



Municipality of Trent Hills

Strategic Planning Survey Report

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Introduction

To ensure broad stakeholder input was included as part of the Municipality of Trent Hill's strategic planning process, **an online survey** was developed and disseminated broadly to the community. The survey was one part of a larger engagement process that included focus groups and key informant interviews.

This report outlines the results of the online survey.

Survey Methodology

Given that the online survey was developed as one part of the strategic planning engagement process and there are other inputs the Municipality must consider as part of planning, it is important to note that the survey is not statistically significant, and sampling was not done. Rather, the survey is a moment-in-time pulse-check of those who were interested in contributing to the development of the strategic plan.

The survey included questions to elicit both qualitative (i.e., open-ended questions) and quantitative (i.e., ranking, Likert Scales and multiple-choice questions) responses. Answers to open-ended questions have been analysed using an open coding methodology that identified broad themes.

Survey Timing

The survey was open between February 22 and March 20, 2023.

Survey Dissemination

As the Municipality already has established relationships with stakeholders, the Chief Administrative Officer and staff assisted with dissemination of the invitation to complete the online survey. Templates were developed by Arising Collective to assist with this communication. Community members were invited to participate via email, social media, and word of mouth.

Survey participants were invited to enter a draw to win a gift basket to a local business.

Survey Participation

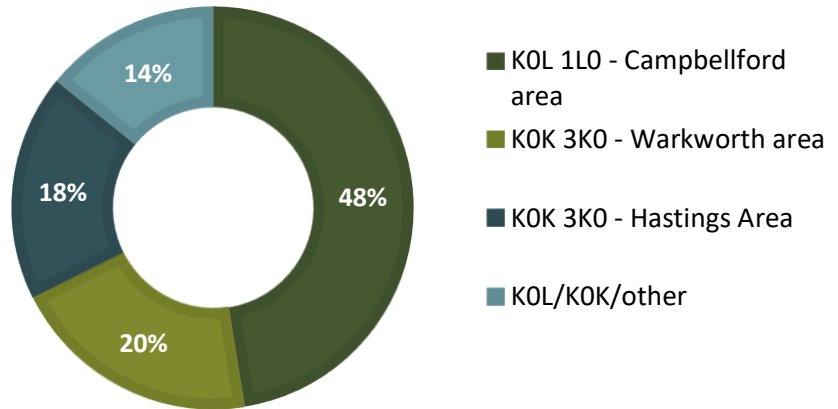
There were **572 survey responses** to the survey. In addition, 240 respondents chose to enter the draw.

Survey Results

Location of Survey Respondents

Respondents were asked to provide their postal code to identify the area in which they live.

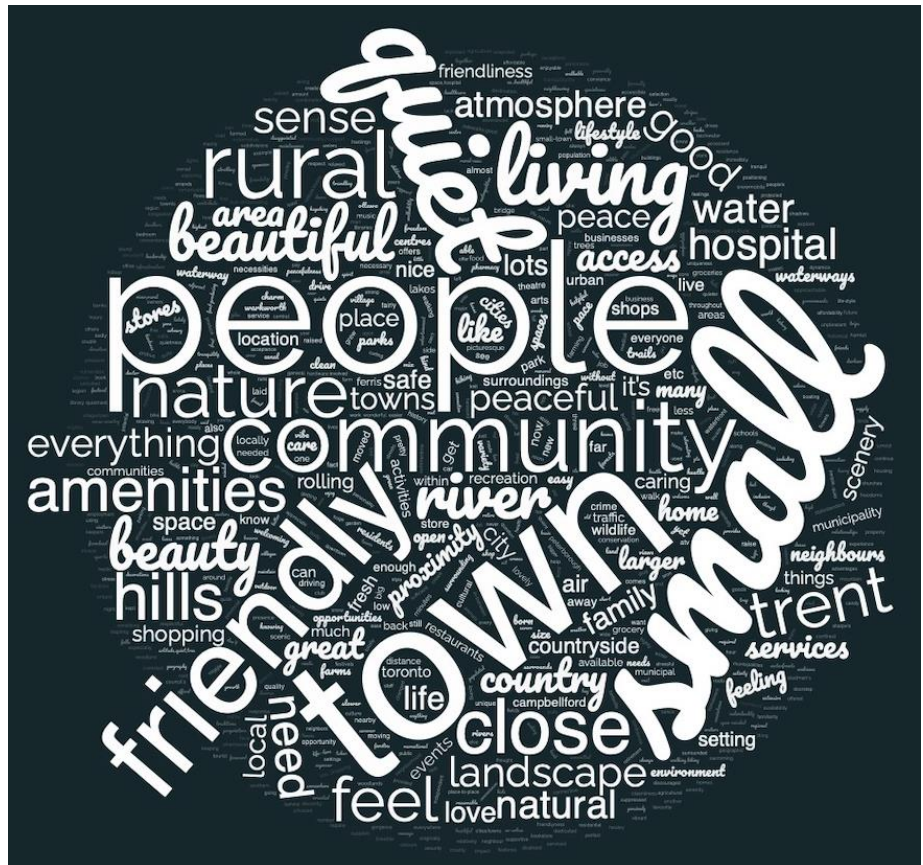
Just under 50% of respondents resided in the Campbellford area, followed by 20% from the Warkworth area, 18% from the Hastings area, and the remaining 14% from the general area.



Strengths of the Municipality

Respondents were asked **what they like most about living in the Municipality.**

Answers are demonstrated by the word cloud. A larger font demonstrates a higher number of mentions.

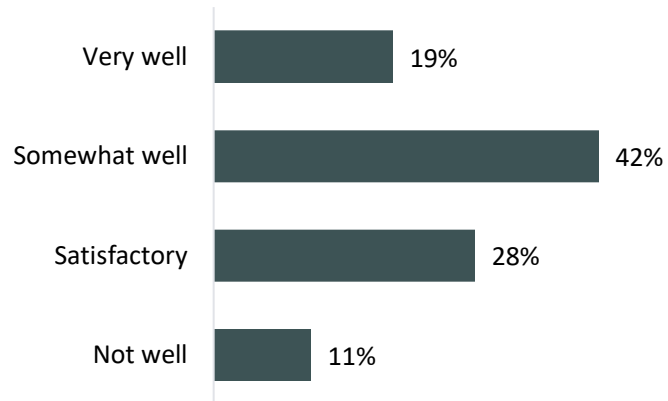


Municipal Vision

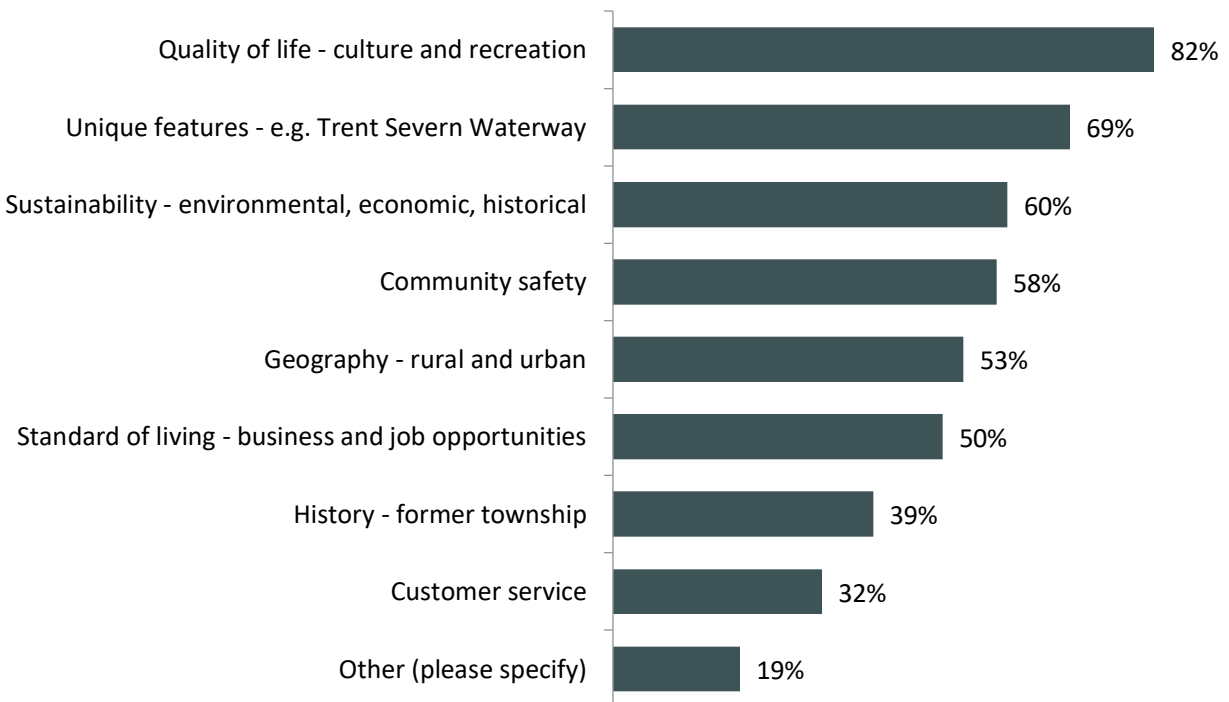
Current Municipal Vision Statement

Trent Hills is a vibrant and diverse community offering an inclusive, healthy, rural lifestyle for its residents, businesses, and visitors. Our unique urban centres and rural communities of Trent Hills are united by a shared heritage, rich cultural fabric, picturesque landscape, and pride in community.

Overall, respondents feel the Municipality is **working very well (19%)** or **somewhat well (42%)** toward fulfilling this current vision.



When asked what **statements they would like to see included within a vision statement** the top four chosen were quality of life, unique features, sustainability, and community safety. Respondents could select any number of statements.

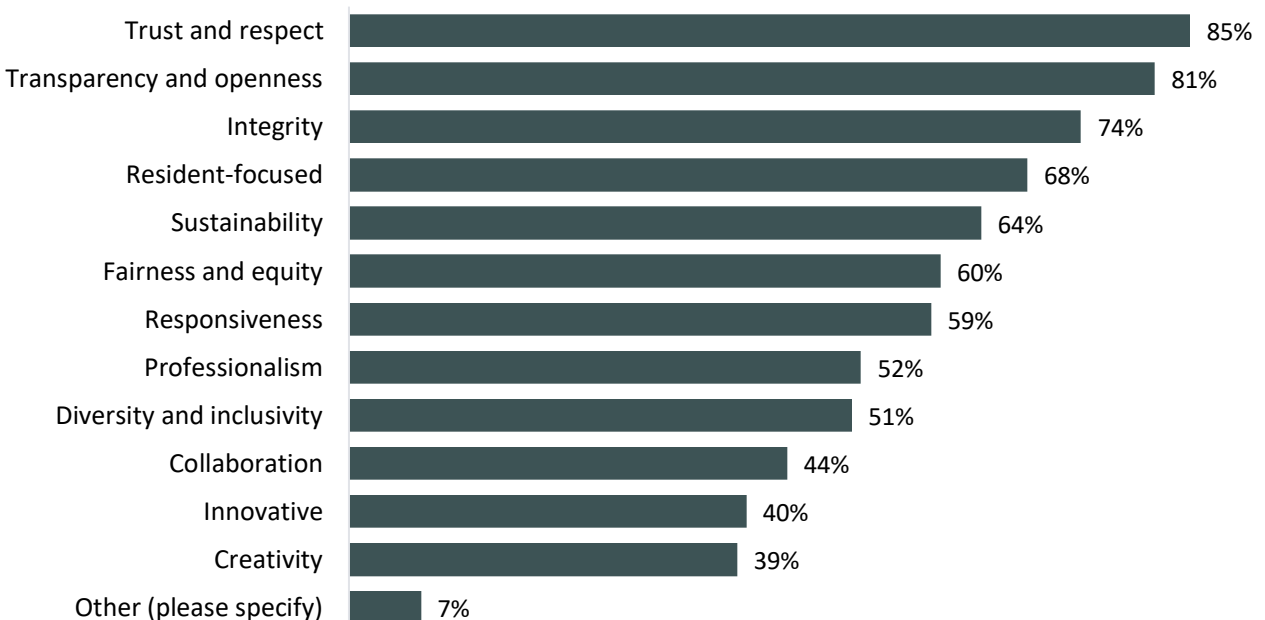


Of the respondents, 19% (104) chose 'other' and described **additional statements to include in a vision statement**. There was some overlap with statements already provided. New suggestions included:

- Ensure the vision statement is forward looking, motivating and inspirational and is reflective of the community's culture and core values
- Volunteerism
- Sustainable housing
- Maintain current strengths
- Affordable living
- Range of amenities
- Welcoming, caring, connected, inclusive, respectful, and a diverse community
- Outdoor recreation
- Recognize indigenous lands
- Address homelessness and poverty
- Protect agricultural land
- Food sustainability
- With growth, respect the past, protect the natural beauty of the area, define greenspace and create safe walkable villages
- Interactive local government
- Support for creative and artistic community
- Trent Hills as one community

Municipal Values

Respondents were asked to select the **values they feel are important** for the Municipality to consider as part of planning. Trust and respect, transparency and openness, and integrity were chosen as the top three values.



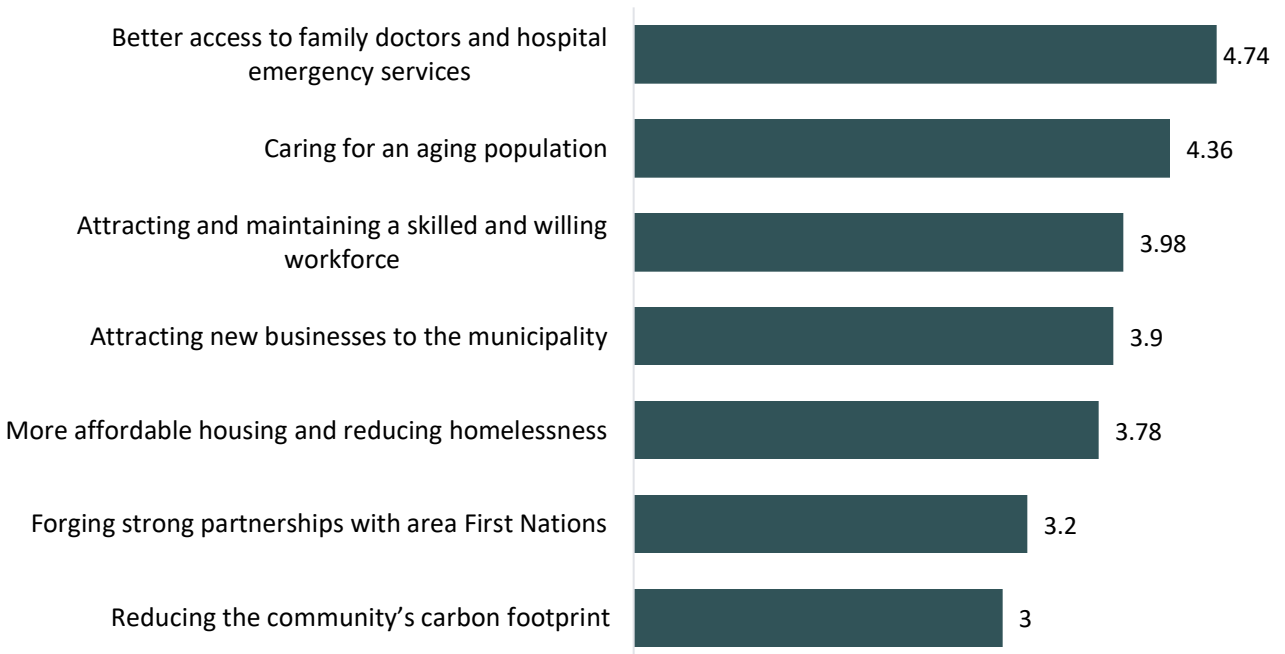
Municipal Goals

Respondents were asked to **rank the importance of six municipal goals** in order from most important to least important. The top three most important goals identified were keeping taxes low, increasing the basic service levels for ratepayers, and addressing the infrastructure deficit identified in the asset management plan.

1. Keeping taxes low
2. Increasing basic service levels for ratepayers
3. Addressing the infrastructure deficit identified in the asset management plan
4. Investing in new recreational and cultural infrastructure
5. Greening municipal operations
6. Maintaining a strong municipal workforce

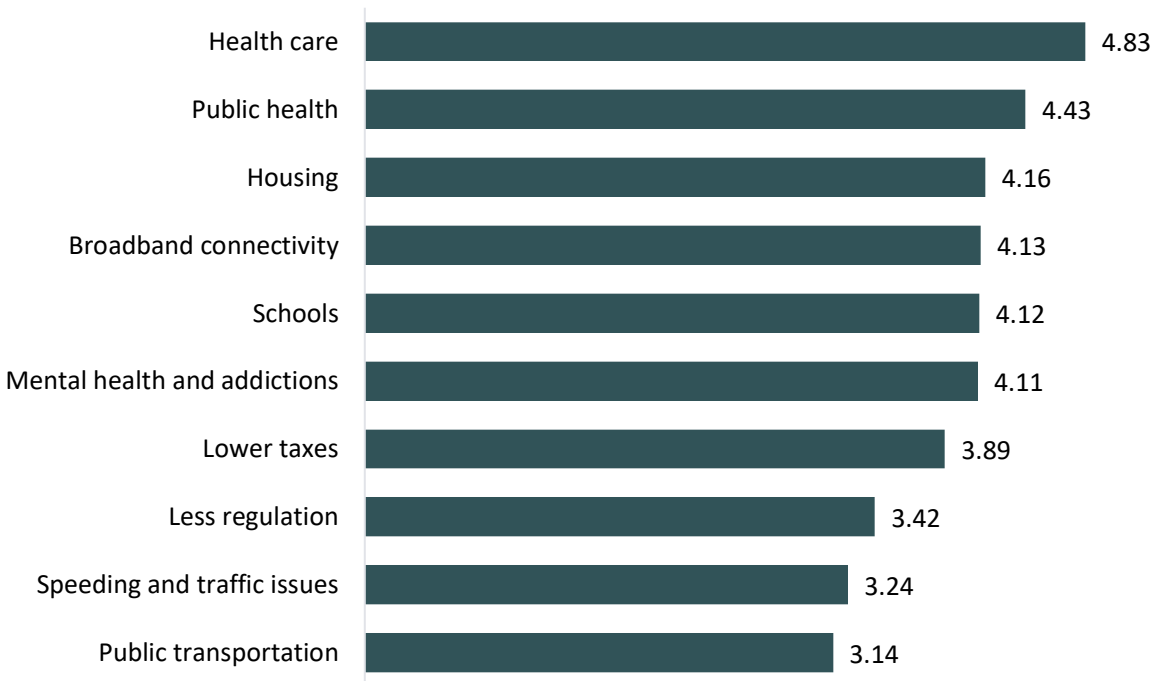
Municipal Priorities

Respondents were next asked to **rate the importance of municipal priorities** from most important to least important on a 5-point Likert scale. The top three priorities chosen were better access to family doctors and hospital emergency services, caring for an aging population, and attracting and maintaining a skilled workforce.



Partnerships with Higher Levels of Government

Many of the issues facing municipalities are often outside the jurisdiction of local government. Respondents were asked to rate, by most important to least important, on a 5-point Likert scale, the **areas that require a stronger partnership with the Province and/or the County of Northumberland**. The areas that ranked as most important were health care, public health, and housing.



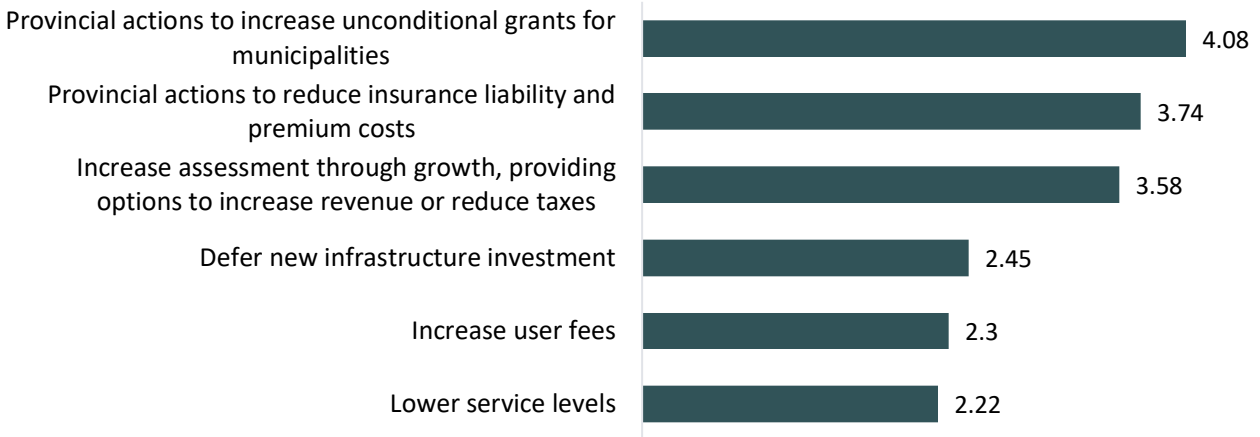
Priorities for Local Economic Growth

Respondents were next asked to rank, by most important to least, **which sectors should be a priority for local economic growth**. The most important sections identified were primary agriculture, value-added agriculture, and retail.

1. Primary agriculture
2. Value-added agriculture (e.g., winery, brewery, farmers market, abattoir)
3. Retail
4. Small business
5. Tourism
6. Manufacturing
7. Downtown revitalization
8. Cultural enterprises

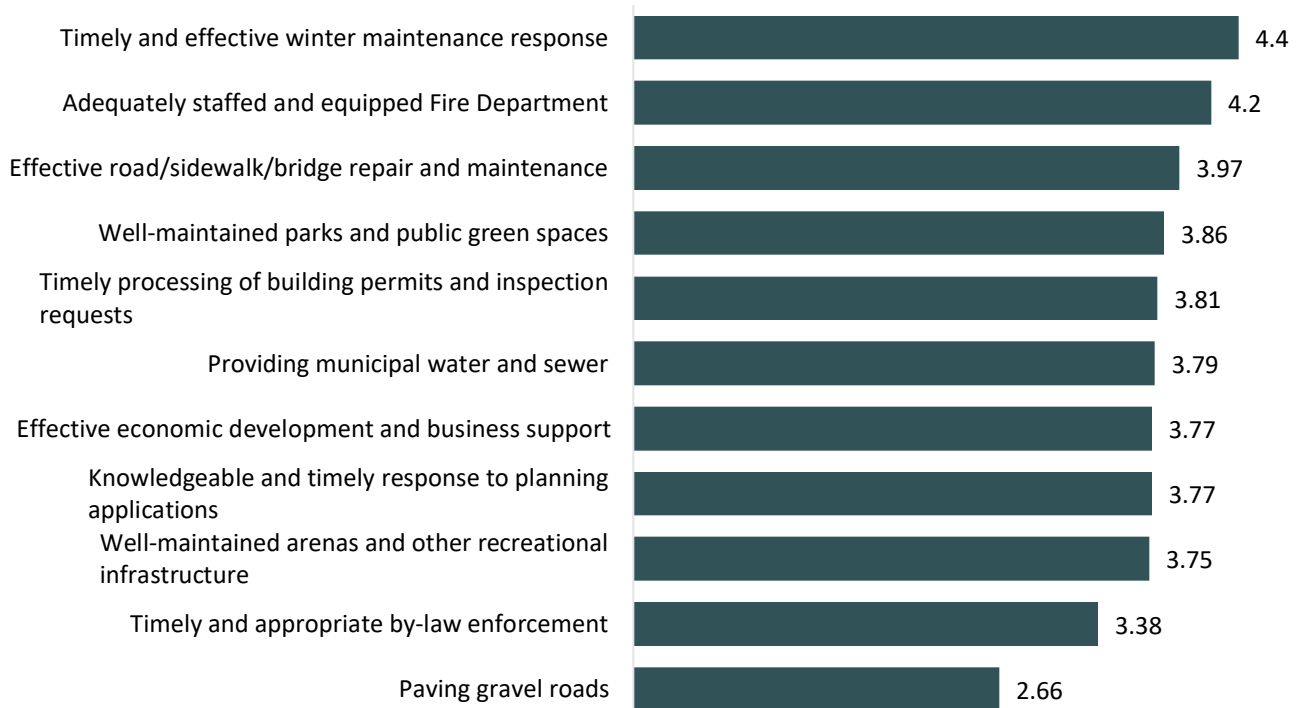
Goal: Keeping Taxes Low

When asked about the most important actions **the Municipality should take to meet the goal of keeping taxes low** on a 5-point Likert scale, respondents rated provincial actions to increase unconditional grants for municipalities, provincial actions to reduce insurance liability and premium costs, and increasing assessment through growth as the most important.



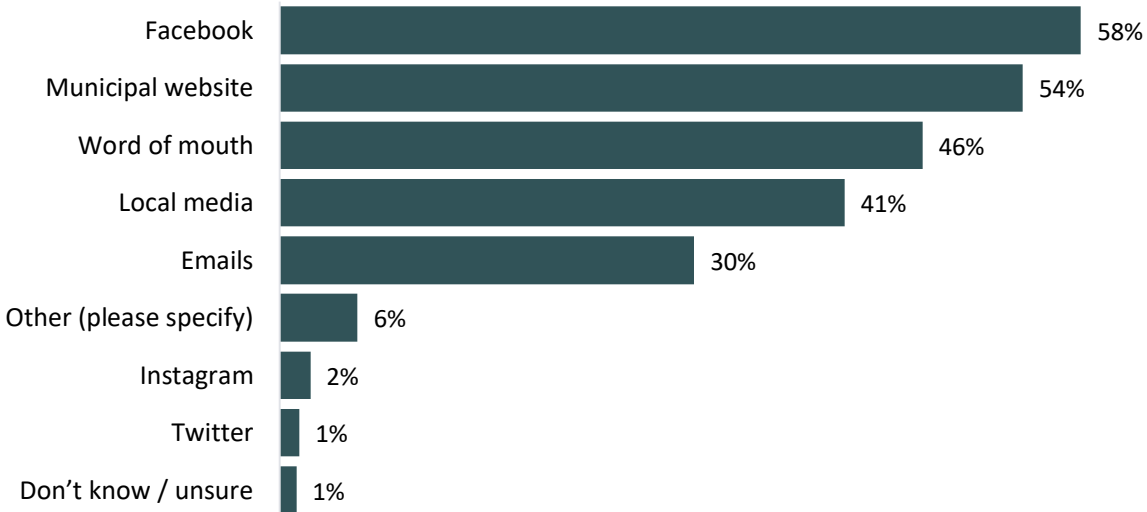
Goal: Maintaining or Expanding Basic Municipal Services

When asked about the **most important actions the Municipality should take to meet the goal of maintaining or expanding basic municipal services** on a 5-point Likert scale, respondents rated timely and effective winter maintenance response, adequately staffed and equipped Fire Department, and effective road/sidewalk/bridge repair and maintenance as the most important.



Communications

When asked where they most often get **information about the Municipality**, respondents noted Facebook, the Municipal Website, and word of mouth as the top three modes of communication.



When asked **how the Municipality can better communicate with residents**, 267 respondents provided a variety of suggestions, including compliments on what is working well. Common mentions included:

- Email
- Through the mail (or tax bills)
- Monthly newsletter
- Social media
- Local media
- Website
- Community boards – digital and/or bulletin boards

Other suggestion included:

- Seeking community input more often through public meetings and surveys, with adequate notice, and providing a report-back.
- Providing more communication that is friendly, open, honest, and transparent to better connect with residents.
- Providing Zoom access to Council meetings, as well as updates of what has happened at those meetings.
- Council members to reach out to residents and be seen in community.
- More timely replies to emails and phone calls.
- Clearer messaging that is easy to read and understand.
- An active social media presence.
- Timely information about proposed changes to bylaws and zoning and other major issues being discussed at Council.
- An interactive app.

Important Issues Facing the Community

Respondents were asked to share what they feel are the **most important issues facing the community**. 421 responses were provided and the themes that emerged have been described in order of the number of mentions, with the most frequently mentioned at the top of the list:

- **Healthcare.** The health and wellness of residents. The importance of the new hospital. Attracting health care professionals. Providing addictions and mental health resources and supports. Long-term care.
- **Housing.** Affordable housing and having a range of housing options available including rental units, housing for seniors, and tiny homes. Ensuring new developments are not built on farmland and other sensitive areas. Fast-track some housing developments to increase tax base. Consider where housing is built with regards to long-term infrastructure costs.
- **Affordability.** The rising cost of living and the affordability of housing and food. High property taxes. High rates for water, sewer, and garbage tags. High permit fees.
- **Managing growth.** Sustainable and planned growth that preserves agricultural lands and green spaces. Infrastructure that keeps up with growth, including roads that can handle increased traffic. Preservation of heritage buildings. Maintaining the small town feel and 'local charm'. Maintain rural values. A lack of childcare for families moving to the Municipality.
- **Issues involving the Municipality as an organization.** A Council that is visionary, trustworthy, and accountable. Open, honest, and transparent communication from the Municipality and clarity around decision-making. Enforcement of by-laws. Municipal overspending. Fairness to all three communities. Managing expectations of new residents. Lack of input from ratepayers. Need for a full-time fire department. Movement on infrastructure projects.
- **Infrastructure.** Road maintenance and safety. A new bridge. Bike- and pedestrian-friendly communities. Reliable broadband access. Transportation or transit connectivity between the communities. Water treatment plant upgrades. Green infrastructure.
- **Community safety and wellbeing.** Increasing homelessness and drug use. Increasing crime rates. Speeding on roads and increased traffic in summer. Bikers. Elder abuse. Instilling pride of ownership. Working together to solve housing crisis and other issues impacting community wellbeing.
- **Jobs and businesses.** Attract new diverse business and manufacturing and help them be sustainable. More jobs that pay above minimum wage. Shopping local.
- **Recreation.** The new recreation centre. More activities for youth, families, and seniors including sports leagues. More pickleball courts.
- **Downtown.** Revitalization and beautification. Incentives to encourage new businesses in downtown areas.

- **Environment.** Need for environmental and sustainability leadership to protect waterways and greenspace, while encouraging green infrastructure. Limit development. Consider using climate crisis lens when planning. Littering. Light pollution.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.** Build welcoming and inclusive communities that celebrate different cultures. Inclusion of young adults with special needs.

Focus Areas

Finally, respondents were provided with an opportunity to **describe how the municipality is doing and to describe areas of focus that should be a priority.** 326 comments were provided that ranged from compliments to suggestions in a variety of areas. The themes that emerged are listed by order of the number of mentions, with the most frequently mentioned at the top of the list.

Major themes included:

- **Municipal services and communication.** Comments included a desire for lower water and sewer costs, improving the response time and accountability from numerous departments, improving snow removal, lowering garbage tag costs, and addressing littering and dumping on rural roads. There was alignment about the desire for the Municipality to improve communications to residents, to focus on being more transparent, ask the community for input, and include community members in decision making. There were also additional comments about permitting and bylaw enforcement including lowering the cost of development permits and improving the efficiency of the permitting process, land severance difficulties, a lack of consistency in enforcing bylaws, and more proactive work to address bylaw issues.
- **Infrastructure.** There were several comments about the need to focus on infrastructure upgrades as a whole, and to ensure that infrastructure keeps up with growth. Comments specific to certain issues included:
 - Road maintenance (paving, fixing with good gravel, potholes)
 - Support for the new bridge
 - Improve biking and walking infrastructure
 - Improve public transit
 - Traffic safety and speeding
- **Health.** Comments were aligned about the need to attract and retain health care professionals, providing support for the Campbellford hospital redevelopment, lobbying for alternative healthcare models such as a Nurse Practitioner-led clinic, and more health support for seniors.
- **Municipal vision for growth.** Comments were aligned about the need for smart, controlled, and planned growth that retains the social, environmental, and cultural strengths of the Municipality. Comments also included the importance of maintaining rural values and lifestyle, focusing on residents instead of tourists, and managing the expectations of new residents.

- **Housing.** Comments ranged from the need for affordable housing, building a variety of housing including rental apartments, condos, and housing for seniors, ensuring developers pay for infrastructure developments, dealing with unregulated Airbnbs, to ensuring prime farmland is not used for new development. A couple respondents noted they wish for fewer homes to be built.
- **Business and employment.** A range of comments were provided that included fostering investment in the area to create jobs and economic opportunities for all residents, continuing to attract and support small businesses, supporting businesses to improve the appearance of downtown areas, supporting businesses to be more inclusive, moving service providers away from main street storefronts, and the need to build an industrial park.
- **Community.** Comments ranged from thinking about how to fairly support each of the three communities, enabling greater collaboration between the three communities, especially in terms of scheduling and coordinating events, promoting the uniqueness of each community, to downtown beautification.
- **Recreation.** Comments ranged from continuing to support the new recreational centre, ensuring recreation opportunities are affordable, to ensuring there are recreation opportunities in each of the three communities (i.e., tennis and pickleball court, sports for youth)
- **Taxes.** Comments were aligned about the desire for lower property taxes or keeping them low, especially for seniors on a fixed income. There were also a few comments about the need to balance services with tax increases.
- **Environment.** Comments included using a climate emergency and equity lens in visioning, being a leader in sustainability to set the Municipality apart to attract business, improving environmental awareness, planting more trees, protecting wetlands and water, increasing green spaces, installing additional electric car charging stations, and encouraging new developments to incorporate renewable or green energy.
- **Attracting and retaining youth and young families.** Comments were aligned about the need to attract and retain youth and young families by ensuring there is affordable housing, jobs, childcare, and appropriate recreation opportunities.
- **Seniors.** Comments mainly focused on the need for additional resources for seniors, including low-cost recreation opportunities, affordable housing, transportation, healthcare, and other supports.
- **Agriculture.** Comments ranged from preserving agricultural land and green space, encouraging value-added farm product, to encouraging farmers to relocate to the Municipality.
- **Diversity and inclusion.** Comments included the need to consider diversity around Council and ensuring the Municipality is inclusive.
- **Tourism.** Comments were aligned about continuing to build on tourism assets by providing more support to the sector.