

## Webster Land Use Plan Survey Summary

Webster's Land Use Plan presents a vision for its future and strives to communicate the wishes of its citizens. Public input and engagement are essential to this process.

In light of COVID-19 precautions, the Webster Planning Board opted to engage Webster's citizens and community partners in ways that would prioritize their safety and wellbeing. Remote meetings and survey tools were employed. An online survey was available to collect public input on Webster's draft Land Use Plan from October 22, 2021, until November 16, 2021. For those without access to online resources, hard-copies of the survey and Land Use Plan were available at Town Hall. There were a total of 28 survey responses submitted, out of a population of approximately 400. The quantitative results from the survey are posted on the Town of Webster website.

The survey consisted of six questions. The first two questions were open-ended and related to the efficacy and perceived usefulness of the Land Use Plan. Question 1 reads, *How well do you think this Plan addresses Webster's future land use needs?* There was a nearly 2:1 response in favor of the draft plan as written. Among the comments, there was concern noted for the safety of pedestrians and motorists along roadways; Buchanan Loop Road and the intersection of NC-116 and Old Settlement Lane were mentioned specifically. Multiple respondents expressed concern surrounding public recreational uses along Buchanan Loop Road. There were also several comments regarding "safe-guarding" the historic quality of Webster and enforcing ordinances that pertain to the upkeep and appearance of residential lots. All of these comments were taken into consideration in updating the Land Use Plan. Question 2 reads, *Did you find the Land Use Plan clear and easy to understand?* There was a 9:1 favorability rating for this question with minimum additional public feedback. Question 3 sought to understand the respondents' relationship to Webster. Eighty percent of the survey respondents are residents of Webster and its ETJ, while 14 percent of respondents own property, but do not reside, in Webster or its ETJ. The remaining 7 percent

are residents of Jackson County. Questions 4 and 5 were intended to take the temperature of the community on a couple of issues that might lead to future action but that will most definitely require additional research, community engagement, and study. Question 4 asks about the Town's current zoning requirement of a 1-acre minimum lot size and whether the zoning ordinances should allow for lots of smaller size. Sixty percent felt the current lot size should be maintained at a 1-acre minimum, while forty percent were willing to consider a smaller lot size option. Written feedback varied widely. Some respondents felt the Town's current zoning ordinances are too restrictive and should allow for additional housing opportunities to grow the tax base and provide options that allow for greater economic diversity. Other respondents mention the charm of Webster being its current layout and density and voice concern about changing the very qualities that attracted them to Webster. Question 5 asks whether the town should limit or regulate short term rentals. Fifty-five percent said yes, the Town should consider limiting short-term rentals, while forty-five percent said no, the Town should not be involved in regulating short-term rentals. This is an emerging issue facing many communities. There was significant written feedback provided by the respondents on both sides of this issue. There was concern expressed at having "tourists as neighbors" and a couple reminders of the importance of maintaining a residential quality to our neighborhoods. Meanwhile, other residents mentioned that they would welcome the opportunity to operate a short-term rental of their own and feel like some short-term rental options within specifically designated areas, perhaps zoned as R-2, could be attractive.

The final question was meant to help guide Town and Planning Board members to prioritize projects as funding opportunities present themselves. Question 6 asks respondents to identify two areas where improvements might most affect their quality of life. The top priorities identified by respondents were: improving broadband access and affordability (fifty percent) and (tied for second with 43 percent each) creating a community space for outdoor activities and improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

Further public input was invited at a Planning Board meeting on November 18, 2021, which included an opportunity for public discussion.

The Planning Board wishes to thank those who took the time to read the Land Use Plan and to share valuable feedback. All of the information gathered from the community was considered in shaping the final draft.