

Memo To: The Paxton Master Plan Committee
From: Adam Burney
Date: 14 December 2006
RE: Master Plan Survey Results

Details:

- 21 questions covering topics including Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Municipal Services and Economic Development.
- The survey was mailed to every household in Paxton, 1,468 in total.
- There were 607 responses for a 41.3% return rate.

Question 1. Why do you choose to live in Paxton? The top three answers were

- Rural Character
- Low Crime Rate
- Open Spaces

An honorable mention was the School System; it was the fourth ranked answer. This indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of the schools. The results for Question 1 indicate a clear preference for small town living in Paxton.

Question 2. What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing Paxton? The top three answers were:

- Cost of the School System
- Loss of Small Town Character
- Excessive Development

The results for Question 2 show concern that the things most liked about Paxton may be threatened. As for School Cost being the most prominent challenge this is not uncommon in cities and towns of any size.

Question 3. What should Paxton look like in the future? The top answer was

- Paxton should remain a bedroom/"agricultural" community. (216)

However this answer was not a runaway. The following two answers were very close behind.

- Paxton should have a few more commercial uses but should remain essentially residential (191)
- Paxton should be a residential and agricultural community, with additional commercial zones serving local needs.(187)

Were very close behind. This indicates a division among the residents of Paxton, even those who would like to see more commercial uses. Those who support having a few more commercial uses would not necessarily support those who favor more commercial zones.

Question 4. Are you satisfied with:

- The pressure in the municipal water system?
- The quality of the municipal water system?
- Paxton's cellular telephone service/coverage?
- The cable television services provided?
- The internet access available?
- The street lighting in Paxton?

Overwhelmingly Paxton residents are satisfied with all of the aforementioned services.

Question 5. How do you rate Paxton's commitment to:

Preservation and acquisition of open space?

Historic preservation?

The support of agricultural uses?

The majority of residents felt that Paxton was doing just enough for all of these community initiatives but there was strong presence of those who felt not enough was being done.

Question 6. Have you noticed any issues with home-based occupations in Paxton?

The overwhelming answer was that there was no perceived problem with home-based occupations.

Question 7. Do you feel that Paxton needs public transportation?

The majority of residents do not feel that Paxton is in need of public transportation. There are a significant number that feel it is needed however.

Question 8. Do you feel that Paxton's character is sufficiently protected?

Interestingly, by more than 2 to 1 residents feel that Paxton's character is sufficiently protected. This seems at odds with the results of Question 2 that indicate Paxton's second most prevalent challenge is "Loss of Small Town Character".

Question 9. Would you support any of the following measures to control residential growth?

All of the options were strongly supported but "Limit the number of building permits issued each year,"(347) was clearly the most popular. With very few building permits issued annually this choice raises many questions.

Question 10. In general, do you feel that Paxton's roads are adequately maintained?

This question was answered with a resounding yes.

Question 11. On the line provided next to each road segment, please indicate which one of the actions below you feel would be most appropriate for each road listed.

- Pleasant Street (Rt. 122 Worcester line to Rt. 56) was most highly scored for a "balance in vehicular traffic, pedestrian safety, maintenance costs and appearance".
- Pleasant Street (Rt. 122 through Paxton Center) was most highly scored for "increases in pedestrian safety"
- All other roads listed scored highest on "take no action."

Question 12. In the space provided please list any problem intersections and identify the issue of concern.

This question was open ended and was not meant to be quantified.

Question 13. What type of additional business do you feel is needed in Paxton? The top three answers were:

- Restaurants (364)
- Gas Station (297)
- Small Scale Retail (164)

These results are not too surprising. What is surprising is that 89 people said they would like to see no more businesses. This may be in conflict with the 216 people who said Paxton should remain as it is in Question 3.

Question 14. Do you feel that Paxton should pursue Economic Development?

- 348 people feel that Paxton should support ED for one purpose or another
- 229 people do not

The pursuit of ED would most likely include an expansion of commercial uses and zones but the number of people who supported that in Question 3 was well below 348. This indicates some conflict among the residents' thinking.

If Yes which of the following land uses would you support? The top three answers were

- Office Park (147)
- R & D (144)
- Regional Retail (127)

The high scores for office and research uses indicate a preference for high volume buildings with a high return of property taxes and low community impact.

Question 15. Do you feel that Paxton has a need for housing that low and moderate income households can afford?

No (284) was the most chosen answer, although nearly 2/3 as many people said yes (198). This shows that there is some strong support for affordable housing, which could perhaps be further increased upon demonstration of community need.

Question 16. What types of housing would you like to see more of in Paxton? The top three answers were

- Senior Housing (239)
- Single Family (190)
- None (130)

This reflects the aging population of Paxton and the homogeneity among the citizenry. The fact that "None" was the third highest choice is consistent with the theme many residents are concerned about the rate of development in Paxton.

Question 17. Have you visited Paxton's website www.townofpaxton.net?

There were about 100 more people who had not used the website as those who had.

If yes, have you used the online bill pay service?

The majority of those who responded had not used the bill pay service. This could indicate a need for better advertisement or could be a result of the newness of the service.

Question 18. In general, are you satisfied with how readily you can access Town services and offices?

The results show that by more than 4 to 1 Paxton residents are satisfied with the access they have to Town government.

Question 19. Please rate the services provided by the following Town Services and Departments based on your personal experience. Also, please indicate in the last column whether you would support more tax dollars for an increase or expansion of the service listed.

- All of the Public Safety agencies were ranked extremely well and would garner support for more spending, even if it is by a slim margin.
- The Building Commissioner and Cemetery Commission both had larger than average number of “Fair” & “Poor” responses. This may be a reflection of the enforcement of unpopular rules (Building Commissioner) and recent controversy (Cemetery).
- The Recreation Department had the most “Fair” & “Poor” responses. This may indicate the need for change or may be indicative of a general misunderstanding of the functions and duties of the department.

Question 20 Which of the following recreation facilities would you like to see in Paxton? The top three answers were:

- Bike Paths (285)
- Hiking Trails (278)
- Swimming Pool/Splash Park (265)

This indicates support for the proposed Wentworth Pool Project, a satisfaction with the number of existing ball fields and an inclination to use active recreation areas. There were two other facilities that warrant being mentioned and they are:

- Restoration of the Sliding Hill (199)
- Outdoor Ice Skating Rink (198)

This shows a widespread want for outdoor winter recreation.

Question 21. Please indicate the importance of the following proposed Town facilities and improvements by **RANKING** them in order of funding priority with 1 signifying the most important and 7 the least important. The top 3 were

- Building a new Public Safety Complex
- Renovating Town Hall for handicap access
- New Park facilities at the old Wentworth Pool site

The other three options were ranked about equally and were notably lower than the top three. This information will be of most interest to the Capital Planning Committee.