

GEYSERVILLE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Community Surveys

February 2019



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Introduction

In March 2018, the Geyserville Planning Committee (GPC) completed two surveys designed to assist in future planning decisions. The first was a 10-question online survey that elicited 128 responses. In addition, 23 short interviews were conducted with local residents. The two surveys were the first of their kind to be completed and they illustrate the importance placed by the GPC in responding to community wishes. They provided the committee with valuable information concerning the community's common vision for the future of the town and their general views about future development. GPC members include Daisy Damskey, President, Paul Connors, Vice President, Walter Kieser, Secretary, Ryan Petersen, Treasurer, Hal Hinkle, Brian Sullivan, and Bryce Jones.

At the request of the President of the Geyserville Planning Committee, an Ad Hoc Committee (AHC) was appointed in June of 2018 to refine the two existing surveys and to increase the amount and specificity of data from the community. The AHC had the following members:

- Bryce Jones, co-chair, Geyserville Planning Committee member, real estate development consultant and former wine industry professional.
- John Cash, Ph.D., co-chair, a Geyserville resident and Senior Consultant to non-profit, mission-driven organizations.
- Jessica Heiges, UC Berkeley graduate student; part-time Geyserville resident; Geyserville Community Foundation member; fascinated and disturbed by waste generation.
- Hal Hinkle, Geyserville resident, member of the Geyserville Planning Committee.
- Lorie Loe, Geyserville resident, marketing & brand specialist and SRJC adjunct faculty.
- Gene Schnair, architect (recently retired from international practice), avid cyclist, and part-time Geyserville resident for past 15 years.

The AHC met four times during the autumn of 2018 and is collectively responsible for this report.

The Surveys

The original online survey and set of initial interviews provided important information to the GPC about overall attitudes towards growth and development in Geyserville. Respondents across both the online survey and individual interviews were quite consistent in their wish that Geyserville retain its small-town, rural nature as well as its agricultural heritage. Respondents and interviewees also felt that the community needed to work with the County to develop a local planning process; engagement by Geyserville residents in partnership with the county was felt to be critically important in defining the nature of growth and development.

Leadership of the GPC believed that these initial surveys needed to be further refined and deepened in order to provide actionable recommendations for future development that would be grounded in community input. The AHC was urged to develop another survey instrument that would build on the original survey and provide greater specificity around community interests. The AHC created a short, twelve-question written survey that was designed to reach as many people as possible in the community. To date, we have received 147 responses to this survey including 22 from the Hispanic Community. The survey was translated into Spanish. In addition, the AHC felt that more in-depth interviews needed to be conducted and 23 such interviews have been completed using a 37-question interview form.

The results of the short survey and the interviews, combined with the prior online survey and initial set of short interviews, paint a picture of deep community engagement in the future of Geyserville. Overall, they reinforce a future where Geyserville retains its small-town, rural, agricultural feel while simultaneously building a much more active, lively downtown core. They call for a preservation of historic structures but also a diversification of the businesses and services offered in the community. There is concern about the variety of housing, and especially affordable housing, and a wish for even greater community engagement as shown through events and a community newsletter. The surveys show a vibrant community that cares about Geyserville and about its future.

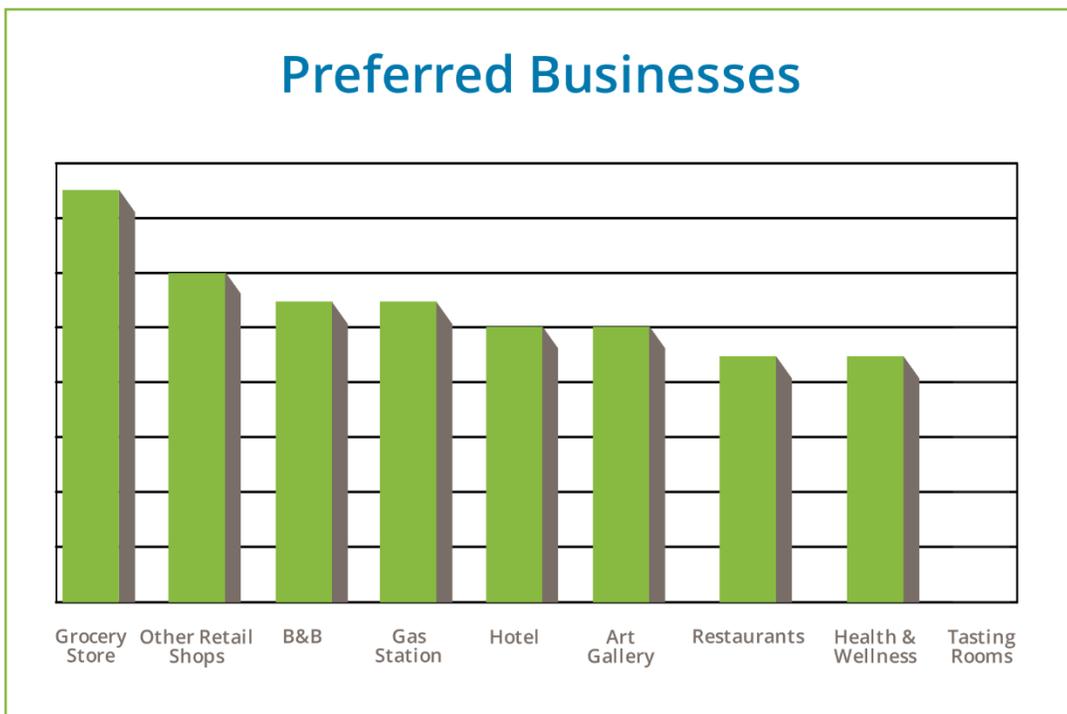
Follow-up Survey and Interviews

While there was overlap in questions from the short survey and the interviews, the interview questionnaire was considerably more detailed. Nevertheless, there were three questions that were unique to the short survey. This report provides charts showing levels of interest for both the interviews and for the short survey. Since the interview questionnaire was more detailed and also had many fewer responses than the short survey, the report separates the two even though there were a number of overlapping questions. The two surveys generally support each other in terms of the relative importance of key services desired by the community as it looks to the new master planning process.

Survey Responses and Analysis

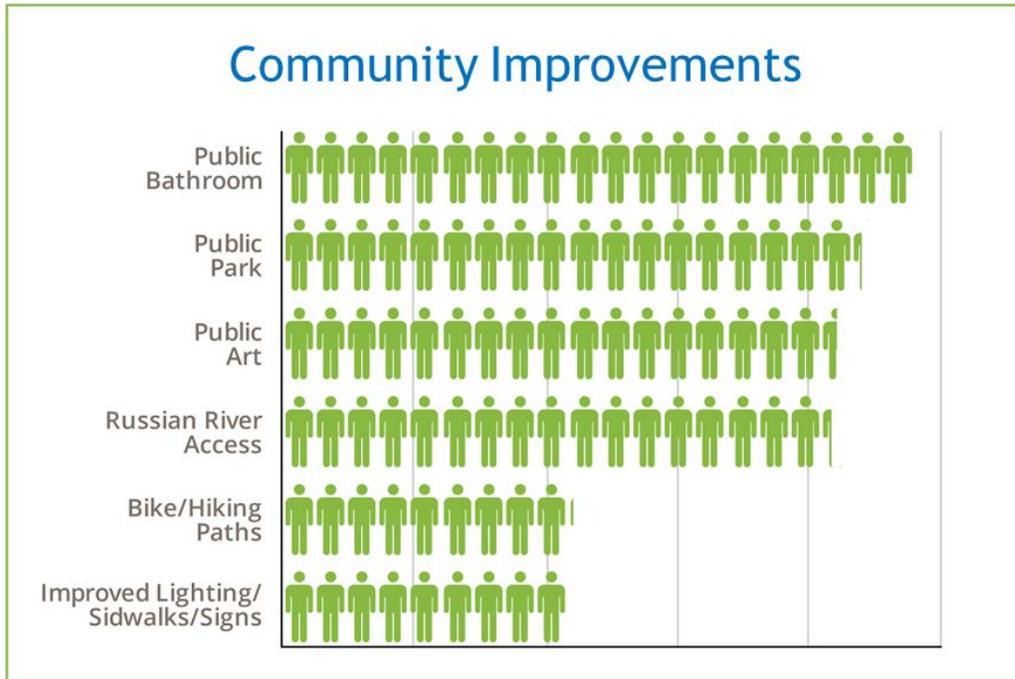
The following numbered questions were asked during the interview process. Descriptions of the short survey responses follow the responses to the interview questions.

1. In the Geyserville Community Survey, the majority of respondents said that they **highly valued the small-town, rural/agricultural character of the community** and would like to see it in the future in the downtown core. If you agree with this perspective, which of the following businesses would you like to see in town?

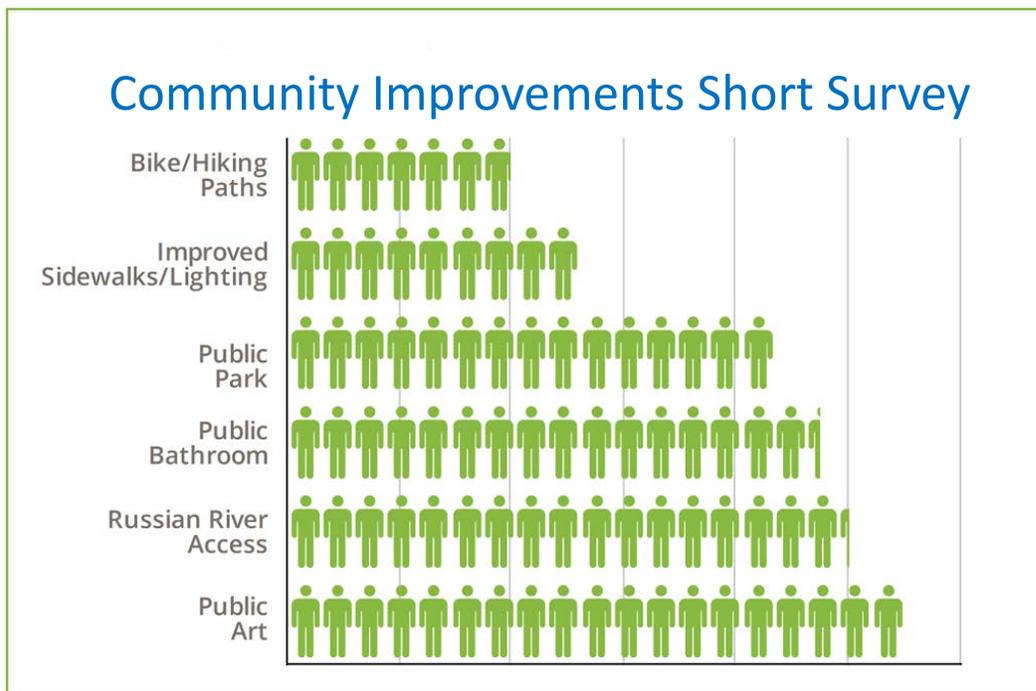


Respondents felt strongly about the need for a local grocery store that was not a chain and not a convenience store. Several commented that they would like to see something that showcased local products from the Geyserville area. A number called for variety in retail shops for the downtown core. Some of the stores people asked for were a bakery, a hardware store, a bank/atm, a gift shop, a clothing store, and a Mexican restaurant. Two interviewees commented that the existing stores did not cater to the local community and they wanted to see more retail in the central core that served Geyserville residents. This was reflected in the absence of support for additional tasting rooms downtown.

2. In the original online survey last March, **several needs were identified**. Which of the following do you think would be important for the future of the town? (*choose at least one answer*).

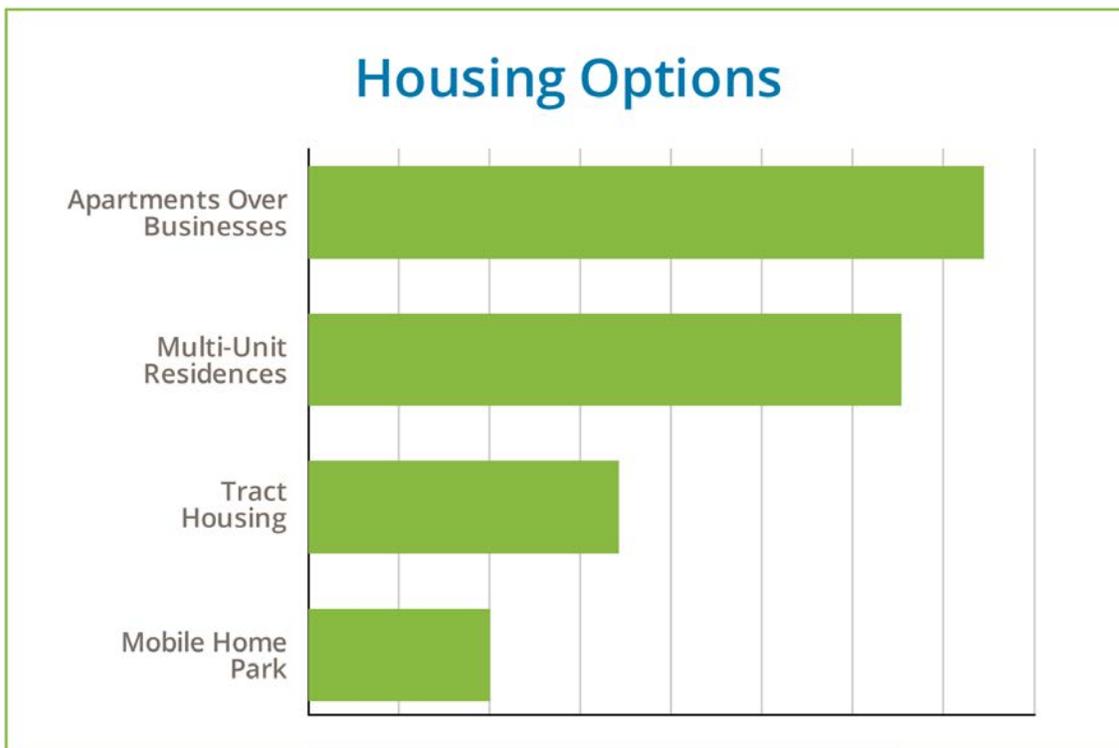


The short survey also asked similar questions, although the question about off-street parking was omitted. The results of the short survey were as follows:



In both the interviews and the short survey, the desire for a public park, a public bathroom, and access to the Russian River were broadly supported. Some local businesses express unhappiness that visitors, particularly cyclists, use the bathrooms in retail establishments without purchasing anything. One interviewee said that there was already sufficient parking but that the existing parking lot and associated green space needed to be better identified. While many would like to see access to the River, several expressed concern about maintenance and who would take care of this new park.

3. Affordable housing is a serious problem in Sonoma County and **any plan for the future of the town has to take into account the need for housing**. Which of the following options would you support for Geyserville? (*choose at least one answer*)

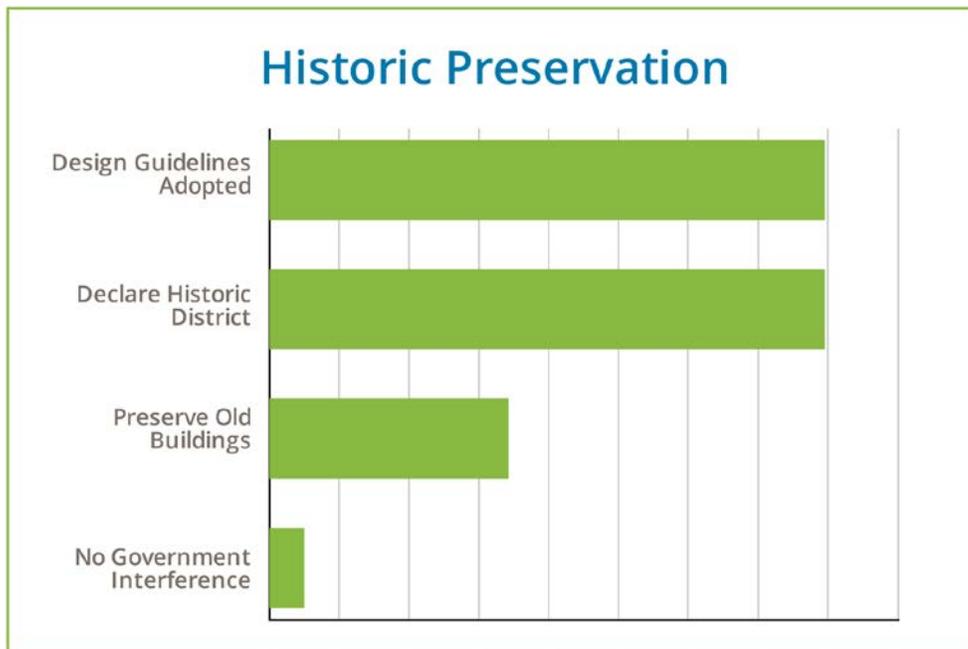


The short survey also asked questions about housing preferences. Nearly equal numbers of respondents (104 and 106) felt that both variety and affordability were important for the future of Geyserville.

The demographic data included as Appendix C. shows the high percentage of individuals in Geyserville who rent rather than own their own homes (only 44% own their homes versus 70% in Cloverdale). Both the interviews and the short survey showed that some variety of housing options are desirable for the community, but significant interest was expressed for both affordable housing and for housing that is higher density. Some expressed the view that there is definitely space to build housing outside of the downtown core, which was felt by some to be

crowded already. At the same time, there was strong support for multiple use structures to ensure that new businesses in the downtown core include a residential component.

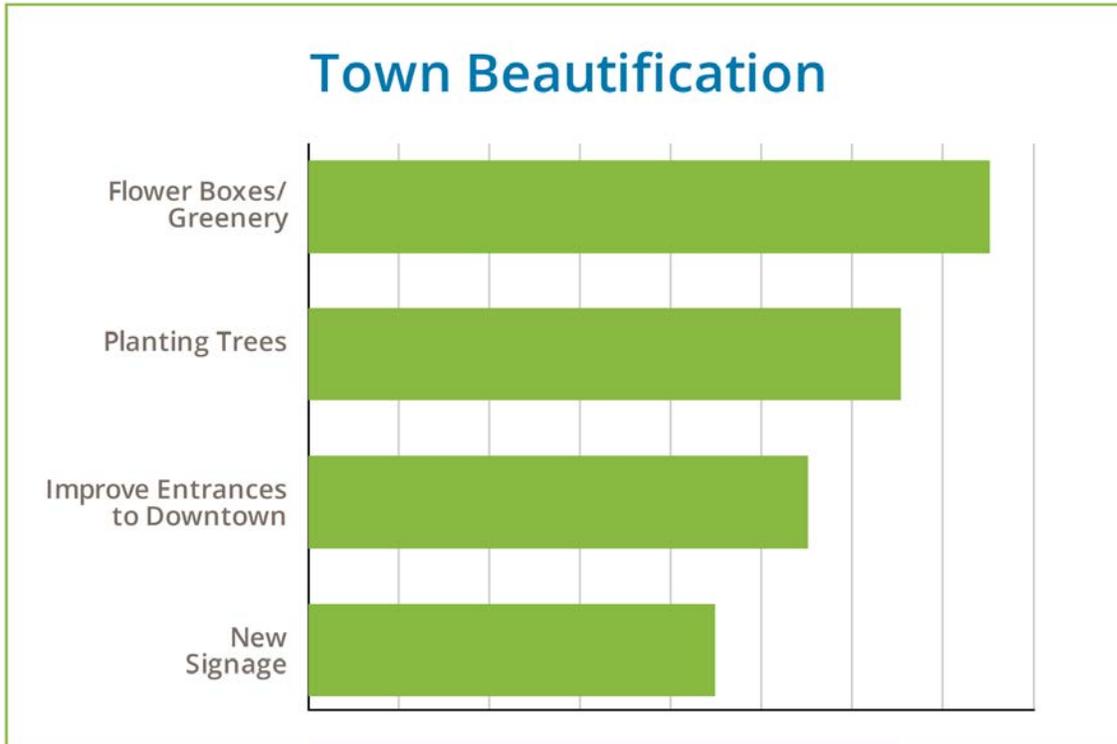
4. Geyserville is **an old community with a number of buildings** that are more than 75 years old in the downtown core. Which of the following statements do you agree/disagree with (*choose at least one answer*):
- Design guidelines adopted to preserve historic character
 - Parts should be declared historic district
 - Preservation of 75-year-old buildings
 - Prefer no government interference



The preservation of historic Geyserville and its rural character are important to the community. There was broad support for the development of design guidelines to ensure that new construction, particularly in the downtown core, is not in conflict with the area’s historic buildings. The idea of investigating the possibility of declaring parts of Geyserville a historic district was popular as well. Only one individual expressed the view that the government and community had no business regulating private property. It was generally felt that the preservation of Geyserville’s historic buildings is important for the future.

In the short survey, fully 140 respondents said it is important for Geyserville to preserve and enhance its agricultural heritage and identity.

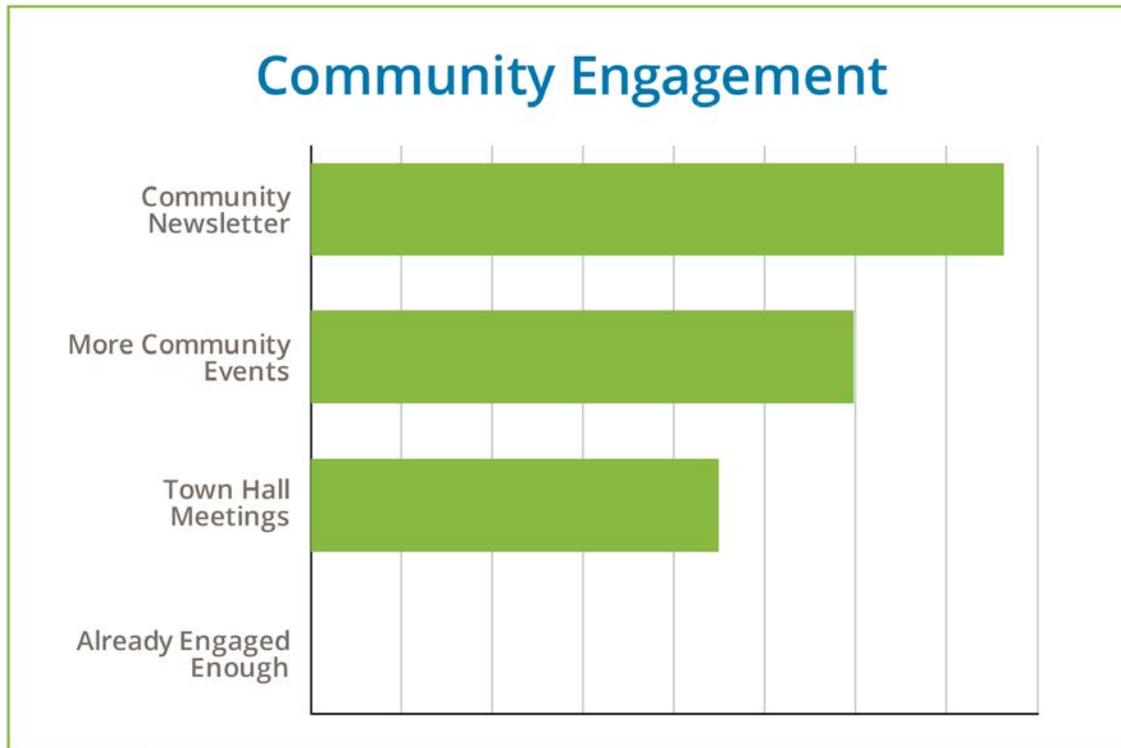
5. **Beautification of the town** was also raised as a priority by some in the online survey last March. Which of the following do you think would be important to pursue?



A number of those interviewed are unhappy over the condition of some downtown buildings especially vacant storefronts. Most think that businesses should be encouraged to help beautify the town by adding flower boxes or landscaping. There is support for additional trees, particularly native trees, along Geyserville Avenue.

A number expressed strong support for the improvements to the southern entrance to the town and for the sculpture garden. The northern entrance to the town remains undeveloped.

6. A number of respondents to the online survey last March expressed a wish for **greater community engagement**. Which of the following do you think would be of value?



The surveys show that Geyserville residents value their community and seek additional opportunities for community engagement. People would like to see some kind of community newsletter though there were no substantive suggestions as to who would be responsible. Community events were highly rated in the interviews and in addition, 131 respondents to the short survey said they would like to see more community events.

7. The short survey asked three additional questions that were not included specifically in the individual interviews. The short survey asked whether the following were wanted for Geyserville:
- Smart Train stop: 106 positive responses
 - More jobs and business opportunities: 97 positive responses
 - Preserve and enhance the town’s agricultural heritage and identity: 140 positive responses

These responses to the short survey speak for themselves. Although 106 short survey respondents support a Smart Train stop, this was not one of the high-ranking responses to the short survey (the question was not included in the interviews). The same is true for additional jobs. The demographic data obtained as background for the Ad Hoc Committee shows that a high percentage of Geyserville residents are self-employed and those that are not average 19 minutes of commute time daily. Thus, they are employed at jobs located in Geyserville.

Finally of the 147 respondents to the short survey, 140 said that the preservation and enhancement of the town's agricultural heritage and identity are a priority, confirming the responses received in all of the four surveys conducted by the GPC and the AHC.

Ad Hoc Committee Findings and Recommendations

It is important to note that the following findings and recommendations should be fully evaluated in the context of local demographics, economics, land use and zoning regulations or other relevant factors present in the community or the County. We also suggest that the Committee look for synergies with other existing or planned County projects that affect the Geyserville community.

Recommendation 1:

The Ad Hoc Committee recommends that the Geyserville Planning Committee dedicate itself to the preservation of Geyserville as a rural, small-town community with an agricultural heritage. Furthermore, the community, as represented by the Geyserville Planning Committee, should actively engage in county planning and general plan updates. This philosophy should guide the GPC's decisions going forward and be a core element of the Geyserville Master Plan.

Recommendation 2:

We recommend that the Geyserville Planning Committee include the following in its recommendations to the county for the Geyserville Master Plan update:

1. A public park.
2. A public bathroom.
3. Plans for public access to the Russian River.
4. Sidewalk improvements and enhanced lighting in the downtown core.
5. Variety of housing.

Recommendation 3:

We recommend that the Geyserville Planning Committee consider the following:

1. Development and adoption of design guidelines for new construction in the downtown core that support the preservation of Geyserville as a rural, small-town community with an agricultural heritage.
2. Investigate the possibility of having the Geyserville downtown core declared a California Historic District.

Recommendation 4:

In support of affordable housing in the community, we ask that the Geyserville Planning Committee consider the following:

1. Encourage new business construction in the downtown core be multi-use and include one or more residential units.

2. Encourage the development of multiple unit residences as a solution to the housing crisis.
3. Actively promote opportunities for development of affordable housing to potential developers and investors.

Recommendation 5:

While the Geyserville Planning Committee cannot mandate new business in the community, survey respondents expressed interest in encouraging the following types of new businesses:

1. A local grocery store (not a chain store and not a convenience store).
2. A selection of small variety stores that would serve both the community and visitors.
3. An ATM or bank branch.
4. A small gas station in keeping with the agrarian, rural character of the town.

Recommendation 6:

Town beautification was a priority for many survey participants and we ask the Committee to consider the following:

1. Encouragement of new and existing businesses to beautify their properties with flower boxes and other landscaping.
2. Planting more native trees on Geyserville Avenue.
3. Encourage development at the northern entrance to the town to enhance the quality of the visitor experience.
4. Review any applicable zoning or permitting requirements related to maintaining a clean and tended landscape for all public and private property in the downtown core, with an eye toward enforcement of these requirements.
5. The community has also shown an ongoing interest in public art and sculpture. We recommend that the Committee encourage the Chamber of Commerce and other groups to continue to expand it.

Recommendation 7:

There is real interest in further community engagement and while the Geyserville Planning Committee has limited influence in this area, we recommend the following:

1. With the Chamber of Commerce or other community partner, explore the possibility of one or more additional community events.
2. With the Chamber of Commerce or other community partner, explore the possibility of producing a regular town newsletter.

APPENDICES

Short Survey Questionnaire

Do you want?

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. A public park in town | Y / N |
| 2. A public bathroom | Y / N |
| 3. River access or river park | Y / N |
| 4. Smart Train stop | Y / N |
| 5. Improved Downtown, lighting, sidewalks, signs, green, etc... | Y / N |
| 6. Bicycle and pedestrian path, increased recreation opportunities | Y / N |
| 7. More jobs and Business opportunities | Y / N |
| 8. Affordable housing | Y / N |
| 9. Variety of housing types / options | Y / N |
| 10. Community events | Y / N |
| 11. Art, sculpture | Y / N |
| 12. Preserve and enhance the towns agriculture heritage and identity | Y / N |

What have we missed that you feel is important or would like to see in Geyserville

Name _____ Email _____

Live Survey Interview Questions

1. Are you a resident of Geyserville? Which of the following describes your situation?
 - a. Resident but employed elsewhere
 - b. Resident and business owner or local employee
 - c. Non-resident business owner
 - d. Retired
 - e. Other

2. In the Geyserville Community Survey, the majority of respondents said that they **highly valued the small-town, rural/agricultural character of the community** and would like to see it in the future in the downtown core. If you agree with this perspective, which of the following businesses would you like to see in town (*choose at least one answer*):
 - a. A grocery store
 - b. A gas station
 - c. Tasting rooms
 - d. A hotel
 - e. Bed and breakfast establishments
 - f. Restaurants
 - g. An art gallery
 - h. Health and wellness operations
 - i. Other retail shops
 - j. Other – please explain:

3. In the survey, **several needs were identified**. Which of the following do you think would be important for the future of the town? (*choose at least one answer*)
 - a. Improved sidewalks
 - b. A park
 - c. Access to the Russian River
 - d. A public bathroom
 - e. Additional off-street parking
 - f. Public art
 - g. Bicycle and/or hiking paths
 - h. Other – please explain:

4. Affordable housing is a serious problem in Sonoma County and **any plan for the future of the town has to take into account the need for housing**. Which of the following options would you support for Geyserville? (*choose at least one answer*)
- a. Tract housing developments
 - b. Multiple unit apartments
 - c. Apartments located over storefronts or businesses
 - d. A mobile home park
 - e. None of the above – please explain:
5. Geyserville is **an old community with a number of buildings** that are more than 75 years old in the downtown core. Which of the following statements do you agree/disagree with (*choose at least one answer*):
- a. All buildings in Geyserville that are more than 75 years old should be preserved.
 - b. Parts of Geyserville should be declared an historic district.
 - c. Design guidelines should be adopted to ensure new construction does not conflict with the historic character of the town.
 - d. The county has no business regulating private property including historic structures.

Feel free to explain:

6. **Beautification of the town** was also raised as a priority by some in the survey. Which of the following do you think would be important to pursue?
- a. Planting trees along Geyserville Avenue
 - b. Encouraging businesses to put in flower boxes
 - c. Improvement to the northern and southern entrances to the downtown core
 - d. New signage
 - e. Other – please explain:
7. A number of survey respondents expressed a wish for **greater community engagement**. Which of the following do you think would be of value?
- a. More community events like Fall Colors
 - b. A community newsletter
 - c. Town Hall meetings
 - d. The community is already sufficiently engaged and does not need any of the above
 - e. Other – please explain:

Geyserville Demographics

prepared for
Geyserville Planning Committee
February 2019

Data from US Census Bureau
with 2017/2018 updates through
American Community Surveys conducted by
US Census Bureau

<http://www.towncharts.com/California/Demographics/Geyserville-CDP-CA-Demographics-data.html>