

Historic Designation Interest Survey

Executive Summary

**Prepared for Virginia Highland
Civic Association
Neighborhood Preservation Committee**



**Prepared by Turner Research Network
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Background and Objectives

Background

- The Virginia-Highland Civic Association Neighborhood Preservation Committee wants to understand if Historic Designation would be supported by the neighborhood as an appropriate means of preserving the existing architectural character of Virginia-Highland.
- The committee believes it was imperative that this process of exploration include community involvement in the establishment of proposed Historic Designation guidelines and community support in order for the guidelines to be put into effect.
- Part of the community involvement process is a neighborhood-wide survey on the issue.

Objectives

- This survey has several objectives:
 - Determine if the Virginia-Highland community is interested enough to continue the efforts and exploration.
 - Determine to what extent the community might go with regard to stringency of regulation.
 - Gain insight about which specific types of regulations the community supports or is concerned about.

Survey Methodology

- One survey was mailed to every “mail-able” household address within the boundaries of the Virginia-Highland neighborhood that would be affected by Historic Designation. These boundaries are roughly:
 - Amsterdam Avenue to the North
 - Briarcliff Road to the East
 - Ponce de Leon Avenue to the South
 - The Southern Railroad line to the West
- The residences within the Atkins Park neighborhood were excluded as they are already within an Historic Designation area.
- There are three residential groups in the sample:
 - Owner-occupied residences
 - Non-owner-occupied residences (renters)
 - Property owners of residences with the V-H footprint, but who live outside the neighborhood.

Methodology – Participant Breakdown

This table shows the breakdown of survey participants and the base sizes for the tables which follow.

	<u>Base Size</u> <u># Respondents</u>		<u>Base Size</u> <u># Respondents</u>
<u>Gender</u>		<u>Renovation Plans</u>	
Female	368 (51%)	No plans to renovate	454 (62%)
Male	346 (48%)	Not sure	167 (23%)
		Plan to renovate	97 (13%)
<u>Age</u>		<u>Household Size (# of people)</u>	
Under 35	155 (21%)	1	243 (33%)
35 to 49	250 (34%)	2	282 (39%)
50 to 64	232 (32%)	3 or more	202 (28%)
65 +	82 (11%)		
<u>Ownership</u>		<u>Years Living in Neighborhood</u>	
Owner Occupied	575 (79%)	2 years and less	102 (14%)
Rent / Lease	123 (17%)	3 to 10 years	238 (33%)
Property owner living elsewhere	26 (4%)	11 to 20 years	177 (25%)
		More than 20 years	205 (28%)
<u>Children in Household</u>			
No	547 (75%)		
Yes	180 (25%)		

Statistical Notation

- A total of 4,672 surveys were mailed out and 727 surveys were returned for a response rate of 15.6%.
- The survey margin of error at this response rate is $\pm 3.3\%$ at the 95% confidence level.
- Letters or arrows on the charts indicate significant differences between data points at the 95% confidence level.
- Responses of “no answer” are not shown in the charts.



Summary of Findings

Summary of Findings

- The opinions for the Virginia-Highland Civic Association exploring the idea of Historic Designation are mixed. About two-thirds favor the idea and one-third are opposed. Very few are on the fence.
- More residents and owners favor the idea of Historic Designation for the neighborhood as a whole than for select streets or blocks.
- The opinion on demolition of existing structures is split down the middle – one-half think it should be allowed and one-half think it should be prohibited. Given that no qualifiers were given in the study, further understanding is needed on this topic.
- The most favorable potential regulation within Historic Designation supported by over two-thirds of the owners and residents is the regulation of architectural styles for new residences and renovations.
 - Other regulation issues (second story additions, detached structures, dormer size and roof pitch) have more negative than favorable opinions, but also draw more “neutral” reactions.

Summary of Findings

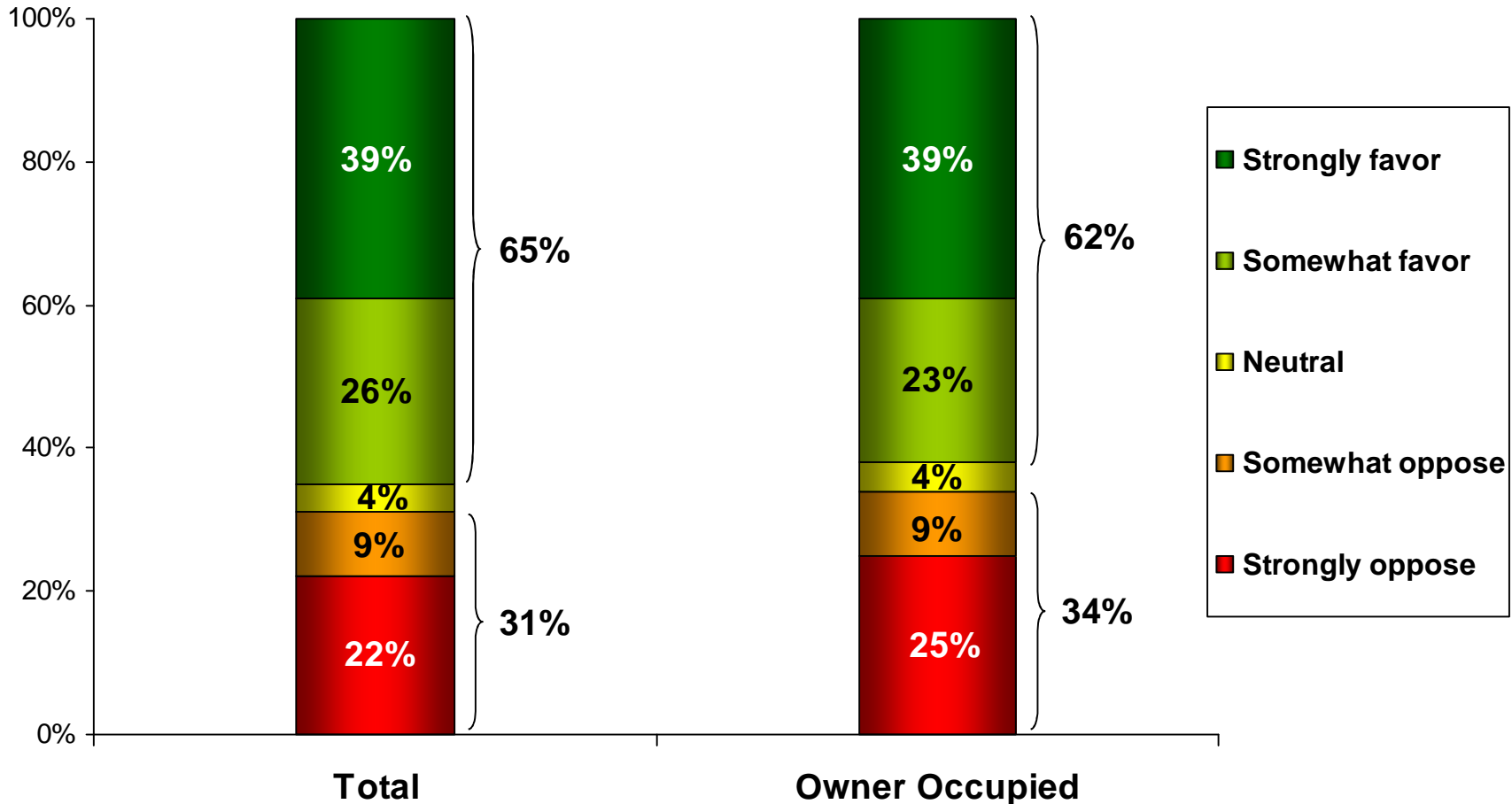
- Regardless of specific opinions for or against (and there were many people vocal on their position), there were other comments from people in the middle that indicated that they need more information about specifics of the plan in order to make a true informed opinion on this important topic. The comments below show this desire for more information.
 - *While I did my best to choose the answer that is most appropriate based on my views, I need more information about specific proposed rules in order to know whether I favor specific provisions.*
 - *Really need to know more.*
 - *I'm anxious to hear more about these plans and curious how VA HI homeowners feel about the potential regulations. Some kind of community forum / info session would be great.*
 - *Continue the conversation!!*
 - *More publicity about this project is needed.*



Detailed Findings

Favor or Oppose Idea of Historic Designation

- Historic Designation is a polarizing issue. Almost two-thirds favor the idea while one-third are opposed. Almost one-fourth are strongly opposed to the idea of the Civic Association exploring the idea. Very few are neutral.



Q1. Based on the information, how much do you favor or oppose the idea of Virginia-Highland Civic Association exploring Historic Designation for the Virginia-Highland neighborhood?

Historic Designation: Verbatim Comment Examples

- Those strongly in favor or strongly opposed show the distance between wanting regulations and those not wanting regulations to limit personal choices.

Strongly Favor	Strongly Oppose
<p><i>We need to keep VA HI in the style and stop the out of control big McMansions that look out of place. Put in new rules now so new homes are the right size.</i></p> <p><i>Something must be done quickly to stop tear downs and infill housing or the character of VA HI will soon be lost. Garages, studios and back additions should be permitted if not visible from the street, and should not change the original front view of the house. All additions and improvements should meet VA HI visual standards.</i></p> <p><i>We need Historic Designation now - not only to protect neighborhoods but individual neighbors. Regulations need to enforce water runoff affects from changed or new construction.</i></p> <p><i>At a minimum I think "McMansions" towering over existing residences should be restricted. Square footage can be added to existing structures maintaining the integrity of the architecture and neighborhood, limiting condos creating drainage and erosion problems, and maintain green space.</i></p>	<p><i>Part of the history and attraction of VA HI is the freedom and laid back atmosphere. Not because of being rigid and judgmental of others' choices.</i></p> <p><i>We do not need more regulation in our neighborhoods. People should be able to do what they want with their property.</i></p> <p><i>VA HI is an area with an eclectic mix of architecture styles, and as such, it doesn't make sense to define a standardized set of regulations.</i></p> <p><i>Though it sounds like a good idea to prevent development of McMansions, I think Historic Designation will make it more expensive and time consuming to renovate Va-Hi homes. It's ultimately a bad idea to discourage renovations. The key is educating home owners about responsible renovation.</i></p> <p><i>This is a neighborhood not a museum. Let the VA HI be a reflection of the rich and varied tastes of its residents.</i></p> <p><i>Rules discourage innovation. If we don't need the new rules, let's do without them.</i></p>

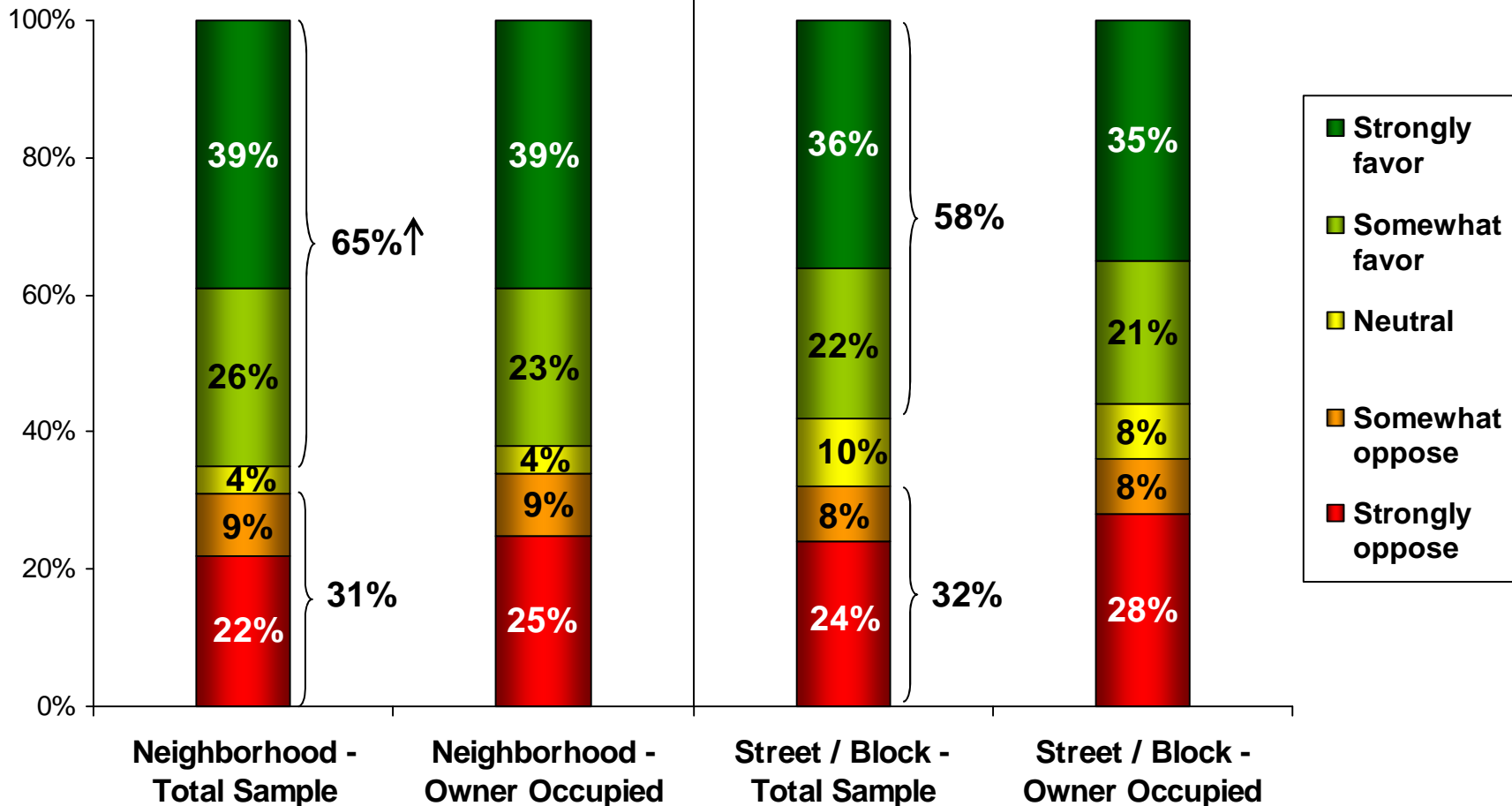
Historic Designation: Verbatim Comments Examples

- Those “somewhat” in favor or opposed appear to be in favor of some provisions, but not others. There is not a “one size fits all” solution.

Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose
<p><i>Very concerned about forward facing attached garage doors in the front of homes. These are not in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.</i></p> <p><i>What I most oppose is tree cutting and building larger footprints on the same lot.</i></p> <p><i>There is a delicate balance between maintaining an aesthetic, architecturally interesting and attractive neighborhood and the rights of individual property owners. VA HI is not Charleston. Some historic properties might be considered eyesores.</i></p> <p><i>There are some really nice renovations that have been done... and then there are these large, shoebox houses that look more like the Midwest - not the style of existing homes.</i></p> <p><i>I understand the desire to keep the integrity of the neighborhood but I feel a property owner's right to do whatever he/she wants to do with it outweighs that.</i></p> <p><i>I would like to see all homes kept in line with historic architecture / style but allow for renovations to make homes more attractive, increase property values.</i></p>	<p><i>While I understand the effort to keep this historic integrity of the neighborhood and support that cause in theory, I struggle with the fact that the majority of homes in VH are functionally obsolete in some way. Thus more restrictions as proposed will hinder the expansion and renovating of the housing stock to accommodate growing families' needs by today's standards.</i></p> <p><i>We feel that renovations should be kept in the pre-existing architectural styles of the neighborhood, but outside of that few restrictions should be placed on construction (except for maximum height of building).</i></p> <p><i>This is a tough question. On one hand I think the Historical architecture is important to preserve. On the other hand I fear bureaucratic regulation infringing on the rights of property owners.</i></p> <p><i>People that purchase a home should have the right to make whatever changes they want as long as they don't bother or hurt the value of their neighbors. We don't need more regulations or rules.</i></p>

Favor / Oppose Idea of Historic Designation for your Street / Block

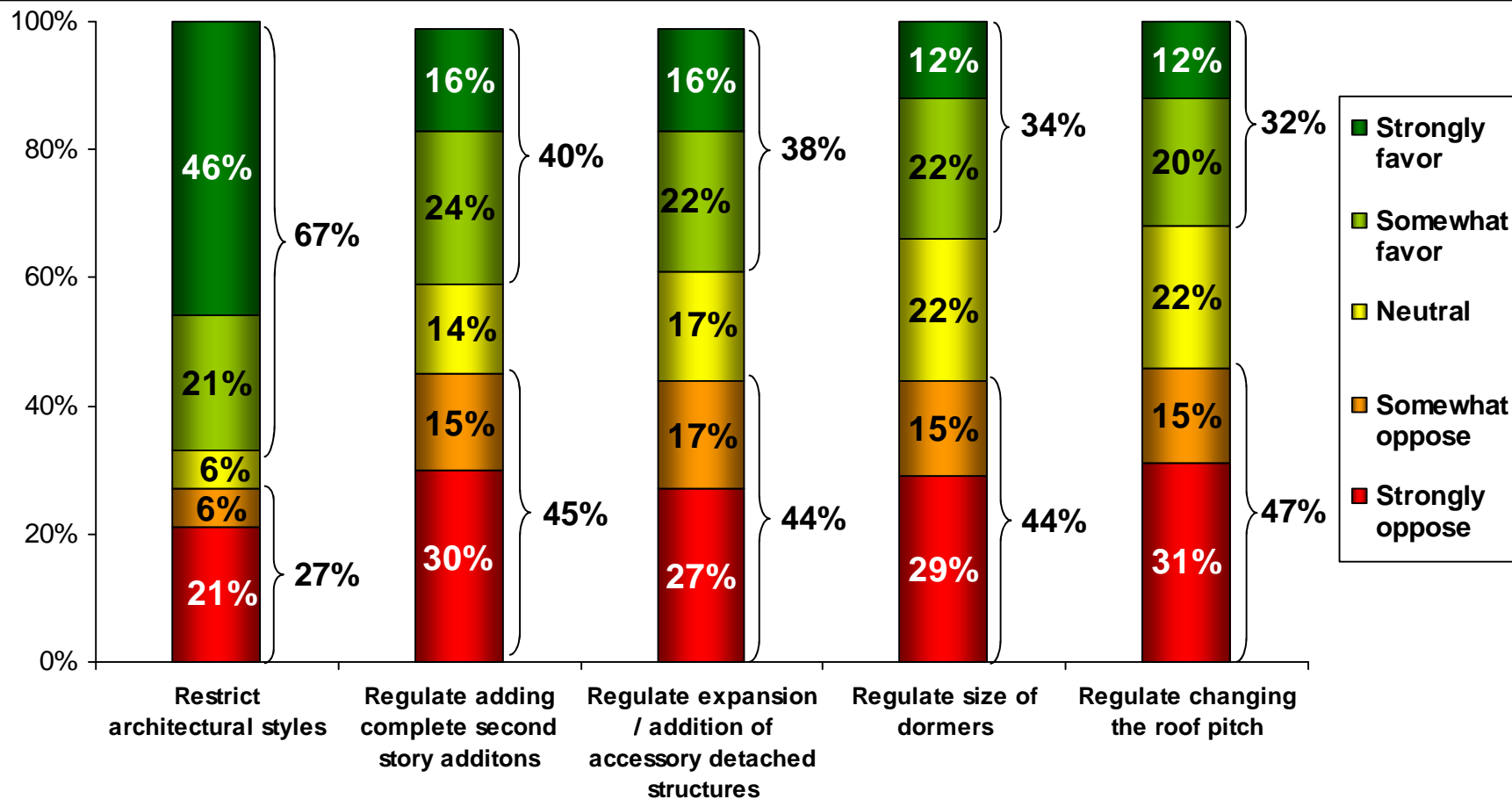
- Fewer participants support Historic Designation for their own street or block over supporting Historic Designation for the Virginia-Highland neighborhood in its entirety. Opposition levels are similar for both options.



Q2. It is possible that Historic Designation could be created for certain continuous sections of the Virginia- Highland neighborhood, and not the entire area. If Historic Designation could be created only for certain continuous sections of the Virginia-Highland neighborhood, how much would you favor or oppose Historic Designation for the street or block where you have your residence?

Favor or Oppose Specific Regulations

- The most favorable potential regulation is the restriction of architectural styles – favored by over two-thirds of the participants. Specific regulations other than architectural style have more mixed opinions and lean toward the negative. There are also a greater number of those with “neutral” opinions on specifics.

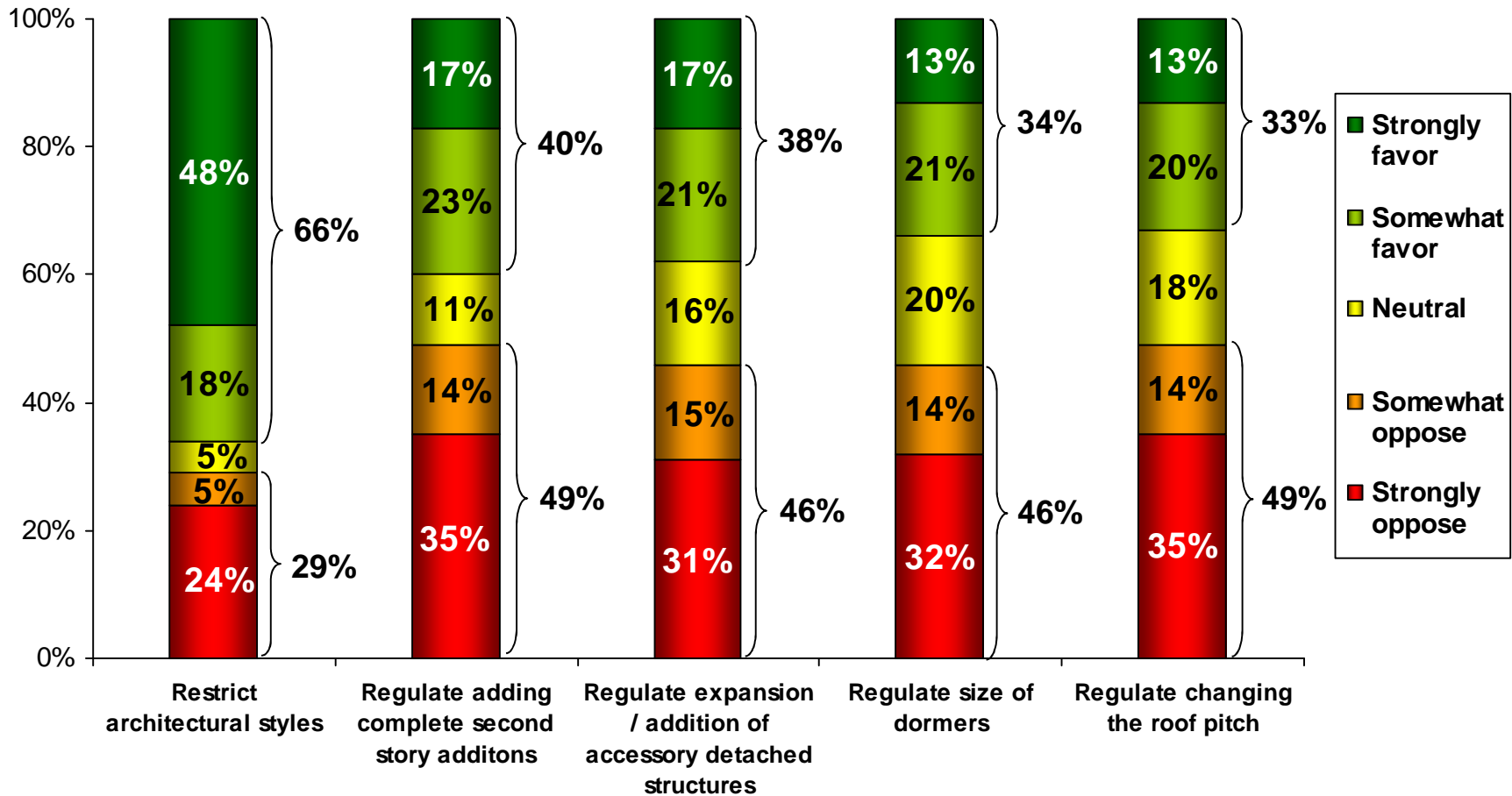


Q4. How much do you favor or oppose the following potential regulations within the Historic Designation for Virginia-Highland?

Favor or Oppose Specific Regulations

- Base: Owner Occupied -

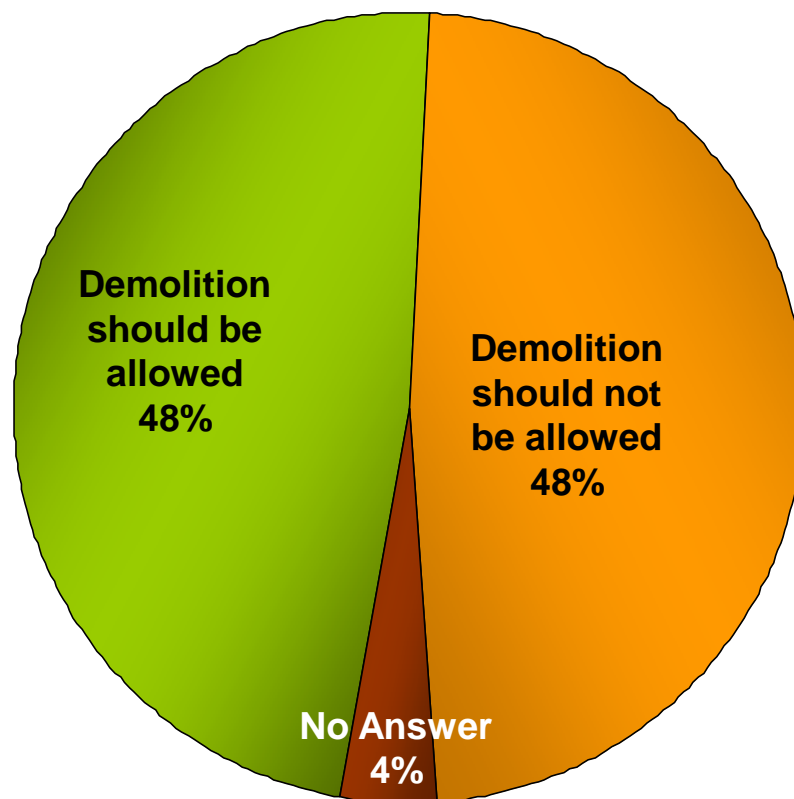
- The most favorable potential regulation among owner occupants is the restriction of architectural styles. Other regulations draw more negative and more neutral positions.



Q4. How much do you favor or oppose the following potential regulations within the Historic Designation for Virginia-Highland?

Opinion of Residential Demolition

- The participants are evenly split on whether demolition should be allowed or prohibited.



Q3. What is your opinion concerning residential demolition (completely tearing down a residence) to make way for new residential construction in the Virginia-Highland neighborhood?

Demolition: Verbatim Comment Examples

- Again here, there does not appear to be a “one size fits all” solution to the demolition issue.

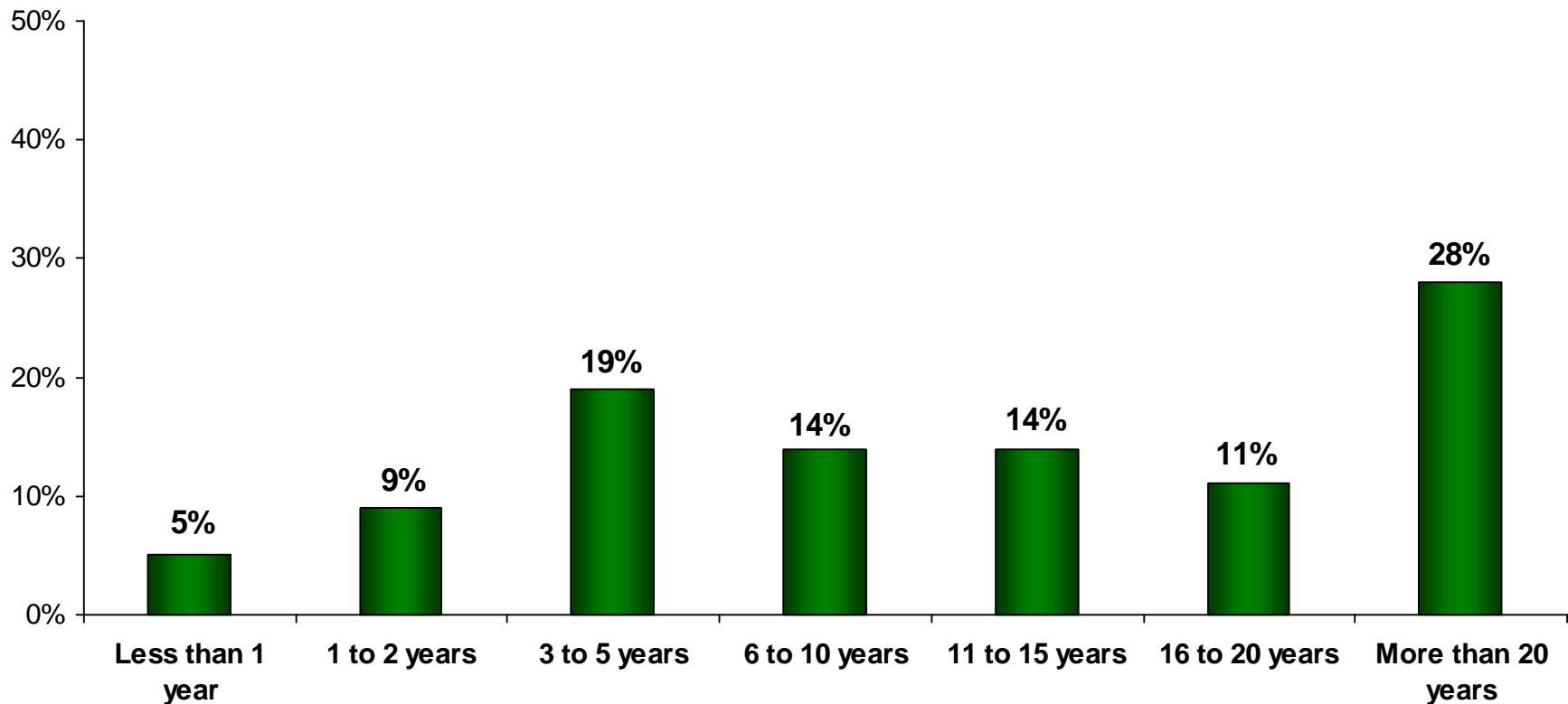
Should Be Allowed	Should Not Be Allowed
<p><i>Strongly favor regulating the exterior look but allowing tear down to build larger homes. Should be closely regulated but allowed as this increases property values.</i></p> <p><i>Demolition should be allowed if homes visually adhere to the district's regulation or the structure is not a landmark or historically relevant.</i></p> <p><i>Complete tear downs are regrettable. I am not opposed to significant alterations to gain space and architectural interest. When a new house must be built, it should be sensitive in size and, to some degree, style to neighbors. I am okay with a few contemporary homes mixed in.</i></p> <p><i>It's the tearing down and building of houses that are out of scale or architecturally inappropriate that I take issue with.</i></p> <p><i>I have no opposition to new construction if the style fits the neighborhood. Some of the existing homes don't fit the neighborhood.</i></p>	<p><i>Very much opposed to tearing down houses and building those big monster houses.</i></p> <p><i>Strongly oppose tear downs of perfectly good and charming homes to replace them with million dollar McMansions. There are enough of those built in the suburbs. If that is the lifestyle people want that's where they should buy a house. I'm less opposed to expansion up or out of original footprint but feel those should definitely be regulated as to size and style.</i></p> <p><i>Strongly favor historic designation. Strongly oppose demolition of historic homes just to rebuild. This neighborhood needs historic designation and the protection it affords.</i></p>



Respondent Profile

Length of Time Lived in Virginia-Highland Neighborhood

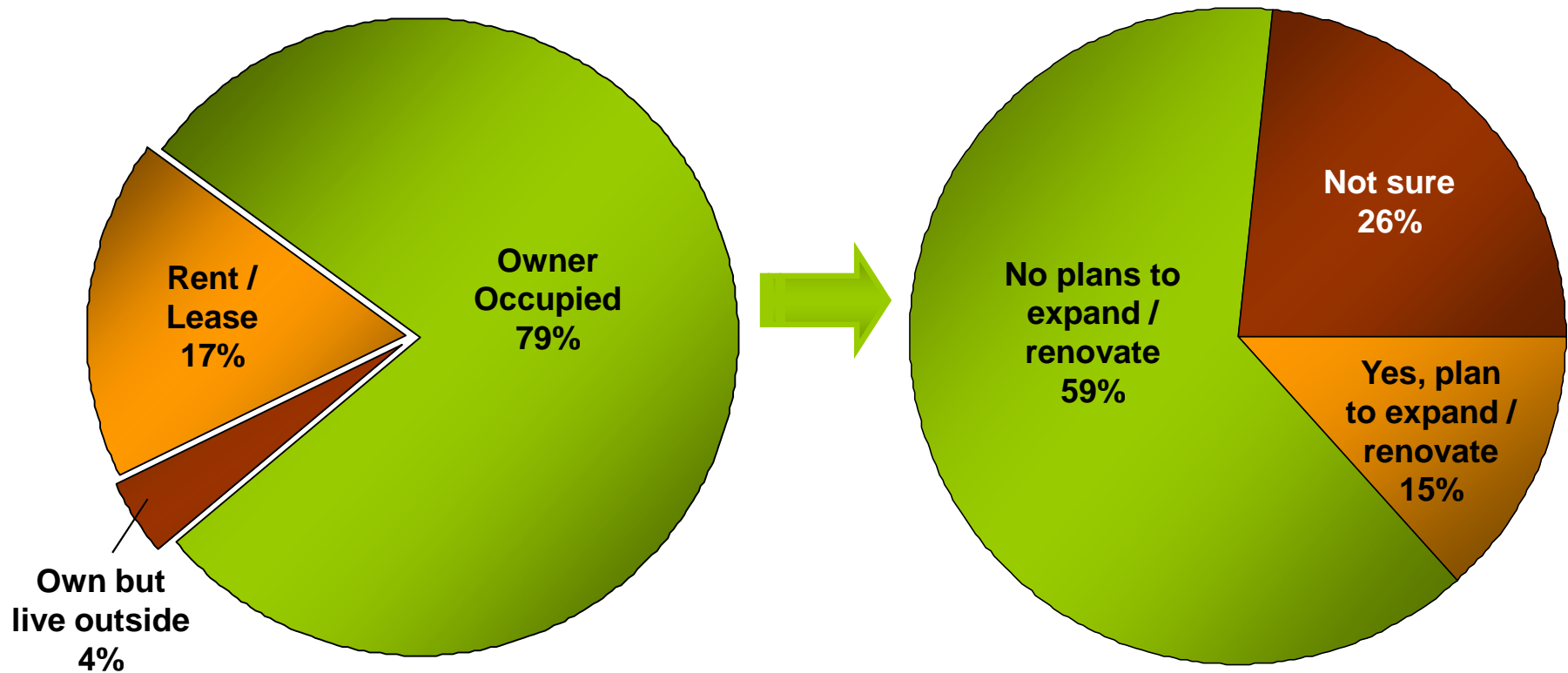
- Over one-fourth of the participants have lived in the neighborhood for more than 20 years.
- Owner occupants are more likely to have lived in Virginia-Highland for eleven or more years while renters are more likely to have lived here five years or less.
- Older participants have lived here longer than younger participants.
- Those with children and a household size of three or more are more likely to have lived here 11 to 20 years.



Q5. How long have you lived in the Virginia-Highland neighborhood?

Own or Rent / Lease and Plans To Expand / Renovate Residence

- About 8 of 10 participants are owner occupants. Among this group, 15% have plans to expand or renovate their residence in the next five years. One in four are not sure.



Q6. Do you own or rent your residence in Virginia-Highland?

Q7. Do you have any plans to expand or renovate the exterior of your residence in Virginia-Highland in the next 5 years?

Respondent Profile

- Participants are evenly split on gender. Most live in a two-adult household with no children.

Male / Female	48% / 51%
Age:	
18 to 34	22%
35 to 49	34%
50 to 64	32%
65 or over	12%
<i>Average Age</i>	<i>47</i>
Adults in household:	
One	36%
Two	58%
Three or more	6%
No children in household	75%
<i>Average number in household</i>	<i>2.2</i>

Respondent Profile / Household Profile

- One in three participants live alone. 39% have two in the household and 28% have three or more in the household.
- The average household size for the sample is 2.2 people. Those who plan to renovate in the next five years average a larger household (2.7 people).
- Participants who have lived in the neighborhood ten years or less and those who have resided here more than 20 years, renters and women are more likely to be living alone.