

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF COUNTY SURVEY AND PUBLIC COMMENTS (December 2002)

In December, 2002, Granite County conducted a county-wide survey to obtain residents' opinions on local issues. Approximately 1,370 questionnaires were mailed to households in Granite County, and 514 were completed and returned, for a 37% response rate. That percentage of responding households provides a statistically valid sample of the population of the county. A full summary and analysis of the survey results are presented in a separate publication *Summary and Analysis: County-Wide Citizens Survey*.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

The 514 responding households have 1,076 occupants, for an average of 2.1 persons per household. The households have 546 males and 530 females, and have a total of 206 children under age 18.

Seventy-one percent (71%) of the respondents have lived in Granite County for 10 years or more and of those, 51% have been residents for 20 years or more. The average age of the respondents was 55 years old; 44% are 50-70 years old. Unusual is the fact that 19% of the respondents are older than 70 years.

Of the respondents:

- 87% Own their home
- 82% Own single-family homes
- 43% Qualify as low or moderate income households
- 14% Are landlords, who have a total of 36 units
- 13% Live in mobile homes
- 10% Rent their home

The following are the largest number of occupations represented by the households:

- 27% Retired
- 21% Small business owner
- 14% Federal, state or local government or school employee
- 13% Farmer/rancher
- 10% Small business employee
- 8% Agricultural services business owner
- 7% Professional person

Community Facilities and Services

A majority (50-55%) of Granite County residents had a positive feeling about fire protection, law enforcement and snow removal services. Respondents rated the following services as “good” or “very good:”

- 54% Fire Protection
- 53% Law Enforcement
- 50% Snow Removal
- 48% Ambulance
- 47% Elementary Schools

Survey respondents rated the following services as “Poor” or “Very Poor:”

- 40% Youth Activities
- 35% Drug Prevention
- 33% Services for Mentally/Physically Impaired
- 31% Affordable Housing

When asked to comment on any problems with public facilities or services, the most number of responses were:

- 31 County roads/city streets
- 20 Hospital; clinic; medical facilities
- 16 Water quality, quantity
- 13 Ambulance service

The following were mentioned most often as changes or improvements people would like to see in Granite County:

- 125 Better Health Care
- 110 Improved County Roads
- 102 More Youth Activities
- 99 Improved and More Effective Drug Prevention
- 91 Improved Law Enforcement

When asked if they would be willing to pay more taxes, assessments or user fees for better city or county services, households were generally opposed. Many commented that their answer would depend on how, and on what, the increased money would be spent. The results:

- 32% Yes (willing to pay more)
- 50% No
- 18% Don't know

Economic Development

Granite County resident generally have a negative perception of the county's economy. Of the survey respondents 62% characterized Granite County's economy as "Poor," 22% as "Fair".

Granite County residents tend to purchase a number of items out-of-town, most of which might be expected:

- 85% Clothing
- 80% Major appliances and furniture
- 75% Medical services
- 58% Groceries
- 56% Hardware

Granite County citizens are very supportive of the county participating in economic development and offering help to new or existing businesses. Of the respondents:

- 78% Believe that the city and/or county should seek federal or state funding to assist businesses
- 75% Believe economic development is critical to the future of Granite
- 73% Believe that the County should be involved in economic development
- 70% Believe the city and/or county should provide incentives to assist businesses

Survey respondents felt the greatest barriers to business and industrial development were (respondents could check more than one answer):

- 305 Competition from other cities
- 264 Transportation and distance to markets
- 180 Lack of residents' support for local business
- 158 Lack of trained workers
- 137 Taxes on business and industry

Survey respondents feel that a grocery/supermarket and a retail clothing store would be most beneficial to Granite County. The types of businesses cited as most beneficial include:

- 70 Light manufacturing; small business
- 53 Clothing; retail; mercantile
- 47 Tourism
- 45 Mining
- 39 High Tech
- 36 Drug store, pharmacy
- 33 Adding value to agricultural products

Most respondents feel that Granite County's scenery, outdoor and winter recreation are attractions or features that should be showcased or promoted.

Respondents felt the following were the best types of businesses to foster economic development in Granite County (respondents could check more than one answer):

- 246 Light manufacturing
- 212 Natural Resource Development
- 196 More tourist promotion
- 179 Adding value to agricultural products
- 151 High Tech Business

Housing/Households

Only one-fifth of the respondents say that they would apply for low interest loans or grants to repair defects in their homes. Also, most respondents are not interested in down payment assistance, interest subsidy assistance or other home buyer assistance.

Land Use

Granite County resident agree with concepts regarding new growth in the county as follows:

- 86% New growth should minimize added costs to county taxpayers
- 80% New development should not interfere with existing agricultural operations
- 75% New growth should not occur on Granite County's most productive agricultural lands
- 70% Commercial and industrial growth should occur near existing communities
- 60% New growth should not develop adjacent to rivers, streams or lakes
- 54% All new growth should occur near existing communities
- 36% New growth should occur as low densities throughout the county
- 19% Growth should occur wherever developers choose

Granite County residents are even more favorable toward Granite County adopting policies or regulations to implement the above and other concepts. Survey respondents agree that policies, regulations or other measures should be adopted to:

- 91% Ensure development is orderly, safe and well-designed
- 90% Reduce the cost of new growth on county taxpayers
- 89% Protect streams, rivers and lakes
- 81% Encourage new growth in or near existing communities
- 78% Assure new development will not interfere with agricultural operations
- 47% Encourage development at low densities
- 16% The County should not adopt any policies or regulations affecting growth

ANALYSIS OF GRANITE COUNTY SURVEY

General

The survey seems to show that Granite County has an older, or perhaps an aging population. Of the various occupations listed, 27% were retired. Also, 39% of the respondents were older than 60 years, and 19% were older than 70 years. The average age of the survey respondents is 55 years.

Problems and Concerns

The poor economy, low wages, lack of job opportunities, lack of choices in retail goods and services, lack of youth activities, health care, county roads, and drug abuse prevention are the biggest problems as perceived by Granite County residents

Economic Development

More than 84% of Granite County residents characterize the local economy as fair or poor. Most survey respondents cite competition from other cities as the greatest barrier to business and industrial development. Other factors cited were transportation/distance to markets, and lack of local residents' support for business.

Respondents strongly favor an active economic development program (75%). Residents believe that the county should be involved in such a program, including providing incentives to assist business and seeking state or federal funding. They believe that the best businesses to foster economic growth in the county are light manufacturing, natural resource development, adding value to agricultural products, promoting more travel/tourism, and expanding retail trade. Respondents named outdoor and winter recreation and the ski area as features that should be showcased or promoted to foster increased travel/tourism trade. A grocery/supermarket and a retail clothing store were two businesses that people feel would be particularly beneficial to Granite County. Residents also favor light industry and natural resource development for future economic growth. Citizens want improved medical and health care.

Land Use Management

Granite County residents strongly favor (54%-86%) sound land use planning concepts such as: encouraging new growth near existing communities, minimizing added costs of growth to taxpayers, avoiding interference with agricultural operations or developing productive agricultural land, and discouraging development along rivers, streams and lakes. Only 19% feel that growth should occur wherever developers choose.

Residents favor the county adopting policies or regulations to implement the above land use concepts even more strongly than they support the concepts (75%-90%). Again, only 16% feel that the county should not adopt any policies or regulations affecting growth.

The survey results seem to give some definitive direction to Granite County regarding land use management. The residents want to see the County develop policy statements relating to land use and growth, and to propose regulations that will implement those policies.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AT PUBLIC MEETINGS

In addition to conducting an opinion survey, the planning board held public meetings in Philipsburg, Drummond, Lower Rock Creek, Georgetown Lake and a meeting with farmers and ranchers in Hall. Major issues cited by residents at those meetings are summarized below.

Lower Rock Creek

Residents of Lower Rock Creek feel strongly about protecting the integrity and water quality of Rock Creek. Most are supportive of adopting reasonable regulations that would prevent damage and contamination from haphazard development. A number of residents expressed the feeling that regulations should not create any barriers to existing or new businesses. Lower Rock Creek is not currently served by a fire district, and residents are concerned about fire protection. They want to explore the feasibility of creating a fire district. Residents would like better snowplowing and enforcement of speed limits on the Rock Creek Road.

Drummond and Vicinity

The Town of Drummond has recently improved its sewer system, and takes pride in its museum, library, senior center and school. The town sees the need for work on streets and alleys. Residents in the Drummond-Hall area are concerned about future subdivision development, and the impact it will have on irrigated lands and irrigation methods. One concern of residents is liability of agricultural landowners and ditch companies with expanding residential development. Residents in the Drummond area favor aggressive business and economic development, including increased tourist promotion. Residents observed that many travelers on I-90 stop in Drummond for a travel break, and events such as the tractor-pull and Montana Mule Days help entice travelers to stay in Drummond.

Philipsburg and Vicinity

A number of residents in the Philipsburg area expressed strong sentiments that private property rights be protected. Some were opposed to any form of zoning regulations. Other citizens said that they had seen the impacts of growth in communities in other states, and that planning and reasonable requirements are necessary to avoid those problems. Many of the people feel that maintaining or strengthening ranching, timber and mining industries was vital for Granite County. Ranchers in the Upper Flint Creek Valley discussed the importance of the Flint Creek irrigated lands to the economy of the county. People talked about the need to protect agricultural and timber lands to ensure a strong Granite County economy. Many Philipsburg-area citizens feel that while they don't like zoning, some form of reasonable land use regulations may be needed to protect the ranching, timber and mining. People seemed to feel that if any regulations are adopted, it should be through local planning and zoning districts where area landowners can develop their own regulations.

Georgetown Lake

Residents in the Georgetown Lake area feel very strongly about protecting the water quality, aesthetic and other amenities of Georgetown Lake. They want to form a planning and zoning district to develop land use regulations tailored specifically for the Georgetown Lake issues and concerns. Residents see the potential for additional development on vacant properties, and want to have policies in place to ensure future development is well-planned. Citizens want better road maintenance on county and U.S. Forest Service roads, better lighting on the intersection of Georgetown Lake Road and Highway 1, and local input into Forest Service decisions on campground and other development. Many Georgetown Lake residents believe that Granite County, Deer Lodge County, and state and federal agencies should develop a single, coordinated plan for the lake and vicinity.

Farmers and Ranchers

Granite County farmers and ranchers generally agree that agriculture is vital to the county, serving as the lifeblood of the economy, paying substantial property taxes and providing an appealing way of life. Most farmers and ranchers cherish their freedom and tend to resist more regulations, but many reluctantly feel that some land use regulation may be needed to protect the future of agriculture in Granite County.

Although not all agreed, most of the agriculture people at the meeting in Hall feel that the growth policy plan should:

- Prevent devaluing of agricultural land;
- Preserve productive agricultural land, but allow some opportunity to sell a few lots;
- Provide “right-to-farm” provisions that would prevent lawsuits and protect normal agricultural operations;
- Protect agricultural water rights;
- If some regulation is necessary, use localized “landowner-petitioned” planning and zoning district;
- Encourage business and economic development, and find sites of new businesses on less productive agricultural lands.