

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY

MASTER PLAN WORKSHOP



HELD ON
OCTOBER 5, 2006

MASTER PLAN

ISSUES REPORT

INTRODUCTION

On October 5, 2006, over fifty [50] local government officials and their planning commission chairs, County Commission members, and members of the County Master Planning Committee participated in the first St. Joseph County Master Plan Update workshop. In the first part of the three hour workshop, historic and future population and employments trends were reviewed and discussed. Data describing residents' employment characteristics and the actual number of jobs located in the county was also discussed.

In the second part of the workshop, participants were asked their opinion on twenty critical future planning issues identified by the County Planning Commission Master Planning Committee.

Using real time electronic voting tabulation equipment, participants were able to see the collective response and discuss the results of the twenty questions.

This report documents the results of the Strategic Issues portion of the workshop. A second document titled *Socio Economic Analysis* contains the socio economic data and analysis discussed during the workshop.

Presented first is the summary of the results for nineteen questions. After discussion, the Master Plan Committee determined the results for the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation question was unreliable due to the wording of the question. Therefore, the results of that question are not included in the summary.

Presented after the summary of results, is each question and individual results of the group voting exercise.

Additional information can be obtained from the St. Joseph County Planning Commission by contacting Bad Neumann, Land Use Policy Educator at the MSU Extension Office, phone 269-467-5522.

Summary of “Results for the 20 Question Exercise”

October 10, 2006

1. Participants indicate the current County Master Plan is of little use (51%) and has little influence (67%) in planning and zoning decision making of local governments in the County. This may be due, in part, to the fact that the Plan was last amended in 1997 and does not contain a future land use map.
2. Participants (89%) indicate the County Master Plan should contain an advisory Future Land Use Map establishing a pattern of residential, commercial, industrial and other land uses for the County. Participants indicate this plan should show unique natural resources (86%) such as wetlands, forested areas, etc. and land areas that should be protected from future development for agricultural production (77%). Respondents (52%) feel it is a responsibility of County government to encourage the location of future development to preserve the “rural character” of the County.
3. While 63% of the participants indicate their local government zoning provides mechanisms for maintaining agricultural production while minimizing conflicts with residential development, 74% of the participants indicate their local units of government support for the St. Joseph County Farmland Preservation program efforts.
4. While participants indicate strong support for open space, environmental and farmland protection and preservation, only 30% of the participants felt that voters in their local government would support a tax to fund open space and environmental land preservation and only 7% of the participants felt voters would support a tax for farmland preservation.
5. Indicated by 67% of the participants, public supplied water and wastewater utilities will be needed in their local unit of government to support future growth.
6. Economic development continues to be an important function of county government with 74% of the participants indicating the county, with funding assistance of the local units of government, should increase activities to recruit businesses to locate into existing industrial parks. They also indicate (71%) that the County Planning Commission should assist with

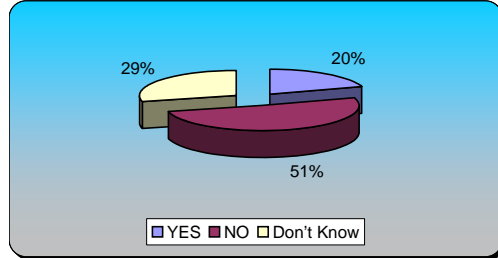
planning for future commercial/industrial development that may result from the relocation of US-131 especially working jointly with the local units of government to establish and protect a “locally chosen” alignment (80%). Respondents indicate (74%) support for efforts to develop land use and economic development strategies based on the future impact of development that may occur along the I-80 Interstate Toll Road in Indiana.

7. While only 45% of the participants support an effort to standardize zoning district definitions and dimensional requirements and only 30% indicated they might use County Planning Commission “fee-based” professional assistance, over 60% supported the idea of local governments considering joint planning and zoning allowed by recent legislation.
8. Respondents indicate (73%) the County should explore formation of a countywide building department to issue building permits and carry-out building inspections.

Results by Question
Results from the October 5th Meeting

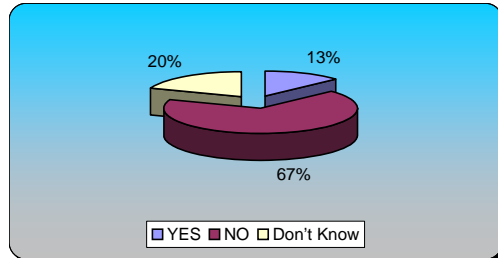
1.) St Joseph County has had a Master Plan since 1977. Has this plan been utilized in the planning and zoning activities within your local unit of government?

	Responses	
YES	9	20%
NO	23	51.11%
Don't Know	13	28.89%
Totals	45	100%



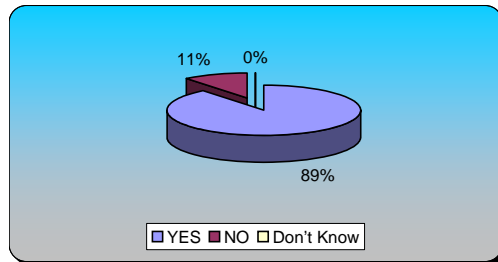
2.) Has the County Planning Commission Master Plan influenced the planning and zoning activities within your local unit of government?

	Responses	
YES	6	13.04%
NO	31	67.39%
Don't Know	9	19.57%
Totals	46	100%



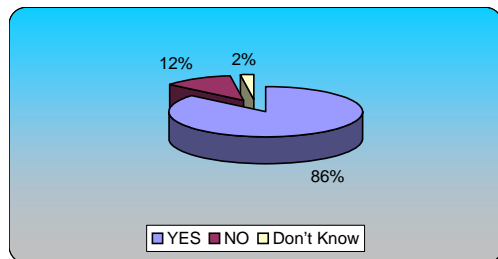
3.) When the County Master Plan is updated, should the Future Land Use Map establish an advisory "countywide" pattern of residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural land use that can be used as a planning tool at the local level?

	Responses	
YES	41	89.13%
NO	5	10.87%
Don't Know	0	0%
Totals	46	100%



4) St. Joseph County is blessed with unique environmental features of which many local governments seek to preserve in the future, including wetland, forested areas, lakes, rivers and streams. Should the Master Plan include an Open Space element designating general areas to be protected from future development?

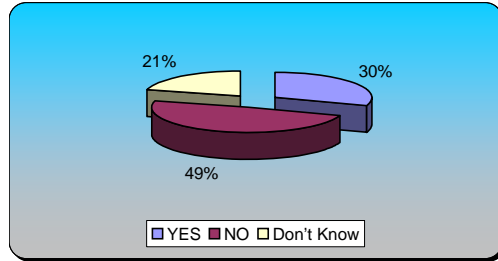
	Responses	
YES	37	86.05%
NO	5	11.63%
Don't Know	1	2.33%
Totals	43	100%



Results by Question
Results from the October 5th Meeting

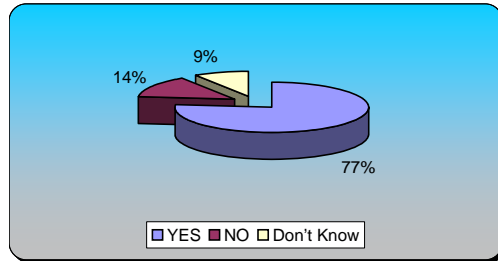
5) Many areas throughout Michigan use local funds for the purpose of preserving open space and development of parks and recreation facilities. Do you feel voters in your local unit of government would support use of local funds for this purpose?

	Responses	
YES	13	30.23%
NO	21	48.84%
Don't Know	9	20.93%
Totals	43	100%



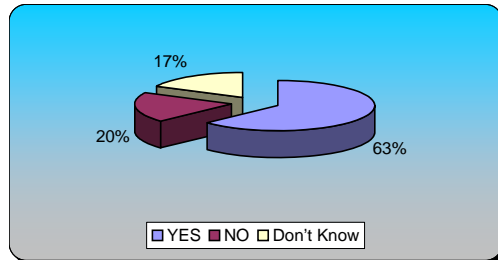
6) Agriculture is commonly referred to as the second largest industry in Michigan, behind the automotive industry and many feel that agriculture may become Michigan's largest industry with the downturn of the automotive industry. Recognizing that St. Joseph County is a leader in seed corn production, should the Master Plan identify land areas that should be protected from future development specifically for agriculture production?

	Responses	
YES	33	76.74%
NO	6	13.95%
Don't Know	4	9.30%
Totals	43	100%



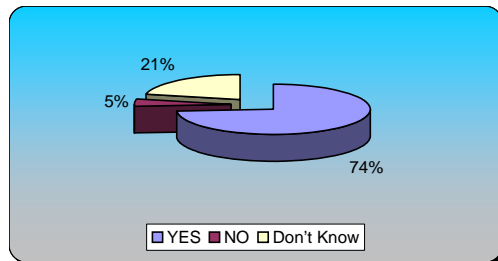
7.) Does your local unit of government have an agricultural zoning district with the goal of maintaining that land for agricultural production and minimizing residential development in that zone?

	Responses	
YES	29	63.04%
NO	9	19.57%
Don't Know	8	17.39%
Totals	46	100%



8.) St. Joseph County has established a Farmland Preservation Program. Is your local unit of government in support of this program to preserve farmland in St. Joseph County?

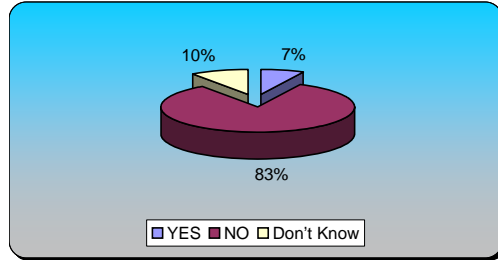
	Responses	
YES	31	73.81%
NO	2	4.76%
Don't Know	9	21.43%
Totals	42	100%



Results by Question
Results from the October 5th Meeting

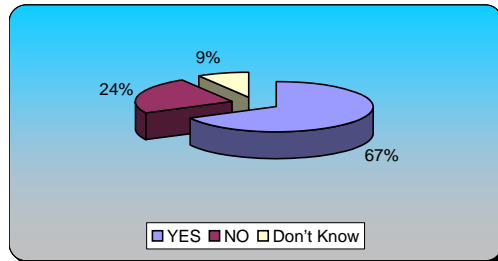
9.) Many supporters of farmland preservation feel that local funding will be necessary to effectively carry-out the county program. Do you feel voters in your local unit of government would support use of local funds for this purpose?

	Responses	
YES	3	7.32%
NO	34	82.93%
Don't Know	4	9.76%
Totals	41	100%



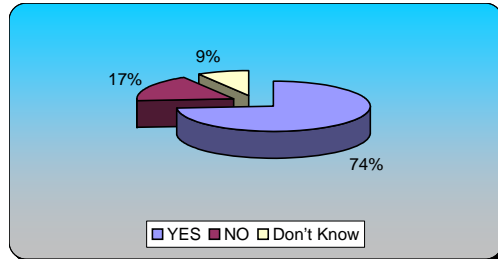
11.) Public utilities, specifically wastewater systems, are necessary to support commercial, industrial and higher density residential development. Will your local unit of government need expansions of the current municipal utility system to service development envisioned in your future development plan?

	Responses	
YES	31	67.39%
NO	11	23.91%
Don't Know	4	8.70%
Totals	46	100%



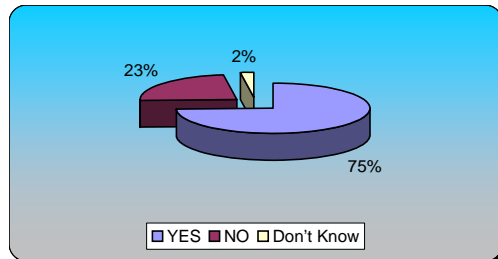
12.) There are several industrial parks located throughout St. Joseph County, most sponsored by local units of government. Should St. Joseph County with joint funding from local units of government carry-out activities to recruit business to locate in these industrial parks?

	Responses	
YES	34	73.91%
NO	8	17.39%
Don't Know	4	8.70%
Totals	46	100%



13.) With the sale of the Indiana Toll Road, the State of Indiana will be funding economic development activities designed to attract jobs along the toll road corridor, especially in Elkhart County. Should the land use and economic development strategies place more focus on cooperation and coordination with these efforts in Indiana?

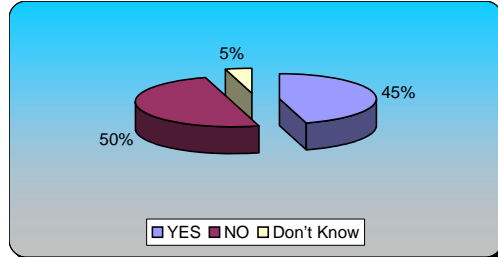
	Responses	
YES	32	74.42%
NO	10	23.26%
Don't Know	1	2.33%
Totals	43	100%



Results by Question
Results from the October 5th Meeting

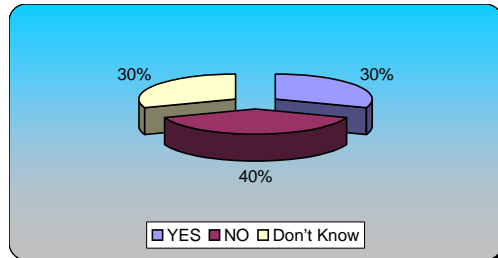
14.) Builders and developers have commented that St. Joseph County's local units of government define zoning terms differently such as different residential lot sizes, yard setbacks, and building heights for the same R-1 Residential Zoning District. They say that a uniform set of zoning definitions and dimensional requirements would simplify land development planning. Should the County Planning Commission undertake a process to standardize zoning definitions, zoning district classification, and dimensional requirements for use by local governments?

	Responses	
YES	20	45.45%
NO	22	50%
Don't Know	2	4.55%
Totals	44	100%



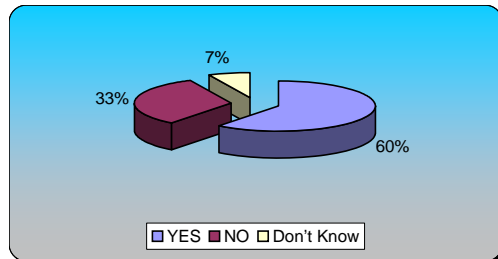
15.) Planning and zoning activities over the past 10-years have become very complex and technical requiring local planning commissions many times to seek professional planning assistance at the expense of the local unit of government. Would you use "fee based" County Planning Commission professional planning assistance if made available?

	Responses	
YES	14	30.43%
NO	18	39.13%
Don't Know	14	30.43%
Totals	46	100%



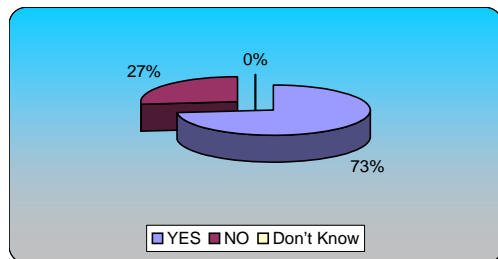
16.) In 2003, the Michigan legislature approved legislation allowing two or more local units of government to conduct joint planning and administer one zoning ordinance. Do you feel that joint planning and zoning should be pursued by local governments in St. Joseph County?

	Responses	
YES	26	60.47%
NO	14	32.56%
Don't Know	3	6.98%
Totals	43	100%



17.) Building permit issuance and inspection is currently being done by each local government within the county. It has been suggested that a countywide system may provide a simpler administrative system and enable faster issuance of permits and completion of required inspections. Do you believe the formation of a countywide building department should be explored?

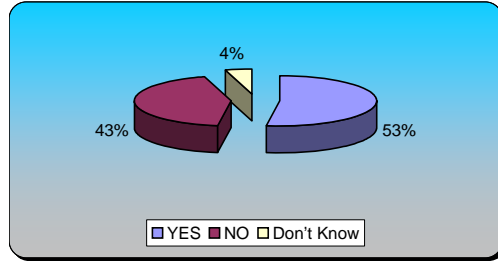
	Responses	
YES	33	73.33%
NO	12	26.67%
Don't Know	0	0%
Totals	45	100%



Results by Question
Results from the October 5th Meeting

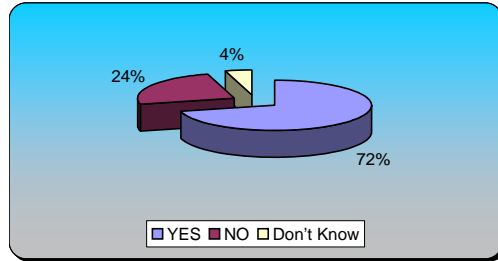
18.) Throughout St. Joseph County, residents seek to preserve the “rural character, open space and recreational assets” which make St. Joseph County a special place to live. Do you feel it is a responsibility of County government to encourage the location of new development towards the more urban and built up areas as opposed to encouraging “lot split” home sites scattered throughout the County?

	Responses	
YES	24	52.17%
NO	20	43.48%
Don't Know	2	4.35%
Totals	46	100%



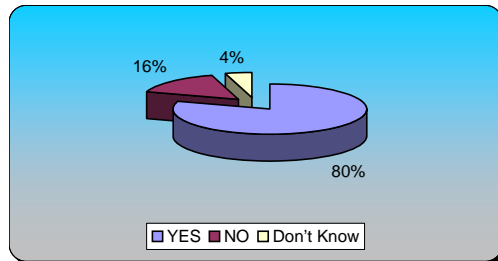
19.) With the funding committed for the realignment of US-131, there will be increased transportation capacity for commercial and industrial transportation purposes. Should the County Planning Commission assist in planning land use with the affected local units of government in planning for future commercial and industrial development that may result?

	Responses	
YES	32	71.11%
NO	11	24.44%
Don't Know	2	4.44%
Totals	45	100%



20.) The MDOT only committed to realigning US-131 around Constantine and currently has no plans for realigning US-131 in other areas of the county. Should the County Planning Commission assist in land use planning with the local units of government along the corridor for the future alignment of US-131 in St. Joseph County?

	Responses	
YES	36	80%
NO	7	15.56%
Don't Know	2	4.44%
Totals	45	100%



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