

SPEAK OUT DOVER

2006

Final Report

October 16, 2006

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INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 2006, the City of Dover sponsored a *Speak Out Dover* series as part of a larger city-wide effort to foster citizen participation in setting directions for City government. Primarily conceived to allow citizen input into the master planning process, *Speak Out Dover* became an opportunity for the citizens of Dover to communicate their thoughts and concerns about the community and to offer ideas and visions for what they hope to see Dover become in the future. This *Speak Out Dover* series was modeled after a similar effort undertaken by the City in 1995 as part of a public participation process in preparation of an update of the City's Master Plan.

The Dover Master Plan, updated every 5 to 10 years by the Planning Board, is a blueprint for the City's future development and land use. The master plan is both a reference and policy document. It is a plan, not an ordinance or regulatory tool that the Planning Board can use to deny or approve a specific development proposal. The master plan is designed to help a community meet change responsibly, guiding its growth in an orderly manner. A master plan covers topics such as future development, transportation, natural resource protection, community facilities, economic development, housing, and historic resources.

More than 220 people took part in the seven *Speak Out Dover* sessions that began in July and ended in August. The schedule and locations of each session is listed on a flyer included as Appendix A. Of those who came to the *Speak Out Dover* sessions 56 completed a written questionnaire designed to provide City government with a greater understanding of what it is the citizens of Dover value in the community and what changes they would like to see. In addition, the questionnaire was placed on the City web-site to allow those citizens that could not attend one of the sessions to be able to complete the same questionnaire. Approximately 27 citizens took the time to download the questionnaire off the web-site, fill it out and submit it to the Planning Department. The seven *Speak Out Dover* sessions were held at various locations around the City that were accessible to the general public. These locations were specifically selected in order to insure that all of the residents were given an opportunity to participate in a neighborhood setting. One session was held in each of the City's six wards and the seventh session was held in City Hall. The last *Speak Out Dover* session was one last opportunity for any citizen to answer the questions and provide their input on the future of the City. Additionally the final session was used to summarize the results from the first six *Speak Out Dover* sessions held up to that point.

The *Speak Out Dover* sessions generated many diverse interests and concerns that were broadly representative of the various neighborhoods of Dover. *Speak Out Dover* participants were guided in their discussions by a moderator that prompted them to consider topics that fell into five major categories:

- (1) Neighborhood strengths and needs for improvement;
- (2) What people value about the City of Dover and how it can improve;
- (3) The needs of families and how government can meet those needs;

(4) The reasons why people volunteer for community service and what it would take to become more active;

(5) What people's vision is for the kind of community they would like to see Dover become in the future.

This report summarizes the responses in each of these five categories from all seven of the *Speak Out Dover* sessions held during 2006.

KEY FINDINGS

The participants at the seven *Speak Out Dover* sessions were pleased to have an opportunity to communicate their many diverse interests, opinions and concerns. Nevertheless, there were some common themes that were expressed by many of the citizens who participated. This section of the report summarizes the most frequent responses to each of the five sets of questions.

While many of the comments were not limited to these topics, these seem to best represent those areas repeatedly addressed in the *Speak Out Dover* sessions. Moderators encouraged people to focus together on how to make Dover a stronger community. Participants were first asked to concentrate on their neighborhoods and then to broaden their view to consider the entire city. Question set 3 asked the participants to consider the needs of their families and what the City could do to address those needs. Moderators encouraged participants to focus on what motivates them to volunteer for community service and what incentives are needed to encourage more people to volunteer. The final question set asked those in attendance to think long term about the future of Dover and to create a vision of what they would like to see Dover become in the next twenty to twenty-five years.

The *Speak Out Dover* sessions generated a whole range of ideas and suggestions about what local government should do to improve the community and equally important, what the citizens themselves can do to make the community better.

Speak Out Dover clearly demonstrated that the citizens of Dover do not lack creative and constructive ideas. Citizens contributed numerous suggestions about how the City could better serve the needs of the community and how the City could facilitate citizen involvement. The number and creativity of the suggestions suggest a pool of civic energy from which public officials may draw for future direction and assistance.

HOW PARTICIPANTS ANSWERED THE FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

This section summarizes the participant responses to the five sets of questions asked by the moderators during the *Speak Out Dover* session and recorded on the flip charts.

Question Set 1A: *What aspects of your neighborhood do you value most?*

Nearly all of the participants in *Speak Out Dover* reported a great deal of satisfaction with their own neighborhoods. Since *Speak Out Dover* sessions were held in each ward, the responses to this question were varied, but there were some common themes that emerged. Many people liked their neighborhood due to its location. For some this meant location near the Spaulding Turnpike, while for others it meant being close to the downtown. In general, most of the *Speak Out Dover* participants seemed to appreciate the central location of their neighborhoods and their proximity to schools, downtown and shopping.

Another neighborhood feature many participants seemed to enjoy was the proximity to natural features like lakes, ponds, rivers, and conservation lands. Others identified living near historic

homes and buildings as a benefit to their quality of life. Many people really liked the people that live in their neighborhood and that this contributed to their positive feelings for the area in which they lived.

The following is a list of the most common responses that were given when asked about the aspects of their neighborhoods that they valued the most.

What aspects of your neighborhood do you value most?

- Older, quiet neighborhoods
- Diversity of neighborhoods and citizens
- Close to downtown
- Parks and recreation areas
- Conservation land and open spaces
- Good access to highways
- Low crime rate
- Rivers
- Historic homes and buildings
- Family oriented

Question Set 1B: *What would make your neighborhood a better place to live?*

This question gave people a chance to consider what improvements could be made to their neighborhood and let City officials know of their areas of concern. Many participants called not only for decreased traffic but also for slower traffic and better enforcement of speed limits. In general, participants expressed a great deal of concern over pedestrian safety at crosswalks and on sidewalks. Several suggestions were made concerning how pedestrian safety could be improved in the City's neighborhoods.

Similarly, quite a few people expressed concern over street maintenance in their neighborhoods. Some residents complained about the City's tax rate, saying that the City needed to control spending. Others expressed a desire for additional police patrols in their neighborhoods.

Overall there was a wide range of suggestions for ways to improve neighborhoods, some very specific to a particular area and others more general. The following is a list of the most common responses:

What would make your neighborhood a better place to live?

- Slow down traffic speed
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Lower taxes
- Pedestrian safety – more sidewalks and crosswalks
- Better street maintenance

- Slow down residential growth
- More police patrols
- Odor control from Turnkey landfill
- Waterfront development
- Remove toll booth on Spaulding Turnpike
- Downtown parking garage

Question Set 2A: *What aspects of the City do you value most?*

Many participants indicated that Dover is special because of its small town appeal, great people and central location. Participants repeatedly indicated that Dover's close proximity to other commercial, cultural and recreation centers was one of the great features of the City. Another feature that makes Dover special is the people of Dover. Participants described the people of Dover as civic minded and socially diverse. The comments suggest that Dover residents appreciate the strong sense of community that Dover has to offer.

Another common theme was an appreciation for the improvements made to Dover's downtown area. Downtown was described as vibrant and thriving. Many people felt that the downtown was a nice place to visit and shop. The diversity and number of restaurants was often noted as a big improvement. There was praise for many of the cultural events sponsored by the City, Dover Main Street and the Chamber of Commerce such as the Cochecho Arts Festival, Apple Harvest Day, and the Seacoast Irish Festival.

Some participants focused on City services when identifying what aspect of the City they value most. Participants offered praise to the Dover police and fire departments and expressed particular satisfaction with the services provided. Many participants paid particular attention to both Dover's school system and Dover's public library. Others felt Dover offered good recreational opportunities.

Attention was also paid to Dover's history and heritage and to the beautification of Dover. Several participants felt that the City should do more to preserve, promote, and capitalize on its rich heritage. Additionally, many people felt that the preservation of green space and conservation lands was of great value to the community.

The following is list of the topics that were mentioned at more than one of the *Speak Out Dover* sessions. The number indicates the number of sessions that the particular topic was mentioned.

What aspects of the City do you value most?

- Variety of people/residents in area/social diversity - 4
- Vibrant downtown with restaurants and shopping is a huge asset - 3
- Dover Concerts & Main Street Programs/Cultural Events/Irish Festival - 3
- Fire Department - 2
- Police Department - 2
- Responsive to citizens on part of the City of Dover and it's departments - 2

- green space, wetlands and conservation lands - 2
- overall mix of urban and rural - 2
- Big enough but small enough for feeling of community - 2

Question Set 2B: *What would make Dover a better place to live?*

When asked what would make life better in Dover, participants seemed to agree that some of the biggest problems Dover must deal with are related with transportation issues. Many participants indicated that traffic congestion and the speed of traffic are problems in Dover. The problems identified covered both vehicular and pedestrian issues. Some of the suggestions offered to help improve the transportation situation in Dover included:

- Improving and maintaining existing sidewalks;
- Constructing new sidewalks, especially near schools;
- Improving crosswalks and pedestrian safety;
- City public transit/bus service is needed; and
- Support for a public parking garage;

Another common issue was the need for additional work force and affordable housing for the residents of Dover. Citizens were concerned that rental prices and housing costs were escalating faster than the average person could afford.

In general, participants felt that more opportunities for public participation in City government would make life in Dover better. Participants expressed concern that City Hall employees were not always responsive. Several participants commented that the *Speak Out Dover* opportunity was good and that more emphasis should be placed on similar approaches including neighborhood meetings.

The following is a list of the responses that were given at more than one session:

What would make Dover a better place to live?

- Sidewalks need improvement and regular maintenance - 3
- Address traffic problems - 3
- Work force/affordable housing - 3
- Improve pedestrian safety/crosswalks - 3
- parking garage for public use - 3
- City bus service/public transit to limit traffic on existing streets - 3
- Need new sidewalks, especially near schools - 2
- North end Fire station - 2
- Introduce a “welcome wagon” program - 2

- Increase pedestrian awareness - 2
- Historic Districts/Historic preservation - 2
- Tolend landfill needs to be addressed in Master Plan - 2
- Protect green spaces - 2

Several participants emphasized a need for the City to stabilize the tax rate and avoid future tax increases. Numerous participants also emphasized the need for City government to downsize and cut spending. In contrast to these concerns, many people called for additional services and municipal facilities, such as a north-end fire station, a parking garage, and the construction of additional sidewalks. This balance between controlling spending and providing services was recognized by many participants as one of the most difficult facing the City.

Several comments concerned the City's zoning classification scheme and zoning and land use related issues. Citizens seemed to have definite concerns about protecting their residential neighborhoods. There was some support for tightening zoning in general and controlling growth and development. Some zoning related suggestions included establishing a historic district, allow more in-law apartments, attract more industry, allow more affordable housing, and increase aesthetic requirements for buildings.

As might be expected with this type of question, the responses received were varied and covered a wide spectrum of issues. Two of the more interesting examples were a suggestion to turn the downtown portion of Central Avenue into a pedestrian only mall and an idea to create a swap shop at the recycling center to reduce the amount of material that has to be disposed of.

Question Set 3A: *What can we as a community do to better meet the needs of our families?*

Participants of *Speak Out Dover* contributed many suggestions about how the community could be more supportive of families. Comments and suggestions focused primarily on those institutions and facilities upon which families rely. In general, most citizens expressed satisfaction with the services provided to families in the City. Most participants were pleased with the quality of services such as Dover schools and the library.

Many comments from participants focused on issues associated with community pride and improving the sense of community. It was suggested that homeowners take more pride in the appearance and upkeep of their homes and yards. It was noted that most people used to shovel the snow off the sidewalks in front of their home or business, and now some people push the snow onto the sidewalk or street. Other suggestions to increase community pride included cleaning up litter and cigarette butts, cleaning up roadsides throughout the community, and promoting common courtesy among drivers and pedestrians to improve safety.

Some participants expressed a desire to see more recreational opportunities for families. Participants requested that the City provide more biking paths and pedestrian walkways. Some emphasized a need for smaller neighborhood playgrounds. In addition, some attention was given to the need for more family events in the City, including riverside events to take advantage of these important natural resources. The promotion of the City's historical resources was also

suggested as one way to improve the quality of life for families.

Question Set 3B: *What should City Government do to meet those goals?*

When the participants were asked by the moderators what steps the City could take to meet the needs of their families, the responses covered a wide range of issues. There seemed to be a focus on the unmet needs of the senior citizens of Dover. Some participants suggested that the Recreation Department should offer more programs and day trips for the senior citizens and that the lack of senior transportation is often a limiting factor for many senior citizens. Some suggested that the senior citizens be given more opportunities to provide volunteer services to those in need. This would give senior citizens an activity to keep them busy and provide a benefit to others that could take advantage of the skills and experience of the senior citizens. One person suggested that the lighting along sidewalks in the downtown could be improved to make walking safer for senior citizens.

Other suggestions in this category included an idea to expand the downtown cleanup efforts to have similar clean ups in neighborhoods or each ward. Along the same lines, it was recommended that the Adopt A Spot program be expanded. There was support expressed for increasing the police foot patrols in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The following is a list of ideas that were offered at more than one *Speak Out Dover* session:

What should City Government do to meet those goals?

- Increase police foot patrols for safety - 2
- Programs and day trips for senior citizens - 2
- Provide more volunteer opportunities for the elderly - 2

Question Set 4A: *What motivates you to volunteer for community service?*

People are the most important and most fundamental resource for any community and their actions are crucial to strengthening communities. In the strong New England tradition, participants expressed a belief that people should give back to the community not just take from it. Participants said that they enjoyed volunteering their time and effort for various community groups and that volunteering can be very rewarding. Some participants indicated that they volunteered because they enjoyed seeing the results of their efforts and that it gave them a sense of accomplishment. The volunteering of parents in the area of youth sports was commonly cited as an example of an activity that benefits both the parents and the children.

Question Set 4B: *What would it take to encourage you to volunteer more often?*

When asked about what keeps them from volunteering, some participants indicated that the time commitment is often a barrier to participation. For some, the reason they did not get involved had more to do with a lack of information. Many people said that the volunteer opportunities

needed to be publicized more often and that good media coverage from volunteer efforts will encourage more participation. Some called for the use of the newspapers and channel 22 on the cable television to better publicize municipal and other volunteer opportunities and felt that this would facilitate citizen involvement. For some, a neighborhood newsletter and the publishing of monthly itineraries would help facilitate their involvement. In general, more information about City issues would allow greater and more productive participation.

The following is a list of suggestions for increasing volunteers that were provided more than once during the seven *Speak Out Dover* sessions:

What would it take to encourage you to volunteer more often?

- Need to recognize the volunteer efforts - 3
- Use newspapers to publicize volunteer opportunities - 3
- Use radio to get out community service information - 2
- “On demand” Channel 22 - 2

Question Set 5A: *What are some of your visions as to the kind of community you would like to see the City become and look like in the next 20 to 25 years?*

This question gave people a chance to be creative and think long-term about the future of Dover. Most participants seemed to enjoy the opportunity to express their vision for their City.

Identifying community strengths and weaknesses is the first step to identifying future directions for the community. Participants of *Speak Out Dover* expressed the feeling that a strong and vital community is the greatest legacy they could hope to leave for future generations. Participants created a vision for the future of Dover that included a strong economy and solid community oriented neighborhoods. Their vision included a thriving, vital downtown that supported new restaurants and small, local businesses. They saw many diverse businesses and visitor facilities that would ultimately be part of an attractive destination point for visitors. Many believed that Dover’s festivals will continue to attract many of Dover’s own residents as well as many visitors. For the participants of *Speak Out Dover*, the downtown is but one element of a strong economic base that will provide the City with revenue and the citizens with good paying jobs.

For some, the future of Dover included increased public transportation, a parking garage downtown and more pedestrian facilities such as the proposed Community Trail. Other participants focused on the schools and neighborhoods. There, participants hoped to see continued high quality in the education system and neighborhoods that are safe, attractive, great places to live. Many people spoke of the need to attract higher quality development, while others promoted the need for more affordable housing and infill development in the downtown.

Another concern suggested a need to improve relations between citizens and local government. Some citizens envisioned a local government that was more responsive and open to the public. *Speak Out Dover* is one effort the City has made to address this problem. In sponsoring *Speak Out Dover*, City officials hope to encourage greater communication and understanding between

citizens and local government in the future. Participants of *Speak Out Dover* expressed a desire to participate more in government and urged local officials and council members to provide them with the opportunities and the information they need to become more active in local government. Participants expressed a need for more information not just about local issues but also about upcoming public hearings. Most respondents were pleased with the *Speak Out Dover* opportunity and encouraged the City to sponsor similar efforts in the future.

The following is a list of the most often repeated suggestions in response to the visioning question.

What are some of your visions as to the kind of community you would like to see the City become and look like in the next 20 to 25 years?

- keep agricultural and open land - maintain rural character - 4
- Parking garage that fits in the downtown and is sensitive to design standards and aesthetics - 3
- Expand public transportation for elderly and commuters - 3
- Infill development to meet affordable housing needs - 3
- More integrated, diverse neighborhoods for a variety of income levels & family types - 3
- Less low-quality development - 3
- Completion of Community Trail - 3
- Encourage smaller businesses/limit chain restaurants - 2
- More Bed & Breakfasts/hotels - 2
- Waterfront developed with restaurants, shops, boat tours, walkways - not just condos - 2
- Village style development with less vehicles - 2
- Promote and protect our rivers and their recreational use - 2
- Need to have public access on waterfront - 2
- government that is responsive to public and open to the public and welcoming to the public - 2

Question Set 5B: *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

The last question asked by the moderator was a chance for anyone to suggest an idea that was not covered by the previous questions. The response to this question was relatively light, probably because most people had had an opportunity to express their opinions and because they had been sitting there for 1 ½ to 2 hours by that point.

These were the responses received to this question:

- Have public meetings to review proposed revisions to Master Plan
- make full use of public hearings for Master Plan during revision process
- get actual stats on the trends projected by the 1998 Master Plan and compare them when doing the Master Plan revisions
- build all private roads to public road specifications- most end up public anyway and should have been built that way to start with

SPEAK OUT QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

In addition to the discussions that were led by the moderators at each *Speak Out Dover* session, participants were given the opportunity to complete a questionnaire form. This questionnaire (see Appendix B) was designed to give people a chance to answer some of the same questions that were asked by the moderators in an anonymous manner. Many people are not comfortable speaking in public and this questionnaire was provided as another avenue for those people to communicate their opinions to the City.

The questionnaire was distributed to each attendee at all seven *Speak Out Dover* sessions. Overall, 56 people filled out and turned in their questionnaire at one of the sessions. In an effort to reach even more residents, the decision was made to place the questionnaire on the City's web-site. This allowed people to print out and complete the questionnaire at their leisure. Copies of the questionnaire were also available for distribution at many of the offices in City Hall. The written questionnaire gave citizens that could not attend one of the sessions an opportunity to provide their input. In the end, 27 people completed and turned in the web-site version of the questionnaire. A total of 83 questionnaires were completed.

The completed questionnaires were reviewed and the answers were tabulated. The results were analyzed and the findings are provided below. It should be noted that this type of questionnaire does not represent a random sample of citizens and therefore the results have to be viewed in that context. The type of people that would take the time to attend a *Speak Out Dover* session or complete an on-line questionnaire are likely to be active in the community and are concerned citizens. Nevertheless, the results do represent the collective opinions of 83 citizens of Dover. A summary of the results are provided below along with a list of the most popular responses for each question.

Question: What three things do you like most about your neighborhood?

The most popular response to this question was that people liked the friendly people and neighbors that lived in their neighborhoods. Of those who completed a questionnaire, 39 percent indicated that their neighbors are what make their neighborhood a great place to live. In general, Dover residents described their neighborhoods as places that are quiet, safe and where there exists a sense of community. 31 percent of those that completed the questionnaire also cited the peace and quiet of their neighborhood as being a positive attribute. Many people also liked the location of their neighborhoods. 25 percent specifically mentioned their neighborhoods location near the downtown and 16 percent answered that the general location of their neighborhood was important to them. Most of the other most popular responses were related to quality of life issues such as safety, open space and living in a rural setting. The following are the top ten responses to the question:

Top Ten Responses

What three things do you like least about your neighborhood?

1. Cars speeding - 22
2. Traffic - 19
3. Streets in need of repair - 12
4. Lack of sidewalks - 12
5. Taxes - 6
6. Noise/traffic noise - 5
7. More building/development - 4
8. Sidewalks need maintenance - 3
8. Properties not maintained - 3
8. Lack of street lights - 3
8. Smell from Waste Management landfill - 3
8. Lack of curbs - 3

Question: What three things do you like least about your neighborhood?

When asked about what could be done to make their neighborhoods better 27 percent of respondents cited speeding vehicles as being the biggest problem they encounter in their neighborhoods. Coming in a close second place was the related issue of traffic, which was the response given by 23 percent of the respondents. The concerns expressed about the amount of traffic and the speed of the traffic seemed to have a significant impact of the quality of life in some neighborhoods.

In addition to traffic concerns, participants also expressed a desire to see more sidewalks and better maintenance of existing sidewalks in their neighborhoods. Of those completing surveys, 14 percent indicated that they would like to see more sidewalks in their neighborhoods and 4 percent asked for better sidewalk maintenance.

Of those who completed a survey 14 percent identified street or road conditions as one of the things they liked least about their neighborhoods.

Taxes were the fifth most common response, with 7 percent of the respondents expressing this as an area of concern.

Top Ten Responses

What three things do you like most about your neighborhood?

1. Friendly neighbors/people - 32
2. Quiet - 26
3. Location near downtown - 21
4. Location - 13
5. Safety/Lack of crime - 10
6. Open land - 9
7. Rural setting - 8
8. Trees - 7
9. Walkability - 6
10. Convenience to highways – 5
10. Historical neighborhood/architecture - 5
10. Proximity to school - 5
10. Large lots – 5

Question: What three things do you like most about the City of Dover?

By far the most popular answer to this question was Dover’s downtown. Over 27 percent of the people thought that the downtown was one the things that they liked best about Dover. It is obvious that many people believe that the downtown has made significant improvements in recent years. To illustrate that fact, the results from the 1995 *Speak Out Dover* project indicated that only 5 percent of the people listed the downtown as one of the things they liked best. Since 1995, the positive opinion of the downtown has grown more than five-fold.

Of those who completed a questionnaire, 16 percent identified location as one of Dover's best features. Another 12 percent felt that the size of Dover was appealing. In addition, 10 percent offered praise for the Dover Public Library and 8 percent identified Dover schools as one of the best things about the City, many emphasizing the importance of schools to Dover's future.

Of those who completed a questionnaire, 8 percent indicated that City services were one of the

City's strengths. On the questionnaire, 8 percent of the respondents identified the people of Dover as one of the best aspects of the City.

Top Ten Responses

What three things do you like most about the City of Dover?

1. Downtown - 22
2. Location in Seacoast - 13
3. Size of City - 10
4. Library - 8
5. Services - 7
5. Good schools - 7
5. Friendly neighbors/people - 7
8. Festivities/community activities - 6
8. Cleanliness - 6
8. Safety/Low crime - 6
8. Restaurants/dining - 6
8. Coheco Arts Festival - 6

Question: Please list up to three areas in which you would most like to see the City of Dover do a better job:

For the questions regarding areas in which the City could do a better job, there were three responses that were by far the most frequent, those being taxes, traffic congestion, and street maintenance. Of those who completed a questionnaire, 20 percent indicated that they would like to see lower taxes in the City. This is more than double the percent (9%) of people who responded the same in 1995. Controlling taxes and spending was a common response to this question. The second most frequent response was traffic congestion, at 19 percent. In 1995, this was the number one answer. Two of the responses that made the top ten list were related to conservation issues. The fourth most popular answer expressed a desire have the City maintain and enhance green spaces and another was support for the preservation of existing trees and planting more trees.

Top Ten Responses

Please list up to three areas in which you would most like to see the City of Dover do a better job:

1. Taxes - 17
2. Traffic congestion - 16
3. Update/pave/maintain existing streets - 15
4. Maintain and enhance green spaces - 7
5. Budget management/control expenses - 6
6. Update/maintain old sidewalks - 5
7. Control growth - 4
7. Planning - 4
7. Preserve and plant more trees - 4
7. Livable, walkable community - 4

The next eight questions on the questionnaire asked people to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with eight statements about the City of Dover. The statements covered economic development issues, levels of community services, and traffic and alternative transportation issues. The first six statements were the same as were asked in 1995, so some comparisons about how the responses have changed over time can be made as part of the analysis. Two statements were added to find out people’s opinions on downtown parking and the preservation of open space. These two topics were added to reflect current issues. The following table contains the eight statements and the number and percentage of respondents for each response.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The City should do more to attract business and industry to the community	18 (23%)	37 (46%)	13 (16%)	10 (12%)	2 (3%)
2. The City should re-zone land to allow for additional business and industrial development.	8 (11%)	18 (24%)	17 (23%)	21 (28%)	11 (14%)
3. The City should promote and develop itself in becoming a destination point for visitors.	17 (22%)	30 (38%)	19 (24%)	11 (14%)	2 (2%)
4. The current level and type of services provided in the City supports the quality of life that my family expects.	17 (22%)	42 (53%)	16 (20%)	4 (5%)	0
5. Residential zoning and development regulations should be strengthened to balance growth in the City.	36 (44%)	30 (37%)	12 (15%)	2 (3%)	1 (1%)
6. Traffic congestion and access to transportation alternatives in the City are a problem.	38 (46%)	28 (34%)	11 (13%)	6 (7%)	0
7. Parking availability in the downtown area is a problem.	22 (27%)	25 (31%)	15 (19%)	18 (23%)	0
8. The City should do more to preserve open space.	40 (49%)	27 (33%)	11 (13%)	4 (5%)	0

The statement that garnered the strongest support was statement #8, which was related to preserving open space. 82 percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. The second strongest support was for statement #5, which calls for strengthening regulations to balance growth, with 81 percent in agreement.

The statement that showed the weakest support in the “Strongly Agree” category was statement #2, which called for the re-zoning of land for more business and industrial development. This statement also resulted in the highest percent of respondents that chose the “Strongly Disagree” answer – 14 percent. However, 69 percent of people either agree or strongly agree that the City should do more to attract more business and industry. This difference in the level of support likely reflects the divisive nature of the past efforts at rezoning residential areas for business and industry. Even at 69 percent, this level of support is lower when compared to the responses from the 1995 *Speak Out Dover* survey, when 83 percent felt the same. This split seems to mirror the comments made at the *Speak Out Dover* sessions with many participants calling for the attraction of more business and industry to the City while cautioning City officials to protect the integrity of the City's neighborhoods.

Another statement that showed a higher level of disagreement was statement #7, which stated that parking in the downtown was a problem. While most people agreed with the statement, more than 23 percent disagreed. This indicates that a significant portion of the population

doesn't see parking in the downtown as big a problem as the majority of people do.

The statement that resulted in the highest percentage of responses in the "Neither Agree nor Disagree" column was statement #3, which supported the City promoting itself as a destination point for visitors. Almost one quarter of the respondents had no opinion on this statement. Overall, 60 percent of the respondents either agree or strongly agree that the City should promote tourism. When compared to the responses from the 1995 *Speak Out Dover* survey, the support for tourism seems to have decreased, as 77 percent either strongly agreed or agreed that Dover should promote and develop itself in becoming a destination for visitors in 1995.

In 1995, 61 percent of survey respondents indicated that traffic congestion and access to transportation alternatives in the City was a problem. In 2006 that number rose to 80 percent, indicating that more people find this as an area of concern today.

On a positive note, 75 percent of respondents indicated that the current level and type of services provided in the City supported the quality of life they expect for their family. This number represents an increase from the 65 percent level from the 1995 survey.

METHODOLOGY

The original *Speak Out Dover* session held in 1995 was modeled after a similar effort undertaken in Lexington, Kentucky in 1993. The 2006 *Speak Out Dover* sessions were designed to encourage as much participation as possible from a broad cross-section of the community. The sessions were carefully constructed and conducted to allow citizens to discuss those topics that were of deep interest to them. The particular ways the groups were organized, the design of the sessions, the format and conduct of the session, and the management and analysis process are described in this section.

Organization of *Speak Out Dover* groups

In 2006, the Planning Board appointed volunteer citizens to a Citizen Survey & *Speak Out Dover* Sub-committee. The first task of this group was to organize and plan for a 2006 *Speak Out Dover* series that would be modeling after the 1995 series. The committee reviewed the previous series and discussed methods to improve the program and increase citizen participation. For the most part, the committee decided to mirror the same format as the 1995 effort.

To identify moderators, the committee and the Department of Planning and Community Development approached City Council members to ask them to identify potential volunteers. City Council members identified individuals from the various wards throughout the City who could facilitate the discussions at the sessions. For some of the *Speak Out Dover* sessions, City Council members themselves volunteered to serve as moderators. Recorders were chosen from members of the planning staff and committee members. Those moderators who were identified by Council members were given an informal training session about the goals of the program and about how to facilitate and direct the sessions.

Announcements on the dates and places for the *Speak Out Dover* series were made on cable television channel 22, on radio announcements, in area newspapers, on the City web-site, on the Dover Download (an e-mail sent to a list of subscribers) and on flyers that were distributed in public places, in some local businesses and to residents living in units managed by the Dover Housing Authority. To help publicize and promote the *Speak Out Dover* sessions, three members of the committee appeared on the Open Mike program on radio station WTSN AM 1270. Additionally City Councilors made frequent mention of the series during televised council meetings.

To assure participation by groups from various segments of the community meetings were held in each of the City's six wards. The final meeting was held at City Hall and was held at large for the entire community. Although meetings were held in neighborhood settings, all of Dover's citizens were invited to each meeting regardless of where they lived.

Design of the sessions

The City's Department of Planning and Community Development and the sub-committee developed a 90 minute *Speak Out Dover* format with five sets of questions. They designed the set of questions to move participants through a sequence that begins with neighborhood level

concerns and slowly expands to include consideration of the larger community. Then moderators asked about the needs of families and how the City could meet those needs. In addition, moderators asked participants to describe their reasons for being active in the community and what prevents them from taking action in the community. Finally, participants were asked to share their thoughts about the community legacy they want to leave for future generations.

These questions balanced two important but somewhat contradicting goals: (1) to encourage suggestions and ideas on issues that participants are deeply interested in and (2) to provide enough structure so that the *Speak Out Dover* results could be integrated, compared across groups, and analyzed efficiently. (Appendix E includes the complete set of questions asked at all the sessions).

The Planning staff designed a one page survey for use at these sessions. The survey offered both free response and forced choice items relating to building a stronger community. The topics included: neighborhoods; larger community; economic development; zoning changes; traffic congestion; and residential zoning and development regulations. In addition, citizen's request forms were created to provide participant's with an opportunity to submit specific complaints and issues that they wanted to bring to the City's attention. Each citizen request form that was submitted was passed onto the City Manager for his review and then to the department that was related to the issue raised. The departments were asked to promptly respond to the citizen to provide assistance.

The format and conduct of the *Speak Out Dover* sessions

Before each session began, moderators and recorders encouraged participants to complete individual written questionnaires and to complete the Citizen Request for Action forms. Recorders also counted the total number of participants, for inclusion in the summary report.

The moderator then explained the way the session would be conducted and then led the group through the consideration of the five sets of questions. The recorder noted responses on a flipchart, recording the basic point of each comment in a few of the speaker's own words.

Analysis of results

Two sources of information formed the basis for analysis: (1) transcriptions of the chart notes taken at each of the sessions and (2) questionnaire results.

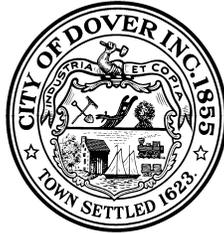
The chart note transcriptions presented a detailed look at each group's ideas and suggestions. Survey results, from the individual participants who completed them, provided demographic information and in-depth or supplementary information on the themes of *Speak Out Dover*.

All suggestions recorded in the chart notes were reviewed and tabulated to determine the frequency of common responses. All questionnaire responses were tabulated to reflect the frequencies of responses. Similar responses were placed together in same categories. Demographic information compiled from the questionnaires is represented in Appendix E.

APPENDIX A
SPEAK OUT DOVER FLYER

SPEAK OUT DOVER!

2006



Speak Out Dover is a series of public meetings designed to allow the citizens of Dover to voice their views and ideas for their neighborhood and the City. The meetings are being conducted as part of the Planning Board's update of the Dover Master Plan. Come meet your neighbors, City Councilors, Planning Board members, and City Administration and Speak Out Dover!

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

DATE	WARD	PLACE	ADDRESS
Thursday, July 13	#1	Horne Street School Cafeteria	78 Horne Street
Tuesday, July 18	#2	Dover Public Library Lecture Hall 3 rd floor	73 Locust Street
Thursday, July 27	#3	St. Thomas Aquinas High School Cafeteria	197 Dover Point Road
Tuesday, August 1	#4	Garrison School Cafeteria	50 Garrison Road
Thursday, August 10	#6	Strafford County Courthouse	259 County Farm Road
Wednesday, August 16	#5	St. Johns Methodist Church	28 Cataract Avenue
Tuesday, August 29	All	Dover City Hall, Council Chambers	288 Central Avenue

Dover Planning Department - 516-6008
 Speak Out Questionnaire available at www.dover.ci.nh.us

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONS MODERATORS ASKED

**CITY OF DOVER
SPEAK OUT 2006
QUESTIONS FOR MODERATORS TO ASK**

Question Set 1

What aspects of your neighborhood do you value most?

What would make your neighborhood a better place to live?

Question Set 2

What aspects of the City do you value most?

What would make Dover a better place to live?

Question Set 3

What can we as a community do to better meet the needs of our families?

What should City Government do to meet those goals?

Question Set 4

What motivates you to volunteer for community service?

What would it take to encourage you to volunteer more often?

Question Set 5

What are some of your visions as to the kind of community you would like to see the City become and look like in the next 20 to 25 years?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX C
SPEAK OUT QUESTIONNAIRE

SPEAK OUT QUESTIONNAIRE



Date _____

Location _____

Moderator _____

What three things do you like most about your neighborhood?		
1.	2.	3.
What three things do you like least about your neighborhood?		
1.	2.	3.
What three things do you like most about the City of Dover?		
1.	2.	3.
Please list up to three areas in which you would most like to see the City of Dover do a better job:		
1.	2.	3.

Below are some statements about the City of Dover. For each statement, please check the response to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The City should do more to attract business and industry to the community					
2. The City should re-zone land to allow for additional business and industrial development.					
3. The City should promote and develop itself in becoming a destination point for visitors.					
4. The current level and type of services provided in the City supports the quality of life that my family expects.					
5. Residential zoning and development regulations should be strengthened to balance growth in the City.					
6. Traffic congestion and access to transportation alternatives in the City are a problem.					
7. Parking availability in the downtown area is a problem.					
8. The City should do more to preserve open space.					

Please provide the following information about yourself:

(Circle one)

Age – 14 or under 15-17 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75-84 85 or older

(Circle one)

Sex - Male Female

Do you Own _____ Rent _____ your residence?

About how many total years have you lived in Dover? _____

If less than five years, what was the main reason you chose to move to Dover? _____

Please feel free to add any additional comments to the reverse side of this sheet.

Thanks for Speaking Out!

The Speak Out Dover series is part of a larger city-wide to foster citizen participation in setting direction for City government. The City conducted the first Speak Out Dover series in 1995 as part of the master plan update process. The sessions are designed to provide an opportunity for citizens to communicate their thoughts and concerns about their neighborhoods and the community and to offer ideas and visions for what they hope to see Dover become in the future.

The Dover master plan is updated every 5 to 10 years by the Planning Board. The master plan is a blueprint for the City's future development and land use. The master plan is both a reference and policy document. It is a plan, not an ordinance or regulatory tool that the Planning Board can use to deny or approve a specific development proposal. The master plan is designed to help a community meet change responsibly, guiding its growth in an orderly manner. A master plan covers topics such as future development, transportation, natural resource protection, community facilities, economic development, housing, and historic resources.

The Speak Out Dover series is the first step in the Planning Board's master plan update process. We welcome your active participation.

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Additional Comments:

APPENDIX D
CITIZEN REQUEST FORM

SPEAK OUT DOVER, 2006

CITIZEN'S REQUEST FORM			
NAME:			
ADDRESS:			
CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:	PHONE:
E-MAIL ADDRESS:			
NATURE OF CONCERN/REQUEST:			
SIGNED: _____			
			DATE: _____

Thank you for taking an interest in your community. After your request has been forwarded to the appropriate City official, we will respond in as timely a manner as possible.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

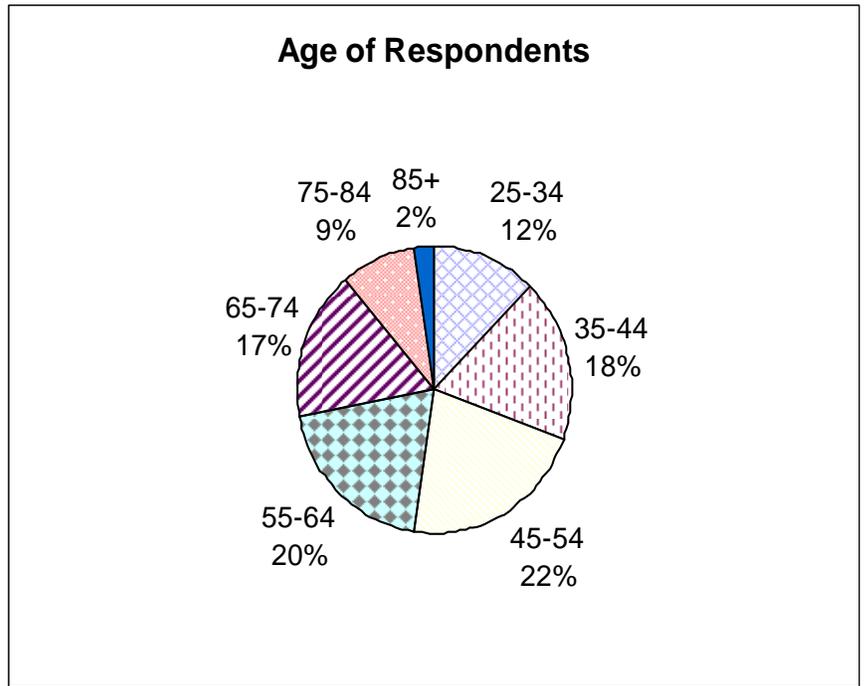
FORWARD TO: _____
PLEASE RESPOND TO PLANNING DEPARTMENT: _____

APPENDIX E
SPEAK OUT DOVER VITAL STATISTICS

SPEAK OUT DOVER VITAL STATISTICS

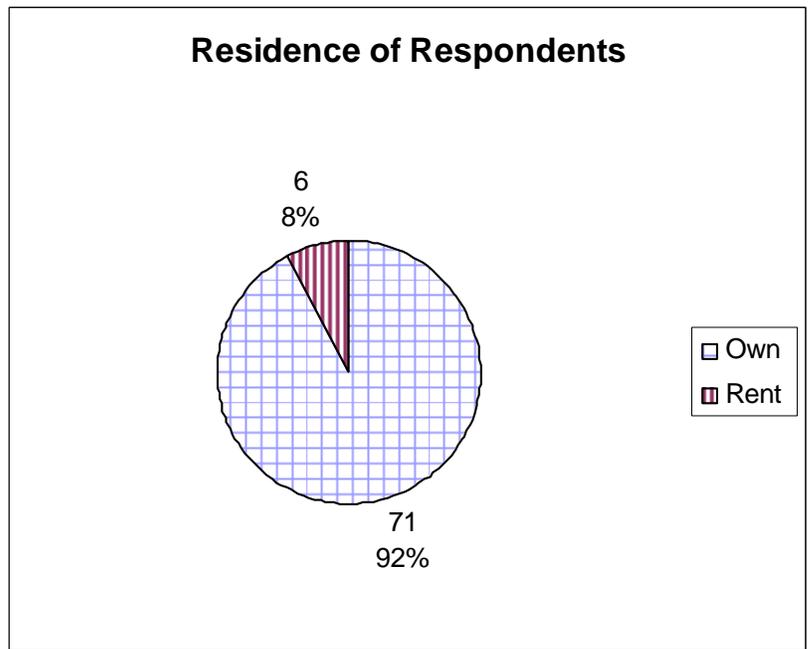
Please provide the following information about yourself:

Age	#	%
14 or under	0	0
15-17	0	0
18-24	0	0
25-34	10	12
35-44	15	18
45-54	18	22
55-64	16	20
65-74	14	17
75-84	7	9
85+	2	2
Totals	82	100



Sex - Male	40	49%
Female	42	51%

Residence: Own	71	92%
Rent	6	8%

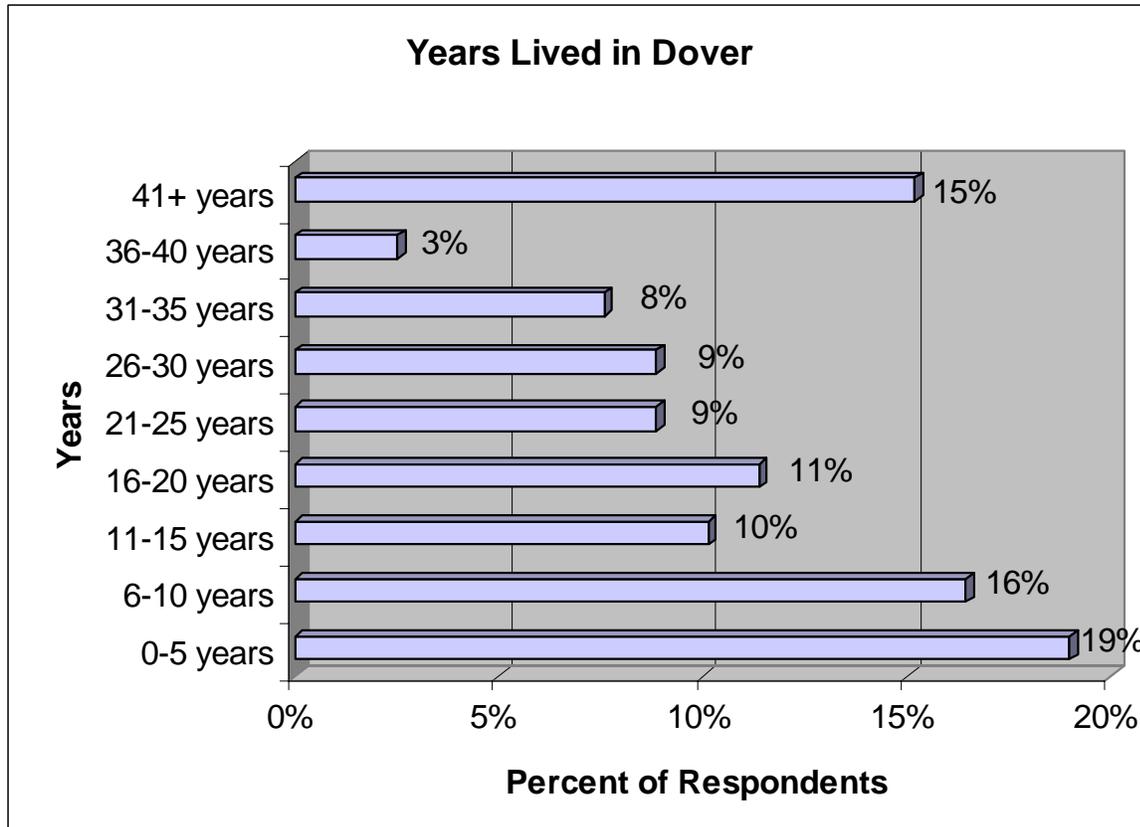


About how many total years have you lived in Dover?

Average = 21.8 years

Median = 17 years

Range = 1 to 75 years



If less than five years, what was the main reason you chose to move to Dover?

1. Housing prices - 4
2. Location - 3
3. Quality of life - 2
4. Partner is a resident - 2
5. Cost of living
6. Work
7. UNH
8. Urban opportunities such as public transportation
9. Rural character
10. Size and character of city
11. Ability to walk to center of city
12. Lots of young families