

The Bolton 2019 Community Survey: Results, Commentary, and Conclusions

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INTRODUCTION

The Town of Bolton has many exciting possibilities and eventualities on the horizon of the 2020s and beyond, including the development of new town office spaces, the expansion and solidification of current town programs and offerings, the potential for new economic development, and more. With all of these topics in mind and more, in late 2019 the Board of Selectmen authorized a small amount of money to be put towards conducting a community-wide survey that would seek to gain input on relevant municipal topics, build benchmark ratings of town offerings to use as an evaluation tool in future years, and otherwise seek to learn what the town can do to improve services for residents based on resident feedback. The high response rate to the survey suggests that Bolton has a significant number of residents that are truly passionate and care about the happenings of the town.

In this report you will find a totaling of all data collected in 2019. As a result of this information, the conclusion presents the Board of Selectmen with a set of policy recommendations for their consideration. Any and all questions about this report, the 2019 Community Survey, or the information found herein can be sent to the Administrator at townadmin@boltonct.org.

PAST SURVEYS

1998 Community Survey

In October/November 1998, the Town of Bolton conducted its “Bolton Community Survey 2000,” which contacted approximately 3,800 residents and ended with 437 completed responses, resulting in a response rate of approximately 11.5%. Robert B. Hewey, a member of the Bolton Economic Development Commission, served as the survey coordinator, and it was reported that the

respondents were a “very representational” sample of the town, though the sample was only balanced for persons per household, gender, and geographic location of each person’s home. The 1998 survey had a relatively high margin of error of approximately +/- 4.47%.

Questions were structured differently in 1998 than they were in 2019. The 1998 survey divided itself into four major sections, first asking residents to benchmark current town offerings (“Where are we now?”), then proceeded to ask the questions “Where should we go?” and “How should we get there?” The final section of the survey focused on current issues. The results of the 1998 survey are listed beside the 2019 results wherever applicable throughout this document for the purpose of comparison. Questions that were asked in 1998 that have no direct comparison question in 2019 are summarized below.

1998 Town Funding Views

In 1998, it was asked of respondents to identify what services Bolton either offers or could offer to residents in the future that they would like to see funded solely by the town; funded as a combination of town appropriations, volunteer efforts, and user fees; or not funded whatsoever. The results of that line of questions is listed below:

B. FUNDING FOR BOLTON SERVICES - Percentage of respondents choosing each funding alternative

<u>Bolton Service</u>	<u>Fund Solely by Town (Incl. state/federal grants/revenue)</u>	<u>Fund by Comb. of Town, volunteer efforts, user fees</u>	<u>No Town Funding</u>
1. Refuse Collection/Recycling	85.1	12.6	1.2
2. Interscholastic HS Sports	44.7	44.7	7.0
3. Music/Art Education (K-12)	64.2	29.6	4.0
4. Youth Recreation Activities	12.6	73.8	11.0
5. Adult Recreation Activities	4.7	69.7	23.8
6. Open Space Preservation	42.6	40.2	7.1
7. Community Newsletter	32.9	53.1	10.0
8. Social Services/Welfare	45.3	29.7	16.1
9. Police Protection	94.4	3.2	1.2
10. Public Media Center	14.9	38.4	25.1
11. Sewage Treatment	37.6	22.4	24.2
12. Public Meeting Rooms	47.2	35.7	9.4
13. Community Center	30.9	52.5	8.7
14. Economic Development	38.6	32.9	14.4
15. Senior Center	27.2	61.9	6.5
16. Library	67.7	26.7	3.5
17. Youth Center	26.0	55.2	14.2
18. Fire Protection	86.2	12.6	0.2
19. Town Parks	57.9	38.1	2.8
20. Leaf Pickup	3 write-in votes	2 write-in votes	
21. Town Dump/Dump Access	3 write-in votes		

Note: One each write-in votes received for town funding of Public Transportation, Summer Kid’s Program, Water, Elderly Housing, and Residential Road Improvement.

1998 Understanding of Government

A greater emphasis was placed on governmental structure and the perceived effectiveness of the form of government that the town used. The results included the following:

C. BOLTON'S GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE/FUNCTION

<u>Area of Government</u>	<u>Agree</u> <u>(i.e. % Score</u> <u>of 1 or 2)</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>(i.e. % Score</u> <u>of 4 or 5)</u>
1. I have a good understanding of Bolton's current governmental structure	52.1	13.2
2. Bolton's governmental structure will be adequate for the next 5 years	39.5	14.9
3. All decisions requiring community approval should go to a referendum	57.4	24.0
4. All decisions requiring community approval should go to a town meeting	50.4	27.5
5. The Boards of Selectmen, Finance and Education work well together	16.0	33.3
6. I have no trouble contacting the appropriate town officials when I need to	58.5	15.2
7. Boards and commissions do a good job at coordinating their efforts	24.8	20.8
8. I believe that the budget process in Bolton is effective	32.9	27.8
9. I believe that the budget process in Bolton is appropriate	30.8	29.6

1998 Topics Du Jour

While topics of conversation in any given community change over time, some of the most important topics noted in the 1998 Community Survey are either identical or related to many of those described by respondents to the 2019 Community Survey. Here is a quick glance of the answers provided in 1998:

IV. Current Issues

<u>Option</u>	<u>Agree</u> <u>(i.e. % Score</u> <u>of 1 or 2)</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>(i.e. % Score</u> <u>of 4 or 5)</u>
1. I would like to see the current Route 6 widened	47.5	34.6
2. I would like to see a highway bypass to Route 6 completed as soon as possible	55.3	24.7
3. I would like to see sewers installed near Bolton Lake as recommended by CT DEP	51.1	21.7
4. I would like to see an expansion of our library facility and services.	53.3	21.4
5. I favor limits on communications towers in Bolton as proposed by the P & Z Board	61.9	10.6
6. I support the proposal of the Fire Department to hire a full time person on site	50.8	22.4
7. I would like to see a public golf course established in Bolton	42.4	32.3
8. I would like to see more night police patrols in Bolton	62.0	11.3
9. I would increase my recycling efforts if I knew it would reduce our town expenses	83.6	4.7
10. I would use Bolton parks more if town ordinances were better enforced	28.2	26.6
11. If sewers are installed, they should run along Rte 44 to help business development	52.5	25.2
12. We should give tax breaks if necessary to encourage businesses to move to Bolton	37.0	39.8
13. I favor connecting Bolton's open spaces/parks with greenways	53.1	16.1
14. Surveys such as this one should be conducted in town at least every five years	76.3	6.2

1998 Development Considerations

The 1998 Community Survey asked numerous questions of respondents in an attempt to determine

how Bolton should further tailor its future development. Over 20 years later, we can consider the feelings expressed by these survey respondents and compare the results to the actions that have actually been taken by the Town in the past two decades. Here is the data collected by the 1998 Community Survey on the subject of development:

II. Where Should We Go?

<u>Development Option</u>	<u>Agree</u> <u>(i.e. % Score</u> <u>of 1 or 2)</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>(i.e. % Score</u> <u>of 4 or 5)</u>
1. Bolton should resist additional development for as long as possible	46.0	34.4
2. Bolton should become a primarily residential (bedroom/commuter) community	53.6	28.2
3. Bolton should become a center for cultural, historical and social activities	33.2	37.9
4. Bolton should become a more evenly mixed residential/business community	37.7	43.3
5. Bolton should become a sports/recreational center	11.9	55.5
6. Bolton should become an educational center	35.0	30.0
7. Bolton should become an agricultural center	28.0	30.4
8. Bolton should become an industrial center and build a light industrial park	20.8	63.2
9. Bolton should expand its retail/service industry base	40.7	39.5
10. Bolton should expand its commercial office base	40.1	35.9

III. How Should We Get There?

<u>Option</u>	<u>Agree</u> <u>(i.e. % Score</u> <u>of 1 or 2)</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>(i.e. % Score</u> <u>of 4 or 5)</u>
1. If necessary, I am willing to pay higher taxes for more/better town services	28.8	50.8
2. I want decreased Bolton property taxes, even if it means reducing services greatly	24.6	53.1
3. I want my taxes to stay the same, even if services must be reduced slightly	39.8	33.7
4. We should increase our tax base by encouraging business development	49.8	32.4
5. We should increase our tax base by encouraging residential development	35.2	44.2
6. We should reduce our dependence on property taxes by seeking more state funds	73.7	12.6
7. We should reduce our dependence on property taxes by seeking more federal funds	70.2	15.5
8. If we <u>must</u> make a \$100,000+ expenditure at some point, let's do it sooner, not later	42.4	19.8
9. Where possible, town services should be supported by user/impact fees	63.8	12.0
10. Bolton should cooperate with other towns to share cost for services where possible	84.9	6.4
11. Bolton should discourage people from moving into town	13.5	66.6
12. Bolton should discourage businesses from moving into town	15.8	63.7
13. If major improvements are mandated (e.g. sewers) make them "business friendly"	50.5	23.8
14. Reduce town funding for services I identified as "low importance" in IA above	58.3	10.5
15. Increase town funding for services I identified as "high importance" in IA above	54.0	14.2
16. Bolton's zoning regulations should be changed to allow more home businesses	44.2	26.5
17. If all <u>available</u> land were to be developed in Bolton in the next 20 years we should:		
a. Preserve as much open land as possible by making it <u>un</u> available for development	67.4	18.0
b. Rezone to make more open land available for commercial development	25.1	60.9
c. Use most of the land for residential housing	24.9	47.7
d. Use at least 10% of the land for recreational services (e.g. parks, greenways)	72.3	13.5
e. Use most land so zoned for retail/service industry development	29.2	45.6
f. Use most land so zoned for industrial/manufacturing development	19.6	59.8

Further 1998 Findings

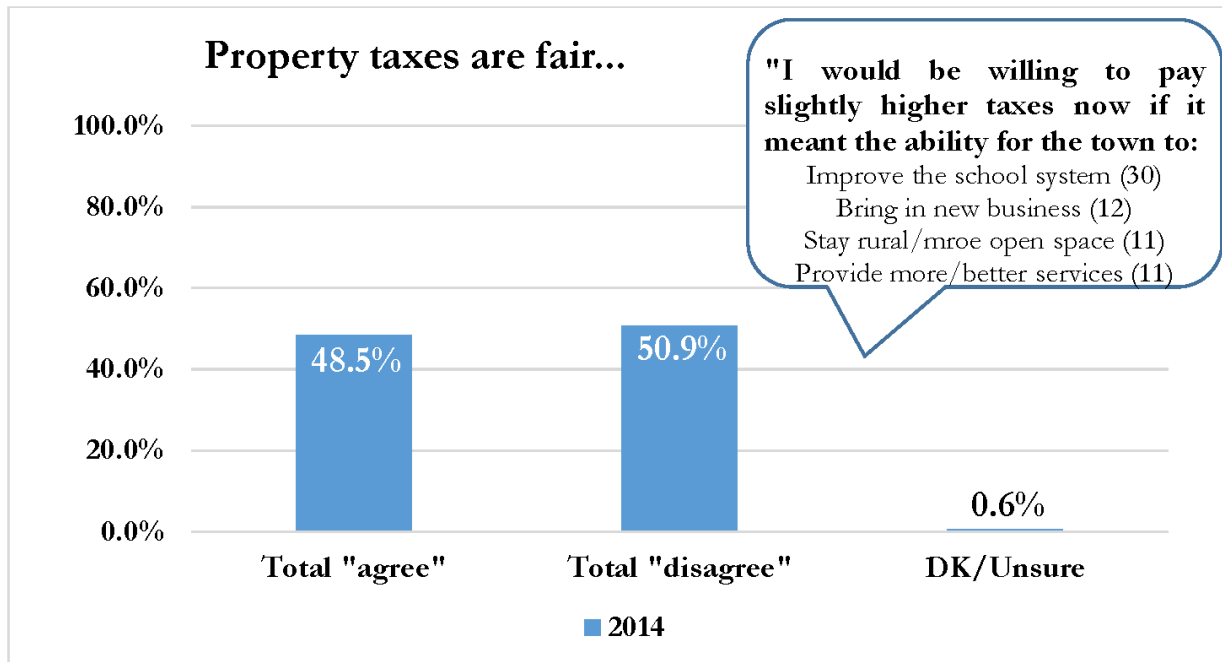
Generally, the remainder of the questions asked in the 1998 survey were asked again in the 2019 Community Survey. We have done our best to incorporate the 1998 results directly alongside the 2019 results wherever possible. For further reading, [the full 1998 Community Survey Results Summary](#) can now be found on the town's website.

2014 Survey – Plan of Conservation & Development

In August 2014, the Town hired GreatBlue Research, Inc. to conduct a survey of 169 residents living in town. The survey did not include anyone who was not considered to be a “head of household” or any responses from individuals under the age of 18. 100 of the surveys completed were collected via one-on-one interview with another 69 collected online throughout the next month. In general, this survey has the highest margin of error of any survey conducted in the past 25 years with a rate of approximately $\pm 7.5\%$ at a 95% confidence level. This survey had a more narrowed scope than the 2019 results, but a few results collected in 2014 that were not directly requested in 2019 are included below.

Tax Fairness

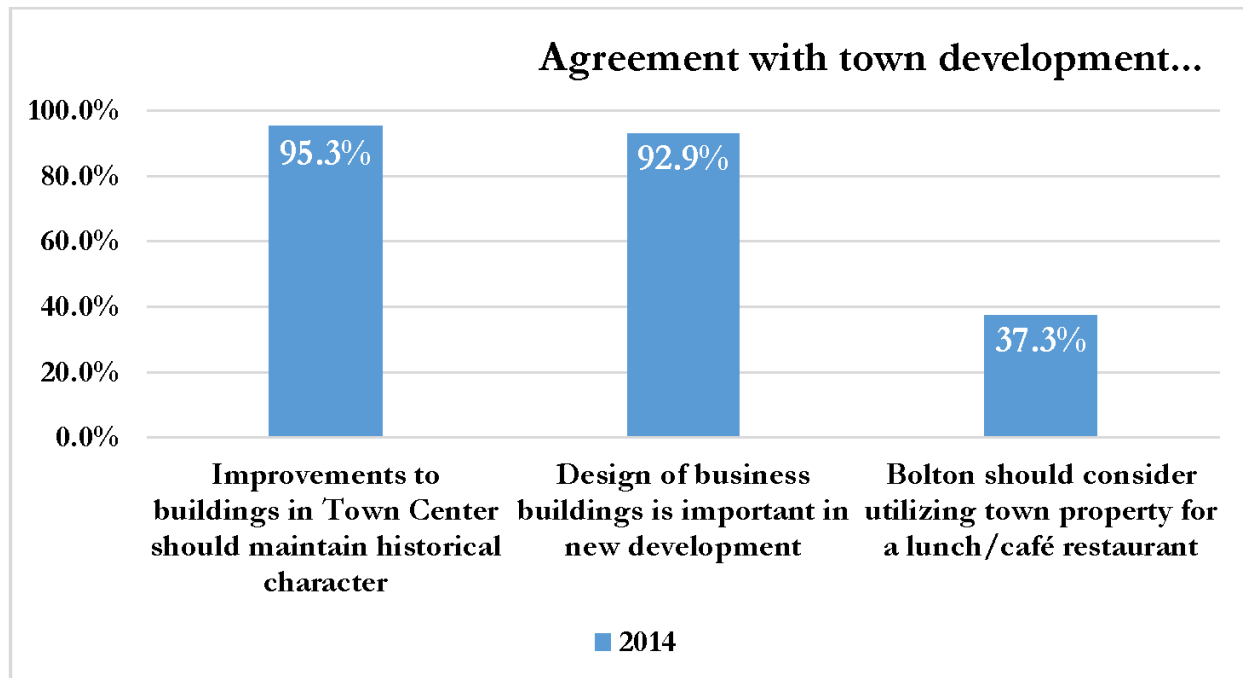
In 2014, residents polled on the question or whether or not the town's property tax levy was “fair” were generally split on the issue, as demonstrated below:



<i>Willing to pay higher taxes if...</i>	<i>2014 Composite (N=169)</i>	<i>2014 Telephone (N=100)</i>	<i>2014 Online (N=69)</i>
I wouldn't complete that statement	49.7%	61.0	33.0
Improve the school system	17.8	14.0	23.2
Bring in new business	7.1	6.0	8.7
Provide more/better services	6.5	6.0	7.2
Stay rural/more open space	6.5	3.0	11.6
Don't know/unsure	5.3	---	13.0
Improve the roads/sidewalks	1.8	3.0	---
Increase the police service	1.8	3.0	---
Provide senior housing	1.8	1.0	2.9
Develop a better park system	0.6	1.0	---
Divide the taxes into two parts	0.6	1.0	---
Improve sewer system	0.6	1.0	---

Planning for Development

Given that the 2014 survey was specifically engineered to help shape the 2015 Plan of Conservation & Development, it is not surprising that many of the questions inquired about resident thoughts on the subject of development. Results from a handful of such questions can be found below:



To a large extent, the remainder of the questions posed to respondents in 2014 have been repeated in 2019, and we have done our best to present these numbers side-by-side later in this report to

demonstrate changes over time. The [full range of results](#) can be found on the town's website.

Please note that, throughout this report, any dataset labeled with a number followed by a letter (e.g. "Table 25a" and "Table 50a" show comparison data between two or more of the surveys conducted in the past 25 years, while datasets with only numbers are depicting data taken only from 2019 with no comparison over time. We have attempted to include time comparisons wherever possible, while also noting that many of the questions from these surveys do not align in a comparable way.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The 2019 Bolton Community Survey was specially designed and tailored in an effort to collect as much data about current town services and public opinion as possible while simultaneously setting a benchmark for future surveys to be measured against. While over 100 questions were considered for inclusion in the survey, the final draft included only 55 questions as a means of helping to ensure a high probability of survey completion by residents and other participants. The survey was, for the most part, administered online (870 responses) with another 41 being submitted via pen and paper for a grand total of 911 responses. Options were used in Google Forms, the web device used to collect online responses, to require that respondents answered all multiple-choice questions. While this was a risky decision and may have led to fewer people submitting completed surveys, it did ensure that each online response was completed thoroughly, which ultimately led to a low margin of error for each question (+/- 2.90%). Each page of the survey's paper copy very carefully listed both the individual page number and the number of pages included in the entire packet, which led to a decent full completion rate. Any multiple choice responses that were not answered on the paper surveys were marked "Unsure" or "N/A" as applicable when the paper surveys were entered into the web collection system. A copy of the survey questions, as they were presented in the paper survey, is included under Appendix A.

To inform residents of the survey offering, each household in town received a 6"x11" postcard, through the US Postal Service's Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM) program, entitled "TAKE THE BOLTON COMMUNITY SURVEY." The postcard included information about how to access the survey through the Town of Bolton's website (bolton.govoffice.com/survey) or where they could pick-up a hard copy (Town Hall, the Library, or the Senior Center). The survey was also shared on each town social media account; including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and Nextdoor; via the Bolton High School e-newsletter; and via the Bolton Bulletin. The survey was also discussed at many board and commission meetings and televised announcements aired on the local public access channel multiple times during the survey period. Lastly, the survey was featured on the town's website and was displayed prominently at each public facility in town that is traditionally frequented by the public. Overall, this led to 911 valid responses.

According to the Capital Region Council of Governments, the Town of Bolton currently has a population of 4,891 people. For statistical purposes, we have estimated that at least 391 individuals in town are either too young to have been reasonably expected to knowledgeably complete this survey or who are otherwise incapable of knowledgeably responding to the survey for another reason, bringing our estimated survey pool down to approximately 4,500 residents. Given these conservative numbers, and given that we had 911 valid responses, we have calculated that we had a response rate of 20.24%, which is a rate approximately 2.5 times higher than the average response rate seen in the average professional, scientific telephone survey as of 2015 (Lavrakas et al, 2015). This yields a margin of error of 2.90% for all questions that received 911 responses, which was the majority.

Google Forms allowed for multiple choice answers to be reordered for each individual respondent, which allowed us to minimize the amount of bias given to any particular answer due to its ordering in a list of options. While it was not feasible to reorder the options given on the paper copies that were submitted and produced, the paper submissions only accounted for 4.5% of the total pool of submissions, and it is not believed that this would have a significant impact on the results.

In order to best ensure that no person was allowed to submit a response to the survey multiple times, manual screening was used. Each individual response was compared with each other response to ensure that no two that came from the same IP address were identical responses. Responses from the same IP address were allowed as long as they were not identical responses, as many respondents were accessing the online submission through the same computer at the Library or Senior Center, and many family members used the same device to make their thoughts known. Handwritten responses were analyzed and compared for identical handwriting. Overall, six duplicates (5 online and 1 handwritten) were found and removed from the numbers used in this report.

The Demographics section of the survey was specifically moved to the back of the survey to ensure that as many people would complete the survey as possible without feeling as though their privacy had in any way been breached. Each of the demographic-oriented questions were optional. While this has likely led to minor inaccuracies, the majority of respondents did include their demographic information, and below we compare some of those numbers to figures taken from the US Census to determine the accuracy of the survey:

Median Age

2019 Community Survey:	49
2010 US Census:	45

Male/Female Ratio

Gender	1998 Survey	2010 Census	2014 Survey	2019 Survey
Male	47.7%	49.4%	47.9%	40.3%
Female	52.3%	50.6%	52.1%	59.3%
Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.5%

Age Brackets

Age Bracket	1998 Survey	2010 Census	2019 Survey
Under 25	2.1%	29.7%	11.4%
Between 26-79	97.9%	66.8%	87.1%
80 and Above	0.0%	3.5%	1.5%

Race

2019 Community Survey: 96.6% White
 3.4% Non-White

2010 US Census: 95.7 % White
 4.3% Non-White

Overall, there are some considerable inconsistencies between numbers from the 2010 Census and the results of the 2019 Community Survey. While the median age between the two sets of data is close, they are not matching, and thus we must assume that the opinions reflected in the 2019 Survey data generally include more input from older residents than a perfectly representative sample would have allowed. This is underscored by the age bracket comparison, where in 2019 only 11.4% of respondents stated that they were 24 years of age or under while the 2010 Census suggests that this number should total about 29.7%. On the other side of the spectrum, senior citizens aged 80 and older were also undersampled in the 2019 data. The 2019 Survey polled significantly fewer men than the 2010 Census data suggests we should, and minority races were also underrepresented by as much as a percent in this survey.

There are three basic explanations for the differences we see between the 2019 local data and the 2010 Census data:

1. The demographic makeup of Bolton has changed since 2010.
2. Residents in key categories (youth, seniors, males, and minority races) were less likely to self-report their demographics.
3. The survey did not reach every pocket of the community effectively, thus leading to deficiencies.

The likely answer is that a mix of the three that has led to the results we see listed above, and the 2020 census data and future community surveys can help us better pinpoint issues we may have faced in our 2019 data collection. Please note that none of the data in this report has been adjusted to fit the 2010 Census demographics: the data you see here is raw so as to display the facts as they

were presented by survey respondents, though readers of this report should keep in mind that some demographics were granted a proportionately larger voice in this process than others.

We must also note that some individuals who are not currently Bolton residents were permitted to respond to this survey. Authorized non-resident submissions included Bolton High School students who study here but reside in another town, like Columbia; individuals who lived in Bolton for a significant amount of time and recently moved away; and individuals who own a significant amount of property or a business in town but reside elsewhere. These responses are important, as their feedback will help the Board of Selectmen better see why it is that some individuals choose not to live in Bolton or specifically choose to either go to school or start a business here. Very few responses are from non-residents, however: 808 out of the 911 responses (88.7%) are from current Bolton residents.

DATA & ANALYSIS

As previously noted, 55 questions were asked in the 2019 Community Survey, most of which (about 45) were multiple choice, while the remainder were open-ended. To the best possible extent, this report aims to summarize the open-ended answers. The complete text responses to each open-ended question can be found in the appendices. Summarized conclusions and recommendations can be found in subsequent sections of the report.

Please note that, with a margin of error of 2.90%, each response seen below that had 911 responses has a 95% chance of being accurate within a 5.8% range, or $\pm 2.90\%$, of the percent shown. For example: In question #2, it is shown that approximately 67.9% of respondents stated that they are connected with the Town via some type of social media platform. Our math suggests that we can be 95% confident that the real number of Bolton residents connected to the town via social media lies between 65.0% and 70.8% of the population, or $\pm 2.90\%$ of 67.9%. There does remain a 5% chance, however, that the results shown are inaccurate due to a sampling error and may fall outside of that $\pm 2.9\%$ range.

We should also note that, for any of the multiple choice questions in the following data analysis, individuals were not limited in the type or number of responses they could give, nor were they required to give one. As a result of this, the number of total responses will not match the actual number of respondents. For many of these questions, more than half of the respondents either gave no answer or indicated they had no thoughts or preference related to the question. In order to better visually display those actions that were requested for several of these questions, we removed all “None/Unsure” answers from many of these charts and grouped all responses that received the support of less than 1% of eligible respondents as “Other”. This was done entirely to better visualize the prevalence of responses and is not intended to obfuscate the data in any way.

Introduction

1. What is your connection to the Town of Bolton, CT?	#	%
I live in Bolton currently.	808	88.7%
I own property in Bolton.	333	36.6%
I have family/close friends that live in Bolton.	229	25.1%
I have lived in Bolton all my life.	106	11.6%
I attend school in Bolton.	99	10.9%
I work in Bolton.	71	7.8%
I own a business in Bolton.	27	3.0%
I used to live in Bolton, but do not anymore.	24	2.6%
Other.	12	1.3%

The first question that respondents were asked to answer was straightforward, and an affirmation of connection to the Town of Bolton was required in order for a response to be deemed valid. Please note that there was also a response entitled “I have no connection to the Town of Bolton, CT” that survey-takers could select, which would disqualify their responses from consideration in this report. No individuals selected that disqualifying response. Over 88% (808 total) of respondents stated that they currently live in Town, while the remaining 12% stated that they either own property in Bolton, attend school in Bolton (from out-of-town, such as Columbia students that come to Bolton High School), own a business in Bolton, work in Bolton, or they are former longtime residents. Multiple responses were allowed to this question, as many respondents have several types of connections to the town, which accounts for the number of responses totaling over 911. The percentages compare the number of people who responded to that question compared to the total number of possible positive responses (911). Overall, the survey did an excellent job of reaching out to a wide portion of our community, and the results shown hereafter are a composite of many different perspectives.

Below, in Table 1a, it can be seen that there was an increase in the number of current residents who responded to the 2019 survey over the number that responded to the 1998 survey. This may be due in part to the internet making the 2019 survey more accessible to those living outside of Bolton itself, as well as the 2019 survey making a more concerted push to include non-residents who either study or conduct business within Bolton’s borders.

1a. Residency:	1998	2019
I live in Bolton currently.	99.1%	88.7%
Other	0.9%	11.3%

Communications

2. How do you receive news about the local community?	#	%
Social Media	619	67.9%
Word of Mouth	539	59.2%
Bolton E-Bulletin	363	39.8%
Town Website	352	38.6%
Newspaper	249	27.3%
Signage or Fliers	216	23.7%
None of the Above	31	3.4%

Question #2 examined the many ways in which the residents of the town hear about town happenings, programs, events, and other offerings, and the results above have been sorted to show the communication platforms in order of most to least used by the public. 67.9% of the surveyed population stated that they were directly connected to the town via one or more social media platforms, which we expect is near the highest it has ever been given that technology becomes more available and affordable as the years pass. Given that Bolton is a small town, however, Word of Mouth remains a close second to Social Media. The Bolton E-Bulletin, which residents can sign up for free-of-charge via the town's website, and the Town Website are both used by a similar number of individuals, and Newspapers and other printed materials have fallen out of favor to the point that they are used by less than a third of Bolton's population. Overall, it can be seen that electronic media is becoming more used by our community, and it could be concluded that the town should invest its resources in those electronic mediums rather than looking to hard signage to spread information. As always, however, a mixed approach reaches the widest variety of residents.

3. Are you connected with the town through...	#	%
Facebook?	578	63.4%
Nextdoor?	102	11.2%
Instagram?	61	6.7%
Twitter?	17	1.9%
Snapchat?	14	1.5%
LinkedIn?	6	0.7%

For links to these pages, please see Appendix C.

Of the residents who claimed to be connected to the town via social media, the vast majority (578) stated that they were connected through Facebook. This, however, is a mathematical impossibility, as the town's Facebook Page only has 535 followers as of the date of this report's authoring. It is likely that many respondents are connected to informal community-based Facebook Groups, such as "Everything Bolton Connecticut USA" and "ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING Bolton CT!" This confusion sparks a few questions: are individuals who believe that the aforementioned Facebook groups are run by the town government getting the information they need to be a satisfied resident of Bolton? Are there negative ramifications for not having an official town-run Facebook

group where only official news and information is shared? Lastly, is the Facebook Page known well enough by the public to be effective?

Aside from Facebook, Nextdoor and Instagram were the two social media platforms where residents connected to official town channels, though all are vastly underused as compared to Facebook. Overall, the inclusion of this question on the survey likely sparked much of the growth seen by these social media accounts over the months of November and December 2019, and more work needs to be done to market and make known all of the various ways in which the town attempts to communicate with residents online.

4. How would you rate the town's communication of important information?	#	%
Excellent	84	9.2%
Good	429	47.1%
Fair	263	28.9%
Poor	73	8.0%
Unsure	62	6.8%

In rating the town's current communication of important information, approximately 56.3% of the population stated that they felt the town communicated in an "Excellent" or "Good" manner with a minority 36.9% of respondents stating that they felt the town's current execution of communications was merely "Fair" or "Poor," with the remainder being "Unsure." While these findings further the notion that more work needs to be done by the town to more directly and readily communicate with its residents, the results shall also serve as a benchmark to be used as a point of comparison in future community surveys.

5. Would you enjoy receiving a hard-copy town magazine or bulletin in the mail on a quarterly basis if funding is available?	#	%
Yes	458	50.3%
No	320	35.1%
Unsure	133	14.6%

One of the communication methods that had been brainstormed by town staff just prior to the launch of the community survey was the possible rollout of a town-wide magazine, to be published and delivered to each individual household in town, which would detail information from each town department that is especially relevant to residents, including recreation event dates and sign-up information, trash and recycling collection calendars, messages about seasonal health considerations from the Eastern Highlands Health District, articles from town administration about current happenings and consideration, a full listing of regular municipal meeting dates, and more. Over 50% of respondents stated that they would be interested in receiving such a magazine in the mail, or nearly 60% when "Unsure" respondents are removed from the equation.

6. In the past 12 months, have you...	#	%
Visited the town's website?	741	81.3%
Attended a community event?	569	62.5%
Read our e-bulletin?	457	50.2%
Volunteered your time for the town or community organization?	317	34.8%
Participated in a Rec Department or Senior Center event?	236	25.9%
Attended a town board or commission meeting?	192	21.1%
Participated in a Library event?	179	19.6%
Watched the Administrator's Report on local cable channel 5?	85	9.3%

Question #6 sought to examine the ways in which residents are currently engaging with town functions. The three answers with the highest number of positive responses were "Visited the Town's Website," "Attended a Community Event," and "Read our E-Bulletin," with each being done by more than half of respondents. Unfortunately, fewer residents chose to attend Recreation, Senior Services, or Library events, which suggests that more could be done by the town to advertise these opportunities or to otherwise entice residents to get involved and participate. Few residents watched the Administrator's Report on channel 5 or online, which may be indicative of the fact that it has not been very well advertised in the past. Furthermore, a town YouTube channel could help to better highlight this show and other recorded programs by placing all of the recorded episodes in one central location under the town's name. Lastly, town volunteer rates are low overall, as exemplified by the responses seen to this answer, and the town may wish to seek different ways to incentivize or attract new volunteers to serve.

In the future, it may be prudent to include the question of whether or not residents participated in the last municipal election, as a means of helping to remind residents that they have an opportunity and, to some extent, a responsibility to vote in town elections.

Land Use & Economic Development

7. Do you feel that the town needs more...	#	%
Commercial Development?	587	73.7%
Senior Housing?	349	53.1%
Affordable Housing?	324	46.5%
Trails?	279	35.0%
Bike Paths?	213	26.5%

On the subject of economic development, town staff identified that there are generally five main points of discussion in Bolton: Commercial Development, Senior Housing, Affordable Housing, Trails, and Bike Paths. Thus, Question #7 sought to gather input from the community about which of these options for increased development would be seen as most favorable if pursued. Overall, most residents stated that they would be comfortable with more Commercial Development and

Senior Housing, that they were lukewarm on the subject of providing more Affordable Housing options, and that Trails and Bike Paths were generally less preferred.

It is well known that there have been discussions for years in Bolton about what particular section of Town could and should be made available for increased commercial development, a subject we attempted to dive into in Question #8. This frequently-held conversation in Town, combined with a desire for a lower tax rate, is likely what led over 73% of respondents to express their interest in Commercial Development, and Senior Housing has often been discussed as part of such development along Route 44 and in other locations. Trails and Bike Paths have been constructed more recently in town, likely leading the current diminished interest in creating more. In the future, it would be worthwhile to better define “Affordable Housing” to help ensure that respondents are making comments about the same type of housing, and also “Trails” and “Bike Paths” to ensure that respondents understand the difference between the two.

Please note that Question #7 did not require responses, and thus the margin of error is higher than 2.90%. The percentage in the table above accurately reflects the percentage of respondents who replied “Yes” as compared to the number of total respondents per question. This is true of all questions that did not strictly require a response.

8. The town completed a study several years ago identifying Bolton Center (the area surrounding Town Hall, at the intersection of Hebron Road and Bolton Center Road) as an area for potential growth as a vibrant community center. Other studies have examined Route 44 and Route 6 and come to the conclusion that both could see greater economic development. Which areas would you be interested in seeing developed with more local businesses?	#	%
Route 44	642	70.5%
Route 6	572	62.8%
Bolton Center	408	44.8%
Route 85	41	4.5%
Other	19	2.1%

The area(s) in which greater economic development should be conducted have long been debated in Bolton, and Question #8 served to take the town’s proverbial temperature on this question once again. Overall, the majority of respondents stated that Route 44 and Route 6 are the ideal location(s). Please note that Route 85 was not listed as one of the original multiple-choice options, and that the 41 responses in favor of that area were all write-ins. It is safe to assume that the option would have received somewhat more support if it had been listed as a selectable option and not had to be written in manually. In the future, Route 85 should be included as a part of the listing of options to test this theory.

“Bolton Center” had been added as an with the thought that more businesses could operate out of currently-built homes, as a means of creating a more walkable and attractive Town Center while maintaining the current historical, small town aesthetic. The question was phrased in such a manner that this vision was not made clear, and it is very possible that respondents viewed the prospect of commercial development in Bolton Center in a very different light. It is recommended that future surveys be more specific in framing this question.

9. What kinds of business, development, and other offerings, if any, do you feel the town is lacking?	#	%
Coffee Shop	270	38.7%
Any Restaurant	178	25.5%
Small Shops/Retail	97	13.9%
Pharmacy	81	11.6%
Any Businesses	55	7.9%
Grocery Store	54	7.7%
Bank	53	7.6%
Bakery	33	4.7%
Community/Rec Center	31	4.4%
Fast Food	30	4.3%
Gift Shops/Botique	22	3.2%
Tavern/Pub/Brewery	21	3.0%
Gym/Fitness Center	18	2.6%
Walkable Town Center/Downtown with Shops	17	2.4%
Convenience Store	15	2.2%
Pizza Place	15	2.2%
Town Pool	13	1.9%
Deli/Sandwich Shop	13	1.9%
Senior Housing	13	1.9%
Diner/Soda Fountain	12	1.7%
Office Space	11	1.6%
Manufacturing/Industrial	11	1.6%
General Store	10	1.4%
Turf Field & Track @ BHS	10	1.4%
No New Business	9	1.3%
Safer Pedestrian/Bike Access on Roads	9	1.3%
Art & Culture	8	1.1%
Ice Cream Shop	7	1.0%

Question #9 posed the open-ended question of what more residents want to see in town when it comes to business, development, and other related offerings. Aside from the language listed above, no other prompts were given to spark specific responses from respondents. The responses shown

above are summarized versions of the full responses, which can be read in their entirety in Appendix A. There were also another 157 individual responses given to this question, but only answers that at least seven people (1% of respondents) agreed with were included above. Other responses included a book store, an expansion of the library, a music venue, bike and canoe rentals, an auditorium, a splash pad for kids, and more.

The top three responses to this question were variations on wanting to see a coffee shop in town, more restaurants, and additional small shops/retail. The “Coffee Shop” listing above combines all responses that listed “Dunkin,” “Starbucks,” “Local Coffee Shop,” “Café,” and other related phrases into one category. There was a fairly even split between the respondents that expressed interest in a chain coffee shop or a local coffee shop, but Dunkin was much more preferred than Starbucks of the individuals who expressed interest in a chain.

Nearly all of the suggestions made would fit in well with an identifiable Main Street-like area in Town, and it is evident that many of these businesses, if located in one walkable location, would provide synergy with one another and would help to grow a formidable economic base here in Bolton. In order to pursue such a vision, however, a location must be identified, Zoning regulations must be reviewed to ensure they allow some or all of the ideas listed above to be enacted in that location, and other amenities such as sewer and municipal water connections must be considered.

10. What are your favorite landmarks, trails, businesses, or other locations to visit in Bolton?	#	%
Trails	363	50.7%
Bolton Heritage Farm	195	27.2%
Georgina's Restaurant	112	15.6%
Bentley Memorial Library	92	12.8%
Fish Family Farm	80	11.2%
Lower Bolton Lake	71	9.9%
Bolton Notch State Park	57	8.0%
Herrick Park	57	8.0%
England Hardware	48	6.7%
Munsons Chocolates	47	6.6%
Town Green & Gazebo	34	4.7%
Pesce's Farm	30	4.2%
All Open Space	29	4.1%
Town Center	27	3.8%
Mobil Gas Station	25	3.5%
Gay City State Park	25	3.5%
Subway	23	3.2%
Freja Park	23	3.2%
Our Place Restaurant	23	3.2%
Jao Praya	22	3.1%
Bolton Vet	21	2.9%
Mini Golf	19	2.7%
3 Jays	17	2.4%
Preuss Equipment	17	2.4%
All Farmland	16	2.2%
Indian Notch Park	15	2.1%
Bolton Ice Palace	14	2.0%

The inclusion of Question #10 was requested by the Town's outside branding consultant, who wanted to better understand what the major draws of Bolton are and what attractions the residents of Bolton see in the most positive light. Much like Question #9, this question was totally open-ended and did not provide any contextual information that might point residents towards a particular place or thing over another, making the results all organic.

The top answer was, by far, the town's extensive trail system. While over 50.7% of respondents to this question expressed that the "Trails" are a favorite of theirs, it is important to note that the category is a composite of many more nuanced responses, including "Hop River Trail," "Nathan Hale Greenway," "Trails at Herrick Park," "Rose Trail," and more. The top five was rounded out

with two other public locations, the Heritage Farm and the Library, and also Georgina's Restaurant and Fish Family Farm.

This question not only revealed some of the aesthetic that the town's Branding team may wish to consider, but it also demonstrated the fact that the Town needs to do a better job of marketing itself, its businesses, and its borders to others. For example, Gay City State Park, a large park that lies mostly outside of Bolton's borders, scored above both Freja Park and Indian Notch Park, which are town-owned parks that lie fully within the town's borders. There were also a number of other businesses listed as area favorites, not included in this list, from outside of Bolton.

There were another 63 different items that were identified as favorites by one or more respondents, but none of those 63 places or things received more than a 2% support rate, and thus were not included in the list above. To read all responses, please see Appendix B of this report.

Environment & Waste Collection

11. In general terms, would you prefer to see more natural land preservation or more economic development in Bolton?	#	%
Strongly prefer land preservation.	225	24.7%
Somewhat prefer land preservation.	198	21.7%
Unsure.	119	13.1%
Somewhat prefer development.	216	23.7%
Strongly prefer development.	153	16.8%

Of individuals who expressed a clear opinion in Question #11, 53.4% stated that they prefer land preservation to development, and individuals who prefer land preservation feel more strongly about it than those who prefer development. This is a very difficult balance to find when considering the future development of a community; according to the responses found in Question #7 and Question #8, however, a significant number of individuals wish to see more commercial development arise in Bolton and even more respondents identified Route 44 as their ideal place to see more development, suggesting that a balance can perhaps be found between these two opposing viewpoints by seeking to develop extremely select areas while protecting land found elsewhere.

12. How important is the preservation of natural land to you?	#	%
Very Important	441	48.4%
Somewhat Important	418	45.9%
Not Important	52	5.7%

Despite the answer to the previous question, very few people in Bolton feel that the preservation of natural land is unimportant – indeed, over 90% of the town is in favor of it, though the degree of importance they place on conservation is by no means uniform. Reaching a balance between

development and land preservation will be an important challenge for any administration in Bolton.

13. Would you support the town spending money to...	#	%
Equip town facilities with green technologies like solar?	515	71.1%
Create a robust natural land preservation program?	390	60.0%
Install an electric vehicle charging station at Town Hall?	185	25.9%

Of the options presented in question #13, Bolton residents are largely in favor of investments in solar technologies and most desire a more programmatic approach to acquiring new open space for the Town. The view of installing an electric vehicle (EV) charging station at Town Hall, however, is largely unfavorable, which we estimate may have occurred for one of three reasons: either (1) the location of Town Hall is viewed as unfavorable, (2) there are not many individuals in town who see the installation of an EV charging station as being highly necessary from their point of view, or (3) many in town simply do not want to see their tax dollars spent in that manner for one reason or another. In order to determine which is true, a future survey would have to both ask whether or not the installation of an EV charging station is generally desirable to the respondent with a follow-up question, for all those who answer “yes,” of where the respondent would most prefer the station be installed. There are also many programs available to help lower or reduce entirely the cost of EV station installations, perhaps making this question obsolete.

13a. Would you support the town spending money to...	2014	2019
Create a robust natural land preservation program?	47%	60.0%

In 2014, respondents to the survey accompanying the Bolton Plan of Conservation & Development asked residents whether they would be willing to increase the tax rate in order to support the purchasing of more open space in town, to which 47% stated that they would be willing to do so. In 2019, a similar question (#13) was asked, to which 60% of residents responded favorably. While these questions were not identical, as the 2019 question did not specifically say that taxes would be raised, but rather simply that money would be spent, the results over time suggest that there is possible growth in interest in the town spending money on more open space and preserving natural land.

14. What other actions would you like the Town to take in an effort to be more environmentally friendly?	#	%
Recycling Improvements	102	19.6%
Reduce waste and expenditures	79	15.2%
Solar Energy Investment	49	9.4%
Bulk/Yard Waste Removal Improvements	47	9.0%
Bike Path Expansion	41	7.9%
Conserve/Acquisition of Land/Resources	35	6.7%
Combined Other Responses	33	6.3%
Community Garden	27	5.2%
Composting/Food Waste Reduction	25	4.8%
Expansion of Trail System	17	3.3%
Expansion of Natural Gas Lines	14	2.7%
Environmental Education	13	2.5%
Geothermal Investment	11	2.1%
Bolton Lake Management Improvments	9	1.7%
Pollution Control	9	1.7%
Wind Energy Investment	9	1.7%

For Question #14, we gathered 1132 responses, of which 612 (54%) provided no suggestions related to environmentally friendly actions for the town to take (the overwhelming majority of these answers were “Unsure”, “None”, “N/A” or “I don’t know”), though many felt that the town was already very eco-friendly. We were able to gather 1,132 responses, a couple hundred more than the 911 respondents who took the survey, because some individuals submitted multiple suggestions in response to this answer. In some cases, citizens worried that the town’s strong stance on environmental protection has limited development opportunities and economic growth.

Of the remaining 520 responses, improving the town’s recycling program was by far the most requested action (20%). The specific recycling improvement requests was varied: More regular recycling pickup, providing recycling services for more materials, and providing educational resources about recycling were all requested. The most popularly requested action after expanding the recycling service were reducing waste in town facilities (15%). In particular, multiple individuals called attention to the importance of carefully monitoring the temperature inside town buildings to save oil and reduce heating costs. Others mentioned their distaste with the continued use of Styrofoam trays for school lunches and advocated a reusable alternative.

Other actions of note requested by the community included the expansion of commercial and residential solar energy (9%); improved services for the removal of bulk waste and yard waste, either through haul-away services or expanded operating hours at the transfer station (9%); and additional bike paths and lanes on busy roads to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.

15. Door-to-door composting collection companies may be interested in extending this service to Bolton if enough residents are interested in signing up for their subscription service. If this service were to be brought to Bolton, how interested would you be in it?	#	%
Very Interested	172	18.9%
Somewhat Interested	335	36.8%
Not Interested	404	44.3%

Question #15 was added to this survey as a means of not just gauging what percentage of individuals may be interested in participating in a municipally-run or coordinated door-to-door composting service, but also to estimate how many individuals in town would be willing to pay for a private company to come collect their compostable items in exchange for a periodic delivery of usable compost. This data will help the Town both evaluate this as a municipal service and help private companies better understand what the Bolton demand for composting services is.

Bolton residents expressed some interest in the idea of a door to door composting service, with 57% of the population expressing some level of interest. As many of this type of composting company requires a minimum number of individuals to sign up for their service before they can enter into a contract with a municipality, having 500 individuals (representing ~10% of the town) express tentative support is a good sign that it may be feasible to bring such a program to Bolton.

Recreation

16. What new recreational programs or community events would you like to see offered through the Town?	#	%
Sports/Recreational (General)	118	31.6%
Sports/Recreational (Kids)	25	6.7%
Sports/Recreational (Adults)	21	5.6%
Other (All)	34	9.1%
Theatre and the Arts	26	7.0%
Children/Family Events	25	6.7%
Community Center/Town Green Events	21	5.6%
Educational	21	5.6%
Outdoorsmanship	20	5.3%
Farmer's Market	14	3.7%
Holiday/Seasonal	14	3.7%
Senior Events	13	3.5%
Teen Events	13	3.5%
Trips/Transport	9	2.4%

For Question #16, we received 972 entries (again due to some submitting multiple suggestions), of which 598 (62%) were left blank or gave a response indicating that they had nothing to add concerning additional recreational programs they wanted the town to hold. Of those respondents

that did provide specific suggestions, the most requested feature by far was additional sports, fitness, or recreation programs. 164 individuals, representing 44% of respondents who provided a specific suggestion, indicated a desire for more community sports, exercise classes, or more funding for existing programs. There were roughly equal numbers of individuals who requested specifically adult or specifically youth recreation programs (21 and 25, respectively) – most respondents indicated no preference in their answer (118).

Beyond sports and athletic activities, the other most requested new recreational programs were additional theatre, arts, and film activities (7%), Activities for young children and families (7%); Educational programs such as classes or lectures (6%); and community gatherings, either on the town green or at a new community center (6%).

17. What prevents you from participating in more town-sponsored events and activities?	#	%
Busy Schedule	548	60.2%
Not informed about events	371	40.7%
Other	116	12.7%
Cost	45	4.9%
Location of Events	34	3.7%

While it is well beyond the power of the town administration to address the busy schedules of Bolton residents to give them much-deserved free time, 40% of survey respondents indicated that they did not feel adequately informed about town-sponsored events and activities. This response indicates a need for the town to examine its communication efforts and social media presence, either changing the frequency or platform of announcements such that they reach a wider community. By informing more residents about events, the perception of Recreation offerings and attendance at such events can improve without having to spend more money and time on developing new programs.

18. Do you feel that the current town-owned space is adequate for the kinds of recreational activities you wish to see offered?	#	%
Yes	498	54.7%
No	173	19.0%
Unsure	240	26.3%

The majority of the townspeople feel that the town currently owns sufficient land and has enough space in their facilities for the recreational activities that they wish to see offered. Notably, this question says nothing about the opinion of the quality of that land, only the quantity – this latter point being addressed in question 21.

Town Grounds & Facilities

19. Bolton is in dire need of building a new facility to replace the space lost as the unsound Notch Road Municipal Center is decommissioned and demolished. The construction of a new facility also provides the town with an opportunity to evaluate its need for activity and recreational space. Would you like a new town facility to include...	#	%
A gymnasium/indoor sporting space?	471	51.7%
A pool?	448	49.2%
Work-out space?	406	44.6%
More community meeting space(s)?	303	33.3%
A community kitchen?	224	24.6%
Other	126	13.8%

The most requested features for the new municipal facility are all related to health and fitness; over 45% of individuals requested either a gym, a pool, or a weight room. This is not entirely surprising, given the answers to question 16 (which indicated a general desire for more fitness resources and activities). The most popular of these answers was a request for a gymnasium or indoor sporting space, which is also the most flexible and multi-purpose of the fitness options. Community meeting spaces and a community kitchen were also common and popular answers to the question. Though the feasibility of implementing all of these options is likely limited, it should be noted that many individuals supported all of these options.

20. In a given year or season, about how often do you visit...	Indian Notch Park?		Bolton Heritage Farm?		Herrick Park?		Freja Park?	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Weekly	53	5.8%	90	9.9%	97	10.6%	40	4.4%
Monthly	133	14.6%	184	20.2%	174	19.1%	81	8.9%
Infrequently	397	43.6%	406	44.6%	458	50.3%	336	36.9%
Never	328	36.0%	231	25.4%	182	20.0%	454	49.8%

Question #20 dealt with the use of Bolton's four town parks over an annual period. While 20 – 30% of residents stated that they used Indian Notch, Bolton Heritage Farm, and Herrick Park weekly or monthly, Freja Park had much lower numbers of regular visitors at only 13%. Indeed, while 40-50% of residents said that they used each of the former three parks at least infrequently, Freja Park was never used by nearly 50% of the survey respondents. Many indicated in subsequent short answer responses that they had never heard of Freja Park and do not know where it is located.

There are several things to note about this data before conclusions are drawn. First, because the parks are not necessarily open each day and for all hours, there are many who will only be able to use them infrequently. This is compounded by the general drop in attendance that many parks observe during the winter months. It is unsurprising, then, that the most common response to a question about the frequency in which parks are used is "infrequently". Communication, however,

could certainly be improved regarding the existence and hours of operation of all of the parks, particularly Freja.

21. Are there any changes that could be made to the management of grounds and facilities of parks and other public spaces that would lead you to visit them more often?	#	%
Improve Access	66	18.2%
Provide Exercise/Sports Facilities	58	16.0%
General Infrastructure and Renovations	55	15.2%
Reduce Out of Town Access	45	12.4%
Event Hosting	43	11.9%
Improve Cleanliness	31	8.6%
Bathroom Access	17	4.7%
Improved Trail Systems	14	3.9%
Other	12	3.3%
Communication & Advertisement	11	3.0%
Dog Park	10	2.8%

For Question #21, we received 1010 suggestions, of which 648 (64%) were left blank or indicated they had nothing to add concerning the topic of facilities management. Of the remaining 362 responses, the most popular requests were for improved access to the parks (18%) and additional exercise and sports facilities (16%). Requests for improved access were varied, and included requests to reduce the entry fees at Indian Notch Park, improve parking, extend hours and open season, and improve the handicap accessibility of facilities located at the parks. The most common of these requests was to improve parking and extend hours of operation such that those who work “9 to 5” jobs can enjoy the parks as well. The most commonly requested improvements and additions to exercise facilities were to renovate or build new courts or fields for a wide variety of different sports, all of which can be viewed in Appendix B.

These two leading responses were followed closely by general infrastructure/renovation of parks’ facilities (15%). There was general dissatisfaction about the state of the grounds at several parks, particularly the frequency of flooding at Herrick Park, and a feeling that lighting and buildings needed to be renovated and brought into the 21st century. There was also a significant number of individuals who responded to this question with a desire to exclude non-Bolton-residents from accessing town parks (12%). Similar to those who felt that access to the parks was lacking, this group of individuals felt that the influx of non-residents was degrading the quality of the parks through littering and making it difficult for residents to access these areas. In particular, criticisms were levied at the manner in which capacity at Indian Notch Park is counted on a given day, potentially excluding individuals who arrive late in the day due to high volume early. This causes the park to hit capacity, even though those early-comers may have already vacated the area.

22. For what types of events or uses do you think the barn at the Bolton Heritage Farm would be useful?	#	%
Private Rentals	238	39.2%
Community Workshop/Vendors	113	18.6%
Performances/Entertainment	81	13.3%
Public Events	81	13.3%
Education	28	4.6%
Agriculture	22	3.6%
Historical Museum/Conservation Center	20	3.3%
Athletics	14	2.3%
Holiday Events	10	1.6%

For Question #22 we received a total of 994 entries, of which 304 (31%) were left blank or otherwise had no suggestions. While the specific answers to the prompt of how to use the property were extremely varied among the remaining 690 responses, they could be grouped into a few fundamental groups based on the general type of activity suggested. By far the most requested use of the property was as a rental property to be used by private citizens for parties or other gatherings (39%). In this category, the single most requested use of the land and structure was as a wedding venue, though other types of social gatherings and private parties were also common. Other common requests included a “community workshop or vendor event” – either a farmer’s market, tag sale, or craft fair that would provide a place for local artisans and farmers to sell to the public (16%).

Other regularly requested event types/potential uses for the Bolton Heritage farm were an arts and entertainment space for independent or town contracted performers or as a community gathering space for activities led by the town (12% each). Though the site is formally a farm, very few members of the community felt that the site should primarily be used for agriculture, with under 4% of the population indicating their preference in that activity.

23. How important is the preservation of historic buildings and sites to you?	#	%
Very Important	404	44.3%
Somewhat Important	427	46.9%
Not Important	80	8.8%

Question #23 was concerned the preservation of historic structures and received a similar ratio of responses that Question #12 did. Much as near 90% of town residents support some level of land preservation, 90% of residents support some historic structure preservation. This represents a clear mandate for managing historical sites already under the protection of the town and coordination with historical societies to preserve the historical and cultural character of the community. When Question #12 and #23 are considered together, this strongly suggests that the public strongly

appreciates the aesthetic of the town as it currently stands and would not want to see extreme changes made to its character.

Library

24. Regarding the Library's hours of operations...	#	%
Satisfied with Current Operations	420	46.1%
Unsatisfied with Current Operations	491	53.9%

Of people unsatisfied...	#	%
Wish the library was open on Fridays.	229	46.6%
Wish the library was open all Saturdays year-round.	206	42.0%
Wish the library was open for more hours on Saturday.	143	29.1%
Wish the library was open on Sundays.	103	21.0%
Wish the library was open until 9pm.	76	15.5%
Wish the library opened at 9am.	72	14.7%
Other: _____	18	3.7%

Concerning Question #24, the majority of individuals expressed unhappiness with the library's hours of operation (which are regularly Monday – Thursday 10 AM – 8 PM, Saturday 10 AM – 3 PM, closed on Saturdays in August). Considering that Fridays and Saturdays are days when many individuals have free hours to spare, expanding operating hours to cover such a time period has a chance of increasing engagement with the community. Remaining open in August on Saturdays was a particularly popular request, likely because of the large number of students who are out of school at that time, and the frustration that could arise from not having the library available at a time of peak interest – before the start of the school year, when many students are reading for book lists or need access to resources offered by the library.

25. Are you interested in seeing a community or program room being added to the library?	#	%
Yes	304	33.4%
No	287	31.5%
Unsure	320	35.1%

The community was quite uncertain regarding this question, with a near even split in the answers. More information about the size and scope of such an addition would likely need to be provided to get a more decisive picture of community opinion, but a lack of a decisive “yes” from the public suggests that most believe that either more community space is not needed or that such community space should be located somewhere other than the Library.

25a. Are you interested in seeing a community or program room being added to the library?	1998	2019
Yes	53.3%	33.4%
No	21.4%	31.5%
Unsure/No Answer	25.3%	35.1%

It can be seen in Figure 25a that opinions about additional space being added to the Library have changed significantly. This may be indicative of the fact that there was a greater community-wide push for a program room at the Library in 1998, thus making the prospect of such space being added in 2019 seem foreign or simply unattainable to 2019 respondents.

26. How often do you visit the library?	#	%
Daily	4	0.4%
Weekly	114	12.5%
Monthly	229	25.1%
Infrequently	383	42.0%
Never	181	19.9%

Very few individuals use the library on a daily basis, but about a quarter go monthly, and over 40% attend infrequently. Nearly 20% of survey respondents never use the library, a response that was analyzed in more detail in the following question.

27. If you answered "never" to the previous question, what could be done or provided at the library that would bring you to the facility?	#	%
Children's Programs	7	22.6%
Educational Events	5	16.1%
Adult Programs	3	9.7%
Better Advertisement	3	9.7%
Café Area	3	9.7%
Extended Hours	3	9.7%
Larger Collection	2	6.5%
Modern Equipment	2	6.5%
Additional Staffing	2	6.5%
Teen Programs	1	3.2%

Question #27 differed from the other open ended questions on this list in that it had an inherently restricted pool of respondents, as it was only relevant to the 181 individuals that responded with “Never” to Question #26’s prompt “How often do you visit the library?” Of these 181 participants, 150 (83%) indicated that there was nothing that could be done to improve the library enough to bring them there.

The overwhelming sentiment among those who do not visit the Bolton library is that it is not a place for them, either as a result of their busy work lives, a general disinterest in reading or other

services offered by the library, or the sentiment that libraries are less relevant to modern life due to the digitization of material and the ubiquitousness of the internet in modern life. This is to be somewhat expected, as there is always a percent of a population that will not engage with a resource available to them; no matter how good it is, they simply lack the interest. From this data, we can estimate that this accounts for approximately 16.5% of the greater Bolton community.

Of those who felt they would visit the library more often if it offered more services, requests for additional programming were the most prevalent, though there was disagreement as to what that programming should entail. Requests for children's programs were most prevalent, but still only made up 4% of responses.

28. How would you rate the following library services?	Excellent	Good	Unsure	Fair	Poor
Customer Service	365	228	82	50	5
Overall Staffing	239	301	122	58	10
Interlibrary Loan	192	274	200	57	7
Facility Comfort	185	351	89	87	18
Collection (books, DVDs, magazines, etc)	129	361	136	91	13
Technology (WiFi, computers, copier, etc)	115	297	220	86	12
Overall Parking Accommodations	180	352	67	115	16
Digital Services (e-books, databases, etc)	109	267	255	82	17
Programs (workshops, book discussions, etc)	98	278	237	98	19
Web Presence (web page, newsletter, etc)	88	268	238	107	29

Both the table above and below demonstrate responses to Question #28. The former demonstrates real values as they were assigned by respondents within the survey itself, and the latter separates those responses into two main categories: Favorable (comprised of "Excellent" and "Good" responses) and Unfavorable (comprised of "Fair" and "Poor" responses). "Unsure" responses were not taken into account in the table below. The favorability ratings listed below and in other questions later on in this report divide the number of "Favorable" ratings by the sum of Favorable and Unfavorable ratings to show you what percentage of individuals favor the service.

28. How would you rate the following library services?	Favorable	Unfavorable	Rating
Customer Service	593	55	91.5%
Overall Staffing	540	68	88.8%
Interlibrary Loan	466	64	87.9%
Facility Comfort	536	105	83.6%
Collection (books, DVDs, magazines, etc)	490	104	82.5%
Technology (WiFi, computers, copier, etc)	412	98	80.8%
Overall Parking Accommodations	532	131	80.2%
Digital Services (e-books, databases, etc)	376	99	79.2%
Programs (workshops, book discussions, etc)	376	117	76.3%
Web Presence (web page, newsletter, etc)	356	136	72.4%

The majority of the Library's programs and accommodations were viewed by the public as good or excellent, but there are several areas of fair or poor performance that bear closer examination, namely the Collection, Parking Size, Programming, and Web Presence of the Library. As the building is relatively small, the ability to hold a large collection onsite is limited for the Library, as is the ability to expand parking to accommodate more individuals at once. For the former concern, interlibrary loan agreements allow the Library to acquire books for individuals upon request with a small lead time, helping to remedy some of the issues surrounding small libraries with inherently limited collections. The Bentley Memorial Library takes part in an interlibrary loan system through the state, and these results suggest that said loan system should be better advertised by the Library.

While there is little to be done about the building size, or the lack of area to expand parking on the Library's parcel of land, much can be said about the web presence and programming offered by the Library. These were the lowest rated categories for Question #28, and the only two where the Library received more or equal "Fair" assessments as "Excellent" ones. While libraries are limited in what type of and quantity of events they can hold, better online communication might make individuals more aware of the events they already hold. In any case, considerable thought should be put into how to best improve these weaker aspects of an important institution.

Senior & Social Services Center

29. Approximately how often do you utilize the services located at the town's Senior & Social Services Center?	#	%
More than once a week	19	2.1%
Weekly	26	2.9%
Monthly	20	2.2%
Infrequently	130	14.3%
Never	716	78.6%

The overwhelming majority of town residents state that they use the Senior Center rarely, if at all. Based on the town's demographic breakdown, this includes not just young individuals but also a large number of seniors who do not use the facility. The reasons for this are explored more thoroughly in Question #31.

30. How would you rate each of the following services at the Senior & Social Services Center?	Excellent	Good	Unsure	Fair	Poor
Holiday Social Service Programs	0	32	51	11	1
Transportation Program	0	39	49	14	2
Tax Preparation Program	0	28	46	13	0
Overall Staffing	0	39	59	17	2
Food Pantry	0	33	49	14	3
Information and Referral to Resources	0	25	49	11	2
Senior Recreational Activities	0	33	69	20	0
CHOICES Medicare Counseling	0	23	41	12	3
Overall Parking	0	37	70	26	4
Accommodations	0	35	62	29	3
Senior Assistance Chore Program	0	25	49	19	6
Hours of Operation	0	25	71	23	6

The same favorability calculation was made for this question as for Question #28.

30. How would you rate each of the following services at the Senior & Social Services Center?	Favorable	Unfavorable	Rating
Holiday Social Service Programs	32	12	72.7%
Transportation Program	39	16	70.9%
Tax Preparation Program	28	13	68.3%
Overall Staffing	39	19	67.2%
Food Pantry	33	17	66.0%
Information and Referral to Resources	25	13	65.8%
Senior Recreational Activities	33	20	62.3%
CHOICES Medicare Counseling	23	15	60.5%
Overall Parking	37	30	55.2%
Accommodations	35	32	52.2%
Senior Assistance Chore Program	25	25	50.0%
Hours of Operation	25	29	46.3%

Question #30 had a low respondent pool because only individuals who had indicated that they used the Senior Center to some degree were allowed to respond to it. Of those said they did use the Senior Center, there is a perception that aspects of their experience at the center can be improved. The center only received a “C” rating in its holiday social service programs and declined in rating from there. The majority of respondents disliked its hours of operation and senior chore assistance program. These favorability ratings fall far below the lowest favorability ratings of the Library’s programs. These results may be partially influenced by a few disgruntled Senior Center users, as there were so few respondents to this question that a few negative responses could have greatly changed the outcome. Overall, however, these results suggest that more information needs to go out about the Senior Center’s current offerings and a reevaluation of some of those offerings, including hours of operation, need to be considered by Senior Center and Town leadership in the future.

31. What events or services could be added to bring you to the Senior Center more often?	#	%
Age	58	25.6%
Additional Activities	56	24.7%
Better Communication	48	21.1%
Athletic Events	17	7.5%
Community Center	14	6.2%
Extended Hours	13	5.7%
Educational Events	10	4.4%
Updates/Maintenance	6	2.6%
Transport to Events	5	2.2%

For Question #31, we received 932 entries, of which 705 (76%) were left blank or indicated they had nothing to add concerning the topic of the Senior Center. Of the remaining 227 responses, there were three answers that stood apart as the most prominent: Age (26%), Lack of Activities (25%), and Lack of Communication (21%). Though these answers appear to be slightly different, they indicate the same underlying issue: many individuals feel that the Senior Center is not a place for them because they are not yet seniors or they don't know what activities are occurring in which they might be interested. This common sentiment indicates that more individuals might use the senior center if there was increased communication regarding the events that occurred and if it was made clear to the public, in some way, that those who are not yet retired are welcome to join (at least some of) the events at the center.

Shared Services

32. In the future, there may be an opportunity to construct a new, large multi-generational community center; focused on youth, family, and senior services; that would be shared with a neighboring town and paid for by both the neighboring town and Bolton. This would increase youth, senior, and recreational services provided; provide more space for recreation activities for people of all ages; and would lower long-term administrative and maintenance costs for both towns. Would you be in support of Bolton developing such a partnership with a neighboring town?	#	%
Yes	592	65.0%
No	115	12.6%
Unsure	204	22.4%

While there have been many ideas circulating in town regarding the construction of new office spaces to replace the soon-to-be demolished Notch Road Municipal Center, one idea up for consideration is to seek to create a new shared community center with a neighboring town as a means of saving money on the construction of Town offices and to offer Bolton residents a wider variety of spaces for community and programming usage. A major problem that could arise from such a plan would be opposition from the residents of each town within the partnership, a prospect

which this question attempted to explore. While a considerable number of residents are unsure, a large majority view this proposal as generally favorable with relatively few opposing the idea.

33. If “yes,” where would you prefer that such a facility be constructed?	#	%
It doesn't matter, so long as it's no more than a 15-minute drive from my home	312	59.4%
Anywhere in Bolton	205	39.0%
Anywhere so long as it is not in Bolton.	7	1.3%
Other	1	0.2%

Question #33 is a follow-up to #32. Many individuals were receptive to the idea of sharing services with other town in order to pool resources, reduce costs, and provide more services in Question #32, and thus this question sought to dig deeper into the sentiments of Bolton residents on where such a facility might be located. When asked where the new facility should be constructed, the majority fell into one of two camps: either only requiring the facility to be within 15 minutes of their residence (even if located outside of Bolton proper), or for the facility to be in Bolton. While the specifics of such services would have to be negotiated in the future with whatever other municipalities Bolton were to cooperate with, support is generally favorable and the public is receptive to the idea, with a minority stating that they would specifically want a new construction to be located within Bolton.

34. Are there other areas of service in which you feel Bolton could partner with other nearby towns to create more efficiencies and cost savings?	#	%
Schools	123	34.3%
Other/Unspecified	49	13.6%
Police Services	48	13.4%
Town Administration	32	8.9%
Athletics	31	8.6%
Waste/Recycling Services	28	7.8%
Fire Services	18	5.0%
Community Center	16	4.5%
Road Maintenance	14	3.9%

For Question #34, we received 979 entries, of which 552 (56%) were left blank or indicated they had nothing to add concerning the topic of regionalization of services. Of the remaining 427 responses, the survey respondents were most interested in the topic of school district regionalization (34%). Multiple individuals noted that Bolton, a community of less than 5000 people, would be an ideal candidate to merge high schools with surrounding communities. Some called for a partnership similar to RHAM, while others preferred to keep the small-town feel of Bolton and favored merging some school functions with small neighboring communities such as Columbia. Regardless of the specifics, the idea of saving money by consolidating schools was popular among the greatest plurality of respondents to this question.

Other topics that yielded significant support for regionalization among the community was consolidation of: Police and Law Enforcement (13%), particularly if it would lead to a full time

police department instead of a unit of resident state troopers; Town Administration (9%), particularly as it pertains to positions that could be consolidated or shared between towns; Athletics (9%), for similar reasons as those given for school consolidation; and Waste/Recycling Services (8%), where several individuals voiced their dissatisfaction with the current hours of operation for the transfer station, and the belief that a regional transfer station might permit more hours.

Quality of Life

35. How would you rate the overall quality of life in Bolton?	#	%
Very Good	398	43.7%
Good	442	48.5%
Unsure	47	5.2%
Poor	18	2.0%
Very Poor	6	0.7%

Most respondents (92.2%) expressed that they view Bolton as having either a “Very Good” or “Good” quality of life, which suggests that, despite any recommendations for changes outlined in other question responses, the vast majority feel that Bolton is still a great place to live.

35a. How would you rate the overall quality of life in Bolton?	2014	2019
Very Good	58%	43.7%
Good	42%	48.5%
Unsure	0%	5.2%
Poor	0%	2.0%
Very Poor	0%	0.7%

The sentiments expressed on this subject have changed over time, however. The 2014 survey that accompanied the Plan of Conservation & Development identified 100% of respondents as believing that the quality of life in Bolton was either “Good” or “Very Good,” meaning that there has been a downward trend since this time. The reason for this shift is not easily made clear, but it is recommended that Town staff review comments and suggestions made in the 2014 survey that have not been attended to in the past six years in the hopes that this may better appease and satisfy the residents who reported subpar quality of life in 2019.

36. Bolton is a good place to raise children.	#	%
Strongly Agree	527	57.8%
Somewhat Agree	270	29.6%
Unsure	78	8.6%
Somewhat Disagree	28	3.1%
Strongly Disagree	8	0.9%

In Question #36, respondents stated, for the most part, that they believe Bolton is a good place to raise children. There were relatively few responses to this question that were negative in any way,

and it is recommended that the Town look to address concerns voiced by individuals who advocated for the expansion of programs and offerings to children as a means of deciding how to best turn those negative responses into positive ones in the next community survey.

37. Bolton is a good place to retire.	#	%
Strongly Agree	94	10.3%
Somewhat Agree	225	24.7%
Unsure	274	30.1%
Somewhat Disagree	172	18.9%
Strongly Disagree	146	16.0%

Individuals were not in the same kind of agreement about Bolton being a good retirement community as they were about it being a good place to raise children, with upwards of 33% stating that they disagree with that statement. While these reasons are not clearly spelled out by respondents in conjunction with this question, the rating of many Senior Center functions suggests that the town's elder population believes more can be done in their service, and Bolton's relatively high mill rate may also contribute to a negative review of Bolton as a place to retire, as many retirees are on strictly fixed incomes.

38. Imagine that you have family or close friends that are looking to relocate with no particular destination in mind. How likely would you be to recommend Bolton as a potential option based on your experiences in town?	#	%
Very Likely	346	38.0%
Somewhat Likely	328	36.0%
Unsure	106	11.6%
Somewhat Unlikely	75	8.2%
Very Unlikely	56	6.1%

Question #38 saw 74% of respondents supporting, to some degree, the claim that they would recommend Bolton to others as a good place to move to and live. While this is a hypothetical question, it serves to capture the underlying feelings of Bolton residents and how much pride they have in the town in which they live. For the most part, that pride is present and would likely show in an instance like this, but 14.3% of respondents have reservations.

39. What attracted you to Bolton in the first place, and what aspects of the community keep you living in town?	#	%
Rural character and natural beauty.	572	62.8%
Quality school system.	528	58.0%
Proximity to commercial centers in Manchester, Hartford, and beyond.	416	45.7%
Proximity to place of work.	307	33.7%
Friends and family live in town/nearby.	304	33.4%
Ideal neighborhood and housing.	303	33.3%
Other: _____	94	10.3%
I have lived in Bolton my whole life and want to stay in my hometown.	91	10.0%
Quality town services.	58	6.4%

Question #39 sought to explore the overarching pieces of town that respondents love most. Top contenders for the most beloved aspect of Bolton are its “rural character and natural beauty” (62.8%), the town’s “quality school system” (58.0%), and Bolton’s “proximity to commercial centers in Manchester, Hartford, and beyond” (45.7%). In the reverse, this question also revealed a number of different items that most residents do not value as greatly in town, with hometown attachment (10.0%) and “quality town services” (6.4%) taking the bottom two spots in the results. These results demonstrate that there are a number of items that the town can show off and showcase to the community and state at large, and also that there are a few key areas in which more work is needed.

39a. What attracted you to Bolton in the first place, and what aspects of the community keep you living in town?	1998	2019
Rural character and natural beauty.	6.9%	62.8%
Quality school system.	63.6%	58.0%
Proximity to commercial centers in Manchester, Hartford, and beyond.	N/A	45.7%
Proximity to place of work.	43.6%	33.7%
Friends and family live in town/nearby.	42.0%	33.4%
Ideal neighborhood and housing.	48.7%	33.3%
Other: _____	80.0%	10.3%
I have lived in Bolton my whole life and want to stay in my hometown.	20.7%	10.0%
Quality town services.	19.5%	6.4%

While the questions were not framed in the exact same way, Figure 39a shows how perceptions of Bolton’s best and worst features have changed in the past 21 years. Aside from the quality school system, which has remained a consistent favorite among most respondents, all of the items listed in this question vary greatly between the two surveys. It is perhaps most notable that over 80% of respondents in the 1998 survey gave an answer that was not included as an option on the 2019 survey.

General & Customer Service

40. Of the following town services, which are your highest priorities?	High #	High %	Low #	Low %
Education	581	63.8%	364	40.0%
Police Protection	491	53.9%	305	33.5%
Fire Protection	461	50.6%	269	29.5%
Snow Removal	424	46.5%	243	26.7%
Trash Collection	359	39.4%	225	24.7%
Road Repair	316	34.7%	211	23.2%
Recycling	292	32.1%	182	20.0%
School Facility Maintenance	275	30.2%	127	13.9%
Park & Public Space Maintenance	247	27.1%	119	13.1%
Recreation Programs	233	25.6%	117	12.8%
Open Space Preservation	231	25.4%	116	12.7%
Library	193	21.2%	104	11.4%
Youth Services	189	20.7%	90	9.9%
Planning and Land Use Regulation	178	19.5%	89	9.8%
Senior Services	140	15.4%	82	9.0%
Public Health	139	15.3%	78	8.6%
Facility Maintenance	123	13.5%	67	7.4%
Social Services	108	11.9%	48	5.3%
Enforcement of Property Regulations	94	10.3%	20	2.2%
Other	21	2.3%	15	1.6%

Question #40 asked survey respondents to group the town services into their five highest priority and their five lowest priority. The services that were consistently ranked highly were education, emergency services, road care/maintenance, and waste removal. As these are some of the principal responsibilities of a municipality, it is unsurprising that many saw these as the most important categories of service. Categories that the fewest individuals saw as high priority were the enforcement of property regulations, social services, and facilities maintenance.

40a. Priorities Over Time	1998 Rank	2019 Rank
Education	3	1
Police Protection	2	2
Fire Protection	1	3
Snow Removal & Road Repair	4	4
Trash & Recycling Collection	5	5
Facility Maintenance	8	6
Recreation Programs	14	7
Open Space Preservation	7	8
Library	6	9
Youth Services	10	10
Planning and Land Use Regulation	11	11
Senior Services	13	12
Public Health	12	13
Social Services	15	14
Enforcement of Property Regulations	9	15

Over time, some priorities in town have changed greatly. Between 1998 and 2019, respondents now view Recreation Programs as being a much higher priority than they used to, but other items such as Library services have fallen in importance. Please note that the phrasing of the questions and the options listed therein differed between 1998 and 2019, and these results reflect as close a comparison as possible as determined by the research team.

41. How would you describe your level of satisfaction with each of the below-listed town services and items?	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Unsure	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied	% Success
Trash Collection	222	525	132	27	5	95.9%
Fire Protection	241	418	223	21	8	95.8%
Snow Removal	258	468	138	32	15	93.9%
Library	179	445	246	26	15	93.8%
Town Clerk Services	132	410	327	32	10	92.8%
Open Space Preservation	109	430	330	29	13	92.8%
Senior Services	50	224	612	18	7	91.6%
Park & Space Maintenance	103	469	283	42	14	91.1%
Public Health	43	287	548	25	8	90.9%
Town Services Overall	93	500	257	48	13	90.7%
School Facilities	152	438	260	48	13	90.6%
Public Schools Overall	246	387	207	50	21	89.9%
Social Services	39	213	625	25	9	88.1%
Road Repair	118	508	194	80	11	87.3%
Recycling	148	465	179	89	30	83.7%
School Recreation Facilities	74	381	332	91	33	78.6%
Recreation Programs	40	349	409	93	20	77.5%
Youth Services	35	249	543	64	20	77.2%
Land Use Regulation	45	297	466	75	28	76.9%
Town Recreation Facilities	39	370	352	126	24	73.2%
Transfer Station	77	272	433	95	34	73.0%
Town Planning	43	267	469	100	32	70.1%
Tax Collection	61	370	290	129	61	69.4%
Property Assessments	26	279	372	166	68	56.6%
Police Protection	58	294	269	211	79	54.8%

The assessment of functional importance, as demonstrated by respondents in Question #40, appears to have little to no bearing on respondent evaluation of quality in the delivery of said services. Most were satisfied with trash collection, fire protective services, snow removal, the library, and the town's open space preservation plan – a collection of services that appeared on both the high and low priority lists. Conversely, only ~55% of survey respondents felt that police protection in town was adequate, despite it being the most commonly agreed upon high priority town service. The other service that had below a 60% satisfaction rate was property assessments, a feeling that no doubt stems from the same root as many of Bolton's other problems, and problems found in towns around the United States: individuals dissatisfied with high taxes. It is important to note, however, that all services in town received general support from a majority of respondents.

41a. Quality Over Time	1998 Rank	2019 Rank
Trash & Recycling Collection	4	1
Fire Protection	1	2
Snow Removal & Road Repair	6	3
Library	3	4
Open Space Preservation	14	5
Senior Services	7	6
Facility Maintenance	8	7
Public Health	12	8
Education	2	9
Social Services	15	10
Recreation Programs	11	11
Youth Services	13	12
Land Use Regulation	10	13
Town Recreation Facilities	9	14
Police Protection	5	15

Figure 41a demonstrates the change in perception of quality between 1998 and 2019, which helps us now to see the areas in which Bolton has improved its services and highlights areas in which the public perceives more work needing to be done. Some of the largest increases in quality can be seen in Trash & Recycling Collection, Open Space Preservation, and Social Services, while some of the largest decreases can be seen in Education, Land Use Regulation, and Police Protection.

42. If you listed "Dissatisfied" or "Very Dissatisfied" on any of the above-listed items, what could be done to improve those services or items?	#	%
Expanded Police Presence	131	27.6%
Reduced Taxes	104	21.9%
Expanded Waste/Recycling Programs	84	17.7%
Economic Development	48	10.1%
Other	36	7.6%
Education Reform	24	5.1%
Better Plowing, Paving, and/or Road Work	21	4.4%
Construction of a Community Center	16	3.4%
Further Regionalization Efforts	10	2.1%

For Question #42, we received 933 entries, of which 495 (53%) were left blank or indicated they had nothing to add concerning the topic. Of the remaining 474 responses, the two most common topics of dissatisfaction among respondents were the lack of police presence in Bolton (28%), and the high tax rate (22%). Individuals specifically noted the high number of break-ins that had happened in Bolton around the time of the survey as a major source of dissatisfaction and stress in their lives, and they expressed a desire for a larger public safety presence in order to deter crime.

Simultaneously, a large percentage of the population is deeply unhappy with the high tax rate in Bolton as well as the current methods of tax assessment and tax collection. Some individuals felt that their properties had been unfairly assessed, while others wished that it was possible to submit property taxes electronically and that taxes could be paid in smaller portions throughout the year as opposed to all at once in July.

Other topics that a large percentage of the survey group expressed dissatisfaction over were the need for further sewer hookups and waste disposal (18%) and a desire for more economic development to come to Bolton (10%).

43. When was the last time you had contact with town staff?	#	%
Within the past week	169	18.6%
Within the past month	221	24.3%
Within the past six months	247	27.1%
Within the past year	104	11.4%
More than a year ago	91	10.0%
I have never interacted with town staff.	79	8.7%

Question #43 was asked largely as a preface as to Question #44, which seek to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of service being delivered by Town staff members. This data also gives us a better understanding of how often our residents and other community members are interacting with town staff so that we can get an understanding of how many individuals the town is not reaching through regular interaction.

44. When you last interacted with town staff, they were...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	%
Courteous and polite?	382	348	48	18	12	96.1%
Knowledgeable?	333	377	64	21	13	95.4%
Responsive to my concerns?	334	344	77	37	16	92.7%

Over 80% of the individuals who responded to the survey have interacted with town staff within the past year, and the overwhelming majority felt that staff were professional and responsive to concerns. Though there may be a bit of survivorship bias in this question (those individuals who are more aware of what goes on in town and interact with town staff more regularly may have had a higher likelihood of engaging with the survey in the first place), these results seem to indicate a general satisfaction with the town staff.

45. What more could the Town or the Board of Education do to improve services or your experience in town?	#	%
Budget Cuts/Cost Reduction	67	17.5%
Education: Expand Curricula/Activities	57	14.9%
Economic Development	55	14.4%
Improve Communication	40	10.4%
Sports/Athletics	35	9.1%
Greater Law Enforcement Presence	31	8.1%
Regionalization	22	5.7%
Education: Improve Funding	21	5.5%
Community Center	14	3.7%
Facilities and Maintenance	14	3.7%
Waste/Recycling	13	3.4%
Education: Stiffen Requirements	10	2.6%
Other	4	1.0%

For Question #45, we received 985 entries, of which 602 (61%) were left blank or indicated they had nothing to add concerning the topic of the Board of Education or Town policy. The responses to this question were highly varied as a result of being such a broad question, and as a result it was difficult to summarize what the majority of individuals wanted from the town for this topic. Of the remaining 383 responses, the most commonly requested changes to Board of Education and Town policy revolved around budget cuts (17%), expanding the curriculum of the school system (15%), developing the economy of the town (14%), improving communication with town residents (10%), providing more athletics funding (9%), and increasing the presence of law enforcement in the town (8%). These requests are all reiterations of topics previously commented on in other open ended questions in this report, but the trend bears some brief examination.

In summation, many citizen concerns center around the high tax burden and continued lack of economic development in their community. While Bolton residents make a median household income that's higher than the State of Connecticut's median, they would understandably like to pay less taxes if possible, and many see economic development as the way to lower tax burden while maintaining or even expanding town services.

Many citizens appear to feel disconnected from Town Hall and the Board of Education, not understanding why decisions may be made and what may inhibit some hot button topics such as law enforcement reform or economic development. Such a confluence of opinions may lead the inhabitants of the town to feel as if nothing is happening on the issues that matter most to them, and this inaction may account for much of the unhappiness that has been expressed in response to other questions.

Demographics

All questions within this section were asked strictly for statistical purposes.

46. How many years have or did you live in	#	%
Less than two years	46	5.0%
2-5 years	103	11.3%
6-10 years	115	12.6%
11-20 years	226	24.8%
20+ years	365	40.1%
I've never lived in Bolton	56	6.1%

Question #46 demonstrates that the majority of respondents have lived in Bolton for more than 10 years, which suggests that the majority of responses received are based on impressions made over time rather than in a short year or two.

46a. How many years have or did you live in Bolton?	1998	2014	2019
Less than two years	8.1%	1.8%	5.0%
2-5 years	9.5%	11.2%	11.3%
6-10 years	10.3%	14.2%	12.6%
Over 10 years	72.1%	72.8%	64.9%
I've never lived in Bolton	N/A		6.1%

Figure 46a shows the breakdown of residency for respondents in the 1998 and 2014 surveys and how that differs from the results in 2019.

47. Your Age:	#	%
Under 18	48	6.1%
18-25	42	5.3%
26-35	86	10.9%
36-50	255	32.3%
51-65	231	29.2%
66-80	116	14.7%
Over 80	12	1.5%
Unknown	121	
Average	48.1	
Median	49	

47a. Your Age:	1998	2014	2019
Under 18	1.4%	0.0%	6.1%
18-25	0.7%	0.0%	5.3%
26-35	10.3%	1.8%	10.9%
36-50	40.6%	N/A	32.3%
51-65	29.1%	N/A	29.2%
66-80	17.9%	N/A	16.2%
Over 80	0	N/A	1.5%
Average			48.1
Median			49

Question #47 examines respondent age, while Figure 47a shows how the breakdown of ages changed between the 1998, 2014, and 2019 surveys. Overall, it appears that the 2019 survey's multifaceted approach to contacting potential respondents helped improve the number of respondents in the sub-25 and 80+ age range, which helps to ensure that the feelings expressed in the 2019 survey are as accurate as possible.

48. What is your current employment status?	#	%
Working Full-Time	519	58.8%
Retired	159	18.0%
Working Part-Time	85	9.6%
Student	77	8.7%
Full-time Parent or Homemaker	25	2.8%
Unemployed - looking for work	8	0.9%
Unemployed - unable to work due to disability	6	0.7%
Unemployed - not looking for work	2	0.2%
Other	1	0.1%

48a. What is your current employment status?	1998	2014	2019
Working	71.7%	62.8%	68.4%
Retired	21.2%	32.0%	18.0%
Student	2.1%	0.0%	8.7%
Full-time Parent or Homemaker	9.8%	4.1%	2.8%
Unemployed	N/A	0.0%	1.9%

Question #48 looked to examine the employment status of individuals in Bolton at the time of the survey. General trends over the three surveys that this report examines, as noted by Figure 48a, suggest that either the 2019 survey did not capture the responses of as many retirees as a proportional response potentially should have or that past surveys have over-represented retirees. The same is true for students, full-time parents, and homemakers. 2019 marks the first year in which respondents were specifically asked about the nuanced situation of unemployment that some individuals face.

49. Please identify your race.	#	%
White	800	96.6%
Two or More Races	13	1.6%
Black	5	0.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	0.5%
American Native	3	0.4%
Other	3	0.4%

More commentary on race, gender, and age can be found in the “Research Design” section of this report.

50. What is your Gender?	#	%
Male	345	40.3%
Female	508	59.3%
Other	4	0.5%

50a. What is your Gender?	1998	2014	2019
Male	47.7%	47.9%	40.3%
Female	52.3%	52.1%	59.3%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%

As previously noted in the Research Design section of the report, reported gender is one response area that has varied greatly over the past three community surveys. Given that responses to this question, as with all demographic questions, were not strictly required, this could be the result of either a high number of females choosing to respond to this survey, a high number of males choosing to not respond to this question, or it may reflect a population that leans more female than male. While it is perhaps least likely that the latter suggestion is accurate, we do not have the data to support or refute any of these possibilities.

51. What is the highest education you have completed or the highest degree you have	#	%
Middle School	45	5.3%
High School/GED	148	17.3%
Associates	105	12.3%
Bachelors	280	32.7%
Masters	219	25.6%
Doctorate	59	6.9%

52. Do you have children in Bolton Public Schools?	#	%
Yes	267	30.6%
No	578	66.2%
I have children in school, but I send them elsewhere.	28	3.2%

While just about a third of respondents claim to have children in school, under 10% of those respondents are sending their children outside of Bolton Public Schools. A low number here suggests that there is relatively high confidence in our town's public schools system. In the future, however, this question should be edited to specify that it is asking about children enrolled in Pre-K through 12th Grade, as some respondents may have believed the question to include college-aged offspring, which may have led to a higher number reporting that their children are sent to school elsewhere. Another question may be considered for historical and demographic reference which would read "Did you graduate from Bolton High School?"

53. What is your Pre-tax Annual Household Income?	#	%
Less than \$10,000	5	0.8%
\$10,001-\$25,000	11	1.8%
\$25,001-\$50,000	38	6.2%
\$50,001-\$75,000	64	10.4%
\$75,001-\$100,000	98	16.0%
\$100,001-\$150,000	180	29.3%
Over \$150,000	218	35.5%

Past surveys did not inquire about household income, making this the first local benchmark of this data in Bolton.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the 2019 Community Survey, the authors of this report hereby recommend that the Board of Selectmen review, consider, and possibly implement the following policies and general courses of action.

Please note that the recommendations are numbered for purpose of reference, and that the numbers have no bearing on the level of importance or consideration that should be assigned to each recommendation. Numbers appearing in parentheses indicate which question(s) the recommendation is based on.

Communications

1. Social media expansion should continue in a way that captures interest and viewership across all demographics (2, 3).
2. More information about the variety of social media outlets and how to use them should be

- shared with the public (3).
- 3. Physical media should continue to be utilized to ensure that those without internet access are kept informed of Town happenings (2).
- 4. The development of a regular hard-copy town magazine should be considered (2, 4, 5).
- 5. More information about pre-existing programs and events should be shared widely before new programs and events are developed (6, 17).
- 6. The format, duration, and content of the Administrator's Report on local cable channel 5 should be reconsidered (6).

Land Use & Economic Development

- 7. Commercial development and senior housing developments should be pursued as high-priority new construction projects (7).
- 8. Work that can be done to make it easier for businesses to relocate to major Bolton thruways, including Route 44 and Route 6, should be pursued.
- 9. Businesses that can incorporate themselves into an attractive, walkable commercial district; including a coffee shop, more restaurants, small shops/retail, and pharmacies; should be encouraged to relocate to designated commercial development areas.
- 10. Town branding and marketing should likely incorporate elements that highlight its natural beauty and small, tight-knit community (10, 39).

Environment & Waste Collection

- 11. A balance between land preservation and development should be maintained (11).
- 12. Regular land preservation should be prioritized and pursued (12, 13).
- 13. Solar and other renewable installations in town should be pursued (13).
- 14. Door-to-door composting and other eco-friendly actions that would help reduce waste to be sent to landfill should be explored and considered (14, 15).

Recreation

- 15. New recreational programs that are developed should focus on activities not currently offered in town (16).

Town Grounds & Facilities

- 16. The creation of space that will allow for new recreation, leisure, and community-based activities to be held is generally desirable (19, 21).
- 17. Information about all parks, especially Freja Park, should be more widely shared in order to promote effective usage and to make the town's investment in those spaces worthwhile (20).
- 18. Accessibility to parks and trails should be addressed (21).
- 19. Historic buildings and sites should continue to be preserved (23).

Library

- 20. An adjustment of the Library's hours of operations should be considered, with possible changes including keeping the Library open on Saturdays year-round and on Fridays in general.
- 21. New incentives, offerings, and programs (with a special emphasis on children and educational programs) should be considered at the Library to increase the number of

individuals who utilize its services and the frequency at which those individuals visit (26, 27).

22. The Library's digital services, programs, and web presence should be evaluated and Library staff should develop and execute a plan to improve their favorability ratings (28).

Senior & Social Services Center

23. The Senior Center should develop and execute a plan to increase the number of individuals around town who use their facility (29, 31).
24. A plan should be developed and executed to improve the Senior Center's favorability ratings (30, 31).

Shared Services

25. The concept of developing a new community center, to be shared between Bolton and a neighboring town, should be pursued for the sake of improved offerings and financial efficiency (32).
26. Further sharing of resources between schools, police departments, and other town services should be reviewed and considered (34).

Quality of Life

27. The Town should do its best to act on these recommendations and the recommendations outlined in other reports to help residents see progress being made on the issues that matter most to them (35, 38).
28. The Town should work to market itself as a more retirement-friendly community (37, 38).
29. The Town should do more to improve accessibility and lift negative perceptions around Town services (39).

General & Customer Service

30. The Town should review the priority ratings of each of its services and consider ways to adjust future funding levels to match the priorities of the public (40).
31. The Town should review services that received "failing" satisfaction ratings, including and most notably Police Protection, and develop and execute a plan to improve those services to passing levels (41, 42).
32. Town staff should keep up its high-quality customer service and do more to market this feature of the government (44).
33. Town officials should seek to reduce tax burden if possible, either through cuts, cost reduction through efficiency, or through economic development (45).

Demographics

34. Town staff and/or officials should consider a way to welcome new residents to town as a means of helping newer arrivals feel at home among a considerable number of residents who have lived in town for over 20 years (46).
35. The Town should develop and execute a plan to connect underrepresented groups; including but not limited to young residents, senior citizens, males, and people of color; with local programs and services while empowering all to become involved with local government (47, 49).
36. Town staff should work to find streamlined ways to connect residents with nearby jobs

(48).

37. The Town should remain as open to communications from people in need as possible, and should continue to offer programs that help families and individuals in poverty (53).

REFERENCES

Bolton Planning & Zoning Commission. 2015. "2015 Plan of Conservation and Development." October. (March 3, 2020).

Stewart, John A. 1999. "Bolton Community Survey 2000 Results Summary". February 12. (March 3, 2020).

APPENDICIES

Appendix A: a copy of the 2019 Community Survey.

Appendix B: all open-ended responses.

Appendix C: a link to all Town social media pages.

Also published: an Executive Summary.