



Engaging Citizens in Community Decisions

Newton Citizen Survey

Prepared by

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Disclaimer

This study was conducted by the PPMC at Wichita State University (WSU). The PPMC is an independent research body unaffiliated with The City of Newton. This report was prepared by the research team. It represents the findings, views, opinions and conclusions of the research team alone. The report does not express the official or unofficial policy of WSU.

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I. Executive Summary

It is becoming increasingly important that local governments find better ways of engaging citizens in the decisions that will ultimately determine the community's well-being and future. Newton invested in this study, conducted by the Public Policy and Management Center at Wichita State University, an independent, third-party research center, to provide an unbiased and scientific study of important community issues facing decision-makers. The study incorporated the best practice of triangulating data from multiple sources, including documents and census data, focus groups and a statistically reliable and valid citizen mail survey questionnaire.

The process employed for the Newton study uses both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Background research and focus group data were compiled to develop a statistically reliable and valid mail survey. A mail survey, as compared to an online survey, helps ensure a valid and random sample, making the findings more likely to be a statistically reliable measure for important policy decisions. Citizens were also asked to participate in community focus groups and complete a mail survey questionnaire, based on their perceptions about choices which are consistent with community well-being, rather than their own personal self-interest.

Survey data was analyzed by demographic group and in relation to two index measures, or overall scores, developed over 25 years of research. The first index measures Public Interest, or the paradoxical tension between community and self-interest that resides in all of us. The Demonstrated Trust index measures the level of trust in city government's past investment decisions. Citizens with stronger levels of public interest and higher levels of trust in city government are generally more likely to support city investment decisions compared to citizens with weaker levels. For most of the proposed investment options, citizens have a relatively strong sense of public interest and trust in Newton city government.

Willingness to pay increased taxes and fees was examined to gain insight into citizens' preferences for infrastructure, housing and quality of life investment options. Support for infrastructure is fairly evenly divided. About half of the citizens indicated they are willing to pay more to support improvements in basic infrastructure such as streets

and sewer lines (50.0%) and for more aggressive street improvements (55.4%). Less than half of citizens were willing to pay more to reduce city debt more quickly (48.6%).

Two options for incentives to encourage housing were proposed in terms of their willingness to pay increased taxes and fees. About half of citizens (50.3%), supported incentives to encourage the construction of new houses. Slightly less than half of citizens (49.6%) were willing to support incentives for rehabilitation of existing housing.

Survey respondents were asked about five recreation options including: (1) enhancements to existing parks; (2) investments in walking/biking trails; (3) additional athletic fields; (4) major renovations of the city pool; and (5) building a new city pool. Half of respondents (50.3%) are willing to pay more in taxes and fees for enhancements to existing parks and investments in walking and biking trails (49.6%). A little over a third of respondents are supportive of additional athletic fields (36.4%). About half of citizens support renovations of the existing pool (49.0%) compared to about one-third (34.4%) of citizens that support building a new pool.

Citizens were asked about their willingness to pay increased taxes and fees for three economic development options: (1) attracting businesses to the community; (2) encouraging development of dining, shopping and entertainment; and (3) encouraging development of downtown. More than three-fifths (63.1%) of respondents support incentives to attract businesses to the community. Slightly more than half (51.7%) support incentives for development of dining, shopping and entertainment and development of the downtown (53.8%).

While developing the survey the City of Newton was actively working with a community committee on a new library project. Respondents were asked about the library project specifically. About fifty-nine percent (58.5%) of citizens support building a new, modern library. However, willingness to pay for the new, modern library received the weakest support (39.8%) of the options presented in the survey.

This study forms the basis for conversation within the community about potential investment options, including the costs and benefits, or trade-offs, in the use of scarce resources for the public good. The study was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which may influence government investment decisions.

While a survey can provide insights to citizen perceptions and willingness to pay increased taxes and fees, it is conducted at a specific point in time. As more information becomes available, it is the role of community and city leadership to advance options that best serve the longer run well-being of the community-at-large. Consequently, continued citizen education and engagement is critically important as the community weighs future investment options.

II. Methodology

Valid and reliable community surveys are necessary to provide decision-makers with accurate information which gives voice to their citizens' ideas and concerns. Newton invested in this study, conducted by the Public Policy and Management Center at Wichita State University, an independent, third-party research center, to provide an unbiased and scientific study of important community issues facing decision-makers.

The process employed for the Newton study uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to follow the best practice of triangulating data from multiple sources, (e.g. research, focus groups, interviews, surveys). Community engagement efforts used a variety of approaches, discussed below, to gather information and generate interest and citizen participation in this study.

Step 1: Establishment of Community Steering Committee

This process began with development of a steering committee comprised of city leadership and community business and nonprofit leaders. This committee provided leadership throughout the survey process. They met several times over the course of the project to discuss critical community issues, review census and research data, make suggestions about the research questions and discuss study findings.

Step 1: Influencing Factors Research

The PPMC staff reviewed census data for Newton and read documents provided by the City, such as strategic plans, budgets and other available reports. This information was compiled and presented to the steering committee for discussion of past and projected trends in the community. This is an important first step to understanding trends in demographics and economic data. The influencing factors report appears in Appendix B.

Step 2: Focus Groups

Eight focus groups were conducted during the spring of 2020 and notes were analyzed to determine major themes, identified by citizens. Focus groups were chosen to attract a cross section of voices that are typically underrepresented in traditional engagement. These themes were discussed during several steering committee meetings and in bi-weekly meetings with city staff. Appendix C presents a summary of the focus group findings.

Step 3. Mail Survey

Using a mail survey, as compared to an online survey, helps ensure a valid and reliable survey sample. Sampling is critically important because the accuracy of the results depends on collecting a random sample or subset of the community citizens. Online surveys are limited to respondents with the technology access and knowledge to complete the survey, compared to this mail survey, which reached the majority of households in Newton. Households were identified using the list of water customers.

The mail survey was developed through identification of community issues or themes, identified with the steering committee and based on background research and community focus group findings. Several drafts of the survey were analyzed by PPMC staff, City staff and steering committee members prior to the final printing and distribution to citizens. In order to ensure a statistically reliable and valid survey, it is critical to get a significant response rate to draw accurate inferences from the data. A rigorous social media and marketing campaign preceded the launch of the survey and encouraged participation throughout the process. Steering committee and community members provided promotional videos posted on social media and encouraged citizens to return the survey. Marketing efforts were successful, and 957 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 12.5%. This is a strong return rate for community surveys, which are considered successful if they receive between a 10 and 15 percent response. The survey questionnaire appears in Appendix D.

Survey data was analyzed in a variety of ways. Researchers calculated response percentages on a Likert scale ranging from one to four, with one being lowest and four the highest. Citizens were asked a variety of questions to develop information about underlying constructs that measure: (1) connection to the Newton community; (2) Investment strategies for building a better community; (3) trust in and approval for previous City investments; (4) specific community investment decisions including housing, recreation and the community library; (5) economic development; and (6) willingness to pay for community investment priorities. This data was analyzed to determine if individual questionnaire items could be combined to create indexes or scales that together, better measure the underlying construct.

Cross-tabulation analysis was used to test for statistical significance of the above

constructs and demographic data. Researchers explored whether group characteristics, such as age, race, gender and many others, influenced how respondents answered. These differences are presented in the following report.

Many written comments were received from respondents. This report summarizes these findings and presents all written comments in the Appendix D.

Step 4: Compilation of the Final Report

This written report was reviewed in draft form by the steering committee and suggestions were considered for inclusion in the final report.

III. Mail Survey Results

Section 1. Commitment to Community

Part 1: The Public Interest

It is becoming increasingly important that local governments and the communities they serve find better ways of engaging citizens in the decisions that will ultimately determine their well-being and future. These survey results are an important avenue for beginning a dialogue with citizens to better understand their values and priorities. It is not only important that citizens be engaged, but the format for citizen engagement is also crucial. We are all driven by self-interest, but in an age of growing challenges and limited resources it is critical that we develop our capacity to balance self-interest and community well-being. This is difficult when our daily lives are flooded with new and growing challenges. In response, we instinctively become increasingly concerned with our personal well-being and the well-being of our families at the expense of the broader community and the public interest. Disregard for the public interest contributes to community decline and communities become unsustainable.

Some of the measures used in this section have been used for more than 25 years and have demonstrated utility in providing clues about sustainability and community capacity. When community leaders engage citizens in important public investment decisions through dialogue focused on the public interest and demonstrate that they can be trusted to invest accordingly, citizens are more likely to become willing contributors to community well-being.

The Public Interest: Balancing Community and Self-Interest

This survey encourages citizens to respond in ways they feel are consistent with community well-being. The items in Table 1-1 directly address the paradoxical tension between community and self-interest that resides in all of us. Our behavior is driven by a combination of how we see ourselves and the anticipated behavior on the part of fellow residents. In other words, if a person recognizes they have a responsibility to the broader community and for advancing the public interest they will behave differently than those focused more narrowly on self-interest. Consistent with this understanding, the first item in Table 1-1 indicates more than half (55.8%) of respondents say they are willing to put community interests above personal interest. In sharp contrast, only about one-fifth (19.7%) expect similar behavior from most people. In other words, about half are favorably predisposed to behave in ways consistent with community well-being but some will fail to act on this predisposition, because they feel that fellow citizens may not do their part to advance community well-being. Interestingly, the results associated with commitment to community did not vary significantly based on demographics (such as age, marital status, gender). However, people with incomes over \$60,000 were more likely to agree or strongly agree with a commitment to the community interests. The lack of variability in demographics indicates Newton is a fairly homogeneous population, based on this initial assessment of commitment to the public interest.

Table 1-1
Section 1. Connection to Community
Part 1: The Public Interest

Support for Advancing the Public Interest	Percentages			
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Balancing Community and Self-Interest				
I am willing to put community interests above personal interests	05.9	38.3	47.9	07.9
Most people are willing to put community interests above personal interests	14.0	66.2	19.5	00.2
Balancing the Wellbeing of Current and Future Generations				
I am willing to make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Newton	08.2	36.5	51.0	04.3
Most residents are willing make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Newton	16.8	62.2	20.8	00.2

Range of N= 830-844 Standardized Cronbach's Alpha for Public Interest= .737

The Public Interest: Balancing the Well-being of Current and Future Generations

The second set of measures discussed in this section (Table 1-1) focus on intergenerational responsibility. The future of the community and the advancement of the public interest depends in part on investments that reflect balanced concern for the well-being of current and future generations. Consistent with previous research, citizens tend to be particularly concerned about the well-being of future generations and, accordingly, are willing to make sacrifices if they believe these sacrifices will have a positive influence on the future generations. Findings reported in Table 1-1 indicate that more than half (55.3%) of the respondents report a willingness to make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Newton, while only about one-fifth (21.0%) think most residents are willing to make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Newton.

Households earning \$40,000 or more annually (71.8%) are more likely to indicate a willingness to make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Newton compared to those earning less than \$40,000 (28.2%). Approximately 70 percent of households earning over \$100,000 (19.9%) report being willing to sacrifice for future generations.

Once again, actual behavior is driven by a mixture of how we see ourselves in combination with the behavior we expect from others. Those who are willing to sacrifice to advance the well-being of future generations, and who expect similar behavior on the part of others, are more likely to act on their predisposition.

Public Interest Index and Classification of Respondents

The scores on the items reported in Table 1-1 (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree) have been combined to form an index (overall score). Each person responding to all four items has been assigned a **Public Interest Index** score between 4 and 16. These summated scores have been used to characterize levels of commitment to the public interest (Weak=4-7, Moderate=8-9, Strong=10-11, Very Strong=12-14). Respondents registering “Strong” or “Very Strong” levels of commitment to the public interest are particularly likely to behave in ways consistent with the well-being of the community. Conversely, those with a “Weak” commitment are more likely to make demands on government based on self-interest or personal concerns at the expense of the broader community. Conversely, households registering “Strong” or

“Very Strong” levels of commitment to the public interest are more likely to work with city government, community organizations and fellow residents to strengthen Newton as a community. These public interest characterizations will be used throughout the report to provide a better understanding of the community in relationship to public policy.

Section 1. Commitment to Community

Part 2: Community of Choice

Part 2 of Section 1 in the survey instrument shifts from measurements of commitment to the public interest to assessments of whether Newton is a “Community of Choice.” In other words, Part 2 assesses the extent to which residents have elected to live in Newton based on attributes of the community generally related to quality of life as opposed to more pragmatic concerns, such as proximity to employment.

Importance of Friends and Family

There are many attributes or assets that contribute to or detract from the attractiveness of a community. The importance of these attributes tends to vary among households and are dynamic in nature, tending to change as the needs and concerns of the household change. Arguably, one of the most important contributors to quality of life and determinants of the attractiveness of a particular community, hinges on the strength of social connections. In the age of the internet, individuals are at greater risk of becoming socially isolated. Therefore, communities with strong bonds including friends and family are an important contributor to a place becoming a community of choice. Households tend to be drawn to and commit to living in a community with strong social connections. The vast majority of the respondents (Table 1-2, 89.1%) feel that most people choose to live in Newton because of connections to friends and family. Friends and family represent a powerful force or anchor to the community of Newton.

Females (90.7%) are somewhat more likely than males (87.8%) to indicate the importance of connections with friends or family. Respondents registering a very strong (91.1%) commitment to the public interest are much more likely than those with a very weak (78.8%) commitment to agree that most people choose to live in Newton because of connections to friends and family.

Recruit New Residents

Previous findings provide evidence that Newton’s residents are committed to the community and represent a solid base of support. However, strong social connections do not necessarily mean that residents see growth in a positive light and actively encourage others to consider making Newton their home. A majority (63.0%) of responding residents report that they encourage people to consider Newton as a place of residence. Citizens older than 46 years of age are more likely to encourage people to consider living in Newton. Those who have lived in Newton 10 years or less (62.7%) and residents of more than 16 years (65.3%) are more likely to encourage others to live in Newton. Respondents registering the strongest commitment (89.2%) to the public interest are particularly likely to recruit people to consider Newton as a place of residence compared to those with the weakest commitment (32.4%) to public interest.

Table 1-2
Section 1. Commitment to Community
Part 2: Community of Choice

Attributes of Community of Choice	Percentages			
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most people choose to live in Newton because of connections to friends and family	01.5	09.4	67.8	21.3
I encourage people to consider Newton as a place of residence	07.4	29.7	53.7	09.3
Newton makes newcomers feel welcome	07.0	36.1	52.3	4.6
Newton is a good place to raise a family	02.2	11.6	69.0	17.2
I expect to be living in Newton 5 years from now	05.5	12.0	50.4	32.1

Range of N= 833-859 Cronbach's Alpha = .718

Welcome Newcomers

Recruitment increases the potential for community vibrancy and growth, but treatment of newcomers will have much to do with whether Newton is considered an attractive place to live. In some cases, the more established residents of a community are not particularly welcoming to outsiders. Long-time residents sometimes feel that they are more invested in community well-being and that newcomers do not know or

appreciate the history of the community and the sacrifices that have been made. More than half (56.9%) of respondents report that Newton makes newcomers feel welcome. Respondents registering strong (80.4%) or very strong (8.9%) commitments to the public interest are particularly likely to feel that Newton makes newcomers feel welcome compared to those with the weakest (30.9%) level of commitment.

Good Place to Raise a Family

The suitability of a community to raise a family is a particularly important community attribute from the perspective of parents and grandparents. Nobody wants to raise a family in a place that is inhospitable or in an environment that is in some important way inconsistent with the development of their children. Consistent with this understanding, a convincing 86.2 percent of the responding residents characterized Newton as a good place to raise a family. Ninety-seven percent of those registering very strong commitments to the public interest and 89.0 percent of those registering strong, reported that Newton is a good place to raise a family.

Likely to Move

The final item discussed in Section 1-2 (Table 1-2) focuses on the extent to which the resident has a long-term commitment to the community. Those who expect to move sometime in the immediate future are naturally going to disinvest in the community they are living in and to adjust their focus on expectations as they relate to their future home. More than four out of five (82.5%) respondents reported that they expect to be living in Newton five years from now. Households with younger age levels are less likely to be living in Newton in five years, compared to older age groups. Seventy-three percent of households between 25-35 years of age expect to be living in Newton in five years compared to 87 percent of households 56 and older. The majority of residents 65-74 (91%) years of age and residents 75 and older (86%) expect to reside in Newton over the next five years. Respondents with the weakest commitment (51.5%) to the public interest are the least likely to indicate that they expect to be living in Newton five years from now.

Section 2. Demonstrated Trust: Approval of Previous Investments

Citizens would like more involvement with the decisions of city government. However, meaningful citizen engagement is challenging for a number of reasons. For example, citizens often lack the information foundation necessary for meaningful participation. Legitimate citizen participation in the decisions of government requires that citizens have a reasonable understanding of how city government is “investing” tax dollars and that they can trust that government listens to citizens and acts on the will of the community. Citizens want to know they can trust government to invest, rather than simply spend, public dollars. Building trust between citizens and government involves demonstrations of how tax dollars have been invested. Consistent with demonstrations of trust, citizens were asked to review a list of capital investments and to provide city government with feedback about which investments meet their approval for how tax dollars have been invested, based on what they feel is best for the community.

Table 2-1 lists these capital investments in descending order based on their approval rating. Previous research indicates that there is a strong relationship between demonstrated trust, citizen commitment to the public interest and willingness to pay taxes. Although the exact nature of the relationship between demonstrated trust and commitment to the public interest is not fully understood, it is safe to say that they interact in reinforcing ways. In other words, when local government demonstrates to citizens that it can be trusted to invest public dollars, it simultaneously strengthens commitment to the public interest.

Table 2-1
Section 3. Demonstrated Trust: Approval of Previous Investments

Support for Previous Investments	Percentages			
	Strongly Disapprove	Disapprove	Approve	Strongly Approve
Fire/EMS Station #3	03.6	09.3	55.5	31.5
Law Enforcement Center Remodel	06.0	15.6	58.2	20.1
Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade	08.9	16.7	55.8	18.6
Centennial Dog Park	18.8	33.2	38.2	09.8

Range of N= 902- 910 Cronbach's Alpha for Demonstrated Trust= .649

The first item reported in Table 2-1 indicates more than 87 percent of responding citizens support the Fire/EMS Station #3. Almost three quarters report support for the Law Enforcement Center Remodel (74.4%) and Wastewater Treatment Plan Upgrade (74.4%). About half (48.0%) indicated support for the new Centennial Dog Park.

The scores for all five items (1=Strongly Disapprove, 2=Disapprove, 3=Approve, 4=Strongly Approve) reported in Table 2-1 are summed to form an index that characterizes strength of Demonstrated Trust for each citizen that responded to all the items reported in Table 2-1 (Weak=4-9, Moderate=10-11, Strong=12-13, Very Strong=14-16). These Demonstrated Trust characterizations will be used throughout the remainder of the report to better understand how strength of Demonstrated Trust relates to a variety of investment concerns.

Section 3. Investment

Part 1. Support for Change/Growth

Part 1 of the third section assesses the change orientation of Newton residents. Some residents embrace change and are more likely to view growth as an important contributor to quality of life. Others move to communities like Newton to avoid the annoyances and the concerns associated with larger cities and consequently are more resistant to economic development or any policy that promotes growth. This section asks respondents to assess the truthfulness of statements regarding their attitudes toward investment and its impact on the long-term well-being of the community. Part 1 of Section 3 provides insight about the overall growth orientation of residents. Part 2 focuses more specifically on citizen support for a selected investment.

Table 3-1
Section 2. Investment
Part 1. Support for Change/Growth

"The long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that...."	Percentages			
	Definitely False	Probably False	Probably True	Definitely True
Embrace Change/Growth				
...encourage population growth	03.3	18.8	50.0	28.0
...encourage business investment	01.5	06.8	46.2	45.5

Range of N= 912-913

Support Population Growth

The first item presented in Table 3-1 uses a direct approach to assess public support for policy that promotes growth. More than three-fourths (78.0%) of respondents indicated it is probably or definitely true that long-term community well-being can best be improved through investments that encourage population growth. Respondents with strong (85.7%) or very strong (87.0%) commitment to the public interest are much more likely than those with weak commitments (64.1%) to define investments that encourage population growth as a positive contributor to the community's long-term well-being.

Previous research indicates commitment to the public interest and demonstrated trust interact in important ways. As presented here, trust characterizations assess the extent to which residents approve of how government in Newton is investing public dollars consistent with community well-being. Respondents registering the strongest level (90.1%) of trust of government are much more likely than those with weak levels of trust (70.0%) to feel that the long-term well-being of the community is advanced when public investments are used to encourage population growth. Previous research indicates it is possible to support growth and at the same time consider a "small-town" atmosphere desirable. For example, a recent study associated with Project Wichita found that many area residents want to see progress and growth but at the same time want to preserve a "small-town" atmosphere. What constitutes "small-town" has different meanings contingent on the community being studied. In any case, it is not unusual for residents of communities like Newton to carry conflicting values as they relate to growth.

Support Business Growth

More than 90 percent (91.7%) of respondents report that long-term community well-being can best be improved through investments that encourage business investment. Those with a very strong (93.5%) commitment to the public interest are more likely than those with a weak commitment (86.4%) to feel that community well-being is advanced through such investments. Similarly, those with the strongest levels of trust of local government (95.7%) are more likely than those with the weakest levels (79.5%) to see actions encouraging business investment in a positive light. Support for government engagement in economic development efforts is examined in Section 5.

Section 3. Investment

Part 2. Quality of Life Improvements

The discussion in Part 2 of Section 3 moves from general growth orientations to specific investment options and the extent to which each option will best advance long-term community well-being from the perspective of Newton residents. Supporting an investment does not always translate to willingness to pay increased taxes to fund this investment. Table 3-2 presents willingness to support and Table 6-1 provides willingness to pay increased taxes for investment options. The following discussion identifies perceptions about possible investments. It is not surprising to find that there is larger citizen support for an investment option until they are asked to balance that option against the necessity to pay increased taxes or fees to support it. Perceptions of investment support are presented in Table 3-2 and willingness to pay in Table 6-1.

Table 3-2
Section 3. Investment
Part 2. Strategies for Building a Better Community

“The long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that...”	Percentages			
	Definitely False	Probably False	Probably True	Definitely True
Type of Investment: Basic Infrastructure				
...focus on the basics such as street and road improvements	01.5	10.7	57.4	30.3
...pay off current city debt	02.3	12.8	48.4	36.6
Type of Investment: Quality of Life Improvements				
...improve recreation options for families	03.0	17.6	55.1	24.4
...improve the public pool	06.5	22.0	47.3	24.2
...build a modern community library	14.1	27.4	38.2	20.3
Type of Investment: Creating a Sense of Place				
...develop more shopping, dining and entertainment options	03.6	10.4	38.4	47.6
...focus on a vibrant downtown	03.9	14.4	50.9	30.8
...improve the visual appearance of the community	03.1	13.3	51.8	31.9

Range of N= 913-917

Basic Infrastructure

The first item (Table 3-2) examines support for investment in basic infrastructure. Nearly 87 percent (87.7%) of the respondents indicated support for investments that focus on the basics such as street and road improvement to improve the long-term well-being of the community. It is noteworthy that support for investment in basic infrastructure is stronger than any other investment option. Households 35 years of age and younger (71.6%) are less likely than those 65 years of age and older (93.4%) to support an investment strategy that focuses on the basics such as street and road improvements. Respondents registering strong or very strong (96.2%) levels of trust of local government are more likely than those with weak (84.2%) trust levels to support investments focused on basic infrastructure to improve long-term community well-being.

Eighty-five percent of citizens support paying off current city debt. There were no significant differences in citizen demographics and the support for debt repayment. Repayment of debt was also raised in several focus groups. Based on this strong response in support of debt repayment for community well-being, more citizen engagement is needed to discuss the trade-offs between paying off debt and the ability to provide the other community investments identified in this report.

The second subdivision in Table 3-2 assesses support for investments in a variety of features generally intended to improve quality of life. This section examines investments in facilities that make the community an attractive place for families to choose to live. Respondents were asked about recreation facilities that would improve the long-term well-being of the community.

Improve Recreation Options

Almost eighty percent (79.5%) of the respondents support investments to improve recreation options for families because they contribute to the long-term well-being of the community. Households that have children who attend Newton schools were more likely to support investment in recreation (83.4%) compared to households (77.8%) that did not have children in Newton schools. Individuals with a very strong (89.7%) commitment to the public interest are much more likely than those with a weak commitment (73.8%) to support investment to improve recreation options for families for

the long-term well-being of the community. Similarly, those registering very strong (91.3%) levels of trust of government are much more likely than those with weak levels of trust (62.2) to support investment to improve recreation options for families.

Improve the Public Pool

Approximately seventy-two percent (71.5%) of citizens support improving the public pool for the well-being of the community. Women were more likely to support pool improvements (78.3%) compared to men (64.7%) and households with children in public school (81.3%) were more likely than households who did not have children attending public school (67.5%) to support improvements to the pool. Citizens in the age category 36-45 (76.2%) were the most likely to support public pool improvements, which is reasonable, since this age group is likely to have children who participate in pool activities. Citizens with the strongest level of support in public interest (79.4%) are more likely to support the improvement to the pool for the well-being of the community, compared to those with the weakest level (62.5%) of public interest. In addition, those citizens who have the most trust in government investments (86.3%) are significantly more likely to support pool improvements than those who have the lowest level (53.1%).

Build a Modern Community Library

About fifty-nine percent (58.5%) of citizens support building a new, modern library. Interestingly, females were more likely to support a new library (66.2%) than males (51.7%). Those registering very strong (75.7%) commitments to the public interest are more supportive of investment in a new modern library compared to those with weak (39.8%) commitments. Similarly, those registering very strong (83.6%) levels of trust of government are much more likely than those recording weak (26.9%) levels of trust to support investment a new library.

Section 3. Investment

Part 3. Support for Creating a Sense of Place

Place-based economic development is a strategy that has been growing in popularity in communities throughout the U.S. Place-based economic development is

built on the assumption that the development of a talented labor pool has much to do with attracting business investment and that the attraction and retention of this labor pool is driven by high quality of life. Quality of life, particularly on the part of the younger members of the labor pool, is linked to the creation of a place where shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities are concentrated in ways that create a sense of vibrancy and opportunities to socialize.

Wichita has and continues to invest in ways that create this sense of place in and around the central business district in downtown Wichita. Wichita State University, in combination with local government and private business collaborations, is creating a sense of place on and in the areas surrounding its campus. The question is, should Newton use its resources to develop a more attractive place downtown? Or would the community be smarter to use proximity to Wichita to draw the labor force to the general area and use its resources to make the community more attractive for housing investment?

Some area residents are willing to venture into more congested parts of the urban area for employment but prefer to retreat to a more peaceful living environment at night and on weekends. Other residents would prefer to stay in Newton if it were more vibrant and had more amenities.

Downtown Shopping, Dining and Entertainment District: Place-Based Development

In the first item, 86% of the responding residents reported that the long-term well-being of the community can best be improved through investments that promote downtown shopping, dining and entertainment. Females (89.7%) are more supportive than males (81.7%) of investments that promote downtown shopping, dining and entertainment.

Interestingly, there were no significant differences in the public interest scale for investment in shopping, dining and entertainment. However, those with very strong levels of trust (92.2%) are much more likely than those registering the lowest levels of trust (77.0%) to support investment that promotes a downtown shopping and entertainment district.

Vibrant Downtown: Place-Based Development

The second item in Section 3 explores the extent to which residents feel that the long-term well-being of Newton can best be improved through investments that create opportunities for a vibrant downtown. Over 81.7 percent of respondents support development of a vibrant downtown. Females (86.3%) are more supportive than males (77.3%) of investments that create opportunities for place-based development in downtown. Households with high school education or (75.2%) or some college (82.1%) are less likely to support than households with college degrees (82.1%) or graduate degrees (87.4%). Households that have strong public interest (88.0%) are more likely to support investment in a vibrant downtown than those with weak public interest (68.3%) and households that have the strongest trust in city government (92.2%) are more likely to support these investments than those with weak trust (66.7%).

Visual Appearance of the Community

More than four-fifths (83.7%) of the responding residents feel that the long-term well-being of the community can best be improved through investments that improve the visual appearance of the community. Households that are very strongly (94.4%) committed to the public interest are much more likely than those with weak commitments (74.5%) to support improvements to the visual appearance of the community. Nearly 92 percent (91.4%) of respondents registering the strongest levels of trust in Newton city government support investment that improves the visual appearance of the community compared to about 66 percent (65.5%) of those registering the weakest level of trust.

.Section 4. Immediate Investment Decisions:

Housing, Recreation and Community Library

Community leaders are seeking citizen input on three important investment decisions facing Newton. These include investment in housing, recreation and the community library. Analysis indicates that in general, citizens who have stronger levels of public interest values tend to be more supportive of investments than those with weaker levels of public interest. Also, those citizens who indicate the strongest level of

trust in past investments made by city government tend to rate investments higher than those who have weaker levels of trust.

Table 4-1 presents the responses about specific community investment decisions. These responses indicate levels of support, but not necessarily willingness to pay more taxes to attain these investments. Section 6 presents further analysis about willingness to pay taxes for community investments.

**Table 4-1
Section 4. Investment
Specific Community Investment Decisions**

“For the wellbeing of the community I recommend that we...”	Percentages			
	Definitely False	Probably False	Probably True	Definitely True
Decision 1: Housing				
...promote rehabilitation of existing homes in existing neighborhoods.	02.6	09.9	45.9	41.6
...promote more housing for seniors.	04.7	19.1	52.1	24.1
...promote construction of housing for low to moderate income individuals and families.	09.6	19.7	51.3	19.5
Decision 2: Recreation				
...increase investment in maintenance at existing parks.	03.1	14.6	61.7	20.7
...increase investment in walking/biking trails.	06.9	24.5	44.7	23.9
...investment in major renovations of the city pool.	10.7	23.7	48.1	17.5
...increase investment in new enhancements to existing parks.	14.1	27.4	38.2	20.3
...invest in additional athletic fields for tournaments and local use.	14.1	33.3	37.5	15.0
...invest in a new city pool	23.0	33.8	24.2	19.0
Decision 3: Community Library				
...renovate the existing library.	10.9	22.2	49.0	18.0
...maintain the current library as it is now.	20.6	31.4	31.0	17.0
...build a new, modern library	31.4	23.6	21.8	23.2

Range of N= 898-916

Decision 1: HOUSING

Construction of Low to Moderate Income Housing

Community focus group discussions frequently mentioned the need for more affordable housing for people who work in Newton, but are unable to find housing and consequently, must commute from area communities. For the well-being of the community, citizens were asked to respond to how acceptable it would be for the city to promote construction of housing for low to moderate income individuals and families. Almost 71% of respondents support this investment.

Females (74.3%) were significantly more likely to support housing development compared to males (67.4%). Significant differences were found based on household incomes. Not surprisingly, households with incomes below \$40,000 were (84.0%) more likely to support investment in low to moderate housing compared to households with higher incomes of \$80,000 to \$99,999 (61.9%) and over \$100,000 (68.6%). Older groups of citizens were more likely to support low to moderate income housing, for example over age 75 (79.7%) compared to younger groups, for example age 25-35 (66.3%). In addition, citizens who are currently renting homes are more likely (80.2%) to support this housing investment compared to citizens who own homes (69.5%).

Citizens who have strong public interest values (84.3%) support investment in low to moderate income housing compared to citizens with less public interest (60.6%). Trust in city government showed significant differences in their support of this investment. Citizens with high levels of trust were substantially more supportive (90.1%) than citizens with lower levels of trust (53.1%).

Promote Housing for Seniors

More than three-quarters of respondents (76.2%) support promoting housing for seniors. Investing in housing for seniors was more strongly supported by females (78.9%) than males (71.6%). Also, citizens with a high school education were significantly more likely to support housing for seniors (84.8%) compared to citizens with a college degree or higher (73.5%). Higher income households, for example over \$100,000 (64.5%), were less likely to support housing for seniors than lower income households of \$20,000 to \$39,999 (81.9%). Citizens over 65 years of age were more

likely to support senior housing (80.6%) than citizens under 65 (72.5%). Citizens renting homes were more likely (83.6%) to support development of senior housing than homeowners (75.0%).

Respondents who have the highest levels of public interest (81.5%) are more supportive of investment in senior housing than those with lower levels of public interest (76.7%). Citizens with confidence in past community investments are much more likely to support development of senior housing (87.9%) compared to citizens with low confidence (63.6%).

Support Rehabilitation of Existing Homes

More than four-fifths of respondents (87.5%) support rehabilitation of existing homes in existing neighborhoods. Females (89.5%) more strongly supported this investment compared to males (84.8%). Households with children who attend Newton schools were slightly more supportive of this investment (88.3%) than households that did not have children in Newton schools (87.3%). Respondents who have high levels of public interest (93.5%) are more likely to support rehabilitation of existing homes and neighborhoods than those who have the lowest level of public interest (79.8%). Level of trust in city government also impacted degree of support, with higher levels of trust (96.5%) supporting rehabilitation, compared to lower levels of trust (78.2%).

Decision 2: Recreation

Previously, almost eighty percent (79.5%) of respondents supported investments to improve recreation options for families because they contribute to the long-term well-being of the community. The following section looks at more specific recreation decision options and reports significant findings between demographic groups, public interest and public trust.

Maintain Existing Parks

Eighty two percent (82.4%) of respondents think wellbeing of the community would be improved by increasing investment in maintenance of existing parks. Citizens who have children attending Newton schools (84.8%) were more likely to support

maintaining parks than citizens who did not have children in Newton schools (81.2%). Citizens with higher levels of public interest (90.7%) are more likely to support this investment compared to citizens with lower levels of public interest (76.9%). This is also true for trust in city government, with the highest levels (96.4%) supporting maintenance of existing parks compared to the lowest levels (61.9%). Maintaining parks was found to be an important priority for citizens.

New Enhancements for Existing Parks

Approximately fifty-nine percent (58.5%) of respondents support new enhancements for existing parks. Respondents in the age group 36-45 are the most likely to support enhancements to parks (84.8%) compared to younger groups, for example below age 25 (66.7%) or older groups age 56-74 (66.2%). Households with children who attend Newton schools are also more likely to support enhancement to parks (75.5%) compared to households without children in Newton schools (69.3%). Citizens who have a strong sense of public interest (78.7%) are more likely to support park enhancements compared to those with a weaker level of public interest (60.6%). Looking at levels of public trust, citizens with the strongest level of trust (87.1%) are more likely to support park enhancements than citizens with the weakest level of trust (51.7%). New enhancements of parks are valued by more than half of respondents, but maintaining existing parks had a larger level of support.

Walking and Biking Trails

Respondents supporting investments in walking and biking trails totaled 68.6 percent. Females were more likely (72.4%) than males (66.0%) to support investment in trails. Higher income households more strongly supported trail investment. For example, households with incomes above \$100,000 (78.6%) were more likely to support investment than households with incomes below \$40,000 (65.3%). People with strong public interest (82.41%) are significantly more likely to support investment in trails than those with weak public interest (58.7%). Not surprisingly, citizens with the strongest trust in city government (90.8%) are more than twice as likely to support trails than citizens with low trust (42.2%).

New Athletic Fields

A little more than half of respondents (52.5%) support investment in new athletic fields for tournaments and local use. Households more likely to have children (ages 36-55 years of age) report the strongest support at 57.6 percent, compared to older households, for example age 75 and older (50.9%) and younger households aged 25-35 (45.8%).

Respondents who have children in Newton schools (58.8%) are more likely to support investment in athletic fields compared to those who don't have children in local schools. Respondents who have lived in Newton for more than 20 years (56.5%) indicate stronger support than those who have lived in the community for less than five years (50.4%). Sixty-seven percent (67.3%) of households that have a strong sense of public interest support investment in new fields compared to households reporting a weak sense of public interest (40.8%).

Significant differences in trust influenced support for athletic fields. Those respondents with strong trust (71.9%) supported expansion of fields while those with the weakest level of trust in city government (28.8%) were much less supportive. Athletic fields are a lower community priority compared to trails and parks.

Renovation of the City Pool

More than two-thirds (65.6%) of responding residents recommended renovation of the current pool and felt this option is consistent with the well-being of the community. Interestingly, respondents 65 years of age and older (69.1%) are more supportive of swimming pool renovations than those below age 45 (55.5%). Households that currently have schoolchildren attending Newton schools (65.5%) are more supportive of the swimming renovation option compared to those who do not (64.4%).

As with other recreation investment options, citizens with higher levels of public interest (65.4%) were more likely than those with lower levels of public interest (58.7%) to support renovations. Citizens with high levels of trust in past spending decisions made by city government (73.6%) were more likely to support pool renovations than those with low levels of trust (54.8%).

Invest in New City Pool

Less than half of respondents (43.2%) support investing in a new city pool. Females (48.8%) are more likely to support construction of a new pool than males (36.1%). Households with higher incomes, over \$60,000 (51.0%), have stronger support for a new pool compared to households below \$60,000 (35.9%). Lower age groups were more likely to support construction of a new pool. For example, respondents between 36-55 years of age (55.8%) are more likely to support a new pool than respondents over age 65 (36.4%). Not surprisingly, households with children in Newton schools were more supportive (54.5%) than households without children (38.3%). Respondents with a strong level of public interest (49.1%) are more likely to support the new pool compared to those with weak trust (43.2%) and respondents with higher levels of trust (60.0%) support the pool compared to those with weak levels (27.8%).

Swimming pools are not only expensive to build but also create an ongoing operating expense. Unfortunately, operation expenses associated with municipal pools tend to increase over time. Consequently, Newton city government needs a better understanding of the extent to which residents value a municipal swimming pool, particularly given the strong support for renovating the existing pool, compared to constructing a new pool.

Decision 3: Community Library

Three items about the community library were included in the survey: (1) renovate the existing library; (2) maintain the current library; and (3) build a new library. Renovation of the existing library received the largest support compared to the other two options. This indicates a community awareness of the current library's deficits, but more interest in updating the existing facility as compared to constructing a new library. Continued community discussion is needed to educate the public on the advantages and disadvantages of these three library options.

Renovate the Existing Library

Sixty-seven (67%) percent of respondents support renovations of the existing library. This item did not show significance when compared to public interest index or

the public trust index. The only significant demographic was gender. Females (67.6%) are slightly more likely to support renovations compared to males (65.7%).

Maintain the Current Library

Less than half (48.0%) of respondents support maintaining the current library as it exists today. Females (52.4%) were significantly more likely to support maintaining the current library than males (42.9%). Interestingly, citizens with graduate degrees (35.2%) were less supportive of maintaining the library than citizens with high school degrees (61.9%). Lower income households were also more supportive than higher income households. For example, those with incomes less than \$20,000 (58%) were more supportive than those with incomes of \$100,000 (40.2%).

Interestingly, households with higher levels of public interest (41.2%) were less likely to support maintaining the current library than those with lower levels of public interest (64.4%). This trend was also apparent in the trust in government index where households with high trust (30.2%) were less likely to support maintaining the current library than those with lower trust (73.3%). Respondents with high levels of public interest and high trust are not supportive of maintaining the current library.

Citizens with higher education, higher incomes, stronger public interest and more trust were less supportive of maintaining the current library. This may be because they have a stronger interest in renovations to the existing library or building a new library.

Build New Library

Less than half of respondents (45%) support building a new library. Females (52.2%) are more supportive than males (38.6%). Education level was significant with respondents reporting completion of graduate courses (64.9%) more likely to support a new library than those with high school degrees (28.9%). Respondents in younger age groups were more supportive of the new library.

For example, those in the 25-35 age group (61.5%) were most supportive of a new library compared to over 65 years of age (39.6%). Those respondents with a high level of public interest (57.0%) were more likely to support a new library than those with a weaker level of public interest (28.7%). Trust in local government also influenced the

likelihood of respondents supporting a new library. Respondents with strong trust (70.8%) were more supportive than those with weak levels of trust (19.7%).

Building a new library has the lowest percentage of community support. Additional community education and engagement about the advantages of renovations verses new construction are needed if the community decides to proceed with construction of a new library.

Section 5: Economic Development

The previous section discussed specific investment options. This section explores citizens’ interest in local government engaging in economic development efforts in the community. Table 5-1 presents the items from the survey and respondents’ responses. These items were analyzed for statistically significant demographic differences and strength of public interest and trust in city government.

**Table 5-1
Section 1. Commitment to Community
Economic Development**

“I believe that the City of Newton economic development efforts...”	Percentages			
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
...should attempt to attract more small businesses.	0.70	08.7	60.2	30.4
...should attempt to work with existing businesses to encourage expansion.	01.1	09.1	58.7	31.2
...should attempt to attract large employers.	03.90	16.3	49.5	30.3
...should attempt to attract additional dining, shopping and entertainment businesses.	02.1	11.6	43.2	43.2
...should focus on developing the downtown area.	03.0	20.0	51.4	25.6
...should focus on recruitment of families to live and work in Newton.	02.9	17.7	52.1	27.3

Range of N= 865-877

Attract Small Business

The first three items in this section discuss attraction of employers to the Newton community. More than ninety percent (90.6%) of respondents support the city's economic development efforts in attracting more small businesses. There were not significant differences among demographic groups. However, those with strong trust in city government (94.7%) are more likely to show support than are those with weaker trust (82.6%).

Work with Existing Businesses to Expand

Ninety percent of respondents (89.9%) think the city should focus on assisting businesses to expand. No significant differences existed among demographic groups. Citizens with strong trust in government (93.8%) were significantly more likely to support the city's efforts than citizens with weaker trust (79.1%).

Attract Large Employers

Almost four fifths (79.8%) of respondents think the city should attempt to attract large employers. Interestingly, females (84.1%) were significantly more likely to support attracting large employers than were males (76.6%). In addition, families with children in Newton schools were more likely (84.6%) to support attracting large employers than those without children in school (77.9%). Households that have a strong trust in city government (90.0%) are more likely to support the city's initiative to attract large employers than those with weak support (80.3%).

Efforts to attract and retain smaller businesses received more support than support for attracting large employers. However, all three options did receive high percentages of citizens that "agree" or "strongly agree" that attracting employers to the community is an important priority for city government. The next two items explore support for attracting businesses to the Newton community.

Attract Dining, Shopping and Entertainment

Over four-fifths (86.4%) of respondents support efforts to attract dining, shopping and entertainment to Newton. Women (89.5%) were more likely to support this initiative

than men (82.9%). There were no significant differences in degree of public interest or level of trust scales and the desire to attract dining, shopping and entertainment.

Developing Downtown Area

Citizens support the city's efforts for development of the downtown area. More than three-fourths (77%) of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree." Females (83.2%) tended to support development of the downtown area more than males (71.9%). Citizens with higher levels of public interest (80.0%) were more likely to support development than those with weaker levels (68.6%). Not surprisingly, citizens with higher trust (88.4%) in city government were more supportive of the city promoting downtown development than those with weaker trust (59.0%).

Recruit Families to Live and Work in Newton

The final item in Table 5-1 is a measure of citizens' support for recruitment of new families to Newton. Four-fifths (79.4%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. No significant differences in demographic groups was found in the data. However, the strongest level of public interest (92.0%) was significantly different from the weakest level (65.1%) and the strongest level of trust (88.2%) was higher than the weakest level (69.2%)

Section 6. Community Investment Priorities:

Willingness to Pay for Basic Infrastructure and Quality of Life Improvements

Section 6 focuses on community investment priorities as defined by willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for increased investment. The investments examined here range from basic infrastructure to investments that have more to do with advancing quality of life. Earlier sections provided a general feel for the level of public support for various investment strategies. This section adds to that understanding by establishing willingness to pay. It is typical for citizens to more strongly support investment options until asked about their willingness to pay increased taxes and fees. The following investments show a drop in percentages from Section 4, but give another indicator of level of support for each investment.

Type of Investment: Basic Infrastructure

The first three items (Table 6-1) are identified as basic infrastructure, since they examine traditional city services and also citizens' comfort with current city debt levels. The first item establishes that half (50.0%) of responding residents indicate they would be willing to pay increased taxes or fees for a more aggressive strategy to replace water and sewer lines, storm water drainage improvements, etc. Those registering strong (59.4%) and very strong (65.3%) commitments to the public interest are particularly willing to pay increased taxes or fees in support of such investments compared to those with a weak commitment (30.1%). Similarly, those with strong (57.7%) or very strong (80.2%) levels of trust in Newton government are much more likely than those with weak (16.4%) levels of trust to support increased taxes or fees to pay for a more aggressive improvement strategy.

The second basic infrastructure item focuses on road surfaces and street improvements. Once again, a little more than half (55.4%) of responding residents indicated they would be willing to pay increased taxes or fees for more aggressive street improvements including road surfaces, number of lanes, turn lanes, intersections, etc. Those who are most strongly (66.0%) committed to the public interest are much more willing, while those registering the weakest (51.0%) commitment are less likely to report they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees in support of street improvements. Those registering strong (60.2%) and very strong (73.6%) levels of trust of Newton city government are much more likely than those who are least (30.8%) trusting of government to be willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for street improvements.

A little less than half (48.6%) of respondents indicated they would be willing to pay off city debt more quickly. Citizens over age 65, are more likely to want to pay off city debt quickly (56.8%) compared to citizens under age 65 (41.1%). Citizens strongly committed to the public trust (53.4%) are more willing to pay increased taxes for debt reduction than those less committed (27.9%). Citizens with a strong level of public trust in city government (65.6%) are more supportive of paying off debt than those with the weakest level of trust (31.3%). Debt repayment is dictated by a variety of economic and political factors that city government must balance against provision of current and future services.

Table 6-1
Section 6. Community Investment Priorities
Basic Infrastructure and Quality of Life Improvements

“I’m willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for.....”	Percentages			
	Definitely Not Willing to Pay	Probably Not Willing To Pay	Probably Willing to Pay	Definitely Willing to Pay
Types of Investment: Basic Infrastructure				
...a more aggressive strategy for replacing water and sewer lines, storm water drainage improvements, etc.	15.0	34.3	41.7	8.3
...more aggressive street improvements including road surfaces, number of lanes, turn lanes, intersections, etc.	11.8	33.8	44.9	9.5
...pay off current city debt more quickly	14.1	37.3	35.6	13.0
Types of Investment: Housing				
...incentive to promote building new housing	22.3	47.3	25.0	5.5
...incentives to promote the rehabilitation of existing housing.	12.5	32.0	45.4	10.1
Types of Investment: Recreation				
...new enhancements to existing parks.	13.3	36.4	42.8	7.5
...investment in walking / biking trails.	17.6	32.8	37.6	12.0
...investment in additional athletic fields for tournament and local use.	25.4	38.2	28.4	08.0
...major renovations of the city pool.	21.4	29.6	40.2	8.8
...building a new city pool.	35.0	30.6	21.8	12.6
Type of Investment: Quality of Place				
...incentives to attempt to attract businesses to the community.	11.2	35.7	46.7	16.4
...incentives to encourage the development of dining, shopping and entertainment businesses.	11.9	29.3	37.0	21.7
...incentives to encourage the development of the downtown area.	14.6	31.7	42.2	11.6
...building a new, modern library.	32.8	27.4	20.9	18.9
Range of N= 849-868				

Type of Investment: Housing

The findings in this section provide insight about how important these quality of life items are in terms of the community's willingness to pay increased taxes. A little more than half (50.3%) of respondents indicated they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees for incentives to encourage building new houses. Households that make less than \$40,000 annually (28.8%) are slightly less willing to pay increased taxes or fees in support of new housing compared to higher income groups of \$40,000 or more (31.5%).

People who rent (39.4%) were more likely to support development of new housing than existing homeowners (29.3%). Households 46-55 years of age were most likely (41.3%) to support new housing. Households that have strong scores on the public interest scale (40.4%) are more supportive than those weakest on the scale (17.5%). Individuals who are very trusting (58.3%) of Newton government are much more supportive of increased taxes or fees to improve housing options compared to those registering the lowest (15.7%) level of trust.

Slightly less than half (49.6%) of responding residents indicated they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees for incentives to promote rehabilitation of existing housing. Females (57.5%) were more likely to support investment in rehabilitation than males (54.2%). Households with incomes less than \$40,000 were less supportive (54.3%) than those with incomes over \$40,000 (57.4%). Interestingly, there were no significant differences in levels of support by individuals who own their homes and those who rent. Citizens who have the highest level of support for the public interest (69.4%) are more supportive of rehabilitation of housing than those with lower levels of public interest (39.1%). Willingness to pay increased taxes and fees in support of housing rehabilitation is directly related to the strength of trust in Newton city government. Those citizens with the highest trust (72.7%) were significantly more supportive than those with the weakest level of trust (42.5%).

Type of Investment: Recreation

Enhancements to Existing Parks

Slightly more than half (50.3%) of respondents indicated they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees for enhancements to existing parks. Females (52.1%) were

more likely to be willing to pay for park enhancements than males (50.1%). Households 35 to 45 years of age had the strongest support for park enhancements (58.0%) as did families with children in the public schools (56%).

Individuals with strong commitments to the public interest (65.0%) are much more likely than those with weak (34.3%) commitments to indicate they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees to promote enhancements to existing parks. Those households with stronger trust in city government (70.4%) are much more willing to invest in park enhancements than those with weak trust (27.3%).

Investments in Walking/Biking Trails

Almost half of respondents (49.6%) support investment in walking and biking trails. Females (54.2%) were more likely to favor this investment compared to males (47.2%). Opinions varied by income levels, with higher incomes more likely to support trails. For example, people with incomes over \$100,000 (65.7%) were much more likely to support trails than those in the \$20,000 to \$39,999 (41.2%) income levels. Age also showed significant variations in support. Respondents between 46-55 registered the most support (66.4%) compared to younger and older age cohorts. Citizens with the strongest support for the public interest (64.3%) were most likely to support this investment compared to those with more self-interest (39.4%). Respondents with the most trust in city government (76.0%) were more likely than those with weaker trust (26.1%) to support construction of new walking and biking trails.

Additional Athletic Fields

A little more than a third (36.4%) of respondents are willing to pay increased taxes and fees for additional athletic fields. Citizens with higher incomes, over \$100,000 (47.3%), were more likely to support athletic fields than those with incomes below \$100,000. Households with children attending public schools (43.8%) more strongly supported this investment than those without children in schools (31.8%). Citizens who have lived longer in the community were more likely to support investment in athletic fields. For example, people living in Newton for 20 or more years (39.5%) were more likely to show support than those living in Newton for less than five years (30.9%).

The level of public interest compared to self-interest also indicated level of support for this investment. Respondents tending more toward self-interest (21.2%) were less likely to express support than were those with strong public interest (43.6%). Trust in government investments also influenced decisions, with those registering high trust (60.6%) more inclined to support investment in athletic fields than those with low trust (18.7%).

Major Renovations of City Pool

Half of all respondents (49.0%) support major renovation of the city pool. Respondents with higher incomes, over \$60,000, were more likely to support (54.7%) investment in a pool than those with incomes below \$60,000 (44.8%). Respondents with higher levels of public interest (50.0%) were more supportive than those with the lowest level of public interest (38.8%). Public trust also influenced decisions, with those having high trust (61.7%) more likely to support than those citizens with lower trust (31.6%).

Build New Pool

About one-third (34.4%) of respondents support building a new public pool. Females are more supportive (37.6%) compared to males (31.6%). Households with incomes over \$60,000 (41.7%) are more likely to support building a new pool compared to those with incomes under \$60,000 (27.8%). Respondents in the 35-45 age cohort (52%) are most likely to support a new pool and those with children in public school (44.9%) are more inclined to support the pool than those without children in Newton schools (29.6%). Once again, respondents with strong public interest (41.8%) are more supportive than those with weak public interest (31.7%) and those with strong trust in city government (57.8%) are more inclined to support a new pool than those with weak trust (21.6%).

Type of Investment: Quality of Place

Attract Businesses to Community

More than three-fifths (63.1%) of respondents indicate they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees for incentives to attract businesses to the community. Citizens

with higher incomes, for example over \$100,000 (73.0%), were more likely to support incentives for businesses compared to those with lower incomes, for example below \$40,000 (59.2%). Respondents with high degrees of support for public interest projects (70.7%) more strongly supported incentives for businesses compared to those with the lowest public interest (43.3%). Levels of public trust in past government decisions also varied between groups. Those with high trust (80.2%) were much more likely to support incentives than those with lower trust (48.2%).

Encourage development of Dining, Shopping and Entertainment

Slightly more than half (51.7%) of households support encouragement of development of dining, shopping and entertainment in Newton. No significant differences between demographic variables was found for this item. However, citizens with higher levels of public interest (72.0%) compared to those with higher self-interest (43.7%) support development. Those with higher levels of trust in local government (73.2%) also more strongly support this investment than those with the weakest level of trust (53.0%).

Encourage Development of Downtown

Development of downtown had 53.8% of respondents willing to pay increased taxes and fees to support this investment. No statistically significant differences were observed between demographic groups on this item. However, respondents with high levels of public interest (68.7%) were more likely to support encouraging downtown investment than those with lower levels of public interest (26.2%). Citizens with high levels of trust (73.2%) in public investments were also more likely to support downtown investment than those with lower levels of trust (39.1%).

Build a New, Modern Library

A modest forty percent (39.8%) of respondents indicate they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees to build a new, modern library. Age groups 45 years and younger (50.2%) more strongly support building a new library compared to age groups over 45 years (37.2%). Citizens with the strongest levels of public trust (58.6%) were

more inclined to support a new library than those with the lowest level of public interest (22.1%). Respondents with the highest level of public trust (67.2%) were much more likely to support construction of a new library than those with low levels of trust (15.8%).

IV. CONCLUSION

This study forms the basis for conversation within the community about potential investment options, including the costs and benefits, or trade-offs, in the use of scarce resources for the public good. This study was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which may influence government investment decisions.

While a survey can provide insight into citizen perceptions and willingness to pay increased taxes and fees, it is conducted at a specific point in time. As more information becomes available, it is the role of community and city leadership to advance options that best serve the long-term well-being of the community-at-large. Consequently, continued citizen education and engagement is critically important as the community weighs future investment options.

Appendix A

Profile of Respondents

Demographic Profile of Respondents						
			Frequency	Percent		
Race			Age			
Caucasian	856	93.3	Below 25	6	00.6	
African-American	4	00.4	25-35	98	10.6	
Hispanics	34	3.7	36-45	107	11.6	
Native American	3	00.3	46-55	109	11.8	
Asian	6	00.7	56-64	173	18.7	
Other	13	01.4	65-74	243	26.3	
			75 and Above	188	20.3	
Gender			Household Income			
Males	392	42.9	Less Than \$20,000	59	06.7	
Females	485	53.1	\$20,000-\$39,999	190	21.5	
			\$40,000-\$59,999	197	22.3	
Property Ownership			\$60,000-\$79,999	155	17.5	
Own	801	86.3	\$80,000-\$99,999	106	12.0	
Rent	127	13.7	\$100,000 & Above	176	19.9	
Education			Marital Status			
Not High School Grad	10	01.1	Married	639	69.3	
High School Graduate	148	16.3	Single	281	30.5	
Some College	231	25.4				
College Graduate	270	29.7				
Some Graduate Study	39	4.3				
Graduate Degree	212	23.3				
Lived in Newton			Household Member Attends Newton Schools			
0-5 Years	120	12.9	Yes	290	31.1	
6-10 Years	95	10.2	No	639	68.5	
11-15 Years	65	07.0				
16-20 Years	67	07.2				
20 or more Years	583	62.7				
Get Information about Newton			Get Information about Newton			
			City Website	29	3.8	
			City Social Media	129	16.8	
			Other Social Media	123	16.0	
			Local Newspapers	296	38.5	
			Friends/Neighbors	192	25.0	

Appendix B

Influencing Factors Report

Demographics tell an important story for any community. Thinking strategically and moving a community forward must include consideration of population trends and make-up. Newton is located approximately 20 miles north of the Wichita Metropolitan area with direct access via the I-135 interstate system. Proximity to the larger metro has benefits and disadvantages for Newton. Many Newton residents easily commute for jobs, shopping and entertainment, but that translates to fewer residents spending their time and money in the community. A sense of community attachment is more difficult to develop with a large portion of the community commuting back and forth to the Wichita Metro. Understanding demographic trends and how those trends can shape the future provides more insight into the survey results.

Newton is the county seat and most populous community in Harvey County. As a whole Harvey County has experienced modest growth in recent decades which is projected to continue until 2040. Figure 1 from the Center for Economic Development and Business Research (CEDBR) at Wichita State University provides a 45-year population projection for Harvey County. Population is expected to peak in 2040 with approximately 36,600 residents. The trend for Harvey County is similar to other counties surrounding the Wichita Metro area: population rises modestly before tapering off as Sedgwick County absorbs more residents as they migrate to the larger city of Wichita.

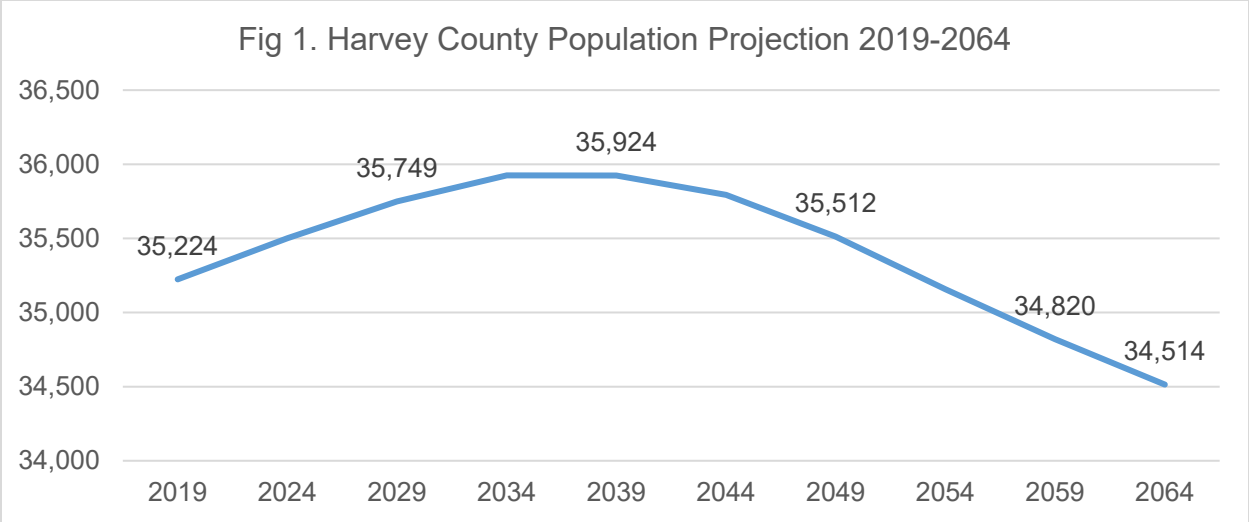
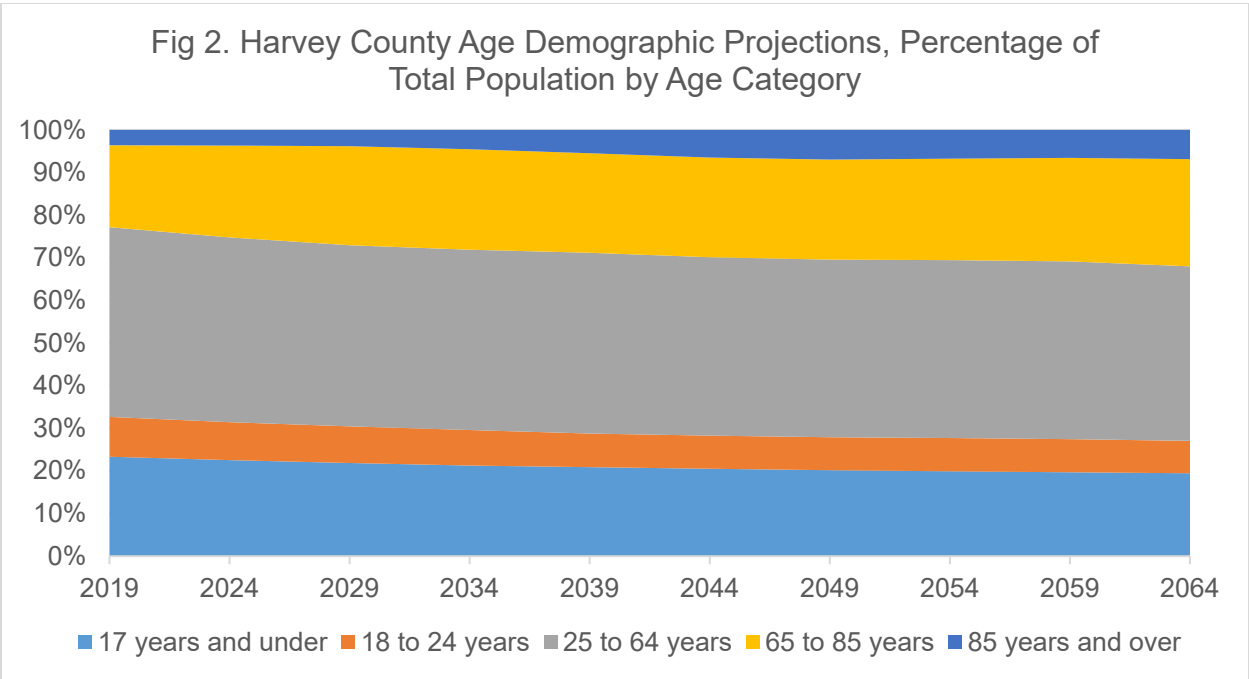
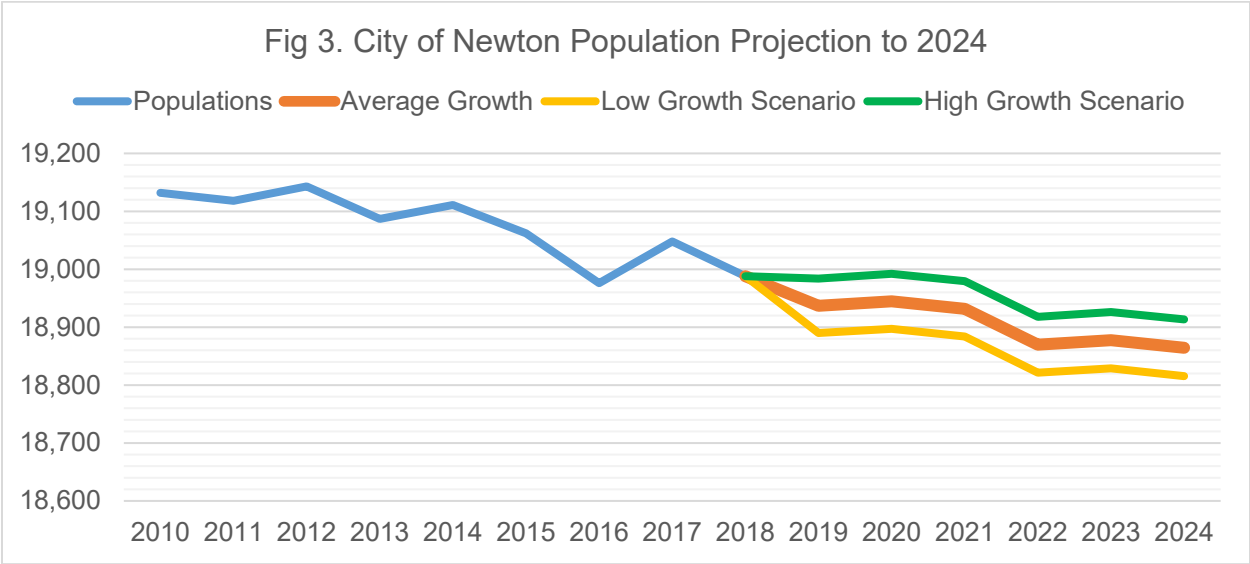


Figure 2, also from CEDBR, shows how age in Harvey County will break down in the future. While the age brackets (illustrated by the colored bar areas) are projected to remain relatively stable in the next 45 years, the primary growth area will be residents in the 65-85 age bracket and the 85+ age bracket. Both of these populations have varying needs that should be considered when evaluating long-term investments. Key among those needs are affordable housing, transportation and medical services which are statistically more utilized by older demographics.

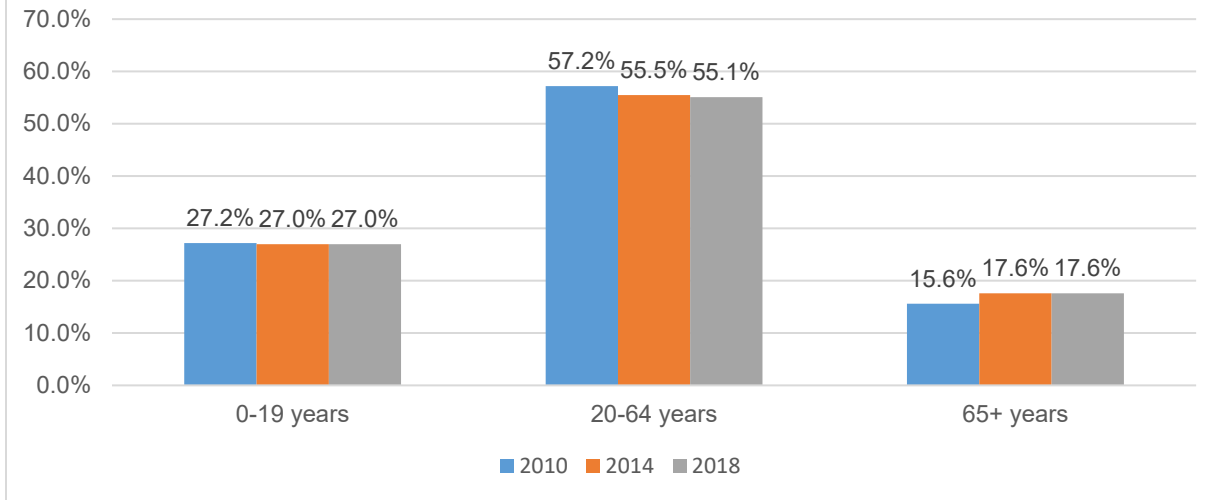


Looking specifically at Newton, the population projections are similar to Harvey County's. Figure 3 provides a shorter-range population forecast for Newton through 2024. The blue line in the diagram represents confirmed populations. The orange line represents the actual population projection while the yellow and green lines offer different growth scenarios. Based on recently available data, the population of Newton is likely to decline immediately while the population in Harvey County is anticipated to grow until 2040 before experiencing the same decline. According to Figure 3, the population in Newton by 2024 should be approximately 18,800 residents, a less than one percent decline from the 2019 estimated population.



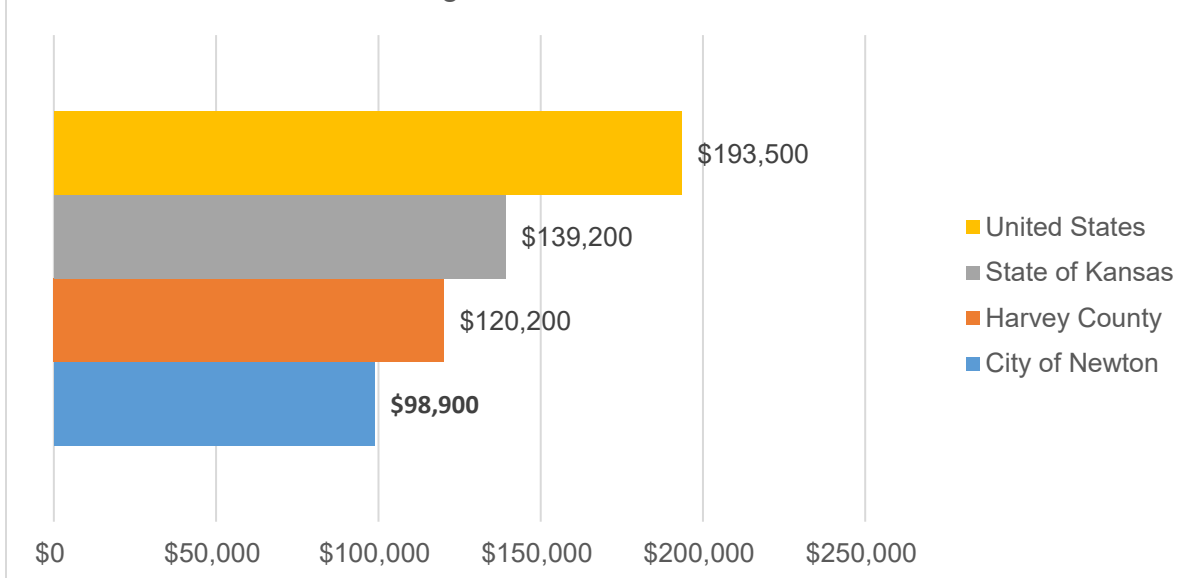
Newton's age demographics are similar to the trend in Harvey County. Figure 4 provides three broad categories of residents by percentage for 2010 to 2018. Older populations, in this case those at retirement age of 65 or older, experienced the most growth from 2010 to 2018. That growth is attributed to the decline in the broadly defined workforce population of those aged 20 to 64 years, which declined 2.1% in the same time period. Minors, those aged 0 to 19 years, declined by .2% during that time period. Based on these trends, the population in Newton – like that of Harvey County – will be older moving into the future.

Fig 4. Newton Population Categories by % 2010-2018



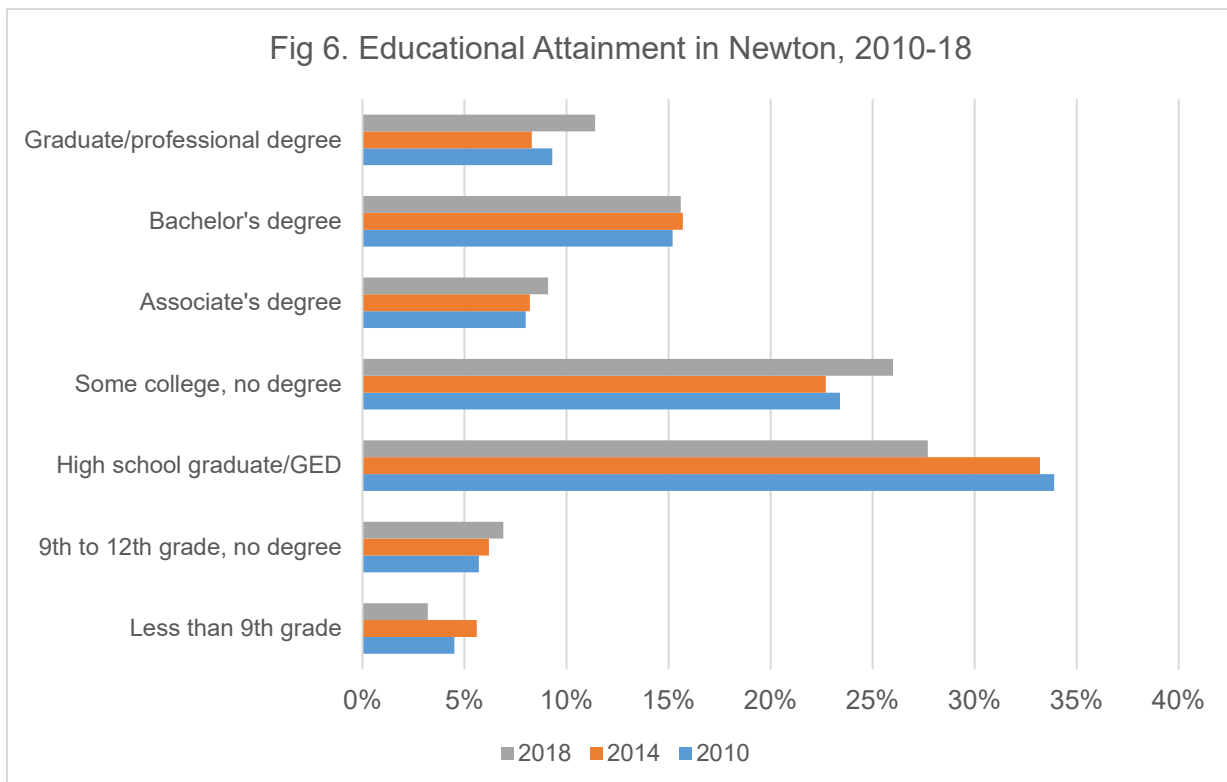
A fundamental issue that factors into strategic decision-making is housing stock. There are 8,487 housing units in Newton. An unusually high number of those units, 9.9% or 841 units, are unoccupied meaning the housing stock is not being used to its fullest in Newton. Figure 5 identifies the median home value in Newton and compares it to the median home value in Harvey County, the state of Kansas and the U.S. The lower home values are partially attributable to the fact that 46.6% of the units in Newton were built before 1960.

Fig 5. Median Home Value



During focus group discussions in Newton, housing stock was mentioned as an issue by several participants. One perception was that Newton has a disproportionate number of rental properties. According to a 2018 American Community Survey Census update, approximately 31.5% of occupied properties in Newton are rentals. While that may seem unusual to Newton residents, that percentage is in line with the Kansas average and nearly 5% below the national average for rental properties. More than 4 in 10 renters (41.9%) in Newton experience cost disadvantages, meaning they spend more than 35% of their income on housing costs. While the number of renters is on par with what is seen in other parts of the state and nation, a high percentage of Newton’s rental properties would not be defined as affordable.

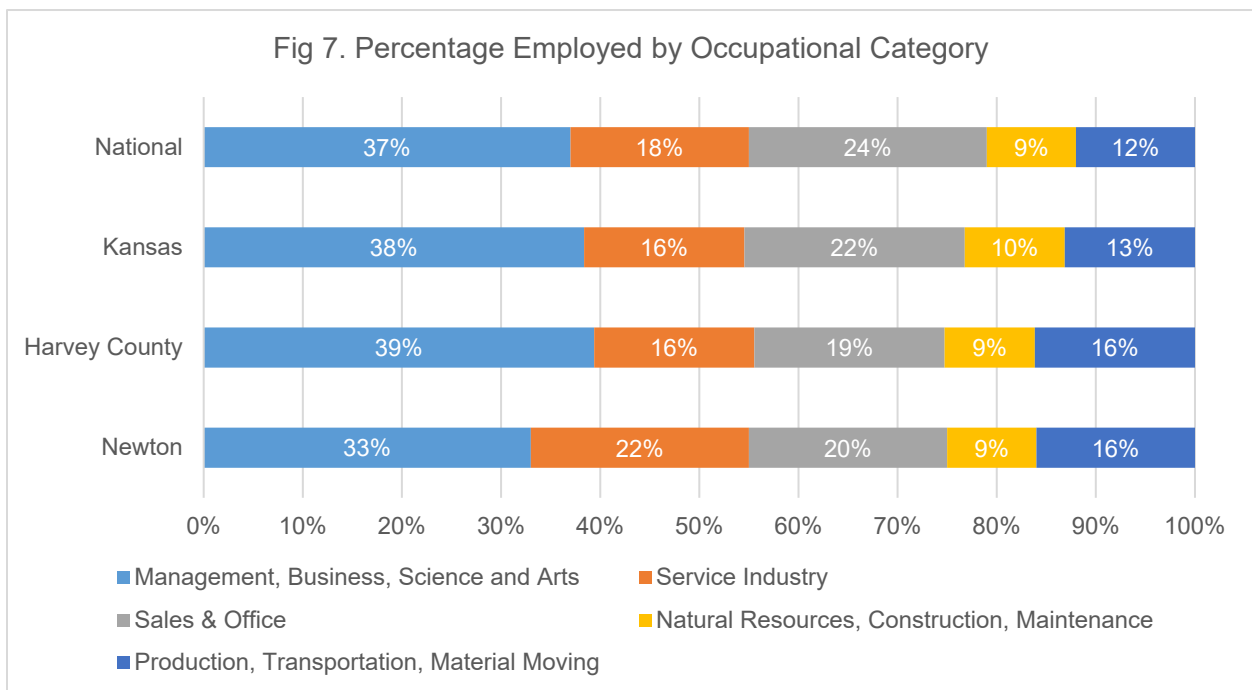
Educational attainment has a strong correlation with income and is a good indicator of a community’s economic health. According to a 2015 study by the Lumina Foundation, those with only a high school diploma are 3.5 times more likely to live at or below the poverty rate compared to those with a bachelor’s degree. Further, those with only a high school diploma on average earn approximately 43% less than their peers with a bachelor’s degree and 52% less than those with professional degrees during their



working life. Figure 6 provides a breakdown of the percentage of Newton residents' educational attainment by percentage from 2010 to 2018. Data indicates that the Newton population become more educated between 2010 to 2018. Overall, the community compares favorably with state and national averages, exceeding the number of people with high school diplomas or GEDs but trailing slightly in the percentage of residents with bachelor's level education.

Educational attainment relates directly to occupation. Figure 7 compares the portion of the population in Newton, Harvey County, Kansas and the U.S. by occupational category. Occupational categories come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and attempt to categorize all occupations in one of five categories.

Newton has fewer residents employed in the Management, Business, Science and Arts category and more in the Service Industry, which can be attributed to educational attainment and is directly reflected in household income levels. Newton's median household income is \$49,874 annually, which is 12% lower than Harvey County and Kansas averages.



Lower than average median household incomes also contribute to a higher than average poverty level in Newton. The 2018 poverty level estimate was 13.3% or 2,534 residents who live at or below the federal poverty level. The poverty level in 2018 for a family of four was \$24,600 and \$12,060 for a single person. Higher poverty levels require additional considerations when evaluating future development and services. More social services including transportation and food assistance may be required by the population. Consideration should also be given to development of affordable housing. Continued population decline, increased aging and persistent poverty create a unique environment for the Newton community.

Appendix C

Focus Group Summary

As part of the Newton community survey project, the PPMC conducted eight targeted focus groups to collect input from specific demographics. Focus group data provided a snapshot of the multiple views on the Newton community and helped establish the core issues presented in the community survey. Focus groups were chosen to attract a cross section of voices that are typically underrepresented in traditional engagement. Multiple interests were represented including seniors, civic clubs, religious organizations, young professionals, relators, sports clubs and nonprofit service providers. Additionally, an open community meeting was held for anyone not affiliated with those groups. Attendance at the focus groups varied widely from only two participants up to 30 participants in the bigger gatherings.

Focus groups were asked a series of questions developed by the steering committee to gather initial feedback on issues the steering committee thought would be relevant to the community. Opportunity to expand on the initial themes was provided in each focus group. Six general themes emerged from the feedback in addition to the specific issues addressed. The six themes from the focus groups were:

- Lack of trust in government
- Negative story about Newton being told by residents
- Need for fresh perspective and leadership
- Prioritization of City projects
- Sustainable growth
- Attracting young families

The resulting feedback from focus groups shaped the development of the questions included in the community survey.

Lack of trust in government, not just city government but all local governments, was an issue in all focus groups. Communication was at the core of the issue of trust. Many participants felt there was a lack of transparency which created opportunity for misinformation. Without definitive information sources, residents looked to alternative

sources of information such as social media to fill in gaps. Lack of cohesive message creates confusion. A common example cited in focus groups was a recently failed school bond issue. Many felt that the mixed messaging for the district created a negative environment and contributed to its failure with voters.

Related to the lack of trust in government was the negative story told by citizens. While having citizens who focus on negative aspects of the community is not uncommon, focus groups felt that the negative narrative had an outsized impact in Newton. The negative story told by these residents has elevated the perceived lack of information coming from government units. These factors had a negative impact on the reputation of the community and the focus groups felt that rebuilding a positive reputation should be a focus of the city moving forward.

Focus groups universally expressed a need for fresh perspective and leadership. The group felt that a lack of vision from current leaders was a hinderance to the community. According to the focus groups, current leaders were hesitant to make decisions that would impact the future of the community. The selection of a new school district Superintendent and a new City Manager presented the community with the opportunity to get fresh perspective and reinvigorated leadership.

Another theme that reoccurred in nearly all focus groups was a need for prioritization. There are multiple potential projects being discussed including a significant investment in the city pool and a new library. However, many participants felt these were not necessary projects and the community could not afford them. Many held the view that utility rates and taxes in the area were currently too high and adding more projects was not feasible. The limited amount of funds available should force prioritization, but many in the focus groups felt city leadership had opted not to make prioritizing decisions.

Other key themes focused on sustainable growth and attracting younger residents with families. Growth trends in Newton have been declining for several years and focus groups felt that having controlled, modest growth would be key to the future of the area. The main target for recruitment should be young families. Young families impact multiple areas including housing, schools, recreation programs and retail areas.

Focus groups were asked to provide specific feedback on several issues that were identified by the Steering Committee as critical to Newton. Topics ranged from recreation areas such as the pool and sports fields to perceptions of current services provided by the city. Many of the topics generated relevant questions which were taken back to the Steering Committee for incorporation into the survey.

The Newton swimming pool, like many other pools in the nation, has surpassed its effective useful life and requires major investment to continue operating. Focus group participants questioned whether the required investment was necessary and if the community could support it. If building a new pool was the preferred option, the focus groups felt the pool should be built to be regionally competitive like recently built pools in Hesston, Derby and Salina. The location of the pool was also questioned. Being in the middle of town created access issues for some while others argued that the central location was ideal for children who walked to the pool.

Recreation services in general were also specifically targeted by the Steering Committee. Overall, focus group participants felt that available recreational assets were good. Many simply wanted more maintenance and attention paid to keeping existing infrastructure in good condition. Questions were raised about the duplication of services between the Newton Recreation Commission and the YMCA. However, it was unclear what should be done about that issue. Generally, there was support for expanding walking and biking trail connections to improve recreational opportunities. Groups that were dominated by recreational representatives felt the city should invest in having more sports fields near each other to attract more out-of-town tournaments.

Rebuilding the current library has been debated for more than a decade. While the focus groups were being conducted, a separate taskforce was holding public meetings about the future of the library. Focus group feedback was generally supportive of the library but asked more abstract questions about the role the library could play. Many struggled to see what opportunities the library may have beyond basic book lending and meeting space. Affordability was again a prominent issue, with nearly every focus group wondering if the community could afford a new library.

Education received overwhelming support from focus group members; however, the focus of the discussion was the recently failed school bond election. Many reasons

were cited for the failure of the bond election including the size and scale of the bond, the projects within the bond and justification for the bond. A major issue surrounding the bond was misinformation. According to focus group members there was a lot of misinformation spread through social media about the bond issue. While the city does not directly address education, the point about the misinformation was helpful to the city regarding trust and reputation.

Impending decisions about the future of curbside recycling were also addressed by focus groups. The economics of recycling had dramatically changed in the last few years making it unfeasible to continue mandatory curbside recycling in Newton. Focus groups felt recycling was important to Newton residents, but they were very sensitive to any cost increases. Most focus group participants supported keeping recycling in some form, but they did not support paying additional fees to continue the service.

Childcare was another issue that was discussed in focus groups. While the city has little to do with childcare and its regulation, it was acknowledged that lack of childcare was a barrier for economic growth in the community. The lack of available spaces, particularly for smaller children and for shift work, was the biggest problem identified by focus groups. While the consensus was that childcare was an issue in the community, there was no support from the focus groups for the city to take an active role in childcare.

The topic of economic development generated a multitude of differing opinions from focus groups. Two things that were universally agreed upon: the city spent too much on the Logistics Park and ABI projects and needs to show some return on those investments, and the community needs to compete for quality jobs but should focus on improving existing conditions. The lack of success at the Logistics Park and the failure of the ABI project at the airport had created a lot of negative feelings in the community. While there was an acknowledgement that the city should continue to promote those assets it had, spending more money on large business recruitment was probably not the best option. Instead the preference was for more amenities like shopping, restaurants and entertainment as well as support for small businesses to build a sustainable economy.

Focus group participants were asked to rate perceptions about public safety (police, fire, EMS) and public works (water, sewer, streets, trash) in Newton. Public safety was widely praised with participants acknowledging that public safety had done a good job in dealing with issues such as increased drug activity and complex mental health issues. Minor questions about increased presence in the community and deploying vehicles to emergency calls were raised by a few of the groups.

Public Works was also well perceived with many respondents pleased with the condition of local infrastructure. There was a strong feeling that utility rates were too high and non-competitive compared to neighboring communities. Multiple groups raised issues around sustainability. They believed focus should be placed on core, developed areas of the community rather than extending infrastructure out to new areas of town. Echoing previous comments about transparency and consistency, more than half of the focus groups indicated that the building permitting or construction process in the city carried negative perceptions. One participant noted that, "...it depended on who you talked to with the city as to what the answer was with permitting."

An issue that was not directly asked about by the Steering Committee but came up in seven of the eight focus groups was public transportation. Harvey County does not have a robust public transportation system. Many participants, particularly older participants, noted that it is difficult to get around the community without a car. Taxis or ride sharing apps have poor availability and are not affordable for those on a fixed income. Finding solutions to transportation for older populations and lower income populations would do a lot to improve the quality of life in Newton.

Related to comments on public safety services was the issue of mental health. Many of the groups, especially the Newton Resource Council and ministerial leaders, felt that mental health issues in the community were reaching a crisis point. Increases in the severity and number of mental health cases were pushing service organizations to the limit and putting more pressure on public safety. Compounding the mental health issues is a rise in substance abuse. The two combined together present a formidable challenge for the Newton community.

Case 14. How has McPherson been so successful—lower electric, water, etc. that attract audiences and lower taxes! Are we still paying for past mistakes – i.e. airport fiasco! We do need a new library why adding on or remodeling repairing one!

Case 16. Good concepts need better picture to embrace a tax increase. If the downtown is improved and there is a \$ don't do of tax break.

Case 21. Attracting large businesses' requires large incentives. Smaller business' less so. Business' attract workers who will bring their families. That attracts new business. That creates demand for housing that the private sector will furnish. Government should focus on infrastructure improvements and maintenance and law enforcement. The city should maintain a fiscal/monetary surplus. It should stay away from any project/development that will require an ongoing maintenance or other financial obligation to keep it operating.

Case 25. Thank you for your work!

Case 30. This survey could use a neutral category. As I am single I can't say if it's a good place to raise a family, for example. My general view is to promote personal and community fiscal responsibility. I'm uncertain what role the city would intend taking to promote new housing projects. Prioritize attracting new employers, over new housing and construction companies. All jobs are critical to growing the community.

Case 35. If other cities can have good housing and water parks for an affordable price and chain restaurants why can we?

Case 36. (Library) or expand on it. There is enough land on site to complete this. (Economic Development) There is more than 200 homes sitting vacant currently. Broken window theory will escalate if no further action is done. (Community Investment) Send someone to Mulvane and see what they do. Every year they fix roads and sewer without a – budget. (Comments) Everything can be put on hold until debts are paid off. Projects need to be finished in less than 2 years. Unnecessary item be on back burner. Get us back on track.

Case 38. * Section 5: What is a large employer? 1000 people?? I would recommend 100-500 people. *Section 3: Concerning dog park. I would like to see the area for smaller dogs be larger. My small dogs think it is a prison. * Section 5: More dining, shopping, and employers overall. I realize that being close to Wichita hurts these areas!

Case 40. As a widow on limited income and having NO other family living in Newton I still want Newton to remain a viable, welcoming town.

Case 41. The taxes are too high! The City needs to pay its bills first. Don't think you have to compete with Wichita. Quit living above your means. Why is Newton a Sanctuary City!

Case 50. The people that spend the City and County Money's needs to think More About the future expenses and quit spending Money for things that are wants Not Needs At present. When in the

Case 51. Water Bill too high. People Move from Newton due to this

Case 52. Get the ABI Building at the airport Rented or sold. That was a BAD decision Bob Myers and the City Commissioners made.

Case 55. 1. MOST IMPORTANT – Elected mayor (4 yr term) who could inspire trust and confidence and take responsibility to dream, prioritize, network and lead fellow commissioners in carrying through significant multi-year projects. 2. One-half percent

local sales tax (probably excluding groceries) to fund special projects (e.g. library, city pool, athletic fields and perhaps some major infrastructure needs with sundown provision (to allow ongoing accountability). 3 Greater transparency in city finances.

Case 58. Downtown Newton is already vibrant! A vague and misleading survey. Public property needs to be maintained to preserve value and function!

Case 60. Too much keeping up with the bigger city neighbors and not enough of common sense. Repair and rebuild what you have and extend it's life. Except for technology. Our lives today does depend on technology but do not throw away the old because its old. Ther still a lot of value in the old and knowledge that is there.

Case 61. Before the city improves Centennial Park you must widen Kansas Ave. from 12th street to Centennial Park.

Case 64. The City of Newton has the beginnings of walking/biking paths, but many aren't connected. The paths deadend at odd places. Many paths only need just a little more pavement to be connected. People that live right here in Newton don't realize some of the resources that exist.

Case 65. You need jobs, housing and a good school system for a community to grow.

Case 67. Collect all of outstanding taxes or sell the property for the city funds.

Case 68. Thanks for asking!

Case 69. I love living in Newton!

Case 73. Sometimes, here in America, there is too much tearing down of buildings instead of (preserving) upgrading. Look at the cities/towns around Newton, where they have renovated their old stately courthouses ... McPherson, Council Groves, etc. Newton tore down 2 stately buildings ... CourtHouse (replacing it with an ugly building, and the church, on same block) Sad to see that. European Countries seem to be more into preservation of their stately, old buildings. Realize it may be more costly to renovate, but would be worth it.

Case 74. 9 not answered because I received info from commission meetings. City's social media is very poor. Commission should have fired Bob Myers. Not a leader. Commission should have continued with plans they had to develop and build the Law Enforcement Center. Commission gets distracted by whatever direction the wind is blowing. No guts.

Case 75. I think its really messed up that our town logo got changed to clouds. Our town logo IS Trains-RailRoad. Waste of millions of \$

Case 80. We have wasted millions of dollars on train tracks to nowhere & underwriting bond guarantees all in the name of economic development. We need to prudently payoff our losses and only deal with basic goods and services. Recreation is part of that. Gambling on new businesses is not.

Case 83. Pay off current debt: school bond/Warer plant before taxing us more. Current water rates and taxes are too high to attract businesses and mid-income family's. Fix this and the rest will follow.

Case 88. I am tired of paying high taxes and water bills.

Case 89. We moved to Newton to get a small TOWN – left the Big City. Newton was okay! But soon had the push to grow! Every time you grow all the services are too small and must fund all the upgrades. Growth is expensive. I know paying employment doesn't pay it if you like a big city, move to one

Case 91. Dog park is not a good investment. I wish the City would invest in building an overpass, underpass or some kind of roadway that goes over/under the railroad tracks.

Case 92. Our ridiculously high utility rates have cause our citizenry to become detractors rather than advocates for residing here. Stop sacrificing the citizens' interests & welfare for the sake of "recruiting" business & industry, it's a game for them – to pit cities & counties to outbid each other until the next deal gets made. Focus on rooftops & residents. Occidental are crooks. Big box stores will be a relic of retail's past, business and industry will invest if they are confident in profit.

Case 93. I think that the success of efforts to improve the community and attract new people and businesses are negatively affected in a MAJOR way by the current state of Newton schools. My belief is that the commitment to the community STARTS with commitment to the schools and then extends outwardly from there. Very disappointed with recent Bond proposal denied by community.

Case 96. It is appalling that a lot of people are inheriting the city debt to pay off due to the city's mismanagement of money. Which in turn has raised our taxes and water rates causing people to move away just so they can better afford their bills. Perhaps the city should consider focusing on the communities needs instead of spending money on things it doesn't need (like that stupid cloud project they did at one point).

Case 99. Walking and biking trails have been done well and are adequate. Newton's downtown is very sad especially for a town this size. Absolute ghost town after 5 pm. Churches and religious organizations should NOT be getting any city funds for development. Like it or not Newton is a bedroom community. Focus on downtown development, dining shopping & entertainment. We won't win big business here.

Case 101. Definitely need more fast food restaurants south of town by hospital. Also, all sidewalks need to be wheelchair accessible.

Case 110. We need to restore down town and the OLD residential town housing. It is falling apart and makes Newton look pretty trashy. Making people accountable for keeping homes kept up, trash, removed and trash dumpsters put away after they are empty.

Case 118. I am of the opinion the city is run like other government entities, very inefficient! The elected officials should be more budget minded and not think of the citizens as a Pot of Gold!!

Case 125. I feel the government of Newton really needs to come up with incentives to get businesses want to open here in Newton. Newton needs to learn from McPhearson and their new business initiative.

Case 127. I support fundraising efforts for things like library & pool. They have been poor investments in other communities like McPherson & have failed to provide growth or quality of life.

Case 132. I would take an active role in improving Newton now & in the future

Case 134. Our community has a high number of lower income families. High taxes keep people from moving here. We also have so much property that is not taxable due to their tax exempt status. What can be done to lower city utility bills? So many store fronts are empty due to high rent.

Case 135. > industry & business = > \$. Why can't the city and county attract industry and business?? Are electricity&/or water rates too high?

Case 136. I have lived here 31 years. Newton does not try or seem to, to recruit business. Business would create growth. I have long said Harvey County is the epicenter of tightwad. Certain things the city spends money on all of no value to those of us living here or people they may try to recruit to live here.

Case 137. Newton is a wonderful community! We have enjoyed our 50+ years here after living in Illinois and New Jersey.

Case 138 – Approval of Previous Investments S Logistics Park 1.

Case 139. More effective and prudent management of collected tax dollars. Focus on smaller business/industry and promote from within. There needs to be a uniform vision within our city administration with proper execution and follow through. City administration works for the community – eliminate personal interest.

Case 140. Most important to our family: new library & improved school facilities. Many older neighborhoods need rehabilitation. More medium income housing needed. More and varied dining and main street shops needed.

Case 146. 1. Need to hire a new city engineer, spending too much money on, mess ups, no regular maintenance on streets, fire hydrants, water towers, reservoir tank, storm sewers, 2. Live in city limits, city manager, city engineer, city clerk, city attorney 3. City Commissioner's should have term limits. 4. City commissioner's should not take city manager & city engineer's word on everything as gospel, need to do more detail checking on budget and how departments are being run. 5. Do not need to raise taxes. Enforce that top management & dept. heads have to follow their operating budget & 5 yr. & 10 yr. equipment & maintenance plan budget. 6. Locate business for the shopping mall south of Newton. 7. Wichita, is too close to Newton, we have to change with times.

Case 148. It is sad and disappointed to see no questions about putting money toward schools, issues related to climate change and health related issues!!!

Case 151. I am very concerned about the condition of the city streets. I am frustrated by the yards with brush laying in them, discarded furniture. They are left for months. Make Our Money Count.

Case 152. Newton's real estate taxes are much too high presently. Any additional taxes for a person with limited Social Security benefits will require that person to give up food, new clothing and/or medications. The city needs to cut expenses just like the retirees have to cut and do without.

Case 153. Industrial park needs more attention.

Case 156. No more deficit spending

Case 158. Discouraging that the issue of recycling is not addressed.

Case 160. Cost? You need a "no opinion" option. Better wording of survey would be helpful. Sure everything new is good, but choices must be made. I don't think this is a very helpful survey because it didn't allow me to prioritize wants and needs. It just asked how much I liked various items. I may like them all, but if the city can only afford limited expense, then I would prioritize 1. Paying down debt. 2. Minimizing luxury expenses. 3. Renovate and clean up existing housing and downtown. 4. Maintain infrastructure (of course) AND DO NOT asphalt over Antique Brick Streets! Repair them!! New Pools & Ball parks are unaffordable luxuries in the current fiscal state of Newton. Newton is looking junky/unkept/slummy. Encourage renovation and upkeep! No one wants to move to a slummy town in the older neighborhoods.

Case 161. I feel that Newton should be more family friendly focused. Newton is a suburb of Wichita. A lot of people who live in Newton work in Wichita. The children in our schools have special events (musical, sporting, etc.) which brings people to our community. We are missing out on opportunities to show off the assets of Newton. We do not compete on what our surrounding communities offer in athletic fields, shopping and dining! ... Also, our Newton swimming pool is too small to host swim tournaments which sends families to other cities for competitions. This is all tax revenue that Newton is missing out on.

Concerning raising taxes I would suggest that Newton first sell some of its real estate and use the money to pay down the loans/bonds. Our water bill is outrageous! Why is the City one of the largest real estate owners in the County? Anybody who understands how to a parcel search on the County website can see that Newton has over 193 parcels of real estate. This is UNACCEPTABLE. Square miles of land in the County. Why? If it is for the water wells then sale the land and reserve the mineral rights for the City. Sale it! Use the money to pay down debt or use for development. We are wasting too much money holding on to real estate and keeping it off the tax rolls.

I want to thank you for sending out the survey. I would also point out that IF our City's administration were more involved in the community then there wouldn't be a need for the survey. It should be a requirement that ALL city employees must live in Newton. Also the top administration should also be required to participate in community events and organizations. I have lived here over 30 years and I could not pick out the Assistant City Manager, Chief of Police, City Engineer and City Attorney from a crowd. I feel as though they hide in their offices all day and make themselves unava⁹ilab;le. It only stands to reason that the employees in the department will follow the lead of their supe³⁴rvisor and keep themselves out of community involvement as well. If the City administration volunteered more than maybe someone like me could approach them and give feedback face to face. I know it is possible, Chief Roberson is out in the community and welcomes suggestions. The City administration works for us and must be more assessable which is something this survey did not address.

Case 162. I lived in Newton growing up; left for a few years and returned when my children were school age. Since then I have seen a decline in Newton as a community and as a good place to raise children. That perception has grown to surrounding communities about Newton. If you want Newton to grow; then you need to focus on that first.

Case 165. Water in this town is horrible its very hard and messes up facets and lines, and the bill is ridiculous. Ex Mayor has been on social media telling people to ask where money from "WAR Chest" to fix roads went implying extra taxes we have paid have not went where they should. Buildings sitting empty that the city funded and not being repaid except by taxpayers who had nothing to do with the loan, houses for sale all the time because of taxes and cost of living here very little for people to do one or two places to eat that are really not worth going to hardly anything for children to do. Parents struggle because job here keep wages low and 200 a month water bill (on average if you have small kids) is crazy for water most won't drink. Replaced faucets twice in 6 years because hard water ruined them. I grown up in this town and with all the

taxes and increased cost of living its time to move out. A lot of others feel the same. Kids here are bored because they have very few options. We hear the cry more money and it will fix everything we promise ... hasn't yet but they keep right on taking it.

Case 168. We have paid taxes for years and watched local government, make poor decision after poor decision. Commit to youth and well being and everything else will fall into place. Our roads have crumbled and look like a third world country. Fix them please.

Case 177. I feel that the city should take better care of Military Park. It looks terrible compared to the other parks. The old Engine 1880 could use some cleaning up and loving care too. Also the old Historic Harvey building on 1st Street is a disgrace to say the least.

Case 178. Still paying for Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade that was suppose to go away how many years ago?? "City Fathers" don't care about any bodies opinions unless it puts a \$ in their own pocket. Making the City "Pretty" does not attract anything!! I'm sure this whole survey is a waste of our time & my money!!!

Case 179. I think the two most important things right now that Newton needs in order to attract families is getting a new modern library and an updated pool.

Case 190. Newton is an amazing community with wonderful people. However I feel its difficult to compete with larger communities with larger tax bases. Perhaps if we work to reduce debt, beautify and maintain what we have, keeping utilities and taxes lower, growth will occur on its own. People are moving away because of that now. It's not a bad thing to be a bedroom community, just be an awesome one. Brad Elliott Realty Connections Just Some thoughts!

Case 191. My personal Info is not applicable to this – never will be and it is intrusive to ASK – Pay attention to what you already have & fix it NOW don't put it off until it cost 10x more cause you don't want to pay for it. STOP trying to put your names on new buildings & fix what you have!

Case 194. We cannot afford increases in taxes – but we get them anyway. What's the point? Prefer wiser use of current income just as the homeowner must do!!

Case 195. The city's desire to expand growth and development in aggressive large programs is constant and does not prove very productive. Waste and water treatment has been very expensive for us but over time has been wise. Public funding of the golf course will take a long time for all of us to pay off. The industrial development district has only improved the airport. Fairgrounds & soccer complex were or continue to be failures and our convention center struggles to stay open.

Case 196. If you want to recruit new families you will need to have a serious discussion with the school board. I will not recommend Newton schools to anyone. I have kids that are struggling, but because they are not high risk or not completely failing, they do not

get extra help. The school board does not seem to hear the concerns of parents. The school almost seem like puppets for the superintendent. As a parent, I feel like I can speak up for my children, but no one is really listening, so that change or help can really be given to my students. If Newton wants to go, they need to have a real discussion w/ families who have kids in school. The city should also have an open discussion w/ faculty & staff of schools w/o having to about their job being taken away. Newton also needs employers that pay more than \$15 an hour. Being honest w./ no loop holes would go a long way. Shopping options in the more medium income range more eateries that are not burgers, Mexican, or pizza

Case 197. Train traffic is a HUGE problem in Newton. It seems like that's all we do is wait for trains. We need to build an overpass/underpass so we have an option to get around Newton. I've seen first responders having to wait on trains with lights flashing! Newton also needs to make the railroad crossings quiet zones inside the city limits. I personally have to sleep with ear plugs at night because it's so loud and that is just about everywhere in Newton ... it's too loud!

Case 198. Sect. 6. Not "willing" to pay additional taxes: We need to focus on maintaining our community and it's growth through an efficient use or resources. As a property owner & landlord – I feel that our prop. Taxes and water bills are inflated!

Case 200. Our Past Spending has hurt Our Future Such as Courthouse Water Wells drilled don't work! Spending Money we don't have for we don't need. No money for things we need. Were Not Wichita Kansas!

Case 201. I cannot rank debt reduction high enough as a priority. The No. 1 thing the city needs to do is pay off the water treatment plant and ballooning Bonds! The PBC should be used to fund city pool improvements. The rec needs to be part of that, the city must not go it alone. I'm tired of the "we can't sell houses because..." excuses from Real Estate Agents. They need to be more creative in doing their jobs & not expect handouts from us!

Case 202. Newton needs to be more communicative of things that need to be done. If something special comes up then put it on the ballot. – Speaking of the Ballot's why doesn't Newton try to get more people to get registered & VOTE! – Newton has never been transparent about things – It would create more harmony in the town if they were. Things just happen on a whim around here. No one knows – until it's done. Thank you for your time.

Case 203. A deterrent to people choosing to live here are some of the costs such as the water bill. I realize improvements cost \$ but people look elsewhere, where bills are cheaper. As far as the pool, the city should team up with the Y to save money on such a project. Newton is a great location with so much potential.

Case 206. I am more concerned about the debt, Newton owes than making more debt.

Case 207. I am not aware of the current state or expected states of things like sewer or water lines, so I don't feel confident having any opinion on strategies & needs in those domains. That is outside my scope.

Case 208. City needs to make property owners clean up there properties, and make landlords keep up there rentals. What happened to rate increase for sewer plant renovation being temporary? City bill and taxers are going to run me out of here before long

Case 209. Section 1: Your Questions 1,3,6,7,8. Are not thought out. Poor Quality of Questions. What exactly are "personal Sacrifices" you need to explain. What are the "Limited Resources" you should say what they are? Section 5: On Question #1 this has been done in the past. i.e. The Logistics Park on S Spencer. Ant that Fiasco we are still Paying for. What is the Chamber of Commerce doing safeguards need to be in place before any of these question be implemented. So we are not left holding the bag. That costs the town money. Section 6. First What are the Incentives, that has to be known, before a Decission can be made. Comments: Poor Quality of a Survey. Questions were not thought out. City's in a Deep Hole financially with Stupid Decissions made in the recent Past. (i.e. the Airport & Logistics Park) Better Homework needs to be done by Elected Officials. And not be HoodWinked by any bussness who wants to come here! Have Fail Safe's in place to protect the money. City Money!

Case 210. 1. When a question asked about improving something and we answered "probably false" it generally meant that we like what you are currently doing and think that further improvements are unnecessary. (e.g. recreation options, public pool, park maintenance/conditions). 2. We have not lived here long enough to give informed opinions on the previous investments section. From what we have heard about the wastewater it seems that was probably not a great investment but we really can't say for certain. Thank you for organizing this survey!

Case 215. I have not been happy with the previous leadership.

Case 224. Newton needs new dining/shopping. We are very limited on 120th here. But we also pay extremely high taxes and city bills here. So to get these things we don't want any higher taxes. Almost unaffordable as it is.

Case 225. I (and my husband) feel other Wichita surrounding communities are booming! Andover to the East Goddard & Maize to the West Derby to the South. We should on the North! We need another progressive outstanding community facility. Sand Creek Golf Course seems to be for Newton. We are not golfers but we are proud of "our" course & the po9sitive attention it brings.

Case 226. Newton needs to allow new businesses to open here especially new & better restaurants!! Also, smaller households should have lower water bills & trash costs!!

Case 227. The city needs to start thinking about how they spend our taxes. Keep tighter control of the purse strings.

Case 230. Need more dining, shopping & business in the Southern part of Newton.

Case 231. My (our) biggest issue is the H2O billing here. The cost is crazy. The city should pay off current debt before spending money that we don't have. The exception of buildings not on tax roll is stupid. Too many properties are

Case 235. I've lived here in Newton all my life and I'm really starting to feel ashamed of living here. The sales tax and water bills are so high and Newton really doesn't have anything to offer. The city just keeps spending money when there is nothing to ATTRACT new people to move here. My niece recently visited here from New York .. (She was born here) her comment – "Newton is really an ugly little town" and I agree. Wonder what this survey cost???

Case 236. I'm on a fixed income – so higher taxes, higher utility bills are very difficult for me.

Case 239. Section 5. We have 2 failed restaurants now. Sect. 6. Retired – on a fixed income.

Case 240. We already pay the highest taxes, the highest utilities, and on top of other rising costs on everything, we are barely scraping by.

Case 243. PP & RE Taxes Too high! Need to reduce all non vital programs

Case 245. Tax are too high already. "No More Taxes" Quit borrowing money. Get out of debt, then spend money on things that will improve the community as a whole. Quit developing areas of town that business never comes to. Get a good city manager!!

Case 248. We really need a new Library. Also – more Restaurants! Would like to have more sit down be waited on type places – not just fast food places.

Case 251. Summit Learning Platform is terrible 😞

Case 252. The survey is redundant in the questions it asks. Why repeat the surveys. Also previous investments in land not addressed.

Case 255. Depending on the condition & need for replacement lines, I might change my thoughts on where to allocate funds. You need to attract more middle class, young families. This community is NO LONGER similar to where I grew up nor what my grandparents helped to build 😞 Get rid of the drug problem! It Is a problem make a clear statement that it is not OK in Newton! Spend my money on these resources! Take back Newton!

Case 256. The city shouldn't ram a new library down our throats. Get realistic quotes to renovate – it should not cost greater than \$1.4 million to renovate. Also I wasn't aware Newton had a public pool! The newton Rec Center & YMCA both have pools – a waste to invest in another.

Case 257. My child is graduating this year. I would like the community to attract more big business. I live here; but work elsewhere. The fun stuff is fine, but lets control debt and bring businesses here to help promote prosperity for all.

Case 260. Lived in Newton in early 1960s – lovely town – great shopping options – moved to Oklahoma & TXS with BNSF. Returned to Newton 2013. Very sad town now. Shop online or Wichita Or Walmart.

Case 262. Why do all the cities around us grow but we don't.

Case 266. The City of Newton needs to stop purchasing property and sell currently owned unused property so that it can be back on the Tax role. Also use the \$ on our water bill currently being charged to reduce debt! The extra charge was supposed

Case 269. Would be very supportive of city initiative to covenant to 100% nontaxable library, receivable transportations and energy initiatives recycling, waste reduction and composting.

Case 271. Newton needs to quit spending money on new police cars & city vehicles & utilize better mpg vehicles. Quit spending money on buildings & then next thing they want to replace it.

Case 272. Mayor Not Friendly Won't Speak to You. Unless you speak First. People Don't Wave.

Case 276. No more taxes!

Case 278. 1. Asking if the wastewater plant upgrade had my approval is silly b/c of age & regulations. It was no longer a choice. 2. A new library will not attract young families 3. If you think an aquatics park is not a priority then you have not been swimming in town lately. It is important to families & those looking to move here. 4. Keep the pool separate from the YMCA & keep it at athletic park. 5. Quit give out money to companies that have no intention of coming & doing upgrades for them. Stop buying random property. We are in debt b/c of poor financial decisions & being duped.

Case 279. We pay way too much taxes now they waste the money & keep wanting more.

Case 281. Newton is turning into a dirty dumpy town. If you complain about a neighbor you get nailed and the neighbor's yard still looks like the city dump. Taxes are horrible & there is no shopping. Too expensive. Thank goodness for Wichita & Amazon. I will be selling this mansion (that Newton thinks I live in) within the next 6 months and moving out of Newton. City workers should not be using city vehicles for personal use.

Case 283. Build an IHop Hobbie Lobby

Case 284. I can't support programs that will raise our taxes. Newton taxes on property are very high. We need to get in businesses that are not tax free. Too many tax free entities in Newton. The tax ratio here is 65% pay taxes and 35% are tax free. As a senior citizen it gets difficult. We have a good police force, firemen, EMT's. Let's keep supporting them.

Case 285. The cost to live in Newton, Harvey Co is unreasonably expensive. Property taxes for us have tripled since living in the same house from 2002. The cost for water, trash & sewers is extremely expensive. The cost of insuring property in Harvey Co. is unreasonably expensive. If it were not for family, I would move elsewhere.

Case 286. Wasting money on hiring an outside of Newton to Do this Survey.

Case 288. Survey design is marginal.

Case 290. There are very few jobs that pay well around here, hence many poor people without much of a future. We already pay more sales taxes* and water is more expensive than gold; what we need are good jobs and decent places to live. What we don't need are pictures of clouds and statues of dog turds that look like people or whatever those things are. * The one-cent sales tax. I haven't forgotten.

Case 295. I am basically not for anything that will increase my taxes. I am a senior living on a limited income and need to keep every penny I have. Bet this survey cost the City of Newton quite a bit of money. Hate the high state taxes for property in Kansas.

Case 296. I find it challenging to maintain a decent lifestyle in Newton. City Fathers should be more accountable for their decisions

Case 301. Check out areas coming into Newton. SW 14th St (across from Asbury Park) grass and area needs to be maintained. Old 81 Hwy and Anderson has parked dumpy storage vans. Awful!!. RV Storage facility has wrecked vehicles (east of Grace Community Church).

Case 302. This survey is ridiculously long. People who are busy will not respond.

Case 304. Newton is a wonderful community that has grown nicely over the years.

Taking steps to improve should help support continued growth.

Case 305. Need cut Brown & Black off welfare all together – the people who really need it don't get the help unless your one of the top.

Case 309. 1. Pay off city debt. 2. Bring in new business and new residents

Case 311. Our taxes and also the water are extremely high.

Case 312. *Newton is sorely in need of restaurants; ie. Freddie's, Spangles, a decent steakhouse (other than Applebees), etc. *There is a mistrust of city officials due to poor business decisions. Ie. Pharmaceutical company at airport, soccer field @ 1st & Boyd, and others. * Fearmongering of city officials regarding trash recycling. You will be fined if regular trash in recycling material. * Extremely high water & sewer bills. Not good for trying to draw business & families to Newton.

Case 313. Utilitie bills are of the highest issue. By not addressing it in these questions the city is not addressing the largest issue residents have. If the city would pay off the additional sewer charge rather than draining that drop money for "other" items would the utility bill and help the general attitude of the City residents.

Case 314. Education, including library access, are key to economic development & growth.

Case 316. Newton is growing at a good pace, preserve the homes you have, and a new modern library is essential. Bike/Walking paths, parks, and a modern pool will attract people. Always build & grow with the future in mind, be trans-parent with your plans and include hand-outs. Promote inclusiveness, cleanliness & climate change for the future. Don't stop growing now; you're on a roll Newton!!

Case 317. Water bill is extremely high here! We will be moving out of Newton just because of the water bill!

Case 318. I moved here from northern CA and have never regretted it. Also, I have never minded paying my fair share of taxes.

Case 321. Get rid of the mall or redistribute it. School doesn't diving no more fast food. Rebuilt downtown Park lots of transportation. Build an underpass on Main Street. This town will never grow without it. Therese nothing on Meridian any more looks like North Broadway in Wichita for your information I'm leaving Newton I have been here 40 years. It's not a proud city anymore.

Case 323. Would be nice to have a small park in downtown area with service restrooms. Also, benches for sitting.

Case 324. * We also need to invest in schools wherever we can. * We need to be able and willing to attract new business to Newton – we can't keep driving them away or we will die as a community.

Case 325. Really think city needs to bring in more new restaurants & entertainment. We must pay off bad debt to be able to do the improvements we want. You are taxing people at a rate that is making them leave town.

Case 326. I strongly disagree w/ the building of a new library. I believe the city would benefit from building a new law enforcement center. The building we currently have is too small and will be outgrown when full staffing is reached. These are the men and women that keep our city safe. They deserve a better place to work.

Case 327. My household income includes my adult child. I am disabled.

Case 329. Water rates too high. New library a must.

Case 331. Newton DEFINITELY needs restaurants other than “fast food” Nice restaurants with good food & drinks.

Case 332. 1. Quit giving tax breaks to businesses in the industrial park. 2. Keep city police off the interstate! 3. Close the homeless shelter to reduce drugs and crime. 4. Maintain current schools and quit trying to force a bond. 5. Water bills are Ludacris & city council is a joke. 6. Provide breaks to small local businesses and allow them to thrive. 7. Condemn houses that are unlivable & tear them down. 9. Manage finances responsibly & quit telling falsehoods about funds. 10. Call me if you have questions 316. 243.7326.

Case 334. Need better paying and more jobs – need to renovate home so providing incentive and guidance a must.

Case 335. The city should be concentrating on getting a school bond passed. Kids are our future. City shouldn't allow dangerous business like Crust & Crumb on Main Street. They should be forced to close.

Case 337. It's time to stop or shorten tax abatements for businesses & developers. One year MAX. If the business or developer thinks it's a great idea and did their homework on the project, they should run with it with their own investors. – Encourage homeowners, landlords & businesses top keep up their properties and businesses & people will want to live here.

Case 344. Property Tax is TOO HIGH. Water Bill is TOO HIGH.

Case 349. Newton is plenty big the way it is. Don't need more people living here. Live within our means.

Case 352. Most of the questions in this survey are incomplete and a justifiable answer cannot be provided without further data or the question being more explicate. Most questions could be answered by “depends” or “not at taxpayers expense”. Questions very vague.

Case 353. The Newton City Government has been extremely irresponsible in the handling of current tax revenues. Until a track record of responsible revenue handling has been established expect aggressive opposition from my family.

Case 357. I am here because my son is here. I like Newton. It is home. The highest priority for a city should be keeping excellent police, sheriff, fire dept. EMS, ambulance; then streets; then everything else falls in line behind as there is money. City should not be in the housing business. We were promised maintenance fund in places for parks and not done.

Case 359. Would also like to see improvements in treatment/clearing of roads during icy or inclement weather. The bridges on Hwy 50 are a joke. We've spun out so many times due to improper preparation for winter storms.

Case 361. Sewage/water bill is way too high. Taxes higher than other surrounding areas.

Case 366. City should focus on being a bedroom community for Wichita. Invest in schools and infrastructure. We are too close to Wichita to compete for business development/relocation.

Case 367. Making Main Street more appealing would make it easier to shop and eat local. Fixing up Riverwalk area maybe restaurants along there. Nice bars that are not full of trashy people would keep me local as well. I like Mass street in Lawrence and Delano district in Wichita.

Case 371. No more murals please! Unless they are actually good. Law enforcement needs investment in a new, better place to work. Invest in what we have. Make it excellent so that the city grows organically. If we do the library, do it excellently so we can get the use out of it. Change the culture of our town to one of pride & personal and intentional ownership.

Case 372. The water & sewer rates are out of line. The way we are charged is unfair. We could go for several months pay for water we never used. People have left Newton because of the rates. Property taxes are too high. Wasteful spending needs to stop.

Case 373. Property tax too HIGH. Good refuse pickup.

Case 374. I would like an accurate report on the new waste water treatment plant. Is it working as planned. We need transparency in local government even if reveals bad decisions.

Case 378. #1. Must enforce codes! Personal property is not being taken care of = poor curb appeal. First and Interstate exit is a very bad example of development. 3rd rate hotels not a good first impression. There are properties on Main and Washington Rd. that look like a hobo camp. City Park dept. & Newton Rec need to be combined into 1 entity! Tear down old buildings! 50+ empty businesses on Main & Washington = bad curb appeal.

Case 381. The insanely high cost of water makes me look @ moving! Newton is all about GIVING tax money for businesses that don't "give back". Too many on city council – over padded. This city dreams big on taxpayers money. Some of the police are little better than "thugs".

Case 384. Take care of the wishes/needs of the people that live here now. Not a lot spent on future businesses. Let's keep it a modest town that is affordable & attractive, continue having great schools.

Case 388. Received appraisal document for my home today and it showed an increase as in almost every year for the past 20. Since most properties have increased and thus more property taxes, why isn't this amount enough to meet needs?

Case 391. 1) I feel the failure to pass any school bond issue is a major negative & is the reason I cannot strongly recommend people moving to Newton (& I have no children of my own). 2) I wish the survey questions had included a "don't know" option since I did not have enough knowledge or significant feelings about some issues.

Case 392. Invest in a new library to revitalize the town!

Case 397. I put them through the questionnaire. Starbucks Chick-Fil-A ALDI'S I-Hop. We're already doing this! Bike lanes. We don't use them. Homeschool, yet we pay taxes for a school system we don't use.

Case 403. Newton is the right location for me. NHS & our school nurtured my children to leap on to better lives outside of Kansas. I love the connection of a beautiful – small town that can access Eisenhower Airport. I LOVE our health services! Taxi transport could be improved.

Case 405. Lived in Newton for about 4 years at other times and have just moved back.

Case 409. Need home for independent veterans.

Case 410. Section 4 Decision 2 - #1,2,3&6 I consider increased investment unacceptable, but fully agree with maintaining those items. Section 6. Current taxes are comparatively high. Unacceptable to increase at all. Reallocate and efficiently use current taxes.

Case 411. There are people having to leave Newton because of high taxes and high water bills, the money is going somewhere – how about looking at effective and positive leadership to manage the current resources, develop a priority list of needs and manage. I have personally seen many hours wasted in poorly managed projects. The taxes are so high we can barely survive. I don't know how we are expected to pay more.

Case 412. I would like to see responsible spending of the funds you have rather than raising taxes. Pay off debt!!! Good schools attract families. Poor decisions in the past have created today's problems.

Case 422. No – use the money you already get more wisely! I'm not willing to pay more taxes. Compared to other places: - our property taxes are high – our water/city bills are high – our sales tax is higher What are you doing with the money you already get? No, I don't want to pay more taxes. Please use the money you already get more wisely.

Case 423. Why have we allowed a property owner to place trailers at the intersection of Hwy 81 and 24th Streets. Require solar and wind energy = sustainable. Build it and the employers will attract the employees. Living minimum wage. Look – at McPherson and Omaha for economic development ideas. Business development -partner with Bethel College to encourage graduates to start businesses here. As McPherson has done produce our own electricity an attraction for business.

Case 426. I got my GED in 1969 went to Bryman School of Madison 1978&79.

Case 427. Need traffic signals at busy intercessions such as 1st Street & High. Great community. Enjoy living here.

Case 429. Need to contain major resources – library in center of Newton – parks – instead of accommodating all the new people building flimsy overpriced houses south of town & use us as bedroom community of Wichita. Where they go to spend their money – dining & shops – this is a neat town with neat people. Value it.

Case 430. This survey is a waste of time & money.

Case 435. My comments are based on being a successful downtown merchant and still living in Newton. I strongly feel that the city debt load is out of hand and creates mistrust. I suggest that the city support the successful downtown hardworking merchants instead of offering incentives to new businesses. You can go anywhere in KS and see a **Casey's** Dollar General, Walmart community. You can't go anywhere & see a vibrant downtown.

Case 436. Is Harvey Co the 3rd highest taxed county?

Case 437. City should tell it like it is in this survey. It's very hard to answer your questions when we don't know all facts. Yes Library needs upgrade build on single level, if you Pat Lasemort in stogest ect. City in so much debt & no funds to pay them off!!! 1.5 decsde we had three nice skak house no zero!!! Yes we need perole & families for medisize jobs. Susan Loomis needs to go!!! Poor directions & cost is more!!!

Case 438. Concentrate on not spondrake tax dollas – throwing neon tax dollars @ previous poor management is not a winning solution – fees & taxes are already too high that is why Newton is not growing = We moved to Newton 10 years ago to retire – had we known how high the taxes were and how poorly managed city was we might not.

Case 446. No New Library It is not used by a majority of citizens. We can get info, books, etc. ... By using our smartphones & computers. We still need to pay for a new dam.

Case 450. I would like more published in the newspaper. Births, police blotter, new activities – etc. What is happening with the Sand Creek dam? It was enjoyable to see the canoes – children & families fishing etc.

Case 456. Taxes are too high in Newton, to my understanding they have spend tax money on property, this is not fit to build on. Newton most people that live in Newton are elderly with a fixed income.

Case 460. It's not wise to invest in fuls profites.

Case 461. Newton's biggest down fall in it's entirely to close to Wichita. There are to many "clicks" of people in this town.

Case 462. We must continue to grow Newton. The need for new families to move-in to help support businesses and community initiatives is great. Newton will continue to die if people aren't willing to mover here.

Case 464. Newton tax dollas are not used wisely! Too much is spent on studies instead of action. Get businesses into downtown + industrial park (which has already had too much money spent on it) and people will come to Newton, increasing tax revenue. Water rates are 2 to 3 times more than other area towns- Why???

Case 467. Trying to build that best on every project this is done will never help us get caught up on all the projects needed to be updated.

Case 473. Need to care for me, finances first. Community never addresses its strong visual and performing arts programs with no place to preform!

Case 486. 1) Please expand outdoor trails for walking, biking. 2) Bird watching at treatment plant is highly desired. 3) Support Bethel College well. Bethel brings much to the community. 4) Support retirement communities; Very strong assets.

Case 485. I am retired and on a fixed income, I live in my own home alone. I can't afford my taxes to go up. I want to be able to stay in my own home. Y'all tore down schools or revamped them for other offices. Now we have a lot of school-age children. God help us all!

Case 489. Thank you for taking time to get out community's input! I believe tht parks are great and don't need new enhancements. I wold like a more engaging, modern library and to see the downtown flourish and be inviting, alive, and thriving! Downtown flourish and be inviting, alive and thriving! I am curious ab. Incentives to encourage new bus. Development + the way tax dollas are used for that. I'd rather know businesses will come instead of just "build it, they will come" mentality. Like the new area on 1st + 1-135. I am absolutely for improvement, enhancements to law enforcement centers.

Showing we have a strong police presence with resources could keep crime down. Law enforcement is high in my books! I marked low #s in additional athletic fields bc. I feel we have good and well-maintained places now. I'd rather see collective tax dollars go toward something that can benefit the entire community/ ex. Downtown, more entertainment that to something that only ppl who are involved in sports. There are so many schooling options, that not all families are going to be involved with NP. This could be skewed bc I do not have children in school yet (will fall 2020), but is just my opinion! Thanks for listening.

Case 493. Biking/walking path betw./ Newton & Heston a top priority for us! + bike lanes throughout town for safe cycling!

Case 500. The main reason I don't see us still being here in 5 years is the lack of family events and the current state of the school district. I feel our schools, education and district system keep a lot of families from coming and/ or staying here.

Case 502. The demographic/ citizen profile only accounts for me (the person filling out the survey) not for my spouse-who would answer differently.

Case 504. City needs to use funds in a better way. Industrial park was a bust!!! Need to help improve teachers and worker wages in Newton. Lower utilities- we have the highest in the area... everyone wants to move.

Case 507. Tax incentives + sprawl hurt the overall tax base + health of Newton. I would love to see Newton invest in incubation style eco-devo. Such as Reno co.'s Quest Center. Newton needs to take a "strong towns" approach to development.

Strongtowns.org

Case 512. The city of Newton and Harvey county already drain our meager pockets with high taxes: property tax, personal property tax, and the ridiculous water bill every month- our downtown is diverse and vibrant already.

Case 515. Taxes increased anytime is a bad idea in a town like Newton where the population for the most part is on the margin of being poor.

Case 516. The Library has very little traffic, it does not make sense to build a new facility.

Case 518. I very much enjoy Newton I just wish there was more shopping venues. A few smaller shops and then Wal-mart, I miss Alco, K-Mart, and other stores. I love the river walk. As a whole I like the fact Newton is clean and people take pride in their houses looks. I hate it when its tear down the places + build new + think refurbish what is here.

Case 520. Let the market determine recreation opportunities, e.g. the library, the pool. Switch to basics. Roads, water, sewer, garbage, police, fire. Keep taxes low and people will stay. Taxes are too high as it is. Keep taxes low and families will come and provide jobs and expand the tax base. Trying to spend money to make an "appealing" city is a losing proposition, and drives taxpayers away.

Case 523. Newton has always had a bunch of naysayers. Grumpy old homeowners & renters. We have to have a focus on the future. My husband and I grad. From NHS- moved away for 15-20 yrs. & have returned.

Case 524. You could raise sales tax but there's nothing here to attract anyone from the outside. Also get the slumlords of this town to do their own upkeep on all there rentals. You should talk the El Dorado city inspector to see what they do with all there rundown homes.

Case 525. I feel like the city should be providing amenities (library, parks, pool) to increase current + future residents' living experiences. However, do to past commission's poor decisions to gamble with huge amounts of resources (logistics park, purchasing the old Dillon's store, ABC Chemical Plant, etc.) The funds for amenities are gone until these other mistakes are paid off. Very Unfortunate!

Case 526. I'm supportive of wise investments but the city has demonstrated a tremendous lack of judgement in vetting investments. In addition, though politically popular Fire, EMS & Police spending is growing at a ridiculous rate compared to community as a whole.

Case 529. Develop jobs people will come esp. if you have housing-rehab older homes-maintain schools + resources.

Case 530. (My wife + I discussed the survey and offered the ratings) Husband: Some college, \$100k+, 36-45, 20+ years in Newton. Wife: Some graduate school, \$0/yr, homemaker, 25-35 yrs old, 5-10 yrs in Newton. Library and pool are important to us, we're not sure which one is more cost effective. We support the more cost effective of the two.

Case 533. Recover the millions of dollars already spent, before buying more land.

Case 542. I used to encourage people to move here, not so much anymore. I hear too much about drugs, especially in schools. I feel like we are still paying for grandiose spending that cost us with no return, or at best- mediocre. A lot of costly mistakes that have run up taxes here and ungodly water bills. Run down yards for lack of water. Not a beautiful town any longer.

Case 543. Do not think we need new bldg. for library. Remodel + add on if necessary. Plenty of room.

Case 544. I believe to attract families to Newton we must focus on shopping choices for food, clothing, along with more entertainment and dining choices. Studies also show that neighborhood groceries within walking distance. Also, a focus on a retirement community, with amenities is important. We have nothing here. Patio homes, public meeting areas, recreational areas....

Case 547. I would like to see more money put towards the schools + creating more jobs in Newton. I currently drive to McPherson to work. I would like to work here in Newton.

Case 553. If I were younger and had more income my answers would probably be much different.

Case 560. Section 3, #1 Law Enforcement Remodel, I put diss approve only because the city needed to build them a whole new, independent police station. Not remodel what's there. I would rather see a new police station than a new library, but that wasn't a question. Public safety should come first! Section 5, Economic Development, the downtown is pretty developed already + with trains coming through its not very appealing. Focus on more restaurants and small businesses to pull people off the highway + actually stop in Newton.

Case 562. If my wife did not grow up here + have family here, I would be long gone. Downton is dead. I suggest look at other cities this size and see what works. Vote a city commission that is uaiou. I know many couples that moved to Wichita as things happen there.

Case 569. City does very little for residents. Very slow to respond to needs. Public works dept. needs new leadership.

Case 571. Improvements in both the senior center facility and the offered services and programs. Better communication between the city, the county and the Newton school board.

Case 586. We need new jobs. I am tired of Newton being labeled as a “meth” town.

Case 587. Lots of “takers” live here, more should be done to stop the enabling. We need to hold a higher standard and do more to help and support the “makers” who make a community worth it in the end.

Case 593. I believe the city has too much debt. Once debt is paid off, I’d be more inclined to accept tax dollars going to more non-essential areas such as parks and entertainment & development. And yes, I need the website information.

Case 602. Poor business management for years. Poor job of bringing business in. Should make a capitol improvement 5 year plan. Water, sewer rates are ridiculous! Stop buying schools, banks, hospitals land + then selling it for nothing + not using land for city purposes.

Case 603. Our perception is that decision makers in the past have made poor financial decisions and haven’t done enough to stimulate economic growth. There is a general lack of trust that good decisions will be made in the future. The tax burden on homes over \$200,000 is burdensome for the quality of life here. It is an expensive place to live with no real benefits.

Case 605. With as much as we already pay in property taxes (one of the highest in the state), the city/ county needs to learn how to better use funds. Our water rates are too high. I would not encourage anyone to move in to Newton at this time. We are currently looking at relocating out of Harvey Co.

Case 611. Don’t raise taxes in Newton figure out a better way to spend money with out making it harder for people to live. The water and trash is high. We have the highest tax for shopping. Taxes on vehicles is high. Newton is one of the most expensive towns to live in. How are we going to get people to stay if don’t make some changes? Too many people are set in their ways. They don’t want to change.

Case 613. Taxes doubled in 8 years leaving Newton in 10 years. Stop the tax bleed.

Case 615. Newton city employees need to live in Newton. Also laws to clean up debris need to be enforced. Newton is a weed city! Meaning the green weeds in summertime.

Case 616. Would like to see some cable competition for Cox.

Case 617. The commission should do adequate research before spending taxpayer money on economic development projects.

Case 618. * Update high school*

Case 621. Stop spending money on attracting business to Newton sell off land city county owns that sits empty of not used. Focus on improving the city as it. Clean up city example old Alco location is bas as is 24th + Anderson corner.

Case 622. Get more Harvey/ Newton property on tax rolls. And off the tax exempt status!!!

Case 625. Financial investments in the future should be made on a measured return of the investment. City should develop long range investments goals that are attainable without a major property tax increase

Case 626. Improvement to downtown Newton area can start with antique junk being removed from sidewalk. Newton looks like a second rate city. Newton already has a city

ordinance for the this, just need to be enforced. Business improvements need to be done by the private ownership.

Case 628. We don't have to spend money to build a better Newton on new stuff all the time. People should be thinking about doing something to renovate all the buildings sitting around empty now instead of building outside of town and ruining downtown by letting buildings set empty.

Case 632. Turkey Red neighborhood (neighborhood behind Walmart) need sidewalks so residents can safely go on walks. Winward Drive is a racetrack for vehicles cutting through the neighborhood.

Case 633. I marked "disagree" or "strongly disagree" several places where I think improvement is needed but not through tax dollars.

Case 634. Enhance rail travel in Newton by offering daytime routes. Need more dining(non-fast food) options. Bring new manufacturing businesses to the area (housing, growth, small businesses will benefit in turn and as a result). Improve/develop west side of town (i.e. Meridian Rd.); Looks like a ghost area, run down. Develop initiatives involving Newton's main "river" (i.e. dammed sand creek); make it larger, too. The Chisolm Trail is pitiful; so close the the interstate it has awesome potential. Attract new large, robust businesses there! More single family housing (no plan B). Stores, dining.

Case 643. Would be interesting to see how much bike traffic uses Meridian and Anderson. We live off of Anderson and sure don't see it used-hardly at all. Would love to see downtown continue to thrive and grow.

Case 645. The pool needs to be improved or replaced within limits. I do not wish to see pool fees increase greatly, to the extent people have difficulty paying the fees throughout the summer for their families. Improvements paid by taxes, a portion of operating costs for the pool paid by fees. The size of the cost of a new library is probably not feasible at the present time, given the present budget, mill levy.

Case 647. Grew up in Newton. When I married moved to Heston. Moved back to Newton in 2014- till now.

Case 654. Newton needs to improve- your first impression – on your 1st visit.

Case 655. Raise the rails from 1st to High property taxes are out of control along with sales tax. You want the community to grow + prosper control taxes. Walking paths could be good but designs are poor.

Case 657. One of the most important issues for attracting commerce + industry is to support public schools with: -update & major improvements to building – respect & support teachers & staff from community – respect & support administration.

Case 659. 1) Need to focus on recruiting vital business/ manufacturing that increases tax base- like Mcpherson- that attracts workers who receive higher wage. Economy in general, is poor- preventing ppl from ability to maintain own homes. 2. Improve USD 373 infrastructure- high school, especially, is hampered in ability to teach up-to-date science courses which is significant for our citizens.

Case 661. I think athletic fields should include tennis courts, both outdoor and indoor courts. For a community that has a rich history of competitive high school and college tennis programs to have only 6 courts at the high school and 6 at the college is discouraging. Tennis is a life-long sport and should be promoted by the city and community.

Case 663. City of Newton has been & is financially mismanaged. This is not a place to retire with such high taxes. Water rates high not billed by gallons used just realm of cubic feet can fluctuate 200 cubic feet or more month to month.

Case 664. Pay off debt!! Then pay in cash!

Case 666. Came here for work in 1981. Met & married husband has always worked in Wichita. I have worked most areas around here and Wichita. Adopted 2. Oldest private school all of school life. Second child handicapped/learning disabled. Ended up in public school which was a major failure. 25 y/o with no high school diploma. Can't find work. We own 2 homes. Had to buy 2nd for housing for handicapped child. Police legal and social services a failure. Seems Newton doesn't want disabled and poor in this town. Taxes constant. Water bill impossible. We will move away!!

Case 669. Would love to see park restroom facilities updated.

Case 671. Water bill in this town is ridiculous. Who pays over 100.00 for water no one but Newton looking to get out just because of this!!!!

Case 673. Newton is one of the most unfriendly towns I have ever lived in. The water bill is out of sight and offers nothing but ruined appliances if you don't use filtered water. There is never any follow up on complaints about overgrown trees/bushes on trashy yards. Shopping is a joke! Whatever happened to Aldi coming in? Walmart + Dillon's need some competition! Thank god for Amazon! As for jobs, yes more need to be created. Maybe, then we could get some of the people that know how to use our State welfare system so well off the books + support our city instead of draining it! Too many non-profits in Newton. City employees should not be allowed to use city vehicles for personal use. In regards to entertainment, let those that use it, pay for it. In conclusion, I can't afford to live in Newton.

Case 677. What does "personal sacrifices" mean

Case 675. More public transportation would be very helpful to many of the families that rent homes, and can not afford vehicles. They miss work, school and school activities. They can't go to Dillon's to get healthy food, etc...

Case 686. Wouldn't recommend anyone to live here sidewalks are dangerous

Case 688. We appreciate your efforts to try to help the city commission, but this really will not matter. We have lived here for 17 years and have yet to have the city commission listen to anything the community has to say.

Case 692. Put the new pool at the Y.

Case 693. We need a new dam!

Case 695. As to our responses (my wife and I) in Sec. 6, our response of "Definitely Not" and "Probably Not" are not due to opposition to spending in any of these areas. As to some (e.g., 1+2) we are happy with the level of investment already being made. As to some (e.g. 4 through 7) we think new investments need to pay for themselves through ROI. As to some areas (e.g., 10 +12) we feel the money needs to be found in existing revenues and not through new taxes.

Case 702. I use a wheelchair and to use computer.

Case 704. The City Newton needs to learn to use current funds and funding for the designated us of such funds and not for these things not designated, except in extreme emergencies only.

Case 709. Concern- excessively high water rates. Thanks for asking.

Case 711. As a retired senior citizen- hold down on spending unwisely. We have limited income and have trouble affording all price increases, including high property taxes. We all need some form of relief, from higher costs. Would like to stay in my home and not move to rent out of town.

Case 712. Good of you to ask our opinion. Because of our closeness to Wichita and so much buying “online” I think we must realize pouring money into “wants” probably won’t bring much change. Best to make what we have stay good and not get in too much debt.

Case 713. I came here when I was 13. This town has gone down-hill the last 25 years. The water and rent is so high people can’t afford to maintain their properties or shop locally and feed money back into town. This town drains your money and your joy! Never move here!

Case 715. City water rates are way too high! Especially when we have to purchase bottled water to drink because of taste.

Case 717. Taxes are already way too high. We can’t afford more! Most people struggle to keep a house. The city is fine how it is. Leave things alone!

Case 718. Our school system was not addressed we need to figure out a way to make our schools safe, functional and up to date. This is a draw or a turn away for families with children.

Case 720. This is not a good survey-too polarizing

Case 721. Help Newton By- reducing our debt! – making improvements to roads – avoiding focus on tourism – not wasting \$\$ on industrial park! – reducing water bills – no new police station.

Case 723. We live on a fixed income so higher taxes are not the answer. You’ll tax us right out of town!

Case 725. I grew up in a neighboring small town and always had to drive to Newton for errands. Newton has always has enough business and dining options (although more locally owned and less chain would be nice). Shopping is adequate. We live here but don’t necessarily enjoy it. Oldest child is miserable in school because of bullying. People are clique-ish and its hard to get involved if you don’t know the right people. Newton should be satisfied with their community and its amenities. Just improve the school system. Also encourage residents to clean up their properties. Too expensive to live here too!

Case 727. We strongly support a multiuse path on old 81 to Heston. That will help our children and us stay active as well as bike to work.

Case 737. We are already paying higher taxes than most surrounding communities and what do we have to show for it. The City Commission and school board need to do a better job of using the existing taxes before people will have trust in them to pay more.

Case 746. Prioritizing the use of public funds requires discipline. Although I did not vote against certain options, I expect my elected official to realize that good water and sewer, good roads and a safe environment take priority. Thank you.

Case 749. As a lifetime resident of this city I am willing to pay (taxes) for those improvements that promote the well-being and success for ALL Newton residents- not just what benefits me. When I say ALL I mean rich or poor, young or old, all people no matter what religion, race or political party. People like Newton because of those qualities a “small town” affords them. We don’t need to try to become a bigger town- but

try to maintain the balance of a vibrant community by maintaining and improving what we have.

Case 751. Our city leaders have historically made poor decisions regarding economic development. Taxpayer money appears to flow easy for economic development but the success rate is deplorable. Find a way to do better/smarter!!

Case 752. As long as our city is satisfied with outdated, second-rate amenities, (new) people will view Newton as outdated + second-rate (to a “new” booming Maize, etc.)

Case 753. Willingness and ability are two different things- Since I am elderly I can not financially support any more than I have not. When there is an increase in cost of taxes, utilities and insurance I can no longer support my basic needs. God Bless those who can.

Case 754. Newton is a miserable place to live. This is a racist, anti-semitic, “We are holier than thou” community. The chamber of commerce exists to collect money for itself, not to promote the community. The chamber INGORES all businesses not members of the chamber. I moved here 30+ yrs ago and am still treated like a newcomer. I can’t wait to retire, close my business & move away from here. Moving to Newton was the biggest mistake of my life!

Case 771. I believe basic needs are going to be the major issue for the future; water/sewage/ electric/gas.

Case 772. I am not opposed to funding for law enforcement. I thought we were going to use the old south Dillon’s for a new HG, but instead we invested in the same land-locked structure. Not sure why, on that I agreed.

Case 773. Newton should have thought about Industry a long time ago. Should have never let Walmart come to Newton. They ruin every downtown. Pay Scale in Newton is Disgraceful. Newton should look to McPherson as a model lots of industry and good wages. Taxes are way too high in Harvey County. Schools get way too much money for what the kids are learning. Too much athletic sports.

Case 776. The city already pays outrageous amounts for the water bill. With the railroad paying taxes the roads should be fixed schools renovated, etc. Some city officials have their hands in the cookie jar!

Case 777. The city has tried to bring large businesses to Newton it has cost the city millions with no response, now we are in debt based on hope.

Case 778. As usual- Newton using an outside source- So how much is this costing the residents of Newton- ‘spose this will raise water bill- again!!

Case 780. Until our water bills and taxes are brought down to reasonable rates, I will vote against any further tax increases for any reason!

Case 781- I don’t mind living in Newton, except for the high water bill and taxes when I don’t see any improvement on things around here. Same old pool, not enough ball parks.

Case 784- 42 yrs. Retired law enforcement.

Case 785- 5 point scale would have been less biased. Need an option for neutral option.

Case 792- H.V. County has some of the highest taxes around. We have very high water bills-people can reside in other areas at a lower cost to them.

Case 793. Newton is a “drug town” and is known for it.

Case 795. Newton should invest in our current residents for things such as more HUDD and Sec. 8 housing that doesn't require going through local housing authority. Our local housing authority director is very judgemental.

Case 797. Newton has excellent health facilities. This is why I moved here. This should be stressed in all advertisements of Newton. Also, this is a very friendly town, everyone willing to help- This also should be stressed- super great small-town atmosphere.

Case 801. would definitely love to see better eating choices in Newton, it just stays the same or gets worse when we lose one, and it's not replaced. Too many empty buildings in Newton, and unused city properties just sitting there.

Case 803. Newton is a good place to live and work! Newton businesses, and people need to support any and all festival type activities- makes a better place to live!

Case 804- The city needs to run on the money they have now. City employees, school admin, ect. are paid too much for a small town. The money that you have now, needs to be moved to the water plant, etc. Not over-paying city employees, too many not working, putting gin the effort for what they are paid. Need less admin and divert those in comes to lower bills taxes. '

Case 805- Why is there no development in the area improved east of I135 by 1st street. That seems like a waste of money.

Case 808. By attracting new business, the city's tax structure can grow. City has already wasted incentive dollars on low income housing. No new businesses to attract people... just giving away tax dollars for no results!

Case 810. I feel Newton should attempt to draw people to live in Newton. Advertise as a great bedroom town to Wichita. I am not impressed with growth of city fold course community Sandcreek station. Bicycyle ride across America comes through Newton. I believe city could benefit from festival for that event every year.

Case 812. The cost of living is too high. Water and trash rates discourage people from moving here. Pay off debt. Reasonably plan for known upgrades over time (water treatment). Lower taxes. Be a place that is easy to do biz in because of low taxes. Good quality of life.

Case 813. No more taxes! My fixed income does not increase. Can't pay out any more taxes.

Case 816. We pay for too many school officials and too much in salaries.

Case 822. Most answers were based on possibility of raising taxes to improve city life. Would be willing to help if everything were not based on raising taxes. Families are relocating our of H. C. because of the taxes. Paying down the city debt while continuing to spend does not work. City continues to take and take and we are no better off.

Case 823. Will always consider Newton my hometown. But I plan to retire to TX in 5-7 years.

Case 830. Focus first on getting Newton out of debt. Then lower taxes. They talk about new pool, library, etc.

Case 831. I also believe our schools need to be a top priority for our town (although I realize that the school board is responsible) If the school board and the city work together for improvements, the benefits will be greater for everyone.

Case 838. I think you need to stop making all decisions based only on taxes, Its important no dought, but people are will to pay it they see value. If not more...

Case 839. Tax in Newton in on the high side (for what we receive in services) Water bills are outrageously high – the primary reason we will move as soon as possible . We have lived here for 10 years, but the water and sewer changes will drive us out. The library is a wonderful resource but the condition of the current one is a sorry state.

Case 843. Newton city officials have been conned too many times by outsiders promising to base their companies in Newton. They have wasted millions on land and facilities that never were used. They fail to pull in customers off the highway, we need more progressive leaders and cheaper housing.

Case 849. Need something else beside Walmart more mom and pop café. Have Tongich clean up his junk yard on N. Main look awful.

Case 850. Newton is a fine town. Full of friendly people. It would be nice to have few more options for dining.

Case 852. Build a new Sr. Center. Sedgwick, Heston, smaller cities than Newton have new centers. Newton Srs. Have to put up with a decrepit building that needs new everything. This town, mostly srs., does not appreciate us.

Case 855. We have lots of white trash move into town. This has resulted in lower SES in schools, more crime, and less community- as seen in last basketball game at the high school. We need to improve community. We didn't need bike paths or new library- new business!!!

Case 856. Nobody will view Newton favorably until we have lower water and sewer and prop. Tax rates, period. We feel fleeced!!! We need leaders we can trust who care about average joe, who are honest to a fault. Knowing 50,000 a month in taxpayer funds are serving a bad city deal makes me sick. Make Newton economically attractive and we can make Newton great again.

Case 857. I believe a new library is very important. I have worked there and have seen the number patrons who support the library. All ages use the library. We have the YMCA and rec center pods and I feel the pool should be a low priority at this time.

Case 862. Downtown parking is pitiful.

Case 863. I'm a senior citizen and have lived in Newton since 1959. I believe we have to invest in our city to keep people here and bring in new families!!! Thank you city commission for you interest in our city!!

Case 864. Past leadership in Newton made serious mistakes investing in projects that didn't work such as logistics park. These mistakes still result in high taxes and fees that continue to hurt our community.

Case 868. Taxes are too high already , we need better paying jobs for people ot live here and then maybe you get people to agree to pay more taxes when there has been an increase to population.

Case 872. This survey done subject to you mailing me a copy with nearly 50% of property valuation not pay taxes and need fire and police protection cost of their survey and who pays I am 79 years old ben in Bus. Since 1970. My add. 501 Washington Rd. Newton, KS 62114

Case 873. Newton is very family oriented improve our parks-tennis courts outdoor pickleball courts, basketball courts picnic areas-shelters -improve centennial park to be a complex for baseball/softball -walking trails: bike trails -new library @ areas for programs/activities

Case 877. If paying off city debt quicker would eventually lower water-rates then I support that. The water rates are a major concern for most of the community.

Case 878. They need more activities for teens so they don't get in trouble. Also more activities for school age children and single parents.

Case 881. Newton has made very poor investment decisions in the past and need to focus on getting out of debt!! Adding to the current debt is stupid! Taxes in Newton are too high, water/sewer/ trash bills are too high! Newton needs to lower the residents tax/utility burden before any new investments.

Case 882. I have lived in Newton for nearly 50 years.

Case 886. The city should allow owners of trained K9's (police department) and service K9's of veterans be allowed access to public places.

Case 889. None of this matters without major improvements to Newton's public education infrastructure... which thus far has been a hard sell with the voters.

Case 890. Newton is a nice, clean town. Just the right size but I do wish there was more stores than just Walmart. The outlet mall does not have outlet prices.

Case 892. Keep up the good work, City Offices!

Case 899. 1) Property taxes in Newton are ridiculous! 2) city water, sewer and trash service is way over priced compared to other communities. 3) lots of foolish spending by the city i.e. Industrial park, basically non existent. Purchasing additional land for just in **Case** growth. 4) Roads are terrible.

Case 900. I would like to see many of the updates discussed. However, I am very concerned about how these goals will be achieved without raising taxes and raising taxes should not be an option. The taxes in Newton/Harvey county are already astronomical with nothing to offer or show for it!! We have plans to seek out a more family friendly community that has more to offer w/ lower taxes.

Case 907. Forced taxation is never an acceptable form of economic growth. Privatize the market and the people will willingly contribute to the services they want/need. We don't want to fall victim to another scam like the waste water plant with the promises of things like a new library or pool.

Case 908. Stop wasteful spending spread the tax base off its citizens only. Our city manager/engineer Susan Loomis needs replaced too.

Case 909. Do what is needed to Fill logistic park.

Case 912. Would love to see Newton community become positive and cohesive about something. So much negativity, defensiveness and lack of community responsibility present currently.

Case 916. Library: libraries are like retail businesses today. You need to downsize the project to keep a new library functional in this digital age. Build the new building using Morton/ Butler style structures. This way all interior walls are moveable for future needs. Yes you can design the structure to look pleasing to the eye. Development is moving south. It is time for the city to jump on board with the country and build a community event complex on the south edge that can host fair events, concerts indoors, flea markets, car shows, athletic events indoors, camper and trade shows and other entertainment ideas we haven't even thought of. These events will bring more revenue to town than any library, bike path or downtown preservation program. The city gave financial backing to home development construction at the begging of local realtors.

However the local realtors did not pony any of their funds to help the cause. But I bet they are the first ones that always scream about high taxes.

Case 918. More diversity for dining. Eat in venues not Mexican food. New fairgrounds should have been built for the community and to attract out-of-towners. I135 Corridor needs to be expanded w/ better access to Spencer. The “mall” needs to be “reborn” to get people to stop here. No easy on+off 135 for sure.

Case 919. Government here is too large taxes are already high enough the city employees too many need to encourage growth in private sector.

Case 920. Nothing about fixing our water! It is not healthy water + very corrosive!

Case 923. Support Snr. Center Grand Central

Case 925. More jobs are needed more jobs more taxes to be paying in turn means possibility of a new pool for example. But jobs/careers first and priority. If I make more money and can then spend more downtown.

Case 927. Why isn't Newton thriving? Newton has a major BNSF rail line, an interstate highway and a major U.S. highway running through it. This is what you should determine. Newton and North Newton should merge, two small towns with duplicate functions. Think of the \$\$ tax savings.

Case 928. Harvey Co. is one of the highest taxed in the state. Enough is enough. Make due with what we have, New buildings, parks, etc. will just mean more taxes.

Case 929. Appreciate the survey and hope it is helpful.

Case 931. Need more “discount” stores- “more business in the mall”

Case 932. Please focus on attracting business through low taxes.

Case 933. No more projects like ABI Chemical + KS Logistics Park. In dry summers we don't need to mow grass as often. Upgrade on 300 block of E 4th should have been bit out to private contractors approx. 2018

Case 938. We need more jobs in Newton. Newton Medical Center needs to bring in Better Doctors. The Emergency Room needs a lot of help. People are being harmed by the services that NMC provides. A person walks in the ER in heart failure and is treated as if they are drug seeking. We need better doctors.

Case 942. Towards cleanup!!! Get the drug dealers, methheads, potheads troublemakers out of TOWN.

Case 945. Hold fundraisers and lower taxes. Also cut your own pay. You don't need to be rich to be a mayor. Put the people of newton first before your damn check that is paid for by you stealing our tax money. Put our taxes to good use and not in your pockets and bank accounts.

Case 951. Building an athletic complex would help generate business for Newton. We travel every weekend in the summer for tournaments with a minimum of 10 teams per age group. All of these teams have a minimum of 10 players whos families need lodging, food and have shopping needs.

Case 953. School bond failure does not encourage young families moving here.

Case 956. City Utilities are entirely too high. The new recycle program has discouraged many people from participating.