

Star Valley Ranch Opinion Survey Summary Report

Val R. Smith, Ph.D.
4/15/22

The mayor and town council commissioned a survey of community members. A steering committee was formed to create, implement, and interpret the results of focus groups and a quantitative survey. The mayor and town council were briefed on the results before writing this report. The results will inform the next master plan and future Council actions.

Research Methods

The Committee held five focus groups to identify a list of priorities held by the citizens of Star Valley Ranch. Based on focus group results, we constructed a thirty-nine-item mail-out survey.

The sampling design was an attempted census. We mailed to a population of 1,150 Town residents. Returns totaled 678 usable surveys. After calculating a finite-population correction the sampling error for the survey was less than +/- 1.4%. Proprietary data analysis software (Porpoise Survey Analytics) was used to analyze the data.

1. Rating of Importance

Questions began with the following two sentences.

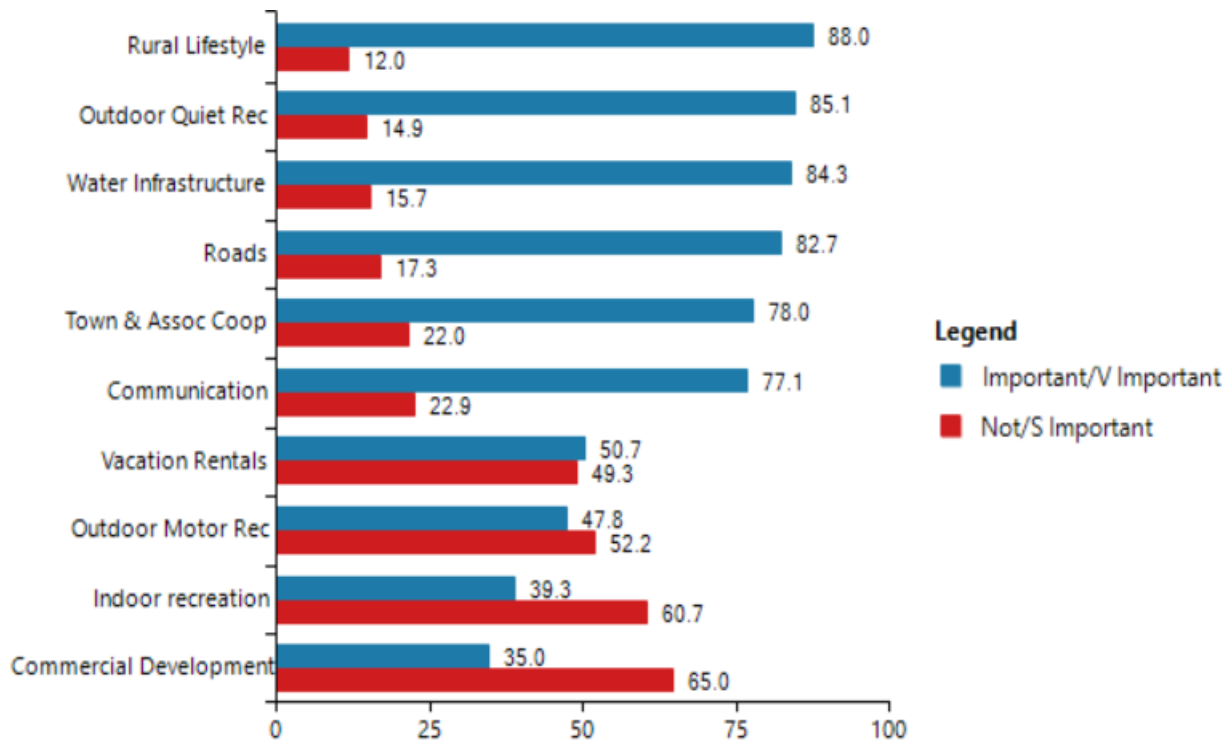
Please read this list of issues facing Star Valley Ranch. Keeping in mind that not every issue can be a top priority. Rate each issue as not important, somewhat important, important, or very important.

- **Outdoor Quiet Recreation** Preserving outdoor quiet recreation such as golf, hiking, cross-country skiing
- **Outdoor Motorized Recreation** Preserving motorized outdoor recreation like snowmobiling and ATVs
- **Town & Association Cooperation** Improving cooperation between the Association and the Town Council
- **Roads** Improving roads
- **Water Infrastructure** Completing water infrastructure projects
- **Rural Lifestyle** Preserving the rural lifestyle of SVR
- **Indoor Recreation** Providing indoor recreation at a community center for young people and adults
- **Communication** Improving communication between the Town and residents
- **Vacation Rentals** Regulating Vacation Rentals by Owners (VRBO's & Airbnb's)
- **Commercial Development** Attracting commercial businesses that generate tax revenue

The graph below rates the importance of the ten items in descending order of importance. The blue bars represent percent “important” or “very important.” The red bars show the percentage of “not important” or only “somewhat important.”

The highest score was for “Preserving the rural lifestyle of SVR.” Admittedly, the phrase rural lifestyle was vague, but came up repeatedly in the focus groups. It is vague because it has so many different referents for different people. Nevertheless, it scored high not only on this question but elsewhere in the survey. It is likely that many people were attracted to Star Valley Ranch because of its beauty and rural appeal. They want to protect what they have.

Outdoor quiet recreation (golf, hiking, and cross-country skiing) came in second. After that came the more practical considerations of roads and water. Other concerns in both the focus groups and quantitative survey were communication between the Town and residents, as well as Town and Association cooperation. Going back to the focus group discussions, much of the frustration concerning the two governing bodies might have been a lack of understanding regarding the jurisdictions of our two organizations.

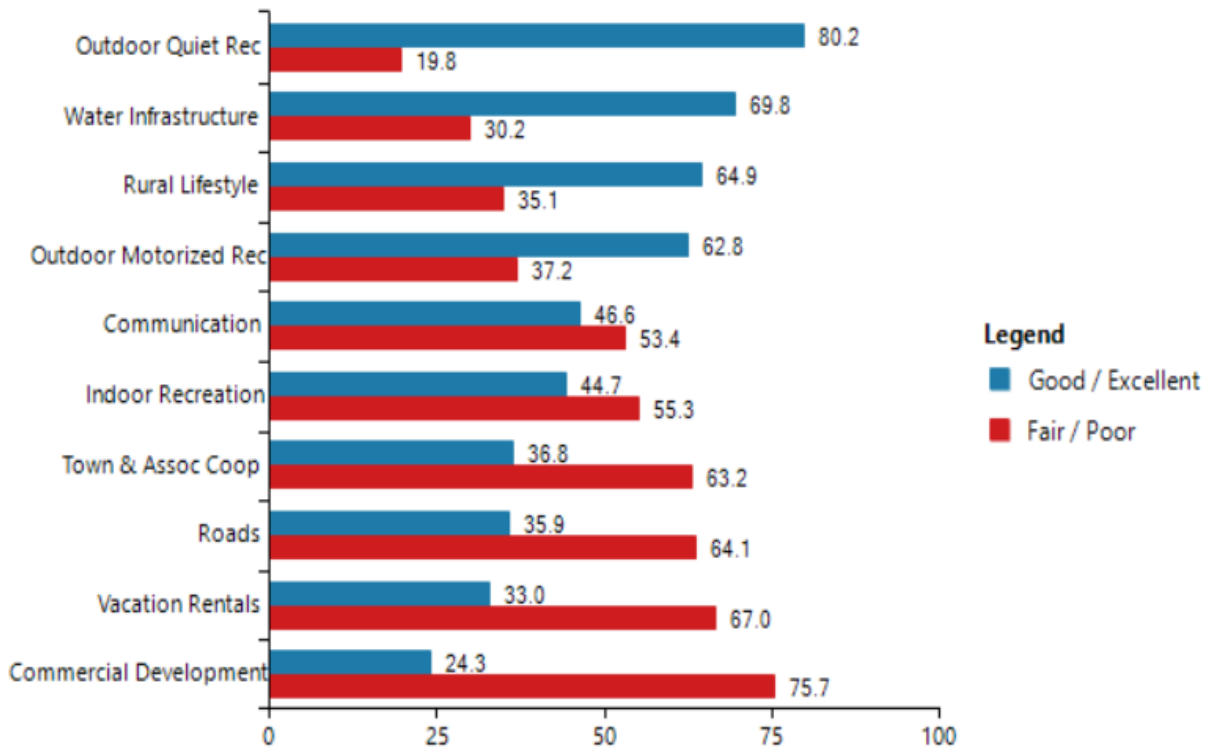


Two follow-up questions asked respondents to identify their first and second priorities. Forty-six percent of the survey respondents listed rural lifestyle among their first or second priorities. Also scoring well was outdoor quiet recreation with 40% listing this item in their top two.

Rating Town’s Performance

The same block of items (adjusted for the performance context) was also subjected to an evaluation of the Town’s performance.

Now you are going to see that same list again. This time please rate the *Town's handling* of each of these issues as excellent, good, fair, or poor.



Outdoor quiet recreation, water infrastructure, rural lifestyle, and outdoor motorized recreation received more positive evaluations than negative evaluations.

2. In Need of Fixing

Two questions followed-up the rating of town performance: (1) “Which of the above is *most* in need of fixing? (2) “Which of these is *second most* in need of fixing?” Almost two-thirds of the respondents (64%) listed roads either first or second on the fix-it list. In second place was water projects with almost one-in-three respondents placing water projects as first or second priority.

3. Matched Blocks

The two blocks of questions (Importance and Performance) have identical items so Porpoise could overlay the two blocks as seen in the next graph. The graph displays the items using what I’ll call “index values.”

Index values for importance = % positive responses - % negative responses +100

Where:

positive responses are defined as “important” or “very important”

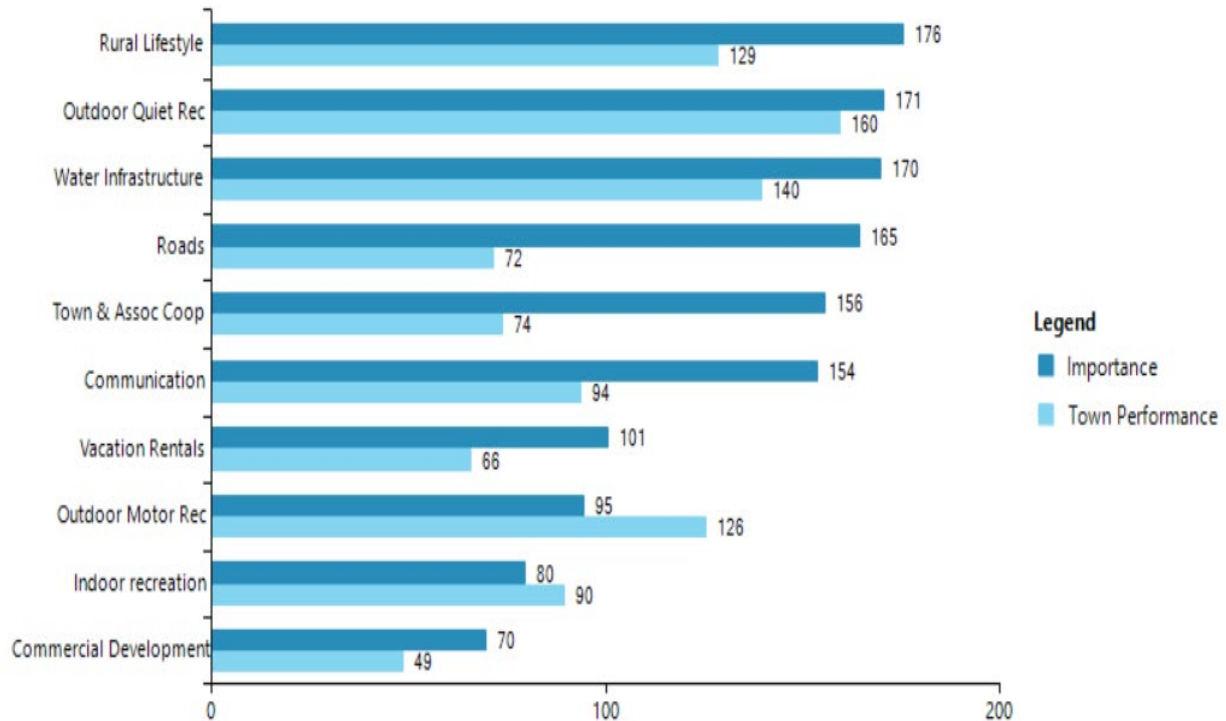
negative responses are defined as “somewhat important” or “not important”

Index values for performance = % positive responses - % negative responses +100

Where:

positive responses are defined as “good” or “excellent”

negative responses are defined as “fair” or “poor”



Three items scored high on both importance and performance (rural lifestyle, outdoor quiet recreation, and water infrastructure).

Three items scored high on importance but below 100 on performance (roads, Town and Association cooperation, and communication). Items deemed as important but performing poorly should be examined closely. Perhaps those topics should be elevated in exposure during the upcoming planning process.

Three items scored near or below 100 on both importance and performance (vacation rentals, indoor recreation, and commercial development). Only one item scored below an index of 100 on importance yet above 100 on performance (outdoor motor recreation). Although slightly less than half of the respondents rated outdoor motor recreation as important, those who did often held strong views on the subject. One-in-five respondents who valued these forms of recreation ranked them as their first or second priority.

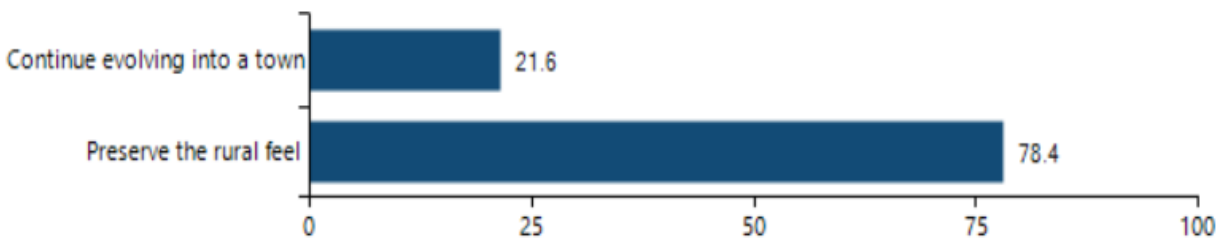
Divided Interests

Based upon focus group discussions we asked five questions designed to explore possible areas where community members might have divided opinions on the future of Star Valley Ranch.

- Rural Feel
- Development
- Recreation
- Tax Increase
- Regulation

Rural Feel

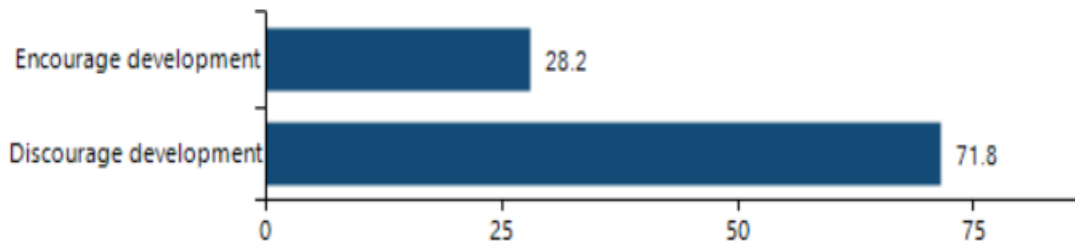
Some people believe Star Valley Ranch needs to continue evolving into a town. Others believe we need to preserve the rural feel of Star Valley Ranch. Which way do you lean?



Among the five questions the strongest area of consensus was the desire to preserve our rural ambience. By an almost four-to-one ratio respondents wished to preserve the rural nature of Star Valley Ranch. As noted earlier, this was also deemed the most important priority for our future.

Development

Some people believe that to finance some of the things we want for Star Valley Ranch we should encourage more commercial development and consider limited annexation of adjacent areas. Other People believe Thayne, Etna, and Alpine already provide most of our necessary amenities. Commercial development should not be encouraged, and annexation should be ruled out. Which way do you lean?

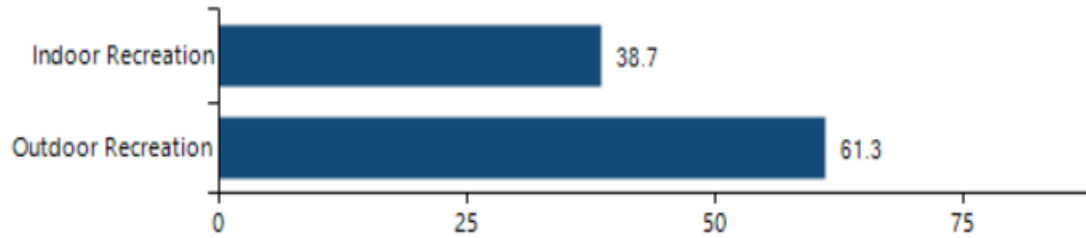


A sort of extension to the preference for a rural setting was the question of expanding the Town's commercial development and annexation. Here again near consensus was achieved with 44% more arguing to *discourage* rather than encourage development.

Using Porpoise’s profiling function we learned that those who favor the minority position of encouraging development tend to be those who want to see Star Valley Ranch continue to evolve into a town, would vote for a tax increase, emphasize indoor recreation, and have lived here 3-5 years.

Recreation

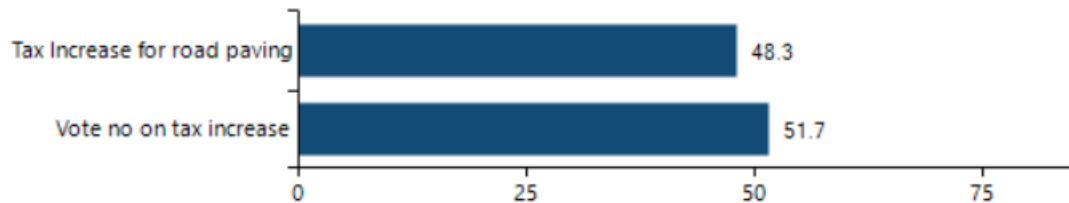
Which needs more attention by the Town? (choices: indoor recreation and outdoor recreation)



The issue of attending to indoor or outdoor recreation showed a little less consensus with close to a 60/40 split.

Tax Increase

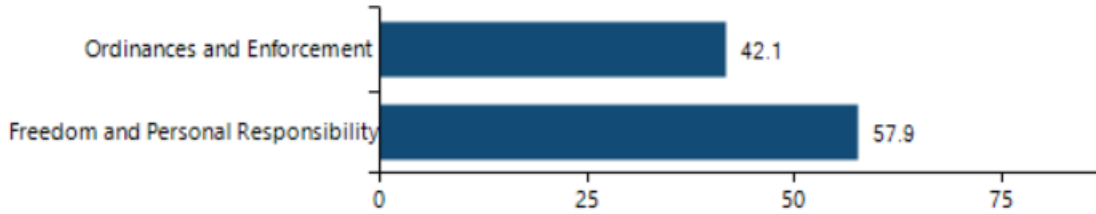
Some people want to finance some of the more costly projects, for example paving roads, recreation, and public safety by voting for a tax increase. That measure would raise taxes by a small amount. Other People are opposed to tax increases and would vote no on a tax increase. Which way do you lean?



The issue that divides the community most closely in half was tax increases. Respondents to the survey were almost equally divided on the issue.

Regulation

Some people believe Star Valley Ranch needs to enact ordinances and enforce those ordinances on such things as property upkeep and kids driving vehicles on streets. Others believe we need to preserve the freedom and personal responsibility of the status quo. Which way do you lean?



The most passionate minority position concerned the issue of regulation. The profile of those who favor stronger enforcement of ordinances tend to be residents who favor a tax increase, want to see Star Valley Ranch evolve into a town, are older and are without children in the home.

4. Communication

Which one of the following media would be your first choice [second choice] when the **Town wants to communicate with you?**

- Monthly Newsletter
- An Updated Town Website
- Email
- Text Message
- Bulletin Board at Mail Center
- Nextdoor Social Media (A localized social media app)

Answers	First Choice %	Second Choice %
Monthly Newsletter	26.8	31.6
Updated Town Website	11.8	22.6
Email	54.0	22.8
Text Message	03.8	14.0
Mail Center Bulletin Board	00.9	04.4
Nextdoor Social Media	02.7	04.6

When receiving communications from the Town the medium of choice was email. Better than three out of every four respondents listed email as either their first or second preference. In second place was the monthly newsletter. Perhaps email could be used for immediate and essential notices, while less critical information can be reserved for the monthly newsletter.

Which one of the following would be your first choice [second choice] when you want to **access information** from the Town?

- Visit Town Office in Person
- An Updated Town Website
- Email expecting an email answer
- Text Message expecting a text answer
- Text Message expecting a phone call

Answers	First Choice %	Second Choice %
In-Person Office Visit	12.9	16.9
Updated Town Website	51.7	21.9
Email Expecting an Answer	28.2	41.8
Text Message Expecting an Answer	04.6	13.4
Text Message Expecting Phone Call	02.5	06.1

When Town members have inquiries the media of choice were an updated Town website and emails. An important qualifier to emails was that Town staff respond to the emails. The website was more commonly a first choice, and emails were most typically a second choice. Perhaps the natural sequence for a Town member is to first check the website, and finding no answer, then send an email to Town staff.

Conclusion

The results demonstrate that people recognize and appreciate the Town and Association efforts to meet resident expectations (infrastructure and golf). However, community members would like to see improved communication between residents and the Town, and improved cooperation between the Homeowner’s Association and Town.

Clearly there is a strong consensus that the rural ambience, closeness with nature, and availability of outdoor recreation are qualities that have drawn people to Star Valley Ranch. As happens in any community, however, some members hold competing opinions. We urge community members to listen to one another and to accommodate divergent opinions where possible. It is our hope that this report will serve as a tool to enable the mayor, town council, and residents of Star Valley Ranch to plan together over the next several years.