

FREMONT, NH

MASTER PLAN SURVEY - 2020 SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Under state law (RSA 674), municipalities must have a master plan to guide the development of the community. Master plans must be adopted and periodically update by Planning Boards to reflect changes in land use and municipal values. Fremont's Master Plan was adopted and updated most recently between 2008 to 2014 with the Vision and Growth Management Chapters most recently adopted.

The Fremont Planning Board began working on updates to the Fremont Master Plan in early 2020. The process began with this survey for residents; the goal of the survey was to gain current input about the current status and desired future of Fremont's land use, town services, and general amenities. (Many of the questions asked in the 2020 survey are the same as questions asked in 1998 and 2012 master plan surveys.)

RESULTS

Between February 1, 2020 and March 15, 2020, a total of 406 individuals took the survey and provided over 23,000 responses or comments to the survey questions. The survey was a predominantly online survey with links posted on the Town website, the unofficial Fremont Community Facebook page, announcements at multiple municipal board meetings, and on flyers posted around Fremont. Paper surveys were made available at the Fremont Town Hall and Public Library. While this survey is neither statistically nor scientifically valid, it did have a many more participants than the 2012 survey (123 versus 406). This survey will serve as one of many resources used in the current Master Plan update; other sources may include public meetings, census data, and other resources.

Only Fremont residents' responses were included in the results of this survey. Approximately half of survey participants had lived in Fremont for more than 10 years and a third of participants were over the age of 55. The vast majority (95%) of survey participants were homeowners and 68% work full time.

The full survey results are available at: <https://publicinput.com/FremontNH2020> and on the Fremont Planning Board website.

NEXT STEPS

The Fremont Planning Board is working with Rockingham Planning Commission in drafting updates to the Vision and Growth Management Master Plan chapters. The expected completion date for both chapters is June 2020. **Any updates to the Fremont Master Plan will require a public hearing prior to Planning Board adoption.**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following outline some of the major findings of the survey. The survey itself was published to assist the Fremont Planning Board in updating the Master Plan, however, some questions were also included to assist other municipal boards. Many of the questions asked in this survey are the same as previous Fremont surveys published in 1998 and 2012 to allow for tracking changes in residents goals and priorities.

Several major themes emerged from survey responses:

- Most residents want to maintain Fremont's rural nature, but many are concerned about what the tax impacts will be depending on the type of future development (businesses versus more housing).
- Many are concerned about protecting Fremont's natural resources and potential negative side effects from certain types of businesses.
- Services provided by the Town are generally highly regarded, but costs and impacts on tax rates was a strong concern.

"We moved to Fremont in 2006 because of the small town, and lots of trees and privacy on our lot. So many other towns had lots that were clear cut with no personality. People are very friendly too. The school taxes are insane though, with no end in sight - that's the only blight of living in Fremont."

The major themes are consistent with previous survey findings, however, there was an increase in concern about land uses changing more rapidly. (Land use change is when land converts from a natural state or agriculture to more intense uses as residential or commercial uses.)

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT LIVING IN FREMONT?

Top three answers:

- 69% Like the rural atmosphere.
- 50% Like the friendly atmosphere
- 44% Like that it is near main highways

WHAT FEATURES ARE IMPORTANT TO FREMONT'S CHARACTER?

Many features in Fremont were showed strong preferences among residents:

- 85% thought locally owned business were important or very important.
- 72% felt it is important to keep commercial uses in the currently allowed zoning districts.
- 90% of residents indicated that maintaining open spaces, natural areas, and working farm

In my opinion we currently have an excellent mix of "old with the new". We have many new construction homes as well as historic homes and buildings. It would be a shame to lose the New England charm this town has, personally it is one of my favorite things about living here. Bringing in some additional small businesses would be a great addition within the allowed zones.

WHAT FEATURES SHOULD THE TOWN PURSUE MORE OF?

There were some areas where residents had diverse opinions about what Fremont needs more of:

- There was a mix of the types of commercial property uses that were more desired in Fremont, but generally low impact businesses or services (such as restaurants) were preferred.

- For future housing options, more residents preferred single family or elderly housing options and generally did not want more multifamily or manufactured housing.
- Amenities such as open spaces, trails and recreation facilities were overall desired by most residents.

COST OF TOWN SERVICES

From participant comments received throughout the survey property taxes (both town and school portions) are a major concern for residents. The survey focused on the cost for town services specifically as it is more related to land use planning activities. However, the survey results indicate tax rate impacts are a major influence about future decisions for Fremont.

Please indicate your opinion regarding the following statements about the cost of TOWN services.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I would like improved town services and am willing to pay increased taxes to pay for them.	6% Strongly agree	10% Agree	25% Neutral	26% Disagree	33% Strongly disagree
I would like improved town services, but am NOT willing to pay increased taxes to pay for them.	18% Strongly agree	24% Agree	39% Neutral	12% Disagree	7% Strongly disagree
I would accept decreases in town services in order to lower taxes.	15% Strongly agree	21% Agree	26% Neutral	27% Disagree	12% Strongly disagree
I would NOT accept decreases in town services even if taxes remained the same.	25% Strongly agree	33% Agree	29% Neutral	7% Disagree	7% Strongly disagree
I would not accept decreases in town services even with lowered taxes.	14% Strongly agree	31% Agree	28% Neutral	17% Disagree	10% Strongly disagree