

Introduction

Kenton County is really two counties. The north is highly urbanized with 18 incorporated places and the south is essentially an agricultural area dotted with rural residential sites.

The tremendous growth of population and housing units in South Kenton County between 1990 and 2000 was the stimulus for an emerging concern about a vision for the future of characteristics and identity of South Kenton County in 1996. Many people began to ask questions such as: If present trends continue, what will South Kenton County be like in 10 or 20 years? Will this still be the kind of place that we want to call home?

A citizens' report in 1998, "South Kenton County: Charting a Path to the Future" became a guide for the writing of the comprehensive plan based on this vision statement.

The vision for the southern portion of Kenton County is one of residential growth centered around existing small communities where public services are currently available or planned for future upgrading, and where existing roads, with appropriate upgrades, can efficiently and safely move traffic. Residential development will be encouraged to occur in a way to minimize impacts on the rural landscape and the functioning of agricultural enterprises. Areas are identified where industrial and commercial development should occur to provide employment opportunities for residents in this portion of the county. Finally, the vision includes maintaining a strong and viable agricultural economy in the southern portion of Kenton County.

In 2013, a South Kenton Citizens group was formed to assess how trends over the last 15 years might have modified residents' attitudes and preferences with respect to development

patterns. The group decided that a survey would be the most effective way to offer residents of South Kenton County an opportunity to express their land use preferences and hopes for the future.

The citizens group hosted several community meetings and created a Facebook page open for suggestions. The group used comments from these to design the questions in this survey.

1043 surveys were completed, representing 29.0% of all households in South Kenton County. While this is not a probability sample, the fact that 3 in ten households participated represents a significant indicator of residents' hopes and dreams for the future of South Kenton County. Moreover, 80% of the participants own property in South Kenton County.

This brochure describes the results of this survey which essentially re-affirms the vision statement from 1998.

Survey Results

Reasons for moving to or staying in South Kenton County and use of land

When asked why they moved to or remain in South Kenton County, 35.4% state it is to experience a rural lifestyle; 30% say it is to be near family, 13.6% say that either farming commercially or retaining a family farm are why they moved to or remain in South Kenton County. Another 7.8% stated that they wanted to be able to raise food for their family.

When asked about the current use of their land, 29% indicate that they are involved in subsistence farming for their family's own use while another 13% say that are engaged in commercial farming (cattle, horses, forestry,

hay). Interestingly, 29% state that their land is for preservation or conservation purposes. The most common theme from the "other" comments is to have a large residential lot and to enjoy country living.

Defining a rural landscape

When asked what comes to mind when they think of a rural landscape, three quarters say "Wide areas of open grass land or pastures or unbroken wooded tracts," 70% say "small operating family farms (under 50 acres)" and 54% say "large operating farms (over 50 acres)."

But less than one third say they picture "large single home lots (5 acres or more)."

There is even stronger agreement among respondents on what does "Not at all" fit their picture of a rural landscape. This includes, 84% who say that "Large supermarkets or discount stores with large illuminated parking lots" are "not at all" in their picture of a rural landscape; 90% say that "Clustered housing developments with less than one acre lot sizes" does not fit; and 93% assert that neither "Large office/facility buildings (private or government)" nor "Factories or warehouses" fit what they define as a rural landscape.

Attitudes on conditions and issues in South Kenton County

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements that presented conditions and issues in South Kenton County.

The highest proportion of respondents indicated that they "strongly" agreed with the statements that describe the desired rural landscape affirmed in earlier parts of the survey, as evidenced by the following:

- "It is important to keep agriculture a viable part of South Kenton economy." (SA = 68.7%) (A = 23.5%, **Total Agree = 92.2%**)
- "It is important to maintain the rural character of South Kenton County." (SA = 70.7%) (A = 19.3%, **Total Agree = 90.3%**)
- "I am satisfied with my access to commercial and retail stores where I live." (SA = 49.3%, A = 37.5%, **Total Agree = 86.8%**)
- "Subdivisions and other residential development should be directed away from land which is being used for preservation or conservation purposes." (SA = 52.2%) (A = 31.7%, **Total Agree = 83.9%**)
- "Subdivisions and other residential should be directed away from land which is being used for agriculture." (SA = 49.6%, A = 30.4%, **Total Agree = 80.0%**)
- "If residential and retail development occurs around these existing communities, it should maintain the small community character of these places." (SA = 41.8%, A = 38.0%, **Total Agree = 79.8%**)

On the other hand, when presented with a set of statements that describe development patterns the respondents see as unacceptable, they clearly express their disagreement.

- "Subdivisions should be allowed in undeveloped areas." (SD = 36.2%, D = 26.3%, **Total Disagree = 62.5%**)
- "South Kenton County needs to have more employment centers (e.g., clusters of large employers)." (SD = 28.5%, D = 32.1%, **Total Disagree = 60.6%**)
- "If the opportunity arose to sell my farm for development, I would take it." (SD = 42.9%, D = 16.0%, **Total Disagree = 58.9%**)

Summary

The results of the 2014 survey of South Kenton County households show that the pattern of

development since the 1998 plan reflects the strong desires of residents to maintain the rural and agricultural character of this area.

South Kenton County is more than a place, it is "home" and where many find they can "enjoy the land with family." South Kenton County's rural landscape becomes a part of the residents' "rural identity."

"The main thing is to keep this area rural, yet a close knit community. The rural area is what drew us here. It is already getting "busy" and feels as though we are losing the "country" feeling." While those who live in the "other" Kenton County might find such a sentiment difficult to comprehend, a significant majority of the South Kenton County respondents would nod their head in agreement. For these respondents, there is only ONE South Kenton County, and it is a rural and agricultural landscape.

It is the responsibility of those who live in and love South Kenton County to work together and with local government to insure that their hopes and dreams for the future of this area can become a reality.

Residents of South Kenton County should participate in the Southern Kenton County Community Events and Government Talk Facebook page for regular updates. We can create and sustain the kind of community that we desire when we work together for a better tomorrow.

"People protect what they love."
— Testy McTesterson

"Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children."
— Theodore Roosevelt



Report to the Residents of South Kenton County: Summary Results of the Survey of Land Use Preferences

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Full results available at www.kentoncounty.org in the community section. Check out the Southern Kenton Community Events and Government Talk Facebook page.