



Waterman Business Association Resident Preference Survey March, 2006

Executive Summary

Background

The Waterman Business Association retained Amdur Spitz & Associates to conduct a survey of Waterman Residents to learn their preferences in order to better serve the community.

The mission of the Waterman Business Association (WBA) is to support, improve and nurture the growth of the business climate in the Village of Waterman, and the general area. WBA recognize that creating and maintaining a vibrant business community in Waterman is highly dependent on support from its residents. WBA sponsors several community events, such as Harvest Day and the Christmas Drawing to help build connections between commerce and community, and to bring residents together.

WBA engaged Amdur Spitz & Associates to conduct this survey because WBA believes it is essential for Waterman businesses to be responsive to residents of the community and to consider resident's preferences and needs as it helps shape the future of the Village.

Response Rate

Surveys were mailed to all 532 residences in town, and the same survey coded differently was mailed to 194 rural Waterman addresses. A validation instrument was used to assure that each returned survey was an original.

Over 45% responded to the survey (a good response rate would be 10%). Waterman residents were clearly eager to be heard.

Demographics

- The average age of the adult population (age 20 or over) in Waterman is 49, while the average age of survey respondents is 52.
- The average number of children per household in the Town of Waterman is 0.75

Survey respondents:

- 47% have lived in Waterman more than 20 years
- 47% are over 50 years old
- 37% of households have children under 18 living at home.
- 59% are female
- 45% of all households responded



Key Findings

Waterman residents want a more full-service town and are willing to grow into it. While just about everyone wants the things that a larger town offers, they are also concerned with maintaining Waterman's small town feel.

Low taxes, low crime rate, quality schools and a reasonable cost of living are the things that residents value most about their community. Proximity to shopping, good quality affordable housing and nearby employment are also community benefits that Waterman residents value.

Waterman residents travel to DeKalb for most of their shopping, entertainment and medical needs. 82% of Waterman's groceries are bought in DeKalb, 22% of residents go to Sycamore to dine. Residents do not shop in Waterman; 11% eat at restaurants in town, 10% get automotive services in Waterman, and 43% use the bank.

Clearly the highest priorities in the Town of Waterman are for a family restaurant (82% want one to open in the next 1-5 years); for a grocery store (73% want one to open in the next 1-5 years); and for a pharmacy (62% want one to open in the next 1-5 years).

We explored preferences across several sub-groups of Waterman residents including; families with children, households without children, seniors age 60+, rural residents, town people, and those who have lived in the community for 20+ years.

Across each of the six sub-groups we found consistent priorities for development in Waterman. More than two-thirds (66%) of each group separately want to see the following within the next 10 years; downtown revitalized, a family restaurant, a grocery store, a pharmacy, more park facilities and programs and improved library services. About two-thirds of each group, except the rural residents, want a medical center in town within the next ten years as well.

Waterman town families with children and seniors 60+ are most eager to see the above improved community services and retail improvements within the next 1-5 years.

Although just 54% of residents are familiar with Waterman's Comprehensive Plan, the preferences expressed in the survey are consistent with the existing plans for the community.

If Waterman's population grows at the same pace as the rest of DeKalb County, and it grows according to its Comprehensive Plan, Waterman is on target to have the population to support the grocery store, pharmacy, and family restaurant that two-thirds of residents want in the next 1-5 years. Through new sales tax revenue and property taxes



on the new houses, the town will generate sufficient support for more park facilities and programs, and increased library services.

Waterman is not on target to grow large enough to support a ‘big box’ store such as Target or Menards, and Waterman residents overwhelmingly (68%) do not want that.

Residents enjoy the Waterman Business Association’s Winter Festival and 97% hope that Harvest Day will include the food vendors and crafts again as it had prior to 2005.

Numeric Summaries

Community Events

1. **Residents who attended the WBA’s Winter Festival overwhelmingly approved of the event, and like the new additions.**
 - 44% of residents participated in Winter Festival 2005
 - 80% responded excellent or good to the carriage rides
 - 95% responded excellent or good to the drawing for free prizes
 - 73% responded excellent or good to the craft fair
2. **Harvest Day participation declined in 2005, and residents overwhelmingly prefer of the old way of doing Harvest Day.**
 - 68% participated in each 2003 and 2004
 - 53% participated in 2005 (15% decline)
3. **Harvest Day preferences**
 - 68% prefer the old way of doing Harvest Day with food and crafts sold
 - 28% didn’t have an opinion
 - 3% prefer the new 2005 non-commercial Harvest Day

Rate of Growth and Community Improvements

4. Community Improvements

Downtown Revitalization

- **84% of Waterman’s town residents want to see Waterman’s downtown revitalized.** 59% hope enough growth will come now so that it can happen in the next 1-5 years, and 25% want it to happen in the next 5-10 years. 10% would like to see a slower timetable of 10 - 20 years, and 7% are opposed to any change.



Park District

- **72% of Waterman's town residents want more parks, facilities and programs.** 35% hope enough growth will come now so that it can happen in the next 1-5 years, and 37% want it to happen in the next 5-10 years. 20% would like to see a slower timetable of 10 - 20 years, and 7% are opposed to any change.

Library Services

- **77% of Waterman's town residents want an expanded library.** 40% hope enough growth will come now so that it can happen in the next 1-5 years, and 37% want it to happen in the next 5-10 years. 16% would like to see a slower timetable of 10 - 20 years, and 7% are opposed to any change.

Rate of Growth and Retail Improvements

5. Retail Improvements

Supermarket

- **88% of Waterman's town residents want a supermarket.** 73% hope enough growth will come now so that one will open in the next 1-5 years, and 15% want it to happen in the next 5-10 years. 8% would like to see a slower timetable of 10 - 20 years, and 4% are opposed to any change.

Family Restaurant

- **95% of Waterman's town residents want a family restaurant to open.** 82% hope enough growth will come now so that it will come in the next 1-5 years, and 13% want it to happen in the next 5-10 years. 3% would like to see a slower timetable of 10 - 20 years, and 2% are opposed to any change.

Drug Store/pharmacy

- **85% of Waterman's tow residents want a drug store or pharmacy.** 62% hope enough growth will come now so that it will open in the next 1-5 years, and 23% want it to happen in the next 5-10 years. 10% would like to see a slower timetable of 10 - 20 years, and 5% are opposed to any change.

6. Priorities

With new residents will come new improvements. Respondents were asked to choose one community or retail improvement that they would most like to see in the next 1 - 5 years from the list of 15. The top choices were:

1. Downtown revitalization
2. Supermarket
3. Family restaurant
4. New park district facilities and programs