

“Shaping the Future” Survey Comments from Laird Township

The following comments (except summaries) are reproduced exactly as written by respondents to the 1997 Houghton County “Shaping Our Future” Land Use Survey who said they lived in Laird Township. All local governments and libraries received full survey results in 1998 (also available at <http://emml.mtu.edu/gem/community/planning/planning.html>).

- Laird Township surveys returned – 43. Total surveys returned, Houghton County – 1,936.

7. Lack of jobs, especially for young people, is a problem in our area.

- With regard to question 7, a bigger issue than the lack of jobs for young people is the shortage of technical/professional jobs for unemployed or under-employed professionals. There is no real shortage of entry-level jobs. [1600]*

11. More recreational opportunities are needed in my township/city/village. If so what kind?

Summary (with number of responses indicated; verbatim responses follow)

- ❖ roof on/improvements to ice rink - 7
- ❖ recreation for young - 5
- ❖ basketball court - 4
- ❖ park - 3
- ❖ recreation building - 3
- ❖ ski trails - 2

Verbatim responses (grouped generally from most common topic to least):

- most important—a roof over the ice rink [285]*
- roof on ice rink [289]
- roof on ice rink, basketball area [587]
- roof on the ice rink [1810]
- park & roof on skating rink, could be used year round [1809]
- funds for our skating rink & baseball teams [1826]
- basketball court, a better ice rink [295]
- places to get together for young & old [1643]
- youth oriented [487]
- any kind of activities for young children [264]
- a well “equipped” park for children plus cemented area for roller blading, basketball, etc., restaurant, mini bus transportation, bowling alley [1714]
- park and recreation for children, horse trails [1869]
- multi-purpose/rec. building for Laird Twp. [738]
- rec. building [1665]
- sliding hills, ski trails, hiking [800]
- cross country ski trails, shelters and campsites on the North Country trail [1600]
- some place to run about & exercise in winter months, a building for basketball, floor hockey, etc. [1899]

13. The small-town feeling of the area is worth preserving.

- Question 13 does not apply in the vicinity of Houghton. That area already lost its small town character over the past decade. [1600]

18. Some roads should be designated as “scenic” and should retain their natural character. If so, which roads?

Summary (with number of responses indicated; verbatim responses follow):

- ❖ US 41, mainly north of Calumet - 3
- ❖ Pike Lake road - 3

Verbatim responses (grouped generally from most common topic to least):

- Pike Lake [1412]
- Pike Lake Road [1641]
- Pike River Road [1810]
- Brockway Mt. Drive, US 41 Phoenix to Copper Harbor [527]
- US 41 L'Anse to Copper Harbor [1385]
- M-38 and 41 North of Calumet and 77 Hwy. 16 [288]
- South Laird and a couple others—too much dust in summer when dry. [285]
- mainly forest service [287]
- Cliff Drive, M-26, Copper Harbor [738]
- roads along Lake—shouldn't need to pay as the road at McLain Park used to be [487]
- Hancock to Calumet, forest hwy. [587]
- side roads such as Pricket Dam Rd to "Sidnaw/Kenton" area [1030]
- There are essentially no roads in this area which currently have a natural character. All, including the most scenic, show evidence of the impact of humans. Some are rural, some have pretty woods, some are undeveloped, etc. but none are "natural." I would only support "scenic" designation on some roads if the restrictions are comprehensive. Many people find clear-cut logging job less scenic than a gas station, for example. [1600]

C. Comments

General comments not identified with any survey statement were sorted into 33 categories during survey analysis (survey respondents were not aware of these categories). Some general comments that address more than one topic are divided into the appropriate categories, e.g., [251], #25 means that another part of survey 251's comment is found under category #25. Wording was not changed.

1. Jobs

- There is the shortage of technical/professional jobs. There is no real shortage of entry-level jobs. [1600]

2. Business and economic development—general

3. Concerns about development

4. Chain retailers vs. locally owned shops

5. Shopping/entertainment/restaurants

6. Tourism

7. Logging, timber industry, and wood products

8. Mining

9. Development location—downtown, renaissance zones, etc.

10. Development—Calumet/Laurium

11. Development—M-26/Sharon Avenue

12. Future U.S. 41 development, Hancock to Calumet

13. Waterfront development and public access

14. Property values and taxes

- People from the larger cities are moving up here to retire but also to try to dictate to the "locals" about changing to suit them. They get to purchase property at ridiculous prices and eventually make our property unaffordable for people who lived here all their lives at lower wages. [487]
- the land value out here [1920], #33

15. Planning

16. Cooperation among units of government

17. Lack of public input in development decisions, favoritism

18. Zoning, ordinances, building permits

19. Balancing environment and development

- We welcome moderate growth to our area, but not at the expense of our natural resources. We should encourage the diversity of small businesses as opposed to large corporations. The quality of life and the beauty of our environment are more important than bigger stores & homes. We've experienced unchecked economic growth/development in our home states of Florida & Pennsylvania. The land has become one big shopping mall & the ecosystems are stressed. I hope our county is wise and cautious with our resources. [1466]
- Growth is not always best. We have to guard our natural resources. [1641]
- There are many examples of mistakes and failure in trying to balance economic growth with land preservation. Our land/water in this U.P. is why we are all here. Research the solution. [1643]
- Also, there are more people in the area which is spoiling the area's natural beauty. [288], #25

20. Cultural history/community character/appearance/signs

21. Small-town feeling/quality of life

22. Historic buildings/improving existing properties/blending old and new

23. Open space, undeveloped land

24. Drinking water, wastewater, and health concerns

25. Property rights and regulations

- It seems that as time goes on, I find myself more limited by the DNR and private landowners as to my rights of snowmobiling, hunting and fishing. [288], #19
- (2) Legislation is needed so landowners would not have to fear lawsuits from people using their land and also from government interference; if so, more private landowners would welcome public use. [287], #29

26. Road maintenance, traffic control, and safety

- We need better roads! [286]
- Too much traffic on roads [348]
- Southern part of Houghton County, rural roads are in very bad condition. There is not 1 mile of paved or blacktop road in Laird Township. [1385]
- Our roads are well kept up here. [587], #31
- The side roads that are heavily traveled need attention—the dust in summer is very bad to your health. Big problem is the logging trucks. [285]
- Need dust control on primary roads in all townships for the health of our children, speed zones should be adopted in Houghton County on county roads where blind spots exist. Not 55 mph. This is important to our quality of life in the country where the scenic beauty exists. (What about our quality of life?) [289]

27. Snow removal

28. Public and non-motorized transportation

29. Tax incentives

- (1) There is too much land listed as nontaxable including that owned by Feds, State & townships. [287], #25

30. Government and public services

- We need recycling programs in small communities. [264]
- More attention should be placed in our outlying areas. As you should know the county stretches far south from Houghton & Hancock; and these areas should have more attention as far as jobs, roads, & recreation are concerned. I feel these areas are always ignored. [1826]

31. Recreation

- Laird Twp is a great place to live but our kids need more recreation. Our small rink is used nightly & our baseball field is great. Our rink needs a roof to cut down on snow removal & keep the ice. [587], #26

32. Survey

- When you publish the results of this survey, please include everyone's written comments. They are often at least as valuable as the answers people check for the questions. [1600]
- This cost-free survey reflects fairness and inclusiveness of all our citizenry. Thank you. [1601]

33. Miscellaneous

- Sturgeon River floating control; [1920], #14