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2019 Menino Survey of Mayors

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Boston University



MENINO SURVEY OF MAYORS

**2019
RESULTS**

Supported by



Boston University Initiative on Cities

The Initiative on Cities at Boston University seeks to research, promote, and advance the adaptive urban leadership strategies and policies necessary to support cities as dynamic centers of inclusive economic growth and sustainable development in the 21st century.

Founded by a proven urban leader, the late Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, and a highly regarded academic, Professor Graham Wilson, the Initiative serves as a bridge between world-class academic research and the real-life practice of city governance.



There are a remarkable number of former mayors running for president this election year. If we have any bias, it is our deep belief in mayors' capacity to lead from the frontlines, not only to promote the well-being of their own cities, but to affect change for a wide and growing variety of issues of national and international scale.

While political divisions are deeper and more conflictual than ever, mayors are in agreement on the challenges facing cities. Infrastructure once again tops their priority list, and mayors across the country remain committed to ensuring all residents are able to benefit from economic growth and development. This year's Menino Survey of Mayors, based on 119 interviews held during the summer of 2019, explores these issues and more. We are particularly proud to provide the first in-depth examination of mayors' reactions to and expectations for the Opportunity Zones program, a significant new federal initiative to stimulate urban development.

We are honored to have had the opportunity to speak with so many dynamic urban leaders and thank the participating mayors for their time and candor. We are also deeply grateful for the support of Citi Community Development and The Rockefeller Foundation, without whom this work would not have been possible.

This project is a collaborative achievement and for six years we have had the good fortune to work with a dynamic team of Boston University faculty and staff. Our sincere thanks to the authors and contributors for their passion, curiosity, and diligence.

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FOREWORD

As local leaders, it is our duty to make sure the city's needs are heard and represented—and what better opportunity than now, when more mayors are running for national office than ever before. The number of candidates with experience leading a city reminds us how much talent there is amongst mayors. The 2020 election presents an enormous opportunity to shine a spotlight on cities, and the Menino Survey of Mayors helps us to do just that, by informing a national audience of our concerns at the local level.

This election year, it is time to bring together our different units of government to tackle the most salient social, fiscal, and physical issues affecting the day-to-day lives of citizens. Cities are our country's economic engines: more than 80 percent of Americans live in urban areas and together they generate 9 out of every 10 dollars of GDP.

To ensure the health of our country, cities need to be properly supported to continue implementing innovative policies, to help businesses of all sizes flourish, and to educate diverse, nimble workforces. This support starts from the ground up. To keep our communities healthy, we need well-functioning water and sewer infrastructure. To keep them moving, we need robust transportation systems. To help them prepare for the jobs of the future, we need to invest in our schools and workforce training programs. Infrastructure may not garner headlines, but it is how we provide a higher quality of life for our residents and help the economy grow.

Through six years of interviews, the Menino Survey has found that mayors' priorities are remarkably consistent across cities, regardless of size, region, or wealth. The 2019 Survey reveals our collective priorities for infrastructure and transportation, while also reflecting the tradeoffs involved in implementing policy. And it is the first survey to provide mayors' reactions to and expectations for the Opportunity Zones program, one of the most important of recent initiatives to jumpstart distressed neighborhoods. We hope you learn as much from it as we have.

Mayor Greg Fischer
Louisville, KY

Mayor Libby Schaaf
Oakland, CA



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

Mayors report water, wastewater, and stormwater are more of a priority relative to prior survey years, while road infrastructure and mass transit continue to be key needs.

One out of two mayors cited infrastructure as the issue they would like addressed in the upcoming presidential election. It was the most popular response by 30 percentage points. Other frequently cited issues were housing affordability (15 percent) and climate change (11 percent). Two-thirds of mayors highlighted roads as one of their top three infrastructure priorities, followed by water, wastewater, and stormwater (51 percent) and mass transit (43 percent). While these findings are similar to those in the 2015 Survey, mayors were 10 percentage points more likely to underscore water, wastewater, and stormwater in 2019 compared to 2015. Additionally, when mayors were asked to pick one “big ticket” investment they would prioritize if given unrestricted funds, water, wastewater, and stormwater topped the list (25 percent), followed by mass transit (19 percent) and roads (16 percent). The refurbishment or construction of city facilities and buildings was the chief “small ticket” priority named.

MOBILITY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

A significant proportion of mayors are concerned with the safety of cyclists and pedestrians in their communities, and have introduced a variety of design changes to improve it.

Nearly half of mayors believe travel for cyclists in their cities is unsafe and nearly 40 percent are concerned about pedestrians’ safety. In contrast, fewer than 10 percent believe the city is unsafe for drivers or mass transit riders. Two-thirds of mayors have implemented bicycle lanes to improve cyclist safety, while pedestrian upgrades include a more variable array of changes from improved sidewalks to traffic signalization. Mayors may not yet realize the extent to which vehicular speeds are a key lever to promote safety; 77 percent of mayors believe speed limits in their community are generally set at the right level, 56 percent believe enforcement is adequate, and 52 percent reject the idea of stronger moving traffic violations.

CAR CULTURE

Mayors believe their cities are too dependent on cars and embrace some reallocation of the roadway, particularly toward bicycle and electric vehicle infrastructure; however, they do not support other policy changes that can reduce car usage, such as higher prices for parking or lower off-street parking requirements in new development.

A significant majority of mayors (76 percent) report that their cities are too oriented towards cars and 66 percent believe vehicles are the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in their communities. Seventy-one percent of mayors believe cities should make their roads more accessible to bicycles, even if it means sacrificing driving lanes or parking. However, mayors in the aggregate, do not perceive parking as oversupplied. Sixty percent say that their cities feature the right level of street parking; only nine percent believe that there is too much street parking. A far larger share — 27 percent — worry that there is too little parking in their cities. Additionally, half of mayors interviewed believe their parking minimums for new developments are set at the right level, while 30 percent perceive them as too high.



CLIMATE CHANGE

While a majority of mayors continue to believe cities should take action on climate change, opinions continue to be split along partisan lines.

Seventy percent of mayors believe their cities should play a strong role in reducing the effects of climate change, even if it means sacrificing revenue or expending financial resources; these levels have remained consistent over the last two years of the survey. Partisan divides endure with 25 percent of Republican mayors supporting climate action relative to 92 percent of Democratic mayors. One area of greater potential agreement is with regard to electric vehicles: 78 percent of Democratic mayors support sacrificing parking to improve electric vehicle charging infrastructure, compared to 40 percent of Republicans, although the latter were more likely to be neutral (33 percent.) While far from partisan agreement, fewer Republicans oppose the electric vehicle tradeoff than oppose the climate change tradeoff in general.

CHANGING NATURE OF WORK

Mayors expect high tech and health related jobs to grow, but also believe retail and manufacturing jobs will become less common.

Mayors expect that high tech jobs and jobs in health care and medicine, particularly those that serve the needs of an aging population, will experience significant growth in their communities in the next five years. They expect retail and manufacturing jobs to become less common, and foresee a general loss of manual jobs to automation. Mayors are nevertheless focused on expanding opportunities for their residents and report a wide array of targeted workforce development initiatives; the most common existing programs target youth (79 percent), followed by programs that serve persons with criminal records (52 percent) and ethnic minorities (50 percent).

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Many mayors, across party lines and city attributes, have favorable impressions of the federal Opportunity Zones program and have high hopes for its ultimate impact on their cities. They believe that dedicated senior staff and an investment prospectus will be key to the program's success locally.

Mayors generally believe the new federal Opportunity Zones program has targeted the right areas, both nationally and in their own communities. Roughly three quarters of cities in the survey sample had eligible census tracts and two-thirds now have at least one designated opportunity zone with an average of six per city. Mayors believe that designations were chiefly driven by a desire on the part of governors to spread them across the state, and were responsive to mayors' input. More than half believe the program will have a large and positive impact on their local economy and that the main mechanisms needed to maximize the benefits are dedicated senior staff in city hall (54 percent) and an Opportunity Zone Investment Prospectus that outlines their community's priorities and specific opportunities and assets (50 percent). Most (55 percent) have tasked their Economic Development Director, or a comparable role in that department, with the job of leading city efforts around opportunity zones.



METHODOLOGY: 119 SURVEY INTERVIEWS

The 2019 Menino Survey of Mayors uses a combination of open- and closed-ended questions to explore myriad, salient local issues and policy priorities. This year, 119 mayors discussed everything from infrastructure and transportation, to workforce development, to the Opportunity Zones program. To generate a systematic sample, we invited all mayors of cities with 75,000 or more residents to participate. Each mayor received an email invitation from the Boston University Menino Survey of Mayors team at their official email account, and follow-up phone calls. The vast majority of interviews were conducted in person or over the phone. **This systematic sampling and recruitment effort yielded a representative sample of mayors of American cities with populations over 75,000.** Table 1 compares the demographics of participating cities to all cities with over 75,000 residents.

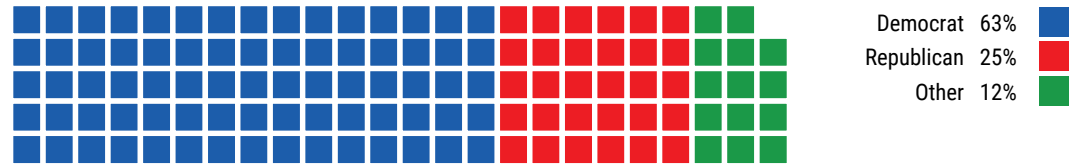
Table 1. Demographic Comparison of Sample Cities to All U.S. Cities with Populations >75,000¹

	Survey	All Cities
Number of Cities	119	480
Average Population	228,925	224,929
Average Percent White	53%	49%
Average Percent Black	16%	14%
Average Percent Hispanic	21%	25%
Average Median Housing Price	\$232,672	\$276,929
Region	% of Sample	% of Cities
Northeast	16%	16%
Midwest	15%	10%
South	34%	33%
West	35%	41%



Figure 1: Demographics of Surveyed Mayors

Party



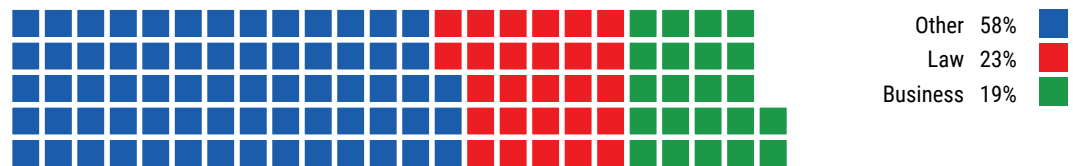
Gender



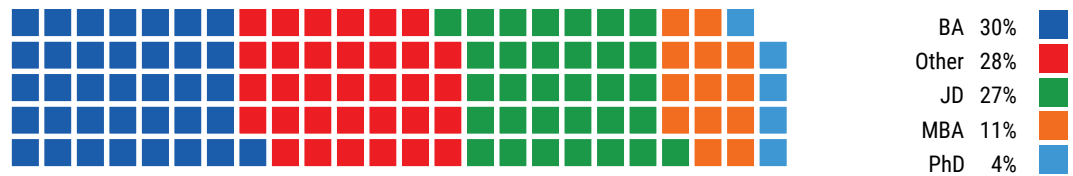
Race



Professional Background



Highest Degree





INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

The 2020 presidential candidates have debated a wide gamut of issues, ranging from health care, to immigration, to impeachment proceedings. While many of these issues are critical to the day-to-day lives of the American people, there are several other key concerns — like infrastructure, climate change, and gun violence — that are of central importance to mayors and American cities. **We asked mayors what issue related to cities they hoped would get talked about during the 2020 election cycle: an overwhelming 45 percent said infrastructure.** This was the most popular answer by 30 percentage points. The level of consensus on this open-ended question is striking. Other frequently cited issues were housing affordability (15 percent) and climate change (11 percent), though their popularity as responses paled in comparison with infrastructure. Infrastructure has long stood out as an important issue on the Menino Survey of Mayors. In 2015, we asked mayors “What one trend or issue that should be a state or federal matter will pose the biggest challenge to your cities?” Infrastructure was also the most popular response, by a margin of over 30 percentage points.

Figure 2: Biggest Issues for 2020 Election *Thinking ahead to the 2020 election, what is the single biggest issue related to cities that you hope gets talked about?*

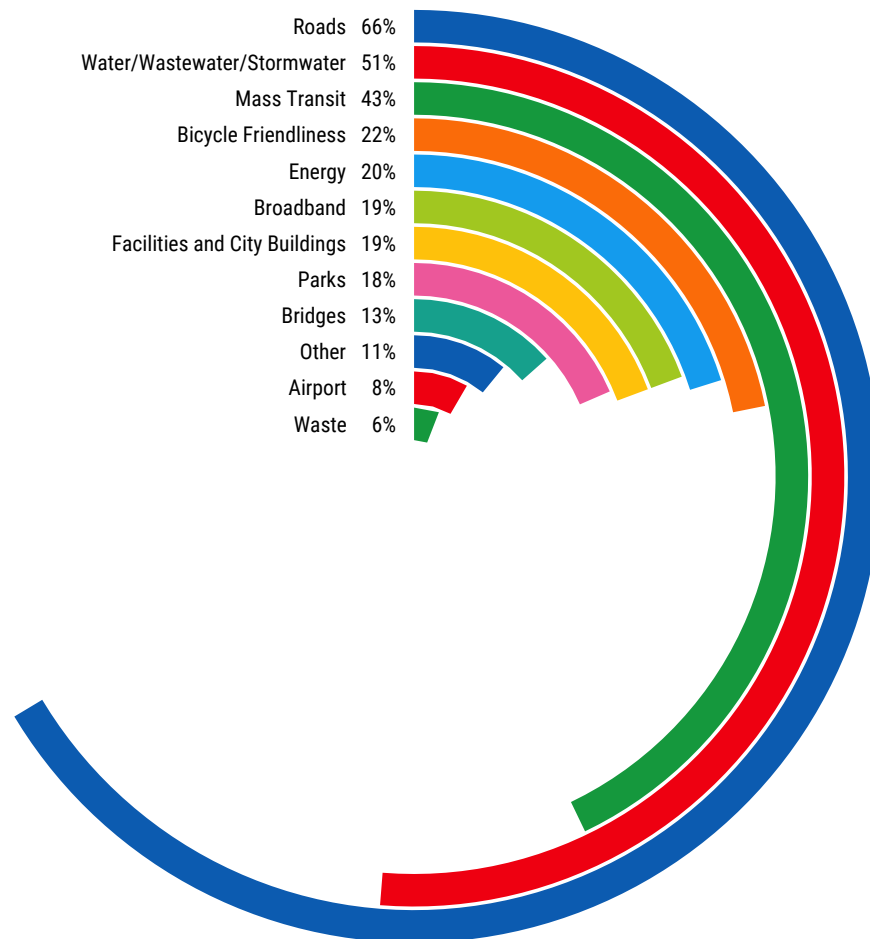


Mayors are responsible for much of the physical infrastructure on which our daily lives depend. Reflecting its importance to mayors and city residents, we devoted an extensive survey module to understanding mayors’ infrastructure priorities and challenges. **Two-thirds of mayors highlighted roads as one of their top three infrastructure priorities.** Water, wastewater, and stormwater (51 percent) and mass transit (43 percent) are also priorities for substantial numbers of mayors. These findings are remarkably similar to those in 2015 when we asked the same question. One notable exception, however, is water, wastewater, and stormwater: mayors were 10 percentage points more likely to underscore those issues in 2019 compared to 2015. This increase may reflect federal legislative changes, which have expanded the waterways that cities have to treat. It likely also indicates the



growing salience of these issues, as extreme weather events such as flooding are becoming more common. In a recent climate study, three quarters of US cities reported that heavy rain events or inland flooding had increased in intensity, frequency, or location in just the last five years.²

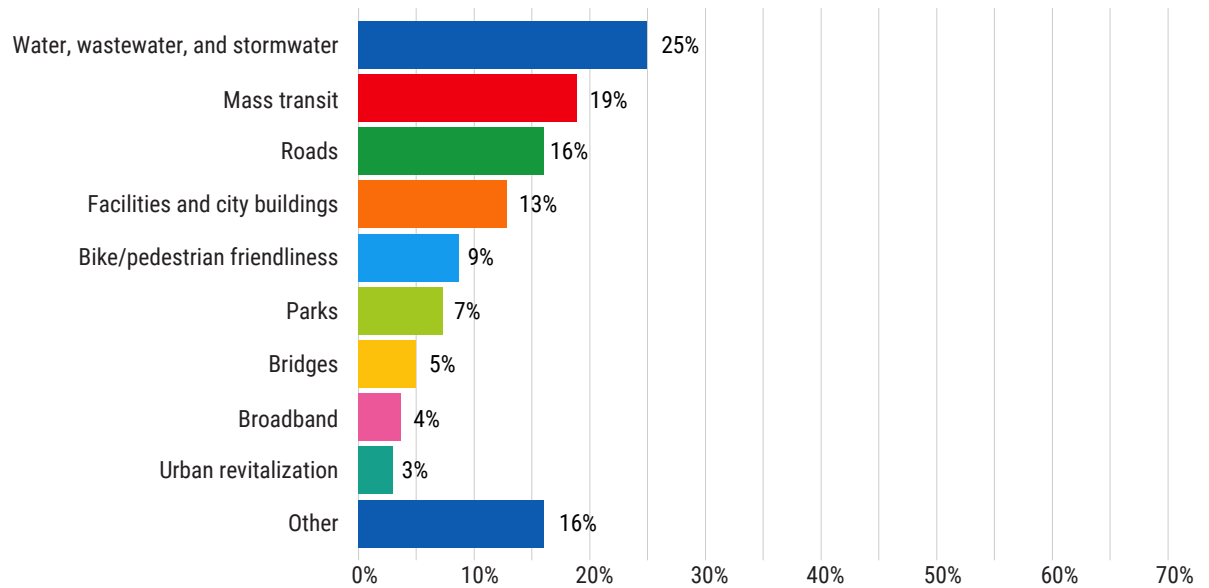
Figure 3: Top 3 Infrastructure Priorities *Thinking about infrastructure in and around your city, what are the top three areas you would prioritize if you could allocate a significant amount of new money?*



We also asked mayors, in an open-ended question, what specific infrastructure projects they would pursue if given a large or small unrestricted grant. Starting with large grants, a plurality of mayors (25 percent) cited water, wastewater, and stormwater projects. This is a modest increase (seven percentage points) compared with 2015. A number of mayors worried about aging water infrastructure; one mayor succinctly described these concerns: “Stormwater runoff. In the last ten days, we’ve seen two 100 year storms and one 500 year storm. People are being flooded like we haven’t seen before.” A southwestern mayor underscored the importance of water regionally, noting that his top project would be: “Water reuse facilities. The southwest of the country is in need of thinking about the future and finding ways to conserve water.” Largely, though, the responses are fairly similar across the four-year time-span; mayors’ needs remain the same and are largely unmet. Other popular answers in 2019 include mass transit (19 percent), roads (16 percent), and facilities and city buildings (13 percent).

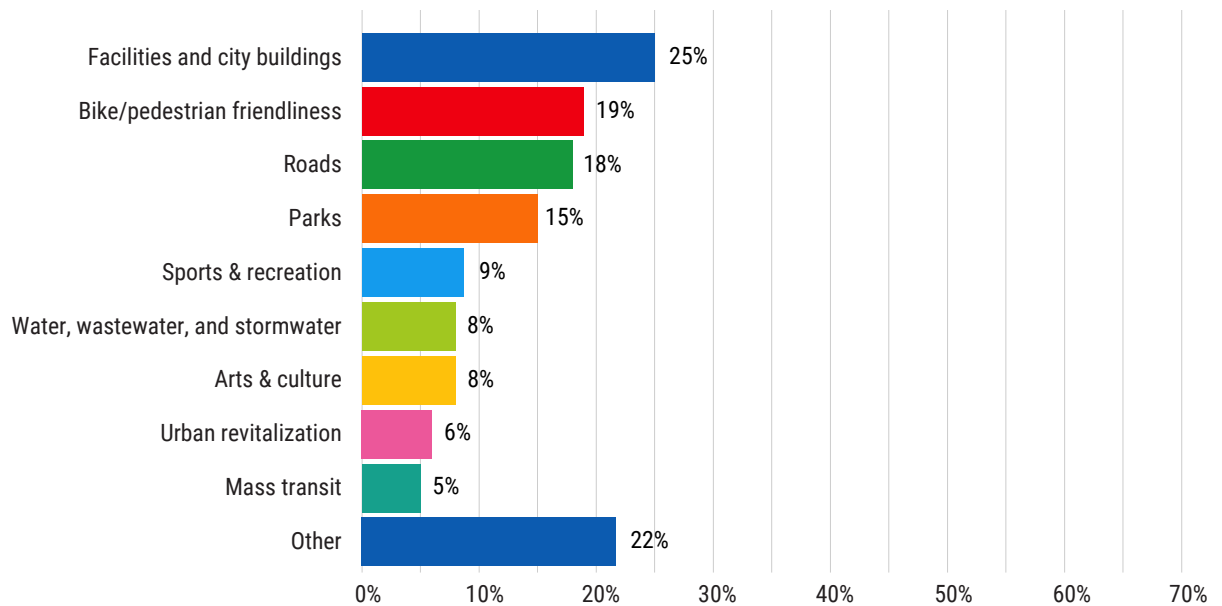


Figure 4: Top 3 Large Infrastructure Priorities Please think about “large” infrastructure projects. That is, projects with costs equal to a large portion of your city’s annual capital budget. If your city were given an unrestricted grant to pay for any ONE such “large” infrastructure project, what would you spend it on?



Turning to small grants, a plurality of mayors (25 percent) would allocate these resources towards facilities and city buildings, such as building or refurbishing city hall, public safety buildings, or community sports complexes. This represents an increase of 10 percentage points compared with 2015. Other popular responses include bicycle/pedestrian friendliness (19 percent), roads (18 percent), and parks (15 percent).

Figure 5: Top 3 Small Infrastructure Priorities Please think about “small” infrastructure projects. That is, projects with costs equal to a small portion of your city’s annual capital budget. If your city were given an unrestricted grant to pay for any ONE such “small” infrastructure project, what would you spend it on?



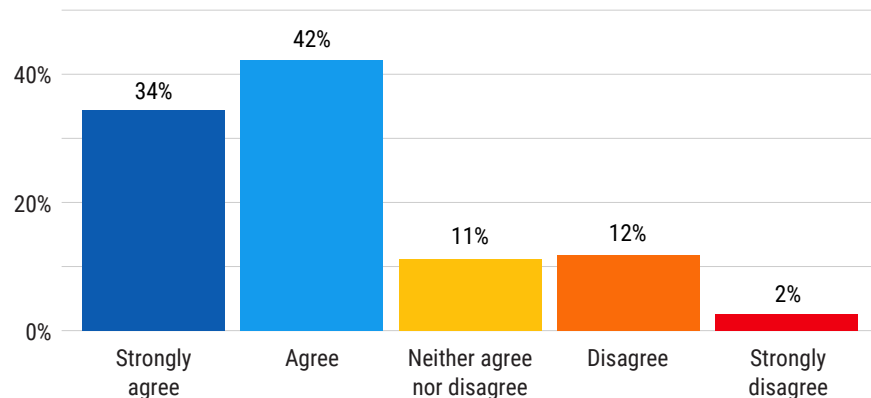


TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Transportation is one specific infrastructure arena over which mayors have a substantial amount of influence and control. By enabling access to jobs and schools, transportation is a key mechanism by which mayors support a vibrant economy; however, it can also be a major source of vulnerability as people move around a city. In the US, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury related death for five to 24 year olds, and the second leading cause for people over the age of 25.³ Indeed, in the 2018 Menino Survey, mayors highlighted traffic accidents as the top health issue for which they believe they are held most accountable by constituents. In 2018, pedestrian and cyclist fatalities in the US reached a 28-year high, with 6,283 pedestrians and 857 cyclists killed on American roads in 2018.⁴ Transit advocates have identified a variety of local safety programs that help make roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists, in particular. Programs like Vision Zero, which seek to eliminate pedestrian and cyclist fatalities by focusing on reducing vehicular speeds, building physical barriers to protect cyclists and pedestrians, and improving pedestrian and cyclist visibility, help both to increase active transit and promote safety.⁵ More generally, pedestrian and cyclist safety advocates highlight the dominance of cars, rather than people, in a variety of urban policy domains, including parking and land use policy.⁶ This year's Menino Survey asked mayors about the extent to which they are taking up this call to reorient cities away from cars, and towards the well-being of pedestrians and cyclists.

A large majority of mayors (76 percent) agree with these advocates' assessments that their cities are too oriented towards cars. Only 14 percent of mayors disagree. In principle, then, mayors seem prepared to lead efforts to reform local transit policy in favor of pedestrian and cyclist safety.

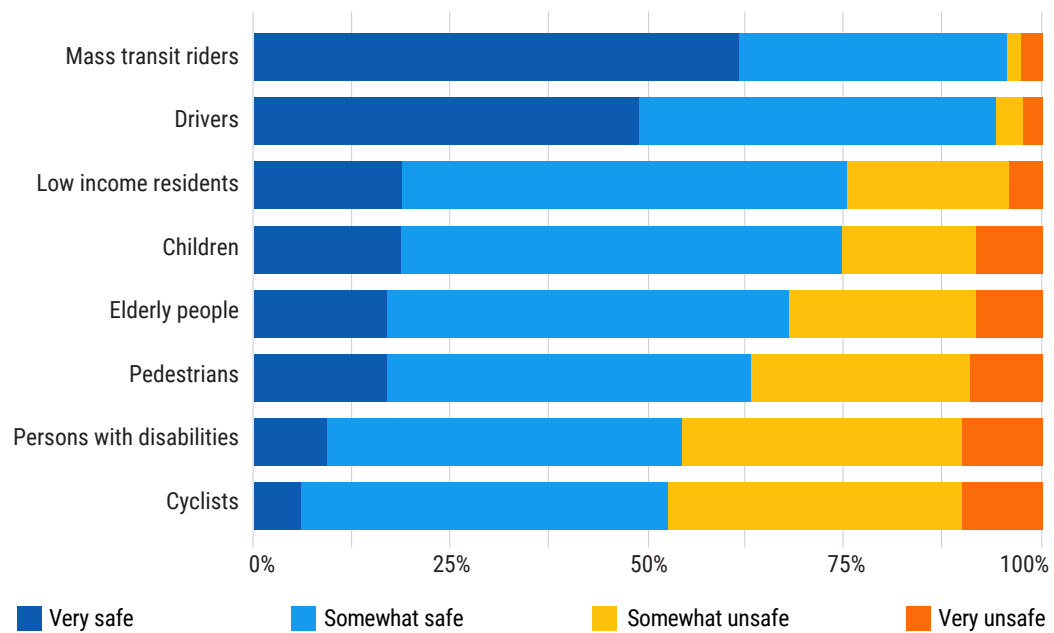
Figure 6: Are Cities Too Car-Focused? Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statement: *My city is too oriented towards cars.*



Many mayors are worried about the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, relative to those inside vehicles. Nearly 40 percent of mayors believe travel for pedestrians in their cities is unsafe, and nearly half are concerned about cyclists' safety, in contrast to fewer than 10 percent who believe the city is unsafe for drivers or mass transit riders. Low-income people, children, elderly people, and people with disabilities are the country's most vulnerable road users; they are disproportionately represented among pedestrians injured and killed each year in American cities.⁷ Mayors recognize that these groups are comparatively less safe than drivers and mass transit riders, with between 25-50 percent of mayors rating travel for these groups as unsafe. Indeed, mayors seem particularly concerned about the safety of people with disabilities, with nearly half expressing concerns about their safety. However, while mayors worry relatively more about the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and vulnerable populations, majorities of mayors rate travel in their city as safe for all of the groups we asked about.



Figure 7: How Safe is Travel for...? *How safe is travel in your city for the following groups?*



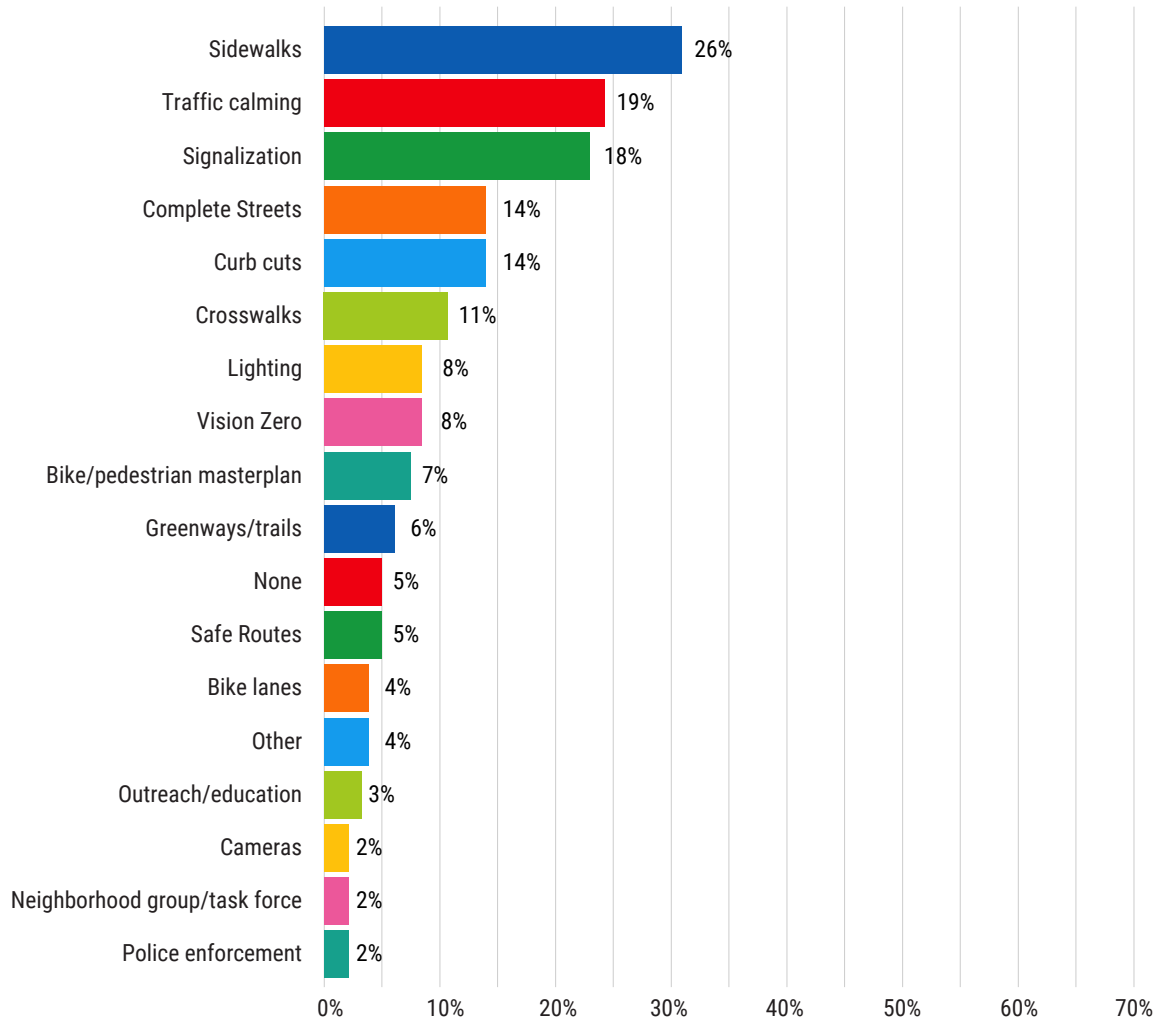
Moreover, mayors have implemented a wide variety of infrastructure improvements in their cities expressly targeted towards pedestrian safety. We asked mayors, in an open-ended question, to cite which policies or design changes in their cities had the greatest impact on pedestrian safety. Mayors' responses underscore the variety of approaches local governments use to address pedestrian safety: many mayors emphasize providing separate spaces for pedestrians and cyclists, and improving physical infrastructure like sidewalks (26 percent), curb cuts (14 percent), crosswalks (11 percent), greenways/trails (6 percent), and bicycle lanes (4 percent). Others highlight traffic calming measures (19 percent) and signalization (18 percent). Some mayors also talked about broad multi-modal efforts that combine policy and planning, such as Complete Streets (14 percent), Vision Zero (8 percent), or development of a citywide bicycle and pedestrian master plan (7 percent), suggesting intimate familiarity with best practices among some.

When asked to weigh different infrastructure priorities, however, 66 percent of mayors listed roads as one of their top three priorities, while bicycle and pedestrian friendliness was a top priority for a mere 22 percent of mayors (as noted earlier in Figure 3). These results remain virtually unchanged from when we asked this question in 2015, despite continued increases in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities.

One proven method to improve road safety for pedestrians and cyclists is to reduce motor vehicle speed. In the event of a collision between a vehicle and pedestrian/cyclist, vehicle speed has a marked impact on an individuals' likelihood of sustaining serious or fatal injuries. When a vehicle strikes a pedestrian traveling at 16 miles per hour, the pedestrian's likelihood of sustaining a serious injury is 10 percent. That probability jumps up to 25 percent at 23 miles per hour, 50 percent at 39 miles per hour, and 90 percent at 46 miles per hour.⁸ Moreover, slower-moving vehicles are better able to avoid collisions with pedestrians and cyclists in the first place. In short, vehicle speed (and type) is critical to pedestrian and cyclist safety.



Figure 8: Impact on Pedestrian Safety Thinking about policies or design changes that your city has implemented, which (if any) has had the biggest impact on pedestrian safety?



Despite the importance of vehicle speed to pedestrian and cyclist safety, mayors largely do not see a need to change their speed limits, or the way that speeding is enforced in their cities. A striking 77 percent of mayors believe their speed limits are currently set at the right level. Importantly, some mayors indicated that they had recently lowered the speed limits in their communities. Others felt that different road policies were more effective: *“People drive as fast as the road allows, regardless of the speed limit. I would say design of the road is most important.”* Still others were limited by external constraints from promulgating their desired policies: *“I have concerns about our speed limits and have tried to get them lowered. In fact, everyone on the council has, at one point, also tried to lower them. We are tied by state regulations.”* Only a small minority — 15 percent — want to see their speed limits reduced. Moreover, a majority of mayors do not want to see penalties for moving violations in their city strengthened. Over half of mayors similarly believe that law enforcement in their cities is doing enough to penalize unsafe driving; only 28 percent disagreed. Still, one-third of mayors believe their city should strengthen speeding fines, while a similar proportion (31 percent) would like to see their police strengthen enforcement of moving violations.



Figure 9: Speed Limits *Do you think speed limits in your city are generally set at the right level, are too high, or are too low?*

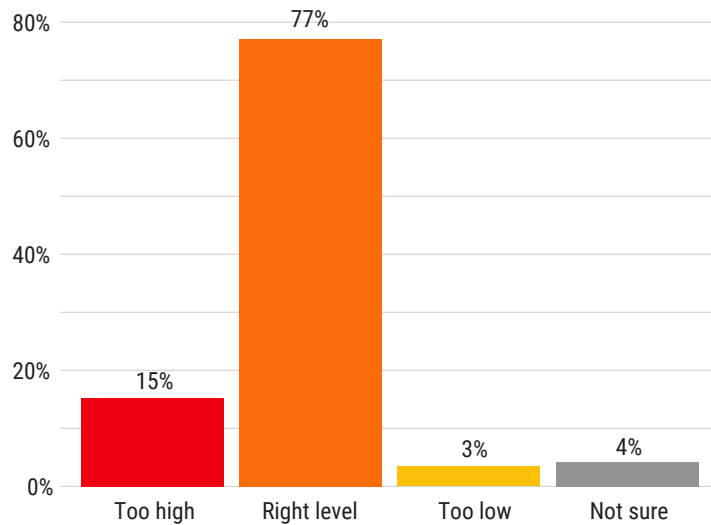
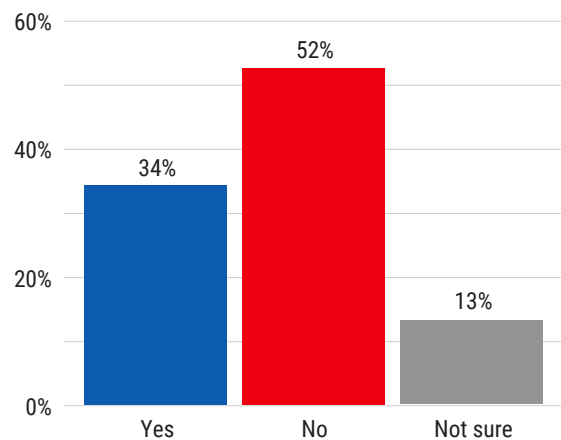


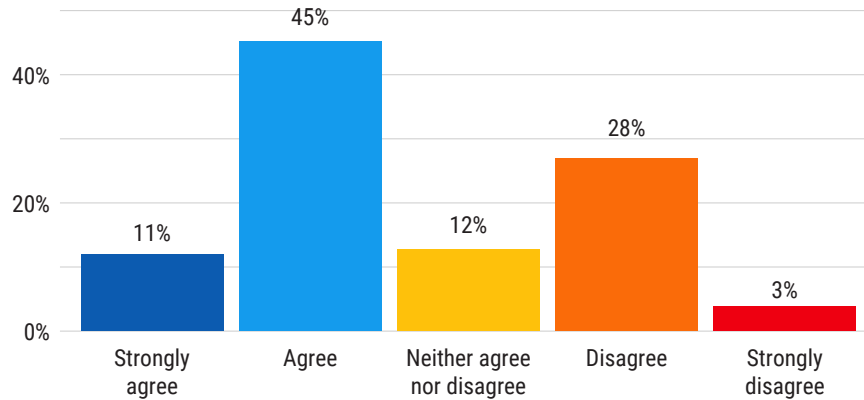
Figure 10: Moving Violation Penalties *Do you think penalties for moving traffic violations in your city should be stronger?*



Parking, sometimes perceived simply as a source of revenue or public good, is in fact an important policy lever to improve safety and reduce congestion. Collectively, ample and cheap parking creates multiple obstacles to implementing evidence-based mobility programs. First, it takes up valuable land area, especially in dense cities. With multiple traffic lanes devoted to parked cars, there is less space available to put in place curb bump-outs, separate bus lanes, and separate bicycle lanes that would improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, and lower transit travel times. Second, when city leaders make it easier to park, they encourage car commuting; this both worsens congestion and creates a constituency of regular drivers who demand more parking, resulting in a potent political obstacle to reforming urban parking systems. Many transportation planners and researchers consequently recommend taking measures that both make parking more expensive and reduce the overall availability of parking.⁹

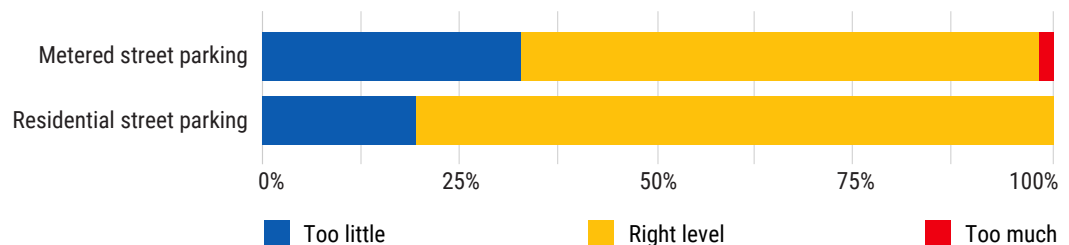


Figure 11: Enforcing Safe Driving Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statement: Law enforcement in my city is doing enough to penalize unsafe driving.



A large majority of mayors do not see parking as transportation advocates do — as underpriced. Over 75 percent of mayors see their residential street parking as priced correctly, whether it was free or for fee — and over half say the same of metered street parking. A sizable minority of mayors disagree with this assessment: one-third perceive metered street parking as too cheap.

Figure 12: Price of Parking Do you think the following in your city cost too much, too little, or are priced at the right level?



Mayors, in the aggregate, similarly do not believe that parking is oversupplied. Indeed, while there are certainly variations in the supply of parking in American cities, research suggests that, even in high-density locations, there is still too much parking priced too cheaply.¹⁰ Sixty percent believe that their cities feature the right level of street parking; a mere nine percent believe that there is too much street parking. A far larger share — 27 percent — worry that there is too little parking in their cities.

Mayors are slightly more likely to acknowledge problems in their parking minimum policies, though, here again, the majority of mayors (51 percent) believe that their parking minimums are set at the right levels. Parking minimums mandate that new developments provide a certain amount of off-street parking per bedroom, often far in excess of what is actually needed according to academic analyses.¹¹ Many mayors see cars as integral parts of their cities. One mayor noted: “We need parking. I disagree with the concept that people won’t have cars. In [our state], you need a car.” An additional 12 percent see their parking minimums as too low; that is, they believe they should set aside additional development space for parking. Thirty percent of mayors, though, think that their parking minimums are set too high; these mayors believe that their land use policy requires too much parking for new developments. One mayor worried that their city’s parking minimum actively promoted parking and driving. “[My city’s parking minimum]



is set a little too high. In multifamily developments, the minimum is one space per bedroom, and I think this is a bit of an exaggeration to think that there will be a car per bedroom. It is almost as if we are promoting that.” Another said that they had lowered the minimum in their city, but that “it probably still was too high.”

Figure 13: Amount of Street Parking In general, do you think there is too much street parking available in your city, too little, or is it at the right level?

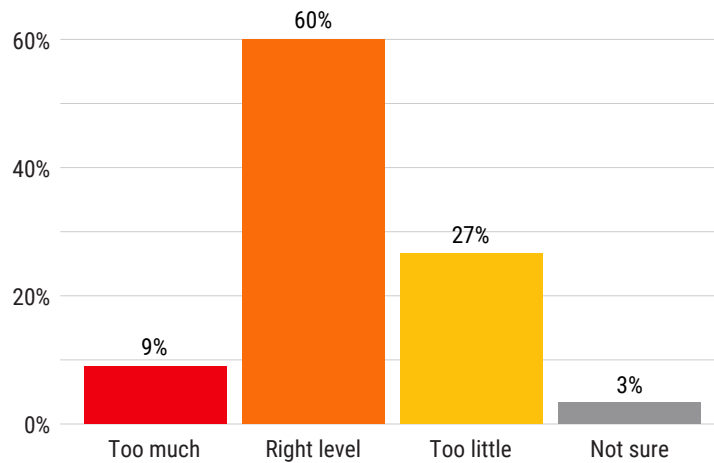
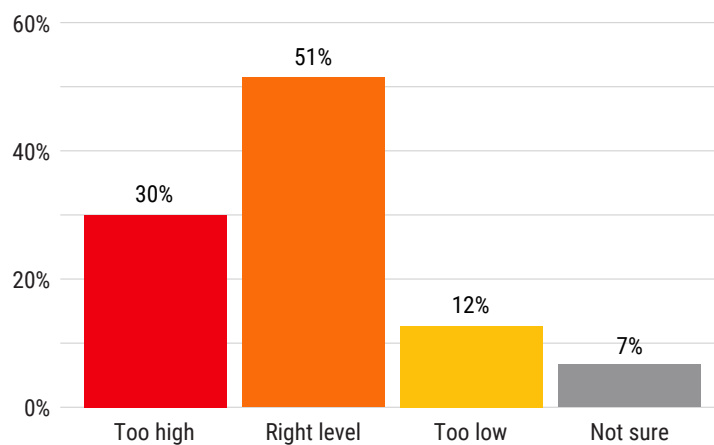


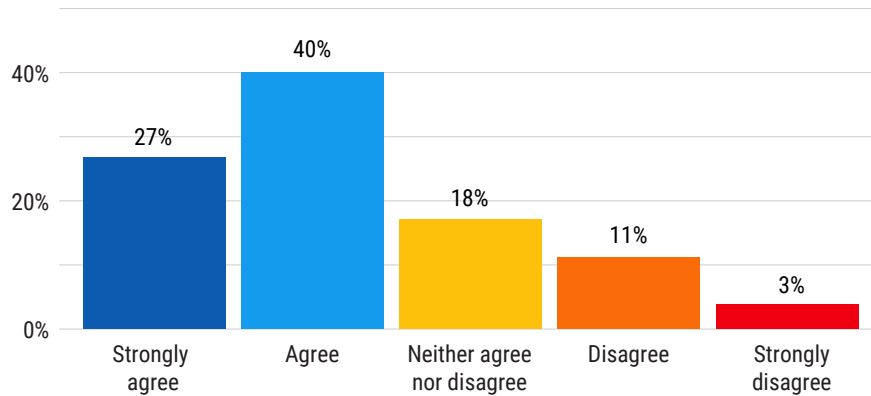
Figure 14: Parking Minimums Some cities require new residential developments to provide minimum levels of parking. If your city has a parking minimum, do you think it is set too high, too low, or is it at the right level?



In concert, mayors largely appear unwilling to reduce parking in their cities or make it more expensive. They are, however, significantly more amenable to sacrificing parking for specific uses, including electric vehicle infrastructure and cycling infrastructure. When it comes to making space for electric vehicles, 67 percent of mayors agreed that their city must improve its electric vehicle infrastructure, even if it comes at the expense of parking for non-electric vehicles.

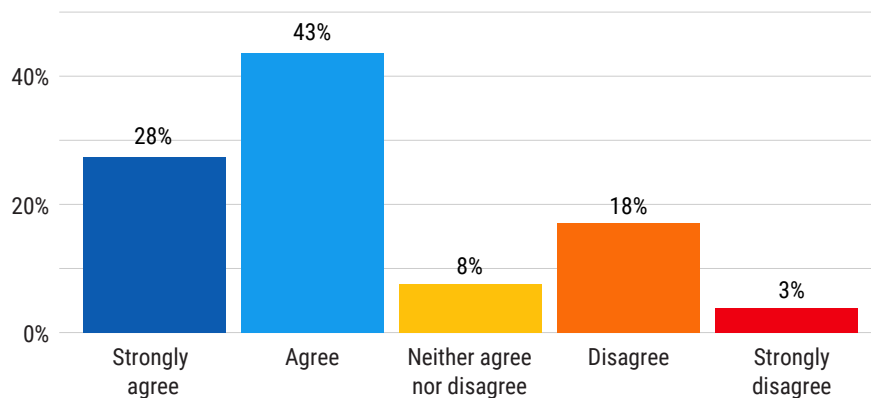


Figure 15: Electric Vehicle Tradeoff Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statement: *It is important to improve my city's electric vehicle infrastructure, even if it means less parking for non-electric vehicles.*



Additionally, a large majority of mayors (71 percent) endorse sacrificing driving lanes or parking spaces to make their roads more accessible to bicycles, regardless of pushback they may get from motorists. Only 21 percent disagreed with this sentiment. Support for bicycling infrastructure has remained remarkably stable since we first asked this question in 2015. It may be that mayors oppose general reductions in parking, but are willing to support it when presented with a specific alternative use.

Figure 16: Cycling Tradeoff Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statement: *Cities should make their roads more accessible to bicycles even if it means sacrificing driving lanes and/or parking.*



A large majority of mayors see bicycle lanes as a critical part of cycling infrastructure. When we asked mayors an open-ended question about what single policy in their city has had the biggest impact on cyclist safety, a striking 68 percent cited bicycle lanes. Other frequently cited options include greenways/trails and a master plan, though the popularity of these options pales in comparison with bicycle lanes by a margin of almost fifty percentage points.

While mayors broadly support bicycle lanes, they may not be aware of current best practices in cycling infrastructure design. A striking 82 percent of mayors believe that painted bicycle lanes are a safe alternative when physically separate bicycle lanes are too expensive. These views are in stark contrast with the most recent evidence. A scientific analysis of painted lanes found that they may actually make conditions more dangerous for cyclists; cars



pass cyclists at a much closer distance (1.25 feet) than they do on streets with no cycling infrastructure.¹² So-called “sharrows” — in which cities paint arrows with bicycles in lanes shared by cars and bicycles — are perhaps even worse, making the roads on which they are painted more dangerous than places that have no cycling infrastructure, paint or otherwise.¹³ The evidence suggests that paint alone — either in separate or shared bicycle lanes — does not improve cyclist safety. A few mayors recognized this; one noted, “Painted bicycle lanes are useless. They’ve got to be separate.” Another mayor similarly strongly disagreed that painted bicycle lanes were a safe alternative to separate infrastructure: “Painted bicycle lanes give you a messy Christmas: red [blood] mixed with green paint.”

Figure 17: Impact on Cyclist Safety Thinking about policies or design changes that your city has implemented, which (if any) has had the biggest impact on cyclist safety?

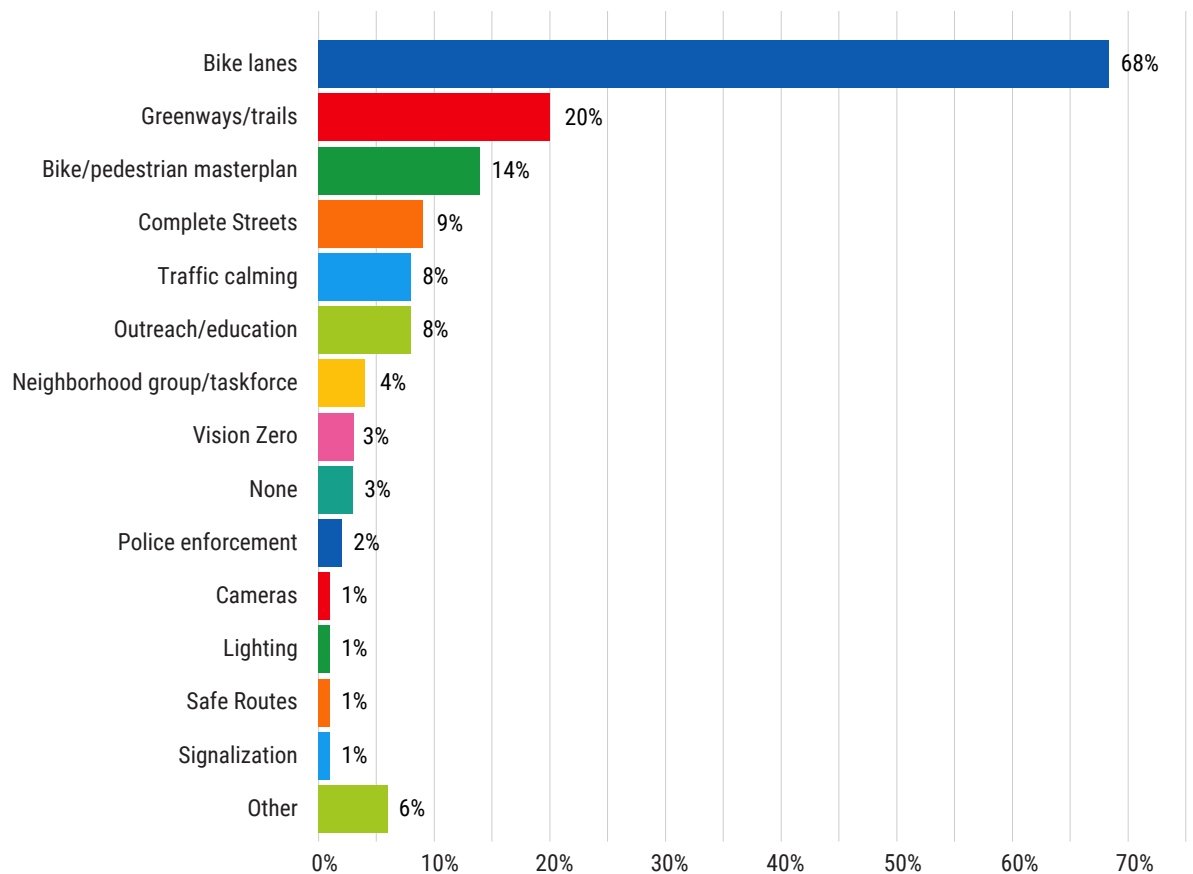
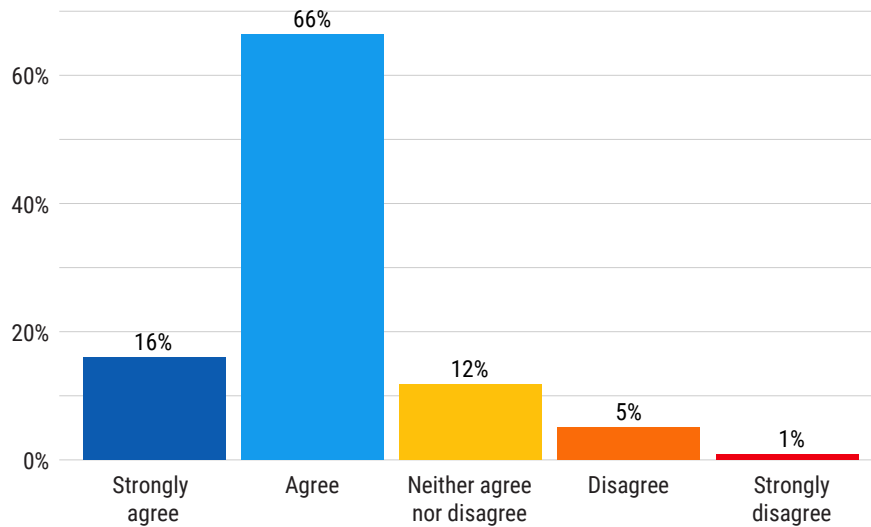




Figure 18: Safety of Painted vs. Separated Bicycle Lanes Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statement: *Painted bicycle lanes are a safe alternative when physically separate bicycle lanes are too expensive.*



Biking continues to be a partisan issue in the Survey. Democratic mayors are consistently and significantly more likely to endorse a variety of street safety initiatives — from bicycle lanes to stronger penalties for moving traffic violations. The area with the most significant partisan gap is cycling: almost all Democratic mayors (92 percent) endorse creating more bicycle lanes, even if it means sacrificing traffic lanes or parking spaces, compared with 34 percent of Republican mayors. These partisan differences have grown by more than 30 percentage points since 2015, when we first asked this tradeoff, with Republicans substantially less likely to endorse this tradeoff or adopt a neutral position than they were four years ago.

Other street safety arenas exhibit sizable, but more muted partisan differences. For example, 72 percent of Democratic mayors believed that speed limits in their cities were set at the right level, compared with 90 percent of Republican mayors. Importantly, even in those areas in which mayors do exhibit partisan differences, substantial portions of mayors of both political parties largely do not support these additional measures to ameliorate pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Mayors from different regions of the country also varied in their support for street safety initiatives, though, here again, the commonalities across mayors are more striking than the differences. Perhaps as a consequence of higher density and space constraints, northeastern mayors are significantly more likely to believe that parking minimums are set too high compared to their counterparts from other regions. The proportion of northeastern mayors endorsing this view, however, was less than half. Western mayors were substantially less likely to believe that their speed limits were too high relative to mayors from other parts of the country. Regardless of these differences, the overwhelming majorities of mayors (70 percent or more in all regions) believe that their speed limits are set at the right levels. Indeed, this is true even in regions, like the South and West, where pedestrian and cyclist fatalities are higher.¹⁴

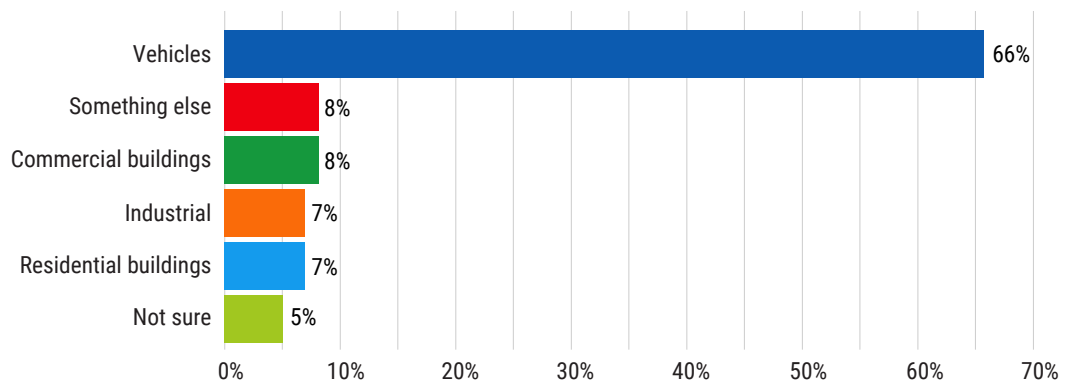
Mayors as a whole are aware of serious pedestrian and cyclist safety issues. Their responses to open-ended questions indicate that they are taking some important steps to tackle these issues, including promulgating bicycle lanes and prioritizing pedestrians through improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and signaling. Moreover, in conversation with us, many indicated that they have put in place or plan to put in place lower speed limits. But, on many questions, a sizable portion of mayors appear unwilling to implement or are unaware of best practices in transportation planning.



INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE

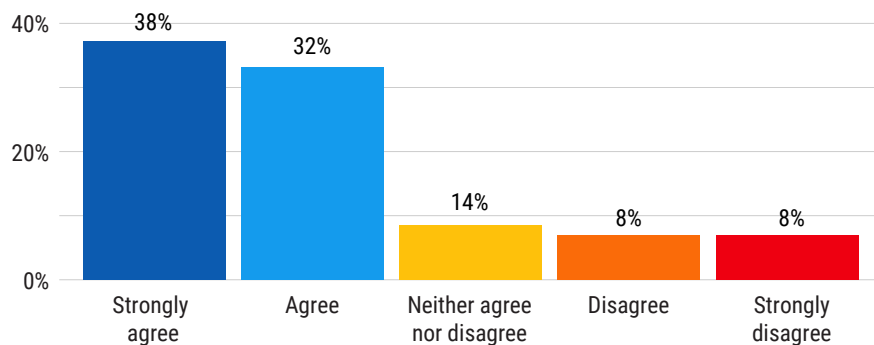
When communities promote alternatives to driving they reduce the number of vehicle trips, alleviating congestion while promoting a variety of physical, environmental, and mental health benefits for city residents. Intriguingly, mayors are acutely aware of potential environmental consequences of Americans' reliance on cars. **A striking 66 percent of them believe vehicles are the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in their city.**

Figure 19: Biggest Source of Greenhouse Gas Emissions *What do you think is the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in your city?*



Reflecting the growing urgency with which cities need to address climate change, a large majority of mayors (70 percent) agree that cities should play a strong role in reducing the effects of climate change, even if it means sacrificing revenues or expending financial resources. These levels of support are quite similar to those offered by mayors when we asked the same question in 2017.

Figure 20: Mitigating Climate Change *Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statement: Cities should play a strong role in reducing the effects of climate change, even if it means sacrificing revenues and/or expending financial resources.*





As in previous years, there remains a strong partisan divide on this issue. A striking 92 percent of Democratic mayors agree with the proposed climate change tradeoff, compared with 25 percent of Republican mayors. These figures are remarkably similar to when we asked this question in 2014 and 2017.

Figure 21: Mitigating Climate Change, by Party Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statement: *Cities should play a strong role in reducing the effects of climate change, even if it means sacrificing revenues and/or expending financial resources.*

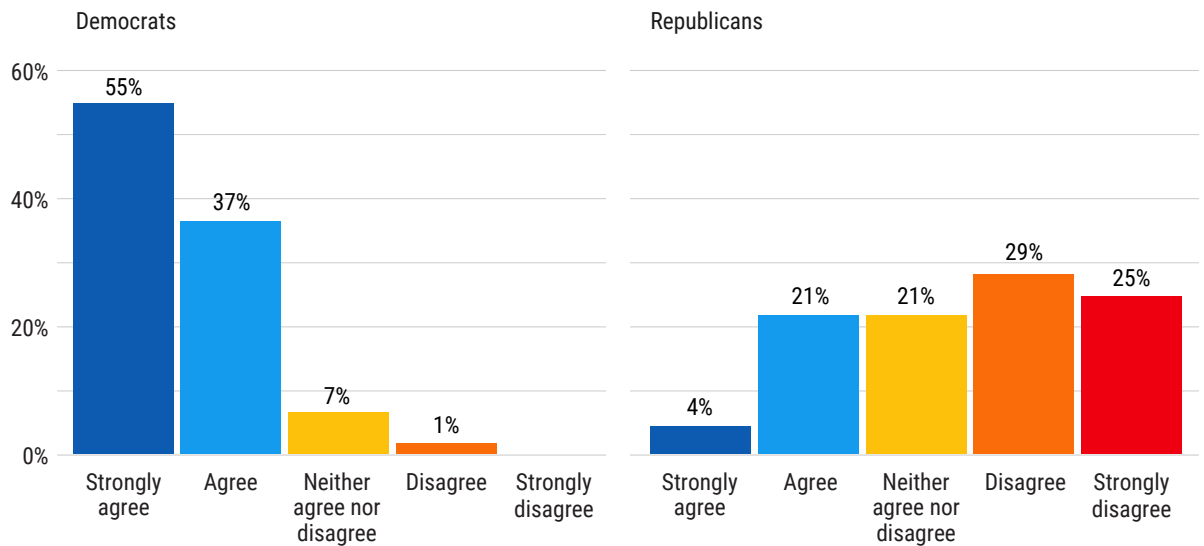
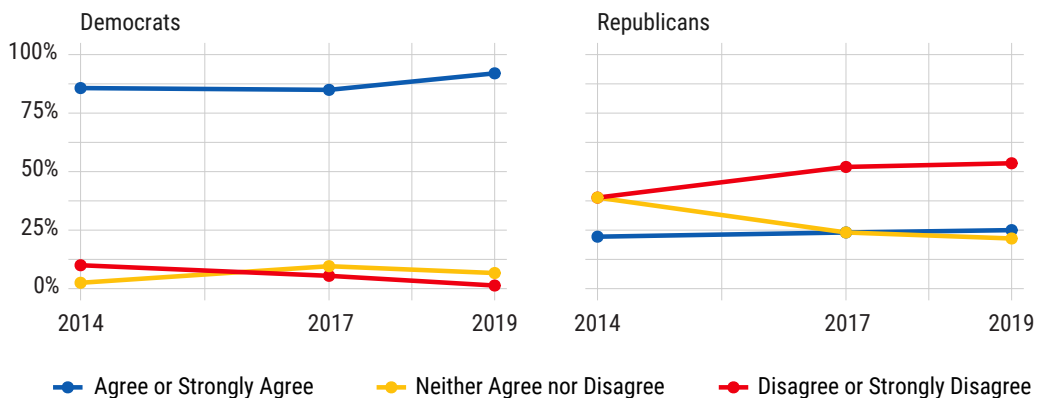


Figure 22: Mitigating Climate Change, by Party, 2014 to 2019

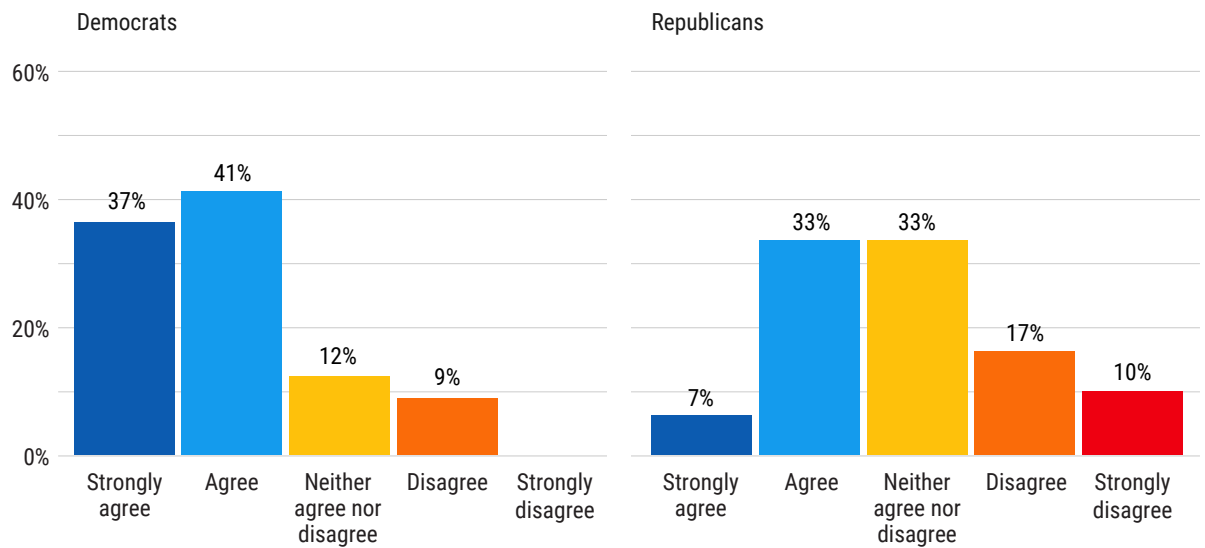


Mayors' commitment to electric vehicles may reflect their desire to address the effects of climate change, and is an issue that elicits less partisan division. As noted earlier, 67 percent of mayors support improving their cities' electric vehicle infrastructure, even if it means sacrificing parking for non-electric vehicles. Intriguingly, the partisan split on electric vehicles is not nearly so large as it is on other environmental issues. There is still a partisan gap, with Democratic mayors 40 percentage points more likely to agree that improvements to their cities' electric



vehicle infrastructure are important. But, Republican mayors are substantially more likely to fall into the neutral category than in the previous tradeoff, suggesting that views are not quite so polarized on this issue. This is in stark contrast to the climate change tradeoff, where the proportion of Republican mayors holding neutral views on the issue has steadily declined since we first asked this question in 2014.

Figure 23: Electric Vehicle Tradeoff, by Party *Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statement: It is important to improve my city's electric vehicle infrastructure, even if it means less parking for non-electric vehicles.*

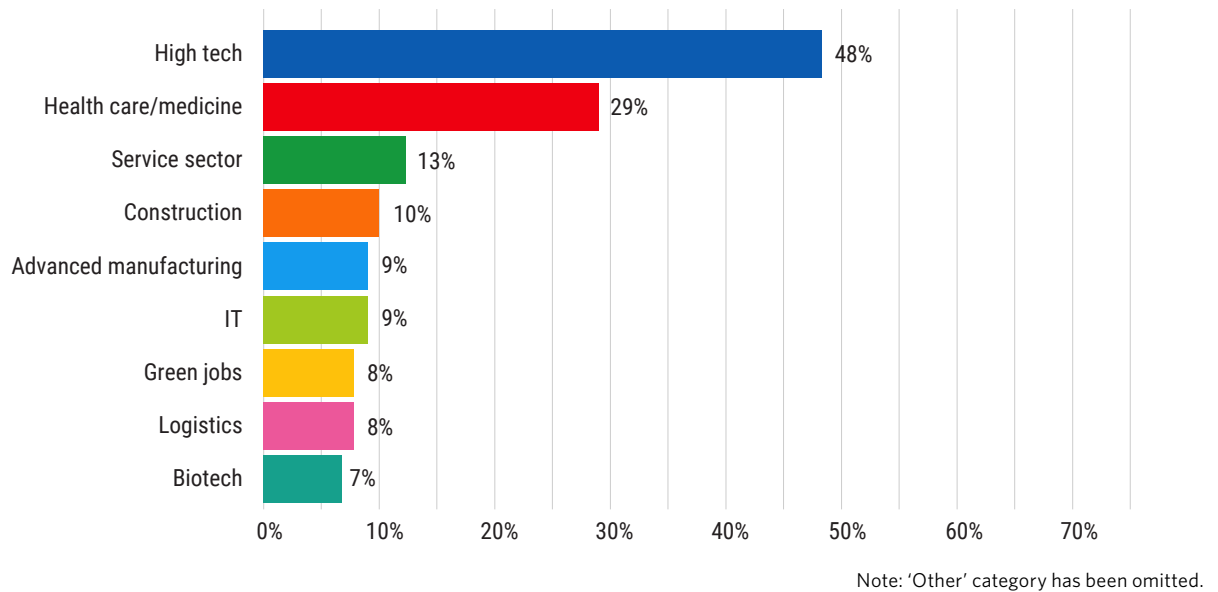




CHANGING NATURE OF WORK

Mayors are on the frontlines of a rapidly evolving national economy that is transitioning towards high tech and service sector employment. Low-skill and high-skill jobs alike are digitizing at a rapid clip.¹⁵ The health care sector is also expanding dramatically, with health care jobs projected to grow faster than any other group in order to serve the needs of an aging population.¹⁶ **Almost half of all mayors (48 percent) believe that high tech jobs will be substantially more common in their cities in five years than they are today.** Other commonly cited growth sectors included health care/medicine (29 percent) and service jobs (13 percent).

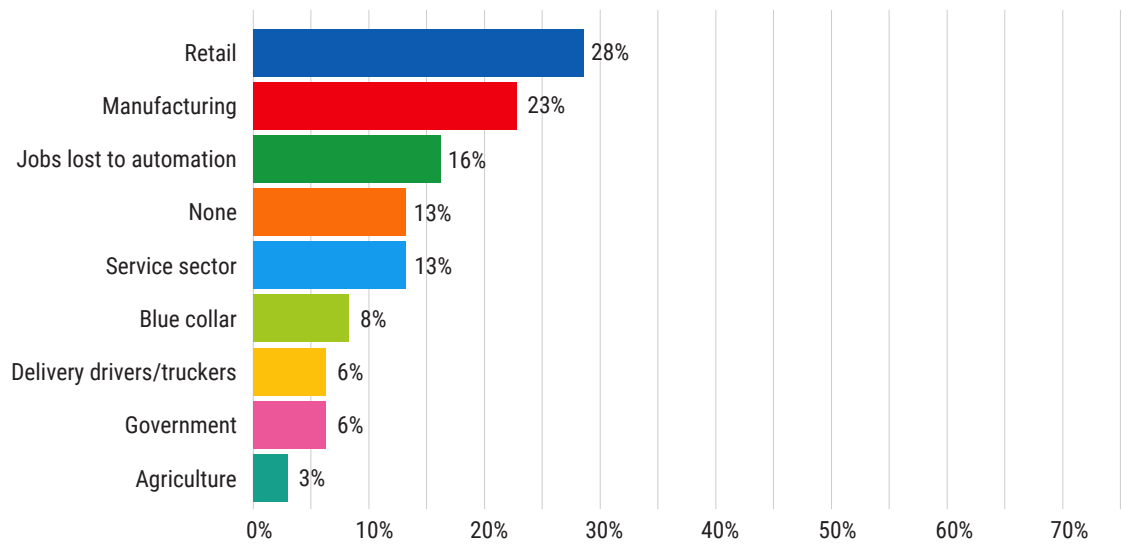
Figure 24: Increasingly Common Jobs *In a few brief words, what types of jobs will be substantially more common in your city in five years than they are today?*





Reflecting the economy's move to online retail and longstanding deindustrialization, mayors expect a sharp decline in retail and manufacturing job opportunities. **When asked what jobs would be substantially less common in their cities in five years than they are today, 28 percent of mayors highlighted retail jobs, while another 23 percent cited manufacturing employment opportunities.** Mayors also worried about automation, with 16 percent anticipating substantial losses among jobs replaced by automation.

Figure 25: Decreasingly Common Jobs *In a few brief words, what types of jobs will be substantially less common in your city in five years than they are today?*

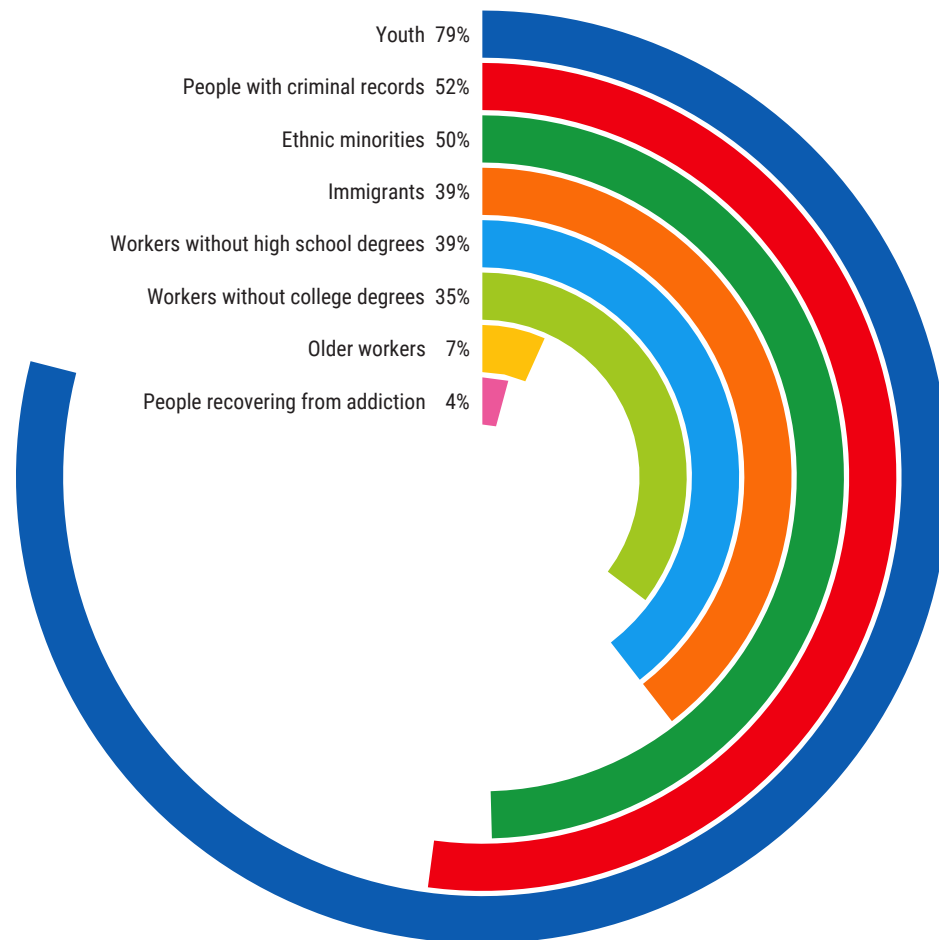


Note: 'Other' category has been omitted.



To expand the opportunities available to their residents, mayors target a variety of groups with workforce development initiatives. **Their overwhelming emphasis is youth: 79 percent of mayors report having workforce development programs oriented towards their cities' young people.** Substantial portions of mayors also focused their workforce development policy efforts on people with criminal records (52 percent) and racial and ethnic minorities (50 percent).

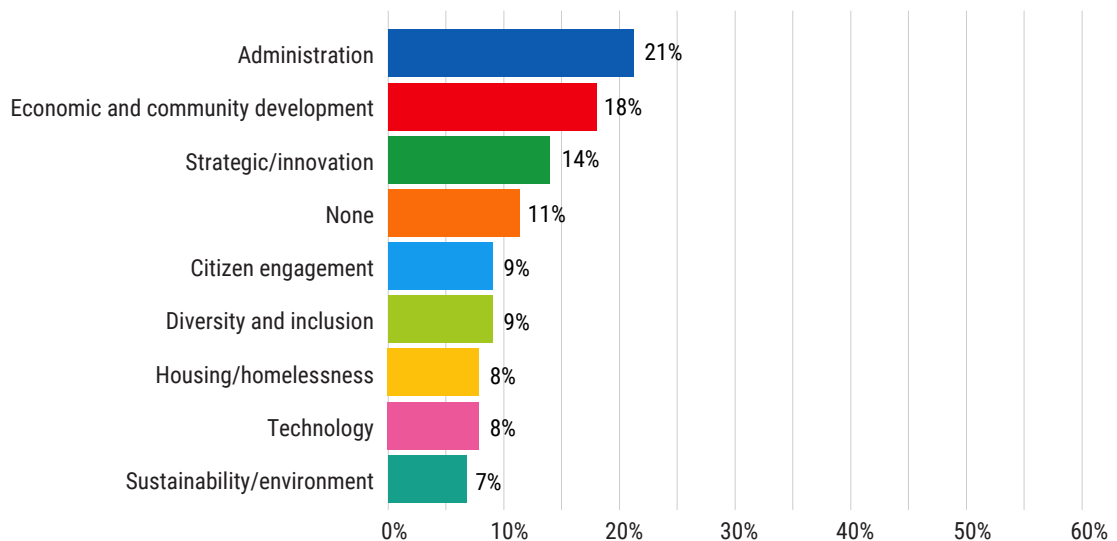
Figure 26: Targets of Workforce Development Initiatives For which groups do you have targeted workforce development initiatives?





Mayors are also seeking to address the changing economic landscape through a variety of new positions within City Hall. We asked mayors to name the most recent new executive or cabinet-level position they have created. They highlighted a variety of positions related to changes in the economy and technology, including economic and community development (18 percent), strategy and innovation (14 percent), and technology (8 percent). These new jobs include “Chief of Economic and Community Development,” “Economic Development Director,” “Chief Innovation Officer,” and “Director of Innovation and Technology.” Mayors also prioritized administration (21 percent) (e.g., “Chief Administrative Officer”). Others created new roles to focus on equity concerns like citizen engagement (9 percent), diversity and inclusion (9 percent), and housing/homelessness (8 percent). Specific titles in these categories include: “Director of Community Engagement,” “Chief Equity Officer,” and “Housing Czar.”

Figure 27: New City-Level Positions Created by Mayors *What is the most recent executive/cabinet-level position you have created in your city? Why did you create this position? (If none, what would you like to create?)*





OPPORTUNITY ZONES

The “Opportunity Zones” program, introduced in the 2017 federal tax law and implemented throughout 2018, is a new, highly contested, and potentially important, federal initiative affecting cities and mayors. This program was based on the “2016 Investing in Opportunity” bill. Sponsored by bipartisan coalitions in the House and Senate including Senators Cory Booker (D, New Jersey) and Tim Scott (R, South Carolina), it reduces or eliminates capital gains taxes from proceeds on other investments that are reinvested in designated zones and on proceeds from investments in them. The program has generated a mix of optimism about its ability to serve as a bipartisan “plan to help distressed America”¹⁷ and skepticism about whether it would work or become “a windfall for the rich.”¹⁸

The program designated thousands of census tracts — geographic areas typically comprising 1,000-8,000 people — as eligible “low-income communities” based on poverty rates or low median income. Governors, via a variety of processes they established, were tasked with designating (subject to Treasury Department approval) up to 25 percent of their eligible tracts as opportunity zones. Over 40,000 tracts were eligible and nearly 9,000 were designated. Governors had additional flexibility to designate tracts that did not qualify based on their economic data, but were adjacent to designated zones that did.

Because the program offered so much discretion in the designation of zones, and was so new with potentially high stakes, there was great uncertainty about how it would unfold. Despite the enthusiasm that many proponents expressed, others feared that the designations would target areas that were already attracting investment or had particular properties already slated for redevelopment.

Early analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, is mixed on the potential efficacy of the program and on questions of its benefits and beneficiaries. Think tanks such as the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution systematically analyzed, for example, the traits of the designated zones compared to the eligible zones. The former found that those selected were even more distressed than those that were eligible, suggesting that governors likely targeted the neediest areas that had seen little prior investment.¹⁹ The latter, however, highlighted considerable state-by-state variation in the number of potentially questionable designations and in how the economics of the designated zones compared to the eligible tracts.²⁰ Alongside these more systematic analyses, journalists have also investigated the program, often focusing on select opportunity zones that may be particularly controversial and consistent with the concern that the program is benefitting connected interests rather than low-income communities.²¹ Others have expressed more general concerns that, among other things, outside investors reap benefits while the communities get little or that residents are displaced by redevelopment.²² Citing a range of these reasons, members of Congress have begun questioning the program and calling for stricter reporting and oversight.²³

Because of these ongoing concerns, questions, and uncertainties about opportunity zones, mayors’ views and expectations about the program are illuminating. For these reasons, we asked mayors a series of questions. Roughly three quarters of cities in our sample had eligible census tracts. Two thirds now have at least one designated opportunity zone with an average of six per city. We asked retrospective questions about the designation process and their zones. We also asked prospective questions about mayors’ expectations for the program and the ways their cities are attempting to maximize the program’s potential benefits and mitigate potential problems.

While there is broad consensus on some views and expectations for the Opportunity Zones program, there is broad divergence on others. This aggregate uncertainty is not the product of widespread neutrality. Rather, many mayors, across party lines and city attributes, have favorable impressions of the program and high hopes for its

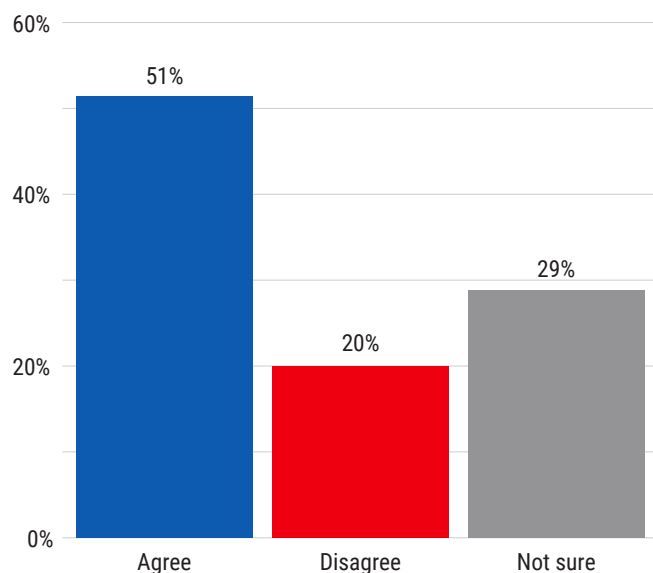


ultimate impacts on their cities. They are confident that they, at the local level, will play an important role in making it work for their cities. However, while majorities of mayors are sanguine about the program, this outlook is not universal. A meaningful minority of mayors have real concerns about its implementation and impacts.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES: SELECTION

Many mayors are quite pleased with the designated zones their cities received, and view the selection process favorably. Fifty-one percent of mayors agreed that, nationally, the program generally “targeted areas of true economic need.” However, one in five mayors disagreed that it was living up to its basic premise, and another 29 percent were not sure. Thus, while many mayors tend to see the program as targeting the types of places it promised to, others are not convinced.

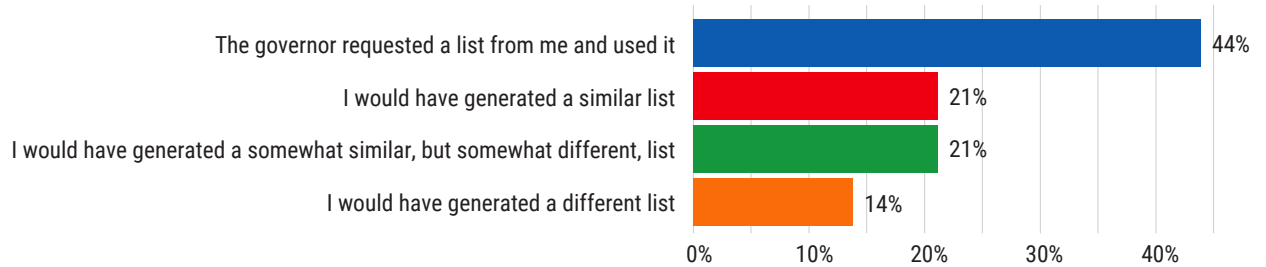
Figure 28: Opportunity Zones and Need *Do you agree or disagree with the follow statement: Nationally, the Opportunity Zones program effectively targeted areas of true economic need.*



Most mayors are pleased with the designation decisions that affect their cities. They are happy with the eligible census tracts in their cities that became designated zones and they are not too upset about those that were passed over. A large proportion of mayors (65 percent) either said that their governors adopted the list of designated zones the mayor requested, or independently generated a list similar to what the mayors would have come up with. However, a substantial minority indicate disagreement between the city and the state concerning which tracts to designate; 35 percent would have designated at least a somewhat different set of zones.

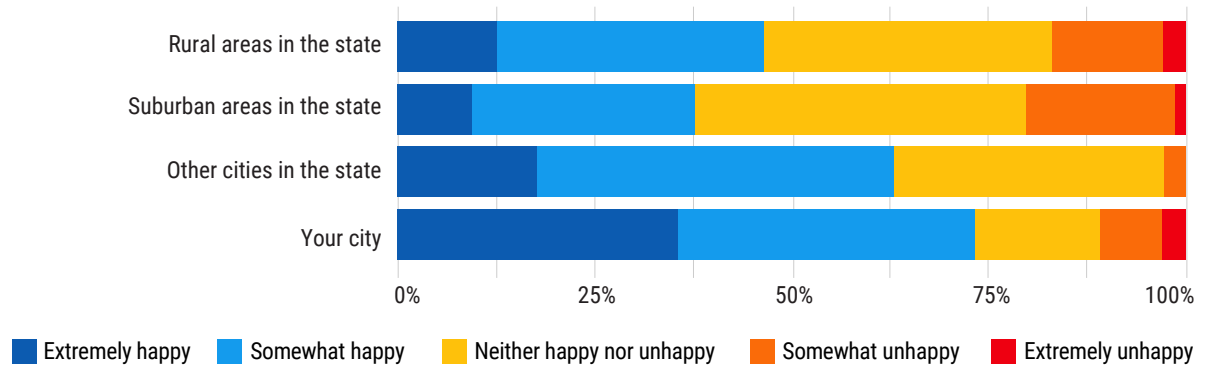


Figure 29: Selection Process *To what extent do the opportunity zones your governor designated in your city match those you would have selected if given the choice?*



Consistent with these responses, roughly one-third of mayors said they were “extremely happy” with their governor’s designations and another third said they were “somewhat happy.” Overall, only 15 percent said they were either “somewhat unhappy” or “very unhappy.” Mayors also perceived their city and other cities in their states to be happier with their designated opportunity zones than suburban and rural areas.

Figure 30: Happiness with Opportunity Zone Designations *In general, how happy should each of the following be with your governor’s designations?*



Mayors’ happiness with the opportunity zone designations does not vary substantially with city size, property values, or partisanship. Seventy-two percent of mayors of bigger cities and 75 percent of mayors of smaller cities are either extremely happy or somewhat happy with the designations. Large majorities of mayors of cities with higher housing prices (67 percent happy) and lower prices (77 percent happy) are also similarly pleased. Finally mayors across party lines are happy with the zones designated in their cities. Democratic mayors are slightly happier with their city’s opportunity zones than Republican mayors (79 percent vs 65 percent).



Figure 31: Happiness with Opportunity Zone Designations in Their Cities, by City Size

In general, how happy should each of the following be with your governor's designations?

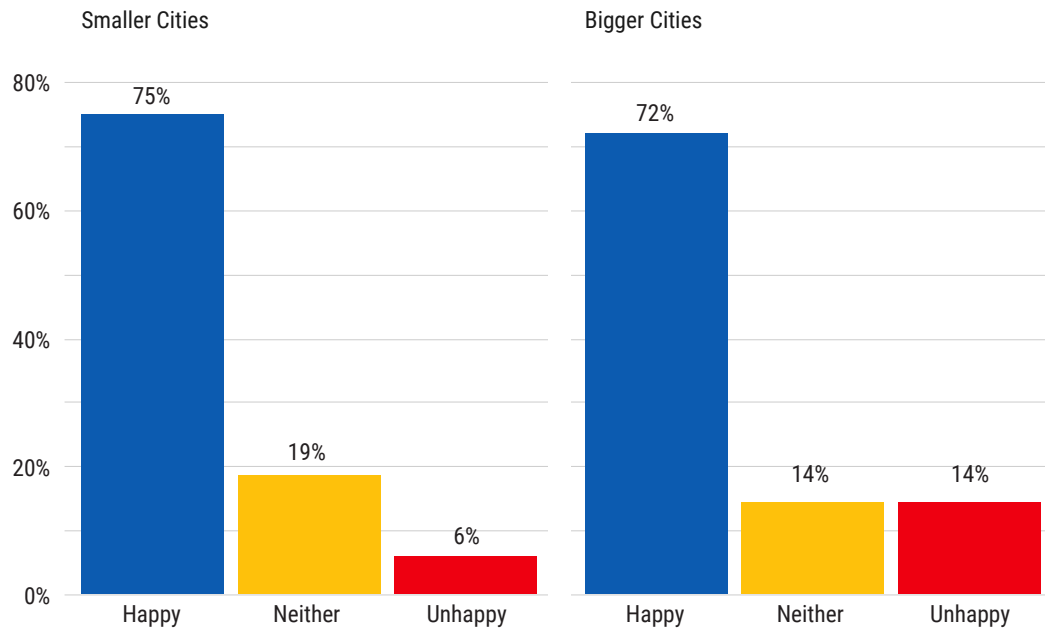


Figure 32: Happiness with Opportunity Zone Designations in Their Cities, by Housing Prices

In general, how happy should each of the following be with your governor's designations?

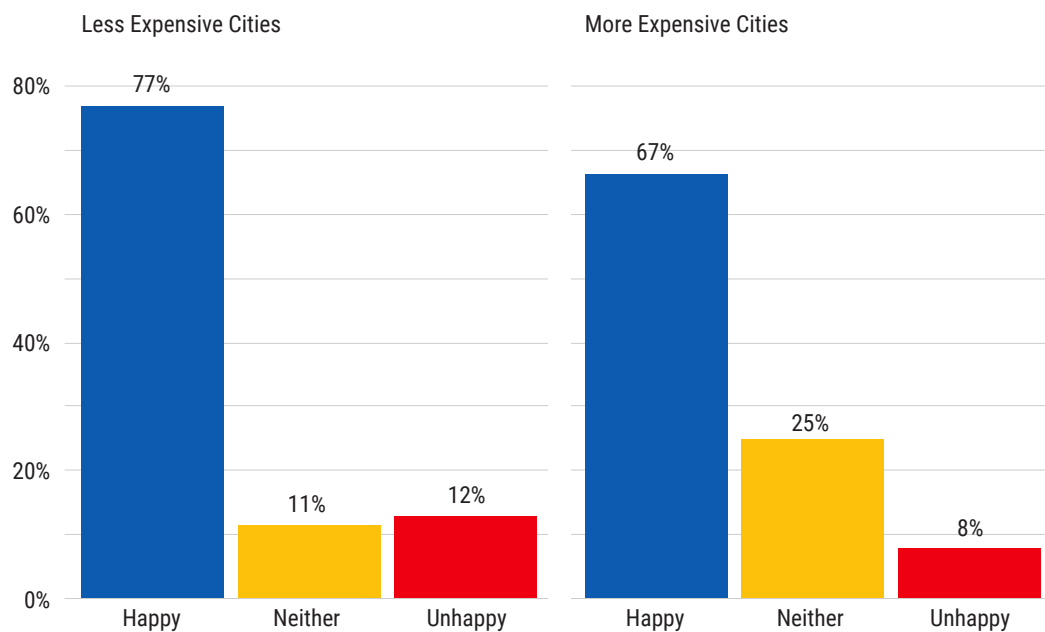
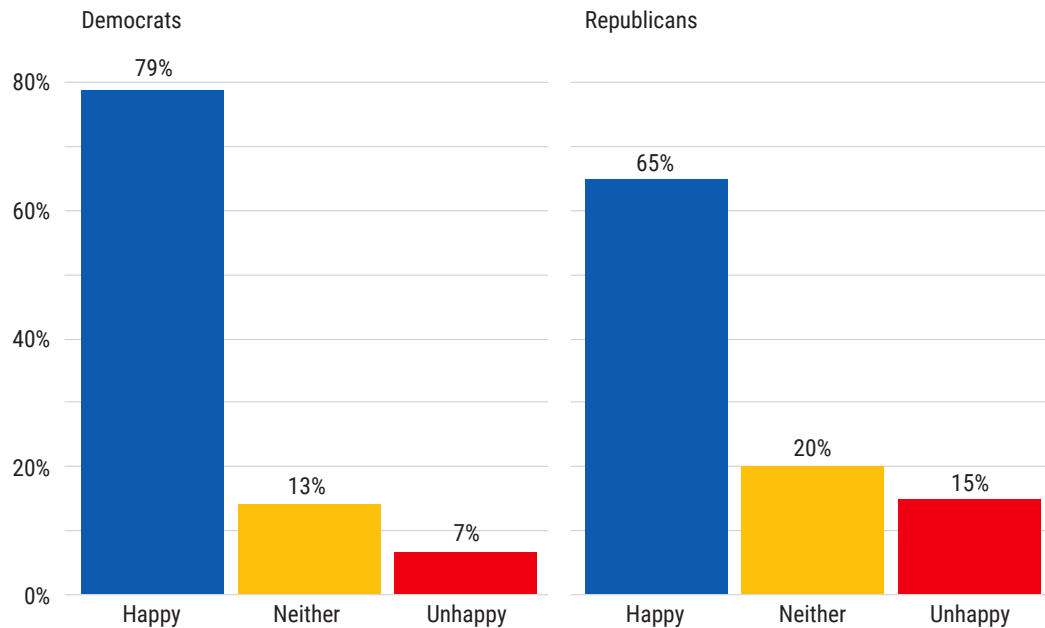




Figure 33: Happiness with Opportunity Zone Designations in Their Cities, by Party

In general, how happy should each of the following be with your governor's designations?



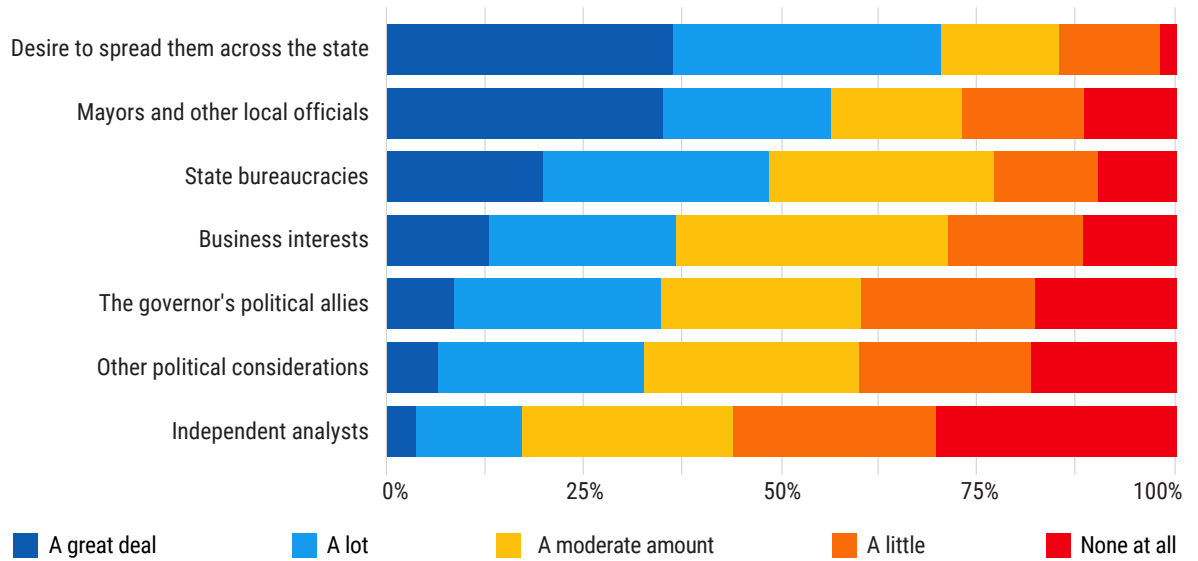
Mayors' own descriptions of their opportunity zones reflect variation in both the types of places that were selected and their broader views about the program. Some described their zones in ways consistent with a sanguine view of the program. One described their zones as *"blighted, underutilized, and underserved,"* another said *"areas in need of reinvestment and poised for reinvestment."* Others expressed concerns that their zones would be good for developers, but not necessarily others. For example, one mayor whose downtown area was designated, called it the *"lowest hanging fruit for developers"* and said the city *"didn't really need it there."* Relatedly, other mayors emphasized missed opportunities. One said their zones were *"residential areas that make zero sense"* and that one was *"across the street from places we wanted."* Another described them as places that *"would not interest developers"* and were not *"well thought out."*

As a group, mayors believe the two biggest influences on their governors' opportunity zone decisions were a desire to distribute them geographically and the mayors' own input. Specifically, two-thirds of mayors believe that a *"desire to spread them across the state"* influenced designation decisions either a great deal or a lot. Additionally, more than half of mayors believe that *"mayors and other local officials"* influenced the governors at least a great deal. Sizable minorities selected options that suggest considerable cynicism about the selection process. Roughly one-third of mayors said that their governor's political allies influenced the designations a great deal or a lot, and similar numbers said the same about business interests.



Figure 34: Influence on Opportunity Zone Designations

How much influence do you think each of the following had on your governor's opportunity zone designations?



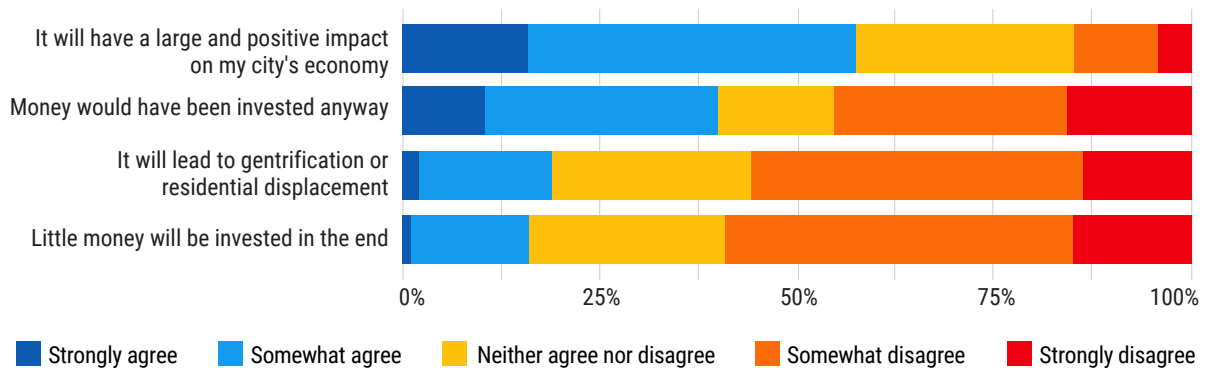


OPPORTUNITY ZONES: EXPECTATIONS

Just as most mayors expressed positive sentiments about the designations — offset by a sizable minority that is skeptical — most, but certainly not all, mayors expressed positive expectations. Majorities of mayors believe that the program will have significant positive impacts and that the city government will have a strong say in how the program plays out.

Sixty percent of mayors agreed that the program would have a “large and positive impact” on their cities’ economies. Very few mayors disagreed with this proposition. Relatedly, few mayors (roughly 15 percent) expect that “little money will be invested in the end.” In short, on the essential question of impact on economic activity, most mayors believe that money will be spent in the opportunity zones and such investments will have a positive impact on their cities. Moreover, few mayors have concerns about one potential set of adverse effects — gentrification and displacement. Small fractions agree strongly that these are potential concerns in their cities. In some cases (as in one of the quotes mentioned earlier), mayors noted that opportunity zones comprised industrial areas with few, if any, existing residents. In others, they noted concerns about displacement and efforts to avoid it. One described his/her zones as “*areas that still have affordable housing...which we need to protect,*” and another emphasized the need to “*make sure investment meets the spirit of what opportunity zones should be and not have people displaced in the neighborhood.*”

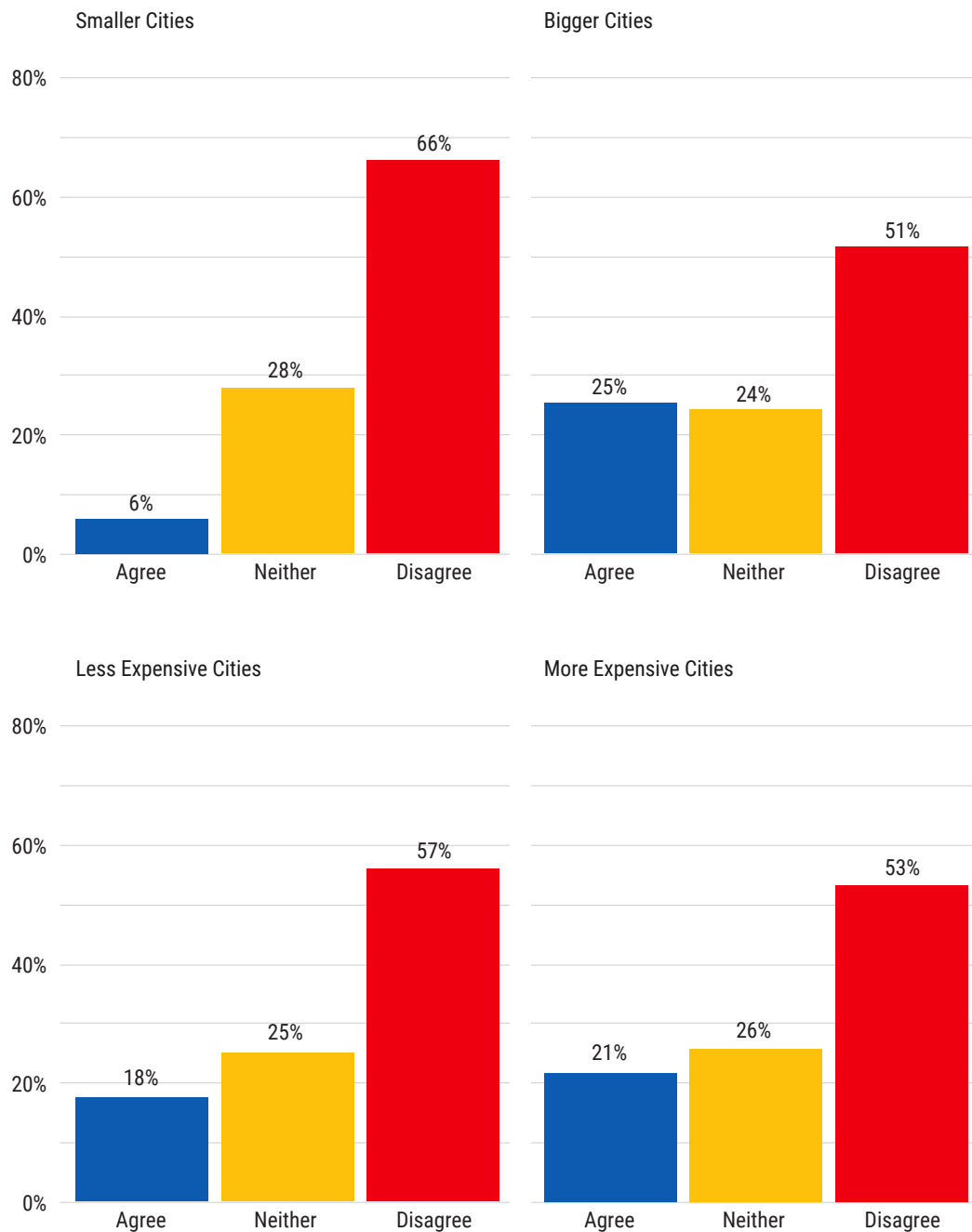
Figure 35: Opportunity Zones Expectations: Investment and Impact *Thinking about the designated Opportunity Zones program in relation to your city, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?*



While majorities of bigger and smaller city mayors are optimistic about the programs' impact, smaller city mayors may be more optimistic in some ways. In particular, they are less worried about potentially adverse impacts on neighborhoods. Virtually identical proportions (61 percent smaller cities and 58 percent bigger cities) reject concerns that little money will be invested in the end. However, 65 percent of smaller city mayors and 53 percent of bigger city mayors expect a large and positive impact from the program. Moreover, smaller city mayors are more likely to disagree that the program will create gentrification and displacement (66 percent and 51 percent, respectively). Almost no smaller city mayors (6 percent) worry about gentrification, but 25 percent of bigger city mayors do.



Figure 36: Opportunity Zones: Gentrification Concerns, by City Size and Housing Prices *Thinking about the designated Opportunity Zones program in relation to your city, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following? “It will lead to gentrification and residential displacement”*



Given the obvious and intentional links to economic activity and development, differences by city wealth (housing prices) may be expected. However, mayors of cities with more and less expensive housing prices express optimism about the program’s impact in similar proportions (55 and 59 percent) and are equally unconcerned that little

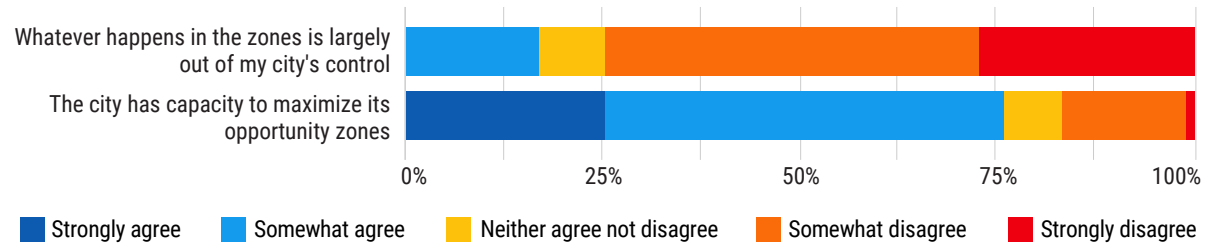


money will be invested (58 and 61 percent). Perhaps surprisingly, a city's median housing prices appear to bear no relation to a mayor's concerns about gentrification in opportunity zones (57 and 53 percent disagree with such potential concerns).

Optimism also crosses party lines. Majorities of both parties believe that opportunity zones will have a large and positive impact (57 percent of Democrats and 65 percent of Republicans), and downplay concerns about little money being invested (58 and 69 percent) and about gentrification (58 and 59 percent). However, more Democrats expressed concerns about gentrification (22 to 6 percent) while more Republicans took the neutral position.

Mayors not only expect positive outcomes, but they believe their governments are ready and able to bring them about. They do not see their cities as passive participants that may be affected by a federal financial incentive program. Rather, they see themselves as active institutions with agency over the success or failure of the program in their cities. Overall, three quarters reject the notion that they have little influence over eventual outcomes. A similar number of mayors are also confident that their cities have "the capacity to maximize their opportunity zones." Only 15 percent of mayors believe that whatever happens with their opportunity zones is "largely out of my city's control." More than a quarter of mayors strongly disagreed with this proposition. These confident and optimistic views are notable given that, by design, the program relies on, sometimes, distant fund investors responding to federal tax incentives.

Figure 37: Opportunity Zones Expectations: Capacity and Agency *Thinking about the designated Opportunity Zones program in relation to your city, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?*



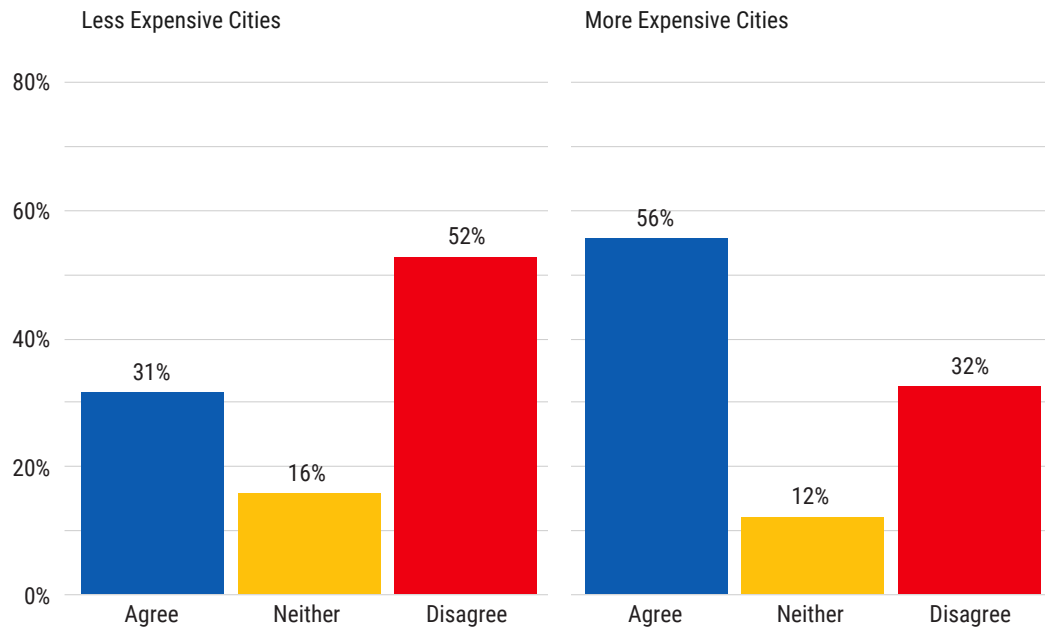
This sense of agency and influence also crosses city traits with minimal variation. Bigger and smaller city mayors (73 and 78 percent), mayors of cities with higher and lower housing prices (79 and 72 percent), and Democrats and Republicans (77 and 71 percent) all reject the idea that outcomes in opportunity zones are out of their control. The same widespread confidence also pertains to their beliefs about local capacity to take advantage of the Opportunity Zones program. Bigger and smaller city mayors (73 and 81 percent), mayors of cities with higher and lower housing prices (76 and 75 percent), and Democrats and Republicans (79 and 71 percent) believe their cities have the capacity they need.

Finally, in the most divisive question about expectations, mayors are split as to whether they believe that money would have been invested irrespective of the new tax incentives. Thirty-eight percent agree that "money would have been invested (in the areas that became opportunity zones) anyway," while 45 percent disagree. Just as this issue divided the mayors more than the others in general, it also divided them based on their cities' wealth. Fifty-six percent of mayors of cities with higher housing prices believe that money would have been invested anyway compared to only 31 percent of mayors who lead cities with lower housing prices. This 25 point difference stands out, as the gaps between Democrats and Republicans and bigger and smaller city mayors were much smaller.



Figure 38: Opportunity Zones: Money Would Have Been Invested Anyway, by Housing Prices

Thinking about the designated Opportunity Zones program in relation to your city, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following? “Money would have been invested anyway”



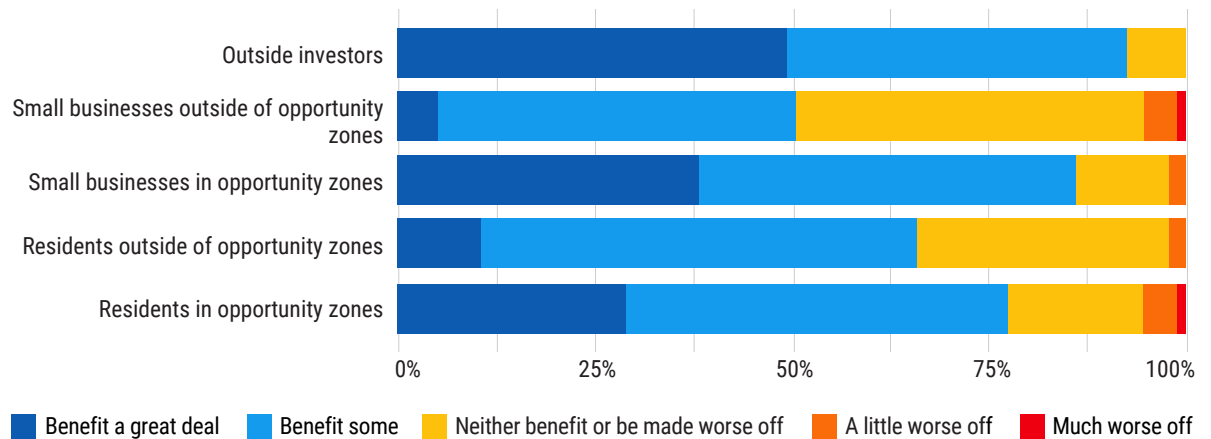
Consistent with their general level of optimism, many mayors think that local residents and businesses will benefit from the Opportunity Zones program. However, even more mayors, nearly all of them in fact, think that outside investors will benefit from it.

Over three quarters of mayors expect that residents and small businesses in opportunity zones will at least benefit some. Over a quarter believe local residents will benefit a great deal, and roughly 40 percent say the same about small businesses located inside the designated census tracts. Moreover, many mayors expect benefits beyond the zones themselves. Slimmer majorities believe that residents and small businesses outside of the designated zones will benefit at least some. While small fractions of mayors do not expect their residents and businesses to be affected either way, almost none expect them to be made worse off by the program.



While many mayors expect to see their communities benefit, nearly all expect outside investors to be made better off. In fact, half of mayors expect outside investors to be made much better off by the program. This is roughly 12 percentage points more than mayors' expectations for small businesses in the zones and 20 percent more than local residents.

Figure 39: Beneficiaries of Opportunity Zones *How much do you think each of the following will benefit or be made worse off from the opportunity zones program in your city?*

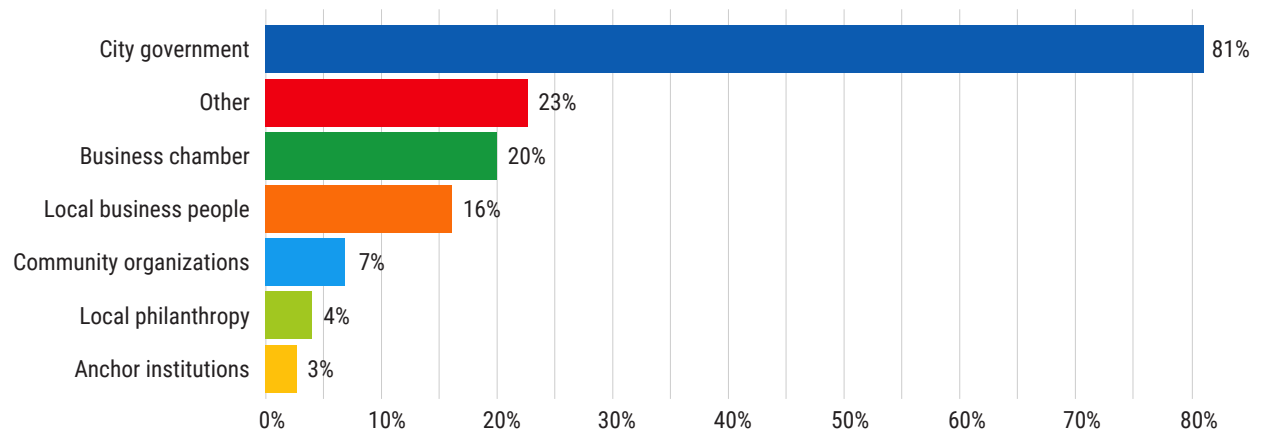




OPPORTUNITY ZONES: IMPLEMENTATION

The fact that mayors most frequently believe that outside investors will benefit from the program speaks to broader concerns about the local community and opportunity zones. Organizing the local community could help cities make the most of the program and help avoid some potential downsides. **Thus far, mayors overwhelmingly see city government itself as the leader of efforts to organize around the new program.** Eighty-one percent of mayors say the city is taking the lead. Even though the question allowed them to select multiple organizing institutions, the second most commonly cited one (only 20 percent) was the local business chamber. Despite analysis arguing for partnerships between cities and non-profits around opportunity zones²⁴, only four and three percent of mayors highlight local philanthropy and anchor institutions respectively.

Figure 40: Taking the Lead on Opportunity Zones *Who, if anybody, has taken the lead in terms of organizing community around opportunity zones*

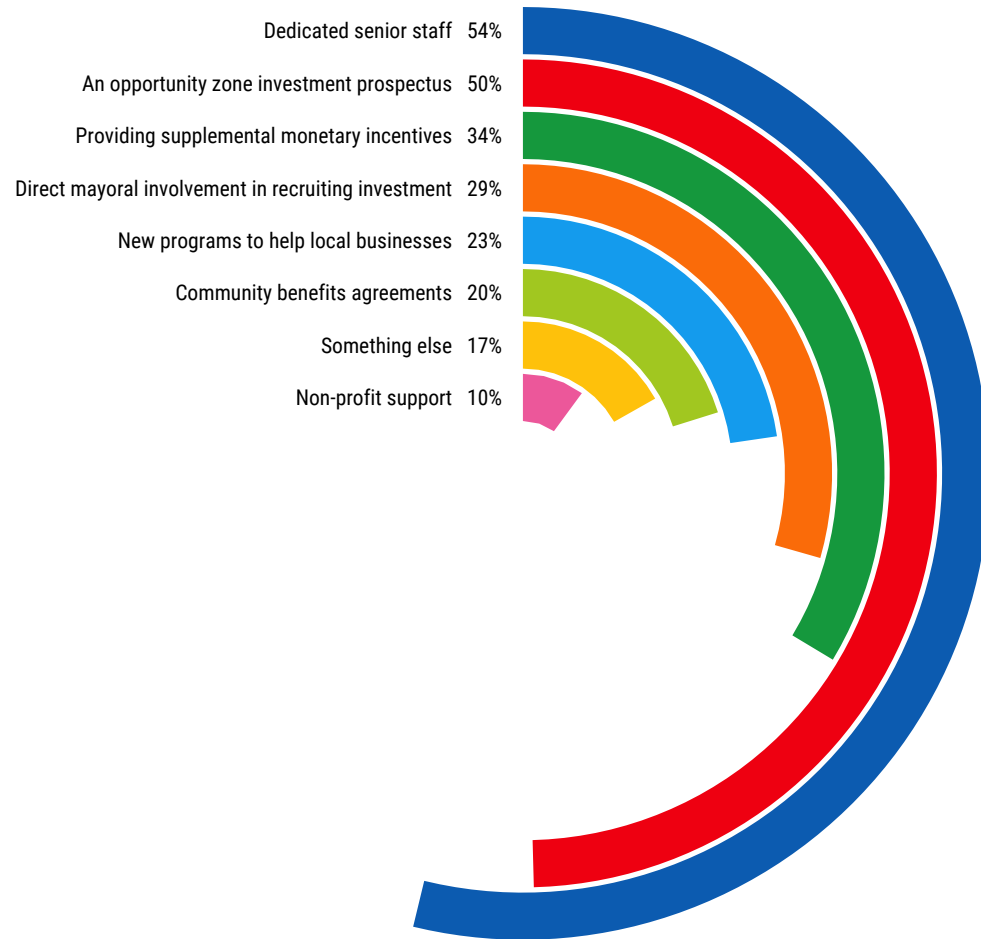


Note: Mayors were able to select more than one answer.

Mayors believe that a variety of factors are important to realizing the benefits they expect from the program, however two options stand out: **mayors most frequently say that having “dedicated senior staff” and producing an “opportunity zones investment prospectus” are important contributors to their cities’ ability to benefit from the program.** Fifty-four and 50 percent respectively selected these as keys to success in maximizing their opportunity zones. Roughly one-third of mayors believed that providing local monetary incentives to supplement the federal tax breaks will be an important contributor. A similar fraction emphasized direct mayoral involvement in recruiting investment. Other tactics and resources that mayors cited much less frequently include “community benefits agreements” (20 percent) and “non-profit support” (10 percent).



Figure 41: Contributors to Opportunity Zone Success Which of the following are, or will be, the most important contributors to your city's ability to make the most of its opportunity zones?



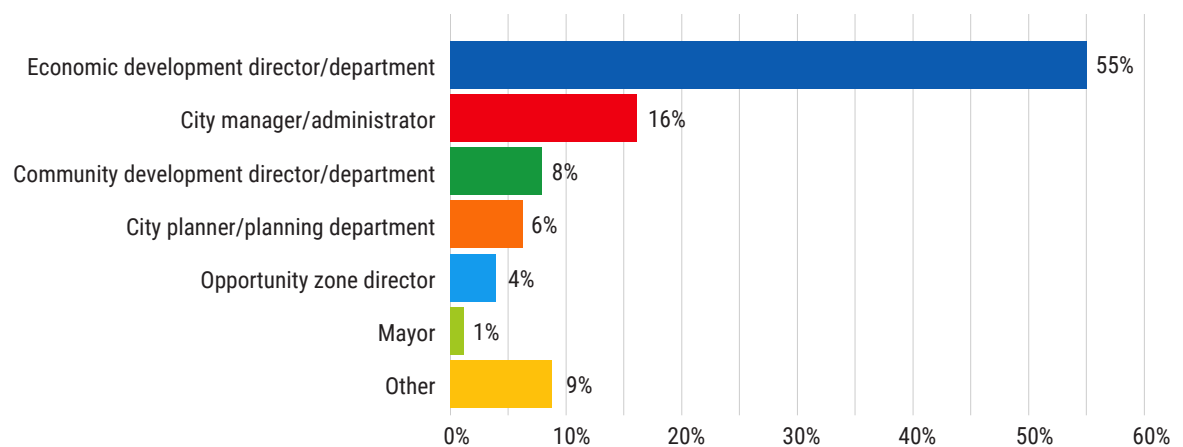
Note: Mayors were asked to select their top three choices.

A second way to look forward is to understand how cities are organizing around opportunity zones. Responses to a question about keys to success highlight the pertinence of understanding internal organization. When asked which factors will be most important to making the most of opportunity zones, the most common answer was dedicated city staff (54 percent). Direct mayoral involvement was the fourth most common response. These answers point to the importance of looking at how cities are allocating responsibility over the implementation of the program.



In general, cities' staffing decisions are consistent with emphasizing the economic development potential of opportunity zones. In a majority of cities, the person in charge of efforts around opportunity zones is either the Economic Development Director or a senior member of that department. Fifty-five percent of mayors provided job titles for the person in charge that fell into this general category. The next most common type of job position, named in 16 percent of cities, is the city manager/administrator or assistant city manager. In fewer than 10 percent of cities, the person in charge is associated with the community development or planning department. Only four percent of mayors say their cities have an employee with a role and title focused exclusively on opportunity zones.

Figure 42: Responsibility for Opportunity Zones *What is the job title of the person in charge of your city's efforts around opportunity zones?*

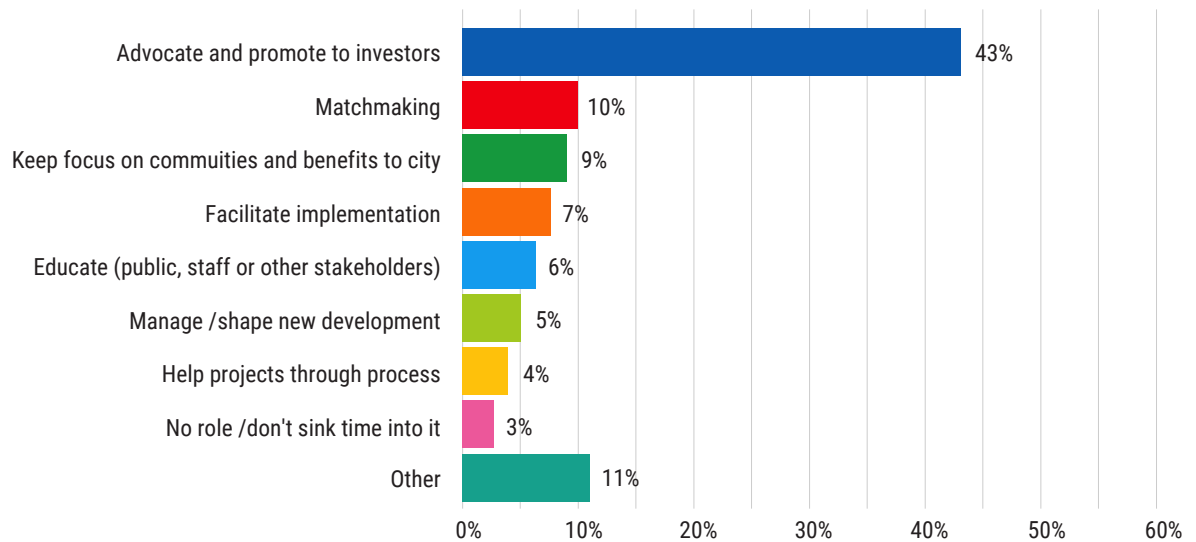


Mayors' perception of their own role around opportunity zones is similarly focused on bringing in investment.

A plurality (by a wide margin) of mayors (43 percent) said their role is about selling their city and its opportunity zones to potential investors. For example, one mayor described his/her role as *"identify[ing] projects that will work and advocate[ing] for them."* Many others simply used words like promotion, marketing, and recruiting (all in reference to investment). The next most common self-defined roles are matchmaking between investors and sites/communities (10 percent) and keeping the focus on communities (9 percent). For example, one mayor said *"educating outside investors about the designated areas, talking to them about making sure they interact with the people who live there—[it's] matchmaking and planning."* Another described the mayoral role, in reference to investors and developers as, *"steering them toward economic mobility and encouraging utilization for broad based economic development."*



Figure 43: How Mayors See Their Own Roles *When it comes to opportunity zones, my role as mayor is to...?*



A third way to understand how cities' activities around opportunity zones may evolve is by understanding which cities mayors see as early leaders in implementing the program. On the one hand, only one-third of mayors could name a city that "stood out as an early leader in maximizing opportunity zones." The other two thirds gave responses such as "no city," "I'm not sure," or "it's too soon to say." On the other hand, of the one third that did name a particular city, Louisville, KY clearly stands out from the rest as a perceived leader. Thirty-one percent of those who named a city named Louisville. The second most mentioned cities were Los Angeles, CA, Birmingham, AL, and Columbia, SC: each was named by 8 percent of mayors. Louisville and Mayor Greg Fischer embraced opportunity zones early and have advocated for cities' adoption of the investment prospectus (cited by many as a key to success) and provided guidance on best practices for doing so with partners such as Accelerator for America.²⁵



CONCLUSION

Six years ago, we launched this annual survey to capture the voices of mayors on key policy areas. After more than 600 interviews, we have come to know that our local leaders are consistently focused on three connected priorities: the human, physical, and fiscal infrastructure of their cities. The 2019 Menino Survey delves into each of these with questions related to workforce development, transportation and mobility, and investment opportunities in vulnerable communities.

Over the next five years, mayors expect high tech and health-related jobs to grow, but also believe that retail and manufacturing jobs will become less common. They report having a wide array of targeted workforce development initiatives for their residents, but programs focused on youth and those with criminal records are the most commonly cited.

While mayors continue to identify roads and mass transit as essential needs, the issues of water, wastewater, and stormwater are more of a priority for them relative to prior years of the survey. When it comes to public safety and mobility, a significant portion of mayors believe travel is unsafe for cyclists and pedestrians in their communities. Many have introduced a variety of design changes to improve safety, including bicycle lanes and sidewalk upgrades; yet, the overwhelmingly majority of mayors believe painted bicycle lanes are a safe option when physically separate bicycle lanes are too expensive. This finding may suggest that mayors are not yet aware of the most recent evidence of the safety benefits of physically separating cyclists from cars and pedestrians.

Mayors generally believe that the new federal Opportunity Zones program has targeted the right areas — both nationally and in their own communities. Mayors are taking the lead in organizing the city to take advantage of their zone designations and are confident in their ability to capitalize on the program. In particular, mayors believe that dedicated senior staff in city hall and an investment prospectus that outlines their priorities and specific opportunities and assets will be key to the program's success locally.

Taken together, the topics covered in this year's survey tell a story of the emerging trends and rising needs of urbanized America. As fast as cities are growing, residents are changing just as quickly — particularly the way they move within spaces, share resources, and access opportunity. We hope these findings shed light on the hurdles and opportunities facing our elected local officials, as the call for their leadership on national issues continues to increase.



ENDNOTES

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