

2021 Public Safety Survey Summary of Findings

December 2021



INVOLVEMENT BUILDS COMMUNITY

WELCOME
TO THE
DIMOND
DISTRICT



CITY OF OAKLAND

Abstract

During the late summer of 2021, the Dimond Improvement Association conducted a public safety survey of the Dimond District. 254 respondents shared their concerns about public safety issues and offered suggestions for how to improve them. Our Public Safety Committee will use this information to advocate for a safer Dimond.

Our survey results showed that property theft and traffic safety were ranked the greatest concerns by community members in the Dimond.

In particular, people were very worried about reckless driving, muggings, and violent crimes. When asked specific questions about street safety, respondents considered MacArthur Boulevard to be less safe than residential streets in the Dimond. A majority of them envisioned improvements to MacArthur Boulevard over the next ten to thirty years that prioritized pedestrian safety and public transportation.

We also gathered data on which intersections in the neighborhood are of particular concern to our respondents. Our Public Safety Committee will use this information in our long-term advocacy work within the city to make the Dimond safer for residents, businesses, and visitors.



Introduction

The Dimond Improvement Association (DIA) conducted a public safety survey of the Dimond community between August and September 2021. Our goal was to collect feedback from those who live in, come to, or transit through the Dimond on issues of public safety to learn how the DIA can better serve the community. While we asked questions on personal and property crime, we paid extra attention to road safety, which will allow us to engage in long-term city planning and decision making.

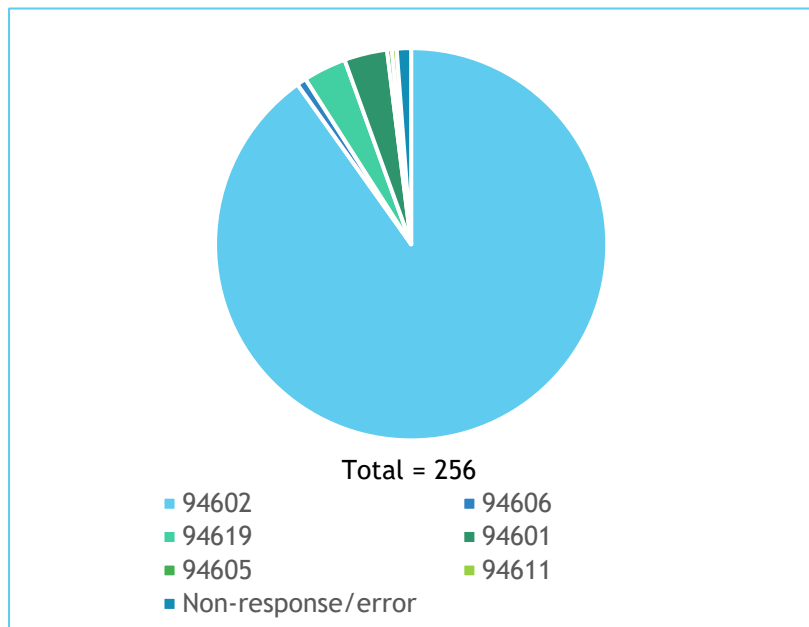


Figure 1: Respondents' Zip Code

Over the course of the survey period, we promoted the survey by direct engagement through established DIA channels and local community groups, as well as in-person tabling at strategic locations. Between the English and Spanish survey options, we received 254 responses, 90% of which came from the 94602 zip code (Figure 1).

General Safety in the Dimond

We sought to gauge participants' current feelings about safety in the Dimond by determining how they felt about their general well-being after dark. We suspected that people would have safety concerns in the neighborhood at night, and these concerns can affect business hours and economic activity.

Respondents were asked to score their feelings of safety from 1 to 5 (1 being not safe and 5 being extremely safe/no issues, with a median possible score of 3). 50% of respondents selected a 1 or 2, 19.3% selected 4 or 5, while 30.7% selected 3. The average was 2.5, indicating that people lean toward feeling unsafe after dark (**Figure 2**).

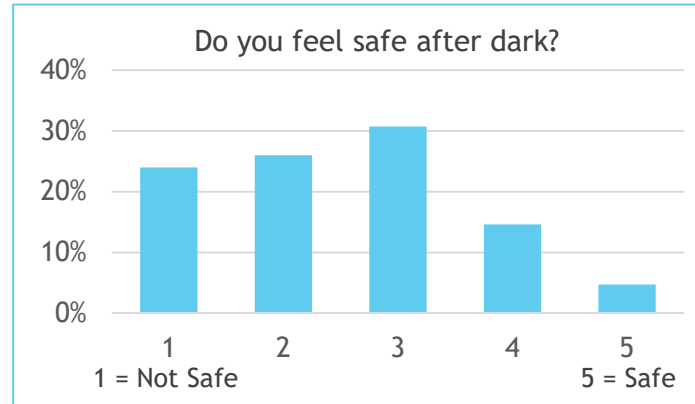


Figure 2: Scoring Safety After Dark

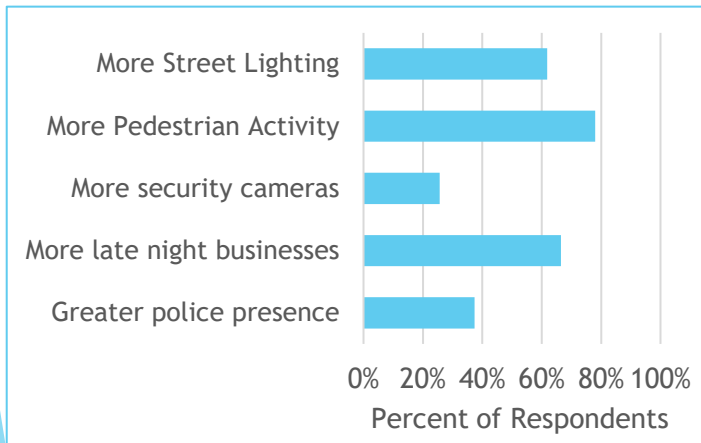


Figure 3: Neighborhood Features that Would Make People Feel Safer After Dark

Respondents were then asked what from the following list would help them feel more secure after dark: more street lighting, more pedestrian activity, more security cameras, more late-night businesses, and greater police presence. Every option could be selected by the respondents. Greater than 50% of respondents selected more street lighting, more pedestrian activity, and more late-night businesses (Figure 3). A smaller proportion of respondents selected more security cameras and greater police presence (26% and 37%, respectively).

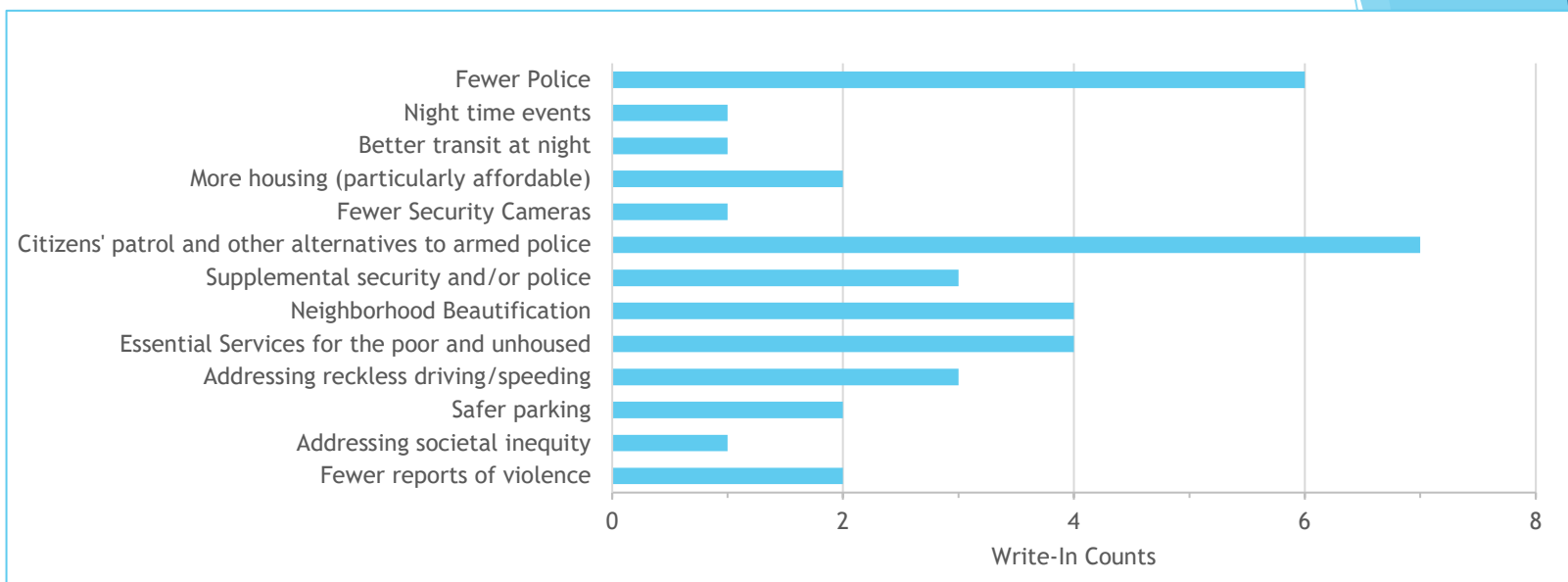


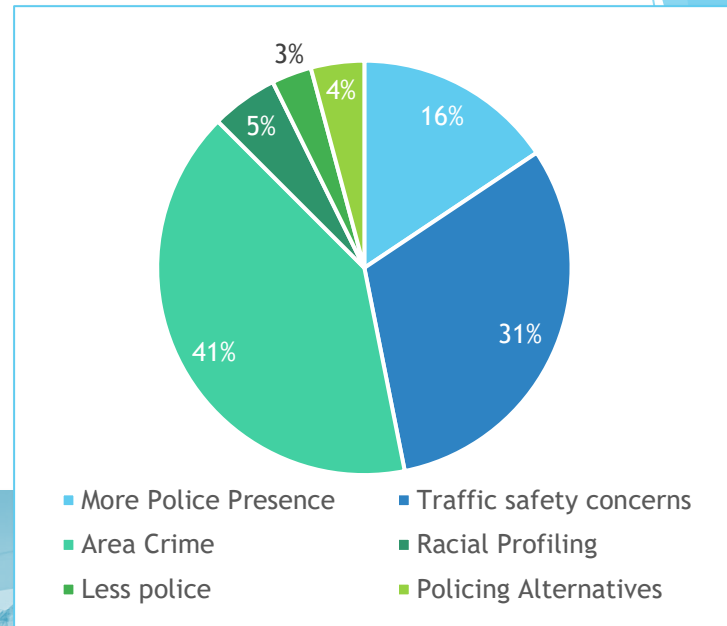
Figure 4: Write-in Features that Would Make People Feel Safer After Dark

Participants were also able to write in their own ideas of what would make them feel safer. Of the write-in options, seven people suggested an unarmed citizens' patrol similar to the ambassador service that the Uptown and Downtown Business Improvement District offers (Figure 4). Additionally, six people (2% of respondents) stated that fewer police would make them feel safer. Taken together, the majority of respondents feel safer with safety measures that correspond with robust economic activity and environmental design.



Figure 5: Feedback for Community Resource Officer

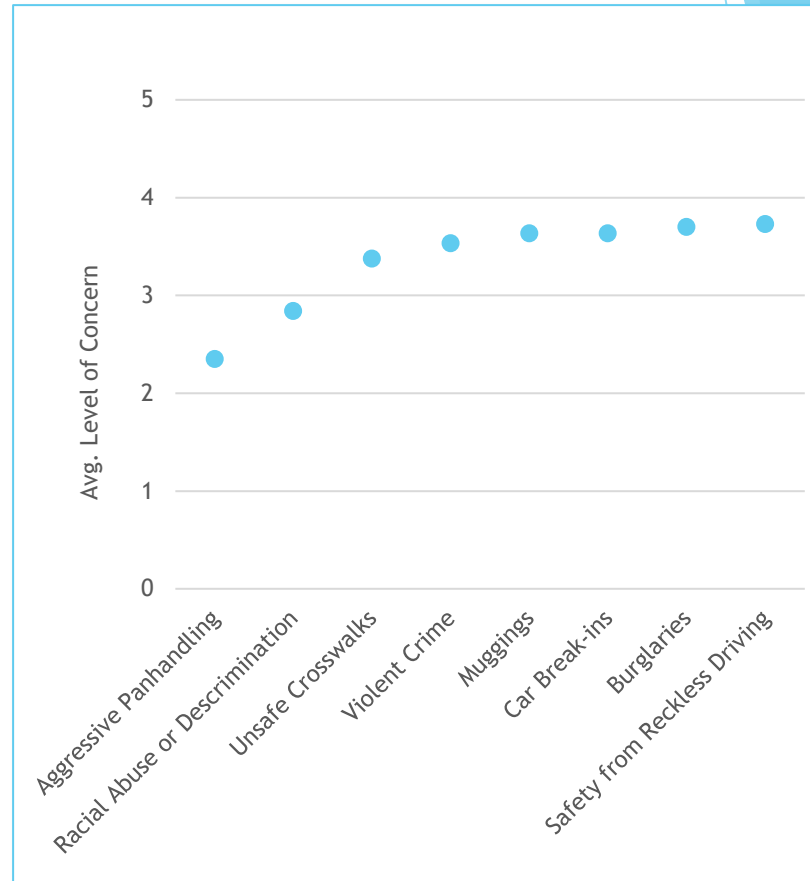
The DIA engages with the neighborhood's Community Resource Officer (CRO), an OPD officer who covers the Dimond in the context of his/her normal duties. Participants were asked to share what they would like their CRO to hear from them the most. Respondents were most concerned with area crime (40.6%) and traffic safety (31.3%) when asked what they wished to communicate to our CRO (**Figure 5**). A smaller percentage voiced the need for more police, policing alternatives, concerns of racial profiling, and less police.



We sought to further understand the general safety concerns in the Dimond by asking how survey participants score their concern for a set of issues. We focused on safety from reckless driving, car break-ins, muggings, aggressive panhandling, violent crime, racial abuse and discrimination, burglaries, and unsafe crosswalks (noting that crosswalks can be unsafe independent of reckless driving). Importantly, respondents were asked to score these issues in isolation and not to rank them against each other. This allowed participants to state that more than one issue was of equal importance. Respondents were allowed to select a level of concern from 1 to 5 (1 meaning less concerning or not an issue, and 5 meaning most concerning, with a median possible score of 3).

From these scores we were able to rank the issues against each other and come up with the most pressing issues in the neighborhood. **Figure 6** presents the average scores for each of the highlighted issues, with the more concerning issues toward the right side of the X axis. Safety from reckless driving was the most concerning issue to survey respondents, while aggressive panhandling ranked the least concerning. Only aggressive panhandling and racial abuse or discrimination scored below 3.

Figure 6: General Safety Concerns Ranked, Lower Concern on the Left to Higher Concern on the Right

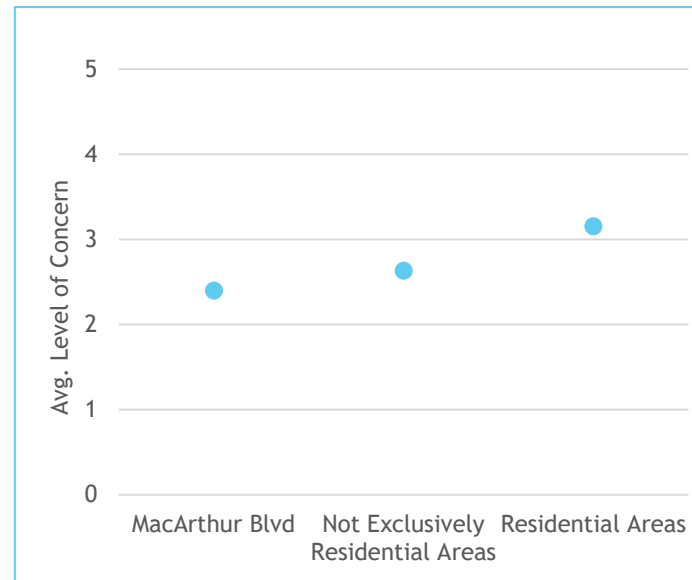


Traffic Safety in the Dimond

To further understand how respondents felt about traffic safety, we dedicated several questions to the issue. Traffic safety has become a topic of national concern, with 2020 seeing the number of national traffic fatalities increase [7.2%](https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/2020-fatality-data-show-increased-traffic-fatalities-during-pandemic)¹ despite lockdowns related to COVID-19. Here in the Dimond District, we have seen an increase in sideshow activity and more brazen speeding by automobiles. A public safety survey with a focus on roads seemed appropriate for the moment.

Respondents were first asked to score how safe they feel the roads are in areas of the Dimond that they consider entirely residential, areas that are not exclusively residential and MacArthur Blvd (a score of 1 meaning not safe, while a score of 5 meaning extremely safe/no issues, with a median possible score of 3). MacArthur Blvd was considered the least safe of the three areas, with a score of 2.4, with other areas that are not exclusively residential and residential neighborhoods scoring 2.6 and 3.2, respectively (**Figure 7**).

Figure 7: Average Scores for Safety of the Roads Listed
1 = Less Safe, 5 = More Safe



¹ NHTSA. (2021, June 03). 2020 Fatality Data Show Increased Traffic Fatalities During the Pandemic. US Dept of Transportation. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/2020-fatality-data-show-increased-traffic-fatalities-during-pandemic>

We wanted to create a database of problematic areas in the Dimond with community input. To this end, we asked survey takers to record intersections or stretches of roads where they see the most concerning safety issues. Because MacArthur Blvd stood out as particularly unsafe, we wanted to allow enough space for respondents to comment on that road in addition to all other roads. 53 respondents indicated that the intersection at Coolidge Ave is the most concerning MacArthur junction in the Dimond, followed closely by the intersections at Fruitvale-MacArthur and E. 38th St.-MacArthur, at 41 and 23 respondents respectively (**Figure 8a**). When asked about areas and intersections not on MacArthur Blvd, respondents indicated that the intersection at Fruitvale and Lyman was the most concerning, with a count of 40 responses. They also stated that Fruitvale Ave was dangerous from Bienati to MacArthur as well as MacArthur to Coloma, 10 and 9 respectively (**Figure 8b**). For a full list of responses, see accompanied [data](#)².

Figure 8: Documenting Problematic Intersections/Areas.

Figure 8a) Concerns on MacArthur Blvd.

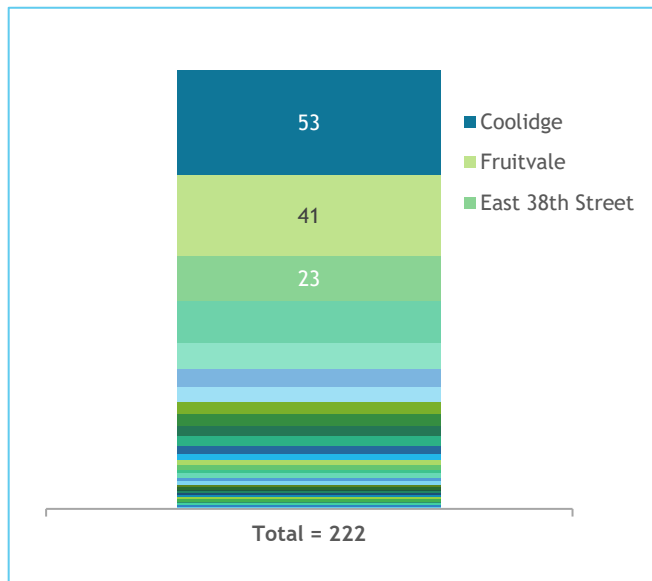
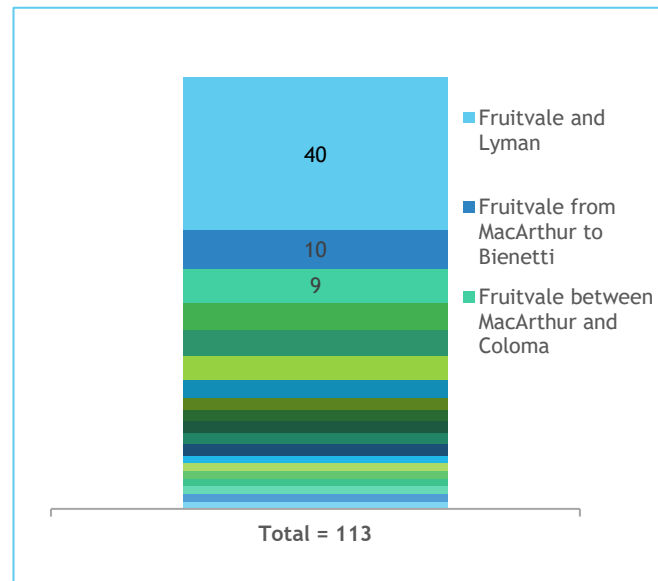


Figure 8b) Concerns on Streets Not MacArthur Blvd.



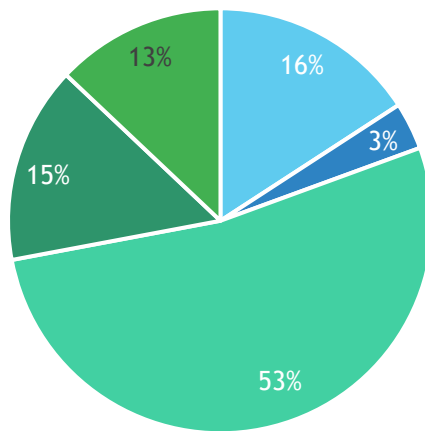
The City of Oakland is planning a major infrastructure overhaul of MacArthur Blvd to accommodate multi-modal transportation as part of the City's [capital improvements program](#) (CIP)³. These improvements will surely go through public review so that interested community members can have their voices heard. In anticipation of the CIP process, survey participants were asked how they envision MacArthur Blvd over the next 10 to 30 years.



Their options were: MacArthur reverts to a four-lane highway that would provide an overflow route for I-580 as a transit corridor for cars; MacArthur Blvd has no changes other than road maintenance; MacArthur is redesigned to prioritize pedestrian travel and public transit, while directing private vehicle traffic to I-580; and to improve public transportation, MacArthur should eventually become a kind of Limited Traffic Zone, where street traffic should be available only to MacArthur residents and businesses, busses and bicycles. Our thinking was that these answers represent the different strategies utilized in the world to manage automobiles, buses, and alternative transit modes. Participants were also allowed to write in another answer in the event they weren't inclined to choose any of the options.

Most respondents, 51%, stated that they would prefer MacArthur to be redesigned to prioritize pedestrian travel and public transit (**Figure 9**). 15% of respondents want no changes other than road maintenance, 15% stated they want a Limited Traffic Zone where vehicle traffic is highly restricted, and 4% want MacArthur to revert to a four-lane highway. In addition, 3 percent of respondents filled in their own answers that did not match any of the offered answers and there was a 13% non-response rate.

Figure 9: Visions for the Future of MacArthur Blvd.



- MacArthur Blvd has no changes other than road maintenance.
- MacArthur reverts to a four-lane highway that would provide an overflow route for I-580 as a transit corridor for cars.
- MacArthur is re-designed to prioritize pedestrian travel and public transit, while directing private vehicle traffic to I-580
- To improve public transportation, MacArthur should eventually become a kind of Limited Traffic Zone, where street traffic should be available only to MacArthur residents and businesses, busses and bicycles.
- No response

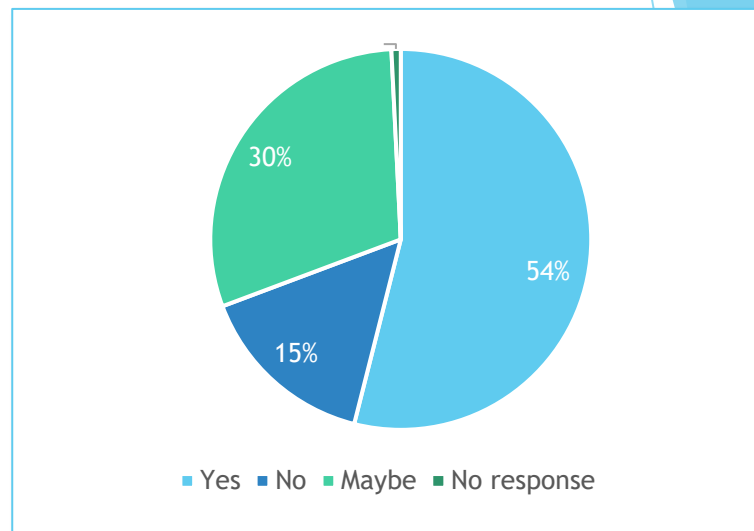
In total, 66% of respondents desire a more pedestrian-friendly MacArthur Blvd that is designed to provide better public transit service, a finding that reflects many of the road changes happening around Oakland, particularly Telegraph Ave and International Blvd.

To dig deeper into what changes respondents would like to see to increase pedestrian quality of life and support public transit, we chose to ask about a potential trade-off: on-street parking. On-street parking presents an engineering challenge to pedestrian-focused urban design, as it competes for space that could otherwise be dedicated to pedestrians as well as alternative transportation modes, such as biking.

Participants were asked if they were willing to sacrifice on-street parking in the business district for more pedestrian space (with expanded sidewalks, parklets and protected bike lanes provided as examples). 54% of respondents stated that they were willing to make this sacrifice, with 30% stating maybe and 15% stating they were not willing (**Figure 10**).

Respondents were also given space to make a comment on this question. With 20 individual comments, the most common write-in opinion reflected the desire for better pedestrian and/or bike infrastructure (data not shown). This comment was also most common for those who stated they were willing to sacrifice on-street parking. For those who indicated that they were unwilling to give up on-street parking spaces, the prominent concern was a general disapproval of traffic calming infrastructure. For those who indicated they were maybe willing to sacrifice on-street parking spaces, the prominent comment was a desire to balance pedestrian safety with parking issues for businesses.

Figure 10: Giving Up on Street Parking for Pedestrian Space



Conclusion

Respondents were also given space to make a comment on this question. With 20 individual comments, the most common write-in opinion reflected the desire for better pedestrian and/or bike infrastructure (data not shown). This comment was also most common for those who stated they were willing to sacrifice on-The DIA continues to strive to better serve the Dimond community. We conducted the 2021 public safety survey to engage with residents and visitors to the Dimond in an evidence-based way. In the past, the public safety committee of the DIA has focused on overseeing our security camera system for emergency use and maintaining relationships with the Community Resource Officer (CRO). However, with issues like road safety, there is a limit to the effectiveness of both of these tools.

The results presented here suggest a community desire for alternatives to our traditional tools for improving public safety in the Dimond District. These alternatives could include advocating for better lighting infrastructure and zoning changes that place more residents and businesses in the business district.



The community also desires a more pedestrian-focused plan for the neighborhood, with an emphasis on enhancing public transit and directing vehicle traffic away from MacArthur Blvd. A way in which the DIA could work towards these goals is by getting involved in the planning process for the MacArthur Blvd: Lakeshore to East Oakland Connection Project through the capital improvements program.

While we were excited about the level of community participation in the survey, we acknowledge that despite our direct outreach, we underperformed our goals of adequately reaching each of the Dimond's racial and ethnic groups. The Dimond Improvement Association cherishes diversity and will continue to reach out to underrepresented groups to make the Dimond District safe, beautiful, and enjoyable for everyone who lives or comes here.

