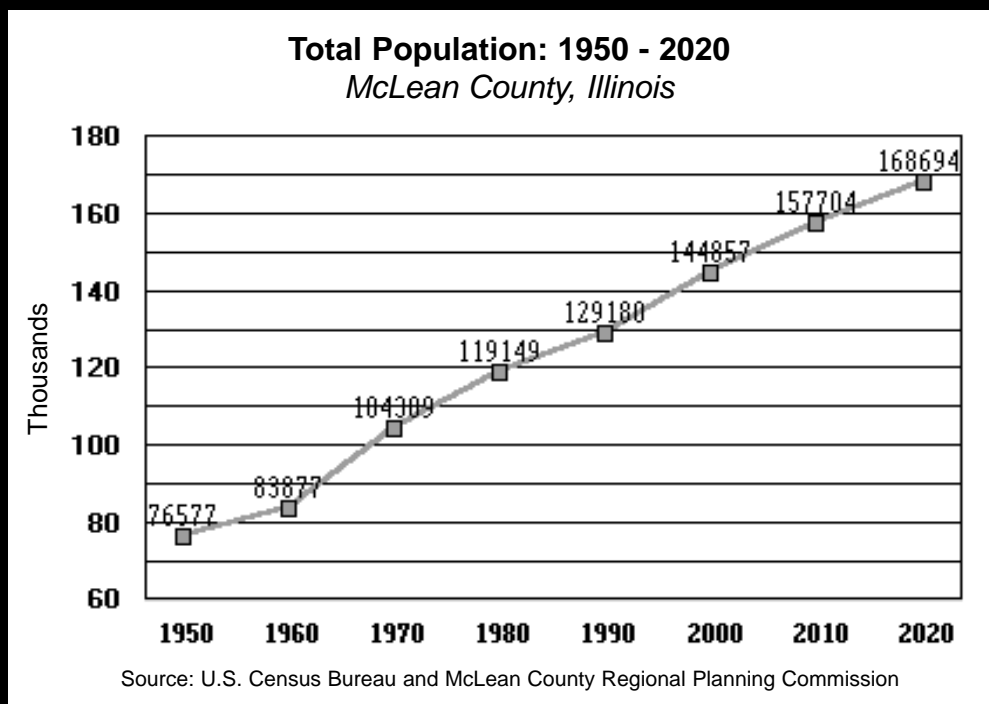


Technical Report on McLean County Growth Survey

June 6, 2001



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Regional Planning Commission**

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	i
I. Introduction	1
II. Methodology	1
III. Results	2
Quality of Life	2
Should Growth Continue?	3
How Should Future Growth Proceed?	3
Demographics	4
IV. Summary and Conclusions	5
Appendix A	7
Appendix B	8
Appendix C	9

I. Introduction

This report is a summary of a population growth survey (“Growth Survey”) distributed to McLean County residents in March, 2001. The survey asked residents about their feelings toward quality of life issues, population growth, natural resource and farmland preservation, and forms of future urban development. It was conducted as part of the implementation of the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan (“Plan”), which was adopted by the City of Bloomington, Town of Normal, and County of McLean in the summer of 2000.

The Plan was prepared by the McLean County Regional Planning Commission in cooperation with the citizens and local units of government of McLean County. In particular, a citizen’s advisory committee was formed for each element of the Plan, and was charged with developing goals, objectives, policies, and priority strategies. The citizen’s advisory committee which addressed the population element of the Plan recommended that: 1) population growth rates consistent with locally adopted comprehensive plan be utilized for design purposes of the plan, and 2) that public surveys and discussions on growth alternatives be conducted to provide an expanded decision making basis regarding growth issues. This survey was to be conducted within one year of the adoption of the Plan.

Accordingly, upon adoption of the Plan, McLean County Regional Planning staff asked the citizen’s advisory committee to continue meeting and assist with the implementation of their recommendation. The committee, plus the addition of three new members, evolved into the Growth Advisory Committee (“GAC”). The GAC met regularly from July, 2000 until March, 2001 in order to develop the growth survey and coordinate a community forum on population growth in McLean County. The community forum was conducted in March, 2001 at the McLean County Museum of History in order to heighten the public’s awareness of the issues covered in the survey and encourage those who would be receiving a survey to complete and return it. A press release announcing the community forum and a synopsis of the event are included with this report as Appendices A and B, respectively.

II. Methodology

The Growth Survey was administered to 3,500 residents of McLean County. The survey was scientifically conducted such that the following results are statistically significant and can be justifiably generalized for the County as a whole. The 3,500 residents who received the survey represented a random sample provided to the Growth Advisory Committee by a professional survey company, Survey Sampling Inc.

Names and addresses were chosen through the sampling method known as cluster sampling with proportional allocation, where residents were clustered based on their township or rural location. This allows for a sample wherein the proportion of residents receiving the survey in each city or rural location is exactly equal to the proportion of county residents living in that location. This method successfully eliminates the bias that would result from an over-sampling of either rural or urban residents.

The population from which the sample was chosen included only residences listed in the McLean County phone book. Since this excludes any residence without a listed telephone number, which accounts for 16.43% of the population of McLean County, the sample does include some bias. On the other hand, this method does successfully exclude college students and other temporary residents from the sample.

A total of 548 respondents returned completed surveys out of the 3,500 that were distributed. This represents a response rate of 15.66% and provides a sample size that is large enough to generate statistically significant results. The survey itself contained nineteen multiple choice questions which covered four topics: quality of life, open space and farmland, community and economic development, and a section aimed at establishing the demographic characteristics of the respondents. A scale reproduction of the original survey along with an indication of the frequency of responses to each question follows this report in Appendix C.

III. Results

Quality of Life

The first of the four sections covered in the Growth Survey was designed to establish the values and opinions of the respondents regarding quality of life issues in McLean County. In this section respondents were asked which issues, from a given set, were most important to them and then subsequently how they felt these issues would be affected by growth. The issues ranged from cultural offerings to low taxes.

Among those issues selected as most important was short commute and low traffic, with 71.8% of the respondents indicating this as either an important or very important issue. When asked how growth would affect traffic and commute, 83.1% of the respondents believed that it would be harmed. Similarly, 95.8% of the survey respondents selected clean environment as an important or very important issue. Again however, 69.2% believed that the environment would be harmed by growth. Finally, 86.1% of the survey respondents stated that a low tax rate was either important or very important to the quality of life in McLean County. 53.5%, however, believe that the tax rate would increase with growth.

Several issues that were deemed important to the quality of life in McLean County were also expected to be improved by growth. 79.6% of survey respondents selected job opportunities as important or very important in maintaining a high quality of life. 62.0% of the respondents felt that growth would improve job opportunities. Likewise, 93.9% of the respondents said that the presence of quality healthcare was important or very important for maintaining a high quality of life. When asked how growth would affect this key component of the community, only 17.3% said that growth would harm it. That is, 59.2% of the respondents said that growth would either improve or not affect the quality of healthcare in McLean County.

Should Growth Continue?

Section Two of the Growth Survey dealt with the degree and rate of growth and its impact on open space and farmland. Specifically, the survey asked residents if governments should play a role in future growth and how they believed growth and development should be balanced with the desire to preserve McLean County's natural resources. Almost half of the respondents (47.4%) felt that government should neither encourage nor discourage future growth, with the other half split between favoring government's encouraging of growth (24.6%) and discouraging of future growth (25.2%).

Only 28.8% of the respondents favored unrestricted future growth, with 70.9% of the survey respondents favoring government imposition of some method of limiting future growth. The most popular methods of limiting future growth were the enforcement of stricter zoning laws (48.2%) and the encouragement of growth in the smaller towns of McLean County, rather than Bloomington/Normal (39.4%).

When asked what the ideal population size would be for the city in which they lived, 32.7 % of respondents selected 100,000--119,000 (the range in which Bloomington-Normal currently falls). A second result, which further implies that respondents are opposed to unchecked future growth, is that 63.1% of the survey respondents believe that growth in McLean County should proceed on either a slower, or zero, growth rate.

Further analysis reveals that those respondents who favored either a slower, or zero growth rate were more likely to prefer living in smaller towns (54.3% prefer towns with less than 100, 000 people). Those who prefer a slower, or zero growth rate are also most likely to believe that government should neither encourage or discourage growth (51.5% compared to 37.9% for those who prefer the current or faster growth rate). Finally, those who prefer slower growth are most likely to support some means for limiting growth, with the most popular being the enforcement of stricter zoning laws (53.5%).

How Should Future Growth Proceed?

The conservation of natural resources, e.g. prime farmland, trees, and undeveloped areas, was a major concern among the survey respondents. In fact, 83.8% of the respondents felt that the conservation of natural resources was a good reason to curtail further urban expansion. Similarly, 44.5% of the respondents favored local governments spending money on this type of conservation, while only 2.0% favored spending to support new growth (the remaining 39.1% supported local government spending money "both to support new growth and to conserve natural resources").

For further analysis the issue of whether or not local governments should spend money to conserve natural resources, to support new growth, or for both, was broken down among those who favor growth at the current or faster rate and those who would prefer growth at a slower or zero rate. Those who are in favor of the current or faster rate of growth were most likely to believe that governments should spend money for both the encouragement of growth and the

conservation of natural resources (67.8%), whereas those who favor slower or zero growth were most likely to favor government spending on natural resource conservation alone (59.4%). This further shows that McLean County residents rank the conservation of natural resources as a very high priority; even those who favor faster growth believe that steps must be taken to preserve natural resources.

Considering the respondents' concern for quality of life issues, such as traffic and the environment, it is not surprising that the majority support the development of new neighborhood centers (40.9% "support somewhat" plus 21.1% "support strongly"), which would strive to accommodate new growth and retain the high quality of life. These neighborhood centers would include shops, businesses, and multi-family dwellings, within walking distance of various types of housing. In fact, 51.7% of the survey respondents stated that they would consider living in this type of neighborhood development, providing evidence of a strong potential market. In fact, 39.5% of the survey respondents indicated that they would support these types of neighborhood developments even if they featured higher density developments such as townhouses, duplexes, and/or apartments above stores.

In further support of the development of new neighborhood centers, 43.3% of the respondents indicated that they believe that it is in these types of locations that future business growth should be encouraged. Another 61.4% said that business growth should occur in the downtowns of Bloomington/Normal, while only 24.7% believed that growth should continue along Veteran's Parkway. An overwhelming 83.7% of the survey respondents believe government should invest more resources to renew older neighborhoods and to encourage people to live there. Responses were mixed however, regarding whether or not Bloomington/Normal should share a portion of sales tax revenue to make it more feasible to revitalize the smaller towns of McLean County (39.5% in favor; 46.8% opposed).

A link seems to exist between those who favor the development of new neighborhood centers and those who favor the alternative development strategies described above. Supporters of the neighborhood center concept were 14.8% less likely than non-supporters to believe that growth should continue along Veteran's Parkway. Instead, these respondents were 12% more likely than non-supporters of neighborhood centers to prefer that growth be encouraged in the downtowns of Bloomington and Normal and in the smaller towns of McLean County. Finally, those who favor neighborhood centers were 19.0% more likely to support governments spending money on the revitalization of older neighborhoods.

Overall, less than one-third of the survey respondents actually said that they did not want any more growth in McLean County (29.9%). The majority, however, were concerned with the aesthetics of the current growth and would like to see future growth become more attractive (36.8%).

Demographics

In order to better assess the opinions gathered from the Growth Survey, a final section was included to establish the background of the respondents. Overwhelmingly, the survey

respondents had lived in McLean County for over 10 years (81.5%) and were distributed among the townships and rural areas in a way that mirrored population distribution. When asked why they lived in McLean County, respondents stated job and family as the most prevalent explanation. Finally, 84.2% of the respondents claimed to follow the local discussion of development issues as least “some”.

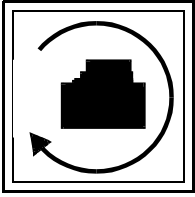
Respondents who have lived in McLean County more than 10 years were 16.4% more likely to prefer that growth continue at a slower or zero growth rate. Further, those who favor slower growth are 9.6% more likely to follow the local discussion concerning growth issues.

IV. Summary and Conclusions

The following key points summarize the conclusions which can be drawn from the results from the McLean County Growth Survey:

- A clear majority felt growth would adversely affect the important quality of life features of traffic and commute, clean environment and low tax rate, while improving those of job opportunities and health care;
- Almost half of the respondents felt that government should neither encourage nor discourage future growth, with the other half split between favoring government’s encouraging and discouraging future growth;
- Nearly two-thirds indicated that growth in McLean County should proceed on either a slower, or zero, growth rate;
- For those favoring limits on future growth, the most popular methods were the enforcement of stricter zoning laws and the encouragement of growth in the smaller towns of McLean County, followed by imposition of fees on new development, and limiting the number of building permits;
- An overwhelming majority of the survey respondents felt that the conservation of natural resources was a good reason to curtail further urban expansion;
- Even those who favor faster growth believe that steps must be taken to preserve natural resources;
- Nearly two-thirds of the survey respondents support the development of new, mixed use, neighborhood centers intended to accommodate new growth and retain the high quality of life;
- Over half of the survey respondents stated that they would consider living in this type of neighborhood center based development;
- An overwhelming majority of the survey respondents believe that government should invest more resources to renew older neighborhoods and to encourage people to live there;
- Approximately thirty percent of the survey respondents indicated they did not want any more growth in McLean County;
- Over one-third of the survey respondents were concerned with the aesthetics of the current growth and would like to see future growth become more attractive;

- The overwhelming majority of the survey respondents had lived in McLean County for over ten years due mainly to job and family, mirrored the geographic distribution of population, and claimed to follow the local discussion of population issues at least “some”.



MCLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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APPENDIX A

March 6, 2001

- For Immediate Release -

Panel Members Announced for Community Growth Forum in McLean County

Contact: Mark Dravillas, Community Planner
(309) 828-4331

Is growth in McLean County too slow, too fast, just right, or should it be just a little bit different? **The public of McLean County will be given the opportunity to give their input on these and other questions regarding growth and development in the area at a community-wide forum being hosted by the Growth Advisory Committee of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission on Wednesday, March 7 at 7 PM at the McLean County Museum of History.**

The day after the forum a random, scientifically valid survey will be mailed to 3,500 residents of McLean County. It will gauge the public's opinions on future growth in the County and what they think future growth should look like.

The forum will include a keynote address on the costs and benefits of growth by Dr. Gerrit Knaap, a professor with the University of Illinois Department of Urban and Regional Planning (see enclosed biography). Following Dr. Knaap's remarks, local panelists will have an opportunity to express their divergent views on urban growth in the region. Panelists include Dr. Walter Mead, Professor Emeritus from Illinois State University, Dr. Dan Hammel, Professor of Geography from Illinois State University, Mr. Paul C. Nicholson, City Manager with the City of Streator, Illinois, and Mr. Don Adams, PE, Manager of the Land Development Section of the Farnsworth Group. Biographies of three of the panel members are included with this fax. Feel free to contact the panel members or keynote speaker for preliminary comments. The event will be moderated by Mr. Barry Weer, former commissioner with the McLean County Regional Planning Commission and former board member with District 87 School District.

The goals of the forum will be to 1) facilitate positive discussion regarding growth and development, 2) heighten the public's awareness of the mail survey that will be sent soon after the forum and 3) encourage those who receive the survey to complete and return it.

This project is one of the first steps in the implementation of the McLean County Regional Comprehensive Plan ("A Guide to Sensible Growth Through Regional Cooperation", available at www.mcplan.org). A citizen committee (now known as the Growth Advisory Committee) that assisted with the formation of the plan recommended the survey with the intent of encouraging public discussion on growth alternatives during the first year after the adoption of the plan. Results of the survey will be made available to local elected officials and the public for consideration in making decisions regarding future growth in the Region.

The mission of the MCRPC is to prepare and advocate the implementation of plans for coordinated and harmonious development that enhances the quality of life in McLean County. Anyone interested in learning more about the MCRPC and planning in general can contact the office by phone at (309) 828-4331 or at www.mcplan.org.

APPENDIX B

SYNOPSIS

**McLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC FORUM ON POPULATION GROWTH IN McLEAN COUNTY
Conducted By The Growth Advisory Committee Of
McLean County Regional Planning Commission
Wednesday, March 7, 2001 - 7:00-8:30 p.m.
McLean County Museum Of History-200 North Main-Bloomington, IL**

Members Present:

Vice-chair Sharon McGinnis, Scott King, James Pearson, Jim Rutherford, Janet Smith, Sue Strang

Members Absent:

Chairman Richard Buchanan, William Bartley, Don Fernandes, Richard Percy

Others Present:

Attendance was estimated at 75.

Agenda:

-Greeting and Opening Remarks

Sharon A. McGinnis, Vice-Chairperson, McLean County Regional Planning Commission

-Introduction of Panelists and Keynote Speaker

Barry Weer, Program Moderator and Chairman of the Growth Advisory Committee

-Keynote Address: Costs and Benefits of Growth

Gerrit Knaap, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Illinois in Champaign

-Position Statements by Panel Members

Donald Adams, Consulting Engineer, Farnsworth & Wylie

Daniel Hammel, Professor of Geography at Illinois State University

Walter Mead, Professor of Political Science at Illinois State University (Retired)

Paul C. Nicholson, City Manager of Streator, IL and former City Manager of Barrington, IL

-Panel Discussion with Audience Participation - Moderated by Barry Weer

-Closing Remarks

Barry Weer

Adjournment:

The forum was adjourned at 8:30 p. m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark A. Wasakoski
Office Manager

Appendix C McLean County Growth Survey

The Growth Advisory Committee of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission is conducting a survey on area growth and development. Your participation will aid efforts to maintain the high quality of life in McLean County. A report summarizing the results of this survey will inform local officials regarding residents' feelings toward future growth. Your individual responses will be kept completely confidential. No identification of individuals can or will be made.

Please complete the following short survey and mail it by March 23rd. Feel free to contact Mark Dravillas, Community Planner, by phone at (309) 828-4331 or email at mark@mcplan.org with any questions. *Thank you!*

QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES

1. How important are the following to you in terms of what they contribute to quality of life? Please check one box per row.

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Short commute, low traffic congestion	5.2%	23%	38.8%	33%
Clean environment	0.4%	3.9%	31.1%	64.7%
Shopping opportunities	6%	34.8%	40.6%	18.5%
Job opportunities	6.6%	13.9%	33.3%	46.3%
Sense of community	3.2%	20.3%	48.8%	27.8%
Cultural offerings	11.6%	32.8%	36.7%	18.9%
Personal safety	0.4%	2.6%	21%	76%
Affordable housing	3%	9.6%	39.8%	47.5%
Low taxes	1.1%	12.8%	31.2%	54.9%
Parks and recreation	2.4%	26.4%	41.8%	29.4%
Schools	3.7%	9.1%	33.7%	53.4%
Healthcare	1.9%	4.3%	33.6%	60.3%
Other: please list	8.5%		19.1%	72.3%

2. To what extent do you feel future population growth in Bloomington/Normal will improve or harm the following quality of life issues throughout McLean County? Please check one box per row.

	Growth will improve	Growth will not affect	Growth will harm	Don't know
Short commute, low traffic congestion	2.4%	7.9%	83.1%	6.6%
Clean environment	3%	16.7%	69.2%	11.1%
Shopping opportunities	68.3%	18.7%	4.4%	8.6%
Job opportunities	62%	14.5%	11.1%	12.4%
Sense of community	6.3%	21.8%	50.3%	21.6%
Cultural offerings	47.1%	27.9%	5.1%	19.9%
Personal safety	4.7%	17.3%	65.3%	12.7%
Affordable housing	14.9%	16.2%	51.7%	17.2%
Low taxes	11.9%	15.3%	53.3%	19.6%
Parks and recreation	30.7%	29.6%	20.9%	18.8%
Schools	21.6%	14.7%	49.1%	14.7%
Healthcare	29.5%	29.7%	17.3%	23.6%
Other: please list	35.5%	16.1%	41.9%	6.5%

The current population of Bloomington/Normal is about 109,000. It could be in the range of 130,000 to 150,000 by the year 2020.

3. Considering your responses to questions #1 and #2, do you feel local governments should encourage, neither encourage nor discourage, or discourage further population growth for Bloomington/Normal? (Check one)

- 1 [] encourage (24.6%)
 2 [] neither encourage nor discourage (47.4%)
 3 [] discourage (25.2%)
 4 [] Other: _____ (2.8%)

4. In your opinion, what is the ideal population size of the city in which you would like to live? (Check one)

- 1 [] 1 - 49,999 (18.3%)
 2 [] 50,000 - 99,999 (22.4%)
 3 [] 100,000 - 119,999 (32.7%)
 4 [] 120,000 - 149,999 (15.7%)
 5 [] 150,000 - 249,999 (7.1%)
 6 [] 250,000 - 499,999 (2.6%)
 7 [] more than 499,999 (1.1%)

5. Do you feel further population growth for Bloomington/Normal should proceed (Check one):

- 1 [] at a faster rate (1.5%)
 2 [] at about the present rate (31.7%)
 3 [] at a slower rate than present (49.2%)
 4 [] zero growth rate (13.9%)
 5 [] don't know (3.7%)

6. Which of the following means, if any, should local governments rely on to limit further population growth in Bloomington/Normal? (Check as many as you wish)

- 1 [] I do not favor limits on further growth (28.8%)
 2 [] enforce stricter zoning laws (48.2%)
 3 [] limit the number of building permits (35.9%)
 4 [] encourage growth in smaller towns (39.4%)
 5 [] impose additional fees on new development (37.5%)
 6 [] Other: (19.2%)

OPEN SPACE AND FARMLAND

7. To what extent do you feel that the conservation of natural resources (prime farmland, trees, natural areas) in central Illinois is a good reason to curtail or direct urban expansion? (Check one)

- 1 [] good reason (83.8%)
 2 [] indifferent (10.1%)
 3 [] not a good reason (6.1%)

8. Do you favor local governments spending money (Check one):

- 1 [] to conserve natural resources (44.5%)
 2 [] to support new growth (2.0%)
 3 [] both to support new growth and to conserve natural resources (39.1%)
 4 [] for neither (14.3%)

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

9. In some cities, new developments include a variety of housing types (smaller and larger single family) within walking distance of a neighborhood center, which includes shops, parks, businesses, and multi-family housing.

Do you support or oppose this type of development? (Check one)

- 1 [] Support strongly (21.1%)
 2 [] Support somewhat (40.9%)
 3 [] Oppose somewhat (13.7%)
 4 [] Oppose strongly (5.5%)
 5 [] Don't know/not sure (18.9%)

10. Would you personally consider living in this type of neighborhood development?

- 1 [] Yes (51.7%)
 2 [] No (48.3%)

11. Would you support this type of neighborhood development if it features somewhat higher densities (townhouses, duplexes, and/or apartments above stores) in or near the neighborhood center?

- 1 [] Yes (39.5%)
 2 [] No (60.5%)

12. Where and in what form should future business development be encouraged? (Check all that apply)

- 1 [] Continue development like that along Veterans Parkway (24.7%)
- 2 [] In the downtowns of Bloomington/Normal and smaller towns (61.4%)
- 3 [] New neighborhood centers (accessible by foot, bike, bus, and car) with shopping, park space, and other amenities (43.3%)
- 4 [] Other: _____ (9.8%)

13. Do you think government should invest more resources (for example, low interest loans, grants, support for social services) to renew older neighborhoods to encourage people to live there?

- 1 [] Yes (83.7%)
- 2 [] No (16.3%)

14. Do you think Bloomington/Normal should share a portion of sales tax revenues to make it more feasible to revitalize the smaller towns of McLean County?

- 1 [] Yes (39.5%)
- 2 [] No (46.8%)
- 3 [] Depends: _____ (13.7%)

15. Please select the statement which best describes your opinions about growth in Bloomington/Normal-McLean County (Check one):

- 1 [] I don't want any more growth in the area (29.9%)
- 2 [] I don't mind the growth, but would like it to be more attractive (aesthetically appealing) (36.8%)
- 3 [] I am content with the way growth is occurring (23.4%)
- 4 [] other _____ (9.9%)

A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

16. How long have you lived in McLean County?

- 1 [] Less than 1 year (0.6%)
- 2 [] Between 1 and 10 years (17.9%)
- 3 [] More than 10 years (81.5%)

17. Do you live?

- 1 [] in Bloomington (46.9%)
- 2 [] in Normal (27.2%)
- 3 [] in a smaller town (8.3%)
- 4 [] in a farm area (10.7%)
- 5 [] in a rural subdivision (6.9%)

18. What reasons explain why you moved to or remain in McLean County ? (Check all that apply)

- 1 [] Job (73.1%)
- 2 [] Rural atmosphere (24.1%)
- 3 [] Schools (25.2%)
- 4 [] Family lives here (40.4%)
- 5 [] Sense of community (22.7%)
- 6 [] Lot sizes (4.0%)
- 7 [] House prices (8.0%)
- 8 [] Other (please list: _____) (11.5%)

19. How closely have you or do you follow local discussion of development issues? (Check one)

- 1 [] Very closely (33.9%)
- 2 [] Some (50.3%)
- 3 [] Not much (12.9%)
- 4 [] Not at all (2.9%)

Thanks for your time and help! Please fold the survey, staple or tape it closed and mail it by March 23rd. Feel free to write any additional comments you may have:

Please take a few minutes to tell us what you think about growth in McLean County. Your responses will help to maintain the high quality of life in the area. Thank you.

McLean County Growth Survey

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