



12th Street Retail Corridor: Neighborhood Survey Results

Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association

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Background & Methodology

Purpose:

To gather community input on the current state of the 12th Street NE retail corridor—what’s working, what’s not, and how it could be improved.

Survey Details:

- *Field Dates:* September 5 – 28, 2025
- *Format:* Mix of multiple-choice, ranking, and open-ended questions
- *Geographic Focus:* 12th Street NE between Rhode Island Ave and Michigan Ave

Outreach:

Promoted through Brookland Facebook groups, neighborhood listservs, and the BNCA email newsletter. Recipients were also encouraged to share flyers with neighbors to broaden participation.

Response Rate:

340 total responses



Key Takeaways

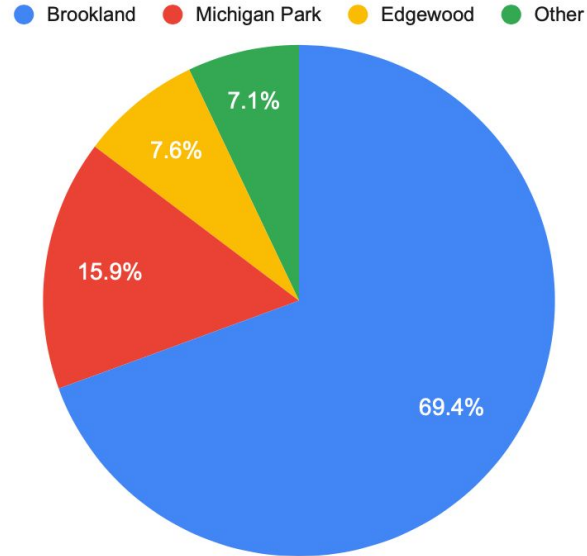
- Neighbors see strong potential in 12th Street but agree it needs renewed attention and investment. While local pride remains high, spending and activity have declined compared to the pre-COVID era.
- Residents value the existing mix of small businesses yet express concern about recent closures. Many want to see more restaurants, cafés, and “third spaces” that encourage gathering—particularly around Monroe Street, the corridor’s natural focal point.
- There is broad support for coordinated programming—such as “First Friday” events or seasonal festivals—to activate the street and boost foot traffic.
- Yes! Organic Market and CVS serve as the corridor’s retail anchors, but CVS is widely viewed as underperforming and detracting from the street’s appeal.
- Several respondents suggested that a formal corridor organization—such as a Main Street program or similar entity—may be needed to coordinate revitalization efforts, attract investment, and provide consistent stewardship for the corridor’s long-term success.
- Ultimately, neighbors recognize that 12th Street faces structural challenges that will require dedicated planning, investment, and sustained collaboration among community, business, and city partners.

Respondent Mix



Q1. What neighborhood do you live in?

Most respondents live in Brookland proper, with a sizeable portion from adjacent neighborhoods

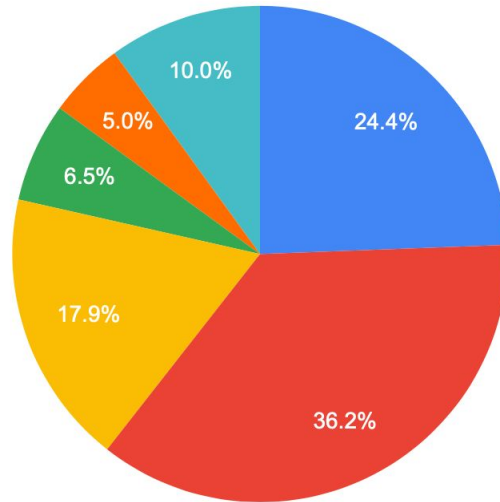




Q2. How many years have you or someone in your household lived in the Brookland area?

Average tenure is 11 years

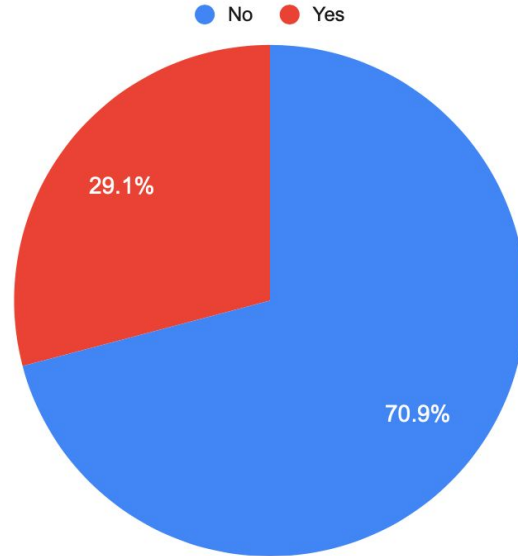
● 0 - 5 ● 5 - 10 ● 10 - 15 ● 15 - 20 ● 20 - 25 ● 25+





Q15. Are you a member of Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association?

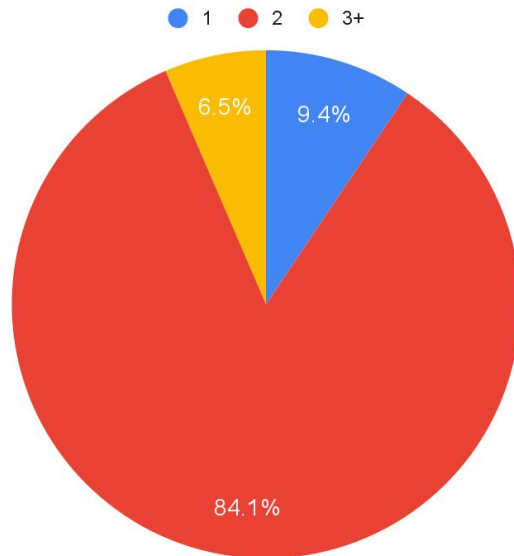
Most respondents are not BNCA members





Q3. How many adults 18 or older live in your household?

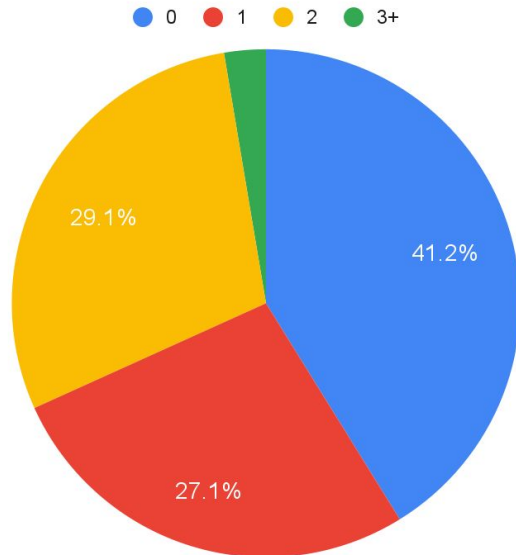
Average is 2 adults per household





Q4. How many minors under 18 live in your household?

Average is 0.9 minors per household



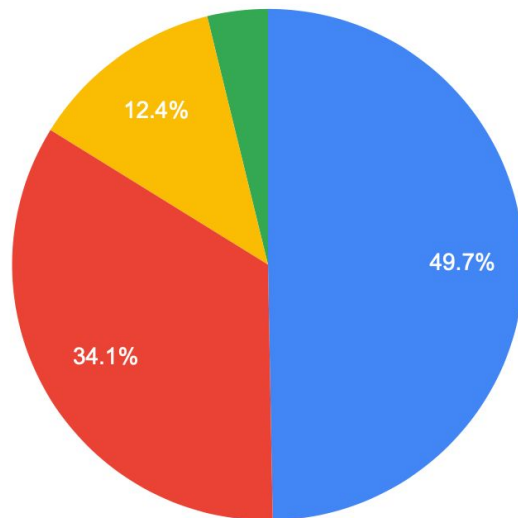
Structured Responses



Q5. Thinking back over the past 6 months, on average, how frequently would you say you or your family members spent money at a retail business on 12th Street?

Most respondents patronize 12th Street with moderate frequency

● A few times per month ● A few times per week ● Almost never ● Daily

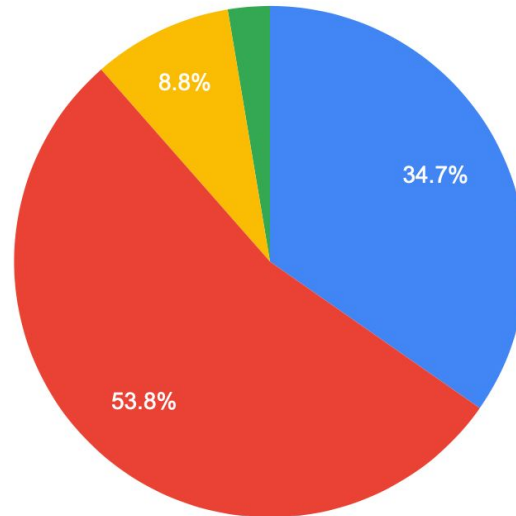




Q6. How has your patronage of 12th Street changed over time?

A majority of respondents patronize 12th Street less frequently than they used to

● About the same ● Less often ● More often ● N/A (I moved here only recently)

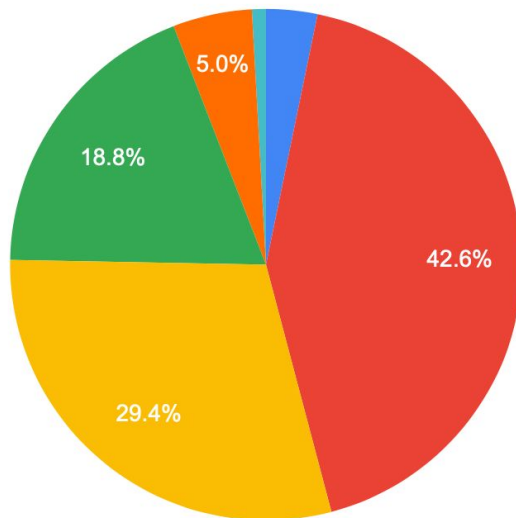




Q7. How much would you estimate your household spends at 12th Street businesses in a typical month?

Average household spend is approximately \$204 per month

● \$0 ● \$1 - \$100 ● \$101-\$250 ● \$251-\$500 ● \$500+ ● Other

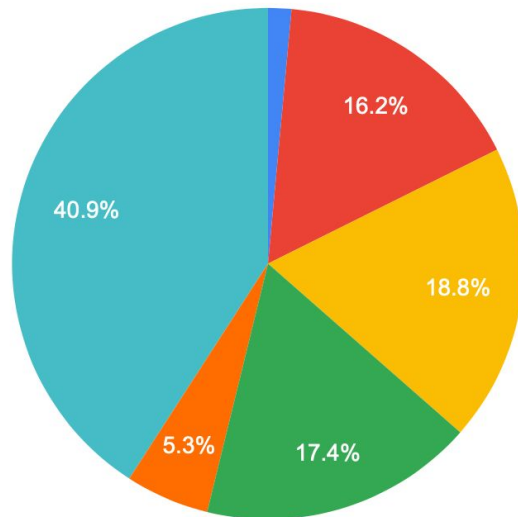




Q8. How much would you estimate your household spent at 12th Street business in a typical month prior to the Covid pandemic? (If you did not live in the neighborhood before Covid please leave blank)

Pre-pandemic spend averaged \$267 per month

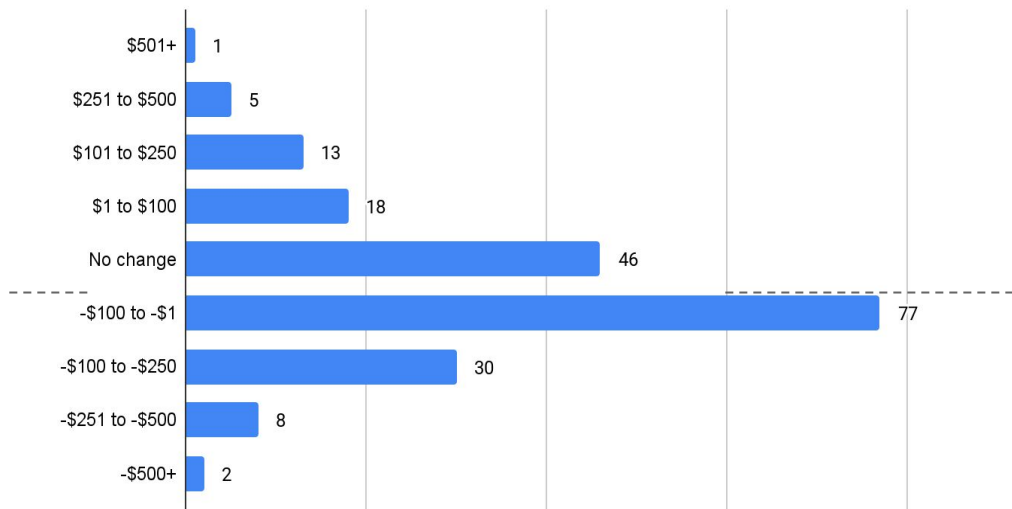
● \$0 ● \$1 - \$100 ● \$101-\$250 ● \$251-\$500 ● \$500+ ● N/A





Q7 vs. Q8: Change in spend

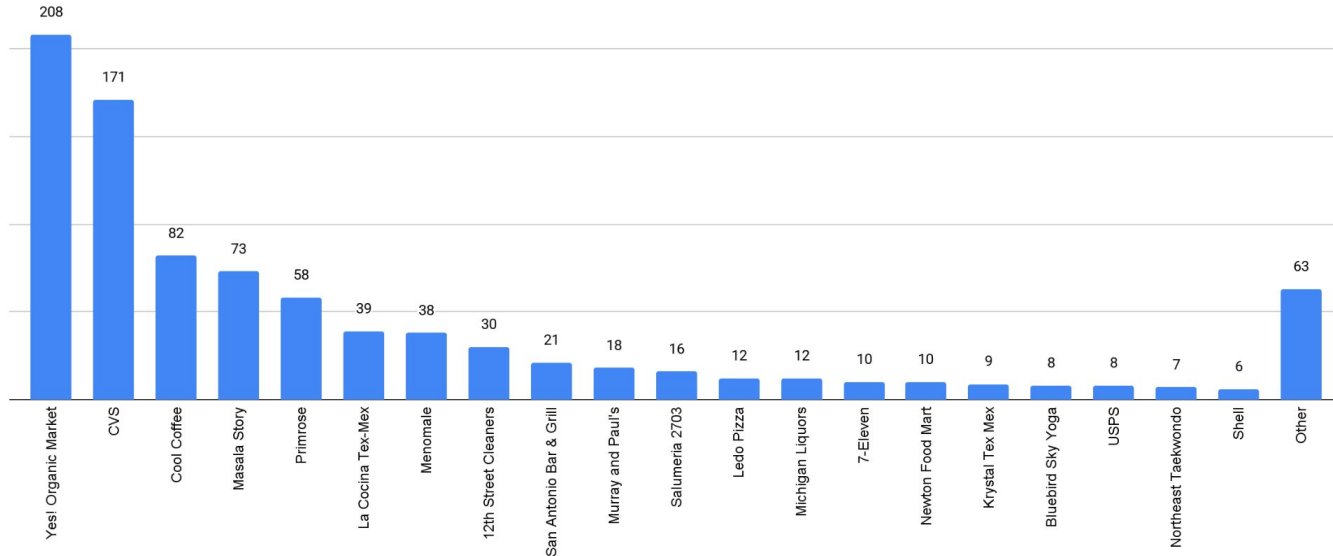
Average *same-household* spend is down approximately \$38 per month





Q9. What 12th Street businesses do you patronize the most?

Yes! Organic Market and CVS anchor 12th Street retail, while several local businesses are stalwarts

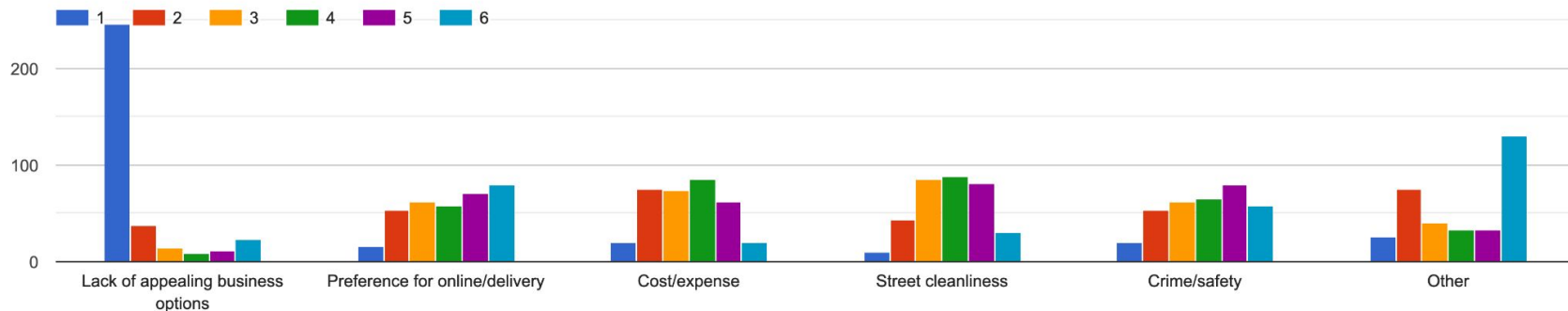




Q10. Please rank the reasons that prevent you from spending more time and money at 12th Street businesses?

Lack of appealing business options is far and away the top reason given by respondents

Ranking by respondents:

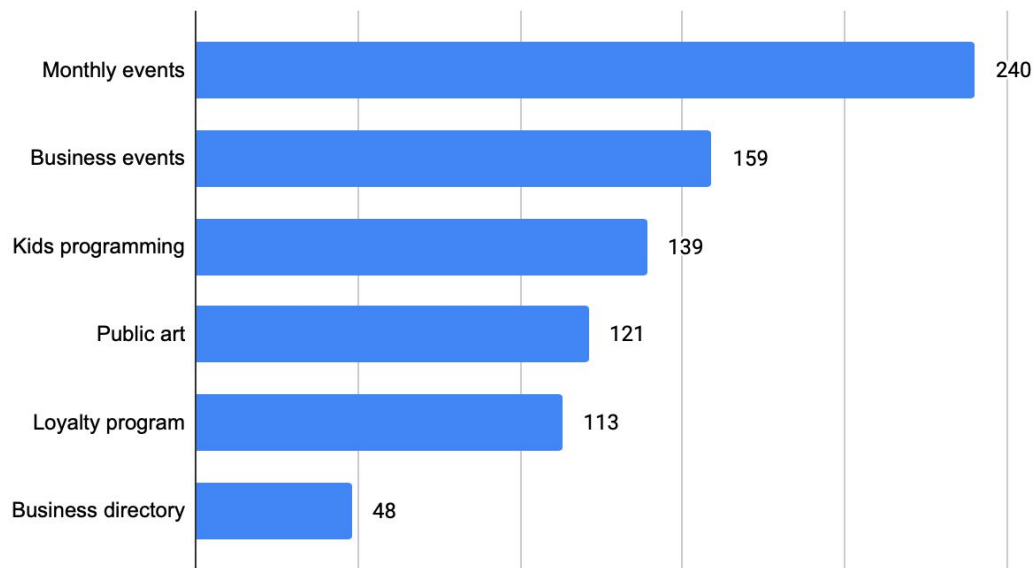


Respondents were asked for force rank the six choices



Q11. Which of the following programs do you think would encourage more retail customer traffic on 12th Street?

Monthly 12th Street-wide events such as “first Fridays” hold the most appeal for respondents



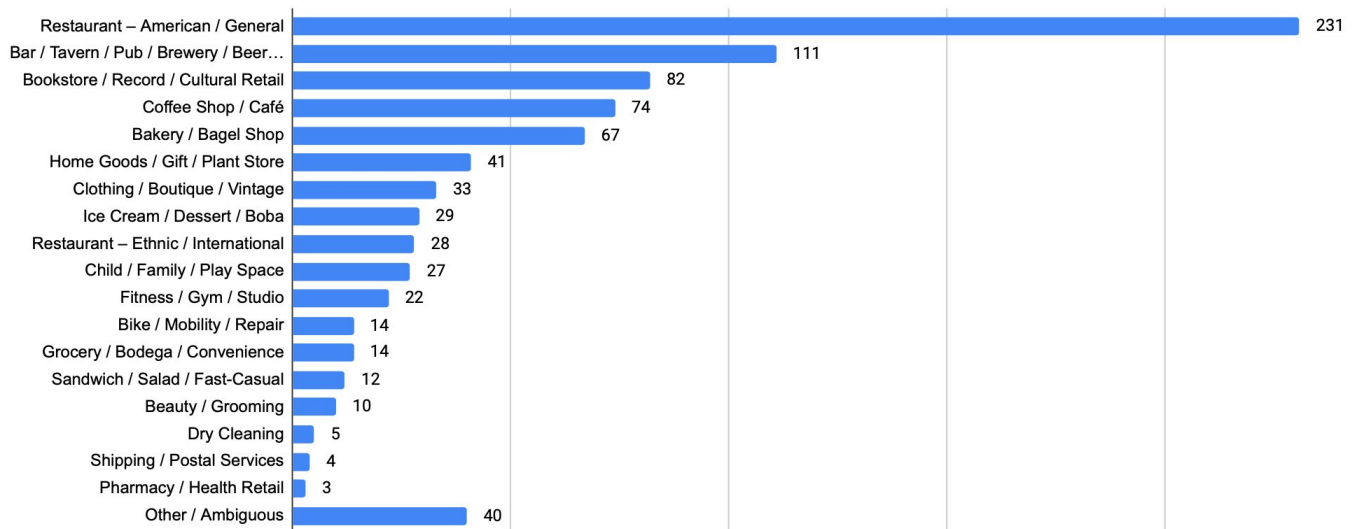
Respondents were asked to select up to 3 options from the following list:

- Public art features
- Kids-oriented programming
- Business-specific events (e.g., trivia, book readings, etc.)
- Neighborhood loyalty/discount card
- Brookland business directory
- Monthly 12th Street-wide events (e.g., "first Fridays")
- Other (specify)



Q12. What types of new businesses would you or your household regularly patronize if they opened on 12th Street?

Respondents want more restaurants along with “third spaces” such as bookstores and cafes





Q13. Are there any specific businesses located elsewhere in DC that you'd recommend "recruiting" to 12th Street because you think they would be successful here?

Respondents provided a wide range of recommendations, which we will pass on to 12th Street landlords.

Most **frequently mentioned** recruitment candidates:

- Solid State Books
- Cava
- Call Your Mother
- Sweetgreen
- Big Bear
- Beau Thai
- Lucky Buns
- Politics and Prose
- Manifest Bakery
- Labyrinth Games & Puzzles



Open-Ended Responses/ Themes



Q14. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about 12th street?

- We posed an open-ended question: “Is there anything else you would like to tell us about 12th street? Feel free to share observations, ideas, concerns, or general ‘vibes’. What is working on 12th Street? What could use improvement? Tell us what you think! Don't hold back.”
- We received 158 responses totaling 8,552 words
- We used AI for sentiment analysis: 62% positive, 25% mixed, 13% negative
- We distilled the top 10 themes, which are summarized on the next slide with more detail and illustrative quotations on backup slides



Q14. Summary of Themes

Theme	Summary
<i>Street Safety and Traffic Control</i>	12th street feels unsafe to pedestrians.
<i>Family-Friendly Amenities and Activities</i>	Residents want more family-oriented venues like cafes, salons, and spaces for kids.
<i>Development, Growth, and Density</i>	Support for mixed-use and moderate growth to boost foot traffic and business viability.
<i>Local Identity</i>	Strong attachment to past venues and preference for local over chain businesses.
<i>Streetscape and Aesthetic Appeal</i>	Desire for trees, greenery, lighting, and improved pedestrian crossings.
<i>CVS and Problematic Nodes</i>	The CVS and nearby properties are seen as unsafe or underperforming anchors.
<i>Vacancies and General Vitality</i>	Vacancies and turnover dampen confidence in the corridor.
<i>Operating Hours and Consistency</i>	Limited or unpredictable hours reduce reliability of local retail options.
<i>Need for Retail Cohesion</i>	The corridor could benefit from a more cohesive retail mix.
<i>Economic Vision for the Corridor</i>	Call for unified branding and planning under a Main Street-style model.



Q14. Theme: Street Safety and Traffic Control

Residents consistently describe 12th Street as walkable but hampered by unsafe traffic, speeding, and loud trucks. People want better crosswalks, slower traffic, and enforcement.

“Traffic and speeding are serious issues—cars race down 12th like it's a highway, making it scary to walk with kids or cross at corners.”

“Crosswalks need to be repainted and lighting improved—it's both a safety and a design issue.”

“The noise from trucks early in the morning really affects quality of life for residents living near the corridor.”

“Pedestrian improvements would not only look better but also make people want to linger and shop.”



Q14. Theme: Family-Friendly Amenities and Activities

Families want more casual destinations—ice cream, playgrounds, cafés, salons, and places to gather with kids. People view these as key to making 12th Street an everyday stop for neighborhood life.

“We could use more casual family spots—places for coffee, ice cream, or just to sit outside together.”

“There’s no real hangout space for kids and families; everything feels either closed or not welcoming to children.”

“12th Street would feel livelier if we had a few more community-centered venues that hosted weekend or evening events.”

“I love the walkability but wish there were more reasons to take an evening stroll with the kids.”



Q14. Theme: Development, Growth, and Density

Many respondents believe 12th Street’s challenges stem from low population density. More mixed-use and residential infill is seen as vital to sustaining local retail, though parking management remains important.

“Adding moderate housing density would help local businesses survive; we just don’t have enough people walking by every day.”

“It’s not about big developments—just enough mixed-use housing to give the street more energy and foot traffic.”

“Parking shouldn’t dominate planning; most of us would walk if there were more interesting places to go.”

“Smart growth that adds residents but respects the neighborhood’s character is the balance we need.”



Q14. Theme: Local Identity

There is strong affection for independent businesses and disappointment over closures like Runaway and Brookland's Finest. Residents want to preserve a local, human-scale retail identity and avoid corporate chains.

"We miss Runaway and Brookland's Finest—those places were the heart of the street and brought everyone together."

"The small, independent businesses are what make Brookland feel special; I'd hate to see it turn into another strip of chain stores."

"12th Street works best when it feels local, creative, and owned by the community itself."

"The mix of mom-and-pop restaurants gave it a charm that's hard to replace; we need to protect that culture."



Q14. Theme: Streetscape and Aesthetic Appeal

Beautification is a major theme. Respondents expressed a need for trees, planters, more consistent trash pickup, street art, better lighting, and other improvements.

“More trees, flowers, and street art would make such a difference; parts of 12th feel barren compared to other DC corridors.”

“It would make such a difference if trash pickup were more frequent and sidewalks were cleaner; the litter takes away from the charm.”

“Imagine colorfully painted sidewalks or planters with native plants—it would signal that the community cares.”

“Underground the power lines and make the street a more pleasant place to be.”



Q14. Theme: CVS and Problematic Nodes

The CVS block, including the old movie theater, is the most criticized area. Residents associate it with loitering, petty crime, and poor aesthetics, and want redevelopment with more community-serving uses.

“The CVS block feels like a dead zone—dark, dirty, and often with people loitering outside; it hurts the overall perception of the street.”

“I avoid that part of 12th because it feels unsafe, especially at night.”

“It’s frustrating that such a central corner is so lifeless when it could be a hub for positive activity.”



Q14. Theme: Vacancies and General Vitality

Vacancies and turnover dampen confidence in the corridor. People want a denser cluster of open businesses. Unlet storefronts perpetuate a feeling of desolation.

“Vacancies are the biggest problem—it’s hard to build momentum when half the storefronts are empty.”

“Too many neglected properties look abandoned; they send the wrong message about how much we care about our street.”

“Every empty building drags down the energy of the whole block; filling even a few would lift morale.”

“Seeing papered-over windows for years makes residents feel like nothing’s happening.”

“Even a few new openings would change the vibe; it just needs some visible progress to get people excited again.”



Q14. Theme: Operating Hours and Consistency

Operating businesses are sometimes unpredictable or closed early, reducing reliability. Residents express frustration about not knowing when restaurants or shops will be open, especially evenings and weekends.

“Sometimes it’s hard to know if a restaurant or shop will be open; inconsistent hours make people give up.”

“I’ve walked by places that looked closed only to find out later they were open—it’s confusing and hurts business.”

“Having regular evening and weekend hours would make a huge difference in how often residents shop locally.”

“The unpredictability discourages people from depending on 12th Street for everyday needs.”



Q14. Theme: Need for Retail Cohesion

Residents think the 12th Street corridor could benefit from a more cohesive retail mix. In the meantime, some suggest creative uses such as pop-ups, murals, or shared retail spaces to fill empty windows and draw interest.

“There’s a lack of cohesion among the businesses; if they worked together, 12th could become a real destination.”

“A stronger retail mix—more dining, fewer service-only shops—would bring in both locals and visitors.”

“It would help to use empty windows for art, community announcements, or temporary pop-ups—something to show life.”



Q14. Theme: Economic Vision for the Corridor

There is a clear desire for 12th Street to have a stronger shared identity—a brand and coordinated strategy, possibly through BNCA or a Main Street model, to attract investment and unify its look and mission.

“12th Street needs a unified vision—right now it feels like a random mix of businesses with no clear brand.”

“A Main Street-style initiative could help organize events, signage, and façade improvements.”

“BNCA could play a leadership role in giving the corridor a cohesive identity and attracting investment.”

“With better coordination, 12th could easily become one of DC’s most charming small business districts.”

BROOKLAND DC CIVIC

The logo for Brookland DC Civic is a yellow speech bubble shape. Inside the bubble, the letters 'DC' are written in a bold, green, sans-serif font. A small red five-pointed star is positioned in the center of the 'C'. The bubble is partially overlaid by the text 'BROOKLAND' on the left and 'CIVIC' on the right.

www.brooklandcivic.org