

Town of Plains Community Survey

Monday, September 15, 2025

256

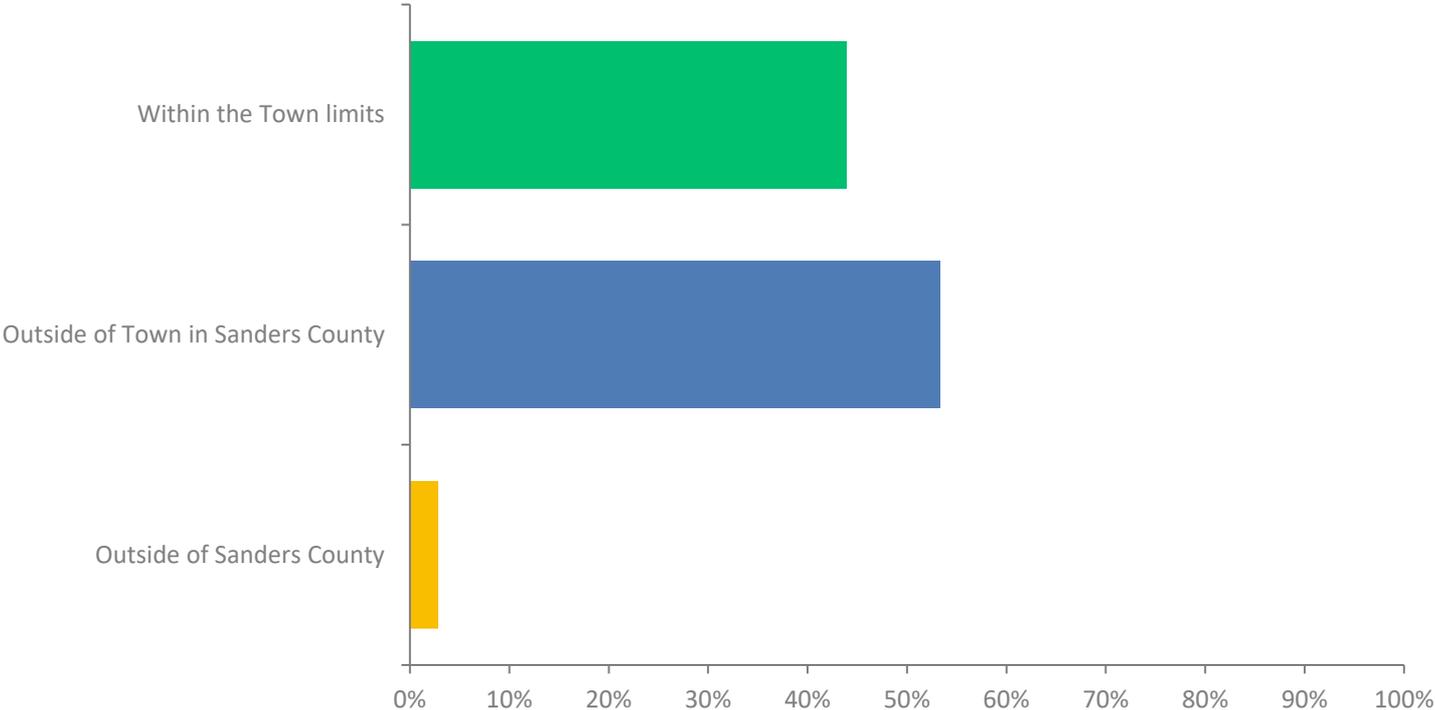
Total Responses

Date Created: Wednesday, August 06, 2025

Complete Responses: 256

Question 1: Where do you live?

Answered: 253 Skipped: 3



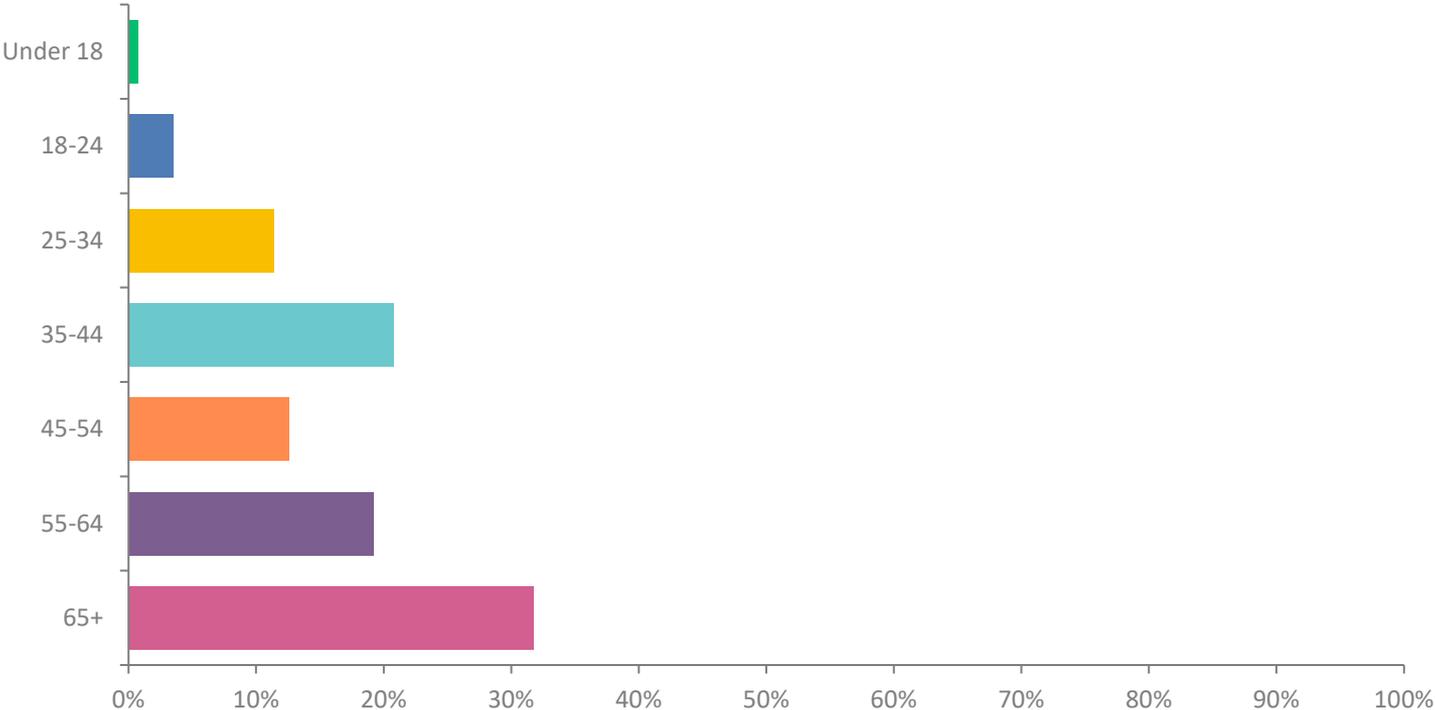
Question 1: Where do you live?

Answered: 253 Skipped: 3

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Within the Town limits	43.87%	111
Outside of Town in Sanders County	53.36%	135
Outside of Sanders County	2.77%	7
TOTAL		253

Question 2: What is your age?

Answered: 255 Skipped: 1



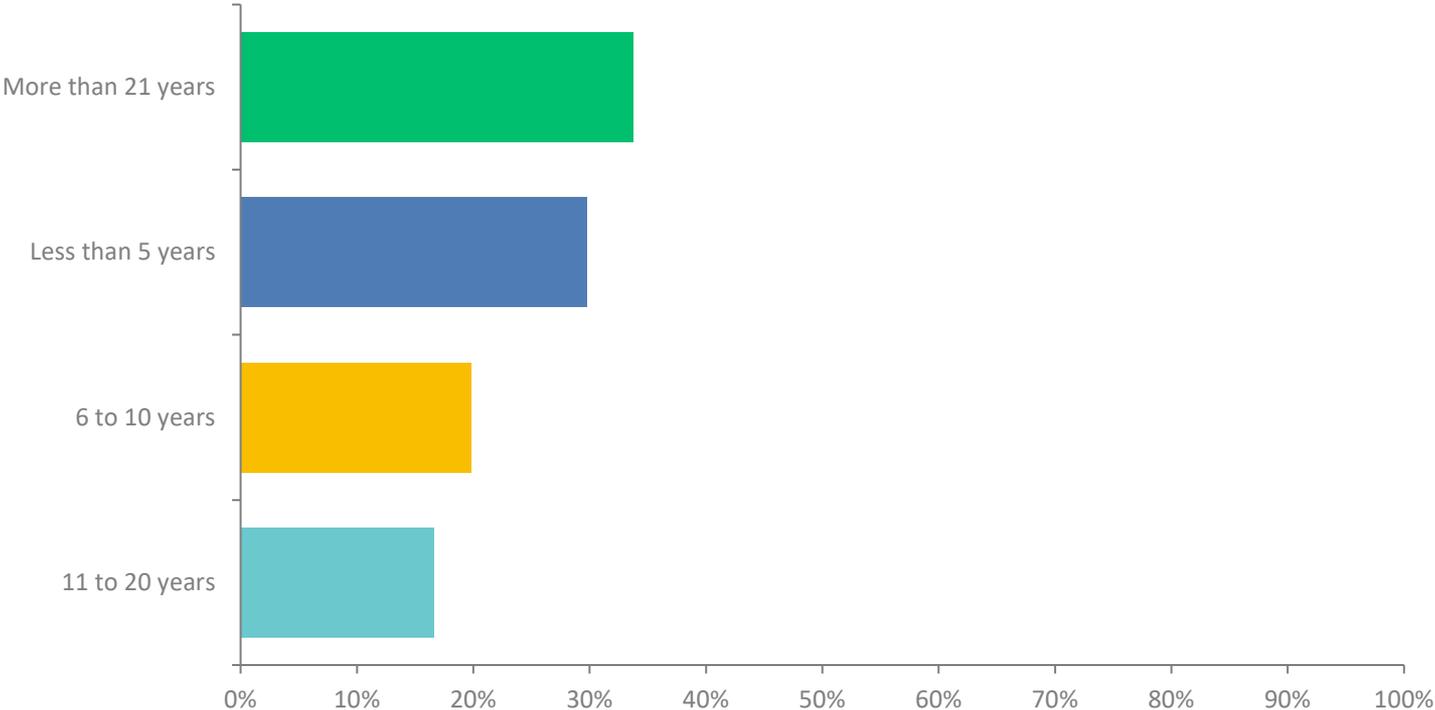
Question 2: What is your age?

Answered: 255 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.78%	2
18-24	3.53%	9
25-34	11.37%	29
35-44	20.78%	53
45-54	12.55%	32
55-64	19.22%	49
65+	31.76%	81
TOTAL		255

Question 3: How long have you lived in Plains?

Answered: 252 Skipped: 4



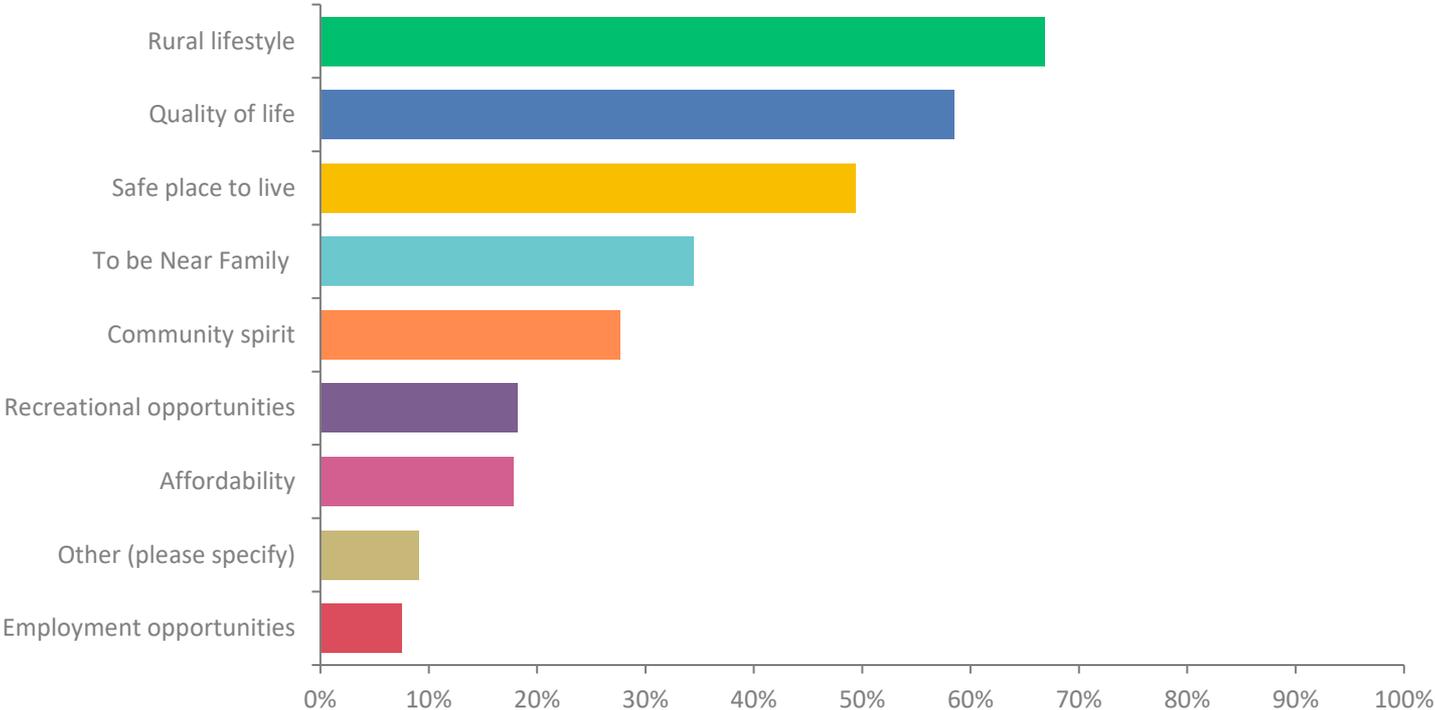
Question 3: How long have you lived in Plains?

Answered: 252 Skipped: 4

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More than 21 years	33.73%	85
Less than 5 years	29.76%	75
6 to 10 years	19.84%	50
11 to 20 years	16.67%	42
TOTAL		252

Question 4: What are your top three (3) reasons for living in Plains?

Answered: 253 Skipped: 3



Question 4: What are your top three (3) reasons for living in Plains?

Answered: 253 Skipped: 3

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Rural lifestyle	66.80%	169
Quality of life	58.50%	148
Safe place to live	49.41%	125
To be Near Family	34.39%	87
Community spirit	27.67%	70
Recreational opportunities	18.18%	46
Affordability	17.79%	45
Other (please specify)	9.09%	23
Employment opportunities	7.51%	19
TOTAL		732

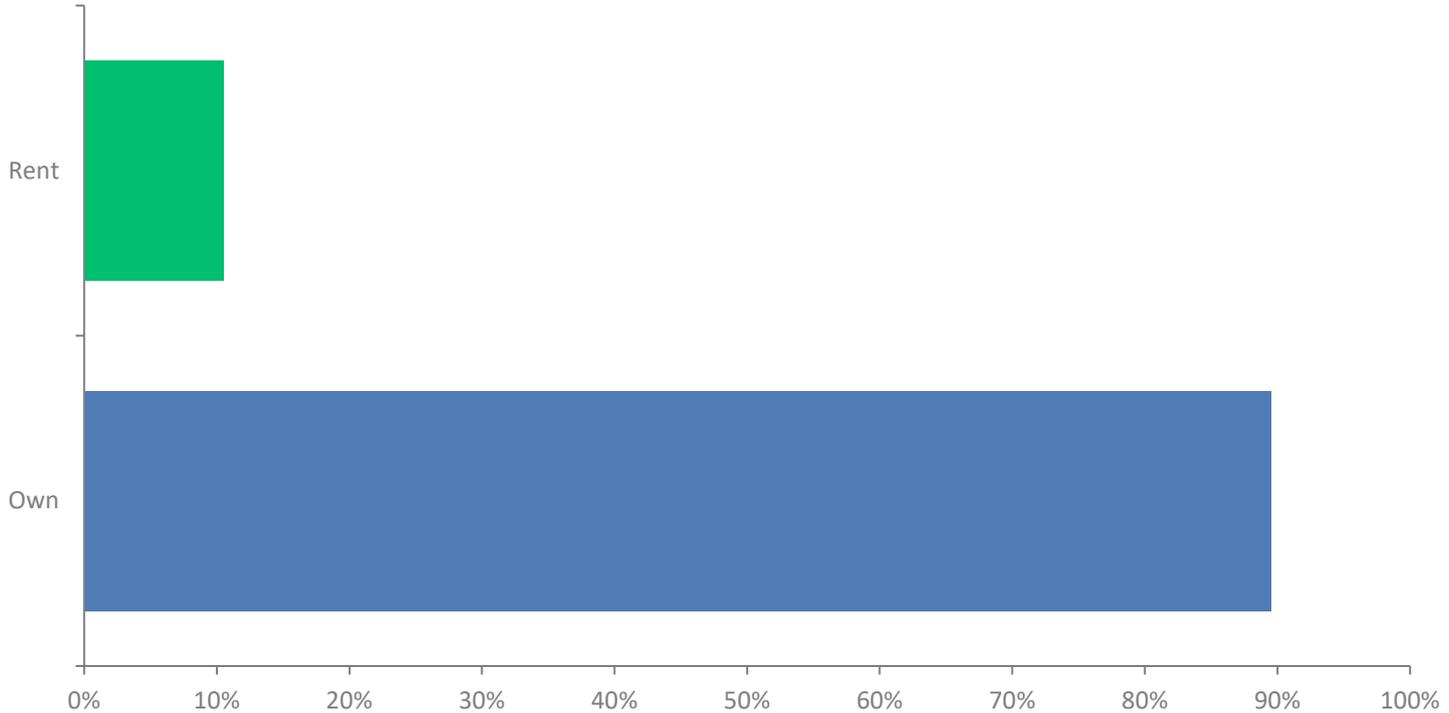
Question 4: What are your top three (3) reasons for living in Plains?

Answered: 253 Skipped: 3

- Land
- The community and town reminded me of a long ago home
- Family
- Conservative Values
- Weather and ability to be more self sufficient because of growth zone
- Deep Roots
- Because it was safe when I moved here, do not feel that way now
- It was for quality of life community spirit and safe place to live but that has all gone to crap in the past few years
- The natural landscape
- Leaving the big city for a better life amongst god fearing people
- work for the RR
- Young people are not taught work ethics by their parents or school!
- We moved back into the mountains
- In the mountains
- Hospital
- Raising kids and do not want to switch schools.
- Good neighbors
- None of the above
- Brian
- I love Montana and it to STAY MONTANA please
- Quietness
- I actually don't want to live here
- Housing/lot size available

Q5: Do you rent or own your housing?

Answered: 248 Skipped: 8



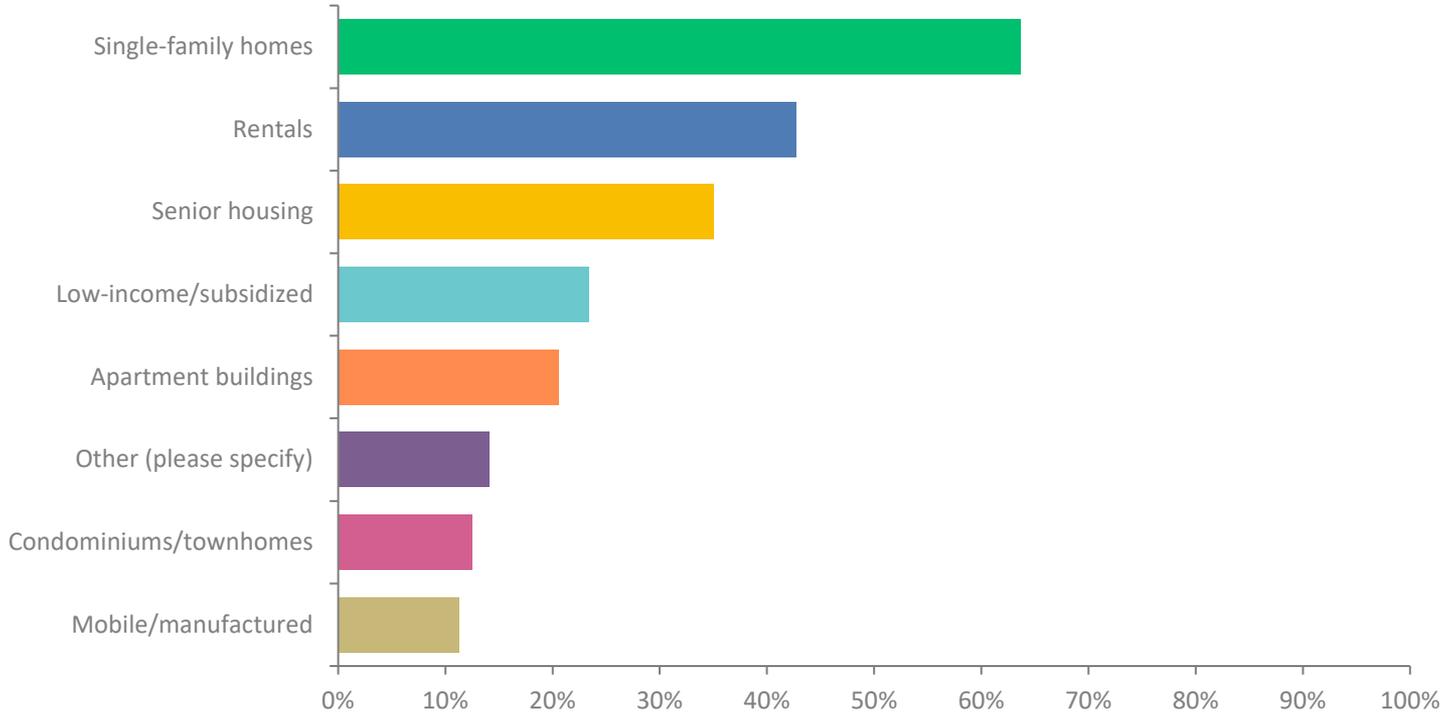
Question 5: Do you rent or own your housing?

Answered: 248 Skipped: 8

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Rent	10.48%	26
Own	89.52%	222
TOTAL		248

Question 6: What type residential development would you like to see in Plains? Please select all that apply

Answered: 248 Skipped: 8



Question 6: What type residential development would you like to see in Plains? Please select all that apply

Answered: 248 Skipped: 8

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single-family homes	63.71%	158
Rentals	42.74%	106
Senior housing	35.08%	87
Low-income/subsidized	23.39%	58
Apartment buildings	20.56%	51
Other (please specify)	14.11%	35
Condominiums/townhomes	12.50%	31
Mobile/manufactured	11.29%	28
TOTAL		554

Question 6: What type residential development would you like to see in Plains?

Please select all that apply

Answered: 248 Skipped: 8

- Single family homes, lived in by people who contribute skills, energy, and vitality to the community.
- Businesses, Affordable Homes for lower Middle class
- Affordable living
- None
- None
- I prefer to keep it as is.
- Housing for the hospital.
- None
- None. I dont want Plains to grow any more
- Affordable housing
- None. It's fine just the way it is.
- Tiny Homes
- Multiple houses allowed on lot (Mother in law housing)
- Ranch/Homesteads farmland
- None. Too many people in town already.
- affordable rentals not rentals that cost more than mortgages or air b and bs
- No air b and b or short term rentals
- It's hard for people to move here for work (teachers & healthcare workers) without somewheres to live.
- The streets of Plains are deplorable!! Take the blinders off.
- Single family homes that are not owned by businesses and rented out for profit.
- Workforce Housing
- I like it the way it is.
- None
- Tiny Homes
- Affordable rent
- Tiny Home Community
- None
- None
- Why anything?

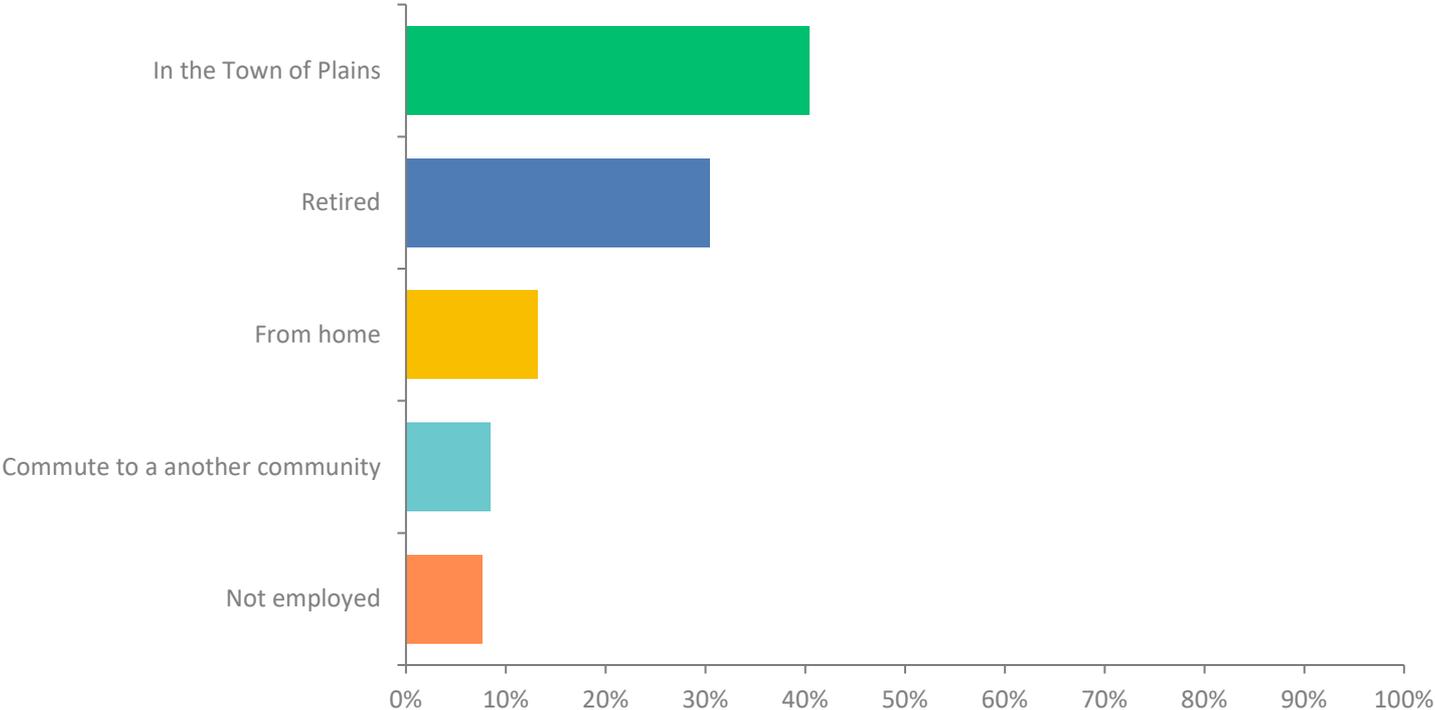
Question 6: What type residential development would you like to see in Plains? Please select all that apply

Answered: 248 Skipped: 8

- Homesteads/family farms
- Homestead
- Small farm, homesteads, not crowded housing developments
- Houses with land
- Better nursing home & Larger
- This is a liberal bias question

Question 7: If employed, where do you work?

Answered: 250 Skipped: 6



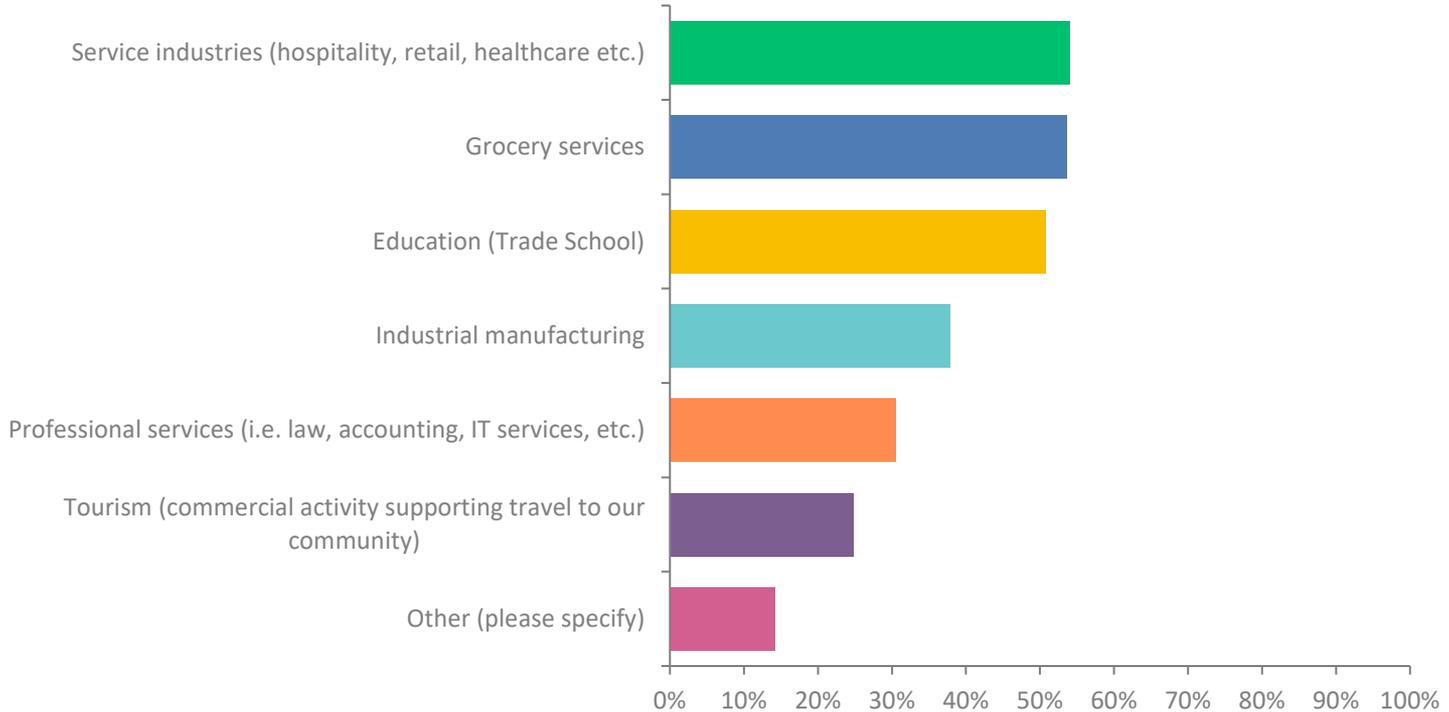
Question 7: If employed, where do you work?

Answered: 250 Skipped: 6

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
In the Town of Plains	40.40%	101
Retired	30.40%	76
From home	13.20%	33
Commute to a another community	8.40%	21
Not employed	7.60%	19
TOTAL		250

Question 8: What type of economic development would you like to see in Plains? Please select all that apply

Answered: 246 Skipped: 10



Question 8: What type of economic development would you like to see in Plains? Please select all that apply

Answered: 246 Skipped: 10

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Service industries (hospitality, retail, healthcare etc.)	54.07%	133
Grocery services	53.66%	132
Education (Trade School)	50.81%	125
Industrial manufacturing	37.80%	93
Professional services (i.e. law, accounting, IT services, etc.)	30.49%	75
Tourism (commercial activity supporting travel to our community)	24.80%	61
Other (please specify)	14.23%	35
TOTAL		654

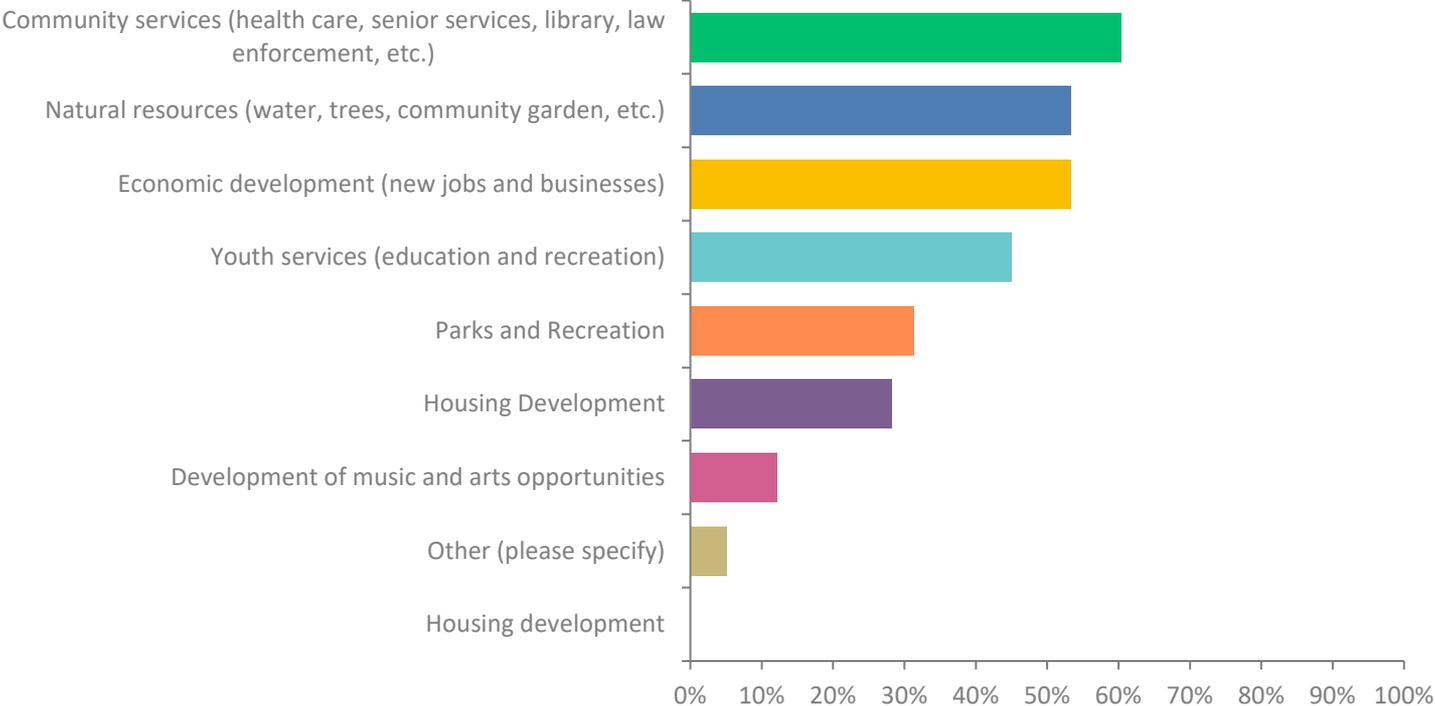
- Rv park
- Restaurant, parks
- Clothing and supplies
- Automatic carwash
- Can I say grocery store twice?
- Mom and Pop businesses that support the community
- Restaurants
- Indoor Recreational
- Restaurants!!
- Recreational
- Mill/forestry
- I am happy the way it is
- Keep the town the way it was.
- And then nothing else as dont want to bring more people here.
- Family oriented denies- movies etc
- It would be great to have more fun things for the kids in this town to do, as of right now it's just sports, the park, and little week night groups, but having a place for kids to hangout on the weekend or after school would be great.
- Affordable Housing
- All the above
- Restaurants
- Hempfiber plant like Ft. Benton has
- McGowan is too expensive, I would like to see another store open to compete with McGowan.
- Argricultural industry
- Plumbers/Electricians/Construction related skills
- Fruit or veggie farms
- Community events like festivals
- None of the above
- Trade School
- Youth recreation/ hang outs
- Fix the roads
- None
- Paid ambulance
- Better shopping and restaurant options.
- Pet Rescue
- See 6
- Slow development, better quality

**Question 8: What type of economic development would you like to see in Plains?
Please select all that apply**

Answered: 246 Skipped: 10

Question 9: Which of these topics is of greatest importance to you? Choose 3

Answered: 255 Skipped: 1



Question 9: Which of these topics is of greatest importance to you? Choose 3

Answered: 255 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Community services (health care, senior services, library, law enforcement, etc.)	60.39%	154
Natural resources (water, trees, community garden, etc.)	53.33%	136
Economic development (new jobs and businesses)	53.33%	136
Youth services (education and recreation)	45.10%	115
Parks and Recreation	31.37%	80
Housing Development	28.24%	72
Development of music and arts opportunities	12.16%	31
Other (please specify)	5.10%	13
Housing development	0.00%	0
TOTAL		737

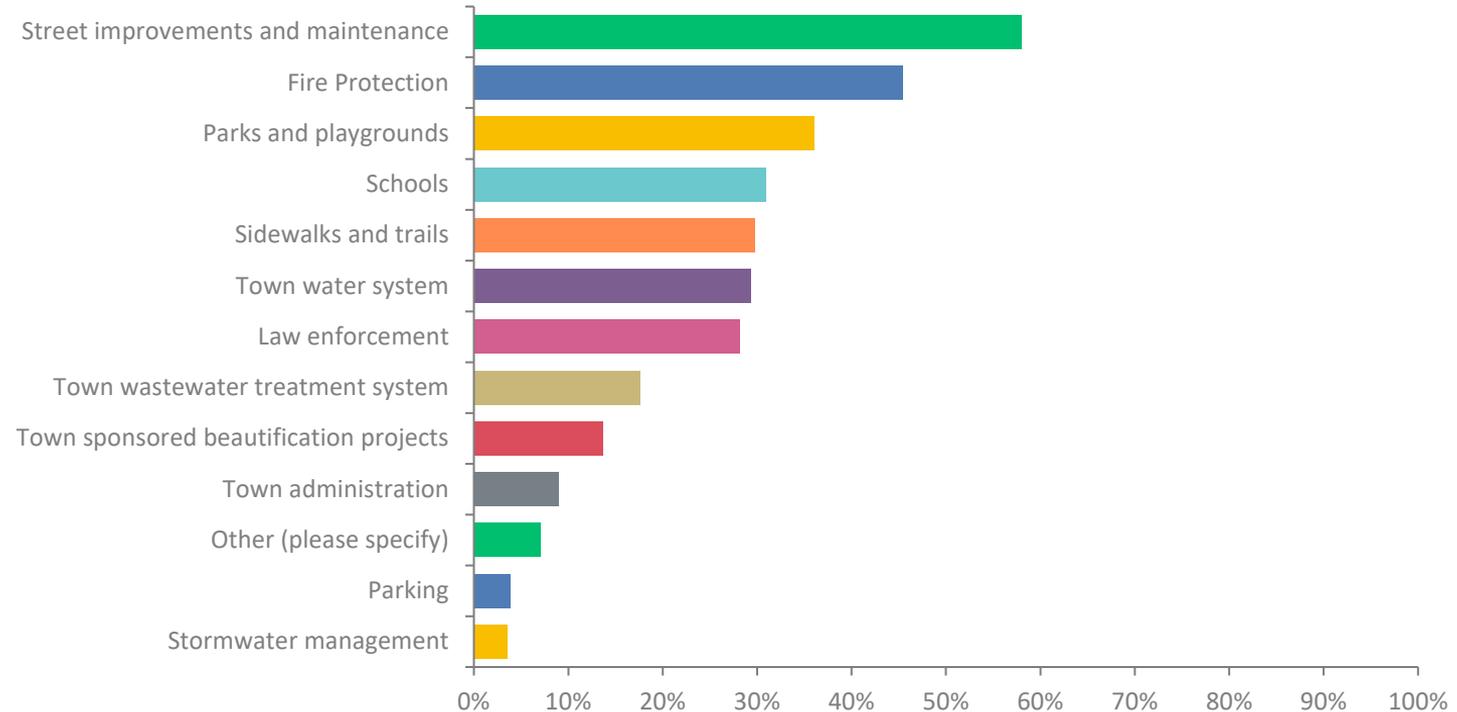
Question 9: Which of these topics is of greatest importance to you? Choose 3

Answered: 255 Skipped: 1

- Affordable rentals
- Mental health services are non-existent in this town.
- Support already established groups such as WYSA, public school, library, hospital.
- Respectable Gainful Employment
- Having an actual, sustainable PLAN for growth
- A Trade School would be a plus....Trump took \$2 Billion from Harvard to use for start up in small towns that don't have any type of Trade School....which would apply to us..
- I like Plains just the way it is.
- None x 3
- Under community services I would say the ambulance. Pay them to have our communities back.
- Indoor swimming pool year round
- Indoor pool year round
- Return to free enterprise and capitalism
- slow development

Question 10: Which of the following Town infrastructure and services are the most important to you? Please choose your top 3

Answered: 255 Skipped: 1



Question 10: Which of the following Town infrastructure and services are the most important to you? Please choose your top 3

Answered: 255 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Street improvements and maintenance	58.04%	148
Fire Protection	45.49%	116
Parks and playgrounds	36.08%	92
Schools	30.98%	79
Sidewalks and trails	29.80%	76
Town water system	29.41%	75
Law enforcement	28.24%	72
Town wastewater treatment system	17.65%	45
Town sponsored beautification projects	13.73%	35
Town administration	9.02%	23
Other (please specify)	7.06%	18
Parking	3.92%	10
Stormwater management	3.53%	9
TOTAL		798

**Question 10: Which of the following
Town
infrastructure and services are
the
most important to you?
Please choose your top 3**

Answered: 255 Skipped: 1

- This town needs so much! It is a rundown town with nothing to do.
- All of the above
- More rentals in town
- Roads
- Something similar to the HRDC Housing Trust Village in Bozeman seems to be a good start. Mari Daniel—who is on the Planning Board—brought a similar idea to the table. Good use of land while able to maintain one's independence AND build community. Good plan!
- City investment in fire hazards such as tire piles
- Enforce not having personal property with so much junk to be a fire hazard and affect property values.
- Horse manure in the street is dangerous for motorcyclists and disgusting for walkers and bicyclists.
- What's not happening is the trashy run-down 4-5 houses in town! What a shame for people that try to do upkeep on their property in town.
- Traffic flow and speed control
- Community events
- End predatory law enforcement
- Emergency medical services

Question 11: Please provide any other comments you have

Answered: 74 Skipped: 182

- Build community!
- It is difficult to pick only 3. FYI, I do appreciate the presence of law enforcement in town & police driving in neighborhoods feels safer.
- Fix the roads. When it rains I have a large pond in front of my house.
- Fix the roads
- Love this town (people). I pray improvement is the result of this survey! Thanks for the opportunity of a survey.
- I think the school is in desperate need of assistance. The administrators are being overpaid while not doing a good job. And the teachers and staff are being underpaid and undervalued.
- Helping the amish
- More places for horseback riding
- Leash law dogs
- I would love to see housing go in that people can purchase rather than rent, that is affordable for young and new families (ex: duplex). I also worry about our town infrastructure being stretched too thin with the increased number of people and calls that they are being sent on.
- Slow development!! do not need a plainsangeles
- There needs to be affordable housing for young families. Also there is nothing for kids to do in Plains, unless they are involved in sports.
- The community needs to be introduced to supporting change. It's happening. Should ride the wave instead of getting the undertow.
- The city of Plains needs to be cleaned up, dead vehicles, campers, and overall garbages needs to be dealt with asap, the town looks like a dump with rodents thriving.
- I would like the town to get people to clean up their yards in town. I live next to a "dump". My neighbors own just like I do. But I have to deal with their bug problem and it's a fire hazard.
- Would like to see less expensive rentals around town like the sheds around valley glass, no more of that, they look awful in town
- Enforce codes. There has to be something done about the junk and trash that engulf some houses. It is a fire hazard as well as environmental health hazard.
- "I would like to see another grocery store in town. They have the monopoly on it with most of the elderly people having to shop there because they aren't wanting to drive out of town. It would be nice to give them options. Also would like to see the town property better taken care of. Get the in ground sprinkler and some good grass in the causeway. Replace the trees that have died. It would be great if there were some benches and picnic tables there. The food trucks need to go elsewhere instead of on the only lawn in that area. Perhaps they could park in the giant dentist office parking lot. "

Question 11: Please provide any other comments you have

Answered: 74 Skipped: 182

- "Something needs to be done about the junk accumulation in yards on almost every street in Plains. There are getting to be more and more of them. They also lower their neighbors' property value for resale of their property. Almost all neighborhoods and streets have yards that are completely unsightly. Junk vehicles are a problem both in town and in rural areas around town. The free junk car removal program needs to be publicized and available throughout the year. Our town also needs another grocery store we are big enough to have two. We do not have a nice walking trail system in our community. For local drivers there are many times you wait quite a long time to cross or merge onto Railroad Street. It seems like a roundabout should be added to let cars merge if we are not in favor of using a light for traffic. "
- The use of poor quality road repairs being done in Plains is a waste of taxpayers money, pot hole here a pot hole there. These repairs don't really last thru the colder weather here
- Finding ways to get funds paid for vs increasing amount for vendors
- Please fix all roads with proper complete repavement. Patch fills aren't good.
- More youth activity centers or robust parks. Also better maintained streets
- I love to see the town grow but community activities and pride in the community and taking care of it has dwindled. Instead of new and improved may e focus on keeping great what we have now and continue making this place affordable to live and back the teachers more in the school system. Pay more attention to who are administrators are and board members and if they have the students best interest.
- I would love to see more of a 'Western Culture' in our area. More horse events, better access to the fairgrounds arenas, more good ol western cowboy type atmosphere
- I am grateful for all that we have.
- I'd love to see more fun things in Plains that draws in local people and neighboring towns. Ideas are Oktoberfest, something like Cherry Fest in Polson. I'm happy to volunteer inahurrycurry22@gmail.com
- "Let's start by better maintaining what we have. Let's make all the tourists pay more with a resort tax. They come here. Use our services and don't spend much money on our community. They're a burden. Fix it. Also let's implement a train tax and tax every rail car that comes through our town. The train is noisy, dirty, and degrading. "
- Thankful for our local law enforcement!!!
- I would love more trails for walkers/runners/youth bikers. Also concerned about the bridge. It would be wonderful to have a pedestrian bridge, especially during the fair.
- I enjoy the chance to be involved in this community in a variety of ways. It feels like home here.

Question 11: Please provide any other comments you have

Answered: 74 Skipped: 182

- None
- Nice library here; in Plains. Heard they are pushing to build a new one. Bad choice. I am over unwise use of tax \$\$\$\$. Very opposed to this if true.
- ""I feel it is important that the Boards that serve this community (and which are very important to this community) should have the support of this community. We, as members of this town, should show our appreciation of the time and energy they donate in order to improve this town. This survey is an attempt to do just that.
- It comes to us via the efforts set in motion via the Planning Board. Respecting their time, confidence, and following the protocol & procedure in place would do a great deal to help them achieve the purpose of the Boards they serve.""
- I could only select three areas in question 10, but I would also include sidewalks and trails for walking & town sponsored beautification projects.
- Not enough safe sidewalks in town, especially by the pool park where there are lots of kids and walkers.
- It would be great to see a private school or a co-op that meets more often.
- Maybe we should fix what we have before talking about adding more and growth. Most city streets have been riddled with the same potholes for 20+years you can't tell me there's no budget for that. That's just one example.
- One of the main reasons I love Plains is that they do not allow fast food chains and mega stores. Please continue that trend. Fast food is destroying the health of Americans and mega stores put the average mom and pop business(which sanders county is built on) out of business. We need to improve the access to the river and develop better parks and places for kids of all ages to recreate. Bigger skatepark that is actually usable.
- Our town and county roads need better maintenance, and our public school system needs better priorities/common sense.
- Maintaining existing attractive town features is a need.
- We need low-income housing, but that would need to boost police protection as that seems to draw the wrong people. Also, we need to clean up places the cleaner the place cheaper taxes. The junkier they pay fines. We need to clean up the houses & alleys for fire protection!
- The county should pay for some roads because most people on River Road E & W and Upper Lynch drive through Plains to get to Hwy 200
- What happened to the money that we voted for, working on the streets and sidewalks.
- We need more for our youth to help keep them out of mischief. Growing up here, we would go out & play on the hill or walk down to the river to swim. There's too much traffic on the highway that I don't think I'd send my child to walk into town now. A walking path would be wonderful.

Question 11: Please provide any other comments you have

Answered: 74 Skipped: 182

- I appreciate the work of this committee.
- Town Council and Mayor - Take charge and clean the town up!! Have a "trash law" for non-compliant owners and renters.
- Some sort of emergency crossing over the tracks with the amount of trains and the length of them.
- New water lines, fix the streets, over pass or something over the tracks for emergency vehicles, there's more and more trains going through and they are getting longer and longer.
- Our Fire Department needs more money training and support from the city. Law enforcement needs more management and town maintenance needs more help.
- Name all entities that will get this survey and provide to my email please.
- I'm more curious in getting information about how the town is using its funds efficiently and for the betterment of the town and people. Also, just putting this out there, if I want to have a specific paper with information from the water clerk, I shouldn't have to pay her for finding it. She's already being paid to do her job, so me paying her to find a piece of information that should be public record is ridiculous- and I'm curious how many other things are structured similarly to keep people out of knowing certain pieces of information.
- There is an urgent need to find a solution for housing for those who wish to come here for the jobs that ARE here. Plains has 0 rentals that are affordable/up to code in livability for the wages offered by most employers. Not to say that wages have not come a long way but the greed by ungoverned landlords that began with the covid epidemic is still with us and has surpassed that of affordability even if multiple people in the household are working full time jobs or multiple part time jobs. This forces folks to live in substandard housing/take what is available and be in constant debt just to provide basics. Often folks choose to move on or not come here at all. We love our community and realize this all takes some planning and oversight to help us grow in a constructive way and know that change and growth can be a positive thing if done with some thought to the future.
- Like to see more housing and jobs.
- I love Plains the way it is. That being said, it is not a matter of if change occurs, it is when. Managing that change so that Plains does not turn into someplace we don't recognize will take skill. Leveraging the Montana Cottage Industry laws from a few years ago to make this an agricultural hub that honors its roots and keeps even a growing community tight knit is the best model we can do. We need more housing that is affordable, but Section 8 is not a solution for that. Possible solutions could be the city and county doing joint-ventures with local builders to keep down investment costs to the builder. If the City helped with land, utilities and permits and split the rental proceeds with the builder, the pay-back period would be acceptable and the builder would be more inclined to accept the risk of a slow rental market. The school district and the hospital BOTH need affordable housing available to draw in talented long-term employees.

Question 11: Please provide any other comments you have

Answered: 74 Skipped: 182

- The school is very important but it is its own entity so I did not include that. Streets and sidewalks should be lumped into one and the consideration of making our town ADA accessible should be at the top of our town's list. There are people who have been residents here for over 20 years who are in wheel chairs and they are homebound for most of the year due to crappy accessibility. It is awful to see them trying to make it anywhere through the winter. And it causes severe issues like bed sores and makes it even harder for them to get out when it's nice enough.
- Support VFW 4th lunch in park
- Great need for housing - that folks can afford
- Keep it small with limited government.
- No new taxes.
- Keep small town vibe. No commercial chains.
- Some of these things are not important to me personally because I don't live in the town and have no kids, but they are very important to the town itself. Schools and fire protection, for instance. I personally wish the town had more parks or trails where I can walk my dog without being attacked by other dogs. I wonder why nobody ever seems to ride bikes and horses in Wild Horse Plains anymore. That was a NICE thing about this community in the past. Maybe install some bike racks and hitching rails, and let the newcomers know that horses do have a right to be on the roads in the town and surrounding area. Also I wish you would plant more shade trees in the greenway beside Main Street, like we had before the highway was widened. And put a live Christmas tree back in there.
- Having space that is inclusive for all ages
- Our town needs a gazebo. And more community events like year-round festivals to increase tourism and unite the town for a common social purpose.
- We have medical, we have necessary services. We are a rural Montana. Keep it that way. You want big city move to a big city.
- We need more things to do other than casino and bars.
- I owned a business and employed people in Plains for 42 years. I own 3 rentals in Plains. Affordable housing is necessary for business growth. Regulations to allow for more dense development is needed to keep rents affordable. Without housing business development is limited. Thanks for caring and good luck.
- Our community is growing, quickly. We have to make sure we're growing to support this growth.

Question 11: Please provide any other comments you have

Answered: 74 Skipped: 182

- This town has always struggled with change, and I don't see this growth policy as being well received because the word "growth" is scary. However, I think if the town can work towards "maintaining community" instead of "growth", there is a potential to increase interest in what it's trying to accomplish. I hope to see this town maintain its small town charm and friendly demeanor in a ever growing world of selfish behavior, and continue to offer "third space" locations for community involvement.
- I love living in Plains, especially how safe and community-focused it is!
- Street improvements There are many streets that or horrible to drive on A few in particular don't even receive pothole filling each year
- Too many homes with junk yards for yards
- Automatic radar 25 mph speed limit signs at both ends of town would help traffic slow down to 25. Might help police prevent speeding.
- We might be a small town, but that shouldn't mean we can't have competitive grocery and restaurant options. If you want residents to truly shop local create better options.