

Rocky Mount Downtown Implementation Survey Summary

The consulting team for the Rocky Mount Downtown Implementation Strategies project used several methods to gather public input over a three month period. The team met with stakeholder groups or citizens, staff, faith-based leaders and businesses. There was a public workshop on December 2 2016 at the Imperial Centre attended by more than 125. Beginning in late October and continuing to December 31, 2016, **273** people took an online 17-question survey related to downtown revitalization. A summary of the results follows. The questions (some combined) are in italic.

- ***How long have you lived in the Greater Rocky Mount area (Nash County or Edgecombe County)? If you're not a local resident, how long have you been visiting Rocky Mount?*** Sixty percent (60%) of survey respondents have lived in Rocky Mount for more than 15 years. Nine percent (9%) were not residents. The same number have been visiting downtown for a similar amount of time.
- ***What is your household income?*** Almost half of the respondents have a household income of more than \$80,000 dollar a year. For 4%, less than \$25,000 per year is their household income.
- ***How often do you visit downtown? If never, what prevents you from coming downtown?*** Almost half of the individuals visit downtown once or twice a year or never. Over 12% are downtown daily. Reasons given for not coming downtown are **lack of retail and restaurants**. There was little concern regarding disposable income or with lack of parking.
- ***How far do you live from downtown?*** Majority (76.75%) of citizens live 3-5 miles or more from downtown. Only 2% of respondents lived downtown.
- ***What constraints hinder investment in downtown?*** When asked what hinders investment downtown, perceptions of crime followed by lack of traffic were the most common answers. Others figured prominently – the write-ins for other included more about crime, followed by nothing to do, dirty and old ground floors of buildings. A couple of people mentioned that the railroad tracks constantly interrupt flow of traffic.
- ***Where is the best business opportunity?*** In answer to where are the best business opportunities, there were 157 responses with the top answers as:
 - Main Street – downtown – near DCF
 - Hwy 64 and Hwy 301/Winstead Ave Corridor; I-95
 - West of Rocky Mount
 - North and west of downtown
 - Westridge
 - Not Rocky Mount downtown
 - Sunset Avenue

A few took the question to mean what types of business opportunities. One response was *“Converting some of the older (well built) buildings into high end condos...or to amp up the promotion of what we have to offer to outside interests so that may want to come to our fair city. Fantastic place for a movie shoot location (send videos of our downtown to movie companies). You never know what the response will be unless you put it out there.”*

- **How safe do you feel walking alone downtown?** 80% of respondents felt somewhat safe or unsafe in downtown. 20% felt very safe.
- **Is it a good idea to give tax breaks or other incentives to businesses that move to downtown?** Almost 70% of the individuals think it is a good idea to give tax breaks or incentives to those who bring businesses downtown and create jobs, though they feel just not any business should receive incentives. The businesses should have a proven business plan. 17% were not in favor.
- **Name one activity/amenity you want to see downtown:**

Railroad Museum Strip Concerts Walking
 Movie Theater Establishments Park Jazz Club
 Downtown Food Businesses Activities
 Shop Events Restaurants Boutiques
 Stores Gas Station Bars Eatery Center
 Restaurants Live Comedy Rocky Mount Studio Think

Also mentioned were sporting events, residential development, gym, park/playgrounds

- **How affordable is housing downtown?** 75% of survey takers feel housing downtown is affordable. 10% felt it is not at all affordable
- **Does downtown have too many, too few, or about the right number of public parks?** Regarding public parks downtown, about half feel there are enough, while the other half feel there are too few
- **How easy is it for people who are disabled to get around downtown?** Many feel that it is moderately easy for disabled persons to get around downtown, but 20% of respondents answered that it is not at all easy
- **Of all the purchases your household makes, about how many are made downtown?** When asked about household purchase, over 72% make no purchases in downtown and 28% make only a few.
- **How should the city utilize its resources?** Given 5 choices of how the city should utilize resources for downtown, overwhelmingly the answer from 76% of respondents was for rehabilitating/renovating downtown buildings for small businesses. About 10% said for advertising /marketing but there was little interest in further beautification improvements. This was not a write in question, but many people offered comments including deter crime, demolish downtown and start over, and no more investment by the city in downtown.
- **Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?**
 - Many comments on taxes being raised to fund the event center and potentially for other projects
 - Need to invest in the adjacent neighborhoods, instead of larger facilities
 - Not much faith in the city government boards, council and leadership
 - Some hopefulness and excitement for the future