

Whately Center School Public Opinion Survey Findings

Survey Background and Methodology

The Whately Center School Visioning Committee (hereafter referred to as the Visioning Committee) developed the Whately Center School Public Opinion Survey to gather input from Whately residents on what they would like to see happen to the vacant Center School building and lot.

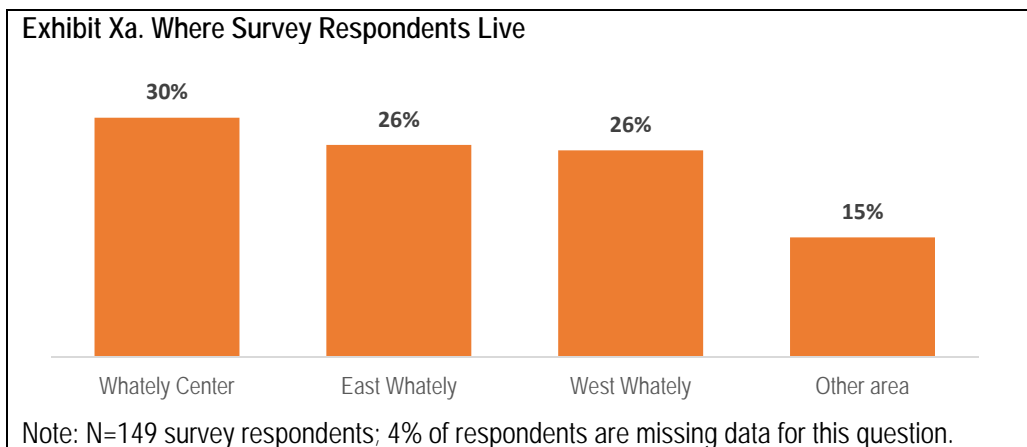
Residents had the option to complete the survey either on paper or online via SurveyMonkey over the two-week period from January 4, 2020 to January 19, 2020. Paper surveys were available for residents to pick-up at the Town Hall, library, and town offices and could be returned to the town offices. Members from the Visioning Committee also administered the survey in-person at the Transfer Station on two Saturdays (the 4th and the 11th). Residents could access the online survey link via the town website or enter the URL listed at the top of the paper survey. The Visioning Committee received a total of 149 responses, 93 of which were completed online and 56 of which were completed on paper.

The Visioning Committee conducted survey analysis from January 19th to February 2nd. Responses to close-ended questions were tabulated to present summary statistics while open-ended responses were analyzed qualitatively using NVivo software. The findings of this analysis are presented in the following sections.

Survey Respondents

One hundred and forty-nine Whately residents completed the Center School Public Opinion Survey in January 2020. According to the 2010 Census¹, Whately's total population is around 1,500 residents, so survey responses encompass close to 10 percent of the total town population.

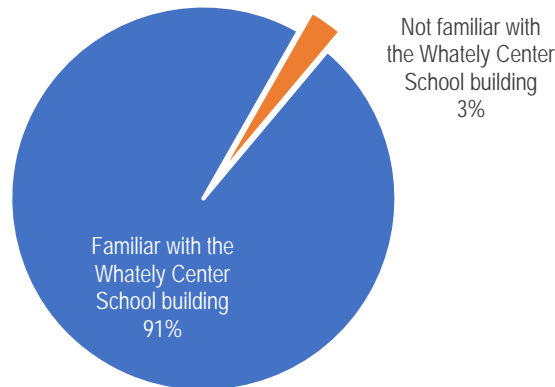
Survey respondents equally represented Whately Center, East Whately, and West Whately in terms of where they lived. A few respondents (15%) reported that they lived in another area.



The vast majority of survey respondents were familiar with the Center School Building. Only 3% of respondents reported that they were not familiar with the building. However, all responses are still included in the analysis of data addressing the Center School Building, with the responses of those who were not familiar with the building applying more generally to downtown Whately.

¹ https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk

Exhibit Xb. Familiarity with the Whately Center School Building



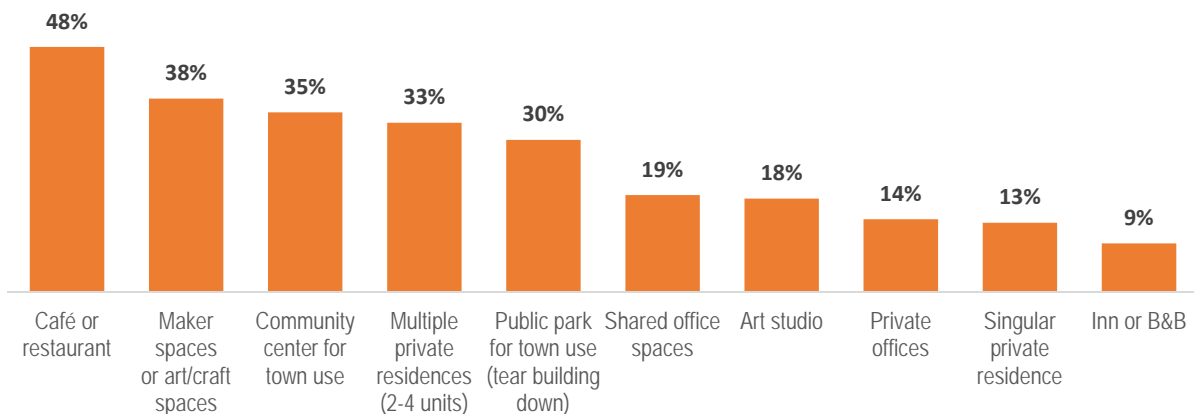
Note: N=149 survey respondents; 7% of respondents are missing data for this question. The chart represents proportions out of those who answered this question.

Opinions on Downtown Whately and the Center School Building and Lot

In open-ended responses, survey respondents listed the top three amenities they felt were missing from downtown Whately and then listed the top three uses they would prefer for the Center School building and lot more specifically. Respondents also selected their top three choices of ways to repurpose the Center School from a pre-determined list of options. The Visioning Committee intentionally did not provide cost estimates for the options on the list in order to gain an understanding of resident preferences that was unbiased by financial misconceptions of assumptions.

From the pre-determined list of options, respondents liked the option of a café or restaurant the most, with almost half of survey respondents (48%) selecting this as one of their top choices. A third or more survey respondents also liked the idea of turning the Center School building into maker spaces or art/craft spaces (38%), a community center for town use (35%), and multiple private residences (33%). The option of tearing the building down and using the space for a public park was also popular with almost one third of respondents (30%) selecting this as a top choice. Less commonly survey respondents preferred shared office spaces (19%), art studios (18%), private offices (14%), a singular private residence (13%), and an inn or bed and breakfast (9%).

Exhibit Xc. Top Choices for Use of the Whately Center School Building and Lot



Note: N=149 survey respondents; 3% of survey respondents did not make any selections for this question. Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents were able to select more than one option.

Using the Center School as a Community Space

In open-ended comments for both requests for downtown Whately amenities and suggestions for use of the Center School specifically, respondents most commonly mentioned community spaces: 46% of all respondents requested more community space for downtown Whately and 48% of all respondents suggested that the Center School be repurposed as a community space. Specific community space requests and suggestions often surrounded parks, playgrounds, or a town common. For example, one respondent said they would like to see a “small park where one can sit and take in the view and meet people” in downtown Whately. Survey respondents also mentioned formal or informal community meeting spaces; community centers; parking; visitor areas or hiker/biker stops; museums and learning or additional library space; exercise, sports or yoga space; war or veteran memorials; post office space; and cemetery space as amenities missing from downtown that were also potential uses for the Center School. Respondents noted increased traffic control and better sidewalks and crosswalks as missing from downtown but not related to the Center School.

Eateries or Stores in Downtown Whately

Survey respondents often requested more eateries and other stores for downtown Whately (50% of all respondents), but fewer suggested these as uses for the Center School building and lot specifically (31% of all respondents). The most common requests were for eateries such as cafes, restaurants, or bars. Responses in these categories also often overlapped with requests for informal community space. For example, one respondent said that they would like to see the Center School building turned into a “local café with light food fare where you can meet others from town or out of town.” Other specific requests and suggestions for food-related businesses included grocery stores, convenience or general stores, and farmers’ markets or farm stands. Two respondents specifically suggested something similar to the Williamsburg general store, with one respondent noting the “local crafts & treats” available there. Non-food related store requests and suggestions were more varied.

The disparity between the frequency with which respondents wanted more eateries downtown and the frequency with which they thought the Center School should be used as an eatery indicates that they either did not think of the Center School as a good location for such a business or that they simply did not picture the space used in that way. The popularity of a café or restaurant option in the close-ended list of potential Center School uses (see above) indicates that respondents simply did not think to use the building in this manner and not that they thought it would be an unsuitable location.

Other Uses for the Center School: Art Spaces, Other Businesses, and Housing

Around a quarter of survey respondents suggested art spaces (22%), other businesses (28%), and housing (26%) as uses for the Center School, while at the same time only around 10% of all survey respondents reported those as amenities missing from downtown Whately. Among suggestions of art spaces, art or music studios, galleries or performance spaces, and maker or craft spaces were most common. For other businesses, respondents mentioned shared offices or co-working spaces as well as inns and bed and breakfasts. Some respondents also listed specific businesses that could occupy the space with one respondent saying that they would like to see the Center School building used as a retail business incubator. Requests and suggestions for housing were frequently accompanied by target user recommendations, such as mentions of senior housing or low-income housing. One respondent even suggested a temporary refugee resettlement as a possible use for the Center School building.

Target Users and Ownership of the Center School

Almost a third of all survey respondents (30%) specified the target residents they envisioned using the repurposed Center School building and lot. Across all mentions, respondents most frequently discussed seniors, low-income residents, and children. Mentions of seniors often included community center space while both seniors and low-income residents were often mentioned in association with housing. Children were often mentioned in the context of

playgrounds. Less frequently, respondents also specified families as users as well as dogs in connection with parks or other outdoor spaces.

Only a few respondents specifically mentioned ownership in regard to the Center School building and lot (less than 10% of all survey respondents) and about half of those brought up ownership in the context of monetary benefits. For example, one respondent said, "Anything that will put it back on tax rolls," in response to suggestions for uses of the Center School. And another respondent said, "If Whately can't make something of it, it should be sold." Those who indicated ownership preference tended to favor private ownership over town ownership, however, a few respondents did specifically request that the building remain town owned.

Summary

Whately residents actively engaged in providing their input on the future of the Center School building and lot. Analysis of residents' opinions show that community spaces and eateries or other stores are both common suggestions for use of the space as well as amenities that residents believe are currently missing from downtown Whately. While residents can visualize other uses for the Center School such as art spaces, other business, and housing, they do not necessarily think that those are amenities missing from downtown Whately. Residents are also concerned about who will use the repurposed Center School space, citing seniors, low-income residents, and children most frequently. On the other hand, residents are less concerned with whether or not the town continues to own the building and lot or whether it is sold into private ownership as long as the purpose of the space aligns with their desires.

Appendices

Appendix A: Quantitative Data Tables

The following tables present frequencies and percentages of survey respondents by response option for all quantitative questions from the survey: Q2, Q4, and Q5. Please see Appendix C for the full text for these questions.

Q2. Familiarity with the Whately Center School Building		
	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Yes, familiar with the building	135	91%
No, not familiar with the building	4	3%
No response	10	7%
TOTAL	149	100%

Q4. Top Suggestions for Use of the Whately Center School Building and Lot		
	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Café or restaurant	71	48%
Maker spaces or art/craft spaces	56	38%
Community center for town use	52	35%
Multiple private residences (2-4 units)	49	33%
Public park for town use (tear building down)	44	30%
Shared office spaces	28	19%
Art studio	27	18%
Private offices	21	14%
Singular private residence	20	13%
Inn or B&B	14	9%
TOTAL	149	---

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents were able to select more than one option. On average, respondents selected 2.6 options.

Q5. Where Survey Respondents Live		
	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Whately Center	44	30%
East Whately	39	26%
West Whately	38	26%
Other area	22	15%
No response	6	4%
TOTAL	149	100%

Appendix B: Qualitative Data Tables

The following tables present qualitative data frequencies (counts of respondents) by category for all qualitative questions from the survey: Q1 and Q3. Please see Appendix C for the full text for these questions. A single qualitative response may fall into multiple categories and respondents were able to enter more than one qualitative response option for each question. The data presented below are de-duplicated across respondents, so that if a respondent entered three separate suggestions for park space for the Center School, they are only counted in the park category once.

The categories shown here were developed as inductive codes (themes that emerged from the data) and used in the qualitative analysis process. Primary codes are listed as well as selected sub-codes within each primary code to show more detailed breakdowns of common responses within those categories.

Community Space Requests and Suggestions		
	Q1. General Town Amenities	Q3. Center School Specifically
All public/community space options	68	71
Park/playground/town common	31	20
Community meeting space (formal or informal)	14	2
Community center specifically	11	25
Parking	10	7
Sidewalks-crosswalks	9	0
Visitor area or hiker/biker stops	7	4
Museum/learning space/additional library space	6	11
Exercise/sports/yoga space	5	6
Traffic control	4	0
War/Veteran Memorial	1	5
Post office space	1	1
Cemetery space	0	2

Eatery and Store Requests and Suggestions		
	Q1. General Town Amenities	Q3. Center School Specifically
All eatery and store options	74	46
Eatery (restaurant-cafe-bar)	63	37
Grocery store	8	4
Convenience/general store	7	4
Farmers' market/farm stand	4	5

Art Spaces, Other Businesses, and Housing Requests and Suggestions		
	Q1. General Town Amenities	Q3. Center School Specifically
All art space options	18	32
Gallery/performance space	9	8
Art/music studios	8	14
Maker/craft space	2	8
All other business options	16	41
Specific business recommendations	12	7
Shared office/coworking spaces	2	9
Inn or B&B	1	6
All housing options	15	39
Housing for lower-income residents specifically	6	17
Housing for seniors specifically	6	11

Target Users Included in Requests and Suggestions	
	Q3. Center School Specifically
All target user options	44
Seniors	23
Lower-income residents	18
Children	16
Families	3
Dogs	1

Ownership References Included in Suggestions for the Center School		
	Q3. Center School Specifically	Center School Ownership for Monetary Purposes
All ownership options	10	6
Private ownership	7	5
Public/town ownership	4	2

Appendix C: Survey Instrument

Whately Center School Public Opinion Survey
Winter 2019-2020

To take this survey online instead: please go to www.surveymonkey.com/r/B9N67TH

For this survey, we are defining "downtown Whately" as the portion of Chestnut Plain Road around the Whately Inn, Town Hall, and the Library.

1. What are **three amenities** that you think are currently missing from downtown Whately and that you would like to see added in the near future (responses can include public space options, certain businesses, etc.)

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____



The Whately Center School building at the corner of Chestnut Plain Road and Christian Lane has been vacant for about a year now and the town is hoping to repurpose the building and/or lot so that it is once again usable. We are considering all possible uses for the building and lot and would like to hear your thoughts as well!



2. Are you familiar with the Whately Center School building?
- a. Yes
b. No
3. Thinking of the Whately Center School building and lot (if you are unfamiliar with the building and lot, think of downtown Whately space more generally), list **three ways** you would like to see the building and/or lot used.
- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
4. Which of the following options would you **most prefer** for use of the Whately Center School building and lot? (Please circle your **top three choices**)
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| a. Community center for town use | f. Private offices |
| b. Café or restaurant | g. Inn or B&B |
| c. Art studio | h. Multiple private residences (2-4 units) |
| d. Maker spaces or art/craft spaces | i. Singular private residence |
| e. Shared office spaces | j. Public park for town use (tear building down) |
5. Circle the area of town in which you live:
- West Whately East Whately Whately Center Other area

Please return this form to the Whately Center School Visioning Committee by **January 12th, 2020**
4 Sandy Lane, S. Deerfield, 01373

*Note: The deadline as listed on the paper survey was extended to allow for late submissions.