



Housing Needs Survey Study
Final Report
January 21, 2009

Sherman County

Housing Needs Survey Study

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Introduction

This summary report presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations derived from the “***Sherman County Housing Needs Survey Study.***” In October 2008, the Sherman County Court commissioned GQG to design the survey, analyze data, and report this custom market research study.

The objectives of the study were:

- To assess people’s needs for new and remodeled homes in Sherman County.
- To identify individuals and organizations (i.e., private, public, and/or non-profit) who are prospective buyers and/or renters of new homes and/or remodelers of existing homes in Sherman County.

To achieve these objectives, a comprehensive survey with 21 closed- and open-ended questions was developed and submitted to the County for approval.

Mid-Community Economic Development District (MCEDD) assisted the County and GQG with developing the sampling frame, obtaining addresses of landowners from the County Assessor, and then printing and sending the surveys in envelopes with letters to a total of n=1,028 landowners of properties in the County via U.S. mail in early December 2008. A media release was included in the ***Sherman County Reporter*** to remind landowners to complete and return the survey. Former County Commissioner Kaseberg included an article about the survey in eNews to County residents. Judge Thompson also met with managers of local larger employers, especially the wind energy farms, to ask them to distribute the housing survey to their employees.

The information reported herein was obtained from n=297 surveys (28.9 percent response rate, 4.8 percent margin of error, 95 percent confidence level) that were returned to the County by January 7, 2009. Of the total sent, an additional n=41 were returned to the County as undeliverable by the U.S. Postal Service. A \$50 gift certificate to the Wasco Farm Store was offered as an incentive for landowners to complete and return the survey.

This ‘branded’ project was designed and conducted by GQG, a strategic marketing and research consultancy based in Portland, Oregon. GQG’s president, Greg Hansen, served as the principal researcher and wrote this report.

Purpose, Organization, and Limitations

This quantitative study was designed and implemented to address the Court’s objectives in better understanding the present and emerging housing needs of current and potential residents of the County. Its purpose was providing the Court with data upon which to make present and future housing-related decisions. This summary report will highlight the significant findings, key conclusions, and present recommendations for the Court.

This report contains the researcher’s findings based upon reviewing and analyzing the tabulated data and verbatim comments (included in the Appendix). It will be presented in an outline or a ‘bulleted’ format.

It is appropriate to acknowledge the limitations inherent in this type of study. This quantitative study involved a census approach sampling of the target population, i.e., owners of residential properties in Sherman County. By definition, the findings are statistically representative of the population under consideration. Thus, these findings are conclusive and projectable for the target audience.

Since the study was ‘branded’ (i.e., Sherman County was identified as the sponsor) when the sending the envelopes with letters and surveys, sponsor bias was introduced relative to Sherman County. In other words, the respondents’ answers may be influenced by virtue of their awareness and/or opinions of Sherman County and/or the Sherman County Court, respectively.

Summary of Findings

The following highlights the main findings from the survey for each question:

1. Are you a resident of Sherman County?
 - No – 90
 - Yes – 203
 - No response – 4
2. [If yes to question #1] Do you presently own or rent your primary residence?
 - Own – 200
 - Rent – 6
 - No response – 91
3. [If rent] Which do you live in?
 - Single family house – 75
 - Other – 5
 - No response – 217
4. [If no to question #1] Are you interested in moving to Sherman County?
 - No – 64
 - Yes – 10
 - Don’t know – 17
 - No response – 206
5. [If yes to question #4] Do you want to buy or rent the home to live in Sherman County?
 - Buy – 9
 - Rent – 0
 - Don’t know – 7
 - Other – 1
 - No response – 280

6. [If yes to question #4] Have you found a home to buy or rent in Sherman County?
 - Don't know – 3
 - No – 8
 - Yes – 9
 - No response – 277

7. [For current renters in Sherman County from question #2] Within the next two years, do you plan to rent or buy a home in Sherman County?
 - Buy – 2
 - Buy and rent – 1
 - Don't know – 11
 - Rent – 2
 - No response – 281

8. [For current renters who plan to rent] Do you want to continue living in the same building or in a new place?
 - Don't know – 4
 - New – 3
 - Same – 7
 - No response – 283

9. [For current home owners from question #2] Does your home need remodeling or rehabilitating?
 - Don't know – 8
 - No – 122
 - Yes – 78
 - No response – 89

10. [For current home owners whose homes need remodeling] Do you need assistance with remodeling your home?
 - Don't know - 15
 - No - 60
 - Yes - 44
 - No response – 178

11. [For current home owners] Do you have an interest in building or buying a new home?
 - Don't know – 17
 - No – 153
 - Yes – 38
 - No response – 89

12. [For current home owners or renters who want to build or buy a new home]
 What is the estimated amount you are willing to pay for the new home?
 \$100,001-\$200,000 – 23
 \$200,001-\$300,000 – 5
 Less than 100,000 – 21
 Less than \$100,000 & \$100,001- 200,000 – 3
 More than \$300,001 – 2
 No response – 243
13. [For all] Do you know other people (e.g. family members, friends, co-workers) who live outside of Sherman County and have an interest in living in the County?
 Don't know – 32
 No – 173
 Yes – 59
 No response – 33
14. [If yes to question #13] Do they want to buy or rent a home?
 Buy – 32
 Buy and rent – 7
 Rent – 6
 Don't know – 30
 No response – 222
15. [All] In what area(s) of Sherman County would you and/or the person you know (who wants to move here) like to live?
 Biggs – 2
 Biggs & Rufus – 1
 Biggs, Grass Valley, Kent, Moro, Rufus, & Wasco – 1
 Biggs, Rufus, & Wasco – 2
 Grass Valley – 13
 Grass Valley & Kent – 1
 Grass Valley & Moro – 5
 Grass Valley, Kent, & Moro – 3
 Grass Valley, Kent, Moro, & Wasco – 1
 Grass Valley, Moro, & Wasco – 3
 Kent – 5
 Moro – 22
 Moro & Wasco – 8
 Moro, Rufus, & Wasco – 5
 Moro, Rufus, Wasco, & rural areas – 1
 Rufus – 11
 Rufus & Wasco – 3
 Wasco – 52

- Wasco & other: areas around Wasco – 1
 - Wasco & other: in the country – 2
 - Wasco & other: rural – 1
 - Other: Country – 2
 - Other: Helm Springs – 1
 - Other: outside city limits – 1
 - Other: primarily would like anyplace in Sherman Co, as long as we can have 5+ acres
 - No response – 150
16. [For anyone who wants to build or buy a home] Do you have a builder selected for your home?
- No – 70
 - Yes – 11
 - No response – 216
17. [For anyone who wants to build or buy a home] Do you have financing lined up for your home?
- No – 63
 - Yes – 12
 - No response – 222
18. [All] How old are you?
- 26-35 year olds – 13
 - 36-45 year olds – 16
 - 46-55 year olds – 47
 - 56-65 year olds – 78
 - More than 65 years old – 133
 - No response – 10
19. [All] What is your gender?
- F – 158
 - M – 124
 - No response – 15
20. [All] How many people live in your household?
- 1 – 51
 - 2 – 167
 - 3 – 25
 - 4 – 22
 - 5 – 15
 - 6 or more – 2
 - No response – 15

21. [All] What other comments do you want to share with the Sherman County Court about housing needs within the County? [Please write on the back if you need more space.] Individual comments in Appendix.

Conclusions

Based upon a review and analysis of the quantitative data and qualitative responses to question #21 from the returned surveys, the following conclusions can be made:

1. A need exists for new and remodeled housing for owners and renters in Sherman County.
2. For people who want to buy or build a home, they want it valued under \$200,000.
3. Most respondents who want to build a home have not selected a builder.
4. Most people who want to buy or build a home do not have their financing in place.
5. A need also exists for rental housing, including multi-family units.
6. For respondents who want to remodel or rehabilitate their home, they need assistance with their project.
7. Residents of Sherman County know people outside of the area who want to live in the County.
8. While people want to live in many areas throughout Sherman County, Wasco and Moro were mentioned most often.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to the Sherman County Court based upon analyzing the data:

1. The Sherman County Court may want to consider developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for addressing the single and multi-family housing ownership and/or rental needs of current and prospective residents of Sherman County.
2. Given economic conditions facing Oregon and the U.S., the Court may want to explore alternative public-private partnerships for building new homes and/or remodeling existing homes throughout the County.
3. Based upon recent and pending economic development activities in Sherman County, especially related to wind energy farms, the Court may want to explore how new businesses can help provide housing for their employees.
4. The Court may want to collaborate with banks and other financial institutions, including USDA Rural Development, to help facilitate people buying homes.
5. To support remodeling and rehabilitating of existing homes, the Court may want to partner with local, state, and federal economic development agencies.
6. The Court may want to utilize windfarm and other Strategic Investment Program revenue to create a County revolving loan fund for housing related purposes, e.g., property development infrastructure (utilities, access and roads), security for new construction loans, and/or additional rehabilitation grants and loans.

Appendix

Verbatim individual responses to survey open-ended question #21:

- That come in from The Dalles area and Goldendale area everyday.
- 1. The housing that is available is currently unaffordable in light of the fact that they all need general to extensive remodeling. 2. Cities need combined efforts in passing and enforcing ordinances that improve current property (residence) conditions. ie. safety cleanliness attractiveness - curb appeal etc. 3. Homeowners should not find themselves penalized (continually increasing/high property taxes) for their efforts to improve their homes while improving the overall appeal of Sherman Co. Its a "catch 22" situation for property owners.
- A 4 or 6 apartment complex with 1 and 2 bedroom apt's would be utilized by the single and/or newly married or empty nesters/would be a good option.
- A great place to live and raise one's family.
- Affordable with financial aid for those of us with little or no down payment.
- and live out of town so this doesn't really pertain to us.
- Apt's or housing - need to consider ammenities - ie. Recreational areas, laundry, etc.
- Are employers being contacted to find out what hey may need in the next few years?
- At this time we have no housing needs.
- Be careful with your future plans, take the wind farms out of the plan and where is Sherman County? Don't put all your eggs in the windmill basket, who wants to live or buy a home surrounded by windmills? You?
- Better rental houses - Too many are 50+ years old, decrepid, fire hazards, etc. all the decent housing is occupied - usually by owners. Maybe apt. units or condos - low income housing. Please discourage more trailers and mobile homes.
- Both my husband and I are very glad to see homes being built in Wasco. My husband has heard of business(es) wanting to locate here but (presently) unable to do so due to lack of housing.
- Condem some of the old eye-sore houses, tear them down or clean them up.
- Considering retiring there.
- Do not need- too many people here now!

- Due to the extremes in weather we experience in Sherman County weatherization grants, credits, or incentives would help current and future housing to be more energy efficient and pleasant to live in. Aid given should be based (at least in part) on the severity of need in a dwelling. * A list of honest, competent, and competitively priced contractors should be established both for the residents benefit and the county's. Updated periodically, of course.
- Get rid of all the trashy unlivable shacks about town and put in some decent moderate priced housing. Clean up the town first! Putting a coat of paint on a shack and charging an enormous rent - is not solving the problem!
- Have a rental tent, only for hunters.
- Here in Rufus we have 60 acres of unimproved land that the city wish to employ as "industrial." I believe the land would better be used for residential. As our city, county grows there will be a greater need as we watch The Dalles grow Sherman Co, (Rufus) could be a bed room community for surrounding citys with industry.
- Housing should be free market driven and not county subsidized.
- I am a former Sherman Co. resident. I would like to see the country grow with people who will stay not just temporary residents.
- I am the trustee of property located in Sherman Co. and property is currently leased out for the purpose of wheat farming and possibility of wind turbines. There is currently no house on the property and no plans to put one on the property in the near future.
- I feel that Sherman Co. should support someone who would be willing to build an apartment complex. This would be useful especially to the windmill workers (since they are somewhat nomadic).
- I have a grain storage building converted to a "cabin." It has been rented in the past.
- I have a new manufactured home in Wasco. It is currently rented. When I advertised in the Dalles Chronicle, I had 29 called wanting to rent in Wasco.
- I have fielded many inquires from people who have jobs in Sherman Co. and would like to live here but have found no housing available. I cannot help but think any residential development would be quickly utilized.
- I have heard quite a few comments about building lots being scarce and housing for rent or purchase being very limited. I would really like to see the outcome of this survey published in county wide publication.
- I have property already up there with housing.

- I highly recommend planned unit developments (PUD) for all new subdivisions. These PUD's should also have CCR's (Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions). These will help retain home values and consistent neighborhoods mandate street lighting in all new projects.
- I like living in Sherman Co. just the way it is.
- I met a lady who stated that she and her family moved to Wasco, planning to buy a home. Then talk began about closing the school in Wasco, so they bought a home in The Dalles instead. I also get asked quite often if I know of rentals, and they seem hard to find.
- I own three rentals in grass valley. Even through attrition the rentals have remained full for over three years. There is a need for more rental housing.
- I see a need for a change in the land use laws. My wife and I have been approached 3 to 4 times in the last few years to sell average for housing. Most people it appears to me, would like some acreage 3-5-10 acres. Plus look at these towns, would you want to build a nice home were your neighbors do not take care of their homes.
- I talk to lots of people, many either passing through Wasco, or searching Wasco for places to live. While I may not know them personally, I listen to their pleas for help in finding homes to live in Wasco and/or Sherman Co. I serve as "welcoming committee," due to my inherent curiosity, desire to help people find resources they need, and keep tabs on things due to involvement with neighborhood watch. I met 5-6 people in a week's time who were searching for homes, some with jobs, or spouses with permanent jobs related to wind farms.
- I think Sherman Co. is very helpful in all areas. It is wonderful that one phone call to the court and you get so much help in anything you need.
- I think they should have low income housing for people on a fixed income.
- I think we need to have more housing available. However, I do not believe the county should be paying to lobby for community wind.
- I understand some of the proceeds generated from wind farms were to help with property taxes. I am puzzled as to why our taxes are so much higher than surrounding counties.
- I would like to see more family homes available to buy.
- I would love to see Sherman Co. grow. Perhaps rental housing would be a good investment- duplexes are particularly good for helping with the elderly- caregiver lives on the side.

- I, myself, don't want to see low income housing where you pay rent/rent to own on the status of your income. (Where everyone lives) a new house some people 60.00 to 100.00 a month next door someone lives who has to pay \$500.00 to 800.00 dollars a month - this is not fair.
- If I decided to I would build one.
- If you put wind mills within @ mile of town's your pretty limited or building!
- In the past, I have had family members interested in moving to Sherman Co. but they where discouraged by what housing was available at the time.
- Infrastructure. Sewer and water! Lots!
- It is not the counties responsibility to provide housing at the expense of the tax payer - manage the county affairs, not everyone is a "homeowner"
- Just hope you don't allow low rent units to be built in SC. The state would probably make them "dumping grounds" for the state welfare people.
- Just purchased a double wide two years ago. New lot model 2005, lot in Wasco, took out old single wide.
- Many of the county homes are old and many of those are quite run down. I think it's encouraging to see new homes being built and mobiles being placed in the county.
- Middle income families need the low or no interest loans for weatherizing their homes, also. If available, please put my name at the top of the list!
- More housing needs to be in the county for people that would like to move to our community.
- More housing, more R.V. parking, more motels.
- My house was well-built in 1922, and remodeled in the 1960s. It also has a new furnace and air conditioning system: We seem to have a lot of retirees - our population is getting older all the time, and transportation is getting more difficult, we could use more "intra-town" transportation and also better transportation to the Dalles. Most of my doctor appts have to be on Friday!
- My pasture is for sale and would be a good homesite in Grass Valley.
- Need jobs to employ people who already live there.
- Need to invest in water/sewer
- No government subsidized low income housing.
- Own property in Kent. Have thought about a summer home there.

- People who live in small communities, live there because they're small. Be very careful about a small number wanting lots of housing.
- People will move if there are jobs and good schools, along with housing.
- Pertaining to city of Wasco: Wasco does not present the appearance of a town favorable for building. Many of the property owners do not take care of their property, including their home. The town needs occupants who are taxable, in order to promote long term responsibility. Rentals would be more negative for encouraging permanent employers.
- Please let market place set housing needs and housing cost. County court should stay out of market.
- Please say no to trailer parks!
- S.C. has what I'd term as lots of "sub-standard" housing. The county certainly needs some new housing that might be attractive to teachers and other professionals.
- Sherman County remains an agricultural economy. In my opinion, new housing should not interfere with agriculture and should be planned to complement other existing or future economic infrastructure. 1. New housing should not take viable farmland. 2. New housing should not be permitted where farm practices might become an issue. Common farm practices involve chemicals, noise, dust, smells and so forth. 3. Residences near the Wasco Airport should be restricted to hanger/home combinations similar to Independence and Lake Billy Chinook elsewhere in Oregon. 4. Windmills should be permissible where farmers agree that farmland is minimally invaded. 5. New housing should be permitted only if people constructing or occupying the homes understand that future windmills may obstruct views. Thank you for asking.
- Seems to be a big need for oversized building lots.
- Sherman Co. has a real deficit of rentals for people who want to move here.
- The majority of new jobs now from the wind industry will not provide high enough paying jobs for any sustained building of new homes beyond the existing lots available. Few higher paying jobs will have people wanting to live in Sherman Co.
- There may be a need for a few houses in Sherman Co., but I would not like to see low income house built. It would be good to have some families in our county that have a job and would make a contribution to the county.

- This answer to your survey is probably misleading because I am the owner/trustee of a house, but that house has been leased as part of a whole farm property (forgoing on 4 generations) and what happens with it is in control of the leasees. Please don't enter my name in the drawing. The prize should go to a resident.
- This survey does not reflect those who live outside the county but still own a house within the county.
- To attract people to the county, we need to make the towns more appealing - fix sidewalks and streets (esp. in wasco), clean up junky lots - show pride in our communities! I feel this would go a long way to attract people. Also a new elementary school located in Moro would be a big plus.
- Up to now - pay to workers has been low so rent can't be afforded on a nice home. I have been told my rentals are maintained better than some, but they are not what I would want.
- Use SIP money to cost share remodels and new construction of homes. You will get all your money back in increased tax renewal down the road. It would be an investment Sherman Co.
- We are "quietly" selling our home ourselves & have been contacted by 5+ families who want to move to Sherman Co. - there is a big interest esp. rural homes.
- We are interested in getting utilities on our property in Grass Valley but do not have an address. Also do not know who to contact about getting city water brought to the property line.
- We are interested in possible rental a new home development other than our own.
- We find small acreages hard to find. We'd like 5-20 acres that is affordable - poss. To put manufactured or sm. Stick built home on to retire in the future.
- We have had four individuals over the past year express an interest in moving to Kent, or buying property to build.
- We have purchased a house in Wasco and plan to move there from Portland.
- We have several rental properties in Rufus - it would be nice to see more job opportunities in Sherman Co. - tenants tend to follow the jobs ie: wind towers, railroad, Google, etc.
- We need electrical power to our property near Buckley Rd and Buck Hollow Creek before we can build.

- We need homes - new- for folks to live in. It is hard to hire people with not very adequate housing available. Great to have Asher's project.
- We need housing in the county soon, or hopefully we can draw interest from outside business to being in a variety of jobs and improve our financial status or a county. Good housing = job opportunities = more population = a better stable status of our county and the improvement to our schools too!
- We need more decent rental units!
- We need more housing in Wasco!
- We own a rental besides our own home and are constantly asked if it is available.
- We own CRP land and we work and reside in Portland. It's possible that we'd consider living in Sherman Co. in the future, but we are not considering it at this time.
- We own ranch land in the county - no house- and live outside the county (Portland area). As such, we're not very knowledgeable on the subject - sorry. Best wishes for a successful assessment.
- We own Trimble Rentals. Our family farm is south of Grass Valley. If there is a need I would consider building rentals in the county.
- We rent the house out.
- We think its commendable for Co. govt to investigate housing needs. But the county govt should not finance construction of single or multi-family housing.
- We think Sherman Co. would be a desireable place to live but our family doesn't live there. As seniors, we would be concerned about medical services in Sherman Co., doctors and dentists. The Dalles is a bit of a drive. As it looks now, the Tri-Cities fits our retirement needs.
- We will be building a new home on Court St. in Moro
- When the construction of wind turbines has ended how many are willing to stay when there will be no work available for 2/3's of the erection areas?
- When we moved here in January we had a difficult time finding a place to buy. We feel lucky to have found this place, but we really want to be out of town. We are hoping for a bare acreage that we can build a house on. We would like at least 20 acres but would love to find 500 or more.
- With the building of wind farms there is a need for housing, rentals & homes to buy. 500-700 mo. 100, 000 to 190, 000 range.



Insights for success

- Would like to see some smaller parcels available outside city limits. Like 1 acre, 2 acre, 4 acre, or 10 acre. Like some young ones may like to have a pony, house or 4H product. Instead of all this 160 acre min. lot size everywhere for one home.