



Town of
Southbury
Connecticut



COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SURVEY RESULTS

APRIL 24, 2018

Prepared for:
The Town of Southbury Strategic Planning Task Force

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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND OWNERSHIP

All of the analyses, findings and recommendations contained within this report are the exclusive property of The Town of Southbury, Connecticut.

As required by the Code of Ethics of the National Council on Public Polls and the United States Privacy Act of 1974, The Center for Research and Public Policy maintains the anonymity of respondents to surveys the firm conducts. No information will be released that might, in any way, reveal the identity of the respondent.

Moreover, no information regarding these findings will be released without the written consent of an authorized representative of The Town of Southbury Strategic Planning Task Force.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Center for Research & Public Policy (CRPP) is pleased to present the results of a 2018 Community Assessment Survey for the Town of Southbury. The survey was conducted among Southbury residents and/or owners and managers of business located in the Town of Southbury.

The research study included responses from 1,177 respondents. The survey was available for completion in three different ways: online, hardcopy or over the phone.

The survey was conducted March 21st, 2018 - April 20th, 2018 at 12:00p.m.

The survey included the following areas for investigation:

- **Reasons for moving to or continuing to live in Southbury;**
- **Quality of life in Southbury;**
- **Rating of services offered by the town;**
- **Opinions on the sufficiency of town resources and services available;**
- **Views on current issues in town;**
- **Willingness to pay more in taxes for several initiatives;**
- **Interest in concepts/ ideas / programs/ volunteer opportunities in town;**
- **Thoughts on issues Southbury will face going forward; and,**
- **Demographics.**

Section II of this report discusses the Methodology used in the study, while Section III includes Highlights derived from an analysis of the quantitative research. Section IV is a Summary of Findings from the survey.

Section V is an Appendix to the report containing the composite aggregate data, cross tabulations and the survey instrument employed.

METHODOLOGY

Using a quantitative research design, CRPP received 1,177 completed online, mailed and phone surveys from Southbury residents and/ or business owners and managers in the Town of Southbury.

Survey input was provided by the Town of Southbury Strategic Planning Task Force.

Survey design is a careful, deliberative process to ensure fair, objective and balanced surveys. Staff members, with years of survey design experience, edit out any bias. Further, all scales used by CRPP (either numeric, such as one through ten, or wording such as strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree) are balanced evenly. Additionally, placement of questions is carefully accomplished so that order has minimal impact.

All interviews were conducted during March 21st, 2018 - April 20th, 2018. All residents and business owners/managers were provided an opportunity to provide input for this survey. Respondents qualified for the survey if they were a resident or business owner/manager over the age of 18.

All facets of the study were completed by CRPP's senior staff and researchers. These aspects included: survey design, pre-test, computer programming, coding, editing, verification, validation and logic checks, computer analysis, analysis and report writing.

The Strategic Task Force handled the logistics of announcing the commencement of the survey through town meetings, ongoing press releases, community involvement (by way of online networks and in person) and contacting town leaders to encourage participation. CRPP designed and mailed a postcard to the 742 business owners and managers in the Town of Southbury inviting them to participate in the survey online. In addition, CRPP designed and provided an additional 1,000 postcards for Town of Southbury community distribution.

The survey was accessible three ways:

- **Online:** a link was located on the town website and circulated through press coverage, community forums and social media networks.
- **Hard copy:** a CRPP business phone number was displayed for residents and/or business owners to call and ask for a hard copy to be mailed to them. A postage-paid return envelope was provided.
- **By phone:** a CRPP business phone number was displayed for residents and/or business owners to call and complete the survey over the phone.

Statistically, a sample of 1,177 completed surveys has an associated margin for error of +/- 2.7% at a 95% confidence level.

Results throughout this report are presented for composite results – all 1,177 cases.

Cross tabulations of data were developed and are included in the appendix which cross core survey questions by demographics such as: number of years lived in Southbury, type of residence, age, income, whether minors live at the residence, and gender.

Readers of this report should note that any survey is analogous to a snapshot in time and results are only reflective of the time in which the survey was undertaken. Should concerted public relations or information campaigns be undertaken during or shortly after the fielding of the survey, the results contained herein may be expected to change and should be, therefore, carefully interpreted and extrapolated.

Each qualified resident or business owner/manager had an equal chance for participating in the study. Statistical random error, however, can never be eliminated but may be significantly reduced by increasing sample size.

3 HIGHLIGHTS

On the Southbury Strategic Planning Task Force...

Nearly one-third of all respondents, 29.6%, suggested they were following the activities of the Town's Strategic Planning Task Force either "very" (4.6%) or "somewhat closely" (25.0%). Another 69.9% noted they were following the process "not very closely" (38.1%) or "not at all" (31.8%).

On Quality of Life in Southbury...

Reasons for moving to or continuing to live (or own/manage a business) in Southbury centered mostly on (in declining order): community appearance, the school system, nice neighborhood, location, housing, community reputation, community amenities, and birthplace or having family nearby.

In an open-end format question, respondents reported moving to Southbury from (in declining order): New York State/New York City, Danbury, Newtown, Woodbury, Waterbury, Bethel, Naugatuck, New Jersey and Massachusetts/Boston.

Impressively, 99.0% indicated their overall quality of life in Southbury was very good (51.2%) or good (47.8%). Just 0.8% noted their quality of life was poor (0.7%) or very poor (0.1%).

A large majority, 86.0%, suggested their standard of living, compared to two years ago, has improved (16.8%) or is the same but good (69.2%). Another 12.6% noted their standard of living was the same and poor (3.9%) or has declined (8.7%).

On Town Services...

All respondents, with an opinion, were asked to rate ten different town services. The highest positive ratings were recorded for library services (93.4%), public safety services (91.9%) and services for seniors (80.5%). The lowest positive ratings were recorded for road maintenance (71.7%), town zoning and planning practices (65.1%), and services for youth (58.2%).

On Town Resources and Services...

In a section designed to identify community needs, respondents were asked if there were too few, enough or too many of 12 named services, options and venues. Majorities, or near majorities with an opinion, reporting "too few" were recorded for public transportation (68.7%), upscale dining options (62.3%), access to public waterfront/lake recreation (55.4%), cultural or entertainment venues (50.8%) and sufficient businesses in town to meet your everyday needs (47.5%).

On Issues in Southbury...

Agreement (somewhat or strongly) with four statements about Southbury ranged significantly from 94.2% to 30.6%.

- My perception off Southbury is very positive – 94.2% agree
- The protection of the aquifer as our drinking source should be a continuing aspiration of the town – 89.4% agree
- I'm in favor of and support a public Pomperaug River Greenway Corridor – 68.6% agree
- Southbury is doing enough to retain our youth and attracting young people to our town – 30.6% agree

Nearly one-half of all respondents (47.4%) noted they strongly or somewhat support hiring of a Town Manager who would act as the Chief Operating Officer reporting to the governing Town of Southbury body. Just over one-half (28.6%) were somewhat or strongly opposed.

More respondents supported (somewhat or strongly) having an independent Police Department (44.4%). Just over one-half (29.3%) were somewhat or strongly opposed.

On Taxes...

There exists majority willingness to pay more in taxes for the following...

- More recreation programs – 56.4%
- Additional senior transportation – 53.4%
- A larger municipal Community Center – 52.1%

There were somewhat fewer willing to pay more in taxes for the following...

- A larger senior center – 45.6%
- An Economic Resource personnel position – 33.6%

On Interest in Opportunities...

There exists strong interest in a set of eight concepts, ideas, or programs held in the survey.

The strongest interest was recorded for:

- Utilization of historic buildings for productive public, private business use to offset maintenance costs – 79.4%
- Lakefront recreational development for residential use by resident – 67.5%
- Increase education for residents regarding energy efficiency programs – 67.1%
- Town sponsorship of more education and engagement on public issues such as drug and alcohol addiction – 66.7%

On Consolidation and Business Needs...

Nearly three-quarters (70.1%) of all respondents agreed strongly (36.6%) or somewhat (33.5%) combining the Zoning and Planning Commissions to streamline the application and approval process.

Importantly, two-thirds of all respondents (66.3%) indicated they were very (27.8%) or somewhat interested (38.5%) in seeing the Southbury Board of Selectmen write policies for and approve business tax incentives.

In an open-end format question, residents reported the leading and most important issues the town faces over the next five to ten years include (in declining order): Need for viable business development/having Southbury become business friendly, retaining and attracting youth and young families to town, budget and tax stability, quality of education, having enough youth activities, road maintenance, care for aging population, and the school budget.

In a closing, open-end format question respondents were offered an opportunity to offer thoughts not covered by the survey. Responses included (in declining order): education/school concerns, business development concerns/need for viable businesses, activities for all age groups, tax concerns, road maintenance, need for indoor and outdoor community spaces, having housing development concerns, use of Southbury Training School and finding a balance in the gap between senior and youth support.

On Volunteering...

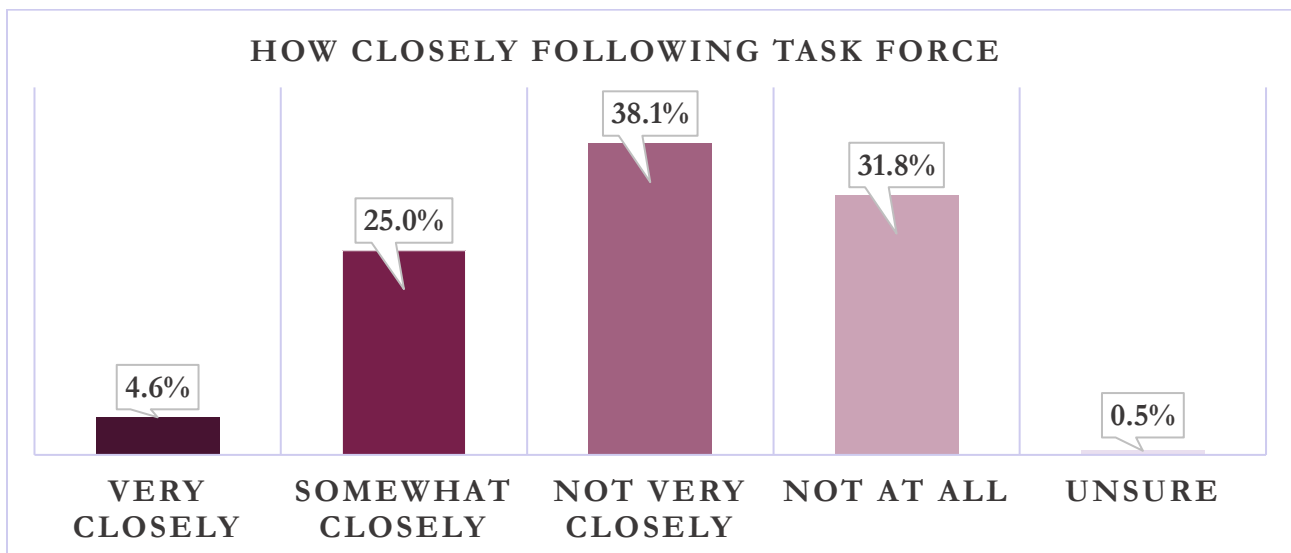
When extrapolated on the total Southbury population, large numbers of respondents (ranging from 16.5% to 25.8%) noted an interest in volunteering in Southbury in areas such as volunteering to work on making a new community center a reality to volunteering with EMS, SMART, health programs, or donating to the Fire Department.

4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Readers are reminded that the narrative throughout this report refers to composite aggregate data – the 1,177 completed surveys. Text, tables and graphs throughout this report presents these composite results.

FOLLOWING THE TASK FORCE

All respondents were asked to report how closely they followed the Southbury Strategic Planning Task Force process, going on since April of 2017. Nearly one-third, 29.6%, indicated they followed the process either very (4.6%) or somewhat closely (25.0%). Over two-thirds, 69.9%, suggested they followed the process not very closely (38.1%) or not at all (31.8%). Results are displayed in the following graph.



QUALITY OF LIFE

Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons they chose to move to or continue to live (or own/manage a business) in Southbury. The top reasons cited included: community appearance (52.7%), school system (51.7%) and the neighborhood (48.6%). Multiple responses were accepted. Results are shown in the table below in declining order.

REASONS	PERCENT
Community appearance (town character / community feeling)	52.7
School system	51.7
Neighborhood	48.6
Location (close to work/highways)	47.7
Housing (nice houses/affordable)	44.1
Community reputation	40.6
Community amenities (recreational opportunities/town services)	29.7
Birthplace, family nearby	21.3
Other	7.7
Unsure	1.1

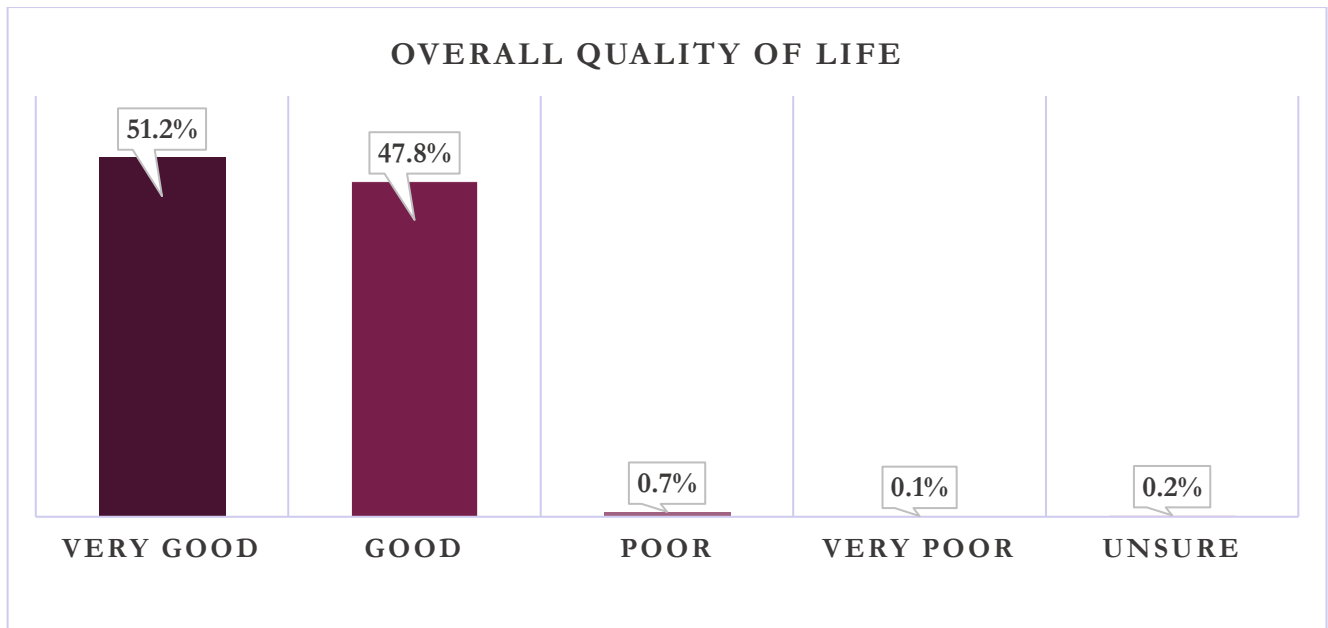
Other mentions with less frequency included lower taxes, Heritage Village, exceptional open space land conservation, moved with family, undeveloped land, senior community, accessible businesses, small community, sports, can't afford to move, kids are still in school system, country/peaceful feel, safety, employment, not comfortable moving, well run government, business climate, housing is more affordable than alternatives, work provided support to move, downsizing, property runs in family and planning to move soon.

In an open-ended format, respondents were asked to indicate where they lived before moving to Southbury. The top fifteen most frequently named responses are presented in the following table in declining order. Remaining locations cited by respondents are included in the appendix.

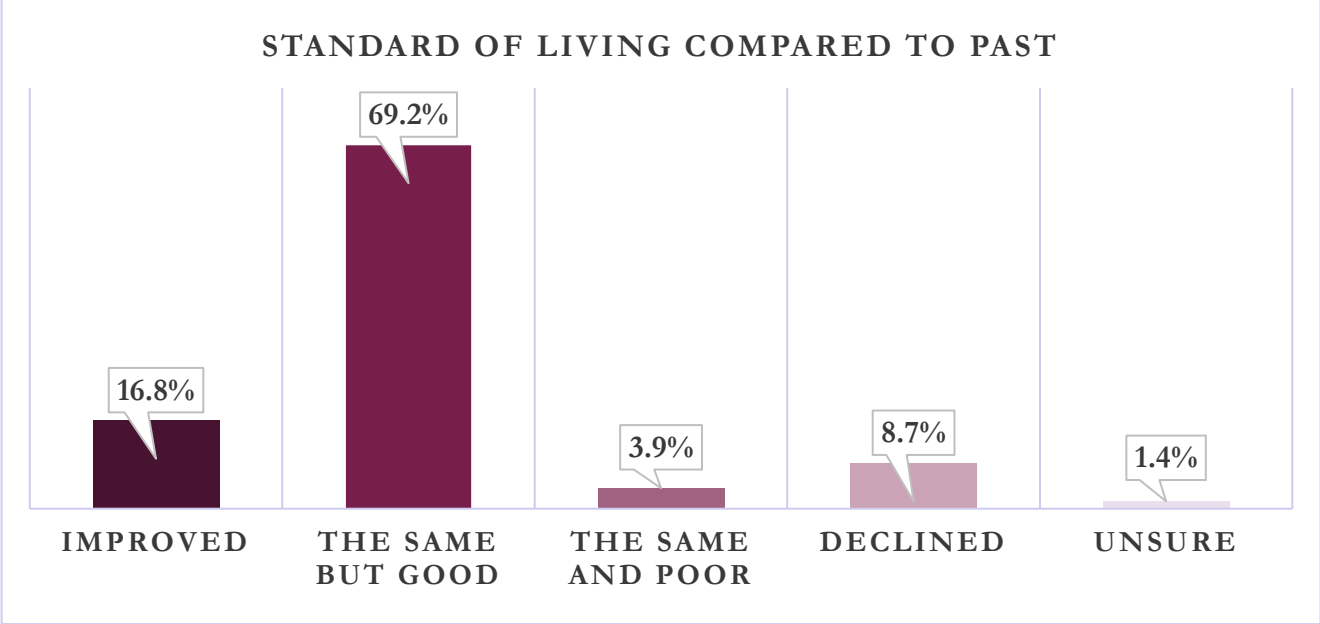
LOCATION BEFORE MOVING TO SOUTHBURY

New York State / New York City
Danbury, CT
Newtown/Sandy Hook, CT
Woodbury, CT
Waterbury, CT
Always lived in Southbury, CT
Bethel, CT
Naugatuck, CT
New Jersey
Massachusetts / Boston
Brookfield, CT
Stratford, CT
Ridgefield, CT
New Milford, CT
Middlebury, CT

All respondents were asked to report their overall quality of life in Southbury. A large majority, 99%, suggested their quality of life was very good (51.2%) or good (47.8%).



A large percentage of respondents, 86.0% see their standard of living as improved (16.8%) compared to two years ago or the same but good (69.2%). Another 12.6% suggested their standard of living was the same and poor (3.9%) or had declined (8.7%). Results are displayed in the following graph.



TOWN SERVICES

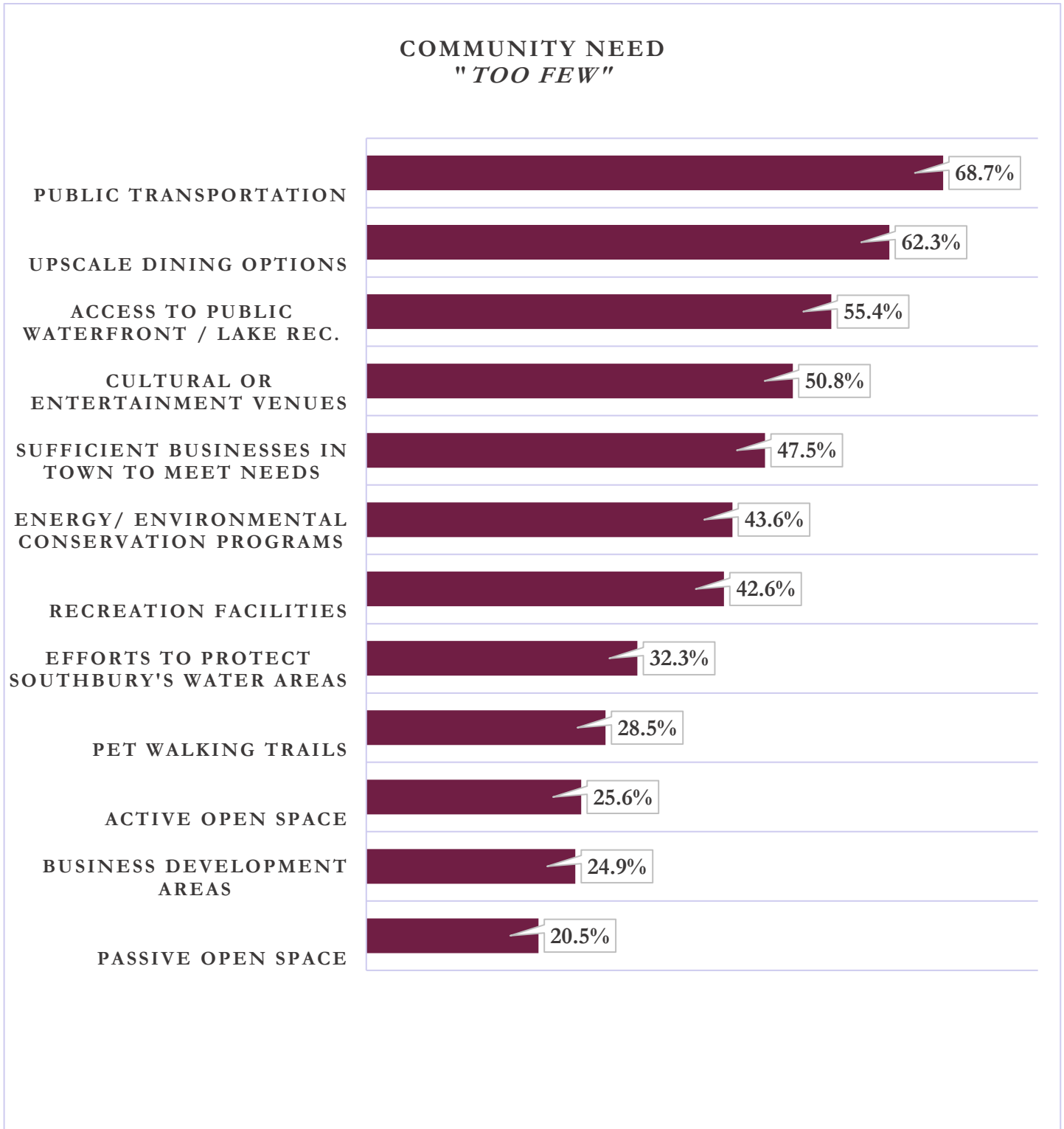
All respondents were asked to rate several services that are offered or provided by the Town of Southbury. Each was asked to use a scale of one to ten where one was very poor and ten was very good.

The highest positive ratings (7-10) were recorded for library services (93.4%), public safety services (91.9%) and services for seniors (80.5%). The services with the lowest positive ratings of 7-10 included road maintenance (71.7%), town zoning & planning practices (65.1%) and services for the youth (58.2%).

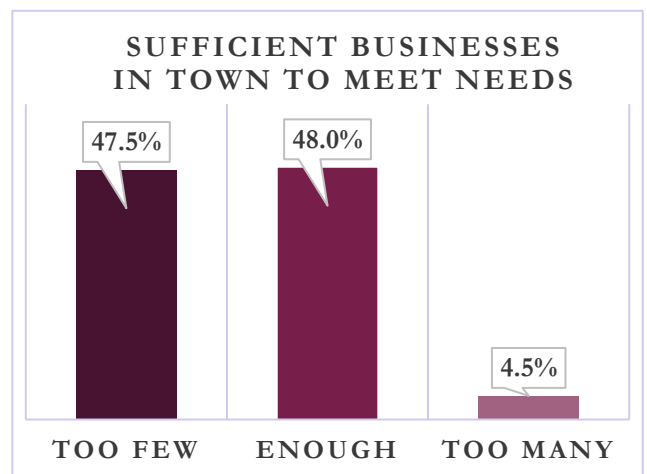
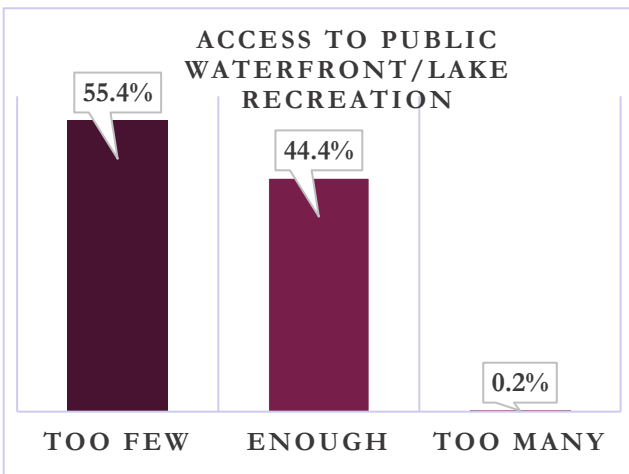
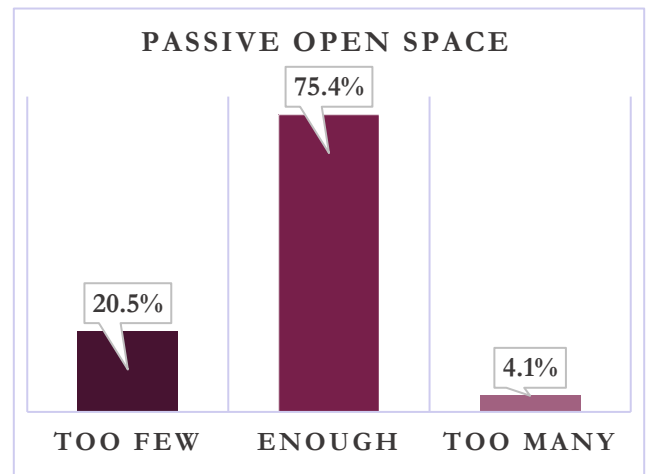
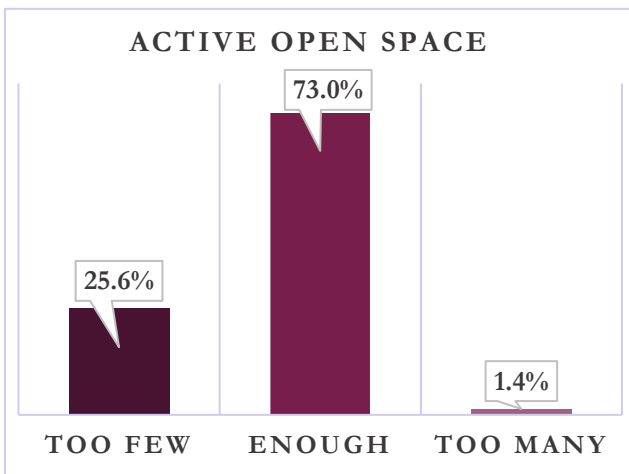
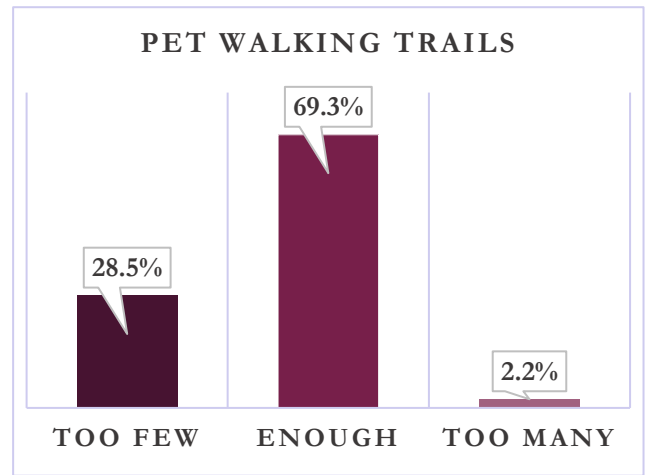
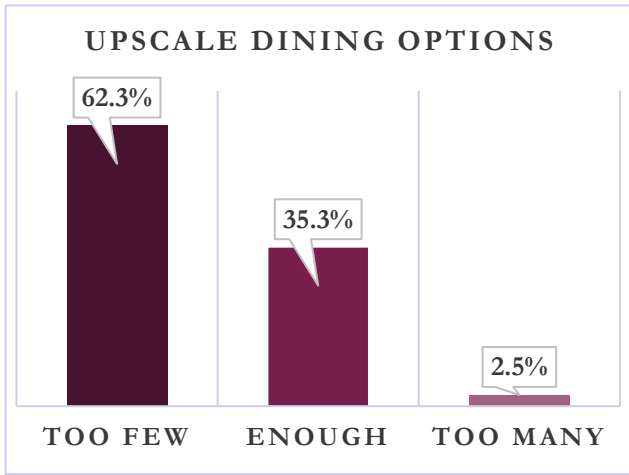
The following table holds the cumulative totals for positive ratings of 7-10 for each of the services in declining order.

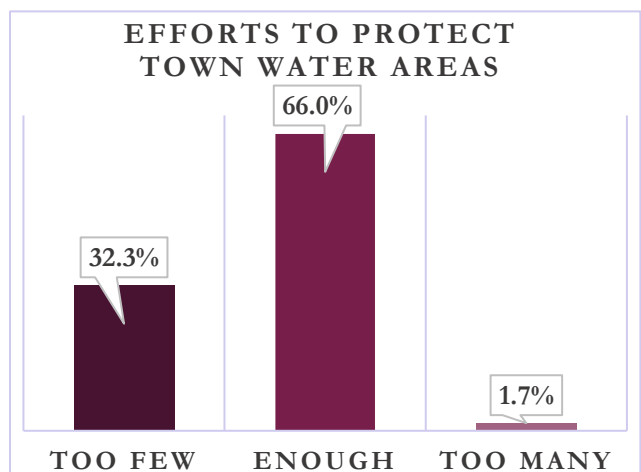
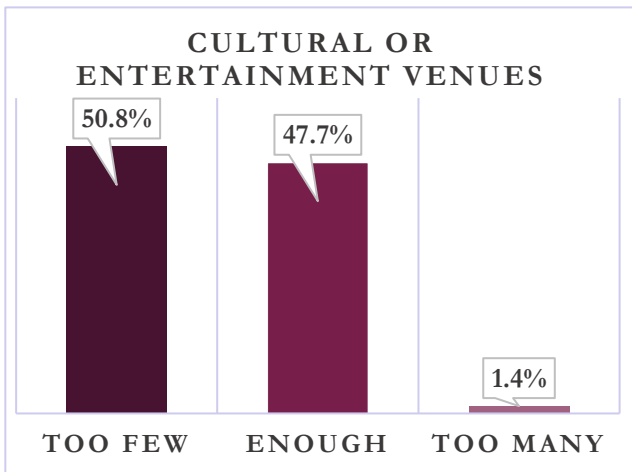
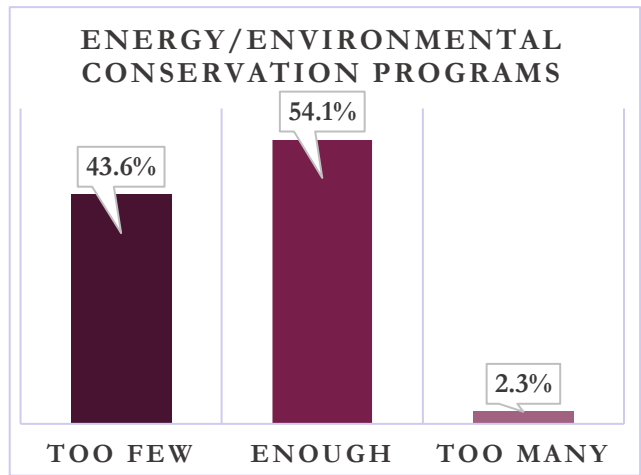
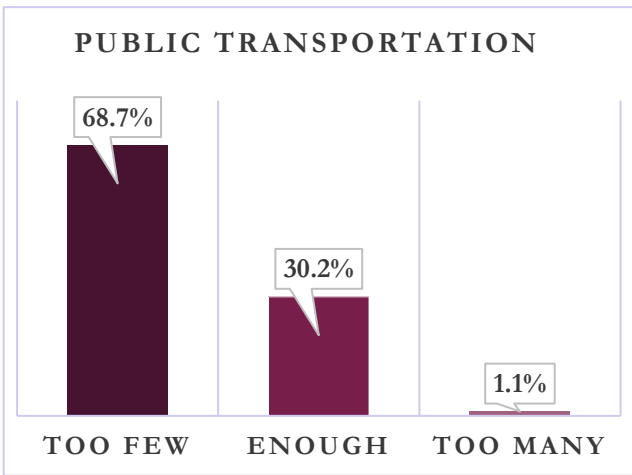
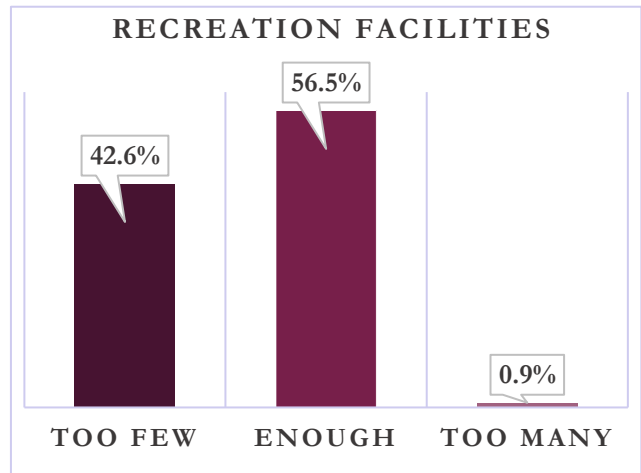
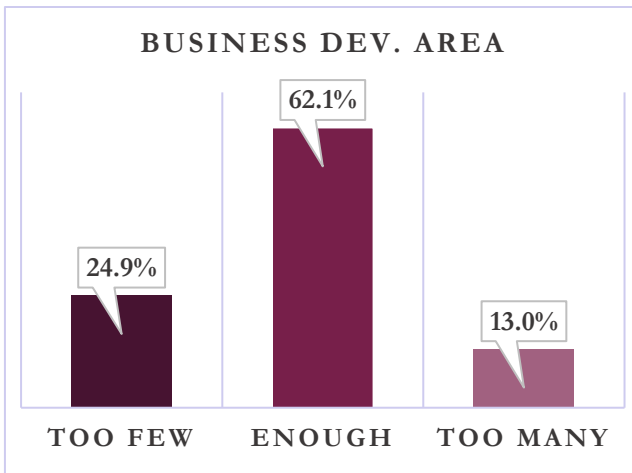
SERVICES OFFERED OR PROVIDED BY SOUTHBURY	POSITIVE RATING (7-10) PERCENT
Library services	93.4
Public safety services	91.9
Services for seniors	80.5
Senior transportation	79.8
Town Hall services	79.7
Historic preservation efforts	78.2
Recreation Programs	73.8
Road Maintenance	71.7
Town zoning & planning practices	65.1
Services for youth	58.2

Respondents were presented with a number of town resources and services. For each, respondents were asked if there were too few, enough or too many of each. “Community need” is often identified by the “too few” response to these questions. Results are displayed in the following graph.



Detailed results are displayed in the following graphs.





CURRENT SOUTHBURY ISSUES

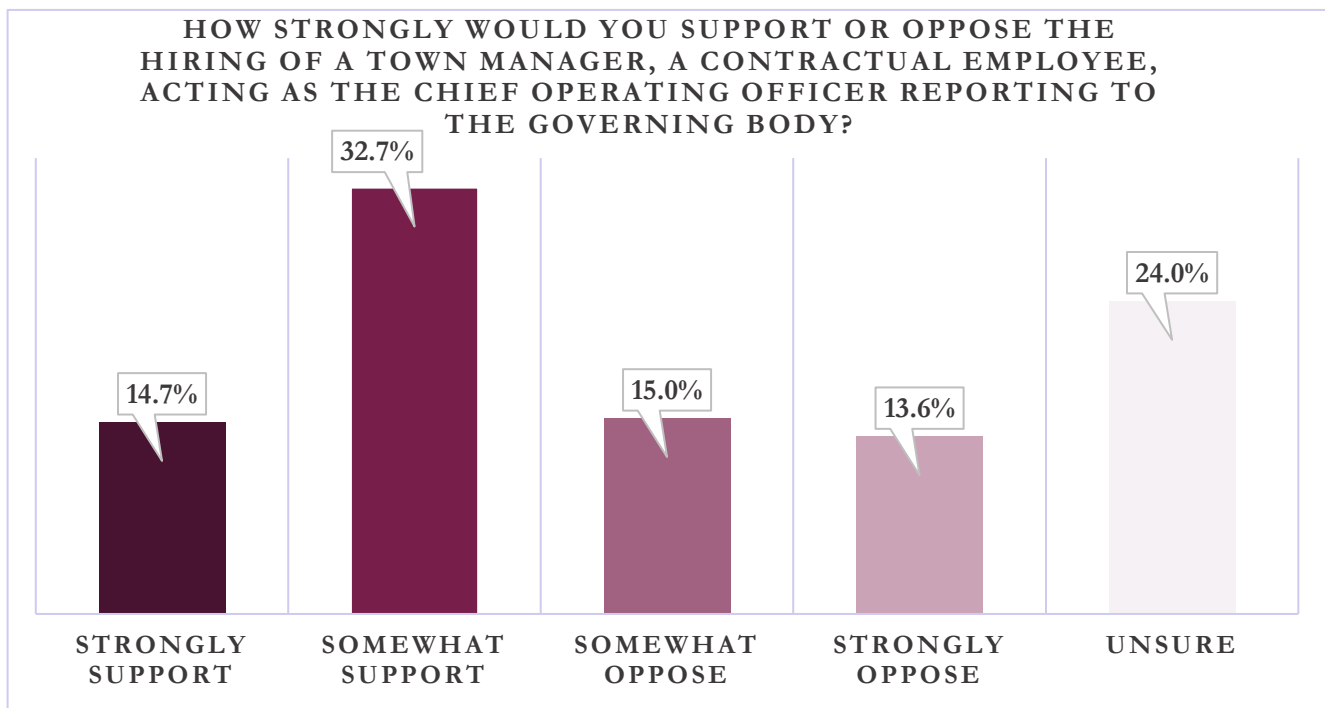
Respondents were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with statements about Southbury or issues being discussed in town. Respondents strongly and somewhat agreed that their perception of Southbury is positive (94.2%). Respondents strongly and somewhat agreed the least on the statement: “Southbury is doing enough to retain our youth and attracting young people to our town (30.6%).”

The following table holds the cumulative totals, in declining order, for those indicating they strongly or somewhat agreed with each of the statements.

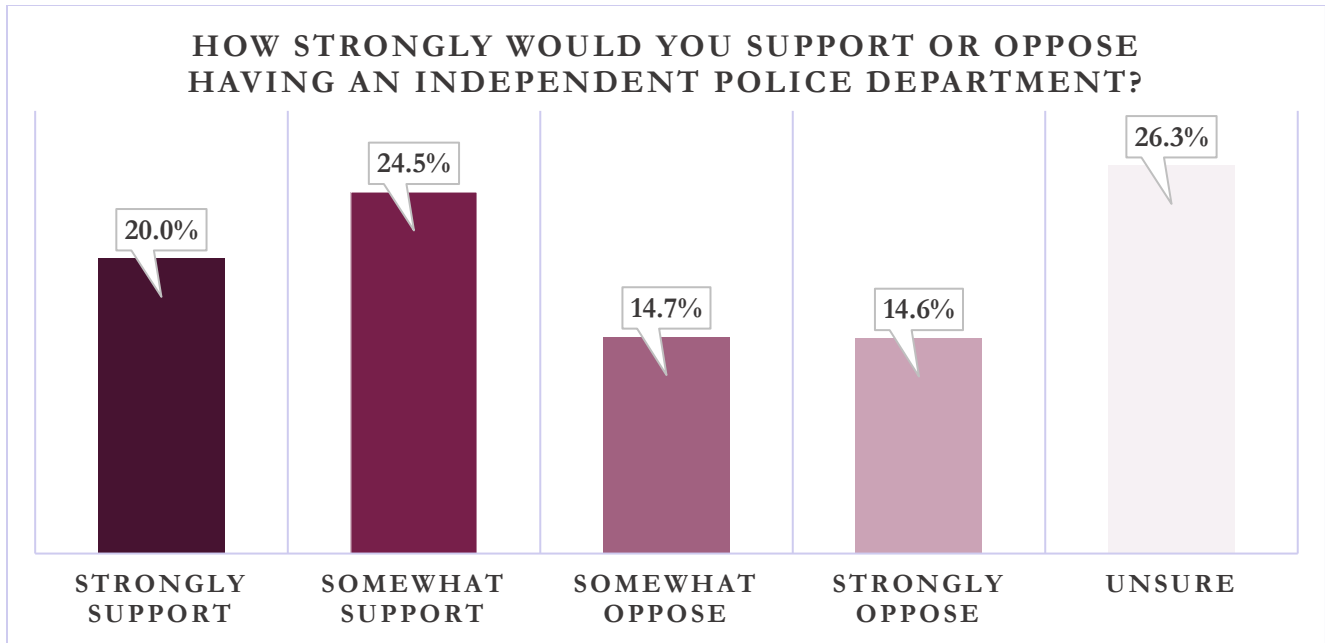
STATEMENT	STRONGLY & SOMEWHAT AGREE PERCENT
My perception of Southbury is very positive	94.2
The protection of the aquifer as our drinking source should be a continuing aspiration of the town	89.4
I'm in favor of and support a public Pomperaug River Greenway Corridor	68.6
Southbury is doing enough to retain our youth and attracting young people to our town	30.6

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they strongly supported, somewhat supported, somewhat opposed or strongly opposed two additional issues being discussed in town.

Almost half of respondents, 47.4%, strongly (14.7%) or somewhat supported (32.7%) the hiring of a town manager acting as the Chief Operating Officer reporting to the governing body. Results are displayed in the following graph.



Over forty-four percent (44.5%) of respondents strongly (20.0%) or somewhat supported (24.5%) having an independent police department. Results are displayed in the following graph.



TAX PROPOSALS

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they would be very willing, somewhat willing, somewhat unwilling or not at all willing to pay more in taxes to secure additional programs in town. Respondents were most willing to pay more in taxes to secure more recreation programs (56.4%) while they were least willing to pay more in taxes to secure an Economic Resource position (33.6%).

The following table holds the cumulative totals, in declining order, for those indicating they would be very willing or somewhat willing to pay more in taxes to secure the proposed programs.

WILLINGNESS TO PAY MORE IN TAXES TO SECURE...	PERCENT STRONGLY & SOMEWHAT WILLING	PERCENT SOMEWHAT UNWILLING & NOT AT ALL WILLING
More recreation programs	56.4	40.1
Additional senior transportation (designed to help seniors age in place)	53.4	40.4
A larger municipal Community Center	52.1	39.6
A larger senior center (designed to help seniors age in place)	45.6	48.6
An Economic Resource position	33.6	40.1

INTEREST IN OPPORTUNITIES

Respondents were presented with statements about various concepts, ideas or programs in Southbury. For each, respondents indicated whether they were very interested, somewhat interested, somewhat uninterested, not at all interested or unsure. Respondents, collectively, were most interested (79.4%) in the utilization of historic buildings for productive public, private/boutique business use to offset maintenance costs.

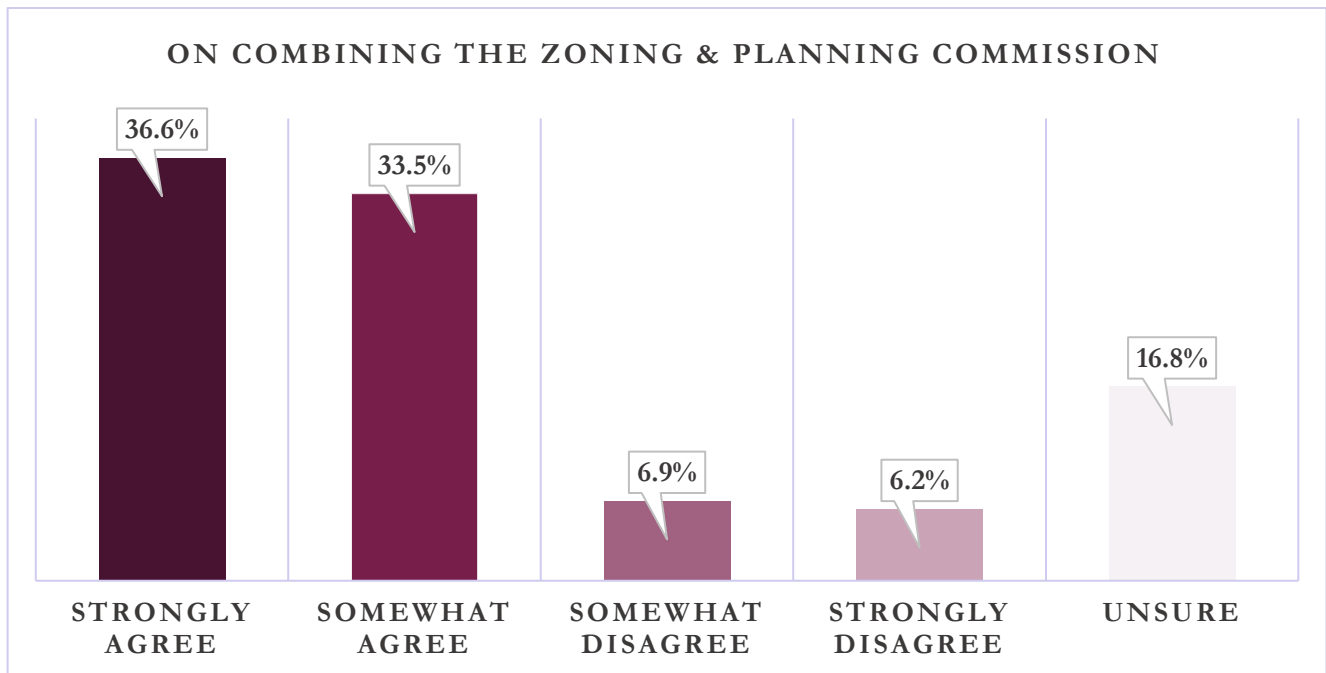
The following table holds the cumulative totals, in declining order, for those indicating they would be very interested and somewhat interested in the concept, idea, or programs.

STATEMENT	PERCENT VERY & SOMEWHAT INTERESTED	PERCENT SOMEWHAT UNINTERESTED & NOT INTERESTED AT ALL
Utilization of historic buildings for productive public, private/boutique business use to offset maintenance costs	79.4	14.6
Lakefront recreational development for residential use by resident (provided Utility owners grant permission)	67.5	24.4
Increase education for residents regarding energy efficiency programs	67.1	28.8
Town sponsorship of more education and engagement on public issues such as drug and alcohol addiction	66.7	28.6
Extending the current enterprise zone (tax incentive area of town or businesses) near Waterbury-Oxford airport in Southbury	63.6	21.2
Town sponsorship of more events designed to draw regional residents to Town	59.6	33.7
Town assistance to improve coordination of for-profit and non-profit cultural organizations	54.9	34.7
Town workshops on topics such as town operations, use of the town website, the town's water resources, and water conservation policies	49.6	43.0

CONSOLIDATION AND BUSINESS NEEDS

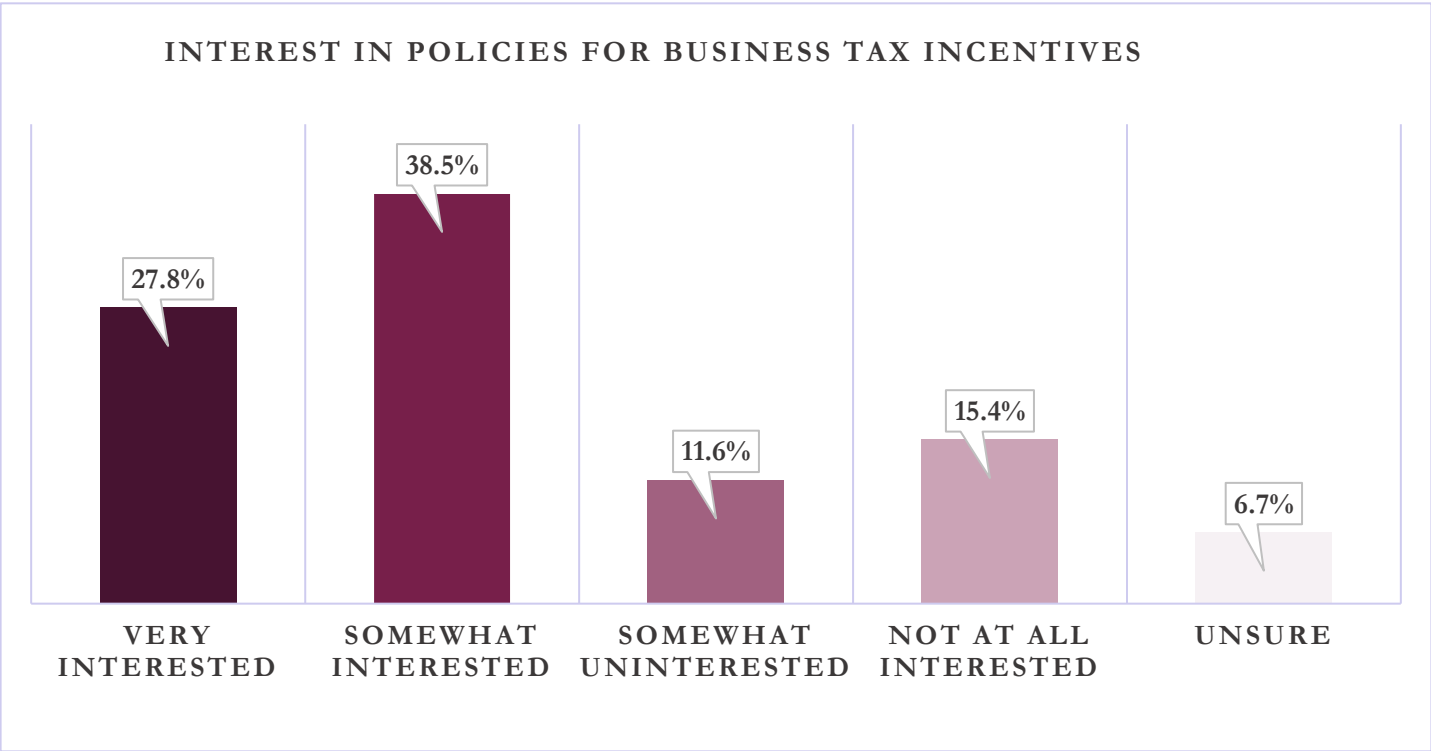
Respondents were presented with a concept for consolidation and asked whether they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, strongly disagreed or were unsure.

The majority of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed (70.1%) that the town should combine the Zoning and Planning Commissions to streamline the application and approval process. Results are displayed in the following graph.



Respondents were advised that some towns surrounding Southbury offer tax incentives to attract businesses to their communities. Southbury currently does not offer any business tax incentives. Respondents were asked to indicate how interested they would be in seeing the Board of Selectman write policies for and approve business tax incentives in Southbury.

Over half of respondents, 66.3%, would be very interested (27.8%) or somewhat interested (38.5%) in seeing the Board of Selectman write policies for and approve business tax incentives in Southbury. Results are displayed in the following graph.



ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY OPINIONS

Respondents were asked to indicate the most important issues they see Southbury facing over the next five to ten years. Responses were submitted in an open-ended format. The most frequently named responses are presented in the following table in declining order.

STATEMENT
Need for viable business development / become business friendly
Retaining/attracting youth and young families to area
Budget/tax stability
Quality of education
Enough youth activities and opportunities
Road maintenance and traffic
Care for aging population
School budget
Public safety / health (including growing drug use)
School budget concerns
Maintaining property values / affordable housing
Over population and over development
Maintain community/historic aspects
Public transportation
Keeping Southbury clean / environmental protection
Lack of overall entertainment
Southbury Training School
Need for quality community center / recreation facility
Limited job opportunities
Lack of senior entertainment

Additional responses mentioned with less frequency included transfer station issues, maintaining quality town leadership (inclusive of town planning and zoning), lack of identity as a town for all ages, lack of corporate tax base, need for an independent police department, maintaining the historic district, low income housing development, and more. Additional responses cited by respondents are included in the appendix.

Respondents were asked to note anything not covered in the survey that they would like to convey to town officials and planners. Responses were submitted in an open-ended format. The most frequently named responses are categorized in the following table in declining order.

STATEMENT
Education / school concerns
Business development concerns- including need for viable businesses
Activities for all age groups- youth/young adults/adults/ seniors
Tax concerns
Road maintenance and traffic concerns
Need for indoor and outdoor community spaces / center
Housing development concerns
Use of Southbury Training School
Finding balance / bridge gap of senior and youth support
Continued communication / input from residents
Maintaining safe and welcoming town
Sponsorship of community events, promote community gathering
Address waterway / beach access
Attention to sidewalk / care for Main Street
Improved public safety services
Improved use of transportation
Environmental / utility concerns

Additional responses mentioned with less frequency are address noise ordinances, review programs for disabled residents, no more banks / medical centers / liquor stores, support of Land Trust, need for mid-range restaurants, need for recreation trails / paths, enjoy living in Southbury, continue to attract young families, address gun control issues, great addition of cinema / theater, promote volunteerism, support of farming communities, find replacement for KMart and IGA.

Additional comments cited by respondents are included in the appendix.

INTEREST IN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they would like to volunteer or donate to various programs in Southbury. Those interested were advised to contact the office of the First Selectman.

VOLUNTEER / DONATION OPPORTUNITY	PERCENT YES	PERCENT NO	PERCENT UNSURE
Volunteering or donating to help make a new community center a reality	25.8	45.8	28.4
Volunteering or donating with Emergency Medical Services in Southbury Ambulance or at Heritage Village Ambulance	16.5	65.7	17.8
Volunteering time or donating to “Southbury & Middlebury Acting Responsibly Together” or SMART in Southbury – an organization created in response to the growing alcohol, tobacco and other substance use among young people in our towns	21.8	50.6	27.5
Volunteering time to help increase community health programs	18.3	54.0	27.8
Volunteering time by participating in local government	23.3	52.7	24.0
Volunteering time or donating to the Southbury Volunteer Fire Department	25.1	53.4	21.5

DEMOGRAPHICS

YEARS LIVED IN SOUTHBURY	YEARS
Average	18.3

OWN OR RENT RESIDENCE	PERCENT
Own	94.2
Rent	3.7
Unsure	0.2
Prefer not to answer	2.0

AGE	PERCENT
Less than 35	5.4
35 to 44	18.6
45 to 54	24.0
55 to 64	20.7
65 to 74	19.0
75 or older	9.7
Prefer not to answer	2.6

ANNUAL INCOME OF ALL MEMBERS IN HOUSEHOLD	PERCENT
Under \$50,000	10.5
\$50,000 to less than \$100,000	19.2
\$100,000 to less than \$200,000	30.7
\$200,000 to less than \$300,000	13.3
\$300,000 or more	5.9
Unsure	0.3
Prefer not to say	20.1

CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 LIVE AT HOME	PERCENT
Yes	42.1
No	55.7
Prefer not to answer	2.1

GENDER	PERCENT
Male	39.0
Female	61.0

BUSINESS OWNER OF BUSINESS IN SOUTHBURY	PERCENT
Yes	11.8
No	88.2

BUSINESS MANAGER OF BUSINESS IN SOUTHBURY	PERCENT
Yes	8.1
No	91.9

LIVE IN HERITAGE VILLAGE?	PERCENT
Yes	18.2
No	81.8

5 APPENDIX

INTERPRETATION OF AGGREGATE RESULTS

The computer processed data for this survey are presented in the following frequency distributions. It is important to note that the wordings of the variable labels and value labels in the computer-processed data are largely abbreviated descriptions of the Questionnaire items and available response categories.

The frequency distributions include the category or response for the question items. Responses deemed not appropriate for classification have been grouped together under the “Other” code.

Each frequency distribution includes the absolute observed occurrence of each response (i.e. the total number of cases in each category). Immediately adjacent to the right of the column of absolute frequencies is the column of relative frequencies. These are the percentages of cases falling in each category response, including those cases designated as missing data. To the right of the relative frequency column is the adjusted frequency distribution column that contains the relative frequencies based on the legitimate (i.e. non-missing) cases. That is, the total base for the adjusted frequency distribution excludes the missing data. For many Questionnaire items, the relative frequencies and the adjusted frequencies will be nearly the same. However, some items that elicit a sizable number of missing data will produce quite substantial percentage differences between the two columns of frequencies. The careful analyst will cautiously consider both distributions.

The last column of data within the frequency distribution is the cumulative frequency distribution (Cum Freq.). This column is simply an adjusted frequency distribution of the sum of all previous categories of response and the current category of response. Its primary usefulness is to gauge some ordered or ranked meaning.