

## Response Summary: Community Survey for the Town of Cornwall Comprehensive Plan

Below is a brief summary of the responses to the Comprehensive Plan survey that was conducted online between October 10, 2017 and the beginning of January 2018. The survey itself is attached for reference.

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**Question 1:** *This was a qualifying question for residents and business owners in the Town/Village.* A total of 350 people responded to the survey and responded to this qualifying question. However, because 23 respondents did not fit into the category of living in or owning a business in either the Village or Town, these were exited from the survey, leaving 327 total *completed* surveys. Only 4 respondents (1.14%) had businesses but did not live in the Town/Village, while 57.7% were Town only, and 34.57% were Village only.

Note that not all respondents finished the survey, and not all respondents responded to every question. Some skipped certain questions.

**Question 2:** *“How important are the following factors in your decision to live in the Town...?”. “*

Most but not all respondents completed this question, with 307 out of 327 answering. Interestingly, being born and raised in Cornwall was not at all important to most, with the quality of the school district, a sense of community, safe community, parks and natural features being the standout responses. Also interestingly, a high percentage of people responded that reasonable housing costs and local shops & services were either very important<sup>1</sup> or somewhat important, and the majority labeled reasonable taxes as an important factor in their decision. Proximity to job was somewhat important to most, and good job opportunities in Town were not too important. Family and friends were very important, and somewhat important.

**Question 3:** *“.....How would you rate the overall quality of life in Cornwall?”* Most but not all respondents completed this question, with 291 out of 327 answering. A strong majority of 55.67% responded it was better in Cornwall than elsewhere, but fully 30.58% responded it was about the same, and 10.31% responded it was worse. Only a tiny percent had no opinion or had only lived here.

**Question 4:** *“.....how is the overall quality of life in the Town changing?”* Most but not all respondents completed this question, with 290 out of 327 answering. The majority, 49.55% felt it was staying about the same, while a significant percent, 31.03%, felt it was declining, and a just over

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<sup>1</sup> See Question 16 for additional thoughts. Some residents have located in the Town as it is affordable relative to Westchester or Rockland Counties.

14% thought it was improving. This response asked the open ended question, why, and 168 people responded.

The open-ended responses fell into several broad categories: the largest group, 43.4%, was concerned about high taxes (school taxes), a lack of economic growth, and Main Street issues (lack of parking, decline in appearance and need for more small businesses, especially restaurants and cafes). The next largest group, 15.4%, felt that the community and/or its leadership was snobby, stagnant, resistant or apathetic to progressive change and improvement. Several comments (8.9%) expressed positive remarks that the community had not changed much, while 8.3% felt the community was getting more diverse in a good way, and 4.8% appreciated the increased activities available in the community. A total of 6.5% felt that new people were coming in and looking to change the town to what they had moved away from and disapproved. A surprising number (5.3%) felt they couldn't say because they had not lived in the community long enough. See Question 17.

**Question 5:** *“What services or facilities would you like to see improved, expanded, developed in the next 10 years?”* This was answered by 293 out of 327. There was wide variation in responses among the 10 choices: for a community center, parks & recreation, community relations, and town purchase of open space, the bulk of the responses fell into the “needs improvement/expansion/development” categories. For recycling programs, a clear majority (60.48%) felt no change was needed, with a similar response for law enforcement coverage, where 62.89% felt no change was needed. For youth programs, 60.42% of the responses fell into the “needs improvement/expansion/development” categories. The response was mixed for transit programs and senior programs: for transit, 52.75% responded in the “needs improvement/expansion/development” categories and 47.26% responding “no change or no opinion”, and for senior programs only 43.15% said “needs improvement/expansion/development,” while 56.85% responded “no change or no opinion.”

**Question 6:** *“If no changes are made, what will be most important problems facing town in next 10 years? Choose up to five...”* This was answered by 278 out of 327. The top five responses were availability of affordable housing options (50.72%), maintaining high quality schools (46.4%), appearance of commercial development (41.01%), adequacy of water/sewer infrastructure (37.77%), and rate of commercial growth (37.05%). The next most important responses were damage to natural resources (31.65%), and tied at 28.78% were loss of population and level of traffic and congestion. Availability of places to walk and bike safety followed at 26.26%, and both climate change and crime received the lowest responses at under 20%

**Question 7:** *“Which of the following additions, replacements, or improvements are needed in any of the Town’s rec areas? Choose up to five.”* This also was answered by 278 out of 327. The top responses were restrooms (51.08%), walking trails (49.64%), bike trails (48.2%), indoor facilities (37.41%), and almost equally picnic facilities (23.74%) and recreation facilities for people with disabilities (23.02%). After this, fields for soccer, lacrosse, football received 21.58%, and

playground equipment 18.71%. Ice skating received 15.83%, and the remaining responses received below 15%, and 11.18% felt no improvements are needed.

**Question 8:** *“How important do you agree it is for the Town to preserve or protect the following:...”* This also was answered by 278 out of 327. Overwhelmingly, agreement and strong agreement was expressed for all of the listed resources. Only negligible numbers disagreed or had no opinion.

**Question 9:** *“List ways the Town might best improve its image. ...”* This was answered by 253 out of 327, and 22.13% responded that the overall image of the Town was fine, while 62.06% picked “beautify public spaces,” and 58.1% picked “tighten development standards.... . Open-ended answers were possible for this, and 120 suggestions were provided. Many of the suggestions tied in closely to the comments on Question 4, with most on Main Street improvements, architectural review, appearance and signage, making Main Street one way, and so forth. Some suggested small business incentives and Town-Village consolidation.

**Question 10:** *“Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements...”*. This was answered by 273 out of 327. Most of the answers found agreement. Of note was that (b) promoting tourism and ecotourism was strongly responded to, agreeing and strongly agreeing, and the same for (c) improving the downtown/Main Street area and also(g), having guidelines for same. Respondents preferred retail/service/commercial to office uses downtown, and additional parking in Main Street is important, along with promoting bikeways connecting to Main Street. Local agriculture and community solar is important to respondents.

**Question 11:** *“In my opinion, the following elements within the Town are undersupplied, adequate, oversupplied, or not necessary...”*. This was answered by 264 out of 327. The overwhelming majority (61.6%) felt general retail was adequate, though 37.64% felt it was undersupplied, and 60.46% felt specialty stores were undersupplied. There was a split in regard to eating and drinking establishments, where 52.27% felt they were undersupplied, but 44.7% felt they were adequate. For recreation and educational opportunities, 47.91% felt they were undersupplied, and 49.81% felt they were adequate. For agriculture, 38.85% felt they were undersupplied, and 53.08% felt they were adequate. For outdoor recreation, 63.36% thought it was adequate, and roughly half of that number, 32.82%, felt it was undersupplied. Fully 62.45% felt tourist lodging was undersupplied, while 22.22% felt it was adequate, and 11.88% felt it was not necessary.

**Question 12:** *“One additional item you would like to see included in this survey...:”* This was an open ended question, and 142 out of 327 people put something down for this, though some of these responses were not true answers, such as punctuation marks, individual letters, etc. These responses covered a very wide range of topics, with several focusing on Main Street traffic and traffic patterns, undergrounding power lines, volunteer opportunities, nightlife, visual arts, performance arts and music, Main Street business ideas, specific recreation suggestions, teen activities, outdoor benches, sidewalk construction, taxes, and the Town pool.

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**The remaining questions were listed as optional:**

**Optional Question 13:** *“I get most of my information about the Town from....:”* This was answered by 261 out of 327, and by far the majority (50.96%) used social media, while a substantial number used the Local (28.74%) and 10.34% used the town website. A total of 24 open-ended responses were collected, and responses included attending town board meetings, word of mouth, and citizens’ groups.

**Optional Question 14:** *“What is your age?”* : This was answered by 259 out of 327, and most (33.2%) were 25-44, with 27.8% being 45-54, and 23.94% being 55-64. Hardly any 18-24 year olds (2.32%) responded.

**Optional Question 15:** *“What is your gender?”* This was answered by 262 out of 327, and most (56.11%) were female, with 39.31% male and a small percent preferring not to specify.

**Optional Question 16:** *“What brought you to the Town of Cornwall?”* This open-ended question was answered by 223 out of 327, with some giving multiple reasons. The majority of respondents (27.8%) listed quality of life considerations, such as the community character and beauty of the area, and 19.2% mention the quality schools. A total of 15.7% were born and raised here, while 22% are here because of family ties or friends. Some (11.2%) came here for affordable housing, with 4% moving from the NYC area and an equal percent mentioning the proximity to NYC. West Point is the draw for 4.9%, and 6.2% are here for job reasons. Several expressed the fear that taxes would drive them out.

The most interesting response we received for this question was, “I think the more important question is what keeps you here.”

**Optional Question 17:** *“How long have you lived in Cornwall?”* This was answered by 263 out of 327, and the vast majority (44.87%) have been here 21 years or more, and 20.91% have been here 11-20 years. It was interesting that 20.53% of respondents have been here less than 5 years. The remaining 13.39% were here for 6 to 10 years.

**Optional Question 18:** *“Your current work status is: .....”* This was answered by 260 out of 327, and there was a broad distribution. Most (23.85%) work elsewhere in Orange County, while the next highest percentage of respondents (17.69%) work in the Town of Cornwall but not at home. Almost equal percentages (14.62 and 14.23%, respectively) work at home or are retired. Commuters to NYC (11.15%) and the east side of the Hudson (11.54%) are well represented. A small percent (3.46%) work in NJ, and a negligible percent of respondents were students or unemployed.