

Community Opinion Survey

General

The Village of Otter Lake Planning Commission conducted a community opinion survey to involve as many of the Village's residents as possible in the planning process for the Master Land Use Plan. Knowing that personal time is limited and schedules busy, it was felt this was the best way to engage the community.

The mailing list was compiled from the Village tax roll and questionnaires were sent to each taxpayer of record. One Hundred Seventy-nine (179) mailings were sent, each contained two (2) questionnaires. In addition to the mailing, questionnaires were made available at the Village offices for any resident of the Village not on the tax roll. Of the 358 questionnaires mailed, 8 questionnaires (4 envelopes) were returned as undeliverable, and 71 completed questionnaires were received or 20% of the questionnaires delivered.

No demographic information was asked of the respondents, although some responses did include a name or return address.

Village Strengths

Eleven (11) items were identified as being strengths of the Village. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with each item and to rank those strengths from most important to less important.

- *Lake and Natural Features*; ranked the highest with 97% of the responds being positive and 100% agreement that this is a strength of the Village. This was the only question asked that everyone agreed on.
- *Quiet Place to Live*; ranked second with 84% of the responds being positive.
- *Rural (up north) Character of the Village* also was ranked high with 83% positive responds.
- *Village Campground and Park/Beach*; received 78% positive responds.
- *Community Supported Events*; received 70% positive responds.
- *Rails-to-Trails Trailway*; also was viewed as a positive with 67% agreement, however some respondents expressed a fear of possible increased crime without proper maintenance and supervision of the trail.
- *Local Businesses*; the major of respondents viewed it as a strength, however only 58% give it a positive rating.

While the remaining questions were still viewed as strengths of the Village, 50% or more of the respondents ranked them in the lower percentile.

- *Municipal Sewer System*; the vast major of the respondents viewed it as a strength, however 54% give it a low ranking as a strength.
- *School System*; respondents were about equally split on agreement or being undecided as to whether this item was a strength with 58% of the responds ranking it low.
- *Local Library Branch*; again respondents agreed this is a strength, but 79% ranked it low.
- *Local Historical Museum*; 83% of the respondents ranked this item as the least strength of the Village.

Village Weakness

Twelve (12) items were identified as being weaknesses of the Village. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with each item and to rank those weaknesses from greatest concern to a minor concern.

- *Lack of Pride in Ownership* and *Lack of Retail Businesses and Shops*; each tied with 74% of the respondents agreeing the these two items are the greatest concern facing the Village.
- *Number of Rental Properties, Absentee Landlords*; was also ranked high on the list of concerns with 66% of the respondents viewing this as a major weakness.
- *Lack of Unity Between the Lapeer Side and Genesee Side of the Village* and the *Village Being Split Between Two Counties*; also was viewed as a concern with 61% and 58% respectively, agreeing that these items are a weakness.
- *Poor or Lack of Police Response Time*; respondents were about equally split between agreeing, disagreeing and being undecided on this item with 56% of the respondents agreeing it is a weakness.
- *Low Community Involvement with the Village*; again respondents were about equally split on agreement, disagreement or being undecided with 53% viewing it as a weakness.

Of the remaining questions, the respondents either strongly disagreed or were about equally split about these items being a weaknesses of the Village.

- *Lack of Sidewalks Throughout the Village*; the majority of respondents did not view this as a weakness with 78% ranking it as a minor or of no concern.
- *Lack of a Municipal Water System*; the vast majority of respondents did not view this as a weakness with 74% ranking it as a minor or of no concern.
- *Lack of Financial Resources for the Village*; although a majority of respondents agreed with this being a weakness, 58% ranked it as a minor concern. However, several responders wrote "Taxes too High" under Other in this question.
- *Lack of Self-Promotion of the Village*; on this item the respondents were about equally split with 57% ranking it a minor concern.
- *Lack of Direction/Leadership for the Village*; again respondents were about equally split with a slight major disagreeing with this being a weakness. Fifty-five (55%) percent of the respondents ranked it as a minor concern.

Residential Land Use

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of questions regarding residential land use within the Village. Some questions asked to rank the importance of some of the items.

- Respondents were in 91% agreement that future development should avoid disturbing the natural features of the Village. Of the four natural features respondents were asked to rank, preserving the *lake shoreline* and *scenic views* ranked highest, with preserving *existing open (undeveloped) land* ranking lowest. Respondents were equally split on the preservation of *wetlands*, however most wetlands within the Village may already be federally or state protected.
- Regarding the questions or allowing different housing types or restricting the type of housing within a given residential development, the respondents were about equally split with 54% and 52% respectively, disagreeing. In one of the questions the respondents felt

there should be restrictions and in the other question they felt there should be no restrictions.

- Respondents agreed that small commercial and office uses should be allowed in residential developments with 56% and 61% respectively, agreeing.
- The vast major, 82% of the respondents, agreed that home businesses should also be allowed within residential developments.
- Again, the majority of respondents agreed that accessory apartments, "granny flats", should be allowed in single family developments.
- Of the six types of housing that respondents were asked to rank as to type that should be encouraged within the Village, *single family, moderate* and *low density* ranked the highest. Respondents were about equally split on *single family, rural* and *senior citizen housing* ranking each of them near the middle. *Single family, attached units and/or condos* and *multi-family, townhouses and low rise apartments* ranked the lowest. The major of respondents felt that the development of multi-family, townhouses and low rise apartments within the Village should not be encouraged.

Commercial Land Use

Again, respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of questions regarding commercial land use with the Village. Some questions asked to rank the importance of some of the items.

- Respondents overwhelming agreed (95%) that commercial uses and businesses that meet the needs of local residents should be encouraged.
- Respondents were also in agreement (77%), that commercial uses and businesses that meet of tourists (campers) should be encouraged.
- Two-thirds (67%) of the respondents agreed that commercial uses, such as offices, small retail shops and eateries should be allowed in the residential structures that borders the central business district.
- Two-thirds (67%) of the respondents were also in strong agreement that strip developments should not be encouraged.
- When asked where commercial development should occur, 88% of the respondents felt it should be in the current downtown (Detroit and Genesee Streets) area. Development along Lake / Otter Lake road was ranked as the next best area with Lake Road, west of downtown rank slightly higher. Commercial development along Hemmingway Lake Road was strongly opposed (67%). Respondents were in very strong agreement (82%) that commercial development should be limited to designated areas, its location does matter.

Recreational Land Use

Finally, respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of questions regarding recreational opportunities within the Village.

- Regarding the Village campground and beach/park, 61% of the respondents felt that improvements are needed versus 39% that felt no improvements are necessary. Respondents were equally split, 50% vs 50%, that the campground should be expanded. Those against expanding the campground overwhelmingly expressed a concern of too many motor boats and jet skis on the lake, and the lack of lake rules being enforced.
- Respondents also agreed (71%) that the Village should construct and maintain a playground area for children.

- As noted in the Village's Strengths above, two-thirds of the respondents viewed the Southern Links Trailway as a positive for the Village, although some expressed a concern of possible increase in crime if the trailway is not maintained and monitored.