

# **Growth, Development and Other Planning Issues in Muskegon County**

## **Survey of Muskegon County**

**Commissioned by MAP, the Muskegon Area-Wide  
Plan**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY and DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS**

**January, 2003**

## METHODOLOGY

**EPIC•MRA** administered interviews with 302 adult residents of Muskegon County (Michigan), from November 11<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Respondents were included in the sample if they were aged 18 or older.

Respondents for the interviews were selected utilizing an interval method of randomly selecting records of households with commercially listed phone numbers. The sample was stratified so that every area of the county is represented in the sample according to its contribution to the county population.

There were two break-outs of geographical areas. The first breakout included individual results for Fruitport Township, Muskegon Heights, Muskegon Township, Muskegon [city], and Norton Shores, as well as combined results for: the cities of Montague, North Muskegon, Roosevelt Park and Whitehall; and the townships of Blue Lake, Casnovia, Cedar Creek, Dalton, Egelston, Fruitland, Holton, Laketon, Montague, Sullivan, White River and Whitehall (Area 6).

The second geographical breakout included five fairly equally populated regions:

Region 1 (northwest region): the townships of Fruitland, Laketon, Montague, Muskegon, White River and Whitehall; and the cities of Montague, North Muskegon and Whitehall

Region 2: Muskegon and Muskegon Heights

Region 3: Muskegon and Fruitport Townships

Region 4: Norton Shores and Roosevelt Park

Region 5: the townships of Blue Lake, Casnovia, Cedar Creek, Dalton, Egelston, Holton and Sullivan

In interpreting survey results, all surveys are subject to error; that is, the results of the survey may differ from those which would have been obtained if the entire populations were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends on the total number of respondents to a particular question. The table below represents the estimated sampling error for different percentage distributions of responses based on sample size.

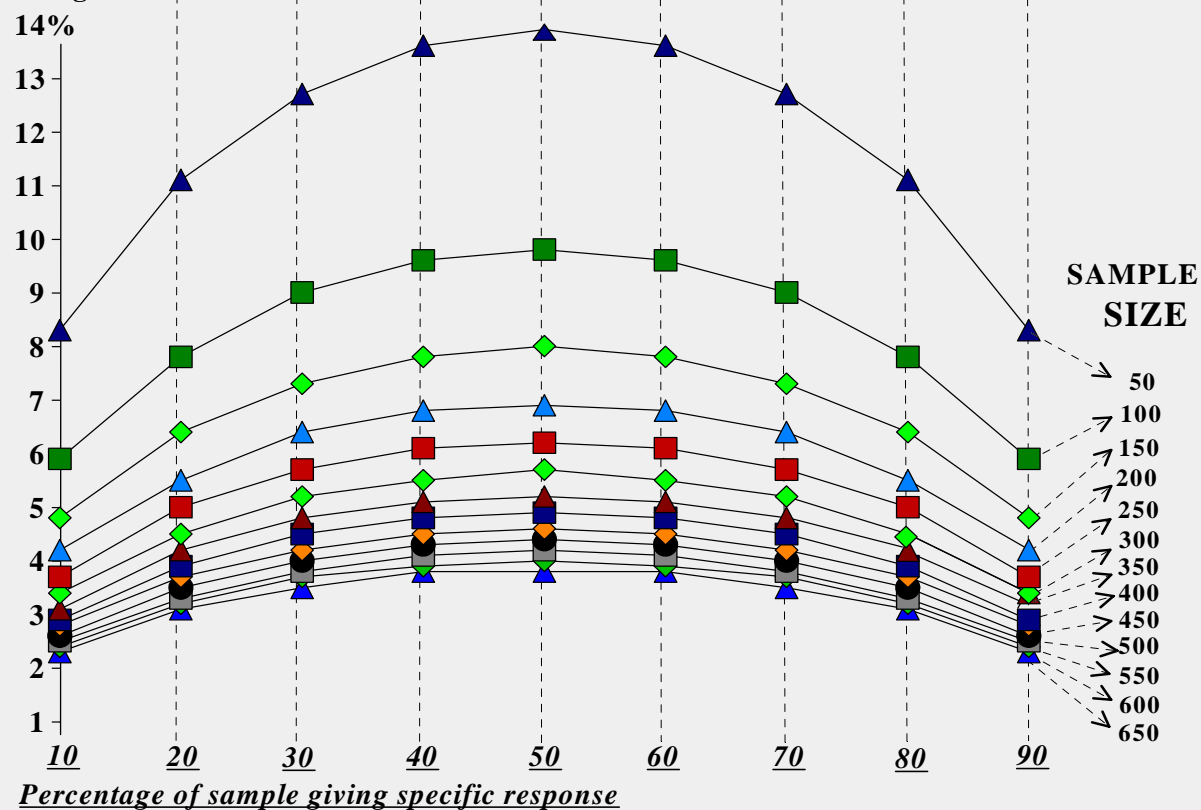
For example, a narrow 50 percent majority of all 302 respondents said that “nearby hunting and fishing areas” were an important reason for deciding to live in the community where they reside (Question #34). As indicated in the chart below, this percentage would have a sampling error of plus or minus 5.7 percent. That means that with repeated sampling, it is very likely (95 times out of every 100), that the percentage for the entire population would fall between 44.3 percent and 55.7 percent, hence 50 percent  $\pm 5.7$  percent.

EPIC-MRA SAMPLING ERROR PERCENTAGE (AT 95 IN 100 CONFIDENCE LEVEL)

*Percentage of sample giving specific response*

	<u>10</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>90</u>
SAMPLE SIZE	% margin of error ±								
650	2.3	3.1	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.1	2.3
600	2.4	3.2	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.2	2.4
550	2.5	3.3	3.8	4.1	4.2	4.1	3.8	3.3	2.5
500	2.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.0	3.5	2.6
450	2.8	3.7	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.2	3.7	2.8
400	2.9	3.9	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.5	3.9	2.9
350	3.1	4.2	4.8	5.1	5.2	5.1	4.8	4.2	3.1
300	3.4	4.5	5.2	5.5	5.7	5.5	5.2	4.5	3.4
250	3.7	5.0	5.7	6.1	6.2	6.1	5.7	5.0	3.7
200	4.2	5.5	6.4	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.4	5.5	4.2
150	4.8	6.4	7.3	7.8	8.0	7.8	7.3	6.4	4.8
100	5.9	7.8	9.0	9.6	9.8	9.6	9.0	7.8	5.9
50	8.3	11.1	12.7	13.6	13.9	13.6	12.7	11.1	8.3

Margin of error ±



## Executive Summary

With the completion of this survey, a great deal of information is now available about the concerns, likes and dislikes of the residents of Muskegon County. This information will be an invaluable source of data to help plan for future growth and development in the county, and also provides useful insight on how to market the area for both residential and commercial development.

Survey respondents provided information in many important areas, including their plans for moving in the next five years and why they would do so; their views about the level of taxes they pay in return for the services they receive; why they choose to live in the community in which they reside; where they work; and whether there is too much growth in their area. They were also asked about urban sprawl and how they rate the job their community does in providing local services.

Survey participants believe there are many things about Muskegon County that will attract residential, business, industrial and commercial development in the future, and they have fairly clear opinions about whether Muskegon County is a better place to live than in the past, worse or about the same, and why they feel that way.

Respondents have clear preferences in terms of policy goals that they believe are important for Muskegon County, and they also support some ideas to encourage – and control – development.

On another topic, respondents were asked if they support or oppose rerouting U.S. 31 through Ottawa County, knowing that it would result in much of the traffic carried by that highway bypassing the southern part of Muskegon County.

### **Key findings:**

“The water” (that is, the proximity of lakes and rivers and activities related to them) is the one feature of Muskegon County that 34 percent of survey respondents cited when asked what they like the most about the area. In a related question, not one item identified by respondents as something they dislike about the county was cited by double digit percentages. It is indeed good news for the county to have one feature identified by more than a third of all respondents as

something they like, with no particular item jumping out as something they dislike about the county.

When respondents were asked why they decided to live in the community where they reside, the reasons offered by the highest percentages were “a job,” “quality of life” and “to be closer to family.”

About sixteen percent of all respondents said they would move to another community within the next five years, with the highest percentages of likely movers coming from: Muskegon Heights and the city of Muskegon, residents who have lived in the county for 10 years or less, respondents in households with children, less educated respondents and younger people, especially younger women (respondents are considered younger if under age 50 – older if age 50 or over). The top reason why people would move is “searching for a job.”

Almost all respondents have an opinion about the taxes and fees they pay in relation to what they get back in services. Just over a third of all respondents said local taxes and fees are too high in relation to the municipal services they receive, with the highest percentages coming from younger residents (especially younger men), those in households with children, and Muskegon Heights residents.

Ideally, the percentage of respondents saying taxes are “too high” should be less than 25 percent if there are any future plans to ask residents to consider tax increase proposals. The more than 30 percent of survey respondents saying taxes are too high is somewhat higher than normal results, given historical trends in EPIC ▪ MRA surveys in other communities. However, although this percentage may be higher than normal, it is important to note that a solid majority, of more than six-in-ten respondents, also said taxes and fees were “about right.”

While a majority of survey respondents said the growth taking place in their community is about right, almost three-in-ten respondents said there is too much growth, with residents of Muskegon and Fruitport townships and other (non-large city) communities saying by the highest percentages that there is too much growth. Overall, while more women than men said there is too much growth, younger men expressed this sentiment more than did older or younger women, or older men.

Three-in-four respondents said their community has the characteristics of urban sprawl, with residents of Fruitport Township and Norton Shores, as well as college educated residents and younger men, saying so by the highest percentages. As might be expected, much lower percentages of residents of the cities of Muskegon and Muskegon Heights said their community had urban sprawl.

Seven-in-ten respondents gave their local community a positive rating for the job done providing basic local services, with the highest ratings coming from college educated men, age 65 and over and men under age 40. Residents of Muskegon Heights offered a negative rating to their local government.

When respondents were asked to state the main reason they live in the community where they reside, the top reasons cited were “to live in a quiet place” and “safety from crime.” “A strong sense of community” and “less traffic congestion” were other important reasons for decisions about where to live.

In terms of community issues of highest personal concern to respondents, “water pollution,” “the quality of local schools” and “the out-migration of good jobs” were identified by the highest percentages.

When asked what were the most important factors respondents thought would attract development to the county in the future, respondents by the highest percentages said “beautiful beaches,” “a skilled labor force,” “people willing to work together” and “a strong school system.” The identification of beautiful beaches as a top attraction is consistent with the respondents’ previously stated belief that “the water” is the most liked attribute of Muskegon County.

Almost half of all respondents said Muskegon County is a better place to live now than it has been in the past, with nearly three times as many respondents saying “better” than the number saying “worse.” Respondents saying “better” by the highest percentages were college educated, especially college educated women and younger residents, as well as residents of Fruitport Township and Muskegon [city].

The top policy goals identified by most survey respondents were “encouraging the creation and expansion of business and industry to create new jobs” and “continuing to provide

investments in higher education and job training.” In terms of ideas to encourage and control growth in the area, “supporting local farmers by purchasing locally grown or produced foods” and “doing more to meet the needs of large area employers to increase the chances that they will stay in Muskegon County” were top methods cited.

Finally, a plurality of survey respondents said they support the plan to reroute U.S. 31 in Ottawa County, even though it will result in much of the traffic on that highway bypassing southern Muskegon County.

### **Long term residence reported**

Nearly two-thirds of all respondents (65 percent) said they have lived in the community where they currently reside for more than 20 years, or for all their life. Almost one-in-five (19 percent) have lived in their community for 10 years or less, and one-in-seven (16 percent) reported residence in their community from 11 to 20 years.

Among the 26 percent of all survey respondents who said they moved into their community within the past 15 years, almost half (44 percent) moved from another community in Muskegon County, one-in-four (23 percent) moved from somewhere else in Michigan, nearly one-in-five (17 percent) moved from another state, and just over one-in-ten (13 percent) moved from a community in another county near Muskegon County.

### **Water is what respondents like the most about the Muskegon area**

When asked to name the thing they liked most about Muskegon County, 34 percent cited “the water.” No other response registered in double digits. The next closest response was “the people” (cited by nine percent), followed by the “great outdoors” and “small-town feeling” (each seven percent) and “familiar” and “good area” (each six percent).

In geo-demographic break-outs, “the water” was cited as the one thing liked the most about Muskegon County by:

- 52 percent of respondents in Region 4 (Norton Shores and Roosevelt Park)
- 50 percent of Norton Shores
- 37 percent each in Muskegon [city] and those in Region 1 (northwest region)
- 33 percent in Area 6 (all other communities)
- 31 percent of Region 3 (Muskegon and Fruitport townships)
- 29 percent of Region 2 (Muskegon [city] and Muskegon Heights)
- 27 percent of Region 5 (remaining communities)

### No specific dislike cited by double-digits

When respondents were asked what they dislike the most about Muskegon County, no specific problem or issue was cited by double-digit percentages. In fact, 21 percent said there was “nothing” they disliked, with another 16 percent undecided.

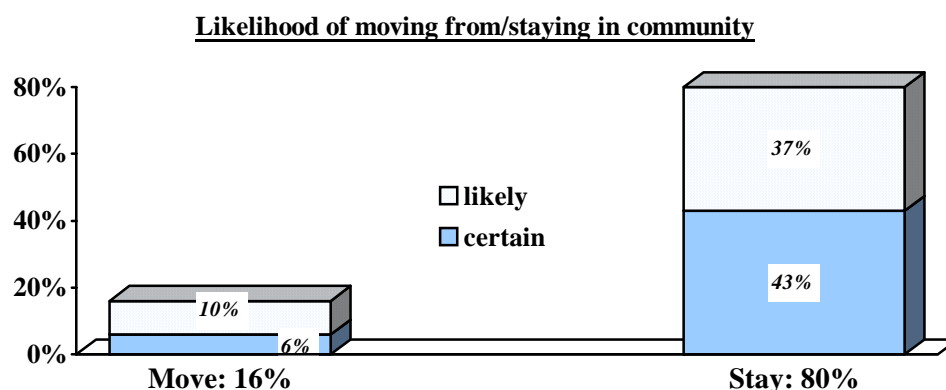
Specific problems cited by respondents included “too crowded and traffic” (cited by nine percent), followed by “local government” (cited by seven percent), “the weather” (six percent) and the “poor economy” (five percent). The fact that no problem or dislike was mentioned by double digits further demonstrates a generally positive view about life in Muskegon County.

### “A job” was the top reason cited for living in city or township

When asked in an open-ended question why they had decided to live in the city or township where they reside, 14 percent of respondents gave “job” as the top reason. This was followed by “quality of life” (offered by 12 percent) and “closer to family” and “good value” (each 11 percent). “Acreage” and “school” were each cited by eight percent, “housing” and “marriage” by seven percent each, and “familiar” and “Lake Michigan” by six percent each.

### Sixteen percent plan to move --

Sixteen percent of all respondents said they plan to move in the next five years, including six percent who said they were “certain” to move and 10 percent who were “likely” to do so. Eighty percent said they would stay, including 43 percent “certain” and 37 percent “likely” to stay.



Among the 16 percent of respondents who said they would move:

- 25 percent said they would move to another city, village or township in Muskegon County



- 18 percent said they would move to a community in another county near Muskegon
- 20 percent said they would move to a community somewhere else in Michigan
- 27 percent said they would move to another state
- two percent said “to another country” and eight percent were unsure of where they would move.

Although the overall 16 percent expressing an intent to move is not a seriously high percentage, analysis of demographic breakouts gives reason for great concern about several specific groups of respondents who indicated by very high percentages that they intended to move. These include:

- 42 percent of Muskegon Heights (25 percent “certain” to move)
- 21 percent in Muskegon [city]
- 13 percent in Fruitport, Muskegon Township, and Area 6
- seven percent in Norton Shores

When broken down by the five regions of communities, 27 percent of Region 2 (Muskegon [city] and Muskegon Heights), 22 percent of Region 5 (“all other” communities), 13 percent of Region 3 (Muskegon and Fruitport townships), eight percent of Region 4 (Norton Shores and Roosevelt Park), and just two percent of Region 1 (the northwest region) said they expected to move.

Further breakouts of respondents who said they expect to move include:

- by length of residence: 24 percent of respondents who lived in the area for 10 years or less, 16 percent of those in the area from 11 to 20 years, and 15 percent of those in the area for more than 20 years
- by reported children in household: 26 percent of respondents with children at home and only 13 percent of those without children
- by age/education: 41 percent of younger respondents without college, 18 percent of younger college educated respondents, eight percent of older college educated respondents and five percent of older respondents without college
- by age/gender: 34 percent of younger women, 29 percent of younger men, 10 percent of older men and only one percent of older women
- by age: 45 percent of those under age 40 and nine percent of those over age 40
  - The younger respondents are, the more intent they are on moving:
    - age 18 to 29: 51 percent majority
    - age 30 to 35: 46 percent
    - age 36 to 40: 25 percent
    - age 41 to 49: 19 percent
    - age 50 to 55: 12 percent
    - age 56 to 64: nine percent
    - age 65 and over: two percent

### -- top reasons for moving

Among respondents who said they are certain to move, 28 percent said they would do so because of “a job.” This reason was followed by “my house” (cited by 17 percent) and “more land” (11 percent). Among those who said they are likely to move, “a job” was cited by 19 percent, followed by “family and friends” and “more land” (each cited by 13 percent)

Economic development and job creation in future years could reduce the number of Muskegon area residents who would leave for a job.

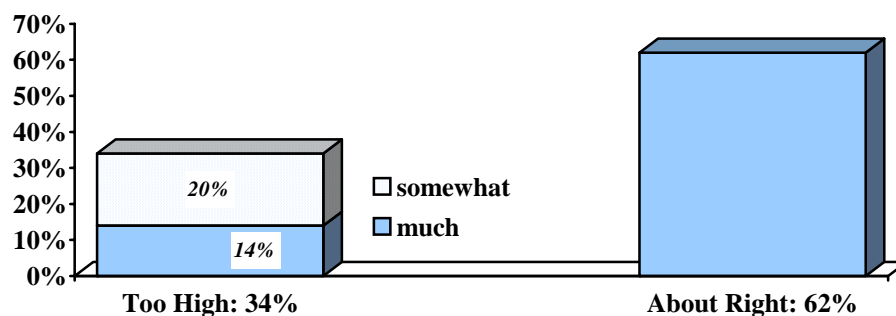
### -- top reasons for staying

Among respondents who said they were certain to stay, 19 percent cited “family and friends” as their top reason for staying, followed by “its home” (cited by 17 percent), “I like it here” (12 percent) and “good area” (11 percent). Among those respondents who said they were likely to stay, “it’s home” was cited by 23 percent, “family and friends” was mentioned by 11 percent, and “own my home” was cited by 10 percent.

### A third say taxes are too high

Thirty four percent of all respondents said their local taxes and fees were too high for what they got back in services. This includes 14 percent who said taxes were “much” too high, 20 percent said they were “somewhat” too high, and 62 percent said taxes were about right.

Assessment of local taxes in return for services

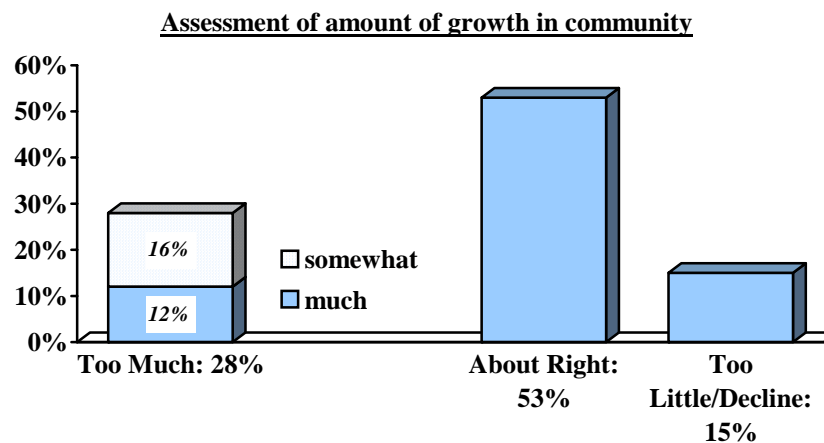


Groups indicating by the highest percentages that taxes and fees were too high included: *county worse over past 10 years (52%); younger men (48%); Muskegon Heights, in households with children (46% each); Area 5 (45%); younger without college (43%); respondents who lived in the area for 10 years or less and 11 to 20 years, likely to move, under age 40 (42% each); Area 6 (41%); oppose rerouting U.S. 31, post high school technical education, Region 1 (40% each); county the same over past 10 years (39%); and young college educated (38%).*

Twenty-four percent of Region 4 (Norton Shores/Roosevelt Park), 27 percent of Region 3 (Muskegon/Fruitport townships) and 31 percent of Region 2 (Muskegon [city]/ Muskegon Heights) said taxes were too high, which is lower than the county-wide results.

### Nearly three-in-ten say there is too much growth

Twenty-eight percent of survey respondents said there is too much growth taking place in their community, including 12 percent who said “much” too much. A 53 percent majority said the amount of growth taking place is about right, with eight percent saying there is too little growth and seven percent citing an actual population decline.



Breakouts of respondents who said there is too much growth include:

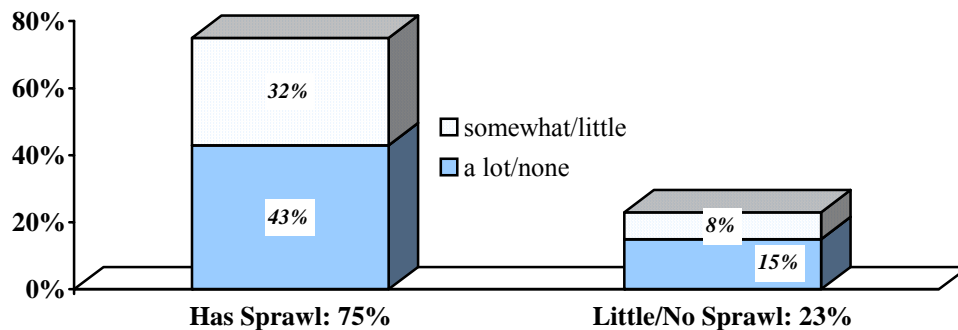
- by residence: Respondents in Muskegon Township indicated by the highest percentage that there was too much growth (40 percent); followed by Region 3 Muskegon/Fruitport townships (38 percent); Region 5 (37 percent); Fruitport Township (35 percent); Area 6 (32 percent), Region 1, Muskegon Heights (29 percent each); Region 2, Norton Shores (19 percent each); Region 4 (18 percent) and the city of Muskegon (15 percent).
- in Muskegon Heights, 38 percent said there is the right amount of growth, 29 percent said there is too much, 17 percent said there is too little and 13 percent said there is an actual population decline
- in the city of Muskegon, 49 percent said growth is about right, 15 percent said there is too much, 16 percent said too little, and 13 percent said there is a population decline
- by gender: 30 percent of women and 25 percent of men
- by length of residence: 42 percent of respondents who lived in the area for 11 to 20 years, 27 percent of those in the area for 10 years or less, and 24 percent of respondents in the area for more than 20 years
- by opinion of taxes: 32 percent of respondents who said taxes are too high and 25 percent of those who said taxes are about right

- by intent to move: 44 percent of respondents who are “certain” to move, 32 percent of those “likely” to move, and 26 percent of those who are “likely/certain” to stay
- by age/education: 36 percent of younger respondents without college, 27 percent of older without college, 24 percent of younger college educated and 22 percent of older college educated
- by age/gender: 33 percent of younger men, 31 percent of older women, 29 percent of younger women and only 21 percent of older men

### Three-in-four say their community has urban sprawl

A 75 percent solid majority of all respondents said their community has the characteristics of urban sprawl, including 43 percent who said it had “a lot” of such characteristics and 32 percent who said “somewhat.” Twenty-three percent said their community has urban sprawl “only a little” or “not at all.”

Assessment of urban sprawl in community



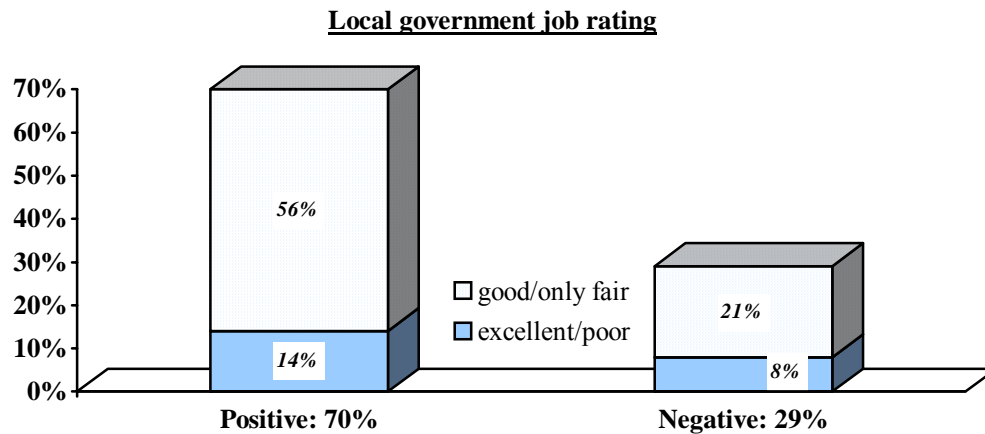
Specific groups that indicated by the highest percentages that their community has “a lot” of the characteristics of urban sprawl included:

*Fruitport Township (70%); unemployed, Region 3 (53% each); Norton Shores (52%); lived in area 11 to 20 years (50%); college educated men, Region 6 (49% each); works in another community in Muskegon County, young college educated, age 50 to 55 (48% each); younger men, age 41 to 49 (47% each); all college educated, Region 4 (46% each); Area 6, Region 1, men over age 40 (45% each); all men, college educated women, county the same over past 10 years, older college educated, age 56 to 64, “Silent” generation [born 1925-43] and “Boom” generation [born 1944-60] (44% each); likely to stay, under age 40 (43% each); men without college, full-time employees, works at home, in households without children, older men and women (42% each); certain to stay, women over age 40 (41% each); Muskegon Township, and men under age 40 (40% each).*

Only 19 percent of Region 2 (Muskegon [city] and Muskegon Heights) said there is “a lot” of urban sprawl.

### Seven-in-ten offer positive ratings for their city or township services

A solid 70 to 29 percent majority of all respondents offered a positive rating for the job their city or township does in providing basic local services. Although the overall positive rating is high, only 14 percent offered an “excellent” job rating, with 56 saying the municipality was doing a “pretty good” job.



Respondents in every community except Muskegon Heights offered a positive rating by a higher percentage than the overall county-wide results. In Muskegon Heights, 63 percent offered a negative rating and 38 percent gave a positive rating. It should be noted however, that Muskegon Heights provided a small sub-sample size (24 respondents).

Highest percentages offering positive ratings came from:

*age 30 to 35 (85%); taxes about right, works in community where they live (83% each); part-time employees, county better over past 10 years (81% each); college educated men, Region 4 (80% each); Muskegon [city], Norton Shores (79% each); Fruitport Township (78%); young college educated, age 65 and over, men under age 40 (76% each); homemakers, works in another Muskegon County community, Region 3 (75% each); lived in the area 11 to 20 years, college educated (74% each); full-time employees, older men, Muskegon Township (73% each); all men, certain to stay, in households without children, older with and without college (72% each); will likely move, will likely stay, younger men and older women, high school or less education, over age 40, men and women over age 40 (71% each); lived in area over 20 years, and age 41 to 49 and 56 to 64 (70% each).*

Highest percentages of negative ratings came from:

*Muskegon Heights (63% -- small sample size); taxes too high (51%); certain to move, age 36 to 40 (50%); county worse over past 10 years (44%); women under age 40, Region 1 (39% each); younger without college (38%); “X” generation [b. 1960-81] (36%); lived in area 10 years or less, younger women, post high school technical training (35% each); county about the same over past 10 years (34%);*

*other communities, under age 40, age 18 to 29, Area 6 (33% each); “Silent” generation [b. 1925-43] (32%).*

### **Quiet and safety from crime most important factors for living in their community**

A list of reasons why respondents might have decided to live in the community where they reside was read. Respondents were asked if each statement describes a very or somewhat important factor in their decision, a minor factor or not a factor at all.

The top ranking reason, cited as important by a solid 88 percent majority, was “to live in a place that is quiet.” This included the 58 percent who cited this as a “very” important factor.

Respondents who indicated by very high percentages that living in a place that was quiet was an important factor include:

- 95 percent of respondents in Norton Shores
- 94 percent each of Regions 1, 4 and 5
- 93 percent of Area 6, other communities
- 87 percent of Region 3 (Fruitport/Muskegon townships)
- 79 percent each of Muskegon [city] and Muskegon Heights, said r.

Other top reasons included:

- “safety from crime” cited as important by a 79 percent majority (54 percent “very” important)
  - 100 percent of Fruitport Township (small sample)
  - 88 percent of Region 4
  - 87 percent of Region 3
  - 86 percent of Norton Shores
  - 84 percent of Region 1
  - 82 percent of Area 6
  - 77 percent of Muskegon Township
  - 67 percent of Muskegon [city]
  - 63 percent of Muskegon Heights
- “a strong sense of community” cited by a 77 percent majority (39 percent “very” important)
  - 87 percent of Fruitport Township
  - 83 percent of Muskegon Heights
  - 81 percent of Region 3
  - 78 percent of Regions 2 and 5
  - 77 percent of Muskegon Township
  - 76 percent of Area 6
  - 75 percent of Muskegon [city]
  - 73 percent of Region 1
  - 72 percent of Region 4
  - 71 percent of Norton Shores
- “less traffic congestion and a quality road system” cited by a 76 percent majority (45 percent “very” important)
  - 85 percent of Region 5
  - 84 percent of Area 6 and Region 1
  - 77 percent of Muskegon Township
  - 75 percent of Region 3
  - 74 percent of Region 4, Norton Shores and Fruitport Township
  - 72 percent of Muskegon [city]
  - 67 percent of Region 2
  - a much lower 54 percent of Muskegon Height

- “the availability and quality of affordable housing” cited by a 73 percent majority (37 percent “very” important)
  - 87 percent of Muskegon Township
  - 85 percent of Region 3
  - 83 percent of Fruitport Township
  - 79 percent of Muskegon [city]
  - 77 percent of Region 5
  - 74 percent of Region 2
  - 69 percent of Norton Shores
  - 68 percent of Area 6
  - 64 percent of Region 4
  - 63 percent of Muskegon Heights
  - 61 percent of Region 1
- “high quality of local schools” cited by a 67 percent majority (50 percent “very” important)
  - 87 percent of Fruitport Township
  - 81 percent of Region 3
  - 77 percent of Muskegon Township
  - 74 percent of Region 4
  - 71 percent of Norton Shores
  - 68 percent of Area 6 and Region 5
  - 65 percent of Region 1
  - 64 percent of Muskegon [city]
  - 56 percent of Region 2
  - 38 percent of Muskegon Heights
- “Lakefront areas and shorelines” cited by 65 percent (41 percent “very” important)
  - Obviously, respondents in shoreline areas think this reason is more important:
  - 79 percent majority of Norton Shores
  - 77 percent of Muskegon [city]
  - 74 percent of Region 4
  - 71 percent of Region 2
  - 67 percent of Muskegon Township
  - 65 percent of Region 1
  - 60 percent of Region 3
  - 59 percent of Area 6
  - 55 percent of Region 5
  - 54 percent of Muskegon Heights
  - 52 percent of Fruitport Township
- “to be closer to family” cited by 64 percent (46 percent “very” important)
  - 80 of Muskegon Township
  - 79 percent of Muskegon Heights
  - 75 percent of Region 3
  - 70 percent of Fruitport Township
  - 66 percent of Regions 2 and 4
  - 62 percent of Norton Shores
  - 61 percent of Muskegon [city]
  - 60 percent of Region 5
  - 57 percent of Area 6
  - 49 percent of Region 1
- “the rural character of the area” cited by 63 percent (34 percent very important)
  - Understandably this reason was not important in the two more urban areas of the county:
  - an 83 percent majority of Fruitport Township and Region 5
  - 76 percent of Region 1
  - 75 percent of Area 6 and Region 3
  - 70 percent of Muskegon Township
  - 55 percent of Norton Shores
  - 48 percent of Region 4
  - 46 percent of Muskegon [city]
  - 42 percent of Region 2
  - 33 percent of Muskegon Heights
- “available recreational activities and a strong park system” cited by 63 percent (28 percent “very” important)
  - 76 percent of Norton Shores and Region 4
  - 70 percent of Fruitport Township
  - 67 percent of Muskegon [city]
  - 66 percent of Region 3
  - 64 percent of Region 2

- 63 percent of Muskegon Township
- 61 percent of Region 1
- 56 percent of Area 6
- “a lot of community events, activities and fun times” cited by 61 percent (23 percent “very” important)
- 74 percent of Muskegon [city] and Norton Shores
- 73 percent of Region 2
- 72 percent of Region 4
- 71 percent of Muskegon Heights
- 65 percent of Fruitport Township
- “to be closer to quality health care services” cited by 60 percent (30 percent “very” important)
- 71 percent of Muskegon Heights
- 70 percent of Fruitport Township
- 68 percent of Region 3
- 67 percent of Muskegon Township
- 66 percent of Region 4
- 54 percent of Muskegon Heights
- 49 percent of Region 5
- 57 percent of Region 1 and 3
- 51 percent of Area 6
- 50 percent of Muskegon Township
- 45 percent of Region 5
- 64 percent of Norton Shores
- 62 percent of Region 2
- 59 percent of Muskegon [city]
- 52 percent of Area 6
- 51 percent of Region 1 and 5

Other factor were thought to be important in deciding where to live by fewer than 60 percent, and a few factors were ranked as more unimportant than important.

- “because of a change in jobs” cited as unimportant by a 78 to 21 percent majority (72 percent “not important at all”)
- “to live in an area where you can walk to nearby stores and other places” cited as unimportant by a 64 to 36 percent majority
- 78 percent of Fruitport Township
- 77 percent of Region 5
- 71 percent of Region 1
- 70 percent of Area 6
- 69 percent of Norton Shores
- 64 percent of Region 3
- 60 percent of Region 4
- 54 percent of Muskegon [city]
- 53 percent of Muskegon Township
- 52 percent of Region 2
- 46 percent of Muskegon Heights
- “to live where there is a diverse mix of people of different races” cited as unimportant by a 59 to 40 percent majority (45 percent “not important at all”)
  - On this measurement, there are some significant differences among communities:
    - important -- a 54 percent majority of Muskegon Heights and 50 percent of Muskegon Township
    - unimportant -- a 71 percent majority of Region 1; 69 percent of Area 6 and Region 5; 61 percent of Fruitport Township; 55 percent of Region 3; 54 percent of Muskegon [city]; 52 percent of Norton Shores, Region 2 and Region 4
  - Respondents in areas with greater diversity tend to feel it is a more important factor than those in areas that are less diverse.



- “lower local property taxes” cited as unimportant by a 59 to 39 percent majority
  - important -- a 70 percent majority of Fruitport Township; 58 percent of Region 3; 50 percent of Muskegon Township.
  - unimportant -- a 67 percent majority of Muskegon Heights, Muskegon [city], Region 1 and 2; 61 percent of Area 6; 60 percent of Norton Shores; 58 percent of Region 4 and 5 said local property taxes were unimportant.
  - In addition, 64 percent of all women and 55 percent of all men said this was not an important factor.
- “to be closer to work” cited as unimportant by a 58 to 40 percent majority (52 percent “not important at all”)
  - important -- a 65 percent majority of Fruitport Township; 51 percent of Region 2
  - unimportant -- a 65 percent majority of Region 1, 64 percent of Region 4 and Norton Shores; 63 percent of Muskegon Heights; 62 percent of Area 6; 60 percent of Region 5 and Muskegon Township; 55 percent of Region 2; 52 percent of Muskegon [city]
- “the historic charm of the area” cited as unimportant by 50 percent, with 49 percent saying it was important.
  - important -- 54 percent majority of Muskegon [city] and Region 4; 53 percent of Region 2, 52 percent of Norton Shores, 51 percent of Region 1, and 50 percent of Muskegon Heights said the historic charm of the area was important.
  - unimportant -- A 63 percent majority of Muskegon Township, 58 percent of Region 3; 54 percent of Region 5; 52 percent of Fruitport Township; 51 percent of Area 6
- “nearby hunting and fishing areas” cited as unimportant by 50 percent, with 50 percent saying it was important.
  - important -- 68 percent majority of Region 5; 57 percent of Fruitport Township and Area 6; 52 percent of Norton Shores; 51 percent of Region 1 and 3
  - unimportant -- 66 percent majority of Muskegon [city]; 64 percent of Region 2; 58 percent of Muskegon Heights; 54 percent of Region 4 ; 53 percent of Muskegon Township
  - Perhaps not surprisingly, 58 percent of all men and only 42 percent of all women thought “hunting and fishing areas” was an important factor, with identical results among both younger and older men.
- “a lower cost of living than other areas” and “a lot of natural and undeveloped land,” each cited as important by a 59 percent majority
  - lower cost of living important -- a 65 percent majority of Fruitport Township; 64 percent of Muskegon [city] and Region 2; 63 percent of Muskegon Heights; 62 percent of Region 3; 60 percent of Muskegon Township and Region 5; 56 percent of Area 6; 52 percent of Norton Shores and Region 4; and 51 percent of Region 1
  - natural and undeveloped land important -- 75 percent majority of Region 5; 73 percent of Area 6 and Region 1; 65 percent of Fruitport Township; 62

percent of Region 3; 60 percent of Muskegon Township; 48 percent of Norton Shores and Region 4; 43 percent of Muskegon [city]; 41 percent of Region 2; only 38 percent of Muskegon Heights

- “the quality of local services, like water, sewer, trash and snow removal” cited as important by 58 percent
  - Understandably, this ranking varies widely among communities:
    - important -- 74 percent majority of Muskegon [city]; 73 percent of Muskegon Township; 71 percent of Region ; 66 percent of Region ; 63 percent of Muskegon Height; 62 percent of Region 4; 57 percent each of Fruitport Township and Norton Shores; 51 percent of Region 1; 46 percent of Area 6; and 37 percent of Region 5.

### **Most important factors in deciding where to live:**

#### **-- Fruitport Township**

The most to least important factors in deciding to live among Fruitport Township respondents were:

*safety from crime (100%); a quiet area, high quality local schools, a strong sense of community (87% each); affordable housing, the rural character (83% each); less traffic congestion and quality local roads (74%); lower property taxes, closer to family, closer to health care, available recreational activities and strong parks (70% each); closer to work, lower cost of living, a lot of community events, a lot of natural and undeveloped land (65% each); quality local services, nearby hunting and fishing areas (57% each); and the lakefront areas and shoreline (52%) -- other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent*

#### **-- Muskegon Heights**

The most to least important factors in deciding where to live among Muskegon Heights respondents included:

*a strong sense of community (83%), closer to family, a quiet area (79% each); closer to health care, a lot of community events (71% each); safety from crime, lower cost of living, affordable housing, quality local services (63% each); lakefront areas and shoreline, able to walk to nearby stores, available recreational activities and strong parks, a diverse mix of people, less traffic congestion and quality local roads (54% each); and the historic charm of the area (50%) -- other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent.*

#### **-- Muskegon Township**

The most to least important factors in deciding where to live among Muskegon Township respondents included:

*a quiet area, affordable housing (87% each); closer to family (80%); a strong sense of community, safety from crime, less traffic congestion and quality local roads, high quality local schools (77% each); quality local services (73%); the rural character of the area (70%); closer to health care, lakefront areas and shoreline (67% each); available recreational activities and strong parks (63%); a lot of natural and undeveloped land, lower cost of living (60% each); a lot of community events, a diverse mix of people, and lower property taxes (50% each) - - other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent.*

**-- Muskegon [city]**

The most to least important factors in deciding where to live among Muskegon [city] respondents included:

*a quiet area, affordable housing (79% each); lakefront areas and shoreline (77%); a strong sense of community (75%); quality local services, a lot of community events (74% each); less traffic congestion and quality local roads (72%); safety from crime, available recreational activities and strong parks (67% each); high quality local schools, lower cost of living (64% each); closer to family (61%); closer to health care (59%); and the historic charm of the area (54%) -- other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent.*

**-- Norton Shores**

The most to least important factors in deciding where to live among Norton Shores respondents included:

*a quiet area (95%); safety from crime (86%); lakefront areas and shoreline (79%); available recreational activities and strong parks (76%); a lot of community events, less traffic congestion and quality local roads (74% each); a strong sense of community, high quality local schools (71% each); affordable housing (69%); closer to health care (64%); closer to family (62%); quality local services (57%); the rural character of the area (55%); lower cost of living, the historic charm of the area, and nearby hunting and fishing areas (52% each) -- other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent.*

**-- other communities within Area 6**

The most to least important factors in deciding where to live among Area 6 respondents included:

*a quiet area (93%); less traffic congestion and quality local roads (84%); safety from crime (82%); a strong sense of community (76%); the rural character of the area (75%); a lot of natural and undeveloped land (73%); high quality local schools, affordable housing (68% each); lakefront areas and shoreline (59%); closer to family, nearby hunting and fishing areas (57% each); available recreational activities and strong parks, lower cost of living (56% each); closer to health care (52%); and a lot of community events (51%) -- other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent*

**-- Region 1**

The most to least important factors in deciding where to live among Region 1 respondents included:

*a quiet area (94%); safety from crime, less traffic congestion and good roads (84% each); rural character of the area (76%); a lot of natural and undeveloped land, a strong sense of community (73% each); high quality local schools and lakefront shoreline (65% each); available recreational activities, affordable housing (61% each); a lot of community events (57%); closer to quality health care, lower cost of living and historic charm of the area, nearby hunting and fishing areas (51% each) -- other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent*

**-- Region 2**

The most to least important factors in deciding where to live among Region 2 respondents included:

*a quiet area (79%); strong sense of community (78%); affordable housing (74%); a lot of community events (73%); quality local services, lakefront shoreline (71%); less traffic congestion and good roads (67%); safety from crime, closer to family (66% each); lower cost of living, available recreational activities (64% each); closer to health care (62%); high quality local schools (56%); historic charm of the area (53%) -- other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent*

**-- Region 3**

The most to least important factors in deciding where to live among Region 3 respondents included:

*safety from crime, a quiet area (87% each); affordable housing (85%); high quality local schools, a strong sense of community (81% each); closer to family, rural character of the area (75% each); closer to health care (68%); quality local services, available recreational activities (66% each); lower cost of living, a lot of natural and undeveloped land (62% each); lakefront shoreline (60%); lower property taxes (58%); a lot of community events (57%); closer to work, nearby hunting and fishing areas (51% each) -- other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent*

**-- Region 4**

The most to least important factors in deciding where to live among Region 4 respondents included:

*a quiet area (94%); safety from crime (88%); available recreational activities (76%); high quality local schools, lakefront shoreline, less traffic congestion and good roads (74% each); a lot of community events, a strong sense of community (72% each); closer to family, closer to health care (66% each); affordable housing (64%); quality local services (62%); historic charm of area (54%); lower cost of living (52%) -- other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent*

**-- Region 5**

The most to least important factors in deciding where to live among Region 5 respondents included:

*a quiet area (94%); less traffic congestion and good roads (85%); rural character of area (83%); safety from crime, a strong sense of community (78% each); affordable housing (77%); a lot of natural and undeveloped land (75%); high quality local schools, nearby hunting and fishing areas (68% each); closer to family, lower cost of living (60% each); lakefront shoreline (55%); closer to health care (51%) -- other factors cited by fewer than 50 percent*

**Top concerns: Water pollution, school quality, the out-migration of good jobs, air pollution, and future planning and development for the downtown and lakefront areas**

Respondents were asked to use a scale of zero to 10 to rate several public issues, with “10” meaning an issue is an extremely serious concern and “0” meaning it is not a concern at all. The issue that garnered the highest “9 – 10” concern ratings from the highest percentages was

water pollution (rated 9 - 10 by 52 percent). The second highest concern, rated 9 - 10 by 47 percent, was “the quality of schools in the area.”

Other top concerns rated 9 - 10 by the highest percentages included:

- the out-migration of good paying jobs (rated 9 - 10 by 45 percent)
- air pollution (37 percent)
- future planning and development for the downtown and lakefront areas (37 percent)
- the quality and availability of water or sewer systems (36 percent)
- too many local businesses and industries owned by outside national and international corporations (34 percent)
- the ability to expand and develop the existing manufacturing base (32 percent)
- loss of farmland, forest land, and natural wildlife habitats (31 percent)
- the level of planning to manage growth and development (31 percent)
- no county-wide master plan or long-term vision (31 percent)
- having convenient public transportation, especially for seniors and the handicapped (30 percent)
- zoning decisions driven by development rather than existing community plans (28 percent)
- a high crime rate (28 percent)
- the condition of local roads (27 percent)
- too many local governments with overlapping responsibilities (27 percent)
- dilapidation and abandoned buildings in my community (25 percent)
- not enough commercial or industrial growth and development (24 percent)
- the lack of strong county leadership (24 percent)
- the amount of taxes paid in your community (22 percent)
- too much poverty in my community (22 percent)
- public apathy (21 percent)
- a lack of cooperation between communities (21 percent)
- urban sprawl (21 percent)
- loss of open space for leisure activities (20 percent)
- old foundry town image and smell (19 percent)
- traffic problems and congestion (18 percent)
- the financial strain on less populated areas to provide infrastructure services like roads, water and sewer to meet the demands of new development (18 percent)
- too much residential growth and development in some areas (18 percent)
- the level of coordinated land use planning and zoning between adjacent communities (15 percent)
- the expansion and service of the Muskegon county airport (13 percent)

**Demographic breakouts: groups offering 9 or 10 ratings in percentages well above the county-wide results:**

**-- water pollution (52%)**

- 65 percent majority of Fruitport Township residents; 59 percent of Muskegon [city]; 58 percent of Region 3; 54 percent of Region 2; 53 percent of Muskegon Township; 52 percent of Region 5; 50 percent of Norton Shores; 49 percent of Region 1; 48 percent of Area 6 communities; 44 percent of Region 4; and 42 percent of Muskegon Heights
- 55 percent majority of women and 49 percent of men
- 66 percent of college educated women, 54 percent of college educated men, 48 percent of men without college and 47 percent of women without college
- 58 percent of younger men, 56 percent of older women, 53 percent of younger women and only 43 percent of older men
- 59 percent of respondents who are likely to stay, 52 percent of those who are certain to stay, 42 percent of respondents who are likely to move and 39 percent of those who are certain to move

**-- quality of schools in the area (47%)**

- 52 percent of Muskegon [city] and Region 2; 50 percent of Muskegon Heights; 49 percent of Area 6 communities and Region 1; 48 percent of Region 5; 43 percent each of Fruitport Township, Muskegon Township, and Region 3; 40 percent of Region 4; and 36 percent of Norton Shores
- There is a significant difference between men and women: 55 percent of women and 39 percent of men
  - 59 percent of younger women, 52 percent of older women, 47 percent of younger men and just 33 percent of older men
  - 63 percent of college educated women, 51 percent of women without college, 41 percent of college educated men and 37 percent of men without
- The quality of local schools could be an influence on residents planning to move: 56 percent majority of respondents who are certain to move, 50 percent of those certain to stay, 47 percent of respondents likely to stay and 39 percent of those likely to move
- There is also a great difference between the concern expressed by respondents with and without children at home: 61 percent of those in households with children and only 42 percent of those without children at home
- There was also a significant difference based only on age: 59 percent of respondents under age 40 and 44 percent of those age 40 or over

**-- out-migration of good paying jobs (45%)**

- 60 percent of Norton Shores; 58 percent of Muskegon Heights; 52 percent of Region 4; 47 percent of Muskegon [city]/Muskegon Township; 46 percent of Region 2; 45 percent of Region 1; 43 percent of Region 3; 42 percent of Region 5; 41 percent of other communities; 39 percent of Fruitport Township

- 53 percent of respondents who have lived in the county for 10 years or less, 44 percent of those residing for 20 years or more and 42 percent of residents living in the area for 11 to 20 years
- 53 percent of respondents who said taxes are too high, and 41 percent of those saying taxes are about right

**-- air pollution (37%)**

- 43 percent of Muskegon [city]; 41 percent of Region 2; 40 percent of Muskegon Township and Region 3; 39 percent of Fruitport Township; 38 percent of Muskegon Heights and Region 5; 34 percent of Area 6 communities; 33 percent of Norton Shores; 32 percent of Region 4; 29 percent of Region 1.
- 42 percent of women and 31 percent of men
- 53 percent of college educated women, 36 percent of women without college, 33 percent of men without college and 27 percent of college educated men
- 46 percent of younger women, 38 percent of older women, 33 percent of younger men and 29 percent of older men

**-- future planning and development for the downtown and lakefront areas (37%)**

- 50 percent of Muskegon Heights; 48 percent of Muskegon [city] and Region 2; 45 percent of Norton Shores; 44 percent of Region 4; 39 percent of Fruitport Township; 37 percent of Region 1; 34 percent of Region 3; 28 percent of Area 6 communities; 20 percent of Region 5
- 45 percent of college educated respondents and 33 percent of those without a college education
- 40 percent of women over age 40, 39 percent of women under age 40, 37 percent of men over age 40 and 24 percent of men under age 40

**-- quality and availability of water or sewage systems (36%)**

- a greater concern in the urban areas than in the more rural areas:
  - 46 percent of Muskegon [city]; 45 percent of Norton Shores and Region 2; 44 percent of Region 4; 42 percent of Muskegon Heights; 35 percent of Fruitport Township; 32 percent of Region 5; 30 percent of Area 6 communities and Region 3; and 27 percent of Muskegon Township and Region 1
- 41 percent of all women and 32 percent of all men
- 40 percent of respondents who plan to stay in their community, 28 percent of respondents certain to move and 23 percent of those likely to move
- 47 percent of college educated women, 39 percent of college educated men, 37 percent of women without college and 29 percent of men without college.

**-- too many local businesses and industries owned by outside national and international corporations (34%)**

- 42 percent of Muskegon Heights; 40 percent of Muskegon Township and Region 2; 39 percent of Muskegon [city]; 38 percent of Region 3; 35 percent of Fruitport Township; 34 percent of Region 5; 33 percent of Norton Shores; 32 percent of Region 4; 28 percent of Area 6 communities; 20 percent of Region 1.

- 42 percent of women without college, 33 percent of men without college and 27 percent each of college educated men and women
- 44 percent of older women, 32 percent of older men, 31 percent of younger men and 25 percent of younger women
- 37 percent of respondents without college and 27 percent of college educated respondents
- 37 percent of respondents over age 40 and 21 percent of respondents under age 40

**-- ability to expand and develop the existing manufacturing base (32%)**

- 46 percent of Muskegon Heights; 40 percent of Muskegon Township; 36 percent of Region 3; 35 percent of Region 2; 33 percent of Norton Shores and Region 1; 31 percent of Muskegon [city]; 30 percent of Fruitport Township and Region 4; 28 percent of Area 6 communities and 26 percent of Region 5
- Other than geographical differences, there are no other significant demographic differences on this question.

**-- loss of farmland, forest land, and natural wildlife habitats (31%)**

- Understandably, concern is generally greatest in the more rural areas:
  - 43 percent of Region 5; 37 percent of Area 6 communities; 35 percent of Fruitport Township and Region 1; 30 percent of Muskegon [city] and Region 3; 28 percent of Region 2; 27 percent of Muskegon Township; 25 percent of Muskegon Heights; and 21 percent of Norton Shores; 18 percent of Region 4.
- 40 percent of younger men, 35 percent of older women, 29 percent of younger women and 23 percent of older men
- There were no other significant differences among key demographic groups on this issue.

**-- level of planning to manage growth and development (31%)**

- 38 percent of Norton Shores; 37 percent of Region 1; 33 percent each of Muskegon Township and Muskegon [city]; 32 percent of Region 4; 31 percent of Region 2; 30 percent of Region 3; 28 percent of Area 6 communities; 26 percent of Fruitport Township; 25 percent of Muskegon Heights and Region 5
- Key groups that expressed 9 - 10 concern t about this issue included by the highest percentages:
  - college educated women, younger college educated respondents (42% each); age 41 to 49 (40%); all college educated respondents (38%); age 50 to 55 (36%); “GI” generation [born 1924 - prior] and “Boom” generation [born 1944-60] (35%); women over age 40 (34%)

**-- no county-wide master plan or long-term vision (31%)**

- 48 percent of Norton Shores; 44 percent of Region 4; 38 percent of Muskegon Heights; 35 percent of Region 1; 32 percent of Area 6 communities and Region 2; 31 percent of Region 5; 30 percent of Muskegon [city]; 20 percent of Muskegon Township; 19 percent of Region 3; and 17 percent of Fruitport Township



- Key groups that expressed 9 - 10 concern t about this issue included by the highest percentages:
  - lived in the Area 11 to 20 years (48%); college educated women, homemakers (42% each); works in another county, county worse over past 10 years, young college educated (40% each); taxes too high (39%); college educated (38%); older women (37%); all women, older college educated, women over age 40 (36% each); full-time employees, works in another community in Muskegon County (35% each); in households without children, younger women, post high-school technical education (34% each); works at home, county the same over past 10 years, women under age 40 (33% each).

**-- convenient public transportation, especially for seniors and the handicapped (30%)**

- 50 percent of Muskegon Heights; 47 percent of Region 2; 46 percent of Muskegon [city]; 31 percent of Region 1; 26 percent of Fruitport Township; 24 percent of Norton Shores and Area 6 communities; 22 percent of Region 5; 21 percent of Region 3; 20 percent of Region 4; 17 percent of Muskegon Township.
- Key groups that expressed 9 - 10 concern t about this issue included by the highest percentages:
  - homemakers (50%); age 50 to 55 (44%); older women (40%); women without college, women over age 40 (39% each); all women (38%); college educated women, county worse over past 10 years (37% each); older college educated, women under age 40 (36% each); younger women (35%); lived in area more than 20 years, college educated, and age 18 to 29 (33% each).

**Most important factors in attracting residential, business, industrial and commercial developments to Muskegon County**

A list of statements pertaining to things that may attract residential, business, industry and commercial development to Muskegon County was read. Respondents were asked if each statement describes a very or somewhat important factor in attracting development, a minor factor or not a factor at all.

Respondents rated all of tested aspects as “important,” by a high of 94 percent to a low of 72 percent. This includes five aspects rated important by more than 90 percent, four items so rated by 86 to 89 percent, and three by 76 to 72 percent.

The most important factor, cited as “important” by 94 percent, was “beautiful beaches” and the least important factor, cited by 72 percent, was “the area’s ethnic diversity.” With the solid percentages saying all items were important factors, there are very few demographic differences on any aspects tested.

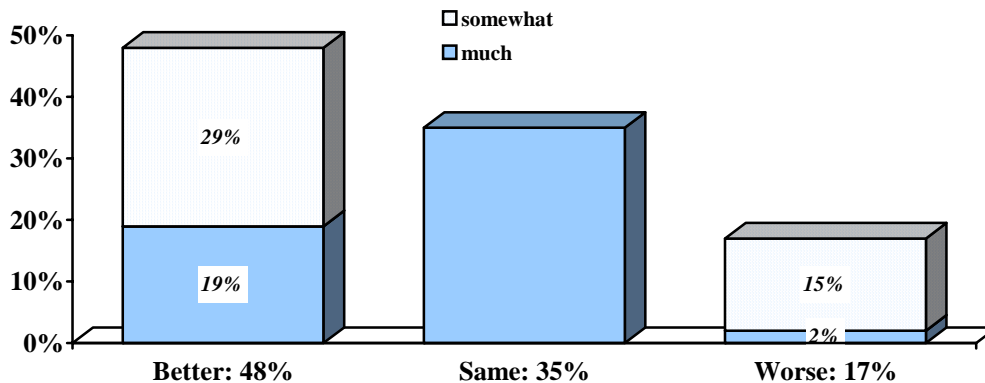
In descending order of percentages of respondents rating an aspect as important, the results were:

- “many beautiful beaches” -- 94 percent important, 76 percent “very” important
- “a skilled labor force,” -- 94 percent important, 72 percent “very” important
- “people willing to work together” -- 92 percent important, 77 percent “very” important
- “strong school system and opportunity for higher education” -- 92 percent important, 77 percent “very” important
- “good retail opportunities” -- 92 percent important, 55 percent “very” important
- “an effective wastewater treatment system” -- 89 percent important, 70 percent “very” important.
- “cultural opportunities like the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, Freunthal Theatre, Cherry Playhouse and summer festivals” -- 88 percent important, 56 percent “very” important
- “economic diversity, including a variety of business types and sizes, as well as ethnic ownership and backgrounds” -- 86 percent important, 48 percent “very” important
- “recent growth and development,” -- 86 percent important, 42 percent “very” important
- “new industrial parks,” -- 76 percent important, 33 percent “very” important
- “Michigan’s Adventure, which draws many people to the area” -- 74 percent important, 37 percent “very” important
- “the area’s ethnic diversity” -- 72 percent important, 30 percent “very” important

### **Almost half say Muskegon County is a better place to live over the past 10 years**

Respondents were asked if Muskegon County has become a better or a worse place to live over the past 10 years, or if it is about the same as it was then. Forty-eight percent said the county is a “better” place to live, including 19 percent who said “much” better. Thirty-five percent said it was “about the same” and 17 percent said it was “worse.”

**Assessment of county as place to live over 10 years past**



Respondents who said “better” were asked why they said so. Fifteen percent of these respondents cited “new businesses,” 14 percent said the county was “trying to improve,” 12 percent said there was “better shopping,” eight percent said “it’s cleaned up,” eight percent said there is “more to do now,” and seven percent said “good people moving in.” Six percent each also cited “jobs” and “lakefront improvements,” followed by “community involvement” and “improved schools” cited by five percent each.

The top reasons offered by those who said “worse” included: “unemployment,” cited by 27 percent of these respondents, “crime” (cited by 18 percent) and “business leaving” (16 percent). Eight percent each cited “industrial expansion” and “schools,” six percent offered “too much politics,” and four percent said “declining retail.”

Key groups indicating by the highest percentages that Muskegon County is a better place to live included:

*part-time workers, works in another Muskegon County community (68% each); works where they live, works in another county (60% each); college educated women (59%); young college educated (58%); Fruitport Township, Muskegon [city], full-time workers (57% each); residents for 10 years or less, taxes about right, college educated (56% each); favor rerouting of U.S. 31, age 36 to 40 (55% each); older college educated (54%); age 50 to 55 (52%); college educated men, younger women, Region 3 (51% each); likely to stay, “Boom” generation [born 1944-60] (50% each).*

Groups saying by the highest percentages that Muskegon County is a worse place to live:

*Muskegon Heights (42%); works at home (33%); age 50 to 55 (28%); taxes too high (26%); homemaker (25%); opposes U.S. 31 rerouting, Region 1 (24% each); likely to move, age 30 to 35, “X” generation [b.orn.1960-81] (23% each); age 18 to 21 (21%); college educated men, older men, under age 40, “Boom” generation [born 1944-60], and men under age 40, Area 6 communities and Region 5 (20% each).*

### **Encouraging expanded business for job creation, more investments in higher education and job training top list of important policy goals**

A list of statements pertaining to policy goals was read, and respondents were asked if each statement describes a “top” or an “important” priority, a slight priority or not a priority at all.

A 96 percent, nearly unanimous majority said that “encouraging the creation and expansion of businesses and industries creating new jobs” is an important policy goal. A 76 percent majority said this goal should be a “top priority.”

The second highest rated policy goal, called important by 91 percent, is to “continue to provide more investments in higher education and job training.” Seventy-four percent said it should be a “top priority.

Other goals ranked in the order of their importance included:

- “providing tax and financial incentives for the reuse and redevelopment of the inner city areas of Muskegon and Muskegon Heights” – 81 percent important, 50 percent top priority
- “strengthening Muskegon County’s image as a tourist attraction” -- 81 percent important, 46 percent top priority
- “offering incentives for development to occur in designated areas where roads, water and sewer services are already available, including having developers pay more of the cost to build infrastructure if it does not exist” -- 79 percent important, 48 percent top priority
- “preserving the character of rural areas” -- 79 percent important, 41 percent top priority
- “provide incentives for owners of farmland to preserve it” -- 78 percent important, 45 percent top priority
- “preventing the loss of farmland and protecting it from development” -- 73 percent important, 36 percent top priority
- “improving and expanding outdoor recreational opportunities in and around new development” -- 70 percent important, 25 percent top priority
- “the general public subsidizing the expansions of water and sewer service for the purpose of economic development” -- 69 percent important, 34 percent top priority
- “containing water and sewer expansion only to areas where growth is planned” -- 67 percent important, 25 percent top priority
- “expanding and improving the airport” -- 59 percent important, 20 percent top priority.
- “developing more bike paths” -- 59 percent NOT important, 40 percent important

### **Supporting local farmers gets strongest support as means of encouraging and controlling growth and development**

Respondents were asked if they support or oppose each of a list of several idea of how growth and development can be encouraged and controlled where needed.

The top rated idea was “supporting local farmers by purchasing locally grown or produced foods,” with 94 percent saying they support this concept, including 64 percent who “strongly” support it.

In rank order of total support, the other results were:

- “more must be done to meet the needs of large area employers to increase the chances they will stay in Muskegon” -- 93 percent support, 64 percent “strongly”
- “create a government-supported program to concentrate on redevelopment and re-investment in the inner cities of Muskegon and Muskegon Heights” -- 84 percent support, 48 percent “strongly”
  - It is worth noting that support for this idea is strong throughout the county:
    - 96 percent in Muskegon Heights; 93 percent in Region 2; 92 percent in Muskegon [city]; 90 percent in Norton Shores and Region 4; 83 percent in Fruitport Township; 81 percent in Region 3; 80 percent in Muskegon Township; 78 percent in Area 6 communities and Region 1; 77 percent in Region 5
  - No other demographic differences were significant enough to mention.
- “tax incentives for landowners who voluntarily preserve farmland and open space” – 84 percent support, 44 percent “strongly”
  - Support for this idea is solid across all demographic groups.
- “by expanding the use of Muskegon Lake as a port, it can attract large foreign ships, making the area a more important destination for travel and commerce” -- 82 percent support, 52 percent “strongly”
  - 90 percent in Norton Shores; 87 percent each in Muskegon [city] and Township; 86 percent in Region 2; 84 percent in Region 4; 83 percent in Muskegon Heights; 82 percent in Region 1; 81 percent in Region 3; 76 percent in other communities; 75 percent in Region 5; 74 percent in Fruitport Township
- “preserve farmland and open space by adopting and implementing local zoning regulation that limits residential development” -- 80 percent support, 48 percent “strongly”
  - There are some differences in community support, ranging from:
    - 90 percent support in Muskegon Township to 63 percent in Muskegon Heights, with 86 percent in Region 5; 85 percent in Region 3; 84 percent in Area 6 communities and in Region 4; 81 percent in Norton Shores; 78 percent in Fruitport Township and Region 1; 77 percent in Muskegon [city]; and 73 percent in Region 2.
  - There were no other significant demographic differences worth mentioning.
- “regulate commercial and industrial growth and development so that it may occur only in and around existing cities and other areas that already have municipal services” -- 79 percent support, 36 percent “strongly”
- “allow developers to build more homes in some areas in exchange for preserving farmland and open space in other areas” -- 77 percent support, 33 percent “strongly”
  - 90 percent in Norton Shores; 86 percent in Region 4; 83 percent in Fruitport Township; Muskegon Township and Region 3; 79 percent in Muskegon Heights; 78 percent in Region 1; 75 percent in Area 6 communities; 74 percent in Region 5; 73 percent in Region 2; 70 percent in Muskegon [city].

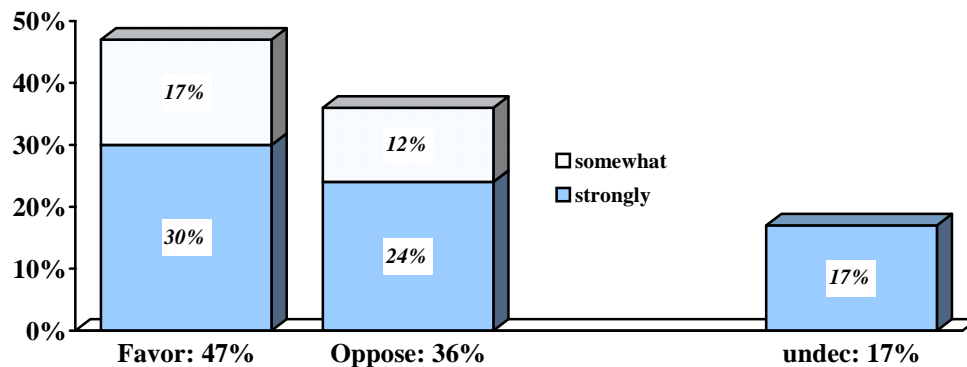
- 88 percent of respondents who live in the community where they live; 78 percent who work in another Muskegon County community; only 60 percent of those who work in communities in another county
- “extend water and sewer lines to the northern communities in the county as the first step to providing more residential and commercial development in that area” -- 67 percent support, 28 percent “strongly”
  - There is somewhat less support for the idea in rural areas than in the cities overall:
    - 80 percent in Region 4; 77 percent in Muskegon Township; 76 percent in Norton Shores; 72 percent in Muskegon [city]; 70 percent in Region 3; 69 percent in Region 2; dropping to 63 percent in Muskegon Heights; 61 percent in Fruitport Township and in Area 6 communities; 59 percent in Region 1; 58 percent in Region 5.
  - 74 percent of respondents who favor the rerouting of U.S. 31, and 59 percent of those who oppose the highway plan
  - 59 percent of respondents in households with children and 70 percent of those without children at home
- “provide a method of sharing tax revenues from higher growth areas that have experienced growth and development with the core city areas that have been unable to attract development.” -- 67 percent support, 26 percent “strongly”
  - There are some differences between the responses of the communities worth noting, but not nearly as great as one might expect on the topic of tax base sharing:
    - 77 percent in Muskegon Township; 72 percent in Muskegon [city] and Region 2; 71 percent in Muskegon Heights; 70 percent in Region 4; 69 percent in Norton Shores; 66 percent in regions 3 and 5; 63 percent in Area 6 communities; 57 percent in Region 1; and 52 percent in Fruitport Township.
  - 75 percent of college educated women, 70 percent of men without college, 64 percent of women without college and only 54 percent of college educated men
  - 75 percent of respondents with a high school education or less, 66 percent of college educated respondents and 56 percent of those with post high-school technical education
- “develop the Pere Marquette Park beach like the Grand Haven area to provide a business district that offers tourists and residents unique dining, shopping and recreational opportunities” -- 64 percent support, 39 percent “strongly”
  - There are some significant differences in the response of communities to this idea, which may suggest that not everyone is enthusiastic about commercial development of areas that are currently popular beaches:
    - 83 percent in Norton Shores; 78 percent in Region 4; 73 percent in Muskegon Township; 71 percent in Muskegon Heights; 69 percent in Region 5; 66 percent in Area 6; 63 percent in Region 1; 58 percent in Region 2; 57 percent in Region 3; and only 52 percent in Muskegon [city]
  - Respondents in Fruitport Township actually oppose this idea by a 57 to 35 percent majority.

- 69 percent of women and 59 percent of men support the idea
- 71 percent of younger women, 67 percent of older women, 65 percent of older men and 51 percent of younger men
- 73 percent of college educated respondents, 67 percent of those with high school or less and 50 percent of those with a post high school technical education favor the proposal.
- 76 percent of college educated women, 68 percent of college educated men, 64 percent of women without college and 56 percent of men without college
- 76 percent of respondents who lived in the area for 10 years or less, 63 percent of those who lived in the area for more than 20 years, and 56 percent of those who lived in the area for 11 to 20 years
- 72 percent of respondents in households with children and 62 percent of those without children at home
- “rehabilitate the old Muskegon Mall to create an urban village development that offers multiple commercial and residential uses” -- 64 percent support, 34 percent “strongly”
  - 76 percent in Region 1; 71 percent in Muskegon Heights; 67 percent in Area 6 communities and Region 2; 66 percent in Muskegon [city]; 64 percent in Norton Shores and Region 4; 62 percent in Region 5; 57 percent in Muskegon Township; 52 percent in Region 3; and 48 percent in Fruitport Township.
  - 69 percent of all women and 59 percent of all men
  - 75 percent of younger women, 63 percent of older women, 62 percent of younger men and 58 percent of older men
  - 78 percent of college educated women, 65 percent of men without college, 63 percent of women without college and 44 percent of college educated men

### Plurality supports plan to reroute U.S. 31 in Ottawa County

A 47 to 36 percent plurality of all respondents said they support transportation plans to reroute U.S. 31 in Ottawa County, which will result in much of the traffic carried by that highway to bypass southern Muskegon County. Thirty percent “strongly” support the plan and 24 percent “strongly” oppose it.

**Favor/Oppose US 31 re-routing**



Strongest support comes from:

*older college educated (68%); college educated men (63%); lived in area 11 to 20 years (60%); works in another community in Muskegon County, college educated (58% each); Fruitport Township (57%); age 65 and over (56%); Norton Shores, works in another county, “GI” generation [born 1924 - prior] (55% each); college educated women, county better than 10 years ago, Region 4 (54% each); retired, Region 1 (53% each); taxes about right, “Silent” generation [born 1925-43], men over age 40 (52% each); older men (51%); other communities, full-time employees, works at home, older women, over age 40 (50% each).*

Strongest opposition comes from:

*Muskegon Heights (67%); part-time workers (55%); likely to move (52%); works in same community where they live, county worse over past 10 years (50% each); men under age 40 (48%); men without college, post high-school technical education, age 36 to 40 (45% each); certain to move, age 56 to 64 (44% each); taxes too high (43%); works at home, younger without college, younger men, Region 5 (42% each); under age 40 (41%); Muskegon Township, unemployed, older without college, age 50 to 55, Region 2 (40% each); lived in area more than 20 years, age 18 to 29, age 41 to 49 (39% each).*

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## Question-by-Question Overview and Demographic Analysis

### Prior residence

Those who in a prior question said they have lived in the city or township where they currently reside for 15 years or less (26 percent of all respondents) were asked if they moved from another city or township in Muskegon County, from a community in another county near Muskegon County, from somewhere else in Michigan, or from another state or country:

other city/village/township in Muskegon County	44%
community in county near Muskegon County	13
community somewhere else in Michigan	23
another state	17
undecided/don't know	3

Respondents in the following groups said “other city/village/township in Muskegon County” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*employed: part-time, works in other part of county (62%)*  
*certain stay in 5 yrs (60%)*  
*men with college education (57%)*  
*age 18-29 years, Region 5 (55%)*  
*“Boom” generation [born 1944-60], women without college education (54%)*  
*county as place to live/10 years: better (53%)*  
*oppose US 31 re-route, younger without college education (52%)*  
*age 41-49, age 65-over, employed full-time, female over 40, Area 6, Region 3 (50%)*

In the following groups, respondents said “community in county near Muskegon County” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*younger without college education (28%)*  
*age 36-40 years, region: Muskegon city, women without college education (23%)*  
*no college educ, high school/less education, post-high school/technical education (22%)*  
*male under 40, men without college education (21%)*  
*age 65-over years (20%)*  
*local taxes: “too high”, with children in home (19%)*

Respondents in the following groups said “community somewhere else in Michigan” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*works where lives (42%)*  
*live in region 11-20 years (41%)*  
*older with college education (40%)*  
*Region 1 (38%)*  
*age 56-64 years (33%)*  
*Muskegon city (31%)*  
*likely move in 5 yrs (30%)*

*college educated, female under 40, male over 40, men with college education, with no children in home, women with college education (29%)*

In the following groups, respondents said “another state” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*county is worse place to live in past 10 years (36%)*

*age 56-64 years (33%)*

*post-high school/technical education (28%)*

*“Silent” generation [born 1925-43] (27%)*

*female over 40, older without college education, Region 3 (25%)*

*women with college education (24%)*

*age 36-40 years (23%)*

These respondents (have lived in their current city/township 15 years-less) were then asked to identify the top one or two reasons why they decided to live in the city or township where they reside:

job	14%	familiar	6
quality of life	12	Lake Michigan	6
closer to family	11	natural beauty	4
good value	11	for privacy	1
acreage	8	good shopping	1
school	8	health reasons	1
housing	7	low taxes	1
marriage	7	other	1
		undecided/don't know	2

### **Intention to stay/move:**

All respondents were asked if they are likely to stay in or to move from their community in the next five years:

certain to move	6%	<b>16% Total</b>
will likely move	10	<b>MOVE</b>
will likely stay	37	<b>80% Total</b>
certain to stay	43	<b>STAY</b>
undecided/don't know	4	

In the following groups, respondents said “likely move” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*age 30-35 years (38%)*

*male under 40 (32%)*

*age 18-29 years, age: under 40 (30%)*

*female under 40 (28%)*

*“X” generation [born 1960-81] , younger without college education (26%)*

*younger men (22%)*  
*unemployed, works outside of county (20%)*  
*home business, Muskegon Heights, works where lives (17%)*  
*employed part-time (16%)*

Respondents in the following groups said “likely stay” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*age 50-55 years (52%)*  
*Norton Shores (50%)*  
*live in region 10-less years (49%)*  
*Region 4 (48%)*  
*Region 1 (47%)*  
*employed: homemaker (46%)*  
*age 36-40 years, with children in home, works outside of county (45%)*  
*“Boom” generation [b. 1944-60] (44%)*

In the following groups, respondents said “certain stay” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*employed other jobs (64%)*  
*age 65-over years (60%)*  
*“Silent” generation [born 1925-43] , employed: retired (59%)*  
*older women (54%)*  
*“GI” generation [born 1924 - prior] , older with college, older without college (52%)*  
*older men (51%)*  
*Muskegon Twp (50%)*  
*live in region 20 years-more/lifetime, with no children in home (49%)*

## -- prospective new location

Those who said “**move**” were asked if they expect to move to another city or township in Muskegon County, to a community in another county near Muskegon County, to somewhere else in Michigan, or to another state or country:

other city/village/township in Muskegon County	25%
community in county near Muskegon County	18
community somewhere else in Michigan	20
another state	27
another country	2
undecided/don’t know	8

**-- reasons for decision to move or stay**

Respondents who said either “move” or “stay” were asked to identify the single biggest reason why they expect to do so:

<b>-- reasons why respondent “certain to move”</b>				
job	28%	its home	6	
my house	17	security	6	
more land	11	climate	6	
own home	6	nothing	6	
family and friends	6			
<b>-- reasons why respondent “likely to move”</b>				
job	19%	schools	3	
family and friends	13	I like it here	3	
more land	13	privacy	3	
good area	6	crime	3	
my house	6	study	3	
I’m retired/old age	6	nothing	3	
for more to do	6	undecided/don’t know	3	
climate	6			
<b>-- reasons why respondent “certain to stay”</b>				
family and friends	19%	privacy	2	
its home	17	economy	2	
I like it here	12	my house	1	
good area	11	more land	1	
own my home	9	small town	1	
I’m retired/old age	9	for more to do	1	
water/lake	5	security	1	
Job	3	business	1	
convenience	3	hate moving	1	
schools	2	health	1	
<b>-- reasons why respondent “likely to stay”</b>				
its home	23%	schools	4	
family and friends	15	water/lake	3	
I like it here	11	hate moving	2	
own my home	11	more land	1	
job	8	downsizing	1	
good area	8	small town	1	
I’m retired/old age	6	for more to do	1	
my house	6	security	1	
		climate	1	

**Most liked/disliked aspects of county**

All respondents were asked what they like the most about Muskegon County:

the water	34%	job security	1
the people	9	low cost of living	1
great outdoors	7	privacy	1
small-town feeling	7	the arts	1
familiar	6	the shopping	1
good area	6	Walker Arena	1
good things are happening	3	other	1
rural	2	nothing	6
schools	2	everything	2
hunting/fishing	1	undecided/don't know	7
it's safe	1		

They were then asked what they dislike the most:

too crowded/traffic	9%	businesses leaving	1
local government	7	city water/sewers	1
weather	6	lack of help for seniors	1
poor economics	5	lack of shopping	1
lack of jobs	4	poor housing	1
roads	4	poor use of lakes	1
crime	3	restaurants	1
not enough to do	3	rundown areas	1
downtown area	2	schools	1
high taxes	2	sheriff's department	1
industrial pollution	2	nothing	21
negative attitudes	2	other	2
not changing	2	undecided/don't know	16

**Assessment of level of local taxes**

All respondents were asked if their local taxes and fees are too high, too low or about right for what they get back in services from the city or township where they live:

much too high	14%	<b>34% Total</b>
somewhat too high	20	<b>TOO HIGH</b>
about right	62	
too low	1	
undecided/don't know	3	

Respondents in the following groups said “much too high” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*employed: home business (50%)*  
*local taxes: “too high” (41%)*

*age 30-35 years (31%)*  
*employed: other, likely move in 5 yrs (29%)*  
*younger men (24%)*  
*younger without college education (22%)*  
*age 41-49 years, region: Muskegon Heights, with children in home (21%)*  
*live in region 10-less years, Region 5 (20%)*

Respondents in the following groups said “somewhat too high” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*local taxes: “too high” (59%)*  
*employed: other (36%)*  
*county as place to live/10 years: worse (33%)*  
*male under 40 (32%)*  
*age 36-40 years, live in region 11-20 years, works in other part of county (30%)*  
*age: under 40, younger with college education (26%)*

In the following groups, respondents said “about right” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*“GI” generation [b. 1924 - prior] (77%)*  
*older with college education (76%)*  
*employed: part-time (74%)*  
*county as place to live/10 years: better (73%)*  
*older men, Region 4 (72%)*  
*men with college education (71%)*  
*region: Fruitport, Muskegon Twp, Region 3 (70%)*  
*age 65-over years, favor US 31 re-route, Muskegon city (69%)*  
*age 50-55 years, employed: retired (68%)*  
*older women (63%)*

### **Employment in community**

Respondents who in a prior question said they were employed full or part time outside the home (38 percent of all respondents) were asked if they work in the same city/township where they reside, in another city/township in Muskegon County, or outside of Muskegon County:

in city or township where they live	45
other city/township in Muskegon County	35
outside of Muskegon County	17
undecided/don’t know	3

Respondents in the following groups said “where they live” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*younger men (63%)*  
*Region 4 (62%)*

*Muskegon city (61%)*  
*women with college education (60%)*  
*female under 40, Norton Shores (59%)*  
*younger without college education (58%)*  
*Region 2 (57%)*  
*age 18-29 years, employed part-time (55%)*  
*“X” generation [b. 1960-81] , all women, likely move in 5 yrs (53%)*  
*age 41-49 years, female over 40, live in area 10-less years, oppose US 31 re-route (52%)*  
*college education (51%)*

In the following groups, respondents said “other city/township in Muskegon County” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*older women (62%)*  
*older with college education (46%)*  
*favor US 31 re-route (45%)*  
*Area 6 (44%)*  
*age 50-55 years, live in region 11-20 years, post-high school/technical education (43%)*  
*men with college education (42%)*  
*male over 40 (41%)*

Respondents in the following groups said “outside of Muskegon County” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*male under 40 (38%)*  
*age: under 40, likely move in 5 yrs, men without college education, older men (24%)*  
*younger without college education (23%)*

Those who said “other city or township in Muskegon County” or “outside of Muskegon County” were asked to identify the city/township in which they work:

city of Muskegon	35%	Walker	3
Grand Rapids	12	Whitehall/Montague Area	3
Grand Haven	8	Bellville	2
Fruitport	7	Chicago	2
Norton Shores	5	Ludington	2
Dalton	3	Muskegon Heights	2
Holland	3	Ravenna	2
Spring Lake	3	Shelby	2
		other community	3

## Population trends/Urban sprawl:

### -- assessment of growth in community

All respondents were asked if there is too much or too little population growth in their community, about the right amount, or if their community is experiencing an actual decline in population:

much too much growth	12%	<b>28% Total</b>
somewhat too much growth	16	<b>TOO MUCH</b>
<b>about the right amount of growth</b>	<b>53</b>	
too little growth	8	
an actual population decline	7	
undecided/don't know	4	

In the following groups, respondents said “too much” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*certain move in 5 yrs (44%)*  
*Muskegon Twp (40%)*  
*works in other part of county, Region 3 (38%)*  
*Region 5 (37%)*  
*male over 40, younger without college education (36%)*  
*age 36-40 years, Fruitport Township (35%)*  
*employed: full-time (34%)*  
*age 41-49 years, employed: homemaker, younger men (33%)*

### -- assessment of urban sprawl

Respondents (excluding those who said “actual population decline”) were told, “Urban sprawl is generally defined as low-density development that spreads out into the countryside, and relies heavily on automobiles for transportation,” and asked to what extent their community has the characteristics of urban sprawl:

a lot	43%	<b>75% Total</b>
somewhat	32	<b>A LOT/SOMEWHAT</b>
only a little	15	
not at all	8	<b>23% Total</b>
undecided/don't know	2	<b>LITTLE/NOT AT ALL</b>

Key groups indicating by the highest percentages that their community has the characteristics of urban sprawl “a lot” included:

*Fruitport Township (70%); unemployed, Region 3 (53% each); Norton Shores (52%); lived in area 11 to 20 years (50%); college educated men, Region 5 (49% each); works in another community in Muskegon County, young college educated, age 50 to 55 (48% each); younger men, age 41 to 49 (47% each); college educated,*



*Region 4 (46% each); Area 6 communities, men over age 40, Region 1 (45% each); all men, favor rerouting US 31, college educated women, student, county same over past 10 years, older college educated, age 56 to 64 (44% each); likely to stay (43%); men without college full-time employees, homemakers, no children in households, older men, older women (42% each); taxes about right, certain to stay, older without college, women over age 40 (41% each); Muskegon Township, and retired, and men under age 40 (40% each).*

Key groups indicating by the highest percentages that their community did not have the characteristics of urban sprawl at all:

*age 30 to 35 (31%); certain to move (22%); Muskegon Heights (21%); women under age 40 (17%); households with children, under age 40, men under age 40 (16% each); works in another county, age 36 to 40 (15% each); Region 2, lived in area 10 years or less, likely to move, Region 2 (13% each); full-time employees, works where they live, county worse over past 10 years, younger college educated (12% each); younger men (11%); Muskegon [city], Region 4, taxes too high, college educated men, college educated women, younger without college, younger women, college educated, and Region 4 (10% each).*

### Local government job rating

All respondents were asked to rate the job their local government does in providing basic local services:

excellent	14%	<b>70% Total</b>
pretty good	56	<b>POSITIVE</b>
only fair	21	<b>29% Total</b>
poor	8	<b>NEGATIVE</b>
undecided/don't know	1	

Key groups indicating by the highest percentages that their community has done a positive job of providing basic local services:

*Age 30 to 35 (85%); Taxes about right, works where they live (83% each); part-time employee, county better over past 10 years (81% each); Region 4, college educated men (80%); Muskegon [city], Norton Shores (79% each); Fruitport Township (78%); young college educated, age 65 and over, men under age 40 (76% each); Region 3, homemaker, works in another community in Muskegon County (75% each); lived in area 11 to 20 years, favor rerouting US 31, college educated (74% each); Muskegon Township, full-time employee, older men (73% each); all men, certain to stay, households without children, older with and without college (72% each).*

Key groups indicating by the highest percentages that their community has done a negative job in providing basic local services:

*Muskegon Heights (63%); taxes too high (51%); certain to move, age 36 to 40 (50% each); county worse over past 10 years (44%); works at home (42%); Region 1,*

women under age 40 (39% each); younger without college (38%); households with children (36%); lived in area 10 years or less, younger women, post high school technical education (35% each); county same over past 10 years (34%); Area 6, unemployed, students, under age 40, age 18 to 29 (33% each); Region 2, Region 5, opposes rerouting US 31, men without college, college educated women (31% each); all women, no college (30% each).

### Ranking of factors in residence decisions

A list of statements pertaining to reasons respondents might have to live in the community where they reside was read. Respondents were asked if each statement describes a very or somewhat important factor in their decision, a minor factor or not a factor at all. In rank order total importance, the responses were:

	IMPORTANT			MINOR/NOT A FACTOR			undec
	very	somewhat	TOTAL	minor	not	TOTAL	
to live in a place that is quiet	58%	30%	88%	2%	9%	11%	1%
safety from crime	54	25	79	6	15	21	--
a strong sense of community	39	38	77	6	16	22	1
less traffic congestion and a quality road system	45	31	76	7	16	23	1
The availability and quality of affordable housing	37	36	73	4	22	26	1
high quality of local schools	50	17	67	7	24	31	2
lakefront areas and shorelines	41	24	65	9	25	34	1
to be closer to family	46	18	64	5	31	36	--
Available recreational activities and a strong park system	28	35	63	9	28	37	--
the rural character of the area	34	29	63	9	27	36	1
a lot of community events, activities and fun times	23	38	61	9	30	39	--
to be closer to quality health care services	30	30	60	10	30	40	--
a lot of natural and undeveloped land	29	30	59	9	31	40	1
a lower cost of living than other areas	25	34	59	8	33	41	--
the quality of local services, like water, sewer, trash and snow removal	28	30	58	10	31	41	1
nearby hunting and fishing areas	29	21	50	7	43	50	--
the historic charm of the area	17	32	49	12	38	50	1
to be closer to work	22	18	40	6	52	58	2
to live where there is a diverse mix of people of different races	12	28	40	14	45	59	1
lower local property taxes	17	22	39	13	46	59	2
to live in an area where you can walk to nearby stores and other places	16	20	36	8	56	64	--
because of a change in jobs	14	7	21	6	72	78	1

### Ranking of community concerns

All respondents were then asked to use a scale of zero to 10 to rate each of a list of issues or concerns in Muskegon County (“0” = not a concern at all, “10” = extremely serious concern):

	Not a concern	neutral	Serious		DK/ Undec
			<i>some</i>	<i>extreme</i>	
	<u>0-4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6-8</u>	<u>9-10</u>	
loss of open space for leisure activities	<b>16%</b>	25%	28%	20%	11%
water pollution	<b>7</b>	9	26	52	6
loss of farmland, forest land, and natural wildlife habitats	<b>11</b>	20	30	31	8
air pollution	<b>10</b>	15	31	37	7
traffic problems and congestion	<b>26</b>	21	28	18	7
the financial strain on less populated areas to provide infrastructure services like roads, water and sewer to meet the demands of new development	<b>16</b>	24	29	18	13
the condition of local roads	<b>14</b>	20	34	27	5
the expansion and service of the Muskegon County airport	<b>29</b>	17	21	13	20
future planning and development for the downtown and lakefront areas	<b>11</b>	14	31	37	7
the quality of schools in the area.	<b>9</b>	8	26	47	10
the quality and availability of water or sewage systems	<b>11</b>	15	26	36	12
zoning decisions driven by development rather than through existing community plans	<b>14</b>	16	26	28	16
the level of planning to manage growth and development	<b>12</b>	18	30	31	9
the ability to expand and develop the existing manufacturing base	<b>12</b>	11	36	32	9
too much residential growth and development in some areas	<b>21</b>	19	30	18	12
not enough commercial or industrial growth and development	<b>19</b>	17	30	24	10
the amount of taxes paid in your community	<b>11</b>	28	32	22	7
the level of coordinated land use planning and zoning between adjacent communities	<b>15</b>	18	28	15	24
too many local governments with overlapping responsibilities	<b>20</b>	14	25	27	14
no county-wide master plan or long-term vision	<b>14</b>	17	26	31	12
Having convenient public transportation, especially for seniors and the handicapped	<b>13</b>	17	29	30	11
dilapidation and abandoned buildings in my community	<b>15</b>	14	34	25	12
old foundry town image and smell	<b>24</b>	14	26	19	17
public apathy	<b>14</b>	19	34	21	12
too much poverty in my community	<b>16</b>	17	36	22	9

*Continued next page*

*continued from previous*

the out-migration of good paying jobs	<b>7</b>	8	34	45	6
too many local businesses and industries owned by outside national and international corporations	<b>16</b>	16	24	34	10
the lack of strong county leadership	<b>16</b>	19	31	24	10
a high crime rate	<b>16</b>	14	36	28	6
a lack of cooperation between communities	<b>17</b>	13	32	21	17
urban sprawl	<b>21</b>	16	33	21	9

**Ranked by highest combined 6-8 and 9-10**

	<u>Total 6-10</u>		<u>Total 6-10</u>
out-migration of jobs	79%	no county-wide master plan/vision	57%
water pollution	78	public apathy	55
quality of schools	73	lack of strong county leadership	55
air pollution	68	lack of commercial/industrial development	54
planning/development for downtown/lakefront	68	taxes in community	54
expand/develop manufacturing base	68	urban sprawl	54
high crime rate	64	zoning decisions by development rather plans	54
water or sewage systems	62	lack of cooperation between communities	53
loss of farmland/forest/habitats	61	local governments with overlapping responsibilities	52
local roads	61	loss of open space for leisure activities	48
manage growth and development	61	too much residential growth	48
dilapidation/abandoned buildings	59	financial strain of infrastructure of new development	47
public transportation, seniors/handicapped	59	traffic and congestion	46
local business/industry owned by outside corporations	58	foundry town image/smell	45
poverty in community	58	coordinated land use planning/zoning	43
		expansion/service of Muskegon Co. airport	34

### Ranking of factors in development decisions

Respondents were read several statements pertaining to things that may attract residential, business, industry and commercial development to Muskegon County. Respondents were then asked if each statement describes a very or somewhat important factor in attracting development, a minor factor or not a factor at all. In rank order total importance, the responses were:

	IMPORTANT			MINOR/NOT FACTOR			undec
	<i>very</i>	<i>somewhat</i>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<i>minor</i>	<i>not</i>	<b>TOTAL</b>	
a skilled labor force	72%	22%	<b>94%</b>	3%	3%	<b>6%</b>	--%
many beautiful beaches	76	18	<b>94</b>	2	3	<b>5</b>	1
good retail opportunities	55	37	<b>92</b>	3	5	<b>8</b>	--
people willing to work together	77	15	<b>92</b>	3	4	<b>7</b>	1
strong school system and opportunity for higher education	77	15	<b>92</b>	3	4	<b>7</b>	1
an effective county wastewater treatment system	70	19	<b>89</b>	4	6	<b>10</b>	1
cultural opportunities like the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, Freunthal Theatre, Cherry Playhouse, and summer festivals	56	32	<b>88</b>	5	6	<b>11</b>	1
Economic diversity, including a variety of business types and sizes, as well as ethnic ownership and backgrounds	48	38	<b>86</b>	6	6	<b>12</b>	2
recent growth and development	42	44	<b>86</b>	8	4	<b>12</b>	1
new industrial parks	33	43	<b>76</b>	11	12	<b>23</b>	1
Michigan's adventure, which draws many people to the area	37	37	<b>74</b>	15	9	<b>24</b>	2
the area's ethnic diversity	30	42	<b>72</b>	16	10	<b>26</b>	2

### Assessment of county as better/worse place

All respondents were asked if Muskegon County is a better or a worse place to live than it was 10 years ago (or since the respondent moved there if fewer than 10 years ago)

much better	19%	<b>48% Total</b>
somewhat better	29	<b>BETTER</b>
<b>about the same</b>	<b>35</b>	
somewhat worse	15	<b>17% Total</b>
much worse	2	<b>WORSE</b>

Respondents in the following groups said “better” by the highest percentages:

*part-time employee, works in other part of county (68%)*  
*works outside of county, works where they live (60%)*  
*women with college education (59%)*  
*younger with college education (58%)*  
*full-time employee, Fruitport Township, Muskegon [city] (57%)*  
*college education, live in region 10-less years, taxes “about right” (56%)*  
*age 36-40 years, favor US 31 re-route (55%)*  
*older with college education (54%)*  
*age 50 to 55 (52%)*  
*Region 3, college educated men, younger women (51%)*

In the following groups, respondents said “same” by the highest percentages:

*unemployed (67%)*  
*Norton Shores (50%)*  
*certain move in 5 years, Region 4 (44%)*  
*employed at home, younger men, younger without college education (42%)*  
*Muskegon Township, taxes too high, retired, age 41 to 49 (40%)*  
*women without college, households with children, high school or less education, post high school technical education (39%)*  
*Lived in area 11 to 20 years, men without college, age 65 and over (38%)*

Respondents in the following groups said “worse” by the highest percentages:

*Muskegon Heights (42%)*  
*Other employment (36%)*  
*Employed at home (33%)*  
*age 50-55 years (28%)*  
*taxes “too high” (26%)*  
*homemakers (25%)*  
*oppose US 31 re-route, Region 1 (24%)*  
*“GI” generation [born 1924 - prior] , age 30-35 years, likely move in 5 yrs (23%)*  
*Age 18 to 29 (21%)*  
*Area 6, Region 5, college educated men, older men, men under age 40 (20%)*

Those who said “better” or “worse” were asked to state their reason for saying so:

<u>Reasons for “better”</u>		<u>Reasons for “worse”</u>	
new businesses	15%	unemployment	27%
trying to improve	14	crime	18
better shopping	12	business leaving	16
it’s cleaned up	8	industrial expansion	8
more to do now	8	schools	8
good people moving in	7	too much politics	6
jobs	6	declining retail	4
lakefront improvements	6	too crowded	3
community involvement	5	no growth	2
improved schools	5	nothing to do	2
cleaner air	3	urban sprawl	2
improved roads	3	other	4
less crime	2		
new leadership	2		
diversity	1		
fewer people	1		
undecided/don’t know	2		

### Ranking of factors in development decisions

A list of statements concerning policy goals was read. Respondents were asked if each statement describes a “top” or an “important” priority, a slight priority or not a priority at all. In rank order total “top/important” priority, the responses were:

	PRIORITY			SLIGHT/NOT PRIORITY			undec
	<i>top</i>	<i>important</i>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<i>slight</i>	<i>not</i>	<b>TOTAL</b>	
encouraging the creation and expansion of businesses and industries creating new jobs	76%	20%	<b>96%</b>	3%	1%	<b>4%</b>	--%
continue to provide more investments in higher education and job training	74	17	<b>91</b>	6	3	<b>9</b>	--
providing tax and financial incentives for the reuse and redevelopment of the inner city areas of Muskegon and Muskegon Heights	50	31	<b>81</b>	11	6	<b>17</b>	2
strengthening Muskegon County’s image as a tourist attraction	46	35	<b>81</b>	9	9	<b>18</b>	1
offering incentives for development to occur in designated areas where roads, water and sewer services are already available, including having developers pay more of the cost to build infrastructure if it does not exist	48	31	<b>79</b>	12	6	<b>18</b>	3
preserving the character of rural areas	41	38	<b>79</b>	15	5	<b>20</b>	1
provide incentives for owners of farmland to preserve it	45	33	<b>78</b>	13	8	<b>21</b>	1
preventing the loss of farmland and protecting it from development	36	37	<b>73</b>	19	7	<b>26</b>	1
Improving and expanding outdoor recreational opportunities in and around new development	25	45	<b>70</b>	22	7	<b>29</b>	1
the general public subsidizing the expansions of water and sewer service for the purpose of economic development	34	35	<b>69</b>	17	12	<b>29</b>	2
containing water and sewer expansion only to areas where growth is planned	25	42	<b>67</b>	19	10	<b>29</b>	4
expanding and improving the airport	20	39	<b>59</b>	21	18	<b>39</b>	2
developing more bike paths	16	24	<b>40</b>	29	30	<b>59</b>	1



### Support/Oppose development ideas

Respondents were read a list of several statements describing how growth and development can be encouraged and controlled where needed was read. Respondents were asked if they support or oppose each idea. In rank order total “support”, the responses were:

	SUPPORT			OPPOSE			undec
	<i>strongly</i>	<i>somewhat</i>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<i>somewhat</i>	<i>strongly</i>	<b>TOTAL</b>	
supporting local farmers by purchasing locally grown or produced foods	64%	30%	<b>94%</b>	2%	2%	<b>4%</b>	2%
more must be done to meet the needs of large area employers to increase the chances they will stay in Muskegon	64	29	<b>93</b>	4	1	<b>5</b>	2
create a government-supported program to concentrate on redevelopment and re-investment in the inner cities of Muskegon and Muskegon Heights	48	36	<b>84</b>	9	3	<b>12</b>	4
Provide tax incentives for landowners who voluntarily preserve farmland and open space	44	40	<b>84</b>	9	4	<b>13</b>	3
by expanding the use of Muskegon Lake as a port, it can attract large foreign ships, making the area a more important destination for travel and commerce	50	32	<b>82</b>	8	7	<b>15</b>	3
Preserve farmland and open space by adopting and implementing local zoning regulation that limits residential development	48	32	<b>80</b>	14	4	<b>18</b>	2
Regulate commercial and industrial growth and development so that it may occur only in and around existing cities and other areas that already have municipal services	36	43	<b>79</b>	10	3	<b>13</b>	8
Allow developers to build more homes in some areas in exchange for preserving farmland and open space in other areas	33	44	<b>77</b>	8	8	<b>16</b>	7
Extend water and sewer lines to the northern communities in the county as the first step to providing more residential and commercial development in that area	28	39	<b>67</b>	14	12	<b>26</b>	7
Provide a method of sharing tax revenues from higher growth areas that have experienced growth and development with the core city areas that have been unable to attract development	26	41	<b>67</b>	16	12	<b>28</b>	5
Develop the Pere Marquette Park beach like the grand haven area to provide a business district that offers tourists and residents unique dining, shopping and recreational opportunities	39	25	<b>64</b>	13	19	<b>32</b>	4
Rehabilitate the old Muskegon Mall to create an urban village development that offers multiple commercial and residential uses	34	30	<b>64</b>	12	14	<b>28</b>	8

### Favor/Oppose US 31 re-route

Respondents were told, “Transportation plans call for U.S. 31 to be rerouted in Ottawa County, which will result in much of the traffic carried by that highway to bypass southern Muskegon County.” They were then asked if they favor or oppose the plans to reroute this highway:

strongly favor	30%	<b>47% Total</b>
somewhat favor	17	<b>FAVOR</b>
somewhat oppose	12	<b>36% Total</b>
strongly oppose	24	<b>OPPOSE</b>
undecided/don’t know	17	

Respondents in the following groups said “favor” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*older with college education (68%)*  
*students (67%)*  
*College educated men (63%)*  
*live in region 11-20 years (60%)*  
*college education, works in other part of county (58%)*  
*Fruitport Township (57%)*  
*age 65-over years (56%)*  
*“GI” generation [born 1924 - prior] , region: Norton Shores, works outside of county (55%)*  
*county as place to live/10 years: better, women with college education, Region 4 (54%)*  
*retired, Region 1 (53%)*  
*Taxes “about right,” men over age 40 (52%)*

In the following groups, respondents said “oppose” in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*Muskegon Heights (67%)*  
*employed part-time (55%)*  
*likely move in 5 yrs (52%)*  
*county as place to live/10 years: worse, employed: other, works where lives (50%)*  
*male under 40 (48%)*  
*age 36-40 years, men without college, post-high school/technical education (45%)*  
*age 56-64 years, certain move in 5 yrs (44%)*  
*taxes “too high” (43%)*  
*“X” generation [born 1960-81] , younger men, younger without college, Region 5 (42%)*  
*Under age 40 (41%)*  
*Region 2, Muskegon Township, unemployed, older without college, age 50 to 55 (40%)*

Respondents in the following groups were undecided on this question in percentages significantly higher than the survey average:

*employed: other (43%)*

*age 30-35 years (31%)*

*male under 40 (28%)*

*unemployed (27%)*

*Muskegon city (26%)*

*age: under 40 (25%),*

*men with college education (24%)*

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