



Aspects of a Livable Community - Kingsport, Tennessee

An Extensive Survey of Seniors and Community Members

presented by

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ABSTRACT

“A Livable Community Survey of the Greater Kingsport, TN Area” was one of 15 pilot AARP projects in 2009 and was the only mail-out survey. With 16 pages of questions, concerns regarding community design and services, neighborhood issues, and personal concerns related to public health and aging were obtained. Of the population surveyed (AARP members and general public), 1,439 people returned surveys, for a combined 43.6% response rate. Innovative approaches that contributed to this high response rate included: an initial focus group and a pre-test pilot group of local citizens; an extensive local publicity campaign; and, a customized mailing envelope. A supplemental survey of community residents was distributed, including to key leadership groups. Community, neighborhood, and personal concerns were identified via gap analysis. A follow-up action plan was developed.

OBJECTIVES

End product: A process / toolkit for improving communities' livability

- Engage AARP members
- Engage community
- Partner with community leaders
- Develop survey:
 - Community concerns
 - Neighborhood concerns
 - Personal concerns
- Conduct needs assessment
- Create awareness of needs for a more livable community
- Identify gaps & opportunities
- Synergistic collaboration within community
- Advocate for changes in city codes & ordinances
- Proactively advocate developing new and innovative ways of addressing community design issues
- Seek innovative support and funding from key stakeholders

METHODS

Survey Methodology: developed in conjunction with AARP

- Questions concerning: community, neighborhood, & personal concerns
- Used a Likert scale
- Mailed out random survey to 3,000 AARP members; 1,331 returned = 44% response
- Handed out nearly 300 surveys convenience sample to community leaders & residents; 108 returned = 36% response rate
- Total response 1,439 participants = 43.6% response rate
- “Gap analysis” performed to determine importance of community attributes and concerns

Timeline:

- March 2009 concept of survey began
- April – August 2009 survey developed by core group and refined using citizen focus group
- September 2009 pre-test of survey using focus group of citizens
- September – October 2009 - local publicity campaign and mail notification to AARP recipients
- October 2009 survey distributed mid-October – late November 2009

- January – early March 2010 survey tallied and analyzed
- March 2010 report written, “A Livable Community Survey of the Greater Kingsport, TN Area: A Place to Live, Work, and Play for a Lifetime”
- March 30, 2010 - survey report released at community press conference and distributed via internet

MAJOR FINDINGS

Community concerns and needs:

- Good job opportunities
- Urban vegetable gardens
- Bus stops with benches and shelters
- Lack of sidewalks
- Attractive entranceways into community
- Well designed and maintained streets
- Affordable housing
- Clean air

Neighborhood concerns and needs:

- Lack of sidewalks
- A grocery store within walking distance
- Community recreation centers and parks

Personal concerns and needs:

- Health care affordability
- Being independent as aging
- Safety and security
- Staying physically active
- Home modification needs

CONCLUSIONS: >80% of respondents think Kingsport’s a good place to live

Major concerns identified:

- ❖ Community
- ❖ Neighborhood
- ❖ Personal issues

Next steps:

-“**Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Taskforce**” – first met late May 2010 ; reviewed survey results, gathered additional information, and provided specific recommendations to address identified concerns
 -Follow-up actions are continuing

REFERENCES

Seay M, Beine K, Guengerich T. “A Livable Community Survey of the Greater Kingsport, TN Area: A Place to Live, Work, and Play for a Lifetime.” AARP, Washington, DC, 2010.

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“If we do not invest in our future, we cannot expect anyone else to do so.”