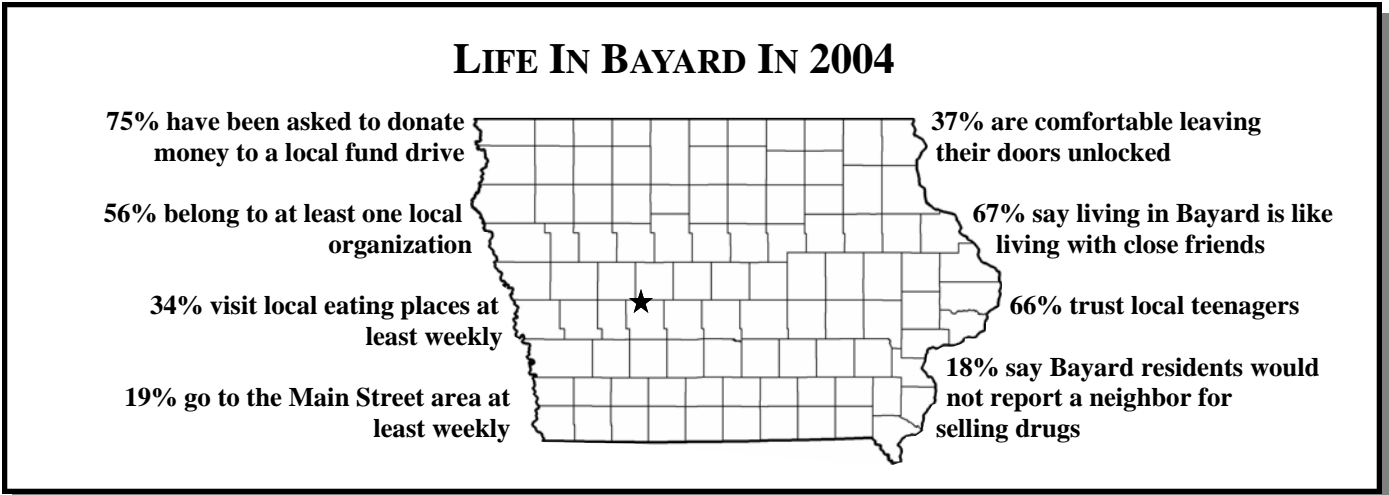
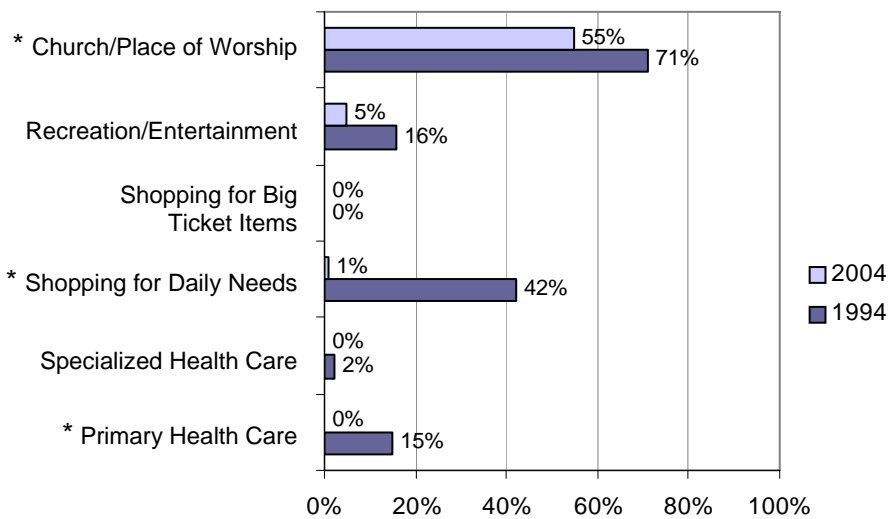


# A DECADE OF CHANGE IN BAYARD

In February 2004, the Rural Development Initiative Project at Iowa State University conducted a survey designed to look at changes in the social conditions in Iowa's rural towns. The survey was mailed to nearly 15,000 households in 99 towns, one of which was Bayard. Ten years ago, residents of these same 99 communities were asked to complete a similar survey. The households for both surveys were selected randomly from local telephone directories (150 households per community). In 1994, 109 Bayard residents responded to the survey, and 94 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Bayard residents have changed over the past decade.



## LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS



**Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"**

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing services of various types in Bayard in 1994 and 2004. Almost everyone went out of town for all services except attending church or place of worship in 2004. About half of residents stayed in Bayard for religious services. However, this represented a significant

drop from 71 percent who attended local churches/places of worship in 1994. There also was a significant decline in the percent of local residents who shopped locally for their daily needs and utilized local primary health care. The differences in patronage levels for other services were within the margin of error for this study and therefore unchanged over the decade.

\*A Note on Interpretation: For Bayard, differences in percentages between 2004 and 1994 of less than 12 percent should be considered a statistical "dead-heat." That is, they fall within the margin of error range, which occurs whenever samples are used to draw conclusions about a larger group. With the modest sample sizes used in this study, the differences must be relatively large before we can be confident that they are real. Throughout the report, differences that are equal to or exceed 12 percent are statistically significant and are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

## RATINGS OF LOCAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES

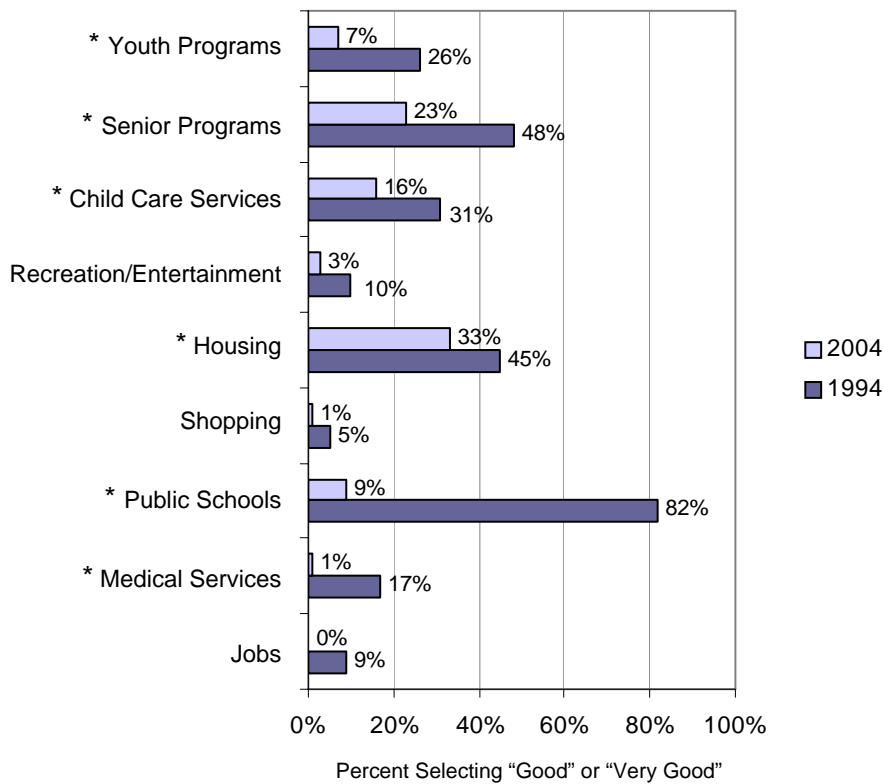


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

Nine local services were listed on the questionnaire along with instructions to rate each as “very good,” “good,” “fair,” “poor,” or “not available.” Figure 2 shows the percent of residents who rated each service as “good” or “very good” in 1994 and 2004. None of the services received a favorable evaluation from more than one third of Bayard residents in 2004. Ratings for youth programs, senior programs, child care services, housing, public schools, and medical services declined significantly over the decade. The assessment of the quality of public schools dropped more than 70 percent, the largest change among all the services. Bayard residents’ ratings for recreation/entertainment, shopping, and jobs were essentially unchanged from 1994.

## RATINGS OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Respondents were asked to provide ratings for seven services normally provided by local governments. Figure 3 shows the percentage of residents rating each service as “good” or “very good” for 2004 and 1994. Generally, Bayard residents reported being satisfied with local government services. More than 80 percent rated emergency response, garbage collection, and fire protection favorably in 2004. Roughly half reported that water, parks, and streets were good or very good. Police protection received the lowest evaluations in both periods. The ratings for emergency response improved over the decade, but ratings for the condition of the parks decreased significantly. There was no change in other evaluations.

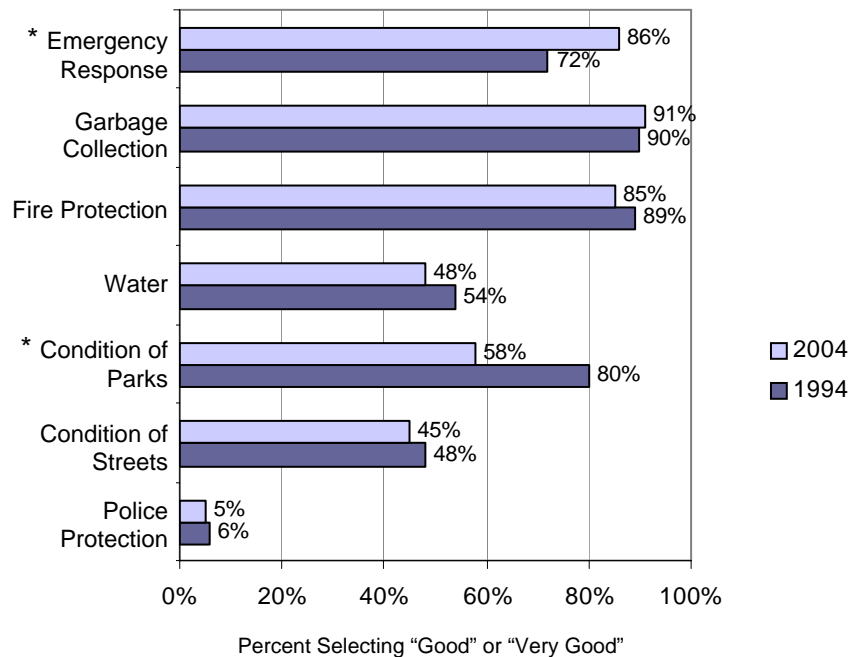
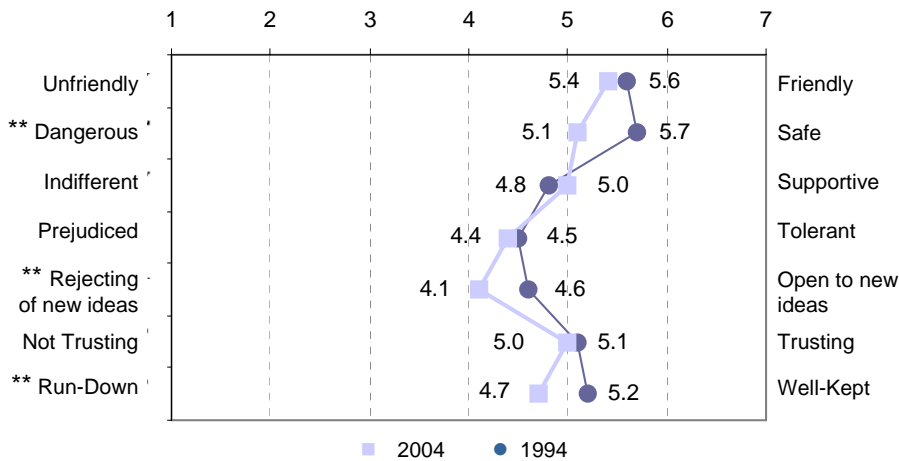


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

## BAYARD'S SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

In spite of the frequently publicized economic challenges faced by many of Iowa's small towns, they are regularly praised for having favorable social climates. A main goal of this project has been to determine the extent to which Iowa's rural towns possess favorable social environments. Accordingly, a variety of questions were included on the survey asking residents to evaluate various social attributes of their communities.



**Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale**

Residents were presented with a list of qualities and asked to evaluate their town on each quality using a 7-point scale. The average ratings shown in Figure 4 reveal that in 1994, safety and friendliness have the highest evaluations. Tolerant and open to new ideas received the lowest ratings in both 1994 and 2004. In 2004, friendliness and safety were again rated the highest. However, there was a significant decline in residents' perceptions of Bayard regarding safe, open to new ideas, and appearance compared to 1994. The assessment of other qualities was unchanged in 2004 compared to 1994.

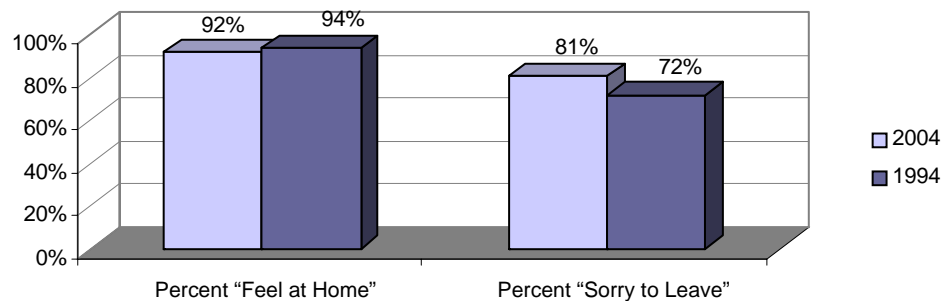
\*\* The margin of error is calculated differently for averages, and will sometimes vary from question to question within the survey depending on how many people answered each question. Thus, changes of the same size may exceed the margin of error for some items in Figure 4, but not for others. Only those items designated by double asterisks (\*\*) have differences large enough to fall outside of the statistical margin of error and can thus be considered to have changed since 1994.

### SOCIAL TIES

“Everybody knows everybody” is often cited as a feature of small towns. The extent to which people know and interact with each other influences commitment to the community and interest in its well-being. Therefore, questions were included about local social ties. In 2004, 73 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Bayard compared to 81 percent in 1994. Similarly, 48 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in Bayard, compared to 52 percent in 1994. Twenty three percent of residents in 2004, and 25 percent in 1994, said that half or more of adult relatives and in-laws live in Bayard. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

### COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How attached are Bayard residents to their community? The vast majority of residents reported that they feel at home in Bayard in both 1994 and 2004 (see Figure 5). Furthermore, more than 70 percent in both 1994 and 2004 indicated that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Bayard. Feelings of attachment to Bayard have not changed in the last decade.



**Figure 5: Community Attachment**

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Bayard, 68 percent of residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is

“good” or “very good.” At the same time, almost 60 percent reported participating in a local improvement project during the year prior to the survey and about one in three described themselves as “somewhat” or “very” active in local community activities and events (see Figure 6). This is essentially unchanged from 1994 when 50 percent reported participating in a project and 44 percent rated themselves active in the community. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top three factors mentioned by Bayard residents were lack of time (62%), not being asked to volunteer (29%), and having no interest in participating (24%).

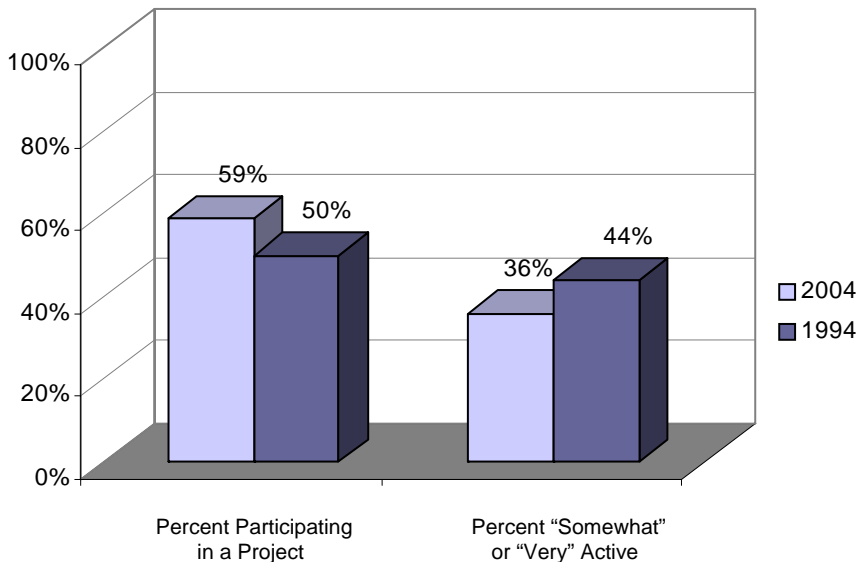


Figure 6: Community Involvement

## SUMMARY

A major goal of this project is to examine changes in the social conditions in rural Iowa over the past decade. As previously discussed, the differences between 2004 and 1994 shown in this report must be interpreted to account for the margin of error—that is, we cannot say with confidence that a change has occurred unless the difference is equal to or greater than 12 percentage points. Using this standard, what has changed in Bayard over the past decade? Findings reveal decreases in the local patronage of churches/places of worship, shopping for daily needs, and primary health care. Ratings of the quality of youth programs, senior programs, child care services, housing, public schools, medical services, and parks have also declined over the decade. However, positive evaluations of emergency response services have increased and residents continued to approve of most local governmental services.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Bayard residents still described their town as a safe and friendly community, but viewed it as less safe, less well-kept, and less open to new ideas in 2004 compared to 1994. Residents remain strongly attached to Bayard and most indicated that the spirit of community participation is good or very good. Also, levels of reported community involvement and active-ness were unchanged over the decade. It is interesting to note that one of the top three reasons people gave for not being involved in community projects was that no one asked them. This response suggests a potential strategy for increasing community participation.

The past decade has been challenging for Iowa’s small towns. We hope this information will prove useful in planning for Bayard’s future. **We wish to thank the Bayard residents who participated in the 1994 and 2004 studies for providing the information that made this report possible.**

**RDI**

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