

OREGON ECONOMIC AND  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT

“BLUE RIVER COMMUNITY SURVEY”

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SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS



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## I. INTRODUCTION

This document reports the results of a list sample telephone survey of 53 adults in the community of Blue River, Oregon, conducted by the University of Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) January 10 - 28, 2002. The survey's purpose was to assess low-moderate income thresholds in Blue River and to provide the community with public opinion data on community improvements and resources.

Working closely with Margie Becker of the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department (OECDD), OSRL planned, pretested and implemented this survey. This report summarizes the survey methodology and results.

## II. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### A. Survey Instrument

The survey's goals were to obtain valid and reliable information from adults in the community of Blue River, Oregon on the following topics:

1. **Household and family size**, including the presence of multiple families within households;
2. **Family income threshold**, with family income from all sources falling above or below specified levels contingent on family size, as provided by OECDD, treating multiple families within the same household separately;
3. **Opinions on Blue River's community service facilities**, including what type of community service facilities people prefer.
4. Respondents' **labor force participation**, including employed, unemployed and looking for work, and out of the labor force (retired, student, homemaker, and disabled).

The key survey questions on household/family size and family income thresholds replicate those used in several previous community income surveys OSRL has completed for OECDD. OSRL developed, tested, and implemented the community service questions especially for this project.

Project Director Brian Wolf programmed the survey instrument into OSRL's computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI) system and research assistants pretested it. A facsimile of the survey instrument is provided in Section 2 of this documentation. All interviews were confidential, and Human Subject's approval was obtained.

## **B. Sample**

OSRL received a list from OECDD containing the telephone numbers of households in the Blue River Water District. This list is believed to be a mostly complete listing of all of the households in Blue River. For the purposes of this study, OECDD and Blue River community representatives agreed that the Blue River Water District is considered to be the best listing of Blue River households. Because Blue River is not an incorporated city, neither the US Census Bureau nor any other agency has data on the number of households in the area.

The original list had 107 telephone numbers. To check the accuracy of this list, we compared the telephone numbers of the water district to the telephone numbers of registered voters in Blue River. The comparison yielded only one additional number, which was added to the sample for a total of 108 records. In addition, two households had more than one family; they were also added to the sample, for a total of 110 records.

Of all 110 telephone numbers listed, 39 were ineligible (1 non-working, 8 disconnected, 1 duplicate, and 29 not in Blue River<sup>1</sup>). The status of 16 could not be confirmed (4 answering machines, 9 no answers, 1 telephone slam, and for two cases, interviewers left message on household answering machine but no one was ever reached).

OSRL rigorously attempted to elicit more households to interview on the list OECDD supplied for the Blue River Water District. Two research assistants systematically combed through the McKenzie River and Eugene-Springfield telephone directories to try to locate members of households listed as vacant on **the**, and to try to locate persons whose telephone numbers were missing or disconnected. We were not able to locate any new Blue River households in this manner.

**Sample validity issues:** Three important validity issues should be considered when examining these results. First, households may exist in Blue River that are not in the water district. However, OECDD assured OSRL that the Blue River Water District is, in fact, as comprehensive a list as possible for that community.

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<sup>1</sup> A screening question at the beginning of the survey ensured that all survey respondents resided in Blue River: "Do you live in the Blue River Water District [of Lane County]?"

Second, households in Blue River that do not have a telephone were necessarily excluded from this study. While 1990 census figures show that, nationwide, more than 96% of rural households have telephones, households without telephones also tend to have low incomes.<sup>2</sup>

Third, Blue River community members report that a certain number of seasonal residents reside there only during certain months. Families who can afford multiple residences tend to have higher incomes than those who can afford just one. To account for this fact and any possible biases this might cause, the survey instrument explicitly asked “*Are you a permanent resident of Blue River? PROBE: Do you live six or more months of the year in Blue River?*” All respondents answered this question (and the probe) affirmatively.

The answers to these three issues satisfy any concerns about interpreting the survey results, we believe.

### **C. Data Collection**

Interviewer training was conducted on January 10, 2002. Interviewing was conducted between 9 AM and 9 PM from January 11 to January 28 until all numbers were called at least 25 times. Altogether, OSRL interviewers made 932 telephone calls to complete 53 interviews with adults age 18 and over. Up to 50 calls were made to each valid telephone number. Interviews averaged 3 to 5 minutes. Overall, OSRL achieved a 82% response rate and an outstanding 0% refusal rate.

Although OSRL interviewers completed 53 interviews, one respondents refused to answer the key income question, for n=52.

## **III. SURVEY RESULTS**

### **A. Household and Family Size**

Respondents were asked: “*How many people live in your household at this point in time, including yourself?*” Interviewers typed in the exact number. Interviewers defined household members for respondents using standard U.S. Census conventions, that is:

**Definition:**

*Include everyone who usually lives there half time or more, including: family, boarders, roommates, foster children, live-in employees, newborn babies still in the hospital, children at boarding school, persons with no other home who stay there, persons temporarily away (business, vacation, military service, or in a general hospital).*

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<sup>2</sup> Census 2000 data are not yet available for telephone subscribership. With the steady profusion of telephones, particularly cell phones, in the 1990s, however, the percentage of rural households with telephones is likely to be ever higher than 96%.

Respondents' answers represented 106 persons in all (including themselves). All persons were distributed across household sizes as follows (single-family and multiple-family combined): 14% in one-person households, 52% in two-person households, 27% in three-person households, and 12% in four-person households. No respondents reported being in a household larger than four-persons.

Next, respondents were asked: "Are all of these people in your household members of your family?" or, if only one other person was in the household, "Is the other person in your household a member of your family?" For respondents who asked, interviewers defined family as follows:

**Definition:**

*A family is defined as people who are related by blood or marriage.*

In Blue River, 23 respondents answered the above question "no," representing 110 individuals (including themselves). That is, 10.4% of households contained more than one family. The average number of persons in multi-family households was 4.8. But 177 respondents answered the above question "yes," meaning that 79.7% of households contained one family. The average number of persons in one-family households was 4.3. Single-persons were skipped past the above question. They comprise 9.9% of households. Combining single-person, single-family, and multiple-family households, there were, on average, 4.0 persons per household in the Blue River survey sample.

**B. Family Income Threshold**

In the telephone survey, respondents were asked: "Was your total family income from all sources in 2001 above or below \_\_\_\_\_," a specified amount, which was contingent upon family size. Interviewers defined family income as:

**Definition:**

*Money from jobs (wages, salary, tips, bonuses, commissions), interest, dividends, child support, alimony, welfare, social security, disability, unemployment, and retirement payments, net income from a business, farm or rent, rent, royalties, trust, or estate; and any other money income regularly received by members of your family. Do not include lump-sum payments, such as money from an inheritance or sale of a home.*

For Lane County, Oregon, the low-to-moderate family income thresholds by family size were defined by OECDD in a memorandum dated December 13, 2001 as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Low-Moderate Income Thresholds, by Family Size**

<u>Family Income</u>	<u>Family Size</u>
\$24,500	1
\$27,800	2
\$31,250	3
\$34,700	4
\$37,500	5
\$40,250	6
\$43,050	7
\$45,850	8
\$48,650	9

OECD requires income information on *persons within families*. OSRL extracted the needed data from banner tables and specially-constructed cross-tabulations. These data are summarized below in Table 2. Income information was available in 52 interviews covering 113 persons in families in the Blue River Water District (see the bottom row of Table 2). More specifically, OSRL collected income data on 14 persons in one-person families, 96 persons in one-family households, and 3 persons in the respondent's own family in multi-family households (see column labeled "All Persons").<sup>3</sup>

**Table 2: Persons Below Low-Moderate Income Thresholds, Blue River, Oregon, January 2002**

<b>Low-Moderate Income Threshold</b>	<b>Number Persons in Family</b>	<b>Persons Above</b>	<b>Persons Below</b>	<b>All Persons</b>	<b>Percent Persons Below</b>	<b>Number Respondents Did Not Answer</b>	<b>Number Of Survey Respondents</b>
<b>One Person Families</b>							
\$24,500	1	6	8	14	57%	0	14
<b>One Family Households</b>							
\$27,800	2	26	22	48	46%	1	25
\$31,250	3	18	9	27	33%	0	9
\$34,700	4	12	0	12	0%	0	3
\$37,500	5					0	0
\$40,250	6					0	0
\$43,050	7					0	0
\$45,850	8					0	0
\$48,650	9	0	9	9	100%	0	1
<b>Respondent's Family in Multiple-Family Households</b>							
\$31,250	3	3	0	3	0%	0	1
<b>Totals</b>		65	48	113	<b>43.6%</b>	1	53

<sup>3</sup> The one person in a two-person family who did not answer the family income question is excluded.

Table 2 shows that 43.6% of all persons in families in the Blue River Water District had family incomes below the low-to-moderate thresholds in 2001 (48 persons out of 110). This result is below the 50% level required to qualify for desired OECD loans or grants.

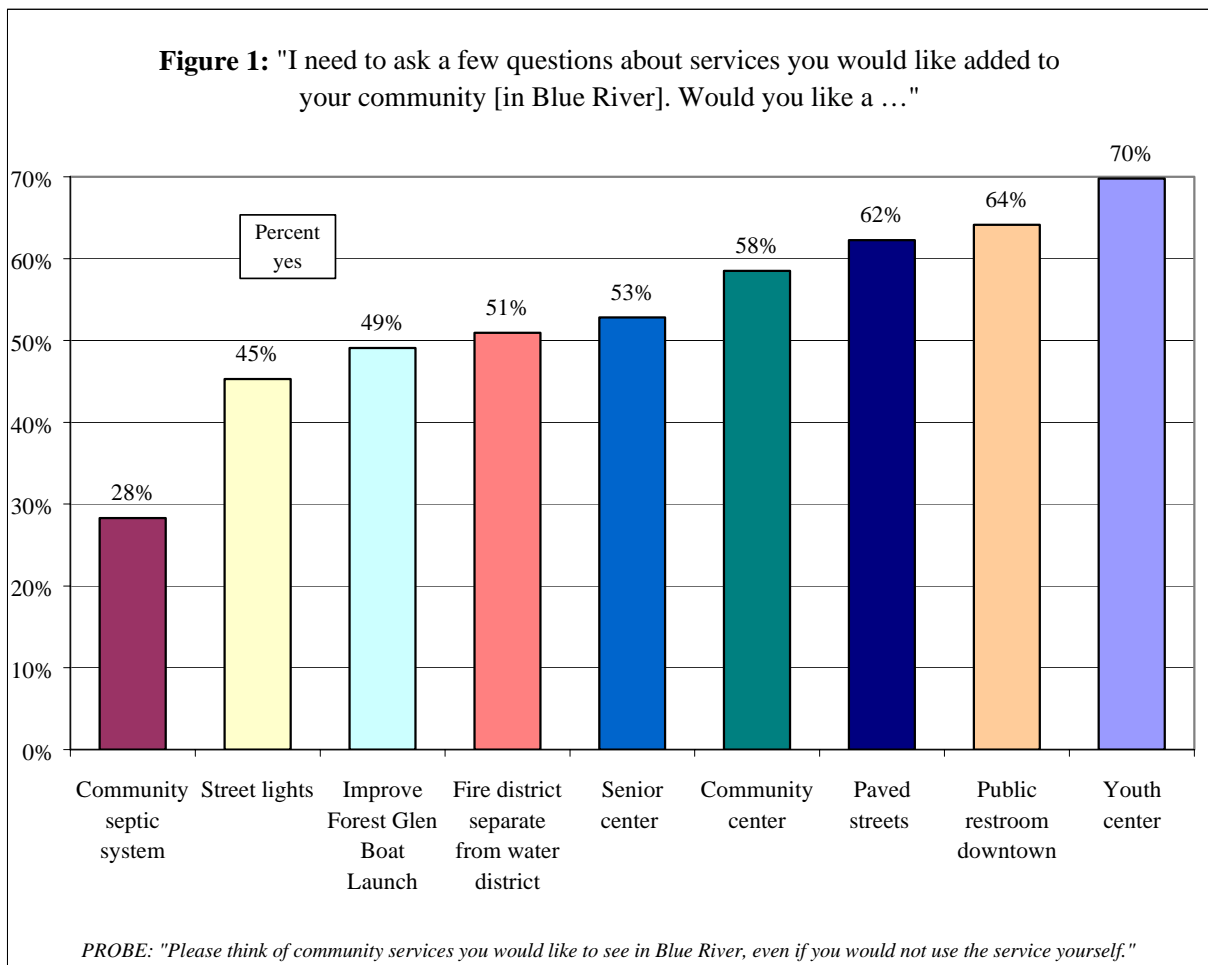
**C. Opinions on Community Service Facilities**

As a service to the Blue River community, OSRL included ten questions in the survey related to community service facilities. The introduction and format of these questions was:

*I need to ask a few questions about services you would like added to your community. Would you like a \_\_\_\_\_?*

*PROBE: Please think of community services you would like to see in Blue River, even if you would not use the service yourself*

Each question asked respondents if they would like a community project or service, including a community center, senior center, youth center, street lights, paved streets, a public restroom, septic system, improvements to the Forest Glen boat launch, and a fire district separate from the water district. Respondents could answer affirmatively to any question. Figure 1 summarizes the results.

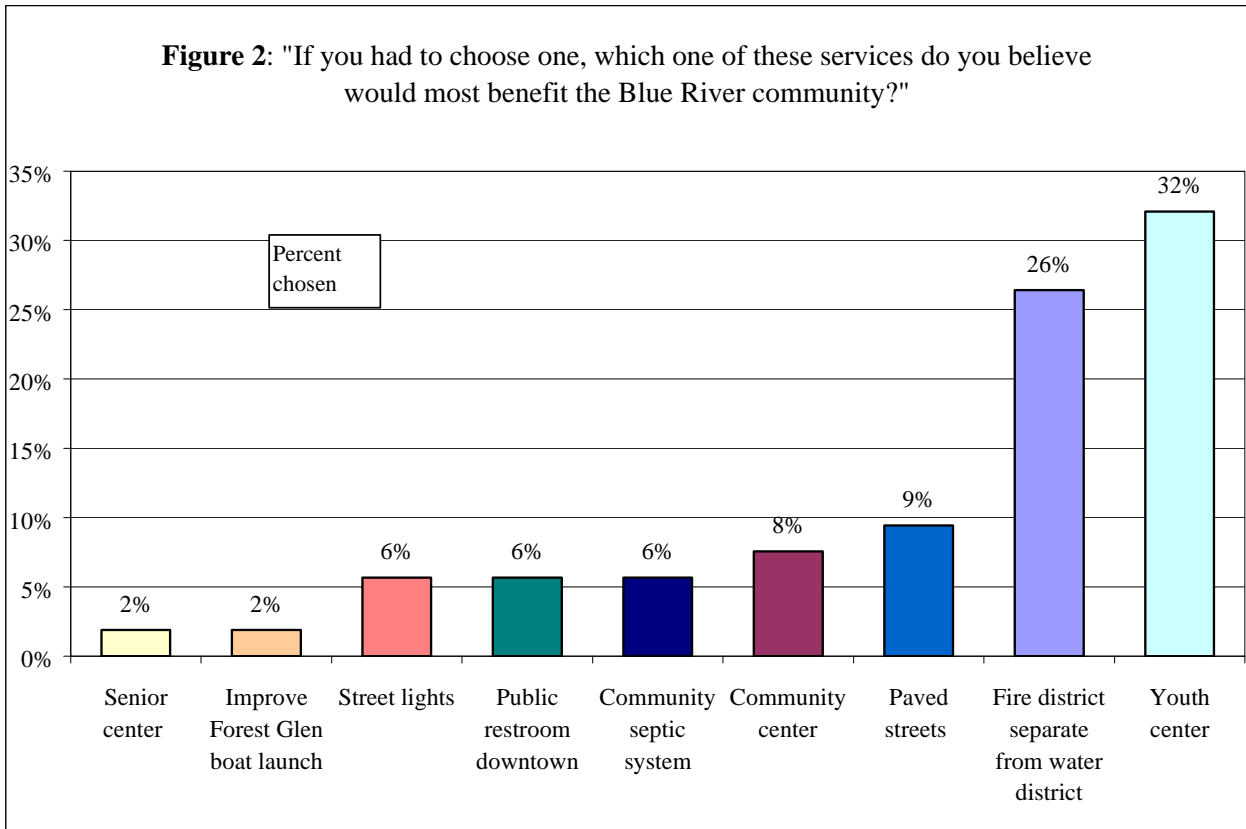


While nearly all the improvements were popular potential additions, a youth center, public restroom downtown, and paved streets were the most attractive improvements to survey respondents.

Interviewers next asked respondents to choose which of the ten services or community improvements would most benefit the community.

*If you had to choose one, which of these services do you believe would most benefit the Blue River Community?*

Respondents could choose among the items in the first ten questions. Figure 2 summarizes respondents' opinions.

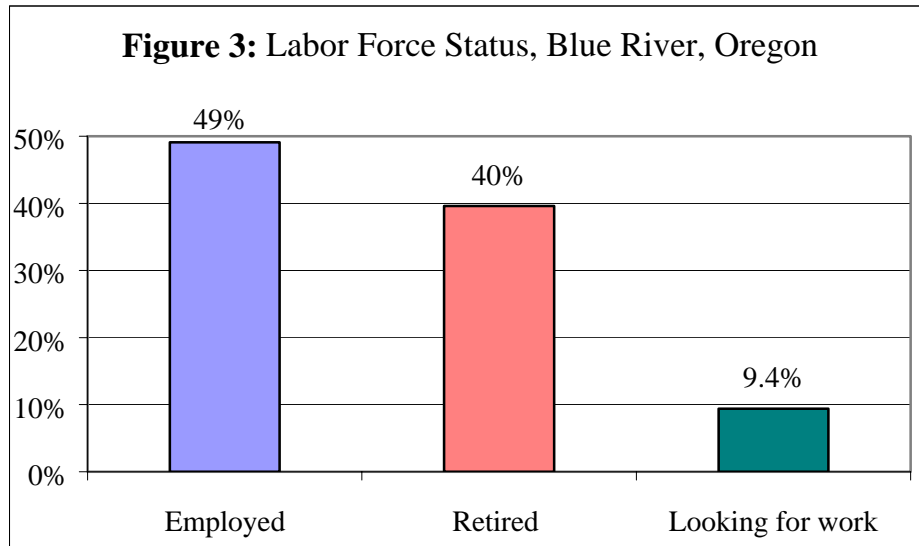


Clearly, the community services respondents believe would most benefit Blue River are a Youth Center at 32% and a fire district separate from the Blue River Water District at 26%. Other improvements, like paved streets and a community center, were distant runners-up.

**D. Labor Force and Employment Status**

OSRL also included in the survey a question on respondents' labor force status as a service to the Blue River community. The results show a higher percentage of retirees than typically

found in Oregon communities, at 40%, as well as a high unemployment rate, at 9.4%. However, nearly half of the survey respondents, 49%, reported working for pay.



The banner tables show that many employed persons in Blue River could be considered among the “working poor”. In single-person households, 44% of employed respondents earned incomes below the low-to-moderate income threshold. For those in family households, 38% had combined family incomes below the low-to-moderate income threshold.

Among retirees, two-thirds of those in single-person households had incomes below the low-to-moderate income threshold. Among retirees in family households, 44% had combined family incomes below the low-to-moderate income threshold.

Among unemployed respondents, all of those in single-person households had incomes below the low-to-moderate income threshold. Among the unemployed in family households, just 33% had combined family incomes below the low-to-moderate income threshold.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

This survey’s main purpose was for OSRL to assess low-to-moderate family income levels in the community of Blue River, Oregon, for OECD. As a courtesy to the Blue River community, OSRL also included eleven questions about ten community services or improvements that would most benefit the community facilities.

The results indicate that the community does not meet the 50% low-to-moderate family income level required to qualify for certain OECD loans or grants. It is unlikely that the threshold would have been met even if each of the sample validity issues raised on pages 2-3 could be addressed more thoroughly. In addition, the survey results show that many Blue River residents are retirees and many might be considered among the working poor. Survey respondents also would like to have a fire district separate from the Blue River Water District and a Youth Center.