

Bolton Town Survey
January, 2002

Panny Gerken
Leigh Shanny
Susan Tripp
Fred Van Bennekom

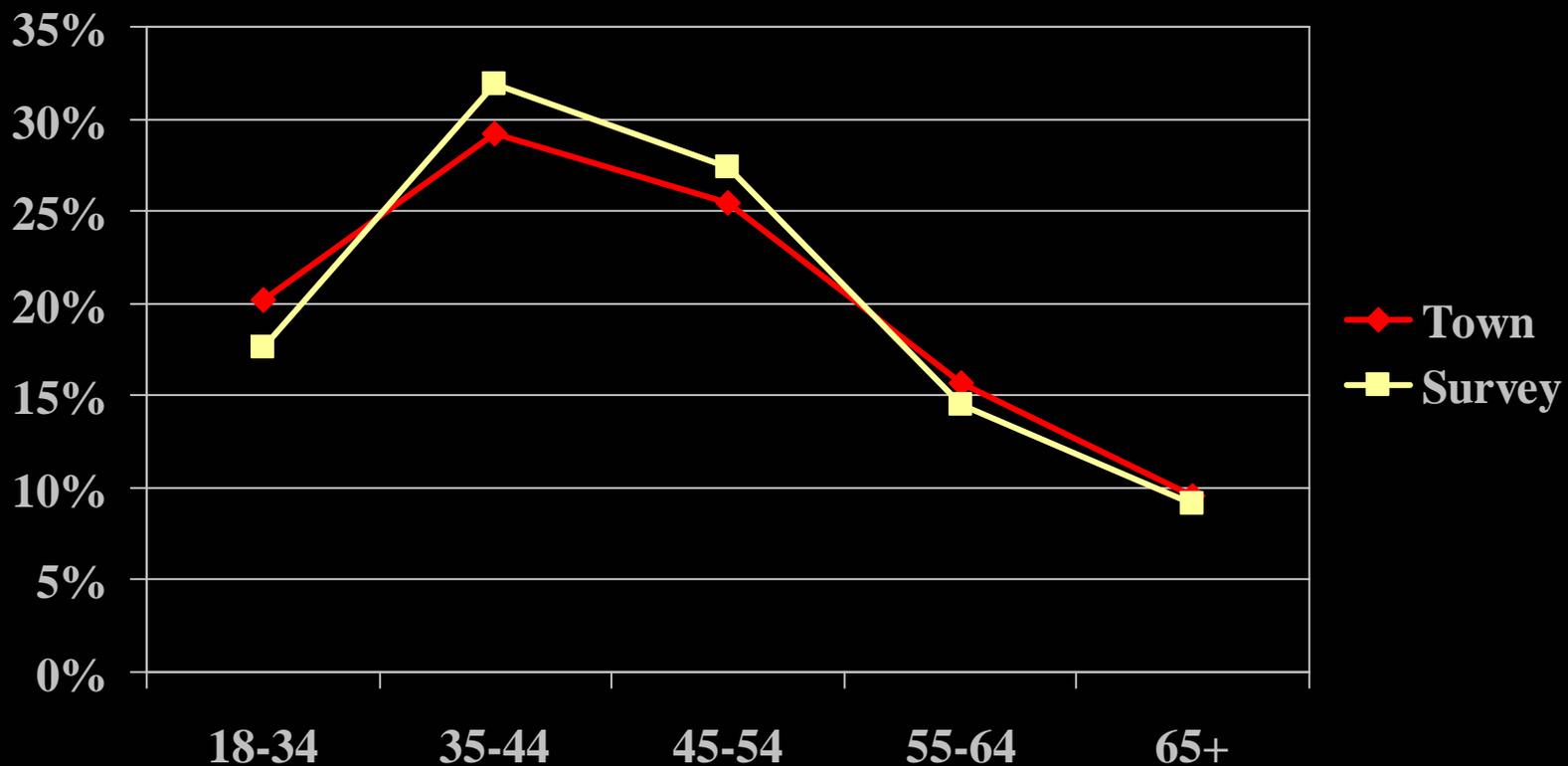
Background

- Survey forms mailed to all Bolton households with census forms in December, 2001
- Forms returned to town hall
- 848 surveys were returned
- Approximately 80% were from "heads of household"
 - A 43% response rate at the household level
- This response rate is well above typical response rates to mail surveys – people clearly care
- The margin of error for this survey is
 - + or - 3% points (95% confidence level)

Reminders

- Responses to questions are based upon a respondent's current knowledge
- Comments indicate that many feel their knowledge is inadequate to answer properly
 - Septic question in particular
- Thus opinions may change as citizens become more fully informed on issues

Town Census Numbers and the Survey Results Are a Close Match for Age



Demographics Compare Reasonably to Town Census – Higher for HH With Children

Survey

➤ Age	
– 18-34	18%
– 35-44	32%
– 45-54	27%
– 55-64	15%
– 65+	8%
➤ # Adults/HH	2.1
➤ HH with children under 18	51%
➤ Years of residence	13.4

Town Census

➤ Age	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
– 18-34	19%	21%
– 35-44	28%	30%
– 45-54	27%	24%
– 55-64	17%	15%
– 65+	9%	10%
➤ # Adults/HH	2.0	
➤ HH with children under 18	47%	
➤ Years of residence	NA	

Q1. There Is Support for a New Town “Center

Q1. Do you favor the creation of a town center?

Yes

No

54%

46%

Selected Comments: Town “Center” - Con

- What’s wrong w/the center we have now? I think it’s perfect.
- Why change Bolton’s history? What is wrong with our present town center? Refer to the history of Bolton. Do we have to change everything? With Bolton soon facing paid fire dept and ambulance, why are you wasting time on a town center proposal? Let’s focus on the real issues.
- If we wanted a town center we would have moved to a different town and people who want one should do the same.

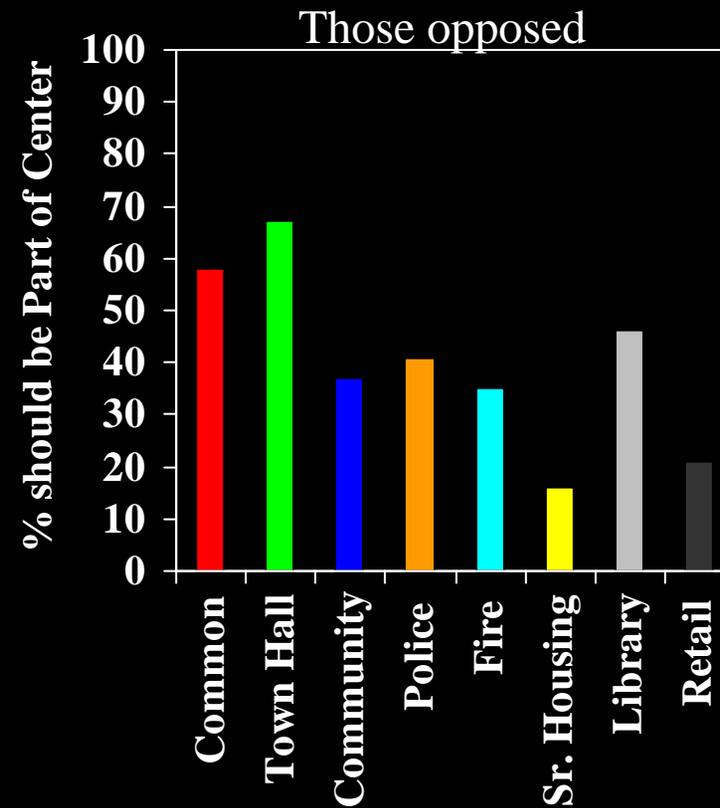
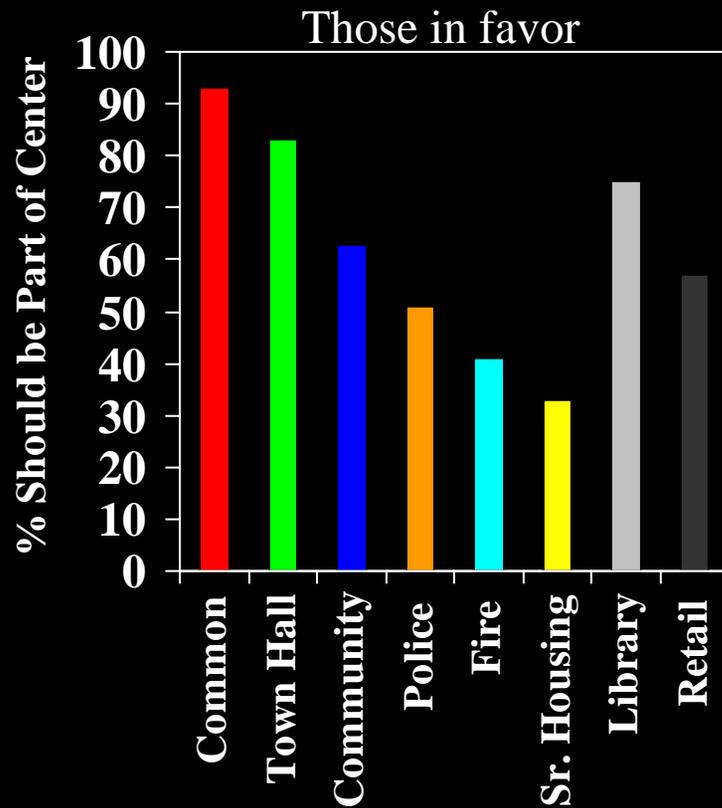
Selected Comments: Town “Center” - Mixed

- Town Center - This depends very heavily on where it would be. Yes if site is not in the historic district or in a residential area. I am not in favor of moving the center. History is very important. The center (historic center) is the center.
- While a town center is appealing and I have responded as such in the survey, I have no idea where it could be located, give the constructs of Rte 117! Wouldn't buildings have to be torn down to construct a “village green”?

Selected Comments: Town “Center” – Pro

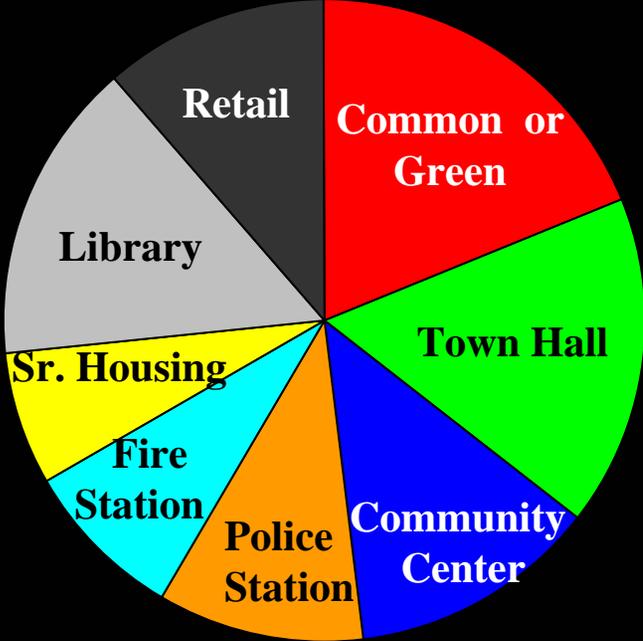
- Bolton needs a gathering site for its citizens..... Really think a town center where people can congregate would increase “togetherness” of town, not “differences” of town!
- There's no village heart in Bolton. A community center well used for diverse functions for both young & old alike would help draw the community together..... We have found that if you do not golf or have children in the school system you rarely get to meet anyone. After 13 yrs in this town we still do not know our next door neighbors and that appears to be the way they prefer it to be.
- A true town center will help Bolton establish a better sense of community. It is also an appropriate place for affordable housing, senior housing and small-scale retail. I believe that Bolton should consider creation of a “new town center” at Crystal Springs.

Q2. Those Who Disagree About Having a New Town Center Also Differ About What Should Be There

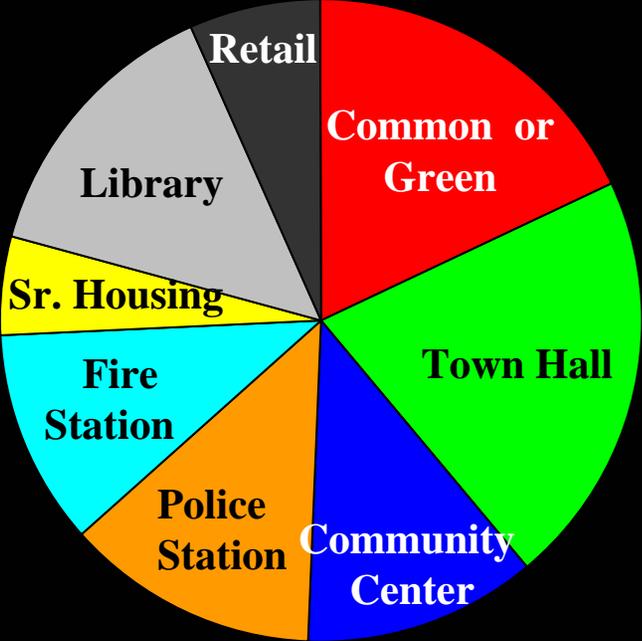


Q2. Another Way to Look at Those Who Disagree About Having a New Town Center

Slices represent size of group favoring the item



Those in favor



Those opposed

Town Opposes Town Involvement in Affordable Housing Activities

Q3. Do you favor the town actively engaging in the creation of "affordable" and other housing options?	Yes	No
	42%	58%

Reactions to Affordable Specific Options

The Town Should Pursue:	Yes	Neutral	No
Senior assisted living	51%	22%	27%
Senior independent living	68%	14%	18%
Affordable housing: condominiums	23%	13%	64%
Affordable housing: townhouses	30%	15%	55%
Affordable housing: single-family dwellings	43%	15%	42%
Manage the housing units after construction	21%	20%	59%
Limited retail within walking distance of senior housing	48%	19%	33%

Selected Comments on Affordable Housing: Pro

- Affordable townhouses/condominiums and smaller houses are needed for the 55+ population. The same are needed for upper-middle-class seniors who are not eligible for affordable housing. Bolton lags way behind other communities in this area. Therefore seniors who pay taxes and have done so for many years, often turn to other communities to live in comfort in their later years.
- Without an integrated plan decisions related to senior/affordable housing will get out of balance with school quality and conservation/recreation space. I'd like Bolton to be a good place to live whether you are 6 or 16 or 60. Decisions about senior housing are inseparable from those related to transportation and health services, and affordable housing should address developing entry level jobs and manufacturing.

Selected Comments on Affordable Housing: Con

- Totally against affordable housing.
- Affordable housing will put a huge tax burden on all property owners!
- Need to continue to move from rural resident base to suburban residential base. Improve schools, no tax increases. There should be no entitlement for anyone to live here – senior, lower income etc.. People move all the time because they can or cannot afford a place – that's life.

Town Supports More Commercial Development

Q7. Should the town try to encourage more commercial development....?	Yes	No
	67%	33%

***Q8. Office or Retail Space Are the Preferred
Businesses to Encourage ---
But Don't Zone More Land for Business***

Action	Do It	Neutral	Don't Do It
Seek office space developers	73%	11%	16%
Seek retail space developers	56%	12%	32%
Seek light manufacturing developers	39%	16%	45%
Zone more land for business	27%	12%	61%

Selected Comments on Commercial Development: Pro

- Would like to see business development (office space) near 495. This would bring tax dollars to Bolton without the need for additional school spending.
- We have to expand our business/industry tax base. Property taxes are getting out of hand. With a better tax base, I would be more inclined to support many of the expenditures suggested in this questionnaire.
- We need business development – residential taxes and open unusable space will not maintain our future.
- I believe that expanding tax revenues by increasing its commercial tax base with office space set back from 117 near Rte 495. This is the most critical need that Bolton has. We can't expect to grow residentially, offer better services (or even maintain services) without a well planned commercial tax base that fits with the feel of the town yet doesn't turn us into another Acton.

Selected Comments on Commercial Development: Con

- We really don't want Bolton to become overdeveloped - residentially or commercially. Please do not increase commercial permits/building etc.. Many towns with large commercial "bases" actually have higher taxes as well as being overdeveloped, because in part of the increased municipal services the commercial interests end up requiring.
- I moved to Bolton because of its beauty and the availability of land for personal use and as open space. I do not want to see more commercial buildings, traffic, condos or signs of a city. Too many residences are not desirable either, but are preferable to commercial development.

***Q6. To Preserve Open Land:
Buying Land & 61A Are the Preferred Solutions
Development With Set Asides Has Less Support***

Action	Do It	Neutral	Don't Do It
Encourage landowners to use 61A	75%	19%	6%
Purchase land for conservation	71%	13%	16%
Purchase land for recreation and municipal use	74%	14%	12%
Encourage development with open land set asides	52%	15%	33%

Selected Comments on Open Land: Pro

- It will be very important to manage our growth to preserve the features that attracted people to Bolton years ago – open space, conservation, limited development and fine schools.
- The next 10 years will be most critical for Bolton in determining what the town will ultimately look like. The bases for what we want Bolton to become should be clearly articulated. This “vision” should guide all planning decisions. I believe that the best place to start is by establishing what open space patterns we want to have left after all else is built. Development will occur where it can. “Unbuildable” is a myth – much more dependent upon economics and technology than ledge and ground water. It is imperative that the town act as quickly as it can to protect what it wants protected. A couple more periods like the mid-late 90’s and there won’t be a lot left!
- We’re going to need a new police station, town has big increase in school buildings. We’ll have to pay people to do these projects as we don’t have enough volunteer hours. Buying Conservation Land looks cheap in comparison! Raise my taxes, please!

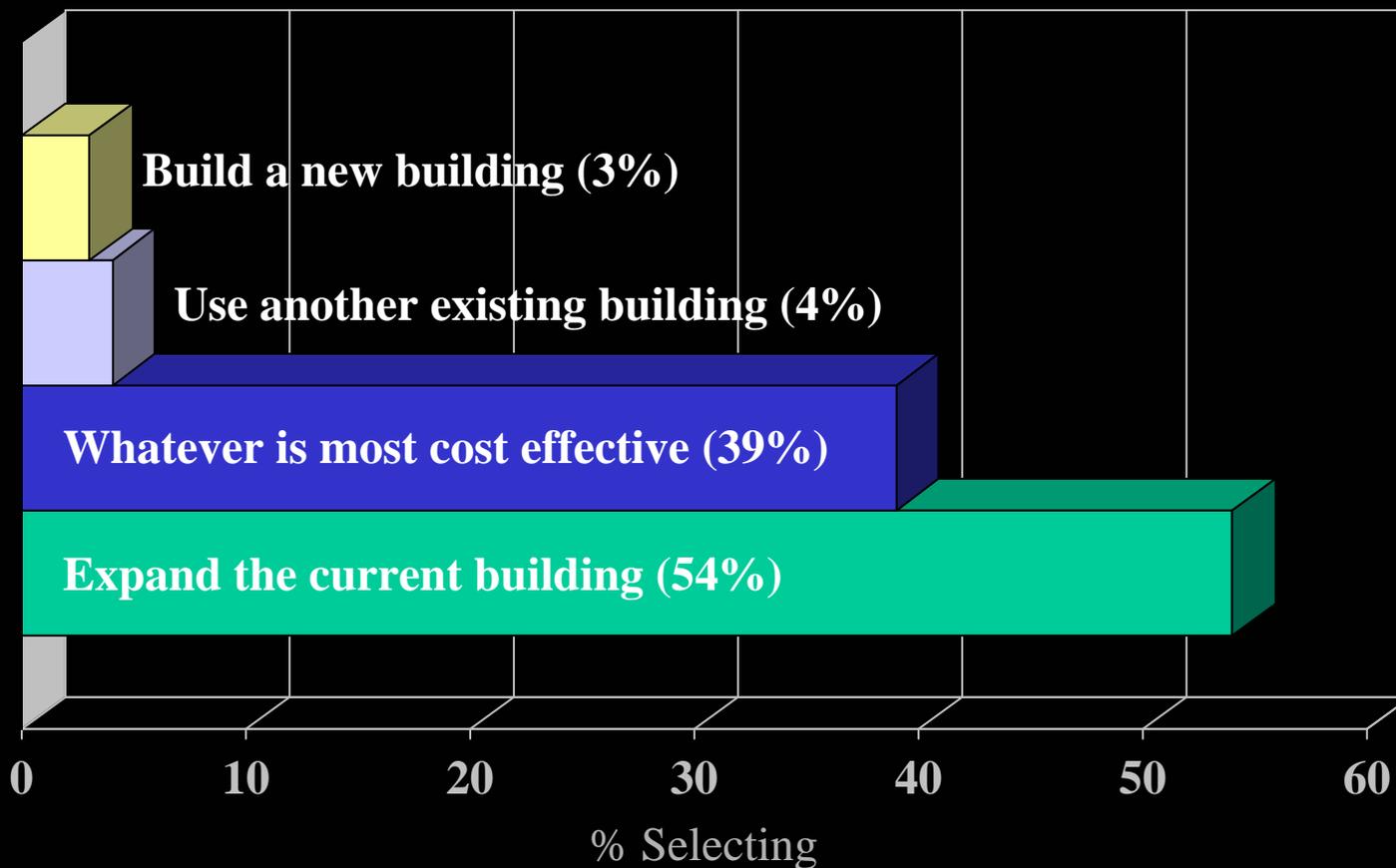
Selected Comments on Open Land: Pro

- I feel that we have maximized the positive potential of residential developments. It is time to purchase as much open space as possible, seek conservation restrictions where possible and protect historical structures and areas of town, i.e., Rte 117. Preserve as many agricultural acres as possible, growth of residential at low rate, don't compromise on wetlands and increase open space but don't go overboard.
- We like the town the way it is and think the force should be on preservation not expansion. We moved out of the city area for all the Town of Bolton has to offer being small, friendly and the open space.
- My reason for moving to Bolton was the quaint, rural nature of the town. It's very important to me that it remains this way as much as possible. I'm willing to pay higher taxes to preserve this way of life.

Selected Comments on Open Land: Con

- There is a lot of conservation land in Bolton currently.
- Stop spending my money to buy up open land for the Conservation Commission. They are zealots regarding this program and they should be tightly controlled.

*Q11. Expansion of the Current Library Building or
Whatever Solution Is Most Effective Is the Choice
of the Town*



Selected Comments on Library Expansion:

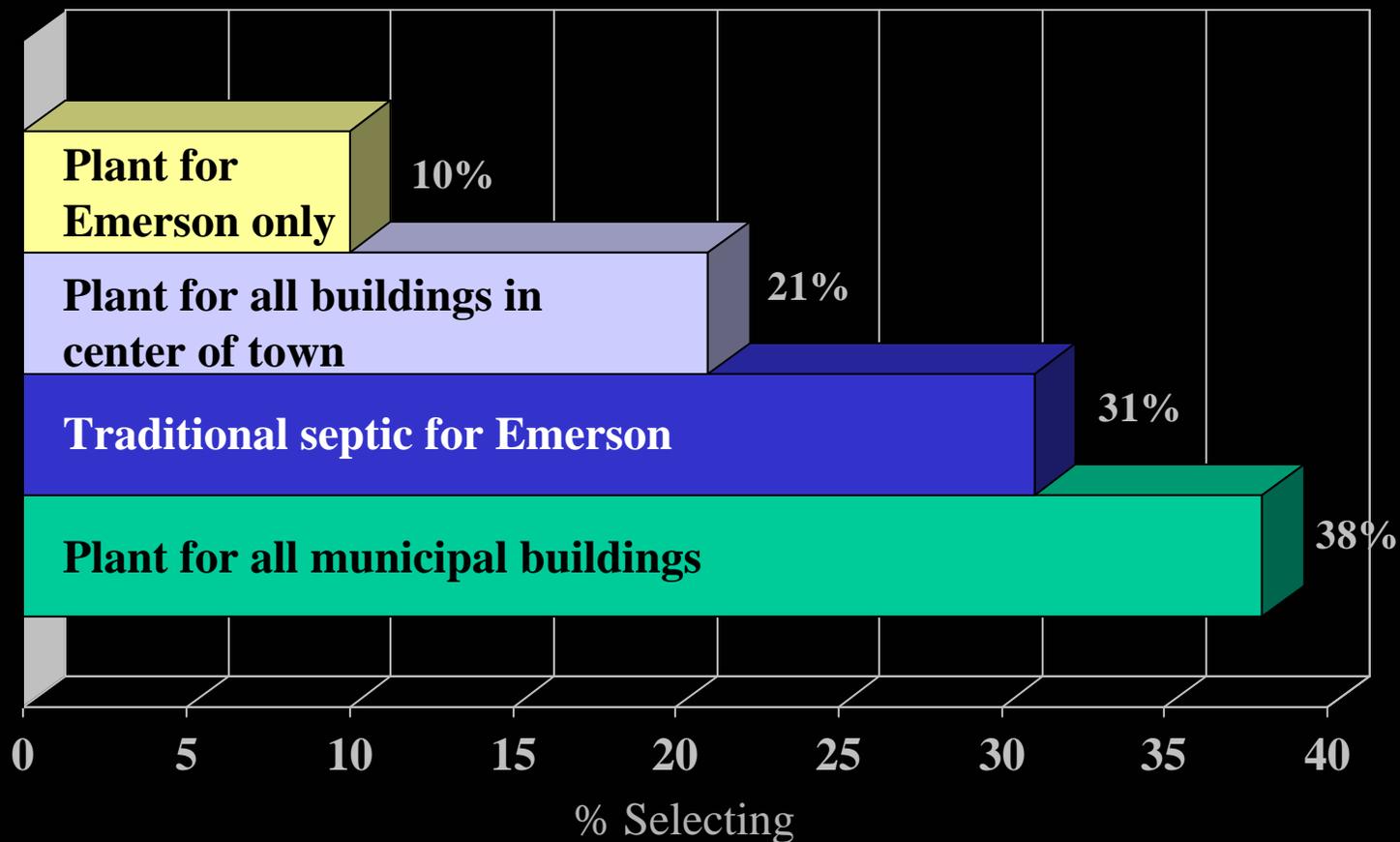
Pro

- To have the library as part of the new town center & easily accessible to senior housing would be ideal.
- This is my favorite building in Bolton and the library is the service I utilize most often. I understand the library needs more space but would like it to stay in this building.
- Expand current bldg preference because of historic beauty of existing bldg.; however, persons involved in library planning should decide with an eye toward cost.
- Give the old library bldg to historical society for a museum and sell the Sawyer House to fund the library.

Selected Comments on Library Expansion: Con

- Library expansion is a waste of money.
- With the advent of the internet, library expansion is a waste of money.

*Q9. A Treatment Plant for All Municipal Buildings
or a Traditional Septic Just for Emerson Is the
Current Preference*



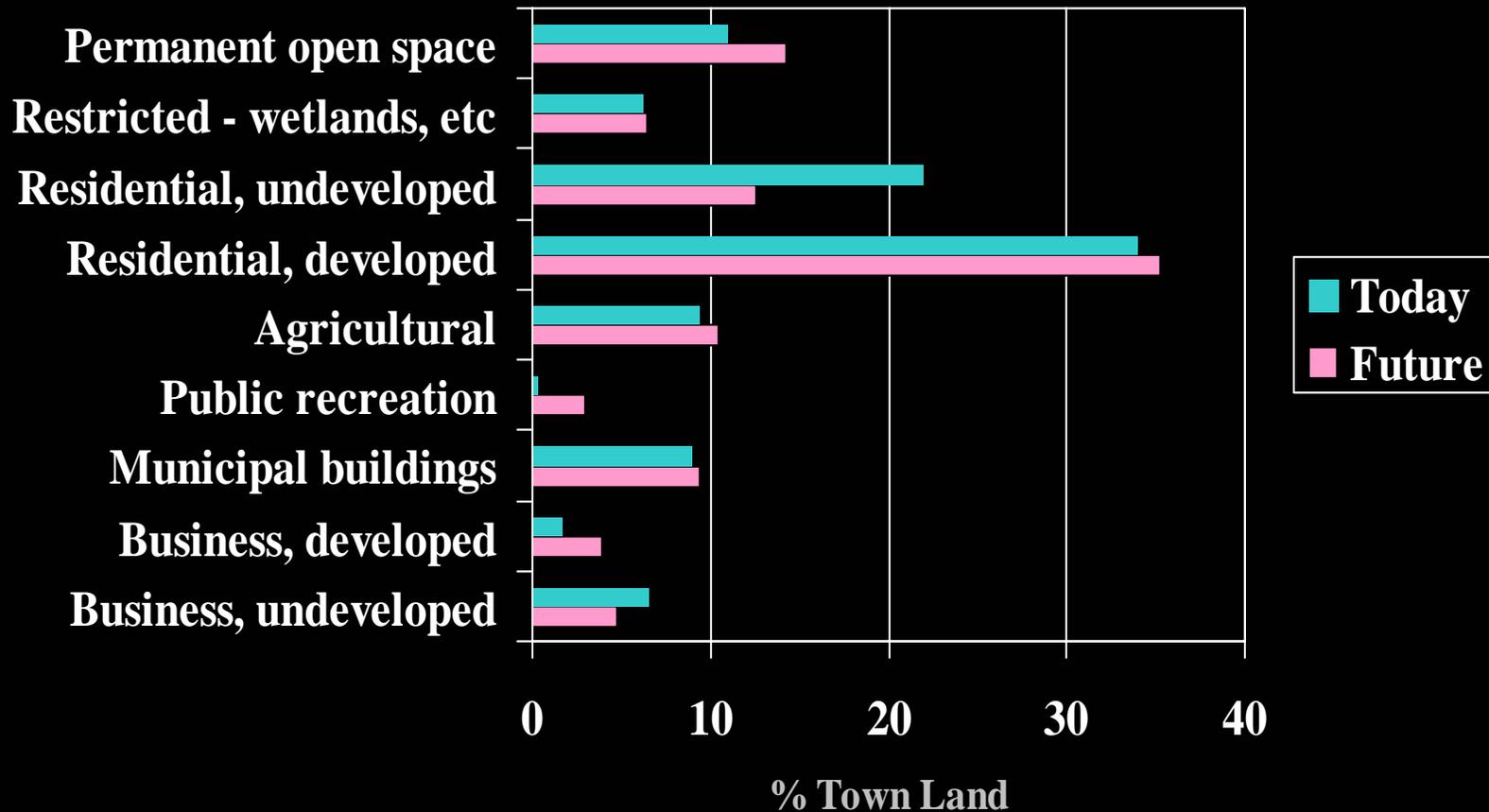
Selected Comments on Emerson Septic

- I can't answer this without more information, e.g., define "fullest use" or what are the relative pros/cons and costs of septic versus waste treatment?
- Expect other septic failures if these buildings continue in use!! I don't see the benefit of polling town residents on issues like this! Such a decision should be based on the findings of a "waste alternatives feasibility study" performed by a qualified engineering company

Selected Comments on Emerson Septic: Con

- This depends on cost, and ability to recover this cost from those who tie in! As someone who paid \$30 K for a new septic I don't feel like subsidizing everyone else!
- How can you put septic systems in when you build in and around wet lands? Florence Sawyer School??
Why should we pay for homeowners in center of town when it cost us \$20,000 to \$30,000 for our septic systems

*Q5. Future Land Use:
Not More Houses, But More Open & Recreational Land
More of the Zoned Business Land Developed*



Selected Comments on Future Land Use

- Bolton has tremendous pressure from outside forces to grow too fast, too big, and too commercial. Location makes Bolton a prime target for this. We should fight the tide of the dollar-people. Keep Bolton rustic, beautiful, yet in the 21st century.
- Define areas of the town for business/offices, light retail, municipal use (new police, town center w/teen area and/or community hall, senior area or meeting place, small outdoor park or place for seniors to walk around, young kids to play, etc.). Also designate where we'd like affordable housing to go so developers don't dictate to us! Would like sidewalks in center of town center (wherever it ends up). Increase business tax base enough to pay for more of our needs. Keep tax increases modest – 2.5-3.5% a year. Pursue matching grants aggressively. I'd like to see a master plan for the whole town with every area having something favorable planned for sometime in the next 10 years to make the tax increase easier to swallow!

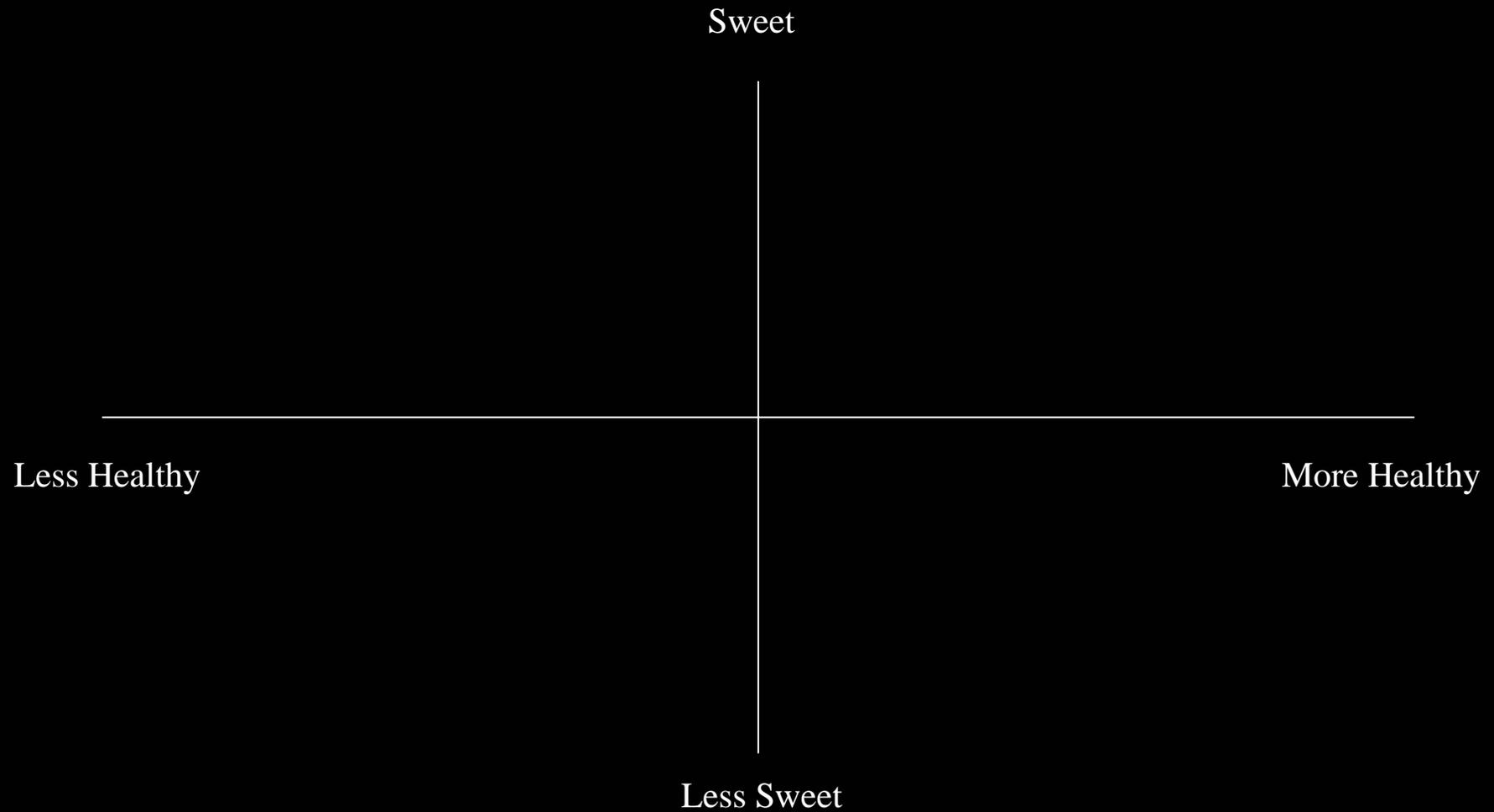
Selected Comments on Future Land Use

- As someone who has lived in the center of Bolton for over 40 years, I would like to point out that Bolton does indeed already have an historic center, with a number of beautiful houses, a town park, town hall, town offices, church, school, library, and so on. How would rearranging what we have make Bolton more "Bolton"? In this I agree with what Warren Wilson had to say in his column in a recent Bolton Common. If there is a need for more space for town services, there seems to be no reason not to locate these services as conveniently as possible away from the center of town, as has already been done with the post office. Please let Bolton stay Bolton, and not become someone's idea of what Bolton "should" be.

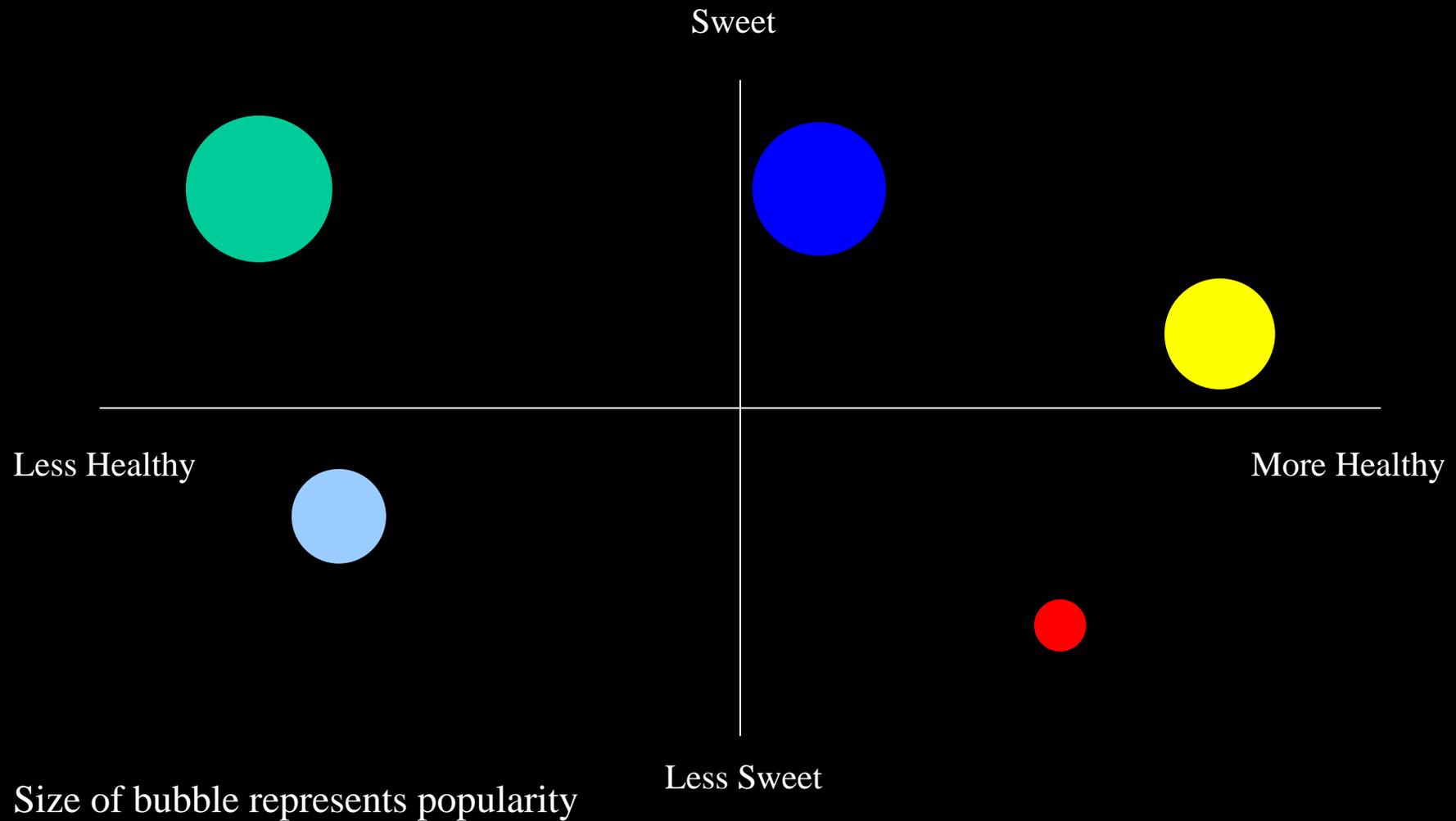
A Small Break

- The next section deals with the identification and characterization of differing opinion groups in Bolton
- To illustrate the differences we use a special type of chart called a bubble chart
- The next slides will introduce you to this type of chart

Consider One View of The Dessert World



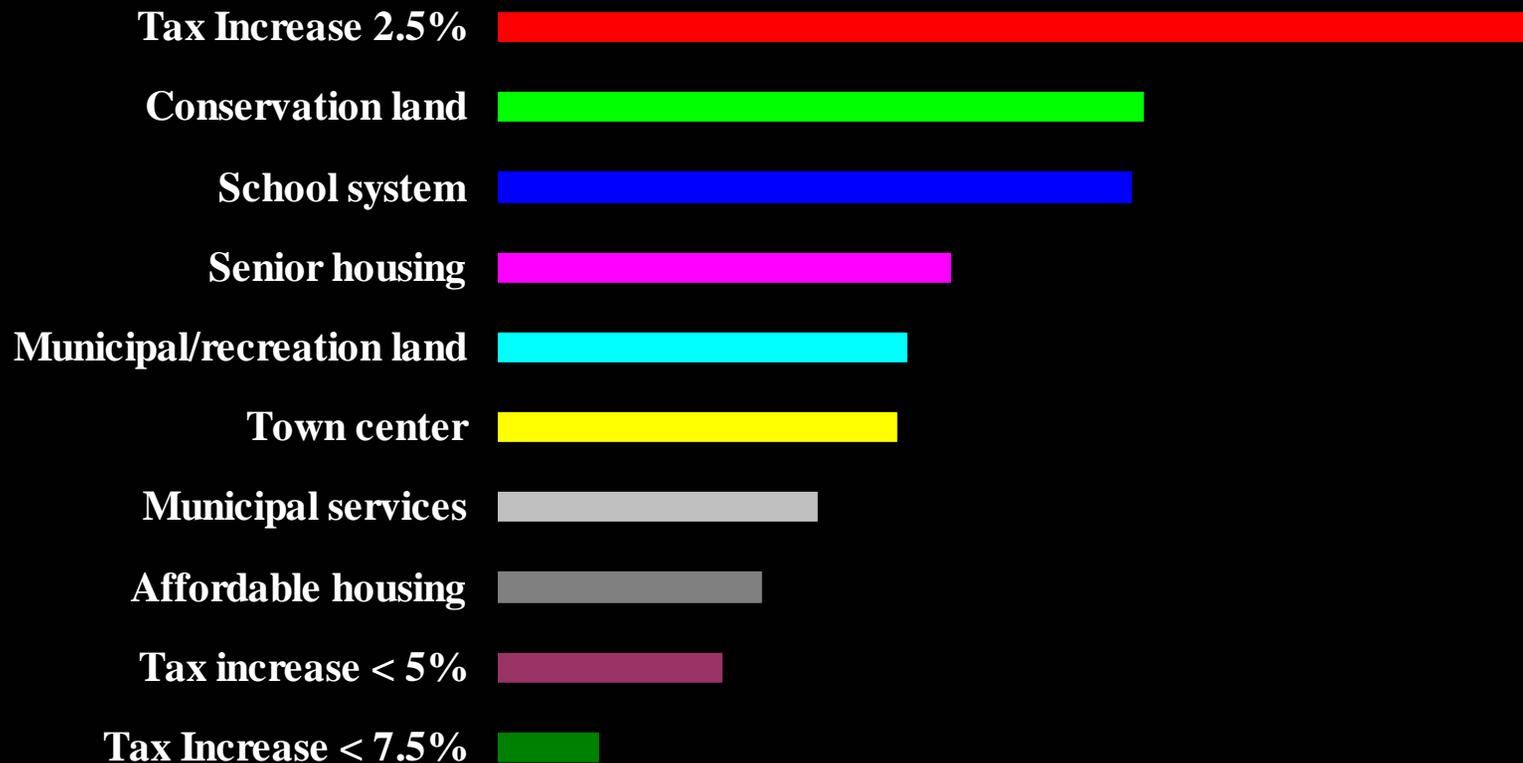
People's Choices in That Space



Back to Bolton

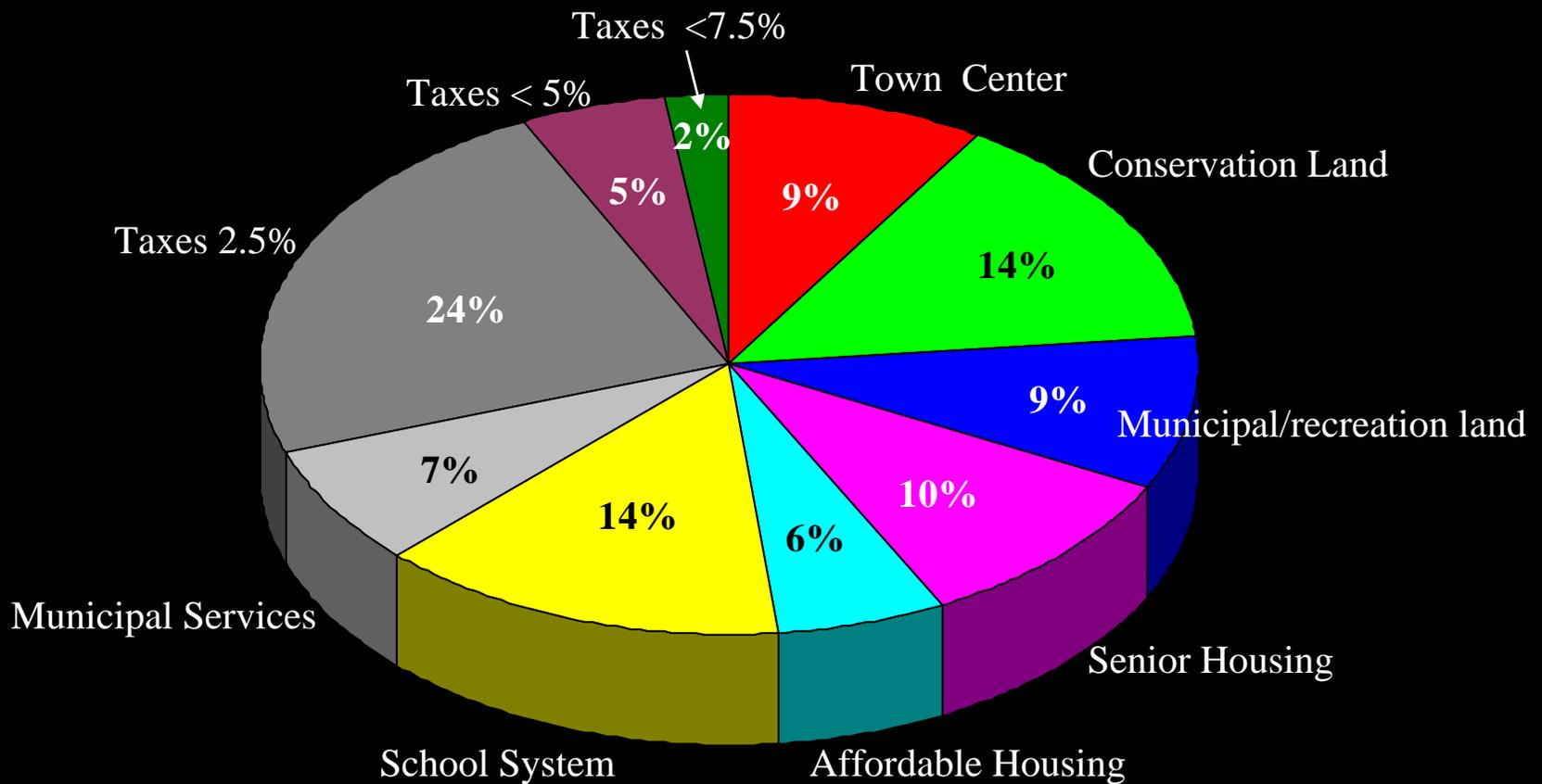
What do we see as Bolton's priorities?

Q10. Containing Taxes, Improving Schools, More Conservation Land Top the List of Town Priorities



Bars represent points awarded

Q10. Another Way to Look at the Priorities



Slices represent share of total points

Differences in Opinion

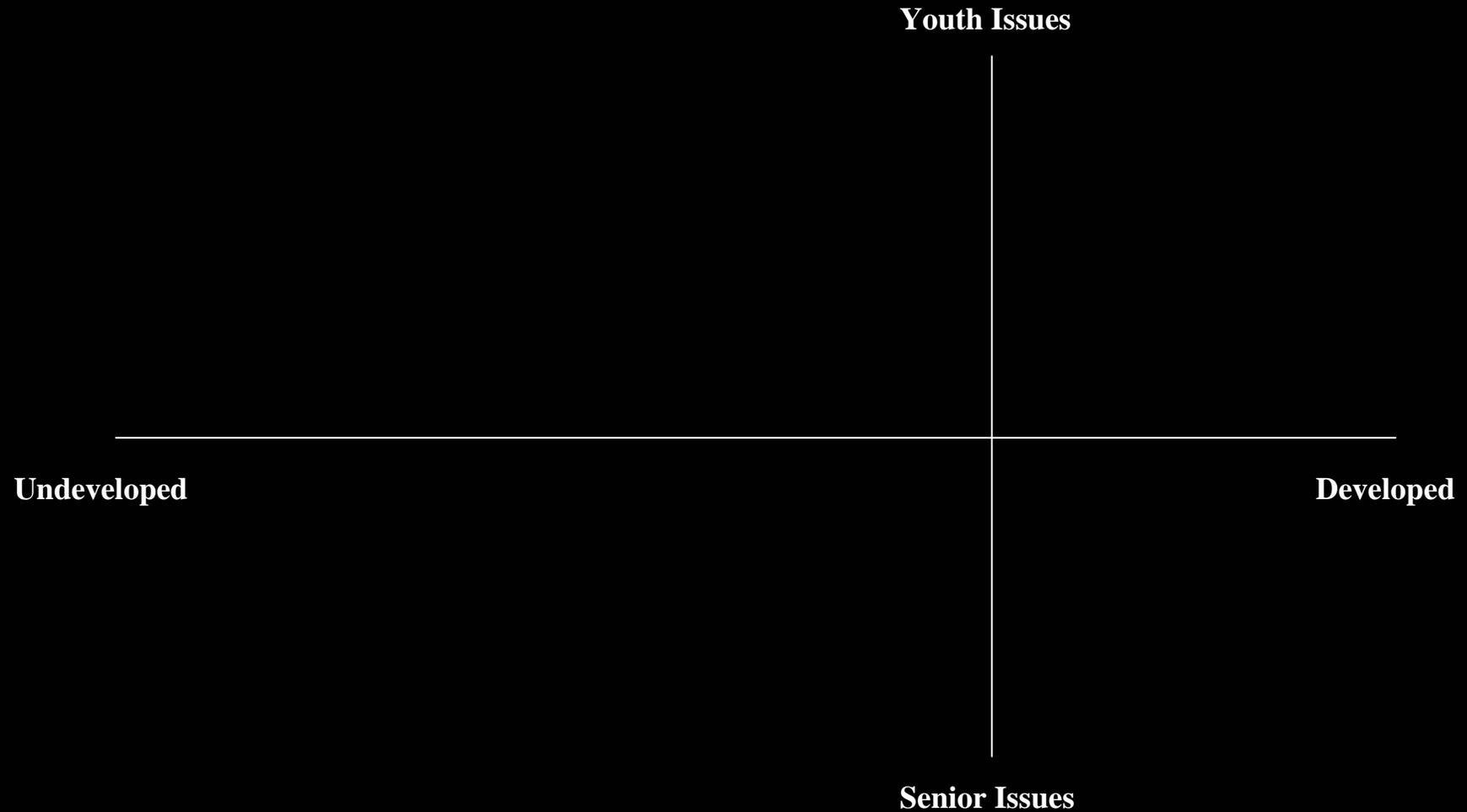
- While that is the overall view of priorities, it conceals real differences of opinion
- At first glance the differences in opinion seem to be driven by either age or length of residence in town.....
- But a closer look shows it's not that simple

A Note on Analysis

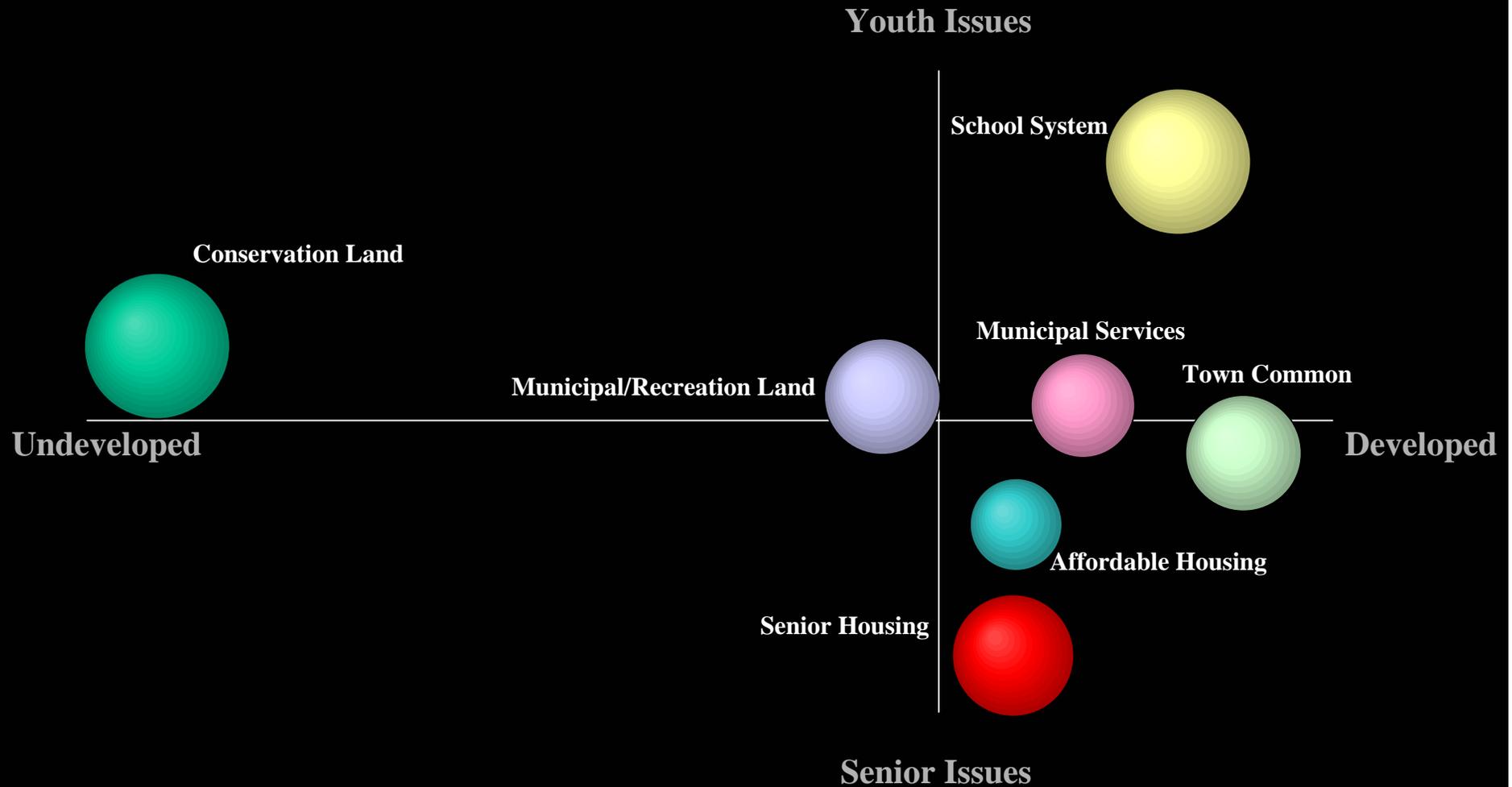
- The questions that asked respondents to allocate 100 points among various alternatives showed clear patterns of response among different groups of people
- Various analytic techniques were applied to identify these patterns and like-minded groups of residents
- The town priorities question proved particularly insightful

*First, Let's Look at Priorities As If Money
Were No Object*

Bolton's "Priority Space"



How Do Priorities Stack Up in This Space?

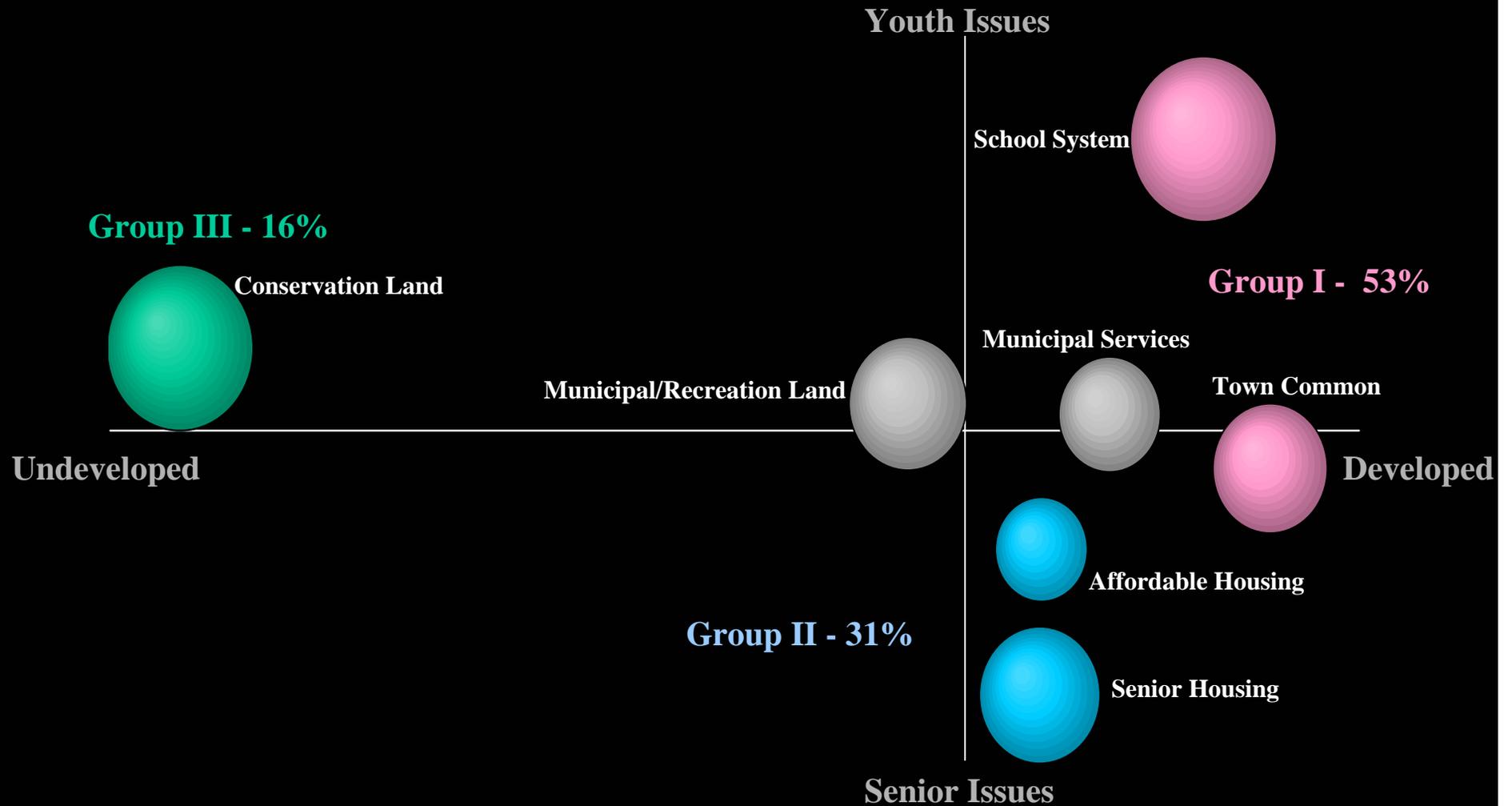


Size of the bubble reflects overall priority

Looking at Priorities This Way (Without Taxes) Revealed Three Opinion Groups

- I. A group most interested in schools & community – 53%
- II. A group with strong housing interests – 31%
- III. A group devoted to conservation – 16%

Where Each Group Concentrated Their Priority Points



Size of bubble reflects overall priority

Now Let's See How Taxes Affect The Priority Relationships



Size of bubble reflects overall priority

Selected Comments on Taxes

- My 3 top concerns are taxes, taxes, taxes. We would like to live here in retirement. Increases in taxes on a fixed retirement income make it very difficult.
- Slow down housing or stop it completely. Taxes too high services too low.
- My concern is that too little consideration is given to containing spending. Bolton's gov't needs to be more efficient. In 7 years taxes have approximately doubled. Services have not doubled, compensation to town employees has not doubled. Yes education costs for a growing population have increased. Perhaps the education budget needs review and some line items reduced or eliminated. We need to live within the revenues that are available, <2.5% /yr.

Selected Comments on Taxes

- Concerned that Bolton property taxes will force the average Joe to leave Please quantify how many senior citizens are leaving Bolton because they can't afford to live here. What about a reduction in property tax for senior citizens. Has anyone done an estimate on the impact on our taxes for each project? It's difficult to determine what we want without knowing the cost. Run by the rich snobs.
- I'm concerned that Bolton is becoming a town for the well-to-do only. I have four children, all of whom have good paying jobs, but can't afford to purchase property in Bolton due to the price of real estate. I live on a fixed income. If real estate taxes & fees continue to grow as they have in the past, I'll be forced to sell my property and move out of Bolton.

Selected Comments on Taxes

- Let the free market operate. If Clinton's housing is more economical, then seniors can move there & still remain in the area.
- We moved here for the rural setting. I know things must change, but we are interested in minimal change – minimal impact on taxes. Our taxes have doubled in 8 years. Absolutely ridiculous. Nowhere else in our economy has anything doubled in 8 years. Our friends have already moved due to this. If it continues-we must consider it too.
- If they(senior residents) are long term, presumably they own a house & the high taxes is the issue. Keep tax rate down so senior's are not forced to leave.

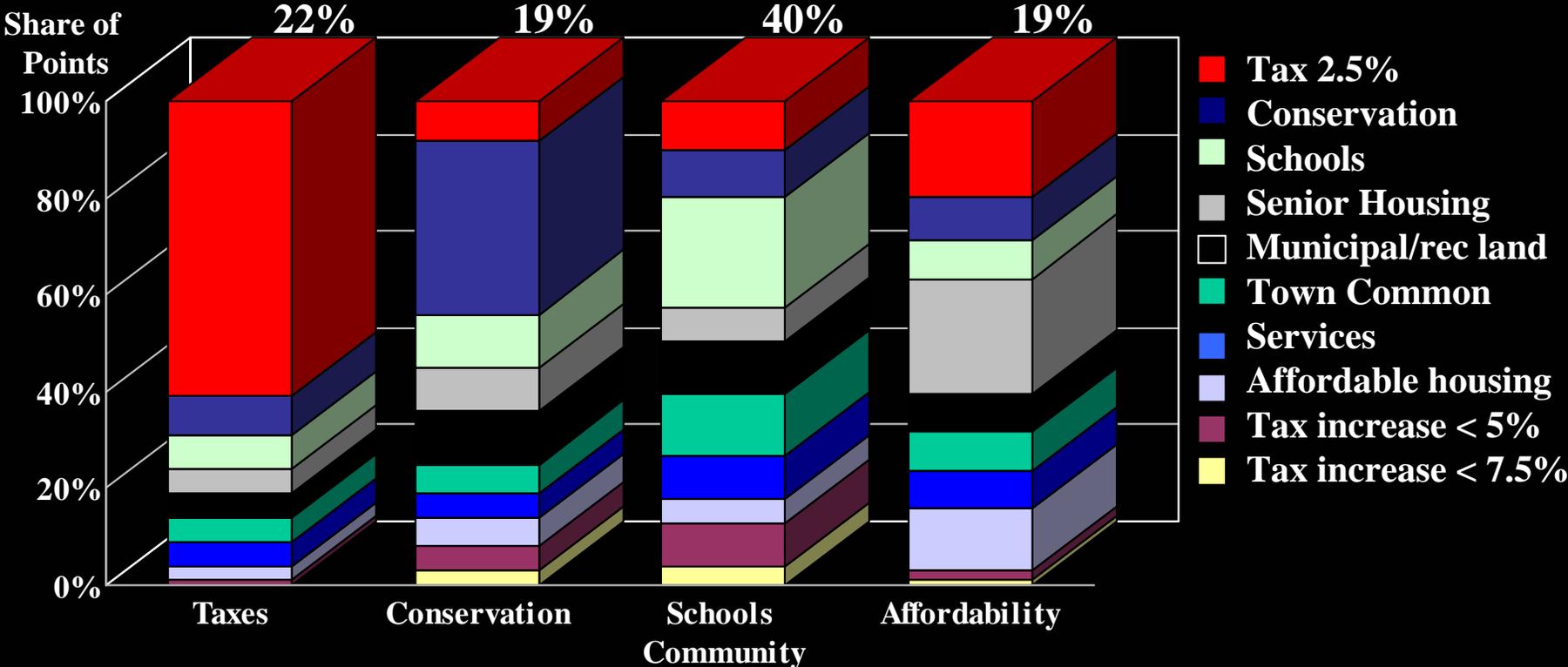
Segmentation by Priorities With Taxes Yields Four Distinct Groups

- Group 1: "Taxes, Taxes, Taxes" – 22%
- Group 2: "Conservation!" – 19%
- Group 3: "Schools & Community" – 40%
- Group 4: "Make it Affordable" – 19%

The Schools/community and Housing Groups Lost More Members to Taxes

	Schools/ Community	Conservation	Housing	Total
Total w/o Taxes	428	130	224	780
Schools/Community	66%		13%	40%
Conservation	4%	85%	9%	19%
Make it Affordable	5%		55%	19%
Taxes, Taxes, Taxes	25%	15%	23%	23%

These Four Groups Have Quite Different Priorities



Profile of Group 1: Taxes, Taxes, Taxes

Demographics

- 22% of responders
- Middle of age groups
 - > 80% are 35-64
- Second longest group in town – average 15.4 years
- Few children under 18 at home

How They Differ

- 61 of 100 priority points to taxes at 2.5%
- Do not favor town center
 - 58% opposed
- Opposed to town engagement in affordable housing – 78% opposed

Profile of Group 2: Conservation

Demographics

- 19% of responders
- Younger
 - > 80% are 18-54
- Average years in town – 10.4
- Few children under 18 at home

How They Differ

- Least concern for tax rates – only 16 points to all tax items combined
- Split on town center – 51% for/49% against
- Strongest interest in conservation
 - 91% for 61A
 - 98% for buying land
- Weakest support for business development

Profile of Group 3: Schools & Community

Demographics

- Largest group: 40% of responders
- Younger: 90% are 18-54 with 41% 35-44
- Newest to town – average 9 years
- Most kids under 18 living at home

How They Differ

- Strongly favor town center – 74% for it
- Highest priority points to schools
- Strong support for land for recreation
- Support business development, but only office or retail and no more land zoned for business

Profile of Group 4: Make It Affordable

Demographics

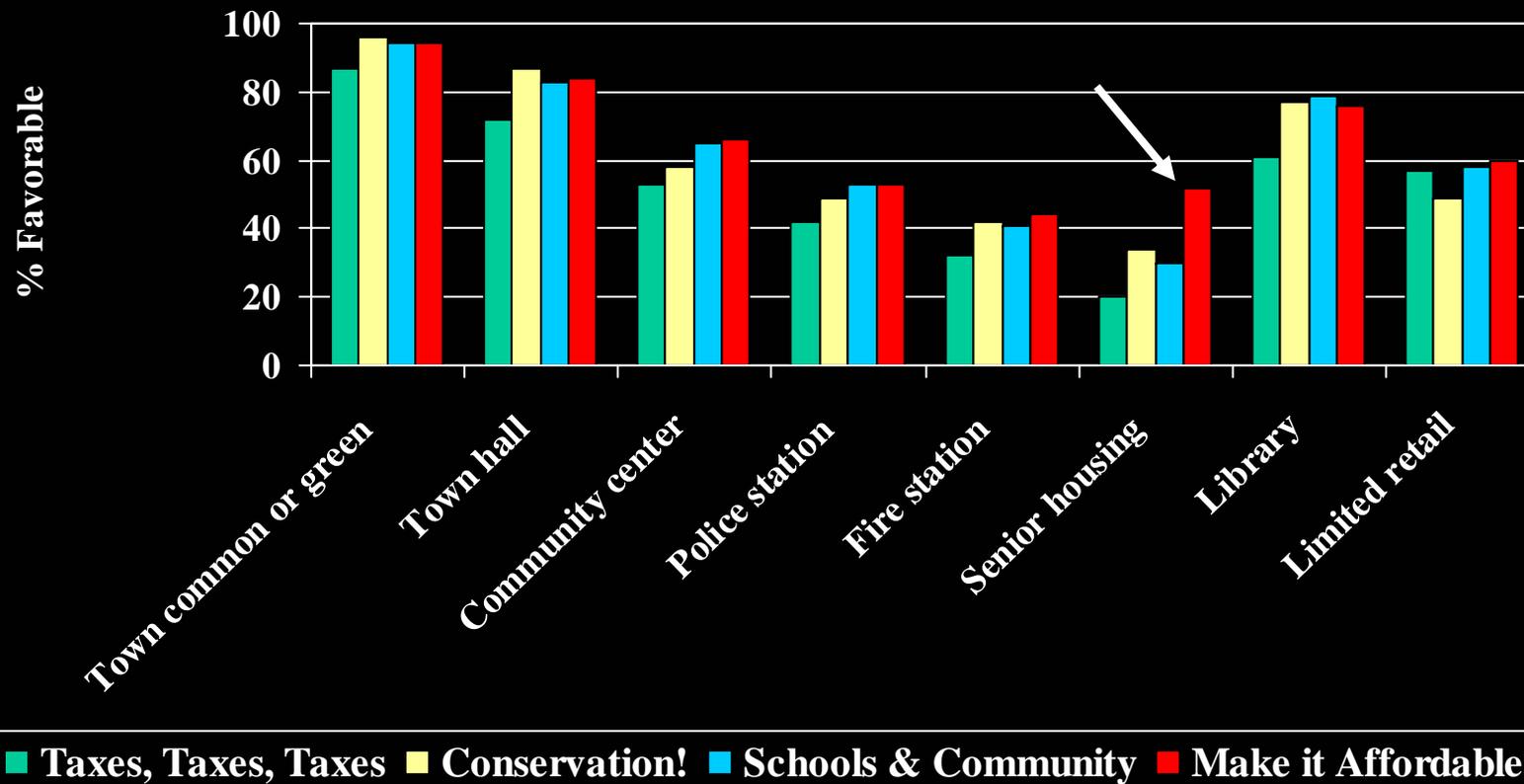
- 19% of responders
- Older: 70% 45+
- Longest in town: 23+ years
- Few children under 18 at home

How They Differ

- 24 points to senior housing + 13 to affordable housing
- 20 points to 2.5% taxes
- Least opposed to townhouses & condos
- Split on town center – 49% for, 51% against

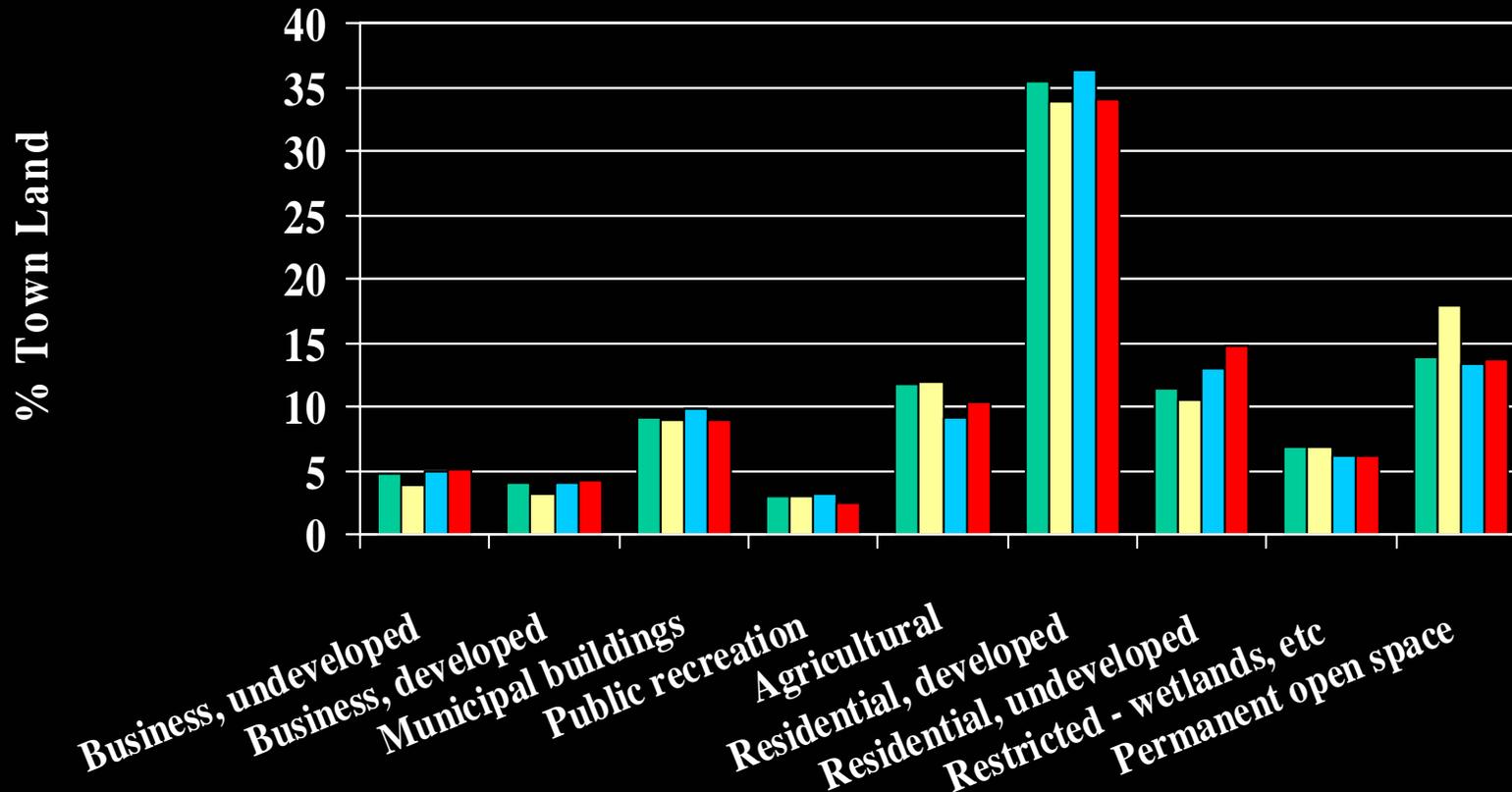
What Should Be in Any New “Center” by Group*

*Among those in each group who favor the creation of a common.



Future Use of Land Reflects Segment Priorities, but the Differences Are Not Great

■ Taxes, Taxes, Taxes ■ Conservation! ■ Schools & Community ■ Make it Affordable



One Further Consideration

- Recall that we had too many families with children vs. those without children
- When the data are weighted for this, the four segments collapse to three
 - “Schools/Community” and “Make It Affordable” become one group
 - This group’s priorities encompass both groups and its demographic profile reflects the whole town
- But the original sub-grouping is real and reflects real differences in interest and priorities

In Conclusion

- There are clear priorities
 - Tax prudence / cost control
 - Schools and open land
 - Town common, senior housing & municipal/recreation land
- There are clear interest groups with conflicting priorities that must be balanced
- Further education/information about issues may change opinion
- People clearly care about the future Bolton – what it is and how it looks

*Our Thanks to All of You for Your
Thoughtful Responses*