

1 The Top reasons families have chosen to live in the Town of St. Croix Falls:

1710	Rural Atmosphere
1123	Recreational Resources-like parks,trails,lakes,etc
885	Near Family & Friends
794	Close to "Twin Cities"
586	Safe
544	Farmland
386	Close to Work
265	Home Prices
255	Close to shopping & Services
251	Good Schools
233	Easy to get around
224	Close to health care
166	Property taxes

Other: Deer Lake  
Access to Arts & Community  
Natural wooded areas and wildlife  
Grew up here  
Family history in the area  
Snowmobile access  
Business location on Highway 8  
We were here first  
We don't want people from the Twin Cities moving hear and turning  
the town into another Minneapolis  
Town Board is conscientious and an A-Team  
Cabin on Deer Lake  
Moved here 40 years ago  
Didn't permit to death tax payers when I bought

2 Since the last survey in 2002, peoples overall experience of living in the Town has:

27	Improved
75	Stayed the same
52	Declined
39	No Opinion

## Responses to why Question 2 was answered the way it was.

### Improved

- We moved to the area in 2018. Over the years lived here, we have experienced a positive relationship with the Township.
- I have more experience with neighborhood friendliness.
- Maintenance seems better.
- Only been here four years but added Highway 8 businesses.
- All looks good.
- More businesses coming in.
- Economic activity during Trump era trickled down to the township level.
- Few new businesses to the area.
- The Town has a balanced vision of the future and is considerate of all the residents needs in a balanced way. When I moved here years ago things were run by the "Good Old Boys" system.
- Quiet countryside, less stress! Able to watch the sunrises and sunsets!!
- Roads are better, scenery is gorgeous.
- Not a drastic change, just a little development.
- Improvement to businesses along Highway 8.
- Our road is brand new on Fairgrounds Road.
- Slowly taking modern ideas.
- More places to shop and industry.
- Commercial area on Highway 8 very complete and useful for shopping (groceries, etc.).
- Roads have improved.
- With addition of office personnel, planning coordinator and attorney the structure of our town government became much more professional.
- Protection of agriculture.
- Jobs.
- Still rural and good recreation with improved access to products and services.
- With all that is going on in the world I believe the town has stepped up keeping us safe.
- More people taking care of and considerate of Deer Lake.

### Stayed the Same

- Nothing has changed.
- We like the rural atmosphere so staying the same is a good. We don't want housing developments and a bunch of commercial stores.
- Has remained primarily a rural atmosphere.
- I haven't seen much change.
- Not much change, services all the same.
- Still a good place to live.
- Have seen no great changes to the Town, with the exception of the commercial businesses along Highway 8.
- Not too much change☺

- No real changes.
- I have felt little adverse impact and I have lived here my whole life.
- Roads are getting worse, snow removal/plowing needs to be more frequent.
- St. Croix Falls is a great town and we like that it has stayed the same.
- There does not seem to be many changes.
- We have lived in the township for twenty-eight years. Haven't seen much change other than the City swallowing up land whenever they want.
- Some businesses have changed, but the overall feel seems to remain the same.
- It was a nice place to live then and it is a nice place to live now.
- Haven't really noticed any difference.
- Area has remained the same. No large developments and easier access to and from the major highways.
- In my view stayed the same.
- Other than a few small businesses, nothing has changed.
- Haven't seen much in changes. Roads are not taken care of up to par and minimum new business growth.
- No real development near us. Our view shed remains beautiful.
- Things have stayed the same partially because township has "anti-growth" attitude.
- Born in 1959 in St. Croix Falls-Always good.
- Although concerned about certain issues, the experience has remained the same.
- Still a rural atmosphere and safe.
- We moved to St. Croix Falls fulltime in 2017. In the past four years we have seen little to no change. We would love to see more restaurants and shops. We drive to the Cities to eat out and shop. Speed limit along Deer Lake is dangerous. We need walk and biking paths along Highway 8.
- Slow movement is better than rapid growth.
- Our priorities in Question 1 have maintained the quality.
- No changes come to mind except property tax increase.
- Roads have stayed in good condition.
- Can't think of anything that changed.
- Hasn't improved or declined.
- Some things are better; the snowplowing on our road is terrible.
- Not a whole lot has changed.
- Not much has changed in my neighborhood.
- I don't see any changes.
- That is the way we would like it to be.
- Nothing stands out as different.

## Declined

- Declined in rural atmosphere, not a big decline but some.
- Taxes keep going up.

- I think one of the major functions of the town is road maintenance. Timeliness is important for snowplowing and town lacks on this. We have a lot of hills and deep ditches with very little shoulders.
- Too much traffic for rural area.
- We have experienced a break in and theft which was never resolved. Increased traffic and complete disregard for speed limits, no apparent enforcement.
- Poor road maintenance, especially in the winter, roads are icy and not plowed early enough and sand only on hills and intersections. Need to plan ahead of snow storms and get ahead of snow and ice. Maintain roads for moms taking kids to daycare not a 4x4 truck! Mow the ditch so you can actually see a deer jumping out in front of you. Take PRIDE in the town and how it looks for a change. Clean Up!
- The open farmland and forest areas have declined because of development.
- We moved here in 2004 looking for more freedom to live a rural lifestyle. We later discovered unreasonable and heavy handed zoning regulations and ordinances with a "we v. them" attitude in the governing body, not a "we represent you-how can we help you thrive and protect as many freedoms as possible according to our vision statement approach". Perhaps this has changed more recently.
- More houses/development; more traffic on rural roads; vehicles travelling faster.
- Our downtown is a ghost town when it could be a huge asset to residents and tourists.
- Commercial development seems random and haphazard. Conditional use permits are approved without regard to traffic or impact on watershed or residential neighbors.
- Excessive traffic on Highway 8 and very dangerous entrances and exits from Deer Lake especially! Excessive traffic along commercial developments.
- Dealing with more neighbors, differences in rural living, letting dogs run and they don't care. We moved here in the 1980s because we wanted the rural life and not have to deal with a lot of neighbors or we would have stayed in the Cities.
- Traffic has increased dramatically. The decline of the City of St. Croix Falls is disappointing.
- A lot of closed businesses down town.
- The Town Board often overstepped their boundaries.
- Restaurants, Clayton's Hardware, shops in downtown gone.
- Too many liberals, communists!
- Minimal road improvements, property taxes are out of hand and do not match the area.
- Congestion, high taxes, no growth, no shopping. People are cranky, no longer friendly, poor leadership (State).
- I've talked two families to not move to Polk County. If you want your well to be fouled by the unregulated application of raw turkey shit – Move here. If the smell of raw turkey shit in the morning is something that is going to make your day – Move here. There are more than ten related human diseases related to turkey

shit. This has to stop. The committee to set rules about turkey shit is made up of six farmers, this is ridiculous.

- I don't feel safe because of general lack of concern for the health and safety of others. Example – CoVid 19 indifference.
- Seeing people moving here from Minnesota.
- High level of traffic, high speeds. Lack of skilled workers-plumbers, electricians, etc. CoVid isolation, closed business in the area, run down looking businesses.
- It is becoming urban every day.
- Get out of my life, permits for culverts (?) and other improvements.
- Think it is still a great place to live but don't really like the increased development and people speeding down 140<sup>th</sup> Avenue. I think the speed limit should be much lower – getting to my mailbox is dangerous.
- We should have access to retail and services that are more local than distant. Money that I earn does not last as long as I would like it.
- Development.
- Downtown has less business, less restaurants.
- Downtown is all boarded up. They should take the boards down-looks like a ghost town.
- Property taxes are increasing at a high rate.
- Waste of tax payer's money, poor planning.
- Development at Big Rock Creek – noise, light and traffic. Property taxes.
- Roads are worse, none-to-little growth, what growth there is leads toward junky. No enforcement as to junk, weeds, traffic speed on town roads.
- Unsightly development on Highway 8 corridor (signage, landscape destruction). Undrinkable water, a five-fold increase in one year, so much so that Polk County Health Department advises not drinking my well water. Increase noise from mining and other.
- Property tax increases, loss of businesses downtown, lack of recycling center for trees, shrubs, leaves.
- Traffic on 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue has increased significantly causing the road surface to deteriorate.
- Main Street in St. Croix Falls is not thriving. Businesses have moved up the hill and other businesses have not succeeded in their spots. How do we attract new businesses (restaurants and retail stores)?
- No law enforcement.
- More crime.
- A lot more traffic, a lot more traffic.
- Main Street in a state of decay. Land owners on main shouldn't be allowed to have ongoing reconstruction projects that last years with boarded windows. The chamber needs to mimic Osceola on curb appeal.
- Although a City issue – the development along Highway 8 (buildings, signage, out lot storage, etc) makes an unsightly "Welcome to Wisconsin and St. Croix Falls" first impression on entry to the community.
- Big Rock Creek has turned our neighborhood into a "State Fair" atmosphere with light show, loud music and helicopters.

- The small parcel property owners along Highway 8 will never allow DOT to close accesses from 8. Completely small town non development attitude. Town Board has no idea how to develop Highway 8 commercial land. They are a do nothing board who takes ideas from town secretary. Whatever she wants goes. Town Board members are too busy to care about the Town. The town doesn't have the training or desire to do this. I am guessing that the town board will laugh at my comments which is sad. I have given hundreds of hours of time to the town/county and realize volunteers are good but they don't have the expertise to do jobs they are entrusted to do. Get rid of town secretary. She works when she wants, paying her too much. Don't take her opinion for anything regarding policy-maybe only office work. She is a rude women is no training.
- Increased density of buildings on Deer Lake where we have a cabin has reduced open spaces and privacy on the lake.
- Downtown is a mess.
- Suburban influence.
- Too many people, lots of traffic on 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue, poor roads.
- The invasion of big box stores and chain restaurants has impinged on small independent businesses.

#### No Opinion or No Selection

- Did not live here until recently.
- Moved here in 2019.
- Only been here four years.
- New to area in 2019.
- Did not live here in 2002.
- Only moved here two years ago.
- Moved here in 2013.
- Only lived here five years.
- I didn't live here in 2002.
- Please limit development and protect the area.
- In most cases what will be done, will be done?! Will happen! Good Luck!!!
- Population brings issues that are hard for the Town to keep on top of. Zoning issues, crime, etc.
- Moved into the area in 2016.
- Have only lived here since 2009, live on lake.
- Didn't live here in 2002.
- Resident since 2016.
- I don't stay active in the Town.
- Don't wait for a day after snowfall to plow roads.
- Center lines on roads
- Lack of youth sports facility, playing field, park, pool, etc.
- Access to City water supply.
- I have been working in North Dakota between 2009 and 2015. Then two years in Thief River Falls, so I am fairly new to the area (four years).
- Not here for last survey.

- I was not a resident in 2002.
- New to area.
- Just moved to our cabin in 2012.
- Only moved here six years ago.
- Residents only since July 2010.
- More affordable housing, more stores, need a Kwik Trip and Applebee's.
- New to area.
- I own land only.
- We didn't participate in the last survey.
- It is the same.
- Only lived here three years.
- Didn't live here in 2002.
- Moved here in 2020.
- Didn't spend much time here twenty years ago.
- I have only lived in the Town of St. Croix Fall since 2016; therefore, I cannot provide an accurate comparison.

4 Looking forward to the next 10 years, Individuals agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the future growth and preservation in the Town.

Residential Development

- 18 Strongly Agree
- 75 Agree
- 43 Disagree
- 26 Strongly Disagree
- 29 No Opinion

Commercial Development

- 38 Strongly Agree
- 78 Agree
- 30 Disagree
- 26 Strongly Disagree
- 15 No Opinion

Farmland Preservation

- 94 Strongly Agree
- 61 Agree
- 11 Disagree
- 6 Strongly Disagree
- 17 No Opinion

Natural area & open space

- 108 Strongly Agree
- 57 Agree
- 10 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree
- 11 No Opinion

5 Level of Concern with the respect to the Town of St. Croix Falls.

Increased Population

- 75 Not Concerned
- 49 Slightly Concerned
- 38 Concerned
- 21 Very Concerned
- 6 No Opinion

Development of Farmland

- 37 Not Concerned
- 21 Slightly Concerned
- 58 Concerned
- 59 Very Concerned
- 12 No Opinion

Conflicts between farming & housing

- 32 Not Concerned
- 35 Slightly Concerned
- 65 Concerned
- 43 Very Concerned
- 16 No Opinion

Loss of natural areas & open space

- 21 Not Concerned
- 32 Slightly Concerned
- 56 Concerned
- 80 Very Concerned
- 4 No Opinion

Increased Traffic

- 20 Not Concerned
- 32 Slightly Concerned
- 63 Concerned
- 75 Very Concerned
- 3 No Opinion

Cost of Town Services

- 32 Not Concerned
- 44 Slightly Concerned
- 64 Concerned
- 35 Very Concerned
- 12 No Opinion

Accessibility of Town staff & officials

- 90 Not Concerned
- 33 Slightly Concerned
- 22 Concerned



- 13 Very Concerned
- 32 No Opinion

Property Taxes

- 31 Not Concerned
- 48 Slightly Concerned
- 56 Concerned
- 58 Very Concerned
- 2 No Opinion

Other:

- Very Concerned
  - Loss of Snowmobile/ATV Trails
  - CAFO's coming into the county-mainly air quality and ground water issues
  - Overdevelopment
- Concerned
  - Housing developments/developers-not in favor of large developments or 1+acre per home like Forest Lake, etc-in favor of tiny home Village for low cost/low impact living
  - Safety
  - Lack of downtown growth

6 Town Zoning

- 114 Continue managing our own zoning
- 18 Move to county zoning
- 49 No Opinion

Other:

- Not the County
  - I am currently zoned shoreland; doesn't make much sense to have to go to county and town-One source if possible.
  - I do not know enough about zoning to answer.
  - Make zoning less restrictive for rural goals-example: small acreage farming; homesteading; home entrepreneurial endeavors.
  - I am not sure of town/county plans or what their ideas are.
  - J. Alt so helpful and calm; find another one like him. County zoning would be complicated & unsatisfying.
  - Current zoning is too restrictive.
  - Possibly move to county zoning-it is a bit confusing.
  - Please think about the fact a lot of revenue the town gets is from tourism-People come to hike, bird watch, camp and other wise get away from development and to enjoy the natural beauty.
  - Enforce rather than the issuance of variance permits which benefits the Town finances but is detrimental and unwelcome to city in vicinity.
  - No CAFO's
  - Keep local control but incorporate besty practices into a master community plan with long range vision with assistance from outside contract experts to beautify the community.
  - Concerned officials - active for their personal best interests.
  - You need to provide detail s to what this entails, poorly written question.

7 Priorities the Town should consider regarding future residential and commercial development proposals.

- 1021 Natural area preservation
- 793 Managing traffic impacts
- 759 Impact of development on neighboring farmers
- 720 Preserving lands for parks & recreation
- 590 Increasing property taxes
- 484 Creating jobs
- 354 Achieving good building design & proper landscaping
- 289 Increasing housing options within the community
- 255 Storm water management

Other:

- Commercial development impact on residents
- Preservation of farm land-Farm Rights
- Strive for good development-Target, restaurants, nice housing. Good construction that attracts younger people-not pole buildings.
- Encourage new business opportunities on Main Street
- Environmental Impact-light pollution
- Restaurants, shops, entertainment-St. Croix Falls doesn't need anymore storage units.
- Water, Sewer
- Need a Target store
- School & Hospital-Both declined in quality.
- Concern of some of the properties and the mess they live in. Junk all over the place.
- Access to City water.

8 How important is it for the Town of St. Croix Falls to protect and preserve our natural resources?

- Ground Water Ground Water
- 3 No Opinion

83	Essential
81	Very Important
17	Important
3	Not Important
Rivers/Streams	
5	No Opinion
80	Essential
87	Very Important
15	Important
2	Not Important
Air Quality	
6	No Opinion
77	Essential
77	Very Important
26	Important
4	Not Important
Wildlife Habitat	
5	No Opinion
59	Essential
87	Very Important
28	Important
8	Not Important
Forest Land	
3	No Opinion
63	Essential
77	Very Important
34	Important
6	Not Important
Farm Land	
5	No Opinion
49	Essential
69	Very Important
49	Important
14	Not Important
Wetlands	
4	No Opinion
65	Essential
69	Very Important
39	Important
9	Not Important
Rural Character	
7	No Opinion
40	Essential
84	Very Important
42	Important
10	Not Important
Scenic Views	
5	No Opinion
47	Essential
73	Very Important
43	Important
16	Not Important
Undeveloped Land	
14	No Opinion
29	Essential
64	Very Important
50	Important
22	Not Important
Historic Resources&Cultural Sites	
11	No Opinion
40	Essential
66	Very Important
43	Important
19	Not Important

The DNR and Council will override all of these questions.

9 Which approaches should the Town take over the next decade to deal with development pressure from, and annexations to adjacent municipalities.

100 Town should formalize long-term agreement with the City of St. Croix Falls regarding annexation

Other: Need info on how it would impact us.  
 The Should look at all possible ways to stop the City from annexing town land.  
 If annexations are forced, retaining existing rights regarding animals/livestock, hunting, along with insuring existing residents are not forced to pay for the cities water infrastructure issues is key.  
 Continue talks with the City  
 IF the City wants more it will destroy the small town atmosphere  
 Probably engaging legal assistance  
 Don't know enough to have an opinion.  
 If long-term agreement helps, do it.  
 No opinion  
 Case by case scenario  
 Investigate sewer and water with the City  
 Resist annexation as long as possible  
 Not enough information  
 Don't know the difference between Town and City  
 Not just St. Croix Falls but Centuria too  
 No annexation, that would just increase property taxes  
 Unsure of true meaning of question  
 Case by case, not sure on current system  
 Build water tower-dig community well  
 The reason I and many others live here is because of the natural beauty. Please protect it, it is special, fix the hole on 210th Street  
 If you want more development in this township, you need to reduce the taxes.  
 Great survey, Thanks Kathy and Doug  
 Not sure how it works now. Need to keep fair for both parties.  
 What ever the Board feels is best for us  
 If towns can benefit and have same projection, possible consider.  
 People do not have time to attend all these meetings. I did not move into the City, please keep them off by back and away from me.  
 Please use great discretion. We don't want to become "City".  
 City should have to expand North and South equally, not just along US Highway 8  
 Would need to know the benefits and impacts of annexation.  
 Get water from Centuria underground to St. Croix Falls.  
 Everything must go before every resident for a up or down vote, majority-not government or businesses  
 Difficult to do long term agreements well. Avoid annexation as much as possible.  
 No more annexation  
 Approach each project individually making decisions in the best interest of the Town residents, employee and the Town's tax base.  
 Taxes will only go up. Say "NO" to Rock Creek development. We don't want to become the next Hudson.

10 What is the most effective ways the Town of St. Croix Falls can provide information to Landowners and Residents?

- 138 Direct Mailings
- 45 Newsletters
- 31 Town's website
- 26 Public Meetings

Other: Emails-15 requests  
 This may depend on topic. Some messages urgent. Clerk & Board discuss on this.  
 Post online somehow-website, face book or email meeting minutes.  
 Website-Cost effective.  
 Facebook  
 Social Media Groups?

198 Surveys returned. 23 Returned Undeliverable.

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*RE: Comments related to Question #6 in the 'Town of St. Croix Falls Community Survey' November 2021.*

I recommend that the Town of St. Croix Falls would move to be part of the Polk County Zoning and would allow the County to manage and police the zoning regulations. I make this recommendation on the following experience and ideas:

1. As a Licensed Land Surveyor who regularly works with zoning regulations and the municipalities that manage them, it is much easier to conduct projects under one set of rules county wide as opposed to each township having their own differing regulations related to minimum lot sizes, setbacks, etc. One set of rules allows me to provide information more readily to clients. This often ends up saving time on projects because I do not have to read through Town specific regulations and or wait for a reply from a town official on an interpretation of a zoning regulation as it relates to a specific situation. This may be a similar situation for many other contractors, landscapes, or do it yourself property owners whose projects should be following specific zoning regulations.
2. The County has a staffed department specifically assigned the task of only handling zoning questions, paperwork, on-site inspections, and the policing of zoning ordinances. The staff includes individuals who are formally educated in Zoning Administration. The staff also has an in-depth knowledge of other state regulations and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulations. The staff also includes a licensed land surveyor. The licensed land surveyor regularly aids the zoning department in navigating complexities, complications and possible legal implications related to parcel boundary locations as they relate to proposed projects.
3. I believe in this day-and-age a GIS (Geographic Information Systems) parcel mapping system is a vital tool in managing zoning regulations and district boundaries. This is not new technology and provides many useful tools to efficiently police and provide answers as to how and where zoning regulations apply. The County employs a GIS coordinator who helps manage the technical aspect of the GIS parcel mapping system. The GIS Coordinator and the County Surveying department are the individuals largely responsible for the information available on the public GIS parcel mapping portal. These individuals have a wealth of knowledge of how and why the lines are located the way they are on said mapping portal and they have been more than willing to provide answers to my questions and have worked jointly with me to seek solutions.
4. By employing the various personnel described above this usually allows for a one stop shop for answers to any questions, even the most challenging. Both the Polk County Zoning Department and the County Surveyor usually answer my questions within a 24-hour window. They have always provided accurate interpretations of zoning regulations and cite what ordinance a certain decision is based upon if there are any questions or concern of legal implications. When issues have presented themselves, the department has been willing to meet in person whether on a private site or an in-person meeting within a 7-day window to discuss the matter. They then jointly work with me to find a resolution for the property owner.
5. In my experience the Polk County Zoning department also does a thorough job of policing their zoning regulations. They regularly perform on-site inspections to verify improvements have been constructed in the proper location as they relate to the legal deeded or platted boundary lines. The Land Information Officer / County Surveyor regularly reviews deeds and surveys which change the boundaries of parcels to ensure that subdivision regulations and zoning regulations are being followed. These reviews are not required by ordinance; however, it is something the county monitors to ensure regulations are being followed.