

Hinesburg Community Survey Summary

In Support of the 2003 Town Plan Revision

**Distributed to Residents of
Hinesburg, Vermont**

During January and February, 2003

Hinesburg Planning Commission
June 10, 2003

Introduction

As part of its preparation for rewriting the Hinesburg Town Plan, the Planning Commission prepared a survey to gather citizen input. This survey was part of a larger public participation project to encourage discussion and garner feedback regarding the Town Plan. The project also included 4 public forums that were held in March and April. The survey was constructed by Town Planner Alex Weinhagen with input from Commissioner John Mace. Preliminary and final drafts were also reviewed by the Commission as a whole. Survey questions were developed after:

1. Extensive discussions with the Planning Commission on issues and challenges facing Hinesburg, as well as planning goals.
2. A review of similar surveys from other communities around the State.
3. Feedback from other Town Staff, Boards, and Commissions.

The survey was distributed in two phases: first via a mass mailing to each of the roughly two thousand addresses in town, and second, about two weeks later, as an insert in *The Hinesburg Record*, which is also distributed to every address in town. No attempts were made to discourage duplicate submissions. The mailing was delivered on or about January 25, and the deadline for returning surveys was February 14. A total of 344 surveys were collected both by mail and at various drop-off points around town. Of this total, over 100 surveys were collected via drop boxes at Lantman's IGA and the Carpenter-Carse Library. Surveys returned within 3 weeks of the deadline were included in the tabulation of results; approximately 30 surveys arrived after the deadline.

Data entry was completed by Alex Weinhagen, Planning and Zoning Administrative Assistant Holly Russell, and John Mace using a program written by John Mace. The program included quality control features to prevent gross data entry errors, and mitigate the need for double entry error checking. John Mace analyzed the data by compiling frequencies that are presented on the following pages. The survey, included as Appendix A, was primarily comprised of questions with defined answers to make interpretation and analysis more straightforward. Space was provided for some open-ended comments and additional suggestions. Approximately 141 open-ended comments were received, and are listed as Appendix B. Grouping and tabulating by category would facilitate interpretation of these "raw" comments; however, we will attack this rather time intensive analysis at a later date.

John Mace and Alex Weinhagen presented the survey results at multiple Planning Commission meetings. John also developed large format poster displays that were used to present the survey results at each of the 4 Town Plan public forums. Excerpts from these results were also reported in *The Hinesburg Record*. This summary document will also be made available to the public via the Town's web site.

Funding for this survey was made possible by a Municipal Planning Grant awarded by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

Lessons Learned

We strove to keep the survey short and easy to complete in order to boost the response. We succeeded in keeping it short (1 page front and back); however, some respondents were confused by the different ranking and rating systems used for some questions. Clearly, the yes/no questions were the easiest to answer as well as being the simplest to analyze and interpret. Questions 1 and 2, in particular, created confusion for respondents, likely because they asked respondents to rank only 3 selections from a list of 10-12 choices. Keeping ranking or rating schemes simpler is advisable, and these sorts of questions would be less prone to misinterpretation if respondents evaluated each choice. At the very least, these sorts of questions should have the same ranking or rating scheme across the entire survey. Mixing up these schemes creates more confusion for respondents. Questions 12 & 16 are probably the right style of question for rating a series of choices.

Far more direct mailed surveys (green paper) were returned than newspaper insert surveys (yellow paper). Even considering that the direct mailing went out first, this method of mass distribution is likely more effective than a newspaper insert alone. In fact, the return rate may have been improved if we had extended the deadline by a week or two, and sent out a reminder post card via another saturation mailing. Although there was ample early notice about the survey in multiple issues of *The Hinesburg Record*, we may have reached a few more people by utilizing the Town's web site to post and publicize the survey.

Data entry is an extremely labor intensive effort, which can be prone to errors due to the volume of data being entered. John Mace's data entry program was critical to the process in that it made the work both faster and less error prone. We succeeded in doing the survey in-house (rather than hiring a consultant), largely because of John's database development expertise. Future survey efforts should carefully evaluate if such in-house expertise is available, and seek outside help if it is not.

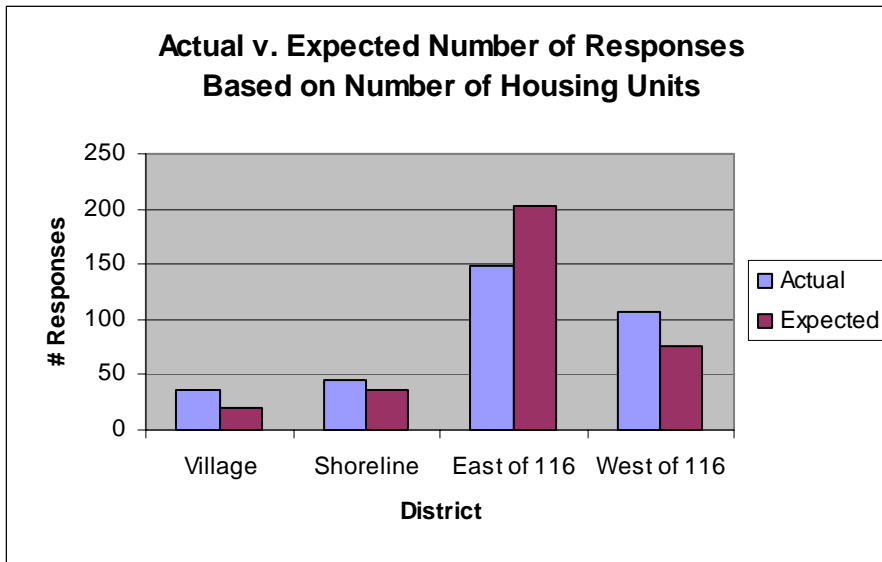
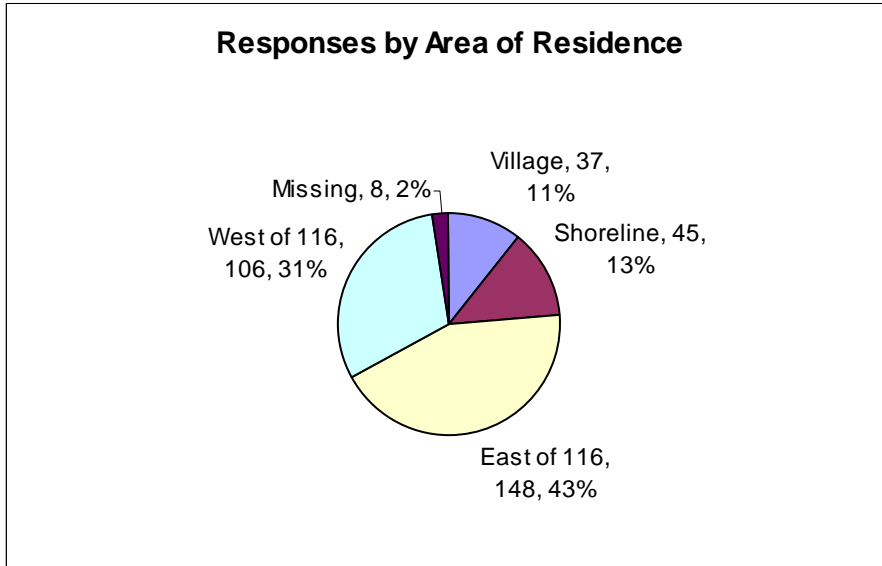
Next Steps

As mentioned above, this survey was part of a larger public participation effort in support of the Town Plan revision. The survey results did help define some of the topics for the public forums, which were also quite successful. The Planning Commission will utilize this feedback as it begins rewriting the Plan this summer. With that said, the public participation process is not over. The community will be invited to attend the Commission's meetings throughout the summer. These meetings will focus on particular components of the Plan, and the Town Planner will try to target special invitations to community members who have expressed interest or have special expertise.

Our goal is complete work on the Plan revisions by the end of 2003 in preparation for the required public hearing prior to passing the new Plan along to the Selectboard.

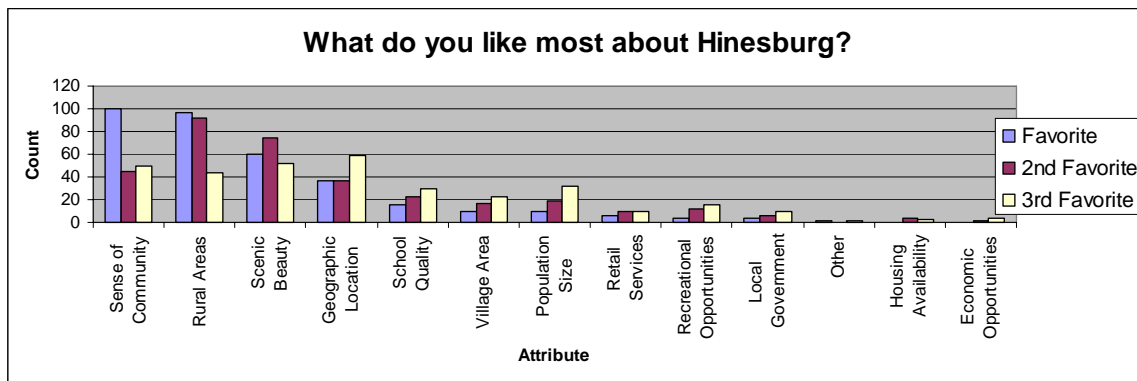
344 Hinesburgers Responded to the Survey

Question 19: What part of Hinesburg do you live in?



Question 1a. What do you like most about Hinesburg?

Attribute	1st		2nd		3rd		Not	
Sense of Community	100	29%	45	13%	49	14%	150	44%
Rural Areas	96	28%	92	27%	43	13%	113	33%
Scenic Beauty	60	17%	74	22%	52	15%	158	46%
Geographic Location	36	10%	37	11%	59	17%	212	62%
School Quality	15	4%	22	6%	29	8%	278	81%
Village Area	10	3%	16	5%	22	6%	296	86%
Population Size	9	3%	19	6%	32	9%	284	83%
Retail Services	6	2%	10	3%	9	3%	319	93%
Recreational Opportunities	3	1%	12	3%	15	4%	314	91%
Local Government	3	1%	6	2%	10	3%	325	94%
Other	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	342	99%
Housing Availability	0	0%	3	1%	2	1%	339	99%
Economic Opportunities	0	0%	1	0%	3	1%	340	99%



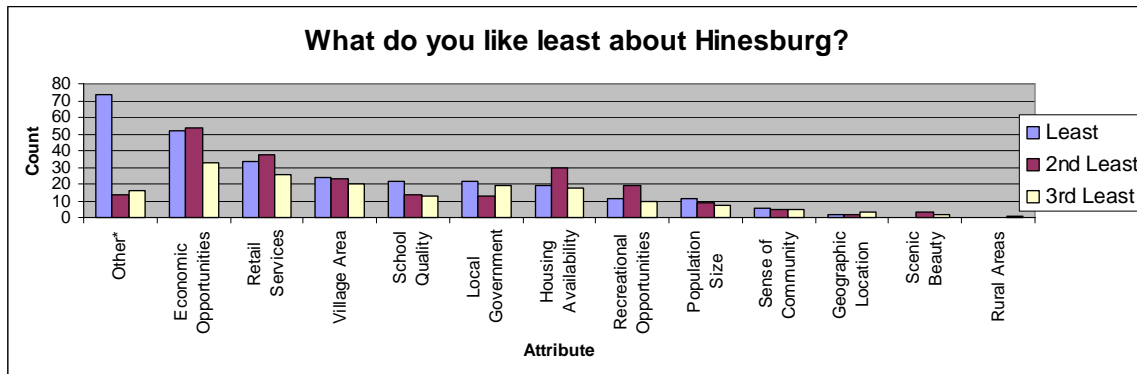
Question 1b: What do you like least about Hinesburg?

Attribute	1 st		2nd		3rd		Not	
Other*	74	22%	14	4%	16	5%	240	70%
Economic Opportunities	52	15%	54	16%	33	10%	205	60%
Retail Services	34	10%	38	11%	26	8%	246	72%
Village Area	24	7%	23	7%	20	6%	277	81%
School Quality	22	6%	14	4%	13	4%	295	86%
Local Government	22	6%	13	4%	19	6%	290	84%
Housing Availability	19	6%	30	9%	18	5%	277	81%
Recreational Opportunities	11	3%	19	6%	10	3%	304	88%
Population Size	11	3%	9	3%	7	2%	317	92%
Sense of Community	6	2%	5	1%	5	1%	328	95%
Geographic Location	2	1%	2	1%	3	1%	337	98%
Scenic Beauty	0	0%	3	1%	2	1%	339	99%
Rural Areas	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	343	100%

*Other responses include:

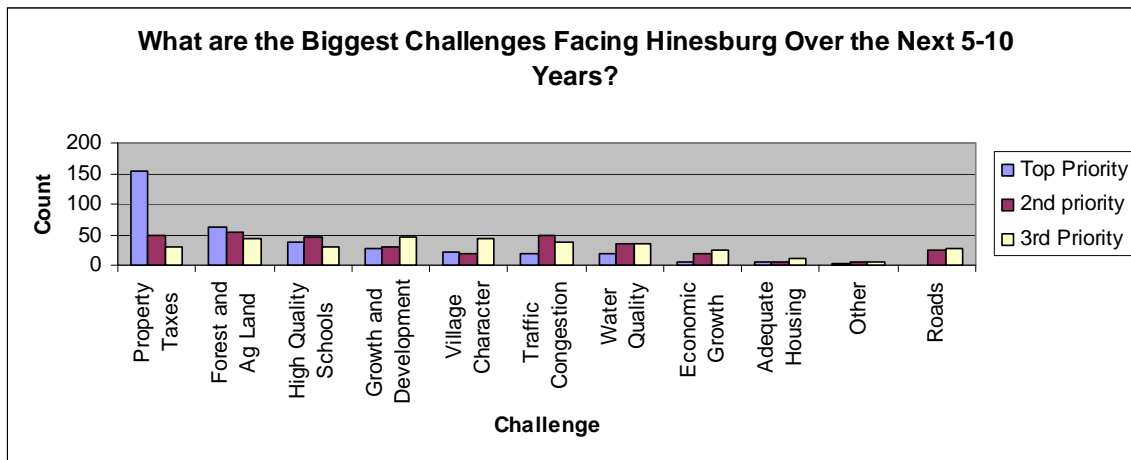
Taxes: 26 - Least; 3 - 2nd Least; 8 - 3rd Least

Traffic: 16 - Least; 5 - 2nd Least; 3 - 3rd Least

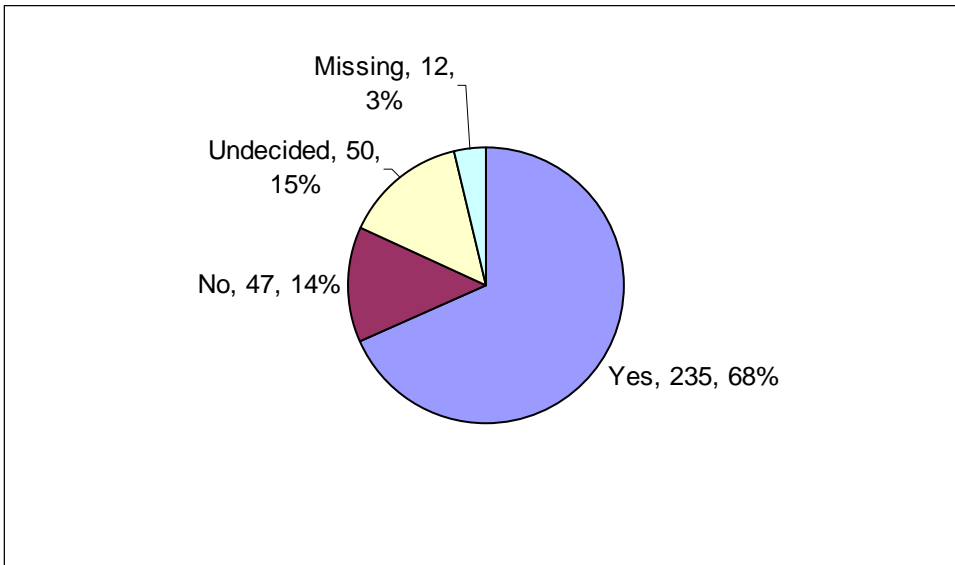


Question 2: What are the biggest challenges facing Hinesburg over the next 5-10 years?

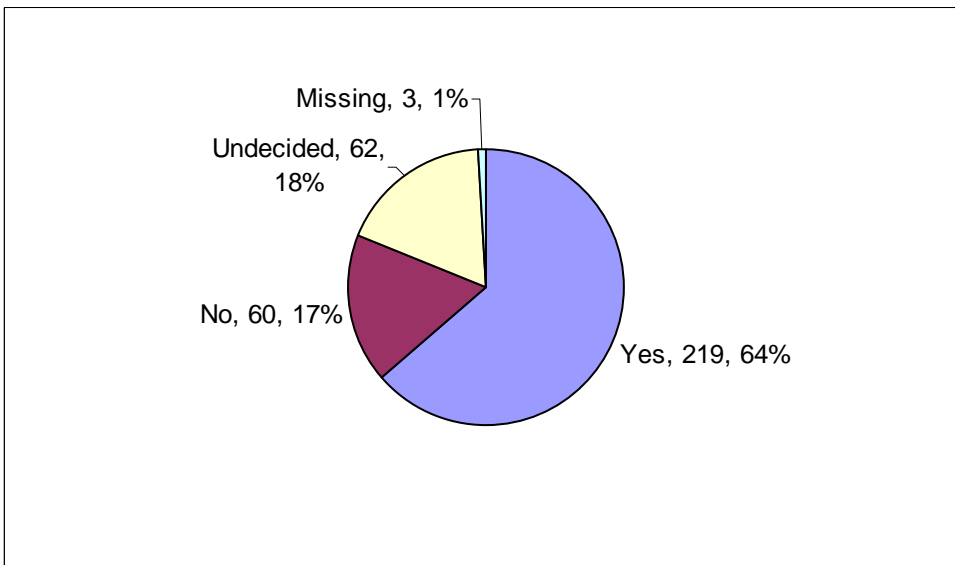
Challenge	Top Priority		2nd Priority		3rd Priority		Not a Priority	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Property Taxes	153	44%	49	14%	30	9%	112	33%
Forest and Ag Land	62	18%	53	15%	44	13%	185	54%
High Quality Schools	39	11%	45	13%	30	9%	230	67%
Growth and Development	27	8%	31	9%	45	13%	241	70%
Village Character	21	6%	20	6%	44	13%	259	75%
Traffic Congestion	20	6%	50	15%	39	11%	235	68%
Water Quality	20	6%	36	10%	36	10%	252	73%
Economic Growth	5	1%	19	6%	24	7%	296	86%
Adequate Housing	5	1%	6	2%	10	3%	323	94%
Other	4	1%	6	2%	6	2%	328	95%
Roads	1	0%	24	7%	27	8%	292	85%



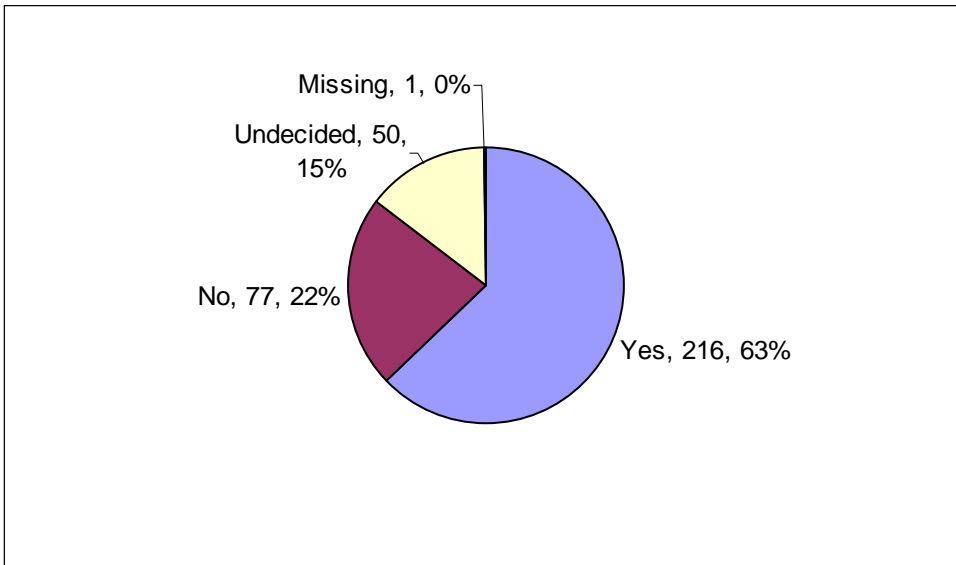
Question 3: Should the Town promote development in concentrated growth centers as opposed to encouraging growth evenly throughout the Town?



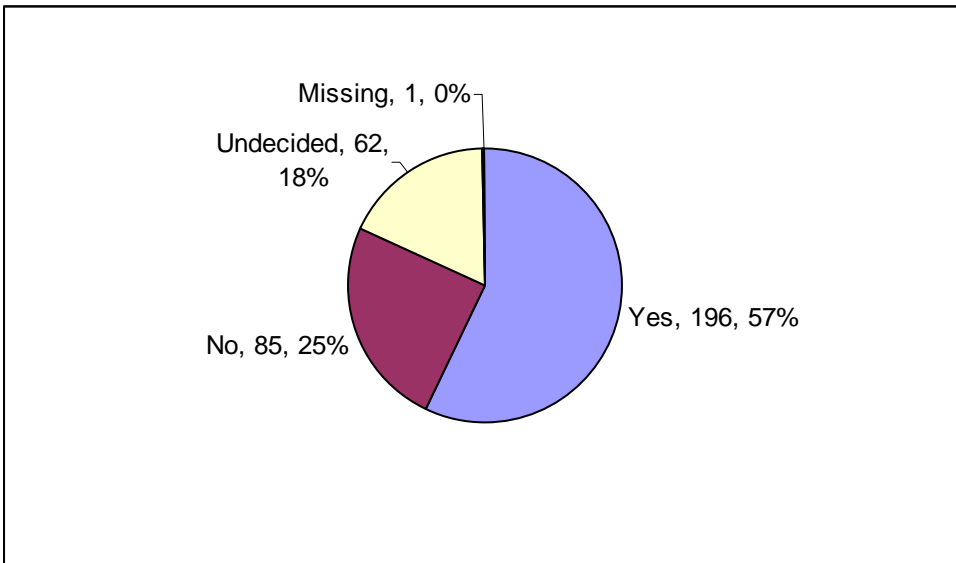
Question 4: Would you support increased housing densities in one area if this would require the developer to conserve another parcel of land?



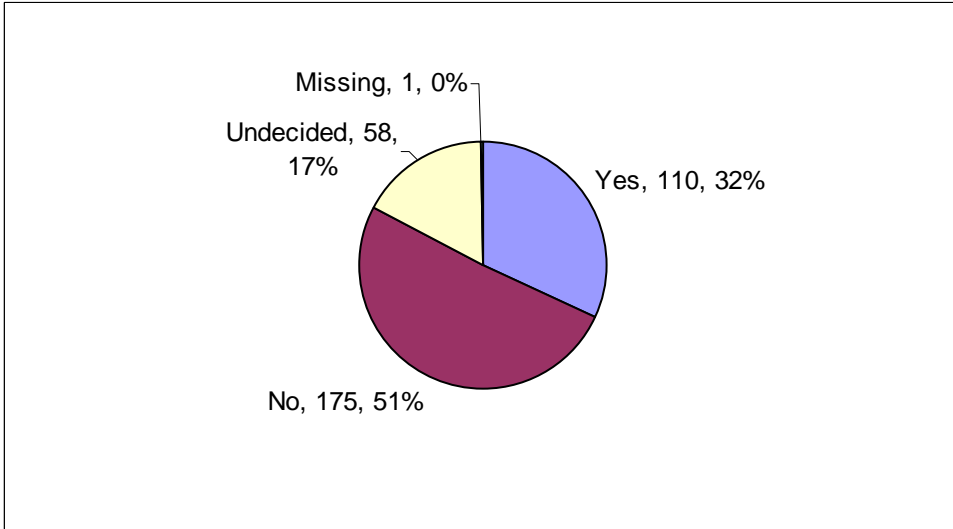
Question 5: Would you support expansion of the Village Area to allow mixed uses (residential, commercial, light industrial) in a larger area than currently exists?



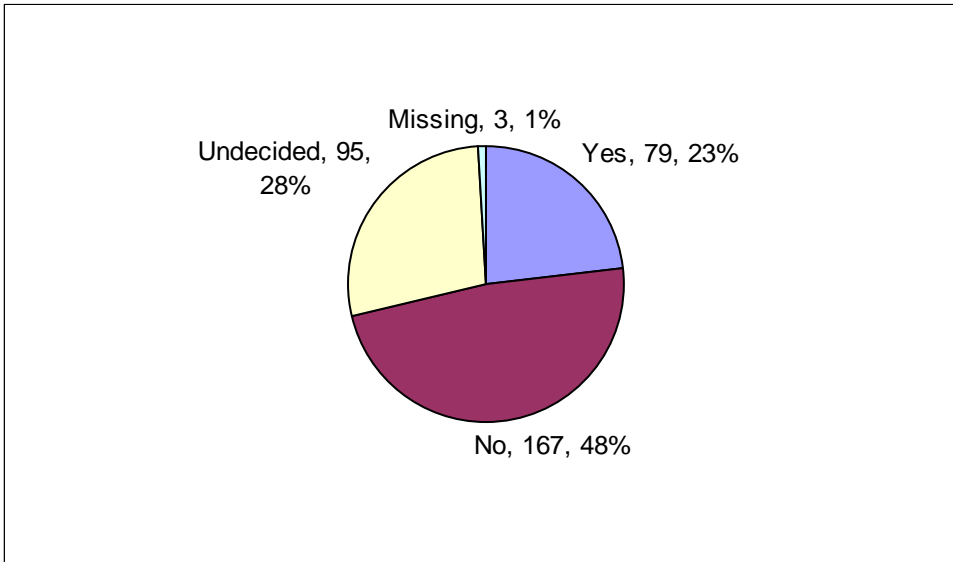
Question 6: Would you support mixed use development along the West side of Rt. 116 from the Cheese Factory to Ballard's Corner?



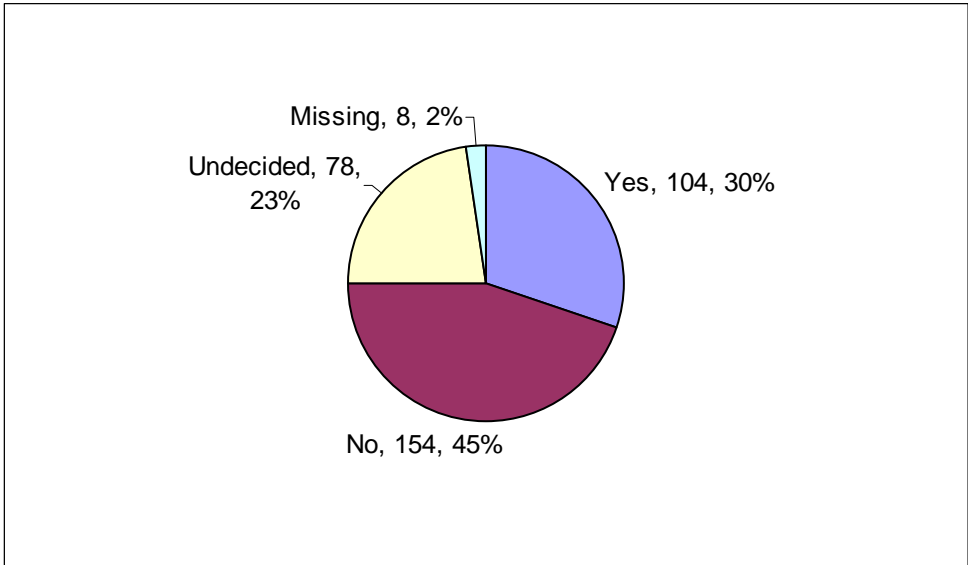
Question 7: The Town sewage treatment plant is nearly at its capacity. Would you support a town-wide tax to increase sewage capacity in order to focus more residential development in the Village area?



Question 8: Should the Town designate a new growth area to provide for more concentrated residential development outside of the Village?

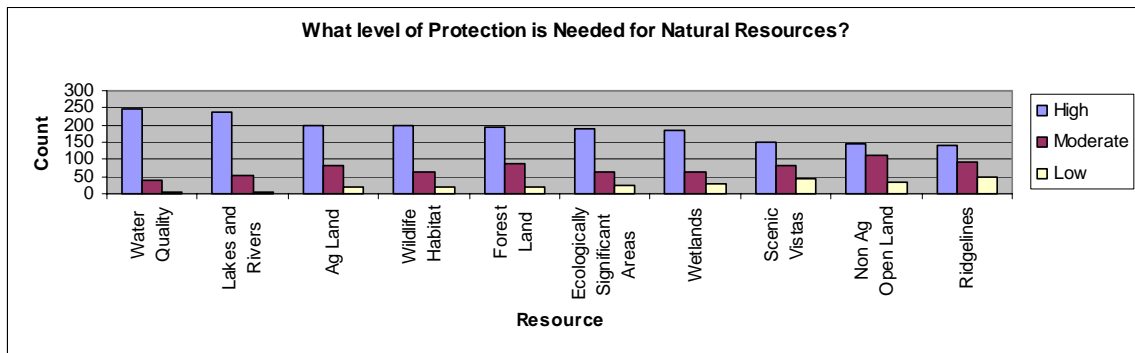


Question 9: Do you feel that Lewis Creek and the LaPlatte River deserve more protection than other streams in Hinesburg?

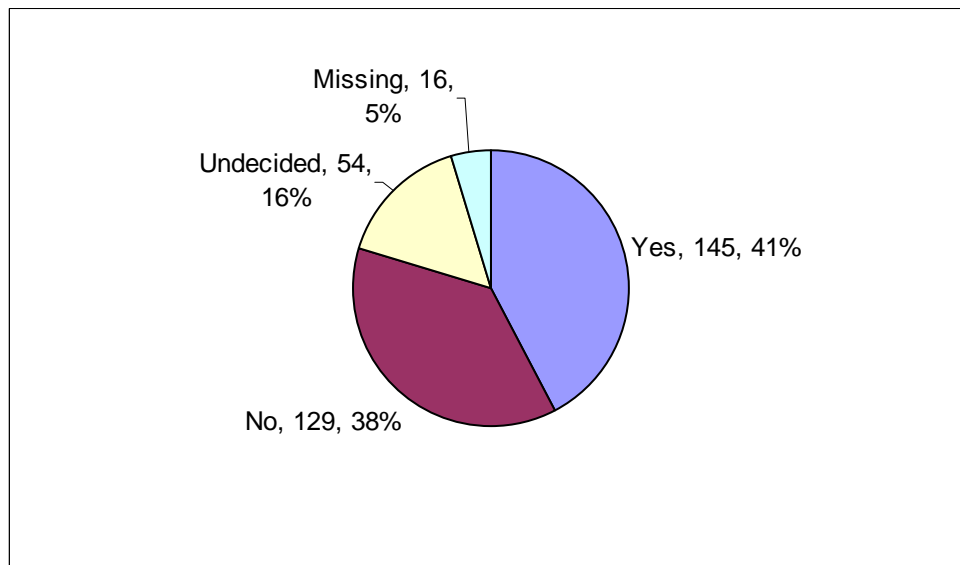


Question 10: Rate the level of protection needed for each of the following Hinesburg natural resources: 1=high; 2=moderate; 3=low

Resource	High	Moderate	Low	Not Rated				
Water Quality	247	72%	37	11%	4	1%	56	16%
Lakes and Rivers	237	69%	54	16%	4	1%	49	14%
Ag Land	200	58%	81	24%	19	6%	44	13%
Wildlife Habitat	199	58%	64	19%	19	6%	62	18%
Forest Land	192	56%	88	26%	21	6%	43	13%
Ecologically Significant Areas	190	55%	63	18%	22	6%	69	20%
Wetlands	186	54%	64	19%	31	9%	63	18%
Scenic Vistas	151	44%	83	24%	43	13%	67	19%
Non Ag Open Land	144	42%	113	33%	35	10%	52	15%
Ridgelines	140	41%	90	26%	50	15%	64	19%

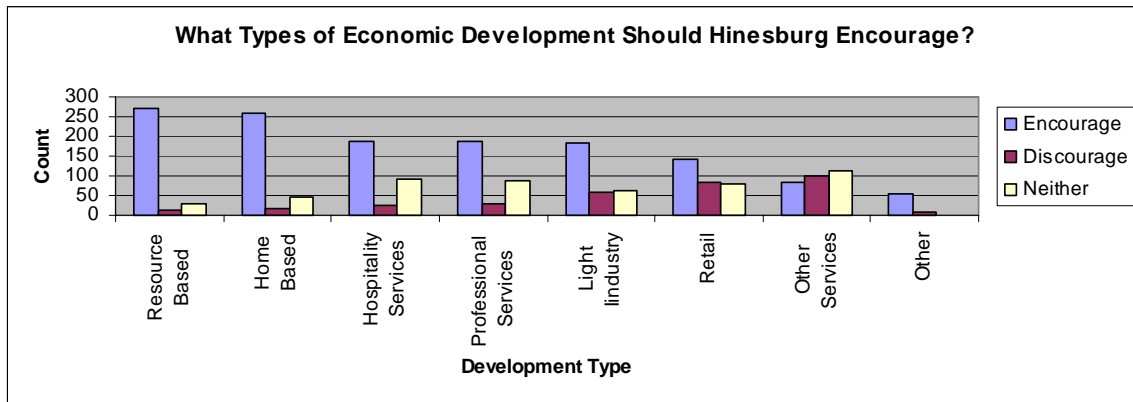


Question 11: Would you support an increase in your taxes to protect these resources?

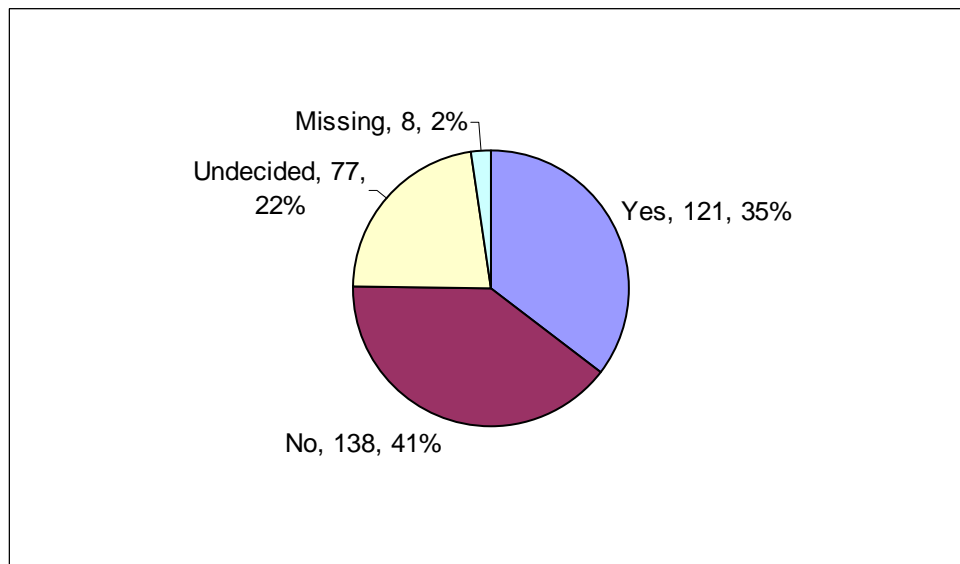


Question 12: Which types of economic development should Hinesburg encourage? Rate each of the following: 1=encourage; 2=discourage; 3=neither

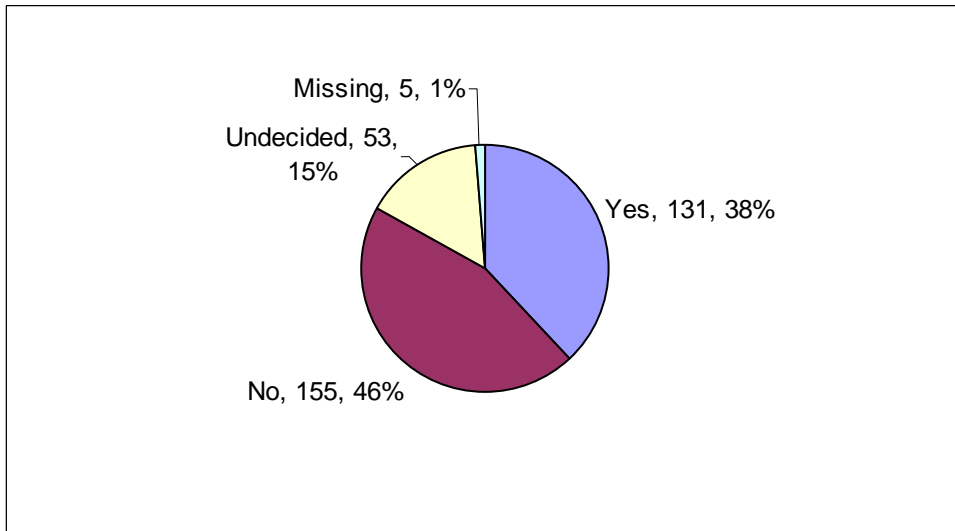
Development Type	Encourage		Discourage		Neither		Missing	
Resource Based	269	78%	11	3%	30	9%	34	10%
Home Based	260	76%	15	4%	44	13%	25	7%
Hospitality Services	189	55%	26	8%	93	27%	36	10%
Professional Services	187	54%	29	8%	88	26%	40	12%
Light industry	183	53%	59	17%	62	18%	40	12%
Retail	140	41%	82	24%	79	23%	43	13%
Other Services	85	25%	101	29%	111	32%	47	14%
Other*	56	16%	8	2%	0	0%	280	81%



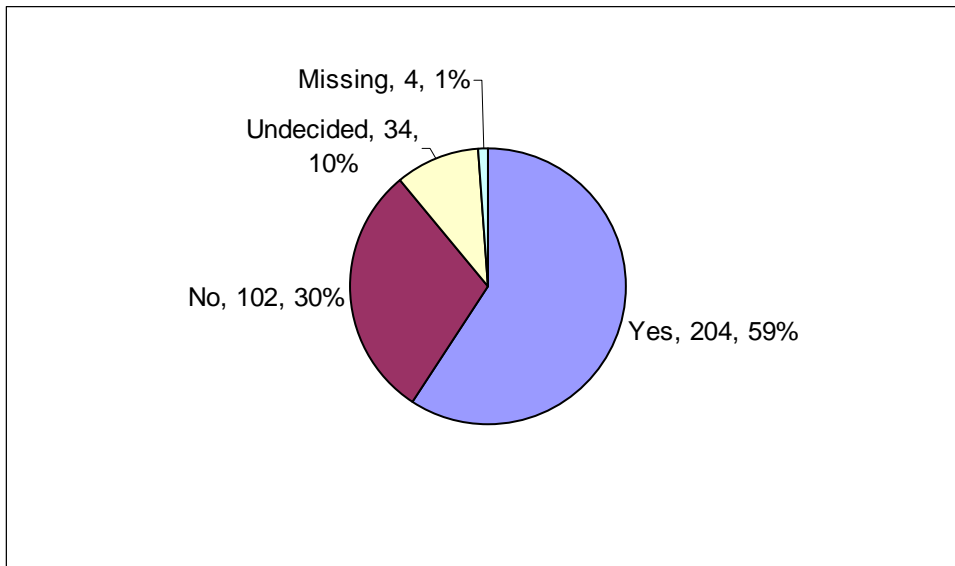
Question 13: Should the Town invest in additional or improved infrastructure (e.g., roads, sidewalks, water, sewer, etc.) to attract businesses?



Question 14: Should the Town invest tax dollars in traffic-calming infrastructure – e.g., raised crosswalks, roadside plantings, roadside parking, etc.?

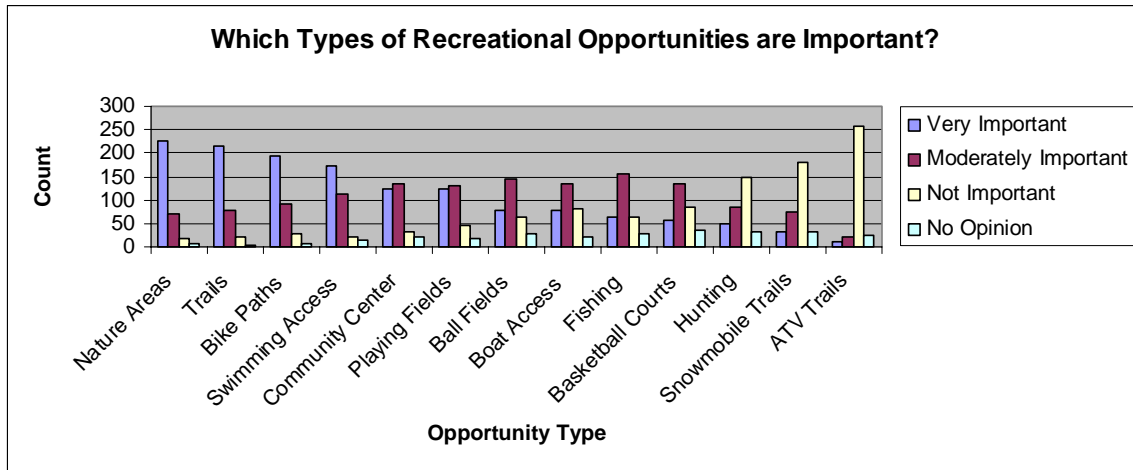


Question 15: Would you support one or more traffic lights in the Village (along Rt. 116) to improve traffic flow and safety?

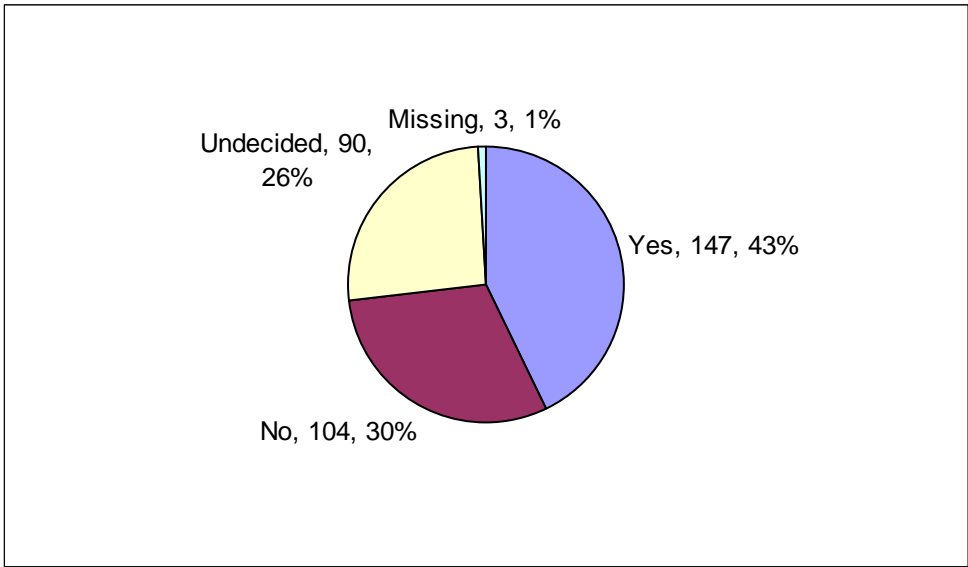


Question 16: Which types of recreational land/facilities are important to you and/or the community? Rate each of the following: 1=very important; 2=moderately important; 3=not important; 4=no opinion

Recreational Opportunity	Importance									
	Very		Moderate		None		No Opinion		Missing	
Nature Areas	225	65%	71	21%	16	5%	7	2%	25	7%
Trails	214	62%	79	23%	20	6%	5	1%	26	8%
Bike Paths	194	56%	91	26%	27	8%	6	2%	26	8%
Swimming Access	172	50%	113	33%	21	6%	14	4%	24	7%
Community Center	124	36%	135	39%	33	10%	21	6%	31	9%
Playing Fields	123	36%	132	38%	45	13%	17	5%	27	8%
Ball Fields	77	22%	144	42%	63	18%	30	9%	30	9%
Boat Access	77	22%	133	39%	82	24%	22	6%	30	9%
Fishing	65	19%	157	46%	65	19%	27	8%	30	9%
Basketball Courts	57	17%	135	39%	85	25%	36	10%	31	9%
Hunting	49	14%	86	25%	148	43%	33	10%	28	8%
Snowmobile Trails	33	10%	73	21%	180	52%	31	9%	27	8%
ATV Trails	11	3%	22	6%	259	75%	25	7%	27	8%



Question 17: Does the Town need additional recreational land or facilities?



Question 18: Would you support an increase in your taxes to provide additional recreational opportunities?

