

Stonington - Route 1 Corridor Study

Visual Preference Poll Results

Introduction

Members of the public attending a Route 1 Corridor Study meeting held on March 26, 2007 were asked to participate in a Visual Preference Survey. Although none of the images were from Stonington, they provided examples scenarios that might be typical of the Town and region. The images were displayed and participants were asked to note their favorite image in each category as well as their least favorite. The results were quantified and the following analysis prepared.

Summary

The results of the visual preference poll indicate the participant's interest in maintaining the rural, agrarian character of the community by keeping commercial and retail development primarily in the village centers and fringe and providing for highly landscaped and architecturally compatible new development.

Village Centers

Mixed-use buildings of 2-3 stories, with a mass in proportion to their height, were contained in many of the most preferred images. It was also preferred that buildings should be set close to the street with on-street parking and sidewalks.

Architecturally, buildings reflecting more traditional New England styles were favored over more modern buildings. Also, images that contained landscaping such as street trees or screening for parking areas were most preferred.

Village Fringe Areas

Most of the preferred images in the village fringe include commercial and office uses but built in typical New England architectural styles and scale. The preferred buildings are 1½ -2 stories and have parking either on-street or in landscaped lots.

Large areas of parking, with little to no landscaping were common in the least preferred images. Modern or neo-colonial architecture and large setbacks from the street were also considered less desirable in the village fringe areas.

Rural Areas

The preferred images indicate the participant's interest in maintaining the rural, agrarian character of the community. All of the highest rated images contain rural attributes such as fence lines, stone walls modest, and New England style residential buildings. Many of the images also contain open farmland and meadows or forest land.

Modern and repetitive architecture, non-landscaped parking and narrow setbacks were contained in the least preferred images. Many of the least preferred images also represented commercial uses in rural areas rather than the preferred residential use.

Detailed Results

Village Centers

Building Mass/Scale/Height

Participants in the poll tended to prefer building massing and height which was three-story buildings with distinguishable retail on the first floor and limited mass relative to height. The building that was least preferred was also three stories but its mass extended to several times its height and the ground floor retail was bland in architectural form.



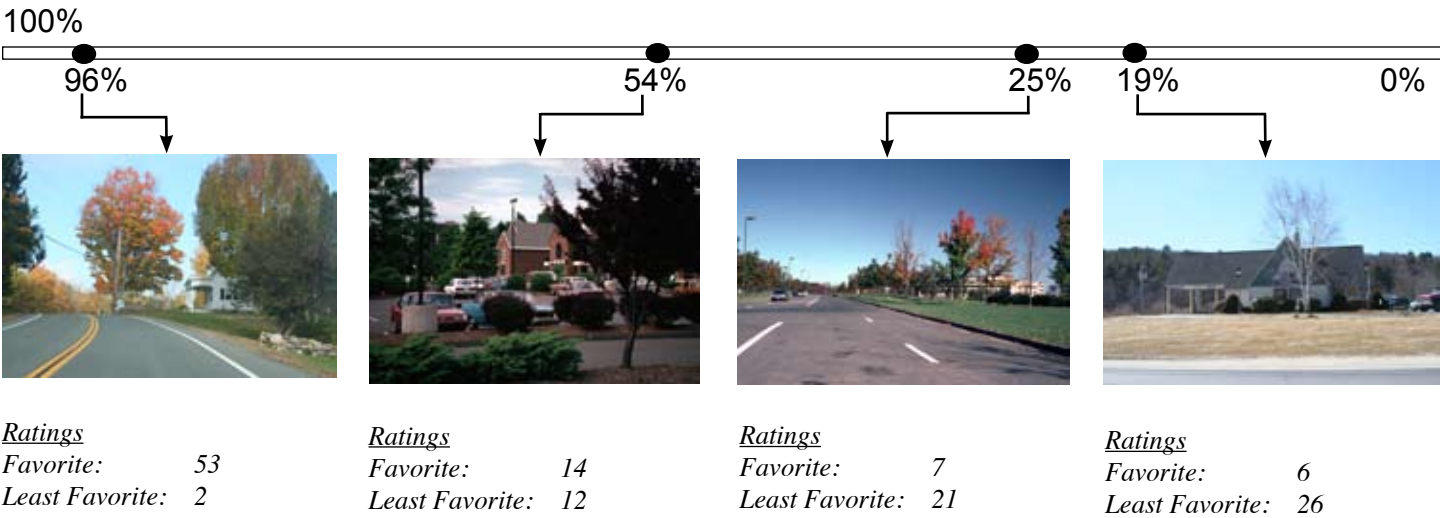
Architecture

Architecturally, buildings that reflected various forms and styles typical of New England was the most preferred and ranked above other images of neo-colonial architecture. The most modern of the architectural styles presented was considered the least preferred.



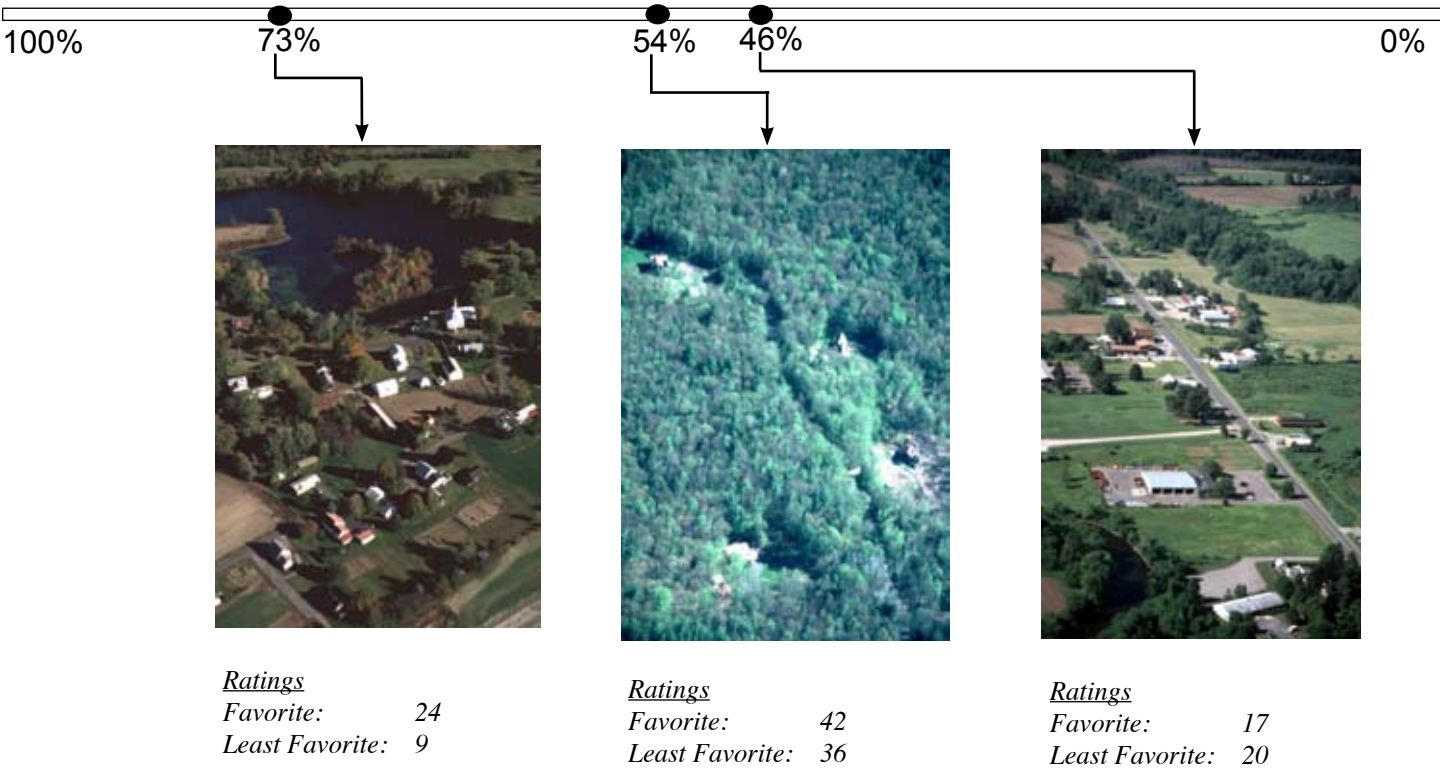
Landscape and Furnishings

The preferred image of landscaping and furnishings in rural areas was an image with large street trees, stone walls and a small historic homestead. Least preferred images contained commercial and office buildings with broad lawn areas.



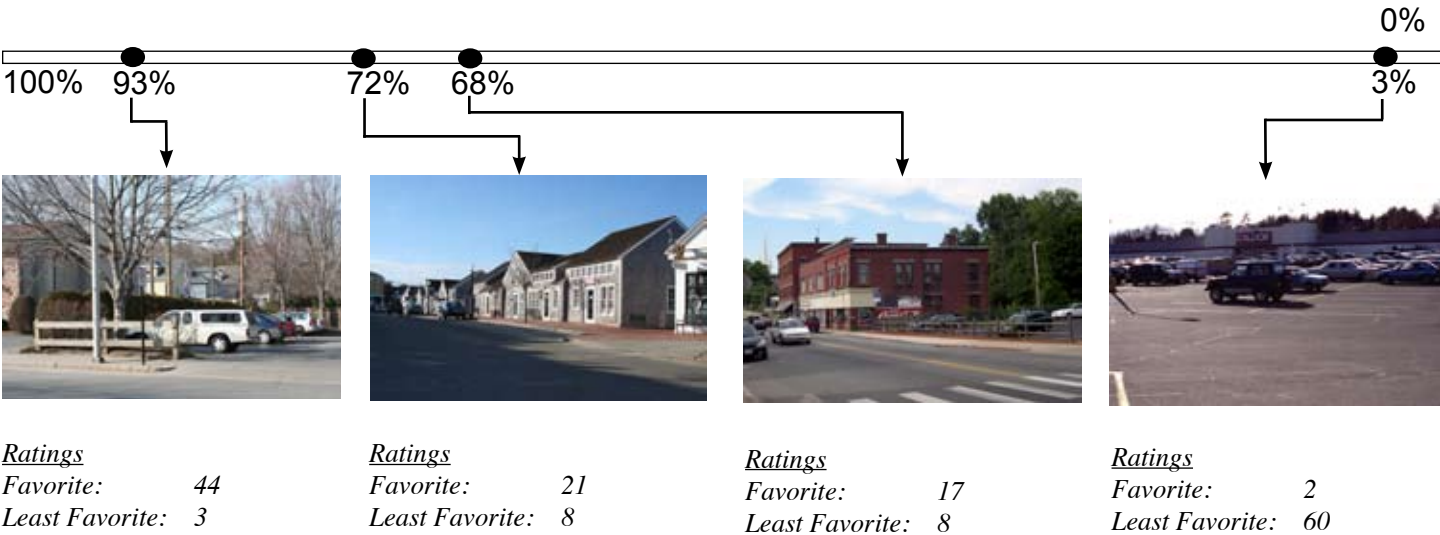
Pattern of Development

The rural pattern of development that was most preferred contained large tracts of forestland scattered with residential development. The least preferred included a mix of uses and large parking areas interspersed in remnant farmland.



Parking and Access

Parking that was located off-street, in small, landscaped lots was preferred. Although other images indicated a similar lot configuration, the preferred one had trees and landscaping that helped to screen it. The least preferred image was, to be expected, the view of a large expanse of asphalt in front of a big box, chain store.



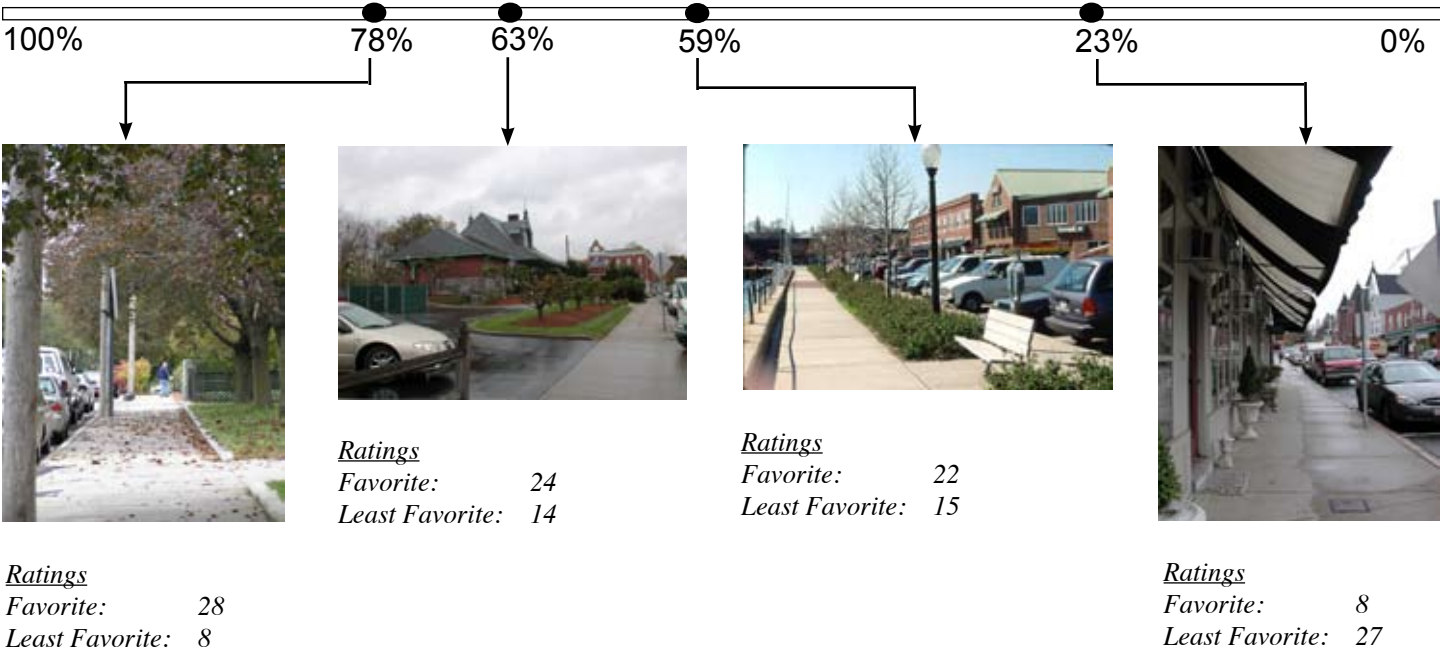
Siting and Setbacks

A set of buildings closely related to the street and the pedestrian system, while incorporating landscape materials, was the most preferred. An image of a retail building set back from the street with parking in front was considered the least preferred.



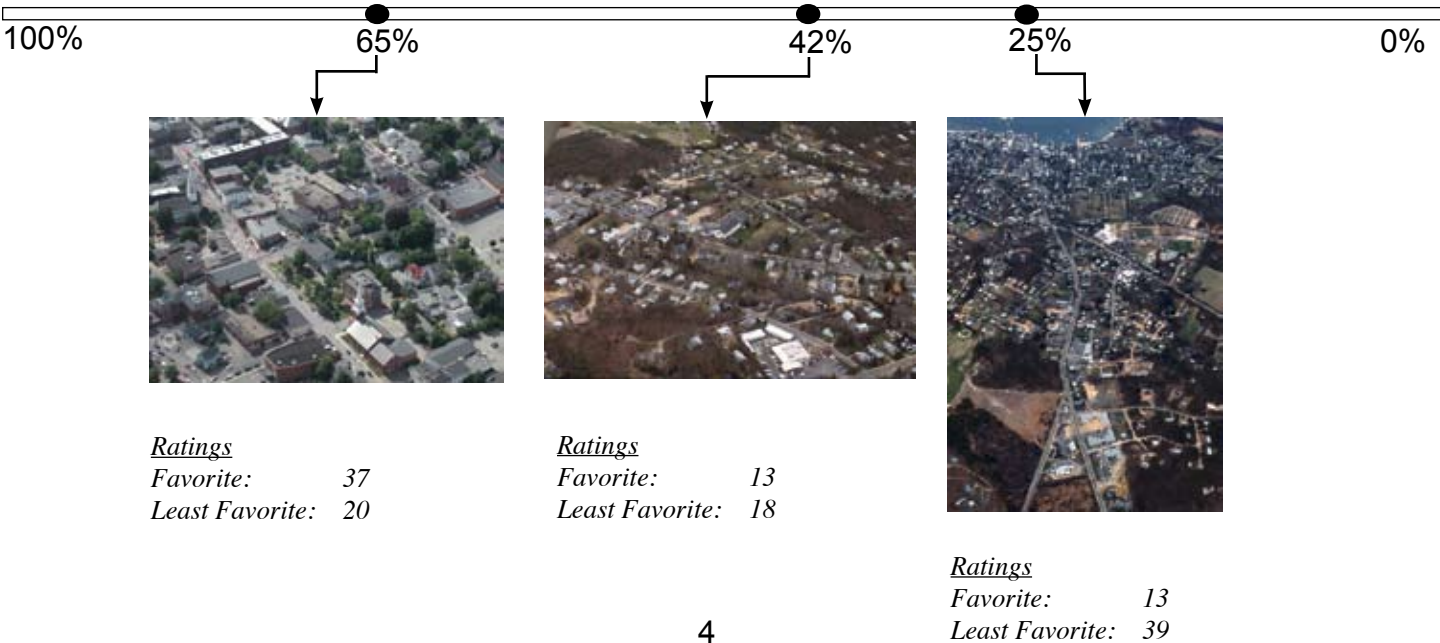
Landscape and Furnishings

Three of the four images were relatively close in the rankings as most preferred. These images have the use of greenspace in common with the use of trees and landscape furnishings to soften the street edge and provide a buffer. The least preferred image included a hard pedestrian experience between the buildings and the street with minimal landscape furnishings.



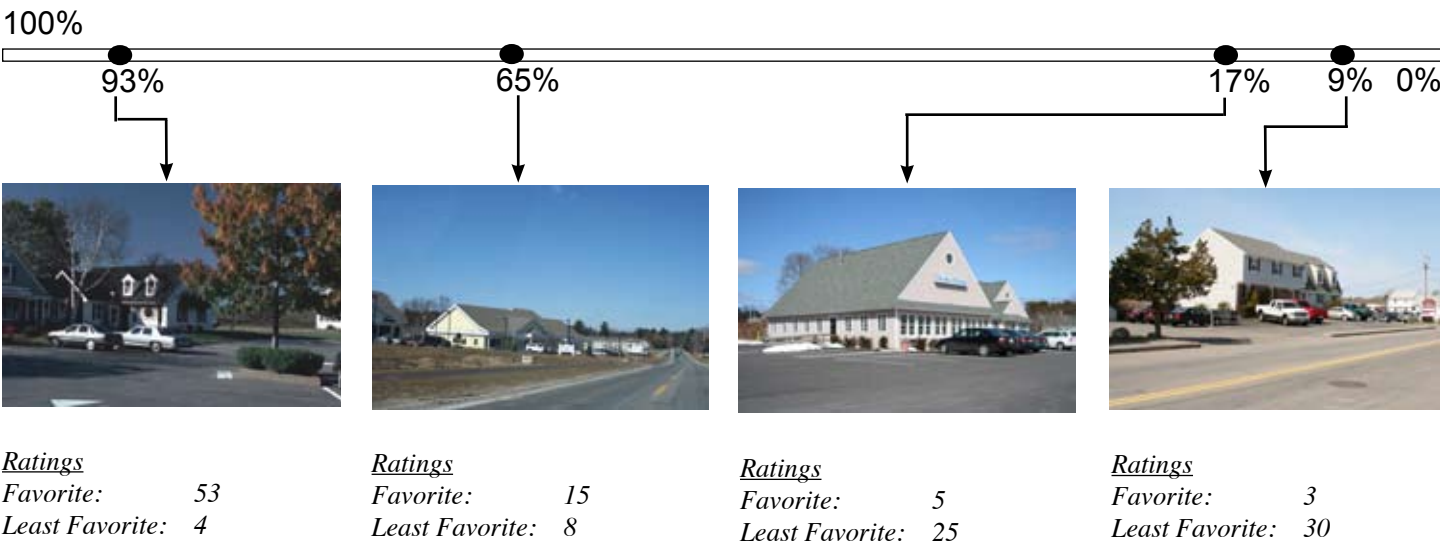
Pattern of Development

The most preferred pattern of development reflected a village center with a variety of building masses and architectural styles that is interspersed with greenspace and plant materials. The least preferred shows more strip-type and industrial development.



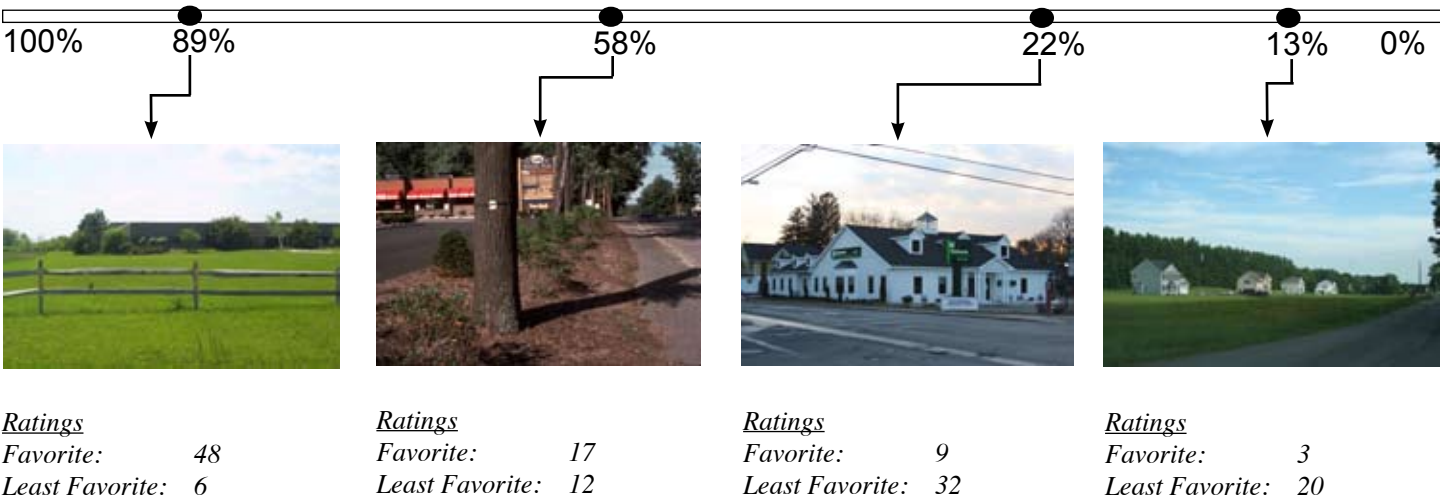
Parking and Access

A well-configured parking area with significant landscaping was the most preferred image. A sea of asphalt that runs directly up to the edge of the building was considered to be the least preferred.



Siting and Setbacks

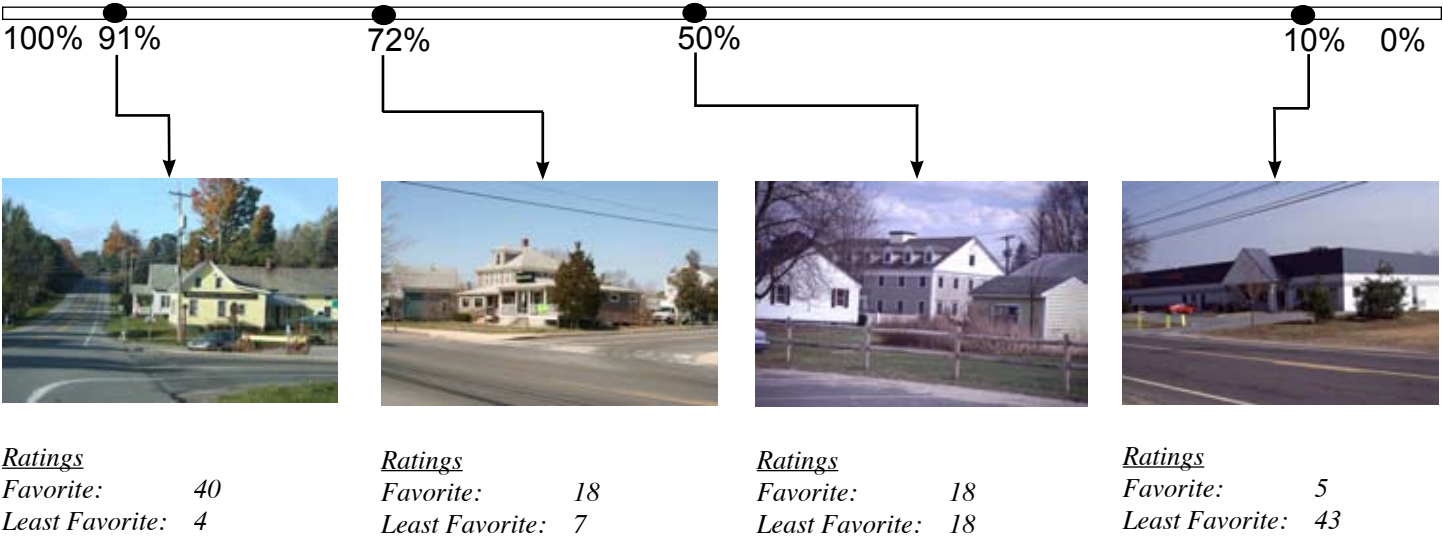
Unlike in the village centers and fringe, the least preferred siting and setback in rural areas were buildings set directly on the street. The preferred siting was buildings set back from the street with an expanse of greenspace between the building and the street.



Rural Areas

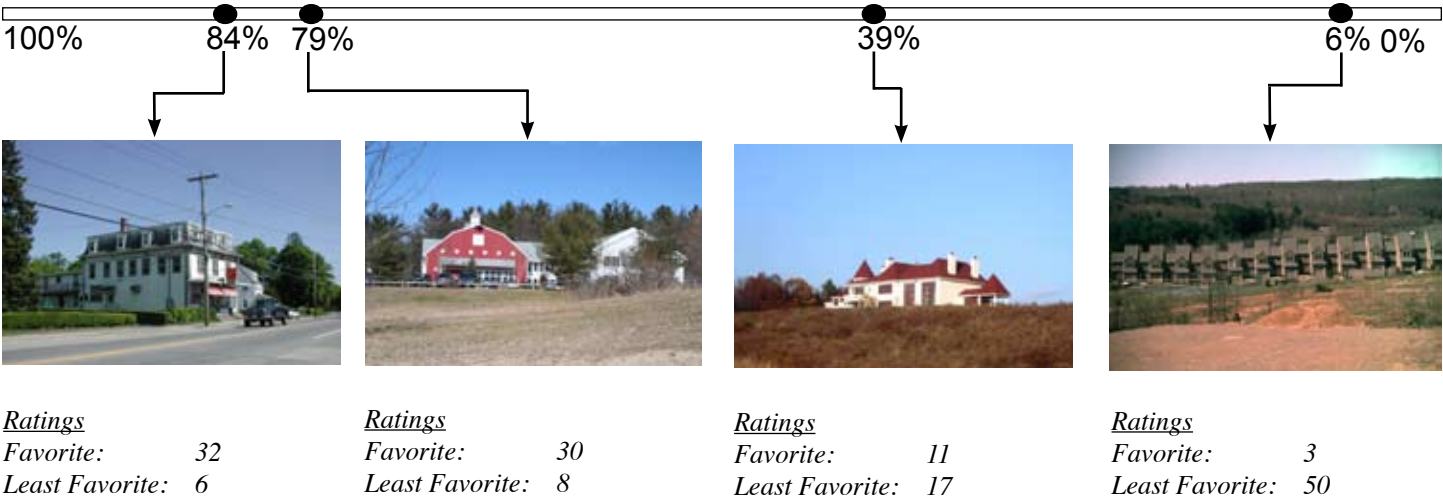
Building Mass/Scale/Height

Buildings containing 1½ stories with a mass more or less equal to their height were considered the most preferred. An image of a one-story building with an expansive footprint was considered the least preferable.



Architecture

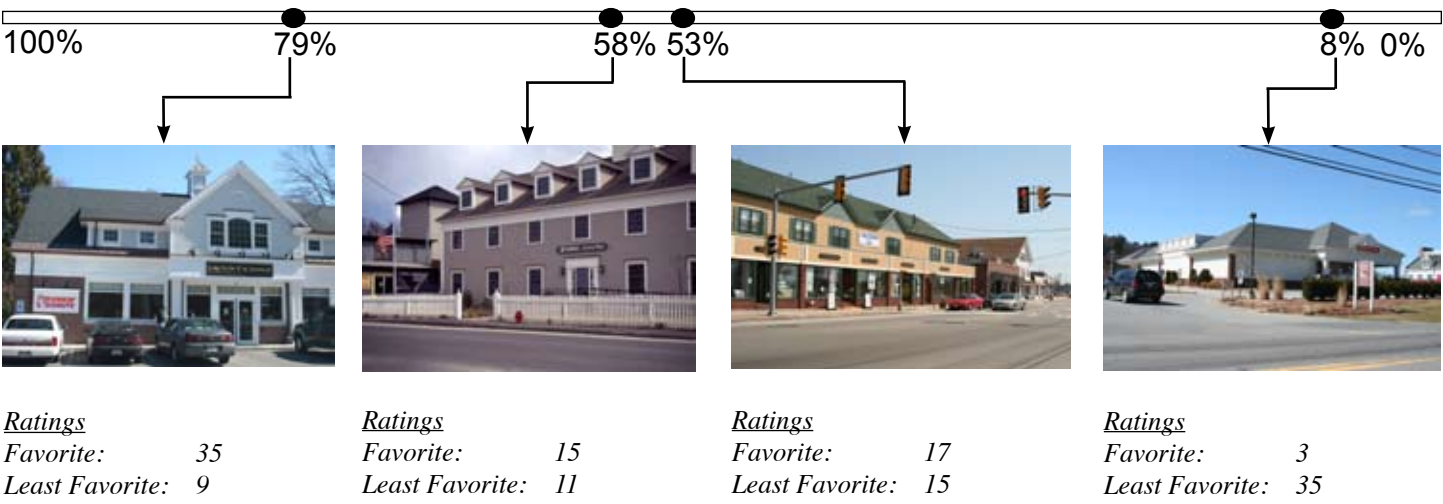
Architecture that reflected historic New England styles including farm buildings, was considered the most preferred. As with others areas, modern architecture was the least preferred with repetitive condominium development being the worst.



Village Fringe Areas

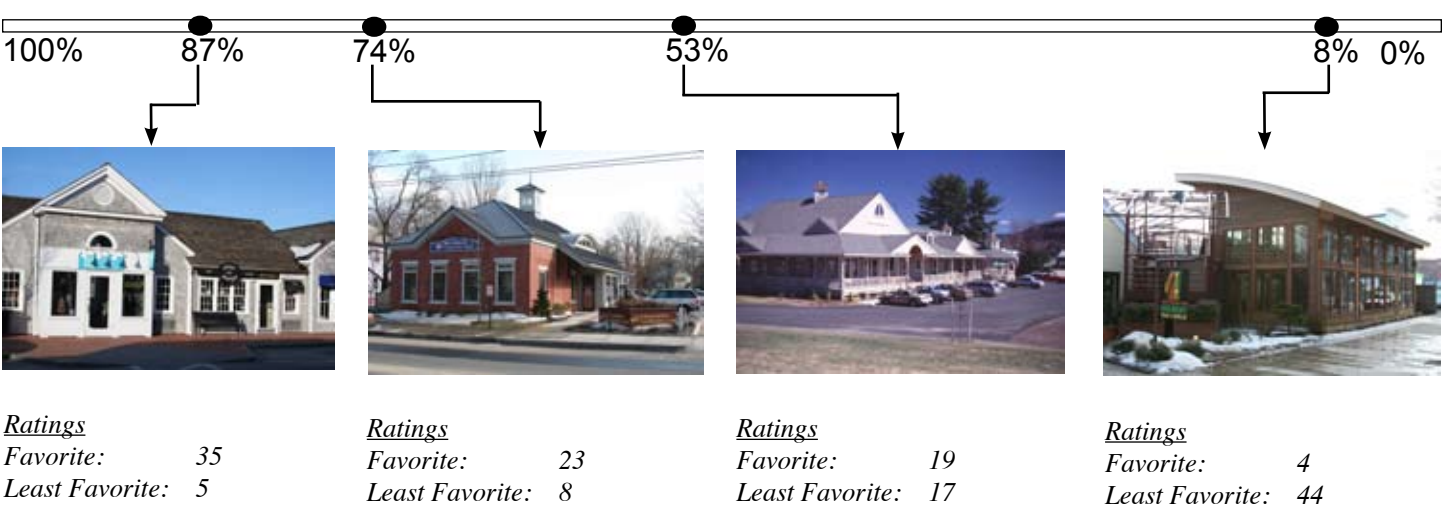
Building Mass/Scale/Height

A building that contained approximately 1½ stories and that was proportional in mass and scale to its height was considered the most preferred. The building shows a mix of office and retail space with parking directly in front of the building. The least preferred image was that of a one story building that was long and low.



Architecture

The preferred architecture reflects a typical New England waterfront style with weathered shingle siding and 6 over 6 windows. As seen in the Village Center section, the least preferred image was of very modern architecture with significant amounts of steel and glass.



Parking and Access

The preferred parking and access image includes a highly landscaped parking lot with granite curbs and changes in paving. Although slightly buffered from the street, uninterrupted parking that runs at an angle in front of a retail building was considered the least preferred.



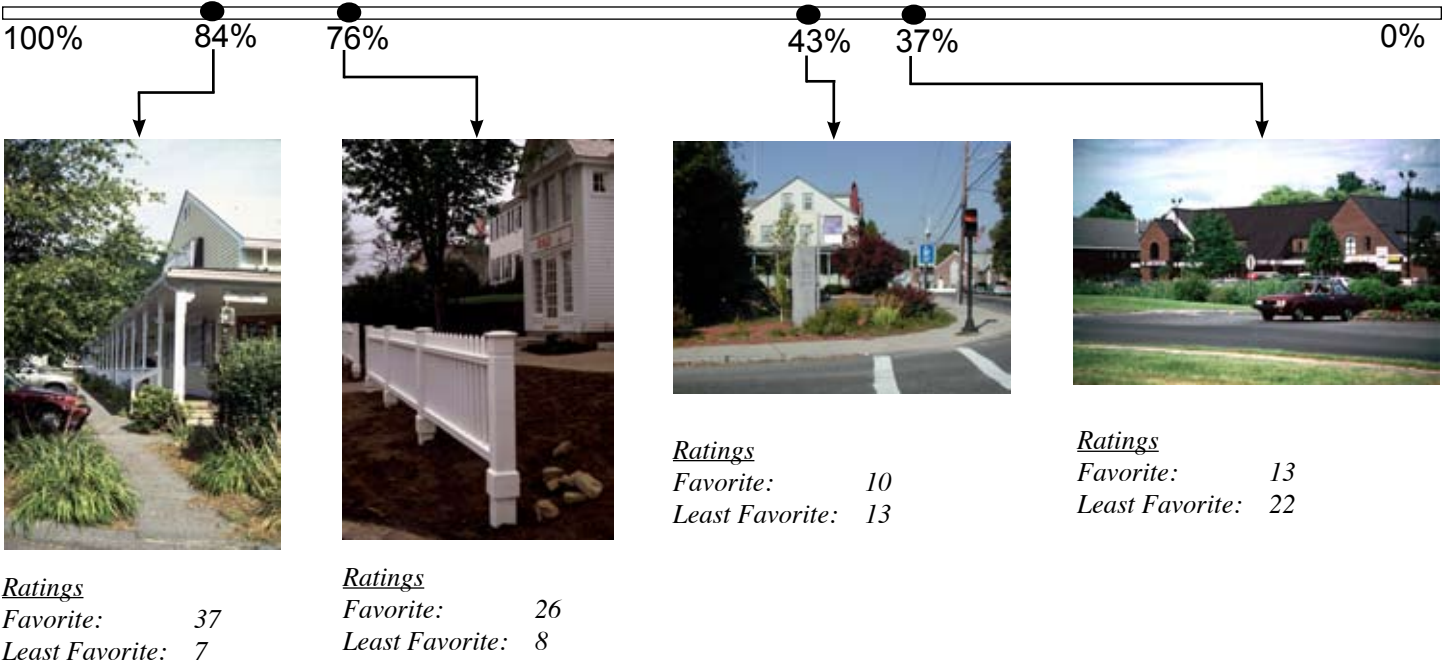
Siting and Setbacks

Buildings located directly on the street with a generous sidewalk comprised the most preferred image regarding siting and setbacks. The least preferred image shows a typical commercial strip with the building set back significantly from the road.



Landscape and Furnishings

Most participants preferred the image with simple landscape materials that provide a pedestrian-scale character to the building façade. Although containing significant landscape materials, the image that was least preferred included the screening of a large, commercial parking lot with low street trees.



Pattern of Development

Although it contains a commercial strip, the image that also contained significant portions of open farmland was the most preferred in terms of the pattern of development. The least preferred was an expansive view of massive industrial/office buildings with large, open parking lots.

