

To: Hardwick Planning Commission  
From: Kristen Leahy, Zoning and Floodplain Administrator  
Re: Preliminary Community Survey Results – Hardwick Municipal Plan Update  
Date: March 10, 2026

The Town of Hardwick recently distributed a community survey as part of the Municipal Plan update process. The survey was made available both online and in paper format, with the first round of responses collected during Town Meeting. As of this writing, 39 responses have been received.

These responses represent an early snapshot of community perspectives and will continue to be supplemented as outreach expands through the spring.

### **Respondent Background**

Most respondents reported that they live in Hardwick year-round. A large portion have been connected to the community for more than twenty years, suggesting that the early responses reflect long-term resident perspectives.

Nearly all respondents reported driving as their primary means of transportation, though more than half also reported walking regularly and roughly one quarter reported biking in town. Downtown Hardwick appears to play an important role in daily life, with many respondents reporting that they visit the downtown area several times per week or daily.

### **Community Values**

When asked what they value most about Hardwick, respondents most frequently identified the town's strong sense of community. Other commonly selected values included local businesses and the food economy, natural beauty and outdoor access, historic character, and walkability or trail connections.

These responses suggest that residents view Hardwick as a place defined by its small-town character, local economy, and close-knit community life.

### **Community Priorities**

Respondents were asked to identify the areas that the Town should focus on over the next ten years. Several priorities emerged clearly from the responses.

The most frequently selected priority was the need for affordable and diverse housing options near village centers. More than two-thirds of respondents identified housing as a key focus area.

Flood resilience and infrastructure improvements were also identified as a major priority. This aligns with the Town's recent experiences with flooding and ongoing resilience planning efforts.

Other commonly selected priorities included supporting small businesses and local jobs, strengthening the downtown area, and improving conditions for walking and biking.

Taken together, these responses suggest that residents are interested in balancing growth and development with resilience, economic vitality, and quality of life.

## **Housing**

Survey responses indicate broad support for expanding housing options in Hardwick. The most frequently supported housing types included affordable homes, accessory dwelling units, apartments, and senior housing.

Housing located near village centers and mixed-use buildings with housing above businesses were also supported by several respondents. Notably, no respondents indicated that Hardwick should stop building new housing altogether.

These responses suggest that the community is open to discussing additional housing opportunities, particularly those that are affordable and located near existing services.

## **Downtown Vitality**

Respondents expressed strong interest in strengthening the downtown area. The most selected priorities included attracting more local businesses and restaurants, improving pedestrian safety and parking conditions, and supporting housing near or above downtown storefronts.

Flood-safe infrastructure and public gathering spaces were also identified as ways to support a more vibrant downtown.

## **Emergency Preparedness and Community Resilience**

Several responses highlighted the importance of communication and coordination during emergency events. Residents noted the value of clear information during storms and flooding, as well as the need for reliable evacuation routes, safe bridges, and accessible emergency support systems.

These responses reinforce the importance of continued planning around flood resilience, infrastructure, and emergency preparedness.

## **Food Access and Community Wellness**

Responses also touched on issues related to food access and community wellness. Local grocery stores were identified as a primary food source for most respondents, with many households also relying on out-of-town grocery stores. Some respondents also identified gardens, farmers markets, and local farms as important food sources.

When asked about wellness priorities, the most frequently selected response was the need for a local pharmacy. Access to health services, safe walking routes, and opportunities for social connection were also identified as important community needs.

### **Community Communication**

Respondents reported that they most often receive information about town issues through Front Porch Forum, local newspapers such as the Hardwick Gazette, and word of mouth. When asked how they would prefer to receive updates from the Town in the future, respondents again strongly favored Front Porch Forum and Town email communications.

These responses suggest that a combination of online community forums, local media, and direct email communication will continue to be important tools for public outreach.

### **Next Steps**

These early survey responses provide useful insight into how residents view Hardwick today and what they see as priorities for the future. As additional responses are collected, staff will continue to summarize and organize the feedback.

The Planning Commission will use this information, along with additional outreach and discussion, to help identify the core themes and priorities that will guide the next update of the Hardwick Municipal Plan.

Additional survey responses will be accepted through June 5, 2026. Paper copies of the survey remain available at the Town Offices for residents who prefer to respond in person.