

TO: Town of Omro Plan Commission  
FROM: Bruce Roskom, Plan Commission Chair  
DATE: February 1, 2023  
RE: Town of Omro HWY 21 Corridor Development Survey Report

The following report is intended to be a general overview of the results of the Town of Omro HWY 21 Corridor Survey. It is intended to provide insight, observations, analysis and recommendations based on responses provided through the survey. It is also intended to generate discussion and recommendations from the Plan Commissioners with those comments/recommendations being added to the report and then provided to the Town Board.

**Background:**

Over the last several years the Town of Omro has addressed development requests and development proposals within the USH 21 corridor. In a desire to be better prepared to reasonably address these requests and proposals and to provide developers with guidelines in which to follow for their proposals and requests, as well as, to eliminate any perceived arbitrary Town approaches in regard to review and approval of development plans, the Town performed the USH 21 corridor Survey. The primary idea was to have the Town residents provide input and guidance as it relates to such things as preferred land uses and development standards within the corridor. The resident survey responses would then be used to guide the Town in any future actions in this regard.

Attached to this report is a map identifying the USH 21 corridor as well as a copy of the actual survey with responses. The following is a brief analysis of the survey responses as well as recommendations for potential future actions the Town can take to address concerns as they relate to the Survey responses.

## **Observations and Analysis**

### **Survey Questions #1, #2, and #3**

These questions generally refer to personal information that relate to age and ownership of property within the corridor.

The responses indicated that 86% were residents of the corridor and that 14% were not residents of the HWY 21 corridor. Additionally, 78% of the respondents owned less than 5 acres while 7% own 5 or more acres.

The survey also indicated that 51% of the respondent were 55 years of age or older with 27% being 45-54 years of age.

What's significant here is that 7% of land ownership control the majority of land in the corridor and that it's likely that these are the lands most likely to be under development pressures.

### **Recommendations/Actions:**

This is important information going forward, however, no recommendations or actions are suggested at this time.

### **Survey Question #4**

Survey Question #4 addressed how the respondent sees the Town of Omro. The responses indicate that the majority, 45%, visualizes the Town as an agricultural community with 33% seeing the Town as a "Bedroom Community for Greater Oshkosh". This seems to suggest that what is attracting people to the Town is its agricultural nature, such as open space, the quiet environment, less vehicular traffic density and pressure and other amenities that an agricultural setting provides. However, a third of the respondents recognize that a demand for residential development exists and there will be continues pressure for future residential growth. One can conclude that the desire to remain an "agricultural community" will, in fact, create the demand for additional residential development.

As residential development pressure continues the Town will, likely, continue to lose the very reason why people want to come to the Town of Omro, it's agricultural environment. It's also reasonable to conclude that as more people move to the

Town, the need for goods and services, both from the Town and from commercial uses, will increase.

The Town of Omro lies between the City of Omro, the Town of Algoma (an urban town) and the City of Oshkosh. With limited lands available for development in either City or the Town of Algoma it's reasonable to conclude that development pressure on the Town of Omro will only increase in the future.

The challenge then becomes, how does the Town allow for future residential, and perhaps other types of land use growth, and still maintain its agricultural nature?

Recommendations/Actions:

Create the type of development standards that would address the desire for future residential and light commercial uses, as identified by survey, that would encourage/maintain a more rural atmosphere. This can be accomplished through zoning regulation or by creating a corridor overlay district which would create development standards that would only apply with in the USH 21 corridor.

**Survey Question #5**

Survey Question #5 asks for the respondent's opinion on existing access to goods and services. The responses indicate a total of 73% found either easy or somewhat easy existing access to goods and services. This is a current day assessment which seems to suggest that the Town, in conjunction with the State of Wisconsin and Winnebago County has done a fairly good job in this regard. As more development pressure occurs, however, will this relatively positive condition continue without anticipating and preparing for these development pressures? The question here is how does the Town get ahead of these development pressure in order to mitigate and minimize the potential negative impacts on the Town's traffic systems that future development with require?

It's also important to note that most commercial services and job centers already exist within close proximity of the Town so it's unlikely that the Town will receive pressure from a proposed development for a large scale business or industrial job creating entity.

#### Recommendations/Actions:

It's important to keep in mind that as a result of these survey responses, the focus should be in encouraging smaller more local service providers to fill in the needs of citizens within the corridor and immediate surrounding lands. This can be accomplished through additional guidelines and development standards that can be provided through an overlay district to the USH 21 corridor.

#### **Survey Question #6**

Survey Question #6 asks if the respondents were satisfied with the current development within the Hwy 21 corridor. This was a tough question in that most of the development taking place within the Town's portion of the corridor is occurring on the outer fringe of the corridor not adjacent to the right-of-way of Hwy 21. However, 44% of the respondents indicated that they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the existing development within the corridor. However, 28% indicated they were not satisfied with the current state of development which is a significant percentage that must be taken into consideration. Only 25% of respondents indicated a satisfaction with the current state of development within the corridor. It is important to note many of the respondents recognized that most of the available land within the Town has yet to be developed. It can be concluded then that most of the concerns over the current character of development within the corridor are reflected by development in the Towns abutting communities.

The question here is how the Town ensures that future development within the HWY 21 corridor will not have a negative impact on such things as adjacent land uses, both existing and future, aesthetics as well as realistically minimize budgetary pressure for such things as road maintenance and other services provided by the Town.

### Recommendations/Actions:

It is important to note that Zoning regulations come into play here. Zoning regulations create minimum land use and development standards. However, these standards are very generalized and will not typically address more specific land uses and development plans.

The application of a corridor overlay, in this case, could allow the Town to be more specific in the application of land use and development standards thus addressing the concerns identified by the survey respondents.

### **Survey Question #7**

Survey Question #7 asked if the Town of Omro should actively promote development within the HWY 21 corridor. 57% of the respondents indicated that the Town should not actively promote development with 40% indicating that the Town should actively promote development within the corridor. Clearly, the majority opposes promoting development in the corridor. However, 40% is a statistically significant percentage and, perhaps, the Town might consider some sort of marketing for development, if it fits within the overall planning scheme designed by the Town. Marketing may help future developers focus development of the type and quality the Town may find acceptable.

The question becomes to what degree should the Town become involved?

### Recommendations/Actions:

The result of this survey question does not require immediate action by the Town but does suggest that additional discussion is merited in this regard. Should the Town, for example, consider doing some marketing to better address the needs of its citizens. If so, what shape, type and form should that marketing take? What type of financial commitment should be applied to any marketing efforts? All questions worth exploring.

## **Survey Question #8**

Survey Question #8 was intended to try and design a best-case scenario for land use developments within the HWY 21 corridor. If we look at the 2 best-case scenarios there appears to be two constants. First, there appears to be little to no interest in industrial development and second a consistent identification of future residential development. Additionally, there remains a significant interest in maintaining agricultural uses as well as maintaining and creating recreational uses and opportunities.

The challenge here is how does the Town maintain an agricultural land use environment when any future land use development will, ultimately, draw from those existing agricultural use? This is not to suggest that agricultural uses along the HWY 21 corridor are inappropriate, only to suggest that, perhaps, those agricultural uses are more a land use holding pattern for other future land uses. These are issues that should appropriately be addressed through the Town's Comprehensive Planning efforts.

It's also important to note that industrial land use seem to be the least desirable in the top 3 best land use scenarios. This would include any industrial development such as mini warehousing/storage units, junk car storage and billboards all identified by the survey as undesirable land uses within the corridor. This was particularly noted under Survey Question #16.

### Recommendations/Actions:

Updating the Towns Comprehensive Plan can address these issues. Additionally, as noted under several other Recommendations/Actions categories the application of a corridor overlay could address many of the concerns in this regard.

## **Survey Question #9**

Survey Question #9 addresses the issue of appropriate residential uses within the HWY 21 corridor. The majority (68%) of respondents favored single family units within the corridor. However, the remainder of respondents indicated an acceptance of two family or multi-family units.

Well-balanced land use environment includes all levels of residential development, when properly located. In the case of the HWY 21 corridor two-family and multi-family units can act as an effective buffer between single family developments and the potential negative impacts a highway can have, such as elevated noise levels and increased light beyond the those generated by a street created as a local minor street. These residential uses can also act as a buffer between non-residential uses and single family uses. Consequently, for those areas which directly abut the HWY 21 right-of-way, as well as those areas between non-residential uses and single family uses, it may be appropriate to consider two-family and multi-family type developments.

#### Recommendations/Actions:

Identify those areas that would be appropriate for future two family and /or multifamily developments through the comprehensive planning process.

Create regulation to prevent industrial type uses within the HWY 21 corridor. This may include a comprehensive zoning map amendment.

Additionally, consider the application of a corridor overlay district to address these concerns.

#### **Survey Question #10**

Survey Question #10 looks to identify what would be acceptable/appropriate regarding types of businesses within the corridor. The focus of most of the respondents (76%) was towards smaller local or community type commercial developments with 8% finding large scale more regional commercial development acceptable and 15% accepting of any type of commercial development. This is an interesting result in that it's inconsistent with other survey results and that a large regional type of commercial development would create a significant demand on services that, perhaps, the Town will be unable or unwilling to provide. It would, additionally, create significant demand on the existing road systems including maintenance. However, the smaller local/community-based businesses may be managed more effectively and efficiently. The results of this survey question certainly beg greater discussion.

### Recommendations/Actions:

At this point additional discussion is necessary to better focus the local needs in this case. It would seem appropriate to identify specific terms and also consider the application of an overlay district to assist in the development of these terms and to create standard that would address the specific issues identified by these responses.

### **Survey Questions #11 and #12**

Survey Questions #11 and #12 are related and address the concept of visual impacts and aesthetics. This question addresses how residents of the Town of Omro sees themselves and how they want to be perceived by those that traverse the Town. Another words what visual impact does the Town want to have on those that travel along HWY21? How does the Town see itself? Successful development should also be concerned with how the Town is viewed given this will be their new home or business location. Landscape treatments and screening is a simple relatively inexpensive method in which to create a pleasing visual impact for a development and, consequently, for the Town. 66% of the respondents concur with this sentiment, 28%, however, disagreed. It would be appropriate to discuss this issue further to attempt to determine respondents thinking in this regard.

These survey questions also address the issue of buffering between land uses as well as along public road rights-of-way. 60% of respondents supported the placement of berms with landscaping and trees and shrubs. The application of sound walls and fencing where supported by 10% with 9% supportive of the applications of any of the referenced treatments. Interesting 21% provided no response. This could, simply, mean the respondents had no opinion or lacked interest in the subject matter or that they didn't quite understand the question.

It's important to note that one of the basic elements of any development is to be successful. However, that success should not result in a negative impact on, or conflict with, those existing or future land uses around them. The importance of these types of buffering considerations relate to the visual and aesthetic impression people from outside the community will have, and also represents the pride Town residents have in their community.



### Recommendations/Actions:

Adjust the Town of Omro's Comprehensive Plan to identify those areas in need of additional buffering and landscaping treatments.

Adjust ordinances to include minimum landscape/screening/buffering standards for new developments.

Create a corridor overlay district to address the specific needs of the corridor.

Additionally, create a forum to encourage additional discussion to determine rationale behind those respondents that were not in support of landscape or screening treatments.

### **Survey Question #13**

Survey Question #13 addresses the respondents' interest in creating regulation addressing aesthetics for future development. This survey question also ties into survey questions #11 and #12. There appears to be a consistent interest in requiring landscaping, screening and buffering treatments within the HWY 21 corridor. The response to question #13 suggests the need for the creation of development standards in order to require developments to apply such treatments.

### Recommendations/Actions:

Landscape standards can be created by Ordinance and applied at time of development application.

Specific landscape standards can be addressed through a corridor overlay district. These standards would then only apply within the corridor.

### **Survey Question #14**

Survey Question #14 is a rather open-ended type of question with a significant number of responses. There are, however, several key words or phrases that are repeated throughout the responses. One word that keeps coming up is "clean", another is "natural or nature", also, a desire to have a "green" "rural" feel.

With these and the other responses there appears to be an indication that respondent interest is for more low-key, low-density type developments that retain the rural

character of the Town. There, also, appears to be a recognition that development is inevitable. Although, many of the respondents may not be enamored with the idea of development, the recognition that if development must take place, then it should be done in a manner that is pleasing aesthetically and done responsibly.

Recommendations/Actions:

Zoning Ordinance standards, Comprehensive Plan recommendations and Overlay District standards are all methods in which to address the general issues identified within this survey question.

**Survey Question #15**

Survey Question #15 asked the question should the Town expend resources in which to assist development within the corridor. The responses were relatively evenly split between support and non-support. There is no indication as to what form Town support might take and that is, perhaps, one of the reasons for the relatively even split. Question 7 asks if the Town should actively promote development along the corridor. The majority of responses recommending the Town not promote development. However, 40% of the respondents suggests that the Town promote development and if the Town is interested in promoting development than it may be prudent to also expend Town resources in this regard.

Recommendations/Actions:

It would seem appropriate for the Town to have continued discussions in this regard. Having said that, the Town should take advantage of any funding source to support the Town's planning efforts to support development and the Town's ability to provide services. Consequently, the Town should investigate and search for funding sources to support Town planning efforts.

## **Survey Question #16**

This question asks how the respondents felt about the current land use development within the corridor.

The survey responses seem to indicate that the majority (68%) felt that the current development was negative with 27% having a positive opinion. Additional comments suggest that, from a negative perspective, there is a significant lack of interest in having industrial type developments such as mini-warehousing or storage type units within the corridor as well as a desire to avoid more automobile related uses such as junk car storage and related businesses. There was, also, a concern relative to the hodge podge nature of the current development and an interest in attempting to maintain the rural character of the Town. There was, also, significant comments related to HWY 21, the density of traffic as well as the concern for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

### Recommendations/Actions:

To create any sort of prohibition on a land use would take an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance or a zoning map amendment or both. It may simply need a down zoning process within the corridor.

Update the Town's Comprehensive Plan to provide a greater focus and identify those acceptable land uses within the corridor.

## **Survey Question #17**

This question asked the respondents what goods and services they would like to have more easily accessible.

Generally, the responses centered around low-density personal service type uses such as restaurants, small local business types and automobile related gasoline/convenience type uses.

Several comments indicated that what services they needed already exists within a relatively short distance.

The responses can act as a guide as to the types of land uses the Town should encourage and support.

Recommendations/Actions:

With the limited developable lands in the corridor outside the Town of Omro it would seem likely that in the future, pressure for these types of small scale service related commercial type uses will exist. The Town should look at Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance adjustments as well as updating the Town's Comprehensive Plan in order to get ahead of these protentional demands.

**Survey Question #18**

Question #18 was simply a contact list for those that would not object to being contacted for additional information.

Recommendations/Actions:

No action recommended at this time.