

Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District Resident Satisfaction Survey Summary Report, October 2021

Purpose of Survey

The Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District Satisfaction Survey was undertaken to gain a better understanding of resident experience and satisfaction with living in the District (HCD). The results of the survey will be used to develop communication resources and inform future studies of potential heritage conservation districts in Guelph.

Method

On July 8, 2021, a notice was mailed out to property owners and tenants within the District requesting their participation in an online survey active from July 8 to August 2nd. An option to request a hardcopy of the survey was also made available to the participants.

In total, 298 surveys were mailed out and 58 responses were collected, a response rate of 19.4%. The mailing list included 180 properties within the District, wherein 127 are privately owned and 53 are rental properties.

The survey was comprised of 33 questions on the following topics:

General Property Information

General Understanding and Awareness of the District Plan and Guidelines

Alterations, Repairs and New Construction within the Heritage District

Neighbourhood Characteristics

General Satisfaction.

The number of responses received varied depending on the question as some of the questions were not applicable to all or were skipped by respondents.

Summary of Key Findings

General Property Information

- Out of 56 responses, 77% of respondents have lived at their current address or owned the property for more than 5 years.
- 86% of respondents are property owners and 14% are renters.

- 67% of the respondents are made up of residents who are 50 years of age or older and only 4% were 18-24 year olds.
- Accordingly, 54% of respondents' household income fell between the \$100,000 to \$200,000 range or above.

General Understanding and Awareness of the District Plan and Guidelines

- 89% of respondents are aware that their property is located within the District.
- 55% recommended that an information brochure would help in increasing awareness of the District, while information sessions and distribution of additional information during a building permit application was only favoured by 8% of the respondents. Other options that were mentioned included promotional videos, self-guided walking tours, and the provision of visual cues around the area.
- 62% of respondents have not read the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guidelines.
- 75% of respondents felt that signs should be used to identify the Brooklyn and College Hill neighbourhood as a heritage conservation district which could be made possible by installing unique street signs.

Alterations, Repairs and New Construction within the Heritage District

- 74% of respondents have not done any external work on their property in the last five years. For respondents that have, the types of work undertaken included changes to the front porch, roofing, landscaping, painting, window replacement, and installation of new front steps.
- 52% of respondents have plans to renovate or repair their homes in the next 5 years. The same proportion of respondents felt that a restoration grant from the City would not alter their initial response in making any changes to their property.
- 88% of the respondents are aware that external alterations, repairs and upgrades to their property may require a heritage permit approval.
- 65% of the respondents were not aware that there are no fees for a heritage permit application.
- Out of the respondents who recently made external changes to their property, built a new home or other structures, 90% did not find it difficult to find trades who could complete the work.

Neighbourhood Characteristics

- Features and characteristics of the District that are important to the respondents include:

- Presence of mature trees, landscaping/gardens and front yards that make the streetscape unique, pedestrian-friendly, harmonious.
- Proximity to Speed River, parkland, Downtown and the University of Guelph.
- Diversity and individuality of the homes from one another, most of which are proportionate to their lot sizes and do not infringe on adjacent or neighbouring properties.
- Out of 38 responses, changes that respondents have noticed within the District since its designation in 2015 include:
 - A number of older homes are being demolished and replaced with new larger “infill” homes that are not proportionate to other properties. (12 responses)
 - These new homes are also thought to be “out of character and proportion” with the existing homes in the area. (7 responses)
 - Nonetheless, respondents are receptive to small-scale improvements and renovations being made to the properties. (2 responses)
- Out of 36 responses, 14% consider the District designation to have helped in maintaining the heritage characteristic of the neighbourhood while 36% believe it somewhat has.

General Satisfaction

- Out of 50 responses, 41% respondents felt “very satisfied” with living within the District while 12% felt “somewhat dissatisfied” and “dissatisfied”.
- Additional feedback and comments submitted in the survey include:
 - The high costs involved with maintaining a heritage property have made it economically challenging for current owners within the neighbourhood. (3 responses)
 - In order to highlight the unique character of the District, more investment could be made for infrastructure (i.e. roads, sidewalks, or street signs) and its public spaces. (4 responses)
 - Some respondents feel that very little information is being communicated to neighbouring properties and current property owners in the District regarding new builds or applications. (3 responses)
 - Although in favour of infill homes, a majority of the respondents find that the dimension and scale of the new builds are not proportionate or sympathetic to existing modest-sized homes in the area. (11 responses)
 - Current homeowners find that their homes are being priced higher by insurance companies due to its heritage status and rebuilding costs. (4 responses)

Summary of Heritage Permits: 2016-2021

In addition to the survey, staff reviewed the number of permits approved within the District. The District designation and Plan and Guidelines came into effect on November 30, 2015. Since the HCD came into effect until September 2021, 28 heritage permits have been approved within the Brooklyn and College Hill HCD. Seven of these permits were considered and approved by City Council and all others were approved under delegated authority.

The types of work undertaken by applicants included:

- Rebuilding front porch and replacement of windows and front porch columns (7 permits)
- Construction of new detached rear yard garage (3 permits)
- Tree removal for replacement of sanitary pipes (1 permit)
- Replacing sunroom and fencing at rear of property (3 permits)
- Second floor addition (2 permits)
- Demolition of existing dwelling and proposal for new dwelling (3 permits)

Attachments

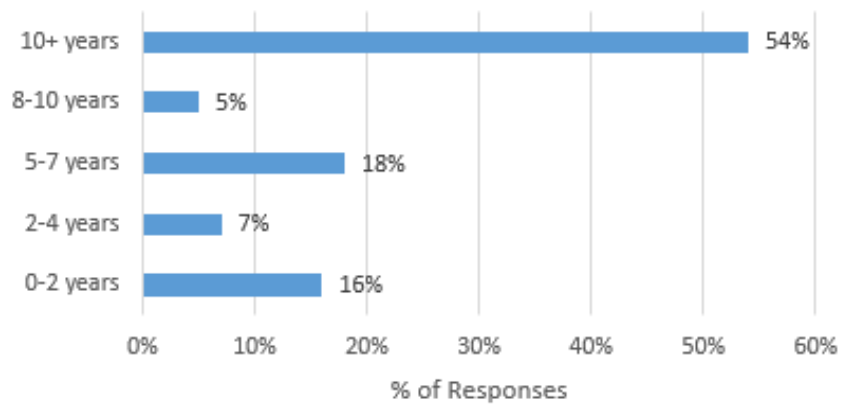
Attachment 1 – Survey Questionnaire with responses

For more Information

Policy Planning and Urban Design,
Planning and Building Services,
City of Guelph
519-837-5616
planning@guelph.ca

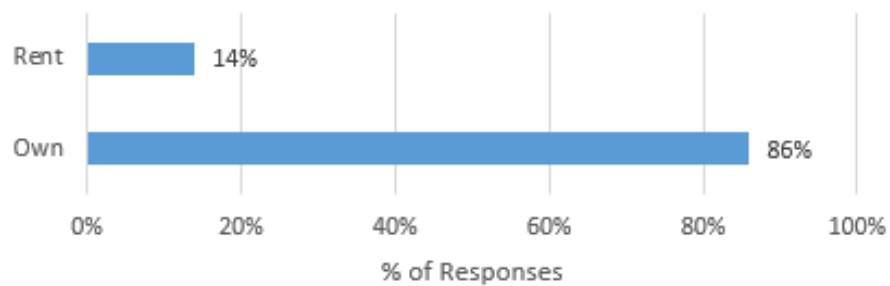
Attachment 1: Survey Questionnaire with responses

1. How long have you lived at/owned this current address?



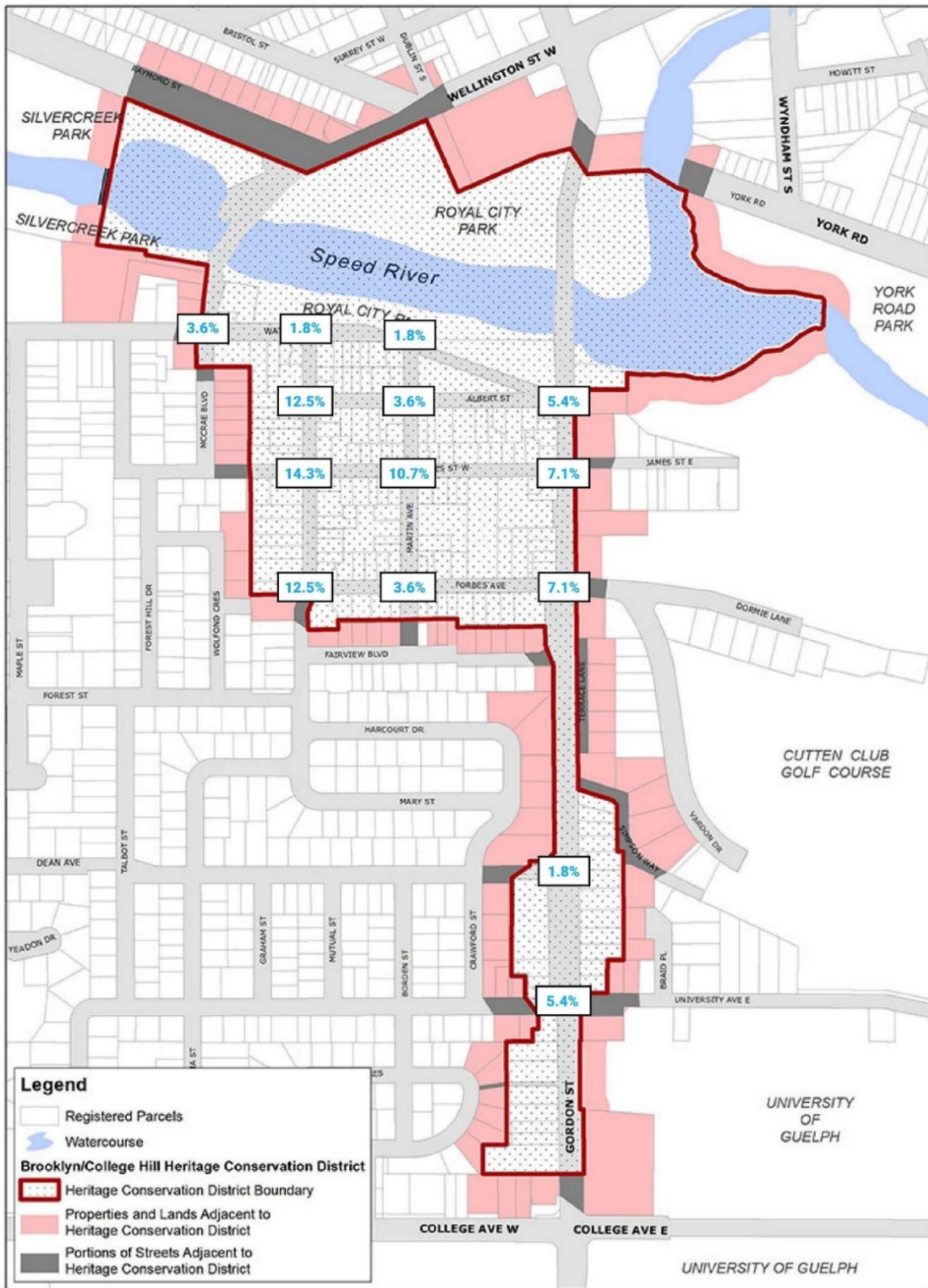
Total number of responses = 56

2. Do you own the property or do you rent the property?



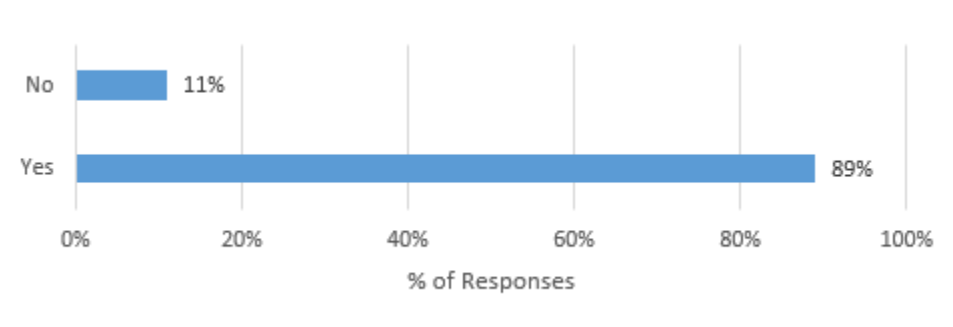
Total number of responses = 56

3. What is the closest intersection to your property?



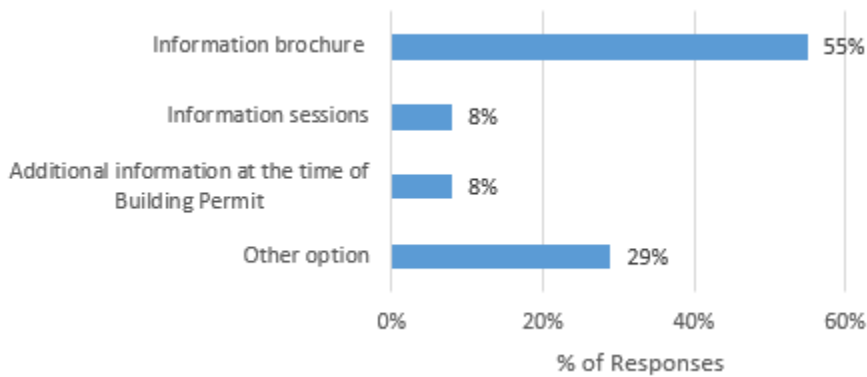
Total number of responses = 56

4. Are you aware that your property is located within the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District?



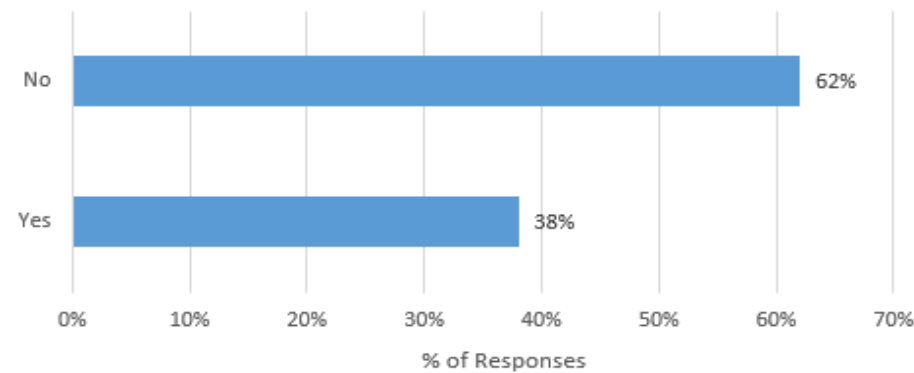
Total number of responses = 53

5. What can we do to increase your awareness of the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District?



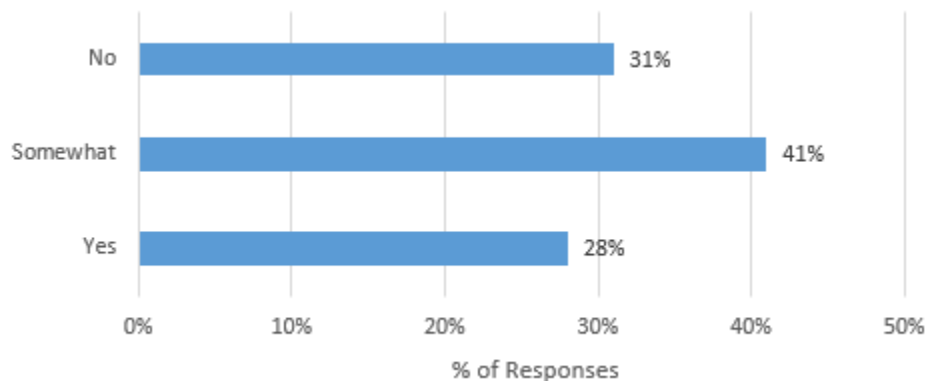
Total number of responses = 51

6. Have you read the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guidelines?



Total number of responses = 52

7. Do you find the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guideline easy to read and understand?



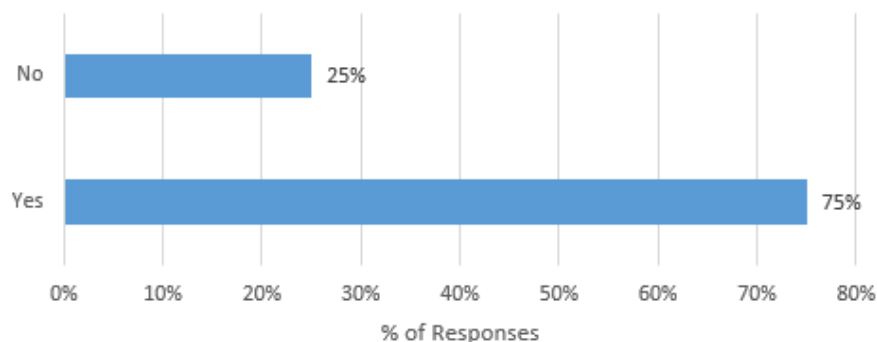
Total number of responses = 39

8. How can we improve the Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guidelines to make it more readable and user friendly?

Total number of responses = 23

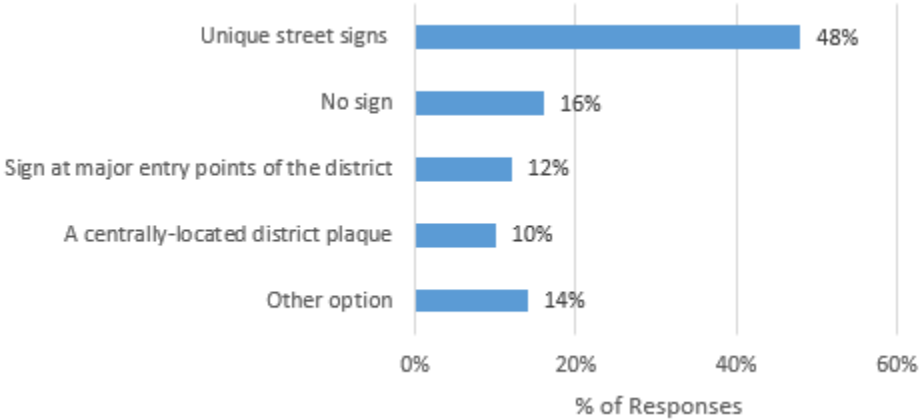
- Site specific guidelines would be extremely helpful. (3 responses)
- Provide a copy that is easier to read and in simple language. (7 responses)
- It was difficult to find initially. (4 responses)
- Perhaps provide a condensed, summarized version of it that most people would have the time and motivation to read. If further, in-depth information would be required on a particular point, the reader could look into a full version. (5 responses)
- The guidelines was too long to read, instead I glossed over it. (3 responses)

9. Should the Brooklyn and College Hill neighbourhood have signs to identify it as a heritage conservation district?



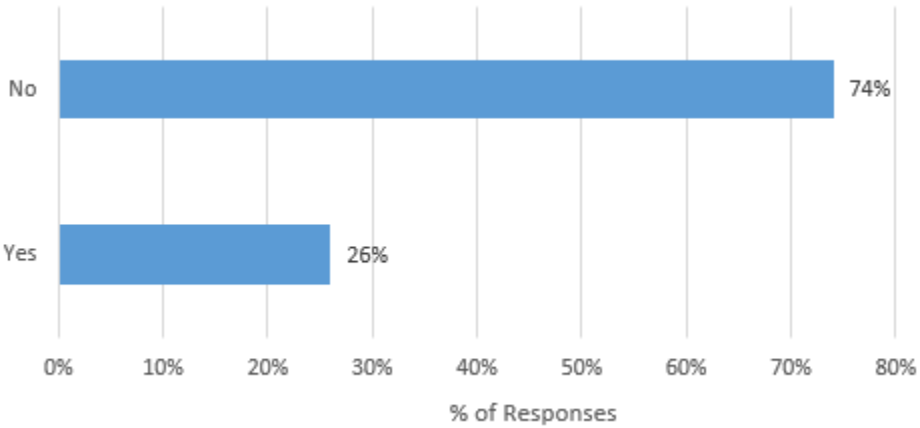
Total number of responses = 52

10. If signs are proposed, what type of district signage do you think is more appropriate?



Total number of responses = 50

11. Have you done external work to your home in the last five years?



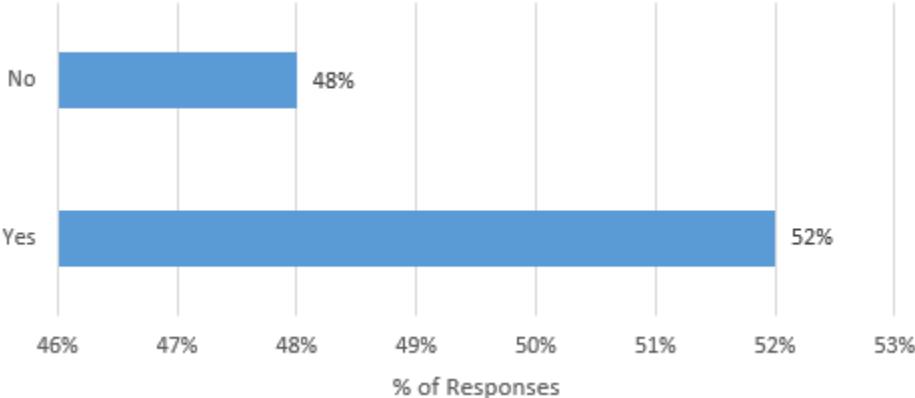
Total number of responses = 53

12. If yes, what type of work did you undertake?

Total number of responses = 18

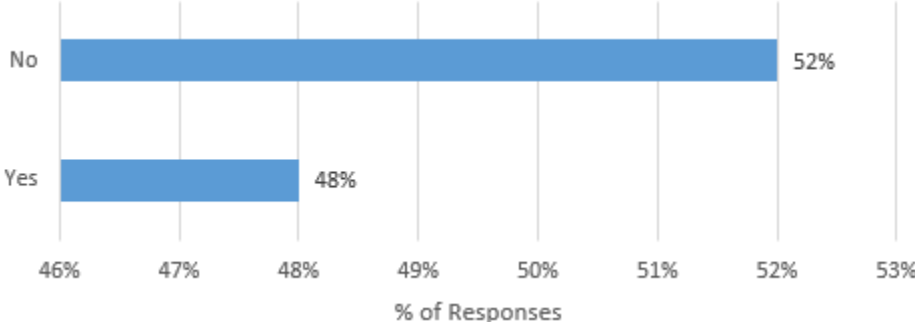
- Porch, front garden, roofing, window replacements, and siding. (6 responses)
- Converting the front lawn to a garden, general home repairs and surface enhancement. Beautification. Added stairs. (3 responses)
- Installing new front steps and shingle roof. (3 responses)

13. Are you planning any renovations or repairs to your house or property in the next 5 years?



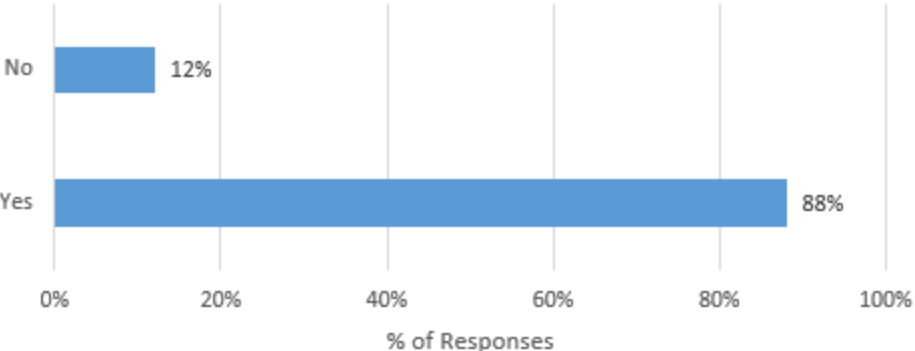
Total number of responses = 50

14. If the City of Guelph provided a financial grant to assist with the restoration of your property’s heritage attributes, would this change your response to the previous question?



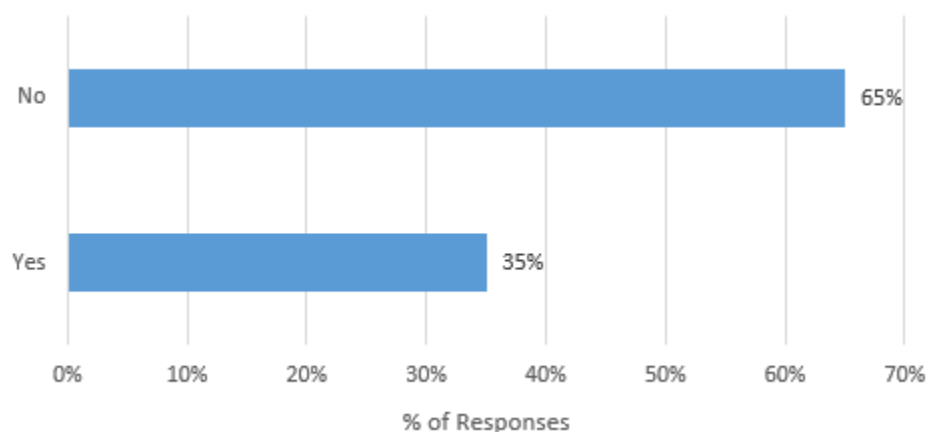
Total number of responses = 50

15. Are you aware that external alterations, repairs and upgrades to your property may require approval of a heritage permit?



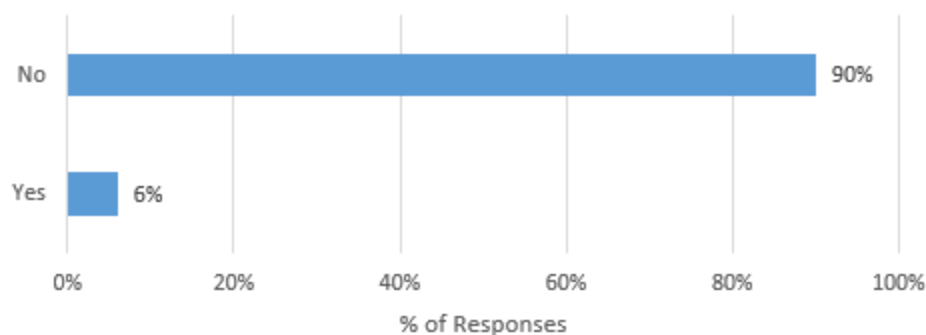
Total number of responses = 52

16. Are you aware there is no fee to apply for a heritage permit?



Total number of responses = 52

17. If you have recently made external changes to your home or have built a new home or other structure, was it difficult to find trades to complete the work?



Total number of responses = 52

18. What features or characteristics of the Brooklyn and College Hill neighbourhood are important to you?

Total number of responses = 44

- Continuity of design and grading levels not infringing on adjacent properties. (8 responses)
- The unique homes and cultural landscapes, trees and the history of the neighbourhood. (18 responses)
- Proximity to the river, parklands, Downtown and the University of Guelph. (5 responses)

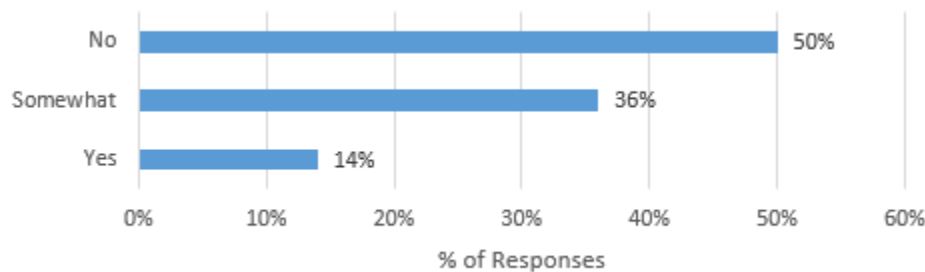
- Presence of large, mature trees for shade as well as street gardens and yards. (15 responses)
- Pedestrian-friendly streets, walkability, spaciousness of the lots, and a mix of house styles that make the streetscape interesting. (3 responses)
- Heritage homes that have a mix of architectural styles with features that are commonly found for homes built in the 19th and 20th centuries. (5 responses)
- Moderately sized homes with small, non-dominating frontages and no parking garages at the front. (5 responses)
- Harmonious consistency of the planning and development of the neighbourhood. (2 responses)

19. What changes, if any, have you noticed within the neighbourhood since the District was approved in 2014?

Total number of responses = 38

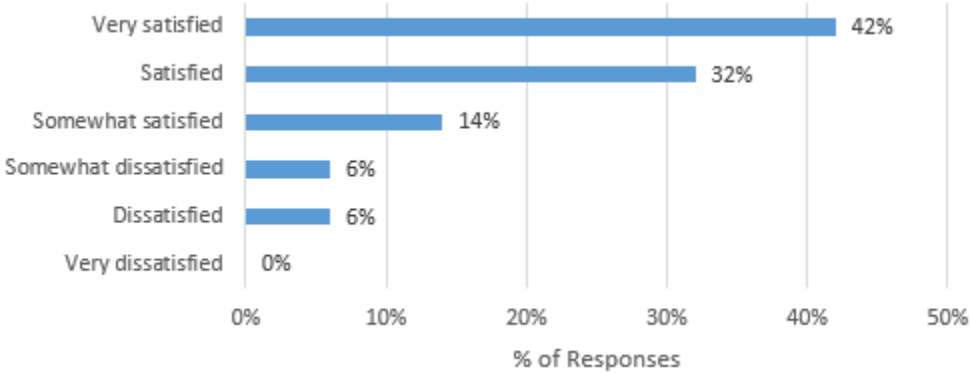
- On the fringe, there have been some houses demolished and very, very large homes built that are out of character with the homes in the neighbourhood. (12 responses)
- Larger infill homes being built in the recent years resulting in large, mature trees being cut down. (3 responses)
- New homes being built seem oversized in relation to the property, taking up all the yard and coming very close to neighbouring properties eventually blocking the views of existing homes in the neighbourhood. (5 responses)
- There have been numerous small-scale improvements and renovations to the properties that are welcome enhancements. (2 responses)

20. If you lived here before the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District was adopted (2015), do you think that the District designation has helped maintain the heritage characteristics of the neighbourhood?



Total number of responses = 36

21. How satisfied are you with living within the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District?



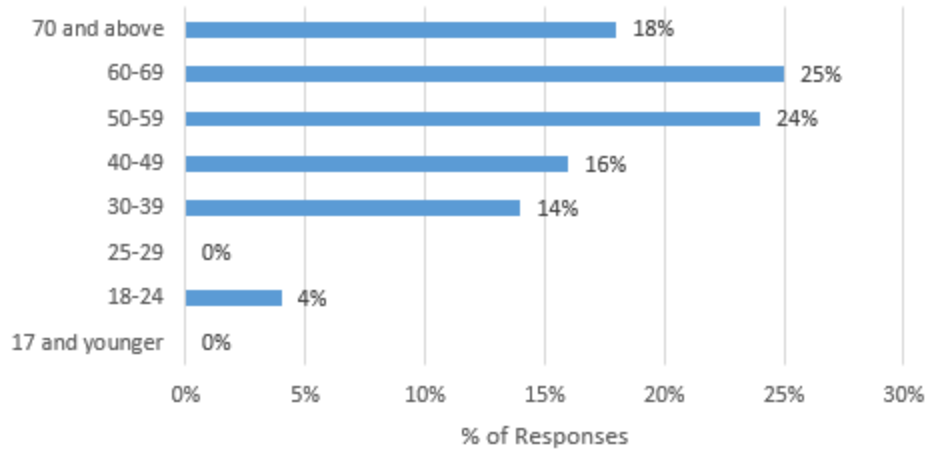
Total number of responses = 50

22. Please provide us with any additional comments or feedback you may have about the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District.

Total number of responses = 30

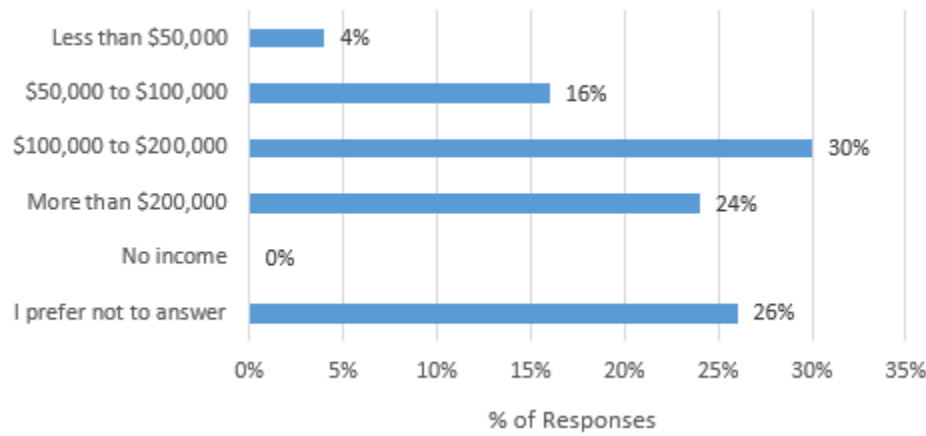
- The high costs involved with maintaining a heritage property have made it economically challenging for current owners within the neighbourhood. (3 responses)
- In order to highlight the unique character of the District, more investments could be made with the infrastructure (i.e. roads, sidewalks, or street signs) and its public spaces (4 responses).
- Dimension and scale of the new builds are not proportionate or agreeable to existing modest-sized homes in the area. These new builds have adopted an ultra-modern design which is not keeping with the character of the area. (11 responses)
- We need more tree protection when construction takes place. (3 responses)
- I see a loss of ground permeability as a problem. Could there not be a limit on footprint as a percentage per lot? Some new builds have almost no greenspace in their lots. (3 responses)
- Insurance companies are pricing heritage home owners much higher fees because of its property status and rebuilding costs. Please provide more guidance/literature on this front. (4 responses)

23. What is your age range?



Total number of responses = 51

24. Please indicate which category your household income falls into?



Total number of responses = 50