

Beverly ON TRAC Community Survey

Summary of Results

Introduction:

The ON TRAC steering committee for the Town of Beverly conducted an on-line community survey during 2010 in order to assess the opinions of area residents about key issues effecting community development within the town. ON TRAC is a community development program supported by the WV Development Office. The program assists local communities in revitalizing downtown areas and planning for future development. Beverly was chosen as an ON TRAC community in 2009.

The survey was made available on-line and could be completed by anyone with Internet access. Paper copies were also made available at the Beverly Town Hall and the Heritage Center. Survey responses were collected over a nine month period between May, 2010 and January, 2011 and residents of Beverly or the immediate area were encouraged to complete the survey. Thirty-three completed surveys were received. Although the response rate was low, completed surveys appear to be representative of a diversity of people in the Beverly area.

Survey Respondents:

Most of the survey respondents live in the Beverly Zip Code area (75%) and the remaining surveys were completed by persons residing in the Elkins Zip Code area. Just over half of all respondents (51.6%) live within the boundaries of the Town of Beverly. One-third of the respondents are male and two-thirds female. More than half (54.8%) of those persons completing the survey are between 55 and 64 years of age. 32.2% of respondents are under age 55 and 12.9% are over age 64. Annual income of respondents varied notably from less than \$10,000 to over \$100,000 and the median income reported was around \$50,000 per year. Respondents are generally more educated than would be the norm for the general population of the Beverly area – all respondents reported some education beyond high school. 72.4% of those persons represented in the survey results hold a college degree.

Survey respondents indicated an interest in the future of the town of Beverly for a variety of reasons. The most often mentioned reasons for having such interest include:

- I want to see the history of Beverly preserved (77.4%),
- I participate in a local organization in Beverly (64.5%),
- I own or rent property in Beverly (45.2%), and
- I want to see more goods and services available in Beverly (48.4%).

Survey Findings:

What People Like Most and Like Least about Living in the Beverly Area:

Open ended questions were included in the survey about what people like and don't like about living in the Beverly area. Responses generally reinforce other findings from the survey.

Survey respondents tend to like the historic nature of the town, beauty of the area, quiet

“Beverly is a nice, pretty little town with a lot of history”.

- Survey Respondent

nature of the town, and recreational opportunities in close proximity.

What people like least is: the traffic through town, a lack of stores and services, and property that is not maintained and attractive.

“The service station at the end of town is a real eyesore. It detracts from a pretty town”.

- Survey Respondent

Respondents were also asked about what other similar sized towns have that they would like to

“Other small towns I have visited have a mix of food, art, shopping, and antiques available”.

- Survey Respondent

see in Beverly. Again responses generally reflected other findings from the survey. Many comments were about the local businesses and storefronts found in other similar towns. Other comments focused on clean streets and local recreational opportunities or parks.

Social Capital

Two questions included in the survey are designed to measure the level of social capital within the Beverly community. Survey participants were asked about issues related to opportunities for citizen involvement in establishing priorities and whether or not they feel local government and community organizations work together for the good of the local community. Most of the respondents (71.9%) think local citizens have opportunities to be involved in discussions about future plans and priorities for the town; however, only a little more than half of the respondents (54.5%) think local town government and local community organizations work together well to improve the quality of life in Beverly.

Tourism Development:

100% of the survey respondents indicated they “would like to see more tourists visit Beverly”, and 93.6% agreed or strongly agreed that “increasing numbers of tourists visiting Beverly is a good thing. Almost all respondents (93.3%) also felt the historic assets of the town should continue to be developed in order to attract tourist business and the same high percentage

(93.3%) indicated they think efforts to preserve and rehabilitate old buildings in Beverly are beneficial to future development. Train trips for tourists between Elkins and Beverly were also supported by nearly all respondents. 93.6% of the survey responses agreed or strongly agreed that such trips should be encouraged and supported.

Local Commerce:

All but one person completing a survey indicated they would purchase more goods and services in Beverly if there were more shops and restaurants in the town. Survey respondents were asked: “What types of goods and services would you like to see located in Beverly?” Responses indicate a desire for additional shops and eating venues. Goods and services most chosen include:

- Coffee shop for snacks, lunch, and a gathering place (84.4%).
- A quality restaurant serving good food (71.9%).
- More shops dealing in art items or handmade craft items (68.8%).
- Outlets for locally grown produce (68.8%).

There was also interest in developing the riverfront area of the town for recreational purposes. 96.8% of respondents felt that cleaning up the river and developing recreational outlets along the river would be beneficial and add to the general attractiveness of the town.

Strengths and Barriers for Development:

Those persons completing the survey were asked to identify the “most significant strengths, assets, or resources for community development” in Beverly and they were also asked to identify the most significant barriers to development. Key strengths identified by a majority of those persons responding to the survey include:

- Heritage tourism potential (78.1%).
- The quiet residential nature of the town (68.8%)
- Proximity to recreational opportunities (65.6%)

For a summary of the relative percentage of strengths chosen by respondents see Chart 1.

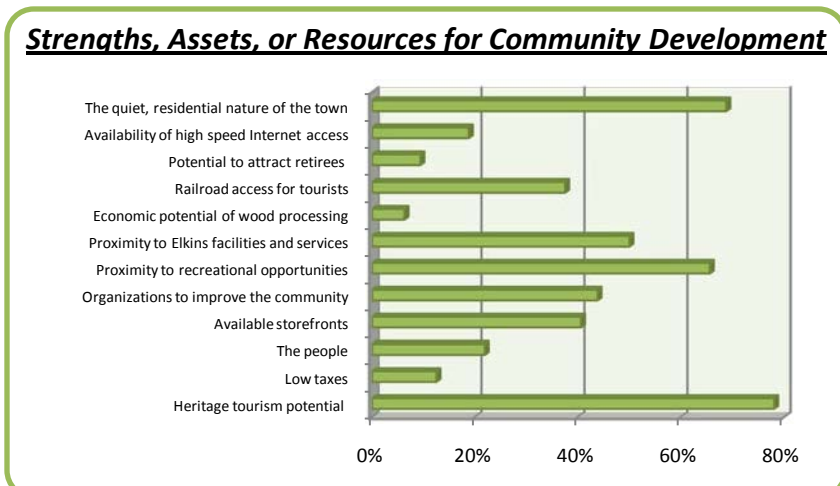


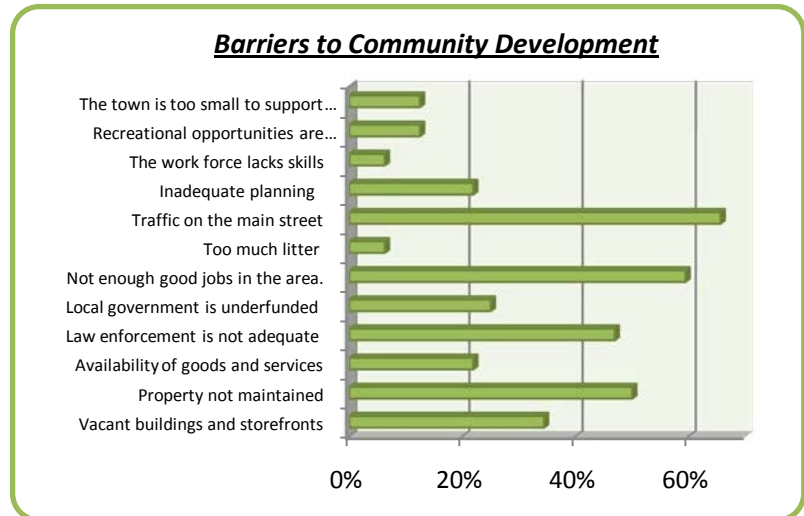
Chart 1
Significant barriers to development identified by the respondents include:

- Traffic on the main highway through town (65.6%).
- Not enough good jobs in the area (59.4%).

Chart 2

- Some local property owners do not maintain their property ((50.0%).
- Law enforcement is not adequate to address local crime and drugs (46.9%).

Chart 2 shows the percentage of respondents who see a particular issue as a barrier to local development.



Persons completing the survey also were given the opportunity to express their opinion about what they think is most needed in Beverly. Based on the survey responses, two high need areas were identified by more than 70% of those persons completing the survey.

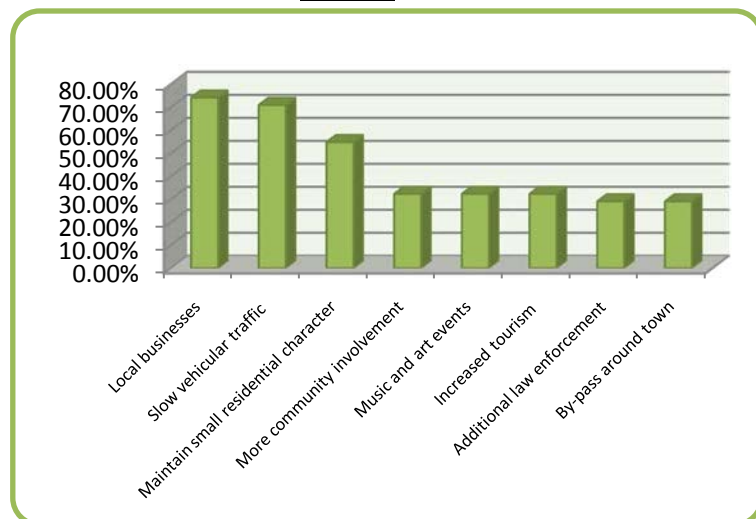
1. More local businesses offering goods and services, and
2. Some way to slow down traffic through town.

Other areas selected by survey participants as issues or actions most needed in Beverly include:

Chart 3

- Maintaining the small residential character of the town,
- More music and arts events, and
- Increased tourism.

See Chart 3 for the percent of total survey respondents who think different issues are a priority need for the town.



Conclusions:

- There is a need to increase the social capital within the community. The working relationship among local government and community organizations needs to be enhanced.

- Survey respondents strongly support:
 - Development of shops and restaurants in Beverly.
 - Increased tourism.
 - Rail trips between Elkins and Beverly.
 - Continued preservation and restoration of the historic assets of the town.
 - Development of the riverfront for recreational purposes.

- Notable strengths of the town of Beverly that can contribute to local development were identified by survey respondents as:
 - Heritage tourism potential ,
 - The quiet residential nature of the town, and
 - Proximity to recreational opportunities.

- Notable barriers to future development were identified by survey respondents as:
 - Traffic on the main highway through town,
 - A lack of good jobs in the area,
 - Property owners who do not maintain their property , and
 - A lack of law enforcement to address local crime and drugs.