



Town of Forest Comprehensive Planning Public Opinion Survey Report, 2008

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Executive Summary

In October 2008, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls mailed 285 surveys to Forest Town residents and property owners. A reminder postcard and a second survey were sent to non-respondents. The overall response rate was 58 percent (165 completed questionnaires). The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 5.0 percent with 95 percent confidence. Statistical tests indicate that “non-response bias” is not a problem with this sample. The demographic profile of the sample contains more male respondents and fewer young people than would be expected.

One impression that SRC analysts have of the Town of Forest, based on our analysis of these data, is of a remarkably cohesive population. Throughout the survey, we check to see if different demographic groups have different opinions about the issues being considered. For example, are the opinions about land use issues held by women statistically different than those of men, do younger residents view things differently than older residents, do people who have lived in the Town for longer periods have different ideas than those more newly arrived, and so on. In this report, there are remarkably few instances in which there are deep demographic divides on a particular issue. There are also few systematic differences of opinion across the topics covered in this survey. It may look different on the ground during meetings of the Plan Commission, but relative to the many communities with which we have worked on land use planning surveys, there appears to be relatively few significant differences of opinion about land use issues in this community.

Respondents said they are generally pleased with the quality of life in the Town. Nine in ten rated the quality of life as good or excellent, few rate it as fair, and none said it was poor. The factors that induce people to live in Forest are being near family and friends, small town atmosphere, and agriculture.

Majorities gave good or excellent ratings to the Town Hall, land use regulations, schools, emergency services, cemeteries and law enforcement. The following services received more fair or poor ratings than good or excellent: animal control, economic development, junk control, elderly programs, and transportation for handicapped and elderly residents.

Direct mailings and newsletters are respondents preferred methods to receive information from the Town.

Large majorities of respondents indicated that they have a high level of concern about preserving the Town’s various natural resources (groundwater, surface water, air, etc.) and are willing to see regulations and taxes used for their protection. At the same time, respondents did not support using a purchase of development rights program as a potential tool for preserving prime farmland.

About half of Forest residents see a need for senior citizen housing and affordable housing in the Town. About one in four said more starter homes are needed.

Forest respondents want to see productive agricultural land used in agriculture and are wary of seeing it converted to residential or commercial uses. That being said, half of respondents would only allow the expansion of large farms (500+ animal units) outside a 2-mile radius from incorporated areas. Solid majorities also feel that the visual impact of developments should be considered and that a minimum lot size is necessary for rural developments (1 to 5 acres is the preferred minimum acreage). Slightly more than half said that landowners should not be allowed to develop their land in any way they see fit.

More than 80 percent of respondents said that the current road network meets the Town's needs. Half did not see a need for more biking or walking lanes along public roadways. Respondents had split opinions regarding designating areas for commercial or industrial development along Highway 64.

Respondents were not willing to use tax revenues to recruit new businesses to the Town. Over half said they would prefer new commercial or industrial buildings be built in the hamlet of Forest. Among various types of businesses that are deemed important or essential for the Town of Forest, agriculture was the dominant choice. No other type of business was chosen by more than one in four respondents.

Respondents identified protection of agricultural resources, ensuring public safety, and protecting environmental/cultural resources as the most important functions of Forest Town government.

Respondents said their favorite things about living in Forest are that it is rural/agricultural, peaceful and quiet, and has a small town feeling.

Survey Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions of residents about community planning issues regarding the future of the Town of Forest. The survey serves as a key component of the public participation portion of the comprehensive plan for the Town. The Town chose to work with the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls to survey residents of the Town of Forest about vital planning issues.

Survey Methods

In October 2008, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls mailed surveys to 285 Town residents and property owners. The mailing was followed by a post card reminder and a second mailing to non-respondents. The SRC received 165 completed surveys, a 58 percent response rate. The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 5.0 percent with 95 percent confidence.

Any survey has to be concerned with “non-response bias”. Non-response bias refers to a situation in which people who don’t return a questionnaire have opinions that are systematically different from the opinions of those who return their surveys. **Based upon a standard statistical analysis that is described in Appendix A, the Survey Research Center (SRC) concludes that there is little evidence that non-response bias is a concern for this sample.**

In short, the data gathered in this survey is expected to accurately reflect public opinion about the planning issues facing the Town of Forest.

In addition to the numeric responses, respondents provided additional written comments which were compiled by the SRC from the surveys. **Appendix B to this report contains the complete compilation of comments.**

Appendix C contains a copy of the survey questionnaire with a quantitative summary of responses by question.

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents to the Town of Forest Comprehensive Planning Public Opinion Survey. Where comparable data were available from the 2000 Census of Population and Housing, they were included to indicate the degree to which the sample represents the underlying adult population in the Town.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents							
Gender	Count	Male	Female				
Survey	146	64%	36%				
Census (18+)	421	52%	48%				
Age 18+	Count	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Sample	150	1%	8%	11%	25%	28%	27%
Census	421	10%	16%	24%	19%	15%	16%
Employment Status (Age 16+)	Count	Full-Time	Part-Time	Self	Unemp	Retired	
Sample	145	34%	28%	10%	4%	24%	
Census	446	63%		11%	4%	22%	
Housing	Count	Own	Rent	Other			
Sample	151	97%	2%	1%			
Census	203	93%	7%				
Number in Sample Households	Count	0	1	2	3+		
Adults	151		11%	77%	13%		
Children (sample)	140	74%	11%	11%	5%		
Children (Census)	203	60%	40%				
Income Range	Count	< \$15,000	\$15 - \$24,999	\$25 - \$49,999	\$50 - \$74,999	\$75 - \$99,999	\$100,000+
Sample	139	7%	14%	30%	28%	7%	13%
Census	200	7%	10%	32%	22%	17%	13%
Length Town Resident	Count	<1	1 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 24	25+	
Sample	147	2%	10%	13%	22%	53%	

The sample has a higher proportion of male respondents than would have been expected. The SRC tested the data and concludes that there is no evidence that gender bias is a concern for this sample. Only one question (#28c) contained a noteworthy difference of opinion between men and women in the sample.

The sample had a higher proportion of respondents age 45 and above. Our experience is that younger residents in most jurisdictions are less likely to participate in surveys than are their older neighbors.

There were slightly fewer renters in the sample than would have been expected. Direct comparisons to the Census data are complicated by the inclusion of non-resident property owners in the survey, since the demographic profile of this group is not known. But it is probable that non-resident property owners are less likely to be in the younger demographic age groups and are less likely to be renters.

The sample also had more households in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 annual income bracket and fewer in the \$75,000 to \$99,999 bracket. Comparisons to the 2000 Census data are tenuous due to the age of the data.

The data in Table 1 show that the Town of Forest has a substantial proportion of long-time residents. Half have lived in the Town for at least 25 years. Twelve percent have live in Forest for fewer than five years.

As we analyze the data, we will identify when demographic groups have significantly different views.

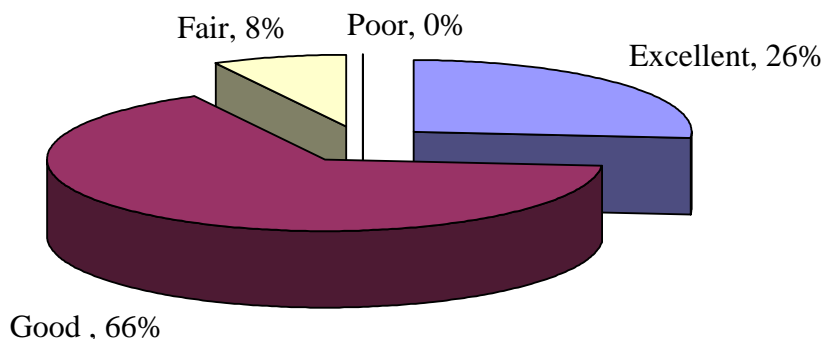
In late 2008 the SRC conducted a public opinion survey on comprehensive planning issues for the St. Croix County Planning and Zoning Department. Where there are similar questions, the SRC will compare the results between the Town and County surveys.

Quality of Life

The initial section of the survey asked respondents a series of questions about the quality of life in the Town of Forest. Chart 1 shows that 9 of 10 Forest residents felt that the overall quality of life in the Town is good (66%) or excellent (26%). There was remarkable uniformity of opinion, with no significant differences among the demographic groups.

In a similar question on the St. Croix County survey that went to all areas of the County, 90 percent of County residents rated the overall quality of life as good or excellent.

Chart 1. Rating of Overall Quality of Life in Forest



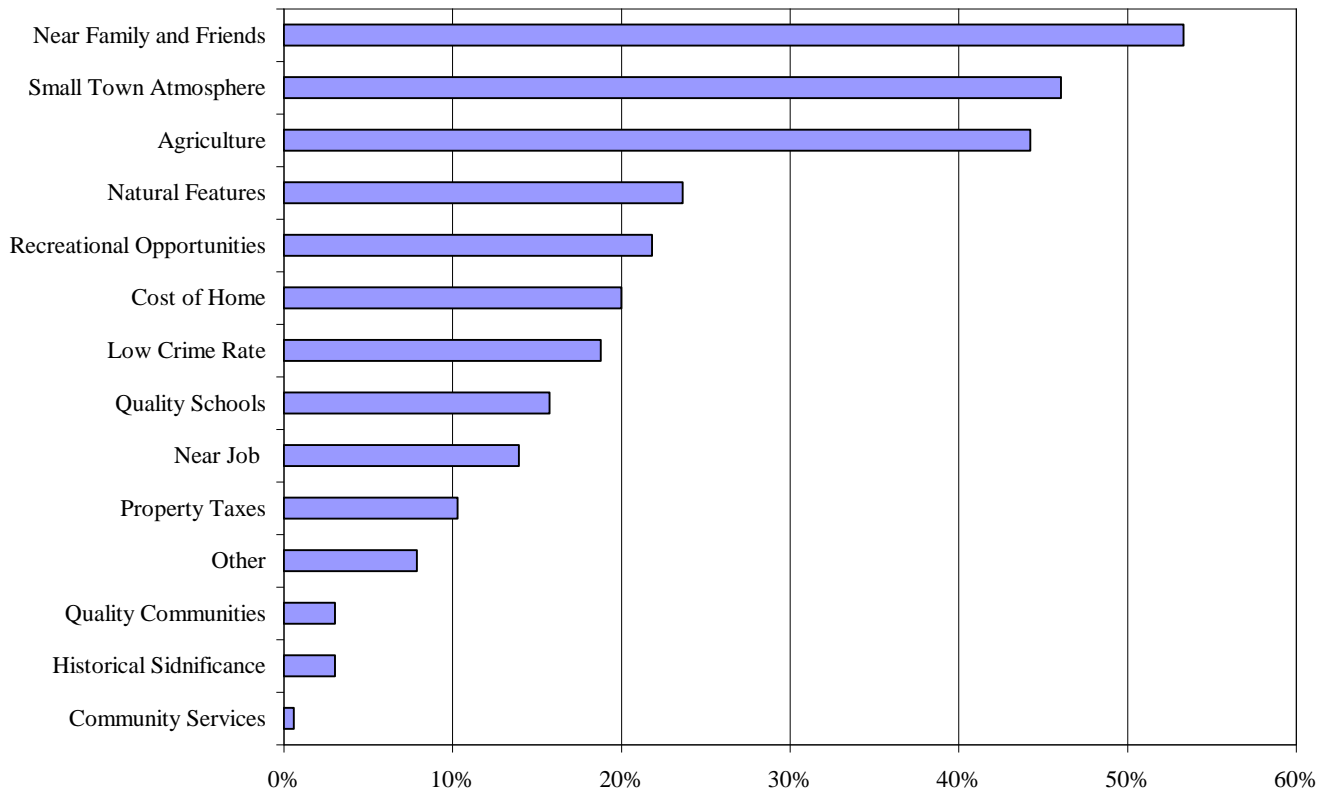
Some of the key reasons for residents' satisfaction with life in Forest are summarized in Chart 2. Respondents were asked to identify the three most important reasons they have chosen to live in the Town. Being near family and friends stands out at the top, having been included in their top three reasons by 53 percent of the respondents. It is also clear that small town atmosphere and agriculture are important reasons for residing in the Town, with 44 percent and 42 percent respectively placing them in their top three.

There is a substantial drop-off to the next most important reasons for living in the Town. These include natural features (24%), recreational opportunities (22%), cost of home (20%), and low crime rate (19%).

Single adult households were more likely to include small town atmosphere among their top three, and households with \$50,000 or more annual income were more likely to have chosen agriculture among their top reasons. Residents who have lived in Forest for 25 or more years were more likely to include agriculture and being near family and friends among their top three reasons but were less likely to include natural features.

The county-wide comprehensive planning survey included a similar question that contained some of the same choices. Small town atmosphere was also among the top three for the county as a whole. Being near family and friends was slightly less important, ranking fifth in the county survey, while agriculture was ranked in tenth place.

Chart 2. Top Reason for Living in the Town of Forest



Programs and Services

In Chart 3 the ratings citizens gave to Town of Forest services are grouped into “Good” and “Excellent” (top bar in each pair) and “Fair” and “Poor” (the bottom bar in each pair). Between 55 and 70 percent gave good to excellent ratings to land use regulations, schools, emergency services, cemeteries law enforcement, and garbage/recycling service.

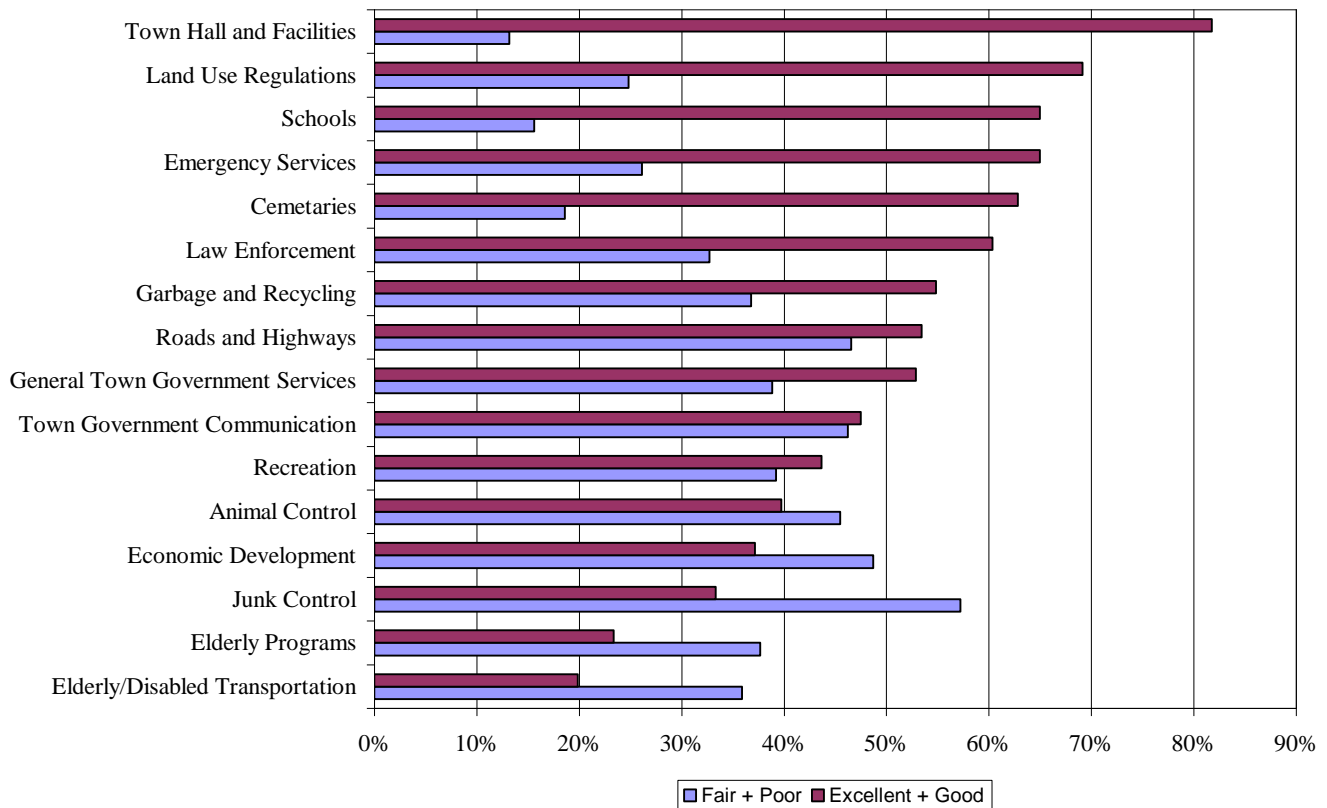
About half gave favorable ratings (good or excellent) to garbage/recycling, roads and highways, general town government services, and town government communication. Slightly less than half of respondents gave favorable ratings to recreation.

Nearly as many respondents rated the following items as fair or poor as rated them good or excellent: roads and highways, town government communication, and recreation.

In contrast, the following items received more “fair” or “poor” ratings than “good” or “excellent” ratings: animal control, economic development, junk control, elderly programs, and transportation for handicapped and elderly residents. It is noteworthy, however, that a high proportion of respondents (approximately four in ten) chose the “not applicable” response regarding elderly programs and transportation for handicapped and elderly.

Long-term residents gave higher ratings to emergency services and cemeteries. Respondents with \$50,000 or more annual income were more likely to give higher ratings to economic development and cemeteries.

Chart 3. Rating of Town of Forest Services



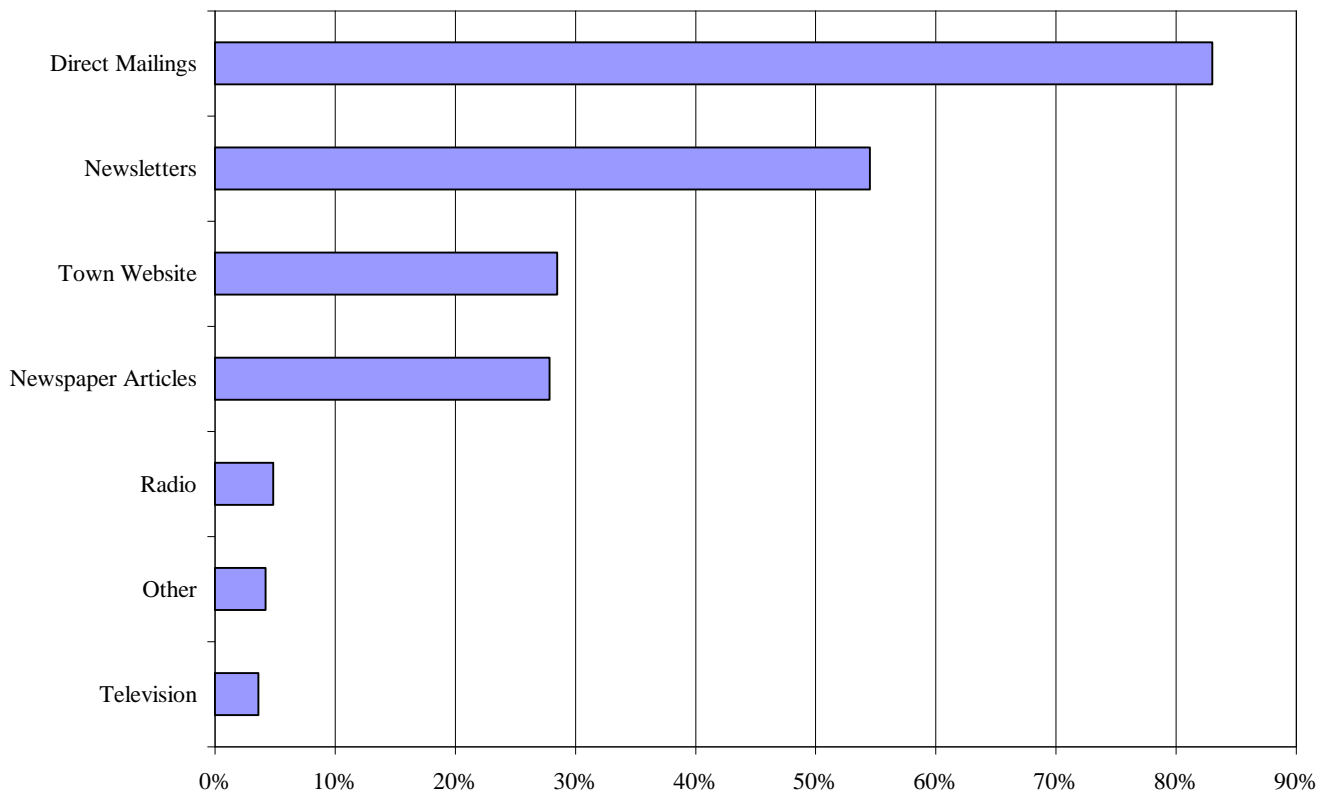
Communication

Respondents were asked to identify the two most effective ways for the Town of Forest to provide people with information about its services and programs. Chart 4 summarizes the responses of Forest citizens and indicates that direct mail and newsletters are, by a large measure, the preferred information conduits. Other surveys of this type that the SRC has done around the state have consistently identified direct mailings and newsletters as preferred means of getting information about public services.

Among the demographic groups, respondents age 45 and over had a stronger preference of direct mailings, while single adult households were less likely to prefer newspapers. Residents who have lived in Forest for at least 25 years were less likely to prefer an Internet web site.

In a related question, half of the respondents said they would be likely (43%) or very likely (7%) to attend visioning sessions and other public participation events as related to comprehensive planning.

Chart 4. Communication Preferences



Natural and Cultural Resources

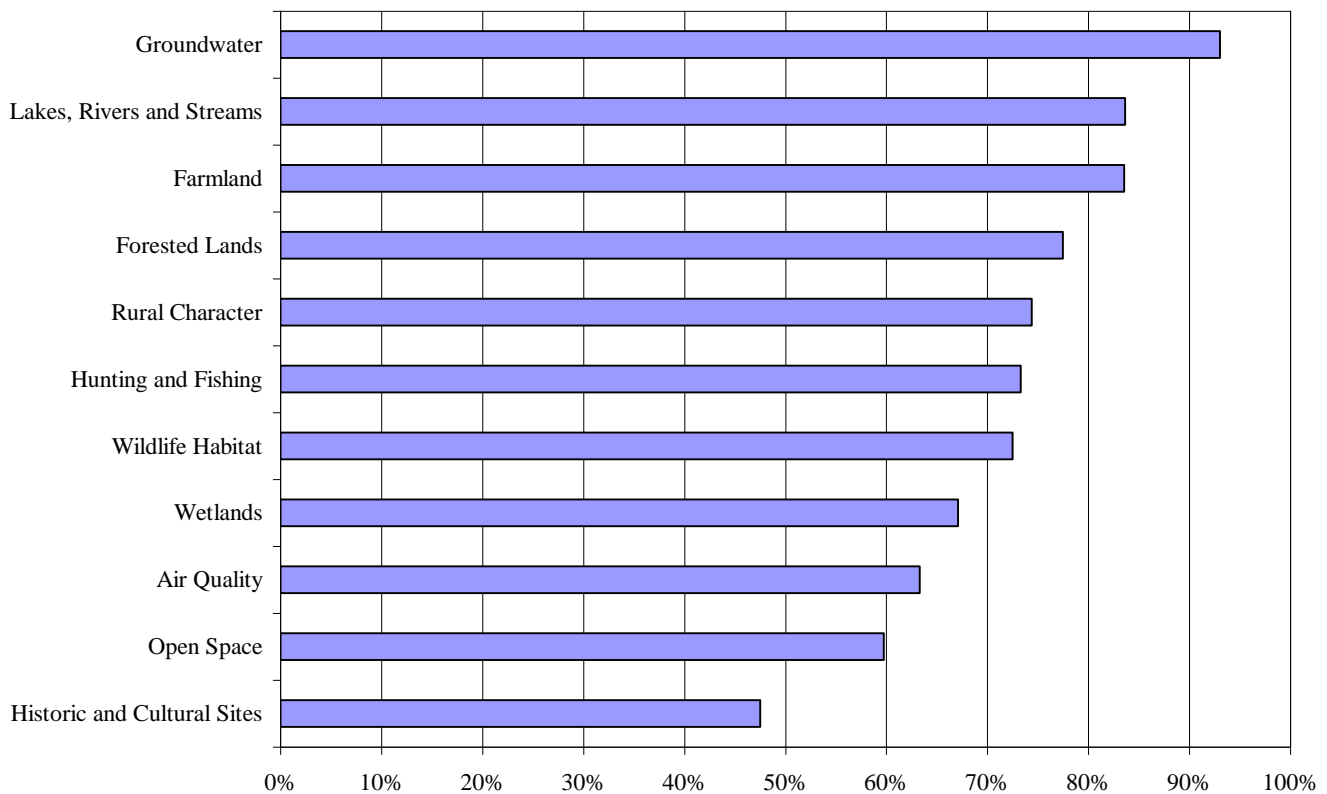
Chart 5 indicates that residents in the Town of Forest are quite interested in preserving natural and cultural resources in the area. Respondents were asked how important they think it is that tax dollars and/or regulations should be used to protect the resources included in Chart 5. For ten of the eleven resources listed, a majority of respondents said it was “important” or “essential” to do so. The percentages ranged from a low of 60 percent for preserving open space to a high of 93 percent for protecting groundwater. Only preservation of historic and cultural sites received less than a majority (47%). Given that the question was framed as, “should the Town of Forest use taxes or regulations to protect these resources,” the fact that majorities of respondents said this is important or essential for all but one item is a remarkably strong result.

Respondents under age 45 had a stronger preference for the preservation of rural character. Households with incomes less than \$50,000 were more likely to say preservation of historical and cultural sites is important or essential. A smaller percentage of long-term residents said preservation of wildlife habitat is important or essential.

In a different section of the survey, respondents were asked about the use of “purchase of development rights” (PDR) programs as a method of maintaining open space, preserving rural character and farmland. When asked if the Town should use tax dollars to purchase development rights on prime farmland, only 21% were supportive, 53% said no, and 26% were unsure. There were no noteworthy differences among

the demographic groups. If PDR is to be used to pursue the environmental preferences of the citizens of Forest, a substantial amount of education will be needed to convince the populous that this is a good idea.

Chart 5. Essential or Important to Use Taxes/Regulations to Preserve



Housing

Forest respondents were asked if additional units of affordable housing, housing to meet the special needs of the elderly, and starter homes were needed in the Town. As noted in Table 2, about half of respondents said there is a need for more elder housing (52%) or affordable housing (47%), which was defined in the survey as housing with rent or mortgage payments that are no more than 30% of a household's gross income. About one in five had no opinion. About four in ten (42%) said that more starter homes (for first-time buyers) are needed (36% disagree).

In short, Forest residents are lukewarm or have no opinion about the need for additional housing in the three categories listed, and there were no differences in the response patterns among the demographic groups.

Table 2. Housing Needs in the Town of Forest

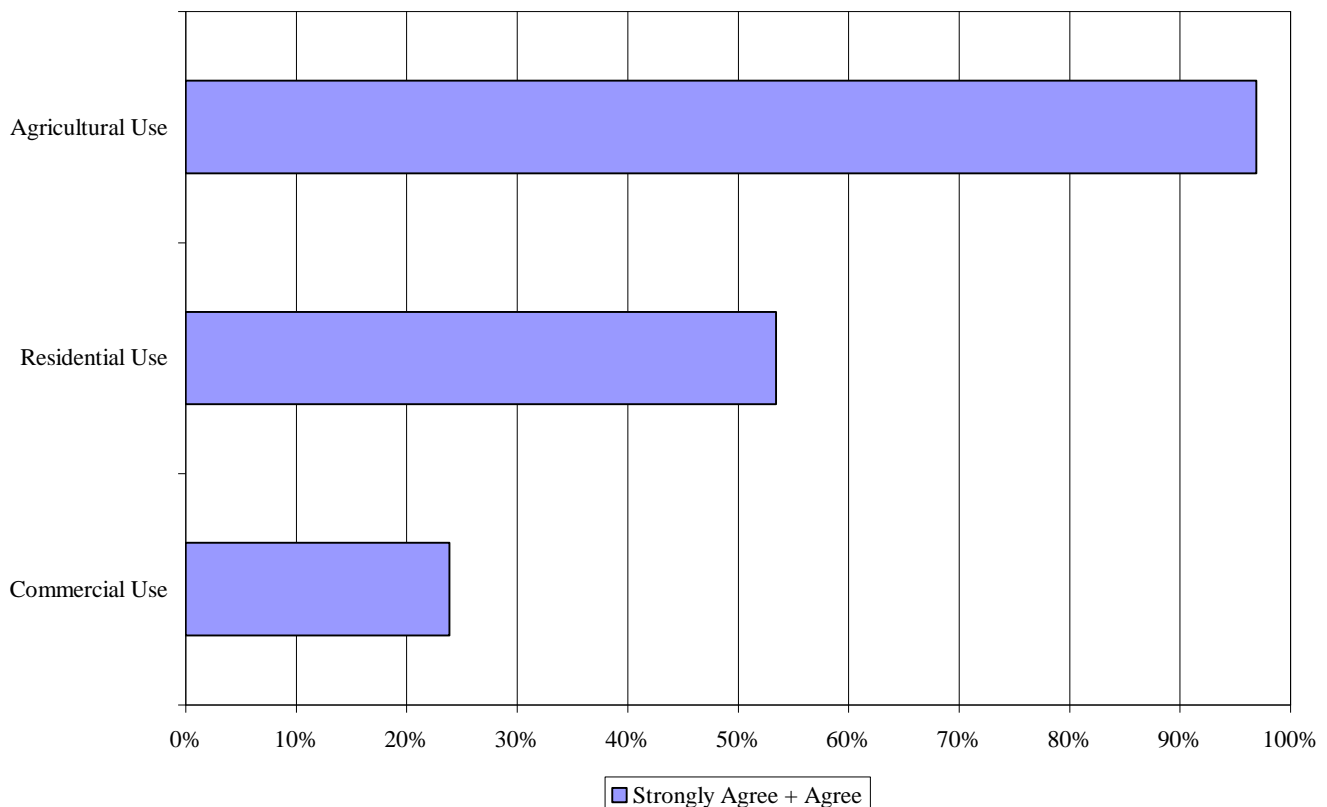
	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Need Affordable Housing	159	11%	37%	26%	11%	14%
Need Elder Housing	160	14%	38%	23%	7%	19%
Need Starter Homes	160	6%	37%	24%	12%	21%

Agriculture and Land Use

Use of Agricultural Land. Chart 6 shows that there is a near consensus on allowing productive farmland to continue being used in agriculture. Forest residents have split opinions regarding the use of productive farmland for residential use; slightly more than half agreed or strongly agreed (54%), while 43 percent disagreed for strongly disagreed. In contrast, only one in four favored using productive farmland for commercial purposes.

There are few differences across demographic groups in terms of how they feel agricultural land should be used. Long-term residents and respondents from households with less than \$50,000 were more likely to strongly agree with the use of productive farmland for agricultural use. Fewer retirees favored conversion of productive farmland to residential use.

Chart 6. Productive Farmland Should Be Used for:



Siting Large Farms. A second set of questions asked Forest respondents to consider where large farming operations, those involving 500 or more animal units, should be allowed to expand. Survey responses are summarized in Table 3, and the data indicates that Forest residents are concerned about the siting of large scale farms. A majority (65%) said they disagree or strongly disagree with allowing them anywhere in the Town. At the same time, a smaller majority (54%) rejected the other extreme of not allowing large scale farms anywhere in the Town. If large scale farms are to be sited in the Town, about half of the respondents said these particular types of farm operations should be no closer than two miles from a community (52%) rather than a mile from a community (30%).

There were no differences in the response patterns among the demographic groups.

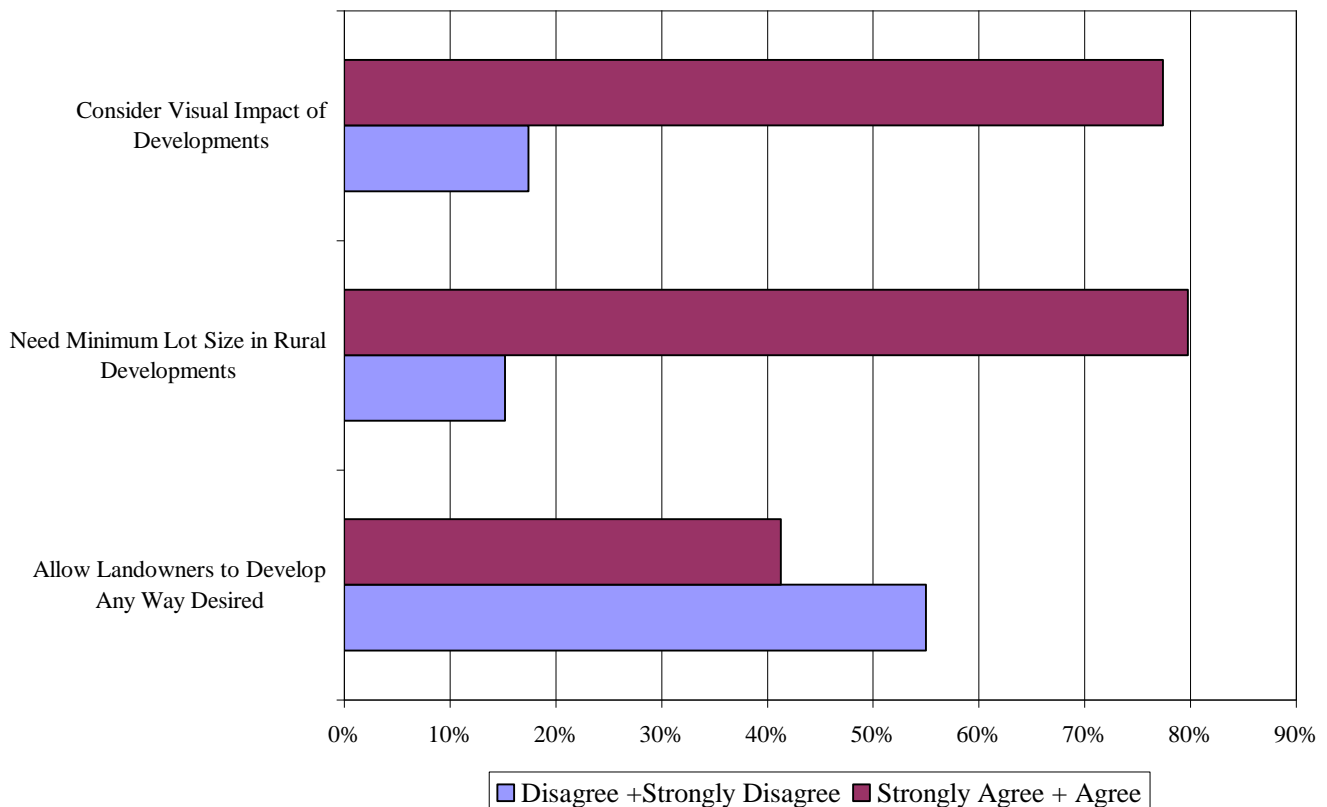
Table 3. Large Scale Farms Involving 500+ Animal Units Should Be Allowed to Expand:

	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Anywhere in the Town of Forest	155	7%	21%	41%	24%	7%
Nowhere in the Town of Forest	150	18%	20%	41%	13%	9%
Outside a 2 mile radius of incorporated areas	150	12%	39%	19%	13%	18%
Outside a 1 mile radius of incorporated areas	146	12%	18%	36%	16%	18%

Land Use Decision Factors. The next set of land use questions focused on factors that respondents feel should be considered in land use decisions. As shown in Chart 7, more than three in four respondents felt that visual impacts (view of the landscape) should be considered when evaluating a proposed development. A large majority (80%) also were in favor of having a minimum lot size for developments in rural areas, although retirees were slightly less likely to agree or strongly agree.

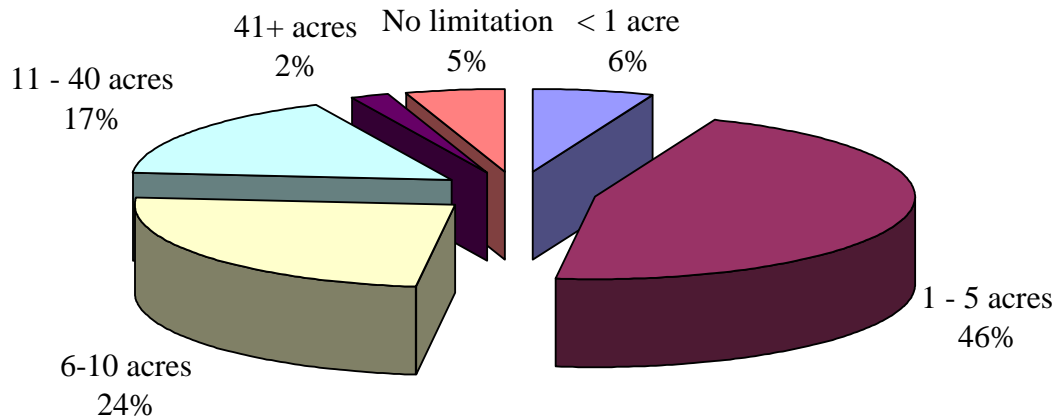
Slightly more than half of respondents rejected the idea that landowners should be allowed to develop land in any way they want; at the same time a substantial minority (41%) agreed for strongly agreed with this statement. Similar questions regarding consideration of visual impact and requirements for minimum lot sizes that we have asked in other parts of the state have generated similar results. However, the proportion of respondents who favor allowing landowners to develop any way they desire was somewhat higher among Forest residents than is typical in other areas.

Chart 7. Opinions About Land Use Decisions



Minimum Lot Size. Chart 8 indicates that about half of the respondents felt that lots in rural residential developments should be 1 – 5 acres. Only six percent feel that the minimum lot size should be less than an acre, compared to 24 percent who would like to see a minimum of 6 – 10 acres and 17 percent would prefer 11 – 40 acres. Households without children were more likely to favor lot sizes of five acres or less.

Chart 8. What Should Be the Minimum Lot Size for Rural Residential Developments



Land Issues. Respondents were asked how many acres they own in the Town of Forest and the minimum number of acres needed to constitute a farm. The data in Table 4 reflects the agricultural nature of the Town of Forest. Nearly six of ten respondents said they own at least 40 acres of land, while 20 percent own fewer than 10 acres. Long term residents were more likely to own 40 or more acres of land.

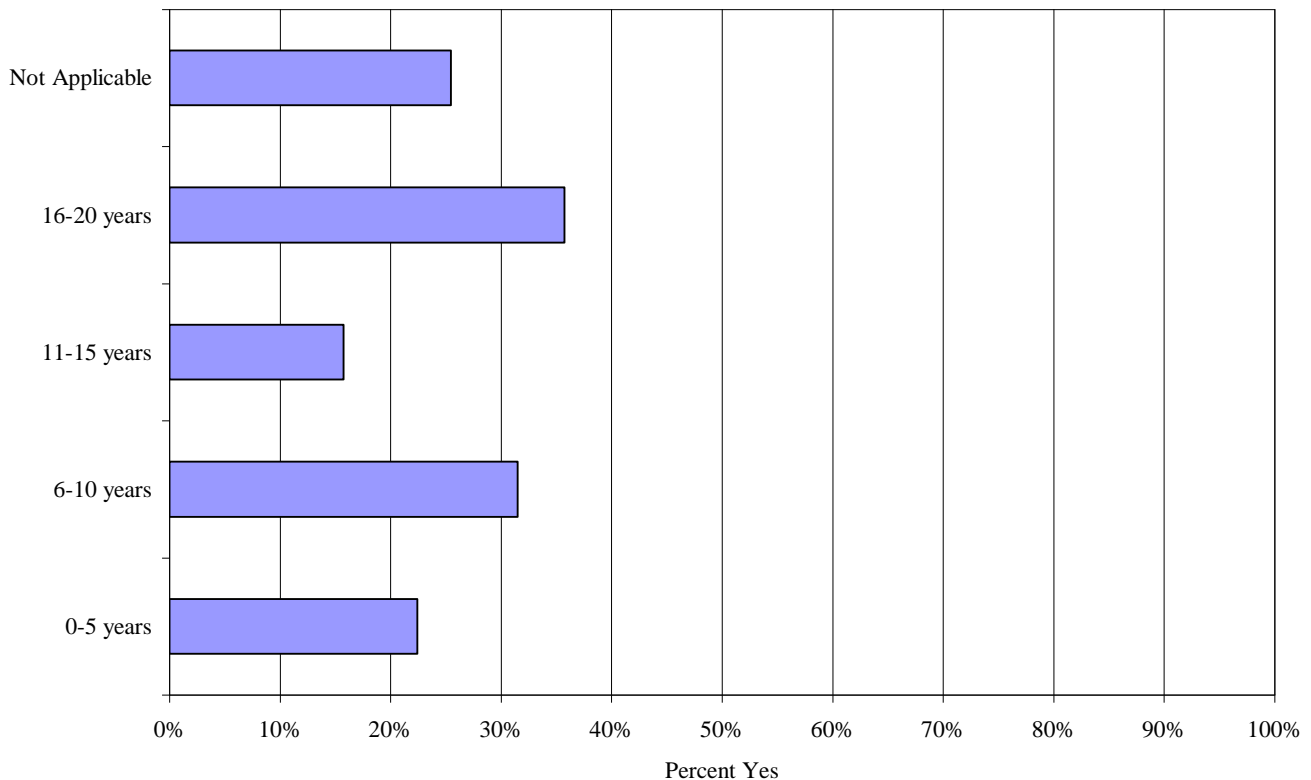
Half felt that 40 acres is the minimum size to be considered a farm in Forest. Renters were more likely to say that parcels under ten acres could be considered a farm.

Table 4: Acreage in Forest					
	Count	< 10	10 - 20	21 - 40	40+
Acres Owned	161	20%	6%	17%	57%
Minimum Size for Farm	154	10%	20%	19%	50%

Respondents were asked if their land is currently farmed and to speculate whether or not it would be farmed in the future. Over 70 percent of the respondents said that their land is currently farmed. Chart 9 shows that a quarter of the respondents said that the question about their land being farmed in the future was not applicable to them.

Residents who have lived in Forest for 25 years or more were more likely to believe their land will be in agriculture 6 to 10 years in the future.

Chart 9. Will Your Land Be Farmed in the Future?



Retirees were less likely to believe their farmland will continue to be in agricultural use during the next five years.

Transportation

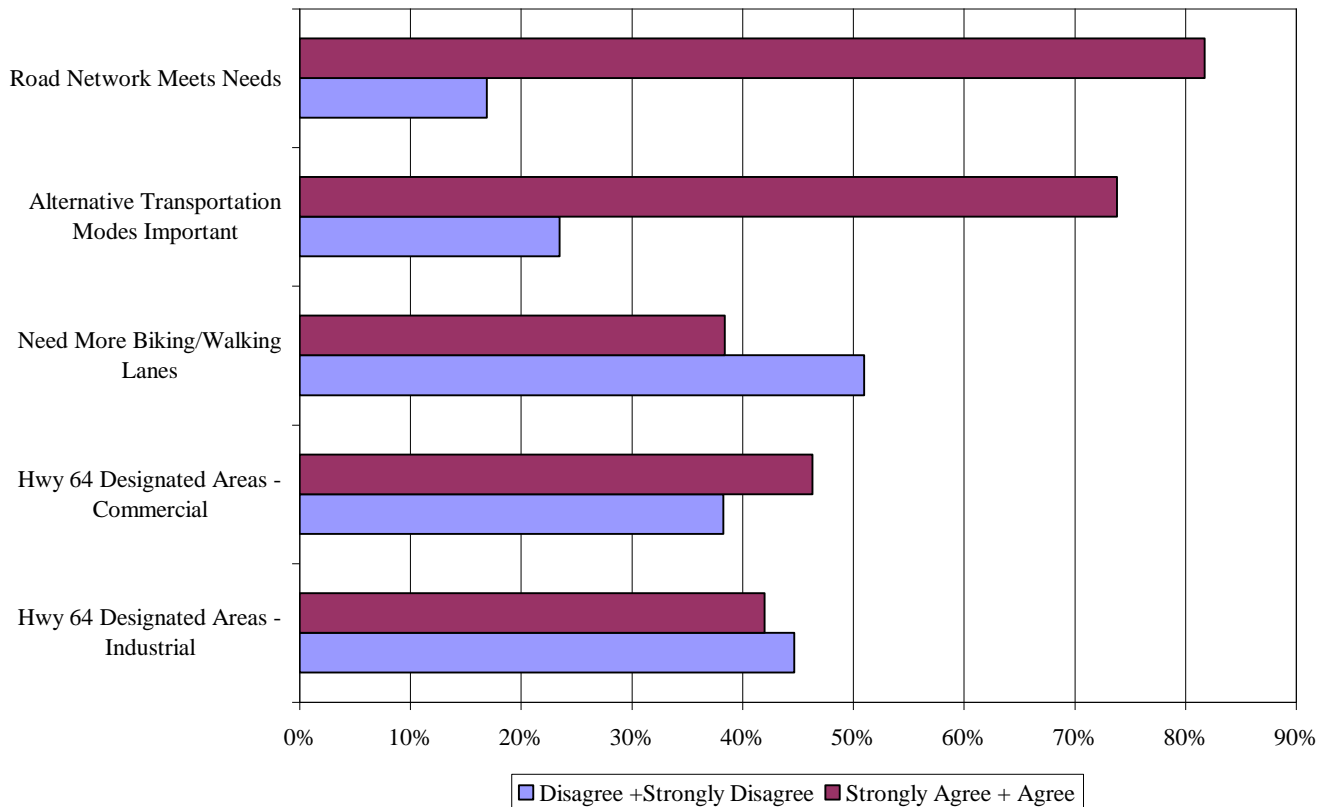
The data in Chart 9 indicate that the overwhelming majority of Forest respondents felt that the current road network meets the needs of its citizens and alternative modes of transportation (ATVs, snowmobiles, bicycles, and walking) are important. A similar proportion of respondents on the St. Croix County survey also felt positively about the adequacy of the road network.

At the same time, half of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that more biking and walking lanes are needed along public roadways, while 38 percent agreed or strongly agreed.

When asked about the need for designated areas for commercial and industrial uses along State Highway 64, respondents had split opinions. Neither question generated a majority in favor or in opposition. Slightly less than a majority agreed or strongly agreed with designating areas for commercial development, but 38 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 15 percent had no opinion. Opinions were more evenly split regarding industrial designations along Highway 64, with 44 percent in opposition and 42 percent in agreement.

Households with children were more likely to favor designating areas for industrial uses along Highway 64 while long-term residents were less likely to favor such designations.

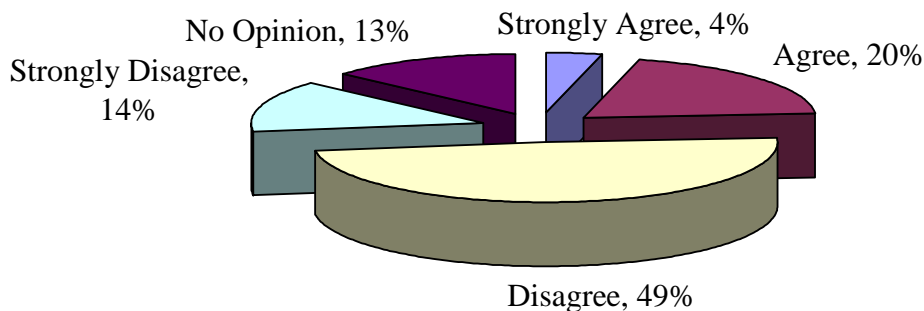
Chart 10. Opinions About Transportation Issues



Economic Development

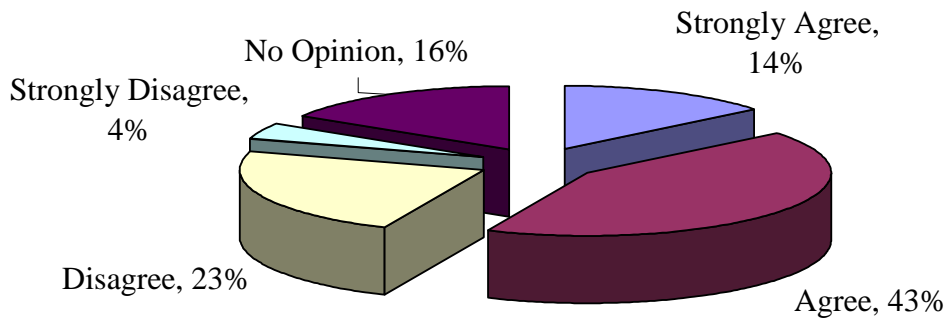
Although Chart 3 indicated a fairly high level of dissatisfaction with the economic development efforts, the data in Chart 11 indicate Forest residents did not support using tax dollars to recruit businesses and industry. More than six in ten disagreed or strongly disagreed with using tax revenues in this fashion, while only 24 percent agreed or strongly agreed. Respondents under age 45 were more likely to have no opinion on this question.

Chart 11. Use Tax Dollars to Recruit Business



As shown in Chart 12, Forest residents indicated a strong preference that future commercial and industrial development in the Town be located in the hamlet of Forest (near the intersection of Highway 64 and County Road D) rather than dispersed throughout the Town. There were no noteworthy differences in the response patterns among the demographic groups.

**Chart 12. Centralize Commercial & Industrial Development
Around Hamlet of Forest**



Residents were asked to rate the importance of the various types of businesses on a scale of “Essential” to “Not Important,” and Chart 13 shows the percentage that rated these businesses as essential or very important. Reflecting the rural, farming nature of Forest, agricultural related businesses was the overwhelming leader among the eight types of businesses listed, and was viewed as essential or very important to the Town by more than six in ten respondents. Home based businesses placed a distant second (21%).

Residents who have lived in Forest for at least 25 years were less likely to include service industries or technology related businesses among those they consider essential or very important.

Chart 13. Businesses Deemed Essential or Very Important to Forest

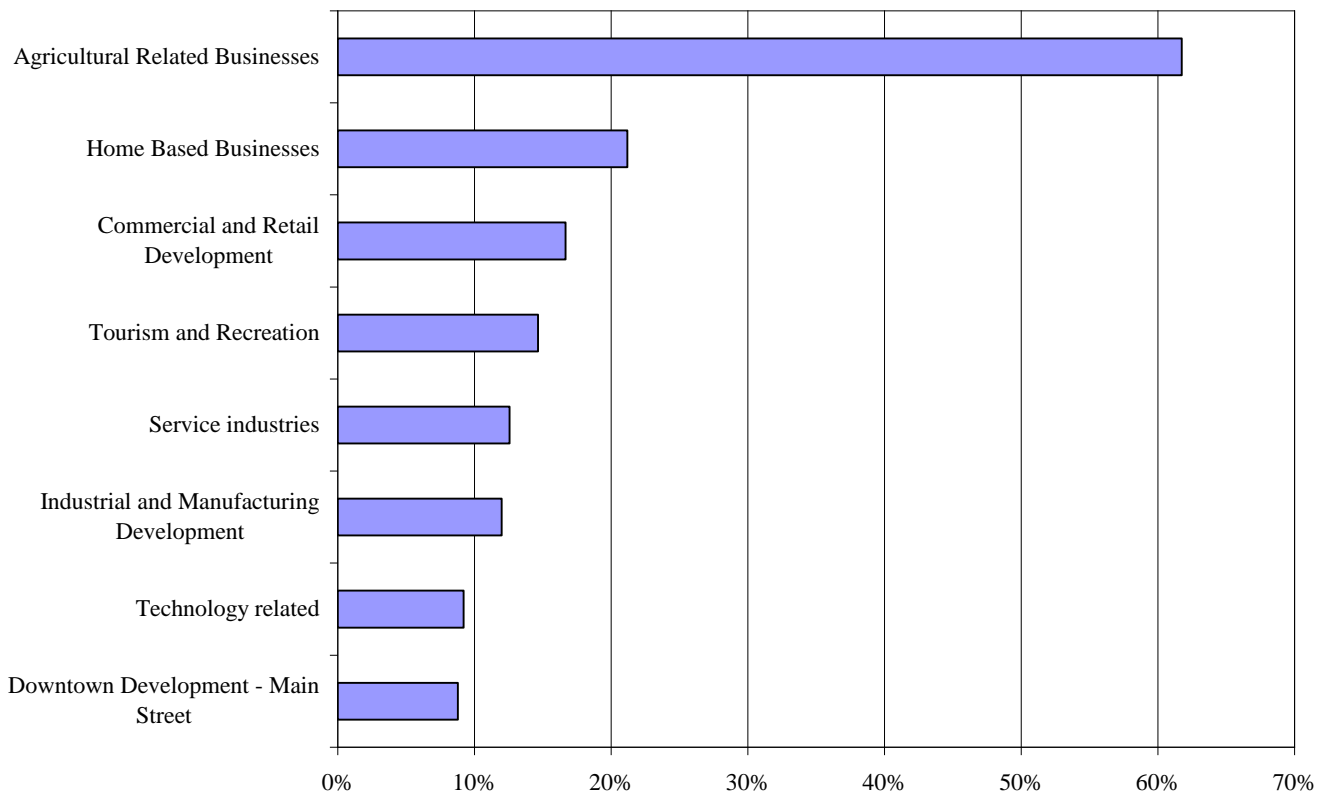


Table 5 summarizes the opinions of Forest respondents with respect to another economic development strategy – generating alternative, or renewable, energy. Wind energy and solar energy were seen as a worthy economic development options by at least seven in ten respondents; less than half agreed or strongly agreed with the pursuit of bio-fuels.

Table 5. Should the Town of Forest Pursue Alternative Energy as an Economic Development Strategy						
	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Wind Energy	152	36%	39%	8%	5%	11%
Solar Energy	148	25%	45%	16%	3%	11%
Bio Fuels (e.g. ethanol, biodiesel)	147	11%	35%	22%	12%	20%
Other _____	35	9%	3%	3%	6%	80%

Although 35 respondents checked the “Other” category, most did not specify a type of energy (see Appendix B, Question 27).

Respondents under age 45 were more likely to have no opinion regarding wind energy.

Key Functions of Forest Town Government

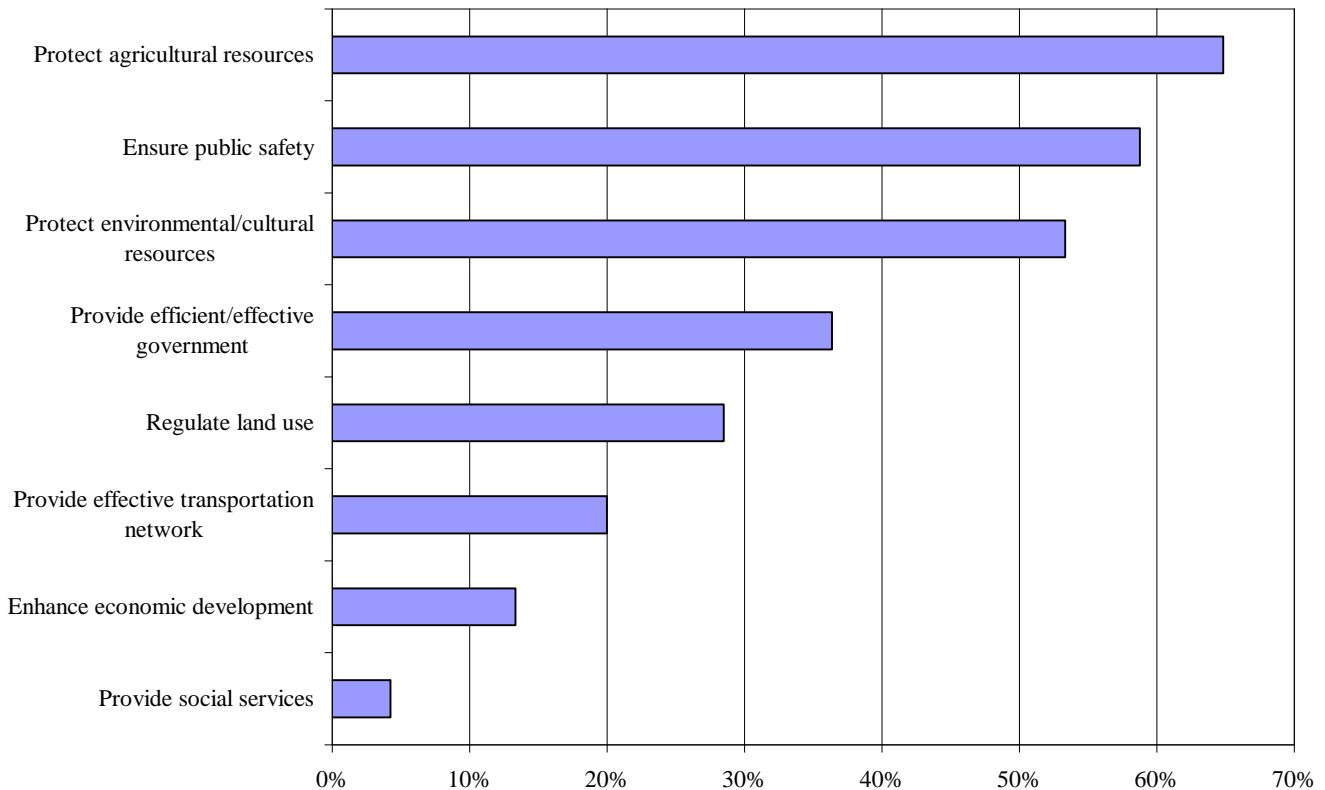
Near the end of the survey, respondents were asked to identify the three most important functions for Town of Forest government. Their responses are summarized in Chart 14. Protection of agricultural resources was the top ranked item and was among the top three priorities for two-thirds of respondents. Ensuring public safety was chosen by 59 percent and protecting environmental/cultural resources was among the top three for 53 percent.

There was a significant drop-off to the remaining functions on the list. About a third said the generic goal of providing efficient and effective government was one of the three most important functions of Forest Town government. Between 20 percent and 28 percent included regulation of land use and providing an effective transportation network. Relatively few chose economic development and social services among their top three.

By demographic slice:

- Single adult households were much less likely to include providing efficient/effective government or providing an effective transportation network among their top three priorities.
- Households with children were more likely to include enhancement of economic development as a town government priority.

Chart 14. Top Three Functions of Forest Town Government



What Respondents Like About Living in Forest

Residents were asked an open-ended question that allowed them to specify what they like about living in the Town of Forest. Ninety-three of the 165 respondents chose to provide an answer to this question. As shown in Table 6 the SRC categorized the comments into ten topics and a miscellaneous group. Many of the individual comments included more than one topic. These were separated into the appropriate categories. As a result, the SRC identified 170 comments among the 93 individual responses.

The most frequently mentioned topic related to the atmosphere of the Town of Forest. This single topic accounted for half of the comments. The SRC subdivided “atmosphere” into three interrelated sub-categories: rural/agricultural, peaceful/quiet, and small town. Typical comments include:

“Beautiful scenic countryside with ample farms and forest land.”

“I can go outside any time, day or night and enjoy how quiet it is.”

“I like that it's a small rural town.”

Table 6. Like About Living in the Town of Forest		
Topic	Count	%
Atmosphere	89	52%
Nature	17	10%
Community	16	9%
Do Not Live in Town (property owner)	13	8%
Location	8	5%
Transportation/Roads	4	2%
Life-long resident	3	2%
Family and Friends	3	2%
Schools	3	2%
Taxes	2	1%
Miscellaneous	12	7%
Total	170	100%

Specific comments about nature comprised about 10 percent of the responses. Among these comments were references to clean air and water and the proximity to wildlife.

Within the “community” topic was a theme related to friendly and helpful neighbors.

Conclusions

As noted in the Executive Summary, the data gathered from this survey suggests a relatively cohesive population. Forest residents are, in large measure, pleased with the quality of life they have in the Town. They particularly value being near family and friends, Forest’s small town atmosphere, and its agricultural opportunities. As an integral part of the quality of life they value, large majorities of respondents indicated that they support using regulations and taxes to preserve the Town’s various natural resources and said the most important function of Forest Town government is to protect agricultural resources.

Appendix A – Non-Response Bias Test

Any survey has to be concerned with “non-response bias.” Non-response bias refers to a situation in which people who don’t return a questionnaire have opinions that are systematically different from the opinions of those who return their surveys. For example, Question 2 of the Town of Forest survey asked residents to rate the overall quality of life in the Town on a scale from “excellent” (= 1) to “poor” (= 4). In this survey, residents rated the overall quality of life a 1.8, which means that, on average, people feel that Forest has a “good” quality of life. Suppose only people who were relatively happy with the quality of life in the Town responded to the survey. If this were the case, the overall quality of life rating in the report would overstate the true level of satisfaction of the overall population and we would have non-response bias.

The standard way to test for non-response bias is to compare the responses of those who return the first mailing of a questionnaire to those who return the second mailing. Those who return the second questionnaire are, in effect, a sample of non-respondents (to the first mailing), and we assume that they are representative of that group. In this survey, 132 people responded to the first mailing, and 33 responded to the second mailing.

We found one variable with statistically significant difference between the mean responses of these two groups of respondents (Table A1) out of 109 tested. Table A1 indicates that even when a statistical difference exists, the magnitude of this difference is very small. **The Survey Research Center (SRC) concludes that there is no evidence that non-response bias is a concern for this sample.**

Table A1 – Statistically Significant Differences Between Responses of First and Second Mailings			
Variable	Mean First Mailing	Mean Second Mailing	Statistical Significance
22. There should be more biking and walking lanes along public roadways.	2.72	3.16	.047

Appendix B – Town of Forest Survey Comments

Question 1. *What are the three most important reasons you and your family choose to live in the Town of Forest?*

'Other' responses (25 responses)

- Don't live there. (7x)
- Born here. (4x)
- I just own land there. (3x)
- Grew up here. (2x)
- Investment opportunity. (2x)
- Clean Air.
- Space/building.
- Clean, drinkable water.
- Country living.
- Hunting.
- Just like it here.
- Smaller school.

Question 4. *Fill the circles of the two most effective ways that the Town of Forest could provide information regarding its services and programs to residents.*

'Other' responses (3 responses)

- Don't live there.
- e-mail.
- NA.

Question 29. *What do you like about living in the Town of Forest? (170 responses)*

Atmosphere (89 responses)

Rural/Agricultural (49 responses)

- Rural atmosphere. (2x)
- Agricultural area.
- Beautiful scenic countryside with ample farms and forest land.
- Beauty and live in country.
- The beauty of the landscape.
- Can farm, although land prices are plenty high.
- Country living - wide open spaces.
- Country living, not a lot of houses.
- Country side.
- Farm life.
- Great rural living.
- Horse town.
- I just like living in the rural area: the privacy, our small acreage.
- I like the view, woods, farmland and no wind turbines.
- It being rural.
- It is a beautiful area to live, work and play.
- It is different from the city.
- It's a slower paced life.
- Less people.
- Living in a rural area.
- Living in the country.
- Location.
- Lots of open spaces.
- Not a lot of traffic.
- Not over populated.
- Openness.
- Our farm.
- Raising my kids in a safe place.
- Rural "character".
- Rural area not developed. No housing developments.
- Rural area.
- Rural community without government input on control.
- Rural setting agriculture hub of the wheel.
- Rural-agricultural.
- Small farms.
- That it's in the country not town.
- The country living.
- The farm and agriculture.
- The pride of living in a rural area.
- The reason I live here is I like a rural area or I would live in town.
- The rural aspect-which means less crime, less traffic, less noise, etc.
- The rural community.
- The rural setting.

- The small township feel amongst farmers (this is where I grew up and will grow old).
- We enjoy living in the country.
- We like the rural quiet atmosphere that rural character has.

Peaceful and Quiet (28 responses)

- It is quiet. (6x)
- Peace and quiet. (5x)
- Peacefulness. (4x)
- No one bothers us. (3x)
- Privacy. (2x)
- I can go outside any time, day or night and enjoy how quiet it is.
- I like it because it's quiet.

Small Town (12 responses)

- Small town. (2x)
- Freedom from city noise, problems and crime.
- I like that it's a small rural town.
- I like the very modest amount of population.
- It has a home town feel.

Nature (17 responses)

- Fresh air. (2x)
- Can see as well as hunt wildlife.
- Clean air/water.
- Close to nature.
- Hunting is fun.
- I can hunt out my backyard.
- I like lots of wildlife animals - deer and turkeys.
- Living with nature, instead of living as an urbanite is why I moved this far from cities.
- Lots of nature and wildlife.

Community (16 responses)

- Good neighbors. (4x)
- A good community.
- Community.
- I enjoy the community-oriented atmosphere.
- I like our neighbors - friendly - helpful neighbors.
- Most of the people.
- Neighbors, rural setting.

Non-resident Landowner (13 responses)

- Don't live there.

- We moved here to be able to hunt on our own land and to get away from the city and its issues.
- Wide open spaces.

- I most enjoy the peace, the quiet and the rural atmosphere.
- It's pretty much like having our own little world.
- Living in the country – quiet.
- Quiet and solitude.
- Quiet living.
- Solitude, peace and quiet.

- It's not over developed, there are no plots of condos like in Hammond, Roberts and New Richmond.
- Small.
- Small community.
- Small town atmosphere.
- Small town EZ livin'.
- Small, rural, not big developments.

- Nice places to walk around and shoot bows and arrows.
- Nice rivers and streams to look at to see nature at its best!
- Remote, quiet, clean air, clean water.
- The sun rises and sun sets are wonderful to take time and enjoy the site.
- We can enjoy the wildlife.
- Wildlife.
- Wildlife all around.

- People in area.
- Plenty of good people here.
- Residents with roots, generations on same property, property for future generations.
- Some of the people around us are great.
- We can feel safe in our homes and know our neighbors look out for each other.
- Wonderful people.

- I do not live in the town of Forest.

- I do not live in the town of Forest. I own property there, a portion of which is farmed and a portion is forest.
- I don't live in the town of forest, I do own land there, however.
- I don't live there, I own a farm and rent out the house and the ag part of the land.
- I don't reside in the township, but own forest land preservation for recreational, hunting and timber harvest.

- I just own land there.
- It is a great get away place for me to enjoy the recreation of hunting and enjoy the communities while I am there.
- Land ownership.
- Landowner but not a resident.
- We are both from the twin cities.
- We do not live in the town of Forest. Only land owners.
- We don't live in the township.

Location (8 responses)

- Available health care.
- Close to major metro areas.
- Close to medical care.
- Close to other larger towns.
- Close to the bigger towns.

- Don't have to go far for great food to dine out.
- It's a rural atmosphere, but still easily accessible to larger cities.
- Not far from a small town.

Roads (4 responses)

- Dirt roads, poor plowing, road ditches not mowed, everything else is great.
- Roads are maintained.

- Some of the roads leading to Clear Lake could be paved.
- We are on a good highway.

Family and Friends (3 responses)

- Close proximity to relatives.
- Family people.

- New friends.

Lifelong resident (3 responses)

- Born and raised here and never wanted to live anywhere else.
- Grew up here.

- It has been our home for nearly all our lives.

Schools (3 responses)

- Good schools.
- Teachers/schools.

- Very good school district

Taxes (2 responses)

- Keep my taxes low.
- Low taxes.

Miscellaneous (12 responses)

- Good of place as any.
- Great town board.
- Home.
- I like it.
- I love living here.
- Its home.
- No opinion.
- Not a lot of regulations.
- Ok.

- Wind turbines will destroy homeowners property value making forest an undesirable place to live.
- Would not want Township of Forest to be the playground for everyone in the county as county planning has proposed.
- You can read this at your next meeting. Life is too rushed to be happy anymore. We did like things when the small family farms were in use. Neighbor helped neighbor but in these

modern times it's too big, too fast, and too destructive, too big of machinery and tractors wrecks the roads. Too many cows in one place that make too much manure that gets spread too much per acre that ruins the groundwater, the air we breathe and the way

the wind blows. Too much talking on too many phones when one should be working. Big farmers should be kicked out of Forest Township so it would be a decent life again. We were all better off before modern times.

Question 34. *Employment Status*

'Other' responses (1 response)

- Homemaker

Question 35. *Place of Residence*

'Other' responses

- Land owners only (2x)

Question 40. *In what ZIP code do you live? (142 responses)*

- 54013 (62x)
- 54005 (49x)
- 54007 (17x)
- 54025 (4x)
- 54016 (3x)
- 54001 (2x)
- 54012 (2x)
- 55042 (2x)
- 55107 (2x)
- 53094
- 53575
- 54002
- 55112
- 55449
- 59005
- 61025

Appendix C - Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question

TOWN OF FOREST COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

PLEASE RETURN BY NOVEMBER 5, 2008

Fill the circle that most closely describes your perspective toward the following statements:

Like this: ☐ Not like this: ☐ ☐ ☐

QUALITY OF LIFE

1. What are the **three** most important reasons you and your family choose to live in the **Town of Forest**? (● mark 3)

44% Agriculture	19% Low Crime Rate	16% Quality Schools
1% Community Services	24% Natural Features	22% Recreational Opportunities
20% Cost of Home	53% Near Family and Friends	46% Small Town Atmosphere
3% Historical Significance	14% Near Job (Employment Opportunity)	8% Other: (Please Identify)
10% Property Taxes	3% Quality Communities	<u>See Appendix B</u>

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
2. Rate the overall quality of life in the Town of Forest .	26%	66%	8%	0%

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

3. Rate the following services and programs in our community.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Applicable
a. Land Use Regulations	7%	62%	23%	1%	6%
b. Law Enforcement	8%	52%	27%	6%	7%
c. Emergency Services (e.g., fire, ambulance)	17%	48%	24%	3%	9%
d. Economic Development	2%	35%	34%	15%	14%
e. Roads and Highways	6%	48%	35%	12%	0%
f. Recreation (e.g., parks, forests, trails)	8%	36%	30%	9%	17%
g. Elderly Programs	3%	20%	23%	15%	39%
h. Elderly/Disabled Transportation	2%	18%	20%	16%	44%
i. Animal Control	3%	37%	38%	8%	15%
j. Junk Control	4%	30%	31%	26%	9%
k. Garbage and Recycling	10%	45%	19%	18%	8%
l. Town Hall and Facilities	27%	55%	11%	3%	5%
m. Cemeteries	13%	50%	19%	0%	19%
n. Schools	15%	50%	16%	0%	19%
o. Town Government Communication	6%	41%	28%	19%	6%
p. General Town Government Services	6%	46%	27%	11%	8%

COMMUNICATION

4. Fill the circles of the **two** most effective ways that the **Town of Forest** could provide information regarding its services and programs to residents.

Direct Mailings	Radio	Newspaper Articles	Newsletters	Television	Town Website	Other: (Please identify)
83%	5%	28%	55%	4%	28%	4% <u>See Appendix B</u>

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

5. How important is it for the Town of Forest to use tax dollars/regulations to protect the following:	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
a. Air Quality	22%	41%	25%	12%
b. Farmland	35%	48%	11%	6%
c. Forested Lands	32%	46%	19%	3%
d. Groundwater	58%	35%	6%	1%
e. Historic and Cultural Sites	8%	40%	39%	14%
f. Open Space	14%	45%	31%	9%
g. Lakes, Rivers and Streams	33%	51%	13%	3%
h. Rural Character	24%	51%	20%	6%
i. Hunting and Fishing	25%	48%	19%	8%
j. Wetlands	23%	44%	25%	8%
k. Wildlife Habitat	30%	43%	22%	6%

HOUSING

The following questions ask your opinion about the development of housing in the **Town of Forest**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
6. Affordable housing is needed in our community (affordable housing = rent/mortgage that is no more than 30% of a household's gross income).	11%	37%	26%	11%	14%
7. Elderly housing is needed in our community (elderly housing = housing for those 65+ that accommodates special needs such as wheelchairs).	14%	38%	23%	7%	19%
8. Starter (first time buyer) homes are needed in our community.	6%	37%	24%	12%	21%

AGRICULTURE AND LAND USE

9. Productive agricultural land should be allowed to be used for:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a. Agricultural Use	68%	29%	1%	0%	2%
b. Residential Use	11%	43%	29%	14%	4%
c. Commercial Use	3%	21%	44%	27%	5%

10. Large scale farms (500 or more animal units) should be allowed to expand:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a. Anywhere in the Town of Forest	7%	21%	41%	24%	7%
b. Nowhere in the Town of Forest	18%	20%	41%	13%	9%
c. Outside a 2 mile radius of incorporated areas	12%	39%	19%	13%	18%
d. Outside a 1 mile radius of incorporated areas	12%	18%	36%	16%	18%
11. Landowners should be allowed to develop land any way they want.	15%	26%	40%	15%	3%
12. The visual impacts (view of the landscape) of development is an important consideration when evaluating proposed development.	26%	51%	15%	3%	5%
13. There should be a minimum lot size on residential development in rural areas.	30%	49%	9%	6%	5%

	Yes	No	Don't Know
14. Should the Town of Forest use tax dollars to purchase development rights to preserve prime farmland? (Under such a program the farmer is paid money in exchange for his/her "right" to develop their farmland.)	21%	53%	26%

15. In your opinion, what should the minimum lot size be for rural residential development? Fill one circle only.

Less than 1 acre	1 to 5 acres	6 to 10 acres	11 to 40 acres	41 or more acres	No Limitation
6%	46%	24%	17%	2%	5%

16. In your opinion, how many acres of land are needed to be considered a farm?	Less than 10	10 - 20	21 -40	40 plus
	10%	20%	19%	50%

17. How many acres of land do you own in the Town of Forest ?	Less than 10	10 - 20	21 -40	40 plus
	20%	6%	17%	57%

18. Is the land you own actively farmed?	Yes	No	Not Applicable
	71%	26%	3%

19. Do you think your land will be actively farmed (by you or someone else) in the next (fill all circles that apply):

0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	Not Applicable
22%	32%	16%	36%	25%

TRANSPORTATION

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
20. The overall road network (roads, streets, and highways) in the Town of Forest meets the needs of its citizens.	13%	69%	12%	5%	1%
21. Alternative modes of transportation, such as ATV, snowmobile, bicycle, and walking are important.	16%	58%	18%	5%	3%
22. There should be more biking and walking lanes along public roadways.	11%	28%	42%	9%	11%
23. There should be designated areas along Highway 64 for <u>commercial</u> development.	5%	41%	24%	14%	15%
24. There should be designated areas along Highway 64 for <u>industrial</u> development.	6%	36%	29%	15%	13%

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
25. Future commercial or industrial development in the Town of Forest should be centralized in or around the <u>hamlet</u> of Forest (Intersection of Highway 64 and County Road D) rather than dispersed throughout the Town.	14%	43%	23%	4%	16%
26. The Town of Forest should use tax dollars to recruit new business and industry.	4%	20%	49%	14%	13%

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
27. The Town of Forest should pursue the following energy alternatives as a form of economic development:					
a. Bio Fuels (e.g. ethanol, biodiesel)	11%	35%	22%	12%	20%
b. Solar Energy	25%	45%	16%	3%	11%
c. Wind Energy	36%	39%	8%	5%	11%
d. Other _____	9%	3%	3%	6%	80%

	Essential	Very Important	Important	Not Important	No Opinion
28. Rate the importance of the following:					
a. Agricultural Related Businesses	26%	36%	29%	4%	5%
b. Commercial and Retail Development	4%	13%	39%	38%	6%
c. Downtown Development – “Main Street”	5%	4%	33%	46%	12%
d. Home Based Businesses	9%	13%	50%	17%	12%
e. Industrial and Manufacturing Development	2%	10%	35%	41%	11%
f. Tourism and Recreation	3%	11%	33%	41%	11%
g. Technology related (e.g. biotechnology, computers, etc.)	1%	8%	35%	38%	18%
h. Service industries (e.g. financial services, health services, etc.)	3%	10%	40%	33%	14%

29. What do you like about living in the **Town of Forest**?

See Appendix B

30. Which **THREE** of the following **Town of Forest** functions do you think are **most important** (• mark 3)?

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|---|
| 59% | a. Ensure public safety | 36% | b. Provide efficient/effective government |
| 53% | c. Protect environmental/cultural resources | 65% | d. Protect agricultural resources |
| 4% | e. Provide social services | 28% | f. Regulate land use |
| 13% | g. Enhance economic development | 20% | h. Provide effective transportation network |

	Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
31. How likely are you to attend visioning sessions and other public participation events as related to comprehensive planning?	7%	43%	41%	9%

DEMOGRAPHICS: Please tell us some things about you:

32. Gender:	Male	Female
	64%	36%

33. Age:	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and older
	1%	8%	11%	25%	28%	27%

34. Employment Status:	Employed Full Time	Self Employed	Employed Part Time	Unemployed	Retired	Other: <u>See Appendix B</u>
	34%	28%	10%	4%	24%	1%

35. Place of Residence:	Own	Rent	Other: <u>See Appendix B</u>
	97%	2%	1%

	0	1	2	3	4	5+
36. Number of Adults (18 or older) in Household:		11%	77%	11%	2%	0%
37. Number of Children (under 18) in Household:	74%	11%	11%	4%	1%	0%
38. Household Income Range:	Less than 15,000 7%	15,000 – 24,999 14%	25,000 – 49,999 30%	50,000 – 74,999 28%	75,000 – 99,999 7%	100,000 or More 13%
39. How many years have you lived in the Town of Forest ?	Less than 1 2%	1 – 4 10%	5 - 9 13%	10 - 24 22%	25+ 53%	
40. In what zip code do you live?	<u>See Appendix B</u>					

Thank You for Completing the Survey!

Your survey responses are anonymous and will be reported in group form only.

Please return your survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by NOVEMBER 5, 2008 to:

Survey Research Center
University of Wisconsin - River Falls
410 S. Third St.
River Falls, WI 54022-5001