

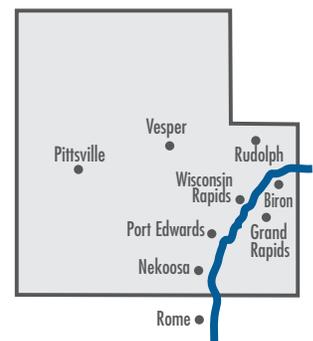
# Survey Says: No ghost town here!



## 2012 Community Survey Key Findings

What did your neighbors say?

Over 4,100 people participated in the largest community survey and outreach in the history of the south Wood County area. They are your neighbors in Nekoosa, Pittsville, Port Edwards, Rome, Rudolph, Vesper and Wisconsin Rapids/Biron/Grand Rapids.



## People identified:

- **A Strong Economy**

*% of participants cited:*

80% Bringing another large industry to employ many

79% Highly trained and competitive workforce

73% Reduced poverty and homelessness

71% Small businesses and entrepreneurs are thriving

61% Mix of agriculture, open space, residential and commercial development

Health care, education and jobs were called out as cornerstones of a strong economy:

90% Quality education for children and adults

80% Access to quality health care

- **Young People and Families**

*% of participants cited:*

64% More young people staying and raising families here

53% More youth development programs outside of school

- **Leadership and Planning**

*% of participants cited:*

65% Having visionary local leaders

61% Strong cooperation across local townships

48% Comprehensive regional plan developed

41% Many residents who are active in civic life

- **Internet, computers and training easily available (49%)**

- **Maintaining the small town feel (46%)**

# Four priorities became clear:



## A Strong Economy

- Economy was identified as biggest challenge.
- Connect to cornerstone issues of health care, education and workforce readiness.
- 92%, without prompting, cited a worry about jobs and unemployment.

Primary concerns:

81% cited jobs/unemployment

69% attracting new businesses to the area

*"I want diverse industries so that if one goes kaput, everything doesn't fall apart."*

*"This community has really grown, not physically but mentally. It took a while. But I think the community is stronger because of that. We've had to learn to work together to grow the economy, grow the culture of this community."*

## Opportunities for Young Adults and Families

- Attracting and retaining youth is a widespread concern. Older residents express more concern on this issue than young people themselves.
- 59% cited opportunities for young adults and families.

*“There is a lot to offer in this community. It is a great place to live and raise kids. Economically and financially, it is not an expensive place to live. We have a lot going for us.”*

*“More opportunities for our kids. They’re the future, and the future tax base. We need to encourage them to stay, and they won’t stay without jobs.”*



## Openness to New Ideas and Change

- Openness to new ideas and change were identified as top indicators of quality of life.
- 76% reported they are ready for change to take place. Enthusiasm for change abounds in every age group, regardless of length of residency.
- Residents feel competing emotions – hopefulness tinged with skepticism. The majority described themselves as “hopeful, optimistic, satisfied or energized” about the way things are today.
- Although unsure of the future, residents defined themselves as:

92% hard-working

89% caring

*“Realization that things have to change, that we have to expand our horizons; there is a willingness to do that. People don’t have their heads stuck in the past. There is a good attitude and people feel like we have a future.”*

*“I want all of the leadership to be working together and collaborating. From all levels, and being open-minded. From Rapids to Nekoosa to Port to Grand Rapids.”*

## Nature and Recreation

- 39% cited nature and recreation as a very important indicator of quality of life.
- Residents want growth that includes preservation of open spaces.
- Community assets and quality of life are values to be protected into the future. Top local strengths include:
  - Sense of community, hard-working and honest/safe
  - Good school system, small town feel and good for kids
  - Natural environment and recreation

*“I would say natural resources are something special here. I like the lakes, the trails. I’m an outdoor person, and I can run at night and feel safe.”*

Over the past two years, Incurage Community Foundation, with support from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Ford Foundation and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, has been coordinating a community-wide engagement strategy to establish a common vision for the south Wood County area. Incurage is committed to supporting the work of these findings.



Edge Research of Washington D.C. coordinated local interviews, focus groups, and a community survey, January-March 2012. This report represents a summary of key findings.

- 500 random sample telephone interviews conducted, controlled for statistically accurate demographic and geographic representation
- Survey invitations mailed to 24,000 households in the south Wood County area (see map on page 1); 1,550 complete surveys and 1,662 partial surveys received
- 439 residents participated in small group conversations led by local trained facilitators

Detailed findings are available online at [incuragecf.org](http://incuragecf.org). To request a copy call 715.423.3863 or email [hello@incuragecf.org](mailto:hello@incuragecf.org).

For additional information:

**Incurage Community Foundation**  
serving the south Wood County area

478 E Grand Ave  
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494  
715.423.3863  
[hello@incuragecf.org](mailto:hello@incuragecf.org)

[www.incuragecf.org](http://www.incuragecf.org)

**incurage**  
community foundation



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## We love our community and believe in its people. The future of our community is at stake; doing nothing is not an option.

Residents say "attitude" is part of building a brighter future. They are primed for activation, and looking for strong leadership and ways to move the community forward.

59% interested in participating in community meetings

60% willing to help develop or comment on a community plan

*"We need to have a voice, and we need to fight for change. You'd be surprised how much your neighbor, or friend or somebody who doesn't seem to be a powerful influence in town, can really be influential and change things."*



## Get involved!

1. Choose your area(s) of interest
  - A Strong Economy
  - Opportunities for Young Adults and Families
  - Openness to New Ideas and Change
  - Nature and Recreation
2. Invite others to get involved - friends, family, neighbors, coworkers.
3. Share your time and talent in Community Conversations in the coming months.
4. Be informed; seek information and knowledge.
5. Visit our Web site for updates on this work, and sign up for invitations to future events.
6. Support Incurage. Make a charitable gift to support the changing needs of your community.