

APPENDIX 3: SURVEY RESULTS



RURAL COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

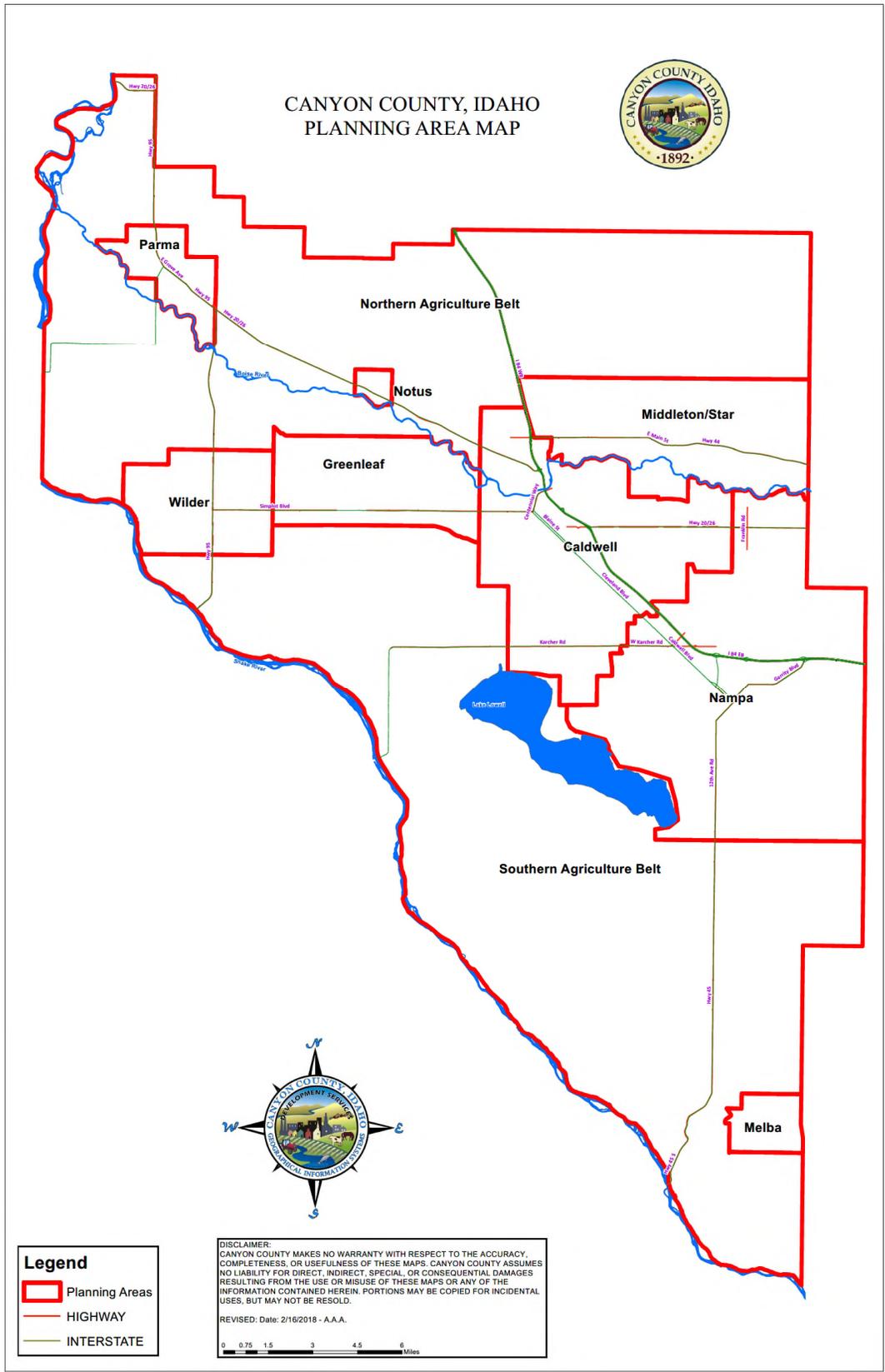
The Canyon County Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2011; policies addressed all areas of the County equally. For the 2030 update, the Canyon County Development Services Department recognized the individual merits of the small towns, large cities, and agricultural areas and formed “planning areas” so specific policies could be written for each situation. This survey is a mechanism to help determine how residents see the future of their “planning area” so policies can be developed to support that.

The survey was open for a period of 2 months from February through March 2020 and was advertised through a number of County, City, and partnered media channels. A total of 845 responses were received; this response rate produces a 95% confidence level and a 3% margin of error for a county wide population of 224,590.

KEY FINDINGS:

Respondents represented 3 key areas:

- **69% Nampa, Caldwell, Middleton Impact Areas**
- **24% Greenleaf, Parma, Notus, Wilder, Melba Impact Areas**
- **7% Southern and Northern Agricultural Belts**



What residents cherish defines what Canyon County views as “quality of life.”

Respondents most cherished the following aspects of where they lived:

- **1st Scenery: farms, mountains, rivers are most important to where they live (70%)**
- 2nd - Slower pace of living with less traffic and relaxed rules (66%)
- 3rd - A preference for country and small-town living (58%)
- 4th - Friendly people and knowing their neighbors (57%)
- 5th - A great place for kids (53%)

***It is interesting to note “I work in farming and ranching” was rated the least important of the choices; 40% rated it not important, 33% neutral and only 27% important. It is easy to assume this reflects that many people that live in the country do not work in farming but other industries.*



32% of respondents considered DOWNTOWN the heart of the community

29% considered AGRICULTURE the heart

15% considered CHURCH the heart

While these responses reflect that people see downtowns as an important economic and social center of the community, agriculture is still a central part of the culture in Canyon County. Promoting and enhancing a downtown that is agriculturally based and themed is a match made in heaven!



***11 comments mentioned people as the heart of the community.*

Respondents were presented with a number of proposed development scenarios.

Respondents were somewhat split in supporting increases in density, including residential above commercial in downtowns, slightly increasing density in neighborhoods with mother-in-law suites, duplexes, and planning more multi-family developments.

As an example, 43% wanted to see more multi-family style residential development while 38% DID NOT want to see more multi-family development.

Subdivisions annexed into small towns, subdivisions next to small towns but not annexed, rural subdivisions in agricultural areas and subdivisions next to lakes and rivers received very little outright support (less than 20%). The most acceptable development among those was developing farmland into rural subdivisions on individual well and septic systems at 19% in support.

84% of respondents strongly supported vacant parcels inside towns be developed prior to expanding to farmland.

82% did NOT want to see farmland developed wherever necessary to accommodate housing.

These results reflect a couple things:

- First, County residents strongly prefer single-family ranchette style living, which is the predominant development style in unincorporated Canyon County.
- Second, a strong preference for the Cities to develop underutilized parcels before expanding out into the unincorporated county farmlands. As well as an overall feeling that more residential development at its current pace is jeopardizing farmlands and resident’s way of life and is not desirable in any way.

Agricultural Perspectives Survey

Nearly 65% of respondents believed that because Agriculture paid more in tax revenue than services it received back was a **VALID** reason for the local government to provide funding to farmland preservation.

*** Almost 24% of respondents were unsure or did not know.*

The comments collected strongly reiterated these points.

This question is especially interesting when paired with responses from the sister survey, the **Agricultural Perspectives Survey**.

Question 10 of the Rural Community Survey asked a

similar question; would multi-family development be more acceptable if government services cost less for taxpayers than single family residential? **Average response 51 out of 100.** Responses did not show not much support for multi-family even if it costs less taxpayer money.

This begs the question; Should local government be more focused on funding and prioritizing agricultural preservation than processing and subsidizing new residential development? If so, what financial model and what organization would take the lead? Other communities have passed agricultural preservation bonds, provided funds to purchase development rights through agricultural conservation easements, and other methods. An updated Cost of Services Study for different land uses would be timely.

Given residents and zonings strong preference towards single-family residential, Respondents were presented with a number of **ALTERNATIVE** housing types, that are more affordably priced, to determine which ones were most acceptable.

This was a tricky question to ask, most of the housing types presented are not possible in unincorporated Canyon County because nearly all homes are on individual well and septic systems, which does not support multi-family and higher density residential. So on the one hand, we obviously do not expect people to support many of these out in the county where they are out of character. On the other hand, single-family homes are becoming too expensive for many people's income, and more affordable alternatives need to be developed, which in most cases does not include single-family. This question was primarily offered to take the temperature of residents and find out where they were on the housing issue; overall feedback has not been supportive of "alternative" housing types. This indicates there needs to be more education on the housing issue and some more successful projects developed that showcase alternative housing types that have a positive image.



Residents were **MOST** likely to consider living in:

- **31% Senior housing**
- 30% Multi-family units
- 27% Residential above commercial

They were **LEAST** likely to consider living in:

- **11% RV Park**
- 12% Manufactured home park
- 12% Shared housing

55% of respondents planned to “age in place” by staying in their own homes during retirement either until they die or until they can no longer support themselves at home. **11%** planned to move into a different style of housing. *Not applicable 29%*.

These results mirror national trends that folks want to remain at home during their golden years and could mean a number of things. First, the number of building permits for ramps, handicap showers, wider doorways, and remodels of opening up rooms are likely to increase and improve accessibility in older homes. Second, we could certainly see an increase in businesses such as senior transportation and at home services like grocery and medication deliveries, physical therapy, landscaping, house cleaning etc. This may indicate a higher percentage of assisted living and nursing home development, with less focus on independent senior living facilities being developed locally.

91% of respondents felt Historic buildings added an important sense of place and incentives should be provided to encourage preservation. This level of support helps make the case for increasing funding and assistance to organizations that can provide support.

Internet connectivity is considered adequate with an average response of **56 out of 100**. This will need to be improved for telecommuting improvements and rural business.

Respondents ranked the **3 most important priorities** to move the Economy forward as:

1. **Physical Improvements to town centers, sidewalks, street lights, and pedestrian amenities (43.48%)**
2. Develop more well-paying jobs so residents don't have to commute (43.36%)
3. Physical Improvements to private property; improve interior and exterior of buildings (39.57%)
4. Complete water and sewer infrastructure projects (38.27%)

These results indicate residents see a strong connection between infrastructure development and economic development. As well as a rising cost of living expenses and stagnant wage growth needs to be addressed for more opportunity in Canyon County.



Recreationally:

- **86% of respondents rated natural spaces for recreation including hiking, fishing, and river access as MOST important.**
- 74% rated walking biking trails as most important
- 57% rated outside play areas like splash pads and ballfields
- 30% indoor gyms
- 32% joining organized activities

Outdoor recreation is a major component of Idaho's quality of life and this question reiterates that. This question also gives some good direction on what types of recreation subdivision development should be providing or integrating with, as well as what new recreation facilities should be developed in the County.

86% of respondents felt it was extremely to very important that children within ½ mile of school should have the option to walk or ride.

This is a very strong result that implies more attention needs to be paid to this issue to make it happen whether that's transportation funding, school siting, subdivision development standards, and other solutions.

Top Transportation Priorities:

- 1. Safe routes to school 50%
- 2. Intersection control 48%
- 3. Safe railroad crossings 32%
- 4. Bike routes 32%

Top priorities for the next 10 years:

- 1. Infrastructure street improvements curb/gutter 36%,
- 2. Safe routes to school 35%
- 3. Water and sewer capacity improvements 34%
- 4. Downtown revitalization 33%

Secondary priorities;

- 5th new parks and pathway 36%,
- 6th street improvements 33%,
- 7th pedestrian improvements 30%.

Not a priority - New public facilities 45%, Community Gateways 34%

Respondents see a dire need for infrastructure improvements of all types!

Downtown Revitalization was rated 4th as a top priority, 32% saw downtown as the heart of the community. Physical pedestrian improvements to town centers and physical improvements to commercial buildings were cited as top priorities to move the economy forward. 91% thought historic preservation added an important sense of place in the community and incentives should be provided to preserve buildings. 31% of respondents had a group leveraging resources for downtown but felt their group needed more support, and 41% of respondents that said their community did not have group and thought they could benefit from one. 11% said they had a group already, and 17% said they did not need a group.

Downtown revitalization is an essential part of the economic development strategy of Canyon County and needs to attract more attention, including supportive policies, funding, technical assistance, and volunteer interest.

Top 5 choices for desired businesses:

1. **Restaurants 62% *comments indicate quality over chains**
2. Retail 51%
3. High Tech and emerging industries 40%
4. Agriculture processing and value-added Ag 35%
5. Wine bar (Winery)/brewery 34%

In conclusion, the survey results provided some new data and insights on resident's thoughts on growth such as the strong preference for preservation of farmland and rural quality of life. As well as the lukewarm reception of development of alternative housing types. The results also reiterated what had already been circulating, the level of growth is unsustainable with infrastructure strained, rising living costs, increased taxes, and loss of quality of life being primary criticisms. The results provide some clear direction to the County moving forward with the County Comprehensive Plan 2030.

AGRICULTURAL PERSPECTIVES SURVEY SUMMARY

During the course of the Canyon County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Update, the volunteer work groups representing each planning area of the County expressed a significant concern for the rapid development of farmland in our meetings with them. Concern for farmland preservation has been touched upon by news editorials, in Planning and Zoning hearings, and a survey question here and there. As a result, the Canyon County Development Services Department developed this survey in order to capture the perspectives of the farmers themselves who own the land, operate agricultural businesses, and financially benefit from the sale of their lands for development. Agriculture is the predominant land use designation as well the historic, cultural, and economic foundation of County Canyon, and as such must remain at the top of our minds as Development Services moves forward to make policy adjustments for land development.

The survey was open for a period of 2 months from February through March 2020 and advertised through a number of County, City, and partner media channels. A total of 187 responses were received, this response rate produces a 95% confidence level and 7% margin of error for an unincorporated population of 38,324.

KEY FINDINGS:

A majority of respondents represented family-owned farms and that were concentrated south of the Boise River in Canyon County (113/187 respondents).

Respondents ranked the following as the **Most Important Reasons** to preserve agricultural land:

1. **The ability to grow our own food to supply global, regional, and local markets**
2. Maintains and preserves a traditional way of life, leaves a legacy and improves understanding of the past
3. Maintaining scenic landscapes and preserving open space
4. Agriculture’s contributions to the Economic base of Canyon County



84% of respondents were likely and very likely to continue farming for the next 10 years. A little over **8% were unlikely** to continue farming. This indicates we should not be seeing a huge turnover in ownership and it buys us time to develop farmland preservation methods before a vast majority of farmers are ready to retire. *(12% cited they had no one to pass the farm to, on the next question)*

Challenges to farming operations are a direct result of further residential development, and can be more closely addressed through zoning approvals in the future.

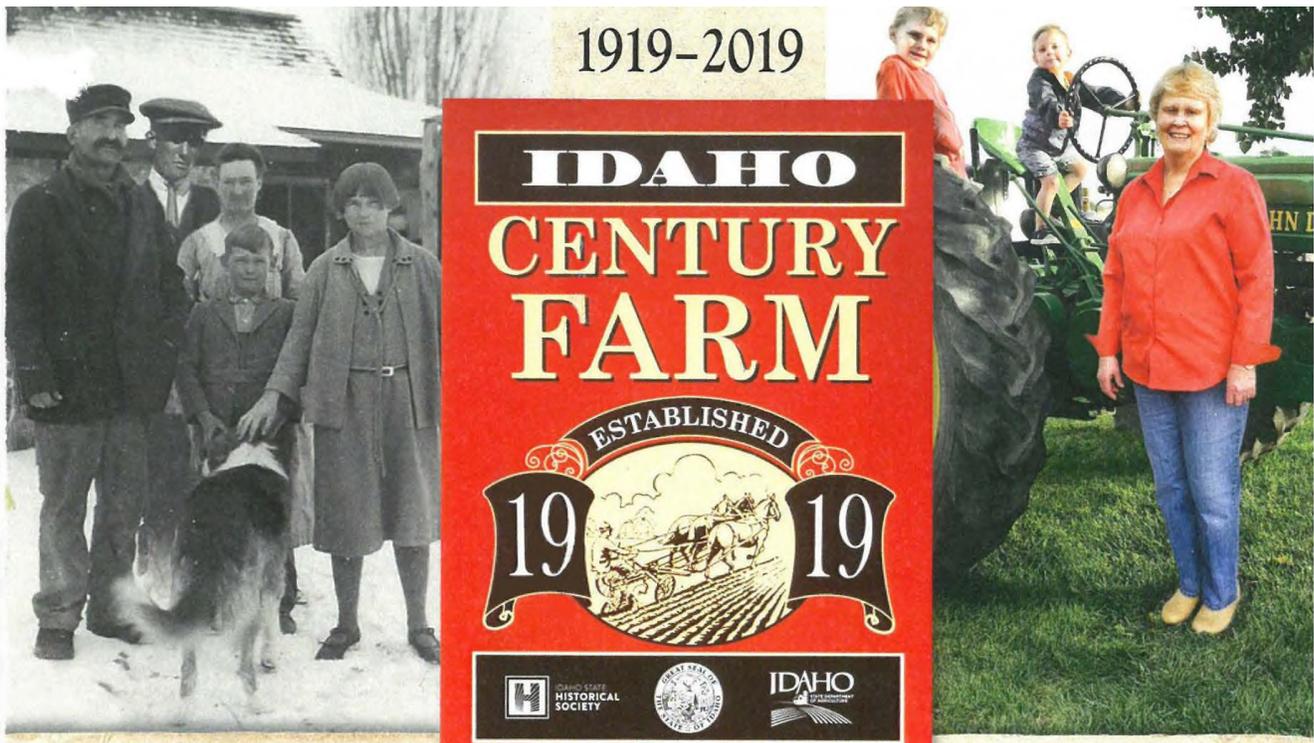
On the solution side; **more restrictive zoning regulations to preserve farmland and limit development saw 75% support as a top priority**, followed by the importance of **agricultural education to the public (61% support)**, and **advocacy and support for legislation and funding of Agricultural preservation (49% support)** as a third priority. Minor priorities hovering from 27-29% were promoting local food distribution, forming an agricultural task force to local government, and development of purchase/transfer of development rights.

FARMING CHALLENGES

1. **FARMLAND FRAGMENTATION 67%**
2. TRAFFIC 52%
3. RISING LAND COSTS TO LEASE FARM GROUND 51%
4. NON-FARM NEIGHBOR CONFLICTS 49%



13% of Respondents indicated their family farm was over 100 years old and potentially eligible for a Century Farm listing. Not only is this program a great way to recognize the longevity, success, dedication, and perseverance of farming families and their homesteads but also a great way to bring awareness and education to the public about the history of farming, its families, and roles in contemporary agriculture. Canyon County currently has 15 Century Farm listings, according to the survey there is potentially 33 more sites that could be eligible.



Nearly 65% of respondents believed that because Agriculture paid more in tax revenue than services it received back was a **VALID** reason for the local government to provide funding to farmland preservation.

Almost **24%** of respondents were unsure or did not know.

This question is especially interesting when paired with responses from the sister survey the **Rural Community Survey**, which

showed a very strong indication from Canyon County residents that 84% of Respondents strongly supported vacant parcels inside towns be developed prior to expanding to farmland. **82% did NOT want** to see farmland developed wherever necessary to accommodate housing.

Furthermore, the responses and comments expressed a strong concern for continued development eating up farmland, the inability for infrastructure to keep up with the pace of development, and loss of quality of life.

In fact, **residents most “cherished” aspect** of where they lived was the Scenery; farms, mountains and rivers, followed by a slower pace of living, and a preference for country and small town living.

This begs the question; Should local government be more focused on funding and prioritizing agricultural preservation than processing and subsidizing new residential development? If so, what financial and organizational model? Other communities have passed agricultural preservation bonds, provided funds to purchase development rights through agricultural conservation easements, and other methods.



The common understanding is that farms are assets and many farmers must sell all or a portion of these assets at some point in order to retire or to continue to fund operations. Many farmers have a limited set of choices that depend on the location of the farm and the position of the farmer; sell or transfer among the family, sell to another farmer, or sell to a developer. Farmer's typically make the most money selling to a developer, but do they want to, especially if given another choice that equally pays?

The final survey question really showed that Farmers have a strong desire to see 100% of a farm remain intact and continue operations (72% cited this as an ideal scenario), overall, 100% felt that the development of a farm into a subdivision was not desirable at all (78% cited this as a worst-case scenario). Development of 25% of the land into housing and retention of 75% as farmland produced a 22% acceptable scenario, and 14% good scenario.

These results indicate it is time to develop more solutions to the philosophical dilemma farmers are faced with. Which is investing a lifetime of money and sweat equity into the productivity of the land only to see their investment produce a crop of homes, which is antithetical to their stewardship mentality.

In summary, the respondents provided a clear preference for farmland preservation and retention of Canyon Counties quality of life.

The Development Services Department is grateful to everyone that was able to provide this critical feedback as we move into a new era of land development in the County.

The open-ended comment portion of the survey reiterated a very strong preference for farmland preservation and promoting residential development in Cities.

Comment Summary

Infrastructure improvements – 132 comments (internet, roads, mass transit)
 Growth – 107 comments (mostly against)
 Preserve farmland – 104 Comments (in favor)
 Traffic – 92 comments (speeding, congestion, need for access, etc.)
 Taxes – property – 80 comments (most think taxes are too high, or suggest lowering taxes for farmers, or passing a bill to cap property taxes e.g. Prop 13 in CA)
 Keep community feel – 72 comments (open spaces, rural, farm)
 Agriculture – 37 comments (all in favor)
 Renowned seed region – 34 comments
 Manage growth – 33 comments
 Allow growth in poor quality farmland – 23 comments
 Bike routes – 23 comments (majority in favor)
 Recreational – 18 comments (senior activities / clubs / dog park / horse trails / access to canals / connectivity commercial to residential)
 Downtown revitalization – 9 comments (in favor)
 Traffic roundabouts – 7 comments (5 for, 2 against)
 Patio Homes / Tiny Homes – 6 (in favor)
 Water quality / quantity concerns – 3 comments

Noteworthy thoughts

Put farms first – Right to Farm Act – No Farms / No Food
 Infill in cities, not farmland
 No more Gravel operations
 Desire a Business Loop – Micron to Caldwell – high speed freeway / mass transit – suggested to go through Kuna
 Revitalize Nampa Gateway Center like Meridian’s Village – (fix interchange 1st)
 Desire a greenbelt from Caldwell to Boise
 Move Boise’s Outlet stores to Caldwell
 Planned communities, should include community needs (e.g.: grocery, shopping)
 Beautify city entry ways
 More citizen committees
 Need more electric charging stations