

## Research Report Summary

### **Town of Falmouth Planning Survey**

**June 2004** 

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### Introduction

In October of 2003, the Falmouth Town Council adopted a resolution directing the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) to conduct research on town-wide approaches to preserving open space and developing compact neighborhoods. The Council indicated that the first step in pursuing this research should be the "collection of citizen values." This decision was precipitated in part by the strong public reaction to the draft Future Land Use Plan for the central part of town. It was also indicted by the Council's stated desire for more measurable input in the public participation process that CPAC has been pursuing for the past two years.

In response to the Council's resolution, CPAC proposed doing a town-wide, citizen attitude survey combining policy questions on both open space and compact growth issues. An additional related topic, conservation zoning, was incorporated in order to maximize the information gathered and to gauge public views on that upcoming policy debate.

Working with consultants, staff, and the town's Conservation Commission, CPAC developed a list of questions and asked the consultants to proceed with a random telephone survey, which CPAC deemed to be the most objective and cost-effective way to acquire the desired input on citizen values. The specific questions were crafted to get at the larger policy questions that follow:

#### **Open Space Policy**

- Has there been any significant change in the level of community support for town acquisition of open space?
- What are the acceptable means for the town to achieve open space preservation?
- How should open space be defined?
- What are citizen priorities for acquiring additional open space?

#### **Compact Growth Policy**

- Is there a preference for compact neighborhoods or large-lot subdivisions?
- What are the factors that might affect views on these two development patterns?
- Who should decide what development patterns get built by developers?
- Is there openness to rental housing and condominiums in town?

#### **Conservation Zoning Policy**

- Is there public support for mandating cluster development to preserve open space?
- Who should determine what land gets placed in the open space of conservation subdivisions?
- Are there citizen priorities for what type of land is placed that open space?

### **Key Findings**

#### Familiarity with Past Efforts to Preserve Open Space

• Most residents (82%) are very familiar or somewhat familiar with Falmouth's efforts to preserve open space.

#### **Definition of Open Space**

- Most residents (69%) feel that land that has been developed for active recreation, park space, and schools should be included in a town wide definition of open space.
- Most residents (66%) feel that tree farms and tree growth parcels should be included in a town wide definition of open space.
- Most residents (63%) feel that land that is currently undeveloped and restricted by subdivision approvals should be included in a town wide definition of open space.

### **Future Priorities for Open Space**

- More than eight in ten residents (84%) would support requiring developers to set aside land as open space in new residential developments. 62% strongly support requiring developers to set aside land as open space.
- Nearly eight in ten residents (79%) would support Falmouth purchasing additional land to set aside as open space. Nearly half (46%) would strongly support Falmouth purchasing additional land to set aside as open space.
- Nearly three in four residents (74%) are very or somewhat satisfied with Falmouth's efforts to preserve open space.
- Nearly three in four residents (73%) feel that it is very important that Falmouth preserve open space.
- Nearly three in four residents (73%) would strongly support the town pursuing voluntary donations of land to set aside as open space.
- Most residents (62%) feel that Falmouth should acquire smaller lots throughout the town to preserve as open space rather than buying large blocks of land in a few locations.

### Familiarity with Current Zoning

 Half (51%) of Falmouth residents are very familiar or somewhat familiar with current zoning regulations governing residential development in Falmouth.

### **Views on Compact Growth versus Large Lot Zoning**

- Seven in ten residents (71%) support increasing the number condominiums and townhouses in Falmouth, if they are included in compact neighborhoods.
- Two in three residents (68%) support increasing the number of rental units in Falmouth, if they are included in compact neighborhoods.
- A two-thirds majority (66%) of residents would oppose letting developers decide whether they would build large-lot developments or compact neighborhoods. 47% felt strongly that developers should not be making this decision.
- Based on their initial opinions, residents are nearly evenly split on whether they would support (48%) or oppose (47%) requiring housing to be grouped into compact neighborhoods so that land could be set aside as open space.
- Based on their initial opinions, residents are also evenly split on whether they would support (48%) or oppose (48%) requiring housing to be built on large lots of 2 acres or more.
- Among those that initially supported grouping housing together on smaller lots to preserve open space or requiring large lots of 2 acres or more, the opinion of most changed depending on possible advantages or drawbacks to such development.
- Residents are split on whether the town should allow extra housing in some areas of town and use fees generated by this mechanism to purchase development rights in other areas of Falmouth.

### **Views on Conservation Zoning**

- Nearly seven in ten residents (69%) support requiring developers to set aside at least half the land in subdivisions as open space for future residents. 43% strongly support this requirement.
- In deciding on the type of land that should be set aside as open space in new developments, a majority of residents (64%) support having the town decide what land is set aside rather than letting developers decide. 38% strongly feel that the town should decide.
- The highest priorities of residents for open space in subdivisions are to preserve wildlife habitat, areas along waterways, and wetlands as open space. Secondary goals include preserving forested lands, trails for walking/biking/horseback riding, and land used for farming. There was surprisingly lower interest in preserving scenic views, although respondents considered it important.

### **APPENDIX I - Survey Questions**

### **Open Space Questions**

- How familiar are you with the efforts of Falmouth to preserve open space? (Very Familiar, Somewhat Familiar, Not Very Familiar, Not at All Familiar) [Q1]
- 2. One topic that the town is considering is what land should actually be considered open space. There are approximately 1100 acres of open space that are undeveloped and deed restricted against development. There are two other classes of land that MIGHT be classified as open space. I would like your opinion on whether this land should be included in a town wide definition of open space. The first is... [Q2a-c]
  - a. Open space that is undeveloped and restricted by subdivision approvals, approximately 400 acres. Should this type of land also be included in a town-wide definition of open space? (Yes, No)
  - b. Open space that has been developed for active recreation, schools, and park space, approximately 750 acres. Should this type of land also be included in a town-wide definition of open space? (Yes, No)
  - c. Tree Farms and tree growth parcels, approximately 3260 acres. Should this type of land also be included in a town-wide definition of open space? (Yes, No)
- How important is it that the town of Falmouth preserves open space? (Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Very Important, Not at all Important) [Q3]
- 4. Overall, how satisfied are you with the town of Falmouth's efforts at preserving open space? (Very Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Somewhat Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied) [Q4]
- In thinking about the town's future efforts at preserving open space, how strongly would you support or oppose each of the following: (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q5-7]
  - ♦ The town purchasing additional land to set aside as open space.
  - Requiring developers to set aside land as open space in new residential developments.
  - Having the town pursue voluntary donations of land to set aside as open space.

6. Do you feel that the town should focus efforts on acquiring additional open space adjacent to current areas of open space? This would create larger areas of open space concentrated in a few areas in Falmouth. Or do you feel that the town of Falmouth should acquire smaller plots of land throughout the town that would preserve and maintain open space in many Falmouth neighborhoods within walking distance? (Acquire next to existing, large open space areas, Acquire smaller plots in neighborhoods) [Q23]

### **Compact Growth Questions**

- 1. How familiar would you say you are with the current zoning regulations for residential housing development in Falmouth? (Very Familiar, Somewhat Familiar, Not Very Familiar, Not at All Familiar) [Q24]
- 2. In developing a future plan, it is important that the plan take into account the views of the residents in Falmouth. I would like to know what you feel should be done to govern future residential development in Falmouth. If you were the town councilor and you had to propose a plan for residential development, what specific things would you include? [Q26]

Now I would like to get your thoughts on some specific options for future residential development in Falmouth. There are 2 strategies that have been discussed by Falmouth policy makers. The first would be to have housing on smaller lots that are grouped into more concentrated neighborhoods. This would provide the opportunity to preserve more land as open space. The second option would place homes on lots that are 2 or more acres in size and that are spread out, away from one another. This would provide the residents of these homes greater privacy.

- 3. Would you support or oppose requiring developers to group houses together on small lots so that other land could be saved as open space. (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q29]
- 4. Would you support or oppose allowing developers to decide for themselves whether to build on two acre lots or to group houses together on smaller lots to preserve larger tracts of open space. (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q30]
- 5. Would you support or oppose zoning laws that require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more. (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q31]
- 6. Now I would like you to think about policies that would allow housing to be grouped together in more traditional neighborhoods. Would you support or oppose zoning laws that would require builders to build homes on

smaller lots in return for preserving larger tracts of open space in these areas? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q37]

#### NEGATIVES – 2 ACRE LOTS

- 7. Now, I would like you to think about the possible drawbacks of zoning laws that require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more. Such laws would limit the ability to preserve larger tracts of open space. Knowing this would you now oppose or support or oppose such zoning laws? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q32]
- 8. Zoning laws that require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more would limit the ability to set aside land that could be used by all neighbors for recreation. Knowing this would you now oppose or support or oppose such zoning laws? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q33]
- 9. Zoning laws that require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more <u>could increase housing costs</u>, thus preventing some people from living in Falmouth. This might include younger families and older couples. Knowing this would you now oppose or support such zoning laws? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q34]

#### POSITIVES – 2 ACRE LOTS

- 10. Now, I would like you to think about the possible advantages of zoning laws that require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more. Such laws would allow new homes to use wells and septic systems rather than town utilities. Knowing this would you now support or oppose such zoning laws? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q35]
- 11. Zoning laws that require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more would provide more personal yard space for home owners as well as more options for what could be done on their property (such as larger garages). Knowing this would you now oppose or support or oppose such zoning laws? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q36]

#### NEGATIVES - COMPACT HOUSING

12. Now, I would like you to think about the possible drawbacks of zoning laws that would REQUIRE builders to build homes on smaller lots in return for preserving larger tracts of open space. Such laws would limit the rights of landowners in terms of what they could do with their property. Knowing this would you now oppose or support or oppose such zoning laws? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q38]

- 14. Zoning laws that would require builders to build homes on smaller lots in return for preserving larger tracts of open space would require that such homes use public sewer and water (which would raise the cost of the development). Knowing this would you now oppose or support or oppose such zoning laws? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q40]

#### POSITIVES - COMPACT HOUSING

- 15. Now, I would like you to think about the possible advantages of zoning laws that would require builders to build homes on smaller lots where appropriate in return for preserving larger tracts of open space. Such laws would allow the preservation or larger tract of open space that all residents could then use. Knowing this would you now oppose or support or oppose such zoning laws? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q41]
- 16. Zoning laws that would require builders to build homes on smaller lots where appropriate in return for preserving larger tracts of open space would provide more housing options and help keep the price of homes affordable to younger families and older couples. Knowing this would you now oppose or support or oppose such zoning laws? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q42]
- 17. Would you support or oppose Zoning laws that would require builders to build homes on smaller lots where appropriate in return for preserving larger tracts of open space if such a residential development were built in your area? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q43]

#### COMPACT GROWTH—OTHER ISSUES

18. One possible way of preserving open space would be to transfer development from more rural parts of town to more built-up areas. If the town were to allow some extra housing units in those built-up areas, it could charge a fee for the extra housing to generate money that could be used to purchase development rights from landowners in rural areas. Would you support or oppose such a method for preserving open space? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q44]

- 19. Would you support or oppose increasing the number of rental units available in Falmouth if they were included in areas where homes are grouped together on smaller lots? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q45]
- 20. Would you support or oppose increasing the number of condominiums or townhouses in Falmouth if they were included in areas where homes are grouped together on smaller lots? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q46]

### **Conservation Zoning Questions**

- 1. The Town Council is currently considering a policy to require developers to set aside at least half of the land they plan to develop as common open space for the future residents of those subdivisions, and to require that open space to be part of a larger network of open space across the town. Would you support or oppose such a plan? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q47]
- 2. I will read a list and I would like to know which items you feel would be most important to set aside as open space in areas of new residential development and which you would consider less important. For each please let me know if you feel that it is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important to set aside this type of land in new residential developments as open space. (asked in random order) [Q48-Q61]
  - Land used for farming or other agricultural purposes.
  - Wetlands and the land adjacent to wetlands.
  - Forested lands.
  - Open fields not used currently for farming or agriculture.
  - Wildlife habitat.
  - Recreation areas such as large parks and playing fields.
  - Smaller, neighborhood parks or playgrounds within walking distance.
  - Large front or back lawns for individual homeowners.
  - Golf courses.
  - Trails for walking, biking, or horseback riding.
  - Trails for ATV's and snowmobiles.
  - Areas with scenic views.
  - Areas along waterways, river corridors, and streams.
- 3. Now think about the types of land that were just discussed and the priority of setting aside certain types of land as open space within areas of new residential development. If the town were to require developers to set

aside open space in every subdivision do you support or oppose allowing the developer to decide the type of land that will be set aside as open space? (Would you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?) [Q62a&b]

### **Housing characteristics:**

- How large is your lot size?
- How long have you lived in your current home?
- In which area of town do you reside? (street address or intersection)

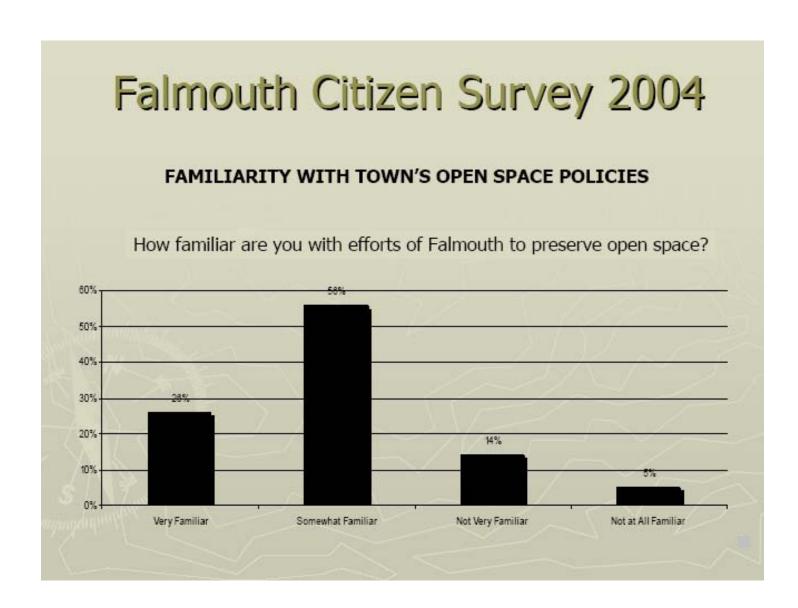
### **Demographics:**

- Age
- Gender
- Income
- Marital Status
- Do any children < 18 reside in your household?
- Education

### For potential focus groups:

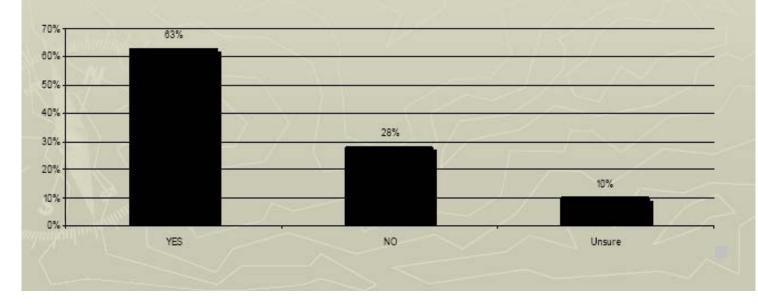
• From time to time researchers are interested in following up on the views of participants to better understand these views, would you mind if we contacted you at a later date?

## **APPENDIX II – Survey Responses**



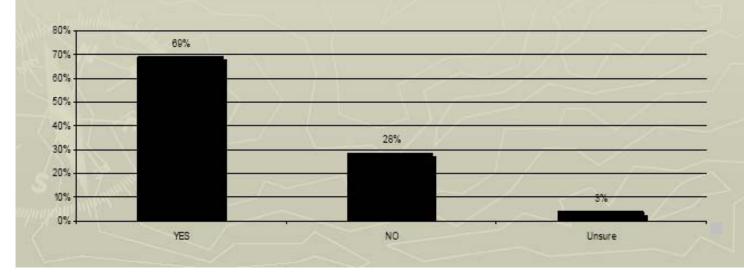
#### OPEN SPACE DEFINITION 1 - SUBDIVISION COMMON LAND

Open space that is undeveloped and restricted by subdivision approvals, approximately 400 acres. Should this type of land also be included in a town wide definition of open space?



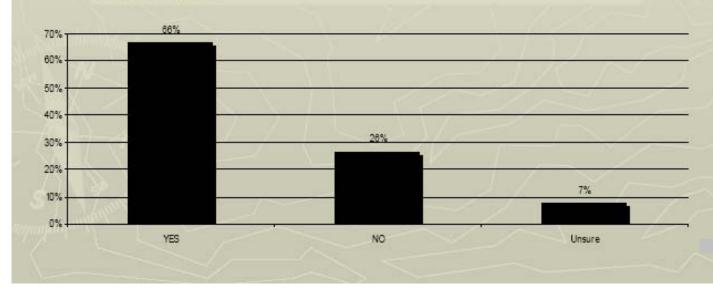
### OPEN SPACE DEFINITION 2 - SCHOOLS, PARKS, PLAYFIELDS

Open space that has been developed for active recreation, schools, and park space, approximately 750 acres. Should this type of land also be included in a town wide definition of open space?



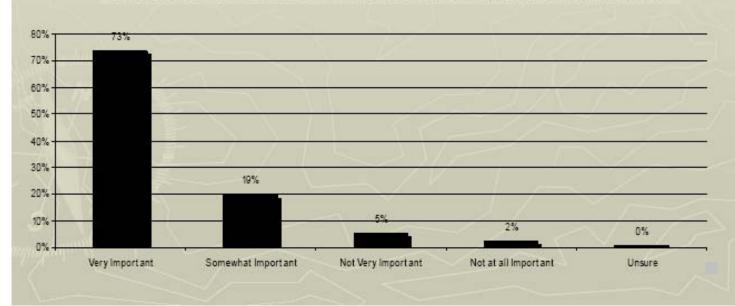
#### OPEN SPACE DEFINITION 3 - TREE FARMS & TREE GROWTH

Tree farms and tree growth parcels, approximately 3260 acres. Should this type of land also be included in a town wide definition of open space?



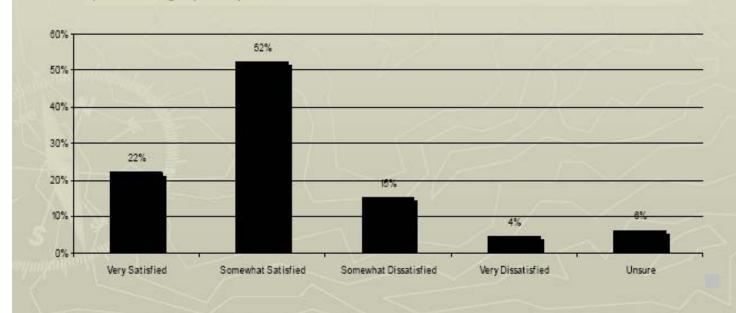
#### IMPORTANCE OF TOWN'S OPEN SPACE POLICIES

How important is it that the town of Falmouth preserves open space?



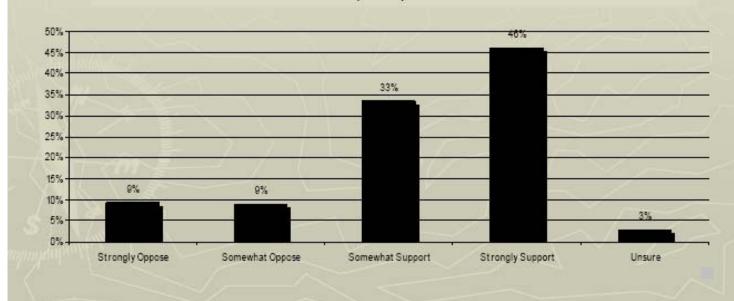
#### SATISFACTION WITH TOWN'S OPEN SPACE POLICIES

Overall, how satisfied are you with the town of Falmouth's efforts at preserving open space?



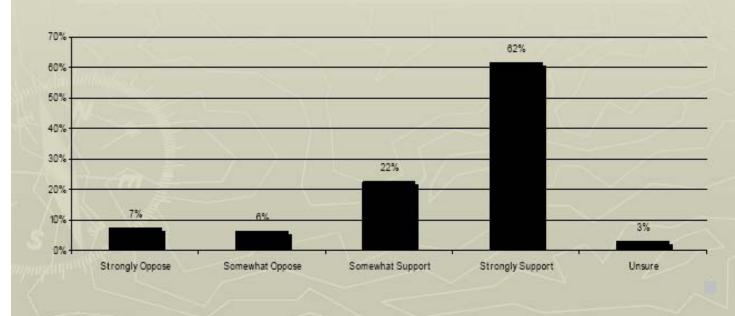
### **OPEN SPACE MECHANISM 1 - ACQUISITION**

How strongly would you support or oppose the town purchasing additional land to set aside as open space?



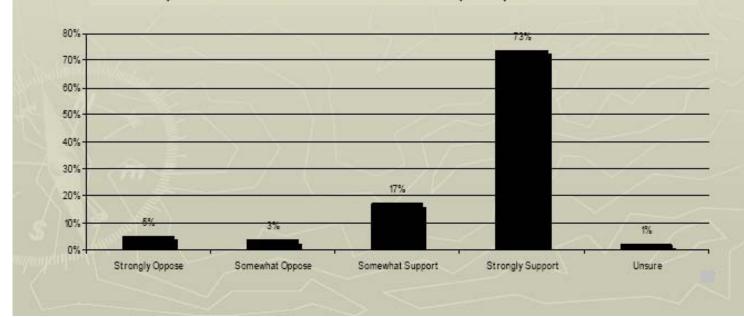
#### **OPEN SPACE MECHANISM 2 - REGULATION**

How strongly would you support or oppose requiring developers to set aside land as open space in new residential developments?



#### OPEN SPACE MECHANISM 3 - DONATION

How strongly would you support or oppose having the town pursue voluntary donations of land to set aside as open space?



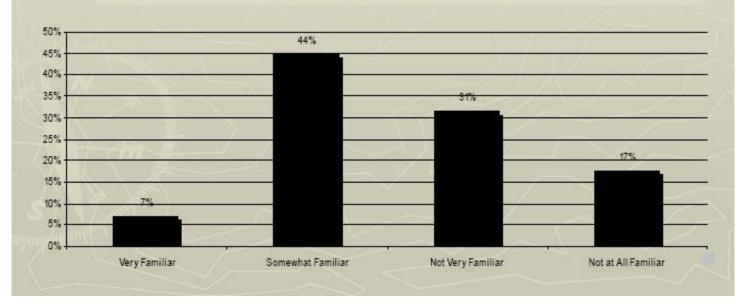
### DIRECTION OF ACQUISITION POLICIES (Few large/Many small)

Do you feel that the town should focus efforts on acquiring additional open space adjacent to current areas of open space or do you feel that the town should acquire smaller plots of land throughout the town?



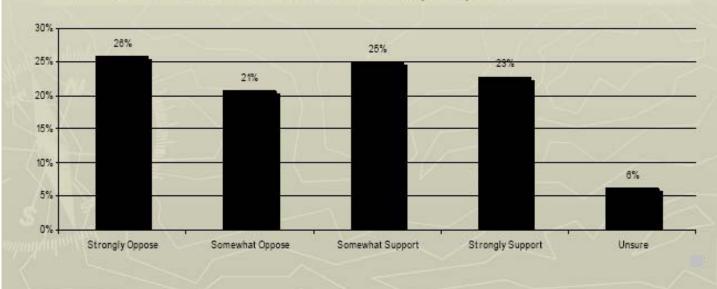
#### FAMILIARITY WITH TOWN'S ZONING POLICIES

How familiar would you say you are with the current zoning regulations for residential housing development in Falmouth?



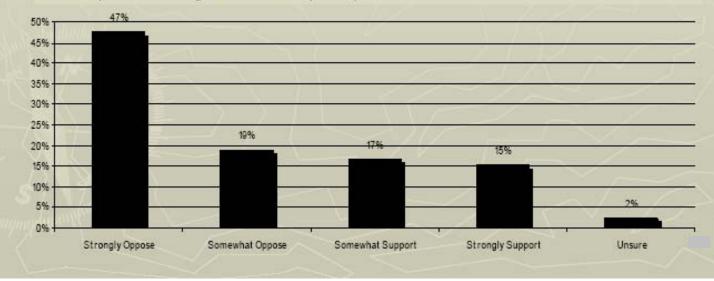
#### SUPPORT FOR COMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS

Would you support or oppose requiring developers to group houses together on small lots so that land could be saved as open space?



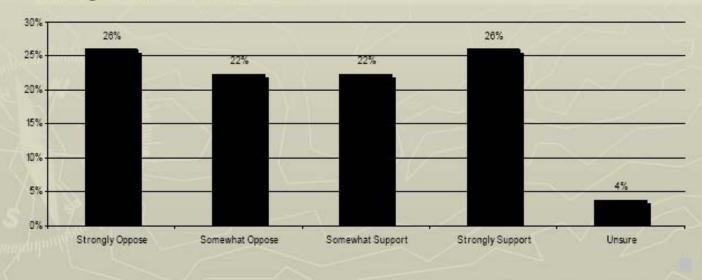
#### RESPONSIBILITY FOR DETERMINING DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Would you support or oppose allowing developers to decide for themselves whether to build on two acre lots or to group new homes together on smaller lots to preserve larger tracts of open space?



#### SUPPORT FOR LARGE-LOT ZONING

Would you support or oppose zoning laws that require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more.



### SHIFTS WHEN GIVEN DRAWBACKS OF LARGE LOTS

	Support Compact Housing	Support Lots of 2+ Acres	Unsure
Initial Survey Questions		1-/-3	
Require developers to group houses together on small lots so that land could be saved as open space.	48%		
Require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more.	( -	48%	4%
Drawbacks – Requiring Lots of 2+ Acres			
Would limit the ability to preserve larger tracts of open space.	51%	41%	8%
Would limit the ability to set aside land for recreation.	55%	40%	5%
Could increase housing costs to younger families and older couples.	59%	34%	7%

### SHIFTS WHEN GIVEN ADVANTAGES OF LARGE LOTS

4. 4. 5	Support Compact Housing	Support Lots of 2+ Acres	Unsure
Initial Survey Questions			1
Require developers to group houses together on small lots so that land could be saved as open space.	48%		
Require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more.	1/-	48%	4%
Advantages – Requiring Lots of 2+ Acres			
Would allow wells and septic systems rather than town utilities.	41%	55%	4%
Would provide more personal yard space for homeowners.	37%	59%	4%

### SHIFTS WHEN GIVEN DRAWBACKS OF COMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS

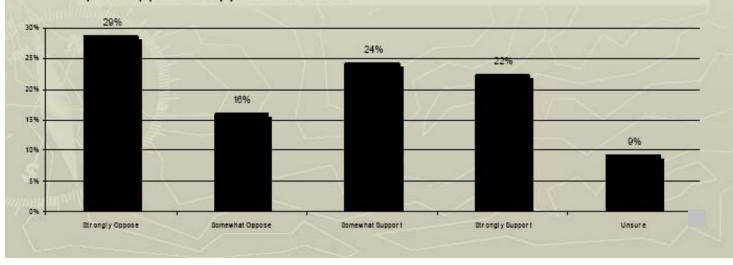
	Support Compact Housing	Support Lots of 2+ Acres	Unsure
Initial Survey Questions			1
Require developers to group houses together on small lots so that land could be saved as open space.	48%	(JA)	( )
Require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more.	5	48%	4%
Drawbacks - Compact Housing	10		
Limits landowner rights	38%	56%	6%
Houses would be grouped more closely together	49%	45%	6%
Would require that such homes use public sewer and water	58%	37%	5%

#### SHIFTS WHEN GIVEN ADVANTAGES OF COMPACT NEIGHBORHOODS

	Support Compact Housing	Support Lots of 2+ Acres	Unsure
Initial Survey Questions			
Require developers to group houses together on small lots so that land could be saved as open space.	48%		
Require new homes to be built on larger lots of 2 acres or more.		48%	4%
Advantages - Compact Housing	4V-		
Would allow the preservation of larger tracts of open space	61%	35%	5%
Could provide more housing options to younger families and older couples.	69%	28%	3%
Allow smaller lots In return for preserving larger tracts of open space if in your area?	59%	37%	4%

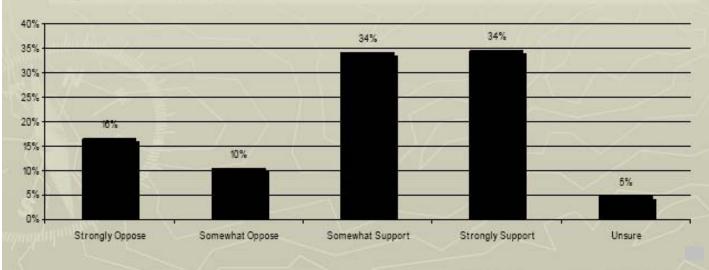
#### SUPPORT FOR TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

If the town were to allow some extra housing units in those built-up areas, it could charge a fee for the extra housing to generate money that could be used to purchase development rights from landowners in rural areas. Would you support or oppose this idea?



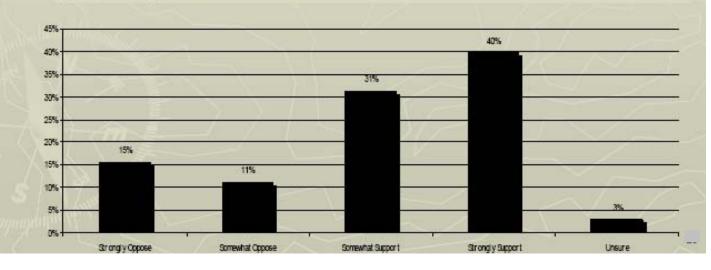
#### SUPPORT FOR RENTAL HOUSING

Would you support or oppose increasing the number of rental units available in Falmouth if they were included in areas where homes are grouped together on smaller lots?



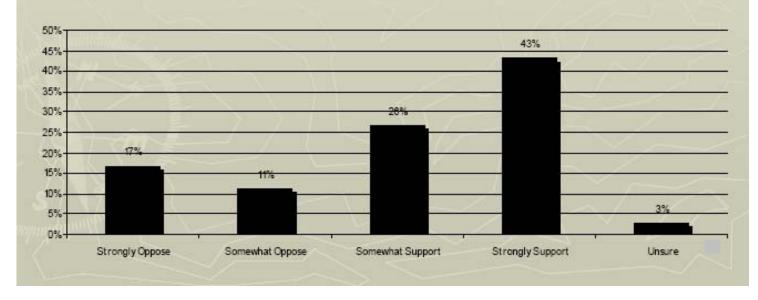
#### SUPPORT FOR CONDOMIMIUMS

Would you support or oppose increasing the number of condominiums or townhouses in Falmouth if they were included in areas where homes are grouped together on smaller lots?



#### SUPPORT FOR MANDATORY CLUSTERING

The Town Council is considering policy to require developers to set aside at least half of the land they develop as open space for the future residents of those subdivisions. Would you support or oppose such a plan?



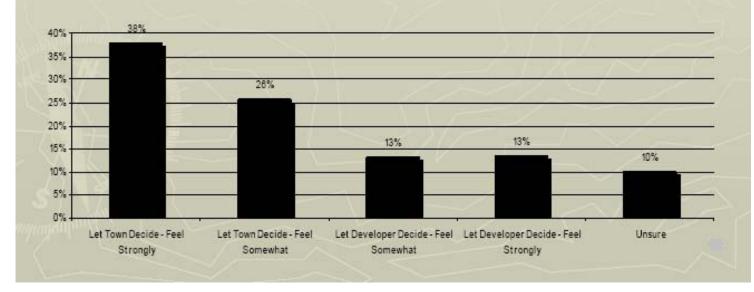
- Priorities in draft ordinance:
  - Unique Resources
    - Rare species habitat
    - Archaeological sites
    - Landmarks
    - Cemeteries
  - Resource System Corridors
    - Shorelands
    - ▶ Rivers & streams
    - Wildlife travel
    - ▶ Trails
    - Unfragmented habitats
  - Areas adjacent to protected open spaces
  - Rural roadsides
  - Scenic resources
  - Other areas
    - Non-scenic fields
    - Aquifer recharge areas
    - ▶ Deer yards
    - Other habitats

### Priorities in citizen survey:

- Wildlife habitats
- Areas along waterways, rivers, & streams
- · Wetlands & adjacent land
- Forested lands
- Trails for walking, biking, & horses
- Agricultural lands
- Small neighborhood parks
- Scenic views
- Large community parks
- Non-scenic fields
- Snowmobile/ATV trails
- Golf courses

#### RESPONSIBILITY FOR DETERMINING OPEN SPACE AREAS

If the town were to require developers to set aside open space in every new subdivision would you favor the town deciding what land is set aside or would you favor the developer deciding what land is set aside?



### **APPENDIX III - Methodology**

#### The Sample

The Town of Falmouth Planning Survey is based on telephone interviews conducted from May 15 to May 27, 2004 with 304 residents of the town of Falmouth. The sample of the telephone numbers called was based on a complete updated list of telephone prefixes (the first three digits in a seven-digit number) used throughout the town of Falmouth. The sample was generated using software provided by GENESYS Sampling Systems. This software ensures that every residential telephone number has an equal probability of selection. The results of this survey are considered generalizable to Falmouth households with telephones. When a working residential number was called, a randomly selected adult age 18 or over was then selected for the interview.

#### Sampling Error

The percentages reported for the entire sample are within plus or minus 5.7% that would be found if all telephone households in Falmouth were interviewed. For example, if our survey showed that 50% of the respondents felt it was important for the town of Falmouth to preserve open space, then the comparable figure for the population would be somewhere between 44.3% and 55.7% with a confidence level of 95%.

#### **Data Weighting**

The results presented in this report have been weighted to reflect the actual distribution of Falmouth residents with respect to their age and gender. The weights are calculated by dividing the percentage of the Falmouth population in a given age and sex group (for example, women that are between 30 and 39 years of age) by the percentage of the sample belonging to the same group. Because percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, they do not always sum exactly to 100%.

#### **Response and Cooperation Rates**

Market Decisions calculates response and cooperation rates based upon standards established by the American Association for Public Opinion Research. We follow this standard to allow the comparison of our rates to other surveys using similar calculations. It is important to understand that there are a variety of formulas for calculating these rates based upon assumptions of how undetermined numbers should be classified. For our reported weights, Market Decisions makes no assumptions and considers all undetermined numbers as eligible. Thus, the rates reported below represent the most pessimistic values (AAPOR RR1 and CR1) that these rates can take. The rates can be thought of as the minimum values possible for these rates. The actual rates would be expected to be higher than these values.

Response Rate	<b>38</b> %
Respondent Cooperation Rate:	<b>62</b> %
Household Cooperation Rate:	<b>52%</b>
Refusal Rate	27%
Contact Rate	<b>73</b> %

The definitions of these rates are:

**Response rates** - The number of complete interviews with reporting units divided by the number of eligible reporting units in the sample as well as units of unknown eligibility.

**Cooperation rates** - The proportion of all cases interviewed of all eligible units ever contacted. It is broken in household cooperation (a member of the household was spoken with) and respondent cooperation (the respondent was at some time spoken with).

**Refusal rates** - The proportion of all cases in which a housing unit or the respondent refuses to be interviewed, or breaks-off an interview, of all potentially eligible cases. In this survey, refusals include both respondent and household level refusals.

**Contact rates** - The proportion of all cases in which some responsible housing unit member was reached.