

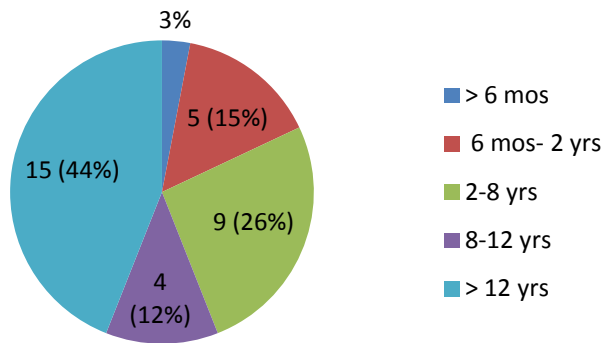
## **East Hills Business District Reponses to Uptown Marketing Study**

In the first quarter of 2017, Uptown collaborated with Calvin College to conduct marketing research for the district. The students surveyed Uptown business owners and area residents about their perceptions of Uptown, its greatest assets, challenges and recommendations for improvements. Over 260 area residents (Heritage Hill, Midtown, East Hills, Baxter and Eastown) and 134 business owners responded to the surveys. This report contains the survey responses from the 34 East Hills business owners answering questions regarding their own business district. A more detailed analysis of all survey responses will be completed by early October and sent out to all Uptown businesses.

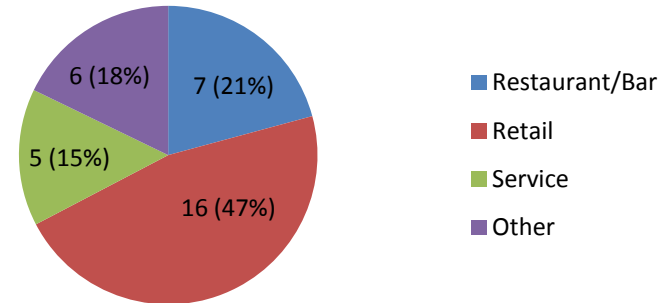
### **Highlights**

- 34 East Hills business owners responded to the survey.
- 73% of all respondents stated their business is performing either “*Well*” or “*Very Well*.”
- In response to “*How would you rank your involvement in the East Hills business district,*” 40% of respondents stated they were “*Actively involved*” and 40% stated “*Nominally involved.*”
- In response to “*What’s going well in the East Hills business district,*” the most frequent comments involved:
  - High quality business district: new businesses moving in, great restaurants and more foot traffic
  - Vibrant, well-kept and desirable community area
- In response to “*What needs to improve in the East Hills business district,*” the most frequent comments involved:
  - Lack of parking
  - More and better marketing, promotions and special events

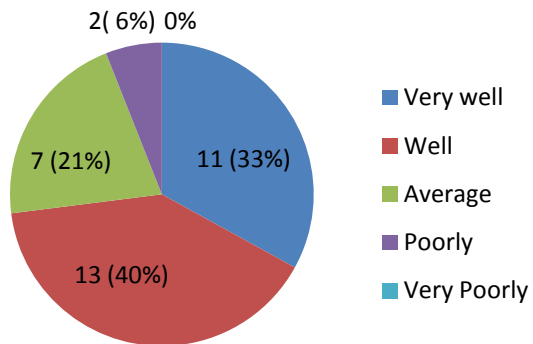
**1. How long have you been in business?  
(34 respondents)**



**2. What type of business do you own?  
(34 respondents)**



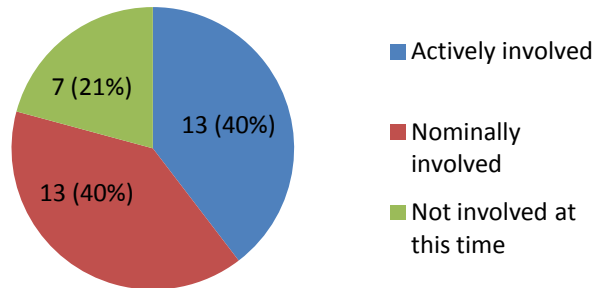
**3. How would you say your business is performing?  
(33 respondents)**



#### 4. Where do you see your business in the next 5 years?

- I see Trinity United Methodist Church being more a fabric of the community that people identify with.
- 30% increase in annual sales
- Same location, double gross sales.
- Opening another location in a different neighborhood, continuing heavy involvement in this neighborhood, perhaps adding more seating/event space in our current location
- Unsure
- We are currently selling and the new owners have some exciting changes in mind. I think sales will increase with their new vision and plans.
- Making more money
- Growing every year
- continuing to grow and evolve in the same location; perhaps a second location or venture
- Providing rental income
- Hopefully growing.
- This is a very open-ended question, so I'll focus on employment and gross annual sales. We have been open just over 6 months, and we are projected to have annual sales of \$250,000. In 5 years, we'd like to see our store at \$300,000 in annual sales. We are currently owner operated and one of us is full-time, the other, half-time. In 5 years, we'd like to have at least 4 additional part-time employees.
- We hope to make significant investment into building renovations and retail equipment utilized for our retail sale product lines. We hope to show 5% growth each year in retail sales.
- Continued growth, expanding to more locations
- VERY WELL
- Doing the same type of work
- Still here, greater on line presence and a second store somewhere.
- Continuing to thrive and expand.
- Opening an additional location in another walkable neighborhood (Ada, Lowell, NW GR, e.g.)
- We are positioned for moderate growth.
- We hope to see more retail traffic in the area - resulting in increased sales.
- We are about at capacity so see us leveling off but staying strong
- Hopefully growing--provided Internet sales do not totally destroy all the brick and mortar stores.
- I plan to stay in the neighborhood and expect that our business will continue to grow at a healthy rate.

**5. How would rate your involvement in the East Hills business district? (33 respondents)**



**6. Comments regarding respondents' involvement in the East Hill business district.**

- We attend the monthly meetings and actively find ways to connect and promote local businesses
- CID board member. 47 year resident.
- Disorganized association, I could be doing more to help the association get things done.
- I go to all the meetings, have been on two committees. I am not currently on a committee or the board.
- Attending meetings and participating in events.
- I have been involved in event planning, marketing and have been president of the business association.
- Too busy to get involved
- I am working on becoming more involved in our business assoc and doing some vision work with other business owners in the district to make the EHBA something that businesses benefit from being active in
- I was more involved a few years back but not as much in recent years.
- We were involved in the East Hills business association when we opened our business and allowed our membership to lapse after attending too many meetings that were not productive or efficient. We are deeply invested in Congress Elementary, our neighborhood elementary school located north of the Cherry St. business district.
- Have been a member in the past, it seems that it is more for the retail businesses
- RENEW MEMBERSHIP YEARLY
- I was incredibly involved when I first opened business in EH. Now, I do not do much but hoping to get involved again.
- Have been very involved since 2002.
- It can be a challenge to keep things moving forward with so many "cooks in the kitchen" especially when people won't commit extra time towards working on things outside of coming to the meetings
- We are not actively involved in the district as our primary focus is on our own business at this time. As a small business, we are constantly working and do not necessarily have the ability to make any additional time commitments.

**7. What's going well in the East Hills business district?**

Theme	Comments
<p>High quality business district</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New businesses moving in</li> <li>- Great restaurants</li> <li>- Much foot traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued increase in businesses opening</li> <li>• Great Eateries</li> <li>• Most of the storefronts are occupied. There's a pretty good selection of shops.</li> <li>• We are the best food district in West Michigan.</li> <li>• Good occupancy rate and a nice mix of retailers.</li> <li>• Continued business development into the East Hills business district has shown that new customers are being drawn to the area.</li> <li>• Foot traffic is exceptional and the neighborhood residents support local business.</li> <li>• Lots of foot traffic</li> <li>• With great variety of business opening of new retail we are seeing more active shopping in the district</li> <li>• Great, high-quality businesses and restaurants</li> <li>• New owners now becoming very involved in district planning.</li> <li>• Foot traffic of shoppers</li> <li>• People keep coming.</li> <li>• Lots of consumers coming to the area.</li> <li>• Walking traffic on warm days</li> <li>• Loyal customers.</li> <li>• New businesses coming in; lots of walkability</li> </ul>
<p>Vibrant, well-kept and desirable community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I've heard from many that tourists seek us out since they have heard how great East Hills is.</li> <li>• Vibrant community that has a destination feel to it for all of West Michigan</li> <li>• Cleanliness of East Hills</li> <li>• Walkable, great neighborhood,</li> <li>• Improved street scape</li> <li>• Cherry Park renovations are making a positive difference influencing more families coming the area</li> <li>• Well kept area.</li> <li>• Desirable neighborhood that draws people</li> <li>• Stability</li> <li>• Supportive neighborhood and community</li> </ul>
<p>More engaged and involved business owners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active engagement of many businesses</li> <li>• The biz assoc has gotten more active and now is having planters filled</li> <li>• Motivated biz owners surrounding my business</li> <li>• A fair amount of collaboration and cohesiveness exists amongst the group.</li> <li>• I like the connection between the business owners and the working together to promote common goals.</li> <li>• Referral to other East Hills Businesses</li> </ul>
<p>Successful, collaborative events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood events</li> <li>• Great turnout for ESR, summer concerts&amp; shop hop</li> </ul>

## 8. What needs to improve in the East Hills business district?

Theme	Comments
Lack of parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking will always be an issue</li> <li>• Parking is a huge issue - restaurants have received variances for parking and as a result there is very little space left for retail</li> <li>• Better (dedicated) city parking lot</li> <li>• Parking. Parking.</li> <li>• Benches and other things on walks to encourage more walking traffic</li> <li>• Parking of Course</li> <li>• Parking - always parking issues; crosswalks for the elementary school</li> <li>• Parking continues to be a problem.</li> <li>• Parking / more frequent public transportation</li> <li>• We need employee parking areas to alleviate street over-crowding.</li> </ul>
More and better marketing, promotions and special events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EHBA tends to market to its OWN community rather than marketing to new communities! They need to be willing to think out of the box! They keep trying the same things with the same results: not positive results.</li> <li>• Better combined marketing.</li> <li>• How to promote and communicate what is happening to each other and the community.</li> <li>• More community oriented events.</li> <li>• Marketing. Events</li> <li>• Regional support for local shopping.</li> <li>• Banners to advertise products and services and differentiate us from other business districts</li> <li>• Making it known to shoppers that East Hills shopping expands beyond Cherry St</li> </ul>
Need to recruit more retail businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need more retail and fewer food or no more food related businesses/restaurants.</li> <li>• A coffee shop</li> <li>• More retail shops</li> <li>• More age appropriate retail.</li> <li>• Turnover is high for storefronts, how do we pick better fits or get more regular traffic for the non-food places?</li> </ul>
Improve "curb appeal" and look of the neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RECYCLING CONTAINERS OFFERED TO PEDESTRIANS ON THE STREET, AND ALSO DOG POOP PICK UP BAGS/STATIONS SIMILAR TO THOSE PROVIDED IN PARKS.</li> <li>• The look of the neighborhood: • additional planters to provide consistency • professional tree trimming (overgrown, rubbing on buildings and delivery trucks, dead branches hanging down) electrical outlets to enhance the holiday romance in winter</li> <li>• Curb appeal" - it still looks pretty sketchy in some areas.</li> <li>• Better monitoring of the look of vacant and run down properties, maybe a way to have the owners of these buildings be accountable for cleaning them up</li> </ul>
Need for greater business participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The restaurants need to understand that they need to be involved with the businesses that surround them. Brewery Vivant is the exception to this. They are a great example of community involvement and should be the model for restaurant community involvement.</li> <li>• The East Hills Business Association could be absorbed into the Uptown BID &amp; CID with a few representatives from East Hills business district advocating for neighborhood interests. The 4 business districts in uptown</li> </ul>

	<p>seem to be duplicating efforts in such a small area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business outreach and participation is less than ideal.</li> <li>• Identity, future plans</li> </ul>
More cultural, ethnic diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More cultural diversity and people who appreciate what it has to offer.</li> <li>• DIVERSITY - no minority owned businesses!!!!!!</li> </ul>
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More affordable housing needed in the area. Consistent hours of operation.</li> </ul>

### Discussion questions for the East Hills Business Association

- Were you surprised or disappointed by any of the responses from the survey? If so, why?
- What are some of your key take-aways from the survey responses?
- After considering the survey feedback, are there any follow-up steps or action items that you believe may be important for individual owners and/or your business association to pursue?