

To: Hardwick Planning Commission
From: Kristen Leahy, Zoning and Floodplain Administrator
Re: Community Survey Results – Hardwick Municipal Plan Update
Date: May 11, 2026

The Town of Hardwick distributed a community survey as part of the ongoing Municipal Plan update process. The survey was made available both online and in paper format, with outreach occurring through Town Meeting, Front Porch Forum, local organizations, and community events. As of this writing, approximately 170 responses have been received.

The responses provide a meaningful snapshot of community perspectives and reflect input from a broad cross-section of residents, business owners, and community members. While additional outreach and engagement will continue throughout the planning process, several clear themes have emerged consistently throughout the survey results.

Respondent Background

Most respondents reported that they live in Hardwick year-round. A significant portion indicated that they have been connected to the community for more than twenty years, suggesting that many responses reflect long-term resident perspectives and lived experience within the community.

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

Community Values

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

These responses suggest that residents continue to view Hardwick as a place defined by its close-knit community, local identity, and connection to both the landscape and village centers.

Community Priorities

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

The most frequently selected priority remained the need for affordable and diverse housing options near village centers. Responses throughout the survey also reflected broader concerns regarding affordability, housing costs, property taxes, and retaining young families and long-time residents within the community.

Flood resilience and infrastructure improvements also remained among the highest-ranked priorities. Respondents frequently referenced flooding, infrastructure reliability, drainage, roads, bridges, emergency preparedness, and continued investment in flood mitigation and resilience planning.

Other commonly selected priorities included supporting small businesses and local jobs, strengthening the downtown area, improving walking and biking conditions, and maintaining the overall quality of life within the community.

Taken together, these responses suggest that residents are interested in balancing growth and development with resilience, affordability, economic vitality, and preservation of Hardwick's community character.

Housing

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

Housing located near village centers and housing above businesses continued to receive strong support throughout the survey responses. Several comments also

reflected interest in maintaining affordability while encouraging housing opportunities that remain accessible to local residents and families.

Overall, the responses suggest that the community remains open to discussing additional housing opportunities, particularly those that are affordable, connected to existing infrastructure and services, and compatible with village-centered development patterns.

Downtown Vitality

Respondents expressed strong interest in strengthening the downtown area. Frequently identified priorities included attracting more local businesses and restaurants, improving pedestrian safety and parking conditions, supporting storefront and small business development, and encouraging housing near or above downtown storefronts.

Flood-safe infrastructure, streetscape improvements, recreation connections, and public gathering spaces were also identified as ways to support a more vibrant downtown environment.

Emergency Preparedness and Community Resilience

Several responses highlighted the importance of communication, coordination, and infrastructure reliability during emergency events. Residents emphasized the value of clear communication during storms and flooding, reliable evacuation routes, resilient utilities and transportation infrastructure, and continued flood mitigation efforts.

Several responses also highlighted the importance of community support systems, volunteer networks, and neighborhood-level preparedness during emergencies.

Food Access and Community Wellness

Responses also touched on issues related to food access, healthcare, recreation, and overall community wellness. Local grocery stores were identified as a primary food source for most respondents, though many households also reported relying on out-of-town grocery stores. Gardens, farmers markets, and local farms also remained important food sources for several households.

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

Several responses also referenced the importance of year-round recreation opportunities, gathering spaces, and services that support residents of all ages.

Community Communication

Respondents reported that they most often receive information about town issues through Front Porch Forum, local newspapers such as the Hardwick Gazette, word of mouth, and Town email communications. 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.

Responses also reflected continued interest in clear, transparent, and consistent communication regarding Town projects, taxes, infrastructure improvements, and long-term planning efforts.

Next Steps

These survey responses provide meaningful insight into how residents view Hardwick today and what they see as priorities for the future. As additional responses continue to be 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 continue to 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.