

Mancelona Area Master Plan

Survey Results Summary and Report

PREPARED FEBRUARY 20, 2018

As part of developing a new Master Plan for the Village of Mancelona and Mancelona Township, the Mancelona Area Planning Commission developed and released an online survey designed to help create a shared vision of what Mancelona could become in the future, and to identify priority actions for the community.

The questionnaire was distributed over email and the Internet in November, 2017. Two hundred forty-three (243) responses were received. An additional opportunity to respond to six select questions from the survey was provided at the Mancelona Public Schools Parent Teacher Conferences on November 9, 2017.

In order to help the community prioritize future activities and direction, the following summary reviews survey results with an eye towards identifying strong consensus issues – that is, those with majorities indicating agreement or disagreement on a particular issue (for example, those with over 50% of responses stating that a strategy is “somewhat important” or “very important”). Complete survey results and comments are included as an appendix to this document.

Note: When reviewing survey results, it’s important to note that the questionnaire is **not a statistically valid survey**. Results must be balanced with additional data sources and dialogues, including committee discussion, focus groups, other forms of public input, and research and analysis. Survey results will help to point the way towards additional research, input opportunities, and discussion throughout the process.

Overview: High-Priority Issues

- There was strong support regarding the importance of being a small town with an **economy enhanced through year-round tourism**. There is good support to retain the businesses currently here, attract new businesses into the area and create **job opportunities** for residents. Having **housing for the workforce** is important. Citizens are also very concerned about the overall appearance of the community and would like to see **blighted conditions addressed**. In addition to improving the appearance, citizens also want to protect viewscapes and wooded hillsides.
- Responses and comments showed a strong interest in **community engagement** and **community pride** throughout the survey. Respondents want to work together on improving their community. Having schools, businesses and residents is important to come together to address issues.

- Mancelona area residents want **more entertainment options and other businesses** in the community. They would like to be able to visit more restaurants or a brewery. Residents enjoy attending concerts, festivals and events like the Bass Festival and Buck Pole and enjoy the activities associated with them.
- For outdoor recreation, **residents are most active in swimming, walking/hiking, camping, canoeing/kayaking, and fishing.** Respondents feel most of the parks are well maintained. However, Wetzel Lake Park could be improved. Other improvements included additional winter activities (ice skating, sledding, etc.) and new trails and paths. Comments were made in support of the restoration of Mt. Mancelona.

Profile of Respondents

70% of the respondents provided demographic information. 26% of respondents were year round Village residents and 33% of respondents were Township residents. 5% were part-time residents in Mancelona. 37% of respondents were not Mancelona residents. While they did not identify as Village or Township residents, these respondents may be business owners, property owners, employees in Mancelona, frequent visitors or customers, or otherwise invested in the community.

25% of respondents lived in the Township or Village for more than 30 years. 12% of residents lived in the community less than five years. 24% of respondents were a homeowner in the Village while 33% of respondents were a homeowner in the Township. Renters comprised 6% of respondents. 23% of respondents owned less than an acre of land in Mancelona while 21% of respondents owned one to five acres of land in Mancelona. 38% were not a Mancelona landowner.

37% of respondents were aged 46 to 60 while 35% of respondents were aged 31 to 45.

40% of respondents work outside of Mancelona (somewhere else in Northern Michigan). 17% work in the Village and 8% work in the Townships. 13% are retired.

65% of respondents learned about the survey through social media, followed by word of mouth (11%) or other means (19%). Most other means noted were email, school/work, or flyer.

Question #28 asked respondents that are interested in participating in Village or Township volunteer opportunities to provide their contact information. 40 respondents were interested and 26 respondents provided their names and contact information.

Responses

#1: What would enhance Mancelona's economy?

Majority of respondents (77%) indicated that year-round tourism opportunities were the greatest in enhancing the economy. When selecting "Other" as a response, the vast majority of respondents indicated that jobs or employment opportunities are highest while other notable responses were restaurants, followed by recreational facilities or activities.

- Year-round tourism opportunities (77%)
- More housing choices for families and/or the workforce (49%)
- Grocery/convenience store or other basic commercial services (32%)
- Promoting broadband, sewer, and water infrastructure (28%)
- Other (28%)

#2: How important are each of these characteristics in creating a desirable future for Mancelona?

Large majorities of respondents (93% and above) indicated that all listed characteristics were “somewhat” or “very” important. Higher-priority characteristics, as ranked by majorities of 81% or more of respondents indicating that each characteristic was “very” important, are as follows:

- Diverse mix of businesses and shops (83%)
- Community participation and engagement (82%)
- Year-round economy/tourism (81%)

Responses from the Parent Teacher Conferences reflected the same with the highest emphasis on *Year-round economy/tourism*.

#3: What would enhance Mancelona’s downtown?

Respondents were able to choose up to three responses. The top priorities were *more entertainment (dining/breweries/live music) options* (211 responses, or 87% of total), *additional residential opportunities* (180 responses, or 74% of total), and *mix of residential and commercial uses* (84 responses, or 35% of total). Other comments generally supported creating more activities and businesses in the downtown. Responses from the Parent Teacher Conferences mirrored these responses with the highest response being *more entertainment (dining/breweries/live music) options*.

#4: What types of development would you like to see in Mancelona?

Respondents were able to choose up to three responses. The top priorities were *commercial uses* (185 responses, or 76% of total), *mix of multi- and single-family homes* (82 responses, or 34% of total), and *additional single-family homes* (67 responses, or 28% of total). Comments addressed jobs and additional retail stores and restaurants.

#5: Please respond to the following community service related statements.

The majority of respondents (50% and above) indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” with all listed community services statements. Higher-priority statements, as ranked by majorities of 65% or more of respondents, are as follows:

- Area fire protection services are adequate (70%)
- Emergency medical services are adequate (69%)
- Primary and local road maintenance provided by the County Road Commission is adequate (65%)

#6: What public infrastructure improvements/projects do you think are most important for the Village and/or Township to address?

Respondents were able to choose up to two responses. The top priorities were *incorporate placemaking strategies (i.e., wayfinding signage, landscape design, public art* (99 responses, or 49% of total) and *improve pedestrian safety (i.e., cross walk markings, dedicated bike lanes, sidewalk maintenance / connectivity* (91 responses, or 45% of total).

Strategy Questions

#7: What strategies do you think are most important in addressing housing needs?

Respondents were able to choose up to three responses. *Encourage housing that's affordable to the workforce* is the most important priority for survey respondents, who expressed a strong consensus for this strategy (158 responses, or 78% of total). While not a majority, other top strategies include *allow small homes (under 700 square feet)* (70 responses, or 35% of total), *assisted living, extended care and nursing facilities* (67 responses, or 33% of total), and *allow multi-family homes (apartments, condos, duplexes, fourplexes) in more areas* (59 responses, or 29% of total). Responses from the Parent Teacher Conferences reflected the same with the highest emphasis on *Encourage housing that's affordable to the workforce*.

#8: What strategies do you think are important in addressing residential rentals in Mancelona?

There was overwhelming response (187 responses, or 94% of total) stating it was “somewhat” or “very” important to *enforce the blight ordinance to encourage cleanliness and maintenance*. Of that support, 86% felt it was “very” important. Regarding short term rentals, responses were generally even on whether to *prohibit short-term rentals*, *allow short-term rentals with no restrictions* or *allow short-term rentals with some restrictions (only in certain areas, cap the number allowed, limit the duration of stay, etc.)*. However, a majority (103 responses, or 53% of total) supported to *allow short-term rentals with some restrictions*. Responses from the Parent Teacher Conferences were similar with notable support for *enforce the blight ordinance to encourage cleanliness and maintenance*.

#9: What strategies do you think are important in preserving and enhancing the Mancelona area natural resources and rural character?

Large majorities of respondents (86% and above) indicated that five of the six listed strategies were “somewhat” or “very” important. Higher-priority characteristics, as ranked by majorities of 92% or more of respondents indicating that each characteristic was “very” important, are as follows:

- *Encourage preservation of viewsapes* (92%)
- *Encourage preservation of wooded hillsides* (92%)

While ranked lower, the strategy to *promote “dark skies” initiative (i.e., using lower wattage street lamps)* garnered 64% as a “somewhat” or “very” important.

#10: What events have you attended or volunteered for in Mancelona?

By the responses received, most (67% or more) have attended the events listed, however, highest responses were for the *Farmers Market, Bass Festival* and *Buck Pole*. For volunteering, highest responses were for *Mancelona Public Schools events, volunteer clean-ups and other volunteer-driven community building activities* and the *White Pine Stampede*.

#11: What would enhance community engagement in Mancelona?

Respondents were able to choose up to three responses. Top priorities were *events and festivals* (155 responses, or 81% of total), *creating opportunities for public art events, activities, and displays* (122 responses, or 64% of total), and *volunteer clean-ups and other volunteer-driven community building activities* (88 responses, or 46% of total).

#12. What other strategies do you think are important for moving Mancelona forward and addressing current issues?

Questions #12 was open ended question were designed to solicit ideas and creativity from survey respondents. Recurring themes in both questions include clean up blight; incentivize business growth and create job opportunities; strengthen community pride; and creating affordable housing options. A sampling of the responses are below:

Clean up blight

- Clean Mancelona up.
- Better visual appeal for downtown.
- Code enforcement is so key. People resist it and will react, but the rules exist for a reason.
- Filling up these empty buildings in town.
- Enforce the ordinance requiring buildings to be maintained.
- Fix the current buildings we have downtown. The cracks in the outside walls make the downtown look so trashy.

Incentivize business growth and create job opportunities

- Incentives to open businesses downtown, create a destination, downtown retailers work with out of town recreational opportunities.
- Incentives for businesses to come to Mancelona will bring jobs to the area.
- Creating jobs.
- Getting attention to current downtown businesses. Helping new businesses/building owners with concerns or processes.
- More great paying jobs.
- We need industry, jobs and places for our kids to get their first jobs.

Strengthen community pride

- Schools, churches, government, businesses all need to work together. There seems to be a division between these groups on what is best for our community.
- Continue to work to build community pride. Mancelona is a pleasant community that needs to take more pride in its excellent schools, local small businesses and friendly, caring residents.
- Find ways to bring people together with a common goal and/or interests.

- I think we need to pull together as a community. We need more resources for single moms, teens and foster children.

Create affordable options

- Having housing for low income people and easily accessible food and transportation
- Empower low income people. Help them to know that they matter and they are valued in the community. Marginalized constituents can and will engage in meaningful community development when they are valued and empowered, rather than dismissed and looked down upon.
- Start allowing housing to be created that is more affordable to the working class.
- I think if housing was more affordable and more opportunities for jobs it would help Mancelona grow.

Parks and Recreation Questions

#13: How often do you use the following Village and Township recreation facilities?

Palmer Park is the most important often visited park in Mancelona with 65% of respondents visiting it “often” or “occasionally.” Other top parks visited “often” or “occasionally” were Railroad Park (87 responses, or 50% of the total) and Mancelona Public Schools recreation facilities (75 responses, or 75% of the total). Responses from the Parent Teacher Conferences used certain parks more often than the community-wide survey. Railroad Park, Johnson’s Pond, Wetzell Lake and Mancelona Public Schools recreation facilities were used more often or more occasionally.

#14: What recreational activities do you and members of your household enjoy?

Majority of respondents (143 responses, or 79% of the total) indicated that *swimming/beach* is the most popular recreational activity. Other activities receiving 50% or more of the responses are as follows:

- Concert/festivals (72%)
- Walking/hiking (71%)
- Camping (67%)
- Canoeing/kayaking (61%)
- Fishing (61%)
- Nature/wildlife viewing (56%)
- Biking (54%)

Responses from the Parent Teacher Conferences were similar with the top five responses being *swimming/beach, camping, fishing, walking/hiking, concerts/festivals*.

#15: Overall how would you rate the Village of Mancelona and Mancelona Township Parks and Recreation operations?

60% of respondents felt that the *appearance of park facilities* were “good” or “excellent” and 58% of respondents felt that the *maintenance of park facilities* was “good” or “excellent.” *Art and cultural events* according to respondents was “fair” or “poor” (120 response, or 67% of the total).

#16: What improvements and/or recreational opportunities would you like to see at the Village’s and Township’s recreational facilities?

Question #16 was open ended question were designed to solicit ideas from survey respondents at current recreational facilities. Notable responses are highlighted below:

Palmer Park

- Basic improvements including restroom facilities, parking lot maintenance, lighting, landscaping, tables, and benches.
- Recreational equipment including ice skating, playground equipment, trail, etc.

Triangle Park

- More concerts
- Improvements such as benches and flowers

Railroad Park

- More bathrooms

Johnson’s Pond

- More benches, pavilions and tables

Wetzel Lake

- Clean up beach and area

#17: Are there additional recreational facilities and/or opportunities that you would like to see in Mancelona that are not provided at present?

Question #17 was open ended question were designed to solicit ideas from survey respondents about new recreational facilities and/or opportunities. Several respondents recommended more additional winter activities (ice skating, skiing, sledding, etc.). There were supporting comments for the restoration of Mt. Mancelona. A grouping of other responses recommended new trails and sidewalks for walking, hiking and biking.

#18: Please share any additional comments and/or suggestions you may have regarding recreation in Mancelona.

Question #18 was open ended question allowing for any additional comments and/or suggestions regarding recreation. Notable comments addressed support for the restoration of Mt. Mancelona, building new paths and trails, and improving existing facilities.