

APPENDIX A

- CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS -



North Brookfield

200th Birthday 2012

Community Citizen Survey

The North Brookfield Master Plan Project Team needs your help!

We are distributing a community survey with the 2006 census in order to determine your thoughts about how North Brookfield should develop over the next 10 – 20 years.

What do you like about the town? What would you change? Would you like more businesses in town? How would you rate each of the town services? Should open spaces be protected? Should historical sites be protected? These and other important questions are part of the survey.

Your input is very valuable. Make a difference by taking a few minutes to answer the questions and make your own comments regarding any issue that you think is important to address.

Your completed survey can be returned in the census envelope or dropped off at the Assessors office. If you have any questions, please contact the Master Plan Committee at NBMP1812@AOL.COM or call 508-867-0209.

By March, 2006 the Survey results will be made available. These results will be used to design elements of the North Brookfield Master Plan.

**North Brookfield
Your Town - Your Future -Your Help Needed**



North Brookfield *200th Birthday 2012*

Your Town - Your Future - Your Help Needed

Dear North Brookfield Resident,

We have volunteered to assemble a Master Plan for North Brookfield, which will provide recommendations for Land Use, Housing Development, Open Space and Recreation, Municipal Services, Economic Development, and the Growth of the Town. The only way we can accomplish this task is by knowing your needs, desires for the town and your ideas for the betterment of North Brookfield. Over the next 24 months we will assemble with you and gather your input in community forums for each chapter of the plan.

Before we begin we need to know some of your thoughts about what you like and dislike about North Brookfield. What would you like the Town to look like in 5 or 10 years? What needs to be improved? For this purpose we are asking you to complete this anonymous Citizen Survey. If we left anything out, please include additional comments.

If you desire to attend any of the Master Plan Committee meetings, their time and location will be posted in the Town Clerk's office. You may also contact any of the members listed below at nbmp1812@aol.com.

Please mail your completed survey with your Town Census or you can drop off your completed survey at the Assessors office. If you need additional copies of the Citizen Survey for other members of your household, they can be obtained at the Senior Center, The Assessors Office or on the Town web site <http://www.northbrookfield.net>. The Town web site has a large print version.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in guiding North Brookfield into the future.

The North Brookfield Master Plan Project Team:

Steve Cummings, Planning Board
Mary Walter, Planning Board
Jim Foyle, Selectman
Aram Thomasian, Police Chief
Robert Gailey, Finance Committee
Priscilla Johnson, Assessors

Richard Dwelly, Volunteer
Jim Fraser, Volunteer
Jim Metcalf, Volunteer
Ron Ryel, Volunteer
Cathy Sickles, Volunteer
Timothy Smith, Volunteer

Facts about North Brookfield:

Sources: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, North Brookfield Town Assessors/Clerk Records and Town Annual Reports

Change 1985-2005

	<u>1985</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Population	4,022	4,505	4,694	672	16.7%
Housing Units	1470	1735	1842	372	25.3%

Land Area: 21.1 square miles.
 Persons per Square Mile: Roughly 222 people per square mile.
 Persons per Household (pph): 2.74 pph in 1985
 2.60 pph in 1995
 2.55 pph in 2005

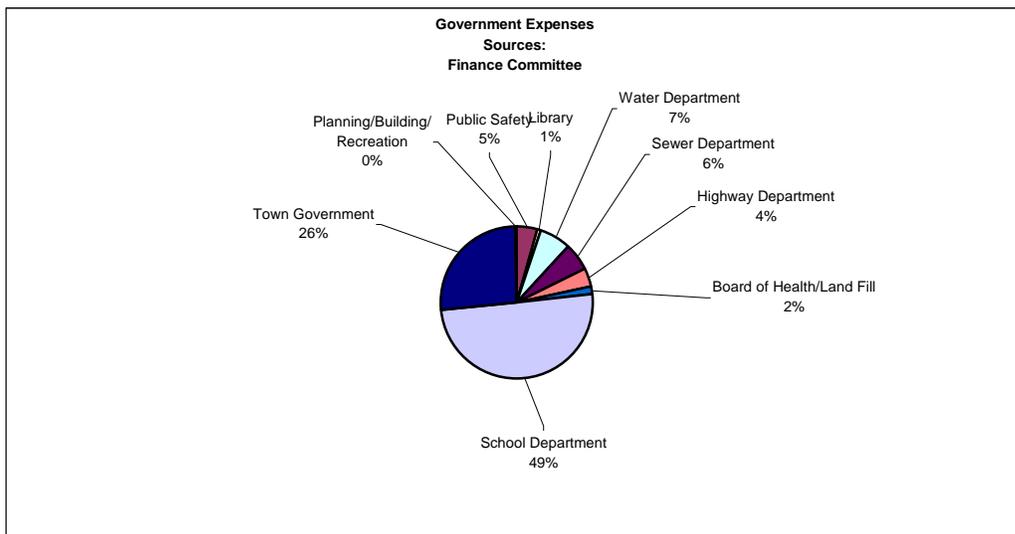
	<u># of units</u>	<u>% of housing stock</u>
Owner Occupied Housing:	1315	71.4%
Renter Occupied Housing:	527	28.6%

Average number of building permits for new home construction (per year) 1995-2005: 20.8
 Number of building permits for new home construction issued in the year 2005: 23

Median sales price of a single family home for the year 2004: \$212,000

Taxes levied for fiscal year 2006:	\$ 3,904,348.82
Residential taxes:	\$ 3,586,452.42 (92% of total)
Commercial taxes:	\$ 150,037.09 (4%)
Industrial taxes:	\$ 106,862.71 (3%)
Personal Property taxes:	\$ 60,996.60 (1%)

Total Town of North Brookfield Operating Budget for fiscal year 2006
 (As approved at Town Meeting): \$13,398,461.02



Citizen Survey for the North Brookfield Community Master Plan-January 2006

General

1. What do you like about living in North Brookfield? (You can check more than one.)
- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 143 low tax rate | 170 affordable housing | 508 small town character |
| 209 family ties | 445 low crime rate | 127 convenience to work |
| 51 access to highways | 399 open spaces | 105 school system |
| 56 municipal services | 79 historic resources | 48 recreation opportunities |
| 48 community activities | 14 employment opportunities | 52 convenience to services |
- Other _____
2. What do you find undesirable about living in North Brookfield? (You can check more than one.)
- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 118 high tax rate | 288 lack of retail shopping opportunities |
| 121 Downtown North Brookfield | 69 lack of a community-gathering place |
| 124 School system | 56 lack of affordable housing |
| 75 Municipal services | 112 lack of recreation opportunities |
| 38 Excessive traffic | 174 lack of employment opportunities |
| 111 Excessive development | 70 loss of small town character |
- Other _____

Economic Development

4. Please check the types of businesses you feel the Town of North Brookfield needs and where you feel the businesses should be located.

Type of Business/ Location	Main St. Downtown	E. Brookfield Rd.-Gilbert St.	Rte. 67 North Rte. 148 North	South Main St. Rte. 148 South	Rte. 67
Restaurants	218	81	98	66	105
Fast food establishments	71	42	35	28	53
Hardware/home improvement stores	274	54	57	38	53
Clothing stores	87	26	25	18	30
Small-scale retail stores	211	53	47	38	47
Home Based Business	78	75	79	80	72
Home Based Agriculture Business	44	63	91	66	89
Large-scale Retail stores (Wal-Mart etc.)	17	38	41	21	60
Services (Dry cleaners, printers, tailors, etc.)	217	47	47	42	39
Professional services (doctor's office, lawyer's office, etc.)	204	95	94	83	87

Other Businesses/locations _____

5. Please check the types of industries you feel the Town of North Brookfield needs and where you feel those industries should be located.

Type of Industry/ Location	Main St. Downtown	E. Brookfield Rd.- Gilbert St.	Rte. 67 North Rte. 148 North	South Main St. Rte. 148 South	Rte. 67
Light Manufacturing	52	156	97	76	109
Research & development	49	105	80	54	83
Office parks	43	72	63	50	73
Heavy Manufacturing	19	39	39	31	48
Freight shipping	20	37	39	25	51
Warehousing/ Storage	18	48	50	37	69
Medical research	45	74	63	44	80
Bio-technology	35	72	64	44	74
Defense industries	19	36	40	28	56

Other Industries/Locations _____

6. North Brookfield currently has 2.3% of land zoned for business purposes Do you believe North Brookfield has enough land zoned for business purposes? (Retail/sales/services)
289 yes 271 no

7. North Brookfield currently has 2.1% of land zoned for industrial purposes Do you believe North Brookfield has enough land zoned for industrial purposes?
350 yes 205 no

8. What do you see as the major benefit(s) of encouraging business/industrial development in North Brookfield? (You can check more than one.)
384 more in-town jobs 390 more tax revenues to help ease residential tax burden
172 more retail stores 276 more tax revenues to help maintain current Town services
172 more services 320 more tax revenues to help improve Town services
49 there are no benefits
Other _____

9. What do you see as the major disadvantage(s) of encouraging economic development in North Brookfield? (You can check more than one.)
315 more automobile traffic 259 changing the basic character of North Brookfield
318 more truck traffic 223 damage to the environment
201 disruption of neighborhoods 288 loss of open space
105 there are no disadvantages
Other _____

10. Would you support the rezoning of land currently zoned as residential for the following purposes? (You can check more than one.)

111 manufacturing	189 light industry	129 commercial use
233 Retail use	273 office & professional uses	193 would not support any rezoning

Housing

11. What types of housing do you think North Brookfield needs more of? (You can check more than one.)

196 single-family homes	64 two-family homes	50 multi-family units
76 apartments	83 condominiums	136 elderly housing
90 subsidized housing for low-income citizens		118 open space residential design
122 in-law apartments in existing residences		
Other	_____	

12. Do you favor zoning changes that would allow for new construction/conversion of existing buildings, in order to provide housing for low/moderate income households?

260 Yes 281 No

Land Use

13. North Brookfield has a minimum lot size requirement of 66,000 square-feet for the rural zone (R-66). Do you think:

48 this is too large 125 this is too small 338 this is just right

14. Would you support any of the following measures to control residential growth? (You can check more than one.)

233 specify how fast each subdivision can be built (i.e., phasing)
336 limit the number of building permits issued per year
214 use the Town's water/sewer systems to guide where development occurs
224 require larger lot sizes for those areas outside of the municipal sewer system
158 promote open space subdivisions for the more rural areas of town
43 None
Other _____

Open Space and Recreation

15. In an effort to preserve North Brookfield's rural character, would you be in favor of any of the following initiatives? (You can check more than one.)

414 protect open space
219 create historical districts
380 protect farming with an agricultural commission
257 add scenic roads designation for some of North Brookfield's rural roads.

16. What types of recreation opportunities would like to see more of in North Brookfield?
- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 123 ball fields | 195 hiking | 155 playgrounds | 82 tennis courts |
| 163 swimming | 60 boating | 77 basketball courts | 72 soccer fields |
| 96 fishing | 258 bike trails | 154 ice skating rink | 145 performing arts |
| 198 theater | | | |
- Other (please specify) _____
- Organizational programs (please specify) _____

Municipal Services and Infrastructure

17. Please rate the services provided by the following Town Services and Departments? ALSO, please indicate in the last column whether you would pay **More, Less** or **Same** for these services. **Please refer to the Pie Chart on the Facts about North Brookfield on Page 2.**

Department	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Would you support More, Less, or the Same tax dollars for this service?
Fire	315	210	12	3	M-124 /L- 2 /S-153
Police	254	238	49	11	M-121 /L- 12 /S-142
Highway Dept.	66	186	187	117	M-134 /L- 23 /S-120
Health Dept.	57	265	87	15	M-18 /L-16 /S-183
School System	74	235	136	49	M-86 /L- 55 /S-122
Water	104	266	71	27	M-14 /L- 38 /S-176
Sewer	97	251	56	26	M-14 /L- 43 /S-162
Transfer Station	157	253	62	21	M-24 /L- 34 /S-177
Recreation	30	176	166	86	M-110 /L- 9 /S-122
Building Department/Inspection Services	51	255	113	20	M-27 /L- 14 /S-169
Planning Board	33	261	107	13	M-22 /L- 14 /S-174
Conservation	30	263	100	15	M-31 /L- 15 /S-154
Council on Aging	69	264	71	8	M-42 /L- 12 /S-159
Library	148	285	62	8	M-95 /L- 18 /S-137
Elected Officials	48	273	105	23	M-19 /L- 34 /S-163
Emergency	211	244	29	9	M-86 /L- 5 /S-141

18. Are you satisfied with the access Town Services and Departments?
 391 yes 158 no

19. Would you be in favor of expanding the municipal sewer & water systems for the following uses? (You can check more than one.)
 206 commercial development 155 industrial development 269 residential development

20. Does North Brookfield need public transportation?
 188 yes 359 no

If you answered yes, what type of public transportation does north Brookfield need?

Additional Comments: Please provide any additional comments or concerns you may have regarding the future development of North Brookfield. Attach additional pages to this survey, if more space is needed.

The North Brookfield Master Plan Committee thanks you for taking the time to complete this survey. You can look forward to seeing the survey results in March, 2006.



Memo To: North Brookfield Master Plan Committee
From: Stephen Wallace, CMRPC
Date: April 11, 2006
Subject: Citizen Survey Results

The Details:

- Nineteen questions covering such topics as land use, zoning, housing, economic development, open space, recreation, and municipal services.
- Sent to every household in North Brookfield (1,842 households)
- There were 642 responses received for a total response rate of 34.8%.

Question #1: What do you like about living in North Brookfield? The top three responses were:

- Small town character (508 votes)
- Low crime rate (445 votes)
- Open spaces (399 votes)

None of the other choices came close, although family ties did garner 209 votes. The results for Question #1 indicate a clear preference for a quiet, rural, crime-free community where open space is valued.

Question #2: What do you find undesirable about living in North Brookfield? The top two responses were:

- Lack of retail shopping opportunities (288 votes)
- Lack of employment opportunities (174 votes)

There were five choices that received a significant amount of votes:

- The school system (124 votes)
- The downtown (121 votes)
- High tax rate (118 votes)
- Lack of recreation opportunities (112 votes)
- Excessive development (111 votes)

As North Brookfield is neither a regional employment center nor a regional shopping destination, it is no surprise that residents lament the lack of shopping and employment opportunities. Furthermore, it has been my experience that issues like high tax rates and excessive development always receive high negatives on citizen surveys.

What is alarming is that the local school system and the downtown received such negative responses. That the lack of recreation opportunities would be cited as a discontent in a rural town with an extensive amount of open space is also disconcerting. We need to give some thought to how we can turn these three negatives into positives.

Question #3: There was no Question #3.

Question #4: Please check the types of businesses you feel the Town of North Brookfield needs and where you feel the businesses should be located.

- Restaurants received the highest number of votes with 568. In terms of preferred locations, the Main Street/Downtown area received the most votes with 218, followed by Route 67 with 105 votes.
- Professional services received the second highest number of votes with 563. In terms of preferred locations, the Main Street/Downtown area received the most votes with 204.
- Hardware/Home Improvement stores received the third highest number of votes with 476. In terms of preferred locations, the Main Street/Downtown area received the most votes with 274 (or 58% of the total votes).
- Small-scale retail stores received the fourth highest number of votes with 396. In terms of preferred locations, the Main Street/Downtown area received the most votes with 211 (or 53% of the total votes).
- Services received the fifth highest number of votes with 392. In terms of preferred locations, the Main Street/Downtown area received the most votes with 217 (or 55% of the total votes).
- Home-based businesses received the sixth highest number of votes with 384. In terms of preferred locations, the preferences were split fairly evenly among the five options.

Businesses that didn't receive a lot of support:

- Large-scale retail stores (177 votes)
- Clothing stores (186 votes)
- Fast food establishments (229 votes)
- Home-based agricultural businesses (279 votes)

Question #4 gives us an indication of what people would like to see in North Brookfield's downtown: restaurants, professional offices, small-scale retail stores, and services like tailors and dry-cleaners. Although home-based agricultural businesses only garnered 279 votes, I'm betting this option would garner more support if we can demonstrate that such businesses would help preserve open space and keep alive the Town's agricultural heritage. This question gives us a lot of material to work with when we get to the Economic Development chapter.

Question #5: Please check the types of industries you feel the Town of North Brookfield needs and where you feel the industries should be located.

- Light manufacturing received the highest number of votes with 490. In terms of preferred locations, East Brookfield Road/Gilbert Street received the most votes with 156, followed by Route 67 with 109, and Route 67/148-North with 97.
- Research and development received the second highest number of votes with 371. In terms of preferred locations, East Brookfield Road/Gilbert Street received the most votes with 105, followed by Route 67 with 83, and Route 67/148-North with 80.

Industries that received a modest level of support:

- Medical research (306 votes)
- Office parks (301 votes)
- Bio-technology (289 votes)

Industries that didn't receive a lot of support:

- Freight shipping (172 votes)
- Heavy manufacturing (176 votes)
- Defense industries (179 votes)
- Warehouse and storage (222 votes)

While most respondents answered Question #5, a significant portion did not. In terms of industries that could be integrated into North Brookfield's rural character with a minimum of damage to the environment, the survey respondent's top five choices could achieve these goals if planned for properly.

Question #6: Do you believe North Brookfield has enough land zoned for business purposes?

The results were fairly evenly split here, with 289 "yes" votes and 271 "no" votes. We may need to make the case that North Brookfield's business tax base has been slipping over the past twenty years and that residential property owners have had to pick up the slack. Are the citizens comfortable with this trend?

Question #7: Do you believe North Brookfield has enough land zoned for industrial purposes?

There were 205 “no” votes for this question and 350 “yes” votes, or 63% of the total responses. My comments under Question #6 apply here as well.

Question #8: What do you see as the major benefits of encouraging business/industrial development?

The top three responses were:

- More tax revenues to help ease residential tax burden (390 votes)
- More in-town jobs (384 votes)
- More tax revenues to help improve Town services

Question #9: What do you see as the major disadvantages of encouraging economic development?

The top three responses were:

- More truck traffic (318 votes)
- More auto traffic (315 votes)
- Loss of open space (288)

The responses to Questions #4 through #9 indicate that while citizens want more services, shopping and in-town jobs, they are not willing to sacrifice the Town’s rural character. Further, citizens are not in favor of zoning more land for industry and are split in regards to zoning more land for businesses. Does this mean that citizens believe there is expansion potential in the Town’s current commercial/industrial zoning districts or that the land in such districts could be better used? When we come to the Economic Development chapter, we will assess the development capacity of each commercial/industrial zoning district: how much vacant developable land is in each district, how much of the district is being used, how much of the district could be reused, etc.

Question #10: Would you support the rezoning of land currently zoned as residential for the following purposes?

The top four responses were:

- Office and professional uses (273 votes)
- Retail use (233 votes)
- Would not support any rezoning (193 votes)
- Light industry (189 votes)

That the “no support” option would receive such a high number of votes indicates that rezoning for economic development would be a tough sell in North Brookfield. This leads us to the following question: how to make better use of the current commercial/industrial zoning districts? We will be in a better position to answer this question once we’ve analyzed the expansion potential if these districts.

Question #11: What types of housing do you think North Brookfield needs more of?

None of the options listed received very much support, and that in its self is very telling. In fact, many respondents wrote in comments such as “no more housing” and the like under the “other” heading. Of the preferences listed, the top four responses were:

- Single-family housing (196 votes)
- Elderly housing (136 votes)
- In-law apartments in existing residences (122 votes)
- Open space residential design (118 votes)

Question #12: Do you favor zoning changes that would allow for new construction/conversion of existing buildings, in order to provide housing for low/moderate-income households?

The vote was fairly evenly split here with 281 “no” votes (or 52% of the respondents), versus 260 “yes” votes (or 48%).

Question #13: What do you think of North Brookfield’s 66,000 square foot minimum lot size?

Just about two thirds (66%) of the respondents think the minimum lot size is “just right”. Based on this response, I’m not sure if up-zoning (going to larger lot sizes) should be part of our gameplan. We will know much more by the time we get to the Land Use & Zoning chapter.

Question #14: Would you support any of the following measures to control residential growth?

All of the options received a decent level of support; however, the top two responses were:

- Limit the number of building permits issued per year (336 votes)
- Specify how fast each subdivision can be built (233 votes)

Regarding these two choices, last year’s Hadley decision made it quite clear that municipalities cannot have growth control in place as a standing measure. Growth control in the forms of a cap on building permits or phasing of subdivisions can only be used for a limited time (meaning a sunset provision), and can only be in place while the municipality addresses an identified community need, such as: building a new school, upgrading a wastewater treatment plant, finding a new water source, or in the case of North Brookfield, completing a master planning process. North Brookfield’s current growth control bylaw is legal because it is in place for a limited amount of time while the Town completes the Master Plan. The other growth

management techniques listed under this question do not legally qualify as growth control measures, and thus are not subject to the restrictions set forth in the Hadley decision.

Question #15: In an effort to preserve North Brookfield’s rural character, would you be in favor of any of the following initiatives?

The top two responses were:

- Protect open space (414 votes)
- Protect farming with an agricultural commission (380 votes)

Question #16: What types of recreation opportunities would you like to see more of in North Brookfield?

The top three responses were:

- Bike trails (258 votes)
- Theater (198 votes)
- Hiking (195 votes)

Both hiking and bike trails are recreational activities that would be in keeping with North Brookfield’s rural character. Hopefully, we’ll be able to identify some appropriate locations once we get to the Open Space & Recreation Plan.

Question #17: Rate the services.

North Brookfield’s municipal services ranked by level of satisfaction:

- Fire Department – rated excellent or good by: 97%
- Emergency – rated excellent or good by: 92%
- Police Department – rated excellent or good by: 89%
- Library – rated excellent or good by: 86%
- Transfer Station – rated excellent or good by: 83%
- Council on Aging – rated excellent or good by: 81%
- Sewer Department – rated excellent or good by: 81%
- Water Department – rated excellent or good by: 79%
- Health Department – rated excellent or good by: 76%
- Conservation – rated excellent or good by: 72%
- Elected Officials – rated excellent or good by: 72%
- Planning Board – rated excellent or good by: 71%
- Building/Inspection – rated excellent or good by: 70%
- School System – rated excellent or good by: 62%
- Recreation – rated excellent or good by: 45%
- Highway Department – rated excellent or good by: 45%

With a few exceptions, the responses here are very typical of what I've seen from other citizen surveys: fire/police/emergency always rate very high (usually above 90% good/excellent), and planning/building/conservation (boards that occasionally have to say "no") usually score between 65% and 75% good/excellent.

What is surprising is that the School Department scored so low. Most local school systems usually have an excellent/good rating of 80% or better. There wasn't a lot of support for providing the Department with more money either: only 86 respondents voted to give them more money (five other departments received more support for additional funding). In fact, 55 respondents voted to give the Department less tax dollars (the highest "less" response of any of the departments).

Citizens are clearly unhappy with the Highway Department. This may be due to the Department's chronic staffing shortages, the ability of its aging equipment to do the job, or it may be an evaluation of the Department's job performance.

The low level of satisfaction with recreation requires a deeper investigation. Are people unhappy with the quantity of existing recreation facilities/programs, or the quality of them? I should be able to get at the quality question once I visit all of the Town's recreation facilities as part of the Open Space & Recreation Plan. I'd also like to talk with the Recreation Commission and see what they have for attendance numbers, waiting lists, quality evaluations (if they exist), etc.

Question #18: Are you satisfied with the access to Town services and departments?

While the vote was seemingly one-sided with 391 "yes" votes (or 71% of the respondents), versus 158 "no" votes (or 29%), the tally is somewhat troubling. In the surveys I've seen that have asked this question, the overall rate of satisfaction with community services has been above 80% favorable. That North Brookfield's town government "only" a 71% overall favorability rating should be cause for concern.

Question #19: Would you be in favor of expanding the municipal sewer & water systems for the following uses?

- Residential development (269 votes)
- Commercial development (206 votes)
- Industrial development (155 votes)

Question #20: Does North Brookfield need public transportation?

While the majority said "no" (359 votes or 65.6%), a significant portion of the population said "yes" (188 votes or 34.4%).