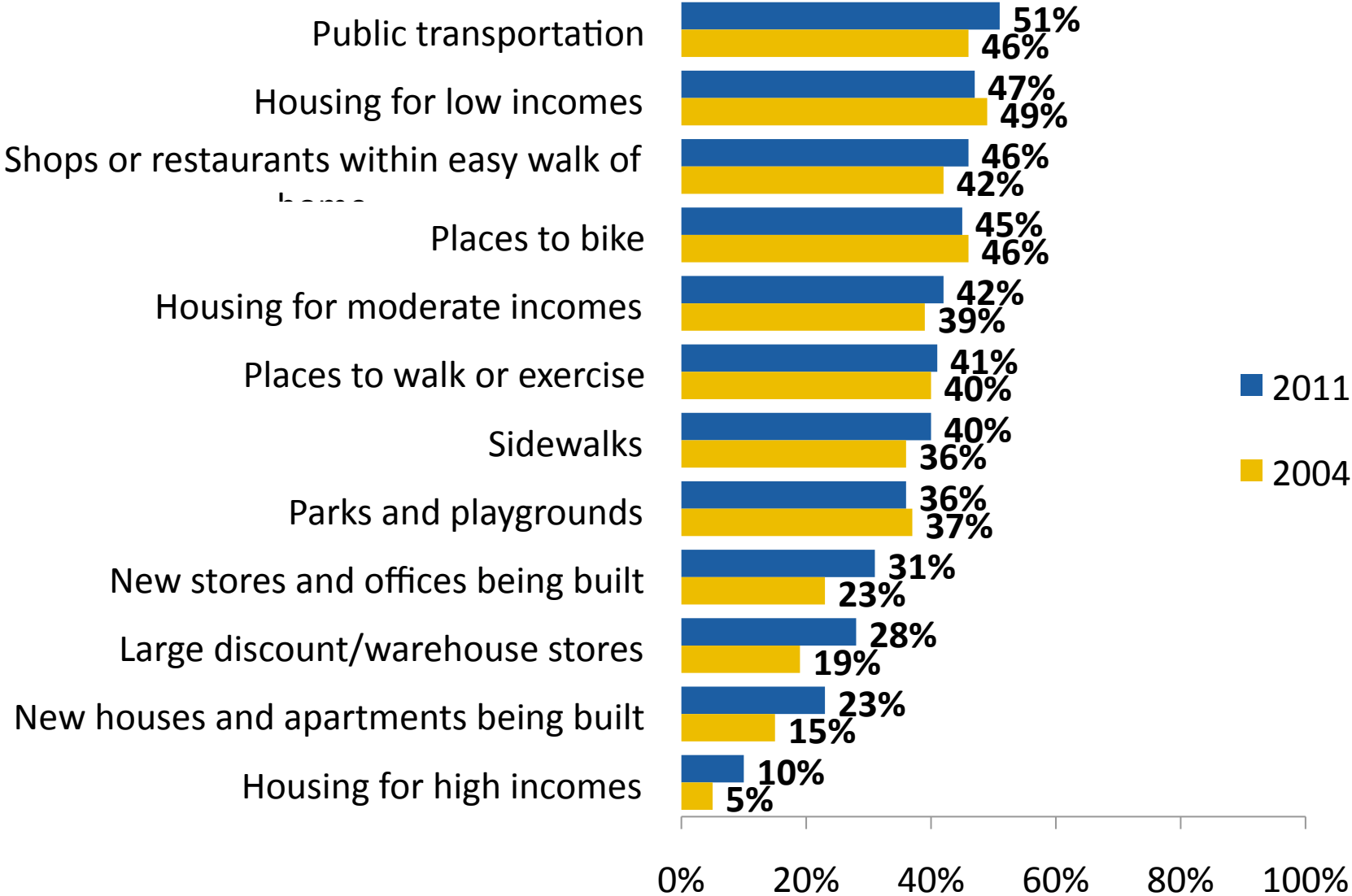
# Making Changes: Policy Preferences

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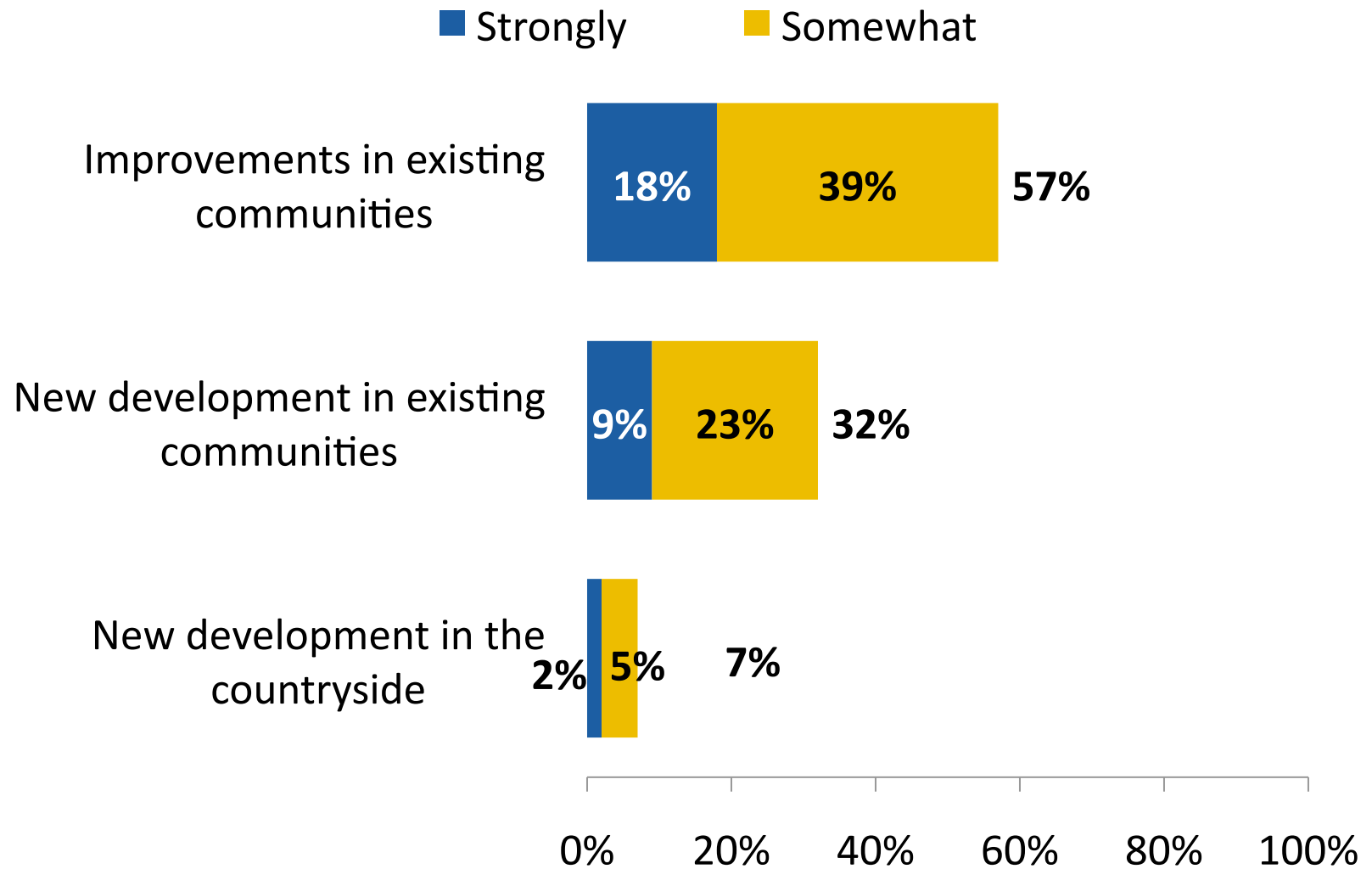
# Community Needs

*% saying too little*



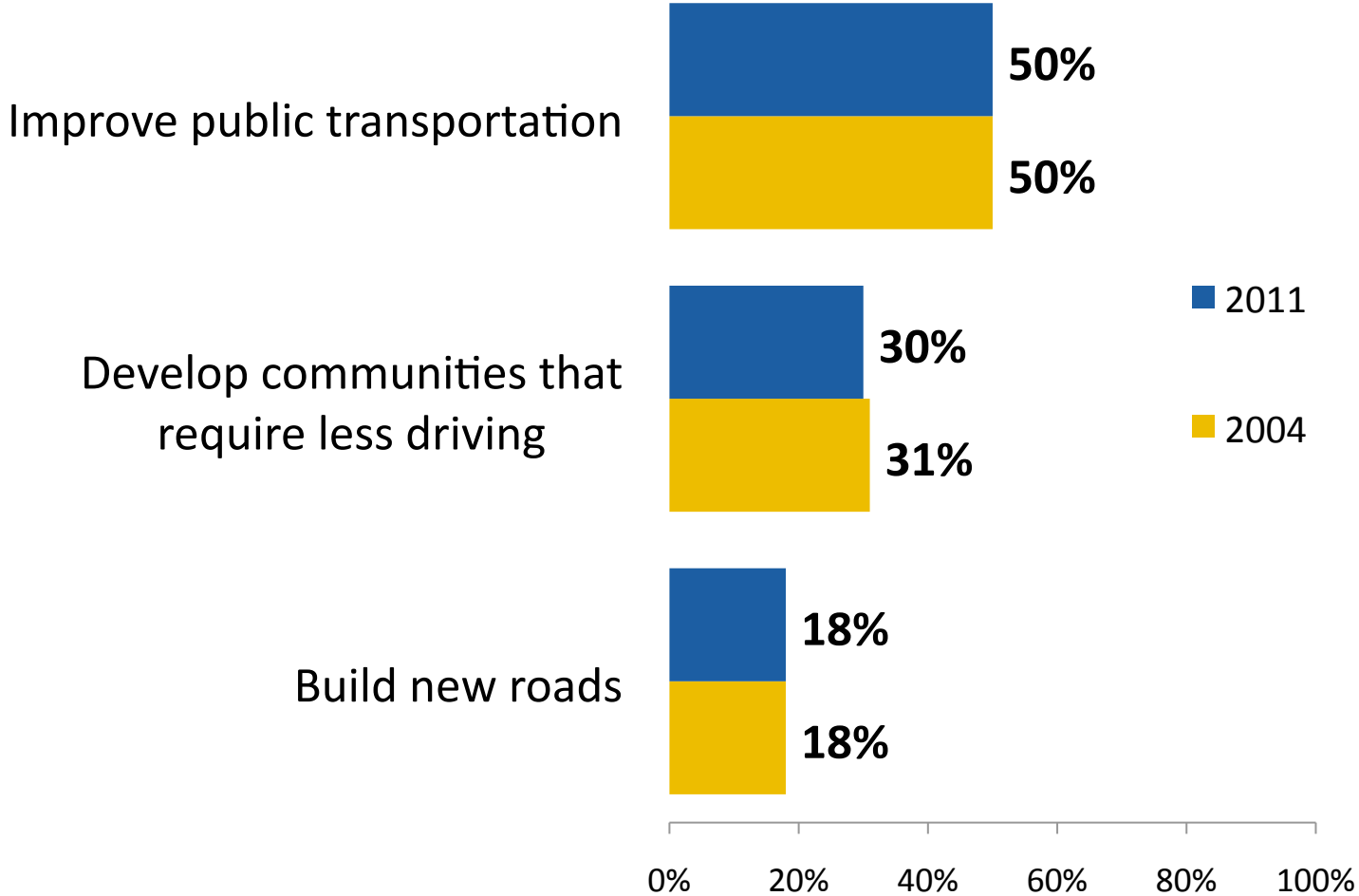
Q3. Do you think there is too much, too little, or the right amount of each of the following in the area close to where you live: (RANDOMIZE)

# Funding Priorities for State Government



Q20. Which of the following should receive funding priority from the state government: (SELECT ONLY ONE: ROTATE ANSWERS) Improvements in existing communities, such as sidewalks and parks; New development in existing communities; New development in the countryside. Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

# Reducing Traffic Congestion



Q19. Which of the following proposals is the best long term solution to reducing traffic in your state: ROTATE; Build new roads; Improve public transportation, such as trains, buses and light rail; Develop communities where more people do not have to drive long distances to work or shop



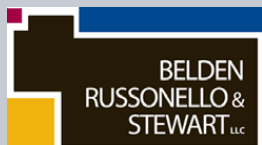
# Idaho, 500 registered voters 2008

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- What is the best long-term solution to reducing traffic in your area?
  - 25% Build new roads
  - 49% Improve public transportation
  - 19% Develop communities where people do not have to drive as much

# Key Audiences

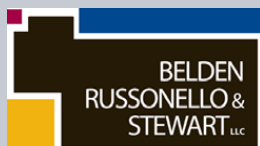
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# Prospective Buyers

- Those who say they are likely to buy in the next 3 years
  - Under 40;
  - African Americans and Latinos
  - Renters
  - Those currently living in a city
  - Those with children under 18 in HH
- More likely to prioritize high quality schools and larger homes.
- Willing to stretch budget for neighborhood, slight preference for smart growth.

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# Young families with kids

- More likely than others to select sprawl community description
- High quality schools/privacy top priorities
- More likely than others to prioritize size of house
- Walkability less important
- Willing to stretch budget for neighborhood

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# Retirement-minded adults

- Prefer rural or small town communities
- Important to stay within budget
- Schools, commute, large house less important for this group
- Slight preference for smart growth community description

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# Young singles

- More likely to prefer city living
- Walkability important
- More likely than others to choose smart growth community
- Prefers apartment or townhome in a walkable area over single-family home that requires more driving

# African-American families

- Four in ten planning to buy in near future
- Prefer living in area with mix of housing and businesses
- Schools, diversity especially important
- Staying within budget more important than preferred community

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# Latino families

- Four in ten planning to buy in near future
- Prefer living in area with mix of housing and businesses
- Schools, larger homes important
- More willing to stretch budget for neighborhood

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