



collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
Ford River Township

CC: Charles Detiege, Zoning Administrator

FROM: GRAEF
Brianna Fiorillo, Planner

DATE: May 30, 2023

SUBJECT: Master Plan Update: Community Engagement Results

This memo was prepared to provide the results of the online community survey and comment map following the promotion of the Master Plan Update engagement process.

I. SOCIAL PINPOINT WEBSITE

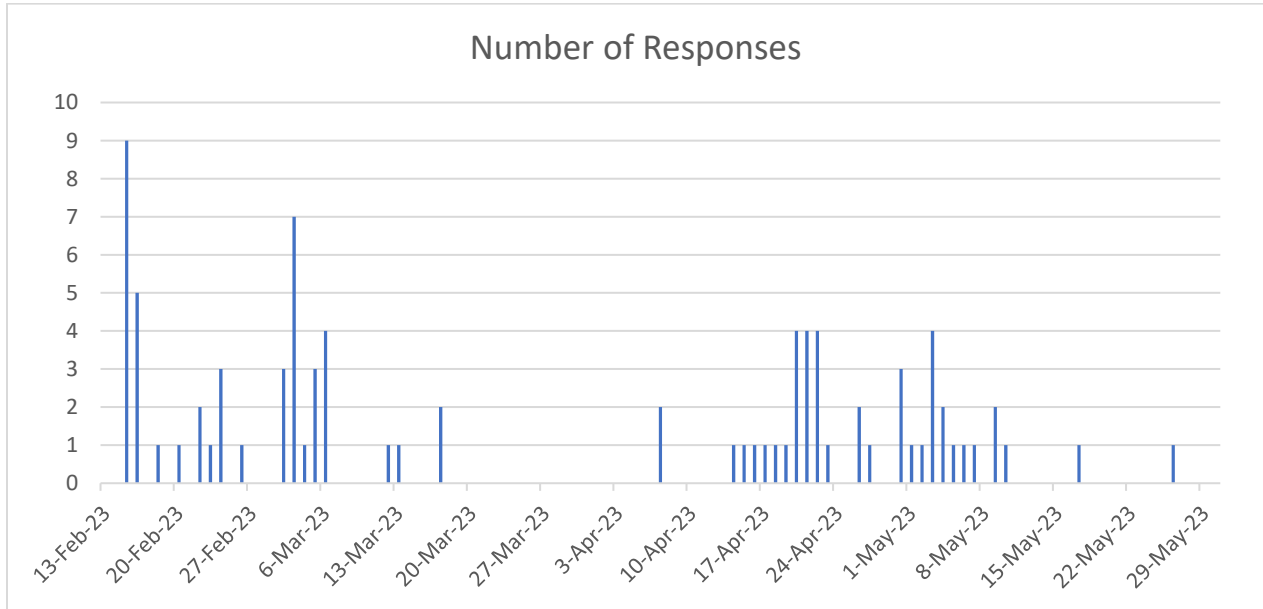
A Social Pinpoint website (<https://graef.mysocialpinpoint.com/ford-river>) was created as a way for residents of Ford River Township to provide feedback to inform the Master Plan Update. The website provided a user-friendly platform for residents to access information about the planning process, project timeline, and complete the engagement modules from any mobile device. The website was launched on February 13, 2023 and remained open for feedback through May 29, 2023. Although the community survey and comment map are closed for feedback, the Social Pinpoint website remains live for residents to check on the project progress, announcements, and information about upcoming meetings. The following table summarizes the responses on the Social Pinpoint website:

Statistic	Number of Stakeholders
Unique Users	517
Total Survey Responses:	88
Comments on Interactive Map:	19

Note: Social Pinpoint defines “Unique Users” as the total number of unique people viewing the website (generally determined by using the same browser).



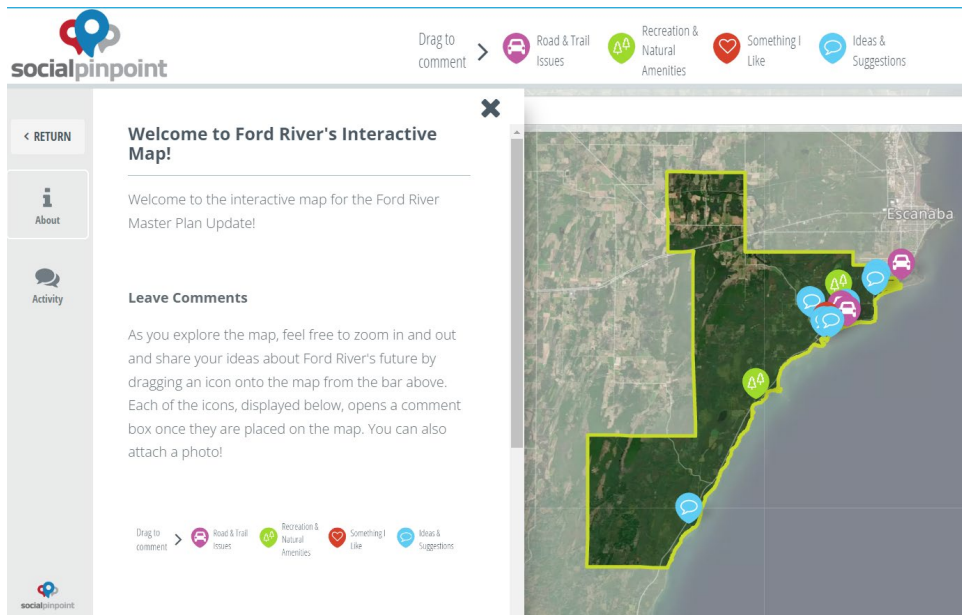
collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte



Most responses occurred in mid-February and early March. This engagement is likely due to the Township’s promotion of the Social Pinpoint website alongside the Community Open House in mid-February and corresponding social media (Facebook) promotion of the survey launch in early March.

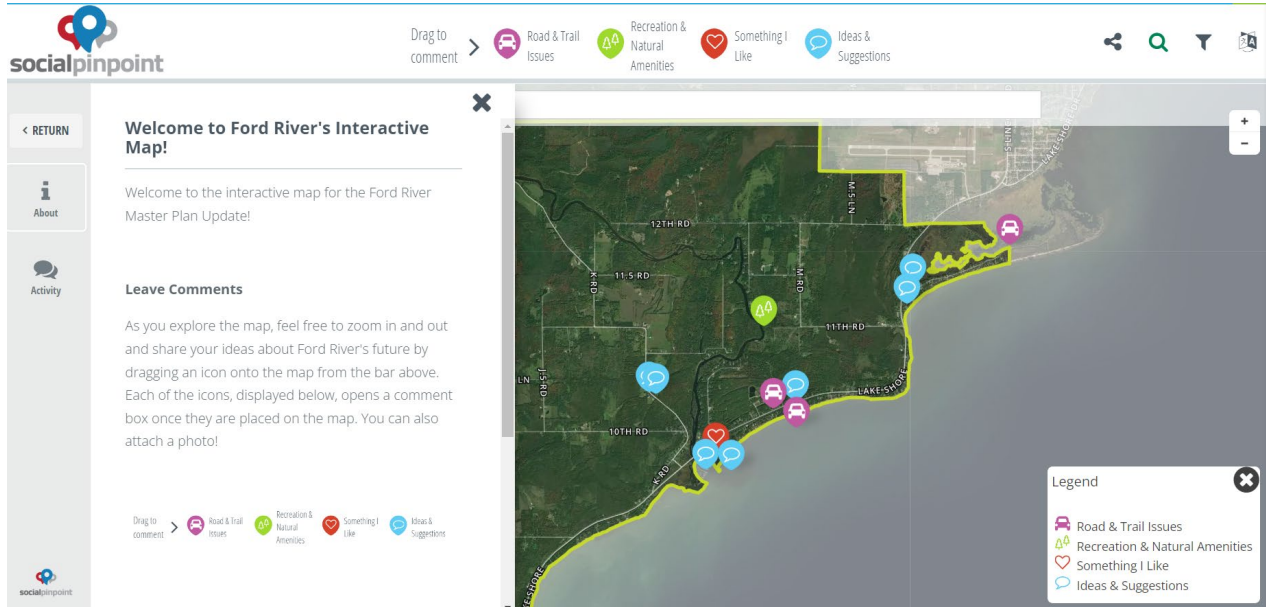
II. COMMENTS ON THE INTERACTIVE MAP

There are 19 comments on the interactive map. The distribution of comments is shown in the images below:





collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte



Visitors to the website were able to “Like” or “Dislike” comments made by other visitors. Included below are the most liked comments:

- **Land Use:**

- *“I would love to see FRT buy this property [former campground site] and create a revenue-generating campground. In addition, it would provide residents with a sandy beach, playground, and park. The income from camping could help offset the cost for the land. Another possible way to generate revenue would be through annual large events.” – 12 likes, 0 dislikes*
- *“Zoning considerations for the property where the boat business currently is (and is for sale) should be zoned for a hotel at this location. On the river, near the lake, across from the boat launch, its ideal for outdoors people. Good for local businesses. Many of the historic cabins have been developed. We need to replace those cabins, especially if air bnb remains outlawed. [It’s] good for business. [It’s] a beautiful, unused spot in need of a new use.” – 5 likes, 3 dislikes*
- *“Enforce Ford River’s existing lighting ordinance to eliminate lighted billboards too close to residences. Further restrict commercial and civic outdoor lighting (lower intensity [and] lower K rating) to protect and preserve the beauty of the night sky.” – 8 likes, 0 dislikes*

- **Transportation:**

- *“Ford River, especially in the winter, is dangerous for any pedestrian to have any way of walking, with the lack of a sidewalk. There was a wood walkway on this stretch historically, if safety is an issue in ANY way, in light of accidents and the fatality at the store in Sept 2021, this should be a top priority. A neighborhood needs at least ONE sidewalk.” – 8 likes, 1 dislike*



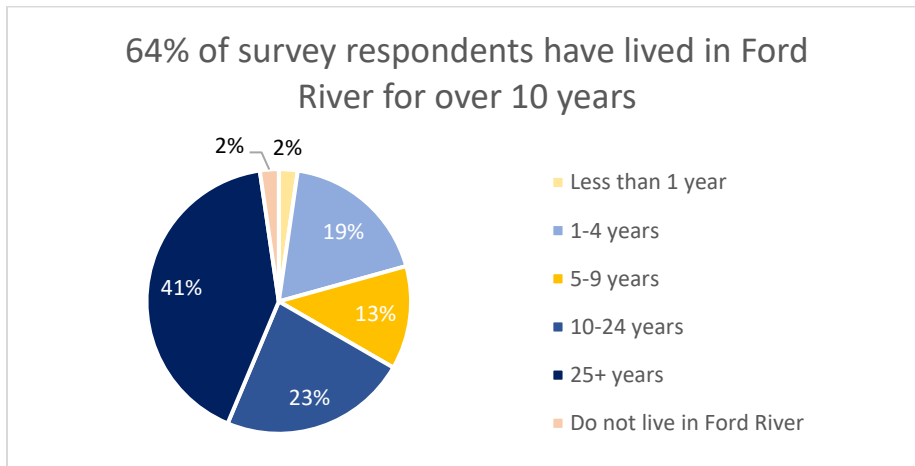
collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte

• **Natural Resources & Recreation:**

- *“This area [just north of Island View] would make a nice small roadside park with access to the shoreline if developed with better parking and picnic tables. A kayak launch might also be possible.” – 5 likes, 0 dislikes*
- *“Possible non-motorized bridge across the Ford on State of Michigan land.” – 7 likes, 2 dislikes*
- *“Engage the county on forming a Parks and Recreation Commission for county parks. If a township has a county park within its boundaries, they would assign a township board member to serve on that commission and would represent their residents feedback relating to that park.” – 5 likes, 0 dislikes*

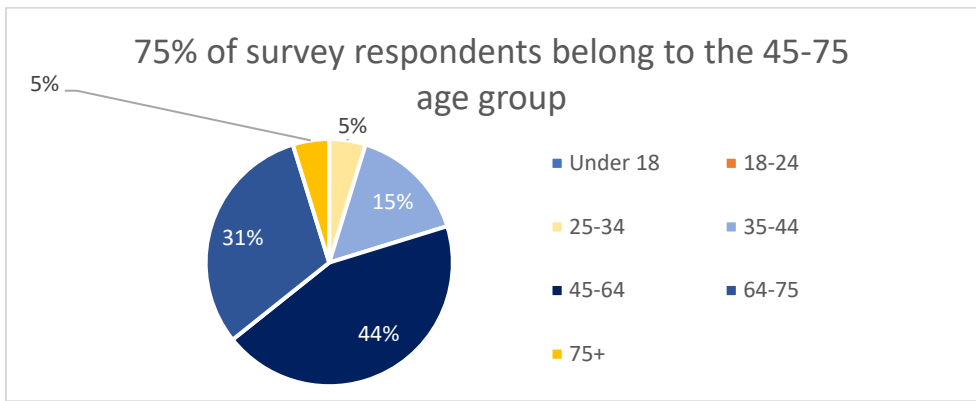
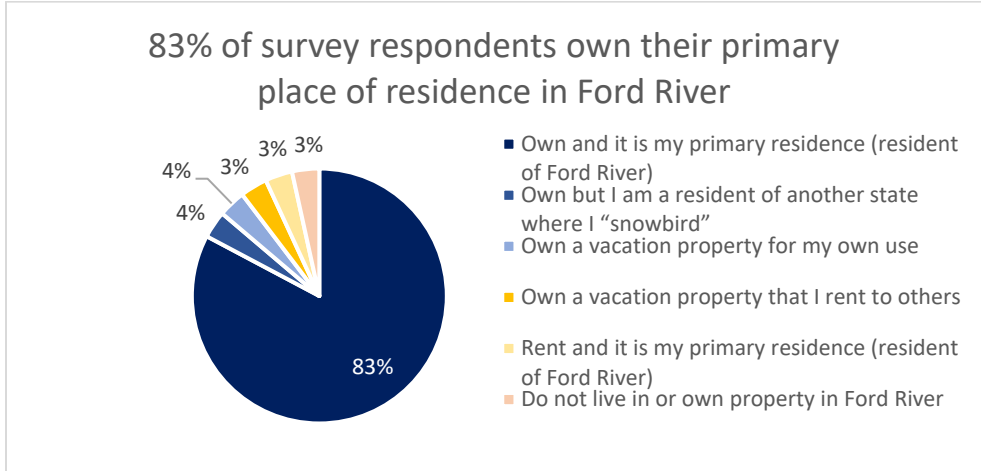
III. WHO ANSWERED THE COMMUNITY SURVEY?

The majority of survey respondents were residents of Ford River who own their place of residence and have lived in the Township for over 10 years. 71% of survey respondents belong to the 45-75 age group, while only 20% of survey respondents belonged to the 25-44 age group. Most respondents lived in a household with 2-3 adults and nearly 75% responded that they live in a household with no children (under 18).



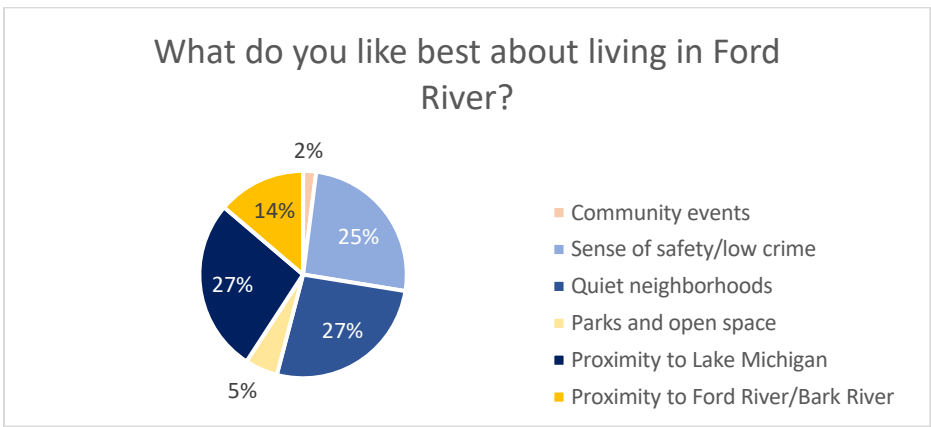


collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte



IV. SURVEY RESULTS BY TOPIC

A. 41% of respondents expressed proximity to the lakefront and/or riverfront as one of the top things they like about living in Ford River. Other top choices were the Township’s quiet neighborhoods, and sense of safety/low crime (respondents were able to pick up to 3).





collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte

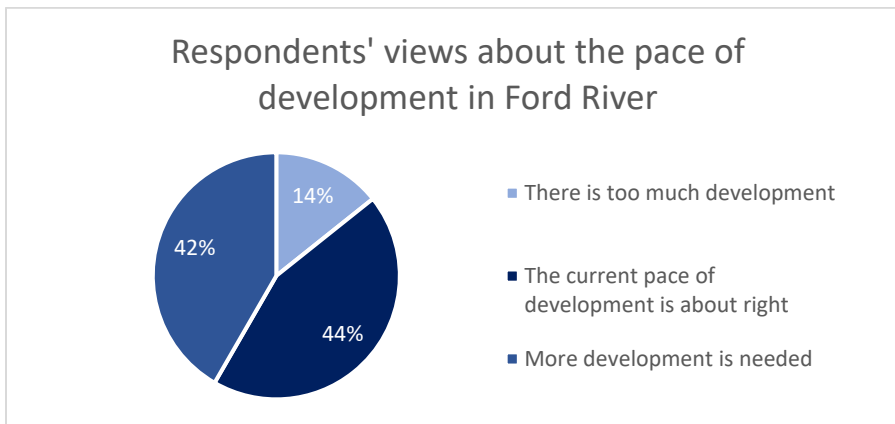
Respondents were also able to describe reasons they love living in Ford River. Responses included:

- Proximity to Escanaba (2 response)
- Grew up in the area (1 response)
- Family (1 response)
- Privacy (1 response)

B. Respondents were able to describe their ideas for improvements that would make Ford River a better place to live/work/play. The following major themes represent comments left by multiple survey respondents and are in no particular order:

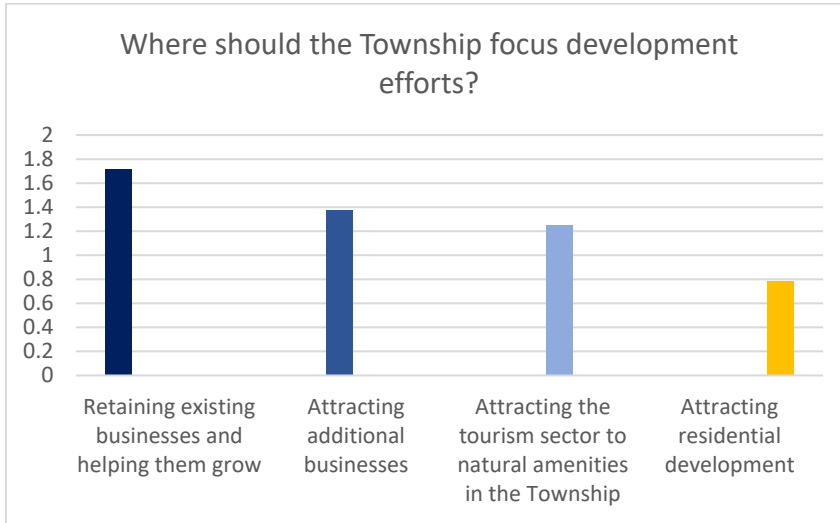
- **Natural Resources:** Access to [public] beaches/harbor
- **Recreation:** More bike/walking/hiking trails; motorized trails; activity areas
- **Land Use:** More housing options for visitors/tourists; improved property maintenance
- **Housing:** More single-family housing options; more options for short-term rentals
- **Community Facilities/Utilities:** More community events/larger community center; road surface improvements;
- **Transportation:** Safety improvements along M-35; access to river transportation (kayaking/canoeing)

C. Respondents were divided in their views about whether Ford River needs more development or if the current pace of development is about right (development was defined as residential, commercial, or industrial growth) in Ford River.

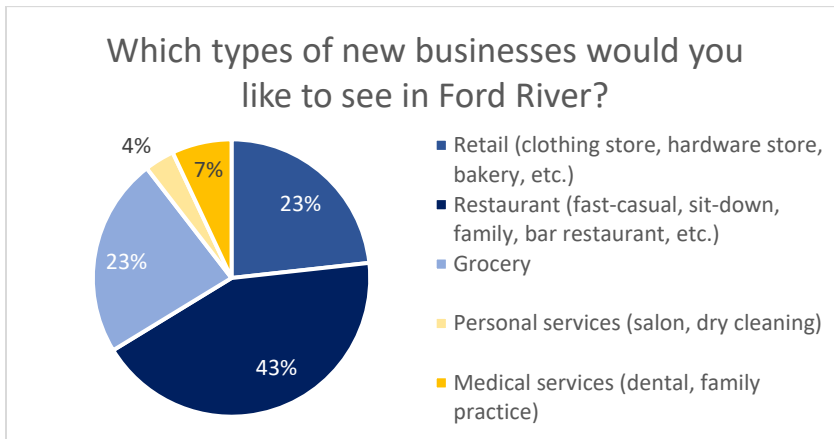




collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte



D. For those respondents who did want to see new businesses move into the community, restaurants and retail were the top types desired, followed by grocery and personal services.



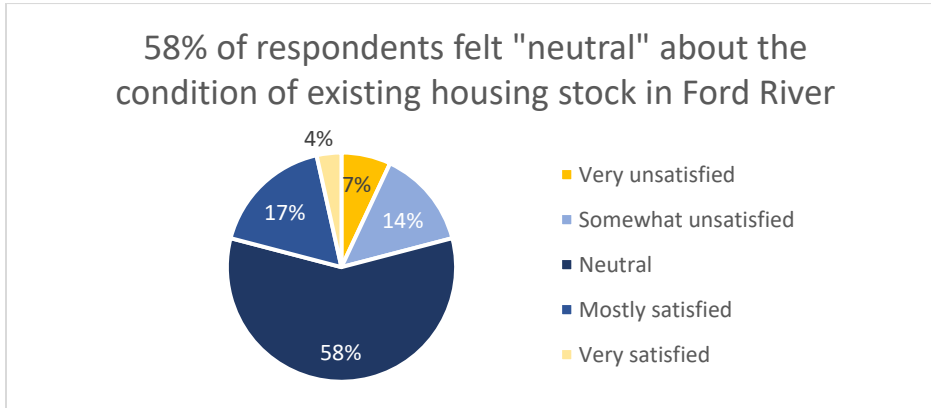
Many respondents also left their own comments for the types of businesses they'd like to see, including and in no particular order:

- Year-round hotel(s)
- Activity-based businesses (outdoor recreation, equipment rentals, etc.)
- Gas station(s)
- Coffee shop

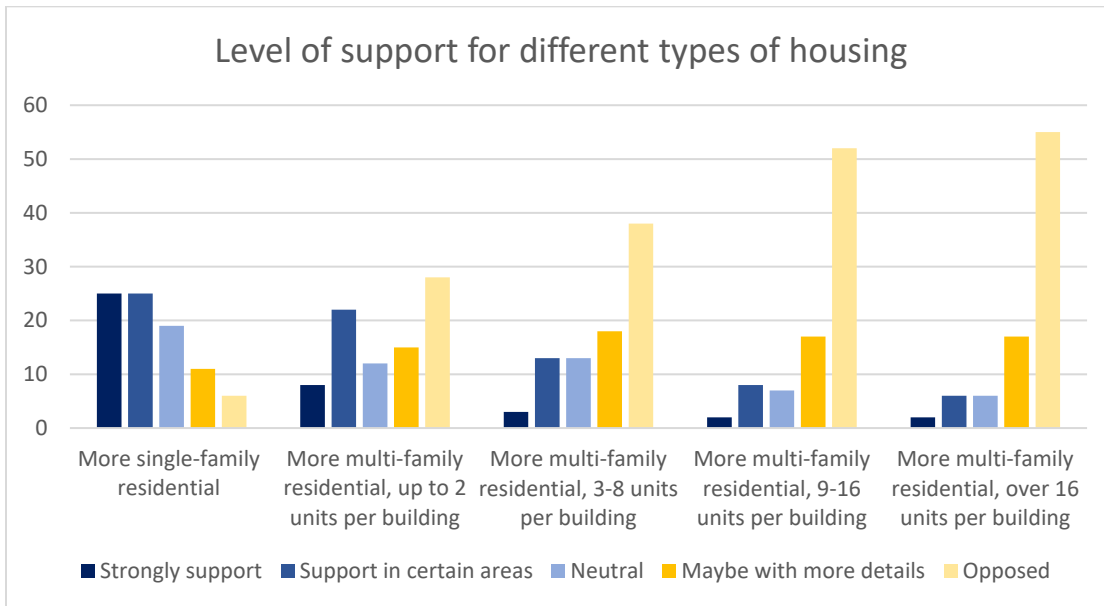


collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte

E. The majority of respondents indicated they felt “neutral” about the existing housing inventory within Ford River.



F. Respondents were generally supportive of more single-family residential housing, and mostly opposed to residential buildings with over 8 units per building.



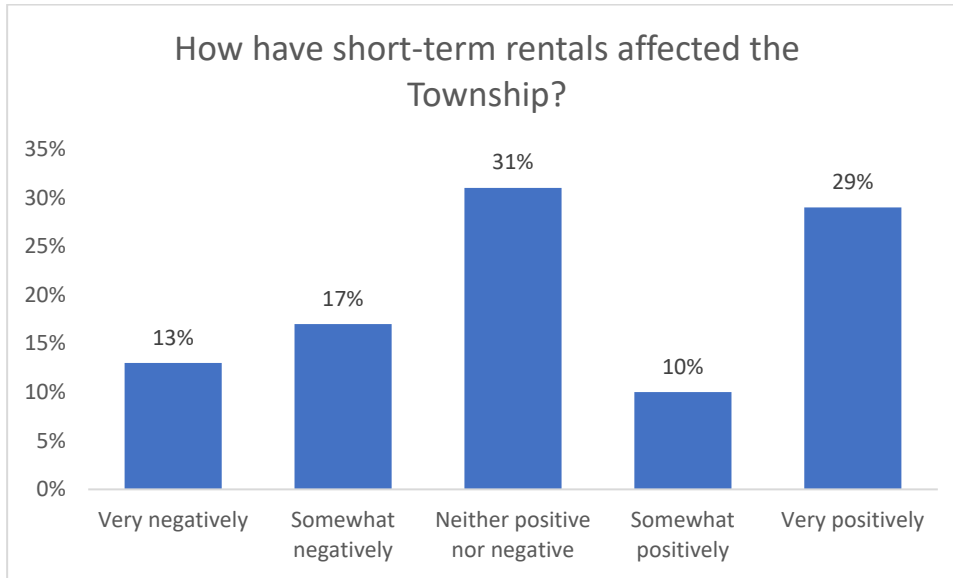
In addition, residents left comments related housing. Major themes included:

- Desire for stronger enforcement of property maintenance/upkeep
- Encouraging single-family residential development in other areas besides along the lakeshore
- Concern over expansion of water/sewer to accommodate new housing
- Maintain the rustic/rural atmosphere of the Township
- Desire to update the zoning ordinance, especially approval processes and content on short-term rentals

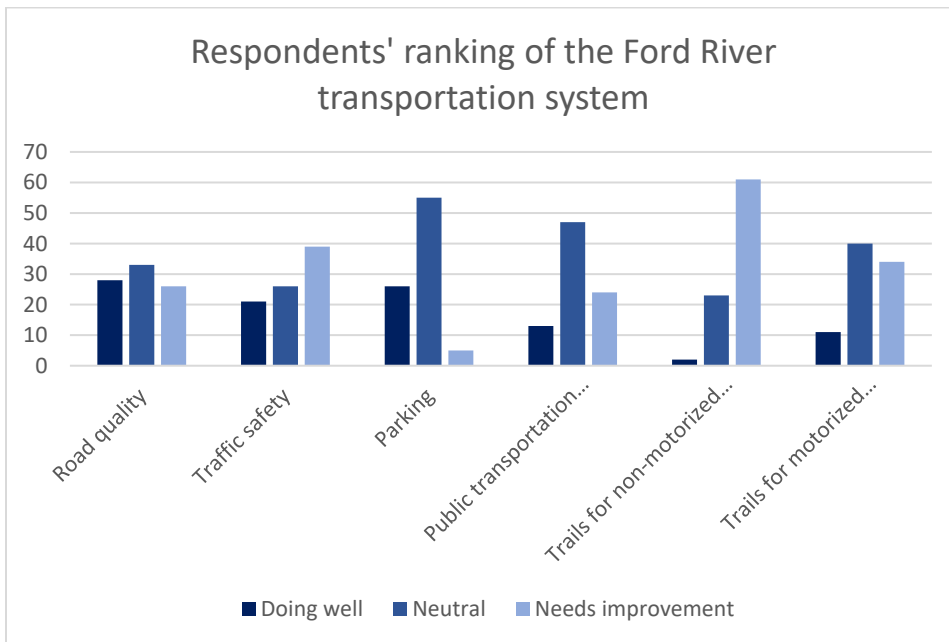


collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte

G. When asked about views on short-term rentals, responses were fairly even split between positive, neutral and negative effects on the Township. 39% of respondents viewed short-term rentals as having very or somewhat positive effects; 31% were neutral; and 30% responded that short-term rentals somewhat or very negatively affected the Township.



H. Respondents identified traffic safety and trails for non-motorized activity as “needing improvement.”



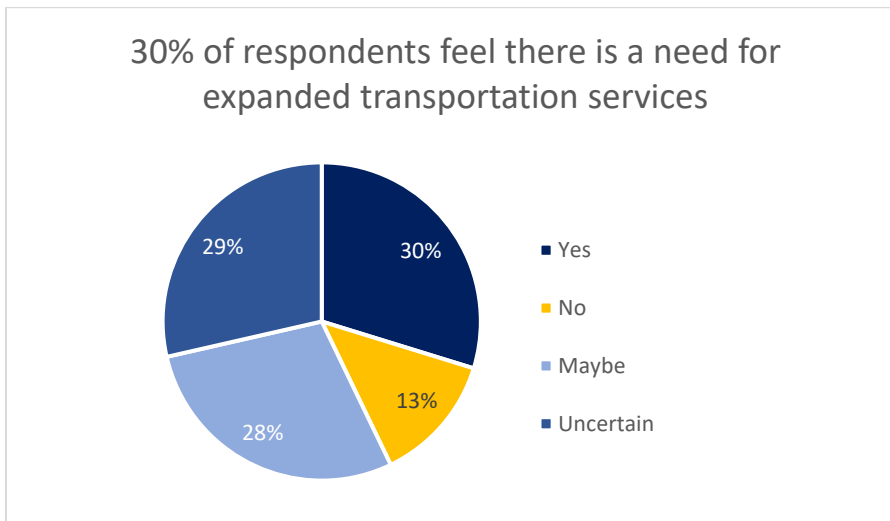


collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte

Respondents also left comments on their thoughts for the transportation system. Major themes included:

- Desire for public hiking, walking, and biking trails
- Safety is a concern along M-35 both for bikers and those pulling out of their driveways, mostly due to speeding and semi-truck traffic
- Desire for expanded motorized trails to attract recreational users to the area
- Taxi/rideshare options are seen as being expensive or unavailable in Ford River

I. Approximately one-third of respondents felt there was a need for expanded transportation services, such as transportation for older adults to doctor's appointments.



In addition, respondents commented some specific ideas and concerns about the transportation system. Major themes included:

- Interest in seeing the Township work with the County to reduce speeds and passing along M-35
- Some respondents felt there was a need for bus/shuttle service between Ford River and Escanaba/Gladstone, while others felt there were sufficient options for transportation



collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte

J. Respondents were asked to select which recreational amenities and activities they would like to see in Ford River (respondents could select up to 10). The following table shows the amenities that received the most votes:

Amenity	Number of votes
Kayak/canoe access points	49
Unpaved trails	40
Cross-country ski trails	36
Fishing access points	33
Paved trails	32
Picnic areas with tables and grills	27
Boat ramps	27
Outdoor ice-skating rinks	25
Baseball/softball fields	22
Restrooms	20
Playground equipment	16
Archery ranges	15
Basketball courts	15
Biergarten	15
Disc golf courses	15
Pickleball courts	15
Community center	14
Dog parks	13
Rentable shelters	10
Outdoor pool/aquatic center	10
Shade area or benches	6
Tennis courts	5
Outdoor fitness equipment	5
Skate parks	2
Football fields	1
Soccer fields	0
Lacrosse fields	0

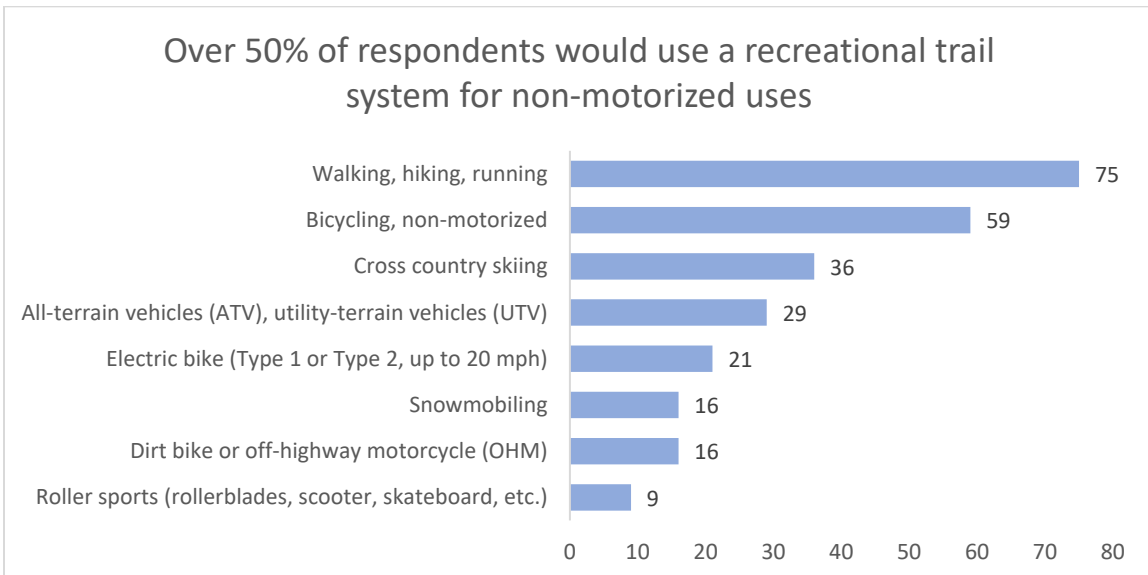


collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte

- K. A large majority of respondents (90%) felt it was at least “somewhat” or “very” important to develop a recreational trail system in the Township.



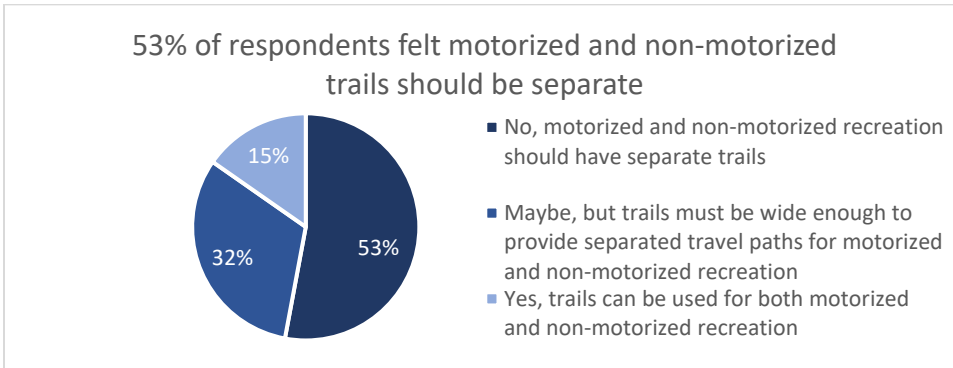
- L. Respondents indicated they would use a recreational trail system for a variety of uses, especially non-motorized uses such as walking, hiking, biking, running, and cross-country skiing.





collaborate / formulate / innovate

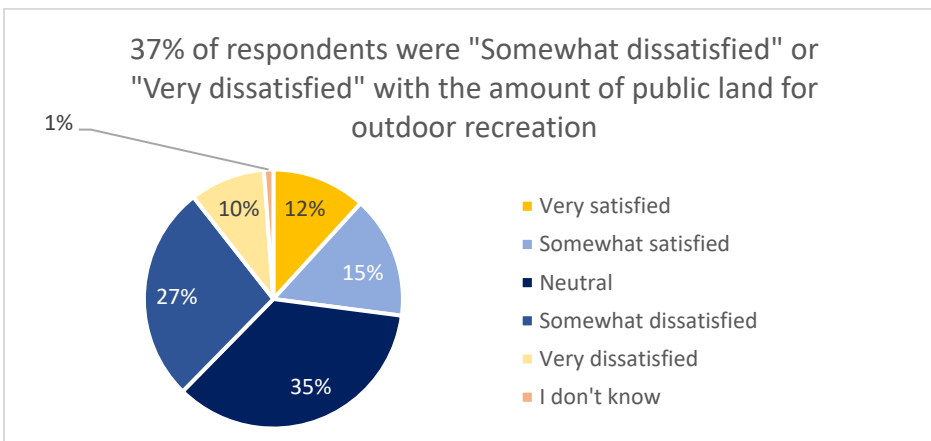
M. The majority of respondents felt that motorized and non-motorized trails should be separate.



Respondents identified many potential ideas for new trails, paths, crossings, and connections. Major themes include:

- Access points from all major roads in the Township
- Connection from Escanaba to the Ford River boat launch
- Along the Ford River, Bark River, and Lake Michigan
- Connections to existing DNR trails
- Public beach walk

N. Approximately one-third of respondents were “somewhat” or “very” dissatisfied with the amount of public land available for outdoor recreation, such as walking trails, wildlife observation, canoeing, kayaking, bicycling, picnicking, etc., within the Township while approximately one-third were “neutral” and nearly one-third were “somewhat” or “very” satisfied.





collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte

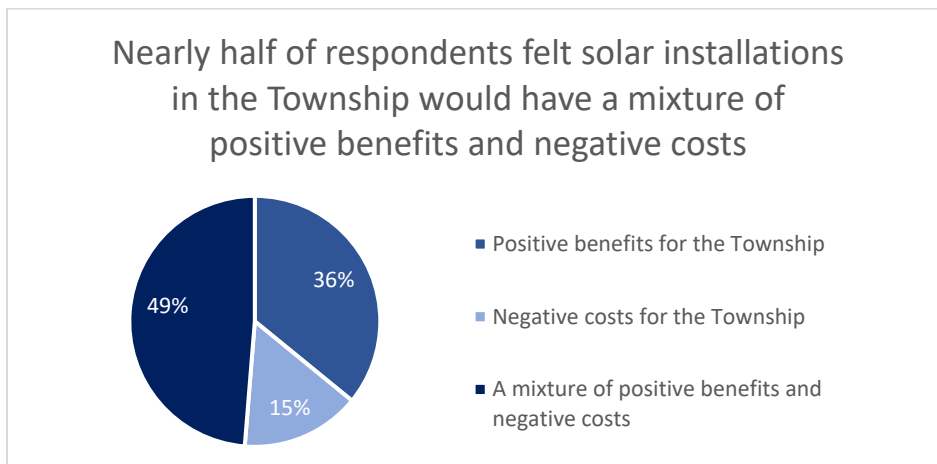
O. Respondents were asked to describe what “protecting the natural features of the Township” meant to them. Major themes included:

- Protecting the natural features and utilizing them at the same time
- Protecting natural features while also promoting growth
- Access to nature is a defining feature of the community
- Keeping the rivers and lake clean and free of trash/pollution; prevent erosion
- Protecting sensitive habitats such as bird-nesting areas, especially those habitats important to tourism
- Protect tracts of forest for wildlife

P. Respondents were asked to share their thoughts on the question: “What improvements would help increase public access to Lake Michigan and the Ford River?” Major themes included:

- Promote existing access points
- Ensure adequate parking for residents and tourists
- Provide additional boat/canoe/kayak access points with restrooms
- Provide a public beach/harbor
- Expand existing facilities at the boat launch
- More fishing docks

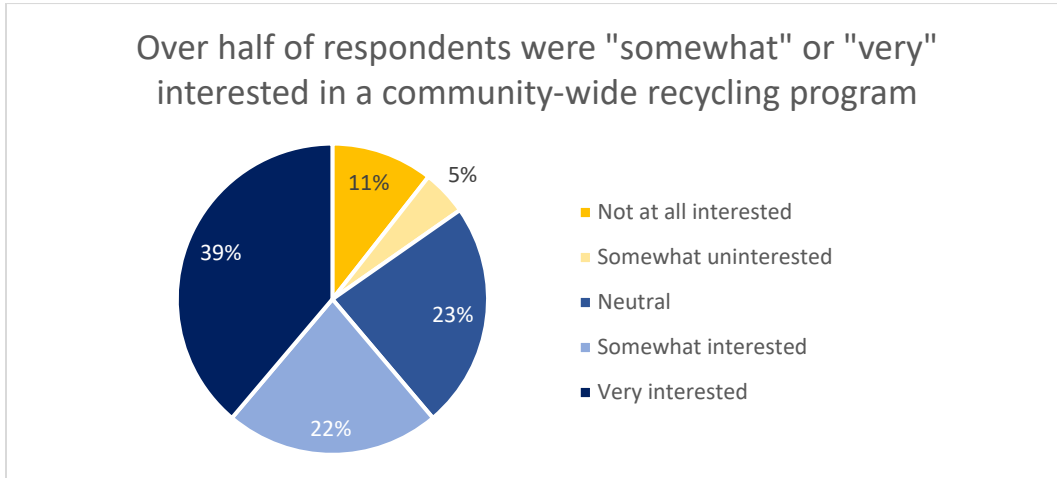
Q. Approximately one-third of respondents felt solar installations in Ford River would have positive benefits for the Township, while 15% felt they would have negative costs.





collaborāte / formulāte / innovāte

- R. Over half of respondents stated they would be at least somewhat interested in a community-wide recycling program, while 16% were “somewhat” or “not at all” interested.



- S. Respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on the following question: “What are your thoughts on future development patterns that have the potential to change the identity of the Township?” Major themes included:
- Address water and sewer expansion prior to more development
 - Ensure any potential development complements or maintains the rural character of the Township
 - Explore ways to promote and encourage tourism to help Ford River grow
 - Clean up the existing infrastructure within the Township
 - Promote smaller, privately owned businesses
 - Address short-term rental policy
 - Moderate growth could be good for the Township
- T. To conclude the survey, respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on the following question: “Any other thoughts you’d like to share with us on the future vision for Ford River Township?” Major themes (that have not already been stated within this summary) included:
- *“I’d like to see Ford River Township become more ‘modern.’”*
 - *“I’d like to see Ford River Township to be more stop by and enjoy the community instead of a drive thru community.”*
 - *“I would highly encourage the development of a formal welcome package for new residents.”*
 - *“We are opposed to any marijuana businesses in our community.”*