



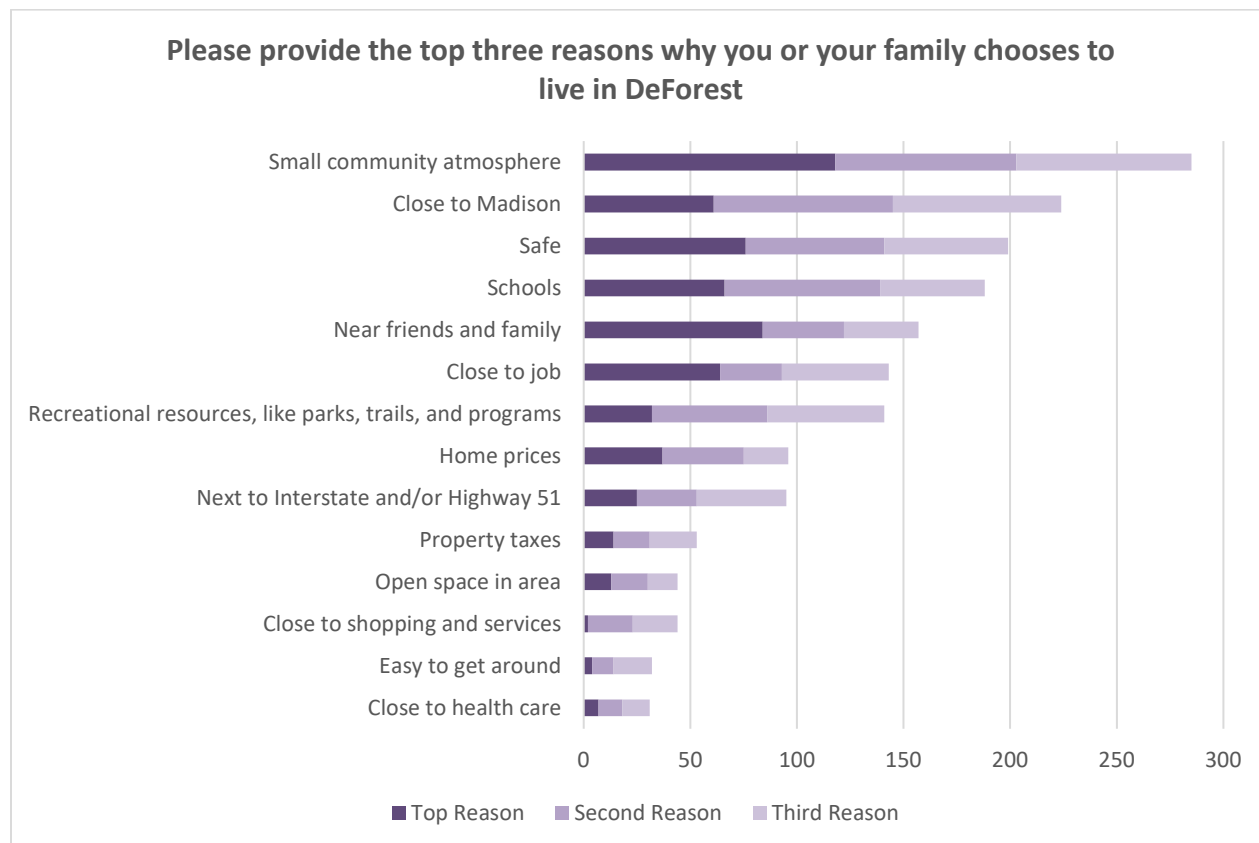
Community Survey Results October 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

In October 2020, the Village of DeForest conducted a community survey to gather resident input on community priorities and preferences related to the pending Comprehensive Plan update. Several questions were carried forward from a 2012 survey with a similar purpose. The new survey was conducted using Survey Monkey—an internet survey tool. The Village utilized various means of media to direct residents to the survey during October 2020, and received 614 responses.

Small Community Atmosphere and Proximity to Madison Important Reasons for Choosing DeForest

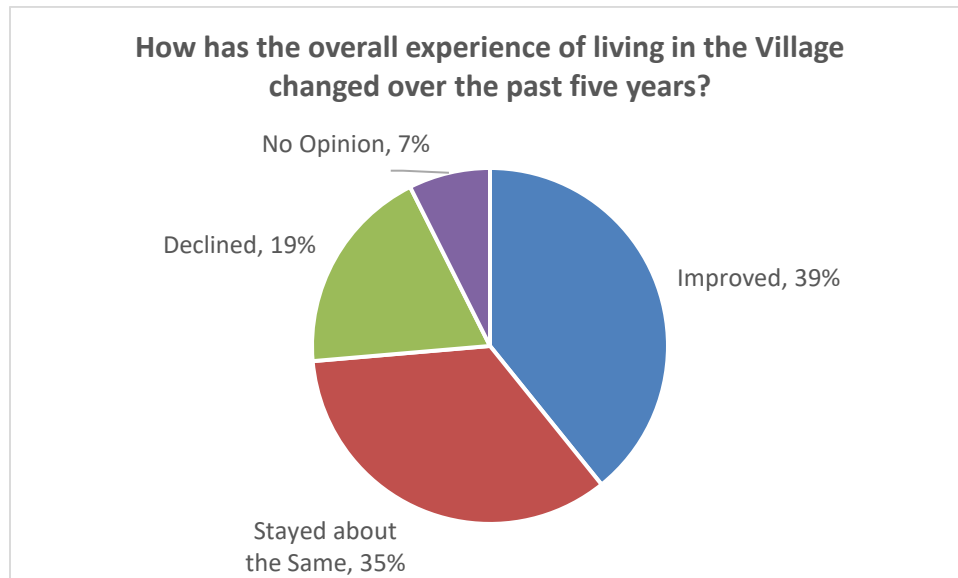
Survey respondents were asked to select their top three reasons, in order, for choosing to live in DeForest, from among 14 potential reasons. The next page includes a chart showing responses. “Small community atmosphere” followed by “close to Madison” were most frequently listed among the top three reasons. “Small community atmosphere” was most frequently listed as the top reason, followed by “near friends and family”, “safe”, “schools”, “close to job”, and “close to Madison”.

In the 2012 survey, “good schools” was most frequently mentioned as the top choice and one of the top three choices. “Village’ atmosphere” was the fifth most listed reason in 2012, but other responses were similar between the 2012 and 2020 surveys. Different responses may be somewhat related to wording shifts. Differences may also reflect greater recent development activity than in the years prior to 2012, plus recent public school capacity issues now being addressed through new and expanded schools.



Most Respondents Believe DeForest is Getting Better or Staying the Same

The next question intended to gain insight on how respondents felt about the overall living experience in DeForest. Three-quarters of respondents believed the overall living experience in DeForest improved or stayed the same over the past five years, with most of these observing improvement.



(There was a somewhat similar question in the 2012 survey, but the 2012 question focused on perceptions of the Village’s “appearance”, not the living experience, so a comparison cannot be made.)

The 2020 survey included a follow-up, open-ended question, asking respondents why they provided the response they did to the “experience” question. There were over 500 unique responses to this follow-up question.

For the 39% who responded that the living experience had improved, common reasons were:

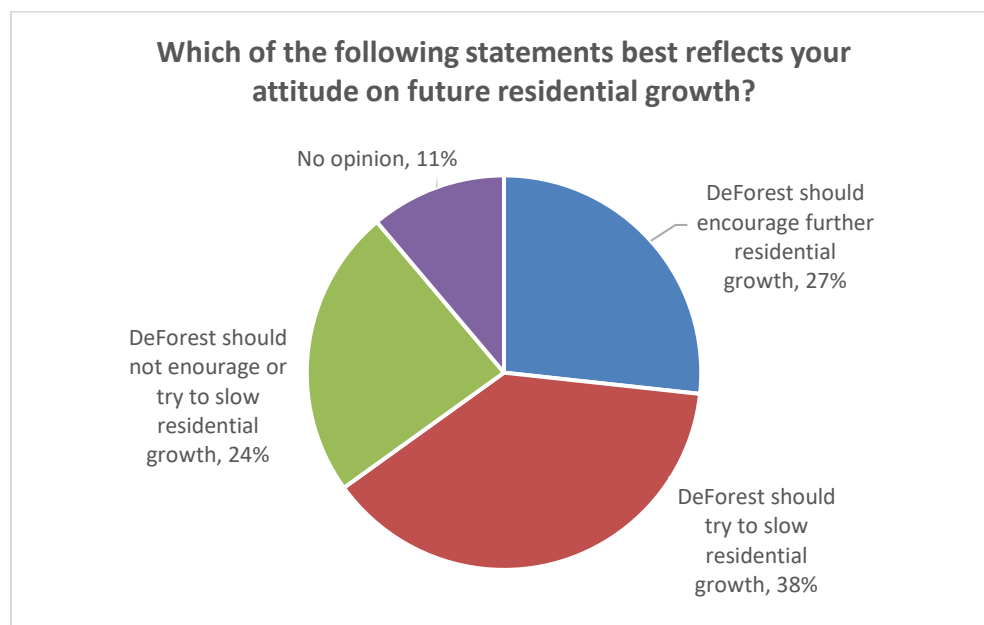
- Added schools and school facilities
- Increased and expanded recreational opportunities and amenities
- Increased property values

For the 19% who responded that the living experience had declined, common reasons were:

- High property taxes
- High housing costs
- Too much growth too quickly
- Not enough, or a wide enough range of, local shopping opportunities

Emerging Interest in Slowing Residential Growth

A plurality (38%) of respondents suggested that the Village should try to slow residential growth, while 27% suggested that the Village should try to encourage further residential growth. This was almost the reverse from responses the 2012 survey, wherein 39% said the Village should encourage further residential growth while 25% said the Village should try to slow residential growth. This reversal is perhaps not surprising. In the three years that preceded the 2012 survey, the Village issued permits for only 57 housing units, while from 2016 to 2019, the Village issued permits for 580 housing units.

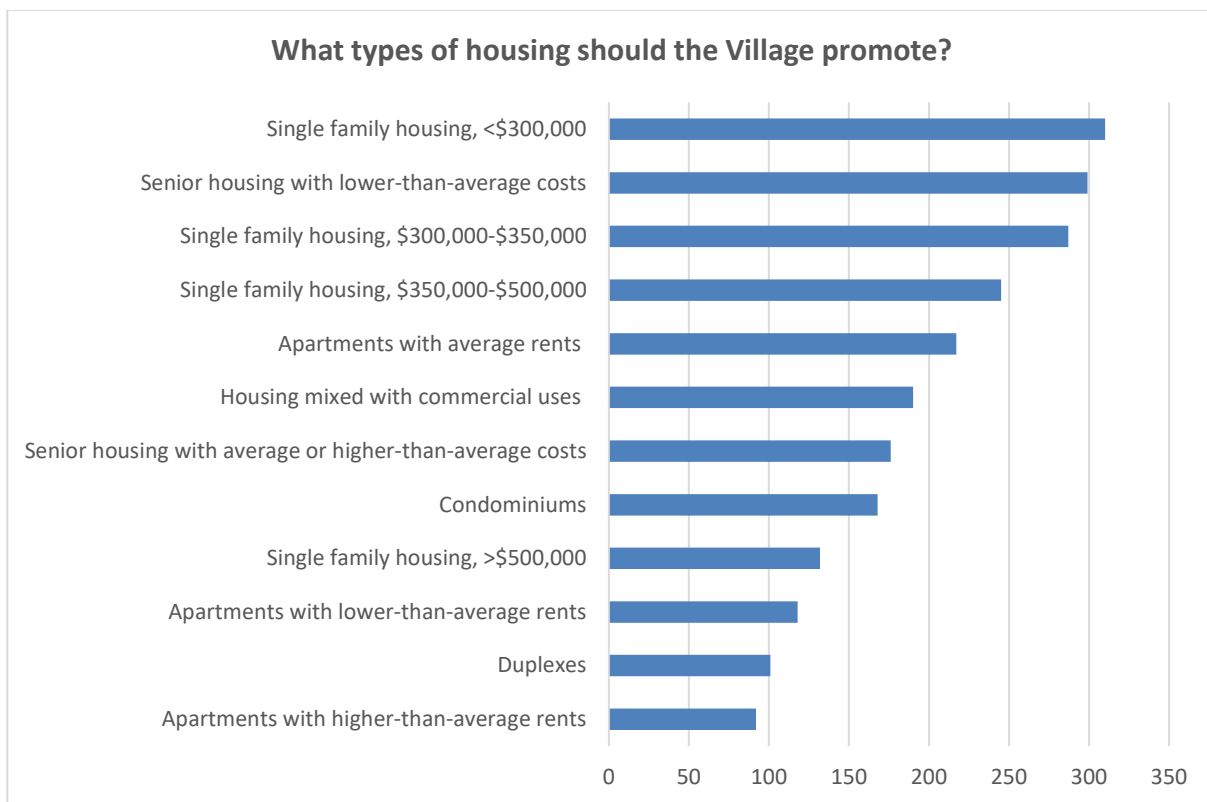


Top Housing Preferences include Affordable Single Family and Senior Housing

The Comprehensive Plan update will review the Village's current housing mix policy in new neighborhoods, and articulate policies for housing affordable to the local population and workforce.

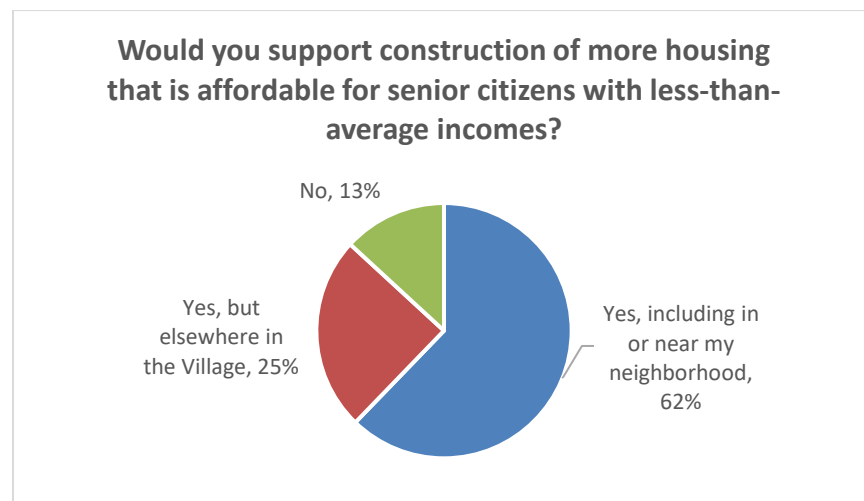
Respondents frequently listed single-family housing of different costs—except for over \$500,000—among the types of housing the Village should promote. Also ranking highly were “senior housing with lower-than-average costs”, followed by “apartments with average rents.” Apartments with both lower- and higher-than-average rents ranked near the bottom.

These responses affirm that housing affordability and availability appears to be a growing issue. In 2019, the median sale price of existing single-family homes in the DeForest-Windsor area was \$318,450. This was a 71% increase since 2009, which was the highest percentage increase in Dane County. Also, anecdotal evidence suggests a growing senior housing demand, without significant recent increases in supply. Also, respondents may have been thinking about their own current and future housing needs—42% of respondents were over 50 years old.



Strong Support for Affordable Senior Housing Construction

Nearly 9 of every 10 respondents supported construction of more housing that is affordable for senior citizens with less-than-average incomes, if a local need is identified. The majority of respondents (62%) supported construction of this type of affordable senior housing in or near their own neighborhood.

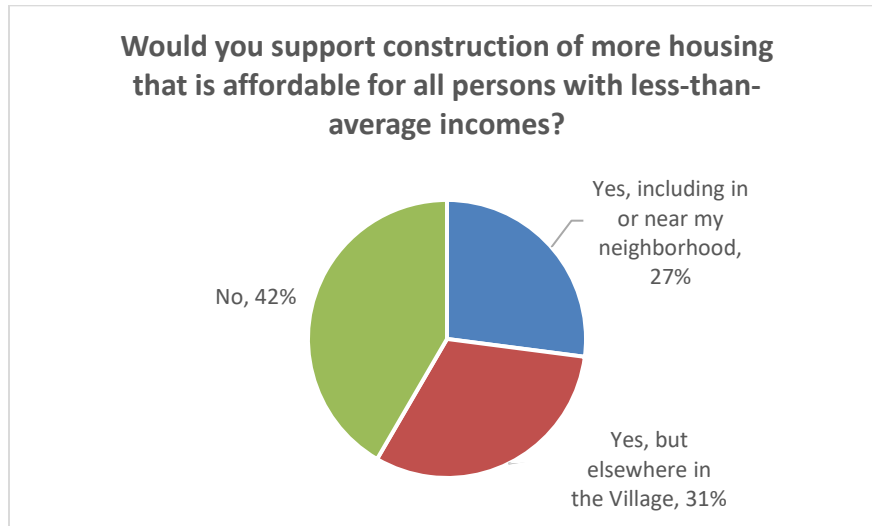


The 13% of respondents who indicated that they did not support construction of affordable senior housing usually offered the following set of reasons in response to an open-ended follow-up question:

- Increased property taxes based on increased service demands
- Decreased values of existing homes in the vicinity of such developments

- Not a market for more of this type of housing in DeForest
- Do not support lower-income housing of any kind in the Village

Nearly 6 of every 10 respondents supported construction of more housing that is affordable to all persons with a less-than-average incomes, if a local need is identified. A little less than one-half of these respondents supported construction of this type of housing in or near their own neighborhood.



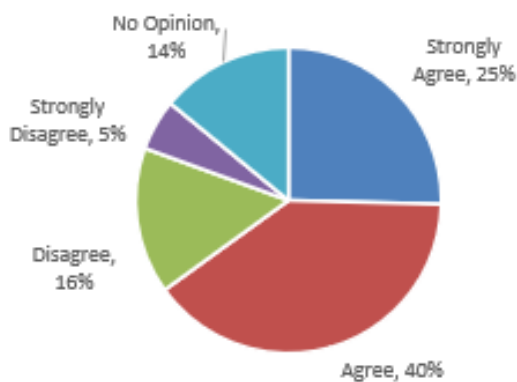
The 42% of respondents who indicated that they did not support construction of housing affordable to all persons with a less-than-average incomes often indicated concern with increased crime, in addition to a similar set of concerns cited for not supporting more affordable senior housing.

Strong Support for More Retail, Commercial, and Downtown Development

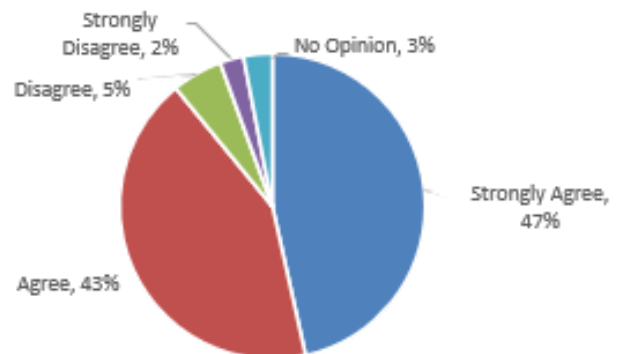
The Comprehensive Plan update will also feature a fully updated Economic Development chapter.

Significant majorities of respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that DeForest should encourage every form of non-residential development listed in the charts that follow. Strongest preferences were for the Village to encourage more retail and commercial service businesses and further downtown revitalization. Responses were in line with those from the same question in the 2012 survey. However, more respondents “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with encouraging more industrial businesses in the 2020 survey—up from 14% to 21%. Like with residential development, DeForest has experienced some larger-scale industrial development projects over the past four years.

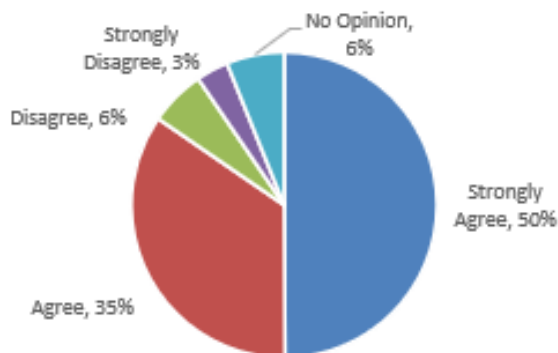
DeForest should encourage more industrial businesses to locate here



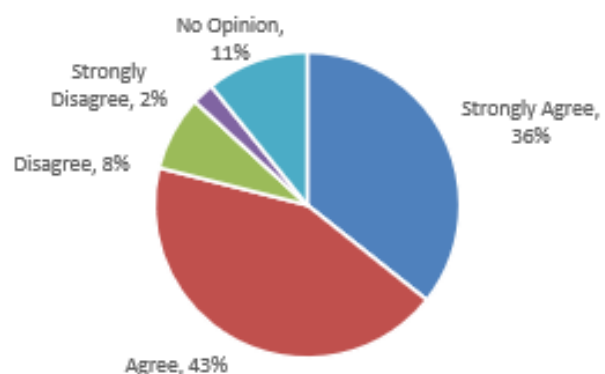
DeForest should encourage more retail and commercial service businesses to locate here



DeForest should encourage further revitalization of its downtown area

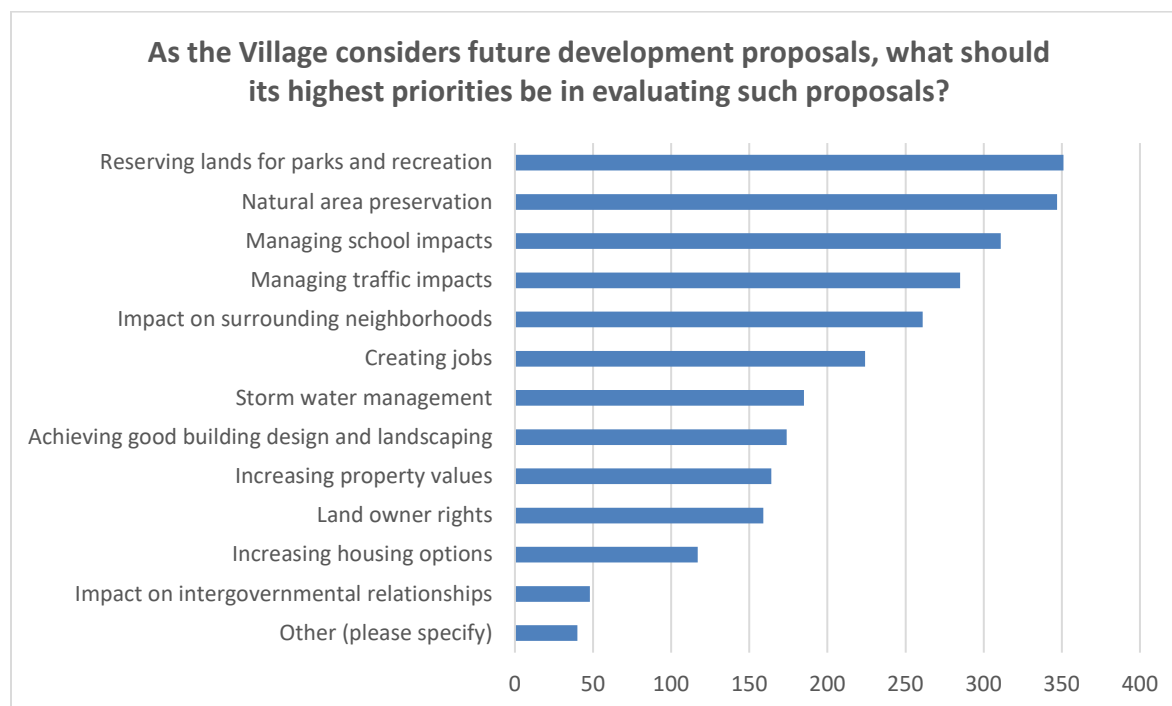


DeForest should encourage more office and research businesses to locate here



Development Priorities include Retaining Natural Areas, Parks, and Managing School & Traffic Impacts

Respondents were asked to identify key criteria against which the Village should evaluate future development proposals. Among 13 potential priorities, the most frequent included “reserving lands for parks and recreation”, “natural area preservation”, and managing school, traffic, and neighborhood impacts. Managing traffic impacts was a greater concern in 2020 than in 2012; traffic volumes on many local roads have increased in this period. “Increasing property values” was a lesser concern in the 2020 survey than in 2012, perhaps in response to the significant value increases in the Village over this period.



Future Vision for the Village Consistent with Earlier Survey Responses

Respondents were asked to complete the following open-ended statement: “As I look forward over the next several years, I wish DeForest would...”. Of the 500 unique responses to this question, the most common responses (in order of preference) are summarized as follows:

- ...increase commercial options, especially restaurants and grocery stores, with mixed opinions on larger-scale retail uses (103 responses)
- ...build community recreational facilities, such as a community pool, community center, and/or additional paths and parks (56 responses)
- ...manage or lower property taxes (52 responses)
- ...slow growth (45 responses)
- ...invest in the downtown and other older parts of the Village (38 responses)
- ...retain its “village” or “small community” character (37 responses)
- ...invest in and or improve existing infrastructure, such as roads and highways (22 responses)

Compared to 2012 survey responses to the same question, 2020 respondents were more likely to be interested in slowing growth, improving existing infrastructure, and investing in the downtown.

Desire to Continue Expansion of the Local and Regional Trail Network

Respondents were asked the following question:

The Village has a Pool Task Force studying the feasibility, type, and location of a potential outdoor community pool. Beyond the pool initiative, what one other community amenity, if any, do you think the Village should pursue over the next five years?

Of 460 unique responses, the most common (in order of preference) are summarized as follows:

- ...increase trails throughout the Village, connecting to existing local trails and to trails in nearby communities (60 responses)
- ...a community center, recreation center, or youth center (26 responses)
- ...pickleball courts or tennis courts (19 responses)
- ...skate park (14 responses)
- ...none; instead, maintain and improve existing infrastructure (10 responses)

In addition, 36 respondents indicated that they did not want a community pool, instead believing that the money could be better used on other community amenities, or on maintaining existing facilities.

Last Call!

The final substantive question offered an opportunity to provide any additional brief comments related to the future growth and development of the Village. The 300 responses to this question generally reinforced several ideas mentioned earlier, and included:

- Slowing growth, particularly apartments but also larger single-family home subdivisions
- Decreasing the tax burden on residents
- Encouraging and promoting commercial and retail development
- Continuing to promote and expand DeForest's trail system and park system
- Retaining DeForest's roots as a small-town, family-friendly, safe community

Respondent Demographics

The 614 survey respondents represented about 8% of DeForest's adult population. This was greater total and rate than the 372 responses to the 2012 survey.

2020 survey respondents generally reflected of the actual population of the Village, though were weighted towards homeowners and parents with children. Respondent characteristics are as follows:

- 94% were homeowners, compared to 78% of the DeForest's total population that lived in owner-occupied residences per a 2018 U.S. Census Bureau estimate.
- 55% of all respondents reported having school-aged children in the house. About 40% of DeForest households had individuals under 18 per the 2018 U.S. Census estimate.

- 4% of respondents were between 19 and 29 years of age, 30% of respondents were between 30 and 39 years of age, 24% of respondents were between 40 and 49, 26% of respondents were between 50 and 64, and 16% of respondents were 65 years or over.
- Respondents were mixed between long-term and shorter-term residents, as represented in the following figure. 30% of respondents have been residents of the Village for less than five years. This compares to only 17% of respondents to the 2012 survey that had lived in DeForest less than five years. The increased percentage of shorter-term respondents is not surprising given the significant recent population growth of the Village.

