

Senior Study Project

Delaware County, Indiana

White Paper

October 1, 2008



Senior Study Project

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Senior Study Project

Executive Summary

The number of Americans over the age of 65 is expected to double from the year 2000 to 2030, resulting in one out of every five citizens being over the age of 65. This changing demographic will have dramatic impacts on the socioeconomic future of communities. Providing a livable community for older adults is of great concern on both national and local levels considering great financial resources older adults provide to their communities. Those over age 50: 1) have a net worth nearly twice the average in the United States; 2) are the most affluent of any age group, owning 70% of all money market accounts and certificate of deposit assets; 3) account for 60% of all healthcare spending; 4) purchase three-fourths of all prescription drugs and half of all over-the-counter drugs; 5) buy over 40% of all new cars. Additionally, almost half of all museum visitors are over the age of fifty-five (eDemographics, 2008).

To address these issues in Delaware County, the Ball Brothers Foundation provided funding to create the Senior Study Project. The project was overseen by representatives from the United Way of Delaware County, LifeStream Services, Inc., and the Fisher Institute for Wellness and Gerontology at Ball State University. A contract project director coordinated study efforts and reported findings. Additionally, the Senior Study Project was supported by a larger Steering Committee of community leaders, as well as staff from the United Way of Delaware County.

The Senior Study Project focused on three initial goals: 1) gather usable information and data from community residents; 2) engage the public in conversations on aging issues; and 3) raise awareness about creating a livable community for all ages. The two former goals were motivated by the idea that direct resident participation will strengthen community support once planning and implementation strategies are developed. The latter goal emerged from the notion that a livable community for seniors is not only about current older adults, but also about other community members. That is, the needs of older adults directly coincide with other age groups in the community. In particular, livable communities for aging residents address housing, health and supportive services, mobility, and social engagement.

Numerous models for establishing and measuring livable communities exist and have been implemented successfully in communities across the country. The Senior Study Project followed the national “AdvantAge Initiative” model. (<http://www.vnsny.org/advantage/>) This model is a dynamic community-building effort focused on creating vibrant and aging-friendly, or ‘AdvantAged’ communities, that are prepared for an increasing number of older adults (Visiting Nurse Service New York, 2008). The AdvantAge Initiative posits that an aging-friendly community is one that addresses basic needs, optimizes physical health and well-being, maximizes independence for the frail and disabled, and promotes social and civic engagement for all of its residents.

The Senior Study Project, from data collection methods, community building efforts, and stakeholder engagement, created a climate of awareness of issues affecting older adults in Muncie/Delaware County. The details of this white paper provide community data and feedback

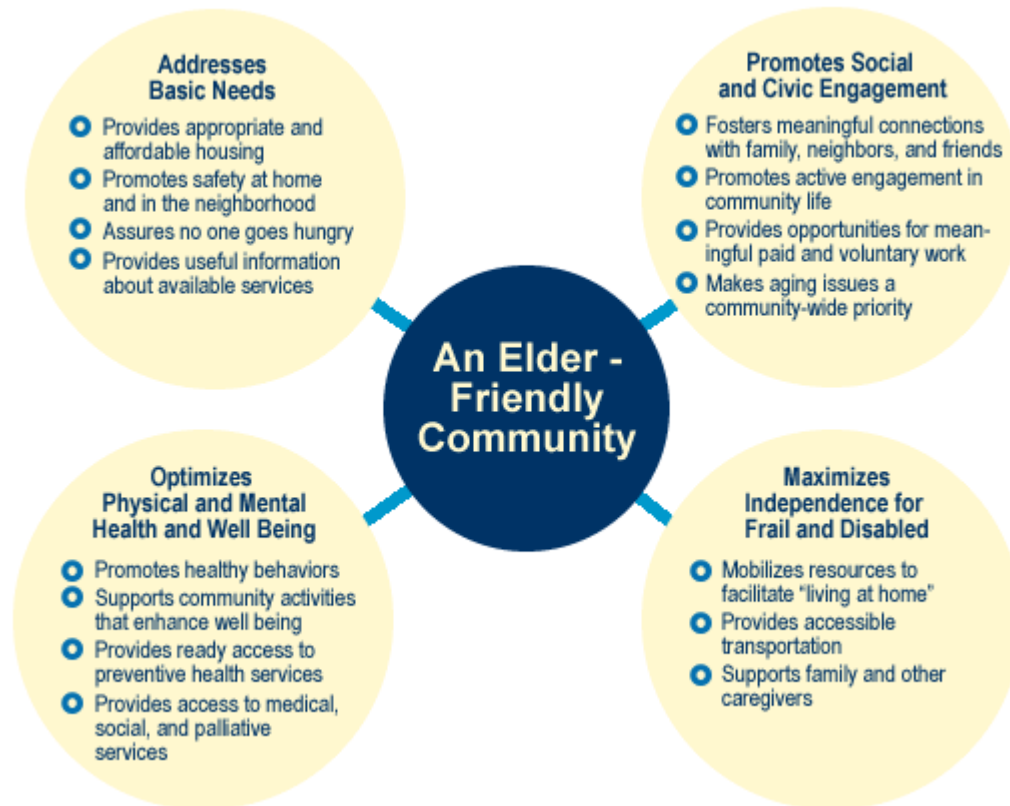
necessary for future strategic planning efforts to make Muncie/Delaware County a livable community for all ages. Based on assessment of eleven focus groups, three community forums, 1,038 community member surveys, 137 business surveys, and community asset mapping from May 15, 2008, through August 28, 2008, the following recommendations are being made to the community:

Administrative Recommendations:

- Create a diverse “livable community for all ages” Advisory Council. This group will consist of community leaders as well as community members and older adults. Findings from Senior Study Project data collection and recommendations will be utilized in developing and implementing short- and long-term strategic plans for a livable community for all ages.
- Various national “best practice” tools are available to help communities become a livable community for all ages. These tools should be reviewed by the Advisory Council to possibly guide the long-term planning process.
- Future funding needs for strategic efforts should be reviewed by the Advisory Council. Identifying budgetary “best practices” from successful livable communities, as well as planning strategies that include zero-based funding or budget neutralities are recommended.
- A community awareness initiative should be implemented to continue increasing public understanding of a livable community for all ages, and to shift the mindset on aging issues. The principle concept of “what is good for older adults is good for everyone,” must become more widely known and accepted for success of future strategic plans.
- The Advisory Council must support city and county efforts towards creating a community-wide vision to lead planning efforts.

Senior Study Project Recommendations Utilizing the AdvantAge Initiative Model:
(The following recommendations are based on data collected during the Senior Study Project)

The AdvantAge Initiative Model - Improving Communities for an Aging Society



Addresses Basic Needs:

- Develop plans to target specific neighborhoods for positive change; establish/identify naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs)
- Work with Ball State University on university-based housing options for older adults/retirees
- Work to increase awareness and utilization of community and social services
 - Strengthen 2-1-1 awareness as a vehicle to disseminate information
 - Identify other vehicles of information dissemination

Optimizes Physical and Mental Health and Well Being:

- Work with healthcare system to expand local healthcare provider scope to include Geriatricians, Gerontologists, and Psychiatrists
- Work with city/county on plans for promoting physical activity opportunities
 - Create a bicycle-friendly community

Promotes Social and Civic Engagement:

- Work with the Chamber of Commerce and higher education institutions
 - Strengthen older adults' role in local businesses
 - Expand talent and diversify local labor pool
- Work with Ball State University to develop specific plans for bridging gaps between the university community and Muncie/Delaware County

Maximizes Independence for Frail and Disabled:

- Work with public transportation providers on education and public awareness of services
- Work to repair, maintain, and develop sidewalks throughout the community
- Work with United Way of Delaware County's Community Solutions Team to help local businesses provide caregiver support and services to employees

Immediate Action Plan

1. Members of the Livable Community for All Ages Advisory Council will be recruited and convene October 22, 2008.
2. Four subcommittees will be recruited by the end of October, 2008, based on areas of the AdvantAge Initiative Model.
3. Subcommittees will hold initial meetings before December 31, 2008. An Advisory Council member will chair/oversee recruitment and efforts of each subcommittee.
4. Each subcommittee will develop a broad, strategic action plan, including resource needs, for implementing Senior Study Project recommendations.
5. The Advisory Council will review all plans, determine priorities and resource needs, and begin implementation of action steps in early 2009.

Background

In 2006, the Community Center for Vital Aging (CCVA), a division of the John and Janice Fisher Institute for Wellness and Gerontology at Ball State University, conducted a study, supported by the Ball Brothers Foundation, looking at general demographics of the older adult population in Delaware County. Additionally, the CCVA hosted focus groups identifying senior service providers in the area, and the awareness and utilization of those services by the community. Finally, they distributed and received 327 “living well” surveys from seniors that addressed social, physical, and other activities in which the community engaged.

The findings from these efforts were positive and provided strong support for a more comprehensive and collaborative initiative to occur. Those involved in the endeavor, determined additional information was needed, and plans were underway for developing the Senior Study Project.

In October 2007, a Steering Committee was formed, and a meeting was held and professionally facilitated. The purpose of the Steering Committee was to organize the process for a county-wide assessment of issues and aging in place surrounding the content of the 2006 study. The anticipated outcome of the meeting would be a plan for a short term (six months or less) process that would engage key participants and deliver a broadly accepted short list of actionable priorities, adopted action plans, and a legacy of advocacy and support. The steering committee was comprised of the President/CEO of LifeStream Services, Inc., the Deputy Mayor of Muncie, the President/CEO of the United Way of Delaware County, the Director of the Fisher Institute for Wellness & Gerontology at Ball State University, the Program Officer for the Ball Brothers Foundation, the Associate Director of the Fisher Institute for Wellness & Gerontology, and a Geriatric Clinical Nurse Specialist from Ball Memorial Hospital.

The Steering Committee’s meeting was successful. Within 3 months of their meeting, they were able to identify financial support for the project (Ball Brothers Foundation), confirm a convening organization (The United Way of Delaware County), and develop timelines for hiring a project director and developing a draft implementation plan.

The Senior Study Project Director began work on March 23, 2008, to plan, implement, and evaluate a project within six months. The director developed a detailed implementation plan including data collection methods, promotion and public relations efforts, and plans for data analysis and reporting. The Steering Committee determined that a white paper would be produced at the conclusion of the study.

Senior Study Project Overview

The approved timeline for the Senior Study Project was a six-month period. The first two months focused on meeting with community and business leaders and “stakeholders” in the field of aging. Additionally, extensive review of literature on successful livable communities for all ages from across the country, and statistics and information about Delaware County, occurred. The information and feedback helped shape the implementation plan as well as methods and content of data collection to be used. Community promotion and awareness of the Senior Study Project and changing population trends also began within the first two months.

For the Senior Study Project to obtain as much information and perspective as possible in a short amount of time (approximately months 2-5), five key methods of data collection were created and implemented:

1. Eleven focus groups were held to present general information to participants and pose questions to targeted groups of people. All focus group participants were asked questions based on the AdvantAge Initiative model. From the focus group responses, broad priority issues were identified for Muncie/Delaware County and became the topics for community forums.
2. Three community forums were held to inform and educate the community while engaging them in the issue of aging in place, obtain information about their views on focus group priority issues, and encourage future participation in community initiatives on aging.
3. A survey was distributed and collected from 1,038 community members. Its purpose was to gather information on residents’ ideas and desires for making Delaware County a livable community for all ages.
4. A survey was distributed and collected from 137 agencies and businesses within Delaware County. Its purpose was to gather information from local businesses on their readiness for the changing community demographics.
5. Asset mapping occurred to plot community resources to help with future planning initiatives.

Focus groups and community forums exist more for the role of collecting qualitative information to help planners understand rather than measure. For aging in Muncie/Delaware County, these pieces are needed in order to plan ‘livable community for all ages’ strategies. It is important to understand how the community residents feel about existing services, gather input and support from community members, and establish broad community conversations about the issues before delving into detailed planning.

The final months of the Senior Study Project were dedicated to data compilation and analysis, and writing and reporting results to the community. Additionally, the Steering Committee worked to determine future efforts and project ownership based on the results and findings from the Senior Study Project.

Senior Study Project Findings

1. Meetings with Community Leaders and Stakeholders

Various ideas and suggestions were obtained from conversations with over twenty-five community leaders. Because most meetings occurred within the first few months of the Senior Study Project's existence, the conversations were general in nature. The Director gave a brief overview of how the Senior Study Project was formed, and general plans for data collection. Community leaders were asked for ideas and suggestions based on their professional perspectives, or what they saw as priorities in their current roles within the community.

The following are summarized suggestions from community leaders and stakeholders that were offered as to what Muncie/Delaware County can be doing to become a livable community for all ages, or what challenges have been in the way of this being able to occur. Comments provided are those that were mentioned by multiple leaders.

- The local healthcare system is not prioritized for older adults. (accessibility, affordability, knowledge level of providers, mental health services-all identified as weaknesses) (6 people)
- Baby boomers and other generations are not thinking about/aware of what they will need in the future or for their role as caregivers. (6 people)
- Perceived gaps in service and/or information are different/worse than actual gaps. (5 people)
- There is not a lot of cohesiveness among agencies and service providers; agencies need to collaborate not just co-exist. (4 people)
- There are significant difficulties in finding ways to reach people with information. Communication channels are challenges for various reasons. (included newspaper, radio, and other sources) (4 people)
- Recent changes in public transportation are negatively affecting older adults. (4 people)
- Housing and local long-term care options do not offer enough variety throughout differing stages of life. (4 people)
- Muncie/Delaware County needs a vision with strategies for it to become aging friendly. (4 people)
- Cost of living and geographic placement of Delaware County on a national scale is very good. (3 people)
- Ball State University must play a larger role in community development; the gap between Ball State and the community at-large is significant. (3 people)
- Employment opportunities will change; non-traditional workforce options need to be addressed within businesses. (3 people)
- Not all neighborhoods are livable. (sidewalks, safety, and crime all identified as concerns) (3 people)

Information discussed with community leaders assisted in the decision making to utilize the AdvantAge Initiative model for focus group discussion. Key areas of livable communities in the AdvantAge Initiative were mentioned repeatedly from community leaders, such as housing, healthcare, transportation, and knowledge and accessibility of services.

2. Focus Groups

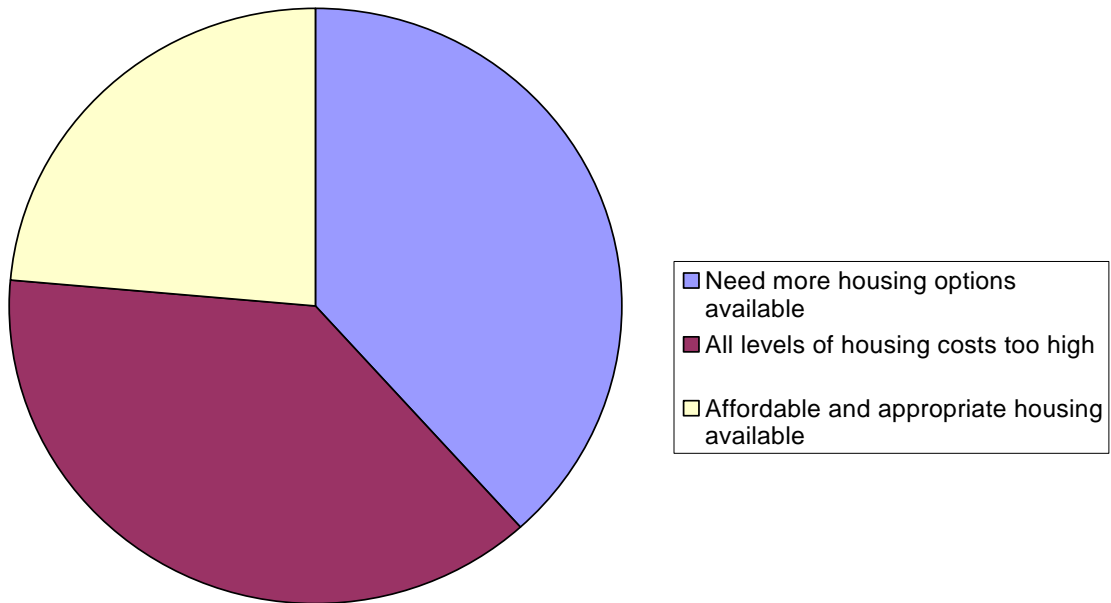
Over ninety participants in eleven focus groups gave detailed feedback to requested information. Of the four dimensions of the AdvantAge Initiative, three areas showed highest concern from the focus groups. First, large concern was expressed in the category of “Basic Needs”, in particular, appropriate and affordable housing. Next, concern was expressed in the category of “Maximizing Independence,” in particular, transportation issues. Finally, participants expressed concern with the category of “Health and Well Being,” with specific emphasis on access to medical and social services.

A detailed transcript of questions and responses for all focus groups is included in the Appendix of this report. Following are summarized statements from focus group data collection. Each area is outlined based on AdvantAge Initiative categories.

Basic Needs-Appropriate and Affordable Housing

40% of all responses felt there needs to be more housing options available within Delaware County, and the same amount related to all levels of housing costs being too high. 19% of the responses were that Delaware County has affordable and appropriate housing for everyone and the quality is good.

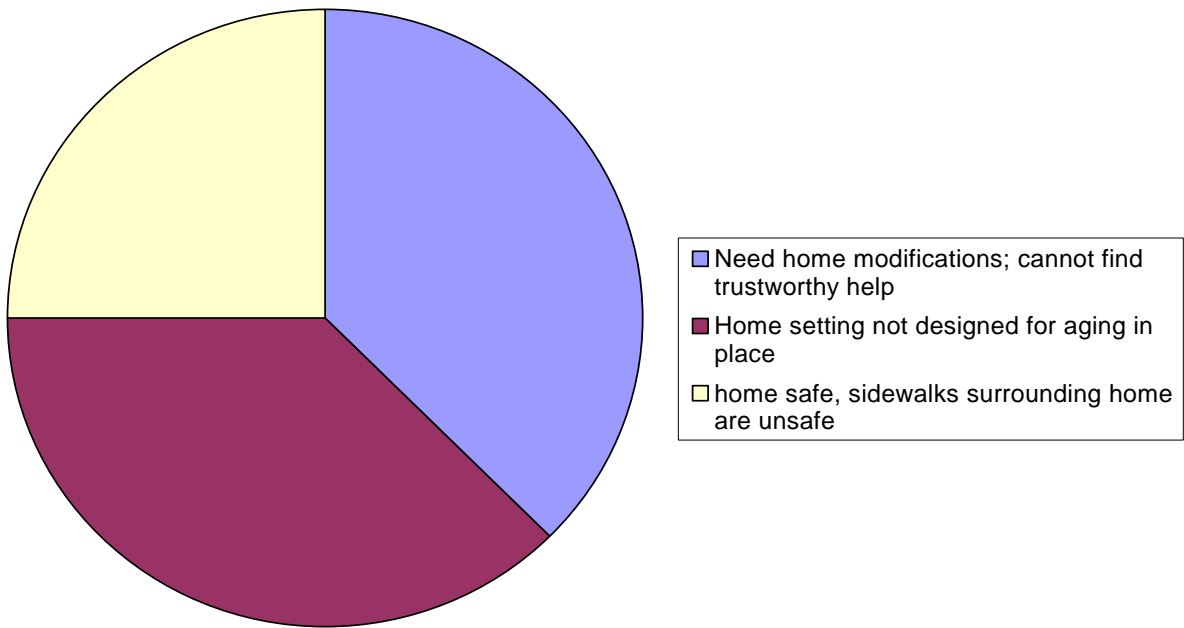
Basic Needs-Appropriate and Affordable Housing



Basic Needs-Housing Modified for Mobility and Safety

26% of the respondents expressed concern about needed home modifications, but did not know how to find trustworthy outside help. The same amount felt home settings are not designed for them to safely age-in-place. 17% of the responses were from people who felt safe in their home, but felt sidewalks surrounding the homes were unsafe.

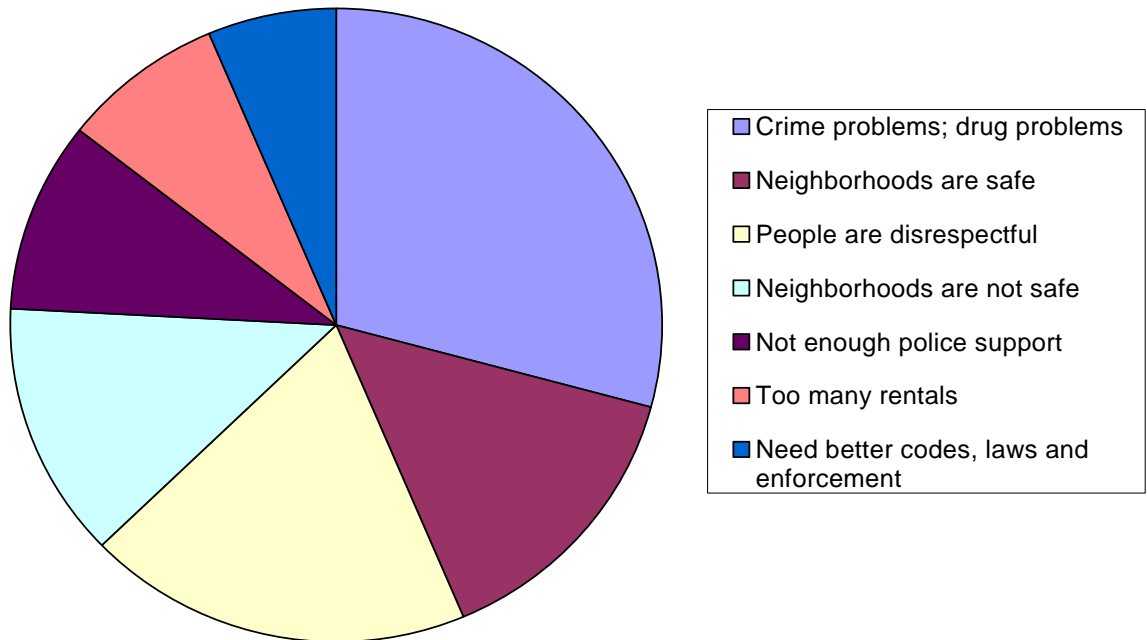
Basic Needs-Housing Modified for Mobility and Safety



Basic Needs-Neighborhoods Livable and Safe

16% of respondents related to positive feelings about the safety of neighborhoods, while 14% of respondents related to neighborhood safety expressed a general negative feeling. 32% of responses related to neighborhood safety were concerns about crime, in particular drug use/sales. Many felt there is not enough police support in neighborhoods. 9% of respondents expressed concerns over an excessive number of rental properties in Muncie/Delaware County contributing to safety problems. 7% of responses related to the importance of better building codes, laws, and enforcement to make neighborhoods safer. 21% of responses related to neighborhood safety were identified as people simply being disrespectful.

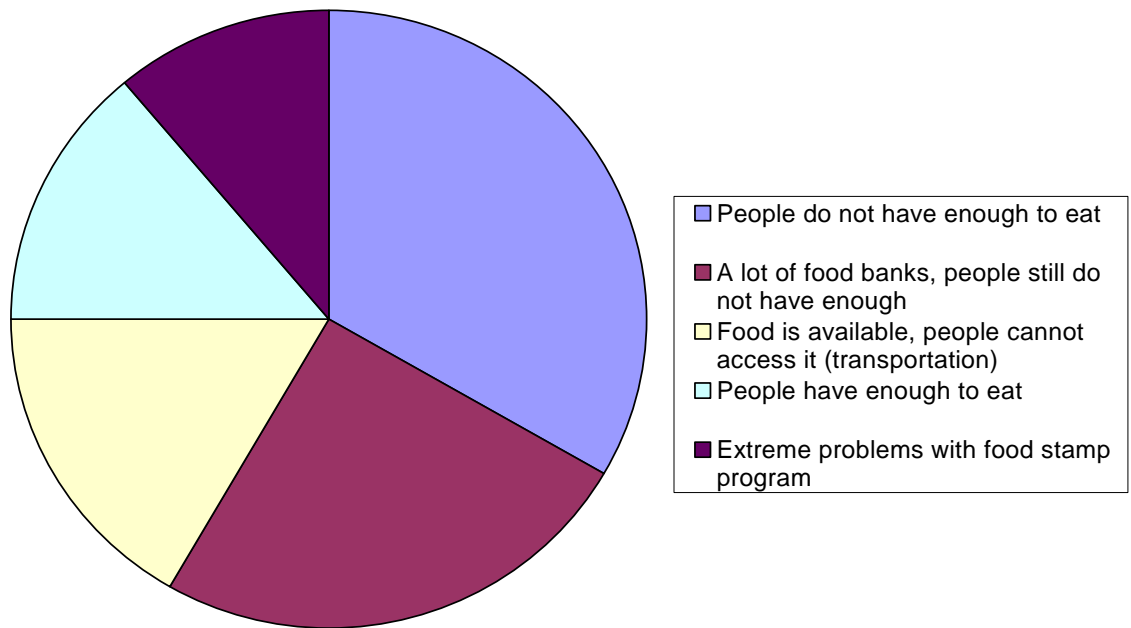
Basic Needs-Neighborhoods Livable and Safe



Basic Needs-Hunger

40% of the responses related to hunger felt concern that people do not have enough to eat on a daily basis in Muncie/Delaware County, while 17% felt there is not a hunger problem. Many responses related to hunger were that there are a lot of food banks and assistance available in the community, but it still is not enough to meet the needs. 20% of the responses were specific to food being available to be distributed to those in need, but they have no transportation or way to access it, or they do not know ahead of time when/where it will be. 13% stated significant problems within the food stamp system.

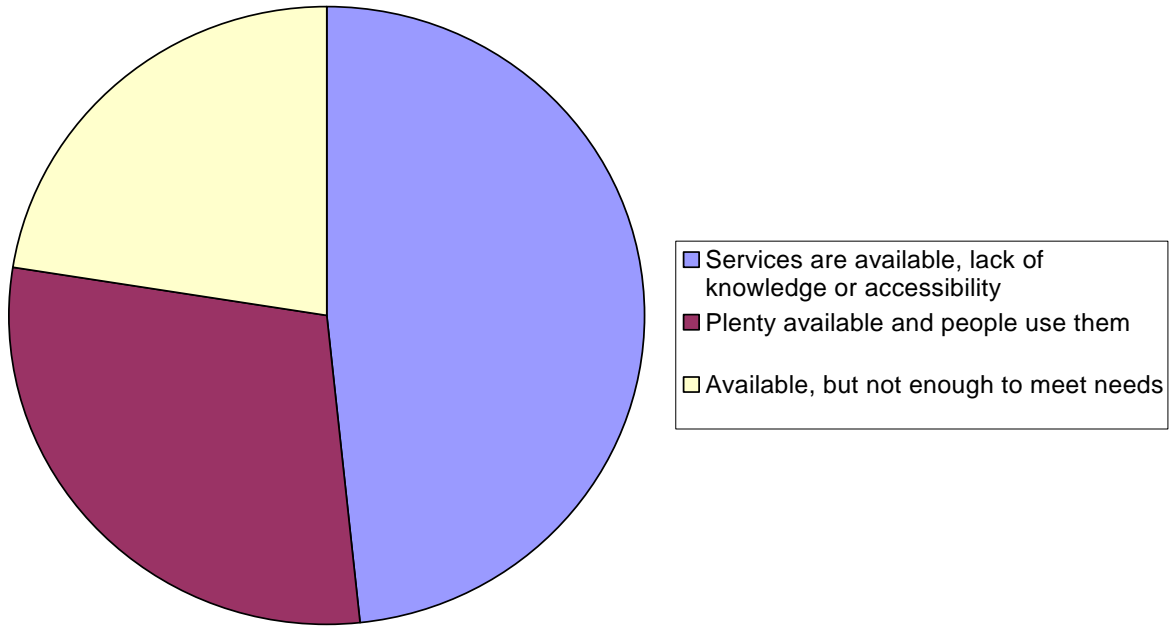
Basic Needs-Hunger



Basic Needs-Assistance Services-Availability and Accessibility

45% of the respondents explained that while services are available, people either do not know about them, or are not able to access them. 27% of responses related to assistive services were that there are plenty available and people use them. 21% of respondents expressed that assistive services are not meeting community needs.

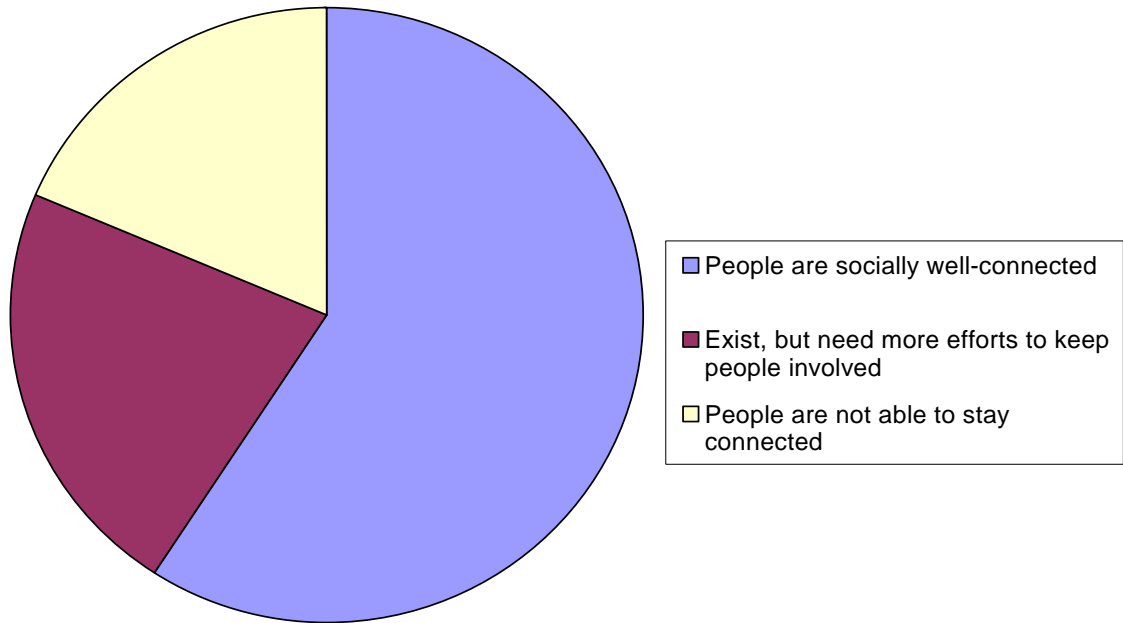
Basic Needs-Assistance Services-Availability and Accessibility



Social and Civic Engagement-Connections with Friends and Neighbors

59% of respondents felt people are able to stay socially connected without problems, while 19% felt that people do not, or are not, able to stay connected. 22% of the responses related to connections with friends and neighbors were that they exist, but more effort needs to be put into helping people stay involved.

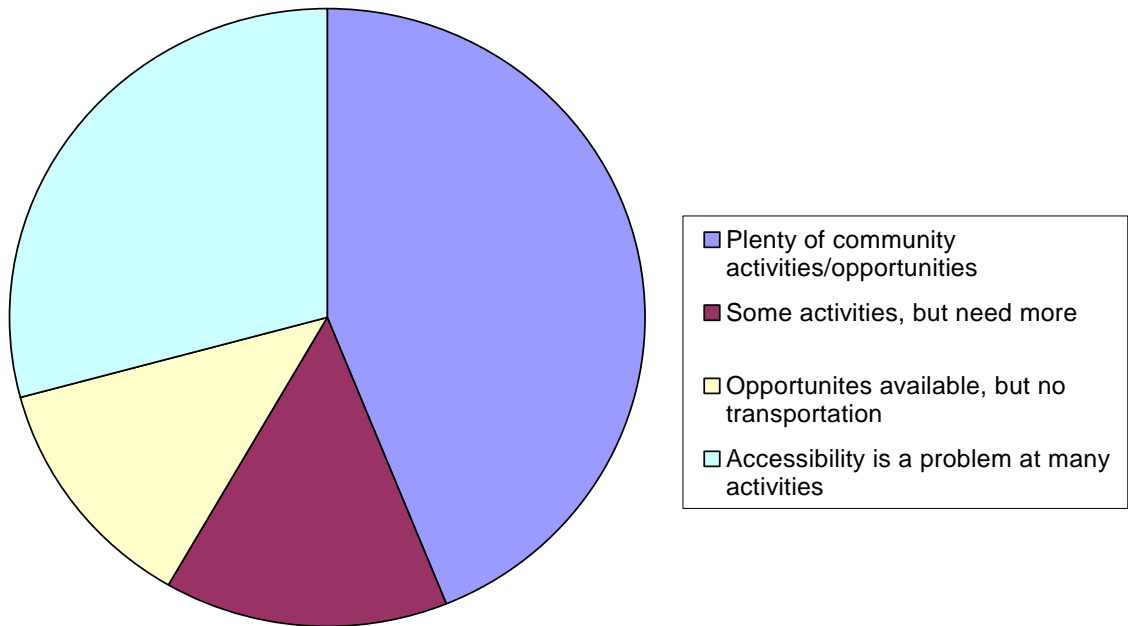
Social and Civic Engagement-Connections with Friends and Neighbors



Social and Civic Engagement-Community Activities

64% of respondents felt that there are plenty of civic, cultural, religious, and/or recreational opportunities available, while 21% felt that there need to be more. 18% expressed problems with transportation to community activities, and 67% noted that accessibility is a problem at many places with activities (sidewalks, parking, walk too far from parking to building, etc.)

Social and Civic Engagement-Community Activities



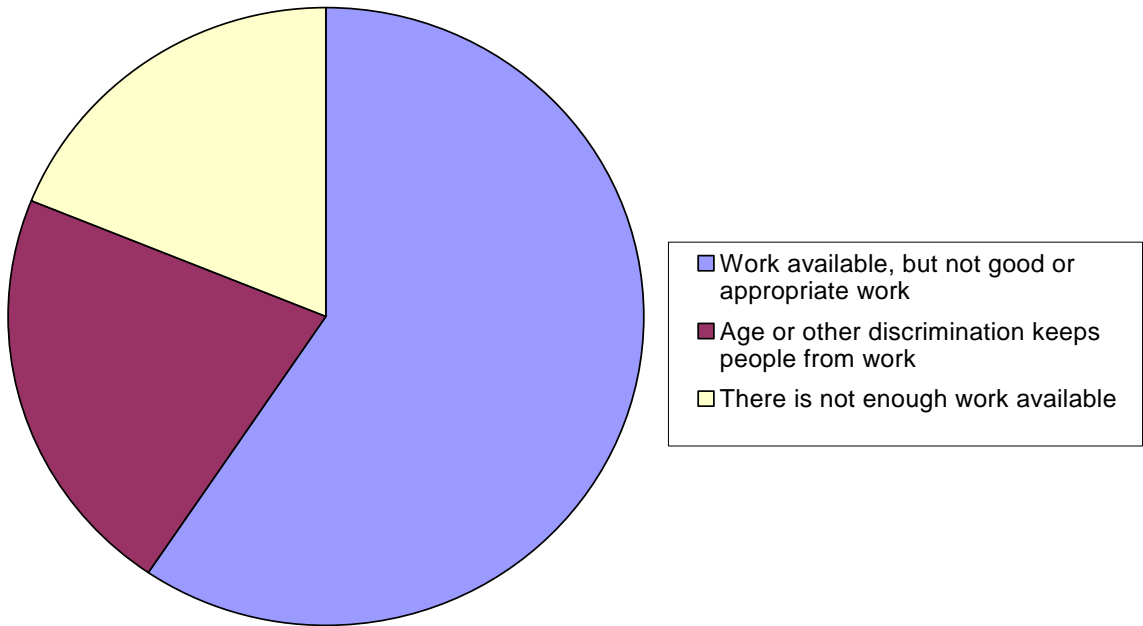
Social and Civic Engagement-Volunteer Work

100% of responses related to there being an abundance of opportunities to volunteer in the community, although some noted transportation as a challenge.

Social and Civic Engagement-*Paid Work*

59% of responses related to work being available, but it not being appropriate or of good quality, preference, or pay. 22% of respondents expressed age, or another form of discrimination occurring, which keeps people from doing desired paid work.

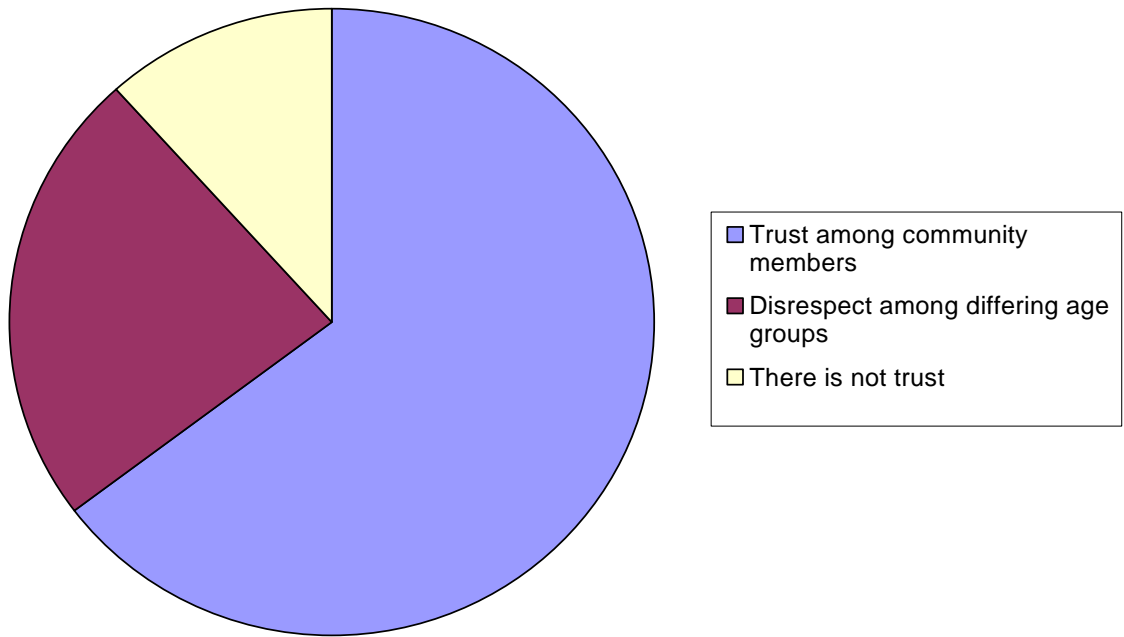
Social and Civic Engagement-Paid Work



Social and Civic Engagement-Trust among Residents

69% of responses were positively related to trust among community members.
25% related to concerns with disrespect among differing age groups.

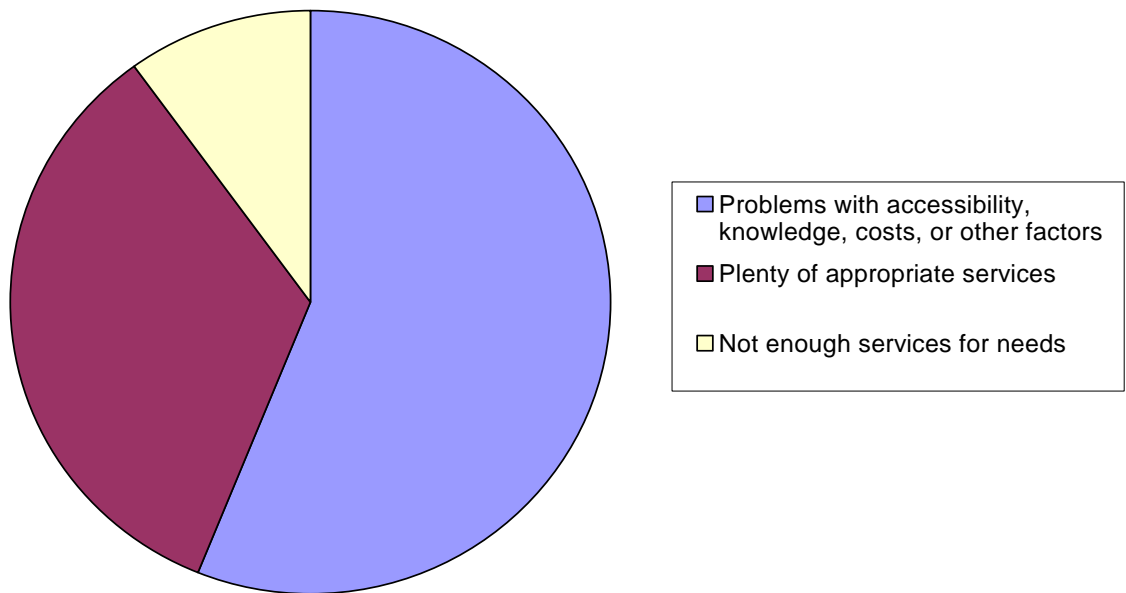
Social and Civic Engagement-Trust among Residents



Health and Well-Being-Promotion and Provision of Necessary and Preventive Health Services

52% of responses related to problems with either accessibility of services, knowledge about services, costs of services, or some other limiting factor to accessing health-related services. 31% of respondents felt Muncie/Delaware County offers appropriate services for health and well-being, while 9% of responses related to there not being enough services.

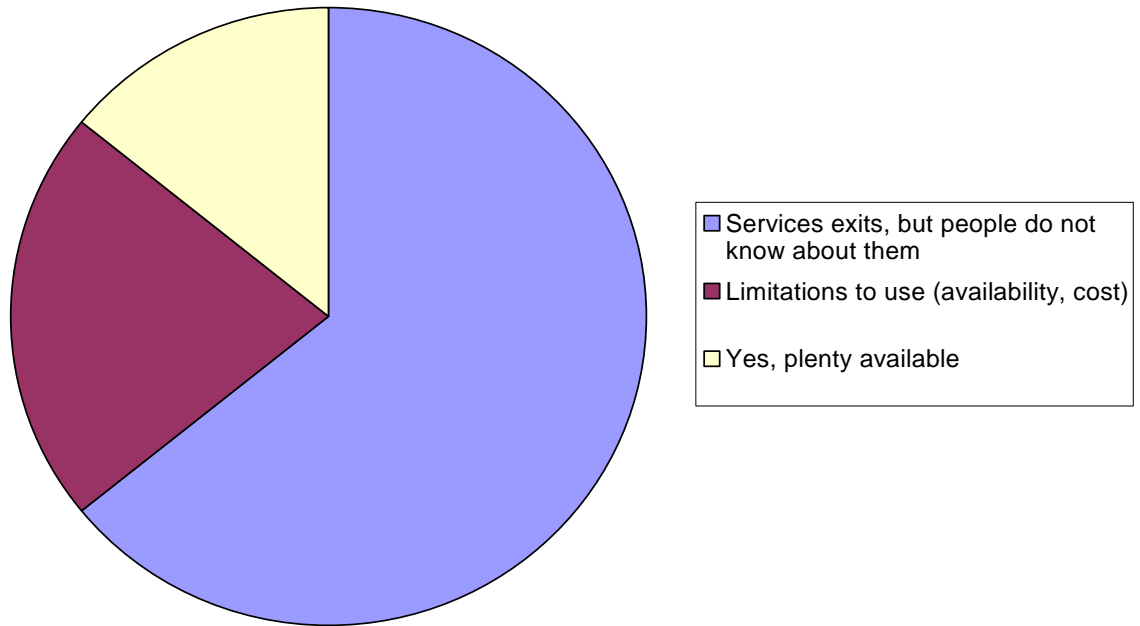
Health and Well-Being-Promotion and Provision of Necessary and Preventive Health Services



Health and Well-Being-Palliative Care

64% of respondents felt that palliative care services exist, but people do not know about them or how to access them. 21% of respondents felt there were limitations of available services.

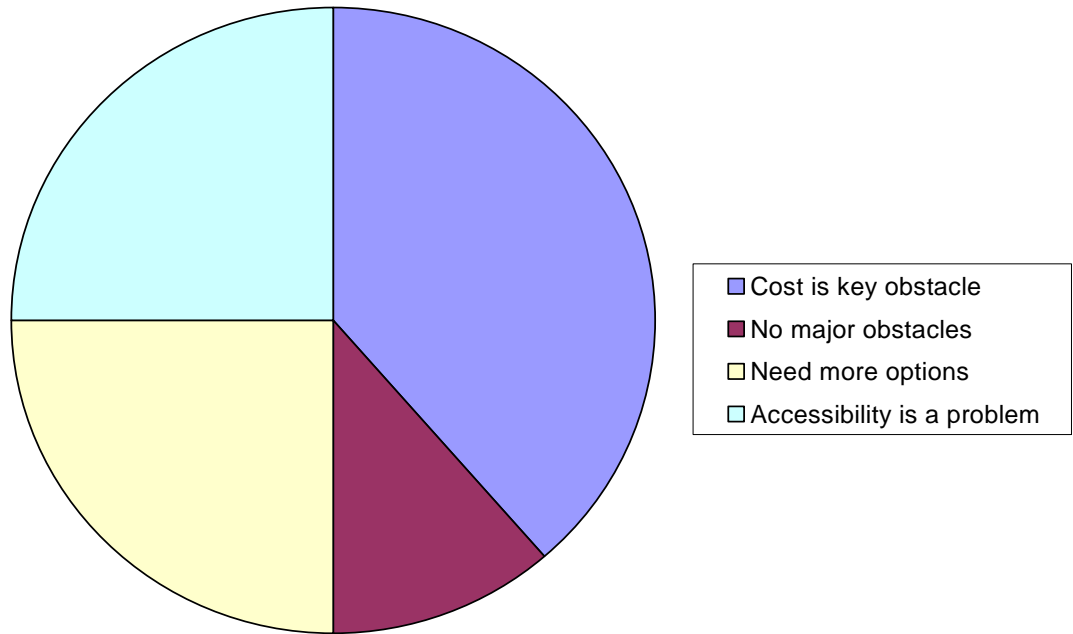
Health and Well-Being-Palliative Care



Health and Well-Being-Obstacles to Use of Medical Care Minimized

40% of respondents felt cost were a key obstacle, 26% felt accessibility was a main obstacle, and 25% felt limited options were an obstacle, specifically a lack of geriatric specialists. 12% of responses saw minimal or no obstacles.

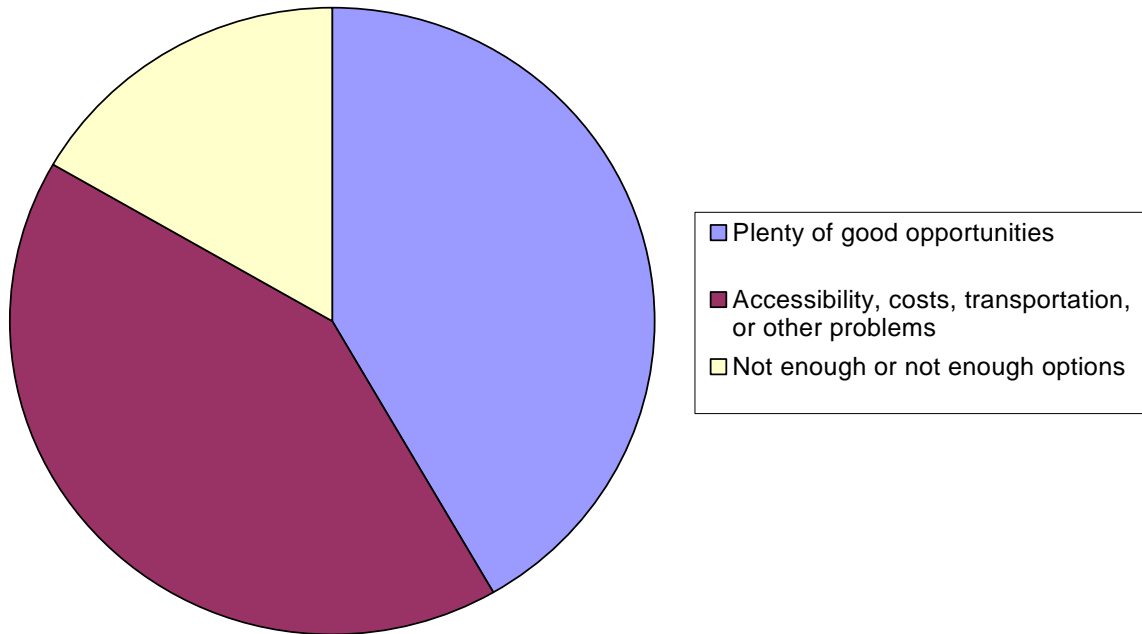
Health and Well-Being-Obstacles to Use of Medical Care Minimized



Health and Well-Being-Opportunities for Physical Activity

53% of responses related to good opportunities existing within the community, and the same amount related to challenges with costs, transportation, or accessibility to physical activity opportunities. 21% of responses related to there not being enough opportunities or enough options for physical activity.

Health and Well-Being-Opportunities for Physical Activity



Health and Well-Being-How to Best Promote Services

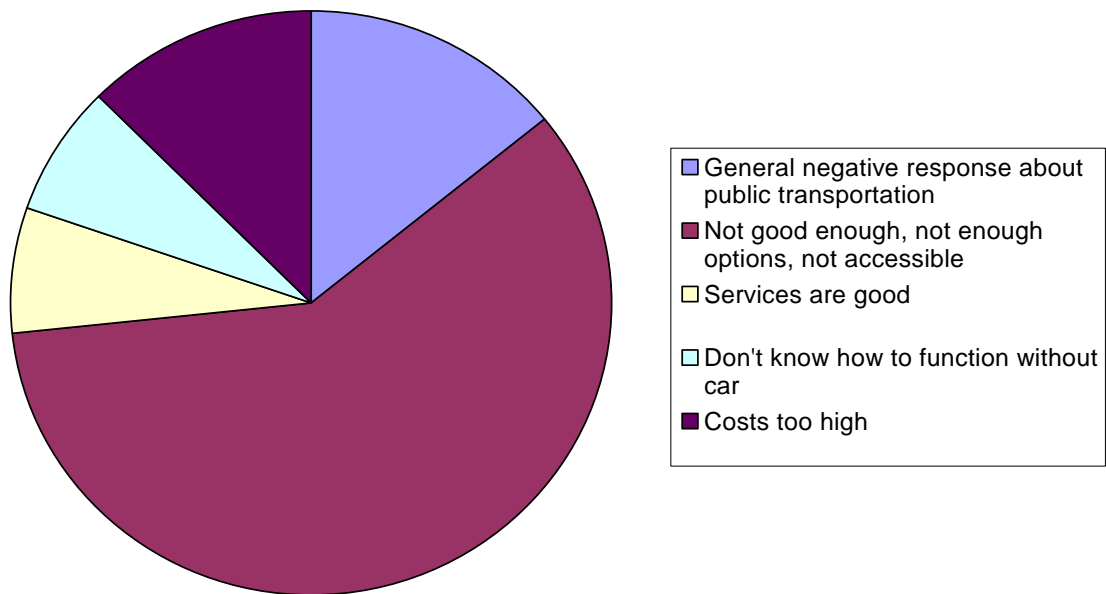
Word of mouth was identified as the best way to learn about available services. The newspaper was identified as the second best way to learn about services. Receiving mailings was the third most popular response.

Maximizing Independence-Transportation Accessibility and Affordability

66% of responses related to limitations within public transportation. (not enough services, not enough options, or lack of accessibility) 16% of responses related to transportation were negative, while 8% were positive about accessibility and affordability of public transportation in Muncie/Delaware County. 14% of responses were specifically related to costs being too high.

Many participants were able to drive and had a car, but expressed significant concerns about mobility if unable to drive.

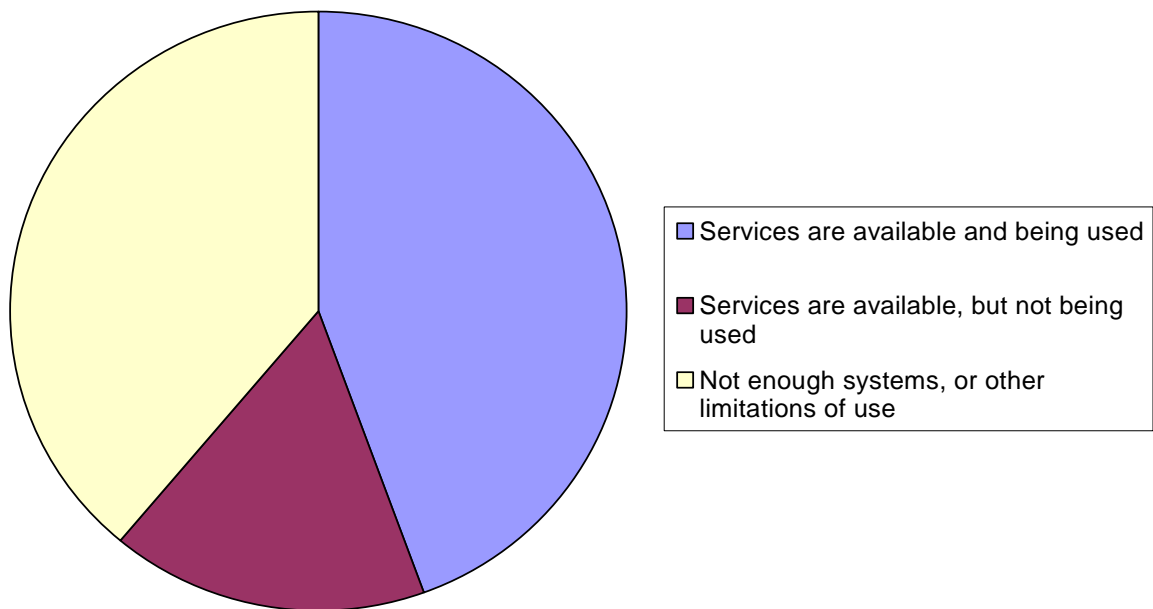
Maximizing Independence-Transportation Accessibility and Affordability



Maximizing Independence-Community Systems Enabling People to Live Comfortably and Safely at Home

44% of responses were related to plenty of systems and services being available, while 39% of responses related to limitations of existing services. 17% of respondents felt that services are available but people choose not to access them.

Maximizing Independence-Community Systems Enabling People to Live Comfortably and Safely at Home



Maximizing Independence-Caregivers Mobilized to Complement the Formal System

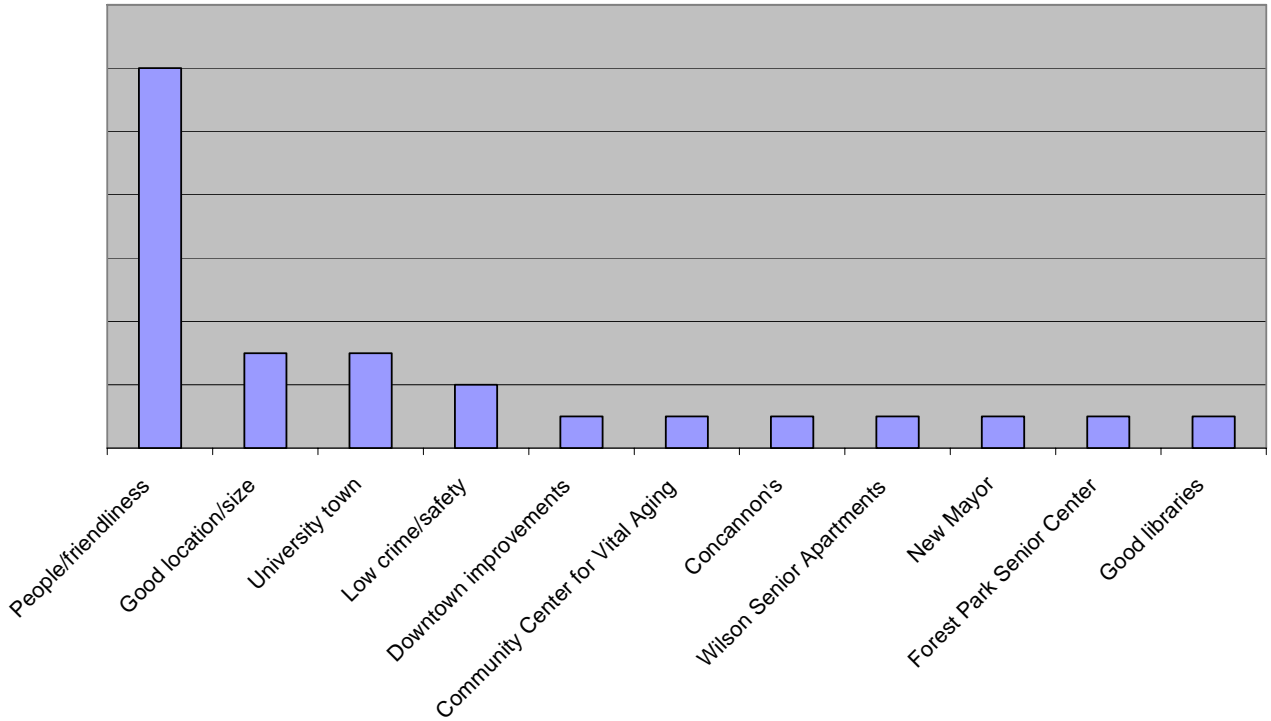
79% of responses felt that caregivers are not in place, family and personal help is limited, costs are too high to hire caregivers, or they could not find caregivers if needed.

28% of respondents felt there is a high availability of professional/paid caregivers.

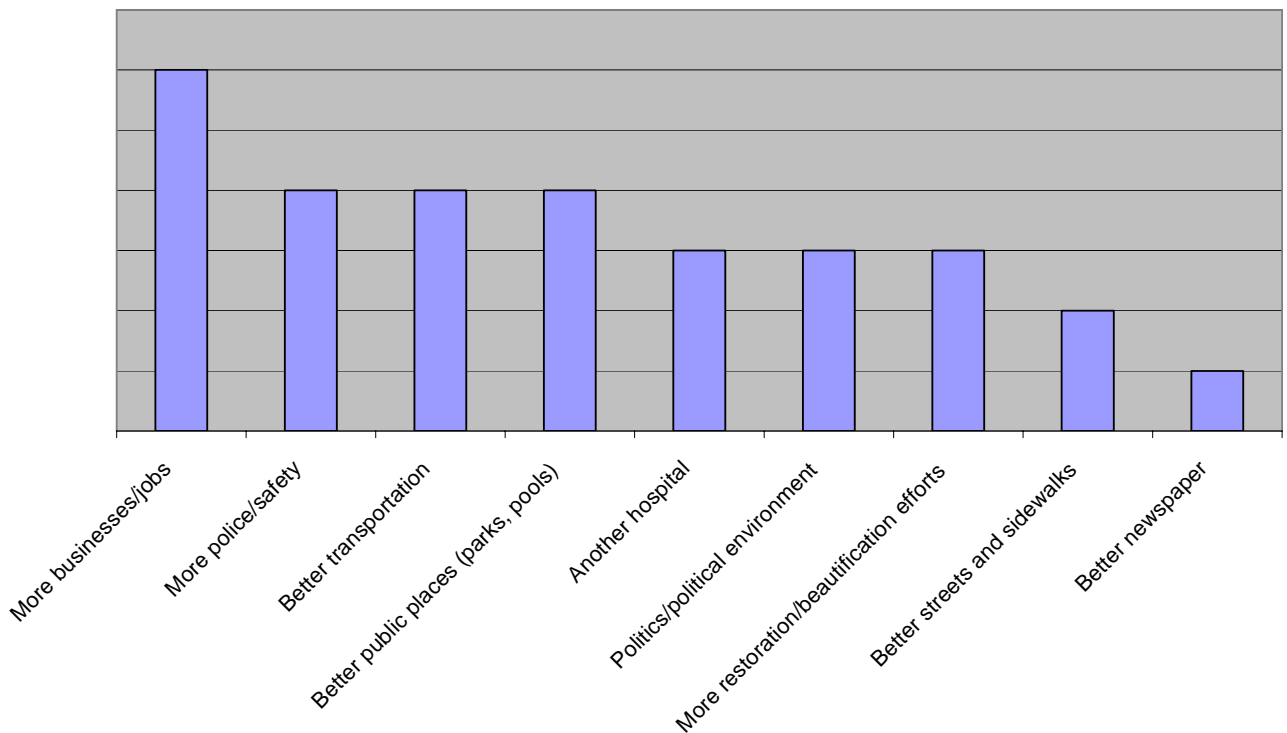
Additional Information from Focus Groups

All focus groups were asked additional questions about their community beyond the framework of the AdvantAge Initiative.

What is one of the best things about living in Muncie/Delaware County?



If you could change one thing about your community, what would it be?



Professional Focus Group

A focus group was held that was comprised solely of individuals working in the field of aging or long-term care settings. Top responses, feedback, and recommendations from that group are summarized. Responses are in order of prevalence.

“What are the biggest challenges people face when planning for health and long-term services?”

People do not know where to start.

There is a lack of pre-planning, or people wait until they are in “crisis mode.”

People are not prepared for costs involved with long-term care.

There is a lack of accurate information and understanding of what is available.

Family roles and caregiver dynamics create challenges.

“Are there enough services to meet future needs?”

Now, there are too many in Muncie/Delaware County, but there are probably not enough diverse services for the future.

Education about services is a significant problem.

We need more Geriatricians and health care providers who understand aging; there are not specialists here.

“What types of services will we need for the future?”

Better mental health services are needed.

We will need more options and flexibility within services; baby boomers will be “pickier.”

We need more Geriatricians and providers who understand issues of older adults.

We will need more technology integrated into service provision.

People need to get help sooner, so more services will be needed to phase people into various levels of care.

Long term care administrators need to get together monthly to stay connected and abreast of changing trends and services.

Transportation should be offered for people to visit different buildings and learn about what is available.

We need to better educate and connect the community to services *before* they need them.

There needs to be better coordination of caregivers.

We need a community leader or position that exists within the community to organize and manage these issues. (education, coordination, etc.)

Health fairs will need to be updated to attract a newer generation.

We can not keep doing the same thing and expect different results.

Regulations will have to change in long-term care settings. They are too cumbersome and slow the process of care.

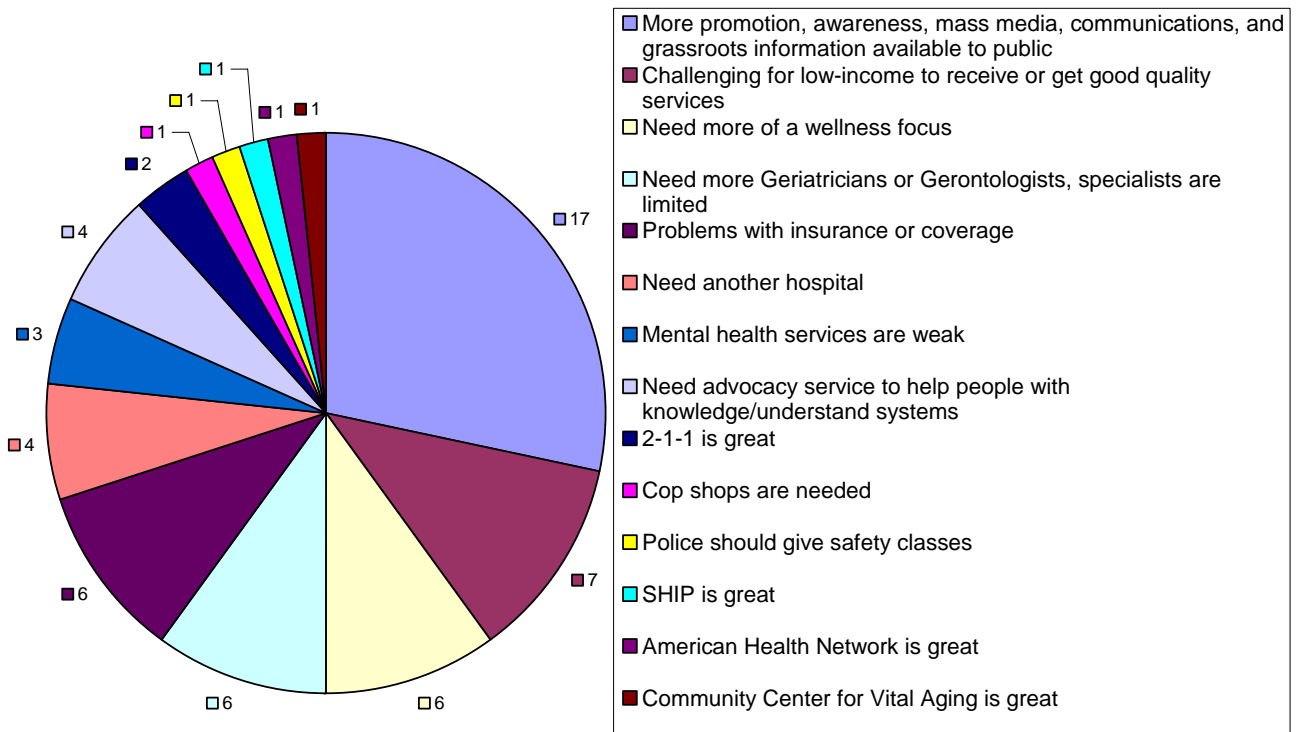
3. Community Forums

Three community forums were held after all focus groups were conducted. Information from the focus groups was utilized as discussion points for the forums. It was determined that three general categories seemed to be of top concern from focus group responses. Those related to all aspects surrounding housing, transportation, and health and social services.

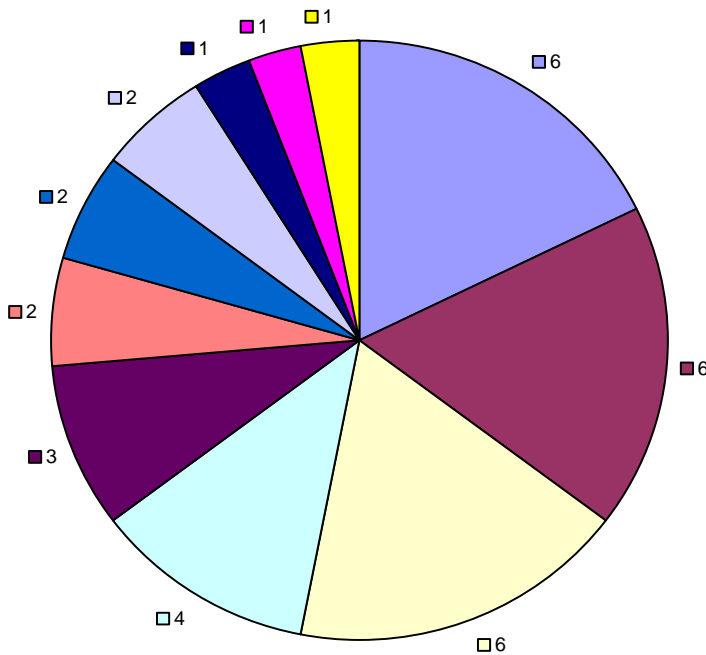
The first 20-30 minutes of each forum was dedicated to community education and awareness about aging trends nationally and in Delaware County, livable communities for all ages, and the specific work of the Senior Study Project. The remaining 40-60 minutes provided the audience with the opportunity to give feedback to facilitated questions. The questions posed to forum audiences were the same for each group.

A detailed transcript of questions and responses for all focus groups are included in the Appendix of this report. Following are key summary areas from community forum data collection.

How can we improve upon our health and social services provisions?

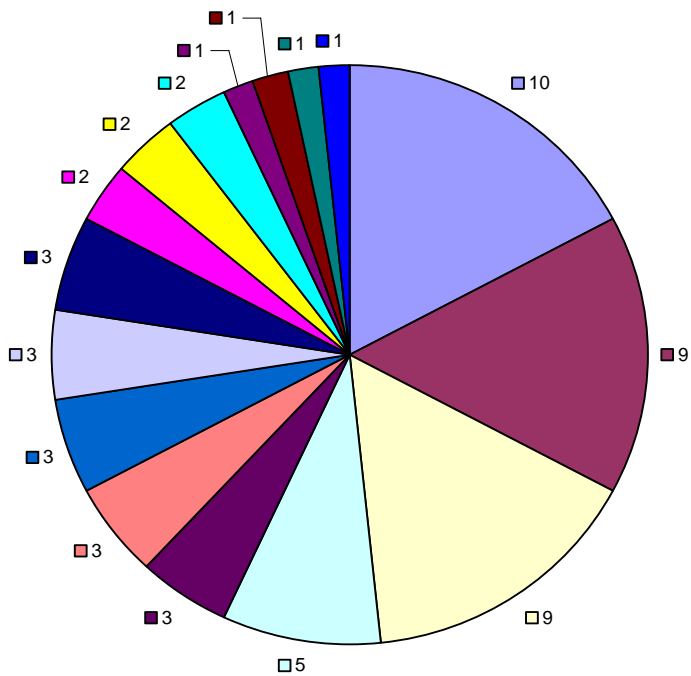


How can our community provide appropriate housing options?



- Not enough Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC's)
- Not enough low to moderate income housing options
- Newer homes are not using "Universal Design"
- Need to education contractors on aging and universal design
- Shared housing options are needed
- Costs of moving is too high
- Providers such as Habitat for Humanity, Section VIII, etc. need to know about building with universal design
- The public isn't educated on all of the options
- Unsafe neighborhoods
- Senior friendly realtors are needed
- Lending institutions need to help people find something affordable

How can our community improve upon our transportation issues?



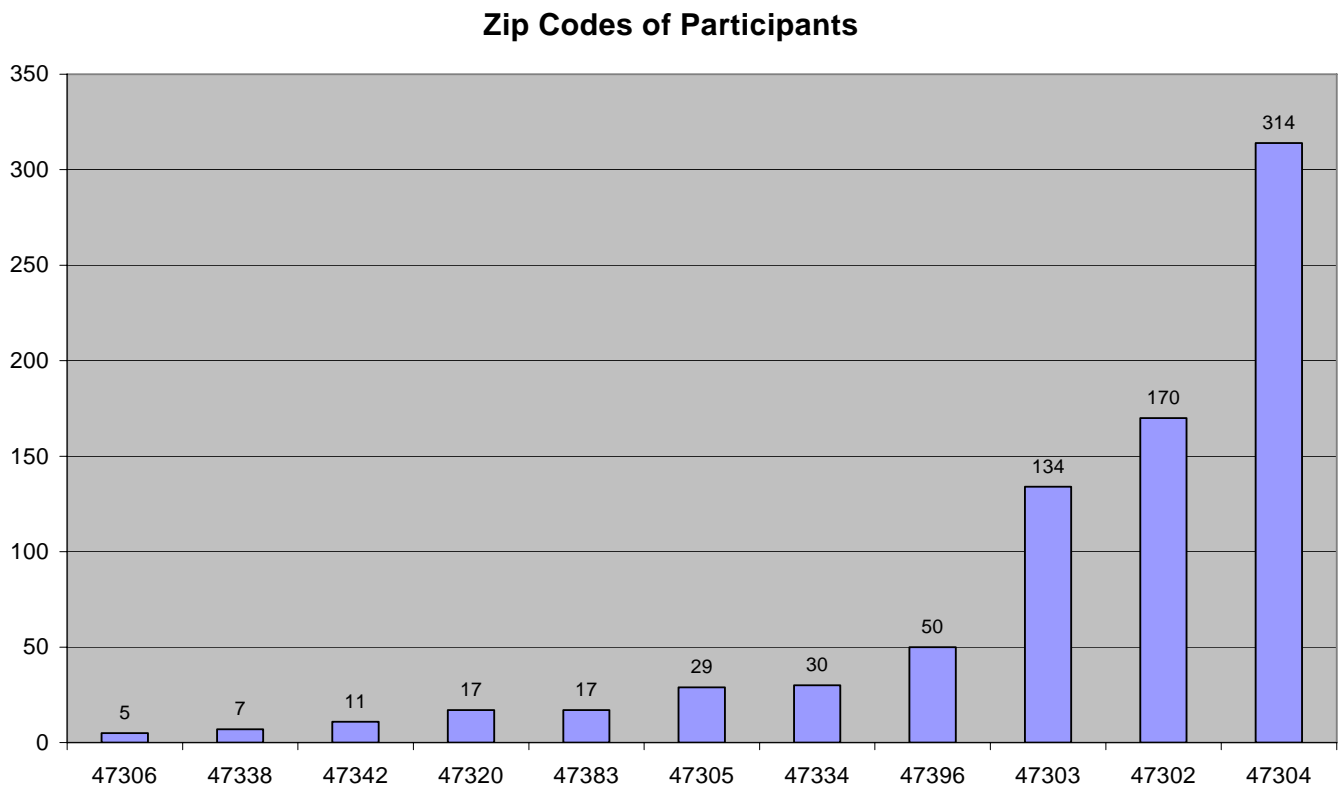
- Costs of transportation too high
- Education and communication about buses and public transportation needs improvement
- Need bicycle paths or a more "bicycle-friendly" community
- More rural transportation is needed (town-to-town)
- LifeStream's transportation is good
- Sidewalks need to be better
- Need services to Indianapolis or other cities
- Need seven day a week services
- Need door to door services for those with mobility issues
- City transportation is good
- Lighting of streets and sidewalks needs to be better
- Need assessments of driving skills
- Need advocate to help people learn about and work through system
- Churches and LifeStream might try to collaborate
- Churches could help by using church vans
- People driving without licenses due to fines, but need car

4. “Community for All Ages” Community Member Survey

To gather broad opinions from residents while increasing public awareness on livable communities, a survey was made available online and on paper. Both methods were promoted heavily, and paper surveys were distributed at numerous community events. In a 3-month time frame, 1,038 surveys were collected for analysis.

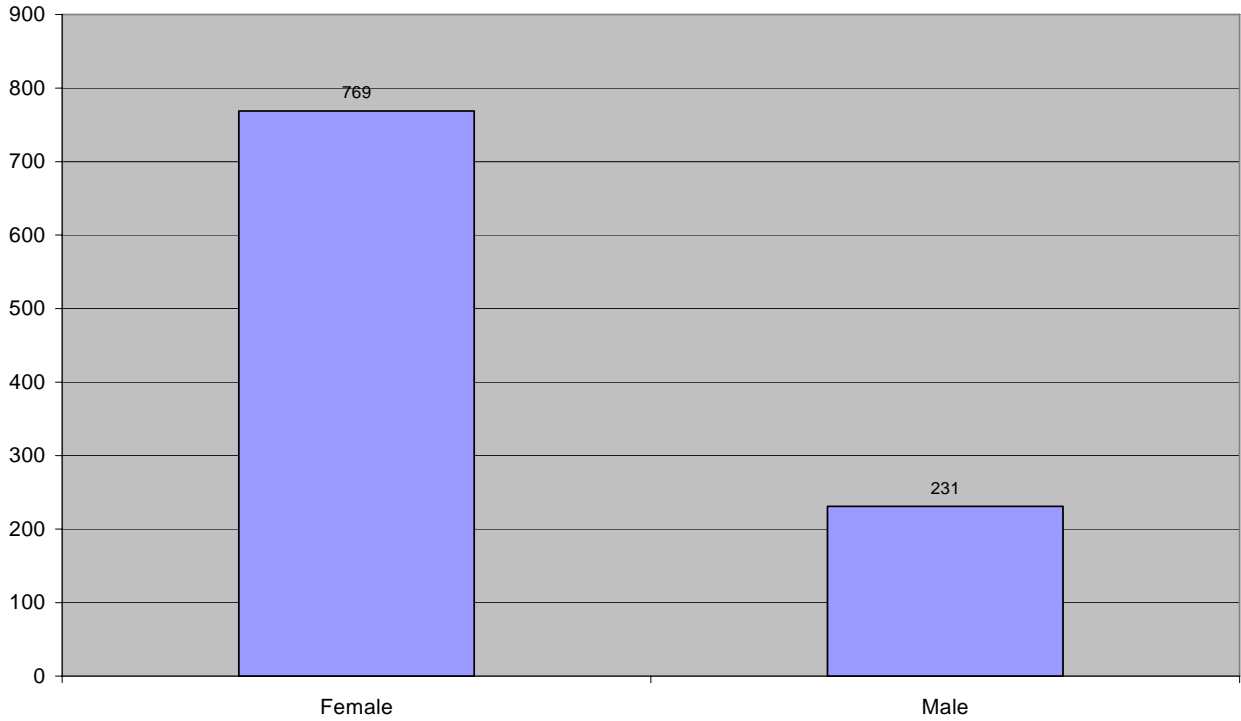
A summary data report from the survey is included in the Appendix of this report. Following are key findings from the “Community for All Ages” survey.

All zip codes within Muncie/Delaware County were represented in the survey.



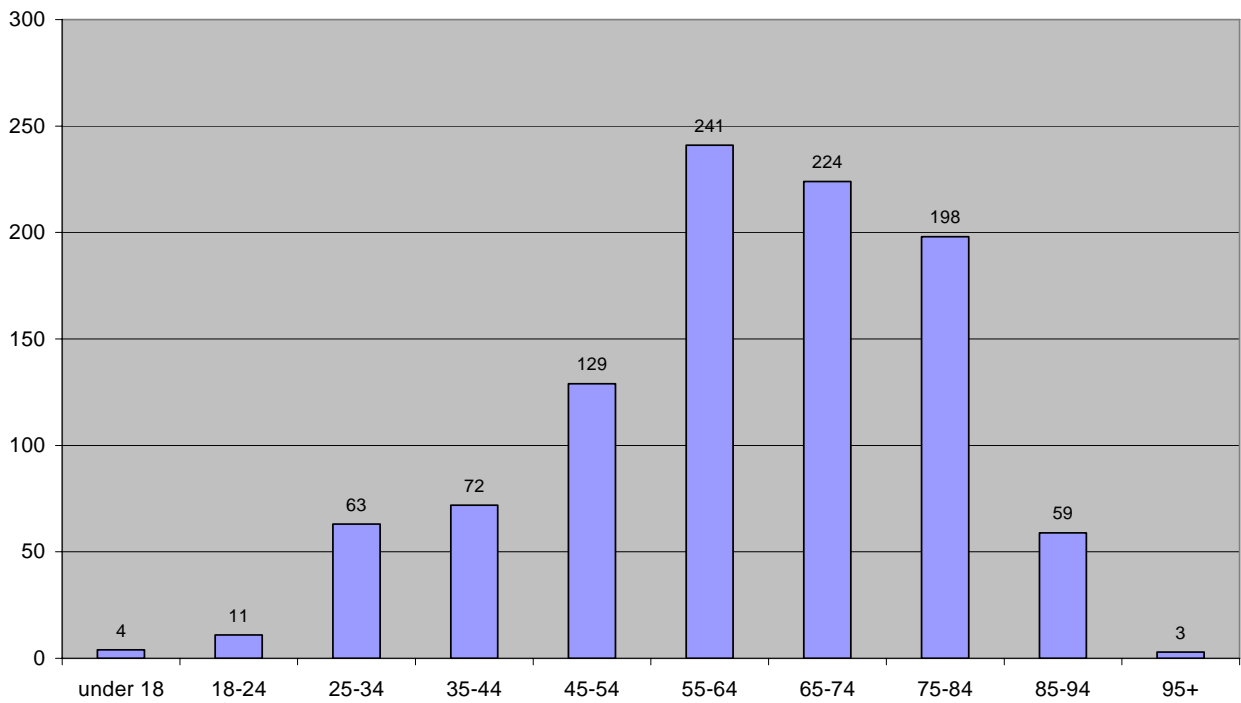
More females than males participated in the survey.

Gender of Participants

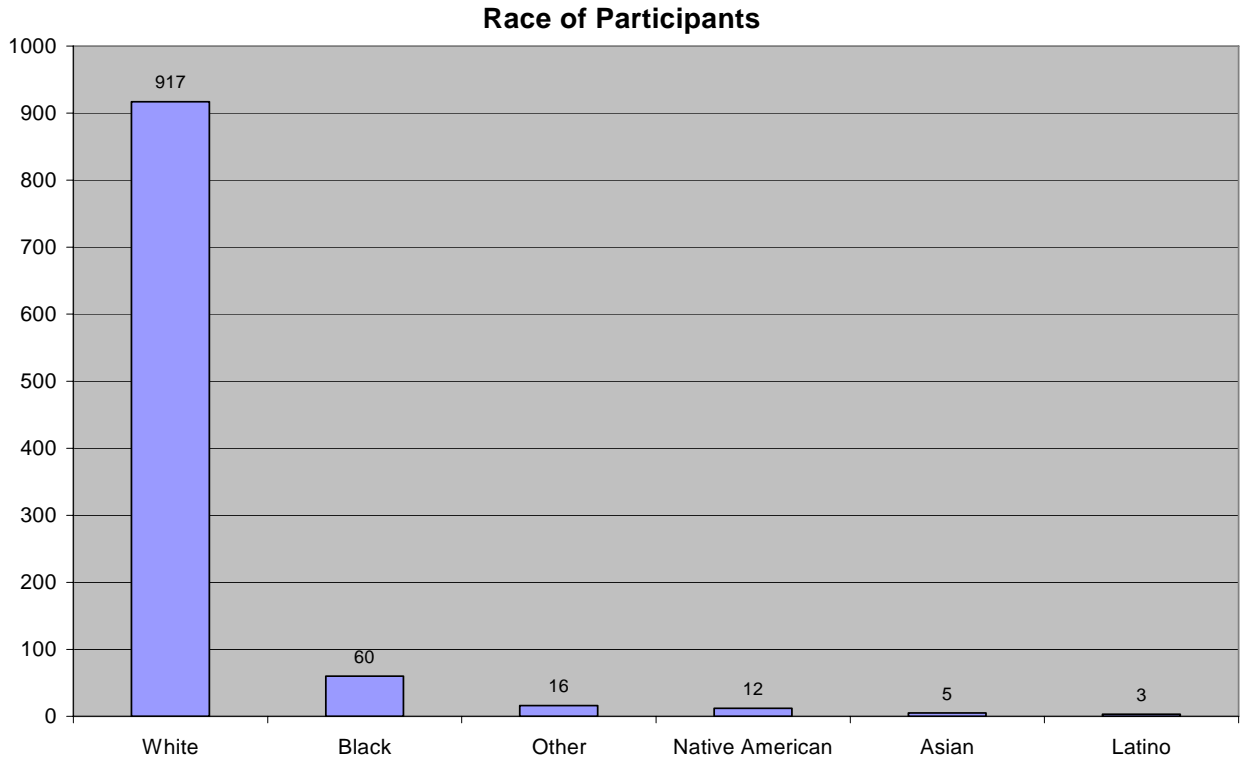


The largest majority of survey participants were age 55-64 (24.0%) with the second largest group being 65-74 (22.3%). (Delaware County statistics: 14.5% over age 65; 23.7% ages 45-64)

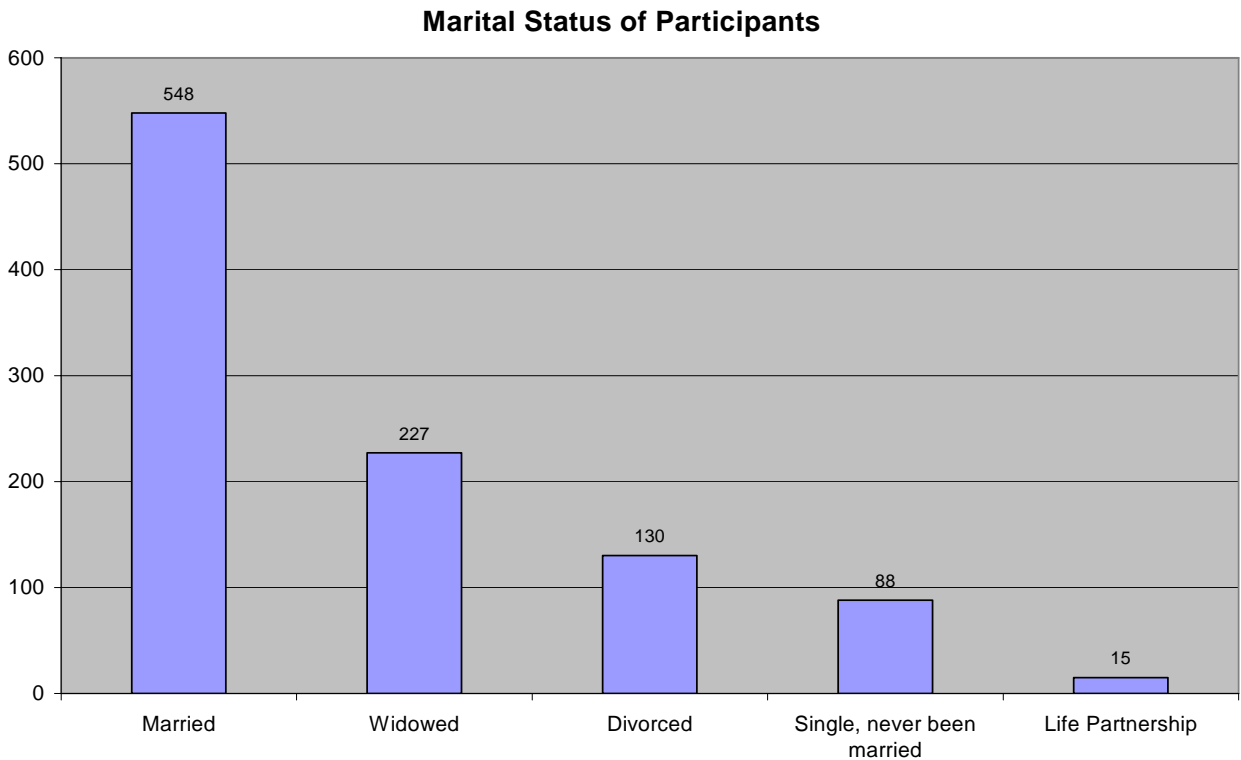
Age Range of Participants



When asked about race, white participants were the largest majority at 91.2%, with black being second at 6.0%. (Delaware County statistics: 90.6% white; 6.8% black)

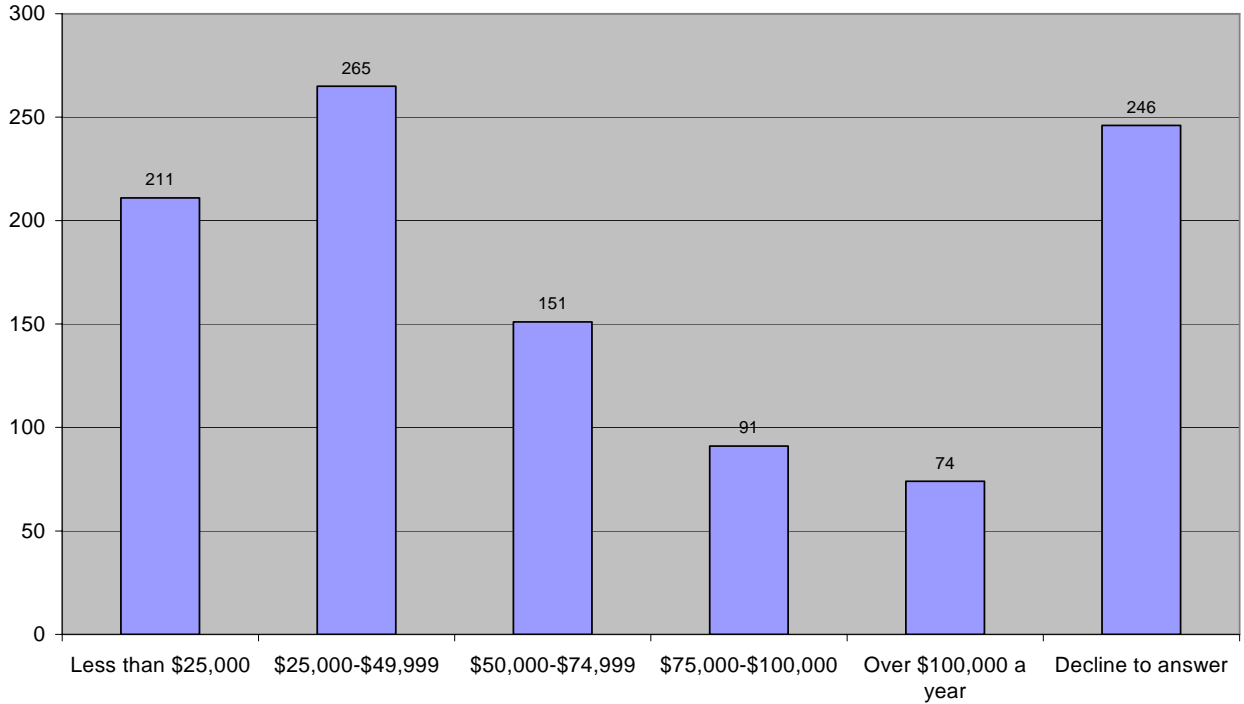


54.4% of survey participants were married, with 22.5% being widowed. (Delaware County statistics: 58.3% married; 6.4% widowed)



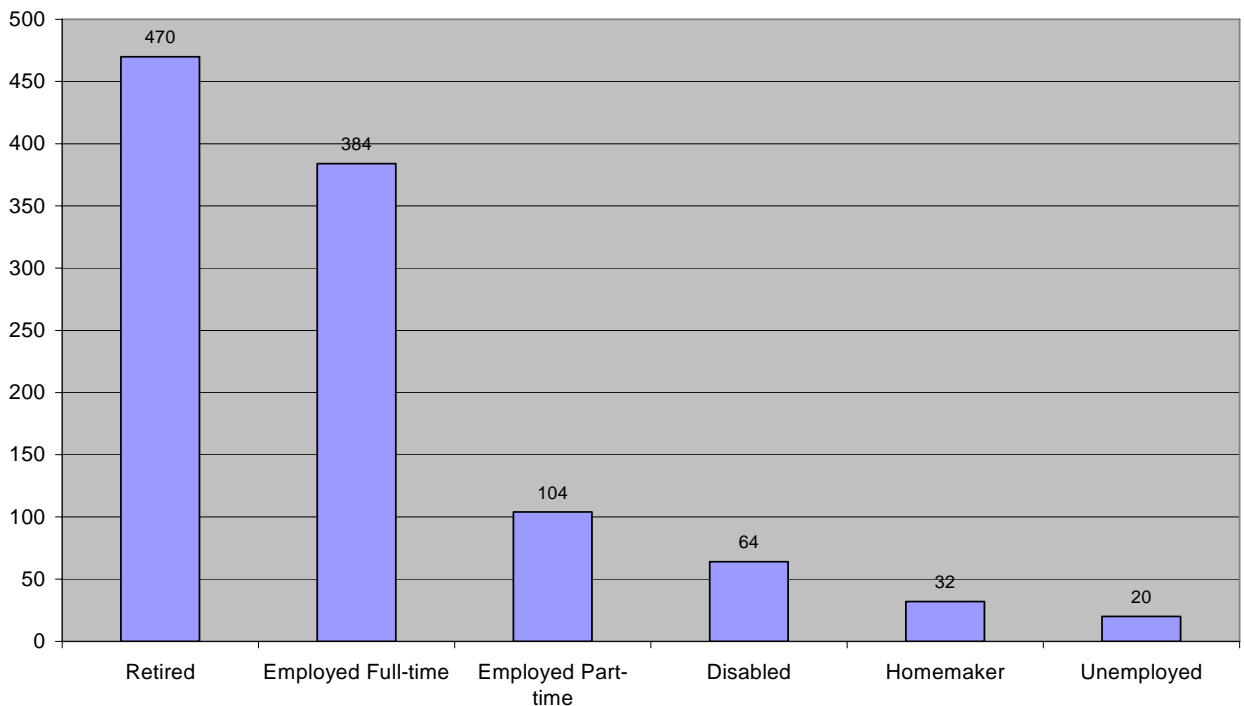
The largest majority of participants' annual household income was "\$25,000-\$49,999 a year" at 28.6%, with "less than \$25,000 a year" second at 22.8%. (Delaware County statistics: 31.4% income \$25,000-\$49,000; 32.2% under \$25,000)

Annual Household Income of Participants



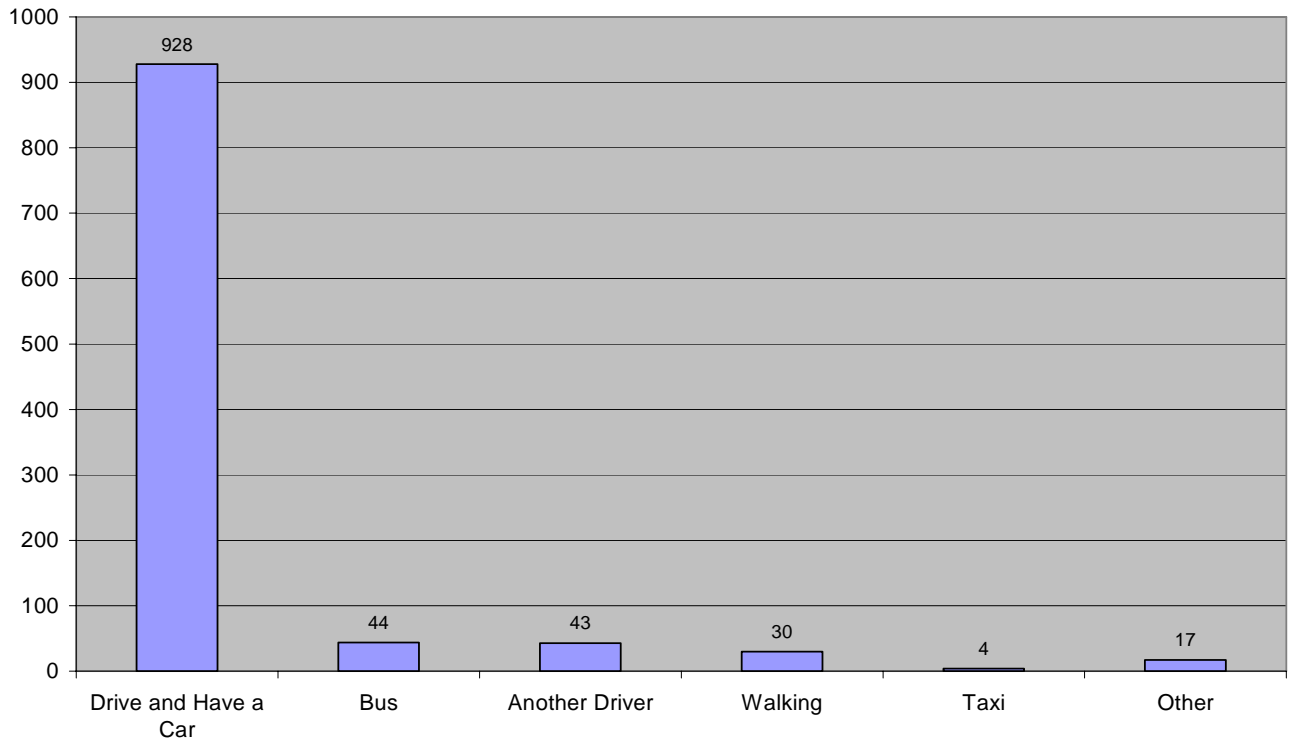
The top response to the question, "Which of the following best describes your current employment situation?" was "retired" at 46.2%, with employed full-time being second at 37.8%.

Employment Status of Participants



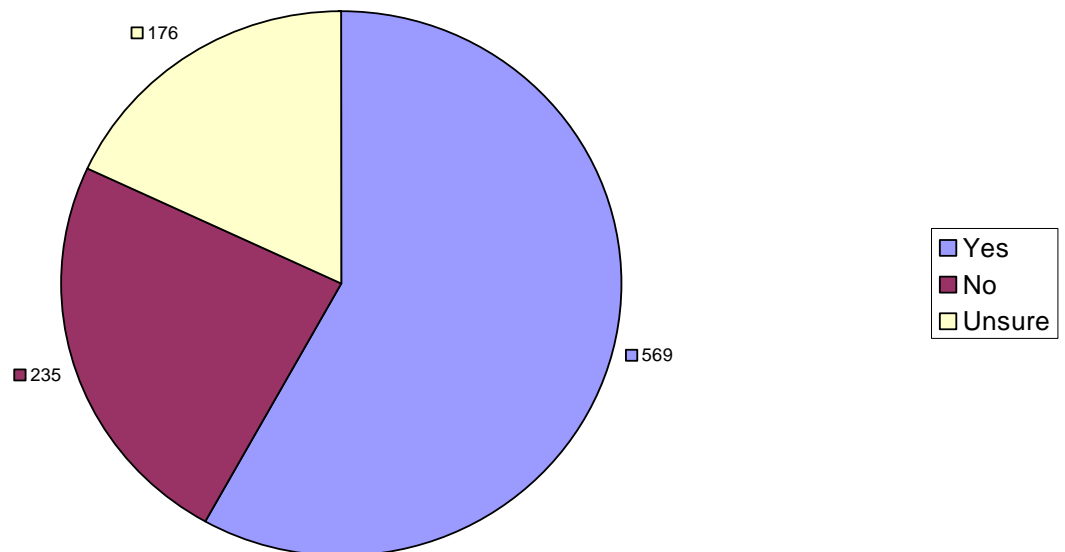
The top response to the question, “*What is your main mode of transportation?*” was “I drive and have a car” at 90.9%, with “bus” being second at 4.3%.

Main Mode of Transportation



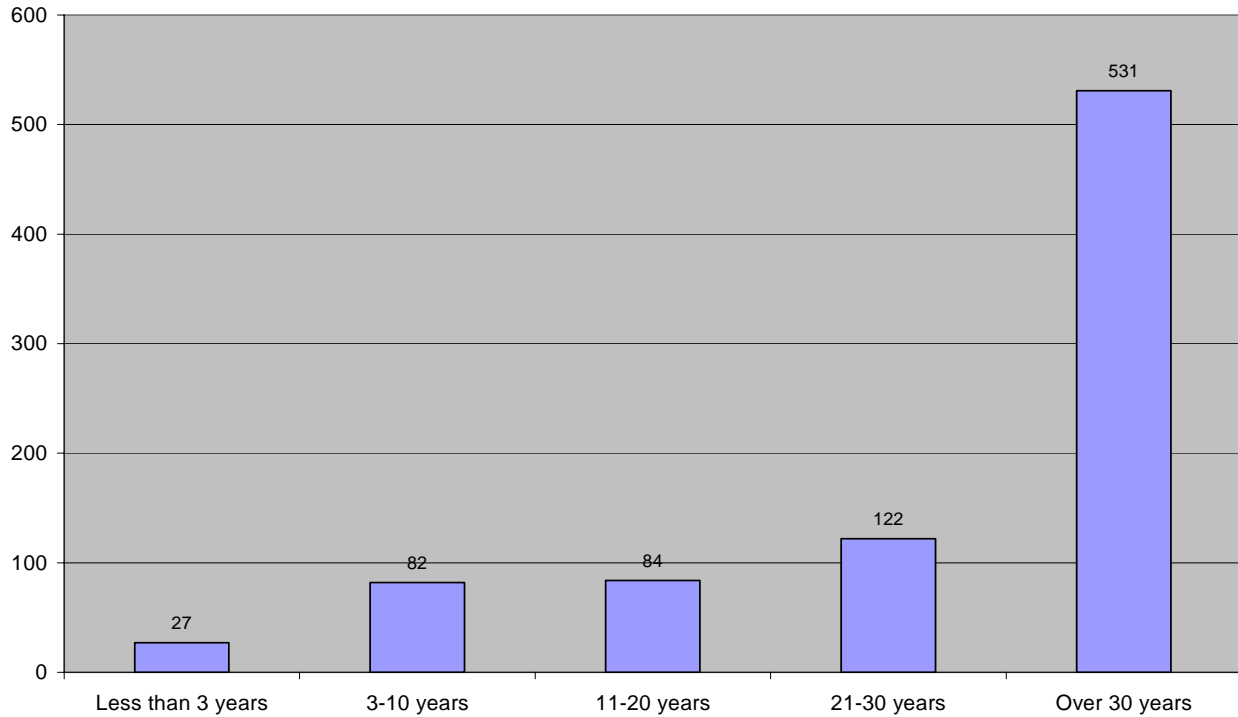
The top response to the question, “*Would you walk to do shopping and other activities if sidewalks were available and accessible?*” was “yes” at 58.1%.

Walk if Sidewalks Available



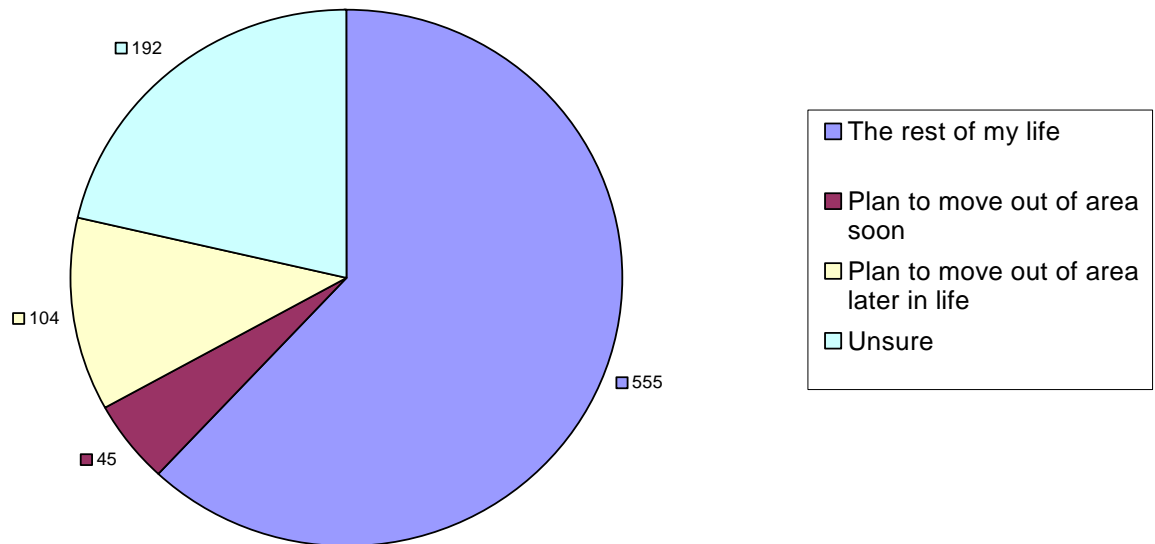
When asked, “How many years have you lived within Delaware County?” the top response was “Over 30 years” at 54.9%.

Years Lived in Delaware County



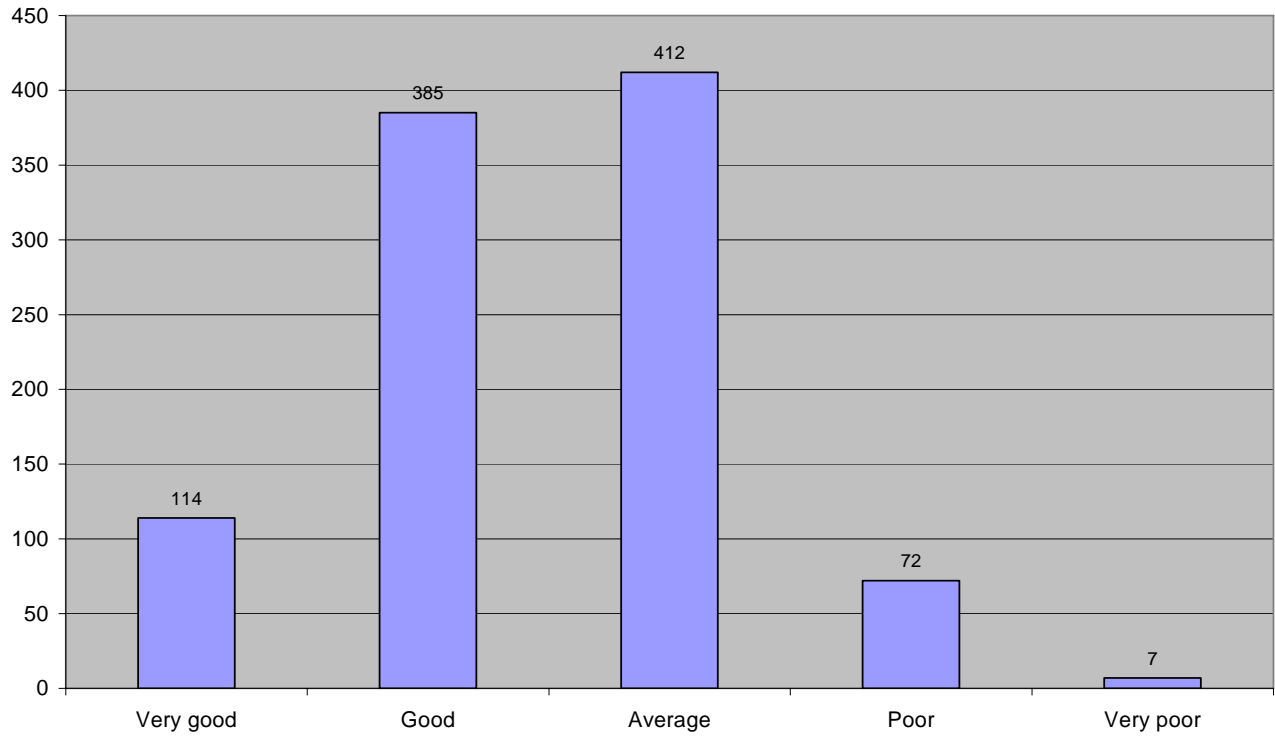
When asked, “How long do you plan to live within Delaware County?” the top response was “The rest of my life” at 62.2%, with “unsure” being second at 21.5%.

How long do you plan to live within Delaware County?



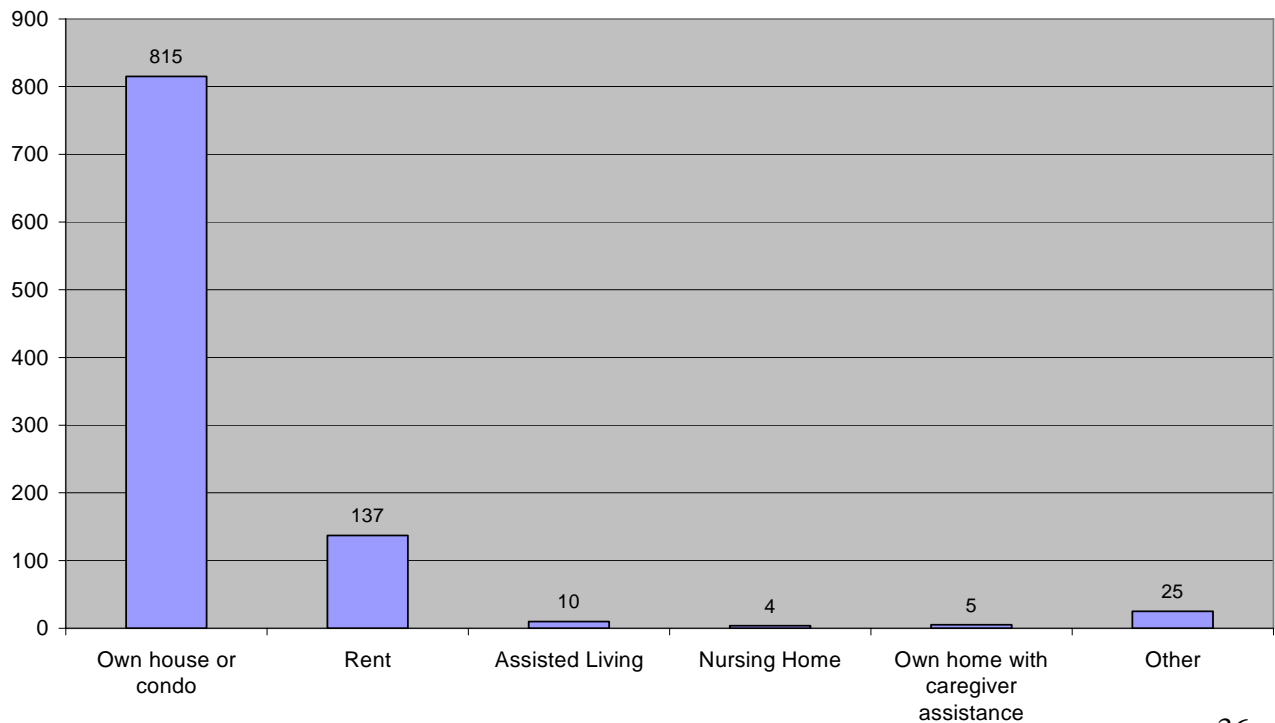
When asked, “How would you rate the quality of life in your community?” the top response was “average” at 41.7%, with “good” being second at 39.0%.

Quality of Life



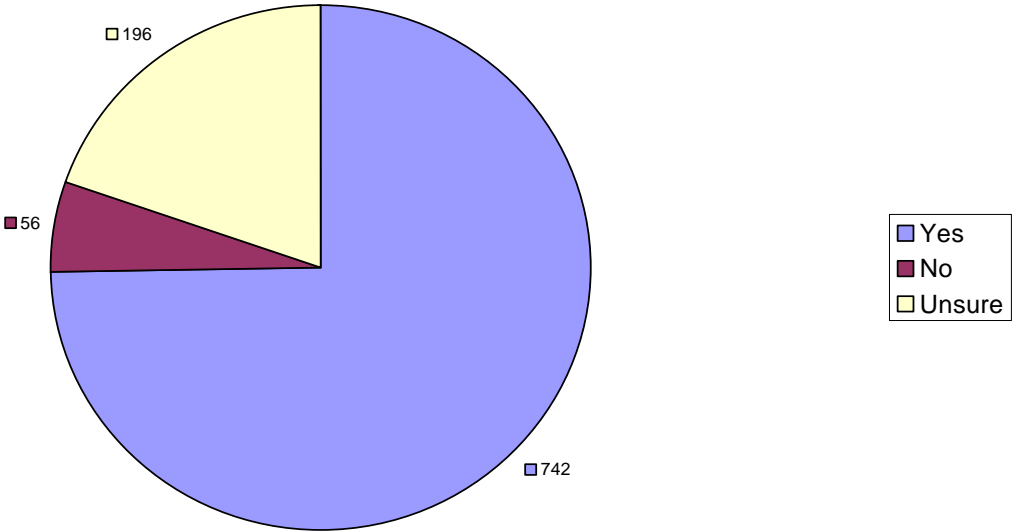
When asked, “What is your current living situation?” the top response was “Own house or condo” at 82.0%, with “rent” being the second highest at 13.8%.

Current Living Situation of Participants



When asked, “Do you feel you can continue to afford living in your current housing situation?” the top response was “yes” at 74.6%.

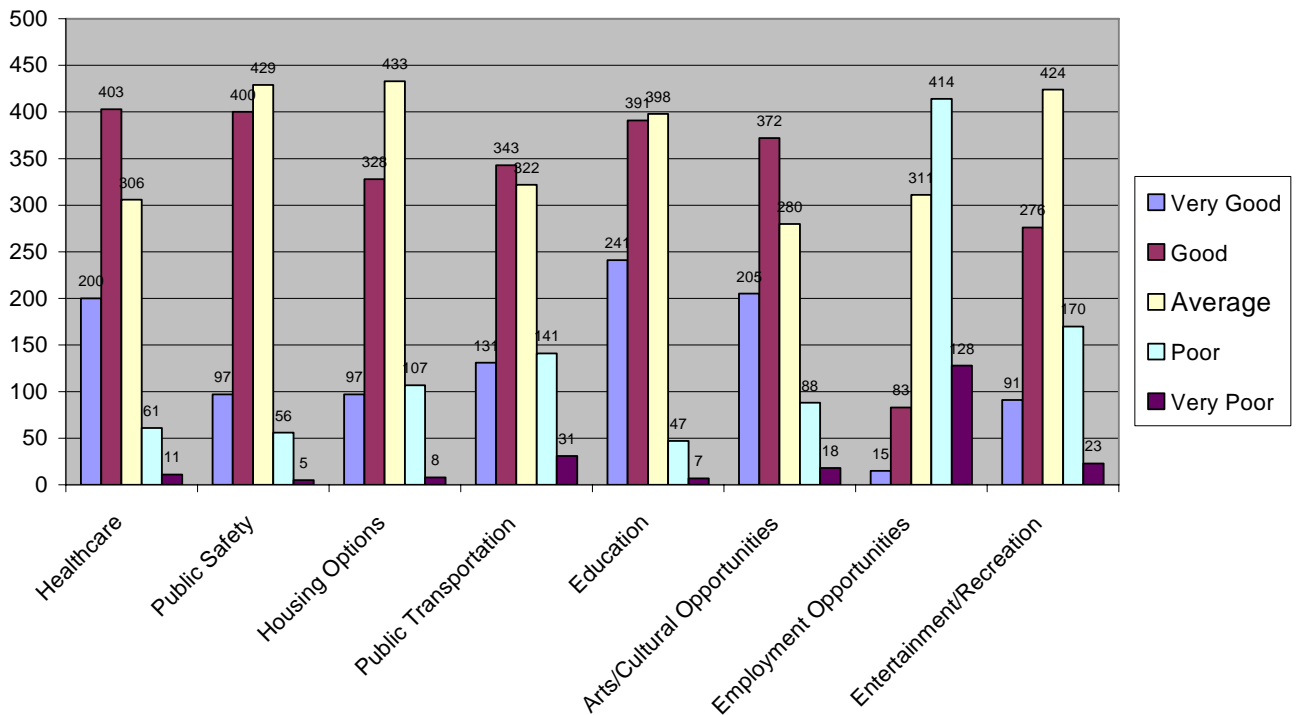
Afford to Live in Current Situation



When asked “How would you rate the following in your community?” the following were top responses:

- Healthcare – Good (41.1%)
- Public Safety – Average (43.5%)
- Housing Options – Average (44.5%)
- Public Transportation – Good (35.5%)
- Education – Good – (39.8%)
- Arts/Cultural Opportunities – Good (38.9%)
- Employment Opportunities – Poor (43.6%)
- Entertainment/Recreation – Average (43.1%)

Rate Community Services



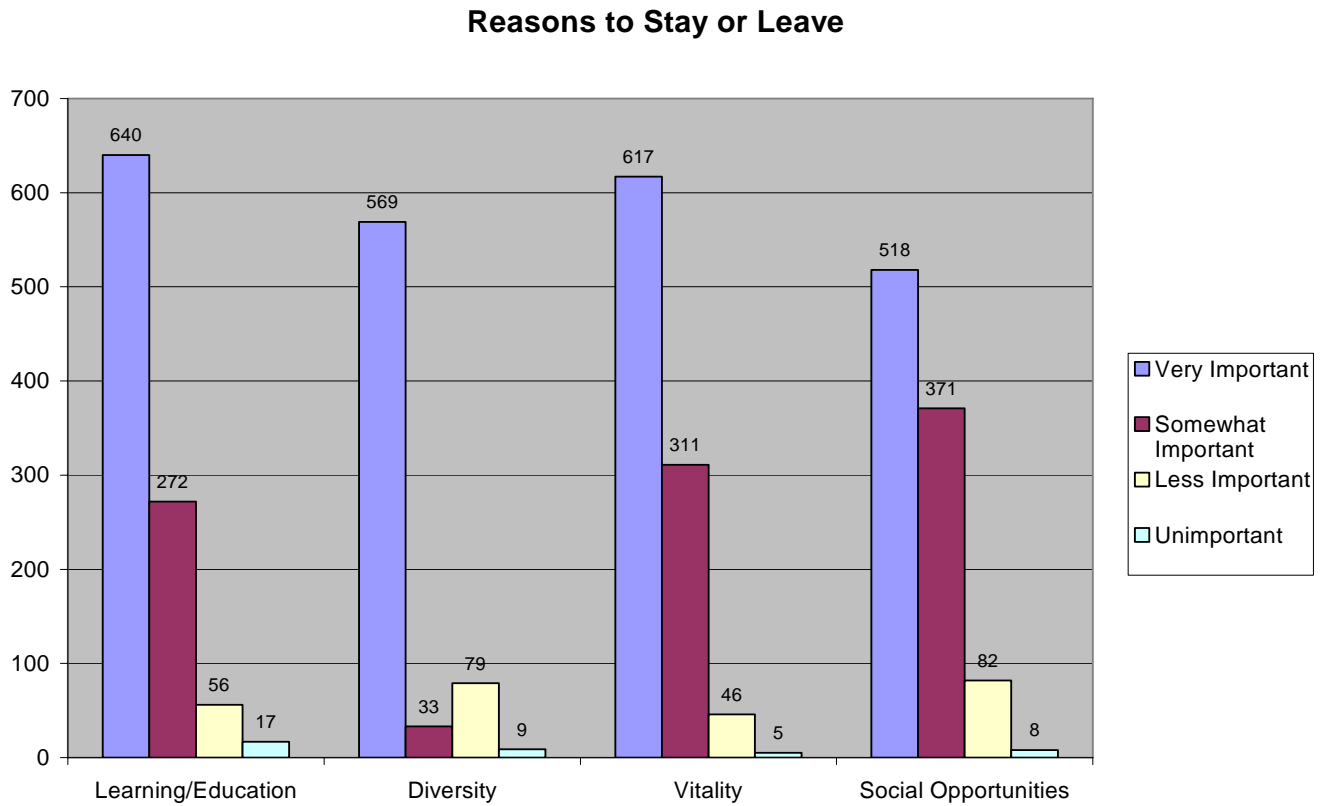
When asked, “As you think about reasons why you would stay or leave a community, how important are the following?” the majority of all respondents prioritized “very important” as the top choice in the following:

Learning/Education Opportunities – 65.0%

Diversity – 57.7%

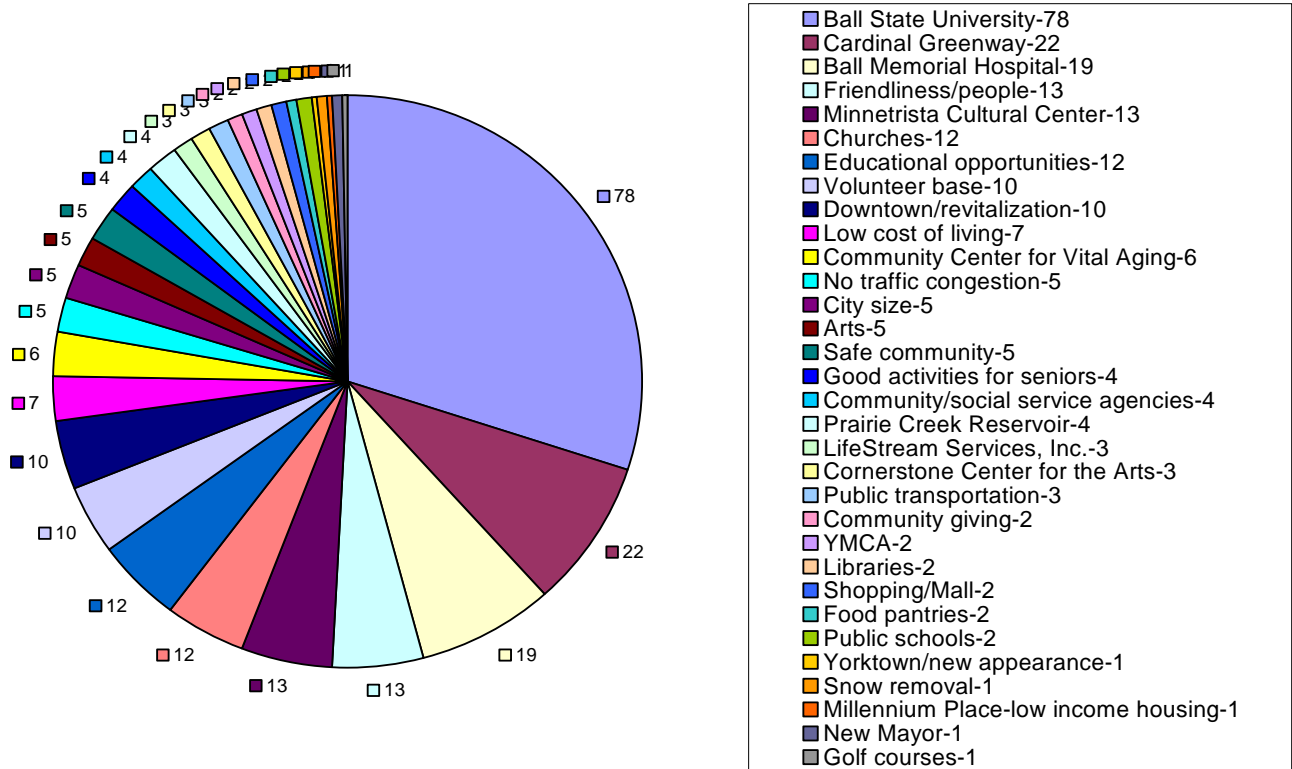
Vitality – 63.0%

Social Opportunities – 53.0%

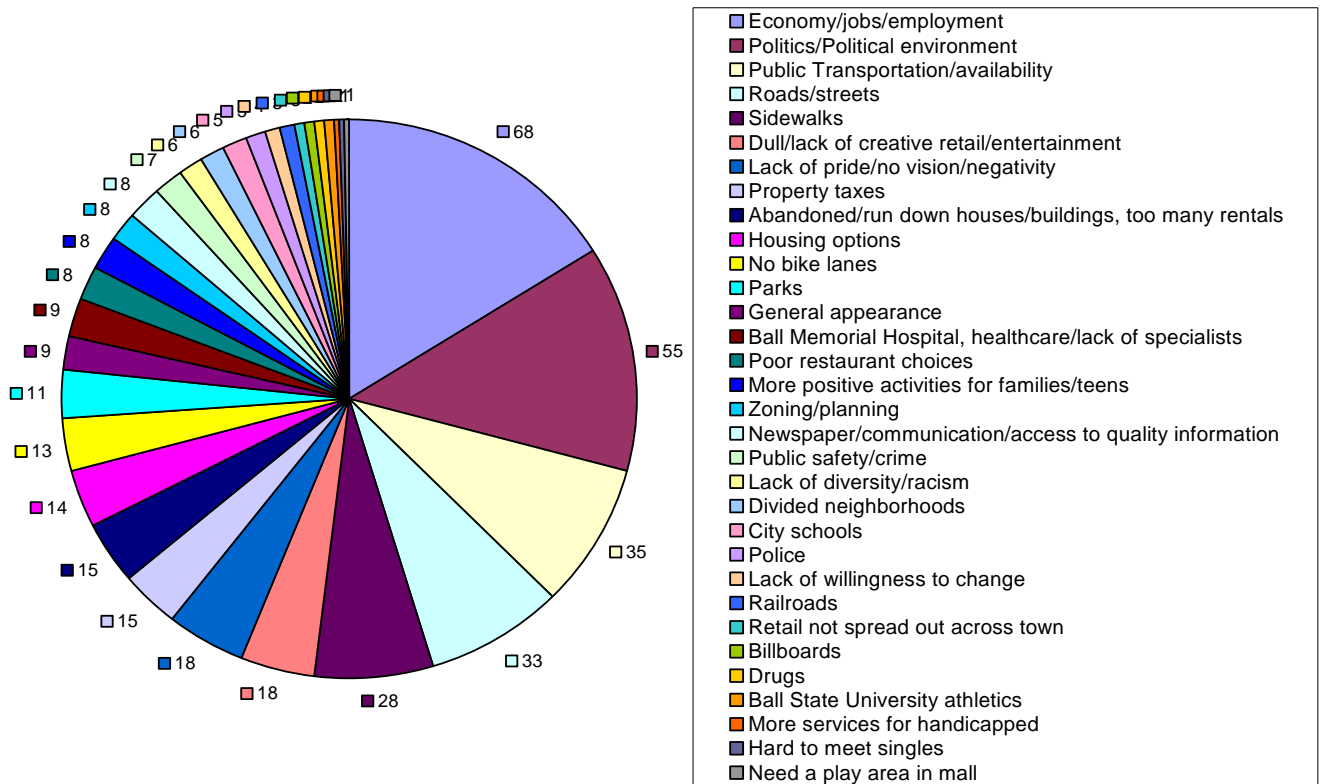


Participants were given the opportunity to provide additional information through an open-ended question. Summarized and categorized responses follow:

What do you consider to be the strengths of your community?



What do you consider to be the weaknesses of your community?



Additional Cross-Filtered Survey Information

20.5% of the people planning to move out of the area soon have a household income of over \$100,000 a year, and of the people planning to move out of the area later in life, 21.9% have a household income of over \$100,000 a year.

40% of the people planning to move out of the area soon have lived in Delaware County 10 years or less.

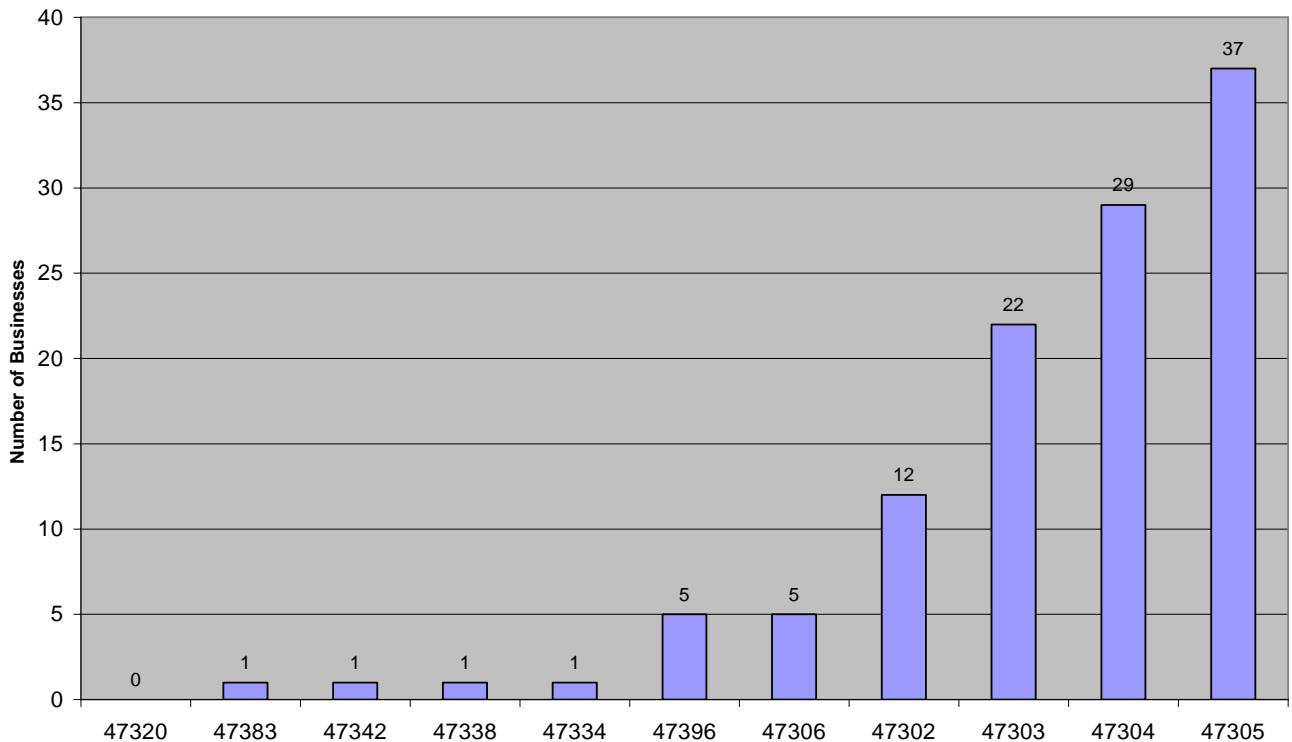
5. “Community for All Ages” Business Survey

The goal of the survey was to begin conversations with businesses on aging preparedness while gathering information. The survey was made available online and on paper for businesses existing within Delaware County. Both methods were promoted heavily. In a 3-month time frame, 137 surveys were collected for analysis.

A summary data report from the survey is included in the Appendix of this report. Following are findings from the “Community for All Ages Business Survey.”

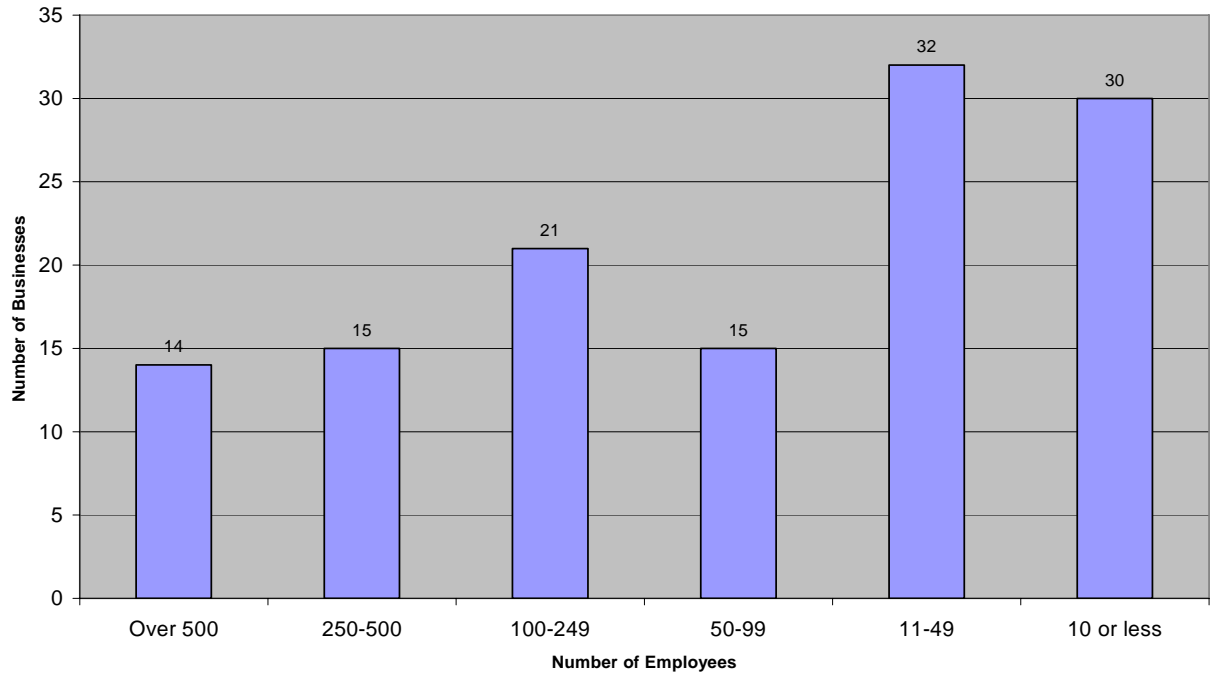
All except one zip code in Delaware County were represented in the business survey. 6.5% of business survey participants were within Delaware County. (outside city of Muncie) 76.6% of business survey participants were within the city of Muncie.

Zip Codes of Business Location



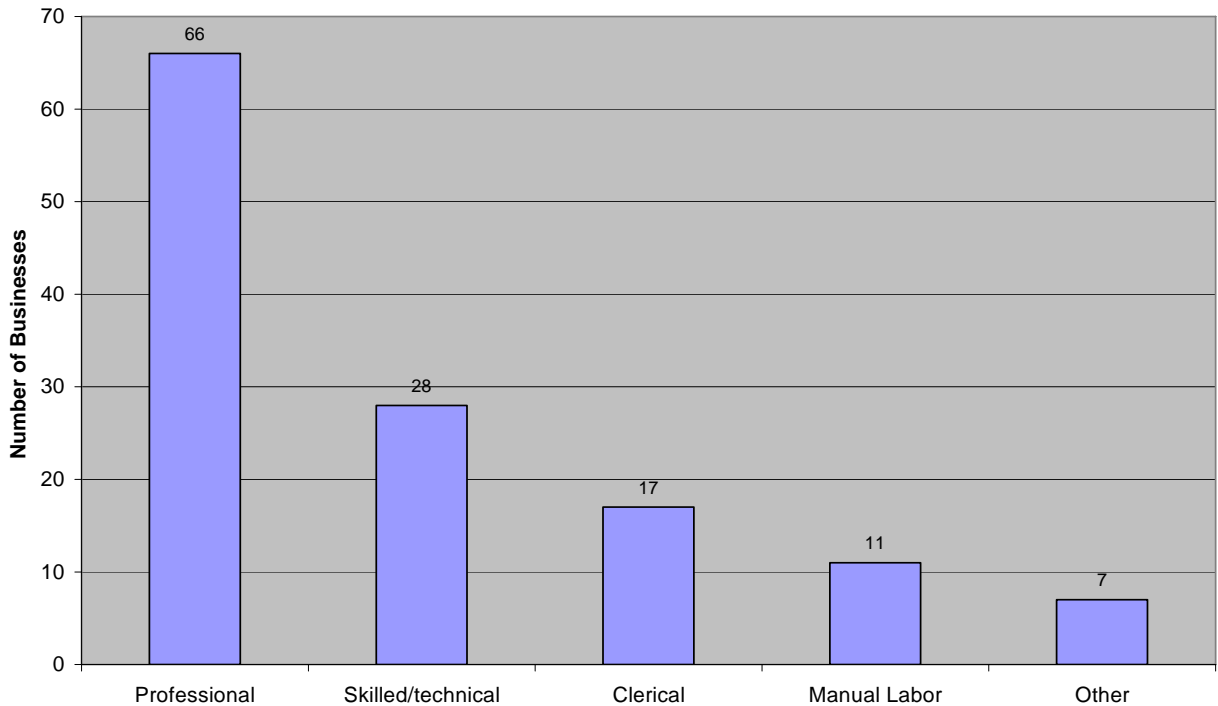
25.2% of businesses participating in the business survey had 11-49 employees, with 23.6% of businesses having 10 or less employees.

Business Size



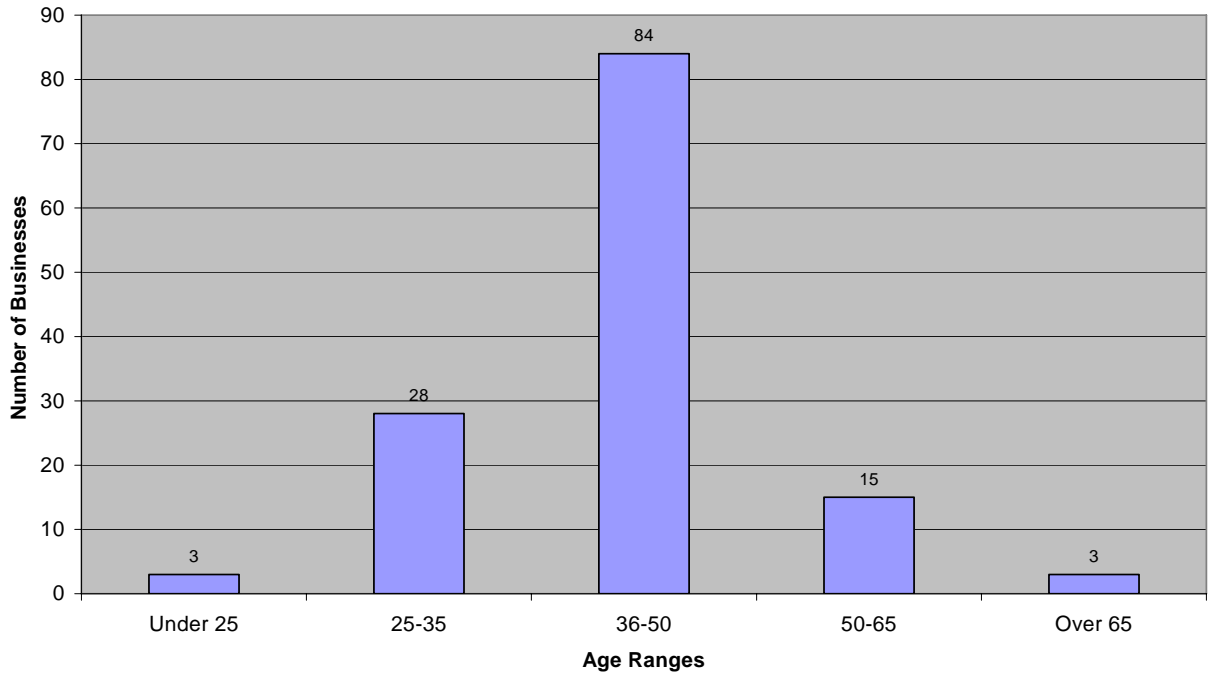
The majority of businesses participating in the survey felt the majority of their employees were professional (51.2%) with 21.7% being skilled/technical.

Type of Employees



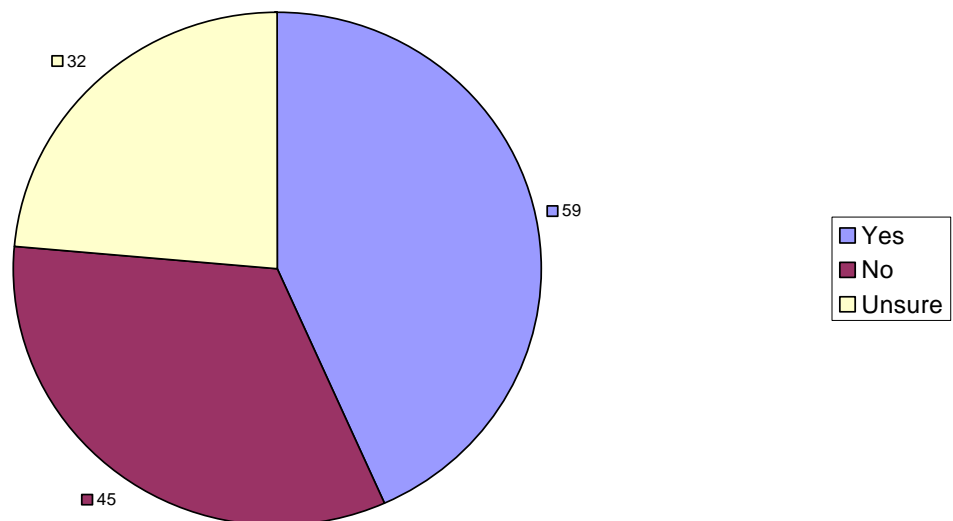
When asked, “What would you say is the average age range for most of your employees?” the largest response was age 36-50. (63.2%)

Average Age Range of Employees



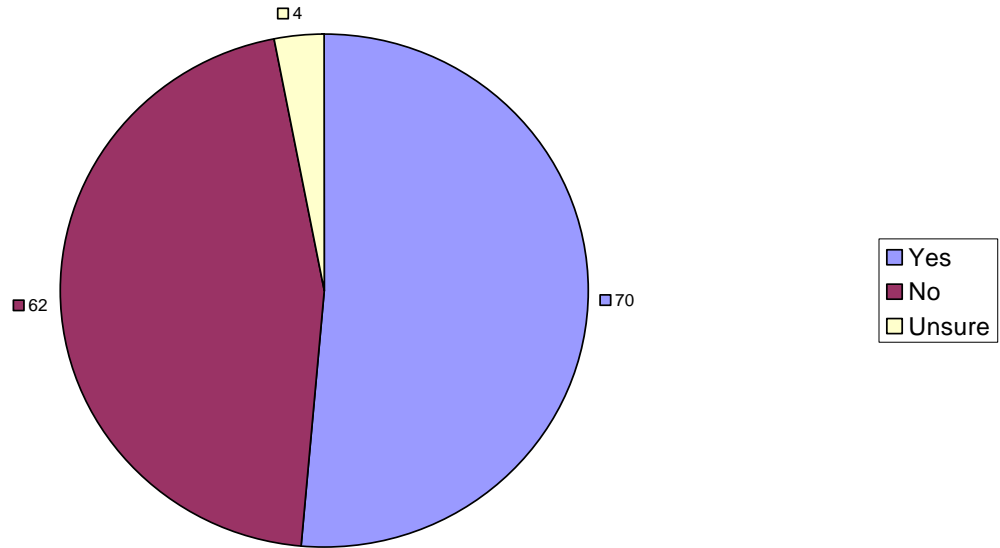
When asked, “Is your business preparing for the coming ‘age wave’ in which one out of every five county residents will be over the age of 65?” the largest majority of survey participants answered “yes.” (43.4%)

Preparing for Coming "Age Wave"



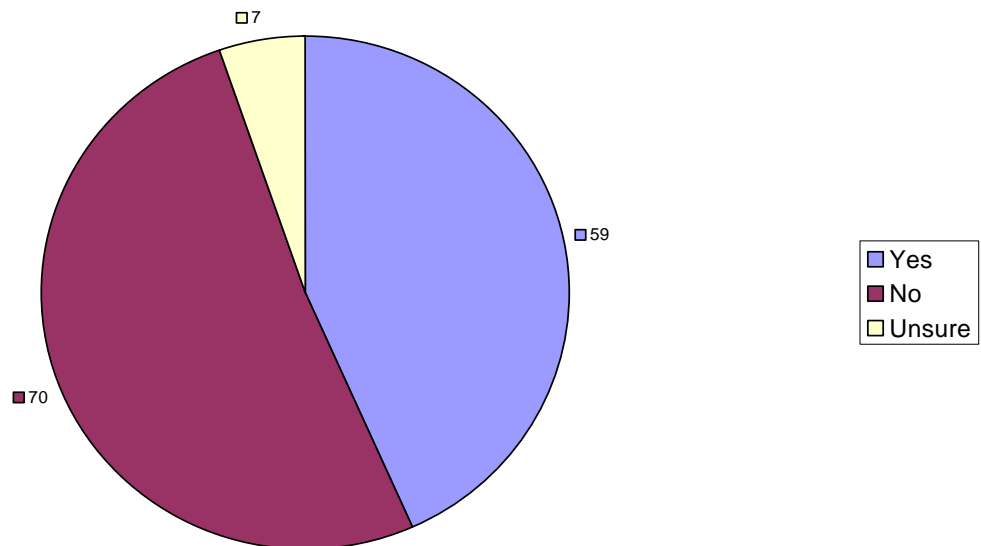
When asked, “Does your business currently offer non-traditional employment opportunities such as job-sharing and flex-time?” 51.5% answered “yes.”

Offer non-traditional employment opportunities



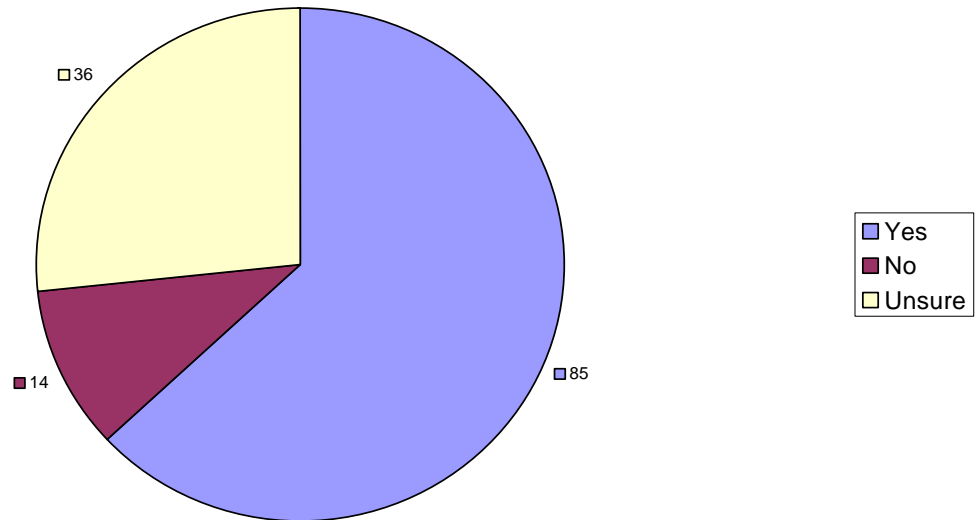
When asked, “Does your business have challenges maintaining enough employees to provide the services you offer?” the majority answered “no” at 51.5%.

Challenges Maintaining Employees



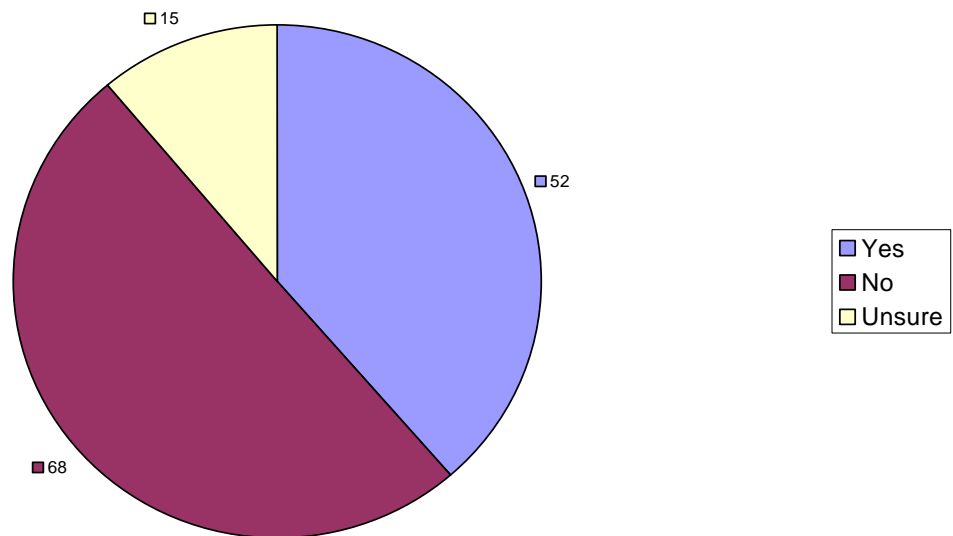
When asked, “Do you think your business would find value in hiring and training older adults to fulfill your employment needs?” the majority of respondents answered “yes.” (63.0%)

Value in Hiring Older Adults



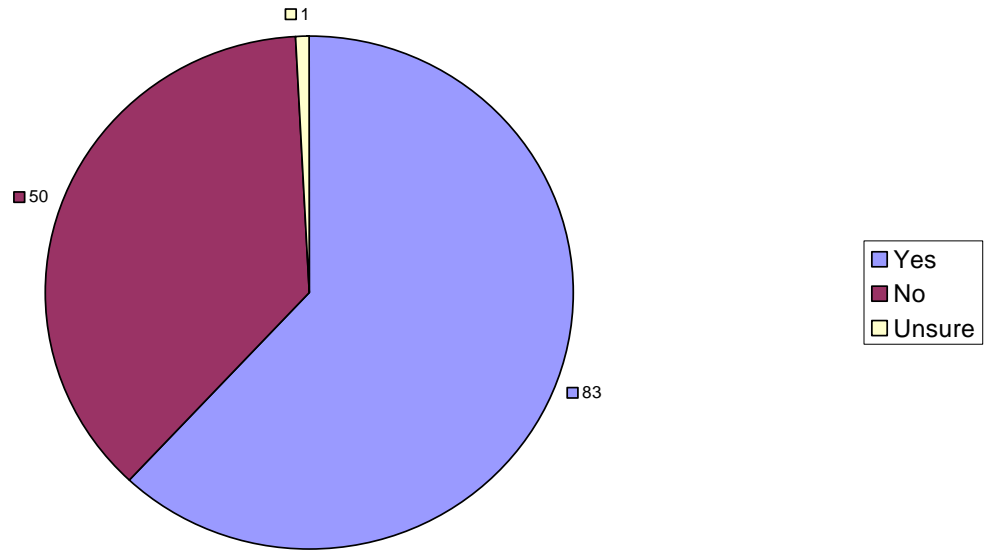
When asked, “Does your business offer benefits or assistance to employees that are caregivers for older adults?” the largest majority answered “no” at 50.4%.

Assistance to Caregivers



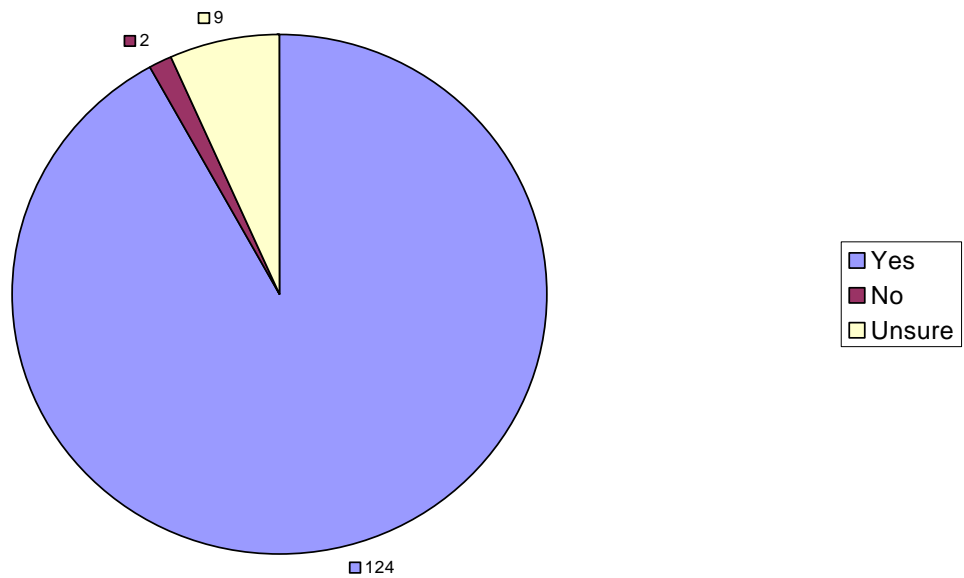
61.9% of businesses stated they have at least one full-time employee in Human Resources.

Full Time Human Resources Person



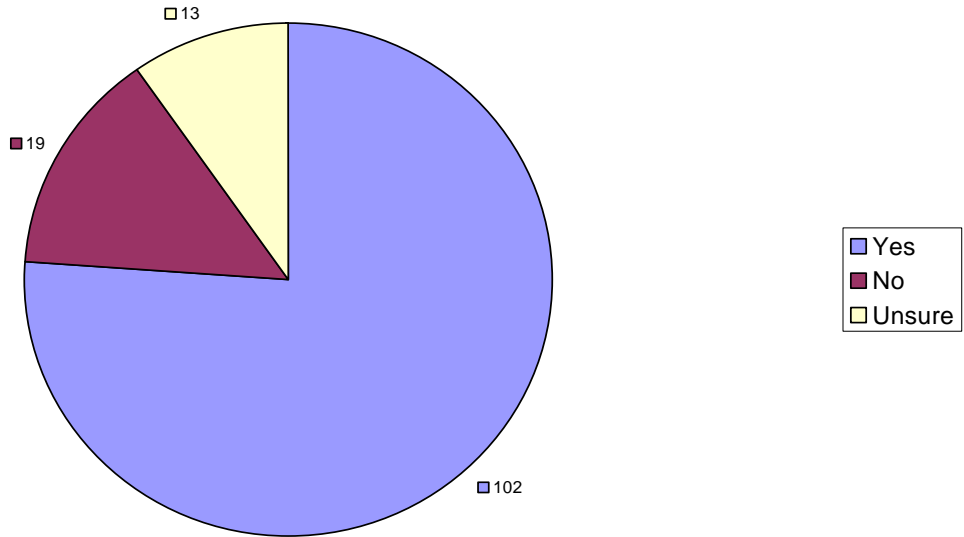
91.9% of business survey respondents answered “yes” when asked if their business planned to stay within Delaware County in the long-term.

Stay within Delaware County



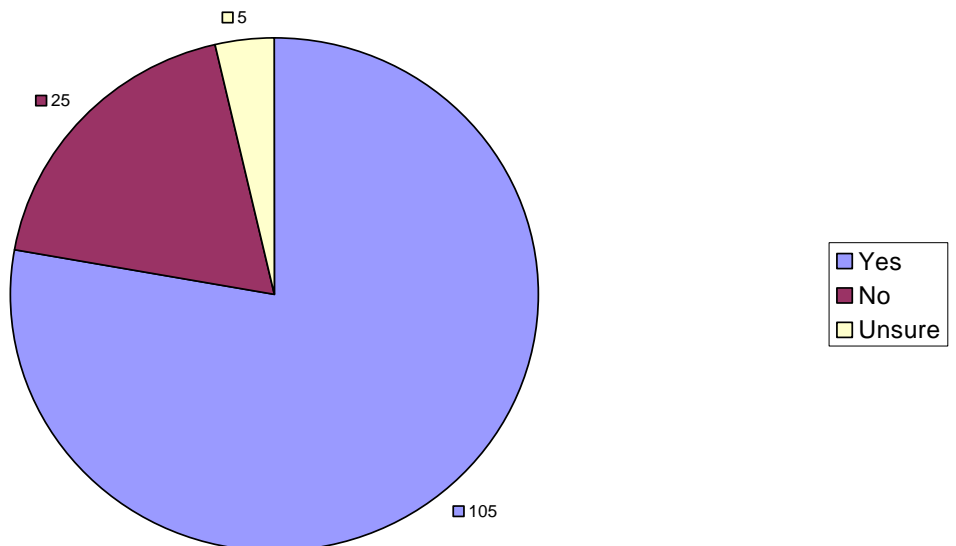
When asked, “Do you feel your business challenges are affected by issues in the local community?” the majority answered “yes” (76.1%)

Challenged by Local Community Issues



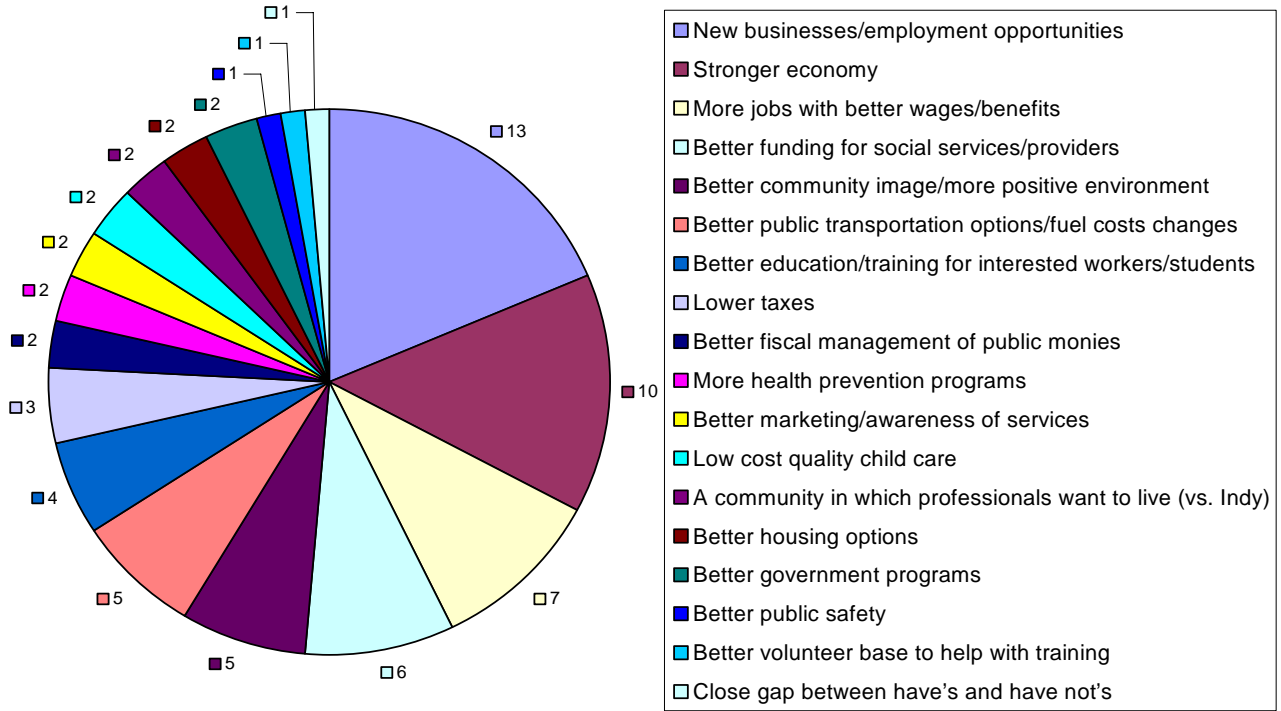
77.8% of businesses offer products or services commonly utilized by older adults.

Products and Services Used by Older Adults

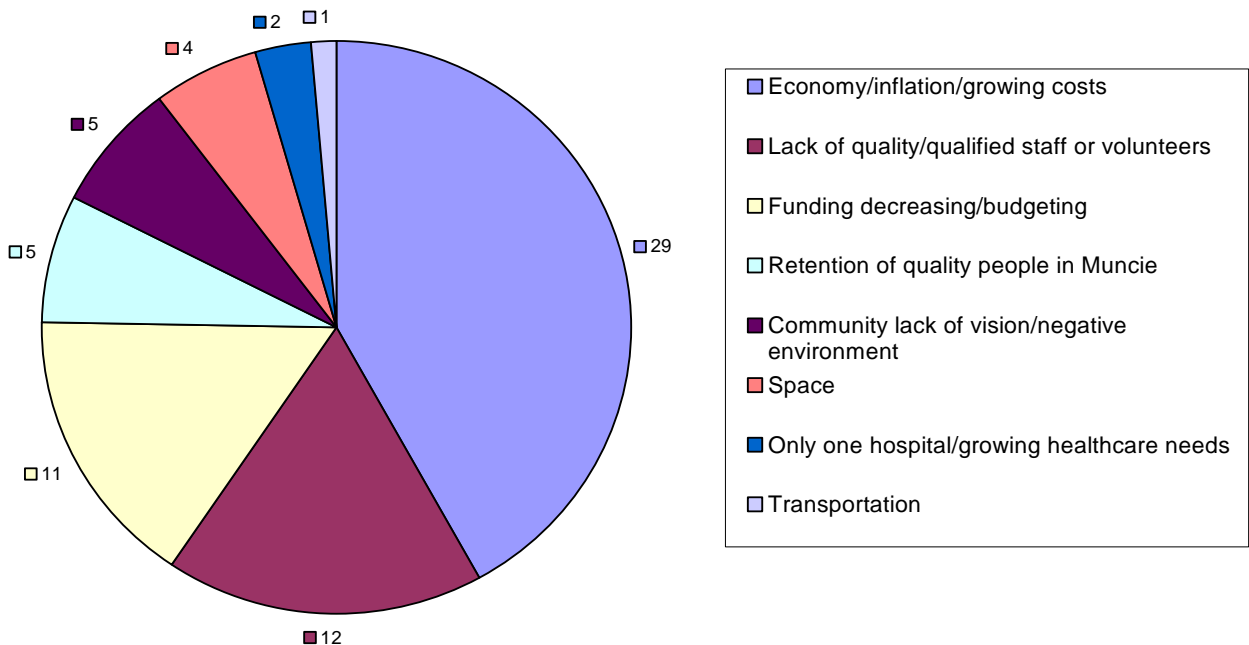


Categorized and summarized responses to open-ended questions are as follows:

What could be different in Delaware County that would positively affect your business?



What are your business' top concerns for the next five years?



6. Delaware County Asset Mapping

Nationally, communities that have become successful livable communities for all ages have identified their strengths and community assets. They have used this information to determine what is working well and expandable, find gaps in services, and link gaps to community assets. Asset mapping is capacity-focused and positive. Traditionally, community planning has focused on a community's needs, deficits, and problems. This had channeled resources to service providers rather than community residents, and led to communities focusing on maintenance rather than growth.

The Senior Study Project felt this was the appropriate time to begin the asset mapping process for Delaware County. The intention was that local asset maps and narrative will be used as Muncie/Delaware County begins planning and developing strategies to become a livable community for all ages. Asset maps, including detailed narrative, are included in the Appendix of this report.

Senior Study Project Recommendations

Numerous opportunities exist for making Delaware County a livable community for all ages. The findings from the Senior Study Project should give community members a better foundation on which to make informed decisions and do community planning. Recommendations from Senior Study Project findings range from short-term possibilities to issues that will take several years to achieve, and from no-cost to high-cost. It is important to note that as communities become livable communities, they spend several years in the process. There is no “quick fix” or simple solution. The efforts of many people and organizations will be needed to implement valuable changes. Data from the Senior Study Project led to the following recommendations.

Administrative Recommendations

- In order for Delaware County to become a livable community for all ages, inclusiveness is crucial. Involvement from a broad array of older adults and other age groups, community leaders, and community agencies will ensure quality decision making as the findings of the Senior Study Project are used to develop and implement plans. A larger, more diverse, and strongly committed “Advisory Council” needs to be created to develop goals, strategies, and step-by-step plans to move towards a livable community for all ages utilizing findings from the Senior Study Project.
- Muncie/Delaware County does not appear to have a community “vision” that is leading to planning and improvement efforts. Questions such as, “What do we want to look like?” and “What do we want to become?” need to be asked. The Advisory Council should work to support community-wide efforts for a visioning process.
- Various tools exist to help communities plan to become a livable community for all ages. These tools should be reviewed by the Advisory Council, and it is suggested that a tool be selected to help guide the long term planning process for Muncie/Delaware County. These tools include, but are not limited to “Sustainable Communities for All Ages, A Viable Futures Toolkit,” the “AdvantAge Initiative,” or the Community Partnerships for Older Adults ‘strategic planning resources.’
- Muncie/Delaware County must implement community awareness efforts that help change the mindset and shift community thinking about “aging-friendliness.” The principle of a livable community’s “What’s good for older adults is good for everyone,” approach needs to become more widely known and accepted. Developing an understanding that aging-friendliness does not always require doing work “in addition” to what already occurs is important. Rather, it is taking what we are already going to do, and improving it in a way that works for all ages and types of people.

AdvantAge Initiative Model Recommendations

Addresses Basic Needs:

- From information gathered at focus groups, people in Muncie/Delaware County appear to be “neighborhood” focused. Residents responded to many focus group questions in terms of their own neighborhood. This needs to be considered and utilized as strategic planning occurs, as it can be a significant asset in moving people to action. Naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs) should be identified and/or established within Muncie and Delaware County.
- From the asset mapping process, it was identified that an abundance of services exist within Delaware County to help residents age in place. Overwhelmingly, a large majority of people seem to not know about these services/providers, how to access them, and how they can be beneficial. Education and knowledge seems to be the biggest gap in helping people as they age in place. The strategic plan needs to include specific details in how to disseminate and communicate information on resources to the public.
- The local community needs to strengthen awareness and utilization of the 2-1-1 system housed within LifeStream Services, Inc., or other providers of similar referral. Promotional efforts must be put in place to work to decrease the gap in knowledge about community services and service providers.
- The community should work collaboratively with Ball State University on the issue of aging-friendly housing on or near campus. This will provide more community housing options, help retain older adults or retirees in the community, and give residents easy access to the many services Ball State University has available. Limited housing options were identified as a top concern in focus groups, re-emphasized as a priority area at community forums, and noted in community member surveys.

Optimizes Physical and Mental Health and Well Being:

- The health care system needs to expand to recruit and offer local geriatric and psychiatric specialty services. Healthcare is a top concerns for all adult age groups. Other than the business survey, great emphasis was expressed in all forms of data collection on better options needed for specialty services for older adults.
- The community should work to become more bicycle-friendly, thinking of bike paths, bike racks, and other community opportunities for people to safely use bicycles.

Promotes Social and Civic Engagement:

- Ball State University was overwhelmingly mentioned as a great asset to the Muncie/Delaware County community in all forms of data collection. The Advisory Council must identify ways to work with Ball State to bridge gaps between the university and the community at large. Specific strategies need to be developed for both the short and long term.
- To address the issue of the aging workforce, the Advisory Council should work with the local Chamber of Commerce and entities such as Ivy Tech Community College to assist older adults in being maximized in local businesses. Additionally, the need to train and strengthen skill sets of the labor force will be beneficial to the community.

Maximizes Independence for Frail and Disabled:

- Business survey data should be utilized to help businesses plan for employee/caregiver assistance. Agencies providing outreach efforts, such as the United Way of Delaware County's Community Solutions Team, can determine businesses to target for caregiver training and assistance.
- According to findings from focus groups and community forums, one of the top issues with transportation is a lack of knowledge about how to use public transportation and what is available. The Advisory Council should work with public transportation providers on education and public awareness about services. Strengthening awareness of the 2-1-1 system can help decrease the gap in knowledge.
- Numerous benefits exist for communities with well maintained sidewalks. Well-maintained sidewalks emphasize healthy behaviors and opportunities for positive lifestyle choices. Muncie/Delaware County must work to maintain sidewalks for resident safety as well as for use as a mode of transportation. Additionally, sidewalks draw foot traffic and are attractive to businesses.

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