

Future Land Use Framework

Overview

Maine's Growth Management Act calls for comprehensive plans to identify growth areas where the community intends to direct most future development and related public investment, as well as rural or non-growth areas where intensive development is not encouraged. Transition areas provide an intermediate area between growth and non-growth areas to allow for a transition between the City's most dense areas and rural areas. Non-growth areas are areas that should see the least amount of growth over the next decade. These are not zero-growth areas. Instead, these are areas that should see the lowest levels of change and development.¹

Recent state housing legislation further connects comprehensive plan growth areas and infrastructure availability to local residential density standards. LD 1829², as amended by LD 2173³, generally requires municipalities to allow greater housing density and smaller minimum lot size requirements in designated growth areas and in locations served by public or centrally managed water and sewer systems.

The resulting standards vary by context:

- Growth areas served by water and sewer are subject to the smallest maximum minimum lot size (four units on 5,000 square foot lots)
- Non-growth and transition areas with both water and sewer must allow for slightly larger lots than growth areas (one unit on 10,000 square foot lot, or two connected units on a 20,000 square foot lot)
- Areas without water and sewer remain subject to State's subsurface wastewater requirements. These laws reinforce the importance of aligning Sanford's future land use designations with infrastructure capacity, while recognizing that implementation will occur through subsequent updates to the City's land use ordinances.

Sanford's future land use framework applies this direction through growth, transition, and non-growth areas that reflect the City's desired long-term development pattern.

Within this framework, land use categories describe the intended form and function of different parts of the City. Each category provides general direction for typical uses, development intensity,

¹ Maine Growth Management Act, 30-A M.R.S. §§ 4312–4326, which establishes state goals and requirements for municipal comprehensive planning and growth management.
<https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/30-a/title30-Ach187sec0.html>

² LD 1829, *An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses by Amending the Laws Governing Housing Density*.
<https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP1224&item=3&snum=132>

³ LD 2173, *An Act to Update the Laws Regarding Housing Developments and Accessory Dwelling Units*.
<https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP1461&item=5&snum=132>

physical form, and public and private realm relationships. Land Use Categories are not a restatement of existing conditions, but instead create a vision for what these areas could and should be like in the future.

The categories are broader than zoning districts and are intended to guide future policy, investment, and regulatory updates. They do not change the zoning of any property or establish parcel-specific development rights. Multiple zoning districts may be consistent with a single land use category and, in the future, there may be multiple zoning districts created within one land use category, so long as they advance the overall intent and direction of the land use category. Future zoning and ordinance amendments will require separate public review and adoption processes.

Collectively, these categories establish a growth pattern that directs the majority of future housing, commercial activity, and redevelopment toward Downtown Sanford and Springvale, mixed-use corridors, and industrial areas while preserving Sanford's rural landscapes, natural resources, and community character. The framework supports housing choice, economic development, walkability, transportation connectivity, and strategic reinvestment, while helping ensure that future growth occurs in locations where public infrastructure can be efficiently utilized and expanded. This approach reflects the community's desire to accommodate change and opportunity while maintaining the qualities that make Sanford a unique place to live, work, and visit.

Protecting Natural Resources

The Future Land Use Map establishes Sanford's desired long-term development pattern, but it must be interpreted together with natural resource information that applies across land use category boundaries. Shoreland zoning districts, mapped flood hazard areas, wetlands and surface waters, drinking water resources, and other applicable regulatory or environmental constraints will overlay the Future Land Use Map. In the future, these resources may limit the location, intensity, or design of development otherwise anticipated by a land use category. Beginning with Habitat maps and data, including high-value plant and animal habitats, undeveloped habitat blocks, habitat areas, wetlands, and other resources should also inform planning, development review, conservation priorities, and infrastructure decisions. These overlays do not create separate future land use categories; rather, they identify places where development should avoid or minimize impacts, incorporate buffers, preserve ecological connections, and comply with applicable shoreland zoning, floodplain management, and environmental protection requirements. The City should update and apply these resource layers as more current information becomes available so that growth and conservation decisions protect public safety, water quality, habitat, and other critical natural resources.

Land Use Categories

The framework below includes the following land use categories and growth areas.

Growth Areas	Transition Areas	Non-Growth Areas
- Downtown Sanford and Springvale - Mixed-Use Corridors - Industrial	Transitional Neighborhood	Rural Areas

Table 1, below, organizes the future land use categories by growth areas, transition areas, and non-growth areas. Each grouping begins with an overview of its intended role in Sanford's future growth pattern and the rationale for that designation. The table then provides more specific direction for each land use category, including its intended character, typical land uses, density and form, and relationship between the public and private realms. A category-specific rationale explains how each designation responds to community feedback, existing conditions, and Steering Committee discussions conducted during the planning process.

Table 1: Future Land Use Growth Areas and Land Use Categories

Future Land Use Categories
Growth Areas
Downtown Sanford and Springvale, Mixed-Use Corridors, and Industrial areas are designated as growth areas because they contain established centers of activity, concentrations of homes and businesses, public water and sewer service, transportation connections, and sites suited to infill, redevelopment, and employment growth. Directing a substantial share of future development to these locations supports housing choice, economic development, walkability, adaptive reuse, and more efficient use of existing infrastructure and municipal services. The designation also helps focus public and private investment in areas where growth can reinforce established centers, improve transportation and public spaces, and limit development pressure on rural lands and critical natural resources. Designation as a growth area also positions these locations for state growth-related capital investment and may provide preferred status or strengthen competitiveness under certain state grant programs when Sanford maintains a comprehensive plan that is consistent with Maine's Growth Management Act. These opportunities can support housing, water and sewer infrastructure, transportation, parks and recreation, placemaking, downtown revitalization, and economic development initiatives. Funding eligibility will continue to depend on the requirements of each program, but identifying these areas establishes a clear policy basis for coordinating future public investment, pursuing grants, and partnering with property owners, businesses, housing developers, and community organizations. Building Blocks of this Growth Area: - Areas served by water and sewer infrastructure - Areas with existing grids of streets and strong transportation networks - Areas with existing businesses that could support growth or expansion - Areas that can support a variety of housing

Future Land Use Categories	
Areas with small lot sizes near amenities	
Land Use Category: Downtown Sanford and Springvale	
Introduction	Downtown Sanford and Springvale are vibrant, walkable centers that build on their historic development patterns, distinctive buildings, and established roles as community gathering places. These areas support a mix of small businesses, restaurants, services, civic and cultural destinations, employment opportunities, and homes that bring activity throughout the day and evening. New investment should complement the scale and character of the existing downtown cores while strengthening connections among buildings, sidewalks, public spaces, neighborhoods, and nearby community assets. Adaptive reuse should play a central role in revitalization, including reinvigorating historic mills and other older or underused buildings with active uses such as housing, businesses, workplaces, arts and cultural spaces, and community-serving facilities. Together, strategic redevelopment, compatible infill, and public realm improvements should reinforce Downtown Sanford and Springvale as welcoming destinations and enduring centers of community and economic activity.
Typical Land Uses	- Residential and mixed-use development - Commercial, office, lodging, health care, small business, and other employment uses - Civic, institutional, cultural, and community-serving uses - Parks, recreation, open spaces, and other public gathering places
Density and Form	The highest residential and employment densities should be concentrated in Downtown Sanford and Springvale. Development should create a continuous and engaging streetscape with buildings oriented toward sidewalks and public spaces. Ground-floor commercial, service, restaurant, entertainment, and civic uses should be encouraged along primary streets, while upper floors may accommodate housing, offices, lodging, or institutional uses. Public investments should prioritize streetscape enhancements, parks, public plazas, pedestrian connections, and multimodal transportation improvements. Multi-story development is encouraged, generally ranging from two to five stories, with greater heights appropriate where compatible with surrounding development.
Public-Private Realm	Buildings should frame streets and public spaces, creating active, human-scaled environments. Entrances, storefronts, outdoor dining, public gathering spaces, and transparent facades should contribute to an active streetscape. Parking should generally be located behind buildings, shared among uses, or integrated into the urban fabric in a manner that minimizes its impact on pedestrian activity.
Rationale	Community engagement consistently identified Downtown Sanford and Springvale as priorities for investment, revitalization, and reinvestment. Residents emphasized the importance of vibrant downtowns that provide local businesses, restaurants, services, housing options, and community gathering spaces. Participants also expressed a desire for walkable environments that strengthen community identity and serve as destinations for residents and visitors. This land use category designation directs growth and investment toward these established centers while supporting economic development and preserving Sanford's historic character.
Land Use Category: Mixed-Use Corridor	

Future Land Use Categories	
Introduction	Mixed-use corridors are connected, evolving places that accommodate future multifamily housing and commercial growth while improving the function and appearance of major travel routes. These areas should transition over time from primarily auto-oriented development patterns into more complete corridors that support homes, businesses, services, employment, and community destinations. New development, infill, and redevelopment should make efficient use of existing infrastructure and strengthen connections to Downtown Sanford and Springvale and South Sanford. Over time, these corridors create safer, more comfortable environments for people walking, bicycling, using transit, and driving.
Typical Land Uses	• Residential and mixed-use development • Commercial, office, health care, lodging, and employment uses • Institutional, recreational, and community-serving uses • Compatible production, maker, and artisan activities
Density and Form	Moderate- to higher-density development is appropriate, with the greatest intensity concentrated near existing activity centers (Downtown Sanford and Springvale and South Sanford), major intersections, transit connections, and areas served by public water and sewer. Buildings should generally range from two to four stories, with additional height appropriate where compatible with surrounding development. Infill and redevelopment should reduce large gaps between buildings, use land more efficiently, and provide transitions in scale and intensity near established neighborhoods.
Public-Private Realm	Buildings should be oriented toward streets, sidewalks, and internal pedestrian connections, with visible entrances and direct access from the public realm. Sites should include safe and connected facilities for walking, bicycling, transit access, and vehicle circulation. Trails provide opportunities for off-street connectivity for walkers and bikers. Parking should be located beside or behind buildings where practical, shared among compatible uses, and designed to limit expansive areas of pavement along the street. Landscaping, street trees, lighting, signs, and coordinated access management should improve corridor appearance, safety, and comfort while supporting adjoining properties and neighborhoods.
Rationale	Community feedback identified the need for additional housing, convenient access to goods and services, and continued economic development while improving transportation safety, traffic, and the appearance of major corridors. Existing conditions show that these areas already contain a mix of uses, access to public infrastructure, major roadway connections, and sites that may support infill or redevelopment. Steering Committee discussions supported development patterns that improve multimodal connections, reduce conflicts among uses, and create stronger transitions to nearby neighborhoods. This category provides policy direction for coordinated reinvestment and gradual transformation from auto-oriented to complete development areas.
Land Use Category: Industrial	
Introduction	Industrial areas are concentrated employment and production centers that support Sanford's economic base, provide locations for business growth, and capitalize on access to transportation infrastructure, utilities, and the Sanford Seacoast Regional Airport. These areas accommodate a broad range of industrial, manufacturing, logistics, aviation-related, and supporting commercial activities that may require larger sites, specialized facilities, truck access, or separation from residential neighborhoods. New

Future Land Use Categories	
	investment and redevelopment should make efficient use of existing infrastructure, retain land for employment-generating uses, and promote well-designed business environments that can adapt to changing technologies and market needs.
Typical Land Uses	• Industrial, manufacturing, production, and research activities • Warehousing, distribution, logistics, and aviation-related activities • Business parks, flex space, trades, and other employment uses • Commercial, institutional, utility, and renewable energy uses that support or are compatible with the area's employment function
Density and Form	Large buildings, flexible floor plates, outdoor work or storage areas, and multiple-building campuses may be appropriate. Site design should support future expansion, shared infrastructure, and efficient freight and employee access. Where industrial areas adjoin neighborhoods, rural lands, or sensitive natural resources, development should incorporate appropriate transitions, setbacks, screening, and buffering to protect adjacent uses.
Public-Private Realm	Sites should provide safe, efficient, and clearly defined access for freight vehicles, employees, visitors, and emergency services. Buildings and primary entrances should present a coordinated appearance along public streets, while loading areas, service functions, utilities, and outdoor storage should be located or screened to limit visual and operational impacts. Internal circulation, access management, landscaping, lighting, stormwater facilities, and pedestrian connections should support safe operations and a functional employment environment. Connections to sidewalks, trails, and transit should be provided where feasible, particularly in areas with higher employment concentrations. New development and redevelopment should evaluate environmental constraints and potential cumulative impacts, including effects on groundwater and drinking water supplies, surface waters and wetlands, wildlife habitat and ecological connectivity, air quality, noise, light, hazardous materials, and nearby sensitive uses. Site planning, operations, stormwater management, emissions controls, spill prevention, buffers, and other mitigation measures should avoid or minimize these impacts and protect public health and natural resources.
Rationale	Community feedback identified economic development, job creation, and a stronger local tax base as important priorities. Existing conditions show that Sanford has established industrial and business areas with access to major roads, utilities, employment centers, and the Sanford Seacoast Regional Airport, together with sites that can support reinvestment and business expansion. The City's Market Analysis sited Sanford's available industrial sites as an asset that can help attract and anchor new businesses in the City. This designation directs industrial growth to locations equipped to accommodate larger sites, freight movement, infrastructure demands, and potential impacts while promoting compatible transitions to nearby neighborhoods, rural areas, and natural resources.
Transition Area (Moderate Growth Area)	
Transitional Neighborhood areas serve as the transition between Sanford's higher-intensity growth areas and its rural neighborhoods and landscapes. These areas contain much of Sanford's established residential development and are generally served by public infrastructure, allowing for modest growth and development of additional housing. As a result of LD 1829 and 2173, areas with water and sewer infrastructure, will allow for increased density, including areas outside of growth areas; however they are not required to allow the same density as growth areas. Some areas in the Transition area have	

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access to both water and sewer, which will allow for increased housing density, while still providing a transition from Sanford's densest areas.

Community feedback highlighted the need for additional housing opportunities while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining the character, stability, and quality of existing neighborhoods.

As a Transition Area, Transitional Neighborhood areas are expected to accommodate moderate and context-sensitive growth. Development may include infill housing, redevelopment of underutilized sites, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, townhouses, and other compatible housing forms that expand housing choice. Growth should occur at a scale and intensity that complements existing neighborhoods, supports walkability and connectivity to the downtowns, and makes efficient use of existing infrastructure. Unlike designated growth areas, these neighborhoods are not intended to absorb the majority of Sanford's future growth but will play an important role in expanding housing opportunities and supporting complete neighborhoods.

Building Blocks of this Growth Area:

- Areas adjacent to growth areas
- Areas that provide a transition from the City's most dense areas to rural areas
- Areas some infrastructure today (served by water and sewer; served by water or sewer alone)

Land Use Category: Transitional Neighborhood

Introduction	Transitional Neighborhood areas are connected neighborhoods that provide a transition between Sanford's higher-intensity growth areas and its rural landscapes. These areas should retain and strengthen their established residential form while accommodating modest, context-sensitive housing growth. Infill development, redevelopment of underused sites, and a broader range of compatible housing types should expand housing choice, support residents at different life stages and income levels, and make efficient use of existing streets, utilities, schools, parks, and services. New developments reinforce neighborhood identity, improve connections to nearby downtowns and activity centers, and fit the scale and pattern of surrounding homes. Limited commercial uses, such as small cafés, markets, and home-based businesses, are located at street corners or other appropriate locations to create walkable neighborhood anchors and provide convenient services, while maintaining a concentration of business activity in Downtown Sanford and Springvale.
Typical Land Uses	• A range of detached, attached, and small multifamily and single-family housing • Residential care, supportive housing, and other compatible residential uses • Schools, child care, health care facilities, places of assembly, parks, recreation, and other community-serving uses • Home occupations and limited neighborhood-serving commercial uses where compatible with surrounding development
Density and Form	Low- to moderate-density residential development is appropriate, with incremental increases in density near downtowns, mixed-use corridors, schools, parks, transit, and locations served by public water and sewer. Building types may include detached, attached, and small multifamily forms. Lot size, setbacks, building placement, and massing should fit into the existing neighborhood pattern while allowing compatible infill and a wider range of housing choices. Larger sites should use connected streets, sidewalks, and open spaces to create neighborhood-scale development rather than isolated projects.

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Public-Private Realm	Homes and other buildings should relate to the street through visible entrances, front yards, porches, walkways, and windows that support an inviting neighborhood environment. Streets and sites should provide safe connections for walking, bicycling, and vehicle travel, with sidewalks, trails, street trees, lighting, and traffic-calming measures added where appropriate. Parking and garages should be located and designed to avoid dominating the streetscape, while shared open spaces, parks, and community facilities should be accessible from surrounding neighborhoods. New development and redevelopment should also respond to environmental constraints, including groundwater and drinking water protection, wetlands and surface waters, wildlife habitat, mature trees, steep slopes, drainage, and flood risk. Site design, stormwater management, landscaping, buffers, and limits on land disturbance should avoid or minimize impacts and protect neighborhood quality and natural resources.
Rationale	Housing affordability and availability emerged as significant community concerns. Residents supported expanding housing opportunities while directing the greatest densities to locations with infrastructure and access to services and maintaining the stability and character of established neighborhoods. Existing conditions show that these areas contain much of Sanford's housing, are generally served by public infrastructure, and provide access to downtowns, schools, parks, and other community destinations. Demographic shifts, including growth among younger adults and older residents, reinforce the need for housing types that serve varied household sizes, abilities, and life stages. Steering Committee discussions supported modest, context-sensitive infill and redevelopment that broaden housing choice without assigning these transition areas the same growth expectations as downtowns and mixed-use corridors.
Non-Growth Area	
Rural Areas are designated as low-growth areas because they contain many natural resources, working lands, open spaces, and rural landscapes that help define Sanford and contribute to its environmental health and quality of life. Community engagement outlined strong support for preserving farms, forests, natural resources, scenic views, and rural character while directing more intensive growth toward serviced areas of the City. As a non-growth area, these locations are not intended to accommodate a substantial share of Sanford's projected growth. Limited residential, commercial, or agricultural development may occur; however, future growth should be carefully managed to protect natural resources, maintain rural character, reduce fragmentation of agricultural, forested, and undeveloped land, and avoid inefficient expansion of public infrastructure and municipal services. Conservation, agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, and resource protection remain primary long-term objectives within these areas. Building Blocks of this Growth Area: • Areas that are rural in nature • Areas with large blocks of undeveloped habitat and other natural resources • Areas without existing water and sewer infrastructure • Areas that are not served by an existing grid of streets or along connected transportation routes	
Land Use Category: Rural Residential	
Introduction	Rural Areas are places with working and natural landscapes where farms, forests, open spaces, water resources, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and rural residential development are located. These areas should support agriculture, forestry, resource-based businesses, and opportunities for low-density rural living, including new homes

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	and accessory dwelling units on appropriately located and designed lots. Cluster developments may be appropriate to conserve larger blocks of undeveloped habitat. Rural residential development should follow established rural patterns, respond to available road and utility capacity, and protect groundwater, working lands, habitat, scenic views, and other natural resources. Existing structures should be reused where practical, and new development should maintain the rural landscape and provide appropriate access to natural and recreational resources.
Typical Land Uses	• Agriculture, forestry, and other resource-based activities • Low-density and clustered residential development • Conservation, outdoor recreation, and natural resource protection • Small-scale rural businesses, home occupations, and visitor-serving uses compatible with the rural setting • Community facilities, utilities, and other uses that require or are appropriate for rural locations
Density and Form	Development should remain low density and follow rural land use patterns, with building locations and lot configurations that conserve contiguous agricultural, forested, and undeveloped land. New lots and structures should be located near existing roads and development where practical, use shared or clustered access where appropriate, and avoid linear development that fragments working lands or natural areas. Building scale, setbacks, and site design should reflect the surrounding rural context. Cluster subdivision or similar approaches may be used to concentrate limited development while permanently protecting significant open space and natural resources.
Public-Private Realm	Roads, driveways, buildings, parking, utilities, and outdoor activity areas should be designed to retain rural views, vegetation, and the visual character of the landscape. Private development should reinforce the rural public realm by maintaining natural edges along roads, preserving views across farms and forests, and providing compatible connections to public trails, recreation areas, water access, and conserved lands where appropriate. Buildings, parking, signs, lighting, and service areas should be set back, screened, and scaled to avoid dominating shared rural spaces or neighboring properties. Public investments should prioritize resource protection, road safety, recreation access, and the continued viability of working lands rather than extending urban infrastructure that could induce more intensive growth.
Rationale	Community feedback supported accommodating future growth while maintaining Sanford's rural character, open spaces, farms, forests, recreational resources, and scenic landscapes. Existing conditions show that these areas contain significant natural resources and agricultural and forested lands, often lack public water and sewer service, and are less suited to intensive development because of infrastructure limitations, environmental constraints, and distance from services. Steering Committee discussions supported directing most growth to the City's dense areas while allowing compatible rural housing, agriculture, forestry, recreation, and agricultural enterprises. The Rural Areas designation helps limit fragmentation, preserve and support farming operations, avoid inefficient extensions of public infrastructure and municipal services, and sustain the environmental, economic, and community benefits of Sanford's rural landscape.

City of Sanford, ME Comprehensive Plan

June QOTM Survey Results

Draft



Submitted By:

Berry, Dunn, McNeil & Parker, LLC
2211 Congress Street, Portland, ME 04102
207.541.2200

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1.0 Questions of the Month (QOTM)

Below are the options that respondents voted on for where in Sanford Springvale they would like to see different types of development take place.

1. Businesses in larger buildings
2. Businesses in smaller buildings
3. Mixed-use buildings (commercial ground floor, residential upper floors)
4. Multi-family homes (more than four units)
5. Detached single-family homes
6. Attached single-family homes (townhomes)
7. Two-family homes
8. Three- and four-family homes
9. Homes on small lots
10. Homes on medium-sized lots
11. Homes on large lots

The locations respondents chose from are included below:

Areas in Sanford Springvale
Downtown Sanford
Downtown Springvale
Rural and suburban neighborhoods throughout Sanford
Industrial and commercial areas in South Sanford (Main Street and Airport areas)
Agricultural areas in northern Sanford/Springvale
Nowhere in Sanford
Anywhere in Sanford
Other (please specify)

2.0 Survey Responses

Below are the survey responses to the June QOTM. In total, there were 96 participants that voted on the questions.

Figure 2.1: Businesses in larger buildings

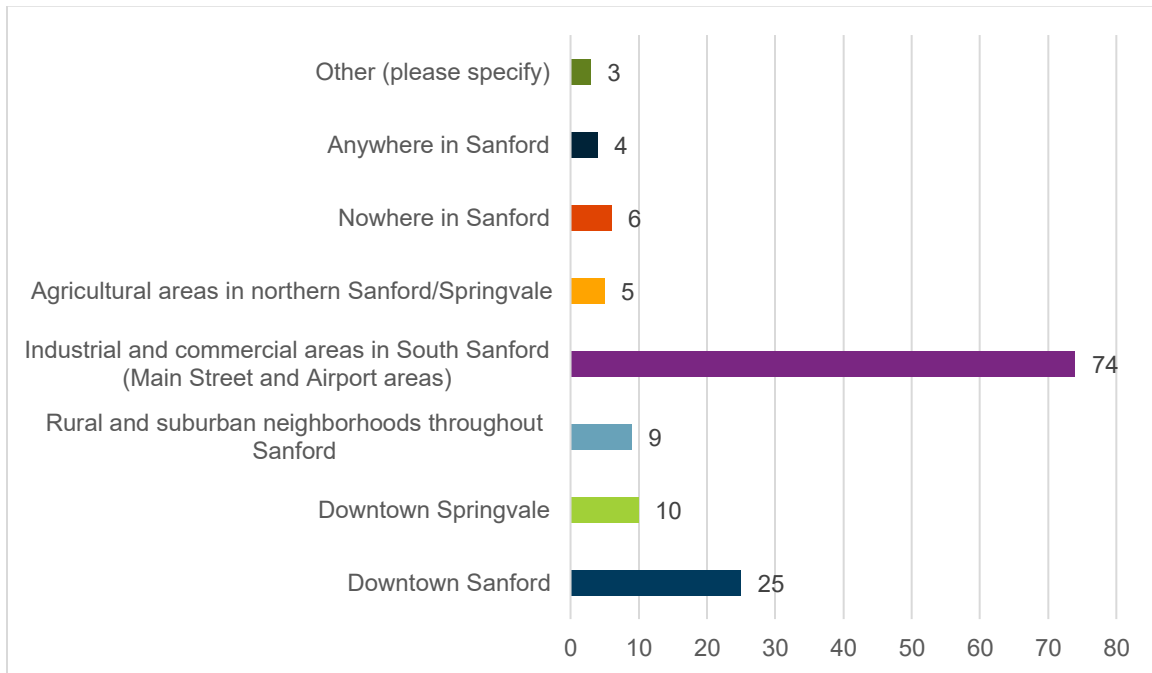


Figure 2.2: Businesses in smaller buildings

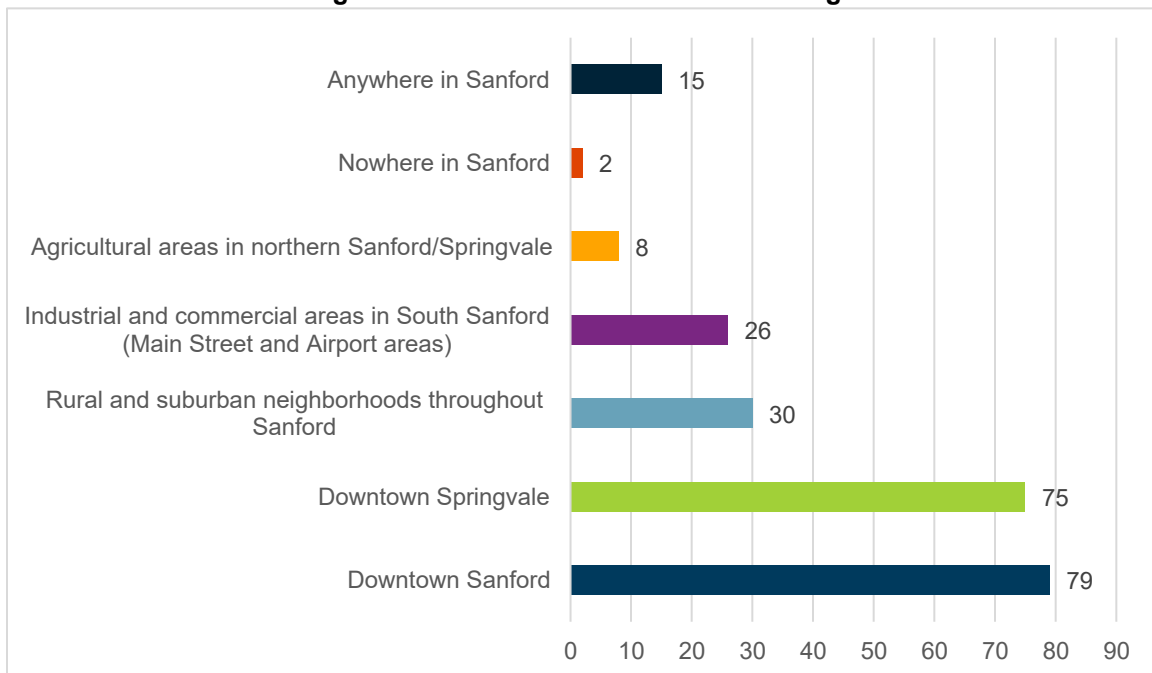


Figure 2.3: Mixed-use buildings (commercial ground floor, residential upper floors)

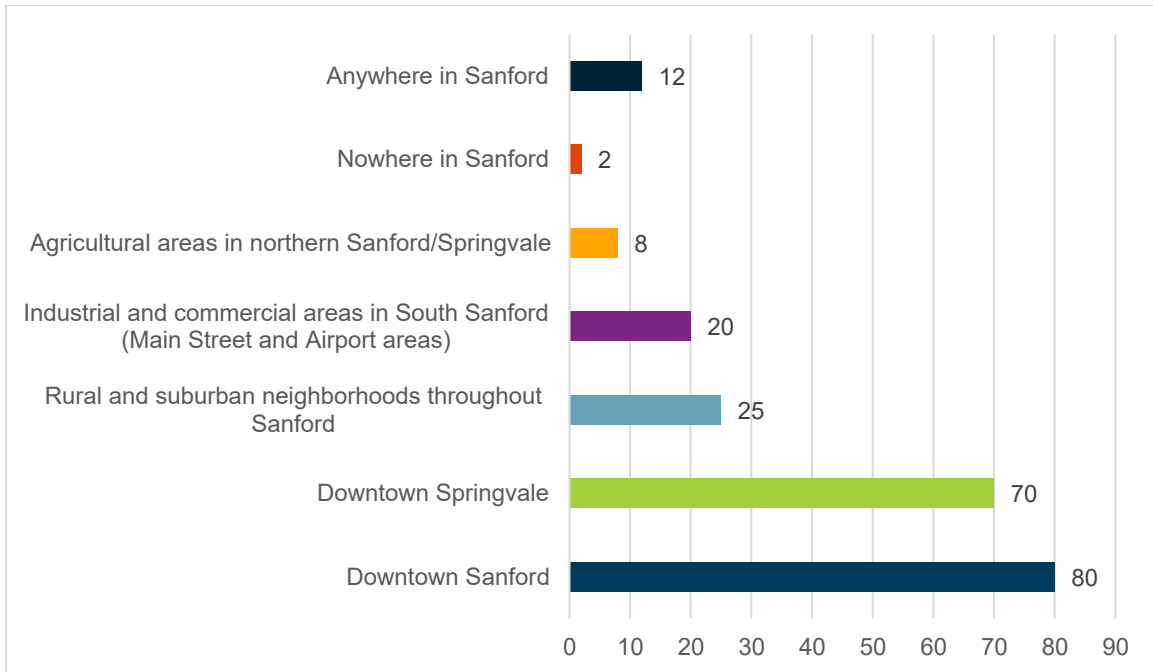


Figure 2.4: Multi-family home (more than four units)

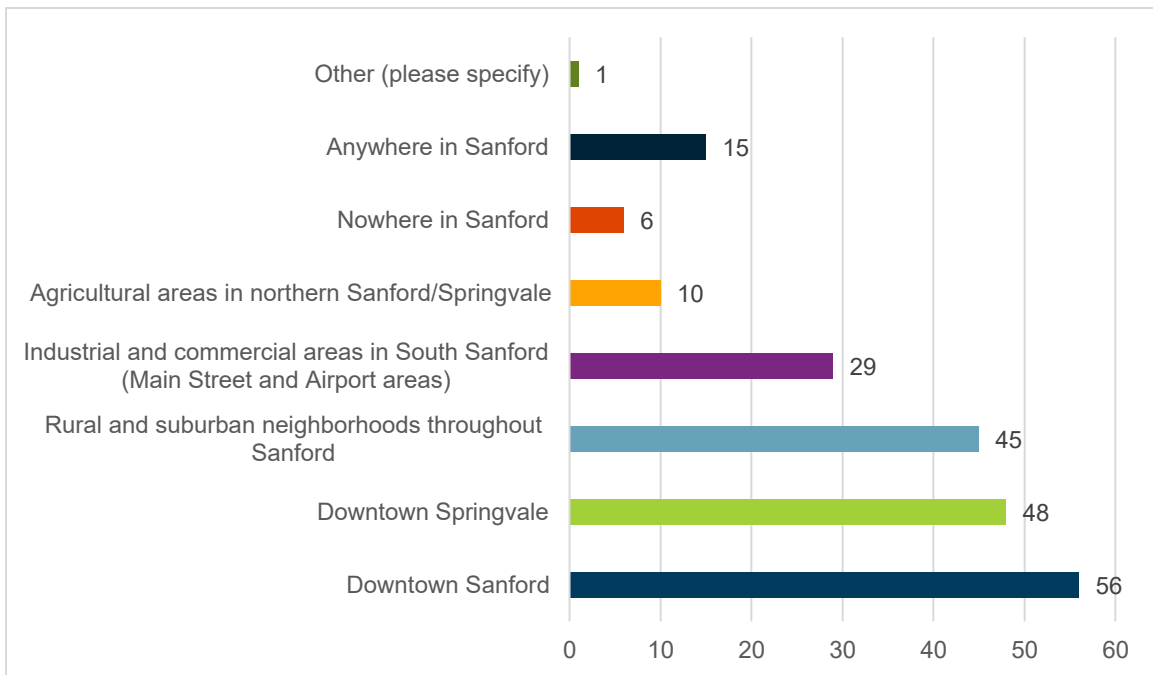


Figure 2.5: Detached single-family homes

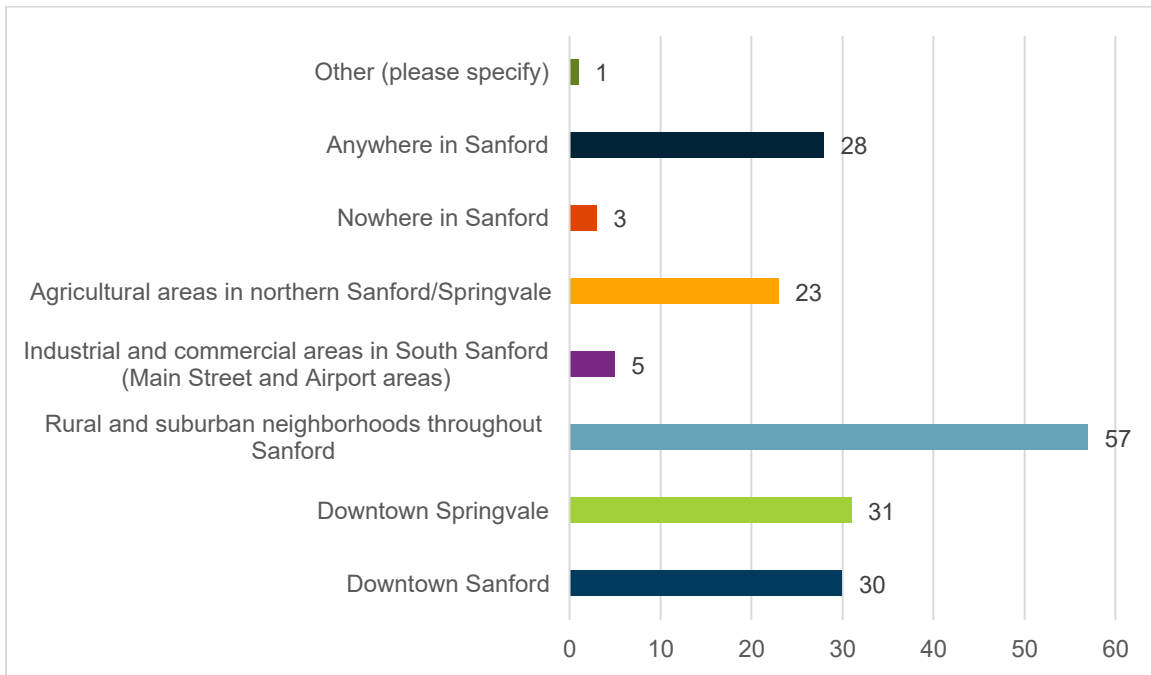


Figure 2.6: Attached single-family homes (townhomes)

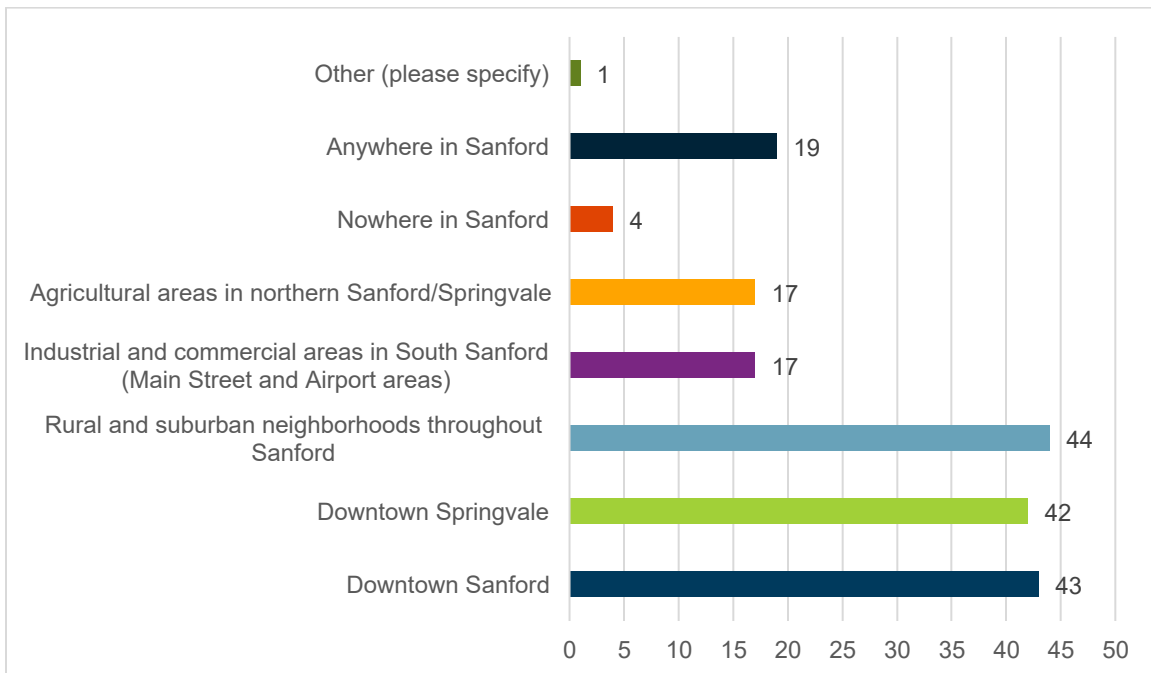


Figure 2.7: Two-family homes

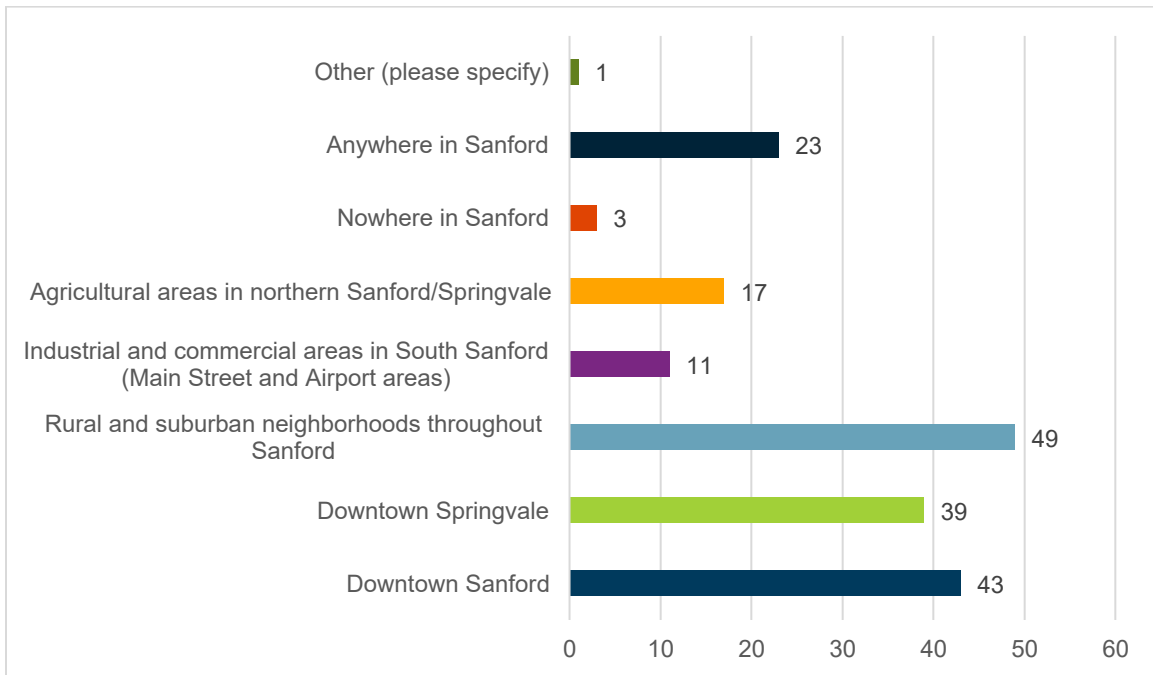


Figure 2.8: Three- and four-family homes

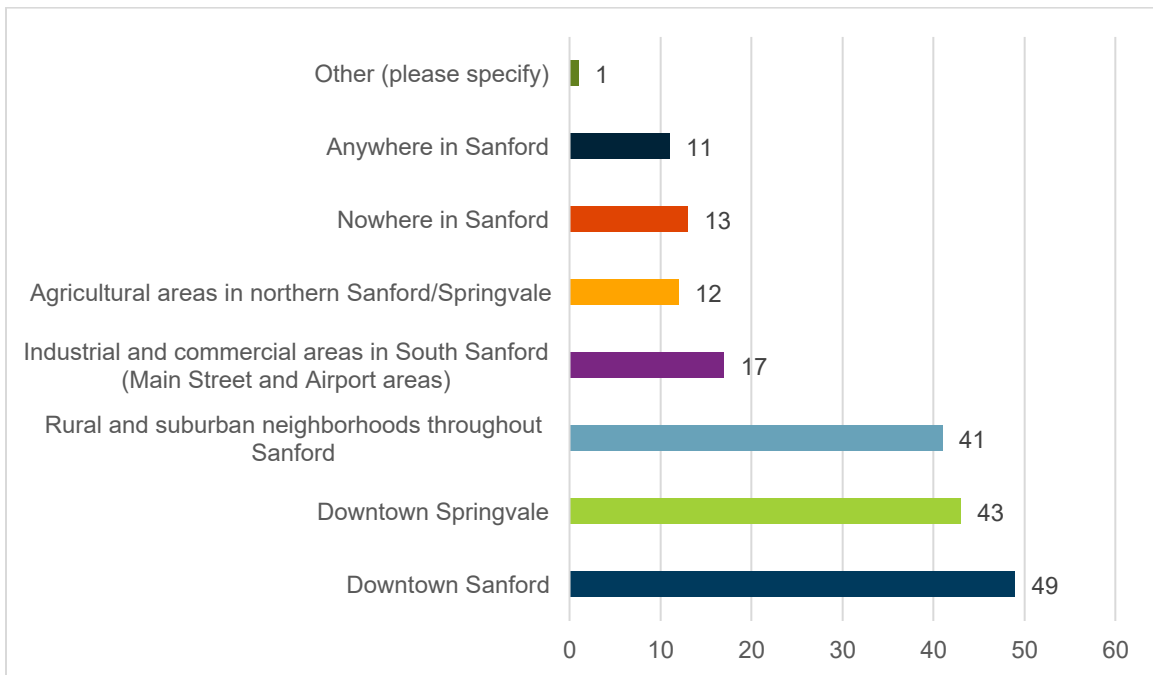


Figure 2.9: Homes on small lots

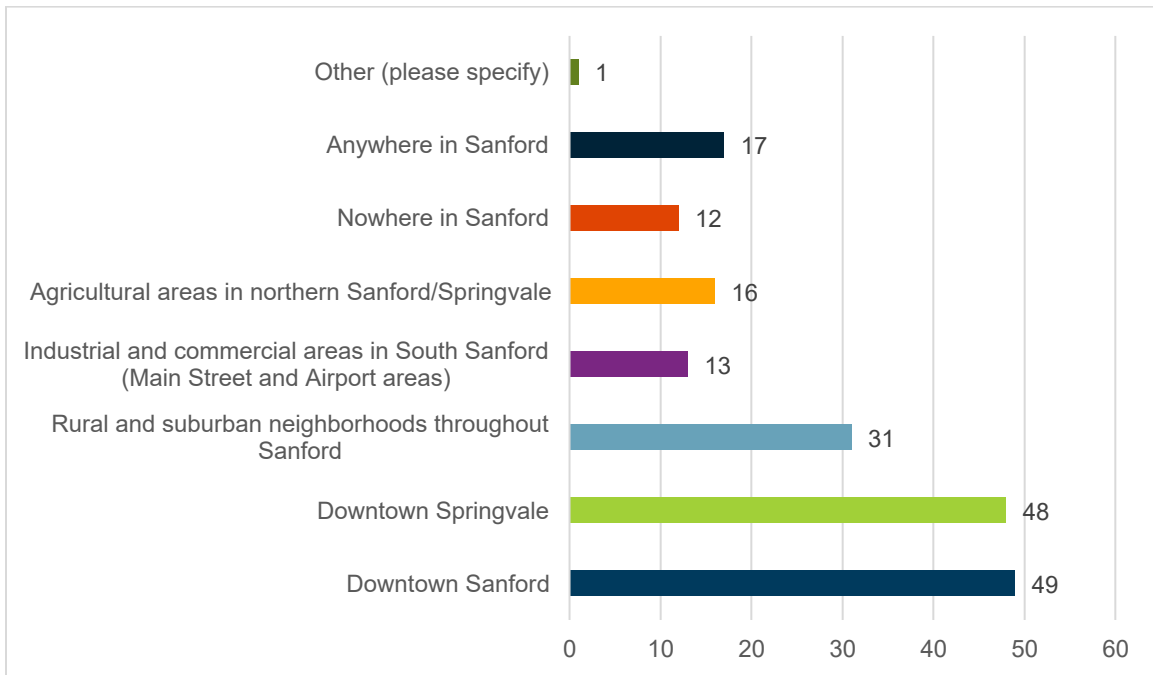


Figure 2.10: Homes on medium-sized lots

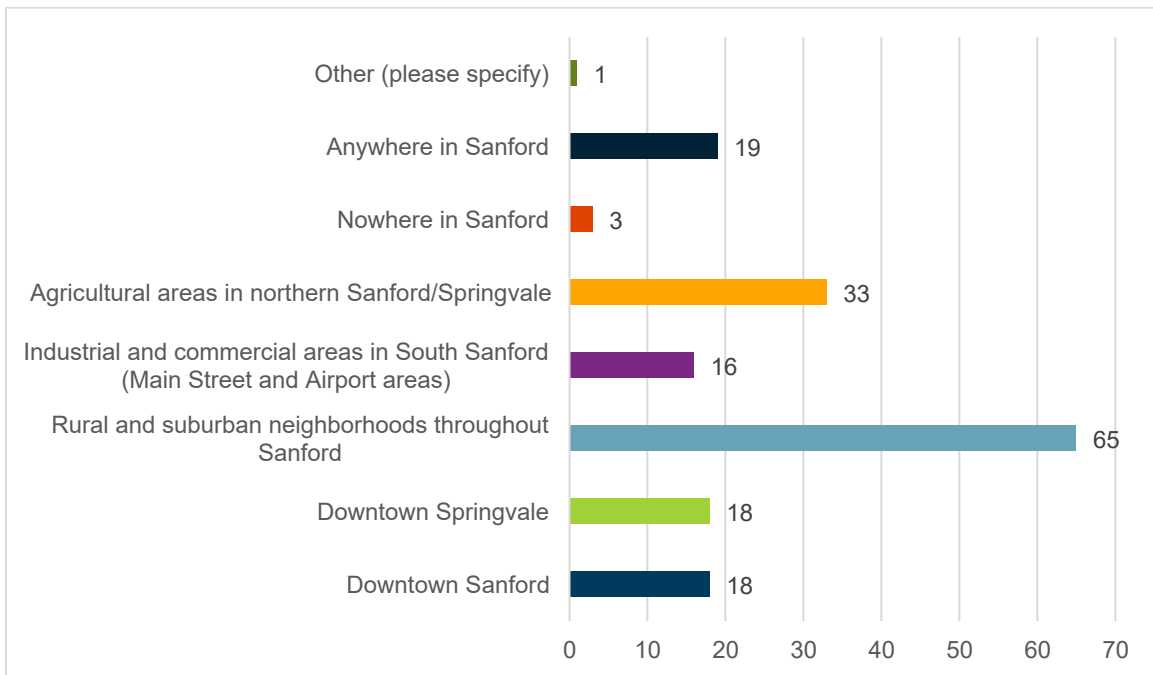


Figure 2.11: Homes on large lots

