

MEMORANDUM

RE: Town of Richmond Comprehensive Plan Property Owner Survey Executive Summary

To: Town of Richmond Board of Supervisors, Plan Commission and Town Clerk

From: John Hilgers, St. Croix County Senior Planner

Date: November 3, 2022

As part of the Comprehensive Plan update process, the Town engaged property owners to complete an online survey. In August of 2022, all property owners within the Town were sent a postcard inviting them to complete an online Comprehensive Plan update survey. Property owners were also given the option of requesting a paper survey to complete. The survey was launched on September 1, 2022 and closed on October 16, 2022. A total of 1,536 postcards were sent. 317 surveys were returned for a response rate of 20.36%.

The survey questions covered various comprehensive plan elements (or chapters) including housing, transportation, utilities and community facilities, agricultural, natural & cultural resources, economic development, land use and issues & opportunities.

Below is a summary of survey responses related to each topic. The full set of responses are included at the end of this summary.

QUALITY OF LIFE:

- Two items rose to the top that residents felt were the most important topic for the town: Utilities, electric, broadband, garbage, recycling, water supply (25%) and Natural/Cultural Resources – groundwater, wetland, wildlife, streams, drainage ways, wooded areas, rural character (25%).
- 90% of survey respondents rated quality of life in the Town as Excellent (25%) or Good (66%)
- However, 1 in 3 respondents (36%) think the quality of life will decline in the next 10 years. 17% believe it will improve. 34% believe it will stay the same
- When asked what the most important actions the Town should pursue, respondents prioritized preserving green space, ag land, rural/small town character and minimize urban sprawl (56%) and improve roads (21%)

NEIGHBORHOOD/HOUSING:

- Nearly 90% of respondents indicated satisfaction with residential lot sizes
- Responses for types of housing needed were single-family (64%), affordable (16%) and senior housing (15%)
- 82 comments were left in the housing comment section. Common themes were no additional homes were needed and desire for rural and agricultural preservation over housing development

TRANSPORTATION:

- In rating Transportation facilities, 77% strongly agreed or agreed there is no need for additional roads and the overall road network meets the needs of citizens
- Nearly 50% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed the overall condition of roads is acceptable
- 75% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed increasing traffic on roads is a problem
- 71% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that....I am satisfied with snow removal in my neighborhood
- 80% of respondents favor the Town continuing to assess a fee of \$2,000 for each new residential lot that is created to assist in capital costs related to construct, expand or improve town road facilities

UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES:

- In rating existing community facilities, utilities and services within the Town: Respondents rated, as excellent or good, garbage collection/clean-up (86%), recycling programs (76%), County Sheriff protection (74%), drinking water quality (73%), Town Hall (71%) and fire protection (71%)
- Items needing improvement were broadband and high speed internet (77%), phone coverage (36%) and land use and zoning administration (21%)
- Respondents strongly agreed or agreed using public funds for off-road hiking and nature trails (70%), hunting and fishing access on public land (70%) and library (59%)

AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES:

- When respondents were asked how concerned are you if farmland in the Town is converted to non-farm uses, 83% answered very concerned or somewhat concerned
- 73% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed there is too much farmland being converted to non-farm uses
- 88% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed local agricultural production should be encouraged and marketed locally
- 85% of respondents support the use of Conservation Design subdivision standards and 88% of respondents believe residential development should be designed to preserve open space and green space
- While only 42% of respondents believed the Town should establish new parks, 55% responded that the Town should establish other areas for recreational purposes
- With respect to cultural resources, 63% of respondents were very interested or somewhat interested in an annual town event and 56% showed interested in architecture and historic buildings

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- When asked should the following types of businesses be allowed in the Town, residents responded **YES** to – Direct sales of farm products (98%), agricultural production (93%), home based business (88%), agricultural entertainment uses (75%) and agricultural service businesses (75%). Residents responded **NO** to - Junk/salvage yards (77%), corporate and large scale farms with over 500 animal units (69%), industrial/manufacturing (62%) and storage businesses (61%)
- 77% of respondents believe business and commercial areas should be restricted to designated areas in the Town (rural area outside the City of New Richmond)

LAND USE:

- When asked how important it is for planning and zoning regulations to protect various natural and cultural resources, respondents rated as very important or important the following: protect groundwater quality (98%), protect surface water quality (98%), protect wildlife habitat (96%), protect air quality (94%), protect woodlands (93%) and protect wetlands (91%)
- When asked about the rate of population growth in the Town, which grew from 3,273 to 4,074 persons between 2010 and 2020, respondents indicated this was about right (53%), this was too much growth (46%), or too little growth (1%)
- 67% of respondents are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the way the Town of Richmond is developing under present land use zoning and subdivision ordinances of the County and Town. 15% are not satisfied and 18% don't know
- 69% of respondents strongly agree or agree that development should use less rural land and be more compact around existing cities and villages, while 21% disagreed and 10% didn't know
- When asked to respond to the statement....I am satisfied with the enforcement of existing land use regulations – 47% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed while 15% strongly disagreed or disagreed. 38% responded didn't know.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS:

- The 40-49 year old age group had the highest percentage of respondents at 26%, followed by the 60-69 year old age group (22%) and the 50-59 year old age group (21%). 11% of the respondents were over 70 years of age
- 98% of the respondents were from the Town of Richmond, 1% from the City of New Richmond and 1% other
- Nearly 30% of the respondents have lived in the Town between 11-20 years and 22% between 1-5 years. Nearly 10% of respondents have lived in the Town for 40 years or more
- 92% of the respondents identified themselves as a non-farm rural resident, 5% as a farm land owner and 3% as a non-resident land owner

GENERAL STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Summary of responses to open ended survey question asking....."Please identify any strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in the Town of Richmond". There were 162 comments from respondents (some respondents touched on numerous topics within their comment).

STRENGTHS:

- **11 comments relating to Agriculture** (protect, conserve, preserve, do not infringe on ag)
- **11 comments relating to the Town being a great place to live** (rural feel, friendly, great place to raise a family, beautiful views)
- **8 comments relating to open space and water** (Willow River, Ten Mile Creek, wildlife, nice open spaces)
- Other strengths listed include: Boardman businesses (2), township is well managed, town officials nice to work with, love the growth, recycling, low taxes, town hall building

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- **33 comments relating to Transportation and condition of roads** (need better roads, too many potholes, improve roads, need better maintenance, widen 95th, shoulders not wide enough, roads need to handle growth, improve 100th, 140th-150th needs improving, there has been decline in quality of roads)
- **22 comments relating to broadband/internet and the need to have better service.**
- **22 comments relating to growth happening to fast** (promote less development, too much growth, growing too fast, stop subdivisions, too much traffic from growth, less development, stay rural, do not add development, too many housing developments)
- **12 comments relating to the need for more ATV routes and bicycle trails** (open all roads to ATV traffic, safer bicycle routes, wider shoulders for biking, more roads should be open to ATVs, secure railroad right-of-way)
- **6 comments relating to the railroad freight yard** (work with feds on changing rules so the RR can't do what they want, noise levels, didn't like how traffic was rerouted because of freight yard)
- **5 comments relating to speed limits needing to be lowered**
- **5 comments relating to better water quality** (farm run-off concerns, dated septic systems, preserve river systems)
- **4 comments relating to the need for larger lot sizes**
- **4 comments relating to the need for better snow removal**
- **3 comments relating to the need for a noise ordinance** (jake braking of trucks)
- **3 comments relating to composting** (cooperate with City of New Richmond for composting)

- Other areas for improvement mentioned were: Charge more than \$2,000 per lot for new development (2), need more parks (2), lack of day care (2), do not allow solar (2), no commercial animal or turkey farms (2), high property taxes (2), Town needs a newsletter (2), more open space in developments (2), do not allow homeowner associations (2), restrict chicken coops (2), preserve freedom (2), school safety, ag entertainment should be required to pay commercial taxes and not ag taxes, allow more restaurants, better buckthorn control, deal with junk in yards, restrict farm irrigation, no manure digesters, gun range too close too homes, do not allow annexation to City, add a fall festival, work with New Richmond on more things, allow commercial development along Highway 65 only, advertise meetings better, replace town hall