



**Ashland County** Comprehensive Plan

# County Level Citizen Survey Findings Report

For the  
Ashland County  
Comprehensive Planning  
Oversight Committee

Prepared by  
Vierbicher Associates, Inc.



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## About this Survey

As part of the Ashland County and participating communities' Comprehensive Planning program(s) this random sample survey was designed and implemented. With a desired rate of statistical validity of plus or minus 3, a sample size of 1,800 residents and property owners was selected from the County tax role. By calculating the representative percentage of total number of property owners within each of the participating communities a sample size per community was able to be determined. Overall a random sample generator of 3.61 was applied in the selection process within each participating community.

Community	2003 Property Owners	Percent of Total	Samples per Community
Town of Ashland	426	6.56%	118.15
Town of Agenda	469	7.23%	130.08
Village of Butternut	193	2.97%	53.53
Town of Chippewa	480	7.40%	133.13
Town of Gingles	391	6.02%	108.44
Town of Gordon	514	7.92%	142.56
Town of Jacobs	610	9.40%	169.18
Town of La Pointe	922	14.21%	255.72
Town of Marengo	283	4.36%	78.49
City of Mellon	369	5.69%	102.34
Town of Morse	524	8.07%	145.33
Town of Peeksville	253	3.90%	70.17
Town of Sanborn	366	5.64%	101.51
Town of Shanagolden	254	3.91%	70.45
Town of White River	436	6.72%	120.92
TOTAL	6490	100.00%	
Sample Size	1800		1800.00

In all the survey received a 32% rate of response, well above the national trend in mail survey responses of 12% to 18%.

61.4% of respondents were year round residents while 35.1% were seasonal property owners.

49.0% of respondents were between the ages of 46-65.

66.5% of respondents own their dwelling unit while an additional 1.2% reported being renters.

An even distribution between the number of years respondents have resided at their current addresses exists.



## Summary of Findings

### Future Growth and Development

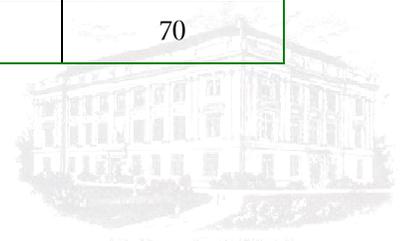
*Context:* Between 1990 and 2000 Ashland County grew by 3.4% or 559 people. At the same time the distribution of the population shifted further away from existing urban clusters and more into the rural areas of the County. In 1990, 52.7% of the County's population resided within urban clusters. In 2000 only 46.7% lived in urban clusters. Similarly, in 1990 47.2% of the County's population lived in rural areas. In 2000 that number has grown to 53.2%.

1. At the County level, nearly half (46%) of all respondents believe the county should continue to grow at the same rate that it is currently growing at.
2. When asked what type of growth, if any, they would prefer 43.7% more residential units, 38.8% would like to see more industry and 35.7% believe additional commercial uses would be positive.
3. The City of Mellen and the Village of Butternut desire faster growth while the Town's of LaPointe and Gordon desire slower rates of growth. Remaining town's feel the current rate is appropriate.

*Conclusion:* Ashland County residents and property owners should be supportive of policies and regulations which aim to accelerate growth in urban cluster locations and maintain current rates of growth in all but the Town of Gordon and the Town of LaPointe.

*Context:* Between 1990 and 2000, 512 new housing units were generated representing a growth in the total housing stock of 6.1%. Housing type distribution within the marketplace also shifted over the period. These shifts occurred through both new construction and the conversion of existing structures. In all 785 unit type changes occurred.

Units in Structure	1990 Percent of Total	2000 Percent of Total	Percent Growth in Category over the Period	Units Change in Category over the Period
1	68.5%	73.7%	5.2%	508
2	5.1%	5.9%	0.8%	70
3 or 4	2.7%	3.2%	0.5%	45
5 to 9	2.1%	2.6%	0.5%	38
10 to 19	1.1%	1.3%	0.2%	16
20 to 49	2.0%	2.2%	0.2%	14
50 or more	0.7%	1.0%	0.3%	24
Mobile Home or Trailer	9.1%	9.9%	0.8%	70



Because survey questions were structured by type instead of the number of units it is important to also understand that according to the U.S. Census 30% of the County's total noninstitutionalized population 5 years of age and over have a disability. 1.1% (187) of them are between the ages of 5-15 years. 17.4% (2,940) are between the ages of 16-64 years and 11.4% (1,934) are 65 years of age and older. At the time of the 2000 Census 15.9% of the total County population was over the age of 65. These two groups of the population represent the potential market for nursing homes and assisted living units. 16.8% of the population were between the ages of 21 and 35 representing the typical range of first time homebuyers. Last it is important to note that median household income was reported at \$31,628 while the median home value was \$61,900 and the median annual rent contract generated \$3804 a year. These findings are meant to begin to assess the question of affordability.

1. When asked to rank the need for varying housing types, respondents clearly stated that only single family (renter and owner occupied) 46% and assisted living for seniors 42.4% were needed.
2. While not identified as being needed, the descending order of acceptable housing types ranked as follows:

Housing Type	Percent of Acceptance or Identified Need
Seasonal Residences	22.6%
Apartments (3 or more units)	20.5%
Duplexes	16.7%
Nursing Homes	14.4%
Condominiums	11.2%
Mobile Homes	9.2%

While the Town's of Gordon, LaPointe, Ashland, Gingles, Peeksville, and White River all matched up in their responses in reasonable correlation to the County average, other communities contained unique varying opinions:

- Agenda returns favor the need for duplexes at a rate above the County average.
- Chippewa returns favor apartments above the County average.
- Jacobs returns favor both duplexes and apartments above the County averages.
- Shanagolden returns favor apartments and seasonal residences above the County averages.
- Sanborn returns favor apartments and seasonal residences above the County averages.
- Marengo and Morse returns favor nursing homes above the County average.
- Butternut returns favor duplexes, apartments, condominiums and mobile homes above the County averages.
- Mellen returns favor duplexes, apartments, condominiums, seasonal residences and mobile homes above the County averages.



*Conclusion:* While there is a clear desired need for additional housing in Ashland County the only category of type that all communities agree upon is single family residential. Policies and regulations which allow for more diversity in housing types in and around urban clusters in the County should enjoy broad based support while more restrictive measures for more traditional housing types in rural outlying areas should also enjoy broad based support.

*Context:* Existing land division controls in Ashland County require a certified survey map (CSM) to be prepared when:

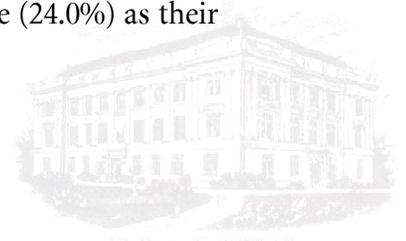
#### “SURVEY REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1 Single lot, 5 acres or less: A survey made by a Registered Land Surveyor shall be required.
- 6.2 Two, three or four lots, 5 acres or less: A certified survey map shall be prepared and recorded as required under Chapter 236, Wisconsin Statutes.
- 6.3 Five lots or more, having an area of more than 1-1/2 acres and not more than five acres each, within a five- year period: A land subdivision plat shall be prepared and recorded as permitted under Chapter 236, Wisconsin Statutes.
- 6.31 In lieu of this requirement the subdivider may prepare and record two or more certified survey maps prepared in accordance with section 5.2.
- 6.4 Any requirement of section 6.0 may be waived by the Zoning Committee when, in its discretion, it determines that special circumstances in the particular case warrant such waiver and that the purpose of this ordinance will not be defeated.”

Discussions with local Comprehensive Planning Committee members have discovered a trend that the majority of lots, which get created, are sized just larger than the five-acre minimum in order to avoid CSM effort and expense.

In addition it is a rule of thumb that lot sizes should be sufficient to accommodate the structure or structures to be built. Area should be sufficient to accommodate the sanitary system to be used and sufficient additional area should be available on the lot to accommodate an additional sanitary system should the original system fail or live out its life. In order to accommodate this rule a typical lot with a typical sanitary system requires approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre.

1. When asked what the minimum size of a new rural, non-subdivision residential lot should be respondents choose 2-5 acres (39.8%) and 1 acre (24.0%) as their majority response.



*Conclusion:* Survey responses appear to be consistent with a rationale that believes that people move out to the country in order to enjoy more space and the outdoors. At the same time lots that are excessive in size tend to be exclusionary from the vantagepoint of affordability. They are also overly consumptive from the vantage point of being too big to mow and too small to plow and wasteful from the vantage point of not achieving a rural density mix of development in balance with open space and large undeveloped resource tracts. Policies and regulations, which seek to achieve 2-5 acre minimum and maximum size residential tracts in the rural areas of the County, should receive broad-based support.

- **Regulatory Environment**

*Context:* Existing County level regulatory controls include: (1) Private Sewage System Ordinance (2) Flood Plain Ordinance (3) Shoreland Amending Ordinance (4) Subdivision Control Ordinance (5) Junkyard Ordinance (6) Scenic Ordinance (7) Zoning Ordinance (8) Nonmetallic Mining Ordinance, and (9) Fee Schedule. In the Town of LaPointe local zoning is in effect. In the attempt to better understand what regulatory environment would best achieve individual visions of what the county should become and the level of willingness to be additionally regulated two questions were asked.

1. When asked if existing regulations were sufficient to achieve individual visions of what the county should become 49.3% of respondents felt that the tools currently in use are sufficient.
2. When asked if the local community should adopt additional regulatory measures local zoning control (45.6%), local subdivision control (44.4%), storm water and erosion control (44.0%) and local shoreland zoning control (43.0%) all ranked highly.



Type of Regulatory Control	Communities with a Positive Indication
Driveway Permitting	Mellen (59.3%),
Storm Water & Erosion Control	Butternut (64.3%), Marengo (56.7%), Sanborn (62.5%), LaPointe (62.9%)
Nonmetallic Mining	None over 50%
Uniform Dwelling Code	None over 50%
Design Review	None over 50%
Purchase of Easements	Sanborn (50.0%),
Development of Impact Fees	None over 50%
Density Standards	Marengo (50.0%), LaPointe (66.1%)
Local Zoning Control	Mellen (70.4%), Butternut (64.3%), Sanborn (68.8%), LaPointe (62.9%)
Local Shoreland Zoning Control	Marengo (50.0%), Shanagolden (50.0%), LaPointe (59.7%)
Local Signage Control	Chippewa (52.8%), LaPointe (62.9%)
Local Land Division Control	Sanborn (50.0%), Gordon (50.0%), LaPointe (58.1%)
Local Subdivision Control	Mellen (59.3%), Butternut (57.1%), Marengo (50.0%), Shanagolden (54.5%), Gordon (54.2%), LaPointe (61.3%)

Within the Town’s of White River, Gingles, Ashland, Agenda, Jacobs, Peeksville, and Morse no majority of response was achieved for any of the above offered regulatory tool options.

*Conclusion:* Survey respondents on average feel that the existing regulatory environment is sufficient to meet the challenges of the next twenty years. However, it is also evident that there is recognition that ordinance strengthening and some limited local ordinance adoption and local control are needed to meet these challenges. Efforts to strengthen existing ordinances and their enforcement along with local efforts to adopt regulatory measures on perceived local need and issues should be successful and supported.

■ **Government Services**

*Context:* Government services are provided to local residents and property owners at the local, regional, county, state and federal government level in Ashland County. One of the primary opportunities presented within the Comprehensive planning process is the ability to identify where service gaps may exist or where perceived performance lags exist. In identifying these situations, Comprehensive Planning offers a platform from which solutions can be discussed and potential for intergovernmental cooperation can be evaluated for opportunity.

1. When asked if the public currently has adequate opportunity to express their opinions on issues, 62.0% of respondents felt that they did, indicating a healthy level of democracy in action within the county.



2. When asked to rate government services respondents felt on whole that all services in general are currently being delivered to them at a fair or good level. However, local responses to the rating evaluation did differ:

In Mellen, Butternut and Shanagolden, more than 50% of respondents felt that recreational services for the elderly were poor.

In Butternut, Marengo, Peeksville and Jacobs more than 40% of respondents felt that recreational services for youth were poor.

In Butternut more than 64% of response feels that recreational services for adults is poor.

In White River 46.2% of the response indicates a feeling that road maintenance and repairs are poor.

In Mellen 40.7% of the response indicates a feeling that planning and zoning is poor.

*Conclusion:* As Ashland County is home to a wealth of recreational asset's, it appears that survey respondents feel there is a need for additional effort in organized recreational activities and perhaps supporting "brick and mortar" facilities. Policies and programs, which seek to aid in formalizing recreational offerings, should receive broad-based support. In addition local analysis of government services should utilize survey findings in order to understand potential opportunities for improvement and more efficient service delivery through further intergovernmental cooperation.

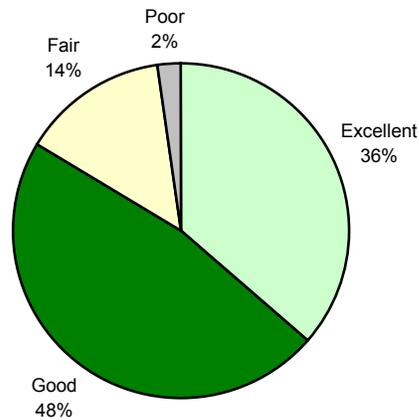


- **About Ashland County**

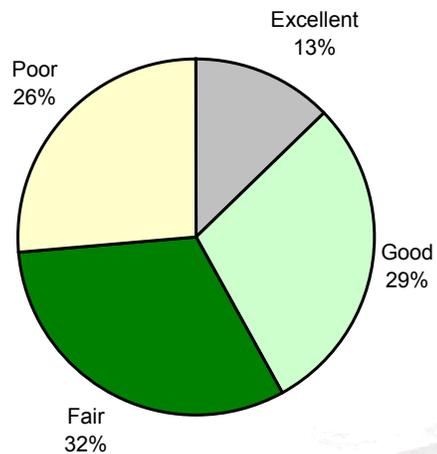
*Context:* Many things go into our individual thinking about what comprises “quality of life”. Our ability to support ourselves, the feeling that our surrounding visual environment impresses upon us, our ability to access the goods, services and resources which we desire. Just as these considerations influence us on a personal level they also influence the interplay of the larger world around us. Businesses decide in part where to locate based on quality of life considerations. People travel to locations based on opportunity to experience attractive quality of life amenities (physical, social and natural). Ultimately it is the vision of what constitutes a quality life in Ashland County that will lead it down the road to what it will become. Understanding this the survey sought to gain an understanding of how respondents feel about Ashland County now and to further understand what future efforts they have an interest in that match with their vision of quality life in Ashland County in the future.

1. How do you feel about Ashland County?

**How do you feel about Ashland County as a place to live?**

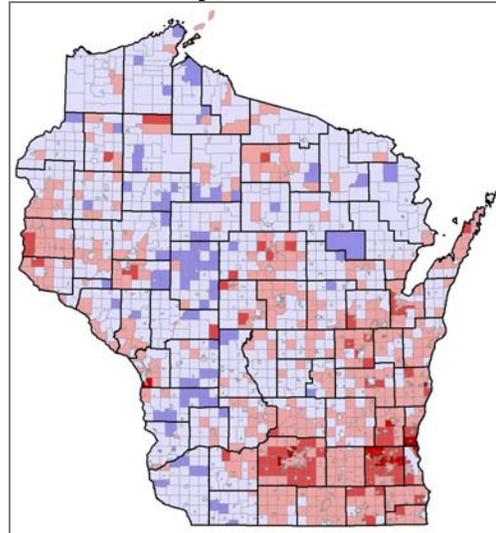


**How do you feel about Ashland County as a place to work?**



On whole respondents to the survey express a majority opinion that Ashland County is a good to excellent place to live. While they enjoy the area, there is a significant drop in the level of satisfaction expressed with respect to how respondents feel about the County as a place to work. While not part of this survey, local planning committee discussions have revealed a deep frustration on behalf of local residents towards the need for job growth and job compensation growth. With a Per Capita Income of \$16,069, Ashland County ranked 68<sup>th</sup> out of the 72 county's.

Wisconsin Per Capita Incomes

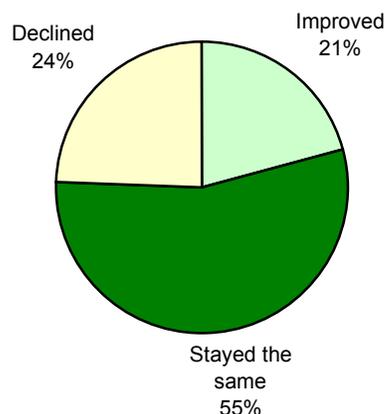


The map shows the distribution of per capita incomes. The municipalities in blue were below the average per capita income in Wisconsin of \$19,923 and those in red were above. The darker the red or blue shade, the further away from the average.

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

While the majority of respondents feel that the quality of life in the County has remained the same over the last ten years, a slightly higher percent believe that it is declining over improving. Efforts to further identify and solve weaknesses leading to perceived stagnancy and slight decline can hopefully evolve through the Comprehensive Planning program.

Over the last ten years, the quality of life in the County has?

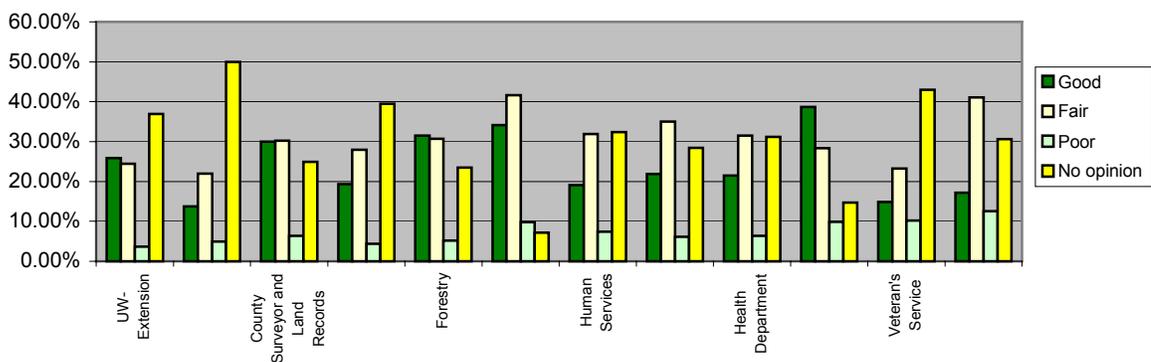


2. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of County level efforts and services. While only one of the possibilities listed received a consensus of more than 50% support (continue to promote industrial development 54.9%), an interesting hierarchy of preference for support did emerge:

1	Continue to promote industrial development	54.9%
2	Focus on recruiting value added businesses	39.5%
3	Continue to promote economic diversification	36.7%
4	Continue to promote tourism	36.4%
5	Do more to protect open space	30.9%
6	Do more to protect water quality	30.5%
7	Do more to expand health services	30.1%
8	Do more to communicate with County residents	28.4%
9	Work more cooperatively with local governments	23.5%
10	Do more to enforce existing ordinances	14.5%
11	Do more to improve the transportation system	13.4%
12	Do more to enforce traffic regulations	10.1%

3. Respondents were asked to rate County services in terms of quality. As not all respondents have had interaction with all County services, an option to respond as “no opinion” was afforded. While this option no doubt gave some an opportunity to avoid answering the question, the rankings produced are none the less insightful as to understanding were improvements can be made:

### Please Rate the Following County Services



*Conclusion:* While survey respondents in Ashland County feel they have a good quality of life in general, they also feel that efforts for improvement can be undertaken. Chief among those efforts is the need to increase the number of jobs in the County and the wage rate at which those jobs compensate employees. To this end it is clear that County residents are supportive of industrial expansion and recruitment, building upon the existing economic base and to a lesser extent continuing to grow the tourism market sector. County services, are in general considered to be fair. Efforts to move the performance from fair to good should be broadly supported.



# ASHLAND COUNTY

## Confidential Community Survey - 2003

Ashland County and its participating communities are in the process of preparing a comprehensive plan and want to learn more about your preferences on a number of issues. The information you provide by completing and returning this survey will assist us in planning for an Ashland County future that meets your expectations. This survey is completely confidential.

About the City/Town of \_\_\_\_\_

### Future Growth and Development

1. Over the last decade, the population has increased/diminished by \_\_\_\_\_% or \_\_\_ people. In addition, \_\_\_ less housing units were built in the 90s compared to the 80s. Compared to the last decade, how should your community grow in the future?

Slower ..... 24.8%                      Same Rate ..... 46.0%                      Faster .....24.6%

2. What type of new growth, if any, do you wish to see occur in your community (check all that apply).

None .....	14.3%	Industrial .....	38.8%	Retail.....	27.9%	Forestry.....	29.8%
Residential .....	43.7%	Hospitality .....	15.0%	Cottage Industry.	15.5%	Mining .....	10.4%
Commercial .....	35.7%	Service .....	20.9%	Agricultural	23.8%	Home Based	25.9%
				Production .....		Business.....	

3. In your opinion is there currently a need for any of the following housing types in your community?

	Yes	No
Single Family (Renter and Owner Occupied)	46.0%	37.3%
Duplexes	16.7%	58.5%
Apartments (Three or more units)	20.5%	59.7%
Condominiums	11.2%	64.0%
Seasonal Residences	22.6%	53.7%
Assisted Living for Seniors	42.4%	40.8%
Nursing Homes	14.4%	60.7%
Mobile Homes	9.2%	67.7%

4. What do you think the minimum, non-subdivision, size of residential lots should be?

1 Acre .....	24.0%	6 - 10	16 - 20	26 - 30	36 - 40
		Acres .....	Acres .....	Acres.....	Acres.....
		14.5%	5.8%	0.1%	3.9%
2 - 5		11 - 15	21 - 25	31 - 35	More than
Acres.....	39.8%	Acres .....	Acres .....	Acres.....	40 Acres.....
		1.0%	2.1%	0.7%	3.1%



## Regulatory Environment

6. Do you believe existing regulatory controls (i.e. zoning, subdivision, land division, sanitary permits, well permits) are sufficient to achieve your vision of your community's future?  
 Yes..... 49.3%      No ..... 17.5%      Unsure..... 29.9%

7. Do you believe your community should plan for adopting any of these additional methods of growth management?

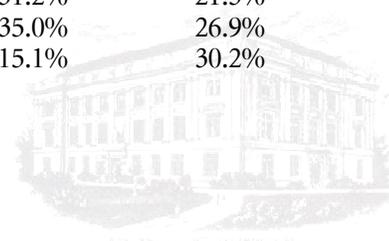
	Yes	No	Unsure
Driveway Permitting	22.4%	45.8%	19.3%
Storm Water and Erosion Control	44.0%	29.2%	15.9%
Nonmetallic Mining	19.8%	47.4%	20.6%
Uniform Dwelling Code	28.2%	41.5%	17.7%
Design Review	19.7%	47.1%	20.1%
Purchase of Easements	27.9%	36.3%	25.3%
Development of Impact Fees	13.7%	47.5%	26.1%
Density Standards	29.6%	34.2%	23.8%
Local Zoning Control	45.6%	29.6%	13.8%
Local Shoreland Zoning Control	43.0%	31.8%	16.1%
Local Signage Control	38.4%	30.9%	19.4%
Local Land Division Control	36.2%	34.2%	19.1%
Local Subdivision Control	44.4%	28.5%	17.3%

## Government Services

8. Do residents have an adequate opportunity to express their opinions on issues?      Yes..... 62.0%      No ..... 26.2%

9. Please rate the following services

	Good	Fair	Poor	No opinion
Police protection	36.6%	33.6%	13.2%	11.1%
Fire protection	49.2%	29.3%	4.5%	9.8%
EMS (Emergency Medical Service)	54.8%	24.1%	4.1%	11.3%
Trash collection	34.5%	17.8%	15.9%	24.3%
Recycling	43.2%	23.9%	12.6%	15.1%
Water and sewer	23.3%	16.2%	9.2%	41.4%
Storm water	58.2%	16.0%	10.3%	45.0%
Snow removal	45.5%	25.1%	12.9%	11.0%
Road repairs and maintenance	28.2%	41.6%	21.3%	5.0%
Library services	29.7%	13.7%	12.7%	34.1%
Traffic enforcement	28.5%	27.3%	11.9%	24.7%
Planning and zoning	15.7%	32.3%	14.2%	28.7%
School district	38.9%	27.7%	8.0%	19.1%
Communication with residents	20.7%	35.8%	22.4%	12.8%
Recreation for youth	12.1%	23.8%	34.5%	22.0%
Recreation for adults	14.1%	25.3%	31.2%	21.5%
Recreation for the elderly	10.5%	19.2%	35.0%	26.9%
Administrative services	13.5%	32.2%	15.1%	30.2%



11. Over the last ten years, the quality of life in the County has improved ..... 19.3% stayed the same..... 51.0% declined ..... 22.8%

12. From the following list, rank the importance of the County efforts and services with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

	1	2	3	4	5
Continue to promote industrial development	54.9%	8.6%	12.6%	4.0%	19.9%
Continue to promote tourism	36.4%	14.4%	19.5%	8.1%	21.6%
Continue to promote economic diversification	36.7%	22.2%	23.4%	4.0%	13.8%
Do more to expand Health Service	30.1%	21.0%	27.8%	7.7%	13.5%
Do more to protect water quality	30.5%	17.3%	24.5%	7.7%	17.3%
Do more to protect open space	30.9%	13.1%	22.5%	11.1%	22.4%
Do more to enforce existing ordinances	14.5%	16.7%	28.8%	13.4%	26.6%
Do more to improve the transportation system	13.4%	13.9%	22.9%	20.2%	27.9%
Do more to work cooperatively with local governments	23.5%	23.6%	30.6%	10.4%	11.9%
Do more to communicate with County residents	28.4%	25.4%	26.5%	8.0%	11.8%
Do more to enforce traffic regulations	10.1%	10.7%	26.8%	18.5%	33.9%
Focus on recruiting value added businesses to compliment existing businesses	39.5%	22.3%	15.4%	9.0%	12.6%

13. Please rate the following County Services

	Good	Fair	Poor	No opinion
UW-Extension	25.9%	24.4%	3.7%	36.9%
Child Support Agency	13.8%	22.0%	4.9%	50.0%
County Surveyor and Land Records	30.0%	30.2%	6.4%	24.9%
Emergency Government	19.3%	27.9%	4.4%	39.5%
Forestry	31.5%	30.7%	5.2%	23.5%
Highway Department	34.1%	41.6%	9.8%	7.2%
Human Services	19.1%	31.9%	7.4%	32.4%
Land Conservation	21.9%	35.0%	6.1%	28.4%
Health Department	21.5%	31.5%	6.4%	31.2%
Sheriff's Office	38.7%	28.3%	9.9%	14.7%
Veteran's Service	14.9%	23.2%	10.2%	43.0%
Zoning	17.2%	41.1%	12.6%	30.6%



