

Harrison Comprehensive Plan Survey Results

Survey Period: April 11th – July 3rd, 2026

Responses: 261

Key Takeaways:

- Harrison residents strongly value the town's lakes, natural resources, and rural character.
- Protecting water quality and open space consistently ranked above all other priorities.
- Respondents support managing growth rather than rapid development or complete restriction.
- Affordable housing is recognized as a concern, although there is less agreement about how much new housing should be built.
- Residents generally support directing future growth to specific areas, particularly the Village Center, rather than allowing dispersed development.
- Small-scale businesses are preferred over large commercial or industrial development.
- Infrastructure improvements, especially sewer, stormwater, broadband, and roads, are viewed as necessary to support future housing, businesses, and environmental protection.

Analysis by question

Question 1: How important are the following aspects of Harrison to you? (1 to 7)

Respondents placed the highest importance on Harrison's lakes, rivers, and water (mean = 1.7; most common rating = 1), followed by rural character (3.19), outdoor recreation (3.29), and the village center (3.34), all of which received moderate importance ratings. Local businesses were rated somewhat less important (4.34), while agriculture (5.38) and motorized recreation (6.46; most common rating = 7) were viewed as the least important aspects.

Question 2: Are there other aspects of Harrison that are important to you? (Optional)

A third of respondents pointed to the **small town, rural feel** of Harrison, as something that is important to them. This included protecting open space and limits on development and tourism. Additionally, **community** was another common theme, with nearly a quarter of answers reflecting positive comments about the positive community, education system and desire for more community spaces and year-round events. 15% of comments

referenced **road infrastructure and zoning**, with emphasis on increasing traffic safety and walkability, strengthening zoning and road repairs. Another theme was about **increasing business and tourism** in the downtown area, keeping the downtown area clean and welcoming. Finally, water resources and access was another recurring theme, with 11% of comments about maintaining water quality, limiting development around the lakes and ensuring water access for all.

Question 3: Based on your priorities for Harrison's future, please rank the following items from 1 (most important) to 11 (least important)

Respondents placed the highest importance on protecting lake, pond and water quality, with a mean ranking of 2.17 (most common ranking = 1) and preserving open space and wildlife habitat (mean = 3.49, most common ranking = 2). These were followed by affordable housing for people who live or work locally (5.14). Other mid-range priorities included infrastructure (5.36), supporting agriculture and forestry (5.9), stabilized tax rate (6.05), economic development and local jobs (6.1), and managing invasive species (6.39). Lower priorities included high-speed internet (7.9), focusing growth near the Village Center (8.14) and climate resilience (8.14; most common ranking = 11).

Question 4: Do you have any other priorities for Harrison that you would like to share (Optional) (Responses: 51)

About 30% of comments **prioritized town growth**, including expanding town services, responding to Harrison's aging population, attracting younger residents, and improving zoning. In contrast, one-quarter of respondents favored **limiting growth** to preserve the town's rural character, slow development, and keep taxes and government spending low. **Recreation and community amenities** were another common priority (20%), with respondents calling for greater public access to lakes and trails, maintenance of parks and cemeteries, and the return of the farmers' market. Other priorities included **affordable housing** (12%), **improving safety** through better walkability and slower downtown traffic (10%), and **protecting open space and the environment** (6%).

Question 5: Overall, do you feel Harrison is headed in the right direction?

Around half of survey respondents are unsure if Harrison is headed in the right direction. 29% agree that it is and 20% feel that it is not.

Question 6: Comments (Optional) (77 responses)

Primary themes from the comments following the question "Overall, you feel Harrison is headed in the right direction," include **positive comments about the ongoing**

Comprehensive Plan efforts, critical and positive thoughts on **town management**, **affordability** and **growth in Harrison**.

19% of comments express **opposition to town growth**, focusing especially on a desire to maintain the small-town feel, protecting natural resources and feeling like Harrison has been developing too quickly. 22% of comments focused on **town management** with 30% expressing positive views on town leadership, and 70% of those providing comments about poor town leadership or inadequate town services or management. People are also concerned about **affordability** and a desire to **prioritize full-time residents** over tourists or seasonal residents, both in housing stock and small-town feeling.

Question 7: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements (Strongly disagree to strongly agree).

Harrison is growing an appropriate pace:

Respondents were split. 31% disagreed with the statement (6% strongly disagree, 25% disagree), 34% were neutral and 34% agreed (32% agree, 2% strongly agree).

New housing and businesses should be located mostly near the Village Center

39% of respondents agreed that new housing and businesses should be located near the Village center (28% agree, 11% strongly agree). Just over a quarter of respondents felt neutral and 35% disagreed (27% disagree, 8% strongly disagree).

Harrison should encourage affordable housing

Over half of respondents (58%) agreed that Harrison should encourage affordable housing (42% agree, 16% strongly agree). 22% of respondents felt neutral and 19% disagreed (9% disagree, 10% strongly disagree).

A mix of housing types should be allowed in town

60% of respondents agreed that a mix of housing types should be allowed in town (47% agree, 13% strongly agree). 19% were neutral and 22% disagreed (15% disagree, 7% strongly disagree).

Harrison should protect open space for its future

57% of respondents strongly agreed that Harrison should protect open space for its future, with an additional 32% agreeing. 6% felt neutral and 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Question 8: When goals conflict, what should Harrison prioritize? (Protect open space/allow more housing)

85% of respondents believe that Harrison should protect open space over allowing more housing.

- Protect open space: 85%
- Allow more housing: 15%

Question 9: Support economic growth/preserve rural character

74% of respondents believe that Harrison should preserve rural character over supporting economic growth.

- Support economic growth: 26%
- Rural Character: 74%

Question 10: Limit regulations/direct growth to specific areas

77% of respondents believe that Harrison should direct growth to specific areas over limiting regulations.

- Limit regulations: 23%
- Direct growth: 77%

Question 11: Expand town services/stabilize the tax rate

77% of respondents believe that Harrison should stabilize the tax rate over expanding town services.

- Expand town services: 23%
- Stabilize the tax rate: 77%

Question 12: Which approach best reflects how Harrison should manage future development?

72% of respondents believe that Harrison should guide development. 13% believe that development should be limited, 8% believe it should be allowed, and 6% are unsure.

Question 13: What types of recreational opportunities would you like to see more of in Harrison (select all that apply).

Among the 244 respondents, **multi-use paths for biking, hiking, and snowshoeing** were by far the most requested recreational opportunity, with **65.6%** of respondents selecting this option. Other highly desired amenities included **swimming areas and beaches (38.5%)**, **community gardens and related programming (36.1%)**, **winter lake access (35.2%)**, and **nature observation opportunities (32.8%)**. Approximately 30.3% of respondents expressed interest in additional playgrounds, parks and picnic areas, while 27.0% selected children's programming. Boat access (24.6%), dog parks (23.4%),

snowmobile and ATV trails (20.9%), fishing and hunting access (18.9%), and sports fields and courts (13.9%) were selected less frequently. 15.2% of respondents indicated they did not want any additional recreational opportunities. Because respondents could select multiple options, the percentages total more than 100%.

Question 14: How concerned are you about residents, workers, and families finding housing they can afford in Harrison?

Nearly half of respondents are somewhat concerned about affordable housing in Harrison (48%) with an additional 19% who are very concerned. 27% are not concerned and 5% are unsure.

Question 15: Would you support the development of affordable housing in Harrison?

41% would support the development of affordable housing in Harrison. 31% are unsure and 27% are not supportive.

Question 16: Which groups of people should be prioritized when considering new housing in Harrison (Rank 1 to 5)

Respondents ranked year-round residents most highly (mean = 1.59, most common ranking = 1) and young adults and families second (mean ranking = 2.69). These were followed by local workers (mean = 2.86), older adults (3.08) and last seasonal residents (mean = 4.61).

Question 17: What types of housing would you be willing to see more of in Harrison?

Among the 249 respondents, 72% would be willing to see more **smaller single-family** housing. 33% would be willing to see **cluster housing**; 30% would be willing to see **ADUs** and 27% **duplexes**. 15% of respondents would be willing to see apartments, and 12% would prefer none of these housing types. Because respondents could select multiple options, the percentages total more than 100%.

Question 18: What do you see as the biggest barriers to housing in Harrison (select up to 3)

Among 247 respondents, high construction costs were by far the most selected barrier to housing in Harrison (59%). Second was property tax rates (34%) followed by limited water or sewer infrastructure with 28% of respondents selecting that option. 21% of respondents were not sure, 18% selected short-term rentals, and 16% selected zoning or lot size requirements. 14% of respondents selected neighborhood opposition as a barrier. Finally, environmental constraints and lack of space were not seen as big barriers to housing, each with 10%.

Question 19: Are there housing-related issues you would like the town to address? (62 responses)

Around a quarter of responses **opposed new housing development** (26%), citing concerns about preserving Harrison's small-town nature and maintaining single-family housing, minimizing environmental impacts of new developments and discouraging out-of-state buyers. **Limiting short-term rentals** was another common theme (18%) with respondents expressing concern that they reduce housing availability and increase housing costs. Comments on **zoning and housing regulations** (15%) were evenly split between calls for fewer restrictions and requests for stronger protections, particularly for the environment and community aesthetics. Other common themes included **increasing housing supply** (15%) and **improving affordability** (13%), while 8% of respondents reported **no housing concerns**.

Question 20: Which statement best reflects your preference for Harrison's economic future

Respondents generally preferred minimal business growth, with 44% preferring to remain primarily residential, with limited new business growth, and 44% preferring to support small to mid-sized businesses. Only 2% preferred to encourage larger scale businesses and 7% preferred to designate industrial or industrial park uses. 3% were unsure.

Question 21: What types of businesses best fit Harrison? (Select up to 5)

Small retail and services were by far the most selected business type that respondents believed fit best in Harrison (87%). Other best business types include local trades and construction (68%), home-based businesses (64%), and outdoor recreation and tourism (62%). Around half of respondents selected lodging, hospitality, and restaurants (53%). 38% of respondents selected agriculture and forestry related tourism as a best business type and just over a quarter (26%) selected professional and office-based services. Less popular were light industrial and manufacturing (12%) and big box stores (2%).

Question 22: When it comes to lodging and hospitality in Harrison, which types of accommodations would you like to see? (Select all that apply)

Respondents generally preferred smaller scale accommodations including Bed & Breakfasts/Inns (70%), cabins/cottages (56%) and campgrounds and RV sites (33%). 31% of respondents selected eco-lodges or nature-based accommodations. Just under a quarter of respondents selected farm-based or agrotourism lodging (24%) and short-term rentals (23%). 19% selected no additional lodging development. Resorts-style lodging (9%) and hotels and motels (8%) were the least popular.

Question 23: Where should most new businesses be located?

30% of respondents believe that most new businesses should be located in the Village Center. 23% believe they should be in designated commercial and industrial designated areas, 19% believe that new business development should be limited town wide. 13% believe that new businesses should be in mixed use areas near housing and 15% are unsure.

Question 24: What infrastructure systems most limit Harrison's ability to support housing, businesses, and environmental protection? (Select up to three in each column)**HOUSING**

Respondents identified broadband (48%) and sewer infrastructure (47%) as the greatest barriers to supporting additional housing in Harrison, suggesting that both utility capacity and access to reliable internet are viewed as critical to future residential growth. Electric reliability (37%), roads (35%), and drinking water (34%) also ranked among the most commonly cited constraints, indicating broader concerns about the community's ability to support new development with existing infrastructure. Fewer respondents identified public facilities (29%), geographical limitations (23%), stormwater systems (21%), or parking (13%) as major barriers, while 22% reported they were not sure.

BUSINESSES

Respondents identified parking (49%) as the most significant infrastructure barrier to supporting businesses in Harrison, followed closely by broadband (46%) and sewer infrastructure (42%). Roads (39%) also ranked highly, highlighting concerns about accessibility and transportation for commercial activity. Approximately one-quarter to one-third of respondents pointed to electric reliability (29%), public facilities (28%), drinking water (25%), and stormwater systems (23%) as limiting factors, while fewer cited geographical constraints (20%). 22% of respondents were unsure. Overall, the results indicate that respondents view improvements to parking, utility infrastructure, and transportation networks as the most important investments for supporting future business growth.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Survey respondents identified stormwater infrastructure (53%) as the greatest barrier to supporting environmental protection efforts in Harrison, followed by sewer infrastructure (44%). Drinking water systems (30%), roads (29%), and geographical constraints (28%) were also commonly cited. Comparatively few respondents viewed broadband (8%) or

electric reliability (10%) as significant environmental constraints, while 21% selected parking and public facilities. More than one-quarter of respondents (27%) indicated they were not sure. Overall, the results suggest that respondents see investments in water infrastructure—particularly stormwater and sewer systems—as the highest priorities for protecting Harrison's environmental resources.

Question 25: Are there town services or facilities that are missing or need improvement? (50 responses)

Some highlighted needs and improvements include **recreational amenities** (20% - increased community spaces and improved public spaces), **road repair and safety** (20%) **emergency services** (16%, specifically medical and fire services). 16% responded that town services are adequate. Other themes include **increased utilities**, especially electricity and sewage, and broadband.

Question 26: How important are Harrison's lakes and water resources to the town's identity, economy and tax base?

Most respondents think that Harrison's lakes and water resources are very important to the town's identity, economy, and tax base. An additional 5% believe that lakes and water resources are somewhat important. 1% believe they are neither important or unimportant.

Question 27: Which water-related concerns matter most to you? (Select up to 3)

Respondents were most concerned about invasive species (71%), followed by impacts from shoreland development (42%). The associated impacts of boating traffic (35%), erosion and phosphorous issues caused by watercrafts (29%), stormwater runoff and erosion (28%), long term costs of inadequate protection, and public access to lakes and rivers (27%) were other commonly selected concerns. 18% were concerned about climate impacts on water resources and 7% were not sure.

Question 28: Which of the following policies would you support to protect water quality in Harrison? (Select all that apply)

Overall, respondents supported most of the policies, reflecting widespread concern about water resources. By far, respondents would support limiting the use of fertilizers, pesticides and salt near waterbodies and drinking-water wells (80%) and improving standards for roads, driveways, and ditches to reduce polluted runoff into lakes and streams (72%). Around half of respondents also support strengthen erosion and sediment control requirements during construction and land clearing (55%), Strengthen wetland and stream protections (54%), creating policies that require regular inspection and

maintenance of septic systems near waterbodies (53%) and strengthening wetland and finally creating a dedicated town fund for lake and watershed protection projects (47%).

Question 29: Do you support Harrison working with neighboring towns (such as Naples and Bridgton) to protect shared water resources?

Most respondents support Harrison working with neighboring towns to protect shared water resources (92%). 3% do not support collaboration and 5% are unsure.

Question 30: What is one thing you would most like the Comprehensive Plan to focus on? (128 responses)

A recurring theme throughout the survey was the desire to **preserve Harrison's small-town, rural character** amid growth and tourism, with 25% of respondents identifying this as a priority for the Comprehensive Plan. Another 18% emphasized **protecting water resources** (9%) and **preserving open space and natural resources** (9%). Nearly one-fifth of comments focused on **town management and zoning**, including greater government transparency, zoning changes, and expanding the tax base. Respondents also highlighted **managing growth** (13%) through downtown improvements, support for small businesses, and balanced development, while another 13% prioritized **affordability**, particularly affordable housing and stable taxes. Improving **town services and infrastructure**, such as roads and education, was mentioned by 7% of respondents.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Key Takeaways

Survey respondents were predominantly year-round residents (64%), homeowners (93%), and older adults, with 57% over the age of 58. Nearly half were retired or business owners. These demographics broadly reflect the demographic breakdown of residents in Harrison.

Question 31: Which best describes your relationship to Harrison?

Year-round resident: 64%

Seasonal resident: 22%

Property owner but does not live in town: 10%

Business owner: 1%

Works in Harrison: 2%

Visitor: >1%

Former resident: 2%

Question 32: How many years have you lived in Harrison as a year-round resident/been a seasonal resident/property owner/business owner/worked/visited/been a former resident?

Year-round resident:

Mean: 18.8 years

Median: 10 years

Seasonal resident:

Mean: 22.1 years

Median: 13.5 years

Property owner:

Mean: 21.6 years

Median: 16 years

Business owner:

Mean: 16 years

Median: 16.5 years

Worked:

Mean: 23.6 years

Median: 15 years

Visited:

Mean: 40 years

Median: 35 years

Former resident:

Mean: 38.6 years

Median: 48 years

Question 33: Do you see yourself connected to Harrison for the next ten years?

Yes: 89%

No: 2%

Unsure: 9%

Question 34: Do you rent or own your home?

Rent: 2%
Own: 93%
Doesn't live in Harrison: 3%
Prefer not to answer: 2%

Question 35: How many people live in your household?

67% of survey respondents lived in a two adult household. 33% had households with no children.

Question 36: What age range do you fall into?

Under 18: 1%
18-27: 1%
28-37: 6%
38-47: 10%
48-57: 17%
58-67: 29%
68-77: 28%
78+: 4%
Prefer not to answer: 3%

Question 37: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Less than high school:
Highschool diploma or GED: 5%
Some college or associates degree: 22%
Bachelor's degree: 32%
Graduate or professional degree: 37%
Prefer not to answer: 3%

Question 38: Which of the following best describes your work status?

Full time worker: 38%
Part-time worker: 8%
Not currently employed: >1%
Business owner: 10%
Retired: 43%
Student: >1%

What is your approximate yearly income?

Under \$24,999: 1%

%25,000-49,000: 8%

\$50,000-\$99,999: 17%

\$100,000 - \$149,999: 16%

Over \$150,000: 29%

Prefer not to answer: 29%

Overall Planning Implications

The survey suggests broad public support for a planning strategy that:

- Protects lakes, water quality, and open space as Harrison's defining assets.
- Preserves the town's rural character while directing future growth to appropriate locations.
- Encourages small-scale businesses and improvements to the Village Center rather than large commercial expansion.
- Addresses housing affordability through targeted, context-sensitive development that prioritizes year-round residents and local workers.
- Invests in infrastructure—including stormwater, sewer, broadband, and transportation—to support both environmental protection and future development.
- Maintains fiscal responsibility while improving essential town services.