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Gardiner, Montana: Visitor Perceptions, Image and Spending Before & After Development

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Gardiner, Montana

Visitor Perceptions, Image, and Spending Before & After Development



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Abstract: Gardiner, Montana, the north gate to Yellowstone National Park, underwent infrastructure development before the 2016 centennial celebration of the National Park Service. This study represents a ‘before and after’ analysis of visitors’ images and spending patterns within Gardiner.

Highlights:

- Visitor spending increased by \$69.48/day in 2018 over 2014, partially attributed to an increase in travel group size.
- Gardiner visitors are likely to spend more time in the community visiting Gardiner attractions (+12%), and rafting/kayaking (+10%).
- The study shows that infrastructure development made a significant difference on visitor’s image with 68% of image variables showing a significant positive growth in 2018 over 2014.
- Only one image variable went down: 2018 visitors were significantly more likely to say that Gardiner was a crowded place.

Gardiner, Montana: Visitor Perceptions, Image, and Spending Before & After Development

Executive Summary

In 2013, the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research assessed visitor image, spending, and reasons for visiting Gardiner, Montana, and repeated the same study in 2018. The purpose of these surveys was to analyze if differences emerged in the visitors’ assessment of Gardiner after both the town and Yellowstone National Park north entrance received an infrastructure uplift between the two data collection periods.

Overall spending by visitors increased \$112.77 per trip, while length of stay remained approximately the same. Group size increased from 3.72 to 4.30 in 2018, a likely contributor to the increase in spending.

Table ES-1: Visitor spending comparison 2013 to 2018

	<u>2013</u> Average spending of all visitors	<u>2018</u> Average spending of all visitors	Difference in spending: 2013 to 2018
TOTAL GROUP SPENDING PER TRIP	\$290.02*	\$402.79	\$112.77
AVERAGE DAILY SPENDING/GROUP	\$192.07*	\$261.55	\$69.48

*Adjusted for inflation

2018 spending increased in nearly all categories with higher amounts seen in hotel/motel (+ \$60); outfitter/guide (+\$33); restaurant/bar (+\$17); and retail/souvenirs (+\$10). Only spending on gasoline/fuel decreased significantly (-\$11) in 2018 compared to 2013.

Table ES-2: Top reasons for visiting Gardiner

Reasons for Visiting Gardiner*	2018 (N=403)
Eat/Drink	72%
Shop	58%
Visit Gardiner attractions	30%
Stay night(s)	29%
Get fuel	27%
Raft/Kayak	27%
View wildlife	25%
Drive through	20%

*Visitors could check all that apply

Gardiner IS a destination, not just a drive through

Compared to 2013, visitors in 2018 were more likely to select each of the reasons (left) for visiting Gardiner – with the exception of driving through.

***Visiting Gardiner Attractions → UP 12%**
Rafting or Kayaking → UP 10%*

Table ES-3: Image variables significantly different in 2018 compared to 2013

Image Variables: Gardiner is/has...	2013 Mean	2018 Mean
A friendly community	4.37	4.51
Free of debris and litter	4.14	4.43
Well-maintained	3.95	4.29
A fun place	4.02	4.25
Well-maintained business and store fronts	3.97	4.24
Ample Sidewalks	3.94	4.21
Pedestrian friendly	4.08	4.21
Well-maintained roads	3.81	4.09
Good signage	3.80	4.06
Nice community/county parks	3.75	3.90
A range of retail shopping Opportunities	3.48	3.74
New and different activities to do in town	3.44	3.57
Different types of restaurants	3.41	3.53
Exciting nightlife	2.80	3.01
A crowded place	2.69	2.93

*Scale = 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree

In both years of data collection, visitors held a positive image of Gardiner. Visitors, both in open-ended and structured responses, noted that Gardiner was a friendly and welcoming community and a fun place. They enjoyed the 'rustic' and 'quaint' look of the town. Respondents also believed, however, that there was room for improvement in available services such as food options and improved availability of Wi-Fi.

*The **Gardiner Gateway Project** envisioned and implemented infrastructure development between 2014 and 2017. It provided new and improved sidewalks; differentiated parking slots; a new road into the park that allows visitors to choose driving through the arch or not; new signage for Yellowstone; and beautification along Park Street which faces into and actually is part of Yellowstone.*

Out of 22 image comparisons, 15 (68%) were significantly different in 2018 compared to 2013 – All but one were positive.

Only the image that “Gardiner is a crowded place” went in a negative direction.

Visitation to Yellowstone via the north gate in Gardiner increased 21% over this time.

How did the project succeed based on visitors' image and spending?

- Higher spending ✓
- Improved image of...
 - Pedestrian friendly ✓
 - Good signage ✓
 - Well-maintained roads ✓
 - Ample sidewalks ✓
 - Well-maintained storefronts ✓
 - Well-maintained town ✓
 - Ample parking ✗
 - Acceptable traffic flow ✗

These data show that Gardiner is in a unique position, as the original entrance to the world's first national park, to take control of what they like about their town and make sure the positive qualities of the people and place are sustained and improved for the future generations of both visitors and residents.

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Introduction

Gardiner, Montana, an unincorporated town on the northern boundary of Yellowstone National Park, is the world's first gateway community to a national park. Gardiner was officially founded in 1880, but has served as the gateway to Yellowstone since the park's creation in 1872. The town of Gardiner has catered to, and built a viable tourism economy around, the needs of park visitors for over 140 years.

Growth in Yellowstone visitation numbers and the 100 year celebration of the establishment of the National Park Service provided the opportunity for Gardiner and Yellowstone National Park to jointly address infrastructure needs in the town and the entrance to the park. The Gardiner-Gateway project began construction in 2014 and was mostly completed by 2017. The intent was to create better traffic flow, pedestrian walkways, parking, and to update Arch Park so it could be used for special events year-round.

With the changes in Gardiner on the horizon, the Governor's Tourism Advisory Council approved a two-step research project to gather information from residents and visitors to Gardiner both before and after the infrastructure development. Therefore, the overall purpose of this project was to conduct a 'before' and 'after' analysis of image of and satisfaction with Gardiner by visitors to the community, as well as resident perceptions of quality of life and image of their community. The final resident perceptions study can be found at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr_pubs/374/.

This report provides results of visitors' perception of Gardiner, as well as their spending patterns within the town. It serves as a replica follow-up of the 2013 visitor study, 5 years later, and after the infrastructure development was completed.

Background

"The Gardiner- Gateway Project" was a partnership between local, state, and federal agencies working across jurisdictional boundaries to restore and enhance the original and only year-round entrance to the world's first national park – Yellowstone National Park – and the nation's first gateway community - Gardiner, Montana. With increases in the number of visitors to YNP in recent years, the project was aimed at providing safe and proper infrastructure for both residents and visitors. The project was expected to lead to improved public safety through pedestrian friendly zones, historic preservation within the downtown district, community development, economic development, recreation access to public lands, tourism promotion with improved signage, a welcome center with public restrooms and information, and creation of jobs for Gardiner. The infrastructure development project was mostly completed in 2016 with some additional work in 2017.

This research project provided an opportunity to assess whether tourism infrastructure development could affect the perception of the community as seen by visitors and residents alike. It offers the prospect to look at visitor spending patterns before and after infrastructure development. The assessment of perception, satisfaction, and spending of visitors in the town of Gardiner both before and after the development can be a guide for other communities contemplating development opportunities. For this reason, this was a two-stage project. Visitors were asked questions related to their image and perception of Gardiner, and their spending patterns during the summer of 2013. These same questions were asked during the summer of 2018 following the completion of the infrastructure developments in 2017. Gardiner, therefore, serves as a longitudinal case study for future infrastructure development within gateway communities to national parks as well as any community that invests in infrastructure

development. In summary, the purpose of the present study was to understand visitor images and perceptions of Gardiner as well as visitor spending within the town and how those notions of image and perception have changed over time.

Image can be defined as mental impressions or perceptions. Images and perceptions of a community have been described as a critical promotional tool for the tourism industry.¹ Although there are benefits and drawbacks to tourism development, tourism offers a means to improve economic conditions for communities.² Research suggests that the images visitors' hold of a destination influences their decisions to visit that location, as well as the length of their trip, among other decisions.³ Visitors' image of a destination assists in community planning for tourism as well as rebuilding and redefining the essence of a place.

In addition to image questions, visitor spending was assessed to provide an understanding of the distribution of spending categories within Gardiner. Finally, to better understand what brought visitors to Gardiner, further questions were included regarding what visitors were doing while in the town. Visitor demographics were also examined for comparison between the two data collection periods.

Objectives of this study:

- To assess and compare visitors' image of Gardiner in 2013 and 2018.
- To determine if differences emerge between the activities engaged in by visitors to Gardiner in 2013 compared to 2018.
- To compare 2013 visitor spending in Gardiner to 2018 visitor spending in Gardiner.

Methods

Visitors were intercepted on Park Street, the main street of Gardiner facing Yellowstone, and asked to complete an on-site survey. The primary intercept location was on the boardwalk immediately in front of the Gardiner Chamber of Commerce and Information Center. Once approached, the study was explained to the visitor who was then handed a clipboard with the survey and pen. Visitors were told the survey would take approximately 3-4 minutes to complete. Since image is an individual perception, data were collected from all willing travel group members over 18 years of age. All data, therefore, was collected at the individual level. However, for expenditure data, the researcher asked only one person in the travel group to complete the expenditure portion, resulting in group expenditures.

In 2013, visitors were intercepted on random days throughout the months of June, July, August and September. Of the 1,997 visitors approached in 2013, 1,656 completed the survey for an 83 percent response rate (1,656/1,997). The 2013 sample size was purposefully large so we could assess differences in visitor demographics and behavior between months. When no differences were found, the 2018 data collection was reduced.

¹ Schofield, P., Phillips, L., & Eliopoulos, K. (2005). Positioning Warrington for day trip tourism: Assessing visitor and non-visitor images. *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 16 (2), 127-146.

² Andereck, K.L., Valentine, K.M., Knopf, R.C., & Vogt, C.A. (2005). Residents' perceptions of community tourism impacts. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32 (4), 1056-1076.

³ Hunt, J. (1975). Image as a Factor in Tourism Development. *Journal of Travel Research*, 13 (1), 1-8.

In 2018, visitor interception took place on four days in July and four days in August. Of the 500 visitors approached, 402 completed the survey for an 81 percent response rate (403/500). Both years of data collection were limited to people who got out of their vehicle and walked along Park Street.

Survey Design

The survey instrument used for this project was the same in both years. Development of the survey was constructed after a review of the literature on visitor image of tourist destinations. Image, spending, what visitors were doing in Gardiner, and demographics were all part of the questionnaire. The full survey can be found in Appendix A.

Results

Results of the study are presented as follows: 1) frequencies and means (when appropriate) of each topic area are displayed in table format. The topic areas are demographics, spending patterns, previous visits to Gardiner, time spent in Gardiner, travel group characteristics, and reasons for visiting Yellowstone National Park and Gardiner; 2) Means and significant differences between 2013 and 2018 data for visitor image and perception of Gardiner are in table and graph format; 3) Open ended questions were coded and are discussed. All of the open-ended responses are provided verbatim in Appendix B for readers to understand the depth of visitor perceptions and suggestions provided by visitors to Gardiner.

Demographics

Table 1 compares the demographics of Gardiner visitors in 2013 and 2018. The split of male/female respondents and age differences are nearly identical between the two data collection years. In 2018, respondents ranged in age from 18 to 83, with a mean age of 46.86. Females represented 52 to 53 percent of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographics of Gardiner Visitors

	2013	2018
Male	47% (744)	48% (192)
Female	53% (849)	52% (207)
Age	Range: 18-82 Mean: 46.54	Range: 18-83 Mean: 46.86

Of the visitors to Gardiner in 2018 who provided residency information, 17 (5%) were from Montana (residing outside Park County), and the rest were out-of-state or out-of-country visitors. People from 46 states and Washington, D.C. were represented in the data, but only the top states are shown in Table 2. States with the highest representation of visitors to Gardiner were California (32), Texas (28), Michigan (24), and Minnesota (18). Ten percent were international visitors: 8 from Canada, and 28 from overseas which included the highest number from Australia (13) followed by France (3) (Table 3).

While it is unclear why the residency of visitors appears to differ between the two years, one explanation may be the sample size differences and the additional months in which data were collected in 2013.

Table 2: Domestic Gardiner Visitors

State	Percent of 2013 Visitors (N=1,563)	State	Percent of 2018 Visitors (N=398)
Montana	8.0%	California	8.8%
California	7.2%	Texas	7.7%
Washington	5.9%	Michigan	6.6%
Texas	4.0%	Minnesota	4.9%
Florida	3.8%	Florida	4.7%
Minnesota	3.5%	Montana	4.7%
Illinois	3.3%	North Carolina	4.7%
Colorado	3.2%	Pennsylvania	4.1%
Pennsylvania	3.1%	Colorado	3.6%
Wisconsin	3.1%	Georgia	3.3%

Table 3: International Gardiner Visitors

Country	Percent of 2013 Visitors (N=1,563)	Country	Percent of 2018 Visitors (N=398)
Canada	3.1%	Canada	2.2%
UK/England	2.0%	Australia	1.6%
Australia	0.8%	France	0.8%
Netherlands	0.6%	UK/England	0.8%
New Zealand	0.4%	Austria	0.5%
Germany	0.3%	China	0.5%
China	0.3%	Israel	0.5%
France	0.3%	Spain	0.5%
Denmark	0.2%	Germany	0.3%
Japan	0.2%	Brazil	0.3%

Spending Patterns

Table 4 displays information about spending by category in both 2013 and 2018. The second column shows the 2018 average spending for each category when only looking at expenditures by those who *actually spent* in the category with the percent of the sample who spent in that category in parentheses. As shown, the highest volume of visitors spent money on restaurant/bar (66%) followed by retail/souvenirs (54%). In other words, 66 percent of visitors to Gardiner spent money on restaurant and bar. The average spending of those who spent money on restaurant/bar was \$105.10 for their trip. Another example: while only 24 percent of these visitors spent money on accommodations (hotel/motel/cabin/B&B), when they did spend in that category, the trip cost for their group was \$718.33.

The last three columns compare the average spending by all visitors between 2013 and 2018. The 2013 spending amounts were inflated to 2018 values. The last column shows the difference in spending in each category between those years. Spending went up for most categories in 2018. Average daily spending per group increased by \$69.48. Total group spending in Gardiner increased \$112.77. The

outfitter/guide category was further analyzed showing that rafting continues to be the activity generating the majority of dollars in Gardiner.

Table 4: 2013 & 2018 Comparison of Group Trip Spending Patterns by Gardiner Visitors

Expenditure Category	2018	2013**	2018	Difference in spending: 2013 to 2018
	Average spending and % of respondents <i>who spent</i> in the category	Average spending of all visitors	Average spending of all visitors	
Hotel/Motel/Cabin/B&B	\$718.33 (24% spent)*	\$113.02	\$172.90	\$59.88
Restaurants/Bar	\$105.10 (66% spent)	\$51.93	\$69.37	\$17.44
Outfitter/Guide	\$177.45 (34% spent)	\$33.90	\$67.01	\$33.11
Retail/Souvenirs	\$84.52 (54% spent)	\$35.28	\$45.30	\$10.02
Gasoline/Fuel	\$55.76 (43% spent)	\$35.04	\$24.07	(\$10.97)
Yellowstone North Entrance Fees	\$38.48 (18% spent)	\$5.68	\$6.87	\$1.19
Campground	\$106.35 (6% spent)	\$9.07	\$6.33	(\$2.74)
Other Fees/Admissions/Licenses	\$44.08 (9% spent)	\$1.42	\$3.83	\$2.41
Groceries/Snacks	\$115.42 (3% spent)	\$2.23	\$3.44	\$1.21
Other	\$115.10 (1% spent)	\$0.13	\$3.15	\$3.02
Transportation Fares	\$50.50 (1% spent)	N/A	\$0.50	N/A
Services	\$7.60 (<1% spent)	\$0.34	\$0.02	(\$0.32)
Vehicle Repair/Maintenance	\$0.00 (0% spent)	\$1.98	\$0.00	(\$1.98)
TOTAL GROUP SPENDING PER TRIP		\$290.02	\$402.79	\$112.77
AVERAGE GROUP SPENDING PER DAY		\$192.07	\$261.55	\$69.48
2018 Outfitter/Guide Expenditures by Category				
Rafting	\$201.73 (23% spent)	\$18.18	\$45.55	\$27.32
Horseback Riding	\$146.82 (6% spent)	\$8.75	\$9.11	\$0.36
Fly Fishing	\$201.38 (3% spent)	\$3.74	\$6.00	\$2.26
Wildlife Watching	\$232.17 (1% spent)	\$0.94	\$3.46	\$2.52
Zip lining	\$160.00 (1% spent)	\$1.34	\$1.59	\$0.25
Outfitter/Guide - Other	\$105.12 (1% spent)	\$0.03	\$1.30	\$1.27
Hunting	\$0.00 (0% spent)	\$0.83	\$0.00	(\$0.83)
Hiking	\$0.00 (0% spent)	\$0.09	\$0.00	(\$0.09)

*% of all respondents who spent money in each category

**Adjusted for inflation to August 2018 values

The average number of nights spent in 2018 was 1.54 nights, up slightly from 2013 (Table 5). Most visitors did not spend a night in Gardiner (55% both years), but 10 percent spent one night, and 11 percent spent two nights in 2018.

Table 5: Nights Spent in Gardiner on this Trip

Nights in Gardiner	<u>2013</u> % and (n)	<u>2018</u> % and (n)
	Mean = 1.51	Mean = 1.54
0	55% (878)	55% (215)
1	14% (221)	10% (40)
2	9% (146)	11% (42)
3	6% (94)	6% (23)
4	5% (81)	7% (28)
5	3% (40)	4% (14)
6	3% (44)	3% (10)
7	3% (51)	4% (17)
8+	2% (39)	1% (4)

Previous Visits and Time Spent in Gardiner

Table 6 presents the number of previous visits to Gardiner by respondents. In 2018, the average number of previous visits to Gardiner was 3.01, down slightly from the 2013 average of 3.32 previous visits. The majority of visitors had never been to Gardiner (64% in 2018), while fifteen percent had visited once previously (found in both 2013 and 2018). Overall, 2013 and 2018 show minute differences in number of previous visits to Gardiner.

Table 6: Previous Visits to Gardiner

Previous Gardiner Visits	<u>2013</u> % and (n)	<u>2018</u> % and (n)
	Mean visits = 3.32	Mean visits = 3.01
0	62% (968)	64% (255)
1	15% (241)	15% (60)
2	6% (90)	5% (20)
3	3% (48)	3% (12)
4	2% (27)	2% (7)
5 - 9	4% (61)	5% (18)
10 - 15	4% (57)	2% (8)
16+	5% (81)	5% (18)

In both survey years, most visitors spent less than half a day in Gardiner. This group was 5 percent smaller in 2018 (61%), than in 2013 (66%). Meanwhile, five percent more indicated they were spending approximately half a day in Gardiner in 2018 compared to 2013 (Table 7).

Table 7: Time Spent in Gardiner on this Trip

Time in Gardiner	<u>2013</u> % and (n)	<u>2018</u> % and (n)
Less than 1/2 a Day	66% (606)	61% (140)
1/2 a day	22% (202)	27% (62)
Full Day	13% (117)	12% (28)

Travel Group Characteristics

The average group size of visitors to Gardiner was 4.30 in 2018, 0.58 larger than in 2013. Most 2018 visitors were in pairs (28%), which is down 13 percent from 2013, but group sizes of 3, 4, 5, and 6 were all higher in 2018 than in 2013 (Table 8), establishing that group size increased in 2018.

Table 8: Travel Group Size

Travel Group Size	<u>2013</u> % and (n)	<u>2018</u> % and (n)
	Mean = 3.72	Mean = 4.30
1	5% (76)	3% (12)
2	41% (642)	28% (113)
3	13% (207)	15% (61)
4	17% (269)	19% (77)
5	7% (116)	11% (42)
6	4% (66)	6% (24)
7	3% (46)	3% (13)
8	2% (29)	2% (9)
9	2% (24)	3% (12)
10+	7% (109)	9% (36)

Reasons for Visiting Yellowstone and Gardiner

The majority of visitors to Gardiner were visiting Yellowstone National Park and had similar reasons in both 2013 and 2018 for visiting Yellowstone (Table 9). Visitors were coming to Yellowstone in 2018 to view wildlife (78%), participate in outdoor recreation (73%), view geysers and hot springs (69%), for the history of the park (46%), as well as to view wolves specifically (42%). The largest increase of a reason to visit was outdoor recreation, which went up 10 percent over 2013 (Table 9).

Table 9: Reasons for Visiting Yellowstone National Park

Reasons for Visiting YNP	2013 % and (n)	Reasons for Visiting YNP	2018 % and (n)
Viewing other wildlife	76% (1150)	Viewing other wildlife	78% (301)
Outdoor Recreation	63% (952)	Outdoor Recreation	73% (283)
Viewing geysers/hot springs	72% (1078)	Viewing geysers/hot springs	69% (267)
History	39% (582)	History	46% (176)
Viewing wolves	41% (618)	Viewing wolves	42% (161)

Note: Visitors could check all that apply

A number of differences emerged in the reasons why people were visiting Gardiner in 2018 compared to five years earlier in 2013. Thirteen of the 16 stated reasons showed increased responses in 2018. The largest percent change was in the number of people visiting Gardiner to see Gardiner attractions (up 12% in 2018) and the number of visitors rafting or kayaking (up 10% in 2018) (Table 10). The percent staying nights in Gardiner and eating/drinking in Gardiner increased eight percent and seven percent, respectively.

Table 10: Reasons for Visiting Gardiner

Reasons for Visiting Gardiner	2013 % and (n)	Reasons for Visiting Gardiner	2018 % and (n)	2013 to 2018 % differences
Eat/drink	65% (1042)	Eat/drink	72% (288)	7%
Shop	52% (831)	Shop	58% (230)	6%
Visit Gardiner attractions	18% (292)	Visit Gardiner attractions	30% (121)	12%
Stay night(s)	21% (342)	Stay night(s)	29% (115)	8%
Raft/Kayak	17% (267)	Raft/Kayak	27% (107)	10%
Get fuel	25% (394)	Get fuel	27% (106)	2%
View wildlife	22% (357)	View wildlife	25% (101)	3%
Drive through	26% (421)	Drive through	20% (79)	(-6%)
Hike	11% (179)	Hike	15% (59)	4%
Horseback ride	7% (114)	Horseback ride	9% (35)	2%
Fly fish	6% (96)	Fly fish	8% (30)	2%
Swim	4% (62)	Swim	5% (19)	1%
Hire a guide from Gardiner	3% (47)	Hire a guide from Gardiner	5% (21)	2%
Zipline	3% (55)	Zipline	4% (15)	1%
Hunt	1% (12)	Hunt	0% (0)	(-1%)
Geocache	1% (9)	Geocache	<1% (1)	(< -1%)

Note: Visitors could check all that apply

Visitor Image of Gardiner

The image of Gardiner held by nonresident visitors was assessed by asking respondents to agree or disagree on a 5-point Likert scale of 22 image variables. In order to assess changes in nonresident image, means from 2013 were compared to 2018 using the Mann-Whitney U-Test. The Mann-Whitney U test is the non-parametric alternative test to the independent sample t-test and was chosen for its ability to correct for possible differences due to the uneven sample sizes between 2013 and 2018. *P*-values less than or equal to 0.05 suggests strong evidence that the means are not the same. In other words, where $p \leq 0.05$ we can reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in means.

Table 11 and Figure 1 display the visitor image of Gardiner related to the activities available in town. Higher scores represent stronger agreement with the statements. Four of the seven activity images went up significantly in 2018 after development changes occurred, including a range of retail available, new and different activities to do in Gardiner, different types of restaurants, and exciting nightlife. As shown in Figure 1, even though the image of exciting nightlife increased in 2018, most visitors were more inclined to disagree or were neutral to the statement.

Table 11: Activity Image: Gardiner has...

Gardiner has...	<u>2013</u> Mean	<u>2018</u> Mean	Significance* <i>p</i> -value
Unique and rich heritage	3.84	3.85	.911
Places to purchase local arts/crafts	3.82	3.82	.953
A range of retail shopping opportunities	3.48	3.74	.000*
Opportunities to experience local cuisine	3.49	3.58	.194
New and different activities to do in town	3.44	3.57	.029*
Different types of restaurants	3.41	3.53	.037*
Exciting nightlife	2.80	3.01	.001*

*Significance at the .05 level

5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Figure 1: Activity Image - Gardiner has...

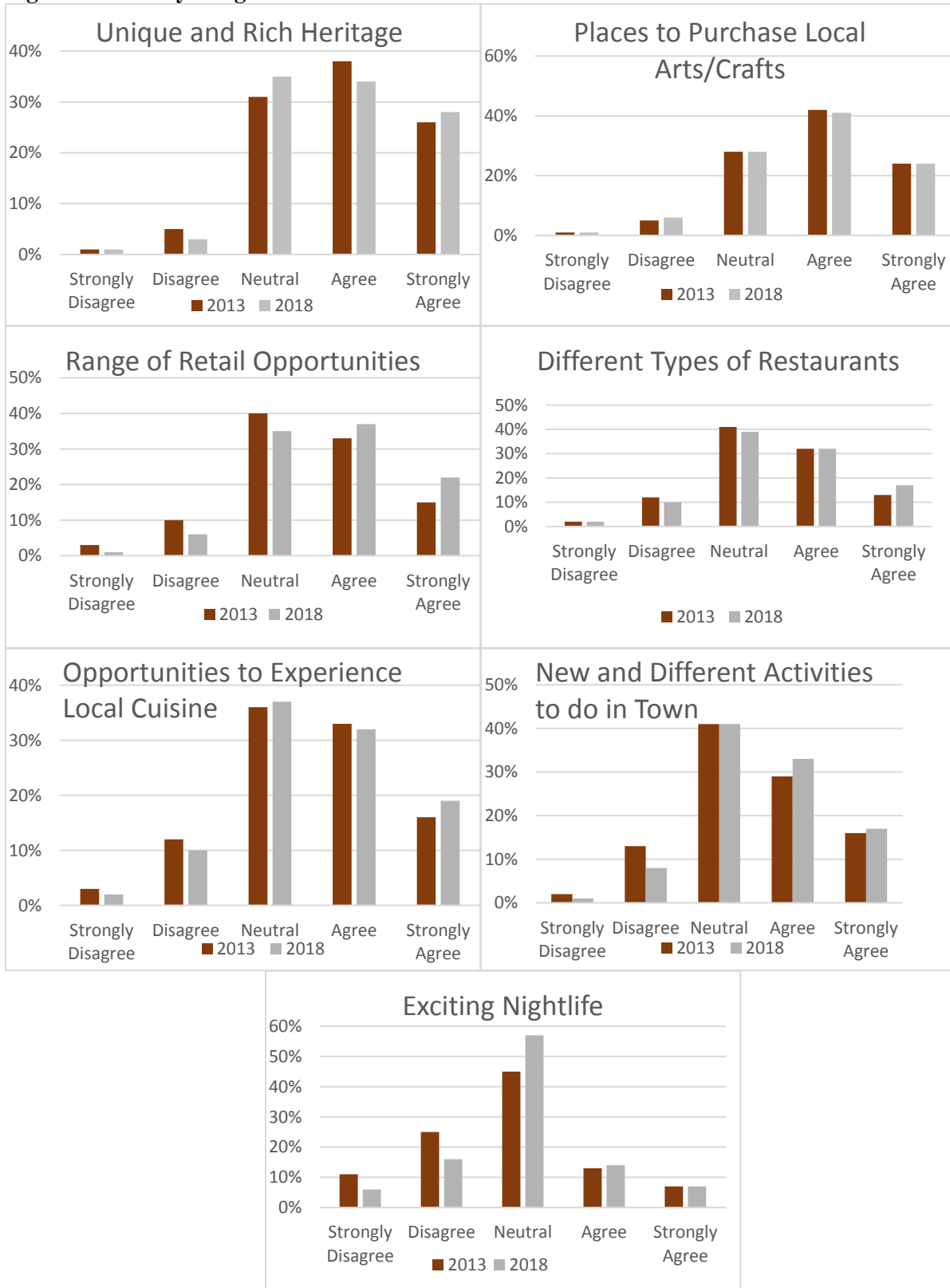


Table 12 and Figure 2 present the visitor image of Gardiner as it relates to infrastructure in the town. Five of the seven infrastructure images were significantly higher in 2018 after development was completed, including well-maintained business and storefronts, ample sidewalks, well-maintained roads, good signage, and nice community/county parks. All items in Table 12 relating to infrastructure in Gardiner scored above a 3.0 (neutral), which indicates that more visitors than not agree that the current infrastructure is adequate or better.

Table 12: Infrastructure Image: Gardiner has...

Gardiner has...	2013 Mean	2018 Mean	Significance* <i>p</i> -value
Well-maintained business and store fronts	3.97	4.24	.000*
Ample sidewalks	3.94	4.21	.000*
Well-maintained roads	3.81	4.09	.000*
Good signage	3.80	4.06	.000*
Acceptable traffic flow in the summer	3.90	3.95	.345
Nice community/county parks	3.75	3.90	.031*
Ample parking	3.94	3.82	.106

*Significance at the .05 level
5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Figure 2: Infrastructure Image - Gardiner has...

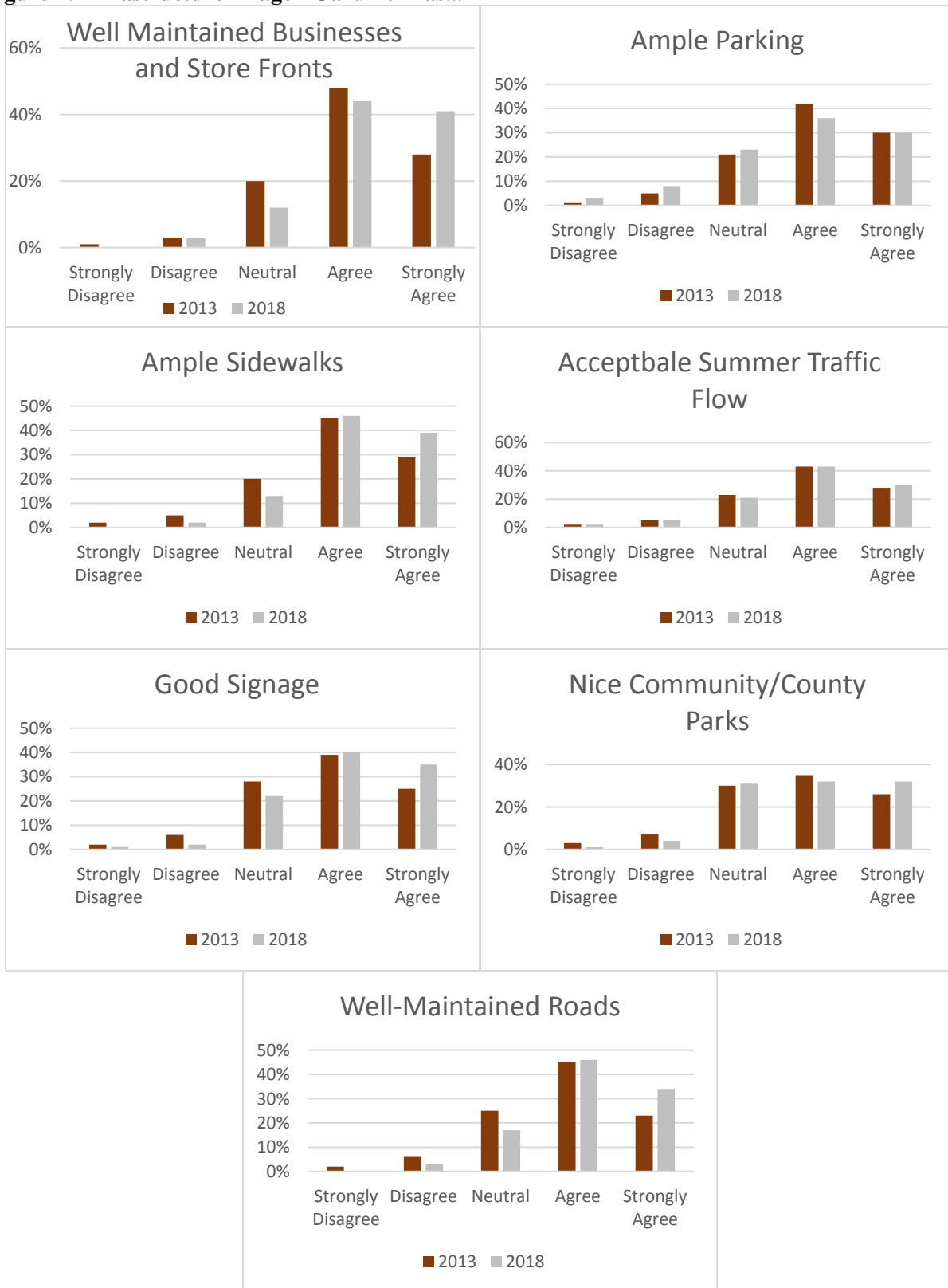


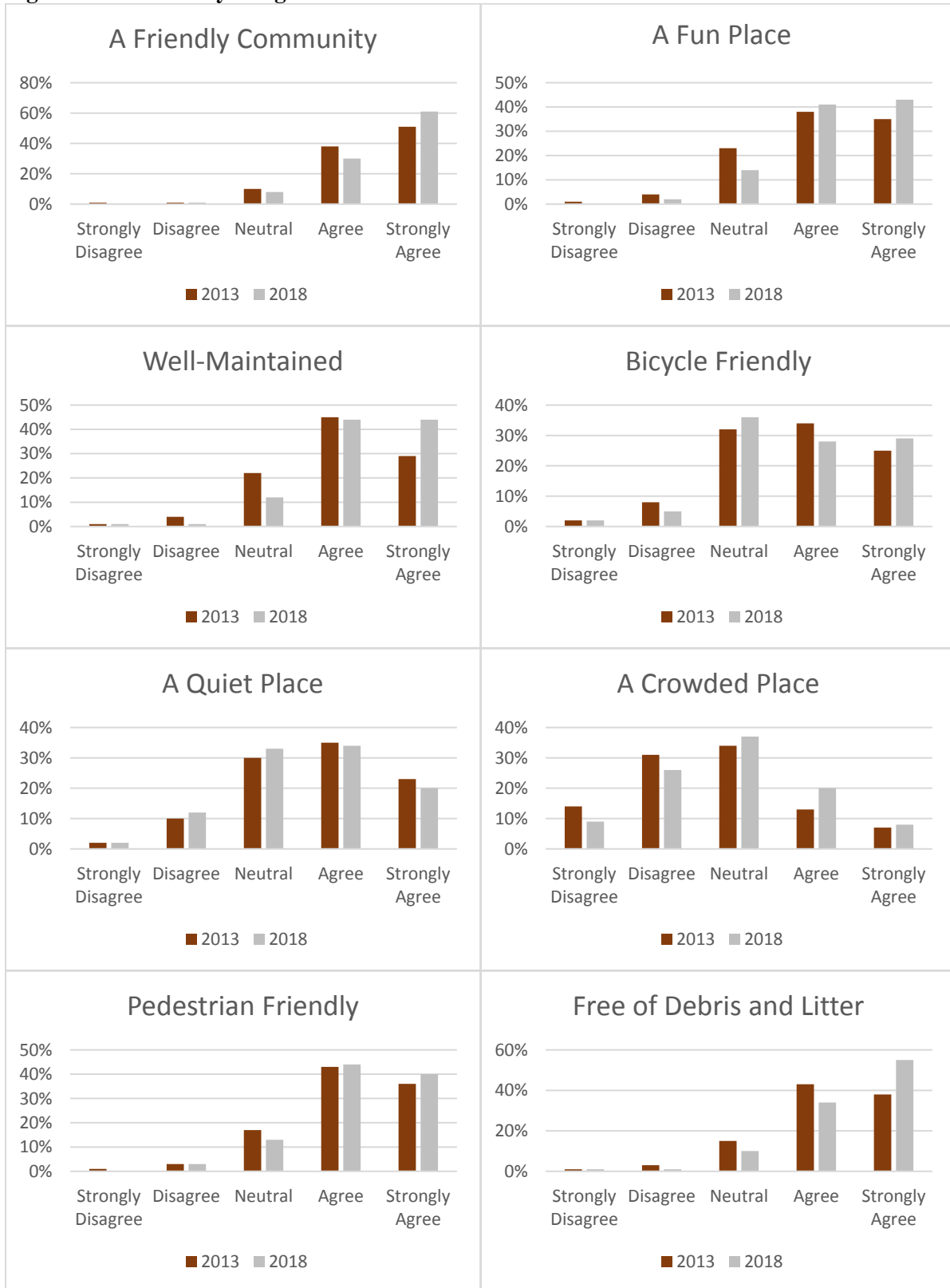
Table 13 and Figure 3 display visitor images of Gardiner as it relates to community aspects. Six of the eight variables were significantly different in 2018 compared to 2013, and all but one increased to a better image. These included a friendly community, a community free of debris and litter, pedestrian friendly, a fun place and a well-maintained community. One variable, while increasing in agreement in 2018, can be construed as a negative comment since significantly more visitors now say Gardiner is a crowded place.

Table 13: Community Image: Gardiner is...

Gardiner is...	2013 Mean	2018 Mean	Significance* <i>p</i> -value
A friendly community	4.37	4.51	.001*
Free of debris and litter	4.14	4.43	.000*
Well-maintained	3.95	4.29	.000*
A fun place	4.02	4.25	.000*
Pedestrian friendly	4.08	4.21	.022*
Bicycle friendly	3.71	3.77	.432
A quiet place	3.66	3.59	.161
A crowded place	2.69	2.93	.000*

*Significance at the .05 level
5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Figure 3: Community Image - Gardiner is...



Visitor Comments

At the beginning of the questionnaire, visitors were asked "How would you describe Gardiner to others? Both positives and negatives." Additionally, at the end of the survey, space was provided for the visitors to make any additional comments they may have. Because visitors had similar thoughts in both comment areas, these were combined into one comment analysis for ease of presentation. To help the reader digest the variety of comments and themes, all the comments were coded and categorized, then truncated into five main themes that emerged as the most common. Visitors often made several comments that were then placed into more than one theme. The five themes are dominated by theme one, where most visitors described Gardiner's aesthetics as mostly pleasing, followed by what Gardiner has to offer in the second theme. For comparative purposes, the comments from 2018 were separated into the same themes used for the 2013 study, minus the sixth theme, which focused solely on comments in relation to wildlife. The theme of wildlife was left out due to the lack of comments produced by visitors in 2018.

Theme 1 – General Aesthetic and Town Descriptions: 54% of comments related to this theme.

Theme 2 – Amenities and Location: 20% of comments related to the location of Gardiner and the amenities it offers.

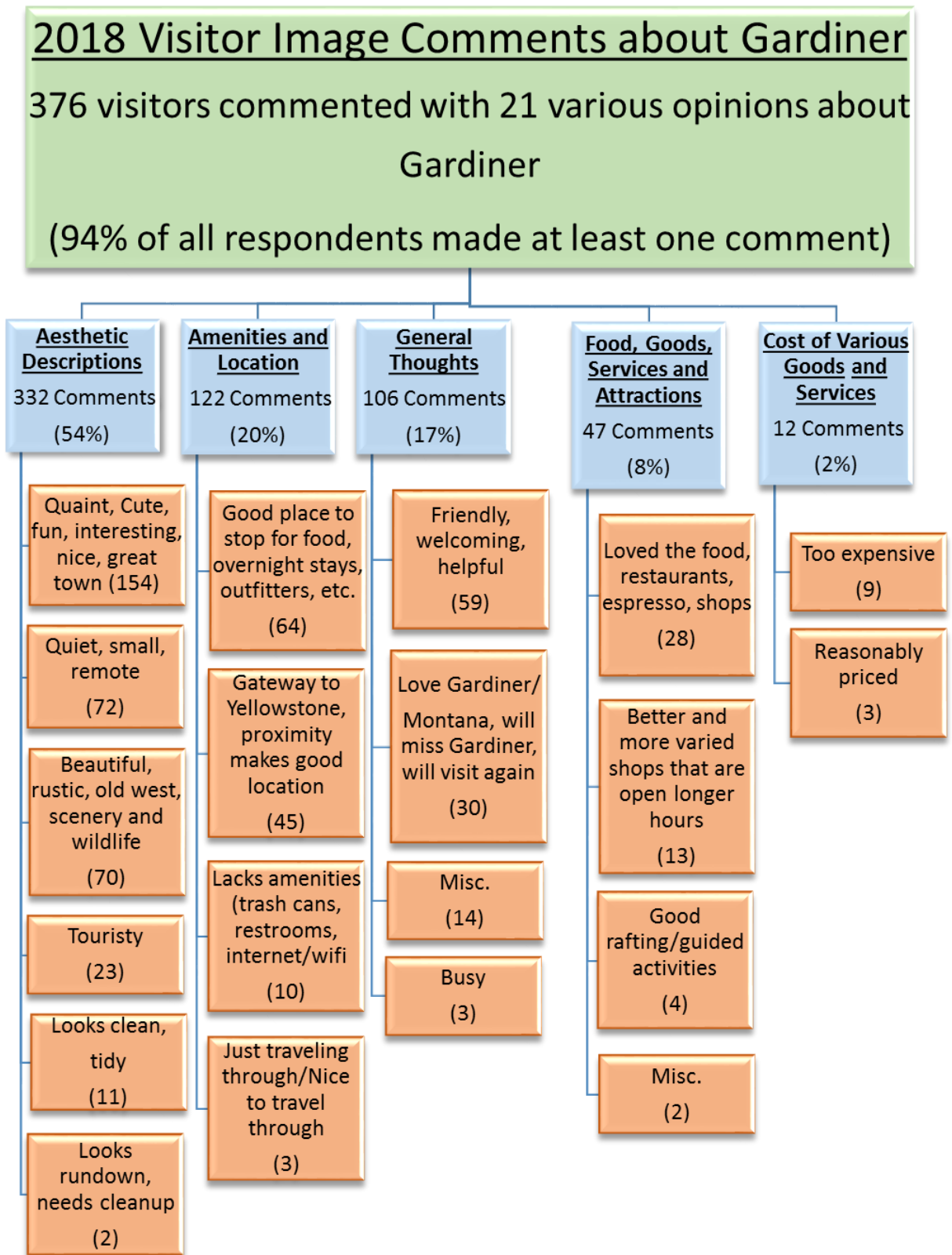
Theme 3 – General Thoughts and Experiences in Gardiner: 17% of comments related to this theme.

Theme 4 – Food, Goods, Services and Attractions: 8% of comments related to improving attractions and amenities for visitors.

Theme 5 – Cost of Various Good and Services: 2% of comments related to costs in Gardiner.

Figure 4 visually displays the five themes and the subcategories that fell within each theme. The categories and an example statement for each category are described in the pages following Figure 4. All the unedited comments can be found in Appendix B and C.

Figure 4. Visitor Comments - Themes and Sub-themes



Theme – General Aesthetic and Town Descriptions: 54% of comments related to this theme, such as the following statements:

- “Western, frontier, touristy, breakfast, cute, espresso.”
- “Friendly, interesting, beautiful scenery. No serious negatives.”
- “Quaint and peaceful, not overrun like most tourist spots. Very friendly.”
- “Great small town with western atmosphere.”
- “Great place - has grown substantially since I was here approximately 10-15 years ago.”
- “A movie set from ‘Blazing Saddles’.”
- “Cute town beautiful views, touristy.”

Theme – Amenities and Location: 20% of comments related to the location of Gardiner and the amenities it offers such as the following:

- “Nice, small community providing goods and services to Yellowstone.”
- “Typical town outside NP that has a variety of eateries, shops, and adventure trips tied to them of NP/outdoor experience.”
- “Nice town to stay for Yellowstone.”
- “A cool little town to come learn about the park, as well as get some lunch and do some shopping.”
- “It is a fun little town with a great photography shop and a lovely entrance to Yellowstone.”
- “Place where you are in Yellowstone. No wi-fi- good escape for communication.”

Theme – General Thoughts and Experiences in Gardiner: 17% of comments related to this theme including:

- “People have been very friendly and helpful. Folks have asked about our vacation plans.”
- “We love Gardiner. Always looking to come back.”
- “Welcoming. We have only been here for 2 days but overall very pleasant.”
- “Very friendly and easy going.”
- “Gardiner is a beautiful setting, third time I have been here. We stay here when we visit Yellowstone.”
- “Seems like a nice place. The locals we’ve spoken to have been really friendly.”

Theme – Food, Goods, Services and Attractions: 8% of comments related to improving attractions and amenities for visitors such as the following:

- “Quaint, historic town. Loved the shops and restaurants.”
- “Small, calm town with a beautiful view not too many options for breakfast/lunch.”
- “People are very nice. There are good restaurants to have dinner or lunch. Night life is funny when you know about the parties. I didn't find any negative thing.”
- “Cute little western oasis with espresso and good breakfast.”
- “Small town, lots of burgers and ice cream.”
- “It's ok. Very touristy, but located in a great spot. I wish there were more options for food and in-town entertainment. Reception isn't the best, either. From all the gateway towns I've been in, it's very middle-of-the-pack.”
- “Cute town but the restaurants offer very, very limited choices. But the Perk ice cream shop is awesome. Very clean-people friendly.”

Theme – Cost of Various Good and Services: 2% of comments related to costs in Gardiner such as the following:

- “Gateway to Yellowstone; Convenient and less costly than inside the park. ‘Touristy’ feel but nicer than the last time I was here 18 years ago.”
- “Tourist town at the North Entrance of the park. Lots of pricy dinner options. Great launch point for raft trips.”
- “Rustic, clean, mostly a non-touristy atmosphere. Food is expensive but not unexpected for the area.”
- “Small, expensive during tourist season. Native Gardiner folks are friendly.”

Summary and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand visitors’ image of Gardiner and spending patterns both before and after development in the community. These data will be useful for comparison of any future studies designed to assess similar questions within the town of Gardiner and as a template for other communities. The questionnaire was administered by intercepting visitors in the town of Gardiner in 2013 (N=1,656) and 2018 (N=403). The difference in sample size was by choice. In 2013, we were interested in differences by month. When no differences were found, it was statistically viable and fiscally prudent to survey a random sample of 400 visitors in 2018.

Infrastructure development between 2014 and 2017 in Gardiner provided new and improved sidewalks, differentiated parking slots, a new road into the park that allows visitors to choose a route through or to bypass the arch, new signage for Yellowstone, and beautification along Park Street, which faces into and actually is part of Yellowstone. This before-and-after study found that visitors to Gardiner still stayed nearly the same amount of time in town in 2018, but increased their spending by \$69.48 per day or \$112.77 for their entire visit to Gardiner (accounting for inflation). This can partly be explained by the increased group size from 3.72 in 2013 to 4.30 in 2018. It is likely that the new development of Gardiner encouraged people to spend more money while in town, but we cannot directly tie spending increases to development. However, the economy of Gardiner was very important to residents as was discovered in the resident study component of this project. Residents did perceive that their economy had improved since infrastructure development (see: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr_pubs/374/ for full study) which does favor these infrastructure changes.

While spending may be difficult to definitively correlate with development, image did improve from 2013 to 2018. Out of the 22 image variables used for comparison between 2013 and 2018, fourteen variables experienced a statistically significant difference in the score of their overall mean, signaling that visitors’ image of Gardiner had positively increased since the previous study was conducted. One variable, “a crowded place” also increased significantly in 2018 over 2013 but many would say this is not a positive experience for visitors and therefore could be a concern for Gardiner.

Many means on the image variables were over four on a 5-point scale. All image variables that improved are listed below. The highlighted variables were actual infrastructure development areas of Gardiner and part of the reason for the changes. The positive image of these changes were likely a direct result of the development.

- a friendly community (mean=4.51)
- free of debris and litter (mean=4.43)
- well maintained (mean=4.29)
- a fun place (mean=4.25)
- Well maintained business and store fronts (mean=4.24)
- pedestrian friendly (mean=4.21)
- Ample sidewalks (mean=4.21)
- Well maintained roads (mean=4.09)
- Good signage (mean=4.06)
- Nice community/county parks (mean=3.90)
- A range of retail shopping opportunities (mean=3.74)
- New and different activities to do in town (mean=3.57)
- Different types of restaurants (mean=3.53)
- Exciting nightlife (mean=3.01)

Two image variables that did not significantly increase after development, and probably should have based on the infrastructure improvements completed in Gardiner, were 'acceptable traffic flow in the summer,' and 'ample parking.' Development was supposed to address traffic flow and parking. Apparently, those issues in Gardiner were not adequately addressed. In fact, development may have even exacerbated the problem and should be looked into for the future.

In general, visitors commented positively about Gardiner. Descriptors such as friendly, nice, interesting, beautiful gateway to Yellowstone, cute, quaint, good restaurants and beautiful were typical comments. Some, however, mentioned less positive aspects like pricey and touristy as well as lacking basics such as trashcans, wifi, and restrooms. These type of comments should provide Gardiner decision makers with some ideas of where to begin to make Gardiner even more appealing to visitors.

Understanding the image visitors have of your community is a first step in moving forward with future changes. However, while visitor images are very important for a town like Gardiner that relies on tourism for much of its revenue, it should still be considered only one piece of the community. What we have seen from this study and the resident study of Gardiner, is that tourism is great for the economy and the changes helped some parts of the community, but there are still concerns.

It is imperative that residents of Gardiner assess what is best about Gardiner for those who live there, improve on those things, and then listen to these visitors for further enhancement. A town relying on tourism must be able to take care of itself while generating the goods and services needed by visitors and maintaining the friendly welcome for which Gardiner residents are known.

Appendix A: Survey



This study is being conducted by ITRR at the University of Montana. The objective is to learn how visitors to Gardiner view the community. The results will help community residents and leaders identify areas of satisfaction and concern. The study is completely anonymous. Your name is never known.

1. How would you describe Gardiner to others? (both positives and negatives)

2. How many times have you been to Gardiner before this trip?

3. How many nights will you be spending in Gardiner on this trip?

3a. If zero nights, how much time will you spend in Gardiner? <1/2 day 1/2 day Full day

4. I am visiting Yellowstone for... (check all that apply; if not visiting YNP, skip to #5)

- Wolves Other wildlife Geysers/hot spr. Outdoor rec. History

5. I am in the town of Gardiner to... (check all that apply)

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat/drink | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit attractions | <input type="checkbox"/> Fly fish | <input type="checkbox"/> Zipline |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shop | <input type="checkbox"/> Hire a guide | <input type="checkbox"/> Raft/kayak/SUP | <input type="checkbox"/> Swim |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get fuel | <input type="checkbox"/> View wildlife | <input type="checkbox"/> Hunt | <input type="checkbox"/> Geocache |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drive through | <input type="checkbox"/> Horseback ride | <input type="checkbox"/> Hike | <input type="checkbox"/> Stay nights(s) |

6. Please indicate the amount your travel group will spend in Gardiner on this trip.

General expenses:

- gasoline/oil \$
- restaurant/bar \$
- retail/souvenirs \$
- hotel/motel/cabin/B&B \$
- campground \$
- transportation fares \$
- auto/RV repair or maintenance \$
- Yellowstone north entrance fee \$
- other entrance fees/licenses \$
- services (e.g., medical, kennel) \$
- other \$

Outfitter/Guide hired in Gardiner:

- rafting \$
- horseback riding \$
- fly fishing \$
- wildlife watching \$
- hunting \$
- hiking \$
- other (please describe) \$

(please describe)

Please continue on back!

Check the box that best corresponds with your level of agreement with each statement below.

7. In my opinion, Gardiner has...

	Strongly Disagree (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Strongly Agree (5)
A range of retail shopping opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unique and rich heritage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Different types of restaurants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities to experience local cuisine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Places to purchase local arts/crafts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New and different activities to do in town	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exciting nightlife	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nice community/county parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good signage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acceptable traffic flow in the summer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Well maintained roads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Well maintained business & store fronts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ample sidewalks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ample parking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. In my opinion, Gardiner is...

	Strongly Disagree (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Strongly Agree (5)
A friendly community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A fun place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A crowded place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A quiet place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pedestrian friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bicycle friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Well maintained	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Free of debris and litter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Where is your permanent residence? (state/province/foreign country)

10. How many are in your travel group?

11. What is your age?

12. Are you? Male Female

Other comments?

Thank you for your time! Have a great visit!

Appendix B: Image Attribute Comparison 2013 vs. 2018

Gardiner has...		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
Unique and rich heritage	2013	11 (1%)	66 (5%)	427 (31%)	529 (38%)	363 (26%)	3.84
	2018	3 (1%)	10 (3%)	127 (35%)	122 (34%)	102 (28%)	3.85
Places to purchase local arts/crafts	2013	15 (1%)	71 (5%)	401 (28%)	597 (42%)	335 (24%)	3.82
	2018	2 (1%)	23 (6%)	103 (28%)	150 (41%)	89 (24%)	3.82
Opportunities to experience local cuisine	2013	35 (3%)	154 (12%)	485 (36%)	443 (33%)	218 (16%)	3.49
	2018	6 (2%)	36 (10%)	134 (37%)	117 (32%)	70 (19%)	3.58
A range of retail shopping Opportunities	2013	36 (3%)	144 (10%)	579 (40%)	489 (33%)	219 (15%)	3.48
	2018	3 (1%)	22 (6%)	132 (35%)	139 (37%)	85 (22%)	3.74
New and different activities to do in town	2013	25 (2%)	159 (13%)	514 (41%)	362 (29%)	203 (16%)	3.44
	2018	4 (1%)	28 (8%)	143 (41%)	116 (33%)	60 (17%)	3.57
Different types of restaurants	2013	31 (2%)	171 (12%)	575 (41%)	447 (32%)	181 (13%)	3.41
	2018	7 (2%)	37 (10%)	148 (39%)	120 (32%)	65 (17%)	3.53
Exciting Nightlife	2013	107 (11%)	248 (25%)	451 (45%)	128 (13%)	67 (7%)	2.8
	2018	16 (6%)	41 (16%)	147 (57%)	37 (14%)	19 (7%)	3.01
Well maintained business and store fronts	2013	15 (1%)	49 (3%)	298 (20%)	697 (48%)	403 (28%)	3.97
	2018	0 (0%)	10 (3%)	47 (12%)	169 (44%)	158 (41%)	4.24
Ample Parking	2013	21 (1%)	78 (5%)	309 (21%)	611 (42%)	436 (30%)	3.94
	2018	10 (3%)	32 (8%)	88 (23%)	138 (36%)	114 (30%)	3.82
Ample Sidewalks	2013	24 (2%)	72 (5%)	297 (20%)	655 (45%)	419 (29%)	3.94
	2018	0 (0%)	9 (2%)	50 (13%)	173 (46%)	148 (39%)	4.21
Acceptable traffic flow in the summer	2013	25 (2%)	63 (5%)	323 (23%)	603 (43%)	387 (28%)	3.9
	2018	6 (2%)	18 (5%)	79 (21%)	162 (43%)	113 (30%)	3.95
Well maintained roads	2013	26 (2%)	88 (6%)	360 (25%)	662 (45%)	334 (23%)	3.81
	2018	1 (<1%)	12 (3%)	66 (17%)	174 (46%)	128 (34%)	4.09
Good signage	2013	24 (2%)	78 (6%)	370 (28%)	517 (39%)	330 (25%)	3.8
	2018	2 (1%)	8 (2%)	83 (22%)	149 (40%)	128 (35%)	4.06
Nice community/county parks	2013	29 (3%)	83 (7%)	352 (30%)	410 (35%)	307 (26%)	3.75
	2018	4 (1%)	13 (4%)	99 (31%)	105 (32%)	103 (32%)	3.9

Gardiner Is	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
A friendly community 2013	15 (1%)	11 (1%)	147 (10%)	588 (38%)	784 (51%)	4.37
2018	0 (0%)	3 (1%)	32 (8%)	115 (30%)	235 (61%)	4.51
Free of debris and litter 2013	19 (1%)	40 (3%)	219 (15%)	626 (43%)	557 (38%)	4.14
2018	1 (<1%)	4 (1%)	37 (10%)	131 (34%)	213 (55%)	4.43
Pedestrian friendly 2013	19 (1%)	50 (3%)	247 (17%)	645 (43%)	530 (36%)	4.08
2018	1 (<1%)	11 (3%)	48 (13%)	168 (44%)	152 (40%)	4.21
A fun place 2013	15 (1%)	54 (4%)	319 (23%)	529 (38%)	494 (35%)	4.02
2018	0 (0%)	8 (2%)	52 (14%)	151 (41%)	162 (43%)	4.25
Well-maintained 2013	19 (1%)	57 (4%)	313 (22%)	648 (45%)	414 (29%)	3.95
2018	2 (1%)	3 (1%)	45 (12%)	168 (44%)	168 (44%)	4.29
Bicycle friendly 2013	28 (2%)	91 (8%)	378 (32%)	406 (34%)	293 (25%)	3.71
2018	7 (2%)	15 (5%)	110 (36%)	86 (28%)	89 (29%)	3.77
A quiet place 2013	34 (2%)	141 (10%)	430 (30%)	503 (35%)	324 (23%)	3.66
2018	7 (2%)	44 (12%)	123 (33%)	126 (34%)	76 (20%)	3.59
A crowded place 2013	193 (14%)	433 (31%)	477 (34%)	184 (13%)	101 (7%)	2.69
2018	33 (9%)	97 (26%)	139 (37%)	74 (20%)	31 (8%)	2.93

Appendix C: Visitor Comments – Positive and negative descriptions

How would you describe Gardiner to Others? Both positives and negatives. (Unedited)

Quaint, historic town. Loved the shops and restaurants.
Nice, small community providing goods and services to Yellowstone
Gateway to Yellowstone; Convenient and less costly than inside the park. "Touristy" feel but nicer than the last time I was here 18 years ago.
Neat town on the outskirts of YNP with a lot of cool shops and historic buildings. It has a little something for everybody. Breath taking views and extremely nice people.
Great!
Love it, everyone is very helpful. Everything is very clean.
Scenic, Nature, Peaceful
Small, calm town with a beautiful view not too many options for breakfast/lunch
Scenic
Old style and scenic.
Cute town, another world. Rustic town, comfortable, easy.
Fun! :)
Small, touristy
Cute little town
Neat, small, homey atmosphere
Friendly, active town
A mecca for those both before and after enjoying the park. Quaint and charming in its architectural fashion and backdrop, the town has what you would need and want being located right outside Yellowstone.
Nice small town.
People are very nice. There are good restaurants to have dinner or lunch. Night life is funny when you know about the parties. I didn't find any negative thing.
It is a good place to do some gift shopping.
Fun, tourist town.
Small, cute park town
Quaint, tourist (but not in a bad way)
Nice place
Touristy, but otherwise beautiful
Quaint, convenient
Interesting
Typical town outside NP that has a variety of eateries, shops, and adventure trips tied to them of NP/outdoor experience.
Friendly, lots of fun stuff/stores
Very quaint and peaceful
Quaint, historic, rustic, friendly.
Nice town to stay for Yellowstone

Nice stop- lots of shops.
Rather quiet for a touristic spot - There could be home cafe's
Beautiful and friendly locals
Small but cute! I've only seen this rest stop area
Cute little western oasis with espresso and good breakfast.
Western, frontier, touristy, breakfast, cute, espresso
Great small town
Friendly, vibrant, beautiful
Small town
Small tourism town outside of Yellowstone North Entrance- very cute and quaint.
Cute little shops by the mountains
Cute small town w lots of rafting guides. Nice to visit
Tourist town at the North Entrance of the park. Lots of pricy dinner options. Great launch point for raft trips.
Quaint, nice stores
Quaint, western appeal, laidback
Awesome small town
Friendly, interesting, beautiful scenery No serious negatives
Small, touristy
Quaint, beautiful, picturesque
Gateway to Yellowstone
Cute/touristy, convenient to Yellowstone entrance, nice views
Gateway to Yellowstone
Friendly, small, lots to do
Great place
Positives - much shopping, close to park Negatives - none so far
Very charming
Very nice area, cute town. Good for tourists
Quaint and peaceful, not overrun like most tourist spots. Very friendly
Home town feel at the end of perfection.
Town looks old
Quaint town, welcoming, warm
Near Yellowstone
Fun town, great food and landscape
Quiet and charming
Small and friendly
Rustic, clean, mostly a non-touristy atmosphere. Food is expensive but not unexpected for the area.
Cute, small town conveniently located outside of N entrance to Yellowstone
Clean town. Nice people
Very friendly and easy going
Peaceful, easy access to YSP, good food options.
Quaint little western town

Quaint small town
Wonderful trip. Travelodge beautiful and close by. Yellowstone wonderful. Gardiner quaint town
It's beautiful, but housing is not good
Nice little town
Too touristy. Segway tours of Jardine.
Small cute town at the gate of Yellowstone park
Small town close to Yellowstone
Easily accessible from Yellowstone
Relatively quiet town, with all amenities, well situated of Yellowstone...pretty.
Cute touristy town near Yellowstone w/ good pizza
Small tour town
Small town
Eclectic
Small, pricey
Nice town, friendly people, good selection
Amazing and friendly
Nice small town atmosphere
Clean and beautiful. Nice shops
Touristy
Nice small town
Great small town with western atmosphere
Historic, quaint and a little busy!
Cute
Spenny
Small, but generally charming. Lacks some amenities, but plenty to occupy us during our stay. Internet is spotty
Nice town, tourist friendly
Small, touristy, local
Touristy, quaint, gateway
Positives are: small town, lots of places to stay, friendly people Negatives are: No hospital
Nice town, great small shops. Friendly
Beautiful old west town feel
Quaint, family friendly
Montana-esque
Small, quaint, not overly commercialized
Pretty
Town in the middle of grand beauty. Cute shops, well kept.
Quaint friendly atmosphere; very welcoming
Relaxing. Breathtaking.
Nice place, chill people, nice.
Positive
We love Gardiner

Small, cool town outside of YNP
Touristy- positive and negative
Nice city
Place at the edge of the park where you can buy more stuff and do more things.
Gateway community
Convenient, busy, unique, crowded, tourist town
Good location for supplies/food outside of YNP
Very pleasant people, welcoming.
It is a fun little town with a great photography shop and a lovely entrance to Yellowstone
A cool little town to come learn about the park, as well as get some lunch and do some shopping.
A beautiful town and wonderful shopping.
Nice, quaint
Beautiful/ old town
Nice and quaint
Quaint, fun, cozy, scenic, popular
Cute, friendly, touristy, convenient and close to Yellowstone
Beautiful
A stopping off place as we come through quaint historic
Nice and cute
Nice town on the North side of Yellowstone
Small, eclectic
Top of YNP. Looks new at Drive Inn
Cozy and wonderful
Cute/people
Small, beautiful, great shops
Adventurous, urban planning hodge podge, lots of tourism, busy, scenic, people-centric, friendly
Quaint, pleasant, friendly
(Great place - has grown substantially since I was here approximately 10-15 years ago
Clean tourist driven community. Nice and clean abundant small shops.
Good place, we stay here when we don't camp.
Nice, small town, good restaurants
Nice little town
Friendly
Very beautiful
Remote, mountainous, diverse, western, authentic
A movie set from "Blazing Saddles"
Nice small town with fun stores
Cute tourist town. Lots of shops and bars
Very friendly
Small town, good local spots. Cute town and great places. A bit small but pretty touristy w/ great views.
Small, laid back, better than west gate relaxing vibe.

Quiet little town on the outside of Yellowstone's North Entrance. Touristy town with restaurants and shops.
Tourist town, quiet, quaint.
Nice town outside Yellowstone. Great for essentials before hiking.
Small town, tourist trap. Nice and hit
Touristy
Small, cute
Great little west town. Pretty lively. Very friendly. Just about the right size
Place where you are in Yellowstone. No wi-fi- good escape for communication
A nice place to visit
Quaint town by river. Nice so close to Yellowstone. Beautiful views/scenery
Kind of a shithole
Friendly but not overly touristy
A local, tourist community catering to visitors
Lots of cool shops
Pros: Nature, wildlife, recreation, safe Cons:
Beautiful country with a lot of activities to offer
A fun spot for tourists to stop by on their way into the park.
Looks like a whitewater rafting town.
Nice quiet little town
Cute, quaint.
Quaint, newer looking town
Quiet, Maybury like town
Quiet, calm, peaceful
Po Dunk/ Calm
Tourist shopping
Beautiful-(No Parking) restrooms - trashcans
Great little town with great food and shops.
Very cute, small, family oriented.
Small town, friendly people, limited food options.
Quaint mountain town. Absolutely beautiful!
Quaint scenic
Seems like a cool little town
Gardiner is a beautiful setting, third time I have been here. We stay here when we visit Yellowstone
Nice place
Nice little town North of Yellowstone
Yellowstone frontier town
Beautiful (very). Too many tourists
Reminds us of Colorado mountain towns (Crested Butte specifically)
Cute/fun
A pretty isolated outpost with totally solid amenities
Quaint, picturesque

Small town, western, brink of Yellowstone, adventure
Cute, small enough to navigate easily, but big enough to have many things. Nice than West Yellowstone
Quaint. Quiet. Peaceful.
Beautiful/scenery
Cute town, western town
Great little tourist town just outside YNP. Nice stop to get stuff to eat
Quaint, cute, homey, wild west
Small town, homey vibe. Slower vibe
Small town, lots of burgers and ice cream
Small town right next to Yellowstone access. "Fine" level of amenities, slow pace, relaxing.
Scenic, inviting, attractive
Beautiful place, really like it and the rafting. Good shopping.
Quaint but at the same time, a bit "touristy". Good restaurants and shops. Little grocery is great. Nice outfitters, rafting tours, horseback riding, etc.
Good place to stay to visit Yellowstone
Country town
Peaceful, many options for food and entertainment, shopping
Small, interesting
Excellent, most beautiful place on earth
Rustic old west town
A pretty cool place
Small town, cute, lots to do, very close to YNP
Cute little town. Good option while visiting Yellowstone
Quaint and pretty!
Small, expensive during tourist season. Native Gardiner folks are friendly
Nice, quaint
Nice town, very friendly people
Charming, down to earth
Quaint
Quaint. Touristy. Nice stores. Beautiful river running through it
The area is beautiful. Gardiner per se is a perfect town for the area
It's a nice place with kind people.
Laid back. People are very nice
Small, walkable, food can be expensive. Parts of downtown look old (not in a good way). Some shops are nice in that they have unique items.
Friendly, lots of places to eat
It's ok. Very touristy, but located in a great spot. I wish there were more options for food and in-town entertainment. Reception isn't the best, either. From all the gateway towns I've been in, it's very middle-of-the-pack.
Cute little town, lots of shops and restaurants
Friendly, clean, good food.

Charming, friendly, beautiful.
Adorable little town in Montana outside of Yellowstone.
Beautiful rolling hills
A small, weird place in Yellowstone
Fantastic
Quaint mountain town that makes for a good stop after visiting Yellowstone
Seems like a nice place. The locals we've spoken to have been really friendly.
A lovely small town that recalls the "old days" at the same time it embraces important current issues, like recycling.
Cute town but the restaurants offer very vert limited choices. But the Perk ice cream shop is awesome. Very clean-people friendly.
Cute town but restaurants need better menus. Ice cream is excellent.
Small and quaint
Nice city, good food, very close to Yellowstone.
Very pretty city. My 1st visit and very impressed. Love the ice cream.
Small quiet town with plenty of activities for visitors.
Cute little tourist town
Picturesque and friendly
National Park entrance town
Small but beautiful
Small town at Yellowstone where my in laws live.
Epitomizes Montana. Big mountains, space around ya.
Wide-open, Yellowstone gateway.
Impressive views. Nice shops.
Beautiful
Friendly, beautiful
Friendly old western town
Feels like a charming little town. Like the 1960s. Its cute.
Fun, rustic old west town
Beautiful town. People are extremely town.
Gardiner is a cool small town with genuine people. A must see for people going to Yellowstone.
Good shops, friendly people.
Small and pleasantly quiet.
Very fun, nature like
Nice city. Close to the park
Nice gateway town to YNP with food and lodging, comfortable, friendly and clean.
Nice small town atmosphere. Would be nice place to stay/eat/shop with easy access to park.
Small town with just enough stores/shops to meet needs while traveling.
Cute, old town, lots of fun shops
Cute town beautiful views, touristy.
Fun, old town cute shops
Cute little town

Small touristy vacation town
Quaint little mountain town. Good views. Good reasonably priced, just too few eating places. Need more accommodations for those traveling with pets.
Gardiner is very busy but stays like Montana should be. Very cool.
Busy during tourist season but well trafficed and directed.
Small town, cool mainstreet vibe.
Amazing little town! Very welcoming, walkable, and quaint.
Very walkable. Friendly. Eating out is a little expensive.
Beautiful place to stay.
Beautiful, scenery
Pretty little mountain town
Quaint, fun
Fun town
Nice mountain town
Wonderful wild life, great outdoor activities, wholesome for the family, great vacation spot. A little expensive for dining, gas, etc.
Beautiful scenery and very nice people.
Border town of the park
A lot of people
Cute little town at the entrance of Yellowstone
Quaint, quiet, hometown friendly.
Great place to stay outside of the park. "Historic" and "original" gateway to Yellowstone. Fun place to stay
Small, old-time, quaint, friendly
Great town, friendly fun, great ice cream. Friendly people, wonderful town.
Very nice. Friendly people. Beautiful scenery
Beautiful scenery, cute town. Reminds me of Manitou Springs Co.
Beautiful scenery. Quaint town.
Very quaint and lovely town lots of things to see and shops to visit.
People have been very friendly and helpful. Folks have asked about our vacation plans.
We love Gardiner. Always looking to come back
Awesome
Neat town, cowboy-like town. Fun, historic
Beautiful and sweet town
Friendly, delicious, "cowboys" grill. Quiet small town; few people.
Quaint small town, nice restaurants, shops, etc. Beautiful scenery
Fun, friendly
Compact
Nice quiet
This is a cute small town with friendly people
Very positive
Nice town to visit. Great scenery and people.

Small, friendly town
A sweet little town we've enjoyed visiting!
Picturesque. People are very friendly, quiet.
Quaint, kinda cool
Nice beautiful land and town
Enjoyable. A lot to do, tourist attraction.
Cute town
Cute, nice town
Quaint, off the path
Nice, refreshing
Beautiful
Cool little town with old time feel
A nice small town with a western vibe
Nice city. Seems original, The atmosphere is very nice = real.
It's a commercial outpost at the N.W. entrance of Yellowstone. Fun, easy to get in and out of. People are helpful.
Tourist town of the nice variety.
Nice town, very clean friendly people
Quaint Rustic Town
Very quaint and friendly town! Beautiful!
Small town, very friendly
Friendly, convenient to park, walkable, cute!
Tourist town. Friendly. Easy to get around. Scenic.
Small town, touristy, but everything closes early. It is a good portal to Yellowstone.
Neat little town
Quaint little town
Beautiful & scenic
Cool town
Cute little tourist town
Quaint little town
North entrance to Yellowstone
Dry & hot. Quaint. Beautiful.
Charming, lots to see and do
Fun place in the summer but too expensive!
Beautiful view!
Perfect escape from Yellowstone
Beautiful, scenic, breath taking
Pos: Old timey Neg: Cell service
Fantastic
Quaint
Cute shops, attractive store fronts
fun, enjoyable

Pretty scenic, clean, welcoming
Fun; informative about activities in area. Kind of touristy- typical souvenirs
Positive and good fly shops
Welcoming. We have only been here for 2 days but overall very pleasant.
Cute western tourist town
Nice town
Quaint. Cute. Friendly.
Small western town
Western like. Small. Cute shops & restaurants
Cute old western town- looks legit, less pricy than in park.
The wild west
Cute town north of Yellowstone
Beautiful, must visit.
Small town atmosphere near fun activities and nature, rocky mountains, and Yellowstone. Fun activities include river rafting, horseback riding, hiking and tours, zip-lining.
Small town with old downtown shopping area at north gate of Yellowstone
Quaint
Very open to visitors
Very clean, neat & quaint.
Western, interesting, fun
Quaint little western town. Coming from the parks (Yellowstone & Teton) we are seeing private homes for the 1st time.
Quaint little town
Beautiful and peaceful. All you want when in Yellowstone
Nice

Appendix D: Other Visitor Comments

Unedited Other Comments

Montana is awesome
I'd come and visit again
Beautiful!
Having lots of fun :)
Love the area
More vegetarian options.
Great driving. Very scenic.
We came here a second time to find food better than in Canyon Village.
Left the park especially to come back to Gardiner for breakfast.
Gardiner Forever!!
Gardiner is a great town with easy access to the best national park in the world. Yellowstone NP :)
Better wifi in VRBO would be appreciated
I love this place, I come here every summer!
Needs more diversity in food allergies!!!! Vegan, Gluten.
Beautiful state
Couldn't find a local bakery...
Good trip so far. Traffic in park kinda bad
Absolutely lovely
I always stop in Gardiner. I come every summer for the last decade.
Drove here from Yellowstone to visit Montana a little bit. Didn't know what to expect in Gardiner but happy there is cell service and food.
Restaurants open earlier for lunch (for EST zone visitors)
I really enjoy it here. It's beautiful
Had a great time
Looking forward to a great trip.
Montana is dope
Not real touristy
The "real" gateway to Yellowstone!!!
Yellowstone is a great place. We will drive the 8 (loop) road
I absolutely love it here. From someone coming from "paradise" it's perfect here.
I like this town
Really glad we stopped!
Slow food service, not understanding why there's extra fees for groups larger than 6 for appetizers.
Jim Spooner says Hi! :)
Nice town.
Love Montana in General!
Loved the wildlife near our cabin!
Very nice here

With a group of high school age Boy Scouts
Great place to stop in for a visit.
Could make it look a little more quaint
Saddle shop fantastic. Came out 10 years ago and wanted to visit the saddle shop again.
Seasonal park employee
Great place to stay
Not a very over populated entrance to Yellowstone which is great.
I can't wait to come back!
It's lovely here
Only here for 20 min when filled out. NA in things left blank
Great town
Nice place!
Great time would come back
Very nice
Gardiner Rocks!
Go Griz!
Good luck with your research!
Thanks for the survey!
We are in Gardiner most often in the winter when it is very quiet.
Fun Place!
Ice cream store needs to do a better job w/ their whip cream. Friendly/service oriented. Mammoth Springs Hotel was disgusting. No wi-fi in Park causes would help to be informed w/ that.
Great place, will be back
Nice project
(6) Keep up the good work on a great little town. P.S. Buy American goods, not made in China. Rip off/ Riverside Cabins very dirty
Gardiner was a great place to stay while visiting Yellowstone. We enjoyed our stay at the Black Bear Inn.
Cowboy's was a great place to eat!!
Enjoyed our time here
Great time
Lost a lot of old Montana flavor. Honestly, I'm sad.
Love the atmosphere. Much more pleasant than the West Gate :)
Beautiful scenery
We will definitely be back!
Great town! I look forward to returning.
Has improved over the years!
Nice little town
Wonderful place for me and my family
Pretty mountain town
Strange to see deer in the crosswalk

We are staying in the BW hotel. We ate next door not knowing what was around the corner across the park entrance. Wish I would have known more communication.
Not been here long, but looks likes a nice place.
Carter is very nice.
Great trip and place to visit
Beautiful place!
We'll see this place again!
This is my wife's hometown :)
Wish we could have chosen to stay here
I'm glad you're doing this