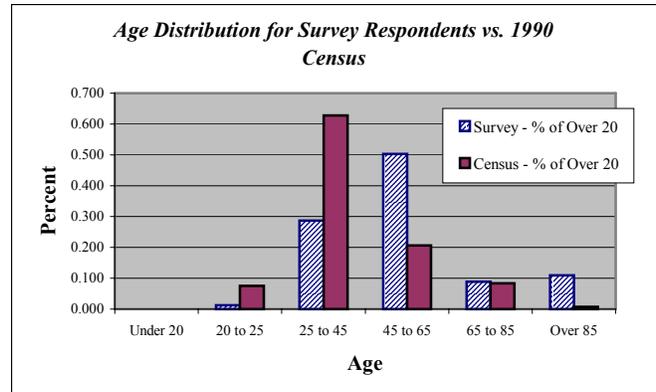


Shutesbury Survey Highlights The Town Plan Committee

During fall 2000, we conducted a survey of Shutesbury landowners and residents. We mailed a total 1275 surveys; 331 were returned for a response rate of about 26%. We've been busy analyzing data and reading the written comments on the surveys. This short summary provides highlights of the numerical data that we gathered from respondents.

The first question we asked about our survey was: "Who responded and do they represent Shutesbury residents?" To find out, we compared some of our information to 1990



Census figures. The graph at the right compares the age distribution of respondents over 20 to the 1990 Census distribution. We expected some differences, especially with the growth that has occurred in Shutesbury in the last 10 years, but we conclude that our survey represents the population of Shutesbury fairly well. Most of the respondents are full time residents (83%). Their average age is 49 and the average household size is 2.75 people. Most (70%) plan to remain in Shutesbury for the next 5 years.

So what do respondents like about Shutesbury? We asked what factors were most important to their satisfaction with living in Shutesbury. *The* most important factor was **peace and quiet**; 85% of the respondents said this was *very important*. The other leading factors chosen as *very important* included: **air and water quality (83%)**; **open fields, forests and trails (80%)**; **rural and small town character (77%)**; and **lake and stream quality (69%)**. When asked what the rural character of Shutesbury meant to them, 80% of the respondents again chose **quiet** as *very important*. The other top factors considered *very important* included: **large forested areas (75%)**; **absence of city lights (70%)**; **lower housing density (69%)**; **walking and hiking trails (69%)**; and **low traffic volume and speed (68%)**.

We also asked respondents to tell us how important it is to conserve natural resources. Nearly all respondents (92%) agreed that the conservation of **clean drinking water** was *very important*. A majority of respondents also chose conservation of **clean air (90%)**, **lakes and streams (84%)**, **forests (79%)**, **rural character (79%)**, and **wildlife habitat (78%)** as *very important*. When asked what forms of protection and conservation of open space and natural resources they supported, 93% said they *strongly supported or supported acceptance of gifts to the town of conservation land*. In fact, most of the respondents (78%) *strongly supported* this approach to conservation. Among other conservation options, 83% *strongly supported or supported* the **town purchase of conservation land** (56% *strongly supported* this option) and 80% *strongly supported or supported zoning changes for open space protection and conservation* (54% *strongly*). The **acceptance of gifts to the town of development rights** was *strongly supported or supported* by 72% of the respondents.

The survey also asked opinions about a number of different development options. Of twelve offered, eight were *avored* by more than half the respondents. They were: **home businesses (76%)**; **bed & breakfast (73%)**; **arts & crafts (72%)** **dentist/doctor/veterinarian (60%)**; **restaurant/coffee shop (59%)**; **gas station/convenience store (53%)**; and **crop/truck farming (53%)**. Of the remaining suggestions, **very small manufacturing, 1-5 employees** was *avored* by 48% of the respondents. Several housing options were suggested, only **single family residential (73%)** was *avored* by more than half of the respondents. **Cluster residential** was *avored* by about half (49%) of the respondents. More than half the respondents agreed with the promotion of **elder housing (57%)** and **congregate housing for elders (51%)**.

A list of statements were provided that dealt with zoning and land-use issues. There were five statements with which more than 50% of the respondents agreed. Those statements dealt with zoning changes to: direct and restrict commercial and manufacturing uses; encourage cluster development; limit communication towers in town; restrict multiple family and duplex housing; and control development in existing high density areas of town. Between 50 and 54% of the respondents agreed with these statements.

To help us plan for the future, we asked what residents would like to see happen over the next 10 years. The two suggestions that would maintain and protect our rural character and natural resources were chosen as important by the greatest number of respondents. **Care of conservation lands** was chosen as *important or very important* by 75% of the respondents, 30% said it was *very important*. **Open space acquisition** was chosen as *important or very important* by 69% of the respondents, 29% said it was *very important*. Other investments that respondents considered *important or very important* included: **ambulance services** (63%); **increased road maintenance** (59%); and a **new expanded library** (54%). A number of investments were chosen as *important or very important* by over 40% of the respondents. They included: **expanded school curricula** (49%); **high-speed Internet access** (47%); **24 hour police department** (46%); **full-time fire department** (43%) and **after-school programming** (42%).

We also asked the tough question: “Are you willing to have taxes increase to pay for these capital improvements?” **Ambulance service** received the most votes, with 38% of the respondents selecting *yes*. **Open space acquisition** and **care of conservation lands** followed with 35% and 33% *yes* votes, respectively, and 30% of the respondents said *yes* to the **new expanded library**.

One final question that we’ll review in our summary is how respondents viewed the allocation of town expenditures. We asked the respondents whether the town should spend more, less or the same amount of money on a number of budget items. Rather than choose *highlights* based on those categories with the greatest number of *more* votes or the greatest number of *less* votes, the entire table is presented below for your review.

Budget Item	More	Same	Less	No Response
Administrative services	7.3	66.1	9.4	17.3
Community events	18.8	55.2	8.5	17.6
Management/improvement of Town conservation lands	25.8	49.4	8.5	16.4
Protection/acquisition of additional Town Conservation lands (either through purchase, or purchase of development rights)	38.2	33.9	10.3	17.6
Fire protection	20.3	60.0	2.7	17.0
Ambulance services	24.2	54.6	3.6	17.6
Library	29.7	45.5	9.4	15.5
Planning	17.0	55.2	8.5	19.4
Police protection (e.g. patrolling local roads, number of hours available)	22.4	50.3	12.4	14.9
Recreation	9.4	56.4	13.6	20.6
Roads (e.g. condition of roads and level of maintenance)	29.1	53.3	3.3	14.2
Shutesbury Elementary School	14.2	48.5	20.9	16.4
Amherst-Pelham Regional Jr./Sr. High District	7.3	50.6	24.9	17.3
Youth programs and services	23.6	45.5	11.2	19.7

We got a number of complete tables that we’ve assembled. If you are interested in more Shutesbury Survey information or have comments, contact David Kittredge at 259-1756. Any *glowing* comments can be directed to Dan Lass at 259-1930.