

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Overview & Purpose

To help collect public input on issues important to the residents of West Pawlet, a brief survey was distributed within the village center and surrounding areas. The purpose of this survey was to help inform locals about the Master Plan process, identify priorities, collect input on known issues, and allow people to identify additional topics or concerns that were not previously discussed. The resulting feedback was informative to identify specific topics which should be discussed further in the later focus group meetings as well as note individual suggestions for the Master Plan.

Survey Design

The survey questions were developed using input from the Open House event as well as suggested topics collected from the Municipal Planning Grant Committee (the committee). Regrowth Planning developed a list of draft questions which were reviewed and discussed by the committee, which were then refined until the final text was agreed upon. The selected questions were then formatted to fit within four pages (two double-sided sheets) to keep it brief and for easy mailing.

The first question on the survey asked people to rank the relative importance of various general topics for the village so that the committee would have information on local priorities and identify future focus group meetings. The remaining questions asked for additional input or detail on these same subjects. The last question provided an open-ended response for people to write in about any topic they pleased. (See copy of survey in Appendix)

Survey Distribution

The survey was distributed in hardcopy via U.S. Postal Service and also made available online for people who did not receive a copy or for additional household members who wished to participate. Since the official “Village Designation” area for West Pawlet is quite small, it was decided that the survey should be mailed directly to all households which were served by the West Pawlet Wastewater Treatment facility. The mailing list for wastewater bills was used as a first step to identify recipients. This list was then reviewed and compared against local tax and property data to identify property owners who lived (or had mailing addresses) out of town, so that an additional copy of the survey could be mailed directly to current occupants of the local home. A total of 137 paper surveys were mailed out.

The survey was additionally advertised on Facebook through the local West Pawlet Neighbors group, as well as on the local Front Porch Forum website.

The paper survey was mailed out on August 23rd with responses collected at Town Hall on September 20th and the closing of the online version on the evening of October 2nd.

Survey Results

Surveys Mailed Out: 137¹

Paper survey responses: 19

Online survey responses: 24

Total survey responses: 43

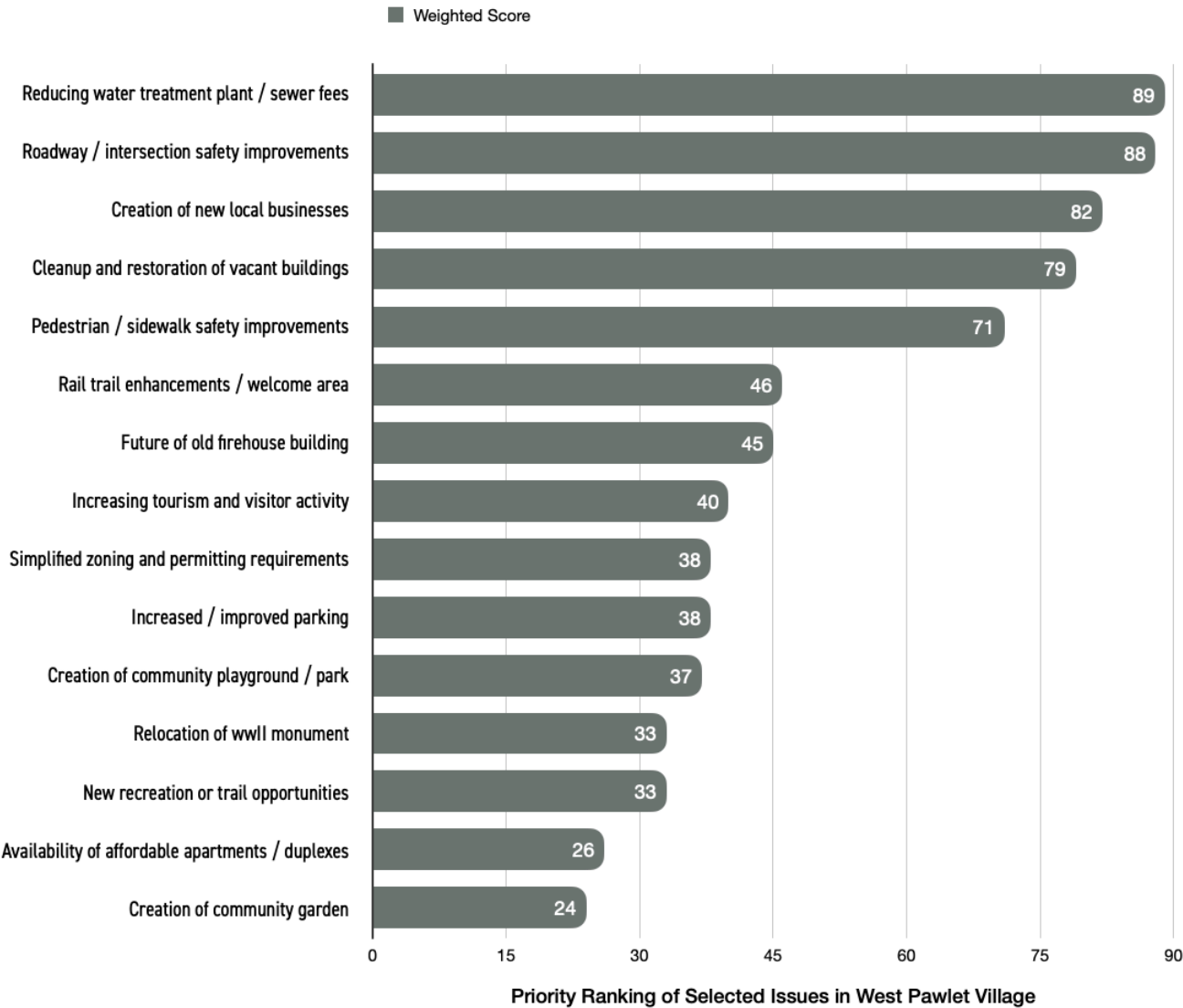
¹ 23 survey envelopes were returned by the postal service as undeliverable to the direct home address.

1 How important to you are each of the following issues in West Pawlet?

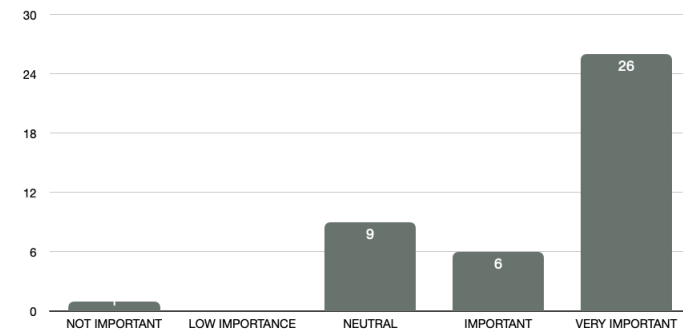
The purpose of this first question was to get a sense of the relative priorities for local residents, starting with a number of issues identified by the Committee and during the open house event. This would help to identify priorities for the plan, as well as help narrow down the important topics for the focus group meetings which would follow. Respondents were asked to rate each topic on a scale from “not

important” to “very important”. The results of each topic are provided on the following pages. For ease of relative comparison, these results were also scored and sorted into a single chart, shown below.

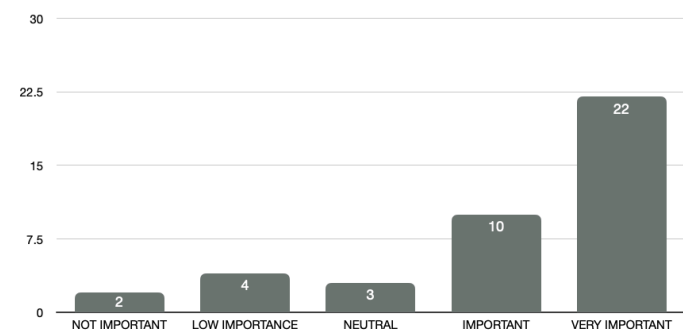
Not surprisingly, “Reducing the water treatment plant / sewer fees” was noted as the most important topic within the village. This was quickly followed by



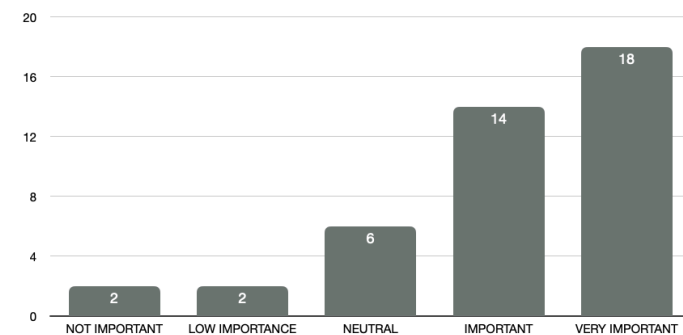
▲ Priority Ranking of Selected Issues in West Pawlet. Results of question 1, ranked and scored in relative importance for comparative purposes. Scoring weights used as follows: “Not Important” = -1, “Neutral” = 0, “Low Importance” = 1, “Important” = 2, “Very Important” = 3



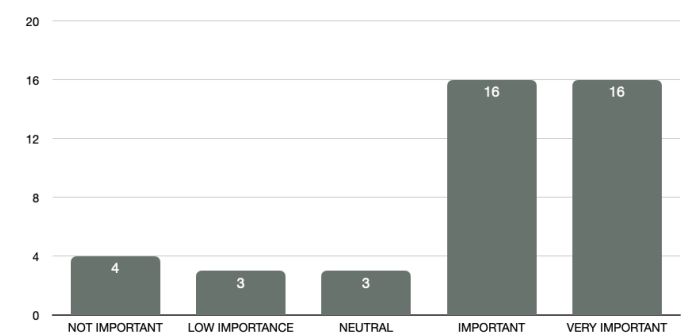
▲ Reducing Water Treatment / Sewer Fees



▲ Roadway / Intersection Safety Improvements



▲ Creation of New Local Businesses



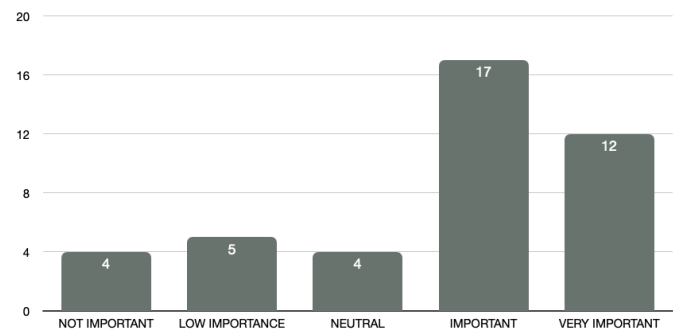
▲ Cleanup and Restoration of Vacant Buildings

“Roadway and intersection safety improvements”, which many people commented on later in the written comment sections. “Creation of new local businesses”, “Cleanup and restoration of vacant buildings” and “Pedestrian / sidewalk safety improvements” rounded out the top 5 issues of importance.

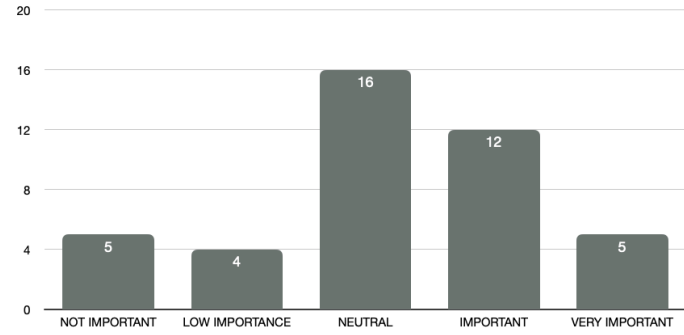
Remaining topics fell sharply after that in relative priority. It should be noted that a few people who scored the “relocation of the WWI Monument” as “Not Important” were actually very vocal in their comments that the monument should *not* be moved. This would imply that the issue of the monument relocation was in fact important (or very important) to them, however they interpreted the question differently than intended. It is likely that this topic would in reality rank slightly higher in importance than it appears here.

Residents were also given the opportunity to provide write-in answers on other topics which they felt were important to the village. These comments have been included on the following pages.

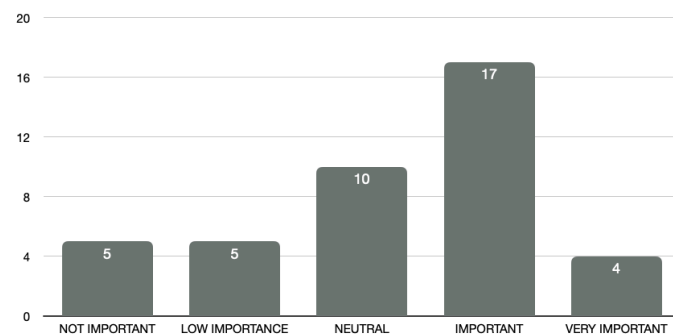
Takeaways. The planning process anticipated up to four separate focus group meetings to discuss priority topics in more detail. From this feedback there appear to be five clear issues of importance. The water treatment plant, while a very complicated and technical issue, warrants further discussion of available options. Creation of new local businesses, particularly the potential for a new corner store, should also be covered. Roadway and intersection safety improvements could very logically be combined with pedestrian and sidewalk safety improvements into one topic as part of an overall village beautification discussion. Lastly, the cleanup and restoration of vacant buildings is recommended as a focus group topic, and could include related zoning issues.



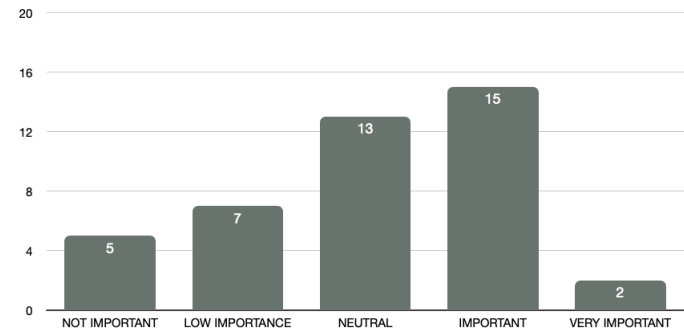
Pedestrian / Sidewalk Safety Improvements



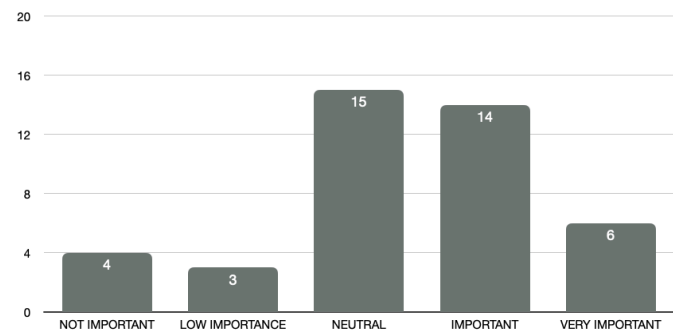
Simplified Zoning / Permitting Requirements



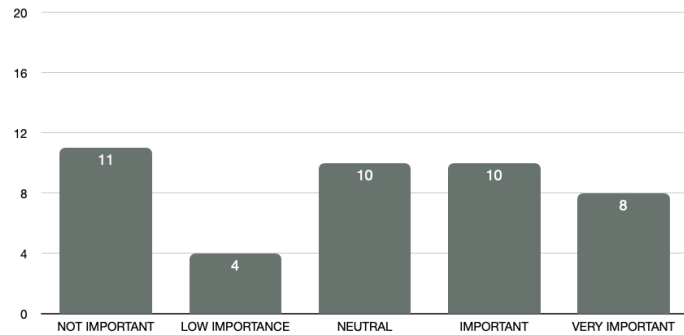
Rail Trail Enhancements / Welcome Area



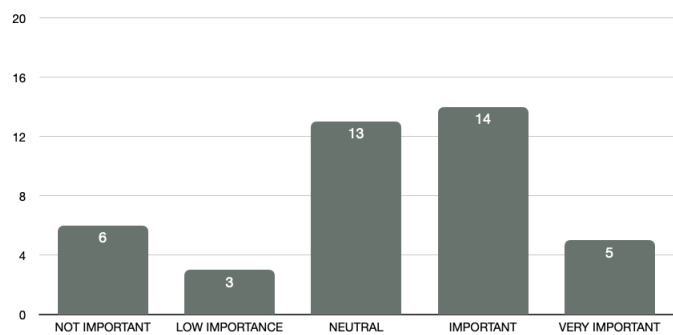
Increased / Improved Parking



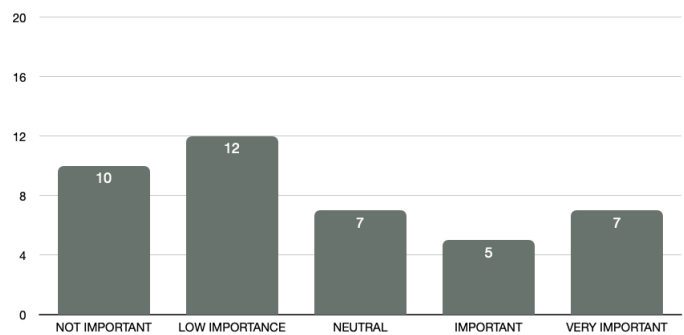
Future of Old Firehouse Building



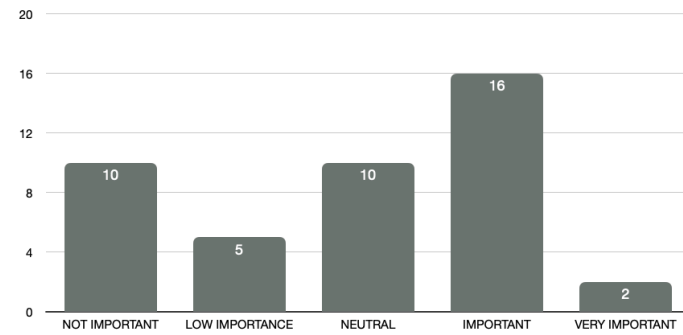
Creation of Community Playground / Park



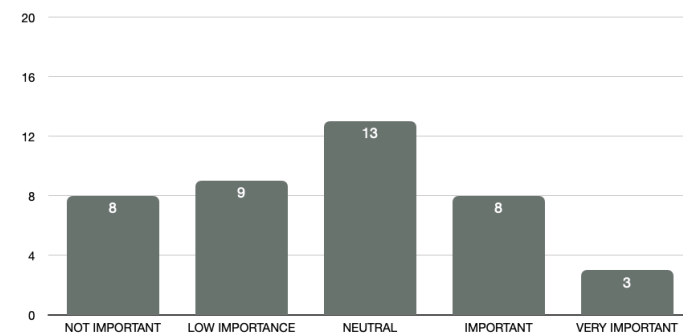
Increasing Tourism and Visitor Activity



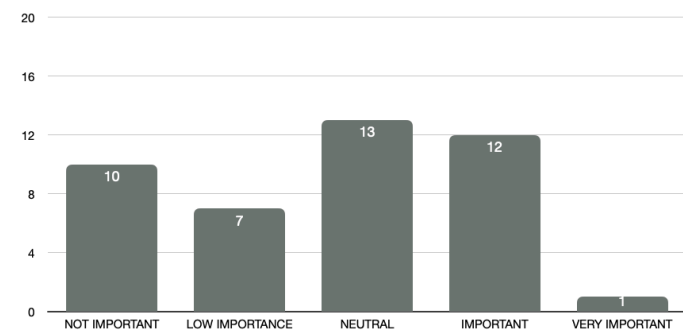
Relocation of WWI Monument



▲ New Recreation or Trail Opportunities



▲ Availability of Affordable Apartments / Duplexes



▲ Creation of Community Garden

2 Are there other issues that you feel might be important to the village? *Text provided in [brackets] added by Regrowth Planning as editorial notes, noting where people wrote in the margins for a specific item or where there is uncertainty, etc.*

1. Increased spaces for community to gather and connect. Improved outreach and welcome to new community members. Improved understanding and celebration of West Pawlet's historic cultural and ethnic diversity.
2. We need stores
3. Perhaps the collapsing road over the slate quarry on VT-153
4. Local support for any businesses or recreational areas. Well defined traffic pattern at intersection of 153 and Egg Street.
5. With a park could come opportunity for farmer's market location, and could also drive tourism and creation of new local businesses.
6. Quite vital: General store in Village
7. Firehouse Annex building should be used for storage. Monument stays where it is. Very calm, quiet town that you should not try to ruin by adding more parking.
8. Remove tree and clean up outside [Editor's Note: Not sure but I think this comment might be referring to the Firehouse annex area.]
9. Fix where Reicey[?] screwed the road up by pumping that pit. Tired of driving my trucks over it.
10. I will STRONGLY OPPOSE [Firehouse Annex] building demolition and Monument move. Perfect "country" store building and location DO NOT DEMOLISH! I will design + volunteer to help renovate. Do not move monument! [Community park / playground not important] UNLESS you do this at Quarry + Amphitheater Rock Face To Quarry Pond that would be awesome.
11. Would love to see a community cooperative store for local products, produce, artwork, crafts, maybe maker space, meeting room.
12. [Re: new recreation or trail opportunities] River Road fly fishing. Maybe Dog Park at Cath Church now closed. Electric car outlets [at firehouse annex] for downtown residents reserved with small fee & lock. The empty building that sticks out in the road and the roof drops a significant snow load across the road. Resolve the issues of ownership, dismantle and open up for parking. (Forget tables due to foul breezes from wastewater plant)
13. heavy trucks illegal use of and enforcement of their use of River road
14. I just want to emphasize how important the intersection is....I think its the #1 project. Also there has been talk of Solar? Seems a good idea!
15. The old firehouse belongs to the WPVFD. Improve Rte 153 between quarries; it is caving in and has no barriers (fencing) that would prevent a fatal accident.
16. I fee the traffic intersection at the World War I monument is confusing to visitors and outdated by current standards. Please move the monument and redesign the intersection to modern traffic patterns. I wish the old barn across from the former "Duchies" could be torn down - it feels like it juts into the road. But I realize it is privately owned so government does not have control of it.

3 If the existing WWI monument were to be relocated, where do you feel would be the best location for it?

This question provided people with five choices:

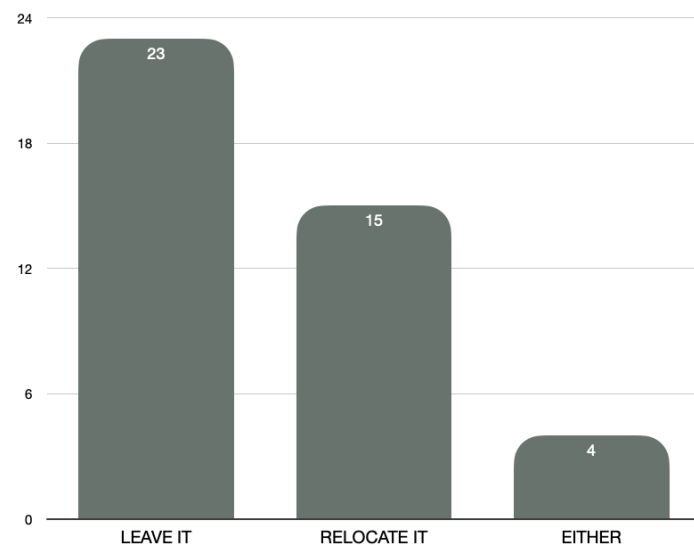
- **Leave it** where it is (but provide landscaping and intersection safety improvements around it).
- **Relocate** to a new park/seating area near the Firehouse Annex building.
- **Relocate** to a new park/seating area near the Rail Trail parking area.
- **Relocate** to a new park/seating area near the Rail Trail trail head.
- **Other** (write-in answer)

Since people were given the freedom to select more than one option, it was (for example) possible for them to select all three of the relocation options provided. This means that someone indicating they wanted the monument to remain had only one “vote”, while someone who wanted to relocate the monument could potentially vote three times. To account for this, we first look at the total number of people who wanted the monument to remain where it is (vs.) the total number people who wanted it to be relocated (somewhere)¹. The results of this breakdown shows that 23 people preferred that it remain where it currently is, 15 people wanted to see it relocated, and four were in support of either.

We then looked at only the responses which supported one of the different relocation options to see which locations were the most popular. Of

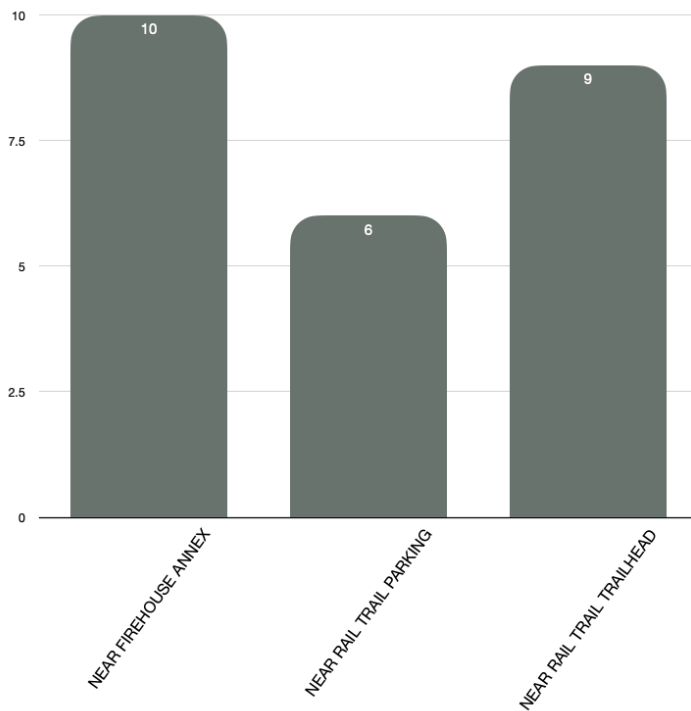


the people who indicated support for one or more relocation options, the option near the Firehouse Annex building was the most popular. This was followed by the Rail Trail Trailhead. The least popular relocation option was near the Rail Trail parking area. Note that because people were allowed to select multiple relocation options, the total number of votes for the different options (25) exceeds the number of people who voted to relocate it or were identified as “either”.



▲ WWI Monument Relocation - Response Distribution

¹ Two people did not select a leave/relocate option, however wrote in the “other” comment field that they wanted it to either remain or be moved. Others indicated they would support both leaving it where it was and at least one relocation option, so they were identified as “either”.



▲ WWI Monument - Popularity of Relocation Options

Takeaways. The general consensus from this (very small) sampling seems to indicate a preference of leaving the monument where it is. A few people indicated that they did not want to see any safety or landscaping improvements added around its current location, despite the fact that “Roadway and intersection safety improvements” were identified as the second highest community priority. It is possible that these people are concerned that any safety and landscaping “improvements” would come in the form of standard State DOT highway measures such as steel bollards or bright orange directional arrows which would obviously detract from the stately simplicity of the monument and, quite frankly, be ugly.

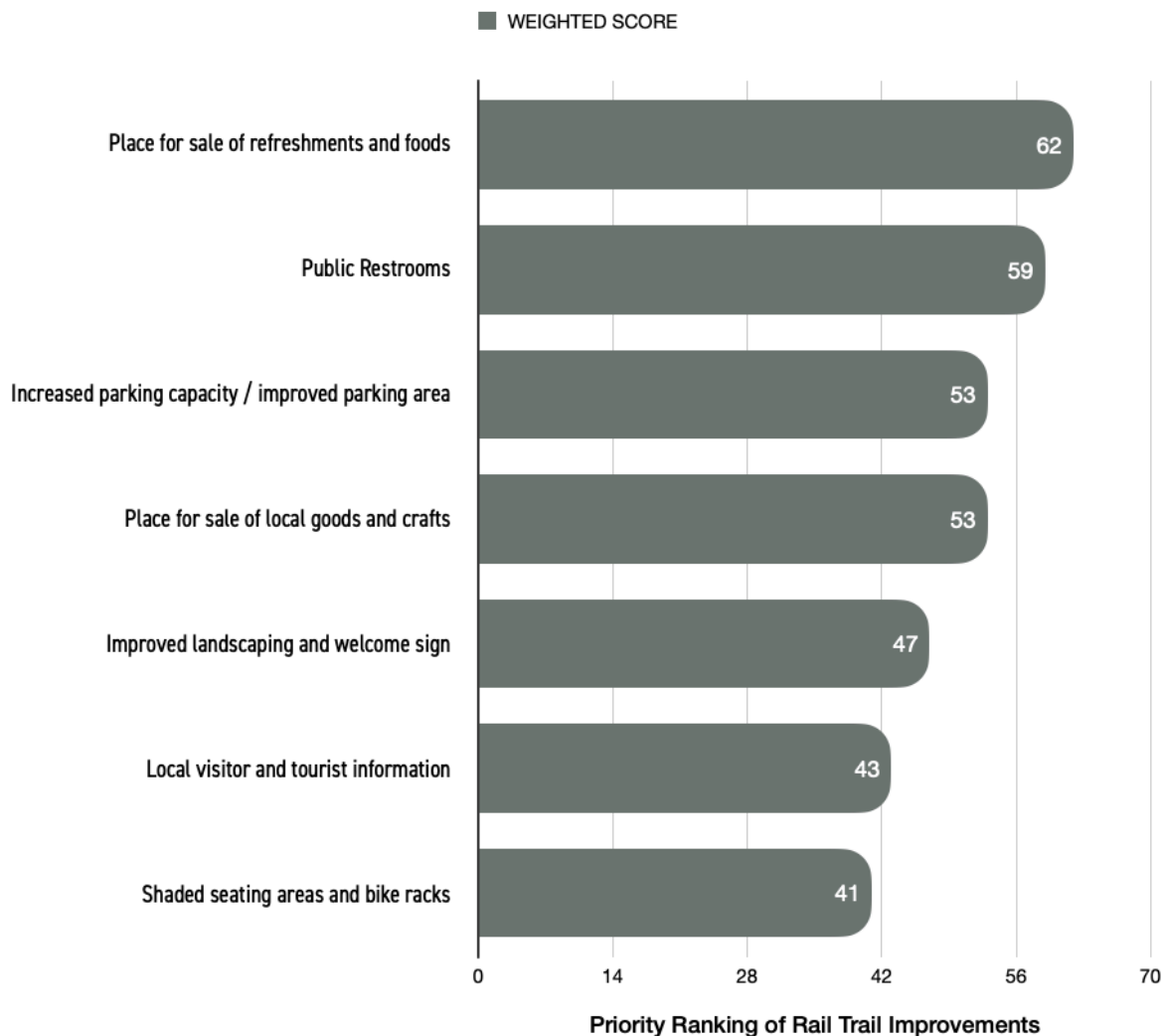
Considering the strong community interest in intersection safety improvements, it may still be worth reviewing with the public some design ideas for more sensitive and “village appropriate” landscaping improvements to see if these would

be acceptable to local residents and the DOT. The argument could be made that some non-standard enhancements, even if they don’t meet current highway design criteria, would be at least some improvement over existing conditions. It can also be argued that some sensitive enhancements around the monument could also show more respect and honor for what it represents. These questions could be further explored as part of the upcoming focus group meetings suggested for roadway and intersection safety improvements.

Write-in Comments (“Other”). *Text provided in [brackets] added by Regrowth Planning as editorial notes, noting where people wrote in the margins for a specific item or where there is uncertainty, etc.*

1. note: Dont put safety improvements around monument
2. [Relocate near trailhead] beside existing map stand. With or without monument the spot will exist due to traffic direction choices. Better traffic lines on pavement defiant stop signs and updated route signs are needed.
3. DO NOT MOVE. It is not a hazard. It keeps traffic movement at a reasonable speed.
4. Leave it where it is. Moving the monument will encourage non-local truck traffic. Road is already caving in.
5. landscaping not needed, just road signs
6. Do not relocate - its in a perfect spot.
7. I would want to know if moving this monument would cut into the budget for other improvements. If that were the case, I'd say leave where it is in order to make more important improvements. Unless the monument is causing safety concerns, than perhaps it should be moved and that would make it slightly more of a priority to me.
8. If the monument is moved, the intersection will become even more dangerous than it already is!
9. Relocate it somewhere, and near the firehouse sounds good if the building becomes something for public use and/or there's green space around it.
10. Anything would be better than the current location
11. DO NOT MOVE MONUMENT! YOU FOOLS! Keep lawn mowed or plant flowers.

4 How needed are each of the following Rail Trail improvements?

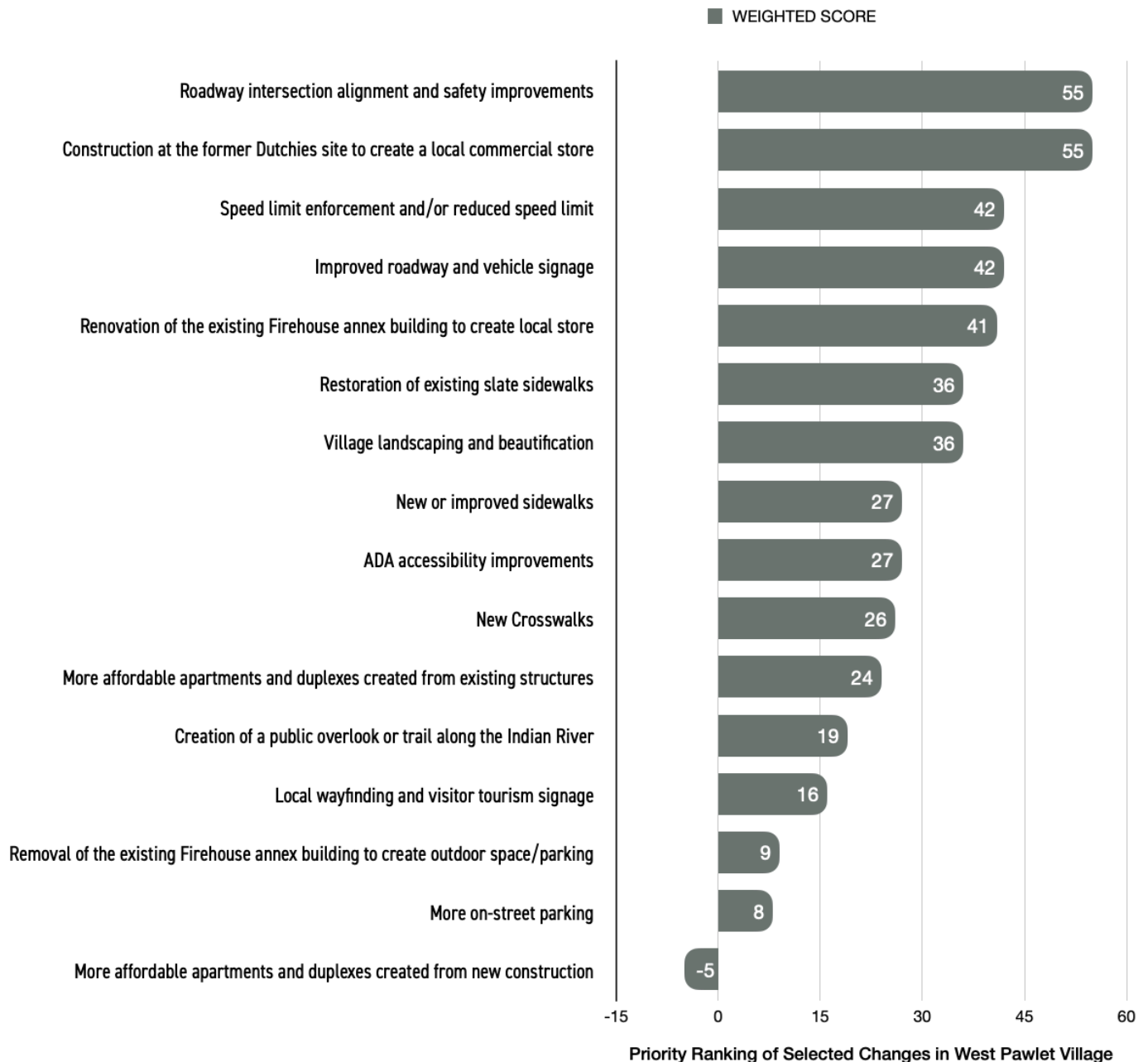


▲ **Priority Ranking of Rail Trail Improvements.** Results of question 4, ranked and scored in relative importance for comparative purposes. Scoring weights used as follows: "Not Needed" = -1, "Neutral" = 0, "Low Need" = 1, "Needed" = 2, "Highly Needed" = 3

Takeaways. While the topic of Rail Trail enhancements ranked sixth in overall community priority, the results here seem to support the overall importance of having additional local stores to provide goods and services. These should be combined with and compared to the results of the Rail Trail User Survey, which is still in progress. The number one response of "place for sale of refreshments and goods" ties directly into the issue of having a local corner store within the

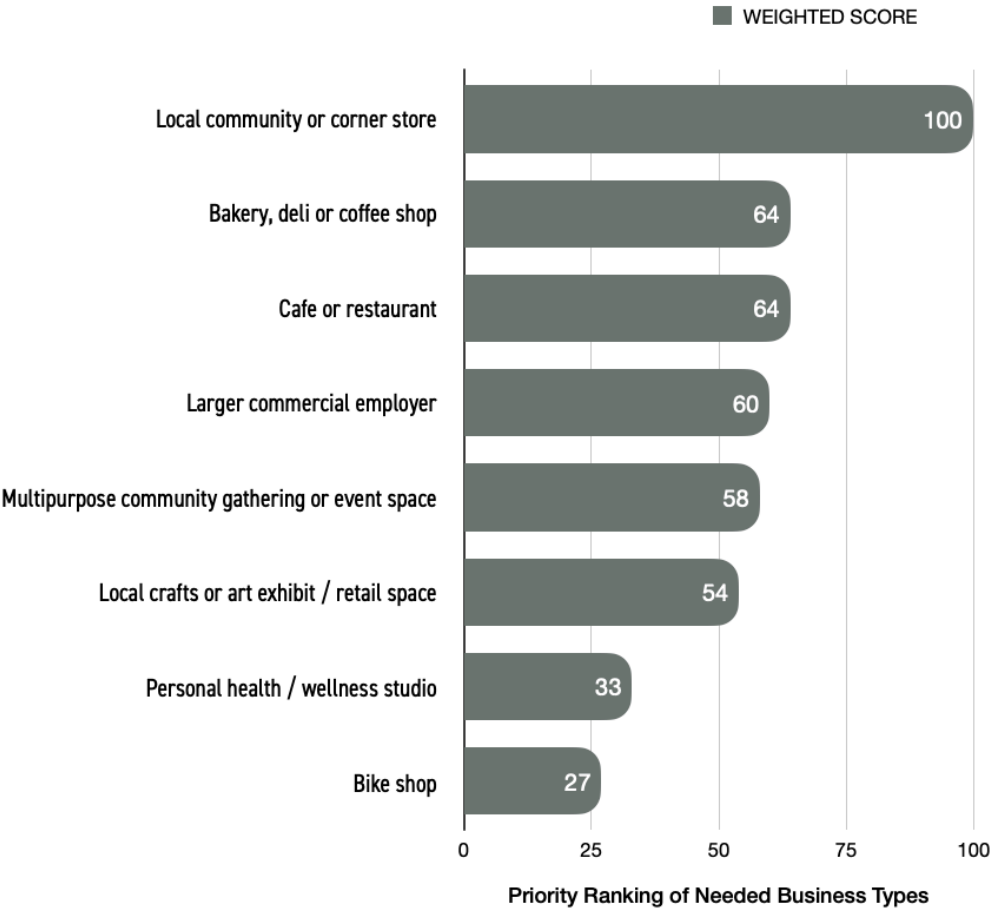
village, and could also support a public restroom. It is recommended that discussion of increased parking capacity and improved parking area be included as part of any focus group discussion on intersection safety and village beautification. The remaining topics, including landscaping, welcome sign, local tourist information, seating and bike rack improvements should be considered in the Master Plan as longer-term goals.

5 How much would you desire each of the following changes in West Pawlet?



▲ **Priority Ranking of Desired Village Changes.** Results of question 5, ranked and scored in relative importance for comparative purposes. Scoring weights used as follows: "Not Desired" = -1, "No Opinion" = 0, "Somewhat Desired" = 1, "Very Desired" = 2

6 How needed are each of the following types of businesses in West Pawlet?



▲ **Priority Ranking of Needed Businesses.** Results of question 6, ranked and scored in relative importance for comparative purposes. Scoring weights used as follows: "Not Needed" = -1, "Neutral" = 0, "Low Need" = 1, "Needed" = 2, "Highly Needed" = 3

What other types of businesses might be needed? (Write-in Comments).

1. child care

2. General store, restaurants

3. Farmers Market/Co-op

4. Something affordable for the community, something for users of the rail trail.

5. NO to construction at former Duchies site - it is too close to the Wastewater Treatment Plan!

6. Reduce Taxes.

7. Bike shop + rental, Cross country ski rental, warming "shack", arts & crafts + retail can + will be done in existing buildings on rivers bend.

8. Doctor? Dentist? Acupuncturist?

9. JOBS JOBS JOBS JOBS! [Re: Bakery, cafe, corner store, gathering space,
- bike shop] all located in improved firehouse annex. [Re: Bike shop] Super idea - rail trail repairs, supplies and rentals - Brilliant!!! Small engine repair shop. Whats going on with small building (home?) next to old Duchies sight? For sale or lease? Its attractive. Great potential.

10. Farmer's market area

11. antiques

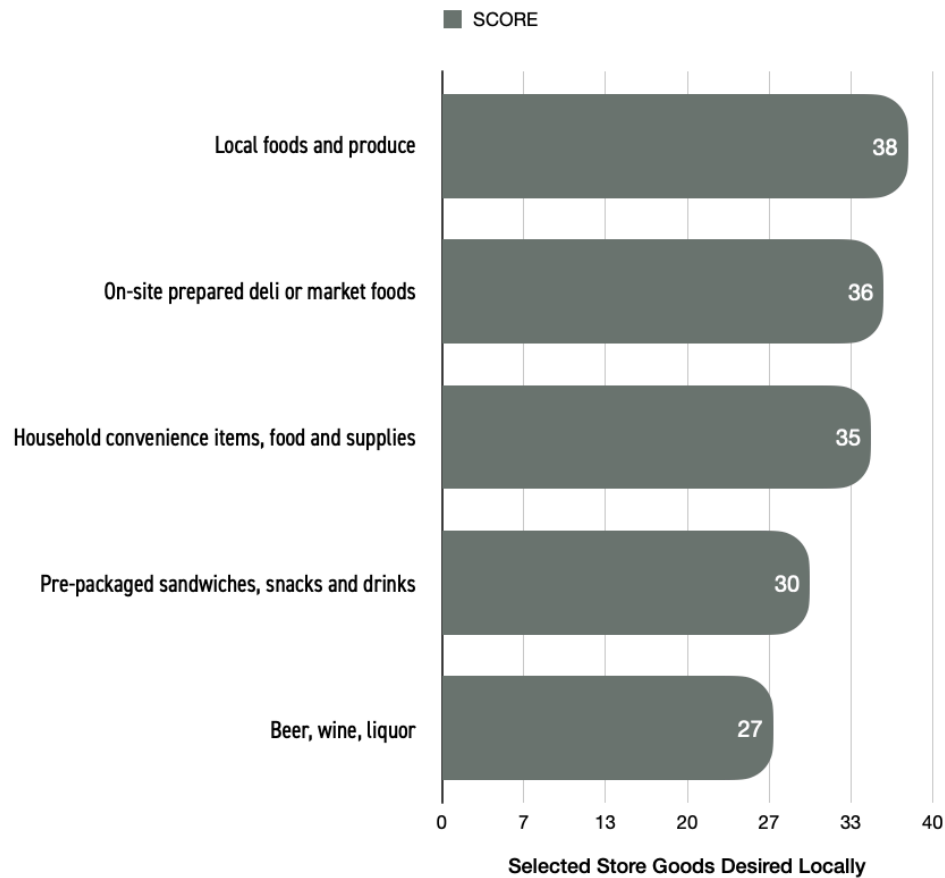
12. Use Firehouse [for multipurpose community gathering space]

13. Most of these have been tried & no longer exist. Why didnt the Duchies owners rebuild?

14. Store for essentials w/ bakery or deli/coffee

15. [Re: Multipurpose community gathering space] The Firehouse already fills a vital need for community space. Bless them for what they do for the community every day!

7 If a local community or corner store could be established in West Pawlet, what goods would you like it to sell?

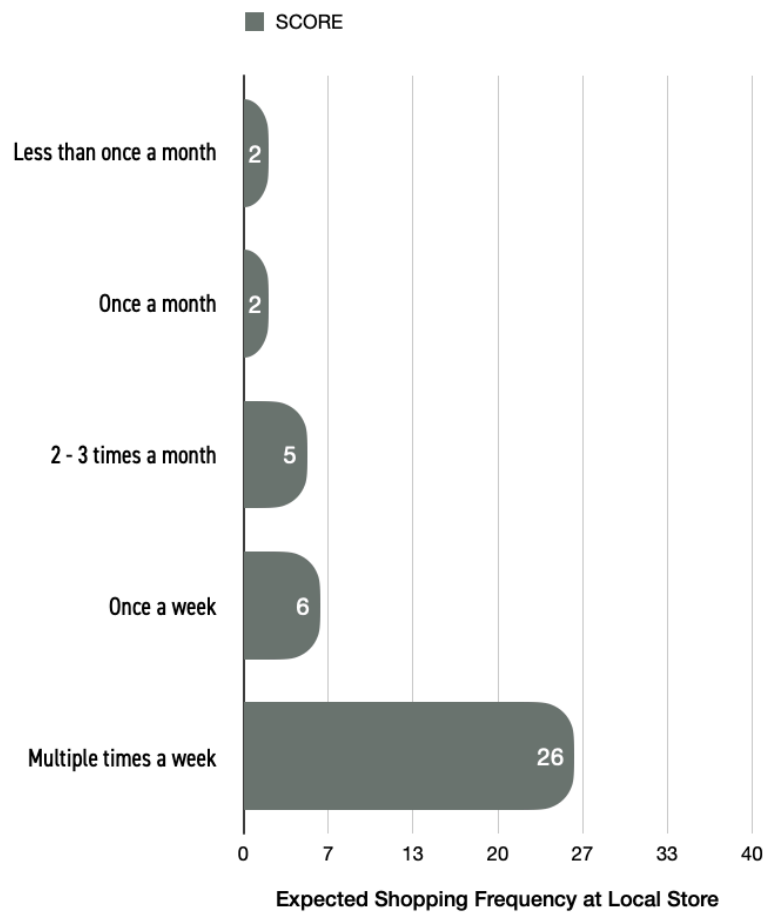


▲ **Desired Local Store Goods.** Results of question 7, showing actual number of votes for each selected good type.

What goods would you like a local store to sell? (Write-in Comments).

1. groceries and produce
2. I think Dutchies was successful when it was a weigh station during hunting season. Something that is good for the local needs as well as any potential tourist needs.
3. Milk. Soda. Juice
4. Agricultural and animal husbandry supplies
5. Yes we need a store in the Village
6. no liquor
7. Pop-Up Farmer's market - Event space
8. All above
9. Bread, cigs (ugh) all the usual "country store" items + take out - keep prices very low.
10. A few large tables for meeting students, resting, computer (laptop) use.
11. Basic hardware items
12. This is a tough decision for the operator but I honestly think we would end up going 5 mi to Granville much more frequently than 1 mi to WP
13. Although this sounds ideal, I realize this needs private enterprise willing to take risks. Efforts in the past havent been successful financially for the business people taking the risks, sadly.

8 If a local community or corner store could be established which carried the items you selected above, how often do you think you would shop there?



Expected Shopping Frequency. Results of question 8, showing actual number of votes for each shopping frequency.

Takeaways. The purpose of this question was to try and get a sense of how much business a potential new store within the village would get, considering the uncertainty and investment risks involved of starting a new business in a small community.

The results here appear to show a great deal of support, with the majority of respondents indicating they would frequent such a store “multiple times a week.” It is our intent to use this information to

help bring potential business partners to the table to discuss this idea in more detail and identify obstacles that need to be addressed. It is recommended that we reach out to established business owners of similar operations in the area and invite them to the discussion, either as potential partners or as knowledgeable advisors. The opportunity to open a “satellite store” of an existing operation is once idea which should be pursued.

9 What 3 words might you use to describe your ideal future “vision” for West Pawlet?



- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Community together semi-modern | 12. Ideal family town | 23. Simple elegant functional |
| 2. safer more convenience | 13. Convenience Variety Participation | 24. restoration beautify desirable |
| 3. I don't know | 14. Leave As Is | 25. historical and quaint |
| 4. Connected Neighborly Social | 15. Inclusion Health Wellness Tourism | 26. Beautiful productive helpful |
| 5. Quaint local town | 16. Improved Use of Existing Buildings | 27. Beautiful Ecological |
| 6. Peaceful friendly community | 17. Overtaxed Overtaxed Overtaxed | 28. Rural Historic Simple living |
| 7. Clean lively historic | 18. Keep W-Pawlet Funky | 29. Safe Quiet Healthy |
| 8. Historic friendly quaint | 19. Active community artistic | 30. Great for Future |
| 9. Lawn care store safe | 20. Enjoy Life Here | 31. Welcoming Commerce Neighborhood-focused |
| 10. freedom from 'gunschools' | 21. Community Opportunity Beautification | 32. Hometown Friendly Relaxing |
| 11. Safe walkable pleasant | 22. Quiet Welcoming Outdoor activities | |

10 Please feel free to share any other thoughts or suggestions for improving the quality of life in the Village of West Pawlet.

1. would love to see cleanup of properties with yards full of junk cars, etc.
2. a community park with a playground for kids would be really nice to have.
3. We need sidewalks, infrastructure and businesses and community projects to help people get people out of their homes and cars and interact with each other.
4. New rentals away from residential area
5. be diligent to free townspeople from fear of local 'tactical gun fighters'
6. The suggestions in this survey are great. A park/playground, businesses/restaurants would be a wonderful starting point. This would lead to improving the town to be more approachable and inviting — it would be great. I'm not informed enough about the slate quarries and if those encroach on the livability of this town, but anything to improve how those look and interact with the neighborhood would also be welcome.
7. Dear Sir, You need to put a stop sign on Egg St people will slow when they come up over the hill or put a stop light a lot of car get hit there. Put a store wear the old store was become it was handy you did not have to go to Granville NY for one one thing or bulid a new post office for the granvill of west pawlet vt.
8. Reintroduce a carnival / fair to finance partially our services. Publicize those positives about West Pawlet. Stabilize and maintain our P.O.
9. New store should be built where Dutchies was, maybe a little smaller, foundation there should be ripped out and a new foundation not as wide, but further back for more parking out front. There should be no parking by Yield sign to turn onto New St, it blocks view and flow of traffic.
10. First of all I don't see how you csn plan for the old firehouse when it is privately owned by the Fire Dept.
11. Level top of slate pile + install solar panels to help offset [sewer?] costs. Repair all roads + sidewalks. Create local swimming hole/park @ Quarry + charge parking fees.
12. The issue of the intersection downtown: the monument should really be a landscaped circle to visually and physically make cars slow down. The intersection is hazardous because of the lack of commitment to this area around the monument (as well as no traffic enforcement!) The old Firehouse building could be used as a flexible space/stroe/greeting/meeting building. The Rail Trail Parking Areas should have gravel / improved surface.
13. Make Frank Nelson[?] mow his lawn. Less barking dogs. Move Prevost's[?] out of town with that god damn dodge pickup - making a racket with no exhaust.
14. The LAST thing we need is to change our village into a slick, trimmed + snot-gussied-up, suburbanized, 2nd Rate "everywhere else" kind of place - a 2nd rate New Jersey (See additional attached written addendum)
15. [Re: rail trail improvements] We are not at the point to be concerned about tourism. That will happen on its own (maybe 5 years). Need basic improvements for tax-paying residents. Not porta-potties please yuk raccoons, skunks, vandalism. The better potties trailer. Hiring some one to manage and clean units. [Re: Village landscaping and beautification] can be done by homeowner encouragement and friendly competitions. [Re:

affordable apartments and duplexes] requires more police/animal control, EMS waste of tax money. [Re: renovation of firehouse annex] and rest rooms. [Re: construction at former Dutchies site] wastewater plant smells. River road is enjoyed for walking and bike riding also fly fishing. River Road is a good activity road with signage for safety help Sue whrite with trespassing & littering. Signage for safety, and roadside maintenance would be appreciated. Street lights? The Newmont Quarry is an environmental disaster and eyesore, noise.

16. My hope is that the town planners incorporate balance within their vision - something for everyone, not just tourists. Money is energy. How we utilize that money energy to include every class of people in a town's growth is how we add mindfulness to West Pawlet's future development. Im excited to see how the community grows toward an enhanced future!

17. Improvement to the area of the post office, traffic safety, a trail on the indian river, a local store

18. the pick up trucks, milk truck and especially landscape truck , timber trucks slate hauling all go to fast and too often. river road has signs saying NO THROUGH TRUCKS And yet all the local town of Pawlet trucks and town of Rupert trucks use that road to Cut through to 153. There should be enforcement of their speed by state troopers or local Constable's or whatever we have to deal with the way to the trucks the noise of the trucks the speed of the trucks

19. Bringing a store would be so great. Improving the intersection is key. The speeding is very much an issue. If there could be some sort of plan for the slate piles? I dont actually know the status of these but I hear there's a solar idea? Might as well put it to use. It would be nice to spruce up the town a bit.

20. [Re: Rail Trail Improvements] This would be an interstate VT/NY project - town has no jurisdiction. The Village of West Pawlet needs to encourage working businesses that will provide employment. We do not need further low income housing. Limit further surveys to full-time residents of the village - which by the way does not end at the quarries!

21. [Re: Rail Trail improvements] An investment opportunity which could provide all other improvements without public funds. // I see Vermont headed for Hell in an electric dump truck. The future belongs to the rich. If they can find a way to protect their money here they may stay. If it costs them too much they will leave. West Pawlet will look like it did in the 30's with some big money estates scattered around. What business might be sucessful here? A glitzy whorehouse with drug sales & perhaps gambling. Right off 22. An easy shot from the city. Might incorporate an abortion center & end of life wing. We could be Las Vegas East. We can get the tourists before they get to Burlington.

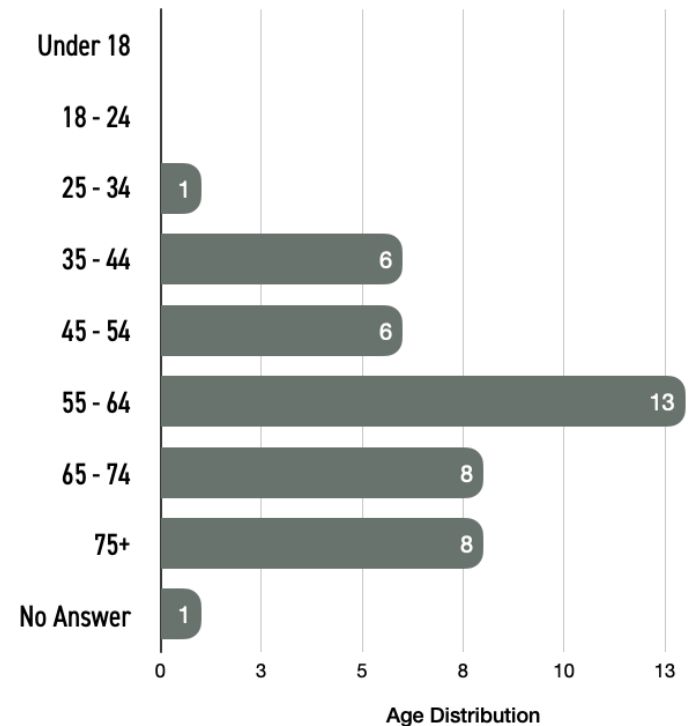
22. [Re: relocation of WWII monument] Do not relocate.

23. Thank you to everyone who is working on this!

11 Are there any issues covered in this survey which you would be willing to donate or volunteer time on to help improve the village?

1. no
2. Clean-up, participate in projects, support new businesses
3. No
4. We are part time residents for close to 30 years. Happy to donate time if we are in VT.
5. I can help with any IT design and installation
6. depends on what is decided, but yes
7. Yes. Playground/park... not sure how I could help with businesses and restaurants but would be willing to consider donating time or money if any of the ideas I voted for came to life. I'm a graphic/web/information designer so I could also potentially donate services if it helped improve the area.
8. I'm open
9. Possibly
10. Improvements to monument landscaping / traffic circle renovation of my garage for possible flex space / meeting space.
11. Yes many (I already do the flowers at P.O. and Fish+Game)
12. I'm interested in writing grant application for some of these projects
13. I need work (job, income) I would love to contribute and my skills have value. Who actually gets all the fund money if all the work is free?
14. Would like to see a list of volunteer opportunities, then decide.
15. Landscaping trail work
16. Not sure where I would be effective but willing to pitch in.
17. Historical aspects - Do you know where West Pawlet High School was located? Do you know who was the first Special Ed teacher in State of VT?
18. Skin in the game would be guaranteed by getting future surveys attached to local tax payments.

12 What is your age?



Other Takeaways

The roadway/intersection and traffic speed issues continue to top the list of desired improvements, as well as the need for a local commercial store (Question 5).

While people were correct to point out that the future of the Firehouse annex building was not really the jurisdiction of the town (and is ultimately a decision for the Fire Department), it is still important to get a sense of what the community would like to see. On that issue, people were generally more in favor of adaptively re-using that building for some other use such as a local store than removing it to create an outdoor event space or parking.

Residents were slightly more in favor of restoring the existing slate sidewalks than creating new ones. Likewise, people were in favor of accommodating more apartments and duplexes within existing buildings than the creation of new buildings, although this ranked relatively low among desired choices. Of note, the creation of more apartments and duplexes (from new construction) ranked last in desired changes within the village.

When looking at the desired types of businesses within the village, a local or community store was by far the preferred choice (Question 6). People were most interested in having a store which provided local foods and produce, as well as deli, household convenience items and supplies. Pre-packaged sandwiches, snacks, drinks and alcohol—which might be marketed more toward tourists—were a lower priority (Question 7). Comments suggested that any goods served should be reasonably priced, and could potentially include support for local hunting, agriculture and animal raising activities.

Other suggested business ideas included child care, and a space to host farmer's market or co-op.

Several people pointed out that the Fire Department already serves the community well in providing a community gathering or event space.

What Have We Learned?

Taking a step back from the details, we see that the residents of West Pawlet would like to maintain the overall charm and character that makes this village unique. People do not want to see the community changed to meet the needs of outsiders, or suffer the sterilization and modernization that typically makes other communities all look the same. “Quiet”, “Quaint” “Simple” and “Keep it funky” were suggested descriptions. While a planning process like this can be easily sidetracked by identifying all the things that people want to change, it is important to also recognize all the things which should not be changed. Priority should be given to meeting the needs of locals first before tourists, visitors and new residents are accommodated. If the village can succeed in better meeting its immediate local needs, then new visitors and interest will naturally grow from there. With this in mind, improvements to the Rail Trail would be a secondary priority to other village improvements.

That being said, there are some opportunities and needed fixes which people feel should be addressed. Roadway safety improvements, reduced living costs, better access to local good and services, and general village cleanup are among them. People would like to find ways to re-purpose the slate quarries, others suggested enhancements to the community events such as parades, fairs and carnivals which really bring the community together.

We also see that the local volunteer Fire Department is in many ways the heart of the village. The Fire Department serves an important role for the community in many ways, and is a social hub of activity. It is recommended that, as part of the focus

group meetings, we sit down with fire department leaders to identify what their long-term needs are to understand how these might be accommodated as part of this Master Planning process.

Potential Focus Group Ideas

Based on the overall survey results, it is recommended that three or four focus group meetings be organized over the coming weeks, as described below, in no particular order. (It is noted that some additional preparation work may be required for some of the topics, and those meetings may need to be scheduled later to allow for collection of data and materials.) To make these meetings more inviting and fun, it is suggested they be organized as informal “pot luck” dinner meetings where possible.

1. Roadway Intersection & Streetscape Improvements. This topic should invite public discussion on desired roadway alignment and intersection improvements, including pedestrian sidewalk safety and speed limits. Because the rail trail parking area, vehicle curb-cuts and WWI monument are a component of this based on proximity and geometry, they should be included as part of the discussion. This also presents an opportunity to include ideas for general streetscape improvements within the public right-of-way.

The Fire Department and local road crews should be invited directly to weigh-in on these design ideas. If possible, we may consider inviting local representatives from VTrans to attend the discussion, although an over-arching goal of the meeting is to establish what the community wants first, before being limited by any mis-perceptions of what “is possible.”

This meeting should be organized as an interactive workshop with maps, drawings and photos where participants are invited to draw their own ideas as

we develop concepts. Regrowth Planning may bring some preliminary design ideas for early consideration to help start the conversation. Concepts developed as part of this could later be taken to VTrans for comment and refinement. Some preliminary tax maps/roadway boundary mapping info may need to be collected in advance.

2. Village Revitalization & Cleanup. This meeting would combine the popular topics of cleanup and restoration of vacant buildings, the creation of new local businesses, and general property upkeep. The potential restoration and care of buildings should include a discussion of potential adaptive re-use ideas, any available grants which may fund construction or facade improvements, as well as volunteer or fundraising efforts. It may be useful to invite specific landowners to the discussion to learn about their long-term plans for their property and how this planning process can support them. It could also include a discussion to determine the community’s interest in any “demolition by neglect” ordinance or strengthening of code enforcement.

Based on some of the written comments, it would appear that general property upkeep—such as lawn mowing and miscellaneous front yard junk—can sometimes be an issue. Code enforcement of property condition is often a touchy subject (one person’s idea of what is “neat & tidy” may not be acceptable to others), and code enforcement officers in any community are often hesitant to come down on people for minor or potentially subjective issues. It may be possible to identify some clarification or improvements to property maintenance and code enforcement which the community finds acceptable.

This topic may be best approached as a discussion about community pride and voluntary efforts to fix things up. This could include, for example, the establishment of an annual “Village Beautification Day” as a fun community event with activities for

people of all ages. Friendly competitions, contests and prizes for general cleanup and beautification efforts around the village, perhaps hosted on Earth Day (a “Green-Up Day”?) or to coincide with any regular bulk curbside trash pickup.

3. The Firehouse & Community Events.

As noted above, the West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department serves an important central role in the village, particularly with hosting many community events. These events, and the firehouse, are an essential social hub for the community which many people value. It is believed that the Fire Department no longer wishes to keep their annex building, but that they also have a need for more equipment storage. These needs (and others) should be identified and considered as part of the master planning process to identify how it may be able to assist them and also serve the goals of the larger community. There may be opportunities to improve their ability to host various community events. This meeting should also include a discussion of what additional community events would people like to see and how these vents can help to bring people together.

4. A Corner Store. This topic should begin with a short presentation recap on past steps to redevelop the former Dutchies site, and an explanation of where those efforts currently stand. It is recommended that in preparation for this topic, outreach to existing area business owners be established to invite them to this discussion. Potential business owners include Sheldon’s, Mach’s, Shermans’ and H.M. Williams. (In lieu of inviting them directly to the public meeting it may be necessary—or preferable to them—to speak privately in a separate meeting instead). The purpose of their business input is to identify concerns or obstacles to establishing any new business within the village, collect advice, and to discuss their potential interest (if any) in assisting us in establishing such a business.

This meeting would also be used to discuss the pros and cons of each of the “potential” store sites which have been identified as part of the public outreach. The the town-owned Dutchies site is an obvious option, while suffering from some site and environmental constrains and concerns about odors from the adjacent wastewater plant. The owner of the Celery Compound has expressed interest in redeveloping their annex building (old antique store) into a local store—although small—could provide a quicker or short-term solution to getting something established. Lastly, considering if there is any mutual arrangement potential in the redevelopment of the Fire Department annex building. As part of the preparation for this, it is recommended that outreach be conducted to the Vermont Retail & Grocers Association, the State of Vermont and other institutions to identify any related grants or programs which may be useful.

Finally, some programming of any future store must be discussed—what does it really need to have? A corner store like this in the community is more than just about walking in, paying for a few items, and walking out. This is also about community socialization, running into your neighbors, catching up and saying hello. A gathering place such as this should ideally have places to sit, socialize, pause to talk, enjoy a coffee and watch the world go by. How the store can be a central focal point of the community should be considered.

Water Treatment Plant / Sewer Fees. This topic is added here for consideration since it ranked so highly in community priority, however because this is such a highly technical and complex issue, it may not be the most productive topic for its own public visioning meeting. People will certainly agree that treatment plant fees need to be reduced, but the technical details of how this can actually be accomplished are better suited for deliberation by specialists and the Town Board. Instead, it is

recommended that each Focus Group include a brief presentation summarizing where this issue currently stands, what options we think are on the table, and allow for comment. This will allow people to be updated on the issue and provide some input while allowing the bulk of the conversation to focus on more productive visioning ideas.

RAIL TRAIL SURVEY

Overview & Purpose

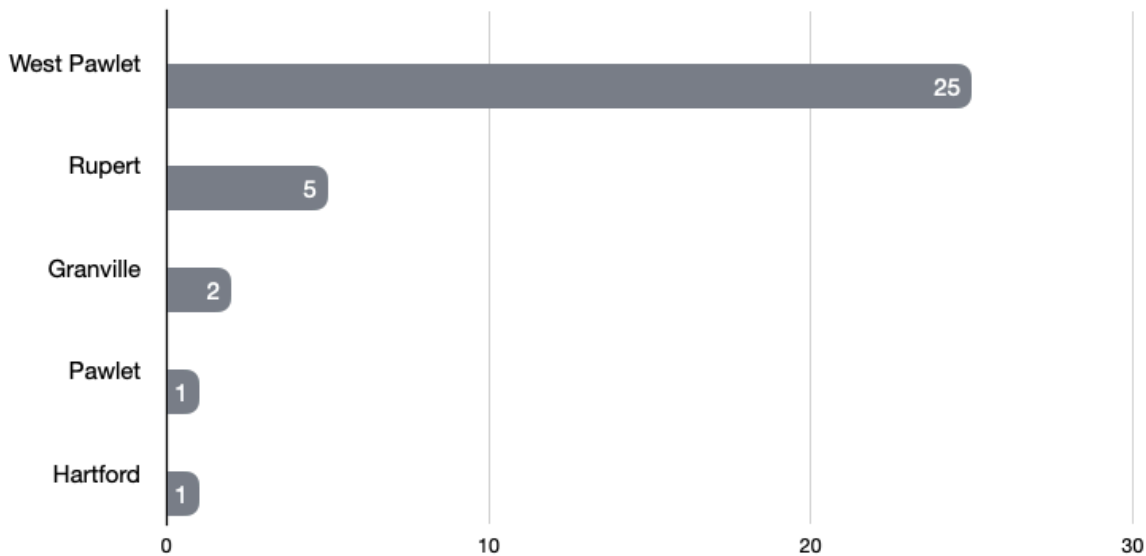
In addition to the Community Survey, a second survey was developed to collect input from Rail Trail users as they passed through the Village of West Pawlet. The purpose of this was to get insight—from a visitors and tourist perspective—on what amenities and features they might like to see when arriving in the village. With permission from VTrans, signs inviting people to participate in the survey were posted at the trailhead, providing a web address and QR code to participate. The survey was open from August 6th to October 31st, and collected a total of 35 individual responses.



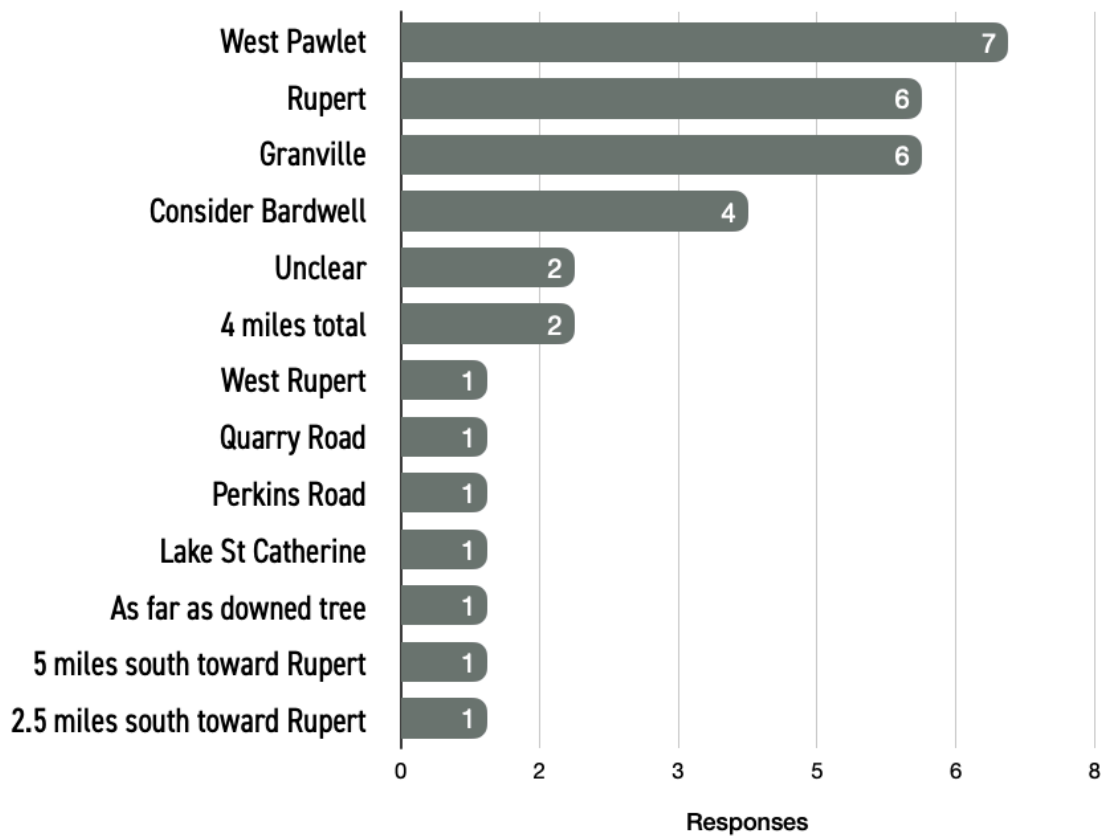
▲ **Survey Invitation.** Sign inviting people to participate in the Rail Trail User Survey.



1 Approximately where was your “point of origin” on the Trail today?



2 How far along the Trail did you travel today (or do you plan to travel)?



3 Did you stop and pause in West Pawlet for any of the following reasons? *(Select any that apply)*



The first three questions were provided as multiple choice options, but also giving people the option to write-in “other” answers if they wanted. Where possible, write-in answers were combined into similar categories.

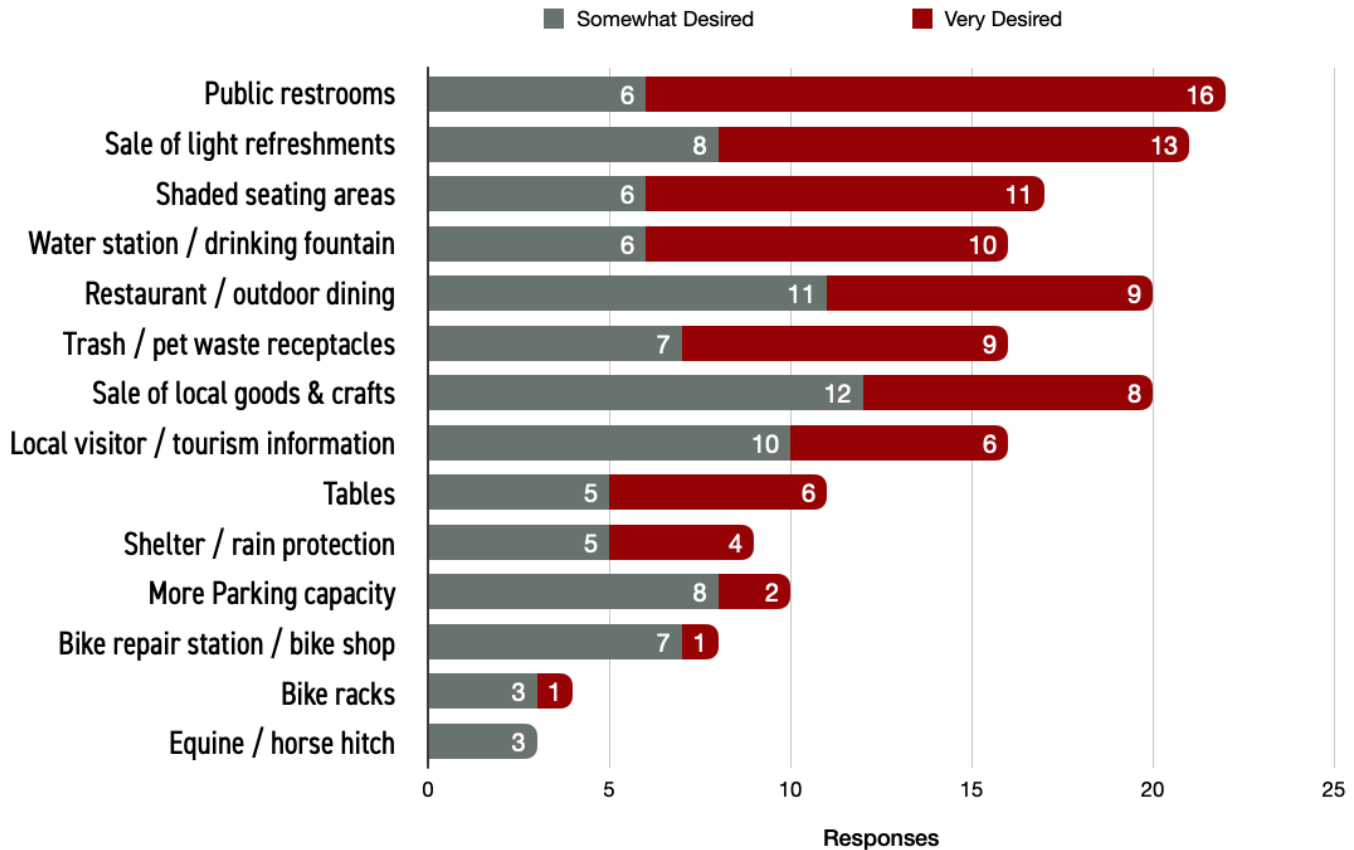
A majority (25) of trail users began (and presumably ended) their trek in West Pawlet, while only about 5 of them live in the village. The two most popular destinations were Rupert and Granville, although it appears most users typically head south toward Rupert. The responses suggest that seven of the southern travelers made it at least all the way to Rupert hamlet, about 7 miles away, or beyond. Nine

of them indicated they stayed within 5 miles, usually stopping short somewhere north of Lewis road, often at Consider Bardwell Farm.

Most trail users who stopped in West Pawlet did so to rest and take a break, with many looking around and looking for food, drinks or restrooms.

When asked to rank what amenities or services people would like to find in West Pawlet, the most popular answer was “public restrooms”, with 6 respondents indicating it was “desired” and 16 indicating it was “very desired”. This was followed closely by “sale of light refreshments”.

4 What amenities or services would you LIKE TO find here in West Pawlet?



Other popular amenities requested included: restaurant/outdoor dining; sale of local goods and crafts; shaded seating areas; water station/drinking fountain; trash/pet waste receptacles and local visitor/tourism information. These items should likely be considered for future village and trailhead upgrades over time. There was relatively less interest in any provision of tables, shelter/rain protection, parking, bike or horse accessories.

Most groups appeared to travel in pairs of two people, with some enjoying the trail solo, but fewer were found in groups of three or more.

Many of the respondents (32%) indicated that they

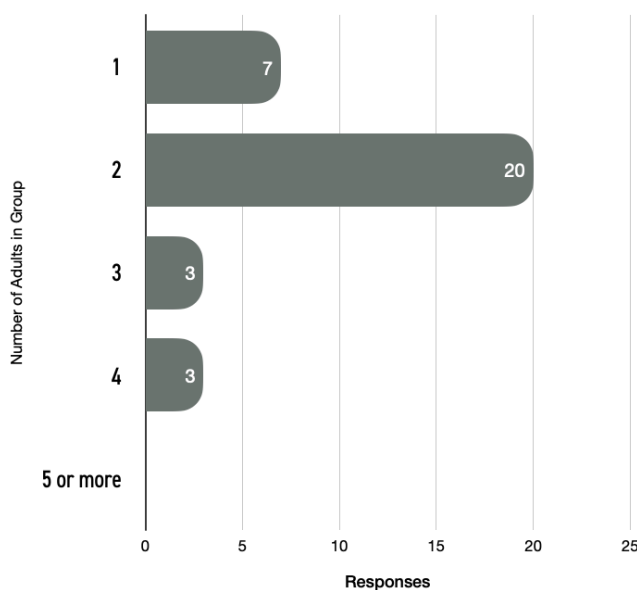
lived in West Pawlet or Pawlet, however most (68%) originated from out of town. 16% of visitors were from nearby towns in southern Vermont, while 32% were from nearby towns in New York (within about an hours' drive, including areas such as Saratoga Springs and Bolton Landing).

20% of the respondents were from a three-hour drive away or more, including distant NY towns downstate and Long Island, as well as other states outside the region including New Jersey, Virginia and Minnesota. Overall, 52% of respondents were from outside Vermont.

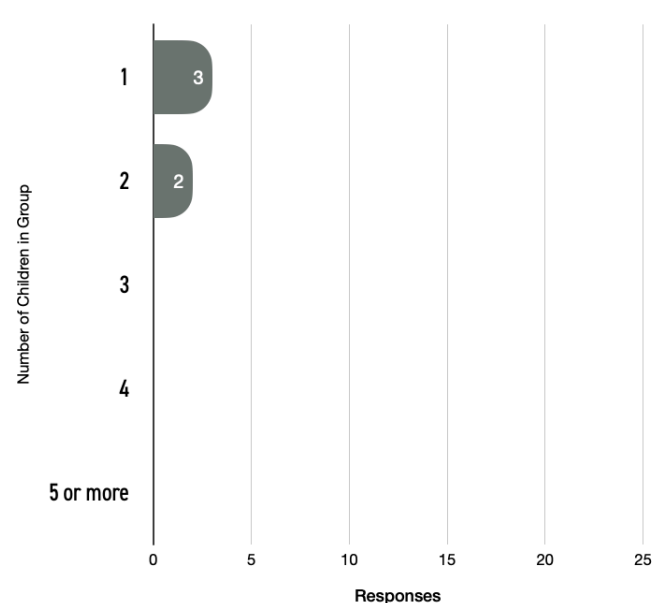
5 What OTHER amenities, services or activities might you like to find here in West Pawlet?

1. Shops and restaurants!
2. Local market
3. Cafe or small general store if the community will support it. If the store had a weigh station for hunting season it might succeed.
4. Country Store would be nice
5. A crosswalk with user-activated lights would be nice (we noticed there's a blind curve in the road that comes from NY, and cars go a bit fast...)
6. We DON'T want hear or see a shooting range (;
7. just a comment-the waystation provided by a local landowner ("just a head") was delightfully quirky! LOVED IT!
8. Thanks for asking our opinion of this trail. We'll be back again soon!
9. Trail map
10. Small store like Dutchies
11. Better maintenance of poison parsnip/poison ivy in the trail; guidance for dog owners to prepare to leash unleashed dogs
12. general grocery store
13. The gates/bollards must be improved. They very difficult to ride through and dangerous. A tandem bike, bike with a trailer, adult trike would find it nearly impossible to pass through. These gates to not meet AASHTO standards for bike paths.
14. A general store
15. A little country store like in east Poultney or Wells would be great.
16. Was not able to answer by cocking option. Water station, trash receptacles, light refreshments, restrooms. And we were 4 adults and 1 baby
17. We couldn't fill out this survey at the W Pawlet site as we didn't have cell service there!
18. Bike rentals in summer, X country ski rentals in winter.
19. The gravel surface along the trail was "upgraded" last year (or so,) and that ruined it. This new surface is awful. We probably won't ride along here as often as we normally do (5-6x/yr.)
20. Small store
21. Shade trees
22. Access to the river ... more formalized?
23. Brewery. Cafe. Snack shack (crème's and or apple cider donuts.

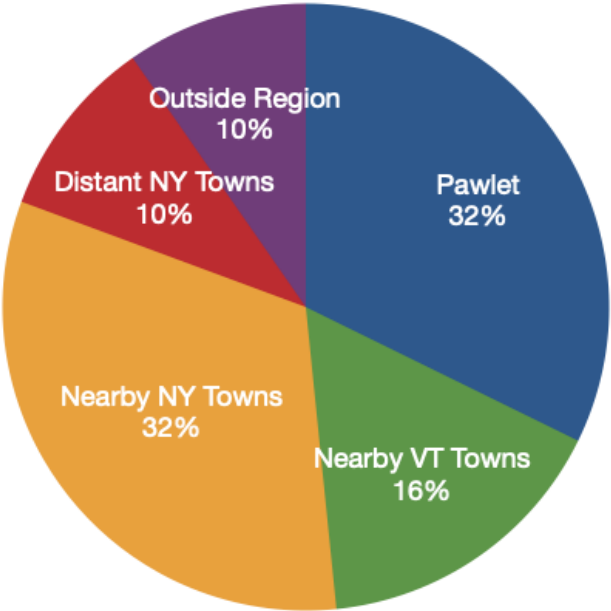
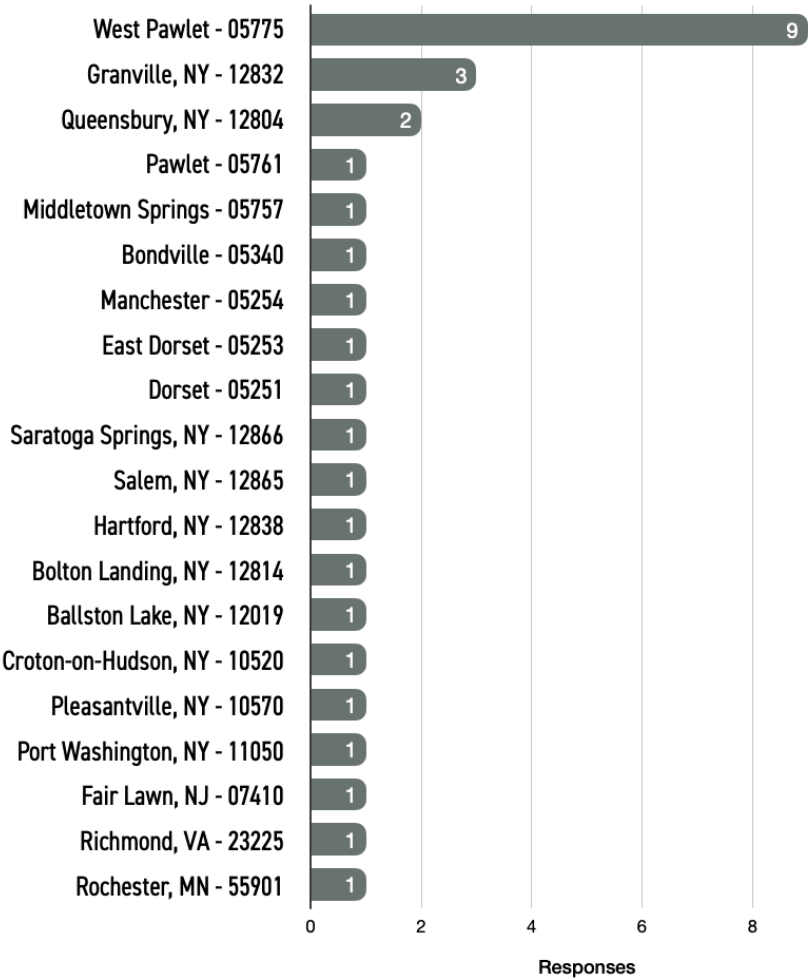
6 How many adults are traveling in your group?



7 How many children are traveling in your group?



8 What is the zip code / postal code of your primary residence?



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Rail Trail Visitors - By Hometown