

Planning Assessment Survey

Report of the Responses to the
Planning Assessment Survey
Conducted March and April of 2013

**Lincoln and Lancaster County Planning Department
April 30, 2013**

Planning Assessment Survey

In the interest of increasing public outreach, gathering data on public opinion, and improving the service provided to the community by the Planning Department, this survey and an accompanying focus group process were developed in 2013. The survey challenges the respondent to consider the pieces that make up a vibrant, growing, livable city and to evaluate their own community in light of those pieces.

Topic areas of Landuse, Downtown, Housing, Attractiveness, Community Character, Natural Resources, and Transportation and Mobility were developed, with issues in each area identified. Respondents were asked to first consider “How important are each of these issues in creating and maintaining the kind of community in which you would like to live?” to which they responded using a five point scale with 1 being the “lowest importance” and 5 being the “highest importance”. Next, respondents were asked to consider “How well do you think Lincoln and Lancaster County are doing in addressing these issues?” to which they responded using a five point scale with 1 being “very poor” and 5 being “very well”. In addition, respondents were given the opportunity to include text comments for each of the topic areas. A full text of the textual responses is included at the end of this survey as Appendix A, and a copy of the survey as Appendix B.

Respondents were solicited through a newspaper article, drop boxes in five City Libraries, Planning Department email list, email addresses gleaned from records of applicants, owners and developers in the Planning Department application tracking system, and on the Planning Department website. There were 457 responses to the survey, 19 through the City Libraries system and 438 through an online survey. Questions in the two surveys were identical.

While the survey is not intended to be a scientific polling of the public, the responses provide anecdotal information to the Planning Department on the perceived importance of various planning factors as well to provide a framework for further conversation in focus group meetings.

Demographics

Respondents were asked to place themselves in an age category. The following is a tallying of the responses.

Age	
3	No Response
15	Over 75
90	61 – 75
156	46 – 60
80	36 – 45
88	26 – 35
25	18 – 25

Respondents were also asked to include their zipcode. The following is a tallying of their responses and a brief description of the area of each zipcode.

Zipcodes

4	68317	Bennet
1	38372	Hickman
1	68402	Malcolm
3	68428	Raymond
2	68461	Walton
1	68462	Waverly
66	68502	Near Southwest Lincoln, D to South and 33 rd to Hwy 77
21	68503	Near North Lincoln, O to Leighton and 40 th to I-180
7	68504	Northcentral Lincoln, O to City Limit and 56 th to 27 th
19	68505	Near East Lincoln, north of O
52	68506	Southeast Lincoln, Pioneers to A and 33 rd to 84 th
10	68507	Rural and Northeast Lincoln, north of Leighton east of 56 th
27	68508	Downtown
56	68510	Central Lincoln, O to A and 19 th to 98 th
28	68512	Rural and South Lincoln, 27 th to SW12th and Hwy 2 to Rokeby
1	68515	Unknown
78	68516	Rural and Southeast Lincoln, south of Pioneers and east of 27th
1	68520	Rural East Lincoln
33	68521	Rural and Northcentral Lincoln, north and south of I-80
12	68522	Rural and West Lincoln, South of "O"
3	68523	Rural Southwest Lincoln
5	68524	Rural Northwest Lincoln
11	68526	Rural and Southeast Lincoln
5	68527	Rural, south of Waverly
2	68528	Rural West Lincoln
2	68532	Rural, west O

Survey Responses

The following data is separated into seven topic areas, as described on page one of this report. Within these topic areas, specific issues often discussed in planning conversations were identified. A conscious decision was made to simplify the language as much as possible in order to not overly burden the respondent with reading lengthy, jargon-filled descriptions. To allow for more full expression of responses, ample opportunity was provided in each topic area for text comments. This opportunity was seized upon by anywhere from 20 to 30% of the respondents in each topic area. The text responses are summarized for each topic area and included in full as an appendix to this report.

The remainder of this report analyzes the responses by topic area, identifying the mean score for each issue in the topic area, pairing the “How important?” with the corresponding “How are we doing?” responses. The resulting paired bar graphs display the gap between the two questions for each issue. The gap is displayed in a second graph, with larger values indicating areas where there is a greater disparity between the perceived importance and performance for the issue. Additionally, data was analyzed for the count of each response (1 through 5) for each issue – i.e. how many people answered “1”, “2”, etc... for each issue. This analysis can provide insight that a mean cannot. For instance a mean of 3.0 could indicate that few people felt strongly about an issue so gave it the more neutral response, or it could be that about half the people felt strongly in the negative and half strongly in the positive. Not all of these “count” graphs are shown in the report, only the ones that are most interesting, but the count table is displayed for all issues in that topic.

It should be pointed out that this is not intended as a scientific survey, but rather as a “conversation starter” and as a way to begin the intended purpose of the outreach effort – the focus group conversations. Results are not being weighted to align the demographics of the respondents with the demographics of the community. Respondents were not scientifically selected but took the survey voluntarily. As the notification of the survey availability included direct emails to Planning Department contact lists, respondents are more likely than the general population to have had some sort of contact with the Planning Department in the past. Additionally, wording of options for each issue could have been interpreted in multiple ways by the respondent, for example if a respondent felt that the on-street bicycle facilities were lacking, he or she might respond with a low mark. A respondent that felt on-street bicycle facilities are a bad idea and should not be used might respond the same way. For this reason, respondents were asked after each topic area to share their thoughts textually and the reader is invited to review these more detailed responses.

Topic Area 1: Land Use

While land use is one of the main concerns of the Planning Department, it is also difficult to define when discussing with the general public. It can be challenging to gather information from the public in this topic area because of the difficulty in framing relevant and comprehensible questions. Broadening the scope of this conversation in the focus groups will be important.

The following are the questions asked and the number of responses sorted by value for each.

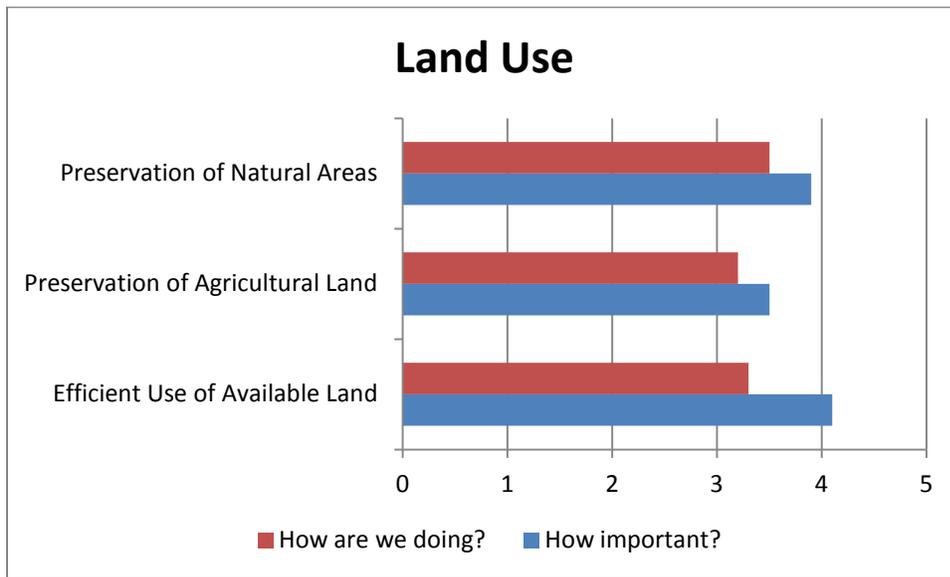
How important are the following issues?

Issue and Score	1 (Lowest importance)	2	3	4	5 (Highest Importance)
Efficient use of available land	43	26	34	108	244
Preservation of agricultural land	51	48	109	126	119
Preservation of Natural Areas	39	44	50	113	208

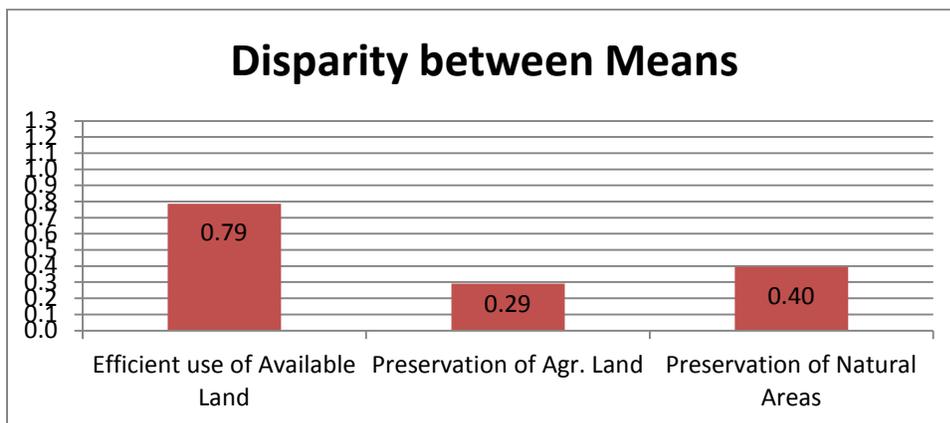
How are Lincoln and Lancaster County doing?

Issue and Score	1. (Very poorly)	2	3	4	5. (Very well)
Efficient use of available land	25	78	123	199	27
Preservation of agricultural land	23	51	225	123	28
Preservation of Natural Areas	16	45	134	209	47

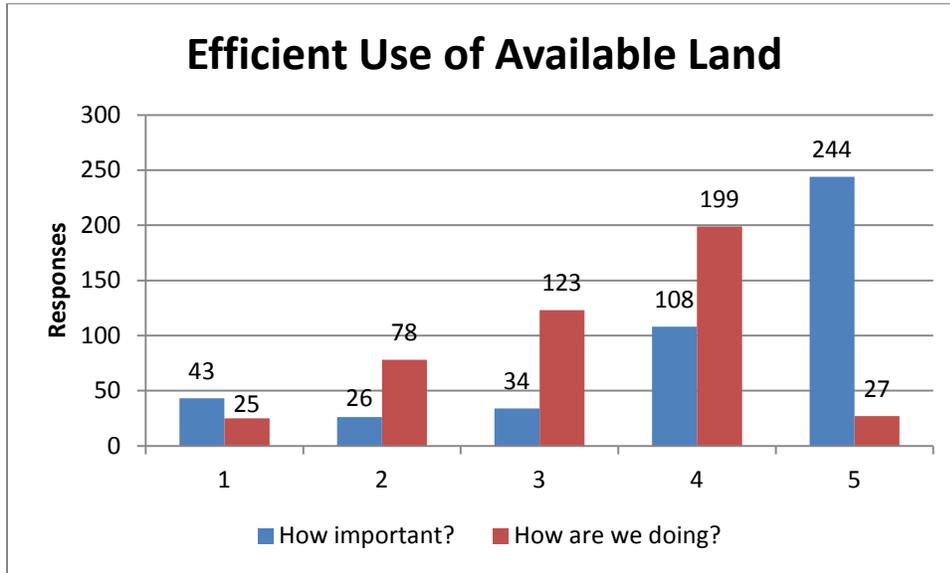
In all issue areas, the “How important is it?” response was higher than the “How are we doing?” response. When the individual response counts are observed the difference seems to be primarily in the high end of the two scales with the responses of value 4 and 5 being highest for the “How important is it?” question and the 3 and 4 responses for the “How are we doing?” question. This graph compares the two questions for each issue.



The following graph shows the breadth of the gap between the two questions for each issue.



The largest gap is for the “Efficient use of available land” issue. When the individual responses for the two questions are plotted, the difference between the higher responses is most evident.



It would appear that most respondents feel that efficient use of land is very important, probably for various reasons, but most respondents also feel Lincoln and Lancaster County could be doing a better job in this area.

134 write-in responses were received for the Land Use Pattern and Development section of the survey. The comments received focused on the following areas: green space, parks and habitat preservation; infill; sprawl; redevelopment; population density; bicycle infrastructure; the free market and property rights; blight and growth.

Of the responses, 31 were generally in support of green space, parks and/or habitat preservation; 19 were in support of infill development; 19 were in support of redevelopment; 7 were in support of higher population densities; 5 were in support of more outward growth, 5 in support of more and better bicycle infrastructure and 5 were generally in support of the free market and property rights. Other areas of support which had lower frequencies of response include more and better pedestrian infrastructure (mostly sidewalks), promoting smart growth and mixed use development, promoting the rejuvenation of older neighborhoods and supporting local, urban and community agriculture.

Problems were identified in several areas including 18 occurrences in opposition to urban sprawl and/or strip mall development and 5 occurrences stating that blight is a problem in older neighborhoods. Other problem areas that had lower frequencies included the presence of too much parking; too much population density; too much floodplain development; too much green space, parks and habitat preservation and big box development.

Although the responses were varied, following a review of these responses, there appears to be fairly strong support for the preservation of green space, parks and habitat preservation as the City grows. In addition, it appears this should be balanced with increased infill development in and around the urban

core accompanied by discouragement of low-density sprawl. The overall growth of the City should be promoted, however, and private property rights respected. Further, it was noted that government regulation should be limited to the extent possible to allow the free market to operate.

Topic Area: Downtown

Traditionally, Downtown Lincoln has occupied a large part of the planning conversation in Lancaster County. Downtown Lincoln being the most urbanized area of the city and there being few other urban areas as recognizable by the general public. In addition, Downtown Lincoln has a regional, and even state-wide, identity being the center of State government and the home of the University's flagship campus, not to mention Memorial Stadium. Downtown Lincoln also has several active neighborhood and business associations that have played large roles in past planning processes. Downtown Lincoln is the site of major entertainment venues, both public and private, and so is an area that most Lancaster County residents visit on at least an occasional basis. Downtown Lincoln is also the hub of the City's StarTran bus system.

In recent years, Downtown Lincoln has also been the site of major public and private investment in the Antelope Valley project area, West Haymarket, P Street corridor, and other projects. Much attention has been paid to mobility in Downtown and several projects have been undertaken to try to include more pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Downtown Lincoln has also seen an increasing interest in residential development and services to support them.

The following are the questions asked and the number of responses sorted by value for each.

How important are the following issues?

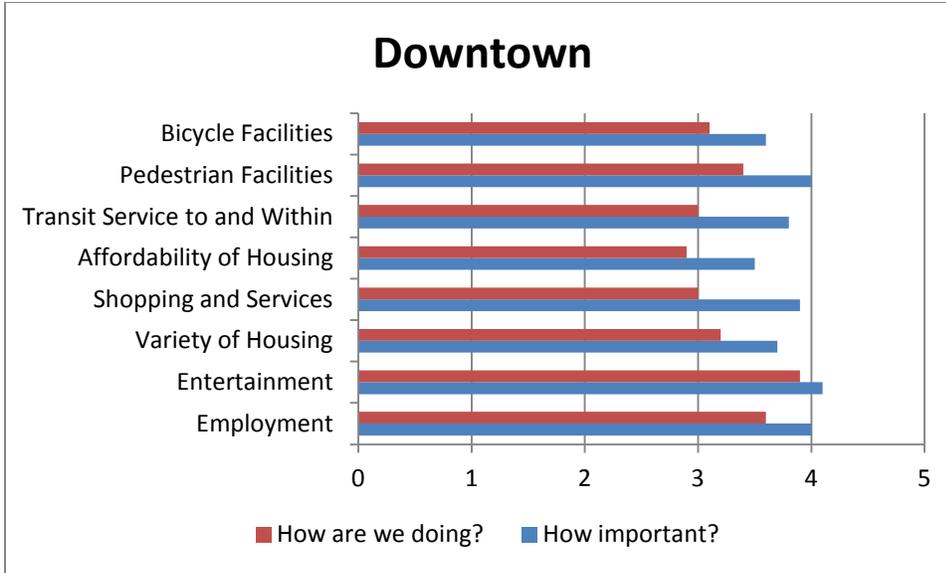
Issue and Score	1 (Lowest importance)	2	3	4	5 (Highest Importance)
Employment in Downtown	22	35	60	164	174
Entertainment in Downtown	23	33	37	145	218
Variety of Housing in Downtown	35	48	90	139	142
Shopping and Services in Downtown	28	41	53	148	185
Affordability of Housing in Downtown	44	62	88	135	125
Transit Service to and within Downtown	43	40	56	131	186
Pedestrian Facilities in Downtown	26	47	46	125	211
Bicycle Facilities in Downtown	60	59	67	86	183

How are Lincoln and Lancaster County doing?

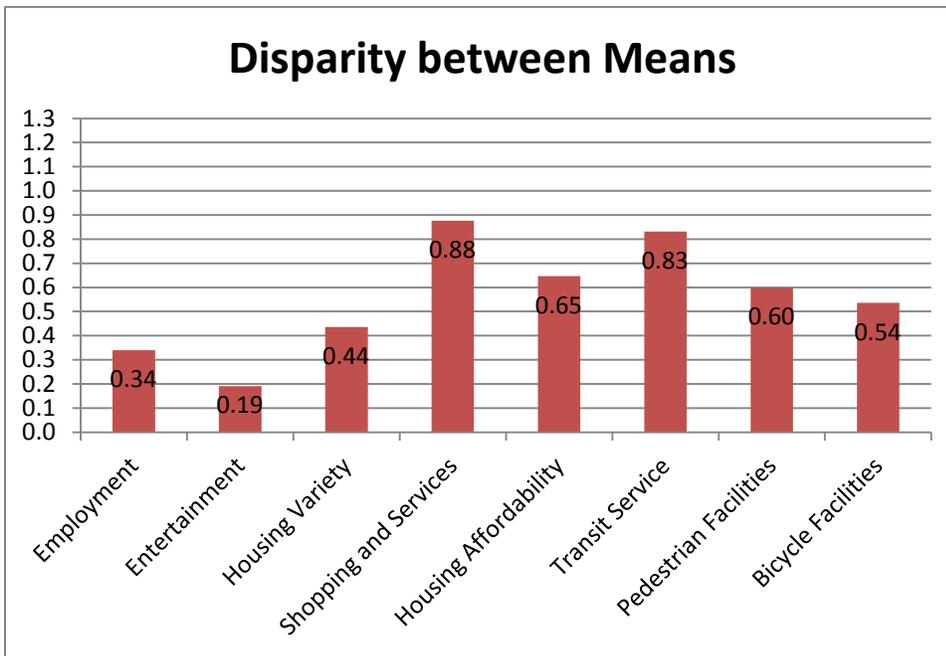
Issue and Score	1. (Very poorly)	2	3	4	5. (Very well)
Employment in Downtown	15	36	125	211	66
Entertainment in Downtown	11	30	77	207	129
Variety of Housing in Downtown	18	83	152	176	25
Shopping and Services in Downtown	29	118	143	130	34
Affordability of Housing in Downtown	29	94	237	82	6
Transit Service to and within Downtown	45	100	150	130	29
Pedestrian Facilities in Downtown	21	57	138	199	37
Bicycle Facilities in Downtown	43	96	139	141	35

In all issue areas, the “How important is it?” response was higher than the “How are we doing?” response. When the individual response counts are observed the difference seems to be primarily in the high end of the two scales with the responses of value 4 and 5 being highest for the “How important is it?” question and the 3 and 4 responses for the “How are we doing?” question. The graph on the next page compares the two questions for each issue.

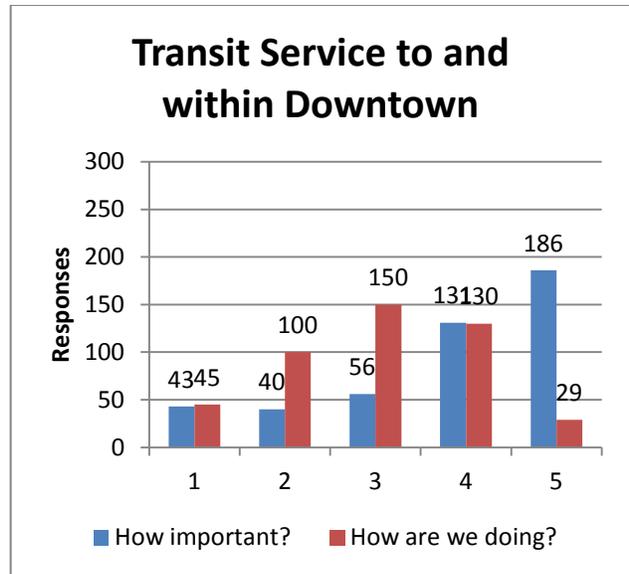
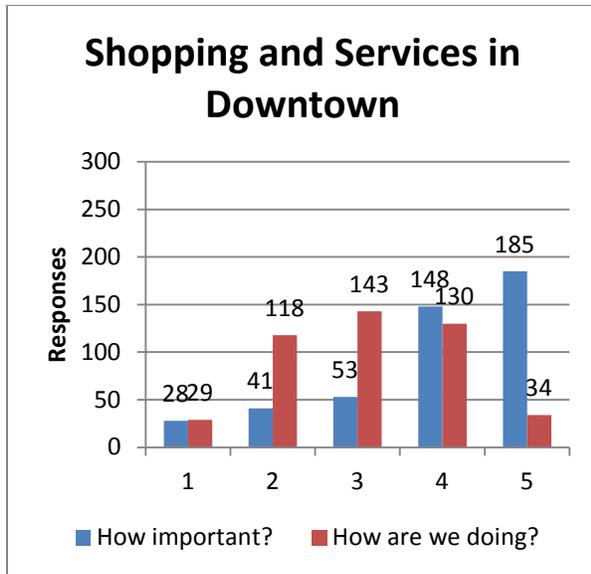
The two issues with the largest gaps are Shopping and Services in Downtown and Transit Services to and within Downtown. With more and more people living, or wanting to live, in the downtown area the demand for more services and shopping will likely grow. Unlike shopping and services of the past, these new demands might be to cater more to the daily needs of a resident, rather than specialty shopping in boutiques. Although the Downtown serves as the hub for the transit system and service is available from downtown to all other areas of the City served, there may be a desire for a route that would serve within the Downtown, such as a “trolley” style bus or shuttle system.



The following graph shows the breadth of the gap between the two questions for each issue.



The following graphs show details for the two issues with the greatest gap. In both cases the responses to the “How important is it?” question were more frequently on the high end, while the responses to the “How are we doing?” question were more frequently in the neutral range.



136 write-in comments were received for the Downtown section of the survey. The comments received focused on the following areas: bicycle infrastructure, housing, pedestrian infrastructure, vehicular parking as well as entertainment and retail facilities.

Of the responses, there were 29 occurrences in support of better and more public transit, 29 occurrences of better and more bicycling infrastructure, 16 occurrences of support for a broader range of housing options, 13 occurrences of more and better pedestrian infrastructure, 12 occurrences in support of the existing bike lanes, 6 occurrences of support for more private development and redevelopment, 6 occurrences of support for a downtown grocery store, 6 occurrences of support for more bars, entertainment and retail as well as 5 occurrences of support for the planned cycle track (protected bikeway). Further areas of support that were cited with less frequency include more entertainment and bars, more retail, more trees, more employment and more handicapped infrastructure.

Problems were identified in several areas including 19 occurrences of dissatisfaction with the current bike lane design, 9 occurrences of the need for more parking, 5 occurrences of need for less regulation, 4 occurrences of the desire to remove the existing bike lanes. Other identified problem areas that were cited with less frequency include too much redevelopment, too much entertainment and bars, a desire to restrict bikes from downtown, too much parking and too much shopping.

Following a review of the comments, most of the comments are regarding transportation. Similar to comments received in the Transportation section, there seems to be fairly strong support for bicycling infrastructure in and around downtown including bike lanes, the planned cycle track and bicycle parking. However, there are design concerns surrounding the safety and viability of the current bike lanes. In addition, there appears to be strong support for more and better public transit which serves not only trips in and out of downtown but within downtown as well. Housing was another major issue with at least some comments suggesting expansion of nearly all housing types in downtown. One common theme of housing downtown was that it is more expensive than other parts of the City. The lack of a

grocery store downtown was also noted along with support for more vehicular parking and more reinvestment and redevelopment.

Topic Area: Housing

Housing variety, affordability and location can be major factors in whether or not one wants to relocate to a new city. A healthy housing stock of both new and existing homes is a good barometer of the overall economic health of a community. When desirable housing becomes harder to find it can drive the cost of living up and make a city unaffordable to the general population.

The following are the questions asked and the number of responses sorted by value for each.

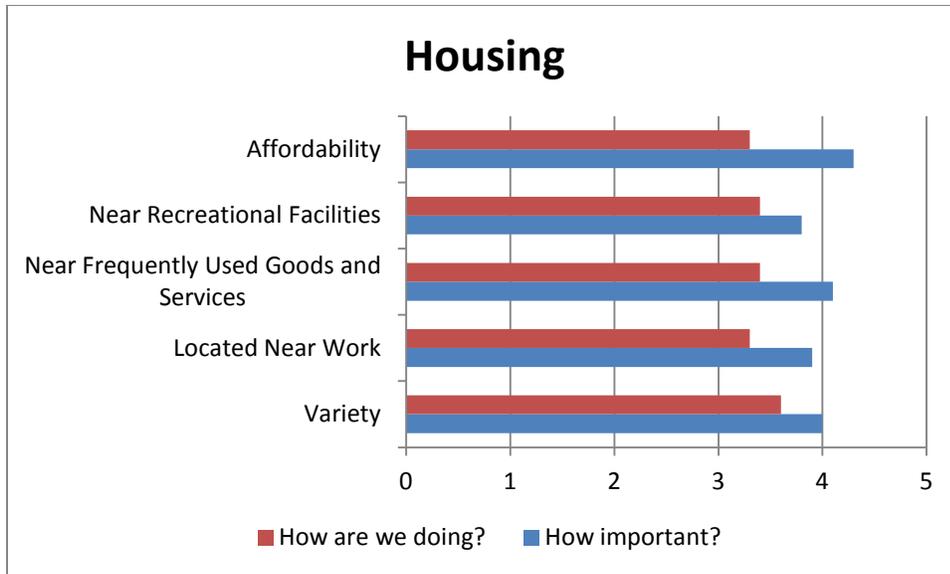
How important are the following issues?

Issue and Score	1 (Lowest importance)	2	3	4	5 (Highest Importance)
Variety of Housing Type	25	23	47	167	188
Housing located near work	20	32	72	185	141
Housing near goods and services used frequently	14	23	43	174	194
Housing near recreational facilities	19	39	90	173	125
Housing affordability	17	17	39	135	241

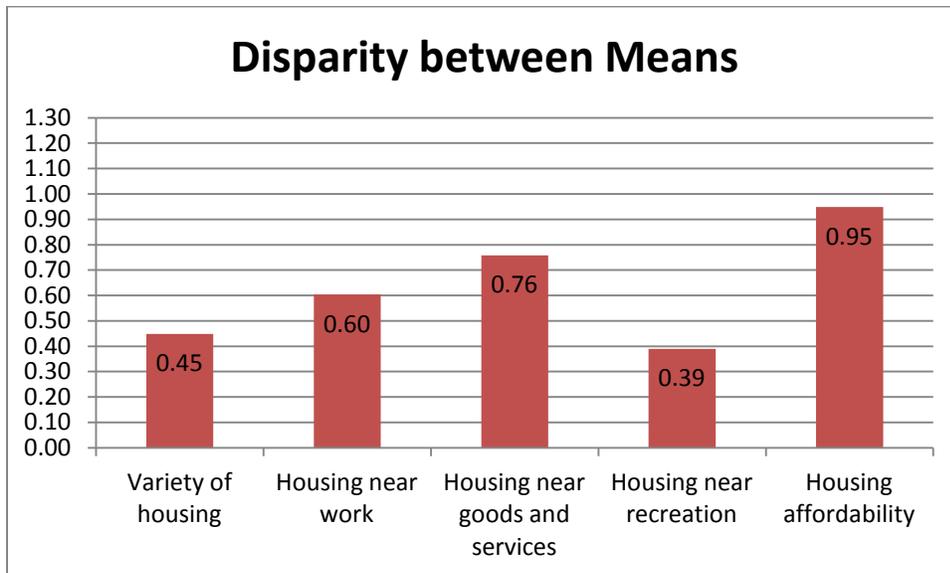
How are Lincoln and Lancaster County doing?

Issue and Score	1. (Very poorly)	2	3	4	5. (Very well)
Variety of Housing Type	11	43	116	221	55
Housing located near work	16	69	164	169	27
Housing near goods and services used frequently	16	60	143	188	37
Housing near recreational facilities	12	49	178	172	37
Housing affordability	31	54	148	174	41

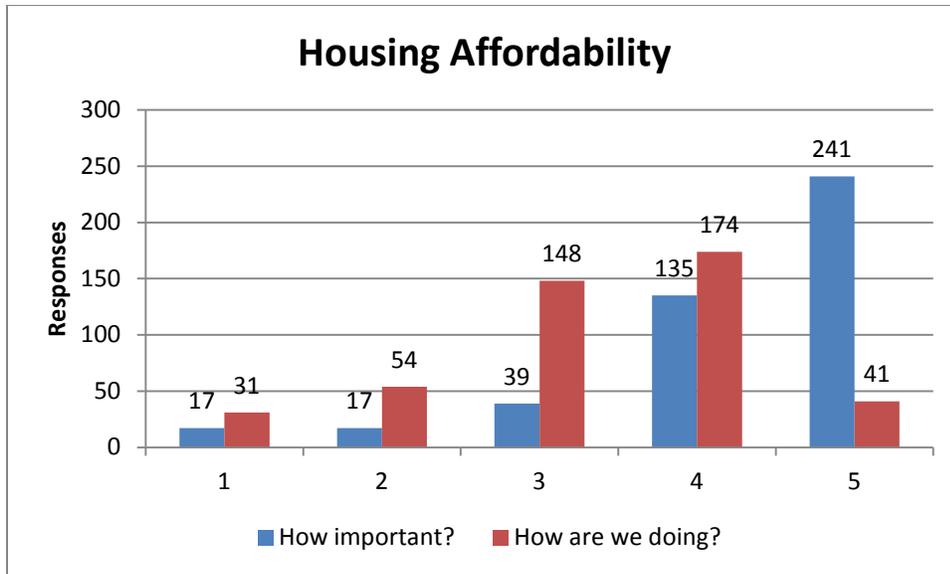
In all issue areas, the “How important is it?” response was higher than the “How are we doing?” response. When the individual response counts are observed the difference seems to be primarily in the high end of the two scales with the responses of value 4 and 5 being highest for the “How important is it?” question and the 3 and 4 responses for the “How are we doing?” question. This graph compares the two questions for each issue.



The following graph shows the breadth of the gap between the two questions for each issue.



The following graphs show details for the issue with the greatest gap. The responses to the “How important is it?” question were more frequently on the high end, while the responses to the “How are we doing?” question were more frequently in the neutral range.



The largest disparity is seen in the Housing Affordability issue area. It is difficult to evaluate housing affordability with this one response. Affordability could refer to new or existing homes, the cost of buying or the cost of renting, or other factors which increase the cost of housing such as utility costs, mortgage loan rates, property taxes and transportation to and from work. Housing near goods and services used frequently also had a fairly large gap with many more responses in the 4 and 5 scores for “How important is it?” and more in the 3 and 4 scores for “How are we doing?” This may indicate a desire for housing that is more integrated with neighborhoods commercial areas

98 write-in comments were received for the Housing section of the survey. The comments received focused on the following topic areas: affordability, government regulation, housing diversity, connectivity by foot or bike, property taxes and green space.

Of these topic areas, there were 9 occurrences generally in support of more affordable housing and/or a program to support senior homeownership, 6 occurrences of support for more housing diversity including condos, single family, duplexes and apartments, 6 occurrences in support of more local housing connectivity to commercial areas by foot or bike and 4 occurrences of support for more recreational opportunities, green space and parks. Other areas of support with lower frequency levels include the need for a downtown grocery store, more and better public transit, more zoning, more mixed use development and more density.

In addition, problems were identified in several areas, including 8 occurrences of too much government regulation, 4 occurrences of problems with impact fees and 4 occurrences of property taxes being too high. Other areas of consideration included residential bight, too many big box stores and not enough local commercial areas, too much sprawl and strip mall development, housing downtown is too expensive, a lack of housing which accommodates handicapped individuals and that the City is too dense.

Following review of these comments, the major theme is that of diversity. Some comments preferred a limited role of government in housing while others favored intervention and even more draconian zoning. Fortunately, Lincoln offers many different options for housing which appears to capture the majority of the population. One possible exception is the availability of quality housing for low and fixed income individuals. Further, although some residents indicated that they had no issues driving for all their basic needs and entertainment, a fair majority of opinions seemed to prefer easy walking or cycling access to neighborhood commercial areas.

Topic Area: Attractiveness

“Attractiveness” is admittedly a subjective topic. Most people can agree that buildings that are in poor condition, trash on the streets and a landscape of pavement are generally un-attractive. However, deciding what colors, shapes, building materials, vegetation, etc... are attractive can be matters of taste. Most of us have an understanding of what we find attractive, but we don’t all agree on what role the government should play in making the City more attractive.

The following are the questions asked and the number of responses sorted by value for each.

How important are the following issues?

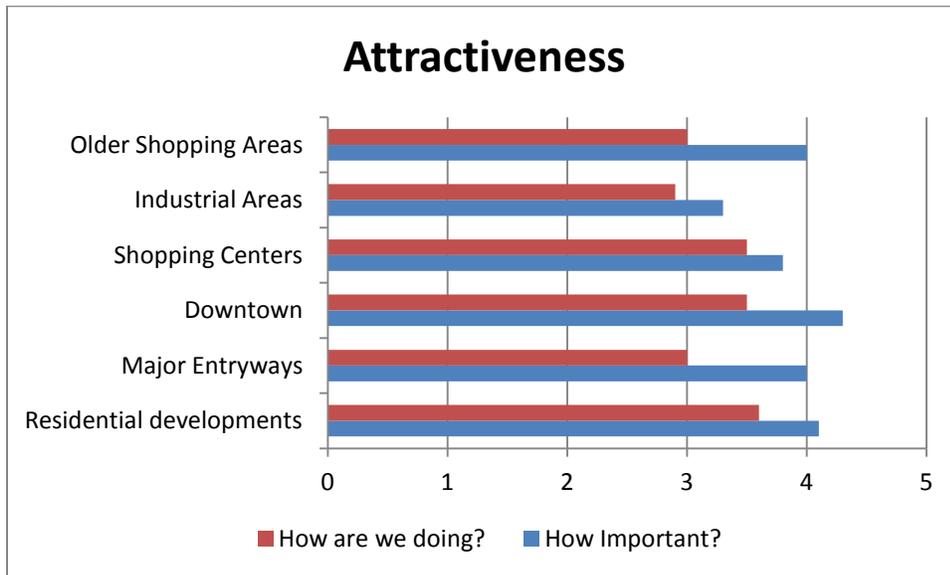
Issue and Score	1 (Lowest importance)	2	3	4	5 (Highest Importance)
Attractiveness of residential developments	13	15	50	190	181
Attractiveness of major entryways to City	24	40	48	147	189
Attractiveness of Downtown	19	14	28	158	230
Attractiveness of shopping centers	20	33	72	191	130
Attractiveness of Industrial areas	30	77	131	153	56
Attractiveness of older shopping areas	9	35	66	188	149

How are Lincoln and Lancaster County doing?

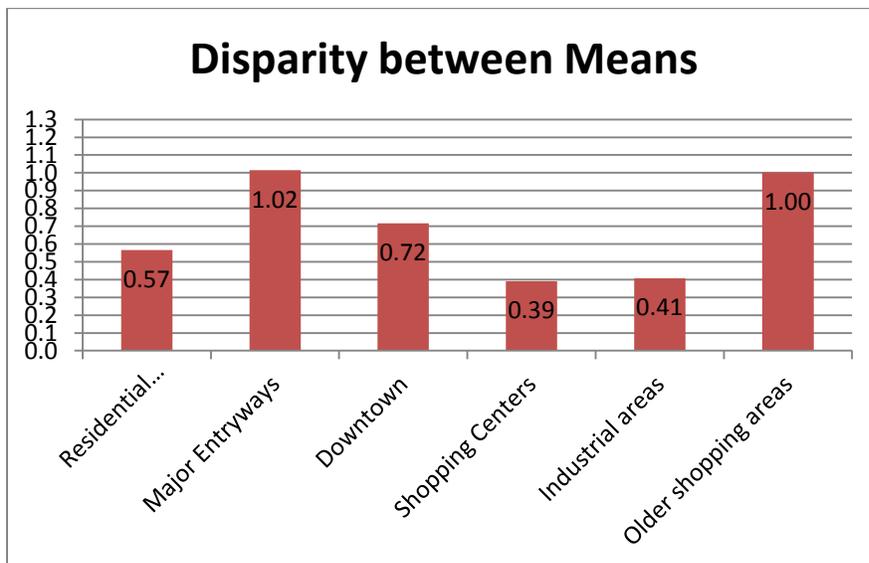
Issue and Score	1. (Very poorly)	2	3	4	5. (Very well)
Attractiveness of residential developments	17	48	100	226	56
Attractiveness of major entryways to City	40	128	114	138	26
Attractiveness of Downtown	16	62	94	213	62
Attractiveness of shopping centers	15	43	148	202	37

Attractiveness of Industrial areas	30	105	210	89	11
Attractiveness of older shopping areas	28	109	171	122	14

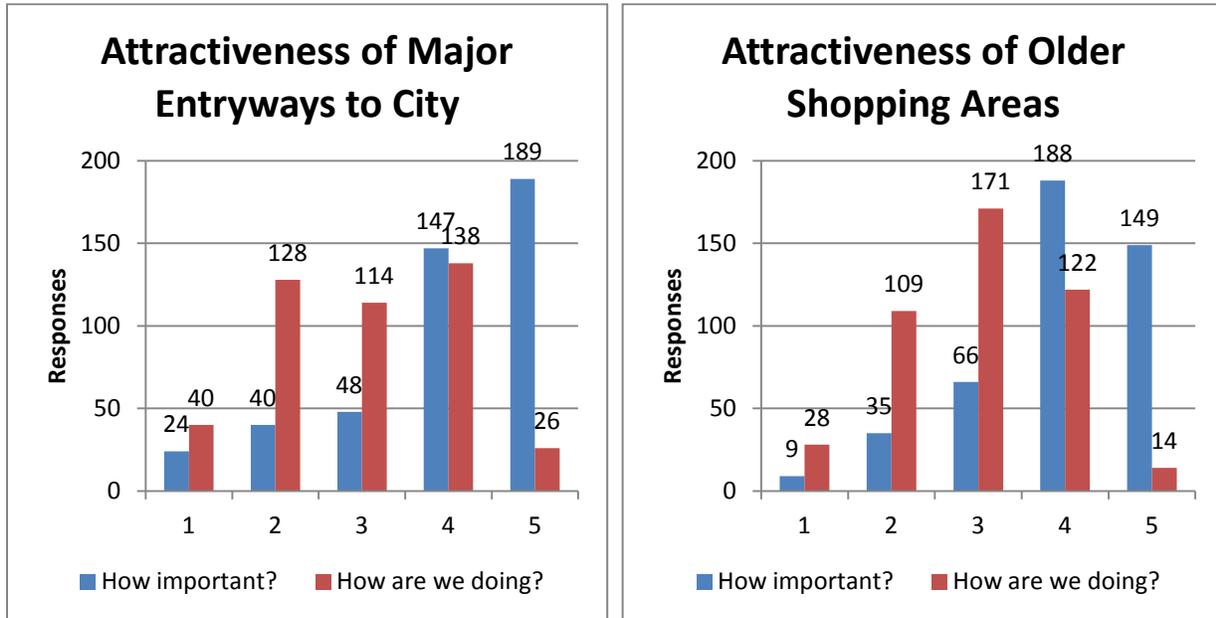
In all issue areas, the “How important is it?” response was higher than the “How are we doing?” response. When the individual response counts are observed the difference seems to be primarily in the high end of the two scales with the responses of value 4 and 5 being highest for the “How important is it?” question and the 3 and 4 responses for the “How are we doing?” question. This graph compares the two questions for each issue.



The following graph shows the breadth of the gap between the two questions for each issue.



The greatest disparity was seen in the issues of Attractiveness of Major Entryways to City and Attractiveness of Older Shopping Areas. These are some of the largest disparity values seen in this survey. When viewing the score counts for each question on the issue of attractiveness of major entryways to city one is particularly struck by the perceived importance of these entryways providing an attractive and welcoming gateway to the City as compared to the perception of what is actually out there.



It is a little more difficult to evaluate the response on the older shopping areas in part because of the variety of definitions of what constitutes and “older shopping area”. The intent was to identify areas such as Havelock, College View, Bethany, and other former small town centers. However, older shopping centers could also mean older strip malls and shopping centers such as East Park Plaza and Edgewood.

Another interesting response is to the issues of Industrial areas and Shopping Centers. These were two of the few “How important is it?” questions for which the response shows more of a curved graph than a linear graph – meaning responses of 5 were actually lower than responses of 4 – indicating that respondents did not find these issues to be as important overall as other issues. Both of these issues had smaller gaps between responses, but the Shopping Centers in general scored relatively high, while the Industrial Areas scored relatively low, possibly indicating that the appearance of shopping centers is more valued than the appearance of Industrial areas. This is probably not surprising to most.

100 write-in responses were received for the Appearance and Attractiveness section of the survey. The responses to this section were very diverse and not heavily congregated into specific categories. The comments did generally focus on the following areas: entryways into the City, downtown, the role of government in appearance and attractiveness, neighborhood commercial areas, new shopping malls and strip malls as well as litter.

Of the responses, 10 were supportive of the appearance of downtown, 5 were generally supportive of the older neighborhood commercial areas while 5 wanted to see more green space, trees and landscaping throughout town. Other areas of support that appeared less frequently included Antelope Valley, the N 27th entryway and the new Lincoln “arrow”.

Problems were identified in several areas including 13 occurrences identifying the appearance and attractiveness of entryways in general, 7 occurrences that appearance and attractiveness should be left to the market, 7 occurrences identifying new shopping malls, strip malls and big box development as a problem, 6 occurrences identifying the West O entrance as a problem, 5 occurrences identifying the Cornhusker entrance as a problem, 5 occurrences identifying junk and blight in older neighborhoods as a problem and 3 occurrences identifying too much parking as negatively affecting appearance and attractiveness. Other problem areas which had a lower frequency of occurrence include the appearance and attractiveness of downtown, too many cigarette butts, the appearance of N 27th St entrance, new residential developments as well as a need for more zoning and code enforcement.

As noted earlier, the responses to this section were varied. One more common theme was the general understanding that appearance and attractiveness are subjective matters. In addition, there were diverse opinions on how the City should be reacting to charges of ugliness or debris. Some respondents thought it was the role of the government through zoning and code enforcement to ensure the cleanliness and attractiveness of the City while others thought it should be left entirely up to the market and that private property rights should rule. Generally, however, it appears that when it comes to entryways to the City, the south entrances are more attractive than the northern entryways, particularly West O and Cornhusker Highway.

Topic Area: Community Character

Community character is intended to refer to the characteristics that are valued by its residents and that make Lincoln unique. While this can also be difficult to quantify, unique historical and architectural resources, the older neighborhoods and business areas, and the tree-lined streets are often cited as characteristics associated with Lincoln.

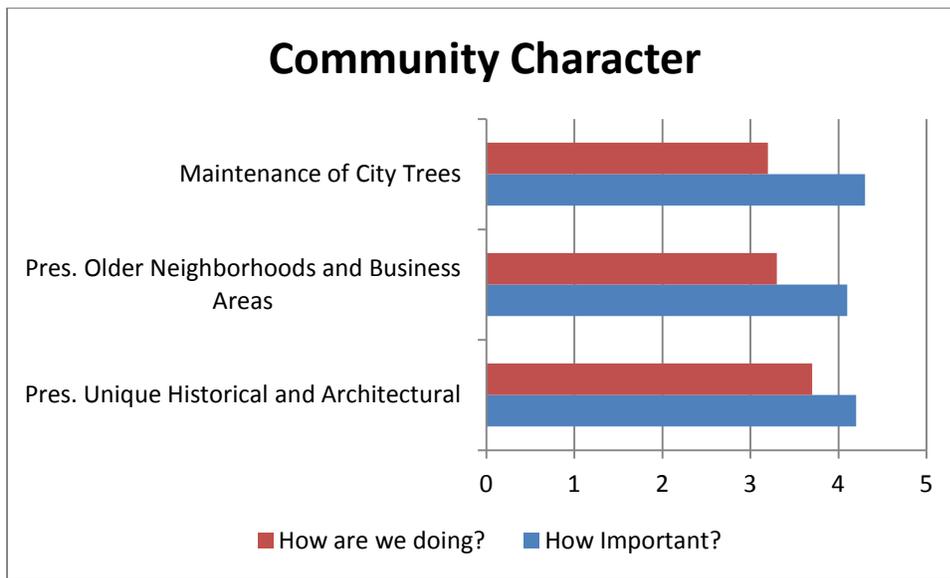
The following are the questions asked and the number of responses sorted by value for each.
How important are the following issues?

Issue and Score	1 (Lowest importance)	2	3	4	5 (Highest Importance)
Preserve Unique, Historical and Architecture	14	25	30	164	215
Preserve Older Neighborhoods and Business areas	16	39	44	134	210
Maintenance of Street Trees	16	19	32	125	252

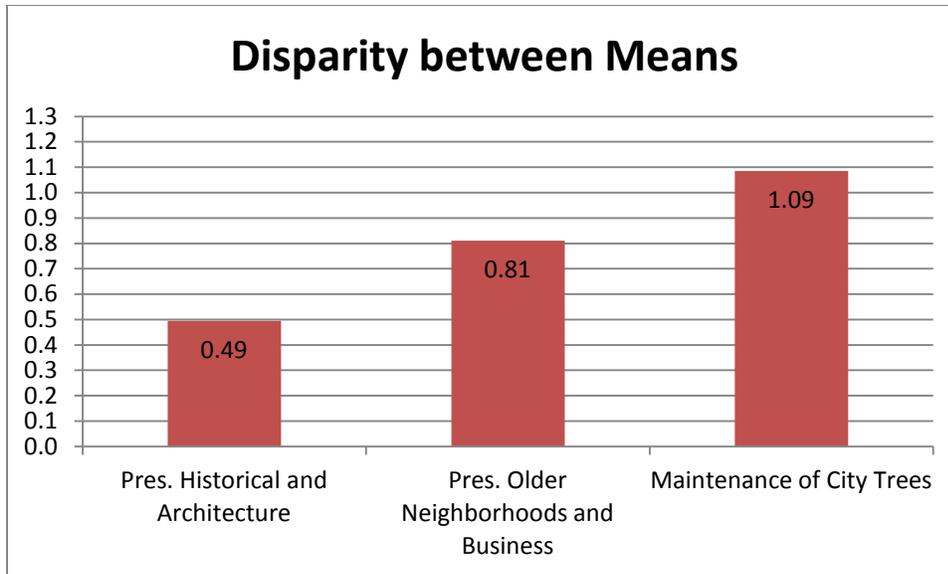
How are Lincoln and Lancaster County doing?

Issue and Score	1. (Very poorly)	2	3	4	5. (Very well)
Preserve Unique, Historical and Architecture	14	31	91	239	68
Preserve Older Neighborhoods and Business areas	33	80	105	180	45
Maintenance of Street Trees	36	91	101	171	44

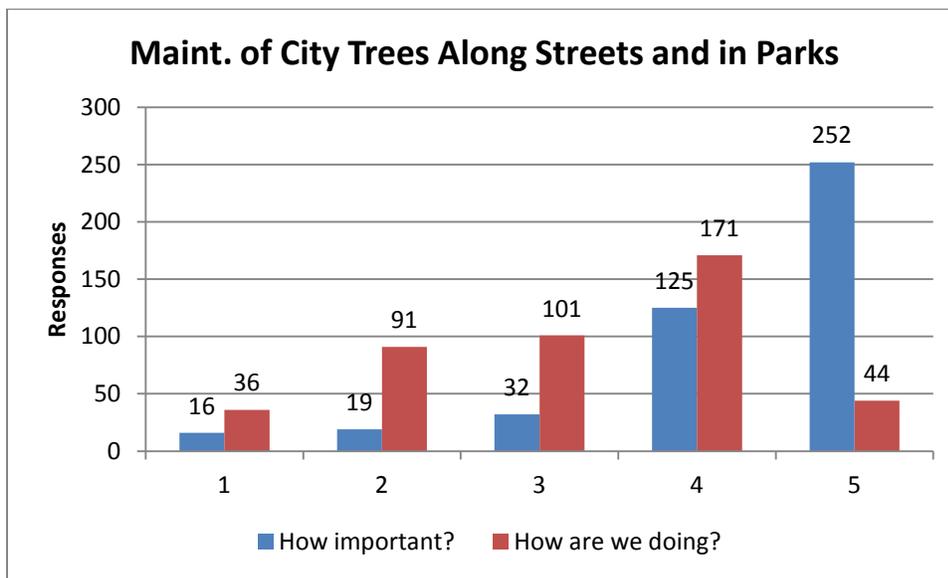
The responses follow the typical pattern seen in the other topic areas with importance outweighing performance. The following graph compares the responses to the “How important is it?” question and the “How are we doing?” question.



The topic of street trees showed the largest gap with “How important is it?” averaging 1.1 points higher than “How are we doing?” Street trees in Lincoln have historically inspired passion from the negative response to removal of trees in City parks, to the campaigns to put a stop to street widening projects that would have removed mature street trees. The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the maintenance of street trees and other public trees. Over the past several years this department has seen reductions in budgets and loss of staff specifically assigned to the urban forest.



The graph below demonstrates the high importance given to street trees with more people assigning the highest importance category than the other four categories combined. On the question of “How are we doing?” there were slightly more responses in the lower registers than seen in other questions.



100 write-in responses were received for the Community Character section of the survey. The responses to this section were focused on 3 specific categories, with a few more topics mentioned. The comments generally focused on the following areas: Trees and Parks, Historic Preservation and Older Neighborhoods.

Of the responses, 56 were on trees and parks, with 14 being generally supportive of the current facilities and 42 being unhappy with one aspect or another. Those who were generally supportive expressed positive feelings about existing parks (4), the need for even more public trees (8) and support of the “Two for Trees” program (2). Of those expressing dissatisfaction, 20 felt tree maintenance was a major

issue and 6 felt planting trees during the drought was a major problem, 5 expressed dissatisfaction with the trimming of trees for power lines, 5 felt trees should not impede widening of streets, 1 would like to see more ball fields, and 4 generally did not support public parks or trees.

Historic Preservation drew comment from 29 individuals, 11 in general support (4 of which would like to see more incentives), and 18 generally unsupportive. Of the unsupportive responses 5 felt that historic designation were often not justified, 4 felt too much investment went to historic preservation, another 4 were supportive as long as the historic preservation efforts did not impede progress, and 5 were generally unsupportive.

The topic of preserving older neighborhoods and business areas drew comment from 27 respondent, 12 in general support, 10 who felt maintenance of older areas was a major problem, two who mentioned conversion of older homes to apartments as a problem, and three who generally did not support preservation of older areas.

More general themes included discussion about the role of government and public investment in preservation projects. Many people cited an understanding of budget difficulties in the Parks and Recreation Dept. and felt the maintenance of parks and trees should have a higher priority

Topic Area: Natural Resources

Evaluation of the state of a community's natural resources can provide information about the quality of life experienced by the residents as well as indicate the overall health of the environment. Natural resources can be protected through proper land use planning, environmental regulations, citizen efforts, and local programs.

The following are the questions asked and the number of responses sorted by value for each.

How important are the following issues?

Issue and Score	1 (Lowest importance)	2	3	4	5 (Highest Importance)
Opportunity for Enjoying Outdoors	11	12	18	128	278
Preservation of Farmland	42	50	94	142	118
Protection of Natural Resources	12	25	38	142	227
Availability of Locally Grown Food	33	36	72	131	174

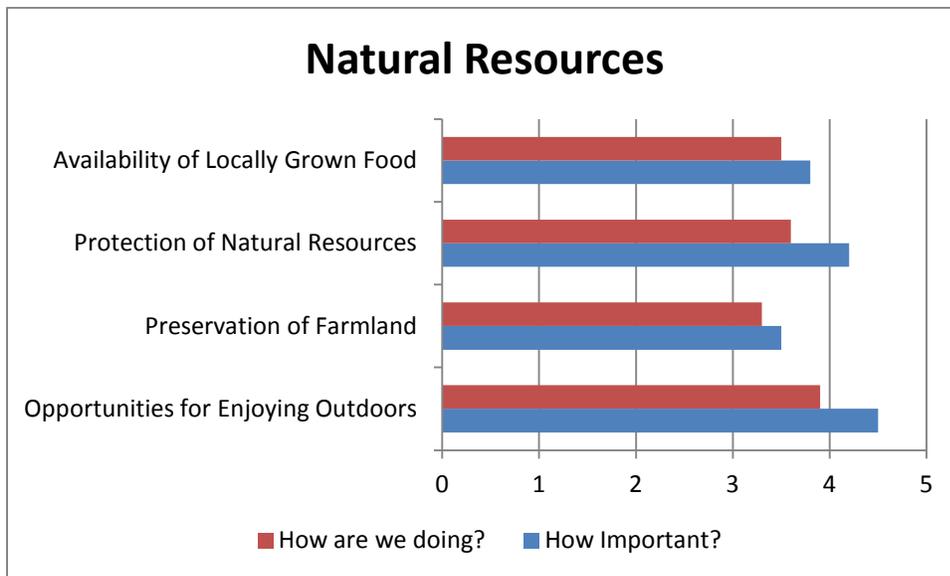
How are Lincoln and Lancaster County doing?

Issue and Score	1. (Very poorly)	2	3	4	5. (Very well)
Opportunity for Enjoying Outdoors	10	29	54	246	106
Preservation of Farmland	15	36	231	120	38
Protection of Natural Resources	7	42	136	202	50
Availability of Locally Grown Food	8	50	145	174	63

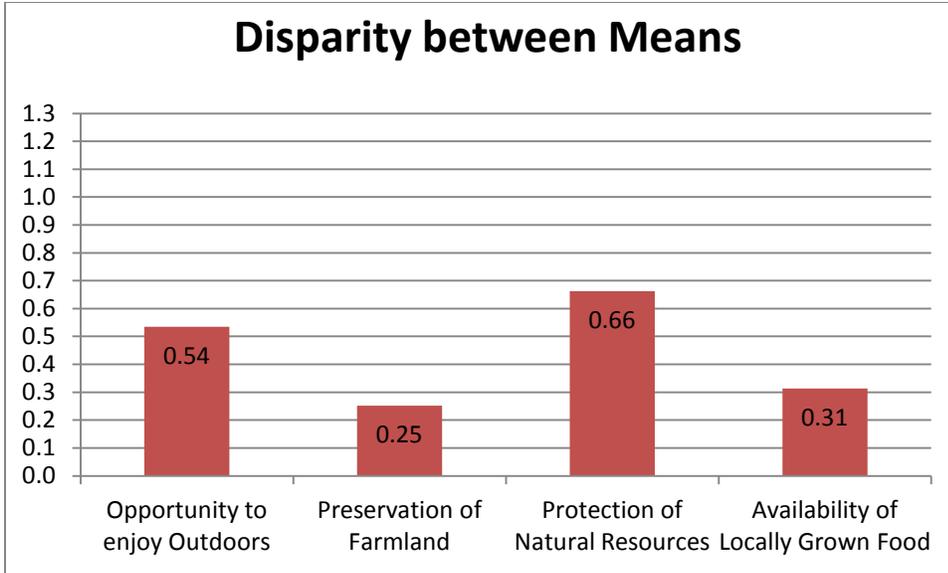
Responses to the two questions generally followed the pattern of the other topic areas with the “How important is it?” question showing a higher rating than the “How are we doing?” question. The preservation of farmland was one of the few issues in the report for which the response of 5 was lower than the response of 4 in answering the “How important is it?” question. However, even for this issue the importance was still higher than the performance response.

The disparity between the two responses was slightly lower for these issues when compared to issue in other topic areas. The preservation of agricultural land issue showed one of the smallest gaps in the report at 0.25 points.

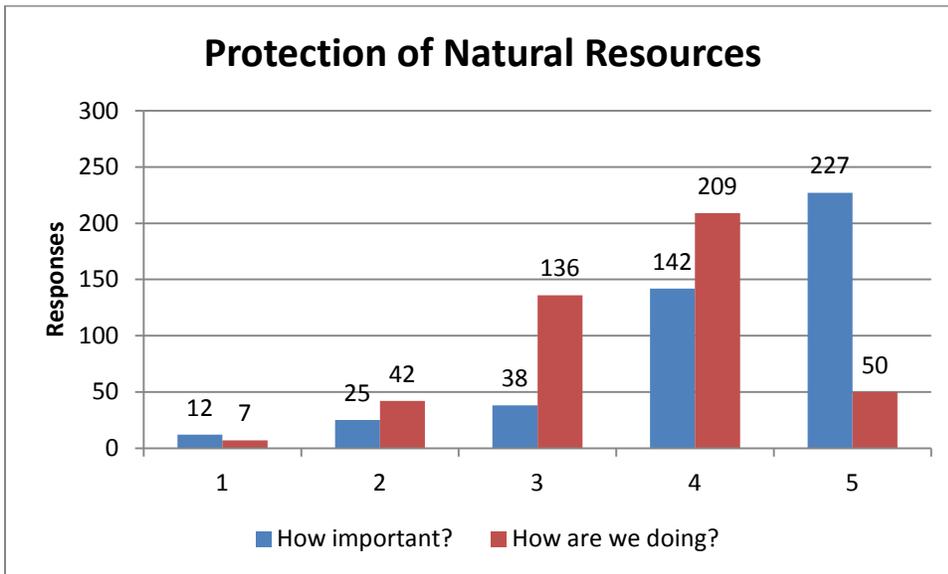
The following graph displays the two questions measured against one another for each of the issues.



The graph below displays the value of the disparity between the two responses for each issue.



The highest value disparity observed between responses was for the issue of protection of natural resources. These responses followed the typical pattern on a linear graph for the “How important is it?” responses and a curve for the “How are we doing?” The following graph displays the number of responses in each category for the issue of protection of natural resources.



75 write-in responses were received for the Natural Resources section of the survey. The responses to this section were varied; however local food was a popular topic, along with access to outdoor activities, the importance of the market’s role, and protection of natural resources. Other topics mentioned were park and golf course maintenance, preservation of agricultural land, streams and water quality, and native plants.

Of the responses, there were 81 comments made in general support. Local food was the leading topic with 37 responses in support, 13 of which specifically mentioned farmer’s markets and 3 mentioned

community gardens. Access to outdoor activities had 15 positive responses with respondents expressing approval of the available outdoor recreational facilities and areas. 7 individuals specifically expressed the desire for more parks, some for larger parks others for pocket parks. 11 responded in support of natural resource preservation with 7 desiring more protection and 2 specifically mentioning increased preservation of and use in landscaping of native plants. ^ people wanted to see more preservation of farmland while 3 felt water quality was an important issues, and 2 felt more efforts to educate the public on natural resource were needed.

24 responses were generally unsupportive of natural resource preservation. 11 of these responses were regarding local food, with 9 of them expressing the desire to see this issue be addressed through the open market rather than by local government. 9 responses were in regards to maintenance in public parks and golf course and how poorly it has been managed. Two felt natural resource preservation should not be a priority and 2 other felt agricultural land should not be preserved at the expense of development or job creation.

In general responses were supportive of natural resources, particularly local food and outdoor activity access. As in a few other topic areas, concerns regarding government involvement and investment of public dollars were also expressed.

Topic Area: Transportation and Mobility

One of the most important efforts in the comprehensive planning process is the update of the community's transportation and mobility plans. Transportation systems must be able to serve the uses on the land and the uses that are planned in the future. Transportation systems must also serve mobility needs of all in the community. Providing for the movement of people and goods throughout the community is one of the basic functions of the local government. Each mode of transportation (bicycle, walking, transit, and motor vehicles) is just as important as the others.

The following are the questions asked and the number of responses sorted by value for each.
How important are the following issues?

Issue and Score	1 (Lowest importance)	2	3	4	5 (Highest Importance)
Off-street trails	19	28	40	143	221
On-street bike lanes and routes	69	72	39	119	155
Transit Services	25	34	72	137	180
Sidewalk and Pedestrian Facilities	12	21	36	165	214
Traffic Congestion	19	18	46	148	217

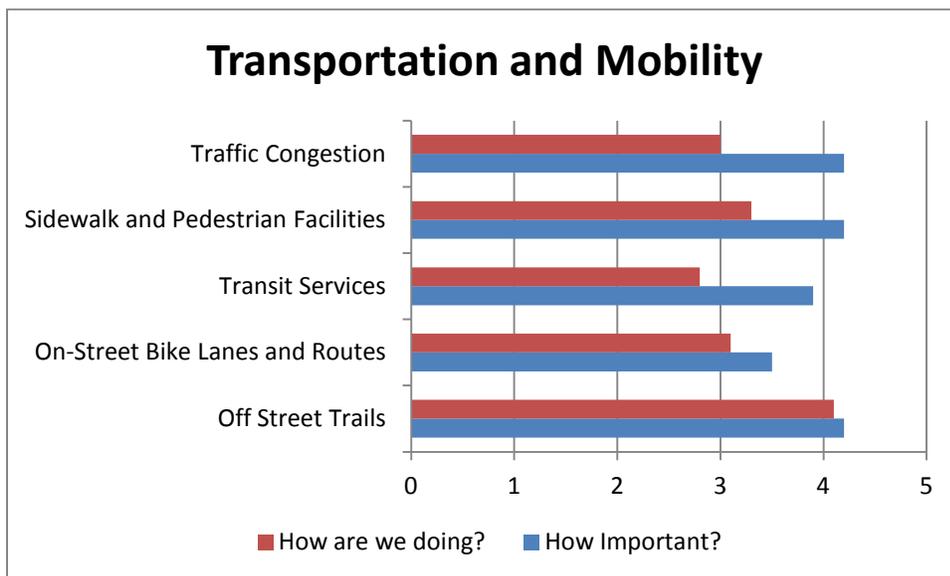
How are Lincoln and Lancaster County doing?

Issue and Score	1 (very poorly)	2	3	4	5 (very well)
Off-street trails	9	24	51	183	183
On-street bike lanes and routes	60	87	106	137	59
Transit Services	62	111	138	113	25
Sidewalk and Pedestrian Facilities	22	81	118	177	50
Traffic Congestion	63	99	110	137	36

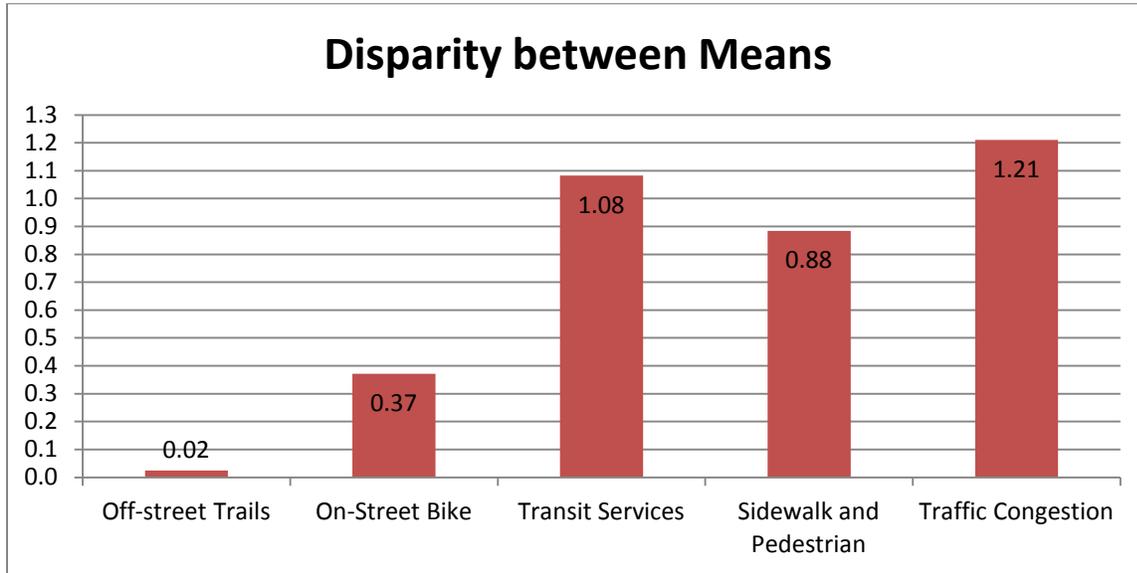
The Transportation and Mobility topic area saw the same basic pattern seen in other areas – answers to the “How important is it?” question were higher than answers to the “How are we doing?” question. Of all issues in the survey, that of off-street trails had ratings of “How important is it?” and “How are we doing?” that had the smallest disparity (0.02 points). This can be interpreted to mean the off-street trails are meeting the expectations of the respondents to this survey. This topic area also saw the largest disparity on any single issue in this report. Traffic congestion saw a very large disparity between the perceived importance and the performance. Transit Services was not very far behind.

This topic area also showed one of the most polarizing topics – on-street bike lanes and routes. This topic had strong response in the positive and negative areas with lower response in the neutral when asked how important this issue was. According to the text responses, there is even some disagreement among those who generally support cycling as to whether or not separated or designated lanes are desirable.

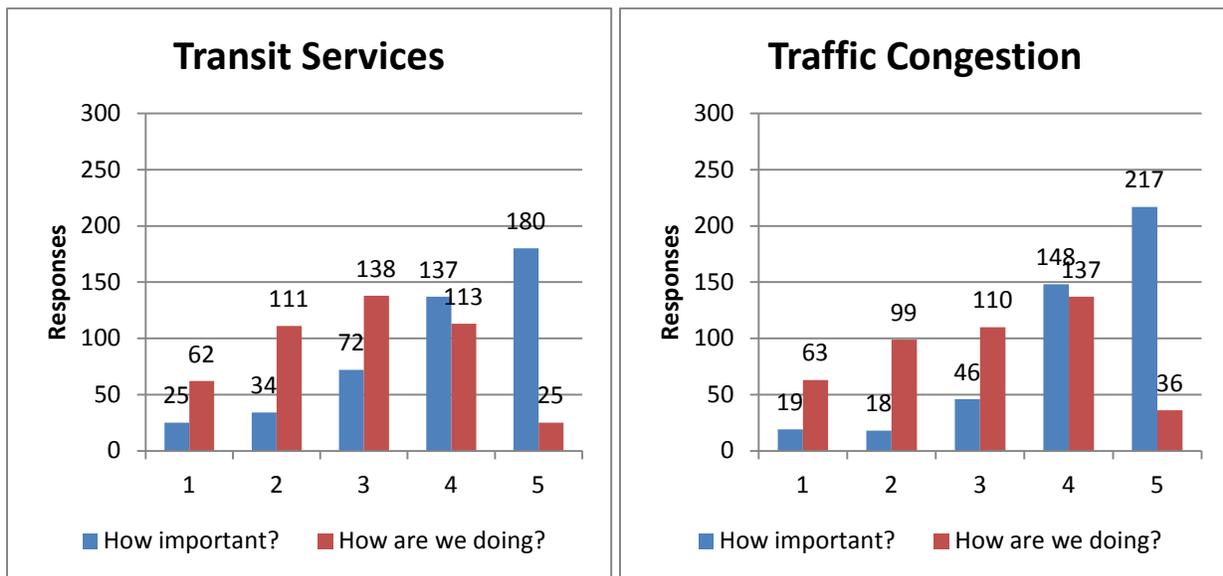
The following graph shows the score for the two questions compared to one another for each of the issues.



The graph below shows the difference between the average response to the “How important is it?” question as compared to the “How are we doing?” question.



The two largest areas of disparity are shown below in the transit services and traffic congestion graphs.



147 write-in comments were received responding to the Transportation and Mobility survey questions. The comments received were diverse and represent a range of viewpoints on numerous topics. The major topic areas that were discussed include bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian infrastructure, vehicular congestion, public transit and trails.

Of these areas, there was an occurrence of 40 opinions generally in support of more and better bicycle infrastructure, 31 generally in support of more and better public transit, 19 generally in support of current vehicular congestion management practices, 14 in support of more and better pedestrian

infrastructure and 13 in support of more and better trails. Further, there were lower frequency comments in support of the use of concrete, increased number of taxis, introduction of a tram/trolley line, more parking, the South Beltway and better road maintenance.

In addition, there was an occurrence of 31 opinions generally stating that current vehicular congestion is a problem, 19 stating that traffic light timing is a problem and 14 stating that the design of the current bike lanes downtown is a problem. There was also a lower frequency of comments identifying the following problem areas: parking prices too low downtown, parking prices too high downtown, a lack of downtown parking, too much downtown parking, lack of a bike connection on 14th, lack of an Air Park bike path and downtown traffic flow.

Following a review of these comments, there are two major connections that should be noted. First, there is general support for more and improved bicycle infrastructure, particularly downtown. However, there is concern with the current design of the downtown bike lanes as people feel they are unsafe. There seems to be support to relocate the existing bike lanes to the edges of the roadway. Second, there is a general concern regarding the amount of vehicular congestion throughout Lincoln. Many respondents with this concern felt that traffic light timing is the primary issue to be addressed to alleviate this congestion.

Topic Area: General Impressions

One additional write in opportunity was offered to respondents at the end of the first section of the survey. Respondents were asked to share their "Impression of whether Lincoln and Lancaster County are meeting your expectations of a great place to live." A summary of responses is included below, with the full text included in appendix A.

120 write-in responses were received for the Impressions section of the survey. The dominant topic areas in this section include: many respondents indicated that they are happy with Lincoln in general and the direction it is going, public transit, property taxes, downtown, bike infrastructure, congestion, regulations, attracting young professionals and road maintenance.

Of the respondents, there were 42 occurrences indicating they were generally happy with Lincoln and the direction it is heading, 7 occurrences indicating support for more and better public transit, 6 occurrences supporting current development downtown, 5 occurrences supporting more and better bike infrastructure, 3 occurrences supporting efforts to attract more young professionals and 3 occurrences supporting more taxes in order to maintain and increase the current level of services in Lincoln. Other areas of support which occurred at lower frequencies included support for more senior services, libraries, pedestrian infrastructure, infill and redevelopment, increased public safety, community agriculture and parks.

Problems were identified in several areas including 6 occurrences stating that property taxes are too high, 4 occurrences indicating that too much attention is being spent on downtown or that it is not a pleasant place to be, 4 occurrences indicated that overall congestion is a problem, 4 occurrences indicating that there are too many regulations and 3 occurrences indicating that road maintenance is a

problem. Other problem areas which occurred at lower frequencies were too few jobs, big box developments and the bike lane design downtown.

Following a review of the comments, respondents seem to generally be happy with Lincoln and the direction it is going. The level of taxation, particularly property taxes was mentioned throughout the comment section with support for lowered taxes while some comments supported higher taxes as long as they are balanced with current facility maintenance and/or increased levels of service. It appears that respondents are most willing to support public transit, bike infrastructure and reduced levels of vehicular congestion. There was also a general theme which identified the need for better paying jobs. Suggestions in this area included attracting young professionals, supporting entrepreneurship, reducing taxes as well as supporting infrastructure desired by those young professionals and companies which need them.

Planning Department Contact

Respondents were also asked whether or not they have had previous contact with the Planning Department. 263 respondents indicated some sort of contact with the Planning Department, 165 indicated no prior contact, and 10 did not respond. Of those who indicate contact the following forms of contacted were cited:

Applicant, land owner, or developer of a property	70
Attend open house or other meeting hosted by Planning	159
Attend Planning Commission or other board meeting	107
Called or visited Planning Department	141
Have received a notification of zoning action in mail	80
Visit Planning Dept. website or read printed material from Planning	144
Planning staff spoke at neighborhood, professional group or other meeting	88
Member of group or board that has contact with Planning	78
City, County or State employee who has contact with Planning	36

Respondents were asked to rate their response to the following statement from 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

The person I spoke to was able to explain the issues to me in a clear and understandable way.

Avg. Score 4.1 Somewhat agree

The person I spoke to was able to answer my questions or find the information I needed.

Avg. Score 4.1 Somewhat agree

I felt my concerns were heard and taken into consideration.

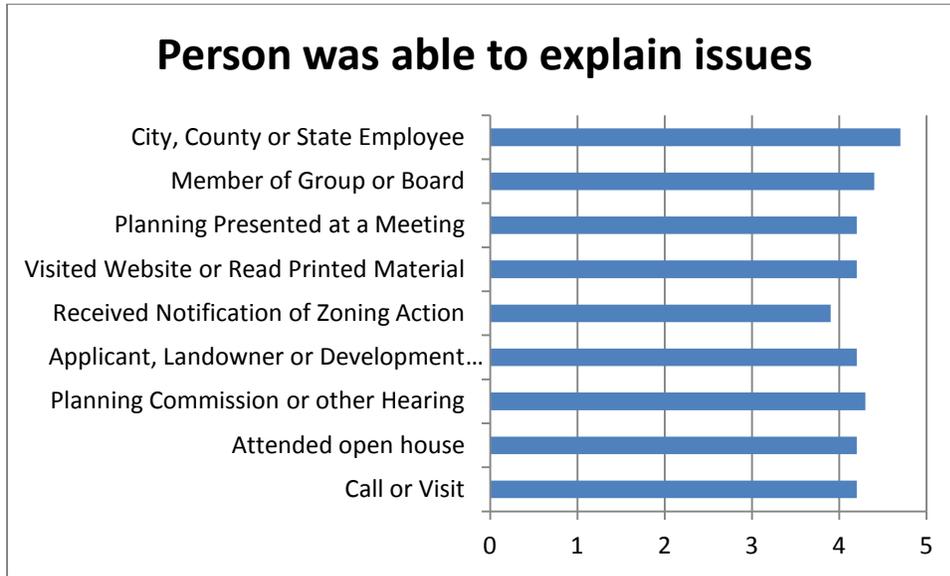
Avg. Score 3.7 Somewhat agree

The information I received was understandable.

Avg. Score 4.1 Somewhat agree

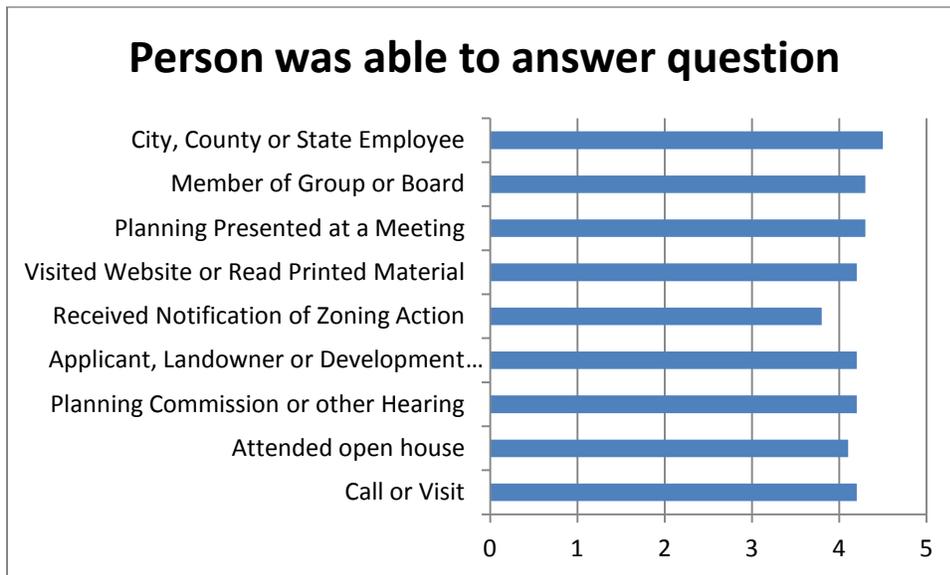
In addition, responses were classified according to the form of contact listed above. Many respondents had multiple forms of contact and so their responses are counted in each contact form category below.

Question 1



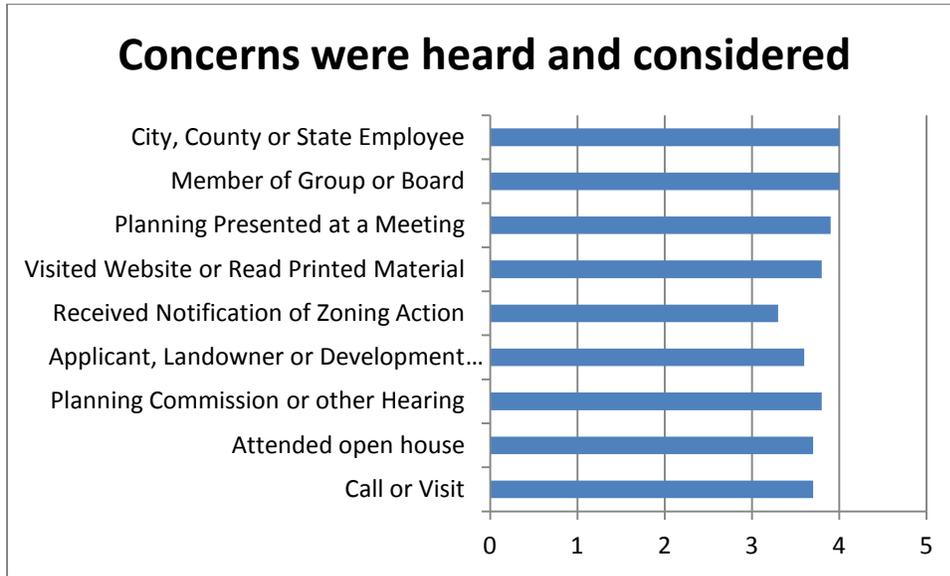
Respondent who identified as City, County or State employees had the highest average score, while those who received notification in the mail were the lowest. This may be due to some of those who received notifications not have had any further contact and so indicating a neutral response.

Question 2:



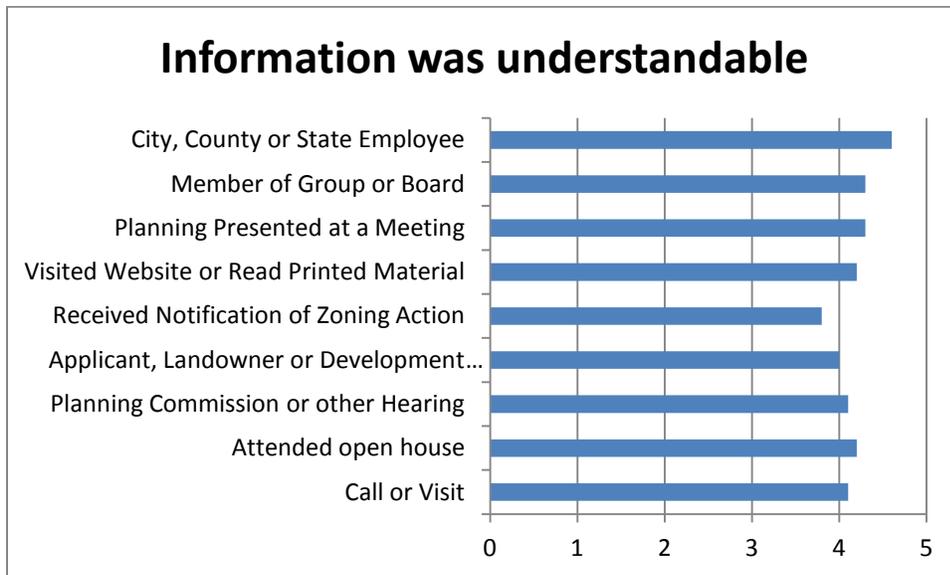
Similar to Question 1 above. Again, the low score from those who received notification may be due to neutral responses. Other categories scored “somewhat agree” or better.

Question 3:



This was the lowest scoring question of the 4 across the board. Those who received notification again scored this question the lowest, while members of groups or boards with Planning contact and City, County, and State employees with Planning Contact scored this question the highest.

Question 4:



The same basic pattern is seen in this question. Those who received notification of zoning action in the mail again had the lowest score while the City, County and State Employees had the highest score.

Overall, the scores received on these four questions were relatively positive. It is not surprising that City, County and State employees would have had the highest score since the amount of time spent in contact with the Planning Department and the knowledge from their positions would make

comprehension of complex Planning projects and issues easier. It is also not surprising that those who received notifications in the mail may not feel they had the best service if they did not also follow up with a phone call or internet research to find more information.

Consideration of Concerns (question 3) had the lowest score for every subgroup of respondents. There may be some actions the Planning Department could take to reassure those who have concerns that they are being heard. This could be as simple as active listening during conversations, taking notes while someone is expressing their concerns at meetings and open houses, or including some mention of concerns expressed at Planning Commission hearings. It is important for further public participation that people understand their thoughts and opinions are important and appreciated in the process.