



# **Town of Underhill**

## **Community Planning Survey**

### **2008**

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## **Methodology**

As a part of the State of Vermont mandated Town Plan Update process, towns must provide opportunities for citizen input into the town plan revision process. Throughout November 2008 the Center for Rural Studies confidentially collected Underhill citizen input utilizing a mailed survey methodology.

The Center for Rural Studies utilized a written survey instrument developed by the town in conjunction with CRS. The instrument was distributed to a random sample of stakeholders using both the Underhill voter checklist and the Grand List of property owners. Copies of the survey were mailed out to 1,193 individuals. The survey mailing included a brief description of the reason for the survey, its importance to the town planning process, a confidentiality assurance and a description of the random drawing for selected gift certificates to local businesses. All surveys could be mailed postage free, back to the Center for Rural Studies. Mailing instructions were provided on the survey.

To provide an incentive for respondents, Underhill supplied The Center for Rural Studies with eight, \$25 gift certificates to Underhill businesses that were sent to random drawing winners with surveys postmarked no later than November 24<sup>th</sup> 2008.

### **The Random Sample**

The random sample was pulled from a combination of the Underhill grand list (property owners) and voter checklist (registered voters) in an effort to be as inclusive as possible of all community stakeholders. Town of Underhill staffers were responsible for merging the town's grand list and voter checklist and for pulling duplications from this new merged list. The new merged list was comprised of 2,702 individual names. From this list, 1,193 randomly selected names were pulled to create the survey's random sample.

### **Statistical Relevance**

The total number of returned and completed surveys was 367. Given a 2008 US Census population estimate of 3,080 for Underhill, the 367 respondents resulted in a statistical confidence level of 95% and +/- 5% confidence interval. In layperson's terms, this means that 95% of the time that these questions are asked, respondent responses would be within +/- 5% of the answers found in this report. This level of statistical representation to the community as a whole is on par with general social sciences survey research methodology and is regularly attained by the Center for Rural Studies in similar community-based research projects.

## Land-Use

**In Underhill Flats the Town should encourage increased density and mixed-use development** in which housing is located near businesses and stores.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	82	22.7
Agree	152	42.1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	49	13.6
Disagree	44	12.2
Strongly Disagree	34	9.4
Total	361	100.0

**In Underhill Center the Town should encourage increased density and mixed-use development** in which housing is located near businesses and stores.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	54	15.0
Agree	118	32.9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	54	15.0
Disagree	84	23.4
Strongly Disagree	49	13.6
Total	359	100.0

**If housing development occurs in rural areas it should be grouped to protect scenic, natural resources, and/or open space areas.**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	147	40.8
Agree	122	33.9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	46	12.8
Disagree	25	6.9
Strongly Disagree	20	5.6
Total	360	100.0

**What types of services do you want to see in Underhill?**

### Restaurants

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	111	30.5
Favor	170	46.7
No Opinion	31	8.5
Against	26	7.1
Strongly Against	26	7.1
Total	364	100.0

**What type(s) of services do you want to see in Underhill?**

**Lodging**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	39	11.0
Favor	110	31.1
No Opinion	112	31.6
Against	56	15.8
Strongly Against	37	10.5
Total	354	100.0

**What type(s) of services do you want to see in Underhill?**

**Small scale retail**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	88	24.4
Favor	197	54.7
No Opinion	27	7.5
Against	22	6.1
Strongly Against	26	7.2
Total	360	100.0

**What type(s) of services do you want to see in Underhill?**

**Large scale retail**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	10	2.9
Favor	19	5.4
No Opinion	28	8.0
Against	98	28.1
Strongly Against	194	55.6
Total	349	100.0

**What type(s) of services do you want to see in Underhill?**

**Professional and trade services**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	83	22.8
Favor	158	43.4
No Opinion	68	18.7
Against	20	5.5
Strongly Against	35	9.6
Total	364	100.0

**What type(s) of services do you want to see in Underhill?**

**Entertainment facilities**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	32	8.9
Favor	76	21.1
No Opinion	82	22.8
Against	84	23.3
Strongly Against	86	23.9
Total	360	100.0

**Comparison of “Strongly Favor” responses for services in Underhill.**

	“Strongly Favor” Percentage
Restaurants	30.5
Small scale retail	24.4
Professional and trade services	22.8
Lodging	11.0
Entertainment facilities	8.9
Large scale retail	2.9

**Over the next 5 years how important is maintaining our current policy of protecting all land in Underhill above the 1500 feet elevation mark from development?**

	Frequency	Percent
Very Important	242	67.0
Somewhat Important	62	17.2
Neither Important nor Unimportant	24	6.6
Somewhat Unimportant	10	2.8
Very Unimportant	23	6.4
Total	361	100.0

**Transportation**

**Over the next 5 years how important is expanding Chittenden County Transportation Authority bus service, including Senior Services Transportation, to Underhill?**

	Frequency	Percent
Very Important	156	42.6
Somewhat Important	133	36.3
Neither Important nor Unimportant	26	7.1
Somewhat Unimportant	19	5.2
Very Unimportant	32	8.7
Total	366	100.0

**Would you use an Underhill Park and Ride commuter lot located near Route 15?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	162	44.6
No	137	37.7
Undecided	64	17.6
Total	363	100.0

## Utilities and Facilities

**Over the next 5 years how important is it to: improve availability of quality childcare from birth to age 12 in Underhill?**

	Frequency	Percent
Very Important	84	23.2
Somewhat Important	107	29.6
Neither Important nor Unimportant	92	25.4
Somewhat Unimportant	36	9.9
Very Unimportant	43	11.9
Total	362	100.0

**Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the current town road maintenance and snowplowing.**

	Frequency	Percent
Very Satisfied	157	43.3
Somewhat Satisfied	128	35.3
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	49	13.5
Somewhat Dissatisfied	24	6.6
Very Dissatisfied	5	1.4
Total	363	100.0

**Would you be willing to pay for increased road maintenance?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	78	22.3
No	182	52.1
Undecided	89	25.5
Total	349	100.0

## Natural Resources

Over the next 5 years how important is it to “protect wetlands, wildlife habitat, endangered species, forest land, water quality, and other natural resources” in Underhill?

	Frequency	Percent
Very Important	245	66.9
Somewhat Important	73	19.9
Neither Important nor Unimportant	18	4.9
Somewhat Unimportant	12	3.3
Very Unimportant	18	4.9
Total	366	100.0

How important is the protection of open space within Town to the people and the future of Underhill?

	Frequency	Percent
Very Important	221	61.2
Somewhat Important	85	23.5
Neither Important nor Unimportant	26	7.2
Somewhat Unimportant	8	2.2
Very Unimportant	21	5.8
Total	361	100.0

Which methods would you use to keep open lands undeveloped?

### Land Exchanges

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	121	33.2
No	243	66.8
Total	364	100.0

### Density Bonuses

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	102	28.0
No	262	72.0
Total	364	100.0

### Tax Incentives

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	198	54.4
No	166	45.6
Total	364	100.0

## Zoning Regulations

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	213	58.5
No	151	41.5
Total	364	100.0

## None

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	39	10.7
No	325	89.3
Total	364	100.0

## Energy

How important is the development of renewable energy sources in Underhill?

	Frequency	Percent
Very Important	207	56.9
Somewhat Important	104	28.6
Neither Important nor Unimportant	25	6.9
Somewhat Unimportant	10	2.7
Very Unimportant	18	4.9
Total	364	100.0

## Housing

What type(s) of residential development do you want to see within Underhill?

### Single-family housing

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	125	34.8
Favor	147	40.9
No Opinion	61	17.0
Against	14	3.9
Strongly Against	12	3.3
Total	359	100.0

**What type(s) of residential development do you want to see within Underhill?**

**Two-family housing**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	41	11.5
Favor	124	34.6
No Opinion	84	23.5
Against	65	18.2
Strongly Against	44	12.3
Total	358	100.0

**What type(s) of residential development do you want to see within Underhill?**

**Multi-family housing**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	23	6.6
Favor	60	17.2
No Opinion	74	21.3
Against	96	27.6
Strongly Against	95	27.3
Total	348	100.0

**What type(s) of residential development do you want to see within Underhill?**

**Senior housing**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	101	28.1
Favor	162	45.0
No Opinion	64	17.8
Against	13	3.6
Strongly Against	20	5.6
Total	360	100.0

**Comparison of “Strongly Favor” responses for residential development types in Underhill.**

	“Strongly Favor” Percentage
Single-family housing	34.8
Senior housing	28.1
Two-family housing	11.5
Multi-family housing	6.6

## Economic Development

Over the next 5 years how important is it to increase employment opportunities in Underhill?

	Frequency	Percent
Very Important	102	28.0
Somewhat Important	128	35.2
Neither Important nor Unimportant	72	19.8
Somewhat Unimportant	33	9.1
Very Unimportant	29	8.0
Total	364	100.0

Over the next 5 years how important is it to expand retail/service business in Underhill?

	Frequency	Percent
Very Important	79	21.7
Somewhat Important	143	39.3
Neither Important nor Unimportant	59	16.2
Somewhat Unimportant	44	12.1
Very Unimportant	39	10.7
Total	364	100.0

## Recreation

Over the next 5 years how important is the construction of bicycle paths and recreation trails in Underhill?

	Frequency	Percent
Very Important	142	39.3
Somewhat Important	86	23.8
Neither Important nor Unimportant	33	9.1
Somewhat Unimportant	35	9.7
Very Unimportant	65	18.0
Total	361	100.0

Would you support extending road shoulders to Town right-of-way limits to accommodate shared rec. uses such as biking and walking?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	263	72.9
No	85	23.5
Don't Know	13	3.6
Total	361	100.0

**Would you be willing to pay for that road shoulder expansion?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	177	48.9
No	130	35.9
Don't Know	55	15.2
Total	362	100.0

**Would you support development of *motorized* vehicle recreation trail networks in Underhill?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	56	15.3
No	285	78.1
Don't Know	24	6.6
Total	365	100.0

**Would you support development of *non-motorized* recreation trail networks in Underhill?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	251	68.8
No	97	26.6
Don't Know	17	4.7
Total	365	100.0

**Would you support repairing the Town tennis courts?**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	190	52.3
No	114	31.4
Don't Know	59	16.3
Total	363	100.0

**Please use the following space to provide any suggestions or thoughts you may have regarding the future of Underhill in the next 5 years and beyond.**

**Categorized Responses**

	Frequency
Infrastructure	25
Land Use and Development	18
Business and the Economy	13
Miscellaneous	11
Taxes	6

## Full-text comments

25 mph speed limit in Underhill flats and Underhill center; 100% high speed internet
A good quality restaurant will go a long way. Some sort of evening facility that folks can go to like library.
Across from BRMS it's the center of the Flats. Restaurant, affordable/ senior housing, community center; car wash
Before we start expanding road shoulders for rec. use. Let's explore and develop a plan to improve road surfaces throughout town. Perhaps we can start paving roads that are currently dirt and gravel.
Charge a road maintenance fee to all property owners along publicly maintained roads- no road taxes of owners of land along private roads
Create hike trails
Current zoning regulations and topography are sufficient to limit growth.
diversity
Expand bike paths
Focus on single family residences and Senior housing with a tax of 4 units per citizen.
For safety purposes, believe we need sidewalks/ multi modal paths. It enhances a community.
Getting rid of the restriction regarding roads and driveways steeper than 10% grade which precludes building houses beyond those grades.
I believe that preserving the open space for Underhill will be a high priority.
I feel very strongly that we need to keep the character of Underhill as close to what it is now, that we can moved here because of the character and totally enjoy it.
I think a bike/hike trail between the schools and the library and mill's riverside park and Underhill Center / Underhill Central School is of the greatest importance.
I would like to have a sidewalk installed in Underhill Flats between the park and Poker Hill Road.
I would like to see light industry
I would like to see the town government stay out of issues outside of their responsibility. Stop wasting money on one-sided surveys where most of the questions have nothing to do with functions of government. The free market will work just fine in Underhill without the planning commission.
I would like to see us retain the rurality of Underhill with expanded opportunities to better help our environment.
I would stress the importance of expanding and developing recreation paths and opportunities in town.
I would support small scale lodging but no level larger
I'd favor tax breaks for a restaurant or bar/ pub in Underhill.
If the town courts are not redone, we should consider a skateboard park.
I'm concerned about the amount of retail properties.
Improve sidewalks from Park Street to Poker Hill Rd.
I moved to Underhill for its rural character
It's very important that the select board continue to pursue the gravel pit off of new road
Keep Taxes down/Lower Taxes-4
Keep the character rural
Keep the rural open spaces.
keep them all small scale
keep Underhill rural-2
Lessen zoning restrictions on small business! Require any town official or board member must have lived in Underhill 15 or more years.
Love the character of the town as it is. Hope future development is minimal.
minimum zoning

Model after German rural towns inclusive of services that the population can support; town center
Move fast in developing a plan for Jacob's land
need high speed internet connection available to north end of poker hill and Westford borders
Over the next 5 years and beyond I would love to see the area remain a country landscape. We are close to all the animals.
People living in pleasant valley, encouraged to cut down the trees to restore the views.
Pleasant Valley Rd. is a perpetual maintenance nightmare.
promote healthy living
Raise 1500 feet elevation limit to be consistent with state elevation limit for development.
Select local goods. Reduce cost of living in Underhill. Make the fire dept. accountable to the public.
sidewalks
Sidewalks in the flats are important to us.
Sidewalks in Underhill Flats are very important to myself and my family. Rt. 15 is so busy traffic is fast, it's just not safe place to so for a walk/run.
Some of questions were much too general to answer completely accurately.
Some of the topics that have been on my mind most
strongly support ice-skating outside
Taxes too high now without add recreation items. Those that want them should pay the cost not everyone.
This is a bad survey. 1. Includes canned questions with no realities application to Underhill "major retail". 2. Has questions that assume sophisticated incoming.
This town is all ready over populated. I would like to see development slow down
Underhill is the last country in Chittenden county. Please no development, no large food store
Underhill needs to grow at a reasonable pace. I have watched the town dry up for the past 30 years due to zoning making it so difficult for people to get permits.
Underhill needs to increase its business tax base to reduce residential property tax and add services. We need a police dept. Underhill could be made a shopping destination if the right anchor store came in.
Underhill should retain rural.
Underhill will be better if there is more businesses.
use pond area for skating- maintenance, seating
We have a lot of elderly people who live here with extended families, we should be able to live together, in multi age households as extended families so we can stay where we and our parents and grandparents were born. Also good jobs in small businesses in close proximity to home.
We live in Underhill because it's a small, quiet town away from traffic, college kids and, for the most part, crime. We can see the stars at night. We would hate to see a chain store go in anywhere near town. Let it be
Need to pave roads, mud season is a nightmare. I worry whether a fire truck could get through the mud. Rather than spending \$1 million for a gravel pit we should pave roads and increase gravel requirements.
We need more affordable housing such as land trust homes and small economical homes.
We would like our children to be able to bike or walk to school at the moment under current circumstances, it is the dangerous for them to do this.
Would like to see a part of the park across from the Underhill town hall be used as a dog park
Would support sidewalks near school
Zoning should be more restrictive for developers who purchase land for multiple homes. And less restrictive for individual homeowners who live in the community and choose to subdivide