

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & UNIVERSITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE



## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

### ~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, May 2, 2023

3:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Economic Development and University Relations Committee will hold a public hearing to receive a report on the results of the Cambridge Business Survey conducted from January to February 2023 and to receive an update on the progress of the Economic Impact Study called for in Policy Order 2022 #29

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Paul F. Toner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quinton Zondervan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Economic Development and University Relations Committee was held on Tuesday, May 2, 2023. The meeting was Called to Order at 3:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Toner. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via zoom.

**At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

**Councillor Azeem – Absent**

**Vice Mayor Mallon – Present/Remote**

**Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber**

**Councillor Zondervan – Absent**

**Councillor Toner – Present/In Sullivan Chamber**

**Present – 3, Absent – 2. Quorum established.**

The Chair, Councillor Toner offered opening remarks and noted that the call of the meeting was to receive a report on the results of the Cambridge Business Survey conducted from January to February 2023 and to receive an update on the progress of the Economic Impact Study called for in Policy Order 2022 #29 (Attachment A). Councillor Toner introduced Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (CDD) who was joined by Pardis Saffari, Director of Economic Opportunity and Development.

Councillor Toner recognized Pardis Saffari who gave two presentations titled “2023 Online Business and Nonprofit Survey” (Attachment B) and “Cycling Safety Ordinance Economic Impact Study Update” (Attachment C). Pardis Saffari shared what the major themes expressed

by the respondents were, which included, parking and traffic, rent and real estate, business support and resources, affordable housing, city governance and decision making, bike lanes, employment and workforce, homelessness and social issues, and economic equity and inclusivity. It was noted that 229 business owners or nonprofit executives were among those who completed the survey.

**Councillor Toner opened Public Comment.**

Young Kim, 17 Norris Street, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns about the presentations and the survey.

Denise Jillson, 2203 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, shared that it would be important for the City to collect new data on business where bike lanes were installed prior to 2019 and shared concerns about future bike lanes that will be installed and how they will affect businesses.

Joan Pickett, 59 Ellery Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments on transparency, outreach, and the definition of economic impacts.

Cynthia Hughes, 9 Kays Street Road, Stoneham, MA, shared concerns about the impact of bike and bus lanes that has affected businesses and their customers.

Geroge Ravanis, 2310 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, owner of Frank's Steakhouse, shared that the traffic in North Cambridge is always at a standstill between 4:30pm-6:30pm and customers call with concerns about parking.

Sharon Cerny, 1780-98 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, property owner of 1780-98 Mass Ave, shared that tenants have shared concerns about parking for customers which may force them to not renew leases due to the lack of sales and parking.

Vickey Bestor, 149 Upland Road, Cambridge, MA, encouraged the City to include businesses that do not only operate on ground levels of buildings in their surveys.

Amy Kipp, 111 Whittemore Avenue, Cambridge, MA, shared that it was disappointing that the bike lanes were implemented with no thought about local businesses.

Linda Moussouris, 2440 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, offered comments on funds for outside consulting services to do a detailed plannings analysis.

Jude Sirois, 1 Waterhouse Street, Cambridge, MA,

Kelly Dolan, Upland Road, Cambridge, MA, shared comments and concerns about the presentations and noted it should be a wakeup call for the City.

Richard Diranian, from the Holy Trinity Church, shared that they were in favor of making a more sustainable environment, but is imposed to the bike lane in front of the Church and the negative impacts it has caused for funerals, weddings, and other essential operations.

Jason Alves, Executive Director of the East Cambridge Business Association, shared that they are hopeful that the economic impact study can show what is happening to the businesses and noted that East Cambridge is willing to partner with CDD to address concerns for the future of Cambridge Street.

Patrick Barrett, shared concerns about the impact bike lanes and the decrease in parking spots have caused to small business owners.

Ruth Ryles, President of Porter Square Neighborhood Association, urged the City to listen to the businesses that are affected and make them apart of the process to help with concerns moving forward.

Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Nolan who shared frustrations about the Policy Order being passed in February 2022 and the Committee is just receiving some data on it. Councillor Nolan suggested having an analysis of the open-ended questions to make it easier to read all of the comments and information that was provided and shared that she would be in favor of surveys including businesses that are not just on the ground floor of buildings. Councillor Nolan shared that future studies should align with the type of streets that are in Cambridge in terms of retail and width of the street and encourages the City to do more outreach with business owners and listen to their concerns. Councillor Nolan had a question regarding employment and retail sales data and why that is not information the City is able to obtain. CDD responded by sharing that the Department of Revenue would not allow the City to have that information due to taxpayer confidentiality, but are trying to work with business owners themselves to optionally provide that information.

Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Carbone who asked when the economic analysis plans to be completed. Pardis Saffari shared that the analysis should be completed by fall of this year and made note that in the Policy Order there was a request for this data to be collected for multiple years. Councillor Carbone asked what street construction will look like on Massachusetts Avenue in the future when the City plans to implement changes. Iram Farooq shared that there is currently a Committee that was formed to help guide the work flow for the Massachusetts Avenue process. Councillor Carbone shared that he was in favor of including businesses in future surveys that do not necessarily operate on ground level and hopes that during the study counts are done not only on traffic, but on bicyclists, pedestrians, and scooters as well.

Councillor Toner offered comments about topics that were discussed during the meeting. He urged the City to reach out to as many small businesses as possible to get feedback and noted that he believes the issue is less about bike lanes and more about the limited parking. Councillor Toner suggested having a place on the City website that would help identify where people can park in the City, including parking lots, metered parking, and nonresidential areas. Councillor Toner shared that he looks forward to working with CDD and other departments to come up with solutions to help those who need it.

Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Nolan who stressed the importance of the City reaching out to small businesses, and using organizations like Cambridge Locals First, to help with

outreach and communication and to work together to find answers for the challenges businesses are facing.

Iram Farooq shared that it would be extremely helpful if business were able to share their financial information to help with the City's conclusions from the study. It was noted that information that is shared voluntarily will remain confidential, so private data is not released. They also shared information on how CDD plans to conduct future survey and making the forms the same for all of the businesses but will also collect data from what area in Cambridge the business is located to help focus on those specific corridors. Iram Farooq noted that Tyrone Fells, who is a Small Business Specialist for the Department of Human Services, will go door to door to talk about the programs the City is offering to help businesses who are still recovering from loss during the pandemic and shared many other examples of outreach CDD is doing with businesses, noting that they are working with the Economic Council of Massachusetts and attend many of the Business Association meetings.

Councillor Toner shared that the City is constantly changing, and it is important to figure out how best the Council and City Departments can support whoever comes and goes.

**With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50p.m.**

Attachment A - Policy Order 2022 #29

Attachment B – Presentation titled “2023 Online Business and Nonprofit Survey” “

Attachment C – Presentation titled “Cycling Safety Ordinance Economic Impact Study Update”

**Clerk’s Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record.

The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/493?view\\_id=1&redirect=true&h=5d3bd404ce9121143748c775dcc68182](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/493?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=5d3bd404ce9121143748c775dcc68182)

**That the City Manager is requested to confer with the Economic Development division and other appropriate departments with the intention of conducting a study to collect relevant economic data relating to business impacts from bike lane installations, positive or negative, which will help inform future installations of bike lanes along commercial corridors**

**A communication was received from Pardis Saffari, Director of Economic Opportunity and Development for the Community Development Department, transmitting the 2023 Online Business Survey.**

**A communication was received from Pardis Saffari, Director of Economic Opportunity and Development for the Community Development Department, transmitting the 2023 Cambridge Business and Nonprofit Organization Survey Results.**

**A communication was received from Pardis Saffari, Director of Economic Opportunity and Development for the Community Development Department, transmitting a presentation titled Cycling Safety Ordinance Economic Impact Study Update.**

# Attachment A



## City of Cambridge

O-5  
**FIRST IN COUNCIL**  
February 28, 2022

COUNCILLOR MCGOVERN  
VICE MAYOR MALLON  
COUNCILLOR SIMMONS  
COUNCILLOR TONER  
COUNCILLOR CARLONE

- WHEREAS: The roll out and implementation of separated bike lanes has caused a lot of concern among the small business community who have felt left out of the process; and
- WHEREAS: Business owners have fears about the impact on their businesses, and it would be beneficial for both the City and the business community to have local economic information about the potential impacts, positive and negative, on various types of businesses; and
- WHEREAS: Economic studies are often cited from other cities about the impact of bike lanes to small businesses, and how they will improve sales; and
- WHEREAS: The City will be implementing bike lanes along business corridors each year until 2026 per the recent ordinance change, this provides an opportunity to collect relevant data and real time experience; and
- WHEREAS: Having local information will help shape future conversations and implementations of separated bike lanes and can help inform needed mitigation strategies along commercial corridors; now therefore be it
- ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with the Economic Development division and other appropriate departments with the intention of conducting a study to collect relevant economic data relating to business impacts from bike lane installations, positive or negative, which will help inform future installations of bike lanes along commercial corridors; and be it further
- ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with appropriate departments on what the standard public process will be prior to implementing new sections of bike lanes consistent with the Cycling Safety Ordinance, and what general evaluation process will take place post-installation now and for a full year once the bike network is completed, and to report back to the City Council on these matters; and be it further
- ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the City Council on these matters by March 31, 2022.

Attachment B

# 2023 ONLINE BUSINESS AND NONPROFIT SURVEY



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MAY 2, 2023 | CITY HALL

# OVERVIEW

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- The City of Cambridge conducted an online business and nonprofit survey from February 7 – February 20, 2023. This survey utilized a non-probability convenience sample, and the results should be considered within that context.
- Over 80% of respondents work in an organization with few than 20 employees (approximately 57% of all respondents work in an organization with 5 or fewer employees).
- The survey was advertised to the business and nonprofit community, promoted in City email communications, on the City's website, and via social media.
- 63% of respondents work for an organization located in a commercial building/space, and 66% of respondents have operated a business or nonprofit in Cambridge for more than 10 years.
- 229 business owners or non-profit executives completed the entire survey. Approximately 71% of the respondents were for-profit businesses and 20% were nonprofits.
- This presentation provides a high-level overview of select questions from the survey. The full survey is available for download at <https://camb.ma/2023-business-survey>



**Major themes expressed by respondents fell into several broad categories. Verbatim responses are included with the survey data at <https://camb.ma/2023-business-survey>**

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- ▶ Parking and Traffic
  - ▼ Bike Lanes
- ▶ Rent and Real Estate Prices
  - ▼ Employment and Workforce
- ▶ Business Support and Resources
  - ▼ Homelessness and Social Issues
  - ▼ Economic Equity and Inclusivity
- ▶ Affordable Housing
- ▶ City Governance and Decision-Making



**53% of respondents rate the overall performance of the City as excellent/good while 56% rate Cambridge as an excellent or good place to do business.**

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW
The overall performance of City government here in Cambridge	16.59% 38	36.24% 83	23.58% 54	20.09% 46	3.49% 8
The overall quality of life in Cambridge	26.64% 61	52.40% 120	16.59% 38	2.62% 6	1.75% 4
The overall quality of your business's neighborhood	19.65% 45	47.16% 108	23.14% 53	8.30% 19	1.75% 4
The overall business climate in Cambridge	12.23% 28	37.99% 87	31.44% 72	15.72% 36	2.62% 6
Cambridge as a place to do business	22.27% 51	34.06% 78	27.95% 64	15.28% 35	0.44% 1
Cambridge as a place to work	30.13% 69	44.54% 102	18.78% 43	4.37% 10	2.18% 5
Cambridge as a safe place to work	35.37% 81	45.41% 104	14.41% 33	4.37% 10	0.44% 1



**50% of respondents rate the City as doing a fair/poor job planning for the future of the community while 80% rate Cambridge as a welcoming place to all races and cultures.**

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW
A sense of community	17.03%	41.05%	28.82%	8.30%	4.80%
	39	94	66	19	11
A place welcoming to all races and cultures	36.68%	43.23%	12.66%	3.49%	3.93%
	84	99	29	8	9
Overall appearance	19.65%	49.34%	21.83%	7.42%	1.75%
	45	113	50	17	4
Overall planning for the future of the community	13.97%	27.51%	25.33%	24.89%	8.30%
	32	63	58	57	19
Open space/Recreation opportunities	17.03%	50.22%	20.09%	6.99%	5.68%
	39	115	46	16	13

Respondents provide high marks for overall appearance (69% excellent or good)

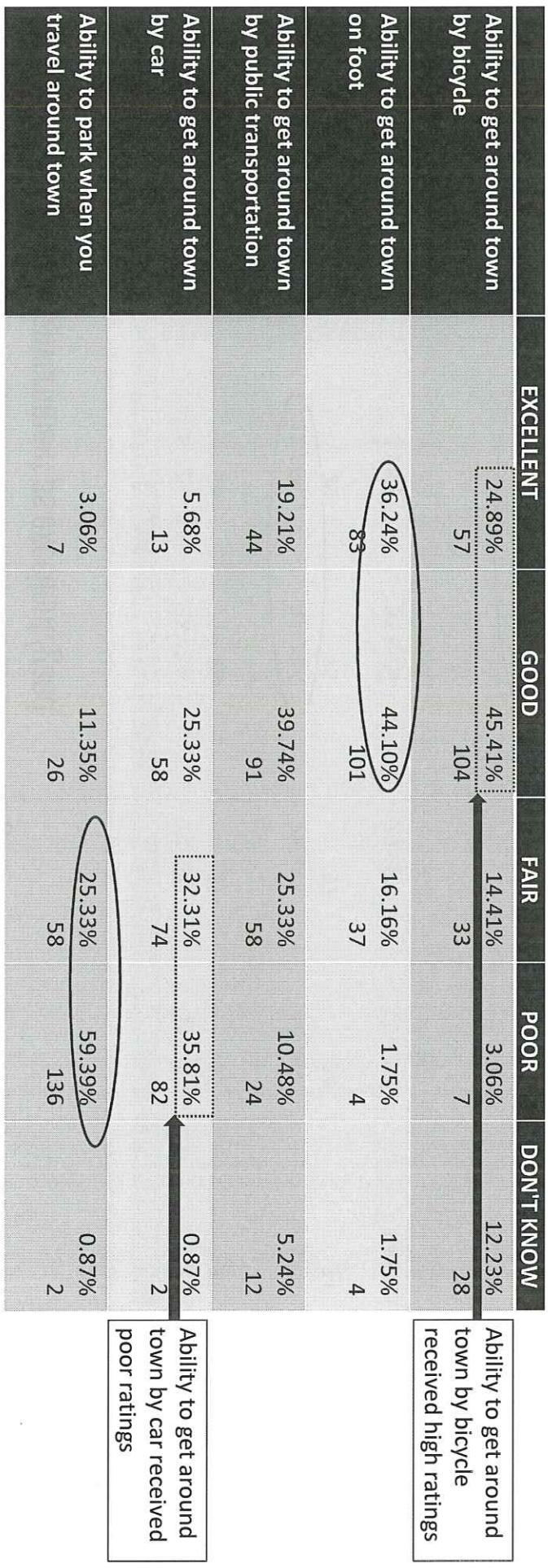


**58% of respondents rate job opportunities as excellent/good while 52% rate environmental planning and policy as excellent/good.**

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW
Job opportunities	17.47%	40.61%	20.96%	3.06%	17.90%
	40	93	48	7	41
Worker's access to affordable housing	4.37%	12.66%	22.71%	44.54%	15.72%
	10	29	52	102	36
Environmental planning and policy	17.03%	34.50%	23.58%	11.79%	13.10%
	39	79	54	27	30
Opportunities to participate in cultural events	34.06%	44.10%	10.48%	2.18%	9.17%
	78	101	24	5	21



85% of respondents rate the ability to park when you travel around town as fair/poor while 80% rate the ability to get around town on foot as excellent/good.

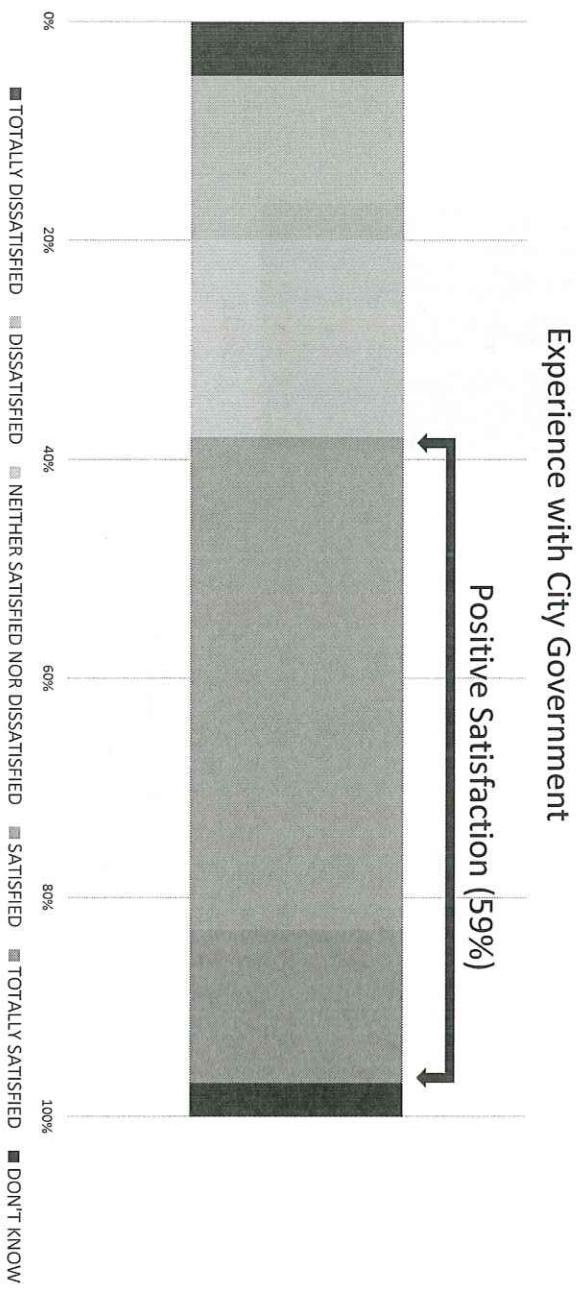


**51% of respondents rate Economic Development as excellent/good and 45% rate their ability to participate in government as excellent/good.**

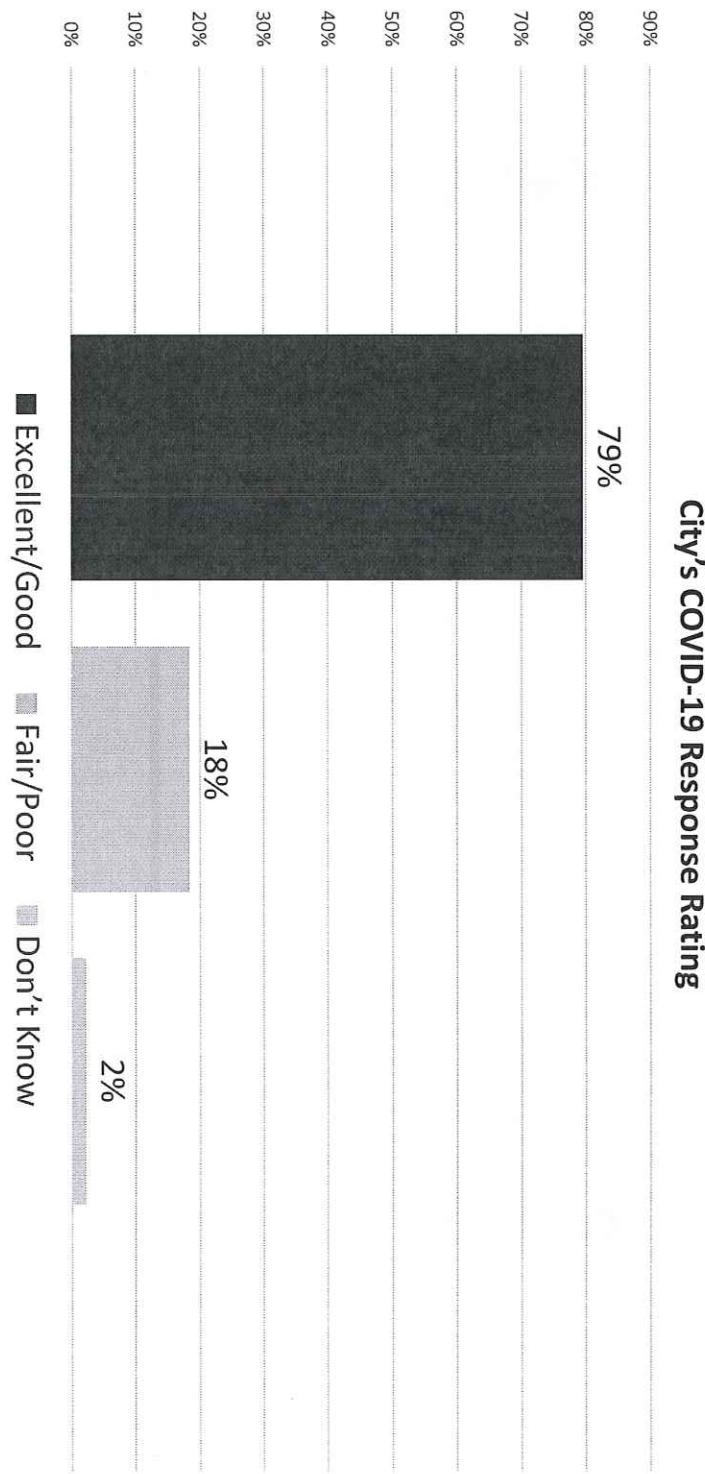
	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW
Ability to have a positive impact on the community	15.72%	38.43%	24.89%	11.79%	9.17%
	36	88	57	27	21
Ability to participate in government	12.66%	32.75%	24.89%	14.85%	14.85%
	29	75	57	34	34
The balance between new construction and neighborhood preservation	3.93%	31.00%	29.69%	27.51%	7.86%
	9	71	68	63	18
Economic Development	10.04%	41.05%	24.45%	10.92%	13.54%
	23	94	56	25	31



**Respondents were more satisfied than dissatisfied with their overall experience when interacting with City government**



In general, respondents highly rate the way the City of Cambridge has handled the COVID-19 pandemic.





CITY HALL, 795 MASSACHUSETTS AVE. CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

[WWW.CAMBRIDGEMA.GOV](http://WWW.CAMBRIDGEMA.GOV)

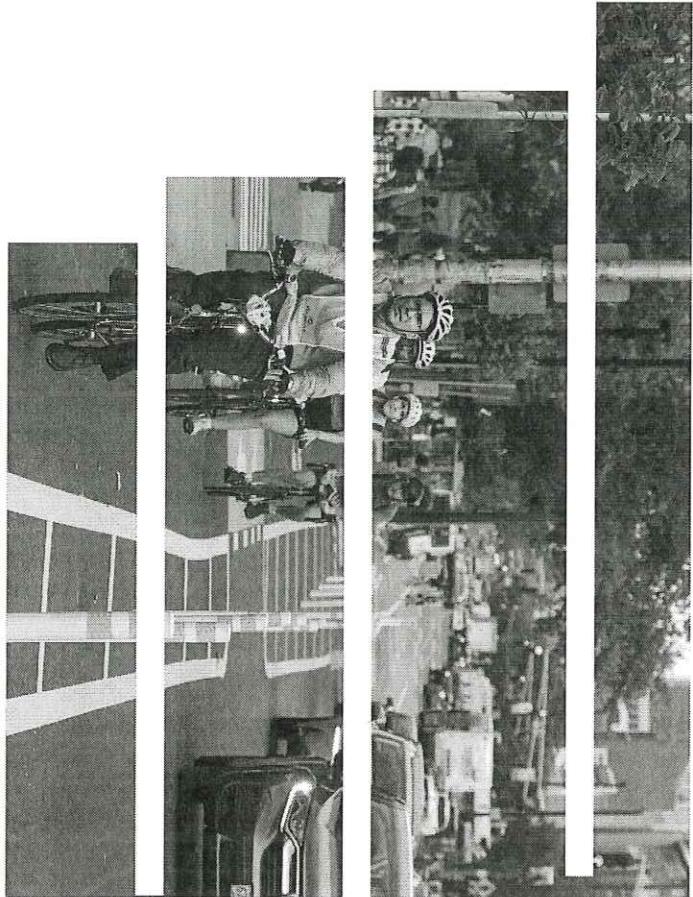
**City of Cambridge  
Community Development Department**

**Cycling Safety Ordinance  
Economic Impact Study Update**

Spring 2023



Cambridge Community Development Department



# Prior Studies

A review of prior studies in different municipalities

## Prior Studies: Overview

- There are a limited number of published studies that address the impacts of bike infrastructure on retail sales in North America
- Generally, these compare the “treatment” area against one or more control areas and citywide trends, plus a before-vs.-after comparison
- Data sources vary by location due to data availability
- Overall, the studies generally show small changes that range from neutral to slightly positive
  - Variations by city, location, and business type (e.g., dining vs. general retail)
  - The small size of the impacts can be difficult to separate from broader economic trends

## Prior Studies: Details

- NYC DOT: The Economic Benefits of Sustainable Streets
  - Based primarily on city tax filings, plus commercial lease data and city tax assessments
- City of Toronto: Bloor Street West Bike Lane Pilot Project Evaluation
  - Based on transaction data from a point-of-sale terminal provider and surveys of businesses and pedestrians
- Portland State University: Understanding Economic and Business Impacts of Street Improvements for Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility
  - 14 corridors across 6 cities (Indianapolis, Memphis, Minneapolis, SF, Seattle & Portland)
  - Primary data sources were employment/wage databases including Census LEHD

# Potential Data Sources

Overview of potential data sources for Cambridge study

# Data Availability Issues

- The ideal data source would be actual retail transaction data or the associated sales tax records
- However...
  - Unlike NYC, Cambridge has no truly local sales/retail taxes – even the local option meals tax is administered by the state
  - Mass. DOR is unable to release granular data due to taxpayer privacy and other concerns
  - US point-of-sale terminal providers do not appear willing to share this data, and the data may not be representative of the market as a whole

# Data Availability Issues

- Government products such as Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) and Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) can be used at a macro level
- But the more granular, geographically specific data that could be used to analyze bike project impacts are not publicly available
  - Would require a lengthy application and authorization process far beyond the timeline of this study
- These datasets also focus on employment and wages, which are indirect and lagging indicators of retail activity

# Proposed Data Sources

- Analysis of changes in retail rent levels and occupancy/vacancy, derived from a subscription database
  - Commercial real estate variables provide an indirect measure of retail activity and were used in the NYC study
- City-wide survey of businesses
  - Provides direct estimates of retail impacts, though subject to potential biases in response patterns
- Additional data sources used for context:
  - Pedestrian, bike, and motor vehicle traffic counts
  - Parking inventory data
- LEHD data on employment and wages at citywide and Census block levels

# Business Survey - Topics

- Survey topics include:

- Business contact info and basic details
- Changes to sales/revenue since 2019 (pre-COVID baseline)
- Whether a bicycle facility was installed nearby and whether there were changes to on-street metered parking and loading zones
- Perceived business impacts of these changes
- Option to provide additional written comments and/or financial data

## Business Survey - Outreach

- City staff will send a mailed invitation letter to all known ground floor businesses in Cambridge, explaining the purpose of the survey and providing a link to the online questionnaire – *May 2023*
- Including the whole city helps with the comparison of project corridors against controls and to provide data on citywide trends
- Unique survey URLs for each business location will help avoid duplicate responses
- As a representative sample is important for validity, city staff will conduct follow-up with non-respondents by email and/or in-person visits

Questions?

Thank You