

City of Afton 2007 Community Survey

As part of its Comprehensive Plan updating process, the City of Afton sent this survey to residents as part of the June issue of the Afton Newsletter. Approximately 1200 copies were sent out and 434 were returned. Since several questions provided space for two respondents, we heard from a total of 743 individuals or approximately 37% of the adult population. Note, however, that not all respondents responded to every question. This report summarizes the basic statistics of the responses to the survey.

The last general survey, conducted in 1997, was the basis for this year's survey. Where the questions are the same, the 1997 survey results are shown in parentheses ().

Current Land Use

1. How would you describe the primary use of your land in Afton?

Agriculture

Crop Land	9%	(10%)
Pasture	7%	(4%)
Livestock	4%	(0%)
Other Ag use	4%	(3%)

Residential

Owner Occupied	94%	(84%)
Rental	2%	(2%)
Vacant	0%	(3%)
Commercial or Industrial	1%	(0.8%)
Other	0%	(1%)

2. What are your long term (10-15 years from now) plans for your land?

Continue existing use	83%	(84%)
Change the use	3%	(2%)
Sell all the land	2%	(3%)
Sell part of the land	1%	(1%)
Pass on land to family members	7%	(2%)
Long term plans are unknown	10%	(5%)

3. How many acres of land or lots in the Old Village do you own in Afton?

Acres	Average 11.8 acres (11 acres)	Range 0-1200 acres (0-200 acres)
Lots	Average 1.1 lots (n/a)	

General Priorities

4. What do you like best about living in Afton? Choose up to three reasons.

[Listed in descending order of preference.]

Rural location and separation of homes from each other	66%	(301 responses)
Lots of open space	65%	(250 responses)
Presence of active farms and agriculture	49%	(184 responses)
Proximity to the St. Croix River	38%	(98 responses)
Good location and access for my needs	25%	(76 responses)
The Old Village area	20%	(44 responses)
Reasonable taxes	14%	(31 responses)
Good schools	13%	(43 responses)
Community identity	12%	(14 responses)
Other	4%	(18 responses)

[Notes: Many respondents selected more than three reasons in 2007. The 1997 report included actual counts instead of percentages.]

5. In general, which of the following topics should the city focus its efforts and funds on during the next 10 years?

Yes	No	No Opinion	
84% (82%)	2% (5%)	8% (13%)	Preservation and improvement of groundwater and surface water quality
71% (65%)	8% (24%)	13% (10%)	Preservation of agriculture and hobby farming as a viable, economic land use
80% (89%)	8% (4%)	4% (6%)	Preservation of a rural lifestyle (low density, large lots, private wells and septic tanks)
28% (26%)	44% (45%)	24% (29%)	Improve active parks and recreation (ball fields, skating, and play areas)
51% (47%)	29% (32%)	14% (21%)	Increase passive parks and recreation (picnic, nature study, hiking) and open space (wildlife areas, conservation preserves)
21% (13%)	64% (69%)	7% (18%)	Enhance opportunities for housing diversity (i.e., greater variety of price ranges and housing types – apartments townhouses and condominiums)
33% (21%)	42% (48%)	17% (30%)	Improve public access to the St. Croix River
43% (45%)	35% (26%)	13% (27%)	Preserve and encourage commercial development in the Old Village
50% (50%)	28% (30%)	13% (19%)	Establish non-motorized trails (walk/hike, bike, skate, ski)

Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces

The City has one active, developed park, Town Square, and a passive park along the St. Croix River, Steamboat Park. Both are located in the Old Village in Ward 1.

6. Do you want additional parks developed? Yes 18% (n/a)

7. If you want additional parks, where and what kind?

[Listed in descending order of preference.]

Yes	No	No Opinion	
39%	14%	8%	Passive nature areas and open space preserves throughout Afton (n/a 1997)
19% (21%)	30% (50%)	10% (29%)	Neighborhood parks in Wards 2, 3 and 4
12% (21%)	32% (47%)	11% (31%)	One active recreation area in Afton

8. Would you support increased property taxes to acquire and develop any of these facilities? [Listed in descending order of preference.]

47% (n/a)	Passive nature areas and open space preserves
41% (43%)	Non-motorized trails (walk/hike, bicycle, horse, ski, etc.)
39% (34%)	Passive parks (picnicking, nature trails, fishing, swimming)
19% (21%)	Active parks (baseball or soccer fields, ice skating or hockey rink, tennis courts, sand volleyball or basketball courts, playground equipment)
7% (4%)	Motorized trails (motorcycle, snowmobile, ATV)

What annual property tax increase would you accept to acquire and develop these facilities?

\$0: 21% (35%)	\$50: 12% (21%)	\$100: 13% (18%)	\$200: 12% (n/a)
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9. What, if any, facilities should the City develop in Steamboat Park? *See other comments, p. 7*

Groundwater, Farmland and Rural Character

The preservation of ground water resources, prime farmland and the rural character of the City are principal goals of the current Comprehensive Plan.

10. Which of the following policies would you support to meet these goals? Choose all that you feel the City should use. [Listed in descending order of preference.]

Yes	No	No Opinion	
65%	22%	7%	Maintain maximum permitted density of 4 homes per 40 acres in the Agricultural District in the western 1/3 of the City (n/a 1997)
61% (54%)	27% (25%)	6% (21%)	Public investment (taxes) to preserve environmentally sensitive areas such as trout streams, bluffs, ravines, wildlife habitat, wetlands, groundwater resources, steep slopes and floodplains)
48% (42%)	24% (28%)	17% (29%)	Develop a means to transfer or purchase development rights to preserve prime farmland
38% (37%)	46% (47%)	7% (21%)	Increase your property taxes to help place land in agricultural, scenic or other long-term conservation easements
37% (28%)	52% (57%)	5% (15%)	Permitting new developments on large acreage to use clustered, small residential lots with significant additional land area in the development which cannot be built on in the future (for example, protected by use of conservation easements)
31% (41%)	51% (42%)	11% (17%)	Increasing the minimum lot size from 5 to 10 acres in the Rural Residential Zoning District in the easterly 2/3 of the City

11. Are Afton’s traditional zoning regulations of 5 acre minimum lot size in the Rural Residential Zoning District in the easterly 2/3 of the City too restrictive?

Yes: 8%

12. Are Afton’s current zoning regulations of 4 homes per 40 acres in the Agricultural District in the western 2/3 of the City too restrictive?

Yes: 18%

13. Are Afton’s traditional zoning regulations of one-half acres in the Old Village too restrictive?

Yes: 8%

14. Washington County is in the process of implementing a county-wide 800 MHz radio system for public safety and public service organizations. Washington County is proposing that a 190 foot tall antenna tower be built in Afton to service the 800 MHz system. The desired location for the tower is north of County Road 18, south of Afton Hills, and ¼ to ½ miles east of Trading Post Trail. Afton’s present ordinances do not permit the proposed antenna tower to be built in Afton. (n/a 1997)

Should the City:			
Yes	No	No	
		Opinion	
45%	41%	7%	Change its ordinances to permit the building of the 190 foot tall antenna towers in Afton thereby allowing the proposed Washington County tower and possibly other towers to be built in Afton? (Federal laws contain equal access provisions for commercial providers)
15%	72%	8%	Permit condemnation of land through the use of Eminent Domain (the involuntary forced taking of private property) to obtain a site for the antenna tower if a willing seller cannot be found?
38%	46%	10%	Reject the Washington County 190 foot tower proposal?

Historic Old Village Development

15. The historic Village of Afton has a small business district near the ST. Croix River with the majority of the Village consisting of single family residences.

Should the City:			(n/a 1997)	[Listed in descending order of preference.]
Yes	No	No		
		Opinion		
67%	21%	10%		Encourage or support the construction of new single family homes on the open lots that remain in the Old Village and generally encourage and preserve the primarily residential nature of the Old Village?
56%	30%	9%		Permit multi-use (commercial street level and living space above) in the Old Village residential zoning district?
23%	71%	3%		Permit high density multi-family housing such as condominiums, townhouses and mixed residential/commercial developments in the Old Village commercial zoning district?

Light Industrial Area Development

16. Afton's current tax base is over 90% residential and agriculture. The City has a small light industrial area along I-94, east of Manning Avenue. Should the City promote more intense use of this area by providing municipal sewer services for:

Yes	No	Opinion	
		No	
37% (25%)	44% (57%)	7% (17%)	Light industrial/office
30% (19%)	55% (64%)	5% (17)	Retail shopping/commercial uses
12% (10%)	69% (70%)	6% (19%)	Higher density residential areas
23% (17%)	55% (62%)	8% (20%)	A mix of the above

17. Afton recently changed its ordinances to expand the Light Industrial area into land located south of and adjacent to Hudson Road. A moratorium is currently in place, halting industrial development in the Light Industrial area.

Yes	No	Opinion	
		No	
34%	55%	7%	Should the Light Industrial area extend to the south of Hudson Road (the I-94 frontage road)? (n/a 1997)

City Finances and Services

18. How satisfied are you with the following services? Mark your opinion on the scale, with 1 being very dissatisfied, 5 very satisfied and N, no opinion.

Paving of gravel roads	Average 3.66 (3.3)
General street maintenance	Average 3.06 (3.7)
Parks and recreation facilities	Average 3.70 (3.8)
Police services	Average 4.13 (4.1)
Fire protection services	Average 4.18 (4.2)
Building inspection services	Average 3.69 (3.7)
Assistance at City Hall	Average 3.57 (3.7)
Other public services	Average 3.35 (3.7)

19. The City has traditionally adopted conservative budgets. Should the City budget and tax more or less for:

More	Same	Less	
17% (20%)	50% (57%)	27% (17%)	Paving gravel roads
33% (11%)	57% (78%)	5% (5%)	General street maintenance
19% (19%)	58% (54%)	15% (19%)	Parks and recreation
10% (9%)	78% (80%)	3% (4%)	Police services
11% (10%)	77% (80%)	3% (3%)	Fire protection
3% (2%)	65% (65%)	14% (13%)	Other services

20. Would you prefer that the City, to the extent possible, finance any increased spending through immediate tax increases, or through increased debt such as the recent four million dollar bond issuance for paving?

Tax increases	20%
Debt (bonding)	33%

21. In general, how satisfied are you with City services?

Average 3.24 (3.6) 1 = very dissatisfied; 5 = very satisfied

Household Information

22. How long have you lived in Afton? Average 21 years (16 years) max. 85 years

23. What is/are your age(s)?

Under 30	1% (15%)	30-39	9% (18%)	40-49	23% (33%)
50-59	36% (30%)	60 plus	32% (18%)		

24. Indicate the number of people within each age group living in your household:

under 6	5% (7%)	6-11	7% (10%)	12-17	15% (9%)
18-44	29% (30%)	45-64	61% (36%)	65 plus	23% (7%)

25. Do you live in the Old Village? Yes 7% (n/a 1997)

26. What is your marital status? Single 16% (17% incl. divorced, widow)
Married 75% (77%)

27. What is your household income before taxes? (optional)

Less than \$15,000	1% (1%)	\$55,000-74,999	7% (16%)
\$15,000-24,999	2% (4%)	\$75,000-99,999	11% (21%)
\$25,000-34,999	1% (6%)	\$100,000-124,999	9% (32% ...)
\$35,000-44,999	1% (9%)	\$125,000-150,000	7% (greater than ...)
\$45,000-54,999	4% (11%)	\$150,000 plus	19% (\$100,000 in 1997)

Other Comments

Many respondents included extensive write-in comments in addition to (or instead of) answering the specific questions on the survey form. The comments are very rich in their expansion of the survey questions and qualification of the answers to specific questions. All the comments are copied verbatim in a spreadsheet on the Afton city web site, www.ci.afton.mn.us/. The same spreadsheet contains all the raw answers to questions from the 434 surveys returned. Interested parties are urged to explore the diversity of responses available on the web page.

(JHF 9-2-07)