Our Village, Our Future
VISIONING for RIDGEWOOD’S NEXT MASTER PLAN

VISIONING QUESTIONNAIRE

Summary of Results

August 2019
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Purpose & Intent

- The purpose of the Visioning Questionnaire (VQ) was to provide a means to **capture the sentiments, opinions, and ideas** of as many residents as possible about a wide range of topics in Ridgewood today and into the future.

- The results of the VQ, combined with the results of the other methods for engaging residents during the visioning process, will inform the **values, principles, goals, and priorities** that guide the creation of Ridgewood’s next Master Plan.

- Several questions in the VQ were designed so that responses that can be **quantified** when compiled. The results of these questions can serve as **a benchmark to compare with the results of future questionnaires** of a similar nature.
Promoting the Visioning Questionnaire

- A postcard about the visioning process, which included information on how to complete the VQ, was sent to every household in the Village (approx. 8,000).

- More than 30 local organizations, including churches and temples, were contacted and asked to help promote the VQ to their constituencies via e-mail, social media, and/or other means.

- Ongoing promotion on the Village website and Facebook page, through www.visionridgewood.org, and through posters and postcards located in prominent locations throughout the Village.

- An Instagram page was also created and the VQ was promoted through this app.

- The VQ was launched in October 2018 and closed in May 2019, a period of 8 months.
The Responses

- **2,001** people completed the questionnaire

  » Approximately **11%** of the adult population of the Village completed the questionnaire (age 18 and up population = 17,794 based on ACS 2017 data).

  » **1,971** respondents are current Village residents.

  » **40** of these respondents submitted a hard copy of their questionnaires completed by hand.

- **130** respondents either work, operate a business, or visit the Village frequently, but do not live in the Village.

  » A number of these respondents report having lived in Ridgewood in the past. Nonetheless, these responses are analyzed separately from those of current residents, unless otherwise specified.
The Questions

1. **Which of the following best describes you?** *(I live in the Village, I work in the Village, etc.)*
2. How long have you lived in the Village?
3. **Which school do you live closest to?**
4. Please indicate the decade in which you were born.
5. What do you like most about living in the Village? *(Residents only)*
6. What are your favorite places in the Village and what do you find special about them?
7. **How do you feel about each of the topics listed below with respect to the Village today?**
8. **How do you feel about each of the topics listed below with respect to the Village today?** *(Continued)*
9. What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should stay the same 5, 10, 20 years into the future?
10. What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should evolve, adapt, and/or change 5, 10, 20 years into the future?
11. What trends (i.e., social, economic, natural, tech, etc.) do you think will have the most impact, positive and/or negative, on the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future.
12. **Thinking about the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future, how do you feel about each of the topics listed below?**
13. **Thinking about the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future, how do you feel about each of the topics listed below?** *(Continued)*
14. If you would like to explain any of your responses or have additional comments or ideas, please type them into the box below.

*Questions in bold typeface were required.*
Q1-Q4: Demographics of the Respondents

Q1. Which of the following best describes you?

- **94%** of respondents are Village residents.
- The VQ permitted responses from **non-residents** who have an interest in the Village. It’s good to get some “outside perspectives,” though a number of respondents indicated that they have previously lived in Ridgewood.
Q1-Q4: Demographics of the Respondents

Q2. How long have you lived in the Village?

- Responses were received from the Village's newest residents all the way to those who have lived here for their whole lives (70+ years).
- More than half of the responses are from long-time residents (20+ years).
- Responses can be cross-tabulated to see, for example, if responses from new residents are different from those of long-time residents.
Q1-Q4: Demographics of the Respondents

Q3. Which school do you live closest to?

- Residents living near the Willard and Travell Schools were well-represented in the responses.
Q4. Please indicate the decade in which you were born?

- Residents born in the 1960s, who are between the ages of 50-59, constitute the highest percentage of respondents, at nearly 30%.
- 1940s = Ages 79+
- 1950s = Ages 60-69
- 1960s = Ages 50-59
- 1970s = Ages 40-49
- 1980s = Ages 30-39
- 1990s = Ages 20-29
- 2000s = Ages 10-19
Q5-Q6: Living in Ridgewood

Q5. What do you like most about living in the Village?

- A Word Cloud. The larger the word, the more often it appears in responses to this question.
Q5-Q6 Living in Ridgewood

Q6: What are your favorite places in the Village and what do you find special about them?

- A Word Cloud. The larger the word, the more often it appears in responses to this question.
Q7-Q8: Evaluating Ridgewood Today

Q7 & Q8: How do you feel about each of the topics listed here with respect to the Village today?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neutral or No Opinion</th>
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Topics are listed in order of weighted average (high to low)

#1  Community Facilities (library, municipal bldgs.)

#17 Socioeconomic Issues (affordability, aging-in-place)
Q7-Q8: Evaluating Ridgewood Today

Q7 & Q8: How do you feel about each of the topics listed here with respect to the Village today?

- **Q**: How much do the responses vary by the demographic characteristics of the person responding?
- **A**: Not by much.
Q7-Q8: Evaluating Ridgewood Today

Q7 & Q8: How do you feel about each of the topics listed here with respect to the Village today?

Observations about the Results

- **Young Residents** tended to rank Public Transportation lower than all other demographic groups.

- **Business Operators** ranked Business & Economic Development and Transportation (cars, parking) the lowest out of all the groups.

- **New Residents** and **Young Residents** ranked the last five topics higher than all of the other demographic groups of residents.

- **Virtually All of the Demographic Groups** ranked Transportation (cars, parking) the lowest among all the topics, followed by Socioeconomic Issues (affordability, aging-in-place).
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q9: What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should stay the same 5, 10, 20 years into the future?

- A **Word Cloud**. The larger the word, the more often it appears in responses to this question.
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q9: What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should stay the same 5, 10, 20 years into the future?

The Range of Responses, by Category

- **Form/Character Aspects**
  - Keep the “Small Town Feel” or “Village Feel.”
  - The charm, vibrancy, character of Downtown.
  - Architecture/historic architecture.
  - Train station.

- **Functional/Operational Aspects**
  - Walkable/walkability.

- **Physical Qualities**
  - Parks and open spaces.
  - Trees.

“[Keep the] charming, historic, village feel.” Growth and development should be tightly contained ...

“All open spaces and recreational areas need to remain and be improved ... We should not keep cutting trees down unless they are dangerous.”

“I hope [downtown] continues to be a hub for community activities and attracts people from surrounding towns. I very much hope that it continues to be a walking town. And I want Ridgewood to value and prioritize our public education.”
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q9: What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should *stay the same* 5, 10, 20 years into the future?

The Range of Responses, by Category (continued)

- **Education**
  - Quality schools and education.

- **Community Facilities & Recreation**
  - The library.
  - Graydon Pool.

- **Social Aspects**
  - Sense of community and community spirit.

- **Opposing Viewpoints**
  - All of it should stay the same.
  - Nothing should stay the same.

“*The library does not need a change except for repairs ... It’s a perfect size for our community and enhances the historic values of our town.*”

“*Keep a thriving downtown (by not making it so difficult to park ... ), and [with regards to] Graydon Pool, [it’s] wonderful to have a natural space without the concrete of municipal pools.*”

“*[It is] very important that Ridgewood remains a village with a great sense of community.*”

“*Leave it well alone.*”

“*Nothing can stay the same. If the town doesn’t change, it will stagnate faster than it [already] is.*”
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q9: What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should stay the same 5, 10, 20 years into the future?

More Observations about the Responses:

- **Maintaining a “Small Town Feel” or “Village Feel”** was one of the most frequent responses to this question.

- Many residents responded to this question by expressing concern about “overdevelopment” in Downtown, feeling that the new residential buildings being constructed will be out-of-scale and add to the population and traffic.

- A number of residents expressed concern about Ridgewood losing its “village feel” and becoming more like [insert name of town here*].

*Montclair, Morristown, and Hackensack were among the most common entries.
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q10: What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should **evolve, adapt, and/or change** 5, 10, 20 years into the future?

- A **Word Cloud**. The larger the word, the more often it appears in responses to this question.
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q10: What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should evolve, adapt, and/or change 5, 10, 20 years into the future?

The Range of Responses, by Category

- **Downtown**
  - More parking (and lower cost).
  - A more pedestrian- and bike-friendly downtown.
  - Make part of Ridgewood Ave one-way or pedestrian-only (an idea that a number of residents recommended)
  - Support/help small businesses.

- **Functional/Operational Aspects (Village-Wide)**
  - Make streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- **Fiscal**
  - Taxes.

”We need more parking and better access to it throughout the CBD.”

”Make downtown more bike- and pedestrian-friendly.”

”Create a climate [that is] welcoming to small businesses.”

”Make [roads in] downtown and the entire town safer and much more bike-accessible. It’s too dangerous for kids or families to ride bikes.”

”The property taxes need to be reviewed. They are forcing seniors out and prohibiting the young from moving [in].”
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q10: What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should evolve, adapt, and/or change 5, 10, 20 years into the future?

The Range of Responses, by Category (continued)

• **Socieconomic Aspects**
  » Increase affordability (esp. for seniors).

• **Recreational Facilities**
  » More playgrounds.
  » Modernize Graydon Pool.
  » Improve sports fields.

• **Social Aspects**
  » The quality of community discourse (esp. over social media); less venting and more productive solutions.

  “Need to provide more affordable options and transportation for people to age in place.”

  “Parks/playgrounds/green spaces - give kids a place to play and be outside.”

  “Graydon Pool should evolve into a modern, useful resource that all are comfortable using. Currently, it is our most under-utilized asset.”

  “The divisiveness prevalent in our country and on local social media tends to spill over [into] everyday life in the village...”
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q10: What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should evolve, adapt, and/or change 5, 10, 20 years into the future?

The Range of Responses, by Category (continued)

- **Environmental**
  - Be more environmentally-friendly.

- **Programming & Spaces for Programs**
  - Enhance arts and music facilities and offerings for high school students.
  - Expand arts and music programming for the community; need for a music/performance venue.

- **Community Facilities**
  - The library.

“"We should become more environmentally-friendly. Ban plastic bags, encourage composting more, install solar power where we can ..."

“"More high quality arts and music in the schools and community."

“"More music events in town for younger residents."

“"The library needs to be renovated to keep up with the demands and ever changing needs of the community."
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q11: What trends (i.e., social, economic, natural, tech, etc.) ... will have the most impact, positive and/or negative, on the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future?

- A Word Cloud. The larger the word, the more often it appears in the responses to this question.
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q11: What trends (i.e., social, economic, natural, tech, etc.) do you think will have the most impact, positive and/or negative, on the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future.

Summary of Responses: Negative Trends

- **High property taxes**, along with SALT deduction limits and State of NJ tax policy, and their impacts on seniors, other residents, and home sales.

- **Overdevelopment/overcrowding** and its impacts on quality-of-life, services (police, fire, EMS), schools, and Village character.

- Increase in **traffic congestion**.

- **Online shopping/Amazon** and its impact on Downtown’s competitiveness.

> “I need to move after living here for 27 years. [It’s] heartbreaking, but [I] can’t afford it anymore. [I] can’t retire and live here.”

> “I worry that the potential overdevelopment of the Village ... isn’t being thoughtfully considered with respect to the impact it will have on schools.”

> “Online shopping will continue to impact [Downtown] retail, but I believe Ridgewood is already adapting in a positive way. Retail propertyowners must adjust their rents or find different renters.”
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q11: What trends (i.e., social, economic, natural, tech, etc.) do you think will have the most impact, positive and/or negative, on the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future.

Summary of Responses: **Negative Trends** (continued)

- **High rents** and their impacts on Downtown businesses and overall vitality.
- **Tearing down** of historic houses; building of larger houses.
- **Climate change/global warming** and impacts on storms and local flooding.
- **Water quality** and **supply** challenges.
- **Cutting down trees** without replacement.

“We need to resist over-development, including over-development of [residential] lots. Too much is being paved or built over. It’s no wonder that stormwater runoff is increasing...”

“Climate change will put increasing pressure on our already aging infrastructure. This will in turn affect social and economic trends a great deal.”

“... we need to make sure we use resources wisely by recycling, conserving water, planting drought resistant trees and keeping our environment clean.”

“Plant trees to replace those being removed.”
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q11: What trends (i.e., social, economic, natural, tech, etc.) do you think will have the most impact, positive and/or negative, on the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future.

Summary of Responses: Trends/Traits to Promote

- **Affordability** (housing)
- **Environmentally-friendly/Sustainability.**
- **Diversity** (age, socioeconomic, ethnic).
- **Walkability/Bikeability.**
- **Fiscal responsibility.**
- **More civility** on social media.

"Environmental trends will have a huge impact. Flooding, heat waves, and ... storms will become more severe and frequent. Ridgewood must be prepared to deal with the effects. Ridgewood must also become more energy efficient, from its vehicle fleet to municipal buildings."

"Continued diversity will have a positive impact."

"More driving less walking ... encourage through car-sharing, trolleys, bike paths, etc."

"A trend away from social media and back to human gathering?"
Q9-Q13: Envisioning Ridgewood’s Future

Q11: What trends (i.e., social, economic, natural, tech, etc.) do you think will have the most impact, positive and/or negative, on the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future.

Summary of Responses: Trends to Monitor or Adapt To

- **Aging** population.
- Increase in **working remotely/from home**.
- **Self-driving cars**.
- **Direct, one-seat train service to Manhattan** and impacts on the appeal of living in Ridgewood.

“We...”

“The workforce is moving towards remote employees... This means more people in the streets walking or exercising during “regular” work hours. Safe streets should be a priority.”

“Aging residents leaving, millennials unable to afford homes, retailers leaving.”

“... electric self driving cars will eliminate the need for private cars, driveways, large roads, parking garages. People will want to walk more so pleasant pathways will become significant selling points...”

“We need a direct train line into NYC.”

“...”
Q9-Q13: Evaluating Ridgewood’s Future

Q12 & Q13: Thinking about the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future, how do you feel about each of the topics listed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Concerned/Worried</th>
<th>Neutral or No Opinion</th>
<th>Optimistic/Hopeful</th>
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<td>Socioeconomic Issues (affordability, aging-in-place)</td>
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Topics are listed in order of weighted average (low to high).
Q9-Q13: Evaluating Ridgewood’s Future

Q12 & Q13: Thinking about the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future, how do you feel about each of the topics listed?

- Responses by demographic characteristic of the respondent.
Q9-Q13: Evaluating Ridgewood’s Future
Q12 & Q13: Thinking about the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future, how do you feel about each of the topics listed?

Observations about the Results

- This chart generally mirrors the chart on page 13 (the topics are in reverse order in terms of sequence) except Socioeconomic Issues (affordability, aging-in-place) topped the list of topics for level of Concern/Worry among respondents. This might reflect the understanding that this affordability is influenced by many factors and is not a simple challenge to tackle.

- Residents seem optimistic that Ridgewood’s strengths will continue to prevail in the future. An exception: Education & Schools, which ranked second in resident satisfaction today (see chart on page 13). This topic appears closer to the middle on the chart on the previous page, reflecting concerns about declining school quality that many residents noted in their responses to the short-answer questions. Nonetheless, the majority of residents reported being optimistic about this topic.
Q14: An Open-Ended Question

Q14: If you would like to explain any of your responses or have additional comments or ideas, type them into the box below.

- A Word Cloud. The larger the word, the more often it appears in responses to this question.
Q14: An Open-Ended Question

Q14: If you would like to explain any of your responses or have additional comments or ideas, type them into the box below.

Frequently Mentioned Sentiments

- Concern about the tearing down of houses in residential neighborhoods and the scale of new houses being constructed.
- Concern about unsustainable taxes and taxes driving seniors out of town.
- Concern about over-development and over-population.
- Concern about declining school rankings and overcrowding of classrooms due to new apartment building construction.
- Desire for better maintenance and care of streets and more street lighting.

“"I worry as older homes are replaced with bigger homes, open spaces [are being taken] over."

“"I would like to see an emphasis on keeping seniors in the village."

“"Overpopulation and having too many condos and buildings will have a negative effect."

“"School rankings are dropping and there is a steady increase in the percentage of children entering the schools with special needs."

“"Streets need to be taken care of better, especially after bad winter storms."
Q14: An Open-Ended Question

Q14: If you would like to explain any of your responses or have additional comments or ideas, type them into the box below.

Frequently Mentioned Sentiments (continued)

- Desire for a more **environmentally-friendly** Village.
- Desire for **improved walking/biking** and **pedestrian safety**.
- Disappointment and concern about **the loss of Valley Hospital**.
- Disdain for the **parking meters** and **high rates**.
- Dismay at the **quality of athletic fields**.
- Frustration with **speeding cars**.

“[We] need to invest in greener options such as e-bikes/e-scooters, especially for commuting. It would be a great green option instead of driving a car.”

“[We] need better planning around the CBD for pedestrian and bicycle safety; the village is still too car-centric and we could do better.”

“Valley Hospital leaving town is a big negative.”

“I have many friends who ... meet me elsewhere for coffee and lunch ... because we don’t want to deal with the parking meters ... and the increased costs feel distasteful.”

“We need more police involvement, especially with pedestrian crossing and safety as well as speeding.”
Q14: An Open-Ended Question

Q14: If you would like to explain any of your responses or have additional comments or ideas, type them into the box below.

Opposing Viewpoints Expressed Frequently

- Dismay that the **parking garage** and **apartment buildings** are being built.
- Hope that the **parking garage** and new **apartment buildings** will help Downtown.

"Four massive apartments are being built [along with] a big [parking] garage, so the things that should stay the same are long since destroyed."

"There is no need for a parking garage..."

"The parking garage is overdue."

"Downtown parking is still a big issue even with the [new parking] garage ... it’s not enough."

"I believe the new housing developments and garage in the downtown area will revitalize Ridgewood and hopefully lower propertyowners’ taxes."
Other Results & Observations

Ideas & Suggestions

- Many residents included specific ideas for the future of Ridgewood in their responses. To keep the focus on the “big picture” and to avoid getting distracted by debates on the merits of these ideas, they are not summarized in this report. The focus of the Visioning Process is on the values, principles, goals, and priorities that such ideas could support/facilitate/implement.
Commentary on the Results

a. Introduction
b. A Core Value/Principle
c. Diverging Viewpoints
d. Finding Middle Ground
e. Areas of Agreement
f. A Challenging Trend
f. Key Questions to Consider
Commentary on the Results

a. Introduction

The most challenging part of summarizing the results of the Visioning Questionnaire (VQ) was to distill the more than 3,000 responses to the short-answer questions—which vary in length from one sentence to several paragraphs—into a summary that accurately captures the frequency and range of sentiments, opinions, and ideas expressed. Fortunately, the responses were unanimously earnest and thoughtful, demonstrating that residents took the VQ seriously, considered it a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the Village today and into the future, and care deeply about their town.

“I have lived all over the country, and the passion for [the Village] is unique!”

Every resident has opinions about and aspirations for the Village, whether they are a long-time resident or someone who just moved to town last year. As such, it’s important to capture not only the most frequently-expressed sentiments, opinions, and ideas, but also to highlight the range of voices that exist in the Village. We also examined responses from people who might not live in the Village but still have a vested interest in its success, such as business operators and former residents.

“[I lived] in Ridgewood for over 20 years, [but] moved last year due to the cost of property taxes and federal tax changes. I would love to move into a new, clean, and modern rental or condo in the heart of town.”
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b. A Core Value & Principle  

This visioning process started at the precipice of major changes in Ridgewood’s Central Business District. A parking garage and four new residential apartment buildings were approved and construction is underway on several of these projects. The Village also proceeded with a project to add more parking spaces to the train station parking lot, which required removing a number of tall, old-growth trees, reducing the size of a landscaped walkway, and replanting trees in place of those cut down. Many responses to the VQ included references these projects.  

Changes are also taking place in the residential neighborhoods, lot by lot. Residents have been noticing that houses, some of them with historic character, are being purchased and torn down to make way for new, larger houses with modern architectural designs.  

These are all significant physical changes in a town that, otherwise, has not changed much in the past 50 years. Against this backdrop, one of the core values/principles that clearly rises to the top from the results of the VQ is to “Keep a Small Town/Village Feel.”  

Some residents feel that the changes taking place are irrevocable, putting the town on the trajectory toward becoming “more like a city.”

“It’s too late now, but we shouldn’t be building all the multi-family housing crowding the downtown. It will now be like a city and have less of that small town feel [that] we loved.”

Regardless of where residents stand on the changes taking place in Ridgewood today, “Keep a Small Town/Village Feel” is not a simple principle to put into practice. It requires
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identifying, defining, and codifying the essential physical qualities and dimensions of the built environment that give Ridgewood its “village feel” so that change, in whatever form it arrives, can be shaped in ways that complement rather than detract from this character and feeling. For example, one essential physical quality of Ridgewood’s “village feel,” as expressed by many residents in the VQ are its trees.

“A commitment to maintaining and replacing trees would vastly improve the Village and make us a true ‘Tree City’ once again.”

The Visioning Process is a starting point for putting this principle into practice, while Ridgewood’s next Master Plan will further define and carry the work forward through policies and regulations.

c. Diverging Viewpoints

While many residents who responded to the VQ would agree that “keeping a small town/village feel” should be a core principle of Ridgewood’s next Master Plan, there is disagreement on how to effectuate this. On one side are residents who wish maintain the small town/village feel by preserving Ridgewood as it is currently, with minimal changes. On the other side are residents who might also believe in the same principle but see the need for changes, adaptation, or evolution within the Village.

This disagreement plays out in the results of the VQ in residents’ comments about Graydon Pool. Many residents specifically mentioned Graydon Pool in response to Q9: What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should stay the same 5, 10, 20 years into the future?:
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“Graydon Pool [should stay the same]. It’s unique and appealing.”

“Graydon Pool should always stay as it is.”

At the same time, many other residents who responded to the VQ are eager to see Graydon Pool modernized. In response to Q10: What aspects, qualities, or parts of the Village should evolve, adapt, and/or change 5, 10, 20 years into the future? many residents specifically called out Graydon Pool:

“Graydon Pool desperately needs renovation and modernization...”

“Graydon Pool needs to adapt. There needs to be a balance between keeping the look of a lake with the sanitary conditions of a public pool...”

This divergence of viewpoints also appears in the VQ responses when concerning other aspects of Ridgewood, such as Downtown, Valley Hospital, and the Library.

“...I am not a native Ridgewooder, [but I] have heard every argument regarding the development and/or vision for Ridgewood in the future. Parking garage or no parking garage? High-density or no high-density? Renovate the library or not? Expand the hospital or not? [It’s a] non-stop debate...”

This “debate,” or divergence of viewpoints, seems to hinder the decisionmaking process in Ridgewood. Some residents feel that, as a result, the Village ends up resisting changes.

“[Ridgewood] needs to stop being the town of ‘NO.’”
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e. Finding Middle Ground

There is a seam of pragmatism that runs through the thousands of short-answer responses to the VQ. It is cast by the residents who see a “middle ground”—one that can respect the Village’s the past/present, but also create space for the Village to adapt or evolve into the future.

“We have a town that loves traditions, but fears change. We need a solid mixture of both.”

“I would like to see a Village that is progressive with an eye to the future without disregarding the past...”

“I love this town, but that does not mean it should stay stuck in an earlier time to retain its beauty and charm. It can evolve with the rest of the world and still be amazing!”

“The town seems divided on whether to honor its past or secure its future. There has to be a middle ground. While there is always risk associated with changes, such as building a new parking garage or multi-family housing, there is also risk in doing nothing...”

They are also eager to see the community begin to resolve differences of opinion in order to plan effectively for the Village’s future.
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“... I urge you to really try and listen to each other ... There has to be a middle ground when it comes to development AND still maintaining the best parts of Ridgewood for years to come.”

“I feel blessed to live [in Ridgewood] and appreciate all the [people] who make this a wonderful place to live and raise a family ... It saddens me when I hear ... complaining. Life isn’t perfect and it’s full of compromises. I hope people see all the amazing things here and work together to find solutions to make it even better.”

Are the residents quoted above being overly-optimistic about people’s interest in compromising or, at the least, starting to listen to one another? Do they underestimate the resolve of those residents who believe Ridgewood should be preserved as much as possible?

“Future planning should focus on a plan to keep Ridgewood the same as it is now. In fact, maybe turn back the clock to make sure the Village is preserved for the future.”
d. Areas of Agreement

Fortunately, as the VQ results demonstrate, Ridgewood residents are not always disagreeing on Village matters. The charts on page 13 and page 14 indicate that residents who responded to the VQ generally agree on the status of a wide range of community topics. They generally agree about the Village's greatest strengths and assets, such as the library, the school system, and community safety, which might have attracted many of them to live in the Village in the first place. They also generally agree on the topics that are most challenging or concerning, such as the high cost of living, the economic health and operation of Downtown, and land use and development. And this agreement spans various demographic categories (e.g., new residents, long-time residents, young residents, etc.).
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e. A Challenging Trend

By far the most frequent word utilized in the response to Q11: What trends (i.e., social, economic, natural, tech, etc.) will have the most impact, positive and/or negative, on the Village 5, 10, 20 years into the future? was “taxes.” Of course, Ridgewood residents have plenty of company in New Jersey who feel the same way about taxes in their own communities. For Ridgewood, how does this play out with respect to the generally-accepted approach of a community supporting and investing in its strengths? Can Ridgewood afford to take this approach? Can it afford not to?

“One should invest where they will get the greatest return, and in a community, this is the education and town resources such as the library and parks.”

“The amount of debt that is about to be introduced to add new facilities to the school system and library is extremely troubling. It will drive taxes higher and degrade services to support the debt service and further drive up taxes.”

“... Priority focus should be on a comprehensive master plan that manages density, maintains character, promotes a healthy [Downtown], and ensures a sustainable level of investment in services, education, and infrastructure that benefits the broadest resident population. This is currently not happening and can be seen in the kinds of projects that are proceeding or being delayed/ignored.”
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f. Key Questions to Consider

As Ridgewood starts to develop a new Master Plan, the following questions are critical to address. The Visioning Workshops present the first opportunities to discuss these questions.

1. **What physical qualities, attributes, and features contribute to Ridgewood’s “small town/village feel?”** What other qualities, including more intangible ones, contribute to this?

2. **The visioning process asks the community to contemplate the future of Ridgewood 5, 10, 20 years from now.** What kind of Village do you want to leave for the next generations? How might the next generation of Village residents be different from (or similar to) today’s residents?

3. **This Summary of Results presents a number of topics that Ridgewood’s next Master Plan could address.** How would you allocate these topics in terms of priority? Priority topics can include both those that residents believe to be critical needs, serious challenges, and ongoing frustrations as well as those that represent the Village’s greatest assets or strengths.
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4. **How might the Village go about providing more affordable housing options for seniors?** What part(s) of the Village would most appropriate for it?

5. **Can the Village continue to support and invest in its greatest assets or strengths?** Can it afford to? Can it afford *not* to?

6. **Can Ridgewood residents find any “middle ground” between the diverging viewpoints about various topics described in this summary?**
Next Steps

Comments, Questions, Reactions

- If you have any comments, questions, reactions about this Summary of Results that you’d like to share, please visit www.visionridgewood.org/contact

Visioning Workshops

- We encourage you to participate in one of the two Visioning Workshops scheduled for September, which will focus on discussing the Key Questions to Consider. We will also discuss the other inputs into the visioning process, which include the “emerging principles” that are described in the Village Voices section of www.visionridgewood.org.

- If you haven’t yet signed up to receive updates on the visioning process, visit www.visionridgewood.org and look for “Receive E-mail Updates” on the right sidebar (or scroll down if you are on a tablet or cell phone).