

**IN-COMMUTER SURVEY ANALYSIS
SEPTEMBER 2010**

Background:

In February 2006 the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council and local officials completed the Tompkins County/Cornell Employee Commuter Survey. The Tompkins County Planning Department provided several supplemental questions about employees' attitudes regarding living in Tompkins County. Individuals that did not currently live in Tompkins County were asked the following questions:

1. What county do you live in?
2. How many years have you lived at your current residence?
3. Do you rent or own?
4. Have you ever lived in Tompkins County?
 - a. If yes, within the last 5 years?
 - b. More than 5 years ago?
5. Why do you live outside Tompkins County?
6. If housing was more *affordable* in Tompkins County, would you consider moving closer to where you work?
7. If housing was more *available* in Tompkins County, would you consider moving closer to where you work?
8. What type(s) of housing would you be interested in?
9. What type of area(s) would you be interested in?

In total, 6,738 workers completed the survey – 5,452 Cornell employees and 1,286 downtown employees. 5,058 employees lived in Tompkins County, 1,680 employees lived outside the County.

Since the focus of the Planning Department's questions was to identify the reasons employees lived outside of Tompkins County, the bulk of the analysis was on those 1,680 employees, and specifically of the 30% (498 respondents) who stated that they would consider moving to Tompkins County if housing was more affordable.

Reasons for living outside Tompkins County:

Individuals who do not currently live in the County (1,680 respondents) were asked **why they chose to live outside the County**. They were given the opportunity to select up to three reasons. The three reasons were not subject to a ranking system. Individuals could select one, two, or three choices.

	<i>Individuals who used to live in Tompkins County</i>	<i>Individuals who have never lived in Tompkins County</i>
<i>Reasons for living outside the County</i>		
Housing is less expensive.	59.0%	48.7%
Prefer the quality of life in their community.	37.4%	41.0%
Property taxes are lower in their community.	37.1%	30.3%
Closer to family/friends.	25.9%	48.1%
Prefer schools in their community.	19.9%	21.9%
Spouse works outside the County.	17.1%	20.1%
Chose not to respond.	2.0%	1.9%

Socio-economic characteristics for those individuals who live outside of Tompkins County but would move into the County if it was more affordable (498 respondents):

- 55% had small households with only 1-2 people, possibly indicating enhanced flexibility in moving their family.
- 39% had a household income of less than \$50,000, indicating that housing affordability may play a key role in housing location choice. (Note that in 2005, 80% of Median Family Income was \$49,500 for a family of four.)
- 50% had lived in Tompkins County before and said they would be interested in moving back.
- 75% owned their home and would be interested in moving to Tompkins County if it was more affordable than their current mortgage.

Preference regarding development centers:

Individuals who do not currently live in the County but would consider moving to Tompkins County if it was more affordable (498 respondents) were also asked to indicate what type of area they would like to live in if they relocated to Tompkins County, with the opportunity to select all those that were applicable. The options were: a traditional village (e.g., Groton, Dryden, Freeville, Trumansburg); a city neighborhood (e.g., Fall Creek, Belle Sherman); a suburban village (e.g., Lansing, Cayuga Heights); a suburban area; a rural area dominated by farms; a rural area dominated by forests; or a rural hamlet (e.g., Brooktondale, Danby, McLean, Jacksonville).

Since individuals had the opportunity to select multiple responses, an analysis was completed to identify potential patterns in the types of development individuals preferred. Where possible individual responses regarding interest in living in each type of area were grouped into one of two categories representing potential interest in living in 1) a Development Focus Area as defined in the County strategy currently being developed, i.e., within traditional village, city neighborhood, suburban village or rural hamlet; or 2) within suburban area; rural area dominated by farms or rural area dominated by forest.

	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage of Respondents</i>
Within traditional village , city neighborhood , suburban village , or rural hamlet .	165	33%
Within suburban area , rural area dominated by farms, or rural area dominated by forests.	98	20%
Selected areas in both categories.	235	47%
TOTAL	498	

These data indicate that individuals are interested in areas both within and outside of more densely settled areas suggesting that many people are flexible in where they would like to live.

Overall Conclusions:

As reinforced by the survey respondents, housing that is affordable to a variety of income categories continues to be a concern for many employees who work in Tompkins County. Nearly one third indicated an interest in living closer to their employment location but housing that is affordable to them remains a barrier. Efforts are underway to increase the housing stock for a variety of income categories. It appears that most in-commuters who expressed an interest in moving to Tompkins County would consider affordable housing located in urban areas or centers of development.