

Community Impact of Regional Transportation Infrastructure Growth

Project for the
Mack-Blackwell
National Rural Transportation Study Center

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Abstract¹

This study explores the attitudes of local citizens toward an improved transportation infrastructure (regional airport, highway expansion) and continued growth. Our hypothesis is that the people of Northwest Arkansas support increased growth in this area but may be experiencing some confusion in the transition from a rural to a more urban corridor. The purpose of this research is to expand our understanding of the human component in an environment of economic and social change. Our methodology was a mail survey designed to serve as a baseline study of attitudes concerning the transportation infrastructure improvements. We found there to be less confusion than concern. Voters in Northwest Arkansas want the benefits of growth in the forms of improved transportation and more high quality jobs but do not want to lose sight of the social and environmental aspects of the current community that make this area special.

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Community Impact of Regional Transportation Infrastructure Growth

Introduction

Washington County in Northwest Arkansas is a vital, growing metropolitan area. Between 1970 and 1990 there was a 46.6% population increase with a corresponding increase in population density (1970: 81.4 people per square mile versus 1990: 119.3). To support this population growth Washington County has maintained a diverse economy. Personal income is derived from a variety of industries. In 1989, employment in goods related manufacturing accounted for 24.9% of the citizen's income, government (e.g., university employees) 18.8%, agricultural services, forestry, fisheries, transportation, public utilities and wholesale trade 18%.0, services 16.6%, retail trade 10.8%, mining and construction 5.4%, and finance, insurance and real estate 3.4%. This diversity and vitality is reflected in the low unemployment rate for that same year: 3.7.

Northwest Arkansas has also become a high-profile area. One community in the region made national news when "Money" magazine rated Fayetteville favorably on a quality-of-life scale. "Money" magazine confirmed that Fayetteville is a good place to live, reporting this on network television programs. This attention is dwarfed by Clinton's successful candidacy for President. His presidency continues to bring attention and scrutiny to Arkansas. These visible advertisements for Arkansas overlay the ongoing progress toward more linkages to the national and international economic communities. These linkages can be seen concretely in the expansion of highways 71 and 112 while the existence of Tysons Foods, Walmart Industries, Cargills, Campbells Soup, J.B. Hunt, Levi

Straus, et. al., gives the area a strong economic base on which to continue building.

There is thus a considerable constituency for growth in Northwest Arkansas. Life is continually changing for the people of this area. With Northwest Arkansas' new national image of job opportunities and a high quality of life coupled with the proposal of new airport facilities, growth must not be a haphazard, unspoken, uncontrolled trend, subject solely to reactive NIMBYs. It is now a recognized issue for all community members.

This research is a baseline study to be used in exploring the attitudes of local citizens toward continued growth. Our hypothesis is that the people of Washington and Benton Counties support increased growth in the region, but may be experiencing some confusion in the transition. This project is intermodal. The survey will explore the impact of both air and ground transportation modalities on attitudes towards the changing community.

Method

This survey was a mailed questionnaire called "Transportation and Community Growth." It was designed and administered by Drs. Kim Fendley and Will Miller. Don Dillman's (1978) total design method was used to increase response rates, which included doing three waves of mailings. Listings of voter registration for Washington and Benton Counties were used as the sampling frame. These lists were considered the most representative list of Arkansas adults available. Registered voters were also of interest because they influence politicians and therefore, local decisions. The survey was implemented in the Spring of 1994 and received a 69% response rate.

Context

Northwest Arkansas, specifically Benton and Washington Counties, is a growing vital area of Arkansas. Population change between 1980 and 1990 for these counties greatly surpassed the state's rate of change. Benton County had a 24.8% increase, Washington County had a 12.9% increase compared to the statewide change of 2.8%.

Growth is also apparent in the changes in earnings per job and the movement between employment sectors. Earnings per job increased 11% in Benton County and 8.8% in Washington County in the 1980s whereas the Arkansas state earnings per job increased 3.2%. Employment in Benton County is located predominantly in the goods producing sector of the economy (32.3%). In Washington County the goods producing sector competes with the service producing sector for the dominant job source (24.5% versus 24.3%). Growth is implied by the increase in the transportation sector between 1980 and 1990. During this decade, the transportation sector increased 2.5% in Benton County and 2% in Washington County compared to a .7% increase statewide. The transformation of Northwest Arkansas also can be seen in the flow of jobs from natural resource based employment to trade and to service production. In Benton County natural resource based employment decreased (-4.3%) while trade increased (+4.5%). In Washington County natural resource based employment also decreased (-3.9%) but the largest increase was in the service producing sector (+3.7%).

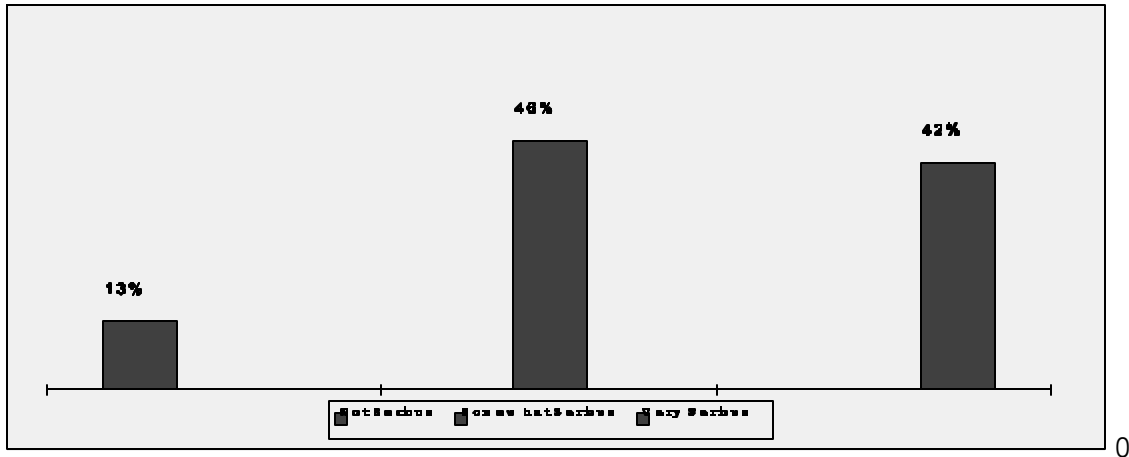
In terms of demographic characteristics of the populations, while both counties have relatively high percentage of their population consisting of

dependent persons in 1990 (Benton County 27.5% < 20 years of age, 17.9% > 64 years of age; Washington County 29.2% < 20 years of age, 11.3% > 64 years of age), yet, each county has fewer persons below the poverty line in 1989 than does the state (Benton County 9.6%; Washington County 14.6%; Arkansas 18.5%). Finally, a higher percentage of the residents age 25 or more of Benton and Washington Counties have a high school diploma than statewide (Benton 74.8%; Washington 73.3%; Arkansas 66.4%). (Data in this section from Rural Profile of Arkansas 1993.)

In sum, Northwest Arkansas has a larger percentage of better educated citizens and a lower percentage of people in poverty. The economy is shifting away from resource based (typically rural) jobs and to the more globally oriented trade and service sectors. The engine helping to run these changes is the population growth from both natural increases and in-migration. The increases in the transportation sector of employment demonstrates one response to this growth.

The following report includes comparisons of voters responses to growth attitude questions for Benton and Washington Counties, a short summary of voters' responses from the rural areas of Northwest Arkansas and an analysis of citizen participation in a booming area. Appendix I contains the percentages for each survey question for all of the respondents. Appendix II contains the percentages for each survey question for rural and urban respondents.

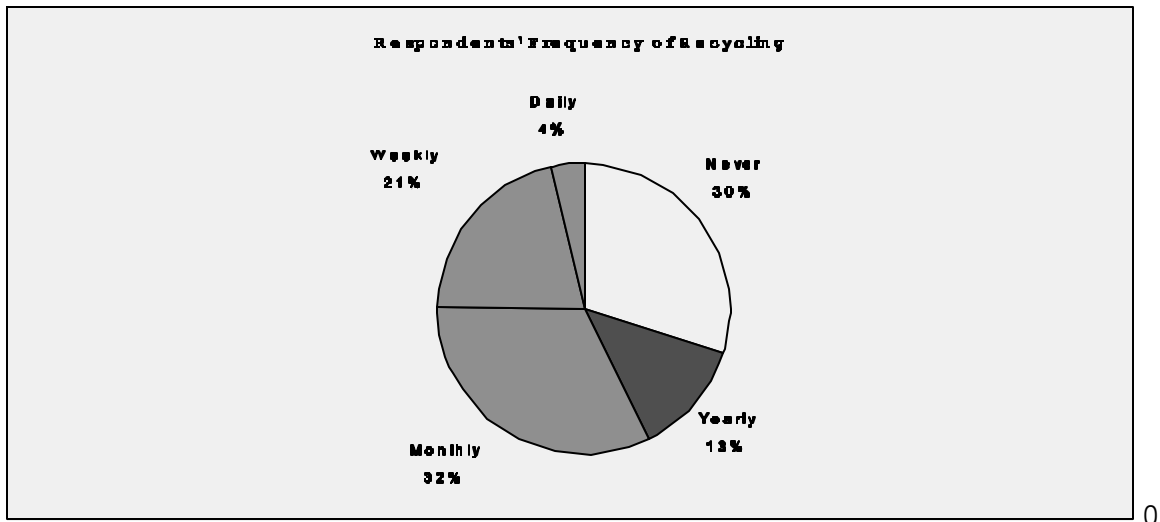
Landfills: Citizen's Perceive Landfills as a Problem



Of all problem variables included in this survey, landfills are perceived by registered voters to be the most serious issue in Northwest Arkansas. According to the survey's results, 88% of the registered voters in Northwest Arkansas believe that landfills are a very serious (42%) or a somewhat serious problem (46%). Only 13% of those individuals surveyed feel that landfills are not a serious issue.

Washington County residents are somewhat more likely to feel that landfills are a more serious issue than Benton County residents. The large majority of respondents from the three major cities included within the survey indicate that landfills are a significant problem.

Recycling in Northwest Arkansas: Who Does and Who Doesn't

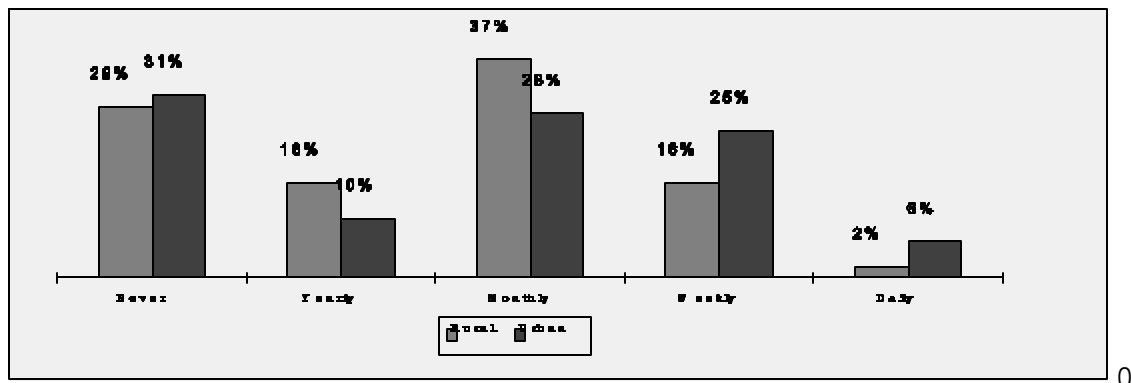


An issue closely related to solid waste management is recycling. According to the results from the survey,

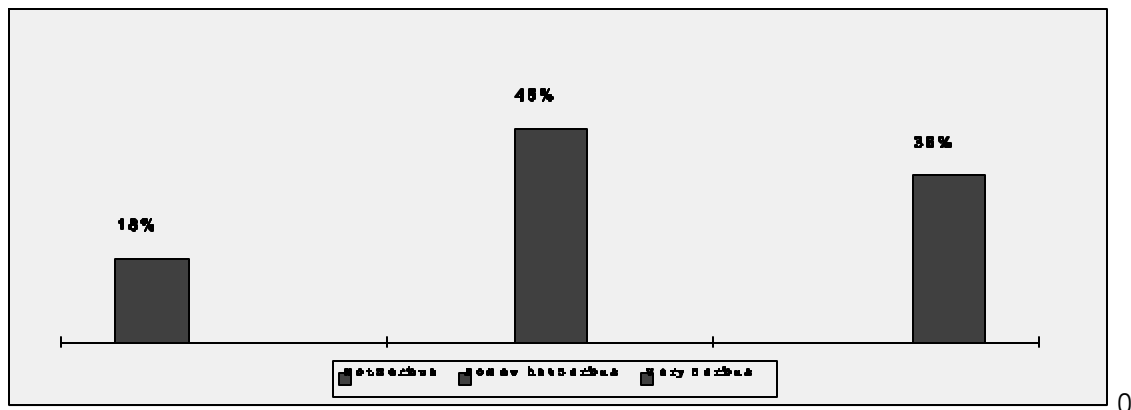
recycling is an established component of solid waste management in Northwest Arkansas. Seventy percent of the registered voters surveyed indicate that they recycle. In addition, recycling appears to be a fairly frequent practice. Most individuals who report that they recycle regularly tend to do so on a monthly or weekly basis.

In general, 73% of the residents in Benton County recycle and 68% of the residents in Washington County recycle. Of the major cities included in this analysis, recycling appears to be most common in Fayetteville and Rogers. Of the three largest cities, residents in Rogers tend to recycle more frequently on a weekly basis whereas residents in Fayetteville are more likely to recycle on a monthly basis. Residents in Springdale, however, indicate that recycling is a less common practice than in the other major cities in Northwest Arkansas.

Those respondents living in rural areas tend to recycle on a less frequent basis than urban residents. Rural residents are more likely to recycle on a monthly and yearly basis. Urban residents tend to recycle on a daily or weekly basis.



Population Growth: Second Most Serious Problem

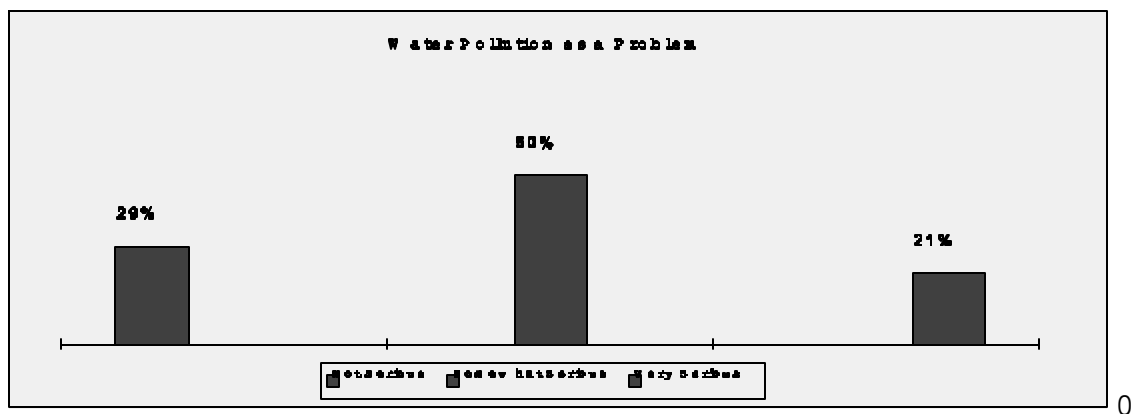


Population growth, because of its impact on the environment,

may well be considered as an environmental issue. Citizens consider population growth to be the second most serious problem in Northwest Arkansas. This is the case for both Benton and Washington County. Of all the issues considered, only the landfill issue is considered more serious. Traffic congestion is a very close third.

After local population growth, water pollution is the environmental issue about which voters express concern. Seventy percent of the respondents believe that water pollution is a very serious (21%) or somewhat serious (50%) problem in Northwest Arkansas. More respondents from Washington County indicate that water pollution is a very serious problem than respondents from Benton County.

Feelings of registered voters towards current levels of water quality protection, population growth, and preservation of water help to explain why water pollution is considered such a serious issue in Northwest Arkansas. People who believe that water pollution is a serious problem in Northwest Arkansas also tend to feel that we are not doing a good job protecting our water quality and that we are not preserving enough of our natural resources. In addition, individuals who feel that water pollution is a serious problem also tend to believe that the rate of population growth in Northwest Arkansas is too fast and that the community is not doing a good job regulating growth. Individuals who believe water pollution is a serious problem also tend to feel that continued growth in Northwest Arkansas will hurt the quality of life in our area. Finally, water quality spending ranked very near the top of activities citizens think government spending should support.



Other Responses to Environmental Questions

Tree loss and soil contamination closely followed water pollution in their perceived seriousness. Other responses to environmental problem questions are in the table below. They are presented in descending order of seriousness.

Environmental Area	Not Serious	Somewhat Serious	Very Serious
Tree Loss	32%	46%	22%
Soil	33%	48%	19%
Air Pollution	46%	39%	15%
Noise	68%	28%	5%

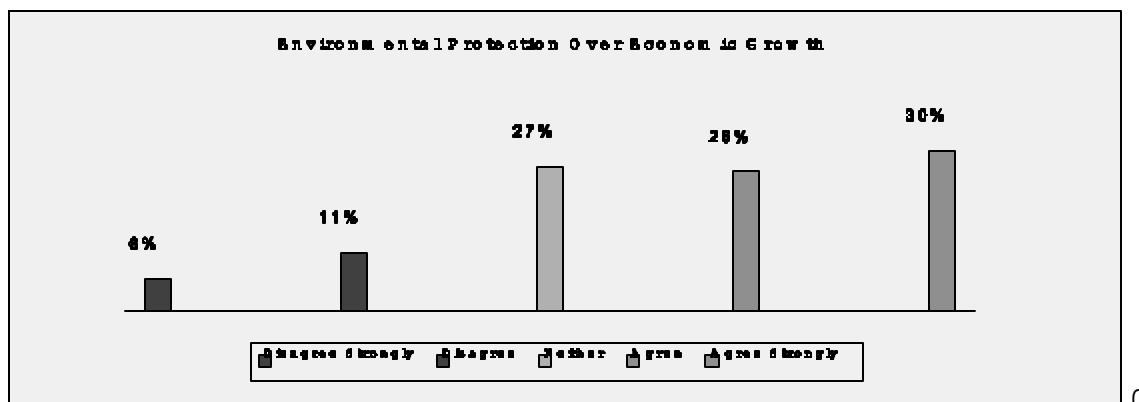
Respondents in Washington County are more concerned about tree loss than Benton County. Of the three major cities, Fayetteville and Springdale express the most concern regarding tree loss in their respective communities.

Policy Reflections

According to survey responses from registered voters in Washington and Benton counties, landfills, population growth and water pollution are the three most serious environmental concerns. Landfills, in particular, are considered to be a serious problem in Northwest Arkansas. The issues of local population growth, traffic congestion, and crime followed landfills (considering all issues) in degree of importance as perceived by registered voters in Northwest Arkansas.

Spending to protect water quality in Northwest Arkansas is particularly important to registered voters; as a spending priority, it is ranked in the highest preferences for increase government spending including public education, police protection, four-lane highways and city roads.

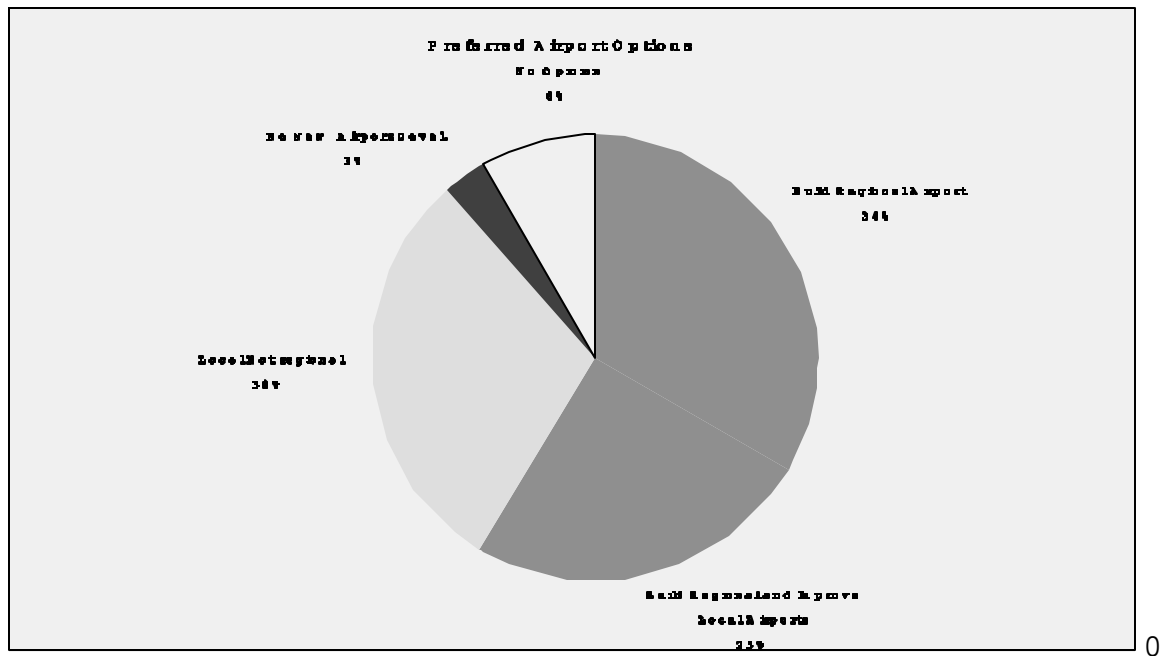
In general, the majority of registered voters (79%) in Northwest Arkansas are satisfied with the natural beauty of the community. Still, a large proportion of the respondents believe that environmental protection should take priority over economic growth.





Forty percent of the respondents do not feel that the government in their community is doing a good job of regulating growth. Another 41% neither agree nor disagree that their community is doing a good job of regulating growth. Only 18% of the respondents agree that their community did well at regulating growth. Policy initiatives that are designed to promote growth and yet ensure our area's natural environment would seem most consistent with the feelings of many voters in Northwest Arkansas.

Transportation Issues: Airport and Highway Facilities



The discussion on airport planning in Northwest Arkansas is still continuing. Our previous survey data (Fall 1993) indicated a majority in support of the construction of a regional airport. The current survey results further explore the preferred policy options concerning the broader question of airport construction and improvement in Northwest Arkansas.

When given five options on airport planning, 34% of registered voters in NW Arkansas say "build a new regional airport." Another 25% say to both build the regional airport and improve local airports. Almost a third (30%), say they think it is best if we improve local airports but do not build a regional airport. Three percent chose no new airport development and about 8% had no opinion.

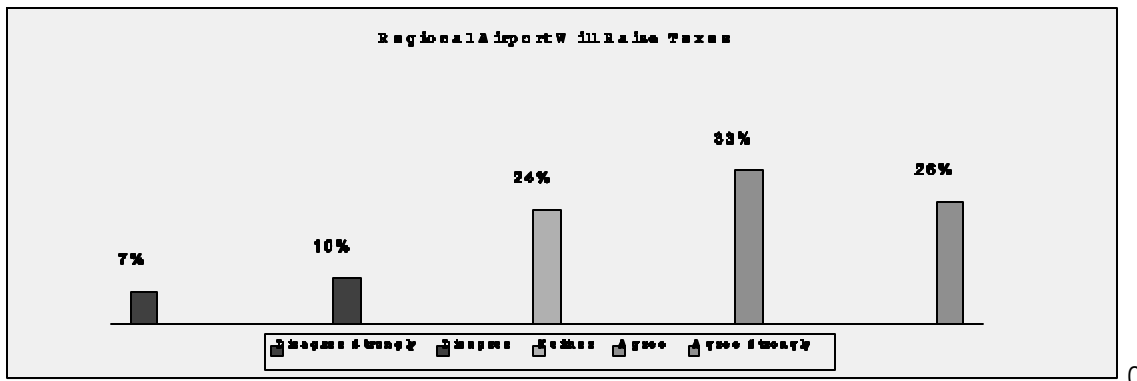
As in the previous survey, the majority support a new regional airport. The more recent survey shows, however, that there are still some airport planning questions unsettled. Another way of looking at these data is to combine the question responses that include both "building a new airport and improving local airports" with "improve local airport only."

Doing this shows that 58% of all respondents (64% of respondents who had an opinion) favor improving local airports. A majority of the respondents want a new regional airport and a majority of the respondents want to improve local airports. The Federal Aviation Authority is concerned about the potential of competition from local airports threatening the success of a new regional airport. Given the discussions in some municipal government bodies and the

majority of respondents' support for local airport development, this is an area of policy development that bears watching.

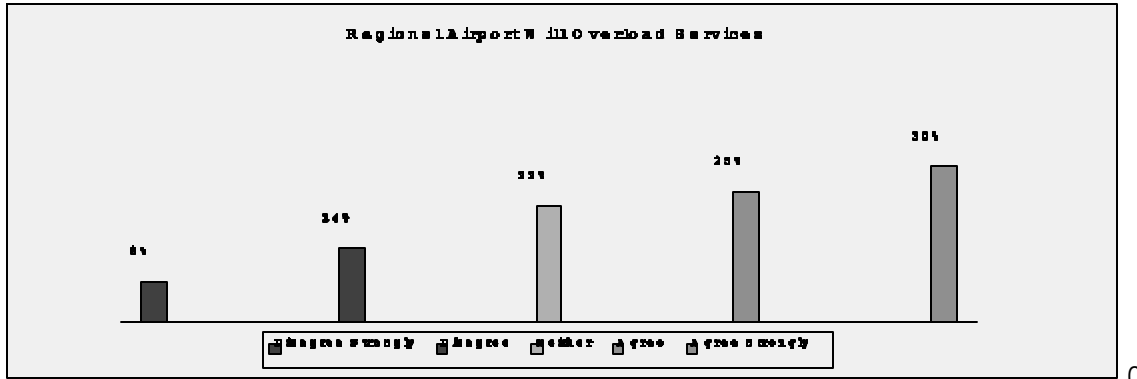
The answers given by Benton and Washington County registered voters are not significantly different. That is, their answers are so similar we cannot say that registered voters in Benton County have different beliefs than those in Washington County. The same is true when the answers are broken down by the cities: Fayetteville, Springdale and Rogers.

To further explore these choices, respondents' perceptions of the effects transportation changes will have on taxes, public facilities and jobs were examined. The specific questions asked whether people agreed or disagreed with: "A new regional airport will raise the taxes of the citizens of Northwest Arkansas." "Growth that comes from the new regional airport will result in overloaded public facilities such as roads, water supply, solid waste and sewer systems." and "The new highways and the new regional airport will provide jobs for local people." The answers to these three questions help explain respondents feelings about airport options. The results are represented below.



New Regional Airport Will Raise

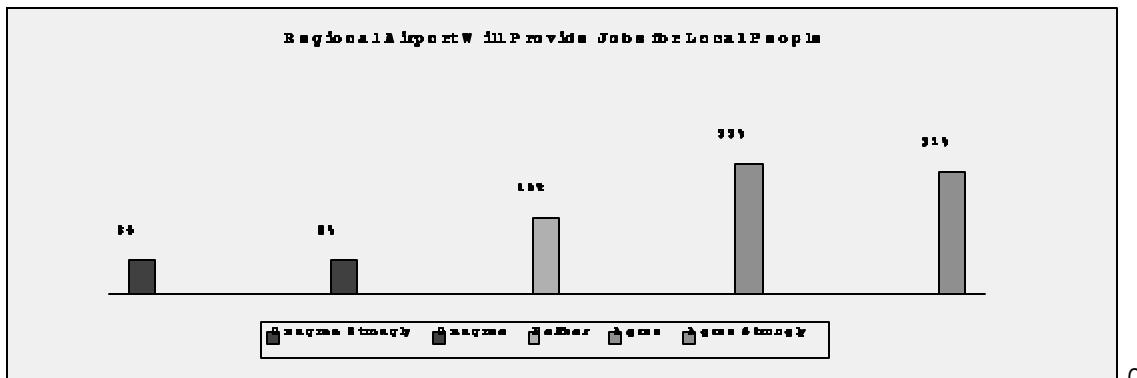
Airport Options	Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Agree
	Strongly	Mildly		Mildly	Strongly
Build New Regional Airport	14%	18%	30%	28%	10%
Regional Airport and Local	7%	12%	32%	36%	14%
Local Airport Development Only	1%	1%	13%	37%	48%
No New Development	6%	0%	11%	6%	78%
No Opinion	2%	7%	26%	40%	24%



New Regional Airport Will

Airport Options

Airport Options	Disagree Strongly	Disagree Mildly	Neither	Agree Mildly	Agree Strongly
Build New Regional Airport	14%	26%	25%	25%	11%
Regional Airport and Local	8%	14%	31%	25%	21%
Local Airport Development Only	2%	4%	9%	27%	58%
No New Development	6%	0%	0%	28%	67%
No Opinion	0%	10%	45%	19%	26%



New Airport and

Airport Options

Airport Options	Disagree Strongly	Disagree Mildly	Neither	Agree Mildly	Agree Strongly
Build New Regional Airport	1%	1%	9%	40%	49%
Regional Airport and Local	1%	4%	10%	40%	43%
Local Airport Development Only	19%	18%	30%	22%	8%
No New Development	44%	18%	25%	6%	6%
No Opinion	4%	8%	41%	30%	15%

Respondents who support building a new regional airport or building a regional airport and expansion of local airports tend more often to disagree that the new regional airport will raise taxes and will overload public services. Regional airport supporters are also likely to believe the new airport will bring new jobs for local residents.

However, the pattern is reversed for respondents who said they do not support the regional airport (want only local airport development or no airport development.) These respondents more often tend to agree that taxes will increase and services will be overloaded. They also tend to disagree rather than agree that new airport and highway facilities will mean jobs for local people.

In summary, some form of airport improvements was chosen as the most popular option in airport planning by most residents.

A minority (3%) of the people opt for no new airport developments of any kind. In terms of development options, there is majority support for a regional airport. The policy question that remains as the most interesting is whether there should be both regional and local airport development and what citizens might feel if they are forced to choose between the two.

Frequency of Airport Use

NW Arkansas	0%	1%	6%	45%	47%
Oklahoma	0%	0%	2%	39%	58%
Other Arkansas	0%	0%	1%	11%	88%
Missouri	0%	0%	0%	8%	91%

To assess the frequency that registered voters use airports in various locations, they were asked to indicate how often during the past five years they had flown in or out of various airports. Fifty-three percent of the respondents had flown in or out of airports in Northwest Arkansas with 45% of these flying yearly. This was the highest use (excluding "never").

Forty-one percent of the respondents had flown in or out of Oklahoma airports with yearly (39%) again the largest category. Twelve percent used Arkansas airports outside of Northwest Arkansas, with 11% of this number flying yearly. Finally, 9% of the respondents used Missouri airports yearly.

Overall, the great majority of users of airport services are certainly not frequent fliers at any airport. They fly perhaps a few times a year or not at all.

Frequency of Use - Driving Selected

Business 71	52%	36%	8%	1%	1%
Bypass 71	24%	50%	22%	2%	1%
Highway 412 West	8%	20%	40%	24%	8%

Construction on highways 71 South and 412 West led us to ask how frequently these highways were used. Business 71 was

added to this set of questions and not surprisingly it is the most frequently traveled highway, though anyone who lives in Northwest Arkansas could have told us that Business 71 is well-traveled. We found that 88% of our respondents drive on 71B on a frequent basis, either daily or weekly. It is still rather startling to find that over half of the respondents say that they used Business 71 daily.

With so many driving on 71B on a daily basis, it is not surprising that among transportation issues traffic congestion is the most likely to be picked as a very serious problem (34%). Forty-eight percent said traffic congestion is a somewhat serious problem. Those who use 71B daily tend most often to say that congestion is a serious problem. Those who drive less on 71B do not feel traffic is a serious a problem.

This does not necessarily mean that driving 71B is the problem, but it does say that those who drive 71B daily perceive traffic to be a greater problem than those who do not. Parking (12%) and transportation to health care facilities (10%) are listed as very serious problems by far fewer respondents.

In contrast, most respondents use Bypass 71 on a weekly basis (50%). Almost all drive the bypass on some regular basis. Highway 412 West of Springdale was the least frequently used of these three highways with 40% driving on it only monthly.

Nearly 60% of the respondents report that they drive to work.

The typical drive to work in Northwest Arkansas is seven to ten miles. Our respondents reported that a typical drive to work takes nearly fifteen minutes. Very few respondents use public transit. Six percent use public transit yearly and each other category (daily, weekly or monthly) held between one and two percent of the respondents.

To get another measure of transportation habits and use, respondents were asked how often they left home for purposes other than work. A little over half indicated that they go out daily. A substantial proportion, however, leave home only weekly (38%). Five percent indicated they leave home monthly and five percent yearly. About one percent never leave home.

Several transportation issues ranked near the top of citizen's spending preferences. City roads, four-lane highways and bridge repair (along with water quality, police, and public education spending) had much support.

Rural Summary

Overall, Arkansas is a very rural state with about half of its residents living in rural areas. Rural areas in Arkansas have a larger percentage of the state's nonproductive citizens, the elderly and children. Rural Arkansas also has higher poverty rates, lower per capita income and less job growth than in the urban areas of Arkansas. (From Rural Profile of Arkansas 1993.)

In Northwest Arkansas, for most topics, rural voters are not significantly different from their urban counterparts. There is a surprising homogeneity in the demographic characteristics and in attitudes and opinions across rural and urban areas of Northwest Arkansas. This is encouraging for those who want to increase economic opportunities through transportation while preserving the rural quality of life. These data while not exceptionally informative on rural-urban differences at this point in time, will be invaluable as baseline data as this area continues to grow.

Demographic Characteristics

Twenty-eight percent of rural voters have an income of less than \$20,000 while 34% have incomes of more than \$60,000. Ninety percent of rural voters own or are buying their houses. Fifty-eight percent are employed, 2% unemployed and 34% retired. Urban voters in Northwest Arkansas follow a similar pattern.

Community Growth

When giving opinions of their community or on growth, rural respondents again did not differ significantly from their urban counterparts. The majority for both rural (72%) and urban (73%) voters disagreed with the statement "I would leave this community if I had the opportunity." In answering questions on growth in Northwest Arkansas, few rural voters (22%) believe there are enough well-paying jobs in the area; more do believe that community growth will increase the quality of jobs (52%). What will precipitate this job increase? 61% agreed that the new highways and the new regional airport will provide jobs for local people. Yet, 47% of the rural voters believe that continued growth in the area will hurt the quality of life.

Only about a fifth of rural voters (19%) believe the community does a good job of regulating growth. If this area isn't perceived as doing a good job of regulating growth then what are the projected consequences of growth? A large majority of rural voters (66.5%) believe increases in population and economic growth will result in higher taxes, for example, 61% believe the new regional airport alone will raise the taxes of citizens in Northwest Arkansas. Another consequence is the effect on public facilities, with 59% believing facilities such as roads, water supply, solid waste, and sewer systems will be overloaded as a result of the growth from the new regional airport. Given these opinions, it is not surprising that few rural voters (28%) say that the costs of economic development can be justified. It follows then that when asked if environmental protection should be given priority even at the risk of slowing down economic growth, 59% of rural voters agree. All of these opinions are shared by the urban voters of Northwest Arkansas.

There is a significant difference between urban and rural voters on some

aspects of life in Northwest Arkansas. More rural voters (46%) believe that local business and government leaders should do more to encourage the growth of businesses than urban voters (36%). And with respect to the environment, fewer rural voters (20%) than urban voters (31%) believe we are doing a good job of protecting our water quality.

Transportation

Rural voters do differ significantly from urban voters on their use of the area's transportation infrastructure. While the majority of urban voters leave home for purposes other than work on a daily basis (61%), the majority of rural voters (52%) leave on a weekly basis. While 62% of urban voters use 71 business daily, only 40% of rural voters do. Rural voters also use 71 bypass and public transportation less frequently than their urban counterparts. While rural voters, in general, use the highways less often than urban voters, they do use the airports around Northwest Arkansas with the same frequency as the urban voters. Even though rural voters have the same usage patterns as urban voters for airports, they have opinions on the airport planning in Northwest Arkansas that are significantly different from the urban respondents. Fewer rural voters opted for "build a new regional airport" (28% rural versus 39% urban). More rural respondents chose the options "do not build a new regional airport, do improve local airports" (33% vrs. 28%) and "no new airport developments" (5% vrs. 2%).

Community Satisfaction and Perceived Problems

More rural voters are satisfied with their homes (53% vrs. 40%), the natural beauty of their communities (57% vrs. 39%), their personal safety (31% vrs. 20%) and with the available country leisure opportunities (42% vrs. 39%) in Northwest Arkansas. Finding a significant difference between rural and urban voters on the

natural beauty of the area, personal safety and outdoor leisure opportunities is somewhat disheartening since Arkansas is labeled "The Natural State" and the proclaimed benefits to moving to this area is its wholesome, safe, clean, environment for families.

The problems perceived very serious for at least a third of both rural and urban groups were landfills and local population growth (landfills 40% rural, 44% urban; population growth 36% rural and urban). These groups differed significantly on their perceptions of traffic congestion (29% rural vrs. 39% urban) and water pollution (19% vrs. 20%), with fewer of the rural voters deeming these issues to be very serious. On the other hand, more rural voters thought noise is a very serious problem in Northwest Arkansas (6% vrs. 4%).

In summary, rural voters recognize a need for more well-paying jobs and assume the increase in the area's transportation infrastructure will bring higher quality jobs. Yet, for many rural voters these benefits are perceived of as being paid for in higher taxes, overloaded public facilities and a decrease in the quality of life. Finally, most believe that environmental protection should have priority over economic development. The changes rural voters seem to fear can be seen as indicators of urbanization. The key to a preferred growth for this group then, may be improved transportation facilities and jobs while maintaining the environment expected of a "Natural State."

Uncertainty in Boomtown: NW Arkansans, Transportation and Economic Growth

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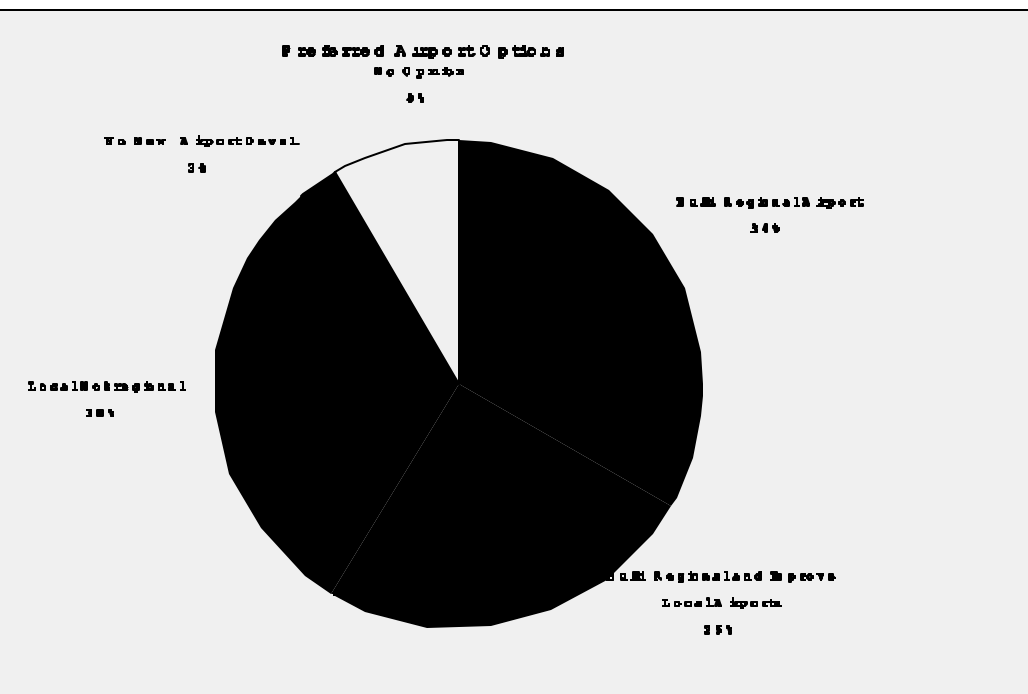
Introduction

Much scholarly attention has been paid to understanding what attracts businesses to a community. Researchers in this journal have surveyed the community business, governmental and education elites to determine what effect their beliefs have on growth. This is important research, but in some sense new business interests and the local elite are only two legs of a three legged stool. The third leg, necessary for truly stable growth, consists of the residents of the community themselves. Such residents, through the normal electoral process or through "ballot box planning" can provide support for growth or stop projects cold.

Northwest Arkansas is very important to the overall economic health of the state of Arkansas. Northwest Arkansas has been nationally recognized for its quality of life. Recently a national news magazine designated Fayetteville as one of the country's "boomtowns." Still, there is disagreement in Northwest Arkansas concerning the shape of development. Changes are not without dispute, for example Fayetteville continues to pay for an incinerator that citizens never allowed to be built. The proposed regional airport was threatened by a citizens' initiative vote.

In the Spring of 1994 the second in a series of studies was conducted which are designed to examine citizens' feelings about growth and to set a baseline for resident's perceptions of quality of life as growth continues. Questionnaires were mailed to one thousand registered voters in Benton and Washington counties. With a response rate of nearly seventy percent, the results from this survey are indicative of the opinions and feelings of registered voters in these counties. Nearly one-hundred twenty questions were asked ranging from crime and environmental attitudes to feelings about highway construction and job satisfaction. A portion of the findings is presented here.

Transportation and Economic Growth



The evolution of the regional airport has been influenced by an association of regional business and government elites, the Airport Authority, the needs and requirements of the Federal Aviation Authority and local citizen opinion. The Airport

Authority first proposed a large regional cargo airport capable of landing large commercial cargo jets. The FAA forced a change in design from a primarily cargo airport to a smaller airport with a passenger emphasis. Concern of local citizens about tax increases caused by the airport have pushed the Airport Authority to sign agreements with local governments that ostensibly guarantee that local governments will not have to carry airport funding burdens.

Our previous survey data (Fall 1993) indicated a majority (54%) in support of the construction of a regional airport. Among other things, the current 1994 survey results further explore the public's preferred policy options concerning the broader question of airport construction and improvement in Northwest Arkansas. When given five options on airport planning, 34% of registered voters in NW Arkansas say "build a new regional airport." Another 25% says to both build the regional airport and improve local airports. Almost a third (30%), say they think it is best if we improve local airports but do not build a regional airport. Three percent chose no new airport development and about 8% had no opinion.

Respondents who support building a new regional airport or building a regional airport and expansion of local airports tend more often to disagree that the new regional airport will raise taxes and will overload public services. Regional airport supporters are also likely to believe the new airport will bring new jobs for local residents. However, the pattern reverses for respondents who said they do not support the regional airport (want only local airport development or no airport development). These respondents more often tend to agree that taxes will increase and services will be overloaded. They also tend to disagree rather than agree that new airport and highway facilities will mean jobs for local people.

As in the previous survey, the majority support a new regional airport. The more recent survey shows, however, that there are still some airport planning questions not settled. Another way of looking at these data is to combine the question responses favoring "building a new airport and improving local airports" with "improve local airport only." Doing this shows that 64% of respondents who had an opinion favor improving local airports. While it is true that a large majority of the respondents want a new regional airport it is also true that a majority of the respondents want to improve local airports. At the time of the survey, the Federal Aviation Authority had already voiced concern about the potential for competition from local airports that might threaten the success of a new regional airport. Given the discussions in some municipal government bodies and the majority of respondents' support for local airport development, this is an area of policy development that is becoming even more important as a policy issue.

Copies of the survey results were sent to the FAA during the FAA's open comment period. This may have been at least one motivation for the FAA (in August) to insist on a non-competition agreement with all local municipal governments operating airports. The agency responsible for raising bond financing has joined the FAA in calling for such an agreement. The plan was that each government was to sign an agreement to give up any air passenger service if the new regional airport is to open. The agreement was rewritten when it was discovered that it contradicted the FAA's own regulations. Since Fayetteville has received federal funds to operate the airport, it could not restrict access to the airport. A new, more mildly worded agreement has been signed by several local governments. Fayetteville is still discussing the matter.

Fayetteville has the most to lose. City council members must consider the loss of several million in airport fees if Drake closes as well as an undetermined amount of airport related spending. In a year in which several council members and the mayor are up for reelection, the 60% of the citizens who want to improve local airports must be considered. Calls for a citizen vote on the closing of Drake field in Fayetteville are troublesome for the promoters of a regional airport. Regional airport supporters insist that the agreement must be signed quickly in order to secure the necessary grants from the federal government.

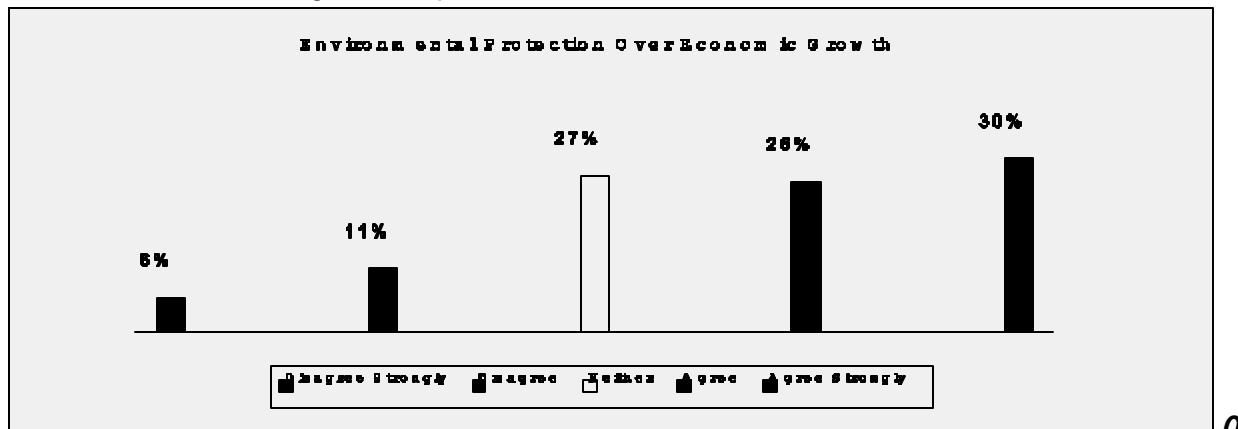
To assess the frequency that registered voters use airports in various locations, they were asked to indicate how often during the past five years they had flown in or out of various airports. Fifty-three percent of the respondents had flown in or out of airports in Northwest Arkansas with 45% of these flying yearly. This was the highest use (excluding "never"). Forty-one percent of the respondents had flown in or out of Oklahoma airports with yearly (39%) again the largest category. Twelve percent used Arkansas airports outside Northwest Arkansas, with 11% of this number flying yearly. Finally, 9% of the respondents used Missouri airports yearly. The great

majority of users of airport services are certainly not frequent fliers. They fly perhaps a few times a year or not at all.

In summary, some form of airport improvements was chosen as the most popular option in airport planning by most residents. A minority (3%) of the people opt for no new airport developments of any kind. Given the air travel patterns, it might be that most respondents want airport development other reasons, perhaps to bring better jobs. In terms of airport development options, there is majority support for a regional airport. The policy question that remains as the most interesting is whether there should be both regional and local airport development and what citizens might feel if they are forced to choose between the two.

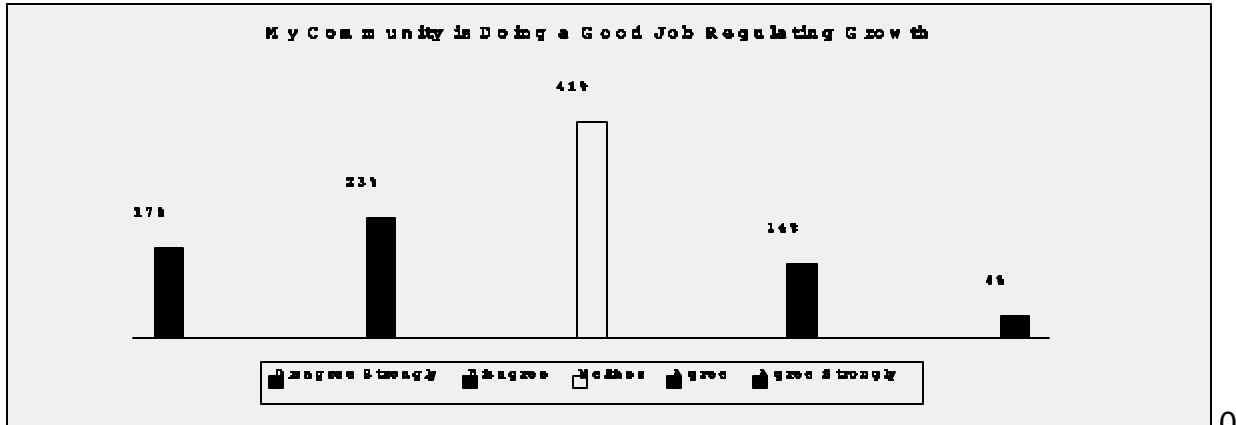
Other responses concerning development issues contained some surprises. When respondents were asked about the seriousness of problems in NW Arkansas, traffic was ranked third. Amazingly, half of all respondents say they drive on business bypass 71 daily. One might have expected, considering all the discussions about new highways and roads, that traffic would have ranked higher. Landfills and population growth were ranked one and two in terms of seriousness. Each of these problems is related to increased economic and population growth. Crime, again contrary to what might be expected, ranked fourth in terms of problem seriousness.

Several questions asked for responses indicating general feelings about growth. Respondents were divided in their responses when asked if rapid growth was a sign of community well-being. Most felt that increased growth would mean higher taxes and would create problems for people living here already. There was uncertainty and division concerning whether such costs could be justified. The majority felt that growth would most benefit bankers, real estate interests and land owners. Finally, agreeing with findings from national surveys, most felt that environmental concerns should outweigh development concerns.



Regulating Growth and Protecting the Quality of Life

Yet respondents want growth. They believe that small businesses in the area will benefit from such growth. Forty percent want local leaders to do more to encourage growth. Forty percent neither agree nor disagree with the idea. Only eighteen percent disagree that local leaders should promote growth.



The key to understanding this mix of both fear and encouragement of growth may be in understanding that current residents do not want growth of any kind or at any cost. They don't want just any new jobs. Unemployment is quite low, but respondents desire higher and better paying jobs.

Our previous survey (Fall 1993) asked what jobs residents most desired. It is interesting to compare these results with the survey that Veasey and Oats did of community leaders statewide.¹ These leaders thought the greatest opportunities for expansion were in light manufacturing (30.9%), agriculture and food processing (25.5%) and tourism (16.1%). Our survey found citizens in Northwest Arkansas wanted development most in high technology, education and agriculture. Food processing was at the bottom of their list of preferences.

Only twenty-five percent of our current survey's respondents felt satisfied with local elected officials. Just thirteen percent of respondents felt local government officials cared what they thought. Ambiguity about growth may be the result of uncertainty about having a voice in community affairs and fear concerning the threat to quality of life from rapid growth. Kumku and Vann write that, "Desired future profiles for a region and the different associated economic development objectives of the interest groups in a community are quite diverse..."² The public voice of the Chamber of Commerce and the regional growth coalition is guaranteed by the resources such groups wield. That particular vision of the future of Northwest Arkansas is well represented. Many respondents to our surveys seem to fear that this vision may not be consistent with their visions for the future of their community. To avoid conflict, lawsuits and angry citizen initiatives the voices of a variety of citizen interests must be heard and considered.

In this way a growth policy can be developed that is both broadly based and broadly rewarding.

References

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