



The Chicago Avenue Corridor Improvement project is part of the Invest South/West initiative to re-activate neighborhood cores that have historically served as focal points for pedestrian activity, shopping, services, transportation, public spaces and quality of life amenities for residents. Since the onset of this project in April, 2021, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), and project design team have conducted an existing conditions analysis, reached out to community stakeholders, and have begun investigating design alternatives.

Public Meeting #1 was held on August 24, 2021 through the online webinar platform Zoom. The meeting began at 6 p.m. and ended at approximately 7:15 p.m. The presentation provided an overview of the project, schedule, streetscape components, previous community feedback, existing conditions, opportunities, and next steps. Live polling was used during the presentation to obtain feedback on preferences of the corridor character, prioritization of roadway features, and potential intersection treatments.

Panelists included representatives from CDOT and the project team, Alderman Taliaferro from the 29<sup>th</sup> Ward, and Alderman Mitts from the 37<sup>th</sup> Ward. The questions and answers portion of the meeting covered a wide range of project topics that included community outreach, general project details, sidewalk space, parking, decorative features & neighborhood identity, and bike lanes. A summary of the questions and answers facilitated during the meeting is provided in Appendix A.

After the meeting a more detailed survey was distributed to collect feedback. Community members were encouraged to take the online survey and/or submit comments via the project website <https://tinyurl.com/ISWChicagoAve> through September 10. A summary of survey results is provided in Appendix B.

The City and project design team will be reviewing the comments and revising designs. The design phase of the project is due to be completed by the end of 2022 and will be constructed in late 2022 through 2025. Community members and other stakeholders are encouraged to visit the project website to contact the project team and sign up for the newsletter to stay updated.

# Appendix A

## Public Meeting #1 Questions and Answers

### Community Outreach

**Q:** Is the City investing funds for outreach? Are they hosting events for community discussions (music series/art exhibit)? Most of the info I see is shared too late because a lot of the organizations on the Westside do not use social media. Funds to create signage along Chicago Ave or community outreach posts (like the Boom Box on Chicago/Mayfield) could improve community outreach. Right now, there's no consistent community activity on Chicago Avenue.

**A:** *Outreach efforts for this project include stakeholder meetings, ISW roundtables, and public meetings. We have a project website and we work with the Aldermen and various stakeholders to distribute and share project information. We have and will continue to distribute paper flyers along the corridor. We are also conducting youth engagement activities, as was shared earlier during the presentation. If you want to help us get the word out for upcoming project meetings and surveys, please let us know via the chat and we will contact you.*

**Q:** How specifically will business owners along Chicago Avenue be engaged?

**A:** *Input can be sent through the project website at <https://tinyurl.com/ISWChicagoAve> or by calling 312-744-2632. Please reference "Austin Chicago Ave" in your message. The project design team is also working closely with the Aldermen's offices and Chamber.*

**Q:** In reference to my question about engaging business owners, I did not ask this as a Chicago Ave business owner, but as an Austin Forward Together strategy lead. I just want to encourage a healthy outreach to these important stakeholders, so that their voices are heard! It takes a little effort to get people in our community to participate.

**A:** *Please help us get the word out! We'd love to have more of the community participate. There will be more outreach and meetings in the future. You can also submit comments through the project website.*

### General Project

**Q:** Will this project include Central Ave, and if so what are the limits of the streetscape improvements?

**A:** *The limits of this project are along Chicago Avenue from Austin Boulevard to Cicero Avenue. Work may extend along all the cross streets (including Central Avenue) to the alleys north and south of Chicago Avenue.*

**Q:** When will this project begin and end?

**A:** *The project is currently in the design development phase and anticipated to be constructed in several sections in late 2022 through 2025.*

Q: How much will this project cost?

A: *The current cost estimate is approximately \$21 million.*

Q: Will this project be coordinated with the Laramie State Bank project?

A: *CDOT's proposed infrastructure improvements will be coordinated with all of the adjacent on-going developments.*

### Sidewalks

Q: More attention should be given to the lack of sidewalk space on some of the streets. The Austin Chamber of Commerce is working to create an alfresco arts and cultural theme on Chicago Ave. With the City guideline that refers to 8 feet clearance before any structure can be placed on the sidewalks (planters, seating & tables), most businesses cannot benefit from the enhanced curb appeal and increased foot traffic because the amount of sidewalk space is only 8 feet.

A: *One of the goals of the project is to rebuild and widen the sidewalks to create a more comfortable and attractive space to walk, including new trees, waste receptacles, and seating areas.*

### Parking

Q: Will there be parking lots created such as those found in Oak Park along Lake St and in LaGrange along LaGrange Rd?

A: *Any improvements beyond the right-of-way limits (beyond the face of the buildings) are not part of this project. Creating parking lots is not within the scope of this project.*

Q: How does the plan take into consideration the desperately needed parking to sustain our businesses?

A: *The project team is looking at on-street parking utilization up and down the corridor, as well as listening to the Aldermen and community groups in regard to the use of adjacent surface parking lots. Later on in the design process different design alternatives will be developed and shared, with each alternative having different benefits and tradeoffs. A key component of the design process will be providing sufficient parking, while addressing other key considerations such as safety and mobility.*

### Decorative Features & Neighborhood Identity

Q: I'm currently involved with a 29th Ward Participatory Budget committee and we've just completed the idea collection phase. Collected ideas for Chicago Ave. between Central Ave and Austin Blvd include: concrete planters installed at each bus stop, a sculpture at Austin Blvd., and customized litter receptacles installed at each bus stop. Are any of these projects included in the Chicago Ave. corridor improvements?

A: *As mentioned in the presentation, the improvements on Chicago Avenue will include wider sidewalks that can accommodate new trees and planters, waste receptacles, and public art. Yes, planters and custom trash receptacles are typically included in these projects. We will reach out to you and the Alderman's office to discuss further to coordinate.*

Q: I was part of the quality of life plan with Austin Coming Together a couple of years ago. I suggested an arch on one of the main streets stating Welcome to Austin. Is this something that can be implemented and possibly Soul City Corridor Arch on Chicago Ave? Can a black-owned landscape company collaborate with the City of Chicago with a contract to train and hire the formerly incarcerated to provide the landscaping? When a person can see how they were involved with the beautification of their community they have more respect for it and it brings a sense of pride. Could the artwork could be provided from CPS students in the community of Austin?

A: *Major gateways like arches are part of the scope of the project and alternatives will be developed. The project team will be asking the community for more input in future meetings. CDOT will also be working with Special Service Area (SSA) & community groups to develop landscaping maintenance partnerships. We are also engaging the Austin youth through Territory, a non for profit youth based artist organization.*

Q: Is the name “Soul City Corridor” a done deal?

A: *CDOT is building off of the work completed from previous studies, and the plan is to continue forward with the Soul City name.*

Q: Who is going to pay and maintain the maintenance of the planter boxes? Is an SSA going to pay for the new look?

A: *At this point the design features and related maintenance agreements have not yet been determined. These arrangements will be formalized with the development of the final plan.*

Q: Can some of the artwork that will be displayed come from CPS students in the Austin Community?

A: *Potential artwork alternatives will be developed and shared at the next public meeting.*

Q: Regarding Territory, how many Austin residents will be participating in this program?

A: *Territory’s team is in the process of being assembled and their progress will be shared at the next public meeting.*

### Bike Lanes

Q: How can the bike lanes be added without worsening already bad traffic?

A: *The proposed improvements will be designed as a Complete Street to balance safety and traffic operations along Chicago Avenue for all types of transportation, including driving, riding transit, biking, and walking. Traffic analyses are being completed to ensure the proposed improvements provide a balanced street that’s safe and attractive for all users.*

# Appendix B

## Public Meeting #1 Survey Summary

The majority of respondents live near the corridor and travel through the corridor via automobile. While there are a mix of reasons why respondents visit the corridor, the greatest number are traveling through, meeting friends/family, and work/employment related. With additional space in the corridor created from bump-outs, respondents would like a mix of playful/active space and modern/contemporary. They would also prioritize more trees/landscaping to a greater degree than other potential roadway features. Consistently, the biggest concerns along the corridor are the ability to be outside and lack of landscaping, followed by poor pedestrian experience. When asked to identify which intersections are the most challenging for a pedestrian, Central & Chicago, Laramie & Chicago, Cicero & Chicago, and Austin & Chicago were identified the most frequently.

Review the survey responses in greater detail on the following pages.



**AUGUST 24, 2021**

# **PUBLIC MEETING #1**

# **SURVEY RESULTS**

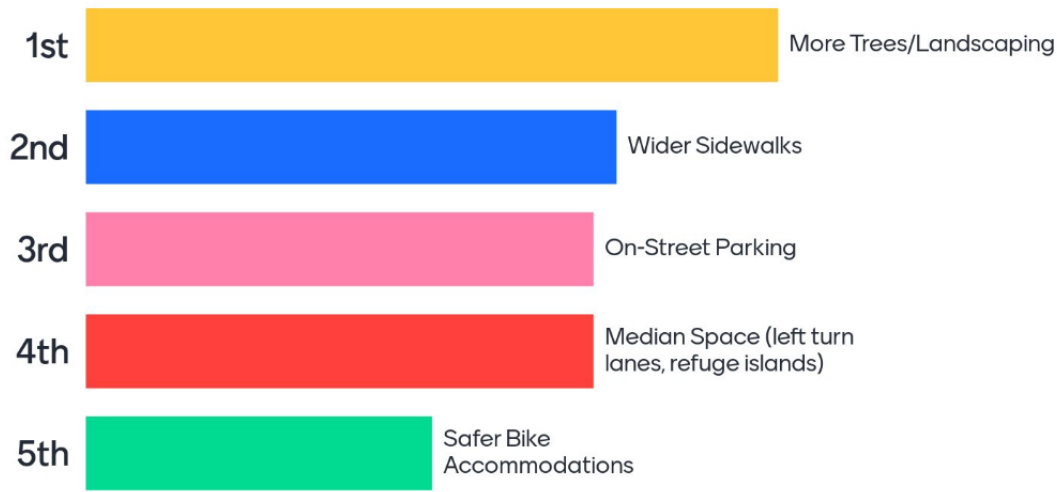
## **ISW Austin Chicago Avenue Corridor Improvements**

## Purpose and Goals

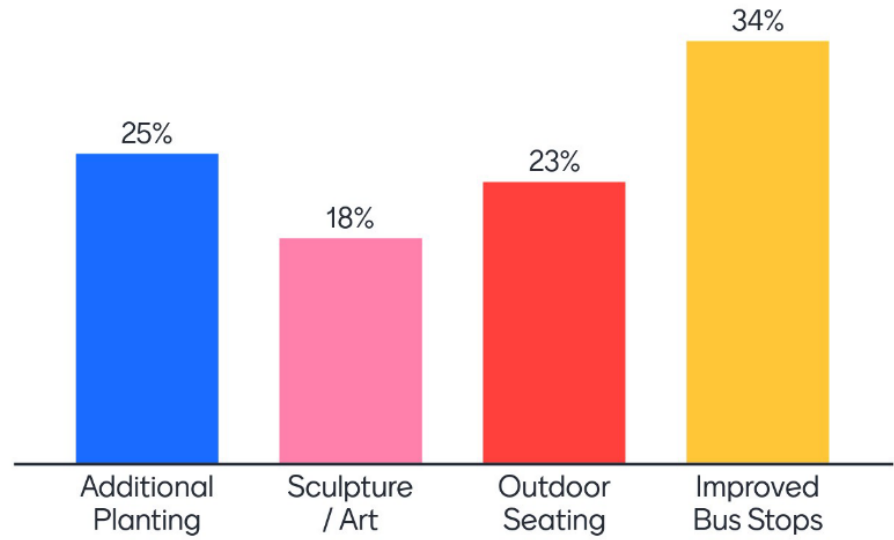
- Explanation of Streetscape Components
- Previous Community Feedback
- Existing Conditions
- Opportunities



## What roadway features would you like prioritized?



## What would you like to see at intersections?







## Q: What is special about Chicago Avenue?



*“The people. It's a business corridor where you can everything from popcorn to hair braiding.”*

*“It's a gateway through the Black community, and with all the improvements taking place, people will want to come.”*

*“It is a street that reflects Chicago in name and status. The way you can see sudden changes in neighborhoods from poor to middle class to wealthy from Austin to downtown show how much work needs to be done to make Chicago more equitable and CLEAN for all its residents.”*

*“It's home. where I grew up and live should be a safe place.”*

*“Coleman's Ribs, Miracle Center Church.”*

*“Chicago Avenue could be the West Side Black Wall Street. Our community is filled with educated, middle income households who want a safe, nice, clean neighborhood to continue to raise our families and reap the benefits of strong work ethic and homeownership along with small business growth. Chicago Ave is great. You can travel all the way from Navy Pier to Oak Park. It is convenient, has great foot traffic and great buildings.”*

## Q: What do you want the corridor to be known for?



*"An authentic ethnic enclave with live entertainment, a rooftop society, and technology."*

*"Good food, a and a place where African American Businesses can thrive."*

*"Togetherness! A place of belonging."*

*"Businesses and safety"*

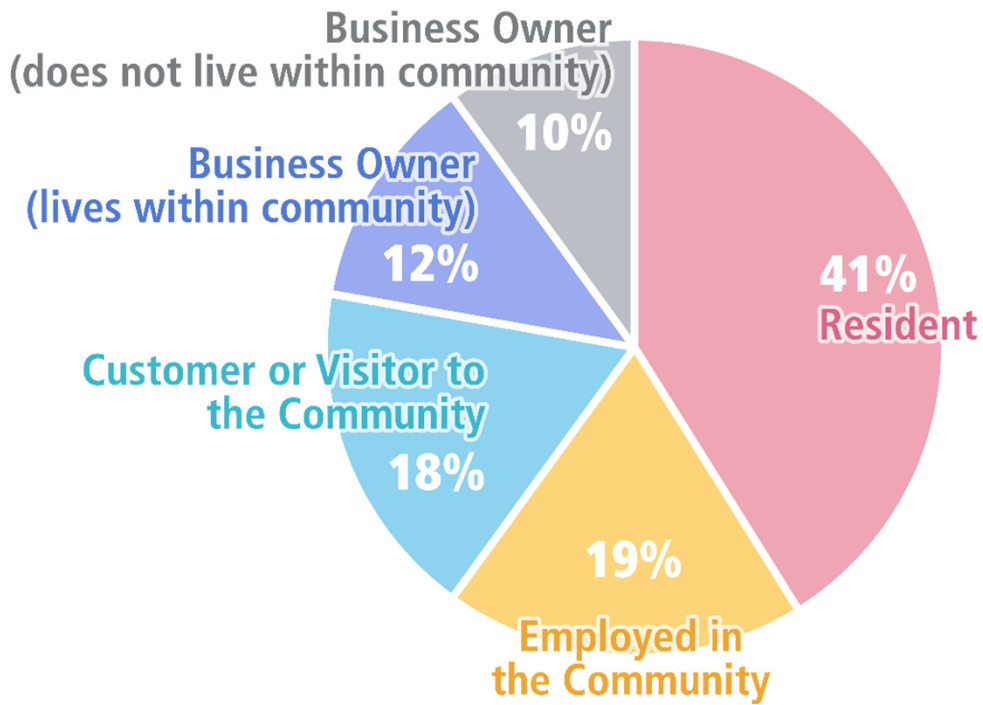
*"Restaurants, dining, small business, worship and rec centers for the youth."*

*"Music (not just blues) Art, Culture and History of African Americans. A place that strives to redefine what being Black in America means. Where Black people can connect beyond religion."*

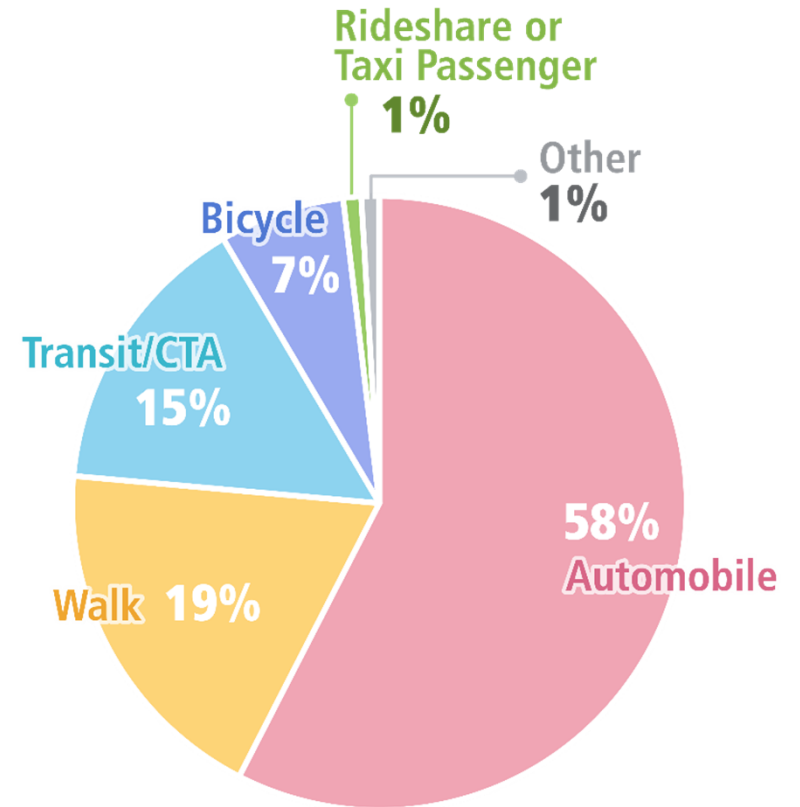
*"A destination neighborhood with a strong economic impact where community members are safe and thriving due to the creativity, ambition, courage, hard-work, and genius of our community members."*



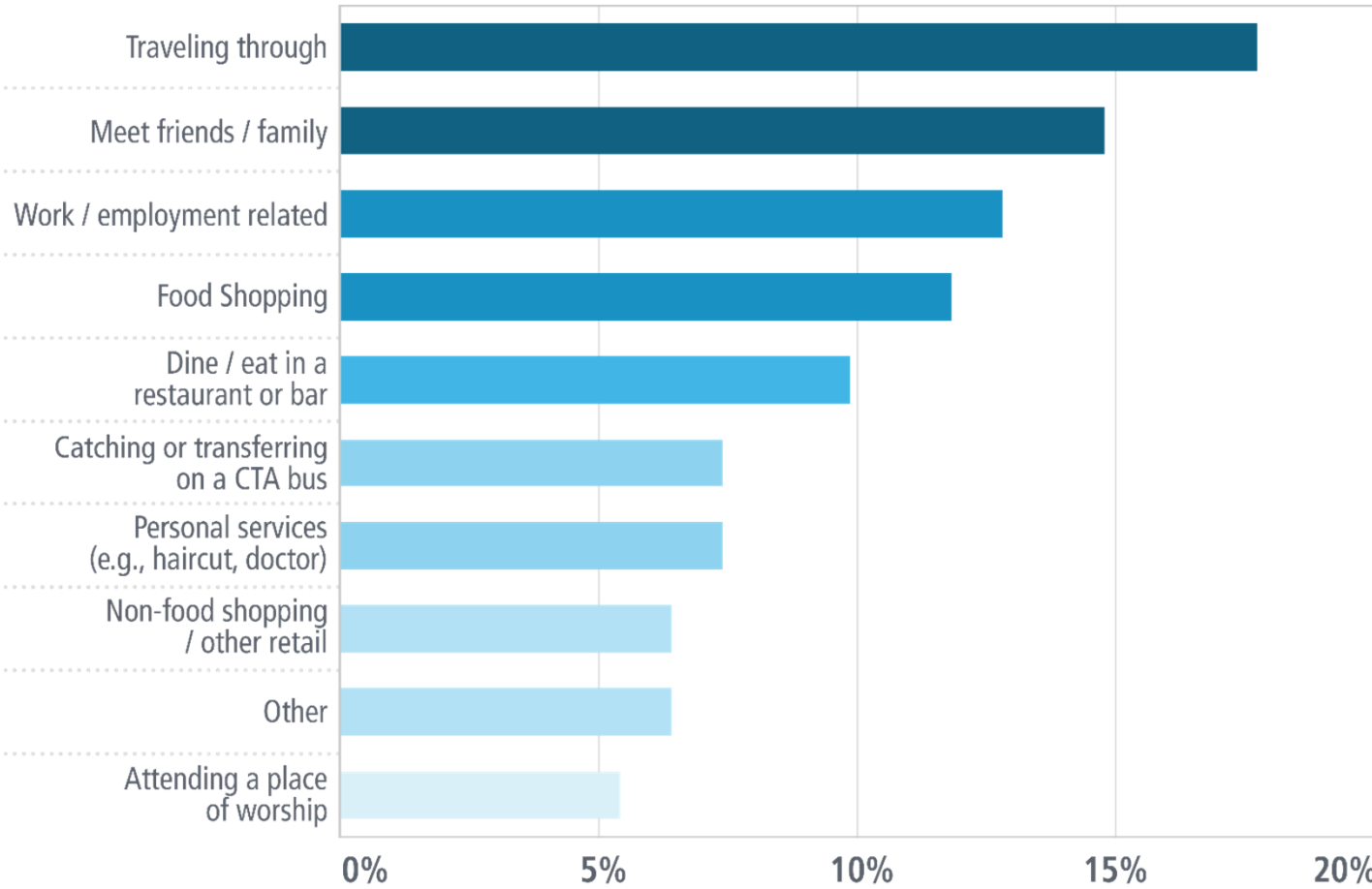
## Q: What is your relationship to the Chicago Ave-Austin corridor?



## Q: How do you travel to/through the Chicago Ave-Austin Corridor?



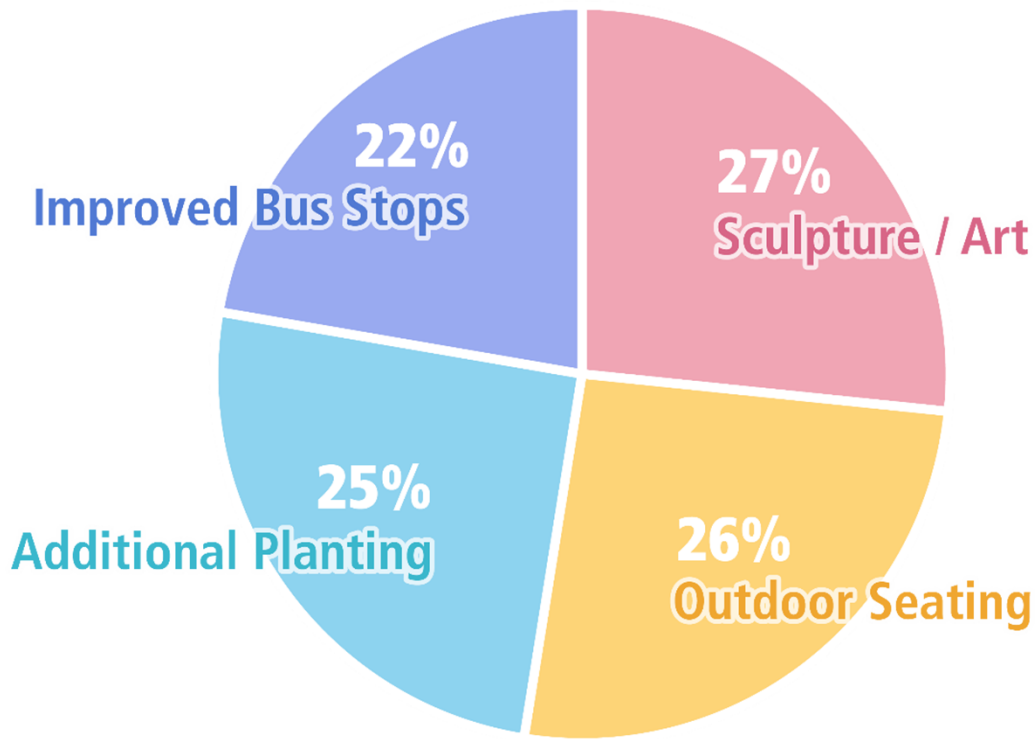
## Q: What is the purpose of your trip when visiting the Chicago Ave-Austin Corridor?



### Resident Only Responses

- Top purposes are traveling through and food shopping
- Compared to all responses, residents make up:
  - 93% of the personal service trips
  - 87% of bus-related activity trips
  - 77% of non-food retail shopping trips
  - 75% of food shopping and traveling through trips

**Q: At intersections where new bump-outs will create additional space, what would you like to see added?**



**Resident Only Responses**

- Top Choices: additional planting & improved bus stops

**Pedestrian Only Responses**

- Top Choices: improved bus stops & additional planting

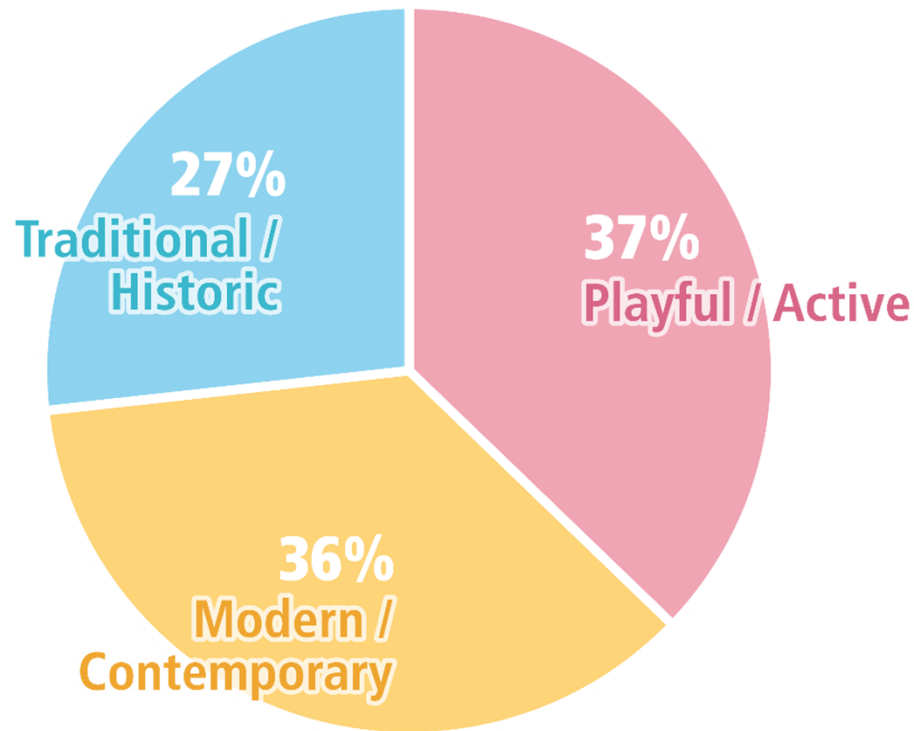
**Transit Only Responses**

- Top Choices: improved bus stops & outdoor seating

**Auto Only Responses**

- Top Choices: sculpture/art & outdoor seating

**Q: At intersections where new bump-outs will create additional space, what would you like to see added?**



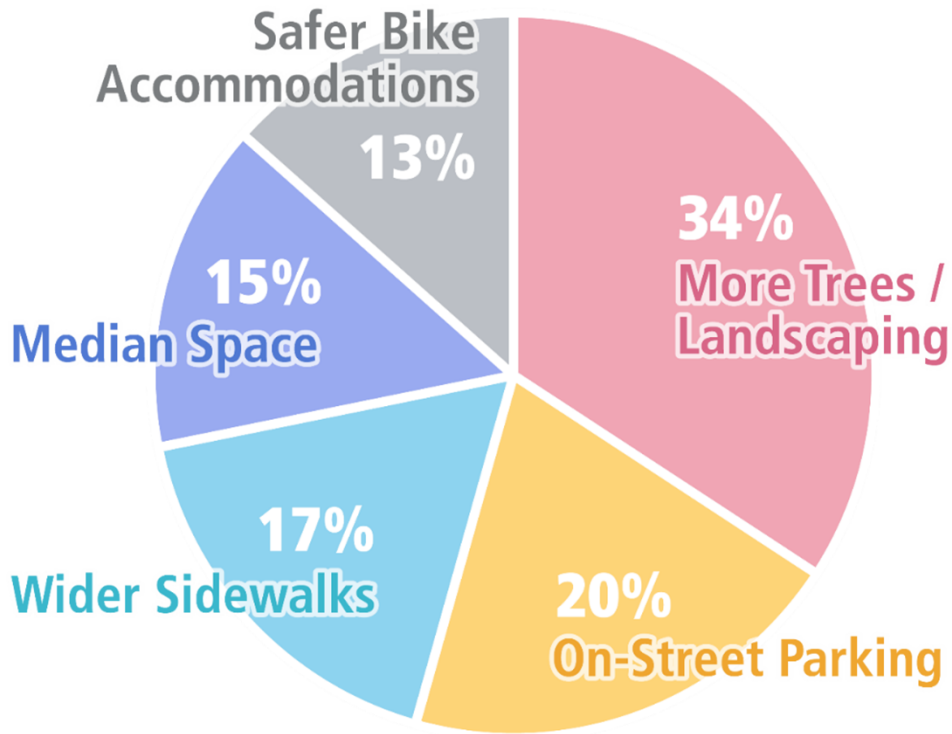
**Resident Only Responses:** Playful / Active

**Pedestrian Only Responses:** Playful / Active

**Transit Only Responses:** Playful / Active

**Auto Only Responses:** Modern / Contemporary

## Q: What roadway features would you like prioritized?



### Resident Only Responses

- Top Choices: more trees/landscaping & wider sidewalks

### Pedestrian Only Responses

- Top Choices: more trees/landscaping, wider sidewalks, & median space

### Transit Only Responses

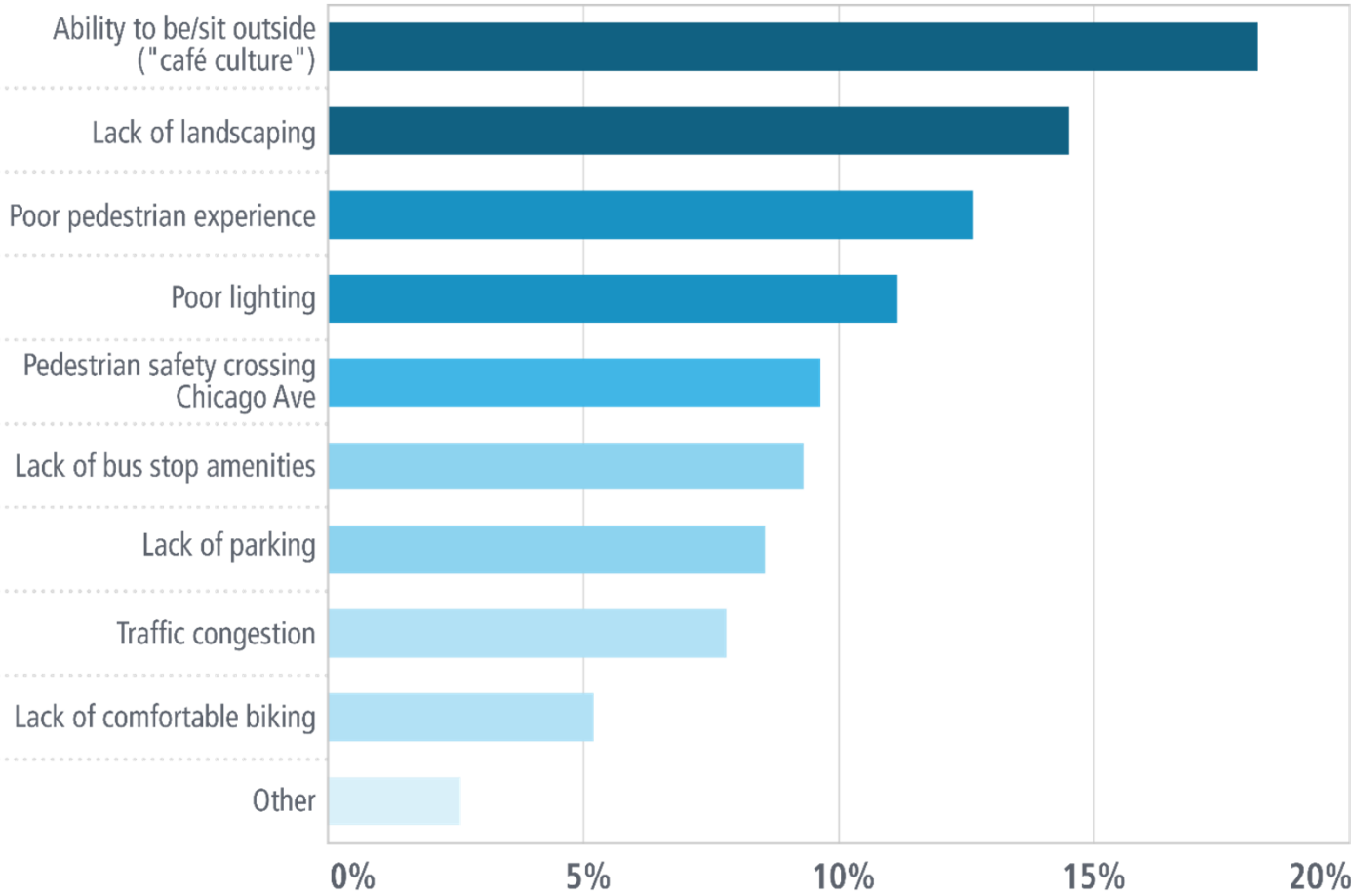
- Top Choices: more trees/landscaping & wider sidewalks

### Auto Only Responses

- Top Choices: more trees/landscaping & on-street parking



## Q: My biggest concern or key issues along Chicago Avenue are...



### Resident Only Responses

- Top Choices: ability to be/sit outside, lack of landscaping, & poor pedestrian experience

### Pedestrian Only Responses

- Top Choices: ability to be/sit outside, poor lighting, & poor pedestrian experience

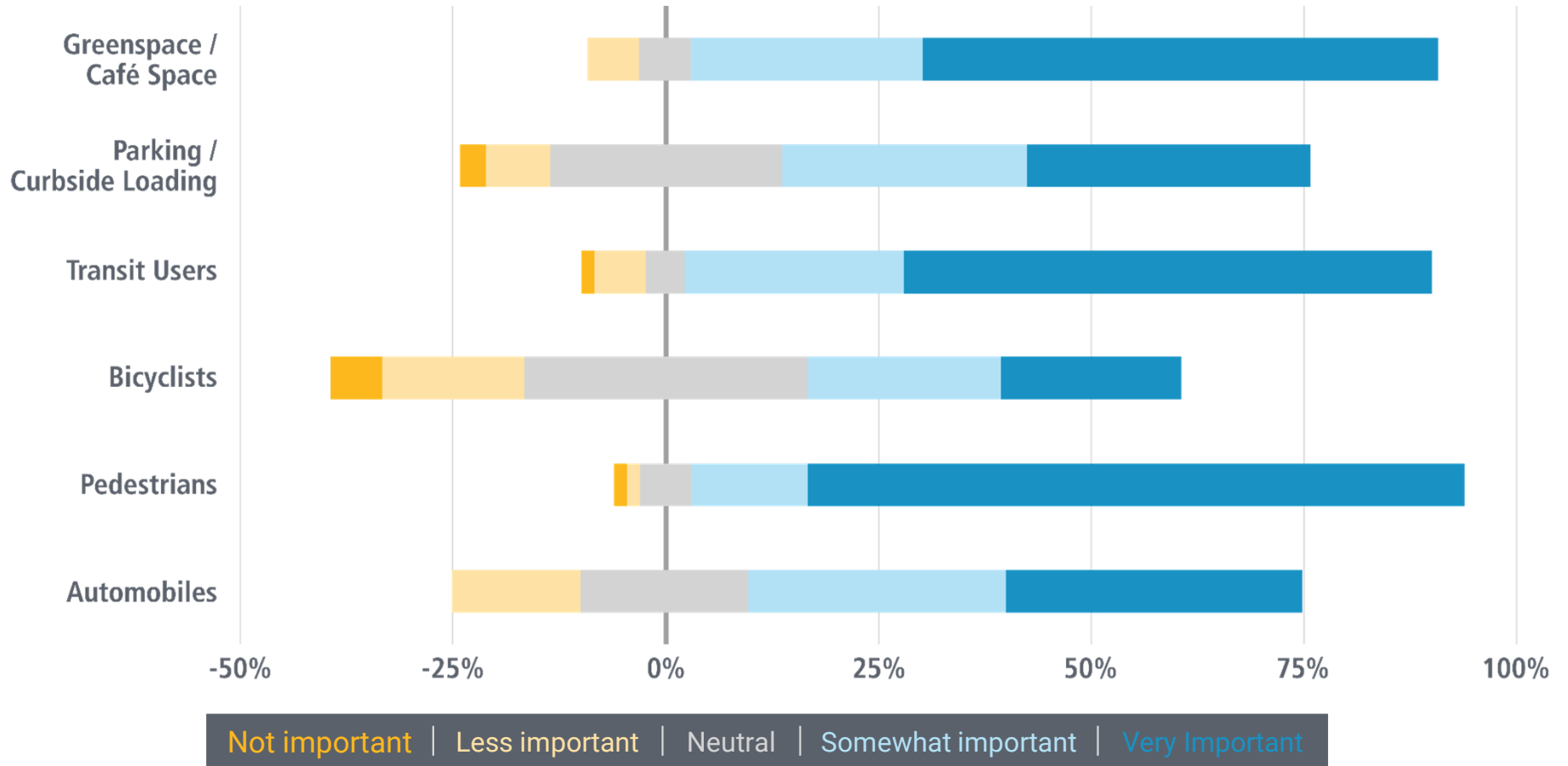
### Transit Only Responses

- Top Choices: ability to be/sit outside, ped crossing safety, & lack of bus stop amenities

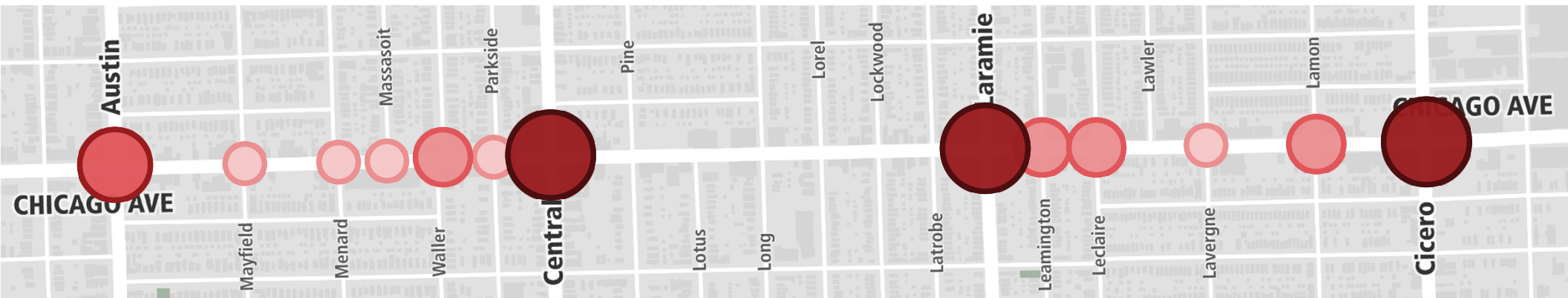
### Auto Only Responses

- Top Choices: ability to be/sit outside & lack of landscaping

## Q: How would you like to prioritize user groups for the Chicago Avenue Corridor?



## Q: What intersection(s) are the most challenging as a pedestrian?



- Central & Chicago
- Laramie & Chicago
- Cicero & Chicago
- Austin & Chicago

