

# APPENDICES

## Appendix - A Business Owners' Survey

### Purpose of Survey and Results

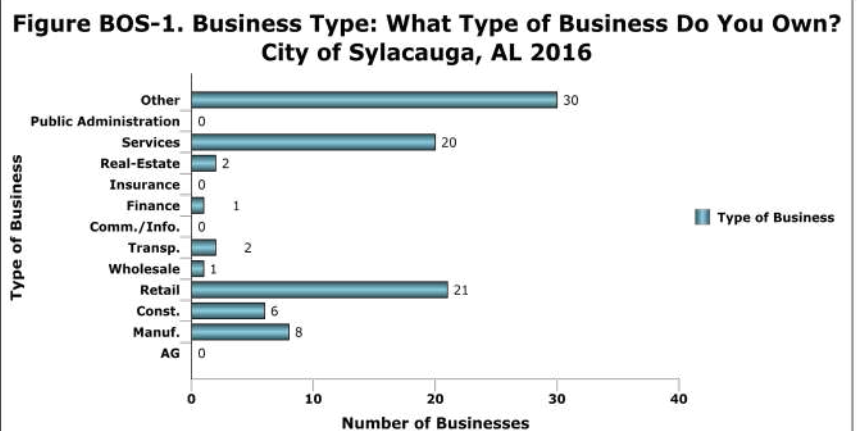
Local business in the City of Sylacauga play a vital role in the economic stability and growth of the economy. As part of an economic assessment, and to further understand the state of the local economy, a business owners' survey was sent to and collected from local business owners within the city limits of Sylacauga. The survey inquired of business owners the following questions, pertaining to their business, city provisions, and the overall business "climate" in the community.

- In what part of the city is your business located?
- What type of business do you own?
- Do you feel the city provides adequate infrastructure utilities for your business?
- How satisfied are you with the city's utility services?
- Do you feel business in the city are—growing, stable, or declining?
- Do you think the city should make it a top priority to renovate and/or redevelop the downtown?
- Does your business have plans to expand?—If so, where to?
- Does your business have enough employees to adequately conduct daily operations?
- Do you think the city and/or city schools should make it a top priority to promote and enhance skilled workforce training for local business?

A total of 163 surveys were sent out to business owners, of which 82 were collected, for a reasonable response rate of 13%. Since the survey only reports responses from a small percentage of business owners, the findings thereof cannot be indicative of the overall business community and therefore cannot be used in the making and development of policy and plans for all local businesses. A more detailed survey with a higher response rate would be needed in such case. Rather, the survey is meant to give a broad picture of the local business community and identify significant findings for further study and research.

### Type of Business and Location

In the survey, business owners were asked what type of business they owned and what part of the city is their business located in. From survey respondents the majority of businesses were related to retail (23%), services (22%) or some other business not specified in the survey (33%). Manufacturing and construction related businesses together comprised 15% of the businesses for survey respondents. The slight majority (55%) of the business owners responding to the

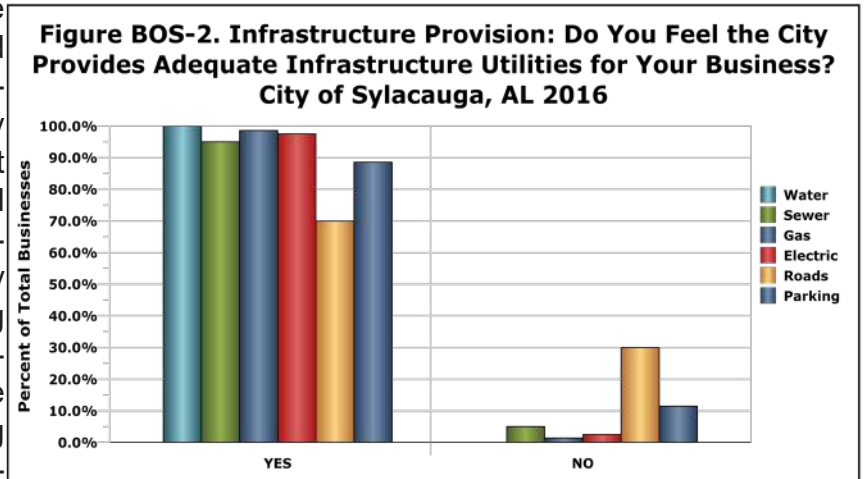


survey replied that their business was located in the downtown area with 20% indicating the west part of the city and 16% the south part. Eleven percent (11%) of survey respondents' businesses were located in the north part of the city with 6% from the east part and another 6% outside the city limits. Figure BOS-1 exhibits business types located throughout the city.

## Utility Provisions

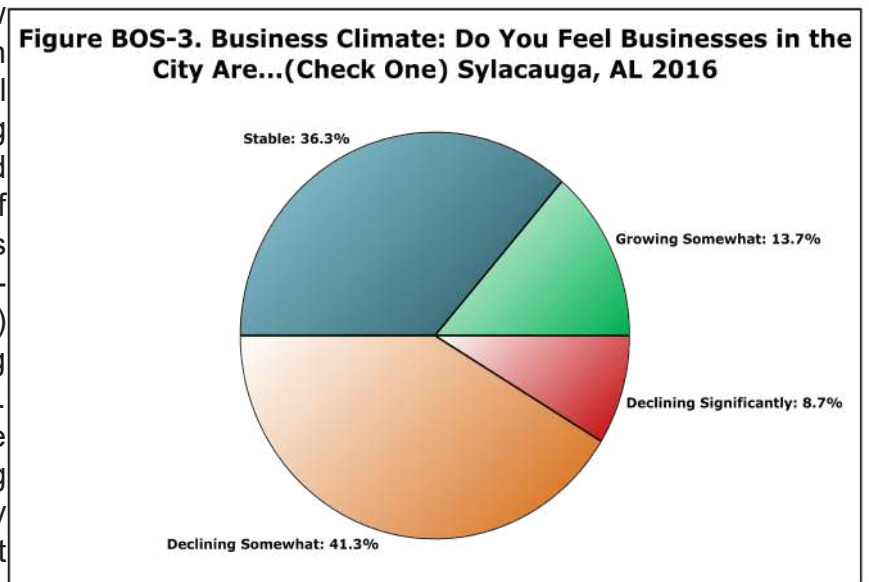
Business owners, in the survey, were also asked if they felt the city provided adequate infrastructure for their business and, in general, how satisfied they were with the level of service. Almost all respondents felt the city provided adequate water, sewer, gas, and electrical services. However, approximately 30% of business owners, responding to the survey, felt the city did not provide adequate roads and 11% felt the city did not provide adequate parking for their business, suggesting potential needs for the city to conduct more

research into. Overall, the significant majority of business owners (93%) were satisfied with city utility services with 46% indicating being very satisfied. Figure BOS-3 displays business owners' responses, that of being positive (YES) and negative (NO) to adequate infrastructure provision from the city. Notice from the chart the somewhat significant portion of business owners who felt the city did not provide adequate roads and parking for their business. As a planning consideration, the city should look into these issues and possibly make plans and policies to meet needs accordingly.



## Business Climate

Business owners were also asked how they felt about the business "climate" in the city. In other words, how did they feel city businesses, overall, were fairing economically as to growth, decline, and stability. Interestingly, approximately half (50%) of business owners felt the city's businesses were either stable or growing somewhat and the other half (50%) felt businesses were either declining somewhat or declining significantly. No business owners responding to the survey felt city businesses were growing significantly. Approximately 41% felt city businesses were declining somewhat and 36% felt business was stable. No



business owners held no opinion on the matter. Figure BOS-3 shows business owners' responses to business climate in the city. Notice that the significant majority of business owners felt city businesses were either stable or declining somewhat. As a planning consideration, the city could conduct a more detailed analysis of the local business environment using this study as a stepping stone.

## Expansion and Operations

Other questions in the survey pertained to business expansion and employees needed to conduct daily operations. From the survey, approximately 17% of business owners responding to the survey had

plans to expand their business, of which 71% had plans to expand in the city and 21% outside the city. Approximately 7% had plans to expand both in the city and outside the city. The survey also asked business owners if their business currently had enough employees to adequately conduct daily operations in which case 86% responded that their business had enough employees and 13% did not have enough.

### **Downtown Redevelopment and Workforce Training**

Since the business owners' survey also focused on future economic development, business owners were asked if they thought the city should make it a top priority to redevelop the downtown and enhance skilled workforce training for local businesses. For this question, business owners replied with approximately 70% indicating that they thought the city should make it a top priority to redevelop the downtown and 75% indicating that the city should make it a top priority to work with city schools to promote and enhance skilled workforce training for local business.

### **Summary**

In summation of results from the business owner's survey, most city businesses were related to retail, services, or other non-specified establishments located in the downtown, southern, or western parts of the community. The substantial majority of business owners felt the city provided adequate water, sewer, gas, and electric utilities, but a somewhat considerable portion felt the city needed to do a better job with provisions for roads and parking. Overall, the vast majority (93%) of business owners were satisfied with city utility provisions for their business.

Approximately half of the business owners surveyed felt positive about the city's business climate—that city businesses are either stable or growing somewhat and half felt negative—that city businesses are declining somewhat or declining significantly. The substantial majority (71%) of business owners planning to expand have plans to expand inside the city limits and 86% have enough employees to adequately conduct daily operations. The significant majority (70%) also felt the city should make it a top priority to redevelop the downtown and approximately 75% felt the city should work with local schools to promote and enhance skilled workforce training for local business.

In terms of potential next steps with a more detailed local business analysis the city along with local businesses could examine the following:

- Infrastructure provisions for roads and parking.
- Declining business environment.
- Expansion for local business inside the city limits.
- Downtown redevelopment.
- Promote and enhance skilled workforce development.

## Appendix - B Community Survey

In order to provide further public input and direction for the Sylacauga Comprehensive Plan a community survey was conducted through Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is an on-line survey system used to collect, report, and analyze survey data for communities on a wide variety of topics. Through Survey Monkey residents could access and fill out the survey on-line, mark questions, and post their thoughts and opinions directly into the system. A link to Survey Monkey was provided on the Sylacauga Facebook page. Residents could access the online survey through the Facebook page and respond with answers accordingly. The survey was opened in October 2015, at the beginning of the planning process, and closed in January 2018 when the Comprehensive Plan draft document was begun. A total of 144 surveys were collected through this method, which represented only a small portion of the city's population. However, as a disclaimer, the survey was not meant to ascertain viable public opinion, but rather to provide a platform for conducting further and more detailed research as to community perceptions and opinions in establishing city policies and plans for the future.

On the survey a total of 10 questions were inquired of residents, which are listed as follows:

1. **Residency:** Are you a resident of Sylacauga (Your Residence is Within the City Limits)?—Yes or No.
2. **Age:** What is your age?—24 or under, 25 to 49, 50 or over
3. **Community Values:** Please Rate How Well You Value the Following Items with 1 Being the Highest and 10 the Lowest—Strong and Growing Economy, Community Facilities, Parks and Recreation etc.
4. **Community Services:** How Do You Feel About the Following?(Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied, Don't Know)—School System, City Utilities, Police Department, Fire Department, Street Department, Public Library, etc.
5. **Community Concerns:** Are You Concerned About the Following Items? (Very Concerned, Concerned, Somewhat Concerned, Not Concerned, Don't Know)—Lack of New Housing Development, Lack of New Industrial Development, Few Skilled Job Opportunities, etc.
6. **Community Needs:** Please Rank What You Feel are the Most Important Needs for the City of Sylacauga, with 1 Being the Most Important or Urgent Need and 10 Being the Least Important or Urgent Need. (More Industrial Jobs and Opportunities, More Rental Options, New Housing Development, etc.
7. **Community Opportunities:** What Opportunities Do You Think the City Should Make a Priority? (Check as Many as Necessary)—Plan for and Encourage New Housing Development, Provide Incentives for New Businesses to Locate Downtown, Partnership with Schools to Provide Skilled Workforce Training etc.
8. **City Communication with Residents:** How Satisfied Are You with the City's Communication with Residents?—Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied, Don't Know.
9. **City Contact:** Have You Contacted the City of Sylacauga in the Last Year?—Yes or No. (If No skip to question 10).
10. **Customer Service:** How Would You Rate the City's Customer Service?—Exceptional, Good, Fair, Poor.
11. **Community Outlook:** If Things Were to Continue the Same as Usual in the City of Sylacauga, How Do You think the City Would Stand in 10 Years?—Very good, Good, Fair, Bad, Very Bad.
12. **Storytelling and Experience:** As the Final Question in the Survey, We Would Like to Inquire

of Your Own Personal Experiences “Good or Bad” from Your Life as a Sylacauga Resident or As Someone Who Lives Nearby and Also Has Experience and Influence from the Community in Some Way. This is the Section of the Survey which Will Take the Community Plan to an Even Deeper Level with a “Storytelling” Element. We Assure that all Responses will Remain Anonymous, Unless You Prefer Otherwise. Thank you for Your Participation in Making the City of Sylacauga an even Greater Place to Live, Work, Play, and Invest In.

The following is an analysis of responses for each question asked on the survey in order establish a platform for resident views and opinions:

1. Residency: Are you a resident of Sylacauga?

The results from city residency showed 102 respondents (71.83%) living in the city limits and 40 respondents (28.17%) living outside the city limits.

2. Age: What is your age?

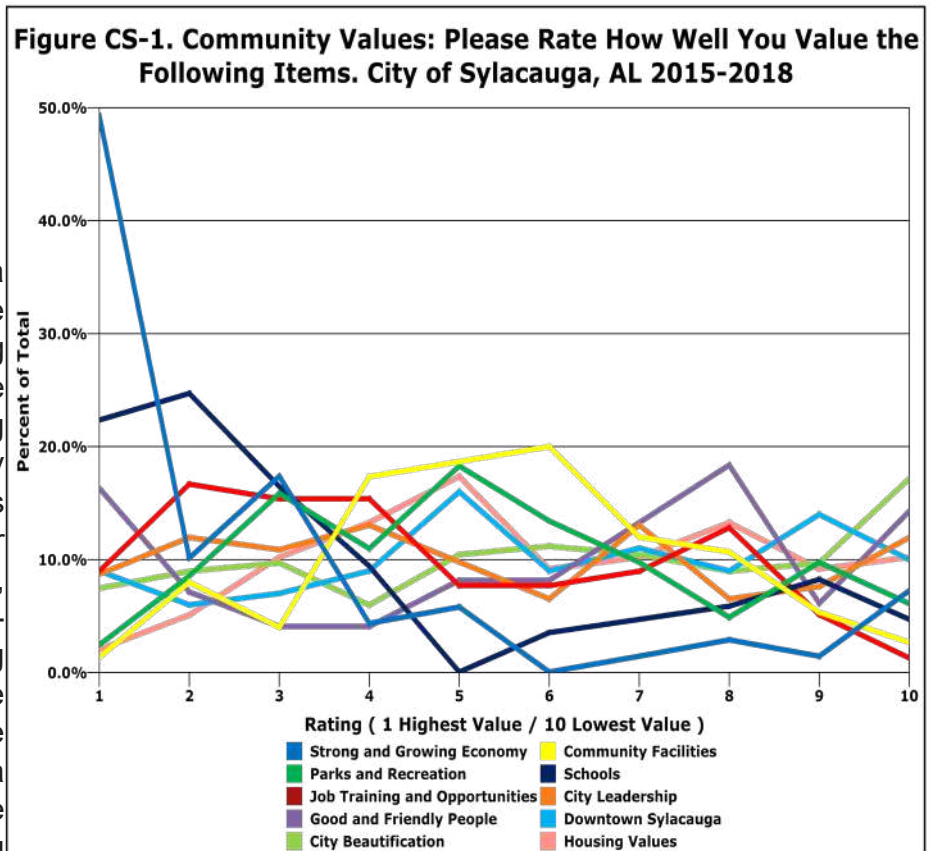
Survey respondents answered this question with 71 being age 50 or over (50.35%), 66 being between the ages of 25 and 49 (46.81%) and 4 being 24 or under (2.84%).

3. Community Values: Please Rate How Well You Value the Following Items with 1 Being the Highest and 10 the Lowest.

In terms of community values survey respondents were asked how well they valued the following items of value, listed as follows:

- Strong and Growing Economy
- Parks and Recreation
- Job Training and Opportunities
- Good and Friendly People
- Downtown Sylacauga
- Community Facilities
- Schools
- City Leadership
- Housing Values
- City Beautification

Respondents rated values on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being of the highest importance and 10 being the lowest. Survey results show the value of highest importance being a strong and growing economy with 49% indicating this value as number 1, 10% indicating number 2, and 17% marking number 3, thus showing that 76% of respondents felt a strong and growing economy should be marked in the top 3 spaces in importance to the community. Schools were rated a distant second in terms of value with 22% of respondents marking



this value in the 1 space, 24% in the 2 space, and 16% in the 3 space, bringing this total to 63% within the top 3 tiers of importance ranking. Good and friendly people were also valued in high importance with 16% marking the number 1 spot, 7% number 2, and 4% number 3. Item values of lowest importance were in community facilities, parks and recreation, housing values. Such high importance placed on economy and schools could be attributed to respondents thinking of important economic needs and the importance of preparing their children for the workforce, while low importance placed on community facilities and parks and recreation could be attributed to the city already providing such facilities and services of substantial quality and number. Figure CS-1 displays community values ranking from the community survey for the City of Sylacauga from 2015 to 2018. Notice from the chart the high importance placed on a strong and growing economy and schools and also the low importance placed on housing values and community facilities. From this information, and as a planning consideration, more research and investment could be focused on building the local economy and preparing students for the workforce through education and job skills training.

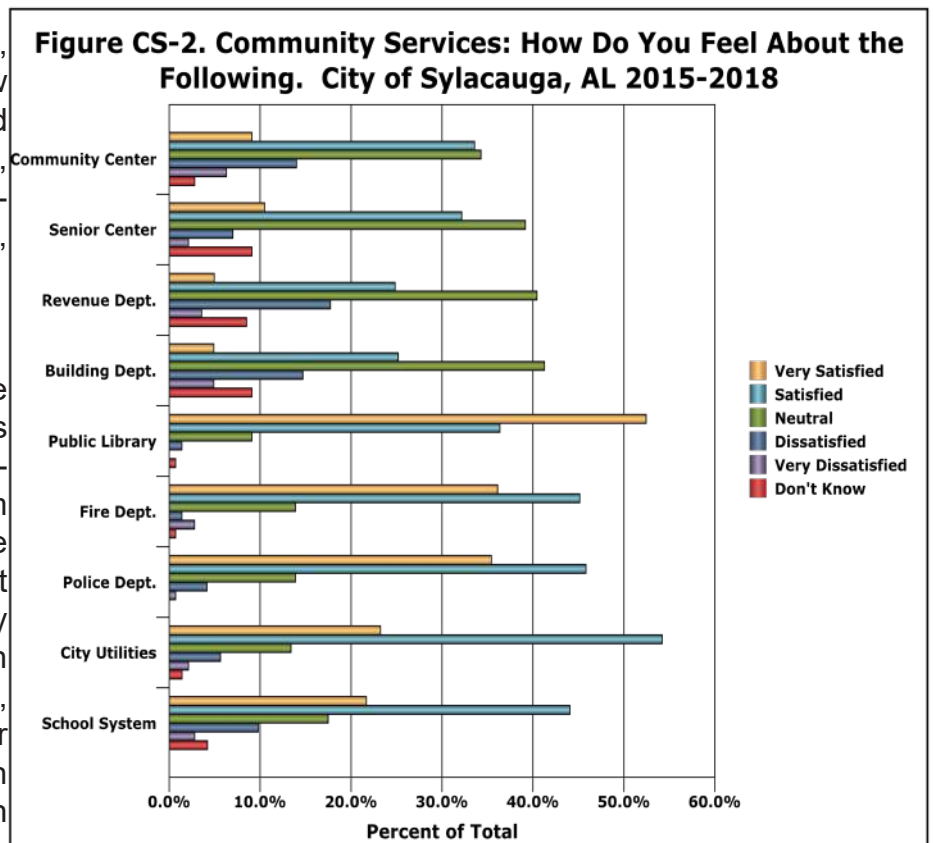
#### 4. Community Services: How Do You Feel About the Following?

The City of Sylacauga strives to adequately and properly serve residents with a variety of services to meet community needs. For this question, respondents were asked how they felt about the following community services provided by the city:

- School System
- City Utilities
- Police Department
- Fire Department
- Building Department
- Revenue Department
- Senior Center
- Community Center

In regards to community services, respondents were asked how they felt about city facilities and services, from their experience, and to mark a choice of the following—Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied, Don't Know.

Survey results indicate that the substantial majority of residents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the city's school system at 65%, city utilities (77%), police department and fire department (both at 81%), and the public library (88%). Community services such as the building department at 30%, revenue department (29%), senior center and community center (both at 42%) did not receive as high a satisfaction rating, however,



these services did not receive many indications of dissatisfaction either. Instead numerous respondents marked neutral, thus showing that many people either may have declined to answer with satisfaction or dissatisfaction or may not have had prior experience or knowledge of these services. Figure CS-2 illustrates how respondents felt about community services provided by Sylacauga from 2015 to 2018. Notice from the chart the high satisfaction with the school system, city utilities, fire department, police department, and public library and also the high portion of respondents that replied neutral to the community center, senior center, revenue department, and building department.

### 5. Community Concerns: Are You Concerned About the Following Items?

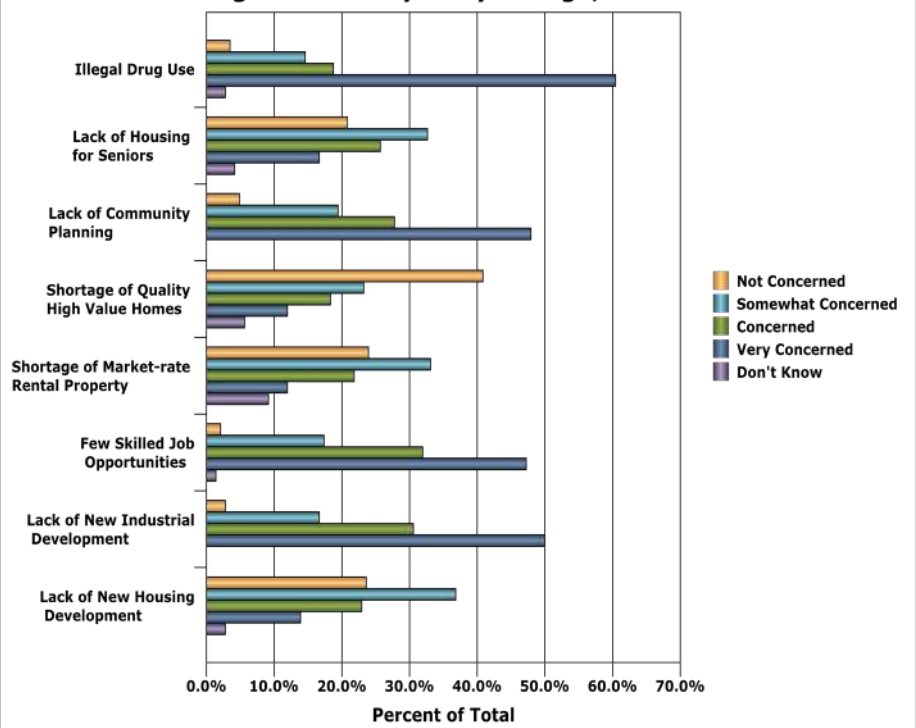
The question on the survey pertaining to community concerns was meant to ascertain how respondents felt about expressed community concerns derived from discussions in the SWOT Analysis and from subsequent Planning Commission meetings. Community concerns are listed as follows:

- Lack of New Housing Development
- Lack of New Industrial Development
- Few Skilled Job Opportunities
- Shortage of Market-rate Rental Property
- Shortage of Quality High Value Homes
- Lack of Community Planning
- Lack of Housing for Seniors
- Illegal Drug Use

In the survey respondents were asked to indicate their concern by marking one of five choices, listed as follows—Very Concerned, Concerned, Somewhat Concerned, Not Concerned, Don't Know.

Survey findings report that the substantial majority of respondents, at 60%, were very concerned about illegal drug use in the community, another 18% reported concern, and 14% were somewhat concerned, indicating an issue for the city to look into with more studies and research. Many respondents (50%) were also very concerned about the lack of new industrial development in the city, 30% indicated concern, and 16% felt somewhat concerned. In relation to lack of new industrial development, a similarly large portion of respondents (47%) were very concerned about there being few skilled job opportunities on hand, while 31% expressed concern, and 17% were somewhat concerned. Lack of community planning was also seen as a major concern with 47% indicating being very concerned, 27% concerned, and 19% somewhat concerned. This information shows that most respondents'

**Figure CS-3. Community Concerns: Are You Concerned About the Following Items? City of Sylacauga, AL 2015-2018**







needs as number 1. Needs such as new housing development, high value housing, and more home rental options were rated as the lowest priorities. This information further verifies previous responses with industrial development and economy related concerns ranking the highest and housing the lowest. Figure CS-4 exhibits ranking of the community needs, in terms of importance and urgency, among ten rankings with 1 being most urgent/important and 10 least urgent/important. Notice that industrial development, mitigating illegal drug use, and better community planning rated the highest at the number 1 need while housing development rated at the lowest priority.

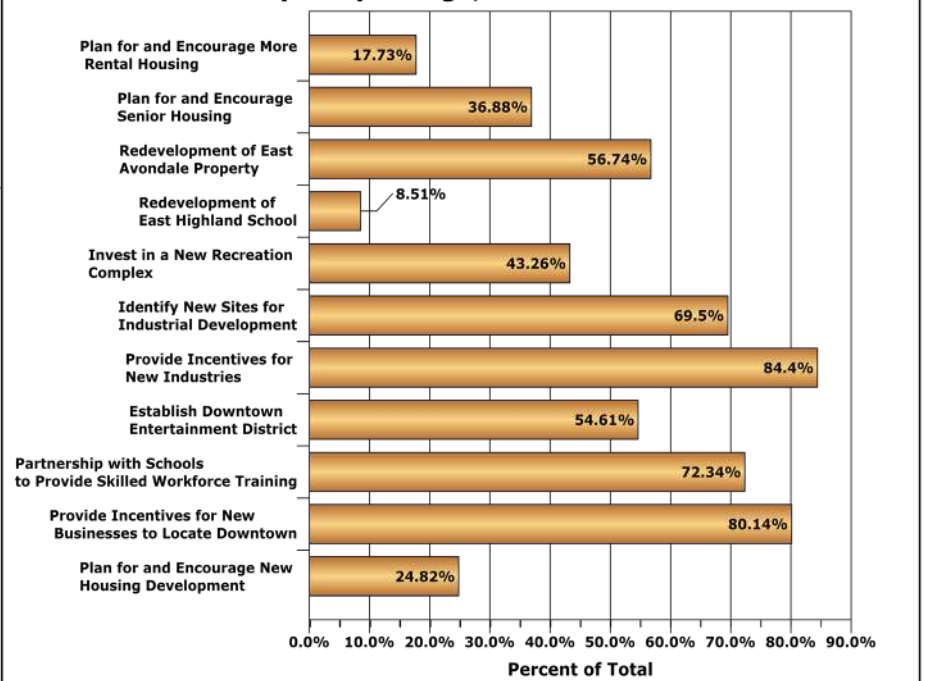
**7. Community Opportunities: What Opportunities Do You Think the City Should Make a Priority?**

As a small city of reasonably large size, Sylacauga possesses numerous opportunities for community growth and development. This question was designed to identify and establish priorities for future improvements and growth in the city. Respondents were instructed to check which opportunities they felt the city should make a priority, as many as they felt necessary (all opportunities could be checked or none at all). These opportunities included the following:

- Plan for and Encourage New Housing Development
- Provide Incentives for New Businesses to Locate Downtown
- Partnership with Schools to Provide Skilled Workforce Training
- Establish Downtown Entertainment District
- Provide Incentives for New Industries
- Identify New Sites for Industrial Development
- Invest in a New Recreation Complex
- Redevelopment of East Highland School
- Redevelopment of East Avondale Property
- Plan for and Encourage Senior Housing
- Plan for and Encourage More Rental Property

From the survey, respondents felt that the top opportunities for the city to pursue should be to provide incentives for new industries to locate in the community (84%), provide incentives for new businesses to locate downtown (80%), the city should partnership with local schools to provide skilled workforce training (72%), identify new sites for industrial development, and the redevelopment of East Avondale Mill property (56%). Opportunities receiving low priority marks included the redevelopment of East Highland School and others revolving around housing development. Notice from the chart the high marks for providing incentives for industries and commercial businesses to locate in the city and for the city to partnership with local schools to provide skilled workforce training to the community.

**Figure CS-5. Community Opportunities: What Opportunities Do You Think the City Should Make a Priority? City of Sylacauga, AL 2015-2018**

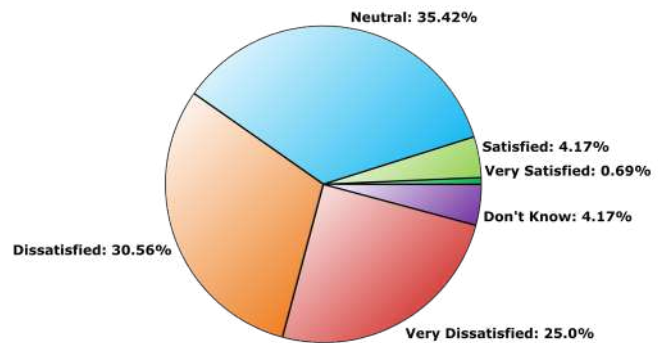


8. City Communication with Residents: How Satisfied Are You with the City's Communication with Residents? In addition to values, concerns, needs, and opportunities, respondents to the survey were asked how they felt about the city's communication with residents. The survey asked how satisfied or unsatisfied respondents were with this communication, listing the following choices—Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied, Don't Know.

According to the survey, a substantially large portion of respondents reported some degree of dissatisfaction with communication between the city and residents. Approximately 30%

of respondents were dissatisfied with city communication with residents and 25% felt very dissatisfied. A large portion of respondents (35%) were neutral and only a small portion (4%) were satisfied. Figure CS-6 exhibits how respondents felt about the City of Sylacauga's communication with residents. Notice from the chart the large portion of respondents who felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with city communication and the small portion who felt satisfied. This information indicates a possible concern with communication that the city should conduct more research on.

**Figure CS-6. City Communication with Residents: How Satisfied Are You with the City's Communication with Residents? City of Sylacauga, AL 2015-2018**



9. City Contact: Have You Contacted the City of Sylacauga in the Last Year?

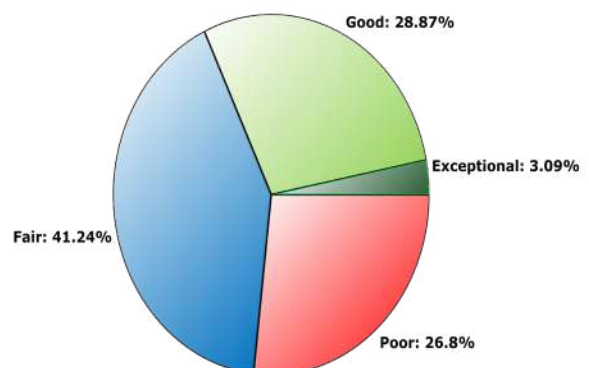
Respondents were asked about contact with the City of Sylacauga within the last year. This question was meant to gain more understanding on the city's customer service to residents as a prelude to the next question. From the survey, the slight majority of respondents (56%) had contacted the City of Sylacauga in the last year and conducted business of some type with a city department, while 43% had no contact with the city in the last year. Only respondents who had contacted the city within the last year were asked how they rated the city's customer service, while respondents who had not contacted the city within the last year were instructed to skip the question on customer service and proceed to the final question.

10. Customer Service: How Would You Rate the City's Customer Service?

This question was meant only for respondents having contacted the city in the last year, pertaining to the previous inquiry. Service rating choices comprised of—Exceptional, Good, Fair, and Poor.

According to the survey, of the respondents having contacted the city within the past year, approximately 3% of rated the city's customer service exceptional, 28% rated city service good, 41% fair, and 26% poor, indicating that the substantial majority (70%) of respondents considered the city's customer service fair to good and only a minor portion exceptional. With 26% of respondents indicating poor service, the city should consider exploring customer service in more detail. Figure CS-7 displays respondents rating of the city's customer service.

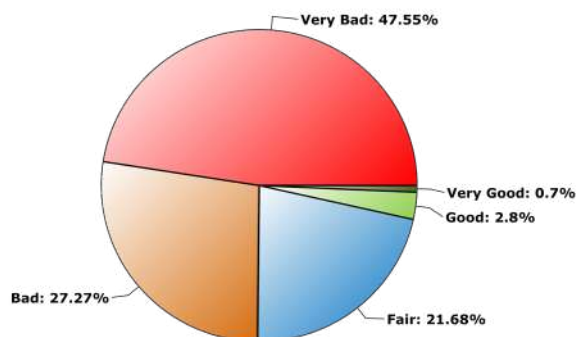
**Figure CS-7. Customer Service: How Would You Rate the City's Customer Service? City of Sylacauga, AL 2015-2018**



## 11. Community Outlook: If Things Were to Continue the Same as Usual in the City of Sylacauga, How Do You Think the City Would Stand in 10 Years?

The final question in the survey was intended to ascertain the community's outlook on Sylacauga's future. Respondents were given the following choices in their rating—Very Good, Good, Fair, Bad, and Very Bad. According to the survey, almost half, approximately 47% of respondents felt the city would stand "very bad" in 10 years if things continued the same as usual. Furthermore, approximately 27% felt the city would stand "bad" and 21% felt the city would stand as "fair". Only a minor 2% of respondents felt the city would stand good and 0.7% "very good". Figure CS-8 illustrates how respondents felt the city would stand in 10 years given that things were to continue the same as usual. Notice that the significant majority felt that the city would stand either "bad" or "very bad" in the next 10 years if things continued the same as usual.

**Figure CS-8. Community Outlook: If Things were to Continue the Same as Usual in the City of Sylacauga, How Do You Think the City Would Stand in 10 Years? City of Sylacauga, AL 2015-2018**



### Summary of Community Survey Results

The Sylacauga Community Survey, conducted between 2015 and 2018, serves simply as a platform in which to conduct further research and exploration on residents' opinions and views pertaining to community values, facilities and services, concerns, needs, and opportunities, etc. The survey also gives guidance for the Comprehensive Plan update in terms of economic development, housing, and community facility needs.

The survey garnered the thought and views of 144 residents or respondents in close proximity of Sylacauga, with the substantial majority (71%) living within the city limits. Half of respondents (50%) were age 50 or older and 46% were age 25 to 49 with the remainder being younger than 25.

### Community Values

In terms of values, most respondents (49%) highly valued a strong and growing economy, schools (22%), and good and friendly people (16%) and rated these number 1. The lowest rated values included community facilities, parks and recreation, and housing values.

### Community Services

For the most part, respondents to the survey were satisfied with services provided by the city. Respondents were most satisfied with the public library with 52% being very satisfied, the fire department (36%), police department (35%), and city utilities (23%). Respondents were least satisfied with the building department, revenue department, community center and senior center, however, many respondents marked neutral or didn't know for these services.

### Community Concerns

The most prevalent concerns for Sylacauga centered around economic development with approximately 50% respondents being very concerned about the lack of new industrial development and 47% showing much concern about there being few skilled job opportunities in the city. Lack of community planning was also a major concern with 47% being very concerned. However, illegal drug use was shown to be the single most substantial concern with 60% being very concerned.

## **Community Needs**

Community needs tended to follow similar patterns to community concerns. The most substantial needs included bringing more industrial jobs and opportunities into the city, as indicated as the number 1 need by 61% of respondents and the need to mitigate or eliminate drug use, which was marked as the number 1 need by 56% of respondents. Better community planning was also indicated as a major need with 46% marking number 1 while both downtown revitalization and skilled workforce training and development reported 36% in the number 1 choice.

## **Community Opportunities**

As for opportunities which respondents felt the city should make top priorities, providing incentives for new industries to locate in the city held the highest score accounting for 84% of respondent indications followed closely with providing incentives for new businesses to locate downtown at 80%. Respondents also rated the opportunity for the city to partnership with local schools to provide skilled workforce training as high at 72% along with identifying new sites for industrial development with 69%.

## **City Communication with Residents and Customer Service**

For the most part, respondents felt dissatisfied with the city's communication with residents as 30% felt dissatisfied, 25% felt very dissatisfied, and 35% remained neutral. Of respondents who contacted the city within the last year, approximately 3% felt the city's customer service was exceptional, 28% good, 41% fair, and 26% poor.

## **Community Outlook**

In terms of community outlook, when asked if things were to continue the same as usual in the City of Sylacauga how do you think the city would stand in 10 years, the majority held a negative outlook with approximately 47% indicating "very bad" and 27% "bad". Approximately 21% felt the city would be "fair", 2% "good", and 0.7% "very good".

Based on survey results the City of Sylacauga should, as top priorities, strive to:

- Bring more industrial development to the city.
- Promote and enhance skilled workforce training.
- Revitalize the downtown area.
- Improve community planning.
- Mitigate or eliminate illegal drug use.

**Disclaimer:** The Community Survey was conducted and recorded as a survey based on community perception and opinion and is not intended, by itself, to be solidly grounded with factual information. The information presented therein was used only as a basis for determining community understanding and in establishing a platform for further research.



2020

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