



Mississippi River
Regional Planning Commission

Regional Comprehensive Plan Public Opinion
Survey Report

For the Counties of Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson,
La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau, and
Vernon

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**James Janke
David Trechter
Shelly Hadley**

Survey Research Center Report 2011/9

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to serve as one public participation method the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission used to gather public input for their regional comprehensive plan. The Commission selected the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls to consult on and develop the questionnaire, conduct the survey, tabulate the results and report the findings.

On March 1, 2011, the SRC mailed a questionnaire to a randomly selected sample of 4,059 households in the nine counties within the service area of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. The initial survey mailing was followed with reminder postcards and then a second survey mailing to non-respondents from both the initial survey mailing and postcard reminder. Appendix M has copies of the initial cover letter, reminder postcard, and second mailing cover letter.

The regional response rate was 34 percent (1,391 returns). The regional results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 2.62 percent with 95 percent confidence. Response rates and results for each of the nine counties were also calculated. Individual county expected rates of accuracy ranged from 7% to 8.4% with 95% confidence.

Taxes and Economic Development

Majorities of respondents agreed with the following: (in descending size of the majority)

- Communities should increase the amount of local food used in schools and local institutions
- Counties should be allowed to share law enforcement costs
- The long term environmental impact of sand mining should be studied
- The economic potential of sand mining should also be studied
- The county sales tax should be increased to reduce property taxes
- Access to high-speed internet is adequate in their area
- Manufacturing will be a major driver of the western Wisconsin economy
- Regional recreational/tourism projects should pursue public-private partnerships
- The primary funding for schools should be shifted to the sales tax

Pluralities¹ of respondents agreed with the following: (in descending size of plurality)

- New business development should be focused where public services are available
- Incentives should be provided to industries to reduce development in rural areas
- State funding of schools should be increased as a means of reducing the property tax

Majorities of respondents did not feel that:

- Corporation tax breaks should be offered for business expansions or start-ups
- More overnight lodging is needed in their community

Recreation and Tourism

¹A plurality is the largest percentage of the total among three or more choices, but less than a majority

Respondents were presented with a list of 20 potential recreation and tourism activities and asked to indicate if they thought each would be accepted in their communities and if each would be successful in attracting tourists to their communities. Majorities of respondents ranging between 73 percent and 96 percent said all the listed activities would be acceptable in their communities. With the exception of tennis, majorities of respondents also said all listed activities would be successful in their communities. Respondents were slightly less sure that the activities would be successful than accepted.

Land Use

Majorities of respondents agreed with the following: (in descending size of the majority)

- Regulations are needed to protect natural resources
- Higher priority should be placed on redevelopment of existing areas
- Regulations are needed to protect farmland & forests
- New housing should be encouraged where public services are available
- My community accepts people from diverse backgrounds
- Regulations are needed to protect cultural & historical sites
- Sustainability principles should guide development

Respondents had split opinions on the following:

- More land use planning is needed in my community
- Local government officials and business leaders in my community work well together

Housing

Majorities of respondents agreed with the following: (in descending size of the majority)

- Providing affordable housing to low and moderate-income individuals should be a goal of all local governments
- Housing for the elderly is adequate in my community

Respondents had split opinions regarding the adequacy of special needs housing in their communities.

Quality of Life

A majority of respondents said the quality of life in their communities is high. However, respondents had split opinions when asked if the quality of life in their communities will improve in coming years.

Alternative Energy

Respondents were presented with a list of 10 types of alternative energy and asked to indicate if they thought each would be accepted in their communities and if each would be successful in their communities. With the exception of nuclear energy, majorities of respondents ranging from 64 percent to 89 percent said all the listed types of alternative energy would be accepted in their communities. With the exception of nuclear energy and biodiesel from animal fat, majorities of respondents said the listed types of energy would be successful in their communities. Respondents were less sure about the potential success of the alternative energy sources than they were about the level of acceptability.

Survey Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gather public input for the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission comprehensive plan. The Commission chose to work with the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls to gather these data.

Survey Methods

On March 1, 2011, the SRC mailed a four-page questionnaire to a randomly selected sample of 4,059 households in the nine counties (Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau, and Vernon) within the service area of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. The surveys were followed with reminder postcards and a second mailing to non-respondents.

The overall response rate was 34 percent (1,391 usable returned questionnaires). Based on the estimated number of adults (18 years or older) in the population of the region (241,158²) the results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 2.62 percent with 95 percent confidence. This means that if this survey was replicated 20 times, only once would the results be expected to fall more than 2.62 percent above or below the values reported in this document.

The overall mailing list was created by a random selection of households within each county. Because each household in a given county had an equal chance of being selected, the random selection process means the geographic distribution of the households of the mailing list (sample) reflected the overall geographic distribution of households within each county. The number of households selected from each county was designed to achieve results that would be accurate within plus or minus 8 percent for each of the nine counties. Table 1 shows the number of surveys mailed to households in each county, the number of surveys returned from each county, the county response rate, and the county confidence interval (also called “margin of error”). Based on the number of returned surveys from each county, the actual confidence intervals for the individual counties were close to the 8 percent target. The confidence intervals in five of the nine counties were equal to or less than 8 percent. Among the remaining four counties, the confidence intervals were no more than 0.4 percent above the goal. For example, the results for Jackson County indicate that 72 percent of respondents believed that burning of biomass would be a successful alternative energy source. Given the 8 percent “margin of error” for the Jackson County data and 95 percent confidence interval, if the survey was replicated 20 times, only once would the results fall outside the range of 64 percent to 80 percent. As Table 1 shows, survey response rates among the counties ranged from 30 percent to 42 percent.

² US Census Bureau, 2009 estimate.

Table 1. Mailings and Returns by County					
County	Households³	Surveys Sent	Surveys Returned	Response Rate	Confidence Interval
Buffalo	5,810	447	177	40%	±7.25%
Crawford	7,043	450	146	32%	±8.0%
Jackson	7,745	450	146	32%	±8.0%
La Crosse	44,883	459	136	30%	±8.4%
Monroe	17,408	456	137	30%	±8.4%
Pepin	2,923	437	182	42%	±7.0%
Pierce	14,538	456	146	32%	±8.1%
Trempealeau	11,514	453	161	36%	±7.7%
Vernon	12,034	453	144	32%	±8.1%
Regional Totals	123,898	4,059	1,391	34%	±2.62

Any survey has to be concerned with “non-response bias.” Non-response bias refers to a situation in which people who do not return a questionnaire have opinions that are systematically different from the opinions of those who return their surveys. The standard way to test for non-response bias is to compare the responses of those who answer the first mailing of a questionnaire to those who respond to the second mailing. Those who respond to the second mailing are, in effect, a sample of non-respondents (to the first mailing), and we assume that they are representative of that group. **Based upon a standard statistical analysis that is described in Appendix A, the SRC concludes that there is little evidence that non-response bias is a concern for the overall sample.**

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

Appendix C contains a contain copy of the survey questions with a quantitative summary of the responses.

The SRC tabulated the results from each of the nine counties. **Appendix D through Appendix L contain summaries of the responses from the individual counties.**

Appendix M has copies of the initial cover letter, reminder postcard and second mailing cover letter.

³ US Census, American Community Survey, 2005-2009 estimate

Profile of Respondents

Table 2a, Table 2b, and Table 2c summarize the demographic profile of the survey respondents. Where comparable data were available from the US Census Bureau (American Community Survey or 2009 population estimates), they were included to indicate the degree to which the sample represents the underlying adult population in the nine counties of the Mississippi Regional Planning Commission.

Gender. The sample contains substantially more men than would have been expected since the survey cover letter attempted to attain gender balance by requesting the adult in the home who most recently had a birthday to complete the survey. Analysis of the mean response values indicated men and women had statistically significant differences in 31 of the 88 quantitative variables on the survey. Further examination showed the percentage differences were relatively small for all but 8 of the 88 variables. These questions will be noted in the text of the report. In short, while the gender imbalance is not a good thing from a statistical standpoint, the similarity of views between men and women means that the practical impact of this skewed distribution is small. As we analyze the data, we will identify when there are statistically significant differences across other demographic variables (e.g. age, education, etc.).

Age. There were more respondents age 55 years and older than would have been expected and fewer respondents age 34 years or less. Our experience is that younger residents are less likely to participate in surveys.

Household composition. The sample closely matches the American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for the percentage of single adult households and households with no children.

Table 2a. Demographic Profile of Respondents: Gender, Age, Household Composition.							
Gender Age 18+	Count	Male	Female				
Sample	1363	71%	29%				
US Census, 2009 Est.	241158	50%	50%				
Age 18+	Count	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Sample	1376	1%	8%	13%	20%	25%	33%
US Census, 2009 Est.	241158	17%	14%	16%	19%	16%	18%
Adults in Household	Count	1 Adult	2+ Adults				
Sample	1318	24%	76%				
ACS, 2005-09 Est.	123898	28%	72%				
Households with Children	Count	No Children	1+ Child				
Sample	1277	72%	28%				
ACS, 2005-09 Est.	123898	69%	31%				

Employment. The sample contains slightly more self-employed individuals and slightly more respondents who are retired or not in the workforce.

Length of residency. Six in ten respondents have lived in their present community for at least 25 years.

Educational attainment. The sample is somewhat better educated than the overall population of the nine counties, with higher percentages of respondents who have some formal post-secondary education.

Household income. The sample closely matched the distribution of household incomes estimated by the ACS. There were slightly fewer households with less than \$15,000 annual income and slightly fewer households with at least \$100,000 income than would have been expected. There were also slightly more households in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 range.

Table 2b. Demographic Profile of Respondents: Employment, Length of Residency, Educational Attainment, Household Income.							
Employment Age 16+	Count	Full-time	Part-Time	Self-employed	Un-employed	Retired	Other
Sample	1353	42%	6%	12%	3%	34%	3%
ACS, 2005-09 Est.	246188	61%		5%	3%	31% ⁴	
Length of Residency	Count	<1 Yr.	1 - 4 Yrs	5 - 9 Yrs	10 - 24 Yrs	25+ Yrs	
Sample ⁵	1378	1%	6%	12%	21%	59%	
Highest Level of Education (Age 25+)	Count	Less than high school	High school diploma	Some college/tech	Tech college graduate	Bachelor's degree	Graduate or professional degree
Sample	1367	5%	27%	24%	14%	19%	12%
ACS, 2005-09 Est.	196421	11%	37%	21%	10%	14%	7%
Annual Household Income Range	Count	Less than \$15,000	\$15-\$24,999	\$25-\$49,999	\$50-\$74,999	\$75-\$99,999	\$100,000+
Sample	1308	8%	13%	30%	25%	14%	10%
ACS, 2005-09 Est.	123898	13%	12%	28%	21%	13%	13%

⁴ ACS category "Not in workforce"

⁵ Census does not collect length of residence data

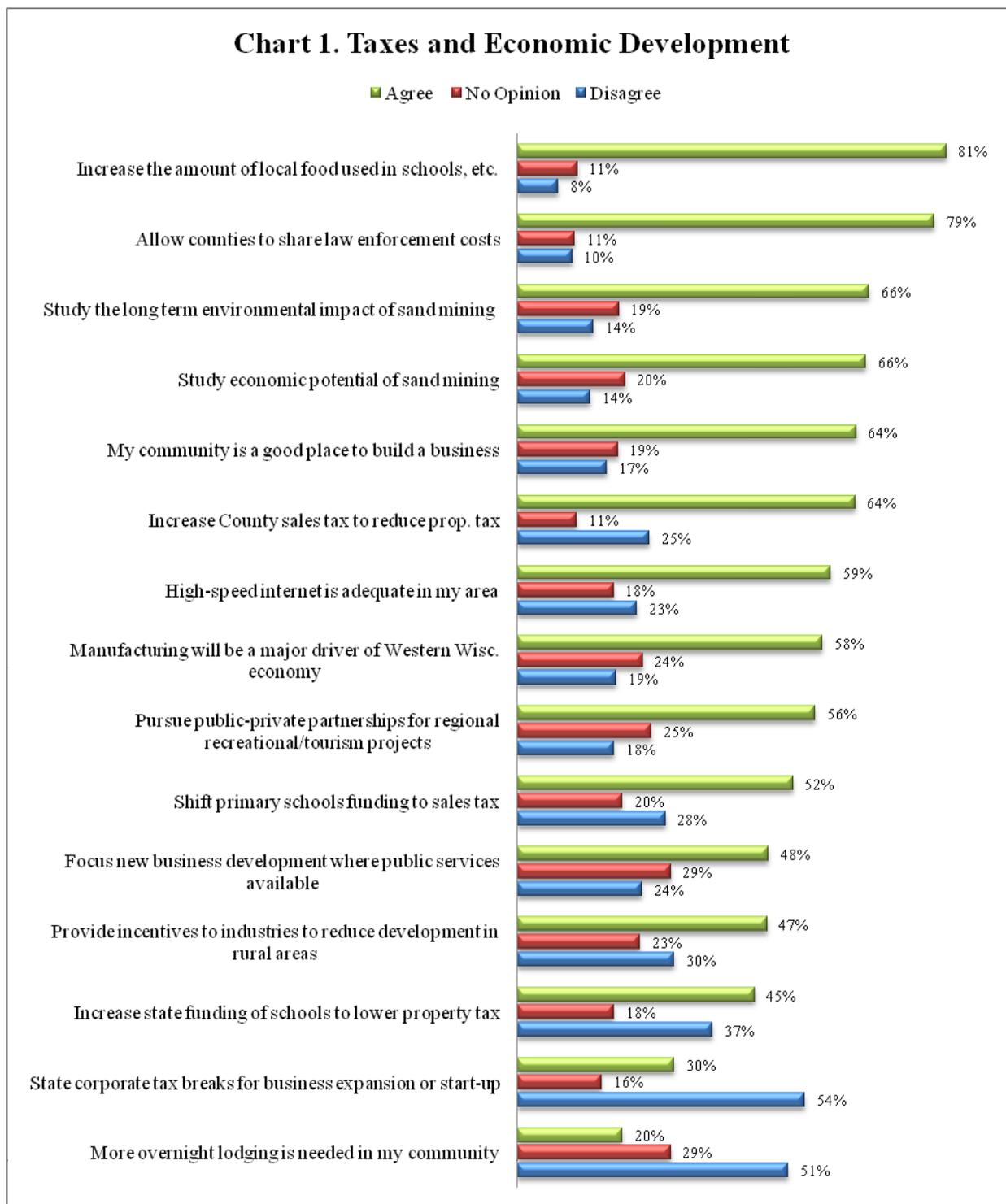
County of Residence. The following counties had more respondents in the sample than would have been expected: Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, and Pepin. Responses from Monroe, Pierce, Trempealeau and Vernon Counties were close to their expected percentages. There were fewer responses from La Crosse County than anticipated.

Residence municipality type. The sample contained slightly more respondents who reside in villages and towns than would have been expected.

Table 2c. Demographic Profile of Respondents: County of Residence, Municipality Type.							
County of Residence	Buffalo	Crawford	Jackson	La Crosse	Monroe		
Sample (Count =1380)	13%	11%	11%	10%	10%		
US Census, 2009 Est. Age 18+ (N=241,158)	4%	5%	6%	37%	13%		
County of Residence	Pepin	Pierce	Trempealeau	Vernon	Other		
Sample (Count =1380)	13%	11%	12%	10%	<1%		
US Census, 2009 Est. Age 18+ (N=241,158)	2%	13%	9%	9%	--		
Residence municipality type	Count	City	Village	Town			
Sample	1350	30%	21%	50%			
US Census, 2009 Est.	317068	44%	13%	43%			

Taxes and Economic Development

The first section of the questionnaire gathered opinions about taxes and economic development issues. Respondents were given a list of 14 statements. Answer options were “agree,” “no opinion,” and “disagree.” Chart 1 presents the results. As described below, majorities agreed with nine of the 14 statements (top bar). Pluralities of respondents between 45 percent and 48 percent agreed with three of the statements. Majorities of respondents disagreed with two of the statements (bottom bar). The middle bar shows the “no opinion” responses.



Four of five respondents agreed that programs should be developed to increase the amount of locally-grown food used in area schools and institutions and that counties should be allowed to share the costs of law enforcement.

At least 60 percent of respondents agreed that the environmental impact and economic potential of sand mining should be studied, that their community is a good place to build a business, and that the county sales tax should be increased to lower property taxes.

Between 50 percent and 60 percent of respondents agreed that high-speed Internet service is adequate, that manufacturing will be a major driver of western Wisconsin's economic future, that public-private partnerships should be explored for regional recreation/tourism projects, and that the primary source of funding for schools should be shifted from the property tax to the sales tax.

The largest percentage of respondents (48%) agreed that most new business development should be located adjacent to existing communities where public services are available, but 29 percent had no opinion. A local government incentive to industries to reduce development in more rural, lower-priced land areas was supported by a plurality (47%).

Respondents had mixed opinions about increasing state funding of local schools to lower the local property tax. While 45 percent agreed with this statement, 37 percent disagreed, and 18 percent had no opinion.

When asked about providing state corporate tax breaks to businesses that expand or relocate in Wisconsin, a majority of respondents disagreed (54%).

Although half of respondents said more overnight housing is not needed in their communities, many had no opinion (29%) about this topic.

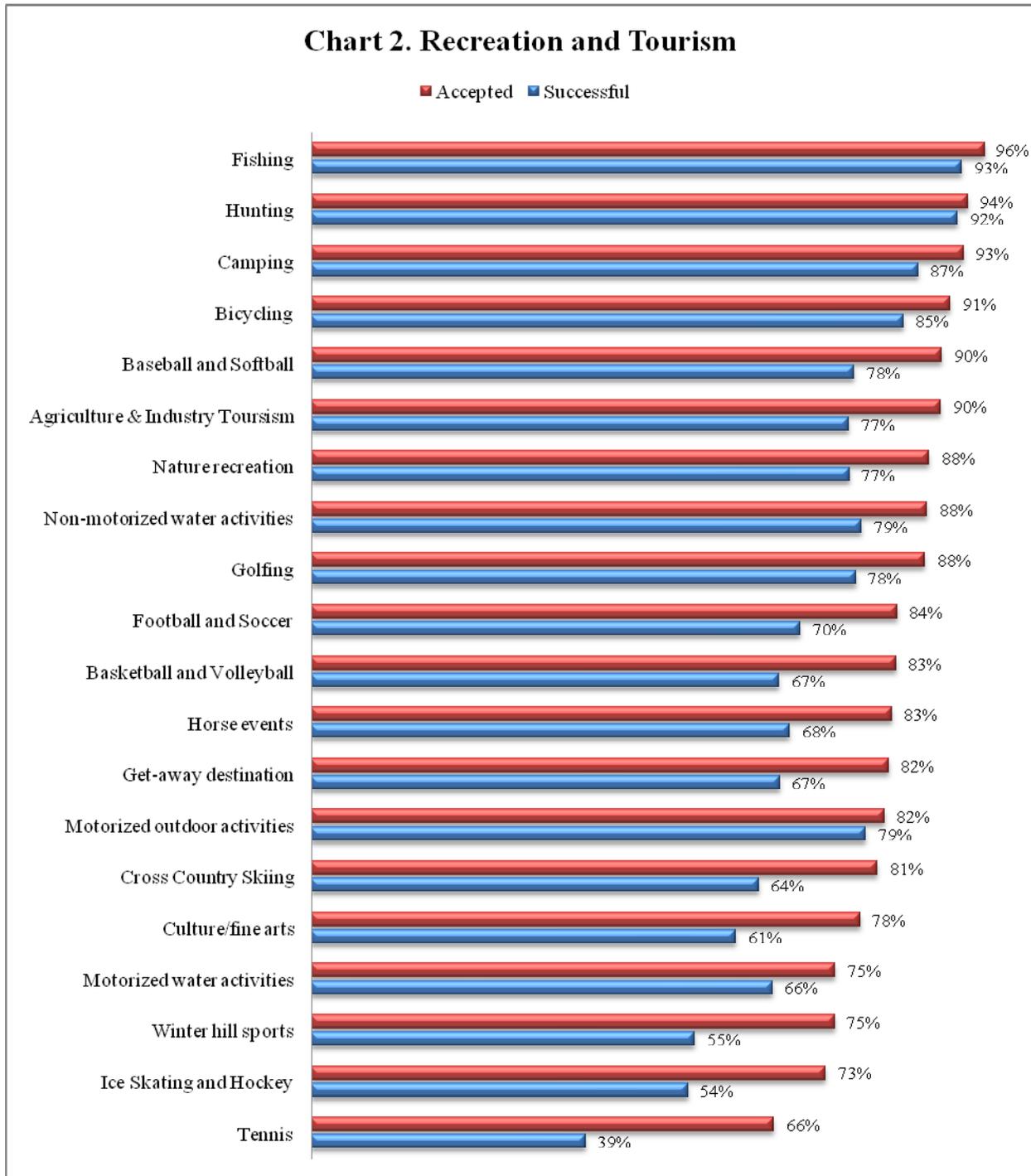
"No opinion" responses were common for this group of questions and were at least 20 percent of the responses for half of the 14 statements.

Demographic comparisons:

- Respondents over age 55 were more likely to agree that more local school funding (K-12) should come from the state even if this means some loss of local control.
- Respondents who have completed post-secondary education programs were less likely to agree that manufacturing will be a major driver of future economic development in western Wisconsin.
- Respondents who have not completed a post-secondary education program were less likely to agree that more regional recreational and tourism projects should be pursued through public-private partnerships.
- A slightly higher proportion of town residents disagreed that high-speed internet or broadband access in their area is adequate for personal and business use.
- Compared to city residents, respondents from villages and towns were less likely to agree that their communities of residence are a good place to build a business.

Recreation and Tourism

The second section of the questionnaire asked respondents a two-part question about potential recreation and tourism development in their respective communities. Twenty types of recreational or tourism activities were listed, and respondents were asked if each activity would be accepted in their community and if they believed the activity would be successful in attracting tourists.



As shown in Chart 2, a majority of respondents, ranging from 66 percent to 94 percent, said all of the listed activities would be accepted in their communities (top bar). The most acceptable

were hunting, fishing, camping, bicycling, baseball/softball, and agriculture/industry tourism (at least 90 percent felt these activities would find community acceptance). Between 80 percent and 90 percent of respondents said the following would be accepted in their communities: nature recreation, non-motorized water activities, golf, football/soccer, basketball/volleyball, horse events, get-away destination, motorized outdoor activities, and cross-country skiing.

Between 70 percent and 80 percent of respondents said the following activities would be accepted in their communities: culture/fine arts, motorized water activities, winter hill sports, and ice skating/hockey. Although tennis was at the bottom of the list, two-thirds of respondents said it would be accepted in their communities.

The lower bar on Chart 2 shows the percentage who said each listed recreation/tourism activity would be successful in their communities in attracting tourists. With the exception of tennis, majorities of respondents believed these activities would be successful in their communities in attracting tourists. The activities believed to have the greatest likelihood of success tend to be those viewed as the most likely to be accepted in the community. It is also the case that as community acceptability drops, the gap between acceptance and likely success increases.

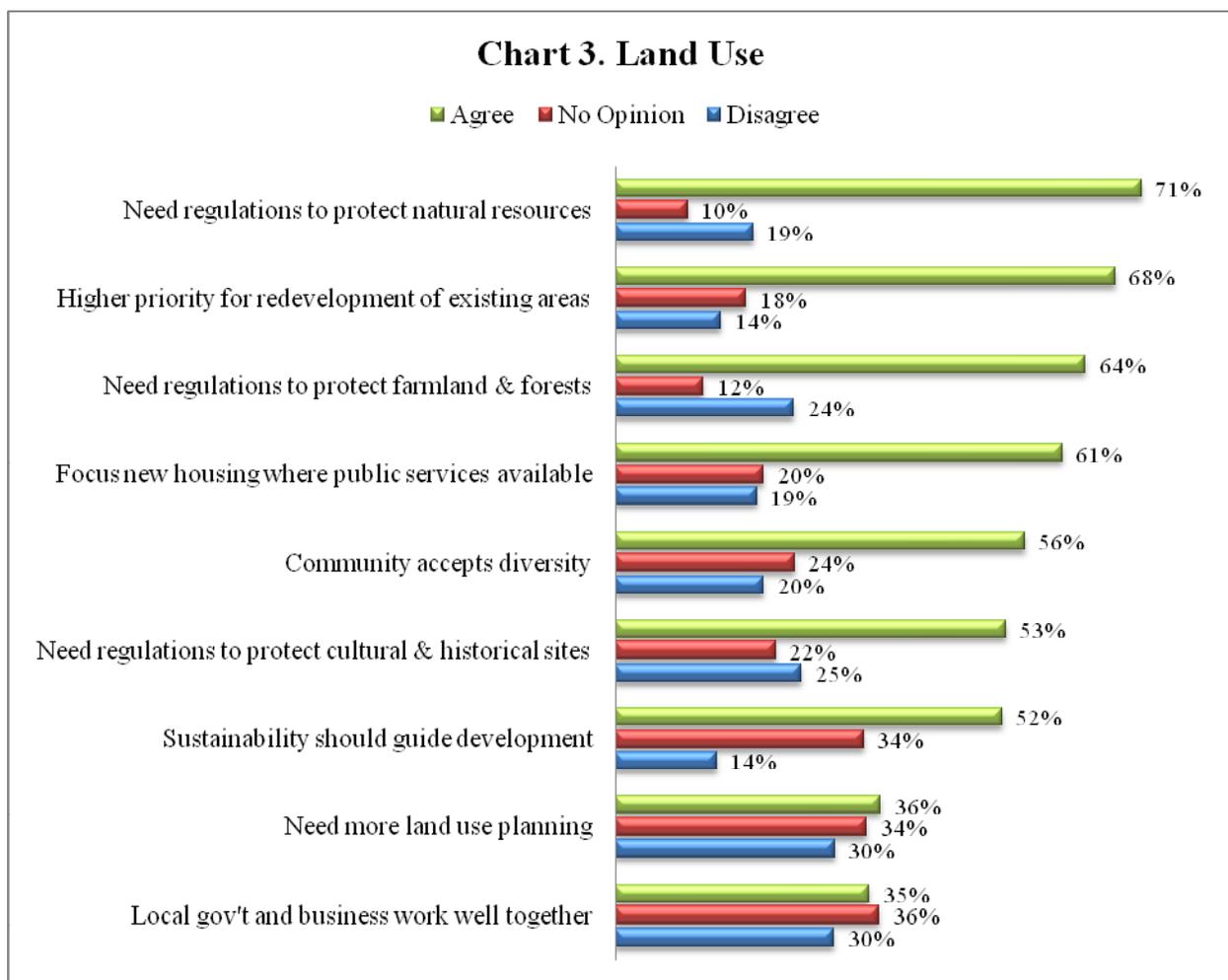
Demographic comparisons:

- Women more strongly agreed that culture/fine arts activities, cross-country skiing, and ice skating/hockey would be successful in their communities in attracting tourists.
- Residents of cities more strongly agreed that culture/fine arts activities would be both acceptable and successful in their communities in attracting tourists.
- Residents of villages and towns were less sure that ice skating/hockey and golfing would be successful in attracting tourists in their communities.

Land Use, Housing, and Quality of Life

The third section of the questionnaire gathered opinions about land use, housing, and quality of life. The responses are summarized in Chart 3. Answer options were “agree,” (top bar) “no opinion,” (middle bar) and “disagree” (bottom bar).

Three questions asked about regulations to protect types of resources or assets. The highest level of agreement was for regulations to protect natural resources such as wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, rivers, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources (71%), followed by regulations to protect farmland and forests (64%). Although a majority (53%) of respondents agreed that government regulations are needed to protect cultural, historic and archeological sites, the level of agreement was significantly less than for protection of natural resources and farmland/forests.



Over two-thirds of respondents agreed that redeveloping existing residential, commercial and industrial areas should take priority over expanding into new areas, even if redevelopment in the short term may be more expensive.

Sixty-one percent of respondents said most new housing should occur in or adjacent to established communities where public services can be more economically provided even if that land is more expensive. The first section of the questionnaire asked a similar question about focusing business development in or adjacent to existing communities to which a smaller percentage, 48 percent, agreed (see Chart 1).

A majority of respondents said they believe that their community accepts people from diverse backgrounds (ethnic, cultural, gender, lifestyle).

With regard to using sustainability principles to guide future development in the region, half of respondents agreed, but a third had no opinion. Respondents were evenly split in their opinions about their communities' need for more land use planning. While 36 percent of respondents agreed that their communities needed more planning, a third had no opinion. In earlier questions on the survey, large majorities of respondents indicated agreement with several statements that are related to aspects of sustainability and comprehensive planning. Among these are locating new business and residential development adjacent to existing communities where public services are more economical, establishing affordable housing goals by local governments, and regulations to protect the natural resource base of the region.

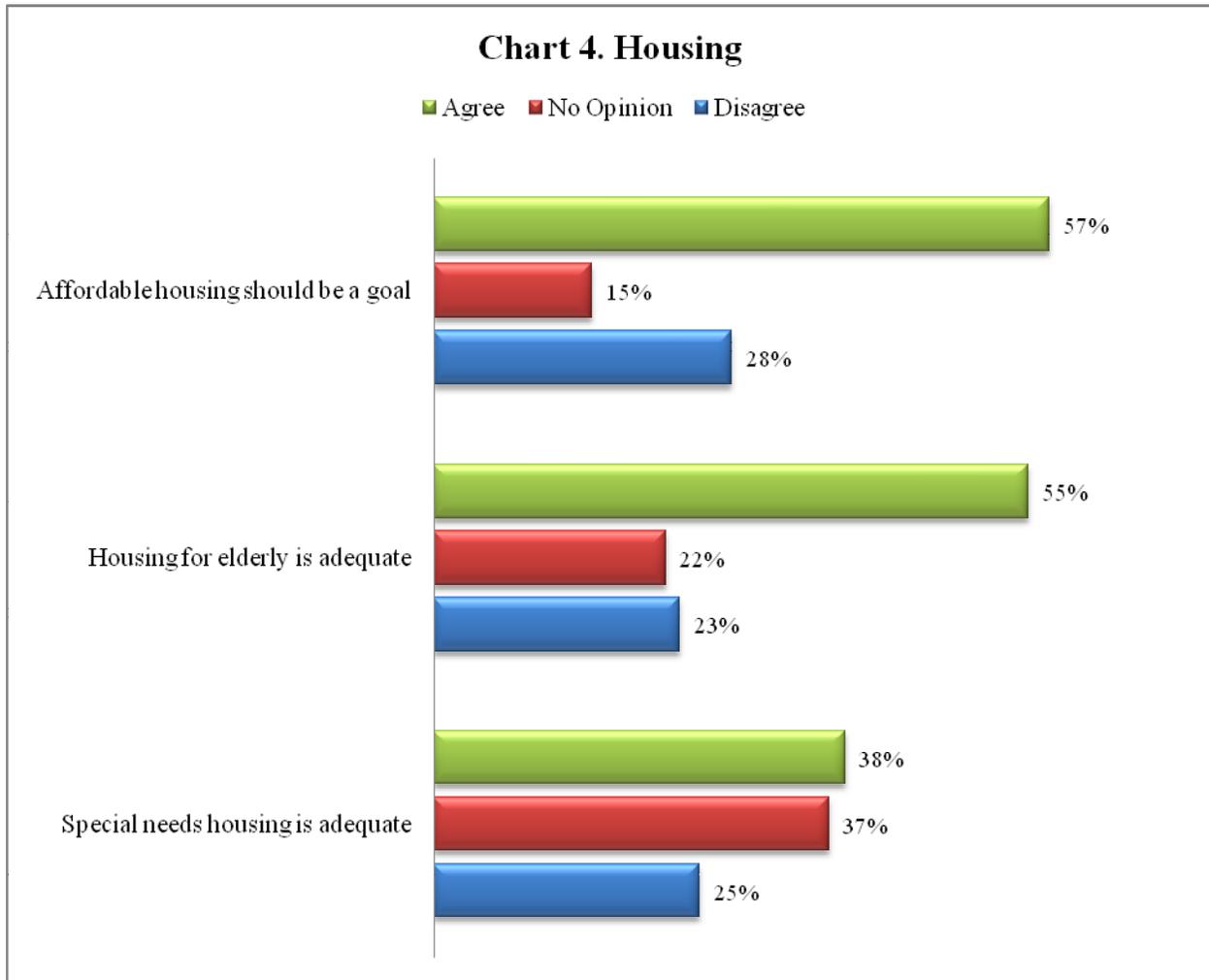
Additionally, majorities of respondents said many types of recreation/tourism activities and alternative energy production would be acceptable land use activities in their communities. The relatively high percentages of respondents who had no opinion about sustainability practices and land use planning while simultaneously agreeing with many of the practices that are integral components of sustainable development and planning may suggest an opportunity for public information efforts to educate residents about the principles of sustainability and planning. The fact that in the past decade many local governments in the region just completed comprehensive plans under the state's new planning law may also explain the variance of opinion between the need for more land use planning and sustainability practices.

Although a majority of respondents said their communities are a good place to do business (see Chart 1), respondents had evenly split opinions when asked if their government officials and business leaders worked well together.

Demographic comparisons:

- Respondents under age 45 more strongly agreed that government regulations or funding is needed to protect farmlands and forests and that government regulations or funding is needed to protect natural areas.
- Only one in four respondents without a high school diploma agreed that sustainability principles should guide development activity, but two-thirds of respondents with at least a bachelor's degree agreed with this statement. The response to this statement contained the largest single gap among demographic groups of any question in the survey.
- Women were more likely to say they have no opinion about the need for more land use planning in their communities.

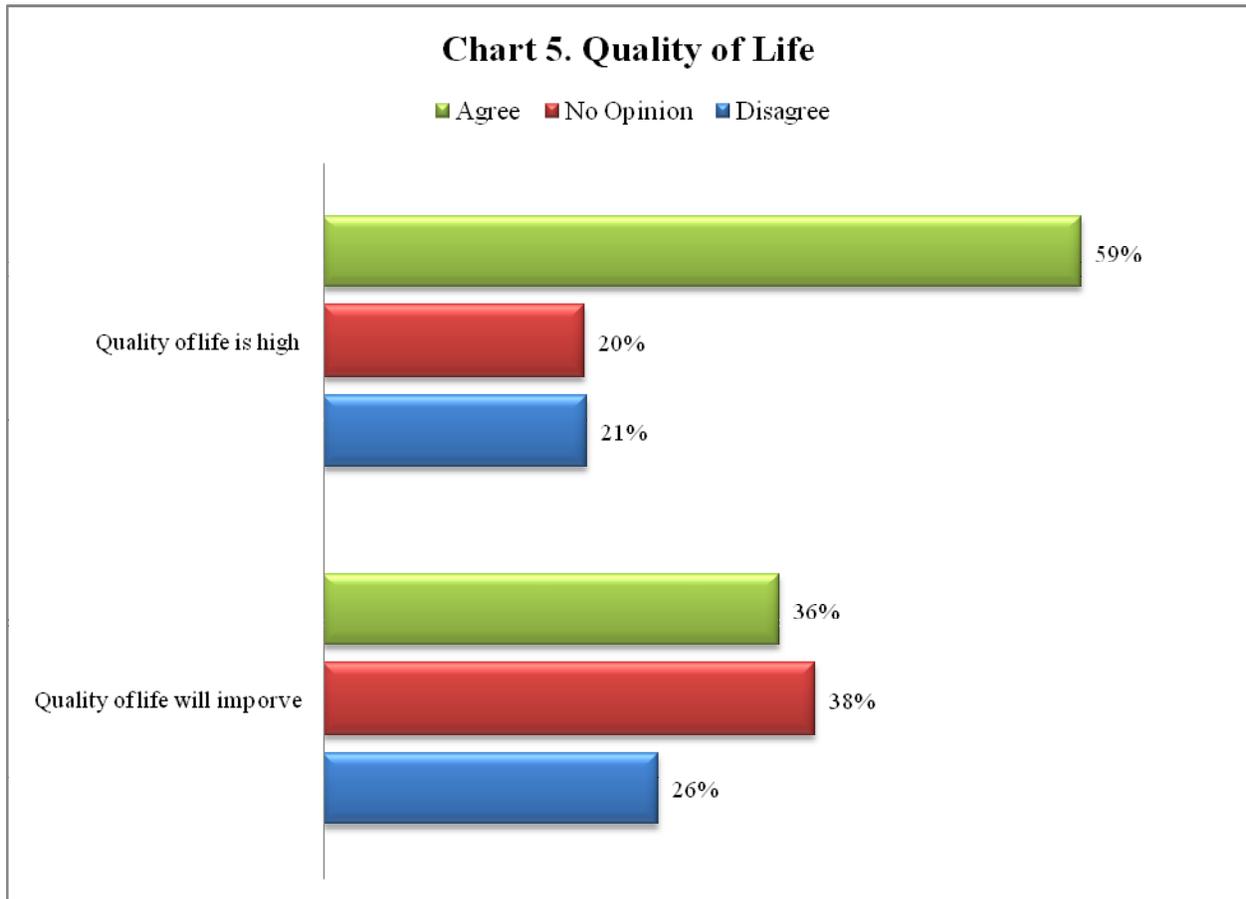
With respect to housing, Chart 4 shows that more than half (57%) of respondents agreed that providing affordable housing to low and moderate-income individuals should be a goal of all local governments (top bar). A similar percentage agreed that elderly housing is adequate in their community (55%). Respondents had more mixed opinions about the adequacy of special needs housing; while 37 percent said it was adequate, 25 percent disagreed (bottom bar) and 36 percent had no opinion (middle bar). The relatively high proportion of “no opinion” responses suggests that many respondents probably have limited personal experience regarding the adequacy of special needs housing.



Demographic comparisons:

- The following groups more strongly agreed that providing affordable housing for low and moderate-income individuals should be a goal of all local governments: women, single adult households, households with annual incomes below \$50,000, and residents who live in an incorporated community (city or village).

When it comes to their opinions about the quality of life in their communities, Chart 5 shows that 59 percent of respondents agree that the quality of life in their community is high (top bar). At the same time, about one in five respondents said they have no opinion (middle bar) or they disagreed (bottom bar) that the quality of life is high in their community. Respondents are decidedly less optimistic about the future quality of life in their communities, with only 36 percent believing their communities' quality of life will improve in the near future. This pessimism may reflect the lingering effects of the deep recession that was still very much in evidence when this survey was conducted.



Demographic comparisons:

- Town residents more strongly agreed that the quality of life is high where they live compared to city and village residents.

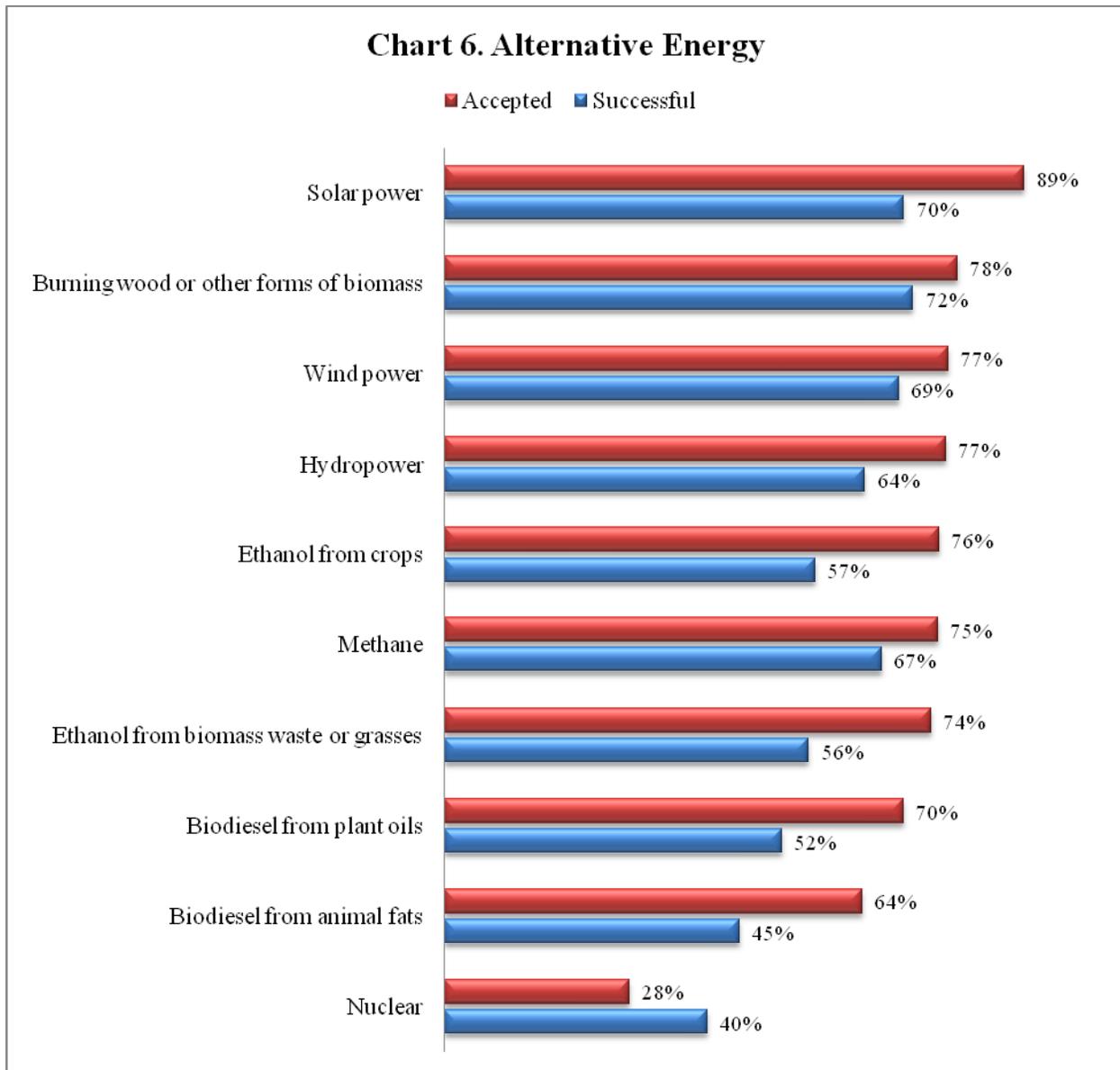
As seen in Chart 3, Chart 4, and Chart 5, “no opinion” responses were common in this section of the survey. At least 20 percent of the respondents chose the no opinion response in ten of the 14 statements on the three charts.

Alternative Energy

Fourteen alternative energy sources were listed and respondents were asked if each would be accepted in their community and whether they believed the activity would be successful.

The top bar of Chart 6 indicates that majorities of respondents believed that all of these alternative energy sources, except nuclear energy, would be accepted in their communities. Solar power was viewed as the most likely to be accepted (89%). Additionally, between 74 and 78 percent said the following types of energy production would be accepted: burning wood or other biomass, wind power, hydropower, ethanol from crops, methane from manure or landfills, ethanol from biomass waste or grasses.

More than half believe production of biodiesel from plant oils and animal fats would be accepted (70 percent and 64 percent respectively).



Relatively few respondents, 28 percent, said that nuclear energy would be accepted. This survey was conducted at the time that the nuclear power plant problems in Japan following the tsunami were much in the news. The impact of the problems in Japan on the opinions of survey respondents is not known but probably did affect opinions about nuclear power.

The lower bar on Chart 6 shows the percentage who said each listed alternative energy source would be successful in their communities. With the exception of biodiesel from animal fats and nuclear energy, majorities of respondents believed these alternative energy sources would be successful in their communities. Chart 6 also shows that six of the listed energy sources have a double-digit percentage gap between the level of acceptance and the perceived likelihood of success. For significant numbers of respondents, many of these types of energy production are viewed as acceptable in their communities, but the respondents are less sure about how successful they would be. Nuclear energy is an interesting exception to this pattern. As noted above, a low percentage (28%) of respondents believe nuclear energy would be accepted in the community, but a larger percentage (40%) percent think a nuclear facility would be successful.

Demographic comparisons:

- Men more strongly agreed that methane production would be accepted in their communities.
- Women more strongly doubted that nuclear power would be accepted in their communities and more strongly doubted that nuclear power would be successful.

Conclusions

Respondents expressed an interest in finding alternative sources of revenue to lower the property tax. Majorities agreed that counties should be allowed to increase their local sales tax to 1 percent and that increased sales tax revenue should be used to reduce the property tax. Half of respondents said the primary source of public school funding should be shifted to the sales tax. Respondents were less sure about reducing their property taxes by increasing state aid to public schools; although the largest percentage favored an increase in state aid, it was less than half of the total.

A majority of respondents said high-speed Internet access is adequate in their areas, but a quarter of the respondents disagreed, indicating that there is room for improvement among underserved populations within the region, particularly among town residents.

Although respondents weren't so sure if their communities need more land use planning per se, and only a small majority agreed with incorporating sustainability principles into future development, larger majorities agreed with several statements that are integral principles of sustainability and comprehensive planning. This seeming paradox, may suggest an opportunity to educate the public about the often compatible principles of sustainability and comprehensive planning. The fact that many local governments recently completed comprehensive plans in accordance with the state's new planning law may also have influenced respondents to conclude that they do not see a need for more land use planning now.

A majority of respondents said the quality of life in their communities is high, but respondents expressed a concern about the future quality of life in their communities. Perhaps this concern is a reflection of the economic difficulties being faced by the nation as a whole at the time of the survey.

Appendix A – Non-Response Bias Test

Any survey has to be concerned with “non-response bias.” Non-response bias refers to a situation in which people who do not return a questionnaire have opinions that are systematically different from the opinions of those who return their surveys. For example, suppose most non-respondents said that the quality of life in their communities is low (Question 25), whereas most of those who returned their surveys said the quality of life in their communities is high. In this case, non-response bias would exist, and the raw results would overstate the perceived quality of life.

The standard way to test for non-response bias is to compare the responses of those who answer the first mailing of a questionnaire to those who respond to the second mailing. Those who respond to the second mailing are, in effect, a sample of non-respondents (to the first mailing), and we assume that they are representative of that group. In this survey, 906 people responded to the first mailing, and 485 responded to the second mailing.

As shown in Table A1, there were 13 variables in the survey with statistically significant differences between the mean responses of these two groups of respondents. Table A1 indicates that even when statistical differences exist, the magnitude of this difference is very small and would not affect the interpretation of the results. **The Survey Research Center (SRC) concludes that there is little evidence that non-response bias is a concern for this sample.**

Table A1 – Statistically Significant Differences Between Responses of First and Second Mailings			
Variable	Statistical Significance	Mean First Mailing	Mean Second Mailing
1. Counties should be able to increase their sales tax from ½% to 1% to reduce property taxes.	.050	1.58	1.67
2. Counties should be allowed to cost share with each other on law enforcement costs such as construction and use of courthouses, jails, and personnel.	.022	1.29	1.37
7. Manufacturing will be a major driver of future economic development in western Wisconsin.	.003	1.66	1.52
13. More regional recreational and tourism projects should be pursued through public-private partnerships.	.011	1.58	1.69
15a1. Culture/fine arts (crafts, festivals, concerts, theater, etc.)	.020	1.20	1.25
15k1. Fishing	.020	1.03	1.05
15s1. Non-motorized water activities (canoeing, kayaking, sailing, swimming)	.005	1.10	1.16
26. The quality of life in my community will improve in coming years.	.011	1.94	1.83
28. Sustainability principles – the needs of future generations are not undermined by today’s decisions – should guide development activity in western Wisconsin.	.004	1.57	1.69
30g1. Wind power	.012	1.25	1.20
30j1. Nuclear	.000	1.68	1.79
30f2. Solar power	.027	1.32	1.26
30j2. Nuclear	.002	1.57	1.66

Appendix B – Written Responses

33. Employment Status “Other” Responses (14 responses)

- Disabled (8x)
- At home
- Domestic Engineer
- Full-time student
- Homemaker
- Seasonal
- Student

39. In which county do you live? “Other” responses (6 responses)

- Eau Claire (4x)
- Juneau
- Richland

Appendix C – Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question

Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission Survey

****Please return by March 11, 2011****

Using blue or black ink, please fill the circle that most closely matches your response.

Taxes and Economic Development	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree
1. Counties should be able to increase their sales tax from ½% to 1% to reduce property taxes.	64%	11%	25%
2. Counties should be allowed to cost share with each other on law enforcement costs such as construction and use of courthouses, jails, and personnel.	79%	11%	10%
3. To reduce property taxes, more local school funding (K-12) should come from the state even if this means some loss of local control.	45%	18%	37%
4. Primary funding for local schools (K-12) should be shifted from the property tax to a sales tax.	52%	20%	28%
5. Businesses that expand or start-up in Wisconsin should pay no state corporate income tax for the first 5 years of operations.	30%	16%	54%
6. High-speed internet or broadband access in the area I live in is adequate for personal and business use.	59%	18%	23%
7. Manufacturing will be a major driver of future economic development in Western Wisconsin.	58%	24%	19%
8. Mining of western Wisconsin sands is increasing because of some unique properties that are desirable for the oil and gas, chemical, and manufacturing sectors.			
a. The long-term <u>economic development potential</u> of mining the region's sand resources should be more fully studied.	66%	20%	14%
b. The long-term <u>environmental impact</u> of mining the region's sand resources should be more fully studied.	66%	19%	14%
9. Programs should be developed to increase the amount of locally produced food used in schools and other local institutions.	81%	11%	8%
10. Most new business development should occur in or adjacent to established communities where public services can be more economically provided even if that land is more expensive.	48%	29%	24%
11. My community is a good place to build a business.	64%	19%	17%
12. More overnight lodging is needed in my community.	20%	29%	51%
13. More regional recreational and tourism projects should be pursued through public-private partnerships.	56%	25%	18%
14. Local governments should provide incentives to industries to reduce development in more rural, lower-priced land areas.	47%	23%	30%

15. How well do you think the following recreation and tourism activities would be accepted in your community and successful in attracting tourists? Please fill (●) one option in the “Accepted” column and one option in the “Successful” column for each recreation/tourism option.

Recreation and tourism activities featuring:	Accepted		Successful	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
a. Culture/fine arts (crafts, festivals, concerts, theater, etc.)	78%	22%	61%	39%
b. Agriculture & Industry Tours (wineries, specialty cheeses, apple orchards, micro-breweries, metal-machinery and wood product technology exhibits etc.)	90%	10%	77%	23%
c. Get-away destination (Dining, shopping, urban walking, scenic drives—automobile and motorcycle)	82%	18%	67%	33%
d. Nature recreation (Bird watching, wildlife viewing, hiking, orienteering etc.)	88%	12%	77%	23%
e. Winter hill sports (downhill skiing, ski jumping, snowboarding, sledding etc.)	75%	25%	55%	45%
f. Cross Country Skiing	81%	19%	64%	36%
g. Ice Skating and Hockey	73%	27%	54%	46%
h. Bicycling	91%	9%	85%	15%
i. Horse events (competitions, trail rides, etc.)	83%	17%	68%	32%
j. Hunting	94%	6%	92%	8%
k. Fishing	96%	4%	93%	7%
l. Camping	93%	7%	87%	13%
m. Motorized outdoor activities (All terrain vehicles-ATVs and snowmobiling)	82%	18%	79%	21%
n. Golfing	88%	12%	78%	22%
o. Baseball and Softball	90%	10%	78%	22%
p. Basketball and Volleyball	83%	17%	67%	33%
q. Tennis	66%	34%	39%	61%
r. Football and Soccer	84%	16%	70%	30%
s. Non-motorized water activities (canoeing, kayaking, sailing, swimming)	88%	12%	79%	21%
t. Motorized water activities (motor boats, personal watercraft)	75%	25%	66%	34%

Land Use, Housing and Quality of Life:	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree
16. Redeveloping existing residential, commercial and industrial areas should take priority over expanding into new areas, even if redevelopment in the short term may be more expensive.	68%	18%	14%
17. Most new housing should occur in or adjacent to established communities where public services can be more economically provided even if that land is more expensive.	61%	20%	19%
18. Government regulations or funding is needed to protect cultural, historic and archeological sites.	53%	22%	25%
19. Government regulations or funding is needed to protect farmlands & forests.	64%	12%	24%
20. Government regulations or funding is needed to protect natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, rivers, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.	71%	10%	19%
21. Providing affordable housing to low and moderate-income individuals should be a goal of all local governments.	57%	15%	28%
22. Housing for the elderly is adequate in my community.	55%	22%	23%
23. Housing for those with special needs is adequate in my community.	38%	37%	25%
24. More land use planning is needed in my community.	36%	34%	30%
25. The quality of life in my community is high.	59%	20%	21%
26. The quality of life in my community will improve in coming years.	36%	38%	26%
27. My community accepts people from diverse backgrounds (ethnic, cultural, gender, lifestyle).	56%	24%	20%
28. Sustainability principles – the needs of future generations are not undermined by today’s decisions – should guide development activity in western Wisconsin.	52%	34%	14%
29. Local government officials and business leaders in my community work well together.	35%	36%	30%

30. Which of the following forms of alternative energy do you think would be **accepted** in your community & **successful** in reducing the region’s dependence on gasoline, natural gas & other fossil fuels? Please fill (●) one option in the “Accepted” column & one option in the “Successful” column for each energy option.

Alternative energy option featuring:	Accepted		Successful	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
a. Ethanol from crops	76%	24%	57%	43%
b. Ethanol from biomass waste or grasses	74%	26%	56%	44%
c. Burning wood or other forms of biomass	78%	22%	72%	28%
d. Biodiesel from plant oils	70%	30%	52%	48%
e. Biodiesel from animal fats	64%	36%	45%	55%
f. Solar power	89%	11%	70%	30%
g. Wind power	77%	23%	69%	31%
h. Hydropower	77%	23%	64%	36%
i. Methane (e.g. from manure digester, land fill)	75%	25%	67%	33%
j. Nuclear	28%	72%	40%	60%

Demographics:

31. Gender:	Male	Female						
	71%	29%						
32. Age:	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and older		
	1%	8%	13%	20%	25%	33%		
33. Employment status:	Employed Full Time	Employed Part Time	Self Employed	Unemployed	Retired	Other: <u>See Appendix B</u>		
	42%	6%	12%	3%	34%	3%		
34. Number of Adults a(18 or older) in household:			0	1	2	3	4	5+
				24%	65%	8%	2%	1%
35. Number of children (under 18) in household:			0	1	2	3	4	5+
			72%	10%	11%	4%	1%	1%
36. Household income range:	Less than 15,000	15,000 – 24,999	25,000 – 49,999	50,000 – 74,999	75,000 – 99,999	100,000 or More		
	8%	13%	30%	25%	14%	10%		
37. Highest level of education:	Less than high school	High school diploma	Some college/tech	Tech college graduate	Bachelor's degree	Graduate or professional degree		
	5%	27%	24%	14%	19%	12%		
38. How many years have you lived in your community	Less than 1	1 – 4	5 – 9	10 - 24	25+			
	1%	6%	12%	21%	59%			
39. In which county do you live?	13%	Buffalo	10%	La Crosse	11%	Pierce		
	11%	Crawford	10%	Monroe	12%	Trempealeau		
	11%	Jackson	13%	Pepin	10%	Vernon		
	<1%	Other (please specify): <u>See Appendix B</u>						
40. Do you live in a:	City	Village	Town					
	30%	21%	50%					

Thank you for completing this survey!

Please return your survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by March 11, 2011 to:
 Survey Research Center, University of Wisconsin – River Falls
 124 Regional Development Institute
 410 S. Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022-5001

**Appendix M: (1) Cover Letter for Initial Mailing, (2) Reminder Postcard,
and (3) Cover Letter for Second Mailing**



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

1707 Main Street, Suite 435
La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: (608) 785-9396
Fax: (608) 785-9394
Email: plan@mrrpc.com
Website: mrrpc.com

*Eugene Savage, Black River Falls, WI
Chairman*

*James Scholmeier, Fountain City, WI
Vice Chairman*

*Vicki Burke, Onalaska, WI
Secretary & Treasurer*

*Greg Flogstad, Onalaska, WI
Director*

March 1, 2011

Dear Resident of Western Wisconsin:

Our region of rolling woodlands, majestic bluffs, flowing rivers and fertile fields is also home to modern agricultural, wood and metal product industries. These industries and the growing demand for business services are part of our scenic working landscape of expanding river towns, valley villages and hilltop cities. These qualities along with outstanding education, healthcare and recreation opportunities are why in the past 20 years the Mississippi River Region's nine counties have experienced a population increase of 46,000 residents, housing growth of 30,000 units and 27,000 more jobs. To help residents and local elected officials make better-informed choices on how to handle continued growth and development, we are requesting your input on this survey that will also help us regionally plan.

You are one of 4,000 randomly selected Mississippi River Region households that are being asked to give opinions on important growth and development issues. For the results of this survey to truly represent the views of residents of the region, it is important that each questionnaire be returned. Your participation is voluntary, but would be greatly appreciated. Please take 10 minutes to complete and return the survey in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by March 11, 2011. **The adult in the household who most recently had a birthday is asked to complete the enclosed questionnaire.**

The results of this survey will be reported at future public meetings in each of the nine counties as well as on our web site www.mrrpc.com. The Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls is conducting the survey on our behalf. **To ensure that your responses remain completely anonymous, please do not write your name on the questionnaire.** Your response will be treated in a completely confidential manner. Neither your name nor address will be associated with your responses to the survey questions. The bar code on the survey is for mailing purposes only – your responses to this survey will not be linked to you.

Sincerely,

Greg Flogstad, Director
MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

If you have concerns about how you were treated in this study, please contact: Molly Van Wagner, Interim Director of Grants and Research, 104 North Hall, UW-RF, 715/425-3195. This project has been approved by the UW-River Falls Institutional Research Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, protocol # H2011-W018.

***A Nine County Economic Development District Providing Advisory
Planning And Economic Development Services to Improve the Region's Environment, Economy and Quality of Life***

Reminder postcard text:

A couple weeks ago, we sent you a Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission survey. The survey asks your opinion about a number of important planning issues facing the region. At the time of this mailing a completed survey has not been received from your household. If you have already completed the survey and returned it, please accept our thanks. If you have not completed it yet, please take some time to fill out the survey and return it. Your input will be used to help guide future directions in Western Wisconsin. If you did not receive a survey or no longer have it, another one will be sent in the next couple of weeks. Please watch for it and return it upon receipt. Thank you.

**Survey Research Center
University of Wisconsin-River Falls
124 RDI Building, 410 S. Third Street
River Falls, WI 54022**



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

1707 Main Street, Suite 435
La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: (608) 785-9396
Fax: (608) 785-9394
Email: plan@mrrpc.com
Website: mrrpc.com

*Eugene Savage, Black River Falls, WI
Chairman*
*James Scholmeier, Fountain City, WI
Vice Chairman*
*Vicki Burke, Onalaska, WI
Secretary & Treasurer*
*Greg Flogstad, Onalaska, WI
Director*

March 30, 2011

Dear Resident of Western Wisconsin:

We recently contacted you seeking your input regarding growth and development issues in our region. To date, your response has not been received by the Survey Research Center at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls. If you recently returned your survey, it may have crossed this letter in the mail, and you may disregard this reminder.

We are writing you again because your input is important. You are one of 4,000 randomly selected Mississippi River Region households that are being asked to give opinions on important growth and development issues. For the results of this survey to truly represent the views of residents of the region, it is important that each questionnaire be returned. Your participation is voluntary, but would be greatly appreciated. Please take 10 minutes to complete and return the survey in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by April 13, 2011. **The adult in the household who most recently had a birthday is asked to complete the enclosed questionnaire.**

The results of this survey will be reported at future public meetings in each of the nine counties as well as on our web site www.mrrpc.com. The Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls is conducting the survey on our behalf. **To ensure that your responses remain completely anonymous, please do not write your name on the questionnaire.** Your response will be treated in a completely confidential manner. Neither your name nor address will be associated with your responses to the survey questions. The bar code on the survey is for mailing purposes only – your responses to this survey will not be linked to you.

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