

## **Chapter 11**

### **Public Input**

In an effort to include the public in this process two surveys were developed and available on paper and online. The Pikeville Community Survey asked ten short questions and was available online for ten weeks. Announcement that the survey was available was made through newspaper, radio and local television announcements providing the link for the survey and information about the availability of paper copies. There were 49 respondents to the survey, all online.

In an effort to understand what Pikeville should be thinking about for the future, high school students were targeted or participation in focus groups and a survey. Three focus groups were held with a group of approximately 18 students involved in school governance and leadership. A total of 62 Pikeville High School students completed the survey on paper in the Spring of 2013.

Specific findings from the surveys follow, but in summary, positive and constructive responses were received from both groups. The community survey results indicate that what people in Pikeville value most is the small town feeling, recent improvements and revitalization of downtown, safety and cleanliness, and the friendly people. Restaurants were also noted to be a positive , as well as Hillbilly Days, downtown Activities like Muscle on Main and Main Street Live, outdoor recreation, and City Parks. The University of Pikeville, Kentucky College of Osteopathic Medicine and Pikeville Medical Center all received accolades, and there were several positive comments about the strong, proactive, growth-oriented and honest City governance.

Predictably responses about what needs improvement had a broad range, although more variety in shopping and restaurants were two frequent themes, and the need for

“more things to do” especially for teens and children was noted by several respondents. Several respondents indicated the need to lower taxes, and several compared tax rates here to other areas claiming they were significantly higher. Jobs and affordable housing were also mentioned multiple times, as was improved management of the drug problem and related partying behavior. A few people suggested bigger acts and shows at the East Kentucky Exposition Center, others complained generally about “city services” but did not elaborate. Other responses seemed more indicative of specific problems with specific elements of City life including single suggestions to improve the fire department, the police department and local government leadership and to monitor public monies more carefully. These responses suggest that there may be room for improvement in communication of activities undertaken by City government.

The Community survey respondents were almost evenly divided between male and female, with almost half between ages 26 and 40, another almost third between 41 and 60, and 16% between 51 and 25 and less than 10% over 60. Seventy-five percent of respondents live in Pikeville, with the remainder living in the county with the exception of one respondent from Matewan, WV. A little more than half work in Pikeville, with another 21% working in Pike County, and 8.3% working in the surrounding region including Floyd County, Virginia and West Virginia; 10% were students and 6% retirees. Most of the respondents (74.5%) reported they have lived or worked in Pikeville for more than 15 years; the other quarter was evenly divided between those who have been here between five and fifteen years, and those who have been here less than five years.

The Youth Survey and focus groups found that young people by and large enjoy living and growing up in Pikeville and many would like to reside here as adults if there is work available for them. In the focus group two thirds of students indicated they would like to live here as an adult; the survey results indicated that about 30% would like to, 28% would not, and 42% were unsure. The majority of survey respondents (71%) live in Pikeville, and the majority of focus groups respondents did as well, with the other students living in Pike County. Most participating students (80%) have lived in Pikeville for more than 10 years. A copy of the Youth and Community Surveys may be found in Appendix A.

The students were overwhelmingly positive about the small town elements, friendly people, safety and wholesome atmosphere. They almost universally indicated a desire for more options for shopping, eating and entertainment, and had some specific suggestions about recreational facilities and activities that would be more appealing to young people. Interestingly, despite their positive feelings about the City they knew little about its governance or functioning. These students were well-versed in national politics, knew some things about state government, but knew almost nothing about local government at either the City or County level. Suggestions for ways to increase the flow of information and improve awareness of young people about City government included the increased use of social media. However, students identified a need for information to be “pushed” to them rather than require them to go and pull it down on their own, noting that they would be unlikely to do so in the face of competing information from other sources.

In summary, it appears that there is a need to facilitate communication between City Government and the public, especially young people. This could be accomplished in several ways:

- Increased and creative use of Facebook, Twitter and other social media to encourage students to connect with the City of Pikeville through incentive raffles and drawings
- Development of a youth advisory commission to meet annually with City Leaders
- Designation of a student to act as a liaison between Pikeville High School and the City Commission, to attend Commission Meetings and report to students and represent student interests to the commission

The matter of facilitating public awareness is less clear. While the community respondents clearly learned about the survey from a local media source, many of them seemed un-informed or misinformed about the governance process and function of the City Commission. Ongoing efforts to use all available media conduits including social media, Pike TV, radio and print media should continue. Incentives for participation through social media could be considered for the community-at-large as well as targeting youth participation.

***Public Input Goals and Objectives:***

*Goal: All residents of the City of Pikeville will have the opportunity to be informed and participate in City government.*

- Enhance current use of media to include more opportunities to “push” information to the public
  - Develop incentives such as monthly drawings for tickets to EKEC events for Facebook friends/ likes
  - Augment use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter
  - Continue to utilize Pike TV as a tool for information dissemination; consider ways to develop interactive shows or Town Hall type forums through Pike TV
  - Continue to utilize radio and print media regularly
- Enhance opportunities for participation by young people, particularly students at Pikeville High School and the University of Pikeville
  - Consider establishing a Youth Advisory Commission to meet with the City Commission one or two times each year
  - Consider identifying student liaisons to Pikeville High School and the University of Pikeville to represent students to the Commission and report back to their peers about City activities
- Consider regular public and youth surveys to be available online