

Report on
Lincoln Citizens' Needs and Interests
October 2008

Based on the
Citizen Survey Conducted in Lincoln, Massachusetts
February 2008

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Key Results from the Survey of Lincoln Citizens' Preferences and Interests

Lincoln's Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee (CLRPC) conducted a mail and on-line survey of Lincoln residents in February, 2008. The survey initiative originated with the interest of the Culture, History and Governance subcommittee (CHuG) in learning about the reasons for the decline in participation in Town Meeting by Lincoln citizens, and whether there were possible strategies for reversing the decline and keeping a town meeting form of government for the Town.

As the survey initiative got underway, other CLRPC sub-committees expressed an interest in gaining information for their own planning tasks. Accordingly, questions were added by the Steering Committee of the CLRPC and for the following subcommittees: Open Space, Recreation and Natural Resources; Facilities and Circulation/Transportation; Housing and Built Environment; and Land Use and Economic Development. The questions seek Lincoln residents' perspectives on the Town's operations and policy directions, but do not address specific actions the Town might take.

A total of 552 survey responses were received, representing about 14% of the population. Compared to the Town's population, the survey respondents include a larger proportion of older residents and residents who have participated in Town affairs. Where feasible, we separately examined responses of younger respondents, who had been less active in the Town. Nevertheless, the heavy representation of older citizens still calls for caution in interpreting the results. Percentages noted in the report generally have a margin of error of ± 3 or ± 4 percentage points. Differences between groups are discussed only if they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Attending Town Meeting

- Age is strongly related to attendance at Town Meeting. Smaller proportions of younger than older respondents said they attended recent meetings. This could foreshadow a continued trend of declining Town Meeting attendance.
- Town Meeting competes with other activities for residents' time. This is the near-universal reason given for non-attendance. Increased attendance requires either that residents elevate the priority of Town Meeting relative to other time demands, or that Town Meeting's time demands become more manageable, or both.
- Residents who have worked on Town boards or committees are more likely to attend Town Meeting, perhaps because their experience increases the priority they give to Town affairs. Increasing the proportion of residents who have worked on Town boards and committees would probably boost Town Meeting attendance.
- Most people who work on Town boards and committees are asked to do so, although some volunteer without a personal invitation. Asking more people to serve, especially people outside the social networks that commonly produce volunteers, may be the most straightforward way to broaden resident involvement. Moreover, even people who have been asked but declined to work on a Town

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board or committee are more likely to attend Town Meeting than those who have not been asked.

- Suggestions for enhancing Town Meeting attendance include: outreach using existing networks and reaching outside the networks, establishing a participation database, creating a committee to promote participation, and testing possible strategies for enhancing the Town Meeting itself.

Opinions on Town Government

- Some aspects of Lincoln’s government are viewed quite favorably, including the helpfulness and efficiency of people who work for the Town and the use of resident volunteers rather than paid staff for Town boards.
- In contrast to their views of Town workers and volunteers, residents are more skeptical that Town government spends tax dollars in “the most effective ways.”
- Views on the effectiveness of Town Meeting government are divided. Residents who have participated – that is, attended Town Meetings or worked on Town boards or committees – generally express favorable opinions. Those who have not participated are unsure.
- The Town needs to determine whether the lukewarm views of spending effectiveness and divergent views on Town Meeting government stem from insufficient information, real operating problems, or both. Small group discussions are suggested as a first step.

Opinions on Lincoln’s Schools

- Most residents who currently have students in the Lincoln elementary or middle schools or in Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School (LSRHS) feel that the schools do an “excellent” job of preparing their children. Opinions are especially favorable among LSRHS parents.
- Views are less favorable on financial issues. Only two in five respondents agreed that the schools manage taxpayer money well, and only one in five would “strongly consider paying more taxes to support a more diverse school curriculum.”

Usage and Opinions on Conservation and Recreation Resources

- Most residents say they use the Town’s conservation and open lands quite frequently, at least once a month. Fewer make such frequent use of the Town’s recreational and other public facilities (such as pool, meeting rooms, or tennis courts), but three in five respondents use these resources at least once a year.
- Lincoln’s conservation land policies seem to reflect the balance of resident preferences. Some frequent users would prefer a more aggressive policy, while

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some less-frequent users would like a more modest approach, but the majority of respondents in both groups considered the current approach “just about right.” A substantial minority expressed support for new taxes to set aside more conservation land.

- The fact that recreation and public facilities are used less frequently than conservation and open lands does not seem to indicate unmet need. Most residents consider the recreation and public facilities at least “adequate.” Nonetheless, a substantial level of membership in private health clubs may indicate an opportunity for self-sufficient, fee-based recreation services.

Opinions on Housing Issues

- Residents broadly support the goal of promoting housing affordability for both middle-income and low-income households. Whether they would support specific actions is not addressed in the survey.
- Residents generally agree that “teardowns” reduce the Town’s attractiveness and that a “balance of environmental, economic development, and social equity strategies” is desirable.

Opinions on Commercial Development Possibilities

- Most residents see some kind of commercial development as desirable or necessary. Only one in five survey respondents agreed that “Lincoln should not add new commercial activity.”
- A majority of residents favor increased retail activity in Town. Asked whether “the quality of life in Town would benefit” from six kinds of potential commercial development, majorities felt that the retail-focused strategies would be beneficial. Many respondents added comments favoring “a robust retail center,” and particularly a pharmacy.
- Large and medium commercial office development is not generally seen as benefiting Lincoln’s quality of life. Fewer than one in three respondents agreed that either of the two strategies described in the survey would be beneficial.
- Development strategies aimed at supporting home-based businesses, such as “incubator” office space or conference rooms, are seen less favorably than retail development but more favorably than medium or large office complex strategies.
- The commercial development questions generated many frustrated write-in responses. Many respondents felt that the questions did not say enough about the strategies’ advantages and disadvantages to provide a good basis for answering the questions.

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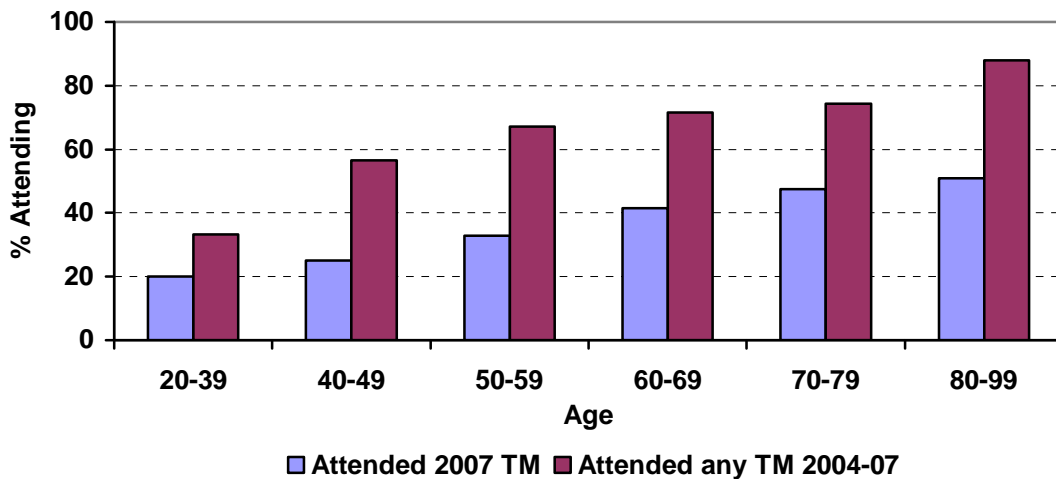
1. Town Meeting Attendance

Overview

Town records show that attendance at Town Meeting has declined over the past decade. For example, 264 residents attended the 2008 Town Meeting compared to 497 in 1998 – a 47% decrease even though the number registered voters increased by 13%. A key objective of the survey was to understand better who participates in Town government, who does not, why, and whether these patterns suggest any ways to increase participation.

Age and Town Meeting attendance. Town Meeting attendees include a larger proportion of older than younger Lincoln residents, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Percent of Respondents Attending Town Meetings



This pattern has disturbing short-term implications because it implies that the views of younger residents are under-represented in Town Meeting decisions. It could also foreshadow declining TM participation in the future, unless the younger cohorts increase their attendance as they age.

Differential participation by age suggests that any efforts to boost participation may need to think separately about distinct age groups. We have defined three age groups for purposes of this analysis: under 50 years old, age 50-64, and 65 and over.

Time competition. Town Meeting competes with many other activities for residents' time and attention. When Town Meeting loses the competition, people don't attend. Over 95% of respondents who did not attend the 2007 Town Meeting cited a time-related reason such as a conflicting obligation or a perception that Town Meeting "takes too

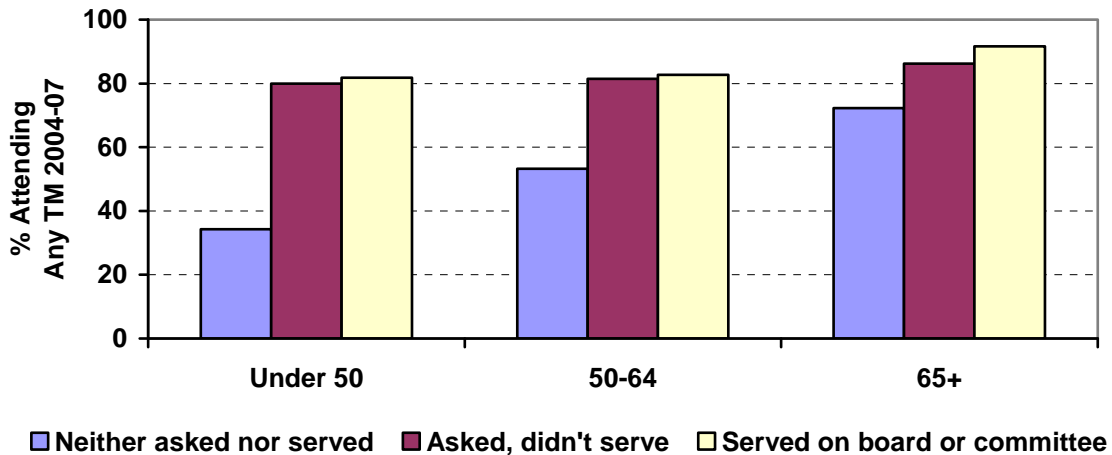
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long.” About a third also mentioned reasons unrelated to time, such as difficulty in following Town Meeting presentations or hearing what is being said. Nonetheless, 64% of respondents mentioned only time-related reasons, compared to 4% who gave only reasons unrelated to time.

For attendance to increase, Town Meeting will have to win the time competition more often. Perhaps this could be accomplished by making the time requirement smaller or more flexible, or it may be necessary to convince people that they should give Town Meeting a higher priority than they do now. The survey does not provide direct evidence about what strategy is most likely to succeed.

Town Meeting, participating on boards, and being asked. One of the most striking patterns in the survey data is the link between attending Town Meeting and participating on Town boards or committees. Most people who have served on a Town board or committee in the last five years attend Town Meetings, as shown in Figure 2. Some people who serve on Town boards and committees have specific roles in a particular Town Meeting, but many do not. It seems likely that the high attendance rate among those who have served reflects an interest and engagement in Town affairs that is engendered or reinforced by their work for the Town.

Figure 2: TM Attendance, Board Participation, and Being Asked to Serve on Boards



An important mechanism for getting people to work on Town boards and committees is the obvious one: ask them. Most respondents (80%) who said they had served also said that they had been asked. Not everyone who is asked to serve does so; 41% of those who said they had been asked to work on a board or committee had not actually served. And some people may be asked to work on one committee while already serving on another (the survey does not indicate how often this happens). Nonetheless, asking people to work on a Town effort can help build a relationship with a person or cause that provokes a growing interest in Town affairs and, subsequently, Town Meeting attendance.

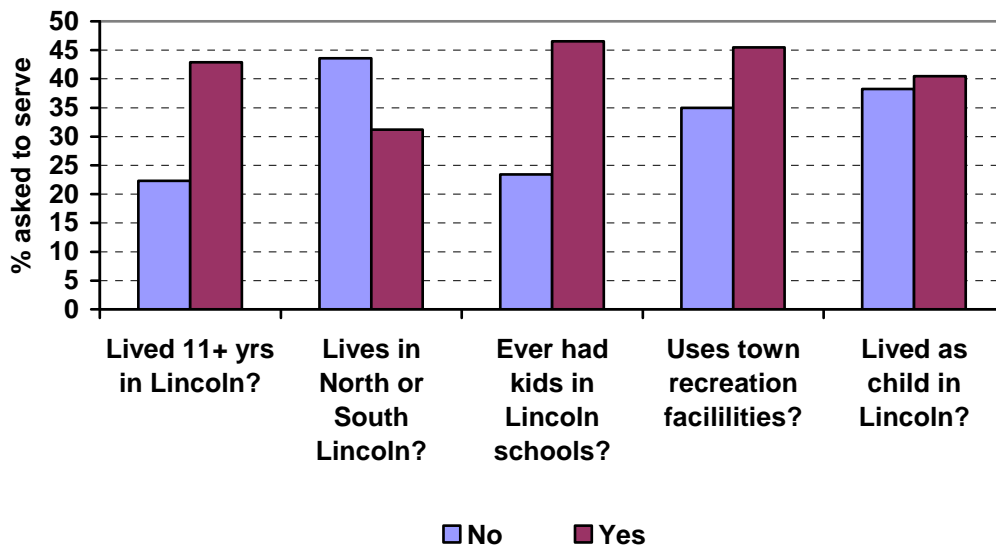
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Who gets asked to serve? The good news is that a lot of residents are already asked to serve on Town boards and committees – 39% of all survey respondents, including 17% of those who said they had not attended any Town Meetings in 2004-07. The better news, regarding the opportunity to boost attendance, is that 83% of those not attending have never been asked to get involved. Fully 87% of the non-attendees under age 50 have never been asked.

Town-based social networks appear to be one important determinant of who is asked to serve. We looked at five characteristics, shown in Figure 3, that we hypothesized might connect people to particular networks. Four of the five factors are associated with the likelihood that a resident would be asked to serve:

- Having lived in Lincoln more than 10 years
- Not living in North or South Lincoln (defined in the survey as Rt. 2 and northward, and Rt. 117 and southward, respectively),
- Having a child in the Lincoln elementary/middle schools or in Lincoln-Sudbury high school, now or previously
- Using Town recreation and public facilities at least monthly.

Figure 3: "Network" Groups That Are Asked to Serve

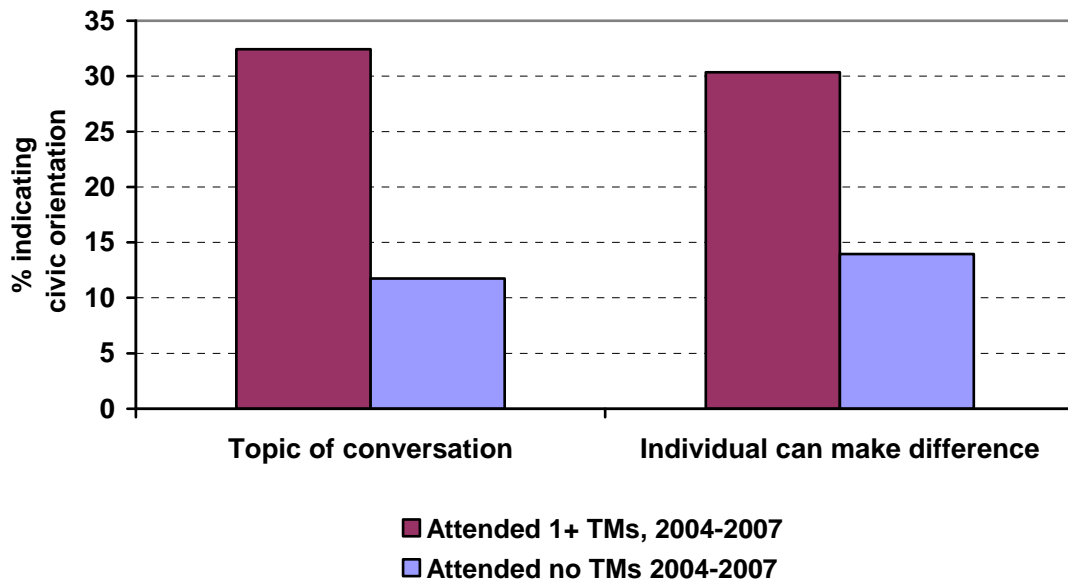


A challenge in enhancing participation will be to reach beyond the scope of existing networks. In effect, those who seek to fill empty volunteer positions need to call the people they don't know rather than the people they know. A useful tool might be a database listing all of the Town's residents and any boards or committees on which they have already served.

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Civic orientation. Only about a quarter of all respondents said that “Town government is a regular topic of conversation with me and my friends and family members,” or that “I wanted to live in a community where an individual could make a difference.” But the people who took these positions are strongly represented among Town Meeting attendees, as shown in Figure 4. Increasing residents’ awareness of and orientation to matters of Town government might lead to increased Town Meeting attendance.

Figure 4: Level of Civic Orientation Among Those who Did and Did Not Attend Any Town Meetings 2004-2007



Response Patterns by Question

In examining the questions about participation in Town government, we were particularly interested in learning about characteristics or attitudes that might make people more or less inclined to participate. We hypothesized that participation might be higher among people who use Town resources such as the schools or conservation land, people who express general interest in Town government, and people with strong social networks in Town. The analysis therefore included several variables in addition to those in the general list for all analyses, which is shown in Appendix A, Table A-2. These are identified in Table 1 below. See Appendix B for the full phrasing of the questions.

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Table 1: Additional Groupings Used in Participation Analysis

	% of Survey Respondents
Child(ren) now in Lincoln schools or LSRHS (Q29, Q32)	
No	80.3%
Yes	19.7%
Child(ren) previously in Lincoln schools or LSRHS (Q30,Q33)	
No	52.9%
Yes	47.1%
Use Town conservation land at least monthly (Q11)	
No	30.2%
Yes	69.8%
Use recreation or public facilities at least monthly (Q14)	
No	67.2%
Yes	32.8%
Town government is regular conversation topic (Q1)	
Agree or strongly agree	74.1%
Don't agree	25.9%
Wanted to live where individual could make difference (Q16)	
No	74.6%
Yes	25.4%
Born in Lincoln or family lived here (Q16)	
No	92.3%
Yes	7.7%

The remainder of this section reviews the response patterns for the main variables examined in this analysis.

Q2. “I attended the Town Meeting during last spring (2007)”

 Yes (39%)¹

 No (61%)

The proportion reporting attendance at the 2007 Town Meeting ranged across groups from 24% to 62%. Attendance was particularly high among persons age 50 and over, those who serve on Town boards or committees, those who use Town conservation land at least monthly, those for whom Town government is a regular topic of conversation, those who moved to Lincoln to be where an individual can make a difference, and those living in neighborhoods other than North or South Lincoln.²

¹ Throughout the report, the percentages shown for individual response categories may not sum to 100% because of rounding. Persons who did not respond to particular questions are excluded in calculating these percentages.

² These were the only factors found to be statistically significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. The variables tested included the basic set shown in Table A-2 (age, gender, children in household,

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Q5. “I attended Town Meeting one or more times in the three years before 2007 (i.e., 2004, 2005, 2006)”

Yes (68%)
No (32%)

Nearly everyone (93%) who reported attending the 2007 Town Meeting had also attended one or more of the previous three, although almost half (46%) of those who said they had attended in 2004-2006 did not attend in 2007. Because of this overlap, we combined Questions 2 and 5 into the broader indicator of Town Meeting attendance shown immediately below.

Constructed variable: Attendance at any Town Meeting, 2004-2007.

Yes (69%)
No (31%)

Reported attendance varied across groups from 44% to 87%. Groups with particularly high attendance rates included persons age 65 and older, those living in neighborhoods other than North or South Lincoln, those for whom Town government is a regular conversation topic, those moving to Lincoln to be where an individual can make a difference, those serving on Town boards or committees, and those using Town conservation lands at least monthly.³

Because of the low attendance rate among residents under age 50, we replicated the analysis for this age group only. Overall, 50% of respondents under age 50 reported attending one or more Town Meetings in 2004-2007. The reported participation rate ranged from 28% to 82% across groups (the 95% confidence interval for these figures are ± 10 to ± 15 percentage points because of the smaller sample sizes). Respondents who had served on Town boards or committees, who had been asked to serve, or who resided in neighborhoods other than North or South Lincoln were particularly likely to attend.⁴

education, employment, income, and neighborhood), and the additional variables shown in Table 1, which include measures of involvement in Town government (serving on Town boards or committees, being asked to serve), indicators of potential network connection (having a child in Lincoln of Lincoln-Sudbury schools now, previously having a child in the schools, frequent use of conservation land, frequent use of recreation facilities, being born in Lincoln), and indicators of general interest in Town government (regular topic of conversation, moved to Lincoln to make a difference). Variables that were significant in bivariate but not multivariate analysis included being asked to serve on Town board/committee, having previously had a child in Lincoln schools or LSRHS, frequently using Town recreation facilities, and living in Lincoln for more than 10 years.

³ These factors were found significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. Additional factors found significant in multivariate but not bivariate analysis were being female and being born in Lincoln. Additional factors found significant in bivariate but not multivariate analysis were being asked to serve on Town boards/committees, having previously had a child in Lincoln schools or LSRHS, and living in Lincoln for more than 10 years.

⁴ These were the only factors found significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. Additional factors found significant in bivariate but not multivariate analysis were having a child under age 18 in the household and having lived in Lincoln more than 10 years.

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Q7. “In the past five years I have served on ___ (number of) Town Board or Commission or neighborhood planning or improvement planning or improvement committees in Lincoln”

0	(70%)
1	(19%)
2	(7%)
3	(2%)
4	(2%)
5	(<1%)
6	(<1%) ⁵

In all, 30% of respondents said they had served on one or more Town boards or committees in the past five years. Serving on boards/committees was closely linked to being asked to serve: 59% of those who had been asked to serve had done so, compared to 9% of those who were not asked. (Some people do volunteer without being asked. Among those who have served, 20% said they had not been asked.) Across other groups, the percent serving ranged from 20% to 46%. The groups particularly likely to serve, in addition to those who were asked, were those age 50 and over and those for whom Town government is a regular topic of conversation.⁶

Q10_2. “I’ve been asked to work on one or more Town committees or improvement efforts.”

Yes	(39%)
No	(61%)

Although most respondents (74%) said they know how to get involved in Town boards or committees, only a minority (39%) said that someone has actually asked them to serve. Across groups, the percent having been asked to serve ranged from 22% to 57%. Groups particularly likely to be asked were those living in Lincoln for more than 10 years, those for whom Town government is a regular conversation topic, and those seeking a place where an individual can make a difference.⁷

The survey included follow-up questions that asked people who attended the 2007 Town Meeting why they attended, asked people who did not attend why they didn’t, and asked people who had worked on Town boards or committees why they volunteered. The percentage of respondents that considered each potential reason “important” is shown below.⁸ These response patterns were not examined by subgroup except as noted.

⁵ Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

⁶ These were the only factors found significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. Additional factors that were significant in bivariate but not multivariate analysis were using Town conservation lands at least monthly, using Town recreation or public facilities at least monthly, moving to where an individual can make a difference, living in Lincoln for more than 10 years, and residing in West Lincoln.

⁷ These were the only factors found significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. Additional factors that were significant in bivariate but not multivariate analysis were those who currently or previously had children in Lincoln schools or LSRHS, those using Town recreation or public facilities at least monthly, and those not living in North or South Lincoln.

⁸ Each question also allowed respondents to write in additional responses, which are not shown here.

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Q3: “Please describe your reasons for attending [the 2007] Town Meeting by responding to each of the following statements.” (Response categories were “Unimportant,” “Neither important nor unimportant,” “Important,” and “Don’t recall.” Reasons are listed in the table in order of percent “important.”)

Reason for attending:	% “Important”
I want to make my Town a better place to live	92.4%
I like to keep up with the range of issues facing the Town	91.7%
Town meeting form of government allows me or a group of other Lincoln citizens the opportunity to make a difference	89.4%
I want to make the Town run well	89.0%
I'm concerned about how the Town spends my tax money	85.4%
It is my civic duty	84.0%
I like to hear the discussions	83.3%
Town meeting offers me a chance for new learning	64.7%
I was interested in a particular issue	50.5%
I like to run into friends and neighbors	46.3%
It's a tradition in my family	42.5%
Friends or family members encouraged me to attend	10.7%

Differences in the percentages for the top seven reasons are not statistically significant. Most of these questions reflect a general engagement in Town affairs, rather than interest in particular issues or social patterns. The response pattern for persons under age 50 was roughly similar, but because only 25 respondents under age 50 attended Town Meeting in 2007, confidence intervals for these questions are very wide.

Q4. “If you did NOT attend Town Meeting in 2007, please describe your reasons for not attending by responding to each of the following statements.” (Response categories were “Unimportant,” “Neither important nor unimportant,” “Important,” and “Don’t recall.” Reasons are listed in the table in order of percent “important.”)

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Reason for not attending:	% “Important”
I had conflicting obligations	67.5%
From past experience, it just takes too long	50.2%
I didn't have the time	45.0%
From past experience, too much time is spent on unimportant discussion	43.2%
I didn't know when issues that are important to me would be discussed	41.1%
From past experience, the presentations are not easy to follow	17.2%
From past experience, it's hard to hear what's being said	17.2%
I hadn't been informed of the pros and cons of the issues that would be addressed	16.9%
From past experience, it's hard to see what people are presenting	11.8%
I missed the announcement	11.7%
From past experience, the seating is uncomfortable	9.3%
From past experience, the room temperature is uncomfortable	6.5%
Someone else from my household attended to express my opinion	6.4%
I didn't know how to find the location	2.0%

“Conflicting obligations” was the most frequently mentioned reason by a significant margin. The next four reasons, which are not statistically different from each other, also reflect issues of time competition. Nearly all respondents (96%) who gave any reason for non-attendance mentioned at least one of these five time-related reasons. Although some respondents who gave a time-related reason also mentioned some other kind of reason, such as difficulty in following presentations, 64% cited time-related reasons exclusively. This pattern was nearly identical for respondents under and over age 50.

Because of the predominance of the time-related reasons, we also examined respondents’ patterns of time usage reported in response to the question below.

Q37. “By getting some idea how Lincoln residents’ typical weeks fall into place, we’ll be better able to create plans that meet your needs. Please try to give your best estimate of the number of waking hours you spend on average each week when you are not on vacation.”

Overall, respondents reported an average of 81 weekly hours across 17 categories of activity. For each category, the average for all who responded to the question and all who reported 1 or more hours for the activity is shown below.⁹

⁹ The 17th category “other” is omitted here. On average, respondents reported 1.0 “other” hours on a wide variety of activities, including volunteer work, gardening, working on a PhD, sleeping, and “responding to endless Town surveys.”

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Activity	Avg. hours for all respondents	Avg. hours if not zero
Work for pay (including travel time and work at home)	27.2	40.9
Tasks around my residence	8.8	9.6
In home entertainment (e.g., watching TV, listening to the radio)	8.1	9.3
Reading, including online	7.7	8.7
Time with family or friends including parties and get-togethers	5.8	6.8
Active sports or athletics	4.4	6.1
Shopping in stores or on-line	2.8	3.4
Child or elder care or transportation	2.6	9.0
Hobbies or games, including on-line	2.5	5.4
Other community, charitable, or religious activities	2.4	4.3
Active artistic pursuits such as music, art, theatre, etc.	2.4	4.6
Entertainment outside my home (e.g., theatre, spectator sports)	1.8	2.9
Attending or preparing for educational activities	1.5	4.8
Working on Town boards, commissions, etc.	0.9	5.0
Activities related to my children's school	0.8	3.4
Political activities	0.6	2.9

Although time use patterns varied widely, no particular activity appears to drive Town Meeting attendance. In all age groups, respondents who reported spending more time on Town boards and commissions were more likely to attend Town Meeting. Among respondents age 65 and over, those who reported spending more time working for pay and more time on hobbies were less likely to attend Town Meetings. No other factor was consistently related to attendance.¹⁰

Q8. “If you’ve served as a volunteer on any Town Board or Commission or neighborhood planning or improvement committees in Lincoln in the past five years, please circle the number reflecting whether the reason shown was important to your decision to serve.” (Response categories were “Unimportant,” “Neither important nor unimportant,” and “Important.” Reasons are listed in the table in order of percent “important.”)

¹⁰ Multivariate analyses were conducted of attendance at the 2007 Town Meeting and attendance at any Town Meeting from 2004-2007, simultaneously considering the hours spent on each of the 16 activity categories noted above. Separate analyses were conducted for respondents under age 50, those 50-64, and those age 65 and over. Some factors were found positively related to attendance in one, but not both, of the analyses for an age group. For the under 50 group, these were spending more time working for pay, and spending less time on tasks around the home. For the 50-64 group, they were spending less time shopping and more time on tasks around the home. For those aged 65+, they were spending more time on active sports and less time reading.

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Reason for volunteering:	% “Important”
I just want to make Lincoln a better place to live	87.7%
Particular Town-wide issues concern me	83.2%
It is my civic duty	68.0%
I enjoy serving with my friends and neighbors	66.9%
I enjoy the possibility for new learning	66.0%
Some issues in my neighborhood concern me	54.9%
Friends or family members encouraged me to serve	27.3%
It's a tradition in my family	27.0%

The response patterns indicate a mix of motivations, including general civic interest, specific issue interests, and social reasons. All but two respondents cited multiple reasons, with an average of 4.5 reasons mentioned.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The preceding discussion has focused closely on the patterns of survey responses. Here we go beyond the data and the statistics to present some thoughts about how Town Meeting participation might be increased. Our perspective is certainly informed by the survey, but most of the suggested actions were not directly addressed in the survey.

For attendance to increase, Town Meeting must win the time competition more often, especially among younger Lincoln residents. Attending Town Meeting must be perceived as sufficiently important and worthwhile to put aside or reschedule other activities. The data suggest that Lincoln’s citizens see the importance of Town Meeting when they are already involved in the community, in particular by working on Town boards or committees. And that involvement most often results from being asked to serve by people who have already been there, people who reach out to form enough of a relationship to offer a credible invitation.

A challenge in enhancing participation will be not only to extend invitations through the existing networks, but to reach beyond the scope of those networks. In effect, those who seek to involve more people in the Town need to call the people they don’t know.

Create and sustain social structures and activities that promote involvement

Thus the challenge for the Town will be to create the social structures and organized activities that can lead to a stable, long-term habit of citizen involvement. Some the efforts that we suggest for consideration are:

- Involve every Town-based network where townspeople encounter each other, with particular attention to the outdoor spaces and facilities that so many residents use and appreciate.
- Create and regularly improve messages that currently active participants can use to reach out to younger residents, particularly those who have recently moved to Lincoln
- Place the messages in written and electronic media known to target audiences (e.g., school electronic and physical bulletin boards, recreation facilities, etc.)
- Capture Town employees’ and volunteers’ enthusiasm for volunteerism by designing volunteer activities and recruitment approaches and accountabilities to

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be attractive to an even more diverse population. Establish procedures and incentives that involve the institutional and governmental diversity of the Town through which Town officials, employees and volunteers can catalog and suggest individuals who might be contacted as potential volunteers and track the results of any outreach.

- Create and maintain a participation database (e.g., list all of the Town's residents, any boards or committees for which they have already served, and any available information on their interests and experience) and encourage every Town committee and board to use the information.
- Look to long-time participants to actively mentor and train new participants to become productive stakeholders in the Town's well being.
- Encourage Lincoln residents interested in establishing blogs on Town issues as a means of building interest and engagement in within-Town communities.

Create a committee with a specific participation improvement charge

The probability of effective action to enhance participation will be enhanced if the Town establishes a specific group to be responsible and accountable for improving participation. In that vein, we support the commitment made by a September 18, 2008 focus group. The group, comprised of the Town Selectmen, school board chair, and representatives of Town employees, boards, and agencies, agreed on the importance of involving as broad as possible a cross section of citizens in Town affairs, as well as the need to create the structures for developing and maintaining citizen involvement.

Most importantly, the group decided to continue discussions and to begin to give direction to crucial volunteer activities. During the focus group, the participants discussed numerous needed next steps. Within that list, we recommend that the group give particular attention to:

- Defining the outreach mission and vision
- Developing data bases and communications messages
- Actively volunteers and volunteer opportunities
- Re-establishing the social events that were once used to welcome new residents to Town and solicit their involvement in Town activities.

North and South Lincoln deserve particular attention. The already very low attendance from people who live in those areas is likely to fall even further with the departure of older residents, who are currently the main attendees. This reduces the likelihood that an invitation to participate in neighborhood or Town activities will come from a close neighbor, implying a need for outreach from residents of other parts of town.

Compete for attention in front of the target audience

The data do not suggest that improvements to Town Meeting itself would lead to major improvements in attendance. At the same time, it seems worthwhile to give Town Meeting every possible advantage in competing for citizens' time and attention, especially as many competing activities come with ever-more interesting production values and compressed time requirements.

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The Town might tap its rich resource of experienced presenters for ideas. Then, the best next step will be to test new notions of:

- Slide and other media creation standards set to enhance and mix engagement with understanding,
- Scheduling
- Lighting
- Sound amplification,
- Moderation (i.e., adjusting the balance between letting people be heard and keeping the broader audience engaged)
- Incentives (e.g., entertainment for kids, post meeting barbeques).

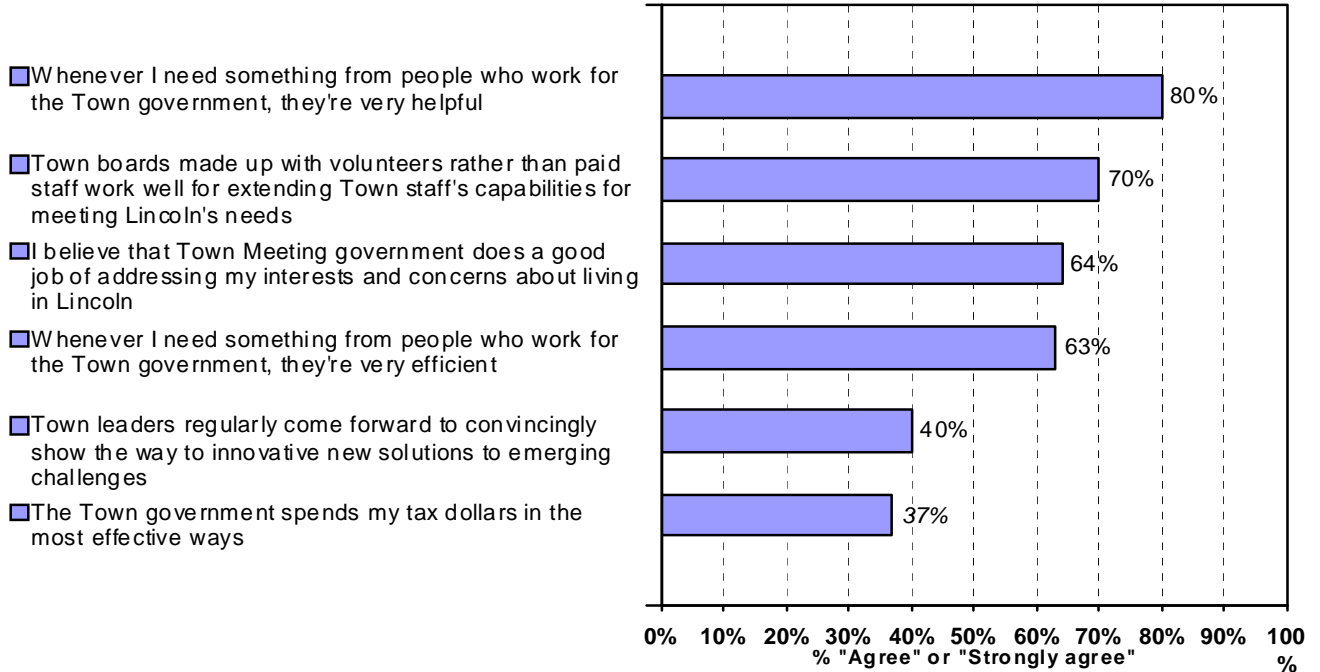
The key will not be choosing the “right” changes at first, but experimenting to find winning formulae and expecting that different approaches will work differently for different audiences and meeting topics.

2. Opinions about Town Government

Overview

The survey’s six questions about Town government elicited varying and sometimes sharply divided responses, summarized in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Opinions of Town Government



Staff helpful, volunteers good, but doubts on spending effectiveness. A substantial majority of respondents agreed that people who work for the Town are helpful. Smaller majorities, but still majorities, perceive them as efficient. Respondents also broadly supported the use of volunteers on Town boards, with majorities of all groups agreeing that having volunteers rather than paid staff works well.

In contrast, only 37% of all respondents believed that the Town government spends tax dollars in the most effective ways, and favorable opinions were in the minority in all groups examined. A plurality of respondents (40%) chose the “neither agree nor disagree” response, while 23% explicitly disagreed. Those who disagreed that tax dollars are spent effectively did not seem to share any common characteristics, but were roughly proportionately distributed across all groups examined.

Opinions linked to participation. Across the six government questions, responses tended to be related to whether the respondents said they attended Town Meetings or served on Town boards or committees, and whether they were older or younger. The non-participants and the younger respondents were less likely to express favorable opinions. Because these groups appear to be substantially under-represented among

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survey respondents, particular caution is required in interpreting the results of the government questions.

The issue of under-representation is not troublesome for the questions related to staff helpfulness and efficiency, volunteer boards, and spending tax dollars effectively, because majorities of all groups expressed the same general view. Under-representation does make interpretation more difficult for other questions, particularly the question on Town Meeting government.

Divided opinions on Town Meeting government. The question on Town Meeting government – “I believe that Town Meeting government does a good job of addressing my interests and concerns about living in Lincoln” – generated a sharp division of opinions across groups. A strong majority (78%) of people who had not only attended Town Meetings but also served on Boards or committees agreed with the statement. In contrast, the statement obtained only minority agreement (37%) among respondents who neither attended Town Meetings in 2004-2007 nor served on Town boards or committees.

It is not clear whether the non-participants tend to believe that Town Meeting government is not doing a very good job, or whether they think that they do not have enough information or experience to have an opinion. Most of those who did not agree with the statement chose the “neither agree nor disagree” response, which could reflect either view. In either case, it is clear that a substantial group of respondents did not strongly endorse Town Meeting government, and that proportion would presumably have been greater if all Lincoln residents had responded to the survey.¹¹

Opinions on leadership unclear. Survey respondents also gave a less-than-ringing endorsement of the Town’s leaders, but this question is difficult to interpret for two reasons. First, the question sets a high and rather narrow bar: “Town leaders regularly come forward to convincingly show the way to innovative new solutions to emerging challenges.” The question’s complexity probably contributed to a relatively large percentage of respondents choosing the “Neither agree nor disagree” response (42%). A more general question about the effectiveness of Town leadership might well have found more respondents in agreement. On the other hand, people who reported not participating in Town government were the least likely to express positive opinions. Because these non-participants are under-represented among survey respondents, the percent agreeing to the question as presented would probably have been lower if all Lincoln residents had responded.

In short, we cannot tell whether the observed agreement rate of 40% is misleadingly high, misleadingly low, or about right as a gauge of Lincoln residents’ satisfaction with the Town’s leaders. The majority do not believe that the leaders meet the stringent criteria posed by the question, but no broader conclusion can be drawn from the data.

¹¹ This assumes that those non-participants who responded to the survey hold opinions that are fairly similar to the opinions held by the non-participants who did not respond.

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Response Patterns by Question

Q1_1: “I believe that Town Meeting government does a good job of addressing my interests and concerns about living in Lincoln.”

Strongly disagree (4%)
Disagree (7%)
Neither agree nor disagree (25%)
Agree (46%)
Strongly agree (18%)

Overall, 64% of respondents agreed that Town Meeting government does a good job. Agreement was strongly related to respondents’ level of engagement in Town governance. Among people who have attended Town Meetings and served on Town boards or committees, 78% agreed with the statement. This contrasts with 37% of respondents who reported neither form of participation. People age 65 and older also tended to agree.¹²

Because people who have not attended Town Meeting are under-represented in the sample, as are younger people, the percent of respondents who agreed with the statement must be considered an overestimate of the percent that would agree if all Lincoln residents had responded to the survey.

Q1_2: “Whenever I need something from people who work for the Town government, they’re very helpful.”

Strongly disagree (1%)
Disagree (5%)
Neither agree nor disagree (14%)
Agree (53%)
Strongly agree (27%)

Overall, 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the people who work for the Town government are helpful. The agreement rate across groups ranged from 67% to 88% - that is, a substantial majority of all groups agreed with the statement. People who had attended Town Meetings or participated in Town boards or committees were particularly likely to agree, as were people age 50 and over.¹³

¹² Engagement in Town governance and age were the only factors related to agreement in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. The variables included in these analyses were those in Table A-2 plus indicators of three forms of involvement in Lincoln: attending Town Meetings and/or serving on Town boards or committees; having children in the Lincoln schools or LSRHS, and frequent use of conservation land. Groups that were found in the bivariate analysis, but not the multivariate, to be significantly more likely to agree were persons with income under \$200,000, and those living in Lincoln for more than 10 years.

¹³ Participation in Town governance and age were the only factors found significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. In bivariate analysis, people not currently working for pay were also found significantly more likely to agree.

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Q1_3: “Whenever I need something from people who work for the Town government, they’re very efficient.”

Strongly disagree	(2%)
Disagree	(7%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(29%)
Agree	(47%)
Strongly agree	(16%) ¹⁴

Overall, 63% of respondents agreed that people who work for the Town government are efficient. The percent who agreed ranged from 51% to 71% across groups. People who had attended Town Meetings and/or served on Town boards or committees were especially likely to agree. Residents of South Lincoln (defined in the survey as living on Rt. 117 or southward) were less likely to agree than respondents from other neighborhoods.¹⁵

Q1_4: “Town boards made up with volunteers rather than paid staff work well for extending Town staff’s capabilities for meeting Lincoln’s needs.”

Strongly disagree	(1%)
Disagree	(5%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(24%)
Agree	(49%)
Strongly agree	(21%)

Overall, 70% of respondents agreed with the statement. The statement is somewhat complex. Respondents might have been considering either the desirability of using volunteers rather than paid staff, or the performance of the boards (whether they “work well”), or some combination of those concepts. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to interpret agreement with the statement as endorsement of the use of volunteer boards.

The percent who agreed with the statement ranged from 58% to 80%. No group characteristics were strongly associated with agreement.¹⁶

¹⁴ Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

¹⁵ Participation in Town governance and residence in South Lincoln were the only factors found significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. Additional characteristics found associated with agreement in bivariate but not multivariate analysis were being age 50 or older, not currently working for pay, and residing in West Lincoln.

¹⁶ No variables were statistically significant in multivariate analysis. Groups found in bivariate analysis significantly more likely to agree included: persons participating in town governance (Town Meetings and/or boards), those over age 50, those not currently working for pay, and those living in Lincoln for more than 10 years.

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Q1_5: “Town leaders regularly come forward to convincingly show the way to innovative new solutions to emerging challenges.”

Strongly disagree	(5%)
Disagree	(14%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(42%)
Agree	(32%)
Strongly agree	(8%) ¹⁷

Compared to the previous statements in the series, this statement is more complex. In order to agree with the statement, respondents must believe that Town leaders “regularly” and “convincingly” “show the way” to “innovative” solutions to “emerging” challenges. Questions that require agreement with multiple concepts often generate lower rates of agreement than simpler questions. (An example of phrasing that would be more comparable with the previous questions might be, “Town leaders deal very effectively with the Town’s emerging challenges.”) Caution must therefore be exercised in comparing results of this question to the other items in the series.

Overall, 40% of respondents agreed with the statement, and the rate of agreement ranged from 22% to 51% across groups. Attending Town Meetings and/or serving on Town boards or committees was strongly associated with agreement.¹⁸

Q1_6: “The Town government spends my tax dollars in the most effective ways.”

Strongly disagree	(6%)
Disagree	(17%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(40%)
Agree	(31%)
Strongly agree	(6%)

Overall, 37% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The rate of agreement ranged from 23% to 44% across groups. Persons age 65 and older were particularly likely to agree.¹⁹

¹⁷ Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

¹⁸ Participation in Town governance was the only factor to be found statistically significant in both multivariate and bivariate analyses. Groups that were found in bivariate but not multivariate analysis to have significantly higher rates of agreement were persons age 50 and over, those not currently working for pay, and those living in Lincoln for more than 10 years.

¹⁹ Age was the only factor significantly related to agreement in both multivariate and bivariate analyses. Additional groups found in the bivariate analysis to be significantly more likely to agree were those who had attended Town Meetings and/or served on boards or committees, and those who have lived in Lincoln for more than 10 years.

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Conclusions and Recommendations

Two aspects of the survey responses are troubling: the comparatively low opinion of the effectiveness of Town spending, and the divergence of opinions on the effectiveness of Town Meeting government. The lukewarm opinion of spending effectiveness could occur because Lincoln residents are not sufficiently informed about Town finances, or it could reflect informed doubts about spending choices. Similarly, the divergent views on Town Meeting government could stem from a lack of information about what Town Meeting government accomplishes or from real differences in how well the current system serves different groups within the Town.

In order to act on these issues, the Town will need to know whether the problems stem from a lack of information, insufficient effectiveness, or some of both. Small group discussions, some involving residents who are heavily engaged in Town government and some involving non-engaged residents, may be the quickest way to learn more. If actions are then taken, repeating these questions in a future survey, and adding questions to explore the reasons for residents' opinions, could show whether perceived conditions improve.

3: Opinions about Lincoln Schools

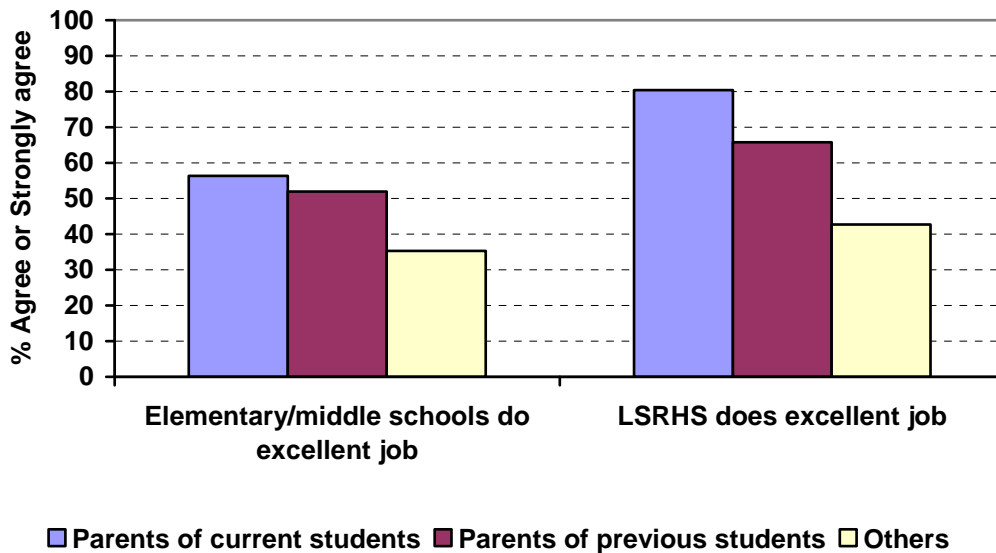
Overview

The survey asked four questions about schools. Two asked whether the schools do “an excellent job of preparing students for the next stage in their lives.” The other two were financially oriented, asking about whether the school systems manage money effectively and whether the respondent would support a tax increase to support a more diverse curriculum.

Those with students see good preparation. A majority of respondents who currently have or previously had children in the Lincoln elementary and middle schools or in Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School agreed that the preparation in these schools was excellent. Respondents with no children currently or previously in the schools were unsure, with the majority choosing the “neither agree nor disagree” response.

Parents’ views of LSRHS were somewhat more positive than their views of the Lincoln elementary and middle schools, as shown in Figure 6. For example, 80% of respondents with children currently in LSRHS agreed that the school does an excellent job; 56% of respondents with children in the Lincoln elementary/middle schools expressed similar opinions. Those with no children currently or previously in any of these schools did not see a quality difference between LSRHS and the elementary/middle schools.

Figure 6: Perception of School Quality by Parents and Others



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The overall percentage of respondents who agreed that the schools do an excellent job is somewhat lower than the overall percentage agreeing with most of the questions about Town government. For example, 46%-53% agreed with the two school quality questions, while 64% agreed that Town Meeting government does a good job. However, if we look separately at the “involved” respondents, we find that school parents agreed with the schools question about as much as Town Meeting attendees agreed with the Town Meeting government question.²⁰ In other words, the lower percentage of favorable responses to the schools questions occurs largely because fewer respondents were involved in the schools.

Doubts about dollars. Survey respondents were less inclined to express approval on financial than educational quality grounds. Less than a third agreed that the systems “do a good job of managing the taxpayers’ money,” and the proposition received only minority support even among those with children currently in the schools. Again the overall percent in agreement is somewhat lower than the percent for the comparable Town government question about tax dollars; but when we separate involved and uninvolved respondents, the schools question and the government question have very similar agreement levels.

Fewer than one-quarter of respondents would “strongly consider paying more taxes to support a more diverse school curriculum.” This statement did not garner majority agreement even among people with children in school. It is not clear whether respondents were expressing a general aversion to taxes or a specific feeling that curriculum diversity does not need to be increased.

Response Patterns by Question

Q1_9: “The Lincoln elementary and middle school systems do an excellent job of preparing students for the next stage of their lives.”

Strongly disagree	(4%)
Disagree	(11%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(39%)
Agree	(35%)
Strongly agree	(12%) ²¹

Overall, 46% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposition. The agreement rate was somewhat higher among people with children currently (56%) or previously (52%) in the Lincoln elementary or middle schools, compared to 35% for all others.²² The range of agreement percentages across all groups examined was 35-56%.²³

²⁰ The percentages agreeing differ by amounts that are too small to be statistically meaningful.

²¹ Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

²² Note that “all others” would include people with no children, people whose children have not yet entered school, people who chose other schools for their children, and people who moved to Lincoln after their children had completed middle school. The data do not identify these groups separately.

²³ Having children in the Lincoln elementary or middle schools (now or previously) was the only factor that was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in multivariate analysis using the variables identified in Table A-2.

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Q1_9: “The Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School does an excellent job of preparing students for the next stage of their lives.”

Strongly disagree	(3%)
Disagree	(5%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(39%)
Agree	(34%)
Strongly agree	(19%)

Overall, 53% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. The agreement rate was considerably higher among people with children currently (80%) or previously (66%) in LSRHS. Among other groups, the rate of agreement ranged from 37% to 63%. In addition to those with children in LSRHS, people who have participated in Town Meetings and boards tended to agree with the statement (63%).²⁴

Q1_10: “The Lincoln school systems do a good job of managing the taxpayers’ money that funds them.”

Strongly disagree	(10%)
Disagree	(17%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(44%)
Agree	(23%)
Strongly agree	(5%) ²⁵

Overall, 29% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. The agreement rate ranged from 20% to 51% across groups. Higher rates of agreement were expressed by people with children currently or formerly in the Lincoln elementary or middle schools, and by people with children currently in LSRHS.²⁶

Groups expressing significantly higher levels of agreement in the bivariate analyses, but not the multivariate analysis, were people who had lived in Lincoln for more than 10 years and people who reported some participation in Town Meetings or Town boards or committees.

²⁴ These were the only factors significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. In the multivariate analysis, but not the bivariate, people who live in North Lincoln were significantly less likely to agree than those in other neighborhoods. Groups that were found significantly more likely to agree in the bivariate analysis, but not the multivariate, include persons over age 50 and those living in Lincoln for more than 10 years.

²⁵ Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

²⁶ These were the only factors significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. Other groups that were found significantly more likely to agree in the bivariate analysis were those reporting some participation in Town Meetings or Town boards or committees, and those currently working for pay.

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Q1_11: “I’d strongly consider paying more taxes to support a more diverse school curriculum.”

Strongly disagree	(24%)
Disagree	(29%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(24%)
Agree	(17%)
Strongly agree	(6%)

Overall, 23% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The agreement rate ranged from 16% to 45% across groups, but none of the differences between groups were statistically strong.²⁷

Conclusions and Recommendations

The small number of school-related questions in the survey belies the school system’s importance to the Town. The school system is the largest user of Town tax revenues. Equally important, it is the focal point for much of the relationship building and communication of civic values that may influence other forms of engagement in the Town.

The difference in opinions between the parents of current students and other Lincoln residents are not huge and are probably not unique to Lincoln. Nonetheless, the centrality of the school system means that it is important to understand where the differences come from, how they may ripple into the broader civic culture. The survey offers little guidance on specific actions, but conversations on this topic between the CLRP and school system leaders might be a useful starting point.

²⁷ No variables were statistically significant in multivariate analysis. Groups that were found in bivariate analysis significantly more likely to agree included those with children currently in Lincoln schools or in LSRHS, those under age 50, those with incomes of \$200,000 or more, and those currently working for pay.

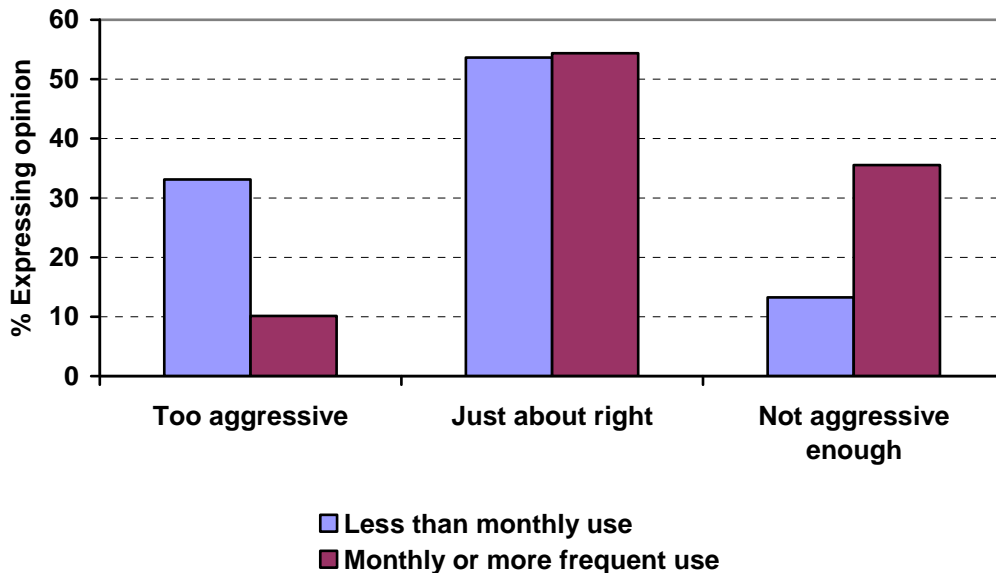
4. Usage and Opinions of Conservation and Recreation Resources

Overview

Conservation lands used frequently. Survey respondents indicated quite high usage and appreciation of the Town’s conservation and open lands. More than two-thirds said that they used the lands at least once a month in 2007, while only 14% said “never or hardly ever.” People who said they attended Town Meetings or participated on Town boards or committees tended to be heavy users. Because this group is over-represented among respondents, the overall results might overestimate the usage rate a bit. However, in all subgroups we examined, including those who did not participate in Town activities, 59% or more of respondents claimed monthly or greater use of the lands.

Support for conservation approach “as is.” Given this high level of usage, it is not surprising that only a minority of respondents (17%) felt that the Town’s approach to land conservation is too aggressive. In fact, a majority of respondents considered the approach “just about right” – an unusually strong response in a context that offered the opportunity to support either a more aggressive or a less aggressive policy.

Figure 7: Perception of Conservation Land Policy, by Frequency of Use



The Town’s current conservation land policies align well with most residents’ preferences. While some frequent users would like a more aggressive policy, and some less frequent users would like a softer approach, most respondents in both groups expressed satisfaction with the current policy (see Figure 7).

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Consistent with this picture, less than a majority of respondents (43%) “would strongly consider paying more taxes to set aside more conservation land.” In other words, even though a solid majority of residents are frequent and appreciative users of this resource, only a minority have an appetite for a tax hike to expand it.

Less, but sufficient, use of recreation facilities. Usage of the Town’s recreation and public facilities – identified in the questionnaire as “pool, meeting rooms, tennis courts” – was much lower than the use of conservation lands. Only a third of respondents said they used these resources at least monthly, which is less than half of the reported level of conservation land usage. People with children under age 18 reported the greatest use, which may imply that the pool and ballfields are the most commonly used resources.

The low usage level does not appear to reflect unmet need. Most respondents expressed general satisfaction with the recreation and public facilities, and only 8% considered them “insufficient to current needs and the challenges of the future.” More than one-fourth of respondents did not “know enough about [the facilities] to offer an opinion.” This may reflect a low level of interest, although it might alternatively reflect a low expectation that Town resources would be relevant to the respondents’ needs.

Response Patterns by Question

Q11: “On average, during 2007 I spent time in Town conservation or open lands (e.g., run, walked, skied, on horseback, etc.):

At least several times per week	(33%)
One or several times per month	(37%)
One or several times per year	(17%)
Never or hardly ever	(14%) ²⁸

A solid majority (70%) of all respondents reported using Town conservation or open lands at least monthly. That percentage ranges from 59% to 84% across groups. Groups that are particularly likely to use the conservation lands monthly are younger persons and those who participate in Town Meetings and/or Town boards or committees. Residents of North Lincoln report particularly low levels of use.²⁹

²⁸ Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

²⁹ These results are significant in bivariate analysis and in multivariate analysis including the factors in Table A-2 plus belonging to a private health club (which we hypothesized might compete with the use of Town resources). Additional factors significantly associated with monthly or more frequent usage in bivariate but not multivariate analysis include: having a child in the home, having a graduate degree, working for pay, living in Lincoln for less than 10 years, and belonging to a private health club.

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Q12: “In the years prior to 2007 and since I’ve lived in Lincoln, the time I spent in Town conservation or open lands (e.g., run, walked, skied, on horseback, etc.) was:

More than I did in 2007	(32%)
About the same as 2007	(62%)
Less than I did in 2007	(7%) ³⁰

While most respondents indicated no major change in their usage of conservation land, 32% said that their 2007 usage was down from previous years. Reduced usage was principally associated with age: 48% of those over age 65 reported reduced usage, compared to 11% of those under age 50. Residents of North Lincoln were also more likely to report a decline in conservation land usage.³¹

Q13: “Lincoln’s land conservation approaches are:”

Much too aggressive. There’s too much land that no one can build on.	(6%)
Somewhat aggressive, but I can live with it.	(11%)
Just about right.	(55%)
Need to be a bit more aggressive in acquiring and managing the land in its control.	(27%)
Not up to the task and the challenges of the future.	(2%) ³²

A small majority of respondents considered the current policy “just about right,” with the percentage ranging from 49% to 63% across groups. Another 29% would prefer a more aggressive policy, with the percentage ranging from 13% to 38%. The remaining 17% felt that the current policy is already too aggressive, with a range across groups of 7% to 33%.

As might be expected, respondents who considered the current policy too aggressive tended to be those reporting low levels of usage in 2007. Respondents who desired a more aggressive policy tended to be those with high levels of usage and people with graduate degrees.³³

³⁰ Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

³¹ Age and residence in North Lincoln are the only statistically significant factors in multivariate analysis. Additional groups found in bivariate analysis to be significantly more likely to have reduced their usage are: people who have not participated in Town Meetings and/or boards, those with no children in the house, those not working for pay, and those who have lived in Lincoln more than 10 years.

³² Percentages exclude the response “I don’t know,” which was selected by 5% of all respondents. Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

³³ These variables were statistically significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. No additional variables were significant in one type of analysis but not the other.

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Q1_13: “I’d strongly consider paying more taxes to set aside more conservation land in Town.”

Strongly disagree	(13%)
Disagree	(25%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(20%)
Agree	(28%)
Strongly agree	(15%) ³⁴

Overall, 43% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Agreement rates across groups ranged from 25% to 54%. People who felt that the Town’s approach to conservation lands (Q13) should be more aggressive were particularly likely to agree, as would be expected.³⁵

Q14: “On average, during 2007 I used the Town’s recreational and other public facilities (e.g., pool, meeting rooms, tennis courts):”

Several times per week or greater, and more than	(9%)
One or several times per month, and more than	(24%)
One or several times per year	(28%)
Never or hardly ever	(39%)

Overall, 61% of respondents said that they used the Town recreational/public facilities at least annually, and 33% reported monthly or greater use. The proportion of frequent users (monthly or greater) varied widely, from 22% to 63% across groups. People with children under age 18 in the household had the highest percentage of frequent users. People who reported monthly or greater use of the Town’s conservation and open lands, and people who reported belonging to private health clubs also tended to be frequent users of the Town’s recreation and public facilities.³⁶

³⁴ Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

³⁵ In multivariate analysis with policy preference included, policy preference was the only factor significantly related to support for additional taxes to acquire conservation lands. In multivariate analysis excluding expressed policy preference, support for such a tax was significantly associated with frequent use of the conservation land and with living in East Lincoln. Additional factors significant only in bivariate analysis include being under age 65, having a graduate degree, and living in Lincoln for less than 10 years.

³⁶ Presence of a child under 18 and frequent use of conservation lands were the only variables found significant in both multivariate and bivariate analyses. Additional factors found significant in bivariate but not multivariate analysis were: participation in Town Meetings and boards, being under age 50, and having annual income of \$200,000 or more.

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Q15: “Lincoln’s recreational and other public facilities (e.g., pool, meeting rooms, tennis courts) are:”

Sufficient to fill a great many of my or my family’s needs for those kinds of facilities	(35%)
Adequate	(31%)
Insufficient to current needs and the challenges of the future	(8%)
I don’t know enough about them to offer an opinion	(27%) ³⁷

Overall, 65% of respondents felt that the Town’s recreational and public facilities were “sufficient” or “adequate.” The percentage of people expressing this level of satisfaction ranged from 55% to 82% across groups. Frequent users of the facilities, people who have lived in Lincoln more than 10 years, people with children, and people who have participated in Town Meetings and/or boards expressed particularly high levels of satisfaction.³⁸

The response categories for this question are potentially ambiguous, as some respondents might feel that the facilities were sufficient for their present needs but insufficient for the future. If any respondents felt this way, it seems most likely that they would choose the “sufficient” response, which was presented first, in which case the responses could somewhat understate the perceived need for improvement of facilities. In our judgment, however, this potential ambiguity is not likely to have affected the response patterns importantly.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The relatively high use and appreciation of Lincoln’s conservation and open lands emphasizes their value to the Town’s citizens. The general direction of Town policies is clearly supported, with responses arguing for “steady as she goes” rather than a course correction.

The widespread use of conservation resources may also provide another platform for building participation in other Town activities. As noted in the section on Town governance, any form of participation is potential lead-in to Town Meeting attendance and broader participation in Town government. One approach might be to identify users of conservation who are otherwise not engaged in Town affairs and invite them to work on committees of activities specifically related to their interests.

Although the recreation and public facilities appear to be used much less than the conservation lands and respondents did not express a demand for more Town resources of this type, we noted that 41% of respondents belong to private health clubs. This might suggest an opportunity for the Town to provide some fee-based recreation services that could cover their own cost and provide another mechanism for engaging residents in Town affairs. The Town may wish to examine the feasibility of such a strategy.

³⁷ Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

³⁸ These factors were statistically significant in both the multivariate and bivariate analysis. No additional variables were significant in one but not both analyses.

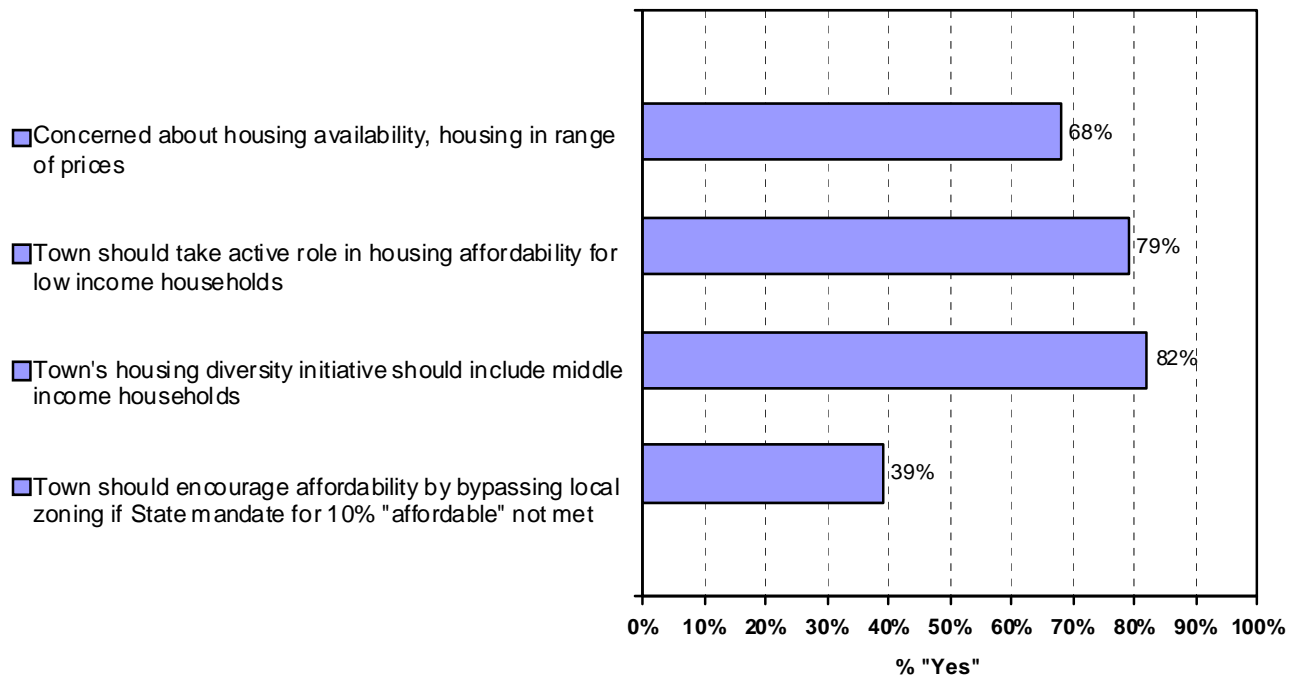
5. Opinions about Housing Issues

Overview

The 2007 Survey of Lincoln Citizens' Preferences and Interests included a series of six questions asking respondents' opinions about various aspects of the Town's housing situation and policy options.

Support for promoting housing diversity and affordability. Survey respondents expressed broad interest in housing diversity and support for at least some Town actions pursuing affordability. Three survey questions asked whether the respondent was concerned about lack of diversity in home prices, whether the Town should actively pursue affordability for low-income households, and whether the Town should include middle-income households in considering affordability. More than half of all respondents answered all three questions in the affirmative. Each question received a solid majority of affirmative responses among the respondents as a whole (see Figure 8) and among all subgroups examined (57% to 91%). Support was strong for promoting affordability for both middle-income and low-income households.

Figure 8: Opinions Housing Diversity and Affordability Policies



In contrast to this strong support for housing affordability in general, only 39% of respondents answered affirmatively to a question about whether the Town should “work with developers to bypass local zoning to build denser housing . . . if the Town does not meet the State mandate requiring that 10% of the Town's housing should be affordable.”

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No group expressed majority support for this course of action. However, the question is sufficiently complicated that it is unclear exactly what the respondents opposed or what course of action they would favor.

Balanced strategy desired, teardowns viewed negatively. Majorities of all respondent groups agreed or strongly agreed that “Lincoln’s planning should seek more creative ways to create a balance of environmental, economic development, and social equity strategies.” Most respondents apparently believe that all three goals are desirable and recognize the need for balance and trade-offs among goals – although they may differ in their views of what constitutes an appropriate balance or “creative” ways to achieve it. People who agreed with this proposition also tended to express concern and support for housing affordability.

Majorities of all groups also agreed with the view that that “Removing or substantially rehabilitating average sized or smaller houses to construct much larger houses takes away from the Town’s attractiveness.” The responses seem to reflect a broadly negative feeling about this kind of development, commonly known as “teardowns.” The survey does not provide direct information on people’s opinions about what should be done. This question was alone in the housing-related series in showing a substantial divergence of opinion by neighborhood: more respondents from North Lincoln than elsewhere affirmed the undesirability of teardowns. This could imply that North Lincoln residents feel that their neighborhood is particularly vulnerable, or that they particularly value the smaller homes in their area.

Response Patterns by Question

Q17_1: “Removing or substantially rehabilitating average sized or smaller houses to construct much larger houses takes away from the Town’s attractiveness.”

Strongly disagree	(9%)
Disagree	(10%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(10%)
Agree	(26%)
Strongly agree	(45%)

Overall, 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposition. The agreement rate ranged between 60% and 80% for different subgroups.

Particularly high levels of agreement were expressed by: residents of North Lincoln (defined as living on or north of Rt. 2), females, people with incomes under \$200,000, and people over age 50.³⁹

³⁹ These factors were all statistically significant in multivariate analysis that considered the set of variables in Table A-2. Groups expressing significantly higher levels of agreement in the bivariate analyses, but not the multivariate analysis, were those without children at home, those who have lived in Lincoln more than 10 years, and those attending any Town Meetings from 2004-07.

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Q17_2: “Lincoln’s planning should seek more creative ways to create a balance of environmental, economic development, and social equity strategies.”

Strongly disagree	(4%)
Disagree	(6%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(23%)
Agree	(39%)
Strongly agree	(28%)

About two-thirds (67%) of all respondents agreed with this proposition. Agreement rates ranged from 56% to 75%. A high level of agreement was expressed by people who have attended any Town Meetings from 2004-07.⁴⁰

Note that this question may have been interpreted differently by different respondents. People could agree with the proposition either because they agree with the objective of balanced strategies, or because they feel that planners have been insufficiently creative or effective in pursuing the balance to date.

Q18: “Are you concerned about potential future lack of housing diversity with respect to having housing available in a range of prices?”

Yes	(68%)
No	(32%)

Overall, 68% answered “yes.” The proportion of affirmative answers ranged from 57% to 79% across groups. People who have attended Town Meetings, people who have worked on Town boards or committees, and those with incomes under \$200,000 were particularly likely to respond affirmatively.⁴¹

Q19: “Do you believe that the Town should take an active role in creating or sustaining housing affordability for low income households, including efforts by Lincoln’s Housing Commission (its mission is to “pursue housing opportunities for targeted populations, including seniors on fixed incomes, town employees, and children of present and past residents”)?”

Yes	(79%)
No	(21%)

Overall, 79% of respondents answered the question affirmatively, with the percentage affirmative ranging from 70% to 89% across groups. Respondents

⁴⁰ This was the only statistically significant factor in multivariate analysis. Other groups with significantly higher levels of agreement in bivariate analysis include: females, people with incomes less than \$200,000, people who have lived in Lincoln more than 10 years, and people who have served on Town boards or committees.

⁴¹ These were the only factors significant in both multivariate and bivariate analyses. Additional factors that were significant in bivariate analysis include: being over age 50, being female, not having children at home, living in Lincoln for more than 10 years.

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who have served on Town boards or committees and those with incomes under \$200,000 were particularly likely to say “yes.”⁴²

Respondents to this question might focus either on the general theme of Town action to promote housing affordability or the specific role of the Housing Commission. Because the general theme is presented first, it seems likely that most responses focused mainly on that theme.

Q20: “Do you believe that the Town should encourage low income affordability by working with developers to bypass local zoning to build denser housing (the so-called Chapter 40B housing) if the Town does not meet the State mandate requiring that 10% of the Town’s housing should be ‘affordable’?”

Yes (39%)
No (61%)

Overall, 39% of respondents answered affirmatively. The affirmative percentage ranged from 35% to 46% across groups, a relatively narrow range.⁴³

This rather complicated question is likely to have been interpreted differently by different respondents. Some might say “yes” to mean that the Town should encourage affordability, while others who agree with the affordability objective might say “no” because they oppose bypassing zoning or because they consider the State mandate unreasonable.

Q21: “Do you believe that the Town’s housing diversity initiatives should include housing for middle income households?”

Yes (82%)
No (18%)

Overall, 82% of respondents answered affirmatively. The affirmative percentage ranged from 74% to 91% across groups. Groups particularly likely to say “yes” were females, respondents with incomes under \$200,000, and those with no children at home.⁴⁴

Responses to Questions 18, 19, and 21 were closely correlated,⁴⁵ and 54% respondents answered all three affirmatively. Those who responded affirmatively to all three

⁴² These were the only statistically significant factors in multivariate analysis. Additional significant factors in bivariate analysis were: being age 65 or older, not having a child at home, living in Lincoln for more than 10 years, and attending any Town Meetings from 2004-07.

⁴³ No factors were statistically significant in either multivariate or bivariate analysis.

⁴⁴ These factors were significant in multivariate and bivariate analysis. Respondents who attended any Town Meetings in 2004-07 were found to be significantly more likely to say “yes” in bivariate but not multivariate analysis.

⁴⁵ Correlation coefficients ranged from 0.49 to 0.59.

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questions tended to be people who have attended Town Meetings and those with incomes not exceeding \$200,000 annually.⁴⁶

Conclusions and Recommendations

The idea of taking action to maintain Lincoln's housing price diversity clearly has broad appeal. Whether residents are willing to support any particular action, such as higher-density housing or housing subsidies, can not be determined from the survey. The only specific policy mechanism described in the survey, working with developers on Chapter 40B housing, did not receive majority support. The complicated phrasing of the question may have influenced this result, but the response may also foreshadow a difference between support for the principle of housing diversity and support for specific actions. If the Town decides to play a much more active role in preserving diversity, it may have to be preceded by a two-step process of gathering information about resident opinions and then providing information to help people understand the inevitable trade-offs.

⁴⁶ These were the only factors significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. Additional groups found in bivariate analysis to be significantly more likely to affirm all three questions were who have served on Town boards or committees, those with no children in the household, females, those age 65 and older, and those who have lived in Lincoln for more than 10 years.

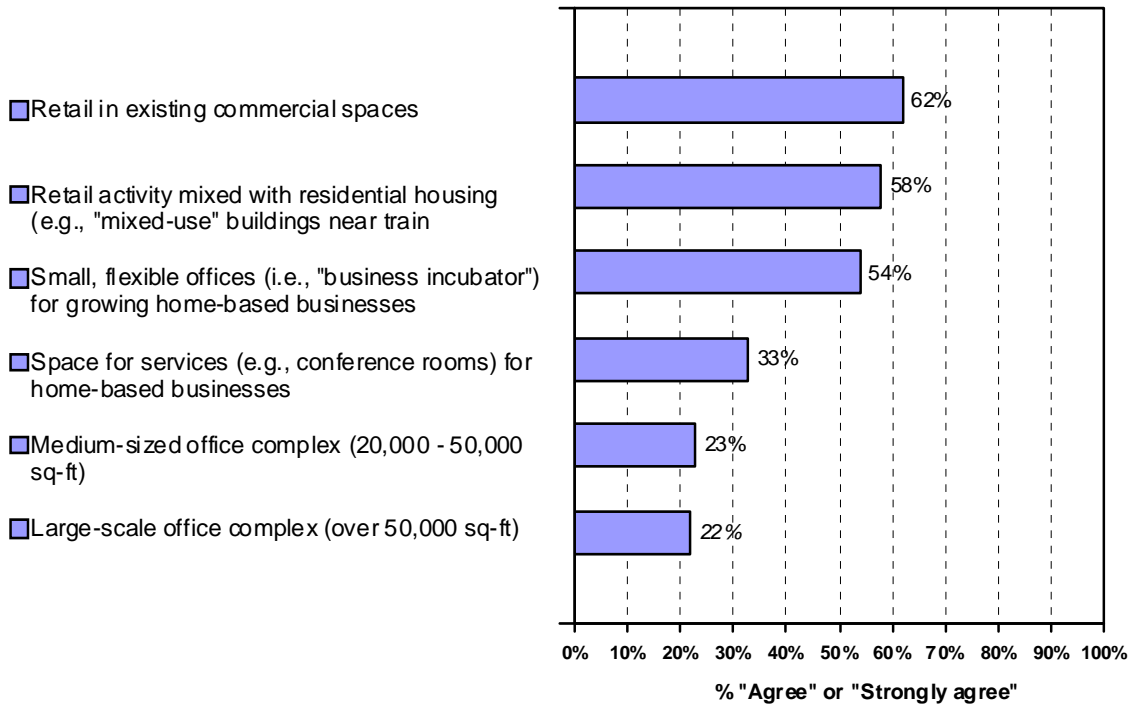
6. Opinions about Commercial Development

Survey respondents were asked, “Concerning commercial development and Lincoln’s character, do you agree that the quality of life in the Town would benefit from adding the following commercial activity?” Six examples of possible types of development followed the question.

Commercial development favored in principle. Only a fairly small minority of survey respondents (19%) felt that “Lincoln should not add new commercial activity,” while 60% explicitly disagreed with the statement.

Retail most favored among possible commercial developments. Retail activity received the most positive responses of the options presented (see Figure 9). Small to solid majorities (50% to 75%) of respondents in all groups agreed that additional retail activity would be beneficial to the quality of life in Lincoln. Little distinction was drawn between adding retail activity in existing commercial areas and adding mixed retail and residential space – most people who agreed with one proposition also agreed with the other. Numerous respondents wrote in comments like “Lincoln needs a robust retail center,” and many expressed a specific desire for a pharmacy.

Figure 9: Opinions on Whether Commercial Development Possibilities Will Benefit Quality of Life in Town



Although it is tempting to compare the “percent agreed” with retail development with percentages for other topics, such as satisfaction with the schools or support of housing affordability policy, such comparisons are risky. For example, the percentage of

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respondents expressing favorable views of additional retail activity was substantially lower than the percent supporting some of the potential housing affordability policies. But the questions were phrased quite differently. The housing questions were phrased in terms such as “Do you believe the Town should . . .”, while the commercial development questions asked whether “the quality of life in Town would benefit” from particular types of development. Given this difference in phrasing, one cannot determine conclusively from the survey whether the percentage of Lincoln residents favoring housing affordability policies is actually greater or less than the percent favoring retail development.

Large and medium commercial office development viewed least favorably. Among the forms of commercial development presented, a “large-scale office complex” or a “medium-sized office complex” garnered the fewest favorable responses. The overall percent agreeing that such developments would benefit the quality of life in Lincoln was 22-23%, and no more than a third of any group expressed that view.

Possible development aimed at home-based businesses – flexible “incubator” offices or service spaces such as conference rooms – were viewed more favorably than office complexes, but not as favorably as retail activity.

A number of write-in responses pointed out the potential desirability of development if it could be placed where it would be least disruptive to the Town’s rural character. The space on either side of Route 2 that is due for substantial change was often suggested. That area was cited for its potential to avoid pulling more traffic directly through the Town, and thereby to minimize the increase in road maintenance costs, public safety problems and costs, and noise.

Modest differences across groups. The differences in views expressed by different population groups were generally smaller for the commercial development questions than some of the other survey topics. Two differences are worth noting:

- People who have served on Town boards and committees expressed somewhat more favorable views on several of the development options than respondents who have not had that experience. Those who have been closely involved in activities of Town government may be more sensitive to the benefits of increased tax revenue that could potentially come with commercial development.
- Location-based differences in opinions were apparent for several questions. Residents of North and East Lincoln, who may feel that commercial development could be located near them, tended to express less favorable opinions than those residing elsewhere.

Although these patterns reflect importantly different perspectives, the similarities across groups are still more striking than the differences. For example, the percentage expressing favorable views of a large-scale office complex ranged from just 16% to 33% for those with experience on boards/committees, those without experience, those living in North and East Lincoln, and those living in other parts of town.

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Response Patterns by Question

Q22_1. “Add a large-scale office complex (over 50,000 sq-ft) similar in size to the Lincoln North building (120,000 sq-ft) near Hanscom AFB.”

Strongly disagree	(41%)
Disagree	(18%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(19%)
Agree	(14%)
Strongly agree	(8%)

Overall, 22% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that adding a large office complex would be beneficial to the quality of life in Lincoln. Across groups, the percent in agreement ranged from 13% to 33%. Male respondents, those living in neighborhoods other than North or East Lincoln, and those who have served on Town boards and committees were the groups with the highest percent in agreement.⁴⁷

Q22_2. “Add a medium-sized office complex (20,000-50,000 sq-ft) slightly smaller than the new office building (63,000 sq-ft) being completed in Waltham at 1580 Trapelo Road at Route 128 across Trapelo Road from Reservoir Place.”

Strongly disagree	(39%)
Disagree	(16%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(21%)
Agree	(16%)
Strongly agree	(8%)

Overall 23%⁴⁸ agreed or strongly agreed that adding a medium-sized office building would benefit Lincoln’s quality of life. The percent in agreement ranged from 16% to 29% across groups. Respondents who had lived in Lincoln less than 10 years, males, those age 65 and over, and those living in neighborhoods other than North or East Lincoln were most likely to agree.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ These were the only factors statistically significant in both multivariate and bivariate analyses that considered the standard group of characteristics (see Table A-2). No additional factors were found to be significant in one but not both analyses.

⁴⁸ Categories do not sum to 23% due to rounding.

⁴⁹ These were the only factors found to be statistically significant in both multivariate and bivariate analyses. No additional factors were found significant in one analysis but not the other.

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Q22_3. “More small, flexible offices (i.e., “business incubator”) for growing home-based businesses.”

Strongly disagree	(9%)
Disagree	(6%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(31%)
Agree	(42%)
Strongly agree	(12%)

Overall, 54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that having more offices for home-based businesses would benefit the quality of life in Lincoln. Across groups, the percentage in agreement ranged from 39% to 63%. The groups most likely to agree were respondents who have served on Town boards or committees, and those living in West Lincoln.⁵⁰

Q22_4. “More space for services (e.g., conference rooms) for home-based businesses.”

Strongly disagree	(11%)
Disagree	(14%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(42%)
Agree	(26%)
Strongly agree	(7%)

Overall, 33% of respondents agreed that having more spaces for use by home-based businesses would benefit the quality of life in Lincoln. The percent in agreement ranged rather narrowly across groups, from 28% to 40%. The differences across groups were not statistically meaningful.⁵¹

Q22_5. “More retail activity in existing commercial areas (e.g., shops, restaurants, etc. in South Lincoln Mall).”

Strongly disagree	(11%)
Disagree	(11%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(16%)
Agree	(40%)
Strongly agree	(22%)

Overall, 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that having more retail activity in existing commercial areas would benefit the quality of life in Lincoln. Across groups, the percent in agreement ranged from 55% to 75%. Respondents who have served on Town boards or committees were most likely to agree.⁵²

⁵⁰ These were the only factors found to be statistically significant in both multivariate and bivariate analyses. No additional factors were significant in one analysis but not the other.

⁵¹ No factors were found to be statistically significant in multivariate analysis. Respondents who had served on Town boards or committees were found significantly more likely to agree in bivariate but not multivariate analysis.

⁵² This was the only factor found to be statistically significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. Groups found significantly more likely to agree in bivariate but not multivariate analysis were those with

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Q22_6. “More retail activity mixed with residential housing (e.g., “mixed-use” buildings near train).”

Strongly disagree	(12%)
Disagree	(12%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(18%)
Agree	(40%)
Strongly agree	(18%)

Overall, 58% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that having more retail activity mixed with residential housing would benefit the quality of life in Lincoln. Across groups, the percent in agreement ranged from 50% to 70%. Respondents who have attended Town Meeting(s) in 2004-2007, and those currently working for pay were most likely to agree.⁵³

Q22_7. “Lincoln should not add new commercial activity even when current zoning allows it.”

Strongly disagree	(32%)
Disagree	(29%)
Neither agree nor disagree	(21%)
Agree	(10%)
Strongly agree	(9%) ⁵⁴

Overall, 19% of respondents agreed that Lincoln should not add any commercial activity, while 60% explicitly disagreed. The percent in agreement ranged narrowly, from 13% to 22%. None of the differences between groups were statistically meaningful.⁵⁵

Conclusions and Recommendations

The commercial development questions generated the greatest number of write-in comments by respondents to the survey. Many respondents felt that the questions were, in effect, too simplistic. They believed that such questions could not fully address the complexities of the choices offered, mentioning short and long term economic effects, collateral effects such as traffic, and effects on neighborhoods and individuals. Others felt that the list of development possibilities had omitted what they considered preferable options, such as locating commercial development along Route 2.

children under age 18 at home, those with incomes of \$200,000 or more, and those currently working for pay.

⁵³ These were the only factors found statistically significant in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. In bivariate but not multivariate analysis, respondents who have served on Town boards or committees were more likely to agree.

⁵⁴ Percentages do not sum to 100% because of rounding.

⁵⁵ No factors were found to be statistically significant in either multivariate or bivariate analysis.

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These write-in comments, together with the response patterns discussed above, emphasize that any commercial development in Lincoln, especially non-retail development, will be a topic of great interest, concern, and controversy. Widespread acceptance of any particular development proposal is likely to depend on a shared understanding, which apparently does not now exist, of where we want to go and how to get there. The CLRP long-range planning effort should be a first step toward such an understanding, presenting a rationale for development and a set of criteria for acceptable development that covers the economic and social concerns expressed by survey respondents. The necessary second step will be a communication and feedback process that reaches and obtains buy-in from residents throughout the Town, including those who do not participate in the usual mechanisms of Town governance.

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Appendix A: Introduction to the Survey, the Sample, and the Analysis

This report presents results from a survey of Lincoln residents conducted in early 2008. The survey was developed in response to the Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee's (CLRPC) need for information about Lincoln residents' views on topics germane to the plan. Each of the several sub-committees of the CLRPC submitted questions pertinent to their particular mission, and these were framed into a single survey instrument.

This report focuses on six topics, each represented by several questions in the survey:

- Citizen participation in Town government, including Town Meetings as well as Town boards, committees, and improvement efforts.
- Satisfaction with various aspects of Town government, including the Town Meeting form of government, staff and leadership, and financial management.
- Satisfaction with aspects of the Lincoln elementary/middle schools and Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School.
- Usage of and satisfaction with the Town's conservation and recreation resources.
- Opinions on issues related to housing and housing affordability policies.
- Opinions on commercial development possibilities in the Town.

A survey designed to serve multiple purposes inevitably has limitations, two of which deserve mention here. First, some topics are addressed by only a few questions, when a more extensive set would be needed to explore the issues fully. Second, questions on different topics tend to be framed differently. This reflects the varied perspectives and interests of the groups that submitted questions for the survey, but in some instances may make it harder to formulate comparisons of responses across topics (at the same time, collecting the heterogeneous points of view enabled us to find important relationships that we would not have seen with a single topic questionnaire). Other limitations related to specific questions have been noted throughout the report.

The sample

The survey form was mailed to all residential addresses in Lincoln, excluding those at Hanscom Air Force Base. All adults (age 18+) in each household were asked to complete surveys, which could be accomplished either by filling out the paper form or through an on-line website operated by the Town's IT director. The web data and the completed paper surveys were then sent to a contractor for compilation into a single database.

A total of 552 residents completed the survey. This represents about 14% of the non-Hanscom adult population of Lincoln, based on figures from the 2000 US Census. (Although the 2000 Census figures do not describe Lincoln's 2007 population precisely, this is the most recent source of reasonably comprehensive information and is used as the point of comparison throughout this section. Assuming that the 2007 population was somewhat larger, the true response rate would be a bit lower.)

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The roughly 14% response rate is reasonable for a mail survey, and the number of responses is sufficient for analysis. Nonetheless, as with all such surveys, the people who respond may not be fully representative of the overall population. Typically, people who are more interested in the survey topic are more likely to respond, and response rates may differ across population subgroups for many other reasons as well.

Interest and engagement in Town issues appears to have been an important motivator for responding to this survey. This is evident in the fact that 208 survey respondents said that they attended the 2007 Town Meeting, which is more than 80% of the 249 officially counted attendees. In contrast, the remaining 344 survey respondents make up about 8% of the Lincoln residents who did not attend that Town Meeting.

Comparing the profile of survey respondents to the Census 2000 profile identifies some other dimensions on which the survey sample does not precisely reflect the characteristics of the Lincoln population (see Table A-1). Most strikingly, the percentage of people under age 55 is much lower in the survey sample than the Census count (30% vs. 60%). Also, persons with less education than a graduate degree are under-represented in the survey sample compared to the Census count (30% vs. 51%). Other differences are smaller and could result from differences between the timing or phrasing of the survey and the Census.

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Table A-1: Comparison of Census and Survey profiles

	2000 Census (ZIP code 01773)	Survey Respondents
Population age 18+	3,828	552 (14.4%)
Gender		
Male	46.0%	47.7%
Female	54.0%	52.2%
Average household size*	2.59	2.46
Housing**		
Owned	85.8%	94.2%
Rented	14.2%	5.8%
Child(ren) under 18 in household*		
Yes	35.5%	26.9%
No	64.5%	73.1%
Age (18 and over)		
18-34	12.5%	1.9%
35-44	21.6%	9.5%
45-54	26.1%	19.0%
55-64	16.7%	28.2%
65-74	13.0%	19.7%
75-84	8.3%	17.4%
85+	1.8%	4.3%
Education		
Less than high school	1.5%	0.2%
High school graduate	6.1%	0.9%
Some college	15.4%	3.4%
Bachelors degree	27.7%	25.4%
Graduate degree	49.3%	70.1%
Marital status		
Never married	19.4%	6.4%
Married or living with partner***	68.6%	80.0%
Divorced/separated	7.6%	8.2%
Widowed****	4.4%	5.4%
Income*		
<\$50K	18.9%	10.4%
\$50-\$99K	28.3%	17.2%
\$100-\$149K	16.2%	23.5%
\$150-\$199K	9.5%	11.0%
\$200K+	27.2%	37.9%

* Census gives percent of households, survey is percent of individuals' responses

** Census gives percent of housing units, survey is percent of individuals' responses

*** "or living with" not in Census

**** "Widowed" was a write-in category in the survey, not a pre-established category

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When a survey sample is known to be non-representative of the full population, it is sometimes possible to make statistical adjustments by using weights – in effect, over-counting the groups that are under-represented. We tested that approach but did not find it satisfactory for this survey. Weights were applied to make the survey profile match the Census profile on age and education, but this was insufficient to adjust for the fact that the people who responded tended to be those more interested in Town affairs. For example, official records indicate that about 7% of the Town’s registered voters attended the 2007 Town Meeting. In contrast, 38% of all survey respondents said they attended that Town Meeting, and the figure was still 31% after applying age/education adjustment weights. Because of the substantial discrepancy remaining after weighting, we decided to use no weights in the analysis presented here.

It is therefore important in interpreting the survey results to bear in mind the substantial under-representation of two groups: residents who are less interested in Town affairs, and younger residents.⁵⁶ Age and participation in Town affairs (as indicated by attending Town Meetings and/or serving on Town boards or committees) are closely related to respondents’ expressed opinions about many of the topics posed by the survey. For these topics, it can be difficult or impossible to determine what “most” Lincoln residents think.

In addition to discrepancies that may arise from under-representation of particular groups, all sample surveys have a “margin of error,” or “confidence interval.” In this survey, the 95% confidence interval is typically ± 3 or ± 4 percentage points for figures based on the full sample. Subgroups have wider confidence intervals, typically ± 5 to ± 8 percentage points. Sub-sub-groups, such as persons who are under age 50 and who attended the 2007 Town Meeting, have still wider confidence intervals, sometimes exceeding ± 20 percentage points.

Analysis approach

For most of the topics discussed here, the principal question is “where do most Lincoln residents stand?” The first analytic step is simply to look at the percent who give particular responses, such as the percent who say “yes.” Many of the questions have more than two response categories, so we typically look at the percent who give each response and also collapse the categories into a dichotomy such as “agree or strongly agree” vs. “disagree, strongly disagree, or neither agree nor disagree.”

Because unanimous or near-unanimous responses are rare, the second step is to see whether particular subgroups of the town population, such as men or women, are especially likely or unlikely to say “yes.” A standard set of nine variables defining 23 population groups was examined for each question of interest (see Table A-2). Additional groups that seemed particularly relevant were included in the analysis of particular questions, and are identified in those discussions. For questions with multiple response categories, the analysis of group differences generally used the collapsed dichotomous version of the variable.

⁵⁶ Residents without graduate degrees are also under-represented, as noted earlier, but education was not closely related to responses to most survey questions.

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Table A-2: Key Groupings Used in Analysis

	% of Survey Respondents
Engagement in Town (Questions 2, 5, 7*)	
No Town Meetings, boards or committees	27.0%
Attended any Town Meetings (2004-2007) OR served on Town board(s) or committee(s)	44.8%
Attended Town Meeting(s) AND served on Town boards or committees	28.3%
Age (Q43)	
<50	20.9%
50-64	37.7%
65+	41.4%
Gender (Q44)	
Male	47.7%
Female	52.3%
Any children under age 18 in household (Q27)	
None	73.1%
One or more	26.9%
Education (Q40)	
Less than graduate degree	29.9%
Graduate degree	70.1%
Employment (Q37)	
Not currently working for pay	33.4%
Currently working for pay	66.6%
Annual household income (Q45)	
Less than \$200,000	62.1%
\$200,000 or more	37.9%
Years lived in Lincoln (Q24)	
10 years or less	23.7%
More than 10 years	76.3%
Neighborhood of residence in Lincoln** (Q25)	
North	13.8%
Central	9.8%
East	23.8%
West	19.6%
South	33.0%

* See Appendix B for questions.

** Neighborhood boundaries were defined in the survey. See Appendix B.

In discussing each question below, we describe the range of results across the population groups that were examined for that question. This provides an indication of the extent of similarity or difference across groups. For example, if 75% of respondents say “yes,” and that percentage ranges across 23 groups ranges from 70% to 80%, we conclude that

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most population groups see the issue about the same way. On the other hand, a range across groups of 30% to 90% would indicate a pattern of substantially divided opinions. We pay particular attention in these bivariate analyses to the respondents' age and level of engagement in Town affairs because of the possibility that under-representation of the younger or less interested residents could create a misleading impression of overall Town sentiment.

Some of the grouping variables are correlated. For example, respondents who have lived in Lincoln more than 10 years tend to be older than those with shorter tenure. If the bivariate analysis shows that both older residents and long-term residents tend to say "yes," we would like to know whether both factors are independently important or whether one is driving the result. To address the question, we conducted a multivariate analysis for each question, which considers simultaneously all of the groupings that were considered one-by-one in the bivariate analysis. The analytic technique was logistic regression, which is well suited to the analysis of dichotomous variables.

In discussing which groups had particularly high or low responses to particular questions, we identify only those which showed statistically significant differences in both multivariate and bivariate analysis. In other words, if the discussion says that older people were significantly more likely to say "yes" than younger people, we can be quite confident that the difference is really related to age rather than some correlated characteristic like the duration of residence in Lincoln. We used the 0.05 significance level in two-tailed tests, which is a commonly used standard for judging whether results are meaningful.

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Appendix B: The Survey Questionnaire

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Survey of Lincoln Citizens’ Preferences and Interests

Your answers will be kept completely confidential and used only in combination with other responses to picture prevailing ideas and trends. We will not know who offered which response and will not share any single response either within or outside the Town.

1. First, we’d like your views of some of your experiences in living in the Town and using Town services. For each of the following statements, please circle the number that indicates if you Strongly Agree = 5, Agree =4, Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3, Disagree =2 or Strongly Disagree =1.

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that Town Meeting government does a good job of addressing my interests and concerns about living in Lincoln	1	2	3	4	5
Whenever I need something from people who work for the Town government, they’re very helpful	1	2	3	4	5
Whenever I need something from people who work for the Town government, they’re very efficient	1	2	3	4	5
Town boards made up with volunteers rather than paid staff work well for extending Town staff’s capabilities for meeting Lincoln’s needs	1	2	3	4	5
Town leaders regularly come forward to convincingly show the way to innovative new solutions to emerging challenges	1	2	3	4	5
The Town government spends my tax dollars in the most effective ways	1	2	3	4	5
The Town of Lincoln is an affordable place to live for me	1	2	3	4	5
The culture of the Town is very open to new people and new ideas	1	2	3	4	5
The Lincoln elementary and middle school systems do an excellent job of preparing students for the next stage in their lives	1	2	3	4	5
The Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School does an excellent job of preparing students for the next stage in their lives	1	2	3	4	5
The Lincoln school systems do a good job of managing the taxpayer money that funds it	1	2	3	4	5
I’d strongly consider paying more taxes to support a more diverse school curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
I’d strongly consider paying more taxes to set aside more conservation land in Town	1	2	3	4	5
The Town of Lincoln is a very satisfying place to live	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend the Town of Lincoln as a place to live to anyone who I’d like to live near me	1	2	3	4	5
If I could, I’d live in Lincoln for as far as I can see into the future	1	2	3	4	5
Town government is a regular topic of conversation with my friends and family members	1	2	3	4	5

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2. I attended Town Meeting during last spring (2007) Yes ___ No ___

If “No,” skip to Question 4

3. Please describe your reasons for attending Town Meeting by responding to each of the following statements. Circle the number that indicates if you believe it was an important reason = 3, Neither important nor unimportant = 2, Unimportant = 1. If you don't recall, circle Don't Recall = DR

Reasons for attending 2007 Town Meeting	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Don't recall
I want to help make the Town run well	1	2	3	DR
I want to make my Town a better place to live	1	2	3	DR
Town meeting form of government allows me or a group of other Lincoln citizens the opportunity to make a difference	1	2	3	DR
I'm concerned about how the Town spends my tax money	1	2	3	DR
I was interested in a particular issue	1	2	3	DR
I like to keep up with the range of issues facing the Town	1	2	3	DR
I like to hear the discussions	1	2	3	DR
I like to run into friends and neighbors	1	2	3	DR
Friends or family members encouraged me to attend	1	2	3	DR
It's a tradition in my family	1	2	3	DR
Town meeting offers me a chance for new learning	1	2	3	DR
It is my civic duty	1	2	3	DR

Other (please describe): _____

4. **If you did NOT attend Town Meeting in 2007**, please describe your reasons for not attending by responding to each of the following statements. Circle the number that indicates if you believe it was an Important reason = 3, neither important nor unimportant = 2, Unimportant = 1. If you don't recall, circle Don't Recall = DR

If you attended the 2007 Town Meeting skip to question 5

Reasons for NOT attending Town Meeting in 2007	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Don't Recall
I had conflicting obligations	1	2	3	DR
Someone else from my household attended to express my opinion	1	2	3	DR
I hadn't been informed of the pros and cons of the issues that would be addressed	1	2	3	DR
I didn't know when issues that are important to me would be discussed	1	2	3	DR
I didn't have the time	1	2	3	DR
I missed the announcement	1	2	3	DR
I didn't know how to find the location	1	2	3	DR
From past experience, too much time is spent on unimportant discussion	1	2	3	DR
From past experience, it just takes too long	1	2	3	DR
From past experience, the presentations are not easy to follow	1	2	3	DR

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Reasons for NOT attending Town Meeting in 2007	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Don't Recall
From past experience, its hard to see what people are presenting	1	2	3	DR
From past experience, its hard to hear what's being said	1	2	3	DR
From past experience, the seating is uncomfortable	1	2	3	DR
From past experience, the room temperature is uncomfortable	1	2	3	DR

Other (please describe): _____

5. I attended Town Meeting one or more times in the three years before 2007 (i.e., 2004, 2005 2006)

Yes ___ No ___

6. I attended the State of the Town meeting on November 3, 2007

Yes ___ No ___

7. In the past five years I have served on ___ (number of) Town Board or Commission or neighborhood planning or improvement planning or improvement committees in Lincoln (if zero, write in 0 and skip to question 9)

8. If you've served as a volunteer on any Town Board or Commission or neighborhood planning or improvement committees in Lincoln in the past five years, please circle the number reflecting whether the reason shown was important to your decision to serve. If you've served on more than one Lincoln volunteer activity, please rate the reasons for your most recent and time consuming service. Circle the number that indicates if you believe it was an Important reason for you = 3, neither important nor unimportant = 2, Unimportant reason = 1.

Reason for Volunteering for Lincoln	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important
Some issues in my neighborhood concern me	1	2	3
Particular Town-wide issues concern me	1	2	3
I just want to make Lincoln a better place to live	1	2	3
I enjoy serving with my friends and neighbors	1	2	3
I enjoy the possibility for new learning	1	2	3
Friends or family members encouraged me to serve	1	2	3
It is my civic duty	1	2	3
It's a tradition in my family	1	2	3

Other (please describe): _____

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9. Following are sources for staying well informed about what’s going on in Lincoln, including topics that tend to be discussed in Town Meeting. On a 1 to 3 scale, please circle the numbers representing each source’s usefulness for keeping you informed. 1 = Poor source, 2 = neither good nor poor source, 3 = Good source

Information Source	Poor source	Neither good nor poor source	Good source of information
Local newspapers (Lincoln Journal for example)	1	2	3
Regional newspapers (Boston Globe for example)	1	2	3
Town publications, including the Town Warrant	1	2	3
The Town website	1	2	3
Community access TV channel	1	2	3

Other (please describe): _____

10. Please tell us if you’ve heard about or seen opportunities for volunteering to work on Town activities. Circle “yes” if it applies to you and “no” if it does not.

I know how to get involved if I wanted to volunteer to work with Town committees or boards or neighborhood groups	Yes	No
I’ve been asked to work on one or more Town committees or improvement efforts	Yes	No
I know how and where I could sign up to volunteer to help my neighborhood or the Town	Yes	No
I know how to get involved if I wanted to volunteer to help out with activities at the Lincoln or Lincoln-Sudbury schools	Yes	No
I have been asked to help out with activities in the Lincoln or Lincoln-Sudbury schools	Yes	No

Other (please describe): _____

11. On average, **during 2007** I spent time in Town conservation or open lands (e.g., run, walked, skied, on horseback, etc.) (check the best answer):

- At least several times per week
- One or several times per month
- One or several times per year
- Never or hardly ever

12. In the years **prior to 2007** and since I’ve lived in Lincoln, the time I spent in Town conservation or open lands (e.g., run, walked, skied, on horseback, etc.) was (check one answer):

- More than I did in 2007
- About the same as 2007
- Less than I did in 2007

13. Lincoln’s land conservation approaches are (please check one answer):

- Much too aggressive. There’s too much land that no one can build on
- Somewhat aggressive, but I can live with it
- Just about right
- Need to be a bit more aggressive in acquiring and managing the land in its control
- Not up to the task and the challenges of the future

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I don't know

14. On average, during 2007 I used the Town's recreational and other public facilities (e.g., pool, meeting rooms, tennis courts,); check one answer

- Several times per week or greater, and more than
- One or several times per month, and more than
- One or several times per year
- Never or hardly ever

15. Lincoln's recreational and other public facilities (e.g., pool, meeting rooms, tennis courts) are (please check one answer):

- Sufficient to fill a great many of my or my family's needs for those kinds of facilities
- Adequate
- Insufficient to current needs and the challenges of the future
- I don't know enough about them to offer an opinion

16. Knowing what brought you to Lincoln and your thoughts about the future for the Town will help us choose our planning directions.

I chose to live in Lincoln because (check all that apply; if you moved away and returned, respond about your most recent move to Lincoln):

- I was born here or my family lived here before I began my own working career
- My employment brought me to this area and I chose to live in Lincoln
- My college or other educational choices brought me to this area and I chose to live in Lincoln
- I chose to move here from another place in the Boston metropolitan area
- I was drawn by Lincoln's institutions such as Codman Farm, DeCordova Museum, Drumlin Farm, etc.
- I was drawn by Lincoln's conservation and recreation spaces and trails.
- The Town' commuter train connection was attractive
- I wanted to live in a rural environment yet be near urban amenities of Boston
- I wanted to live in a community where an individual could make a difference
- I wanted to live in a Town where my investment in a home would appreciate significantly
- When I retired, I decided that this would be a good place to live
- Other: _____

17. Following are statements about planning possibilities for the Town. For each of the following statements, please circle the number that indicates if you Strongly Agree = 5, Agree =4, Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3, Disagree =2 or Strongly Disagree =1.

Planning possibilities	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Removing or substantially rehabilitating average sized or smaller houses to construct much larger houses takes away from the Town's attractiveness	1	2	3	4	5
Lincoln's planning should seek more creative ways to create a balance of environmental, economic development, and social equity strategies	1	2	3	4	5

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18. Are you concerned about potential future lack of housing diversity with respect to having housing available in a range of prices?

Yes ___ No ___

19. Do you believe that the Town should take an active role in creating or sustaining housing affordability for low income households, including efforts by Lincoln’s Housing Commission (its mission is to “pursue housing opportunities for targeted populations, including seniors on fixed incomes, town employees, and children of present and past residents”)?

Yes ___ No ___

20. Do you believe that the Town should encourage low income affordability by working with developers to bypass local zoning to build denser housing (the so-called Chapter 40B housing) if the Town does not meet the State mandate requiring that 10% Towns’ housing should be “affordable”)

Yes ___ No ___

21. Do you believe that the Town’s housing diversity initiatives should include housing for middle income households?

Yes ___ No ___

22. Concerning commercial development and Lincoln's character, do you agree that the quality of life in Town would benefit from adding the following commercial activity?

For each of the following statements, please circle the number that indicates if you Strongly Agree = 5, Agree =4, Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3, Disagree =2 or Strongly Disagree =1.

Commercial development possibilities	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Add a large-scale office complex (over 50,000 sq-ft) similar in size to the Lincoln North building (120,000 sq-ft) near Hanscom AFB	1	2	3	4	5
Add a medium-sized office complex (20,000 - 50,000 sq-ft) slightly smaller than the new office building (63,000 sq-ft) being completed in Waltham at 1560 Trapelo Road at Route 128 across Trapelo Road from Reservoir Place	1	2	3	4	5
More small, flexible offices (i.e., "business incubator") for growing home-based businesses	1	2	3	4	5
More space for services (e.g., conference rooms) for home-based businesses	1	2	3	4	5
More retail activity in existing commercial areas (e.g., shops, restaurants, etc. in South Lincoln Mall)	1	2	3	4	5
More retail activity mixed with residential housing (e.g., "mixed-use" buildings near train)	1	2	3	4	5
Lincoln should not add new commercial activity even when current zoning allows it	1	2	3	4	5

23. Please offer any thoughts that you’d like to add about your answers to any of the above questions:

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Please don't give up now! You're almost done.

Your answers to the following questions will help us classify your responses. Again, none of these data will be shared with anyone else or used for marketing purposes.

24. About how many total years have you lived in Lincoln (count all the time including if you moved away and returned)? _____
25. In which neighborhood do you now live. Select one. If you are uncertain, please make your best estimate)
- Hanscom Air Force Base**
 - North Lincoln** from on Route 2 north to Concord and Bedford, not including Hanscom AFB
 - Central Lincoln** where you must pick up your mail at the post offices rather than having it delivered (one-quarter mile from either post office)
 - East Lincoln** south of Route 2 from on Bedford Road or Weston Road/Silver Hill Road and eastward to the Town line with Waltham and the post office delivers your mail to your mailbox near your place of residence.
 - West Lincoln** south of Route 2 from the west side of Bedford Road (not on Bedford Rd) and the west side of Weston Road/Silver Hill Road (not on Weston Road/Silver Hill Road), north of South Great Road (Route 117) and the post office delivers your mail to your mailbox near your place of residence.
 - South Lincoln** from on South Great Road (route 117) and south to the Town lines with Weston and Wayland
26. Zip code where you work _____
27. Including you, how many adults 18 or older live at your current address? _____
28. How many children under the age of 18 currently live at your current address? _____
29. How many children in your household now attend either the Lincoln elementary or the Lincoln middle school? _____
30. Have there ever been children in your household who once attended the Lincoln middle or elementary school and no longer attend?
Yes ___ No ___
If NO, skip to question 32
31. If yes, how many _____
32. How many children in your household now attend the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School? _____
33. Have there ever been children in your household who do not now attend the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School but once did?
Yes ___ No ___
If NO, skip to question 35
34. If yes, how many _____
35. Approximately, what is the sum of cumulative years of school attendance at the Lincoln middle or elementary school Lincoln-Sudbury school systems of all of your children who have ever attended (if none, enter 0)? _____

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36. Which one of the following occupational categories best describes what you do? (If you have several occupations, check the one that takes the most time during working hours)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional services (lawyer, health care provider, researcher, accountant, economist, consultant, social worker, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Science, engineering, architectural, mathematical or technology
<input type="checkbox"/> Manager in a business or non-profit organization
<input type="checkbox"/> Sales, operations, office and administrative support or services
<input type="checkbox"/> Education and library occupations
<input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing or production or transportation or material moving
<input type="checkbox"/> Construction, installation, maintenance, or repair
<input type="checkbox"/> Food preparation and serving
<input type="checkbox"/> Police, fire and other protective services
<input type="checkbox"/> Community and social services | <input type="checkbox"/> Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal service (massage, hair care, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Farming, fishing, mining or forestry
<input type="checkbox"/> Household manager
<input type="checkbox"/> Military
<input type="checkbox"/> Local, state or federal government except military
<input type="checkbox"/> Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Full time volunteer in public or non-profit activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Fully retired (if partially retired and you work 50% or more of the average day, please note your occupation above)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
|---|--|

37. By getting some idea how Lincoln residents' typical weeks fall into place, we'll be better able to create plans that meet your needs. Please try to give your best estimate of the number of waking hours you spend on average each week when you are not on vacation. Please enter whole hours only. If less than one hour, but more than zero, enter "1":

Activity	Hours per Week
Work for pay (including travel time and work at home)	_____ hrs
Active sports or athletics	_____ hrs
Shopping in stores or on-line	_____ hrs
Attending or preparing for educational activities	_____ hrs
Active artistic pursuits such as music, art, theatre, etc.	_____ hrs
Activities related to my children's school	_____ hrs
Working on Town boards, commissions, etc.	_____ hrs
Other community, charitable or religious activities	_____ hrs
Entertainment outside my home (e.g., theatre, spectator sports)	_____ hrs
In home entertainment (e.g., watching TV, listening to the radio)	_____ hrs
Time with family or friends including parties and get-togethers	_____ hrs
Hobbies or games, including on-line	_____ hrs
Reading, including online	_____ hrs
Political activities	_____ hrs
Tasks around my residence	_____ hrs
Child or elder care or transportation	_____ hrs
Other (describe) _____	_____ hrs

38. I belong to a private health club or health clubs Yes ___ No ___

If no, skip to question 40

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39. I use the club facilities for (please check all that apply)
- Athletic programs for me or my family or friends
 - Meetings
 - Social events
 - Other (please describe) _____
40. What's your highest level of educational achievement?
- Did not finish high school
 - High school
 - Some college or post high-school trade education
 - Hold undergraduate degree
 - Hold graduate degree
41. What is your marital status (please check one)?
- Single, never married
 - Married or living with a partner
 - Divorced
42. Do you or your family rent or own the home or apartment where you live in Lincoln (please check one)?
- Own the house or condo
 - Rent the house or apartment
43. What is the year of your birth? _____
44. Are you male or female? Male ____ Female ____
45. Which annual income category best describes your 2007 household income (please check one)?
- Less than \$30,000 per year
 - \$30,000 to \$49,999 per year
 - \$50,000 to \$99,999 per year
 - \$100,000 to \$149,999 per year
 - \$150,000 to \$199,999 per year
 - \$200,000 to \$299,000 per year
 - \$300,000 or more per year
46. Please offer any thoughts that you'd like to add about your answers to any of the above questions:

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer our questions. The Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee and its subcommittees, Town employees and boards, and the selectmen will be working hard in the coming months to make productive use of the information you've offered.

Ken Hurd
Chairman, Lincoln Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee