

2020 Newton Community Survey

Results and Next Steps

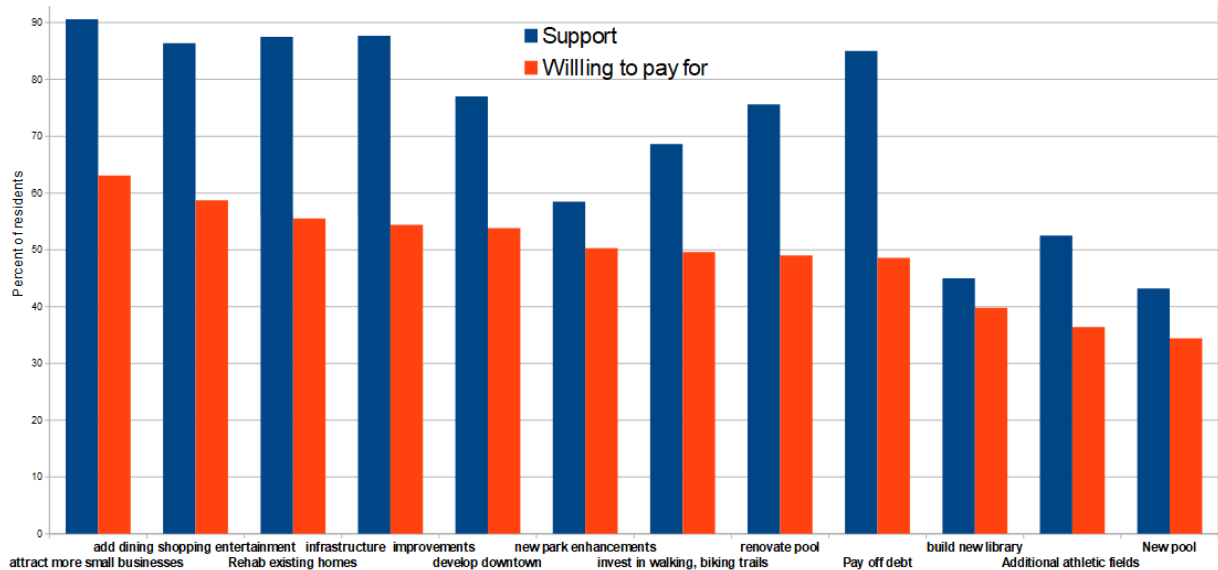
June 9, 2020

OVERVIEW

- **What scored high?** The initiatives that had the broadest support and willingness to pay were:
 - Attracting small businesses
 - Adding dining/shopping/entertainment options
 - Rehabilitation of existing homes
 - Infrastructure improvements
 - Downtown development

The initiative with the biggest gap between support and willingness to pay more was paying off City debt.

Any item scoring 50% or above has a statistically good chance of being supported by at least half of the residents in the community.



Courtesy of Newton Now

- **Who responded?** Nearly half of the survey responses came from individuals older than 65. Sometime the wishes of young families and those in the age groups who would most likely be targets for business workforce were quite different. Those examples were noted in the survey report. For example, more than half (55.8%) of responses in the 36-55 age group supported a new pool, while just 36.4% of those 65 and older did. Likewise, 61.5 percent of those in the 25-35 age group supported a new library while 39.6% of those 65 and older did.

- **Who can use these results?** The survey results provide guidance for the community, not just the City. Accomplishments and action items are done in partnership with the private sector.
- **How to determine next steps?** ReNewton, Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan, Southside/I-135 Corridor Development Plan, Housing Study and Needs Assessment, Bicycle Master Plan, Revitalization Strategic Plan, and Parks Master Plans offer objectives and goals that may be relevant.
- **What about the comments?** The comments section provides feedback but is not scientifically valid representation of the community as a whole.

RECREATION/QUALITY OF LIFE

- 82.4% support increased investment in maintenance at existing parks. (50.3% willing to pay more)
- 68.6% support increased investment in walking/biking trails. (49.6% willing to pay more)
- 67% support renovating the existing library.
- 65.6% support investment in major renovations of the city pool. (49% willing to pay more)
- 58.5% support increased investment in new enhancements to existing parks. (50.3% willing to pay more)
- 52.5% support investment in additional athletic fields for tournaments and local use. (36.4% willing to pay more)
- 48% support maintaining the current library as it is.
- 45% support building a new, modern library. (39.8% willing to pay more)
- 43.2% support investment in a new city pool. (34.4% willing to pay more)

Current initiatives:

1. Resume discussions with the Board of Education and Recreation Commission about increasing funding to the Public Building Commission and the potential to finance pool and ballfield improvements through the PBC.
2. Update estimates and plans for what “renovating” and “rebuilding” the pool might actually look like and evaluate what kind of investments make the most sense long-term. Consider scheduling work session with Rec Commission for late summer/fall 2020.

Potential new initiatives:

1. Investigate the possibility of funding the City’s portion of a new library using the PBC’s bonding authority, alleviating the need to add to the City’s bond load.
2. Consider pursuing grant opportunities to expand walking/biking trails, in addition to supporting other agencies and nonprofits in applying for grants for trails.
3. Consider establishing a permanent home for the farmers market.
4. Pursue opportunities for park investments:
 - a. Implement projects from master plans at Athletic, Centennial, Washington parks

- b. Additional picnic tables
- c. Shade structures at Centennial Park
- d. Flag lighting at Greenwood Cemetery

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- 91.7% support the encouragement of business investment. (63.1% willing to pay more)
- 90.6% support trying to attract more small businesses.
- 89.9% support working with existing businesses to encourage expansion.
- 86.4% support trying to attract more dining, shopping, and entertainment businesses. (58.7 willing to pay more)
- 79.8% support trying to attract large employers.
- 79.4% support a focus on recruitment of families to live and work in Newton.
- 77% support a focus on developing the downtown area. (53.8% willing to pay more)

Current initiatives:

1. Continue to work with Occidental as it moves forward with the first phase of its development.
2. Continue to work with other developers who can bring entertainment, retail and other commercial developments that will add to the tax base.
3. Continue to work with the EDC to enable industrial expansions and new businesses, such as the ongoing expansion of Park Aerospace.
4. Continue to work with new and existing businesses to assist in finding grant money and tax credits, as is being done at Prairy.
5. Complete development of the Choose Newton website for residential, workforce, and business recruitment.

Potential new initiatives:

1. Pursue resources available through the Main Street program recently renewed by the Kansas Department of Commerce.
2. Create a redevelopment plan for 320 N. Main.
3. Consider the establishment of a countywide Community Development Corporation (CDC) or Community/Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) in partnership with the EDC, Chamber of Commerce, other municipalities, and Harvey County. This would expand the EDC's current model of industrial development to also include initiatives such as:
 - a. Retail recruitment
 - b. Housing development
 - c. Downtown development
 - d. Workforce training

HOUSING

- 87.5% support efforts to promote rehabilitation of existing homes in existing neighborhoods. (55.5% willing to pay more)
- 76.2% support efforts to promote more housing for seniors.
- 70.8% support efforts to promote construction of housing for low to moderate income families.

Current initiatives:

1. Continue to work with developers to add housing option in all price points and demographics, as called for in the Housing Study and Needs Assessment.
2. Continue to assist potential developers with grant and tax credit applications where applicable.

Potential new initiatives:

1. Consider using the remaining \$50,000 in the new housing incentive fund to establish a home improvement loan/grant program to help homeowners repair deteriorating housing (i.e. roof, siding, HVAC systems)
2. Pursue opportunities to use CDBG fund for revitalization and weatherization programs for low- to moderate-income housing.
3. Consider implementation of the Revitalization Strategic Plan to improve existing neighborhoods:
 - a. House painting program
 - b. Sidewalk assistance program
 - c. Tree trimming program
 - d. New nuisance violation program
 - e. Bid out abatement services