

TOWNSHIP OF SABLES-SPANISH RIVERS

2024-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

PUBLIC SURVEY RESULT REPORT



STRATEGIC PLAN PUBLIC SURVEY RESULT REPORT

Background:

The Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers initiated a review of the expired 2018-2021 Strategic Plan with the intent of adopting a new plan for 2024-2028. Please see the results from this review in the Phase 1 and 2 Summary Report available on the Township website or paper copies are available at the Township Office.

According to 2021 Census data from Statistics Canada, the total population of Sables-Spanish Rivers is 3,237. The structure consists of 15.1% being 14 years old and under, 60.4% being 15-64 years old and 25.6% being 65+. The average age of the population in 2021 was 45.6 years old, the median age being 50.4 years old.

Process:

Council and the Strategic Plan Steering Committee are aware that community input and collaboration is essential to the success of this initiative. Therefore, a public survey was launched on October 3rd, 2023, and was open until the 3rd of November 2023. The intent of the survey was to be step one in the public consultation process to understand the general wants and needs of community members, and ensure the strategic goals established by Council represented residents needs as well.

The Township is committed to providing accessible means for all residents to contribute to Township operations and collaborations. The survey was available through a digital format (survey monkey) and paper copies were distributed throughout the Township for residents to return to the municipal office. Advertising of the survey included hard copy posters and advertisements in the local publication and municipal newsletter, social media posts, in person information sessions, radio advertisements, and all information was continuously updated on the Township website. A total of 158 responses were received, made up of 133 digital and 25 hard copy responses. All responses were completed anomalously. Hard copy responses were inputted into the digital system by the Deputy Clerk.

The results of this survey have been related back to the defined Strategic Goals established in the review phase. Insights from survey answers will be used to create specific questions to ask the public in future information sessions, to further assist Council to adopt a Strategic Plan that represents the needs of all residents.

What are the established Strategic Goals?

Quality of Life- this goal relates to the overall health and wellness of the community. Potential directions that fall under this goal include health care services, community pride, housing initiatives and alternatives, accessibility, recreational and social programs, and emergency management.

Community Aesthetics- focuses on bylaw enforcement relating to property standards, recycling programs, and encouraging cleanliness within the community through beautification efforts.

Infrastructure- the goal being to maintain and update municipal infrastructure including roads, buildings, and public spaces. This goal also includes the maintenance of equipment and any other municipal assets in accordance with the Township's Asset Management Plan.

Economic Growth and Tourism- focus is on building and maintaining a prosperous economy through the promotion of local businesses, community events and tourism efforts to increase visitor traffic off Highway 17.

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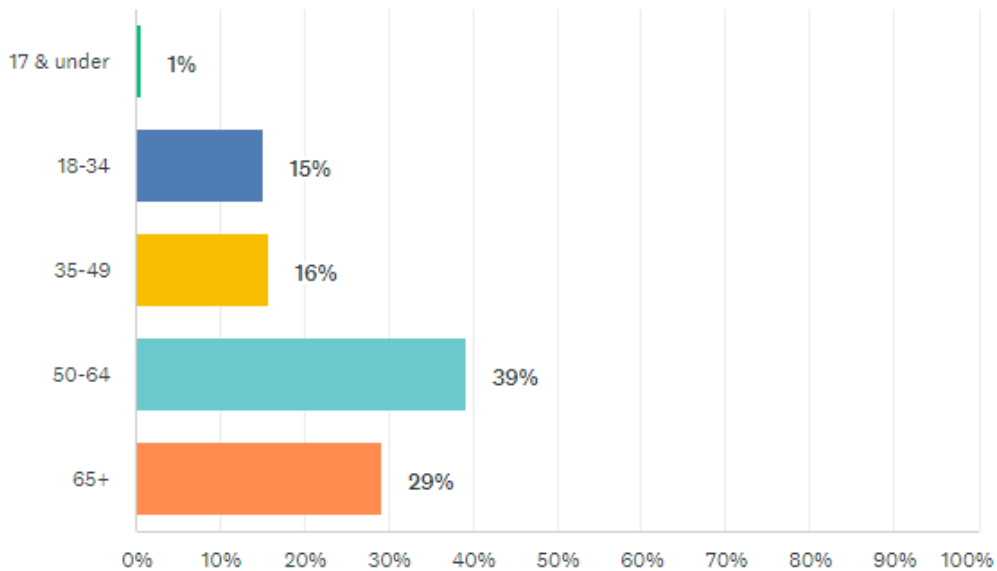
Effective Government- centered on effective communication efforts with the public, increasing usage of municipal facilities, a structured and legislative compliant human resources plan for municipal staff, training opportunities, retention and succession planning and interdepartmental communication.

Survey Insights Per Question:

The results of each question are discussed individually below.

[Question 1- What is your age?](#)

This question was included to determine the age-demographic of the individuals taking the survey. See the age demographics of participants below:



[Question 2- Where do you live or own property?](#)

The intention of this question was to determine which “community” within the Township majority of participants resided in. 68% of participants lived in Massey, 19% in Webbwood, and 13% were from Walford.

[Question 3- What setting do you live in?](#)

This question was designed to be able to further identify rural vs. urban needs within the community. 63% answered they lived in a rural setting, while 37% answered they lived in an urban setting.

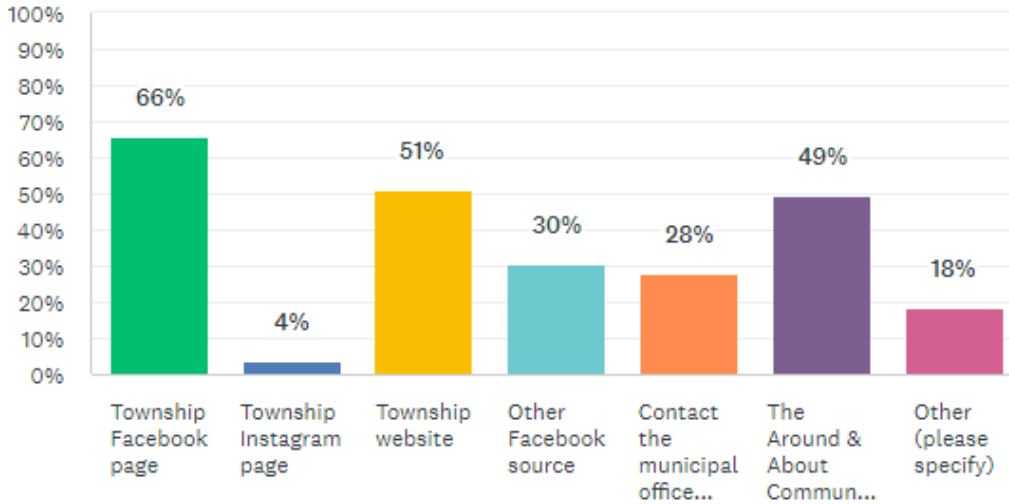
[Question 4- Do you work within the Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers?](#)

Participants were asked if they work within the Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers to get a sense of how many jobs are available within the community, this was not a mandatory question. 61 participants said they worked in the Township, while 98 did not. It is recognized that some people who answered “no” are most likely retired as 68% of participants were 50+.

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[Question 5- What source do you use to get information on Township news and operations? Select all that apply.](#)

The top three sources where participants receive Township news and information are the Township Facebook page, the Township website, and The Around & About Community Page. The table below displays the percentage of use per source:



A total of 29 “Other” sources where participants said they receive information regarding the Township were recorded:

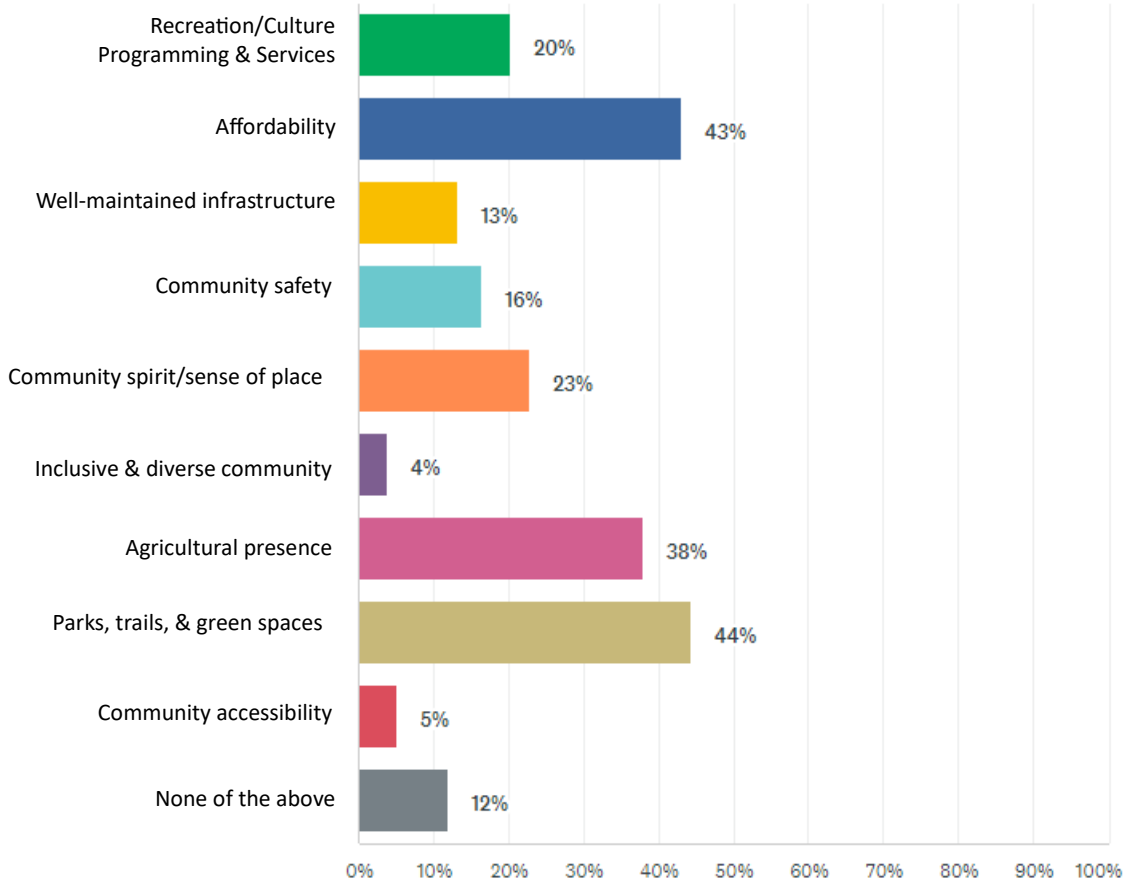
- The Mid-North Monitor (1)
- At work (5)
- Gossip/Word of Mouth (8)
- The Post Office (1)
- Township meetings-online (4)
- The Sables-Spanish Rivers Residents Forum Facebook page (1)
- Family/Friends (4)
- The newsletter enclosed in tax bills (4)
- Personal experience (1)

These results note that digital platforms are growing, however a physical publication is still needed to supplement them. Again, the demographics of the participants should be taken into context, as typically the senior population prefers physical publications over new/changing digital platforms such as Instagram. However, it is acknowledged that senior residents are becoming more familiar with the digital world. The “other” sources recorded support the need for physical publications as information tends to be gathered through personal interactions and paper materials the Township produces. However, the same amount of people cited watching online meetings as did reading the newsletter.

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Question 6- What are the most appealing things about the Township as a community? Select a max of 3.

346 answers were recorded for this question, meaning not all residents submitted 3 answers. According to participants the most appealing aspect of the Township are the parks, trails, and green spaces it provides. Participants do not see Sables-Spanish Rivers as an inclusive and diverse community as it had the lowest score, almost tied with community accessibility. Agricultural presence was the second most appealing aspect of the community. See the full breakdown below:



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Question 7- Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the following services offered by the Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers?

The goal of this question was to establish which municipal services participants were satisfied with and which ones may need attention to improve. Services have been grouped into the corresponding strategic goals and results have been compiled into three categories for ease of analyzing them: very satisfied and satisfied are grouped together as 1) Satisfied, 2) Neither, and strongly dissatisfied and dissatisfied have been grouped together as 3) Dissatisfied.

Related Strategic Goal	Question	Dissatisfied %	Neither %	Satisfied %
Quality of Life	Recreation & Programming	40	26	34
	Police Services	35	24	41
	Fire Protection Services	19	11	71
	Public Library	10	27	63
	Parks, Trails & Open Spaces	18	24	58
	Massey Medical Clinic Services	40	29	31
Economic Development & Tourism	Planning & Development Assistance	36	43	21
	Wayfinding Signage	24	39	
Community Aesthetics	Curbside Garbage & Recycling Pickup	22	15	60
	Community Beautification	41	27	31
Infrastructure	Road Quality & Maintenance	40	13	46
	Snow Removal & Sanding	34	17	49
Effective Government	Property Standards & Bylaw Enforcement	58	25	17
	Municipal Customer Service	32	26	42
	Payment Options	19	23	58

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Question 8- Were there any services not noted above that you'd like to comment on? Please list and rank them (very dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither, satisfied or very satisfied)

The intent of this question was to provide the opportunity to participants to comment on another municipal service that was not included in question 7. This question was not mandatory, 73 participants skipped it and 85 answered. 46 of these answers were "no", "none", "N/A", etc. The remaining ones have been recorded below and grouped into the applicable strategic goals that were established in Stage 1.

Note some answers addressed a category that was already provided for above, therefore only services that were not addressed are included below and majority of participants did not rank them. Although some answers/statements were not relevant to this question specifically, they have still been taken into consideration as they are applicable to other questions. A full list of the answers received for this question can be found in Appendix A.

- Quality of Life
 1. Housing availability- very dissatisfied (2).
 2. Laundromat- very dissatisfied.
 3. Services for persons with intellectual learning disabilities and mental disabilities and inclusion in this community- very dissatisfied (2).
 4. Placement of the needle box- wants it moved to a more secluded location.
 5. Lack of affordable heating options.
 6. Programming for youth- very dissatisfied.
 7. Lack of backyard chickens- very dissatisfied.
 8. Seniors' services available to residents living at home (snow removal, lawn maintenance, hazardous waste depot in community)- very dissatisfied.
- Community Aesthetics
 1. Assistance service to residents to upkeep their yards.
 2. Increased bylaw enforcement.
- Effective Government
 1. Communication via township website -very dissatisfied.
 2. Tax rates/building permit fees- very dissatisfied.
- Infrastructure
 1. River Road cemetery, and upkeep of graves-very dissatisfied.
 2. Notification of road maintenance issues and detour signage- very dissatisfied.
 3. Too many stop signs-there should be police enforcement instead.
- Economic Growth and Tourism
 1. Small business incentives and considerations- not satisfied.
 2. Services that provide revenue to the Township so we can keep taxes down. E.g., solar panel farms and windmills the town could operate to provide income.
 3. Snowmobile accessibility- very dissatisfied.

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Question 9- Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Participants were given the options of strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Results have been compiled into three categories for ease of analyzing them: strongly agree and agree are grouped together as 1) Agree, 2) Neither, and strongly disagree and disagree have been grouped together as 3) Disagree. The questions are also broken down into the corresponding identified strategic goal.

Related Strategic Goal	Question	Agree %	Neither Agree nor Disagree %	Disagree %
Quality of Life	The Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers is a welcoming community	48	32	20
	The Massey & District Community Centre and Arena has a diverse offering of programs and services that fits my needs	35	44	22
	Incentives should be offered to developers to increase housing opportunities	65	33	15
Economic Development & Tourism	The Township provides supports for local businesses to succeed	19	47	34
	The Township should investigate ways to increase tourism within the community	71	18	11
	The Township collaborates with community groups sufficiently to provide for community events	31	46	22
Community Aesthetics	The Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers is a clean community	52	35	33
	Majority of residents are proud to live in the Township	53	33	13
Infrastructure	Township equipment is used effectively and efficiently to maintain infrastructure	44	41	14
Effective Government	Township services are provided in a timely manner	46	35	18
	Information regarding Municipal services/programs and community updates is easily accessible	48	28	24
	My tax dollars are being used effectively by the Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers	32	27	42

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Question 10- Considering your current housing situation, which of the following best applies?

Participants were asked to answer if they owned a home, rented a home, apartment, or room, were unhoused or if the options given were not applicable to them. Meaning they either lived with someone (parents) or had other housing arrangements (couch surfing, staying with family periodically, etc.). The goal of this question was to determine the housing types utilized by each demographic. 89% of participants noted they owned their home, 7% rented, 1% said they were unhoused and 3% noted the question was not applicable to them. These results are further broken down by age group below:

Age	# Total Responses	Own a home	Rent	Unhoused	Not Applicable
17 & Under	1	100% (1)	0	0	0
18-34	24	71% (17)	8% (2)	4% (1)	17% (4)
35-49	25	80% (20)	20% (5)	0	0
50-64	62	94% (58)	5% (3)	0	2% (1)
65+	46	98% (45)	2% (1)	0	0

Question 11- Considering your current housing, is it stable, unstable, are you unsure or it is not applicable to you

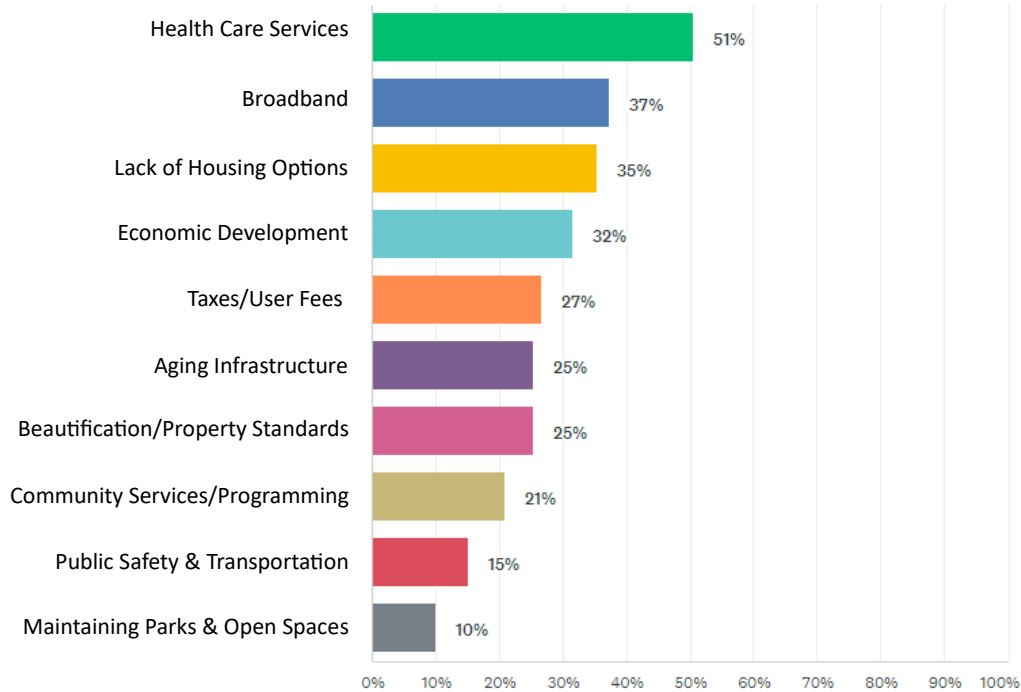
The intent of this question was to see how many individuals are having housing issues within the community. 88% of participants said their housing situation was stable, 4% said it was unstable, 4% were unsure and 4% said it wasn't applicable to them. These results are broken down by age group below:

Age	# Total Responses	Stable	Unstable	Unsure	Not Applicable
17 & Under	1	100% (1)	0	0	0
18-34	24	83% (20)	4% (1)	4% (1)	8% (2)
35-49	25	84% (21)	8% (2)	8% (2)	0
50-64	62	90% (56)	5% (3)	2% (1)	3% (2)
65+	46	98% (45)	2% (1)	0	0

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[Question 12- In your opinion, what are the top three issues the Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers should address within the next four years? Select up to 3.](#)

Participants selected the issue(s) they'd like to see addressed most. The most concerning issue participants identified was health care services. A total of 440 responses were received, meaning not every participant chose three issues. The full results are included below.



[Question 13- If there was JUST ONE specific thing the Township could do THIS YEAR to make Sables-Spanish rivers a better place, what would that ONE specific thing be, in your opinion.](#)

158 responses were received as this was a mandatory question although some participants included more than 1 thing in their response and other responses simply noted “no” or “none”. All responses were grouped into the applicable strategic goal and then repeated answers were grouped together to form strategic priorities/initiatives within each goal with the most popular answer. Action items are specific steps that Council and staff could identify to ensure the strategic priorities/initiatives can be achieved. The strategic priorities/initiatives sub-categories are listed below, raw data from the survey that could be used to create future action items is included in Appendix A.

1. Quality of Life

- Housing (seniors and affordable)
- Massey Medical Clinic Services and Resources (more physicians/practitioners)
- Social and Recreation Programming (youth programming, services for people with disabilities)
- Emergency Management Services (more policing, drug control)

2. Economic Development/Tourism

- Parks and Green Space Development (Mouth and Teasdale Park)

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- Community Pride and Inclusivity (connection between communities, community events promotion/participation)
 - Grants and Development Incentives (not specified)
 - Regional Partnerships (LaCloche and Sagamok)
3. Community Aesthetics
- Property Standards and Bylaw Enforcement (more enforcement)
 - Community Beautification (assistance programs)
 - Waste Management (rural recycling programs, more options for hazardous waste)
4. Infrastructure
- Roads and Sidewalks (maintenance schedules, replacement cycles, culverts)
 - Recreation Equipment (Webbwood parks, splash pad)
5. Effective Government
- Communication
 - Staff Retention and Succession Planning
 - Policy/Bylaw Review

Immediate next steps:

1. Council, the strategic plan steering committee, and senior staff will review the survey results as presented above.
2. Specific questions for the public information sessions (early 2024) will be created to narrow down the strategic directions and priorities/initiatives within each strategic goal.

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Appendix A-Question 8 Raw Data Answers

- Quality of Living:
 1. Housing availability- very dissatisfied
 2. Massey Medical Clinic is lacking services- feel there needs to be an advocate for improvement and has been an issue before the pandemic.
 3. Laundromat- very dissatisfied.
 4. There should be more accessible services and services for people with developmental disabilities.
 5. Services for persons with intellectual learning disabilities and mental disabilities and inclusion in this community- very dissatisfied.
 6. Medical services- doctors need to be more efficient with time and see more patients in a day.
 7. Concerns regarding the placement of the needle box on a main street, and that it gives the town a poor image. Believes it won't be used based on its placement and is awful for tourism. Wants it moved to a more secluded location.
 8. Lack of affordable heating options.
 9. Programming for youth- very dissatisfied.
 10. Lack of backyard chickens- very dissatisfied.
 11. Seniors services available to residents living at home (snow removal, lawn maintenance, hazardous waste depot in community)- very dissatisfied.
 12. Need more affordable housing and another family doctor/nurse practitioner.

- Community Aesthetics
 1. Clean up the Township.
 2. The new Remembrance Day flags are impressive. Let's strive for the main street to be beautiful and welcoming not just for people passing through-but let's get on residents to try to beautify their yards.
 3. There is only one playground on the north side of the highway. I don't see any beautification so far.
 4. Community beautification is unnecessary and a waste of tax dollars.
 5. Over regulated use of private property.
 6. Property standards are bad-Highway 17 is an eyesore.
 7. The Towns look rundown and in need of beautification.
 8. Bylaw enforcement-don't turn this into a revenue source and make the municipality a miserable place to reside.
 9. Seasonal town beautification (e.g. Hallmark movie/Muskoka)- very dissatisfied.

- Effective Government
 1. Need a more forward-thinking council with greater transparency.
 2. Council meetings don't follow correct protocols.
 3. Lack of communication with municipal office, meaning lack of responses from persons in charge- very dissatisfied.
 4. Building permit fees need to be drastically reduced as new buildings make us money and we should not try to make them more expensive to build with permit fees.
 5. Communication via township website, especially fire bans and road closures-very dissatisfied.
 6. Felt the survey choices for where we lived did not properly reflect more rural areas.
 7. More supervision of summer students.

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8. Taxes are too high when compared to other municipalities.
 9. Garbage pickup- very dissatisfied.
- Infrastructure Maintenance
 1. Playground and splash pad- very dissatisfied.
 2. River Road cemetery, and upkeep of graves-very dissatisfied.
 3. Notification of road maintenance issues and detour signage- very dissatisfied.
 4. Recycling bins at the Township office for public use.
 5. Too many stop signs-there should be police enforcement instead.
 6. More sidewalks needed in Massey for walking safety of all ages.
 7. Lack of playgrounds- younger population needs activities.
 8. Recreation options for children are very sad-need updated playground equipment and splash pad.
 9. Wants more swings, playground equipment etc. in the Webbwood park- very dissatisfied.
 - Economic Growth and Tourism
 1. Concerns regarding Massey being the focus of the strategic plan.
 2. Community events.
 3. Small business incentives and considerations- not satisfied.
 4. Council does not seem open to growth and seems to work toward closing businesses, ensuring things stay the same.
 5. This town is lacking in tourism development yet has so much potential.
 6. Services that provide revenue to the Township so we can keep taxes down. E.g., solar panel farms and windmills the town could operate to provide income.
 7. Hard to get through Massey on a snowmobile- Township should facilitate improvements.

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Appendix B- Question 13 Raw Data Answers

Quality of Life

- Housing for seniors 65+ (4)
- General/Affordable housing (9)
- Increase development for housing to provide greater tax income.
- More health services (2)
- Review/more services offered at the Massey medical Clinic (2)
- Build or encourage the creation of a laundromat.
- More programs for people with developmental disabilities and teens
- Increase Inclusivity (2)
- Drug control
- Advocate/attract more doctors/nurses (11)
- Invest in the Fire Department / Emergency Services
- Improve health services/healthy programming activities.
- Increasing rental housing is important.
- Keep up with community events.
- More programming for children (2)
- Have Bell telephone to improve cell service.
- More policing.
- Take a serious look at the drug problem in our community as it is leading to more and more criminal activity and homelessness.
- Continue to promote recreation opportunities for children, teens, adults, and seniors (e.g. hockey, skating, pickle ball).
- Outdoor rink
- Campaign with neighboring municipalities for either more Northland Service, such as a morning route or investigate launching a regional transit service.
- Community spirit
- Inclusivity between the three towns that make up Sables-Spanish River (2)
- Policing by the Township, of use of Lee Valley Road & Old Webbwood Rd, when Hwy 17 closed due to MVA. Repairs due to Deterioration of these roads are very costly to taxpayers.

Economic Development/Tourism

- Bring back the marathon.
- Create jobs (2)
- Contribute to the efforts and support of economic development, tourism, and the attraction of industry for long term sustainability of our community and region.
- Drive Business to this area to increase population.
- Have an event where people float down the Spanish river. Maybe from Mouth Park. Could attract tourists and be a fundraiser too.
- Offer Incentives for New Business
- Develop Mouth Park (2)
- Address the issue of snowmobiles crossing the Spanish River bridge. It seriously impedes the trail system and stops a LOT of economic opportunity in Massey. Trail users trailer around Massey. Our gas station, restaurants, hardware store, coffee shop lose a lot of winter business.
- Return mouth park to original state.
- Conduct an efficiency and affordability study to investigate reductions in taxes including investment attraction proper in cooperation with neighbouring municipalities.
- Grants- housing and infrastructure
- Economic development plan contest
- Develop Teasdale Park
- Community gym

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- Community events calendar.
- Conciliation with the local First Nation

Community Aesthetics

- Beautification/property standards (9)
- Have a drop spot for hazardous waste and electronics.
- Have our own animal shelter.
- Improve and promote rural recycling.
- Help low income to fix up their homes.

Infrastructure

- Devote more attention to aging infrastructure.
- Maintain Sidewalk in Webbwood (2) (sweep debris/sand/gravel)
- New Park in Webbwood (2)
- Install another playground south of the highway.
- Less stop signs (3)
- Urban infrastructure updates
- Resurface/ pave Lee Valley
- Better management of roads
- Finish Webbwood rink
- Better Summer maintenance of roads
- A splash pad for our kids!
- Support your workers with proper working tools.
- Recreation/playground equipment in Webbwood needs upgrades.
- Improve Waterfalls Road (2)
- Proper turning lanes when entering rural access roads from Highway 17 (i.e. left turning lane going west onto Government Road)
- Removing curb snowbanks in winter for seniors' citizens who do their shopping on main streets.
- Natural gas
- Maintenance of ditches and Culvert's
- Renovate/update the clinic.
- Fix River Road
- Improve sidewalks.
- Broadband/Cellular (3)
- Better cellular service

Effective Government

- Prohibit the use of herbicides + pesticides.
- Informed Council members being aware of services offered to residents (2)
- Continue to educate your residents on the parameters council must work within
- Assess staffing needs in various departments (3)
- Plan ahead
- Enforce the bylaws that are passed (5)
- Better communication with public (2)
- Lower property taxes (7)
- Review members of council/unhappy with council (5)
- Listen to what residents need/want and their opinions and consider working towards a township that serves the next generation while caring for the current one, creates opportunities for small business (new and expanding) and consider that others (not just those on council) may be able to provide valuable input.
- Revoke trailer bylaw/lower trailer fee
- Reduce building permit fees.

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- Follow the municipal laws set out by the Prov. Government regarding Code of Conduct of Building Officials and the Building Code. There would be more money in the budget if people could build.
- Community involvement
- Return phone calls, Complete jobs paid by Township.
- Return speed limits to reasonable speeds -80 on Lee Valley, 50 in town. The solution is enforcement of reasonable limits not lowering to an artificially low limit.
- Keep residents more informed of proposed bylaw changes and include their ideas and opinions in the content of proposed and revising bylaws.
- Host a family community event to bring everyone together! For example, the upcoming information session could have been better advertised and could have been more of an open house during a time when all families could have participated, maybe a BBQ, fire trucks and big equipment for children to see, etc.; more open, inviting, and transparent opportunities for residents to get involved and see what really occurs within the operations of the municipality. In addition, the Council/municipal workers need to be more objective/open-minded when ideas from residents are presented.
- Staff reviews
- Education of bylaws in effect
- Full time bylaw enforcement officer (4)