

DATE: 9/8/15
TO: Northfield Township Board
FROM: William SaintAmour, Executive Director, Cobalt Community Research

RE: Township Survey

The purpose of this memo is to update the Board on the progress of the Township's survey project.

On July 28, the Board directed the Planning Commission to review the draft survey provided to the Board at that meeting and recommend changes. The Planning Commission met on August 5, and the Commission decided to provide clearer direction to Cobalt by articulating the decisions that would benefit from the study results and the key business questions they would like the project to answer to support those decisions. The Commission planned to share ideas with one another, and then forward them to Cobalt so we can draft survey questions accordingly. Draft surveys would be considered by the Commission, and both the Commission and Cobalt would work jointly on revisions until all were comfortable with a survey draft that they could recommend to the Township Board.

The Commission is continuing to discuss the decisions and key questions to guide survey development. On Monday, August 31, Marlene shared a draft set of questions with Cobalt so we were aware of what they were working on, and Marlene planned to speak to a few more people before providing us with final direction. Cobalt will begin survey development once the direction and key business questions are ready.

If the Board has direction on the top three key business questions the project should answer to support decision making, such direction also would be very helpful.

For the Board's reference, working concepts of the questions have been compiled and are currently being evaluated. Those concepts will be the topic of the next planning commission meeting on September 16. Once the Commission is comfortable with the direction and key business questions, then Cobalt will begin development of the formal survey questions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to work with the Township, and we look forward to your feedback.

DATE: 7/23/15
TO: Northfield Township Board
FROM: William SaintAmour, Executive Director, Cobalt

RE: Township Survey

Below are the draft research objectives for the Board's review and approval. The planning commission reviewed the objectives. Cobalt staff have used these to guide the development of the survey questions themselves. Below are the objectives for your review:

- Give the Township Board and Planning Commission useful information to guide their decisions.
- Broadly determine whether the residents of Northfield Township want more residential development in the township and measure the strength of their opinions.
- To guide planning, by identifying which features of an ideal future township are the most important to residents.
- Determine if and how the respondents' location affects their opinions.
- Determine how the possible location of residential development affects opinions.
- Determine the relative strength of opinions regarding how people perceive they might benefit from development and preservation.
- Determine the relative strength of opinions about what is good for the community.
- Identify other reasons why people oppose or support more development.
- Determine if and how demographic status (age, income, education, gender) affect opinions.
- Test residents' tolerance for the cost of implementing their top priorities.

In addition, attached you will find the draft survey and cover letter. Please note that the final proofing and layout will occur once the Board has approved the questions, as we will be making final edits and minor production adjustments to the layout. Once the Board approves the questions, then results will be available in about six weeks.

Thank you again for the opportunity to work with the Township, and we look forward to your feedback.

NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP: RESPONSE REQUESTED
2015 PUBLIC OPINION STUDY
C/O Cobalt Community Research
1134 Municipal Way | Lansing, MI 48917

You may complete this assessment online:
www.CobaltCommunityResearch.org/NORTHFIELD

Study ID: [ID]

Your response will be strictly
confidential – your name will
not be released for any purpose

DUE: Before X/XX/2015

Dear [NAME]:

Please take a few minutes to help guide planning efforts in Northfield Township. It is very important that we hear from you.

Enclosed is a short study questionnaire that takes fewer than 10 minutes to complete. Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope **before Xxx XX, 2015**.

Your feedback is very important. It will help the Township make decisions that will have the greatest benefit to the community and help ensure tax dollars are being spent wisely.

This questionnaire may be completed online at www.CobaltCommunityResearch.org/NORTHFIELD. Once on the study page, type in the study ID number shown at the top of this letter. The study ID number helps us ensure we hear from you, but your response will be **strictly confidential** – Cobalt will not release or share your name with the Township for any purpose.

If you do not have a computer, you may use the computers at the public library. If you would like to review the Township's Master Plan, it is available at www.twp.northfield.mi.us.

Northfield Township and Cobalt Community Research are working together on this study. Cobalt is a 501c3 nonprofit organization created to help governmental and nonprofit organizations measure, benchmark and manage their efforts through high-quality, affordable research.

If you have questions on this study, please contact the Township at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. Thank you for your cooperation and your insight.

2015 NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING EVALUATION DRAFT 3

Please take a few minutes to share your preferences and thoughts to support the Township's planning efforts. All answers will remain confidential, and your identity will not be shared with the Township. For reference to the current Master Plan, visit www.twp.northfield.mi.us. Thank you!

Planning

1. Please identify up to **seven (7)** features, characteristics and services you would like to see the Township prioritize as they review long-term planning choices. **(Mark up to 7.)**

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage more commercial development | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide additional public parks, beach and recreational facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage more local events such as festivals, music, sports and arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improve the appearance of downtown Whitmore Lake | <input type="checkbox"/> Emphasize agricultural land use | <input type="checkbox"/> Develop more farmer/artisan's market opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain/expand walking and biking trails | <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain current lot size requirements | <input type="checkbox"/> Develop downtown space for farmer/artisan market, gatherings, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain/expand sidewalks | <input type="checkbox"/> Implement township-wide garbage and recycling services | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide municipal water |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain/improve roads | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide more housing for seniors | <input type="checkbox"/> Attract/retain more young people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expand public transportation options | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide more housing for young families | <input type="checkbox"/> Lower taxes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preserve natural features and habitat for plants and animals | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide more affordable housing | <input type="checkbox"/> None of these |

2. Based on your selections above, which strategies should the Township pursue to implement your preferences? **(Mark all that apply.)**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modest increase in local fees and taxes | <input type="checkbox"/> Expand the tax base through additional residential development in existing residential-zoned areas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modest increase in local fees and taxes localized to those living in the area affected | <input type="checkbox"/> Expand the tax base through more intense commercial/industrial development? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expand the tax base through additional residential development in rural/agricultural-zoned areas | <input type="checkbox"/> Elimination/consolidation of major Township services |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> None of these |

3. What types of businesses would you most welcome into Northfield Township? **(Mark all that apply.)**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Essential services (grocery, dry cleaners, hardware, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Research/office space |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specialty shops/boutiques | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants (independent) | <input type="checkbox"/> Specialty or niche farms (organic farms, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants (chains/national brand) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed use (combination residential and commercial) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment venues (movie theaters, night clubs, skate parks, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> None, there is enough commercial development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Big box stores (Home Depot, Sears, Meijer, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

Please specify:

4. Which types of residential housing should the Township encourage as it begins its review of zoning and the Master Plan (which is updated every 5 years)? **(Mark all that apply.)**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apartments | <input type="checkbox"/> Large single-family homes clustered together |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Duplexes | <input type="checkbox"/> Small single-family homes spaced out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Townhouses | <input type="checkbox"/> Large single-family homes spaced out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small single-family homes clustered together | |

5. If some current rural/agricultural areas were rezoned for residential use, which lot size should be the minimum allowed for people to build upon?

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No preference | <input type="checkbox"/> 1/2 acre | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 acres | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 acres or larger (current requirement for agricultural areas) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1/4 acre | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 acre | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 acres | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1/3 acre | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 acres | | |

6. Please identify up to **four (4)** aspects of residential development that are most important to you. **(Mark up to 4.)**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> If it is only in those areas already zoned for it in the master plan | <input type="checkbox"/> If it supports the types of housing needed in the Township |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If it was in a part of the Township other than mine | <input type="checkbox"/> If it attracts more businesses offering the goods and services I want |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If it was in my part of the Township | <input type="checkbox"/> If it greatly benefits the Township through increased tax revenue, beautification, improved services and facilities, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If the development would not affect me financially, for example, it does not increase property taxes and fees | <input type="checkbox"/> If Township officials can demonstrate the costs of installing and maintaining a project's infrastructure (such as sewer) will not increase costs to other users |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If I may benefit financially, for example, by lower property taxes and fees | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If it resulted in new amenities, such as parks and trails | |

7. In your opinion, regardless of your position, what are **two (2)** of the best arguments **against** more residential development? **(Mark up to 2.)**

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase demand on Township services such as public safety | <input type="checkbox"/> May increase pollution | <input type="checkbox"/> Development should take place only in those areas currently planned for it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Possible loss of property values | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduction of farmland | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of our rural character |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase pressure on infrastructure such as sewer and roads | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduction of open space | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> May increase traffic congestion | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduction of habitat | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not want more neighbors | |

8. If you marked "Other" above, what other reasons do you have **against** more development in the Township? (Please print clearly)

9. In your opinion, regardless of your position, what are **two (2)** of the best arguments **in favor** of more residential development? **(Mark up to 2.)**

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of more and better housing | <input type="checkbox"/> May improve the affordability of housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase the tax base |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Possible increase in property values | <input type="checkbox"/> May attract additional spending and investment in local shops and services | <input type="checkbox"/> May attract retail and service businesses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> May fund better maintained infrastructure and amenities | <input type="checkbox"/> Brings more students and funding for local schools | <input type="checkbox"/> May provide more local jobs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund new infrastructure and amenities | | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below) |

10. If you marked "Other" above, what other reasons do you have **in favor** of more development? (Please print clearly)

11. The Township is currently studying whether a change to the Future Land Use Plan (known as the Master Plan) is in the best interests of the citizens of the Township to allow a 461 acre subdivision development in the SE corner of the Township. The land is currently planned for agriculture. The developer has requested that the Master Plan be changed to allow homes to be built on lots smaller than one acre with sewer service. Should the Township continue to consider this development?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No, the Township should not approve a change to the Master Plan for this development | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure and would like more information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the Township should continue consideration of a change to the Master Plan for this development and work through appropriate details | <input type="checkbox"/> I have no opinion on the development |

Infrastructure

12. Is **traffic congestion** in the Township a regular problem for you?

- Yes No

If yes, please note where you have the problem:

13. The Township's **sewer treatment** commitment to current users is currently over its maximum capacity. It will cost an estimated \$2.5 to \$3 million for a storage tank to meet that commitment. Those funds will come from user fees. Should Northfield Township plan for an additional expansion to allow for more users with homes that require sewer service (those on less than 1 acre)?

- Yes No

14. Please briefly share any other thoughts you would like the Township to consider in their planning efforts? (Please print clearly)

All answers below will remain strictly confidential and will not be used to identify you.

15. What is your gender?

- Female Male

16. What is your age group?

- 18 to 24 25 to 34 35 to 44 45 to 54 55 to 64 65 or over

17. Which of the following categories best describes your level of education?

- Did not graduate high school High school graduate Some college, no degree Associate's degree Bachelor's degree Graduate/professional degree

18. What is your current employment status?

- Homemaker /stay at home parent Unemployed Self-employed Retired Employed

19. How long have you been living in this community?

- Less than 1 year 1-5 years 6-10 years 11-20 years 21-30 years More than 30 years

20. Do you own or rent/lease your residence?

- Own Rent/Lease

21. Please select the term that best describes your residence:

- Single family (less than 1 acre lot) Apartment Other
 Single family (1 to 5 acre lot) Manufactured home
 Single family (5+ acre lot) Attached condominium or duplex

22. Which section of the Township best describes where you live?

- West of Spencer, North of N Territorial Rd W East of Spencer, North of 5 Mile Rd
 West of Spencer, South of N Territorial Rd W East of Spencer, South of 5 Mile Rd

Thank you for your time. Please return this assessment in the postage-paid envelope provided.

Working Concept for Citizen Survey Questions – 9/9/15

A. Subject: Residential Development

Rank your preferences for the following housing choices:

1. Apartments
2. Duplexes
3. Townhouses
4. Condominiums
5. Manufactured Homes
6. Housing for seniors such as condominiums, independent and assisted living apartments
7. Single-family subdivisions for young families and professionals (1/4 to 1/2 acre lots)
8. Single-family subdivisions for young families and professionals (1 acre lots)
9. Rural residential – large lot (2 acres)
10. Rural residential – 5+ acres

In which of the above do you live? Please select the corresponding number.

B. Subject: Land Use Attitudes

Using Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree, please state your agreement with the following statements:

1. Residential land use should be concentrated near expressways and paved roads.
2. Houses should be clustered on small lots to preserve natural areas.
3. We need more housing for families with students to bring in funding for local schools.
4. We should preserve agricultural land use in areas suited for such use.
5. Landowners should be able to develop their land any way they want regardless of the Master Plan (i.e. community vision). (Alternate statement: Landowners should develop their land in accordance with the Master Plan.)
6. We should allow large tracts of land to be developed into subdivisions or business areas.
7. We should preserve natural features and habitat for plants and animals in environmentally sensitive areas.
8. We should extend sewer service only to those areas adjacent to the current sewer service area.
9. In those areas without sewer service and where private community sewer systems are possible, subdivisions should be permitted in order to build more houses on less land.
10. We should allow development if water quality and open space can be preserved in environmentally sensitive areas.
11. We should develop a program to allow a landowner to proportionately increase the number of lots on a parcel in a specific area if another parcel is permanently preserved for farmland or natural area.
12. We should reduce the current 5 acre minimum lot size requirement in agricultural areas to 2.5 acres to permit additional residential development.
13. Developers should bear the total cost of their projects, for example, sewer service expansion, road improvements, etc.

C. Subject: Attitudes about Taxes and the Role of Government

Using Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree, please state your agreement with the following statements:

1. We should expand the tax base by encouraging more commercial development.
2. We should expand the tax base by encouraging more office-type development.
3. We should expand the tax base by encouraging more manufacturing-type development.
4. We should expand the tax base by encouraging more residential development.
5. I would be in favor of more residential development if I benefited financially, for example, by lower property taxes and fees.
6. The Township should create a fund to actively acquire key properties to realize improvements in downtown Whitmore Lake.
7. I would be in favor of a modest tax increase to preserve farmland and/or natural areas and open space.

D. Subject: Programs, Services and Costs

Which of the following are or would be of value to you? No Opinion, Not important, Important, Very Important

1. Improvement and maintenance of the roads
2. Our own township police and fire department
3. Township-wide garbage and recycling services
4. Convenient shopping in the township
5. Provide municipal water
6. Accessing the sanitary sewer system
7. Public transportation
8. A community garden
9. Enforcement of zoning and blight ordinances

E. Subject: Downtown Whitmore Lake

Amenities or qualities I would like to have in the downtown that are currently missing or inadequate.

Use Strongly Dislike, Dislike, No Opinion, Like, Strongly Like

1. Expanded sidewalks
2. Community gathering space for concerts, movies, farm/artisan market, etc.
3. Public beach
4. Public boardwalk with fishing pier
5. Cleaner, more welcoming appearance
6. More and/or better parking
7. Improved mix of essential businesses (grocery, hardware, bank, urgent care, pharmacy etc.)
8. Specialty shops/boutiques
9. Seasonal outdoor cafes/food court
10. Restaurants
11. Craft Brew Pub
12. Senior living/condominiums/apartments

F. Subject: Township-wide Recreation (consider collaboration with schools and federal/state/county)

Indicate your preference for these recreational opportunities in Northfield Township that would be an asset to residents: Use Strongly Dislike, Dislike, No Opinion, Like, Strongly Like

1. A safe public beach on Whitmore Lake
2. Additional public parks and recreational areas for walking, hiking, running
3. Sports fields (soccer, football, baseball, tennis)
4. Skate park
5. Expanded walking and biking trails to connect with regional trail systems
6. Equestrian trails or designated scenic routes

G. Subject: Funding Priorities

Which strategies should the Township pursue to implement your preferences concerning Whitmore Lake and Recreational Opportunities above? (Mark all that apply.)

1. Modest increase in fees and taxes
2. Modest increase in fees and taxes localized to those receiving the benefit
3. Elimination/consolidation of major Township services
4. Create a savings fund to obtain matching state, county, or private monies
5. None of these

H. Subject: Demographics

What is your gender?

Female Male

What is your age group?

18 to 24 25 to 34 35 to 44 45 to 54 55 to 64 65 or over

What is your current employment status?

Homemaker/stay at home parent Retired Unemployed Self-employed Employed

How long have you been living in this community?

Less than 1 year 1-5 years 6-10 years 11-20 years 21-30 years More than 30 years

Do you own or rent/lease your residence?

Own Rent/Lease

How many children or teens live with you?

Preschool School-age

Which of the following categories best describes your level of education?

Did not graduate high school High school graduate Some college, no degree Associate's degree
Bachelor's degree Graduate/Professional degree

Please select your household income?

\$200,000 or more \$150,000-\$199,999 \$100,000-\$149,999 \$75,000-\$99,999 \$50,000-\$74,999
\$25,000-\$49,999 Less than \$25,000