

Survey Responses from Grant County Landowners Show Overwhelming Support for Wind Energy Development.

In the fall of 2007, Grant County landowners received a survey conducted by The Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

Question 30 on the survey asked respondents if Grant County jurisdictions should pursue Ethanol Plants, Solar Energy or Wind Energy alternatives as a form of economic development. Data compiled from those surveys shows overwhelming support for Wind and Solar Energy with marginal support for Ethanol.

The proposed White Oak Wind Farm falls within Smelser Township, Cuba City, Hazel Green, Hazel Green Township and Dickeyville. Survey pages illustrating the responses to the renewable energy issues for the county and those townships follow.

The raw data for the comprehensive plans, which includes the survey data for all participating jurisdictions in Grant County, is also available at <http://www.swwrpc.org>.

The Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Provides intergovernmental planning and coordination of community development planning, economic development, and transportation. In response to local and regional goals, the Commission and its Staff work to enhance fiscal and physical resources and to balance local and regional development, preservation, conservation, and social priorities. SWWRPC's member counties are Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, and Richland.

Executive Summary

During the fall of 2007, the South Western Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission sent comprehensive planning public opinion surveys to 18,978 residents of Grant County and 4,715 (25 percent) were returned. From the 4,715 returned questionnaires the Survey Research Center (SRC) at UW-River Falls constructed a random sample of 379 surveys based on the number of occupied housing units in each jurisdiction. For example, the city of Boscobel, with 1,174 occupied housing units, represents 6 percent of the total occupied housing units in the County (18,559), so we wanted 6 percent of the overall County sample to come from the city of Boscobel (24 observations). The 379 surveys provide estimates that are accurate to within plus or minus 5 percent of the reported value.

The demographic profile of the sample of 379 surveys was compared to data from the 2000 Census of Population and Housing and was found, in general, to align very closely with it. Key features of the demographic profile of the sample are: about 70 percent include two adults and no children, very few reported being unemployed, they are solidly middle class (few with very low or very high incomes), and most have lived in Grant County for a long time (71 percent report having lived in Grant County for 25 or more years).

Key findings of this study include:

Quality of Life

- The predominant reasons people gave for living in Grant County is the “small town atmosphere” (58 percent) and to be “near family and friends” (56 percent).
- The next most common reason cited for living in Grant County (to be near a job) was cited by only 40 percent of respondents.

Community Facilities

- More than half of respondents rated all community services (ambulance, fire, etc.) as good or excellent.
- Substantial minorities rated street and road maintenance (36 percent) and police protection (24 percent) as fair or poor.
- Those younger than 55 are significantly more concerned about the quality of street and road maintenance than are older residents.
- Men are more concerned about the quality of police protection than are women.

Communication Preferences

- People in the County prefer to get information about planning efforts via direct mail (70 percent) and newsletters (56 percent).

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Grant County residents place a high value on natural and cultural resources in their jurisdictions.

Economic Development

“Government should work toward guiding development without giving away services or over burdening the developer or individual land owner.”

“. . . my husband has to drive to Madison everyday to have a good paying job with benefits. Grant County should provide more opportunities for people to get an education or learn a new skill WHILE working at the same time . . .”

“Lack of good restaurants.”

Grant County residents were asked to provide their opinions about a number of economic development issues and their responses are summarized in Table 7. The first set of questions asked if the location of commercial and/or industrial activities involving truck traffic and manufacturing should be limited. Only about one-quarter of respondents would allow such activities to occur anywhere in the County but a majority agree or strongly agree that it should be limited to inside a city or village (53 percent) or near a city or village (79 percent). This result is consistent with the concern noted above about preserving farm land in the County. Male respondents were significantly more likely to agree that manufacturing activities should be located within cities or villages and less supportive of allowing them to be sited near a city or

Table 7: Opinions About Economic Development Issues, Grant County, 2007						
Limit manufacturing involving truck traffic to:	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
in city or village	347	14%	39%	28%	7%	12%
near a city or village	347	16%	63%	8%	3%	10%
anywhere in Grant county	339	7%	19%	38%	20%	16%
	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Coordinate new businesses recruitment	358	53%	40%	2%	2%	3%
Require water and sewer services	360	26%	45%	11%	4%	14%
Grant County should provide land with infrastructure	360	16%	43%	19%	7%	15%
Grant County should pursue	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
ethanol plants	361	22%	33%	23%	9%	13%
solar energy	366	39%	45%	5%	1%	10%
wind energy	372	48%	43%	2%	2%	6%

village or anywhere in the County than were women. Higher income households were, similarly, more likely to favor location of manufacturing businesses within cities or villages and less supportive of allowing them to locate anywhere in the County.

Virtually all respondents (93 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that Grant County should coordinate efforts to recruit new businesses and industry. Likewise, there is majority support for requiring developments at the edge of cities and villages to have municipal sewer and water (71 percent agree or strongly agree) and that all Grant County jurisdictions should provide at least some land with infrastructure for industrial and commercial developments (59 percent agree or strongly agree). Men are significantly more skeptical about the wisdom of providing infrastructure at public expense for industrial or commercial developments than are women.

Respondents were asked to weigh in on whether Grant County should pursue the development of three types of renewable energy to promote local economic development: ethanol, solar and wind energy. Interestingly, the only one of these options for which there is significant opposition is ethanol (about one-third disagree or strongly disagree that this option should be pursued). On the one hand, this is surprising given the clear and substantial impact that ethanol has had on the corn market in the U.S. during the past two years. On the other hand, press accounts with concerns about the sustainability of the rate of growth in this industry, concerns about the impact of these plants on local air quality and water supplies, and the increase in animal feed prices caused by ethanol make this level of opposition understandable. Men and those from higher income households are particularly skeptical about ethanol as a driver of local economic development.

Finally, Grant County residents were asked to provide their opinions about the importance of various types of economic activities to the Grant County economy. Figure 6 illustrates the fact that almost all respondents recognize agriculturally-related business as important or very important to the County's economy; only 4 percent disagree or are neutral with respect to this assessment. All of the items listed in Figure 6 gathered the support of strong majorities. Home based businesses had the lowest level of agreement that they are important or very important to the County's economy and even this option was supported by 71 percent of County respondents.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (COUNTY COMPARISON)

- When compared to the County average, support for wind energy is somewhat weaker in Smelser (though still a very solid majority). Town residents held similar views on the development of ethanol plants and solar energy.
- Residents of Smelser also hold similar views on commercial and industrial development as the County as a whole. However, Smelser residents are more likely to agree that development should be located in an existing city or village than other county residents.
- While Smelser residents are more likely to view tourism and recreation business development more important than the county average, all other forms of business development received similar ratings.
- Like the county, agriculturally-related business development is rated most important by residents of Smelser.

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Opinion	
	Smel	Cnty	Smel	Cnty	Smel	Cnty	Smel	Cnty	Smel	Cnty
26. Commercial or industrial buildings and activities involving truck traffic and manufacturing should be located:										
a. In an existing city or a village	27%	14%	49%	39%	14%	28%	3%	7%	7%	12%
b. Near a city or village	16%	16%	61%	63%	12%	8%	4%	3%	7%	10%
c. Anywhere in Grant County	6%	7%	19%	19%	37%	38%	25%	20%	13%	16%
27. Coordinate business recruitment	52%	53%	39%	40%	4%	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%
28. Provide land & infrastructure for industry/commerce	19%	16%	39%	43%	25%	19%	3%	7%	14%	15%
29. Required muni water & sewer	31%	26%	39%	45%	10%	11%	4%	4%	17%	14%

30. Grant County jurisdictions should pursue the following energy alternatives as a form of economic development:

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Opinion	
	SMel	Cnty	Smel	Cnty	Smel	Cnty	Smel	Cnty	Smel	Cnty
a. Ethanol Plants	24%	22%	30%	33%	23%	23%	13%	9%	11%	13%
b. Solar Energy	42%	39%	45%	45%	4%	5%	1%	1%	7%	10%
c. Wind Energy	41%	48%	36%	43%	7%	2%	5%	2%	11%	6%
d. Other	26%	28%	21%	8%	5%	0%	0%	0%	47%	63%

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (COUNTY COMPARISON)

- Like Grant County residents generally, those in Cuba City feel that commercial and industrial development should generally occur in or near an existing city or village.
- Residents of Cuba City feel more strongly that all Grant County jurisdictions should provide at least some land with infrastructure for industrial and commercial uses either owned publicly or privately.
- Like the overall County sample, Cuba City supports alternative energy development. By a small margin, Cuba City residents support the pursuit of ethanol plants more enthusiastically than the overall County average.

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Opinion	
	Cuba City	Cnty	Cuba City	Cnty	Cuba City	Cnty	Cuba City	Cnty	Cuba City	Cnty
26. Commercial or industrial buildings and activities involving truck traffic and manufacturing should be located:										
a. In an existing city or a village	11%	14%	44%	39%	36%	28%	2%	7%	7%	12%
b. Near a city or village	18%	16%	72%	63%	3%	8%	1%	3%	6%	10%
c. Anywhere in Grant County	6%	7%	27%	19%	43%	38%	11%	20%	13%	16%
27. Coordinate business recruitment	60%	53%	37%	40%	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%	3%
28. Provide land & infrastructure for industry/commerce	28%	16%	46%	43%	14%	19%	2%	7%	10%	15%
29. Required muni water & sewer	28%	26%	48%	45%	7%	11%	3%	4%	13%	14%

30. Grant County jurisdictions should pursue the following energy alternatives as a form of economic development:

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Opinion	
	Cuba City	Cnty	Cuba City	Cnty	Cuba City	Cnty	Cuba City	Cnty	Cuba City	Cnty
a. Ethanol Plants	26%	22%	38%	33%	16%	23%	7%	9%	13%	13%
b. Solar Energy	43%	39%	41%	45%	6%	5%	0%	1%	10%	10%
c. Wind Energy	53%	48%	36%	43%	3%	2%	1%	2%	7%	6%
d. Other	12%	28%	12%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	76%	63%

30. Grant County jurisdictions should pursue the following energy alternatives as a form of economic development:

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Opinion	
	Haz Gn	Cnty	Haz Gn	Cnty	Haz Gn	Cnty	Haz Gn	Cnty	Haz Gn	Cnty
a. Ethanol Plants	21%	22%	34%	33%	27%	23%	8%	9%	10%	13%
b. Solar Energy	30%	39%	51%	45%	8%	5%	2%	1%	10%	10%
c. Wind Energy	51%	48%	37%	43%	5%	2%	2%	2%	6%	6%
d. Other	10%	28%	20%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	70%	63%

Residents of the Village of Hazel Green have marginally higher levels of interest in home-based businesses than the overall County average.

31. Rate the importance of the following:

	Very Important		Important		Unimportant		Very Unimportant		Not Applicable	
	Haz Gn	Cnty	Haz Gn	Cnty	Haz Gn	Cnty	Haz Gn	Cnty	Haz Gn	Cnty
a. Ag Related Business	59%	59%	35%	38%	2%	2%	0%	0%	5%	1%
b. Commercial & Retail	27%	33%	63%	59%	5%	7%	0%	1%	5%	1%
c. Downtown Devel	26%	31%	54%	52%	17%	11%	3%	2%	0%	4%
d. Home-Based Bus	11%	17%	70%	54%	16%	22%	0%	3%	3%	4%
e. Ind & Manufacturing	30%	40%	63%	50%	2%	8%	3%	1%	2%	1%
f. Tourism & Rec	23%	36%	63%	55%	9%	7%	3%	1%	2%	1%

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (COUNTY COMPARISON)

- Compared to the County, Town of Hazel Green residents have higher levels of agreement that commercial or industrial development that involves truck traffic be located in existing cities or villages.
- Residents of the Town of Hazel Green have lower levels of agreement to require new development at the edge of an existing city to connect to municipal water and sewer.
- The level of support for the development of alternative energy as a tool for economic development is very similar to the overall County average, with the possible exception of ethanol plants. Respondents from the Town of Hazel Green may be slightly less likely to support ethanol plant developments than the County average.

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Opinion	
	T Haz Grn	Cnty	T Haz Grn	Cnty	T Haz Grn	Cnty	T Haz Grn	Cnty	T Haz Grn	Cnty
26. Commercial or industrial buildings and activities involving truck traffic and manufacturing should be located:										
a. In an existing city or a village	13%	14%	49%	39%	24%	28%	4%	7%	9%	12%
b. Near a city or village	7%	16%	73%	63%	7%	8%	4%	3%	10%	10%
c. Anywhere in Grant County	10%	7%	24%	19%	35%	38%	20%	20%	10%	16%
27. Coordinate business recruitment	50%	53%	45%	40%	1%	2%	0%	2%	4%	3%
28. Provide land & infrastructure for industry/commerce	24%	16%	41%	43%	19%	19%	4%	7%	13%	15%
29. Required muni water & sewer	18%	26%	46%	45%	18%	11%	1%	4%	18%	14%

30. Grant County jurisdictions should pursue the following energy alternatives as a form of economic development:

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Opinion	
	T Haz Grn	Cnty	T Haz Grn	Cnty	T Haz Grn	Cnty	T Haz Grn	Cnty	T Haz Grn	Cnty
a. Ethanol Plants	14%	22%	34%	33%	26%	23%	14%	9%	13%	13%
b. Solar Energy	36%	39%	48%	45%	8%	5%	0%	1%	7%	10%
c. Wind Energy	44%	48%	40%	43%	6%	2%	0%	2%	9%	6%
d. Other	24%	28%	18%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	59%	63%

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (COUNTY COMPARISON)

- Village of Dickeyville residents were generally less supportive of commercial and industrial buildings and activities involving truck traffic and manufacturing in an existing city or village.
- Relative to the County, residents feel slightly more strongly that jurisdictions should provide at least some land with infrastructure for industrial and commercial uses.

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Opinion	
	Dville	Cnty	Dville	Cnty	Dville	Cnty	Dville	Cnty	Dville	Cnty
26. Commercial or industrial buildings and activities involving truck traffic and manufacturing should be located:										
a. In an existing city or a village	7%	14%	32%	39%	42%	28%	8%	7%	12%	12%
b. Near a city or village	21%	16%	61%	63%	7%	8%	2%	3%	8%	10%
c. Anywhere in Grant County	9%	7%	24%	19%	45%	38%	6%	20%	16%	16%
27. Coordinate business recruitment	49%	53%	45%	40%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%
28. Provide land & infrastructure for industry/commerce	21%	16%	44%	43%	19%	19%	3%	7%	13%	15%
29. Required muni water & sewer	21%	26%	48%	45%	18%	11%	0%	4%	14%	14%

- Residents of the Village of Dickeyville give similar high support of pursuing alternative solar and wind energy as do County residents as a whole. As was true with the County, Village residents are less enthusiastic about ethanol plants as a form of economic development.

30. Grant County jurisdictions should pursue the following energy alternatives as a form of economic development:

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Opinion	
	Dville	Cnty	Dville	Cnty	Dville	Cnty	Dville	Cnty	Dville	Cnty
a. Ethanol Plants	19%	22%	32%	33%	33%	23%	4%	9%	13%	13%
b. Solar Energy	38%	39%	46%	45%	9%	5%	0%	1%	7%	10%
c. Wind Energy	51%	48%	43%	43%	2%	2%	0%	2%	4%	6%
d. Other	13%	28%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	88%	63%