

## **CHAPTER 11. COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS**

### **Introduction**

Feedback from the Raytown community, suggests residents and members of the business community are generally pleased with the facilities and opportunities the City has to offer.

The feedback was obtained through personal interviews, public meetings or mail-out surveys of Raytown residents. The surveys were developed through the combined efforts of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee members, City staff and the consultant team. Raytown residents were surveyed to determine specific issues that the City in general, and the Comprehensive Master Plan in particular, need to address.

### **Survey of Raytown Residents**

Of 3,500 surveys mailed, 22 percent were completed and received. Most respondents were retired, and a majority were female and single family homeowners. More than half of those surveyed also lived in Ward 5, have been homeowners for over ten years, and have an annual household income in the range of \$30,000 to \$44,999. The average level of education of the respondents was high school, though some possessed higher degrees.

From the survey results, it is apparent that nearly all the respondents enjoyed living in Raytown. The respondents felt that the City is centrally located to major facilities. Most are pleased with the local churches, schools, and parks. The general impression conveyed through the survey is that Raytown was quiet and has friendly residents and affordable housing. The role of the Central Business District (63rd Street) in the City is recognized and appreciated, but many respondents are concerned about the decline in the area. Another issue concerning most of the respondents is the low participation of local residents in organized neighborhood associations.

Some comments suggested that though there seemed to be adequate recreational facilities for the younger population, there is the need for facilities that would cater to the adult population. Some respondents recommended walking trails and a community center. There was interest in combining the community center with the new YMCA. The average respondent sees the community center as a modest facility with a multipurpose community meeting room and sports facilities, such as a fitness apparatus room, aerobics / dance studio and handball / racquetball courts, as well as a banquet room. A majority of the respondents are willing to fund this community center with user fees.

Overall, the respondents are satisfied with the condition of existing infrastructure (streets, curbs, sidewalks, etc.) in the City. Some comments, however, pointed to specific problems on certain streets, such as the need for better traffic light signalization, wider street lanes, better street lighting, handicap ramps on sidewalks, and other repairs. Generally, the respondents are satisfied with city services and their neighborhoods. A few residents, however, are concerned about problems related to unkept property in certain neighborhoods and poorly managed pets, such as barking dogs and/or stray pets.

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## ***Community Perceptions***

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Some specific comments related to the future development of Raytown are culled from the survey results and listed below:

- Ⓟ A majority of the respondents (78 percent) would welcome incorporating the area in Kansas City, which is east of Raytown's city limits (to Lee's Summit Road).
- Ⓟ If new uses were to be introduced in the Central Business District, the typical respondent preferred a restaurant, movie theater, general department store, clothing and shoe store, or a bookstore.
- Ⓟ As far as generating funds for public improvements, the respondents expressed strong opposition to increased property taxes and preferred user fees or, with less enthusiasm, increased sales tax.

Another finding of the survey is that the community would welcome greater development controls, design regulations and code enforcement. In addition, there is the awareness that Raytown's growth to date has been disjointed and could greatly benefit from a realistic "vision" of future development in the City.

### **Planning Implications**

Discussion with community members, City staff and merchants brought to light some critical issues confronting Raytown, it also helped highlight some of the City's strengths. The respondents constitute a small portion of the City's total population and generally seemed to represent a select portion of the City's community - the retired, female and single family homeowners. Nevertheless, the respondents portrayed a fairly wide variety of interest groups within Raytown's community.

Raytown residents are basically committed to the City and desire to tackle some of the critical issues head-on. The City's lack of an image or identity, its minor role in regional economics, its deteriorating housing stock, and its declining housing values are some of the issues that the residents are very aware of and are interested in resolving. At the same time there is apparently a major resistance to increased taxation, but a willingness to improve public services with user fees.

