

QUESTION 2

“What is something Joplin could do better?”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The question, ‘what can Joplin do better?’ provides the most difficult responses to address because the answers challenge the community to confront barriers that keep the city from thriving. These are the issues, that left unaddressed, can in some way negate other efforts to improve the community. The most meaningful and impactful improvement comes from recognizing, accepting, and resolving weaknesses. The feedback provided to this response presents an opportunity for the community to make the greatest stride possible towards improvement.

Like many other cities around the country, Joplin faces a need to address societal and community issues related to homelessness, diversity, and inclusion. In regards to homelessness, responses to the survey show that Joplin is a community that aids those in need, while also indicating homelessness issues are an area of concern. This suggests that the City may need to balance the aid provided by the community with efforts that limit the opportunity for those in need to take advantage of the existing systems, processes, organizations, generosity, and support provided by the community. Did you know that 42% of all structure fires within the City can be attributed to the vandalism of vacant and empty structures? Because Joplin is a giving and supportive community, the community

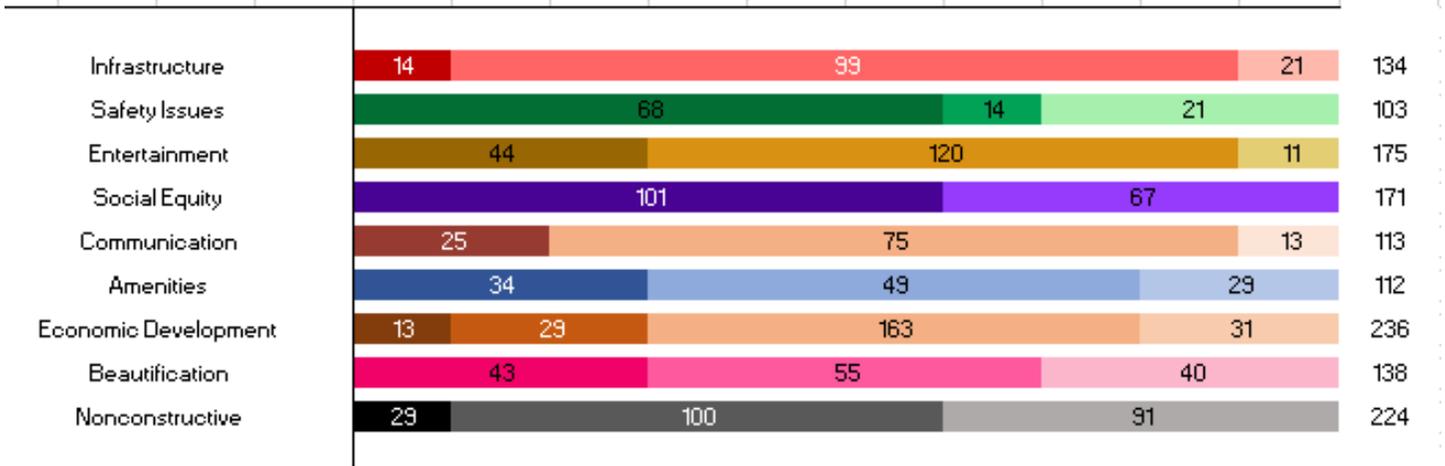
becomes an attractive environment for those in need. Without community supported efforts to balance and deter those that harm, vandalize, and threaten the safety and viability of the community, it will hamper the City’s ability to grow and thrive.

The bright future that Joplin can have as a community, and all the benefits that come with calling Joplin home, should be available, in equal measure, to all citizens and businesses regardless of age, religion, income, race, gender, or any other demographic characteristic. The community’s strength is the cohesiveness that allows for problem solving, improvement, aid, and support. Not including everyone in the community diminishes that cohesiveness which threatens to mire the ability to enhance our City.

The City of Joplin will soon celebrate its sesquicentennial, its 150th birthday, which marks a long period of the community’s life. The community’s collective age is starting to show in the form of deteriorating and inadequate infrastructure. The community will need to provide resources that will allow for the City to improve our existing infrastructure such as streets, sewers, curbs, and facilities. Additionally, the community will need to provide resources that will allow for new infrastructure such as fiber connectivity, parks, trails, schools, streets, so that the next 150 years will be as bright as the last 150 years.

QUESTION #2 GRAPH

What is something Joplin could do better?



DETAILED SUMMARY

COMMON THEMES

- INFRASTRUCTURE
- SAFETY
- ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS
- SOCIAL EQUITY
- COMMUNICATION
- AMENITIES
- NONCONSTRUCTIVE
- BEAUTIFICATION

INFRASTRUCTURE

Joplin residents see a great need for infrastructure planning and repair. Many feel that too many of the same roads are redone too often while street and sidewalk repairs on the North side of town are ignored. Many would like to see sidewalk repair and expansion done all over town for improved walkability to contribute to placemaking in the community. This addition would include more path/trail options near MSSU for students to enjoy better access to the rest of town and commute easily if they are primarily walking or biking. These improvements would also include alley repairs and parking expansions, specifically downtown. There is a mixed opinion on upgrading some roads (not specified) to four lane options vs. creating road diets. The respondents seem to wish for road diets to lead to further bike paths/walkability. Flooding and stormwater infrastructure is another concern for residents, especially near the Murphy low-water bridge.

There is also a call for improved technology infrastructure and upgrading what we have for

the future to attract technology based industry, remote and youth. This is believed to also improve the quality of life for current residents.

Technology infrastructure upgrades would include smart city initiatives such as improved street lighting, streetlight tempos and access to better connectivity. Residents currently feel the traffic light tempos are inconsistent all over town and would like to see improvements on perceived slow lights. Subsequently they hope that these changes would improve traffic flows on the arterial roadways such as Range Line. Roadways are perceived to be slow and congested.

Improving and expanding Joplin's public transportation network is a large concern amongst citizens. These would include adding more routes and expanding the hours. These changes would allow working and single families to confidently work jobs that may not be during daytime hours, such as night shifts in the industrial park. Residents also wish to see more travel outside of the city of Joplin such as to Webb City, Carthage, and Carl Junction. It's believed more routes would allow greater quality of life to low income families and those seeking healthcare outside of the allotted routes.

SAFETY

The reduction of crime rates, specifically drug related rates, is recognized and largely important to residents. Improved public safety would not only improve current quality of life for residents but would encourage and promote new families / businesses to come to Joplin. They believe more policing in neighborhoods and near vacant housing could contribute to the reduction, as well as increased monitoring in parks. There is also a great concern for traffic violations, specifically speeding, and it's believed greater monitoring on traffic infractions should be done. In addition to more monitoring/policing, there is a desire for harsher sentences for crimes committed, as well as harsher crimes for repeat offenders in any criminal regard. Similar to infrastructure upgrades there is a consensus that improved street/neighborhood lighting would decrease criminal activity, both downtown and in residential areas.

Residents would like to see an improvement in support for Joplin PD and Fire Dept. in both community support and funding. The desire is to ensure that the City can attract and retain public safety professionals. Respondents also indicate a desire to ensure adequate staffing for public safety.

Neighborhood watches/training. Residents currently do not feel there is enough PD on patrol at one time. There is also a desire to see improved training amongst JPD. These would include diversity/racial training, mental health training to recognize those who are dangerous versus those who require mental healthcare. Some believe police are not thorough enough during routine stops or that "bullying" occurs during routine stops and not enough attention is given to serious crimes.

ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS

Residents have a strong desire to see more recreation for all ages. There were asks for more entertainment for retirees and the elderly, adults, young professionals, college students, teenagers and children. There is also a consensus that Joplin needs more activities for families to do together whether it be outdoor recreation or bringing in some sort of kids museum or science center. There were many ideas for events, activities and attractions that could be brought in to solve this concern and draw in people from surrounding areas, but a few of them are as follows: an aquarium, zoo, amusement park, science center, splash pads, go-karts, a greater farmer's market, and a wall/rock climbing facility.

Increasing Joplin's outdoor recreation, cultural events and festivals is another request of residents. People enjoy events like Third Thursday but want to see a wider array of events. Affordable activities for families to attend and participate is important to residents, as is expanding and further promoting our arts community and up and coming artists. Residents see this as an opportunity to boost the economy, especially if the city can host larger scale events such as concerts or professional plays. Boosting attractions would also incentivize youth professionals to stay in the area, as well as allow current residents to spend their money here rather than travel to surrounding hubs for entertainment. There is also a note of a lack of nightlife.

Another large sector of individuals would like to see an increase in sporting events of all varieties. This would include more league options for kids and youth, and those who cannot participate in school sports if they are from a low-income family. They would also like to see an expansion of youth sports and greater

support for the MSSU teams. Lastly, bringing in a ball team or sporting event to use the Joe Becker Stadium.

SOCIAL EQUITY

The growing homeless and panhandling population in Joplin is a great concern to many residents. They fear the image it brings to the community and would like to see a reduction of panhandling at intersections. People are no longer willing to walk downtown due to feeling uncomfortable/unsafe. They are also concerned with the trash and litter panhandlers leave, making the city look dirty. Residents would like to see more enforcement and deterrence of panhandling and the subsequent littering. They also see a greater educational need on outreach channels and organizations that better provide for homeless individuals.

Additionally, getting the homeless off of Main St. is important as it currently depletes the value of downtown businesses. Another concern is that not only are there not only enough services for the homeless population, but that there is also a lack of affordable services for low-income families and individuals seeking to gain better access to health and wellness services for food, mental health and overall quality of life improvements.

Joplin residents believe the community could do better to promote diversity and inclusion both culturally and for the LGBT+ community.

Responses have noted perceived racism in the community in which many people of color do not feel welcome or safe. There is also a desire to see a more diverse population in which this concern is no longer an issue and the City has made an active effort to promote inclusion and expand events that bring the community together and educate them.

COMMUNICATION

Residents believe there could be better communication from the City on internal processes like budgeting and spending, as well as smaller forms of communication on events taking a place around the City. Many have stated that they often don't find out about events until after they've taken place and would like to see a central hub of what's going on around town. They have also stated that they often do not feel heard by local government and that the municipality has an agenda for what is to be done rather than go by the will of the people. Residents also see a need for education for the community on ongoing issues and City operations, as misinformation and lack of education on issues contributes to tension within the community. There is also a desire to see the city develop more community and unity after political issues have created a divide. Residents would also like to see the City be bold in decision making that will move the community forward and create a more forward thinking and innovative society that embraces growth.

AMENITIES

Residents believe Joplin could do better in creating or bringing in public gathering places, venues or convention centers for large events and shows. There is not a place where events could be held to both give the community something to do and bring an economic boost if large shows/events could be brought into the City. There are also not enough casual places for youth to hang out and be safe outside of restaurants and shopping places. Another thing Joplin could do better is adding and promoting bike trails and paths. This would not only contribute to connectivity but would also expand the City's outdoor recreation. In

addition to bike trails, often drawing from a desire to be more like NW AR, is the improvement and expansion of city parks. This expansion would include more dog parks, splash pads and additional recreational tools and outdoor exercise equipment to promote physical activity.

Another perceived issue that respondents believe Joplin could do better in is building and supporting the downtown community. Residents crave a robust and thriving downtown and Main St. in regards to nightlife, upkeep of the buildings, new business and supporting old businesses and restaurants and creating a hub for events and activities.

NONCONSTRUCTIVE

Nonconstructive statements consist of comments such as “None”, “Everything”, etc. These comments are either non specific or derogatory and do not contribute directly to the question. Other statements include derogatory comments regarding the Chamber, City Council, and politically motivated remarks that do not contribute to the question. Many of the comments are not constructive in that they relate to COVID-19 and the mask mandate and not directly to the future of Joplin. There are many comments for and against the mask mandate as this survey was released at the time the mandate was put into place.

BEAUTIFICATION

Residents feel that Joplin could do better addressing blight in residential and commercial areas by reducing the amount of vacant and abandoned buildings and creating stricter code enforcement for absentee property owners and “slum lords” as well as enacting harsher citations for those who disregard

ordinances. They would also like to see property owners currently residing in blighted homes or run-down properties held to a higher standard and become responsible for clean-up, mowing, and other forms of property maintenance. Many feel the abandoned buildings downtown ward off new business and families looking to move to Joplin and that they create a negative perception of the city.

The cleanliness of Joplin streets, parks and other areas of the city is also a rising concern. Residents have noticed an increase in trash, littering and neglect on both public and private properties, especially near panhandling and high traffic areas. They want to take pride in these areas and have safe, clean gathering places and recreational spaces for themselves and visitors. There is also a desire to give the city a fresh landscaped look in public spaces and restore many of the trees that were lost after the tornado.

WHAT COULD JOPLIN DO BETTER?

- Improve public safety
- Improve public health
- Address homelessness
- Economic development
- Progressiveness
- Improved infrastructure
- More entertainment
- City beautification
- Improved communication
- Education improvement