


WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

Engaging Citizens in Community Decisions:
**Newton
Community
Survey Results**

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WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY
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Self-Interest, Markets & Profit
Versus
the Public Interest

What is the Public Interest/Public Good/Community Wellbeing?

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Methodology

- ✦ **Steering Committee**
- ✦ **Qualitative Research**
 - **Background Research on Influencing Factors**
 - **Eight Community Focus Groups**
 - **Qualitative Research**
- ✦ **Quantitative Research**
 - **Mail Survey (957 surveys, response rate = 12.5%)**

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Section 1. The Public Interest

Section 1. Part 1.

Balance Self-Interest and Community Wellbeing


- ✦ **55.8% are personally willing to put community above personal interests**
- ✦ **19.7% are confident that most people are willing to put community interests above personal interests**

Balance the Wellbeing of Current and Future Generations

- ✦ **55.3% are willing to make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Newton**
- ✦ **21.0% feel that most people are willing to make personal sacrifices for the future of Newton**

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Section 2. Community of Choice

Section 1. Part 2.

- **89.1% choose to live in Newton because of connections to friends and family**
- **63.0% encourage people to consider Newton as a place of residence**
- **56.9% think Newton makes newcomers feel welcome**
- **86.2% report Newton is a good place to raise a family**
- **82.5% expect to be living in Newton 5 years from now**

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Section 2. Demonstrated Trust

Section 2.

Trust between citizens and government is advanced when government can demonstrate that it is investing public resources in ways that are consistent with the will of the community and the public interest → *convergence between democracy & the public interest*

Approval of selected major investments

- **Fire/EMS Station #3 (87.0%)**
- **Law Enforcement Center Remodel (78.3%)**
- **Wastewater Treatment Plan Upgrade (74.4%)**
- **Centennial Dog Park (48.0%)**

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Section 3. Investment

Section 3. Part 1. Support for Change/Growth


The long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that...

Embrace Change/Growth

- ★ ...encourage population growth (78.0%)
- ★ ...encourage business investment (91.7%)

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Section 3. Investment

Section 3. Part 2. Strategies for Building a Better Community

The long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that...

Type: Basic Infrastructure


- ★ ...focus on the basics such as street and road improvements (87.7%)
- ★ ...pay off current city debt (84.0%)

Type: Quality of Life Improvements

- ★ ...improve recreation options for families (79.5%)
- ★ ...improve the public pool (71.5%)
- ★ ...build a modern community library (58.5%)

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Section 3. Investment


Section 3. Part 2. Strategies for Building a Better Community

The long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that...

Type: Creating a Sense of Place

- ◆ ...develop more shopping, dining and entertainment (86.0%)
- ◆ ...focus on a vibrant downtown (81.7%)
- ◆ ...improve the visual appearance of the community (83.7%)

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Section 4. Immediate Investment Decisions: Housing, Recreation, Library


Table 4.1

For the wellbeing of the community I recommend that we ...

Support for Housing Investments

- ◆ ...promote rehabilitation of existing homes in existing neighborhoods (87.5%)
- ◆ ...promote more housing for seniors (76.2%)
- ◆ ...promote construction of housing for low to moderate income individuals and families (70.8%)

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Section 4. Immediate Investment Decisions: Housing, Recreation, Library

Table 4.1


For the wellbeing of the community I recommend that we ...

Support for Recreation Investments

- ...increase investment in maintenance at existing parks (82.4%)
- ...increase investment in walking/biking trails (68.6%)
- ...investment in major renovation of the city pool (65.6%)
- ...increase investment in new enhancements to existing parks (58.5%)
- ...invest in additional athletic fields for tournaments and local use (52.5%)
- ...invest in a new city pool (43.2%)

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Section 4. Immediate Investment Decisions: Housing, Recreation, Library

Table 4.1


For the wellbeing of the community I recommend that we ...

Support for Community Library Investments

- ...renovate the existing library (67.0%)
- ...maintain the current library as it is now (48.0%)
- ...build a new modern library (45.0%)

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Section 5. Commitment to Community Economic Development


Table 5.1

I believe that the City of Newton economic development efforts...

- ◆ ...should attempt to attract more small businesses. (90.6%)
- ◆ ...should attempt to work with existing businesses to encourage expansion. (89.9%)
- ◆ ...should attempt to attract large employers. (79.8%)
- ◆ ...should attempt to attract additional dining, shopping and entertainment businesses. (86.4%)
- ◆ ...should focus on developing the downtown area. (77.0%)
- ◆ ...should focus on recruitment of families to live and work in Newton. (79.4%)

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Section 6. Community Investment Priorities

Table 6.1 Basic Infrastructure and Quality of Life Improvements

I'm willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for...

Type of Investment: Basic Infrastructure

- ◆ ...a more aggressive strategy for replacing water and sewer lines, storm water drainage improvements, etc. (50.0%)
- ◆ ...more aggressive street improvements including road surfaces, number of lanes, turn lanes, intersections, etc. (54.4%)
- ◆ ...pay off current city debt more quickly. (48.6%)

Type of Investment: Housing

- ◆ ...incentives to promote building new housing. (30.5%)
- ◆ Incentives to promote the rehabilitation of existing housing. (55.5%)

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Section 6. Community Investment Priorities

Table 6.1 Basic Infrastructure and Quality of Life Improvements


I'm willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for...

Type of Investment: Quality of Place

- ✦ ...incentives to attempt to attract businesses to the community. (63.1%)
- ✦ ...incentives to encourage development to dining, shopping and entertainment businesses. (58.7%)
- ✦ ...incentives to encourage the development of the downtown area. (53.8%)
- ✦ ...building a new modern library. (39.8%)

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