

**Kent County Citizen Survey
December 2010**

Presented by:

EPIC ■ MRA

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY and
DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS**

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METHODOLOGY

EPIC • MRA administered interviews with 400 registered voters residing in Kent County, Michigan, from September 7 - 10, 2010. Respondents were selected utilizing an interval method of randomly selecting records of published residential telephone numbers. The sample was stratified so that every area of the county is represented in the sample according to its contribution to the overall county population.

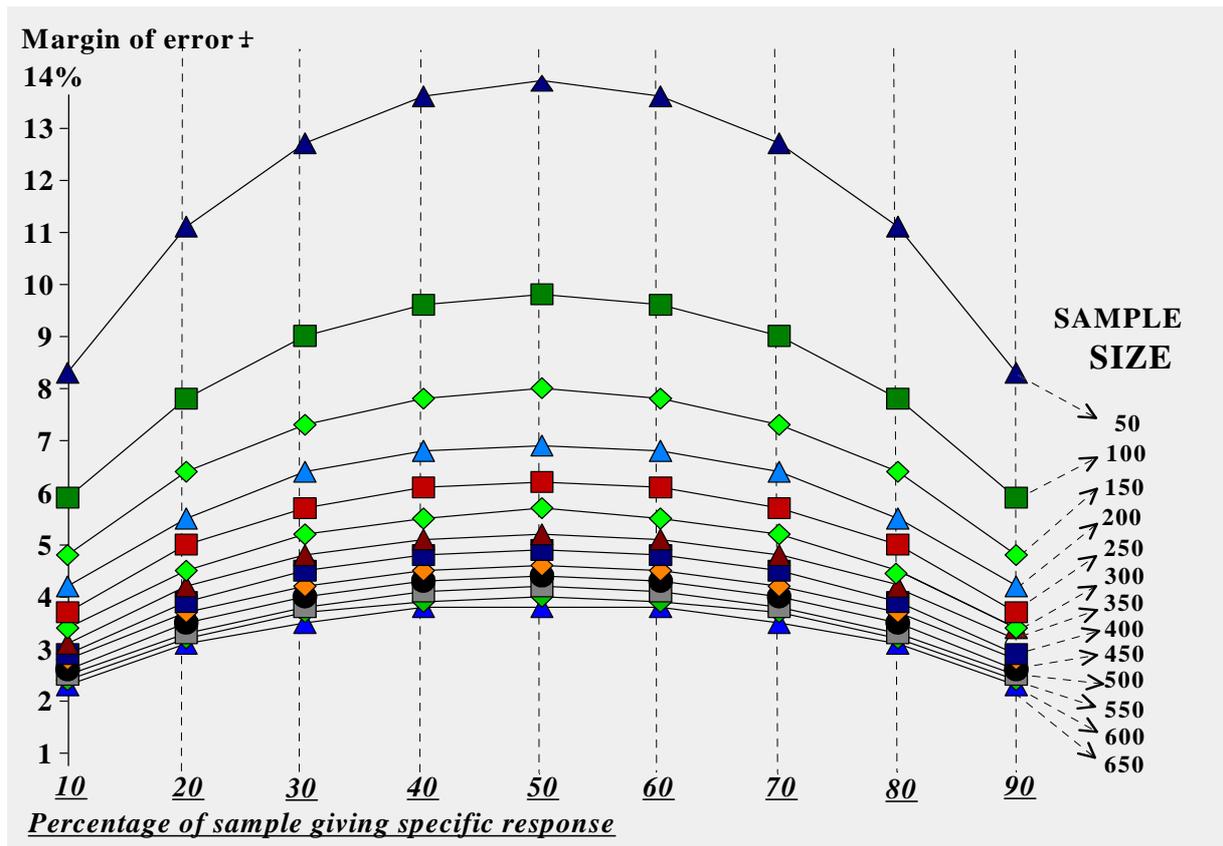
In interpreting survey results, all surveys are subject to error; that is, the results of the survey may differ from those that would have been obtained if the entire populations were interviewed. This “margin of error” quantifies the degree to which random sampling will differ from a survey of the entire population, taking into account, among other things, the disposition of individuals who do not complete the interview. Put another way, the opinions of those who are not randomly selected or who decline to be interviewed, are no more or less likely to be different – within the margin of error – than the opinions of those who complete an interview and are included in the sample. The size of sampling error depends on the total number of respondents to the particular question.

For example, 50% of all 400 respondents indicated they, “. . . *were within walking distance [of] a city, township or county park*” (Question # 11). As indicated in the chart below, this percentage would have a sampling error of plus or minus 4.9 percent. This means that with repeated sampling, it is very likely (95 times out of every 100), the percentage for the entire population would fall between 45.1 percent and 54.9 percent, hence 50 percent \pm 4.9 percent. The table on the next page represents the estimated sampling error for different percentage distributions of responses based on sample size.

EPIC • MRA SAMPLING ERROR BY PERCENTAGE (AT 95 IN 100 CONFIDENCE LEVEL)

Percentage of sample giving specific response

SAMPLE SIZE	<u>10</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>90</u>	
	% margin of error ±									
650	2.3	3.1	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.1	2.3	
600	2.4	3.2	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.2	2.4	
550	2.5	3.3	3.8	4.1	4.2	4.1	3.8	3.3	2.5	
500	2.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.0	3.5	2.6	
450	2.8	3.7	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.2	3.7	2.8	
400	2.9	3.9	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.5	3.9	2.9	
350	3.1	4.2	4.8	5.1	5.2	5.1	4.8	4.2	3.1	
300	3.4	4.5	5.2	5.5	5.7	5.5	5.2	4.5	3.4	
250	3.7	5.0	5.7	6.1	6.2	6.1	5.7	5.0	3.7	
200	4.2	5.5	6.4	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.4	5.5	4.2	
150	4.8	6.4	7.3	7.8	8.0	7.8	7.3	6.4	4.8	
100	5.9	7.8	9.0	9.6	9.8	9.6	9.0	7.8	5.9	
50	8.3	11.1	12.7	13.6	13.9	13.6	12.7	11.1	8.3	



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EPIC • MRA was commissioned in 2009 by the Kent County Board of Commissioners to develop and implement a survey to gauge, among other things, public opinion of registered voters regarding land use issues – including the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program. In addition, there was interest in measuring, albeit in a limited fashion, public perception about the availability and accessibility of park land, attitudes toward and participation in recycling activities, and top-of-mind knowledge about the level of agricultural activity within the county.

As was mentioned in the prior section, the interviews were stratified within the county in proportion to the constituent jurisdictions' contribution to the overall population. For analytical purposes, the county geography was broken down into eight regions, three of which subdivided Grand Rapids City into its component election wards:

- GR Ward 1, N=32 (8% of the total);
- GR Ward 2, N=40 (10% of the total); and,
- GR Ward 3, N=38 (10% of the total).

Also segregated were:

- Wyoming City, N=41 (10% of the total)
- The “Northwest”, consisting of the townships of: Algoma, Alpine, Plainfield, Solon, Sparta and Tyrone, N=53 (13% of the total);
- The “Northeast”, consisting of the townships of: Cannon, Courtland, Grattan, Nelson, Oakfield and Spencer, and the cities of Cedar Springs and Rockford N=36 (7% of the total);
- The “Southwest”, consisting of the townships of: Byron, Gaines and Grand Rapids and the cities of: East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood and Walker N=112 (28% of the total); and,
- The “Southeast”, (consisting of the townships of: Ada, Bowne, Caledonia, Cascade, Lowell and Vergennes, and the city of Lowell, N=48 (12% of the total).

-- Questionnaire Frame

With the primary aim of measuring citizen attitude toward governance of land use in general, and specific types of land use tools in particular, an obvious starting point was to take an initial measurement without offering any background information or pro/con advocacy statements. This was done at the outset of the interview in a battery of questions briefly

describing eight public policy goals in which governments might engage – ranging from law enforcement to economic development and including land use initiatives. Respondents were asked to assess the relative importance of each of the eight stated goals and the outcomes from this initial measurement forms the basis against which to compare related questions appearing later in the survey, after the respondents had been exposed to more information.

The line of questioning then went on to ask respondents to rate their local governments' efforts in the realm of planning for growth and to make a personal assessment of whether or not the level of experienced growth was appropriate. These questions were followed by a series of inquiries regarding the perceived availability of parkland, the importance of locally produced food, and an assessment of the relative importance agriculture has on the county economy along with perceptions about the amount of farmland in the county over time. The preceding questions were designed to have respondents start thinking about land and land use within their own experience, as well as on the wider county level.

With the immediately preceding questions as a backdrop, respondents were next asked to Agree/Disagree with a battery of six statements which asserted “truths” regarding the regulation or non-regulation of land. The statements specifically focused on controlling population growth, the preservation of farmland and the proper role of government in a free market economy.

What followed were questions which provided the respondent with objective information concerning farmland in the county. Specifically, the questions noted the reduction in the number of acres devoted to agriculture over time and Kent County's national ranking in the production of several agricultural commodities. Respondents were then asked to register their reactions about the reduction in agricultural acreage and their level of concern about it.

After having been “warmed up” to thinking about land use in the early sections of the interview, and receiving more specific information about agriculture in particular, respondents were asked separate questions about favoring or opposing voluntary government programs designed to preserve open space and farmland. Among those who voiced opposition, a follow-up question presented a closed-end list of reasons for opposition and asked respondents to select the one that best represented their view. These two questions were succeeded by a statement identifying an existing Kent County purchase of development rights program and another request to indicate whether or not the respondent favored or opposed the just-described Kent County land preservation program.

In an effort to gauge residents' specific knowledge of purchase of development rights programs, a series of seven statements were read, again purporting to state "truths" about such programs. Respondents were then asked to indicate if the statement was an accurate, or inaccurate, description of PDRs.

In a final set of questions, respondents were asked to assess the level of relative importance they placed on the existence of open-space and farmland preservation programs. For those who reported a relatively high level of importance on either of the types of PDRs, a follow-up question asked to make a similar assessment on the need for dedicated sources of funding for the respective programs.

The interview concluded with a battery of demographic questions.

-- General Observations

In the initial measurements at the outset of the survey, 81% of respondents indicated that preserving farmland and open space for local food production is a worthy aim of local governments, but not necessarily as important, as measured on the scale provided. For instance, public safety (95%), pollution control (91%), road maintenance (85%), and economic development programs (83%) ranked higher in respondents' perception of importance while recycling (72%), traffic congestion (64%), and controlling population growth (50%) ranked lower (Q1-8).

Respondents also issued an overall "Positive" rating of 53% for the manner in which their local officials planned for growth and development. As evidenced by the split responses of "very" positive and "very" negative responses, there was little intensity as to the opinions regarding how local officials planned for growth and development (Q9). Corroborating the lack of intense feeling about how well local governments have done in the area of planning is the notion among a strong majority of residents (69%) that the amount of growth that has taken place in the county over the past 20 years has been, "*About right*" (Q10).

Responses to questions regarding parks also support the observation that there is not an overriding need for greater land use regulation to create public spaces. Almost all say they have visited a park at least within the last year, with a very strong majority (66%) reporting having done so in the past month. In addition, 96% of respondents believe they are within a reasonable distance of a county, city or township park and three-quarters of the respondents indicate that there are currently about the right number of parks (Q11-13).

The overall picture begins to change somewhat when respondents are required to focus more closely on the local agricultural scene. Sixty percent of respondents report frequenting a local farmers' market at least once a month, 97% indicate that they place high value on domestically produced farm products, and 78% acknowledge agriculture as a key component in the local economy (Q14-17). Respondents also indicate – by overwhelming margins – that the amount of land dedicated to agriculture in Kent County has declined over the past two decades, but most of this group believe it has done so only “*Somewhat*” or “*A little*” (Q18).

The underlying interest and importance respondents place on open space and farmland preservation is again evidenced by responses to a series of agree/disagree statements. Among a series of six statements, 89% of respondents indicate that preserving open space is important to the future quality of life for Kent County, 76% agree that the loss of farmland has a negative impact on our local economy, 71% agree that commercial and residential development in areas without strong local planning results in higher costs for government services, and 69% agreed that if the population continues to grow without more planning and control it will have a negative impact on the economy in Kent County. (By contrast, responses to a similar question earlier in the survey indicated that only 50% thought planning for population growth was at least an important priority (Q3); the lowest ranking given to eight governmental activities presented.). A statement that market forces, not government regulation, should drive development patterns received the lowest level of agreement (54%) in this section (Q19-24).

When told about the specific amount of land in the county that is no longer available for agriculture, 61% report that the level of loss is “*Too much*”, with 32% of this group indicating it was “*much too much*” loss of farmland. When respondents were informed about the high-ranking of Kent County as an agricultural producer, 86% of respondents report that they were at least somewhat concerned about the loss of farmland. Of those indicating a concern, 32% indicated concern because it reduces the availability of locally grown food, 28% indicated concern because the farmland helps preserve environmental quality, 18% indicated concern because the loss of farmland will result in a loss of jobs, and 15% indicated concern regarding the loss of farmland because population growth results in a greater need for services and more taxes. (Q25-27).

Despite the significant indications from respondents about the importance of agriculture in Kent County (Q17), upon the initial question which only included a brief generic explanation

of the concept of purchasing development rights, 51% of respondents indicated that they “favor” the program (Q28). However, upon hearing more specifics about the program 77% of respondents favor purchase of development rights for open space and 70% indicate support of the purchase of development rights program for farmland preservation (Q29, Q31).

For the 20% opposed to PDR for open space and the 27% opposed to PDR for farmland preservation they indicated that their primary rationale was that government should not be in the business of purchasing development rights for land preservation (Q30, 32).

Despite the strong support about PDR in the prior questions (Q29, Q31), 64% were not aware that Kent County has operated a program, and 66% of respondents indicated that they favor the PDR program in Kent County (Q33, Q34). This reduction in support from the earlier response levels is of enough significance from the generic survey questions regarding PDR to make it worthy of note. The reason for this is to be found in the following battery of questions

To gauge the level of understanding regarding PDR programs, a series of eight statements were presented to the respondents, who were then asked to report whether or not the statement was accurate or inaccurate. Respondents were also able to indicate that they “*Didn’t know*” or were “*Undecided*” about the accuracy of the statement. In this series of question, the significant responses were in the large number of “*Undecided*” responses as it relates to questions regarding funding or if other areas of the State had seen a benefit from PDR programs. These results clearly indicate a lack of specific knowledge concerning PDR programs. However, in subsequent questions regarding farmland and open space preservation programs, respondents indicated support returning to very strong levels (Q35-42).

In a quasi-repeat of a question posed earlier in the interview, respondents were again asked to assess the level of importance that they placed on programs designed to preserve farmland and 71% of respondents again expressed a sentiment that these programs are of great importance to them (Q43). In this instance, the total number of respondents indicating farmland preservation programs was either “*Essential*” or “*Very important*” spiked to levels (71%) even higher than the already very-strong levels (66%) seen in the prior generic question (Q34). As for programs designed to preserve open space, 63% of respondents indicated that it was at least very important or essential to have programs to preserve open space (Q45). It is interesting to note that in the prior questions regarding the differentiation between open space and farmland, respondents were more supportive of the concept of open space preservation, while respondents

indicate more support for farmland preservation after survey questions regarding agricultural production had been presented.

In a follow-up question regarding the need for a dedicated funding source for farmland preservation, 61% of respondents indicated it is at least “Very Important” with an additional 29% indicating it is “Somewhat” important to have a dedicated funding source for farmland preservation (Q44). As it relates to a funding source for open space preservation, 57% indicated that it is at least “Very Important” with an additional 34% indicating that it is “Somewhat” important that there be a dedicated funding source for open space programs (Q46). However, the respondents’ support for a dedicated funding source must be relayed back to the prior survey questions wherein the highest number of “*Undecided*” respondents landed on the statements concerning whether or not the funding sources for the programs were from public or private sources. That is, respondents generally concur with the notion that PDR’s are a good thing and ought to have a dedicated source of funding, but they lack awareness concerning the existing program and how it is funded. Moreover, there is an identifiable uncertainty among a significant portion of the respondents regarding the role of government involvement with land use issues (Q3, Q20).

In sum, there is strong evidence that Kent County citizens – especially those in the “Northeast” region and Ward 3 of Grand Rapids City -- are, in the abstract, pre-disposed toward programs that are designed to preserve open space and, even more so for farmland. The citizens of the county highly value locally produced food items and they also value the quality of life afforded by their geographical spot in the state. However, there is uncertainty about the role of government as it relates to the disposition of property. As a result of these seemingly conflicting (or inconsistent) perceptions and opinions, it will be necessary for registered voters to be educated regarding the PDR program in order to obtain the levels of support indicated in this survey.

QUESTION-BY-QUESTION RESULTS

Questions 1-8

-- Relative importance of several county and local government policy goals

Survey respondents were first asked a battery of nine questions which recited major policy aims of some local governments. The order of presentation of the questions was rotated for succeeding respondents to minimize any bias in responses. After hearing a brief description of the policy goal and, in some cases, specific actions to advance the goal, respondents were asked to reveal whether they thought the specific aim was a, “*Top Priority*”, an “*Important, but Not a Top Priority*”, only “*Slightly Important*” or, “*Not Important at All*”. The following chart illustrates, from highest to lowest based on “Total Important”, the relative positions of the several policy goals presented to respondents:

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%	95%	3%	1%	1%
Protecting the air, land and waterways from pollution	58%	33%	91%	7%	2%	---
Providing economic development programs and incentives to attract business and industry	49%	34%	83%	11%	5%	1%
Maintaining and improving area roads	39%	46%	85%	13%	1%	1%
Preserving farmland and open space for local food production	49%	32%	81%	11%	7%	1%
Offering programs to recycle household items such as cans, plastics, cardboard and newspapers	27%	45%	72%	18%	9%	1%
Controlling traffic congestion	17%	47%	64%	26%	8%	2%
Controlling where population growth occurs by regulating commercial and residential development	20%	30%	50%	29%	17%	4%

As can be seen by the chart above, importance is placed by at least a strong majority of respondents for each of the policy aims recited, with the exception of, “controlling population growth . . .”, which is deemed to be of importance by an even 50% of respondents. Interestingly, however, the arguably related aims of, “controlling traffic congestion” and, “preserving farmland and open space . . .”, are viewed by significantly higher proportions of respondents as being at least, “Important” by wide margins, and in the case of farmland and open-space preservation, the proportions viewing this aim as a “Top priority” (i.e. 49%) is the same as for the goal of, “Providing economic development . . . incentives”.

Respondents reporting “Top Priority”, for “Crime & Drugs” in proportions greater than the overall mean (66%) included:

“Too much” Co. Growth	78%
GR Ward 3	74%
\$75 to 100K income	
Funding for farmland protection, “Essential”	
Wyoming	73%
Funding for open-space protection, “Essential”	
Lived in area 16-25 years	72%
Gov’t Planning Exc/Good	71%
About the “Right Amount” farmland loss	
“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss	
“Very” concerned about farmland loss	
Farmland protection programs “Very” important	
Open-space protection programs “Essential”	
Younger w/o college	
Women under 50	
GR Ward 2	70%

Respondents reporting “Top Priority”, for “Protect against pollution” in proportions greater than the overall mean (58%) included:

Funding for open-space protection, “Essential”	76%
Open-space protection programs “Essential”	74%
“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss	72%
Farmland protection “Essential”	
“Too few” parks	71%
“Favor” local PDR programs (Q28)	67%
“Favor” farmland PDR purchase (Q31)	66%
Open-space protection programs “Very Important”	
“Too much” farmland loss	65%
Funding for farmland protection “Very important”	
Funding for open-space protection, “Very important”	
Under \$25K	
Favor PDRs (Q34)	64%
“Suburban” residents	
Younger w/o college	
Older w/college	63%

Respondents reporting “Top Priority”, for “Economic development” in proportions greater than the overall mean (49%) included:

Farmland loss “About right”	60%
County Growth “Too slow”	59%
Over \$100K	
GR Ward 2	58%
Northeast Region	
“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss	
Lived in area 16-25 years	56%
No college women	55%
Under \$25K	
Funding for farmland protection, “Essential”	54%
Open-space protection programs “Essential”	
“Rural” residents	

Respondents reporting “Top Priority”, for “Preserving farmland and open-space” in proportions greater than the overall mean (49%) included:

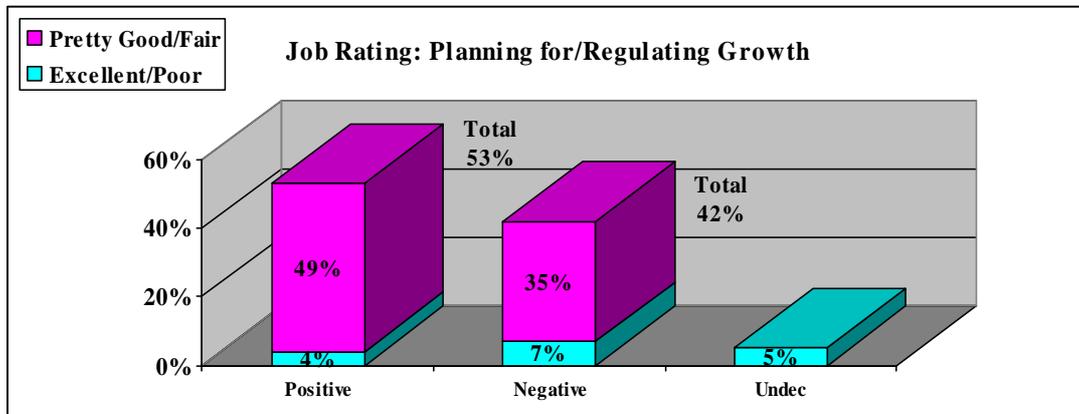
“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss	80%
Funding for open-space protection, “Essential”	77%
Funding for farmland protection “Essential”	73%
Farmland protection programs “Essential”	68%
Open-space protection programs “Essential”	
Northeast region	61%
“Too much” county growth	59%
Northwest region	58%
“Favor” local PDR programs (Q28)	
“Too much” farmland loss	
Under \$25K	
“Too few” parks	57%
“Favor” farmland PDR purchase (Q31)	
Post HS education	
Funding for farmland protection “Very important”	
\$75-100K	
Farmland protection programs “Very” important	56%
Area resident 1-15 yrs	
Favor PDRs (Q34)	
“Rural” residents	
Area resident 16-25 yrs	
Younger w/o college	
Women w/o college	

Question 9

-- Majority issue a “Positive” rating for local government planning efforts

Respondents were next asked if they would give a “Positive rating of Excellent or Pretty Good” or a, “Negative rating of Only Fair or Poor”, for job being done by county and local governments in planning for and regulating growth and development. As the chart below illustrates, a slight majority of respondents issued an overall “Positive” rating, however, the proportion issuing the highest, “Excellent” rating is a very small proportion of the overall

assessment. Similarly, a relatively small proportion of the “*Negative*” rating is represented by a rating of “*Poor*”.



Respondents reporting “*Positive*” in proportions lower than the overall mean (53%) included:

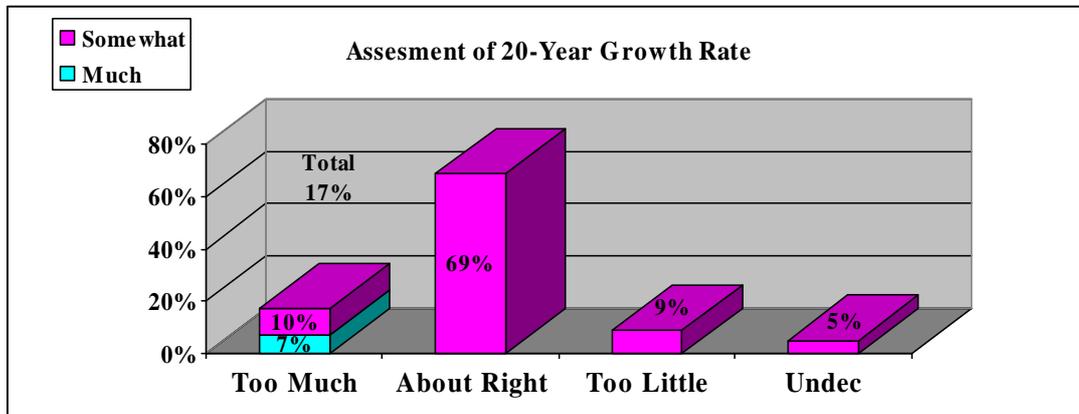
Open-space protection programs, “ <i>Undecided</i> ”	40%
Post HS education	42%
“ <i>Too few</i> ” parks	43%
Men over 50	
No college Men	44%
“ <i>Oppose</i> ” PDRs for purchase of open-space (Q29)	45%
Open-space protection programs “ <i>Essential</i> ”	
“ <i>Little/Not</i> ” concerned about farmland loss	46%
“ <i>Undecided</i> ” on PDRs (Q34)	
“ <i>Too much</i> ” county growth	48%
“ <i>Extremely</i> ” concerned about farmland loss	
“ <i>Oppose</i> ” PDRs (Q28)	
“ <i>Oppose</i> ” PDRs (Q34)	
Funding for farmland protection “ <i>Essential</i> ”	
Funding for open-space programs “ <i>Essential</i> ”	
50-55 Age group	
Under \$25K	
\$25-50K	
Older w/o college	

Question 10

-- Strong majority see two-decade rate of growth as being, “*About right*”

Respondents were next informed that, over the past two decades, the population of Kent County has increased by 20%. They were then asked if they believed that such a rate of growth is, “*Too much*” – (with a follow-up of whether it is “*Much*” too much, or “*Somewhat*”), is it, “*About right*” or, is it “*Too little*”? Sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated their belief that the rate of growth in the county over the past 20 years has been,

“About right”, 17% indicated a belief that it has been “Too much”, and 9% offered that the growth rate has been, “Too little”. The graph below illustrates the distribution:



Respondents reporting “Too much” in proportions higher than the overall mean (17%) included:

Under \$25K	33%
GR Ward 2	28%
No college men	
H.S. or less	
Funding for farmland protection “Smwt” important	24%
Funding for open space protection “Smwt Important”	
Young, no college	
“Too much” farmland loss	23%
Older, no college	

Questions 11-13

-- Nearly all residents report being at least a “Reasonable distance” from a park

Initiating a series of three questions about parks in the county, respondents were asked to indicate how close they are to a city, township or county park. Fifty percent reported they were “within walking distance”, another 46% said they were within, “a reasonable distance to travel if they chose to”, with only 4% reporting they were, “too far away to travel to consider doing it”.

-- Three-of-four believe there are currently, “About the right amount” of parks

When asked about the number and location of city, township and county parks in their area, three-out-of-four respondents reported that there were, “About the right amount”. Nearly one-in-five (19%) reported their belief that there are, “Too few”, with 5% saying there are already, “Too many”.

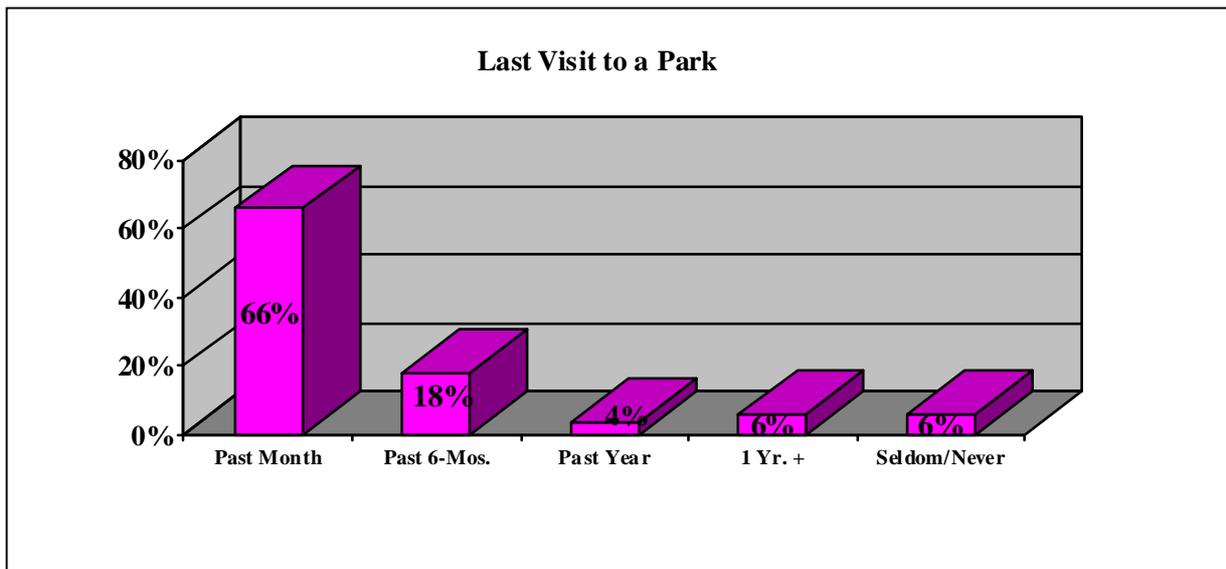
Respondents reporting “Too few” parks in proportions higher than the overall mean (19%) included:

Funding for open space protection “Very Impt”	30%
GR Ward 3	26%

Farmland protection programs “Very” important
 Funding for farmland protection “Very” important
 “Rural” residents 25%
 \$50-75K
 College women
 Southwest region 24%
 Gov’t Planning “Negative” (Q9)
 “Extremely” concerned about farmland loss
 Open space protection programs “Very” important
 Area resident 16-25 yrs
 Age 56-64

-- Two-thirds have visited a park, “In the past 6 months”

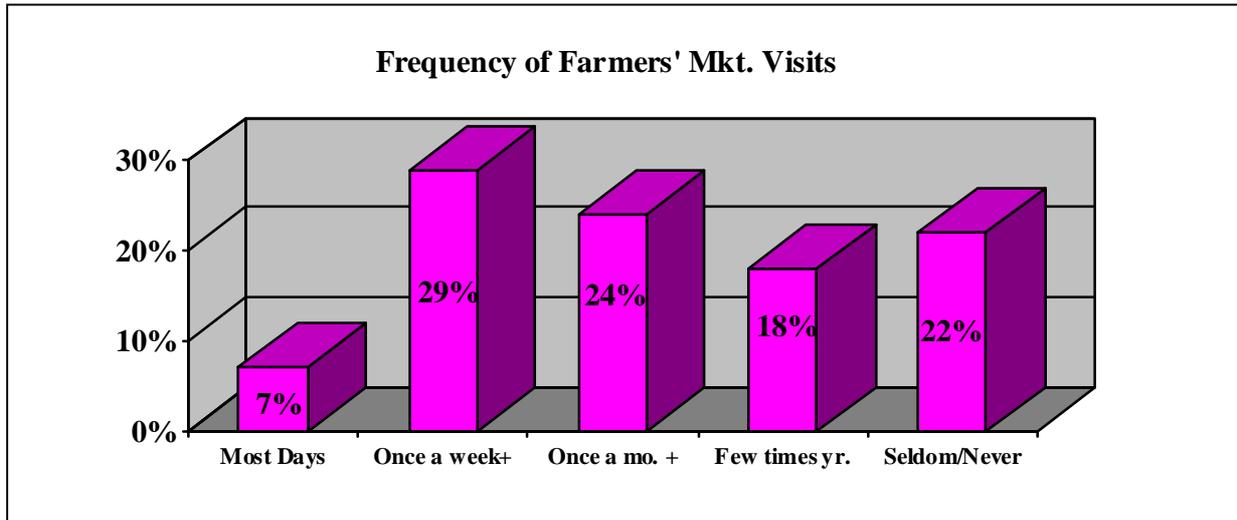
All respondents were asked how recently they or a member of their household had visited a park. A total of 88% reported that they or a household member had visited a local government park within the past year, with 66% saying the visit occurred within the past month. The graph below illustrates the frequency distribution:



Question 14-16

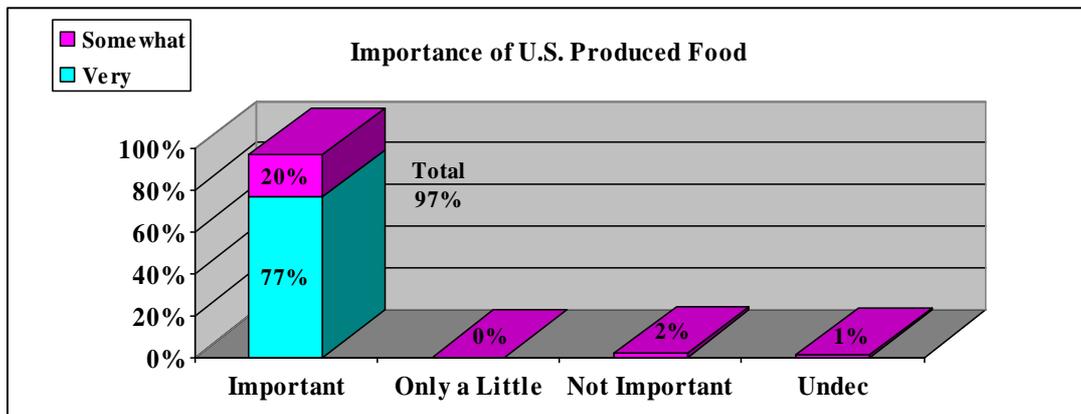
-- Over three-quarters visit a farmers’ market at least “Several times a year”

In a question that mimicked the previous inquiry about frequency of park visitation, all respondents were asked how recently they or a member of their household had visited a local farmers’ market to purchase locally produced goods. A total of 78% reported that they or a household member visit a farmers’ market at least, “several times a year”, with 60% reporting a visitation at least a, “few times a month”. The graph below illustrates the frequency distribution:



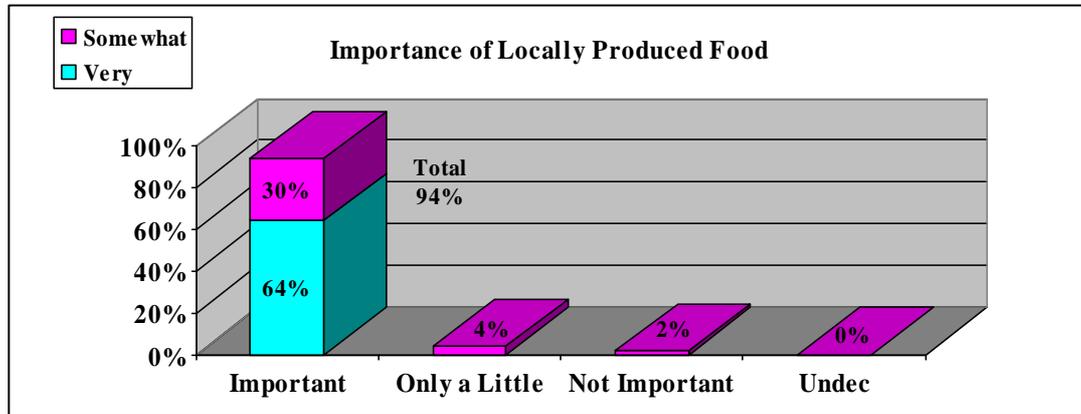
-- Great importance placed on domestically produced food items

In a two-question set, respondents were first asked to report how important they believed it is that the grocery items they purchase are produced in the United States. As demonstrated by the graph below, nearly all respondents (97%) reported that it is at least “*Somewhat important*” that their food be produced domestically, with 77% reporting that it is, “*Very important*”.



Among the 97% who placed at least some degree of importance on their food being produced in the United States, a follow-up question was asked to assess the level of importance respondents placed on their food being produced by area farmers. While the results are not quite as dramatic as illustrated in the previous question, the following chart nevertheless demonstrates

the very high expressed level of importance Kent County residents place on locally produced grocery items:



Respondents reporting “Very” important in proportions higher than the overall mean (64%) included:

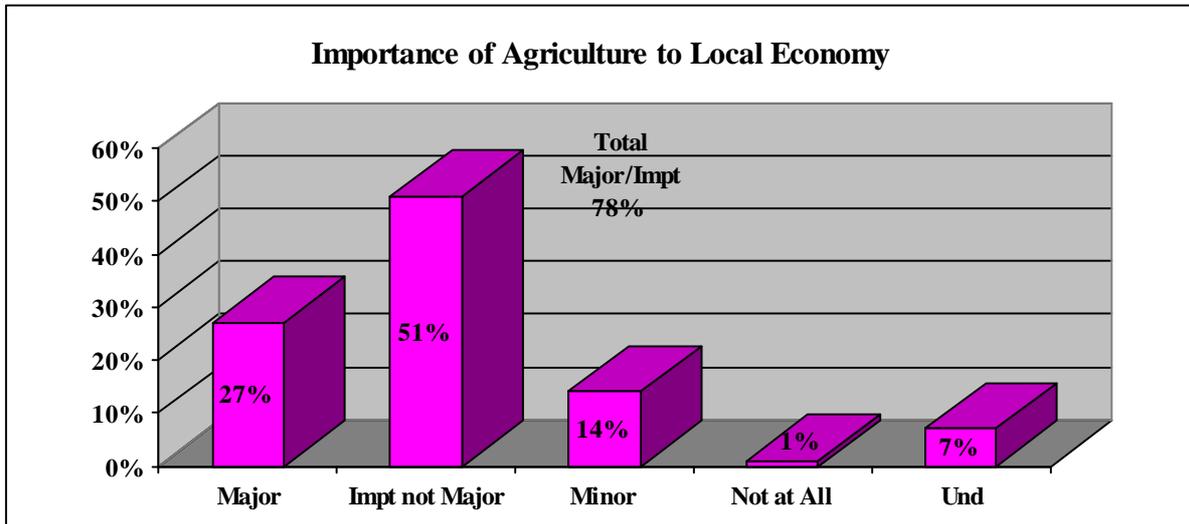
“Extremely” concerned about loss of farmland	81%
Northeast region	77%
Under \$25K	75%
Open space protection programs “Essential”	74%
“Too few” parks	73%
Farmland protection programs “Essential”	
No college women	
GR Ward 1	72%
“Too much” county growth	
\$25-50K	
“Very” concerned about loss of farmland	71%
H.S. or less	
Women over 50	
Funding for Open space programs “Very imp’t”	70%
Females	
Older, no college	
Aware of Kent Co. PDR program	69%
Farmland protection programs “Very” important	
Age 41-49	
Age 65+	
“Rural” residents	
Women under 50	

Question 17

-- Agriculture seen as being an “Important” local economic factor

Respondents were next asked to opine on the extent to which agricultural activity contributes to the economy in Kent County. A slight majority of 51% offered their belief that agriculture is an “Important but not major factor” in the county economy, with 27% reporting

their opinion that the sector is a “Major factor”. The three remaining possible answers, “Only a minor factor” (14%), “Not really a factor at all” (1%) and the unprompted, “Undecided” (7%), combined to form a 22% portion of the sample for this question.



Respondents reporting “Major” factor in proportions higher than the overall mean (64%) included:

Northeast region	42%
“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss	
“Too few” parks	37%
Funding for farmland preservation “Essential”	34%
Open space preservation programs “Essential”	
Funding for Open space programs “Essential”	
Funding for Open space programs “Very impt”	
“Small town” residents	
Aware of Kent Co. PDR program	33%
“Rural” residents	
Under \$25K	
Young w/college	
GR Ward 3	32%
“Too much” farmland loss	

Question 18

-- Uncertainty about extent of land dedicated to agriculture

Following the question about the impact of agriculture on the Kent County economy, respondents were asked whether or not over the past 20 years, the amount of farmland in the county had, “Increased”, “Declined” or, “Remained about the same”. For those expressing an opinion that it has declined, a follow-up query asked if it had declined, “A lot”, “Somewhat” or, “Only a little”. While nearly nine-in-ten respondents reported a belief that the amount of

farmland in Kent County has declined in the past two decades (87%), a plurality (47%) reported it had done so, “*Somewhat*”, with 36% saying it had declined “*A lot*”, and the remaining portion of this group (4%) believing farmland in the county had declined “*Only a little*”. Eight percent of respondents expressed the belief that it had remained “*About the same*”, one percent offered that it had, “*Increased*”.

Respondents reporting a belief that farmland has declined “A lot” in proportions higher than the overall mean (36%) included:

<i>Under \$25K</i>	<i>53%</i>
<i>Funding for Open space programs “Essential”</i>	<i>50%</i>
<i>GR Ward 3</i>	<i>47%</i>
<i>Open space preservation programs, “Essential”</i>	
<i>Funding for farmland preservation “Essential”</i>	<i>46%</i>
<i>GR Ward 2</i>	<i>45%</i>
<i>Gov’t planning “Negative”</i>	<i>44%</i>
<i>\$50-75K</i>	
<i>“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss</i>	<i>43%</i>
<i>Women over 50</i>	
<i>“Too much” farmland loss</i>	<i>42%</i>
<i>Older no college</i>	
<i>No college women</i>	
<i>Farmland protection programs, “Essential”</i>	<i>41%</i>
<i>“Urban” residents</i>	

Questions 19-24

-- Maintaining quality of life tops list of “Agreement” statements

The more indirect preceding questions regarding residents’ attitudes toward land use in the county were followed with a battery of six – “*Agree/Disagree*” – questions which propounded statements regarding land use, and more specifically, the extent to which governmental entities should play a role in shaping it. As can be seen by the chart below, residents agree with statements going toward preservation of farmland and open space by larger margins – in some cases significantly so as evidenced by the “*Strongly Agree*” proportions – than with statements which suggest allowing market forces or maintaining the status quo, should drive decisions regarding development. **NOTE:** For those who indicated an opinion, a follow-up query probed for the respondent’s intensity of sentiment, by asking whether the agreement or disagreement was felt “*Strongly*” or “*Somewhat*”.

RELATIVE LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ON LAND USE POLICY

Sorted by Highest to Lowest TOTAL Agree

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

Respondents reporting “Strong agreement” with the statement that preservation of open space is important, in proportions higher than the overall mean (61%) included:

<i>Funding for Open space programs “Essential”</i>	84%
<i>Open space preservation programs “Essential”</i>	79%
<i>Northeast region</i>	75%
<i>“Favor” PDRs (Q 2/8)</i>	
<i>Funding for farmland preservation “Essential”</i>	
<i>Farmland protection programs, “Essential”</i>	74%
<i>GR Ward 1</i>	72%
<i>GR Ward 3</i>	71%
<i>“Extremely” concerned over farmland loss</i>	
<i>Funding for farmland preservation “Very Impt”</i>	
<i>“Rural” residents</i>	
<i>“Too few” parks</i>	70%
<i>Southeast region</i>	69%
<i>“Favor” Kent Co. PDR program (Q 34)</i>	
<i>Age 50-55</i>	
<i>Younger college educated</i>	
<i>“Too much” farmland loss</i>	68%
<i>“Favor” PDRs for farmland (Q 31)</i>	
<i>College educated</i>	
<i>\$25-50K</i>	
<i>Older college educated</i>	

Women over 50	
“Favor” PDRs for open space preservation (Q 29)	67%
Funding for Open space programs “Very Impt”	
“Very” concerned over farmland loss	66%
Farmland preservation programs, “Very Impt”	

Respondents reporting “Strong agreement” with the statement that loss of farmland has a negative impact on the economy, in proportions higher than the overall mean (50%) included:

Funding of open space preservation “Essential”	74%
Open space preservation programs “Essential”	73%
“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss	71%
Funding for farmland preservation “Essential”	
Farmland preservation programs “Essential”	68%
Northeast region	67%
41-49 Age group	63%
“Too much” county growth	62%
“Too much” farmland loss	
“Favor” PDRs (Q 26)	60%
\$25-50K	59%
“Favor” farmland purchase PDRs	58%
Funding of open space preservation “Very Impt”	
16-25 yr. residents	
“Rural” residents	
“Favor” Kent Co. PDR program (Q 34)	56%

Respondents reporting that they “Agree” (in total) that market forces should drive development, in proportions higher than the overall mean (54%) included:

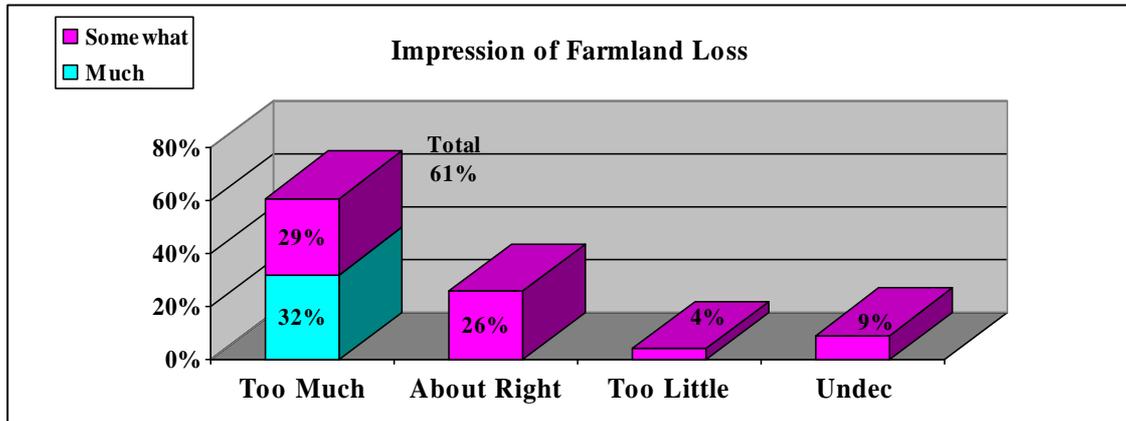
“Oppose” Kent Co. PDR program	78%
“Little/No” concern about farmland loss	76%
Farmland preservation programs “Not Imp/Und”	
“Oppose” farmland PDRs (Q 31)	75%
“Oppose” Open space PDRs (Q 29)	71%
Farmland preservation programs “Somewhat Impt”	
Open space preservation programs “Not Imp/Und”	68%
Farmland loss is “About right”	67%
Farmland loss, “Undecided”	65%
Open space programs “Somewhat impt”	
Northeast region	64%
“Oppose” PDR programs (Q 28)	
\$75-100K	
Wyoming	61%
Area resident 16-25 years	
Southeast region	60%
Age 65+	59%

Question 25

-- Most report “Too much” farmland has been lost

Following the battery of statements about land use policy, respondents were informed that approximately 18 % of the land dedicated to agriculture in Kent County had decreased in the period between 1978 and 1992. They were then asked (being mindful of all the benefits associated with commercial growth) if the cited decrease in farmland during that period has been

“The Right Amount”, “Too Little”, or, “Too Much”. For those who indicated “Too much”, a follow-up query asked if it was “Much” or “Somewhat”. Overall, just over six-in-ten (61%) reported the opinion that “Too much” had been lost. The chart below, illustrates the distribution:



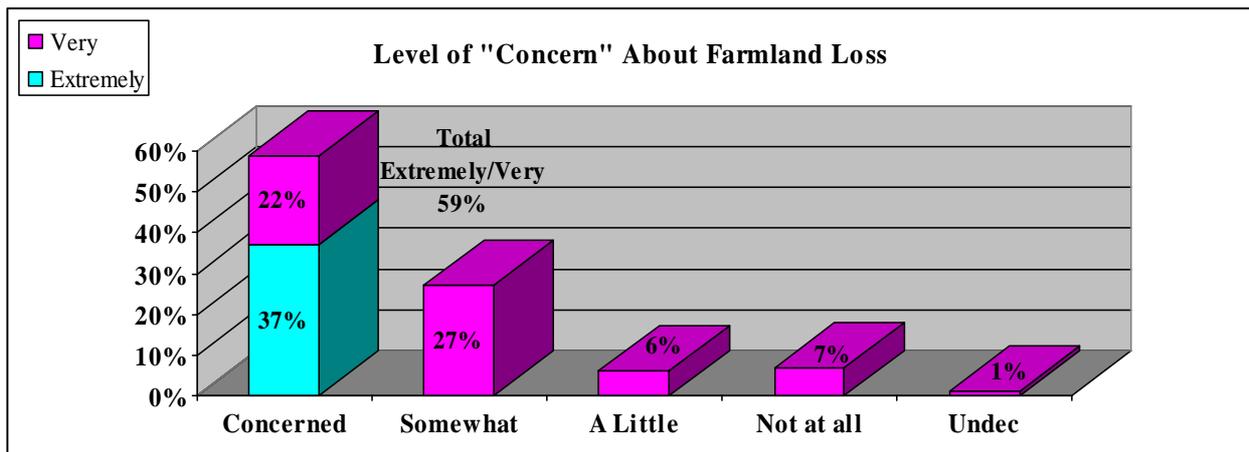
Respondents reporting that they believe “Too Much” (in total) farmland has been lost, in proportions higher than the overall mean (61%) included:

“Too much” county growth	83%
Funding for open space programs “Essential”	80%
“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss	79%
Funding for farmland preservation “Essential”	78%
GR Ward 3	74%
Under \$25K	73%
Farmland preservation programs “Essential”	72%
\$25-50K	
“Too few” parks	71%
“Very” concerned about farmland loss	
Open space preservation programs “Essential”	
Farmland preservation programs “Very Impt”	70%
Funding for open space programs “Very Impt”	
No college women	
Women over 50	69%
GR Ward 2	68%
“Favor” PDR programs (Q 28)	
“Favor” farmland PDRs (Q 31)	
Women	
Young w/o college	
“Negative” rating for government planning	67%
Favor Kent Co. PDR program	
Funding for farmland preservation “Very Impt”	
40-49 Age group	
Women Under 50	
Northeast region	66%
Open space preservation programs “Very Impt”	
HS or less	

Question 26

-- High concern over impact of farmland loss on the local economy

Respondents were next informed of Kent County’s top rankings for production of crops overall, as well as the particularly high rankings for specific agricultural products. After a brief description of these statistics, respondents were asked, the level to which they were “Concerned” about the effect the loss of farmland might have on the health of the local economy. Overall, combining those voicing either “Extremely” or “Very” high levels of concern, 59% of all respondents reported “concern” about the negative economic impact the loss of farmland could have on Kent County. If combined with those who reported being at least, “Somewhat” concerned, the overall level of concern regarding the impact of farmland loss on the local economy rises to 86%. The following graph illustrates the distribution of the responses:



Respondents reporting that they are “Concerned” (in total) about the loss of farmland, in proportions higher than the overall mean (59%) included:

Funding for farmland preservation “Essential”	80%
Open space preservation “Essential”	78%
Farmland preservation program “Essential”	76%
Funding for farmland preservation “Very Impt”	71%
Young, no college	
Women over 50	
“Too much” farmland loss	70%
Northeast region	69%
“Favor” PDRs (Q 28)	68%
“Too few” parks	67%
Funding of farmland programs “Favor”	
Funding of open space programs “Very Impt”	
No college women	
“Negative” rating on Gov’t planning	66%
Farmland preservation program “Very Impt”	
Under \$25K	

Northwest region	65%
“Favor” Kent Co. PDR program	
Women	
Post HS	
50-55 Age group	
“Small town” residents	
\$25-50K	64%
“Too much” county growth	63%
“Favor” open space PDRs (Q 29)	
Funding of farmland programs “Favor”	
Older w/college	
College women	
Open space preservation “Very Impt”	62%

Question 27

-- On follow-up, a fairly even distribution of reasons for concern

Among respondents who expressed at least, “*Only a little concern*” about the economic impact to Kent County over the loss of farmland, a follow-up, closed-end question asked them to select which of the offered reasons best represented “*why*” they were concerned. Given the preceding series of questions heard by respondents regarding the availability of locally grown food, environmental considerations, impact on the need for governmental services and economic impact, the distribution of answers reveals something of a potpourri. The closeness of these results suggests that respondents don’t harbor one overriding reason for concern but rather, have more than one reason competing for their attention. The chart below, demonstrates the distribution of respondents’ selections of reasons for their concern:

REASONS FOR CONCERN ABOUT LOSS OF FARMLAND

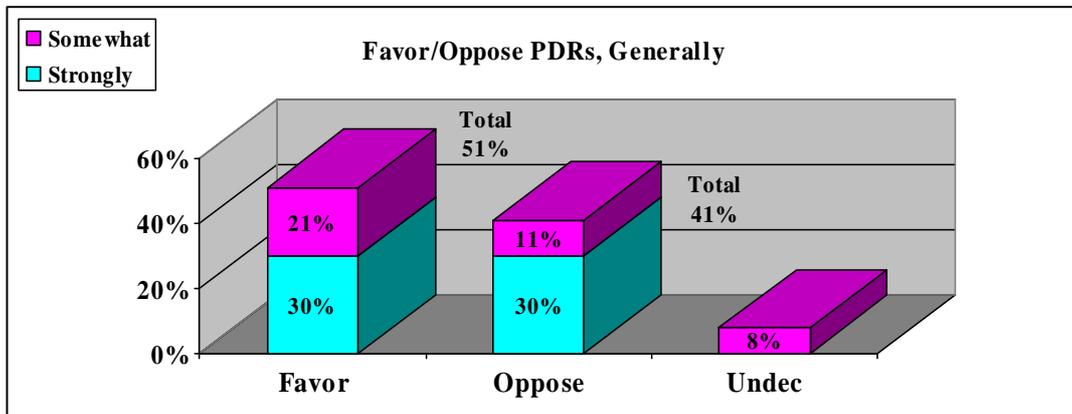
32%	It reduces the availability of locally grown food
28%	Maintaining farmland helps preserve environmental quality
18%	Loss of farmland results in a loss of jobs
15%	Population growth results in a greater need for services and more taxes
7%	Undecided/Refused

Question 28

-- Very slight majority favor PDRs on initial asking

Respondents were next asked if they would “*Favor*” or “*Oppose*” a voluntary government program allowing local units of government to purchase development rights as one means by which governments can control population growth and development. The result to this initial asking of a specific question regarding PDR programs was a bare majority reporting they

avored the notion. Strength of sentiment about the question was equal, however, with identical proportions indicating a “Strong” preference on the question one way or the other. The chart below, illustrates the distribution of responses:



Respondents “Favoring” PDRs (in total), in proportions higher than the overall mean (51%) included:

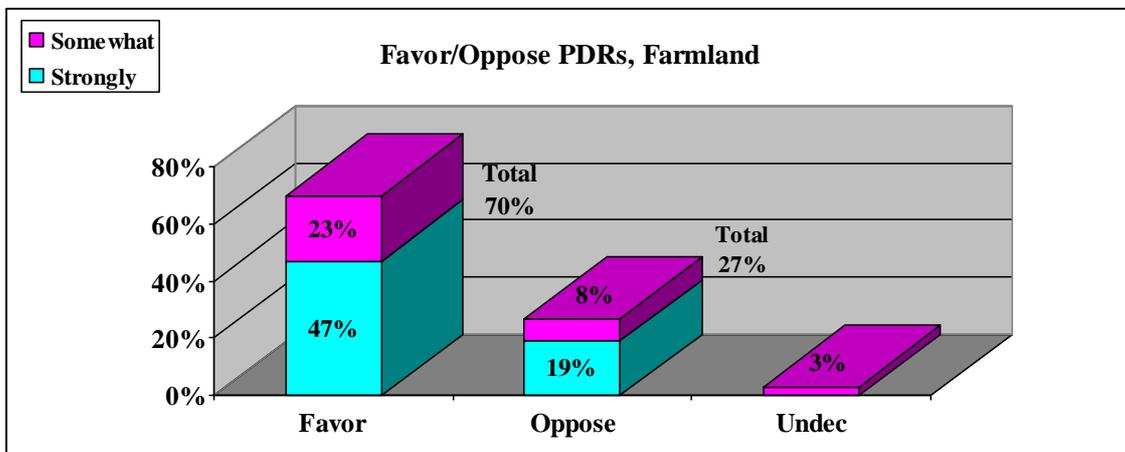
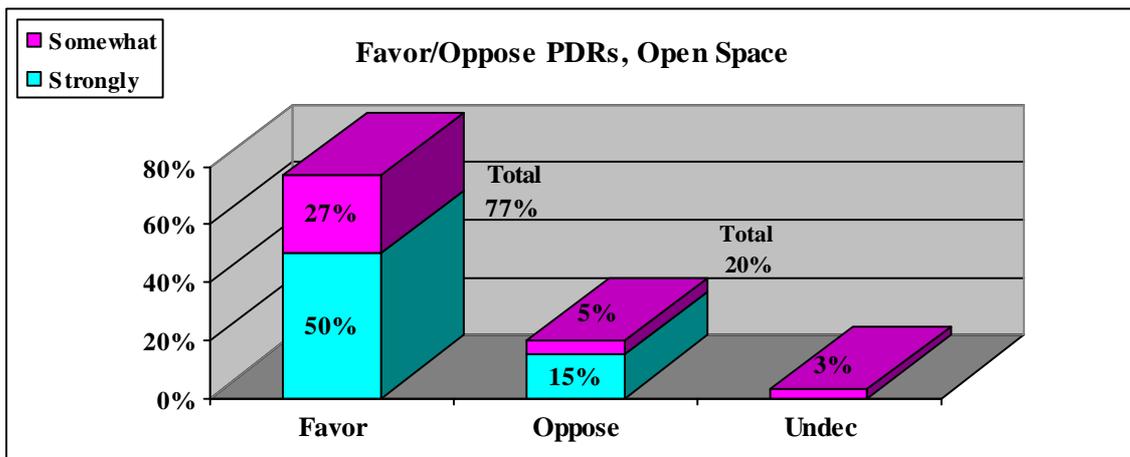
Funding for Open space programs “Essential”	70%
“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss	69%
Funding for farmland programs “Essential”	
Farmland preservation programs “Essential”	68%
“Favor” farmland PDRs	67%
“Favor” Kent Co. PDR program	65%
Open space preservation programs “Essential”	64%
GR Ward 1	63%
GR Ward 3	
“Favor” open space PDRs	61%
Aware of Kent Co PDR program	
Funding for farmland preservation “Very Impt”	
50-55 Age range	
Over \$100K	
Open space preservation programs “Very Impt”	60%
Funding for Open space programs “Very Impt”	
16-25 year residents	
Older w/college	58%
College women	
Women under 50	
County growth “About right”	57%
“Too much” farmland loss	
Children at home	
College educated	
Younger w/college	
Under age 50	
Southeast region	56%
1-15 year residents	
Younger/no college	

Question 29 & 31

-- Strong support of PDR's upon hearing more specifics

As a follow-up to the initial question asking respondents to voice an opinion concerning PDR's generally, a presentation of two rotated questions was made. The questions specifically identified "Open-space" and "Farmland" as the object of hypothetical preservation activity that might be undertaken by a local unit of government using a PDR. When put in the context of the aforementioned purposes, a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who reported "Favoring" government use of PDR's is seen.

In the case of "open space", defined as, ". . . a parcel of land in a mostly open and undeveloped condition . . . and is suitable for natural areas, wildlife and native plants", a very strong majority of 77% reported "Favor[ing]" the idea overall, 50% saying they "Strongly" favored the idea. Similarly, 70% of respondents overall, "Favor[ed]" PDR use in the context of farmland preservation, 47% "Strongly". The following graphs illustrate the distribution:



Respondents “Opposing” PDRs for Open space (in total), in proportions higher than the overall mean (20%) included:

Open space preservation programs “Not impt/Und”	66%
Oppose farmland preservation PDRs (Q 31)	51%
Oppose Kent Co. PDR program	46%
“Little/No” concern over loss of farmland	41%
Farmland preservation programs “Not impt/Und”	40%
Oppose PDRs generally (Q 28)	37%
Southeast region	31%
Funding of farmland preservation programs “Not impt/Und	
Loss of farmland “Undecided”	30%
Oppose Kent Co. PDR program “Undecided”	27%
Open space preservation program “Smwt impt”	
HS or less	26%
Men over 50	
Loss of farmland “About right”	25%
Farmland preservation programs, “Smwt Impt”	
65+ Age group	

Respondents “Opposing” PDRs for Farmland (in total), in proportions higher than the overall mean (27%) included:

Farmland preservation programs, “Not Impt/Und”	73%
Open space preservation programs “Not Impt/Und”	70%
Oppose Kent Co. PDR program	68%
“Little/Not” concerned about farmland loss	53%
Farmland preservation “Somewhat Impt”	
Oppose PDRs, generally	52%
Amount of farmland loss, “About right”	41%
Open space preservation programs, “Somewhat Impt”	40%
County growth “Too slow”	38%
Amount of farmland loss, “Undecided”	
Northwest region	36%
“Undecided” about Kent Co. PDR program	
College men	35%
Funding for farmland preservation “Somewhat Impt”	34%
Southwest region	33%
1-15 Year residents	
Men	32%

Question 30 & 32

-- Role of government vis-à-vis market forces top reasons to oppose PDRs

After each “Favor/Oppose” question regarding PDR use in the context of open-space and farmland, respondents who “Opposed” the use of them were asked, which of four recited reasons best described the respondent’s opposition? In the case of open space, 80% of this subset (16% of the entire sample), cited the offered reason that, “Government should not be in the business of purchasing development rights for land preservation purposes.”, with 5% citing the related reason that, “Market forces should determine how much open space is available”.

Fourteen percent indicated that resources should be devoted to other priorities, with one percent “Undecided.”

In the case of farmland preservation, the specific percentages citing the reasons for opposition differed somewhat from those in the case of open-space preservation, but the ordering of the reasons remained the same. That is, the proper role of government, deference to market forces, and the existence of other, more pressing, priorities topped the list of reasons for opposition to PDRs in the farmland preservation context among the 27% of respondents who expressed opposition. Because a fairly small minority expressed original opposition, and there were five possible categories (including “Undecided”) available to express as reasons for opposition, dissecting the data by subgroup yields very small raw numbers of interviews and are thus, of minimal analytical value.

Question 33

-- Nearly two-thirds “unaware” of existing PDR program

Respondents were next told that over the past eight years, Kent County has operated a PDR program for farmland preservation. They were then asked if they were aware of the program or not. Sixty-four percent of respondents indicated that they had not heard of the program before, with 36% reporting that they had.

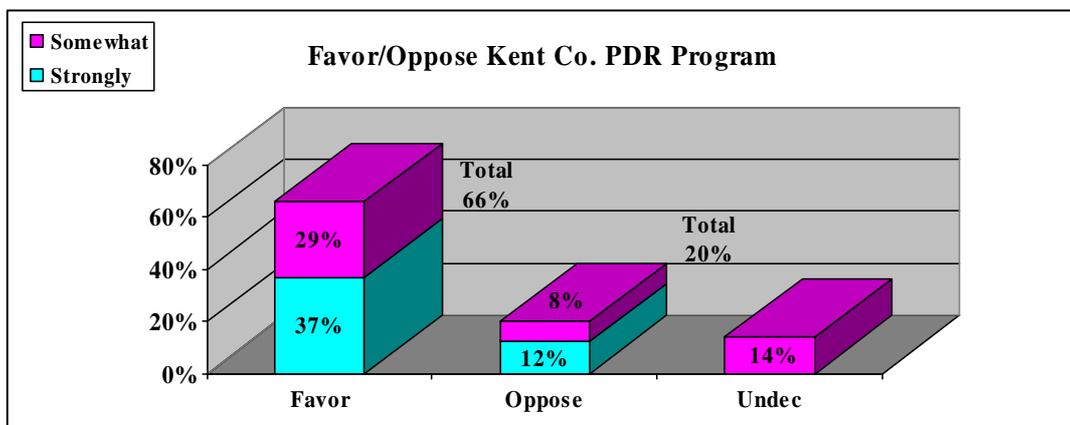
Respondents reporting being “Unaware” of the Kent Co. PDR program, in proportions higher than the overall mean (64%) included:

<i>“Undecided” about Kent Co. PDR program</i>	82%
<i>16-25 year residents</i>	
<i>“Small town” residents</i>	79%
<i>Under \$25K</i>	78%
<i>30-40 year age group</i>	77%
<i>Women under 50</i>	76%
<i>Younger w/o college</i>	73%
<i>Under 50</i>	
<i>Younger w/college</i>	72%
<i>County growth “Too slow”</i>	71%
<i>Funding for farmland preservation “Somewhat” Impt</i>	
<i>No college women</i>	
<i>GR Ward 2</i>	70%
<i>1-15 year residents</i>	
<i>Oppose Kent Co. PDR program</i>	69%
<i>Women</i>	
<i>Children at home</i>	
<i>Post HS</i>	
<i>41-49 year age group</i>	

Question 34

-- Two-thirds “Favor” the existing PDR program

Following the brief description of the Kent County PDR program in the preceding question, respondents were next asked – apart from how they might generally feel about PDR programs – whether or not they “Favor” or “Oppose” the county program just described. As illustrated by the chart below, two-thirds of all respondents overall “Favor” the program, 37% “Strongly”.



Respondents “Strongly Favor[ing]” the Kent Co. program, in proportions higher than the overall mean (37%) included:

<i>Northeast region</i>	69%
<i>Open space preservation programs, “Essential”</i>	66%
<i>Funding for open space programs, “Essential”</i>	64%
<i>Funding for farmland preservation “Essential”</i>	62%
<i>Farmland preservation programs, “Essential”</i>	59%
<i>“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss</i>	55%
<i>Over \$100K</i>	
<i>Aware of Kent Co. PDR program</i>	
<i>Favor PDR programs (Q 28)</i>	53%
<i>Favor farmland preservation programs</i>	49%
<i>“Too few” parks</i>	45%
<i>“Too much” farmland loss</i>	
<i>Funding for open space preservation programs, “Favor”</i>	
<i>16-25 year residents</i>	44%
<i>50-55 year age group</i>	
<i>College educated</i>	42%
<i>“Small town” residents</i>	
<i>\$25-50K</i>	
<i>Women under 50</i>	

Questions 35-42

-- Greatest uncertainty found regarding how PDR programs are funded

A series of eight statements regarding PDR programs were presented to respondents and for each statement, the respondent was asked to indicate whether the statement was an “Accurate” or “Inaccurate” description of such programs. For five of the eight statements, a majority of respondents reported an opinion one way or the other. However, for three of the statements – two asserting the source of PDR funding and a third asserting that other Michigan communities have seen a benefit from such programs – “Undecided/Don’t know” received the highest proportion of responses. The table below illustrates the distribution of responses, ranking the statements in order of highest to lowest proportions of respondents reporting that the statement is “Accurate”.

[IF ACCURATE/INACCURATE, ASK: Is that a very or somewhat (Accurate/Inaccurate) description of the program? ‘ AND CODE BEST RESPONSE]

[ROTATE Qs]	Very <u>Accurate</u>	<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Accurate</u>	<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Inaccurate</u>	Very <u>Inaccurate</u>	DK/ <u>Undec</u>
It has long term benefits to the community	37%	67%	14%	6%	19%
It improves land values	17%	49%	28%	12%	23%
The program provides jobs and helps the economy	18%	48%	33%	16%	19%
It reduces the cost for water, sewer and other services	17%	42%	32%	18%	26%
The program is mostly funded by local government tax dollars	17%	40%	17%	9%	43%
Other areas in Michigan have seen a benefit from having a Purchase of Development Rights program	16%	36%	13%	7%	51%
The program is mostly funded by local foundations	9%	24%	24%	11%	52%
It only benefits the farmer	6%	19%	68%	39%	13%

Respondents reporting being “Undecided” about foundation funding of PDRs in proportions higher than the overall mean (52%) included:

<i>“Undecided” about the Kent Co. PDR program</i>	73%
<i>“Undecided” about the amount of farmland loss</i>	68%
<i>Northwest region</i>	66%
<i>Funding for open space programs, “Somewhat” Impt</i>	64%
<i>50-55 Age group</i>	63%
<i>41-49 Age group</i>	59%
<i>College women</i>	
<i>Unaware of Kent Co. PDR program</i>	58%
<i>Funding for farmland programs, “Somewhat” Impt</i>	
<i>“Rural” residents</i>	
<i>Younger w/college</i>	
<i>Women under 50</i>	

Respondents reporting that funding from local tax dollars is an “Accurate” (in total) description of PDR programs (40%) in proportions higher than the overall mean included:

<i>“Oppose” Kent Co. PDR program</i>	55%
<i>Wyoming</i>	52%
<i>\$50-75K</i>	
<i>Post HS</i>	50%
<i>“Oppose” open space preservation programs</i>	49%
<i>“Aware” of Kent Co. PDR program</i>	
<i>“Oppose” farmland preservation programs</i>	48%
<i>Younger w/o college</i>	
<i>No college women</i>	
<i>GR Ward 2</i>	46%
<i>“Oppose” PDRs, generally (Q 28)</i>	
<i>Funding of farmland preservation “Somewhat” Impt</i>	
<i>16-25 year residents</i>	
<i>56-64 year Age group</i>	

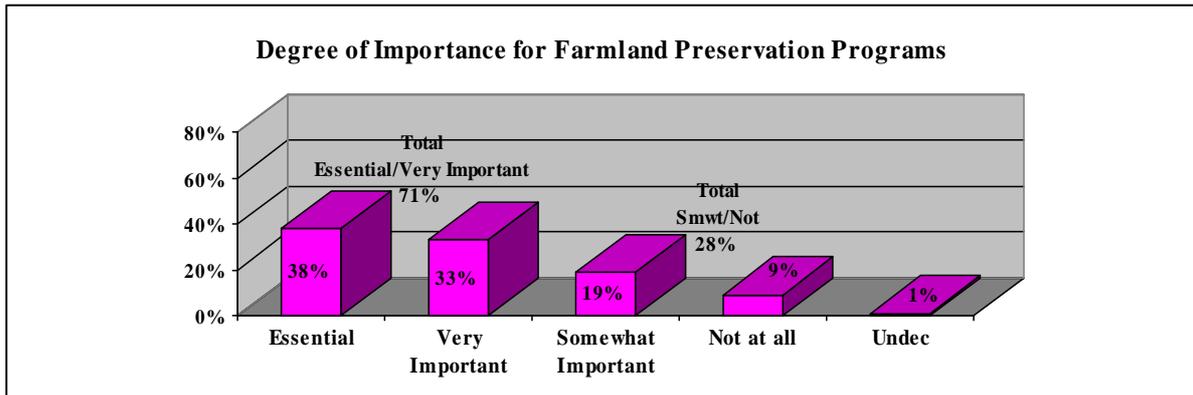
Questions 43-46

-- High importance placed on the existence of land preservation programs

In a final test meant to measure opinion about land preservation activities, two rotated question sets were presented asking respondents to rate the level of importance that should be placed on programs to preserve, farmland/open-space. They were then offered the following gradations of importance from which to choose: *“Essential”*, *“Very important”*, *“Somewhat important”* and, *“Not important at all”*. For those placing at least a level of *“Somewhat important”* on preservation programs, a follow-up question asked them to assign the same importance rating scale on there being a dedicated source of funding for each type of preservation program.

Between the two purposes for a land preservation program – preserving farmland and preserving open-space – more respondents placed importance on farmland (71% overall, 38% *“Essential”*), than on the preservation of open-space, although at 63% overall *“Important”* (24% *“Essential”*) the level of importance respondents placed on the

open-space presentation did not lag far behind. A slightly lower level of importance was placed on the existence of a dedicated funding source for preservation programs, with farmland again nudging out open-space, although each test produced strong majorities offering their view of the overall importance for dedicated funding sources. The following charts illustrate the distributions.

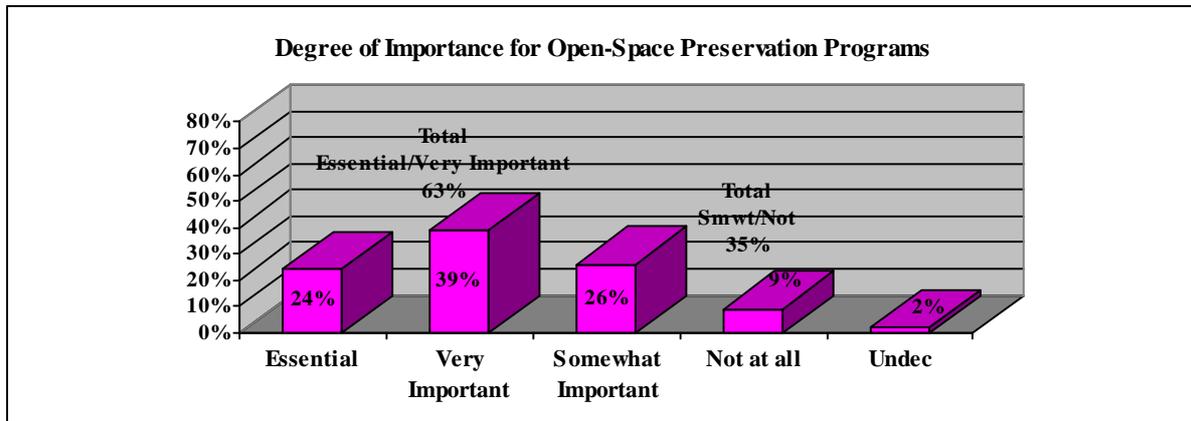


Respondents reporting that farmland preservation programs are “Essential” in proportions higher than the overall mean (38%) included:

Funding for farmland programs, “Essential”	87%
Open space preservation programs, “Essential”	81%
Funding for open space programs, “Essential”	80%
“Extremely” concerned about farmland loss	64%
Northeast region	53%
“Favor” PDRs, generally (Q 28)	50%
“Favor” farmland preservation programs	49%
“Favor” Kent Co. PDR program	48%
GR Ward 1	47%
GR Ward 3	
Southeast region	46%
“Too much” farmland loss	45%
16-25 year residents	
Over \$100K	
Women under 50	44%
GR Ward 2	43%
“Favor” open space preservation programs	
Children at home	
College women	

How important is it that there be a dedicated funding source for farmland preservation? Is it essential, very important, somewhat important, or not important at all?

27%	Essential -----	61% TOTAL IMPORTANT
34%	Very important	
29%	Somewhat important	
7%	Not important at all	
3%	Undecided/Refused	



Respondents reporting that open space preservation programs are “Somewhat/Not at all” important in proportions higher than the overall mean (35%) included:

Farmland preservation programs, “Undecided”	76%
“Oppose” open space preservation programs	72%
Farmland preservation “Somewhat” Impt	70%
“Oppose” farmland preservation programs	64%
“Oppose” Kent Co. PDR program	59%
Funding for farmland preservation “Somewhat” Impt	54%
County growth “Too slow”	50%
Loss of farmland, “About right”	
Loss of farmland, “Undecided”	
Oppose PDRs, generally (Q 28)	49%
Southwest region	42%
“Somewhat” concerned about loss of farmland	
Age 65+	41%
\$75-100K	40%

How important is it that there be a dedicated funding source for Open Space preservation? Is it essential, very important, somewhat important, or not important at all?

20% Essential ----- 57% **TOTAL IMPORTANT**
 37% Very important
 34% Somewhat important
 7% Not important at all
 2% Undecided/Refused

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