

Executive Summary

Door County Cost of Community Services Study

A Cost of Community Service Study (COCS) is a picture, set in a concrete moment of time, that compares the costs to a community of servicing certain categories of land use to the revenues generated to that community in the form of taxes, licenses, permits and other fees. This relationship is then expressed in the form of a ratio of *dollars earned in revenue* to *dollars spent to provide community services* for specific land categories. For example, the ratio of \$1 : \$1.25 would indicate that for every dollar of revenue received, a community would be paying out a dollar-and-a-quarter in services for that land category.

The COCS for Door County was conducted on behalf of, and funded by, the Door County Environmental Council and the Door County Land Trust. The study was conducted by Mary Edwards (PhD in Urban and Regional Planning—UW-Madison) currently an assistant professor with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

The Door County COCS (DC-COCS) examines the two towns of Nasewaupsee and Gibraltar. Nasewaupsee was selected because of its rural nature, while Gibraltar was selected because it represents an area impacted by tourism and residential development. Land use categories for this study include: **Residential, Agricultural Residential, Commercial, Manufacturing, and Agricultural/Open Lands.**

Previous research and past COCS methodologies used as guidelines for this study were provided by the American Farmland Trust and the Wisconsin Land Use Research Program. While both organizations utilized slightly different methodologies, conclusions were similar. Typically, these studies indicate across-the-board that it costs a community far less to service **forest** and **agricultural land** than to service all other categories, with the cost of services to **residential land use** being highest.

The DC-COCS cautions that some studies are criticized for not including an **agricultural residential category** in the **agricultural/open lands** category. This study compares costs of **agricultural residences** separately, and in combination with **agricultural/open land use**. The DC-COCS also cautions that ratios given for land use categories may vary considerably from specific land uses. Individual land uses should be cost-analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

The DC-COCS then provides profiles, in table form, and methodologies used to gather data for this study. Nasewaupsee land use was overwhelmingly **agricultural and open land** (85.4%). Gibraltar was largely **residential land use** (66.3%). Land uses were defined by the state of Wisconsin assessment categories. Additionally, town clerks and residents were interviewed to identify properties associated with active farming to create the **agricultural residential** category.

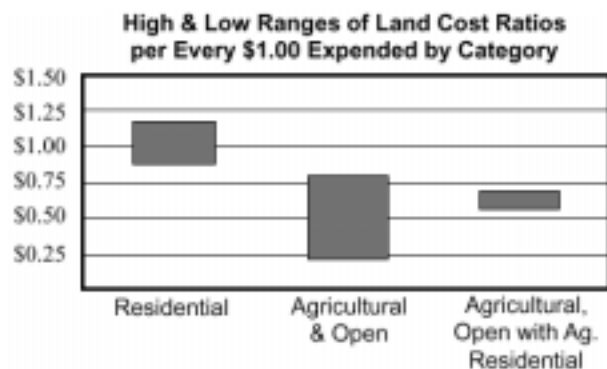
All local revenue and expense data were collected for fiscal year 2003, with property valuation data collected for 2002, from town offices and the State Department of Revenue. Other sources of data included local budgets, tax assessment rolls, statements of assessment and school district data from the Department of Public Instruction.

Local income & expense allocation was made through the review of local town budgets and records and interviews with town clerks. Expenses included public works and public safety, general administration, legal services, elections and assessments for both towns.

Educational revenues and expenses were based on data obtained from local school officials and allocated by pupil count to land uses in each of the towns.

Then the revenue to expense ratios were calculated for each land use from three points of view: the taxpayer, the town board and the school district. The taxpayer point of view includes all taxes, fees, licenses and permits and can be viewed as a *total paid* against the *total received* in services. Each town's point of view includes only those revenues and expenditures related to its governance. The school board's point of view includes only revenues and expenditures strictly applicable to the schools.

These results were then presented in a series of tables with the following results. For the period of time as mentioned above, from the three points of view, **agricultural and open lands** were the least expensive land categories for all with ratios ranging from \$1 : \$.23 to \$1 : \$.79, while **residential land use** ratios ranged from \$1 : \$.88 to \$1 : \$1.15. Other land uses fell between these ranges. Even when **agricultural land** was combined with **agricultural residential land** it proved to be less expensive to serve than **residential land**, with a range of ratios of \$1 : \$.59 to \$1 : \$.68.



The implications of the DC-COCS are consistent with previous COCS studies: **residential land use** remains the highest demander of public services, while **open and agricultural land uses** place the lowest cost burden upon their communities.