

**POLK COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS**  
**Mail (Categories) – Question 3**  
**March 2007**

117 Respondents.

**WHERE ARE WE NOW? Current Assessment. What trends and issues do you see developing in our County and in our communities?**

GOVERNMENT

Schools

- Consolidate all county schools into 1 administrative unit.
- Continue to strengthen school systems.
- Strong educational system.
- Strong local school – every mile traveled to school is lost learning time.
- We will have the best schools in the nation.
- Schools which emphasize scholastic achievement with respect of self and others.
- We must provide adequate education, including alternatives to regular high school.
- More 2-year vocational training schools.
- With growth comes the need for quality education, including alternatives for the after high school. Include in the County a Technical, 2 year, and eventually a 4-year college.
- Promote our area's post-secondary education to give manufacturing a base for educated individuals, especially healthcare.
- We will have an institution of high education in Polk County so that (a) people need not commute long distances for an education (b) advanced educations will be more valued by our population (c) spinoff benefits come in areas such as health, which is linked directly to levels of education completed (d) more of our young people will have reason to stay in Polk County (e) we benefit from the positive synergy found in most college communities.
- Schools where kids (and adults) learn the skills needed to cope with a rapidly changing society and world instead of being prepared to be good line and service employees and "good" (meaning "voracious") consumers; where they learn to engage in honest civic dialogue with all sides represented and respected; where they learn to question and think critically and creatively; where they are engaged in social (and economic) youth entrepreneurship, service-learning and philanthropy; where good old 4-H values are taught and practiced; where they learn life-long physical fitness and safety skills (e.g. swimming, lifesaving, CPR, EMT) instead of just head-bashing and expensive spectator sports for a few (how about "touch football," "hoops," week-end soccer, ultimate Frisbee, community marathons, bicycling, cross-country skiing, swimming, canoeing, hiking?); where the youth drug, violence and silence (i.e. hip-hop gang) culture is directly and effectively challenged and remediated, and not just tacitly ignored by teachers, parents, and administrators.

Taxes

- Continue to strive for business growth and stop increasing property taxes.
- To be able to afford to live on a fixed income. Can't absorb higher Real Estate taxes.
- Lower property taxes so our seniors and working people can afford to stay in their homes.
- Give the senior citizens a "Senior Citizen tax break" on their real estate taxes! They have paid for – 1st stage: other children, 2nd stage: their children, 3rd stage: their grandchildren, 4th stage: their great-grandchildren, and so many simply can't afford that 3rd and 4th stage on their low social security wages. Help them, at least a little; to be able to stay in their homes for just a little bit longer!
- Unload the unfair demand on non-resident, retired seasonal property owners. Why should these folks be forced to liquidate rather than creating a legacy to their families and their future ownership?
- Why raise the taxes on lake property and lower taxes on other people who live on the back lots but have access to the lake? Are we trying to drive our people off the lake?
- Cooperation between governmental entities. Increased tax base to help lower taxes so our long term residents don't get taxed off their properties.
- New revenue resource to feed the huge appetite of the county government.

## Services

- Control drug traffic/meth labs.
- Continue the fight against Meth.
- Continue the fight against meth, drunk driving, and sex offenders.
- Get pot and meth under control.
- AODA treatment centers that are effective and not just breeding grounds for ongoing addictions.
- Increased emphasis on and support for treatment and prevention options rather than incarceration.
- Provide a safe environment.
- Safety: personal, financial, emotional.
- Security: protection from schemers who legally or otherwise obtain assets from uninformed and vulnerable citizens.
- Better law enforcement.
- There should be more severe punishment for people who break the law. They should have hard physical work when they are in our jail or State prisons. Give them a pile of rocks and make the criminals, felons, drunks, move the pile of rocks and then move them again. Hopefully they won't want to be punished again. Next time it will be a bigger pile of rocks.
- Able prisoners are working, doing good for the community.
- Continue to support the library and tourism system.
- Deal with poverty issues.
- Government needs to assist people with human needs (physical, emotional, educational, safety) as well as our land and water resources.
- Government with equipment and technology to provide service effectively and efficiently. Fair and honest justice system.
- Social services are adequately funded and policies, laws, and programs are applied to effectively protect the rights of all children to a healthy upbringing vs. protecting the rights of dysfunctional parents; adequately compensated, competent legal and social service personnel to discern the capabilities of the individuals involved.

## Other

- Slow the growth of government – government is an un"sustainable" burden on Polk County.
- Control/reduce actual government spending.
- When the economy slows like it has lately, the County should be no different than a local business – if there are expenses we can cut, let's do so. We have to keep a "lean" organization, and pass the savings on to our residents.
- I commend those County Board Supervisors who are trying to put the brakes on the run-away spending that is going on, but there are tough decisions to be made.
- Our future looks good, our managers need to use good common sense with the money they have to work with, don't let good values get lost in the fast pace of life.
- Stagger county board election.
- Streamline county board.
- Downsize county administration. Board members need to work together for the people—not their own personal interests.
- I'd like to see Polk County working together, 10 years or so ago. I felt PC was a county where we were growing together, now it seems that there is much dissention which stems from the Board itself. This needs to change.
- Polk County's preferred future will depend on the elected leadership. I am disappointed in the discord that I hear of in the weekly newspapers among the county board members. The divisiveness must end if the county is going to gain back its respectability. I am embarrassed to hear of some of the wrangling that goes on. I believe there is too much micro-managing by board members. I say "hire good people and let them do their jobs." We have a fine law enforcement division. The highway department does a good job. Employees of the offices of clerk, treasurer, deeds and land do a fine job, but are doing more with less. The same goes for the tourism office.
- The county leadership of the future must be more respectful of and interested in preserving the natural and physical resources of the county. I would hope that the future will see county stewards rather than county supervisors.
- I think the County's role should be very open ended. Allow the areas with the growth issues to govern themselves offering what assistance is needed. The County then should assist the economically challenged areas as best they can.

- Polk County would benefit from an increase in professional management at the local level instead of relying on outside consultants to make up for the shortcomings of local clerks, etc. who have simply been promoted through the years to management positions with no graduate education.
- Let the Towns perform the tasks that they do best. Examples: Animal control at a local level instead of hiring additional County employees; perform own park and recreational needs. Become better at communicating with the Towns. More orderly growth.
- Implementing IRV (Instant Runoff Voting). IRV saves time and money in elections by eliminating primaries and it encourages voting in order of your preference, instead of voting for the lesser of two evils.
- Consolidate township government into 1 county government.
- Less government control, more attention to proactive schemes.
- One thing we do not need is more regulations such as this animal ordinance. Our last sheriff wouldn't enforce the last dog ordinance (I-95). I am hoping for better things from Sheriff Moore.
- Land use ordinances are getting too invasive in the private sector.
- Protect the environment but don't take property rights away from the landowners.
- Less government regulations including city, county, state, and federal levels.

### TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNICATION

- Internet technology easily available for all.
- Wireless throughout.
- Polk County needs to progress with technology in all facets of our society.
- Increased use of technology, but keep small town values of family and knowing your neighbors.
- Better cell phone reception in Polk County.

### TRANSPORTATION

- Highways safe and free flowing.
- Keep the County safe, including the roads.
- Safer highways.
- Safer roads (Hwy 8 is a death trap!)
- Good highway system to move traffic in orderly fashion.
- Pave dirt roads.
- Roads are a vital artery for our economy and need to be maintained and developed to cover increased needs.
- Southern part of county will be a bedroom community with heavy demand on our roads.
- Plan for transportation other than cars – biking, walking safely, light rail?
- Transportation options other than depending on cars – bike, light rail.
- Develop mass transit options to Mpls./St. Paul, Madison, and Superior. This will bring people here too!
- Polk County is going to be more a bedroom community for Twin Cities area – 20% now work in Twin City area – faster and better Hwy's and rail will bring residents more and more into Polk County.
- Working with the state to bring back rail transportation for shipping. Attach Polk Co to the global economy by encouraging business with global ties.

### ENERGY

- We need to be a model for energy policy that is under our control – what can we do here.
- County will be more energy efficient and not so dependent on high cost outside sources of oil and electricity.
- Freedom from reliance on fossil fuel.
- Focus on alternative energies.
- Promote recycling and renewable energy.
- Renewable energy.
- Alternative energies like solar and wind.
- Sustainable energy (wind farms, solar collectors)
- Utilize utilities as a group.

## PRESERVATION, RECREATION

- Curb re-cycling throughout company.
- More recycle areas.
- Re-cycling curb-site.
- Current recycling program is great but needs to expand for what is coming with growth.
- Promote reward system for recycling.
- Could it be possible for us to turn in our batteries at the same time we have clean sweep for turning in pesticides, etc., and no charge?
- Go back to cleaning up the road kill that lays for weeks along our highways and county and state roads.
- Protect rural and environmentally sensitive areas from development. Support land stewardship programs.
- I would like to see wildlife and public open spaces preserved.
- Protect and keep wildlife areas.
- Green space for wildlife.
- Contained growth to protect our natural resources.
- Protect natural resources.
- Preserve and inventory natural resources.
- Plant trees. The environmental benefits and simple beauty of trees will help us remain a good place to be.
- Preserve beauty of Polk County (clean lakes, rivers).
- Preserve our lakes.
- Clean environment.
- Polk County could be a leader and model for other communities. Our natural resources need to be protected and utilized in a sustainable way.
- Promote an image, county-wide of Polk County being a getaway destination, not a low income area.
- Emphasis on Natural Resources and our Communities as tourism destination locations.
- Our recreational land and lakes and tourism are the only thing we have (that is our future!)
- Would like to see space reserved for public use for healthful and quiet recreation. Let's lead the rest of WI in healthy constituents!
- Retain access to our lakes, rivers, and parks.
- Parks which are not overcrowded.
- Develop a strong park and recreation system. With a growing population they will be used and needed very much.
- Preservation of parks, green space.
- Green space reserved for quiet walking, biking, bird watching.
- Take advantage of our terrain by incorporating trails for hiking, biking, skiing, snowmobiling, and walking.
- Remain a good place to raise a family – I would like to see Polk County purchase more land to allow hunting and fishing opportunities for more than just land owners.
- The Polk County of the future will have infrastructure that accommodates the physical and social characteristics of the increasingly aging population. For example, public roads do not have adequate shoulders for safe walking, bicycle riding, or running. The aging population will need exercise and recreation without danger of traffic accidents. The future Polk County must make this possible by fostering more convenient, non-motorized trail and recreational space than is currently available. The future county will have towns and cities that are accessible by non-motorized means. Getting to and getting around in towns and cities by non-motorized means will be simple, easy, and inviting. Most of those bicycles you see going to town are ridden by Boomers. The future Polk County will focus more on environmentally sustainable and environment preserving types of recreation.
- Equal opportunity wholesome activities keep students busy and out of trouble.
- Teen center.
- Vibrant cultural life including arts and recreational opportunities. SUSTAINABILITY as a guiding principle.
- Focus on family and the arts.
- Try to keep our "small town" atmosphere, preserve our historic sites.
- Another idea – outdoor theater – "Shakespeare in the Park," "Movies in the Park," in addition to the outdoor concerts would make summer evenings worth staying around.

## EMPLOYMENT

- Not only bedroom communities, but provide good jobs.
- Good jobs for all.
- Positive financial & economical growth.
- Tourism will bring jobs. Amery-Dresser trail developed for bike, walk, quiet space could spur entrepreneurs – ice cream, coffee houses, cafés, etc. This would help our towns that thrived during railroad times. Tourists bring \$ to help tax base & jobs.
- The future of Polk County is tourism even if one of your board members tries to kill the Polk County Tourism Committee. I have never seen such a negative person for the county.
- Active tourism.
- Tourism does also have a great impact on our county – we need to promote tourism.
- Attract tourists.
- We need to ramp up our hospitality and tourism, this is a gold mine for the area!! I worked in the travel business for 11 years, I know!
- Encourage the family businesses and keep our money local instead of getting larger out of county bus.
- Bring back small town business.
- Can we re-create small communities? With the internet and tele-commuting more people should be able to work from home/from their community.
- Let the retail stores have a better advantage by not giving in to the big box stores.
- Organic farming and locally owned business.
- More employment opportunities and aggressive efforts on the county to get people off the MA system and working. More opportunities for businesses to grow to accommodate the population and create employment.
- There will be an abundance of good paying jobs so that parents can make a good living close to home instead of commuting out of state.
- Job opportunities with good paying jobs with benefits for young families outside of the Government and Education framework.
- Increase job opportunities for our youth.
- Solve poverty problem. Meaningful jobs – local businesses.
- Bring new jobs that pay a living wage. We need business that will provide opportunities for families here.
- If we grow with big business – we get more taxes, more people, more homes, etc. People are not loyal to the small business in the small town, they go to the malls, so bring the malls to us – and keep the business in Polk County.
- We need to attract industry, while protecting our environment.
- Seek out companies to locate here that will employ county citizens.
- We need more industry in our area to serve the people. If there were more jobs available we wouldn't have so many people on welfare and at the food shelves. (But how??)
- Career job creation – increase workforce educational opportunities to increase job/pay opportunities.
- Continue to draw in good strong businesses. Encourage strong employees to make Polk County home.
- Low unemployment. Robust industrial parks.
- I would like to see Polk County develop in such a way that includes all people. This means no one is going to fully get their way, but no economic group will be left out either. Polk Co. must make a priority attracting jobs which will employ our residents at living wages with medical benefits.
- The future of the county should include more jobs at more places of businesses than are currently located in the county. A premium must be placed on those businesses that respect and maintain the physical and natural environments as they locate and expand here.
- We will have a diverse economy, since our lower tax, lower workers' compensation, lower wages, strong work ethic competitive advantage will be gone. Fewer residents will commute out of Polk County to go to work. We will have white collar jobs because we will have encouraged businesses to start up here and/or headquarter here.

## POPULATION

- Steady growth of population, businesses, and community.
- Organized mix of rural and urban that can afford its Government, Schools, and quality of life.
- We need to remember that those in our communities that can't speak for themselves still have a voice and representation in our County.
- Promote the attraction and retention of young families within Polk County.
- Trend right now is for this area to have a much older population – must create opportunities for youth and young, educated professionals.
- Socio-economic – less poverty, high school degrees, un-employment improved, health insurance. Preserve Golden Age Manor for elderly. Deal with problems: obesity, smoking, alcohol abuse treatment.
- I think Polk County will continue to attract more new residents than it loses. Infrastructure will improve as demand for it grows, particularly in the area of housing, year round entertainment and hospitality venues, variety of offerings, etc.
- As always we prefer the Status Quo, but it will not be available. Hopefully we can adjust although it sometimes appears we should be learning to speak Arabic or Chinese. At least we will have to learn to share the Earth's resources.

## HEALTH

- Leader in promoting good health and fitness.
- Promote good health and fitness.
- We need to assist the entire county with health programs.
- We must support the mental health of our community.
- Free health and in-home-care is provided for elderly and poor.
- Health care for all.
- Get some affordable health insurance.
- Polk County needs to admit the grave problems of disease here and not rely on Health Department statistics which are totally inadequate for disease; and doctors who do not report these diseases (or even recognize them). Polk County needs to be known as a place Lyme disease and other diseases are treated until all symptoms are gone.

## VALUES

- We need a change in our core value system.
- More community spirit.
- Low crime.
- Students are taught to be respectful and do their best. County is nearly drug free and crime free.
- We want to be able to accommodate the changes and grow economically without sacrificing rural values and qualities.
- A major focus of the county's future should be on economic, social, and physical health and a standard of living that are all sustainable and growing. I think Polk County's future should be as a place where people want to go *to*, not to be *from*. I intend this in both an economic and a social sense.
- A sustainable, rural community that is open, welcoming, and attractive to non-threatening tourism or recreational activities. A safe, friendly place to raise a middle class family comfortably.
- Communities where diversity (of culture and opinion), creativity and thoughtful, respectful public discourse are valued and encouraged; where economic resources are distributed so that hunger and homelessness are non-existent county-wide; where children, youth, and adults engage in intergenerational activities for recreation, personal development and community improvement.
- The great irony of what's happening in Polk County is that people from "the cities" want to come here for the rural lifestyle and to escape from the cities. But as they move out they're bringing much of what's wrong with the cities to the country. Crime, drugs, crowding, traffic congestion and social needs are some of the blessings brought about by the urbanization of Polk County.
- End all that overseas involvement.

## LAND USE, DEVELOPMENT

- We need to study areas where planning has worked and adopt their strategies. The plan has to be communicated to our citizens. One model: Whistler, Canada.
- If we do not get on the ball and get plans developed the county will end up looking like Houston, Texas. Have you been? There is no real plan there and it looks like a tsunami hit—residential next to car washing next to high rises next to god knows what. The streets remind me of the access in and around the new Wal-Mart in St Croix Falls—a mess. We need to take ownership of our future and make sure we are proud of the development that takes place in Our County. This plan will not be easy. It will be fought by those who do not want to change. It will be hard to get agreement by landowners/municipalities and government officials. But if we do not do it the next generation will look back at us and say what in the hell were they thinking? We must be brave and take on this challenge!!!
- Being bedroom communities for the Twin Cities cannot be avoided. We need to shape development and plan to preserve the charm of our small towns. (Those towns are an attraction for visitors, as well as where we enjoy living.) The late Urban Geographer John Borchert warned that planning is essential if our towns are not to be taken over by strip malls—which is what the automobile and bank lending practices produce.
- Future does not look good as no proactive plans are in place – it is better to be proactive than reactive.
- Slow development, restrict growth to selected areas.
- Growth, development planned – zoning of commercial, residential, rural.
- Planned development.
- Planned out developing, good planning, planned green space. Don't rush to developing. Slow and controlled is good.
- Stay with slow growth and good planning.
- Controlled growth.
- Change and growth will continue. No matter how well we manage and control it, it will still happen.
- Growth is inevitable but we need to plan.
- Economic development for region. Develop planning department. Sewer system throughout. County promotion. Zoning – commercial separate from residential.
- Planned growth with strong zoning laws to regulate commercial development.
- Strict zoning. Holding tanks monitored—septics checked every other year. City water and sewer where possible.
- Need to prepare for orderly and rapid growth by better zoning regs and enforcement.
- Hire a professional planner. Develop grant money for co-housing opportunities. Eco-villages.
- Well planned commercial and industrial development. (Highway 8 and Highway 35 corridors.)
- Create quality business park – county – not separate communities – with design standards – no pole sheds.
- Controlled development with emphasis on maintaining and protecting natural beauty (woodlands, lakes, streams, and rivers) – public referendums/committees directing these paths.
- It sure would be nice to have a truck route/bypass around the perimeter of Osceola. Yet, we don't want to divert all potential shoppers from downtown either. The big boxes in SCF are making our small town businesses tougher to survive.
- I believe it is possible to increase the commercial district along Highways 8, 63, 48 and 35, and allow the small towns to retain their individuality through specialized shops and eateries. Each town should be encouraged to develop a plan unique to it that would encourage visitors to stop along the route.
- Sustainable communities.
- Limited big box development.
- Residential development (population pressure from Twin Cities Mpls/St. Paul).
- Mobile homes should be in a designated area, not scattered all over the county.
- We should be planning for land use, where we will permit housing, protect agriculture & encourage it. Encourage towns, villages, & cities to work on cooperative planning at all levels.
- I am no longer chairman of McKinley Township after the April election as I decided not to run again. The one thing that I was disappointed in was the lacking of effort that was given by the zoning in the Bob Bates use of land for a dump. It even went to court and he was ordered to clean it up but has not to my knowledge.
- County to discontinue purchasing private land through federal grants for public use. Federal money is our funds also. We need to address the issue of protecting agricultural use and ag business in our area.
- Rural/commercial small business.
- Please don't forget about your municipalities on the outer fringes of the county map!!
- Strong vital small communities. Local jobs, local products. Make Polk County a healthy and convenient place to retire and live. We don't want 1 person per 10 acres evenly dispersed across the county.

- We are a more mobile society ready and willing to travel for what we want and need. As a result we have accepted the demise of local businesses as part of progress. However, there is segment of our community that is “less mobile” (elderly, low income, etc.) that now have less options for basic needs of food, health care, clothing, etc. Small businesses and manufacturers have some difficulty recruiting employees as they cannot compete with wages offered at jobs in the metro area. Employees are willing to travel for better pay. Houses are springing up all over the place with a definite change in the landscape. We are losing our rural look. Homeowners who have been in an area for many years are being squeezed by new development thereby losing the appeal that drew them here in the first place.
- We cannot go back to the lifestyles of the past. But we can help it remain a wonderful place to live and raise families. We can plant trees. Housing developments without trees are barren no matter how beautiful and large the homes. Acres and acres of blacktopped parking lots are ugly and unpleasant to be in. Both lawns and parking lots should have trees.
- Positive growth as long as we manage the vast amount of resources available. Retain their integrity with proper management and a solid plan to become more attractive to the people looking for a open, stable community to invest, work, live, and grow with us.
- Most people that move here are looking for space and country qualities. We need to maintain these. Encourage our farmers to maintain farmland and still allow for development.
- We need to keep character of the county. Decreasing density of rural development.
- Small time country appeal. Close to cities, people like to travel and get back to “roots.”
- Balance growth with preserving rural character.
- Maintain a good balance between development and retaining our natural resources.
- Keep more open land. Stop depleting farm land.
- Do we have a choice? I would recommend more land be set aside for green space.
- Preserve as much prime farmland as possible (see attached article). Preserve forest land and “green space” (see enclosed article).
- Ample opportunities to work/shop in reasonable proximity to residence.
- Need to create shopping opportunities locally.
- I would like to have more convenience shopping options – my personal wish list would include: Target, Herbergers or Macy’s, Sam’s Club or Costco, some health food stores, and in a perfect world, Trader Joe’s and Ikea stores.
- I’d like to see several local farmers’ markets with several dozen booths in the summer – perhaps one in Osceola, another up on Highway 8 (the Flea Market could do more with fresh farm produce, fresh flowers, and other homemade items.) The one offered on Thursdays during the in White Bear Lake would be a great model to use. Many local farmers offer eggs, dairy products, poultry and other meats that are delicious, fresh, and for the most part, (although not necessarily certified organic) free of hormones and antibiotics. However, they don’t (know) market themselves and so are hard to learn about. A Farmer’s Market (even a virtual one – i.e., a website link off the Polk County site – and map with hours of operations and other information (i.e., honor system in place when they’re not home) would benefit Polk County residents and small business farmers).
- Supportive environment for small businesses whether retail/mfg/high tech or ag-based. Increasing density around cities & villages with municipal services to protect character.
- Keep essence of rural-ness.
- To remain a rural area.
- We need to create a sustainable and green community so that people will want to come here, raise families and start businesses. You do that by having nice amenities, like access to Nature, hiking, and biking trails and good schools.
- Hopefully “green” – we have a manufacturing and tourist economy that require our region to stay beautiful and clean.
- We will have used our subdivision ordinance to create and preserve green space and parks as development occurs. (After-the-fact parks results in pocket-sized parks because no land is left available for parks.)
- Artistic development. Diversity of retail.
- Become the leader in co-housing communities, small organic farms.
- We need intelligent land use planners to keep the lakes and rivers clean and provide conservation policies for forests, prairies, parks and trails. People need to get away from the pressure of schedules and traffic where much of the time they need to be constantly alert to avoid danger. We need places where everyone, children, older people can feel safe when they need to. Every village and city should have in reality, an extended sidewalk where they can enjoy nature’s surroundings in peace and quiet. Such trails would have low maintenance yet safety from motor traffic. Our predecessors were concerned for saving valuable bits of nature’s scenery for us, now we should do the same for the future generations. What of the future? Space will be compressed. Resources, especially

energy sources, will be different. Smaller will be better. There will be more consumers for resources. Intelligently they will supply for their needs. It will be a different world, as different as our pioneer's world was from our world today.

- A playground for the Twin Cities with high value agriculture.
- Sustainable growth in all areas (commercial, industrial, residential) that preserves as well as enhances the natural beauty which has attracted people here in the first place. A quiet but energized community feeling. A community that continually welcomes and embraces diversity, cooperation, respect, and change.
- I believe we need to protect the core elements of life in the county that current residents value, and that have brought new residents to this area. Those core elements include: The physical environment, Clean water and air, open space (rural), and public areas such as parks, lakes, rivers and streams that residents (and visitors) can access and enjoy. The "small town" rural culture, Residents live here because they like to know their neighbors, want to assist their local economy, make their livelihood locally if possible, send their kids to smaller schools where they can be participants, and live a slower paced life.
- Polk County needs to develop a planning mechanism that we address the issues above and the funding sources necessary to make it happen. The future should reveal the following picture: Communities with self-sustaining economic structures, housing development, and a viable public transportation system. Zoning and land use regulation that encourages efficient use of real estate resources. A system of recreational amenities that recognizes conflicting uses and the need to separate them. Social services to administer to the disadvantaged. County owned and operated facilities to care for the aging population, including assisted living and nursing home care. A planning approach which recognizes the increased impact of tourism and urban development in the county.
- I don't want to see unbridled, or even certain kinds of bridled, growth. The prime example of what I hate is the ugly, cut-down-the-trees-and-put-up-a-parking-lot development of Highway 8 in St. Croix Falls. If I wanted to see a commercial strip every time I go to the store, I could live practically anywhere in the United States. That kind of zoning, to put it bluntly, sucks. Commercial development is necessary and desirable – I don't want to have to drive to Stillwater or Forest Lake or the Twin Cities to shop – but we need to preserve the quality of what is already here. I have seen quality commercial development along a major US highway (US 1 in north Key Largo, Florida; The Woodlands, north of Houston, Texas) where the local zoning required a buffer zone of trees to screen the asphalt parking lot and big box store from the highway. The commercial establishments were still visible and the beauty of the landscape was preserved. Why are businesses in Polk County allowed to build whatever they want, regardless of esthetic considerations? I think the key word to keep in mind is **sustainability**. Growth for the sake of growth is the philosophy of the cancer cell. It is not appropriate for Polk County or anywhere that people want to live. It seems to me preferable to strive for quality growth – businesses that will make the effort to fit into the local environment, emigrants that bring education and culture to our communities and demand the same in return, and environmentally friendly development. If we allow development to continue to reduce the amount of forested land in the county, how can we hope to continue to grow? What do we have to offer that is more important than the beauty of our landscape?
- The challenges will be to create an environment that is friendly to small businesses as well as major employer. That will depend on lower property and other taxes, internet and telecomm access, availability of business property rentals and commercial zoning and land to build (i.e., office condos). This is key because people like to work close to where they live and vice versa. I live in WI, own a business in MN and get hit with income taxes for both states, plus pay huge property taxes for my home. Eventually I would like to move my business to WI, but would need affordable, clean, and attractive office space with high speed internet and good restaurant options for entertaining out-of-town clients (think of Stillwater, there are gourmet restaurants, wine bars, outdoor dining, lots of ethnic choices – Thai, Japanese, American Bistro, French, Italian, Chinese, Mexican, German – to name a few). I have to be able to count on good roads that are well cleared during winter so that visitors are not intimidated to visit our office in the winter – especially on a long drive from the MSP airport. Of course, there are no "business class" hotels nearby either.
- Beautiful, quaint, architecturally tasteful and historically sensitive villages with vibrant main streets, green spaces, green buildings and power sources and ecologically sensitive public services. Community-wide environmental protection and ecological restoration programs, and partnerships throughout the county involving children, youth and adults caring for natural habitat, farmland and local food systems.
- I hope that Osceola focuses mostly on preserving the beautiful environment of the river valley that causes it to be such an attraction in the summer. The quaint town has appeal! It is so unlike all the towns that are sprawled out with big box stores. It already has a strong reputation among many who we know to be an organic oasis.
- I think that we need to preserve our RURAL landscape and lifestyle through comprehensive planning. I would like to see our towns with centers that have vibrant businesses and industries that serve the community and are owned by members of our communities (so that the money supports our neighbors and stays in our

communities!!!) I'd like to see green space in each town (like the Mill Pond we have in Osceola). I'd like most of our housing to be close to town with cluster type development surrounding (see above) and I'd like our rural agricultural land to be owned and operated by local farmers who grow food for our communities (through farmer's markets, groceries, restaurants, schools, nursing homes, etc.)

- I would prefer that Polk County retains its rural feel. I find the phrase "bedroom community of the Twin Cities" is an insult to the people and the diverse opportunities of Polk County. I personally don't want to live in a suburb, but a rural community that retains the "small town" feel and qualities. I.E. good schools, doctors that know who you are, bankers that know who you are, knowing your neighbors—even if the closest one is a couple miles down the road, having the teachers at our schools actually know and remember you from your older children that they had a few years prior.
- I would like to see development, since it is going to happen one way or another, that learns from most of the rest of the nation. In other words, not like everywhere else, but tasteful, original, environmentally progressive, and very GREEN oriented, i.e. walker and biker friendly with the retention of those things that make the area special – clean air, quiet, lots of nature, ability to see the stars at night.
- Polk County should strive to maintain its rural character to foster continued agricultural, forestry, and tourism industries. Development should provide for adequate green space and should be done in a controlled and orderly manner while protecting the environment and assuring clean water and air.