

# 2026 Municipal Plan Update – Hardwick Planning Commission

## Survey Participation

- Total survey responses collected: **238**
- Responses to individual questions ranged from approximately 134 to 228 depending on the question.
- Extensive outreach. Survey was available in paper and electronic versions. Stayed open for 5 months.

### Connection to Hardwick (228 responses)

- Year-round Hardwick residents: 204 (89.5%)
- Part-time/seasonal residents: 7 (3.1%)
- Work in Hardwick: 18 (7.9%)
- Own/operate a business in Hardwick: 28 (12.3%)
- Regular visitors: 6 (2.6%)

### Length of Connection to Hardwick (227 responses)

- Less than 1 year: 3 (1.3%)
- 1–5 years: 32 (14.1%)
- 6–10 years: 34 (15.0%)
- 11–20 years: 33 (14.5%)
- More than 20 years: 125 (55.1%)

### How Residents Travel Around Town (227 responses)

- Drive: 216 (95.2%)
- Walk: 112 (49.3%)
- Bike: 39 (17.2%)
- Carpool/rideshare: 6 (2.6%)
- Bus/shuttle: 1 (0.4%)

### Downtown Visitation (227 responses)

- Daily: 79 (34.8%)
- Several times per week: 120 (52.9%)
- Weekly: 19 (8.4%)
- Monthly: 5 (2.2%)
- Rarely: 4 (1.8%)

## **What Residents Value Most About Hardwick (223 responses)**

Top selections:

1. Sense of community and neighborliness: 148 (66.4%)
2. Local businesses, artisans, and food economy: 120 (53.8%)
3. Natural beauty and outdoor access: 112 (50.2%)
4. Historic and small-town character: 98 (43.9%)
5. Walkability, trails, or bike routes: 94 (42.2%)

## **Top Priorities for the Next 10 Years (227 responses)**

1. Affordable, diverse housing near village centers: 124 (54.6%)
2. Flood resilience and infrastructure upgrades: 112 (49.3%)
3. Supporting small businesses and local jobs: 93 (41.0%)
4. Strengthening downtown: 73 (32.2%)
5. Safe walking, biking, and parking: 65 (28.6%)
6. Farmland and local food systems: 53 (23.3%)
7. Recreation, trails, and parks: 52 (22.9%)
8. Municipal services and utilities: 50 (22.0%)
9. Environmental conservation and river protection: 48 (21.1%)
10. Emergency preparedness and community support: 46 (20.3%)

## **Housing Types Residents Would Like Encouraged (219 responses)**

1. Affordable homes: 128 (58.4%)
2. Housing near village centers: 85 (38.8%)
3. Accessory dwelling units: 73 (33.3%)
4. Senior housing: 68 (31.1%)
5. Mixed-use buildings: 67 (30.6%)
6. Apartments: 63 (28.8%)
7. Rental housing: 56 (25.6%)
8. Duplexes/triplexes: 47 (21.5%)
9. Small homes/cottages: 46 (21.0%)
10. Housing in rural areas: 25 (11.4%)
11. No more housing: 8 (3.7%)

## **Downtown Improvements (219 responses)**

1. More local businesses and restaurants: 113 (51.6%)
2. Safer parking and pedestrian areas: 111 (50.7%)
3. Streetscape improvements: 76 (34.7%)
4. Storefront and small business support: 72 (32.9%)
5. Stronger trail and recreation connections: 70 (32.0%)

6. Housing above or near downtown: 61 (27.9%)
7. Flood-safe infrastructure: 60 (27.4%)
8. Event or community gathering spaces: 55 (25.1%)

### **Community Development Priorities (218 responses)**

1. Reliable broadband and internet access: 81 (37.2%)
2. Creating safer walking and biking routes: 77 (35.3%)
3. Renewable energy and energy efficiency: 76 (34.9%)
4. Protecting farmland and forestland: 74 (33.9%)
5. Parks and public spaces: 65 (29.8%)
6. Expanding trails and recreation access: 64 (29.4%)
7. Waste, recycling, and composting: 54 (24.8%)
8. Improving river and stream water quality: 53 (24.3%)
9. Preserving historic buildings: 40 (18.3%)

### **Food Sources (227 responses)**

1. Local grocery stores: 202 (89.0%)
2. Out-of-town grocery stores: 141 (62.1%)
3. Restaurants/take-out: 71 (31.3%)
4. Garden/homegrown food: 64 (28.2%)
5. Farmers markets: 56 (24.7%)
6. Community meals: 29 (12.8%)
7. Local farms/CSAs: 29 (12.8%)
8. Convenience stores: 21 (9.3%)
9. Food pantry: 16 (7.0%)

### **Wellness Priorities (228 responses)**

1. Local pharmacy: 198 (86.8%)
2. Access to affordable health services: 76 (33.3%)
3. Local urgent care: 68 (29.8%)
4. Access to affordable mental health services: 60 (26.3%)
5. Safe walking and biking routes: 50 (21.9%)
6. Social connection and community spaces: 49 (21.5%)
7. Recreation and fitness opportunities: 46 (20.2%)
8. Senior services/home-delivered meals: 37 (16.2%)
9. Public restrooms, water fountains, shade: 36 (15.8%)
10. Volunteer and mutual aid networks: 25 (11.0%)

### **Feeling Informed About Town Projects (224 responses)**

- Rating 1: 8 (3.6%)

- Rating 2: 33 (14.7%)
- Rating 3: 72 (32.1%)
- Rating 4: 74 (33.0%)
- Rating 5: 37 (16.5%)

Average score: approximately **3.4 out of 5**.

#### **Current Sources of Town Information (227 responses)**

1. Front Porch Forum: 182 (80.2%)
2. Local newspapers: 151 (66.5%)
3. Word of mouth: 137 (60.4%)
4. Facebook/social media: 66 (29.1%)
5. Town website/newsletter: 64 (28.2%)
6. Town postings/meetings: 50 (22.0%)
7. Town email: 45 (19.8%)
8. HCTV: 25 (11.0%)
9. TextMyGov: 24 (10.6%)

#### **Preferred Methods for Receiving Town Information (222 responses)**

1. Front Porch Forum: 130 (58.6%)
2. Town Email: 130 (58.6%)
3. Town Website: 74 (33.3%)
4. TextMyGov: 47 (21.2%)
5. Facebook/social media: 47 (21.2%)
6. Phone message: 29 (13.1%)

# #7 What is the Biggest Challenge facing Hardwick right now? 182 responses

## 1. Affordability, Taxes, and Cost of Living (Most Frequent Theme)

This was the single largest thread. Examples included:

- Property taxes are too high.
- Municipal and school taxes are increasing faster than incomes.
- Cost of living is becoming unsustainable.
- Fixed-income residents are struggling.
- Young families are being priced out.
- Affordability affects nearly every other issue.

Representative comments:

- "High taxes"
- "Property taxes are too high"
- "The taxes in Hardwick are increasing at a rate that do not match incomes."
- "Housing costs and taxes are way too high and are driving people out."
- "Continued rising taxes, municipal and school."

This theme appeared across virtually every section of the survey, not just the challenge question.

## 2. Housing Availability and Housing Affordability

The second major thread. Residents discussed:

- Lack of housing units.
- Lack of affordable housing.
- Lack of starter homes.
- Lack of housing for young families.
- Lack of senior housing.
- Lack of move-in ready housing.
- Empty or deteriorated housing stock.

Representative comments:

- "Housing"
- "Housing affordability"
- "Need more housing"
- "Lack of turnkey housing"
- "Affordable housing and associated parking"

People rarely opposed housing. Most comments focused on affordability and availability.

### **3. Flooding, Climate Change, and Infrastructure**

A very strong thread, though somewhat smaller than affordability and housing. Residents mentioned:

- Repeated flooding.
- Flood resilience.
- Infrastructure upgrades.
- River management.
- Stormwater.
- Floodplain issues.
- Transportation vulnerabilities.

Representative comments:

- "Repeated massive flooding"
- "Flooding"
- "Climate change and housing shortages"
- "Infrastructure"

Many responses connected flooding directly to economic stability and housing.

### **4. Economic Development, Jobs, and Downtown Vitality**

This was another major cluster. Themes included:

- Empty storefronts.
- Need for businesses.
- Need for jobs.
- Need for employers.
- Downtown vacancies.
- Economic opportunities for younger residents.

Representative comments:

- "Need more businesses."
- "Empty storefronts."
- "Zero large scale economy driver."
- "Need new business to support our tax base."
- "Lack of businesses."

Several residents specifically mentioned attracting medium-sized employers and year-round economic activity.

## **5. Pharmacy and Healthcare Access**

The pharmacy issue was extraordinary because it appears repeatedly across multiple sections. Representative comments:

- "No pharmacy."
- "Lack of a local pharmacy."
- "Need a pharmacy."
- "No pharmacy or eye doctor."

Unlike many topics, this issue generated broad agreement and very little disagreement. It shows up as both a challenge and a desired future improvement.

## **6. Schools, Families, and Population Retention**

This was smaller than housing but still substantial. Themes included:

- Retaining young families.
- School enrollment.
- School closures.
- Educational opportunities.
- Population decline.

Representative comments:

- "Preserving all schools."
- "Need more kids in the school system."
- "Young people are leaving."
- "Threat of education redistricting."

Several respondents viewed schools, housing, and population growth as interconnected.

## **7. Parking, Transportation, and Walkability**

A frequent theme. Topics included:

- Downtown parking.
- Construction impacts.
- Pedestrian safety.
- Bicycle safety.
- Traffic circulation.

Representative comments:

- "Parking."
- "Affordability and parking."
- "Lack of parking."
- "Parking and flooding."

The parking issue was concentrated around downtown access and construction impacts.

## **8. Community Division, Communication, and Civic Culture**

A smaller but notable theme. Topics included:

- Political division.
- Civic discourse.
- Transparency.
- Communication.
- Community cohesion.

Representative comments:

- "Having civil discourse."
- "Divisive politics."
- "A weird new partisanship."
- "Poor understanding of how town government works."

This issue was raised by fewer respondents than housing or taxes but appeared repeatedly.

# #9 What Would Help You Feel More Prepared for the Next Flood or Storm? 134 responses

## 1. Communication and Warning Systems (Most Frequent Theme)

This was the strongest thread. Residents repeatedly mentioned:

- Advance warning
- Emergency alerts
- Text notifications
- Phone notifications
- Better communication during events
- Clear evacuation information
- Information about road closures
- Neighborhood communication networks

Examples:

- "Town alerts by email and text have been great."
- "Town-wide communication."
- "Cell phone warnings."
- "Knowing there was a means of communication with all residents."
- "Streamlined communication of what is being done."

Many residents appear less concerned about the storm itself than whether they will know what is happening and what actions to take.

## 2. Sirens and Audible Alerts

A surprisingly strong standalone theme. Numerous residents specifically requested:

- Flood sirens
- Community warning sirens
- Audible alerts that work at night
- Modern versions of the old fire alarm

Examples:

- "Loud village siren."
- "An actual siren."
- "A working alarm/emergency siren."
- "A text message won't wake people up."

This was one of the most repeated specific preparedness requests.

### **3. Infrastructure Improvements and Flood Mitigation**

Another major category. Residents mentioned:

- River corridor improvements
- Floodway work
- Seawalls
- Drainage improvements
- Bridge improvements
- Road improvements
- Infrastructure upgrades
- Completion of ongoing flood projects

Examples:

- "Floodway stabilization."
- "Upgrade to existing facilities."
- "Finishing the infrastructure projects from the last floods."
- "Our infrastructure needs to be updated."

Several respondents tied preparedness directly to long-term mitigation rather than emergency response.

### **4. Emergency Resources and Power Reliability**

Many residents focused on practical needs during and immediately after a disaster. Frequently mentioned:

- Generators
- Reliable electricity
- Fuel supplies
- Refrigeration
- Potable water
- Food supplies
- Emergency heat
- Equipment such as sump pumps

Examples:

- "Reliable power."
- "Community access to generators."
- "Keeping the power on."

- "Affordable access to emergency heat and electricity."

These responses often reflected lessons learned from recent flood experiences.

## **5. Emergency Facilities, Shelters, and the Essential Services Complex**

A significant number of respondents focused on emergency infrastructure. Themes included:

- Emergency shelters
- Evacuation centers
- Fire station location
- Essential Services Complex
- Emergency operations facilities

Examples:

- "The Essential Services Complex."
- "Building the Essential Services Complex."
- "Fire station not in the floodplain."
- "Knowing that an emergency plan is fully in place."

This theme appeared repeatedly, though less frequently than communication or sirens.

## **6. Neighborhood and Community Support Networks**

This theme aligns closely with work already underway. Residents discussed:

- Neighbor-to-neighbor support
- Phone trees
- Contact lists
- Volunteer assignments
- Knowing who needs help
- Knowing who they should check on

Examples:

- "Phone chain in place."
- "Contact information for our neighbors."
- "Knowing it was my job to check on certain people."
- "Community center for donations and volunteers."

These responses suggest interest in organized neighborhood-level preparedness.

## **7. Information and Education**

Many responses focused on understanding risk. Residents requested:

- Better understanding of the emergency plan
- Property-specific flood information
- Evacuation maps
- Resource guides
- Prevention information

Examples:

- "A greater understanding of the town emergency plan."
- "Knowledge about what to do in advance."
- "Information about risks."
- "A clear map of the best roads in and out of town."

This indicates a desire for preparedness education in addition to physical infrastructure.

### **Interesting Minority Themes**

Several smaller but recurring themes appeared:

#### **Dredging/River Management**

- Dredge the Lamoille
- Dredge rivers
- Shore up riverbanks
- Remove Jackson Dam

#### **Road and Bridge Reliability**

- Alternate routes
- Better detours
- Safe bridges
- East Hardwick bridge

#### **Household Mitigation**

- Sump pumps
- Foundation drainage
- Generators
- Property-specific improvements

These were less common than communication and warning systems but appeared often enough to note.

**Quantitatively, the response themes roughly break down as:**

**Highest frequency**

- Communication and alerts
- Sirens and warnings

**Second tier**

- Infrastructure and flood mitigation
- Emergency power and supplies

**Third tier**

- Emergency facilities
- Neighborhood support networks
- Preparedness education

One thing that stands out is that residents were not primarily asking for more plans. They were asking for things that help them know **when a flood is coming, what is happening during the event, and where to go or what to do when it occurs.**

# #14 Other Thoughts About Food Access, Wellness, or Community Health? 68 responses

## 1. Pharmacy and Healthcare Access (Most Frequent Theme)

This was the dominant thread. Residents repeatedly mentioned:

- Need for a pharmacy
- Access to doctors
- Access to urgent care
- Access to hospitals
- Access to dental care
- Access to specialists

Examples:

- "The pharmacy is a major need."
- "Need a pharmacy and eye doctor."
- "Urgent care needed."
- "It is almost impossible to access a doctor or really any medical or dental support in Hardwick."
- "I believe we need a local hospital."

The pharmacy issue appears throughout the entire survey, but it was particularly strong in this section because respondents were thinking specifically about health and wellness.

## 2. Mental Health and Social Isolation

The second strongest thread. Residents discussed:

- Mental health services
- Adult and child counseling
- Community depression
- Isolation
- Loneliness
- Trauma
- Addiction
- Crisis support

Examples:

- "We are desperate for more mental health resources."
- "There is such a high proportion of generational trauma, poverty, violence, and addiction."
- "More opportunities for seniors and those with impaired mobility to make social connections."

- "There is a lot of depression in town."

Many responses framed wellness as both physical and mental health.

### **3. Recreation, Fitness, and Community Wellness**

A very common theme. Residents mentioned:

- Indoor recreation
- Community fitness opportunities
- Walking
- Swimming
- Youth activities
- Community wellness centers

The most repeated specific idea was an indoor pool or recreation center.

Examples:

- "Indoor pool and indoor track."
- "Community wellness center."
- "Wish there were more local fitness opportunities."
- "Things for youth to do."
- "A healthy place for teens to go."

Unlike the pharmacy discussion, there was no single proposal, but many respondents connected physical activity to community health.

### **4. Food Security and Local Food Systems**

Another significant thread. Residents praised:

- Hardwick Area Food Pantry
- Farmers Market
- Crop Cash
- Community meals
- Local farms
- School food programs

Examples:

- "The Food Pantry gives people dignity."
- "Crop Cash is a lifesaver."
- "Community meals provide nourishment and social connection."

- "Support farming in this community."

Unlike some survey sections, these comments were generally positive and appreciative. Many respondents highlighted existing strengths.

## **5. Affordability and Economic Stress**

This theme appeared repeatedly. Residents discussed:

- Food costs
- Housing costs
- Utility costs
- Taxes
- Fixed incomes

Examples:

- "Taxation is driving folks away."
- "People are struggling to afford to live here."
- "We need affordable housing and food."
- "Electric rates are unsustainable."

Many comments linked affordability directly to wellness and health outcomes.

## **6. Senior Services and Aging in Place**

A noticeable thread. Topics included:

- Home-delivered meals
- Social opportunities
- Transportation
- Aging in place
- Elder care

Examples:

- "We have almost no senior services."
- "Take care of our seniors."
- "More opportunities for seniors to make social connections."

These comments often overlapped with isolation and healthcare access concerns.

## 7. Community Spaces and Social Connection

A recurring theme. Residents discussed:

- Libraries
- Third spaces
- Community centers
- Places to gather
- Volunteer networks
- Mutual aid

Examples:

- "Support third spaces like the library."
- "Create community spaces."
- "Develop more companionship among neighbors."
- "Anything that gets people exercising and socializing."

Many respondents viewed social connection as a wellness issue.

### **What is most notable?**

Respondents spent a surprising amount of time describing things that are already working well. The Food Pantry, Farmers Market, Crop Cash, community meals, Hardwick Health, local volunteers, and neighbor-to-neighbor support all received positive mentions. This section contains more appreciation for existing community assets than almost any other part of the survey.

# #18 One Idea That Could Make Hardwick Stronger or More Resilient 113 Responses

## 1. Housing and Affordability (Most Frequent Theme)

Housing was one of the strongest threads. Residents suggested:

- More affordable housing
- Workforce housing
- Housing for young families
- Housing for seniors
- Multi-unit housing
- Reuse of vacant buildings
- Housing that supports population growth

Examples:

- "More affordable housing."
- "Support efficient multi-unit residential housing."
- "Affordable housing for renters and buyers."
- "Opportunity and affordability for younger generations."
- "Become an inviting place for young people to live and raise a family."

Housing was often linked to schools, business growth, and retaining residents.

## 2. Business Development and Economic Growth

This was likely the second strongest theme. Residents mentioned:

- Attracting businesses
- Supporting existing businesses
- Filling empty storefronts
- Creating jobs
- Expanding tourism
- Improving economic opportunity

Examples:

- "Bring new business to Hardwick."
- "More businesses downtown."
- "Tax incentives to attract businesses."
- "Find ways to be more business friendly."
- "Investing in small businesses."

Many responses connected economic development directly to affordability and the tax base.

### **3. Downtown Vitality and Vacant Buildings**

A distinct and recurring thread.

Residents discussed:

- Empty storefronts
- Vacant buildings
- Reuse of older structures
- Downtown activity
- Community gathering spaces

Examples:

- "Refurbish abandoned buildings."
- "More businesses in empty spaces."
- "Take advantage of unoccupied buildings."
- "Community park space along the river."

Several comments specifically focused on improving the appearance and utilization of downtown buildings.

### **4. Flood Resilience and Infrastructure**

Another major category. Residents proposed:

- Flood mitigation
- Floodway improvements
- Infrastructure investment
- River projects
- Resilience planning

Examples:

- "Flood infrastructure and resilience."
- "Implement recommendations from the corridor study."
- "Floodway improvements."
- "Meaningful investment in infrastructure, housing, and flood readiness."

Unlike some other sections, many respondents framed resilience as a long-term investment rather than an emergency response issue.

## 5. Community Spaces, Recreation, and Events

A surprisingly large theme.

Residents suggested:

- Recreation facilities
- Community centers
- Public gathering places
- Festivals
- Arts and cultural activities
- Trails

Examples:

- "More community events."
- "Indoor pool and indoor track."
- "Community wellness center."
- "Jazz festival."
- "Community festivals."
- "Neighborhood street parties."

Many people viewed social connection as a form of resilience.

## 6. Transportation and Mobility

This theme appeared consistently. Topics included:

- Public transportation
- Shuttle services
- Safer walking and biking
- Trail connections
- Parking

Examples:

- "Public transit."
- "Taxi or shuttle service."
- "Improve pedestrian and bike safety."
- "More trails and walking places."

Several respondents specifically mentioned improving connections to Morrisville and Montpelier.

## **7. Pharmacy, Healthcare, and Wellness**

A smaller but still significant theme.

Residents mentioned:

- Pharmacy
- Eye doctor
- Healthcare access
- Wellness facilities

Examples:

- "Pharmacy."
- "Pharmacy and eye doctor."
- "Fitness and nutrition opportunities."

While dominant in the wellness section, healthcare appeared less frequently here because respondents were choosing broader resilience ideas.

## **8. Community Cohesion and Civic Culture**

Residents discussed:

- Civic participation
- Respectful dialogue
- Community involvement
- Transparency
- Bringing people together

Examples:

- "Greater community participation."
- "Working together and loving thy neighbor."
- "Community dialogue."
- "Continue to lead by example with civil and constructive dialogue."

These responses suggest some residents see social cohesion as an important resilience asset.

## **9. Taxes and Affordability**

A separate theme from housing.

Residents mentioned:

- Lower taxes
- Tax burden
- Affordability
- Cost of living

Examples:

- "Lower taxes."
- "Lower tax rate."
- "Affordability."
- "Property taxes."

This theme appeared repeatedly but generally in shorter comments.

## **Overall Overview**

### **Most Common Themes**

1. Housing and affordability
2. Business development and economic growth
3. Downtown revitalization and building reuse
4. Flood resilience and infrastructure

### **Second Tier**

5. Recreation, community spaces, and events
6. Transportation, mobility, and connectivity
7. Community cohesion and civic engagement

### **Smaller but Recurring**

8. Healthcare and pharmacy access
9. Taxes and affordability
10. Tourism and recreation-based economic development

One notable difference between this question and the "Biggest Challenge" question is tone. The challenge question focused heavily on problems. This question focused more on opportunities. Many respondents proposed ways to build on Hardwick's existing strengths rather than simply identifying deficiencies.

# #19 Additional Comments or Suggestions – 54 responses

## 1. Affordability, Taxes, and Economic Pressure

This remained one of the strongest themes. Comments included:

- Property tax burden
- Reappraisal concerns
- Affordability for long-term residents
- Concerns about gentrification
- Ability of residents to remain in town

Examples:

- "The tax rate is increasing at a percentage that is not commensurate with wages."
- "You are at that threshold."
- "Lower taxes."
- Concerns about widening class divisions and affordability.

## 2. Housing and Population Retention

Several comments focused on demographic trends. Topics included:

- Housing for seniors
- Housing for young families
- School enrollment
- Population loss
- Aging population

Examples:

- Questions about where seniors can downsize while remaining in Hardwick.
- Concerns about losing school-aged children.
- Concerns about becoming a community of second homes.

## 3. Downtown Buildings, Vacancies, and Redevelopment

A strong recurring theme. Residents discussed:

- Vacant buildings
- Deteriorated properties
- Empty storefronts
- Reuse opportunities

Examples:

- Calls for new uses for vacant buildings.
- Questions about accountability for neglected properties.
- References to downtown buildings sitting vacant.

#### **4. Recreation, Trails, and Outdoor Economy**

Many comments focused on recreation. Topics included:

- LVRT opportunities
- Town Forest
- Community recreation
- Pool facilities
- Trails
- Outdoor tourism

Examples:

- Promote trail opportunities.
- Build on recreation-based visitation.
- Expand outdoor activity opportunities.
- Discussion of a year-round pool.

#### **5. Community Cohesion and Civic Culture**

One of the most interesting threads. Residents expressed concern about:

- Community division
- Political polarization
- Respectful dialogue
- Bringing people together

Examples:

- References to "MAGA-inspired fear/distrust."
- References to class divisions.
- Calls to bridge different factions in town.
- Emphasis on communication and respect.

#### **6. East Hardwick and Rural Areas**

This appears more here than anywhere else in the survey. Comments included:

- East Hardwick representation
- Rural area concerns
- Sidewalks
- Perceived focus on the village

Examples:

- One respondent specifically noted that East Hardwick, Mackville, and rural areas were largely absent from the survey.
- Requests for more attention to East Hardwick.

## **7. Municipal Governance and Public Participation**

Several comments addressed Town processes. Topics included:

- Town Meeting location
- Budget voting
- Communication
- Public engagement

Examples:

- Move Town Meeting back to the school.
- Provide food at Town Meeting.
- Increase opportunities for public engagement.
- Improve communication regarding taxes and reappraisal.

## **8. Property Maintenance, Blight, and Community Appearance**

A recurring but smaller theme. Topics included:

- Junk ordinances
- Building maintenance
- Property upkeep
- Appearance of the community

Examples:

- Calls for enforcement of junk ordinances.
- Concerns about neglected buildings.
- Discussion of downtown maintenance standards.

## **9. Appreciation for Town Staff and Community Assets**

One of the strongest positive themes. Numerous respondents expressed:

- Appreciation for town employees
- Optimism about Hardwick's future
- Support for ongoing efforts

Examples:

- "Thank you to the wonderful town employees we have."
- "Hardwick has a great future."
- "We feel lucky to live in a small town with a thoughtful administration."
- "Hardwick rocks."

## **10. Healthcare and Pharmacy**

The pharmacy issue appears again. Comments included:

- Pharmacy
- Eye doctor
- Healthcare access

Examples:

- "Pharmacy and eye doctor."
- Continued references to healthcare services missing from the community.

## **Overall Overview**

### **Most Common Themes**

1. Affordability and taxes
2. Housing and population retention
3. Downtown buildings and redevelopment
4. Recreation and outdoor economy
5. Community cohesion and civic culture

### **Secondary Themes**

6. East Hardwick and rural representation
7. Municipal governance and public participation
8. Property maintenance and blight
9. Healthcare access

### **Notable Positive Theme**

10. Appreciation for Town staff, volunteers, and the community's future

One thing that stands out is that this section contains some of the survey's strongest discussions of **community identity**. Residents are not just talking about projects; they are talking about who Hardwick is, who it serves, whether people can continue to afford to live here, and how the community stays connected as it changes.