

Ontwa Township / Village of Edwardsburg

Master Plan Community Engagement Report

November 2023

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Introduction

A Master Plan is a broad policy document that provides a community vision and acts as a guide for land use and development, capital investment, and growth management. It is a vision that articulates what the community desires to become, and it establishes a framework for achieving that vision through a series of specific strategies and tasks. For the first time, Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg are developing a joint Master Plan. The planning process began in mid-2023 and will guide the Ontwa Township/Edwardsburg community over the next two to three decades. To ensure that the plan is responsive to community needs and desires, the Village and Township undertook a robust engagement campaign to inform the goals and objectives of the new Master Plan. This report presents the findings of this effort.

Edwardsburg / Ontwa Township Joint Open House

A community open house was held in October 2023 to gather ideas that will inform the development of the Joint Master Plan for Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg. This event was held on Thursday, October 12, 2023, from 4:00 – 7:00 pm. Dozens of people visited the Township Hall from both the Village, Township, and neighboring communities.

Welcome Board

The welcome board featured informational text that explained the process of the Master Plan and the importance of long-range community master planning. The board encouraged participants to take part in the available activities and provide their feedback regarding planning topics for the Village and Township.

Where do you live?

This board asked participants to place a sticker to mark where they live, either in the Village or the Township, to help the Planning Commission gauge where participants were distributed throughout the local area.

Community Values Activity Results

Participants were asked to write about what they love and what could be improved in both the Township and the Village. Responses were written on sticky notes and posted on the activity boards. There were two questions per board posed to participants. They could leave comments under, “What do you LOVE about Ontwa Township?” and “What would you IMPROVE about Ontwa Township?”, and “What do you LOVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?” and “What would you IMPROVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?”

“What do you LOVE about Ontwa Township?”

The top responses to the question “What do you LOVE about Ontwa Township?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Small Town/Rural Character (8 comments)
2. Lakes/Water (7 comments)
3. The Sports Complex (5 comments)
4. Community/People (4 comments)
5. Wildlife (3 comments)
6. Schools (2 comments)

“What would you IMPROVE about Ontwa Township?”

The top responses to the question “What would you IMPROVE about Ontwa Township?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Walking trails/non-motorized improvements (4 comments)
2. Housing
Renewable Energy
Park upgrades
Marihuana stores/operations (tied with 3 comments)
3. Grocery Store(s)
Shopping options
Downtown Improvements
Clean/update buildings (tied with 2 comments)

Analysis: The most common reoccurring topics that participants loved about Ontwa Township were the “Small-town/rural character” and recreation-related comments such as water resources and the sports complex. Clearly, recreational and natural places and spaces in the Township continue to be valued assets in the community.

When considering what could be improved in Ontwa Township, the most common issue named by participants was a desire for more non-motorized infrastructure. People are looking for more trails and sidewalk construction and connections. There were a number of comments related to retail options, from limiting marihuana sales to increasing shopping and retail access and diversity. The improvements of old buildings and parks were also mentioned.

“What do you LOVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?”

The top responses to the question “What do you LOVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Community/People (4 comments)
2. The mural
Schools (tied with 2 comments)

“What would you IMPROVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?”

The top responses to the question “What would you IMPROVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Improving Downtown (7 comments)
2. Improvements to U.S 12 (5 comments)
3. Improvements/move beach to Gunn Park (3 comments)

Analysis: The most common reoccurring topics that participants loved about the Village of Edwardsburg were the community and people, suggesting that the small, tight-knit character of the community is important to residents. Similar to the Township, the Edwardsburg Public School system was important to several participants.

When considering what could be improved in the Village of Edwardsburg, the most common issue was the desire for downtown improvements. Participants are looking for walkability and shopping options in the Village. There were also a large number of comments related to the improvement of U.S. 12, from walkability and traffic safety to aesthetics of the corridor.

Penny Jar Voting Activity Results

Participants were given 5 pennies to vote for Village improvements and 5 pennies to vote for Township improvements, and were instructed to distribute all of their pennies into labeled jars. Each jar contained a few words that describe a land use and growth-related topic pertaining to either the Village or the Township’s services, infrastructure, and/or amenities. The 10 pennies given to participants represented their tax dollars and the distribution of their pennies illustrated their desired allocation of those funds. The voting results for this open house activity are shown below.

Figure 1. | Open House Penny Jar Activity Results for Ontwa Township

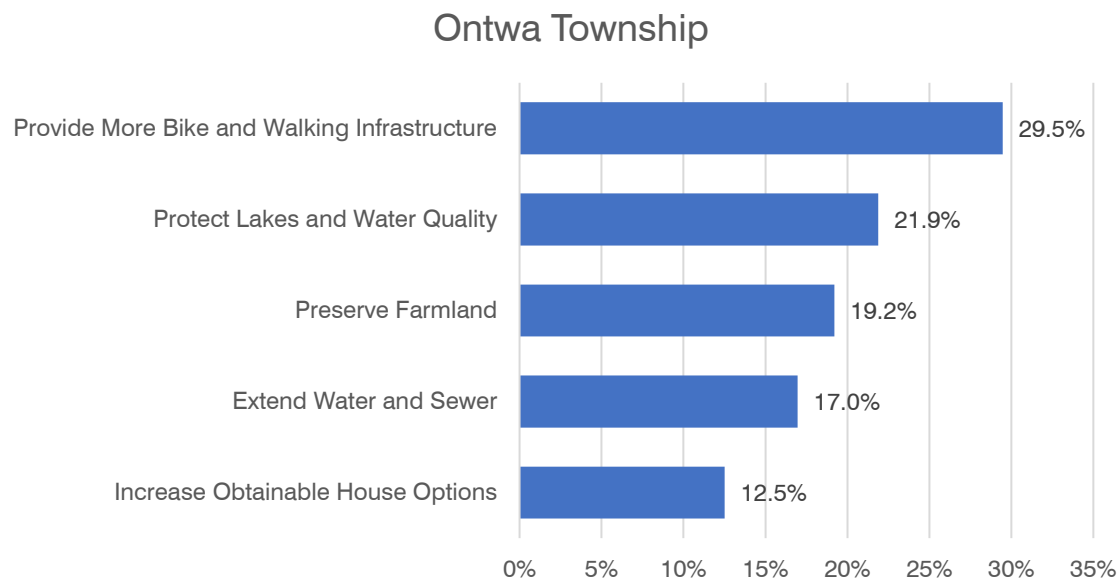


Figure 2. | Open House Penny Jar Activity Results for the Village of Edwardsburg

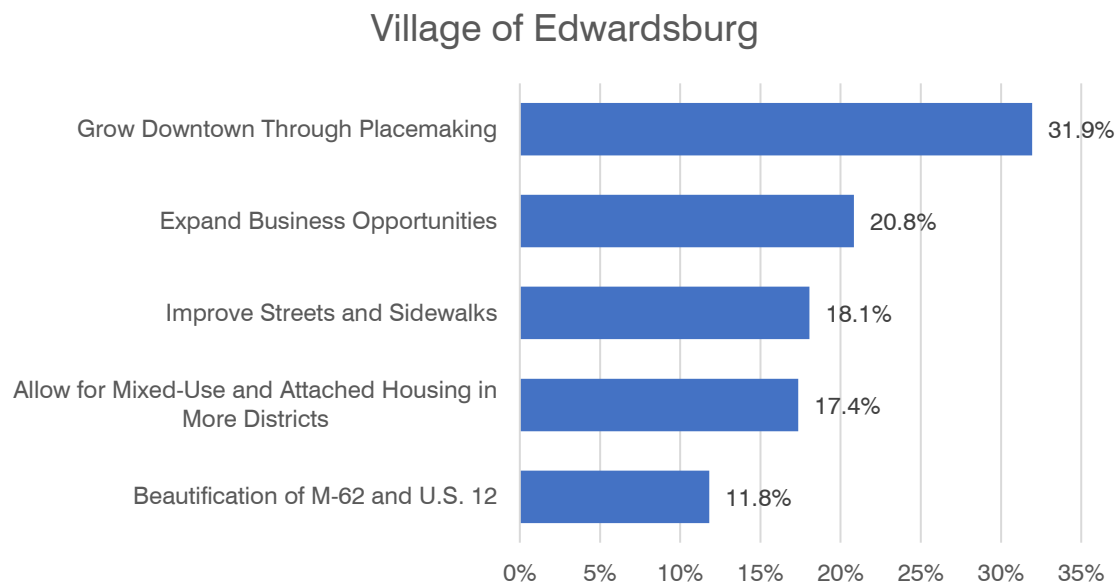


Table 1. Total Number of Pennies for Ontwa Township

Ontwa Township	Percentage	Count
Provide More Bike and Walking Infrastructure	29.5%	66
Protect Lakes and Water Quality	21.9%	49
Preserve Farmland	19.2%	43
Extend Water and Sewer	17.0%	38
Increase Obtainable House Options	12.5%	28
	Total	224

Table 2. Total Number of Pennies for the Village of Edwardsburg

Village of Edwardsburg	Percentage	Count
Grow Downtown Through Placemaking	31.9%	46
Expand Business Opportunities	20.8%	30
Improve Streets and Sidewalks	18.1%	26
Allow for Mixed-Use and Attached Housing in More Districts	17.4%	25
Beautification of M-62 and U.S. 12	11.8%	17
	Total	144

Analysis: Participants in this activity were the most supportive of bikability and walkability in the community; this was selected as the highest priority in the Township by 17 votes. In the Village, participants wished to see growth in downtown through placemaking, new business opportunities, improved streets and sidewalks, and a mix of housing. These items speak to a desire for a higher quality of life. Also important to people in the Township was protecting the rural character of the Township and preserving the natural features such as lakes and groundwater. It should be noted that fewer people participated in the Penny Jar activity for the Village compared to the Township.

Future Land Use Map Activity Results

In order to gain insight into desired land uses in the community, a future land use activity was conducted. The participants were asked to use stickers with coordinating colors to mark where the different uses of land should occur within the Village and Township. The respondents' feedback is shown below on the scanned activity boards from the open house.

Placed Dot Stickers

A few black dots representing office and industry were placed in the Village and west side of the Township near the existing industrial park.

A number of **blue dots** representing mixed-use and downtown style of development were placed in the heart of the Village.

A number of **red dots** representing retail and commercial corridors were placed along M-62 and U.S. 12 in the Township surrounding the Village. No red dots were placed within the Village limits.

Several **yellow dots** representing single-family homes were placed all around the Township, with one particular cluster on the southeast corner of May Street and M-62.

The **green dots** representing agriculture and open space were scattered around the Township, with a large cluster around the west side of the Township near the industrial park.

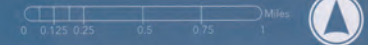
In summary, the results suggest a planned distribution of different types of development, with a focus on concentrating industrial activities on the west side of the Township, or within the Village. Mixed-use and downtown development in the Village was preferred, which was also expressed in the Penny Jar Activity and the community survey. Retail and commercial corridors were identified to remain along major roads such as M-62 and U.S.12. Preservation of agriculture and open space was expressed by many individuals, as it is seen as a primary feature of the community, especially on the west side of the Township near the industrial park.

Comment Cards

Participants were encouraged to provide additional thoughts anonymously via comment card (unless they choose to leave their name). A total of 7 cards were received, and responses varied from recreational opportunities for families and children, to multi-family housing concerns. Comments received are listed below:

- Make a safe place for kids to go after school and on the weekend and summer
- Would love to have recreational activities families can enjoy here. We leave town to go to parks, beaches and bike trails. We spend money when we do these things and I hate that all our money is leaving our community.
- Dense commercial / multi-family housing development on US 12 west of the village will create severe traffic problems.
- Future use of land (approx..) 125 acres at May St. and Conrad Road should NOT be industrial. It would destroy prime farm land and encroach on existing rural residential properties.
- Please do not expand the industrial park to Conrad Road. We do not need another 125 acres of trashy industry over taking the farm land. The fields need to remain agricultural not be rezoned as industrial!
- Edwardsburg needs a grocery store!
- Simple online Bill pay! IT IS 2023!

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?



Use the stickers provided to mark where you live.



FUTURE LAND USE

for the village and township

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles



Use the matching color coded stickers to mark where the uses of land should be encouraged.



AGRICULTURE & OPEN SPACE
use the **GREEN** stickers



SINGLE FAMILY HOMES
use the **YELLOW** stickers



ATTACHED HOUSING (DUPLEXES, TOWNHOMES, APARTMENTS, & SENIOR HOUSING)
use the **ORANGE** stickers



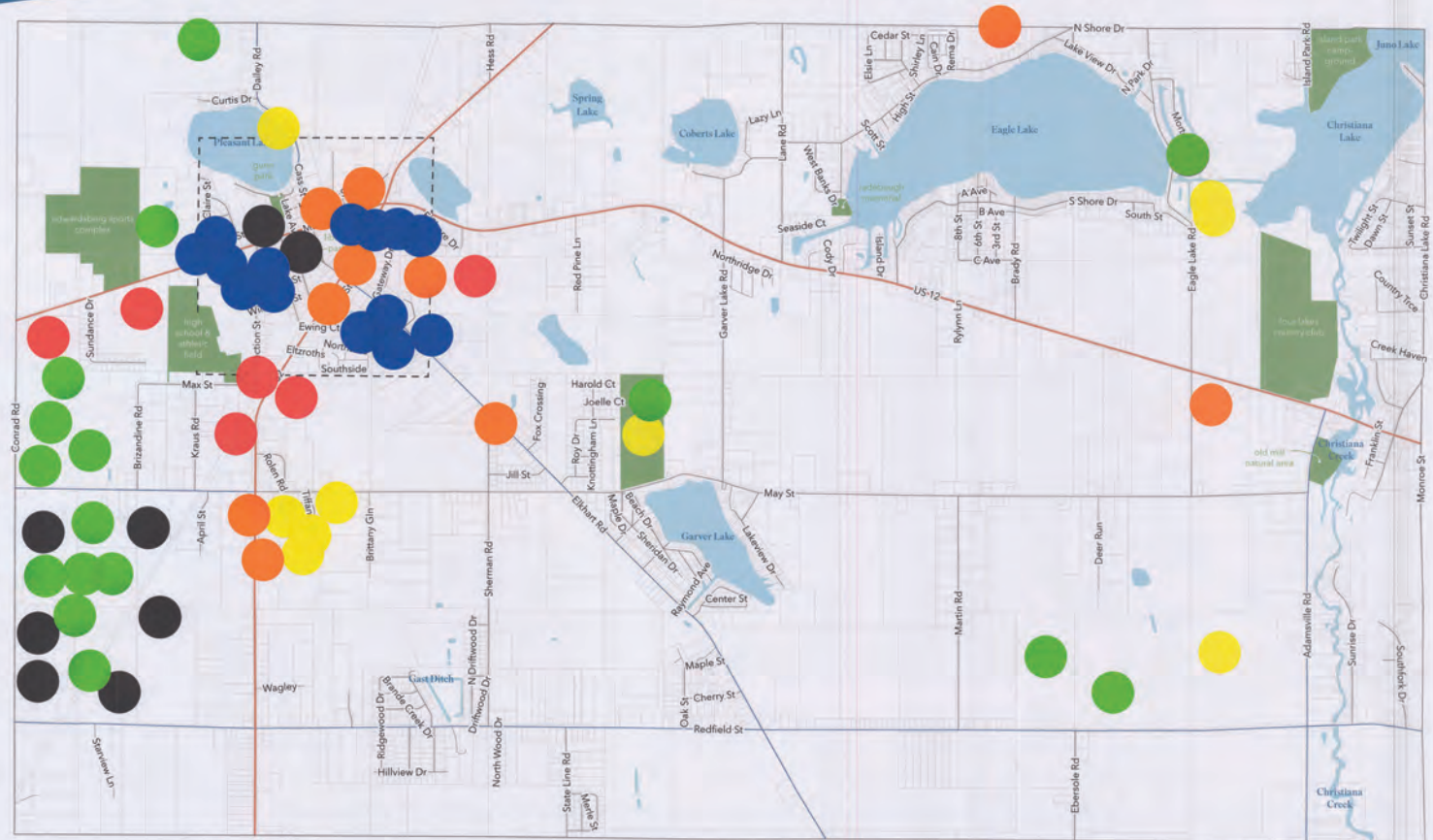
MIXED USE AND DOWNTOWN
use the **BLUE** stickers



OFFICE/INDUSTRY
use the **BLACK** stickers



RETAIL/ COMMERCIAL BUSINESS
use the **RED** stickers



I'M NOT SURE WHERE BUT I WANT TO SEE MORE OF _____ LAND USE.
Place the corresponding colored dot below if you know what land uses you'd like to see more of but are unsure as to where it belongs on the map.

Community Survey

Introduction and Methodology

From August 14 to October 30, 2023, Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg had a community survey open to gather public input on community development, housing, land use, and other related master plan topics.

The survey questions were developed with the assistance of Williams & Works. A total of 20 questions were asked via the online survey tool Survey Monkey. A total of 186 responses were received by the deadline with a 73% completion rate. Additionally, the survey was handed out in several Edwardsburg High School classes, of which 141 responses were returned. Student feedback was incorporated into questions 9, and 12-20. Between student respondents and general respondents, there were a total of 327 responses to the survey.

The survey was successful as it resulted in information from a large number of people compared to typical participation in other forms of public input like community open houses or visioning meetings. The survey enabled respondents to provide anonymous replies using a “check-the-box” format to expedite the completion of the online form and maximize the rate of response. Some questions allowed the respondents to leave other comments that may not have been covered with the multiple-choice options. Responses were kept as written by the respondent with a few exceptions for capitalization and some spelling corrections.

Data

The online survey tool Survey Monkey presented respondents with a standardized set of questions and responses. Some questions only permitted one answer while some permitted multiple-choice answers along with space for individual comments. This method restricted acceptable entries to those required by the survey form, providing a standardized method by which analysis could be conducted.

Three scoring scales were used to report the data received: Nominal, Ordinal, and Ratio scales. A nominal scale merely counts responses by a defined set of classifications (e.g., permanent residents or seasonal residents). This scale is useful to separate responses into working groups or to evaluate the overall sample to determine whether it represents the larger population.

Questions 1, 3, 5-13, and 15 were designed on a nominal scale.

An ordinal scale is more useful in gaining insight into respondent beliefs because it includes the characteristics of rank order. One item is greater or lesser than another item or it has more or less of a particular quality, based on a commonly understood standard. An ordinal scale enables some greater judgment about the relative strength or weakness of a particular response (e.g., “somewhat concerned”, “too quickly”, etc). However, it does not include a quantifiable or consistent interval between the various points in the scale. Questions 15, 17, and 18 were designed with an ordinal scale.

A ratio scale was used for questions 2 and 4 as respondents were asked to indicate a range of items that applied to them such as age. Finally, Items 16, 19, and 20 featured open-ended questions, allowing write-in responses.

Summary of Key Findings

1. While single-family homes were desired by a plurality of respondents (48.4%), there was support for additional housing types including retirement/assisted living facilities (27%), multi-family residential (19%), and attached single-family residential (16%). The Township and Village will need to ensure that the two jurisdictions provide a variety of housing options in well-planned areas suited to accommodate them. Grocery stores and sit-down restaurants were preferred by a wide margin in terms of new businesses that residents preferred to see in the area.
2. Protecting surface water and groundwater quality were repeatedly mentioned as important priorities to the community. This is reflected in the identification of community priorities (see question 17) and the agree/disagree statements contained in question 18.
3. Nearly all respondents wanted some sort of open space in new development. Most (73%) desired passive open space such as walking trails and picnic areas, but there was also support for active open space (42%), lake/river access (40%), and undeveloped areas (30%). However, only 5.2% indicated that they did not want open space in new developments.
4. Aside from the above-noted support for grocery stores and sit-down restaurants, several other types of businesses were desired, such as general retail, health care, personal services, and recreation. In general, there seemed to be stronger support for retail and service uses compared to industrial businesses. Similarly, the open house results indicate mixed feelings with respect to industrial growth in the Township south of the Village limits.
5. In the Village, nearly 80% of respondents indicated that enhancements to downtown Edwardsburg were either “very important” or “important.” This is consistent with the results of the house penny jars, where “growing downtown through placemaking” received the highest number of votes from participants.

Summary of Open-Ended Comments

1. Community Development and Planning:

Several comments express the need for improved communication, advocating for virtual meetings and emphasizing the importance of thoughtful planning. Some residents highlight specific areas for improvement, such as Gunn Park and Lindberg Park, suggesting activities for families and community gatherings. There also appear to

be concerns about the pace of growth and a perceived lack of vision for the community.

2. Preservation of Farmland and Nature:

A recurring theme throughout is the preservation of farmlands and nature. Residents emphasized the importance of protecting agricultural areas, opposition to rezoning farmland, and advocating for the preservation of natural spaces. Some comments express a desire to balance development with the preservation of lakes, farmlands, and natural areas.

3. Growth Management:

Several comments addressed specific projects, such as the proposed “Eddies Market Park” project on U.S. 12, as there appears to be a concern that new developments may not align with the community's identity. There are also pleas to avoid expansion and rezoning of farmlands for commercial or industrial purposes.

4. Community Identity and Character:

Residents consistently express a strong sense of community and a desire to maintain the small-town character and charm of Edwardsburg. Concerns about growth, subdivisions, and comparisons with larger neighboring areas like Granger are prevalent. The need to enhance the cohesive appearance of the Village and preserve its unique identity is a common thread in many comments.

5. Infrastructure and Services:

Practical concerns regarding infrastructure and services are raised in comments calling for a grocery store, improved waste management with more recycling options, and safer transportation, particularly addressing railroad crossings and sidewalks for school-going children. These comments reflect a desire for enhanced amenities and services within the Village and Township.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The survey results reveal that residents of Ontwa Township are mostly united in a vision for the future of their community that consists of a desire to maintain the rural character that defines their surroundings. The results underscore the importance of preserving the farmland and the overall rural character of the community. In addition, the Township's many inland lakes are key features of the community that residents prioritize for protection and preservation.

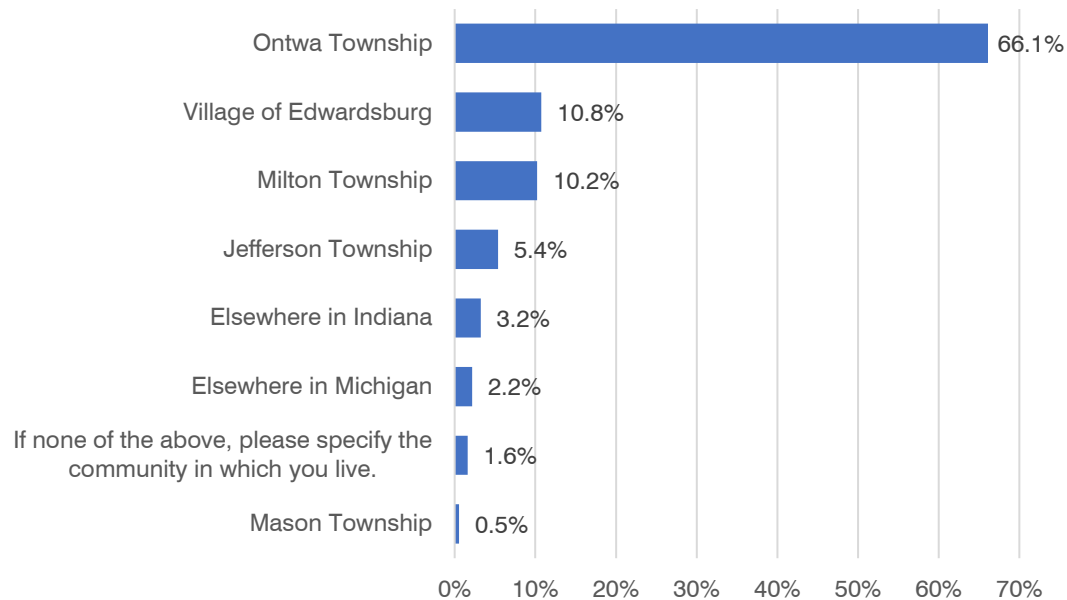
Similarly, visions for the Village of Edwardsburg surrounded the school system and community, with a desire to concentrate new development in the Village and promote the existing downtown area as a place for housing, retail, recreation, and community events. The community expressed a desire for a vibrant downtown. Residents seek a thoughtful approach

to development that encourages local businesses and fosters a sense of community. By focusing on the heart of the Village, residents aim to improve the downtown so it may serve both the practical needs of its residents and define the social fabric of the community.

As both the Township and Village review their goals and objectives, future land use maps, and strategies for implementation, it must be mindful of the direction received from the public.

Raw results of the community survey can be found on the following pages.

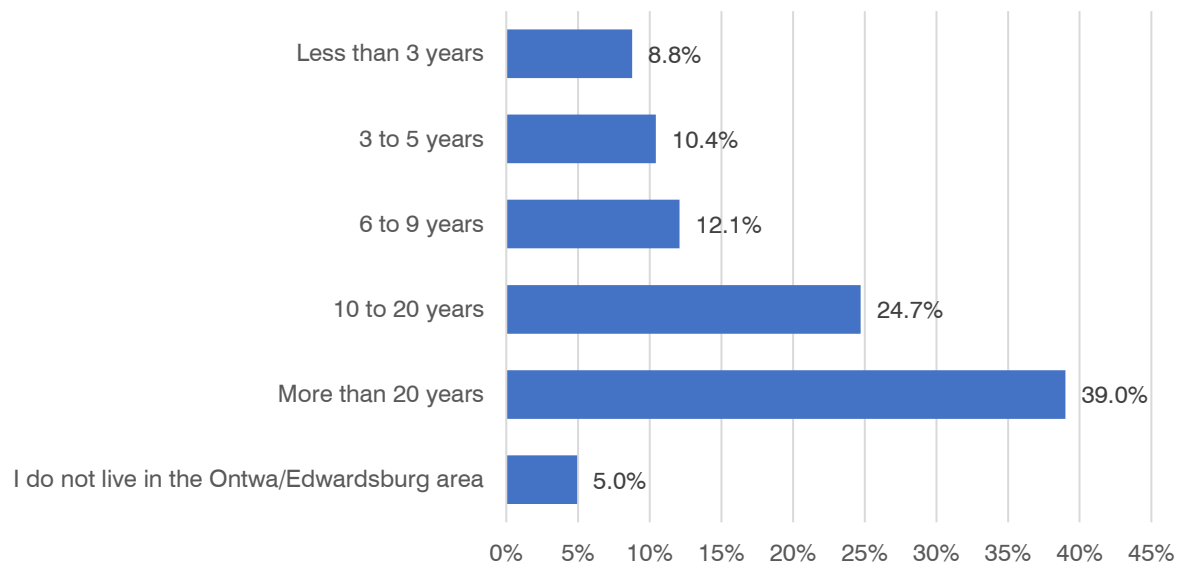
Question 1: Where do you live?



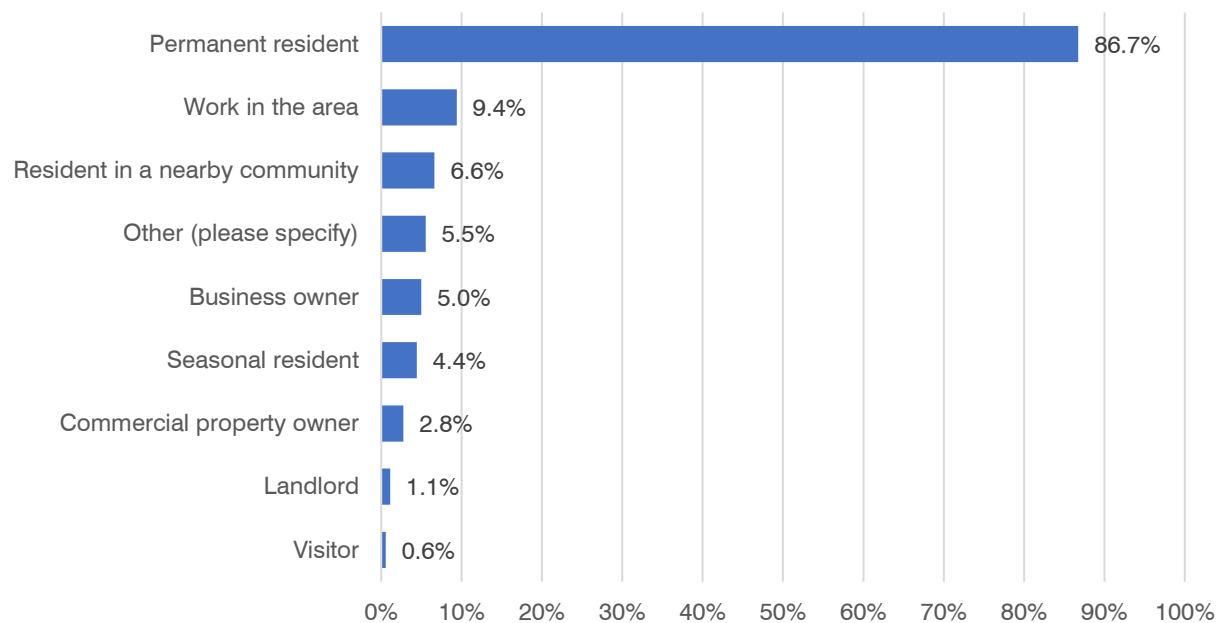
Other Responses:

- Porter Township
- Howard Township
- Edwardsburg, Michigan

Question 2: How long have you lived in the Ontwa Township/Edwardsburg area?



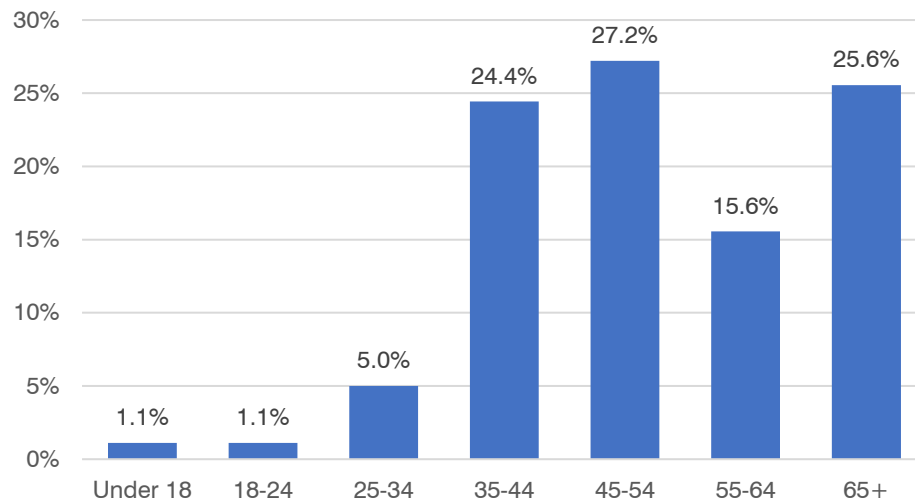
Question 3: Which of the following best characterizes your connection to the Township/Village? (Select all that apply)



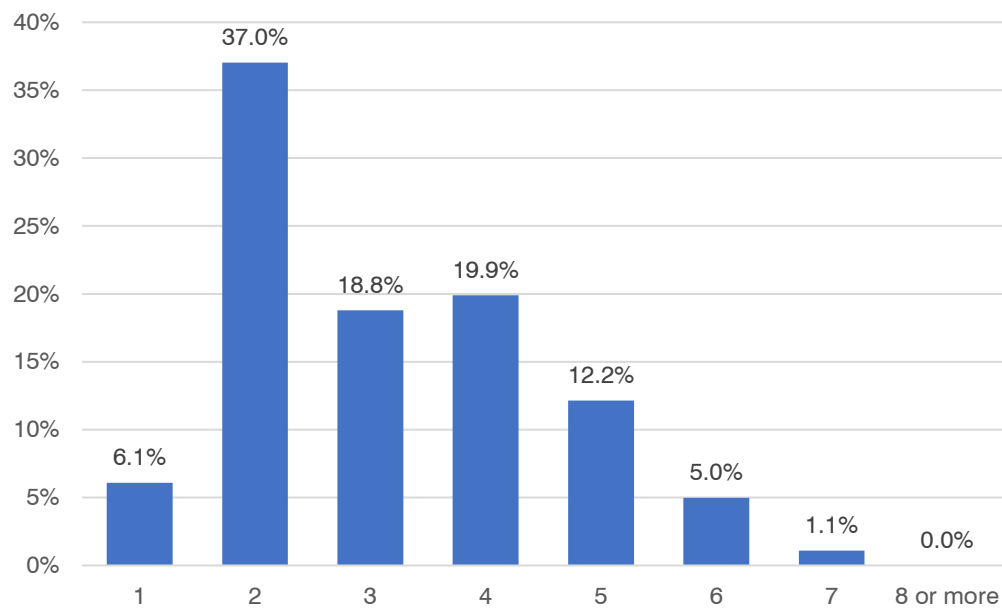
Other Responses:

- Run Not For Profit, LLC
- Husband is from here and his parents are Ontwa Township residents
- Own farmland in Ontwa Township
- Children attend EPS
- Miss/Mr Edwardsburg Youth Scholarship Program
- Teacher at Eagle Lake
- My children attend Edwardsburg Public Schools
- Edwardsburg Chamber
- Brother lives there
- Parent had a business

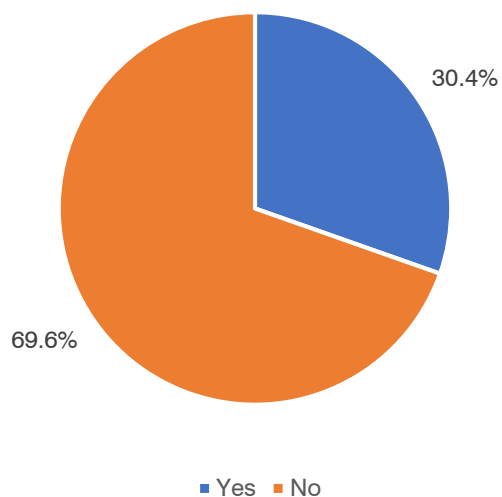
Question 4: What is your age?



Question 5: Including yourself, how many people live in your household? (Please check one. Household members do not need to be related.)



Question 6: Is anyone in your household over 65?

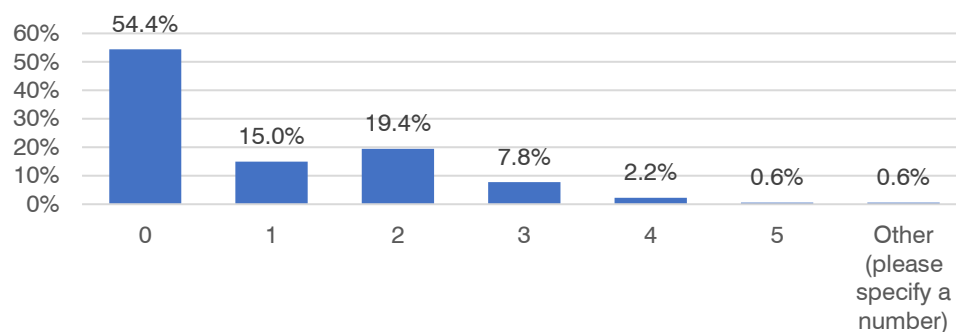


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	30.39%	55
No	69.61%	126
If yes, how many?	see below	39
	Answered	181
	Skipped	5

Responses:

- 1 (19 responses)
- 2 (20 responses)

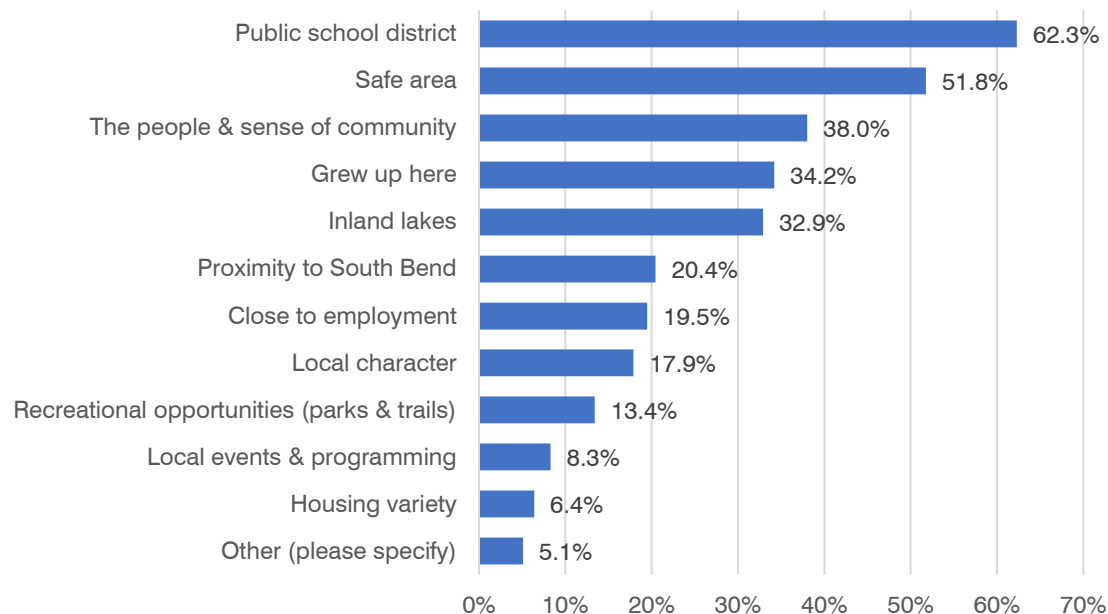
Question 7: How many children (under 18 years of age) reside in your household?



Other Responses:

- Grandchild

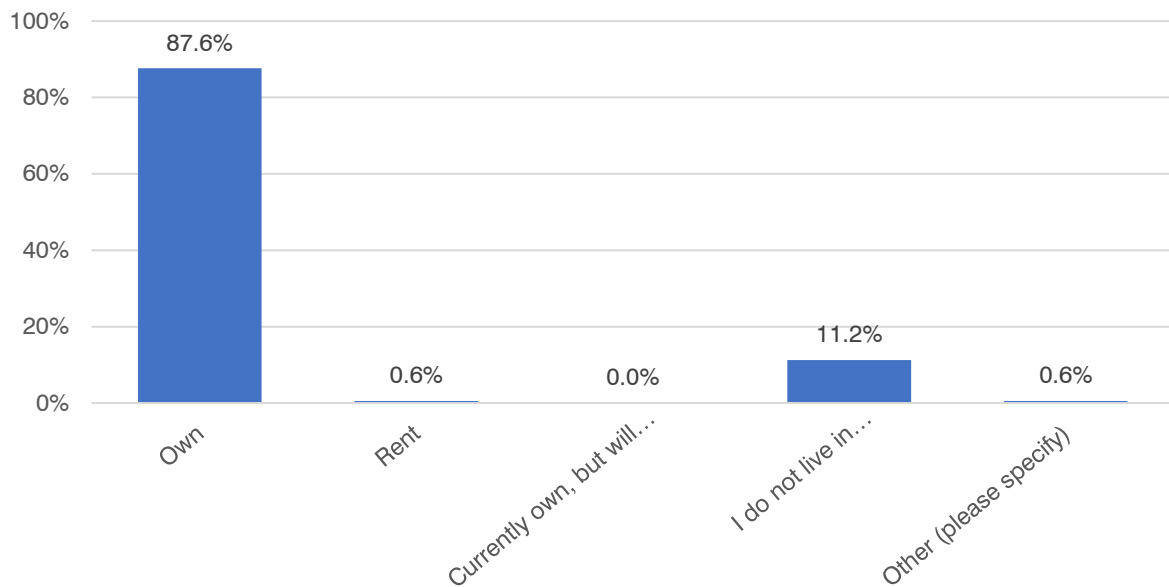
Question 9: From the following list, please select the most important reason(s) you live or would consider living in the Township/Village (check all that apply):



Other Responses:

- Small town
- But since we are dissatisfied with the district, we homeschool now.
- Rural atmosphere
- Country living with ability to get to Mishawaka/South Bend but not have to live in a urban setting
- Youth support has always been a priority here in EDWARDSBURG
- Small town
- Trying desperately to leave.
- Small rural community, not city life.
- Rural community
- Sports Complex
- I landed here years ago.
- Affordable acreage
- Property cost
- Small farm community

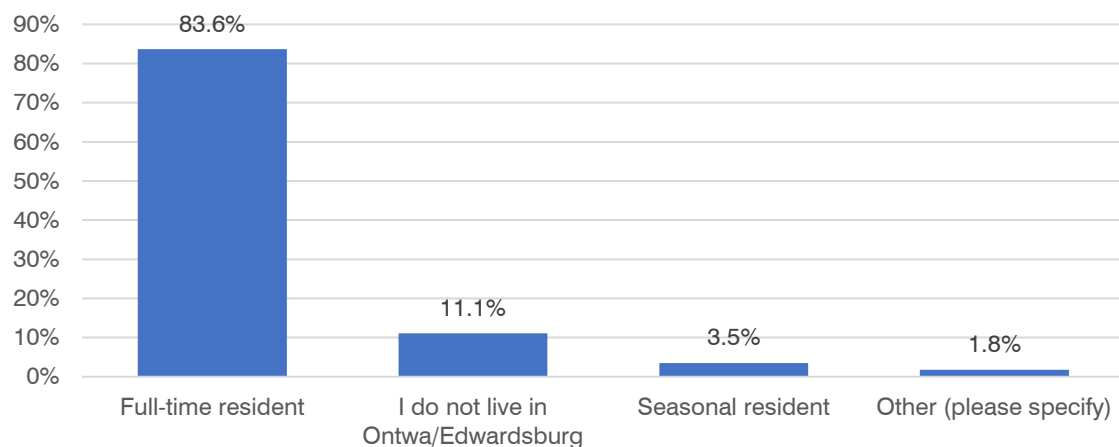
Question 10: If you live in Ontwa/Edwardsburg, do you own or rent your residence?



Other Responses:

- Live with relatives

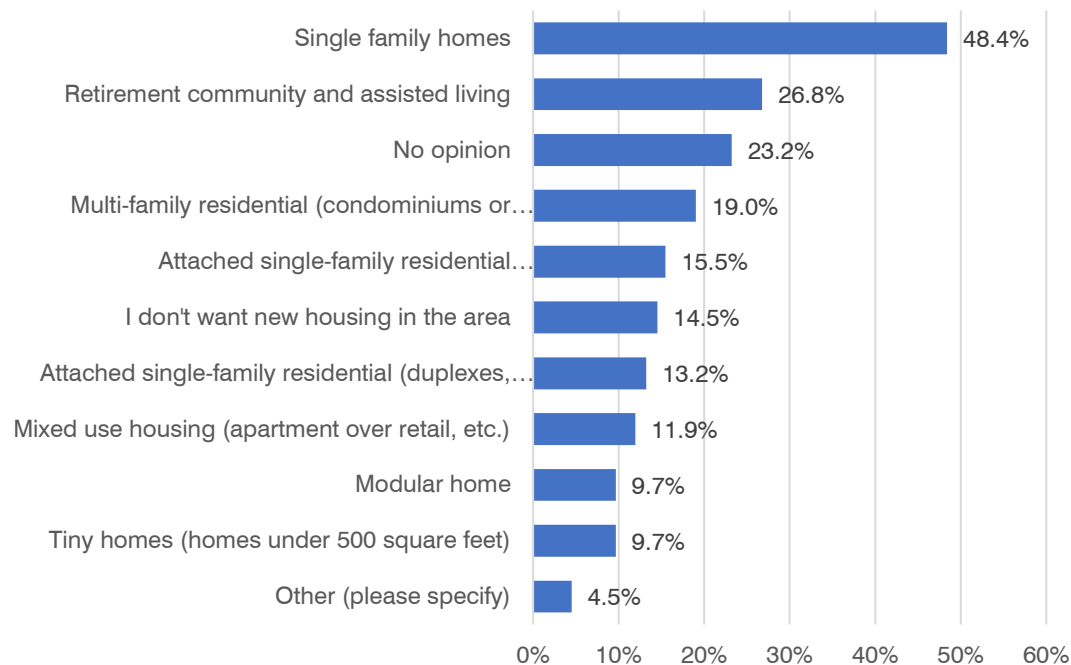
Question 11: If you own or rent a residence in the Township or Village, are you a seasonal or full-time resident?



Other Responses:

- Full-time for 39 years, seasonal for the last 4 years
- I have a full-time residence in Jefferson and a seasonal cottage in Ontwa

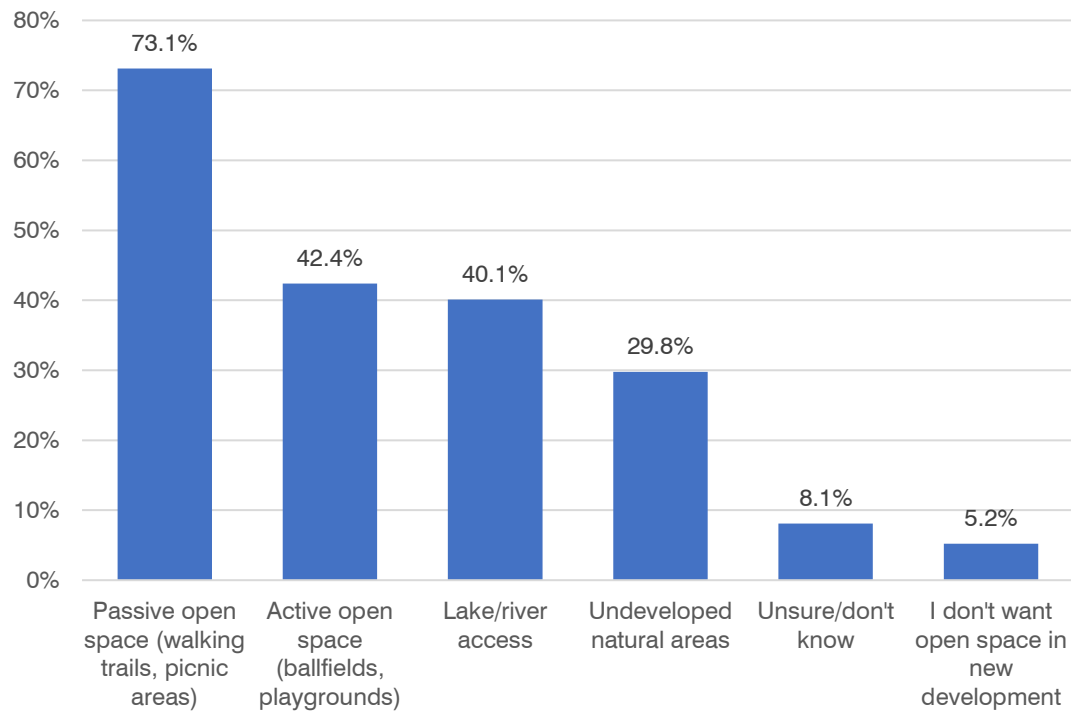
Question 12: What types of housing are needed in the Township/Village? (check all that apply):



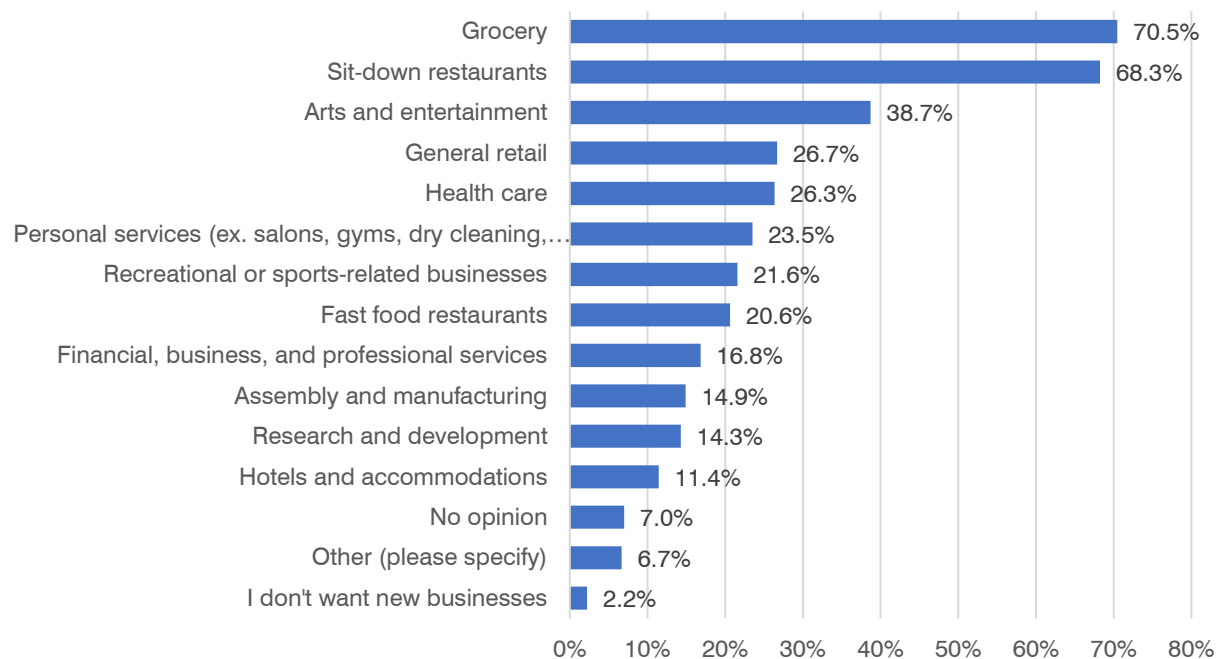
Other Responses:

- Hotel/Motel
- Cheaper rentals
- I like that this is a farm community. How about more parks/green spaces?
- Township needs growth to support the schools
- I DO NOT WANT APARTMENTS!!!!
- Affordable housing for young families
- Low-income housing
- 100-300k need to close the gap
- Affordable housing for low-income families.

Question 13: What types of open space should be encouraged in new development? (select all that apply)



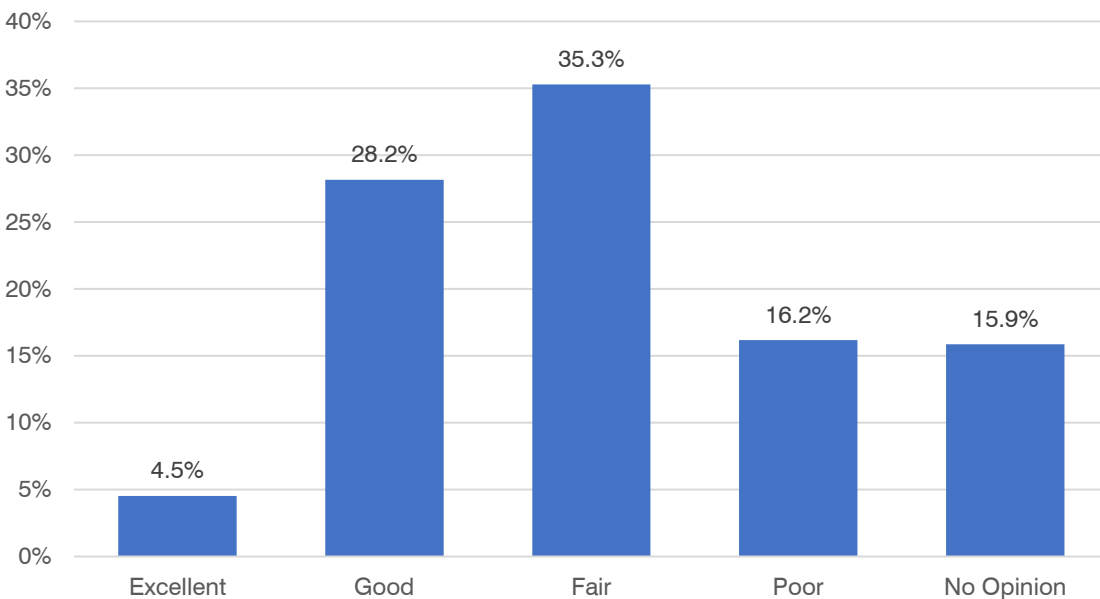
Question 14: What types of new businesses would you like to see in the area? (check all that apply)



Other Responses:

- Youth center
- D.N.R. Lake access on Eagle Lake. It is not a private lake.
- Downtown area
- NOT marijuana stores!
- Daycares
- Please no more pot shops. I don't want Edwardsburg to become a busy metropolis. I live here because it is a quiet safe farm community. We don't need condos or more apartments or busy retail destinations. Keep it mom and pop shop local. Unfortunately, the economy sucks and there isn't a lot of disposable income.
- I would be okay with business in the buildings that are already here but I do NOT WANT NEWLY BUILT
- Grocery stores, drug store
- Drug store
- Light industrial. Manufacturing. Good jobs promote prosperity and security.
- Desperately need a pharmacy, like Walgreens, CVS, or RiteAid (if that's what it is called).
- Bakery not just donuts, drug store
- Small and local owned
- Budget friendly dining

Question 15: Please rate the Township/Village's efforts to guide and direct development and growth.



Other Responses:

- Make sure Eagle Lake is open to everyone. It is a public lake.
- Village - poor
- Too many marijuana shops. We don't want to be known as a drug town. Rather a family friendly, quaint town.
- There have been two zoning changes that have resulted in no development that have become eye-sores. One on May St and one on Brady Rd.
- DO NOT allow business (with lots of junk) in residential areas, ex. Eagle Lake Road, first house to the south, next to DNR property, looks like a junk yard. Businesses in the Village are allowed to pile junk outside their businesses. Next to public parking and post office.
- I'm not familiar with the current efforts.
- Great planning but lacking follow through!
- I have no idea what the Township/Village is currently doing for this.
- Same people get re-elected and it is the same response. Not a lot gets done
- The Township seems hard pressed to hinder growth. We have such restrictive ordinances (maximum of 760 sq foot out building) some people on the Planning Commission make people jump through hoops to get projects passed. Our Township is controlled mostly by Eagle Lake residences, and that needs to change.

Question 16: What do you feel is the best attribute of our community?

- Our lakes
- Schools and people
- The lakes and the school system
- Agricultural areas, small town feel
- The residents + schools
- Our beautiful lake. + close location to shopping, doctors + churches
- Lakes / safety
- People
- School system
- The schools
- Your public lakes...you should capitalize on public lakes - maybe more ice cream shops.
- The leadership cares about the community
- Proximity to Granger yet rural feel
- Small town / schools
- Sport complex
- The public schools
- The schools
- Small town feel

- Edwardsburg Schools, Edwardsburg Sports Complex, Lakes, small town close community involvement
- Location, community pride and support of school system.
- Our new superintendent of schools
- Eagle Lake
- Eagle Lake
- People helping people.
- Small town pride and family togetherness
- A "Small town community" where everyone knows everyone and a community of people that cares for one another. We don't want a granger type of community here. We don't want too much growth; our schools cannot handle any more growth. And we don't want our schools to be any more overcrowded. Edwardsburg has been a special place to live and we raised our children and now our grandchildren are attending Edwardsburg. We want all of our youth to be able to participate in sports or other activities if they want to... (and not just the wealthy families' kids that have had private lessons since they were 5 years old.) Too much growth will ruin our small town. Please don't let that happen! I have heard that there are 5 new developments that have been approved for building homes...that's way too many. Our quiet and safe small town needs to be protected.
- Small farm community.
- The people and the schools.
- Rural character
- The schools.
- Safety and pace of life
- Quiet-safe-little to no crime but there should be more activities for young people
- School/ small town feel
- Our schools and school pride.
- School district
- Not being a 2nd granger. We bought here to live in the country and have fields and farmers as neighbors not apartment buildings and strip malls.
- I love the small town feel and peacefulness
- Small community
- Eddie Pride - personable - small town feel
- The mural was a good addition
- People and small-town feel
- Small community
- Small town feel where people know each other, help each other and truly care about each other
- The sense of community is fantastic, and the public schools are great.
- The small-town feel
- Low population
- Our school system.

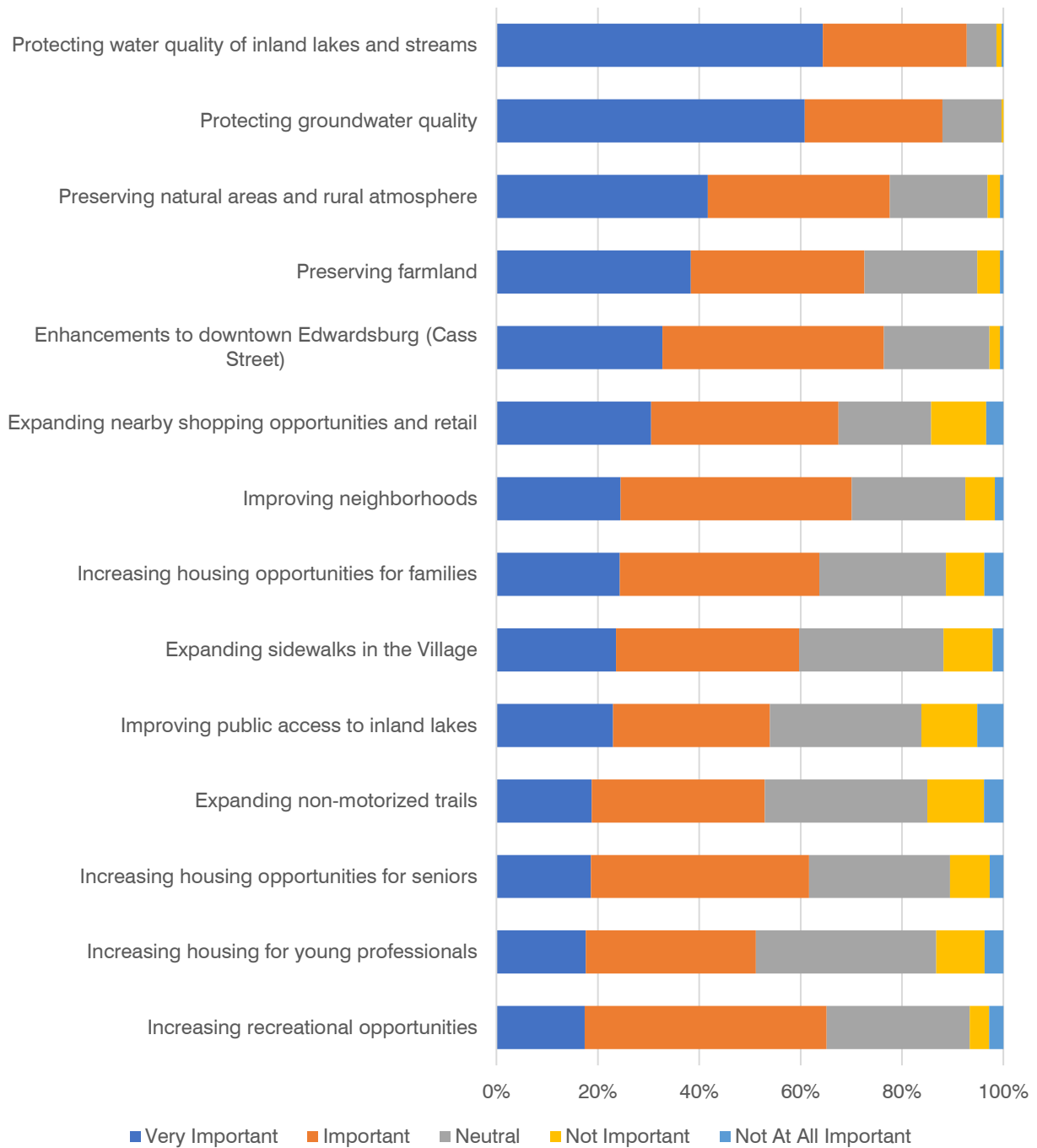
- Pride in the school district
- The schools and the small-town atmosphere.
- Small
- Probably the school district.
- Growing!
- There is no reason to expand Edwardsburg. Keep it a small city. I do not mind traveling the 10 miles to a grocery store.
- School district
- Local feel and small community
- Small-town feel
- I'm not sure there's nothing for kids to do parks rec areas or such. Nothing for adults to do so everyone has to drive to other towns for any kind of recreational fun. Maybe it's best attribute in some people's eyes like a lack of anything to do out of fear of the type of people it might bring would be the answer. So my answer is a lack of any kind of culture or anything that a vocal few fears congrats you've nailed it.
- The sense of community here. People of mostly conservative values who believe in kindness, patience, positive attributes and want to help and lift each other up but also expect everyone to pull their own weight (responsibility!)
- Small community with great schools.
- Edwardsburg Sports Complex. Nice gym. Public Schools.
- The school system. The families moving into the area, along with long-time residents with open ideas and a desire to grow the community to support new development. It's ok to develop and grow as a community.
- Ability to connect w nature
- It's a close-knit farming community. Needs to stay that way. We are close enough to Granger, Mishawaka and Elkhart we don't need more businesses or housing here.
- Size. I grew up down the road in Granger. I'm 45 and cannot stand what it has become.
- Good people. Great schools.
- Proximity to Mishawaka, lakes and public school
- Our school system. Frankly that and proximity to family are the only reasons we live here.
- The people
- Our police and our schools
- The small town and nice streets
- Schools and the Township and Village not helping support the school and its needs. But you can put two weed shops in on the main school routes.
- The lakes
- The school system. The library.
- Schools and Library
- Schools, library

- The school district brings in families, the lakes bring in out of towners, but we don't have enough good business (retail, sit down dining, grocery). The number 1 problem is we don't have a city center.
- Sense of community.
- Friendly community
- Lakes draw people in, not much to keep them here
- Small town feel
- That we are a small community with good, wholesome family values. By adding too much housing and too many new retail spaces there is a large possibility that we will start to lose that. I love our small-town community with our amazing family values and togetherness.
- The new mural and the museum
- Hometown spirit and our schools but without industry and tax dollars, our schools are not properly funded.
- Peaceful & relaxed
- Small town feel
- Lakes
- Lakes, community pride and a conservative school system
- Lake
- Enhance the school system to better accommodate the students. The primary building is not adequate any longer. Need to help support the school system.
- The people, schools, Sports Complex and the lakes.
- Schools
- The rural setting and the access to lakes.
- Safe environment
- It must be the school, since every business that comes here has to have blue & orange as their 'colors' for their logo! (ok, not everyone, but geez, there ARE other colors!)
- The close, small-town feel.
- Small town with excellent school system
- Lakes
- "Country living" but close to urban conveniences such as shopping, medical services, education opportunities
- Libraries
- The schools, but they need updates including air conditioning for all buildings.
- The school system. Also, the natural beauty of the lakes and countryside
- Lakes and homes on the lakes, small town, quiet, downtown area could really be utilized if set up properly. Little brewery, coffee shop, bakery or ice cream. If walking distance
- The school system. Although the unwillingness of the community to support it via passing the bill allowing for renovations of existing building and addition of a new building make me think that we're not on a sustainable path in that regard. Many of the

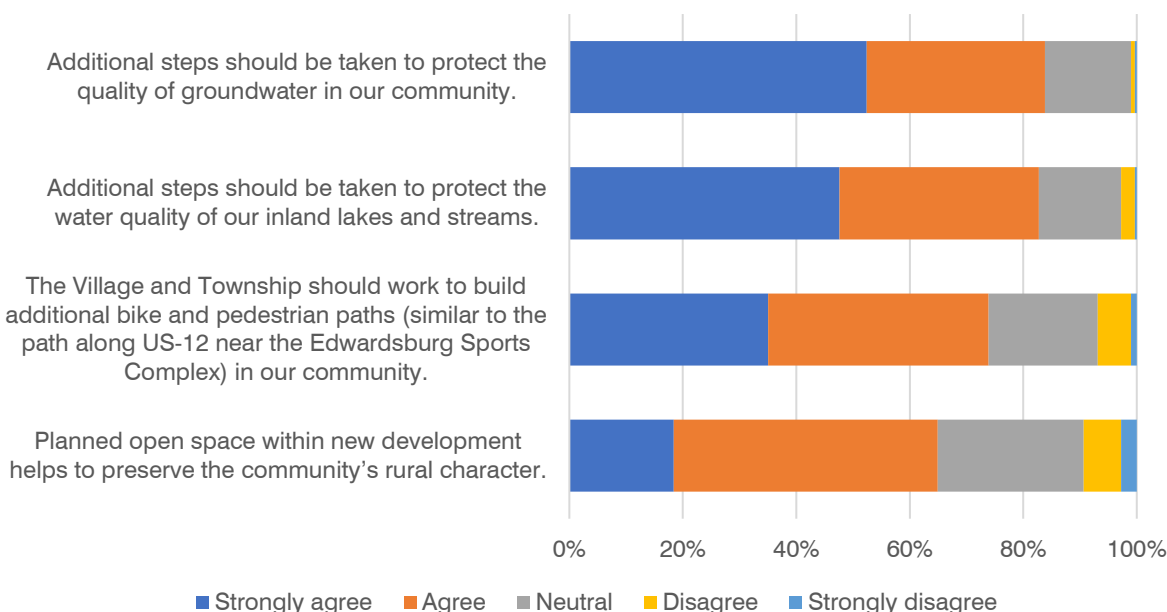
facilities— both athletic and academic— are well below standard and not on par with schools of similar scale in the region.

- It's a small town is why we moved into this area. Small schools and small town. I do think we need a grocery store and maybe a new tester at but no more housing/townhomes and or apartments. And no more recreational businesses.
- Small town / schools
- Our pride of community
- School
- I like where I live
- The people of the community are nice, but there is a sense of, "You aren't from here."
- Small farm rural
- Good infrastructure and good schools
- The people
- Low crime and good schools
- Love for the Eddies
- Simply put, the "community". It's a small-town feel, where you really can get to know the people in your town if you put in a little effort.
- Hometown
- Great public relations, and service from our Police, Fire, and EMS to the community.
- Peace and quiet in my neighborhood except for loud mufflers and squealing tires most recently.

Question 17: In terms of potential priorities, how important are the following?



Question 18: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:



Question 19: What three words best describe your future vision for the Ontwa/Edwardsburg community?

Below is a word cloud that was generated from the survey responses. In a word cloud, the larger the word appears, the more often it was mentioned by respondents. It is clear from these results that a small, safe, clean, and friendly community is what respondents envision for the future of the Ontwa Township and Village of Edwardsburg area.



A collection of all of the responses to Question 19 are below:

Response	1	2	3
1.	Lake-life	Sports	Community
2.	More shops and restaurants; enhanced downtown presence	Walking/bike/hiking trails	Grocery store is a must
3.	Growth	Retail	Quality
4.	Enforce property upkeep	Less restrictive rules	Better communication
5.	Grow	Farmland	Cooperation
6.	Peaceful	Rural	Clean
7.	New motels	Restaurants	Elimination of blighted properties
8.	Embrace your neighbors	Don't be stuck-up	Neighbor be your best friend
9.	No pot shops	Quaint downtown	Small town community
10.	Safety	Protect natural resources	Development of businesses
11.	Retail	Resources for food - not dollar general	Farmer's market - indoor/outdoor
12.	Attracting	Young	Families
13.	Rural	Agricultural	Small town vibe
14.	Clean	Safe	Old school family
15.	Need to save the water	Need update park	Need more stuff here for kids
16.	Progressive	Inclusive	Safe
17.	Green	Diverse	Community
18.	Better school buildings	Improved downtown	More restaurants
19.	Safe	Quiet	Good roads
20.	Thriving downtown	Working with the vfw and american legion to promote activities	Traffic control
21.	Rural	Agricultural	Safe
22.	Develop	Enhance	Build
23.	Beautification	Growth	Foresight
24.	Healthy	Kind	Helpful
25.	Growing	Enhancing	Supportive
26.	Small	Friendly	Quaint
27.	Safe	Rural	Clean
28.	Walkability	Recreation	Restaurant variety
29.	Community	Gathering	Socializing

30.	Small community feel	Nature	Education
31.	More family friendly neighborhoods	More trails and bike paths	More retail and restaurants (not fast food)
32.	Vibrant	Progressive	Opportunistic
33.	Recreational facility	Local grocery store	Local hardware and pharmacy
34.	Family friendly		
35.	Small town		
36.	VILLAGE (small town)	FAMILIES (of all ages)	MAINTAIN (improve what we have)
37.	Friendly	Safe	Peaceful
38.	Country	Farms	Small town Community
39.	Keep rural/farm land	No more apartments/townhomes etc.	Save our small-town community
40.	An actual downtown		
41.	Welcoming	Kid friendly	Safe
42.	Stay small	Close knit	No expansion
43.	Safe	Friendly	Small-businesses
44.	Nature	Safe	
45.	Grocery	Restaurants	Entertainment
46.	Small	Quiet	Community
47.	Schools all of one campus	New homes near Eagle Lake	Increased outdoor recreation opportunities
48.	Safe park areas for middle-aged children	Sit down family eating	Community activities
49.	Protect	Preserve	Gradual
50.	School improvement	Commercial businesses	Sidewalks
51.	Connected	Strong family ties	Community
52.	Ecological neighborhood development	Increased tax base through manufacturing	Greater recreational opportunities.
53.	Welcoming	Progressive	Vibrant
54.	Keep the residential size	Expand native plant and tree planting	Reduce class size at EPS
55.	New	Vision	Please
56.	(Stay) rural	Grocery store!	Community
57.	Safe	Healthy	Involved
58.	Safe	Beautified	Responsible development
59.	Quiet	Walkable	Bikeable

60.	Housing growth	Business growth	Acceptance for new ideas
61.	Quiet neighborhood	Preserving farmland	Quality schools
62.	Preserve the integrity by protecting farmland	Continuing to provide a quality education and school system that attracts out of district families to attend via school of choice	Maintain quality and smooth roads free of potholes.
63.	Small	Not Granger	
64.	Friendly	Safe	Active
65.	Restaurants	Grocery stores	Public school improvements
66.	Growing	Walkable	Entertaining
67.	Opportunity	Downtown	
68.	Friendly	Safe	Clean
69.	Potential	Possibility	Nature
70.	Business	Growth	Safety
71.	Clean	Planned architecture	Pride
72.	Thriving	Charming	Safe
73.	Safety	Recreational opportunities	Good schools
74.	Protect ...citizen property rights	Protect ...citizen safety & welfare	Protect ...citizen property values
75.	Prosperity	Inclusion	Secure
76.	Access	Open space	Fair taxes
77.	Exciting	Diverse	Desirable
78.	Family	Safe	Relaxed
79.	Family first	Strong community	Safety
80.	Growing	Building	Succeeding
81.	Expansion (but classy)	More industry to support local business and our schools	Clean up
82.	Growing	Inviting	Inspiring
83.	Growth	Excellence	
84.	Enhancing schools/safe buildings	More safe neighborhoods	Would love a little downtown area or grocery store
85.	Green space	Welcoming	Rural
86.	Great schools	Lots of recreational opportunities	Plenty of non-motorized paths throughout the township!
87.	Building a sense of community	Housing	Business

88.	Diversify		
89.	Safe	Environmentally friendly	Quiet
90.	Education	Stable	Friendly
91.	Retail (grocery/pharmacy)	Protection (waterways & nature preserves)	Growth
92.	Safe	Community	Schools
93.	Safe	Welcoming	Clean
94.	Community	Inclusiveness	Responsibility
95.	Cohesive	Healthy	Community
96.	Inviting	Destination	Desirable
97.	No townhomes	Add a grocery store	Keep it small
98.	Safe	Clean	Local charm
99.	Safety	Education	Drug free
100.	Walking paths or sidewalks	Cellphone towers	Library upgrades
101.	Community enhancement: some parts of the community are ugly.	A variety of housing.	A few shops and a grocery store
102.	Preservation focused	Non commercial	Recreational
103.	Accepting	Green	Lively
104.	Growth		
105.	Enhancement	Infrastructure	
106.	Growth	Secure	Non-woke
107.	Safe	Healthy	Fun
108.	Unified	Inviting	Intentional
109.	Prosperous	Engaging	Organized
110.	Growing	Stable	Safe
111.	Grocery	Accessibility	Seniors
112.	Hopeful	Successful	Friendly
113.	Small	Safe	Friendly
114.	Safe	Entertainment	Successful
115.	Successful	Futuristic	Safe
116.	Fishing area	Water park	Community park
117.	Conservative	Clean	Friendly
118.	Cool	Beautiful	Fun
119.	Green	Clean	Peaceful
120.	Safe	Simple	Enjoyable
121.	Cool	Beautiful	Fun
122.	Kind	Exciting	Unique
123.	Unique	Friendly	Interesting

124.	Helpful	Easy access	Cleanly
125.	Beautiful	Welcoming	Safe
126.	Fun	Lots to do	Nice
127.	Good	Hardworking	Nice
128.	Kid friendly	Fun	Exiting
129.	Good	Futuristic	Outstanding
130.	Accessible	Safe	Friendly
131.	Livable	Likeable	Together
132.	Good	Nice	Great
133.	Safe	Social	Clean
134.	Growth	Inclusive	Improvement
135.	Growth	Money	Power
136.	Helpful	Happier	Logical
137.	Free	Strong	Hard working
138.	N/A	N/A	N/A
139.	Opportunity	Improvement	Involvement
140.	Lively	Peaceful	Fun
141.	Lively	Fun	Peaceful
142.	Better roads	Idk	Idk
143.	Awesome	Sweet	Excited
144.	Small	Rural	Adventures
145.	Friendly	Rural	Opportunistic
146.	Pride	Passion	Purpose
147.	Wonderful	Good	Natural
148.	Popular	Local	Convenient
149.	Lively	Busy	Loud
150.	Connected	Interesting	Clean
151.	Busy	Happy	Healthy
152.	Community	Safety	Clean
153.	Opportunity	Entertainment	Safety & quality
154.	I	Don't	Care
155.	Walkable	Affordable	Assisting
156.	Safe	Clean	Pedestrian
157.	Pride	Passion	Purpose
158.	Happy	Environmentally friendly	
159.	Preservation	Interesting	Clean
160.	Connected	Clean	Helping
161.	Improve	Design	Think
162.	Innovate	Expanding	Recreate
163.	Fun	Happy	Strong
164.	Improvements	Accessible	Safety

165.	Beautiful	Peaceful	Safe
166.	Growth	Communitive	Unity
167.	Growth	Maturity	Strength
168.	Futuristic	Accessible	Fun
169.	Easy access to sports + facilities	Better walkways	More paths or trails
170.	Safer	More sightseeing	Better
171.	Cool	Fun	Nice
172.	Clean	Calm	
173.	Visited	Loved	Cared for
174.	No more Dollar Generals	Cleaner	Pretty
175.	Safe	Clean	Happy
176.	Exciting	New	different
177.	Growth	Development	Neighborhoods
178.	Safe	Fun	Calm
179.	Safe	Food	Fun
180.	Clean	Organized	Safe
181.	Safe	Clean	Fishing spots
182.	Bigger	More opportunity	Connected
183.	Growth	Protection	Community
184.	Entertainment	Restaurants	Paths to walk
185.	Happy	Safe	Fun
186.	Evolved	Entertaining	
187.	Become bigger	Higher population	More building
188.		Growth	
189.	Development	Achievement	Growing
190.	Rural	Small	Sporty
191.	Protected	Safe	Peaceful
192.	Diverse	Accessible	Functional
193.	Nice	Accessible	
194.	Education	Rural	Community
195.	Improvements	Avocation	Ideas
196.	Clean	Walkable	Beautiful
197.	Improved	Sealed	Clean
198.	Safe	Good	Developed
199.	Grand	Expanding	Helping
200.	Fun	Entertaining	Safe
201.	Stay small	Rural	Bike paths
202.	Larger	Nature	Rural
203.	Rural	Peaceful	Clean

204.	Walkable	Safe	Natural
205.	Safe	Nature	Parks
206.	Nature	Water	Housing
207.	More parks	More entertainment	Stores
208.	Maybe soon overpopulated	Popular for gas station & food	Lot more houses to extend village
209.	Great	Teamwork	Good
210.	Not	The	Best
211.	Good	Developed	Safe
212.	Cool	Nice	Small
213.	Improved	Advanced	Welcoming
214.	Helpful	Fun	Cool
215.	Safe	Unity	Activities
216.	Rural	Smell	Community
217.	Great	Cool	Amazing
218.	Activity	Diverse	Welcoming
219.	Over population	Schooling	Academics
220.	Over population	Diversity	Academics
221.	Amazing	Popular	Special
222.	Nice	Explorable	Safe
223.	Explorable	Entertaining	Safe
224.	Spacious	Safe	Accessible
225.	Safe	Prosperous	Close-knit
226.	Accessible	Clean	Organized
227.	Fan	Good	Nice
228.	Entertaining	Alive	N/a
229.	Bigger	More space	Safe
230.	Improved	Advanced	Welcoming
231.	Clean	Active	Simple (in a good way)

Question 20: If there are other comments related to land use, growth, and development in Ontwa Township or the Village of Edwardsburg that you would like to share, please write them below.

- Grocery store
- Please do a better job of informing the public of future development. Zoom all meetings.
- Preserve our farmlands
maintain our roads
- Stop being a greedie + share space with neighbor + friends. No matter what side of the street they live on.
- Developing Gunn Park to accommodate family activities
Discussion @ Starboard Choice Marina to bring back size of Lindberg Park.
- No low-income housing
- Less private lakes.... more public lake access.
- We do not need new developments like the proposed Market Park project. Please use existing vacant lots within the village before re-zoning farmland for housing + business. It is very disturbing to see the industrial park has been potentially enlarged to go all the way to Conrad Road!
- Keep is simple + safe
- Edwardsburg residents have a strong sense of community and caring for each other. Yet, unfortunately, the school bond has not passed. I know the master plan has nothing to do with the school bond but upgrading our schools will be very important for the Township/Village upgrading.
Continuing to try and upgrade our downtown will be attractive to people looking to move into Edwardsburg.
A real grocery store would be a big plus.
With that said, we still need to be aware of how important our farmlands/farmers are.
- Please do not proceed with Marketplace on U.S. 12. It doesn't represent our community appropriately.
- Need to use existing empty buildings and space before taking away more farmland.
- Please do not allow the Edwardsburg area between the Village and the State line to the south and to Conrad Rd. To the west turn into another Granger. I am very concerned about the possible rezoning of the farmland between U.S. 12 and May St. East of Conrad Road being rezoned Industrial or Commercial. I also am against the rezoning of the farm west of Edwardsburg to allow the Market Park project to build housing and retail space. Please encourage new growth within the village limits. Please protect the prairie before it is lost forever!
- There is very little vision for this community. Look at Cassopolis Dowagiac Three Oaks the improvements are enhancing those communities. They are destinations. Edwardsburg is a drive thru no reason to stop here. It's a shame and a waste of monies in lack on development in this community !!!!!

- Slow down growth, please keep our small-town community! We do not need more development. We need to improve what we already have. Edwardsburg is a wonderful Village/Township...it's special and rare to have our close knit community.
- Please do not expand Edwardsburg to become big. More tax dollars aren't always the answer. We are a small close knit farming community. That is the charm of our town. I love the flowers lining U.S. 12. I love the Christmas lights and the kiddos decorating the tree. I love highlighting our seniors with banners. Let's focus on keeping a small-town vibe and not wanting to develop the very land that makes this community great.
- Please do not develop existing farmland. Especially on 62 between Redfield and May Streets. Incentivize small business in the old town area. A boutique cafe would be nice, perhaps a gastro pub type restaurant. Don't just place everything on 62 in strip malls. Enhance and use the character of the old town area.
- I would love to see more restaurants and places to enjoy a coffee with friends. Shopping areas and single fam housing. Paths walks along Redfield such as the one on Adams in Granger
- Development needs to address the delicate balance of commercial/industrial, residential development and school systems in a very purposeful way. The Village and township must actively collaborate and incentivize these in a progressive manner to "prime-the-pump" of progress. Buy vacant properties (Lunkers) and land to drive the development of business, incentive new business with tax abatements, actively market for and engage developers to invest in the community, etc. Actively retain resources to work with the Planning Commission to benchmark the communities we'd like to be like to determine the what and how they were successful. Use ARPA funds availed to do so!!!
We are community of managers rather than leaders who drive the future with courage. Good enough has become the enemy Great!!!!
Someone needs to LEAD this community towards establishing a vision of a better tomorrow with the willingness to take risks and ridicule by the vocal minority while drawing out and supporting the silent majority.
This is going to be purposeful march that must start NOW, not 6 months or a year from NOW.
- The proposed Ice-Skating rink would be nice for the whole community. More festivals besides the Memorial Day one we already have
- Would love a grocery store and a quaint downtown feel like many neighboring small towns.
- We don't need to be another Granger. We need to improve our water and improve what we have while limiting overgrowth which causes more up keep over time and ultimately the community losses its purpose. Our strength is our small community and the pride we share with the community.

- I don't believe that farm should be destroyed there are plenty of other places to build and develop the downtown means something more. The village needs upgraded that role farm areas don't need to be developed. I moved to this area for the school in the small community would hate to see it changed.
- I wish we actually had a town. No clear downtown area
- Please limit the amount of growth.... we don't need more subdivisions. Granger is close enough
- Grocery store, drug store, hardware store, brewery. Continue park improvements/access at Gunn Park, possible walking bridge over U.S. 12 somewhere between Lake St & Dailey Rd for safe access to Gunn Park. Continue to increase utilization of our current outdoor areas such as Gunn Park, Sports Complex & our public access sites at local lakes.
- I prefer the quite simple life. I don't need big businesses I can go elsewhere for that. I like the small community
- I am good with the pot shops. But they shouldn't be the first thing you see when coming to town. They should be put in the industrial park and hidden.
- I believe we should try to preserve the small local feel of Edwardsburg against big strip malls or apartment buildings.
- Develop pickle ball, tennis courts similar to Vandalia.
- I think the community needs to get behind the school district to build a new K-3 building. If we want to attract and retain great teachers and families, we need this. The current buildings are out dated (especially with the new advances in technology). The lack of air conditioning is awful for learning. Plus, if the community were to grow, we are going to need space for additional kids.
- Would love to see Ontwa do something like what Cass has done with Stone Lake.
- Turn lunkers into a strip mall or multi business location
- Please only plant native plants
- Please don't forfeit farmland in order to create developments, especially by people who have not grown up here and do not care about maintaining our rural atmosphere and sense of community. Our wildlife is losing land for their homes. Farmers need land to grow crops. Traffic is already a big concern on U.S. 12 without adding to it. Bringing in large multitudes of people at once who do not treasure our sense of community will definitely change the personality and environment of our small town.
- We have zoned areas for development, particularly, Multi-Family Residential. Those designated areas could be built out, they have room for expansion. Why try to create more areas when existing areas are not full?
- The area really needs a zoning administrator who is effective, understands ordinances and adheres to them, cares about all citizens, no matter where they live and cares about the appearance of our community.
- Enhance the Industrial Park

- In order for the Township/Village to thrive, investment in development must be made. Just because it's always been done one way, doesn't mean it needs to continue to be that way. If you're not ever-evolving, there will be negative economic impacts to the community.
- Preserve the farm ground that feeds that nation. This community is not the place for tiny homes or mass housing. We already have enough apartment buildings available here and do not need more.
- We moved here 30 years ago specifically so our children could attend excellent schools. Now our grandchildren attend the same schools.
- We desperately need more housing, as well as restaurants, parks, recreational areas and just things in general for residents to do. Nearly all of our time outside the home is spent in Indiana.
- New Township board member to replace the ones that seem to stop or slow down new developments would be a good start. So many businesses don't even try in Ontwa because of the reputation the board has. Probably should replace all the people in appointed positions as well once the new board members take their seats.
- It would be great to remove the stuck-up dinosaurs from the boards and get in some fresh eyes with the ability to see potential in the area.
Gunn Park and the downtown stretch of 12 has extreme potential and would be a huge benefit to the Village to improve. The area has felt like it has gone downhill from when I grew up here as a child and I would love to see it thrive again.
- Parks that have areas for gathering for music and festivals. Pickleball and basketball courts added to parks. But they have to be taken care of. We let our town look so run down. It's an embarrassment. We need something to be proud of. We also NEED A GROCERY STORE
- The schools are needing help and will need more help for growth in our community. I am all for growth, change and making a beautiful Main Street. Whatever you do it also has to be maintained on going. The schools are what is bring people to Edwardsburg not Edwardsburg.
- Please encourage more recycling within waste community.
- Community Pickle ball courts
- In terms of access, safety and welfare, the rights of our citizens should always be considered first before those of the general public.
- I am in favor of true affordable housing, but not in favor of building multiple apartment complexes, multi-family rental housing. Towns need affordable rental housing for younger residents or those looking for employment, but should also have truly affordable housing so these same people can buy a house and establish roots in the community. Someone that buys a house is likely to be more invested in the community by feeling a sense of belonging versus someone renting that may feel overlooked or temporary.

- You have to consider filling the empty spots in order to grow- corner of 12 and Dailey, the corner next to old barber shop, the old fireside lot.... Stop allowing those land owners to keep lots empty... we need business/buildings to fill with commerce!!
- I love our community and would love to see some updates on Cass Street, would love to have something more developed for our community at Gunn Park. I would love to see the businesses on 62 revitalized a little more as well. I do not want to see a giant condo/apartment development with shops and restaurants right next to the Edwardsburg Sports Complex. I love our small town and would hate to see it become like Granger and Mishawaka...so large with not much of a sense of community anymore.
- Rental properties do not generate property taxes
- If we could follow in Cass's footsteps and improve Gunn Park to be similar to Stone Lake, it would be wonderful. It might lead to some destination type businesses - good restaurants, shops etc.
- Green spaces should be required in future subdivisions. Sidewalks on the major roads required with any construction. May be subsidized via grants and Township funds.
- The area is low-income. Please make sure that the housing you provide is affordable.
- Enforce the current zoning ordinances and update them to be realistic based on actual lot sizes.
- The pot stores are embarrassing
- Parks, trails, green areas, new subdivisions with homes 1800 sq, foot plus with sewer, sidewalks and other amenities. Community center for Township-Village.
- The Village needs to look like one cohesive unit, a 'city' not a smattering of businesses here & there.
- Be more cohesive and able to travel via bike or walking to small shops or bakery or sandwich type place.
- The downtown area has so much potential if we cared to develop it appropriately. It could be such a quaint, inviting area. Currently, I own a \$1M-ish house (not on a lake) and am embarrassed to have people come visit me in Edwardsburg. It has the appearance of a "pass-through" country town that either has a low-income population or is poorly ran by people that have low expectations or no vision for improvement. (I don't know that this is actually the case, it's just what seems to be the case). I'm encouraged by this survey, however.
- I truly feel like our Village could be improved with sidewalks and shopping as drug store, hardware store and grocery store, but would not want any farm/rural areas destroyed.
- A huge problem is the railroad going through the Village. We have uptown, which needs beautification and then we have east over the railroad track. How do we fix that? We can't change the railroad track. There was a definite lack of planning and

vision. But we have new businesses like the Flat Rock and the vet hospital. The old Harding's mall looks much better. There is a small group of people who are trying to do something and they should be encouraged. They are the group that did the mural. Which is nice. There is a housing development south off M-62 with one house!

- Milton and Ontwa should cooperate more
- There are people on the Planning Commission, and the Board of Trustees that need to go. It's only a few people that seem to hamper growth in our Township.
- Please preserve the farm land, and, help to improve our schools.
- We need some more commercial business to help with the tax base. The residents are not able to accommodate the growth of the school or town.
- A daycare center would be helpful to working families with limited financial resources.
- Need an actual park
- Fix railroads so cars can go over softly without worrying about flat tires.
- No comment.
- Don't turn this town into a place of shopping centers.
- I think there should be more things for kids and teens to do.
- N/A
- None
- No
- Less manufacturing
- None
- None
- Easier access to crossing the train tracks.
- I do think we could add more parks and reserved spaced for more nature.
- They need to work on the neighborhood being built next to Eagle Lake.
- No comment
- Let people ride pit bikes and stuff if they follow the laws.
- No comments
- No opinion
- No more Dollar Generals
- N/A
- No other comments.
- N/A
- NO put Walmart
- We need an actual grocery store not another dollar general and a park with equipment for kids.
- Don't turn it into a city. Keep it small, just a village. Don't make it into something it's not.
- More parks

- None
- Ok
- Because so many people walk to and back from school, we would like nice sidewalks.
- We should be thinking about wildlife and clean community.
- Please protect the farmland and rural areas. We don't need more materialistic places! (Like we don't need 3 dollar generals for example).
- More nature and place to enjoy it. Less businesses like banks. Less parking lots. Walkable design.
- No comments
- No opinion
- Need better fast-food restaurants
- Do not disrupt farmland to add to the housing and business part of the community.
- N/A
- Grocery store
- N/A
- Preserve growth (trees). Do not clear them out + preserve water.
- N/A
- Land use but protect our animals.
- More entertainment for the youth