

POLK COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
Mail (Categories) – Question 4
March 2007

117 Respondents.

HOW WILL WE GET THERE? Shape the path. What are some strategies or possibilities? What can be done, by stakeholders and others, to deal with the trends and issues occurring in Polk County?

VALUES

- First, engage our young adults – they are highly capable and probably much more flexible than we older ones.
- Solicit more interest and participation in local affairs. Solid, harmonious community attracts positive people to participate. Educate community of amenities available to them right here. Look in our own back yard!
- Get back to basics. Our Country was founded on Christian principles. Our generation has dropped the ball in passing these principles on to the next generation. You can't legislate morality—it has to be a lifestyle.
- Need to be open minded to new things. Prayers for our area is great.
- Keep whatever community centers there are strong.
- No. 1 “ is appearance”, I just came back from Texas, (which I love) shock as to garbage along roads.
- Pull all our troops out of Iraq. Very little immigration.

HEALTH

- County Doctor and Nurse available at very low or no cost to low wage bracket families and elderly.
- Research the possibility of a State Health Plan, following the lead of California and Massachusetts.
- Increase health care options.
- First: Ensure doctors have freedom to diagnose & treat infectious diseases properly. (No fear.) Second: Warn people about dangers of insect-borne disease, i.e. every park, hunting, and recreation area needs to be posted with signs. Third: Attack the problems through greater deer kill and 4-poster feeding station subsidies.

ENERGY

- Renewable energy.
- Encourage wind power, crop fuels and recycling to make us more energy efficient.
- Support lobby for renewable energy sources; research grants, and incentives for farmers to pursue cultivation of Corn and soybeans. Make available grants and incentives for transition from fossil fuel to solar or wind powered energy sources; support a County or State goal to be free of dependence on fossil fuel in 5 years or less.
- Promote use of corn ethanol for fuel.
- Provide tax incentives to those implementing/developing sustainable energy systems in their homes and businesses. Continue to invite the public to the discussion table and take their ideas to heart.

TRANSPORTATION

- Develop “real” road maintenance program that includes funding alternatives aside from the “business as usual” philosophy of raising taxes.
- Keep our roads well maintained by having a 5 and 10 year plan that is flexible with changing needs and demands.
- Will mass transit to the metro area eventually be a factor? Possibly.
- Develop alternative transportation options (e.g., bus service from communities to major sources of employment such as Polaris and Anderson Windows). Use existing abandoned rail grades to provide paved bicycle commute access to communities. View these amenities as valuable alternative transportation options, not playgrounds.
- The Wisconsin Department of Transportation needs a faster response level to orderly highway improvements. Federal and state should limit mandated controls and regulations; and, when required, adequately fund these.
- We can encourage **someone** to see that they can make money by starting a taxi company in the county. Polk County has no public transportation.

TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNICATION

- Polk County needs to keep abreast of the changes that are happening and that will come. Stay on cutting edge of new technology in government offices and departments. Maintain buildings to get maximum life from them.
- Increase or improve communications systems.
- HIGH-TECH: Let's go wifi – put a wireless router on top of every municipality water tower.

PRESERVATION, RECREATION

- Establish a “**Polk County Ecology and Sustainability**” campaign to promote green building alternatives, waste water treatment, land conservation and restoration and alternative energy sources (solar, wind, bio-mass, geo-thermal). Through community education and “folk schools” create on-going community dialogue and discussion of issues. Under the banner of Eco-AG Tourism promote Polk County as a progressive (i.e. forward thinking) county of unmatched beauty that protects its natural resources, promotes the health and well-being of its citizens and welcomes families, visitors and creative new ideas.
- A commitment on the part of government and private sector to keep natural habitat from being destroyed.
- Protect and preserve our natural assets, i.e. lakes, and forest area.
- We should look ahead as stewards for future generations and leave them a clean and positive legacy.
- Have foresight to protect areas that are important to our area and county. Once a natural or special element of the county is developed or destroyed it can never be replaced.
- Catalogue and implement preservation of unique geographical and natural areas of the county. For example, Polk County has several unique glacial features and the park system should be expanded to include such features. See Mark D. Johnson, “Pleistocene Geology of Polk County, Wisconsin,” published by the Wisconsin Geological Natural History Survey.
- Think about wildlife, recreational corridors. Preserve public land around lakes. Maintain quality of lakes/streams.
- Provide stronger enforcement mechanisms and personnel to control invasive species threats to natural resources (e.g. monitors for aquatic invasive species in lakes).
- Be aware of water conservation.
- Set aside funds to purchase public land and land with water access.
- Let’s be known as the county that plans for the future by planting trees. Ordinance for housing developers to plant minimum # of trees on each lot before selling. Ordinance for parking lots to have islands of trees and park-like settings in a ratio no less than 3 parts blacktop lot to 1 part tree-islands. Can’t go back to forests of past, but we can recognize God’s gift of trees and live among beautiful giants that give Polk County so much in so many ways.
- Invest in the environment! Recognize what we have with the river, the bluffs and the waterfalls as very unique and operate to preserve these things. The trick would be not to exploit it. As Wisconsin Dells, etc. I believe that tourists come here because of the natural beauty that is just not common to a town. The music in the park and the art barn add to this unique character.
- Park system with county & towns. A county people will want to live in uniting people by maintaining communities. Preserving some quiet green space for recreation.
- Need to stiffen laws to protect our lakes and recreational land – we need to better maintain roads to recreational areas and stiffer laws to encourage people to “clean up” all the junk yard properties (a real “turnoff” to tourists).
- We need to protect selected forestland and farmland if we are serious about tourism. Look into farmland preservation (not the current Wisconsin law which is not working) before it is too late.
- Marketing our rivers and lakes for growth and tourism.
- Tourism. The Undecided trail from Amery to Dresser should be non-motorized – set a trend to develop it into a friendly bike/bird watching trail – in the long run it will benefit Polk County and the people within.
- Maybe start with paving the Gandy Dancer so it can be used by good road bicycles, wheelchairs, skates/roller blades/ roller skis, etc. Currently can only use for hiking or mt. bikes. Designate the Amery to Dresser trail as non-motorized only and please pave. Easy to see that motorized vehicles can’t abide by laws . . . currently signs say no one can use, but it’s heavily tracked with/by snowmobiles and ATVs. Thank you!
- Advertise our TRAILS!
- More walking and biking trails.
- Create recreational opportunities recognizing patterns of usage that are incompatible (e.g. ATVs and silent sports such as hiking) and a funding mechanism to provide equal financial opportunities for both.
- Teen clubs (nothing for teens locally).
- More opportunities for youth. Civic center or YMCA.
- Development of a community center – for families, youth, and even adult singles groups.

GOVERNMENT

Schools

- Continued financial support for education, alternative education.
- Expand educational (Post 12) opportunities WITC/UWRF others.
- Increase off campus options for high school students.
- Hire teachers who love to teach, not just there for money; some sort of merit system would help encourage them.
- Good schools attracting families.
- Schools are not just separating church and state, which was never the original intention – they are anti-God. The school board mentality is just to spend more money and the problem will go away, which obviously is not working.
- Encourage the teaching of entrepreneurship in our schools; businesses that result are likely to be compatible with the reasons people like to live here.
- There are vandalism-type pranks (mailboxes are a favorite target) and roads are strewn with cans and garbage. These acts point to a certain age group and that is always a challenge, but is worth being addressed – more emphasis in school on keeping the neighborhood (their immediate environment) clean, perhaps field trips where kids pick up trash to help them connect the dots later in life. As they grow older, some of it might stick.

Taxes

- Equitable tax procedures that encourage opportunities.
- Develop methods of tax resourcing that is fair and equitable to residents that live in and use the county resources.
- Restructure financing of local, state, & federal gov't by enacting an alternative to Property tax for equitable responsibility of all residents, not just the property owner. ie: Sales, room, & luxury tax; Vehicle registration, etc.
- Give tax breaks to industry and private home owners. If people have good jobs, they create growth and tax relief by spending their money in Polk County.
- Give tax incentives to main street developments, not developments at the city/village limits. DO NOT enact tabor-like policies or encourage such policies on the state level.
- Get a handle on real estate taxes – currently out of control – retirees are being forced out.

Services

- Adequately fund for human resource needs. Operation Round-Up of Polk-Burnett gave 2 awards to Polk County (Family Preservation & Support School-Home Liaison Program and Human Services Juvenile Justice Unit). The county should not need to ask for private funds to carry out essential and vital human resources responsibilities.
- Work to perform the services required from County Government efficiently with good tax value. Non required services are fee based and should be self supporting or referendum directed.
- Prevention programming for children and youth. Let professionals deal with cases individually.
- Continued financial support for mental health services. Continued supportive services for families in need.
- Use better forecasting of human population issues. Decentralize government. Outsource county services.
- Either embrace ownership of, or provide tax or other economic incentives to private enterprise to own, facilities to care for the aging population in the county.
- Stricter judges and jails, sending the message that Polk County is not a good place to commit a crime!
- Strict enforcement of anti-drug, drunk driving, and other laws.
- Every community has major issues with meth and other drug crime behaviors. They are under constant discussion, and much expense and effort is made towards curbing those problems.
- County Board of Supervisors invites our University of Wisconsin Medical School faculty partner, Dr. Richard Brown to make a presentation to the Board about the effectiveness of screening and brief interventions to reduce at-risk and abusive alcohol and drug consumption (see power points attached from Dr. Brown). County Board of Supervisors and its Ad Hoc Committee on Meth works with the departments of Human Services and Health to secure funding as a Drug Free Communities Collaboration (see attached). Note: This application for multiple-year funding is due on April 17, but this same opportunity will arise next year, so if we begin working towards it now, we can easily be ready. This would provide staffing for prevention work. County supports efforts to increase treatment options available through the Human Services Department (increased funding for positions/programs). County encourages communities, community groups and organizations and churches, etc., to develop programs and initiatives such as those outlined in the Clean and Sober Polk County menu of proposed activities.
- Drunks, drugged people, and criminals are out running around waiting for their court hearing. They all should be suffering punishment. Welfare money should not be given to people who smoke or drink. If they do either, they should make their own living and pay for their own fuel, food, and medical bills, etc. The County board should not hire any policemen, judges, or lawyers who drink, so they could set a good example. We have neighbors who are getting welfare in Polk County and the wife stands on the front steps smoking cigarettes.

GOVERNMENT

Other

- Minimize government.
- Establish an updated model for county administration. Reduce the size of County Board to 7 to 9 members who are elected from areas of the county based on population. Hire a full-time professional county administrator. Create a county planning department.
- Reduce the size of the county board and have a full time administrator.
- Hire a county planner. Someone with experience.
- Make sure our county govmt is a functional organization rather than a circus. Reorganize administrative staffs to eliminate the fiefdoms the county now has. We also have too many separate depts. Do a better job of inservicing new members of the board. Have term limits of 12 years or such for board representation. Do more organizing on multiple county basis for things such as road maintenance, construction, land use rules, etc.
- More civic opportunities, less government control. (Adopt a highway, more clean up days.)
- There are too many rules today to let small gov't work. We don't need lawyers to run our small gov't issues.
- Gov't has to allow people and the municipalities to function without too much control, yet guide the growth in a fair/free enterprising manner.
- Things are broken. Let's first figure out how, why, and to what degree. Round tables done by the County Executive committee and Amery, St. Croix Falls, Osceola, Dresser, Frederic, Milltown, Balsam Lake, Clayton, Clear Lake, Centuria to discuss a strategic plan and other issues. Ditto with the towns.
- Maybe encourage townships on the southern part of PC to adopt their own ordinances to deal with their own issues. Obviously, the northern part of PC needs less rules and regs (or different). Possibly – the county should adopt some "general" standards and then allow each community to adopt stronger rules that address their particular issues.
- Promote and encourage small communities to hire MPAs and other "qualified" managers to guide local officials through the myriad of gov't regulations and development techniques that exist today. Encourage and require good customer service based governance instead of the "good 'ol boys" philosophy!
- Leadership – planning committees, town boards, county boards, local input. Fellowship. Road and land issues.
- Work toward a good working relationship between county and local governments to ensure we're all working toward a solid positive goal. Our infrastructure is in place, let's help it expand.
- Working together: counties and local government. Human Services and Polk's citizens. Polk County Board of Supervisors must put on a unified front and lead this county forward into the future. We all must also learn that state mandates are not choices!!
- Officials need to be educated on the advantages of sustainability so that they can support those efforts. Small groups of people are organizing in Polk County. The government and the people should work together to get things done. This survey is an important step.
- As to how you will get there is to have good people willing to enforce ordinances that are already on the books that are good for the county.
- County Board needs to step up and take responsibility and act as one responsible unit and set an example. Budget, committee, comprehensive planning plan done quickly & effective completely and being ready to assist others. Those career board members should consider their agenda's carefully. Special interests are not welcome.
- County Board can set a tone that signals "we are all in this together." (This survey does that. Congratulations!)
- We need to elect people who have the common good in mind for all and not to further individual agendas. People need to turn out to vote on issues and offices at all elections. They need to be educated on issues in a positive manner. Just go to the County Fair and see how much we have to be proud of. Everyone should do his share to help others to do the same.
- Public referendums/committees directing above paths.
- Reduce spending, listen to citizens and stop closed meetings.
- I think the county board needs to take a hard look at how money is managed starting at the top and going down. Have a zero tolerance for waste. Departments should be evaluated for efficiency and changes made where needed. Everyone can do something better to improve to make a cost difference. While I know it wouldn't be popular, the union has taken benefits way off the charts, very few citizens enjoy the benefits themselves that they pay for, for County employees. We should be able to afford our taxes and enjoy the services it provides at the current level of taxation.
- How about homesteading in our county. Taxes are outrageous, spending out of control. Gov't employees outnumber real working people. Gov't centers built costing millions, and things will not change.

- I hope you consider these points and not get involved in major complex plans. (KISS) Tax revolts. Take personal responsibility for action and family's welfare. Put caps on litigation and large local services. Control local spending. Less gov't involvement in our lives. Must control public cost of benefits/future retirement cost for future.
- Use technology to your benefit. The Information Department has a wealth of information that could be used for better planning purposes but it is now just becoming available via the internet. Within the last 6 months we have had 3 different departments not return phone calls to questions or miss meetings for which they were a stakeholder. React to the growth. Pro-act when we see the need. Keep the local Municipality in the loop.
- Local government needs to procedurally analyze each element of business that comes before it to confirm that its purpose is to protect the long-term, environment and culture valued by the core county residents. Core county residents are the folks that live here because they like it here. We do not want to fowl our nest. There are other residents here that have land for sale, that broker land, or that develop land. Their focus is to make money and not maintain the communities core elements. They tend to be more vocal than the majority of residents. Capitalism is encouraged in America, but local government should understand their duty is to do the will of the core county residents. Many in government have the desire to improve things. Usually improvement comes at a cost. Government needs to make sure the majority really want the improvement and is willing to bear the cost. Creating a "better" community, where we can no longer afford to live, because we can no longer pay the taxes, is not an improvement. By maintaining the valuable core elements of life in our area that we now have, and by keeping taxes reasonable, local entrepreneurs and business owners from other areas will want to live here and have their businesses in our community, benefiting us all. One survey is not enough. An election is not the best survey. Systematically query residents every 4 or 5 years and adjust the plan. Thanks for asking.
- We need a plan then communicate the plan and implement the plan on a daily basis. Our objective should be to create such a plan that will be a model to other counties and communities.
- Just having a strategic planning committee is a good start. We should probably put out a survey similar to this one and listen to what the average citizen thinks about how we can improve as a County. We might open a "can of worms," but that is probably the best way to get the opinion of the people that elected us.
- The path of the future for Polk County will be predominately shaped by the forces of the free market economy; not government. Wisconsin State government agencies and initiatives will effect the future also. It is my belief that county government and any "planning" or "strategies" that it may develop will have little or any effect on the issues and trends mentioned above. County government simply doesn't have the statutory clout or the monetary clout to do much in these areas. The county can enforce the law, administer welfare to it's citizens, and maintain highways. Basically, I believe your "Strategic Planning Committee" is an exercise in futility!
- Work with University and Extension.

EMPLOYMENT

- County efforts to decrease unemployment. Bringing in more advanced jobs to bring up the quality of life and encourage education. Help people be accountable for their welfare. May need to be assistance for these things.
- How do we create the jobs that allow our kids to be able to go to college and return? More state commitment to attract MN Companies (JOBZ Challenge) to Western WI.
- Invest in the Polk County EDC. Come up with a plan to compete against Minnesota's JOBZ Program. Try to recruit some company headquarters to the county, to add to/enhance the mix of companies in our industrial parks.
- Create more "bonafide" (living wages, benefits, respectful) jobs for the current residents. Create job opportunities to attract creative, educated individuals to make Polk County their 1st choice for new homes and/or businesses.
- Invite new business – creating employment, a higher wage base which in turn creates tax dollars for the liberal (socialist) county board to waste more dollars. You really did not want to hear the truth did you?
- Encourage more better paying businesses to locate in Polk County.
- Invest heavily in creating new jobs with livable wages.
- Sustainable economic development; must include living wages and benefits.
- Need to see if we can encourage more industry.
- Municipalities need to have ability to charge local option sales tax to promote Econ Dev in our small, rural villages. Concentrate less on smokestack chasing, more on small business development and entrepreneurship.
- Provide economic opportunities for young residents by fostering the growth of home grown industries.
- Promote small family run business. Support living wage for employees.
- Encourage small business.
- Perhaps some laws to help encourage small businesses to grow (loans, decreased taxes, etc.).
- Focus on tourism, recreation and sustainable rural housing development for the economic future of Polk County.
- We need to support our tourism industry. Folks must realize that tourism promotes visitors and potential residents.
- Get rid of one of your board members and promote tourism!

LAND USE, DEVELOPMENT

- Planning for the overall and future good, not just instant gratification (and money) for special interest groups. Individuals involved should not have personal agendas or vendettas with regard to any development but should be open minded and mature enough to learn, listen, and respect the laws that currently exist.
- Encourage planning at all levels, assist in dialogue, provide a basis for discussion. Continue assistance through ordinance, if necessary, to assist comprehensive planning.
- A working arrangement between citizens, business, and government to plan future growth and adapt to changing population and technology.
- Work with businesses to stimulate growth of our economy. Balance development and natural resources. Study and give deep, broad thought before allowing changes to occur. Creative revenue sources to allow responsible, good, growth that will benefit our grandchildren and their children. Flexibility and open-mindedness are essential to address issues of the future. Provide regulations that implement green space with development.
- Each city or town council develop a proposal. Then bring the councils together by area—those along Highway 8, those along 63, then 48, then 35. Each council survey it's own area and take a look at other places that are thriving. The state could offer incentives to towns to create the draws that would bring in new businesses. If the big box stores come to Highway 8 as projected, there will be increased employment and more reason for each town to upgrade its own business community. All businesses in a community need to work together to promote the commercial district. Commitment to growth must come from within with 100% participation.
- Community/county/town collaboration. Strong planning efforts (on-going). Cooperate on regional initiatives (economic development, transportation, etc.)
- We need to pull together stakeholders to plan ahead for how “big” we want to be. This will include discussions on how much of our landscape we feel is dispensable in the interest of growth and how much are we willing to pay to accommodate growth and the needs to maintain this level of growth. For example, how long can we rely on volunteer fire departments with the changes in buildings, housing expansion, etc.?
- Pick an attribute and make Polk County **the** place to go for that attribute, both in fact and in advertising. I suggest making Polk County the place to go for art of all types. This would permanently draw artists and their studios as well as increase visitor traffic and spending. High quality is more important here than quantity. The county should become stewards of the aging population. Boomer friendly Polk County would draw new residents, temporary residents, and visitors with non-motorized recreational and town infrastructure, and culturally focused entertainment. More residents and visitors means more goods and services required which, in turn, means more economic opportunities for residents. The county should become in fact and by reputation serious stewards of the natural and physical environment.
- Artistic development – attract entrepreneurs – tourists will follow.
- Support the small businesses and main streets.
- Give family businesses & agriculture incentives—monetary or resources—for them to survive. Save our agriculture land, restrict developments to agriculture ratio (percentage). Incentives for redeveloping downtowns.
- Redevelop small downtowns and support them (limit big box stores – we are only 45 minutes from Cities – less to Forest Lake!) Encourage small scale agriculture. Create a niche atmosphere in Polk County (i.e. Polk is supportive of independent business owners – retail, agriculture, mfg., artists) and encourages an atmosphere of small town healthy living.
- Cluster developments and conservation subdivisions. Small scale or niche oriented sustainable ag. Programs to protect best ag lands. Redevelopment of smaller downtown. Grow local, eat local, buy local campaign support.
- With our aging population we will need to look at even more elderly housing and the related health care, local shopping, eating places, etc. that will go with their limited mobility.
- We can take advantage of all state and federal programs, grants, etc., that help businesses grow, including technology areas and tax incentive districts. We can patronize local businesses. They are the ones, after all, that for years have supported the Scouts, schools and community events. Greater business volume for them means they should be able to lower their prices to compete more effectively. **And** the County gains it 1/2% sales tax from sales by local businesses. We can look at ourselves and realize how good we really are. We have a lot going for us. There is a growing diversity, also, in the arts, food, and small businesses. Thanks for doing this!
- Encourage small-scale agricultural enterprises and zones; support local food systems, farmers' markets, CSA farms, etc. Create incentives & education of merchants for “mainstreet” investment and upgrading. Establish voluntary community design standards (buildings, colors, signage, lighting, landscaping, etc.) to deal with “strip-mall and main street “blight.” Declare a moratorium on big box superstores; make the ones that are already here “give back” to the community more than just low paying jobs as greeters and stock clerks. Make sure all “absentee owners” invest in local institutions, including banks, other businesses, schools, non-profits and not just pipe money out of the community to distant bank accounts.
- County identify rural areas to preserve – develop strategy to preserve sites - \$. County develop business park.

- Maintaining and creating new green spaces. Value sustainability of the land instead of use it up and wear it out.
- Sustainable land usage that benefits all Polk County residents now and in the future. (Mandatory recycling, stricter laws on burning trash and plastics.)
- Development plans which do not segregate racially or economically.
- Perhaps concentrated areas of development. Keep our farmland open. Limit the number of homes on a forty. If more than one, keep them close to help eliminate sprawl.
- We can enforce our subdivision ordinance. Realizing we can't build a fence around Polk County, we can work to shape growing development so that we retain the reasons people want to live here.
- **Sustainability** should be a key value in the visioning for Polk County's future and a requirement in any policies or ordinances that are developed as a result. It may not be the easiest or most expedient at any given moment, but our grandchildren will thank us for it. Our county will be better for it.
- We need a county planner. Or two. We need good zoning ordinances with strong enforcement. In all decisions, we should consider the long view; or, as the Native Americans say, consider the impact of our actions today on the seventh generation in the future. I recommend the principles outlined in the book *The Natural Step for Communities* by Sarah James and Torbjorn Lahti; this is the text that's been used as the basis for Washburn's and Ashland's transformations into green communities (a work in progress!) and is also being talked about in Amery. The four guiding principles – called "system conditions" – are ones that I would suggest Polk County adopt: In the sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing: 1. concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust, 2. concentrations of substances produced by society, 3. degradation by physical means and, in that society . . . 4. people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.
- Cooperation, planning, respect, balanced development, creativity, diversity, innovation, dedication, mutual support, community mindset, welcoming change & opportunity. Invite outside input from a variety of consultants, futurist, planners, designers with experience and an eye towards the concept of sustainable growth and development of a rural community. Promote niche development, i.e. sustainable tourism/leisure opportunities, organic farms, vineyards, restaurants, performing arts, green development, specialty stores/industry (low environmental impact). Better, stronger support for main street commerce, i.e. increase awareness and presence of small business assistance, grants, loans, etc. De-emphasize franchise businesses. Small industry that is invested in its community. Create an overall land use plan based in sustainable opportunities, growth and development. Decrease the size of the Board of Supervisors. Hire a skilled and qualified county planner with broad charge, answerable to the County Board. Planning based on the future . . . not the past. Thank you for this opportunity to express our thoughts and ideas!
- As more residents move into Polk County there will be an expanded tax base. It's important to lower the mill rate as that happens, so that Polk County will earn a reputation as a family-home-business-owners-friendly area in which to live and work. As more "multi-housing" developments are built, it is imperative that some landscaping be incorporated into the design. There are a number of developments in Polk County that have no curb or architectural appeal, the front yards are asphalt with no or a bare minimum of trees or shrubs planted. They look bad enough while the buildings are new and freshly painted, but when those properties start to age, the lack of curb charisma will be even more glaring (Country Road M in Osceola is one example). On top of that, of course there are homeowners everywhere that leave trash, old cars, broken down trailers, toys, etc. on their property in full view from the road. It's an eyesore, a health hazard, and gives Polk County a third world look. I don't know what zoning laws there are in place to prevent that, but if there are such laws, they are not enforced (Nye is an example).
- Have proper zoning set-up.
- Tougher zoning laws.
- Zoning controls what gets built where.
- Keep the growth orderly.
- Land use planning to prevent haphazard development.
- Keep overgrowth from consuming land without proper planning.
- Standardize the land and building appraisal process.
- The preferred and easy way to deal with most issues is through zoning. Annexation should be controlled better.
- Enforce codes we have now, through the state. County enforced building codes. Planning, planning, planning.
- Regulations to protect the land owner and to protect misuse of the land. Hold people accountable for violations.
- Zoning control. Maintain communities economically. Sewer system throughout county. County promotion. Diversity of retail.
- Solidify the boundaries of Villages and cities within the county. Look to develop sanitary and water districts outside of the cities and villages to support the suburban (Town) development.

- Don't fight expanding cities development – rather make it controlled expansion and development – keep lot size large enough for quality homes –stay away from small sizes that bring “trailer trash” development.
- Explore/implement purchasing development rights. Explore/implement impact fees. Higher density developments to preserve more working lands.
- Historical markers – people like to stop and read about the area. Sign pollution, check nice drive, from SCF north 87 to Cushing = “clean”, then check SCF – east along “Hwy 8” sight for sore eyes!
- The planning department should work with townships in a countywide effort to encourage smart growth and reduce urban sprawl. This effort might include changes in zoning codes to encourage cluster development which would allow a high density of homes (e.g., 1/2 acre lots) surrounded by dedicated open space that would be commonly available to all home owners within the development. Provide tax incentives to improve aging housing base in population centers in county. Develop a planning mechanism to allow communities to decide on the presence of big box stores (e.g. Walmart). Monitor and enforce impacts of large agribusiness operations on local communities and natural resources.
- Mike Welsh at the PCEDC has gone a long way down the path to defining issues that developers have with our county. We need to continue to support him and the EDC. Municipalities that think that they don't need any more “places to shop” will end up being left in the dust and will look back in 5 – 10 years and wonder what they were thinking.
- I'm not sure what strategies will get us there other than county and township planning and zoning regulations. Transfer of development rights and other programs have been used in Chisago and Washington Counties in Minnesota. What we're talking about will probably require a whole package of strategies. If we can identify what kind of communities we want and what strategies can get us on the road, then we can look at issues to see if yes, they support that goal or no, they don't. (I don't know what stakeholders are – I think we all have a stake in our communities because we live here.) To me, large box stores like Wal-Mart don't serve the community like locally owned and constructed businesses. Though on the surface they provide jobs and sound like a good idea, a thorough evaluation of long term community benefit shows they are not a good idea. I do understand that a county in Iowa is enacting a provision that gives property tax breaks to farmers to grow organically and requires local food providers (groceries, restaurants, etc.) to buy from local sources. www.nextstep.state.mn.us/res_detail.cfm?id=3235 This sounds like a great idea to me. I also understand that Land Stewardship Project, based in Minnesota, has a fledgling program to help existing but retiring farmers to sell the farm to new farmers (so that their retirement doesn't require selling the farm for housing development). Ultimately, I really do believe that we need to look at long term benefit planning. Planning based on short term benefits will not help us or our children. I think making decisions based on how we think they will affect our communities generations ahead of us is sound planning. Thank you for considering our opinions.
- While I don't agree with a high level of governmental restrictions, I do feel that having uniform building codes would best help control and define the development of Polk County. A limit on minimum lot sizes in rural areas, house sizes, garage setbacks, etc. to prevent uncontrolled growth and avoid the problem of “McMansions” and property values becoming so out of reach for the “average” Polk County resident. Also, uncontrolled building leads to other cost – increased costs for the Cities/Villages for water/sewer supplies, more schools are necessary, more vehicles on the roads . . . all of these factors and many more increase the costs for the municipalities, schools, and county to operate, creating higher taxes. Currently, those that work in Polk County factories have a difficult time managing home ownership. Increases in costs, whether it is rent or mortgage costs due to higher taxes and fees only multiplies the problems. With large, good paying companies like Ford closing and Andersen Windows cutting back, the lifestyles of some residents is going to become much more difficult. These changes need to be addressed, as with the possible downturn of the US economy, in any long term planning.
- Comprehensive Growth Planning using effective zoning and the purchasing of development rights of private lands should be pursued. Vertical development, as contrasted to horizontal development, should be encouraged to limit and/or prevent sprawl. Economic development should be encouraged in population growth areas to take advantage of the increased labor force. Prime agriculture lands should be preserved from development. Local and County ordinances need to be effectively enforced.
- Don't encourage development.
- Those born and raised in rural Polk County—buckle in, enjoy the ride. Property values will continue to climb – farms that haven't been “split up” will subdivide in the future and we will be the “New Woodbury” in a few years. We're rapidly approaching the day when my kids and grandchildren won't be able to afford to live in Polk County.