

Shaping The Future



A Report on Development Strategies

Based on the Results of a Community Survey
Conducted by the
Cape Vincent Development Council

Sept. '92

INTRODUCTION

The comments found in the margin are direct quotes from survey respondents.

"You have so much to offer. Beautiful weather in the summer, a good school system, easy access to fishing grounds and to Canada. I love your large trees and your beautiful lake and river."

"We have been coming to Cape Vincent since 1957 and have owned land since 1976. We enjoy the people, the village, fishing, French Day and in general the relaxed and quiet atmosphere."

Cape Vincent is a beautiful, historic town located on the shores of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. Earlier this century, Cape Vincent was a bustling industrial and tourist center. Agriculture, shipping, coal transportation, commercial fishing and tourism supported the local economy. During this time, Cape Vincent was more self-sufficient with many retail stores and services. Some of the services and facilities included doctors, a dentist, a pharmacy, clothing stores, a movie house, hotels, a railroad, and active commercial docks.

Since that time, there has been a gradual decline in the family farm, commercial transportation, and Cape Vincent's economy. With the loss of many year-round jobs, many people were forced to leave Cape Vincent. This, in turn, led to a smaller population and a smaller tax base. Because of the reduced population, many of the retail stores and services also failed, which contributed to a further decline in the population. All of these factors resulted in a community that is now more heavily dependent on the summer season and tourist dollars.

Today, Cape Vincent's economy is supported by tourism, marine-related businesses, fishing, agriculture and seasonal residents. The area's two largest year-round employers are the Cape Vincent Correctional Facility and the Thousand Islands Central School District. In the past five years, the new prison and the general growth of Jefferson County contributed to some new job opportunities in Cape Vincent. However, Cape Vincent is still largely dependent on its seasonal economy, and growth in retail stores and services has not met expectations.

In the late 1980's, community leaders continued to look for ways to improve the economy and the quality of life for Cape Vincent's residents. Construction of a second prison was considered, but this suggestion was opposed by many residents and the issue led to a split in community attitudes toward development. Many citizens felt the economy needed improvement, but there was no consensus in which direction to move.

In June 1990, the Cape Vincent Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with Town and Village Boards, established the group which later became known as the Cape Vincent Development Council (CVDC). Membership was opened to all interested residents with the intent that the group would reflect Cape Vincent's diverse population. Today, the CVDC has about 15 members, who include seasonal and year-round residents of various occupations, such as school teachers, business owners, retirees, and farmers.

The goal of the CVDC is to investigate potential development strategies that would promote economic growth. First, all the members of the CVDC agreed that any long range development plan should

consider the interests of all the residents of Cape Vincent. Two approaches were used to solicit public opinion: vision sessions and a community attitude survey.

"The Cape definitely needs a face lift. Do something to help people paint and beautify their homes, plant flowers, etc."

"Efforts should be made to create incentives to beautify the village community."

Vision sessions with local government and civic organizations were designed to better understand attitudes toward future development. Twenty sessions were led by CVDC members, which helped open a dialogue with the community regarding the future of Cape Vincent.

The community survey was designed to solicit opinions and ideas regarding economic development. In January 1992, two thousand and seventeen surveys were mailed to all seasonal and year-round households in the Town of Cape Vincent. Over 55% of these surveys were returned.

The survey was created primarily to gather information concerning community attitudes on the present economy and future development. It also included several demographic questions and opportunities to make suggestions about services and development. The following report summarizes the results of the questionnaire. Because of the limitations of this format, it was not possible to report all the information collected in the surveys. However, all the tabulations and results will be available upon request.

II. DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

This sector represents the demographic information provided by those people who responded to the survey. The greatest value of this information will be for examining differences in attitudes among groups living within the Township of Cape Vincent. This summary will help describe those people – their ages, educational background, where they live, and their total household income.

"Cape Vincent needs more year-round people to help the businesses that are here and to get new businesses to open up. Once businesses die the village dies."

Two important demographic features characterize our community. The age composition is weighted heavily toward older citizens (See fig. 1), and a large proportion of residents live in Cape Vincent seasonally (See fig. 2). Seasonal residents comprise 58% of the total respondents compared to year-round residents who represented 42%. Year-round residents were equally apportioned between living inside or outside of the village of Cape Vincent (Fig. 2). The vast majority of seasonal residents, on the other hand, live outside the village.

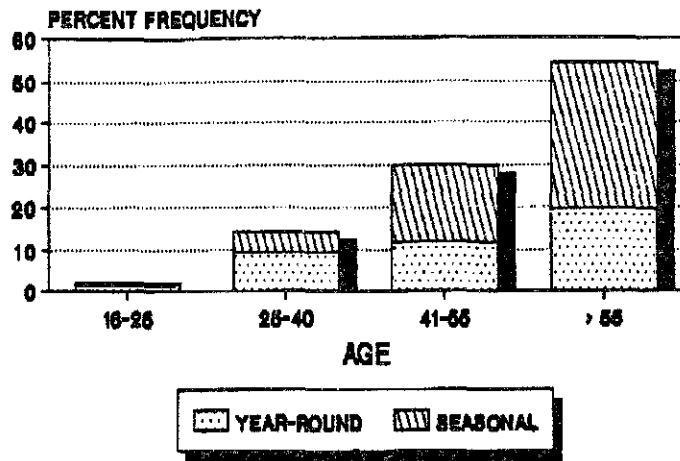


Figure 1. Age composition by type of residence.

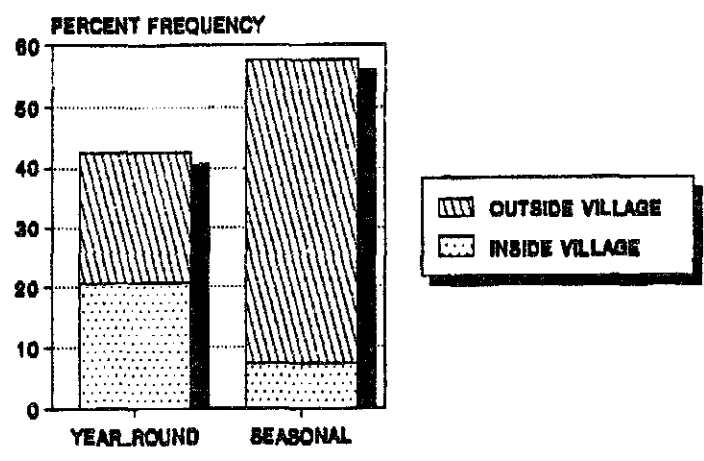


Figure 2. Distribution of residences.

"Some population growth to increase the tax base is desirable, but too large a growth would ruin our town."

Eighty-five percent of the year-round residents of Cape Vincent own their homes. Home ownership is also related to household income; those respondents in the lower income brackets were more apt to rent and those in the higher income brackets were more likely to own homes. Renters represented only 15% of the respondents, with the largest proportion of renters living outside the village on a seasonal basis, many of them having lived in Cape Vincent for 6 years or longer.

Most of the residents of Cape Vincent have lived here for many years. Forty-one percent of all respondents have lived in Cape Vincent for more than 19 years compared to 29% who have lived here for less than six years. (Fig. 3).

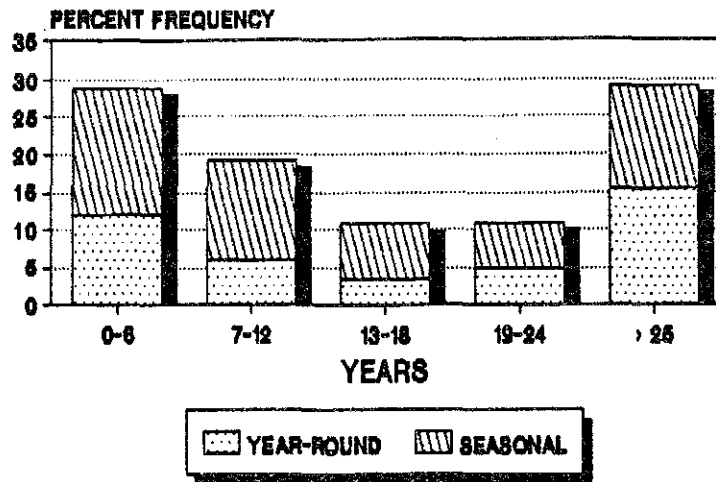


Figure 3. Years lived in Cape Vincent by residential status.

"We need permanent year-round residents with families who have steady income to promote the economy, social life and growth."

The distribution of annual household incomes is described in Figure 4. Of the 922 people who responded to this question, 81, or 9%, had household incomes less than \$12,000. Nearly 75% of these 81 respondents were age 56 years and older. Those people over age 55 comprised 29% of the 193 respondents in the highest income bracket. The household incomes of people of working age, from 26 to 55 years, increased steadily with each successively higher income bracket, peaking at 71% of the 193 households making more than \$60,000. Year-round residents represented 84% of those households making 12,500 and less, and seasonal residents comprised 79% of the the over \$60,000 bracket. Between the incomes of \$12,500 and \$60,000, there was a more equitable distribution of year-round and seasonal residents.

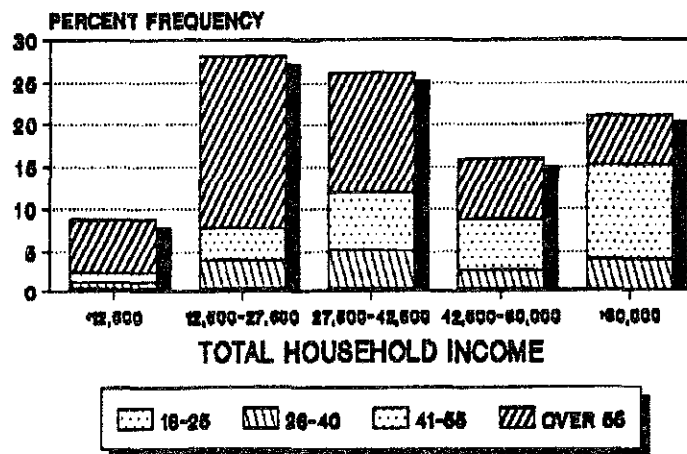


Figure 4. Total household income distribution according to ages.

Half of the respondents were college graduates (Fig. 5). High school and technical school graduates represented 32% and 16% of respondents, respectively. Twenty-seven of the 1,056 respondents (3%) who answered this question completed only elementary school. There was a positive relationship between level of education and household income, i.e., higher education was associated with higher incomes. All of the respondents with only an elementary school education were age 41 and older; younger people were all high school graduates.

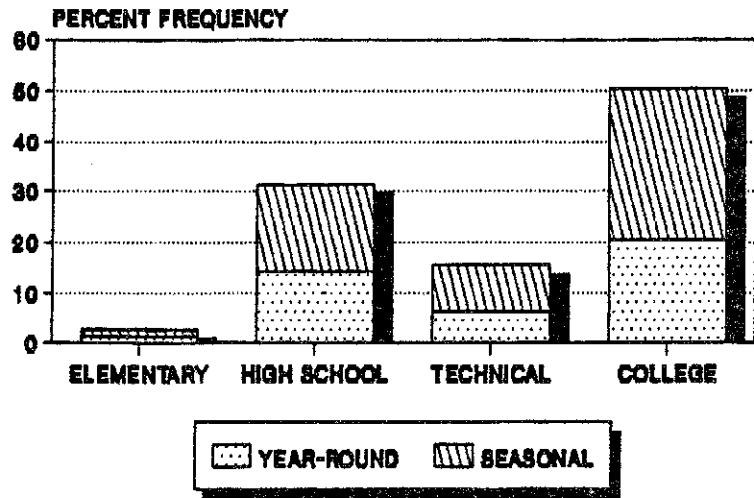


Figure 5. Distribution of education level according to residency status.

III. LOCAL ECONOMY

"I believe the economic conditions in Cape Vincent could greatly benefit if the natural beauty and historic qualities were more actively promoted."

"Cape Vincent is a nice community. I would not favor anything drastic. I feel anything you do should be examined carefully and with good judgement."

Although some individuals have expressed concern about the lack of economic opportunities available in Cape Vincent, prior to this survey no solid information existed to document our community's attitude regarding our local economy. The results presented in this section not only describe how people presently feel about the local economy and the quality of life in Cape Vincent, but these results are also an expression of their hope for the future.

Few individuals described Cape Vincent's economy as good. Only 10% of the respondents described the local economy as good and the majority (62%) considered the economy as fair (Fig. 6). Although only 27% of the respondents considered Cape Vincent's economy poor, eighty-nine percent were supportive of economic improvements. This suggests that many of the people who rated the local economy as fair were not satisfied and want to see improvement. Those respondents that were the most pessimistic about the economy and most supportive of improvement efforts were young people, year-round residents living within the village limits, and citizens in the lower income brackets.

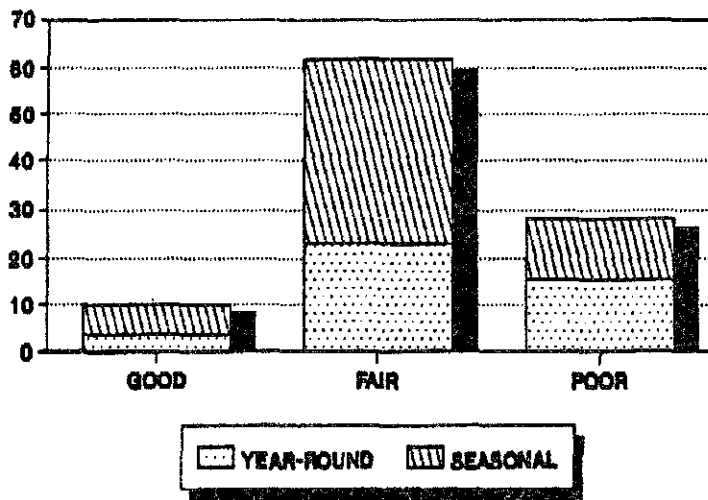


Figure 6. Attitude on the general economy of Cape Vincent according to residency status.

"We need something to keep our children in the area after they are out of school. There is nothing in this town, and it's too bad."

Not everyone who supported economic improvement wanted to see the population increase. Those individuals who described the economy as good also believed the population level should remain the same. Not surprising, those who felt the economy was poor also thought the population level should increase. Although 89% of Cape citizens supported efforts to improve the economy, 41% wanted the population level to remain the same. This suggests that many citizens would like to see their quality of life improve, but not necessarily at the expense of Cape Vincent's small town atmosphere. In addition to making an effort to improve Cape Vincent's economy, a substantial majority of respondents (80%) supported the creation of a long range comprehensive plan, and 75% of the respondents are in favor of a local development agency.

It is interesting to note how very little divergence of opinion there is between year-round residents and seasonal residents. Although on some issues one group may feel more strongly than the other, it is only a matter of degree; on the whole they agree.

IV. DEVELOPMENTAL STRATEGIES

"As a long-term seasonal resident, I have treasured the beauty and tranquility of the Cape Vincent area. We also realize that the year-round residents could greatly benefit from increased employment opportunities. We hope that efforts are successful."

One of the most important sections of this survey was the one that provided different ideas for future economic development. The purpose of presenting these ideas was to obtain a sense of what type of development best suited the citizens of Cape Vincent and, just as importantly, what types of development strategies are not supported by our community.

The following table ranks those developmental strategies according to the highest percent of agreement. Five choices were available in this section of the survey: strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree. In order to establish a list of preferred strategies the

strongly agreed and agreed responses were added together for an overall approval rating.

"I feel that there are enough opportunities available in this area to attract summer residents and tourists. What we need is to provide growth in industry or other work to benefit the year-round residents."

"We feel that any industrial complex should be no closer than 3 miles from NYS Rt. 12E. The tourism industry is totally dependent on the location. While we recognize the need for economic diversity, it should not be at the sacrifice of an existing valuable economic resource."

"Tourism is what we are ideally suited for - promote more marinas, camping facilities, motels and golf courses."

"Let's forget about an industrial city booming, but put a little more polish on the pure gem we already have."

Ranking of developmental strategies from responses from the CVDC community survey - August 23, 1992.

RANK	STRATEGY	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE
1	Historical and cultural	87.70	7.30	5.10
2	Main street revitalization	86.70	5.60	7.80
3	Expand recreational facilities	84.00	6.80	9.30
4	Promote tourism	79.30	7.10	13.60
5	Agricultural development	77.30	14.50	8.20
6	Expand marine facilities	75.80	8.70	15.60
7	Promote retirement community	74.00	7.60	18.50
8	Create cottage industries	67.60	17.80	14.60
9	Expand municipal services	65.40	20.00	14.60
10	Promote year-round residences	63.30	15.20	21.50
11	Develop healthcare facility	62.90	19.90	17.30
12	Establish conference center	47.60	17.70	34.70
13	Promote multi-purpose arena	45.20	17.90	36.90
14	Create industrial park	39.60	14.70	45.60
15	Construct second prison	19.90	8.90	71.30

Highest agreement was for developing our historic and cultural assets (88%) and to revitalize Cape Vincent's main street (87%). Expanding recreation, tourism, marina facilities, and agricultural opportunities were supported by three-fourths of the respondents. This ranking of strategies shows that our community continues to support the traditional activities that have provided the economic mainstay of Cape Vincent in the past. Developmental strategies such as an industrial park, multi-use facility and conference center were the least favored alternatives. Development of a second prison had little support from our community; it ranked last with only 20% favoring another correction facility. Even though year-round residents were more supportive of a second prison than seasonal residents, the majority in each group disagreed with promoting further prison development in Cape Vincent (Fig. 7).

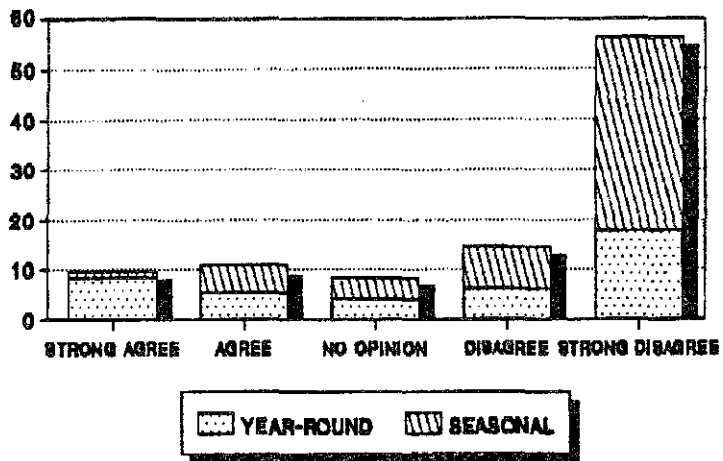


Figure 7. Distribution of responses to the development of a second prison by residency status.

Using Cape Vincent's historic assets to improve the local economy was supported by the majority of respondents who were aged 26 and older. College educated and older citizens were somewhat more supportive of promoting historical heritage than other respondents. Revitalizing Cape Vincent's main street was also strongly supported as a developmental strategy, particularly by village residents.

"I believe that water and sewage treatment facilities will be the key to any future development in Cape Vincent."

There were some differences of opinion on some strategies based on the age group of the respondents. Those people above age 25 held common beliefs about most issues. The youngest age group 16-25 had somewhat different views. They were generally more supportive of promoting marinas, a conference center, tourism and an industrial park. They were somewhat less agreeable to promoting historical and healthcare strategies.

"Our greatest resource is our water supply and yet, no water district is available outside the village. Thus, thousands of acres of land go undeveloped and to me this is our biggest downfall."

An individual's residential status was related to the responses to some of the developmental strategies. Main street revitalization was supported most by those people who live inside the village, both year-round and seasonal residents. Seasonal residents were less agreeable to the industrial park (34%) than year-round residents (48%).

"We need to promote agricultural industry other than dairy farming to make use of the vast amount of unused land."

Some differences in responses to developmental strategies were related to the level of total household income. Citizens with lower household incomes were more agreeable to promoting Cape Vincent as a year-round residential community, developing a multi-use arena, creating an industrial park, promoting healthcare facilities, and constructing a second prison. Apparently those people with lower incomes were more supportive of any type of economic development that might improve their quality of life. Individuals with the highest incomes were generally less agreeable to these same strategies; they tend to support those activities that maintain the present character of Cape Vincent.

"We would like to see the village take on the vacant land across from the Post Office as a village green and beautify it."

The development strategies that received a positive approval rating need not all be pursued at once. Rather, it would be more advisable to isolate one or two strategies at a time, those which show the most promise or interest, but without dismissing other opportunities when they arise. It should also be noted that the preferred and most lasting development generally comes from within the community. Local businesses, present and future, need the support of the community in order to survive and prosper.

"I would like to see competitive stores and other businesses in Cape Vincent to keep jobs and flow of money here where we live."

V. SERVICES

An open-ended question on the survey asked "What would you consider to be the single largest lack of services in the community?"

The following table ranks the services that the respondents described as the single largest lack of services in Cape Vincent:

RANK	SERVICE NEEDS	FREQUENCY
1	GROCERY	257
2	MEDICAL SERVICES	211
3	GENERAL RETAIL	135
4	PHARMACY	130
5	RECREATIONAL FACILITIES	82
6	WATER/SEWER OUTSIDE VILLAGE	74
7	MARINAS	65
8	MOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS	38
9	RESTAURANTS	30
10	GARBAGE COLLECTION	30
11	JOBS	17
12	ZONING	11
13	PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION	10

"Better retail stores don't happen in a vacuum. People have to support local businesses."

"Competitive retail stores, especially groceries, could result in a large increase in the purchases a lot of us drive to Watertown to buy."

Another grocery store and expanded medical services were the most common services listed by respondents. Expansion in general retail businesses and the addition of a pharmacy were the next most commonly listed group of services. Respondents want to see continued improvement in recreational facilities, marinas, motels and restaurants.

They also see the need for better municipal services. Water and sewer services outside the village, and garbage containers and collection in the village were the most commonly requested public services. Improved job opportunities, more equitable enforcement of zoning regulations and some form of public transportation to Watertown were also listed.

VI. COMMUNITY ISSUES

"I feel that the river should be protected and preserved at all costs. So much of our environment is under threat that I wonder what life will be like for my great grandchildren. We must take responsibility for the past to insure a future for our children's children."

Citizens of Cape Vincent are united on one issue in particular -- the appreciation of the natural beauty of our area with a strong commitment to preserving and protecting our valuable natural resources. Respondents were unanimous in their agreement in the survey for the statement that "The natural resources of Cape Vincent are an important asset to our community and we should make every effort to protect and preserve them." Likewise, 92% of respondents agreed that efforts should be made to promote greater knowledge and appreciation for our river and lake resources. Responses to these two questions not only show strong feelings for the natural beauty of our area, but they also indicate that any development plans must consider potential adverse effects on our river and lake resources.

"We would like to see the village of Cape Vincent have pride in its appearance and upkeep. There are beautiful villages in New York State with considerably less to offer in the way of natural resources; they have capitalized on their history and are "gems" of architectural refurbishing."

"Give seasonal people more say so in your town. Let us work together, not apart. Try to encourage better feelings between summer and year-round residents."

"I really love the Cape and surrounding area and I hope several solutions can be found to re-populate the area and bring up the economy without sacrificing the magnificent shoreline and views."

The appearance of our community and its historical and cultural heritage are valued highly by our citizens. Ninety percent of those who responded to the survey agreed that the physical appearance of our community is important and believe it can have an impact on our economic well-being. Regarding the historical and cultural assets of Cape Vincent, 88% of all respondents agreed that promotion of our heritage will help the growth of our local economy.

The community has certain preferences regarding the type of development that should be promoted. When asked "What would be the effect of industrial development on tourism and recreation?", more people (55%) believed the impacts would be adverse compared to those who thought the effects would be positive (26%). This underscores the previous conclusion that development should take into consideration any potential adverse impacts on Cape Vincent's natural resources.

CONCLUSION

When the CVDC was formed in 1990, its goal was to seek a community consensus regarding future development in Cape Vincent. The CVDC felt it had the important responsibility not only to identify potential strategies, but also to make sure they would be in keeping with the needs, desires, and ideals of the community. The CVDC has, with this report, identified those strategies which are supported by the community, as indicated by the results of the survey. All the steps taken to reach this point, although time consuming, have been necessary because the attitude of the community is a factor critical to the achievement of any successful development.

Perhaps the most important findings of the survey show that the majority of respondents, both year-round and seasonal, not only are in favor of development, but also agree on what types of development would be most acceptable in Cape Vincent. The respondents have expressed a clear concern for our present economic condition, and a hope for a better quality of life. Although hesitant to describe Cape Vincent's economy as poor, the majority nevertheless were in favor of a concerted, organized effort to improve our local economic base. They would like to see improved job opportunities and services, but not at the expense or sacrifice of the very qualities that make Cape Vincent so appealing- its beauty, history, and small town atmosphere. Many people express a reluctance to see Cape Vincent change at all, but realize that in order to have a better quality of life, changes must occur. In the words of one respondent, "Unfortunately, change and development have to happen, and the best we can do is to try and manage it carefully."

Overall, we hope this report serves three purposes: first acknowl-

edging that the community realizes that there are no "quick fix" solutions to revitalizing Cape Vincent's economy; second, recognizing the need and benefits of long-range development plans; third, we hope that this report will serve to make the residents of Cape Vincent aware that consensus exists, and to encourage them to continue working together to achieve common goals.

"Cape Vincent is a wonderful place to live. Please don't change it, just improve what is already here."

It is the CVDC's hope that this report will be used by the citizens and community leaders as a guide for Cape Vincent's future. The CVDC believes that only with open discussion, consensus building and planning can successful development take place. It is clear that the majority of residents believe that development will not compromise Cape Vincent, but enhance it, if it is planned and controlled. With the support of the community, the CVDC intends to move into the next phase of its efforts. Following the guidelines set forth in this report, we hope to investigate potential development projects, as well as contribute to those already in progress. We realize achieving our goals will not be an easy task, but we look forward to the challenge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We also would like to thank the Cape Vincent Chamber of Commerce, the Clayton Improvement Association, Township Telephone, Cable Systems, and Syracuse Stamp and Coin for their help and/or financial support in the preparation and mailing of the survey.

Many members of the CVDC had a hand in the preparation of the survey and this report, in particular: Michel Longtin— President, David LaMora— Vice President, Elisabeth Brennan, Seldon Brown, David Docteur, Sandy Ivey, Susan Mahrer, Clifford Schneider, Galen Todd, Robert Uhlig, Ruth Uhlig, Beatrice Wilkins, and Gary Wood.

In addition, Michelle Merchant and Michael Mahrer, representing the Cape Vincent Chamber of Commerce, contributed greatly to the preparation of the survey and report.

We would also like to thank Shirley Hamblin for the cover art, and the Cape Vincent Correctional Facility for the printing of this report. To contact the CVDC you may write to us c/o The Cape Vincent Chamber of Commerce, Cape Vincent, NY 13618.

A. General Questions

1. How would you describe the general economy of Cape Vincent?	10.3 % good	62.4% fair	27.3% poor
2. Do you think an effort should be made to improve the general economy of Cape Vincent?	88.6 yes	11.4 no	
3. Would you support the creation of a long range comprehensive plan for controlled development?	79.5 yes	20.5 no	
4. Would you support the formation of a local development agency that would deal specifically with development issues and projects?	75.2 yes	24.8 no	

B. The following questions deal with different types of *development strategies* that have been identified as having potential for Cape Vincent.

	<u>strongly agree</u>	<u>agree</u>	<u>no opinion</u>	<u>disagree</u>	<u>strongly disagree</u>
1. Promote Cape Vincent as a year-round residential or bedroom community	19.8%	43.5%	15.2%	14.7%	6.8%
2. Increase the seasonal population by further promoting the second home concept for retirement and/or vacationing	26.9	47.1	7.6	12.8	5.7
3. Explore various strategies to increase tourism	31.3	48.0	7.1	9.0	4.6
4. Create or promote a resort conference center	16.2	31.4	17.7	22.4	12.3
5. Look at expanding current marine facilities and creating new ones.	35.0	40.8	8.7	9.6	6.0
6. Promote the historical and cultural nature of Cape Vincent	40.8	46.9	7.3	2.9	2.2
7. Revitalize the "main street" retail industry	48.8	37.9	5.6	4.7	3.1
8. Create and promote light "owner-operated" or "cottage" industries	24.7	42.9	17.8	10.9	3.7
9. Expand and promote the recreational aspects of Cape Vincent	37.9	46.1	6.8	6.3	3.0
10. Promote an enclosed multi-purpose recreational arena	17.8	27.4	17.9	22.1	14.8
11. Expand the capacity and reach of our municipal services to help promote development and accomodate new health regulations	22.5	42.9	20.0	9.4	5.2
12. Create an industrial park complex with municipal services to attract manufacturing and service industries	14.5	25.1	14.7	22.7	22.9
13. Promote healthcare industries such as a multi-level care nursing home	17.3	45.6	19.9	10.5	6.8
14. Promote as a development strategy the construction of a second prison	9.5	10.4	8.9	14.7	56.6
15. Promote the existing agribusiness and pursue alternative agricultural uses for vacant land.	26.1	51.2	14.5	5.0	3.2

C. These are subjective or attitudinal questions:

1. What is your opinion of our population level, do you think it should...	decrease 1.0%	remain level 47.2%	increase 51.8%
2. The physical appearance of our community has an impact on its economic well-being	agree 89.8	no opinion 7.2	disagree 3.0
3. The natural resources of Cape Vincent are an important asset to our community and we should make every effort to protect and preserve them	agree 96.8	no opinion 2.2	disagree 1.0
4. Efforts should be made to promote greater knowledge, use, and appreciation of our river and lake resources	agree 92.2	no opinion 5.4	disagree 2.5
5. How do you feel industrial development within the river and lake corridors would affect tourism and recreation?	positively 25.6	no effect 19.2	adversely 55.3
6. What would you consider to be the single largest lack in services in the community?			

D. The following are demographic questions:

1. Sex of respondent		68.5% male	31.5% female
2. Age	1.8% 16-25	13.8% 26-40	28.9% 41-55 55.6% 56-
3. Education	elementary 2.6	high school 32.3	technical/vocational 15.6 college 49.5
4. Residence (check one)		year-round —	inside village 20.9 outside village 21.5
		seasonal ———	inside village 7.4 outside village 50.3
5. Do you		85.4 own	14.6 rent
6. How many years have you lived in Cape Vincent?	28.9% 0-6 years	19.2% 7-12 Years	10.9% 13-18 Years 11.6% 19-24 Years 29.4% 25+
7. Total household income:		less than 12,500 8.8%	12,500-27,500 28.1%
		42,500-60,000 16.3%	27,500-42,500 25.8% 60,000+ 21.0%

8. Please feel free to comment: _____

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