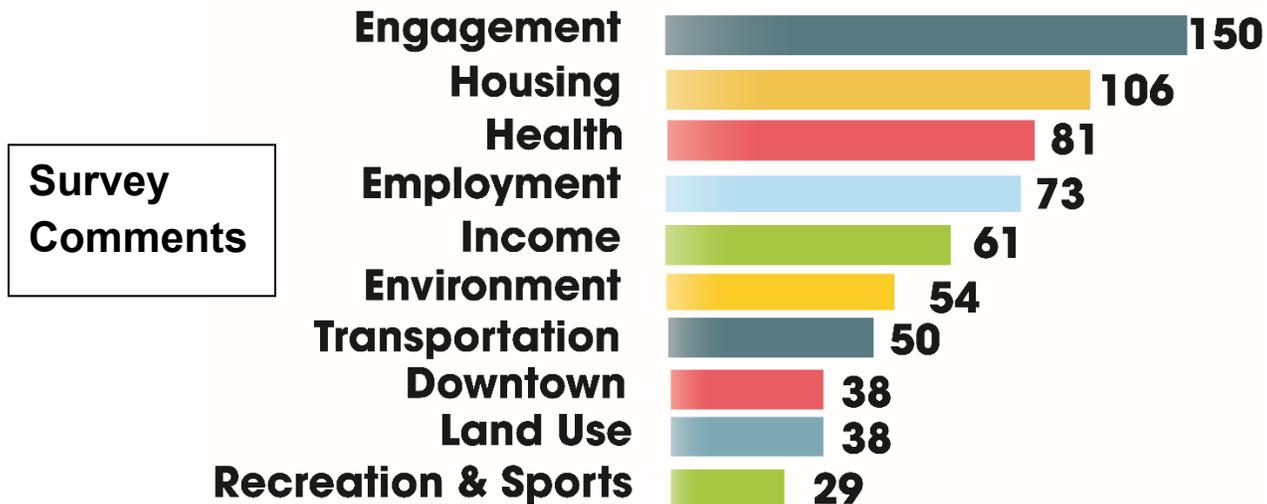


Community Wellbeing Survey Comments

What people are talking about!



Engagement - People want to be heard by decision makers, their input valued, and their ideas respected. Council and municipal government need to include those often not represented (i.e. the young and the impoverished) as well as draw upon the expertise available within the community to assist in decision making (non-profits, health services, Indigenous community and other stake holders). Council and municipal government need to be accountable, transparent and honest. People want to know the reasoning behind decisions, and have more open communication so as to work together more effectively. Municipal governments need to work together more effectively and advocate with provincial and federal governments to improve essential services for well-being, such as mental health supports

Housing: Concern with overall cost and access to housing in a highly competitive market for both low and middle income. Rents are unmanageable on minimum wage or financial assistance. There is a lack of available housing and dissatisfaction with existing housing. Vulnerable groups identified included seniors, students, and working poor or unemployed (individuals and families). Need for social housing and the construction of more homeless shelters. Downtown core and community could be improved by newer residences and apartment buildings

Health: Health and medical services in the community are lacking. Need for more doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, and walk in clinics, as well as reduced wait times. Need more public promotion of healthy foods and physical activities (particularly in schools). Need to invest in funding for increased mental health services, including substance use, and for affordable and accessible counselling with decreased wait times. Identified link between mental health, affordable housing and poverty; must approach in integrated way to promote community wellbeing.

Employment: Employment recognized as an important factor for a healthier community. Concern identified with unemployment rates and resulted social implications. Hope that less unemployment would help improve physical and mental health. City must attract new businesses

offering higher paid jobs to engage youth, and have more diversified jobs to attract university grads. Job security, managing precarious employment, improved employment outlook and expansion of benefits needed to promote a healthier community.

Income: Residents see financially supporting those with low income as a priority, as poverty is seen as a significant barrier to social inclusion and well-being. Need for more rent controls, budget for rent supplements, and more low income housing or rent-geared-to-income housing.

- Beyond - while not under direct control of the community, could still push for structural change and improvements in the area of income. Examples: increase financial aid for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program, support a guaranteed income program; lower hydro bills; increased minimum wage, and introduction of a living wage.

Environment: Recognized as linked to community well-being. See municipal government, in its development process, as playing a large role in protection and sustainability. Citizens want a voice in decision making and are concerned about recent situations (bridge over Jackson Park, greenspace & urban encroachment). Want to encourage items such as solar panels, increased use of compost and bike trails.

Transportation: Active use of side-walks, bike lanes, and trails (increased/in good repair) is seen as environmentally friendly and promotes a healthy, active lifestyle vs. overuse of cars. Public transportation (transit) also valued as it supports youth, students, seniors, those with accessibility needs, and ensures community members can actively participate in community life. Improvements recommended include more buses and more / improved routes (i.e. with access to popular destinations). Transportation equity needed for accessibility improvements and more options in rural areas.

Downtown: Valued as a community centre; would like to see expanded businesses, recreational facilities, parks, water fountains, more efficient building planning (fewer vacancies) and more housing options for lower income individuals. Keep vibrant to benefit community wellbeing; repair streets and sidewalks and clear of debris. Some citizens feel unsafe walking in the downtown core, and believe homeless population should be properly served / serviced.

Land Use Planning: Focus more on how the City can plan and development to better meet the needs of community members. Need to reduce urban sprawl, build more homes, recreation facilities, and services in the downtown area, and also throughout the City to discourage gentrification. Protect green spaces, parks and biking trails. Plan City so that it is walkable to reach amenities and a more active lifestyle can be supported.

Recreation and Sports: important to individual, family, and community well-being. Affordable access to places like the Wellness Centre is a priority for low income populations, especially children, youth, and older adults. More programming in general is desired. Suggestions made to improve arenas, create more parks, and build more indoor swimming pools. Music scenes and downtown recreational development are included in this theme, and noted to have potential economic development benefits.