

## Chapter 1 - Contents

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### Introduction

Because of the anticipated water district along NYS Route 12 in the Town, various board members and citizens decided an updated Route 12 Corridor Plan was needed in 2018. Upon further discussion, the Town considered a Townwide Plan update was necessary and preferable, considering its current Townwide Plan was completed in 1961.

An updated Comprehensive Plan would allow the Town to take advantage of new development opportunities in several areas, especially where municipal sewer exists and with the impending municipal water service. Another goal of its completion is to enhance the community’s quality of life, while maintaining what makes the area a unique and desirable place to live, work, and visit. While the Town has an adopted Zoning Law, it did not have an updated vision or current plan in place beyond the 2004 Corridor Plan to determine whether recently proposed projects in many areas of the Town are consistent with the vision desired by the community.

Ultimately, an updated town-wide Comprehensive Plan for the Town is and will be beneficial to complete in order to shape the Town’s current vision for the future.

### Orleans Plan Purpose

This Comprehensive Plan seeks to gain input to create the community vision, goals and recommended strategies in order to continue to allow our Town and its various communities to continue to be desirable places to work, live and visit. It describes Orleans historical context, outlines various demographic and economic trends that have shaped its recent past, notes current environmental and development conditions, as well as describes community facilities and transportation systems. The public input process and inventory will be used to generate a series of considerations and recommendations regarding the community’s future direction.

Thus, it illustrates for Town leaders and the public where the community has been, where it is now (current conditions), and where it may be going, ultimately to help craft its vision for the future. This vision, strategies, and a series of recommended

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implementation steps should lead Orleans to realize its community vision over time. By illustrating the desired community direction, potential development projects and priority environmental issues/areas can be identified, supported, and promoted or preserved.

According to New York State Town Law, zoning shall be in accordance with a comprehensive plan. Therefore, after this Plan is completed, a Zoning Law Update should be initiated to help ensure the Town Zoning requirements continue to be in compliance with the Town's latest Vision and Strategies.

### Comprehensive Plan Defined

A comprehensive plan is a written document that identifies the goals, policies and/or standards for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of communities within the Town.

Well-crafted plans seek to answer the following questions:

**Where are we now?** This is answered using the community inventory, demographic, economic profile and land use information.

**Where are we going?** This is answered using various trends, possible development scenarios, infrastructure needs, zoning districts and regulations, etc.

**Where do we want to be?** This is answered by relying on citizen input and local

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leadership, to develop or update the community vision or vision statements.

**How do we get there?** This is answered by drafting and finalizing a series of priorities including Goals, Objectives or Strategies, and Actions necessary to accomplish the community's vision over the next 5 to 10

### Comprehensive Plan benefits

- *Addresses quality of life issues*
- *Builds support for local actions*
- *Process can identify community and town-wide needs*
- *Provides legitimacy for upcoming land use and zoning decisions*
- *Leads to community consensus*
- *Serves to guide community decisions*
- *Allows community to work toward the vision for the area*
- *Helps attract prospective residents and employers to the community*
- *Improves support for grant funding to implement priority projects*

years. However, a concerted, committed, and coordinated effort is often required to approach the goals and vision.

### Planning Process

The Committee working on the Plan is comprised of Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Board members, the zoning officer and a Town Board member, as well as residents and business people in the Town. The Committee volunteered it's time to work and complete this Plan to benefit residents, business owners, and visitors of the Town for the next 5 to 10 years.

Process steps included:

- A brainstorming exercise: identifying Town likes and dislikes, special places, and those needing work, as well as community Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.
- An online public survey used to gather public opinion regarding several planning and community issues.
- A community inventory which involves a brief history, demographic, housing, and business trends. The inventory also includes a series of environmental conditions, land use patterns, traffic levels, bridge crossings and other elements.
- Public meetings/input sessions were used to present inventory results to date, and gather additional input to help shape and refine the community vision, goals, strategies, and actions.
- The land use portion of the Plan discusses existing land uses town-wide and explores scenarios for future growth patterns.
- Potential future zoning amendments identified for discussion purposes meant to be consistent with or to implement the community vision and goals.

## Location

The Town of Orleans is located in the “North Country” portion of northern New York. It sits approximately 95 miles north of the City of Syracuse on the St. Lawrence River in northern Jefferson County. It is approximately 20 to 25 miles north of the City of Watertown, Jefferson County’s county seat. The Town’s population center, LaFargeville, is approximately 25 miles (less

than 30 minutes) from Fort Drum’s main gate on US Route 11 via Interstate-81 and I-781.

This area along the St. Lawrence River has been a local, national and global destination for tourists and visitors for many years. Also known as the Thousand Islands, this portion of the River has shaped development along its shorelines and its settlement patterns for



many years. Future development and tourism will likely continue to be shaped by its natural characteristics and unique assets.

The Town is made up of several smaller communities. The Hamlet of LaFargeville lies within the central portion of the Town of Orleans. It has the largest population, number of businesses of any of the communities within the Town. Fishers Landing is another Hamlet, along the St. Lawrence River. The Hamlets of Thousand

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Island Park and Fineview are on Wellesley Island in the St. Lawrence River. Wellesley Island offers unique community like characteristics, made up of both year round residences and seasonal homes, along and near the St. Lawrence River. The state parks and public land on Wellesley Island along the River include hundreds of campsites, cabins, boat launches enabling boating, hiking trails at the Nature Center, geological formations, visitor displays, historical markers and buildings.

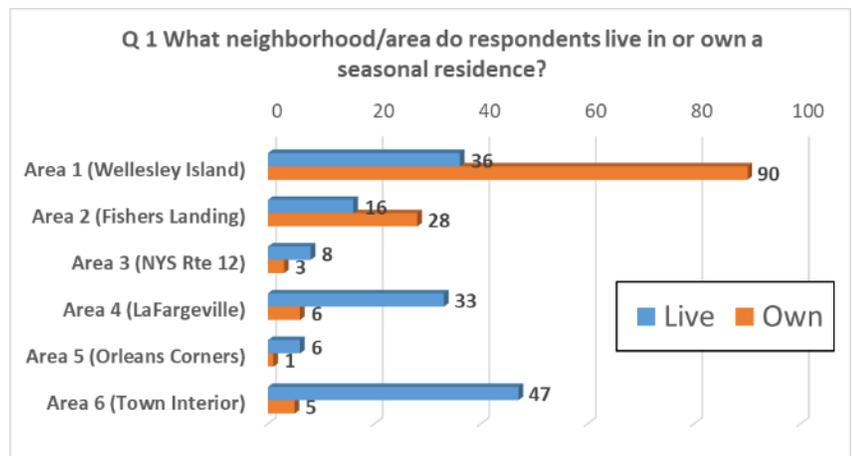
### Citizen Community Input

Early on during the planning process, planning committee members placed a high priority on gaining as much public input as possible, not only from year-round residents and business owners, but also from seasonal residents and visitors.

Two committee open house type meetings were held on August 6 of 2018, one at the Fire Station in Fishers Landing from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm, and the other in the school auditorium in LaFargeville from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm in order to seek public input and inform the public on the start of the Comprehensive Planning process. There were 20 attendees at the Fishers Landing site, and 4 attendees at the LaFargeville School site with a total of 24 members of the public attending with committee members and staff also participating. The meetings served to brainstorm community issues, locate special places throughout the community and collect public thoughts and comments on the information to be included in the Comprehensive Plan process.

During the summer of 2018, a community survey and a poster regarding the open houses were sent to all taxable properties in the Town. It included a link to the Town website, and from there a link to the community survey for completion online. There were 268 completed surveys online and in paper form. With a response rate of 12.5% of the year-round households (those who indicated they lived in the Town), and 11.1% of seasonal housing units (those who indicated they were seasonal residents) in the Town, the number of responses is considered to be an adequate return rate. The total number of 268 surveys completed out of the 2,238 households in the Town yielded a return rate of 11.9%. For example, a statistically valid random sample survey would require return by 10% of the households surveyed.

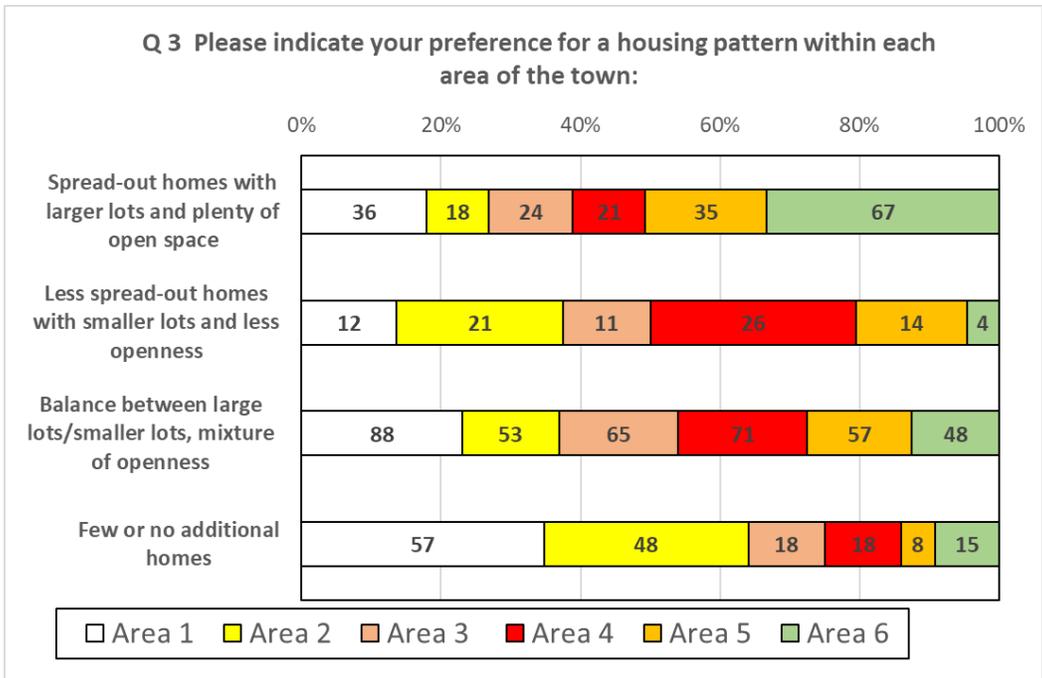
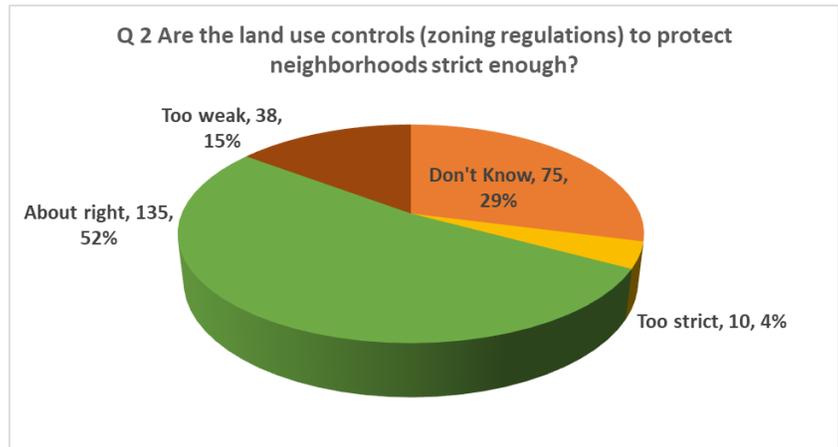
The first question of the community survey asked where people lived or owned property. Of note, 126 respondents lived or owned property in Area 1 (Wellesley Island) with 28.5% of respondents living there, while the other 71.4% owning property there. Area 2 (Fishers Landing) respondents included 36.3% living there, while 63.6% own property there.



Respondents from the other four areas in Town included more of those living there as opposed to owning. Area 3 (NYS Route 12) totaled eleven respondents, of which 72.7% live there, while 27.27% own property. Area 4 totaled 39 respondents, with 84.6% live there, with 15.4% owned property. Area 5 had seven respondents, 85.7% of whom live there. Area six had fifty-two respondents, 90.4% of whom live there.

Question 2 asked respondents whether they felt the land use controls (zoning regulations) to protect neighborhoods were strict enough. A little over half (52%) indicated the land use controls were about right. However, 29% indicated they didn't know, while 15% indicated they were too weak, and the smallest segment of respondents indicated the land use controls were too strict (10.4%).

Question 3 asked respondents to indicate their preference for a housing pattern within each of the six areas in the town. Area 1 responses showed varied preferences, including a desire for a balance between large lots/smaller lots and a mixture of openness. Another segment of choices

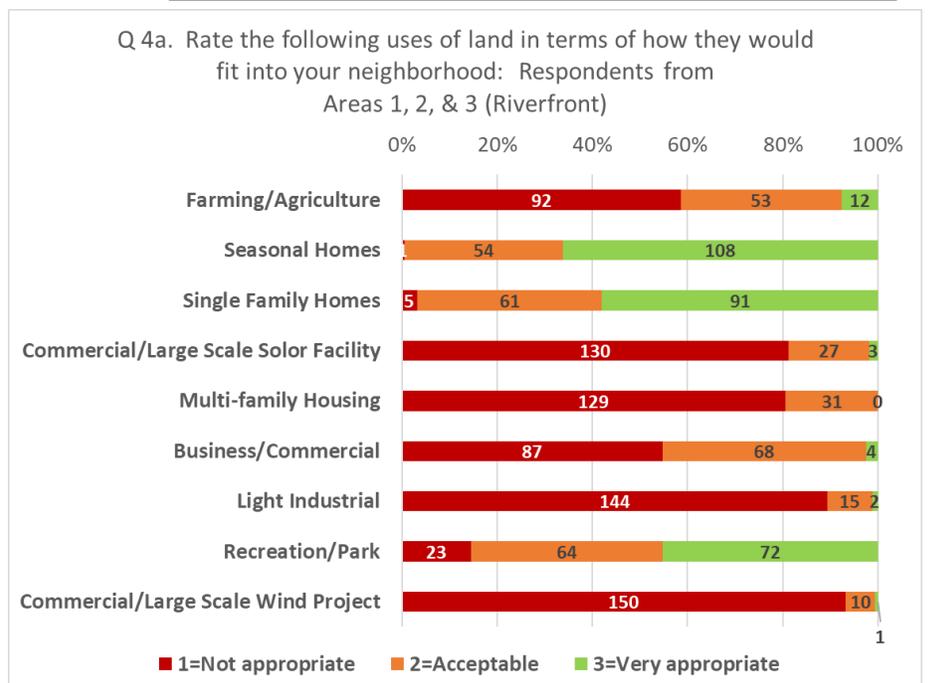
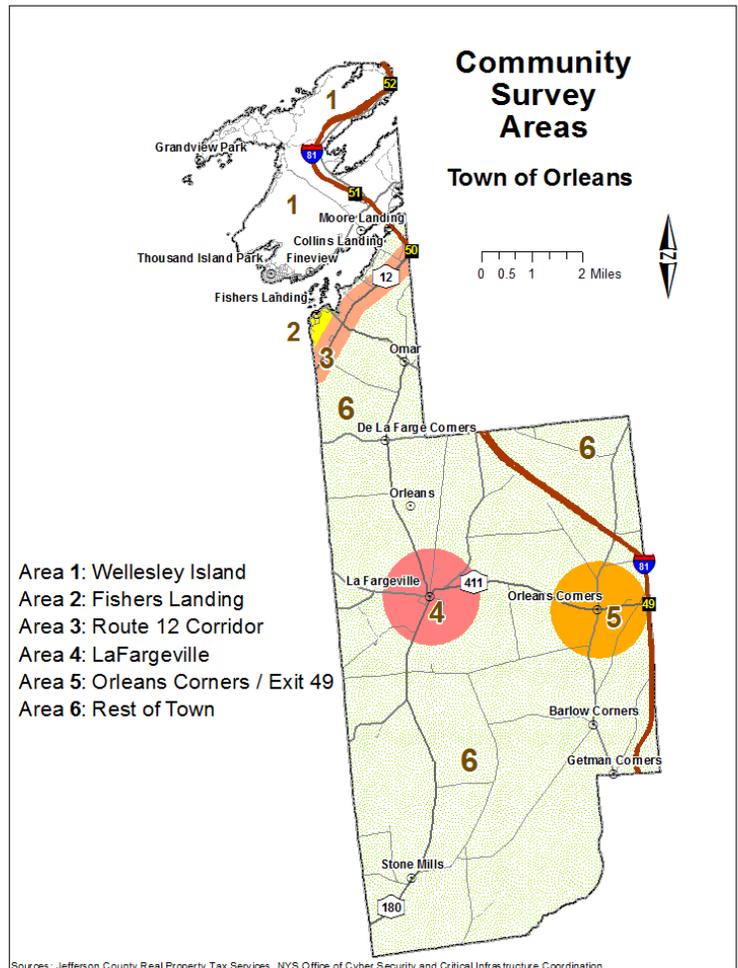


indicated few or no additional homes, with a minority of responses chose spread-out homes with larger lots and plenty of open space, and a few indicating less spread-out homes and less openness.

Area 2 responses were similar in that more choices for balance between large lots/small lots and a mixture of openness, as well as few or no additional homes were indicated more often than the less spread-out homes with smaller lots and less openness. While some did choose the spread-out homes with

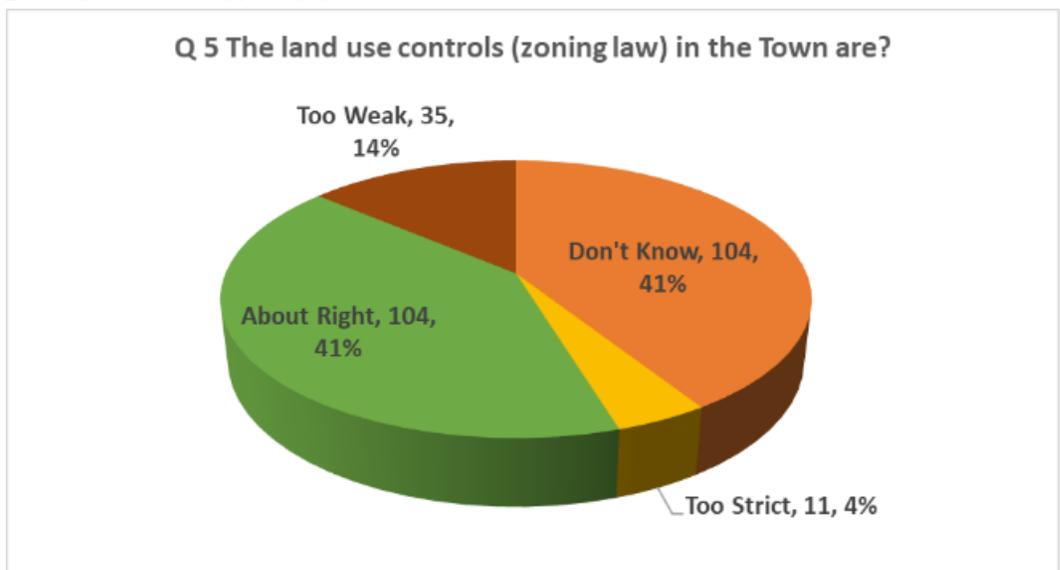
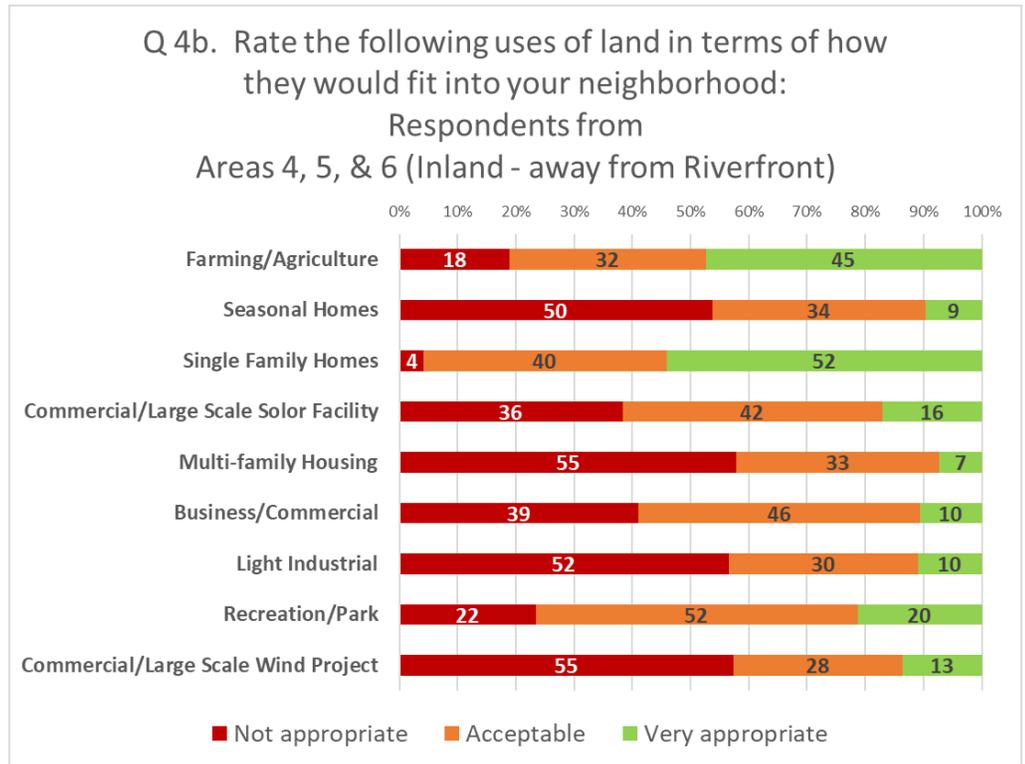
larger lots and plenty of open space response. The majority of Area 3 responses were for balance between large lots/smaller lots and a mixture of openness. Area 4 had a majority with the balance between large lots/smaller lots and a mixture of openness indicated, while another quarter of responses indicated less spread-out homes with smaller lots and less openness. Area 5 illustrated a similar pattern. Area 6 had the most indicating spread-out homes with larger lots and plenty of open space, with a good segment choosing balance between large lots/smaller lots, and mixture of openness.

Question 4 said: Please rate the following uses of land and how they would fit into your neighborhood. For this question the results were split between the Riverfront respondents (4a) (areas 1, 2, and 3) and the Inland or away from Riverfront (4b) (areas 4, 5, and 6). As expected, many responses 91 Riverfront and 52 Inland responses indicated single family residential was very appropriate. However, for the Riverfront respondents a larger number chose seasonal homes as very appropriate (108). Also, 45 inland respondents chose Farming/Agriculture as very appropriate with another 32 indicating acceptable. Recreation/parks were also rated as very appropriate (72) among the Riverfront respondents with another 62 indicating acceptable. Conversely, other uses such as commercial/large scale wind with 150 Riverfront and another 55 Inlanders rated them as not

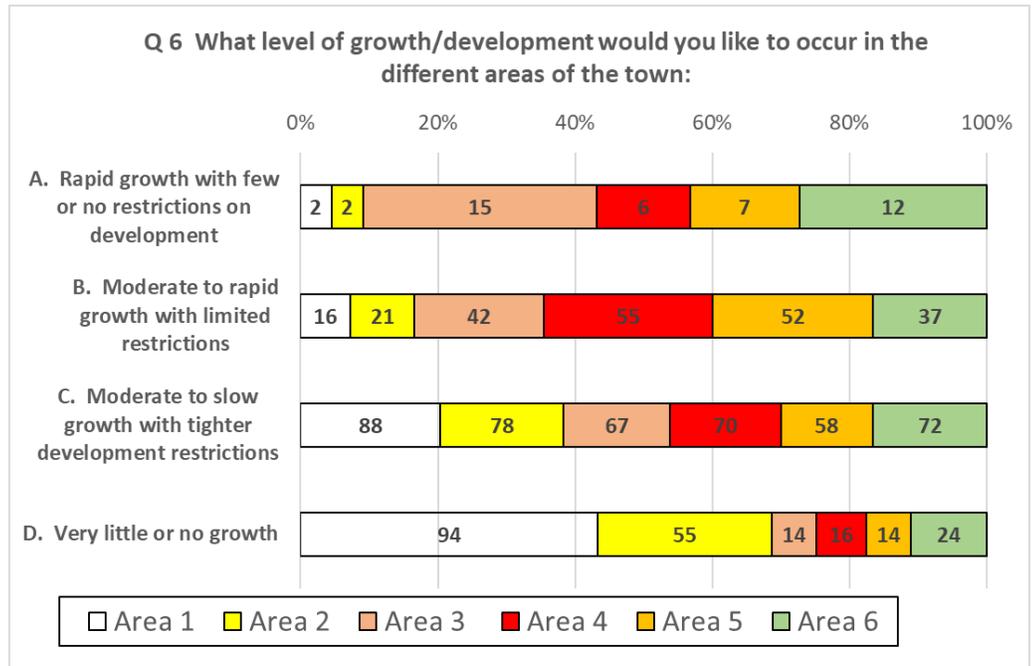


appropriate in their neighborhood. However, commercial solar were split with 130 Riverfront indicating not appropriate while only 36 Inlander respondents indicated not appropriate with 42 indicating appropriate and 16 indicating very appropriate.

Question 5 asked about the land use controls in the Town. While 41% indicated the land use controls were about right, the same percentage indicated they didn't know. Therefore, almost half of the respondents need more experience to answer the question truthfully. While 14% of the respondents said the land use controls were too weak, having 41% that don't know casts doubt on any appreciable conclusions from the question.

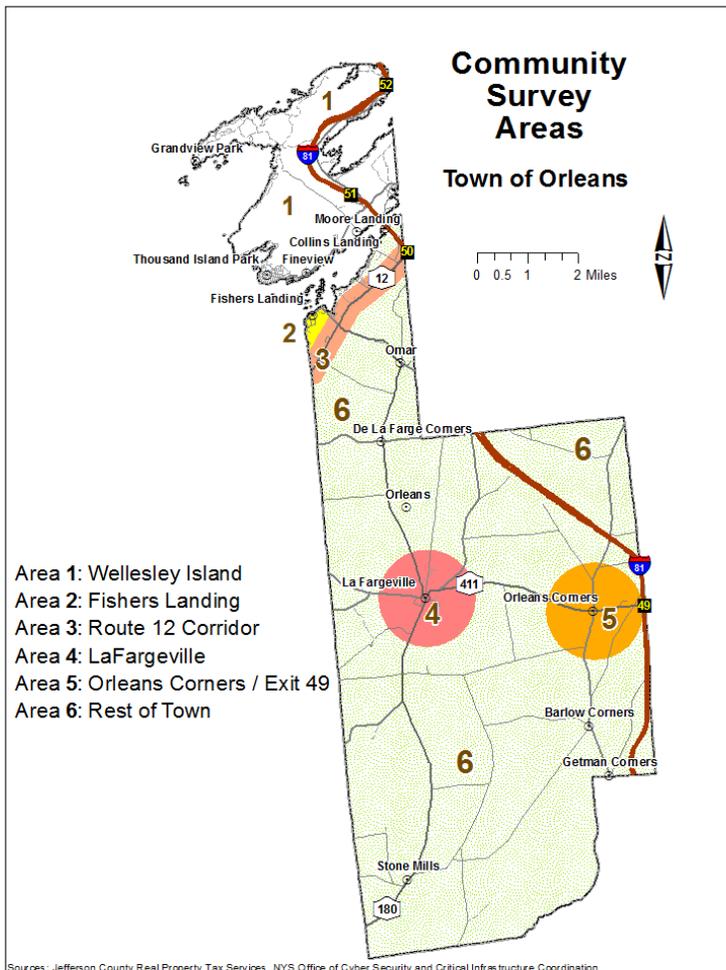


Question 6 asked what level of growth was preferred in the different areas of the town. Within Area 1, the highest number of responses indicated very little or no growth with 94 out of the 200 responses for Area 1. For Area 2, 78 out of the total of 156 indicated moderate to slow growth with tighter development restrictions, while Area 3 also had more of the



total responses (67 out of 138) indicate moderate to slow growth with tighter development restrictions. However, the second highest response was moderate to rapid growth with limited restrictions (42 out of 138).

Area 4 also had the most responses for moderate to slow growth with tighter development restrictions (70 out of 147). Similarly, the second most chosen response was moderate to rapid growth with limited restrictions (55 out of 147). Similarly, more Area 5 responses (58 out of 121) also indicated moderate to slow growth with tighter development restrictions. Similarly, the second most indicated response was moderate to rapid growth with limited restrictions (52 out of 121). Area 6 also had the most responses (72 out of 145) for the moderate to slow growth with tighter development restrictions.



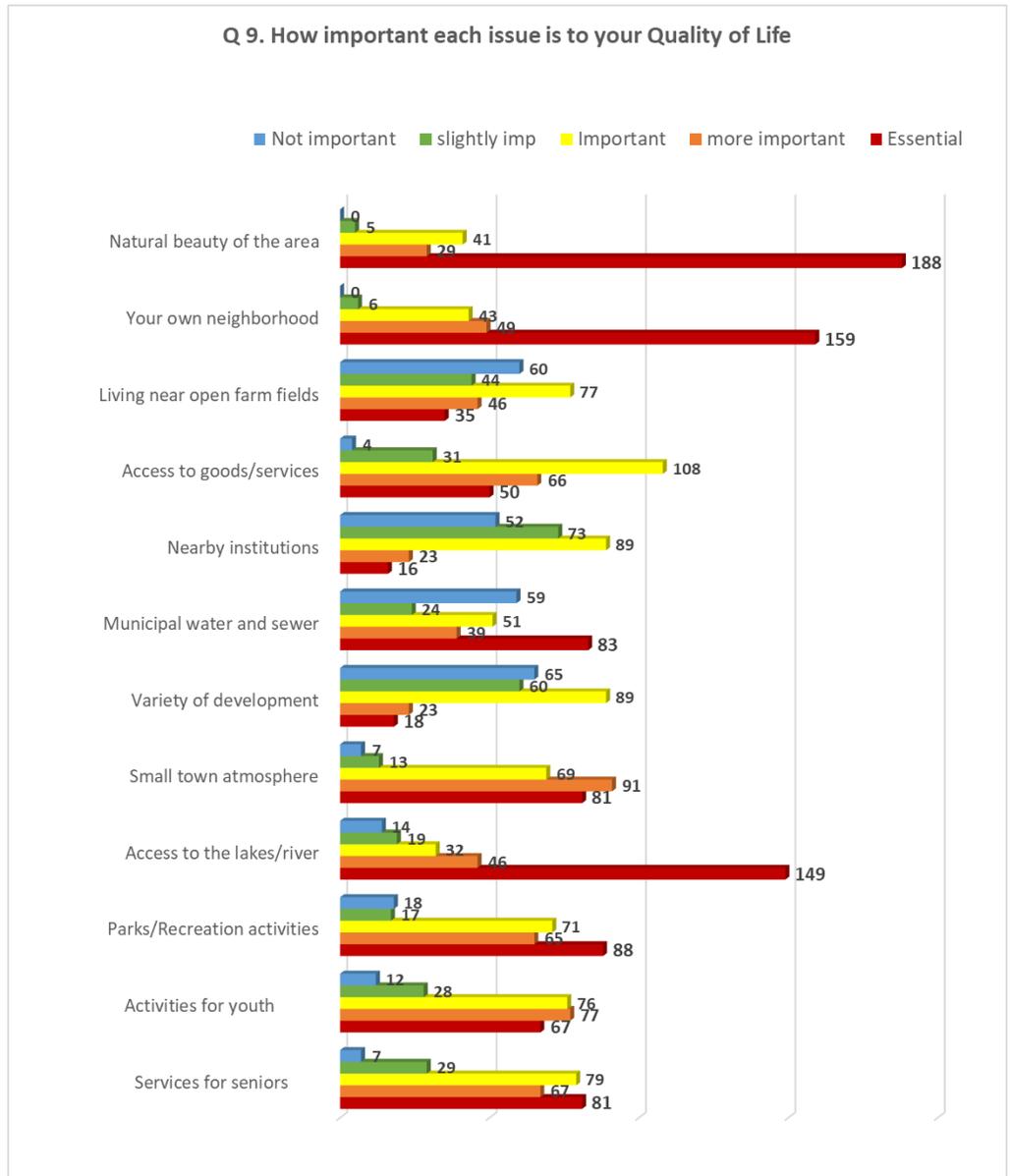
Question 7, asked respondents to please list what you think are your neighborhood and the Town's greatest assets worthy of preserving or enhancing. The open-ended input responses are placed in the appendix of the Plan.

Question 8, asked respondents what you think are the Town's serious problems or deficiencies in your neighborhood and Town-wide.

The open-ended input responses are placed in the appendix of the Plan.

Question 9 asked respondents how important each issue is to your quality of life. Natural beauty of the area, your own neighborhood, and access to the lakes/river were the top three rated responses with the most responses marked essential.

Others receiving quite a few essential ratings were parks/recreational facilities and municipal water and sewer. Activities for seniors were also deemed essential or more important. Small town atmosphere also rated either essential, more important, or important to most respondents.

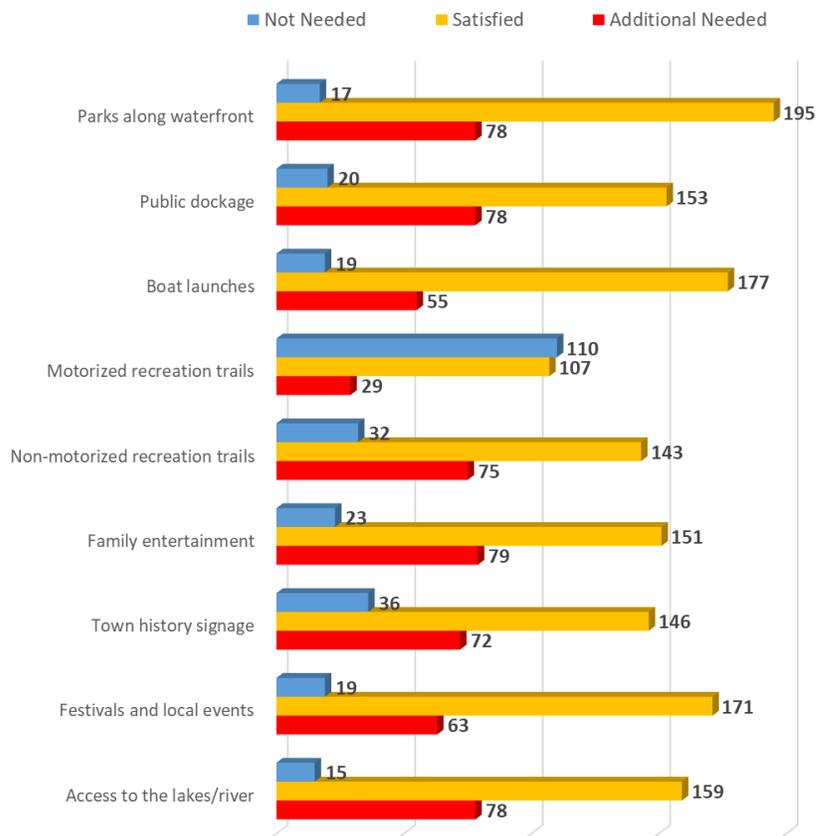


Question 10 asked respondents to indicate their satisfaction with the following recreational opportunities in the Town. Parks along the waterfront, boat launches, festivals and local events as well as access to the river received the highest amount of satisfied respondents as well those who marked additional needed.

Perhaps unexpectedly, motorized recreation trails received the most numerous not needed responses even outnumbering those respondents who were satisfied with motorized trails in the Town.

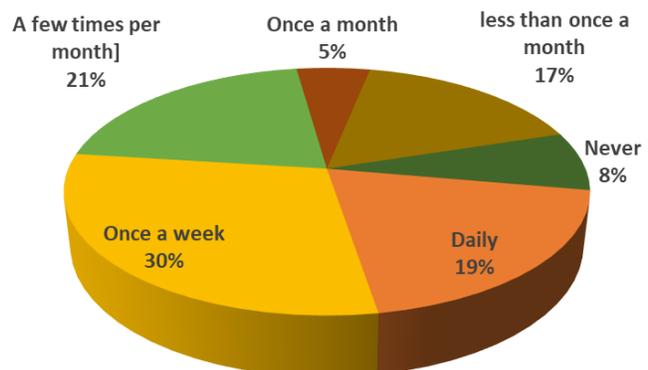
Question 11 asked how often respondents purchase goods/groceries within the Town of Orleans. The largest segment of respondents (30%) indicated once a week. The next largest segment (21%) indicated a few times per month,

Q 10. Please indicate your satisfaction with the following recreational opportunities in the Town:



while daily was the next closest at 19% of the respondents. Less than once a month wasn't too far behind with 17% of the respondents.

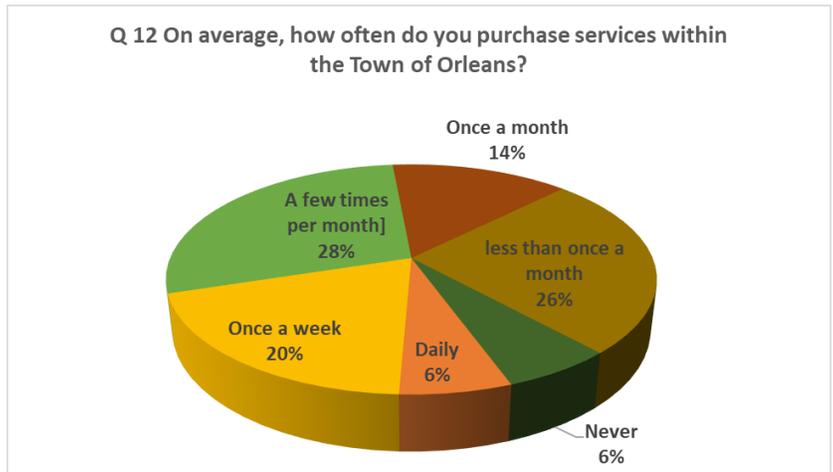
Q 11 On average, how often do you purchase goods/groceries within the Town of Orleans?



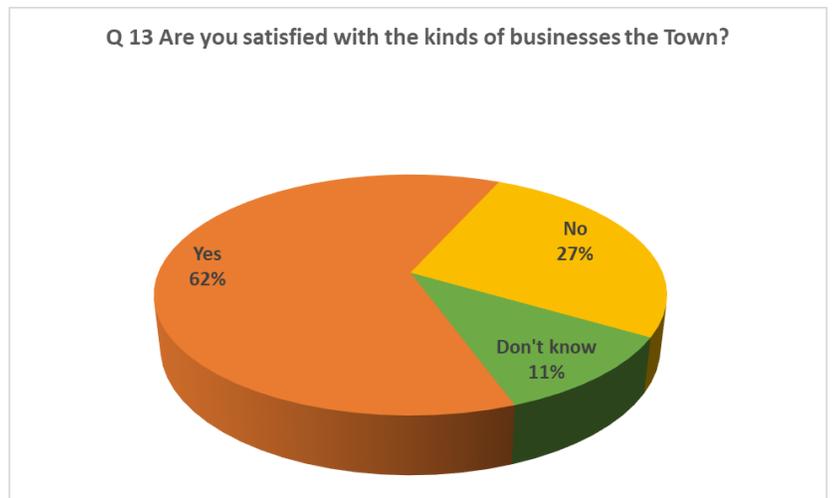
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Question 12 asked how often respondents purchase services within the Town of Orleans. This question yielded diverse results, with the largest segment (28%) indicating a few times per month, less than once a month indicated a close 26%, while only 20% indicated once a week.

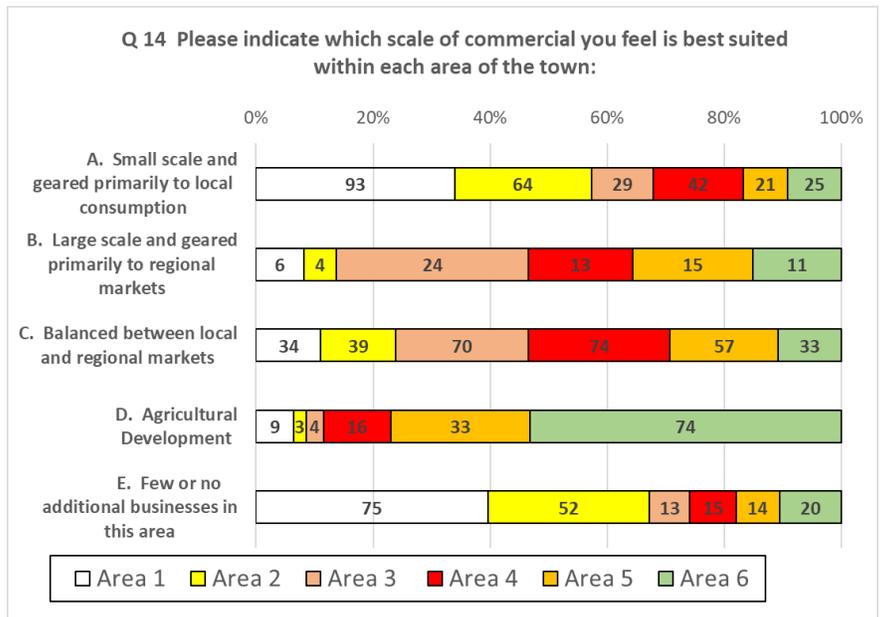


Question 13 asked are you satisfied with the kinds of businesses in the Town? The majority of respondents said yes (62%) with a little over a quarter said no (27%) and only eleven percent said they didn't know.

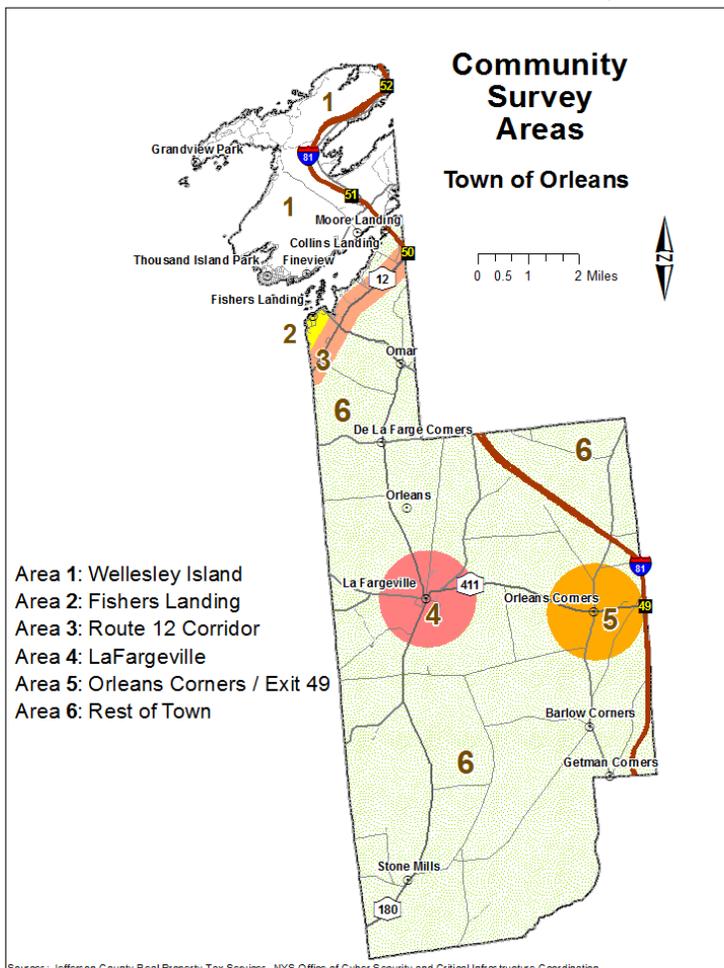
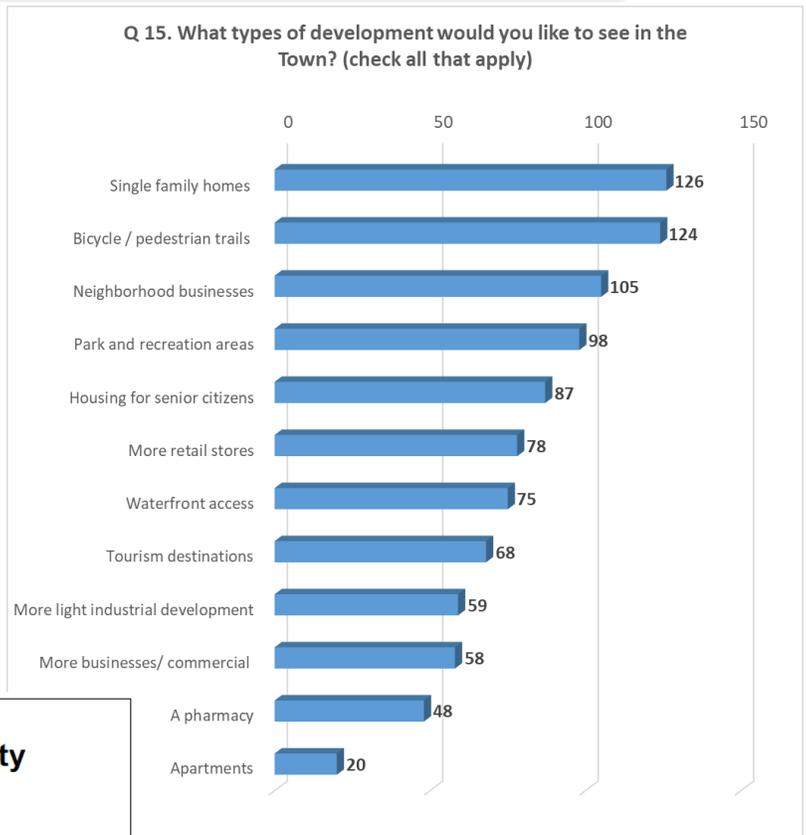


Question 14 asked which scale of commercial you feel is best suited within each area of the town. Four categories within each of the six areas resulted in diverse responses:

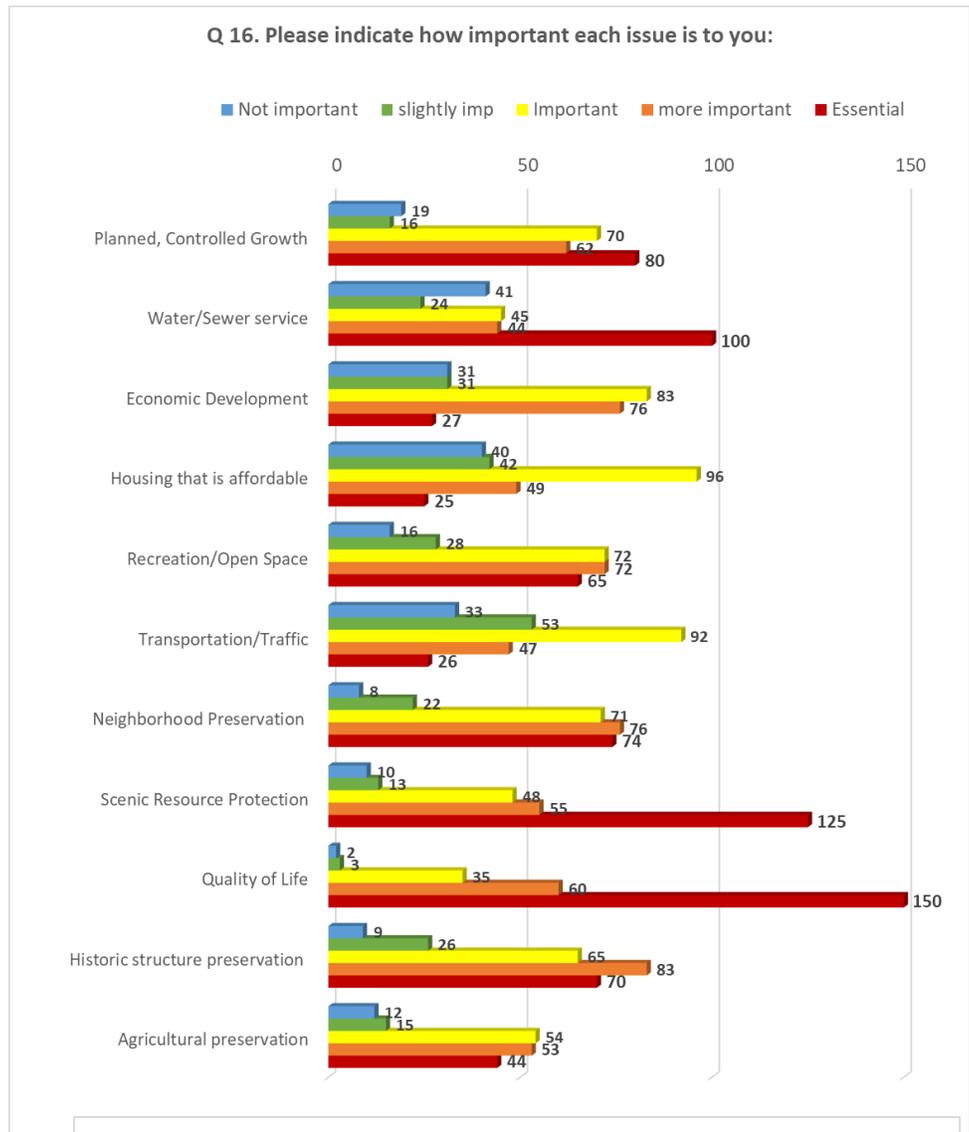
Area 1 had the highest number of responses in the A. small scale and geared primarily to local consumption with 93 out of 223 responses, while the second most responses was E. few or no additional businesses in the area (75 out of 223). Area 2's highest response was also in the small scale and geared primarily to local consumption category with 64 out of 152, and similarly, the second most response was 52 out of 152 for E. few or no additional businesses in this area. Area 5's highest response was for a balance between local and regional markets (57 out of 140) As expected, the bulk of Area 6 responses were for agricultural development (74 out of 163).



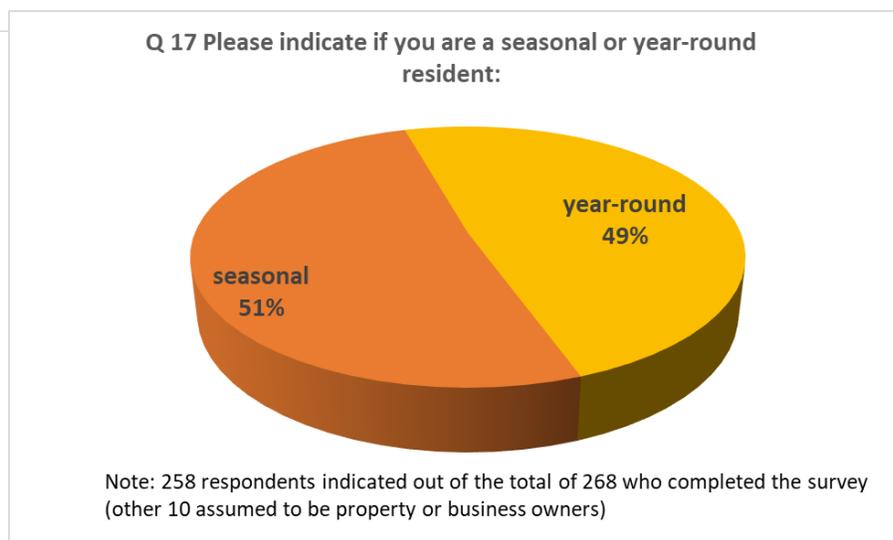
Question 15 asked what types of development respondents would like to see in the Town. All that applied could be checked. Single family homes, bicycle/pedestrian trails, and neighborhood businesses rated in the top three. Fourth and fifth were park and recreation areas and housing for senior citizens.



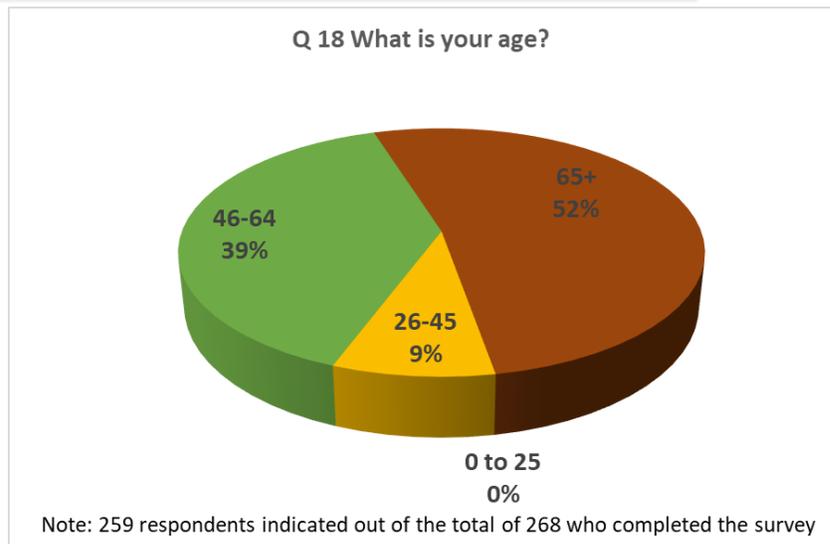
Question 16 asked respondents to rate how important each issue was to them. Quality of life had the most deem it essential with 150, and another 60 rating is as more important, with 35 deeming it important. Scenic resource protection was also rated highly with 125 respondents indicating it essential, and another 55 rating is as more important, with 48 deeming it important. Third most with 100 essential responses.



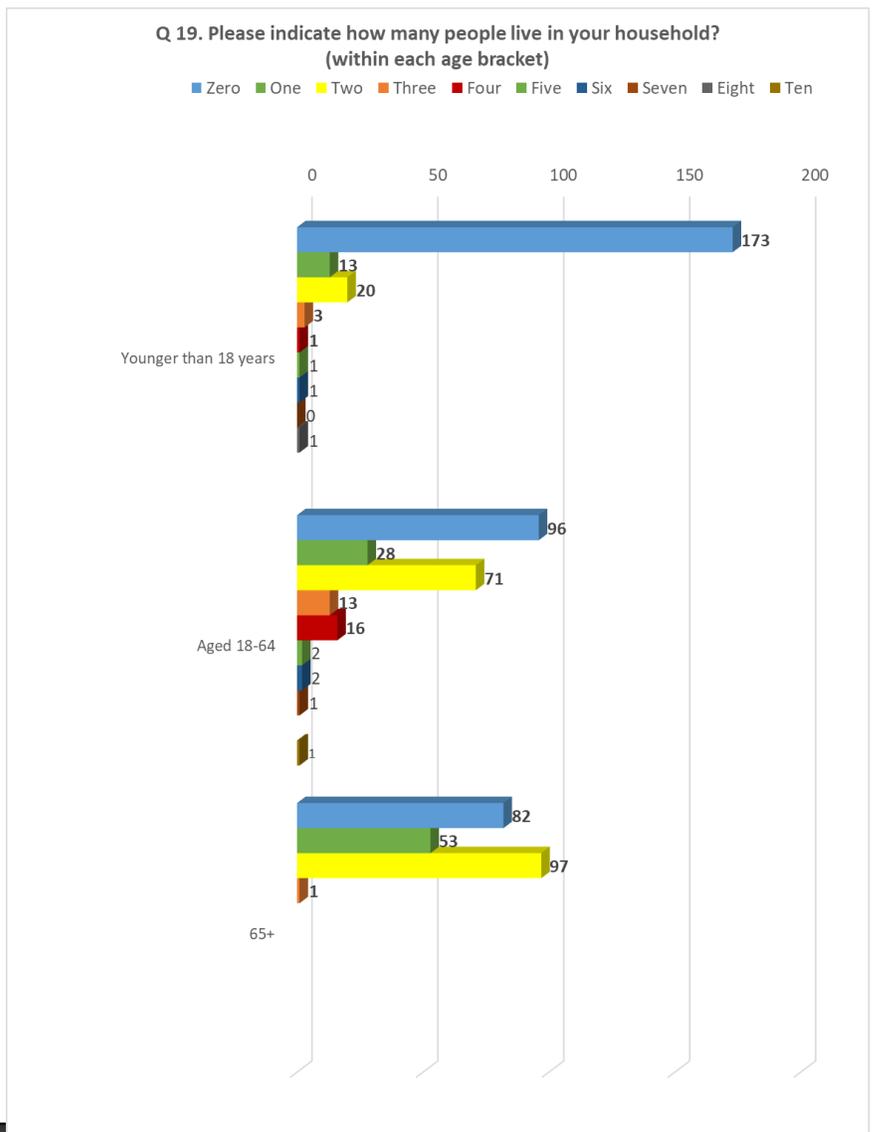
Question 17 asked about people’s residency in the Town. A little over half (51%) indicated they were seasonal residents. This is a decent spread considering the number of seasonal and year-round residences in the Town. A more one-sided response means more input would be needed from the missing segment.



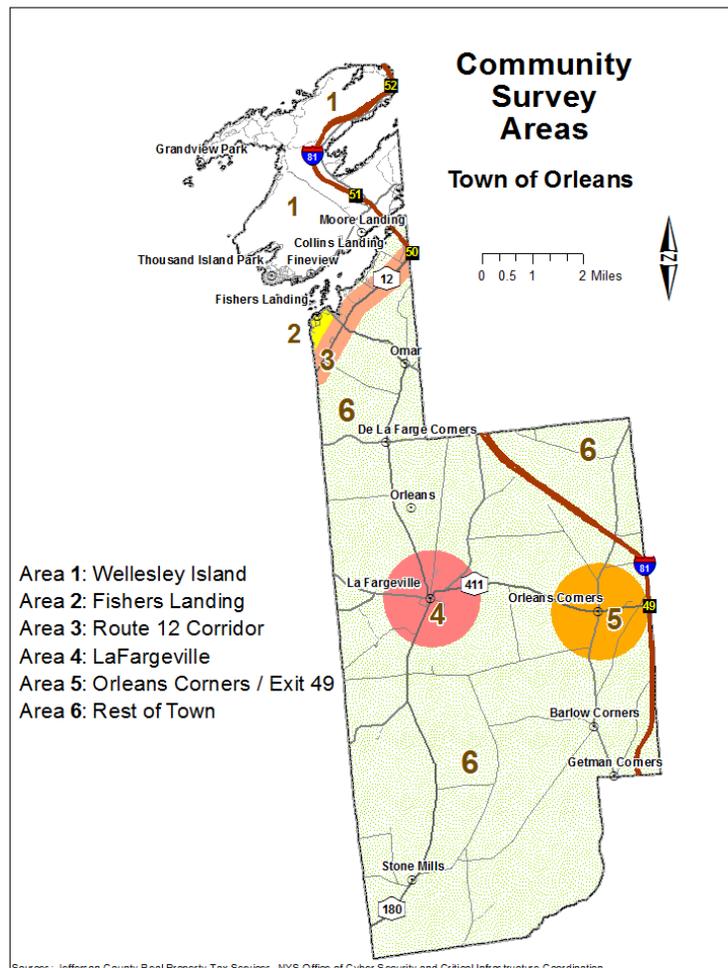
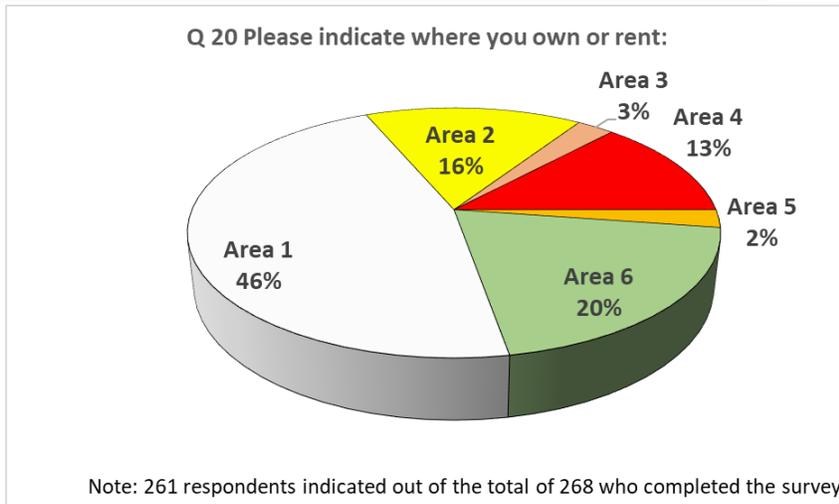
Question 18 asked respondents to indicate their age range. Over half (52%) of the respondents were 65 and older. Another 39% were between 46 and 64 years of age. The smallest segment of respondents to the community survey were between 26 and 45 years old.



Question 19 asked respondents to indicate how many people live in their household within each age range. The questions purpose was to help gauge household sizes among respondents. Interestingly, only 40 households (of those who responded) had children in them. Many households (97) had two residents in them aged 65 and over. Also, there were seventy-one two person households with people between the ages of 18 and 64. Also of note, in each age bracket, the two person category outnumbered the one person category.



Question 20 asked where people owned or rented their property. The largest number were from Area 1 with 46% of the total. The rest of the Town respondents were fairly well distributed, especially considering the population and number of households within each area.

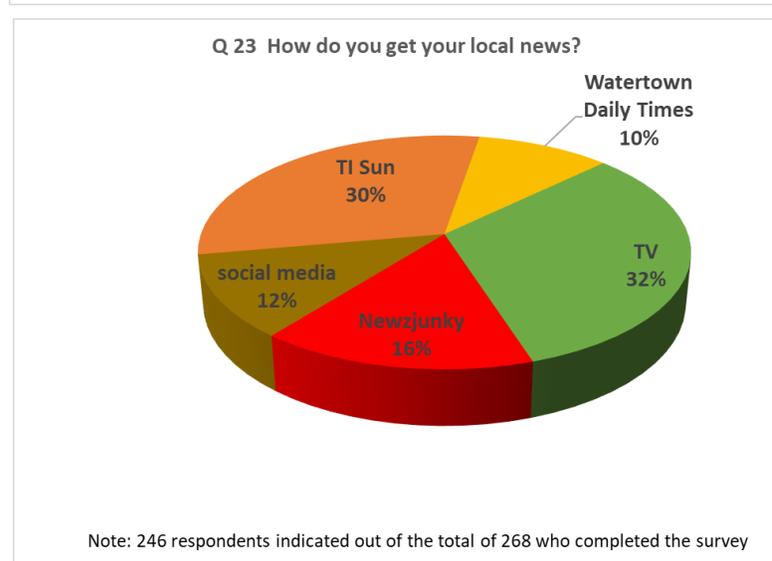
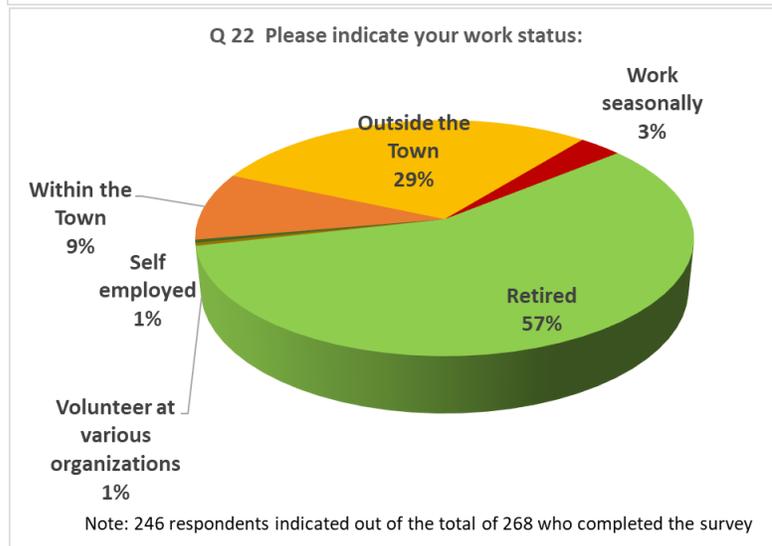
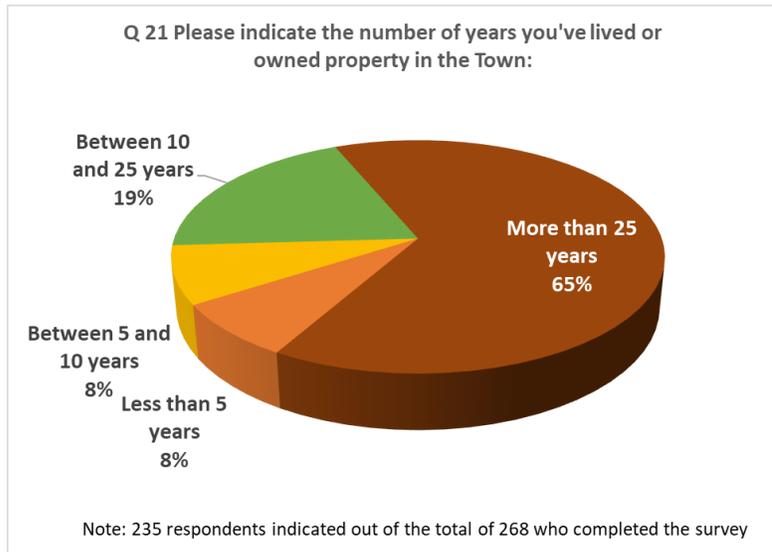


Question 21 measured the number of years respondents have lived or owned property in the Town. As expected, many of the respondents (65%) have lived or owned property for more than 25 years in the Town of Orleans. The next largest segment was between 10 and 25 years with 19% of respondents. Therefore, 84% of those who responded to the survey would be considered long term residents. As vested in the community they want to know and influence community decisions.

Question 22 asked respondents their work status. By far, the largest segment consisted of retirees (57%), with the next segment working outside the Town (29%). Of note: 9% of the workforce works within the Town.

Question 23 (the final question) asked respondents how they get their local news. Perhaps unexpectedly was the relatively high amount of news from Television (32%), compared to the TI Sun (30%). Even online social media had provided 12% of the respondents with their local news.

A summary of the open ended results will be developed and the full set will be in the appendix.



## Survey Results – Brief Summary

Of the 268 completed surveys, the proportion of respondents' residency: 49% year-round to 51% seasonal respondents. With Orleans 2,265 housing units, 268 respondents represented 11.8% of the 2016 estimated number of units assuming one survey was submitted per year-round or seasonal unit respectively.

Proportion of respondents by Town area:  
Area 1 – 46%, Area 2 – 16%, Area 3 – 3%,  
Area 4 – 13%, Area 5 – 2%, Area 6 – 20%.

Top three rated most essential quality of life issues on a scale of not important to essential by respondents:

- Natural beauty of the area,
- Your own neighborhood,
- Access to the river.

Bottom Three:

- Nearby institutions,
- Variety of Development,
- Living near open farm fields.

Top three rated preferred development types in the Town by respondents:

- Single family homes,
- Bicycle pedestrian trails,
- Neighborhood businesses.

Bottom three:

- Apartments,
- Pharmacy,
- More business/commercial.

The full results of the survey summary can be found in the previous section.

## Open Houses - Brainstorming

The exercise conducted during the summer open houses of 2018 at Fishers Landing and LaFargeville identified community or Town Strengths, Weaknesses and Priorities as well as special places and areas in need of attention or effort throughout the Town. A Townwide map was also displayed that allowed attendees a chance to indicate special areas or areas needing attention for effort.

The following pages summarize the input into the main categories and kept similar comments grouped into common themes in order to more effectively understand and follow-up in the areas desired.

<b>TOWN STRENGTHS</b>	
<b>Parks and Recreation</b>	Minna Anna Nature Center, Wellesley Island State Park, Grass Point SP, Perch River Wildlife Management Area, name all parks, trails, fishing, boating, wintertime recreation, Town boat launch/ marinas, fishing charters/guides
<b>Taxes</b>	Keep taxes reasonable, helps keep businesses viable, increase tax base, Town transfer site is affordable and convenient,
<b>Great People</b>	Committed board members, government employees, LCSD staff, Cooperation/shared services between the school and the Town, Youth commission programs and events
<b>Rural Character</b>	Small town culture, ag influence, open space, Plentiful farms/agricultural fields/working landscapes, location of the new NYS Welcome Center
<b>Location\beauty</b>	Proximity to Canada, Thousand Islands, St. Lawrence River, tourism, trade, recreation, historical significance of the area, walkability in Fishers Landing to groceries, restaurants, tennis, support of artists and craftsman (Stone Mills), Great Lakes Seaway Trail Scenic Byway
<b>Transportation\Road Network</b>	Decent, shared responsibilities, cooperative agencies, well maintained, wintertime road maintenance (snow removal)
<b>Local Employment</b>	Hood, School, Racetrack, Gilco, Agriculture

<b>TOWN WEAKNESSES</b>	
<b>Employment</b>	Limited number of year round jobs (non-farm)
<b>Senior Housing</b>	Limited number of senior living units (55+)
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Lack of municipal water along NYS Rte 180 (between LaFargeville and Fishers Landing), groundwater contamination (NYS Rte 12), limited sewer service availability townwide, low yield well water in some areas, Town road pavement patching in Fishers Landing after sewer line installation
<b>Vacancy/Property maintenance</b>	Lack of a program to address zombie and/or property maintenance parcels
<b>Signage/billboards</b>	Proliferation of off-premise signs (illegal)

<b>LOCAL PRIORITIES</b>	
<b>Business and Development</b>	Corridor business development (NYS Rte 12, CR 100, NYS Rte 411, Cross Island Road), balancing development with aesthetic quality, Expanding the number of local jobs/businesses, Keeping the bank and existing stores operating
<b>Pedestrian Safety and Trails</b>	Non-motorized pedestrian safety (townwide), Pedestrian safety along NYS Rte 180 (need sidewalk or trail), Rivergate Trail (recreational trail) connecting Clayton to LaFargeville
<b>Agriculture</b>	Adding more parcels to the NYS Certified Ag District
<b>Renewable Energy</b>	Solar energy and other minimal impact renewables
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Secure funds to lower municipal water district user costs
<b>AREAS/ISSUES THAT NEED ATTENTION</b>	
<b>Pedestrian Safety and Trails</b>	Enhance pedestrian safety in and near LaFargeville (youth, senior citizens, et al), also pedestrian safety along CR 100, address recreation vehicle (ATV, snowmobile) use on public roads to enhance safety
<b>NYS ROUTE 12</b>	Want more commercial development especially on NYS Route 12, Clean up NYS Route 12 Corridor, Evaluate setbacks along NYS Route 12 (minimum of 200 feet), Remove old gas station at corner of Seaway Ave and NYS Route 12
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Need municipal water from LaFargeville to Fishers Landing, Municipal Sewer Installed at Collins Landing East
<b>Vacancy/Property maintenance</b>	Clean up/address property maintenance, use the newly enacted state tool to address zombie or abandoned properties
<b>Recreation</b>	Tennis Court repair (Fishers Landing), Track State Park expansion plans
<b>Community Character</b>	Balance aesthetic/scenic quality with development for example: a mix of forest/public/conservation land/agriculture

SPECIAL AREAS/AND LOCATIONS THAT NEED ATTENTION	
<b>Tourism Promotion – Unique\Special Areas</b>	Thousand Islands Winery, Coyote Flats, Thousand Islands Bridge, Perch Lake Wildlife Management Area, Stone Mills Ag Museum, Rock Island Lighthouse, Can-Am Speedway, and LA Golf Course
<b>Other Special Sensitive Areas In Need of Protection</b>	Native American Sites
<b>Recreation – Trail Safety</b>	Rivergate trail, ATV safety
<b>Pedestrian Safety</b>	Cross Island Road and CR 100 need pedestrian\bike lanes or pathways to separate pedestrians from the vehicular traffic, at least to connect to Wellesley Island State Park
<b>Town Road Maintenance</b>	Repave Fishers Landing Roads where sewer lines were installed under the roads and minimal patching was provided
<b>State Park – additional land</b>	State parks that add property should expand park sites where feasible

**Summary - Open House Notecard Write-in Comments\Suggestions**

The full summary of the comments can be found in the appendix, as well as a summary

of comments submitted to the Town afterwards.

**Public Meeting – Town Vision**

Another public meeting, held at 7:00 pm, Thursday, July 18, 2019 included a PowerPoint update and summary of the planning process including selected Comprehensive Plan content to date such as demographic, housing and economic trends.

In particular, a discussion\critique of the proposed draft Town Vision, Goals, and Objectives including additional content suggested for the draft Vision, Goals and Objectives by several attendees. Questions regarding the census data, the definition of census designated places (CDP) such as

Fishers Landing, TI Park, and hamlet of LaFargeville was discussed. A number of Comprehensive Plan maps were presented as well as other trends summarized to help those in attendance follow a number of the inventory considerations the committee worked with.

A brief summary of the public input to date included highlights from the Community Survey responses and a handout of the brainstorming issues generated at previous open house public meetings allowed attendees to review their content and scope of coverage. Next steps were also discussed which will include a committee and Town Board public hearing respectively.