

City of Ellsworth Visioning Project

Summary of Survey Results

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

DECEMBER 4, 2015

9:00 – 10:30 AM

Respondents

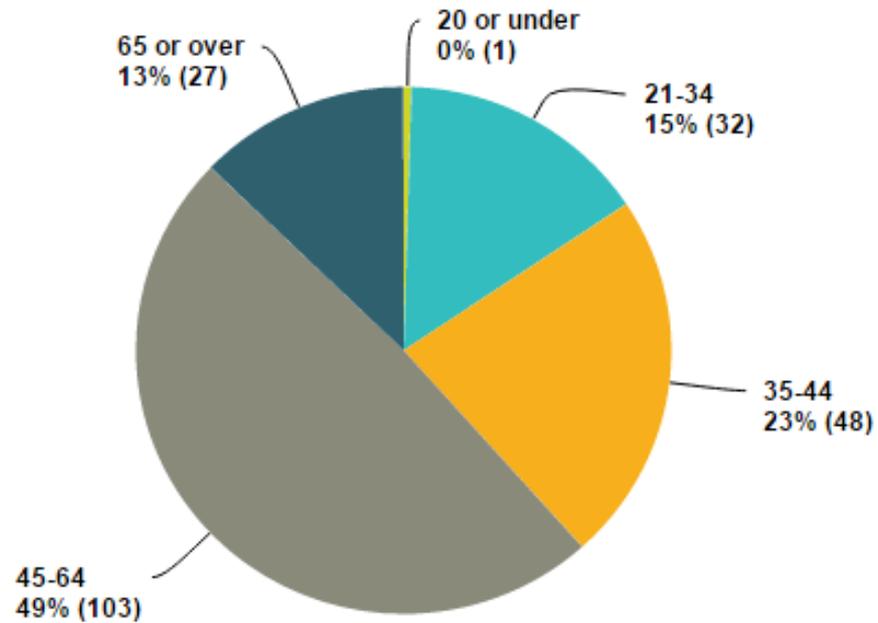
- 218 respondents total
- Most live in Ellsworth (61%)
 - The vast majority of these are year-round home owners who have lived here 5 years or more (88% own, 81% have been here 5 years+, only 2% seasonal)
- Strong majority work or own a business in Ellsworth (68%) and have done so for 5 years or more (80%)
 - 46% work in Ellsworth (but do not own a business)
 - 22% own a business
 - 32% do not work or own a business in Ellsworth

Respondents –

range of ages -- half are 45-64

Ages of Respondents

Answered: 211 Skipped: 7

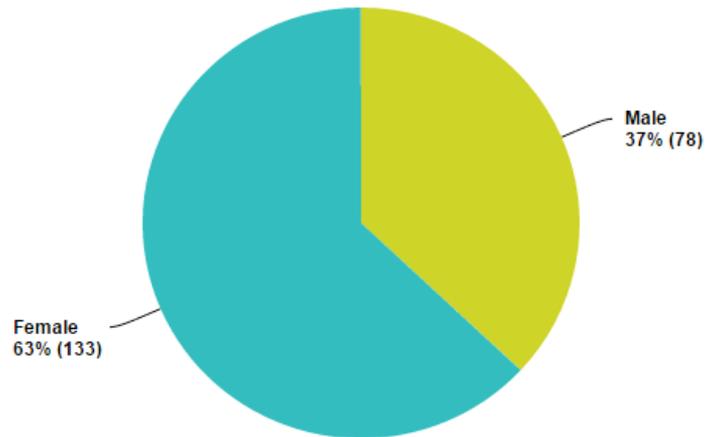


Respondents –

predominantly female and married

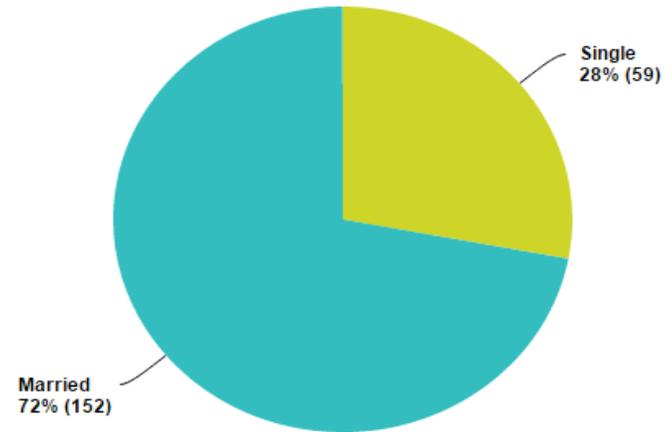
Gender

Answered: 211 Skipped: 7



Marital Status

Answered: 211 Skipped: 7



Respondents -

household composition and community involvement

- Strong majority are two-adult households (73%)
- Majority have no children (55%)
 - One child (22%)
 - Two children (15%)
 - Three or more (8%)
- Most likely to be involved in*:
 - Service organizations (55%)
 - Business, trade or professional groups (46%)
 - Arts or cultural groups (41%)

*More than one response permitted.

General Questions –

top three . . .

- Reasons you choose to live, work, own a business and/or own property in Ellsworth*:
 - Small town feel (40%)
 - Year round community (39%)
 - Central location in the region (39%)

- Most important attributes of Ellsworth for you 10 years from now*:
 - Vibrant, authentic Maine downtown (46%)
 - Safe community (40%)
 - Friendly to small businesses and entrepreneurs (37%)

*Respondents required to pick top three responses.

Jobs and Economic Development

- Ellsworth's economic role/identity in 10 years -- respondents asked to order preferences (1 to 5)
 - Year round regional service hub where people can live, work and buy most goods and services easy winner -- ranked 1 or 2 by 84%
 - Place where it's easy for businesses to do business runner up with 42%
 - Source of innovation/entrepreneurial activity in region runner up with 37%
- Top 3 priorities for improving business districts (Main St., High St., etc.)
 - Fill empty storefronts, malls and industrial park before further expansion/sprawl (73%)
 - Redevelop Water St. emphasizing river access, visibility, public uses (55%)
 - Support a diversity of retail shopping and businesses (46%)

Jobs and Economic Development

write-ins . . . over 100 answers to each!

What types of new businesses or services would you like to see in Ellsworth 10 years from now?

➤ **Themes**

- Social spaces and community gathering spots, especially on river/waterfronts
- Employers who offer decent pay and benefits
- More retail and restaurants – but great diversity in the detail!
- New/more entertainment options

➤ **Specific requests**

➤ **Social/Community**

- Convention Center
- Riverfront restaurants, boardwalks/park space, creative spaces, kayak/boat rentals

➤ **Employers**

- Light manufacturing
- STEM based -- Biotech/Biomed
- Services

Jobs and Economic Development

write-ins . . . over 100 answers to each!

What types of new businesses or services would you like to see in Ellsworth 10 years from now?

➤ Specific requests

➤ Retail

- No chain! Small – Upscale – Clothing – Office supply – Bookstore – [except Target!]
- Yes chain! National Brands – Outlets – Club stores -- Maybe not Big Box – [except Target!]

➤ Restaurants

- MORE! All types: coffee shop – breakfast – ethnic – artisanal – chain – bakery – local sustainable

➤ Entertainment/recreation

- Using waterfront – “Vibrant, cultural waterfront,” music, kayak races and rentals
- Movie theater
- Aimed at kids and teens
- Winter indoor

➤ Other

- Higher Ed
- Public Transportation

Jobs and Economic Development

write-ins . . . over 100 answers to each!

- If you had to choose one area of Ellsworth to encourage **business** development, where would this be and why?
 - **Themes**
 - No sprawl/infill: empty storefronts, malls, space surrounding Walmart, etc.; avoid using open spaces beyond current development
 - Prioritize downtown and adjacent waterfront: expand from downtown core into surrounding blocks and along Water St. “coastal Maine vibe”
 - **Specific Ideas**
 - Keep business development where it already is -- clear mandate, though strong minority could see building out along Bangor Rd.
 - Move existing Water St. business to more appropriate area – allow to repurpose waterfront + reduce truck traffic
 - Grasshopper Shop and Maine Coast Mall are high profile, weighing on people’s minds

Jobs and Economic Development

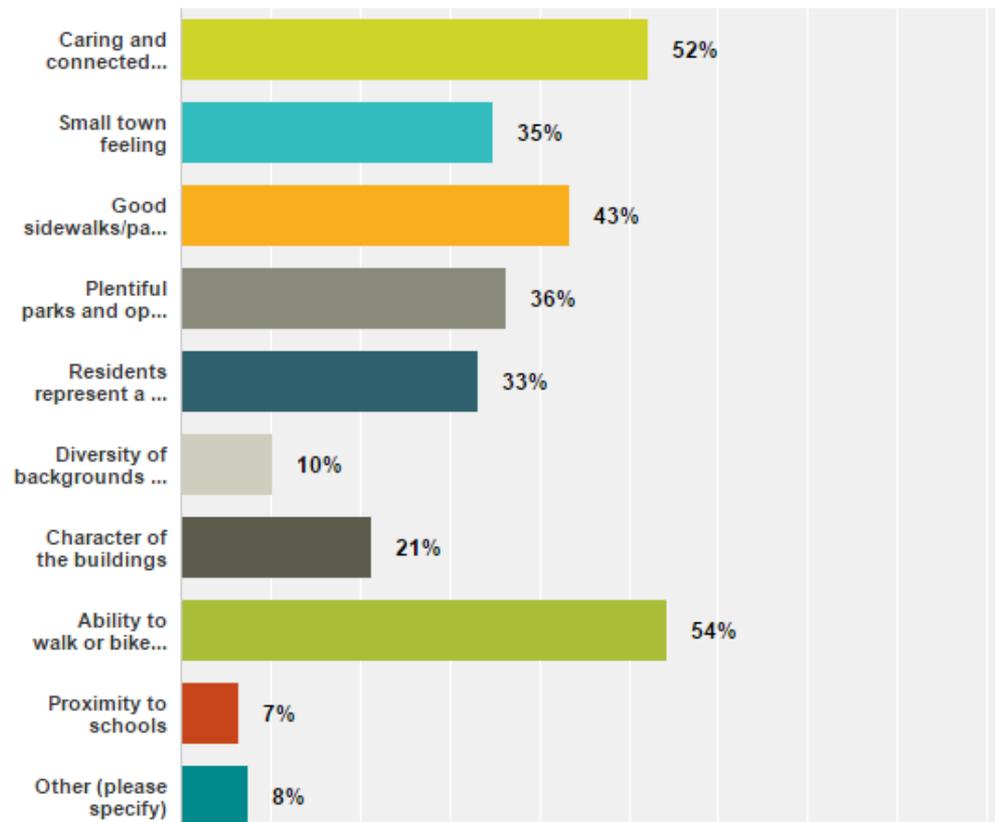
write-ins . . . over 100 answers to each!

- If you had to choose one area of Ellsworth to encourage housing development, where would this be and why?

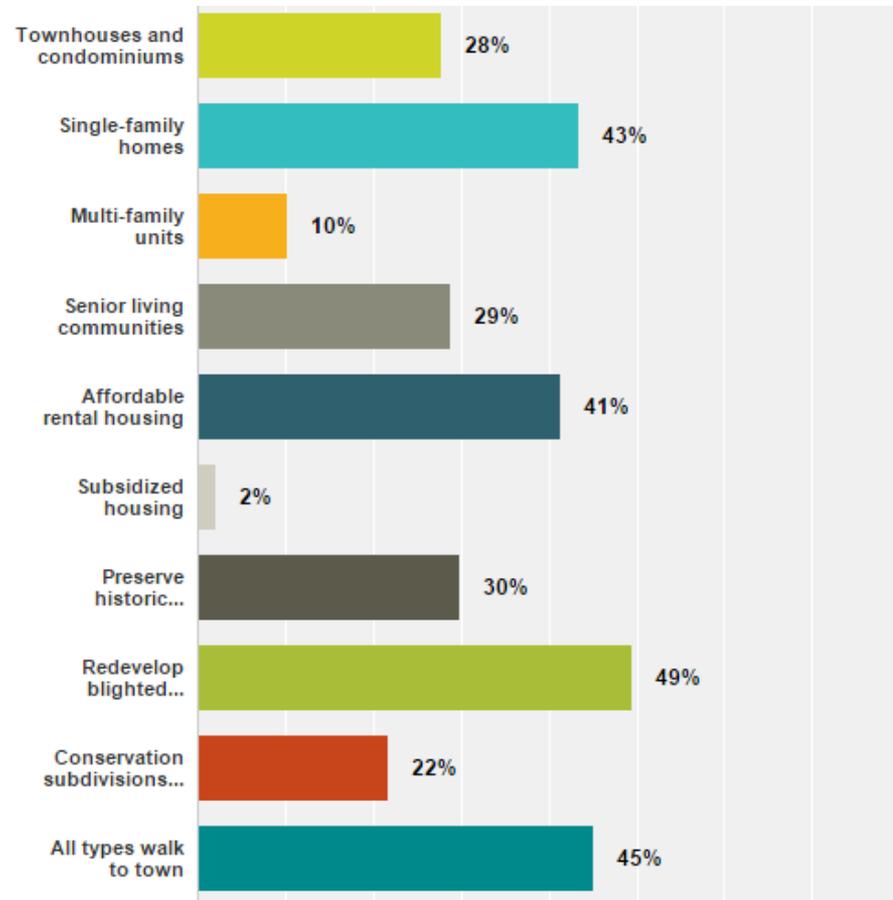
- **Themes**
 - No sprawl – higher density, planned/zoning, incentives to rehab existing
 - Walking distance to downtown – healthier, reduces traffic
 - Waterfront – river and lakes
 - Along major arteries – voices for this in contrast to above, especially North Ellsworth/Route 1A, access to Bangor jobs
 - Affordable – for young adults and seniors; not low-income; walkable; rentals

Housing/Neighborhoods –

three most desirable aspects of a great neighborhood



Housing/Neighborhoods – three types City should encourage in coming 10 years



Recreation, Arts and Culture, Entertainment

top three . . .

- Arts and cultural activities you would like to see more of in Ellsworth in 10 years*:
 - Community events (e.g., Autumn Gold) (64%)
 - Movies (61%)
 - Music (54%)

- Parks & Rec amenities that are most important to maintain or improve over the next 10 years*:
 - Trail systems for walking and biking (71%)
 - Riverfront access and public usage (55%)
 - Public parks (e.g. Knowlton Park) (44%)

*Respondents required to pick top three responses.

Natural Environment and Open Space

- When it comes to protecting natural assets, vast majority rated it very important or important for the City to protect:
 - the **drinking water supply** (96%) and
 - the **quality of surface waters (e.g., lakes and ponds)** (89%)
- If the City could **purchase one area for permanent protection**, respondents would very strongly prefer **riverfront, particularly where it passes through downtown**.
 - Differing ideas:
 - Extension of the downtown, with small art shops, take-away food stands, restaurants, bars, public art, a great place to hang out year round
 - Park-like setting . . . Bird and seal watching, boating, etc.
 - Other suggestions included: Branch Lake area, Ellsworth Falls area, open farm spaces
 - A number of respondents don't think the City should spend money/purchase any properties

*Write-in question, 79 responses.

Natural Environment and Open Space

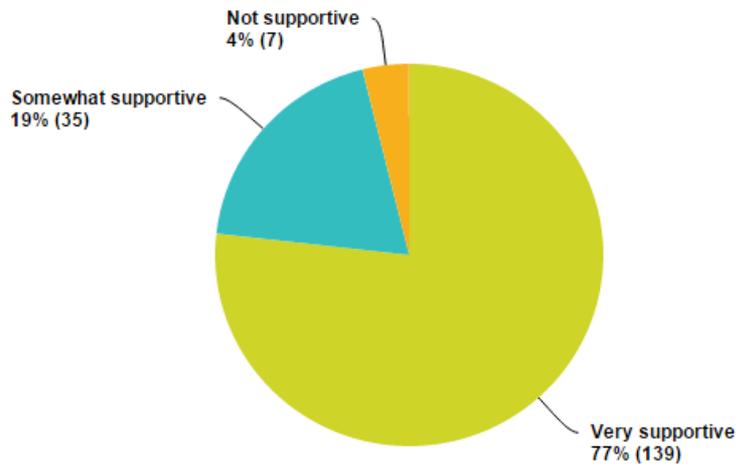
- When it comes to expanding access to the outdoors, strong majority rated it very important or important for the City to:
 - **improve and connect trail systems** (83%) and
 - **improve access to trails through parking at trailheads and signage** (73%)
- If the City could **expand or improve one area for outdoor recreation**, respondents would very strongly prefer **to upgrade and connect existing trails**.*
 - Ideas:
 - walking and biking
 - “cohesive, collaborative, and publicized system of trails”
 - corridors (Water St./Shore Rd./Grant Rd./Lake) and loops
 - Other suggestions included: Branch Lake area, Ellsworth Falls area, open farm spaces
 - A number of respondents don’t think the City should spend money/purchase any properties

*Write-in question, 74 responses.

Natural Environment and Open Space – redeveloping riverfront

How supportive are you of City
redeveloping riverfront to connect
downtown?

Answered: 181 Skipped: 37



Why?

- Heart of the City; will bring community together
- Would bring together everything that makes Ellsworth special – history, business and recreation
- Golden asset – osprey, seals, fish, natural beauty
- Investment for locals who will use it + attractive to visitors
- Antidote to image as a busy road on the way to somewhere else
- “single most important thing City can do to positively impact all objectives, including economic growth”

Public Safety and Community Health –

important factors contributing to feeling of safety

- Police and Fire Department visible in community
- Well-lit, maintained sidewalks and walking paths
- Police and Fire Department response times
- Capable and well-trained Police and Fire personnel
- Low crime rate

What else will contribute to your feeling of safety?

- Keeping sense of community strong
- Strong response to drug activity/help for substance abuse
- Getting to know police officers – Facebook page is great!
- Traffic – enforce laws and improve management
- People looking out for each other, as they already do in Ellsworth

Public Safety and Community Health

factors that will most improve community health over next 10 years*

More opportunities to walk and bike rather than drive	53%
Healthy and safe activities for children	45%
More public facilities for exercise/recreation	42%
Access to local healthcare that addresses our highest needs	35%
Help seniors age in place with safety and dignity	35%
Drug abuse prevention programs	31%
Better access to local, fresh produce	27%
Weight reduction programs	10%
Cooking/nutrition education	10%
Improve accessibility for people with disabilities	6%
Other (please specify)	Responses 5%

*Respondents required to select top three.

Summary Questions

best thing about Ellsworth

- Small town feel
- Downtown
- Sense of community
- Vibrant, year-round community
- Location
- Big town amenities
- Access to nature/riverfront
- “It has energy and pride. It is willing to look towards the future.”
- “Us! The people!”

Summary Questions

worst thing about Ellsworth

- Traffic congestion
- Trucks, heavy traffic bisecting town
- Not pedestrian friendly
- High St.
- Drugs
- Empty storefronts
- Run-down, empty, or unattractive lots and buildings
- Current state of riverfront
- Lack of high-quality job opportunities
- Not enough reasons for young adults to stay
- Not enough entertainment/activities

Summary Questions

what would make Ellsworth **even better than it is today**

- **Revitalized riverfront** [could be development, park, riverwalk, many ideas]
- **Bustling downtown fully linked to riverfront**
- **Get heavy traffic out of downtown**
- **Bypass/efforts to reduce traffic congestion**
- **Be able to safely walk or bike almost everywhere**
- **Engaged community – citizens staying connected and involved***
- **Business/economic development – year round jobs that pay a decent wage**
- **Community events**
- **Invest in education**
- **Invest in cultural opportunities**

* 22 people submitted names to be contacted about volunteer opportunities at the City!