

QUESTION 4

“What is the biggest threat facing our community?”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

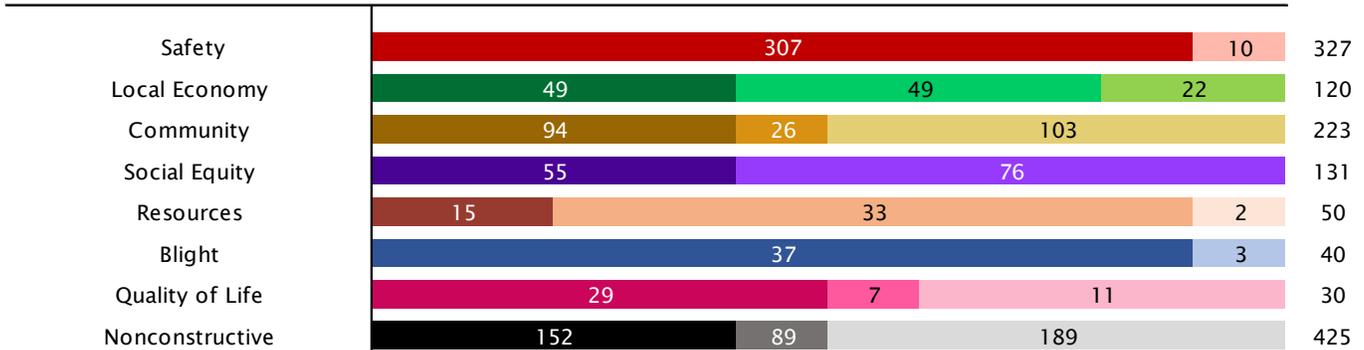
Like the question about the community’s weaknesses, the answer to the question, ‘what is the biggest threat facing our community?’, can yield responses that are difficult to accept. A threat alludes to the possibility of something that could negatively impact the community into the future. A weakness is a known challenge to address today whereas a threat identifies what could be a future weakness.

A fundamental need for the entire community is the need for safety. Without a safe and secure community, our businesses, schools, and institutions cannot flourish. This value is best described by psychologist Abraham Maslow and his research that translated into Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. For a community, the need for safety requires that we prioritize investments and resources that keep us safe. As the community grows, there will be a need to expand city provided Police, Fire, and Health Department services. Additionally, more communities are embracing concepts that incorporate safety considerations into the design of physical environments. This is evident as communities embrace Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts and through the adoption of more modern building and design codes. These are only a few examples of what the City will have to proactively prioritize with future investments and resources.

Aside from physical and tangible threats to our safety there are other threats related to attitudes and behaviors that threaten quality of place. Those that responded to the listening tour survey pointed out the need to address an overall lack of vision, apathy, resistance to change, and division that will plague the future of our community. These responses suggest that the community would like to see bold leadership to address the problems that exist now and to better position the community for the future. As a community, if we can set aside our differences, and rally together as it has done before, the community can conquer the challenges. Maintaining the status quo (in practice) results in decline as the community doesn’t respond to the constant environmental change. These responses should provide a galvanizing moment for all in the community to be bold in their encouragement and support for efforts that will allow for a better future.

QUESTION #4 GRAPH

What is the biggest threat facing our community?



Common Themes

- Increasing Drugs and Crime
- Public Safety Growth
- Losing Small Businesses
- Lack of New Businesses
- Low Wage Jobs
- Division
- Apathy and Negativity
- Lack of Vision
- Racism
- Homelessness
- Funding
- Brain Drain
- Low-Income Resources
- Neighborhoods & Buildings
- Infrastructure
- Lack of Entertainment
- Infrastructure Improvements
- Lack of Health Initiatives
- Anti-mask and COVID
- Chamber and Council
- Nonconstructive (general)

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DETAILED SUMMARY

COMMON THEMES

- PUBLIC SAFETY
- LOCAL ECONOMY
- COMMUNITY
- RESOURCES
- NONCONSTRUCTIVE
- SOCIAL EQUITY
- BLIGHT
- QUALITY OF LIFE

PUBLIC SAFETY

In regards to public safety the public feels that the community and municipality can do better to support public safety services. Residents also see a great concern and growing threat to the community is increasing crime rates, specifically drug/meth usage. Along with increasing drug rates they are also concerned with human trafficking, abuse, arson, violent crimes and petty theft.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Many people are concerned as a community they are traveling outside of the city to shop and find entertainment. They are concerned that their money isn't flowing back into the local economy and they would like to see a business boom that encourages people to stay here and that there are the necessary

resources here to satisfy their needs. They are also concerned that it is not easy enough for new businesses to come to Joplin and that more incentives should be offered and less restrictions from the City. Some residents also feel that Joplin already has too many large businesses chains and that their presence creates a challenge for small business owners and entrepreneurs. They feel too many small businesses are closing or have closed and desire to see greater support for them. Residents feel the current job market does not offer enough positions with livable wages and that Joplin needs higher paying job opportunities. The lack of these high quality jobs are causing young professionals to leave the community to find a greater variety of job opportunities and businesses.

COMMUNITY

Residents have expressed concern with "small town thinking" and fear that Joplin will become stagnant if the mold isn't broken. They would like to see a city with a bold vision and ability to be innovative and

continue building off of the tornado recovery process. They are concerned that not enough of the community is involved in creating a better city and that there is a sense of apathy and negativity following strong divisive topics that have occurred. Another common concern is the division that recent political and health topics have raised in the community. To respondents it has caused “selfishness” and fear.

There is a desire from residents for more transparency from the City and more education outreach on hot topics that would allow decisions to be made proactively rather than reactively. They feel there needs to be a coordinated effort to mend distrust between citizens and the City, as well as a coordinated effort to mend the community as a whole.

RESOURCES

The largest concern residents have concern the “brain drain” occurring in Joplin. The community both lacks the resources to entice young families and professionals to visit or move to Joplin, but also that they are losing these families and professionals as a resource to grow the community. Residents also feel there is a general lack of funding and/or wise spending across the community. They feel the City does not prioritize proper use of tax dollars and that emergency services are underfunded, as are child services funding, school programs and local support for low-income families and individuals.

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. Some residents would respond with “see previous answers”.

SOCIAL EQUITY

Like previous responses, residents see a great threat from the growing homeless and panhandling populations and fear the perception they give the community. They feel this issue deters people from moving to Joplin and staying here. They do not feel safe walking in high traffic areas due to these concerns and are “embarrassed” of how it makes the city look. They would like to see a growth in mental healthcare and an education to the public on how to contribute to non-profits that are addressing homelessness and drug recovery versus giving handouts to panhandlers. As with other social equity concerns in previous questions many residents see a growing threat of racism and lack of inclusion in the community. They would like to see more education and encouragement for inclusion to make Joplin and the community more diverse and allow for people of color and people in the LGBTQ+ community to feel safe.

BLIGHT

Residents see increasing neighborhood blight as a threat in that there are many dangerous

structures, a lack of pride in the community and the perception of the community based on the neighborhoods' appearances. They would like to see increased code enforcement and harsher punishments for absentee landlords and noncompliant homeowners. Many people would also like to see an education process for homeowners on current ordinances to keep neighborhoods clean. There is a call for vacant and dangerous structures in the area to be torn down or revitalized. Additionally, there is a subset of people that fear there is too much being torn down and that the community is losing valuable historical pieces in this process. They believe there is an opportunity to improve and modernize these structures and monuments.

QUALITY OF LIFE

There is a distinct lack of entertainment for youth and families in the area that residents feel contributes to the brain drain of the area. They feel there should be more family oriented entertainment businesses, such as a children's museum, or a greater variety of outdoor recreation. Increased outdoor recreation would also tie into the need for more health initiatives and walkability in the city. Increased means of walkability for residents would support not only healthier means of travel and reduce car pollution but would provide activities to do for people of any socioeconomic status. These infrastructure improvements could contribute to a health initiative education and contribute to trail expansions and increased healthier ways of transportation and provide safe activities for all ages.