

## Baseline Survey on Attitudes and Perceptions About Open Space & Agricultural Preservation

A 400-Sample County-wide survey of adult registered voters conducted  
September 7 through 10, 2010  
Margin of error  $\pm 4.9\%$

### “Cold” Question Section

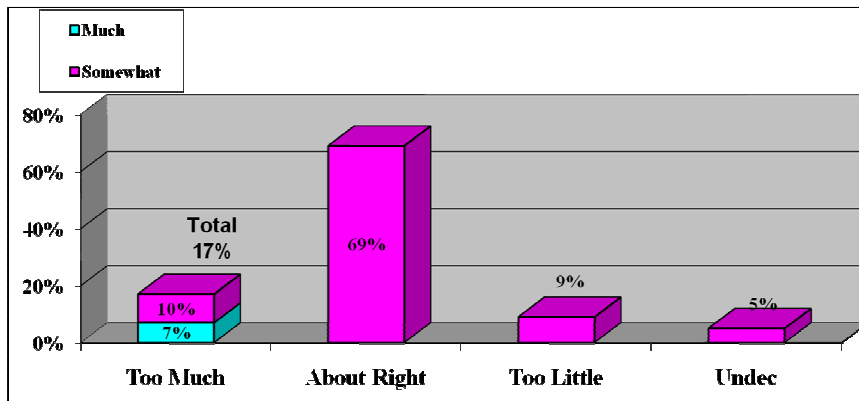
- Slightly fewer than half of the questions in the survey – posed at the outset of the interview – were devoted to measuring “cold” responses to questions going to open-space, county agriculture and governmental activity in land use.

## RELATIVE IMPORTANCE PLACED ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY AIMS

[READ AND ROTATE Q.1 TO Q.8]	<u>Top Prior</u>	<u>Impt Not Top</u>	<u>TOT Impt</u>	<u>Slight Impt</u>	<u>Not Impt</u>	<u>DK/Und</u>
Protecting the public from crime and drugs	66%	29%	<b>95%</b>	3%	1%	1%
Protecting the air, land and waterways from pollution	58%	33%	<b>91%</b>	7%	2%	---
Providing economic development programs and incentives to attract business and industry	49%	34%	<b>83%</b>	11%	5%	1%
Maintaining and improving area roads	39%	46%	<b>85%</b>	13%	1%	1%
Preserving farmland and open space for local food production	49%	32%	<b>81%</b>	11%	7%	1%
Offering programs to recycle household items such as cans, plastics, cardboard and newspapers	27%	45%	<b>72%</b>	18%	9%	1%
Controlling traffic congestion	17%	47%	<b>64%</b>	26%	8%	2%
Controlling where population growth occurs by regulating commercial and residential development	20%	30%	<b>50%</b>	29%	17%	4%

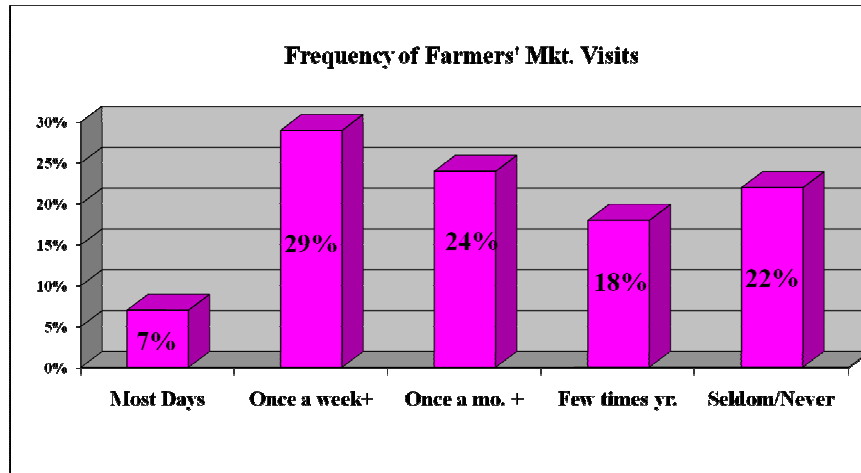
## Assesment of 20-Year Growth Rate

Q. 10



## Locally Produced Food

Qs. 14-16



## Impressions of Agriculture in the County

Qs. 17-18

- Most residents see agriculture as an “Important” but not, “Major” component of the economy.
- Most believe acreage has declined “Only little” (4%) or, “Somewhat” (47%), over 20 years. Over one-third (36%), report an opinion that it has declined, “A lot”.

## Relative Agreement With Statements About the Topic

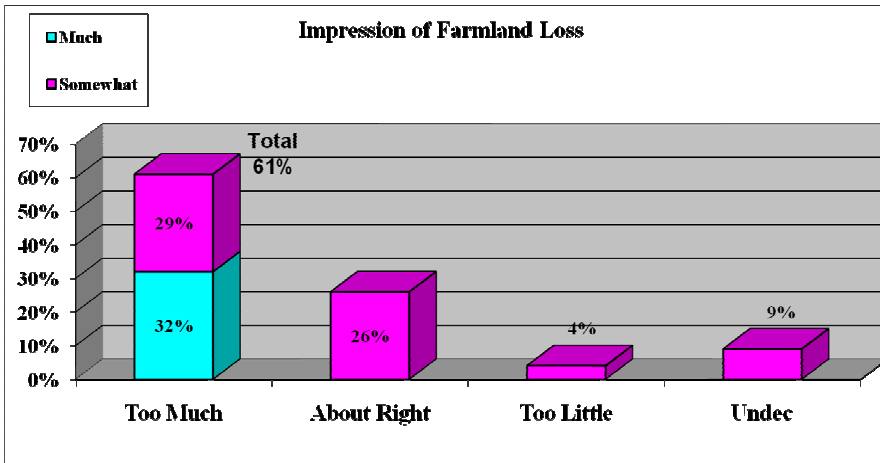
[READ AND ROTATE Q.19 TO Q.24]	Strgly Agree	TOTAL Agree	TOT DisAgr	Strgly Disagr	DK/ Und
Preserving open space is important to the future quality of life in Kent County.	61%	<b>89%</b>	<b>9%</b>	4%	2%
The loss of farmland has a negative impact on our local economy.	50%	<b>76%</b>	<b>19%</b>	7%	5%
Commercial and residential development in areas without strong local planning results in higher costs for government services.	38%	<b>71%</b>	<b>20%</b>	9%	9%
If the population continues to grow without more planning and control over growth and development, it will have an overall negative impact on the economy in Kent County.	43%	<b>69%</b>	<b>21%</b>	11%	10%
My local unit of government currently makes adequate plans for growth and development.	22%	<b>60%</b>	<b>28%</b>	13%	12%
Market factors – not government regulation -- is the most important thing that should determine if land is developed or not.	30%	<b>54%</b>	<b>40%</b>	23%	6%

## “Informed” Question Section

- The next section of the interview offered:
  - objective data concerning Kent County’s place in agricultural production;
  - an explanation of the existing Kent County PDR program; and,
  - questions probing respondents’ reactions to questions similar to those posed in the “Cold” section of the survey.

## Attitudes Toward Loss of Farmland Acreage

Q. 25



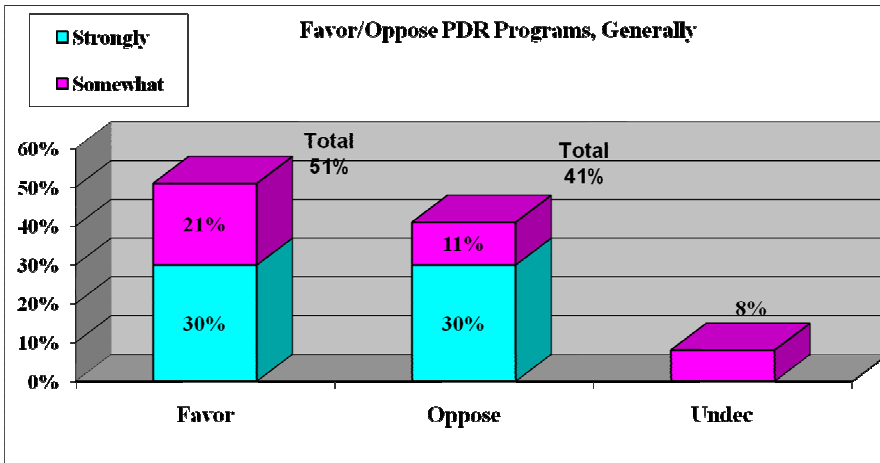
## Awareness Translates Into “Concern” Over Loss of Acreage

Qs. 26 & 27

- Once apprised of the 39,000 acre loss of farmland, as well as Kent County’s ranking for farm commodity production, 59% of respondents expressed that they were either “Extremely” (22%) or, “Very” (37%), “Concerned”.
  - Reasons for concern found a plurality citing loss of locally grown consumables and preserving the environment.
  - To a lesser extent, economic impact and increased government service needs were expressed.

## Generic PDR Description Receives Bare Majority Support

Q. 28



## Support for PDR Programs Increases Significantly When Described in the Context of Open Space and Farmland

Qs. 29-32

- Open Space PDR Program “Favor” moves up to 77%
  - 50% “Strongly”
  - 27% “Smwt”
- Farmland PDR Program “Favor” moves up to 70%
  - 47% “Strongly”
  - 23% “Smwt”
- Opposition to the specific programs centers on the role of government vis-a-vis free market dynamics.

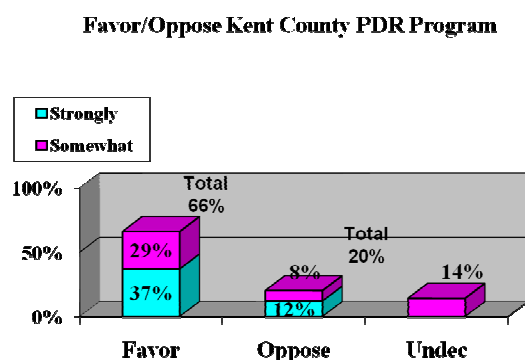
## “Awareness & Knowledge” Question Section

- The next section of the interview:
  - Measured awareness of the Kent County program operating since 2002;
  - Tested respondents’ knowledge concerning several aspects of PDR programs; and,
  - Gauged the level of importance placed on the existence of PDR programs and a dedicated source of funding for them.

## Two-thirds “Favor” the Kent Co. PDR Program After Hearing About It.

Qs. 33 & 34

- Upon hearing a brief description of the existing Kent County PDR program, just over one-third of respondents (36%) indicated that they had heard of the program.



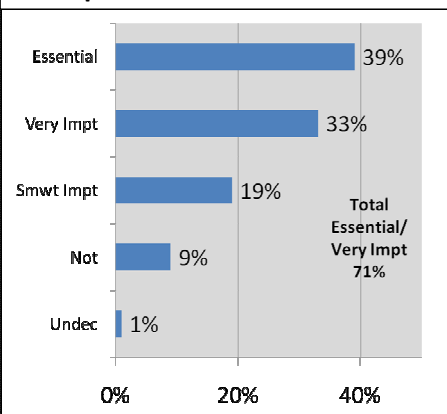
## Lack of Clear Consensus About PDR Program Specifics

Rotate Qs. 35-42	Very	TOTAL	TOTAL	Very	DK
	Accurate	Accurate	Inaccurate	Inaccurate	Undec
Has long term benefit to the community	37%	<b>67%</b>	<b>14%</b>	6%	19%
It improves land values	17%	<b>49%</b>	<b>28%</b>	12%	23%
It provides jobs and helps the economy	18%	<b>48%</b>	<b>33%</b>	16%	19%
Reduces water, sewer & other svc. costs.	17%	<b>42%</b>	<b>32%</b>	18%	26%
Funded mostly by local tax dollars	17%	<b>40%</b>	<b>17%</b>	9%	<b>43%</b>
Other areas of MI have benefitted.	16%	<b>36%</b>	<b>13%</b>	7%	<b>51%</b>
Funded mostly by local foundations	9%	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	11%	<b>52%</b>
It only benefits the farmer	6%	<b>19%</b>	<b>68%</b>	39%	13%

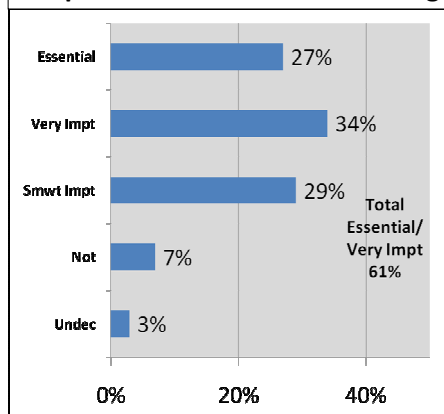
## Relative Importance of Farmland PDR Programs & Sure Funding Source

Qs. 43 & 44

### Importance of Farmland PDR



### Importance of Dedicated Funding

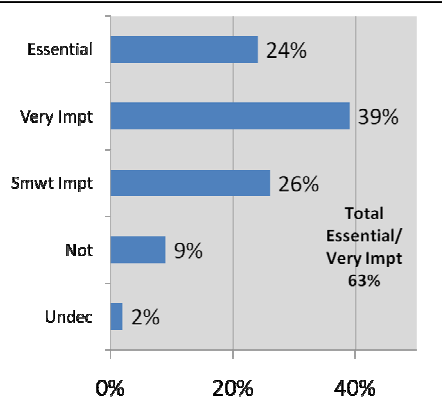




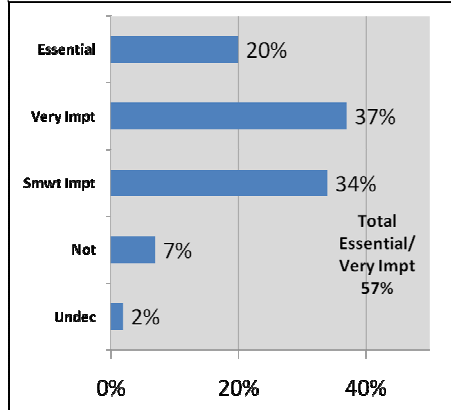
## Relative Importance of Open Space PDR Programs & Sure Funding Source

Qs. 45 & 46

### Importance of Open Space PDR



### Importance of Dedicated Funding



## Summary of Findings

### “Initial” Respondent Impressions

- Preserving farmland and open space for local food production ranks high on a list of several government public policy goals. **(81% Important 49% “Top”)**
- Generic description of PDR programs as one means for governments to control growth is met with slight majority favor **(51%)**
- Most residents see agriculture as an “Important” but not, “Major” component of the economy **(51%)**.
- Most believe acreage has declined “Only little” **(4%)** or, “Somewhat” **(47%)**, over 20 years,

### “After Information” Impressions

- 2/3 Approve of Kent Co. PDR program after brief description **(66% Favor 37% “Strongly”)**
- PDR programs described as specifically aimed at preserving open space and farmland meet with strong “Favor” **(77% for Open Space, 70% for Farmland)**
- In a final asking, having a PDR program to preserve farmland is seen as “Very Important” by **71%** of respondents **(38% “Essential”)**. For Open space, the figures are **63% “Very Important”**, **(24% “Essential”)**

