

December | 2015

State of Trumansburg Housing

A report on housing in the Village of Trumansburg
since the 2008 Comprehensive Plan

Prepared by Stefan & Jennifer Lutter

Introduction

The housing market has changed significantly in the years since the 2008 Comprehensive Plan was completed. The increased demand for housing in the Ithaca area combined with Trumansburg's small market, attractive school district, high quality housing, and recent improvements to the downtown have increased demand for housing in the Village. This, coupled with changing demographics and the impending lift of the building moratorium, makes it an opportune time to review changes, and determine whether new goals should be set for the Village.

This report seeks to provide an assessment of how the Village has been changing and what these trends mean for the future. We provide both qualitative and quantitative information to guide the Village leadership in determining what actions, if any, should be taken.

It is important to keep in mind the conclusions reached in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. They are shown below.

2008 Comprehensive Plan Housing 20-Year Vision

"In 2028, housing in Trumansburg includes a variety of architectural styles and a range of affordable options. An integrated network of streets and sidewalks safely connect the commercial core with adjacent residential neighborhoods. Safe and accessible downtown housing, available on the upper floors of street-level retail and service businesses, encourages a vibrant, active community experience.

The neighborhoods are enhanced through a shared understanding of features and practices that give Trumansburg its special character. New house construction is integrated into older residential neighborhoods. Zoning ordinance assures that new house construction provides off-street parking with safe sidewalks and streets that ensure safe vehicular traffic. Multi-unit senior housing is located close to downtown amenities and provides an affordable option for retirees. A variety of housing densities and types offer diverse housing options while allowing for efficient installation of infrastructure and roads."

2008 Comprehensive Plan Housing Goals

"Working towards this vision, our housing goals are to:

- 1. Maintain a variety of architectural styles, housing densities and housing options that meet the needs of a variety of socio-economic situations.*
- 2. Establish streets and sidewalks that provide a safe connection between downtown and adjacent residential neighborhoods.*
- 3. Promote new housing construction that is in harmony with existing neighborhoods, provides off-street parking and sidewalks and allows for efficient installation of infrastructure, roads and green space.*
- 4. Encourage safe and accessible housing on the upper floors of downtown commercial buildings.*
- 5. Establish additional affordable housing for seniors in close proximity to downtown amenities."*

Housing Data – Updates

The information below compares current data to that used in the 2008 comprehensive plan.

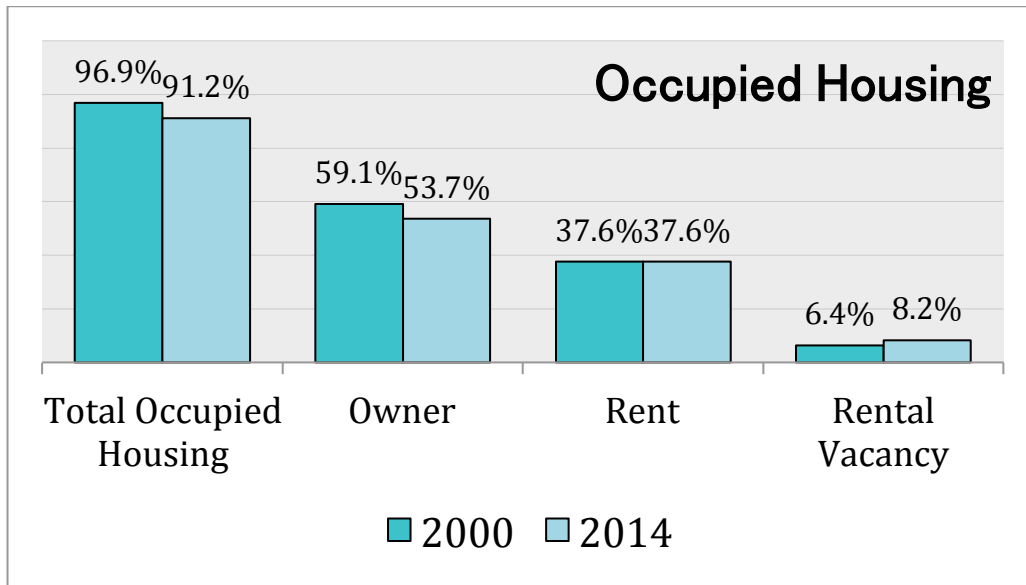


Figure 1: Occupied Housing (ACS 2014)

The above graph indicates the occupation of housing. Since 2000, there has been a slight increase in renter-occupied housing. The rental vacancy rate however, is still a healthy 8.2% (5-8% is considered stable). The number of occupied housing units has remained stable.

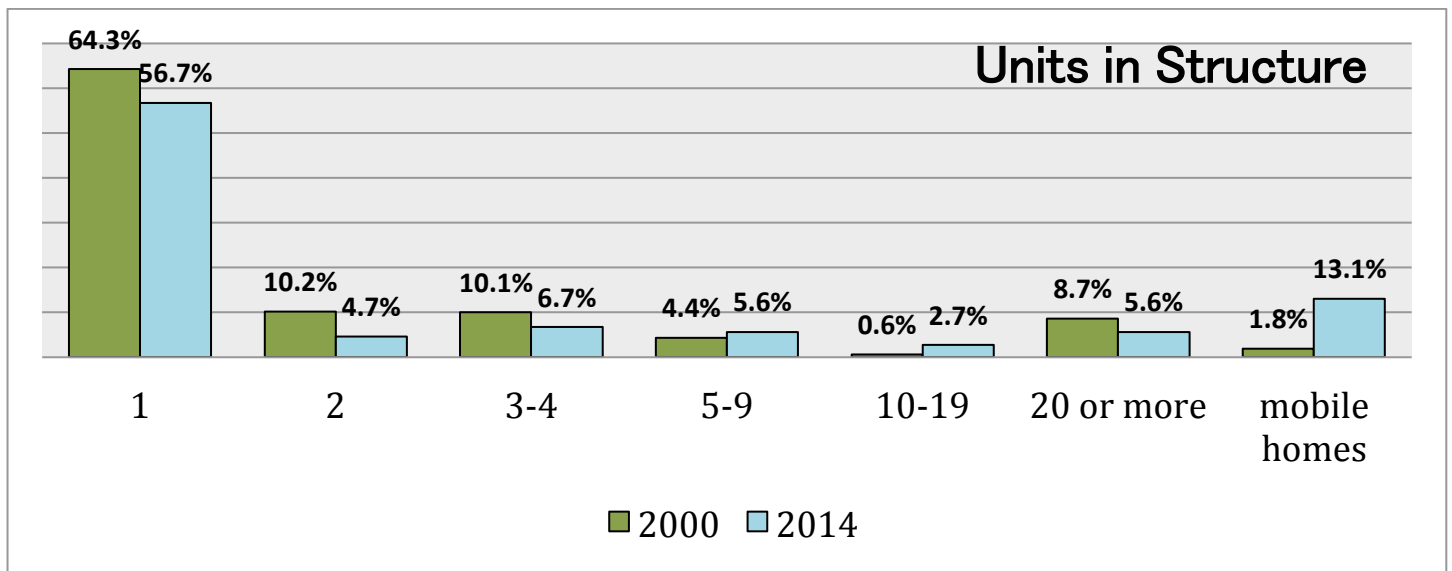


Figure 2: Units in Structure (ACS 2014)

One of the greatest changes in the housing stock of Trumansburg was the annexation of Auble Trailer Park. This not only increased the number of units within Village jurisdiction, but also was partially responsible for the increase in renter-occupied housing, and had a significant impact on the housing unit breakdown. The addition of the mobile home park raised the proportion of total mobile home units from 1.8% in 2000 to 13.1% in 2013. The majority of structures in the Village of Trumansburg are still single family homes (56.7%).

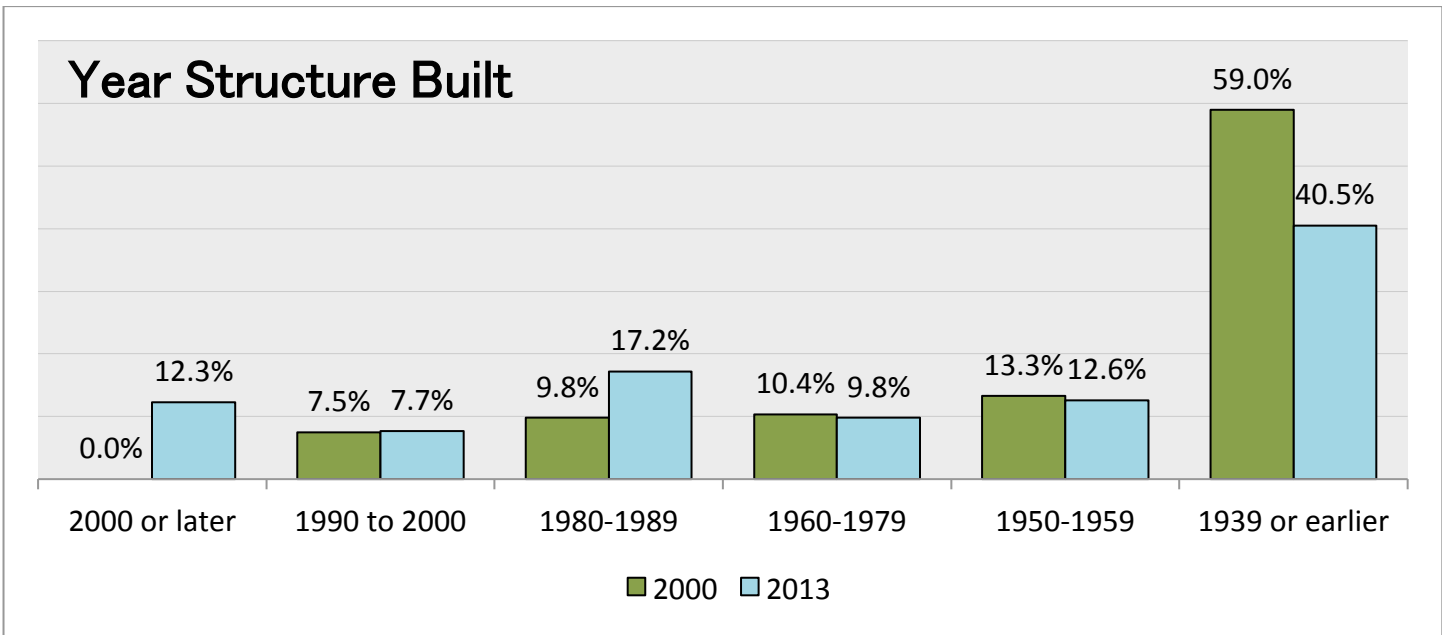


Figure 3: Year Structure Built (ACS 2013)

The older housing stock of the Village can make home maintenance and paying for utilities difficult for seniors or new homeowners. As the graph above indicates, a significant number of units are over 80 years old. Not only are many of these homes in need of costly updates, but they are also larger homes. This can make their sale price higher, particularly so when the previous owner completed significant updates. Size, cost, and maintenance issues make these difficult properties to own for lower income families and seniors.

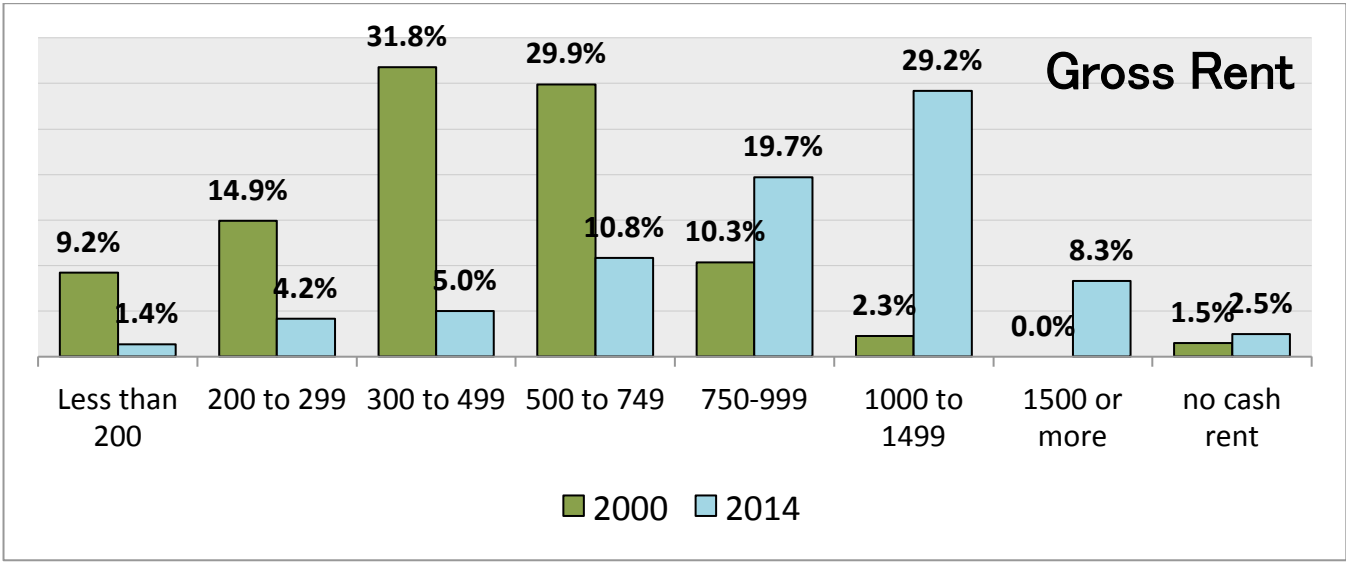


Figure 4: Gross Rent (ACS 2014)

Figures 4 and 5 show the upward trend in both gross rent and median home sale in the village. Trumansburg’s median home sale price of \$196,700 in 2015 is set to be an increase of \$61,000 dollars from 2004’s figure. The trend countywide looks to be headed upward again after taking a stumble during the recession (2009-2014).

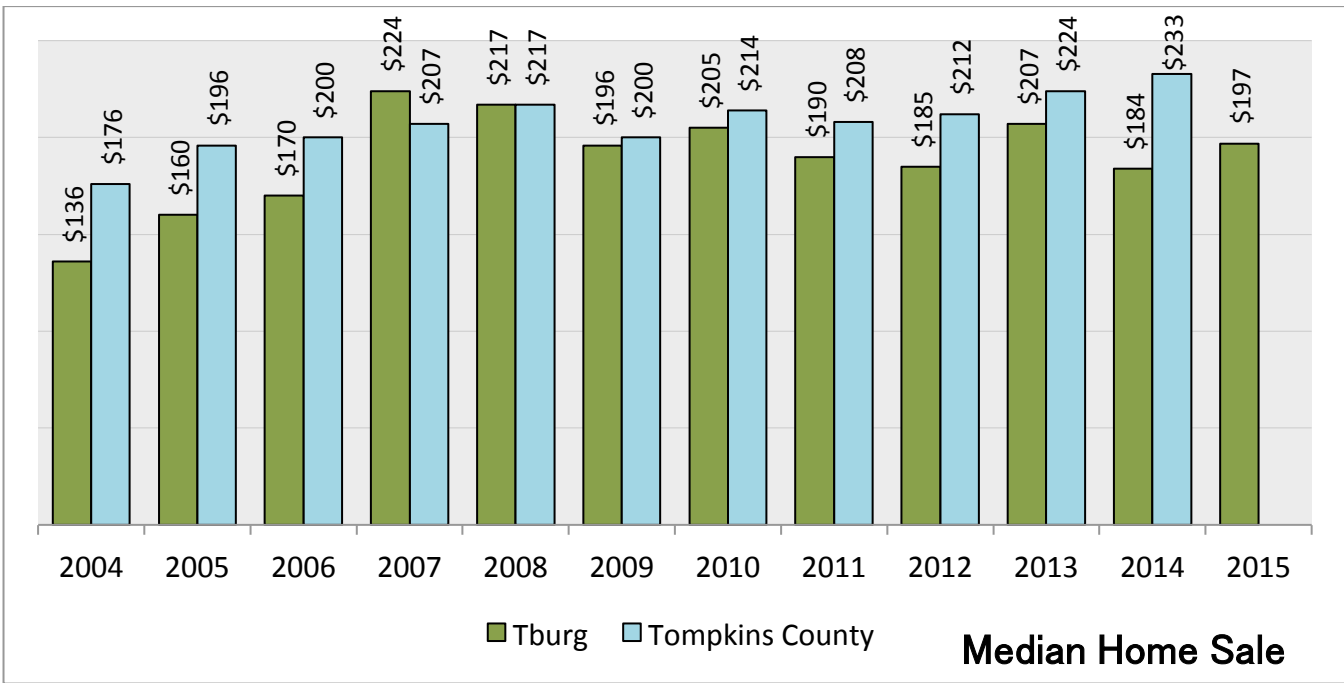


Figure 5: Median Home Sale Price*

This table shows the number of units sold annually in the Village. This, coupled with sale price, shows how competitive the market is and how difficult it can be for anyone interested in moving to Trumansburg (or staying in Trumansburg) to do so. There are very few houses on the market at any given time, and even fewer that are considered affordable for low and moderate income households.

Trumansburg, Number of Units Sold Annually

Year	Number of Units Sold
2004	18
2005	19
2006	21
2007	24
2008	9
2009	10
2010	26
2011	20
2012	24
2013	14
2014	13
2015	16

Median Home Value

2000- \$112,200 (Census 2000)

2014- \$201,700 (ACS 2014)

Median home value has increased 79% over the past fifteen years.

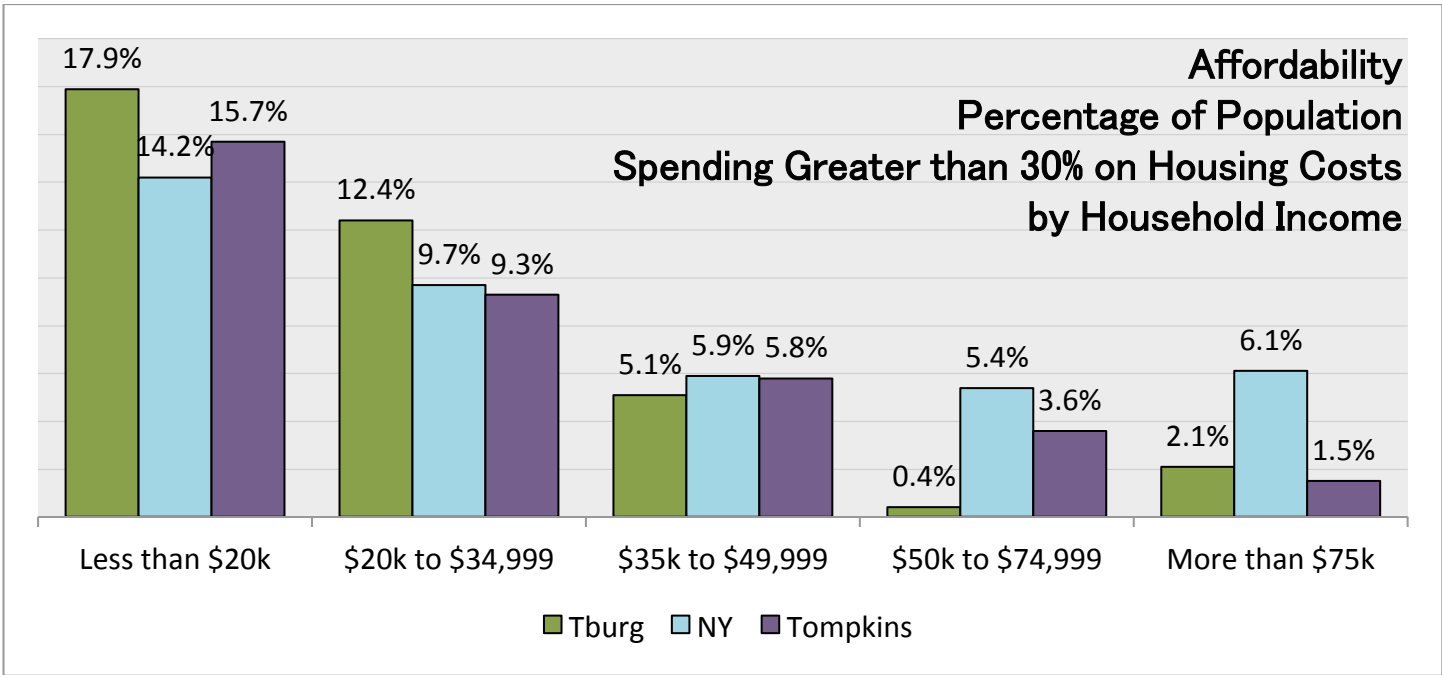


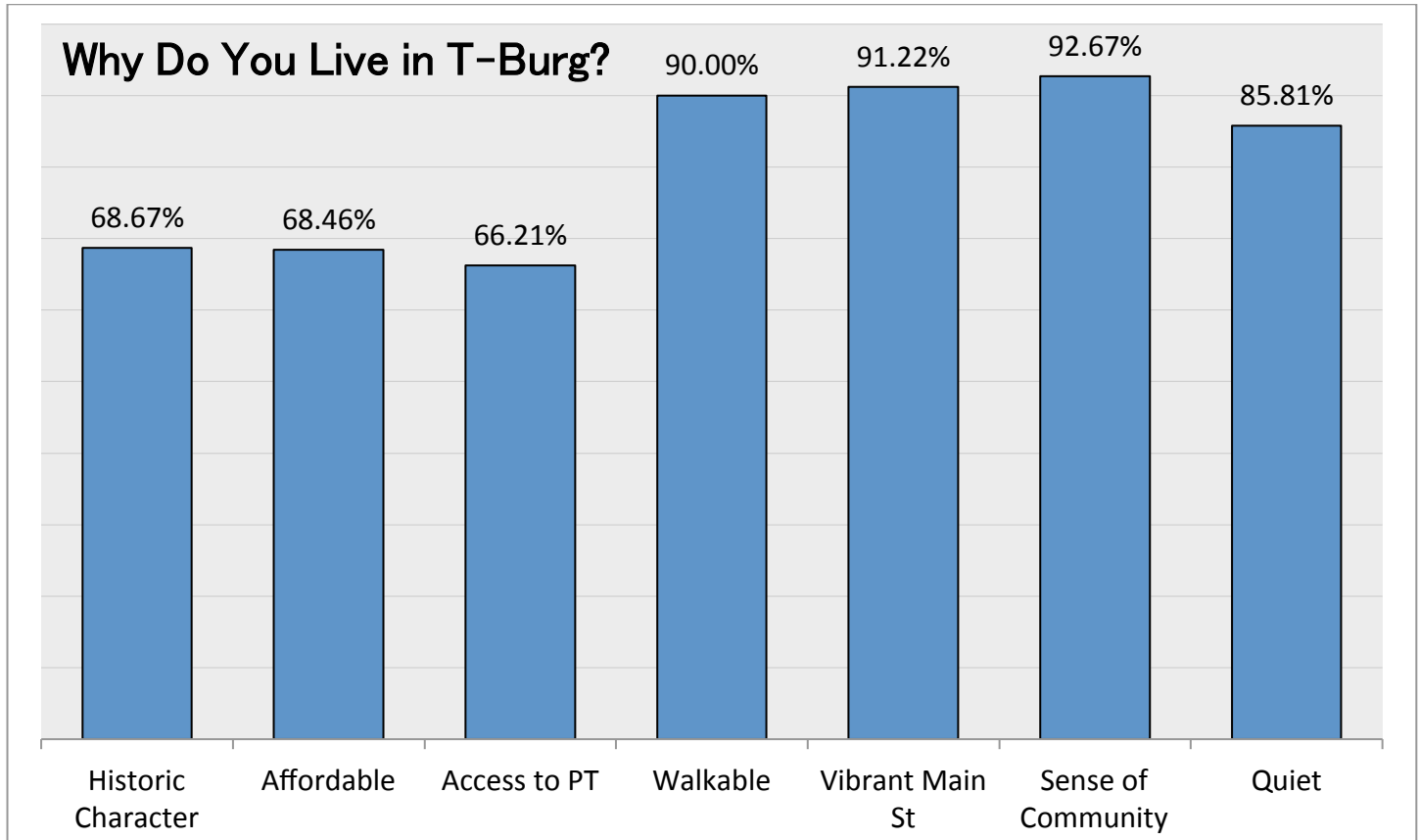
Figure 6: Affordability (2013 ACS)

This graph displays the portion of people in each income bracket spending more that 30% of their household income on housing costs - the general cutoff at which housing is no longer considered affordable. Trumansburg is considerably worse than New York and Tompkins County in the lower income brackets, yet performs better in the higher income brackets. This may illustrate that Trumansburg is affordable for the wealthier people, but struggles to provide housing to low and moderate income households.

Survey Data – 153 Responses

The data below was collected through an online and print survey. A copy of the survey and is attached to this report. A total of 153 responses were collected.

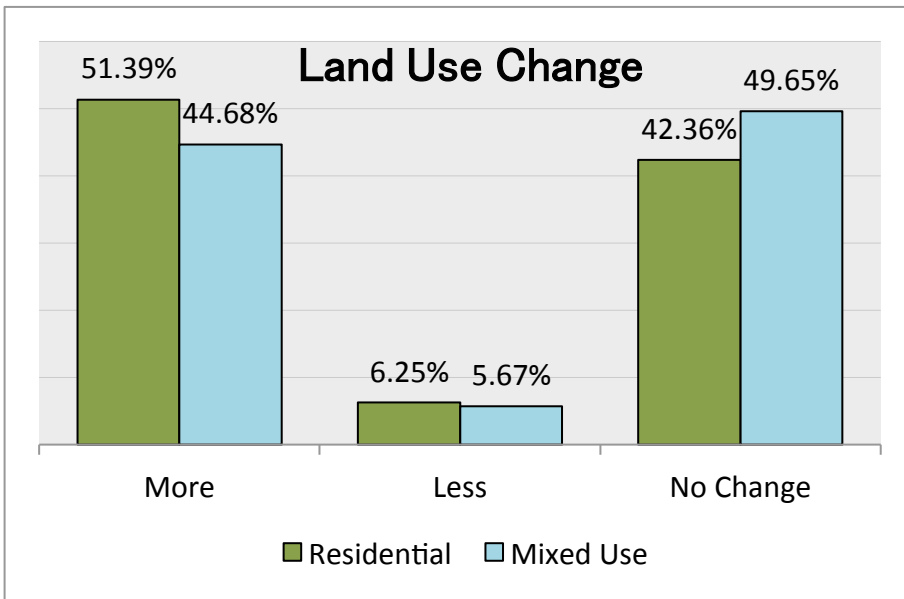
Question 1: Please rate each of the following reasons why you live in Trumansburg.



The graph above displays how many respondents indicated positive answers (either 'very important' or 'important') for the community characteristics listed above when considering reasons for living in Trumansburg. A vibrant Main St, sense of community, and walkability all received nearly entirely positive affirmations, while historic character, affordability, and access to public transportation were all less important, but still valued.

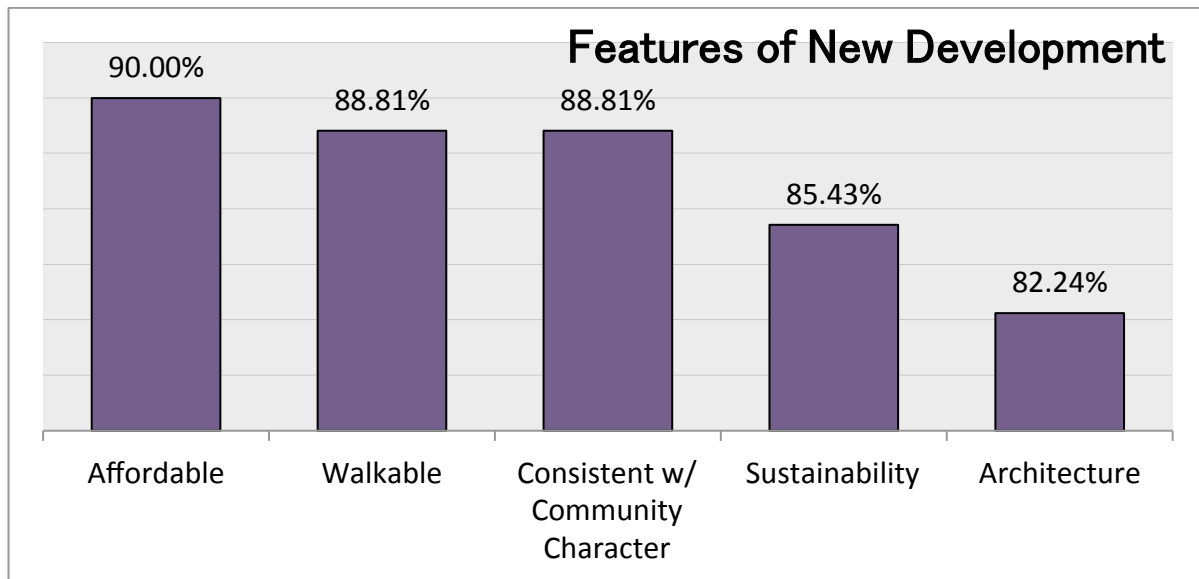
This also displays a preference towards a neighborhood, community feel, one where residents can walk around and enjoy themselves and interact with others. Somewhat revealing is how relatively few people consider affordability in their rationale for living in Trumansburg, a trend that is brought up at times throughout this study. Access to public transportation, while not necessarily as important as walkability, still is considered valuable by two-thirds of respondents.

Question 2: Please indicate whether you would like to see more, less, or no change in the following land uses.



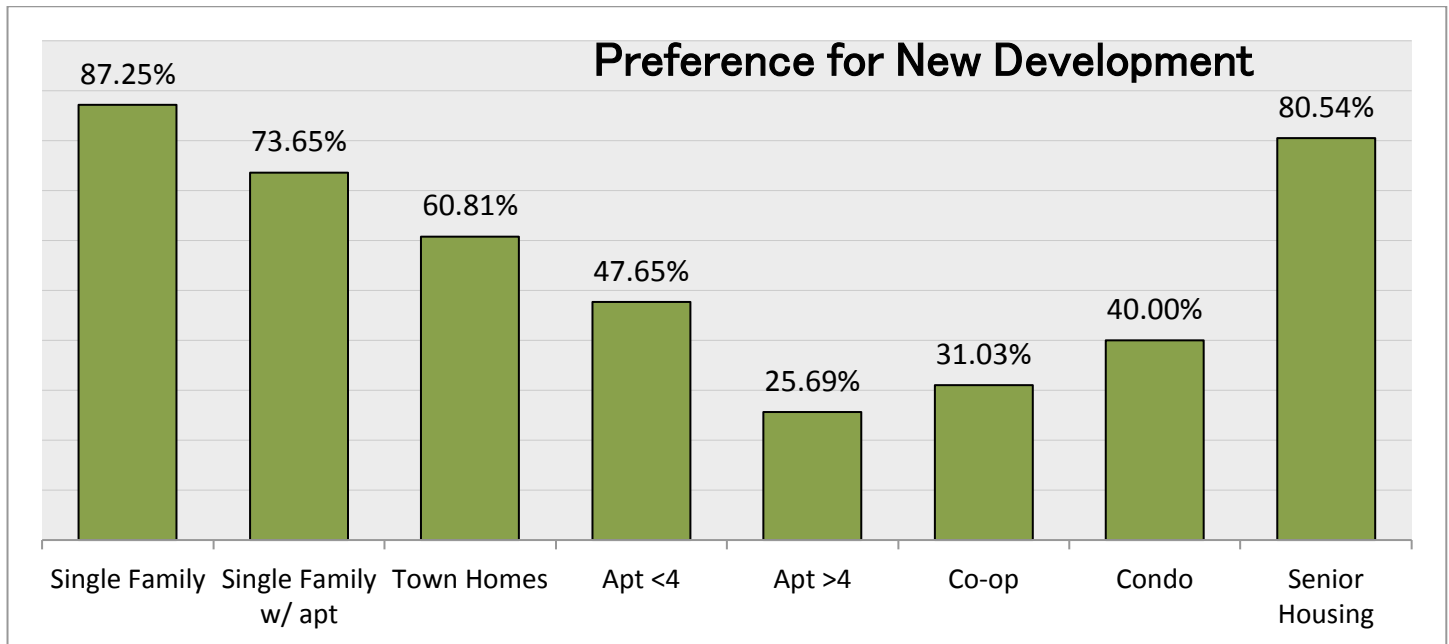
This question sought to provide a rough gauge of how residents interpreted overall land use in the village. Nearly all respondents indicated that they would like to see either no change or an increase in mixed use and residential development, with the highest percentage indicating a need for more residential development (51.39%). This theme recurs throughout the survey, including in the comments section, where people repeatedly indicated the need to increase population in order to make the Village more affordable for all.

Question 3: Please rate the importance of the below features for new development in Trumansburg.



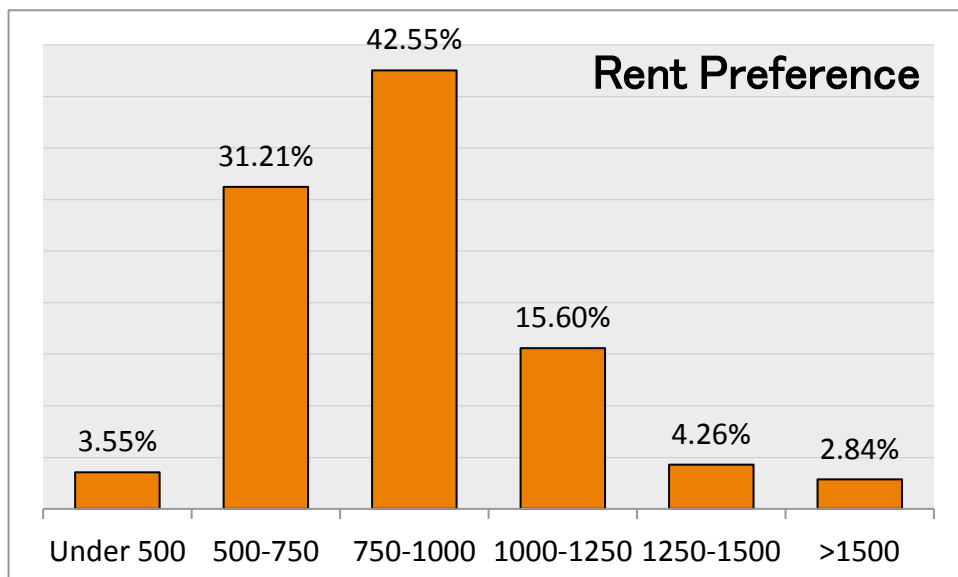
This question asked about the importance of certain features of new development. The graph displays the positive response for each variable (very important or somewhat important). There is a clear preference towards affordability, walkability and consistence with existing community character. Of slightly lesser importance are sustainability and architectural features.

Question 4: If new development occurred in Trumansburg, please rate the styles listed below by how desirable you would find them.

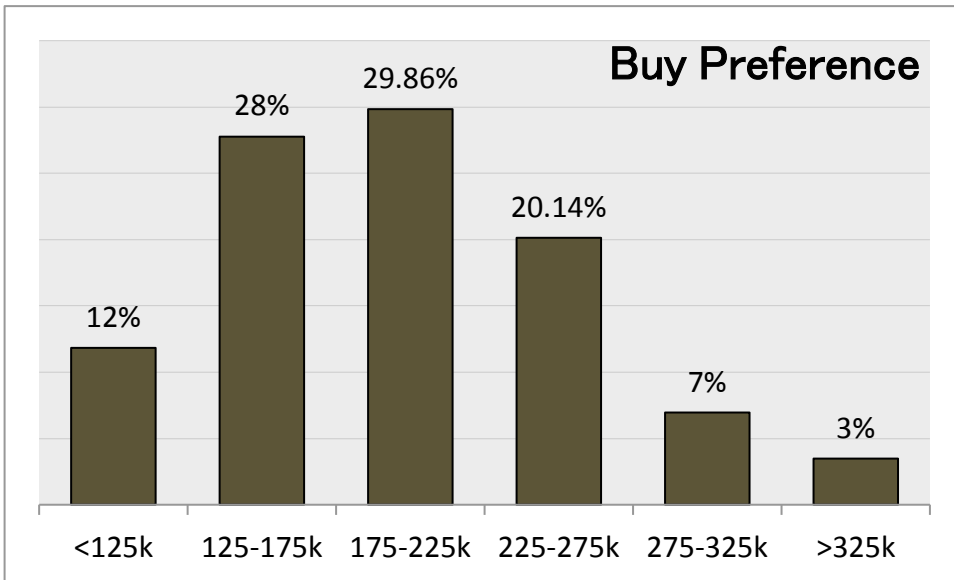


This graph displays housing type preference (percent answering either ‘very desirable’ or ‘desirable’) for new development, and illustrates a community need for more single family homes and more senior housing. There were several comments discussing a need for smaller, affordable homes that were easier to afford for young families and easier to afford and maintain for folks moving into old age that would like to remain in Trumansburg. As development size increased, desirability went down, keeping with the response in Question 3 indicating a preference for consistency with community character. Many streets on Trumansburg are primarily single family houses.

Question 5 and 6 – If you were interested in renting or buying, how much would you pay?



These questions sought to compare what respondents would like to pay with what the current prices are in Trumansburg. For rent, over 70% of respondents indicated a willingness to pay somewhere between \$500 and \$1000 per month. In reality, the highest proportion of rentals fall in the \$1000-\$1499 range (27.2%). Median Gross rent is currently \$950.

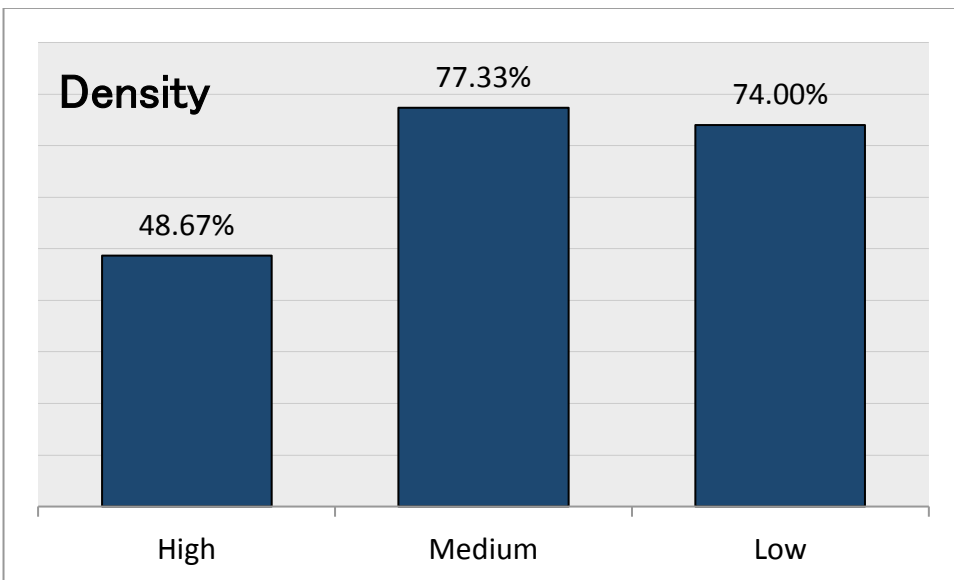


The situation for purchase price was similar to that of rent. A significant portion (40%) indicated that they would look for a home under \$175,000. Median home value is \$201,700, and median sale price in 2015 is \$196,600, a price that a considerable portion of respondents came in below.

Both rent and home price have increased considerably over the past decade in Trumansburg, to the extent that the cost of living is beyond what many would-be

residents can afford, and beyond the price residents who moved to the village over ten years or so ago can afford. The increase in home valuation and corresponding rise in taxes may be causing many of the affordability concerns for residents who already call Trumansburg home, and did so before the rise in cost of living.

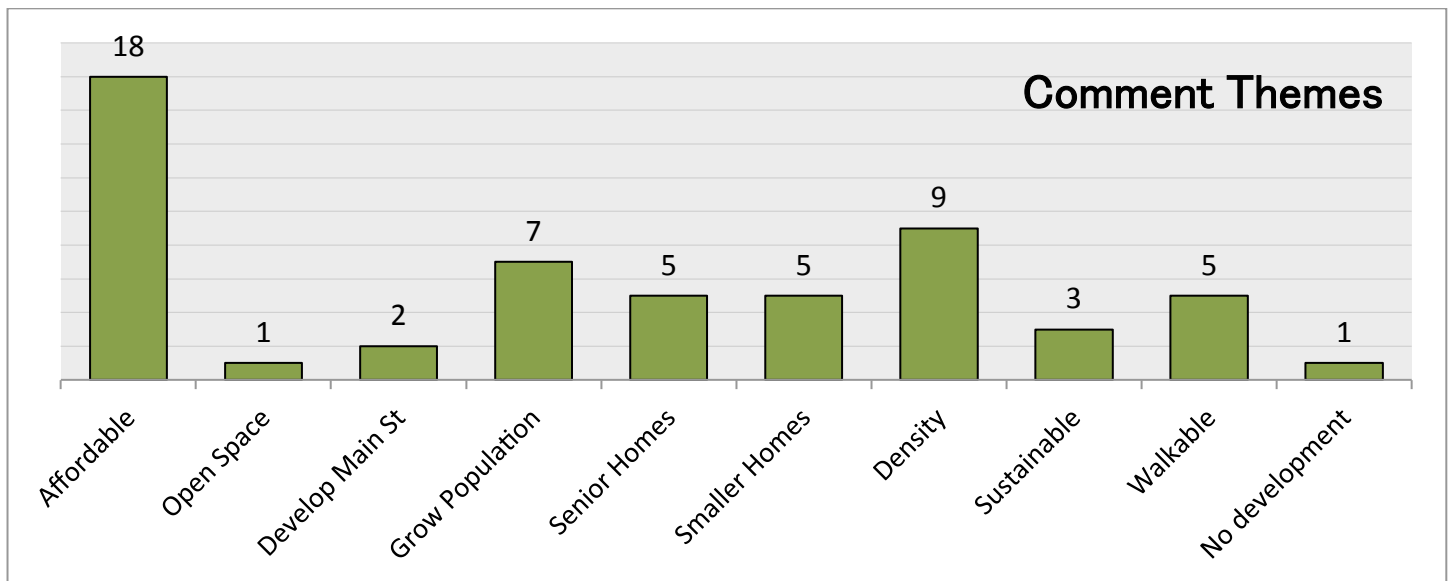
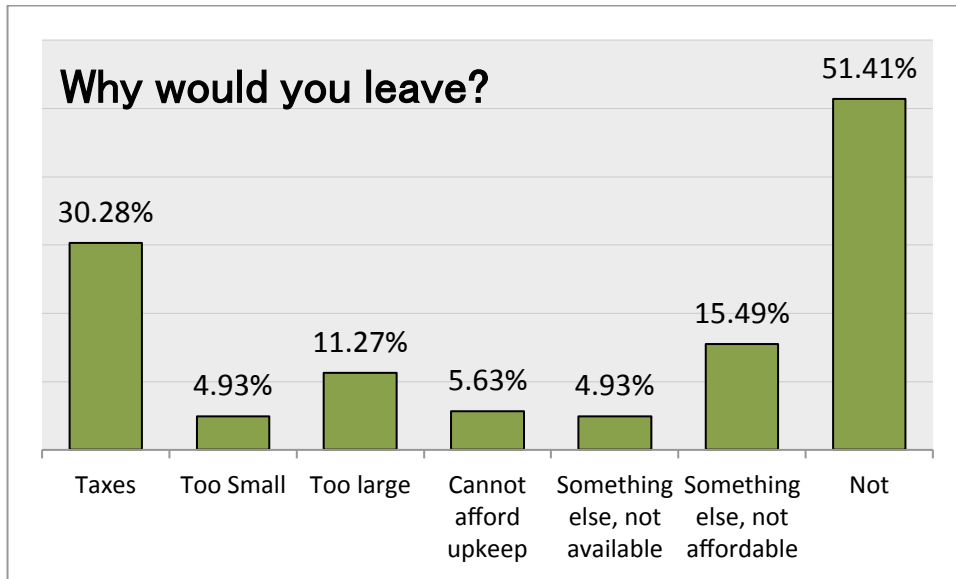
Question 7: Please rate not on home appearance but on distance between homes (density).



Despite a high acknowledgement of walkable, affordable, and lively neighborhoods prior in the survey, high density (described to respondents as a section of Main St) received the lowest preference. Though medium (described as 5-11 Whig St, an area with small lot size and particularly small minimum frontage) scored the highest, low density (South St past the historical society) scored very well. Thus, there is a disconnect between what respondents enjoy about a place and what the built environment is that provides those very things they enjoy. This is not isolated to Trumansburg, but is rather one of the more common conundrums to community planning: people tend to like the benefits of slightly higher density areas, but usually do not indicate a preference toward higher density itself. This survey illustrates that.

Still, the 'Medium Density' used in the survey is an excellent livable neighborhood density, yet is not possible to recreate under current Trumansburg zoning. That being said, many comments mentioned a need for denser development, particularly in relation to growing population to offset taxes.

Question 8 & 9: If you are considering leaving the village, which of these describes your situation? And Comments.



For both the final question and the comments we see affordability rise to the top, with taxes a concern for 30% of respondents and affordability coming up in 18 individual comments.

Conclusions

Affordability

There is mounting pressure on affordable housing in Trumansburg. This is likely due to a variety of factors, including overflow from the demand in Ithaca, increasing attractiveness of walkable communities, and the primary residential structures being large, old homes that are inherently more expensive. Median sale price, Median home value and gross rent have both gone up significantly over the past decade. Trumansburg needs to be proactive in combating this trend in order to ensure that the Village remains an open place for people of all incomes, and to keep the cost of living low for individuals who lived in Trumansburg before the cost of living increase.

Housing Variety

There is a noted absence of smaller, newer homes in the Village. These homes would be ideal both for first-time homebuyers and seniors who are looking to downscale but remain independent. But both of these demographics are also interested in and would benefit from housing that is close to Village amenities and fits in with or creates a new neighborhood feel. Most of Trumansburg's housing is large, historic homes (close to downtown) or newer homes that are much further from downtown and are not walker friendly.

Community Character

Any new development in the Village of Trumansburg should not only maintain the community character, but seek to enhance it. There is a strong demand to live in Trumansburg, and much of this demand is generated by being a walkable community with a lively downtown area where residents can interact with their neighbors. Trumansburg should build on these existing strengths. The Village has done an excellent job of doing so in the near past- with sidewalk improvements, adding second- and third-floor housing along Main Street, and numerous improvements to Main Street itself, but more can be done to ensure that this continues and spreads to the housing aspect of the Village.

Potential for Growth

There is a great demand for housing in the Village of Trumansburg, and there is a high potential to capture population that is currently being pushed into the Town of Ulysses and even north into Seneca County. Trumansburg stands to benefit from capturing some of this population: increased population can offset the tax and infrastructure burden being felt by current residents, and an increase in housing can help accommodate the burgeoning demand and alleviate the rising home prices and rental rates. Capturing this growth does not need to be at odds with community character. Many residents also cited concerns about a decreasing school population and the need to attract more families.

Recommendations

Zoning

Updating the Village of Trumansburg's zoning may be something to consider before new development commences. Below is a chart comparing the dimensional requirements for residential districts in Trumansburg to one in Ithaca (the zoning for Fall Creek, Northside, and other similar neighborhoods) and another historic district in the Village of Cazenovia.

The Village of Trumansburg has larger minimum lots sizes and frontage requirements than the other two zones, which greatly impacts overall neighborhood character and density. If the Village would like to accommodate new growth and do so in way that is walkable and maximizes available land, reducing these requirements is an important option to consider.

The most-preferred area identified by the survey (5-11 Whig St) is a density level unbuildable under current Village Zoning.

One-family detached or semi-detached or two-family dwelling:

	Trumansburg	Ithaca R2b- Fall Creek, Northside	Cazenovia R-6
Minimum lot size for first dwelling on the property	15,000 sq. ft.	3,000 sq. ft	6,000 sq. ft
Minimum frontage	100 ft.	35 ft.	50ft.
Maximum height-principal buildings	35 ft.	35 ft.	30 ft.
Minimum Yards- Principal Buildings			
- Front yard	50 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.
- Side yard	15 ft.	10 ft. for one side, 5 ft. for other	total both yards 20 ft., either yard 4 ft.
- Rear yard	35 ft.	25% or 50 ft, but not less than 20 ft.	30 ft.

Go Small

Young homebuyers and seniors alike voiced the desire for smaller, more affordable homes. Creating zoning that allows for small homes in addition to small lots is essential. Additionally, allowing for multi-unit homes can keep homes at a manageable size and price. Accessory or mother-in-law apartments should be encouraged to meet housing demand.

Community Character

The Village of Trumansburg has a distinct character that the majority of its residents cite as a major reason for choosing to live there. Simple design standards, or even a set of best practices for what the community would like to see encouraged, is something the Village can provide to developers.

Planned Unit Development

Planned unit developments (PUD) are planned and built as a unit, encouraging clustering of structures, a variety of building types and land uses, and designation of common open space. Benefits include, open space preservation, more efficient site design, and lower development and maintenance costs. Planned unit development are something the Village might consider adding to the zoning.

Walkable

Pedestrian connectivity to the community is important for any new housing. Sidewalks and footpaths should be part of new developments in Trumansburg. Increased density will also promote walkability.

Work with Non-Profit Developers

Collaborating with non-profit developers maybe the best way to meet the demand for low and moderate income residents, especially if quality housing is desired. These developers make use of government subsidies and other programs to build units that can be sold or rented at a reasonable price while maintaining a high standard of building quality. Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services and Pathstone (based in Rochester) are two regional options.

Housing Trust

Community housing trusts are an important tool for keeping units permanently affordable in a community. Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services currently has a community housing trust that could be used as a model or homes in Trumansburg could be added to the existing trust.

Extend Affordable Unit Development Requirement

Another option for creating affordable housing would be for the Village to extend the affordable units required of developers past the five year minimum.

Create Incentives to Build Denser Developments

Density bonuses or transfer of development rights are two ways that Trumansburg can encourage developers to build more compact, sustainable housing. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a tool that allows landowners to sell development rights from a parcel they own to a developer who can use the rights to increase the density of development on another parcel. Density bonuses permit developers to build taller buildings, more housing units, or more floor space than zoning would normally permit by providing a public benefit, such as affordable units or a public use on the property.

Appendix I- Survey

A consulting team is conducting a survey for the Village of Trumansburg to update the housing portion of the Comprehensive Plan. Village residents are being asked to complete a brief set of questions. By taking part in the survey, you are helping this become a more informed and accurate process. We appreciate your input!

Here are a few definitions you'll need to know:

Senior housing- housing that accommodates the aging population through handicap-accessible design, opportunities for services, and low-maintenance design. This ranges from independent living to assisted living.

Mixed-use development- mixture of residential, commercial, and other uses all in the same area (Main Street is considered mixed use).

Streetscape- All the parts that make up a street, including roads, trees, buildings, benches, lighting, and other features that form character.

If you have any questions, please contact tburghousingsurvey@gmail.com. Thanks.

1. Where do you live? Circle one:

Village of Trumansburg Town of Ulysses Other

2. Please rate the reasons why you live in the Village of Trumansburg. Indicate: 1= Very important; 2= somewhat important; 3= neither important nor unimportant; 4= somewhat unimportant; 5= very unimportant; no opinion

Historic character	1	2	3	4	5	no opinion
Walkability	1	2	3	4	5	no opinion
Access to public transportation	1	2	3	4	5	no opinion
Affordability	1	2	3	4	5	no opinion
Vibrant Main St	1	2	3	4	5	no opinion
Sense of Community	1	2	3	4	5	no opinion
Quiet	1	2	3	4	5	no opinion
Other (specify below)	1	2	3	4	5	no opinion

3. Please indicate whether you would like MORE, LESS, or NO CHANGE for the following land uses:

Residential Development	MORE	LESS	NO CHANGE
Mixed Use Development	MORE	LESS	NO CHANGE

(Main St is considered Mixed Use)

4. Please rate the importance of the following features for new development in Trumansburg. Indicate: 1= Very important; 2= somewhat important; 3= neither important nor unimportant; 4= somewhat unimportant; 5= very unimportant.

Affordability	1	2	3	4	5
Walkability	1	2	3	4	5
Consistent w/ community character	1	2	3	4	5
Efficiency and sustainability	1	2	3	4	5
Architecturally interesting design	1	2	3	4	5

5. If new development occurred in Trumansburg, please rate the styles listed below by how desirable you would find them. Indicate: 1= Very desirable; 2= desirable; 3= neither; 4= undesirable; 5= very undesirable.

Single family homes	1	2	3	4	5
Single family homes w/ accessory apt	1	2	3	4	5
Town homes and duplexes	1	2	3	4	5
Apartment buildings (4 units or less)	1	2	3	4	5
Apartment buildings (5 units or more)	1	2	3	4	5
Co-op	1	2	3	4	5
Condo	1	2	3	4	5
Senior housing	1	2	3	4	5

6. If you were interested in renting, how much would you be willing to pay each month for rent?

Under \$500	\$500-750	\$750-1000	\$1000-1250
\$1250-1500	More than \$1500		

7. If you were interest in buying, how much would you be willing to pay for a new home?

Under \$125,000	\$125,000-\$175,000	\$175,000-\$225,000
\$225,000-\$275,000	\$275,000-\$325,000	\$325,000+

8. Please rate the following not on appearance of homes but on distance between houses.

Indicate: 1= Very attractive; 2= attractive; 3= neither; 4= unattractive; 5= very unattractive.

High Density 1 2 3 4 5
(Main St between Library and Village Hall)

Medium Density 1 2 3 4 5
(5-11 Whig St (between St James Church and Elm St)

Low Density 1 2 3 4 5
(South St past Historical Society)

9. If you are considering leaving the Village, which of these best describes your situation?

Circle all that apply:

Can no longer afford taxes

Home is too small

Home is too large

Cannot afford repairs and upkeep

Would like another style home that is unavailable

Would like a different home, but cannot afford to purchase or rent in Village

Not considering relocating at this time

Do not currently live in Village

Other (please specify)

10. Please add any additional thoughts or comments below: