Bennington Planning Commission Meeting Thursday, May 23, 2024

Bennington Town Plan Summary of Public Input and Thematic Outline





- 960 postcards from students
- 190 survey responses
- 55 participants in focus group discussions
- 50 idea boards from community roundtables
- 40 participants in community roundtables
- 5 community roundtable conversations
- 5 public tabling events
- 4 focus group discussions





Hello from Bennington in 2050!

I want
ado9-Walking Path
arount lake Paran. I want
splashed at Molly State.

Sincerely,

Dear 2023 Bennington,

The year is 2050! Bennington is more
beautiful than ever Our town now has more parks
and trees. Main Street is filled with cute little shops.
The rougher areas of Bennington, have been cleaned up.

thanks in part to the actions you took to make our community better, such as . . .

building a organization that works to remove the old houses, that have been left untouched, Also a group that works to plantices BENNING.

Margare

Dear 2023 Bennington,

The year is 2050! Bennington is more

thanks in part to the actions you took to make our

thanks in part to the actions you took to make our community better, such as . . .

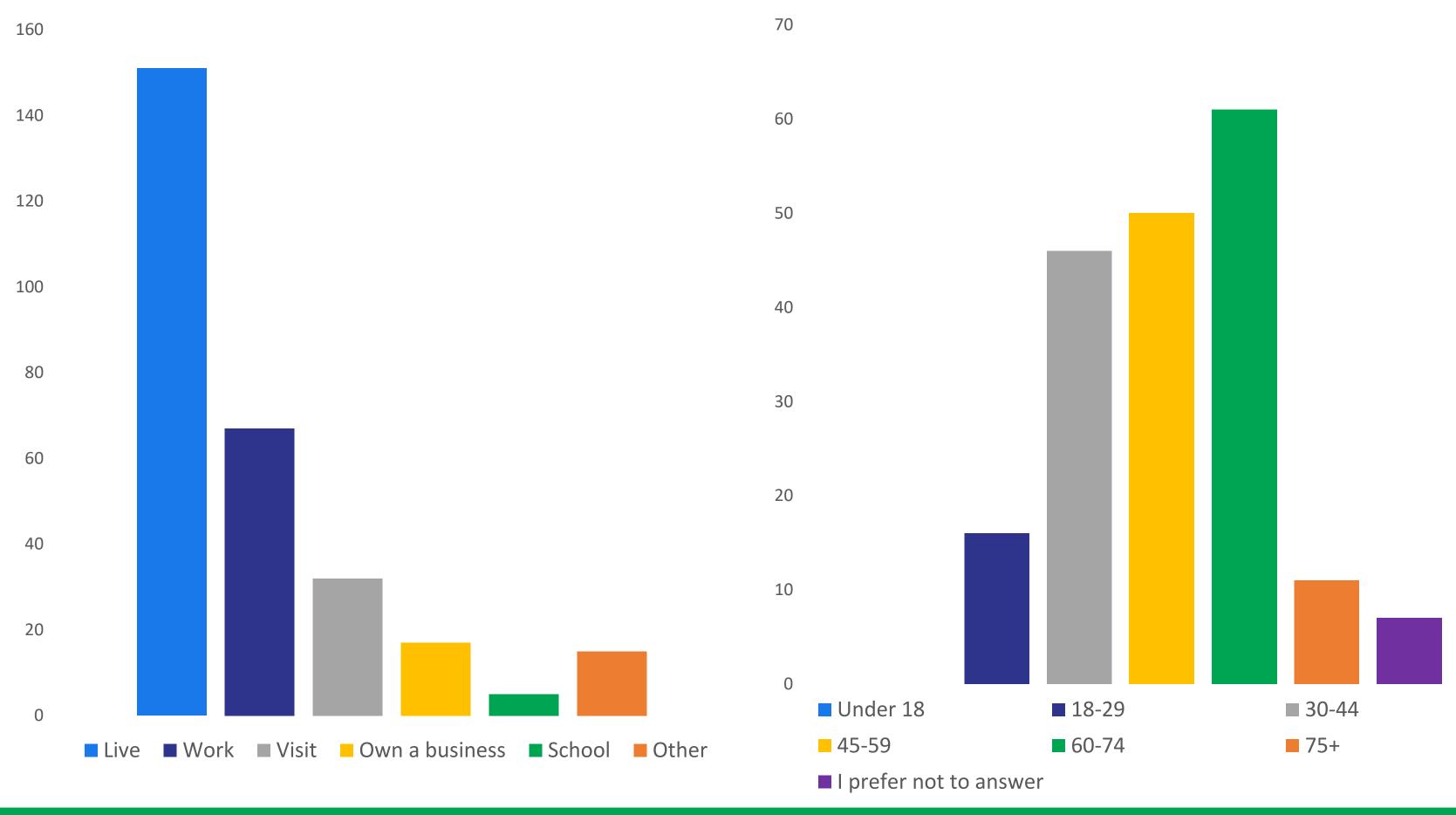
for the menuless. Better caps, and
get rid of the hundreds of car of BEN.
Sincerely,

Postcards: Visions for 2050

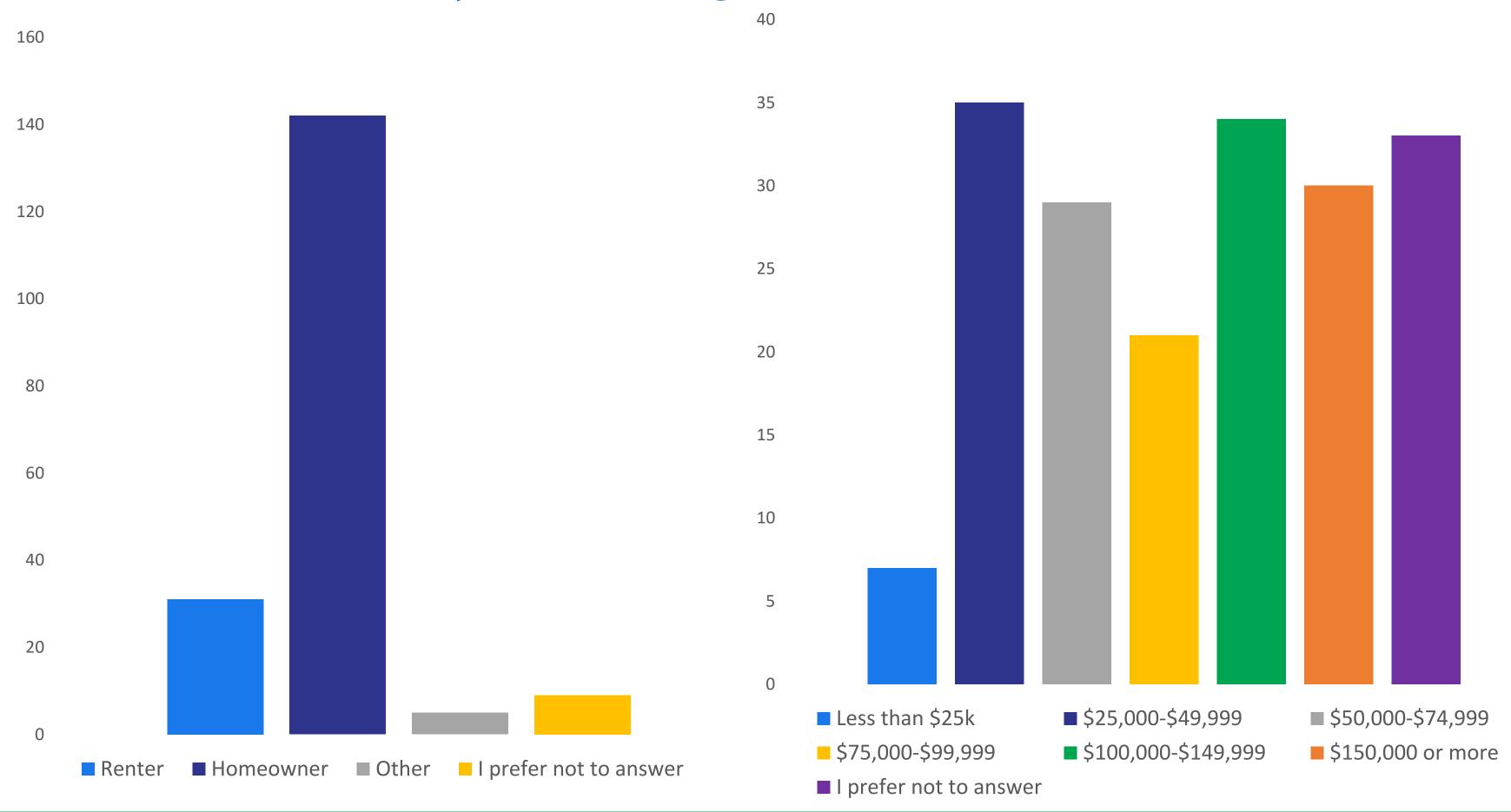
- More places to go and things to do
- Cleaner, greener, prettier
- Peaceful, safe
- Addiction and drug free
- Fun and entertaining
- More and better housing
- Walking and biking friendly
- Safe, progressive, equitable, inclusive, healthy, diverse, and accessible



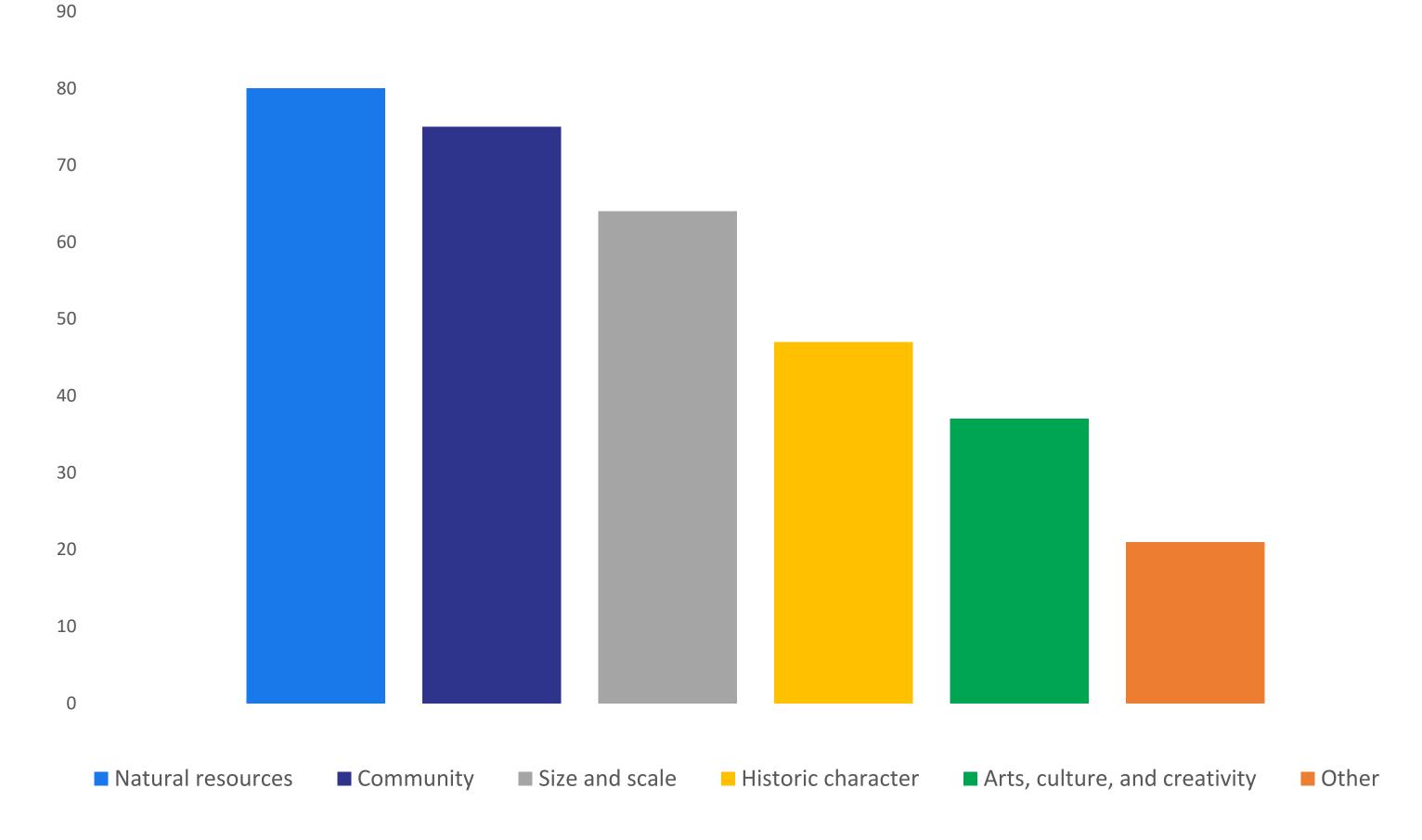
Survey: Relationship and Age



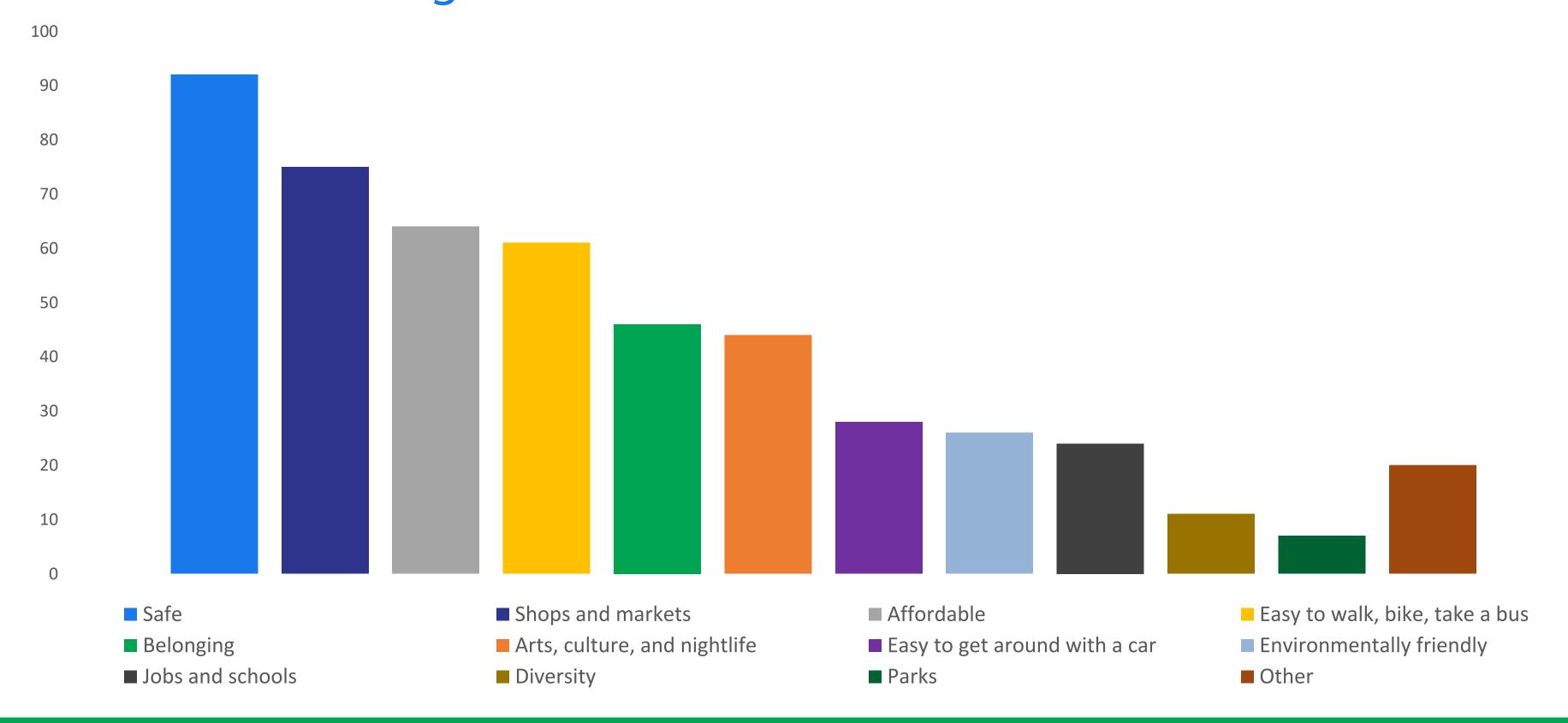
Survey: Housing and Income



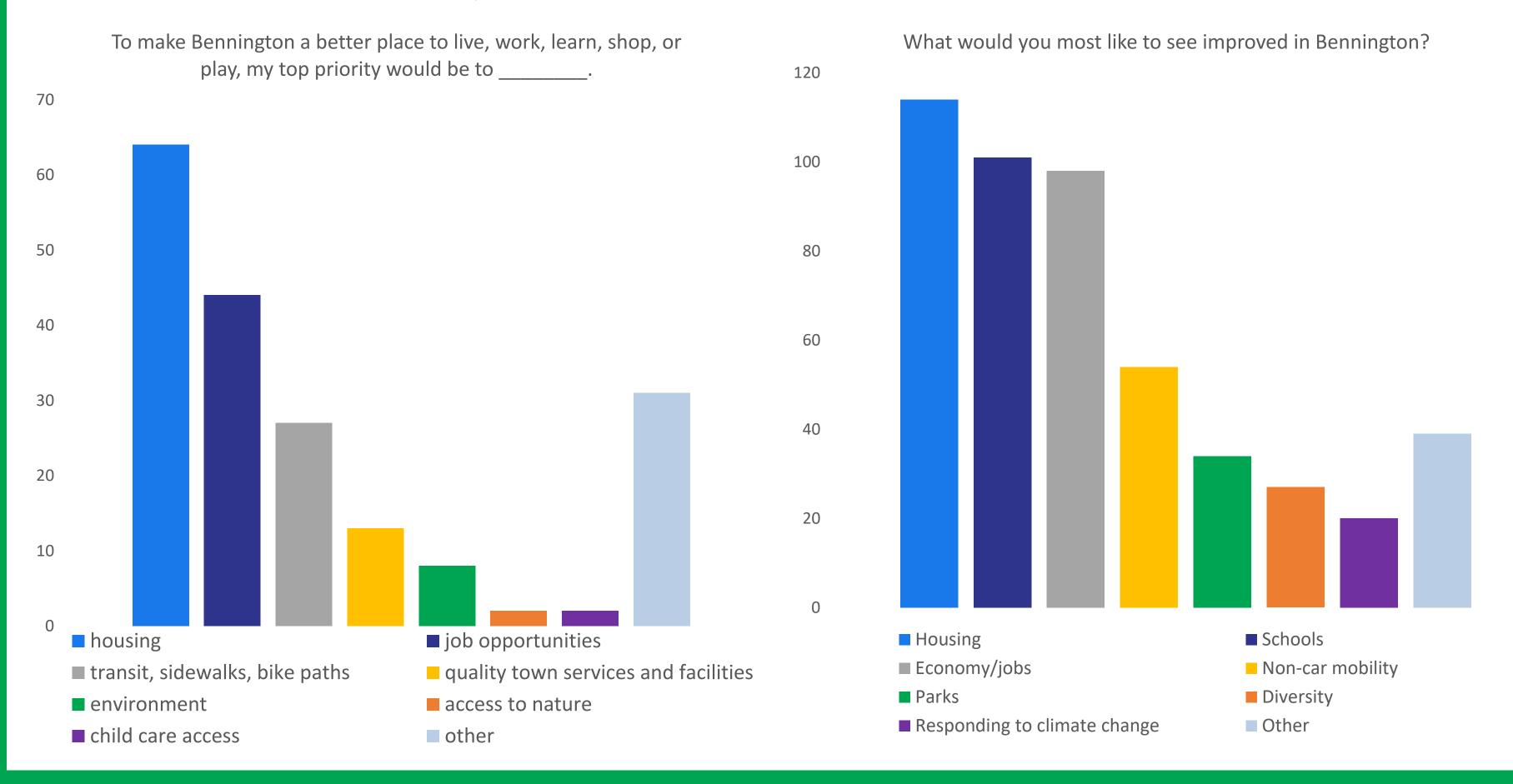
Survey: Favorite Things about Bennington



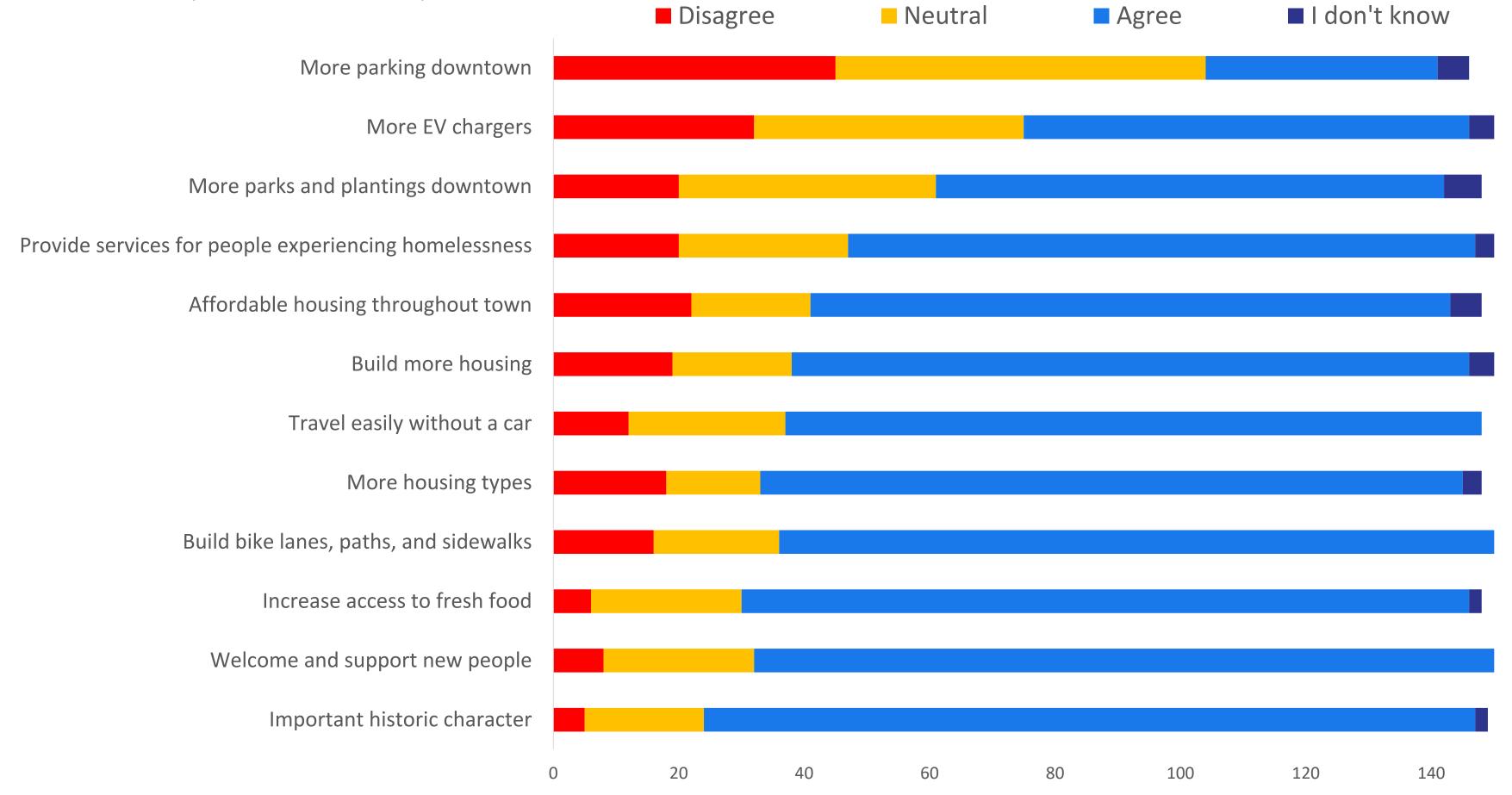
Survey: Most important in deciding where you spend time in Bennington?



Survey: Improvement Priorities

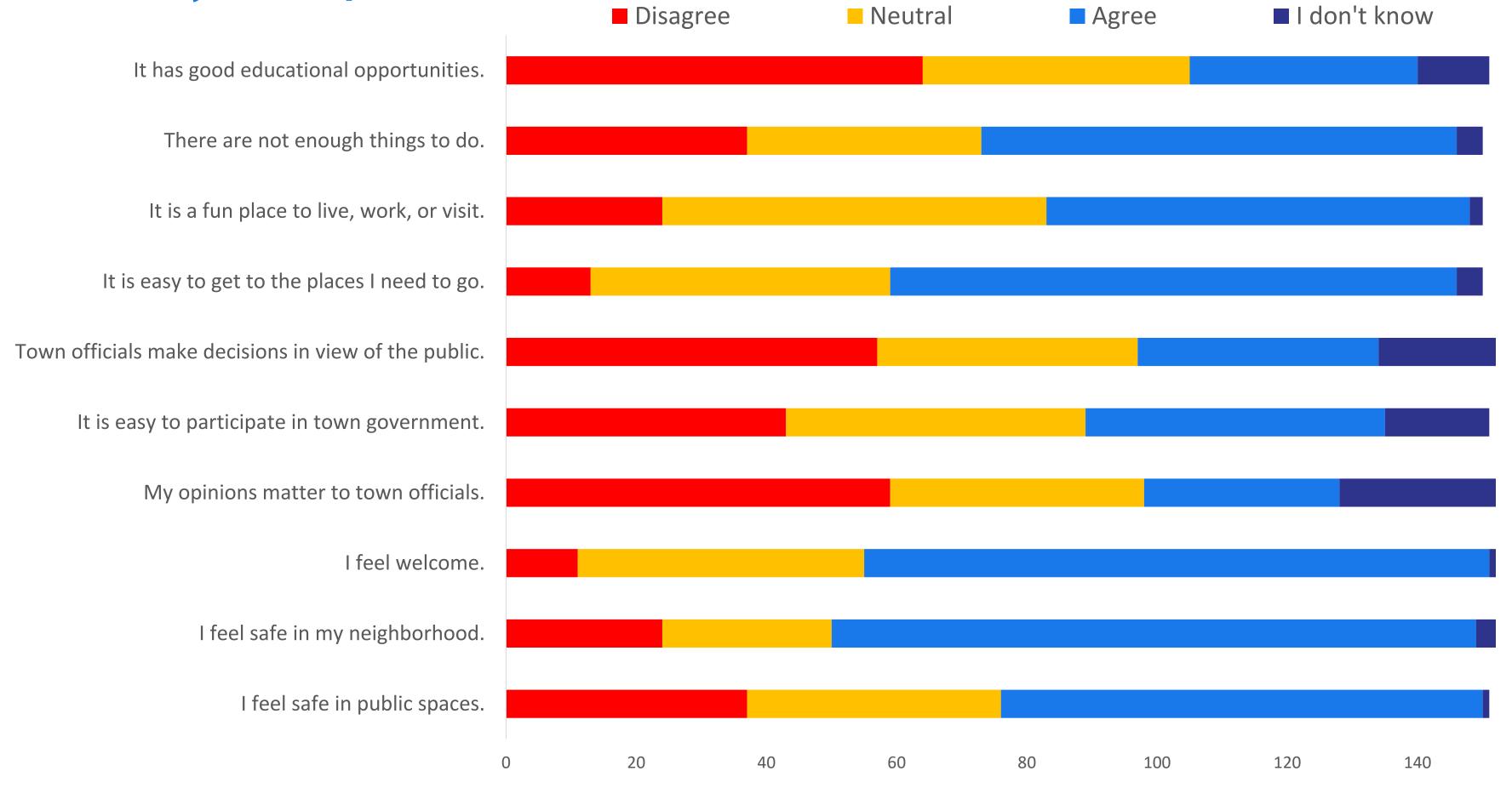


Survey: Policy Priorities



160

Survey: Experiences

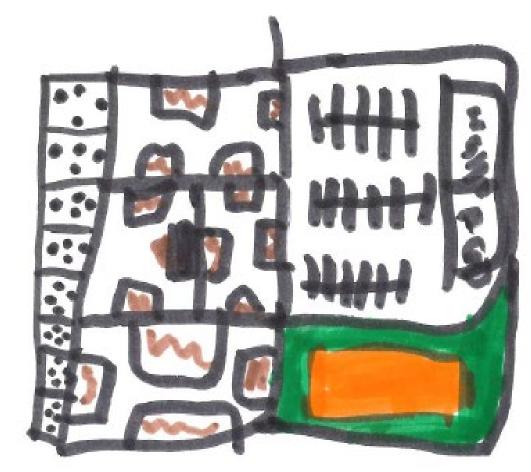


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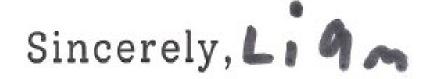
Topic Areas

Hello from Bennington in 2050!

- Housing
- Community
- Public Facilities + Programs
- Economy + Jobs
- Energy + the Environment
- Transportation + Mobility







Housing

Adaptive reuse Affordability Architecturally beautiful Walkable downtown Compact neighborhoods Balance between downtown and rural

Challenges
Low housing stock
Not easy to "age in place"
Homelessness
Impacts of housing shortage
on key industries
Maintenance and quality
concerns
Disempowerment by
political process and
landlords

Opportunities Redevelopment of vacant buildings Build more accessible and small-scale homes Encourage density in and around downtown Provide services to people experiencing homelessness Regulatory reforms Public discussion of housing challenges

Community

Values

Connection with neighbors

Strong arts community

Vibrant events bring everyone together

Strong non-profit community

Deeply rooted

Appreciation for rich history

Challenges

Low self-esteem about the community

Resources are not well known enough

Lack of accessible, familyfriendly activities

Need more spaces and programming for BIPOC community

Substance misuse and addiction challenges

Disconnect between Bennington College

Opportunities

More placemaking

Collaborations with Bennington College students

Community spaces for people of all ages

Invite volunteerism and civic participation

More programs for youth

Intergenerational engagement

Public Facilities + Programs

Values

Splash pad

Lots of good parks, paths, and trails

Recreation Center

Senior Center has great classes, Meals on Wheels

Appalachian Trail Community designation

Water and sewer services

Social worker on staff at Police Department

Challenges

Barriers to civic participation

Need more indoor and outdoor recreational spaces

Path safety improvements

Short-staffed at key municipal services

Inaccessibility for children in public parks

Concerns about school system

Lack of trust in town government

Opportunities

Easy access to all town communications

Strengthen marketing of town assets

More public spaces and public events

Community beautification

Bathroom and shower facilities for people experiencing homelessness

Increase crime prevention measures

Combat drug problem

Economy + Jobs

Values

Lots of small businesses

Sense of entrepreneurship

Many entry-level job openings

Strong community institutions

Affordable internet

New and incoming stores and restaurants

Events activate Main Street

Challenges

Vacancies and underutilized spaces downtown

Wages/salaries too low to support good quality of life

Inconsistent quality of school system

Shortage of doctors, limited medical services provided

Limited retail

Healthy food desert

Lack of trade workers

Opportunities

Invest in career development pipeline with schools

Create an incubator for start-ups, small businesses, BIPOC-owned businesses

Stronger marketing of the town

Activate vacant / underutilized storefronts

Address housing challenges to attract workers

Entice more private sector, tech- or science-based jobs

Attract more retail and restaurants

Energy + the Environment

Values

Good mix of energy sources, not too reliant on coal

Beautiful natural areas

Active Energy Committee

Lead line replacement project

Good programs for weatherization and efficiency improvements

Significant progress in recent years

Challenges

Need more EV charging stations

Efficiency improvements are prohibitively expensive

Too much pushback around renewables development

Energy conservation programs are complicated

Utilities are expensive

Renters feel disempowered

Opportunities

Strategic renewables development

Explore geothermal

Add more fast chargers

Ensure all municipal buildings are at max efficiency

Expand educational resources for homeowners, landlords, and business owners

Community clean-up events

Transportation + Mobility

Values

Pathways for recreation and transportation

Walkable downtown

Bus system is free, offers direct transport for medical appointments (Medicaid)

The Bike Hub's equitable service approach

Ample parking

Bike infrastructure that links to grocery stores

Flashing crosswalks

Challenges

Irregular, inconsistent, insufficient bus service

Lack of information on public transit

Inaccessible sidewalks and pathways

Lack of crosswalks, lack of respect for pedestrians

Opportunities limited by vehicle access

Few ridesharing options

Traffic noise downtown

Opportunities

Better walking and biking trails

More pedestrian protections at major crosswalk areas

More bike parking

Deemphasize automobiles

Expanded bus services, improved intercity transit

Connect businesses with transit and bike incentives

Concern about LPG train cars by North Bennington

Themes: Visions for Bennington

- A Vibrant Downtown
- Mobility for All
- The Place to Be
- Community-Oriented Public Safety
- Innovative Spirit + Strategic Programming
- Informed and Educated
- Climate Resilient

Key Themes x Topic Areas

						Civic Participation
		Economic		Environmental	Public Facilities	+ Community
	Housing	Development	Transportation	Issues	+ Programs	Building
A Vibrant Downtown	Support small centrally located housing	Activate vacant storefronts	Enhance a compact, walkable area	Support more fresh food options	Celebrate and expand on existing parks	Foster spaces for intergenerational connection and collaboration
Mobility for All	Ε	Expanded sidewalks, bike lanes, pathways, and public transit service to improve access across the board				
The Place to Be	Improve housing quality	Combine development and public art-making	Add street furnitute and landscaping to paths and sidewalks	Community-building through beautification	Foster social connection through recreation	Extend invitations for involvement before and during events
Community-Oriented Public Safety	Expand public facilities and services to support community members struggling with housing insecurity, addiction, and other challenges					
Innovative Spirit + Strategic Programming		Lower barriers for starting a small businesses	Support micromobility	Lower barriers to developing renewables on preferred sites	Strengthen marketing for town assets	Connect students and industries for career development
Informed and Educated	Improve communications on existing resources, services, and events provided by the Town					
Climate Resilient	Expand resources on home efficiency and weatherization	Connect workforce development with "green" jobs, especially trades	Promote active transportation	Support community tree- planting	Ensure all municipal buildings are as efficient as possible	Facilitate community clean-up days

Values (How?)

- Accessibly
- Affordably
- Compassionately
- Innovatively
- People-centered
- Sustainably
- Transparently
- Vibrantly



Thematic Outline – 3 Choices

- Option 1: Chapters centered on topic areas
- Option 2: Chapters focused on key themes
- Option 3: Hybrid topic areas grouped by key themes

Option 1: Chapter for Each Topic Area



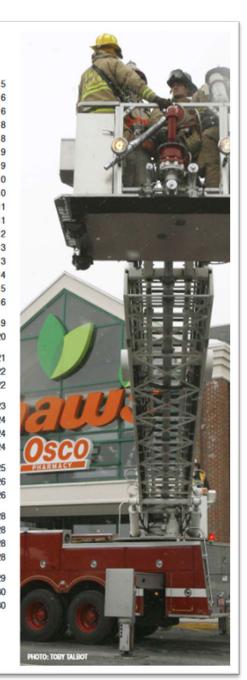


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Berlin, VT

Interstate highways

Class 2 town roads

Class 3 town roads

Class 4 town road:

Federal or state highway

OBJECTIVES

- Provide a multi-modal transportation system that is capable of supporting further growth in the northeast guadrant.
- Increase the number of commuters traveling in or out of Berlin by means other than single occupancy vehicles (transit, biking, carpooling).

- Promote compact, walkable, higher density neighborhoods in the northeast quadrant to reduce the distance residents need to travel for work. shopping and services, and to encourage greater
- Focus commercial and industrial development in the northeast guadrant where it can be served by existing transportation infrastructure and transit
- Call upon the state and town to maintain and improve highways as necessary to foster growth and development as envisioned in this plan.
- Avoid increasing the total length of roads maintained by the town unless it will improve the efficiency of maintenance operations and/or support development that generates adequate tax revenue to offset increased costs.
- Encourage improved access management on state highways and other high-traffic roads.
- Support and advocate for construction of the Central Vermont Path through Berlin.
- Seek improved accommodation for bicyclists and pedestrians on state highways and other hightraffic roads in the northeast quadrant.
- Require private roads to be constructed in accordance with town road standards and developers to provide a maintenance agreement or equivalent for new private roads.
- Maintain town ownership of Class 4 roads and legal trails as a public recreation resource.

- Continue to actively participate in the Central Vermont Transportation Advisory Committee to advocate for the state-funded transportation projects needed to further the objectives and policies of this plan.
- Adopt revised land use regulations with adequate standards for access management curb cuts, driveways and roads to promote a safe and efficient transportation network.
- Develop and adopt a policy regarding the construction and maintenance of sidewalks along public roads.
- Seek implementation of the priority projects listed in Section 3B of this plan.

3. TRANSPORTATION

3A Existing Conditions

Streets and Highway Network

INTERSTATE 89. Interstate 89 travels through town with Exits 6 and 7 located in Berlin and Exit 8 just across the town line in Montpelier. Construction of I-89 commenced in 1960, but the interstate was not opened in Berlin until 1970 as part of the final segment that completed the full length of the interstate through Vermont and New Hampshire.

The construction of I-89 has shaped and continues to influence Berlin's land use patterns, particularly the commercial and industrial development in the northeast quadrant. Access to the interstate is clearly an important factor differentiating the eastern and western portions of town. The land west of I-89 is not readily accessible from the interstate and has remained rural, while the land to the east served by Exit 7 has been developed.

FEDERAL AND STATE HIGHWAYS. Federal and state highways form the backbone of Berlin's transportation network and have made it possible for the town to become a regional employment and service center (see "Transportation Map" on page 19). The capacity of these highways to accommodate additional traffic directly affects Berlin's growth potential and the ease with which businesses can locate or expand in town.

There is limited information about the current condition and capacity of these highways. The Vermont Agency of Transportation last updated their highway sufficiency ratings in 2008. The amount of traffic on the highways in Berlin generally declined between 2000 and 2015 (see "Average Annual Daily Traffic Statistics" on page 20) suggesting that there is adequate capacity to accommodate growth. However, according to recent traffic studies undertaken in conjunction with proposed development projects, several key intersections have a level of service of D or E, indicating problems with congestion and safety. These intersections create bottlenecks that restrict the amount of additional traffic the highways can accommodate. The state may require developers to pay for intersection and highway improvements to mitigate traffic impacts of proposed projects through the Act 250 process.

TOWN ROADS. Berlin maintains approximately 51 miles of town road, less than 10 miles of which are paved (see "Transportation Map" on page 19). About 900 residences and businesses were accessed from town roads in 2017. The town has approximately 7.5 additional miles of Class 4 roads that are not maintained for year-round travel and 4 miles of legal trails no longer



Legat traits & impa

Private roads

Poved surface

Transit service av

The Future Land Use Recommendations (page 17) are organized as follows:

- Recommendations to maintain are intended to preserve or strengthen the element described with limited change from the existing or historic condition.
- Recommendations to evolve are intended to promote incremental change that builds on an existing strength or asset.
- Recommendations to transform are intended to lead to substantial change that will alter the future character or use of an

Village Centers

RIVERTON. Riverton or West Berlin is a historic hamlet along the Dog River on Route 12 that developed as a small industrial center due to the availability of water power and later access to the railroad. Town residents have expressed support for revitalizing this area, which formerly supported more businesses, homes and civic buildings than it does today. The town has proposed creating a new mixed-use zoning district for Riverton that would recognize and maintain its historic settlement pattern.

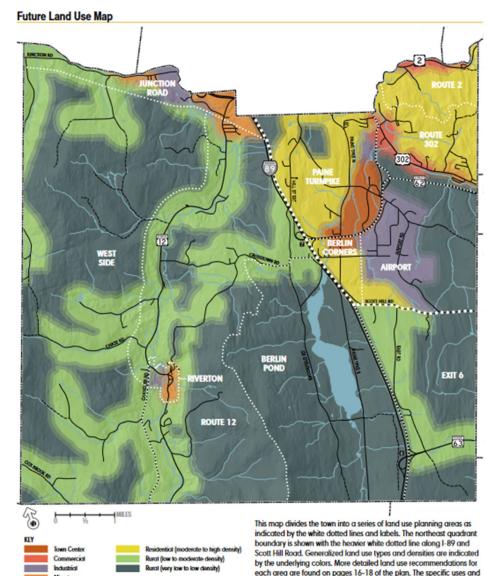
BERLIN CORNERS. Berlin Corners is a historic hamlet that formed around the intersection of Crosstown Road (the only road connecting the eastern and western sides of town) and Paine Turnpike. While it has been overshadowed by development around Exit 7 and the airport, it continues in its role as a civic center. Town residents have expressed an interest in retaining the historic scale and character of Berlin Corners, and in preventing the commercial development near Exit 7 from extending further south along Paine Turnpike. The town has proposed zoning changes that would allow for additional housing, but that would limit the scale of commercial activity in Berlin Corners.

DESIGNATION. The town plans to seek Village Center designations for these two historic hamlets from the state (see "Village Centers Map" on page 15). Designation would support the town's land use policies related to maintaining the historic scale and pattern of development, encouraging private investment in historic buildings, and promoting infill and improving the walkability of the town's existing and planned centers. State designation would offer both the town and property owners within the designated area benefits including

- Owners of income-producing historic buildings could access tax credits for eligible improvements.
- C Land within and near village centers would be eligible for the state's Neighborhood Development Area program.
- C Berlin would be more competitive when seeking grant funding for projects in the village centers.

Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectors

Town plans are required by state statute to identify forest blocks and habitat connectors and to plan for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote forest health and ecological function. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources



Berlin, VT

densities of development allowed are established in the Berlin Land Use

and Development Regulations.

Option 1: Chapter for Each Topic Area

Current conditions and goals/action items within each chapter

- 1.Introduction
- 2. The Place to Be (Land use, natural resources)
- 3. Housing for All (Housing)
- 4.A Vibrant Economy (Economic Development)
- 5. Mobility for All (Transportation)
- 6. Connected Community (Public Facilities and Programs)
- 7. Climate Resilience (Energy and the Environment)
- 8.Implementation
- 9.Appendix

Option 2: Theme-based Plan



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THEME 2: AUTHENTIC

A CITY THAT TREASURES ITS UNIQUE CHARACTER, NATURAL RESOURCES AND HISTORIC ASSETS

Portsmouth's historic core and waterfront are principal contributors to the unique identity of the City and are primary draws for visitors from both near and far. As Portsmouth's vibrant economy supports ongoing development and redevelopment, historic preservation within the core continues to be a high priority for residents and advocacy groups. However, other parts of the city, including its residential neighborhoods, must also feel authentic and communicate the sense of community, shared history, and experience that is unique to Portsmouth.

The City has embraced the use of historic district zoning and, more recently, character-based zoning to ensure compatibility of new development within historic areas of the city. Some new buildings in the downtown have met the expectations of residents and the preservation community for compatible redevelopment while others have been more controversial. Challenges remain for ensuring that the City

52 I. THEMES AUTHENTIC

balances historic preservation with growth and reinvestment. New forms of development such as parking structures, hotels, supermarkets and senior housing frequently desire a larger scale than historic precedents. Authentic new development would be sensitive to scale, massing and volume of its surrounding context while providing exciting spaces for modern day uses, amenities and

the City should promote physical and visual access to encourage use and enjoyment of one of Portsmouth's most charming and historic amenities. New harborwalk connections along the downtown waterfront should be developed, eventually creating a continuous pedestrian walk connecting Ceres Street to Daniel Street. Boating access points and "river trails" could



GOAL 2.1

ACTION # DESCRIPTION

ENSURE THAT NEW DEVELOPMENT COMPLEMENTS AND ENHANCES ITS SURROUNDINGS.

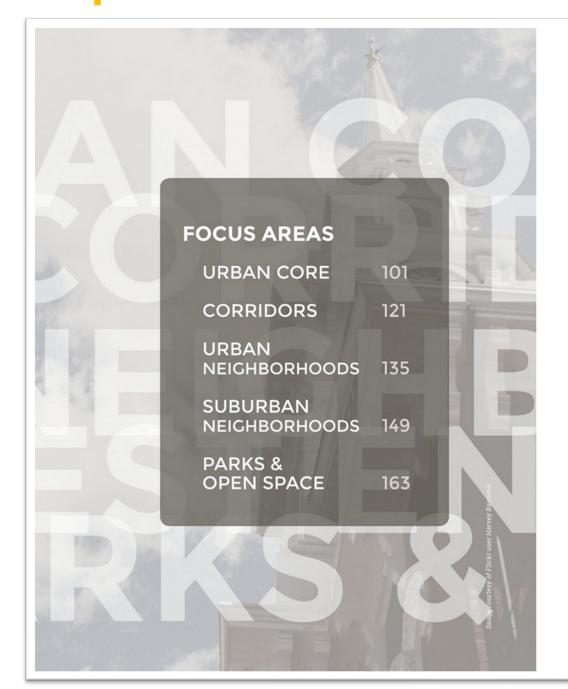
2.1.1	community character and assets, including factors such as mass, scale and resilience.
2.1.2	Consider incorporating architectural design standards into the development review process.
2.1.3	Adjust residential zoning standards to ensure integrity of existing neighborhood development patterns.

have unique and valuable characters that deserve protection. Where residents wish to see change, new development should be reviewed to ensure compatibility with neighborhood character and scale. Empowering residents to review projects is essential Design review of new buildings is an appropriate step for a community with as much concern for character. Likewise, public investment should respect ommunity quality and character as well as anticipate future impacts of climate change. Metrics to ascertain progress towards this goal could include statistics on projects that receive design review or areas of the city that have character districts



Ports mouth, NH

Option 2: Theme-based Plan



FOCUS AREAS

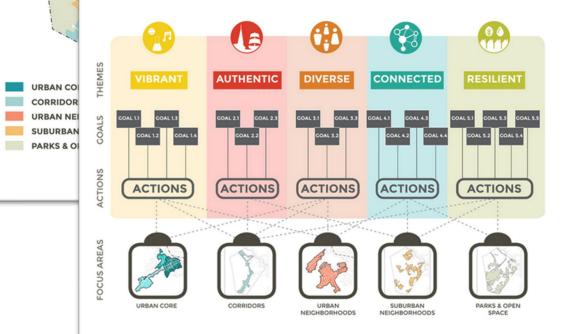
PORTSMOUTH CONSISTS OF SEVERAL DISTINCT TYPES OF PLACES, WITH **VERY DIFFERENT NEEDS** AND VISIONS.

The five broad Focus Areas in this plan represent geographic areas within the City with common characteristics. objectives and challenges. These Focus Areas can help illustrate many of the planning, design, and development challenges and opportunities facing Portsmouth today, and show what these areas could become in the future.

The Focus Area boundaries are not intended to be exact and do not cover the entire City. Most of the areas excluded were either industrial, which likely require further study, or land that does not fall within the City's jurisdiction, including the Pease Tradeport and other State-owned

The purpose of the Focus Area narratives and illustrations is to suggest how individual Actions laid out in the Themes section can be implemented in different parts of the City. Applying the recommended Actions to generalized versions of these areas can help residents and decision makers better understand the ways different parts of Portsmouth could and should transform.

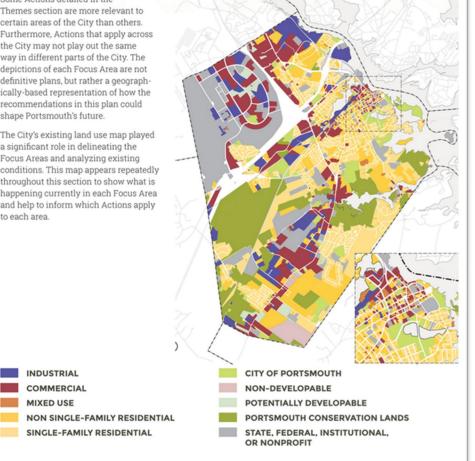
Below: A graphic representation of the structure of Portsmouth 2025, showing the relationships between Themes, Goals, Actions, and Focus Areas. Each Theme contains a set of Goals, each with a set of associated Actions. Additionally, each Action can be applied to Focus Areas (or the entire City) to help guide implementation and provide context for proposed goals in Portsmouth 2025.



FOCUS AREAS AN INTRODUCTION

Some Actions detailed in the Themes section are more relevant to certain areas of the City than others. Furthermore, Actions that apply across the City may not play out the same way in different parts of the City. The depictions of each Focus Area are not definitive plans, but rather a geographically-based representation of how the recommendations in this plan could shape Portsmouth's future.

The City's existing land use map played a significant role in delineating the Focus Areas and analyzing existing conditions. This map appears repeatedly throughout this section to show what is happening currently in each Focus Area and help to inform which Actions apply



Ports mouth, NH

98 II. FOCUS AREAS

SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL

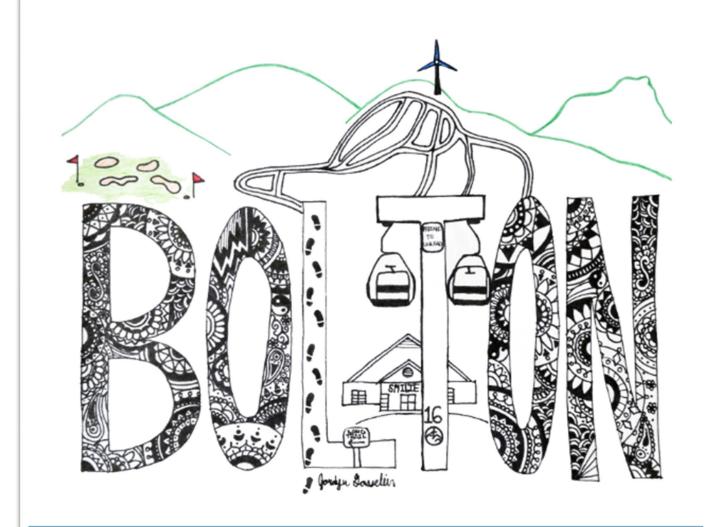
MIXED USE

Option 2: Theme-based Plan

Current conditions upfront, goals/action items within each chapter

- 1.Introduction
- 2.Bennington Today (Current Conditions)
- **3.A Vibrant Downtown**
 - a. Economic development, housing, and transportation
- 4. Mobility for All
 - a. Transportation and public facilities
- 5. Committed and Connected Community
 - a. Public facilities and programs, education and information-sharing, and civic participation
- **6.Climate Resilience**
 - a. Natural resources and energy planning, and public facilities and programs
- 7.Implementation
- 8.Appendix

Option 3: Hybrid



BOLTON TOWN PLAN

ADOPTED 26 APRIL 2017
AMENDED 3 MAY 2021
AMENDED 6 SEPTEMBER 2022

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Bolton, VT

Option 3: Hybrid

The key issues/concerns in the Prosperity chapter include:

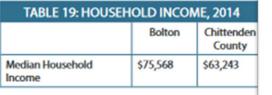
- Bolton has a relatively limited economic base currently, and therefore it is imperative to support Bolton Valley and other recreation related businesses, and the variety of home based businesses in Bolton.
- The continued availability of affordable housing will require new and rehabilitated units within the growth confines of this plan.
- » Maintaining a safe and reliable road network and finding funding to comply with the new Municipal Roads General Permit will be the town's biggest challenges during the life of this plan.
- » Bolton's town government cannot and should not provide all the facilities and utilities needed by residents, and coordination with outside entities is necessary.
- This plan defines energy generation facilities as development just like any other form of development. Therefore, any energy generation facility in Bolton must comply with the goals and objectives related to land conservation as outlined in the Natural Resources, Natural Hazards and Resilience and Land Use sections of this plan.

Economy

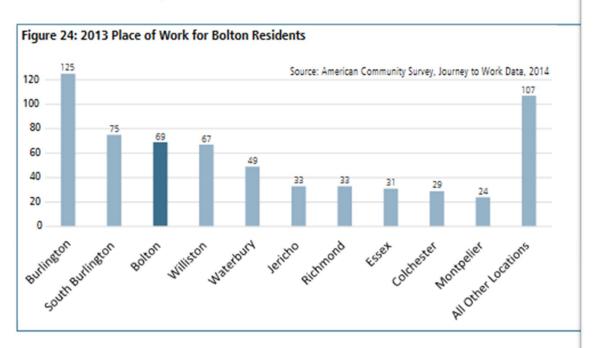
BOLTON TOWN PLAN

The largest employer in Bolton, and the cornerstone of the town's economy, is Bolton Valley Resort. The town's economic growth depends on ensuring the success of the resort as a four-season enterprise. The town also encourages new businesses that are able to capitalize on our numerous recreational opportunities while meeting the goals of this plan. Finally, we recognize the importance of other local businesses, especially home businesses.

Economic Conditions in Bolton. Unemployment in Bolton is very low, and though it increased from 1.2% to 2.3% from 1990-2014, it remains lower than the Chittenden County and Vermont unemployment rates. The American Community Survey reports that the median income in Bolton is higher than the Chittenden



page 23



Chapter 3. Prosperity

Bolton, VT

Objective 5.4. Encourage the establishment and continuation of recreational businesses and events that utilize and support the town's scenic beauty and recreational opportunities and contribute to the town's attractiveness as a recreational destination.

Prosperity Goals, Objectives and Actions

its small town, rural nature.

and support economic development in the town.

businesses, that meet the goals of the Town Plan.

Objective 5.5. Encourage Bolton Valley Resort to become a successful four-season resort able to thrive during an era of warmer weather and less snow.

objectives of the Town Plan need to be met for all development, especially the goals of

this plan related to natural hazards and resilience, natural resources and land use.

Action 24. Complete and maintain an inventory of all businesses in Bolton and make the list of interested businesses available as a community resource on the town website.

GOAL 5. Bolton will support economic development that is compatible with

Objective 5.1. Bolton's Economic Resources Committee will work to develop strategies to promote

Objective 5.2. While economic development is important to the Town of Bolton, the goals and

Objective 5.3. Support the creation and growth of local businesses, including home-based

Action 25. The Town of Bolton and Bolton Valley Resort will work together to improve the relationship between the two entities, by initiating quarterly discussions to establish a dialogue regarding long term planning in and around the Resort, and by investigating changes to the BLUDRs as necessary and appropriate.

Action 26. Undertake a survey to quantify the number of abandoned buildings in Bolton and adopt an ordinance regarding the definition and treatment of abandoned buildings.

GOAL 6. Bolton will increase safety and affordability of housing for residents.

Objective 6.1. Make residents aware of programs and funding sources for the rehabilitation of homes to address safety issues and energy inefficiency.

Action 27. Coordinate with Efficiency Vermont and Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity to make residents aware of reduced cost and free weatherization.

Action 28. Coordinate with Efficiency Vermont to make residents aware of rebates for energy efficient appliances.

Objective 6.2. Increase the number of safe, affordable housing opportunities in Bolton.

Action 29. Educate residents about eligibility for homestead declarations.

GOAL 7. Bolton will improve the resilience and maintain the quality of its road network through cost-effective methods that are appropriate for the town's steep topography.

page 38 Chapter 3. Prosperity BOLTON TOWN PLAN

Option 3: Hybrid

Current conditions and goals/action items within each chapter

- 1.Introduction
- 2. The Place to Be
 - a. Natural resources, land use
- **3.Connected Community**
 - a.Demographics, public facilities and programs, climate resilience (energy and the environment)
- 4.Bennington for All
 - a. Housing, economic development, transportation
- 5.Implementation
- 6.Appendix

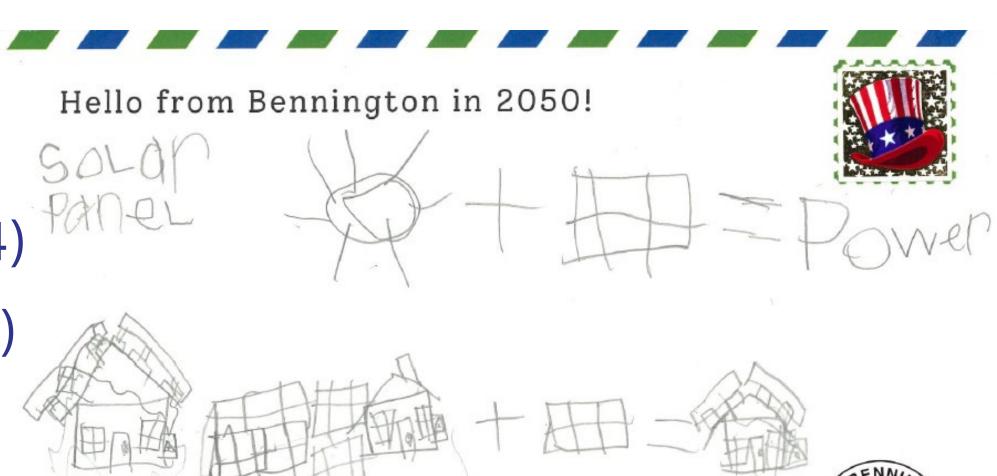
Web Presence

- Berlin
- Portsmouth
- Bolton

Next Steps

Phase 2:

- Data Collection (Summer 24)
- Draft the Plan (Winter 24/25)
- Get Feedback (Spring 25)
- Finalize Plan (Summer 25)



Sincerely,

Thank you!

