

**Town of Big Bend, Rusk County, WI**  
**Property Owner Survey**  
**April/May 2019**

The Town of Big Bend is currently non-zoned and is in the process of determining whether to maintain that status or become zoned. If zoning is selected the Town will then determine whether to accept Rusk County Zoning or do their own Comprehensive Plan and Zoning. 654 surveys were mailed to property owners in the Town in the month of April, 2019. 294 surveys were returned, for a return rate of 45%, which is outstanding. Below are the results of this survey.

These results will follow the format of the survey. There were areas in the survey where opinions or comments were solicited. Those opinions and comments will follow the numeric tabulation. "Total" is the total number of responses for a question or of segments of a question.

1. Gender of person completing survey: Male – 215    Female – 84 (some surveys indicated that both male and female completed survey together)
  
2. Number of people in your household by age range: total citizens - 524

Under 18 – 38	7.3%
19-24 – 17	3.2%
25-34 – 12	2.3%
35-44 – 30	5.7%
45-54 – 80	15.3%
55-64 – 126	24.0%
65-74 – 156	29.8%
75-84 – 51	9.7%
85 + - 14	2.7%
  
3. Do you own your own home or rent a home or apartment? Total - 280

Own – 278	99.3%
Rent – 2	.7%
  
4. If you own your own home, what is the size of your lot? Total - 279

Less than 1 acre – 98	35.1%
1-2 acres – 68	24.4%

2-5 acres – 32	11.5%
5-10 acres – 16	5.7%
10 + acres – 65	23.3%

5. How long have you lived/owned your present location? Total - 286

Less than one year – 7	2.5%
1-3 years – 31	10.8%
4-7 years – 41	14.3%
8-12 years – 35	12.2%
13-20 years – 50	17.5%
20 + years – 122	42.7%

6. If you live on a farm, is it a commercial farm? (not a hobby farm) Total - 34

Yes – 6	17.6%
No – 28	82.4%

7. Are you: Total - 287

Employed – 133	46.3%
Unemployed – 2	.7%
Retired – 151	52.6%
In school – 1	.4%

8. If working, where do you work? Total - 132

In the Town – 12	9.1%
Outside the Town – 120	90.9%

9. Are you: Total - 275

Seasonal/weekend resident – 169	61.5%
Permanent resident – 106	38.5%

10. Why do you choose to own property in the Town of Big Bend? Total - 816

Rural Environment – 137	16.8%
Close to employment – 7	.9%
Family and friends – 69	8.5%
Family roots – 44	5.4%
Good place to raise family – 19	2.3%
Type of housing – 20	2.5%

Reasonable tax rate – 44	5.4%
Proximity to rivers and lakes – 211	25.9%
Cost of living – 22	2.7%
Quality of schools – 4	.5%
Reduce regulations – 24	2.9%
Housing costs – 3	.2%
Hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation – 212	26.0%

11. Do you feel the quality of life in the town of Big Bend is: Total - 284

Excellent – 92	32.4%
Good – 180	63.4%
Fair or poor – 12	4.2%

12. Recreational activities in the Town are: Total - 274

Adequate – 258	94.2%
Inadequate – 16	5.8%

13. What do you think is missing in the Town of Big Bend? Total - 368

Trails – 67	18.2%
Parks and open space – 47	12.8%
Restaurants – 94	25.5%
Shopping – 69	18.8%
Services/activities for senior citizens – 29	7.9%
Jobs – 49	13.3%
Other – 13	3.5%

14. Do you find the overall condition of the Town of Big Bend roads (Town):

Total - 274

Adequate – 225	82.1%
Inadequate – 49	17.9%

15. Would you be willing to pay increased taxes to upgrade Town roads?

Total - 264

Yes – 85	32.2%
No – 179	67.8%

16. Do you feel the following services are adequate in the Town?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
County Sheriff – Yes – 232, No – 18, total – 250	92.8%	7.2%
Road Department – Yes – 213, No – 36, total – 239	89.1%	10.9%
Snow removal – Yes – 220, No – 23, total – 243	90.5%	9.5%
Open government – Yes – 194, No – 16, total – 210	92.4%	7.6%
Fire – Yes – 186, No – 38, total – 224	83.0%	17.0%
Ambulance – Yes – 184, No – 40, total – 224	82.1%	17.9%
First Responders – Yes – 203, No – 21, total – 224	90.6%	9.4%
Trash collection – Yes – 190, No – 30, total – 220	86.4%	13.6%

17. Do you feel the Town should continue to bear the cost of monthly garbage/recycling at the Town Hall? Total - 273

Yes – 157	57.5%
No – 38	13.9%
No opinion – 78	28.6%

18. Do you use the Town garbage/recycling at the Town Hall? Total - 282

Yes – 136	48.2%
No – 146	51.8%

19. The biggest issue facing the Town of Big Bend in the next 10-20 years is:  
Total - 650

Managing growth – 61	9.4%
Promoting economic development – 35	5.4%
Protecting farmland from development – 90	13.8%
Maintaining/improving roads & infrastructure – 117	18.0%
Protecting the environment – 155	23.8%
Keeping taxes low – 159	24.5%
Providing more parks & recreation – 29	4.5%
Other – 4	.6%

20. Should land use policies and regulations emphasize preserving the rural character of the Town? Total - 272

Yes – 235	86.4%
No – 37	13.6%

21. Are you for or against the development of agricultural land for residential housing purposes and commercial/industrial purposes?

Residential housing, total – 288

For – 101 35.1%

Against – 96 33.3%

Not sure – 91 31.6%

Commercial/industrial, total – 251

For – 39 15.5%

Against – 139 55.4%

Not sure – 73 29.1%

22. How important is it to preserve farmland for open space and recreational purposes? Total - 278

Very important – 147 52.8%

Somewhat important – 75 27.0%

Somewhat not important – 35 12.6%

Not important – 7 2.6%

No opinion – 14 5.0%

23. Would you encourage or discourage the following land uses in the Town:

Residential single family homes

Total – 265, encourage – 240, 90.6%, discourage – 25, 9.4%

Residential multi-family homes

Total – 261, encourage – 65, 24.9%, discourage – 196, 75.1%

Senior/assisted living unites

Total – 250, encourage – 166, 66.4%, discourage – 84, 33.6%

Agriculture/farming

Total – 263, encourage – 239, 90.9%, discourage – 24, 9.1%

Light industrial manufacturing

Total – 246, encourage – 116, 47.2%, discourage – 130, 52.8%

Convenience/gas station facilities

Total – 261, encourage – 195, 74.7%, discourage – 66, 25.3%

Tourism: B and B facilities, restaurants

Total – 259, encourage – 201, 77.6%, discourage – 58, 22.4%

Campgrounds – encourage

Total – 257 – encourage – 107, 41.6%, discourage – 150, 58.4%

24. What kind of housing development should be allowed in the Town?

Single family homes on 5 acres or more

Total – 255, Yes – 232, 91.0%, No – 23, 9.0%

Single family homes on 1-2 acre lots in subdivision

Total – 247, Yes – 178, 72.1%, No – 69, 27.9%

Duplexes and or Townhouses

Total – 243, Yes – 73, 30.0%, No – 170, 70.0%

Apartment housing

Total – 243, Yes – 45, 18.5%, No – 198, 81.5%

25. Do you feel the Town should increase taxes or borrow money to modernize its facilities and/or equipment? Total - 258

Yes – 82 31.8%

No – 176 68.2%

26. If the Town grows significantly, present Town services will not need to be increased. Total - 272

Strongly agree – 26 9.6%

Agree – 61 22.4%

No position – 63 23.2%

Disagree – 100 36.8%

Strongly disagree – 22 8.0%

27. As the Town grows, should additional land be set aside for recreational use? Total - 263

Yes – 175 66.5%

No – 88 33.5%

28. Groundwater contamination is a problem in the Town. Total - 222

Yes – 59 26.6%

No – 163 73.4%

29. Pollution of lakes and streams is a problem in the Town. Total - 229

Yes – 95 41.5%

No – 134 58.5%

30. More land should be set aside for wildlife preservation. Total - 242

Yes – 145            59.9%

No – 97              40.1%

Questions 13, 14, 31, 32 and 33 requested comments so these will be addressed in the comment section.

34. The Town should take the following action regarding a Comprehensive Plan and Zoning. Total - 593

Do nothing, leave things the way they are

Yes – 49, 8.3%, No – 93, 15.7%

Adopt Rusk County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning

Yes – 39, 6.6%, No – 97, 16.4%

Develop its own Comprehensive Plan and Zoning

Yes – 150, 25.3%, No – 27, 4.6%

No opinion at this point – need more information

Yes – 103, 17.4%, No – 35, 6.7%

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**Comments**

13. What do you think is missing from the Town of Big Bend – Other

- Economic opportunity, tourism
- Gas station - 5
- Beaches on the lakes
- Good roads
- Trails, parks, recreation – picnic tables at boat landings
- Planning – Rusk County junk properties are an eye sore and they are all over
- Grocery or convenience store - 5
- Non-motorized trails
- Law enforcement - 2
- Bike trails or lanes – 2
- Closer fire protection
- More motorized trails to include motorcycle

14. Do you find the overall condition of the Town of Big Bend roads (Town only)

If inadequate, please explain:

- Road rebuilds are poor at best – need long range goal to improve
- As most infrastructure in WI – not enough funding to keep up with roads, bridges, etc.
- Roads are terrible - 2
- Pot holes - 8
- Some roads, like Rose's Bay and Dziemela roads need work - 5
- Non blacktop roads in poor condition
- Not using blacktop - 4

- Stop building blacktop roads over swamps
- The roads need a lot of work, and soon, or we will be in big trouble
- No shoulders for walking/bike riding - 2
- Blacktops not maintained and gravel not bladed properly
- Adequate for car traffic, not good for trucking
- Some culverts need to be replaced – Plummer Road
- Untimely snow removal and spring maintenance
- Gravel roads need more gravel, culverts and some need lifting
- Roads need to be plowed sooner
- Large farm has damaged Kramer Road - 2
- More dust control treatments – 2
- Snow removal this winter was excellent
- Indian Point Road not well-maintained
- They are better when we first bought our property
- Rusty Nail Road has 3 or 4 “repaired” sections that have been base course for going on 3 years. Needs to be black topped
- Poor grading on roads
- Need help installing culverts
- Roads are marked (blacktop cut) and then nothing happens for more than 2 years
- Need better maintenance
- Very poor job of maintenance, snow removal. Town has lot of old equipment, lack of skilled drivers and employees – town needs to pay employees more

19. The biggest issue facing the Town of Big Bend in the next 10-20 years is:

Other (be specific)

- Employment in private sector - 2
- No parks in Big Bend
- Protecting lakes, rivers, forests – environment - 2
- Fiber optic service installation
- Keeping the natural wooded beauty for future generations

- 4 wheeler trail access by going across bridge on highway 40
- Farmland around lakes and rivers is better off being used for development or recreation – not farming or manure spreading
- Cleaning up unsightly properties
- Concerned about increase in campgrounds – 2
- Protecting County land

31. What are your current issues owning property in the Town?

- High or increasing taxes – 47
- Miscellaneous fees and taxes will drive us off the lake
- No place to haul brush - 2
- Unstable water levels on Fireside Lake - 7
- Taxes inappropriate with services - 2
- Non-residents that own property can't vote
- Dumping along roadways - 2
- Trash on private property, junk cars - 16
- Too many public services
- Management seems to be against new development and growth
- Nice if Township would listen to the residents when you have residents who overwhelming are against something. You go against the people
- Pollution of lakes - 2
- The locals have no say in the Town - 2
- Town and County not enforcing current laws and regulations - 2
- Uncontrolled growth of campgrounds - 7
- Too many lakeshore zoning and normal zoning regulations - 8
- Getting snow removal for our road
- Brainerd Road has been improved by still needs culverts and gravel
- Not taking care of roads
- Lack of environmental accountability
- Boat landings should be plowed in winter
- Weed growth and people not protecting shorelines on Island Lake
- Want to see rural character encouraged

- Business building next to my property
- Year round and consistent road maintenance - 2
- Broadband - 4
- Lack of medical support
- Road bans which prevent garbage pickup
- Poor services
- Need to set term limits
- Road speeds on Plummer Road
- Lack of zoning – 8
- Lack of cooperation between Town and County government
- Better/quicker access to health care facilities
- Water contamination from large scale manure spreading
- Garbage/recycling pickup services needed
- When retired, taxes should be “locked in” until you die
- More agricultural regulation
- Access during snow storms
- Over regulation - 2
- Growth
- No Sunday garbage services - 2
- Allow single family homes on 1 acre lots
- Regulating well/septic systems
- Trespassing and damage of land - 3
- Our well has very high concentration of nitrates due to ground water contamination – Willy road
- Arbitrary way building permits are handed out
- Not enough swimming places
- Keep garbage/recycling center open
- Need more ATV trails
- Need shopping and gas closer by - 2
- Having to pay for parking permit for our trailer on land we have owned for 13 years and still have to pay high taxes - 2
- A neighbor is trying to turn his 18 acre property into a campground which will give access to my land
- Road to Clear Lake boat landing poorly maintained
- Tripled our taxes in one year and didn't see other property owners have the same increase - discrimination

32. What is your biggest concern about the future of the Town?

- Improve farming community and have city children help out on farms
- Will our children be able to keep our lake property?
- More taxes and/or government interference - 13
- Maintain open spaces and fishing/hunting environment - 2
- Maintain present quality recreation while not affecting environment
- Development of industry and commercial
- Keep character
- Growth or overcrowding - 14
- Law enforcement
- Balance to provide all services for land use so affordable to attract younger families
- Crowds
- Beaver on Potato Creek
- Limit ground water use for irrigation
- Local residents paying the tax dollars for campgrounds where the people in the campgrounds pay nothing and they are using the lakes and hunting areas
- Lack of support for growth and development
- Our leadership is outstanding so keep on doing what you are doing - 2
- Lake people get everything
- No jobs – difficult to get/keep people
- Uncontrolled growth of campgrounds - 16
- Too much traffic
- Town Board not paying attention to what citizens want – small campground
- No sand mines – 13
- Town should be more concerned about roads - 5
- Town should help and pay more attention to senior citizens
- Manage environmental issues – especially lakes, streams and rivers - 6
- Avoid large CAFO farming operations - 11
- Increased role of setbacks
- Snow removal taking 10-12 hours
- Road plowing prior to 3 years ago was good, not now
- Water quality or pollution - 3
- Continue to grow but provide adequate services and reasonable taxes - 3

- Balance growth with need to protect environment while providing green space and provide diversity of low, moderate and high income properties
- Keep Town with a rural, non-commercial, non-industrial state of life
- Build more family houses to build tax base
- Town Board members becoming a clique
- Uncontrolled growth - 3
- Want light pollution measures in the Comprehensive Plan
- Loss of agricultural land
- Flooding
- Need better representation with the County
- Growth brings more crime
- Over regulation – 2
- Property only available to out-of-towners because of high values
- No heavy industry
- Commercialism
- No strip clubs
- Decisions in Town are being made by small group of people – need open dialogue
- Communication and access to Town information
- Upgrading roads
- Roads have improved
- Too much development
- No gas stations
- Too much ATV noise
- Nice to have recycling center – 2
- Comprehensive plan too expensive to develop and then enforce
- Lakes need more fish stocking and removal of weeds
- Deterioration of roads
- No jobs
- Ground water contamination
- Town Board's disregard of prevailing opinions on many matters
- Need more people at Town Board meetings
- Town needs to grow to expand tax base
- Unregulated growth – 50-100 campers in what used to be a wetland
- Feels questionnaire is bias with a slant towards limiting the rights of private landowners/farmers

- Fear that of declining school system with no opportunities for young people will leave just retired people
- Town not doing good job of encouraging growth
- Not enough jobs, recreational businesses, young people
- Wants CSM and small cluster subdivisions for smaller lot residential
- Preservation of waterways and natural lands
- Continuing decline in population in Town and County

33. What changes in the Town (positive or negative) over the past 10-20 years have you noticed?

- Building large homes around the lakes – very disturbing! - 2
- Town governors doing a great job – 6
- Let markets determine our future - 2
- Helicopter pad – 5
- Addition of new, small plow truck
- Not much growth in recreational sector
- Lake condition deteriorating – 4
- Good at maintaining roads - 5
- More campgrounds – negative - 10
- Decline of small farms – good and bad
- Good snow removal - 3
- No zoning – need it
- ATV/UTV running on State highway
- Concern about keeping the lakes healthy
- Great on fish cribs on Fireside and Sand Lakes
- We are lucky to have EMTs doing such a great job
- Movement from permanent residents to seasonal residents
- More and more campgrounds and storage units
- Seasonal people have says in what goes on in Town
- Better communication with citizens
- People getting variances for large, view blocking size homes
- Roads have gotten bad - 2
- Town getting involved in areas the Rusk County Board controls
- Less quietness – getting too commercial
- Re-cycling, at this point, is big asset to the Town - 2

- First responders are an important addition - 2
- Usage of lakes - 2
- The State budget cuts and how it has negatively affected Big Bend
- Love the simple, rural lifestyle
- Town Hall a plus - 2
- Equipment has improved – could use another dump truck
- Too much litter – signs be put up to remind people and respect Town
- Black topping of roads – good
- Fireside Lake fluctuates so much – ruined docks, shore lines, etc.
- Irrigation with high pressure wells – negative
- Reluctance to take over new private gravel roads. Pondell Lane West should be a Town Road - 2
- Fewer employment opportunities
- Unreliable electricity – Jump River Electric needs underground lines
- Increased drug use
- Disrespect shown to fisherman on lakes, especially by campground occupants
- Having equipment to repair roads
- Lakeshore zoning – negative - 2
- Town Board and services have declined. Board needs to be more open with spending
- Lack of emergency services
- Better roads and road maintenance - 3
- Too many “permanent” camping trailers – non-paying tax structures
- Wonderful place to live – we should open the Town up to more growth
- Pressure to sell “back” lots around lakes for development
- Too many campers and tourists polluting our lakes with no regard for private land and the damage done to our Town roads with their ATVs
- Town recycling center is nice to have
- Lakes not as clean as they used to be
- Structures that are deteriorating and not allowed to rebuild because of zoning regulations
- Involvement of our residents in the community
- Crop farming has increased – farmers need to take responsibility for soil erosion and pollution
- Bow fishing – hours need to be managed

- Need housing for the poor
- Positive – taking care of Town roads - 4
- More tourism, growth, traffic
- Over use of boat landings and lakes from campground residents - 2
- Rules and restrictions don't seem to apply to everyone uniformly
- Positive – taxation
- Too many multi-family lake shore dwellings
- Question whether the Town has purchased the right equipment to do necessary work. Roads are below levels of other surrounding Towns
- Influx of rich/affluent lakefront owners who are only ones who can afford high taxes are trying to dictate what other landowners can do with their property
- Positive – active lake association
- Negative – not enough sheriff patrols
- Fireside lake floods more often and severely
- Seems to be more economically depressed
- Trailer tax on land we have owned for 13 years
- Effort to discourage camping is stunting growth possibilities
- Positive – fiber optic internet, less haphazard assessments
- Negative – fireworks and Personal Watercraft
- Over development of lakeshore lands
- Increased tourism and recreational homes, vehicles
- Lack of enforcement of ordinance on junk cars
- Town hasn't kept up with maintenance needed due to growth
- Campground occupants not paying their fair share of taxes
- Was glad to see Dziemela Road paved