

# Town of Richford 2014 Comprehensive Plan Survey Results Report

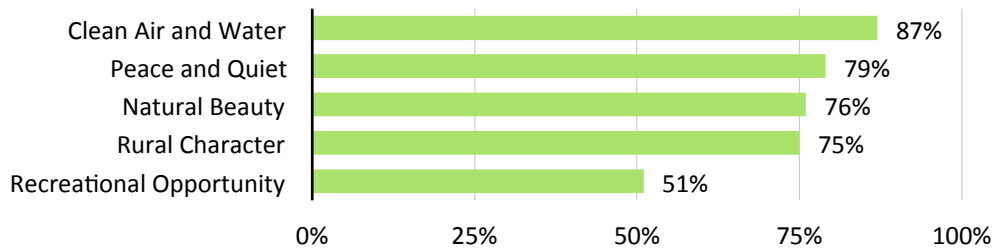
Prepared by Richford Planning Board

## Executive Summary

The Town of Richford mailed a community survey to all 687 Richford residents and non-resident landowners and received a total of 109 surveys returned, for a response rate of 15.8%. The completed surveys contained 9,492 question responses and 476 written comments. Four topics received the most attention: preserve Richford’s rural character and natural environment; economic development consistent with maintaining the rural character; improve Richford’s appearance by removing junk and dilapidated houses; and make Town government more efficient and reduce taxes.

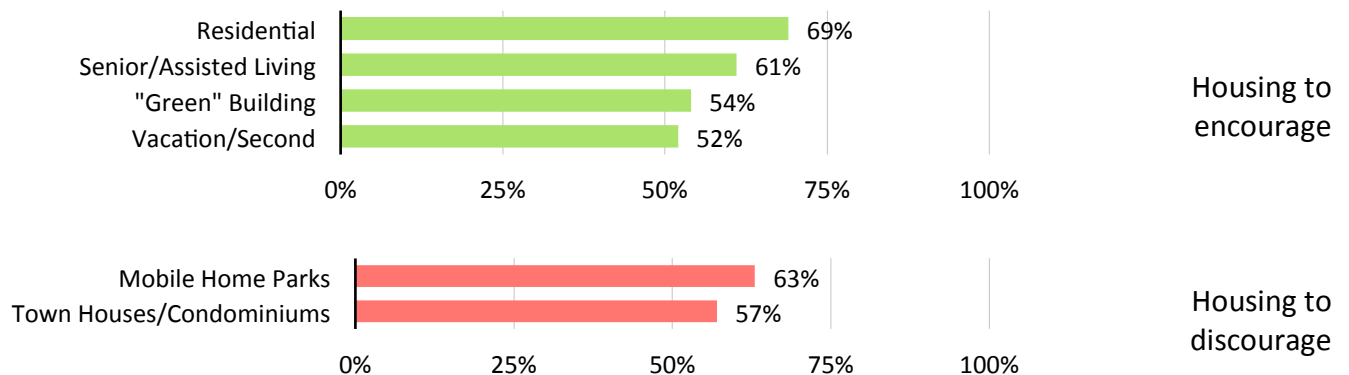
### *Preserve rural character*

Clean air and water, peace and quiet, natural beauty and rural character were the overwhelming reasons why respondents choose to live in Richford, and preserving these qualities is very important to residents. Respondents participate in a variety of outdoor recreational activities, including jogging and walking, hiking, fishing, bird watching, hunting, cross country skiing and snowshoeing, snowmobile and ATV use, biking and horseback riding, all of which are readily available in Richford’s rural landscape and state forests.



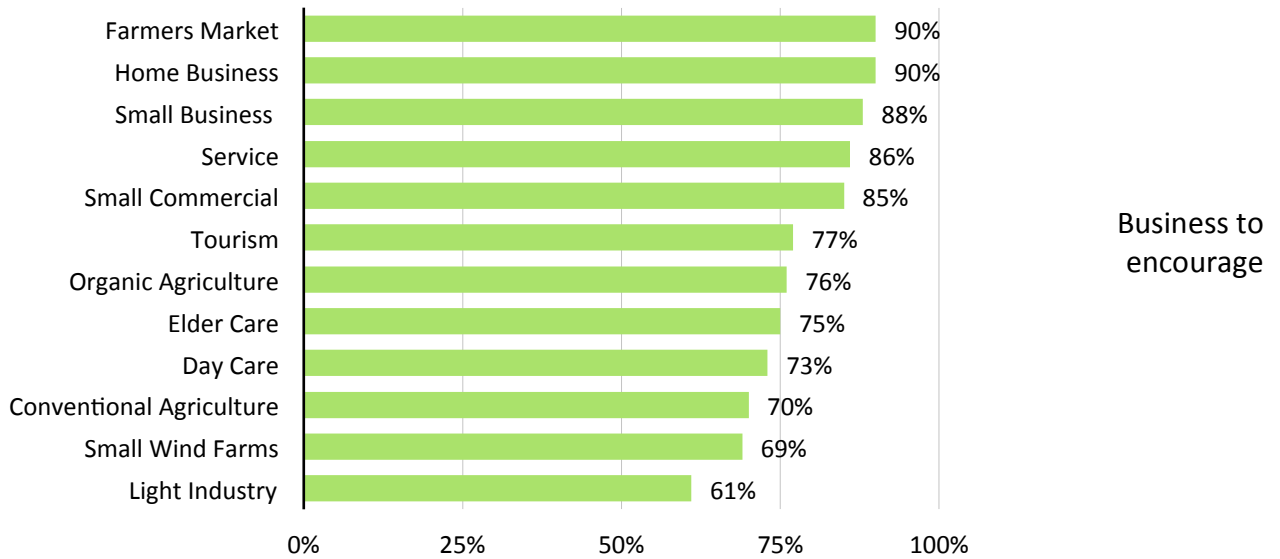
### *Economic development: Housing*

Respondents overwhelmingly want future residential development to consist of single family homes, including vacation and second homes, and do not want mobile home parks, apartment complexes, condominiums or subdivisions. Local residents in particular encourage development of a senior/assisted living facility in Richford, and also favor ‘green’ building construction, reflecting the emphasis on maintaining Richford’s clean water and air.

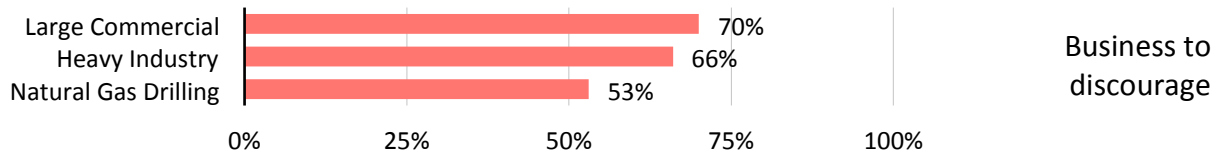


### ***Economic development: Business***

Nearly all respondents would like to have more small businesses in Richford, including home-based, service based, and tourism based. Respondents also support agriculture, both conventional and organic, and would like to have both day care and elder care businesses in the community. Respondents especially want a farmer's market – 90% of all respondents encouraged development of a farmer's market.



In contrast, large commercial and industrial development are not wanted, nor is high-volume drilling for natural gas ('fracking').

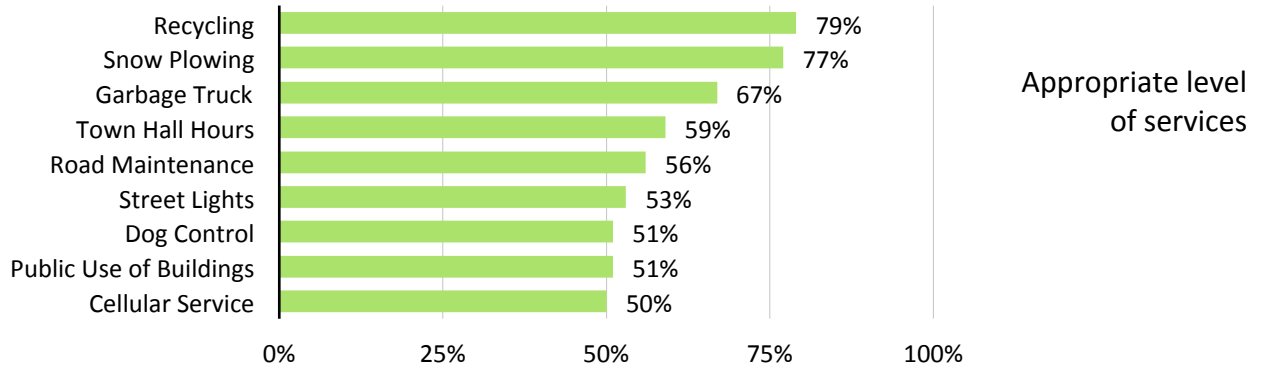


### ***Improve Richford's appearance***

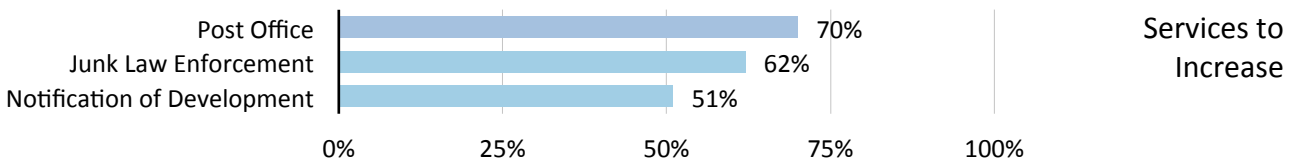
Most respondents expressed concern about the dilapidated appearance of buildings and properties in both the hamlet and the Town. Respondents were very emphatic about the need to remove junk and improve the appearance of many properties, and these two concerns received more written comments than any other topic. Improving the appearance of the Town was almost as high a priority as preserving the Town's clean air and water.

### ***Improve Town government and reduce taxes***

Respondents were generally satisfied with the level of Town services, especially recycling and snow plowing.



Respondents were not satisfied with some services however. In particular, they wanted Post Office hours to be increased. Many respondents wanted increased enforcement of both the Junk law and the Dog Control Law.



Respondents emphasized the need for pro-active Town government to meet the current and future needs of the community. Respondents wanted lower taxes and more value for the taxes they paid, a theme common to small towns across the nation. When asked if they thought the Town was 'getting better or worse' most respondents indicated that the Town was neither improving nor falling apart, but simply staying the same. For many respondents there was dissatisfaction with the lack of improvement. The challenge facing the community is how to maintain Richford's positive qualities, especially the clean air and water and rural character, while improving the economic base of the Town.

## **Survey Background**

The survey was prepared by the Town of Richford Planning Board during multiple meetings in spring 2014. The survey was developed to assess why people choose to live in or own land in Richford; what Town services should be increased or decreased; what housing and economic development options are preferred; and what actions the Town should take for community development in the future. The survey also asked about economic and housing concerns of residents, and concluded with five write-in questions about overall opinions of the Town. The draft survey was tested on a small group of individuals not associated with the Town government, whose comments were incorporated into the final survey.

The final survey was sent to all 449 resident addresses and 228 non-resident land owners on 23 May 2014, with a suggested return date of June 20 1014. Additional copies were available at the Town Hall, at all Town meetings, at the garbage truck, and also on-line on the Town web site ([www.richfordny.com](http://www.richfordny.com)). Completed surveys could be placed in labeled boxes at the Town Hall and the Town Garbage Truck, dropped in the mail slot at the Town Hall, or mailed to the Planning Board c/o the Town of Richford. At one time an on-line survey was considered but rejected, as many residents do not access the Town website and internet service is the Town varies with location. Each survey was accompanied by a cover page that explained the purpose of the survey. Respondents were asked to write their name and address on the cover page when returning the survey, to avoid multiple surveys filled out by one individual (a problem encountered in the earlier 2005 survey). After verifying that the respondent had not already submitted a survey, the cover letter with identifying information was separated from the survey and destroyed. The survey and cover letter are in Appendix A. The cover letter also asked if respondents wanted to receive the Town newsletter by mail or e-mail, and if they wanted to participate in updating the Comprehensive Plan.

A total of 109 completed survey forms were returned, 88 from residents and 21 from non-resident land owners, for a response rate of 15.8% (19.6% of residents and 9.2% of non-residents). In some cases the two groups had different responses and these are noted in the report. Responses from Richford residents represented 69 households, or 15% of the total number of households in the Town. Many residents said they planned to fill it out but 'never got around to it'. It is possible that some residents were hesitant to return the cover page with their survey; on the other hand, all mailed surveys had return addresses and names clearly written on the envelope, indicating that at least for these residents there was trust that all surveys would be completely anonymous.

## **Respondent Profiles**

The majority of respondents were 45 and older, and noticeably absent were responses from younger residents, who comprise 30% of the Town population (based on the 2010 US census data: Fig. 1). The 109 respondents lived in 89 households; 69 in Richford and 20 outside of Richford. Residents lived in both the hamlet (17%) and outside the hamlet (83%). Most respondents were either retired (42%) or worked full-time (31%); 17% worked part-time, were unemployed, or were unable to work.

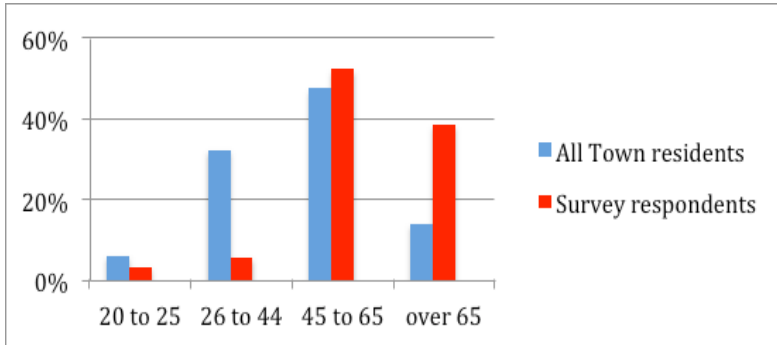


Fig.1 Age distribution of all 1172 Town residents and the 109 survey respondents.

The majority of working residents (91%) work outside the Town of Richford, particularly in Ithaca, and most commute more than 10 miles each way (Fig. 3). The vast majority drive a personal vehicle to get to work and for personal travel (shopping, appointments, etc.); only 8% walk, carpool, or ride the bus.

Most respondents own their own residence or land (only two renters responded to this survey). When adjusted for household, 10% own less than one acre, 25% own 1 to 4 acres, 48% own 5 to 49 acres, and 17% own 50 acres or more. All Richford respondents use their land as a residence, and 14% also use their land for business (both agricultural and non-agricultural).

Both residents and non-residents participate in outdoor recreation, especially walking, hiking, fishing and hunting (Fig. 2).

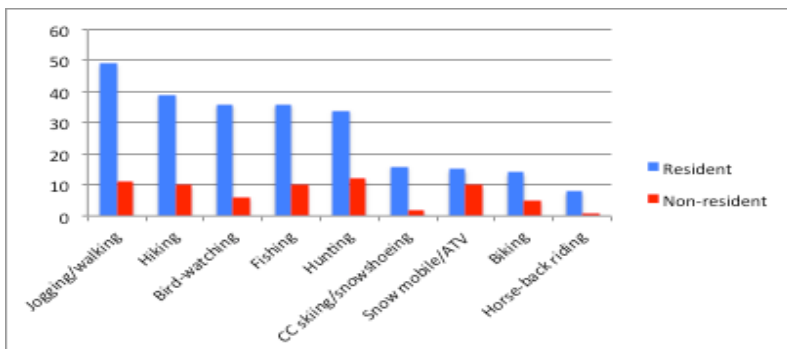


Fig. 2 Number of respondents who participate in various outdoor activities.

## Survey Results: Why people choose to live or own land in Richford

Richford’s rural character, natural beauty, clean air and water, peace and quiet, and recreational opportunity are the most important reasons why people live in or own land in Richford (Table 1), and the vast majority of respondents highly value these resources. The importance of these 4 features is further reflected in the written responses to Question 29 (What do you like most about Richford?; see Table 5). Typical responses include:

- “Living in a beautiful place with clean air and water. “
- “The quietness and the ability to enjoy nature. “
- “The beautiful woods, hills, and clean streams.”
- “The beauty in the landscape - the connection to the state forest.”
- “Living in a remote area where I can raise my food and not have very many neighbors.”
- “Hunting, fishing, and location.”
- “Peace and quiet, good water, clean air, dark at night, low traffic.”

To a lesser degree, respondents also value the small town size and sense of community of Richford (Table 1). The written responses to Question 29 (Table 5) follow this same pattern, and again emphasize that Richford’s rural character is the most important reason why people live in Richford.

- “The sense of community and knowing my kids are safe.”
- “I love my little town! I love that people are so connected.”
- “It is a good place to live and a lot of good people.”

**Table 1. Why people live in or own land in Richford.** 109 responses were submitted. Not all respondents answered all questions; columns indicate percent of responses in each category, and the ‘total’ column indicates the number of responses for each question. The bold numbers indicate the category with a substantially larger number of responses. (NA = Not Applicable)

	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>Not very Important</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Total No. responses</b>
Clean air and water	<b>87</b>	8	0	5	101
Peace and quiet	<b>79</b>	16	3	3	103
Natural beauty	<b>76</b>	16	2	6	101
Rural character	<b>75</b>	15	3	7	101
Recreational opportunity	<b>51</b>	22	6	22	97
Housing cost	35	33	10	22	98
Proximity to Ithaca	32	30	18	20	100
Grew up here	30	7	6	<b>57</b>	98
Lack of zoning	27	27	21	24	91
School District	25	24	13	<b>38</b>	97
Sense of community	23	33	27	17	98
Town size	23	<b>40</b>	22	15	95
Proximity to Owego	15	16	<b>41</b>	29	96
Investment opportunity	15	12	35	39	95

## **Survey Results: Town services**

The majority of respondents are satisfied with the level of Town services, especially local road maintenance and snow plowing, fire protection, garbage truck, dog control, Town Hall service and street lights. However, respondents want greater enforcement of the Junk Law, and this is very clearly indicated in the written comments to Question 32 (“What would you change in Richford”; see Table 8).

- “Insist that people abide by the junk law and then enforce it.”
- “Clean it up - have junk laws enforced.”

In fact, respondents have great dissatisfaction with the amount of junk in the Town and the often unattractive appearance of many properties, and these two concerns received more written comments than any other topic, in response to Questions 30 (What do you like least about Richford?), 31 (“What is your biggest concern about Richford?”) and 32 (What would you change in Richford?)(Tables 6,7, and 8 respectively):

- “I’m sorry to say that Richford looks like a dumpy little town. We need to help people fix up their houses and clean up their junk. How about a junk collection day?”
- “Unkept properties and buildings in disrepair in town need revitalization or cleanup.”
- “The initial appearance when you come through town. Not sure how, but spruce it up a bit. Maybe a flower garden or something.”
- “Downtown looks like a ghetto! Houses aren’t painted or taken care of.”
- “Clean up the Town and outlying areas. Make it a place to be proud of.”

Respondents also want to be notified of any development that occurs near them. A majority of respondents want to have increased high-speed internet, Ambulance Service and Post Office service, but these services are outside the Town’s authority. The local Post Office was closed in 2013, resulting in inconvenience to many residents.



**Table 2. How people perceive the level of services provided by the Town.** 109 responses were submitted. Not all respondents answered all questions; columns indicate percent of responses in each category, and the ‘total’ column indicates the number of responses for each question. The bold numbers indicate the category with a substantially larger number of responses.

	<b>Appropriate</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>Decrease</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Total No. responses</b>
Recycling	<b>79</b>	8	2	12	103
Snow plowing on Town roads	<b>77</b>	11	6	7	104
Garbage Truck	<b>67</b>	15	3	15	99
Town Hall services/hours	<b>59</b>	18	1	22	100
Town road maintenance	<b>56</b>	32	5	7	103
Availability of buildings for public use	<b>51</b>	12	2	35	103
Dog control	<b>51</b>	16	8	25	102
Street Lights	<b>53</b>	13	3	31	98
Cellular service	<b>50</b>	29	0	20	103
Fire protection	<b>48</b>	32	2	18	103
Building code enforcement	<b>49</b>	23	7	22	101
Public recreational opportunities	<b>44</b>	26	2	27	102
Community events	39	24	1	37	101
Police protection	38	39	0	24	101
Sidewalks	38	23	2	38	101
Hiking trails/bike paths	33	35	2	30	103
Post Office Service	14	<b>70</b>	1	14	98
Junk Law enforcement	18	<b>62</b>	3	18	102
Notification about development near you	31	<b>51</b>	1	17	102
Ambulance Service	27	<b>48</b>	1	23	99
High Speed Internet connection	25	<b>46</b>	1	27	102
Public transportation	28	37	0	35	103
Services/activities for youth	25	31	1	<b>44</b>	101
Services/activities for senior citizens	23	36	0	42	101

## Survey Results: Housing Development

Respondents overwhelmingly want future residential development to consist of single family homes, including vacation and second homes, and do not want mobile home parks, apartment complexes, condominiums or subdivisions (Table 3). These preferences were similar for both residents and non-resident landowners.

A majority of respondents, and especially local residents, encourage development of a senior/assisted living facility in Richford, and a majority of residents also favor ‘green’ building construction, reflecting the emphasis on maintaining Richford’s clean water and air (see Table 1).

**Table 3. What kind of Housing development should be encouraged in Richford.** 109 responses were submitted. Not all respondents answered all questions; columns indicate percent of responses in each category, and the ‘total’ column indicates the number of responses for each question. The bold numbers indicate the category with a substantially larger number of responses.

	ENCOURAGE	DISCOURAGE	NO CHANGE	NO OPINION	Total No. responses
Residential development: single family homes	<b>69</b>	7	13	11	108
Senior/assisted living facility	<b>61</b>	7	9	23	107
“Green” building construction	<b>54</b>	10	12	24	105
Vacation/Second homes	<b>52</b>	12	16	19	105
Residential development: apartments	29	<b>47</b>	9	14	106
Subdivisions	24	<b>39</b>	14	22	104
Townhouses/condominiums	20	<b>57</b>	7	17	106
Mobile home parks	10	<b>63</b>	13	14	107

### Survey Results: Economic development

The overwhelming majority of respondents would like to have more small businesses in Richford, including home-based, service based, and tourism based (Table 4). Even a small commercial development, such as a small shopping center, or a light industry, such as furniture construction, would be welcome. Respondents also support agriculture, both conventional and organic, and would like to have both day care and elder care businesses in the community. Respondents especially want a farmer’s market – 91% (97 of 107) of all respondents encouraged development of a farmer’s market. These small businesses are the preferred means of economic development in Richford.

In contrast, large commercial and industrial development are not wanted, nor is high-volume drilling for natural gas (‘fracking’). Residents in particular do not want fracking conducted in the Town (Fig 3) while in contrast, a small majority of non-resident landowners favor fracking. Fracking is a controversial land use, and written comments to Questions 31 (What is your biggest concern about the future of Richford?) show the strong opinions many residents have (16 residents wrote comments opposing fracking, and 3 wrote comments favoring fracking).

- “My biggest fear is that fracking will occur.”
- “That fracking technology will disrupt the rural character of the area.”
- “I believe that gas drilling and fracking operations will have negative consequences for the residents of Richford.”
- “That the greedy gas companies will come and ruin the water, roads, land and peace, and not pay what they should.”
- “Fracking will greatly harm our community, our roads, and potentially our water. It will provide little or no economic benefit to most residents; rather it will likely result in great economic harm.”
- “Lower our tax base by encouraging gas exploration and development.”
- “That narrow minded people will block fracking. It would allow more money to come into the community and help relieve the tax burden of the entire community.”

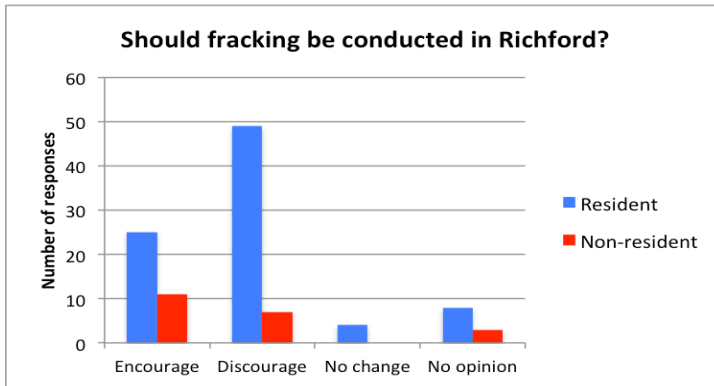


Fig. 3 Number of resident and non-residents favoring or opposing drilling for natural gas in Richford.

**Table 4. What kind of economic development should be encouraged in Richford.** 109 responses were submitted. Not all respondents answered all questions; columns indicate percent of responses in each category, and the 'total' column indicates the number of responses for each question. The bold numbers indicate the category with a substantially larger number of responses.

	<b>ENCOURAGE</b>	<b>DISCOURAGE</b>	<b>NO CHANGE</b>	<b>NO OPINION</b>	<b>Total No. responses</b>
Farmers market	<b>90</b>	2	3	6	108
Small business (construction, vehicle repair, etc)	<b>90</b>	1	6	4	107
Home business (honey, maple syrup, soap, etc)	<b>88</b>	2	7	4	107
Small Commercial development	<b>85</b>	5	8	2	108
Service business (plumber, housecleaner etc)	<b>86</b>	3	8	3	106
Businesses centered on tourism	<b>77</b>	5	8	9	106
Elder care	<b>75</b>	1	4	21	107
Organic agriculture	<b>76</b>	5	8	12	104
Day care	<b>73</b>	3	5	19	105
Conventional agriculture	<b>70</b>	9	13	7	107
Small-scale wind farm	<b>69</b>	16	4	11	105
Light industry (clothing, furniture construction)	<b>61</b>	29	5	6	105
Large Commercial development (Walmart etc)	23	<b>70</b>	4	3	107
Heavy industry (fracking, chemical plant, etc)	29	<b>66</b>	1	5	108
High volume drilling for natural gas (fracking)	34	<b>52</b>	4	10	107
Large scale wind farm	42	41	5	13	103

## **Survey Results: Community development**

Respondents strongly favored every proposed type of community development (Table 5). The strongest support was for protection of the natural qualities of Richford: clean air and water, scenic views, natural areas and open space, and both residents and non-residents held similar views. Residents and non-residents also strongly supported preservation of historic buildings, and development of new bike paths and hiking paths, emphasizing the interest in recreational opportunity (see “Why people choose to live or own land in Richford” above).

Respondents also strongly encouraged development of a community center, library, Rawley Park and public green space, and here the difference between residents and non-residents was apparent; the majority of residents supported all these developments, and very few indicated ‘no opinion’, whereas non-residents were equally divided between ‘encourage’ and ‘no opinion’.

Interestingly, only half of respondents encouraged ‘planning for climate change impacts’, and again the contrast was apparent between residents and non-residents, with the majority of residents encouraging planning for climate change impacts, and non-residents equally split between encouraging and having no opinion.

**Table 5. What community development should be encouraged in Richford.** 109 responses were submitted. Not all respondents answered all questions; columns indicate percent of responses in each category, and the ‘total’ column indicates the number of responses for each question. The bold numbers indicate the category with a substantially larger number of responses.

	<b>ENCOURAGE</b>	<b>DISCOURAGE</b>	<b>NO CHANGE</b>	<b>NO OPINION</b>	<b>Total No. responses</b>
Protection of air, soil, and water quality	<b>85</b>	2	10	4	105
Preservation of scenic views and natural areas	<b>80</b>	4	10	6	105
Preservation of historic buildings	<b>76</b>	10	7	8	104
Protection of natural areas/open space	<b>75</b>	5	11	9	102
Community Center	<b>65</b>	5	16	13	104
Develop walking path at Rawley Park, elsewhere	<b>65</b>	7	10	18	105
Library	<b>58</b>	7	23	13	106
Bike paths/lanes	<b>59</b>	8	13	20	104
Expand Rawley Park size, recreation activities	<b>57</b>	8	19	17	106
Public green space	<b>53</b>	8	18	21	104
Planning for climate change impacts	<b>51</b>	12	12	25	103

## **Survey results: Economic and housing concerns**

This part of the survey applied only to residents, to help Town officials prioritize actions and apply for appropriate grants. All results are compiled by household.

The first four questions concern problems with insulation, maintenance and flooding. Two-thirds of respondents consider their homes to be well-insulated, and almost all respondents supported applying for grants to help with home insulation. More than half of respondents indicated their homes need maintenance and almost all supported applying for grants to help with home maintenance.

Do you consider your home to be well-insulated? And would you support funding to help people with home energy efficiency?

Well insulated:	45 (36 support funding)
Not well insulated:	20 (20 support funding)

Does your home need maintenance? And would you support funding to help people with home maintenance?

Need maintenance:	36 (34 support funding)
Do not need maintenance:	28 (20 support funding)

Two comments were written about applying for grants, emphasizing the need to be fair about funding distribution, and to minimize any additional tax burden on the community.

- “As long as it is all income levels or at least middleclass working people.”
- “Outside grants, not increased taxes.”

The next three questions concerned problems with well water, flooding, and electrical outages. The majority of respondents (75%) have no problems with well water quantity or quality.

Do you have problems with your private drinking well water?

No problems:	51
Problem with quantity:	10
Problem with quality:	4

In contrast, one-third of respondents have problems with flooding, especially of driveways and property. Only 5% have problems with houses flooding. Richford has steep hillsides and clay soils, which both contribute to flooding issues.

Do you have problems with flooding?

No problems:	42
Problems:	23
Home:	5
Driveway:	13
Property:	12

Electric outages are frequent, with 40% of respondents indicating they have problems. Electric lines are all above-ground (some individual residences have buried lines) and winter storms and winds frequently down trees, which pull down the electric lines.

Do you have problems with electric outages?

No problems:	36
Problems:	28

The next two questions concerned telephone service and internet service. All households have telephone service, equally split between landline and cellular:

Landline only:	18
Cellular only:	14
Landline & cellular:	33

The majority of households (76%) have one or more forms of internet service:

Landline:	11
DSL:	28
Satellite:	5
Cable:	8
Wireless:	10

Both cellular and internet service are patchy in the Town, in part due to the hilly topography and rocky soils. Written comments to question 32 (“What would you change in Richford?”) emphasize the need for improved service:

- “Provide reliable hi-speed internet for every resident”
- “More cell towers and telecommunications.”

Some residents are uncomfortable with the societal move to internet and electronic communications, as indicated in this response to Question 30 (What do you like least in Richford?):

- “Pressuring people towards digital media and internet use.”

The remaining two questions concerned food insecurity. Only 16% of households (9 of 56) indicated they use food pantries or the free food service. Most (5) use the pantry 1-4 times a year, 1/4 use the pantry 5-8 times a year, and the remaining ¼ use the pantry 9 or more times a year. The actual number of households using the free food program and food pantries may be higher, as respondents may be hesitant to acknowledge the need to obtain free food. Several residents mentioned the free food program in written comments, particularly the difficulty of standing in line to receive the food:

- “Quality of food better. Can't stand in line.”
- “Most of the food is way past expiration date.”
- “Need some things changed in Richford because I have bad back can't stand in line 4 hrs so I don't go. “
- “I don't know how many they have but food pantries are very important.”

The majority of Richford respondents had no opinion when asked if there should be more food pantry programs available in Richford:

Yes:	25	No:	16	No opinion:	41
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**Write-in responses**

Respondents wrote in 444 responses to Questions 29 (97 responses), 30 (110 responses), 31 (88 responses), 32 (82 responses), 33 (41 responses) and 34 (26 responses). Additional responses were written in the margins of the survey. These additional comments plus the written comments for questions 33 and 34 have been added to the appropriate category in Questions 29-32. All written comments are available at the Richford website ([www.richfordny.com](http://www.richfordny.com)).

**Summary of Question 29: What do you like most about Richford?**

77 people responded to this question. Some people gave 2 or 3 answers, for a total of 95 responses. Several respondents also wrote comments elsewhere on the survey form stating why they live in Richford, and these comments along with 6 from Questions 33 and 34 are combined with the answers to question 29. In cases where more than one topic was addressed by a respondent, that person’s response was entered in each category.

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the natural environment was what they liked the most about Richford. Two thirds of the respondents wrote comments stating how they valued Richford’s rural character, peace and quiet, natural beauty, and clean air and water (see above). Respondents also wrote that they valued the sense of community and small town quality of Richford and in general stated that Richford was centrally located allowing easy access to larger communities:

- “The location, with easy access to Ithaca, Cortland, Owego, and Triple Cities.”
- “Reasonable access to Ithaca, Cortland, Binghamton, even Syracuse and Elmira.”

**Table 6. Comments from Question 29 “What do you like most about Richford?”**

**Enjoy the Natural Environment**

Rural character	23
Peace and quiet	12
Natural beauty	10
Clean air and water	1

**Good Town Government**

Town government	2
Newsletter	1
No government interference	1
Post Office	1

**Outdoor Recreation**

Abundant public land in area	1
Hunting and Fishing	1

**Enjoy the Community**

Sense of community	18
Small town	11
Centrally located	9
Potato Festival	2
NTNN	2
Church	2
Rawley Park	1
Fire Dept.	1
Lourdes Health Center	1
Local stores	1
School District	1
Garbage truck, recycling	1
People moving in	1

### Summary of Question 30: What do you like least about Richford?

71 people responded to this question. Some people gave 2 or more answers, for a total of 105 responses. Several respondents also wrote comments elsewhere on the survey form stating concerns and problems in Richford, and these comments, along with 18 from Questions 33 and 34, are combined with the answers to question 30. In cases where more than one topic was addressed by a respondent, that person's response was entered in each category.

Respondents concerns centered on two issues – the visual appearance of the community, and problems with Town government. Respondents were overwhelmingly vocal about the visual appearance of the community, particularly the unkempt aspect, unmaintained buildings, and accumulation of junk (see Survey Results – Town Services, above). Many simply wrote “Clean it up!”.

- “Run down homes make it look as though we don't care about our community. “
- “The decrepit houses that should be torn down. Junk all over so many places.”
- “Driving into town and seeing the dilapidated and burnt out house and poor conditions of the firehouse and the town hall buildings.”

Respondents singled out one building in the center of the hamlet (“the burnt house”) and the need to remove it:

- “The burnt house on 79/38 should be knocked down. Watch one day a kid will wander in there and either get hurt or killed.”
- “The burnt out house must be removed ASAP. The Town Board must take quick and decisive action to remove this hazardous eyesore.”

Respondents often attributed the unkempt appearance to a lack of motivation, and suggested finding ways to help residents repair their homes.

- “People just don't care what their houses look like.”
- “Unmotivated Town - few people willing to volunteer in local government, or to make their residences look attractive or involve in community activities”
- “I'm sorry to say that Richford looks like a dumpy little town. We need to help people fix up their houses and clean up their junk. How about a junk collection day?”
- “There seems to be no community pride. The one corner has an abandoned building and the other corner is overgrown and there is an ugly burned out house.”

Respondents were also concerned with a lack of stores in the community. This concern is further expressed in Question 32 (below).

- “No business coming in, no commerce.”
- “Not enough stores”



Respondents were concerned about high taxes and poor town government. Fourteen respondents wrote about taxes, some simply stating “taxes are too high” and others acknowledging a “poor economic tax base” and “The taxes are high with very little return”. The high taxes and modest services provided by the Town are in part a function of the small population of the Town.

Respondents were also dissatisfied with Town government:

- “Disfunctional Town government- lack of planning, poor financial planning. The Town board is very slow to make any decision, and tends to be reactive rather than proactive.”
- “Non-responsive government”
- “There has been lack of forward thinking. Expansion of the budget to support upgrades of buildings/roads.”
- “Meeting after meeting happens and cans just get kicked down the road (issues/problems).”

However, not all comments were negative:

- “The newsletter is good.”
- “Town Board is more balanced not as onesided as it has been in the past.”

**Table 7. Comments from Question 30 “What do you like least about Richford?”**

**Community**

Trashy appearance	32
No stores	11
Burnt house not removed	10
Unmotivated residents	6
No Post Office	4
People burning garbage	3
No sense of community	3
Lack of police presence	3
Long commute	2
Poverty	1
No sewer	1
No residential trash pickup	1
No annual cleanup day	1
Intersection of Hwy's 38 & 79	1
EMT service	1
Need new Town Hall, Fire house	1
Drugs	3
Other	7

**Town Government**

High taxes	14
Poor Town government	12
Town roads	8
Lack of Dog Law enforcement	2
Lack of Junk law enforcement	2

**Summary of Question 31: What is your biggest concern about the future of Richford?**

67 people responded to this question. Some people gave 2 or more answers, for a total of 84 responses. Several respondents also wrote comments elsewhere on the survey form stating concerns and problems in Richford, and these comments, along with 4 from Questions 33 and 34, are combined with the answers to question 31. In cases where more than one topic was addressed by a respondent, that person’s concern was entered in each category. Overwhelmingly, respondents were concerned about the future of the community and the impact of hydrofracking.

Respondents were most concerned that the Town would continue to deteriorate. Many of the comments were similar to those expressed in Question 30 (above) regarding the need to improve the appearance of the Town.

- “The houses look run down. We need to help people fix them up and instill a sense of pride.”
- “Lack of maintenance of properties in town.”

As in Question 30, respondents were aware that some needs exceeded the Town’s ability to provide:

- “Not enough funding to keep the roads maintained properly and the town clean.”
- “Need for more services (roads, fire station and town hall) that cannot be supported by monies available in the township.”

Respondents were very concerned that hydrofracking would occur and damage roads, water, and the rural character of the community (16 comments) although a few respondents welcomed fracking as an economic benefit (3 comments). Many of these comments are listed above.

**Table 8. Comments from Question 31 “What is your biggest concern about the future of Richford?”**

**Community**

Town deteriorates	17
Loss of rural character	8
Town not improving	7
High taxes	5
Town roads not maintained	4
Town needs exceed revenue	4
Lack of motivation	4
Lack of Post Office	4
Increased regulations	3
Local laws not enforced (junk, dog, etc.)	2
Few young families moving here	2
Few activities available for children	2
Lack of zoning	1
EMT	1

**Economic development**

Fracking will occur	16
Fracking will not occur	3
Lack of businesses	2
Loss of agriculture	2
No economic growth	1
No employment	1
Other	3

**Summary of Question 32: What would you change in Richford?**

66 people (62 residents and 4 non-resident land owners) responded to this question. Some people gave 2 or more answers, for a total of 84 responses. Several respondents also wrote comments elsewhere on the survey form stating concerns and problems in Richford, and these comments, along with 20 from Questions 33 and 34, are combined with the answers to question 31. In cases where more than one topic was addressed by a respondent, that person’s suggestion was entered in each category.

Many suggestions were made covering a wide variety of topics. As seen in Questions 30 and 31, the majority of respondents would improve how Richford looks, especially by cleaning up junk and enforcing the Junk Law.

**Table 9. Comments from Question 32 “What would you change in Richford?”**

**Improve Community Appearance**

Clean up junk in hamlet & town	16
Enforce junk law	7
Get grants to upgrade town	3
Beautify the hamlet	2
Remove burnt house	2
Fix roads	2
Repair sidewalks	1

**Economic development**

Encourage fracking	4
Ban fracking	2

**Preserve Natural Beauty**

Protect natural resources	2
Ban open burning	1
Focus on recreation	1
Increase hiking trails	1

**Improve Community Services, Quality of Life**

Reopen the Post Office	8
More small businesses	6
Enforce dog law	4
Increase police enforcement	3
More public transportation	2
High speed internet, cell phone	2
Stoplight at Hwy's 38 & 79	2
Provide activities for children	1
Provide senior housing	1
Provide ambulance service	1
Ban jake brakes	1
Improve local communication	1

**Improve Town Government**

Have pro-active Town Board	7
Reduce taxes and assessments	5
Adopt zoning	3
Computerize budget process	1
Reduce regulations	1

**Question 34: Is Richford changing for the better or worse?**

83 people responded on a scale of 1 (“Better”) to 5 (“Worse”), for an average score of 3.2, indicating that most people feel the Town is not changing, or is changing gradually for the worse. This offers hope for improvement, particularly by focusing on the suggestions offered in response to Questions 29 and 32, and the concerns stated in response to Questions 30 and 32.

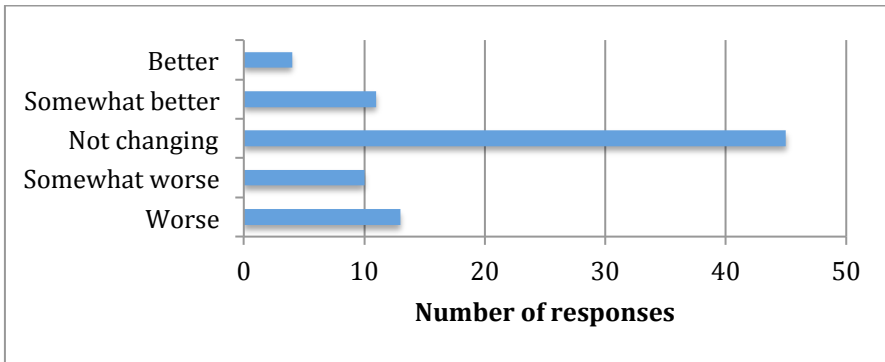


Fig. 4 Number of responses on a scale of 1 (“Better”) to 5 (“Worse”).