



Mississippi
Mills

Official Plan Amendment 28: Rural Villages and Rural Vitality

Survey Results Report

Authors:

Melanie Knight, Director of Development Services and Engineering
Melissa Fudge, Planning Technician

Dated:

February 6th, 2025

File Number:

Official Plan Amendment 28: Rural Villages and Rural Vitality

Prepared By:

Municipality of Mississippi Mills Developmental Services and Engineering
Department

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of the survey was to engage residents from the villages and rural areas to help shape the Rural Villages and Rural Vitality project, Official Plan Amendment 28 (OPA 28). The data collected will help Staff gather insights into the unique needs and priorities of the local community prior to the Official Plan policy development. The questions in the survey were intended to prompt respondents to think about what they valued in the Villages and Rural Areas, and how they felt these areas could be supported as they grow and change. By understanding community preferences, needs and opportunities, the results of this survey will help to inform planning initiatives that strengthen and support both the Rural Villages and Rural Areas within Mississippi Mills.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The online survey was launched at the onset of the project and remained open for participation from March 2024 to the end of December 2024. Recognizing that internet access can be limited in rural areas hard copies of the survey were also distributed to specific locations where residents were likely to frequent such as local businesses and bulletin boards to try to reach as many residents as possible. The survey was actively promoted using multiple mailed postcards to encourage widespread community engagement, with a focus on the Villages and Rural Areas.

Public Consultation Events

Staff held multiple public engagement opportunities including open houses, community gatherings and attended several organized community events, which provided residents the opportunity to engage directly with planning staff. The survey was distributed at all of these public engagement opportunities.

Socia Media

The survey was shared across the Municipality’s social media platforms, targeting different demographic groups and those who may not attend in-person events.



Website and Newsletter

The survey was also featured on the Mississippi Mills website and highlighted in the MM Messenger, a quarterly newsletter from the Municipality. This multi-pronged approach aimed to reach a diverse cross-section of residents, ensuring a representative sample from all Villages and Rural Areas.

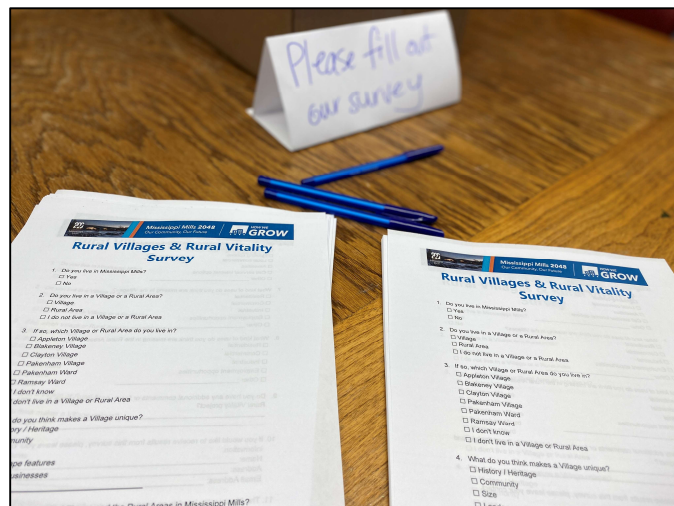
The survey consisted of eleven (11) questions, with three (3) short answer questions and eight (8) multiple-choice questions, with the option to add further comments.

Respondents were asked if they live in Mississippi Mills and which area they reside in. They were asked about what they loved about the Villages and Rural Areas, what makes them unique, what kinds of uses were missing, and any additional comments they wanted to contribute. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide their contact information should they wish to be notified of the survey results and of any further surveys. A thorough review of the survey results is discussed in Sections 3 and 4.

3.0 RESULTS OVERVIEW

A total of **192 individuals participated in the survey**, with **96% of respondents residing in Mississippi Mills**. OPA 28 is focused on both Rural Villages and Rural Areas, so understanding where participants live was crucial. The survey distinguished between residents in Rural Villages and Rural Areas to capture unique needs of each and every community.

Most respondents live in Rural Areas, while 28% reside in a Village. Additionally, 14% of respondents indicated they do not live in either a Village or Rural Area. The survey gathered responses from all the rural communities, including Appleton, Blakeney, Clayton and Pakenham Villages, as well as the Ramsay and Pakenham Wards.



4.0 DETAILED FINDINGS

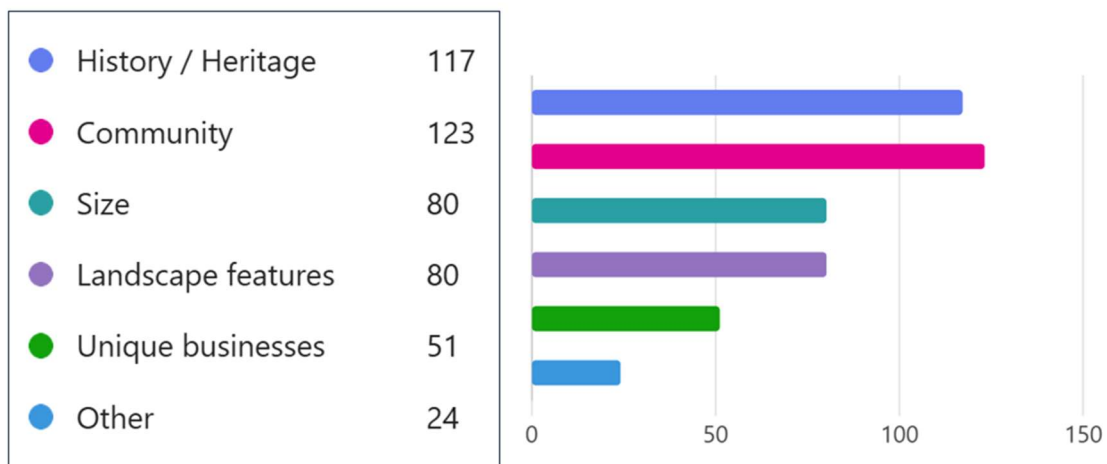
Refer to Attachment C for a full list of responses. Key findings from the survey are summarized below.

4.1 Unique Village Qualities

The most common themes that make a Village unique are summarized below:

- i. Community: The most frequently mentioned unique quality is *Community*. Respondents highlighted that the *sense of belonging, local relationships* and the people who shape the Village life is important to them.
- ii. History and Heritage: The Villages are also valued for their *historical character, preserved architecture and cultural roots*, which create a sense of continuity and identity for each rural community.
- iii. Size: Many respondents appreciate the *smaller, manageable scale of the Villages*, which contributes to their close-knit feel that contrasts with urban sprawl.
- iv. Landscape Features: Natural surroundings, such as the Mississippi River, *open spaces and unique scenery*, are seen as essential features to the village environment. These landscapes are seen as integral to the Villages' appeal.
- v. Unique Businesses: *Local, independently owned businesses*, including general stores and cafes, *contribute to the village's charm* and distinctiveness. These businesses help *define the character of the Villages* and support the local economy.
- vi. Additional Comments: The *peacefulness* of the villages was also highlighted as a cherished characteristic. Respondents expressed appreciation for the *quiet and tranquil environment* that contribute to the overall appeal and quality of life in the Villages.

Figure 4.1 – Results for Unique Village Qualities



4.2 What Residents love about the Villages and the Rural Areas

A notable **28% of respondents valued a strong sense of community in the Villages and Rural Areas** of Mississippi Mills above other features. The most common themes that residents love about the Villages and Rural Areas are as follows:

- i. Community: A *strong sense of community, neighbourly support, and shared values* were consistently highlighted. Many respondents appreciate the close-knit atmosphere, where they feel connections and a sense of belonging. The friendly interactions and opportunities for involvement in community activities contribute to the overall sense of togetherness.
- ii. Lifestyle: The *calm, rural atmosphere*, away from busy traffic and urban areas, provides residents with a serene lifestyle.
- iii. Nature: Access to *nature and scenic landscapes*, including rivers, wildlife, and open spaces, is highly cherished. Many respondents emphasized the importance of preserving green spaces, farmland, and natural areas.
The rural setting *provides opportunities* to enjoy quiet walks, observe wildlife, and appreciate the beauty of the environment.
- iv. Character: Each village's *distinctive identity*, historical architecture, heritage features, and local unique businesses contribute to the *authentic rural charm*. Respondents value the *character and cultural richness of the villages*, with some noting that the villages should *maintain their original boundary* to preserve their uniqueness and size.
- v. Access to Urban Areas: The villages offer rural living while remaining close to Almonte and Ottawa for additional amenities and services.
- vi. Additional Comments: Respondents also highlighted a range of other valued features, such as: community spirit, preservation of nature, peacefulness, character and charm.

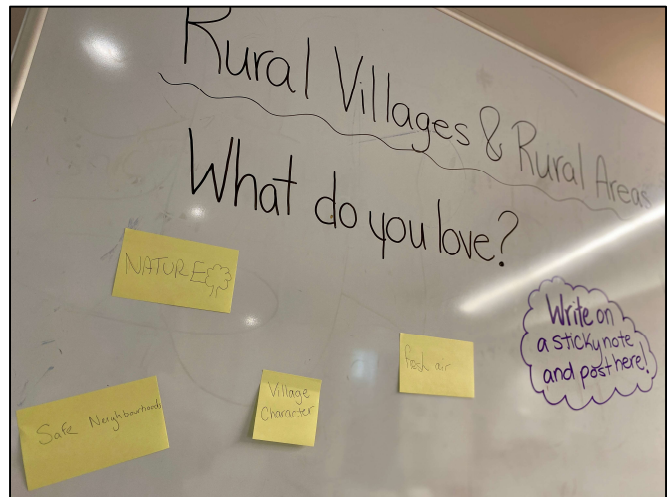


Figure 4.2 – Themes for what residents love about the Villages and Rural Areas

47 respondents (28%) answered community for this question.

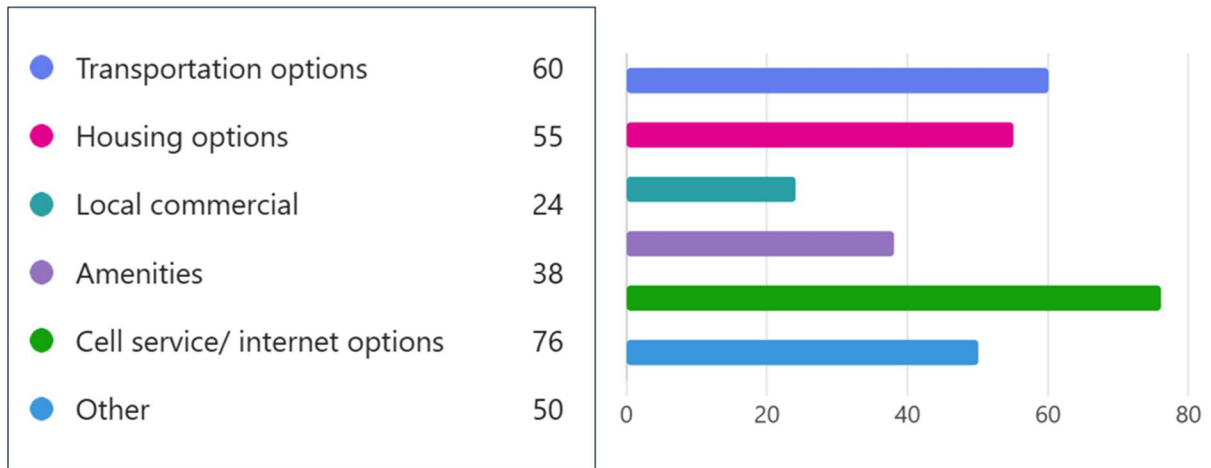


4.3 Gaps in the Villages or Rural Areas

The most common themes that residents are missing in the Villages and Rural Areas are as follows:

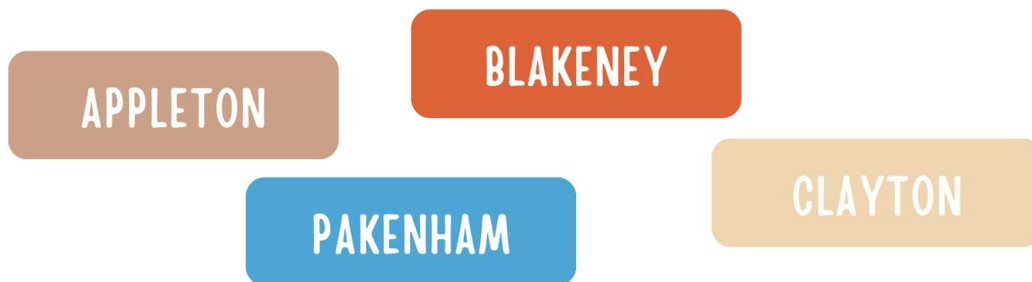
- i. Cell Service and Internet Options: *Reliable, high-speed internet* and *improved cell service* were identified as a critical need. Many respondents noted that connectivity is insufficient, impacting business operations and overall communication.
- ii. Housing Options: There is a desire for a *broader range of housing*, including options for seniors, affordable housing, and low-density developments that *maintain the rural character* of the community.
- iii. Transportation Options: *Limited public and alternative transportation options* such as carpooling, make it *challenging for residents*, particularly seniors and youth, to travel within and outside of their communities. Many accessible transportations options are a priority for many.
- iv. Local Commercial: Respondents expressed the *need for more local businesses*, including additional grocery stores, more "fast food" options, and improved access to local coffee shops. There is a desire for *family-oriented, local amenities* including playgrounds, splash pads, and recreational facilities.
- v. Additional Comments: There are concerns about village infrastructure, including *improvements to water and sewer systems*, along with the need for safer, active transportation infrastructure. Some respondents mentioned the desire for *improved public access to rivers or shorelines* and multi-purpose trails along roadways, street lighting, and recreational and social events.

Figure 4.3 – Results for what residents are missing in the Villages or Rural Area



4.4 Missing Uses in Villages

The feedback emphasizes the need for balancing growth that supports local employment, housing, and community amenities while preserving the unique character of the villages.

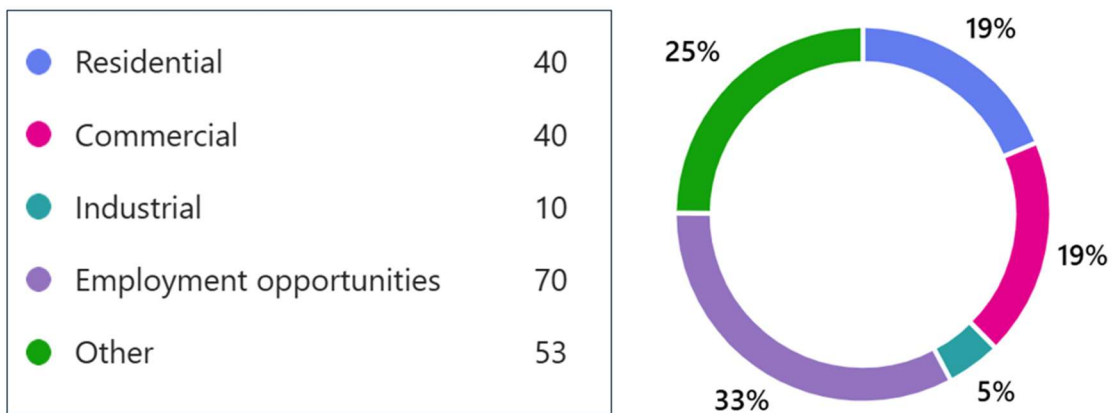


The following summarizes common themes identified by respondents:

- i. Employment Opportunities: Several respondents expressed a *need for more local employment opportunities*, particularly stable, full-time positions for younger families. Many respondents also highlighted *the importance of fostering small local businesses and entrepreneurial ventures*. There is also a desire for more industrial and commercial job prospects, although the focus remains on maintaining the village’s character.
- ii. Residential Development: There is a demand for *affordable housing and options for seniors*, though many respondents *cautioned against overdevelopment*. They emphasized that any new residential growth should be *carefully balanced to preserve the Village’s character* and should be managed carefully to ensure it aligns with the community’s values and needs.

- iii. Commercial Development: While there is *some interest in expanding commercial services* like restaurant and retail, many respondents felt that a *nearby town already meets these needs*. A preference was for mixed-use development where appropriate to provide more diverse services while still maintaining the village feel. Additionally, there is a call for *more small, locally owned businesses* to support the local economy.
- iv. Infrastructure and Amenities: There is a *strong desire for more recreational facilities*, such as parks, sports fields, playgrounds, swimming pools and active transportation facilities such as bike lanes. Respondents also called for *improved active transportation infrastructure* to support healthy, community-driven lifestyles. Key infrastructure needs include *high-speed internet* and *adequate sewage and water treatment services* to support village growth and quality of life.
- v. Additional Comments: Respondents favoured a *balanced approach to development*, ensuring that growth in employment, residential, and commercial sectors is well-coordinated and aligns with the village’s rural feel. Many respondents want to maintain the peaceful, small-town atmosphere and rural character of the Villages and Rural Areas. It was highlighted that any changes should *carefully consider their long-term impact on the environment and community well-being*.

Figure 4.4 – Results for Missing Uses in Villages



4.5 Missing Uses in the Rural Areas

Similarly, respondents indicated a desire for balanced development that supports economic growth, housing diversity and local employment while preserving the rural environment and agricultural focus. The following summarizes common themes:

- i. Employment Opportunities: Many respondents would like *more local employment options*, particularly in *agriculture, small industries and tourism sectors*. Many

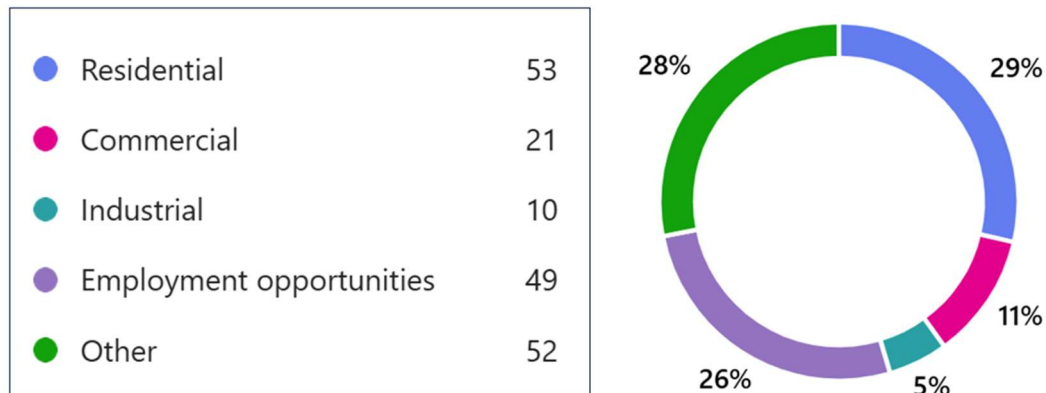
respondents emphasized the need for jobs that can support rural life while boosting the local economy.

- ii. Residential Development: It was highlighted that there is a need for diverse housing, especially affordable options and cluster housing. Their desired goal is for the Rural Areas to offer *a broader range of housing opportunities* while preserving the rural landscape.
- iii. Commercial Development: There is an interest in *small-scale commercial development*, including local shops and restaurants, to enhance rural life without urbanizing the area. Respondents want commercial development that *complements the rural character* rather than transforming the area into a more urban environment.
- iv. Additional Comments: There is an interest in agricultural initiatives, including *regenerative farming and agri-tourism* to not only promote the agricultural economy but also to help preserve rural identity of the area. Other suggestions include *improvements to infrastructure*, including improvements to road maintenance, safe walking and cycling lanes, *recreational facilities, and community event spaces*. A common sentiment is the desire to *preserve rural character* of the area.



Many respondents are opposed to large development, preferring to *maintain the rural landscape and limit urbanization*. The importance of *protecting natural areas, wildlife habitat, and water drainage systems* were emphasized. There is also a need for improved transportation options that *support the farming community and local businesses*, as well as sustainable solutions for farming.

Figure 4.5 – Results for Missing Uses in the Rural Areas



4.6 Feedback

Feedback for the Rural Villages and Rural Vitality project highlights a range of priorities and concerns from the community as summarized below:

- i. Amenities and Infrastructure: Respondents expressed *a strong need for improved infrastructure*, including bicycle and snowmobile friendly routes, safer active transportation lanes, and improved road conditions, particularly in the villages of Appleton and Clayton. There is also a call for facilities like *community centers, public washrooms, and indoor gathering spaces* to foster social connections.
- ii. Development: Many respondents want *to protect the rural character* and avoid over development in these areas. Suggestions include limiting large-scale subdivisions and promoting low-density rural housing options.
- iii. Housing: Affordable housing is a major concern of respondents. Many suggested that *allowing more flexibility in severance regulations* to permit additional housing on rural properties and land for family use would make housing more affordable. Additionally, respondents also advocated for reduced municipal fees to make affordable housing more achievable.
- iv. Community Well-Being: There is a call for a community health and safety planning perspective, addressing *seniors aging in place, active transportation, and mitigating isolation*. Improved access to reliable cellular and internet services in rural areas is seen as critical for *safety and connectivity* for residents.
- v. Economic Vitality and Tourism: Suggestions include enabling *small-scale rural accommodations*, like short-term vacation rentals and luxurious camping

- accommodations, to boost tourism and support local farms. Respondents would like to see *policies that support organic growth and small businesses*.
- vi. Environmental Protection: *Protection of natural resources, wildlife habitats, and groundwater* is a priority. Some respondents are opposed to development on agricultural lands or lands with environmental features, emphasizing the need to preserve rural landscapes.
 - vii. Traffic and Safety: Increased traffic volume and speed in rural villages are major concerns, with requests for *traffic calming measures* and safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.

Figure 4.6 – Additional feedback from residents



5.0 DATA ANALYSIS

The survey results from the Rural Villages and Rural Vitality project provide valuable insights into the needs and priorities of the residents of Mississippi Mills.

The data reveals **a strong appreciation for community, historical heritage, and natural landscapes in the Villages**, which contribute to a sense of identity and belonging. Respondents also expressed **a deep attachment to rural lifestyles, valuing the tranquility, access to nature, and proximity to urban amenities**.

There are several areas where respondents feel improvements are necessary, including **reliable internet and cell service, more housing options, and alternative transportation options**. Additionally, there is a call for the **development of local businesses and community amenities**, such as grocery stores and recreational facilities, to reduce dependency on larger urban centers.

While there is support for controlled growth, many respondents emphasized the **importance of preserving the rural character of both villages and rural areas**. The

feedback highlights the desire for balanced development that promotes local employment, housing diversity, and infrastructure improvements, without compromising the unique rural environment.

These insights will be instrumental in shaping the policies and strategies under OPA 28, ensuring that they reflect the community's values and priorities while fostering a sustainable future for both the Rural Villages and Rural Areas of Mississippi Mills.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The survey results for the Rural Villages and Rural Vitality project under OPA 28 offer valuable insight into the priorities of residents living in the Villages and Rural Areas of Mississippi Mills. Overall, participants expressed strong support for preserving the community's heritage, natural landscapes, as well as rural and village lifestyles while emphasizing the need for improvements in infrastructure, housing, and local services.

To address these needs, **the survey highlights the importance of balanced development that promotes rural vitality, while maintaining the unique character of the Villages and Rural Areas.** The findings will help guide the development of policies under OPA 28, ensuring that future growth supports both community values and the long-term sustainability of these integral areas in Mississippi Mills.

ATTACHMENT A – SURVEY QUESTIONS

ATTACHMENT B – RESPONSES OVERVIEW



Mississippi Mills 2048
Our Community, Our Future



Rural Villages & Rural Vitality Survey

1. Do you live in Mississippi Mills?
 - Yes
 - No

2. Do you live in a Village or a Rural Area?
 - Village
 - Rural Area
 - I do not live in a Village or a Rural Area

3. If so, which Village or Rural Area do you live in?
 - Appleton Village
 - Blakeney Village
 - Clayton Village
 - Pakenham Village
 - Pakenham Ward
 - Ramsay Ward
 - I don't know
 - I don't live in a Village or Rural Area

4. What do you think makes a Village unique?
 - History / Heritage
 - Community
 - Size
 - Landscape features
 - Unique businesses
 - Other _____

5. What do you love about the Villages and the Rural Areas in Mississippi Mills?



6. What are our residents missing in the Villages or Rural Area?

- Transportation options
- Housing options
- Local commercial
- Amenities
- Cell service/ internet options
- Other _____

7. What kind of uses do you think are missing in the Villages?

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Employment opportunities
- Other _____

8. What kind of uses do you think are missing in the Rural Areas?

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Employment opportunities
- Other _____

9. Do you have any additional comments or feedback related to this Rural Villages and Rural Vitality project?

10. If you would like to receive results from this survey, please leave your contact information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

11. The Municipality intends on conducting a 1 to 2 more follow-up surveys throughout the project. Please indicate whether the Municipality can send you direct links to these additional surveys.

- Yes
- No

Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey!


Please return to **Almonte Old Town Hall** after completing
Address: 14 Bridge Street, Almonte
Or scan and email to: mplanner@mississippimills.ca

ATTACHMENT B - RESPONSES OVERVIEW


Responses

192 

Average Time

07:13 

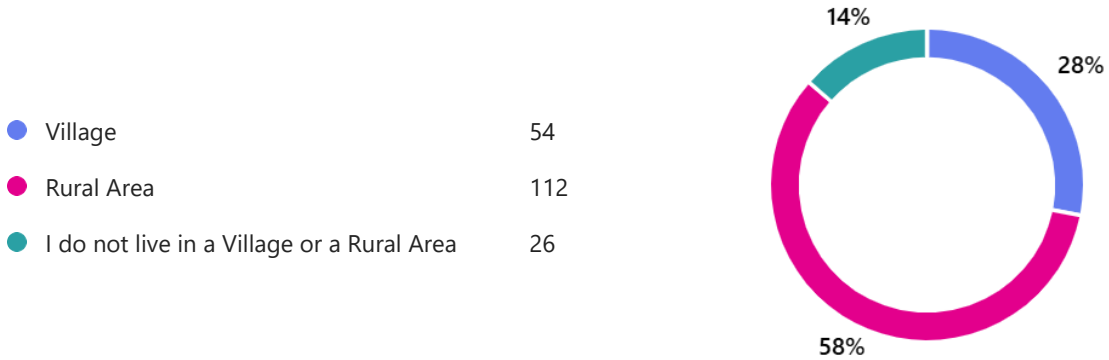
Duration

323 Days 

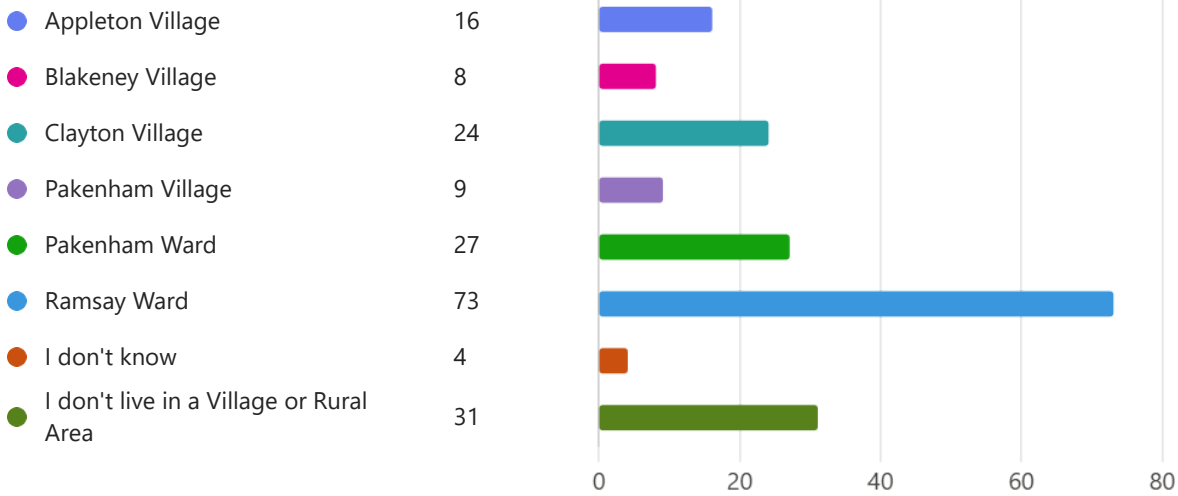
1. Do you live in Mississippi Mills?



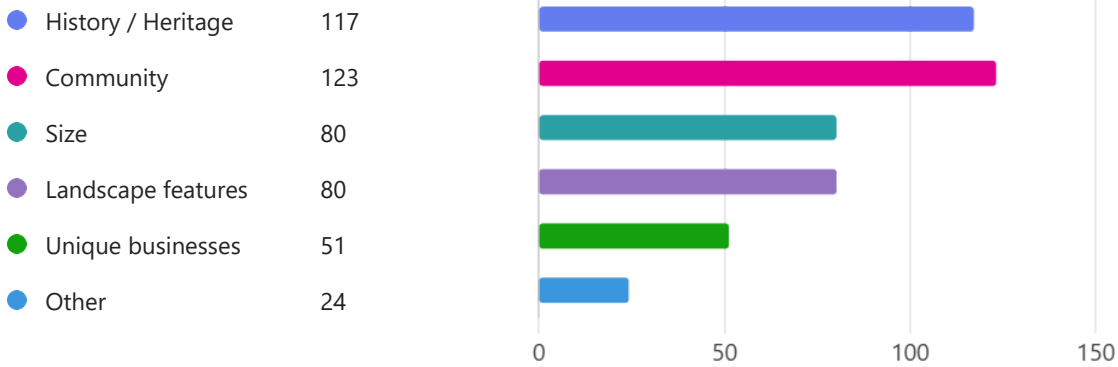
2. Do you live in a Village or a Rural Area?



3. If so, which Village or Rural Area do you live in?



4. What do you think makes a Village unique?



5. What do you love about the Villages and the Rural Areas in Mississippi Mills?

166
Responses

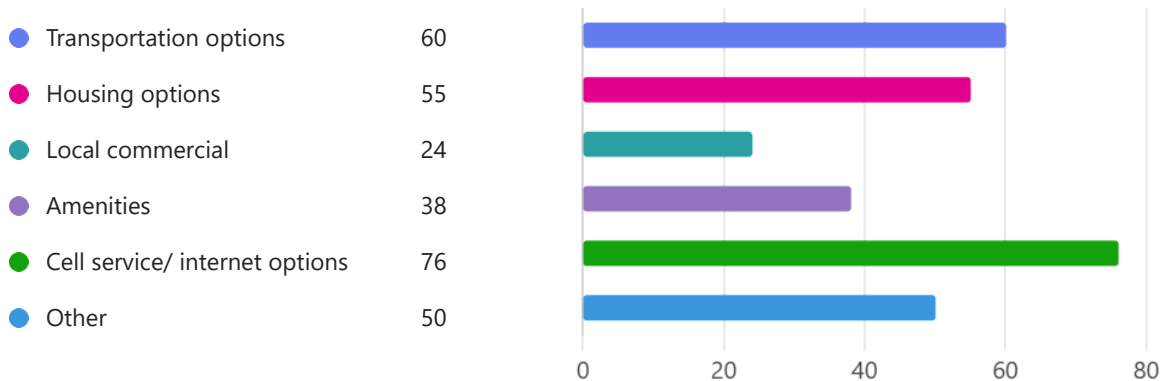
Latest Responses

"Rivers, trails, shops, crown and pumpkin is good"
 "Sense of community and belonging, break from the sprawli... "
 "Quaint, quiet, not urbanized nor heavily developed, access t..."
 ...

47 respondents (28%) answered community for this question.

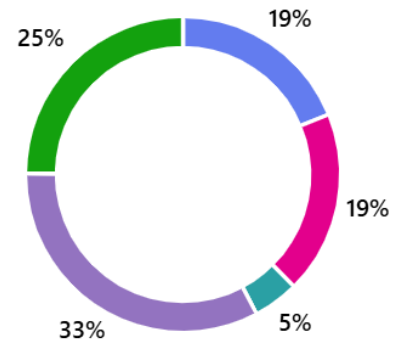


6. What are our residents missing in the Villages or Rural Area?



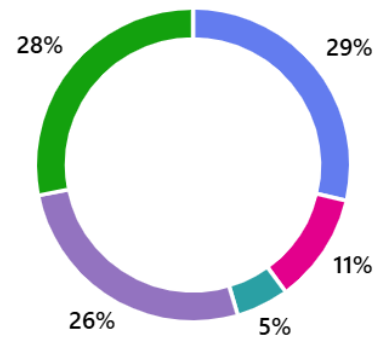
7. What kind of uses do you think are missing in the Villages?

● Residential	40
● Commercial	40
● Industrial	10
● Employment opportunities	70
● Other	53



8. What kind of uses do you think are missing in the Rural Areas?

● Residential	53
● Commercial	21
● Industrial	10
● Employment opportunities	49
● Other	52





Mississippi
Mills