

Whatcom County Values & Beliefs Survey

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1) Research Goals

- ❖ **Assess resident's attitudes toward population growth and land use**
- ❖ **Inform private, public, and non-profit sector decision-making related to growth management**
- ❖ **Provide a baseline to determine changes in attitudes over time**

2) Research Methodology

- ❖ **Telephone survey of 400 County residents**
- ❖ **Age 18 and older**
- ❖ **Demographically representative of County's population**
- ❖ **Margin of error is +/- 4.9%**
- ❖ **Triangulated research on key issues**

3) Demographic Comparisons with Census

Age	Survey %	2005-2007 % Census Data
18-34	31%	35%
35-54	39%	35%
55+	29%	30%
Refused	1%	---

Gender	Survey %	2005-2007 % Census Data
Male	48%	49%
Female	52%	51%

4) Living in Whatcom County

What do you personally value most about living in Whatcom County today?

Response Category	%
Beauty/Natural surrounding/Scenery	23%
Small town feeling	7%
The location—general	6%
Climate/weather	6%
Outdoor activities	6%
Quality of life	6%
Community	5%
Near family	5%
Open space	5%
Clean environment	4%
Small population	4%
Good place to live—general	4%
All other responses	3% or less
Don't know	5%

4) Living in Whatcom County

“Probably the beautiful sunsets and sunrises because when the sun rises, it comes up over Mt. Baker. It’s quite glorious on a clear day and when the sun sets over the water.”

“The natural beauty—mountains, trees, Puget Sound—the natural beauty of those things.”

“What I used to value was when it was a small town and it wasn’t a strip mall like it’s becoming.”

“Everything is accessible. It’s smaller, I can walk to the places I need to get to, I don’t need the bus, and I’m close to the Canadian border.”

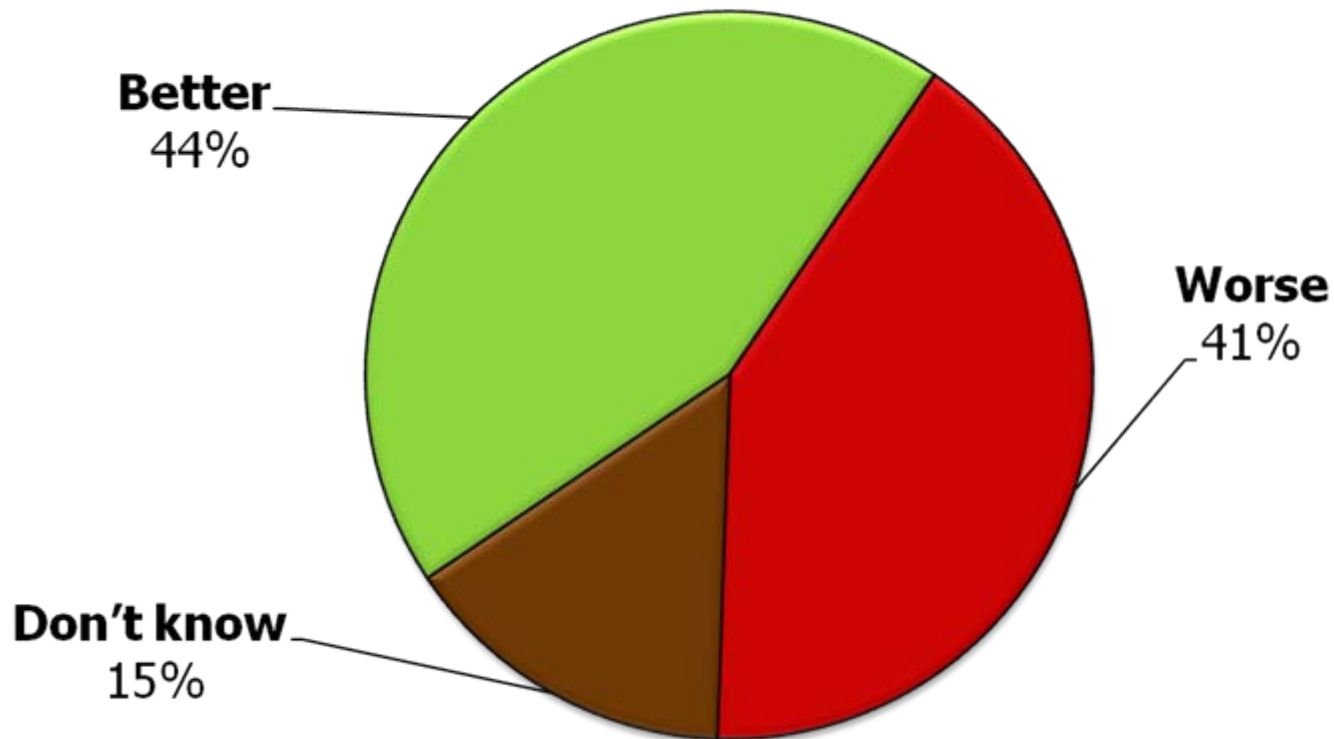
“Being by the mountains and the ocean at the same time.”

“The location. I’m on the outskirts of Bellingham, and I’m 90 minutes to Seattle, and about the same to Vancouver, BC, so I can have the amenities of a big city when I want them.”

“I like the mix of the different climate and the different areas where you can go for recreation, including the park, the beach, or the mountains.”

5) Whatcom County in 50 Years

Looking ahead over the next 50 years to the year 2060, and in terms of the things you value most about living in Whatcom County, so you see the county being a better or worse place to live?



5) Whatcom County in 50 Years

Why do you think it will be better?

Response Category	% (n=177)
Optimistic	21%
Growth	20%
Improve—general	12%
Keep environment stable	12%
Stay the same	10%
More business	7%
Development control	7%
Already preparing for the future	7%
Improve economy	6%
More jobs	6%
Closely knit community	5%
More recreation	5%
Lower crime rate	5%
All other responses	4% or less
Nothing	1%
Don't know	5%

5) Whatcom County in 50 Years

“Even with the expansion that is going on in places like downtown, they are still trying to keep it a small community even though it’s a growing community.”

“At the moment, I am really happy with Whatcom County Council and their vision for the future. I am confident that people from Whatcom County will continue to step up and do that job with the interests of the residents at heart.”

“We’re actually putting hundreds of millions of dollars into parks. We’ll have the longest and most beautiful park of anywhere along the lake. We have urban villages, inner urban trails, 1000 miles of trails through city blocks, and now they are going up to Mt. Baker.”

“It seems to me that the community has been increasingly making the arts district better, and I see the improvements made downtown, and I think they’re good.”

“I think we have a number of organizations that are actively trying to make the community better.”

5) Whatcom County in 50 Years

Why do you think it will be worse?

Response	% (n=165)
Over populated	58%
Too much development	37%
Hurting the environment	9%
Poor government	8%
Destroying farmland	6%
Poor planning	5%
More traffic	5%
Over taxed	5%
No jobs	5%
Higher cost of living	4%
Companies leaving	4%
All other responses	3% or less
Don't know	0%

5) Whatcom County in 50 Years

“The urban growth plan is totally wrong and they’re just expanding without thinking.”

“We are going to continue to grow—more people, less undeveloped places.”

“Too many people are coming here. Over population.”

“It’s going to become overcrowded because there are more people coming in. I’ve seen Bellingham city limits expand a couple of times.”

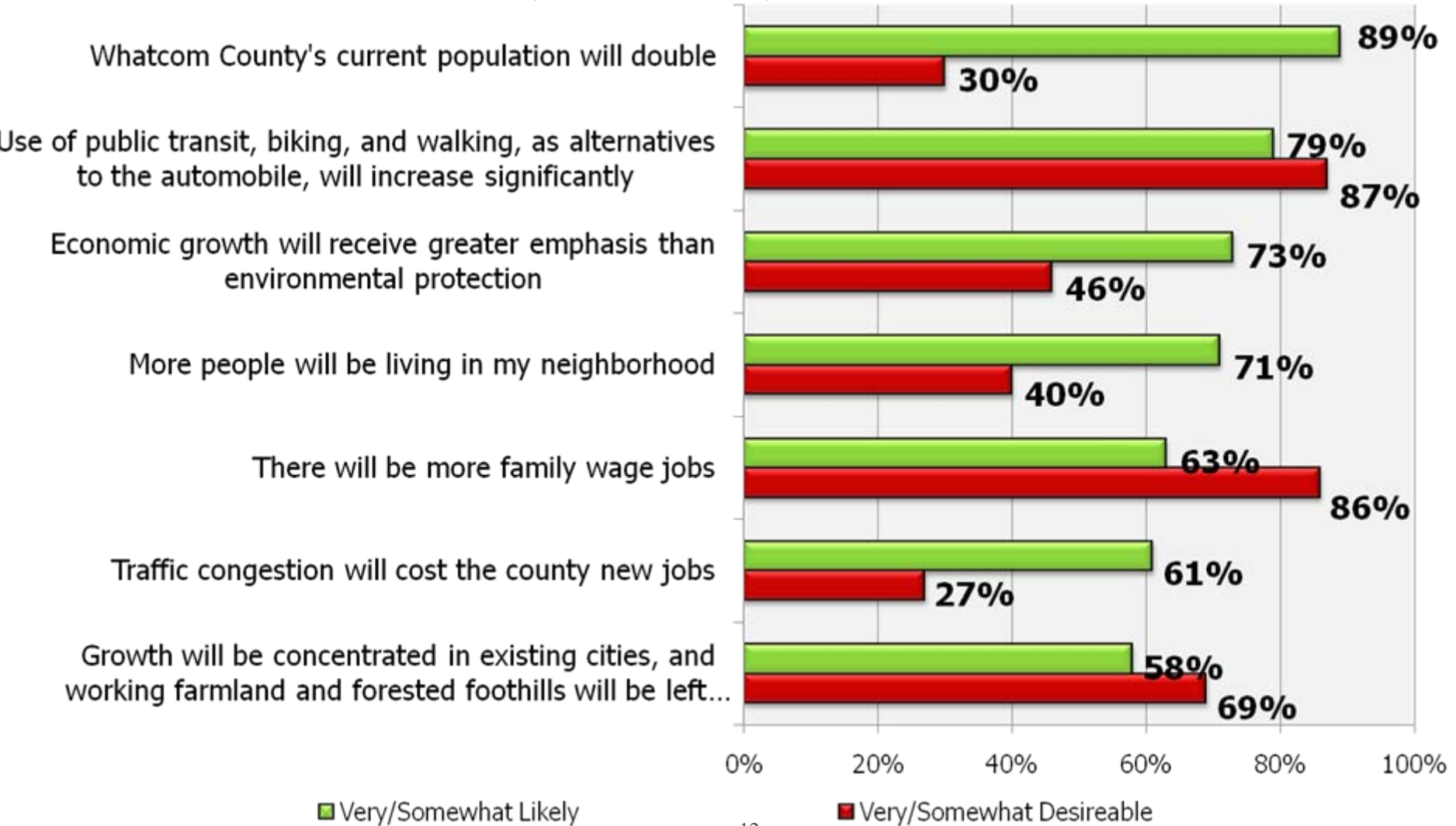
“We’ve got too many people moving in from other areas that come in and try to change things the minute they get here.”

“More population and less opportunities for the things we like to do—the outdoor things. It’s getting harder to get access to do outdoor activities, and people are vandalizing private property on Mt. Baker.”

“I know we’re developing pretty quickly, but I liked this place when I first came because it wasn’t all city—a lot of developers are going crazy and we’re losing some of the natural beauty of the area.”

6) Future Quality of Life Trends

Please tell me if each possible trend into the future of Whatcom County over the next 50 years is likely, and how desirable it is.



7) Future Livability Trends

Here are some statements related to what we want Whatcom County to be like over the next 50 years. For each one, please tell me if you agree or disagree.

Planning for growth in Whatcom Co needs to be done over the next 50 years to assure a high quality of life for residents in 2060



New neighborhoods with higher density development are OK in our Co if they are carefully designed and provide open space



Over next 50 years, having one more housing unit per block in my neighborhood is a reasonable price to pay to keep Whatcom's Co farmland from being...



If everyone else does too, I am willing to have more people in my neighborhood so that less rural open space next to cities will have to be developed



Local government ought to try to slow down population growth in Whatcom Co



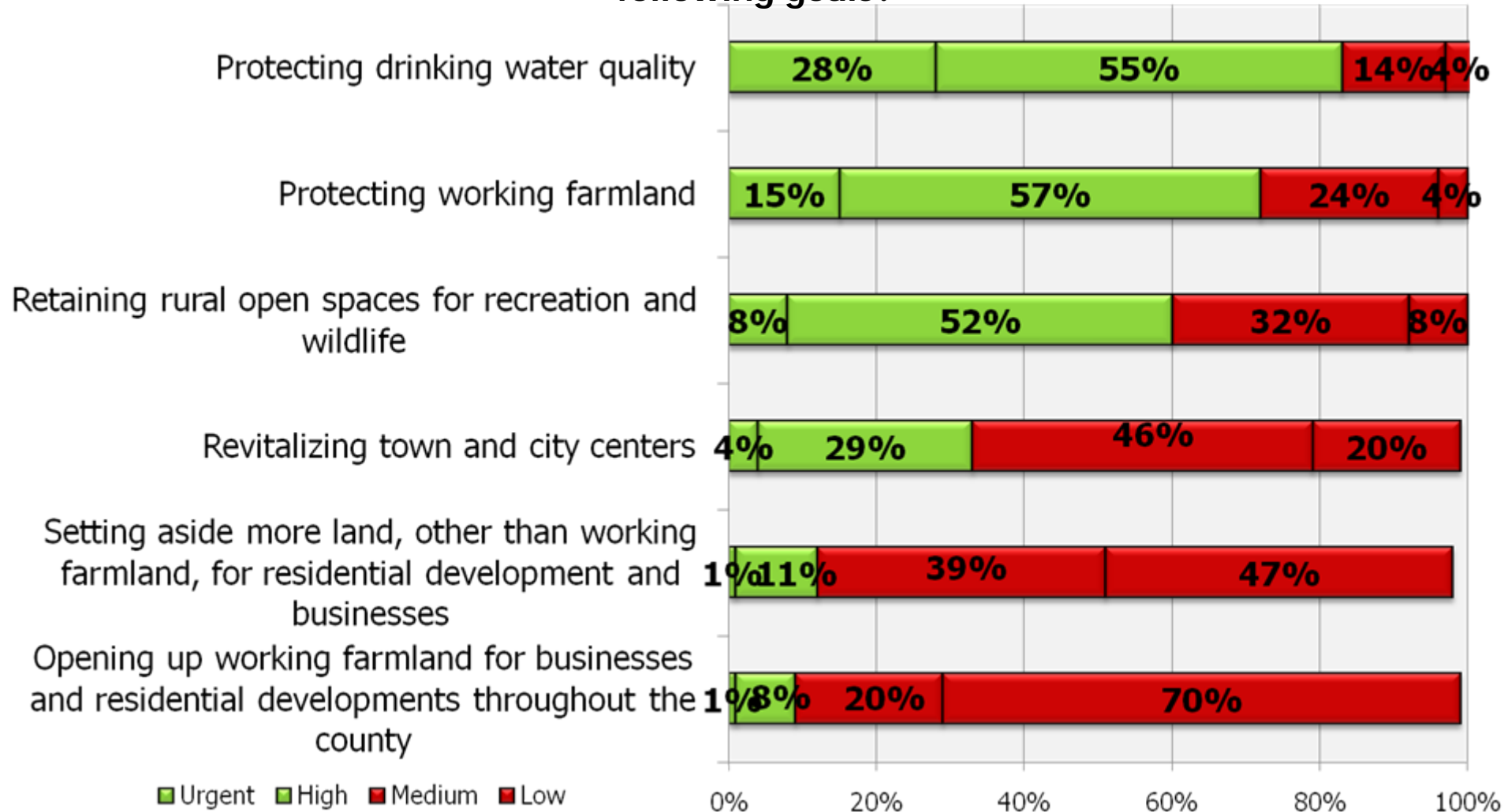
We have plenty of room for growth in Whatcom Co and shouldn't worry about cities/towns spreading out as they grow



■ Strongly/Somewhat Agree ■ Neutral
■ Strongly/Somewhat Disagree ■ DK

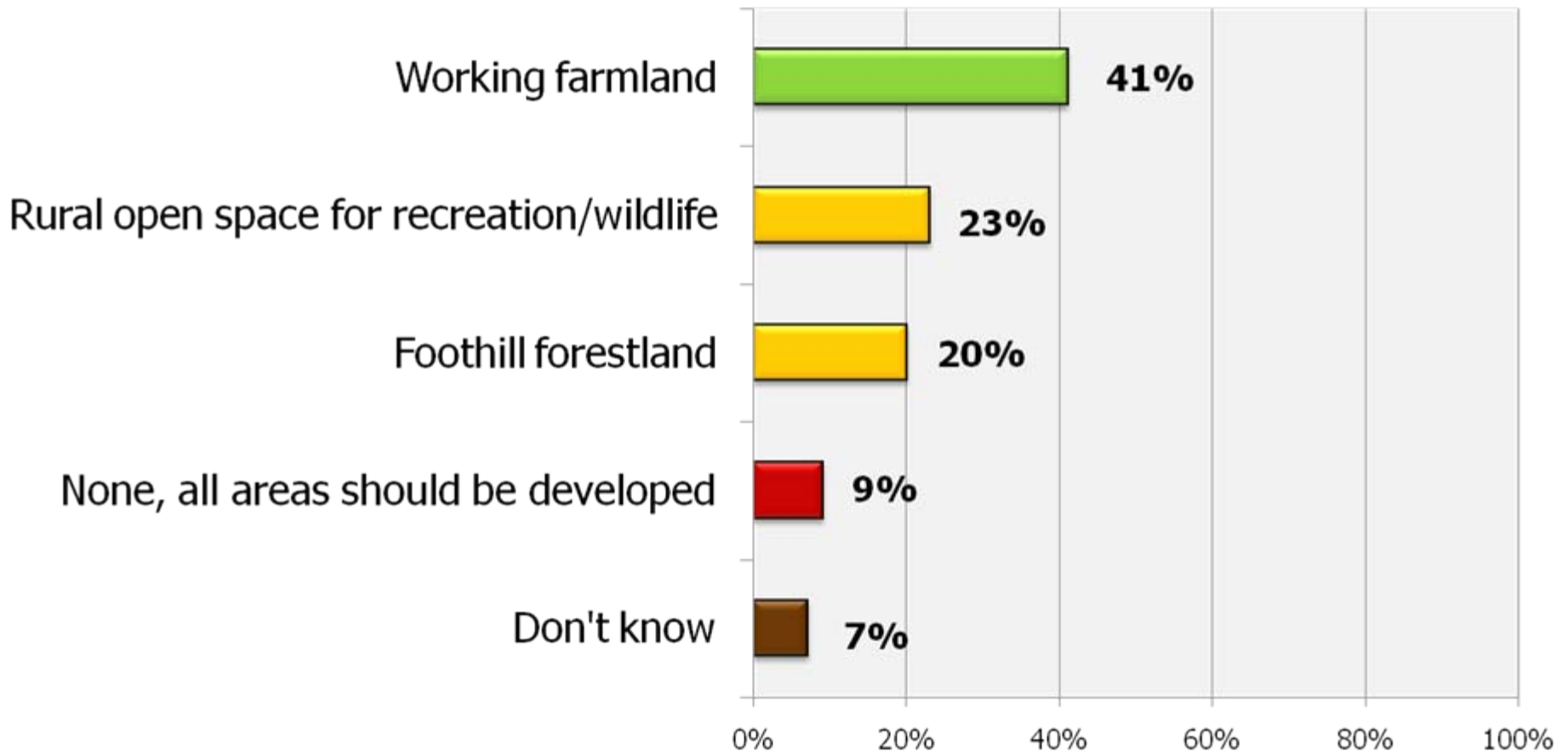
8) Planning Goal Priorities

Over the next 50 years, what priority level should local government give each of the following goals?



9) Most Important Land to Conserve

I'm going to read to you a short list of different land types outside city boundaries in Whatcom County. Tell me which one is most important to conserve over the next 50 years.



10) Areas to Conserve

Describe the kind of areas of Whatcom County that should be conserved and not designated as population growth areas over the next 50 years.

Response Category	Percent
Farmlands	49%
Forests	22%
Park lands	17%
Water fronts	14%
Foothills	12%
Wildlife habitats	9%
Recreational areas	9%
Lakes/Rivers	9%
Wetlands	8%
Open/undeveloped spaces	7%
Mountain areas	6%
All other responses	5% or less
Nothing/None/Refused	2%
Don't know	6%

10) Areas to Conserve

“I think about every aspect of our city could have denser population. As long as they don’t use farm areas.”

“Existing farmlands should be left as they are, as well as forested areas. Also, places along the coast should be kept natural, and parks should be preserved.”

“Agricultural areas and grounds should be conserved—you’ll never get agricultural ground back, and our food comes off of it.”

“Farmlands and park and like recreation areas because it’s important to keep the farms we need, like the berry farms and dairy cows.”

“Forest land, working farmland, and our ocean front (what’s left of it) because can’t go back once you’ve done it—they’re not renewable. Once they’re developed, it’s irreversible.”

11) Areas for Population Growth

Describe the areas of Whatcom County where population growth should be concentrated over the next 50 years.

Response Category	Percent
Within city limits	27%
Established areas	13%
Bellingham	12%
Smaller towns/cities	11%
Ferndale	9%
Existing neighborhoods	8%
Downtown	6%
In areas not suitable for farming	6%
All other responses	4% or less
Nothing/None/Refused	4%
Don't know	11%

11) Areas for Population Growth

“Closer to Bellingham is okay, like the south end of Bellingham. That’s pretty much it. I want the rest pretty much left alone.”

“Direct the growth to Bellingham, not to the outlying regions.”

“Bellingham/Ferndale area because those are the areas that are already highly developed so the population growth should continue to grow there.”

“I think it should be concentrated in the population center which already exists.”

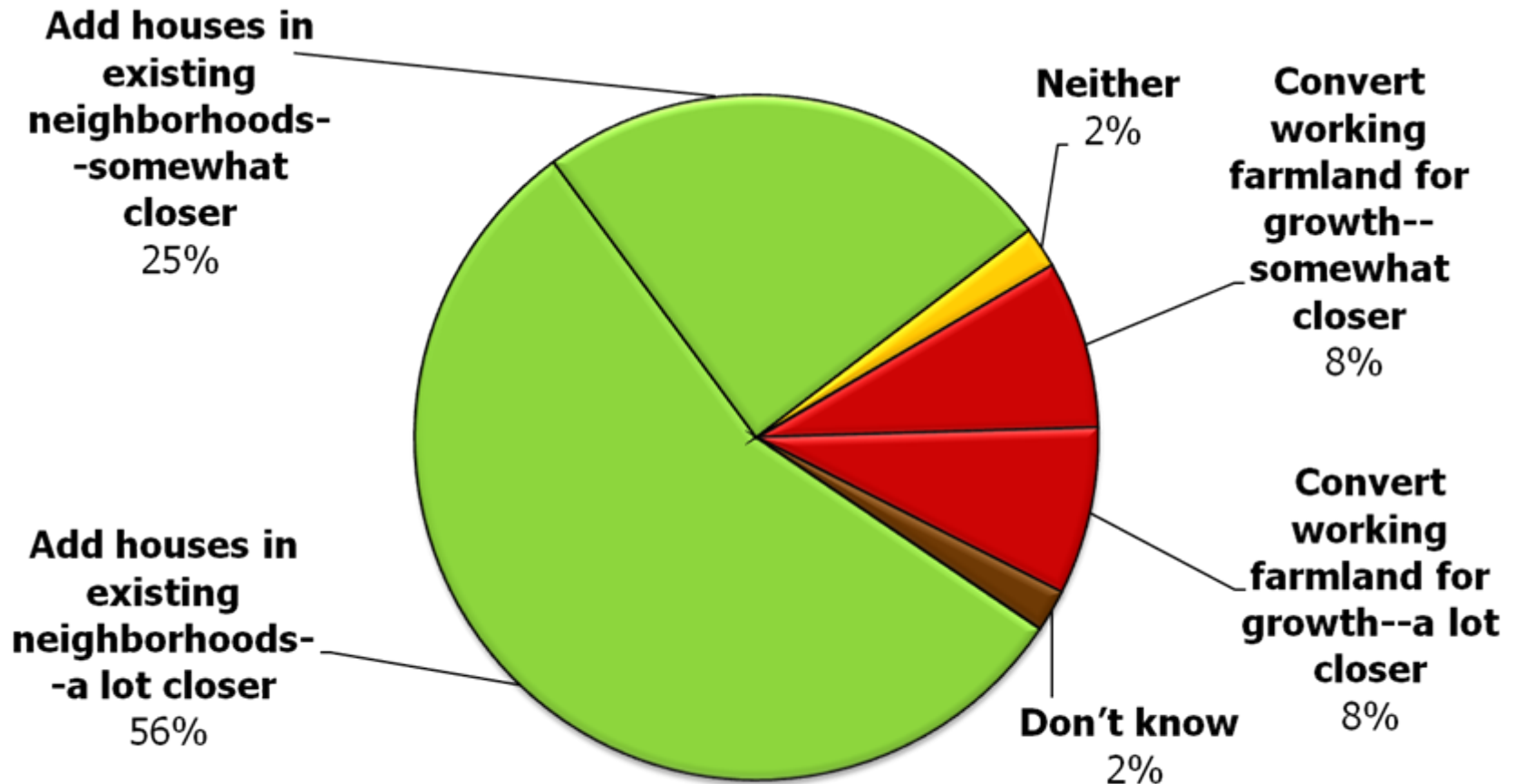
“Near downtown there are lots of areas that have buildings such as retail and apartments near Railroad Avenue. That sort of planning is very good.”

“Existing neighborhoods because the neighborhoods are already developed so it makes most sense to build there.”

“The existing downtown area, such as Bellingham downtown, and I think the established neighborhoods should keep having growth, but it shouldn’t keep sprawling out to the farmlands.”

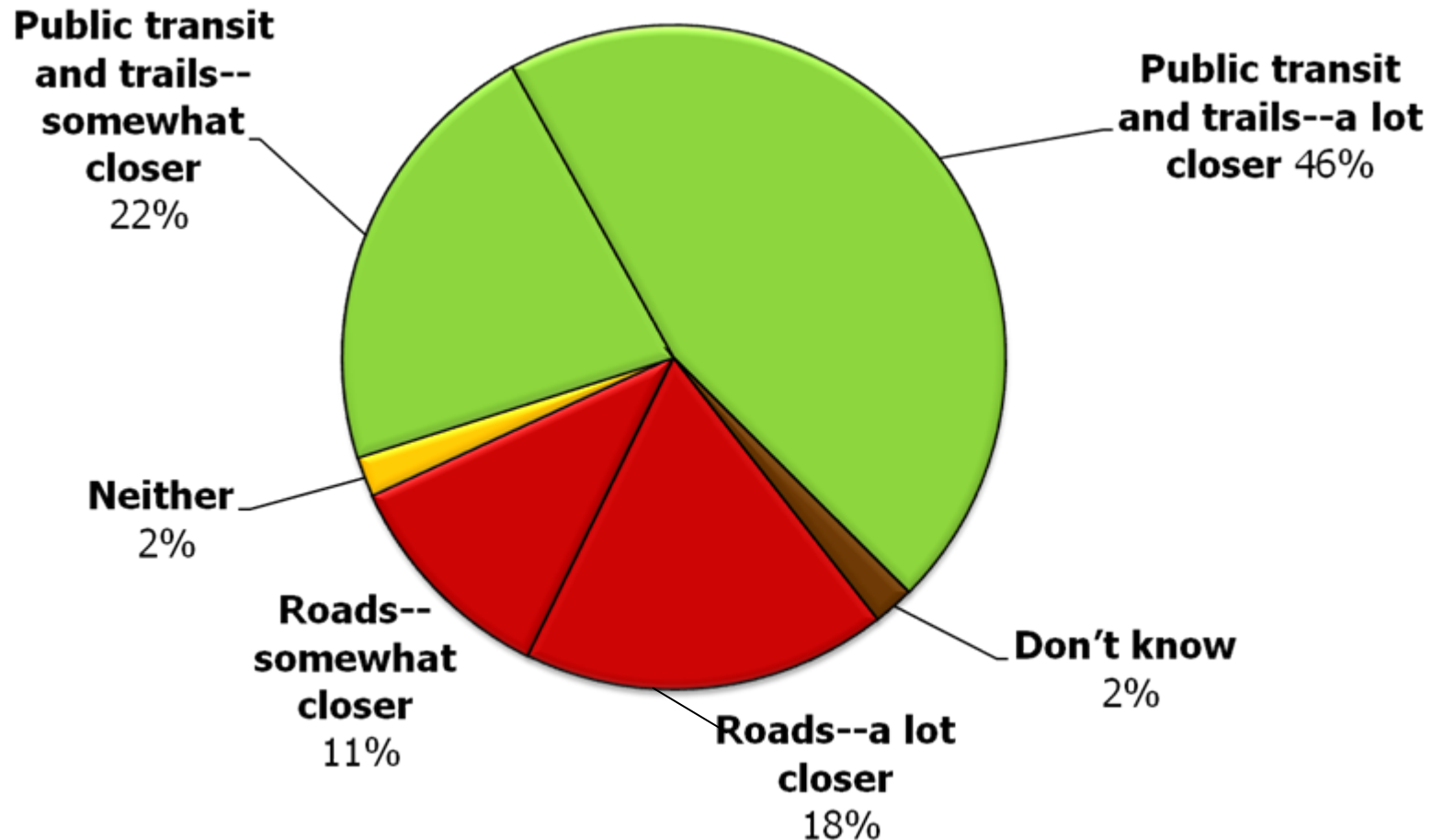
12) Adding Houses in Neighborhoods vs. Converting Farmland

Considering only two possible options to accommodate population growth, some people say it is better to add houses in established neighborhoods than to convert working farmland. Others say it is better to convert working farmland than add houses in established neighborhoods. Which way do you feel?



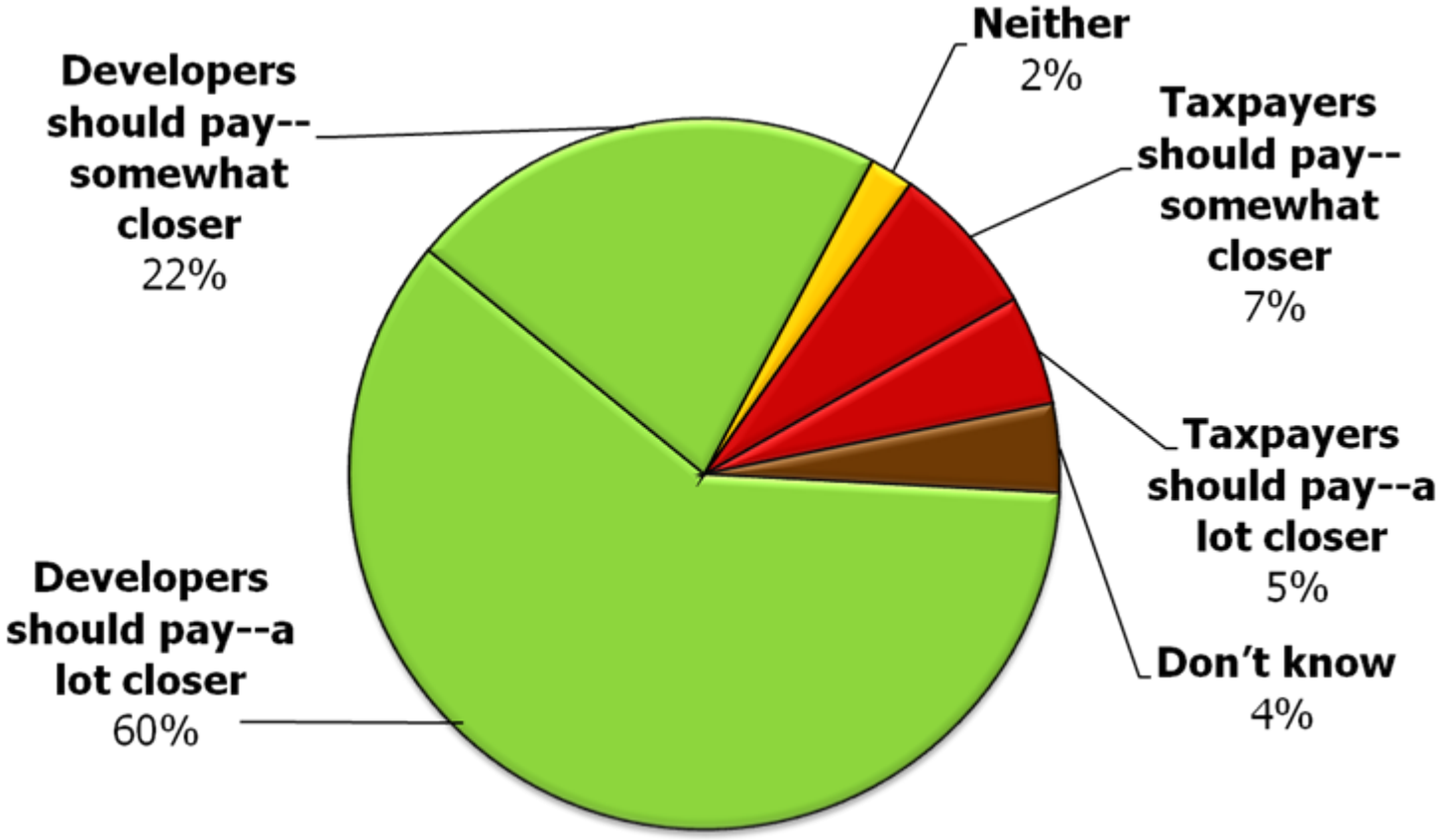
13) Investing in More Roads vs. Public Transit and Trails

Some people feel we should invest in more roads. Other people think that public transit and trails represents a better investment. Which way do you feel?



14) Developers Pay to Bring Public Services vs. Taxpayers

Some people say land developers should pay to bring public services like water, sewer, and roads to their property. Others say those costs are the price taxpayers should pay for a growing economy. Which way do you feel?



Observations and Conclusions

- ❖ **Residents value the landscape and location of Whatcom County**
- ❖ **Residents were split as to whether the County will be a better or worse place to live in the next 50 years**
- ❖ **A majority of residents did not think there is plenty of room for growth in the County**

- ❖ **Elements of planning for which residents showed their support were high density growth in cities and existing neighborhoods so less natural space and working farmland will need to be developed in the future**

❖ **Trends residents found desirable were:**

Increased use of public transit, biking, and walking alternatives to the automobile

More family-wage jobs

Growth concentrated in existing cities while working farmland and forested foothills are left undeveloped

- ❖ **In terms of who should pay to bring public services like water, sewer, and roads to their property, residents were significantly more likely to think it should be paid for by developers and not be taxpayers**
- ❖ **Demographic differences in the survey were most often found by age, length and type of area of residence, and income**