COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY

Introduction

Based on the survey return rate, Flatonia's recent community survey was a success. Roughly 450 of the 1100 surveys that were mailed out to City Utility customers were returned - a 41 percent response rate. Once duplicate and unquantifiable surveys were removed, the answers from the remaining 353 surveys were used to formulate the following observations.

Key Findings:

- The most important issue highlighted throughout the survey was the need for additional businesses and jobs. Although, a few respondents argued that it is not the city's responsibility to address this problem.

- Protecting property values, providing affordable housing, preserving the small town character, and expanding school facilities all ranked as equally important issues facing Flatonia in the upcoming years.

- For the City Council, respondents felt that the most important projects to focus on were encouraging new businesses, developing zoning, and enhancing local parks.

- There was general agreement that the City of Flatonia should act to increase the availability of new housing and affordable housing.

- Respondents felt that "just enough" or "not enough tax money" was being spent on all five uses given in the survey. "Attracting businesses/ industry" and "road and street maintenance" were the two areas where citizens asked that more money be spent.

Relevant Issues for the Comprehensive Planning Process:
(refer to page six for question-by-question analysis)

✍ Economic Development

The need for economic development is in the forefront of most Flatonia residents. This can be seen throughout the entire survey. In question 7, "what is the most important issue facing Flatonia," the two most common answers were the need for additional retail and commercial businesses and the need for more jobs. As well, in question 9, respondents most often chose "encouraging new businesses to locate in Flatonia" as the most important project for the city council to pursue.

One interesting finding that stands out is the priority that most respondents placed on bringing in outside businesses over the option of cultivating the expansion of local industry. This bias toward outside industry could be detrimental to the community if acted upon by the City or the Chamber. Since local businesses are already contributing to the local economy and community, it is important to foster a sense of cooperation and support between these employers and local government. Supporting local industry, contributing to their success, may eventually allow the city or chamber to make a stronger case for the recruitment of an outside company. If local businesses can not survive locally because of insufficient customer or employment base, it is likely that outside businesses will be unwilling to make the move into the local economy.

Some respondents expressed concern over the fact that the City might become further involved in economic development (ED). They expressed the opinion that ED should be the domain of the Chamber of Commerce. While the concern was voiced by only a few respondents, it may still be important for the city to weigh the relevance of the majority's request for city involvement with other citizen's concern over what the city's role should be, in regards to increasing economic opportunity.

✍ Housing

While affordable housing received only 8.1% of the total votes for the most important issue facing Flatonia, it received the third highest number of votes (tied with the need to protect property values) when all answers, ranking one through seven, were taken into consideration. This indicates that, while residents don't consider housing a top priority, they acknowledge that it is a concern and that something should be done about the shortage. In question 8, the desire for

action was clarified when nearly everyone agreed that the City of Flatonia should be involved in promoting the "construction of new housing" and "assisting in the development of more housing options," although very few indicated that housing should be the top priority of the city council (question 9).

∾ Land Use

Three different issues relate to the topic of land use management: protecting property values, zoning, and preserving the small town character. Relating to the need to protect property values, only 10 percent of the respondents felt that this was the number one issue facing Flatonia, but the topic did receive a substantial number of votes (when ranking was included) for most important issue.

One of the main tools available to protect property values is zoning, which was discussed in question 8. Thirty percent of the respondents "strongly agreed" and twenty-nine percent "agreed" that the "City of Flatonia should develop zoning to manage how land is used." While there were fifty-five individuals, or roughly fifteen percent of the respondents, who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the implementation of zoning, overall, residents seem to be in favor of the process.

Finally, preserving the small town character of Flatonia, while not merely a land use issue, is a goal that can be furthered through future land use decisions. The importance of Flatonia's small town feel is established by the fact that 14 percent of survey respondents listed it as the number one reason why they live in Flatonia and 16 percent of the survey respondents felt that preserving the character of Flatonia is the most important issue facing the community. With this in mind, if and when zoning and subdivision ordinances are created, they should be constructed in light of the community's desire to preserve the character of Flatonia.

Demographics:

❧ **Location of Respondents**

The geographic location of respondents was evenly distributed throughout the four quadrants of town (a,b,c, and d) and outside the city limits (e) (see "Survey Map" at the end of report). The fact that the surveys originated from all areas of town increases the representative validity of the survey data.

Figure 3-1
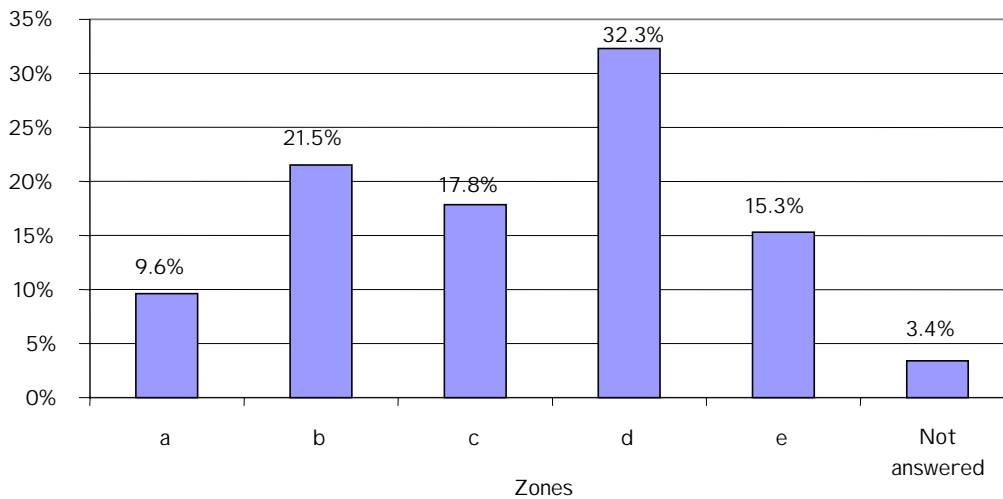
❧ **Length of Residency in Flatonia**

The following graph very clearly shows the skewed nature of the city residency characteristic. Nearly half of all survey respondents have lived in Flatonia for over twenty years. This distribution is probably the result of two causes. One, a large majority of Flatonia residents have lived within town for a significant portion of their lives, meaning that the distribution merely reflects Flatonia's overall population. But the second, and somewhat conflicting, factor is that those people who have lived in Flatonia the longest may have more of a vested interest in filling out the survey. Newer residents may not have felt the connection with city government and city life as strongly as the long-time residents, therefore not filling out the survey. Regardless of motive, it is probable that there is some segment of the Flatonia population (likely the newly acquired portion) that is under-represented.

(Length of Residency, Continued)

Figure 3-2
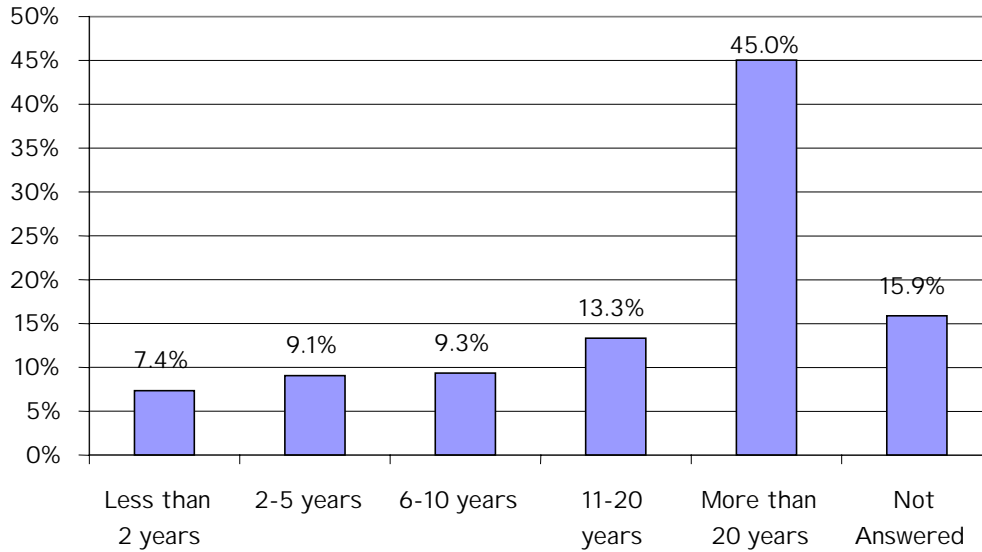
Age of Respondents

As one can see from the distribution, the age ranges of 35-49, 50-64, and 65+ were evenly represented. It appears that the younger individuals did not fill out the survey in as great of numbers, but this may simply be a representation of Flatonia's age distribution. Any under-representation in the 18-34 year category can perhaps be attributed to the fact that this age category tends to own less property and therefore did not receive a survey, or be more invested in work and family, or have spent less time in the Flatonia community and therefore feel less of a pull to become involved in community life.

Figure 3-3
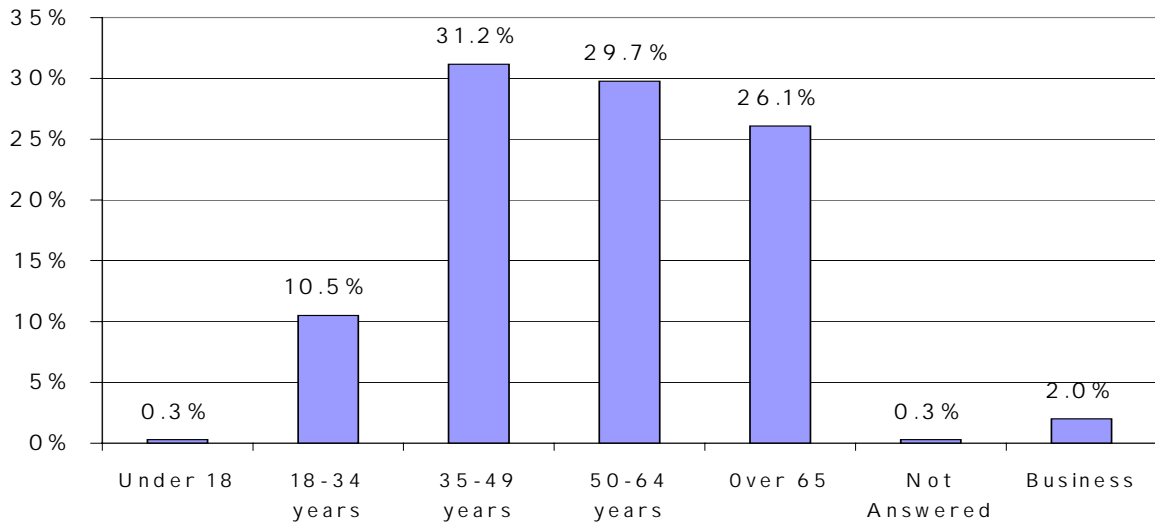
Question by Question Analysis:

6. *"Why do you live in or around Flatonia?"*

Why I live in Flatonia (number one answers)	
Family	48.6%
Location	19.2%
Small Town Character	14.4%
Job Opportunities	9.0%
Schools	3.9%
Other	3.6%
Utilities	0.9%
Tax Rates	0.3%

Why I live in Flatonia (overall points)*	
Family	1657
Location	1540
Small Town Character	1462
Schools	997
Utilities	806
Tax Rates	772
Job Opportunities	666

* the higher the total, the higher the importance

By understanding why people have chosen to live in a community, a proactive stance can be taken by city government and other civil organizations to make sure that these qualities are maintained.

Looking at the reasons why individuals live in Flatonia, Family, Location, and Small Town Character lead the lists. All three of these qualities are intangible characteristics that Flatonia possesses. The inherent nature of the characteristics is a strength for the future of the town, but the town must work to preserve the quality of life that originally drew individuals to the area if it is to remain viable.

"What do you feel is the most important issue facing Flatonia during the next year?"

Most Important Issue Facing Flatonia (number one answers)	
Additional Retail and Commercial Businesses	36.1%
Create More Jobs	17.3%
Preserve Small Town Character	15.8%
Need to Expand/ Improve School Facilities	12.8%
Protect Property Values	9.9%
Provide Affordable Housing	8.1%
Other	1.8%

Most Important Issue Facing Flatonia (overall points)*	
Additional Retail and Commercial Businesses	1434
Create More Jobs	1212
Protect Property Values	951
Provide Affordable Housing	951
Preserve Small Town Character	903
Need to Expand/ Improve School Facilities	895

* the higher the total, the higher the importance

As was discussed in the economic development section, respondents indicated that the most pressing concerns for Flatonia were the need for additional businesses and jobs. While these two issues did receive fifty percent of the number one votes, the other fifty percent of the respondents felt that one of the remaining issues was the most important issue for Flatonia.

When total points were calculated, protecting property values, providing affordable housing, and preserving the small town character were given nearly equal votes by residents. Therefore, the issues that the city can exert some level of control over, protecting property values, providing affordable housing, and preserving the small town character were considered as equally critical.

The survey shows that residents feel concern on all of these issues and that some level of action is warranted.

Table 3-1

Most Important Issue facing Flatonia/ Age	Overall Breakdown	Under 18	18-34 years old	35-49 years old	50-64 years old	over 65
Additional Retail and Commercial Businesses	**35%**	0%	**46%**	29%	**40%**	**32%**
Create More Jobs	**17%**	0%	**20%**	23%	15%	10%
Preserve Small Town Character	**16%**	100%	6%	14%	15%	23%
Need to Expand/ Improve School Facilities	13%	0%	11%	**18%**	11%	11%
Protect Property Values	10%	0%	3%	6%	14%	13%
Provide Affordable Housing	8%	0%	**17%**	7%	6%	9%
Other	2%	0%	0%	4%	1%	1%

When the "number one" responses are broke out by age, certain relationships become apparent. In the 18-34 years old category, more support was expressed

for affordable housing than in any other age category. Where as with the protection of property values, the majority of support was raised from the two oldest age groups, 50-64 and over 65. Support for the preservation of small town character apparently increases with age, going from 6 to 23 percent. Finally, the categories of additional business and jobs, received over fifty percent of the votes from those categories that included working age individuals (18-34, 35-49, and over 65).

"Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement, 'The City of Flatonia should…'"

Table 3-2

City of Flatonia should:	Average Response	Agree Strongly (2)	Agree (1)	Neutral (0)	Disagree (-1)	Disagree Strongly (-2)
Encourage new businesses to locate in Flatonia	1.63	245	92	9	0	5
Promote the construction of new housing	1.14	139	136	59	6	6
Assist the expansion of existing local businesses	1.11	135	137	48	11	9
Assist in the development of more housing options	0.98	117	129	69	14	9
Enhance local parks	0.89	101	131	86	8	12
Help to improve local cable tv services	0.80	115	93	100	16	17
Seek to make natural gas services available	0.77	103	108	104	12	18
Help to improve local internet access	0.67	87	102	116	16	17
Develop zoning to manage how land is used	0.64	102	99	84	24	31

2=Agree Strongly; **1**=Agree; **0**=Neutral; **-1**=Disagree; **-2**=Disagree Strongly

The average response for all actions fell between 0 and 2, which means that respondents ranged from neutral to strongly agree on all options for future City action; no overwhelming opposition existed against any of the actions.

The strongest level of support was expressed for encouraging new businesses and the least amount of support for zoning. Although, the zoning option is unique in that residents seemed to have a more varied response, as shown by the evenly distributed responses between the different categories (the larger number of disagree responses brought down the average, masking the actual level of agree responses).

"From the projects listed in question 8, which is the most important project for the Flatonia City Council to pursue?"

Most important project for the City Council to Pursue		
1.	Encourage new businesses to locate in Flatonia	60%
2.	Develop zoning to manage how land is used	11%
3.	Assist the expansion of existing local businesses	8%
4.	Enhance local parks	5%
5.	Assist in the development of more housing options	5%
6.	Seek to make natural gas services available	4%
7.	Promote the construction of new housing	4%
8.	Other	2%
9.	Help to improve local cable tv services	1%
10.	Help to improve local internet access	1%

Remaining consistent, the overall consensus of survey respondents was that the priority of the city council should be encouraging new businesses in Flatonia. Since the survey did not explore what form residents would like such encouraging to take, a focus group in the future might be helpful to understand just want measures residents would support in order to further this directive. After additional businesses, zoning received the next highest number of votes.

Question 9 does not suggest that all projects other than business development are unimportant (the importance of the projects was established in question 8); what question nine illustrates is that above all, the concern highest in residents' minds is the need for additional business. In seeking to respond to this consensus, the City Council and Steering committee must consider not only how to encourage business but also how the other projects on the project list may impact the city's ability to, in fact, encourage new businesses. It may be that only through investment of time and resources in zoning, housing, or parks will Flatonia be able to encourage additional businesses.

In order to have a better understanding of who supported which type of project, the data can be broken down by length of residency in the city, location in the city, and age of respondent.

Table 3-3

Most Important Project for City Council/City Tenure	Overall Breakdown	Less than 2 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	more than 20 years
Total	328	26	30	31	42	147
Encourage new businesses to locate in Flatonia	60%	52%	43%	45%	62%	69%
Assist the expansion of existing local businesses	11%	8%	13%	23%	7%	2%
Develop zoning to manage how land is used	8%	24%	10%	13%	10%	6%
Promote the construction of new housing	5%	4%	3%	3%	5%	5%
Assist in the development of more housing options	5%	0%	10%	0%	7%	6%
Help to improve local internet access	4%	0%	0%	3%	0%	1%
Seek to make natural gas services available	4%	0%	3%	3%	0%	5%
Enhance local parks	2%	8%	10%	10%	5%	4%
Help to improve local cable tv services	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Other	1%	0%	3%	0%	5%	1%

A few interesting differences can be seen in the breakdown by length of residency. Those individuals that have lived in Flatonia for less than two years are more highly in favor of zoning than any other group. Residents that have lived in Flatonia for 2-10 years, but more significantly 6-10 years, see the value of assisting local business in conjunction with additional business from outside the area. Finally, those respondents who have lived in Flatonia over 20 years are strongly in agreement that the focus project of the City Council should be encouraging business. In fact, it is this group that drove up the overall overage in support of project number 1.

(See "Survey Map" at the end of report)

Most Important Project for City Council/ Location	Overall Breakdown	A	B	C	D	E
Total	328	32	69	58	107	52
Encourage new businesses to locate in Flatonia	**60%**	**69%**	**61%**	**64%**	**59%**	**47%**
Assist the expansion of existing local businesses	**11%**	6%	**9%**	**9%**	6%	7%
Develop zoning to manage how land is used	**8%**	3%	3%	7%	**17%**	**13%**
Promote the construction of new housing	**5%**	3%	5%	4%	5%	7%
Assist in the development of more housing options	**5%**	6%	**9%**	4%	3%	7%
Help to improve local internet access	**4%**	0%	0%	0%	1%	7%
Seek to make natural gas services available	**4%**	6%	3%	**9%**	2%	0%
Enhance local parks	**2%**	3%	**8%**	**9%**	5%	**13%**
Help to improve local cable tv services	**1%**	3%	2%	0%	1%	0%
Other	**1%**	3%	2%	2%	1%	0%

By location, there are a few differences in the way that the different quadrants arrange the city council priorities. All sections see business as very important, while lose who live outside city limits are less in support of making the quest for additional business the number one project. Minor differences are seen in the categories of local business expansion, developing more housing options (section B voicing the largest support), and providing natural gas (section D voicing the largest support). The most striking difference though is in the category that relates to zoning. Residents in section D, and to a lesser degree in the county, expressed fairly strong support for the zoning project; the support was much higher than reflected by the overall average. This difference in the level of support suggests that, if the city choose to pursue zoning ordinances, it should consider some sort of public education process to illustrate the logic and reasoning behind zoning, especially in those areas where support was lowest.

(Most Important Project, Continued)

Most Important Project for City Council/Age	Overall Breakdown	Under 18	18-34 years old	35-49 years old	50-64 years old	over 65
Total	328	1	37	102	97	81
Encourage new businesses to locate in Flatonia	60%	0%	46%	59%	66%	62%
Assist the expansion of existing local businesses	11%	0%	11%	11%	3%	1%
Develop zoning to manage how land is used	8%	0%	5%	9%	18%	6%
Promote the construction of new housing	5%	0%	5%	2%	3%	9%
Assist in the development of more housing options	5%	0%	8%	6%	4%	6%
Help to improve local internet access	4%	0%	0%	1%	1%	4%
Seek to make natural gas services available	4%	0%	3%	3%	3%	7%
Enhance local parks	2%	0%	19%	8%	1%	2%
Help to improve local cable tv services	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Other	1%	100%	3%	2%	0%	0%

The two important relationships that emerge when the variable of age is introduced are in the areas of parks and zoning. Respondents in the 18-34 year old category were, by far, the most heavily in support of additional effort in the area of local parks enhancement. Their support is not reflected at all in the overall average (2 percent). For zoning, the majority of support stems from the 50-64 years old age category. Again, there is a larger degree of support from one category, showing that priorities do in fact vary by age, which adds complexity to the City Council's decision making process since each group expects different results from the council and city.

"Please indicate how you feel about how the city uses your tax money."

City's use of tax money	Average Response	# of Responses
Attracting businesses/industry	0.83	327
Road and street maintenance	0.66	330
Parks maintenance and development	0.33	315
Revitalizing Main Street	0.26	315
Fire, Police, and Medical Services	0.21	318
1= Not enough spent; 0= Just enough spent; -1=Too much spent; 0=Neutral		

In all five categories, the average response ranged from "not enough spent" to "just enough spent". These answers may be somewhat skewed by people's perception that not enough is being done in the areas that concern them. Nonetheless, the information is useful, is only to compare how residents feel about these five city services, as they relate to each other. Residents would like more money spent on attracting industry, which may be somewhat surprising since often times citizens want new industry but they aren't willing to ask for resources to be spent on it, and on road and street maintenance. The averages for the other three services, Parks, Main Street Revitalization, and Fire, Police, and Medical Services lie closer to zero which means that, on average, residents are satisfied with the current level of spending.

Answer Tables:

Community Survey -

1.

Location	
a	34
b	76
c	63
d	114
e	54
Not Answered	12

2.

City Tenure	
Less than 2 years	26
2-5 years	32
6-10 years	33
11-20 years	48
More than 20 years	158
Not Answered	56

3.

County Tenure	
Less than 2 years	21
2-5 years	26
6-10 years	32
11-20 years	45
More than 20 years	220
Not Answered	9

4.

Age	
Under 18	1
18-34 years	37
35-49 years	110
50-64 years	105
Over 65	92
Not Answered	1
Business	7

5.

Household Size	
1 person	62
2-3 persons	202
4-5 persons	68
6-7 persons	12
8 persons	3
Not Answered	6

6.

Why I live in Flatonia (number one answers)	
Family	162
Location	64
Small Town Character	48
Job Opportunities	30
Schools	13
Other	12
Utilities	3
Tax Rates	1

Why I live in Flatonia (overall points)	
Family	1657
Location	1540
Small Town Character	1462
Schools	997
Utilities	806
Tax Rates	772
Job Opportunities	666

7.

Most Important Issue Facing Flatonia (number one answers)	
Additional Retail and Commercial Businesses	121
Create More Jobs	58
Preserve Small Town Character	53
Need to Expand/Improve School Facilities	43
Protect Property Values	33
Provide Affordable Housing	27
Other	6

Most Important Issue Facing Flatonia (overall points)	
Additional Retail and Commercial Businesses	1434
Create More Jobs	1212
Protect Property Values	951
Provide Affordable Housing	951
Preserve Small Town Character	903
Need to Expand/Improve School Facilities	895

8.

Most important project for the City Council to Pursue	# of Votes
Encourage new businesses to locate in Flatonia	198
Develop zoning to manage how land is used	35
Assist the expansion of existing local businesses	25
Enhance local parks	18
Assist in the development of more housing options	16
Seek to make natural gas services available	13
Promote the construction of new housing	12
Other	5
Help to improve local cable tv services	3
Help to improve local internet access	2

9.

City of Flatonia should:	Agree Strongly (2)	Agree (1)	Neutral (0)	Disagree (-1)	Disagree Strongly (-2)
Encourage new businesses to locate in Flatonia	245	92	9	0	5
Promote the construction of new housing	139	136	59	6	6
Assist the expansion of existing local businesses	135	137	48	11	9
Assist in the development of more housing options	117	129	69	14	9
Enhance local parks	101	131	86	8	12
Seek to make natural gas services available	103	108	104	12	18
Help to improve local cable tv services	115	93	100	16	17
Help to improve local internet access	87	102	116	16	17
Develop zoning to manage how land is used	102	99	84	24	31

2=Agree Strongly; **1**=Agree; **0**=Neutral; **-1**=Disagree; **-2**=Disagree Strongly

13.

City's use of tax money	Not Enough (3)	Just Enough (2)	Too Much (1)	Neutral (0)
Road and street maintenance	221	81	2	26
Attracting businesses/ industry	273	27	2	25
Parks maintenance and development	125	117	20	53
Revitalizing Main Street	102	134	19	60
Fire, Police, and Medical Services	93	148	26	51

High School Survey

1.

Place of Residence	
Flatonia	83
Surrounding Areas	67

2.

Grade	
Ninth Grade	49
Tenth Grade	42
Eleventh Grade	39
Twelfth Grade	19

Place of Residence/ Grade	Flatonia	Surrounding Areas
Ninth Grade	25	24
Tenth Grade	26	16
Eleventh Grade	23	16
Twelfth Grade	9	10
Total	83	67

3.

Best thing about Flatonia (number one answers)	Total	9th	10th	11th	12th
People	26%	18	12	14	4
Location	52%	22	25	16	10
Schools	10%	3	2	6	3
Other	9%	6	2	1	2
Not Answered	2%	0	1	2	0

Best thing about Flatonia (overall points)	
People	292
Location	322
Schools	205
Other	52

4.

Most Important Challenge for Flatonia (number one answers)	Total	9th	10th	11th	12th
Jobs	23%	13	13	10	7
Retail Stores (places to shop)	20%	8	9	4	6
Recreational/ entertainment opportunities	50%	22	19	24	4
Affordable Housing	4%	3	1	0	1
Other	2%	0	0	1	1
Not Answered	2%	3	0	0	0

Most Important Challenge for Flatonia (overall points)	
Jobs	396
Retail Stores (places to shop)	396
Recreational/ entertainment opportunities	464
Affordable Housing	204
Other	26

5.

Project for the City Council (number one answers)	Total	9th	10th	11th	12th
Create Jobs	39%	15	20	13	8
Help improve/ expand parks and recreational facilities	45%	23	17	24	3
Help improve Internet access	13%	8	3	2	6
Other	3%	2	1	0	1

Project for the City Council (overall points)	
Create Jobs	321
Help improve/ expand parks and recreational facilities	334
Help improve Internet access	211
Other	21

Survey Map: