

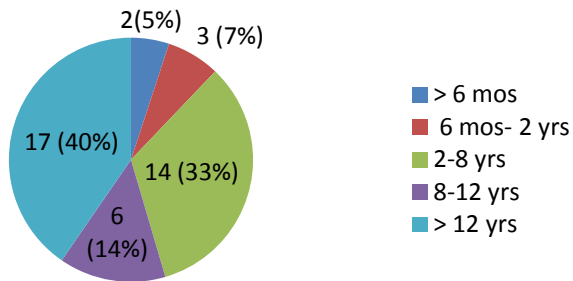
## **Wealthy Street Business District Reponses to Uptown Marketing Study**

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, Baxter, East Hills and Eastown) and 134 business owners responded to the surveys. This report contains the survey responses from the 42 Wealthy Street 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.

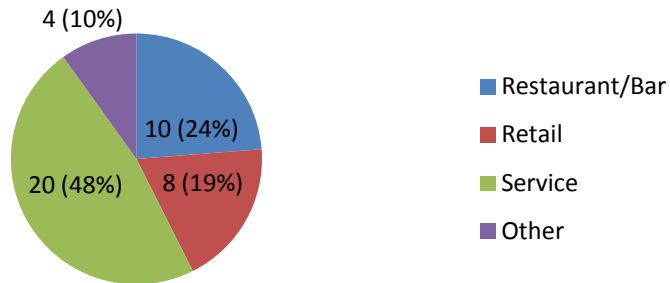
### **Highlights**

- 42 Wealthy Street business owners responded to the survey.
- 86% of all respondents stated their business is performing either “*Well*” or “*Very Well*.”
- In response to “*How would you rank your involvement in the Wealthy Street business district,*” 36% of respondents stated they were “*Actively involved*” and 46% stated “*Nominally involved*.”
- In response to “*What’s going well in the Wealthy Street business district,*” the most frequent comments involved:
  - Tremendous economic revitalization: new businesses moving in, rehabbing dilapidated buildings and increased foot traffic
  - Greater engagement and camaraderie amongst the Wealthy Street business owners
- In response to “*What needs to improve in the Wealthy Street Business district,*” the most frequent comments involved:
  - The lack of parking, traffic congestion and concerns around pedestrian safety
  - The need for even more active business involvement

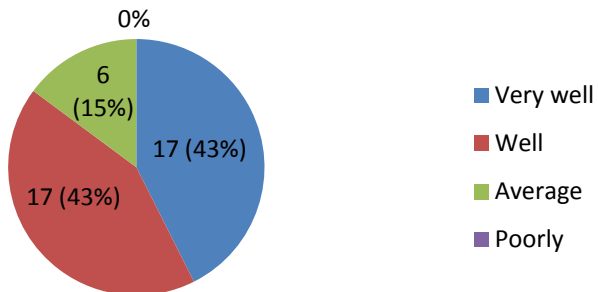
**1. How long have you been in business? (42 respondents)**



**2. What type of business do you own? (42 respondents)**



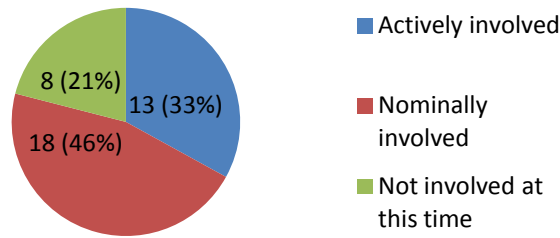
**3. How would you say your business is performing? (40 respondents)**



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

- Hopefully expanding more and an increase in business
- Continuing with the momentum we have today
- Same or slight growth
- We have maintained a steady client base and see it growing over the next 5 years
- 10 locations, larger off-site production facility, diversify offering, employee ownership through discounted franchising. Known locally as premier coffee roaster in GR and begin growth into other metro areas.
- At least double the size it is now.
- Same
- Hopefully growing and getting stronger!
- Hopefully doubling in clients - currently around 200, would like to go up to 400. Also, we hope to have a street-visible storefront by then. We currently occupy physical space above and below street level.
- Expanding
- Doing even better!
- Very well
- Growing and opening more locations, maybe expanding outside of Grand Rapids
- Would expect to see continued growth and continue to diversify our client portfolio.
- Good question....we are currently having this discussion.
- I don't see much change to the business in the next five years as it relates to customers. I think the biggest changes businesses like ours will see are in the expenses to run the business. Health insurance, cost of goods, wages, etc are all factors that will seriously impact bars and restaurants in the near future. You will see a revolving door of bars and restaurants in 5-10 years.
- I see our business continue to grow here as both the residential population and the retail presence in the area continue to grow.
- Located in EGR.
- Continuing to grow in its current location.
- I see our connections to the city and other businesses growing stronger. I see an increase in production and distribution. As well as another major side business branching off of the one we currently have going.
- Stable, well-performing
- Hopefully expanding our space on Wealthy and opening a 4th & 5th location.
- Doing well
- Sustaining and thriving.
- Our business is thriving and growing. We anticipate in 5 years we would be at capacity and may have to open a second location.
- Growing sales online and outside the district. Improvements/remodeling.
- Much the same, hopefully busier!
- Geographically, still in Uptown
- Expanding to Bridge St.
- Moving to a larger location and acquiring additional promotional companies
- Growing - hopefully
- Growing carefully. Possibly expanding to Detroit, which is a boom town right now.
- Steady demand-driven growth
- In Uptown, increased number of employees and potentially more space.

**5. How would you rank your involvement in the Wealthy Street business district? (39 respondents)**



**6. Comments regarding respondents' involvement in the Wealthy Street business district.**

- Part of the events at Wealthy on Charles (we donated and served at the events), going to partake in Cinco on Wealthy, donations to fellow establishments, Shop Hop, and anything else we are invited to by surrounding businesses or that the business district asks us to be part of we try our best to join!
- My wife and I (owners of From the Heart Yoga) were president and vice president of the EFBA for 7 years prior to moving to Wealthy Street. We were also 2 of the founding members for Uptown back in the early 2000's and were on the formation boards for landing the cool cities grant along with being on several committees after that . We were also on the Uptown board through the process of securing the CID/BID designations for uptown. For the last 4 years we have taken a break from committee work.
- Was very active: created the "W St." logo and signage, created Wealthy Street FB page, active in marketing concept of Wealthy Street brand as destination for discriminating shoppers and entrepreneurs looking for upscale experience and lifestyle.
- The times of meetings I have to be at my business.
- I've been to meetings, but have not in a while. Usually involved with the planning for entertainment regarding Eat.Shop.Rock during the summers. Otherwise, it's been difficult getting to the early morning meetings and I am usually working during the evening mixers.
- We participate in monthly WSBA meetings. We give monetarily to WSBA for dues. We share happenings, events with our staff to encourage community involvement. We keep a clean property. We employ local landscaping and shop local in the Uptown district for food/ beverage/gifts. We allow Uptown Exec. committee and marketing committee to use our conference rooms whenever for meetings. We host annual client appreciation open house and invite most Wealthy St. business owners to attend. We look for crime occurrences, reporting suspicious activity to the police and all around try to be a good neighbor to both businesses and residents.
- We are active along Wealthy St but I believe there is a shift happening now between the people we were here 6+ years ago and those just looking to make a start on Wealthy. There is little willingness to help those that are new to put business on this street by those who have been long term. One part is the old timers had to figure it out with no outside help while the new comers are asking for help to make things easier for themselves.
- We stay connected with business members, are active on area business social media pages, and attend business alliance meetings.
- My office in East Grand Rapids is a community bank and I work very closely with some of the businesses in the Uptown Community by providing financial services. I have attended several networking meetings of WSBA, Local First West Michigan, and other groups such as the Association for Corporate Growth that serve to promote the success of businesses in Uptown and Grand Rapids and to connect local businesses to one another. I have also helped out with Shop Hop by volunteering for the event (and patronizing it).

- The few meetings I have attended were a bit of a waste of time. Plus the meetings are announced less than a week before, so it never works with my schedule.
- The association is geared more toward retail and restaurants.
- Very engaged group – we believe in this neighborhood, the business and the community – neighborhood schools, the diversity.
- I was very involved when my business was on Fulton Street. My neighbors on Wealthy were not welcoming to my business and have essentially harassed me and my guests since we moved in. This issue has been about parking.
- No time for involvement in the business alliance. Not really feeling like it's an alliance.
- Intimately involved in leadership, in transition to back down from leadership but will continue to be actively involved
- Part of WSBA, on the BID board, Uptown marketing committee
- They have no presence and I have not found that they do anything
- WSBA and CID Board member

## 7. What's going well in the Wealthy Street business district?

Theme	Comments
<p>“Tremendous” economic revitalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New businesses moving in</li> <li>- Rehabbing old buildings</li> <li>- Greater foot traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Businesses popping up, condos being built</li> <li>• The growth of incoming business</li> <li>• Development and involvement</li> <li>• Tremendous Growth</li> <li>• Attracting development, decreasing blight</li> <li>• Increase in traffic due to growth.</li> <li>• Development of the old McDonalds property.</li> <li>• Lots of activity</li> <li>• A lot of new growth up and coming</li> <li>• Area is filling in empty buildings.</li> <li>• The area is certainly more active and seems to be growing. The surrounding areas seem to also be changing and improving.</li> <li>• Development of obsolete properties</li> <li>• Changing every day mostly for the better. New small businesses opening</li> <li>• Real estate development interest from outside business owner wanting to be a part of WS</li> <li>• New development is happening, especially in finally getting rid of the old McDonald's.</li> <li>• Wealthy Street is becoming a thriving bustling business district, like it was years ago, as more retail and service oriented businesses move in and invest in the district. It has been fun watching store fronts fill in and people begin to treat Wealthy Street like a walk-able shopp-able corridor.</li> <li>• Overall creating a buzz.</li> <li>• Walking business really seems to be up</li> <li>• Increased awareness and walkability for the Uptown area.</li> <li>• Good foot traffic</li> <li>• Traffic and awareness of the businesses is up. Seem to be attracting a "better" customer in the past 2 years + more businesses are interested in opening in the area.</li> <li>• Increased traffic</li> <li>• Wealthy Street has seen tremendous development and economic revitalization over the past few years. This has drawn many people to the area to shop.</li> </ul>
<p>Great business engagement and camaraderie</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camaraderie between businesses</li> <li>• Many of my business neighbors are personable and cooperative when it comes to organizing events.</li> <li>• An increased interest from business owners to participate in moving the business community forward. There is great consistency with meetings and communication.</li> <li>• Meeting on a regular basis.</li> <li>• WSBA meetings are held regularly. Decent level of involvement from some business owners</li> <li>• Increased engagement by business owners</li> <li>• Lots of collaboration and interest in bringing more people to Wealthy</li> <li>• Engaged businesses. Passionate community. Businesses want this area to be successful.</li> <li>• Community involvement</li> <li>• Working with the city to further define what a TBD is and who/what kind of businesses should be on main</li> </ul>

	<p>floor level of buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Dec Shop Hop in Dec well done and brings solid results.</li> </ul>
Improved perceptions of Wealthy Street, especially regarding public safety and cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's becoming a safer area</li> <li>• More people = more eyes = more security.</li> <li>• People are beginning to see the area as a destination and not a scary place</li> <li>• Having new and thriving businesses has improved the public safety perception of the area which has brought in more foot traffic of people just walking and jogging through the area where in years past most people avoided the district.</li> <li>• Crime is low, things are relatively peaceful</li> <li>• Street cleanliness</li> <li>• Unlike Eastown and Michigan Avenue, the old architecture is mostly intact</li> <li>• Street is clean</li> </ul>
High quality/diverse businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restaurants- high quality</li> <li>• There is a great diversity of shops and businesses on our street. That also leads to a lot of strong partnerships and ways we all band together and grow together.</li> <li>• The quality of what is offered. It is, mostly unique (or at least usually distinctive) and local, and first rate. No fast food; no pita joints, no cheapie places. No punk trade businesses that bring trouble, like in Eastown.</li> </ul>

## 8. What needs to improve in the Wealthy Street business district?

Theme	Comments
Lack of parking, traffic congestion and concerns around pedestrian safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic calming street design</li> <li>• A traffic light NEEDS to be put in at the intersection of Henry and Wealthy. It is extremely dangerous and now that it is a busier area with so many people walking on foot we need to advocate for this before someone gets hurt. Even trying to inch off of Henry it is nearly impossible to see around the parked cars on Wealthy to see if it is safe to turn. It is a death trap.</li> <li>• Keep an eye on the traffic. Not too bad right now - and I understand some businesses actually feel they benefit from a lot of traffic - but the last thing the neighborhood needs after all those years of decrepitude is a fatality. Then there will be cops all over and the fun of the main drag will be gone.</li> <li>• More free parking. I know - there is a big push for bicycles - but face it - but America is addicted to its cars and that ain't gonna change. Face it. I know a lot of people who still avoid these fun neighborhoods because the parking is perceived as paid (not sure why - few if any meters) and/or non-existent But a good-sized lot like Eastown's two, or the Wealthy Theater one, discreetly tucked in somewhere in the Eastern-to-College strip, would be a good idea.</li> <li>• Parking is becoming a huge negative issue. The city does not seem to care where they approve a restaurant. And furthermore, they are requiring NO parking for these new establishments. This will take all street parking and there are only two small lots in the area. It will drive customer away from service and retail businesses. (look at Cherry Street) Also random ONE hour parking areas make no sense. They should consider metering the entire business district</li> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• More Parking, More pedestrian right of ways.</li> <li>• Need more bicycle and pedestrian friendly services.</li> <li>• To slow the vehicular speed WAY down on Wealthy St.</li> <li>• In our section (Between Eastern to Union) After 5:00pm on most nights Parking has become an issue. There is parking on side streets but this burdens the residential districts. Businesses are not required to include parking and this is overloading the public lots. As soon as the Kregel building and Phil's stuff are developed it will be even more congested.</li> </ul>
Need more active business involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to see more involvement from all businesses, some completely absent from events or meetings.</li> <li>• More involvement of all/different types of businesses.</li> <li>• Engage businesses that are not as involved. Overall, no complaints or issues.</li> <li>• There's a lot of inconsistency in how things are done. The business alliance seems to rubber stamp some things and not others. Some projects happen without any comment whatsoever. Other businesses are put through the wringer. That makes it appear rather fishy in my opinion</li> <li>• There are many businesses/owners that could/should be more engaged in the community</li> <li>• Can be a bit cliquy Some business owners seem to want to control the neighborhood</li> <li>• More welcoming environment to new businesses owners.</li> </ul>
Need more retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More retail, grocery, diversity.</li> <li>• We need more retail and it should be identical to services that are already provided in the immediate area. A neighborhood grocery is needed in the Heritage Hill / East Hills area.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small hotel would be great on Wealthy St</li> <li>• Need more unique retail shops to support new residential and restaurant oriented growth that is happening.</li> <li>• More retail is needed. We are continually hearing of restaurants that want to/are going to open, but we don't need another Cherry St. (where restaurants have overtaken the retail and the stores seem to be hurting).</li> <li>• Focus on maintaining diversity.</li> </ul>
Gentrification concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rents keep going up and I would like to see some sort of pathway to investment and funding information available to business owners.</li> <li>• More inclusive of the neighborhood, stakeholders around the business district</li> <li>• I think there is a problem of gentrification where residents near the businesses feel excluded from their own community. The residential area surrounding most of the district is low income and working class, but few of the businesses in the area offer services people on this side of the economic spectrum are interested in or can afford. In general I think most economic vitality of the area comes from people who commute in from outlying areas either from downtown or the suburbs--not from people who live around the corner. The area is becoming more desirable to live in, and I worry that instead of increasing the diversity of the community there will be a trend to drive out older residents who no longer see themselves as a part of this changing area.</li> <li>• Do not make this neighborhood into what it is not. Keep it simple with down to earth business. They are currently trying to gentrify it too much.</li> <li>• Attract minority owned businesses, businesses with affordable products, diversity of business types, creating welcoming businesses for those who feel left out of the renaissance of Wealthy.</li> </ul>
Need more marketing and promotion of Wealthy Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough events to tie the district together.</li> <li>• I'd love to see more event promotions between local WS businesses to help create more publicity</li> <li>• More specific marketing/events for Wealthy Street.</li> <li>• More outreach to businesses not active in WSBA, maybe our own yearly event</li> </ul>
Increase public safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Safety</li> <li>• Crime control</li> <li>• I don't like the dollar store across my business. It attracts the wrong people</li> <li>• Personal safety / crime mobility</li> </ul>
Rehab neglected buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of the building across from the Wealthy St Bakery and the building between Winchester and the book binding shop.</li> <li>• There are some buildings that still need love - and occupancy</li> <li>• Good to have tough zoning. It works. Look at Charleston. Or Birmingham (Mich.) Yes some say we don't want to lose the "Bohemian" quality of these shopping areas but I don't think that's a big risk. Keeping the architectural and aesthetic integrity of the areas should be key.</li> </ul>
Cleanliness and maintenance of streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the BID dollars for winter snow removal! Not all businesses clear their sidewalks.</li> <li>• I think the businesses need to be treated fairly by the city. All of the landscaping on all of the lots should be maintained. There is a lot of liter left in the alleys and business areas. Several lots are allowed to overgrow while other lots are given abatement notices.</li> </ul>
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much focus on alcohol sales and consumption. Not enough multi-unit housing.</li> <li>• I think one of the biggest things holding back progress on our street is the Historical Society. I greatly appreciate what they do for the history of our city but I believe a lot of what they do is actually hurting growth.</li> </ul>

## **Discussion questions for the Wealthy Street Business Alliance**

- 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?