

Alton Master Plan Update Survey - Summer 2021
 Conducted for Alton Master Plan Committee
 by Tara Bamford, Community Planning Consultant

Summary of Results

Process

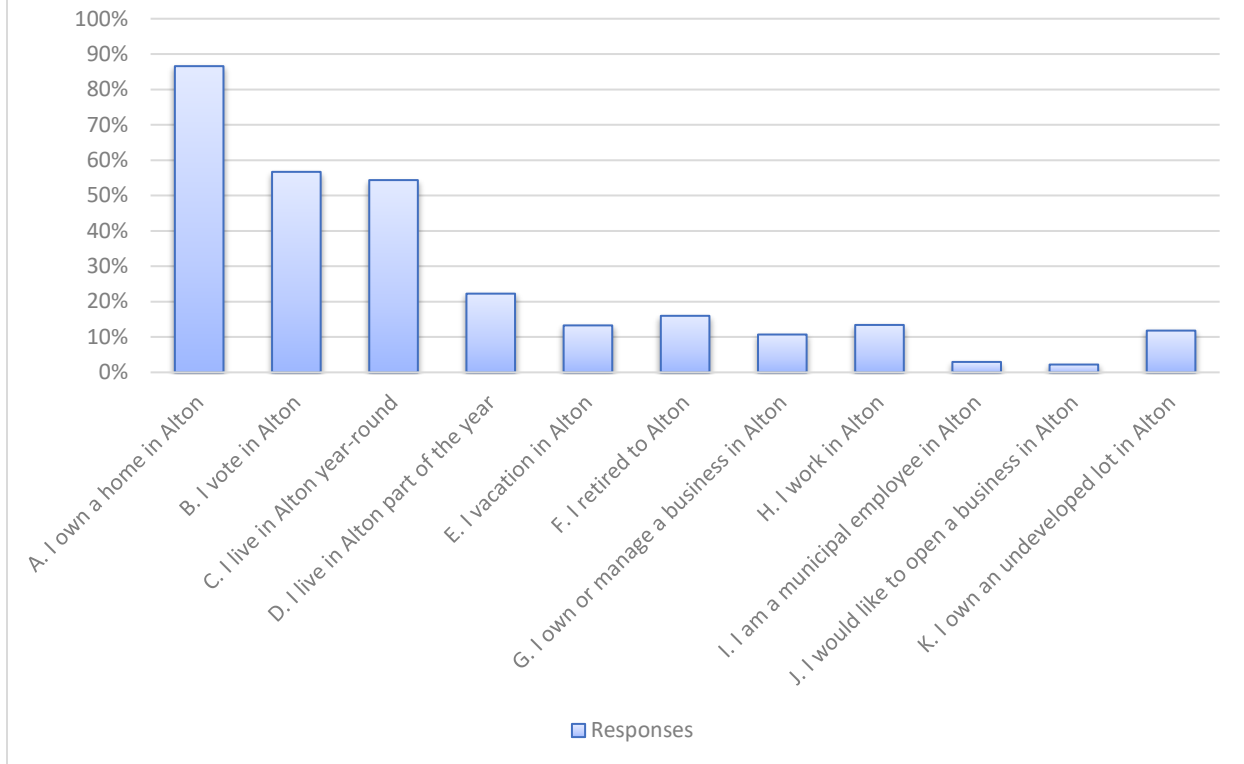
In mid-June, postcards containing information on accessing the three-question master plan update survey were mailed to the 3,442 addresses in the 03809 (Alton) and 03810 (Alton Bay) zip codes and to the 2,244 addresses associated with out-of-town landowners. Soon after, surveys were mailed to the 42 voters with post office boxes in adjacent towns and to the 3 landowners with addresses outside of the country. Eight surveys were returned as undeliverable. The end result was a total of 5,723 surveys reaching voter and landowner addresses. The post cards contained a link to complete the survey on-line and also offered the opportunity to obtain a hard copy of the survey from the town office. As of September 8, 2021, a total of 818 responses had been received, 779 on-line and 39 paper. The results are summarized below. Individual responses are provided in the associated appendices.

Question 1

The first question asked the respondents to identify their relationship with the town of Alton. As shown below and on the graph on the next page, 87% of responses were provided by those who own a home in Alton; slightly more than half (54%) reported living in Alton year-round.

What is your relationship with the town of Alton? (Please check ALL that apply.)		
Answer Choices	Responses	
A. I own a home in Alton	87%	704
B. I vote in Alton	57%	461
C. I live in Alton year-round	54%	442
D. I live in Alton part of the year	22%	181
E. I vacation in Alton	13%	108
F. I retired to Alton	16%	130
G. I own or manage a business in Alton	11%	87
H. I work in Alton	13%	109
I. I am a municipal employee in Alton	3%	24
J. I would like to open a business in Alton	2%	18
K. I own an undeveloped lot in Alton	12%	96
L. Other (please specify) (See Appendix 1L)		33
	Answered	813
	Skipped	5

What is your relationship with the town of Alton? (Please check ALL that apply.)



Question 2

What do you like best about Alton? Please list up to three positive qualities or strengths of the town.

The word cloud on the following page shows the 30 words or terms used most frequently in the responses to Question 2. The size of the word indicates the relative frequency of that word in the responses.



Question 3

What would make Alton even better? Please list up to three issues or needs you think should be addressed in the Master Plan.

Below is a summary of responses to Question 3 organized by the number of respondents who mentioned the issue or need so far.

Highest Priorities

The greatest number of responses focused on commercial development in Alton. Almost 200 suggestions were provided regarding Alton Village and/or Alton Bay. These included redevelopment, filling empty storefronts, beautification, support for small local businesses, more small businesses/shops, improving walkability and parking, and enhancing historic character. In addition, almost 200 comments were provided regarding the need for more businesses in town without reference to either village area. These included those who would like to see more restaurants or retail opportunities in town and those who mentioned jobs, the tax base, specific businesses, and the need for more year-round businesses. Several recommended that any new businesses should be located in or adjacent to the existing commercial areas.

50-100 Responses

Next in importance with over 50 responses each were concerns about property taxes, growth, road condition, the town beach, a community center, increased outdoor recreation opportunities, and traffic.

- Many respondents expressed a desire to keep taxes/expenses low or lower them. Some mentioned concern about taxes on waterfront properties specifically or the ability of retirees to pay taxes.
- Many commented on keeping Alton small and rural, a desire to see less development, limiting development, or keeping rural areas rural.
- Comments about roads focused primarily on maintenance and paving.
- Many expressed a desire for a town beach that is more family-friendly, away from the boat ramp. Several would like to see a town beach that is just for residents or taxpayers. Others commented on the size of the beach, its condition or adequacy of parking.
- Quite a few respondents expressed a desire for a community/recreation center; some mentioned especially the need for year-round activities, sports facilities, a facility for all ages or a place for teens.
- Several provided suggestions for more outdoor recreation opportunities. These included a desire for water access, more parks and recreation for all ages, trails in general or specifically developing a rail trail to connect with other towns. Upkeep of existing facilities was also mentioned.
- The issue of traffic was seen quite a bit in responses, some expressing a desire to see less traffic, particularly in summer, others looking for better traffic control. Enforcement of speed limits was mentioned as an issue throughout town.

25-50 Responses

- Several expressed a desire to improve the walkability of the community, including more sidewalks.
- Although the largest number of survey respondents expressed a desire for more business development in town, a significant number expressed a desire not to see any more chain stores/restaurants. Some specified no more large businesses or specific types of business.
- Boaters expressed a need for more public docking space and for more parking for the boat launch. Also mentioned by some was a desire to see more access to the lake for residents/taxpayers and improved circulation for launching and parking.

- Several suggested a town sewer system for the village areas. Some mentioned the lack of sewer as a barrier to village area development or a burden for small business owners.
- The importance of water quality to the community was also noted.
- More community events were suggested, for example, Bingo, music and movie nights. Several emphasized family-friendly events and opportunities to meet other community members.
- Additional housing for seniors and the workforce was identified as a need, with some specifying affordable or assisted, including more year-round rentals.

10-24 Responses

- Some, rather than commenting on a specific type of or location for growth, focused on enforcement of land use regulations and management of growth and development.
- Some respondents expressed a desire for more recycling opportunities with several mentioning plastics specifically.
- Some respondents listed the return of the Swap Shop.
- Bike trails/paths/lanes were suggested.
- A desire to control the design/appearance of new development was reported.
- Improvements to the water system mentioned included expansion of the year-round service to some properties where it is now only seasonal and improvements to infrastructure.
- Improved or increased communication between town government and residents was identified as well as community engagement.
- Other respondents specified a desire not to have specific types of residential development including cluster, condos, multi-family, high density, workforce or low income.
- Reducing the frequency of power outages was noted.
- Some respondents reported a desire to see more policing.
- Some noted specific land use regulations such as certain minimum lot sizes or prohibiting business development in the rural areas of town.

- A desire for more land conservation and protection of natural resources was reported.
- Concerns specific to lakeshore development included protection of shoreland vegetation and the level of development.
- A desire for more programs and services for youth was reported.
- Several mentioned a desire for more services to the islands, including emergency services specifically.
- More control of aquatic invasives/weeds was mentioned.
- Expansion of parking area at Mount Major was identified as a need by several.

5-9 Responses

Other suggestions made by a handful of respondents:

- Be mindful of landowner rights.
- Improve the appearance of the gateways to town.
- Provide fulltime firefighters.
- Provide an indoor pool.
- Preserve the town's historic buildings and sites.
- Have more frequent litter pick-up.
- Continue investment in town buildings.
- Provide a dog park.
- Provide public transportation.