



Burnett County Comprehensive Planning Public Opinion Survey Report

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Executive Summary

During the summer of 2009, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls sent comprehensive planning public opinion surveys to 2,165 residents and property owners of Burnett County. The surveys were followed up with a second mailing to non-respondents. The overall response rate was 42 percent (909 completed questionnaires).

From the returned surveys, the SRC constructed a random sample of 374 surveys as a balanced sample of public opinion for the County as a whole. The 374 surveys provide estimates that are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 4.6 percent.

Key findings of this study include:

Quality of Life

- The predominant reasons people gave for living in Burnett County were the natural beauty (64 percent) and recreational opportunities (55 percent).
- More than 4 of 5 respondents rated the overall quality of life in Burnett County as good or excellent.

Services and Facilities

- More than half of respondents rated fire protection, police protection, county parks, and county road maintenance as good or excellent.
- One service, wireless telecommunication, had more than one-half of all respondents in the County sample rating it fair or poor.
- An overwhelming majority (87%) indicated they favor the sharing of community services if savings occurred and service quality was maintained.

ATV Usage

- Most Burnett County property owners (92%) felt that ATV infrastructure (trails, signage, maintenance, etc.) should be funded through user fees.
- A majority (56%) disagree that additional use of roads for ATVs is needed in their community.

County Budget

- If allocating a surplus County budget, respondents would be most likely to cut taxes first, followed by distributing funds to emergency services, roads and bridges, and education.
- Recreation funding would take the biggest cut if respondents were faced with a County budget deficit, followed by cuts to social services, and economic development.

Communication

- Residents and property owners prefer to get information from Burnett County via direct mail (55 percent) and newsletters (49 percent).

Growth and Development

- When Burnett County residents were asked their preference for how to pay for *public infrastructure*, the responses were fairly equally distributed: 36 percent prefer taxes, 32 percent prefer user fees, and 28 percent prefer development impact fees.
- When paying for *public services*, 54 percent prefer taxes, 24 percent user fees, and 16 percent prefer development impact fees.

Residential Development

- A substantial majority of property owners in Burnett County (69 percent) favor rural developments that use cluster designs (smaller lots with shared open space) over traditional designs (larger lots with little or no shared open space).
- Majorities of respondents support the clustering of residential lots to preserve forest land, natural and environmental features, rural open space, and productive agricultural land.

Seasonal Rentals

- A very solid majority of respondents agree that noise limits on outdoor use of property should be imposed during late hours.
- A majority of respondents agree that septic systems should be designed and maintained to support the number of guests.
- Nearly one-half of respondents disagree with requiring landscaping along side property lines.
- Twenty-one percent of respondents believe that short-term rental of residential units should not be allowed.
- Nearly two-thirds of seasonal residences are used five or more months annually.

Economic Development

- When asked what types of businesses are the most important for Burnett County to attract, tourism and recreation businesses were deemed the most important followed by health care services.
- A majority of respondents agreed that restaurants, cocktail lounges, and resorts are appropriate commercial uses on waterfront property adjacent to residential development.

Survey Purpose

In the summer of 2009, the Survey Research Center at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls (SRC) sent comprehensive planning public opinion surveys to 2,165 residents and property owners of Burnett County. The motivation for this study was to gather opinions of residents and property owners about the future direction of development in Burnett County. Foth Infrastructure and Environment, LLC and Burnett County chose to work with the SRC to process, compile, and analyze the results of this survey. A total of 909 usable surveys were returned for an overall 42 percent return rate.

Survey Methods

The SRC used a stratified random sample process that over-sampled the thirteen jurisdictions in Burnett County (villages and towns) participating in the comprehensive plan grant. These jurisdictions represent 60 percent of the approximately 12,700 usable addresses for Burnett County. The SRC also mailed surveys to households in non-participating jurisdictions for which addresses were available to ensure that we could construct a sample representative of the entire County.

County Sample. The overall County sample, which is analyzed in this report, was constructed from the participating and non-participating sub-samples. The non-participating jurisdictions contain about 40 percent of the total available addresses in Burnett County. So, the observations from the non-participating jurisdiction represent 40 percent of the overall sample. The overall County sample of 374, therefore, contains 150 observations from the non-participating jurisdictions and 224 from participating jurisdictions. The SRC drew a random sample from each participating jurisdiction that was proportionate to its percentage of available addresses for the County. The SRC needed to construct the County sample in this way to avoid having excessive representation from the participating jurisdictions. Table 1 summarizes the available addresses from the County, the number of questionnaires mailed to residents/property owners in each jurisdiction, the number and percentage that were returned, the confidence interval, and the number randomly drawn to include in the overall County sample.

With a total County sample of 374, the estimated values reported in this summary of results should be accurate to plus or minus 4.6 percent.

Table 1: Burnett Sample from Participating Jurisdictions - Burnett County, 2009						
Jurisdiction	Addresses	Number Mailed Out	Returned Surveys	Percentage Returned	Confidence Interval	Needed for County Sample
Village of						
Grantsburg	566	133	51	38%	13%	14
Webster	362	128	54	42%	12%	9
Town of						
Anderson	312	139	41	29%	14%	8
Daniels	507	139	54	39%	13%	13
Dewey	323	135	50	37%	13%	8
Jackson	1290	128	68	53%	12%	33
Oakland	1141	127	44	35%	14%	29
Sand Lake	509	139	44	32%	14%	13
Siren	913	130	46	35%	14%	23
Trade Lake	712	129	61	47%	12%	18
Union	530	130	52	40%	13%	14
Webb Lake	1000	131	51	39%	13%	26
Wood River	635	132	55	42%	13%	16
Burnett Sample from Non-Participating Jurisdictions						
Jurisdiction	Addresses	Number Mailed Out	Returned Surveys	Percentage Returned	Confidence Interval	Needed for County Sample
Village of						
Siren	465	35	21	60%	21%	15
Town of						
Blaine	269	21	7	33%	37%	7
Grantsburg	549	42	26	62%	19%	14
La Follette	455	35	14	40%	26%	12
Lincoln	228	17	5	29%	43%	5
Meenon	986	75	38	51%	16%	25
Roosevelt	155	12	6	50%	39%	4
Rusk	399	30	9	30%	32%	9
Scott	1080	82	40	49%	15%	30
Swiss	969	74	37	50%	16%	25
W. Marshland	272	21	4	19%	49%	4
	Addresses	Number Mailed Out	Returned Surveys	Percentage Returned	Confidence Interval for County Sample = 4.6	County Sample
Blank/Multiples ¹			31	3%		
Total Participating	8800	1720	671	39%		224
Total Non-Part.	5827	445	207	47%		150
TOTAL	14627	2165	909	42%		374
Approx. Usable Addresses	12,700					

¹ Respondent either did not provide jurisdiction in which residence is located or selected multiple jurisdictions.

Non-response Bias Testing. Surveys have to be concerned with “non-response bias”. Non-response bias refers to a situation in which people who do not return a questionnaire have opinions that are systematically different from the opinions of those who return their surveys. For example, Question 2b asked Burnett County residents and property owners to rate the quality of County public health services. Suppose only strong supporters of County public health services completed their questionnaires, and those who are not chose not to respond. In this case, non-response bias would exist and the results would overstate the overall satisfaction with County public health services.

A standard way to test for non-response bias is to see if respondents to the first mailing differ from those who responded to the second mailing (who are non-respondents to the first mailing). The SRC tested 110 variables included in the questionnaire and found only six instances in which responses from the first mailing and those from the second were statistically different. Not only is this a small number of differences but, while they are statistically significant, the differences do not change the overall interpretation of results. **Based upon our analysis (see Appendix A for a full description), the Survey Research Center (SRC) concludes that there is little evidence that non-response bias is a concern for the Burnett County survey.**

In addition to the numeric responses, respondents provided additional written comments that were compiled by the SRC from the surveys. **Appendix B contains the compilation of comments from the County sample.**

Appendix C contains the survey questionnaire with a quantitative summary of responses by question for the County sample.

Profile of Respondents

Table 2 summarizes the demographic profile of the County sample. Comparisons with Census data are not appropriate for this sample due to the inclusion of seasonal (47% of sample) and non-resident landowners (7% of sample).

Highlights of Table 2 include:

- Respondents in the sample tend to be somewhat older; 67 percent are 55 or older
- Very few respondents report household incomes of less than \$15,000 (4 percent); more common are higher income respondents with incomes in excess of \$100,000 (24 percent).
- 71 percent report that they have resided or owned property in the County for more than 10 years.
- Nearly equal percentages report owning less than one-acre (20%) or over 40 acres (18%).
- Over half of the County sample report living in a shoreline residence.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Burnett County Sample, 2009							
Gender	Count	Male	Female				
County Sample	324	68%	32%				
Age	Count	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
County Sample	354	0%	2%	9%	21%	26%	41%
Highest Level of Education	Count	High School or Less	Some College	2-year college degree	4-year college degree	Grad/ Prof Degree	
County Sample	355	19%	22%	12%	26%	21%	
Household Income Range	Count	<\$15,000	\$15-\$24,999	\$25-\$49,999	\$50-\$74,999	\$75-\$99,999	\$100,000+
County Sample	328	4%	10%	24%	25%	13%	24%
Residential Status	Count	Full-time	Seasonal	Non-Res			
County Sample	356	45%	47%	7%			
Length Residency or Property-Ownership	Count	<1 year	1 - 5 years	6 – 10 years	11 – 15 years	16 – 20 years	20+ years
County Sample	361	0%	12%	17%	13%	9%	49%
Total Acres Owned in Burnett County	Count	<1 acre	1 - 5 acres	6 – 10 acres	11 – 20 acres	21 - 40 acres	40+ acres
County Sample	361	20%	40%	11%	5%	6%	18%
Residence Within Burnett County	Count	Within Village	Shoreline	Rural non-farm	Rural hobby farm	Rural farm	No Residence in County
County Sample	368	12%	52%	26%	5%	3%	2%

The Sample. There are substantially more males in the sample (68%) than females (32%). Interestingly, statistical tests show only three instances in the survey where males and females have statistically significant differences of opinion. For example, 40 percent of females said that they “strongly agree” or “agree” that too much farmland is being converted to non-farm uses; 32 percent of males felt this way. As we summarize the various elements of the survey, we will note the few differences between the opinions of men and women.

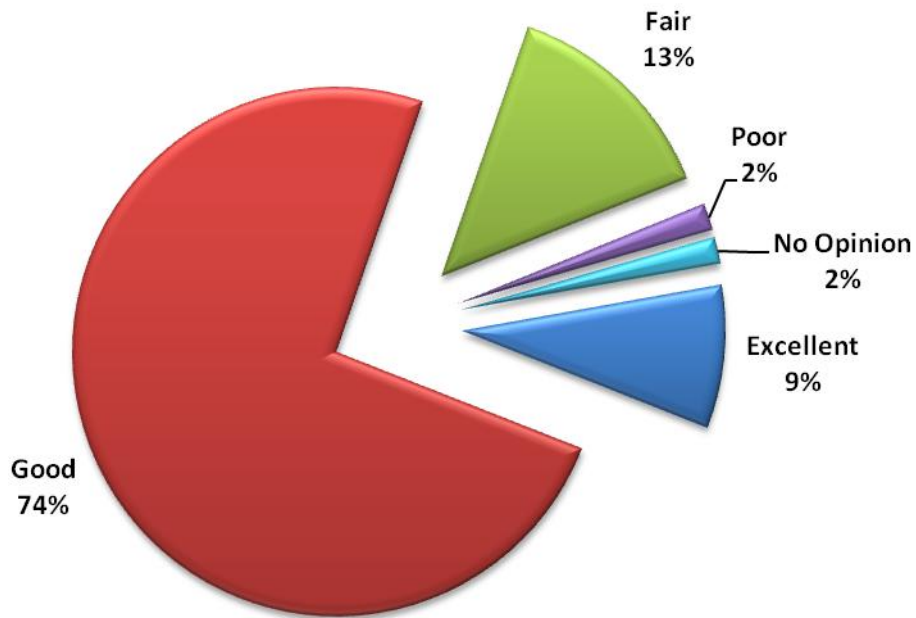
Another key deviation from the expected demographic profile is with respect to age. The sample has a higher proportion of older respondents and lower proportions of younger respondents, which is not unusual for surveys. This shortage is likely related to a couple of factors. First, our experience is that younger residents in most jurisdictions are less likely to participate in surveys than are their older neighbors. Second, the County’s property tax list was used to identify people to be included in the sample. Younger residents are less likely to be property owners than are older County residents. Thirteen percent of the variables tested showed a significant difference between the opinions of those 45 and older and those younger than that. Younger residents are more likely to say that the cost of a home and being near their job is a reason they choose to live in Burnett County. Perhaps not surprisingly, older respondents were more supportive of their community coordinating with the County and neighboring communities to plan for an aging population’s housing needs. Differences of opinion based on age will be noted throughout this report.

As noted earlier, more than one-half of the County sample were either seasonal residents or non-resident property owners. A key demographic result found that there is a high correlation between seasonal residents and higher levels of income and education. There are a number of points in the survey that speak to differences of opinion between these groups (full-time vs. seasonal) in terms of what they value and what they would support. Comparisons of key survey questions were made by the SRC based on respondents’ residential status and will be described throughout the report.

Quality of Life

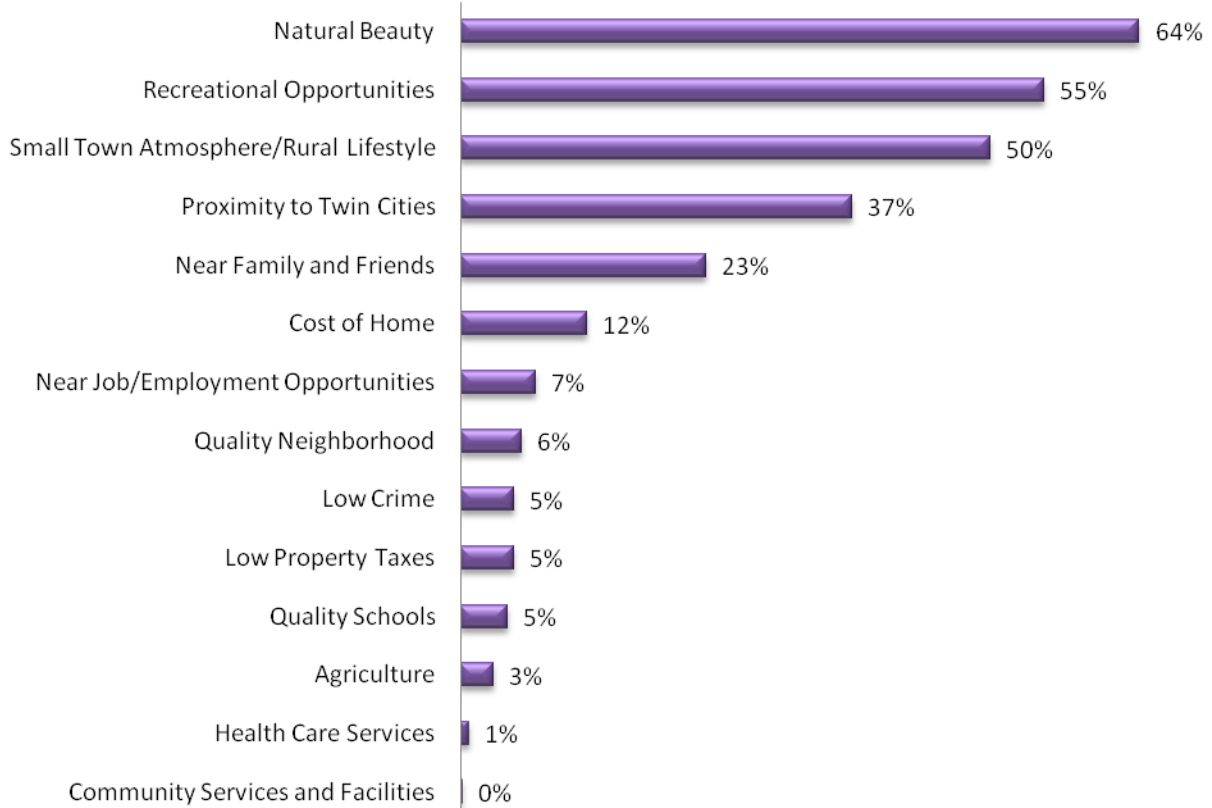
Residents and property owners generally expressed contentment with the quality of life in the County. Figure 1 shows that more than 4 of 5 Burnett County residents and property owners feel that the overall quality of life in the County is “good” (74%) or excellent (9%). There are no statistically significant differences by demographic group in the sample.

Figure 1: Overall Quality of Life in Burnett County



Respondents were asked to identify their three most important reasons for living in Burnett County and a summary of their responses is shown in Figure 2. The natural beauty of the County was ranked the highest by respondents (64% indicated this to be very important in their decision to live in the County). As shown, more than half of respondents in the County sample said that recreational opportunities were key to their location decision. The small town atmosphere/rural lifestyle was the third most important reason for living in the County for half of the respondents. There is a substantial drop from these three characteristics to the proportion saying that they live in Burnett County to be near the Twin Cities (37 percent) and another significant drop to those who cited being near their family and friends (23%) and cost of home (12%).

Figure 2: Top 3 Reasons to Live in Burnett County



There are some statistically significant differences in the reasons different demographic groups give for living in Burnett County. For example, younger respondents (<45) and those living in the County for 10 years or less were significantly more likely to say that the cost of a home is an important reason to live in Burnett County. Those who have lived in the County for longer periods of time are more likely to say that being near family and friends is a reason for living in Burnett County but less likely to be influenced by the cost of homes.

Respondents that own 10 acres or less in Burnett County were more likely to say that the proximity to the Twin Cities was an important reason to live in the County, while those owning over 10 acres were more likely to cite the proximity of family and friends as a key reason for living in Burnett County.

Seasonal residents were significantly more likely to identify recreational opportunities and the proximity to the Twin Cities as reasons they choose to live in Burnett County. Full-time residents were more likely to say that being close to their place of employment, the small town atmosphere/rural lifestyle, and being near family and friends are reasons for living in Burnett County.

Higher income respondents were more likely to cite recreational opportunities as a reason to live in Burnett County; lower income respondents were more influenced by proximity to family and friends.

Services and Facilities

A majority of respondents rated four services or facilities as “excellent” or “good”: county parks (60% excellent/good), fire protection (56%), police protection (55%), and county road maintenance (54%). About half of the respondents gave good or excellent ratings to emergency 911 service, and local town/village road maintenance. A majority of County respondents rated only one service, wireless telecommunication, as “fair” or “poor”. Generally, services with low overall ratings (wireless telecommunication, county nuisance ordinance enforcement, county public health service, etc.) also have high proportions of people with no opinion. In fact, one-fourth or more of respondents had no opinion about the quality of nine of the 15 services and facilities listed on the survey.

Table 3: Quality of Services and Facilities , Burnett County, 2009						
	Count	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Fire protection	359	13%	43%	18%	3%	24%
Emergency dispatch service (911)	362	12%	38%	10%	3%	37%
Police protection/law enforcement	362	9%	46%	22%	4%	20%
Local public school system	361	9%	29%	10%	3%	49%
County parks	356	8%	52%	14%	2%	23%
Public libraries	362	8%	28%	17%	4%	43%
County road maintenance	364	7%	47%	34%	10%	2%
County recycling programs	360	5%	34%	24%	9%	28%
Local Town/Village road maintenance	364	5%	45%	30%	12%	8%
County public health services	360	4%	30%	18%	2%	46%
Local Town/Village hall	359	4%	40%	21%	4%	31%
Wireless telecommunication service	356	3%	16%	24%	33%	25%
County zoning code enforcement	359	2%	33%	25%	7%	34%
County building code enforcement	359	2%	39%	18%	8%	34%
County nuisance ordinance enforcement	358	1%	20%	18%	15%	47%

Lower income respondents are slightly more satisfied with the local public school system and public libraries. Older respondents are more likely to rate County road maintenance higher. In general, seasonal residents were more likely to have no opinion about the quality of services and facilities in the County.

Wireless Communication Network. As noted earlier in Table 3, a majority of respondents were not satisfied with wireless telecommunication services. When asked about strategies to improve the wireless communication network in the County while still maintaining the “Northwoods Character”, 50 percent believe it is more important to allow fewer, but taller communication towers. Approximately one-fourth (26%) were in favor of more, but shorter communication towers, and 24 percent had no opinion. There are no statistically significant differences by demographic group in the sample.

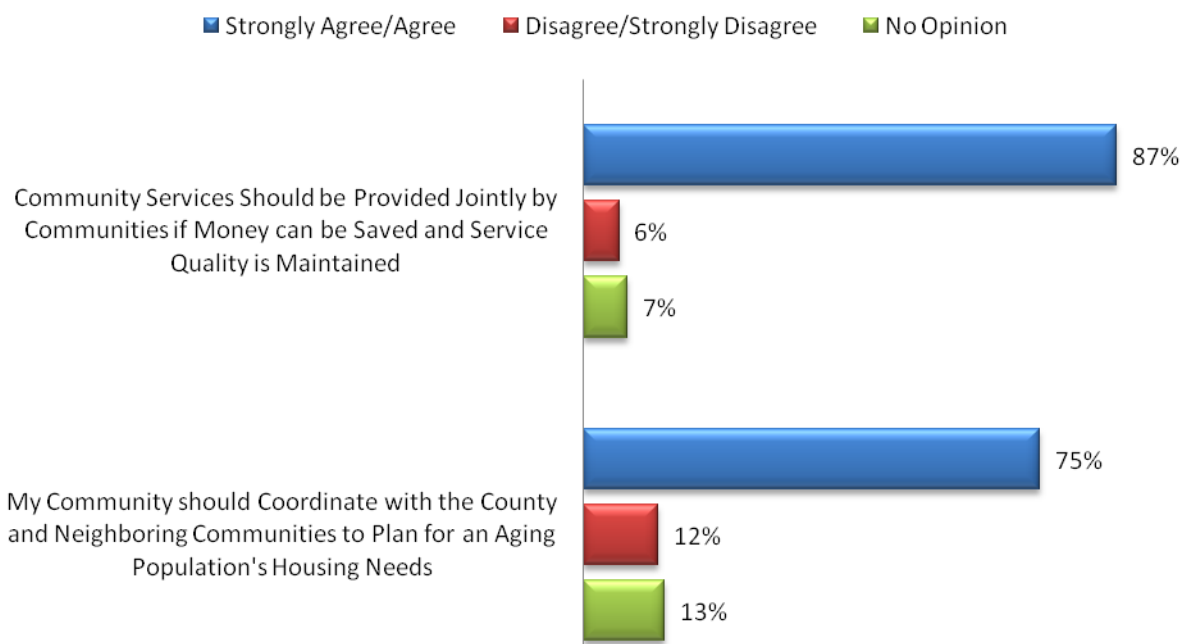
Internet Service. Respondents were asked to indicate if they currently have internet service at their residence in Burnett County. Eight percent report having dial-up modem service, 37 percent have high speed/broadband, and over half have no internet service. Seasonal residents and older respondents were less likely to have internet service at their residence.

For those with internet service, nearly six in ten would not work from home if that option was available; however, 15 percent do (or would) work from home three or more days/week.

Two survey questions addressed the need for coordinated efforts between communities and the County. The first question asked respondents if they agree that services should be provided jointly by communities if money can be saved and service quality can be maintained. The second question asked respondents if they agree that a coordinated effort is needed between neighboring communities and the County to plan for an aging population's housing needs. In Figure 3, responses are grouped into "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" (top bar in each pair), "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" (the middle bar in each pair), and "No Opinion" (the bottom bar in each pair).

If joint community services results in a cost saving (and service quality is maintained), a large percentage of residents (87%) are for it. Residents are generally in favor (75%) of a coordinated plan by Burnett County and neighboring communities to address housing needs for an aging population.

Figure 3: Joint Community Services and Coordinated Housing Plans



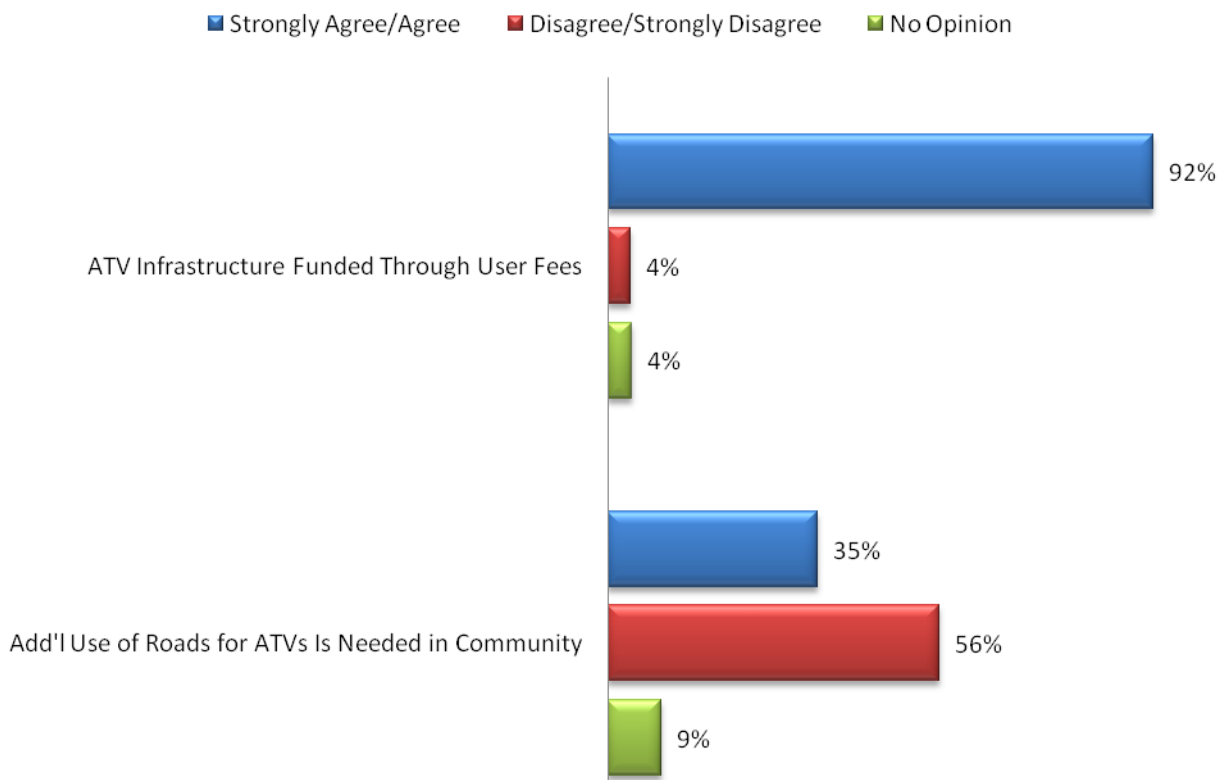
Respondents with higher levels of education and higher incomes were more likely to strongly agree that community services should be provided jointly by communities if money can be saved and service quality is maintained. Older residents were significantly more likely to support county and community coordination in planning for an aging population's housing needs.

ATV Usage

Residents were asked two specific questions about motorized all-terrain vehicles. Respondents were asked if additional use of roads for ATVs is needed in their community, and if ATV infrastructure should be funded through user fees. In Figure 4, opinions are grouped into “strongly agree” and “agree” (top bar in each pair), “disagree” and “strongly disagree” (the middle bar in each pair), and “no opinion” (the bottom bar in each pair).

The data in Figure 4 indicate that the overwhelming majority of Burnett County property owners feel that ATV infrastructure (trails, signage, maintenance, etc.) should be funded through user fees. A majority (56%), however, disagree that additional use of roads for ATVs is needed in their community. In terms of demographic differences with respect to ATV issues, higher income and higher educated respondents feel more strongly that ATV infrastructure should be funded through user fees.

Figure 4: Opinions Regarding ATV Infrastructure and Usage



County Budget

Allocating County Budget. Respondents were given the opportunity to allocate the County budget based on two budget scenarios: having a \$100 surplus or facing a \$100 deficit. Figure 5 highlights the average amount respondents from the County sample allocated per item. The SRC eliminated responses in which totals did not add up to \$100.²

The surplus count and deficit count listed on the left side of the table under each budget item are determined by the number of respondents who both included a value for that category and had total budgets equaling \$100 as requested on the questionnaire. As an example, when dealing with a County surplus, roads and bridges would receive an average amount of \$14 based on values provided by 190 respondents with totals equaling \$100 for the entire budget. Alternatively, when faced with a \$100 deficit, 153 respondents would cut roads and bridges, on average, \$8.

Figure 5: Allocating the County Budget:

	There is a <u>\$100 surplus</u> . Distribute it among the following: AVERAGE AMT. WRITTEN BY RESPONDENTS	There is a <u>\$100 deficit</u> . Balance the budget by cutting it from the following: AVERAGE AMT. WRITTEN BY RESPONDENTS
Taxes <i>Surplus count = 159 Deficit count = 127</i>	\$23 (decrease)	\$11 (increase)
Emergency services <i>Surplus count = 206 Deficit count = 109</i>	\$17	\$ 4
Roads and bridges <i>Surplus count = 190 Deficit count = 153</i>	\$14	\$ 8
Education <i>Surplus count = 173 Deficit count = 134</i>	\$13	\$ 9
Environment <i>Surplus count = 169 Deficit count = 195</i>	\$10	\$14
Recreation <i>Surplus count = 155 Deficit count = 233</i>	\$ 8	\$21
Economic development <i>Surplus count = 143 Deficit count = 202</i>	\$ 8	\$16
Social services <i>Surplus count = 143 Deficit count = 192</i>	\$ 7	\$17
Total = must add to 100	\$100	\$100

Survey responses (Figure 5) indicate that when dealing with a surplus, respondents would be most likely to cut taxes first, followed by distributing surplus funds to emergency services, roads and bridges, and education. Alternatively, if respondents need to balance the budget by cutting funds, recreation would take the biggest hit (on average), followed by social services, and economic development. On average, emergency services would be the service cut the least.

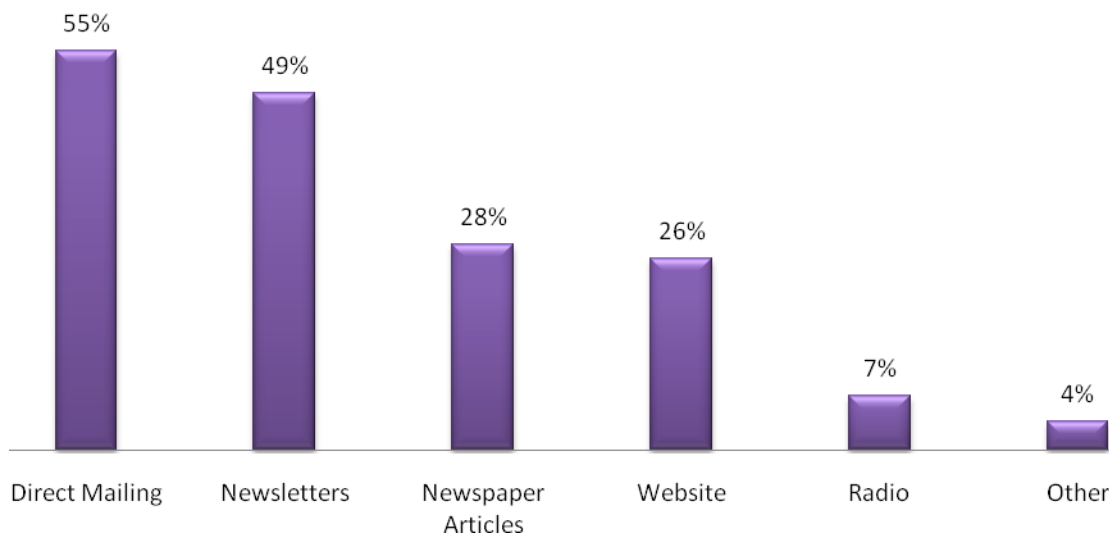
² Surplus results from 24 respondents were eliminated because their sums didn't total \$100. Deficit results for 17 respondents were eliminated because their sums did not total \$100.

In at least one area, recreation, the attributes that people value about Burnett County do not necessarily align with budget balancing. Respondents' allocated one of the smallest surplus distributions to recreation and would give it the largest cut when dealing with a deficit. As described earlier in the report, the second most important reason this group of respondents lives in Burnett County was the recreational opportunities available to them. In addition, County parks had the highest excellent/good ratings in terms of services and facilities, and, as will be discussed later in the report, tourism and recreation businesses received the most "high priority" ratings when discussing the most important types of businesses for Burnett County. It is, in short, interesting that the recreational attributes that respondents find most attractive about the County and which are likely to figure prominently in a tourism/recreation-based economic development strategy do not fare well in the budget reallocations summarized in Figure 5.

Communication

Receiving Information from Burnett County. Figure 6 indicates that the most preferred methods of receiving information from Burnett County for this group of respondents are direct mailings and newsletters – roughly half the respondents identified these as their preferred communication channels. About one-fourth of respondents prefer newspaper articles and the website. Other surveys of this type that the SRC has done around the state have consistently identified direct mailings as a preferred means of receiving information. "Other" responses include receiving this sort of information electronically through email. Appendix B contains the complete compilation of "other" communication methods mentioned.

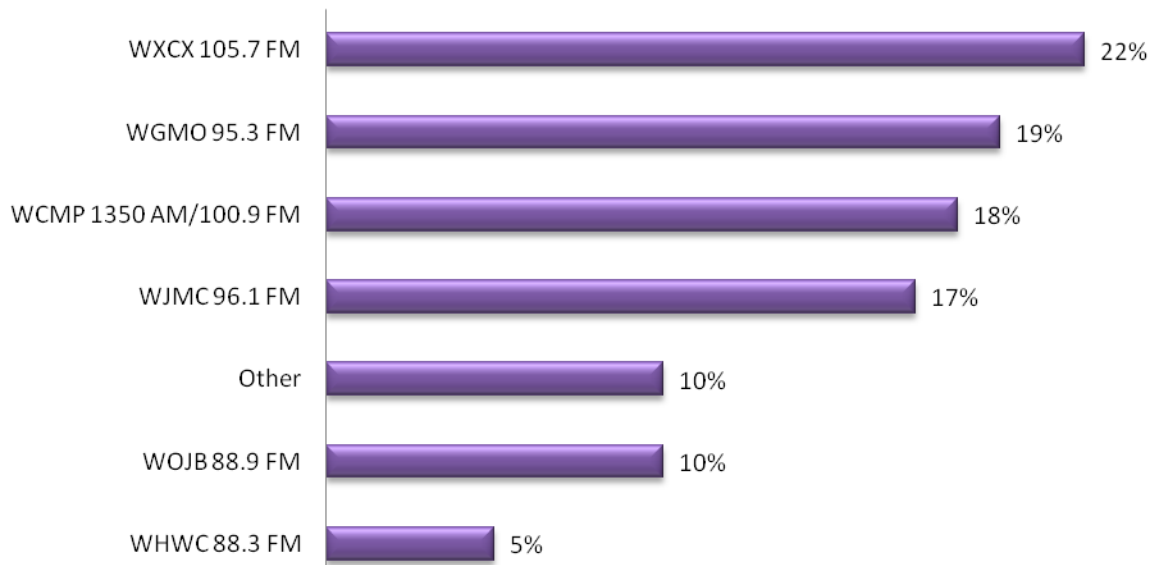
Figure 6: Preferred Communication Methods from Burnett County



The County website, while not identified as one of the two most preferred means of receiving information from Burnett County, does appeal to specific subgroups. Seasonal residents are more likely to want to receive information from the website, as are higher income respondents, and those with more formal education. Full-time residents, those who own more acreage, and those with less income are significantly more interested than their counterparts in receiving information from newspaper articles and the radio.

Preferred Radio Station for County Information. Although a relatively small proportion of respondents choose radio as a preferred method of communication with the County (7%), those who did were asked which radio station they would prefer to receive information from. Figure 7 highlights respondents' preferences. Four stations were preferred by similar numbers of respondents with WXCX 105.7 slightly higher than WGMO, WCMP, and WJMC.

Figure 7: Preferred Radio Station for Receiving County Information

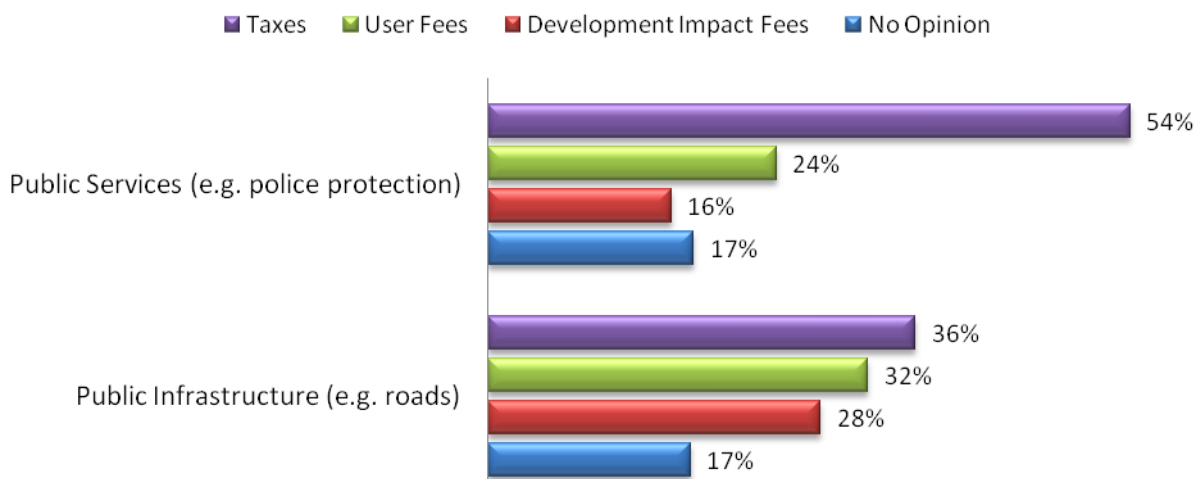


Growth and Development

Paying for Costs Associated with Growth and Development. Respondents were asked their preferred ways of paying for the costs associated with growth and development in terms of public infrastructure, such as roads and public services, such as police protection.

The top bar in each set in Figure 8 shows the percentage who prefer that taxes be used to cover the costs associated with growth and development, the second bar shows the percentage that believe that user fees should be collected for associated costs, the third bar describes the percentage that believe development impact fees should be used, and the bottom bar shows the percentage that do not have an opinion. In both instances, the most preferred option was to pay for growth and development costs through taxes. However, paying taxes for public services was the only option in which a majority of respondents agreed and it is just a slight majority at 54 percent. User fees and development impact fees were slightly more popular choices for public infrastructure than for public services.

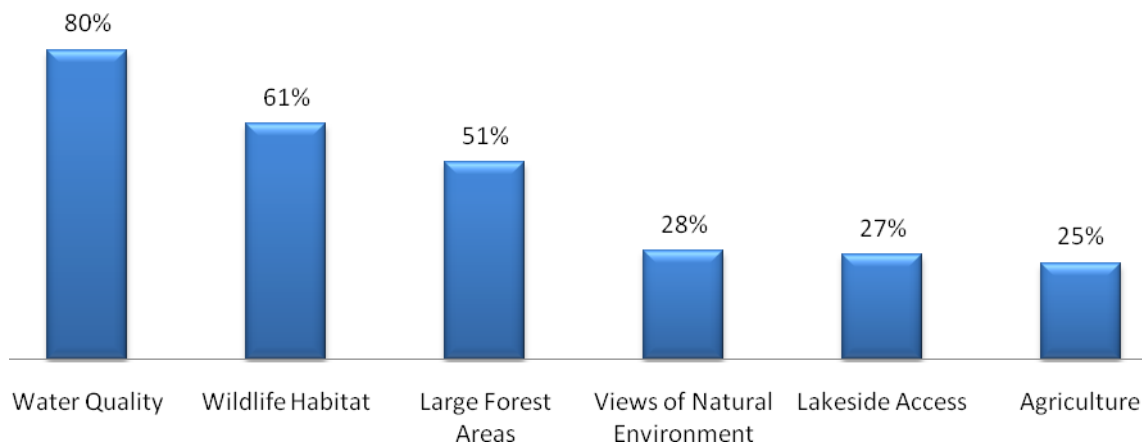
Figure 8: Preferred Ways of Paying for Costs Associated with Growth and Development



There are few differences across demographic groups in terms of the preferred methods of paying for the costs associated with growth and development. The preference for taxes grows with income. Respondents with less education and less income were more likely to say they have no opinion regarding how to pay for additional infrastructure and services associated with development.

Preservation of County Resources. Respondents were asked to identify up to 3 resources they thought Burnett County should preserve as development occurs over time. Figure 9 indicates that residents in Burnett County are quite interested in preserving water quality in the area. The preservation of wildlife habitat was in the top three for 3 of 5 respondents. Preserving large areas of forest had a slight majority rating it in their top three. Preserving natural environment views, lakeside access, and agriculture was chosen by approximately one-fourth of respondents. One percent of respondents chose “other” or “none”.

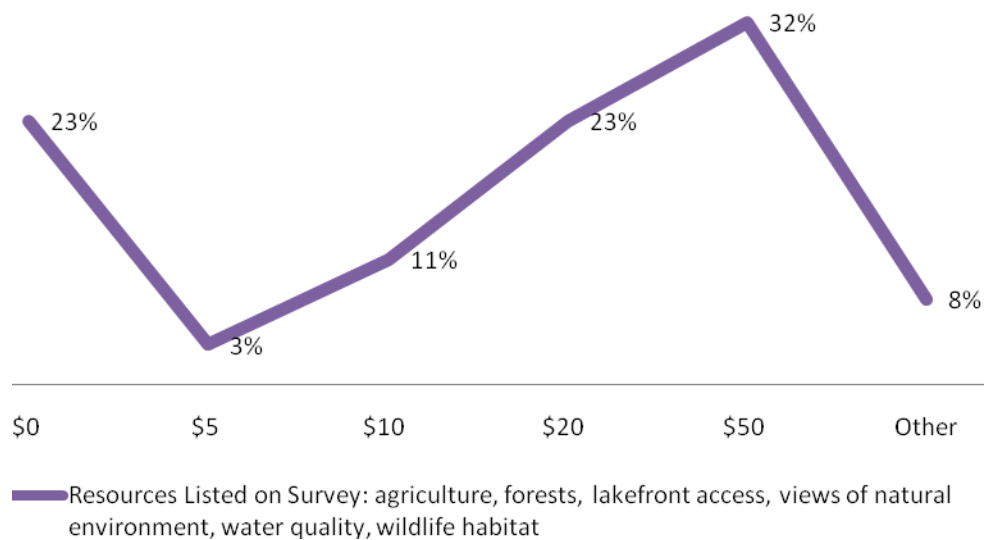
Figure 9: Top 3 Most Important Things to Preserve in Burnett County



Males are more likely to say that preserving large areas of contiguous forests is one of their top 3 most important things to preserve as development occurs over time in Burnett County. The preservation of agriculture and preserving wildlife habitat are more likely to be in the top three for full-time residents. Seasonal residents are more likely to place importance on preserving views of the natural environment. Respondents with more formal education were more likely to believe that water quality is one of the most important things to preserve in the County, while respondents with less formal education are more likely to include agriculture and wildlife habitat in their top three.

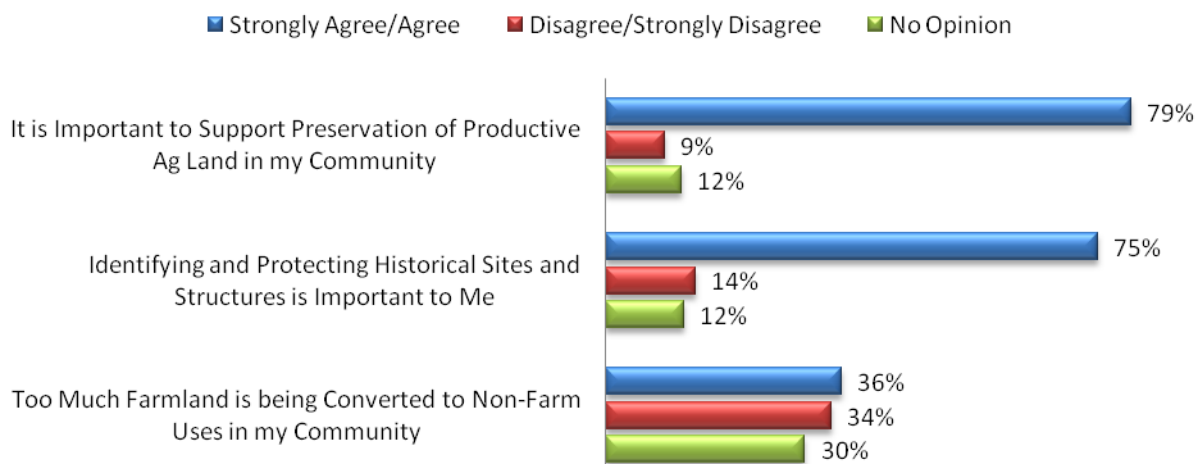
In a follow-up question, respondents were asked how much they would be willing to pay annually to help preserve the items found in Figure 9. Nearly one-third of respondents would be willing to pay \$50/annually (Figure 10). Approximately one-fourth either would pay \$20 annually or would not pay anything. “Other” comments included \$100, or “depends on my income”. Appendix B contains the complete compilation of “other” responses. Higher income respondents were willing to pay more annually (\$50) to help preserve the resources mentioned in Figure 9.

Figure 10: Willing to Pay Annually to Help Preserve Various Resources in Burnett County



A few additional questions on the survey addressed various types of preservation (agricultural land and historical sites and structures). In Figure 11, opinions are grouped into “strongly agree” and “agree” (top bar in each pair), “disagree” and “strongly disagree” (the middle bar in each pair), and “no opinion” (the bottom bar in each pair). A substantial majority (79%) of respondents support the preservation of agricultural land in their community. A nearly identical percentage (75%) place importance on the identification and protection of historical sites and structures. Respondents are almost evenly split on their opinions regarding excessive farmland conversion, 36 percent are in agreement, 34% disagree, and 30 percent have no opinion. In terms of demographic differences, females, full-time residents, and those with less formal education are more likely to believe that too much farmland is being converted to non-farm uses in their community.

Figure 11: Opinions about Preservation

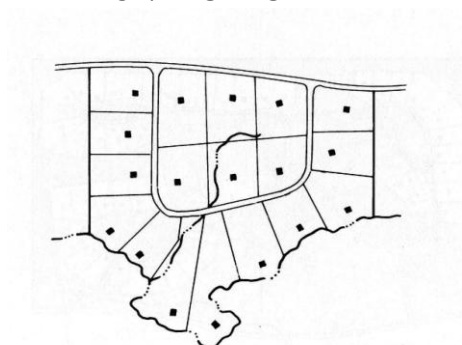


Residential Development

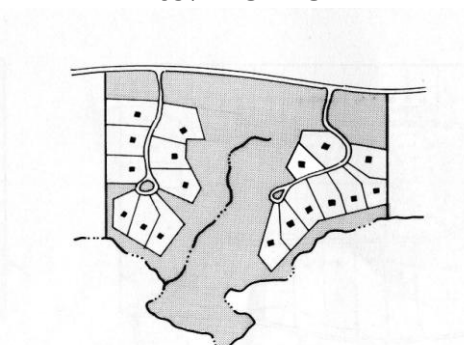
Respondents were asked to indicate their preference for a traditional rural development design (larger lot size, no common/open space – Option A below) versus a cluster concept (smaller lots, common/open space – Option B). Figure 12 indicates that by more than a two to one margin, Burnett County residents opt for the cluster design that creates shared open space.

Figure 12: Preference for Rural Housing Development Design:

Traditional Development Design
31% **OPTION A**



Cluster Development Design
69% **OPTION B**



The SRC has asked this question using the same or a substantially similar visual element in a large number of land use surveys throughout Wisconsin. In almost every instance, the cluster design option has been favored by a margin similar to that seen in Burnett County. The cluster design, while still preferred by a majority, had significantly lower levels of support from younger (<45 years old) respondents. Interestingly, other surveys of this type that the SRC has done around the state have shown that the cluster design has higher levels of support from younger respondents.

Clustering Residential Building Lots. An additional question asked survey respondents to state their opinions about requiring the cluster of residential building lots to preserve various resources. In Figure 13, opinions are grouped into “strongly agree” and “agree” (top bar in each pair), “disagree” and “strongly disagree” (the middle bar in each pair), and “no opinion” (the bottom bar in each pair).

Figure 13: Clustering Residential Building Lots Should be *Required* in Order to Preserve:

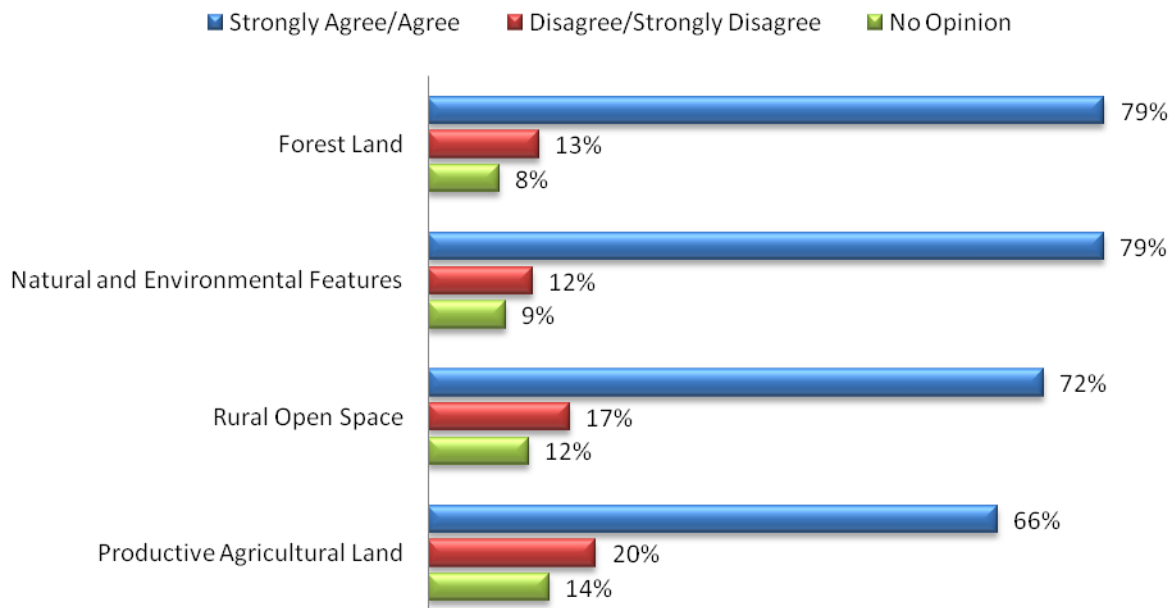


Figure 13 indicates that solid majorities of respondents agree that clustering requirements should be required for preserving each of the four features described. Nearly 4 of 5 respondents believe such requirements should be made to preserve forest land and natural and environmental features, and slightly less than three-fourths feel this way about preserving rural open space. Two-thirds of respondents are in favor of requiring the clustering of residential building lots to preserve productive agricultural land.

Full-time residents and those with more than 10 acres of land tend to be more supportive of clustering residential building lots to preserve productive agricultural land. As was the case with rural housing development design preferences (Figure 12), older respondents were significantly more supportive of clustering residential building lots to preserve rural open space.





Additional questions regarding residential development were asked in the survey (Table 4). Approximately three-fourths of respondents are in favor of managing the location of new residential development to ensure efficient delivery of public services. A majority believe that new residential development should be located away from agricultural operations and a slight majority disagrees that agriculture uses should be restricted close to residences. More short-term residents agreed that new residential development should be located away from agricultural operations.

Table 4: New Residential Development Opinions, Burnett County, 2009						
	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
The location of new residential development should be managed to ensure efficient delivery of public services.	356	21%	53%	12%	3%	12%
New residential development should be located away from agricultural operations.	355	12%	44%	22%	4%	18%
Ag uses should be restricted close to residences.	359	4%	23%	40%	11%	22%

Residential Density. Respondents were asked to provide the appropriate limit on density for various types of non-waterfront areas outside of villages within the County (agricultural areas, forest areas, and other rural areas). Definitions and graphics were provided showing housing options based on a 40-acre area.

The data in Figure 14 indicate that nearly one-third of respondents believe that one home per 40 acres is appropriate for agriculture areas. One home per 40 acres is also the most chosen option for forest areas, although one home per 10 acres is close behind (as are those with no opinion). When asked their opinion about residential density in “other rural areas”, one-fourth of respondents had no opinion, followed closely by residential density of one home per five acres (22%), and one home per 10 acres (20%). Few respondents were in favor of having more than eight homes per 40 acres for any of the non-waterfront areas described on the survey.

Figure 14: Preferences for Residential Density: Most Appropriate Limit on Density for each of the following non-waterfront areas outside of villages within the County.

(note that the placement of the dots in the following graphics does not necessarily represent where a home would be built in the given residential density option)	More than 8 homes/ 40 acres	8 homes/ 40 acres = 1 home/ 5 acres	4 homes/ 40 acres = 1 home/ 10 acres	2 homes/ 40 acres = 1 home/ 20 acres	1 home/ 40 acres	Other Density: Specify	No Opinion
						See Appendix B	
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Ag areas n=325	6%	10%	14%	16%	31%	2%	22%
Forest areas n=326	6%	10%	21%	17%	22%	4%	21%
Other rural areas n=322	13%	22%	20%	10%	9%	1%	25%

Respondents with higher levels of education were more likely to place the appropriate limit on density in agriculture area and forest areas as one home per 40 acres. Respondents who own fewer acres were more likely to believe the appropriate limit on density in agriculture areas is one home per 20 acres.

Seasonal Rentals

Seasonal residents were asked a set of questions about how they use their home. Responses of “residence is not seasonal” were eliminated for both questions shown in Figure 15a and Figure 15b. Most seasonal residences were used five or more months and nearly half were occupied by two people.

Figure 15a: If Residence is Seasonal,
how many Months/Year is it Used?

n = 188

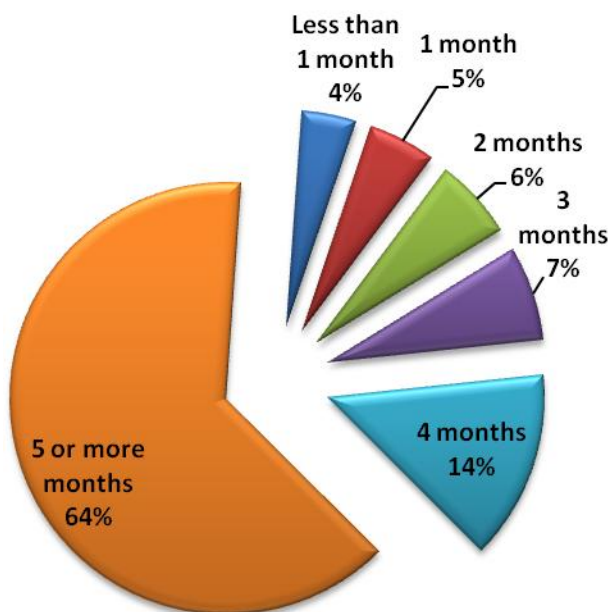
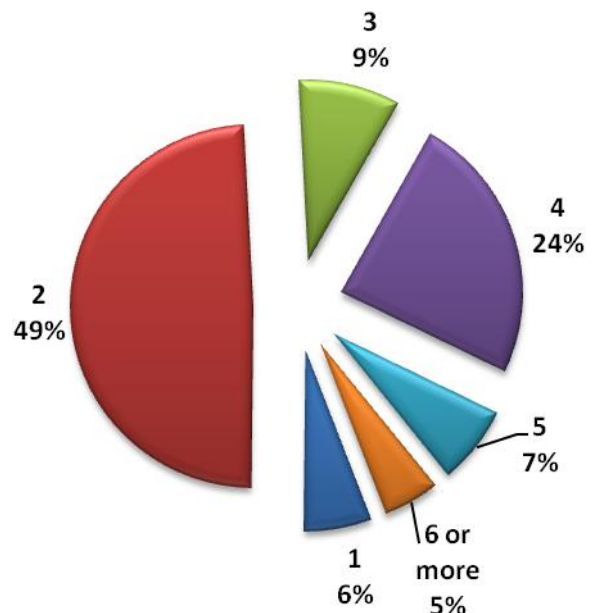


Figure 15b: If Residence is Seasonal,
how many People Use the
Residence at any Given Time?

n = 204



Burnett County respondents were asked to consider certain statements as they apply to short-term seasonal rentals. Survey responses (Table 5) indicate that a strong majority of respondents in Burnett County (88%) agree that septic systems should be designed and maintained to support the number of guests. A very solid majority of respondents (83%) also agree that noise limits on outdoor use of property during late hours should be imposed.

Nearly 7 of 10 respondents believe that neighbors should have access to owner contact information. Although less support is shown for requiring reference checks of prospective renters, a majority of 60 percent agree to this condition. Nearly one-half of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that landscaping along side property lines should be required. Twenty-one percent of respondents believe that short-term rental of residential units should not be allowed.

Table 5: Short-term Seasonal Rental Opinions, Burnett County, 2009						
	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
The septic system should be designed and maintained to support the number of guests	363	49%	39%	5%	1%	6%
Noise limits on outdoor use of the property should be imposed (late hours)	362	42%	41%	9%	3%	5%
Neighbors should have access to owner contact information	362	24%	45%	17%	6%	9%
Reference checks of prospective renters should be required	360	22%	38%	23%	6%	11%
Landscaping along side property lines should be required	361	11%	22%	36%	13%	18%
Short-term rental of residential units should not be allowed	364	10%	11%	49%	16%	14%

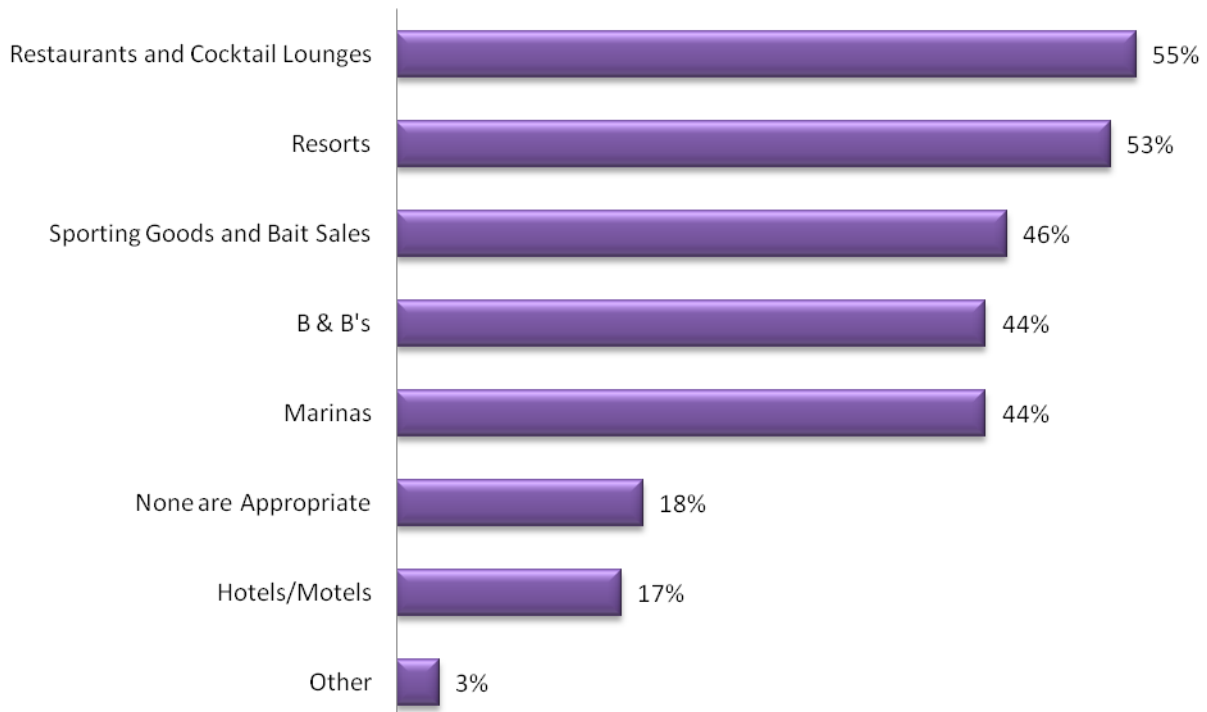
By demographic group:

- Nearly one-fourth of males believe that short-term rental of residential units should not be allowed (compared to 12% of females).
- Respondents with more formal education are more likely to strongly agree that septic systems should be designed and maintained to support the number of guests. They are also more likely to strongly agree that noise limits on outdoor use of property during late hours should be imposed.
- Older respondents are more likely to support required reference checks of prospective renters. Older respondents are also more likely than younger respondents to favor disallowing short-term rental of residential units.
- Support for reference checks of prospective renters and requiring landscaping along side property lines is stronger among full-time residents.

Economic Development

Recreational-oriented Commercial Uses. Respondents were asked which commercial uses might be appropriate on waterfront property adjacent to residential development. As summarized in Figure 16, a majority of respondents believe that restaurants/cocktail lounges, and resorts are appropriate. Nearly half (between 44 and 46 percent) of respondents would allow sporting good/bait sales, B & B's, and marinas. Nearly one-fifth of respondents would allow hotels/motels and a similar number do not believe that any of the uses listed are appropriate. Appendix B contains the complete compilation of "other" commercial uses mentioned.

Figure 16: Appropriate Commercial Uses on Waterfront Property Adjacent to Residential Development



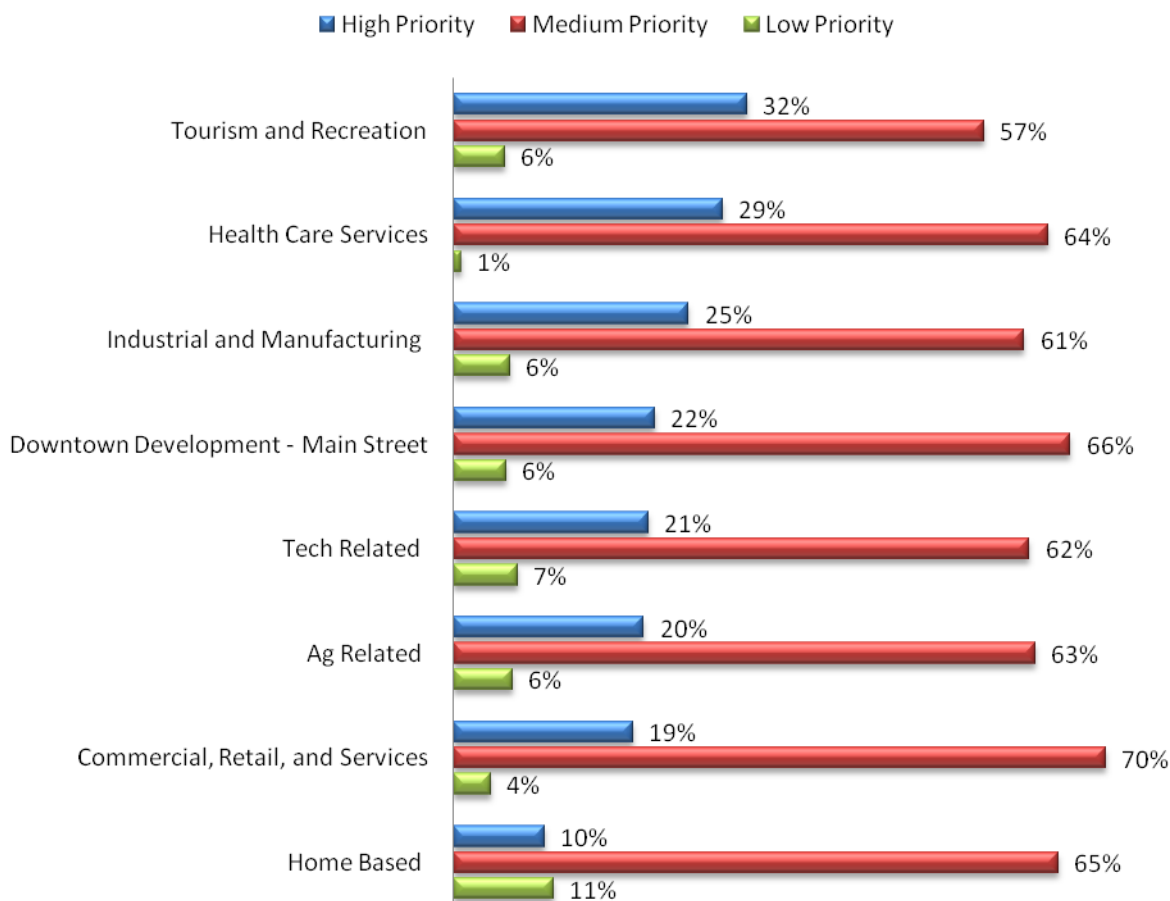
Younger residents were more likely to favor restaurants and cocktail lounges, resorts, and hotels/motels; older respondents were more likely to say that none of the commercial uses listed on the survey were appropriate on waterfront property adjacent to residential development.

Most Important Businesses/Industries to Attract. Burnett County residents were asked to rank the importance of various types of businesses on a scale of “5 = High Priority” to “1 = Low Priority”. In Figure 17, ratings are grouped into “high priority” (the top bar in each pair), “medium priority” (the middle bar in each pair), and “low priority” (the bottom bar in each pair).

Tourism and recreation received the most “high priority” ratings (32%), followed closely by health care services (29%). The rest of the industries were close together in terms of being given “high priority” (between 19 and 25 percent) with the exception of home based businesses at 10 percent. Home based businesses also had the highest (11%) “low priority” ratings. Between 57% - 70% of respondents, place medium priority on all of the businesses/industries listed on the survey.

Full-time residents and those with less formal education were more likely to place high priority on industrial and manufacturing development in Burnett County. Otherwise, there are no statistically significant differences by demographic group in the sample.

Figure 17: Most Important Types of Businesses/Industries for Burnett County to Attract



Attract and Retain Companies. Respondents were asked if Burnett County communities should pool resources to attract and retain companies that will create jobs. Eighty-five percent of respondents support such collaboration. Only 5 percent voiced any opposition; 10 percent had no opinion. No statistically significant differences were shown by demographic groups for this question. For a complete quantitative summary of this result, see Appendix C, Question 5d.

Additional Comments

Two open-ended questions were in the survey. The first asked respondents to provide any additional comments they have regarding residential density issues. In the second open-ended question, respondents were asked to report one thing they would change about Burnett County. By prior agreement with Foth Infrastructure and Environment, LLC, qualitative analysis was not completed for open-ended survey questions. The complete compilation of comments can be found in Appendix B.

Conclusions

The results of this survey indicate that residents in Burnett County are generally happy with the overall quality of life they have. Most appreciate the natural beauty and recreational opportunities available in the County. They place a high value on preserving productive agricultural land, forest land, rural open space, and natural and environmental features. For housing developments, they prefer cluster designs that preserve more open space, and generally believe that the location of new residential development should be managed to ensure efficient delivery of public services.

A majority of respondents rated four services or facilities as excellent or good: county parks, fire protection, police protection, and county road maintenance. In contrast, more than half rated wireless telecommunication service in the County as only fair or poor. Over half of survey respondents (53%) currently have no internet service at their residence.

Residents support joint community services if it results in a cost saving, and service quality is maintained. Residents also believe Burnett County communities should work together to recruit and retain companies. Tourism and recreation and health care services were considered the most important types of businesses for Burnett County to attract.

Finally, there are a number of demographic differences with respect to the comprehensive planning issues covered in this survey between seasonal residents and year-round residents. Seasonal residents were significantly more likely to identify recreational opportunities and the proximity to the Twin Cities as reasons they choose to live in Burnett County while full-time residents were more likely to say that being close to their place of employment, the small town atmosphere/rural lifestyle, and being near family and friends are reasons for living in Burnett County. Seasonal residents are more likely to want to receive County information from the website; full-time residents are significantly more interested in receiving information from newspaper articles and the radio. The preservation of agriculture and wildlife habitat are the most important resources to preserve for full-time residents, while seasonal residents are more likely to place importance on preserving views of the natural environment. In terms of seasonal rentals, support for reference checks of prospective renters and requiring landscaping along side property lines is stronger among full-time residents. Full-time residents were also more likely to place high priority on industrial and manufacturing development in Burnett County.