

Town of Carlton Engagement Report

September 2026

The Town of Carlton conducted a survey of residents to learn more about their views on issues facing the Town. Gathering input from residents is an important part of the development of a Comprehensive Plan. The questionnaire was developed by Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (G/FLRPC) with input from the Steering Committee. Responses were collected from support of the Community Heart and Soul Initiative.

The survey generated more than 100 responses to several of the primary questions, providing a broad range of perspectives to inform the Comprehensive Plan. The engagement findings demonstrate a strong connection between Carlton's rural character, waterfront resources, agricultural heritage, recreational opportunities, and sense of community. At the same time, respondents identified opportunities to strengthen local amenities, improve access to community resources, support businesses and tourism, and maintain the infrastructure and services that contribute to residents' quality of life.

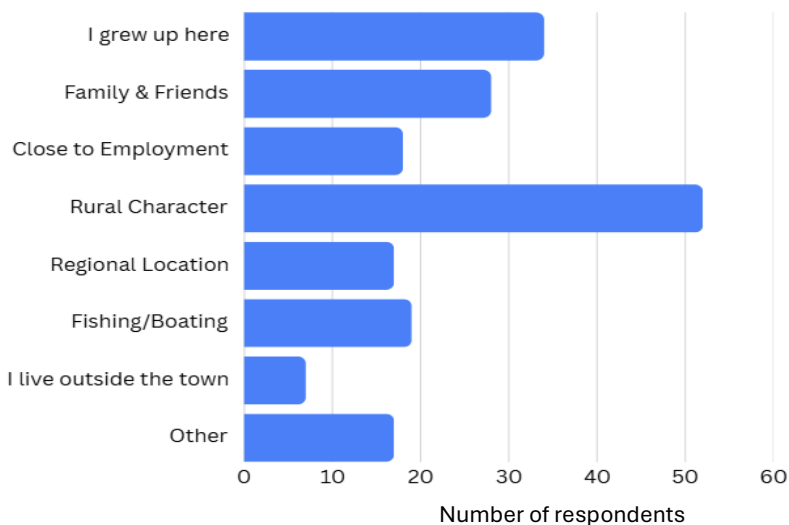
A Strong Sense of Place

Rural character emerged as the strongest reason residents choose to live in Carlton, followed by recreation and natural resources, lifelong connections to the community, and family and friends. Recreation and access to natural resources were also important, with 15% respondents identifying fishing, boating, and recreation. Other commonly identified reasons included growing up in Carlton, family and friends, cost of living, proximity to employment, and the Town's regional location.

Open-ended responses further emphasized the qualities that residents associate with Carlton. Respondents described the Town as quiet, peaceful, rural, and community-oriented, frequently referencing good neighbors, a small-town atmosphere, and connections to family and friends. Point Breeze, Lake Alice, Lake Ontario, the Oak Orchard River, and other waterfront and recreational areas were repeatedly identified as important places within the community.

Together, these responses indicate that Carlton's identity is strongly tied to its rural landscape, natural resources, waterfront, and relationships among residents. These characteristics represent important assets to consider as the Town plans for future growth and investment.

What is the main reason you chose to live in the Town of Carlton?

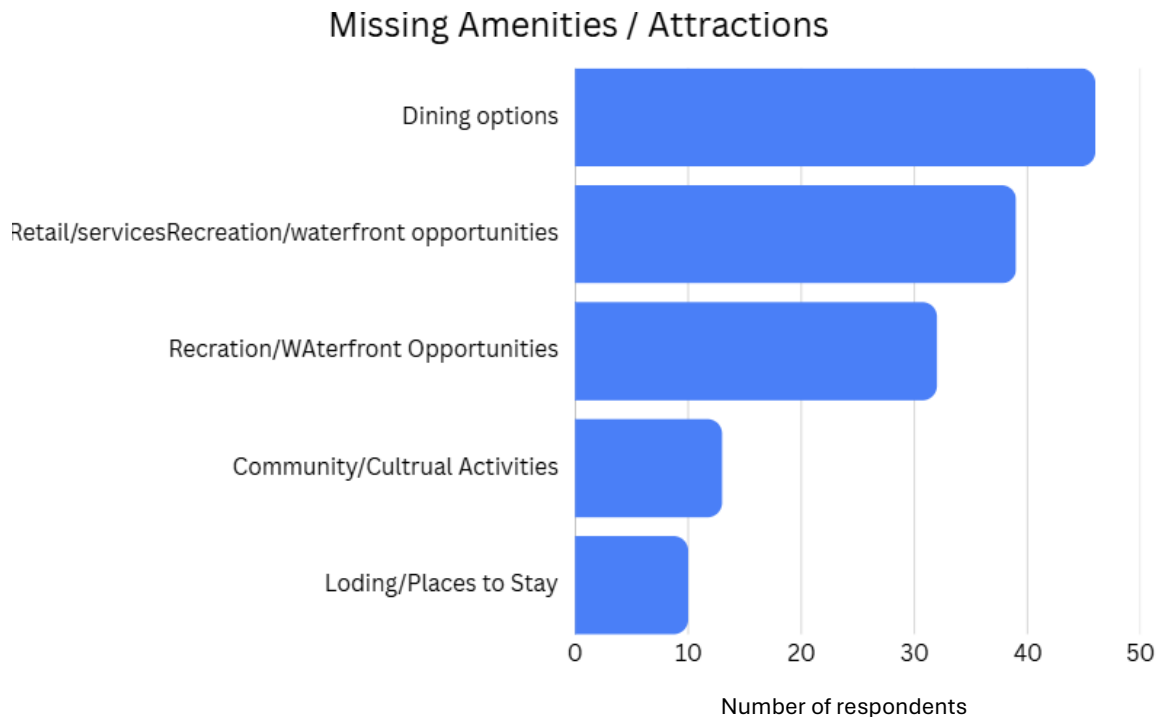


Strengthening Local Amenities and Destinations

While residents expressed strong appreciation for Carlton's existing character, the survey identified opportunities to expand the amenities and services available within the Town. Dining options were the most frequently identified missing amenity, 46 respondents selected this response. Residents also identified a need for additional retail services, stores, restaurants, and other businesses that could serve both residents and visitors.

Several responses specifically referenced opportunities for additional food and gathering places, including restaurants and dining opportunities along the waterfront. Residents also expressed interest in additional cultural activities, events, and attractions that could provide more opportunities for people to gather and spend time in the community.

Point Breeze and Carlton's waterfront were frequently identified as having the potential to serve as stronger destinations. Respondents envisioned opportunities for family-oriented businesses, food and entertainment, festivals, water-based events, and other activities that could attract visitors while also providing additional recreational and gathering opportunities for residents.

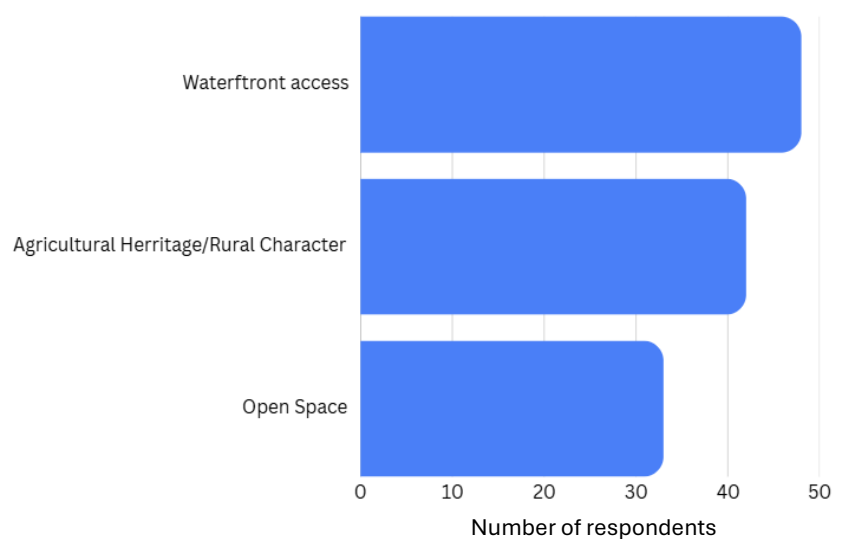


Protecting Community Character and Natural Resources

Maintaining Carlton's existing character was a consistent theme throughout the survey. When asked about the most important elements of community character, open space and waterfront access were among the most frequently mentioned responses. Agricultural heritage, rural landscapes, farms, farm stands, and access to the lakes and waterways were also repeatedly identified. Residents emphasized the importance of preserving access to waterfront areas while maintaining the Town's rural and agricultural identity. The waterfront was viewed not only as an environmental and recreational resource, but also as an important component of Carlton's identity and economic potential.

Some respondents also expressed concerns about the potential impacts of future development, particularly large-scale solar development. These comments suggest that residents recognize the need to accommodate future investment while carefully considering how development may affect agricultural land, open space, viewsheds, natural resources, and the Town's rural character.

Elements Important to Maintaining Carlton's Character



A Future Focused on Recreation, Waterfronts, and Local Activity

Residents' responses regarding Carlton's future generally reflected a desire to build upon the Town's existing assets rather than fundamentally change its character. Respondents expressed interest in a community that is more active, welcoming, and connected to its waterfront and recreational resources.

Water-based and outdoor recreation were recurring themes in the future vision responses. Residents identified opportunities for hiking, kayaking, canoeing, boating, fishing, and other activities that take advantage of Carlton's natural resources. There was also interest in creating a more vibrant atmosphere through festivals, water events, family-oriented activities, and other community programming.

What We Heard:

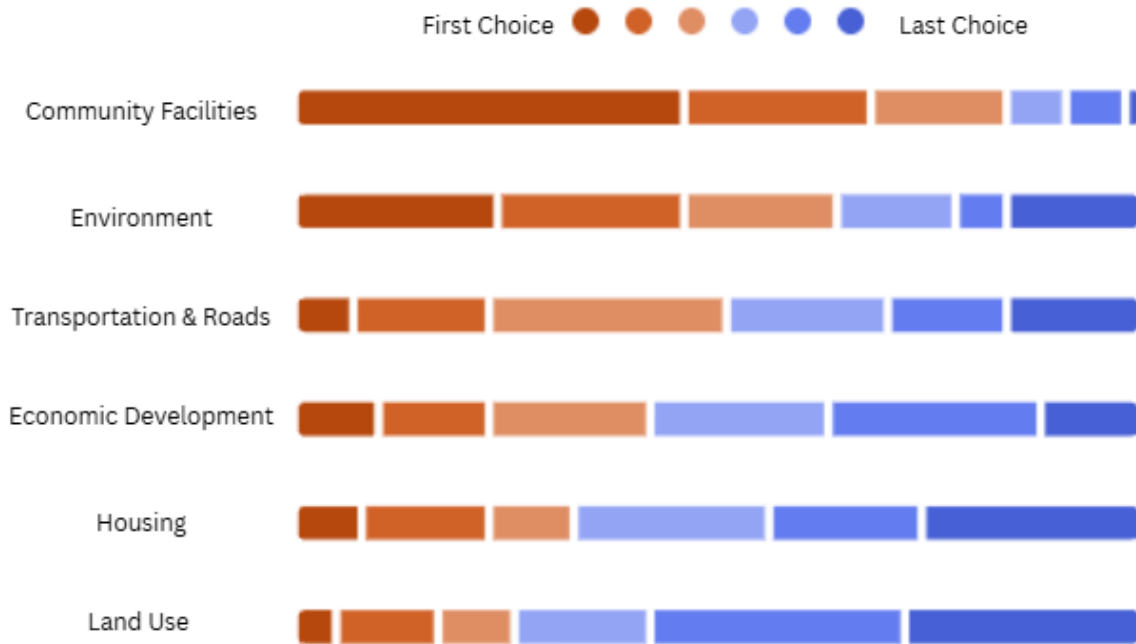
Residents envision a future that builds upon Carlton's waterfront, recreational resources, local businesses, and community destinations while maintaining its rural and small-town character.

Point Breeze was repeatedly identified as an area with potential to become a stronger destination. Suggestions included additional family-oriented businesses, food and entertainment, and activities that could complement the waterfront and recreational resources already present.

Overall, the community's vision points toward thoughtful investment and enhancement of existing destinations, with an emphasis on recreation, waterfront access, local businesses, tourism, and community activity while preserving Carlton's small-town and rural identity.

Community Priorities

When asked to rank six broad planning topics, Community Facilities ranked as the highest priority, followed by Environment and Transportation. Economic Development, Housing, and Land Use followed in the ranking. The ranking provides an important indication of the issues residents consider most important to the Town's future. Community Facilities encompasses emergency services, community and recreational facilities, and utilities, while environmental priorities include water and air quality, energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions, and trees and natural resources. Transportation concerns include road conditions, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, waterfront park access, and intersections.



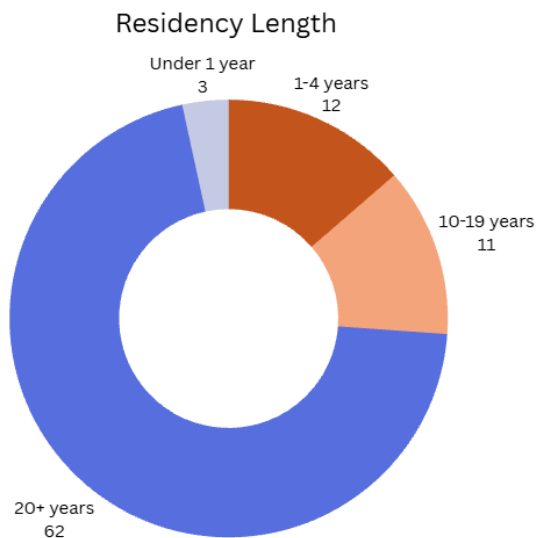
Open-ended responses provided additional detail regarding these priorities. Residents referenced concerns related to roads, private roads, Town maintenance, water and sewer services, the Town park, and access to waterfront areas. Other responses raised questions and concerns related to solar development, land use, Town leadership, and communication between residents and local government. These responses suggest that the Comprehensive Plan should address both long-term community development and the day-to-day infrastructure, services, and facilities that support residents' quality of life.

Housing, Land Use, and Future Growth

Housing and Land Use ranked below the other major planning categories in the survey, but responses still identified several considerations for future planning. Residents expressed a desire to maintain Carlton's rural character and open spaces while being thoughtful about where and how new development occurs.

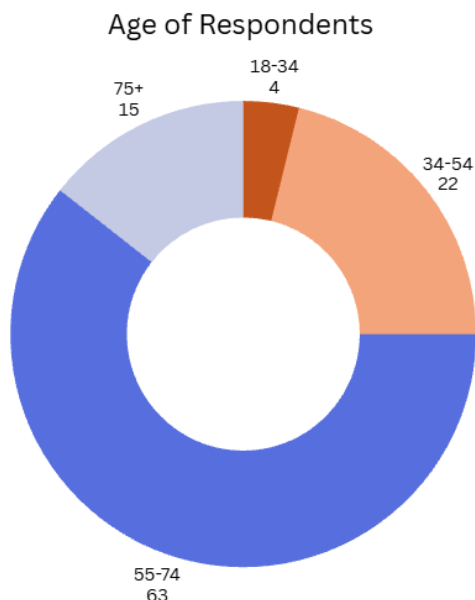
Comments related to solar development, agricultural land, open space, waterfront access, and future development indicate that land use decisions will be an important part of balancing growth with preservation. The Comprehensive Plan can provide a framework for considering future development in a way that supports community needs while protecting the agricultural, environmental, and scenic resources that residents identified as important.

Community Participation



The survey responses were predominantly from long-term residents. Of those responding to the residency question, 81 identified themselves as Town residents, while others identified as property or business owners, employees, or other participants in the Carlton community. Sixty-two respondents reported living in Carlton for more than 20 years, demonstrating a strong representation of residents with longstanding connections to the Town.

Respondents were also predominantly older adults. Sixty-three respondents were between the ages of 55 and 74, and 15 were over age 75. Twenty-two respondents were between 35 and 54, while four were between 18 and 34 and no respondents were under 18.



This participation profile provides valuable insight from residents with deep connections to Carlton, while also highlighting the importance of continuing to seek input from younger residents, families, and other community members as the planning process continues. Broadening participation can help ensure that the Comprehensive Plan reflects the needs of current residents as well as the generations who will shape Carlton's future.

Key Engagement Themes

Preserve what makes Carlton unique. Residents strongly value the Town's rural character, small-town atmosphere, agricultural heritage, open spaces, and natural resources.

Improve waterfront access and recreation. Lake Ontario, Point Breeze, Lake Alice, the Oak Orchard River, and other waterways are central to Carlton's identity and represent opportunities for recreation, tourism, and community activity.

Support local businesses and amenities. Residents expressed interest in more dining, retail, services, and community destinations that can serve residents while also attracting visitors.

Strengthen Point Breeze and other destinations. Respondents see opportunities to build upon existing waterfront destinations through events, recreation, family-oriented activities, and complementary businesses.

Maintain and improve community facilities and infrastructure. Roads, utilities, parks, emergency services, and other community facilities were identified as important components of Carlton's quality of life.

Balance growth with preservation. Residents expressed interest in investment and additional activity, while emphasizing the importance of protecting rural landscapes, agricultural resources, open space, waterfront access, and community character.