**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Preparing a comprehensive plan with significant public participation for a town such as Clifton can present challenges. As a general rule, town meetings typically are attended by possibly 30 or so citizens out of a town population that is approaching 1,000. Additionally, finding volunteers to participate in town activities has, in recent years, proven problematic. As an example, at times the town’s Planning Board has been short a full member. Typically, the Planning Board will only have one alternate member, if at all. Despite repeated calls for volunteers to assist in preparing the town’s comprehensive plan, there were few citizens willing or able to lend a hand. Nevertheless, the town leadership has made and continues to make every effort to encourage the public’s participation in writing the comprehensive plan and to keep its citizens informed of the plan’s formulation. These efforts have included the use of the town’s website ([www.cliftonme.com](http://www.cliftonme.com)) to post draft sections of the plan for public comment, Facebook, a periodic newsletter, regularly scheduled public meetings and a public hearing dedicated to citizen input.

Additionally, to help guide the comprehensive plan committee, an opinion survey was conducted that ultimately that played a very significant part in providing a good sense of the direction the town wanted to go in. Approximately 10 percent of the population responded. The results were as follows:

| **Clifton Lifestyle Aspects and** **Relative Importance** | **IMPORTANT** | **NO OPINION** | **NOT IMPORTANT** | **N/A OR I DON'T USE THIS ASSET OR RESOURCE** | **TOTAL RESPONDENTS** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Proximity to Work (Bangor/Brewer/ Ellsworth Regions) | 58.44% | 6.49% | 15.58% | 19.48% |   |
| 45 | 5 | 12 | 15 | 77 |
| Community Culture/Lifestyle | 67.53% | 12.99% | 10.39% | 9.09% |   |
| 52 | 10 | 8 | 7 | 77 |
| School District (k-8) | 51.95% | 7.79% | 9.09% | 32.47% |   |
| 40 | 6 | 7 | 25 | 77 |
| High School Choice | 59.74% | 6.49% | 9.09% | 25.97% |   |
| 46 | 5 | 7 | 20 | 77 |
| Real Estate Tax Rates | 85.33% | 6.67% | 4.00% | 4.00% |   |
| 64 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 75 |
| Property Values | 80.26% | 15.79% | 0.00% | 3.95% |   |
| 61 | 12 | 0 | 3 | 76 |
| Scenic Environment/ Nature | 86.67% | 6.67% | 4.00% | 2.67% |   |
| 65 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 75 |
| Access to ATV/Snowmobile Trail Networks | 45.45% | 18.18% | 19.48% | 18.18% |   |
| 35 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 77 |
| Access to Walking/Non-Motorized Trail Networks | 68.83% | 10.39% | 12.99% | 7.79% |   |
| 53 | 8 | 10 | 6 | 77 |
| Access to Broadband | 86.84% | 3.95% | 2.63% | 6.58% |   |
| 66 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 76 |

**Note:** 40% to 45% of the respondents either “do not use” or consider “not important” the school system and school choice aspects, which *represent 65% of the property tax*.

In response to the survey question, “Should the town put more effort into developing local businesses and employment opportunity,” 71 people responded with 66% answering “yes” and the remainder “no.” The following table and chart show opinions to specific development preferences or land use practices including preservation (extreme limitations on activities – more like a park environment) and conservation (mixed and shared use such as most of the land today). Twice as many people favored conservation versus preservation while 62% still favor preserving and protecting key scenic terrain.

| **Clifton Land Use Development Preferences** | **REALLY LIKE THIS** | **FAVORABLE** | **NO OPINION** | **UNFAVORABLE** | **REALLY DON'T LIKE THIS** | **TOTAL** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Encourage a business to develop the former Leon Williams Saw Mill site, which is our local designated industrial zone. | 53.25% | 37.66% | 5.19% | 2.60% | 1.30% |  |
| 41 | 29 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 77 |
| Encourage more wind energy development. | 27.27% | 29.87% | 15.58% | 11.69% | 15.58% |   |
| 21 | 23 | 12 | 9 | 12 | 77 |
| Encourage solar energy development (similar to the 40,000 panel site in Pittsfield, for example). | 41.56% | 31.17% | 16.88% | 0.00% | 10.39% |   |
| 32 | 24 | 13 | 0 | 8 | 77 |
| Encourage biofuel energy development (forest or other agricultural plant based energy resource). | 18.18% | 36.36% | 24.68% | 15.58% | 5.19% |   |
| 14 | 28 | 19 | 12 | 4 | 77 |
| Encourage development along the Route 9 corridor. | 32.89% | 39.47% | 15.79% | 7.89% | 3.95% |   |
| 25 | 30 | 12 | 6 | 3 | 76 |
| Encourage more preservation (limit or reduce timber harvesting, motorized trail access, motorized boating, etc. - create a more park like atmosphere). | 13.16% | 35.53% | 23.68% | 15.79% | 11.84% |   |
| 10 | 27 | 18 | 12 | 9 | 76 |
| Encourage conservation and resource management (work with land owners to produce timber and other natural resources using good sustainment principles - traditional working Maine forests). | 27.63% | 44.74% | 22.37% | 1.32% | 3.95% |   |
| 21 | 34 | 17 | 1 | 3 | 76 |
| Continue to protect scenic places such as Eagle Bluff, Big Peaked and Little Peaked Mountain (aka Chick Hill). | 62.34% | 24.68% | 7.79% | 2.60% | 2.60% |   |
| 48 | 19 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 77 |
| Encourage subdivision development. | 14.67% | 21.33% | 33.33% | 17.33% | 13.33% |   |
| 11 | 16 | 25 | 13 | 10 | 75 |
| Encourage rental multi-unit housing development. | 13.33% | 25.33% | 22.67% | 18.67% | 20.00% |   |
| 10 | 19 | 17 | 14 | 15 | 75 |
| Encourage condominium (basically owned multi-unit housing) development. | 14.47% | 17.11% | 34.21% | 18.42% | 15.79% |   |
| 11 | 13 | 26 | 14 | 12 | 76 |
| Encourage commercial strip mall/shop type development. | 18.42% | 21.05% | 13.16% | 25.00% | 22.37% |   |
| 14 | 16 | 10 | 19 | 17 | 76 |
| Be more proactive managing water body levels in local lakes and ponds. | 38.16% | 30.26% | 26.32% | 1.32% | 3.95% |  |
| 29 | 23 | 20 | 1 | 3 | 76 |

Based upon the survey, there is very solid community support for some form of economic development effort – particularly to the specific question, “Should the town put more effort into developing local businesses and employment opportunity?” The answer was yes by over 66%. Moreover, some 90% respondents would like to see the former saw mill parcel on Route 9, currently the only industrial zone in Clifton, developed. That said, in 2021 the town’s Planning Board approved a permit to construct an 20 acre solar array on a portion of that property. Other major dev elopement projects that would appear to align with this preference is the upcoming construction of the 5 turbine Silver Maple wind project which will be built adjacent to the existing Pisgah Mountain wind farm that became operational in 2016.