

# Transit Village Monitoring Research

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## Residential Survey Data: Rahway

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[www.policy.rutgers.edu/tod/transitvillages](http://www.policy.rutgers.edu/tod/transitvillages)

## Summary

A mail survey of Rahway households was conducted in Spring 2005 to assess community perception about smart growth, the town and neighborhoods, changes in the Transit Village (TV) area, and the importance of transit in choice of housing location. The same survey has been previously carried out (Spring/Summer 2003) in three other Transit Villages — Metuchen, South Amboy and South Orange. These surveys contained “Smart Growth” questions, about downtown development, especially housing, that were also on a statewide Eagleton Institute-*Star Ledger* poll of 802 households in Spring 2003. In each survey approximately 1500 households were polled: 1000 within the ½ circle around the transit station and 500 outside the circle. The overall response rate for the four towns was 38% with Metuchen highest at 49% and Rahway lowest at 30%. The following are the major results of the study — first, those of Rahway:

### Smart Growth

- Rahway residents in general were significantly *more likely* to favor housing in the town’s downtown center (71%) and a significant portion (67%) feel it is *very important* that the state actively encourage growth and development in existing downtowns.

### Community Perception

- Only 12% of residents living in the Transit Village area felt that their neighborhood was “much better” than the rest of the town, while 31% outside the TV felt that way.
- Most residents who classified themselves into any “non-white” category (i.e. black, Asian or Hispanic) were more likely to feel *positively* about their town but negatively about their own *neighborhood*.
- Less than 50% of Rahway residents saw improvement in downtown safety (35%), walkability (45%) and shopping (31%) over the last three years.
- However, minority groups, in particular blacks, were significantly *more likely* than white respondents to feel that downtown Rahway *had improved* over the past three years
- Seventy-five percent (75%) of all respondents did feel that the downtown was more attractive.
- Fifty-eight percent (58%) felt that there were much better restaurant options.

### Importance of Transit

- While 33% of TV residents use public transit at least once a month, only 20% of those living outside the TV use transit once a month or more.
- A substantial portion of non-whites (20%) said that transit was a “major reason” for moving to their current location. This compares to only 12% of whites, a statistically significant result.
- Non-whites are more likely than whites to take public transit five or more times per month.
- Outside the TV area Hispanics are significantly *more likely* than non-Hispanics to say that transit was a “major reason” for moving to their current location and are significantly *more likely* than non-Hispanics to use public transit more than five times a month.

## Housing

- Eighty percent (80%) of Rahway respondents were homeowners.
- Rahway TV residents (median stay at current residence is 10 years) are somewhat more mobile than those living outside the TV (median stay at current residence is 15 years).

The following are the major results of the study across all four Villages and the State:

## Smart Growth

- Rahway respondents indicated the highest support for downtown housing (71%) compared to South Orange (50%), South Amboy (50%), Metuchen (23%) and New Jersey (49%).
- All of the TVs responded that it was very or somewhat important that the state play an active role in encouraging downtown growth and development (Metuchen 85%, South Amboy 90%, South Orange 95%, and Rahway 93%), more so than statewide residents (83%).

## Community Perception

- Rahway residents (20%) rated their town lower as an excellent place to live compared to the other three Villages (Metuchen 63%, South Amboy 27%, and South Orange (38%) and the State (63%).
- In all Villages the residents outside the TV rated their neighborhood as a better place to live than those living within the TV area.
- A substantial percentage of residents in all four TVs felt their towns were somewhat or much more attractive than the previous three years: South Amboy 83%, Rahway 75%, Metuchen 65%, and South Orange 62%. This is not surprising given that Metuchen and South Orange have a higher economic base and were already desirable communities.
- As in Rahway, perceptions of improvements in walkability, downtown safety, downtown shopping, and downtown entertainment fell short across all of the Villages.
- Only when asked about improvement in downtown dining did residents across all Villages indicate substantial improvement over the previous three years.

## Importance of Transit

- More South Orange (63%) and Metuchen (57%) residents indicated that transit was either a major or minor reason for moving to their current address. In Rahway the share was only 28% and in South Amboy it was even lower at 26%. However, across all villages, a higher percentage of residents in the Transit Village area, as opposed to those outside the Village, indicated that transit was important in their decision in choosing their housing location.
- Correspondingly, more South Orange (58%) and Metuchen (45%) residents used public transit in contrast to Rahway (28%) and South Amboy (20%). Again, across all Villages, those residents within the TV used transit more often than those outside the TV.

- As a result, Rahway (82%) and South Amboy (88%) residents rank the highest in use of the car for their work commute. However, they are more likely to live within five miles of their work than the residents in South Orange and Metuchen which may explain the higher use of auto for work trips.
- Across all four towns, vehicle ownership per household is lower in the Transit Village area: a high of 1.92 cars per household in Metuchen TV to a low of 1.67 in South Orange TV. These levels are still relatively high compared to more urban, compact communities like Hoboken that, according to the 2000 Census, have levels less than 1 car per household.

### Housing

- Across all four communities, those living inside the Transit Village live for fewer years in the same town in general, and in the same home in particular.
- A high percentage of respondents in all towns tended to be homeowners. Except for Metuchen, which had an overall rate of 90% in both the TV and outside the TV, more respondents outside the TV were homeowners. And, not surprisingly, the majority of these homeowners lived in single-family detached housing.

The economic and diversity differences among the Transit Villages are evident in these results. South Orange and Metuchen are more bedroom commuter communities while Rahway and South Amboy represent a blue-collar manufacturing legacy. And, Rahway is the most diverse racially and ethnically. These perspectives have to be factored in when considering the survey results. However, it does appear that improvements being made in all of the TVs are adding to the overall satisfaction of residents.

A detailed analysis and presentation of data results follow.

## Introduction

In the Summer of 2003 the Voorhees Transportation Center, as part of a previous NJDOT study on the status of the first seven designated Transit Villages (TVs), conducted a household opinion survey in three of the Villages — Metuchen, South Amboy and South Orange. These Villages were chosen because they were experiencing new housing construction in the TV area (1/2 mile circle around a transit station). In this current study of the Transit Villages, Rahway was chosen for the household survey (Spring 2005) as a new, 136-unit luxury apartment development has been completed in the TV within the past year. In addition, there has been a large amount of non-residential improvements in the downtown area in the last five years.

The first part of this report features the results from the Rahway survey. The second part will review the results of all four Transit Villages – individually and together.

## Methodology

The sampling and survey methodology for Rahway is the same as for the three previous Villages:<sup>1</sup>

### Data Collection and Sampling Frame

The sampling frame was drawn from a list-source postal delivery code database. The towns were divided into two zones – Transit Village (census block groups within approximately ½ mile of a train station) and Non-Transit Village (the remaining census block groups).

The sampling frame was a probability sample of all households. 1,000 addresses were selected for each of the Transit Village groups and 500 addresses for each of the Non-Transit Village groups. The survey format was an eight-page self-administered questionnaire mailed to heads of households in the municipalities. The initial mailing for the towns included a questionnaire booklet with cover letter and a reply postcard to track responses. A reminder postcard was sent within two weeks and a final full survey packet was sent again to non-responders. The Rahway Survey was conducted April to June 2005.

The approximate population sizes (total number of housing units), sample size, and response rate for each sample group are presented in Table 1 below.

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<sup>1</sup> The first three surveys were conducted by the Rutgers Eagleton Institute of Politics. The Rahway survey was carried out by the Bloustein Survey Research Center. However, all surveys were directed by Patrick Murray who has since left Rutgers to head the Monmouth University Poll.

<b>TABLE 1</b>				
<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>Housing Units</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Returned</b>	<b>Rate</b>
<b>Metuchen (2003)</b>				
-- Transit Village	2,373	977	489	50%
-- Non-Transit Village	2,665	485	227	47%
<i>Total</i>	<i>5,038</i>	<i>1,462</i>	<i>716</i>	<i>49%</i>
<b>South Amboy (2003)</b>				
-- Transit Village	1,556	924	275	30%
-- Non-Transit Village	1,446	488	186	38%
<i>Total</i>	<i>3,002</i>	<i>1,412</i>	<i>461</i>	<i>33%</i>
<b>South Orange (2003)</b>				
-- Transit Village	3,577	972	391	40%
-- Non-Transit Village	2,065	494	215	44%
<i>Total</i>	<i>5,642</i>	<i>1,466</i>	<i>606</i>	<i>41%</i>
<b>Rahway (2005)</b>				
-- Transit Village	4,860	961	278	29%
-- Non-Transit Village	4,679	491	155	32%
<i>Total</i>	<i>9,539</i>	<i>1,452</i>	<i>433</i>	<i>30%</i>
<b>All Towns</b>				
-- Transit Village	12,366	3,834	1,433	37%
-- Non-Transit Village	10,855	1,958	783	40%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23,221</b>	<b>5,792</b>	<b>2,216</b>	<b>38%</b>

### Data Analysis

A weight was applied to the data file to adjust for the disproportionate sampling frame, so that the total results are proportionally representative for all six sample groups.

The margin of sampling error associated with the full-survey sample of 2,216 is  $\pm 2.0\%$ . The percentages obtained in a random probability sample survey are estimates of what the distribution of responses would be if the entire population had been surveyed. "Margin of sampling error" is a statistical term which describes the probable difference between interviewing everyone in a given population and a sample drawn from that population. Sampling error increases as the sample size is reduced. This must be kept in mind when comparing the responses of different groups within a sample.

The margins of error for relevant subgroups in this survey are:

<b>TABLE 2</b>	
RESPONSE	Margin of error (+/-)
<b>Metuchen</b>	
-- Transit Village	4.0%
-- Non-Transit Village	6.2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>3.4%</i>
<b>South Amboy</b>	
-- Transit Village	5.4%
-- Non-Transit Village	6.7%
<i>Total</i>	<i>4.2%</i>
<b>South Orange</b>	
-- Transit Village	4.7%
-- Non-Transit Village	6.3%
<i>Total</i>	<i>3.8%</i>
<b>Rahway</b>	
-- Transit Village	5.7%
-- Non-Transit Village	7.8%
<i>Total</i>	<i>4.6%</i>
<b>All Towns</b>	
-- Transit Village	2.4%
-- Non-Transit Village	3.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.0%</b>

Readers should note that sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion, including question wording, question order, length of interview, and social desirability of responses.

### Statewide Poll

In addition to the local household surveys seven questions about transit use and housing development in downtown areas and commercial centers were placed on the Eagleton-*Star Ledger* statewide poll in April 2003.<sup>2</sup> These questions were also included on the local surveys in order to compare responses. The questions were:

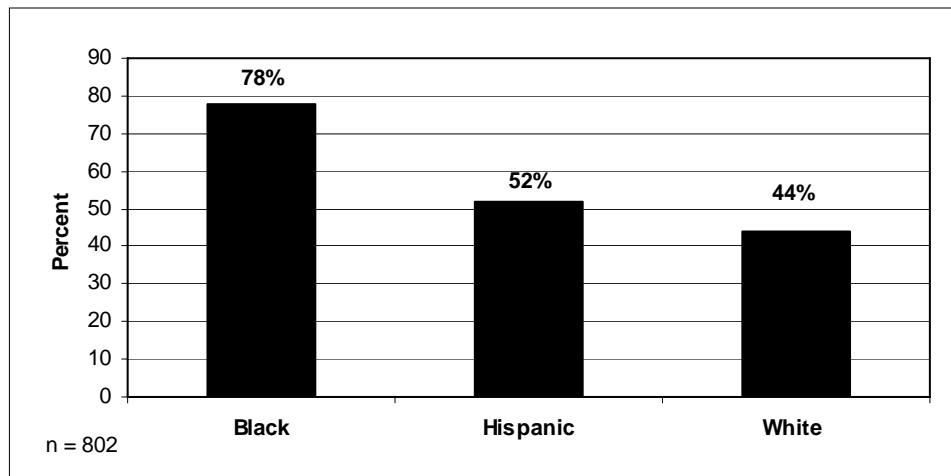
1. How important is it that the State actively encourage growth and development in existing downtown areas and commercial centers in New Jersey?
2. Do you favor or oppose new housing construction in the downtown area or commercial center of your town?

<sup>2</sup> This was a phone survey of 802 households.

3. Is the availability of public transportation a major reason, minor reason, or not a reason in the decision to choosing your current home?
4. How would you like to see these funds divided between roads and highways on one hand and public transportation on the other?
5. Is there a train station within walking distance of your home?
6. How far away is the nearest train station?
7. How often do you use public transportation?

The first two questions are considered the “smart growth” questions and the answers at both the state and local levels were divided, particularly by demographics of race, ethnicity and age (See Figure 1).<sup>3</sup>

**FIGURE 1: Percent in Favor of Housing Construction within the Downtown or Commercial Center of the Respondent’s Town; by Race and Ethnicity**



### Rahway Transit Village

Before moving to the results of the survey, it is important to point out that of the four municipalities surveyed, the Rahway Transit Village is the most diverse in population (See Table 3). As shown above, the statewide poll illustrated that a higher percentage of blacks and Hispanics, as opposed to whites, favored more housing in downtown areas. The results of the Rahway survey also show that whites and non-whites have disparate opinions on their community issues.

<sup>3</sup> See Renne and Wells. 2003. *Transit Villages in New Jersey: Public Opinion and Attitudes*. [http://policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/tod/tod\\_projects.html](http://policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/tod/tod_projects.html)

<b>TABLE 3</b>				
<b>Comparative Demographics of Surveyed Transit Villages</b> (1/2 Mile circle around transit station)				
	Metuchen	Rahway	South Amboy	South Orange
% White	86.7%	46.4%	93.2%	65.8%
% Black	3.0%	38.7%	0.9%	24.9%
% Asian	6.5%	4.2%	0.7%	4.6%
% Other	3.8%	10.7%	5.2%	4.7%
% Hispanic	4.4%	16.8%	8.4%	4.3%
% Foreign Born	13.6%	19.6%	8.7%	20.0%
Source: Census 2000				

### Survey Results<sup>4</sup>

In order to better characterize the responses to the survey, responses have been grouped into four different categories: *Development and Housing*, *Community Perception*, *Housing Location*, *Importance of Transit & Vehicle Ownership* and *Housing Characteristics*. Each group corresponds to a set of questions asked in the residential surveys. (See Figures 2–23 on the following pages.)

#### *Development and Housing*

One of the more interesting results of the survey was that Rahway residents in general were significantly more likely to favor housing in the downtown center (71%). Additionally, a significant portion of Rahway residents (67%) feel it is *very important* that the state actively encourages growth and development in existing downtowns. These results show that not only do Rahway residents overwhelmingly support downtown residential growth, but they also feel that the state is responsible for encouraging such growth.

#### *Community Perception*

Rahway residents were less enthusiastic about their town. Only 20% of Rahway residents rated the municipality as an “excellent” place to live and there was little variation between those surveyed inside and outside the TV on this question. However, when rating one’s neighborhood as a place to live compared to other neighborhoods in the town, a very significant discrepancy existed between those living inside versus those living outside the half-mile circle. Thirty-one percent (31%) of those living outside the circle felt their neighborhood was “much better” than the rest of town, while only 12 % living in the Transit Village felt the same. Stated more clearly, Transit Village residents view their neighborhood as worse than the others in town.

Less than 50% of Rahway residents saw improvement in downtown safety (35%), walkability (45%), shopping (31%) and entertainment (33%) in the past three years. However, 75% felt that the downtown was more attractive and 58% felt that there were much

<sup>4</sup> See Appendices 1 and 2 for crosstabs and significance levels.

better restaurant options than previously. There was little difference in these opinions between those living within the TV and those outside the TV.

Several analyses were done dealing with race and ethnicity. There were some interesting results in relation to community perception. Most residents who classified themselves into any “non-white” category (i.e. black, Asian or Hispanic) were more likely to feel *positively* about their town but negatively about their own *neighborhood*. “Minority” groups, and in particular blacks, were also significantly more likely than white respondents to feel that downtown Rahway had improved over the past three years. Non-white residents of Rahway felt that the downtown area was safer, more pleasant to walk around, and had better shopping than it did three years ago. Other statistically significant results are as follows:

- Whites were *more likely* than non-whites to rate their neighborhood as “much better” or “somewhat better” than other neighborhoods in Rahway.
- Blacks were *less likely* than non-blacks to rate their neighborhood as “much better” or “somewhat better” than other neighborhoods in town.
- Hispanics were *more likely* than non-Hispanics to feel that the downtown area is “much safer” or “somewhat safer” than it was three years ago.

To summarize, white residents feel their neighborhoods were better than others in Rahway, while black residents overwhelmingly feel that their neighborhoods are worse than others in the town. However, all minorities feel that the downtown area has greatly improved in several categories over the past three years. There was little difference in these results between those surveyed inside the Transit Village area and those outside the half-mile circle.

#### *Importance of Transit and Vehicle Ownership*

Rahway shows a large discrepancy of transit usage between those living inside and outside of the half-mile radius around the station. While 33% of TV residents use public transit at least once a month, only 20% of those living outside the TV use transit once a month or more. Additionally, heavy users (more than twenty public transit trips per month) make up 13% of those surveyed inside the TV while heavy users make up only 9% of residents outside the half-mile radius.

Rahway’s rail ridership for TV residents is 10% over non-TV residents. However, the average number of vehicles per household is only slightly lower in the Transit Village area (1.9) than outside the Transit Village area (2.0).

In terms of race and ethnicity, several interesting relationships exist. A substantial portion of non-whites (20%) said that transit was a “major reason” for moving to their current location. This compares to only 12% of whites, a statistically significant result. Along these same lines, non-whites are more likely than whites to take public transit five or more times per month. In addition, some especially intriguing results also came out of the survey of TV versus non-TV residents with regard to transit and home location:

- Outside the TV area Hispanics are significantly *more likely* than non-Hispanics to say that transit was a “major reason” for moving to their current location.
- Outside the TV area Hispanics are significantly *more likely* than non-Hispanics to use public transit more than five times a month.

- More generally, outside the TV area non-whites are significantly *more likely* than whites to use public transit more than five times a month.

These results demonstrate some fairly clear patterns between race and transit use. Minority groups are much more likely to use transit on a regular basis than white residents. Also, minority residents of Rahway – particularly Hispanics – are more likely to base decisions about housing location on the proximity to transit use.

### *Housing Characteristics*

Eighty percent (80%) of Rahway respondents were homeowners. However, for those outside the TV the level was 90%; for those in the TV, 70%. Still, this is a very high percentage compared to the U.S. level of 69%.<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly, 58% of Transit Village residents live in single-family units compared to 85% of those living outside the half-mile radius. Finally, the median number of years that Rahway TV residents have lived in their *town* is 20, while the median number of years in one's current *residence* is 10 years. Those living *outside* the TV have lived in Rahway for a median of 25 years while the median number of years in their current *residence* is 15 years. It seems that in the Transit Village, with a higher percentage of renters, the population is more mobile.

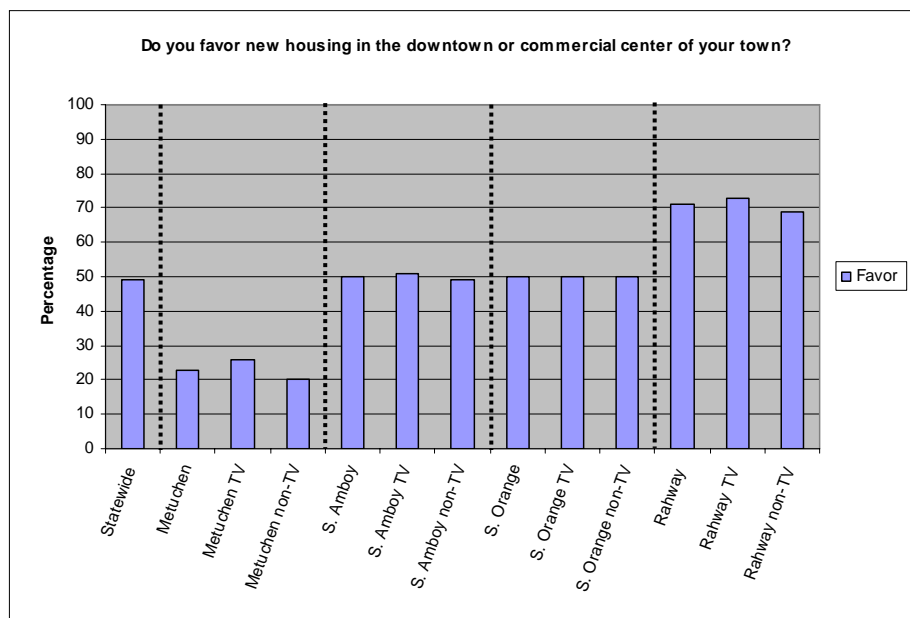
### **Cross-case analysis – Rahway, Metuchen, South Amboy, South Orange**

The following section compares results from all four of the TVs that have been surveyed. Opinions on the “smart growth” questions are also compared to the state poll results.

### *Development and Housing*

Figure 2 below shows that Rahway residents were much more likely to support new housing in the downtown commercial center of their town than those surveyed in Metuchen, South Orange and South Amboy, as well as those surveyed statewide.

**FIGURE 2: New Housing Support**



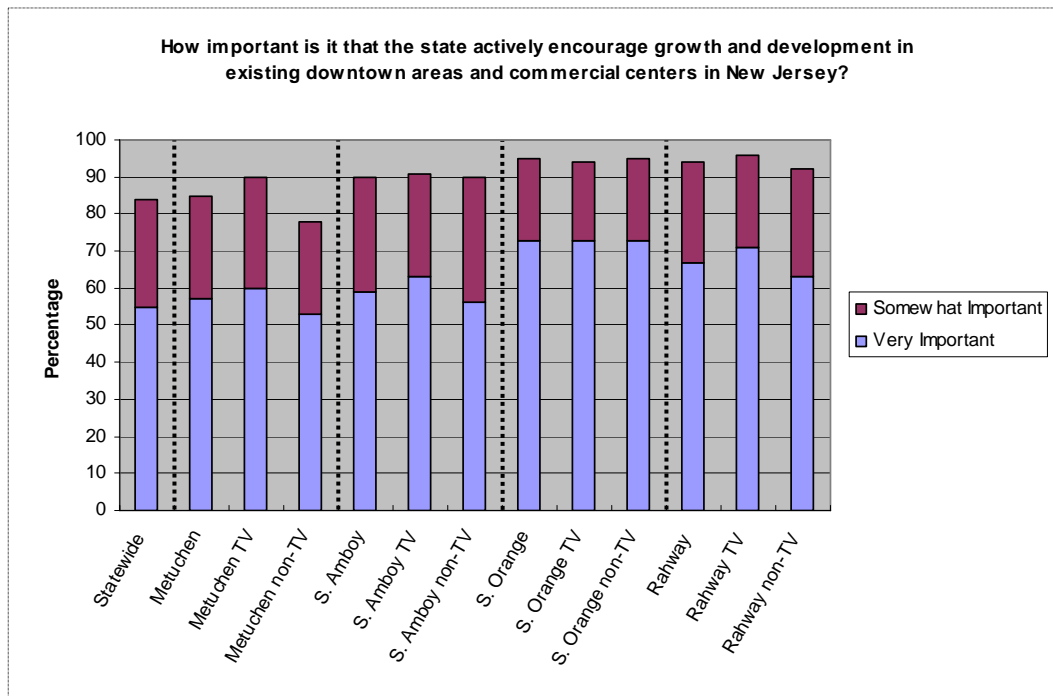
<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2005. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/hvs/qtr205/q205tab5.html>

Seventy-one percent (71%) of Rahway residents overall favor downtown housing, 73% within the Transit Village and 69% outside of the Transit Village. The 71% support rate in Rahway is compared to only 50% of residents supporting new housing in South Orange and South Amboy, only 23% in Metuchen and 49% statewide. This strong support may be reflective of the minority preferences just discussed and the fact that Rahway has the highest percentage of non-white residents surveyed.

In all four villages surveyed, residents living within the Transit Village supported downtown housing construction marginally more than residents outside the half-mile area, with the largest variation existing in Metuchen. Twenty-six percent (26%) of TV residents in Metuchen supported downtown housing construction, while only 20% of those outside of the Village were in favor of new housing in the commercial center.

Rahway residents responded similarly to the other Villages in supporting the state’s active role in encouraging downtown growth and development (Figure 3). More precisely, 67% of Rahway residents felt it was very important for the state to encourage downtown development while 27% felt it was somewhat important. Fifty-five percent (55%) of New Jersey respondents felt the state’s role was very important, with 29% arguing that state encouragement was only somewhat important. Overall, nearly 95% of Rahway residents were in favor of the state’s role in downtown development.

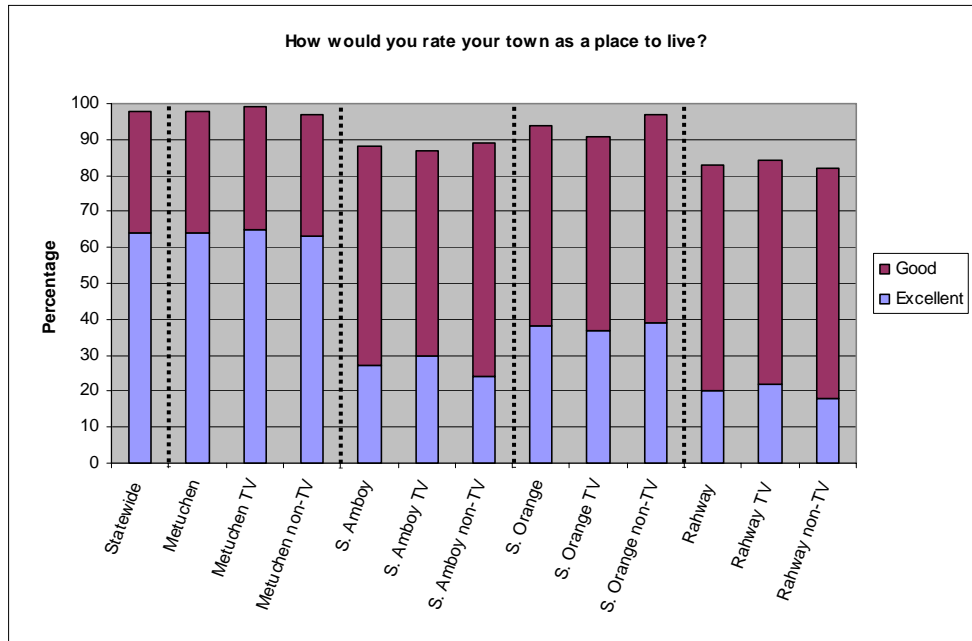
**FIGURE 3: State Role in Supporting Downtown Growth and Development**



*Community Perception*

While it is still too early to determine whether the Transit Village designation has improved Rahway as a place to live, early indications show that the half-mile area around the train station is precisely the area needing revitalization. In Figure 4 below, we see that Rahway residents rated their town lower than the other three villages *and* the statewide average.

**FIGURE 4: Town Rating**



Only 20% of residents felt their town was an “excellent” place to live, compared to the statewide average of 64% and Metuchen’s 65%. There is a very minor difference in all Villages between those within and outside the half-mile area around the train station.

**FIGURE 5: Neighborhood Rating**

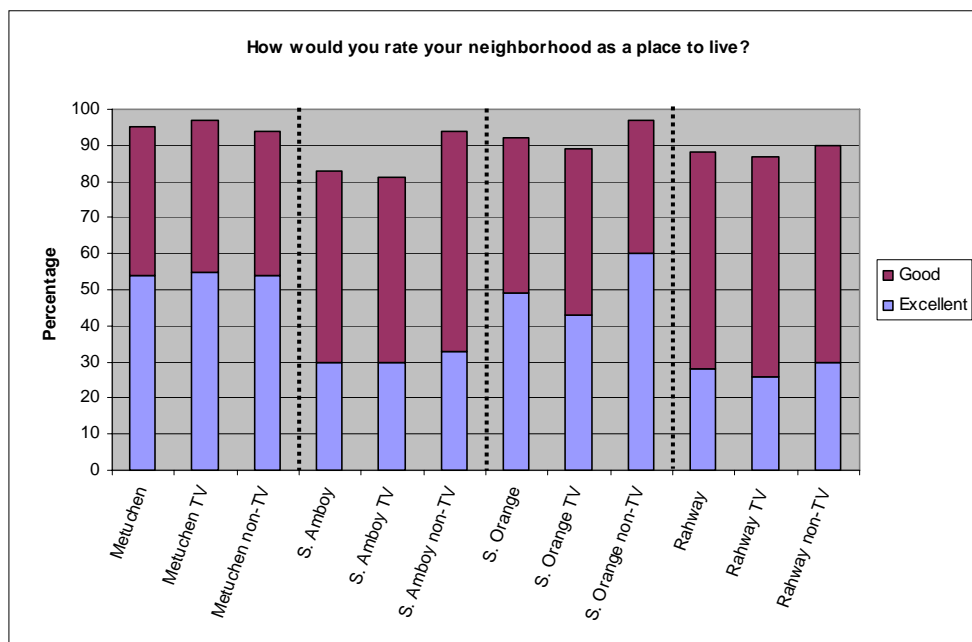
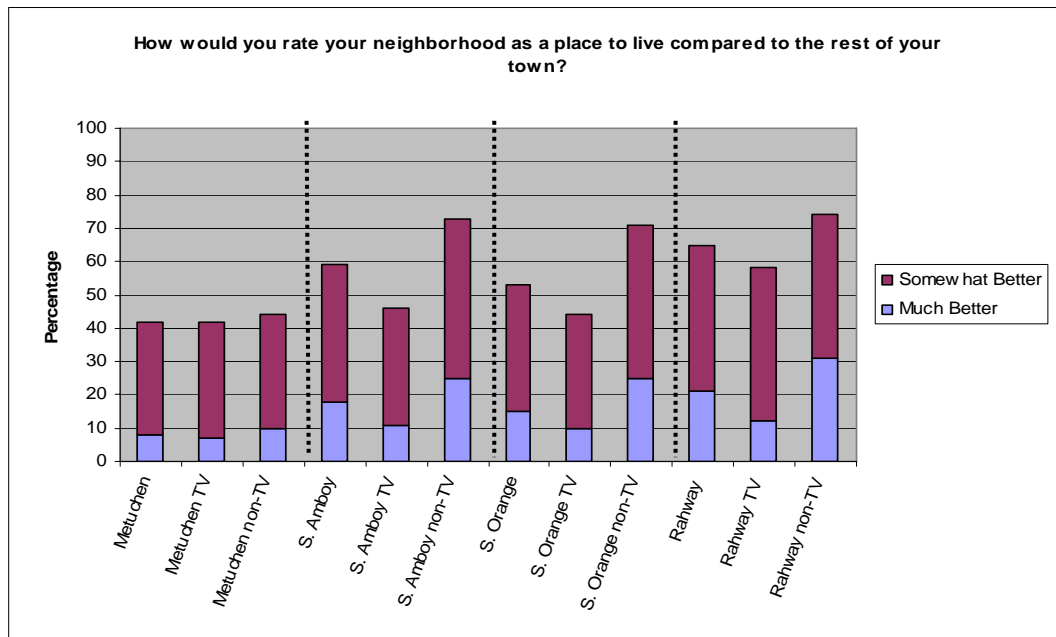


Figure 5 above shows how residents rated their own neighborhood. It is immediately clear that Rahway residents were the least likely to rate their neighborhood “excellent,” although the town had the highest portion of residents (60%) rate their neighborhood as a “good” place to live.

Perhaps one of the most interesting conclusions is that Rahway Transit Village residents are less likely to rate their *neighborhood* favorably than those living outside the half-mile radius. These same Transit Village residents also rated their overall *town* better than those living outside the half-mile radius. In other words, those living inside the Village are more likely to rate the area *outside* the Village area better than their own neighborhood *inside* the Transit Village area. This relationship becomes clearer in Figure 6 below.

**FIGURE 6: Neighborhood Comparison**



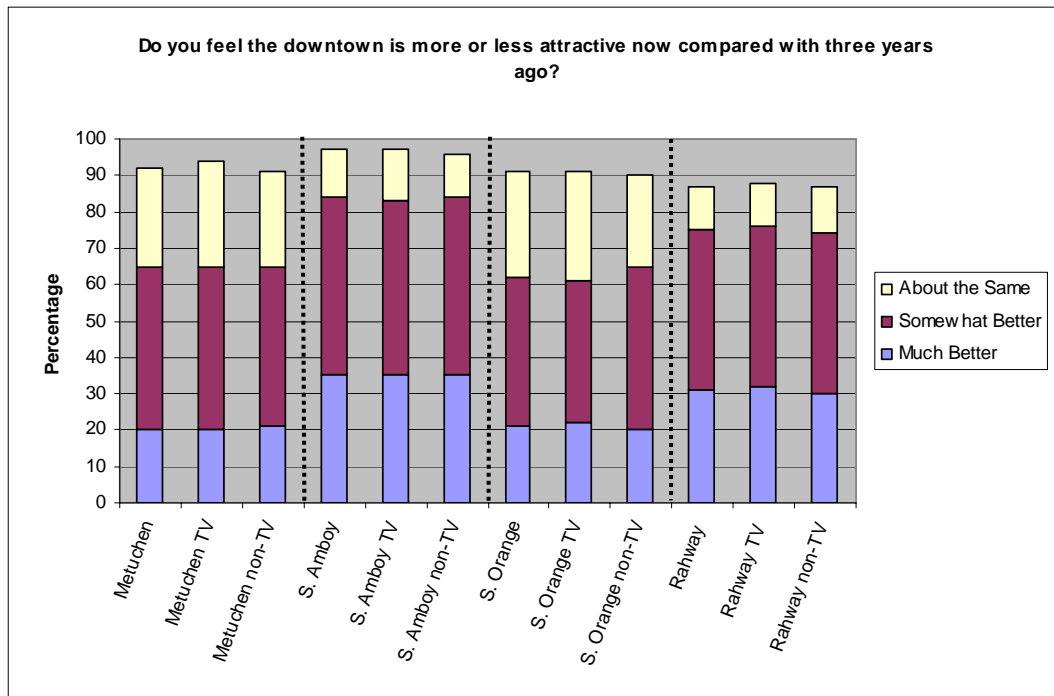
Rahway residents living outside of the TV felt similarly to their counterparts in the other Villages, as all rated their neighborhood as a better place to live than those living within the Transit Village area. This difference is quite pronounced in South Amboy, South Orange and Rahway. In the South Amboy non-TV area, 73% of residents rated their neighborhood as a better place to live than the rest of town, with only 46% saying the same inside the TV. In South Orange, 71% of non-Transit Village residents said their neighborhood was somewhat better or much better than the rest of town, while only 44% of TV residents said the same. Finally, 74% of Rahway non-Transit Village residents rated their neighborhood better than others, while only 58% of Transit Village residents felt that their neighborhood was better than the rest of town.

Interestingly, Rahway had the highest percentage (12%) of Transit Village residents who felt their neighborhood was *much better* than the rest of town. In all the Villages surveyed, fewer residents living within the half-mile radius of the station felt their neighborhood was better than others in their town, which demonstrates a desire for downtown improvement in these areas. Several Villages have undertaken improvement projects in their downtown/commercial centers since they were designated a Transit Village. The following

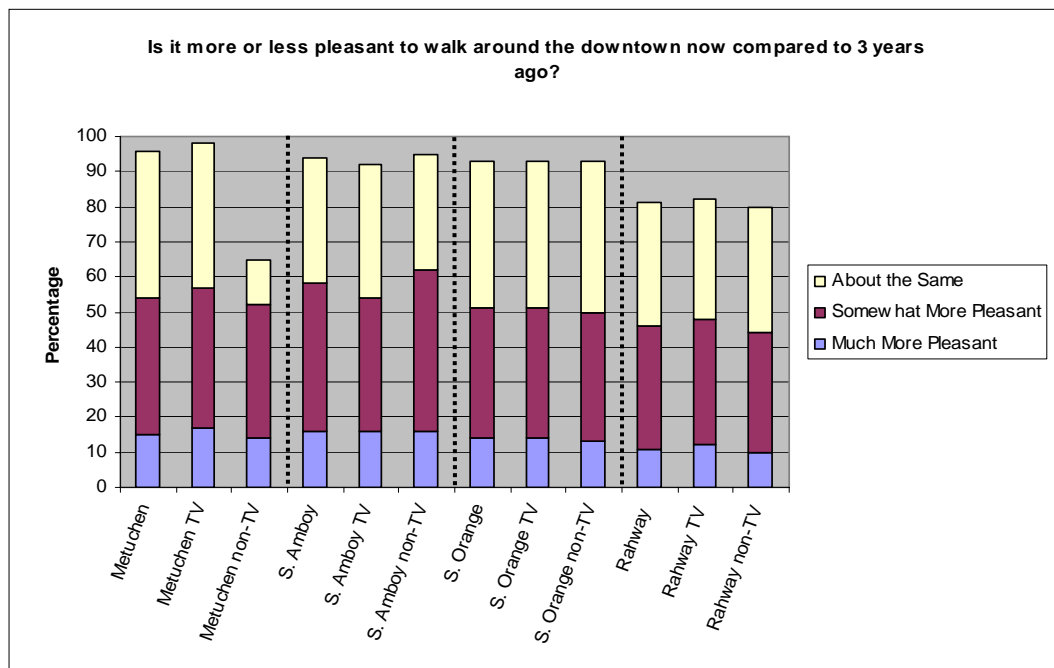
questions attempt to gauge actual downtown improvement over the past three years in terms of several different categories.

Figures 7-12 depict how residents in the four Transit Villages feel their town has changed over the past three years with respect to overall downtown attractiveness, walkability, safety, shopping, and restaurant and entertainment options.

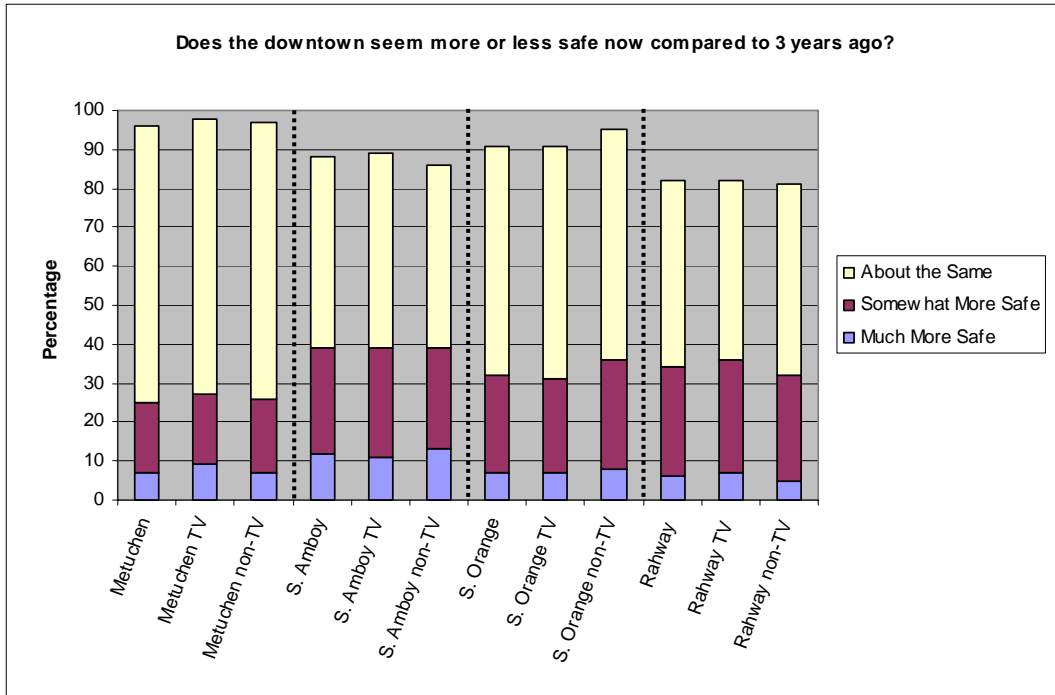
**FIGURE 7: Downtown Attractiveness**



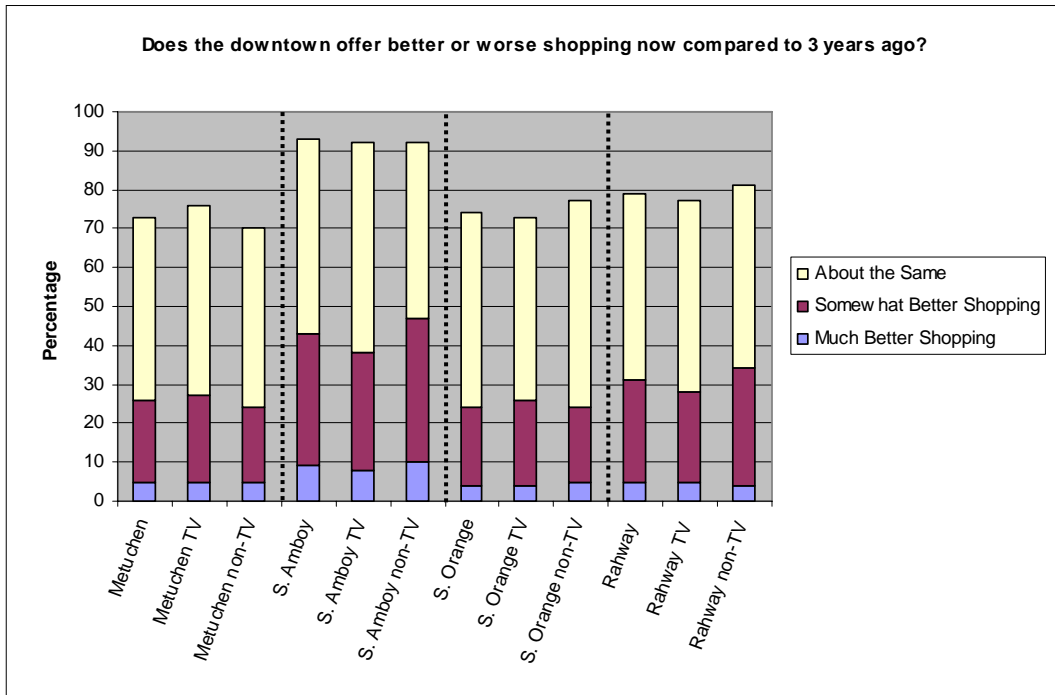
**FIGURE 8: Downtown Walkability**



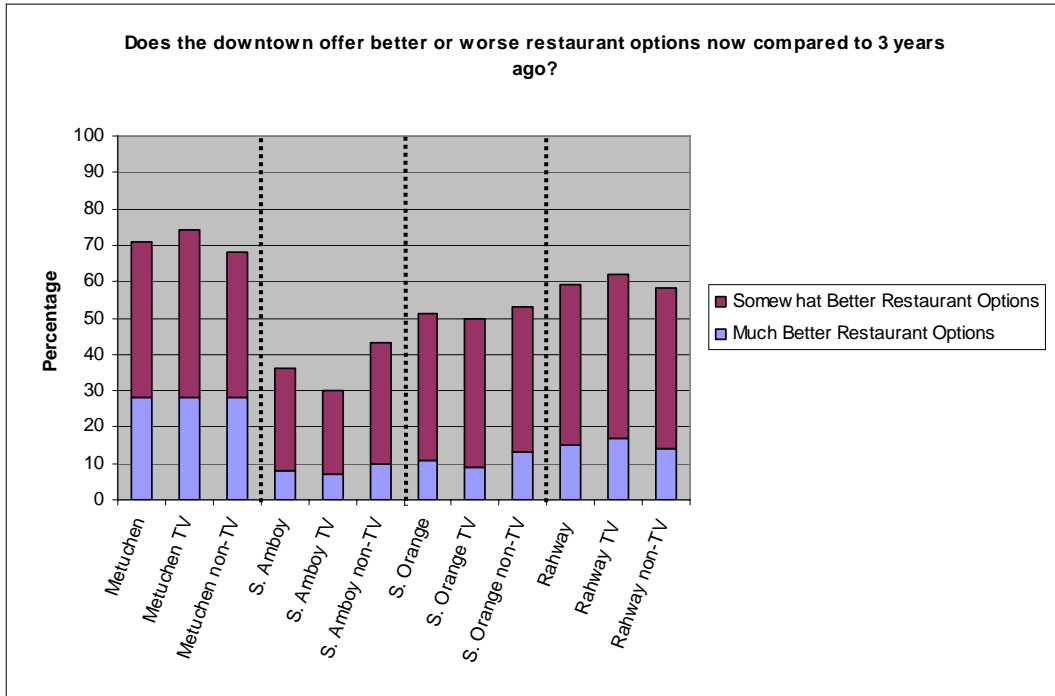
**FIGURE 9: Downtown Safety**



**FIGURE 10: Downtown Shopping**



**FIGURE 11: Downtown Restaurants**



**FIGURE 12: Downtown Entertainment**

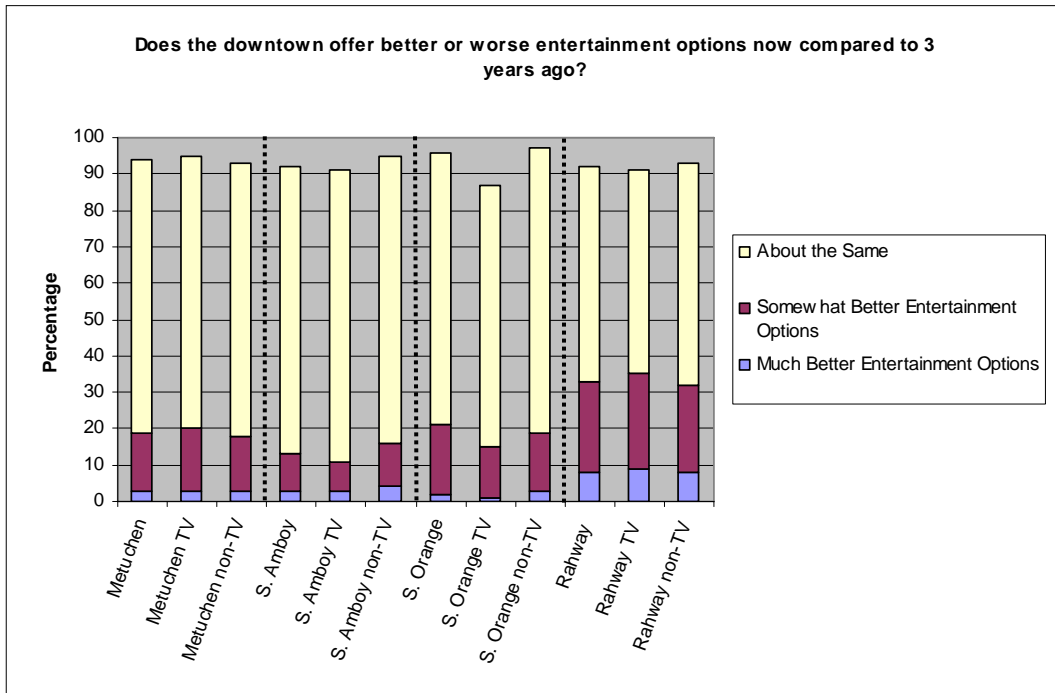


Figure 7 shows that 75% of residents feel that the downtown area is more attractive than it was three years ago. Only South Amboy had a higher percentage (84%) of residents with the same opinion on downtown attractiveness.

However, in terms of downtown walkability, Figure 8 demonstrates that Rahway residents were the least likely of all surveyed towns to say their downtown was much more pleasant to walk around than it was three years ago (11%), compared to 14%, 15% and 16% for South Orange, Metuchen and South Amboy, respectively.

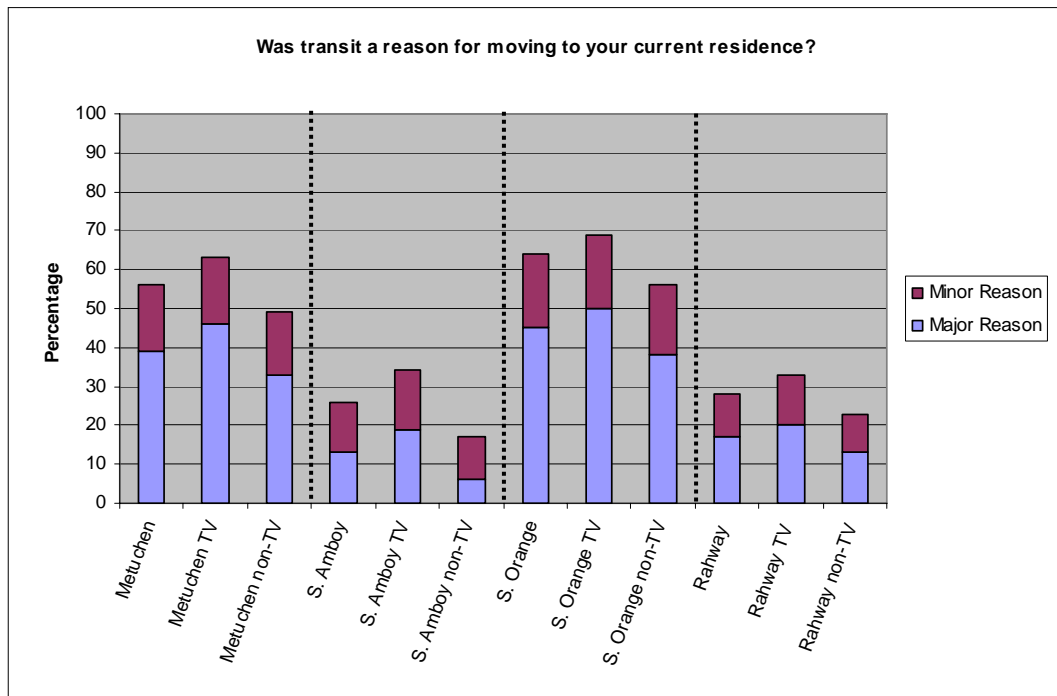
Figure 12 illustrates the 33% of Rahway residents, both inside *and* outside the Transit Village area, felt that entertainment options had improved while only 21%, 19% and 13% in South Orange, Metuchen and South Amboy felt similarly. This is most likely due to the predominance of the Union County Arts Center (UCAC) located just blocks from the train station in the downtown area. The Center has experienced substantial renovations and improvements in recent years and has a relatively higher profile than the more conventional entertainment options in the other three villages.

The Transit Village program has a particular focus on downtown improvement. Compared to the other Villages, Rahway residents were the *least* likely of all towns to say that their town had improved in three different categories: downtown safety, walkability and general downtown attractiveness. However, press releases and interviews with town leaders indicate that Rahway has committed itself to improving all aspects of the downtown experience. Numerous residential and commercial improvements are either being planned or are already in the construction phase. Clearly, it would be worthwhile to ask these same questions of all Transit Village residents in two to three years or once the majority of proposed improvements have taken place.

#### *Importance of Transit and Vehicle Ownership*

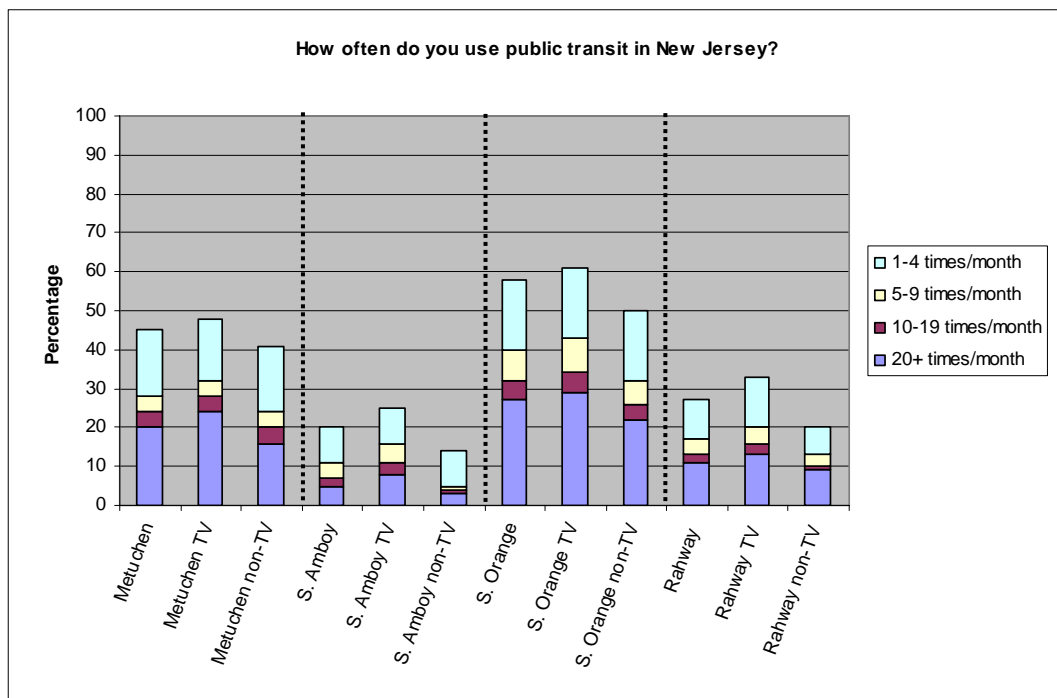
The surveys also attempted to measure the importance of transit when deciding on housing location. As shown in Figure 13, transit was a significant factor in why residents in all four towns chose their home location, especially for Metuchen and South Orange. Also, in all four Villages transit is a more significant reason for residents moving to homes *inside* the Transit Village area compared to those moving to areas *outside* of the half-mile radius.

**FIGURE 13: Importance of Transit when Choosing Home Location**



Two additional figures demonstrate the importance of public transit in each Village. First, Figure 14 depicts how often residents of each town use public transit.

**FIGURE 14: Public Transit Frequency**

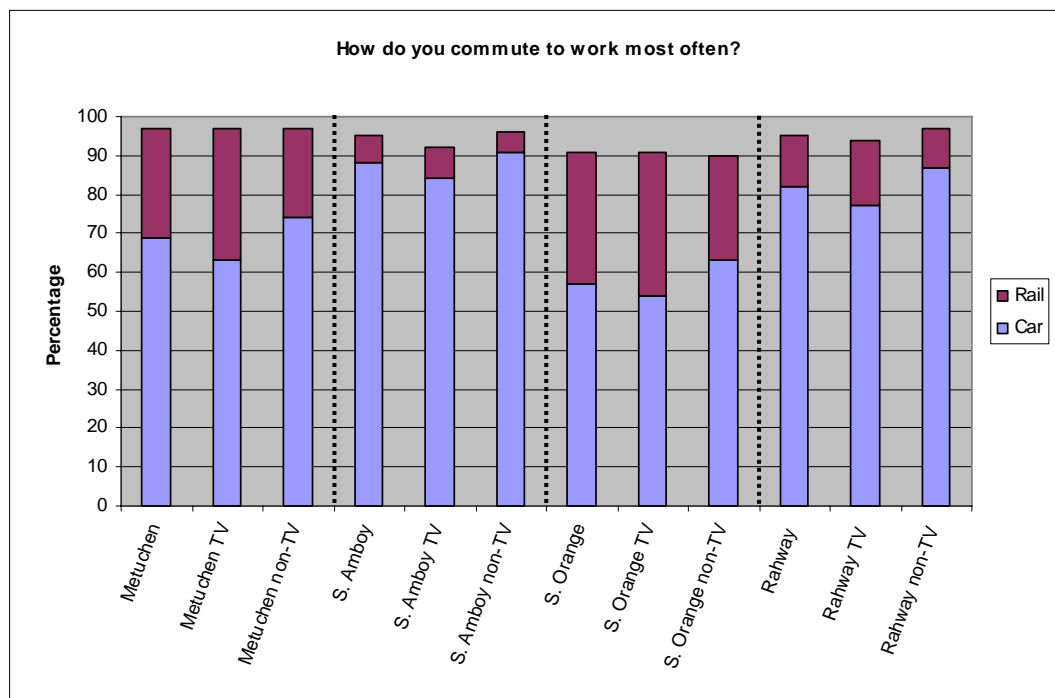


The figure portrays the varying levels of transit usage across Metuchen, South Amboy, South Orange and Rahway for households both inside and outside the Transit Village area. Transit ridership is most frequent in the Transit Village area of South Orange, with Metuchen finishing a fairly distant second. The findings also indicate slightly more transit ridership for residents closer to the station in all four towns.

Rahway shows the largest discrepancy of transit usage between those living inside and outside of the half-mile radius around the station. While 33% of Transit Village residents use public transit *at least* once a month, only 20% of those living outside Rahway's Transit Village area use transit once a month or more. Additionally, heavy users (more than 20 public transit trips per month) make up 13% of those surveyed inside the Transit Village while heavy users make up only 9% of residents outside the half-mile radius.

Figure 15 below shows the modal split between rail and car trips only.

**FIGURE 15: Commute Mode**



Rail ridership of residents in all towns is higher for those living in the TV versus outside the TV. Metuchen shows the largest difference in this regard. Rahway and South Amboy have the lowest percentage of residents riding the train. Several other variables might be playing a role in this discrepancy, including vehicle ownership, distance to work and parking availability at each station. Table 4 deals with the first of these issues (vehicle ownership), while Figure 17 shows distance to work data.

TABLE 4: Vehicle Ownership	
Location	Average Number of Vehicles per Household
Metuchen TV	1.92
Metuchen Non-TV	2.12
South Amboy TV	1.81
South Amboy Non-TV	2.16
South Orange TV	1.67
South Orange Non-TV	2.10
Rahway TV	1.89
Rahway Non-TV	2.03

Table 4 shows that the average vehicle ownership for households outside of the Transit Village area range from 2.03 to 2.16 vehicles per household, while inside the Transit Village average vehicle ownership drops: 1.67 to 1.92 cars per household. Still, these TV levels represent almost two cars per household, much greater than more urban, compact communities such as Hoboken where the number of vehicles per household is well under one.<sup>6</sup>

**FIGURE 16: Distance from Home to Work**

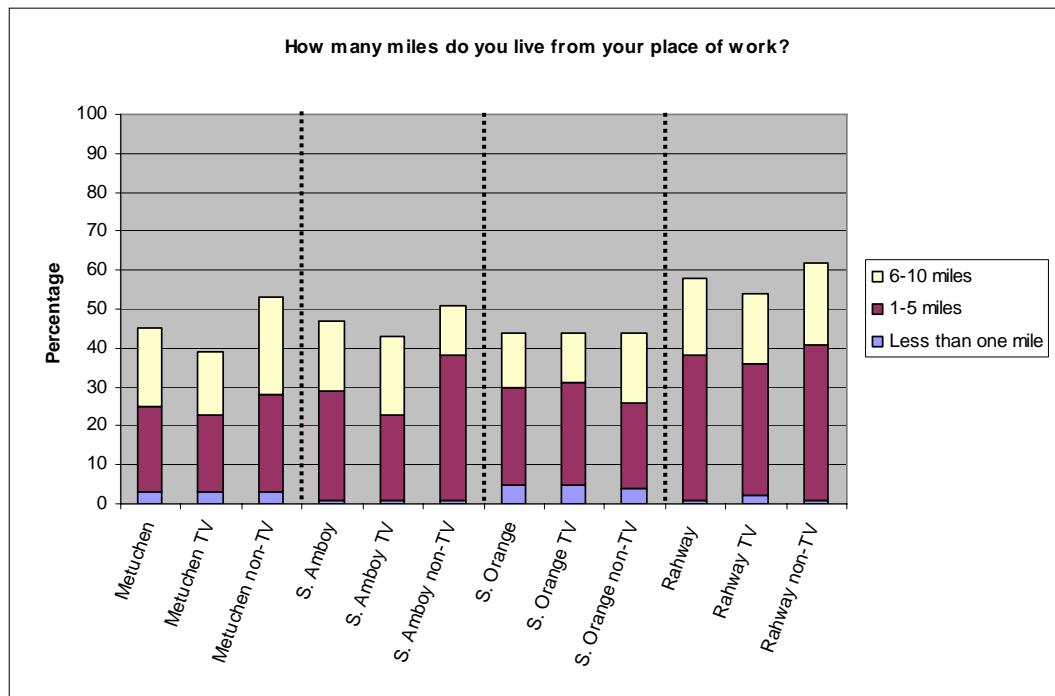


Figure 16 shows that Rahway residents are more likely than any other town’s residents to live within five miles of their work (38% of residents, compared to 30% in South Orange, 29% in South Amboy and 25% in Metuchen). Additionally, in all Villages except South

<sup>6</sup> Census 2000.

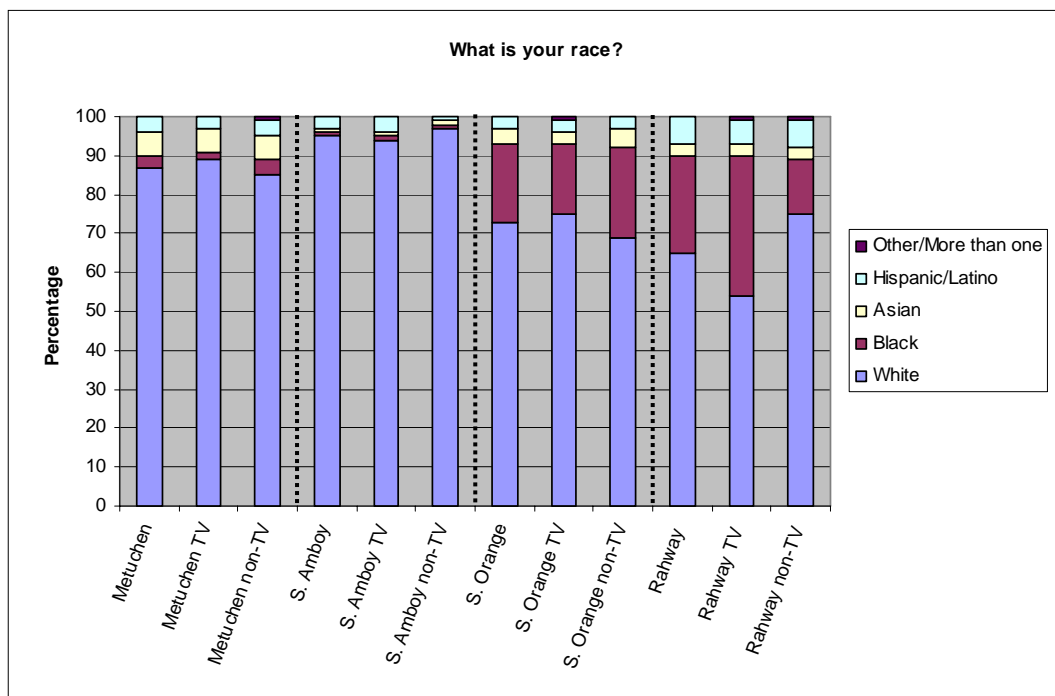
Orange, residents of the TV area are significantly more likely to commute shorter distances than those living outside the Transit Village area. Rahway has the lowest percentage of residents commuting more than ten miles at 42%, compared to 55-57% in the other Villages.

This last statistic should help explain some of the reason for the lower levels of transit usage in Rahway. If nearly 60% of residents are commuting less than ten miles to work, the use of a private vehicle is less daunting or *inconvenient* than a longer trip into Manhattan or south to Trenton. For example, even if the Rahway commuter encounters heavy morning/afternoon traffic, his or her relatively short (10 miles or less) trip will probably take about 20-30 minutes. This process would most probably take a significantly shorter amount of time than would be spent waiting for a train, riding it to a work destination, and walking from the end station to the place of business.

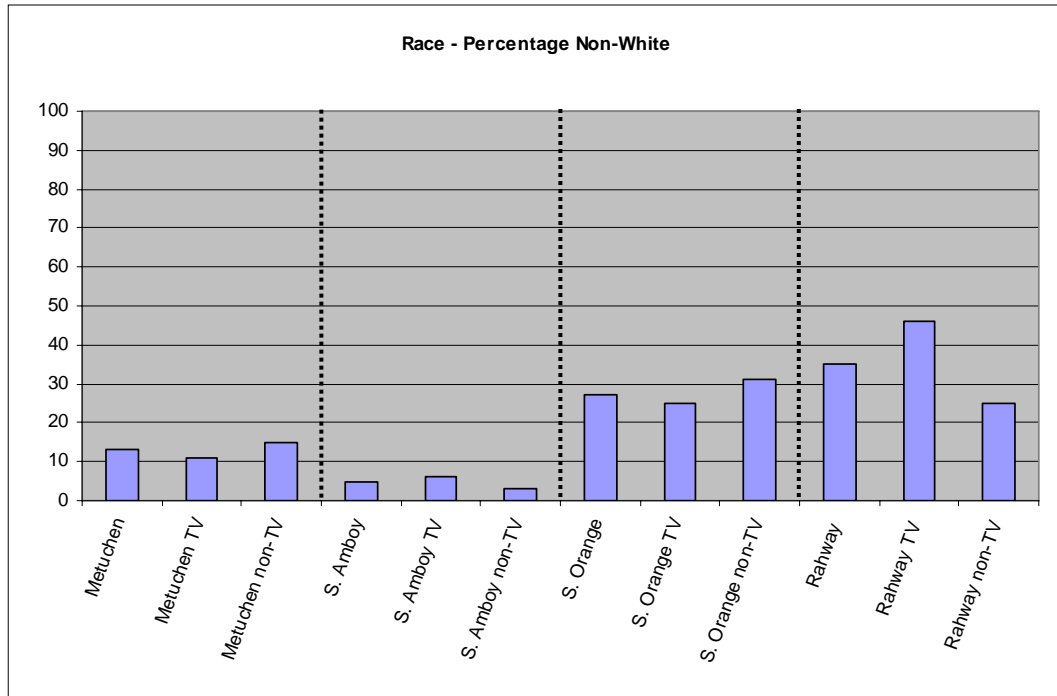
*Housing Characteristics*

Rahway and South Orange represent the most racial and ethnic diversity in responses (shown in Figure 17). The non-white percentage in the TV (Figure 18) is highest in Rahway.

**FIGURE 17: Racial Profile of Transit Villages**

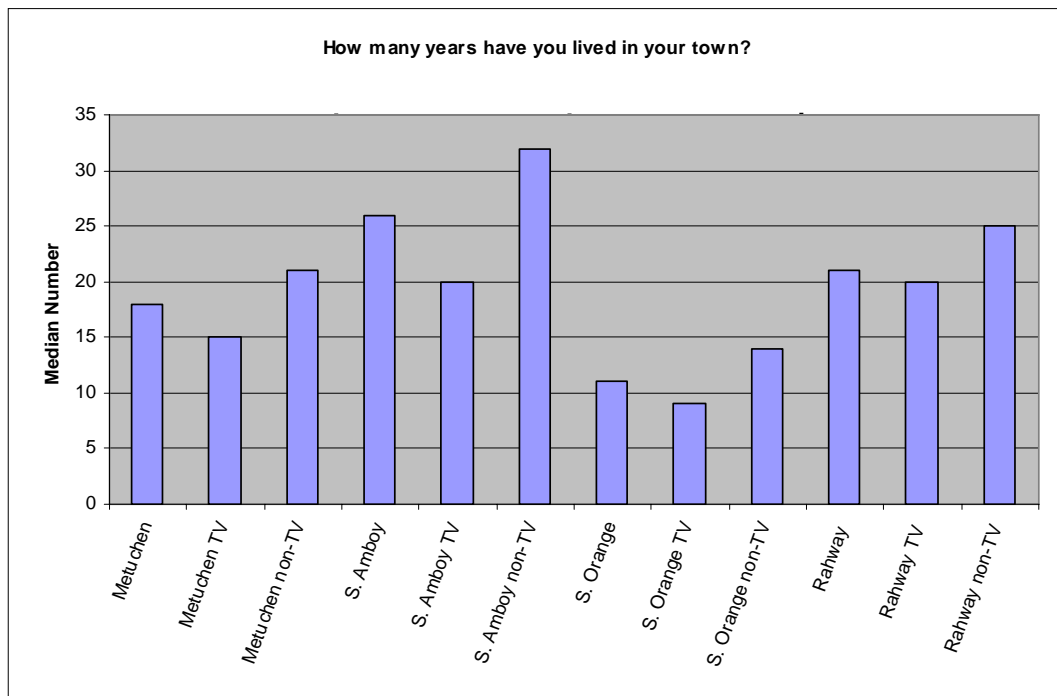


**FIGURE 18: Non-White Residents**

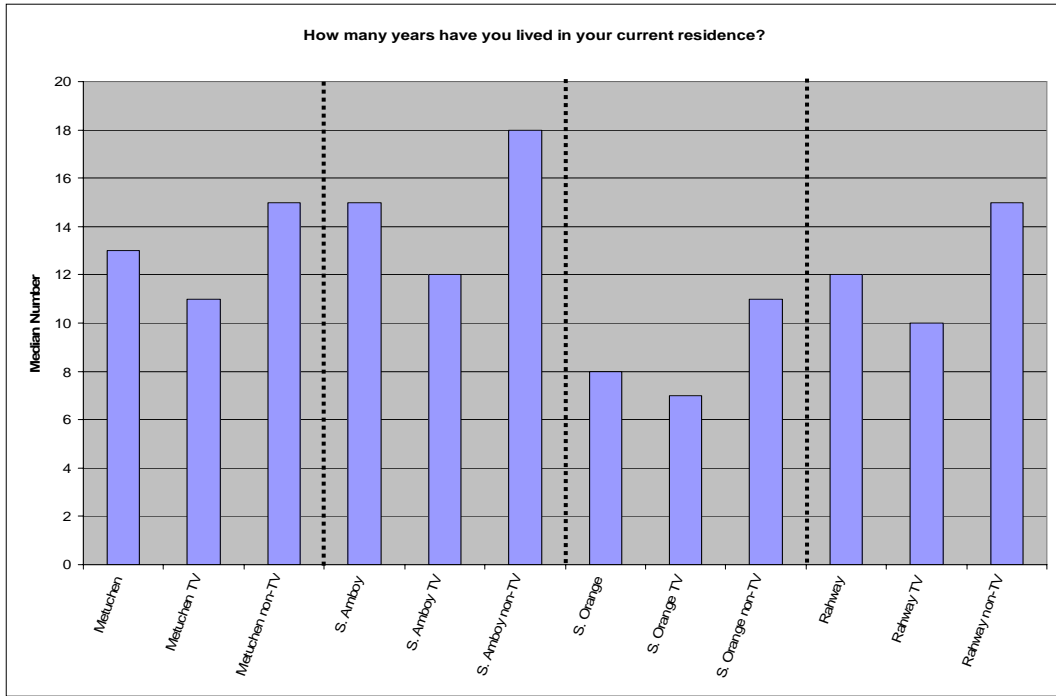


In terms of housing tenure, all four Villages reflect the same pattern. Figures 19 and 20 demonstrate that those living inside the Transit Village live for fewer years in the same town in general, and the same home in particular.

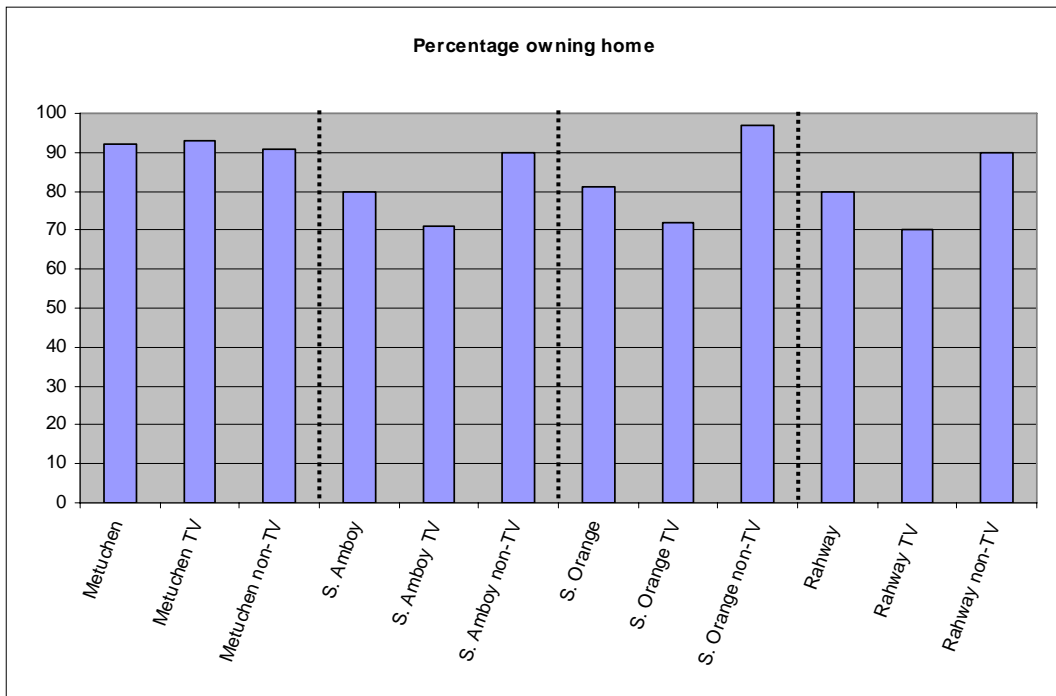
**FIGURE 19: Years in Same Town**



**FIGURE 20: Years in Same Residence**



**FIGURE 21: Percentage Owning Home**



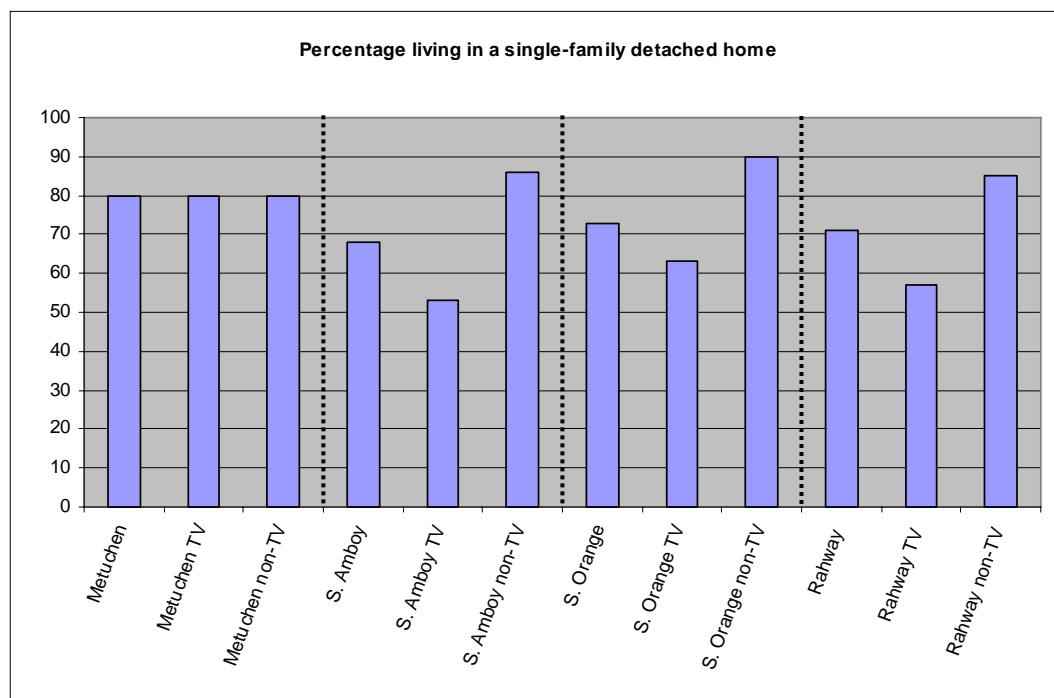
**FIGURE 22: Single-Family Detached Home**

Figure 21 illustrates a high homeownership rate of respondents across all Villages. In Metuchen, the TV homeownership rate (90+%) slightly exceeds that of the non-TV area, whereas in South Amboy, South Orange and Rahway the rate in the TV is considerably lower than that level outside the TV. However, all three have homeownership rates at around 70% which is above the national level of 69%. The high levels are probably indicative of homeowners being more stable and responsive to filling out the questionnaire. Likewise the number of respondents living in a single-family detached home is also relatively high (70–80%), although the percentage drops in the TV areas of South Amboy, South Orange and Rahway. But, even there, the share is over 50%.

### Conclusion

Residents of Transit Villages perceive the change in their towns based on a variety of factors: economic status of the town, race and ethnicity, transit service and job location, and how much has been accomplished in improvements. It also appears that homeowners tend to answer the survey more than renters.

In general, communities that are designated Transit Villages support smart growth and encourage housing in the downtown area. This is especially true of Transit Village area residents and non-whites. They rate their towns highly as a place to live but those within the Transit Village are less favorably inclined about their neighborhoods. As a result of improvements being made, they find their town more attractive, walkable and with a better choice of restaurants. However, increases in safety, shopping, and entertainment levels still fall short.