

# CHAPTER 4: COMMUNITY ISSUES



## OVERVIEW

The Village Center, Open Space and Parks, and Community Character emerged as top issues when residents and board and commission members offered their insight during the planning process. Residents also emphasized becoming more “green” overall and having more alternative transportation options.

Highlights of public input include what residents are proud of and sorry about. The results provided guidance on things to protect in Ridgefield and challenges to address.

Proud of:	Sorry about:
<p><u>Character</u> – Contribute to the overall character of the community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open space and lakes</li> <li>• Main Street and scenic streets</li> <li>• Historic architecture</li> </ul>	<p><u>Irritants</u> – Affect quality of life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific housing developments</li> <li>• Certain types of businesses</li> <li>• Style of development on Route 7</li> </ul>
<p><u>Community</u> – Facilities and services that contribute to quality of life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Golf courses</li> <li>• Cultural amenities</li> </ul>	<p><u>Threats</u> – Could change the community’s character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate development</li> <li>• Offices on 1st floor downtown</li> <li>• Traffic, congestion, safety</li> <li>• Loss of historic resources</li> </ul>
<p><u>Traditions</u> – Contribute to the overall feeling in the community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cass Gilbert Fountain</li> <li>• Village events and celebrations</li> <li>• Historic resources</li> </ul>	<p><u>Deficiencies</u> – Do not exist but could enhance the community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of streetscape connection from Copps Hill to the Center</li> <li>• Lack of public transit</li> <li>• Downtown parking</li> </ul>

## **THEMES**

A number of themes arose from community input, from a review of Conditions and Trends, and from Commission discussions during the Plan update process. These themes influenced the direction of the Plan and included:

- Protecting character, historic resources, natural resources, and open space is important.
- Ridgefield Center should be protected and enhanced.
- There is an interest in attracting additional business development to Ridgefield, but generally in areas already zoned for business use.
- The Town should discourage sprawl, strip retail, and big box retail.
- The Town should evaluate the zoning along parts of Route 7.
- There is interest in providing more affordable housing for young workers, seniors, and the disabled.
- Traffic is of concern, particularly on Routes 7 and 35.
- The Town should encourage public transit options, walking, and bicycling.
- The Town should explore ways to become more “green”, in terms of waste reduction, energy use, and overall patterns of development.

## **OVERALL PLAN PHILOSOPHY**

While goals and strategies in this Plan may be refined over time, the following Plan philosophy will remain relevant during the ten- to twenty-year life of this Plan:

Ridgefield should always be a community where:

- important natural and cultural resources are protected,
- community character is preserved and enhanced,
- the single family residential character is maintained,
- appropriate economic development is promoted,
- overall development patterns and transportation choices promote environmental sustainability, and
- all residents benefit from and enjoy those amenities that make Ridgefield unique.