Village of Cooperstown, NY
New York Forward

Community Survey Summary

August 11, 2023

Prepared by Highland Planning

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW

Background

The Village of Cooperstown was selected by the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) to receive a $4.5 million award from New York State Governor Kathy Hochul through the NY Forward (NYF) program. The award will allow the Village to develop a Strategic Investment Plan and implement key catalytic projects to advance the community's vision for downtown improvements. Projects selected for funding by the state will transform the community and support a vibrant local economy.

NY Forward was launched in 2022 to support a more equitable downtown recovery for New York State's smaller communities, with a focus on hamlets, villages, and neighborhood-scale commercial centers. NY Forward is led by the New York State Department of State, in close partnership with Empire State Development, Homes and Community Renewal, and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

Survey Methodology

In May 2023, Highland Planning administered a survey to gauge community members' perceptions of opportunities within the Village of Cooperstown in order to inform the funding investment by the New York Forward Program. This survey will advance the work of the Local Planning Committee by identifying perspectives and concerns of community members. This document summarizes the results of the community survey administered as part of the NYF public engagement process.

The online questionnaire was hosted on Survey Monkey from June 19 to August 7, 2023. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. It received 162 responses. The survey was promoted through the Cooperstown website, the public meeting, a pop-up event, flyer distribution, and social media posts.

The survey asked the following eleven questions:

1. When you think about what Downtown Cooperstown is like presently, what word would you use to describe the area to your friends and family?
2. When you think about what Downtown Cooperstown might be in 15 years, what word would you like to be able to use to describe the area to your friends and family?
3. How often do you visit Downtown Cooperstown?
4. What do you think is currently missing in Downtown Cooperstown?

5. What enhancements are most needed to encourage new investment and economic growth in Downtown Cooperstown?
6. What business establishments would you like to see more of in Downtown Cooperstown?
7. Which of the following housing options should Cooperstown prioritize within the downtown area?
8. What discourages you from going to Downtown Cooperstown more often?
9. What are the highest priorities for Downtown Cooperstown?
10. What best describes your relationship to Cooperstown?
11. What is your home zip code?

Survey Respondents

The top four zip codes where survey respondents reside are listed below. A majority, 76.25%, of respondents came from the 13326 zip code, followed by 13807, 13337, and 13820 zip codes, with about 2% each.

Respondent Zip Codes	
13326	76%
13807	2.5%
13337	2.5%
13820	1.8%

Key Findings

High-level takeaways from the survey include:

Respondents think that retail options are currently missing from Downtown Cooperstown. Non-baseball or tourist related retail for residents was specified by many respondents.

Respondents think that housing is currently missing from Downtown Cooperstown. Affordable housing and apartments above commercial and retail establishments were chosen as the highest priorities.

Parking and a lack of shopping and things to do geared towards residents discourages respondents from going to Downtown Cooperstown. Respondents stressed a need for a convenience store downtown, methods of reducing congestion in the tourist season, and creating things for residents to do downtown.

SUMMARY OF COOPERSTOWN SURVEY RESULTS

Results of each question in the survey are summarized below.

Question 1: When you think about what Downtown Cooperstown is like presently, what word would you use to describe the area to your friends and family?

Many respondents find the Village charming and quaint, with mentions of its historical and picturesque aspects. The Village is frequently associated with baseball, often described as being centered around baseball with a lot of baseball-related shops. Some respondents express concerns about there being too much focus on baseball and an overabundance of baseball-related stores. Others mention the Village being touristy, with concerns about being perceived as a tourist trap and not being as friendly to residents. Respondents said there is a need for more diversity in the types of shops and attractions, and concerns about storefronts being empty.

Some respondents find the Village welcoming, with a community-oriented atmosphere and local businesses. While many people appreciate the charm, some see the Village as lacking in variety, vibrancy, and modernization. Nostalgia is another common theme, with some comparing the Village's atmosphere to an earlier era of America.

Overall, the survey responses reflect a mix of positive sentiments about the Village's charm and history, along with concerns about an overemphasis on baseball and a desire for more diverse offerings and improved local experiences.

Question 2: When you think about what Downtown Cooperstown might be like in 15 years, what word would you like to be able to use to describe the area to your friends and family?

The responses to this question provide a diverse range of hopes and desires for the area. Charming, diverse, historic, eclectic, clean, artsy, vibrant, lively, and thriving are some of the terms used to describe the future vision of the area.

Respondents hope for an improved appearance of storefronts. Many express a desire for the Village to be more family-friendly, accessible, innovative, and welcoming to both residents and visitors. There is a hope for increased diversity in offerings, businesses, and experiences beyond just baseball.

Respondents want Cooperstown to remain quaint while also becoming more modern and dynamic. Respondents desire a balance between catering to tourists and supporting the needs of residents.

Overall, the responses suggest a vision for Downtown Cooperstown that combines its historical charm with modern vibrancy, diversity, and improved offerings for both tourists and residents.

Question 3: How often do you visit Downtown Cooperstown?

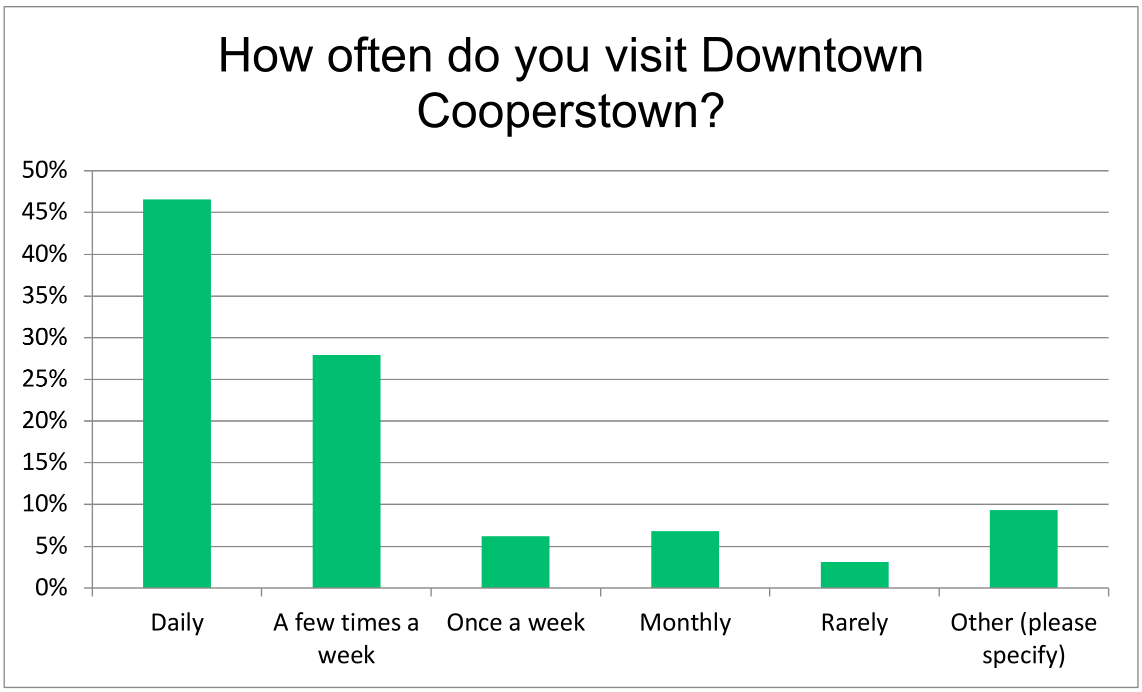

Figure 1.

The survey data indicated the frequency of visits to Downtown Cooperstown as follows:

- **Daily:** 46.58% of respondents (75 individuals)
- **A few times a week:** 27.95% of respondents (45 individuals)
- **Once a week:** 6.21% of respondents (10 individuals)
- **Monthly:** 6.83% of respondents (11 individuals)
- **Rarely:** 3.11% of respondents (5 individuals)

The written answers from the 15 respondents who answered with "other" can be summarized as follows:

- Every 2-3 weeks, daily when visiting Cooperstown, a few times per week, three times per week, every few years, bi-monthly
- For specific reasons such as going to the Opera
- Avoid going downtown due to the traffic, especially during the summer
- Only to go to work downtown

Question 4: **What do you think is currently missing in Downtown Cooperstown?**

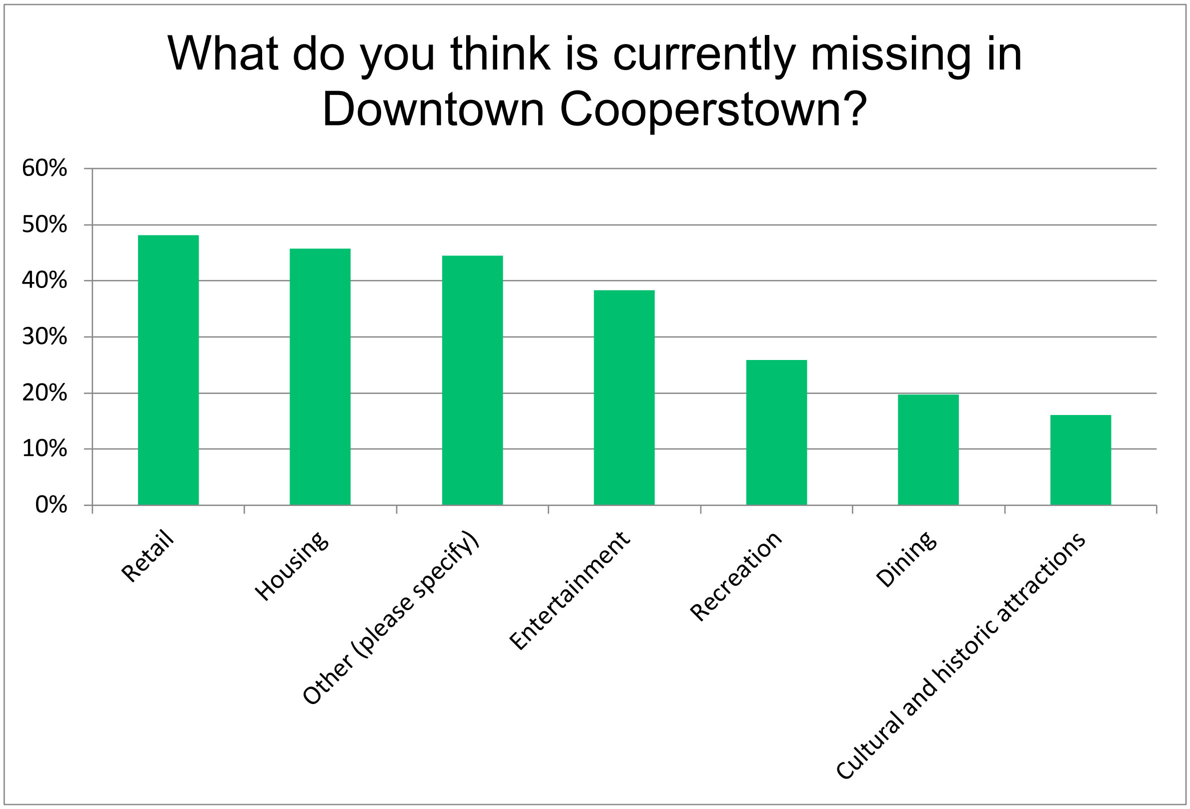

Figure 2.

The data reflects a variety of interests among the respondents, with a significant focus on retail and housing development, followed by entertainment and recreation.

- **Retail**: 48.15% of respondents (78 individuals)
- **Housing**: 45.68% of respondents (74 individuals)
- **Other (please specify)**: 44.44% of respondents (72 individuals)
- **Entertainment**: 38.27% of respondents (62 individuals)
- **Recreation**: 25.93% of respondents (42 individuals)
- **Dining**: 19.75% of respondents (32 individuals)

- **Cultural and historic attractions**: 16.05% of respondents (26 individuals)

The "Other" category suggests that there are additional preferences and ideas beyond the options provided summarized as follows:

- **Diverse Retail:** Respondents emphasized the need for non-baseball-related retail shops, similar to those in places like Skaneateles or Saratoga.
- **General Stores and Services:** Several participants mentioned the desire for general stores, grocery stores, and services that cater to both residents and visitors such as coworking spaces.
- **Playgrounds and Recreation:** Some respondents suggested adding playgrounds and family-friendly recreational spaces.
- **Upscale Boutique Hotel:** One respondent mentioned the need for an upscale boutique hotel.
- **Clean and Welcoming Storefronts:** More store owners maintaining clean and welcoming storefronts and sidewalks was highlighted as well as better upkeep and uniformity in building maintenance.
- **Coffee Houses and Cafes:** The addition of coffee houses and cafes was suggested to enhance the dining and social experience.
- **Art Galleries and Local Businesses:** Creating more non-tourist-oriented galleries **Improved Building Maintenance:** Respondents noted the importance of better upkeep and uniformity in building maintenance.
- **Year-Round Attractions:** Suggestions for year-round attractions that draw steady use were made.
- **Parking Facilities:** Several respondents highlighted the need for improved parking facilities, including parking garages.
- **Connectivity to Other Areas:** Connecting Downtown Cooperstown to the Railroad District and lake for a more cohesive experience.
- **Cinema and Arts Center:** Some participants suggested adding a cinema or arts center to engage both adults and children, especially those less interested in sports.
- **Bookstore and Libraries:** The desire for non-baseball-related bookstores and support for libraries was mentioned.
- **Affordable Housing:** The importance of offering affordable housing options was emphasized.
- **Childcare services**

Question 5: What enhancements are most needed to encourage new investment and economic growth in Downtown Cooperstown?

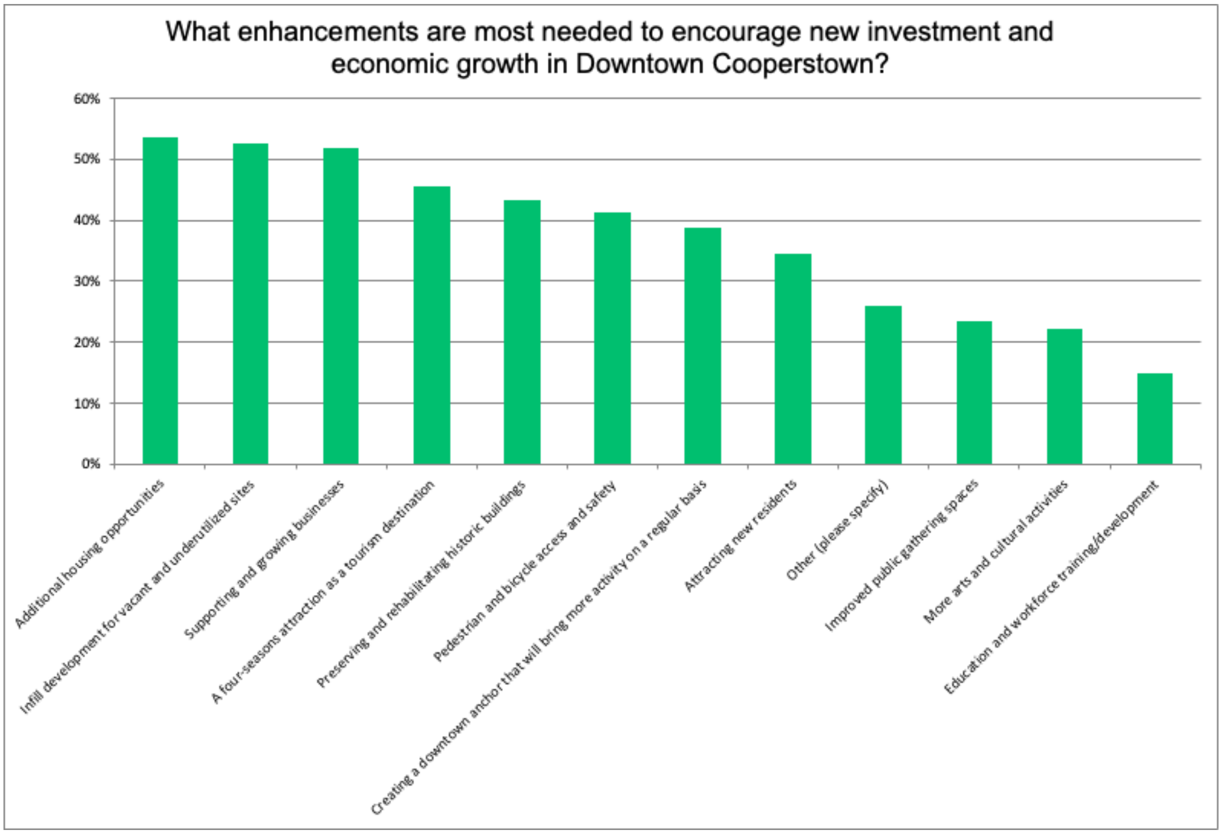

Figure 3.

The responses demonstrate a range of ideas for fostering economic growth, including support for businesses, housing opportunities, development of underutilized areas, historic preservation, tourism enhancement, and improved infrastructure.

- **Additional housing opportunities**: 53.70% of respondents (87 individuals)
- **Infill development for vacant and underutilized sites**: 52.47% of respondents (85 individuals)
- **Supporting and growing businesses**: 51.85% of respondents (84 individuals)
- **A four-seasons attraction as a tourism destination**: 45.68% of respondents (74 individuals)
- **Preserving and rehabilitating historic buildings**: 43.21% of respondents (70 individuals)
- **Pedestrian and bicycle access and safety**: 41.36% of respondents (67 individuals)
- **Creating a downtown anchor**: 38.89% of respondents (63 individuals)

- **Attracting new residents**: 34.57% of respondents (56 individuals)
- **Improved public gathering spaces**: 23.46% of respondents (38 individuals)
- **More arts and cultural activities**: 22.22% of respondents (36 individuals)
- **Other (please specify)**: 25.93% of respondents (42 individuals)
- **Education and workforce training/development**: 14.81% of respondents (24 individuals)

The "Other" category suggests that there are additional preferences and ideas beyond the options provided summarized as follows:

- **Loss of Essential Businesses:** The closure of CVS and the general store was noted as a factor that has led to Main Street being less visited by year-round residents.
- Early Childhood Amenities such as a centralized play area.
- **Main Street Apartments:** Utilizing the second and third floors of buildings on Main Street.
- **Kayak Ramps:** Adding kayak ramps at the lakefront and Three Mile Point.
- **Attractive Building Facades:** Improving Main Street buildings' exteriors.
- **Diverse Retail and Useful Shops:** The desire for shops that provide items beyond souvenirs and gift shops, along with a greater variety of retail options, was expressed.
- **Transportation Improvements**: Suggestions included better transportation options such as Uber/Lyft, electric bike and scooter rentals, public transportation, and a parking garage.
- **Nightlife and After-Hours Activities:** Providing activities and attractions after 7PM to encourage night-time visits. Respondents also want a movie theater.
- **Improved Dining:** Respondents emphasized better variety in dining establishments.
- I**nfrastructure Improvements:** Suggestions included removing unsightly electric poles and revitalizing abandoned or underutilized buildings, adding public restrooms on main street.
- **Year-Round Attraction:** Creating year-round attractions, such as an ice rink, was suggested to draw visitors during all seasons.

Question 6: What business establishments would you like to see more of in Downtown Cooperstown?

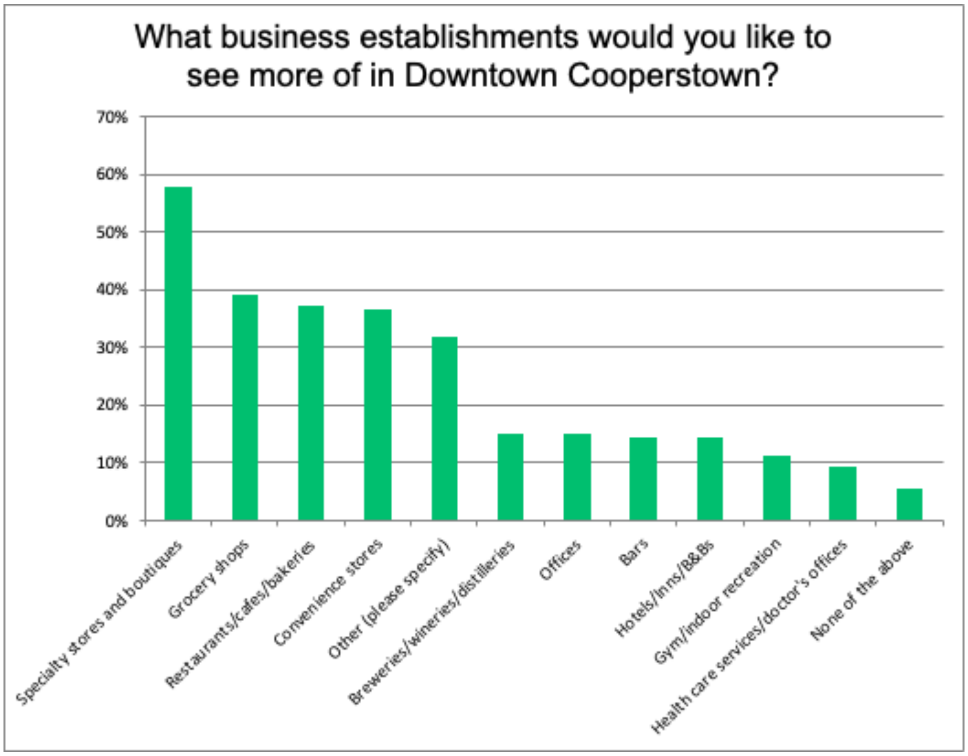

Figure 4.

The majority of respondents expressed interest in specialty stores and boutiques, grocery shops, and restaurants/cafes/bakeries. Additionally, there's notable interest in health care services, breweries/wineries/distilleries, and gyms/indoor recreation.

- **Specialty stores and boutiques:** 57.76% of respondents (93 individuals)
- **Grocery shops:** 39.13% of respondents (63 individuals)
- **Restaurants/cafes/bakeries:** 37.27% of respondents (60 individuals)
- **Convenience stores:** 36.65% of respondents (59 individuals)
- **Breweries/wineries/distilleries:** 14.91% of respondents (24 individuals)
- **Offices:** 14.91% of respondents (24 individuals)
- **Gym/indoor recreation:** 11.18% of respondents (18 individuals)
- **Bars:** 14.29% of respondents (23 individuals)
- **Hotels/Inns/B&Bs:** 14.29% of respondents (23 individuals)
- **Health care services/doctor's offices:** 9.32% of respondents (15 individuals)
- **Other (please specify):** 31.68% of respondents (51 individuals)
- **None of the above:** 5.59% of respondents (9 individuals)

The "Other" category suggests that there are additional preferences and ideas beyond the options provided summarized as follows:

- **Entertainment and Recreation:** Movie theaters (multiple requests), arcades, live music venue, indoor gym, entertainment not related to baseball.
- **Retail and Shops:** Specialty stores and boutiques, outdoor recreation store, general store, ethnic markets, art supply shops, galleries, affordable artisan shops, basic clothing and housewares stores, bookstore, consignment shop, antique shops.
- **Services and Facilities: P**harmacy, daycares, shared/coworking spaces (multiple mentions), hardware store.
- **Community Spaces:** Inclusive playground, outdoor pool, library expansion with a café.
- **Food and Dining:** More diverse restaurants, gluten/allergen-free bakery, cafe at the library, food co-op.
- **Infrastructure and Planning:** Improved parking, eliminating dangerous parking, more free parking for residents, diagonal parking elimination.
- **Creative and Artistic Spaces:** Dance studio, painting and ceramics activities, art and photography galleries, art studios.
- **Maintain Unique and Nostalgic Atmosphere**
- **Family and Youth-Focused:** Locations for youth lessons, places for kids and teens to hang out, inclusive modern playground.

Question 7: Which of the following housing options should Cooperstown prioritize within the downtown area?

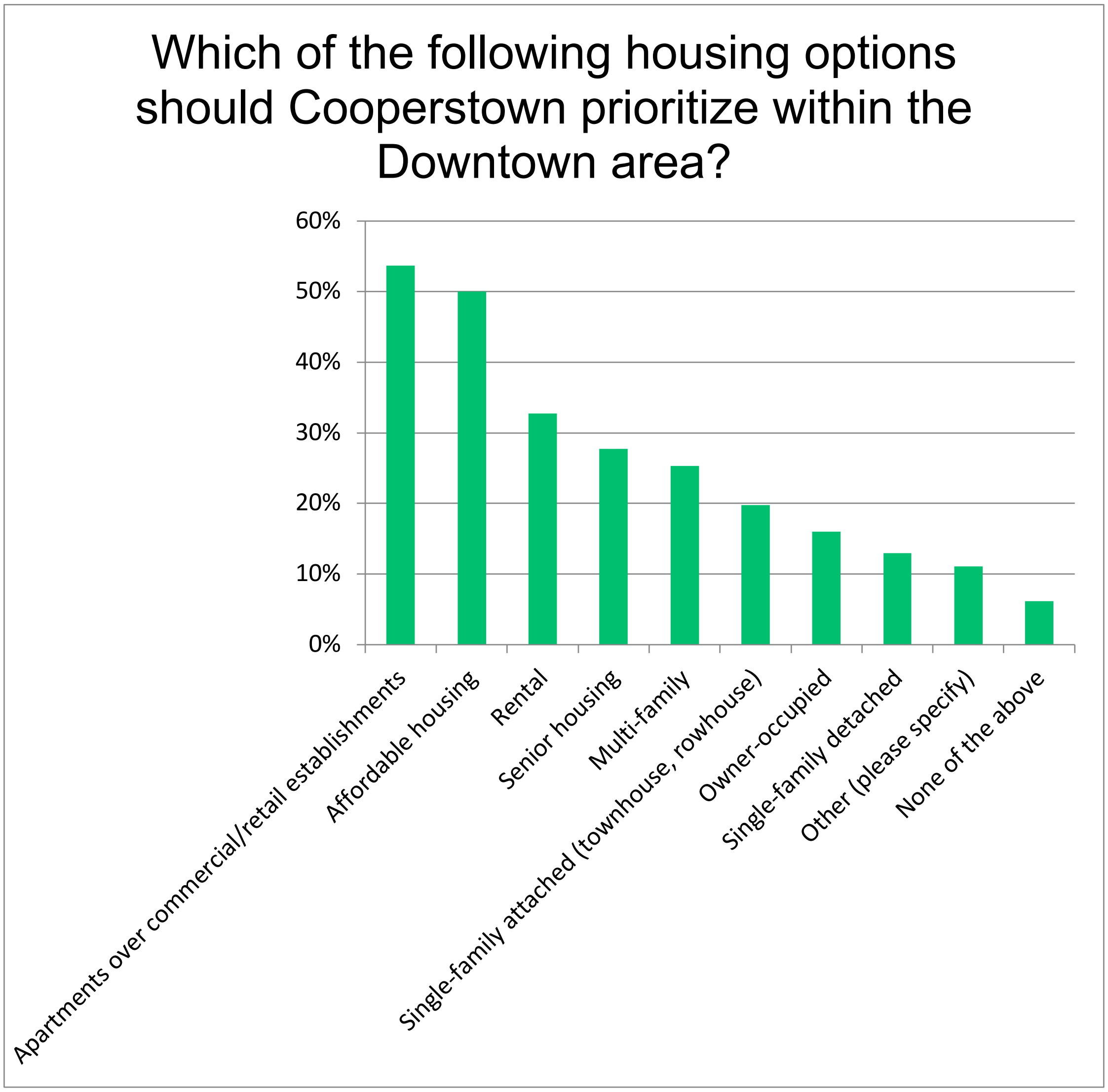

Figure 5.

The responses provide further insights into the community's housing preferences, highlighting the emphasis on affordability, year-round options, and the consideration of different housing needs and populations.

- **Apartments over commercial/retail establishments:** 53.70% of respondents (87 individuals)
- **Affordable housing:** 50.00% of respondents (81 individuals)
- **Rental:** 32.72% of respondents (53 individuals)
- **Multi-family:** 25.31% of respondents (41 individuals)
- **Senior housing:** 27.78% of respondents (45 individuals)

- **Single-family attached (townhouse, rowhouse):** 19.75% of respondents (32 individuals)
- **Owner-occupied:** 16.05% of respondents (26 individuals)
- **Single-family detached:** 12.96% of respondents (21 individuals)
- **Other (please specify):** 11.11% of respondents (18 individuals)
- **None of the above:** 6.17% of respondents (10 individuals)

The "Other" category suggests that there are additional preferences and ideas beyond the options provided summarized as follows:

- Preference for affordable year-round rentals for locals instead of seasonal rentals for tourists.
- Housing options outside of the downtown.
- Filling housing gaps with a focus on streets within walking distance of Main St and the hospital (Chestnut, Linden, Brooklyn).
- Affordable year-round rentals, specifically for locals.
- High-quality living facilities for Bassett employees.
- Universal housing rather than exclusively senior housing was mentioned by two respondents).
- One respondent expressed a belief that housing is not a priority.

Question 8: What discourages you from going to Downtown Cooperstown more often?

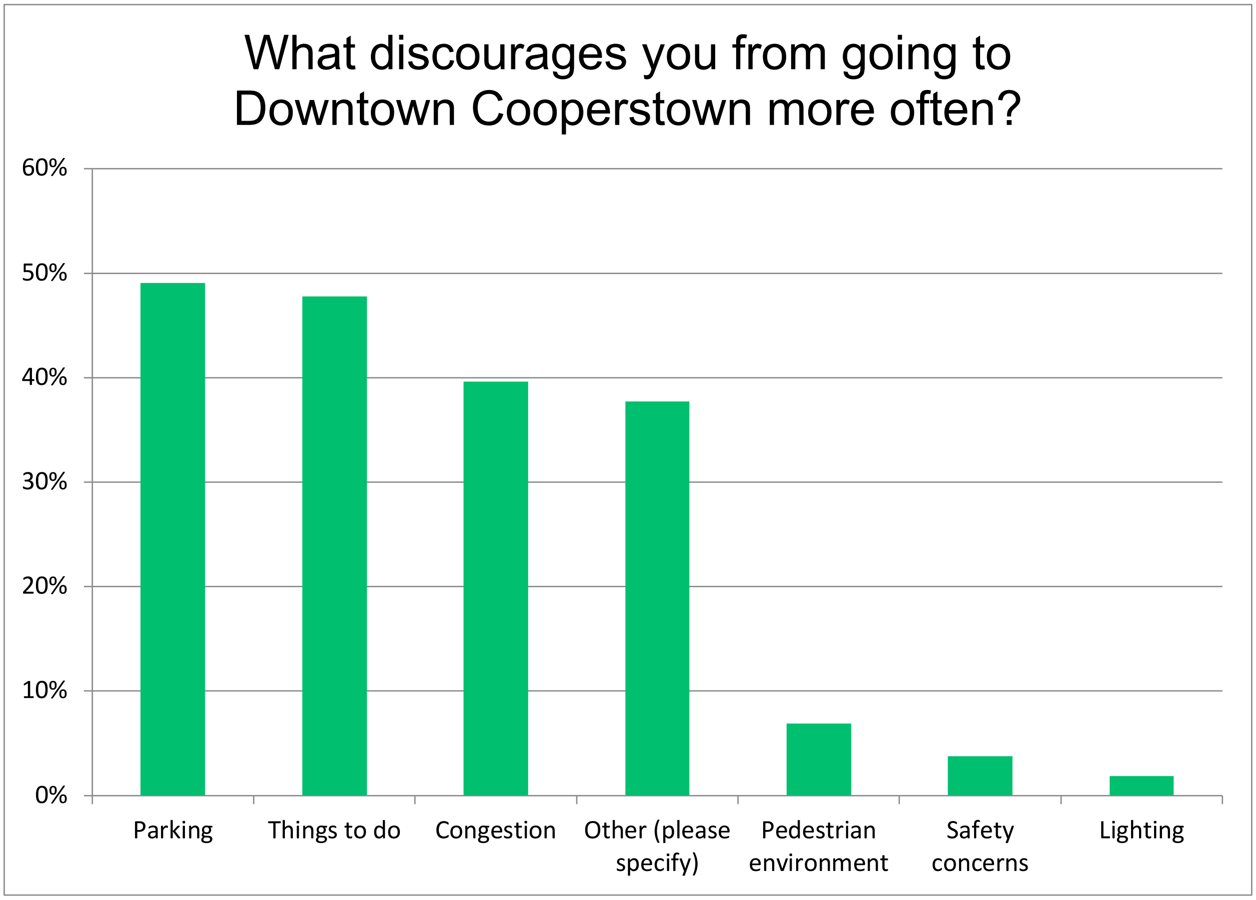

Figure 6.

Factors that discourage individuals from visiting Downtown Cooperstown more frequently are listed below with parking, availability of activities, and congestion being notable concerns.

- **Parking:** 49.06% of respondents (78 individuals)
- **Things to do:** 47.80% of respondents (76 individuals)
- **Congestion:** 39.62% of respondents (63 individuals)
- **Pedestrian environment:** 6.92% of respondents (11 individuals)
- **Safety concerns:** 3.77% of respondents (6 individuals)
- **Lighting:** 1.89% of respondents (3 individuals)
- **Other (please specify):** 37.74% of respondents (60 individuals)

The common themes expressed by survey participants in the “other” response section regarding what discourages them from visiting Downtown Cooperstown are listed below.

- **Limited shopping options for Locals:** A desire for the pharmacy and general store to come back were highlighted along with a limited availability of specific products like baby gifts, birthday gifts, and drugstore items. Many respondents highlighted the prevalence of baseball-themed stores and activities.
- **Lack of Reasons to Visit Downtown:** Limited variety beyond restaurants, limited activities for families and children, lack of things to do other than baseball, no music or dance lesson places downtown.
- **Parking and Congestion:** Concerns and frustrations around parking and congestion, especially during the summer months, was mentioned by several respondents.
- **Traffic Safety:** Limited visibility at crosswalks, improved cycling lanes, jaywalking tourists
- **General Safety:** Concerns about summer tourist behavior and lack of policing as well as uneven sidewalks, tripping hazards, and snow removal on sidewalks.

Question 9: What are the highest priorities for Downtown Cooperstown?

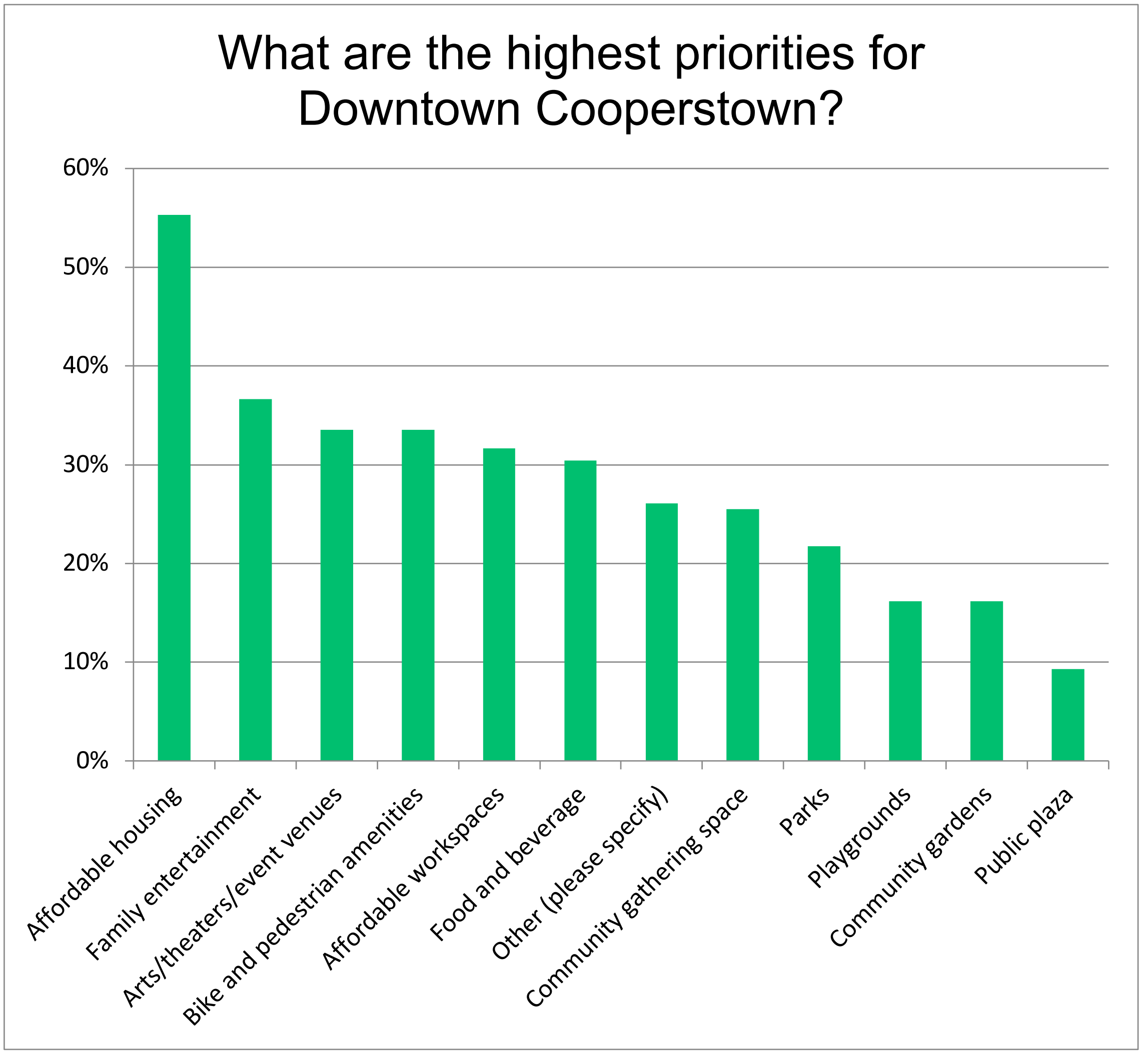

Figure 7.

The highest priorities for Downtown Cooperstown are affordable housing, family entertainment, arts/theaters/event venues, and bike/pedestrian amenities.

- **Affordable housing:** 55.28% of respondents (89 individuals)
- **Family entertainment:** 36.65% of respondents (59 individuals)
- **Arts/theaters/event venues:** 33.54% of respondents (54 individuals)
- **Bike and pedestrian amenities:** 33.54% of respondents (54 individuals)
- **Affordable workspaces:** 31.68% of respondents (51 individuals)
- **Food and beverage:** 30.43% of respondents (49 individuals)
- **Community gathering space:** 25.47% of respondents (41 individuals)
- **Parks:** 21.74% of respondents (35 individuals)

- **Playgrounds:** 16.15% of respondents (26 individuals)
- **Community gardens:** 16.15% of respondents (26 individuals)
- **Public plaza:** 9.32% of respondents (15 individuals)
- **Other (please specify):** 26.09% of respondents (42 individuals)

The categorized responses from the "other comments," based on the common themes expressed by the respondents, are summarized below:

- **Infrastructure and Public Spaces:** Fixing sidewalks and road resurfacing, developing a pedestrian/bike path to Glimmerglass State Park, developing public toilets and more electric vehicle charging stations, restoring historic properties and buildings.
- **Local Business and Services:** Supporting local businesses, increasing varied retail options beyond baseball-themed stores, opening a farmer's coop storefront, expanding availability of pharmacies and hardware stores.
- **Aesthetics:** Encouraging business owners to maintain exterior maintenance, painting buildings for better aesthetic appeal.
- **Housing and Real Estate:** Filling empty undeveloped spaces with high-quality housing, multi-use development to attract a resident base and ensure value, investing in core local businesses and affordable workspaces, access to affordable housing for professionals.
- **Transportation and Traffic:** Addressing traffic congestion and safety, including road improvements and implementing better parking solutions, accessible sidewalks and crosswalks.
- **Entertainment:** Developing family entertainment options, a small movie theater, expanding arts, theaters, and event venues
- **Cultural Spaces:** Focus on cultural, historical, ecological, and geographical aspects of Cooperstown
- **Recreational and Public Spaces**: Developing parks, playgrounds, community gathering spaces, and gardens, creating a pedestrian/bike-friendly environment with improved walkability, creating a rail trail for the community.

Question 10: What best describes your relationship to Cooperstown?

- **Full-time resident**: 72.22% (117 individuals)
- **Property owner**: 18.52% (30 individuals)
- **I visit Downtown Cooperstown for services**: 18.52% (30 individuals)

- **I work in Downtown Cooperstown**: 17.90% (29 individuals)
- **Part-time resident**: 8.02% (13 individuals)
- **Tourist**: 3.70% (6 individuals)
- **Other (please specify)**: 8.02% (13 individuals)

"Other" responses are summarized as follows:

- Visitor to Cooperstown to dream and refresh.
- Main Street Business Anchor and unofficial ambassador.
- Hometown respondent.
- A business owner who operates from outside the main downtown area and finds it suitable for their needs.
- Residency in a nearby town while maintaining some connection or activities in Cooperstown.
- Family connections or relatives residing in Cooperstown.
- Long-standing association with Cooperstown through multiple generations and family members.
- Oneonta resident with a neighboring connection to Cooperstown.
- Employee of Bassett who goes downtown for food and shopping.