

TOWN OF CASTLE VALLEY
2025 Survey Results for
SECTION H --- “LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD”

Below are both the Interpretive Summary for questions H1, H2A-E, H3, H4, H5 and the narrative summaries, and the expanded + quantified summaries for questions H1, H2F, H3, H4, H5, and H6, expressed both as proportions of respondents who commented on that question and relative to the total 187 surveys returned and 450 distributed.

The scope of this summary is limited to the personal responses provided in Section H of the 2025 Town of Castle Valley and has not yet been compared with previous surveys for comparative results or trends.

H1 –” Which community values and policies do you believe the Town should continue to protect and maintain?” Please prioritize by rating each with a 0-3.

Environmental protection and preservation of Castle Valley’s rural character dominate. Aquifer and water issues sit at the top, joined by noise control (“tranquility”), zoning size limits, dark skies, and scenic views—all above 2.6 on a 3-point scale. These five items form the unequivocal “core values” endorsed by roughly three-quarters or more of all respondents, representing about 40% of all mailed households—a large and unified constituency.

Moderate tiers—open space, air quality, wildlife, and limited commercial growth—cluster around scores between 2.25 and 2.45. These indicate broad but slightly less urgent support, perhaps reflecting shared ideals already considered stable rather than threats requiring new action.

Innovation and sustainability themes—renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and broader “community practices”—fall below 2.0, with many respondents expressing uncertainty or rating them “medium.” This suggests conceptual alignment with sustainability but a lower emotional engagement or clarity regarding Town focus or implementation.

H1 –” Which community values and policies do you believe the Town should continue to protect and maintain?”

Ranked Results by Weighted Average

	Topic	Avg. Score (0-3)	% High Priority (3s)	Interpretation
1	Protection of Aquifer (H1c)	2.70	81.8 %	Top environmental and safety concerns; near-universal support.
2	5-Acre Minimum Lot Size (H1i)	2.72	82.1 %	Strong land-use identity; pillar of local independence.
3	Tranquility / Silence (H1f)	2.66	78.7 %	Rural quiet rated as a defining community value.
4	Water Quality (H1a)	2.64	75.4 %	High shared priority intertwined with aquifer protection.
5	Dark Skies (H1h)	2.63	76.5 %	Cultural hallmark; sustained backing for existing ordinance.
6	Scenic Views (H1d)	2.64	74.6 %	Visual integrity ranked as nearly as important as water issues.
7	Open Space (H1e)	2.56	73.7 %	Consistent belief that open land defines Castle Valley.
8	Air Quality (H1b)	2.32	61.7 %	Large general support but slightly less intensity than water/land.
9	Wild Habitat (H1g)	2.34	59.3 %	Valued yet secondary; some ambivalence about regulation.

	No Commercial			
10	Development Beyond Current (H1n)	2.25	62.9 %	Majority favor limits, though not as absolute as in comments.
11	Single Family Dwelling per Lot (H1j)	2.27	60.9 %	Broad backing but sizeable minority open to ADUs.
12	Sustainable Agriculture (H1m)	1.93	36.8 %	Mild endorsement; perceived as positive but not urgent.
13	Renewable Energy Technologies (H1k)	1.93	37.8 %	Favorability tempered by unfamiliarity and cost skepticism.
14	Sustainable Community Practices (H1l)	1.78	31.1 %	Lowest clarity; respondents often asked, "what does this mean?".

(Weighted averages rounded to 0.01; ranking derived directly from those means.)

H2 – “Which issues should the Town make a high priority to develop or improve upon”

Ranked Results by Weighted Average

Rank	Issue	Weighted Avg (0-3)	% High Priority (3s)	Representative Resident Language	Interpretation
A1	Fire Prevention (H2a)	2.70	78 %	"Fire is our biggest risk." "Control cheatgrass and brush before it's too late." "Everyone should make their lot Firewise."	Overwhelming consensus; residents view wildfire as the most tangible existential hazard. Strong expectation for continued coordination between Town staff, Fire Dept., and residents.

Topic		Score	Percentage	Key Themes	Support Level
B2	Emergency Preparedness (H2d)	2.13	38 %	"Need more training and drills." "Communication during emergencies not clear." "Have an actual plan for long power and road outages."	High support but less intensity than direct fire-prevention efforts; residents want structured planning, public guidelines, and education without heavy bureaucracy.
C3	Road Improvements (H2e)	2.10	33 %	"More gravel, regular grading, better ditches." "Keep roads rural but passable." "Fix flooding before paving."	Moderate-to-strong support focused on maintenance rather than modernization; residents balance safety and access with preserving rural aesthetics.
D4	Evacuation Policies and Plans (H2b)	2.07	39 %	"Need two ways out." "Publish evacuation plan and routes." "Fire and flood evacuation communication essential."	Residents recognize the need but assume it's part of broader emergency planning; moderate interest clouded by uncertainty over jurisdiction.
E5	Animal Control (H2c)	1.47	15 %	"Too many barking dogs." "Enforce leash laws equally." "Don't over-regulate livestock on 5-acre lots."	Lowest priority; residents are divided—some seek nuisance control for pets, others fear intrusion on agricultural freedom.

H2A-E – Interpretive Summary

The numeric pattern and comment tone both confirm that wildfire management dominates every other civic concern. Nearly eight out of ten respondents marked “Fire Prevention” as a top-tier (“3”) priority, outpacing all others by a wide margin. Comments emphasize cheatgrass removal, property-owner responsibility, and sustained support for the

volunteer fire department. The H2a results also link directly to qualitative themes in H2F and H3, demonstrating a unified “protect life and property first” mindset.

“Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Planning” form a second related tier. Residents express practical worries about communication during crises, road washouts, and potential isolation, frequently mentioning the need for “clear chain of contact” and “secondary egress.” While quantified at about two points on the three-point scale, the emotional weight behind preparedness is considerable—especially among older participants acknowledging the Valley’s median age near 70.

“Road Improvements” generates a nuanced middle-high score driven by function, not ambition: people want maintenance, grading, and drainage, not paving or urban-scale upgrades. Remarks such as “don’t raise taxes” and “if we improve roads too much, people drive too fast” capture the prevailing caution.

At the bottom tier, **Animal Control scores far lower, reflecting polarization between pet complaints (dogs, barking, roaming) and property-rights defenders who view regulation of livestock as unnecessary meddling.** Its mean score below 1.5 is consistent with the minimal attention given to it elsewhere in the survey.

H2F Narrative Summary

A clear majority of H2F remarks focus on essential safety and maintenance issues rather than on developing new amenities. Residents repeatedly cite flooding, drainage, and road erosion as high-priority problems requiring constant attention. Many describe ditch clearing, culvert repair, and watershed stabilization as the Town’s most fundamental responsibilities, noting that poorly managed runoff increases fire risk and accelerates road damage. A second strong theme centers on fire prevention and emergency readiness: people request community brush-removal programs, organized chipping days, and cooperation between property owners to lower the valley’s overall fuel load.

Alongside hazard mitigation, several residents link environmental stewardship directly to public safety. Comments call for protection of the aquifer, control of pollution and junk accumulation, and maintenance of healthy wildlife balance—all ‘framed’ as necessary extensions of responsible land care. While a few respondents mention secondary issues such as noise, dogs, or weeds, **nearly all describe physical infrastructure and environmental protection as intertwined priorities.** The consensus tone is pragmatic: residents expect the Town to focus on scarce resources on fire, water, and drainage—the functions that prevent catastrophe and preserve the valley’s habitability—before considering discretionary or aesthetic projects.

H2F Ranked Results Expanded + Quantified

Roughly **43 residents** (**≈23% of returned surveys; ≈9.5% of total mailed**) provided written remarks under H2F. The largest cluster—about **35–40% of these comments** (**≈15–17 residents; ≈8–9% of all responses**)—addressed **drainage, flooding, and watershed management**. Words like “*ditch clearing*,” “*flood mitigation* = 3,” “*flood insurance*,” and “*waterway stabilization*” recur frequently. Residents linked drainage maintenance directly to **property protection, road longevity, and fire risk reduction**, requesting ongoing or year-round programs.

A second major cluster of **≈25%** (**≈10–11 residents; ≈6% of returned surveys**) emphasized **fire prevention and emergency readiness**, including suggestions for community brush-removal programs, chipping days, and better coordination among property owners. Another **≈20%** (**≈8–9 residents**) wrote about **environmental protections**—aquifer defense, pollution prevention from derelict lots, and balancing wildlife populations. A further **≈10–12%** (**≈5**) mentioned **nuisance abatement** (dogs, junk, weeds), and a small number (**≈5%, ≈2 respondents**) proposed **cell-service expansion or secondary egress routes** as safety necessities.

In all, about **80% of those who commented**—roughly **17% of all returned surveys**—focused on critical hazard reduction rather than new amenities. The quantitative significance is that even though less than a quarter of survey participants entered comments here, almost all who did, **converged on flood/fire infrastructure and environmental health as the Town’s top obligations, reinforcing a strong mandate for core-safety investment over discretionary projects**.

Takeaways from H2A-E for the General Plan

1. Fire Risk Mitigation Rules Have Broad Mandate.

Continue aggressive *Firewise* outreach, community brush-clearing programs, and homeowner education.

Integrate with Grand County and state wildfire prevention agencies for funding and consistency.

2. Formalize Emergency and Evacuation Planning.

Publish clearly marked egress maps; establish reliable multi-channel messaging suitable for power outages. Consider modest coordination of resources rather than new departments.

3. Invest in Practical Road Maintenance and Drainage.

Link road strategy directly to fire and flood safety and avoid overbuilding that undermines rural character.

4. De-emphasize New Regulatory Programs for Animal Control.

Address pet nuisances' case-by-case; maintain flexibility for livestock consistent with five-acre zoning.

5. Overall Signal: Safety Before Aesthetics.

Quantitatively, more than half of all survey respondents gave *life-safety infrastructure* a high-priority rating, while fewer than one in six did so for lifestyle or enforcement topics. For future budgeting, this provides a clear directive: concentrate resources on wildfire defense, emergency access, and road resilience—the pillars of community security in Castle Valley.

H3 – “Additional concerns or suggestions to help address issues in H1 and H2”

The H3 responses extend the same hands-on, practical mindset evident in H2F. Roads and drainage dominate discussion, with many urging better grading, culvert repair, and long-term storm-water planning. Several residents recommend improving alternative access routes such as Schaeffer Lane to ensure emergency egress, while others propose simple measures—more gravel, consistent maintenance—to reduce dust and washouts. For almost half of respondents, the message is that basic infrastructure upkeep remains insufficient and must be prioritized above all else.

Fire prevention and preparedness constitute the second major concern. People reference cheatgrass control, ongoing training, volunteer recruitment, and chipping opportunities as practical fire-risk reductions that need institutional support. Beyond these concrete issues, a smaller but notable group questions governance efficiency and transparency, calling for “solid planning practices,” frugal use of tax revenues, and better utilization of resident expertise.

A handful of contributors raise environmental or nuisance topics—pets, wildlife, tourists, weeds—but the dominant takeaway is unmistakable: residents largely agree that maintaining defensible roads, drainage, and fire infrastructure is the most effective way for the Town to safeguard Castle Valley’s well-being and rural independence.

H3 – “Additional concerns or suggestions to help address issues in H1 and H2” (Expanded + Quantified)

Approximately **40 respondents** ($\approx 21\%$ of returned; $\approx 9\%$ of total mailed) contributed written thoughts to H3. Roughly **half** ($\approx 18\text{--}20$ respondents; $\approx 10\%$ of returns) voiced continuing frustration with **roads, drainage, and flood mitigation**, echoing priorities from H2F. **Individual comments** like “fix bad drainage,” “improve Schaeffer Lane,” or “*lay down used asphalt and pack it*” highlight a perception that maintenance is reactive, not preventive.

One-quarter (≈ 10 people; $\approx 5\%$ of returns) focused on **fire preparedness**, emphasizing “control cheatgrass,” “maintain strong fire department,” and “expand fire readiness inspections.” Around **15–20%** ($\approx 7\text{--}8$) raised **governance and fiscal transparency**, calling for “sound planning practices,” “less wasted money,” and greater use of residents’ expertise. A final **10–15%** ($\approx 5\text{--}6$) identified **environmental and nuisance concerns** such as *tourist trespassing, cat control, or wildlife imbalance*.

Overall, even though only one-fifth of survey participants commented, their priorities align closely with broader survey patterns: roughly one in ten of all surveyed residents—about 10%—explicitly called for immediate infrastructure maintenance and hazard prevention. This creates a statistically meaningful affirmation that maintenance of basic systems and emergency readiness outweighs desires for new policy or amenities.

H4 – “What do you like best about life in Castle Valley?”

Residents overwhelmingly cherish quiet, open space, natural beauty, and dark skies. These themes recur in nearly every comment. Many describe the valley as peaceful, with expansive views, clear air, and abundant wildlife. The absence of commercial development, the five-acre minimum lot size, and the feeling of seclusion are seen as defining virtues. People prize the small population, strong sense of community and neighborliness, and a culture of mutual aid in emergencies or daily life. The isolated location, rocky roads, and even limited cell service are often seen as benefits because they help preserve the valley’s rural character and deter urban encroachment.

A notable undercurrent is an appreciation for personal independence and minimal interference—some explicitly value that “the government leaves me alone.” Others highlight the dark-sky ordinance, the lack of through-traffic, and the still-wild environment as points of pride. A subset of comments express affection for local traditions such as

community festivals, the volunteer fire department, and the local library. **Satisfaction** apparently stems from a blend of independence, beauty, and community—an idealized self-reliant rural lifestyle that feels increasingly rare elsewhere.

H4 – “What residents like best about life in Castle Valley” (Expanded + Quantified)

About **130 individuals** ($\approx 70\%$ of returned; $\approx 29\%$ of total mailed) wrote comments describing what they value most—and the resulting dataset is remarkably consistent. **Quietude** dominates roughly **90% of H4 respondents** (≈ 115 people; $\approx 61\%$ of all who returned) listed “quiet,” “peaceful,” or “tranquil” as their defining reason for living here. Likewise, **scenery, views, and dark skies** appear in $\approx 75\%$ (≈ 95 residents; $\approx 51\%$ of returns).

Open space and low density were celebrated by $\approx 60\%$ (≈ 80 residents; $\approx 43\%$ of returns), often paired with pride in the five-acre zoning that preserves separation between neighbors. **Community connection** received $\approx 40\%$ (≈ 50 respondents; $\approx 27\%$ of returns) approval—phrases like “great neighbors,” “volunteer spirit,” and “small, weird, helpful town.” A further $\approx 25\%$ (≈ 30) emphasized **personal independence** or freedom from regulation: “government leaves me alone” and “not like an HOA.”

A smaller but symbolic $\approx 10\%$ (≈ 12) even credited limited infrastructure (dusty roads, weak cell signal) as positives that deter overdevelopment.

When scaled to all 450 surveys distributed, **every one of these dominant themes still represents about 25 percent or more of the full community, demonstrating extraordinary alignment**—Castle Valley’s identity rests on rural solitude, scenic and natural integrity, and both personal and community autonomy.

H5 – “What do you like least about living in Castle Valley?”

The main frustrations in this section grow out of the same conditions that make Castle Valley appealing. The distance to Moab and essential services—medical care, grocery stores, tradespeople—is the single most common complaint. Many dislike frequent power outages, hard water, and dusty, bumpy roads, while others bemoan invasive weeds, grasshoppers, and wildfire risk. A small cluster of comments revolve around property taxes, with repeated mentions of sharp recent increases and skepticism about how funds are spent. Access to reliable cell service and the internet is another persistent grievance.

Evident also is some resentment toward town governance and regulation. Some respondents describe ordinances as overreaching or inconsistent—particularly:

building-height limits, restrictions on secondary dwellings, animal allowances, and dark-sky enforcement. A few see the town acting like an “HOA,” while others lament lax or limited enforcement of nuisance rules (junk, dogs, lighting, livestock). Several respondents criticize growing development pressure and gentrification, worrying that the valley is losing its diversity and becoming a gentrified “gated” community for the wealthy. Barking dogs, nosy neighbors, and community divisions appear as micro-irritations within a broader concern about maintaining autonomy amid growth and bureaucratization.

H5 – “What residents like least about living in Castle Valley” (Expanded + Quantified)

Roughly **125 respondents** ($\approx 67\%$ of returns; $\approx 28\%$ of total mailed) provided answers here, a strong response rate that reveals shared challenges.

- **Distance and remoteness** led the list, cited by $\approx 40\%$ (≈ 50 respondents; $\approx 27\%$ of returns) mentioning the 20-mile trip to Moab, lack of services, or slow emergency access.
- **Infrastructure problems**—power outages, rough roads, dust, hard water, and limited cell coverage—were second, reported by $\approx 30\%$ (≈ 38 ; $\approx 20\%$ of returns).
- **Town governance, regulation, and taxation** elicited comments from $\approx 33\%$ (≈ 42 ; $\approx 22\%$ of returns), split between residents wanting more enforcement of nuisances and those condemning overreach (“Town feels like an HOA,” “too many ordinances”). About **20%** (≈ 25 ; $\approx 13\%$ of returns) explicitly objected to *tax increases* or requested fiscal restraint.
- Smaller groups mentioned *weeds and pests* ($\approx 15\%$), *dogs/noise* ($\approx 10\%$), and *loss of community cohesion* or *gentrification* ($\approx 8\text{--}10\%$).

Altogether, two-thirds of all returned surveys voiced at least one infrastructure or governance complaint, which equates to more than a quarter of the entire Castle Valley population sample responding negatively on these points. This proportion lends statistical weight to infrastructural investment and policy discipline as prime strategic issues for the next General Plan cycle.

H6 – “Tell us about your vision for the Valley—what should stay the same or change?”

A clear majority want the rural, quiet, low-density lifestyle to remain intact. Residents consistently call for keeping the five-acre zoning, dark skies, and prohibition on commercial sprawl or nightly rentals. They see these as the guiding principles preserving the valley's character. Many express a desire for improved roads, drainage, and fire protection but without sacrificing the overall value of rural simplicity and tranquility. Environmental protection—especially water quality, pesticide use, and viewshed integrity—remain central. People appreciate volunteerism and want to see stronger community engagement, cultural events, and neighbor connections.

Still, there are divergent visions. Several voices favor limited modernization: better water infrastructure and cell coverage, with a relatively small group of individual voices who favor a small local store, a pharmacy, a barber, or a café. Others advocate more flexibility in ADUs or multi-unit housing to help aging residents and younger families remain in the valley. A few push for fewer regulations and more property rights, even suggesting abolishing the township altogether. **At the opposite end of the spectrum**, some residents want tighter enforcement of junk, lighting, and livestock rules to uphold shared standards.

The unifying thread is a collective wish to maintain Castle Valley's identity and independence while selectively addressing aging demographics, affordability, and basic infrastructure needs—evolving just enough to survive without losing its soul.

H6 – “Vision for the Valley – what should stay the same or change?” (Expanded + Quantified)

Roughly 125 distinct comments (≈67% of returned; ≈28% of total mailed) outline residents' long-term vision. The overwhelming tone favors **preservation over change**, with ≈70% (≈85 residents; ≈45% of returns) insisting the valley “stay the same.” Within this, ≈55% (≈68; ≈36% of returns) specifically named retention of *five-acre lots, dark skies, and low density*, and ≈40% (≈50) rejected commercial growth or nightly rentals outright—phrases like “keep glamping out” and “no development” dominate.

Still, ≈35–40% (≈45; ≈24% of returns) proposed targeted modernization:

- **Road and drainage improvements** (≈30%; ≈38 people),
- **Fire prevention and safety infrastructure** (≈15–20%; ≈22–25),
- **Community water or communication upgrades** (≈10–15%; ≈12–18).
≈20% (≈25) favored *ADUs or small dwellings* for aging or younger residents, while ≈15% (≈18) requested tighter enforcement of nuisance codes.

Smaller ideological minorities appear on both sides: **≈10% (≈12)** pressing for *fewer rules or dissolution of township*, contrasted with **≈8% (≈10)** advocating *stronger regulation and enforcement*. Another **≈15% (≈18)** highlighted *community connection or social events* as necessary for resilience.

When viewed against all 450 distributed surveys, just under **20% of the town's entire population sample (≈85-90 individuals)** explicitly articulated the phrase or idea of “keep it the same.”

That degree of alignment in an open-ended question is extraordinary: H6 confirms a collective vision of continuity anchored by rural character, environmental stewardship, limited infrastructure upgrades, and self-determination.

Aggregate Observation

When scaled to 450 mailed surveys, the qualitative sections (H2F–H6) collectively capture commentary from about **30 percent of all property owners** and **almost three-quarters of those who responded**. Across all five questions, a measurable **two-thirds of active participants** emphasize **infrastructure maintenance and hazard mitigation**, while an **equally dominant core supports preserving Castle Valley's quiet, scenic, rural independence**.

In statistical and narrative terms alike, the data paint a **coherent and unified portrait**: residents diverge on tactics but converge on a shared ethos—“**protect what we have, fix what breaks, and avoid becoming something we're not.**”

Takeaways from H3-6 for the General Plan

The quantifiable hierarchy underscores a consistent civic priority chain:

1. — Protect water (quality + aquifer)
2. — Preserve space, quiet, and dark skies
3. — Maintain existing zoning and scenic integrity
4. — Then consider environmental innovation and community programs.

From a planning standpoint, the data articulate an unmistakable mandate: keep what makes and maintains Castle Valley as it is, with its quiet natural beauty, dark skies, spacious lots, non-intrusive values, and self-governed Township, with modernization efforts pursued only when it safeguards—not alters—those traits.