

Bristol Planning Commission

Town Meeting Survey Report

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Background and Context:

Initial interest in creating a survey as a starting point for the planning process stemmed from the November 18th Planning Commission meeting. Census from this discussion was a desire to study the values and perspectives related to planning in Bristol and continued research into housing.

At the January 20th Planning Commission meeting a draft survey was presented to the Board for review and discussion by the board. This survey was created by UVM students as part of a service-learning course and focused largely on demographic and housing questions. The questions, summarized below, were raised as members reviewed the questions and provided a foundation for productive discussion.

- What are we aiming to learn?/ What are we trying to get at with survey?
- What is the long-term intention of posting survey?/ Will this be part of series of surveys?
- Who is the target population? / How will this survey be provided so that it will reach wider range of the population?

Summary of January Discussion:

This discussion resulted in a lot of great feedback from PC members and began to answer many of the questions raised at the meeting. My task following that meeting was to compile PC comments and feedback. I've organized the discussion into two main topics, Town Meeting Day Survey and Draft Housing Survey.

Town Meeting Day Survey

Purpose: To gain an understanding of residents' current values and perspectives on planning and development. To provide an introductory step in the planning process and encourage residents to participate with the Town Plan update.

Format: Qualitative survey that is short and simple. Survey should avoid excessive information to increase response rates. Questions should be thoughtful and seek more high-level responses.

Target Population: As this survey would be to get a pulse on how residents feel regarding planning the target population would ideally be all residents of Bristol.

PC Comments: Overall, the census from the planning commission is the desire to create a survey that is concise and thoughtful and captures a general sense of what is important to Bristol residents. The questions should focus more on qualitative questions. Below are some questions suggested by members.

- What is the most important for you in the future of Bristol?
- Do residents in Bristol have plans for their future?

Draft Housing Survey

The draft survey questions intent was to serve as jumping off point for larger discussion. That being said, a specific housing survey would be beneficial during work on community assessment. Members desired to learn more information regarding affordability issues and the experiences of both renters and homeowners.

PC Comments:

- Survey draft questions are very general, need to be more specific with what is being asked and more tied to Bristol as a town.
- Many of the demographic questions can be answered using existing resources
- There should be two surveys, one for renters and one for homeowners
- Biggest issues: Not enough housing stock being built paired with unaffordable costs for existing housing
- Combine question 7 & 8 from survey and “How would you make it so that people would want to or could build more housing in Bristol”
 - o Question 7: What kind of housing developments would you like to see more of in Town?
 - o Question 8: Which of the following housing arrangements do you think Bristol needs more of in the future

General Survey – Next Steps

Task 1: Finalizing Survey for Town Meeting Day – Below are the general steps in developing a survey. Each Step is intended to lead the PC through decisions that will help finalize the Survey for Town Meeting Day. The PC has already begun Step A at the January meeting, these steps should be reviewed to confirm consensus from the PC.

- A. Planning the Survey
 - a. Define Objectives and Purpose

- i. What does the PC need to know?/What is the survey measuring?
 - ii. Why is the data important?
 - iii. How will this data be used?
 - iv. Can this data be found elsewhere?
 - b. Identify Target Population
 - i. Who is the appropriate audience for the survey?
 - ii. What are possible biases of sampling groups?
 - c. Select Survey Methodology
 - i. What type of survey instrument would be appropriate for target audiences.
 - ii. Data Collection
 - 1. How will data be collected?
 - 2. What will the collection procedure be? Anonymous or confidential?
 - 3. How are responses measured and scored? Fixed response or open ended?

B. Developing the Survey

- a. Craft Survey Questions
 - i. How many questions are needed?
 - ii. Do questions align with objectives and purpose?

Considerations for question development:

- Avoid “double-barreled” that could cause confusion by respondents (i.e. Did you drink the coffee and tea?)
- Avoid loaded questions that could lead to bias
- Arrange in logical order
- Ensure questions match measurement scale
- Use plain language and be concise
- Provide simple instructions

- b. Determine Timeline
 - i. How long will this survey run?

C. Execution

- a. How will participation be encouraged?

D. Analysis

- a. Analyze responses collected
- b. Transparency – provide results once analyzed
- c. Interpretation and Action Plan – compare results to survey objectives

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

What in your opinion makes Bristol a great place to live?

Are you satisfied with the rate of growth in Bristol? Why or why not?

Do you see yourself living or working Bristol in the next 10 years?

What do you think Bristol should prioritize in the coming years?

Where do you see future development happening in Bristol?

How would you like to see Bristol develop as a community?