



Staff Report

Strategic Initiatives

Report To: Special Committee of the Whole
Meeting Date: January 7, 2025
Report Number: SI.25.001
Title: 2024 Resident Satisfaction Survey Results
Prepared by: Tim Hendry, Director of Strategic Initiatives

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report SI.25.001, entitled “2024 Resident Satisfaction Survey Results” for information;

B. Overview

This report provides Council with a summary of the results from the 2024 Resident Satisfaction Survey.

C. Background

The Resident Satisfaction Survey was conducted from October 16, 2024 – November 24, 2024, and received a total of 828 responses.

The survey questions were approved by Council in August 2024 through report [FAF.24.082](#). The questions were also reviewed by the Accountability and Transparency Committee, with minor changes made to reflect the feedback provided.

The purpose of the Resident Satisfaction Survey is to better understand resident satisfaction related to the Town’s service delivery, customer service and communication, financial management and leadership. The survey also included questions regarding resident satisfaction with Town-owned infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, bridges, water and wastewater systems, and recreational facilities/amenities.

The survey was developed through consultation with the Town’s external survey consultant, The W Group. For background information, The W Group specializes in supporting municipalities across Canada with public consultation, including surveys and research panels.

The survey questions were designed based on the [2022 Resident Satisfaction Survey](#), with minor adjustments made to reflect accuracy and consistency based on current Town operations.

The survey was supported by a strong and robust promotional plan, which included the following actions:

- **Town Website:** A dedicated project webpage was created with a featured block directly on the homepage (www.thebluemountains.ca/residentsurvey).
- **Press Release & Notice to Email Subscribers:** A press release was issued and emailed to 1400+ website subscribers announcing the launch of the survey.
- **Town Newsletter:** The survey was promoted in the November edition of the Town e-newsletter and emailed directly to 1600+ subscribers.
- **Social Media:** The survey was promoted on the Town's Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter) social media accounts. In addition, a paid advertising campaign was conducted on Facebook and geotargeted to residents within the Town. The advertising reached a targeted audience of 3,600 residents throughout the community.
- **Mailed Post Cards:** Approximately 7,000 postcards were mailed to properties in The Blue Mountains through Canada Post general mail.
- **Road Signs and Posters:** Approximately 20 road signs were installed at key locations throughout the community, and posters were installed at the entrances of Town facilities.
- **Newspaper Advertising:** Advertisements were included within the Blue Mountain Review and Collingwood Today news publications.

D. Analysis

The purpose of the Resident Satisfaction Survey was to gather feedback from residents to help inform decision-making, budgeting and priority setting for the Town and to inform the 2025 budget process and deliberations.

The W Group is in the process of benchmarking the results against the 2022 survey results to highlight the net change in satisfaction related to the Town service areas, operations, assets, financial management and leadership.

The survey results have been reviewed in detail by the Town's Senior Management Team and will be used to track and implement measures to strengthen service delivery. To ensure that the survey results are actionable, a mid-year staff report will be presented to Council to outline the steps taken to address the comments and feedback provided.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

No environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of this report.

G. Financial Impacts

No direct financial impacts are anticipated as a result of this report.

H. In Consultation With

Senior Management Team

The W Group, External Consultant

Allan Gibbons, Acting Manager of Communications & Economic Development

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Tim Hendry, Director of Strategic Initiatives si@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

1. 2024 Resident Satisfaction Survey Results

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Hendry
Director of Strategic Initiatives

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SI.25.001 2024 Resident Satisfaction Survey Results.docx
Attachments:	Attachment 1 - 2024 Resident Satisfaction Survey Results.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Dec 20, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

No Signature - Task assigned to Tim Hendry was completed by delegate Allan Gibbons

Tim Hendry - Dec 20, 2024 - 11:34 AM



2024

Resident Satisfaction Survey

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

The Town of The Blue Mountains is Canada's second fastest growing municipality and serves home to over 9,300 full-time residents, with an extensive part-time and seasonal population. Recognized as Ontario's true four-season tourism and recreation destination, The Blue Mountains welcomes an additional 2.5 million visitors annually.

Source: <https://data.thebluemountains.ca/>

1.2 Survey Framework

The Town conducted a Resident Satisfaction Survey to help inform future decision-making, budgeting and priority setting. The survey sought to understand resident satisfaction related to service delivery, customer service and communication, financial management and leadership. Survey results will be presented to Council this Winter and will assist with the creation of the 2025 Town Budget.

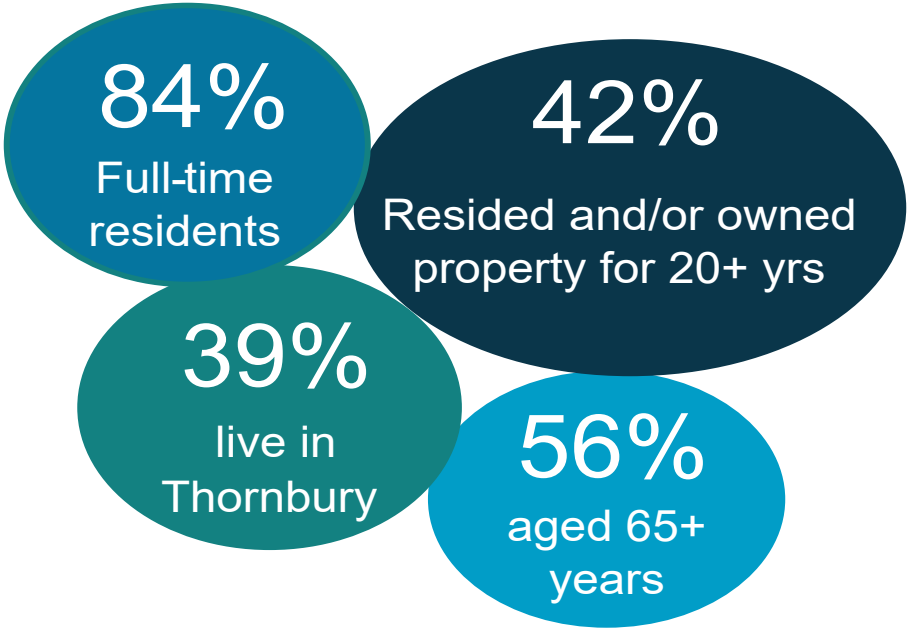
The survey was open from October 17, 2024 to November 26, 2024.



1.3 Study Respondent Characteristics

In total, 774 respondents participated in the survey, however, responses to demographic and classification results are based on 567 responses.

- The majority of respondents (84%) are full-time residents of the Town of The Blue Mountains.
- Thornbury is the primary property location for almost 4 in 10 respondents (39%), followed by Craigeleith, with 2 in 10 (20%) respondents living there.
- Those aged 55 and older account for 84% of respondents.
- 42% have resided and/or owned property in the Town for more than 20 years.
- Almost 1 in 4 respondents (24%) live in a condominium subdivision.



1.4 Study Highlights

In total, 774 respondents participated in the Town of The Blue Mountains' 2024 Resident Satisfaction survey. When asked how they feel about the Town as a place to live, 9 in 10 respondents reported being *satisfied* or *very satisfied*.

Service Delivery

Satisfaction with the delivery of administrative, public works, public safety and other services by the Town is generally high. The Town's gallery, library, archives and museum services, fire protection services and the maintenance of Town-owned recreation facilities were the top scoring services (95%+) based on both *satisfied* and *very satisfied* ratings.

Customer Service

Most respondents (84%) have had contact with a Town employee in the past year and almost 8 in 10 of these respondents report being *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with their interaction experience. Staff members are rated most notably for being courteous and respectful, treating residents fairly while also being knowledgeable and competent. Furthermore, enquiries/ requests are typically dealt with in a timely manner, with more than half (55%) of respondents receiving an initial response *within one business day*.



Corporate Communications

The Town's website is used by most respondents (66%) for news and information about the Town. Participation in public surveys is very popular with 9 in 10 respondents having completed at least one. In general, a moderate number of respondents take advantage of the public engagement opportunities presented by the Town.

Financial Management & Planning

Six in 10 respondents believe that that receive *good value* for their tax dollars, being generally satisfied with the services provided by the Town. A very small percentage (4%) say the get *very good value*. The remainder report that they get *poor* or *very poor value* citing a variety of reasons including taxes are too high, wasteful spending by the Town, needing better water and sewage options etc. to explain their dissatisfaction.



Leadership

Two-thirds of respondents were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with the Council's overall performance. The Council's collaboration with community partners and organizations and actions to respond to climate change also scored highly – 70% and 65% respectively.

Increasing access to healthcare (both family healthcare and long-term care) should be the key priority for the next council, however, investing in the Town's infrastructure replacement is critical with 94% of respondents rating it as a *high* or *medium* priority.

The Future Outlook

The impact of the recent residential growth and development in the Town is perceived negatively (*somewhat* to *very*) by more than half of the survey respondents.

When asked to identify the key issue facing the Town today, affordability, both in terms of the cost of living and housing, was the most frequently mentioned issue. Many commented on other issues and challenges related to the Town's growth and development, for example, poor planning and management, the need for more infrastructure and services to support a growing population, the need for more and different affordable housing options, the negative impact on the environment and the loss of the small-town feel.

2 Survey Results

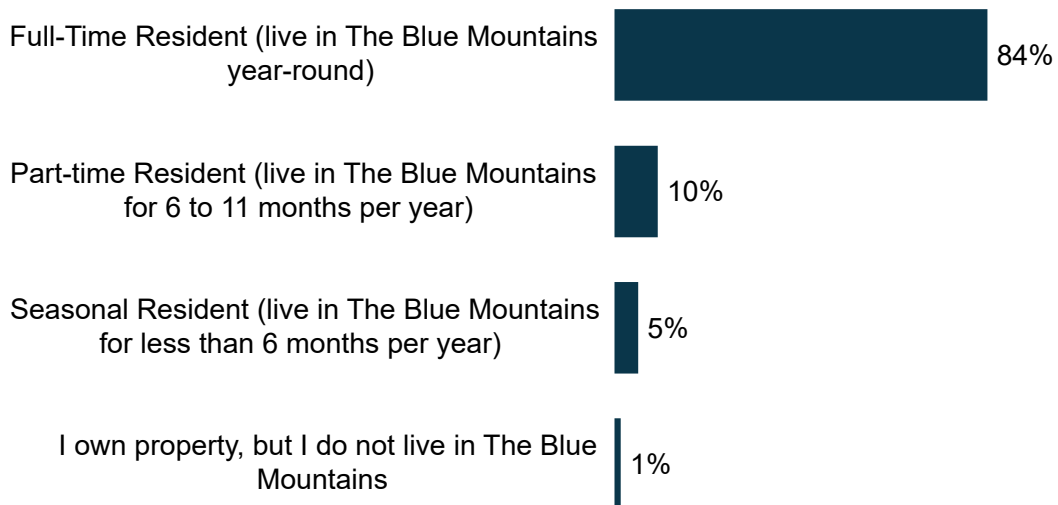
2.1 Respondent Profile

Resident Type

84% of respondents live in the Town of the Blue Mountains year-round while 10% are part-time residents, residing in the Town 6-11 months per year.

Q: Please select the option that best describes yourself:

Total Respondents: 774



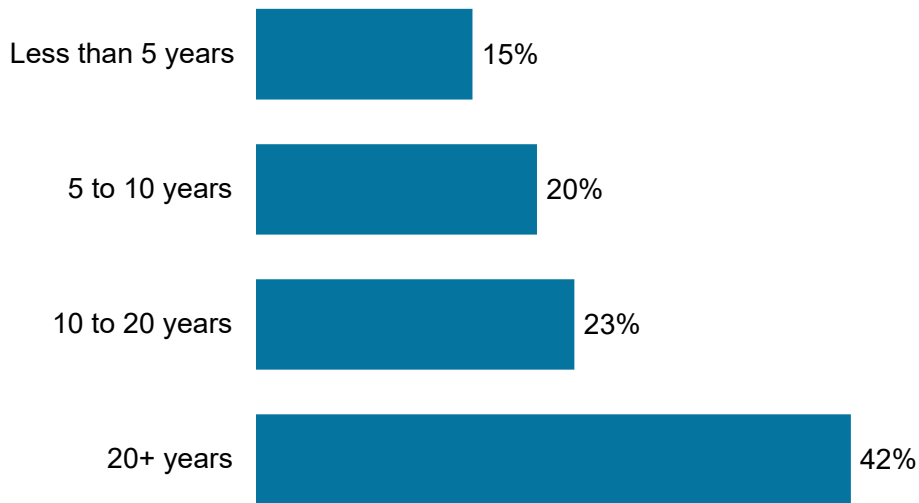
Years Resident and/or Owned Property in the Town

In total, 15% of respondents are relative newcomers to the Town of The Blue Mountains, having resided and/or owned property on the Town for less than 5 years. Conversely, 4 in 10 (42%) have resided and/ or owned property in the Town for more than 20 years.



Q: How long have you been a resident and/or owned property in the Town of The Blue Mountains?

Total Respondents: 567

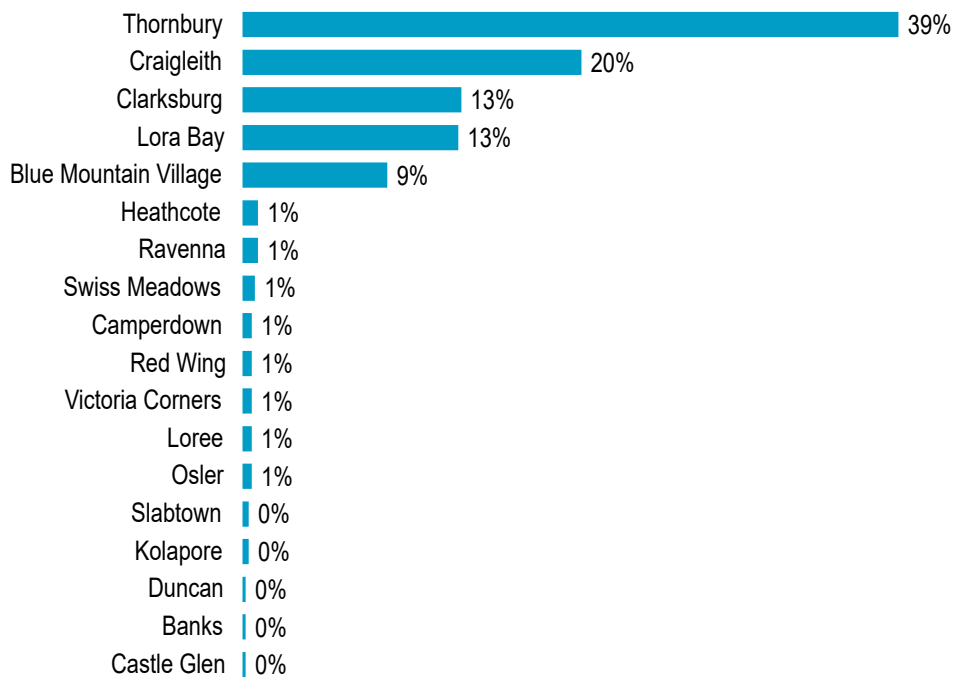


Property Location

The majority of respondents (85%) reside in Thornbury, Craigleith, Clarksburg and Lora Bay.

Q: Where is your property located in the Town of The Blue Mountains?

Total Respondents: 547. Excludes N/A.

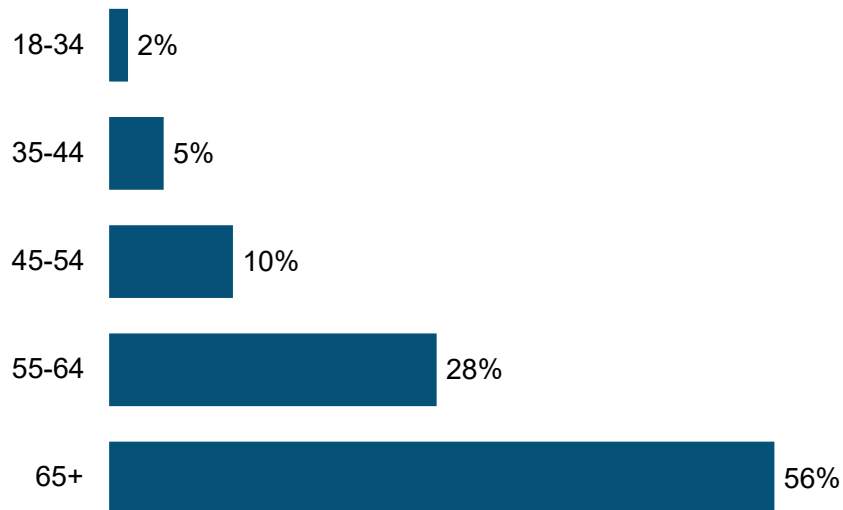


Age Range

In summary, 15% of respondents are aged 35-54 years with those aged 55 and older accounting for 84% of respondents.

Q: What is your age?

Total Respondents: 567



Resident of a Condominium Subdivision

Almost 1 in 4 (24%) live in a condominium subdivision and pay annual fees to a condo association.

Q: Do you live in a condominium subdivision and pay annual fees to a condo association?

Total Respondents: 567



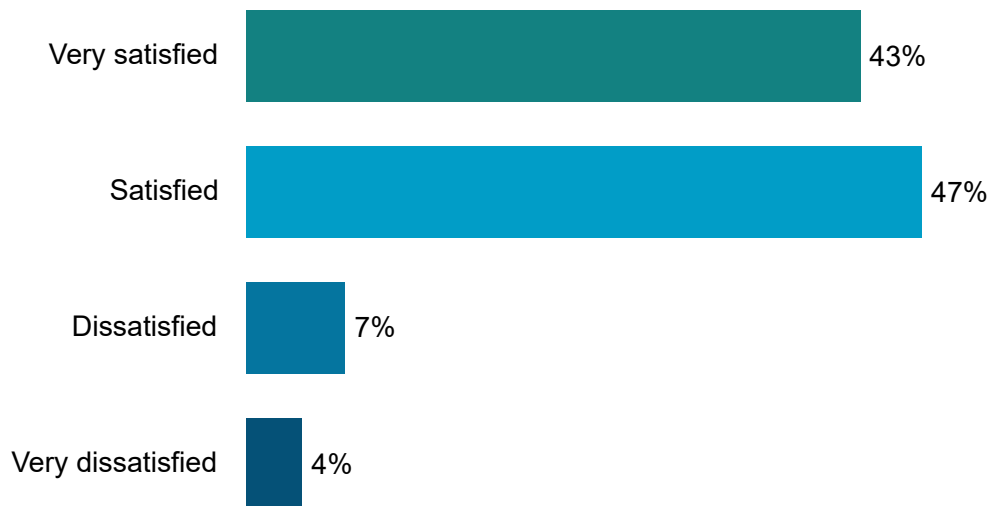
2.2 Living in the Town of The Blue Mountains

2.2.1 Satisfaction with Living in the Town of The Blue Mountains

Overwhelmingly, residents feel very positive about living in the Town of The Blue Mountains – 90% are either *very satisfied* or *satisfied*.

Q: How do you generally feel about the Town of The Blue Mountains as a place to live?

Total Respondents: 774

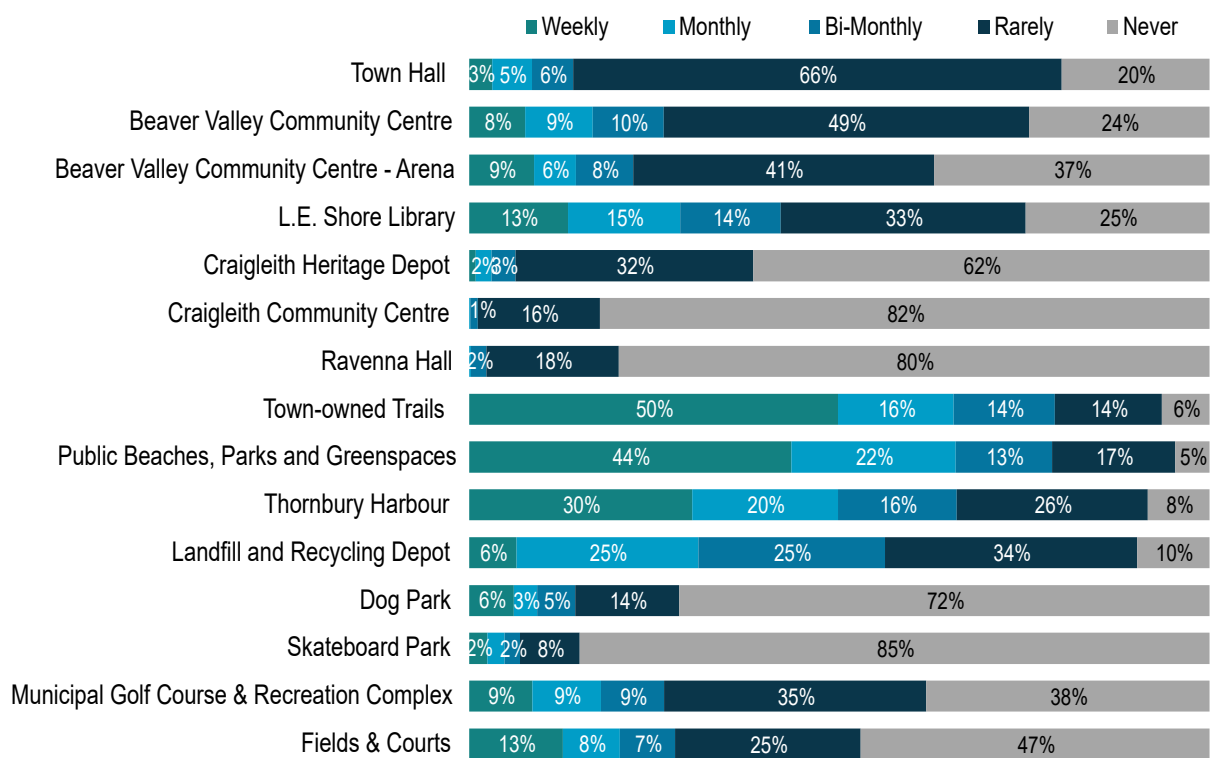


2.2.2 Frequency of Visits to the Town's Facilities

Survey respondents were asked about how often they visit various facilities throughout the Town to gauge their general involvement and engagement in the community. Town-owned trails, public beaches, parks and greenspaces and Thornbury Harbour receive the highest levels of weekly visits. Ravenna Hall, Craigleith Community Centre, Craigleith Heritage Depot and the skateboard park appear to be the least frequently visited Town facilities.

Q: Please indicate how often you visit or use each of the following Town facilities.

Total Respondents: 741-770



2.3 Service Delivery Satisfaction

2.3.1 Satisfaction with Town Services

Survey participants were presented with a list of specific services that are delivered by The Town and asked to rate their level of satisfaction with each one. Satisfaction levels were generally very high. The Town's gallery, library, archives and museum services, fire protection services and the maintenance of Town-owned recreation facilities all scored 95% based on *Satisfied* or *Very satisfied* ratings.

Also scoring 90% or higher in satisfaction (*very satisfied* or *satisfied*) were:

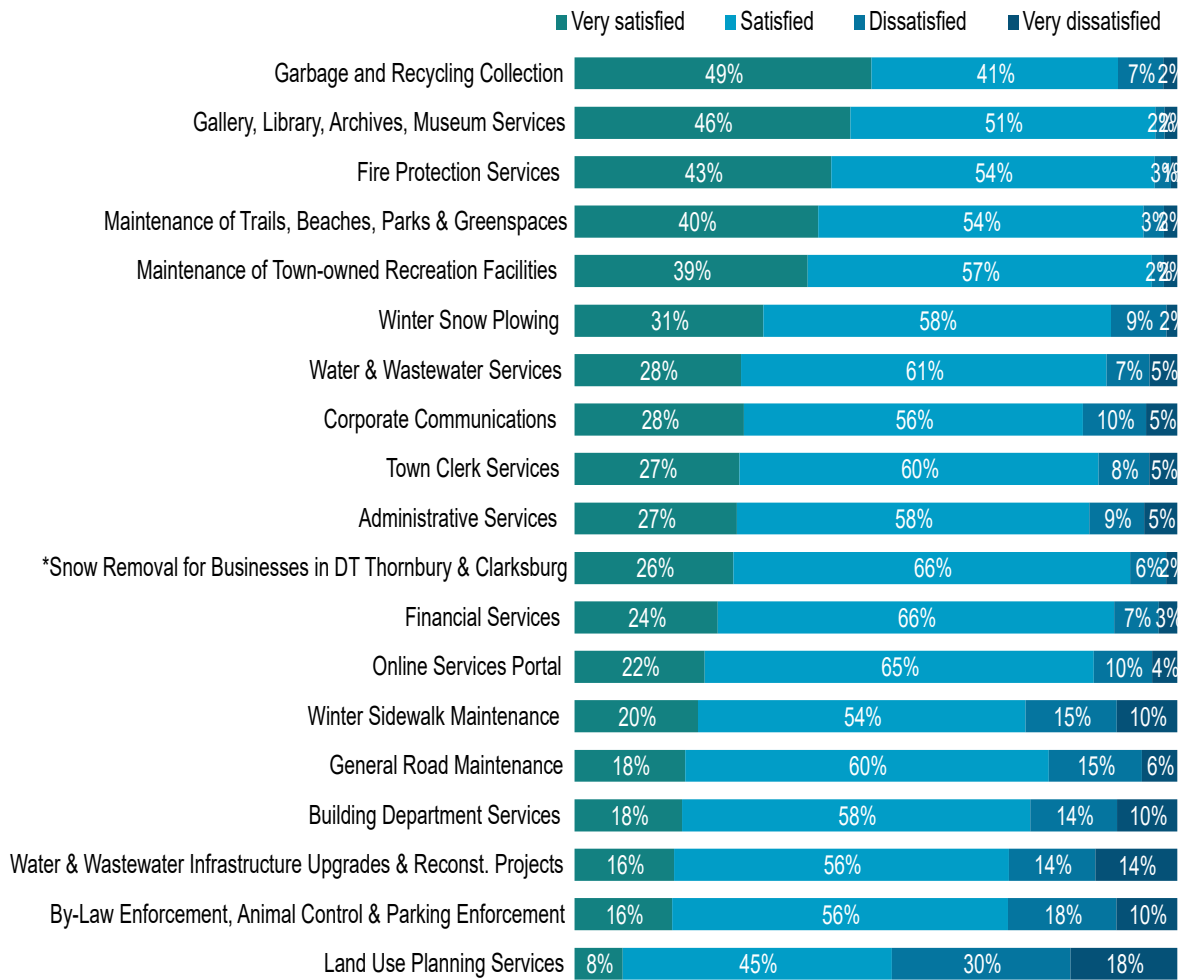
- the maintenance of trails, beaches, parks and greenspaces,
- snow removal services specifically related to maintaining access to businesses in the Thornbury and Clarksburg downtown areas,
- garbage and recycling collection services and
- financial services.

Land use planning services received the lowest satisfaction score at 53%. Following the results of the 2022 Resident Satisfaction Survey, where land use planning received a similar score, a customer satisfaction survey was conducted to receive feedback from those who have directly interacted with the department. The survey gauges the levels of service delivered, customer satisfaction and provides opportunities for additional feedback regarding their interactions with the department. While this survey remains on-going, 83% of respondents to date have been very satisfied or satisfied. In 2025, staff will bring forward a report on the results of the customer satisfaction survey.



Q: Please indicate your level of satisfaction regarding each of the following Town services:

Total Respondents: 381-698. Excludes N/A.



*Snow Removal to Maintain Access to Businesses in Downtown Thornbury & Clarksburg

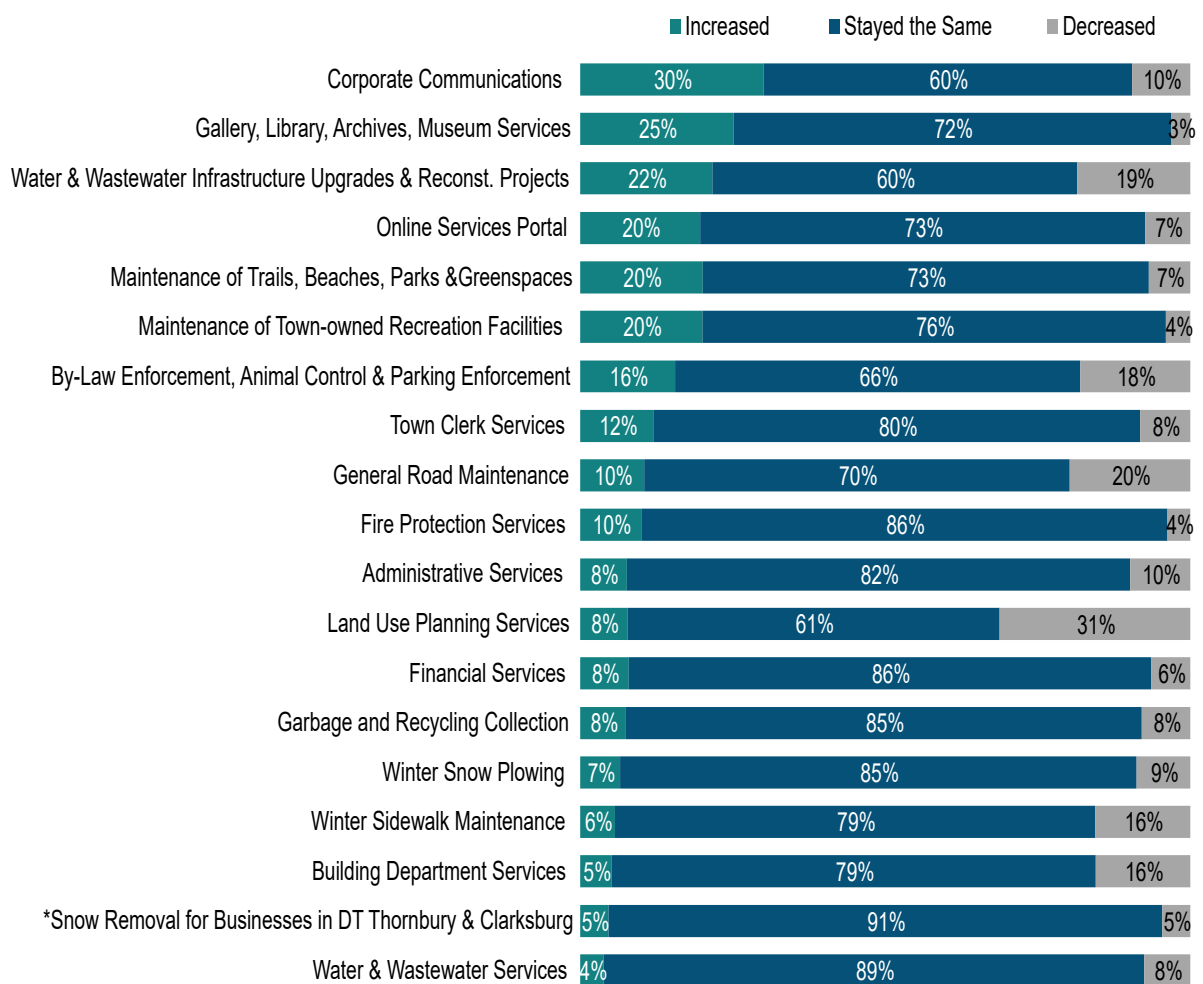


2.3.2 Perception of Quality in Service Delivery

When asked whether the quality of service has increased, decreased or remained the same over the past five years, the majority of the service areas are perceived to have remained the same. Corporate Communications and Gallery, Library, Archives, Museum Services showed the largest perceived improvements in service quality – 30% and 25% respectively.

Q: For each service listed, please indicate whether you feel that the quality of the service has increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past five (5) years (or for as long as you have lived here if it has been less than five years).

Total Respondents: 367-668. Excludes N/A



*Snow Removal to Maintain Access to Businesses in Downtown Thornbury & Clarksburg



2.4 Customer Service and Communication

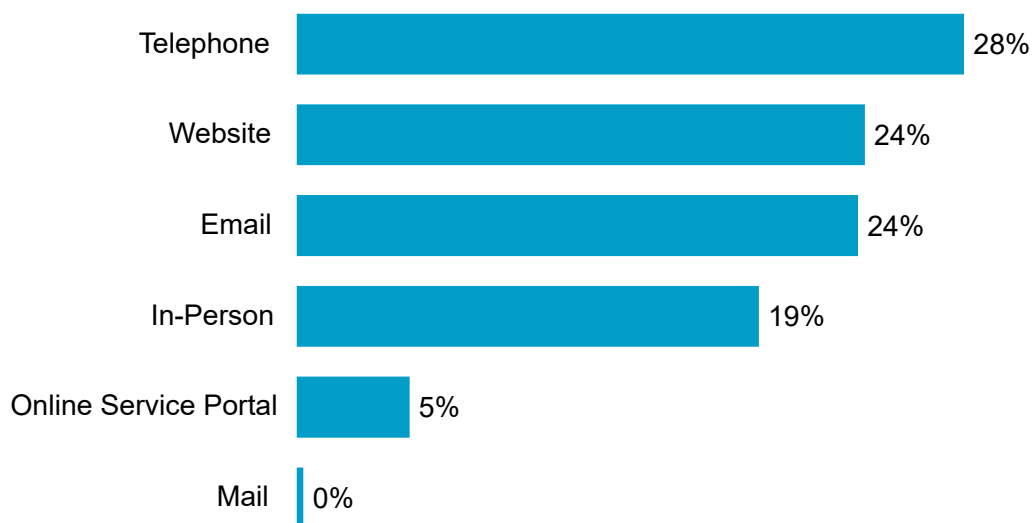
This section of the report focuses on the type and perceived quality of contact and communication that respondents have had with the Town.

2.4.1 Type of Contact

Firstly, when contacting the Town for information, services, or assistance respondents are most likely to use telephone, website or email. The online service portal is less frequently used at 5%.

Q: What method are you most likely to use when contacting the Town for information, services, or assistance?

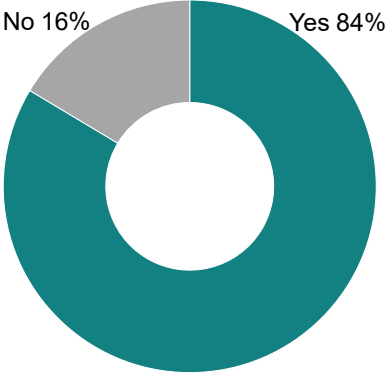
Total Respondents: 695



2.4.2 Employee Contact

The vast majority (84%) of respondents reported that they have had contact with a Town employee either via email, telephone, in-person or other means, in the past year.

Q: In the past year, have you had contact (via email, telephone, in-person, etc.) with a Town employee?
Total Respondents: 695



2.4.3 Satisfaction with Employee Contact

Based on their most recent experience, almost 8 in 10 respondents (77-78%) say that they have been *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with their contact with a Town employee.

Q: Based on your most recent experience and contact with a Town employee, please indicate your level of satisfaction for each of the following statements:

Total Respondents: 555-557



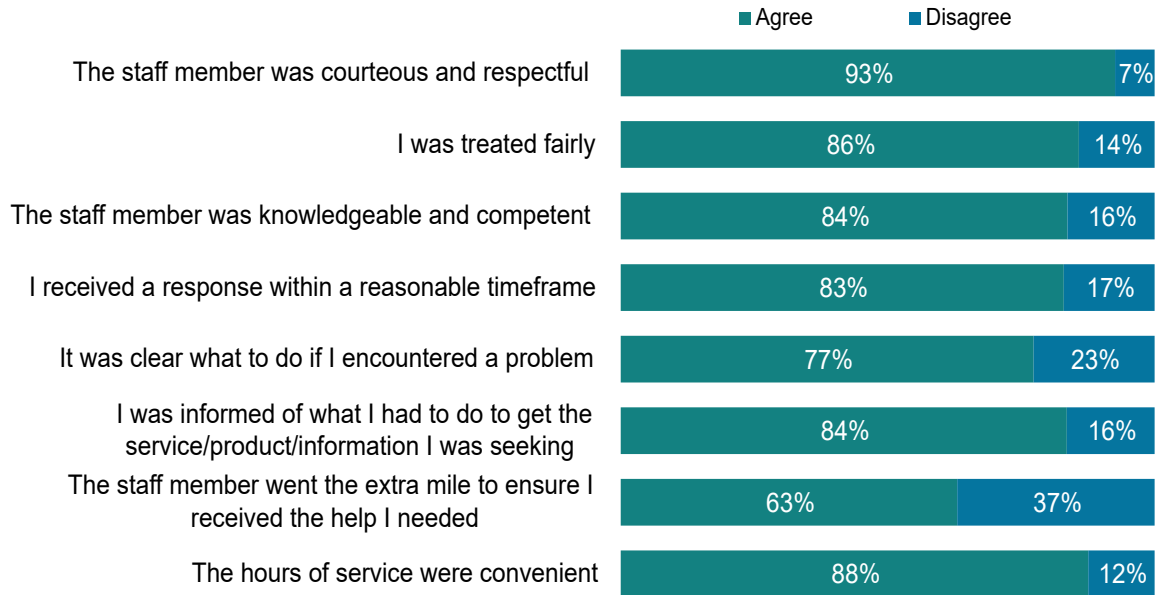
2.4.4 Customer Service Delivery

In addition, respondents indicated a very high level of agreement related to various aspects of customer service delivered by the Town’s employees. In general, employees are courteous, competent, fair and thorough when resolving issues and responding to enquiries.



Q: Based on your most recent experience and contact with a Town employee, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

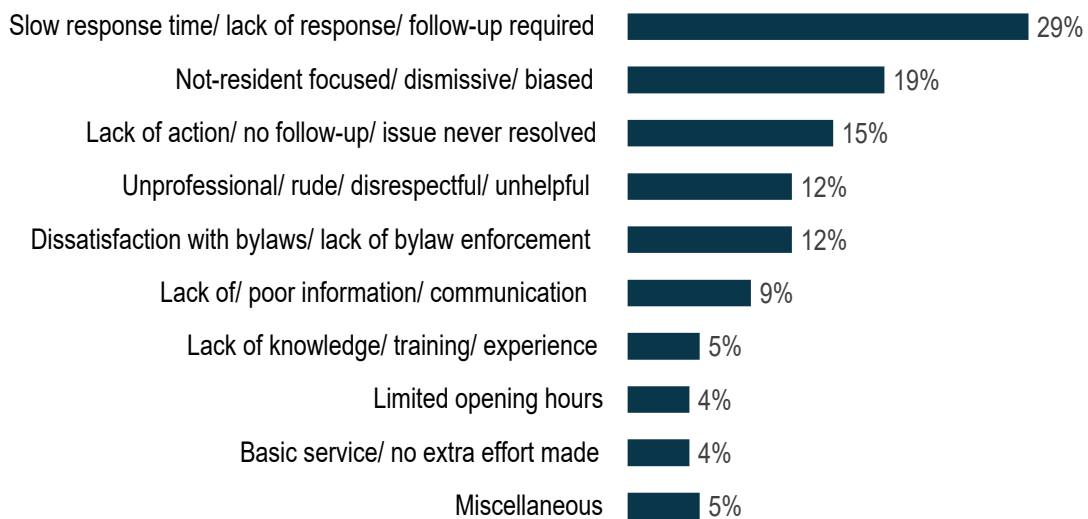
Total Respondents: 398-526. Excludes *No opinion*.



Among those who explained why they disagreed with the previous statements about their recent interactions with Town employees (134 respondents), the primary reasons related to the following experiences or issues:

Q: If you disagreed with any of the statements above, please explain:

Total Respondents: 134

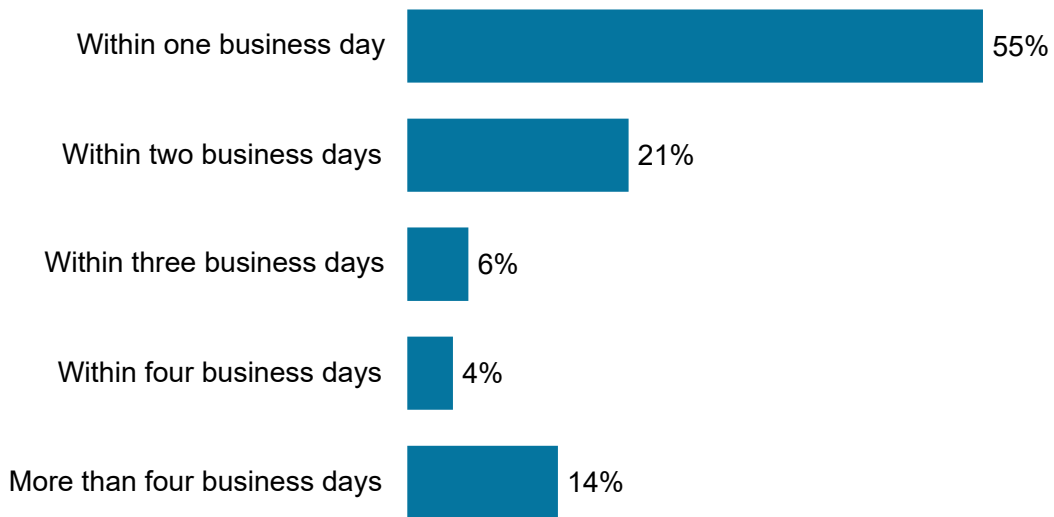


2.4.5 Response Times

These respondents were also asked about the response time to receive an initial response during their most recent experience and contact with the Town – three-quarters (76%) said they received a response *within two business days* with a notable 55% receiving a response *within one business day*.

Q: Based on your most recent experience and contact with the Town, how long did it take to receive an initial response?

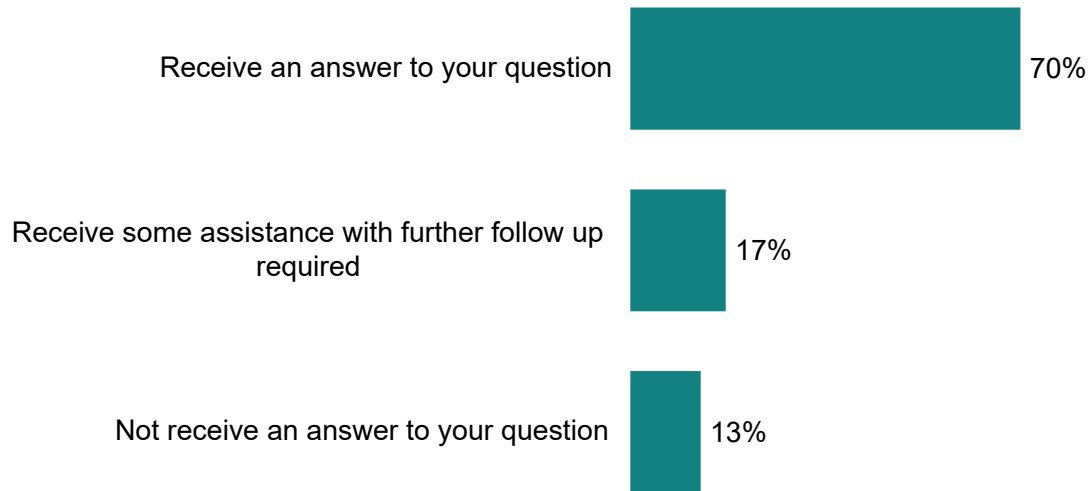
Total Respondents: 553



2.4.6 Outcome of Most Recent Contact

Positively, among those recounting a recent contact experience, 7 in 10 (70%) did receive an answer to their enquiry, while 17% received some assistance with further follow-up required. However, 13% did not receive a response to their enquiry at all.

Q: Based on your most recent experience and contact with the Town, did you ultimately:
Total Respondents: 553



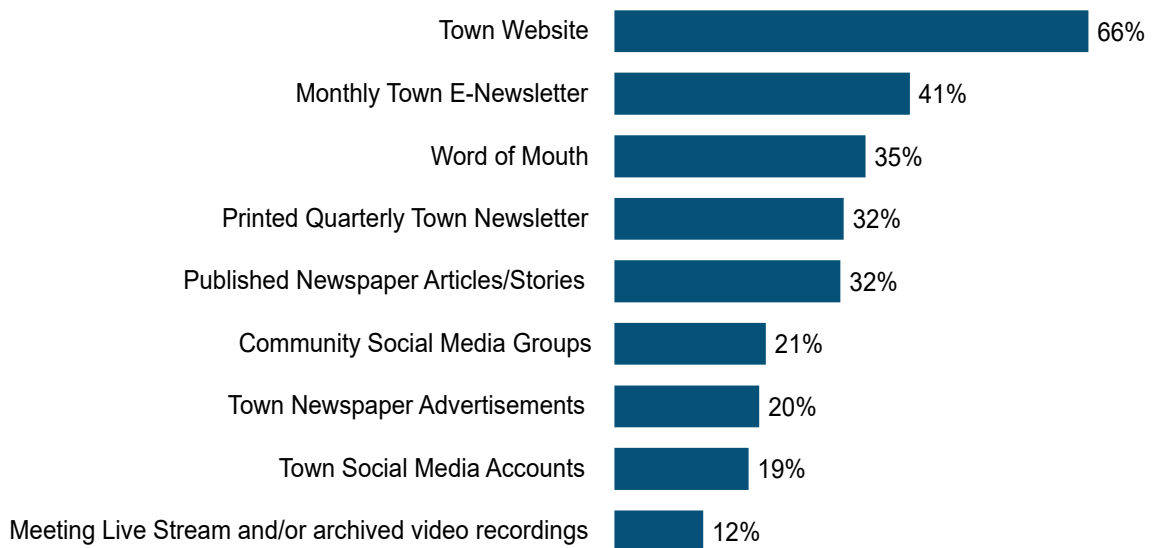
2.5 Other Communication and Engagement

2.5.1 Sources of News and Information about the Town

The Town’s website seems to be the “go-to” source for news and information about the Town – regularly used by two-thirds (66%) of respondents. Other popular sources curated by the Town are the monthly e-newsletter (41%) and the quarterly printed newsletter (32%).

Q: Which of the following methods do you most commonly use to seek news and information about the Town?

Total Respondents: 659

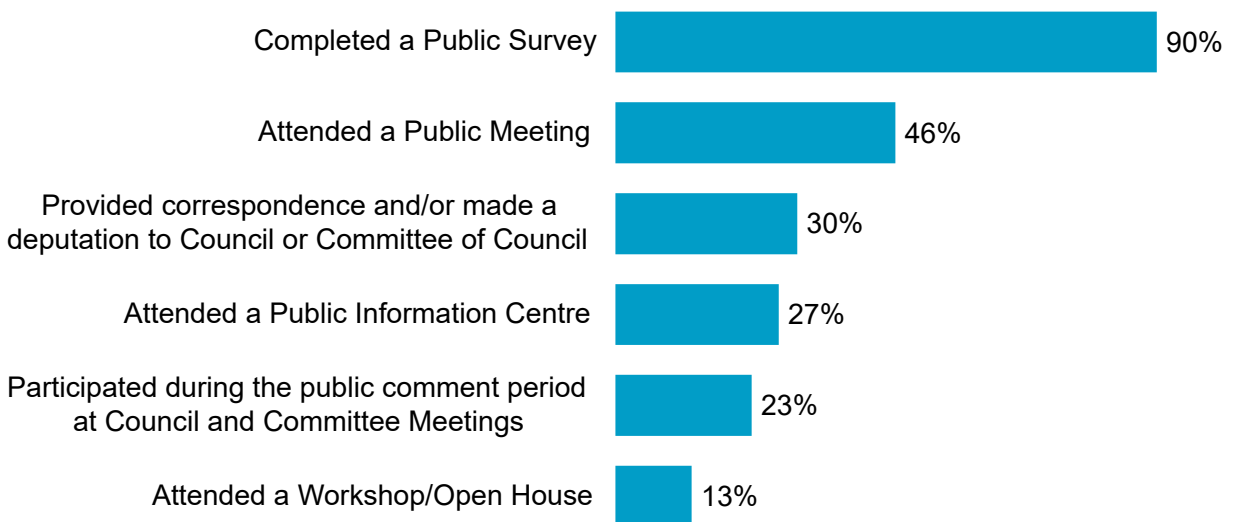


2.5.2 Participation in Public Engagement Opportunities

When asked about their participation on public engagement activities, 9 in 10 (90%) have completed a public survey and almost half of respondents (46%) have attended a public meeting.

Q: The Town offers several opportunities for residents to gather information and formally share feedback regarding Town initiatives and projects. Please indicate if you have used any of the following methods:

Total Respondents: 584





2.6 Financial Management & Planning

The Town was keen to gather public input in order to inform its fiscal management and planning and the long-term community economic activity.

“The Town of The Blue Mountains collects approximately \$45 million per year in property taxes. Of the taxes collected, 41% stays with the Town to support operations and infrastructure. The remaining 59% is allocated to the County of Grey and the School Board. There are several factors that affect the Town’s annual budget, including inflation, growth, development activity, economic trends, changing market conditions, taxation issues, and policy decisions of Council.”

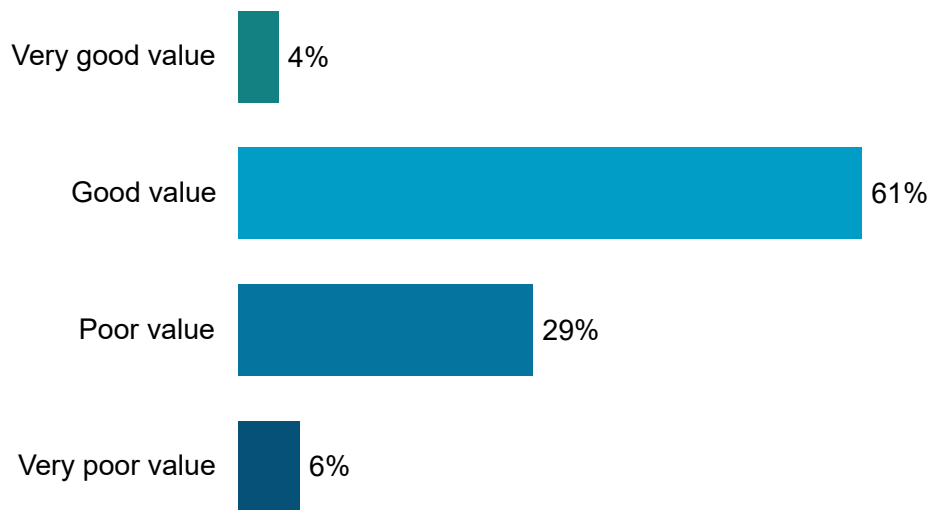
The Town understands the need to achieve balance between the demand for services and the taxpayers’ ability to pay for these services. The goal is to ensure, through prudent fiscal planning, the long-term economic sustainability of the community.”

2.6.1 Value for Tax Dollars Spent

Survey respondents were asked to consider the above statement and then rate the value they receive for their tax dollars. The majority (61%) believe that they receive *good value* for their tax dollars. Conversely, 35% are less positive in their assessment, indicating that they receive either *poor value* or *very poor value* for the taxes they pay to the Town.

Q: Based on the information above, please rate the value that you get for your tax dollars:

Total Respondents: 630



Q: Please explain:

Total Respondents: 97/ 168

Among those who think that they receive *good value* or *very good value* for their tax dollars, their reasons relate to the following:

- General satisfaction with services and value receive/ taxes are reasonable
- Need improvements to and better maintenance of local Infrastructure e.g. roads, water, sewage etc.
- Want to see improvements in snow removal and garbage collection services
- Grey County transfers are perceived as being too high
- Need more investment in recreational and community facilities e.g. indoor pool, racquet courts etc.
- Taxes are high especially for those who do not get essential services such as water and sewage from the Town
- Improvements to traffic congestion, biking infrastructure and road safety are needed.

Perceptions of receiving *poor* or *very poor value* for tax dollars are due to:

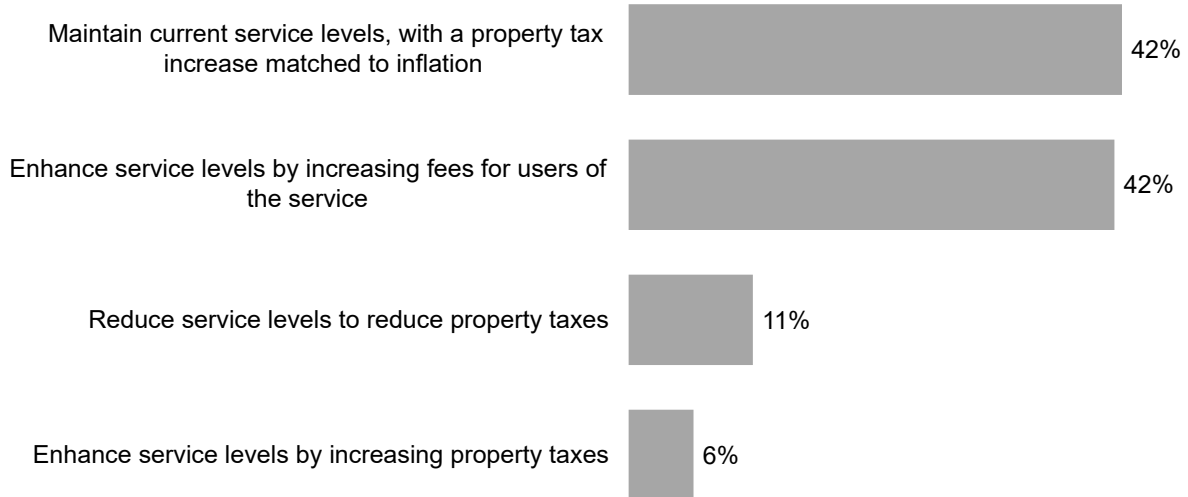
- Taxes are high/ not getting value for money/ other areas benefit more than their own
- Need improvements to and better maintenance of local Infrastructure e.g., trees, drainage, roads, etc.
- Grey County transfers are perceived as being too much/ not delivering value for money
- Poor financial management/ wasteful spending/ high staff salaries
- Need better water and sewage management options
- Want to see improvements in snow removal, yard waste and garbage collection services
- Need more investment in recreational and community facilities e.g., indoor pool, pickleball courts, gym etc.
- Improvements to traffic congestion, biking infrastructure and road safety are needed
- Many receive limited municipal services or pay for their own snow plowing and garbage collection services.

2.6.2 Tax Strategy Concepts

Respondents were then asked about their support for specific tax strategies. Support for maintaining current service levels, with a property tax increase matched to inflation and enhancing service levels by increasing fees for users of the service was tied at 42%. The least popular option is enhancing service levels by increasing property taxes, at 6%.

Q: Thinking about the services provided by the Town, which of the following tax strategies do you support?

Total Respondents: 630



2.6.3 Reducing Services to Maintain Taxes

Respondents were asked the hypothetical question of which services they would reduce to maintain the current level of taxes. There was a clear preference for reducing services in administrative/ public areas rather than in operational/ maintenance areas. Services that would most likely face reduced spending are Town hall administrative operations, events/ festivals etc., environmental/ climate change initiatives and gallery/ library/ archives and museum services.

Q: If the Town had to reduce services to maintain taxes, which services would you reduce?

Total Respondents: 566/ 128



A significant proportion (30%) of those respondents who made a comment believe that all these services are important/ necessary and should not be reduced. Others pointed to the need for a review of resource allocation to reduce wasteful spending and a review of staffing levels and salaries. Less frequently mentioned areas that could potentially be reduced are funding of tourism/ event promotion and community organizations or a reduction in the frequency of curbside garbage/ recycling collection services and the size of the Town's fleet of vehicles.

2.7 The Town's Leadership

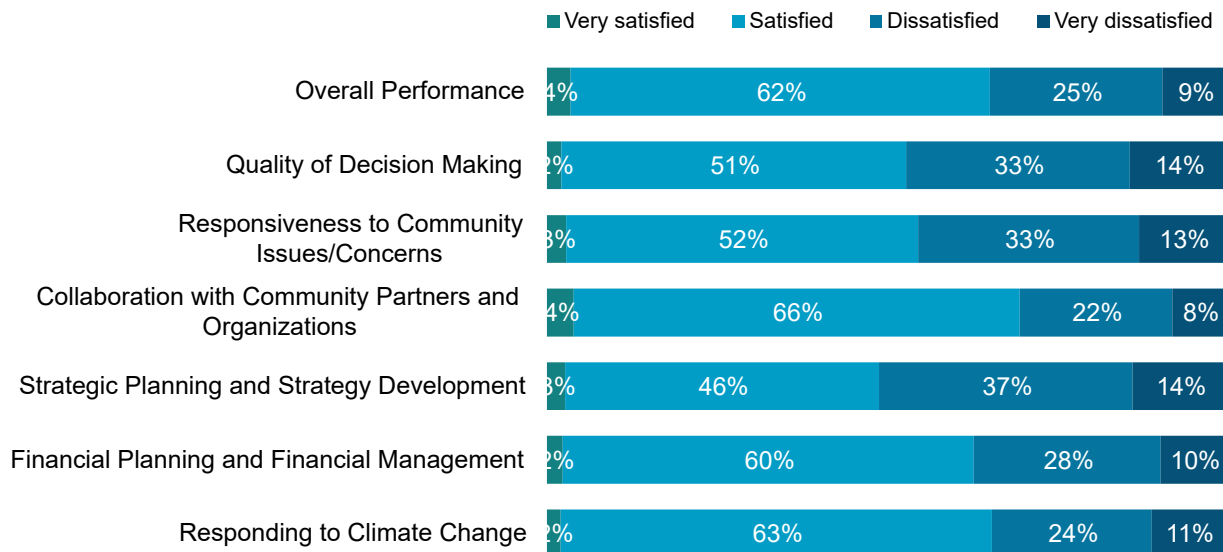
This section of the Town's Resident Satisfaction Survey related to respondents' satisfaction with the Town Council's performance in the current term and their priorities for new initiatives in both the current and next term.

2.7.1 Performance of Council

In terms of the Council's overall performance, two-thirds (66%) of respondents were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied*. The Council's performance with respect to *collaboration with community partners and organizations* and *responding to climate change* also scored highly – 70% and 65% of respondents being *very satisfied* or *satisfied*, respectively. The Council's lowest satisfaction score was reported for *strategic planning and strategy development* (49%).

Q: When you think about the current term of the Town of The Blue Mountains Council, how satisfied are you with each of the following areas

Total Respondents: 553-571



2.7.2 Prioritizing Current Initiatives

During Council's current term, several new initiatives have been prioritized. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of priority for each initiative.

The three highest priority initiatives (those rated as *high priority*) for respondents were:

- Attracting and retaining family doctors (81%)
- Ensuring accountability and transparency in decision-making (67%)
- Preserving trees and green space throughout the community (64%)

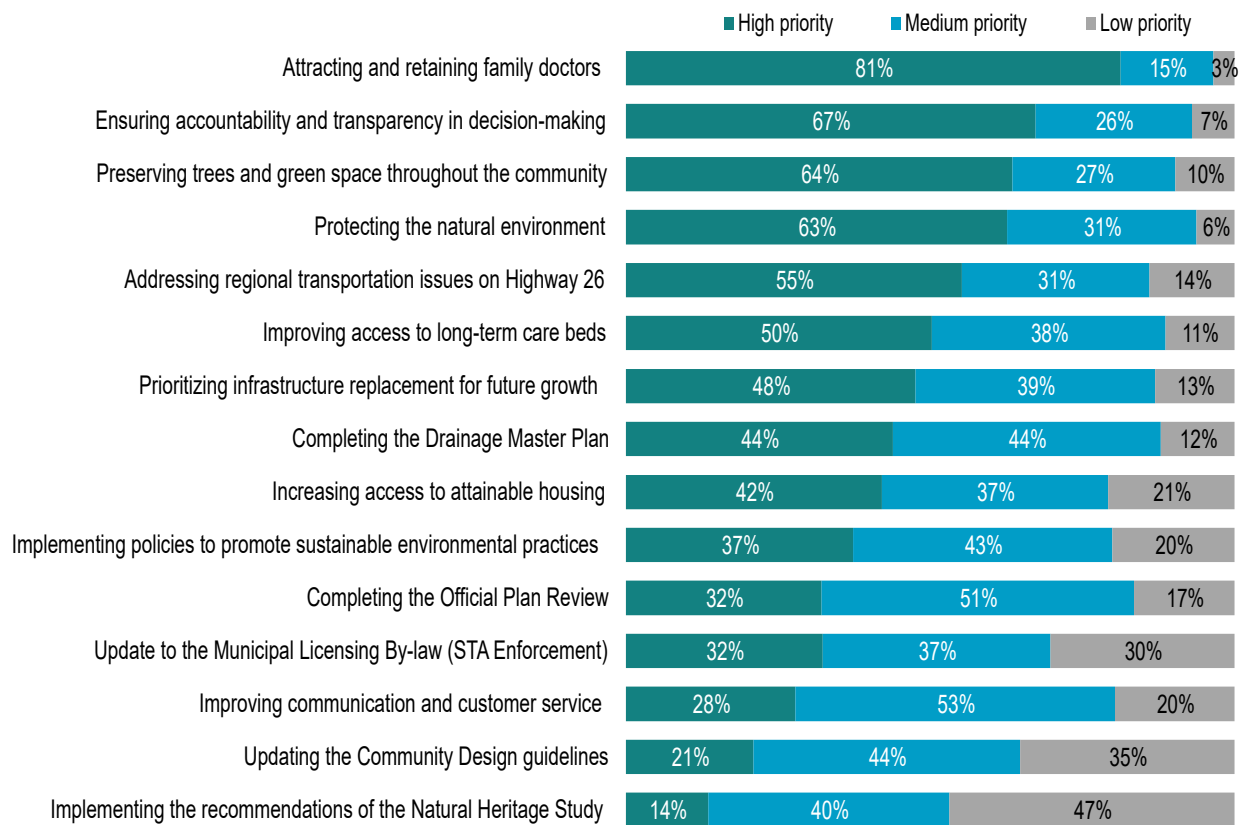
Current initiatives that are less of a priority (those rated as *low priority*) include:

- Implementing the recommendations of the Natural Heritage Study (47%)
- Updating the Community Design guidelines (35%)
- Update to the Municipal Licensing By-law (Short-Term Accommodation Enforcement) (30%).



Q: Throughout the current term of Council, several new initiatives have been prioritized. In your opinion, please indicate your priority for each of the following items.

Total Respondents: 568-578



2.7.3 Prioritizing New Initiatives

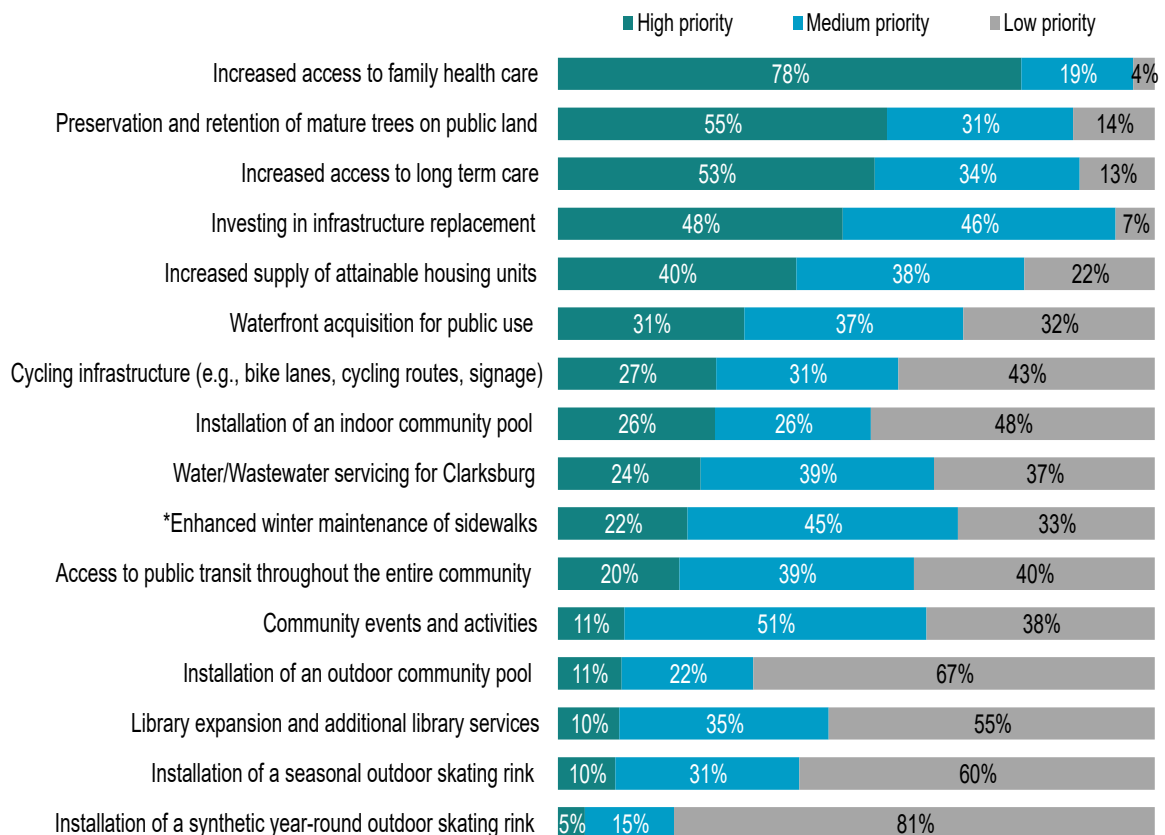
Looking forward to the next term of Council, the top priorities (rated *high priority*) by respondents are:

- Increased access to family health care (78%)
- Preservation and retention of mature trees on public land (55%)
- Increased access to long term care (53%)

When *high priority* and *medium priority* ratings are combined, increasing access to healthcare (both family healthcare and long-term care) still dominates but the importance of investing in the Town’s infrastructure replacement is further highlighted, with 94% of respondents rating it as a *high* or *medium priority* for the next Council.

Q: To help guide what projects the Town of The Blue Mountains should focus on during the next term of Council, please indicate your priority for each of the following topics:

Total Respondents: 571-577



*Enhanced winter maintenance of sidewalks throughout the entire community (where sidewalks exist)



2.7.4 Other Priorities

Q: Is there anything else you feel should be a priority for the Town during the next Term of Council?

Total Respondents: 285

Other priorities that Council should consider during the next term include:

- Better planning and management of development projects and the required infrastructure and utilities
- More transparent decision-making and information sharing with residents from Council and Town staff
- More investment in recreational and sports facilities e.g. pickleball/ tennis facilities, gym etc.
- Preservation of the small-town feel and charm
- More effective communications and public engagement efforts
- More robust financial management, reducing taxes and reducing transfers to Grey County



2.8 The Future Outlook

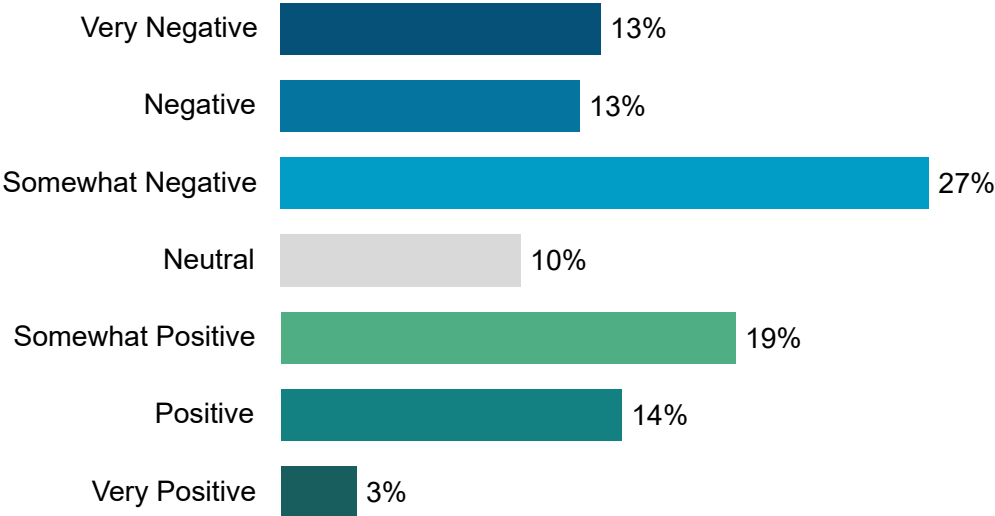
The Town of The Blue Mountains was ranked as the second-fastest growing municipality in Canada as reported through the 2021 Census. The Town's population increased by 33.7% from 7,025 to 9,390 people.

2.8.1 Impact of Residential Growth and Development

Respondents were asked to rate the overall impact of residential growth and development happening in the community. More than half (53%) of the survey respondents rated the overall impact as negative (*somewhat to very*). Less than 1 in 5 (17%) rated it as *positive* or *very positive*.

Q: How would you rate the overall impact of residential growth and development happening in the community?

Total Respondents: 565. Excludes N/A.

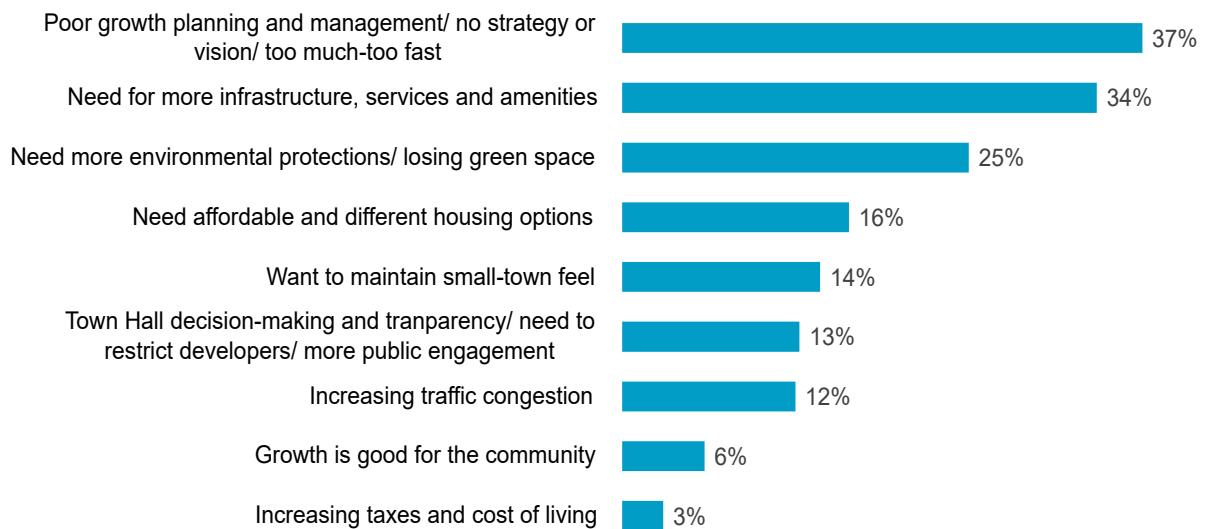


2.8.2 Commentary on Recent Community Development and Growth

Many respondents mentioned needs and challenges that have arisen for the community owing to the Town's recent rapid development and growth. The chart below presents the key themes that emerged from a review of the comments submitted.

Q: Please provide any comments you have regarding recent community development and growth.

Total Respondents: 342



2.8.3 Most Important Issue Today

At the end of the survey, participants were asked what they considered to be the most important issue facing the Town today.

The cost of living in general, housing affordability and housing attainability was the most frequently mentioned issue. Other key issues mentioned can also be attributed to the pace of growth and development that the Town is currently experiencing.

Q: In your opinion, what is the single most important issue facing the Town of The Blue Mountains today?

Total Respondents: 543

Most Important Issues	%
Cost of living/ housing affordability/ lack of attainable housing	18%
Over-development/ rapid growth/ lack of planning and infrastructure	14%
Loss of community and small -town feel/ preservation of Town's character	11%
Environmental protection/ loss of green space	10%
Council and Town Hall effectiveness/ decision making/ lack of accountability and transparency	10%
Planning/ updating infrastructure and providing municipal services for growing population	10%
Transportation infrastructure/ traffic congestion/ road safety	9%
Lack of healthcare services and family doctors	9%
Managing and controlling growth	7%
Fiscal management/ high taxes/ tax increases/ Grey County transfers	5%
Recreational and public space improvements	3%
Serving the needs of residents/ listening to and respecting the community	3%
Other	2%

