

Overall results for Houghton County

Overall, the number of surveys returned, the responses to statements, and the comments made on the survey forms show strong interest in long-range planning, land conservation, growth management, private property rights, and jobs among Houghton County residents. The table on the facing page ranks the strength of agreement with each survey statement by total points (see p. 3). At least 80 percent of respondents agree with each of the top 15 statements in the table.

There is only one statement with which more residents disagree than agree: "Developers should be allowed to develop with little or no restriction because it helps the local economy." The next least popular statement has 57 percent agreement, 41 percent disagreement, and 20 points.

Respondents are divided in their reactions to statements regarding the benefits versus costs of recent development and the relative importance of "private property rights" versus "public interest." Of the three statements that specifically mention private property rights, the largest percentage of respondents (82 percent) agree that "We need to balance private property rights and public interest." Only 16 percent disagree and 48 percent agree strongly, for a total of 106 points. A larger percentage of respondents (54 percent) agree strongly that "Property owners should have absolute and final say about what happens on their property," but 21 percent disagree. Overall, 78 percent agree with the statement either strongly or somewhat (103 points). Almost the same number (75 percent) agree with the third statement, "Private property rights are more important than public interest when a development is proposed," 43 percent agree strongly and 23 percent disagree, for a total of 86 points. (For property rights results by age, length of residence, and location, see pp. 14-15.)

Overall, 82 percent of respondents agree with the statement, "Tax incentives associated with land trusts, conservation easements, and purchase of development rights should be encouraged to help landowners keep their land in its present use if they prefer not to sell to a developer." In contrast, only 64 percent agree that "Tax incentives, such as tax abatements, should be used to attract new businesses." Total points are 113 and 35, respectively.

Other statements address concerns raised by many area residents about the type and appearance of development projects. At least 84 percent of respondents agree with the following three statements:

- The design and appearance of new buildings and signs are important to the community.
- Some open space and undeveloped land should be protected from future development.
- Improvement of existing properties, especially those of historical significance, should be encouraged as an alternative to developing more land.

Interestingly, 36 percent of respondents (40 percent of those under age 60) feel that they do not have a voice in shaping the future of their community, township, or city. The Partnership hopes that the results of the survey will promote discussion of land-use issues and help provide the voice that many residents feel they lack.

Houghton County Results (1,936 Responses)

Results ranked by total points*

Sections are separated by differences of 40 or more points.

		Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	Total Points*
Highest Overall Agreement ↑	Statement: Long-range planning is needed to manage growth and to protect our environment and natural resources such as drinking water.	80%	15%	2%	2%	169
	The natural environment, scenic beauty, and "getting away from it all" are important to our quality of life.	77%	18%	3%	1%	168
	Neighboring townships, cities, and counties should identify and work together toward shared goals.	71%	26%	2%	1%	163
	Public costs for new water, sewer, and other services should be considered when any development is proposed.	73%	22%	2%	2%	161
	The small-town feeling of the area is worth preserving.	71%	23%	5%	1%	157
	Environmental impacts should be considered when creating new jobs.	59%	32%	6%	2%	139
	Lack of jobs, especially for young people, is a problem in our area.	63%	25%	8%	3%	138
	Change brought by economic development should be balanced with actions to preserve community character.	57%	33%	6%	3%	136
	The design and appearance of new buildings and signs are important to the community.	58%	31%	8%	2%	135
	Some open space and undeveloped land should be protected from future development.	63%	21%	9%	5%	127
	Improvement of existing properties, especially those of historical significance, should be encouraged as an alternative to developing more land.	55%	31%	9%	4%	123
	Some roads should be designated as "scenic" and should retain their natural character.	57%	23%	8%	4%	123
	Property is becoming unaffordable for local residents.	53%	29%	12%	3%	117
	Tax incentives associated with land trusts, conservation easements, and purchase of development rights should be encouraged to help landowners keep their land in its present use if they prefer not to sell to a developer.	46%	36%	8%	4%	113
	We need to balance private property rights and public interest.	48%	33%	8%	8%	106
	Property owners should have absolute and final say about what happens on their property.	54%	24%	13%	8%	103
	Public access to waterfront areas is becoming too limited	47%	30%	15%	5%	98
	Lowest Overall Agreement ↓	Private property rights are more important than public interest when a development is proposed.	43%	31%	15%	8%
New development would be acceptable to more people if it blended better with the historic buildings in the area.		38%	36%	18%	6%	83
"Big city" shopping and entertainment benefit the area.		24%	40%	22%	12%	41
Tax incentives, such as tax abatements, should be used to attract new businesses.		18%	46%	20%	13%	35
More recreational opportunities are needed in my township/city/village.		27%	25%	24%	12%	32
I feel that I have a voice in shaping the future of my community/township/city.		21%	38%	23%	14%	31
The benefits of recent commercial development along M-26 and Sharon Ave. outweigh any disadvantages.		24%	33%	27%	14%	26
Similar commercial development along US-41 between Hancock and Calumet would benefit the area.		25%	31%	20%	21%	20
Developers should be allowed to develop with little or no restriction because it helps the local economy.		8%	17%	24%	50%	-91

*200 points = unanimous strong agreement, -200 points = unanimous strong disagreement (see p. 3).

Percentages may not total 100 if some respondents did not express an opinion on a particular statement.