

Report of Community Assessment for Vilano

SURVEY OF COMMUNITY CONDUCTED NOVEMBER 2021
NORTH BEACH COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

Table of Contents

Survey Background	2
Survey Methodology	3
Dashboad Summary - Vilano Beach Community Assessment	4
Executive Summary of Vilano Community Assessment Responses.....	5
Charts Detailing Quantitative Responses and Trended Write-In Comments	7
Respondent Location	7
Length of Residence of Respondent	7
CRA Objective #1: Infrastructure	8
CRA Objective #2: Economic Development	10
CRA Objective #3: Affordable Housing	11
CRA Objective #4: Recreation and Community Activities.....	14
CRA Objective #5: Funding, Management and Promotion.....	16
Funding	16
Management.....	18
Promotion	20
Voice of the Community	22
Community Leadership	23
Pressing Issues for the Community.....	24
Facilitating Community Participation	25

Survey Background

Vilano Beach was designated a [Community Redevelopment Area](#) in St. Johns County in 2002 to promote, coordinate and fund a variety of residential and commercial redevelopment efforts in three community redevelopment areas, of which Vilano Beach is one of the three.

From the St. Johns County Website:

“The Vilano Beach Community Redevelopment Area plan reflects extensive input from the community to create redevelopment programs that address the priorities expressed in public meetings of the Vilano Beach Waterfronts Florida Community Group, North Shores Improvement Association, and other members of the community.

The programs created for this community will be phased in according to future community input and future revenues available for redevelopment from tax-increment revenues, County funding, grants, and other public or private resources. The tax increment mechanism established for this area provides dedicated revenue for up to a thirty-year period. The program created for the Vilano Beach Community Redevelopment Area has been designed to redevelop the Town Center.

The primary focus of the plan addresses infrastructure improvements, economic development incentives, and encourages the development of activities, which impact the quality of life of the people who live and work in the Vilano Beach neighborhood.”

Community participation is an intentional component of the CRA. Regular community meetings and input are required but have not routinely been conducted to facilitate input from the residents. Rather, the meetings were held well after development plans were evolved, and limited feedback and input from those attending meetings.

Vilano Beach Main Street, Inc. serves as the liaison between Vilano Beach and the County CRA staff yet has been less than responsive to the requirement for community input.

The North Beach Community Alliance (NBCA) is a citizens and local small business group founded in 2021 by neighbors in the North Beach area to address major concerns over a development that would negatively impact the neighborhood environment and quality of life. We are continuing our mission of working with the St. Johns County Government, commissioners and real estate developers in hopes that we can curb out of control and reckless growth that will negatively impact the area we all love and call home.

Given the drought of community input into Vilano Beach development, the NBCA launched an online survey, promoted through social media, to obtain candid feedback from community members about the CRA objectives.

The results of the survey are provided in this report.

Survey Methodology

The survey was designed by NBCA members to focus on the objectives of the CRA. The survey launched on November 9, 2021 and was promoted daily on NextDoor social media.

There were 180 responses to the survey when it was closed on November 26, 2021.

Questions directly related to the five strategic objectives of the CRA, including:

- Infrastructure Improvements
- Economic Development
- Affordable Housing
- Recreation and Community Activities
- Funding, Financing, Management, and Area Promotion

Demographic information consisted of neighborhood represented and length of time residing in Vilano/North Beach. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected.

Quantitative data used a sliding rating scale from 1 (Low) to 100 (High) and is represented in graphs showing the distribution of ratings.

Each quantitative question was followed with an opportunity to make open-ended comments. This qualitative data was analyzed for macro-level trends and reported in graphic form by frequency of comment trend. Trend statements were developed to preserve the positive or negative connotation of the comment.

Questions about the survey may be directed to NBCAVilano@gmail.com.

Dashboad Summary - Vilano Beach Community Assessment

Demographics

- 180 respondents
- 83% from Vilano and North Beach; 17% from outside Vilano/North Beach
- 46% residing in area over 10 years, 33% 5-10 years, 21% five years or less

CRA STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Objective	Good	Moderate	Poor
Q3 Infrastructure		47	
Q5 Economic buildout VBTC			27
Q7 Affordable housing CRA			30
Q9 Recreation/Activities		50	
<i>Average rating on scale of 1 (Low) - 100 (High)</i>			
Objective	Positive	Negative	No Opinion
Q11 Funding/finance CRA	7%	33%	61%
Q12 CRA Management	10%	72%	19%
Q14 Promotions	50%	18%	32%
Q16 Voice of residents	21%	68%	11%

Key Pressing Issues:

- Community wants to be heard
- County leadership needs to be responsive to citizens
- Development in Town Center is unbalanced
- Infrastructure is at risk with future development
- No control on developers with short-term-rentals

Executive Summary of Vilano Community Assessment Responses

The community survey, conducted in November 2021, offers a profound glimpse into the perspectives of residents of the Vilano and North Beach community.

That 180 individuals responded within a 13-day range when the only promotion was through social media, indicates significant interest in helping to shape our community. That people provided thoughtful and comprehensive input, shows what Vilano and North Beach community could be with participation of the citizens in all aspects of life in the community.

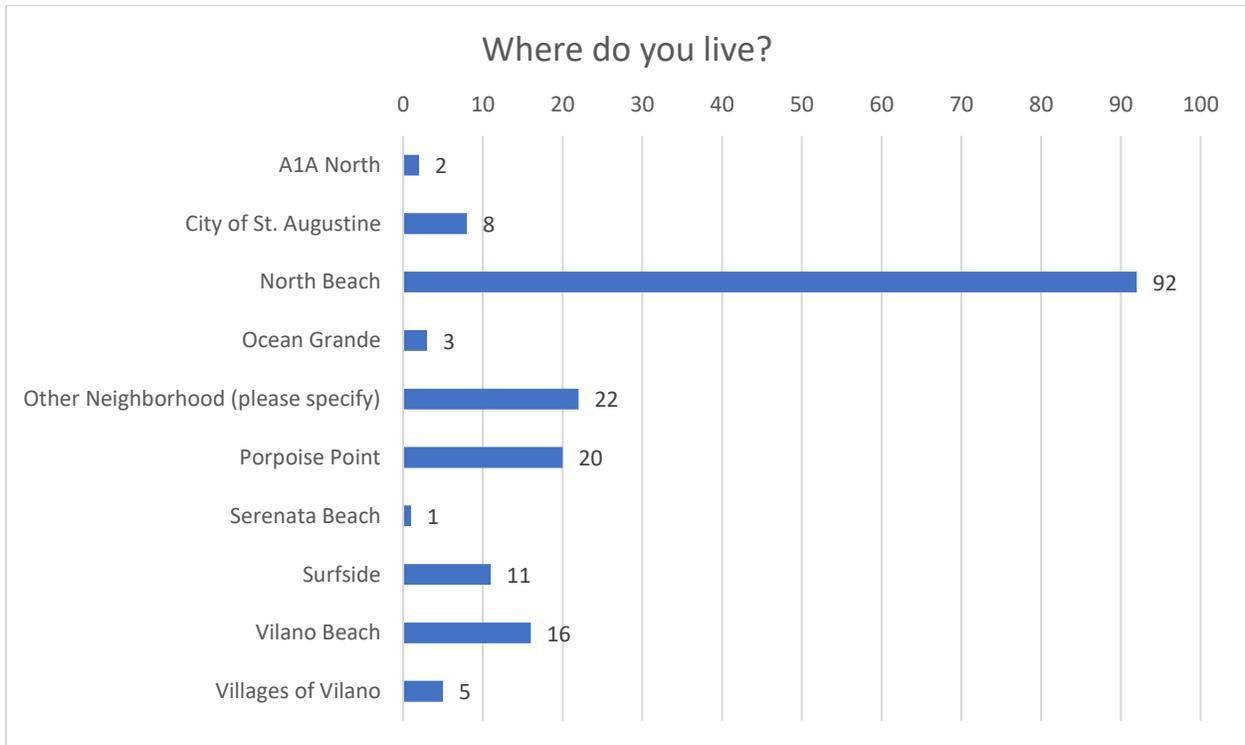
In reviewing the survey results, the NBCA offers the following conclusions:

- Respondents overwhelmingly feel that **they do not have a voice** in shaping their community. Of 134 responses, 91 (68%) indicated that they do not have a voice, while 28 (21%) believe that they do have a voice and 15 (11%) do not have an opinion.
- **Leadership of Vilano Beach is not clear.** Twenty five percent (27) of the 108 comments said they “don’t know.” Twenty four percent (26) said “no one” while 10 comments indicated that leadership resides with those who have a financial interest in Vilano. Vilano Town Center, as a CRA, requires strong and visible leadership that will engage the community in shaping the future. This is not happening.
- Of the 128 residents defining the most pressing issues within the community, 38% (48) said “**Overdevelopment,**” 30% (39) said “**Infrastructure**” and 23% (30) cited the proliferation of **hotels and short-term rentals.**
- Residents suggested several methods of engaging the community, including an active and supportive **citizens Board** that would serve as a liaison to the County, various methods of **regular and open communication** as well as **regular meetings** that actively engage the Commissioner in the discussions about Vilano and North Beaches.
- The CRA contains five objectives and for the first four objectives, the survey collected an average rating on a scale of 1 (Low)-100 (High):
 - Infrastructure Improvements (46.68 average rating). Specific comments include
 - Water issues, hydrants, drainage, standing water
 - High traffic volume, safety and evacuation concerns
 - Overall maintenance of the Town Center, walkways, trash, lighting
 - Economic Development (27.32 average rating)
 - Prioritize attention to the infrastructure: traffic, evacuation, utilities
 - Stop building hotels
 - There is an imbalance in residential, commercial and hotel property
 - Development is out of character with the small beach community vision of Vilano
 - A desire for more commercial options for residents, shops, restaurants, professional practices
 - There were 7 comments that related to the perception that growth in the Town Center only benefited developers and not residents
 - Affordable Housing (29.69 average rating)
 - Responses on the question of affordable housing generally related to expense of beach property in general.

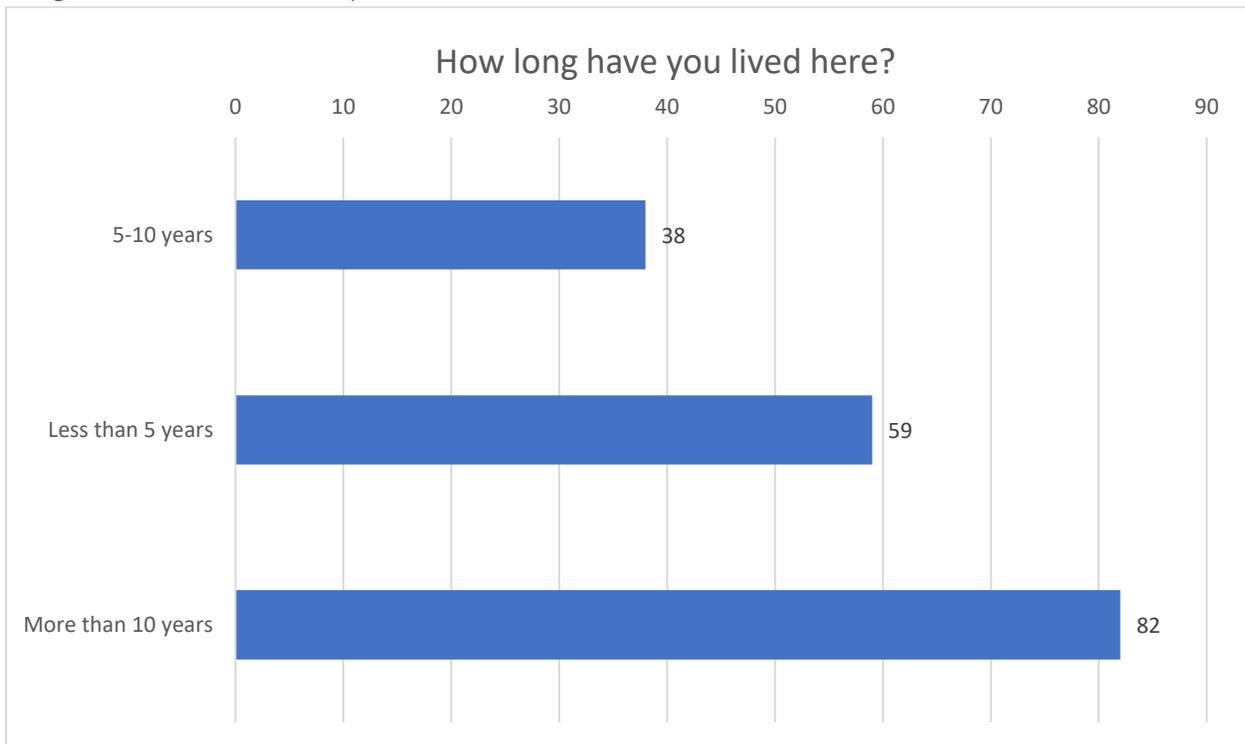
- Twelve comments related to affordable housing being converted to short-term rentals, which do not benefit the community
 - There were 3 comments that the only affordable housing was quite run down
 - Recreation and Community Activities (49.92)
 - Comments about recreation and community activities varied widely with some wanting to preserve the quiet, while others wanted a lively community.
 - It will be important, going forward, to involve residents and hear and respect all voices.
- The final objective of the CRA related to funding, promotion and management.
 - **Funding.** It is telling that 61% indicated that they did not have an opinion and 33% perceived that the CRA was poorly funded. Given the public nature of the CRA, citizens should be made aware of how funds are received and distributed.
 - **Management.** 72% (96) responded “not well managed,” while 19% (25) responded that they did not have an opinion. That only 10% (13) responded “well managed,” indicates strong dissatisfaction with the intention of the CRA for Vilano Beach Town Center.
 - Need for residents to be listened to and have input early in the process
 - Increased transparency
 - There were also 26 comments related to the need to have objective leadership who have no financial interest in decisions.
 - **Promotion.** Most respondents (54, 50%) believe Vilano is effectively promoted. That rating was followed by 21 (of 25) comments that state further promotion is not needed, and that if it is promoted, it should be for residents.

Charts Detailing Quantitative Responses and Trended Write-In Comments

Respondent Location

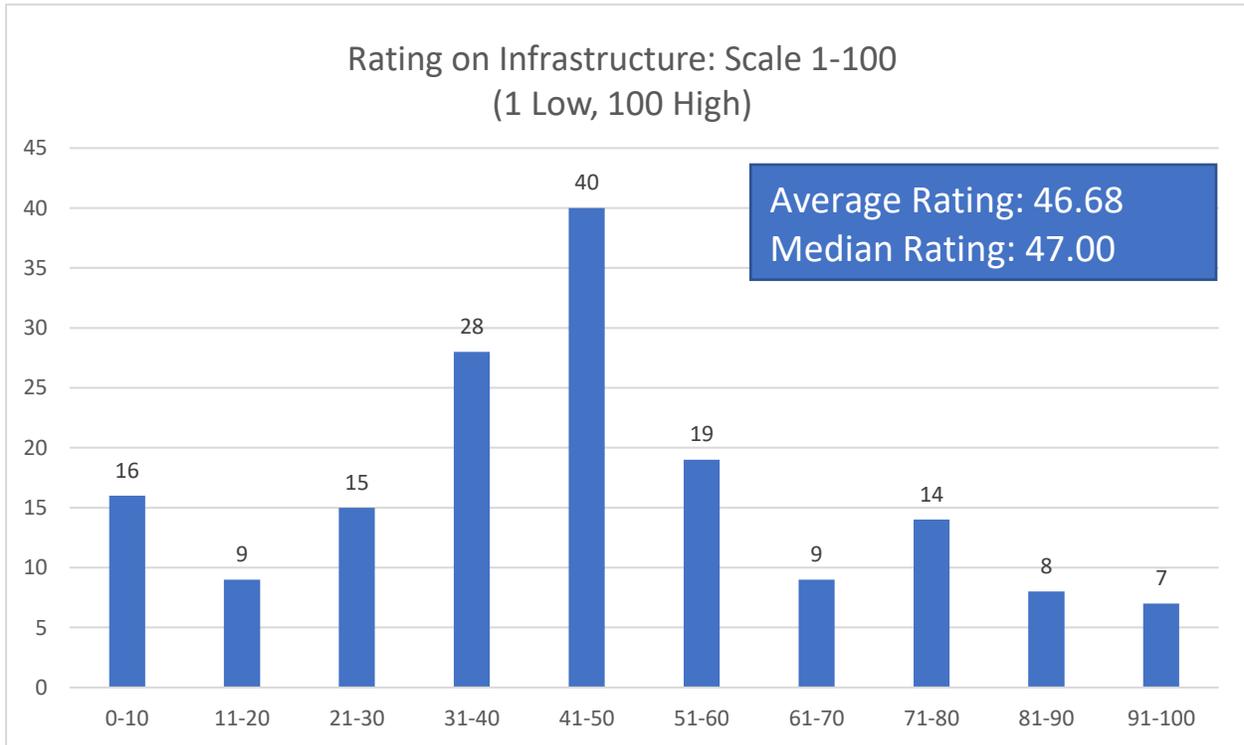


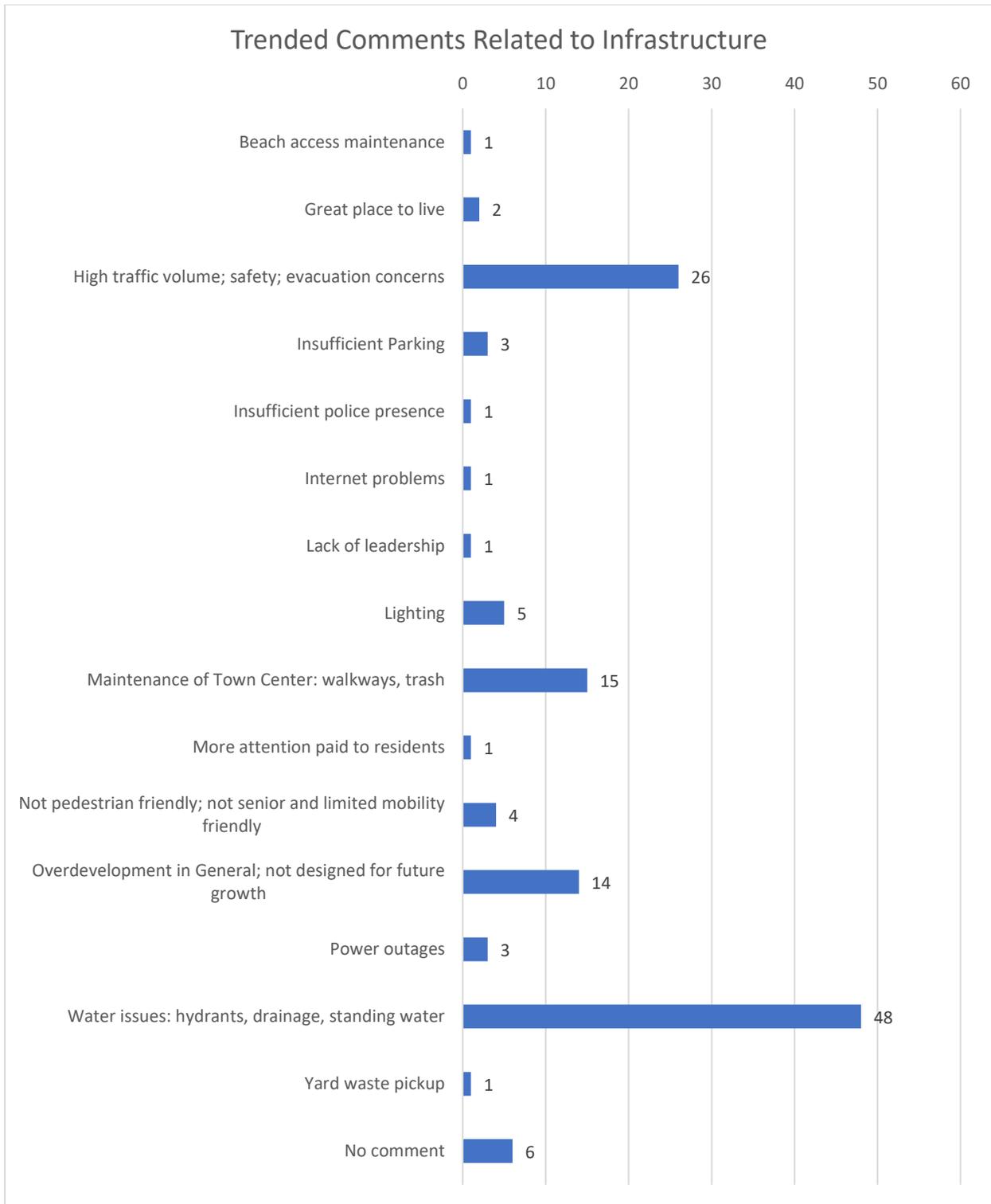
Length of Residence of Respondent



CRA Objective #1: Infrastructure

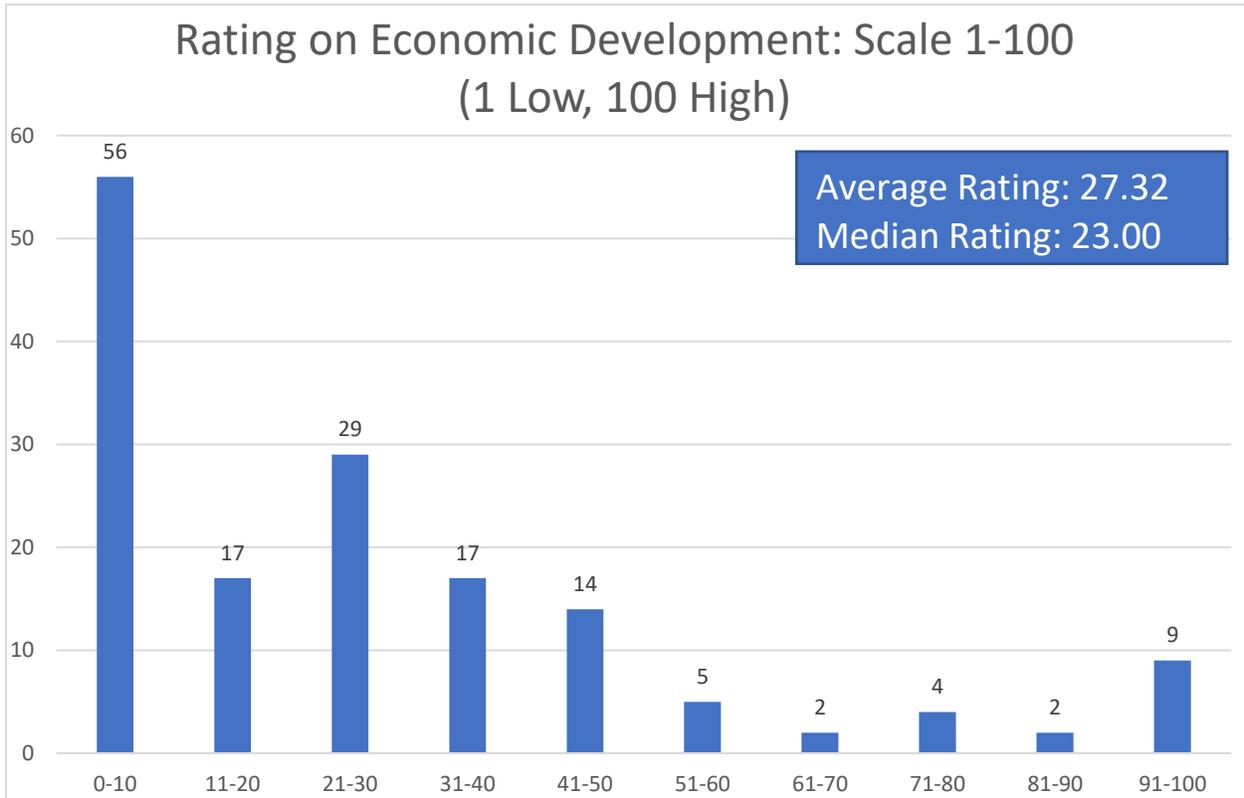
One of the 5 objectives of the CRA is infrastructure improvements. This includes roads and traffic, water and sewage, lighting, maintenance, and upkeep. How do you rate the infrastructure in Vilano and the North Beaches?

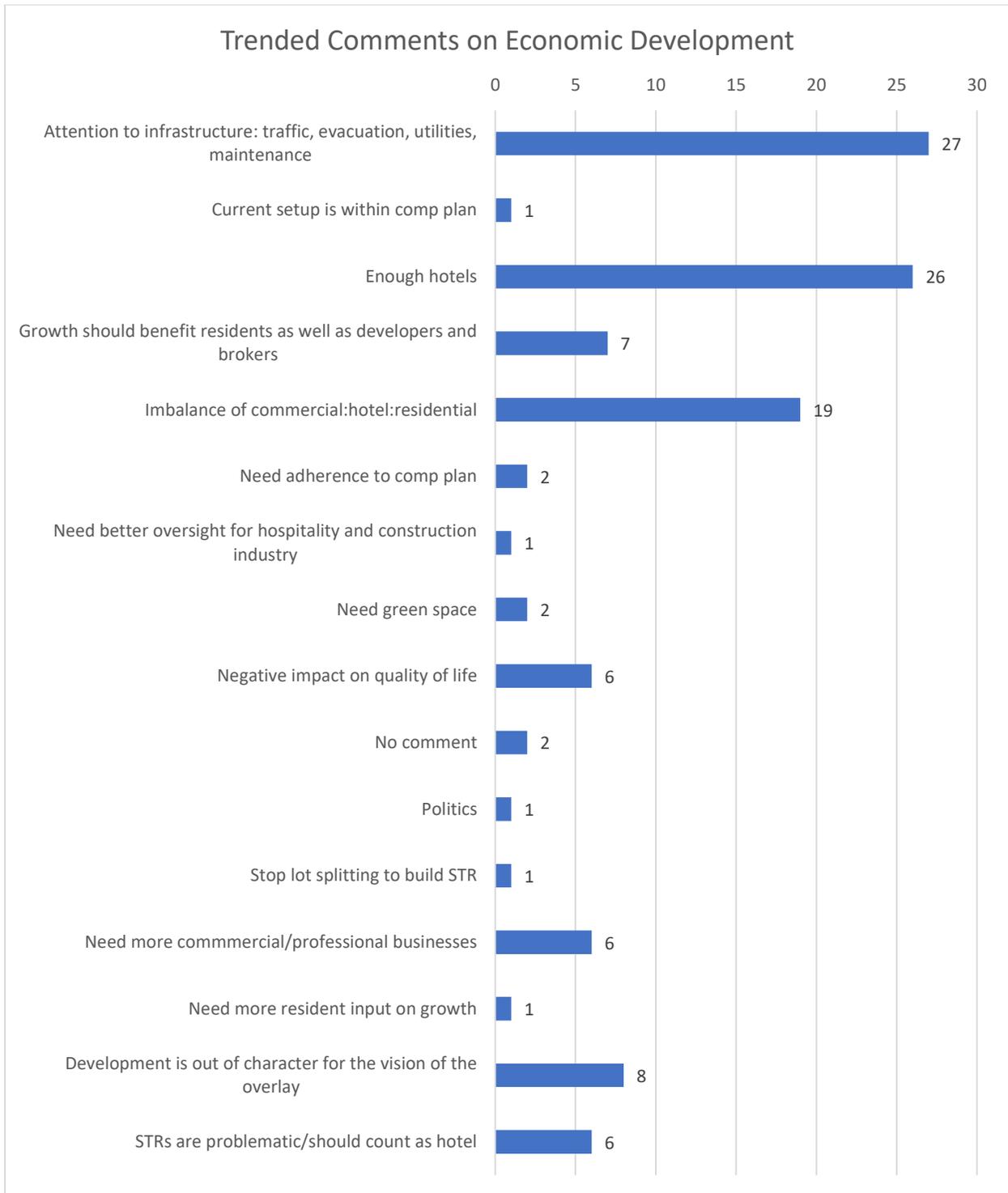




CRA Objective #2: Economic Development

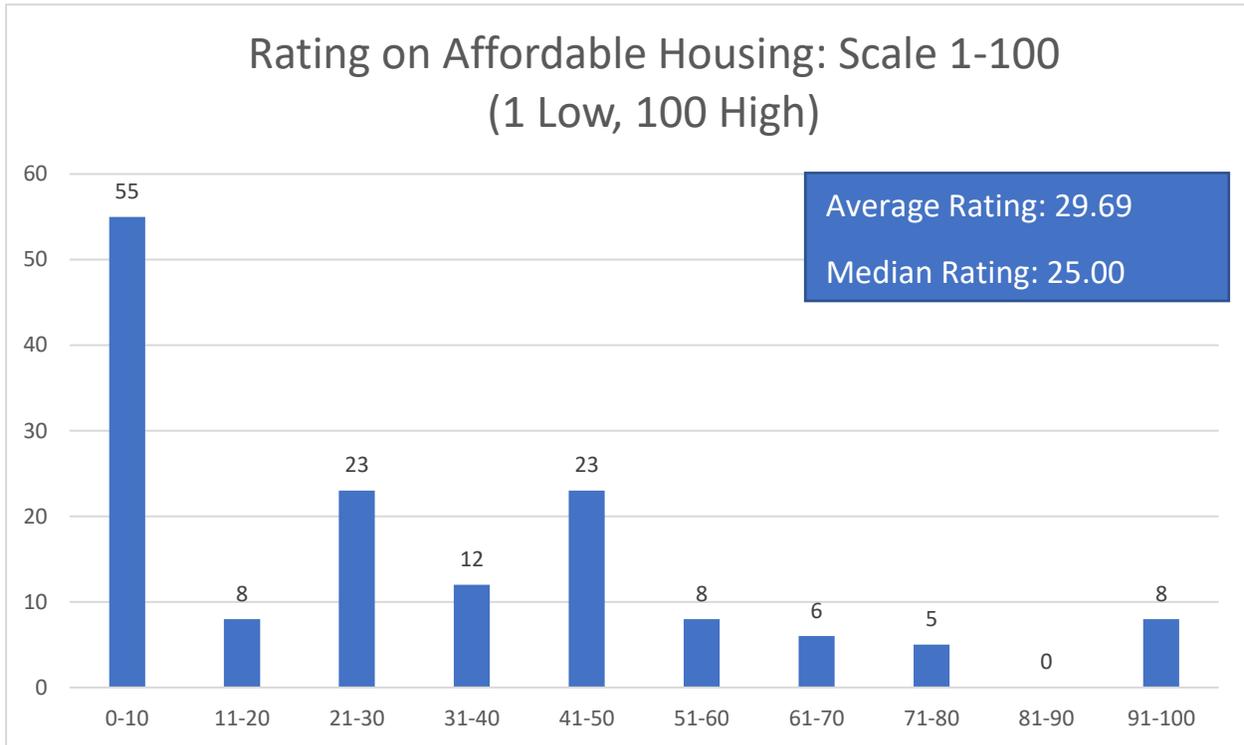
One of the 5 objectives of the CRA is economic development. The vision for Vilano is a mix of build-out of Hotel/Motel at 30%, Residential at 33%, Commercial at 33%. How do you rate the economic build-out in the Vilano Town Center?

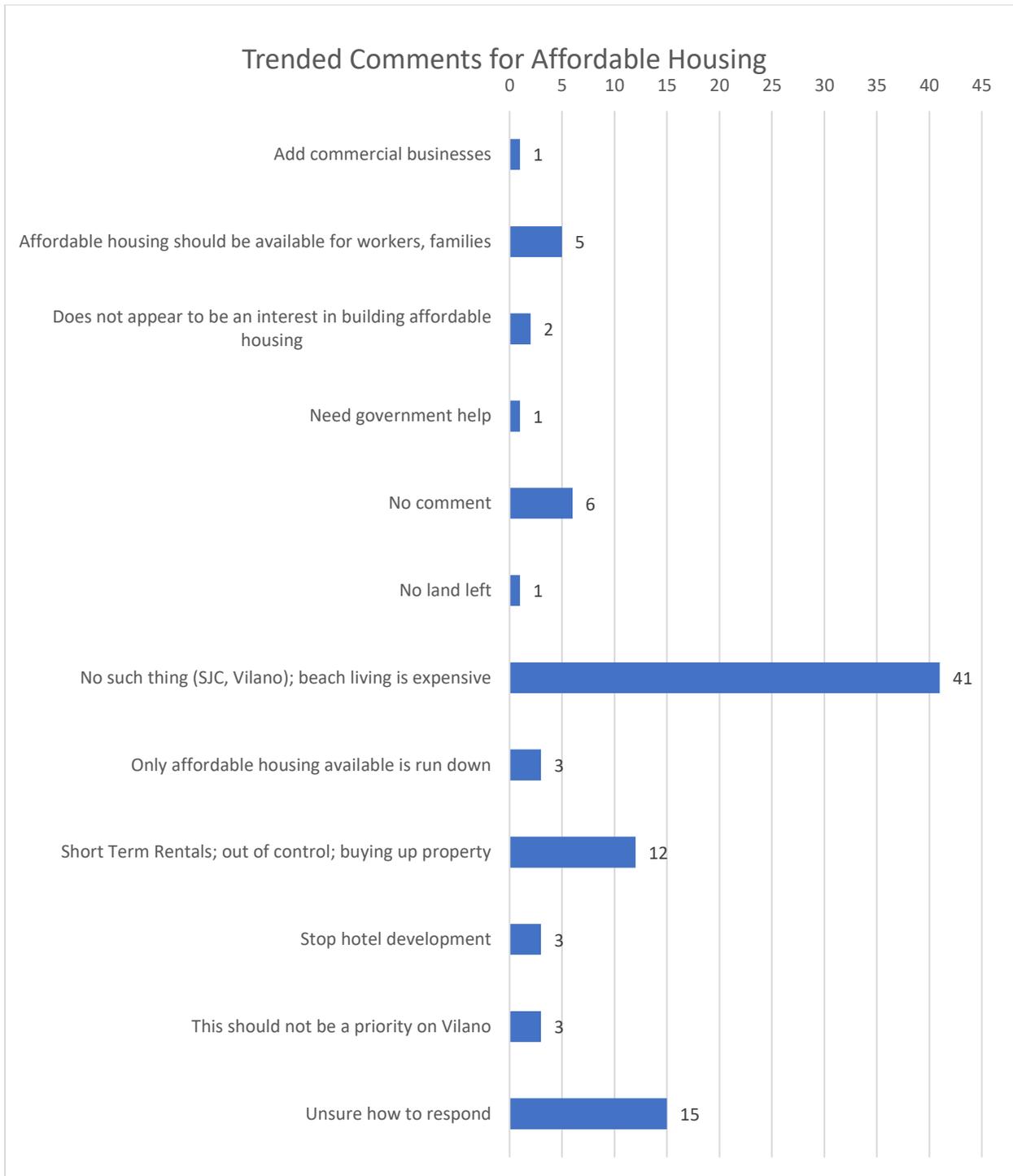




CRA Objective #3: Affordable Housing

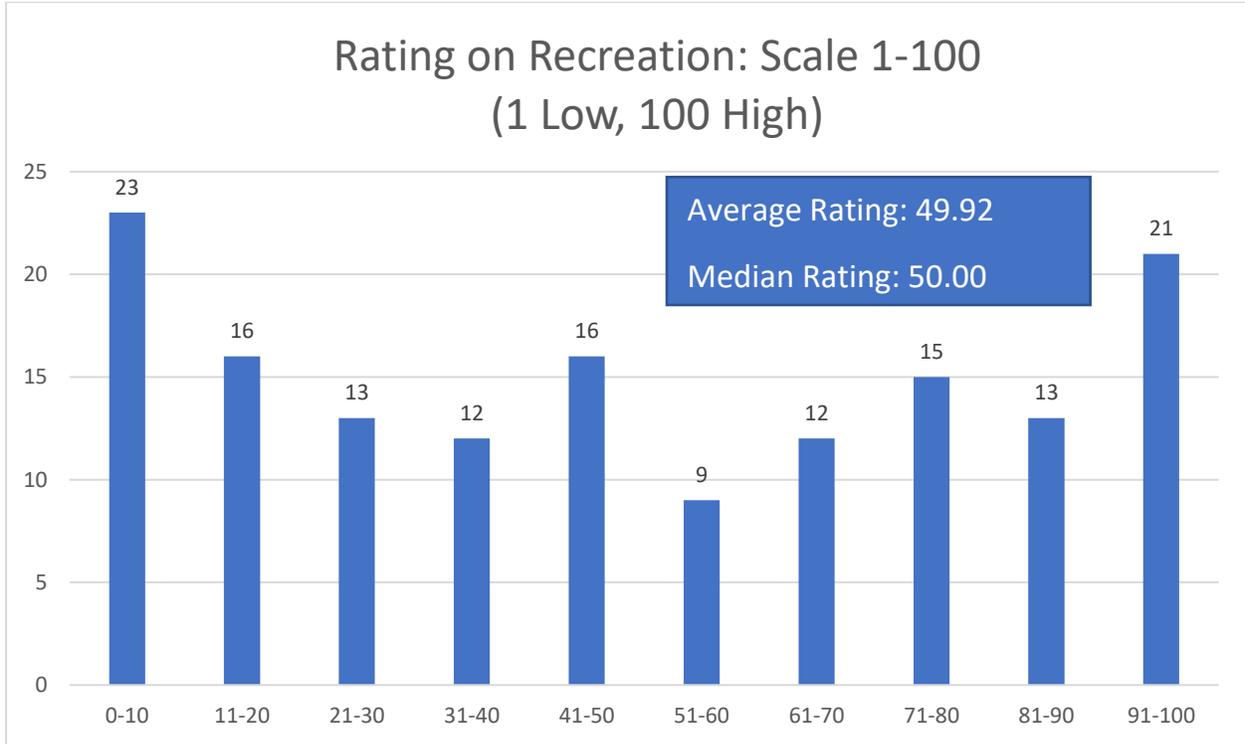
One of the 5 objectives of the CRA is affordable housing. The vision is to have 33% residential. How do you rate the affordable housing in Vilano and the North Beaches from Ferrol Road up to Gardner Avenue (CRA Boundary)?

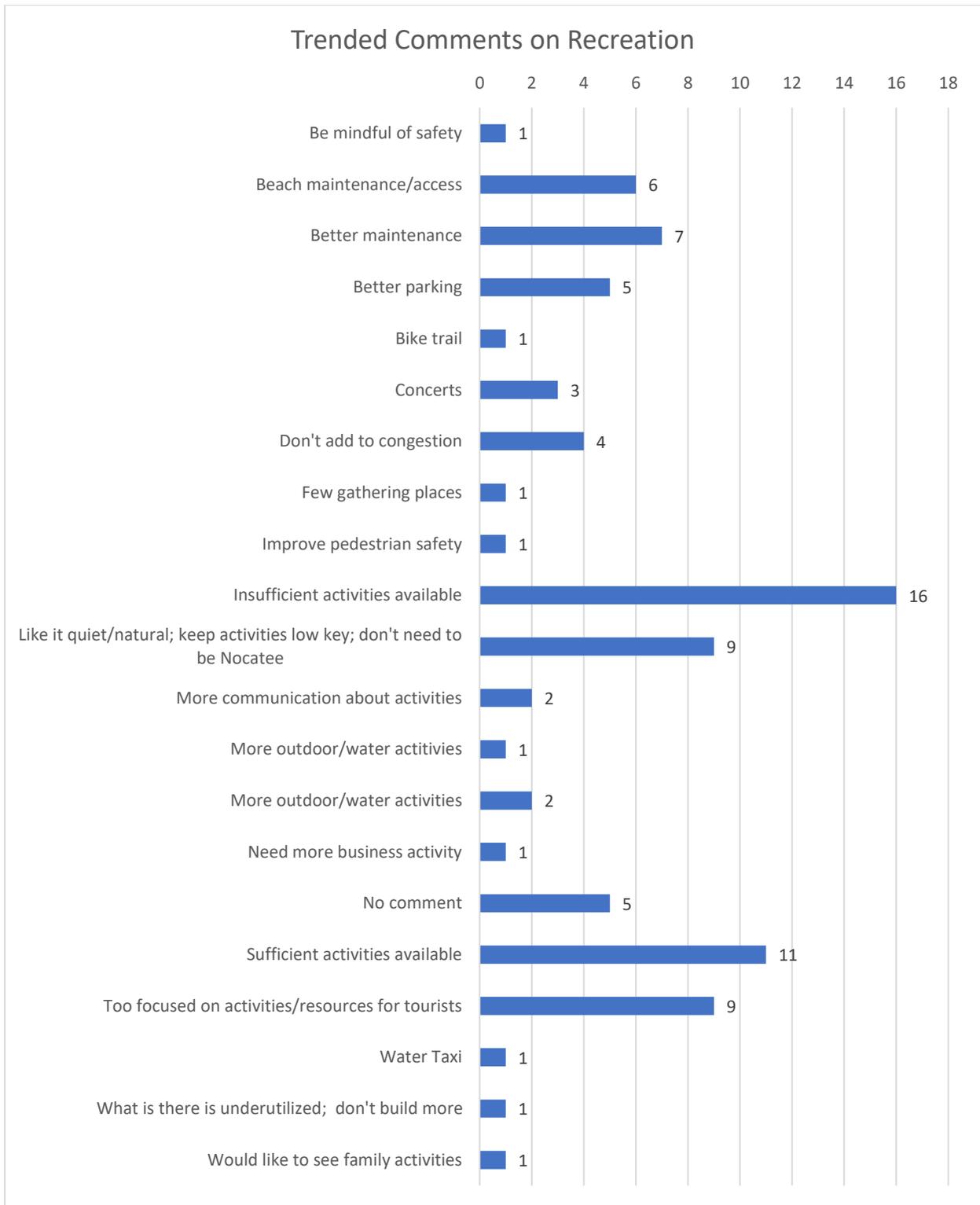




CRA Objective #4: Recreation and Community Activities

An objective of the CRA is to provide a lively and fun place to live and visit that takes advantage of the unique waterfront properties. How do you rate recreation and community activities in Vilano?

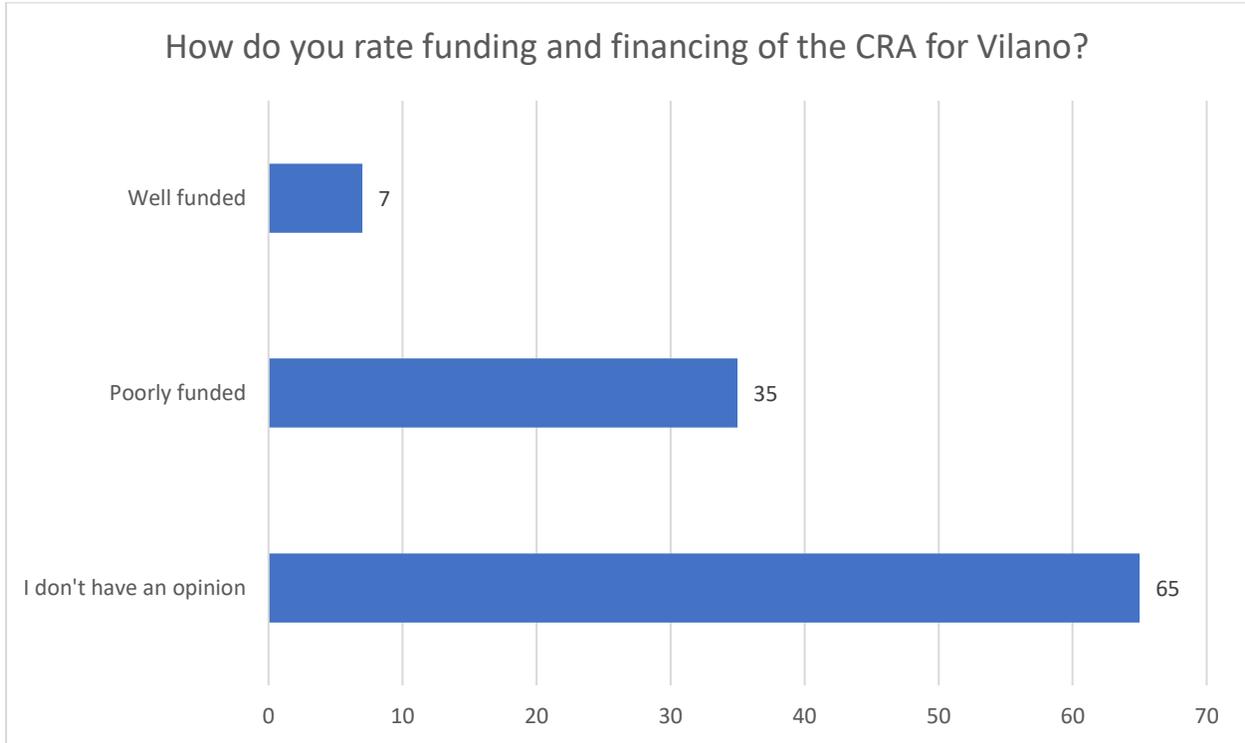




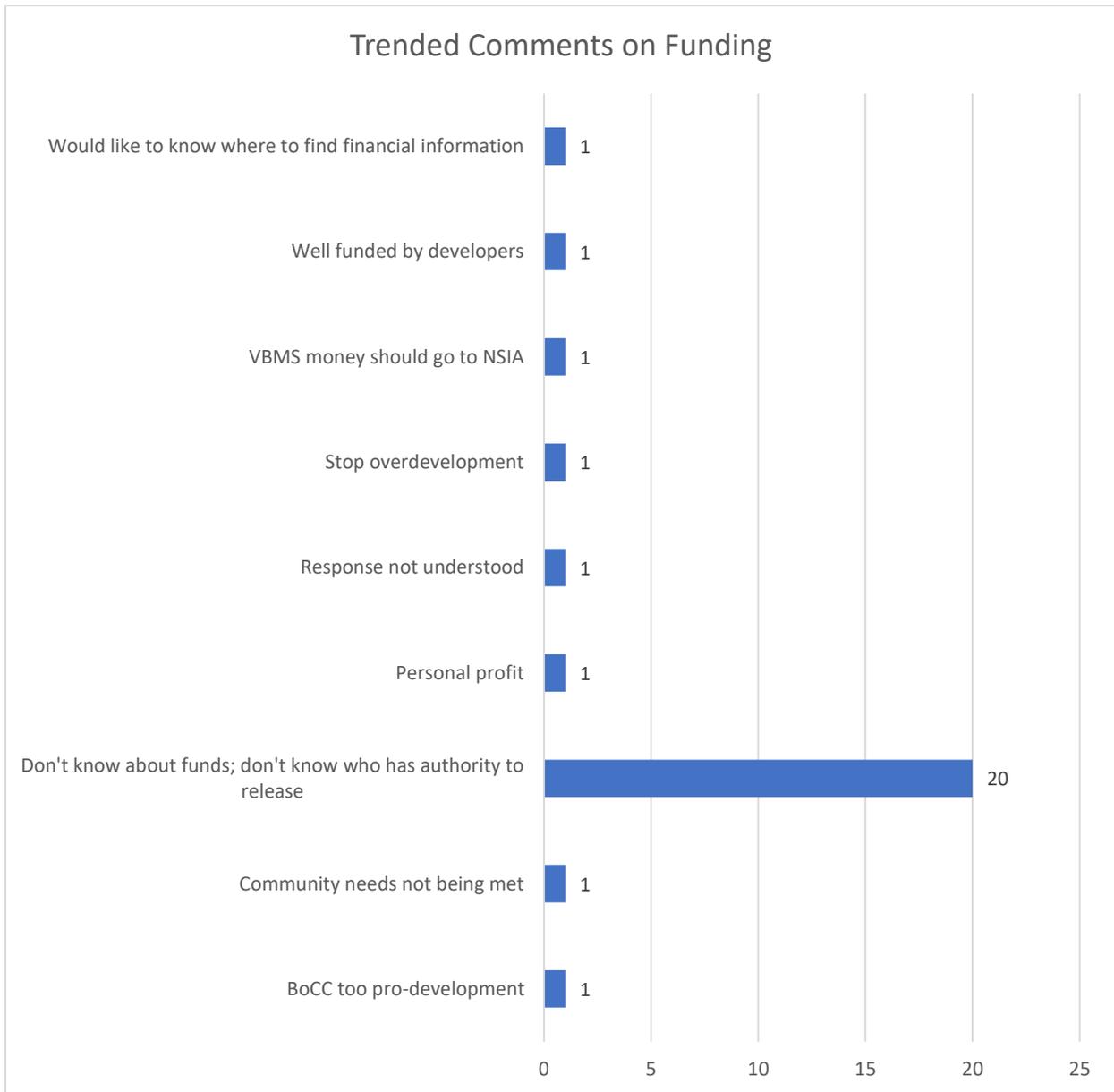
CRA Objective #5: Funding, Management and Promotion

The St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners serve as the governing board of the CRA that recognizes a specific committee of citizens to represent community needs to the County, in terms of funding, management and promotion.

Funding

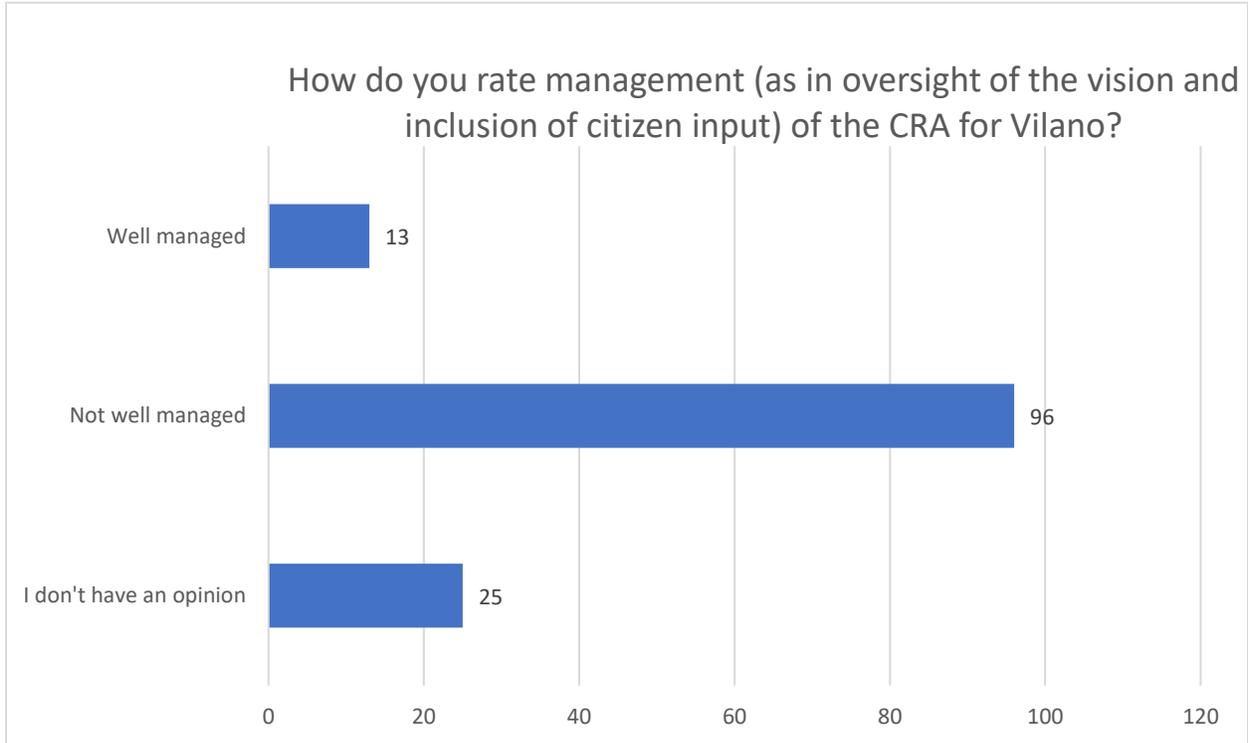


Write in comments were analyzed for trends, and the trend responses charted, below.

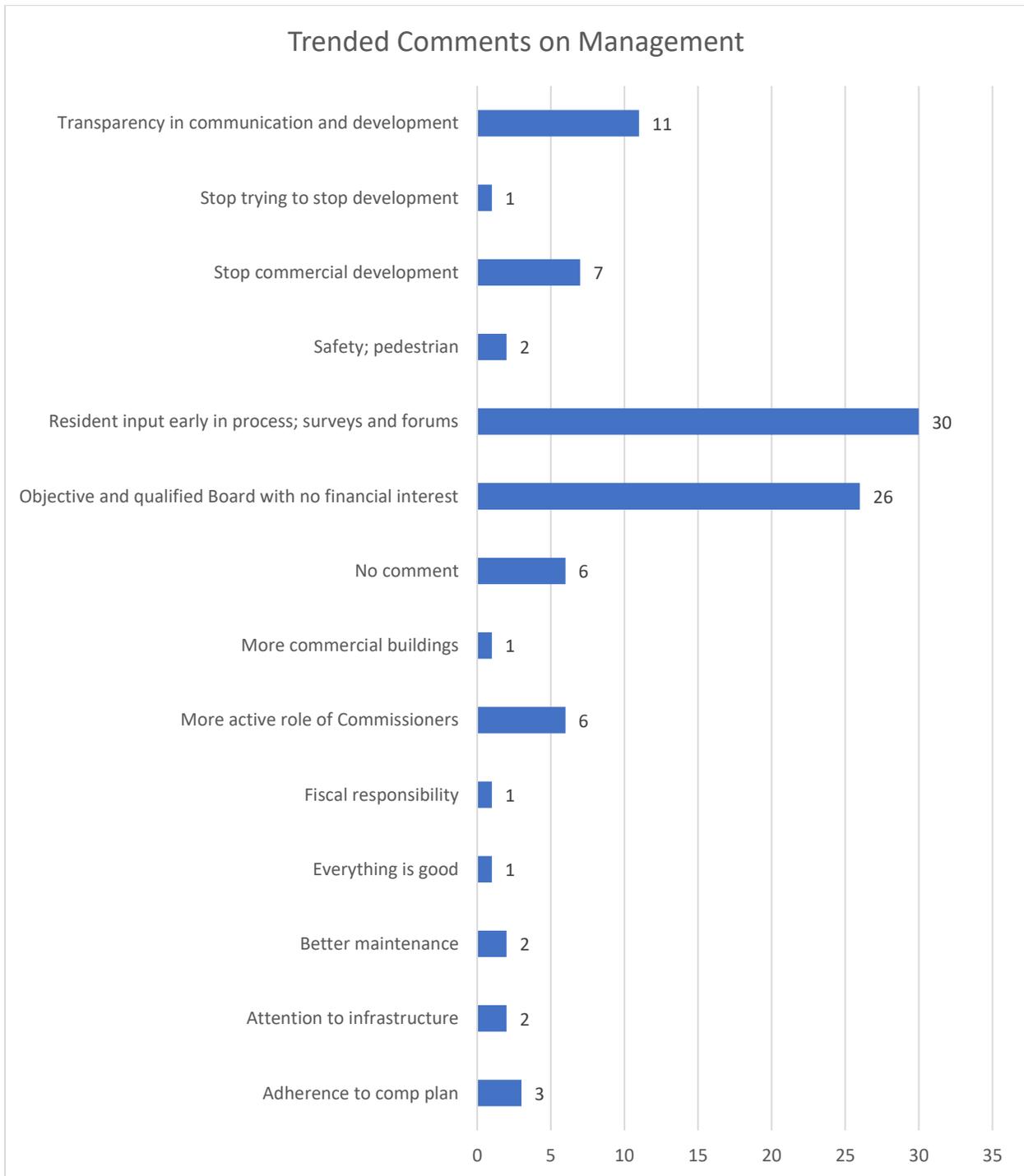


Management

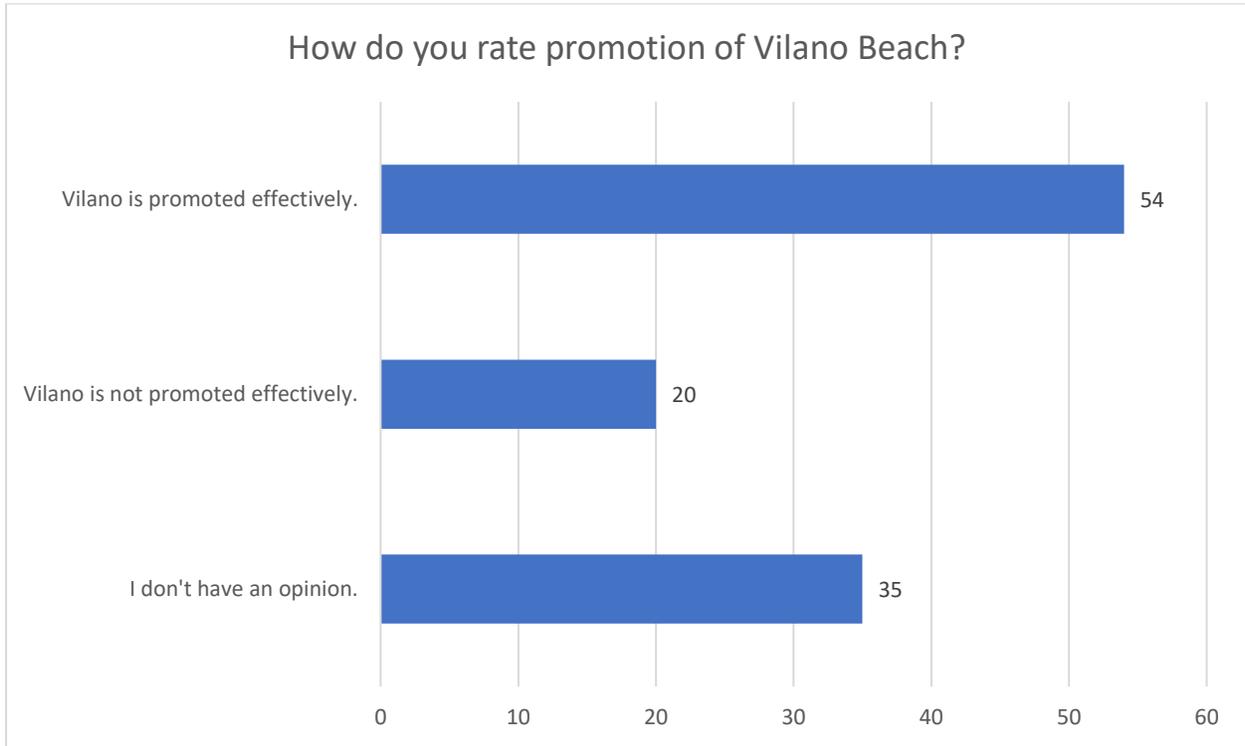
How do you rate management (as in oversight of the vision and inclusion of citizen input) of the CRA for Vilano?



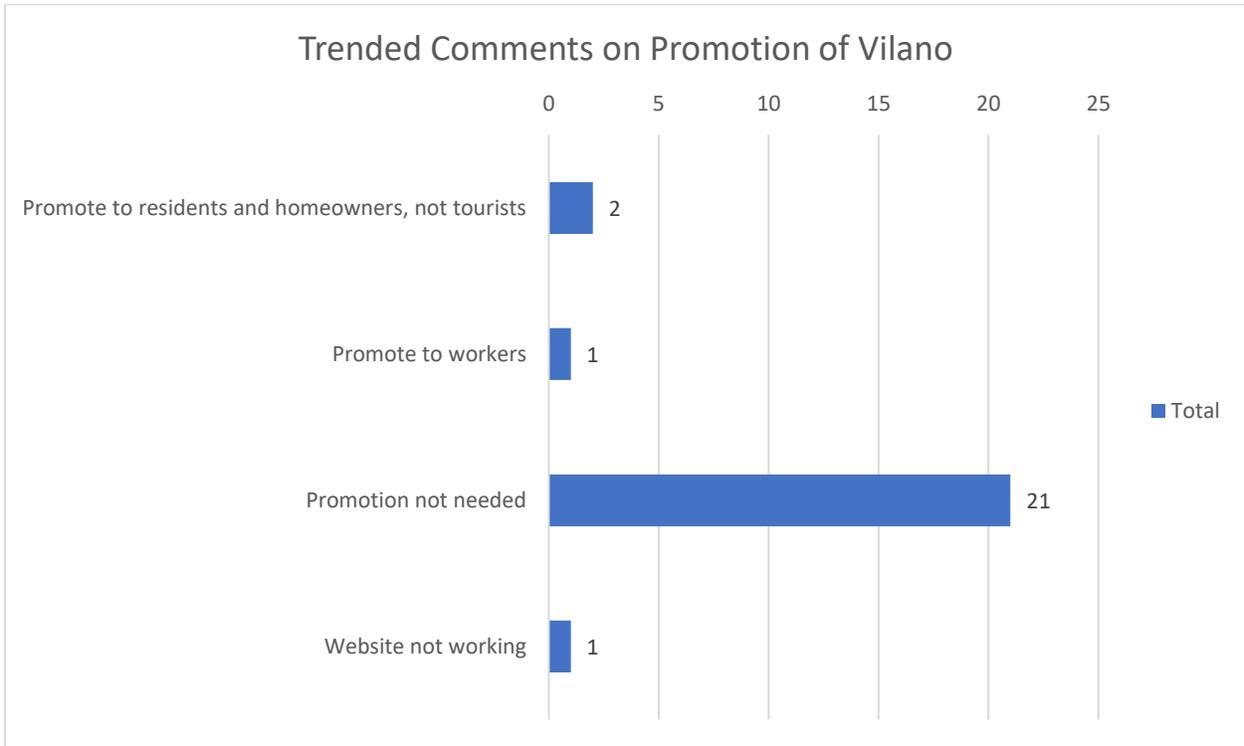
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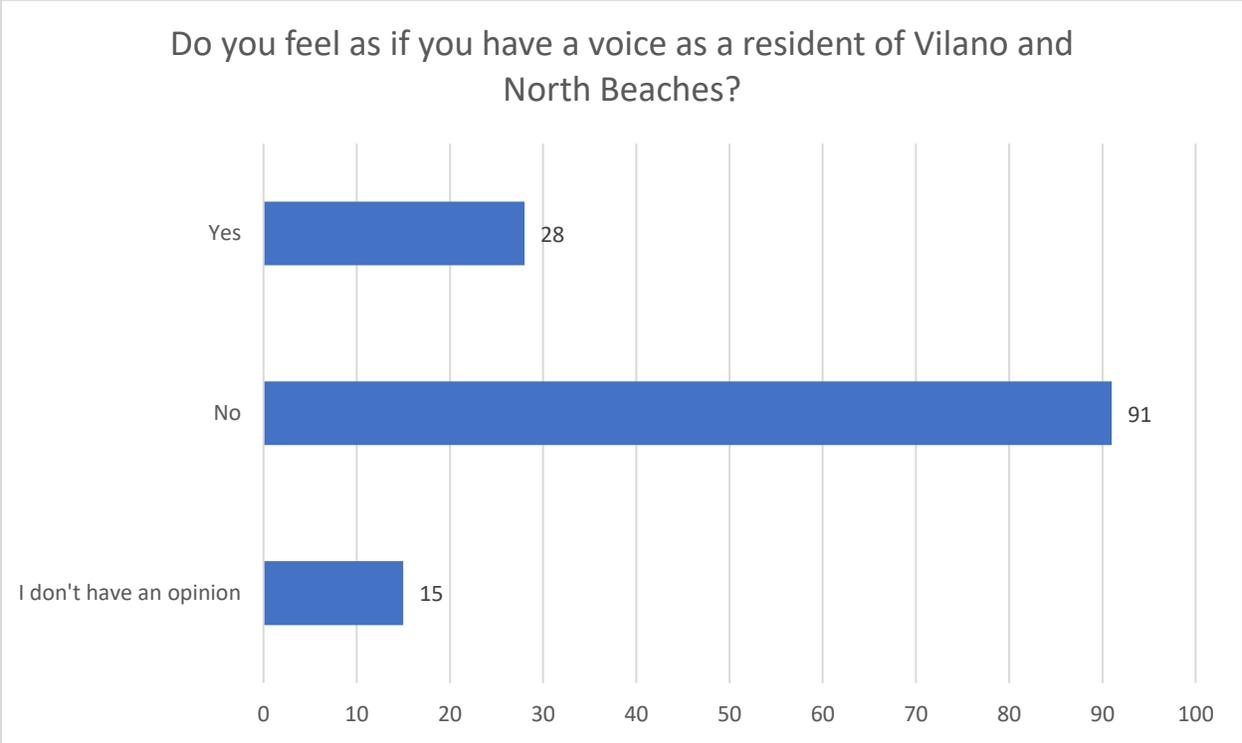
Promotion



Write in comments were analyzed for trends, and the trend responses charted, below.

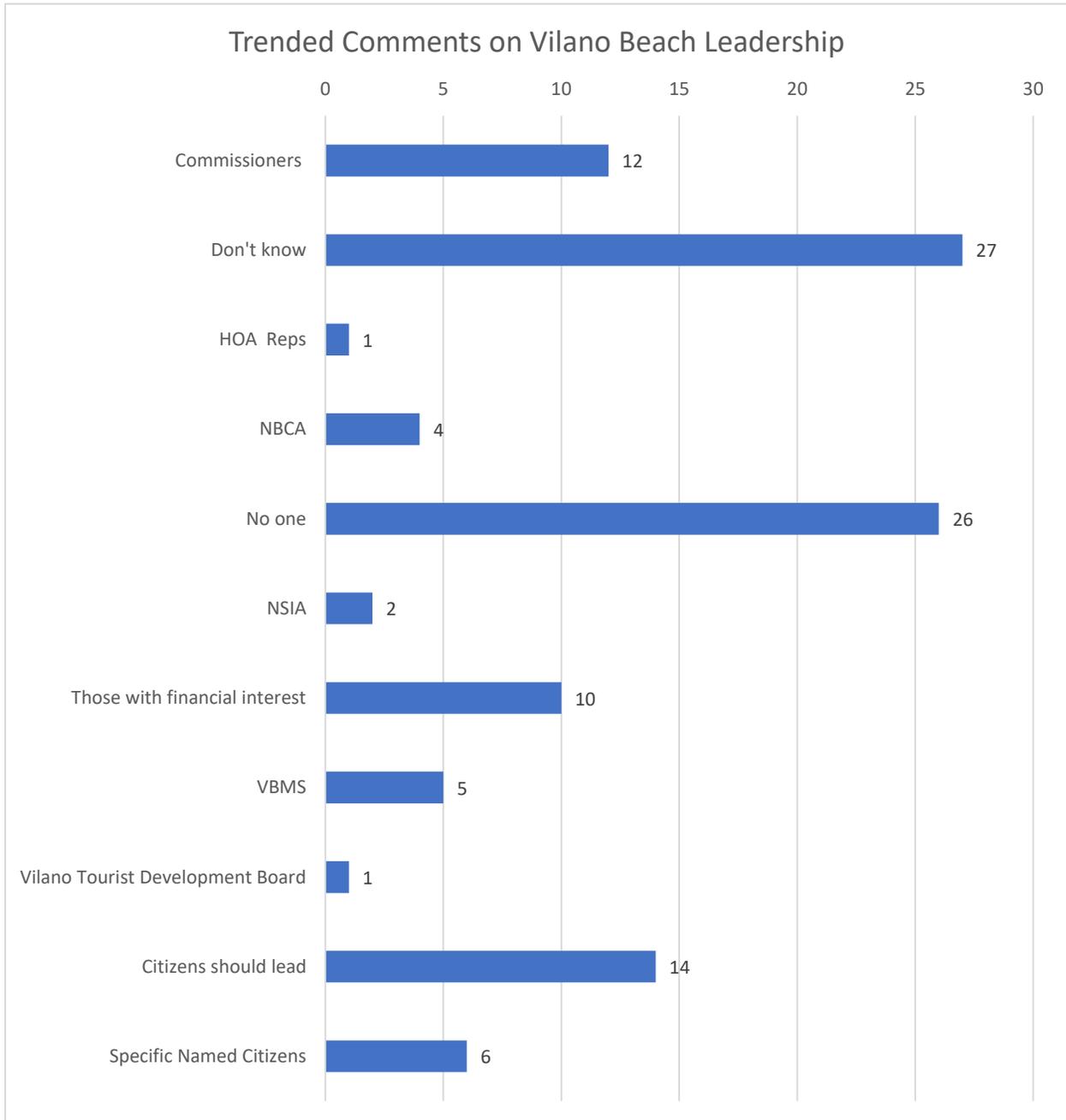


Voice of the Community

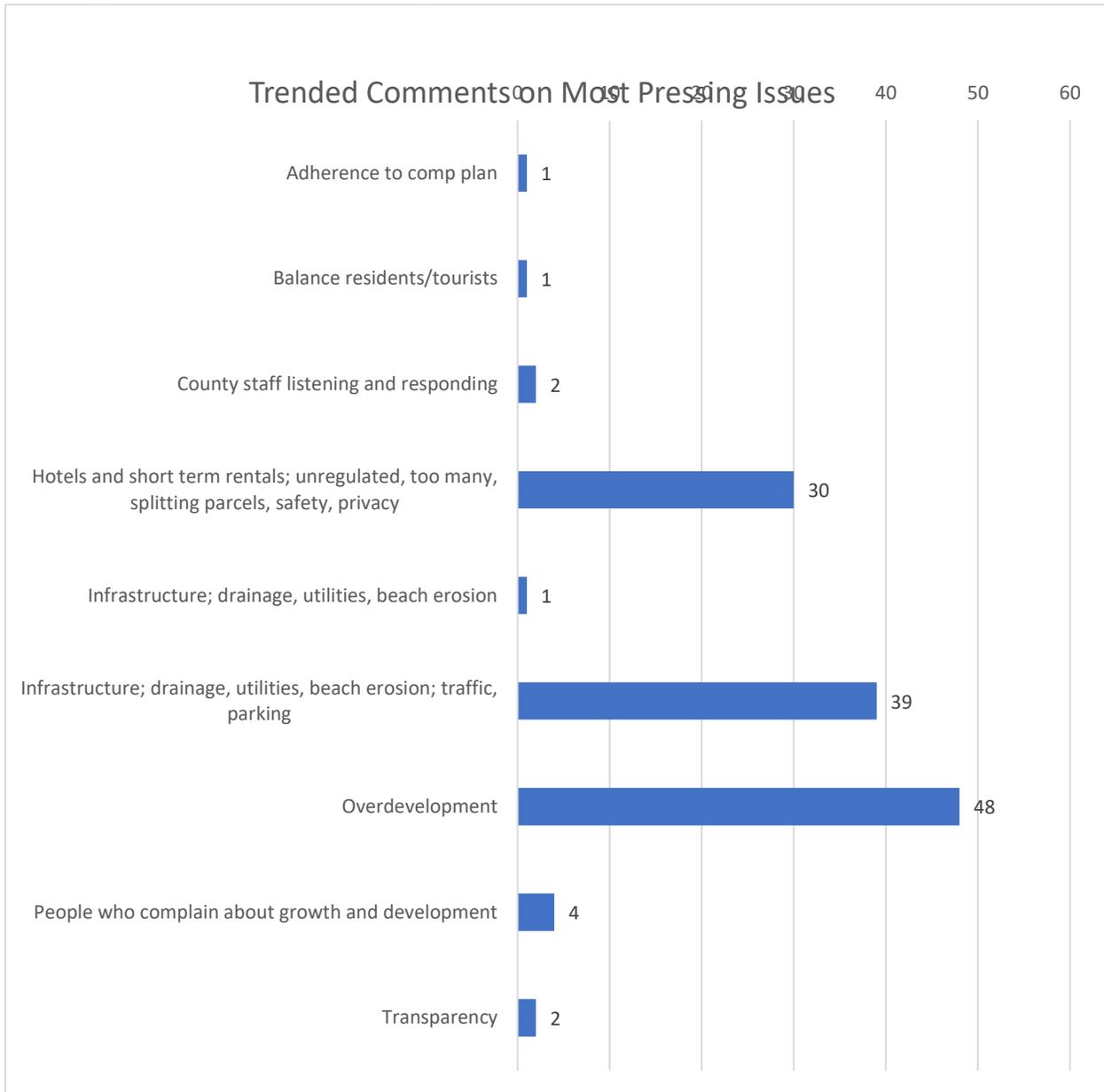


Community Leadership

Vilano Beach is not a city or town, as are St. Augustine and St. Augustine Beach, so there is no elected representation of the citizens. Who do you believe serves as the leadership of Vilano to share the voice of the citizens with the county?



Pressing Issues for the Community



Facilitating Community Participation

