

Planning Commission Meeting

433 Cherry Street, Sumas, WA 98295
Monday, November 18, 2024 at 5:30 PM

Agenda

Open Meeting

1. Review/Correct and/or Approve Minutes

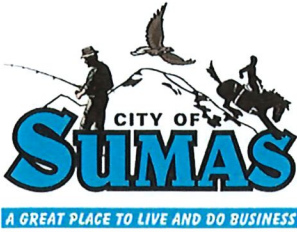
[A.](#) October 21, 2024 Draft Minutes

2. Old Business

[B.](#) Comprehensive Plan Review

3. New Business

4. Adjournment



Planning Commission Meeting

433 Cherry Street, Sumas WA

Monday, October 21, 2024, at 5:30 PM

Minutes

PRESENT

Ex-Officio Josh Clawson
Carson Cortez, City Planner
Michelle Quinn, City Clerk

Planning Commission

Present

John VanWingerden
Jacob Williams
Lizette Custer
Helen Solem
Teresa Josephson

Review/Correct and/or Approve Minutes

John VanWingerden made a motion to approve September 16, 2024, Minutes, Lizette Custer seconded; all were in favor the motion carried.

New Business

Notice of Application & Public Hearing
Proposed Residential Long Subdivision on Sumas Avenue

Carson Cortez, City Planner, explained these applications were received from Jason Heutink for the development of the property on Sumas Avenue. The applications are for a Long Subdivision, Subdivision Variance and Conditional Use Permit, the public comment period for this project is from October 16th - 31st, 2024. The proposal for the condition use permit is to construct six pairs of attached single-family homes, creating a total of twelve units.

The subdivision variance is to allow a portion of the development to include a street right-of-way width and associated roadway improvement below the City standards.

The commissioners would like consideration from the council regarding the sidewalks, the storm pond, flood control, street lighting, parking, and landscaping. The commissioners wanted to know if there would be some type of agreement between the town houses.

Discussion on the sidewalk and if this could be connected to the sidewalk along Highway 9. Another concern is whether the driveways access onto Sumas Avenue is going to take away from the street parking. A recommendation for the council would be to also review the proposal to include a sidewalk on the south side of the road also, not just the north side of the road.

There are concerns about flooding issues and how this will affect the neighboring areas with all the new homes. Another discussion was regarding the retention pond size and whether this will be able to assist with holding flood water during a flood event.

Adjournment

The next planning commission meeting was set for November 18, 2024, at 5:30 pm.

John VanWingerden made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Helen Solem seconded; all were in favor the motion carried.

Councilmember Josh Clawson, Ex Officio

City Clerk

the county to develop an overall update schedule, a land capacity analysis methodology, and background information. In the fall of 2013, a consultant hired by the county (but paid for by all of the cities as well) prepared high, medium and low projections for population and employment growth in the county through 2036 along with allocations of such growth to all of the UGAs, including Sumas. In late 2013, the city submitted a preliminary proposal to the county that identified the city's proposed allocations of population and employment growth. In early 2014, the Whatcom county council adopted a non-binding resolution establishing preliminary allocations of population and employment to all of the cities, including to the city of Sumas. In June of 2015, the Sumas city council authorized submission of the city of Sumas UGA Proposal, which included the same allocations of population and employment included in the prior county council resolution. The Sumas planning commission began the review and revision process in the fall of 2015, and the recommended revisions to the plan were made available in the spring of 2016. Final action adopting the 2016 update of the comprehensive plan was taken by the Sumas city council in June 2016.

Community Survey

In July of 1992 a survey was conducted to learn the feelings of the community. A copy of the actual survey document is included in Appendix III, along with the complete set of comments made by residents. The following is a brief summary of the survey showing the five major questions followed by the responses in priority order.

- Q. What do you like about Sumas?
 - Character
 - Sewer and water service
 - Open spaces and natural beauty
 - Air quality
 - Police and fire services
- Q. What are the issues or problems facing Sumas?
 - Defining land-use classifications
 - Striking balance between property rights and restrictions
 - Promoting job/business growth
 - Protecting and enhancing environmental quality
- Q. What actions should the city take to improve quality of life?
 - Improve flood control
 - Protect water supply
 - Improve and add roads
 - Assist job/business growth
 - Limit commercial strip pattern
 - Maximize property rights
- Q. In which direction should the city grow?
 - South
 - West
 - East
- Q. What is the best way to pay for public facilities built to accommodate growth?
 - Combination of revenues

- Property taxes
- User fees
- Bonds

People's handwritten comments revealed a sharp division between those interested in promoting further commercial growth and those dismayed by the growth of the preceding 15 years. Each viewpoint was held by about the same number of people. Following are some verbatim comments that reveal the division.

Get rid of the service stations and bars and stop catering to the needs of business only.

I think the city is more concerned with the Canadian business owners than with its own citizens.

I preferred the old character of Sumas, businesses closed on Sunday and not all Canadian owned businesses -- I feel the average resident is worse off now than 15 years ago, with traffic pollution, and noise.

Fewer gas stations.

Don't let grocery stores and gas stations go beyond Cherry Street.

Try to think of Sumas and its residents, not just money and Canadians.

Sumas has been taken over by a foreign country and no longer exists as a small town. Small town services, businesses, etc., are gone. It no longer is a desirable place to live and raise a family. Pride in home maintenance is gone as more and more homes have absentee landlords. The Canadian dollar has not improved the average resident's life -- it has made it worse -- only the businessman profits! Zoning means nothing! HUD housing brings in more non-contributing residents.

Most of the favorable features or characteristics are gone -- sold to the highest bidder.

It's big enough now -- any more growth there will be no trees - or farmlands left. The animals won't have any homes -- our air would be ruined. Also cut down on Canadian traffic.

City revenue dollars -- long-term businesses create better paying jobs which in turn offer the opportunity for local youth to stay and work and prosper in their own hometown. Right now you have to look outside Sumas for good job opportunities.

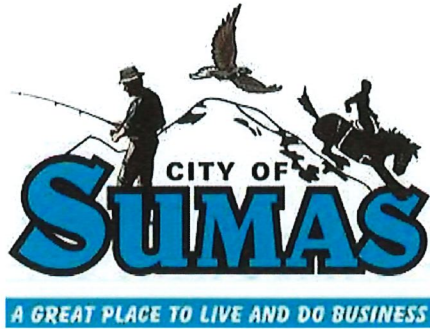
As far as I see it, Sumas is right now nothing more than a gate. We have this huge fenced back yard with nothing in it to play with. If the city continues to restrict business growth, you may as well start making out a rent check to Lynden. There must be thousands of lost dollars going through Sumas to Lynden, Everson and Bellingham every day. Until this city decides to get off its hand and make a positive step towards business growth it will remain nothing more than a passageway to other points that can offer people what they need.

Let's not miss the opportunity for growth. We have many commercial opportunities we should take advantage of, and then allow residential growth to follow. We should take advantage of people passing through to better our community further.

Would like to see a wider variety of businesses. I would rather spend money in my own community and support it rather than supporting another which I must do more than 50 percent of the time I need something.

Serious considerations towards a mall complex of some sort with a variety of shops, etc., so tax dollars can stay in Sumas and not head to Everson or Lynden.

Keep the natural beauty, but please allow some space for commercial development. I feel that the city is not actively interested in a strong, broad tax base and future.

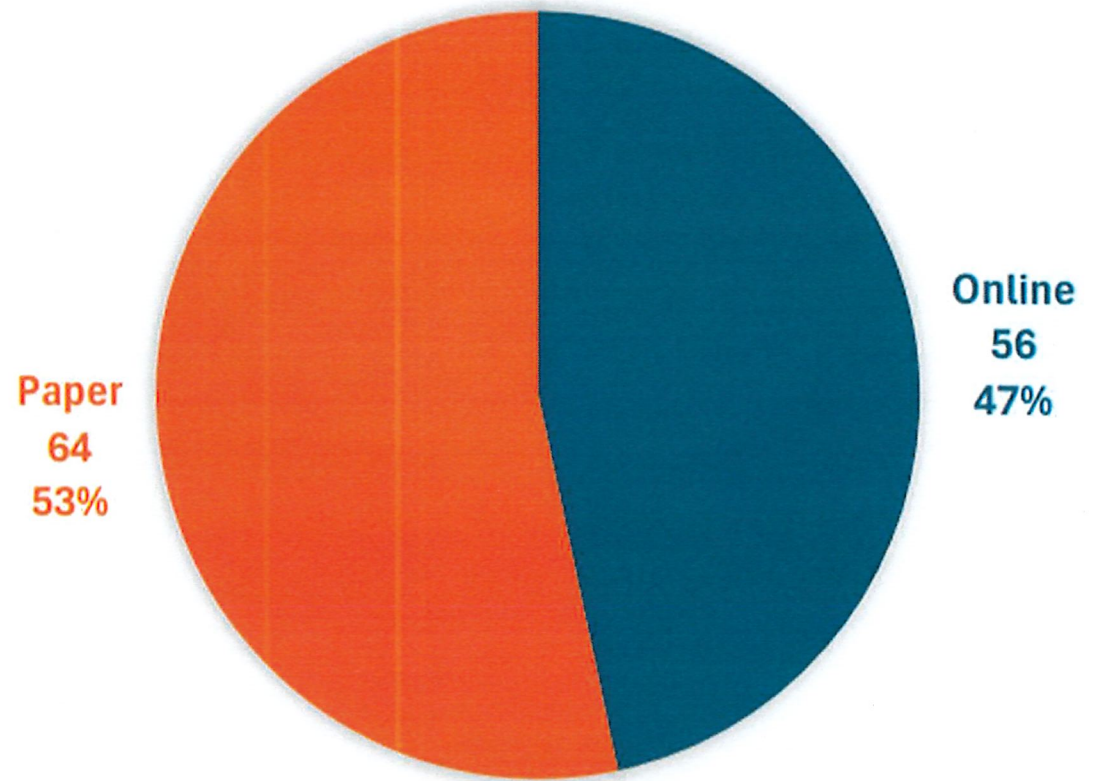


Sumas 2024 Community Survey Response Results

Total Responses: 120

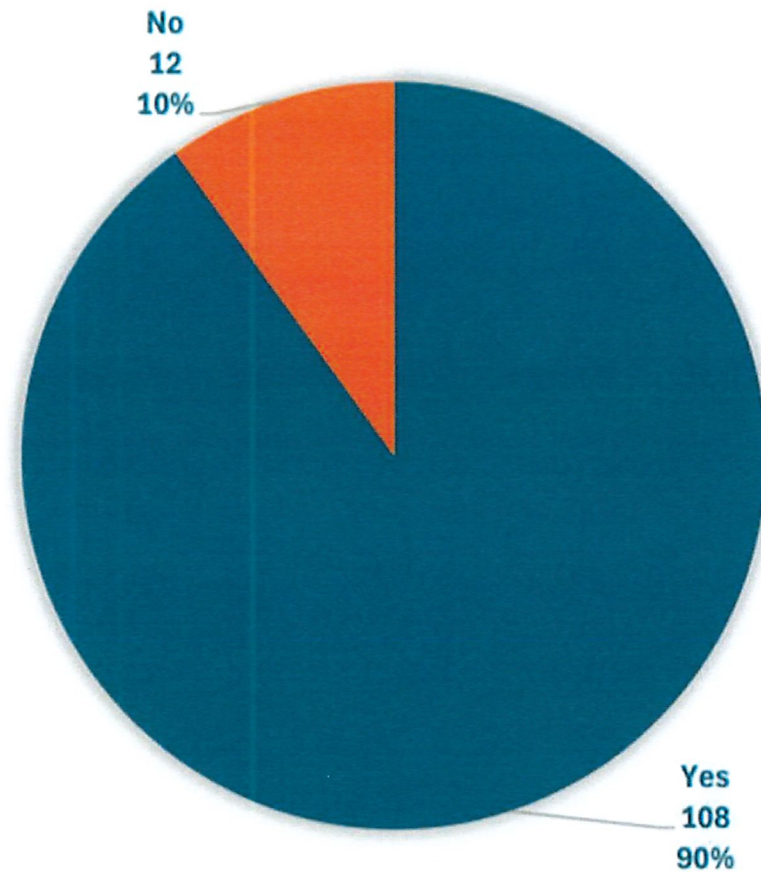
Survey Response Type

- Possible Types
 - Online
 - Paper



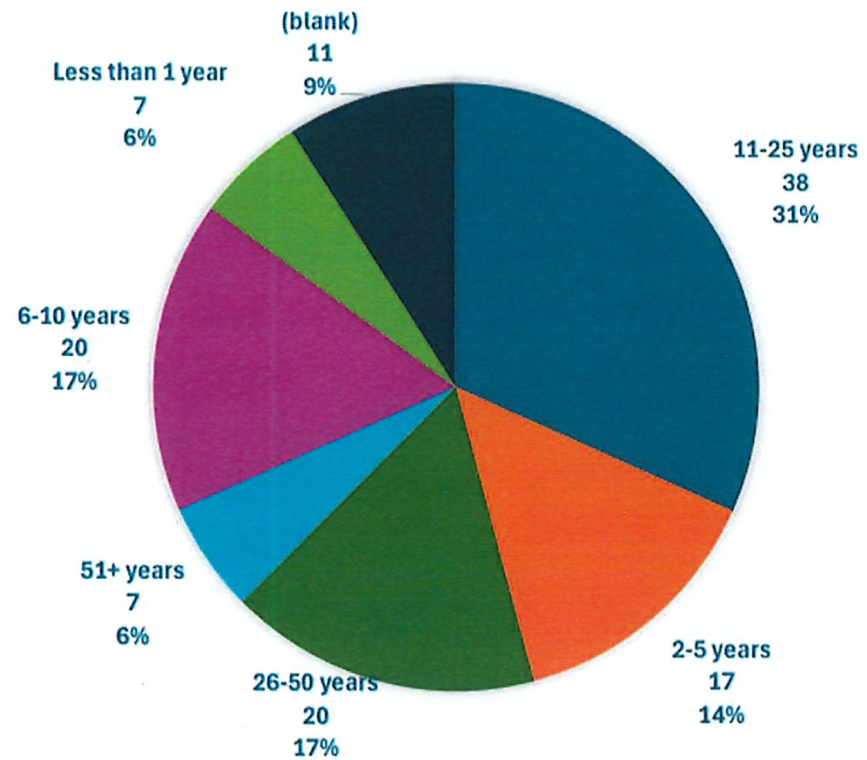
Question 1: Do you currently live within the city limits of Sumas?

- Possible Responses
 - Yes
 - No



Question 1a: If answered yes to the previous question, how long have you lived in Sumas?

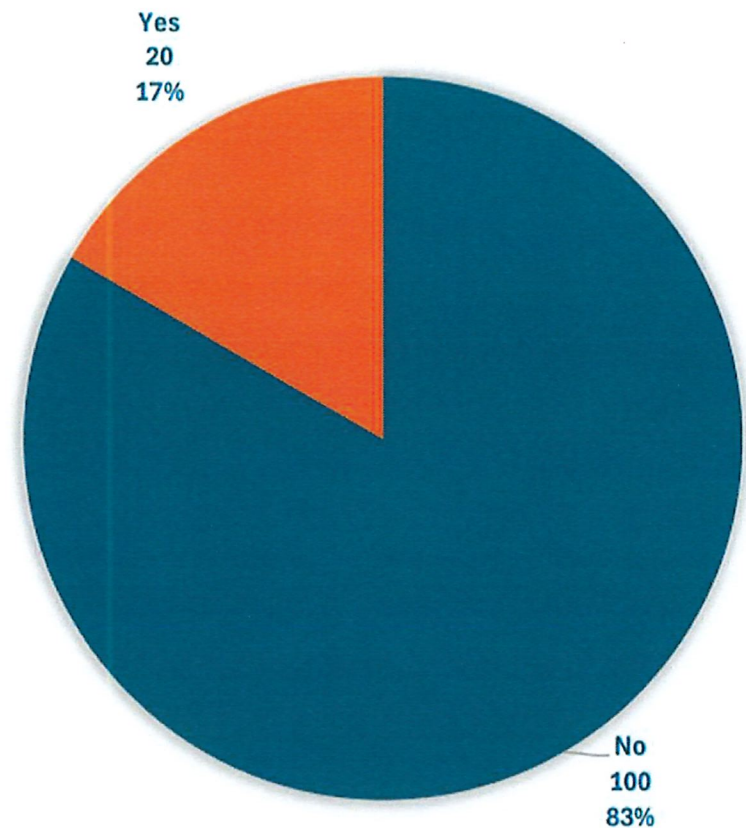
- Possible Responses
 - Less than 1 year
 - 2-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-25 years
 - 26-50 years
 - 51+ years



Question 2: Do you currently own a business within Sumas city limits?

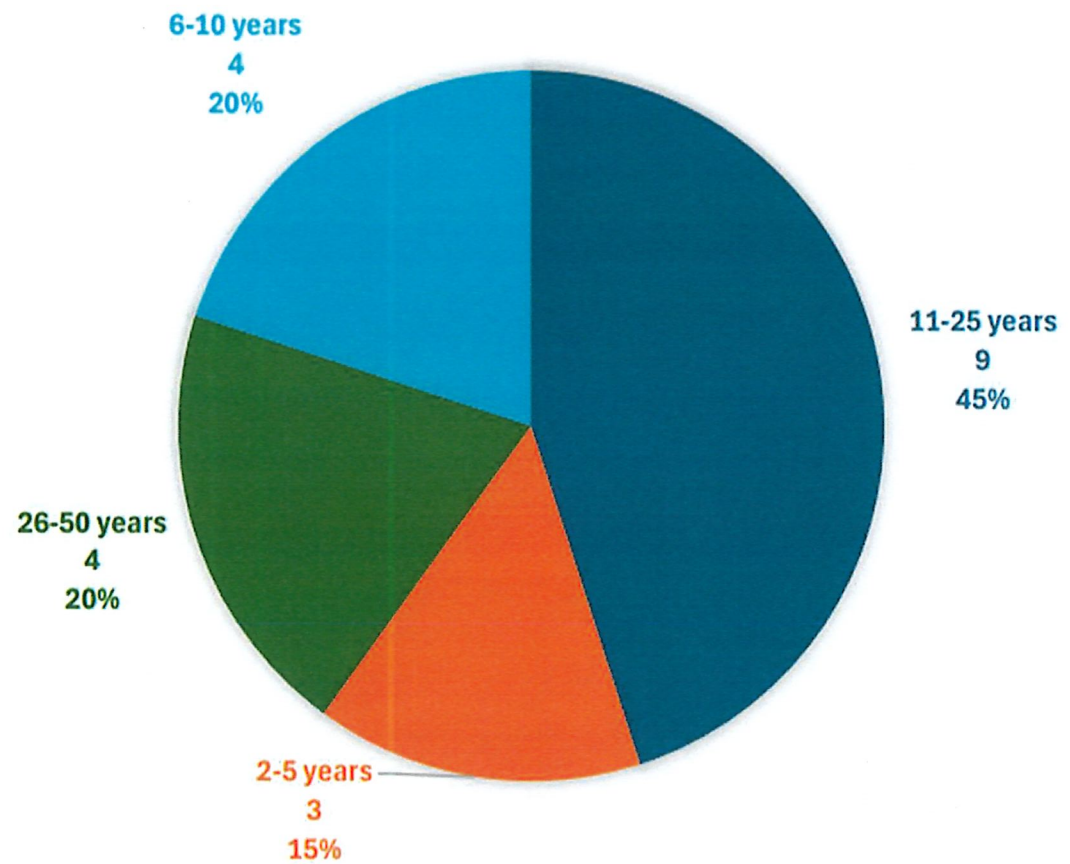
- Possible Responses

- Yes
- No



Question 2a: If you answered “yes” to the previous question, how long have you owned a business in Sumas?

- Possible Responses
 - Less than 1 year
 - 2-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-25 years
 - 26-50 years
 - 51+ years



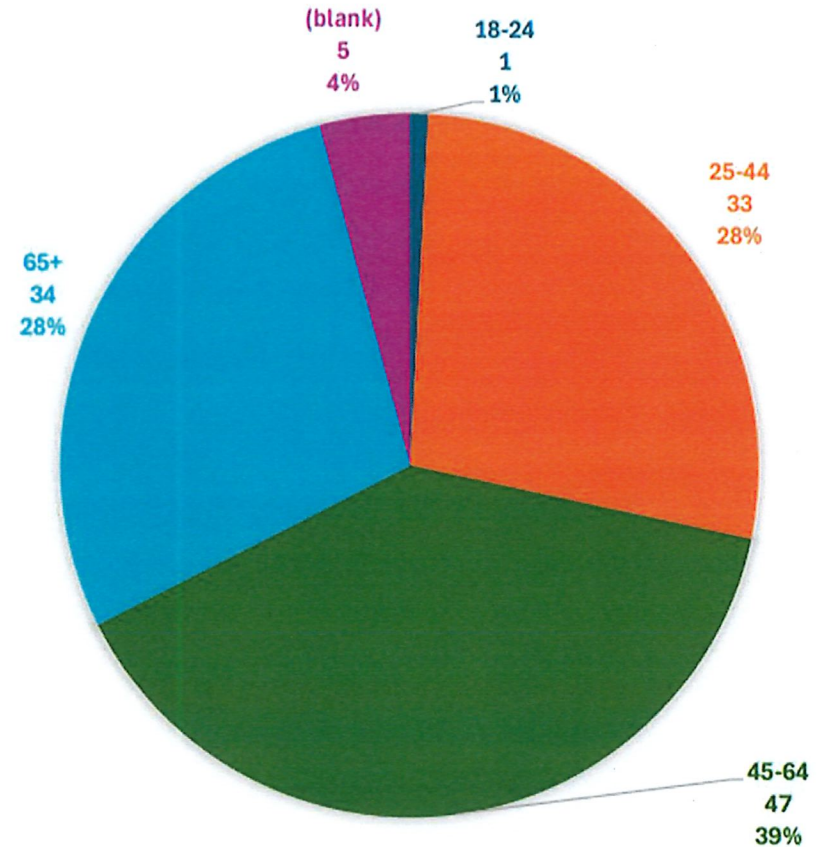
Questions 3, 4, and 4a

- Question 3: Would you like to learn more about the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process?
- Question 4: Would you like to be contacted regarding project updates?
- Question 4a: If you answered “Yes” to either question above, please write in your name, email address, and/or mailing address to receive more information
- **Question responses not shown (Internal use only)**

Question 5: Age

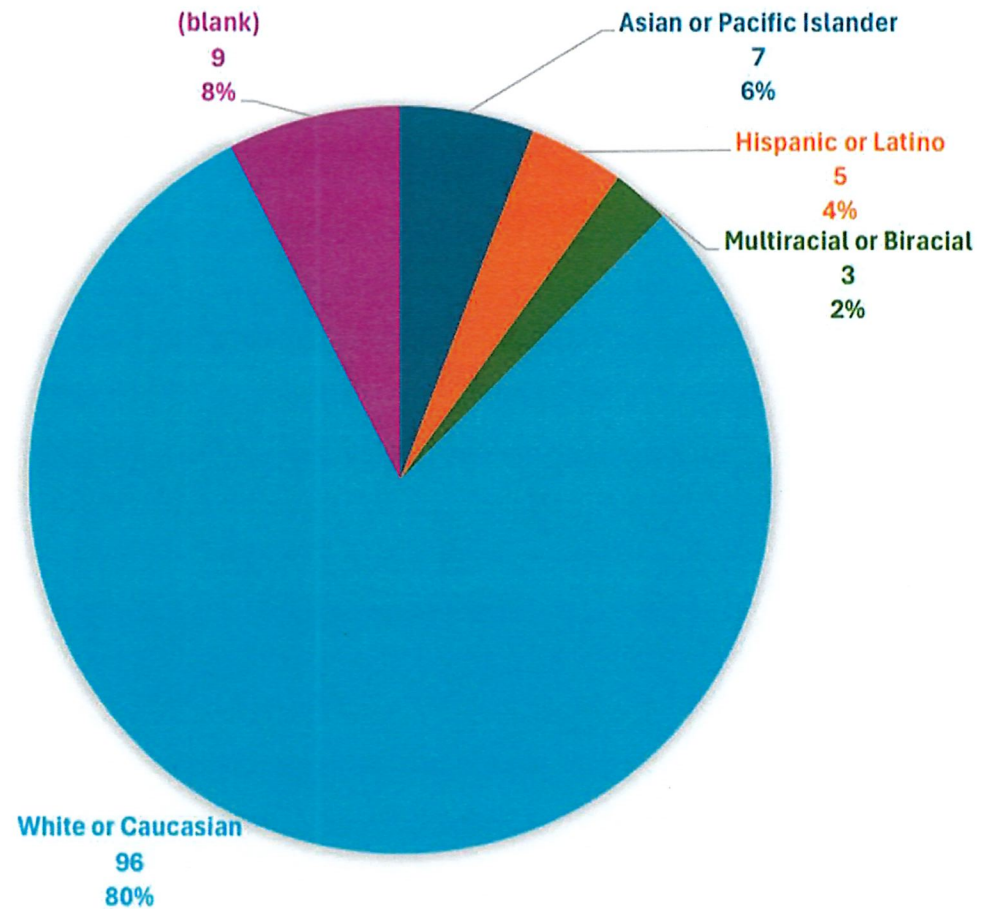
- Possible Responses:

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-44
- 45-64
- 65+



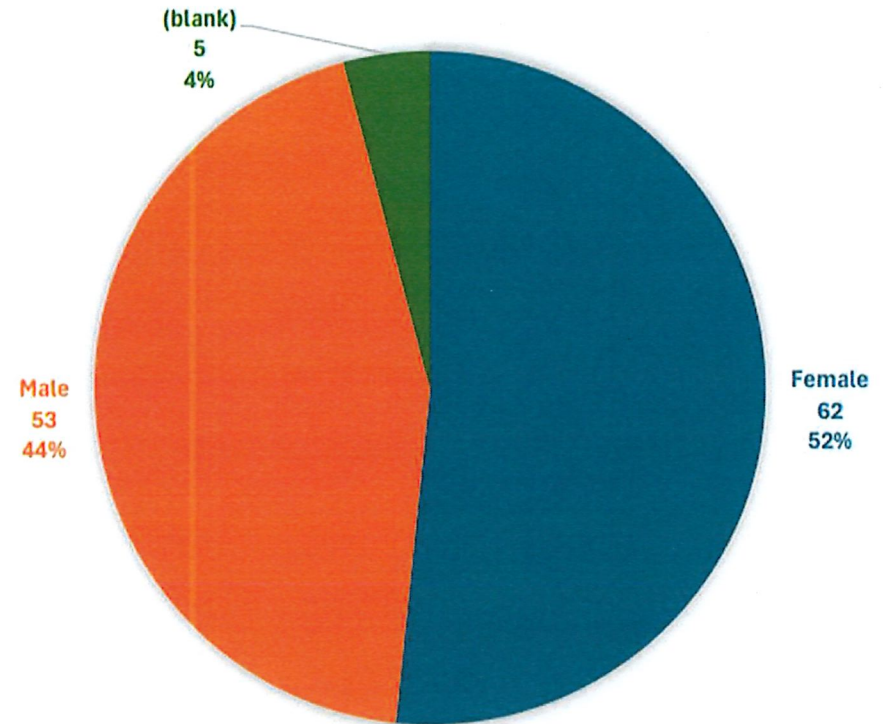
Question 6: Race/Ethnicity

- Possible Responses
 - Asian or Pacific Islander
 - Black or African American
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Native American or Alaskan Native
 - White or Caucasian
 - Multiracial or Biracial



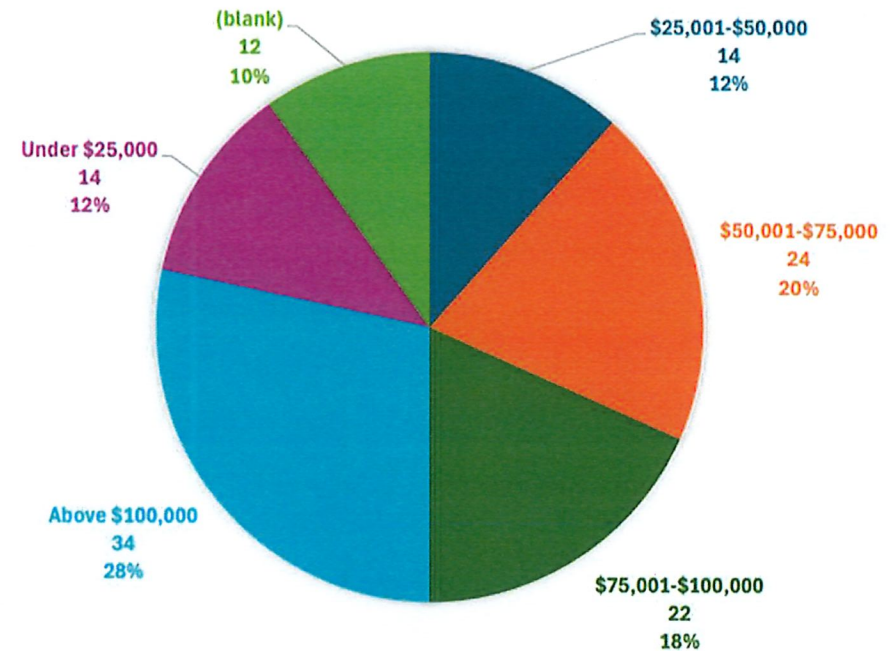
Question 7: Gender Identity

- Possible Responses
 - Female
 - Male



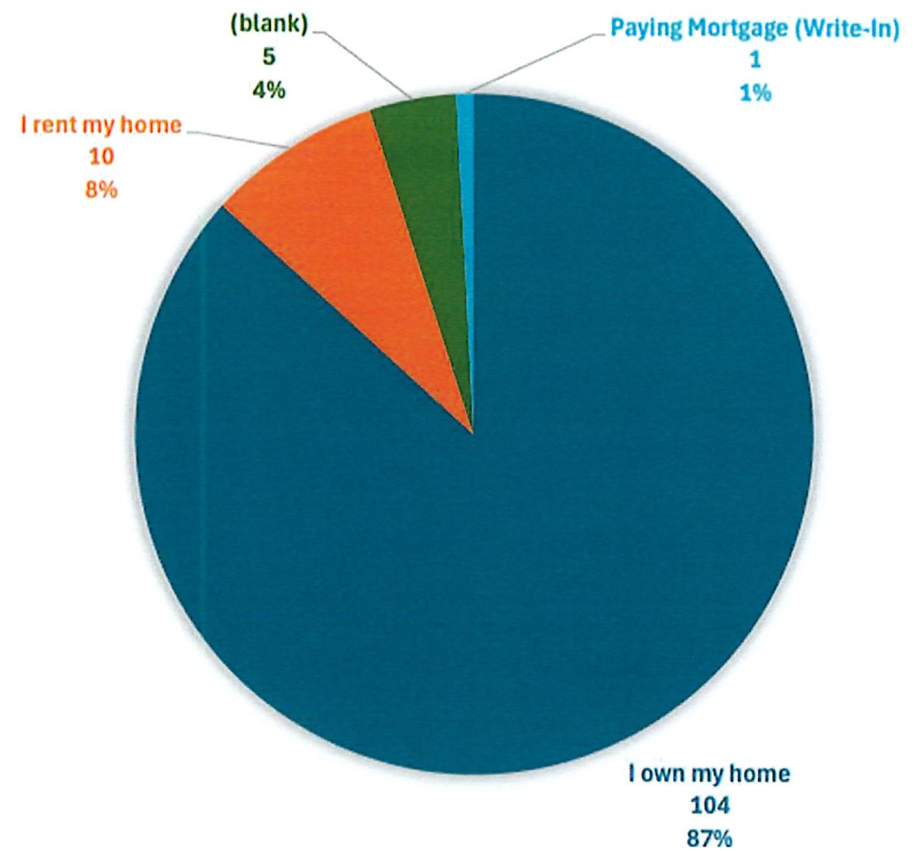
Question 8: Annual Household Income

- Possible Responses
 - Under \$25,000
 - \$25,001-\$50,000
 - \$50,001-\$75,000
 - \$75,001-\$100,000
 - Above \$100,000



Question 9: Home Ownership/Rental Status

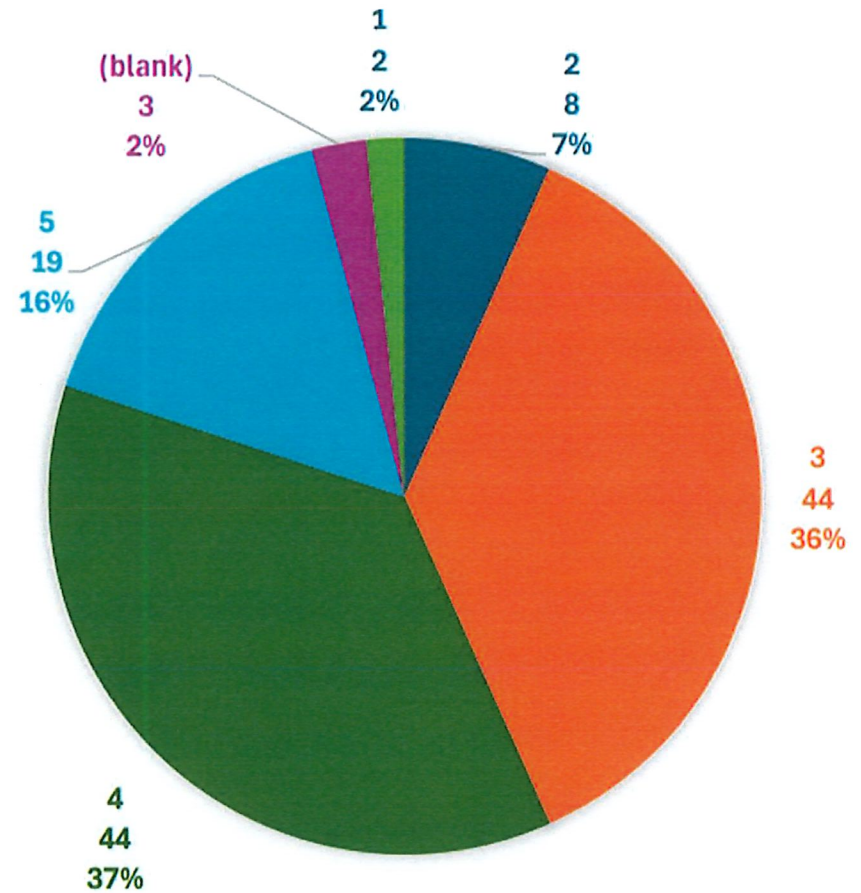
- Possible Responses
 - I own my home
 - I rent my home



Question 10: Do you think Sumas is heading in a good direction? (1 to 5 Scale)

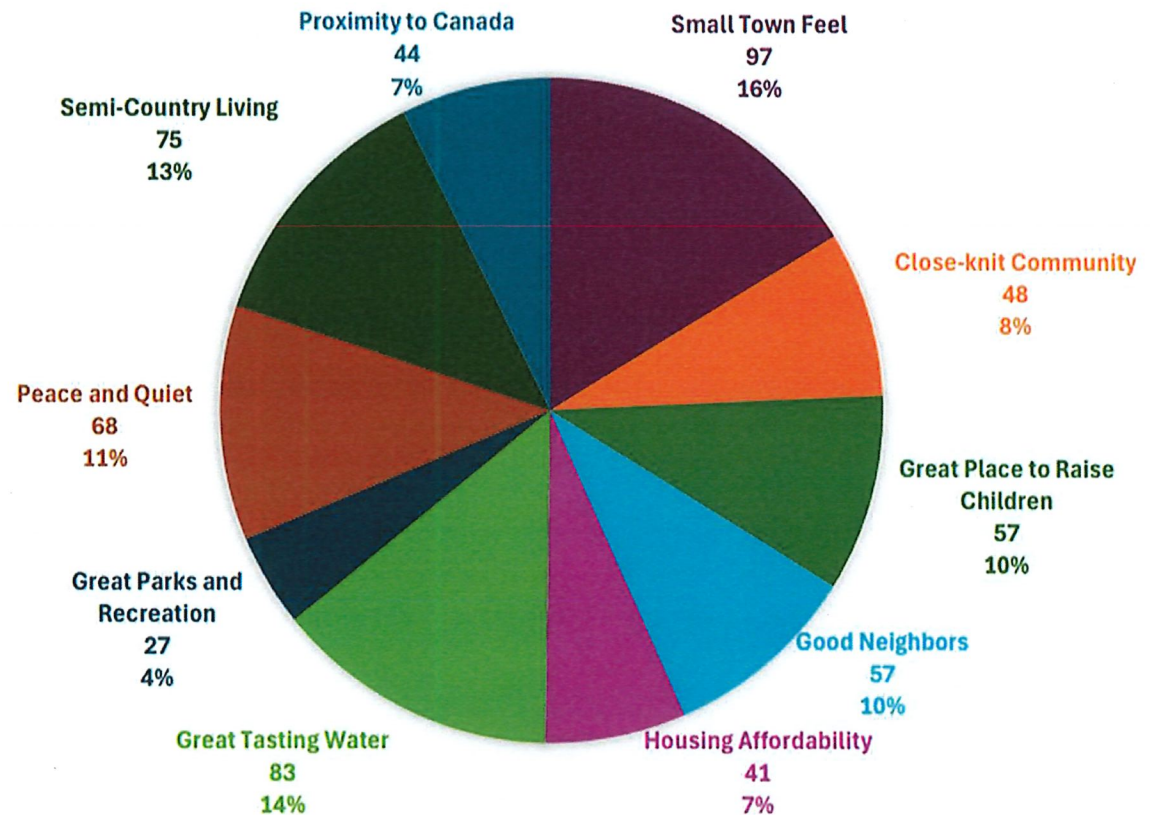
- Possible Responses

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



Question 11: What do you consider to be Sumas' greatest strengths as a community? (Check all that apply)

- Possible Responses
 - Small Town Feel
 - Close-knit Community
 - Great Place to Raise Children
 - Good Neighbors
 - Housing Affordability
 - Great Tasting Water
 - Great Parks and Recreation
 - Semi-Country Living
 - Proximity to Canada
 - Other (Write Ins)



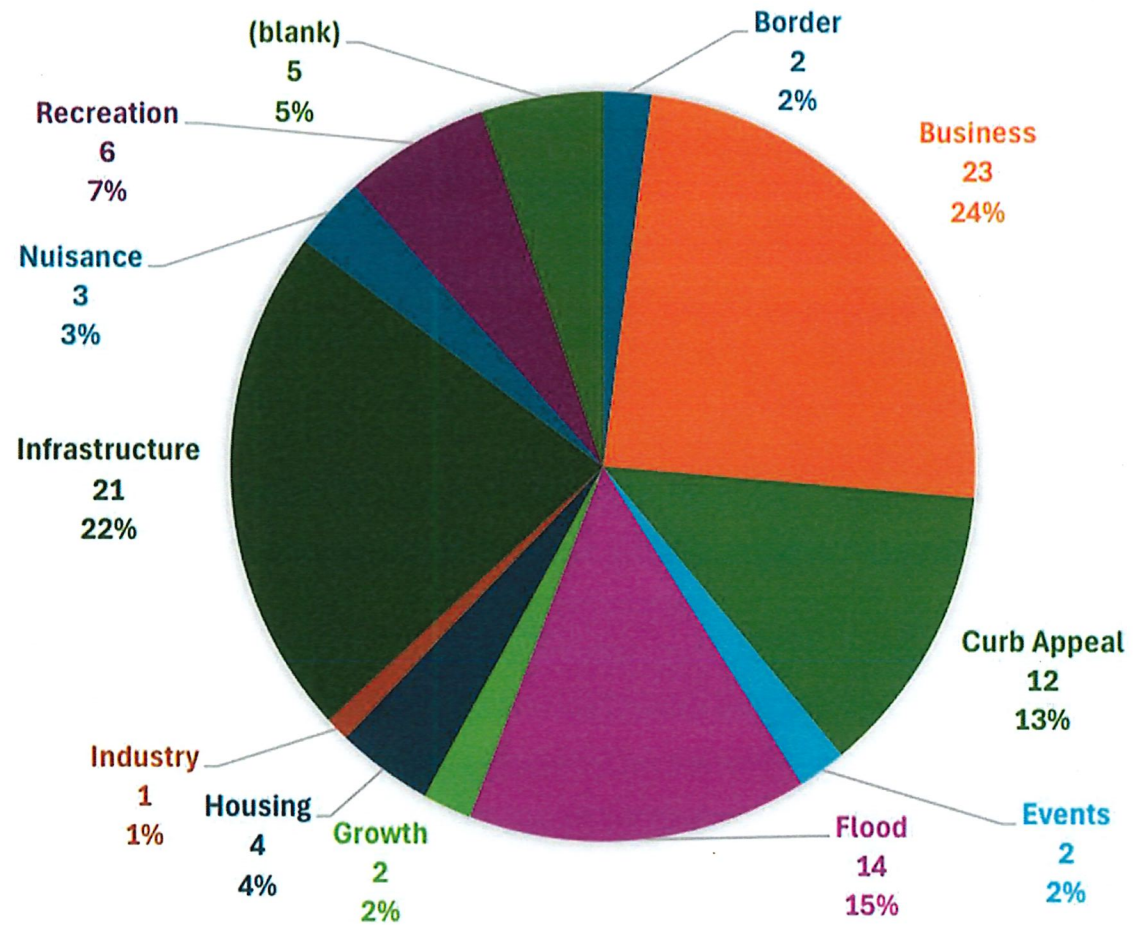
Question 11

Write-Ins

Write-Ins	
Safe Place to Live	1
City is good about being prompt to issues	1
Industrial Zone and Heavy Haul Road	1
Safe/good police dept	1

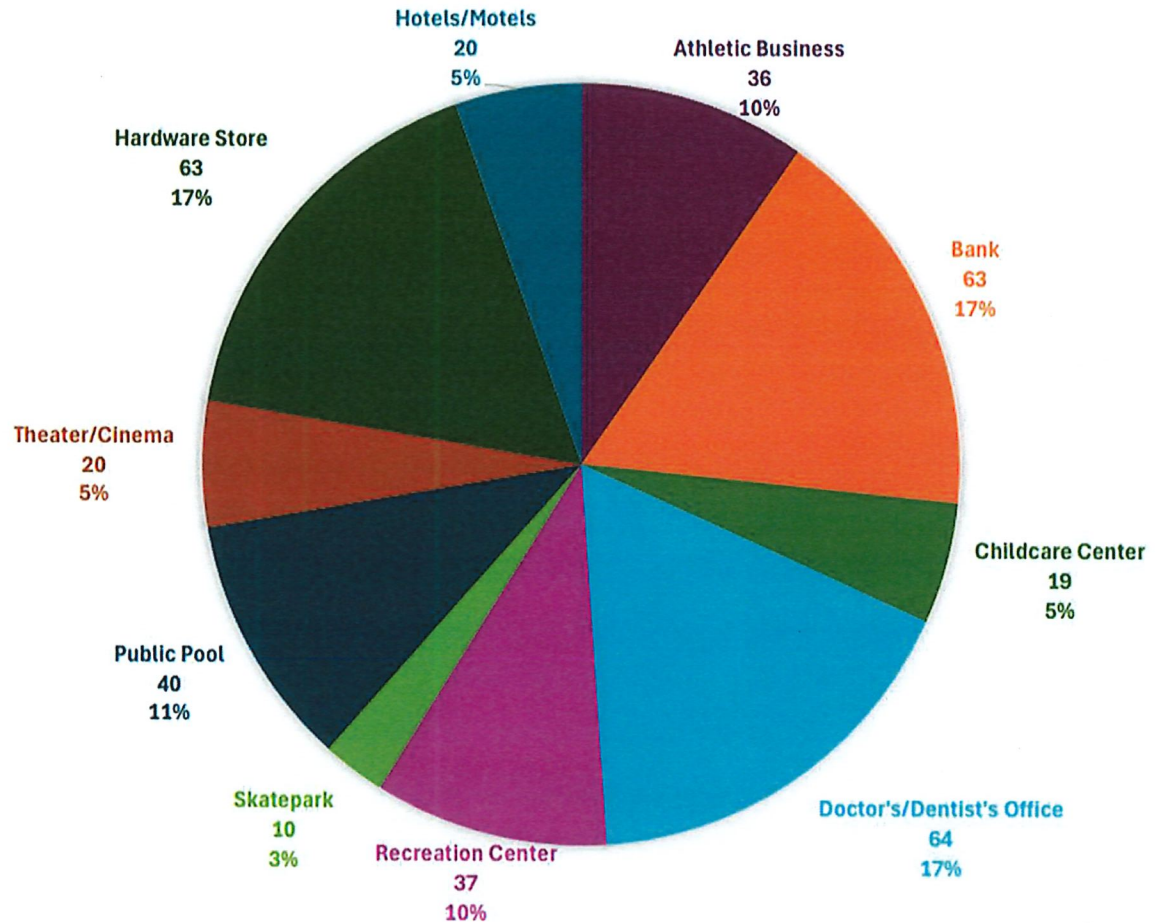
Question 12: What aspects of Sumas do you think could use improving? (Organized by response category)

- Possible categories
 - Border
 - Business
 - Curb Appeal
 - Events
 - Flood
 - Growth
 - Housing
 - Industry
 - Infrastructure
 - Nuisance
 - Recreation



Question 13: Which amenities would you like to see come to Sumas? (Check all that apply)

- Possible Responses
 - Athletic Business
 - Bank
 - Childcare Center
 - Doctor's/Dentist's Office
 - Recreation Center
 - Skatepark
 - Public Pool
 - Theater/Cinema
 - Hardware Store
 - Hotels/Motels
 - Other (Write Ins)



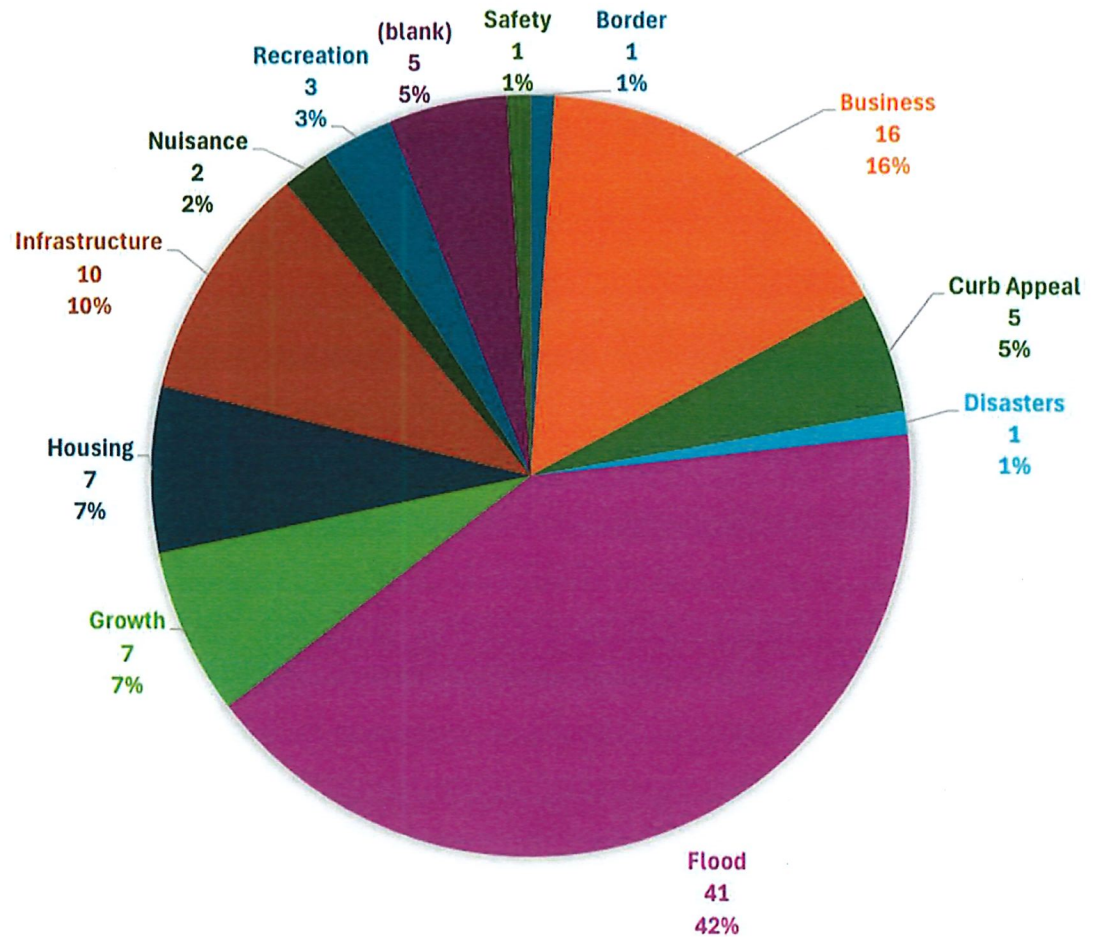
Question 13

Write-Ins

Write-Ins	
Sandwich/pizza shop	1
FAST FOOD OPTION	1
Cannabis Store	1
Quick food like subway or 7-11 and larger grocery store	1
fast food	1
Nature trail	1
Grocery Store w/ Butcher Meat Dept	1
Senior Living - Like Meadow Greens in Lynden	1
fast foods, restaurants	1
Fast Foods	1
Brand name Groc. Store	1
It's about affordability	1
Fast food restaurants, neighborhood Walmart	1
An actual grocery store. The Market being the only remaining source of groceries means they can rip people off.	1
Business center, shopping mall, senior activities, & tours outside Sumas	1
Grocery	1
Fast Foods	1
youth center	1
Pizza/fast food	1
Fast food Restaurant	1
Walking trail away from traffic	1
develop a "river walk", Urgent Care	1
Volunteer center, affordable restaurants, improved walkability	1

Question 14: What do you think should be the City of Sumas' top priority for the next 20 years? Why? (Organized by response category)

- Possible Responses
 - Border
 - Business
 - Curb Appeal
 - Disasters
 - Flood
 - Growth
 - Housing
 - Infrastructure
 - Nuisance
 - Recreation



Question 15: Do you believe that Sumas is a great place to live and do business?

• Possible Responses

- Yes
- No
- Other (Write Ins)

Row Labels	Count of #
Yes	101
No	5
(blank)	3
Get Rivers and Ditches cleaned out!	1
Yes good place to live but really not so much businesses to do business in Sumas	1
It could be but I think it needs work.	1
Nice Place to Live	1
It has not been as great since the flood. I feel that the community received little help to build it back to where it was.	1
Yes to live, no to keep our business thriving	1
Great place to live. Needs more attention to business needs in order to be here doing business.	1
It could be, but it needs some work.	1
has possibilities	1
It could be - living here over the other Whatcom towns is fantastic. The drive to get things less so. And I know businesses *currently* are having a hard time.	1
To live but what business would you do here?	1
Grand Total	120

Community Vision and Goals

Based upon the results of the community survey, the input of the planning commission, and citizen feedback at public meetings, the following vision has been identified:

Sumas should be a small rural town that offers a vibrant commercial district, spacious residential neighborhoods, a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities, and an industrial base that provides decent jobs. The community should exhibit self-reliance and the citizens should have pride in their town.

Several policy objectives have been identified to help the city attain this vision.

- Sumas should protect the natural elements -- the clean air, pure water, and beautiful open space -- that create the pastoral environment enjoyed by residents.
- Sumas should protect the residential character that is the essence of a rural town: residents should have "room to breathe", yet should still be able to walk anywhere in town.
- Sumas should encourage commercial development that provides a benefit to local residents. Sumas should capitalize upon the large number of "passers-through" in order to support desirable businesses that would otherwise not survive in such a small town.
- Commercial development should be contained within compact, well-defined areas, both to minimize the impact on surrounding neighborhoods and to serve patrons conveniently.
- Sumas should encourage "clean" industrial development in areas separate from residential use.
- Sumas should enhance the facilities at existing parks and also develop new trail and park facilities by conversion of land that is unsuitable for development because of flooding.
- Sumas should protect groundwater resources to ensure that potable water meeting the current high standard and in quantities sufficient to support new growth will continue to be available into the future.
- Sumas should provide special protection of anadromous fisheries through implementation of the city's critical areas regulations and shoreline management master program goals, policies and regulations.

In addition to the goals set forth above, the planning goals established in the Growth Management Act (GMA) pursuant to RCW 36.70A.020 are hereby adopted and incorporated by this reference as planning goals under this comprehensive plan. In addition, the policy of the Shoreline Management Act established under RCW 90.58.020 is added as one of the GMA planning goal, without creating any priority order, and is incorporated by this reference into the Sumas comprehensive plan.