

2020 Town of Scipio Comprehensive Plan Update

In July 2019, a group of interested town residents formed a committee to develop an update to the 2011 Town of Scipio Comprehensive Plan. The group revised a questionnaire used from the original Comprehensive Plan and during three fall community events: The Fall Clean Up Day, Election Day and at the Duke Energy Renewable Public presentation the community survey was available for public input. Three hundred eleven questionnaires and written comments were collected from town residents. The following survey summary analysis was made. This analysis resulted in committee guidance in planning and development decisions for the Town of Scipio in the future.

What did the community survey data reveal?

A good cross section of the community participated in this survey. Age groups represented: 58% were 56 years and older, 33% were 35-55 years old and 9% were in the 18-34 years old bracket., 5% were seasonal residents. Many of the respondents to the community survey commented they are not receiving town information other than the town newsletter sent twice a year or from conversation with family and neighbors. Quality of life is a positive feature in this community.

63% of the survey respondents have lived in Scipio for over twenty years. However, it is notable that over 23% have lived in Scipio 10 years or less. Respondents rated a clean and healthy environment, a reasonable cost of living, green space/ natural areas, and rural character as the four top attributes of living in Scipio. The four highest ranked challenges identified were protecting natural resources and water quality, improving infrastructure (roads, electric, internet), volunteers for emergency services and maintaining the rural character in the Town of Scipio.

What defines Scipio as a Place?

It is the quality of life. It is the standard of health, comfort and happiness experienced by an individual or group. When asked to list why do you live in Scipio, the top four responses named where family (48%), rural character (45%), location (40%) and environment (37%). Followed with schools (19%), natural resources (18%), employment (16%) and housing (15.6%).

How has the community responded to the goals and objectives set in the first Comprehensive Plan?

Our town has actively engaged in addressing needs identified in the 2011 Comprehensive Plan. The Town of Scipio Zoning and Sub-Division Rules and Regulations were adopted in 2015. The town has active participation with the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. The town Code Enforcement Officer works closely with these boards.

Scipio has board representation on the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council. Residents have volunteered to participate in the rewrite of the county's Health Department - Owasco Lake Rules and Regulations and have been involved in the Nine Element Plan with the county's Planning Department.

From these survey responses, some clear conclusions can be drawn. The community's desire for the future of the Town of Scipio depends on the protection of its resources, both natural and cultural, and on improving land use regulations and town government policies. These include land-use regulation for the protection of the environment, and preservation of the rural/agricultural character of the town, in addition to renewable energy development, and affordable housing.

Community Vision Statement:

“The Town of Scipio would like to preserve its rural character, scenic beauty, and cultural and historic assets, and protect its natural and agricultural resources as it continues to accommodate new growth and services that meet the changing needs of the community.”

Goals and Recommendations

Protecting Natural Resources and Water Quality

1. Protect the natural resources of significance to the Scipio community.

- a. Maintain and reference a current map of all natural resources including stream corridors, water bodies, undeveloped shoreline, beaches, wetlands, watershed areas, vegetation communities, woodlands, steep slopes, meadows, specimen trees, wildlife habitats, soils, geology, and aquifer contribution areas.
- b. Apply 2015 Town of Scipio Subdivision Rules for Water Conservation Overlay Districts along Owasco Lake to ensure both shoreline and water quality protections through adequate minimum shoreline requirements.
- c. Ensure that site development requirements include standards for Best Management Practices (BMPs) to minimize soil disturbance, erosion, and stormwater runoff, and ensure that those standards are met particularly in lakefront and streamside areas.
- d. Support sustainable land use practices through the implementation of Overlay Zoning that protect buffers along stream corridors and riparian zones, slopes, streams, and wetlands.

2. Support water quality preservation through good stewardship of Owasco Lake and the Owasco and Cayuga Lake watersheds.

- a. Actively participate in the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council approaches for all issues related to water quality and watershed protection.
- b. Support the development of the county Health Department’s Owasco Lake Rules and Regulations and the county Planning Department’s Nine Element Plan.
- c. Actively work with the Owasco and Cayuga Lake watershed organizations to preserve and improve the quality of the water in both Finger Lakes.
- d. Participate in the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Conservation Reserve Program.
- e. Work cooperatively with the County Soil and Conservation District to implement improved and protective roadside ditch maintenance practices to lessen or prevent erosion and runoff.
- f. Support development of an Environmental Education Outreach Program for town residents.
- g. Protect Owasco and Cayuga Lakes from increased pollution and nutrient run-off both from development and agricultural practices.
- h. Enhance the use of buffer strips around streams and shorelines to reduce or eliminate run-off.
- i. Ensure adherence to regulations and guidelines for the spreading of manure and tilling of soils.
- j. Recommend Best Management Practices to minimize phosphorous loaded fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides throughout the town.

Improving Infrastructure

3. Improve Communications Infrastructure

- a. Increase wireless internet accessibility for town-wide service.
- b. Improve cellular phone service and authorize colocation of cell phone towers.

4. Maintain or improve the present quality of town roads and services

- a. Review road maintenance funding and procedures to ensure continued quality of town roads.
- b. Work with other town/government agencies to address the impact of heavy truck traffic.
- c. Maintain the town's current practice of holding two clean-up days annually.
- d. Continue the town's refuse transfer station and recyclable drop off bins through a usage charge.
- e. Investigate future options for public water districts

5. Explore potential benefits and impacts of renewable energy resource development

- a. Evaluate commercial wind energy, solar energy, bioenergy, and potential associated benefits and impacts on the town.
- b. Update Scipio Zoning Rules and Regulations related to public utilities forming Green Energy/Renewable Energy initiatives.

Volunteers for Emergency Services

6. Support volunteer recruitment for fire and ambulance services.

- a. Explore creative avenues to provide incentives for community volunteer programs.
- b. Support and implement incentive programs for fire and emergency volunteers.
- c. Continue support of local scholarships, grants and awards available for all colleagues in our town.

Maintaining Rural Character /Accommodating Residential Growth

7. Preserve the rural-agrarian character of the town

- a. Facilitate the protection of farmland balanced with managed community growth and preservation of open space through farmland protection and agricultural easements.
- b. Build a collaborative relationship with educational institutions and community-oriented organizations in support of local agriculture and farming.
- c. Promote farmland preservation working collaboratively with New York State, Finger Lakes Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and other agencies.

8. Protect the existing open space & scenic views of farmland and lakes in the Town of Scipio

- a. Apply the 2015 Town of Scipio Subdivision/Zoning Regulations for land use zoning and sub-division to protect the town's rural-agrarian and scenic identity.
- b. Implement the 2015 Town of Scipio Subdivision Regulations land use tools such as Overlay Districts, Easements, Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to protect farmland, open space, scenic views, and historic areas in the town.
- c. Refer to the 2015 Town of Scipio Subdivision Regulations to support low-impact development patterns and land uses that conserve resources, complement the rural character of the residential setting, and encourage farms to remain in farm production, while providing reasonable land area for neighborhoods of single-family dwellings at a medium to low density on a range of lot sizes using conservation-sensitive design. The resources, lands and values identified by the community as important to conserve include rural character, agriculture, highly visible open space lands, scenic views, and wildlife buffer areas.
- d. Use established environmental protection guidelines to regulate and limit building in areas with steep slopes (15% or more) reducing soil erosion, storm water run-off, and sedimentation of water resources.

9. Plan for and seek opportunities to increase the availability of affordable single-family, and senior convalescent care in Scipio.

- a. Identify desirable growth areas within or adjacent to existing hamlet areas.
- b. Explore the possibility of rehabilitating vacant or under-used structures to meet housing demands.
- c. Research rural housing options and National Standards for safety in building for smaller homes.

Supporting Community Organizations

10. Encourage the improvement or development of additional community recreational facilities

- a. Explore options for the acquisition of additional town land for the development of community recreational facilities including parks, recreational trails, and playing fields.
- b. Explore the prospect of developing an interconnected system of hiking trails and bike paths with historic and recreational points of interest throughout the town and hamlets of Scipio.

11. Seek opportunities to increase community participation and civic resources

- a. Assess viability of quarterly publications of the Scipio Town Newsletter on the townofscipio.com website. Maintain two USPS mailings of the town newsletter.
- b. Publicize timely town events on the town website – townofscipio.com
- c. Encourage recruitment of a growing volunteer base for town organizations.
- d. Maintain town owned Right of Way areas on Owasco Lake for emergency services access and waterfront recreation area.

12. Expand efforts to support the preservation of the historic heritage of the town.

- a. Evaluate the potential for the development of a town history museum in an existing historic structure.
- b. Coordinate promotion of town historic sites with other regional heritage tourism programs through website links, maps, brochures and special events.
- a. Explore grant funding opportunities for preservation planning, capital improvements and interpretation of the Sherwood Equal Rights Historic District through the National Park Service “Network to Freedom” program, the National Women’s History Project Act - “Votes for Women Trail”, and the “Save America’s Treasures” program.

13. Maximize the potential of the town’s history and historic resources to become sources of economic and cultural benefit to the community.

- b. Establish a Local Preservation Commission with the mission of developing an inventory of historic resources in the town and a Local Preservation District to protect Scipio’s historic character.
- b. Adopt a Local Preservation Law that encourages preservation projects by providing tax incentives for investments in preservation district properties, while also establishing a review and approval process for exterior renovations of Local Preservation District properties. (Inclusion in a Local Preservation District increases property owners’ eligibility for state and federal preservation grant funds.)
- c. Apply to NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to become a Certified Local Government (CLG) and then seek designation as a “Preserve America Community” to be eligible for federal preservation grant funding through the “Preserve America Grants Program.”

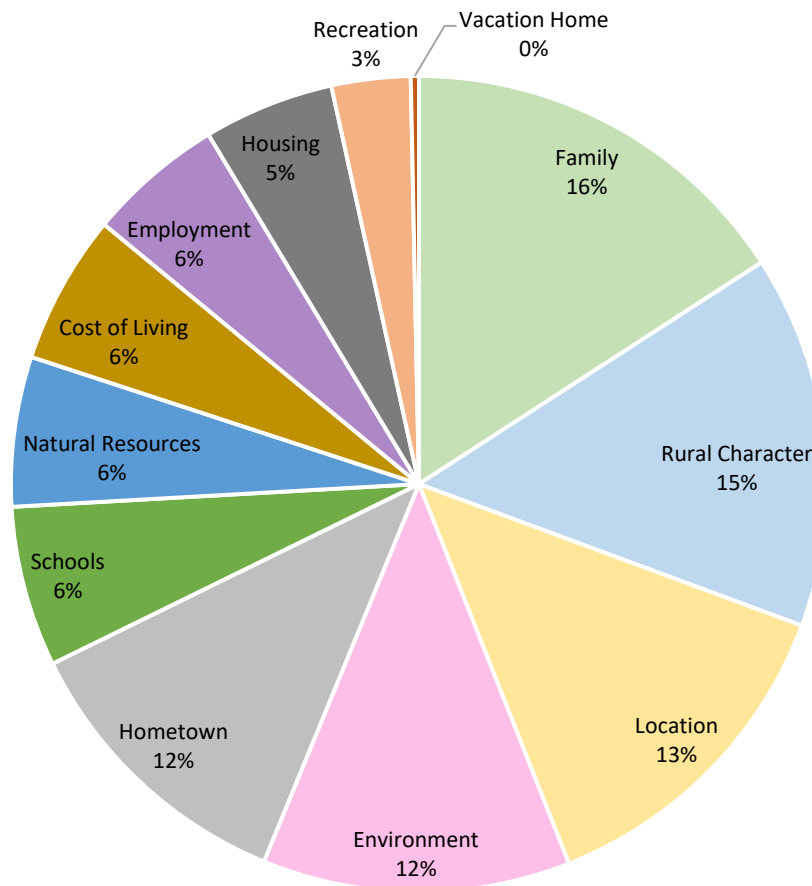
Maintaining Farming and Agriculture

14. Support future viability of local agricultural practices

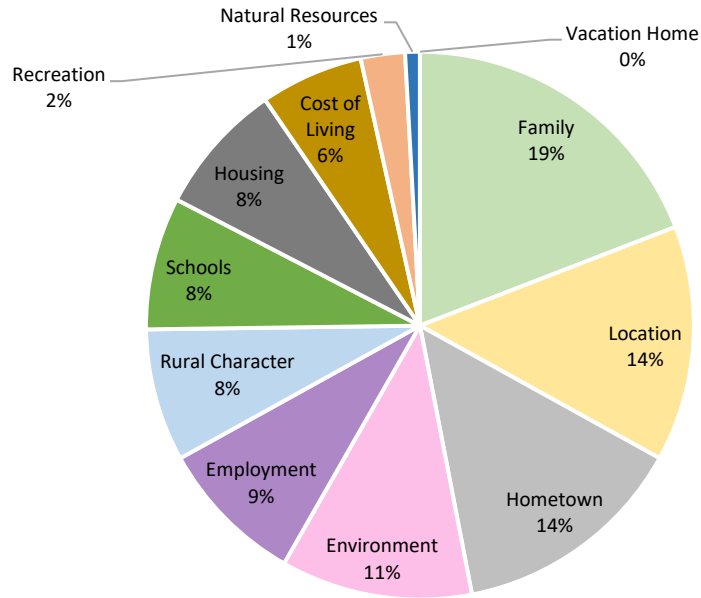
- a. Encourage growth in a wide range of local agricultural services and businesses in support of a sustainable local farming community including local processing and local markets.
- b. Continue to support the Right-to-Farm law.
- c. Engage with Cayuga County Soil & Water Conservation District, the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division and Cornell Cooperative Extension personnel on agricultural issues.
- d. Encourage the Town of Scipio to support tax incentives to keep farmland in production.
- e. Evaluate and implement tax abatement programs in agricultural assessments from the State Agricultural Assessment Program coupled with comparable penalties for converting farmland to non-farm use.
- f. Encourage the use of programs such as the Cayuga County Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program for sustainable and best management practices in all agricultural activities in the town.

Why do you live in the town?

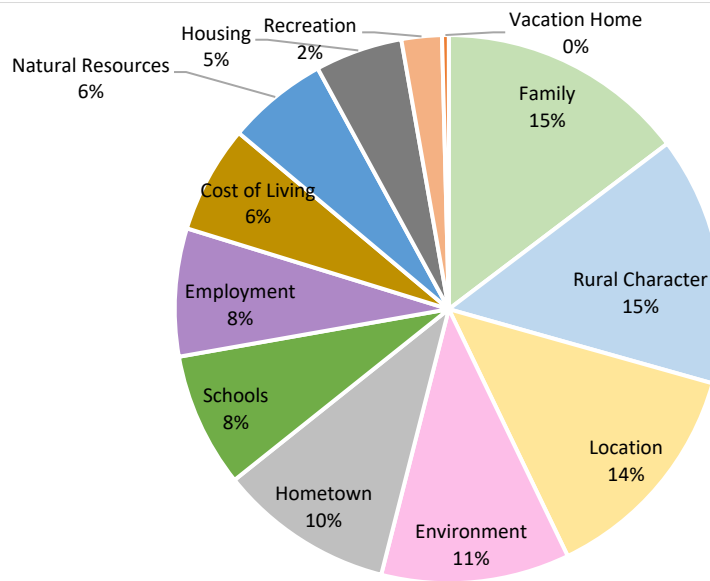
All Respondents

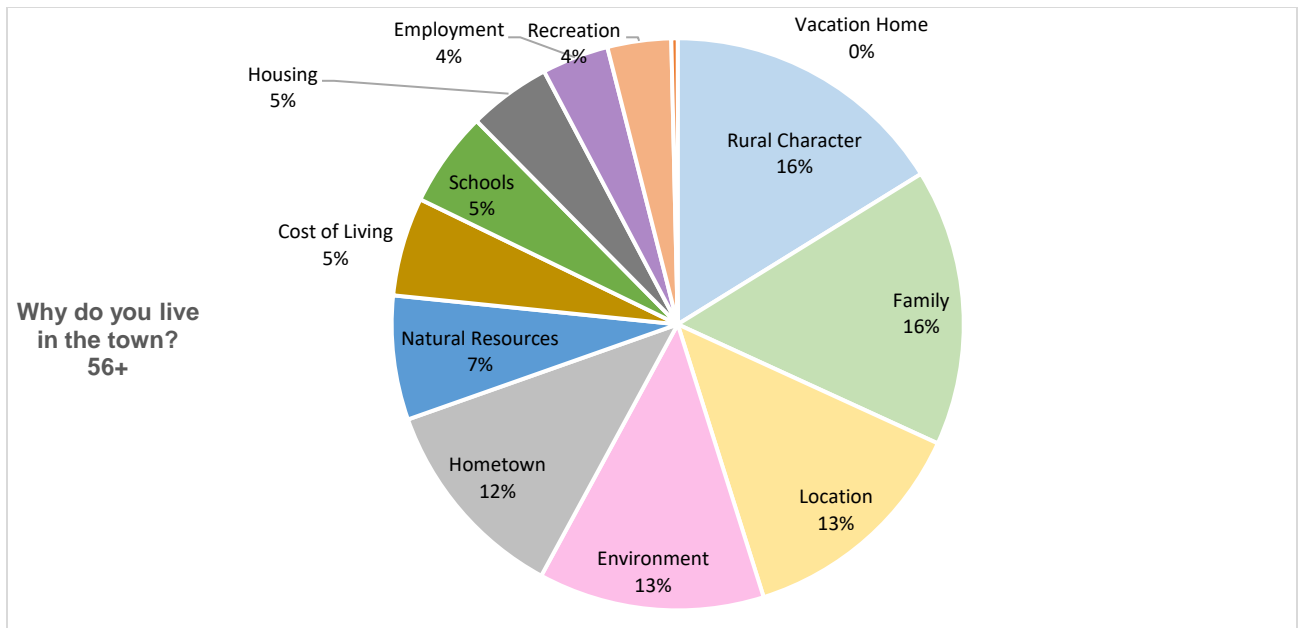


Why do you live
in the town?
18 - 35

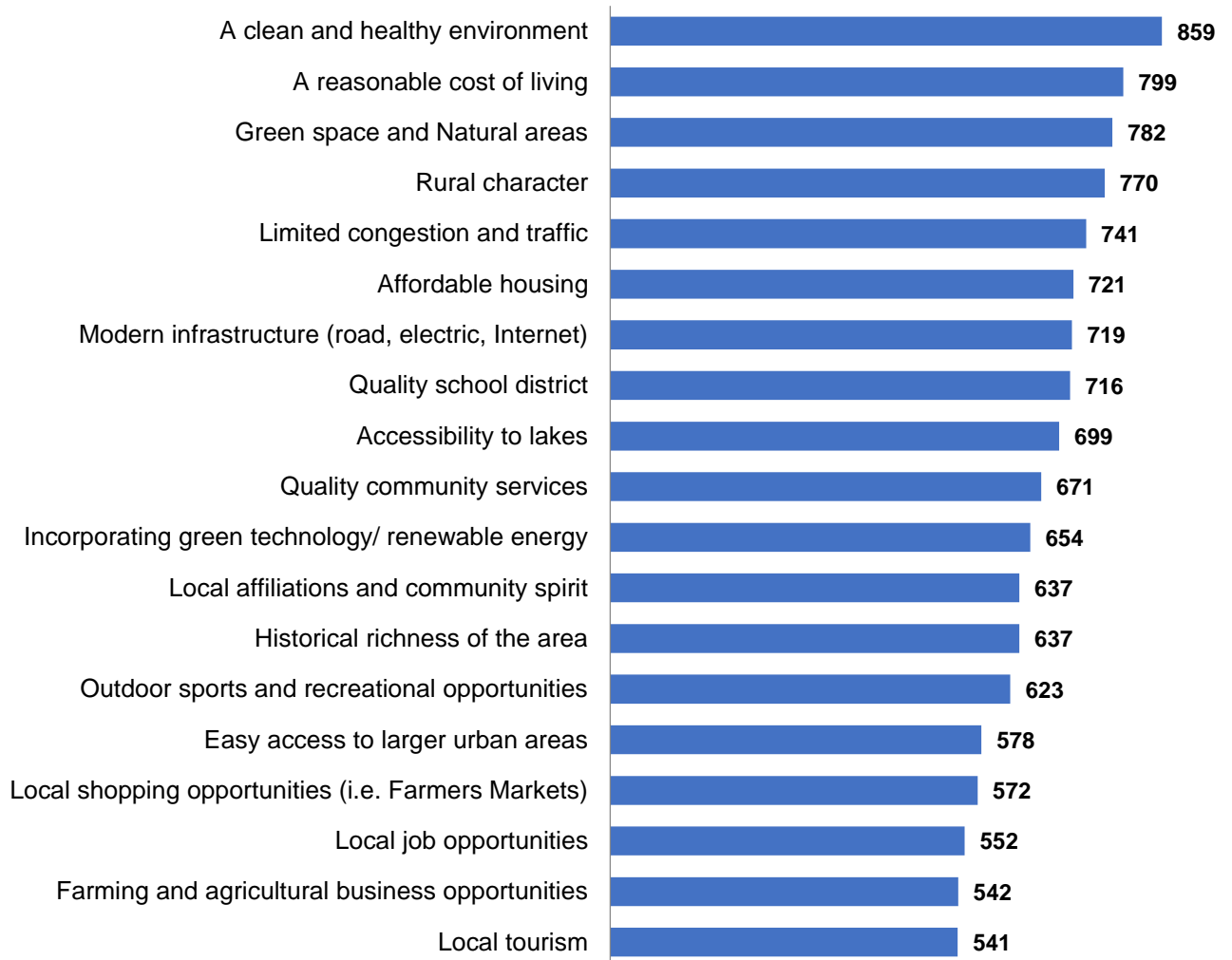


Why do you live
in the town?
36 - 55

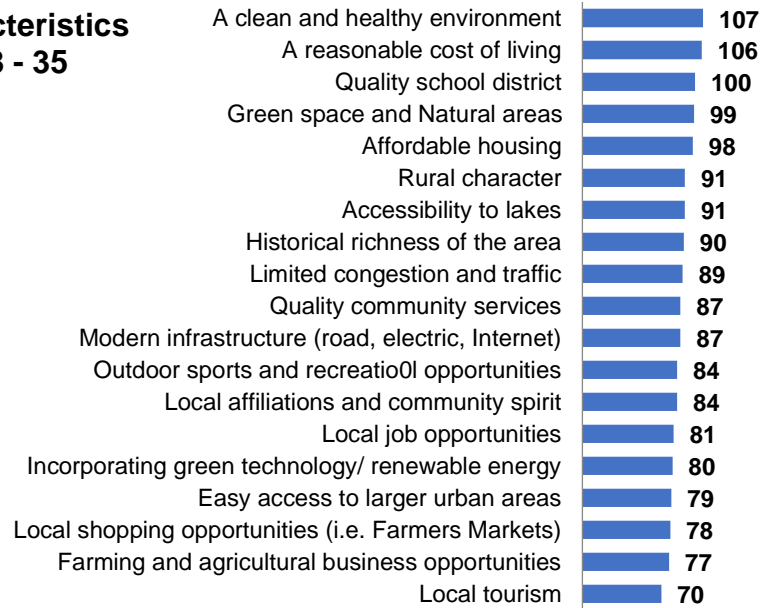




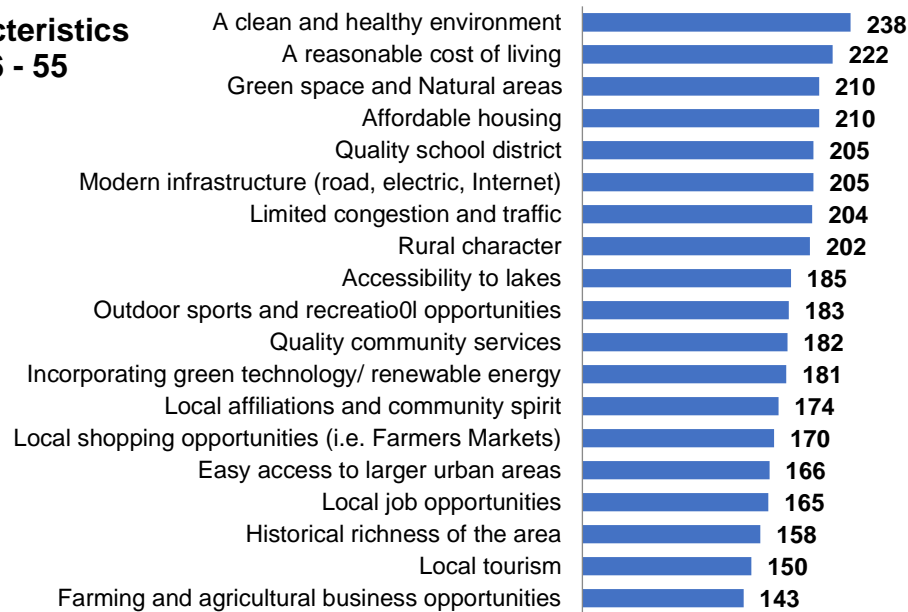
Characteristics: All Respondents



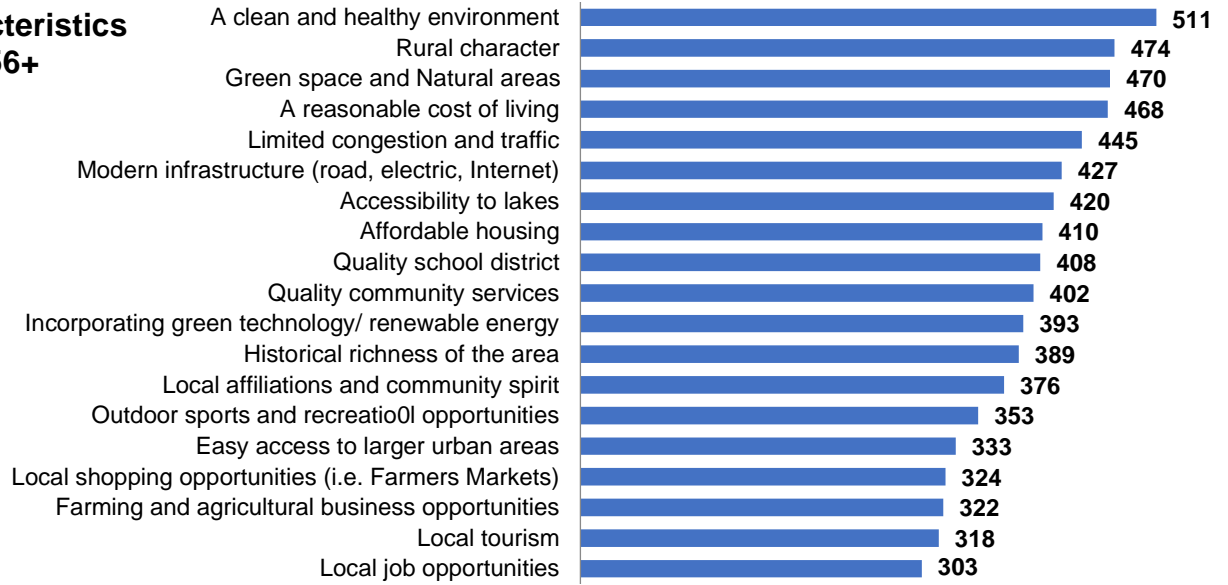
Characteristics 18 - 35



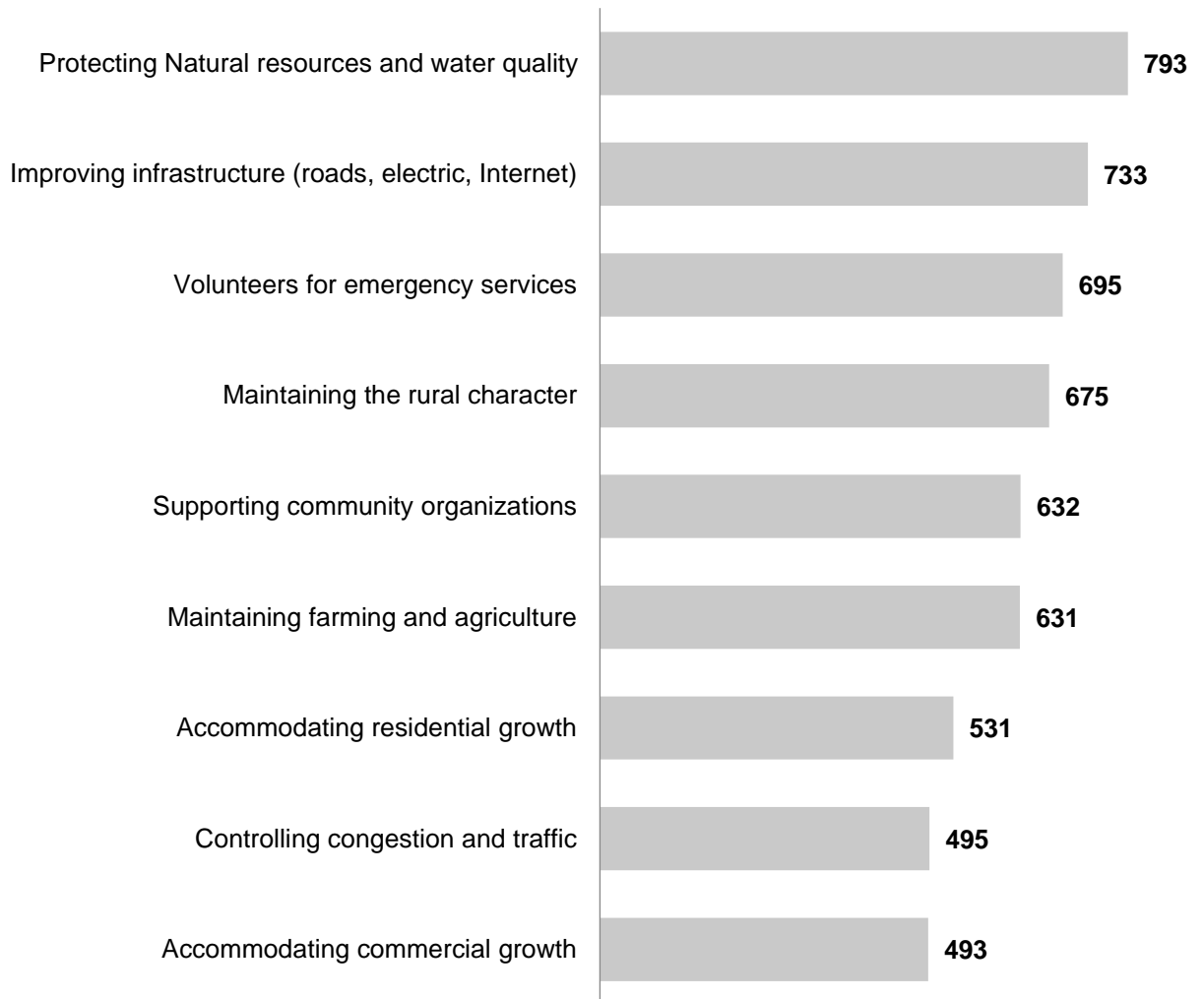
Characteristics 36 - 55



Characteristics
56+

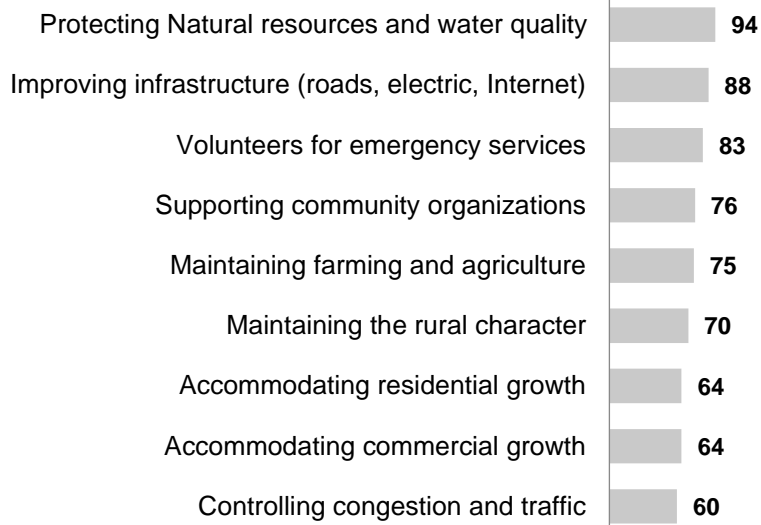


Biggest Challenge: All Respondents



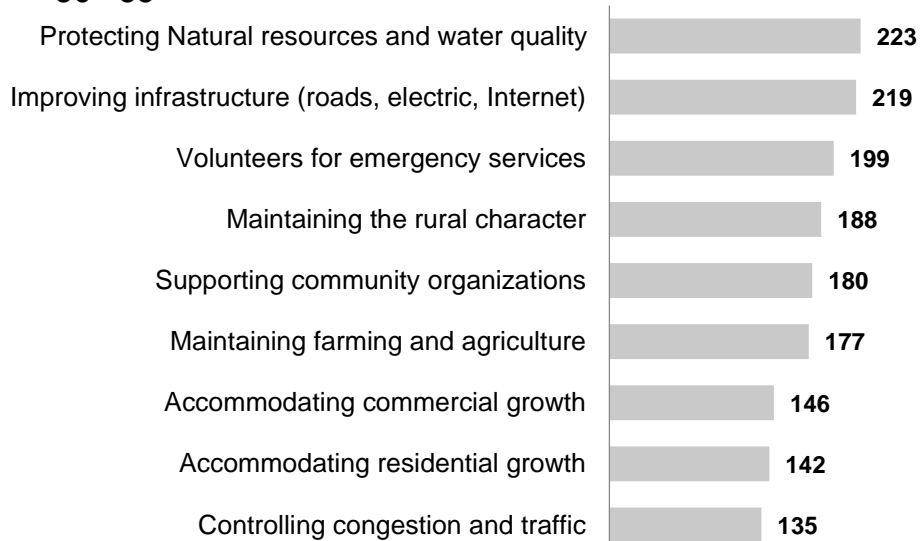
Biggest Challenges

18 - 35



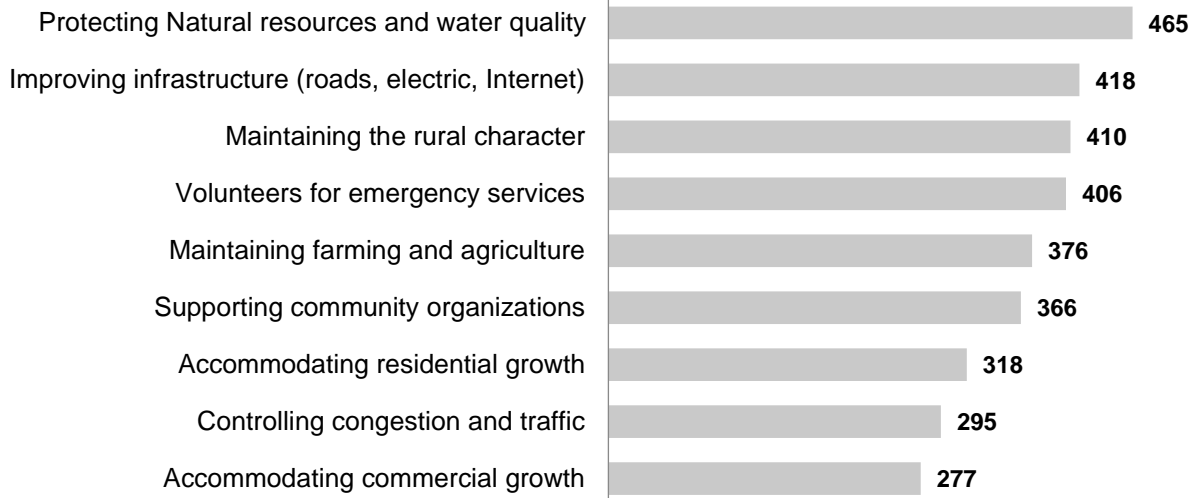
Biggest Challenges

36 - 55



Biggest Challenges

56+



Through the analysis of community participation, the update to the Town of Scipio Comprehensive Plan provides a sound basis for guiding future growth, development, and community preservation. Any future land use or zoning regulations must reflect the findings and recommendations of the 2020 Town of Scipio Comprehensive Plan Update.

Special thanks to the members of the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee:

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