



Barron County Comprehensive Plan Public Opinion Survey, 2008

David Trechter
James Janke
Shelly Hadley

Survey Research Center Report 2008/22
October 2008

Staff and students working for the Survey Research Center at UW-River Falls were instrumental in the completion of this study. We would like to thank Denise Parks, Jim Janke, Ramona Gunter, Jolanda Stammler, Mandy Speerstra, Bethany Barnett, Megan Glenn, Megan Keune, Hannah Stuttgen, Grady Stehr, Aaron Peterson, Ted Cannady, Michelle Landherr, and Ashley Julka. We gratefully acknowledge their hard work and dedication. In addition, we would like to thank Catherine Tuminaro and the Barron County Plan Commission for their input and assistance through this process. Finally, we thank the citizens of Barron County who took the time to complete the questionnaire.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Study Purpose.....	4
Survey Methods.....	4
Profile of Respondents.....	5
Quality of Life	6
Programs and Services	9
Communication	10
Natural and Cultural Resources.....	11
Housing	13
Agricultural Use/Land Use	14
Transportation	18
Economic Development	19
Key Functions of Barron County Government.....	21
In terms of demographic differences:	22
Conclusions.....	23
Appendix A – Non-Response Bias Test.....	24
Appendix B – Written Comments	26
Appendix C: Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question.....	36

Executive Summary

From mid-August to early October, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls mailed surveys to 1,130 County residences. The SRC received 425 completed surveys, which is a 38 percent response rate. The 2000 Census gives the County’s adult population as 33,583. With 425 responses, the estimates contained in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 4.7 percent. Statistical tests indicate that “non-response bias” is not a problem with this sample. However, the demographic profile of the sample does not align well with the underlying population (too few women, renters and young people included). The SRC notes differences of opinion of different demographic groups throughout the report and, in one instance, adjusts the results to reflect more accurately the opinions of all Barron County residents.

The bottom line is that Barron County residents are reasonably happy with the quality of life they enjoy. More than 80 percent rate the quality of life as good or excellent and few rate it as only fair or poor. Older residents and those with higher household incomes are particularly content with their quality of life.

The factors that induce people to live in Barron County are its small town atmosphere and the proximity of family and friends. The physical environment (recreational opportunities and natural features) and economic opportunities are also important reasons they have chosen to live or own land in Barron County.

Most County services (county parks and trails, emergency management, highways, public safety, UW-Extension, the courts, community services, public health and child protection services) were given positive ratings by a majority of the respondents. A majority gave less favorable ratings to animal control and economic development efforts. Many of the ratings align with the key demographic groups using them; the more likely a service is to apply to a group, generally, the more highly they rated it. This is a positive result in terms of the effectiveness of County offices.

Direct mailings and newspapers are the preferred means of receiving information about County government. Based on the low percentage who indicated that they would likely participate in future meetings about the comprehensive plan, it appears that face-to-face exchange of information is not likely to be effective. This reluctance to attend meetings increases the challenges facing local officials. As noted throughout this report, the views of different demographic groups (men versus women, renters versus homeowners, long-term residents versus more newly arrived ones) vary significantly. To the extent that the composition of elected or appointed boards don’t reflect the demographic profile of the County, it will need to work hard to understand the people’s preferences overall and act accordingly.

Respondents indicated that they have a high level of concern about preserving the County’s environmental and cultural heritage. As noted, these social and physical amenities are the primary reason many have chosen to live or own land in Barron County. So, it makes sense that they would be concerned about preserving these features. Women and homeowners are particularly concerned with these preservation issues. Support for purchased development rights

(PDRs), one means of preserving the environmental features prized by County residents, is not strong.

With respect to housing, strong majorities agreed or strongly agreed that more specialized housing (for the elderly, affordable housing, and starter homes) are needed in the County.

Barron County residents want to see productive agricultural land used in agriculture and are wary of seeing it converted to residential or commercial uses. That being said, a majority would only allow the expansion of large farms (500+ animal units) outside of a 2-mile radius from incorporated areas. Solid majorities also feel that the visual impact of developments should be considered and landowners should not be allowed to develop their land in any way they see fit.

Nearly 90% of respondents feel that the current road network meets Barron County's needs and that alternative modes of transportation (ATVs, walking, biking, etc.) are important. Currently, support is not strong for using tax revenues to expand rail service.

Respondents were willing to use tax revenues to recruit new businesses to the County. There is a reasonably strong preference for new commercial or industrial buildings to be built in or near existing cities or villages. The types of businesses that respondents would like to see recruited, as judged by what types of business they consider important to the County, include agriculturally related businesses, tourism and recreation, industry and manufacturing, and service industries. Support is also strong for pursuing wind and solar energy as economic development options.

Respondents identified ensuring public safety and providing efficient and effective government as the most important functions of County Government. Surprisingly, they did not rate the key County functions of providing social services, regulating land use, and providing an effective transportation network, highly.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this survey was to understand public opinions about a range of important land use issues facing Barron County. The results of this survey will provide input into the comprehensive plan that the County is developing.

Survey Methods

From mid-August to early October, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls mailed surveys to 1,130 County residences. The SRC received 425 completed surveys, a 38 percent response rate. The 2000 Census gives the County's adult population as 33,583. With 425 responses, the estimates contained in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 4.7 percent.

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 2 of the Barron County survey asked residents to rate the overall quality of life in the County on a scale from “excellent” (= 1) to “poor” (= 4). In this survey, residents rated the overall quality of life a 2.1, which means that, on average, people feel that Barron County has a “good” quality of life. Suppose only people who were relatively happy with the quality of life in the County 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 SRC tested 109 variables included in the questionnaire and found 8 instances in which responses from the first mailing and those from the second were statistically different. In most instances, the differences don't change the interpretation of results. **Based upon a standard statistical analysis that is described in Appendix A, the Survey Research Center (SRC) concludes that non-response bias is not a concern for the Barron County survey.**

In addition to the numeric responses, respondents provided additional written comments that were compiled by the SRC from the surveys. As appropriate, selected quotes will be used in some sections of this report to illustrate these comments. **Appendix B to this report contains the complete compilation of comments.**

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

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents to the Barron County Comprehensive Plan 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 County.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents							
Gender	Count	Male	Female				
Survey	389	67%	33%				
Census (18+)	44063	50%	50%				
Age 18+	Count	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+
Sample	395	1%	5%	13%	27%	25%	30%
Census	33,583	11%	15%	21%	18%	13%	22%
Employment Status	Count	Full-Time	Part-Time	Self	Unemp	Retired	
Sample	387	46%	5%	13%	2%	32%	
Census	33,968	57%		7%	3%	32%	
Housing	Count	Own	Rent	Other			
Sample	394	95%	4%	1%			
Census	17,851	76%	24%				
Number in Sample Households	Count	0	1	2	3		
Adults	389		18%	72%	11%		
Children (sample)	361	72%	11%	12%	5%		
Children (Census)	5,965	67%		33%			
Income Range	Count	< \$15,000	\$15 - \$24,999	\$25 - \$49,999	\$50 - \$74,999	\$75 - \$99,999	\$100,000+
Sample	368	7%	13%	29%	25%	12%	15%
Census	17,816	17%	15%	36%	20%	7%	6%
Length Town Resident	Count	<1	1 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 24	25+	
Survey	396	2%	10%	13%	21%	54%	

Concerns about Sample Bias. The sample differs from the Census figures in a number of places. This is important for reasons similar to the preceding discussion about non-response bias. A

sample skewed in a particular way can generate results that don't accurately reflect the opinions of the overall population in Barron County.

For example, there are substantially more males in the sample than would be expected. The SRC did some statistical tests that show that men and women have statistically significant differences of opinion in about 20 percent of the questions included in the survey. Many of the gender differences are associated with environmental preservation. Women are consistently more concerned about environmentally related issues than are men. For example, 78% of women said that it is "essential" or "important" for Barron County to use tax dollars/regulations to protect air quality; only 65% of men felt this way. If the sample contained 50% women, we would expect the overall proportion of the Barron County population who feels it is essential or important to use tax dollars and regulations to protect air quality to be 72% rather than the 69% observed in this sample. As we summarize the various elements of the survey, we will note differences between the opinions of men and women.

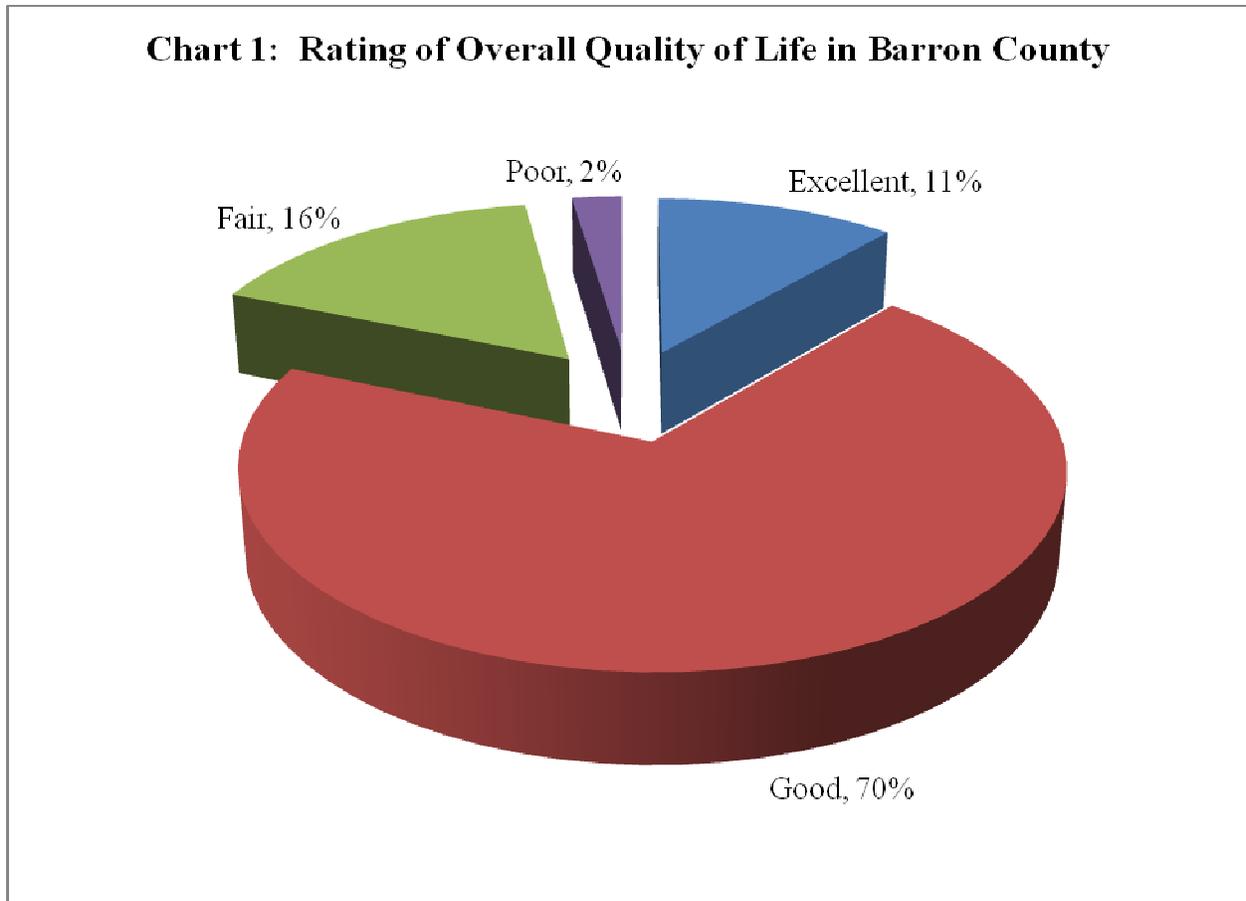
The other key deviation from the expected demographic profile is with respect to age. There are substantially fewer people under 45 years of age in this sample than the Census indicates should have been included. This shortage is probably related to a couple of factors. First, our experience is that 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. As was true with gender, nearly one-fifth of the variables tested showed a significant difference between the opinions of those older than 45 and those younger than that. These age-related differences are more difficult to categorize than was the case for gender. Younger residents are more supportive than their elders of County policies that would allow farmland to be used for residential development, are more open to siting large-scale farms in the County and are less concerned about restricting commercial development to existing cities. On the other hand, they believe that it's more important to have alternative modes of transportation and that there should be more bike and walking lanes on public roads. Differences of opinion based on age will be noted as we proceed through this report.

However, the fact that nearly 25 percent of the sample were non-resident landowners means that the comparisons in Table 1 are not totally appropriate. Non-resident landowners are very likely to be older and home-owners, which partially explains the disproportionate numbers of people with these characteristics in the sample.

Quality of Life

Chart 1 shows that more than 4 of 5 Barron County residents feel that the overall quality of life in the County is "good" (70%) or excellent (11%). There is a correlation between the age of the respondent and household income and how they view the quality of life in the County. With respect to age, those who are 65 or older rate the quality of life substantially higher (87% good or excellent compared to an average of 78% for those younger than 65). With respect to income, satisfaction with the quality of life in Barron rises consistently with income levels. For households reporting less than \$50,000, 73% say that the quality of life in Barron is good or

excellent; this rises to 84% for those in the \$50,000 - \$74,999 category, to 85% for in the \$75,000 - \$99,999 category, and to 94% at the \$100,000+ level. In sum, there is an overall high level of satisfaction with the quality of life in Barron County, particularly among older residents and those with higher incomes.



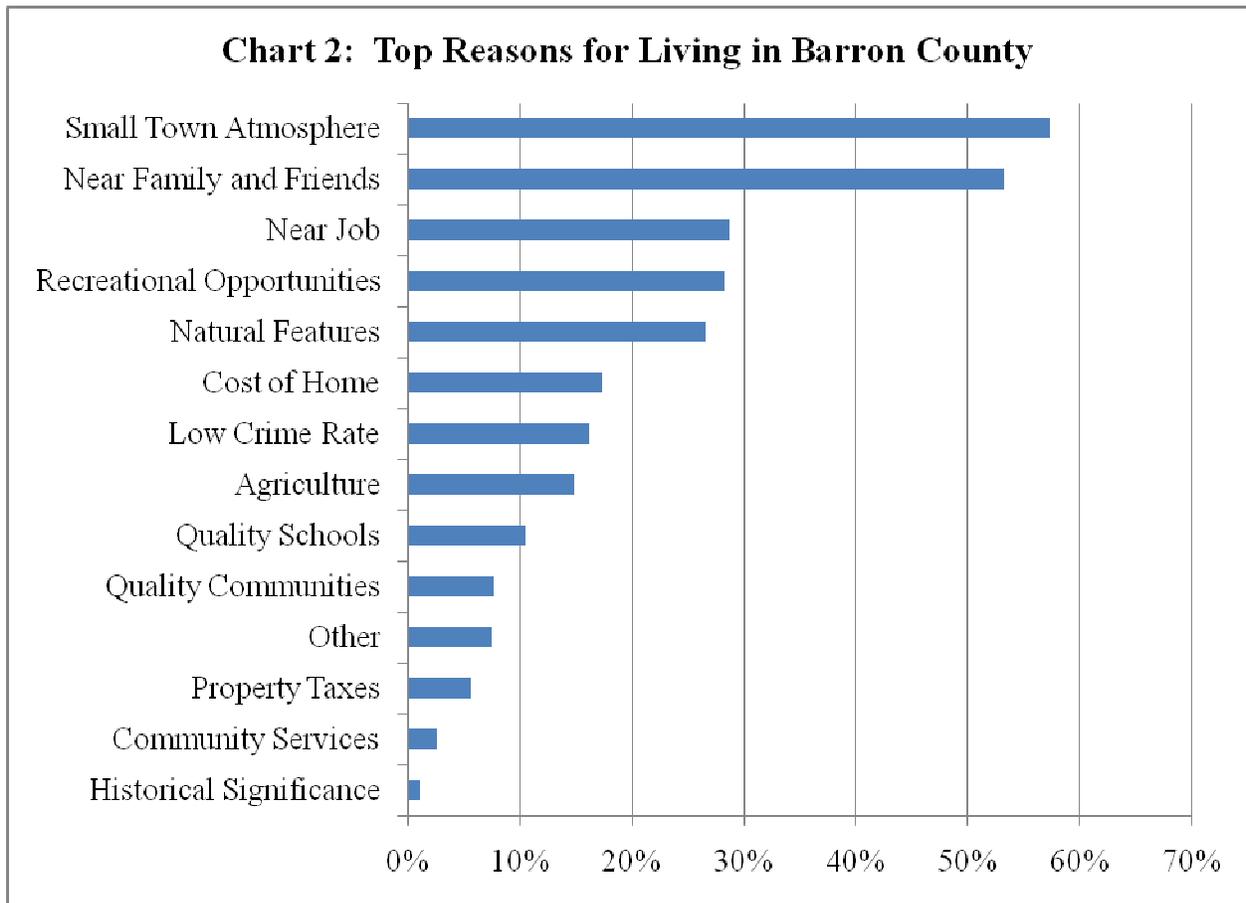
Factors Important in Choosing Barron County as a Place to Live. Some of the key reasons for property owners' satisfaction with life in Barron County are summarized in Chart 2.

Respondents were asked to identify the three most important reasons they have chosen to live in Barron County. Clearly, most people in the County value the small town atmosphere of their local community. It is also clear that being close to family and friends is a critical reason for choosing to live in Barron County. More than half of all respondents identified these items as one of the three most important reasons for living in Barron County.

The next three most important reasons for living in Barron County are closely grouped: being near their job (29% in top 3), recreational opportunities in the County (28%) and the natural features of the area (27%).

The items in "Other" included being born and raised in the County, inheriting land there, the proximity to the Twin Cities, and the natural amenities (lakes, rivers) available in the area.

People who fall into different demographic categories identified different features of the County as reasons for living in Barron. Perhaps the most interesting and important results are associated with how long the respondent has lived in Barron County. People who have lived in Barron County for shorter periods cited the natural features of the area, the quality of the County’s communities, and the area’s recreational opportunities. The things that are most important to longer-term residents included the agricultural opportunities in the County, proximity to employment, and to be near family and friends. To the extent that elected officials and those serving on plan commissions are drawn disproportionately from either long-term or newly-arrived citizens, they need to be aware that their personal priorities may not align well with people who arrived in Barron County either long before or long after they did.



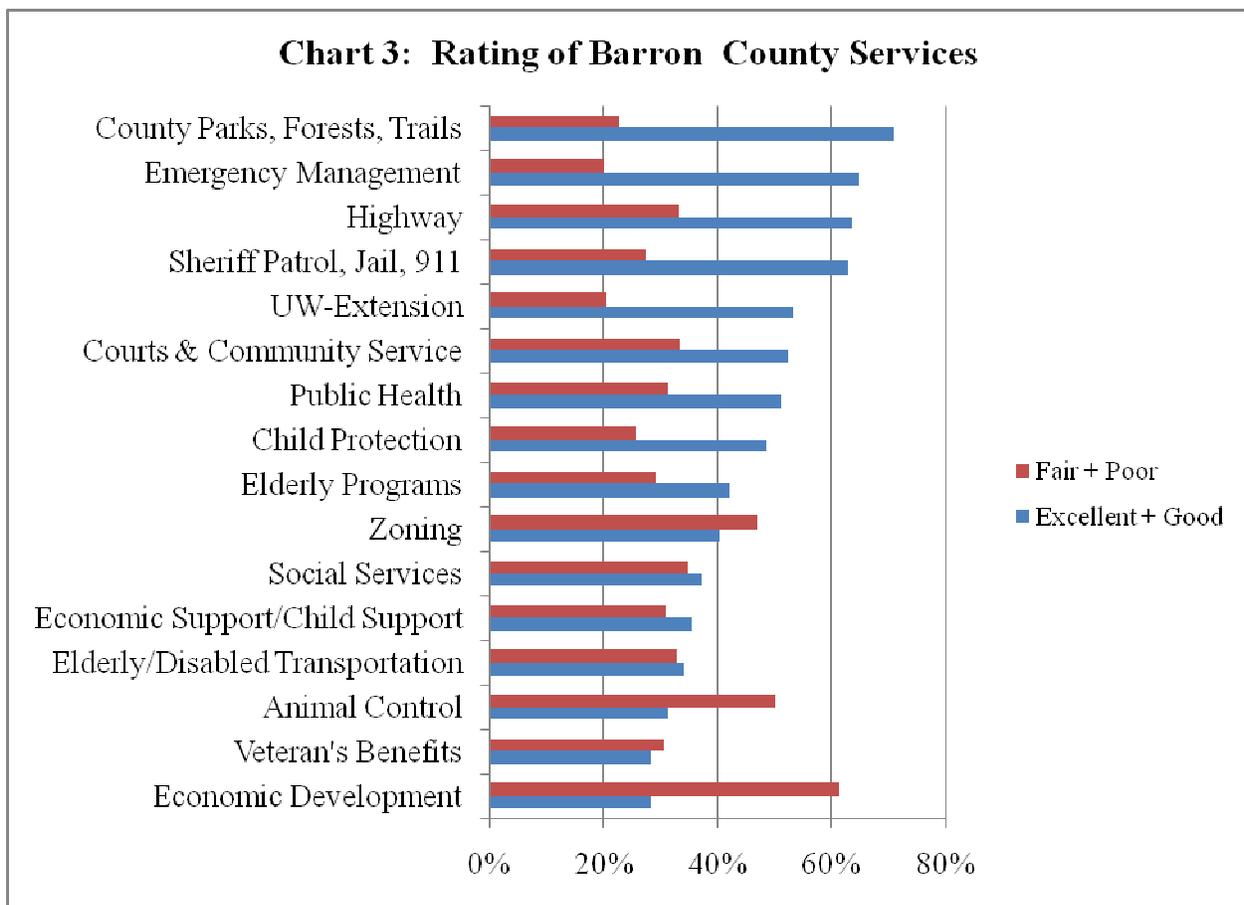
Other demographic differences in the reason for living in Barron County include:

- Being near their job was noted as important by higher income households, those younger than 65, and those with full-time employment (as well as longer-term residents).
- Men were much more concerned about property taxes and recreational opportunities than women.
- As one might expect, households with children were more likely to say that quality schools were important in their choice of Barron as a place to live.

- Lower income households said that a low crime rate and being near family and friends were very important to them while higher income households identified recreational opportunities and being near their job as reasons for living in the County.

Programs and Services

In Chart 3 the ratings citizens gave to Barron County services are grouped into “Fair” and “Poor” (top bar in each pair) and “Good” and “Excellent” (the bottom bar in each pair). Roughly two-thirds of County residents rated the County’s outdoor amenities (park-forest-trail system), emergency management, highways, and public safety (sheriff, jail, 911) as good or excellent. About half of the citizens gave good or excellent ratings to UW-Extension, the courts and community service, public health and child protection services.



In contrast, about 50% of respondents said that zoning and animal control services were only fair or poor and nearly two-thirds felt this way about economic development efforts.

One-third or more of the respondents had no opinion about the quality of veteran’s benefits, elderly programs and child protection services.

Opinions about services offered by Barron County vary widely by demographic group:

- Older residents rate veteran services, programs for the elderly and transportation for the elderly and disabled more highly than younger residents. Since this group is probably more likely to use many of these services, it is significant that they tend to rate them more positively. Respondents in the 45 – 64 age categories were less satisfied with the County’s economic development efforts.
- Higher income households were significantly more likely to say that many County services were not applicable to their circumstances including child support services, veteran benefits, sheriff and other public safety services, programs for the elderly, and social services. High income groups were less satisfied with economic development efforts. Lower income households were significantly more satisfied with public health and transportation for the elderly and disabled.
- Those who have lived in Barron County for longer periods tend to give higher ratings to emergency management services, child protection, programs for the elderly and with UW-Extension. Longer-term residents are less satisfied with veteran programs, the court system, and public safety.
- Retirees gave substantially higher ratings to veteran benefits, programs for the elderly, transportation services for the elderly and disabled, and social services. Those who have full-time jobs are less satisfied with economic development efforts.

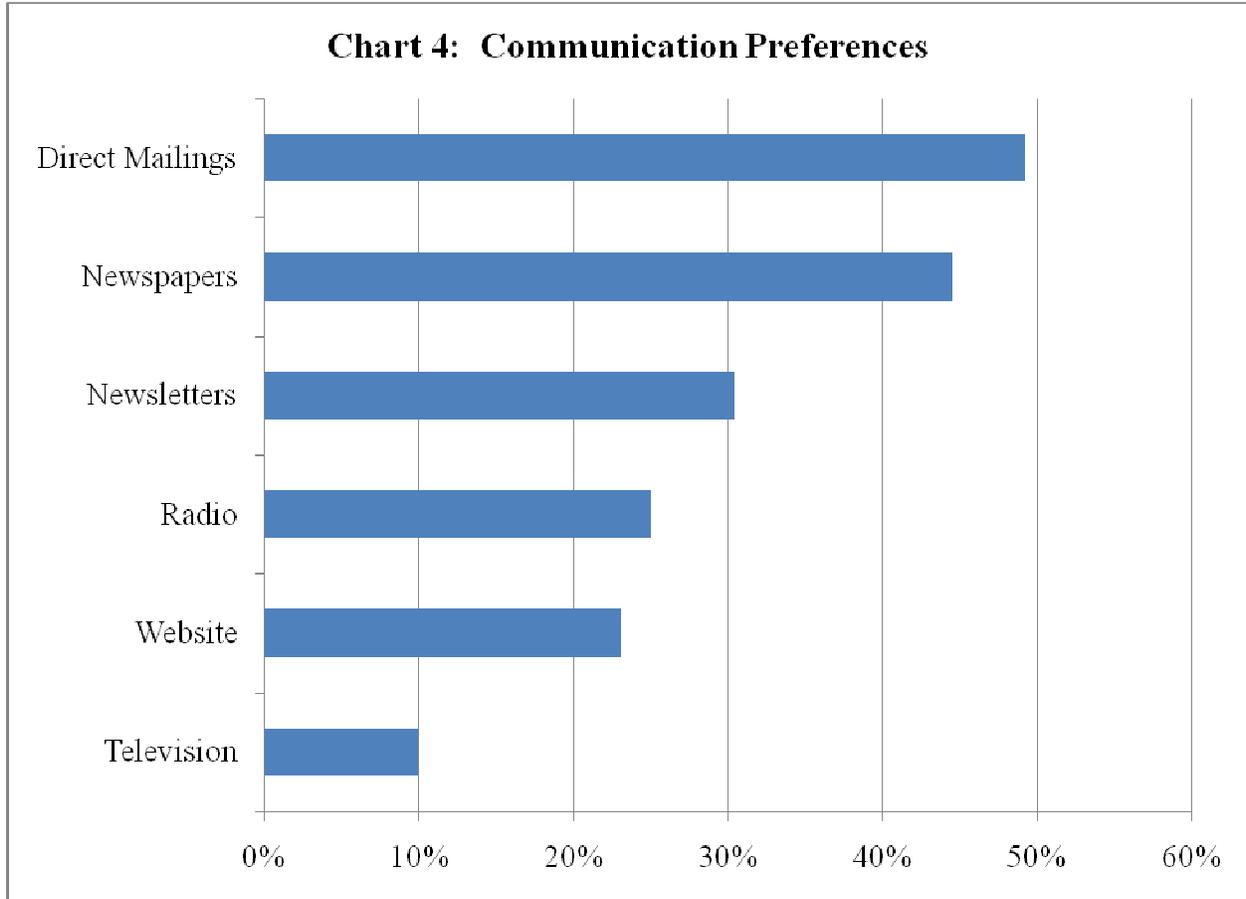
Communication

Respondents were asked to identify the two most effective ways for Barron County to provide people with information about its services and programs. Chart 4 summarizes the responses of Barron County citizens and indicates that direct mail and articles in newspapers 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 as a preferred means of getting information about public services. However, relatively few of these surveys have identified newspaper articles as one of the two most-preferred information conduits.

The County website, while not identified as one of the two most preferred means of receiving information about programs and services, does appeal to specific subgroups in Barron County. Respondents in the 45-54 age category identified the website as a preferred means of getting information about County services in much higher proportions. The preference for the website increased with the reported level of household income and for those who have full-time jobs. Newer residents use the website more than longer-term ones.

Longer term residents, while less enthusiastic about the website, reported stronger preference for newspaper articles and radio programs about County services than did their more newly arrived neighbors. Somewhat surprisingly, respondents in the 35-44 age group also identified radio programs as a preferred source of information about the County.

Interestingly, in a separate question, only slightly more than one-quarter of Barron County residents said they were “very likely” (3%) or “likely” (24%) to attend a visioning session or other public participation event related to comprehensive planning.



Natural and Cultural Resources

Chart 5 indicates that residents in Barron County are quite interested in preserving natural and cultural resources in the area. Respondents were asked how important it is that the County use tax dollars and/or regulations to protect the resources included in Chart 5. The percentage of respondents saying that it was “important” or “essential” to do so ranged from a low of 55% for preserving historic and cultural sites to a high of 91% for protecting groundwater. Given that the question was framed as, “should the County use taxes or regulations to protect these resources,” the fact that a majority of respondents said this is important or essential is a remarkably strong result.

Sample Bias Adjustments. As noted in the section describing the demographic profile of the sample, we noted that, compared to the Census, men and homeowners are disproportionately represented. This is a particularly important consideration in this section of the survey because the opinions of men versus women and homeowners versus renters are significantly different.

Women are more willing to use the County’s regulatory authorities and tax dollars to preserve air quality, farmland and the rural character of Barron County than are men. Homeowners are more willing to use these resources to protect groundwater, open space and rural character than are renters.

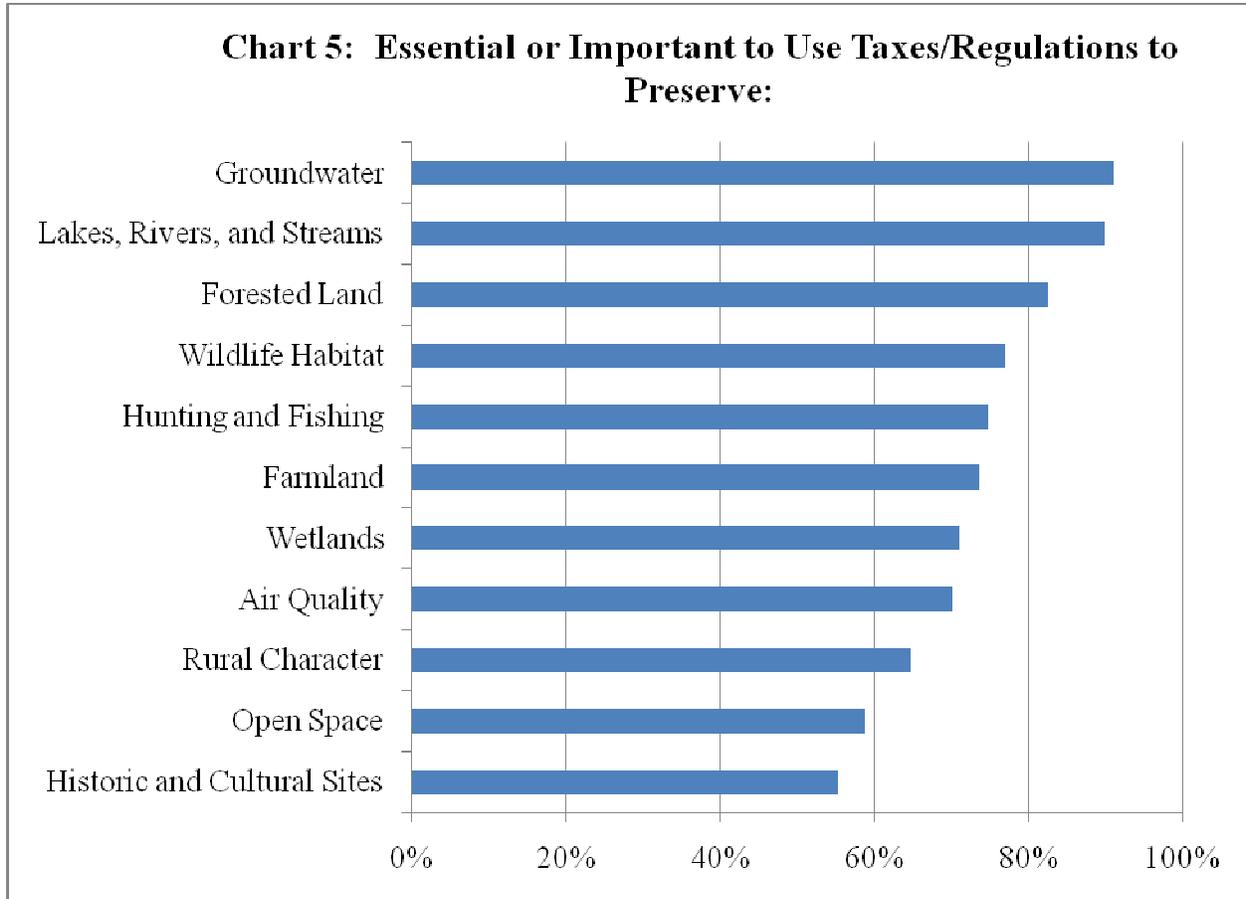


Table 2 illustrates what happens if we rebalance the results to reflect the fact that women make up 50% of the population (rather than 33% in the sample) and renters make up 24% of the population (rather than 5% in the sample). Giving greater weight to the voices of women increases the level of importance residents place on preserving farmland, air quality and Barron County’s rural character. Placing greater weight on the opinions of renters reduces the importance attached to preserving open space, rural character, and groundwater. Probably the

Table 2: Impact of Reweighting Environmental Opinions

Variable	Unweighted Result	Gender Balance	Renter Balance
Open Space	59%		49%
Rural Character	65%	66%	61%
Air Quality	70%	72%	
Farmland	74%	76%	
Groundwater	91%		87%

most important conclusion to be drawn from Table 2 is that, with the possible exception of preserving open space, a majority of respondents favor actions to preserve these resources even when the results are rebalanced to reflect the

opinion of Barron County landowners.

The importance respondents place on environmental and cultural dimensions of Barron County also comes through in the comments compiled in Appendix B of this report. Respondents were asked, in an open-ended question, to identify the things they most like about living in Barron County. Of the 461 comments received, nearly half noted things associated with the environmental and cultural features contained in this section of the report (small towns, nature, hunting and fishing, etc.).

Purchased Development Rights. The conclusion that environmental issues are very important to Barron County landowners is, however, somewhat undermined by the results from a different section of the survey. One way of maintaining open space, preserving the County’s rural character and its farmland is to purchase development rights (PDR) from landowners. When asked if the County should use tax dollars to purchase development rights on prime farmland, only 19% were supportive, 52% said no, and 29% were unsure. Women, in particular, registered a high percentage of “don’t know” responses. If PDRs are to be used to pursue the environmental preferences of the citizens of Barron County, a substantial amount of education will be needed to convince the populous that this is a good idea.

Housing

Barron County respondents were asked if additional units of affordable housing, housing to meet the special needs of the elderly, and starter homes were needed in their jurisdiction. Affordable housing was defined in the survey as housing with rent or mortgage payments that are no more than 30% of a household’s gross income, which is in line with the federal definition of this type of housing. As noted in Table 3, 65% of respondents felt that more affordable housing is needed in their area and only 20% disagreed with this assessment.

Table 3: Housing Needs in Local Jurisdiction						
	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Need Affordable Housing	393	26%	39%	14%	6%	15%
Need Elder Housing	395	29%	44%	9%	3%	16%
Need Starter Homes	390	19%	41%	19%	4%	17%

More than 70% feel that additional units of elder housing are needed (12% disagree) and 59% feel that more starter homes (for first-time buyers) are needed (23% disagree). In short, roughly 3 times as many respondents feel that more of the three types of housing identified in Table 3 are needed than disagree.

By demographic slice:

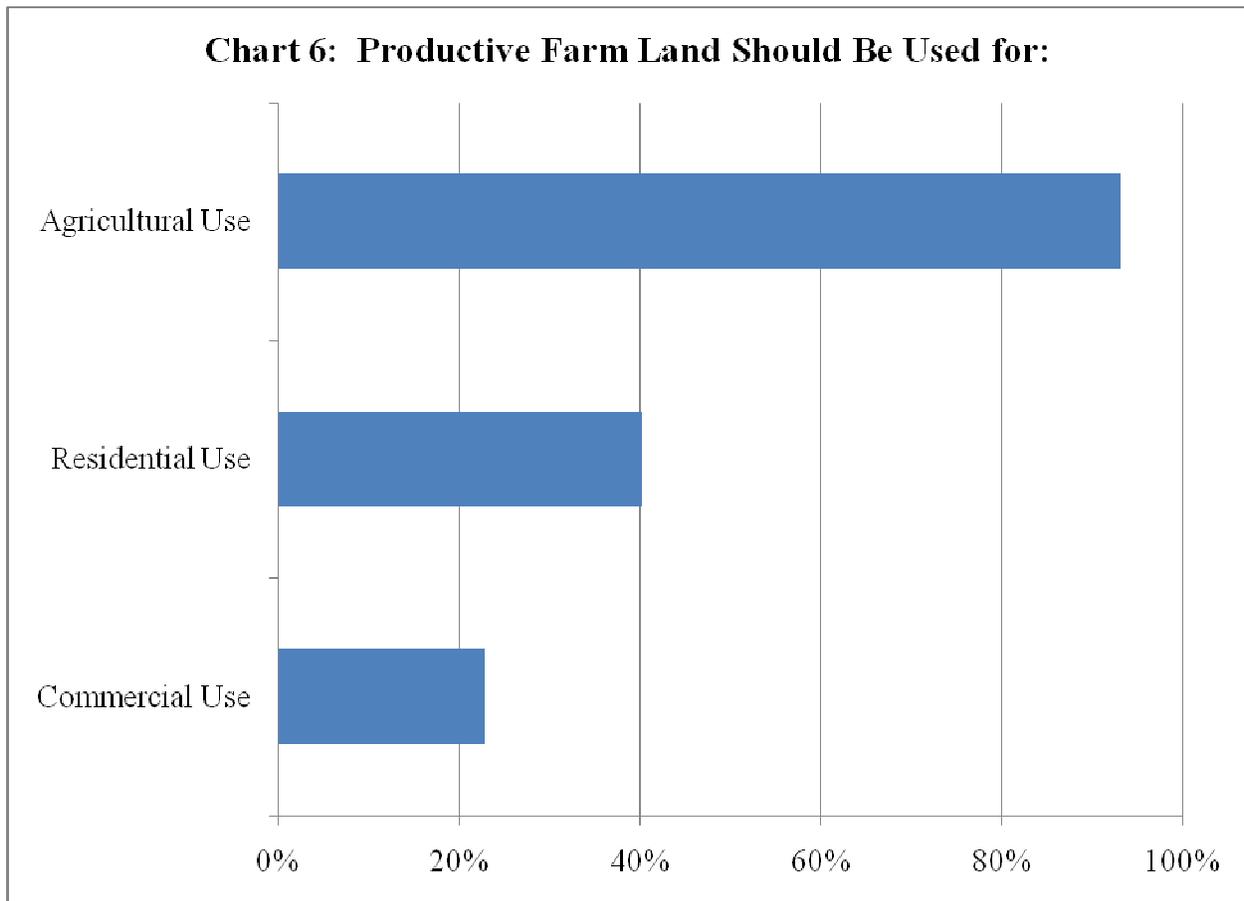
- Support for affordable housing was lower among higher income households but higher among renters, longer-term residents and full- and self-employed residents.

- Support for elder housing was also lower among higher income households but higher among renters and older residents.
- Support for starter homes was particularly high among renters.

Agricultural Use/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. In contrast, a majority of Barron County landowners are opposed to using productive farmland for residential or commercial purposes.

There are few differences across demographic groups in terms of how they feel agricultural land should be used. Opposition to converting productive agricultural land to residential uses grows with age and retirees are more likely to say they have no opinion about the conversion of productive agricultural land for commercial uses than those currently in the workforce. Otherwise, there are no statistically significant differences by demographic group in the sample.



Siting Large Farms. A second set of questions asked Barron County respondents to consider where large farming operations, those involving 500 or more animal units, should be allowed to expand. Survey responses (Table 5) indicate that a majority of property owners in Barron are in

favor of allowing expansions that are 2 miles or more from incorporated areas. Only between one-fifth and one-third are willing to allow expansion within one mile of incorporated areas (33% strongly agree or agree that this should be permissible), anywhere at all in Barron County (25%), or no-where in the County (21%). So, the extreme positions of allowing expansions anywhere or nowhere were both roundly rejected by respondents but they fairly clearly indicate that they are in favor of restricting where expansions of large farms can occur.

Table 5: Large Scale Farms Involving 500+ Animal Units Should Be Allowed to Expand:						
	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
2 Miles from Incorporated Area	368	14%	45%	18%	8%	16%
Anywhere in Barron County	380	11%	23%	38%	19%	9%
1 Mile from Incorporated Area	353	7%	18%	38%	16%	21%
Nowhere in Barron County	368	8%	13%	42%	24%	13%

Older residents were significantly more likely to oppose expansion of large farms anywhere in the County or outside a 1-mile radius from incorporated areas. More older residents and retirees were in favor of prohibiting expansion of large farms anywhere in the County than younger residents. Women were more likely to say they didn't have an opinion about allowing expansions more than 1 mile from towns.

Land Use Decision Factors. The next set of land use questions focused on factors that respondents feel should be considered in land use decisions (Chart 7). By a margin of 85% (agree or strongly agree) to 9% (disagree or strongly disagree) respondents feel that visual impacts (view of the landscape) should be considered when evaluating a proposed development. By a nearly four-to-one margin, they are in favor of having a minimum lot size for developments in rural areas. Finally, by a nearly two-to-one margin, respondents rejected the idea that landowners should be allowed to develop land in any way they want (35% in favor vs 61% opposed). Similar questions about how much latitude landowners should have in how they develop their property asked in other parts of the state have generated similar results.

Homeowners and households with a single-adult are particularly supportive of considering the impact of developments on the view of the landscape.

Minimum Lot Size. Chart 8 on the following page indicates that about half of the respondents feel that lots in rural residential developments should be 1 – 5 acres. Only 11 percent feel that the minimum lot size should be less than an acre, compared to 18 percent who would like to see a minimum of 6 – 10 acres and 12 percent would prefer 11 – 40 acres. Those who own fewer acres tend to prefer smaller minimum lot sizes than those with larger holdings.

Chart 7: Opinions About Land Use Decisions

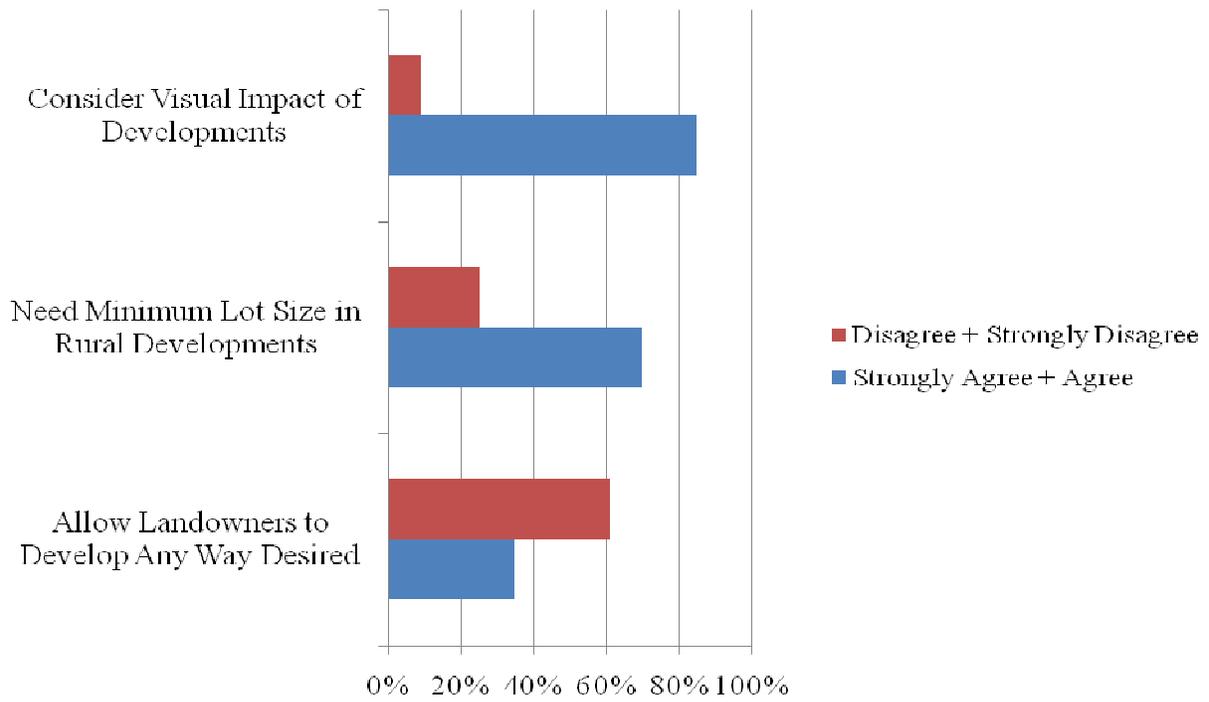
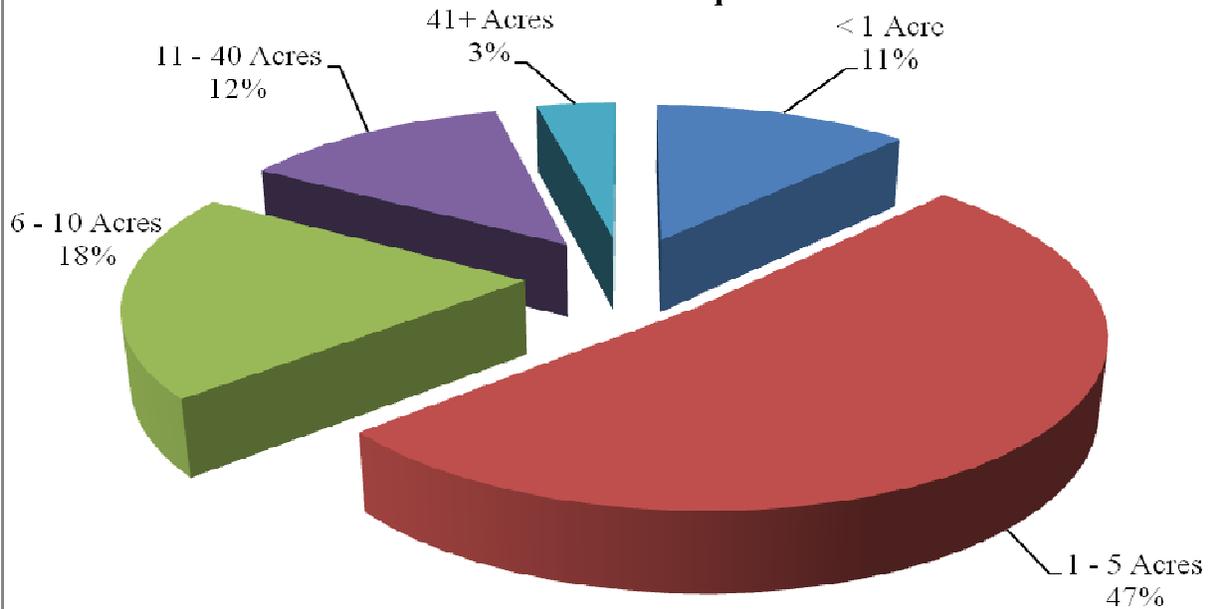


Chart 8: What Should Be Minimum Lot Size for Rural Residential Developments



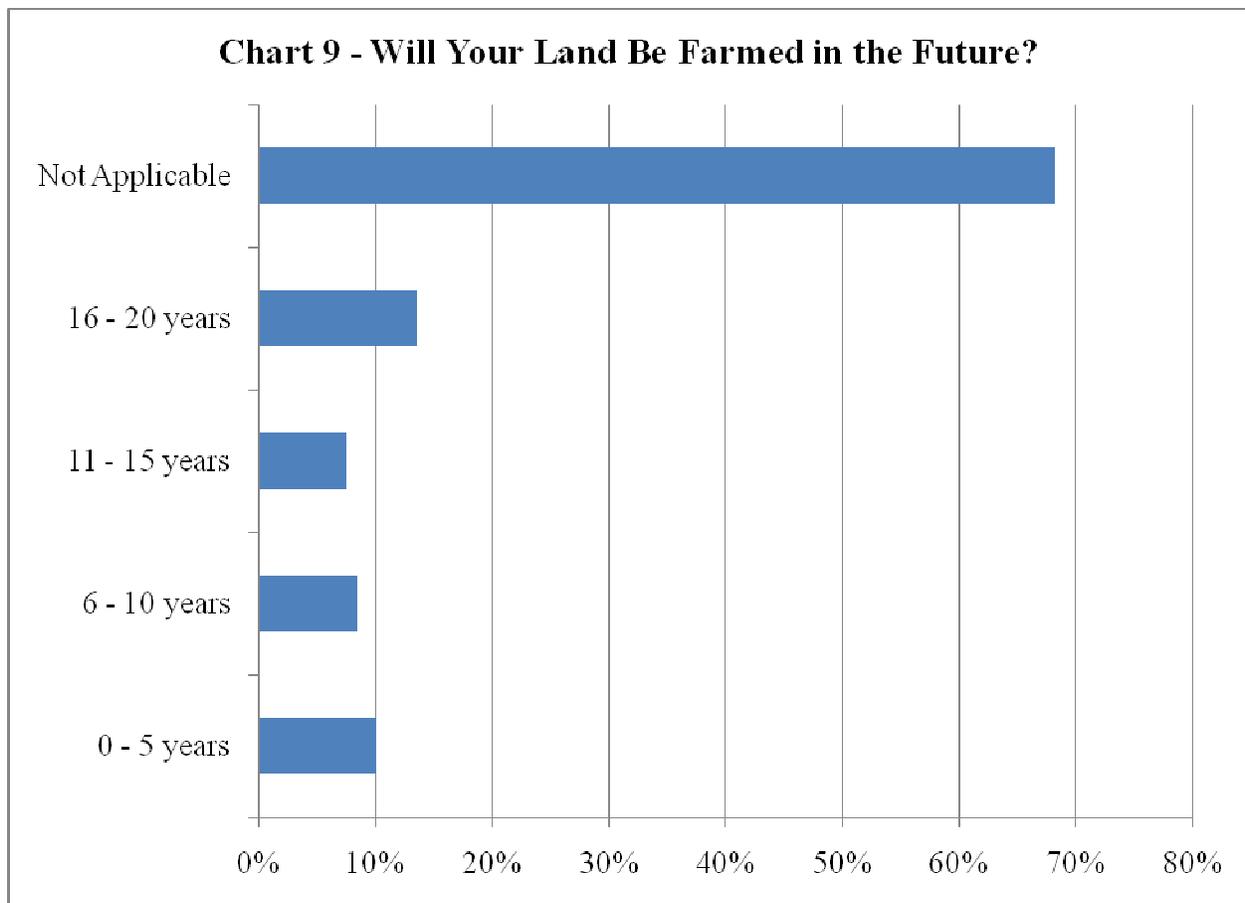
Land Issues. Respondents were asked how many acres they own in Barron County and the minimum number of acres needed to constitute a farm. Table 6 shows that two thirds of the respondents own fewer than 10 acres of land and another fifth own more than 40 acres.

Table 6: Acreage in Barron County					
	Count	< 10	10 - 29	21 - 40	40+
Acres Owned	388	67%	5%	6%	22%
Minimum Size for Farm	387	7%	21%	24%	47%

Slightly less than a majority feel that 40 acres need to be owned to be considered a farm in Barron

County. Older respondents, men, those with full-time or self-employment, and homeowners generally said that larger acreages were needed to be considered a farm than did their counterparts (younger people, women, retirees, or renters).

People included in the sample were asked if their land is currently farmed and to speculate whether or not it would be farmed in the future. Only 24% of the respondents said that their land is currently farmed. Chart 9 shows that two-thirds of the sample said that the question about their land being farmed in the future was not applicable to them.

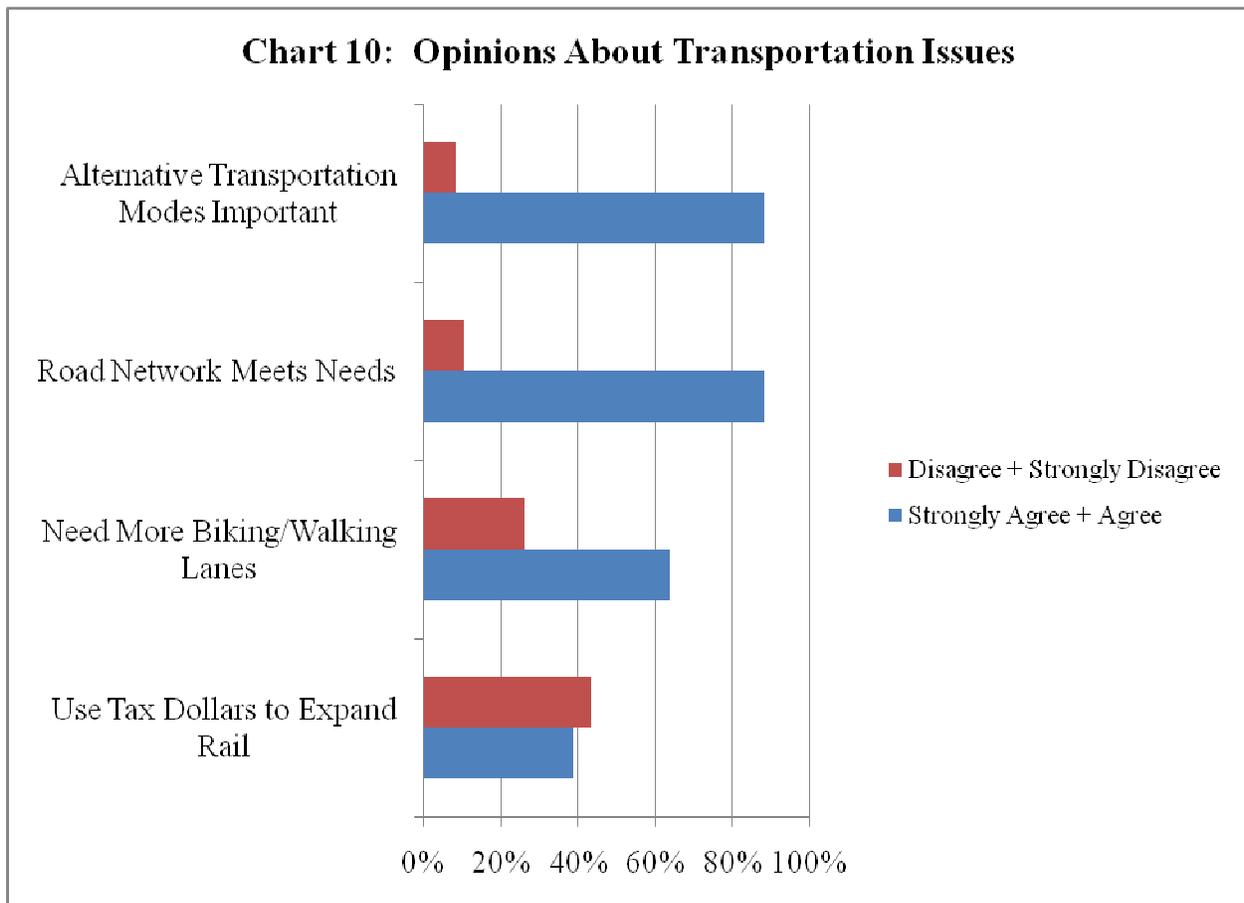


The larger the number of acres owned, the more likely it is that the landowner believes his/her land will be farmed in the future. Surprisingly, only slightly more than half of respondents who

reported that their land was currently being farmed said that they believe it will still be farmed 16-20 years from now.

Transportation

The data in Chart 10 indicate that the overwhelming majority of Barron County property owners feel that the current road network meets the needs of its citizens and that alternative modes of transportation (ATVs, snowmobiles, bicycles, and walking) are important. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents in the sample feel that more biking and walking lanes are needed along public roadways. With respect to the wisdom of using tax dollars to expand rail services in Barron County, respondents were split almost equally between those who agreed and those who disagreed. Nearly one in five said they had no opinion about using tax dollars to expand rail transportation in the County.



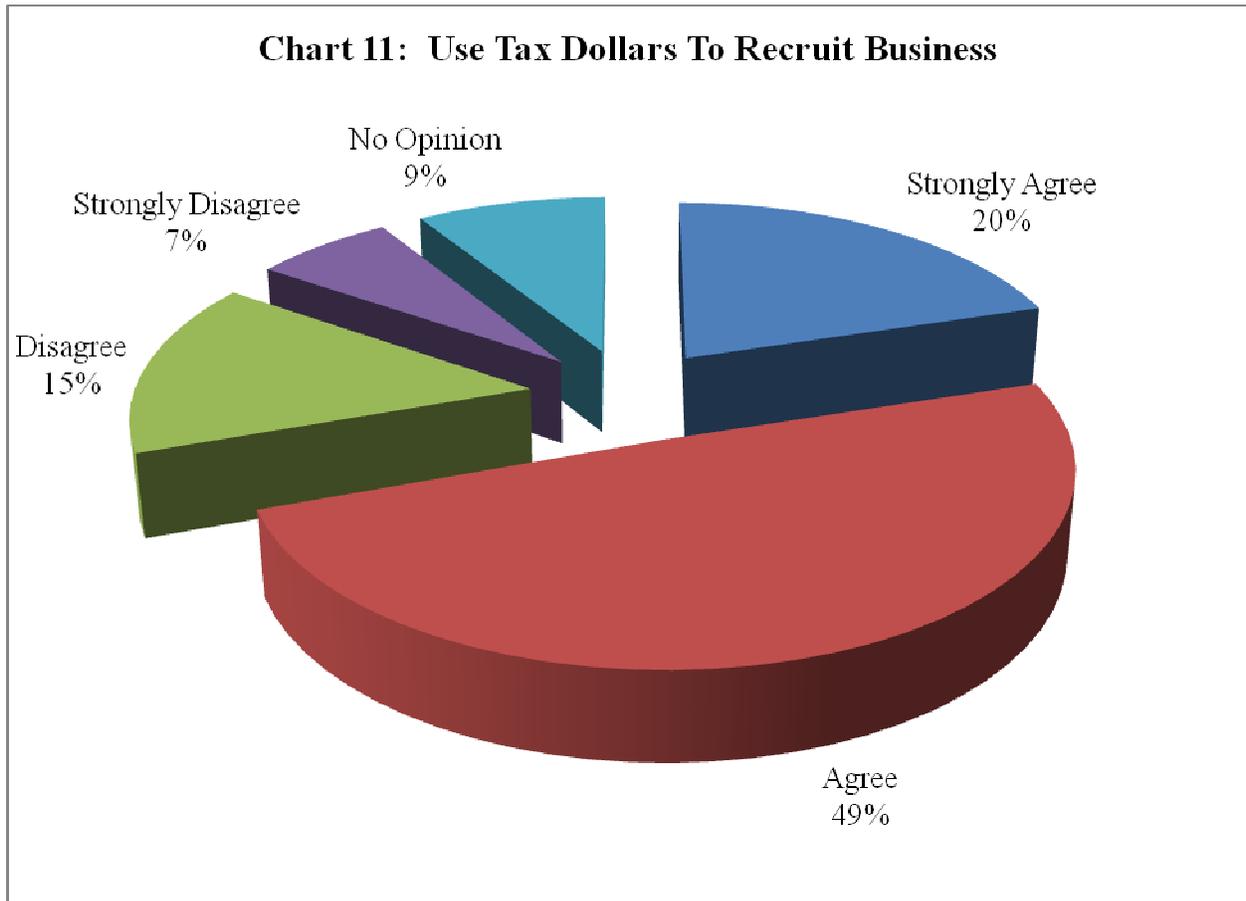
In terms of demographic differences:

- Women agree in higher proportions than men that bike lanes are needed and are more likely to say they don't have an opinion about using tax dollars to expand rail services.
- Support for alternative modes of transportation and biking/walking lanes falls with age.

- Though a majority of renters agrees that the road network meets Barron County’s needs and that alternative transportation modes are important, substantially lower percentages of renters feel this way than do home owners.
- Higher income households are more likely to disagree that tax dollars should be used to expand rail services in the County.

Economic Development

Chart 3 indicated a fairly high level of dissatisfaction with the County’s economic development efforts. Chart 11 indicates that residents are willing to “walk the walk” by using tax dollars to recruit businesses to the County. Nearly 70% agree (49%) or strongly agree (20%) that tax dollars should be used to recruit new businesses and industries; only 22% disagree with using tax revenues in this fashion. Men, who were more concerned about property tax rates, were more supportive of using tax dollars to recruit businesses than were women.

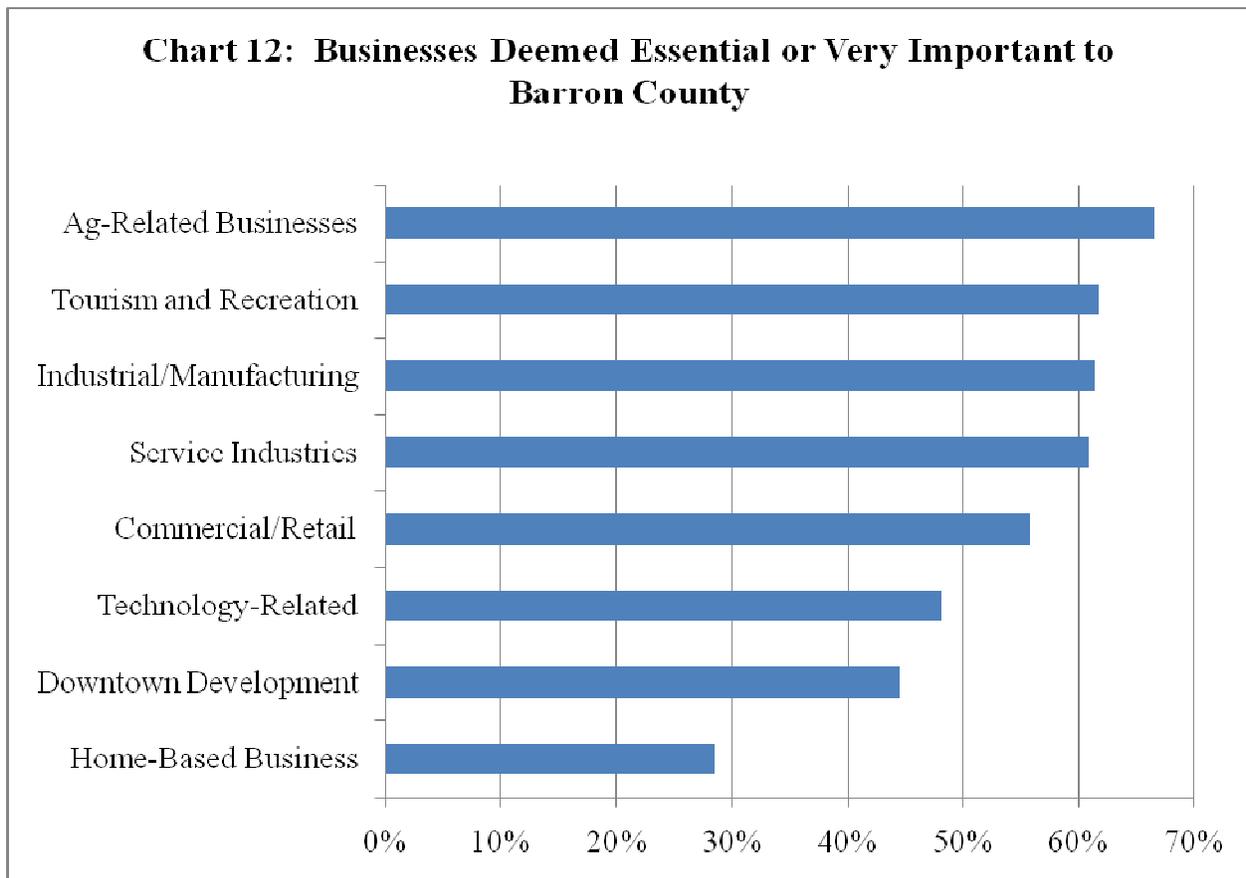


If the County were successful in their business recruitment efforts, Table 7 indicates that commercial or industrial building should be built in or near an existing city or village. Seventy-percent or more agree or strongly agree that commercial or industrial construction should be located in or near existing cities or villages; only 28% agree that such buildings should be built anywhere in the County.

Table 7: Where Should Commercial or Industrial Buildings Be Built						
	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
In Existing City/Village	377	20%	50%	14%	3%	13%
Near Existing City/Village	375	13%	59%	11%	3%	14%
Anywhere	371	9%	19%	38%	21%	13%

There are relatively few demographic differences of opinion about where commercial or industrial buildings should be built. Women were more likely to say they have no opinion about building commercial or industrial buildings near an existing city/village or anywhere in the County. Likewise, older residents and higher income households were more likely to say they have no opinion about building anywhere in the County. Somewhat surprisingly, higher percentages of the self-employed disagreed with the idea of allowing industrial or commercial building to occur anywhere in the County than did retirees or those with full-time jobs.

A hint of the types of businesses respondents would like to see recruited to the County is provided by Chart 12. Residents were asked to rate the importance of the businesses listed in the Chart on a scale of “Essential” to “Not Important” and Chart 12 shows the percentage that rated these businesses as essential or very important. Between 60% and 70% feel that agriculturally related businesses, tourism and recreation, industry/manufacturing and service industries (financial services, health care, etc.) are essential or very important to Barron County.



Fewer than half the respondents felt that technology-related businesses, downtown development or home-based businesses are vital to the economic future of the County.

The biggest demographic differences of opinion about the importance of the business sectors shown in Chart 12 are based on reported household income. Generally speaking, support for commercial/retail, downtown development, home-based businesses, industry and manufacturing, tourism, technology-related firms, and service-based businesses increase with household incomes. Older residents are more interested in agricultural-related businesses and less interested in technology firms. The self-employed are substantially more supportive of agricultural and service-based businesses than are other employment categories.

Table 8 summarizes the opinions of Barron County landowners with respect to another economic development strategy – generating alternative, or renewable, energy. Both wind and solar power are seen as worthy economic development options by more than 80% of the respondents; about two-thirds feel this way about biofuels.

Table 8: Should Barron County Pursue Alternative Energy as an Economic Development Strategy						
	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Wind	386	39%	45%	5%	2%	9%
Solar	380	34%	49%	7%	2%	9%
Bio Fuels	379	21%	45%	17%	6%	11%
Other	137	25%	13%	1%	0%	61%

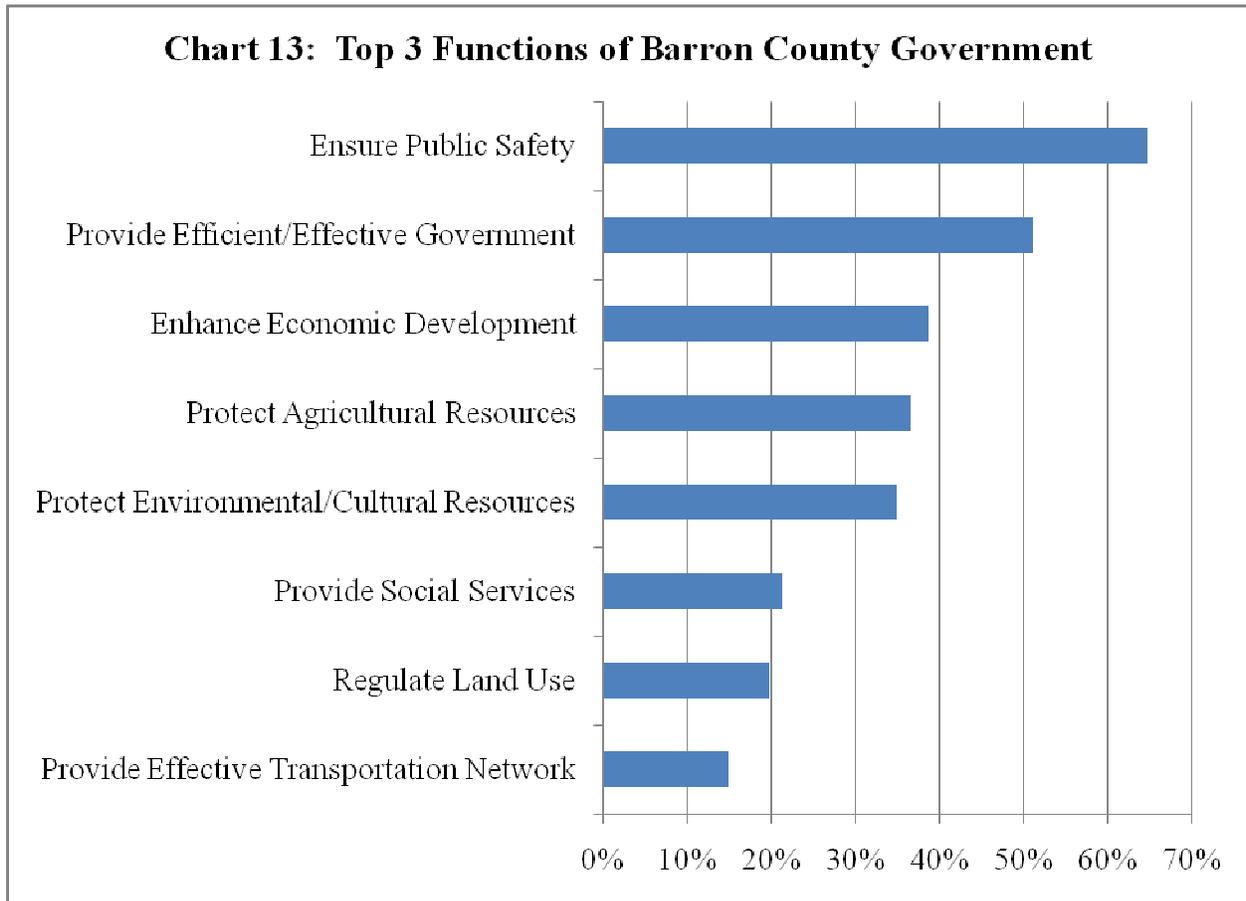
“Other” alternative energy options included hydroelectric power, nuclear, waste-to-energy plants, geothermal and a variety of other energy-related ideas (see Appendix B, Question 26).

Large majorities of both genders agree that solar and wind energy are important to Barron County but men are more enthusiastic about solar and less about wind than women; women are more likely to say they have no opinion about these options.

Key Functions of Barron County Government

Near the end of the survey, respondents were asked to identify the three most important functions for Barron County government. Their responses are summarized in Chart 13 on the next page. Perhaps the most surprising result in Chart 13 is that there is a fairly large variation in the things that citizens think are the most important functions of Barron County Government. None of the options was identified by anything close to a consensus as being a vital County function. Another interesting thing about Chart 13 is that some of the traditional County government functions did not garner more support as critical functions. For example, the County’s role in the area’s transportation network, land use regulation and providing social services were all identified by fewer than a quarter of the respondents as one of the top 3 functions of the Barron County government.

By a considerable margin, the County government function identified by the largest percentage of respondents was “Ensuring Public Safety” (65%). About half of the respondents said that the generic goal of providing efficient and effective government is one of the three most important functions of Barron County. Between 30% and 40% of respondents said that enhancing economic development, protecting agricultural resources and protecting cultural and environmental resources are key functions of County government.



In terms of demographic differences:

- Men were more likely to identify efficient and effective government than were women.
- Those older than 65 were more likely to identify efficient and effective government and less likely to say economic development are critical.
- Likewise, retirees were less likely to say that economic development is critical but more likely to identify efficient and effective government.
- As household incomes rise, the importance attached to County government providing social services fell but the importance of economic development increased.
- The longer a person has lived in Barron County the more importance they attach to the County providing social services; new arrivals were more likely to identify environmental protection.
- Renters were more interested in the County ensuring an adequate transportation network than were homeowners.

Conclusions

The results of this survey indicate that, in large measure, land owners in Barron County are reasonably happy with the overall quality of life they have. They like the small town atmosphere and natural features that surround them. They are generally satisfied with the services they receive from the County and with the road network in the area.

Perhaps reflecting the bad economic times that were becoming ever clearer during the time that data were being gathered, respondents expressed a fair degree of unease about the economic development efforts of the County. Respondents are supportive of using tax dollars to expand employment opportunities in a fairly wide range of economic sectors.

Respondents also expressed a strong desire to preserve the natural and cultural environment they value so highly. They would like to see new economic developments occur in or near existing incorporated areas and are not supportive of allowing productive farmland to be used for commercial or residential purposes.

Finally, the challenges faced by elected and appointed officials of representing the Barron County population are suggested by the diverse views of the population and their lack of enthusiasm for participating in face-to-face meetings about the future of the County. Groups of people who are often underrepresented on governing bodies (younger people, people who have moved to the County more recently, renters, women) often have opinions that differ significantly from their counterparts in the population (older citizens, those who have lived in Barron County for most or all of their lives, home owners and men). Surveys such as the one that is the focus of this report provides insights into the diversity of views that exist in the County and will, we hope, help policy makers better understand the aspirations of the people they represent.

Appendix A – Non-Response Bias Test

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 2 of the Barron County survey asked residents to rate the overall quality of life in the County on a scale from “excellent” (= 1) to “poor” (= 4). In this survey, residents rated the overall quality of life a 2.1, which means that, on average, people feel that Barron County has a “good” quality of life. Suppose only people who were relatively happy with the quality of life in the County 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, 276 people responded to the first mailing and 149 responded to the second mailing.

We found only eight variables with statistically significant differences between the mean responses of these two groups of respondents (Table A1) out of 109 tested. Table A1 indicates that respondents to the first mailing were more likely to choose to live in Barron County for the quality of its communities and its recreational opportunities. Respondents to the second mailing were more likely feel it is important to preserve the County’s rural character and its hunting and fishing, to see a need for more starter homes in their area and be less enthusiastic about pursuing solar power as an economic development strategy. Respondents to the second mailing place a higher priority on the goal of having the County provide efficient and effective government and had slightly lower household incomes.

Table A1 – Statistically Significant Differences Between Responses of First and Second Mailings			
Variable	Mean First Mailing	Mean Second Mailing	Statistical Significance
Q1 Live in Barron for quality communities	0.10	0.04	.04
Q1 Live in Barron for recreational opportunities	0.32	0.21	.01
Q5 Rural Character	2.29	2.09	.03
Q5 Hunting/Fishing	2.05	1.85	.03
Q8 More starter homes are needed	2.69	2.39	.04
Q26 Barron County should pursue solar energy for economic development	1.92	2.25	.01
Q29 Provide efficient/effective government	0.47	0.59	.03
Q37 Household income	3.81	3.42	.01

While these items are statistically different, with few exceptions, the absolute magnitudes of differences are quite small and would not affect the overall interpretation of the results. For example, we noted that respondents to the second mailing were more concerned about preserving the County’s rural character. However, for both the first and second mailings, the rating given

would round to a rating of “important”. So, while this difference is statistically significant, the difference doesn’t change the overall interpretation of this result. Instances in which the difference would modify the interpretation of results are highlighted in bold text in the Table. Of the bolded items, only the view of respondents to the second mailing that more starter homes are needed and their somewhat lower household income seem to be of real importance.

The Survey Research Center (SRC) concludes that non-response bias is not a concern for this sample.

Appendix B – Written Comments

Question 1: *What are the three most important reasons you and your family choose to live in Barron County?*

‘Other’ responses (31 comments)

Born/raised in Barron County(7 responses)

- Born here (2x)
- Born and raised here
- Born in Barron Cty
- Born- raised, married, farmed, retired
- I was born in this area and never left
- Lived here most of my life

Lakes (5 responses)

- Lake property (2x)
- Lake Shore
- Lakes – water
- On the lake

Don’t Live in the County (4 responses)

- Do not live in Barron County
- We do not live in Barron County. We live in Burnett
- We dont- we live in Polk county! We used to live in Barron County
- We own vacant land

Proximity to Twin Cities (3 responses)

- Near Twin Cities
- Proximity to Twin Cities
- To own a cabin in close proximity to twin cities

Miscellaneous (14 responses)

- Family inheritance (2x)
- Answer based on conditions in 2005--cost of taxes etc; now make me unsure
- Business
- Cabin
- Clean air and clean water.
- Family has been here for 100 years
- Inherited property
- Looks prosperous
- Mayo Clinic
- Medical facilities
- My business is here
- Peace and quiet
- Retirement/Downsizing

Question 4: *Fill in the circles of the two most effective ways that Barron County could provide information regarding its services and programs to residents.*

‘Other’ Responses (4 Comments)

- e-Mail
- Let people seek it out
- Signs
- Via service center

Question 26: *Barron County should pursue the following energy alternatives as a form of economic development.*

‘Other’ Responses (47 comments)

- Hydro (8x)
- Water (5x)
- Any alternative fuel source (3x)
- Geo-thermal (3x)
- Nuclear (3x)
- Conservation (2x)
- Geo-thermal heat pumps (2x)
- Water Power (2x)
- Alternative biofuels not food crops
- Chetek Dam water, Generate electricity.
- Coal
- Energy efficient building methods.
- Farm animal waste to energy
- Garbage
- Go mass fuels other than from corn or soybeans
- Methanol (By product use already in County)
- Natural gas cars
- No tax dollars
- Off peak electricity programs
- Refinerys for big oil. (lower cost of fuel)
- Return on investment to balance tax ratio.
- Sequester heat energy from incinerator
- Thermal pump
- Waste to energy
- Water on engines already since 1960 Chrysler
- Water/Dam for electricity
- Wood

Question 28: *What do you like about living in Barron County?*

Quality of Life (258 responses)

Atmosphere (138 responses)

- Small town atmosphere (11x)
- People (7x)
- Rural atmosphere (6x)
- Friendly people (5x)
- Country living (3x)
- People are friendly (3x)
- Quiet (3x)
- Country atmosphere (2x)
- Friendly atmosphere (2x)
- Good neighbors (2x)
- Great place to raise a family (2x)
- Peaceful (2x)
- Quiet atmosphere (2x)
- Small town feel (2x)
- Beautiful community
- Caring community
- Close communities
- Close kind community
- Comfortable place to live and work
- Community
- Country atmosphere but close to town. It’s peaceful and what we like about our life. When it’s so hectic you know you have a quiet peaceful place to go home to and not a lot of people around
- Ease of travel
- Eclectic, diverse
- Fairly easy to walk to most places we need to go
- Fairness for everyone
- Friendliness
- Friendliness of the people
- Getting away to a quiet place and relaxing
- God’s Country
- Good moral values in rural communities
- Good neighborhood
- Great people
- Great place to live

- How peaceful it is
- I enjoy the open spaces
- Important to promote community involvement
- It has everything from crowded shopping centers to tranquil nature settings all wrapped up in one small area
- It is close enough to larger cities and comfortable pleasant communities
- It's a nice little town
- It's more of a relaxed atmosphere than a ""big"" city such as Minneapolis and St. Paul.
- It's not Illinois
- It's not Nebraska but close.
- Its plain simplicity
- Knowing my neighbors-the good and bad
- Knowing the neighbors
- Live in a pretty area
- Living in Rice Lake
- Location
- Love the country living
- My family likes how accessible we are to several major towns and businesses.
- Neighbors
- Nice hard working people
- Nice people
- Nice small town area
- Nice variety of things here
- No big cities
- Not commercial close enough to Eau Claire and Twin Cities to get those services
- Not crowded
- Open country side
- Open spaces
- Peace
- Peace and quiet
- Peace and quiet in the rural setting
- Peace and quiet of the country
- Peacefulness
- People make this county a good place to live
- Quality and freedom to live, raise a family, own a business without too much government contact and regulations
- Quiet and peaceful
- Quiet and very rural
- Quiet friendly people
- Quiet rural communities
- Quiet space
- Reminds me of the small resort community I grew up in
- Rice Lake
- Rice Lake Chetek Cameron Area
- Rural and scenic, but also has businesses and towns in lots of sizes
- Rural area - Not industrial
- Rural area with relatively easy access to large urban areas.
- Rural areas
- Rural areas best place to raise a family
- Rural atmosphere with a variety of lakes, rivers, woods, and farmland that is within 1.5 -2 hrs of a larger metropolitan area.
- Rural character
- Rural culture that exist throughout much of the county.
- Rural life
- Rural living
- Rural setting yet have access to good medical care, shopping
- Rural setting-not having neighbors close by
- Rural- still small town- neighbors helping neighbors, ect.
- Rural values
- Small community atmosphere
- Small friendly communities
- Small town atmosphere, everyone knows everyone
- Small town communities
- Small town farming community
- Solitude
- Space
- Use of land for gardening, hunting, and wild berries
- Well rounded lifestyle that puts employment in proximity to services.
- You can travel a little distance to do a lot

Community Size (31 responses)

- No traffic (5x)
- Small communities (3x)
- Small towns (8x)
- Area
- Dense population
- Good growth in Rice Lake community
- Low population density compared to many other areas of the country
- Low population density
- Not fighting crowds
- Not fighting crowds when driving or using resources, stores, etc
- Public land
- Small population
- Small town opportunities in which the population is a good size
- Smaller community
- Sparcely populated
- There are more and more stores and restaurants in Rice Lake so I don't have to go to Eau Claire anymore.
- Uncrowded conditions
- Uncrowded rural atmosphere

Crime (26 responses)

- Low crime rate (12x)
- Barren County is a safe place to live (3x)
- Safe (2x)
- Safety (2x)
- Extremely high drug problem concerns us
- Feeling of safety
- Hopefully we can continue to live without fear of gangs and high crime
- Police presence
- Safe place to raise kids
- Safe rural communities
- We have been vandalized twice since 1996 with property damage and theft

Family and Friends (13 responses)

- Family (3x)
- Close to family and friends (2x)
- Family and friends (2x)
- Great place to raise a family (2x)
- Have family in Rice Lake area. Are in Barron Co on a weekly and daily basis.
- Moved here because our daughter lives here. Not withstanding, we like the "small town atmosphere"
- My family and friends are close
- We have family and friends in Cumberland

Clean Air, Water, Land (12 responses)

- Clean air (4x)
- No pollution (3x)
- At present air is fresh and clean, noise pollution non existent
- Cleanliness
- For the most part it is a clean area to live
- Good air and water quality
- Please clean up the lakes and make them clear again

Taxes (12 responses)

- Bad thing taxes are too high
- Don't like the high taxes
- Don't over tax our senior's who are trying to retain home ownership.
- Hate high taxes
- Hopefully, the county can continue with good services without the property tax becoming burdensome
- I love paying the exorbitant taxes.
- It is good except for taxes
- It is not the property taxes
- One major complaint county is billing us, bridges, concrete roads , cars and trucks with road salt. It has not enhanced our safety! Thanks
- Taxation is a problem now and don't see County trying hard enough to lower it.
- Taxes not too bad
- Used to be cheap living, but my taxes are 5 times what they were 10 years ago when I purchased my home.

Agriculture (9 responses)

- Farming (4x)
- Counties consideration for rural status
- Fertility of the soil
- Good farming community
- Farmers can still farm without the worry of ""new"" neighbors complaint of smells, or farming practices changing those century old practices, farmers were here first
- Prime Agricultural land

Climate (6 responses)

- Four seasons (3x)
- Climate (2x)
- Good weather

Infrastructure (5 responses)

- Good infrastructure
- Good roads
- Gravel roads are not maintained well enough
- Maintenance of our very effective highway system
- Roads are okay

General (4 responses)

- Quality of life(4x)

Cost of Living (2 responses)

- Lower cost of living
- Used to be affordable

Nature (62 responses)

Lakes (25 responses)

- Lakes (15x)
- Clean lakes (2x)
- Abundance of lakes
- Access to lakes
- Beautiful lakes
- Lakes- although they need cleaning up badly
- Lakes are important, they need more attention and must be protected and need to prosper.
- Lakes of Chetek
- Northwoods feel yet close to many services of the lake
- The chain is a beautiful chain of lakes that is going bad fast

General (16 responses)

- Beautiful (2x)
- Beautiful country (2x)
- Nature(2x)
- Scenic (2x)
- Diversity of land examples: farmland, forests, wetlands, lakes
- Enjoy the beauty of the county, it is just right
- Enjoy the outdoors
- Environment
- I enjoy the diversity and abundance of wildlife and the forests.
- Natural Beauty
- Natural landscape
- Natural resources

Trees (10 responses)

- Trees (4x)
- Woods (3x)
- Forests (2x)
- Abundance of trees

Wildlife (6 responses)

- Lots of wildlife (4x)
- Watching the deer
- Wild creatures, birds, and such

Rivers (5 responses)

- Rivers (2x)
- Abundance of rivers
- Creeks
- Waterways

Services (59 responses)

Schools (17 responses)

- Good schools (8x)
- Schools (2x)
- Excellent schools
- Good quality public education
- Need police liason officers in our schools
- Good volunteers for kids sports and programs in general. Summer school program, kids sports (wrestling, football, baseball, softball)
- Need quality education/schools
- Schools are awesome

Government (14 responses)

- Hate inefficiencies/fights in County Governement vs. City of Rice Lake
- Barron County has the most corrupt law there is anywhere. They don't follow guidelines. They do whatever they want. Barron County laws are not even followed.
- County can overrule the township.
- County needs to work together with city
- County, City, and State spending too much to take care of immigrants.
- Decrease the amount of DNR and sheriff patrols on the waterway- chasing people away.
- Depends on the where abouts that you live in Barron County. Unincorporated small town does not apply in community upgrades or human services
- Freedom from politics overtaking my decision making
- I think they should put a freeze on county workers salaries. Plus make them pay for their own insurance as they are getting good wages and can well afford it
- I think you should have some kind of insurance like Minnesota has for people who are not working
- I used to like the peace and quiet and hoped to someday retire on my land, however since the county board opted to let the local 4-wheeler club put a trail system through out the Hay River the wildlife management area without even notifying neighbors whose property borders that land, I can now look forward to listening to 4- wheelers go around in circles all day long 8 months out of the year. At least I didn't invest anymore money in Barron County by building on my land prior to this "Bonehead Decision." Thanks a lot.
- Lack of caring and knowledge of Town Board members and their piss poor building code enforcement. Good ole boys x2.
- Our county's government
- Police, Fire

Shopping (14 responses)

- Access to trade
- Adequate shopping facilities
- Close to grocery stores
- Enjoy the options available for all types of shopping
- Food prices are too high
- Good retail shopping
- Having a retail center (River Lake) near
- I can go to shopping center that is not too far away
- No big city vendors
- Not far to a store
- Quality of food items such as meat are poor
- Shopping
- Shopping available close by
- Shopping nearby

Healthcare (9 responses)

- Clinics, Hospitals
- Close to doctor and drug store
- Good health care options
- Health care systems
- Health services
- Medical care-Clinic/Hospital
- Medical services have improved with the new clinics
- New hospital and clinic in Rice Lake
- Services for the elderly

Churches (2 responses)

- Church
- Churches

General (2 responses)

- Availability of essential services. Shopping, healthcare, recreation, convenient to other larger communities.
- Essential service available

Library (1 response)

- Good library in the county

Recreation (43 responses)

Hunting and Fishing (20 responses)

- Fishing (7x)
- Hunting (3x)
- Hunting and fishing (3x)
- Hunting and fishing opportunities (3x)
- Close to fishing and hunting and other recreation
- Close to hunting and fishing area
- Freedom to hunt and fish on public lands and lakes
- Good fishing

General (15 responses)

- Recreational opportunities (4x)
- Recreation (4x)
- Excellent recreational opportunities
- Good recreation
- Lots to do
- Multi-recreational opportunities
- Outdoors recreational opportunities
- Recreational choices available
- Recreational options

ATV (4 responses)

- ATV's and snow mobiling
- Let ATV's have the rights to the dirt roads
- Recreation ATV trail
- I strongly believe ATV's and snowmobiles should share the trail system. There are a lot more ATVs than snowmobiles. I believe most business's would benefit from the people using the trails since you can not rely on snowmobiles only.

Land (3 responses)

- 4 wheel trails
- Freedom to hunt and fish on public lands and lakes
- Paths for ATV, walking, snowmobile etc.

Golf (1 response)

- Golf courses

Landowner (19 responses)

- Do not live in Barron County but have invested there because it is strong economically
- I did not answer most questions on the programs & services because I do not know them.
- I do not live in Barron County
- I live 1/2 South of the Barron/Dunn County line in Ridgeland, but own 12 acres of land in Barron County
- I grew up in Barron County, but don't live there
- Currently own property and work in Barron County
- Working on moving back to area
- I don't feel Barron offers enough information to landowners on what can and cannot be done on their land
- I don't live in Barron County, just own.
- I don't live in Barron County
- I have lake property here
- I don't live in Barron County. Have a summer home on Chetek Lake. Use mostly on some weekends and maybe a week or two in summer and fall. Enjoy the fresh air and pine trees and quietness.
- I don't live there-merely visit for short periods of time
- I own land only at this time, but I have lived in Barron Co. in the past
- We bought a cabin by Cumberland
- We have a lake place on Big Butternut-its peaceful and beautiful
- We own a small piece of land so we have a place to walk and hunt without any other people to put up with, it's a place of our own to get away from everything for awhile
- We own one acre of recreation land
- We use our home as a cabin, so we don't use much in service related things.

Resident (7 responses)

- Born and raised in Barron County
- I was born here
- I was born here so it is home
- Life long resident
- My wife and I went to school in Cumberland
- This is my home and I love living here
- We are part time residents

Miscellaneous (13 responses)

- Nothing (3x)
- County needs to wake up and move forward
- Freedom to do what I wish with my property
- Get rid of *****
- Good growth in Rice Lake community
- Not much
- This is hard to answer when you haven't lived in other counties
- We are extremely senior, appreciate all the county's considerations
- When my 3 boys and I are together and they are safe and happy. When a certain person was still allowing me to speak to him.
- In my view, economic living standards and land use will be issues that the county will need to consider carefully as it moves forward. I would like to see clustering encouraged, such development allows us to maintain those things that I think are important without discriminating development opportunity and growth.
- Young adults have nothing to do

Question 33: *Employment Status*

'Other Responses' (8 comments)

- Disabled (3x)
- Homemaker (3x)
- From USPS
- Student

Question 34: *Place of Residence*

'Other Responses' (2 comments)

- Live at home
- Twin Cities

Question 39: *In what zip code do you live? (380 coments)*

- 54868 (106x)
- 54728 (50x)
- 54812 (34x)
- 54822 (34x)
- 54829 (34x)
- 54889 (15x)
- 54733 (14x)
- 54805 (10x)
- 54762 (9x)
- 54817 (9x)
- 54004 (8x)
- 54813 (7x)
- 54757 (6x)
- 54005 (3x)
- 54826 (3x)
- 54841 (3x)
- 54751 (2x)
- 53038
- 54013
- 54020
- 54023
- 54025
- 54313
- 54469
- 54601
- 54603
- 54636
- 54703
- 54725
- 54729
- 54763
- 54824
- 54856
- 54857
- 54895
- 55025
- 55040
- 55075
- 55112
- 55113
- 55118
- 55123
- 55125
- 55416
- 55424
- 55434
- 55802
- 55901
- 55902
- 59868

Appendix C: Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question
BARRON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

QUALITY OF LIFE

1. What are the **three** most important reasons you and your family choose to live in **Barron County**?

15% Agriculture	16% Low Crime Rate	11% Quality Schools
3% Community Services	27% Natural Features	28% Recreational Opportunities
17% Cost of Home	53% Near Family and Friends	57% Small Town Atmosphere
1% Historical Significance	29% Near Job (Employment Opportunity)	8% Other: (Please Identify)
6% Property Taxes	8% Quality Communities	_____

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
2. Rate the overall quality of life in Barron County	11%	70%	16%	2%

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

3. Rate the following Barron County Services and Programs	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Applicable
a. Zoning	4%	36%	39%	8%	13%
b. Emergency Management	10%	55%	18%	2%	15%
c. Child Protection	4%	44%	23%	3%	26%
d. Economic Support/Child Support	3%	32%	22%	9%	34%
e. Veteran’s Benefits	4%	24%	21%	10%	41%
f. Courts and Community Service	8%	44%	27%	7%	14%
g. Public Health	6%	45%	26%	5%	18%
h. Sheriff Patrol, Jail, 911	10%	53%	22%	5%	10%
i. Highway	9%	55%	28%	5%	3%
j. Elderly Programs	8%	35%	24%	5%	29%
k. County Parks, Forests, Trails	14%	57%	18%	5%	6%
l. Economic Development	2%	26%	43%	18%	10%
m. Elderly/Disabled Transportation	4%	30%	21%	11%	33%
n. Social Services	4%	33%	28%	7%	28%
o. UW-Extension	10%	44%	17%	3%	26%
p. Animal Control	2%	29%	30%	20%	19%

COMMUNICATION

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

Direct Mailings	Radio	Newspaper Articles	Newsletters	Television	Barron CO Website	Other: (Please identify)
49%	25%	45%	30%	10%	23%	1%

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

5. How important is it for Barron County to use tax dollars/regulations to protect the following:	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
a. Air Quality	29%	41%	21%	9%
b. Farmland	29%	44%	20%	7%
c. Forested Lands	35%	48%	15%	3%
d. Groundwater	58%	33%	7%	2%
e. Historic and Cultural Sites	9%	47%	37%	8%
f. Open Space	15%	44%	32%	9%
g. Lakes, Rivers and Streams	60%	30%	8%	2%
h. Rural Character	21%	43%	27%	8%
i. Hunting and Fishing	34%	40%	18%	8%
j. Wetlands	31%	40%	22%	7%
k. Wildlife Habitat	40%	37%	19%	5%

HOUSING

The following questions ask your opinion about the development of housing in **Barron County**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
6. Affordable housing is needed in your local jurisdiction (affordable housing = rent/mortgage that is no more than 30% of a household's gross income).	26%	39%	14%	6%	15%
7. Elderly housing is needed in your local jurisdiction (elderly housing = housing for those 65+ that accomodates special needs such as wheelchairs).	29%	44%	9%	3%	16%
8. Starter (first time buyer) homes are needed in your local jurisdiction.	19%	41%	19%	4%	17%

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	64%	29%	1%	1%	5%
b. Residential Use	9%	31%	35%	16%	9%

c. Commercial Use 11% 23% 38% 19% 9%

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 Barron County	11%	23%	37%	19%	9%
b. Nowhere in Barron County	8%	13%	38%	24%	13%
c. Outside a 2 mile radius of incorporated areas	14%	45%	42%	8%	16%
d. Outside a 1 mile radius of incorporated areas	7%	18%	18%	16%	21%
11. Landowners should be allowed to develop land any way they want.	12%	23%	43%	18%	4%
12. The visual impacts (view of the landscape) of development is an important consideration when evaluating proposed development.	24%	61%	43%	3%	6%
13. There should be a minimum lot size on residential development in rural areas.	27%	43%	7%	6%	5%

	Yes	No	Don't Know
14. Should Barron County 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.)	19%	52%	29%

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
11%	47%	18%	12%	3%	9%

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
	7%	21%	24%	47%

17. How many acres of land do you own in Barron County?	Less than 10	10 - 20	21 -40	40 plus
	67%	5%	6%	22%

18. Is the land you own actively farmed?	Yes	No	Not Applicable
	24%	62%	14%

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
10%	8%	8%	14%	68%

TRANSPORTATION

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
20. The overall road network (roads, streets, and highways) in Barron County meets the needs of its citizens.	14%	74%	9%	2%	2%
21. Alternative modes of transportation, such as ATV, snowmobile, bicycle, and walking are important.	28%	61%	7%	2%	4%
22. There should be more biking and walking lanes along public roadways.	24%	40%	22%	4%	10%
23. Barron County should use tax dollars to develop and expand rail transportation in the County.	14%	25%	29%	14%	18%

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
24. Commercial or industrial buildings in Barron County should be located:					
a. In an existing city or a village	20%	50%	14%	3%	13%
b. Near a city or village	13%	59%	11%	3%	14%
c. Anywhere in Barron County	9%	19%	38%	21%	13%
25. Barron County should use tax dollars to recruit new business and industry	20%	49%	15%	7%	9%

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
26. Barron County should pursue the following energy alternatives as a form of economic development:					
a. Bio Fuels (e.g. ethanol, biodiesel)	21%	45%	17%	6%	11%
b. Solar Energy	34%	49%	7%	2%	9%
c. Wind Energy	39%	45%	5%	2%	9%
d. Other _____	25%	13%	1%	0%	61%

	Essential	Very Important	Important	Not Important	No Opinion
27. Rate the importance of the following:					
a. Agricultural Related Businesses	31%	36%	26%	2%	5%
b. Commercial and Retail Development	20%	35%	35%	4%	5%
c. Downtown Development – “Main Street”	16%	28%	41%	9%	5%
d. Home Based Businesses	10%	19%	39%	22%	10%
e. Industrial and Manufacturing Development	23%	38%	29%	4%	5%
f. Tourism and Recreation	29%	32%	28%	4%	6%
g. Technology related (e.g. biotechnology, computers, etc.)	14%	34%	36%	8%	8%
h. Service industries (e.g. financial services, health services, etc.)	22%	39%	31%	3%	5%

28. What do you like about living in Barron County?

29. Which **THREE** of the following Barron County functions do you think are **most important (Only select top 3)**?

- | | | | |
|---|-----|---|-----|
| a. Ensure public safety | 65% | b. Provide efficient/effective government | 51% |
| c. Protect environmental/cultural resources | 35% | d. Protect agricultural resources | 37% |
| e. Provide social services | 21% | f. Regulate land use | 20% |
| g. Enhance economic development | 39% | h. Provide effective transportation network | 15% |

	Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
30. How likely are you to attend visioning sessions and other public participation events as related to comprehensive planning?	3%	24%	51%	22%

DEMOGRAPHICS: Please tell us some things about you:

31. Gender:	Male	Female
	67%	33%

32. Age:	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and older
	1%	5%	13%	27%	25%	30%

33. Employment Status:	Employed Full Time	Employed Part Time	Self Employed	Unemployed	Retired	Other:
	46%	5%	13%	2%	32%	2%

34. Place of Residence:	Own	Rent	Other:
	95%	4%	1%

	0	1	2	3	4	5+
35. Number of Adults (18 or older) in Household:		18%	72%	7%	4%	0%
36. Number of Children (under 18) in Household:	72%	11%	12%	4%	1%	0%

37. Household Income Range:	Less than 15,000	15,000 – 24,999	25,000 – 49,999	50,000 – 74,999	75,000 – 99,999	100,000 or More
	7%	13%	29%	25%	12%	15%

38. How many years have you lived in Barron County?	Less than 1	1 – 4	5 - 9	10 - 24	25+
	2%	10%	13%	21%	54%

39. In what zip code do you live?
