

East Bridgewater Open Space Plan Citizen Survey

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Project Overview	3
Open Space Goals and Priorities	5
East Bridgewater’s Proposed Policies	7
Attitudes and Opinions	13
Respondent Comments	19
Sample Demographic Characteristics	21
Appendix A	25
Appendix B	26

Executive Summary

The purpose of the 2004 East Bridgewater Open Space Plan Citizen Survey is to gather information from town residents regarding their perceptions of conservation issues, support for acquisition of open space and willingness to support legislation for new open space programs. The Town of East Bridgewater occupies just over 17 square miles in Plymouth County and has a population of approximately 11,100 residents. The survey was done in conjunction with the East Bridgewater Open Space Committee and the East Bridgewater Conservation Commission.

A total of 348 completed surveys were returned from East Bridgewater residents for a response rate of 34.8 percent and a margin of error at approximately +/- 3.2 percent.

Some of the highlights of the survey are as follows:

- ? An overwhelming majority of respondents (97.7%) are somewhat or very supportive of preservation, maintenance, and acquisition of open space so that all residents will have access to natural resources that are well identified and publicized.
- ? A clear majority of respondents (88.9%) are somewhat or very supportive of acquiring open space for recreational usage for the citizens of East Bridgewater.
- ? A great majority of respondents (90.2%) are somewhat or very supportive of the establishment of a nonprofit land trust to obtain donations and manage the acquisition and maintenance of conservation land in East Bridgewater.
- ? A clear majority of respondents (86.5%) are somewhat or very supportive of the development of a town sewer system.
- ? Over two-thirds of respondents would be willing to pay an extra \$15.00 per year in taxes for the purchase and preservation of open space in East Bridgewater.
- ? A majority of respondents at 67.1 percent report they would be willing to donate time and/or funds to clean up and maintain open space and conservation areas.

Project Overview

Bridgewater State College's Institute for Regional Development, in coordination with the East Bridgewater Open Space Committee and the East Bridgewater Conservation Commission, designed and administered a citizen survey of East Bridgewater residents during the months of June and July 2004. The purpose of this survey is to assess the level of citizen support of preliminary goals and policies to be used in the town's Open Space Plan.

Prior to survey distribution, the Institute for Regional Development applied for and received approval from the Bridgewater State College Institutional Review Board. This board serves to protect human subjects who participate in research done by members of the college community.

Survey data was collected through a random sample of 1,000 East Bridgewater adult residents. A postcard notification of the survey was sent to the sample residents on June 7, 2004, followed by the first survey and participation request on June 14th. A second survey and participation request was sent out on July 8th, asking those who had not completed the first survey and return it to do so. In the survey introduction, respondents were asked to complete and return the survey by July 23, 2004. On July 30th, the Institute for Regional Development considered all surveys returned and began to analyze the results. A total of 348 surveys were returned from East Bridgewater residents.

At the survey acceptance deadline, survey responses were entered into a computer database. Using the latest state-of-the-art statistical software (SPSS for Windows Version 11.5), the data file was analyzed. Complete protection and confidentiality of the survey database was

Town of East Bridgewater – Open Space Plan Citizen Survey 2004

assured during all phases of data analysis. Access to the database is limited to the project directors and one assistant.

Open Space Goals and Priorities

Table 1
Please indicate your level of support for each of the following open space goals for the Town of East Bridgewater.

	Very Supportive	Somewhat Supportive	Not Supportive
The town will preserve, maintain and acquire open space so that all residents will have access to natural resources that are well identified and publicized. (N=344)	75.6%	22.1%	2.3%
East Bridgewater will continue to provide diverse recreation opportunities for residents of all ages. (N=342)	75.4%	21.6%	2.9%
East Bridgewater will preserve its history for conservation and educational purposes. (N=343)	72.0%	25.7%	2.3%
New development will be in keeping with East Bridgewater’s town character, which may include some changes to the existing development regulations. (N=336)	53.6%	36.9%	9.5%

Highlights:

- ? An overwhelming majority of respondents (97.7%) are somewhat or very supportive of preservation, maintenance, and acquisition of open space so that all residents will have access to natural resources that are well identified and publicized.
- ? A strong majority of respondents (75.4%) are very supportive of the provision of diverse recreation opportunities for East Bridgewater residents of all ages.
- ? The majority of respondents are very supportive of preservation of East Bridgewater’s history for conservation and educational purposes at 72 percent.
- ? The majority of respondents are very supportive of keeping new town developments consistent with East Bridgewater’s character at 53.6 percent.

Table 2

Please indicate your ranking, from among the goals listed above, which you feel are most important to East Bridgewater.

	Priority 1 (N=317)	Priority 2 (N=314)	Priority 3 (N=306)
Preserve, maintain and acquire open space	42.0%	29.6%	17.6%
Provide diverse recreation opportunities	22.7%	26.1%	45.1%
Preserve history of conservation and education	15.1%	26.8%	36.3%
New development in keeping with E.B. town character	20.2%	17.5%	18.6%

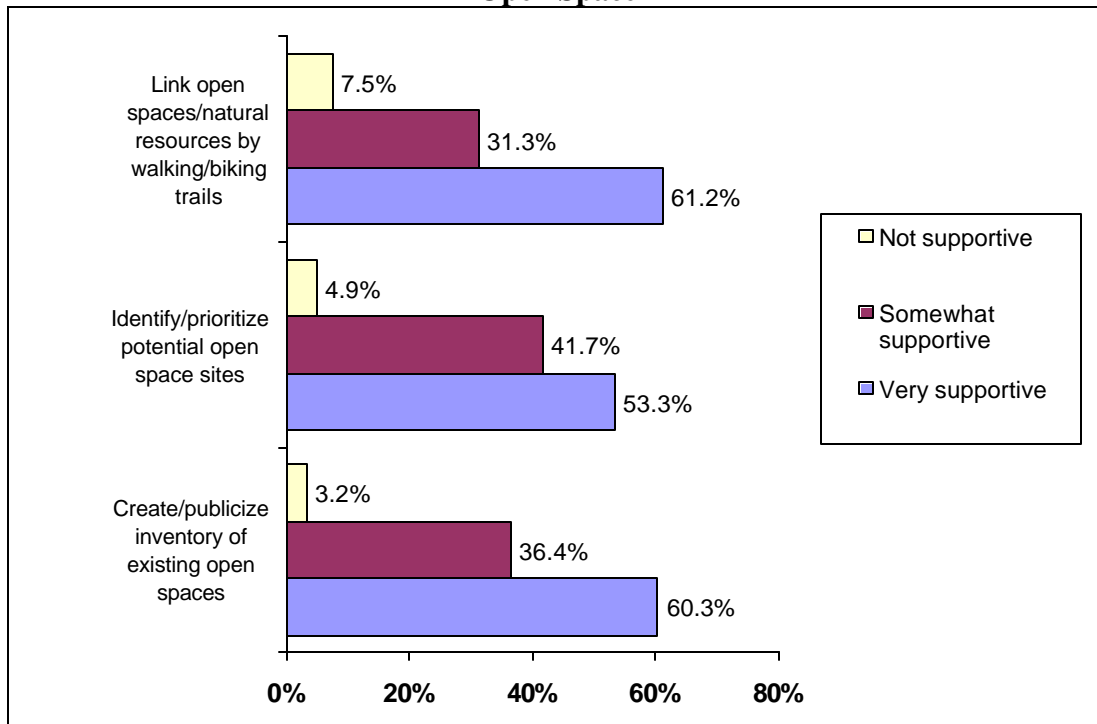
Highlights:

- ? Respondents choose the preservation, maintenance and acquisition of open space as their first priority almost two times as often as any other goal at 42.0 percent.

East Bridgewater’s Proposed Policies

Indicate your level of support for each issue of the following topics.

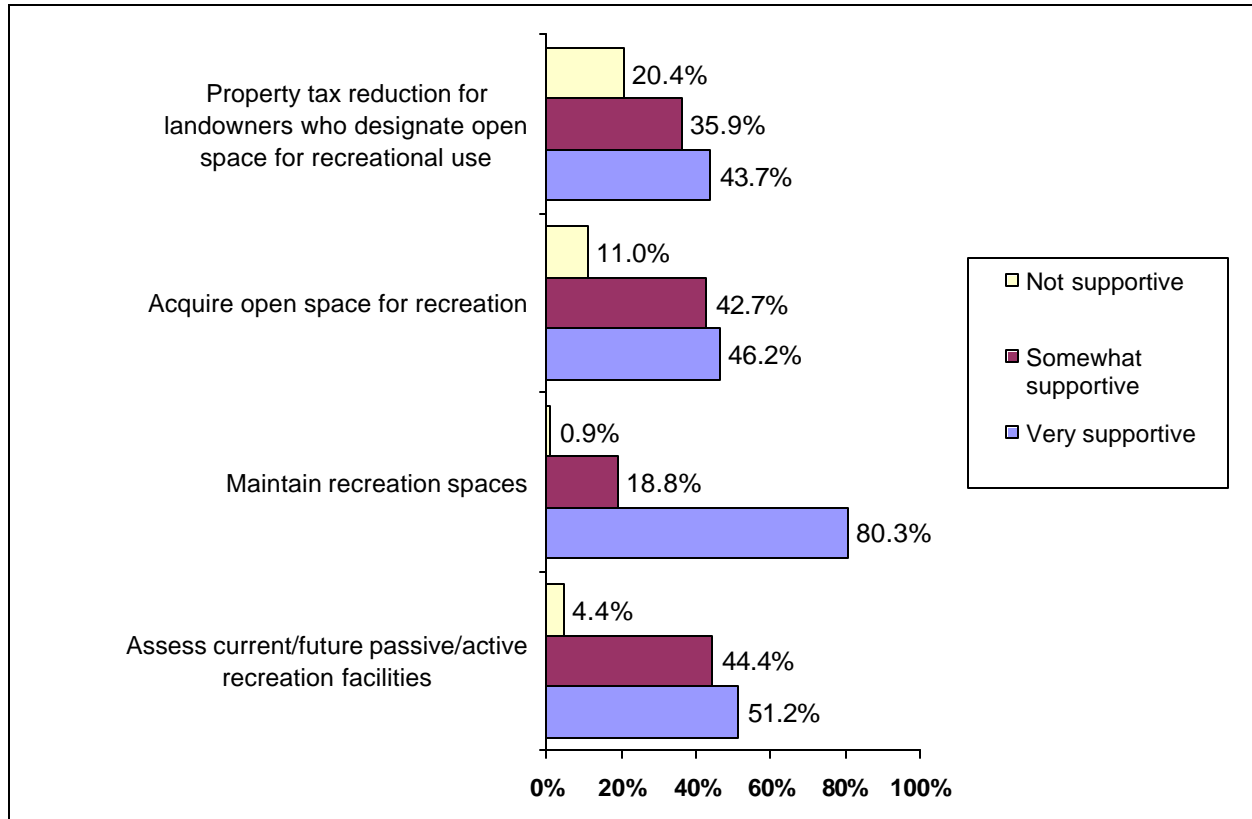
Figure 1
Open Space



Highlights:

- ? The majority of respondents are very supportive of linking open spaces with walking or biking trails *and* creating and publicizing an inventory of existing open spaces at 61.2% and 60.3% respectively.
- ? Respondents *without* children under the age of 18 living in the home are almost two times more likely (64.3%) than those *with* children under 18 living in the home (35.7%) to be very supportive of linking open spaces and natural resources in an open space network as much as possible connected by walking and biking trails.

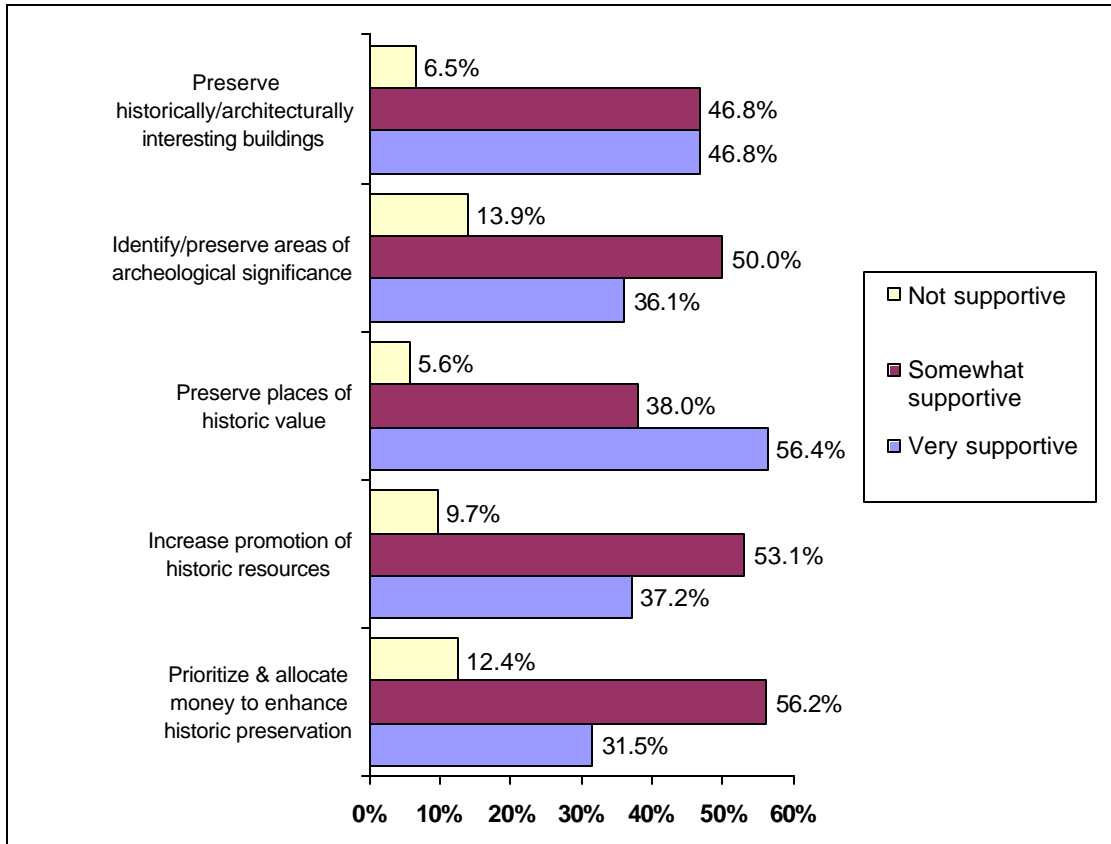
**Figure 2
Recreation**



Highlights:

- ? An overwhelming majority of respondents at 80.3 percent are very supportive of maintenance of recreation spaces.
- ? 20.4 percent of respondents are not supportive of a property tax reduction for landowners who designate open space for recreational use.
- ? 95.6 percent of respondents, an overwhelming majority, are somewhat or very supportive of assessing current and future passive and active recreation facilities.
- ? A clear majority of respondents (88.9%) are somewhat or very supportive of acquiring open space for recreational usage by the citizens of East Bridgewater.

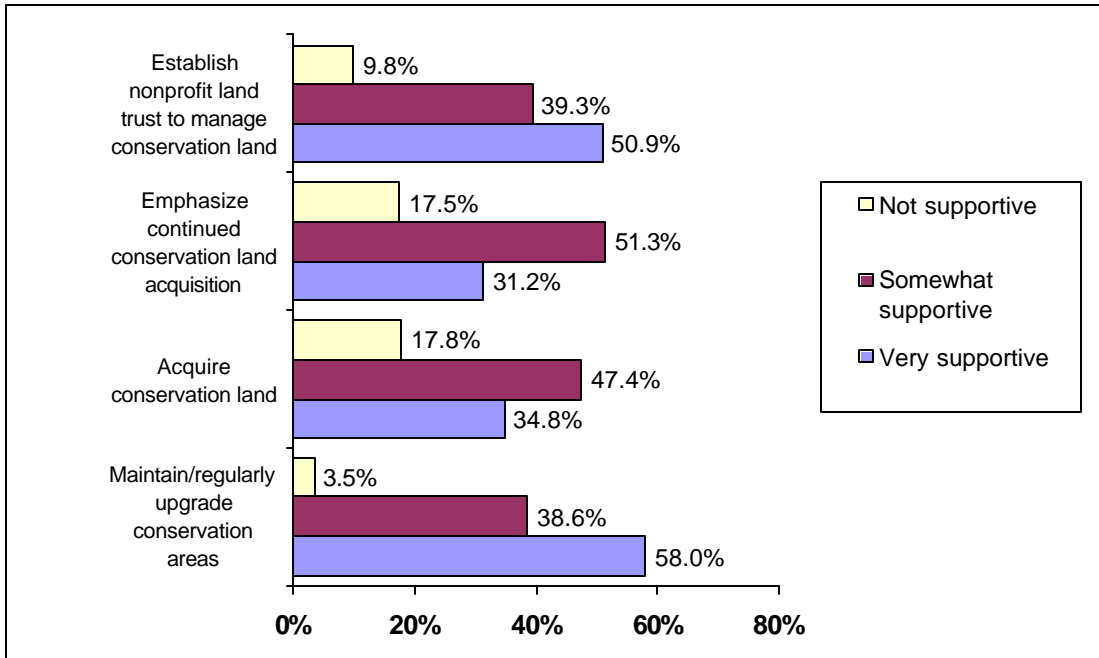
**Figure 3
Historic Resources**



Highlights:

- ? 56.4 percent of respondents are very supportive of preserving places of historic value.
- ? An equal percentage of respondents are likely to be very supportive and somewhat supportive of preserving buildings of historical and architectural interest at 46.8 percent.
- ? An overwhelming majority of respondents (90.3%) are somewhat or very supportive of increasing promotion of existing historic resources.
- ? 36.1 percent of the respondents are very supportive of an initiative in East Bridgewater to identify and preserve areas of potential archeological significance.
- ? A strong majority of respondents (87.7%) are either very or somewhat supportive of an initiative that would prioritize and allocate money to enhance historic preservation.

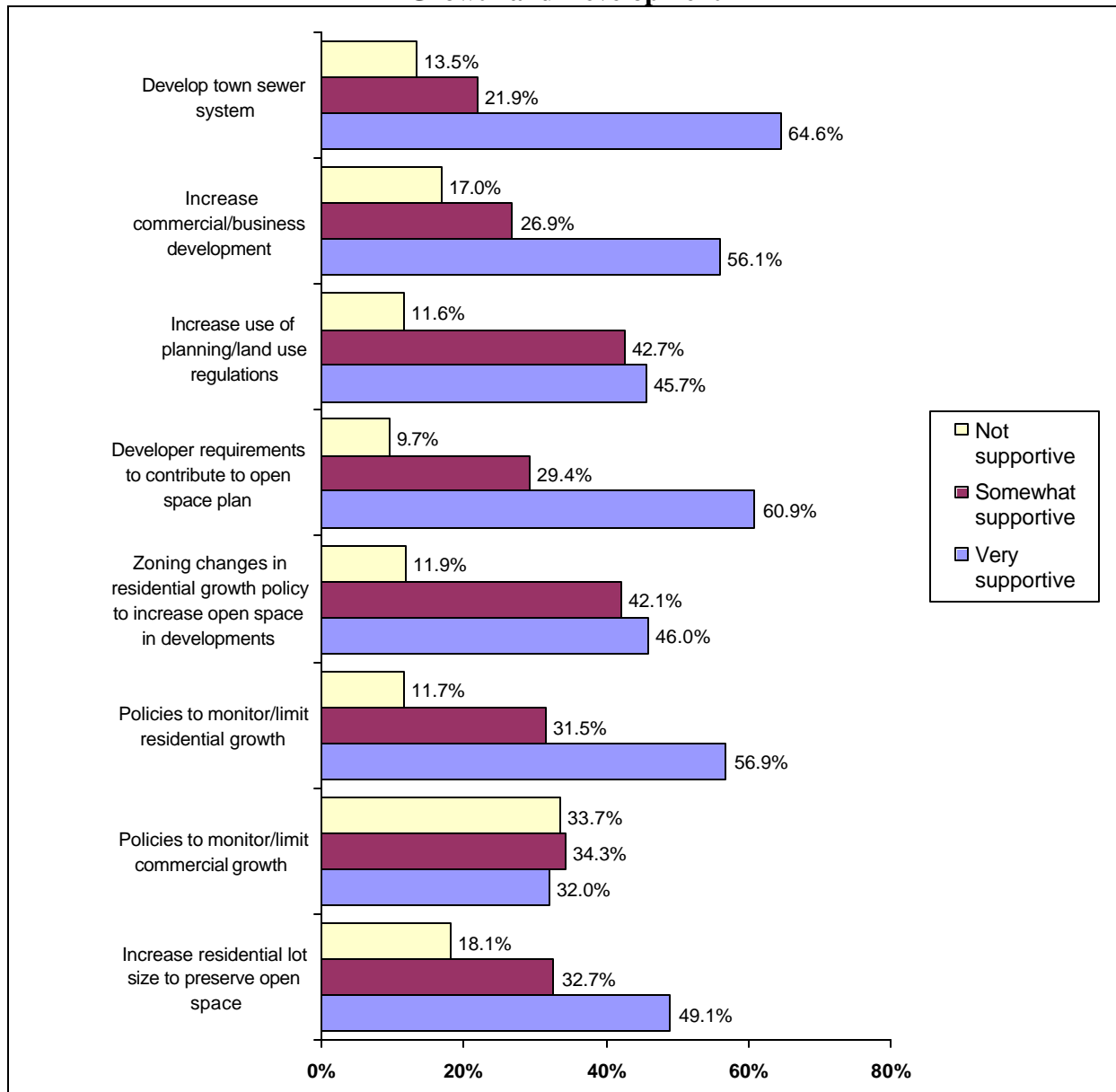
**Figure 4
Conservation**



Highlights:

- ? The majority of respondents at 58 percent are very supportive of maintenance and regular upgrades of existing conservation areas.
- ? A great majority of respondents (90.2%) are somewhat or very supportive of the establishment of a nonprofit land trust to obtain donations and manage the acquisition and maintenance of conservation land in East Bridgewater.
- ? A strong majority of respondents (82.5%) are somewhat or very supportive of the Town of East Bridgewater’s emphasis on acquisition of conservation land.

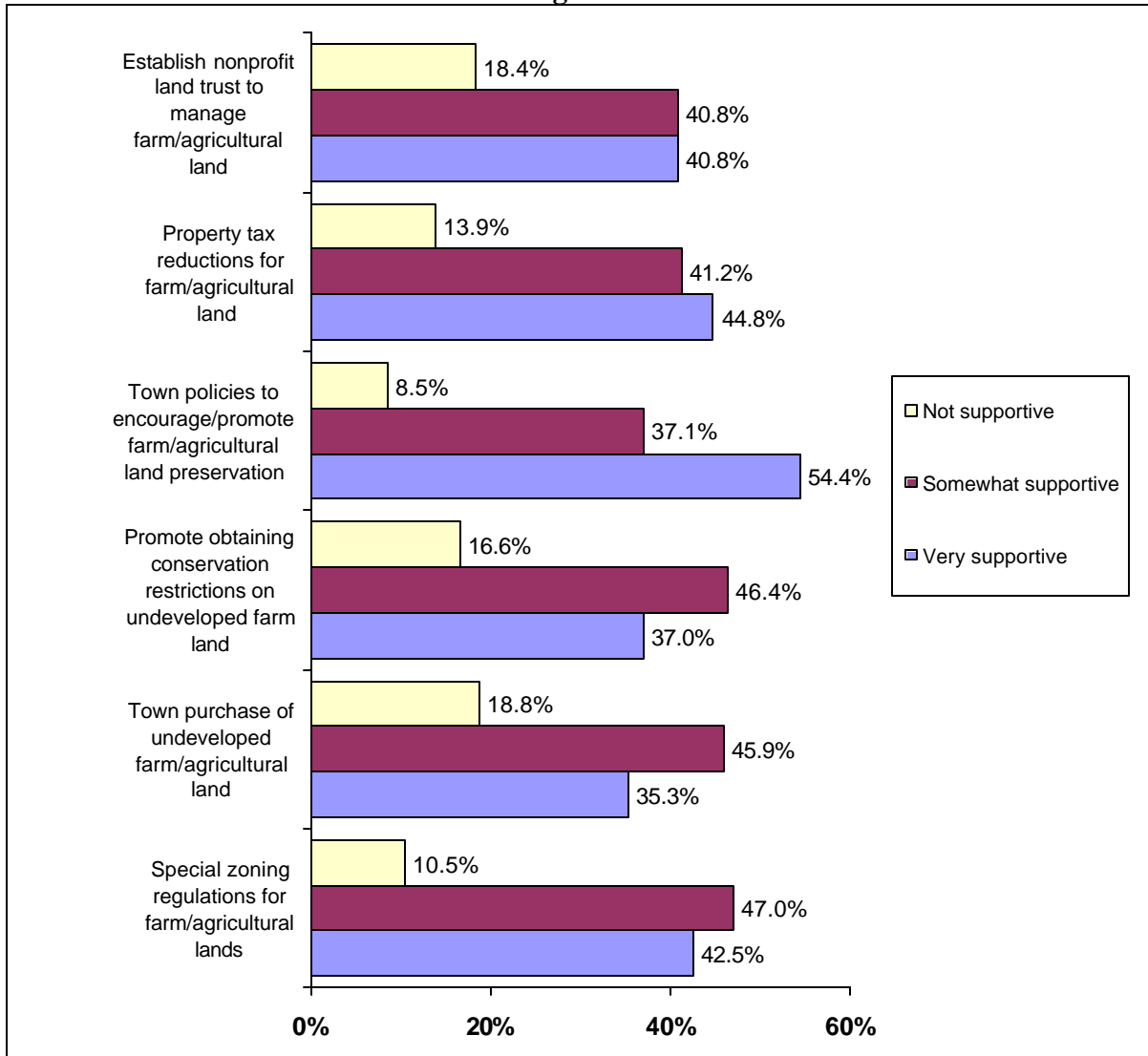
**Figure 5
Growth and Development**



Highlights:

- ? A clear majority of respondents (86.5%) are somewhat or very supportive of the development of a town sewer system.
- ? The majority of respondents are very supportive of the following issues: policies to monitor and limit residential growth (56.9%), requirements for developers to contribute to an open space plan (60.9%), and increased commercial and business development in East Bridgewater (56.1%).

**Figure 6
Farm and Agricultural Land**

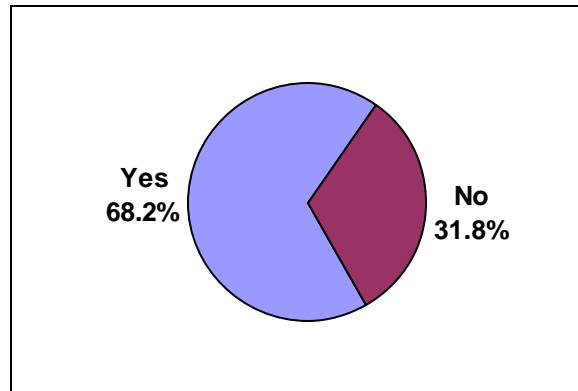


Highlights:

- ? The only issue a majority of respondents are very supportive of at 54.4 percent is town policies that encourage and promote the preservation of farm and agricultural land.
- ? A strong majority of respondents at 81.6 percent are somewhat or very supportive of the establishment of a nonprofit land trust to obtain donations and manage the acquisition and maintenance of farm/agricultural land in East Bridgewater.
- ? Of respondents who report being very supportive of special zoning regulations for farm and agricultural lands, the majority (69.8%) have no children under 18 living in the home.

Attitudes and Opinions

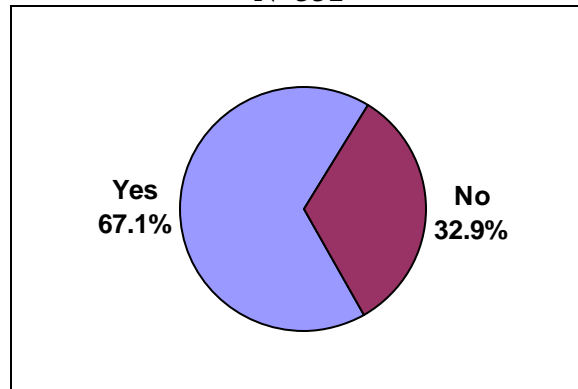
Figure 7
Would you be willing to pay an extra \$15 per year in taxes for the purchase and preservation of open space?
N=343



Highlights:

- ? Over two-thirds of respondents would be willing to pay an extra \$15.00 per year in taxes for the purchase and preservation of open space in East Bridgewater.

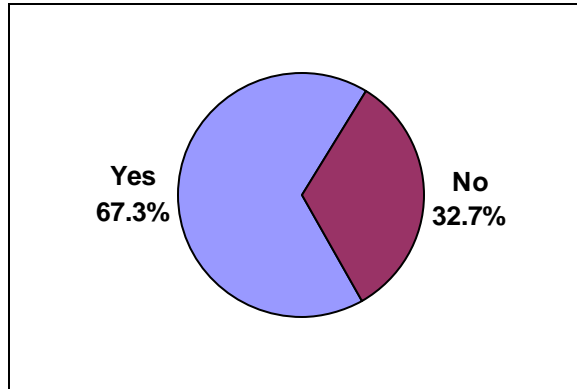
Figure 8
Would you be willing to donate time and/or funds to clean up and maintain open space and conservation areas?
N=331



Highlights:

- ? A majority of respondents at 67.1 percent report they would be willing to donate time and/or funds to clean up and maintain open space and conservation areas.

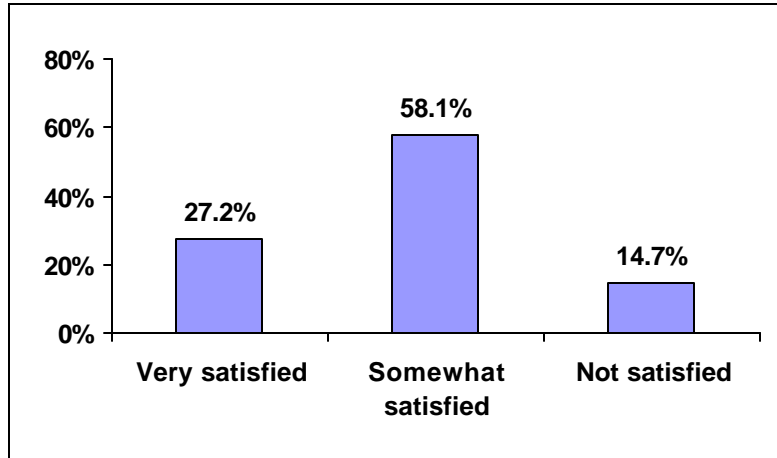
Figure 9
Do you think that East Bridgewater should develop a plan to establish a nonprofit Natural Resources Trust to purchase endangered properties?
N=337



Highlights:

- ? A significant majority of respondents (67.3%) think East Bridgewater should develop a plan to establish a nonprofit Natural Resources Trust to purchase endangered properties.

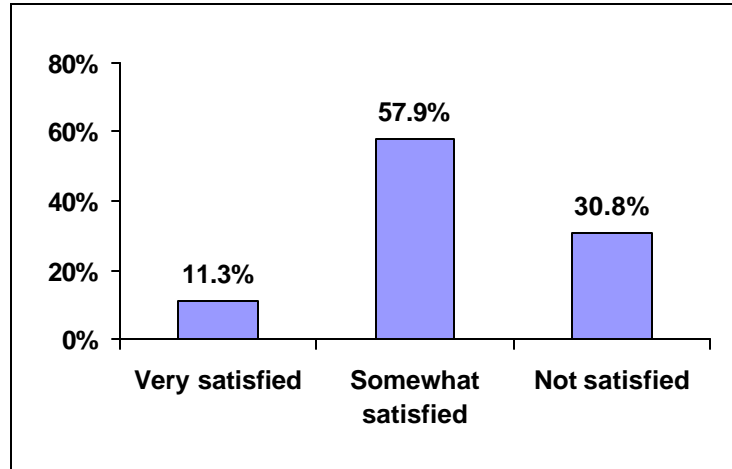
Figure 10
How satisfied are you with current recreational programs and facilities for youth?
N=336



Highlights:

- ? The majority of respondents at 58.1 percent report being somewhat satisfied with current recreational programs and facilities for youth.
- ? More respondents are very satisfied with current recreational programs and facilities for youth (27.2%) than are not satisfied (14.7%).
- ? The majority of respondents (61.7%) who report not being satisfied with current recreational programs and facilities for youth have children under 18 living in the home.

Figure 11
How satisfied are you with current recreational programs and facilities for adults?
N=334



Highlights:

- ? The majority of respondents at 57.9 percent are somewhat satisfied with current recreational programs and facilities for adults.
- ? Almost one-third of respondents are not satisfied with current recreational programs and facilities for adults.

Table 3
Among the items listed below, how important is it for East Bridgewater to have these types of recreation facilities?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Playing fields (soccer, football, etc.)	69.6%	23.9%	6.5%
Children’s play areas	67.7%	27.6%	4.7%
Conservation areas	56.9%	36.4%	6.7%
Public access to lakes and ponds	52.0%	34.8%	13.2%
Bike trails	46.3%	44.3%	9.4%
Family picnic areas	43.3%	42.4%	14.2%
Recreation center	35.4%	38.6%	26.0%
Local neighborhood parks	32.0%	43.8%	24.3%
Hiking and skiing trails	31.6%	71.7%	28.3%
Large parks with amenities	26.3%	36.4%	37.3%
Town swimming pool	19.6%	21.3%	59.1%
Tennis courts	17.2%	46.6%	36.2%
Ice skating rink	15.2%	35.9%	49.0%
Outdoor theater	13.2%	33.2%	53.5%
Golf course	12.9%	26.4%	60.7%

Highlights:

- ? Respondents reported that there are four types of recreation facilities that are very important for East Bridgewater to have: sports fields - 69.6 percent, children’s play areas - 67.7 percent, conservation areas - 56.9 percent and public access to lakes and ponds - 52 percent.
- ? The majority of respondents at 71.7 percentage report that hiking and skiing trails are somewhat important to have in East Bridgewater.
- ? Of the 32 respondents who checked “Other” for this question, 12 responded with “sidewalks” at 37.5 percent.
- ? Five types of recreation facilities are considered very important by less than 20 percent of respondents: a town swimming pool, tennis courts, an ice skating rink, an outdoor theater, and a golf course.

Respondent Comments

Table 4
Are there any particular areas in town you would like to see preserved or made available for public use?

N=87

	Percent
Robin's Pond	19.5%
Bannerman Farm	13.8%
Sachem Rock	9.2%
Leland Farm	6.9%
Other	50.6%

* For a complete list, please see Appendix A.

Highlights:

- ? Robin's Pond is the area of East Bridgewater that the most respondents report wanting to see preserved or made available for public use at 19.5%.

Table 5
Please provide any additional comments regarding East Bridgewater’s proposed open space goals and policies.

N=91

	Percent
Improve recreation and youth services	16.7%
Cost/taxes are a concern	11.1%
Better communication regarding town activities	8.9%
Develop sewer system	8.9%
Repairs are a priority	6.7%
More open space/larger lot sizes	6.7%
Other	41.1%

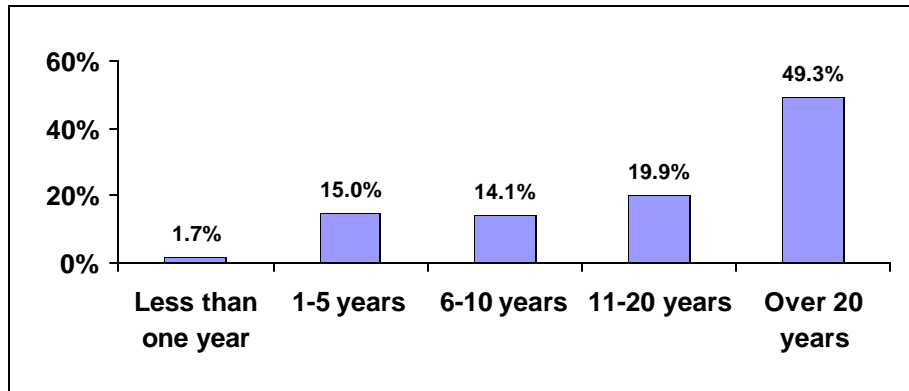
For a complete list, please see Appendix B.

Highlights:

- ? The largest percentage of respondents (16.7%) want improvements in recreation facilities and youth services in East Bridgewater.

Sample Demographic Characteristics

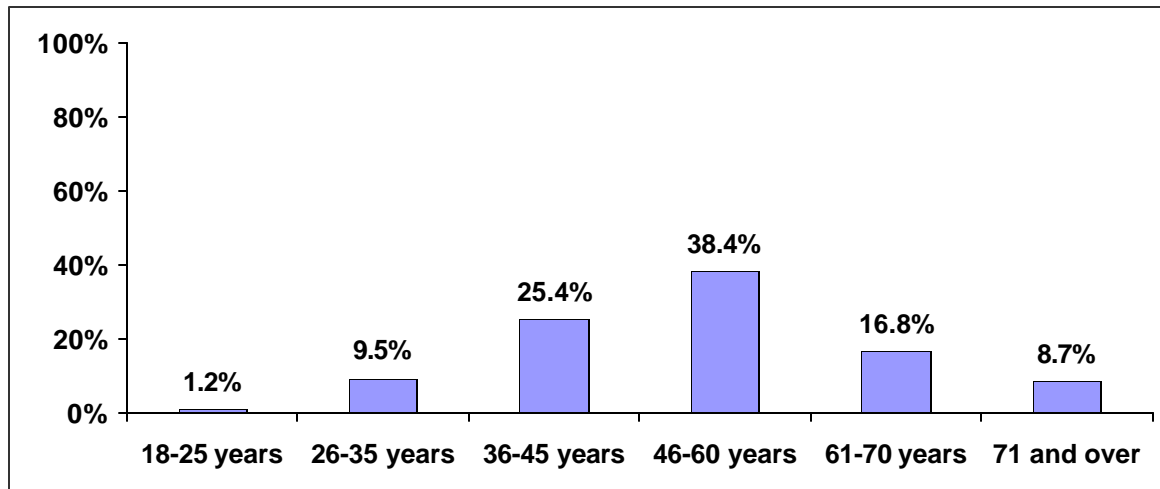
Figure 12
How long have you lived in East Bridgewater?
N=347



Highlights:

- ? The largest percentage of residents at 49.3 percent report they have lived in East Bridgewater for over 20 years.

Figure 13
Into which of the following age groups do you fall?
N=346



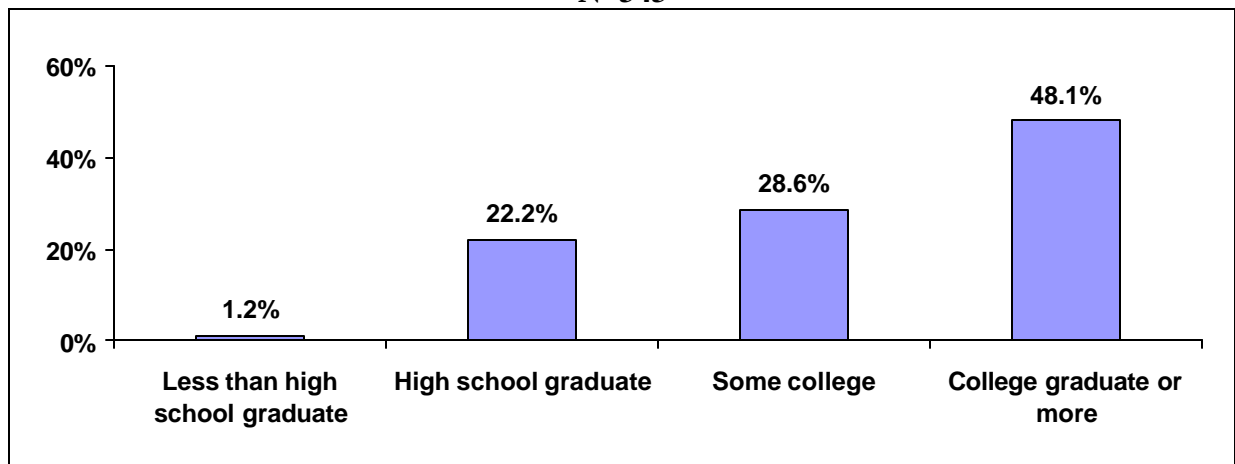
Highlights:

- ? The largest percentage of respondents (38.4%) report they are between 46 and 60 years old.

Figure 14

What is the last grade in school you completed?

N=343



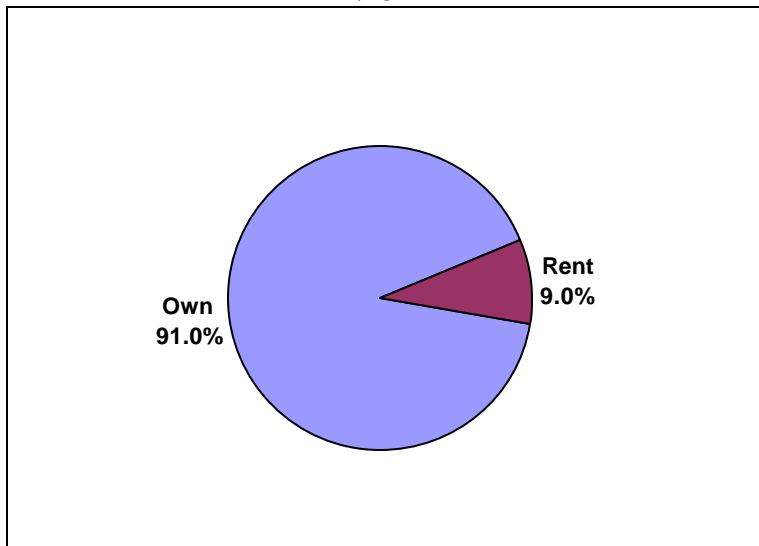
Highlights:

? Almost half (48.1%) of all respondents report having a college degree or more.

Figure 15

Do you own or rent your home?

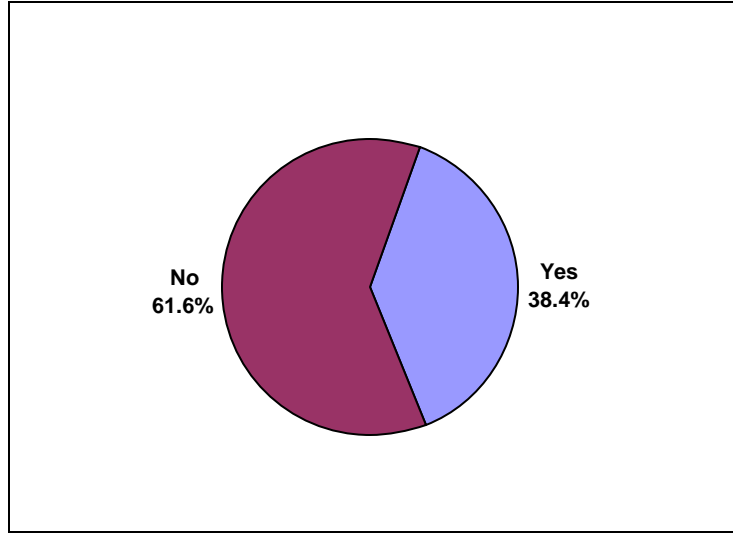
N=344



Highlights:

? An overwhelming majority of respondents report that they own their own home.

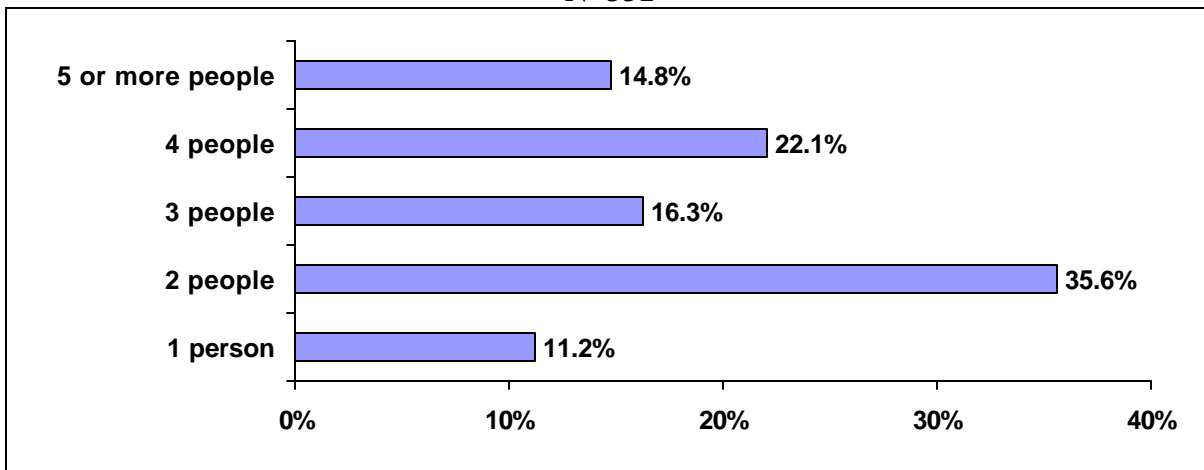
Figure 16
Do you have children under the age of 18 living in your home?
N=344



Highlights:

- ? Well over half of all respondents report having no children less than 18 years of age living in the home.

Figure 17
How many people live in your household?
N=331



Highlights:

- ? Almost half (46.8%) of all respondents report having one or two people in the household.

Figure 18
What is your gender?
N=305

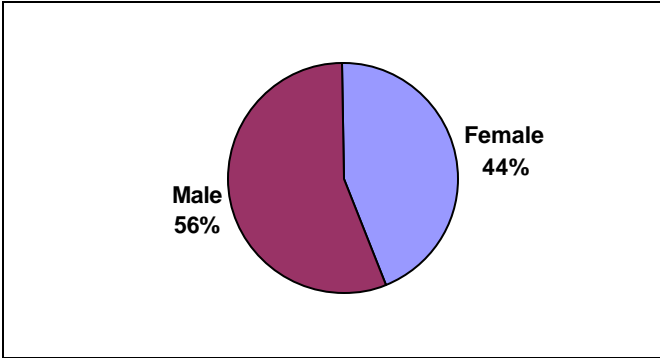
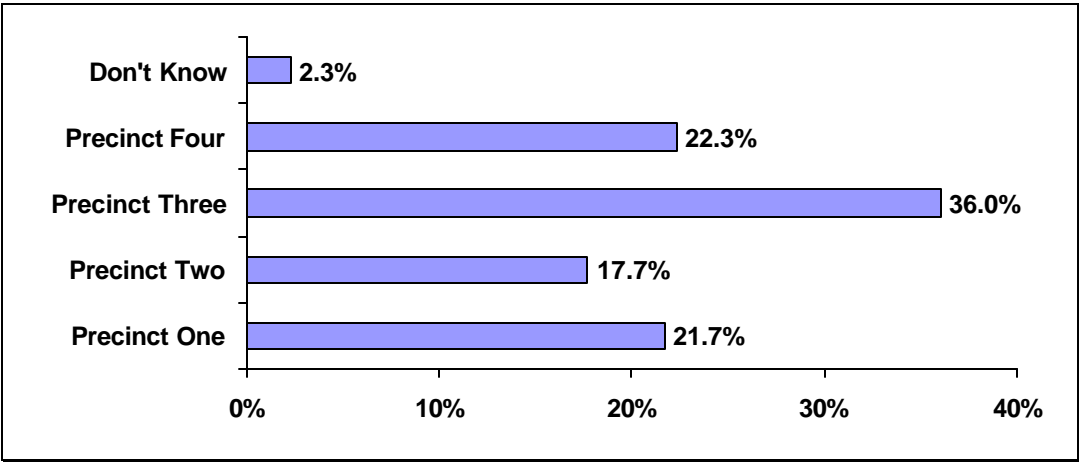


Figure 19
In which precinct do you live?
N=175



Highlights:

- ? Of the 175 respondents who answered this question, 36.0 percent report that they live in Precinct Three.

Appendix A N=87

Are there any particular areas in town you would like to see preserved or made available for public use?

Across from post office- recreational facility
Area behind Central/High schools
Areas around bodies of water
Bannerman Farm (12)
Center of Town
Central St Farm (5)
Church Street
Conservation for wildlife, not public
Cotton Gin
Develop/maintain sports fields
Duck pond near Skips/Mary Lou's--paths, benches
Eastern states steel turned into park
Forge pond- fishing, boating, wildlife
Forge Pond-fix it or fill it
Hiking trails needed
Hunting/fishing/camping--not playing fields/picnic areas
Komarinisky Farm
Land across from 773 Plymouth St on Rt 106
Land behind Strongs baseball field down to Satucket River
Large plots of land in general
Leland Farm (6)
Lot across from post office
Maintenance of old wooden children's playground
Mill Pond area
Old bank house in center of town
Old Colony railroad bed
Old Foxboro Company land
Old railroad bed converted to bike/walking trail
Old railroad beds to be made trail for public use
Plymouth St Mill
Post office area land
Public boat ramp at Robins Pond
Robins Pond (15)
Sachem Rock (9)
Satucket River (2)
Save as much open land as possible
Southeast watershed areas
Superfund site across from post office
Thatcher St. Landfill converted for public use
Town Center
Town forest (2)
Town park
Walking trail along church street
Washington/Central St Land
Water quality
Wildwood Ave to Union St to Whitman Ln

Appendix B
N=91

Please provide any additional comments regarding East Bridgewater's proposed open space goals and policies?

Agree with purpose
Agrees w/ proposal
All depends on what you can do and how much it will cost
Basketball courts
Better clean-up needed
Both preservation and commercial development is important
Buy more land for parks
Center of Town
Collaboration with W. Bridgewater
Commercial/residential building is killing our wildlife
Concentrate on repairing existing infrastructure
Coordinate w/ other departments for efficiency
Developers taking land at alarming rate
Do not increase taxes to accomplish these goals
Do not provide activities that will attract people outside of EB, for traffic and pollution reasons
Don't build what we don't need
EB needs rural flavor
EB should propose to have 1-2 acre house lots to maintain country appeal
Emphasis should be put on those facilities that don't exist, like rink, etc.
Encourage business
Fix downtown buildings
Float bond for domed stadium
For open space but need an alternative to paying more taxes
Forge Pond dam needs to be fixed
Give thought to coop farm
Goals need to be clearer
Goals/policies should be made known to public
In best interest of town, encourage commercial growth while preserving history and culture
In support of more open space
Kids should be able to have indoor pool/skating rink for affordable price-like MDC
Larger lot sizes
Like tax reductions for land
Limit commercial growth
Limit residential growth
Lot size should be increased
Maintain what is already town-owned
Maps
Money is problem
Most open areas have developments coming
Need bike/hiking trails
Need commercial development area to reduce tax rate
Need recreational activities for ages 18-26

Town of East Bridgewater – Open Space Plan Citizen Survey 2004

Need to balance town's tax needs in respects to commercial & residential
Need to publish info at existing recreational programs/areas
Not well enough understood or publicized
On the side of preservation vs. commercial development
Open space acquisition will increase property tax which may hurt senior citizens
Open space good, but can't use tax dollars
Open space should benefit all, not select few
Open space should benefit citizens not burden
Open spaces should be preserved for historical and recreational purposes
People join committees for personal agendas
Plan ahead
Playing fields need to be maintained
Priority should be to spruce up center of town
Provide additional info about plans
Provide services rather than dwell on open space
Public swimming-ponds
Recreation facilities for summer
Release damn so land could be used for public
Research buying the "development rights"--prevents development
Residents need to know what is available for use and rules of use
Safety enforcement on Robins Pond
Slow down residential building
Stay with open space
Stop residential "mansions"
Stop residential growth
Take better care of what we have
Tax on property bought/sold for future purchase of land
Taxes at peak high already
Too many unknown factors to answer these questions
Town badly needs sewer system
Town center has potential to be charming
Town needs park for public use
Town owns a lot of open space
Town sewer system (8)
Town should not acquire more land until Bannerman/Leland Farms are developed for recreational use
Town's priority should be pure, clean water
Use of 2 town owned properties
What is available for recreation needs to be advertised by town
Whitman's example of park/pool
Wish there was more for kids to do in summer
Would be nice to use land instead of posting things we can't do on it
Youth center would be great addition



Institute for Regional Development

One of the missions of Bridgewater State College is to serve the Southeastern Massachusetts region by working to enhance its intellectual, economic, cultural and civic well being. To this end, the College established the Institute for Regional Development on September 1, 1996. The Institute serves as the viable focal point for College initiatives related to enhancing the quality of life in Southeastern Massachusetts. The mission of the Institute is to serve as a resource center for the public, private, and non-profit sectors of Southeastern Massachusetts through applied research, training, and technical assistance programs.

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