



# **Route 29–Rio Road Intersection and Immediate Area Placemaking Study Final Report**

Draft #1: September 3, 2015





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Draft #1: September 3, 2015



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“Location decisions today start—  
and end—with, ‘do they have the  
people we want?’”

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**Site selection consultant**

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“The pipeline of workers is the ultimate driving force of all relocation decisions today.”

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**Site selection consultant**

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“Companies expanding or relocating know that 85 percent or more of their workers will come from the population already in place.”

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**Site selection consultant**

# The **Evolving** Economic Development Model

## **Old Model**

**Recruit Employers**

**People Come**

**Create a Great Place**

**Community Grows**

# The **Evolving** Economic Development Model

## **Old Model**

**Recruit Employers**

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## **Evolving Model**

**Create a Great Place**

**People Come**

**Employers Follow**

**Community Grows**

**Placemaking** is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design, and management of public spaces. **Placemaking** capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being.

Source: Wikipedia



# 80%

Roads Make Up 80%  
of All Public Space

Source: multiple sources, studies, and references

# **How Can the Route 29 Solutions work support placemaking?**

# Table of Contents

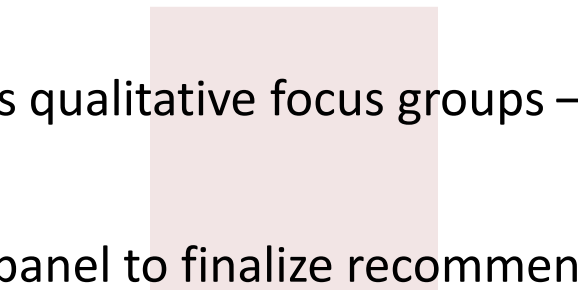
1. Research Project Goal and Process
2. Overview of 10 Major Findings
3. SIR's Recommendations

# Research Project Goal and Process

# Project Goal

Provide placemaking  
naming recommendations  
for the Route 29–Rio Road  
intersection **and** the immediate  
surrounding area.

# Research Initiative Process

1. SIR conducts quantitative survey – Winter 2015  
(Survey includes a few questions on naming)
  2. SIR conducts qualitative focus groups – Summer 2015
  3. SIR taps into online panel to finalize recommendations – Summer 2015
- 

## **4. Present draft report – September 3, 2015**

VDOT and the Route 29 PDAP share SIR's final report with Albemarle County for their consideration in the county's small area planning process for the Route 29–Rio Road area.

# Research Initiative Process

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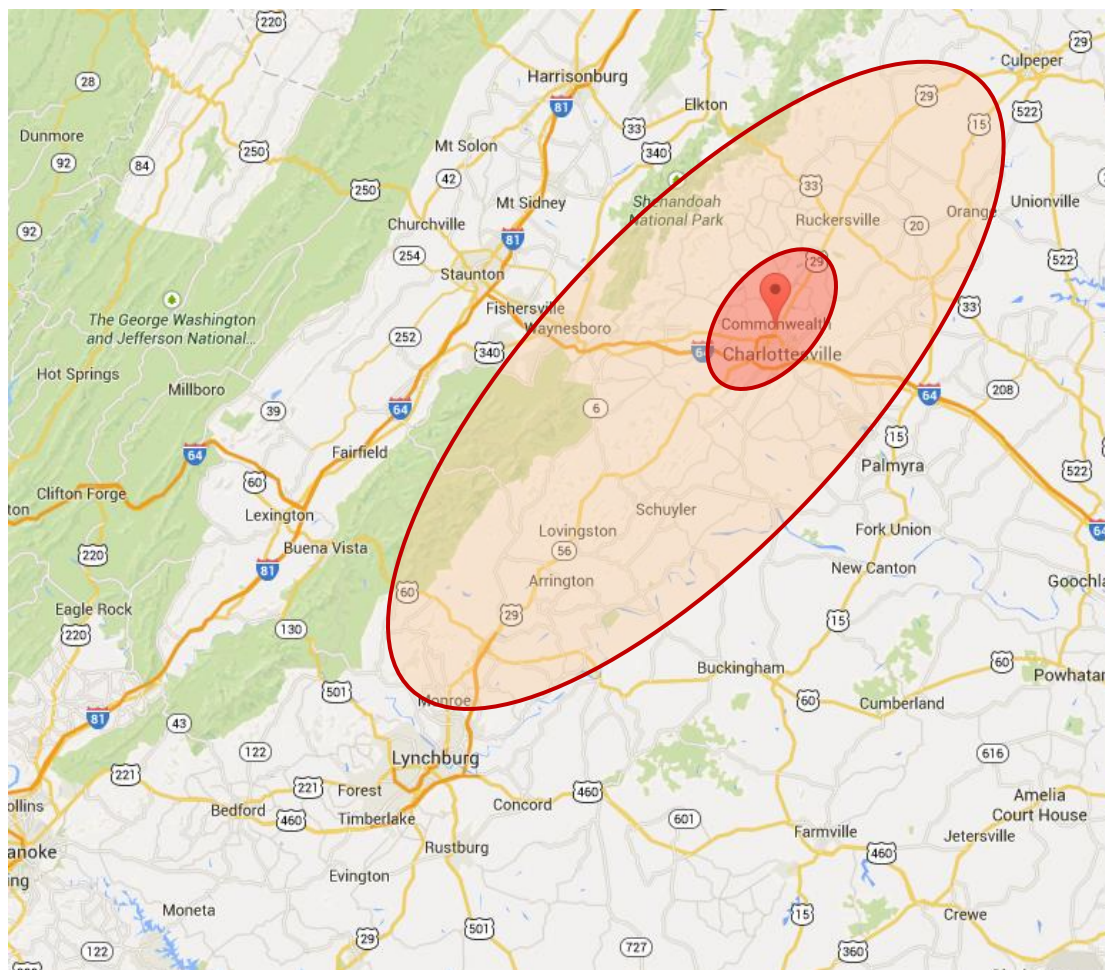
VDOT and the Route 29 PDAP share SIR's final report with Albemarle County for their consideration in the county's small area planning process for the Route 29–Rio Road area.

# Quantitative Research Objectives

1. Assess the level of awareness of and familiarity with Route 29 Solutions project details.
2. Gain initial feedback on the optimal naming considerations for the Route 29–Rio Road intersection and the immediate area.



# Methodology



- SIR conducted an 8-minute telephone survey of Route 29 travelers. A mix of cell phone and landline interviews were conducted.
- This survey was fielded from March 3, 2013, to March 10, 2015.
- A total of 400 surveys were completed.

# Research Initiative Process

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# Qualitative Focus Groups

## Research Objectives

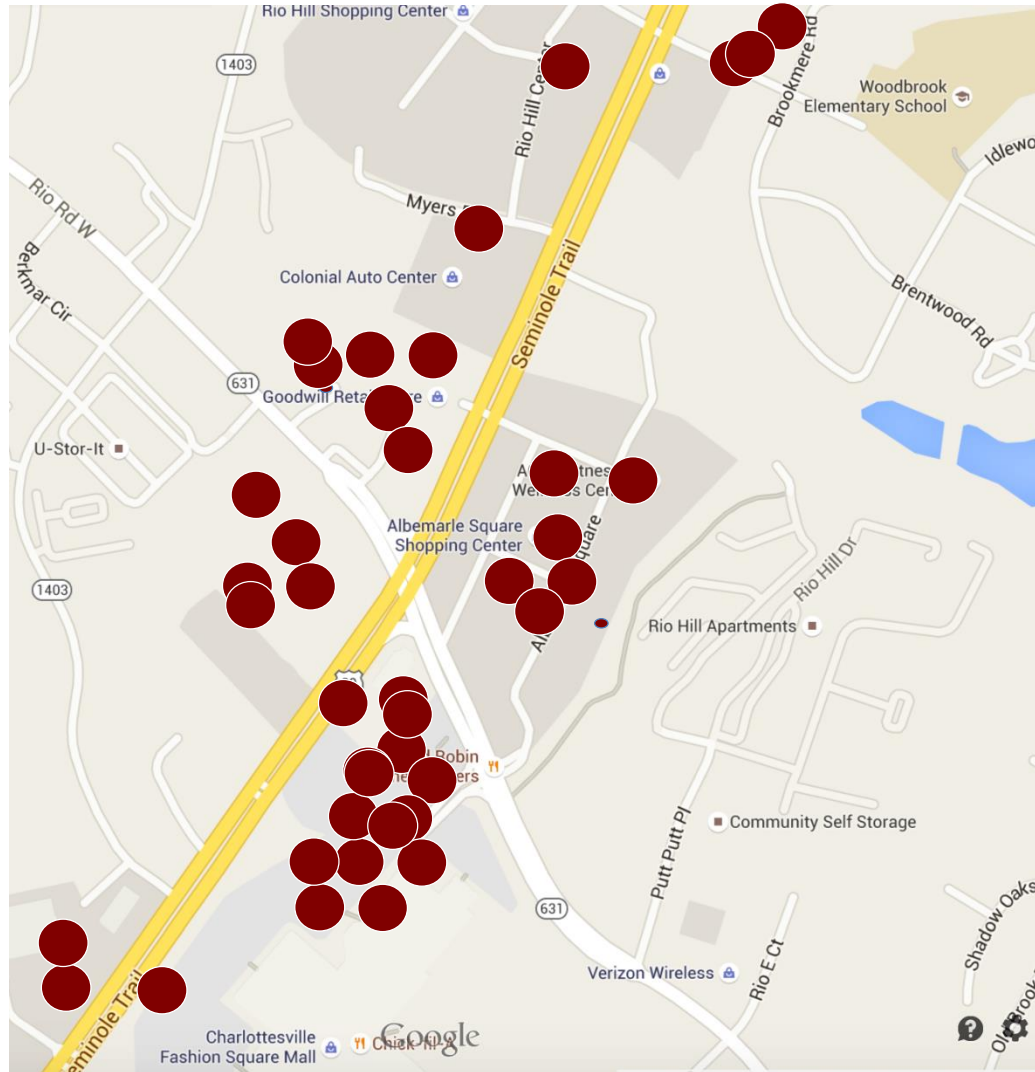
- Understand how businesses and other stakeholders appreciate and support an official naming of the Route 29–Rio Road intersection to help build a greater sense of place for the immediate area.
- Identify the most promising names and related rationale for the Route 29–Rio Road intersection and its four parts.

# Qualitative Focus Groups

## Research Methodology

- Discussion group participants were recruited from a list provided by the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce. Participants had to work or live in the general Route 29–Rio Road intersection area.
- SIR conducted nine separate groups (40 participants).
- All participants were given a \$50 gift card as a thank you for their time and input.

# Locations of Participants' in Qualitative Focus Groups



# Research Initiative Process

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# Online Panel

## Research Objectives

The overarching objective of the panel is to **obtain additional feedback on key outstanding issues**:

- Identify how respondents define the area in a geographical sense.
- Identify the top-ranked naming options for the area and understand why these names are preferred.
- Obtain input on the naming scheme and descriptions of the four parts of the intersection.

# Online Panel

## Research Methodology

- Follow-up questions were sent to:
  - Participants in the qualitative focus groups.
  - Prospects for the focus groups who couldn't participate.
- Responses were collected from August 14–21, 2015.
- Respondents were incentivized with a \$10 Starbucks electronic gift card.
- A total of 16 people completed the questionnaire.



# Overview of 10 Major Findings

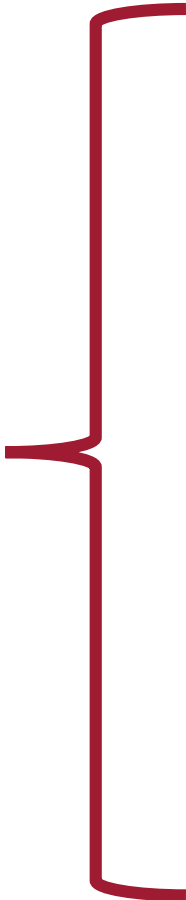
1

Participants see the  
value in having a  
place-oriented identity.

# What Makes a Place?

Research participants were asked to brainstorm what attributes make up a geographic area or location that has its own personality or branded name.

Study participants came up with the following attributes that make a “place.”

- 
- Variety of things to do
  - Types of people going there
  - Memorable
  - Recognizable
  - Is a true destination
  - Self-sustaining
  - Growing
  - Has a critical population mass
  - Is a destination
  - Has a recognizable landmark or two

# Perceived Benefits of a Defined Place-Oriented Identity

Study participants were asked to identify any perceived benefits for areas that have a defined sense of place. The participants identified several benefits.

- Helps make a place easier to appreciate—*what it's all about*.
- Helps attract more attention, support, and growth.
- Positions the place as more of a destination.
- Makes it easier for businesses to market their service—“*We're located at \_\_\_\_.*”
- Helps tourists find the location since locals know where to send them.

---

“Naming creates that sense of place and really defines it.”

---

**Focus group participant**

2

Study participants  
easily came up with  
criteria needed for  
place naming.

# Criteria for Naming an Area

Participants were asked to brainstorm a possible list of criteria that could help guide the creation of a name for a region or geographic area that might not have a set or established name today. Their answers fell into five broad areas of consideration.

## 1. Based on something related to the area.

- Includes something that is visually unique to the area—a major landmark.
- Meaningful and significant to local area; for example, Pantops Mountain.

## 2. Leverage local historic equity.

- Ties into any significant historical event(s) in the region or broader market.

# Criteria for Naming an Area

*Continued*

Participants' naming criteria (continued from previous page).

Note: This list was used by participants later in the discussion to “assess” the potential names they came up with for the Route 29–Rio Road intersection and area.

## 3. Simple and memorable.

- Easy to remember.
- Easy to read or text.
- Short.
- Positive, upbeat.
- Catchy.
- Unique.

## 4. Timeless.

- A name that is not tied to a retailer or some other asset that may not be there in twenty years.

## 5. Marketable.

- Has the potential for mass appeal.
- Something that conjures the idea of a geographic location.
- A word that's trustworthy, that is, not controversial.



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“Thinking 15 to 20 years from now, you want to name it something that will last, and many of the businesses located in this area may not be here.”

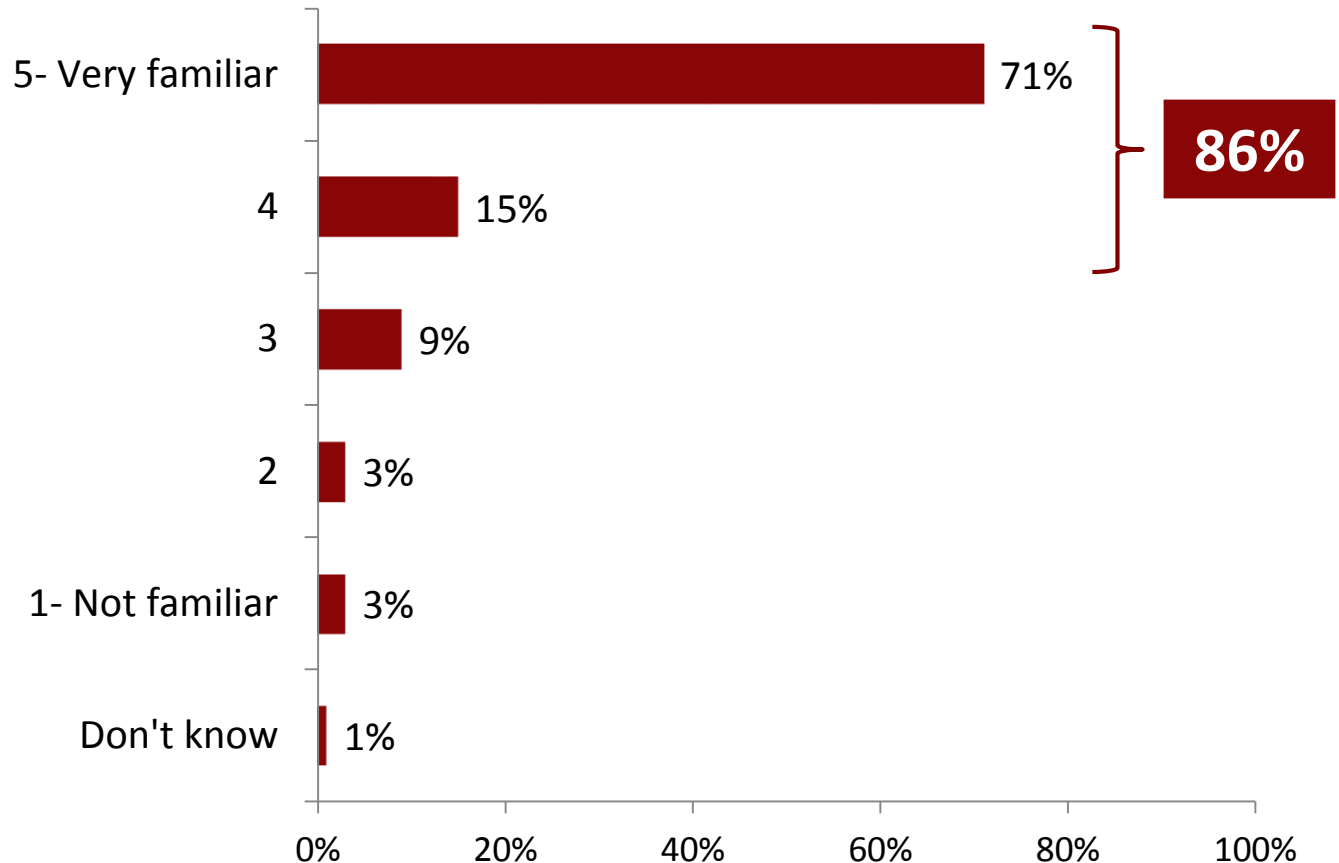
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**Focus group participant**

3

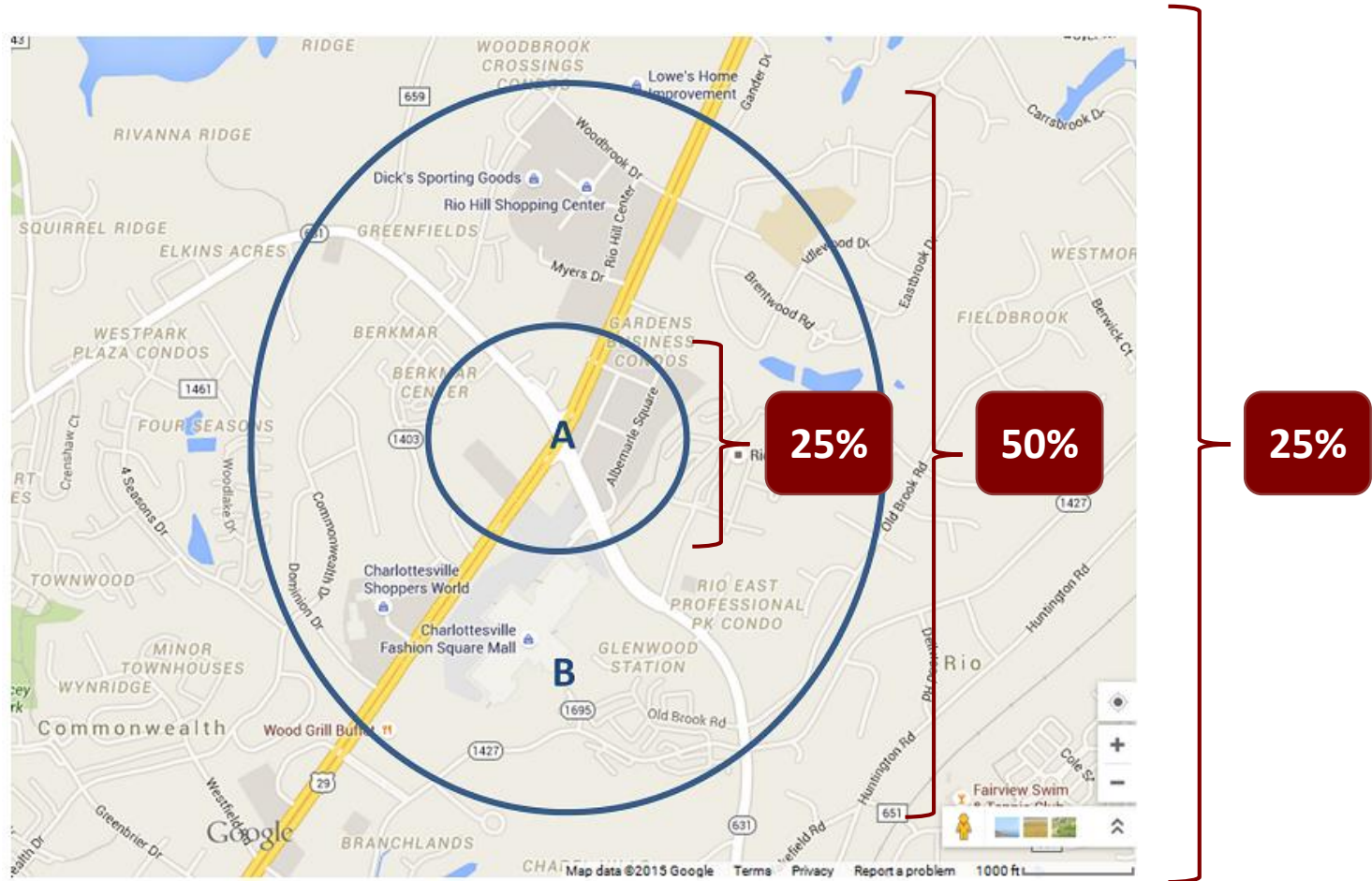
Most of the respondents say they are familiar with the Rio Road–Route 29 intersection.

## 86% of Respondents Are Familiar with the Route 29–Rio Road Intersection and Immediate Area



Q12. How familiar would you say you are with the Route 29 and Rio Road intersection and the immediate area around this intersection?

# Most Respondents Believe That the “Route 29–Rio Road Area” Encompasses a Larger Area than Just the Intersection.



Q1. When you think about the Rio Road and Route 29 intersection and the immediate area that defines this place, what does that encompass?

# 4

The Route 29–Rio Road intersection and surrounding area have many defining features, but not one dominant feature that people can recall for the general area.

# Defining Features and Visual Iconography in the Route 29–Rio Road Area

*Participants were asked to brainstorm a list of the defining features and iconography in Route 29–Rio Road area. The complete list of answers is presented here.*

- Fashion Square Mall
- Rio Road itself
- Albemarle Square
- Reservoir
- Rio Hill Shopping Center
- Barracks Shopping Center
- General shopping area and retail
- Greenbrier
- Toys 'R' Us
- Library
- SunTrust (clock)
- The Mall
- Stonefield Shoppes
- UVA shopping center
- Hollymead Town Center
- Colonial Auto
- Hardee's
- Wood Grill
- Albemarle High School
- Fresh Market
- Lowe's
- Daily Progress
- Putt-Putt Golf
- ACAC

# 5

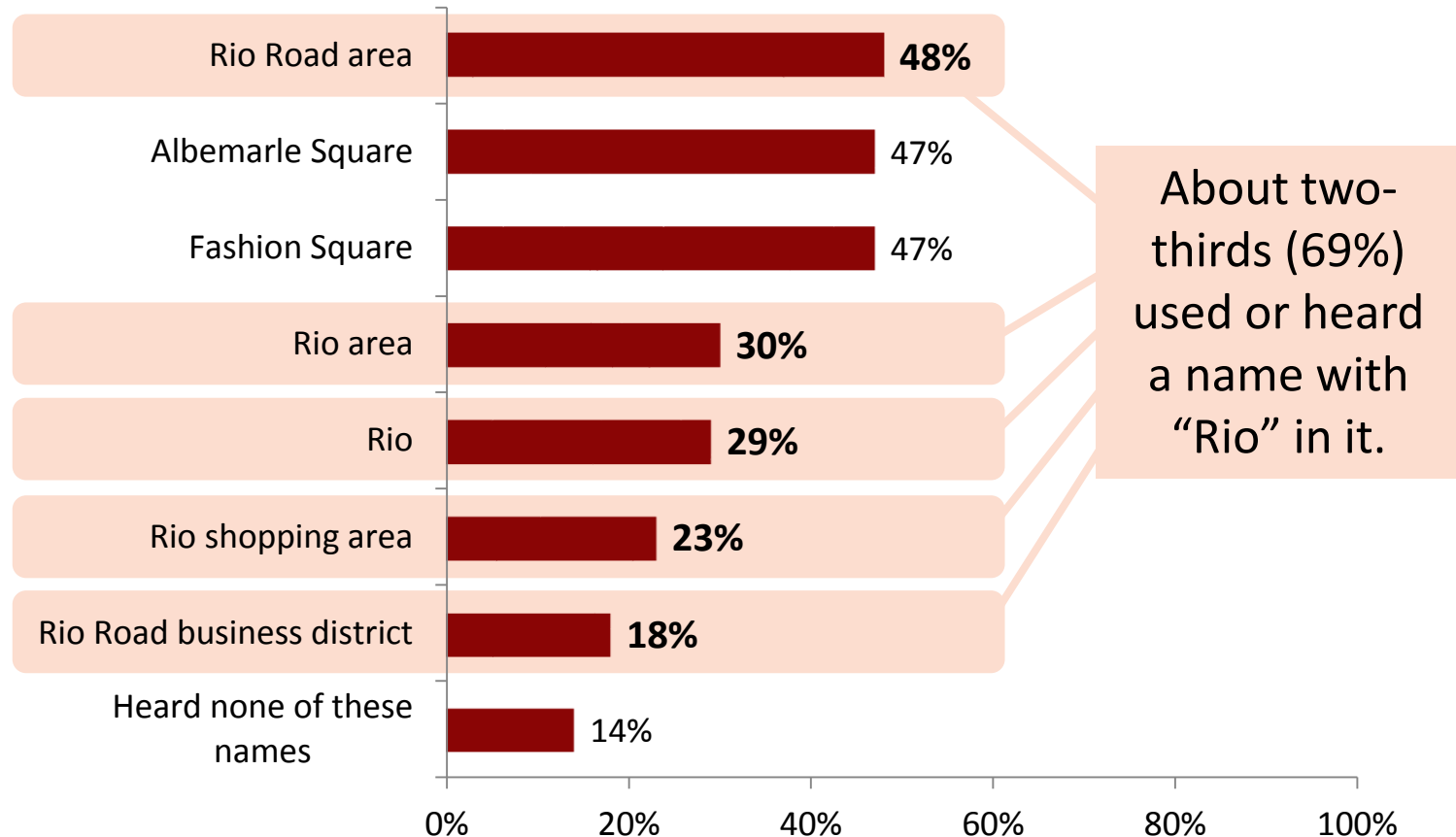
Several “names” are commonly used for the Rio Road–Route 29 intersection. By far, the word “Rio” is most included in these names.

# Unaided Names for the Rio Road Intersection





# Most Respondents Identify the Rio Road– Route 29 Intersection as “Rio Road Area,” “Albemarle Square,” or “Fashion Square”



Q14. Which of the following names have you used or heard to refer to the general geographic area of the Route 29 and Rio Road intersection?

# The Complete List of Names That Study Participants Have Used or Heard Being Used for the Route 29–Rio Road Area Included:

- **Rio**
- Main Highway
- 29
- **Rio** 29
- Fashion Square Mall
- Albemarle Square
- Uptown
- Midtown
- 29 North
- **Rio** Road Intersection
- **Rio** Road Mall
- 29 **Rio**
- **Rio** Strip Mall

*Note the number of mentions that included “Rio”*

# 6

There is remarkable consensus on the leading **potential names** for the Route 29–Rio Road intersection and immediate area: Rio Crossing(s), Rio Crossroad(s), and Rio Square. All three hold promise.

# Possible Names for Route 29–Rio Road Intersection and Immediate Area

48  
→

Possible Name	Total Votes
<b>Rio Crossing(s)*</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Rio Square*</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Rio Crossroad(s)</b>	<b>25</b>
Rio Place (Rio 29 Place)	20
<b>The Square*</b>	<b>18</b>
Midtown or Midtown Charlottesville	13
Rio	7
29 Corridor	7

Possible Name	Total Votes
Rio City	7
Rio Corners	6
Rio 29*	5
Rio Grid*	5
Rio Intersection	5
Rio District (and Business District)	5
Northpoint	3

\* Without the aid of a list, most of the groups came up with these names.

# Route 29–Rio Road Intersection Possible Names

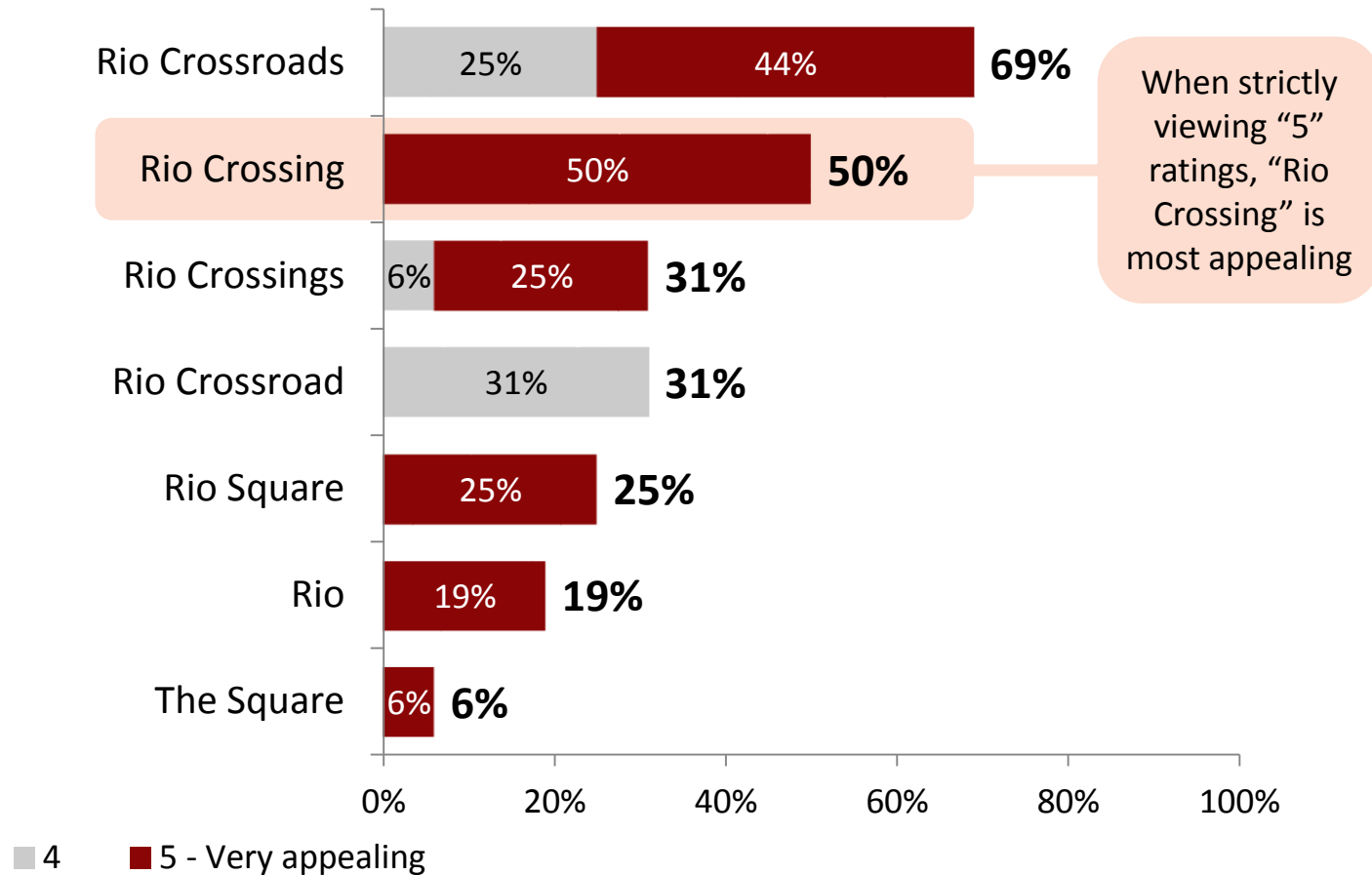
*Additional Names That Came Up When Brainstorming Potential Name Possibilities—But These Received Two Votes or Less*

- Rio Ridge
- Rio Retail
- 29 Rio Bypass
- Rio Interchange\*  
(Rio 29)
- 29
- Rio Road Area
- Rio Exchange
- Community Square
- Southriver
- Albemarle Hub
- Mall Place
- The Lasso
- North Crossing or  
Uptown Crossing
- The Spot
- Rio Circle
- The Corridor
- Civil War square
- Rio North
- 29 Corridor
- Rio 29 District
- Albemarle Midtown
- Rio Interchange
- Riverside
- Four Square
- Rivanna Place
- Four Corners
- Rio Center

7

Panel participants chose  
“Rio Crossroad<sup>s</sup>” and  
“Rio Crossing” as the leading  
names for the  
intersection and area.

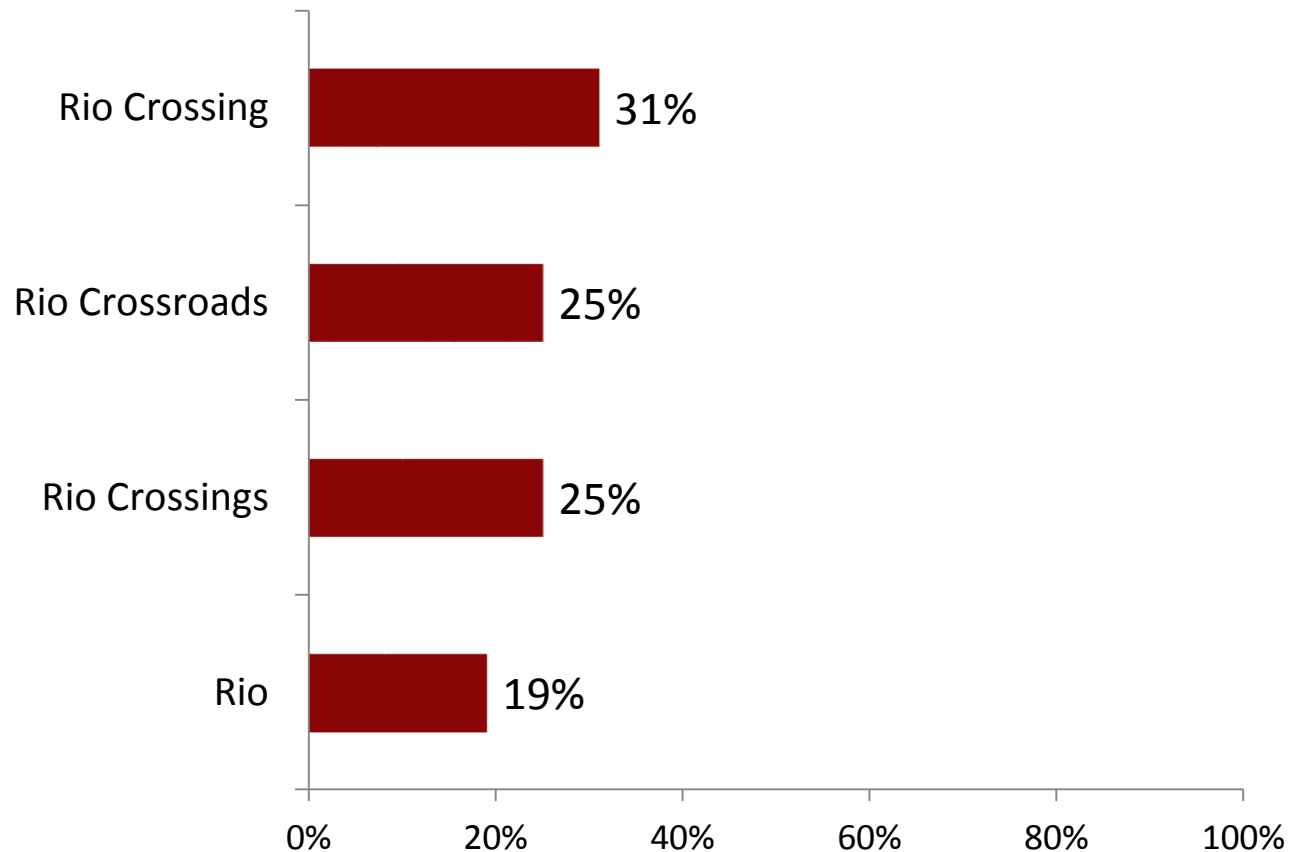
# Nearly 70% of Respondents Find the Name “Rio Crossroads” Appealing



Q2. The following is a list of possible names for the Route 29–Rio Road intersection and immediate area. Please rate how appealing each name is. Please use a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “not at all appealing” and 5 means “very appealing.”

Percentages represent the proportion of respondents who selected each name as their first choice.

## When Asked to Rank Their Top Three Name Choices, Approximately One-Third Selected “Rio Crossing” as Their First Choice





# “Why do you prefer this name?”

## **Rio Crossing**

*“The intersection is actually a crossing where Rio Road crosses over Route 29.”*

## **Rio Crossroads**

*“There are two roads that intersect here at a major intersection, and [it’s] similar to a place east of Charlottesville called Zion Crossroads.”*

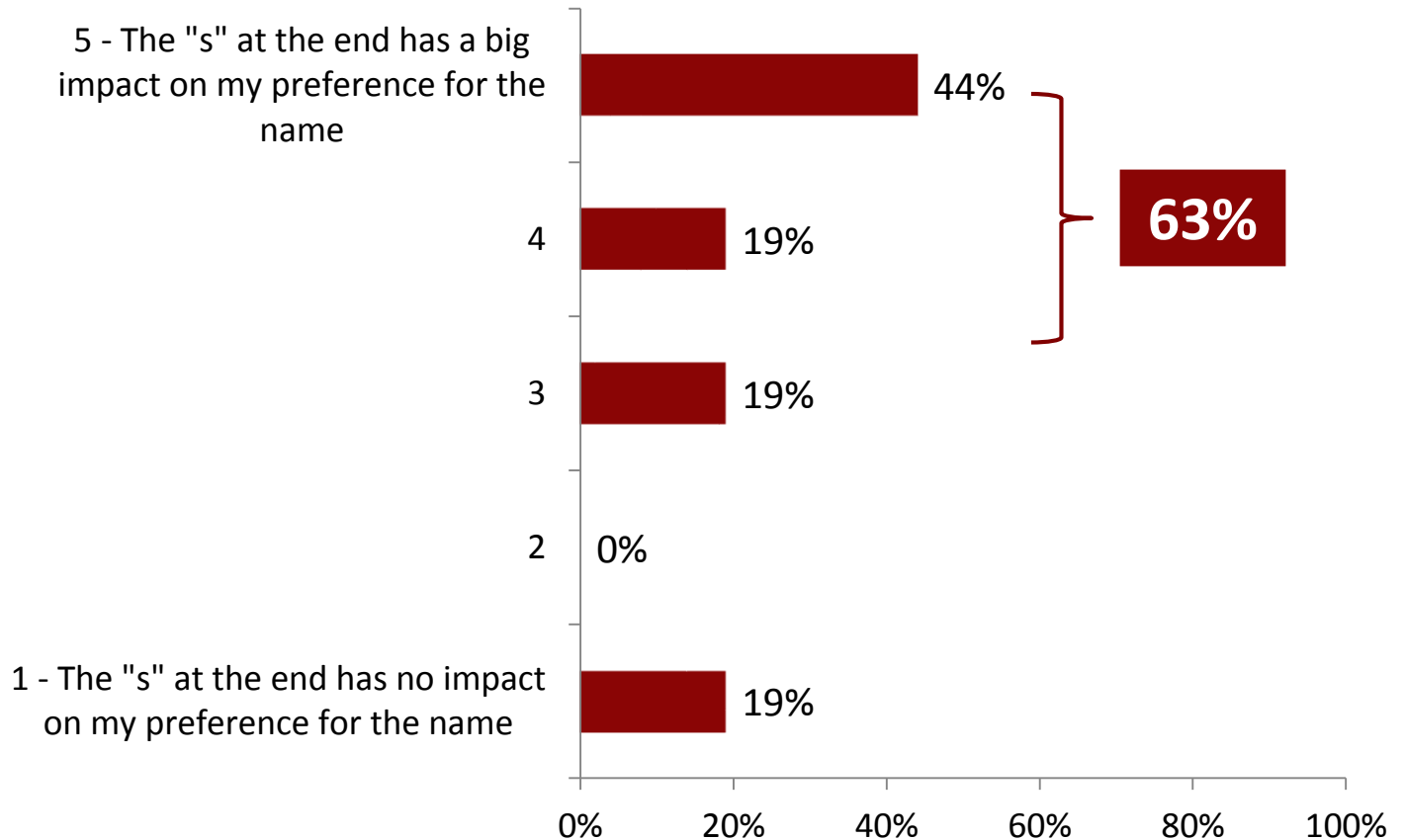
## **Rio Crossings**

*“Rio is the main thoroughfare crossing 29 N/S, there will be more than one road crossing Rio, and several businesses have Rio in their name.”*

## **Rio**

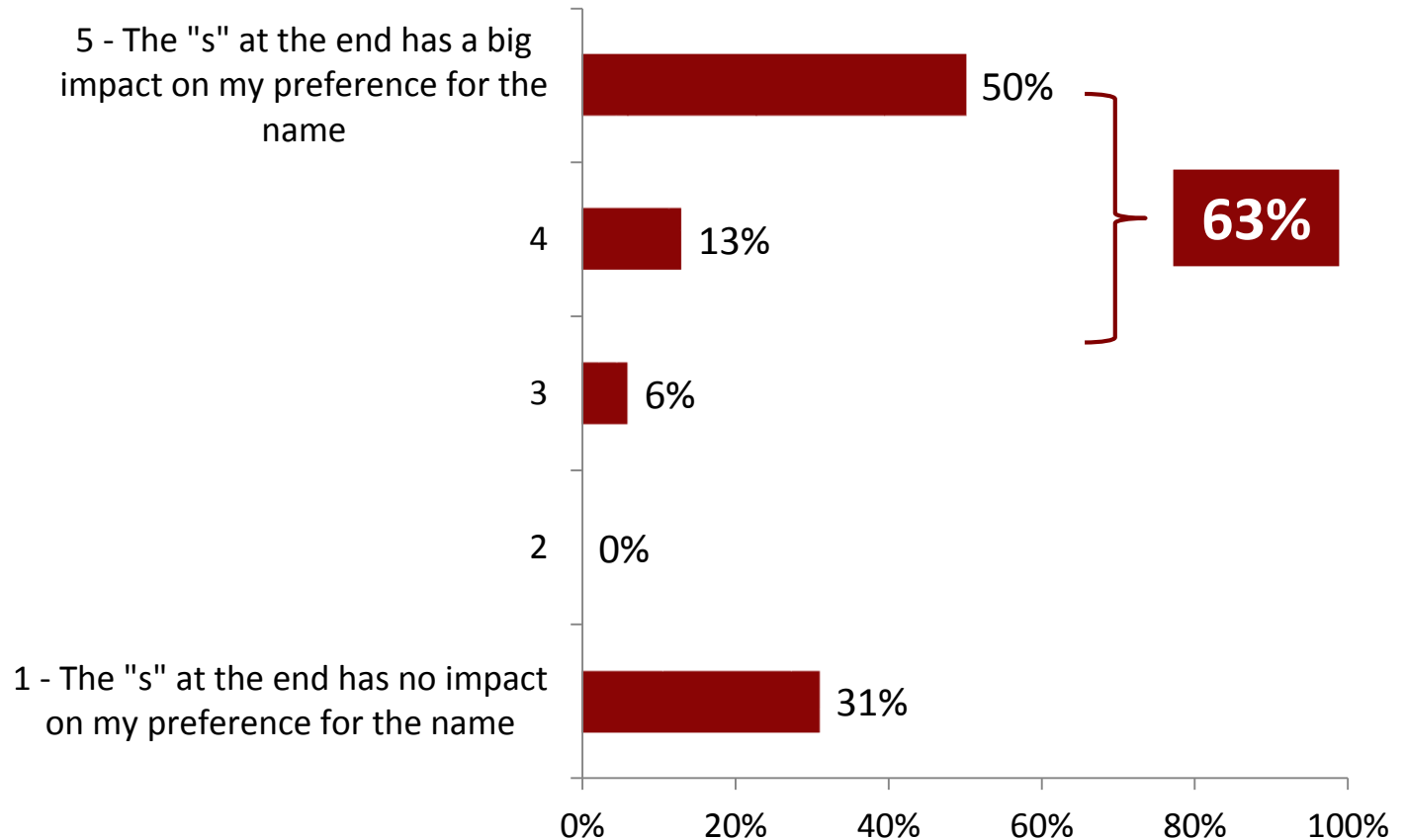
*“I prefer it to be called Rio because this is what I already consider the area to be called.”*

# Adding an “S” at the End of “Rio Crossing” Has an Impact on Name Preference for Almost Two-Thirds of Respondents



Q5. When considering the names “Rio Crossing” versus “Rio Crossings,” how does the addition of the “s” at the end of “Crossing” impact your preference for the name?

# Adding an “S” at the End of “Rio Crossroad” Has a Similar Impact on Name Preference for Respondents



Q6. When considering the names “Rio Crossroad” versus “Rio Crossroads,” how does the addition of the “s” at the end of “Crossroad” impact your preference for the name?

# “Why does the “s” at the end make a difference in how you feel about the name?”

*“It depends. It’s a crossroads,  
but it’s a crossing in my head.”*

**“Crossing” is  
preferred  
(with no “s”)**

*“Because we are not  
some huge metropolitan  
area with multiple  
crossings. It’s really just  
one big crossing.”*

*“There is just one main  
crossing, not multiple  
crossings.”*

**“Crossroads” is  
preferred  
(with an “s”)**

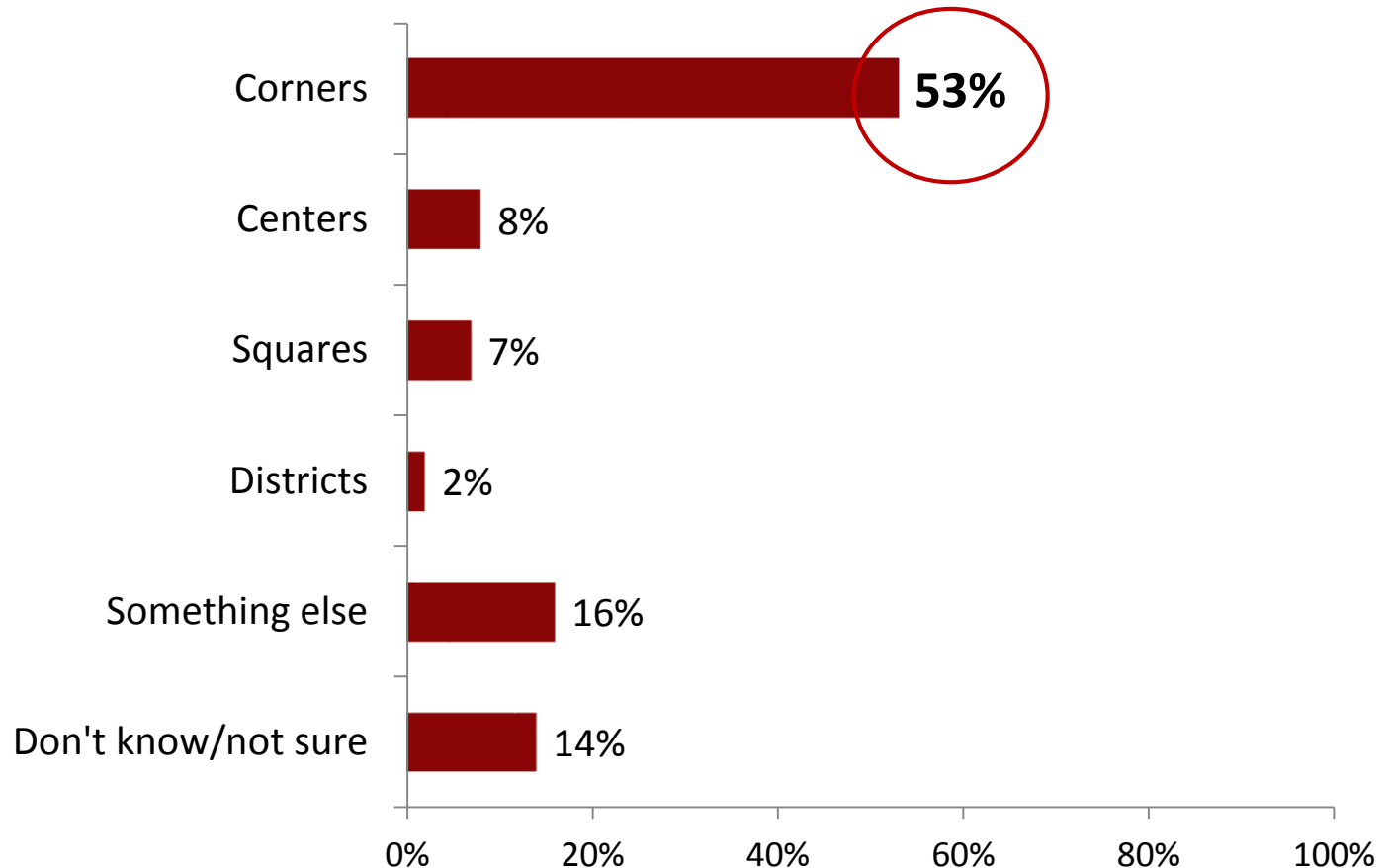
*“Within the target area  
there are several  
crossroads other than  
29—Berkmar and  
Woodbrook being key  
intersections.”*

*“When I say Rio  
Crossroads I would  
automatically add the  
“s” if it were just Rio  
Crossroad.”*

# 8

Respondents identify the  
Rio Road–Route 29  
intersection's four  
quadrants as “**corners.**”

# Most Respondents Who Are Familiar with the Rio Road–Route 29 Intersection Identify the Four Quadrants as “Corners”

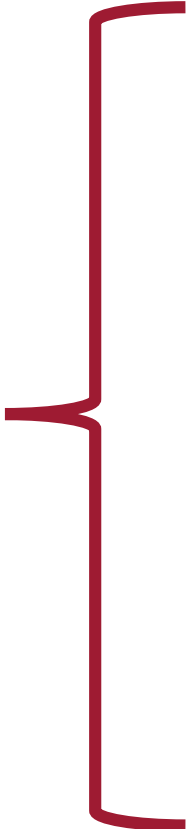


# Based on an Aided List, “Corner” Was the Top Name for the Parts of the Route 29–Rio Road Intersection

Study participants were then given a list of terms that could be used in naming each part of the intersection.

The most appealing name was “corner,” followed by “quadrant” (or quad) and “square.”

Two participants felt that the “corner” name brings up Tysons Corner.

- 
- **Corner**
  - Quadrant (Quad)
  - Square
  - District
  - Area
  - Box
  - Quarter

# 9

There is a challenge, however, in finding unique corner-related names for two of the four corners. Most study participants feel the most practical solution is to also use a traditional geographic orientation (NE, NW, SE, SW) for each corner.



---

“If you don’t know where  
you are going, naming the parts  
by geographical area is better  
description-wise.”

---

**Focus group participant**

# Defining Features and Visual Iconography in Each Corner of the Route 29–Rio Road Intersection

*Participants were asked to brainstorm a list of the defining features and iconography in each corner of the Route 29–Rio Road intersection. The complete list of answers is presented here.*

## Major Unaided Identifiable Features:

- Northeast corner: Albemarle Square
- Southeast corner: Fashion Square
- Northwest corner: ?
- Southwest corner: ?

## When Pushed on Possible NW and SW Identifiers, Places Mentioned:

- Northwest corner: Rio Hill
- Southwest corner:
  - Stonefield
  - Northrop Grumman

Most participants had a hard time identifying well-known features or icons for the northwest and southwest corners.

*Note: Study participants did not feel that the new library was recognizable enough to be considered an identifier for the southwest corner.*

# Consideration in Naming the Corners

*Observations and considerations offered by participants*

- One challenge with naming anything after an existing business is that the business might not be here in 20 to 30 years.
- Related to being “timeless,” several participants suggested naming each part of the intersection using historical references.
- Another concern identified is the limitation that one particular business-oriented association would place on the size of area being defined.

# Geographic Orientation as Part of the Corner-Related Name

- Geographic reference points in the naming of parts of the intersection had appeal. Participants started to make sense of this naming structure by using examples of the overall names previously discussed for the Route 29–Rio Road intersection and immediate area:
  - Rio Square: naming the corners based on the geographic points of the “square”—NW Rio Square, SW Rio Square, NE Rio Square, etc.
  - Rio Quad: naming the corners based on the geographic points of the “quad”—NE Rio Quad, SW Rio Quad, SW Rio Quad, etc.
- Most participants said this geographic orientation (NE, SE, etc.) as a naming convention already existed for the area (i.e., Barracks East, Barracks West) and should be utilized for the Route 29–Rio Road intersection, too.

# 10

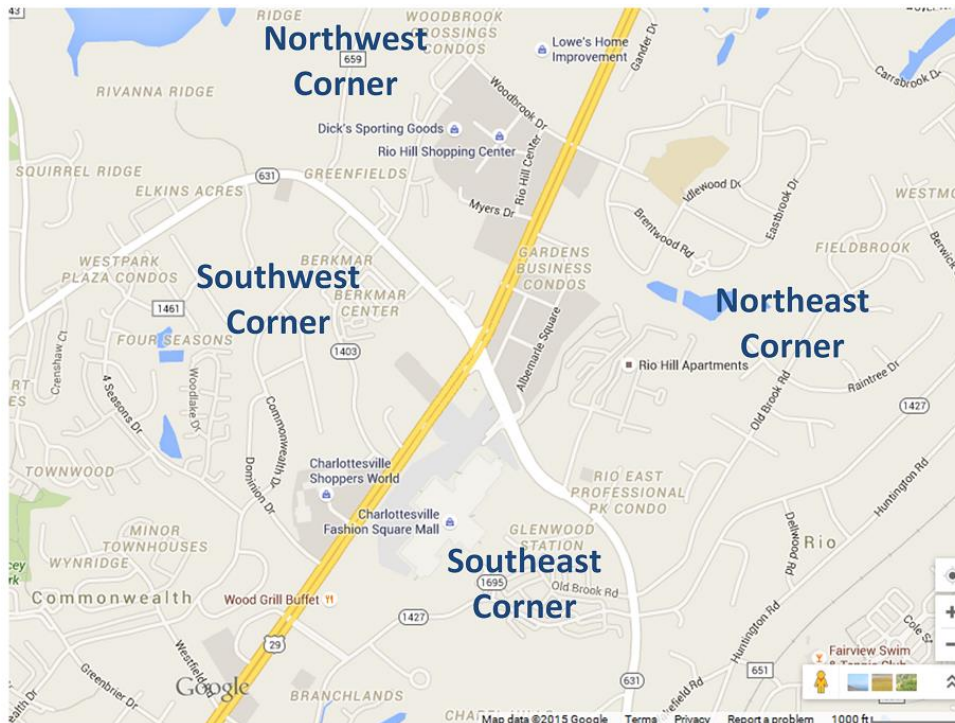
Participants feel they also need more information to know what's ahead, such as what businesses and attractions are located in each geographic corner.

# Geographic Orientation as Part of the Corner-Related Name

- Many participants also believe the geographic naming convention helps people who are new to the area or are just visiting the area.
- While the majority prefer the geographic orientation (NE, NW, SE, SW), an insight came from some people who said they understand this idea, but just don't appreciate "a compass, geographic orientation" in their own head—they can't intuitively think or point to each direction, even when driving on Route 29.
- They simply need more information to know what's ahead, such as what businesses and attractions are located in each geographic part.

Most panel participants agree with naming that describes the northeast and southeast corners of the intersection as leading “to Rio Road East and Downtown Charlottesville.” Most respondents still have a hard time defining the northwest and southwest corners of the Route 29–Rio Road intersection.

# Respondents Were Provided a Description of the Naming Scheme for the Four Corners

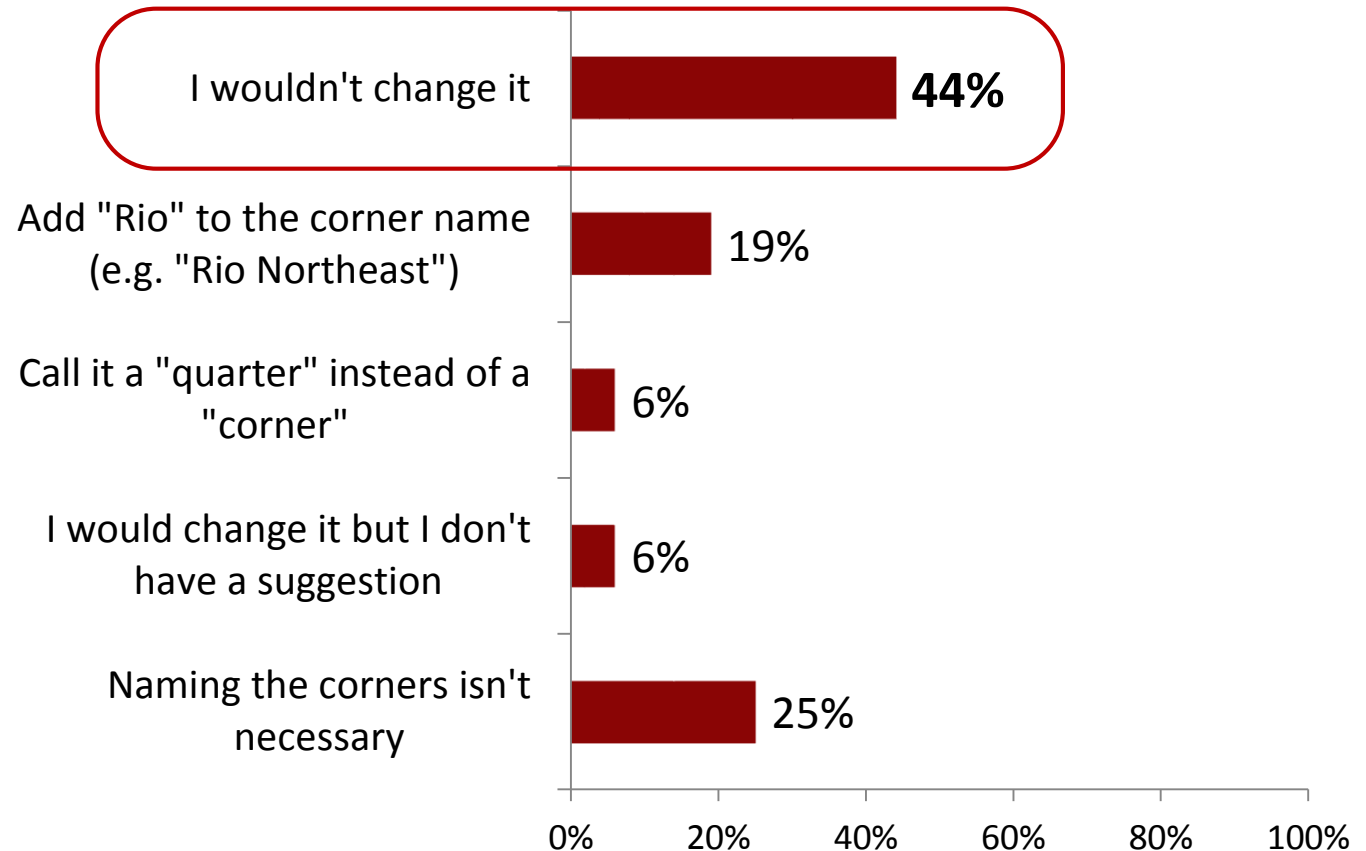


*“In addition to naming the Route 29–Rio Road intersection and immediate area, there is also consideration for naming the four corners created by the intersection. These corners will be named based on their geographic location, for example, the ‘Northeast Corner.’ If they are named, signage on Route 29 for the Rio Road exits will reference the corners by these names, along with public landmarks or well-known destinations adjacent to each corner.”*



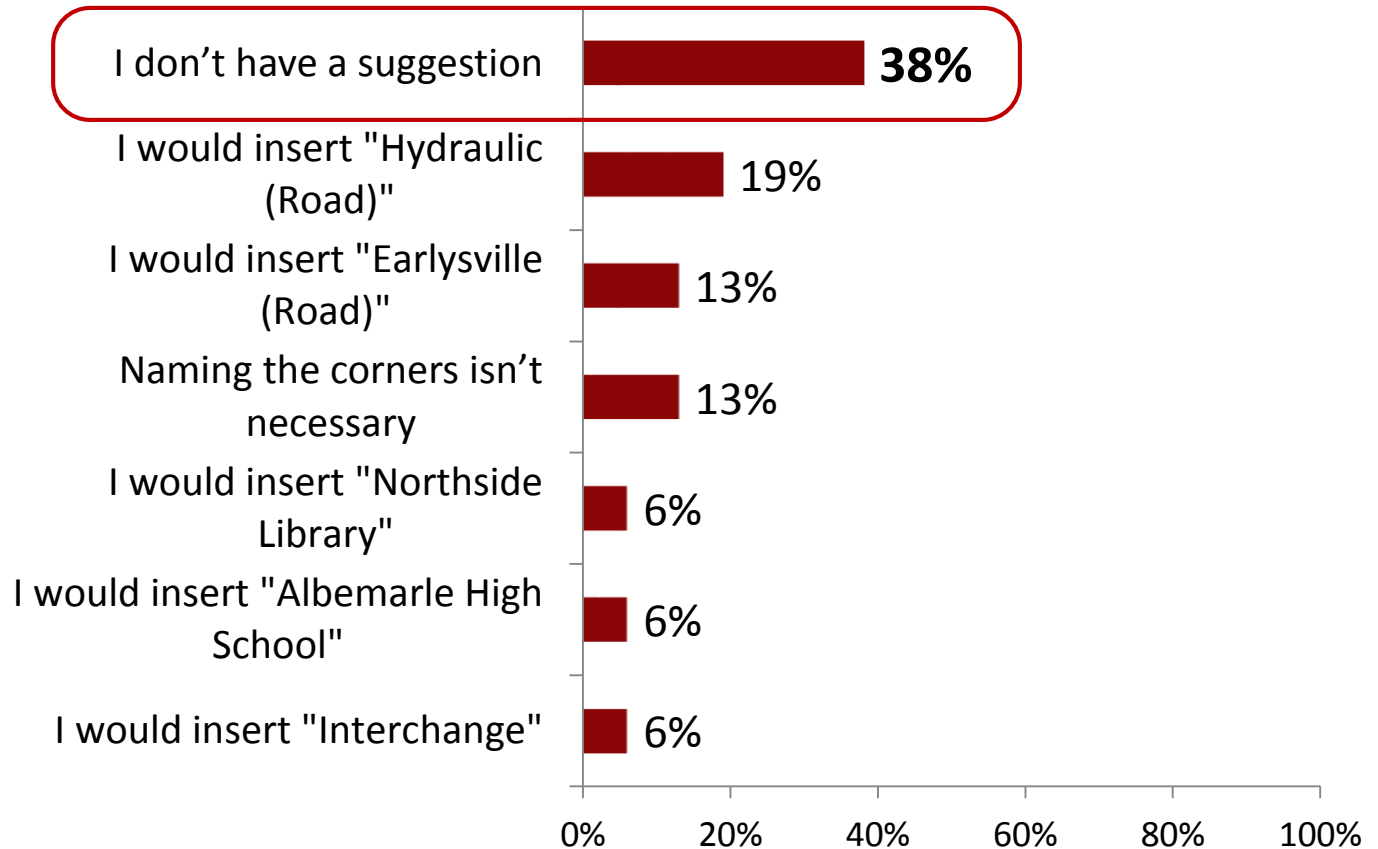
- Rio Northeast  
*to Rio Road East and Downtown Charlottesville*
- Rio Southeast  
*to Rio Road East and Downtown Charlottesville*
- Rio Northwest  
*to Rio Road West and Rio Hill*
- Rio Southwest  
*to Rio Road West and Northside Library*

## Nearly Half of Respondents Would Not Change the Northeast and Southeast Corner Description of “to Rio Road East and Downtown Charlottesville”



Q10. The northeast and southeast corners are highlighted in the image below. A possible description to be used in the signage identifying these corners on Route 29 is “to Rio Road East and Downtown Charlottesville.” How would you improve this description, if at all?

# Four out of Ten Respondents Did Not Have a Suggestion for the Northwest and Southwest Corner Descriptions



Q11. The northwest and southwest corners are highlighted in the image below. A possible description to be used in the signage identifying these corners on Route 29 is "to Rio Road West and \_\_\_\_\_." What nearby public landmark or well-known destination would you insert to complete this description?

**Interesting  
Last  
Observation**

After participating in the focus group experience, all of the study participants believed this overall naming and placemaking initiative was important to pursue.

---

“This is necessary for this place;  
creates status and a draw.”

---

**Focus group participant**

---

“We need something to keep  
small businesses in this area.”

---

**Focus group participant**

---

“This would be great for  
marketing purposes.”

---

**Focus group participant**

---

“This initiative is a good idea to bring our community together.”

---

**Focus group participant**



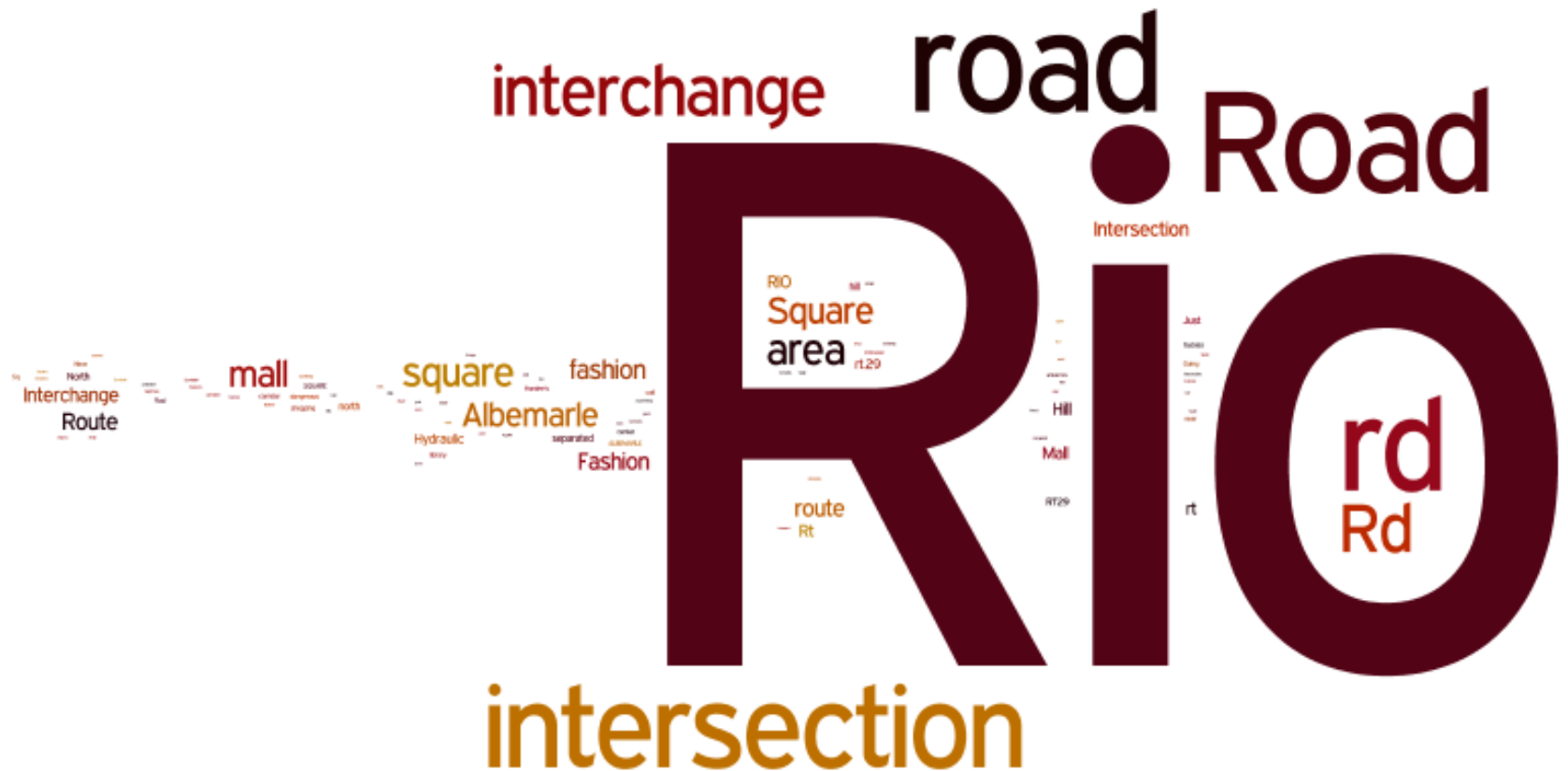
# SIR's Final Naming Recommendations

# SIR Recommendations

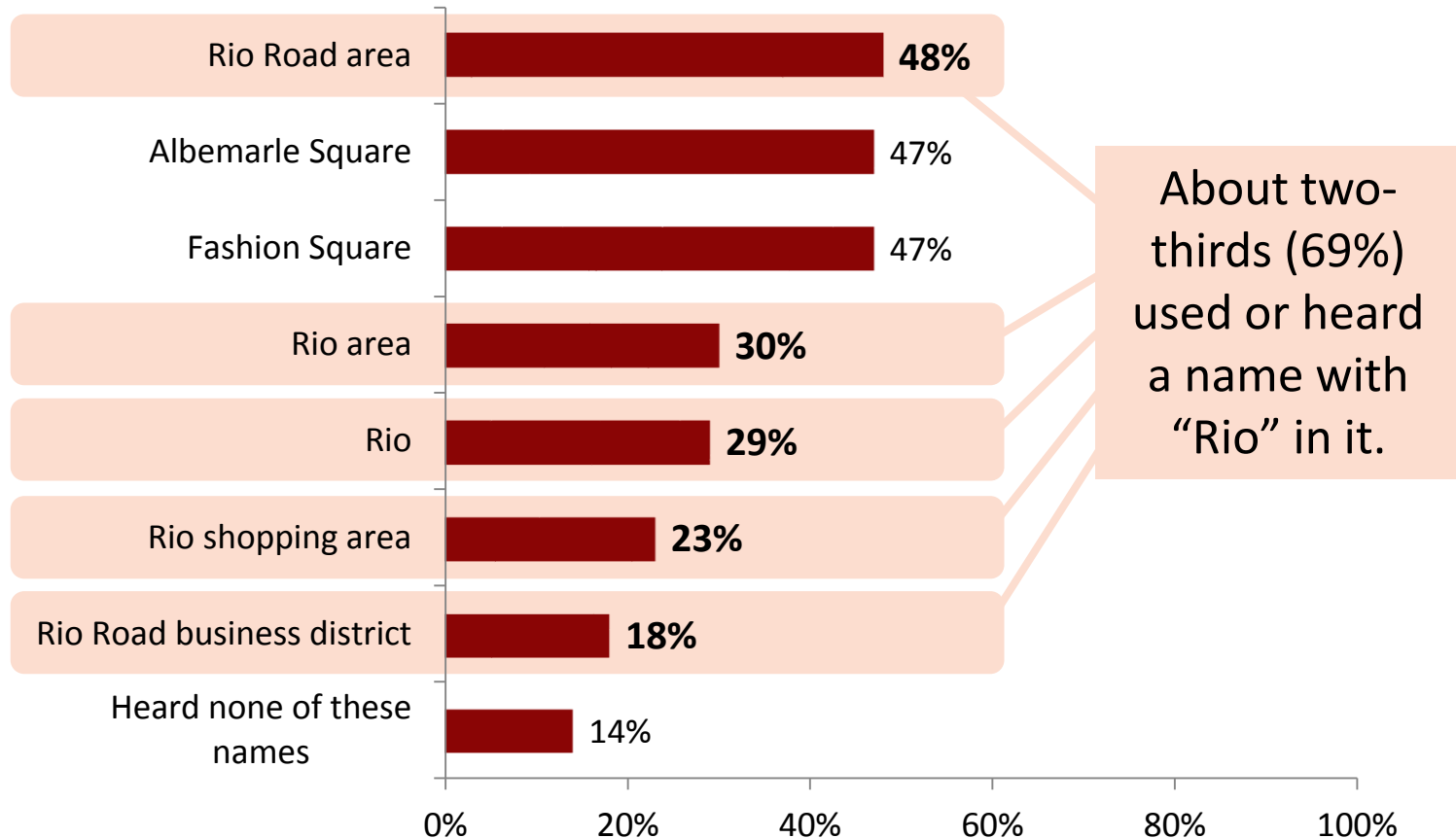
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Name the intersection and immediate area “Rio.” From a marketing perspective, it will end up being called just “Rio.” This short name also lends itself to more creative marketing efforts.

# Unaided Names for the Rio Road Intersection



## Most Respondents Identify the Rio Road– Route 29 Intersection as “Rio Road Area,” “Albemarle Square,” or “Fashion Square”



Q14. Which of the following names have you used or heard to refer to the general geographic area of the Route 29 and Rio Road intersection?

---

“I am partial to ‘Rio’ because I have lived here for a long time—‘Rio’ has some heritage to it ... the name ‘Rio’ is authentic.”

---

**Focus group participant**

---

“People looking for directions specify ‘Rio’ because 29 is so long. ... If they say ‘Rio,’ you know where on 29.”

---

**Focus group participant**

---

“This area is Rio. It’s big. You would think the whole area would be Rio with its own zip code.”

---

**Focus group participant**

# The “Rio” name also lends itself to more creative marketing efforts:

---

“It’s Ri-o, not Ree-o.”

---

---

“Rio de Ville.”

---

**Focus group participants**

*(as in Charlottesville ... Cville ...  
There’s Rio de Janeiro and our Rio de Ville)*



# 2

Name the four intersection parts “corners” and include their respective geographic orientation.

- Rio Northeast Corner
- Rio Southeast Corner
- Rio Northwest Corner
- Rio Southwest Corner



Include “descriptor terms” on roadway signs to help direct people.

**Rio Northeast**

*to Rio Road East and Downtown Charlottesville*

**Rio Southeast**

*to Rio Road East and Downtown Charlottesville*

**Rio Northwest**

*to Rio Road West and Rio Hill*

**Rio Southwest**

*to Rio Road West and Northside Library*



Thank You

For more information on  
this study, please contact:

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Fax: 804-342-1790

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