

Summary of Public Input

Survey:

- Profile of Survey Participants: All areas of Town were represented by survey participants with slightly more (35%) from south of Route 7 than other areas. The average number of years people have lived or owned land in Princetown was 18.8 years with a median of 14 years. Sixty-one percent work outside of the Town – with more working outside of Schenectady County. About 24% of participants were retired. The majority (61%) were aged 41 to 65, with 22% over 65 years, and 17% between 21 and 40. The survey under-represents young people and young families with children at home. About 72% of survey participants do not have children under the age of 18 living at home with them.
- Community Character: Survey participants felt strongly that maintaining rural character in Princetown was an important objective (87%). When asked how rural character is defined, people described a rural place as that with low density residential development mixed with farms and open spaces and having limited small business and low impacting commercial uses. The character of Princetown today was described as beautiful, friendly, a nice place to live, rural, country, a small town, peaceful, and quiet.
- About half of the participants favored use of commercial design standards and 54% said they would support efforts to preserve historic buildings and places. Kelly Station Tunnel, churches and cemeteries in Town, and historic farmlands and barns were considered to be among those historic places that should be preserved and protected. 66% supported creation of a noise ordinance in Princetown. There seemed to be considerable support for alternative energy systems, especially solar panels (87% support). About 56% would support placement of 100-ft tall wind turbines on neighboring properties, and 49% would support wood-burning furnaces.
- Agriculture/Open Space: There was great support for town-sponsored conservation actions that would result in the permanent protection of open space, scenic views, active farmland, historic structures, and critical environmental areas. Eighty-three percent of participants endorsed conservation actions to protect active farmland. The other resources included in this question all enjoyed between 70% and 79% support for town-sponsored conservation actions. Favored tools to accomplish protection of these resources was through enhancing site plan standards and subdivision regulation, offering incentives to landowners to protect open space or ag lands, using other development standards to protect natural features, carefully siting placement of utility, water or sewer lines and roads, requiring buffers between new homes and existing farms, and adjusting lot sizes in Princetown's zoning districts.
- Housing/Development: About 35% of participants would like to see the population of Princetown stay about the same as it is now. 39% favored a slight increase while 23% favored a moderate increase, and 3% wanted to see the town population grow a lot. Participants did not feel there was much need to have more housing within Princetown for first time homebuyers, renters, seniors, or others with moderate incomes. However, senior citizen participants did have a much higher need for senior housing than people of other age

groups.

- About 45% of participants were concerned about development pressure south of Route 7. More telling however, is that 70% of those people who actually live south of Route 7 were concerned about development pressure. Many ideas were generated on how to handle these growth pressures but ideas most centered on having the Town require larger lot sizes, establish strict development standards, and setting stringent limits on development to maintain character and the environment to prevent the area from being overdeveloped.
- Single family houses were acceptable forms of housing for almost all participants in the survey. Senior citizen housing was acceptable to about 60%. Other forms of housing that had some support (about ½ of the participants) included duplexes, combining commercial and residential buildings in a hamlet setting, assisted living/continuous care facilities, and small (up to 5 units) subdivisions.
- There was more consensus on what was not desirable housing styles in Princetown. Undesired types of housing included large (over 6 units) multi-family buildings, mobile home parks, small (3 to 6 unit) multi-family buildings, single mobile homes on individual lots, large (over 5 units) residential subdivisions, condominiums, and townhouses. The survey clearly showed more acceptance of Princetown being primarily a single family residential community with support for senior style housing opportunities.
- Town Center: The majority (61%) would support an effort to create a mixed residential/commercial town center in a hamlet-like setting. Route 7 near the Princetown Town Hall was the preferred location for such a development. In order to facilitate establishing this kind of development, more participants favored encouraging walking paths and parks as part of a new hamlet, establishing visual appearance guidelines and standards for building exteriors in this area, and attracting shops, stores, and small businesses to that hamlet area. Purchasing properties for a Town Center, and providing incentives to encourage development there, and providing water and sewer to a new hamlet were measures not as supported.
- Recreation: The survey explored interest in having a community center, more town parks/playgrounds, more recreational activities, and trails. There were mixed opinions about recreational needs. Participants were asked to rank the importance of each on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important. Combining responses of “1”, “2”, and “3” shows that all recreational opportunities explored received 52% to 59% of participant support for them. A rank of “1” and “2” indicates stronger support. Building walking, hiking and nature trails received the highest level of support, followed by a community center. Providing more recreational activities had less support than provision of actual facilities. Participants that do not have children living at home actually supported all these recreational opportunities more than families that have children living at home.
- Commercial Development: Slightly less than half (45%) felt that Princetown should develop programs to attract businesses (34% said “no”, and 22% had “no opinion”). There was stronger consensus however, on the type of businesses that would be appropriate in

Princetown's commercial zones: these included small retail stores and restaurants, service businesses like insurance agencies and banks, and "green" businesses. Many people included a grocery store as a real need in Town. Other large retail stores (big-box) and light industry/manufacturing had much less support. More people favored allowing buildings that could be a mix of commercial and residential than those that wanted a strict separation of these uses. A strong majority (64%) wanted to keep commercial activities to currently defined commercial zones in Princetown. There was little interest in encouraging commercial development in other parts of Town or in expanding the size of existing commercial districts.

- About 47% felt that the town should consider establishing sewer systems in the current commercial zones to encourage economic development, while 32% said "no", and 21% had no opinion on this question. 60% felt that wind farms should be considered as an option for commercial development however. About 30% of those who supported wind farm development also wanted to restrict commercial development to currently existing zoning districts.
- Community Services: There was general satisfaction with most town government services. More people were satisfied with hours of town hall operation, access to town officials, fire protection, police/law enforcement, and road maintenance than other services. 88% of participants were satisfied with road maintenance in Town. Access to town records, planning board, zoning board of appeals, property tax assessment process, and the Town website had less satisfaction, but more participants having no opinion about these services. For example, 40% were satisfied with the planning board, 11% were not satisfied, but 49% had no opinion. The service having more people dissatisfied was communication about what is going on at Town Hall: 26% were dissatisfied with that.
- The survey explored things that the Town could pursue to enhance public services. Of 10 services explored, only using alternative forms of energy in Town facilities and introducing alternate energy considerations into planning and zoning regulations were activities the majority of participants wanted to pursue. Most people did not want to pursue town trash service, creation of a town police force, or installation of sidewalks, curbs and streetlights. There were about 40% to 45% of participants that supported providing subsidies to town fire departments, sponsoring more community services and events, and provide more communication about what is going on in Town. 37% supported expansion of public water services north of Route 7. However, a closer look at that data indicated that there was not much support for expanding water among those participants living north of Mariaville Road or south of Route 7. Most support for water expansion came from those living between Mariaville Road and Route 7.
- Traffic concerns and problems with pedestrian safety were identified at Pangburn Road and Route 7, and along Giffords Church Road, Kelly and Mariaville Road, Duanseburg Road, and other Route 7 locations.
- Highly valued characteristics about Princetown included its country setting, friendly atmosphere, quietness, rural character, open spaces, peaceful nature, privacy, safety, farms, and its small town feel.

- Some common characteristics of Princetown liked the least included lack of a grocery store, distance to shopping, fighting and politics in town government, lack of public services such as water, taxes, and lack of enforcement. There was less consensus on features disliked.
- Participants were asked to describe what they would like Princetown to be in 20 years. Common answers included rural, green, lots of open spaces, friendly, a nice community, peaceful, quiet, safe, farms, nice people, and recreation.
- The survey asked people to indicate what issues should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Although a wide variety of answers were given to this question, most related to future growth and development in town. There was keen interest in finding ways to allow the Town to grow in a smart way that preserves the rural character, open spaces, farms, and environment. Addressing water and sewer expansions was also a frequent comment with some people encouraging that to happen while others cautioned against it. Many felt that commercial business development was needed to enhance the tax base, but that they needed to be carefully developed and managed to preserve the other qualities of Town. Alternative energy was also of interest to many participants.