

CHAPTER SIX COMMUNITY INSIGHTS



6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Six presents an overview of community insights and priorities concerning future community development. The insights of the community were primarily examined through two separate, but inter-related processes.

- Facilitated discussions with community leaders that comprised elected members of the Town Council, as well as representatives of appointed Planning and Zoning, Economic Development, Natural Resources, and Water boards.
 - An initial September 7, 2014 meeting with community leaders identified and discussed general visions for the community, as well as more specific descriptions of community needs and opportunities.
 - A second meeting with community leaders on October 7, 2014 reviewed results of a community survey and refined a preliminary set of community development objectives and strategies for the coming decade. This session ended with each community leader completing an individual priority ranking process for all community development projects.
- A community survey was mailed to 1,066 households along with the September 2014 municipal water bill. Nine hundred and fifty-six of the respondents owned and resided in homes in the Town while 110 were owners of vacant lots in the community. The survey was completed and returned by 227 households which represented a return rate of approximately 21 percent.

The separate, but related methods for seeking insights from the community enabled Pedersen Planning Consultants to distinguish the visions of local decision-makers from residents who live with their decisions. Since results of the community survey were shared with community leaders before they refined community development objectives and strategies, community leaders were provided with the concerns, interests, and priorities of fellow residents and landowners in advance of determining directions and priorities regarding future community development.

A public hearing was also held on October 29, 2014. At this hearing, Pedersen Planning Consultants summarized findings in the plan, as well as the recommended community development objectives and strategies. The Town Council urged residents and landowners to review the draft municipal master plan. Digital copies of the plan were made available on the Town website; a few hardcopies of the master plan would also be available at the Town Hall for public review. Public comments received during the hearing are summarized in Appendix C.

6.2 COMMUNITY LEADER SEMINARS

6.2.1 September 9, 2014 Meeting

Jim Pedersen of Pedersen Planning Consultants opened the September 9 meeting with an initial presentation that outlined the scope of the master plan update, as well as how residents of the Town would be participating in the project. Subsequently, Pedersen asked each of the community leaders to describe their vision for the community, what is required to sustain the operation of municipal government, and what community needs and opportunities should be addressed in the coming decade. The general vision and more specific range of issues and opportunities that were identified and discussed by community leaders are summarized in Appendix A.

6.2.2 October 7, 2014 Meeting

Jim Pedersen of Pedersen Planning Consultants opened the meeting to indicate that community leaders would receive the results of the Community Survey before hearing and discussing preliminary community development objectives and strategies. Sandy Pedersen, Senior Planner, of Pedersen Planning Consultants subsequently presented the results of resident responses to the Community Survey. These findings are presented in section 6.3.

Pedersen Planning Consultants provided a preliminary set of community development objectives to all community leaders. The rationale and strategies associated with each objective were described. Discussions among the community leaders led to the refinement, deletion and addition of various objectives and strategies. The refined list of objectives, which are presented in Chapter Nine, were ranked in priority through a matrix evaluation provided to each community leader. Community leaders anonymously provided individual scores that were subsequently averaged by Pedersen Planning Consultants to determine an overall statistical ranking of the community development objectives.

6.3 COMMUNITY SURVEY

6.3.1 Sample Size and Related Statistical Validity

As stated earlier, 227 residents and landowners in the Town completed the Community Survey (see Appendix B1) that was distributed to 1,066 meter billing addresses. In terms of statistical reliability, the survey responses provide a good insight to the concerns of local residents and landowners.

There are 2,024 lots in the Town which are owned, vacant, and/or resided in by a survey population that includes roughly 2,000 households. The survey was sent to 1,066 of these landowners and/or residents. Given the sample size, the survey results have a margin of error of roughly two percent and a confidence level of 95 percent.

A margin of error of two percent can be described using the following example. If 60 percent of the survey responses favor something regarding a particular issue and 40 percent do not, you can be sure that if you asked the entire survey population the same question, between 58 and 62 percent would favor something and between 38 and 42 percent would not (Creative Research Systems, 2014).

The confidence level of 95 percent indicates how sure you can be about a response within the preceding margin of error. When the margin of error and confidence level are combined, it can be concluded that Pedersen Planning Consultants is 95 percent certain that between 58 and 62 percent of the survey population would favor something and between 38 and 42 percent would not (Creative Research Systems, 2014).

Another consideration is how representative the survey is of the entire survey population. The age of survey respondents is one gauge that can be used to make this evaluation. Surveys were completed by landowners and residents who were 20 years or older. The April 2010 Census indicates that almost 39 percent of the resident population was between 20 and 54 years of age while those residents 55 years and older comprised about 37 percent of the population. By comparison, 85 percent of those responding to the Community Survey were 55 years and older; about 15 percent were between 20 and 54 years of age. Consequently, survey results are significantly biased toward those households nearing or in their retirement years.

6.3.2 Survey Results

Results from the Community Survey are summarized in a series of statistical tables and bar graphs that are presented in Appendix B2.

6.3.2.1 *Who responded to the Community Survey?*

Aside from age, respondents to the Community Survey were primarily residents of Star Valley Ranch who were registered to vote in the precinct for Star Valley Ranch. Ninety-four percent of the respondents owned the Star Valley Ranch property where they lived. In terms of residency, 48 percent live full-time in the community, 37 percent are seasonal residents, and only 13 percent occasionally stay in the community.

The responses to these background questions suggest that there is a sizeable proportion of landowners whom claim Star Valley Ranch as their primary residence even though they reside in the Town on a seasonal basis. This is likely due to tax benefits associated with Wyoming residency where residents are not required to pay State income tax.

6.3.2.2 *What attracts people to the Town of Star Valley Ranch?*

In combination, natural beauty, recreational opportunities, people, and the quiet setting represent the primary assets that attract landowners and residents to the Town of Star Valley Ranch. Almost all respondents agreed that it is the natural beauty of the Town and surrounding area. Almost 82 percent said that they liked available recreational opportunities and 71 percent enjoyed the people who live in the community. Eighty-nine percent reported that they liked Star Valley Ranch because it is a quiet place to live.

Respondents varied considerably about whether or not Star Valley Ranch is a less expensive place to live. About 41 percent agreed that it was. But, 39 percent were neutral to this question and the remaining 20 percent considered that Star Valley Ranch was a more expensive place to live.

Most respondents were also neutral or disagreed to the proposition that they liked Star Valley Ranch because of the proximity to jobs in nearby communities.

Consequently, it appears that the quality of life offered at Star Valley Ranch are the driving factors that attract and sustain the resident and seasonal populations of the community. For some, the cost-of-living and potential income derived from nearby job opportunities represent constraints to enjoying the quality of life that is otherwise afforded to local residents.



6.3.2.3 *Priorities for Future Community Development*

Given several choices concerning the use of available funding, there is no question concerning the first priorities for future community development. Respondents expressed their priority for improvement of municipal roads (42 percent) and the completion of improvements to the municipal water system (35 percent). But other respondents did demonstrate some nominal support for better law enforcement, the encouragement of commercial businesses, improved fire suppression safety, medical services, and improved storm water drainage.

A considerable number of respondents emphasized and supplemented their priority selections with more specific comments. Many of the more specific comments called for the repair and pavement of municipal roads and the need for water improvements. Other more specific comments identified recreational needs for connecting subdivision plats with trails, park and play areas, and a community center. Two respondents also suggested that the Town take over the operation of existing recreational facilities from the Star Valley Ranch Association.

6.3.2.4 *Should We Encourage Private Investments Other Than Residential Development?*

Forty-four percent agreed with this proposition. But another 26 percent were neutral and the remaining 30 percent disagreed or had no response. While more respondents favored the idea of encouraging other investments, the community appears to be split in their support of other private investments in the community.

6.3.2.5 *Annexation*

The future annexation of adjacent properties to increase the size of the resident population was also not popular with respondents to the Community Survey. Forty-nine percent of the respondents disagreed with this proposition and 31 percent were neutral to the idea. But 18 percent favored the concept of annexing additional properties.

While the segregation of responses from the 20-54 age group is not statistically valid given the considerably smaller number of returns, it is interesting to note that the respondents of this age group expressed no support for the future annexation of adjacent properties.

6.3.2.6 *Support for Commercial Enterprises Within or Adjacent to Town*

Respondents were asked to provide their top three choices. Their responses indicated primary support for a restaurant, a combination convenience store that provided fuel for automobiles and some consumer items, and a grocery store.

Only 10 percent of the respondents indicated that they would support no commercial businesses.

Other supplemental written comments suggested that the population base was insufficient to support any commercial businesses. Further, if there were commercial businesses in Star Valley Ranch, they would adversely impact businesses in Thayne.

6.3.2.7 *Future Residential Development*

Question 12 queried whether or not the Town should encourage the development of duplexes, townhouses, and apartments in areas surrounding the Town of Star Valley Ranch. Two-thirds of the respondents expressed considerable opposition to this proposition. In contrast, about 21 percent agreed with the idea of encouraging alternate forms of future residential development. Only 12 percent were neutral to this concept.

6.3.2.8 *Recreational Opportunities*

Questions 11, 13 and 14 considered future recreational opportunities. Respondents expressed considerable support for encouraging the development of additional recreational facilities outside of the municipal boundary. Over 53 percent of the respondents favored this proposition. Although, 23 percent were neutral to the idea and 22 percent disagreed.

In terms of recreational opportunities within the Town, 68 percent agreed that the Town should seek ways to extend more community trails for walking, jogging and biking. Nineteen percent were neutral this proposition, but only 10 percent disagreed and three percent provided no response.

In terms of future changes to Fox Run Park, respondents expressed some difficulty in reviewing the available conceptual park master plan that was originally prepared by the Ashworth Group in 2008. Putting that aside, a considerable number of written comments to question 14 were provided and summarized in Appendix B2. The comments were highly varied with few recurring recommendations for specific changes to the Park being evident.

6.3.2.9 *School Bus Stops*

One third of the survey respondents believe that there should be more school bus stops that contain a bus shelter, bike storage, and vehicular parking. But, 52 percent were neutral to this proposition and over 16 percent disagreed.

6.3.2.10 *Municipal Complex*

Questions 16a and 16b focused on whether a proposed municipal complex on the Town-owned property along Vista Drive should include a medical clinic or a community center.

About one-third of the respondents were in favor of incorporating a medical clinic on the Town-owned property. Almost 34 percent disagreed with the idea. Another 33 percent were neutral to the suggestion. So, the community is very split in its view of this concept.

In terms of a community center, the incorporation of a community center on the municipal complex property received greater support. Over 45 percent supported this proposition compared to 24 percent who opposed the concept. But, about 27 percent were neutral to the idea.