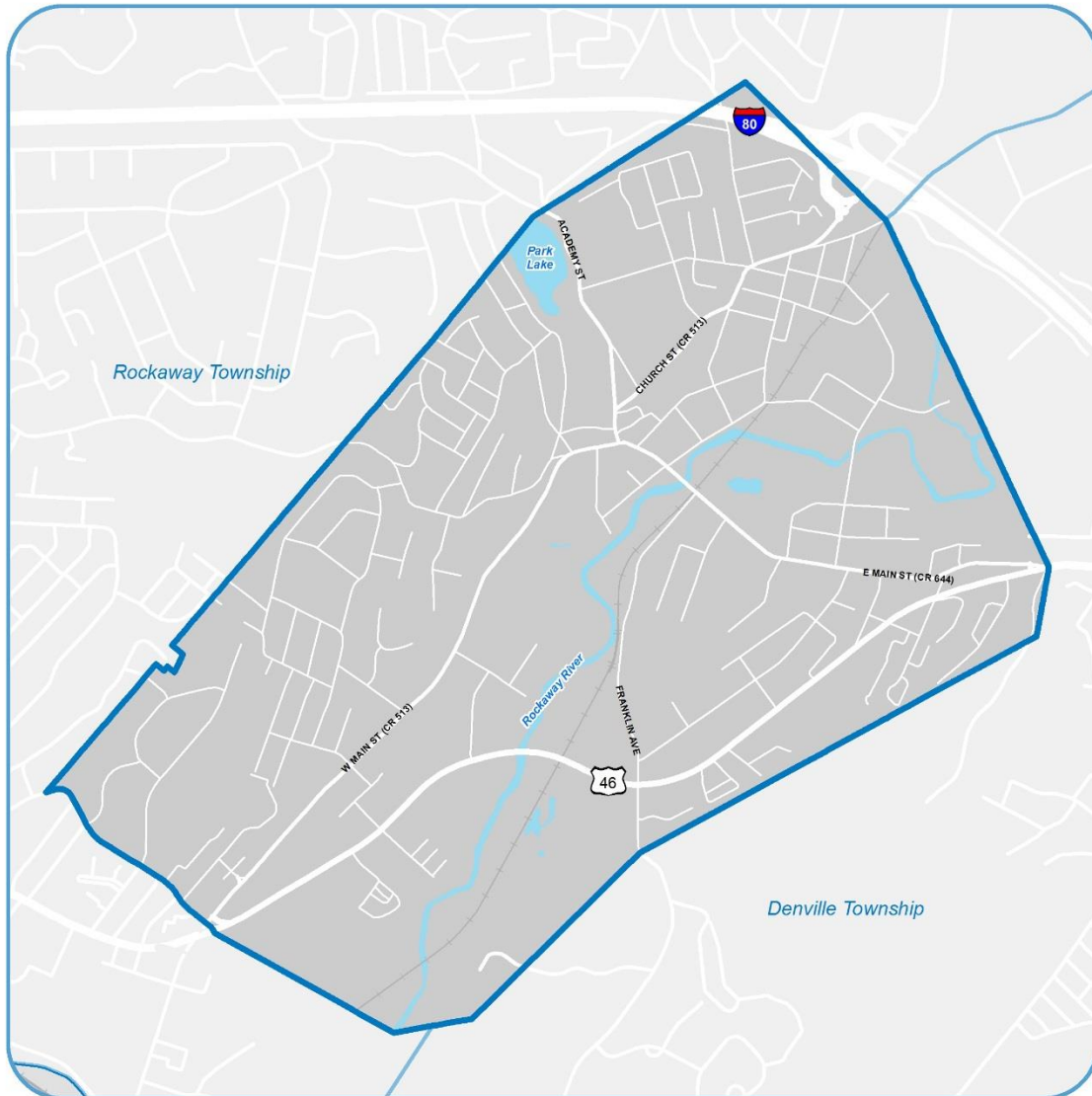


# Rockaway Borough Master Plan: Public Survey Summary Report



Prepared Date: October 2018

Prepared by:



architects + engineers  
practical approach. creative results.

## Introduction

To assist in the development of the Master Plan, the project team created a survey in Google Forms directed towards Rockaway residents and stakeholders. The intent of the survey was to solicit information on attitudes and opinions on a variety of subjects which corresponded to the different elements of the Master Plan including: Land Use / Development, Economic Development, and Community Facilities. This survey was made available to the public online via the Borough's website and by hard copy at Borough Hall and other municipal facilities. The survey ran from June 2018 to Sunday, September 30, 2018. A total of 176 responses were submitted. Where comparisons to U.S. Census data is made, all references are to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates, unless otherwise noted.

Key takeaway from the results of the survey include:

## Vision

- The Borough's character is strongly defined around its quaint small-town feel, sense of community and friendly population. Respondents perceive the Borough to be safe and quiet and oriented around family. The Borough is also considered by respondents to be historic, clean, and affordable. However, many believe that it could use an update.

## Land Use / Development

- Many people feel that the above-listed qualities also make Rockaway attractive for development and business.
- Respondents take a slight majority against new development, with worry of overpopulation and the negative local impacts that may result such as additional traffic, impact on schools and services. While there is a sense that Rockaway could use some revitalization, it cannot come at the expense of what makes it already attractive to its residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Key redevelopment and rehabilitation of existing buildings are significantly more palatable than new residential development.
- Residential development preferences are single-family residential, senior housing and mixed-use.
- Main Street, especially in the downtown, and Route 46 corridor are the key areas where reinvestment is desired. It will still be critical to be measured in the intensity and the type of development that is introduced/permitted in those areas.

## Economy

- While there are more frequent shoppers on the Route 46 corridor, there is a strong desire to improve the quality of Main Street and Borough Center. More restaurants, retail stores, entertainment establishments, and cultural facilities are desired, which would strengthen the appeal of the area.
- Beyond Main Street, the Route 46 corridor is identified as a location for future business or development opportunities.

## Community Facilities

- People are somewhat content with the community facilities and public services provided by the Borough although most all facilities were commented as being small. People would like to see

more accommodating hours at the recycle center, more community programming, a facility to accommodate such programming (i.e. Recreation Center), and online bill pay capability.

- Some survey responses indicate using neighboring municipal community facilities instead of Rockaway Borough's.
- People consider the Rockaway School District average to good, though the general feeling is the facilities themselves need an upgrade and that staff turnover is a major concern.

The following information is summarized by the order the questions appeared in the survey:

## Demographics

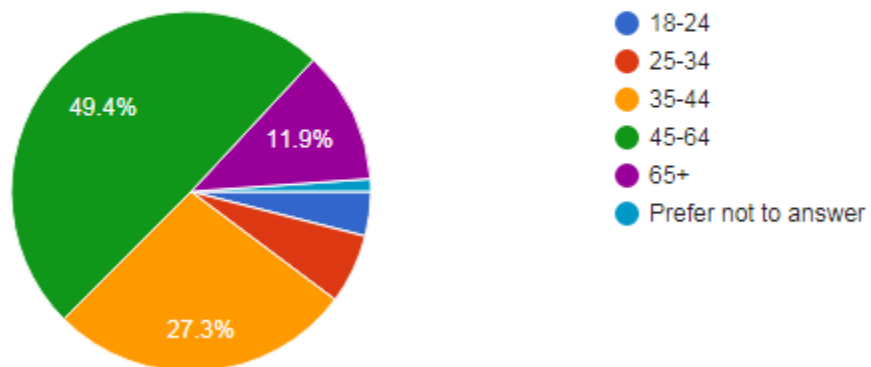
The demographics section was designed to create a baseline understanding of respondents to the survey for the Master Plan. In some cases, it provides an opportunity to compare these results to United States Census information to determine whether the characteristics of the participants are reflective of the demographics provided by the Census.

### Q1. What is your age?

Approximately half (49.4%) of the survey's respondents are between 45 and 64 years of age, followed by ages 35-44 at 27.3%. Adults over 65 comprise of 11.9% of the responses. Adults between 25-34 make up only 6.2% of all the surveys, and adults between 18-24 make up only 4% of all surveys. Two respondents (1.1%) prefer not to give their age. The older population represented in this survey reflects the current age mix in the Borough, where over half the population was born before 1962.

### What is your age?

176 responses

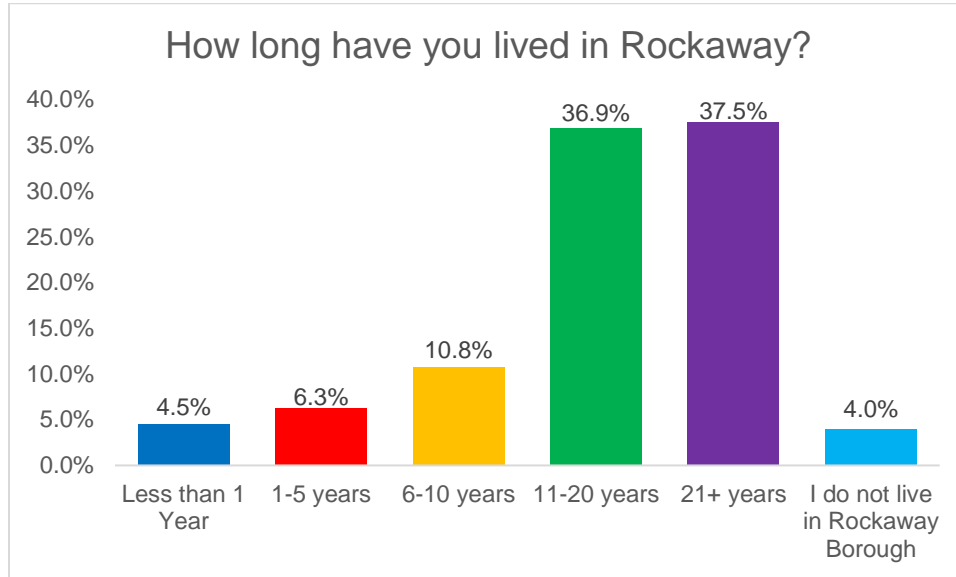


### Q2. What is your gender?

While the percentage of female and male adults living in the borough is nearly equal (49.9% vs. 50.1%), females had more survey responses with 64.8% of the completed surveys. Males made up 34.1% of the surveys, and two respondents prefer not to give an answer on their gender.

Q3. How long have you lived in the Borough?

More than one-third (37.5%) of all survey respondents have lived in Rockaway for 21+ years and more than one-third (36.9%) of all respondents have lived in Rockaway between 11-20 years, followed by 6-10 years at 10.8%. People who have lived in Rockaway between 1 and 5 years made up 6.3% of the survey. People who have lived in Rockaway less than 1 year consist of the smallest percentage, making up only 4.5% of the responses. Seven people (3.9%) answered they do not live in the Borough.



Q4. If you have moved to Rockaway in the last 20 years, what are the main reasons for it?

For this question, respondents were given multiple choices (and could select more than one choice) for why they moved to the Borough, with the availability of an open-ended response. Of the available responses, 56% identify finding a home they liked within the Borough, followed by the quality of life (47.2%) and access to Route 80, Route 46, or other highways (41.6%) as the top 3 reasons they moved to Rockaway. Low taxes (39.2%), close to family/friends (34.4%), and the school system (32.8%) received the next highest responses in the survey question.

Q5. Which of the following statements is most accurate?

This question consisted of a series of generational options to determine how long their family have lived within Rockaway. More than two-thirds (68.2%) of the respondents are the first person in their family to live in the Borough, followed by respondents (13.6%) whose family have lived there more than two generations and closely followed by respondents (13.1%) who are 2<sup>nd</sup> generation.

Q6. Which family arrangement best describes you?

Survey respondents were asked about their family situation, of which over two-thirds (68.2%) answered they are married, with children. Another 9.1% are single and living alone. An equal percentage (6.8%) of respondents are either married with no children, or other family with children. Nine responses (5.1%) are single and not living alone and 4% prefer not to answer.

Q7. What is your approximate household income?

For this question, the most common response is by respondents living in households which earn between \$125,000 to \$199,999 at 30.3%, followed by 26.9% making \$75,000 to \$124,999 and 14.3% of households making more than \$200,000 annually. 15.4% opted not to answer, and seven responses indicate their household bring in less than \$20,000 per year.

#### Q8. What kind of home do you live in?

By far, survey respondents live in single-family homes (92%), generally consistent with the development patterns of the Borough. Four respondents indicate living in a duplex (2-3 family), 2 respondents in a townhome, and 2 respondents in a garden apartment (12 units or less). 6 respondents prefer not to answer.

#### Q9. What is your employment status?

More than two-thirds (67.6%) of participants are employed full-time, followed by part-time employees (11.4%). The third and fourth (tie) most selected options are not employed by choice or otherwise, and retired (both 8.5% each).

#### Q10. Where do you work?

About one-third (34.1%) of responses were made by people working outside the Borough, but within Morris County. This is followed by those working outside of Morris County, but inside the state of New Jersey (19.9%), and people who work within the Borough of Rockaway (18.8%). 17% of respondents do not work, and only 5 respondents indicate working in New York City.

## Thinking about Rockaway

This series of questions was designed to put the respondent in the frame of reference in thinking about Rockaway as a place and what they associate with when they think about the borough. These questions also provide an indication of the Borough's strengths and challenges, and the possible vision for Rockaway's future.

#### Q1. What do you most like about living, working or visiting the Borough of Rockaway?

In this open-ended question about what people most like about the Borough, overwhelmingly people indicate the Borough's small-town feel (70 mentions) and the borough's sense of community, good people, and knowing their neighbors (35 mentions). Respondents also reference the Borough's access to the highway and proximity to other places both locally (within 3 miles) and regionally (i.e. New York City) (30 mentions) and the borough's family friendliness and good school system (18 mentions). Other aspects of Rockaway respondents like (with 7 mentions) its low/fair taxes, its natural features such as the Rockaway River and Parks Lake, its walkability, and how quiet it is. Lesser mentioned aspects of Rockaway include its history/charm/character with 6 mentions, and its safety with 4 mentions.

#### Q2. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the Borough of Rockaway?

This was an open-ended question that provided an opportunity to immediately associate a feeling or something else with the Borough of Rockaway. Many of the responses repeated what was identified in Question 1 above. The response that came up the most with 42 answers is, again, Rockaway's small-town feel, followed by the Borough's close-knit community 29 times, and the association of the Borough as "home" or "family" 30 times. This question elicited more negative comments, with the borough being referred to either as old, rundown, or in need of update 15 times. The Borough Center was mentioned 11 times, of which many times, this was the area that was referenced as needing an update. Rockaway was also associated with being quiet or peaceful 8 times, its history, charm, or character mentioned 7 times, and high taxes mentioned 7 times. Lesser mentioned items included safety issues (5 mentions), natural features (5 mentions), Rockaway's cut-through traffic or congestion (4 mentions), and its school system (3 mentions).

Q3. What are 3 words you would use to describe the Borough of Rockaway?

The answers to this question generally followed the responses of the previous questions in this section, displayed in the word cloud below. The greater the frequency of the response, the larger it shows up in the image. The top three words used to describe Rockaway include Small (repeated 47 times), Friendly (35), and Quaint (27). The top ten words used were all positive reflections of Rockaway, where the 11<sup>th</sup> most commonly used word was Rundown (7) and Old (7).



## Land Use / Development

One of the principal focuses of the new Master Plan is to identify how the Borough of Rockaway may develop in the future with regards to types of development, density, and permitted uses.

Q1. What are the 3 qualities that make Rockaway attractive for new businesses and development?

This open-ended question resulted in a variety of responses. Overwhelmingly, the most identified strength of Rockaway that makes it attractive to new business and development is the Borough's access to local highways and location, which was mentioned 72 times. The second and third qualities that make Rockaway attractive for new business and development is its customer base (i.e. friendly, plentiful, loyal, support local businesses) (26 mentions) and its lower costs (i.e. low taxes, rents, and land prices) (23 mentions). Mentioned less frequently was the Borough's existing downtown area, its available space for growth, and denser/growing population (19 mentions). 18 respondents indicate they could not think of one quality that would attract businesses or development or said that there is no room to develop. Other responses mention



the Borough's potential/opportunity (11), small-town feel (10), the area's income and access to skilled workforce (9), its walkability (6), good schools (5), its history (5), natural resources (i.e. Rockaway River) (4), and diverse population (4).

Q2. What are the 3 qualities that make Rockaway NOT attractive for new businesses and development?

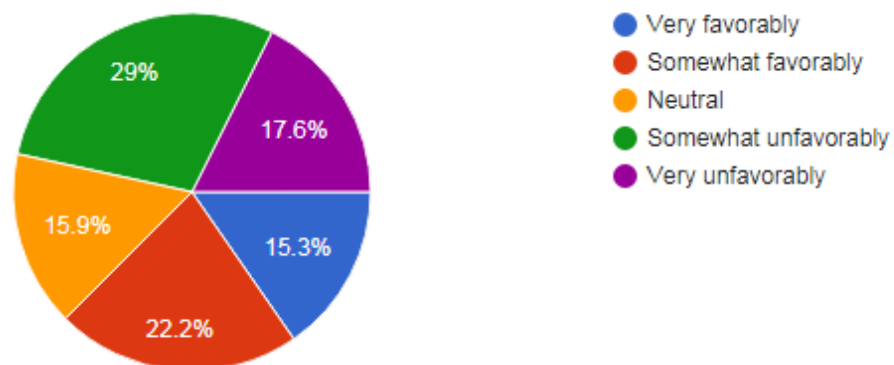
The open-ended question revealed that parking is the main concern, having been identified 56 times. Traffic and congestion is a close second quality, with 41 mentions. Respondents also identify that that downtown is too small or that there is insufficient space for new business/development, or poor layout, or old infrastructure and real estate, with 33 mentions. The overall unattractiveness and lack of investment is mentioned 29 times and high costs (i.e. property taxes, rents) is mentioned 23 times. Respondents were also sure to mention the empty storefronts and high turnover in the Borough Center (18), as well as the lack of municipal governance and leadership of the area, and strict zoning rules and strict Land Use Board (14). With equal mentions are the lack of walkability in the Center with some safety concerns (i.e. traffic, type of people in downtown) (11), and the area's income not being able to support businesses (11).

Q3. Generally, how do you view the possibility of new development in the Borough of Rockaway?

Survey participants are split regarding new development in the Borough, where ultimately there were more unfavorable views to new development (29% Somewhat Unfavorably and 17.6% Very Unfavorably = 46.6%) than favorable views (22.2% Somewhat Favorably and 15.3% Very Favorably = 37.5%). 15.9% of respondents had a neutral response to new development.

## Generally, how do you view the possibility of new development in the Borough of Rockaway?

176 responses



Q4. If you answered favorably or unfavorably to the previous question, why do you view development that way?

Of the 27 responses that were Very Favorable of new development (Q3), 14 respondents provided reasons including, they are ready for change, to see empty storefronts filled, and that new development would help lower taxes. Of the 39 responses that were Somewhat Favorable to new development (Q3) 22 respondents provided reasons for this choice, including the need to revitalize downtown. Many indicate specific recommendations such as the need for wayfinding for parking and a more diverse retail base. Others raise the concern of overpopulation with new development – while some respondents welcome residential in the downtown, others warn against more apartment complexes. In Question 3 above, 28 respondents were

Neutral to new development where only 8 respondents provided their reasoning with mixed responses; one respondent did not understand question #3.

Negative responses comprised the majority of the answers. 51 respondents view new development in Rockaway Somewhat Unfavorably, of which 48 provided reasons for their choice. The number one concern was of overcrowding/overpopulation. Some believed it would put the Borough's small-town feel at risk while others commented on the already overcrowded school system and already poor downtown traffic conditions. Others mentioned that the Borough should concentrate on revitalizing existing developed areas instead of building new development on existing undeveloped land. 29 of 31 respondents provided their reason for choosing Very Unfavorable to new development in Rockaway from Question 3. Reasons for their choice reflected those reasons from the Somewhat Unfavorable respondents.

Q5. What do you think are major benefits related to new development in the Borough?

Respondents were given the option to select all responses they felt applied to the answer, plus the ability to provide an open-ended response, by selecting "other". 41.5% participants identify with "attract new businesses/support local economy" as the top major benefit. This is followed by "increased tax base and ratables" (38.1%) and "attract new businesses" (37.5%). About one-third of the responses (33.5%) identify with "I don't think there are major benefits to new development". 29% of the respondents identify with "Improve overall aesthetics in the Borough" and "New population" (17.6%) as other major benefits.

Q6. What do you think are major impacts related to new development in the Borough?

When asked what impacts may arise from new development, 75% list traffic as their primary concern, followed by impact on schools (73.3%) and the impact to services such as police, fire, etc. (59.1%). These answers are followed by overpopulation (51.1%), lack of visual quality of architecture (33%), and affordable housing (17%).

Q7. What kind of residential development should Rockaway encourage?

Similar to the traditional development pattern in Rockaway, single family residential receive the most responses, consisting of 73.7%. This is followed by senior housing of any kind (33.6%), and mixed-use (27.6%). Townhouses receive the fourth most responses at 24.3%. Affordable housing (18.4%) and duplexes (2- to 3- family homes) (17.8%) each receive less than 20% of the responses. Less than 15 percent support the idea of garden apartments with up to 12 units per building (13.2%). Other apartments with more than 12 units per building falls last on the list at 4.6%.

Q8. What kind of non-residential development should Rockaway encourage?

62.9% of survey respondents believe that Downtown Commercial Mixed-Use development should be encouraged in Rockaway. More than half the respondents (51.6%) also indicate that stand-alone commercial development should be encouraged. This is followed by single-family to office conversions (35.2%), and strip commercial (26.4%). Home occupations (offices in occupied residences) receive the fourth most responses at 20.8%. Office buildings (16.4%) and industrial/flex industrial (12.6%) each receive less than 20% of the responses. Less than 10 percent support the idea of big box commercial (9.4%)

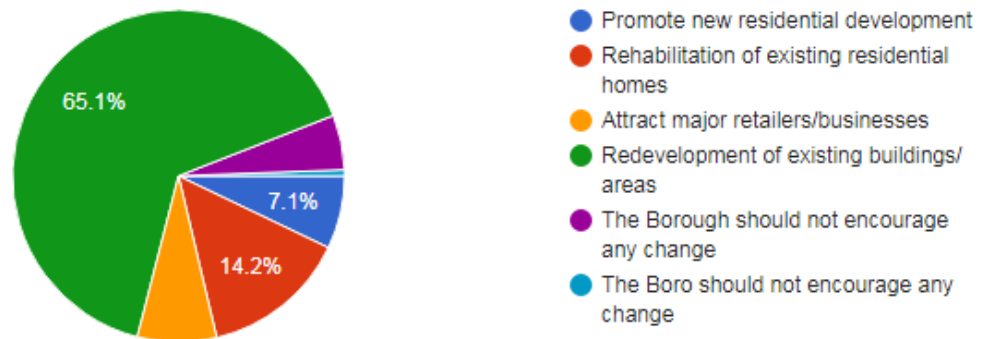


Q9. What development strategies should the Borough most focus on encouraging?

Consistent with many of the previous answers, especially the preference against new development, most participants say Rockaway should focus on the redevelopment of existing buildings and areas of the Borough (65.1%). The second most common response is the rehabilitation of existing residential homes (14.2%). Attracting major retailers/businesses (7.7%). 5.9% believe the Borough should not encourage any change.

## What development strategies should the Borough most focus on encouraging?

169 responses



Q10. Where would you most like to see new development/redevelopment occur?

For this question, the most responses (50.3%) identify Borough Center as the location participants would most like to see new development/redevelopment occur. This answer is followed by the Route 46 Corridor at 16.2%. Many fill-in responses indicated Borough Center and the Route 46 Corridor, as multiple answers could not be chosen for this question. 14.3% say they don't want to see new development in any part of Rockaway. Eleven percent would like to see new development/redevelopment occur on E. Main Street and/or W. Main Street, outside of Borough Center. 2.9% indicate Hibernia Avenue while the remainder had filled in a response in the "other" location.

## Economy

Questions for this section were related to the local economy, types of business desired within the Borough, and other potential areas for business activity.

Q1. Do you own a business in the Borough of Rockaway?

This question confirms participation of the existing business community in Rockaway. While most respondents (86.9%) do not own a business, 17 respondents own a business in the Borough (9.7%) and 7 respondents do not own a business but are an employee of a business in the Borough (3.4%).

Q2: If you answered “yes” to the above question, are you a member of the Rockaway Borough Business Owners Association?

Of the 17 respondents in Question 1 above, 11 are members and 6 are not members of the RBBOA. This question speaks to the strength or level of participation that the RBBOA has with existing Rockaway Borough businesses.

Q3: In a typical month, how often do you shop in the Borough Center?

Participants rarely shop (once a month or less) in the Borough Center (26.9%). Of those who do shop in the Borough Center, most shop 4-5 times per month (22.3%), followed by 2-3 times per week (19.4%). People who shop on a daily basis make up 16.6% of the total and those who shop 2-3 times per month in Rockaway Borough’s Center make up 14.9% of the total.

Q4: In a typical month, how often do you shop on the Route 46 Corridor?

More participants shop on the Route 46 corridor than in the Borough Center. Almost one-third of respondents (32.1%) shop on Route 46 2-3 times per week, followed by 4-5 times per month (23.6%) and followed closely by “on a daily basis” (23%). 13.2% shop on Route 46 2-3 times per month and only 8% of respondents rarely shop (once a month or less) on the Route 46 corridor.

Q5. Which of the following statements are true?

When asked about what kinds of businesses they use in Rockaway, restaurants are selected by nearly 90% of the respondents. Shopping at Rockaway stores is selected more than half of the time (59.5%), followed by going to health and beauty service establishments (53.6%). Entertainment establishments such as bars, theaters, bowling, etc., were chosen 45.2% of the time. About one-third (32.8%) participants say they go to Rockaway fitness service establishments and 23.8% go to professional service establishments. Only 9.5% of respondents go to cultural facilities like galleries or museums.

Q6. In your opinion, Rockaway could use more:

Given different types of business options, most participants identify Rockaway Borough needing additional restaurants (58.7%) and retail stores (53.5%). More entertainment establishments is mentioned third most often (42.6%), followed by cultural facilities (31.6%). Approximately 1 in 4 people say professional services (25.2%). Health and beauty services (4.5%) and fitness services (2.6%) are not as desired.

Q7. The business or kind of business you would most like to see in the Borough of Rockaway is:

The open-ended question elicited a wide variety of responses. The number one business respondents want in Rockaway Borough are restaurants (mentioned 47 times). Some respondents gave specific recommendations such as an ice cream parlor (12 times), a Chic-fil-a (3 times), and a bakery (2 times). The second most wanted business type in Rockaway were Retail Stores (26 times). The words “local” or “small” was used to describe these retail stores 9 times. Where people offered a specific recommendation, a gift shop was mentioned most often (5 times). Respondents also want to see coffee shops in Rockaway Borough (11 times), of which a Starbucks is mentioned specifically 5 times. Entertainment options was mentioned 8 times, of which music venues were mentioned specifically 3 of those 8 times. Professional services was also mentioned 8 times, of which banks were mentioned 3 times. Options for kids was mentioned 6 times, bars 4 times, and grocery stores 4 times of which a Trader Joe’s was mentioned twice.

Q8. What other areas of the Borough should be looked at for new businesses?

Survey participants primarily identify Main Street as a possible area for new businesses (24 times), more specifically the Borough Center was mentioned 13 of those 24 times, West Main Street area was mentioned 4 of those 24 times, and East Main Street was mentioned only once out of those 24 times. Twice respondents indicate that new development should not be near the Borough Center. Route 46 was

mentioned 17 times by respondents, of which twice the area around World Gym was noted. Locating businesses in existing abandoned or vacant buildings was mentioned four times.

## Community Facilities

These series of questions relate to public facilities and services, plus the perception of the schools in the Borough.

### Q1. In the past month, have you been to the following places at least once?

Most people say they have been to the recycling center (57.9%) or Borough Hall (49.3%) at least once in the last month. 45.7% of the time, respondents indicate they had visited the Borough Library, but less people had been to the Community Center (25%) or Historical Society (5%).

### Q2. Generally, do you find the community facilities from the question above to be convenient and useful?

Over three-quarters of survey participants approve of the community facilities from question 1. 77.2% answer yes, while 22.8% say no.

### Q3. If you answered “no” to the question above, why not?

Feedback provided by respondents were split among the Borough’s community facilities. The Community Center received the most comments, mentioned 10 times, of which 3 times, respondents ask what happens there and another 3 times it was mentioned as being too small. Second most mentioned community facility is the Recycle Center (9 times), of which its limited hours was the biggest complaint. The Library received six mentions, with comments regarding its size and outdated-ness. Borough Hall was mentioned 5 times, of which it was noted as being inconvenient and poor parking. One respondent noted that there should be the ability to pay taxes online. The Historical Society was mentioned only three times, of which twice it was regarded as small. Throughout the comments, some respondents admitted to using Rockaway Township Facilities over Rockaway Borough’s (i.e. Recycle Center, Library).

### Q4. In general, are you satisfied with the services the Borough of Rockaway provides?

Similar to Question 2, the sizable majority of responses say yes (79.5%) versus no (20.5%).

### Q5. If you answered “no” to the question above, why not?

Of the responses that provide critical comments to this section, 8 respondents mentioned the poor maintenance, general up-keep of the Borough from street cleaning to property maintenance to the maintenance of public areas such as parks. Another 8 times a Taxes-Services Provided mismatch was described. Respondents believe taxes are increasing while services remain. A need for additional services for children and seniors of Rockaway was mentioned 3 times, of which a larger community center or recreation center would be a viable option. Traffic was a concern as well (3 times), where downtown, W. Main Street, and speeding on County roads were pointed out. The need for an upgrade to the schools was mentioned twice.

### Q6. Are there any facilities or services that are not in the Borough you would like to see?

Of the responses, 20 mention the need for additional services/programming and a place to host such activities (i.e. PAL center, community center, recreation center, senior center). 7 respondents would like to see a Borough swimming pool and six respondents would like to see improved recycle services including a place to drop leaves off. 4 respondents mentioned the schools, 2 of which mentioned a need for an update to the schools and two of which mentioned needing school buses for the elementary and middle school. Finally, three respondents mentioned improvements to Borough Hall and twice online bill pay capabilities were mentioned.

Q7. Did you or did/does someone in your family go to public school in the Borough of Rockaway?

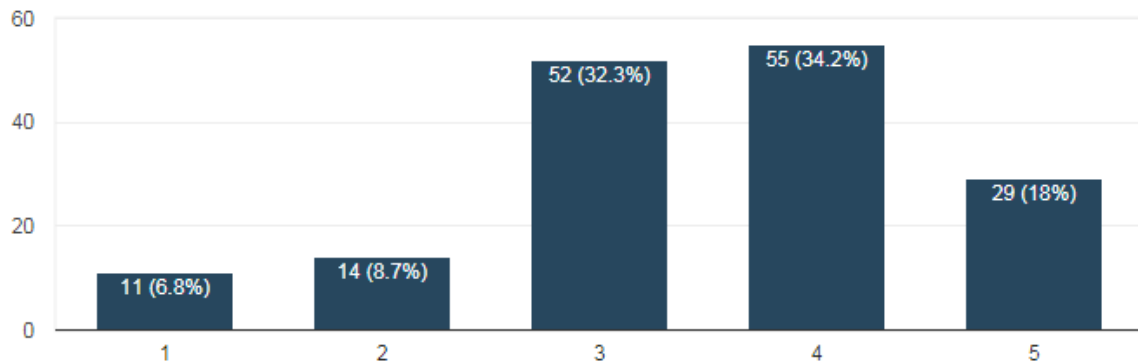
86.1% of respondents state that they or someone in their family did or does go to a public school in the Borough of Rockaway, while 13.9% said no.

Q8. On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being "Excellent" and 1 being "Poor", how would you rate the Borough of Rockaway school system?

Most survey respondents list the school system as a 3 (32.3%) or 4 (34.2%), which can be interpreted as about average to good, while 18% rate the system as a 5, and 8.7% say it is a 2 (below average). Less than 10 percent (6.8%) rate the school system as a 1.

On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being "Excellent" and 1 being "Poor", how would you rate the Borough of Rockaway school system? (Elementary and Middle school only; the High School is a separate District)

161 responses



Q9. What is the reason for your rating?

Similar to the rankings from question 8, there are a number of positive comments about the school district and a number of negative comments. Most positive comments focus on excellent teachers and staff, good education and good life outcomes they or their children attained. Critical comments note the outdated facilities and staff turnover. Several note overcrowding.