

Appendix A

Citizen Input Questionnaire Summary (six responses) -- Assessment of Kentwood

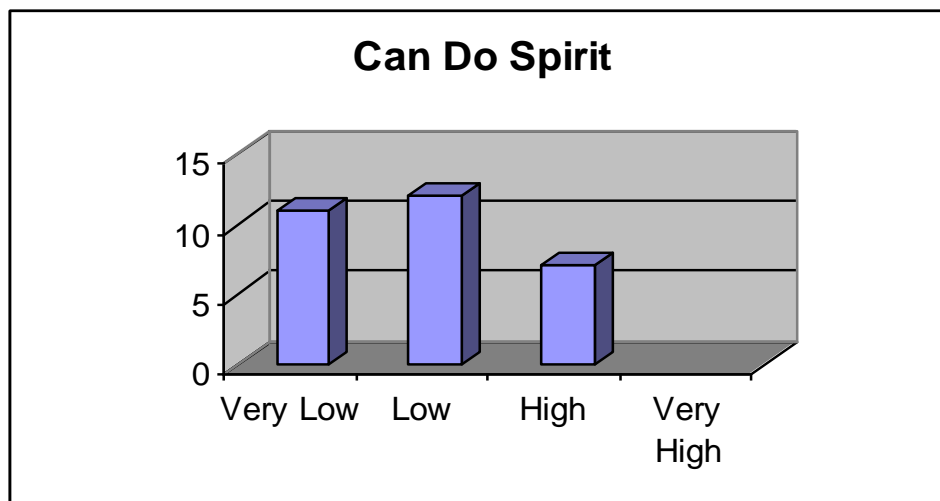
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Interpreting Results.: Feedback is a gift; although, it can sometimes be a hard gift to receive. It is important not to become angry or upset when reviewing the responses below. Remember these are opinions, and not necessarily fact. Try to view the ratings objectively and what they might mean. While they are not necessarily correct, they are the perceptions of individual respondents. If they are not correct, then, at the very least there is a perception problem that might have to be addressed. For example, if the educational system is viewed as noncompetitive, but it is very competitive, then citizens may need more information comparing their school system with others.

The accuracy (validity and objectivity) of the ratings is further affected by the following. The thirty-two responses represent less than one percent of Kentwood's population. Further, questionnaires were not randomly distributed and responses were voluntary.

How would you rate your community's "can do" spirit (positive attitude) when it comes to organizing itself to get things done, to making improvements, and to creating new business?

Very Low	Low	High	Very High
1	2	3	4



Comments From Respondents

The blacks and whites do not get along. The whites think they are better than the blacks, but God does not. We will all die and go top the same places.

Only a few improvements made in most of the same area.

Does not promote new business or try to assist them in getting started (tax breaks, etc.)

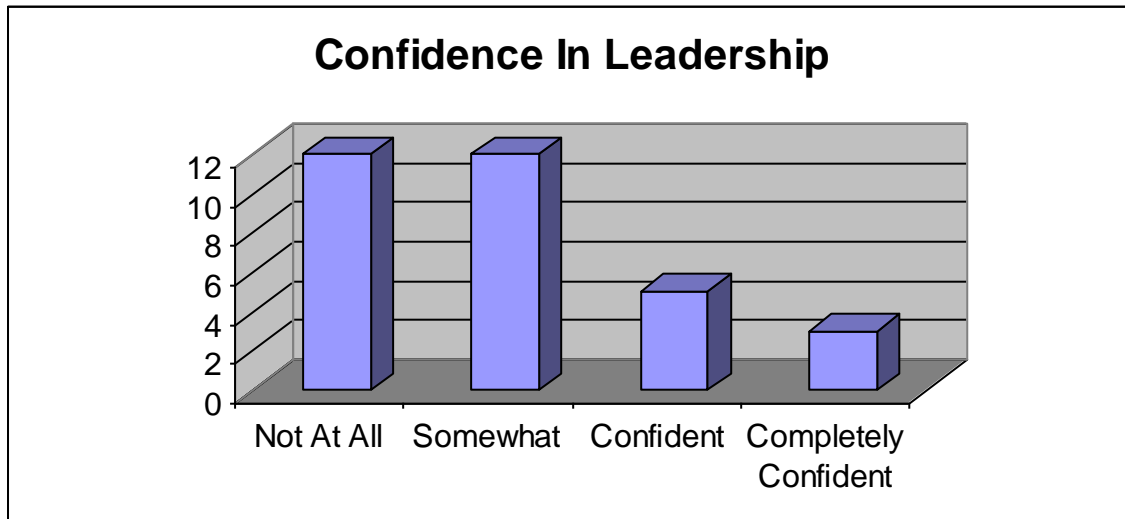
I only use medium (rated between two and three – not shown on chart) for the last several months. Before that it was a closed society.

The town is scared of change.

There is little or no motivation or concern. Very reluctant to accept change in the town, in leadership, and not at all willing to let go of the past.

To what extent are you confident that your local community leaders have the skills needed to move your community forward?

Not at all Somewhat Confident Completely Confident
1 2 3 4



Comments From Respondents

1. Elected leaders, 2. Majority of voters (55%) are black. Will not engage in the process.

But we need for all to be concerned. We have 5 on our council board and I feel that only 2 are really concerned about making progress in town.

We have two that are really concerned about our community, the other three are not concerned.

Making plans or passing ordinances, and not implementing them.

Some are incompetent, but others try to do the right things and are "out numbered".

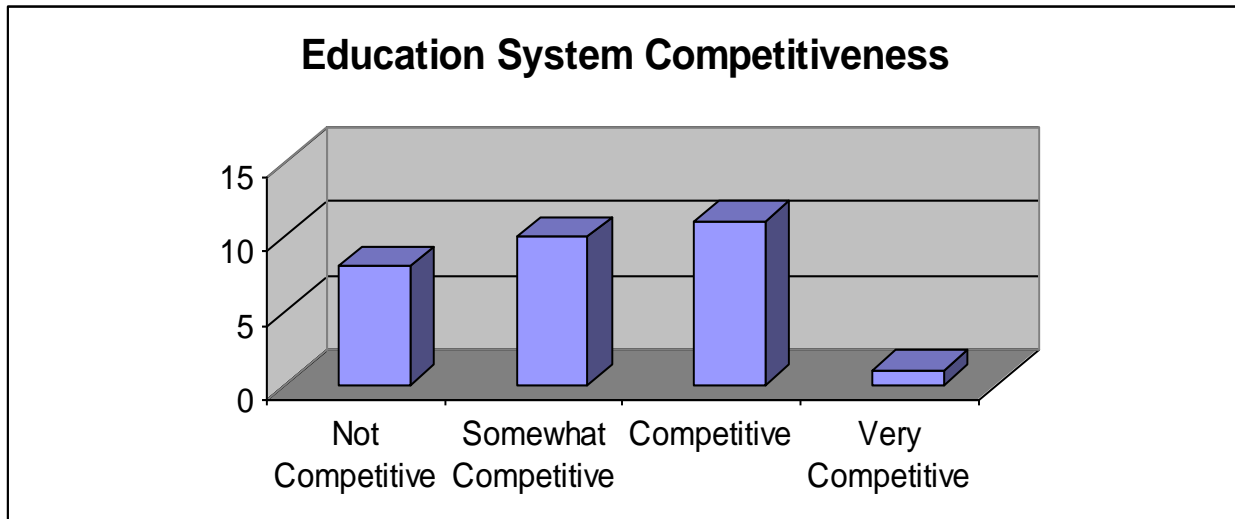
"Reservidly" (Respondent's ranking not shown above, circled 1 and 2).

Too many folks still living old ways.

They have been on office, some for four terms and the town has declined rapidly under their leadership. You hear often, "We need a change at City Hall.", but it never happens.

How do you think your local educational system compares with other towns its size in the southern United States?

Not Competitive	Somewhat Competitive	Competitive	Very Competitive
1	2	3	4



Comments From Respondents

One respondent's ranking not shown. He or she rated Kentwood High School as "Not Competitive" and Sumner as "Very Competitive".

We have excellent schools, but the whites refuse to allow their children to go to school with the blacks. This is a problem! So the white children go to school in other areas and they grow up not being concerned about getting along with everyone in town.

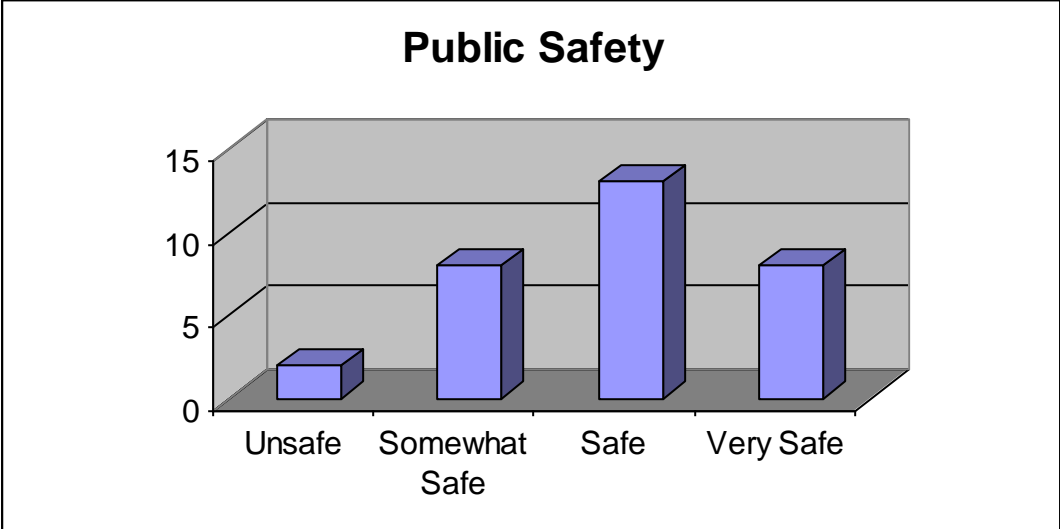
Except for the fact that it is 98% a single race. There needs to be another school built, either public or private.

Kentwood High is 99% black and to get more people in town, we need a 50% white and 50% black school. Don't take this statement wrong. I myself went to public school for 12 years.

The principal and staff work extremely hard. The whites refuse to return. Probably, the only town anywhere that whites have left in masses and have stayed gone.

How safe do you feel in your town (consider fire, police protection and emergency services)?

Unsafe	Somewhat Safe	Safe	Very Safe
1	2	3	4

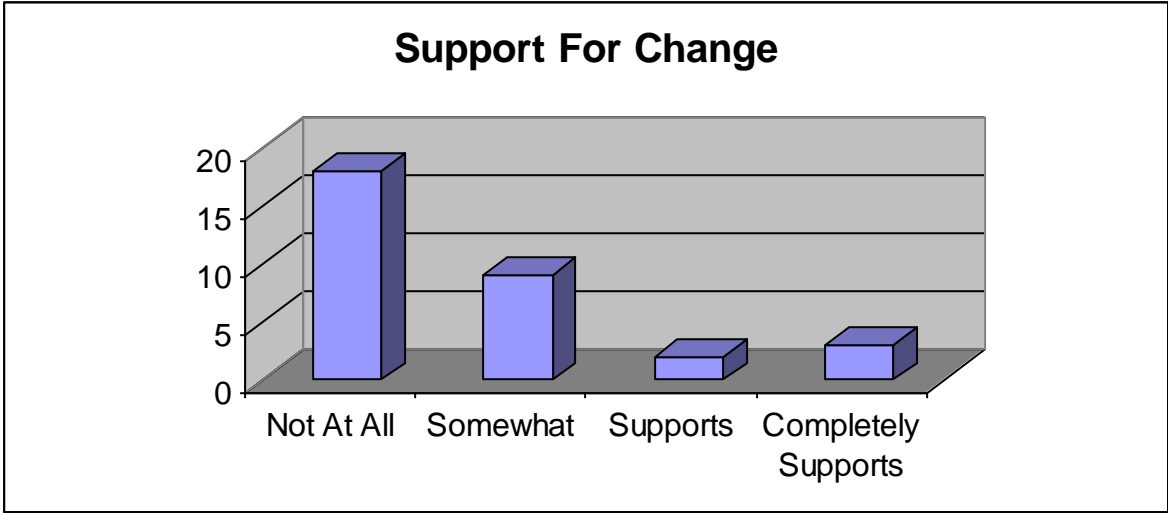


Comments From Respondents

Our fire is great. Our policemen can do better. They are more concerned about courting the women than protecting citizens.
Our policemen could do a lot better if they got out of their cars sometimes. They need to care about the whole town and not just half of it.
We need more full-time firemen. Need to pay police and fire more money!!
The police and fire departments are by far the most outstanding attribute in this town. You'll here, when asked about assets, "We have great police and fire protection".

To what extent do you think your town welcomes and supports change (for example, the creation of new businesses welcoming of new families)?

Not at all Somewhat Supports Completely Supports
1 2 3 4

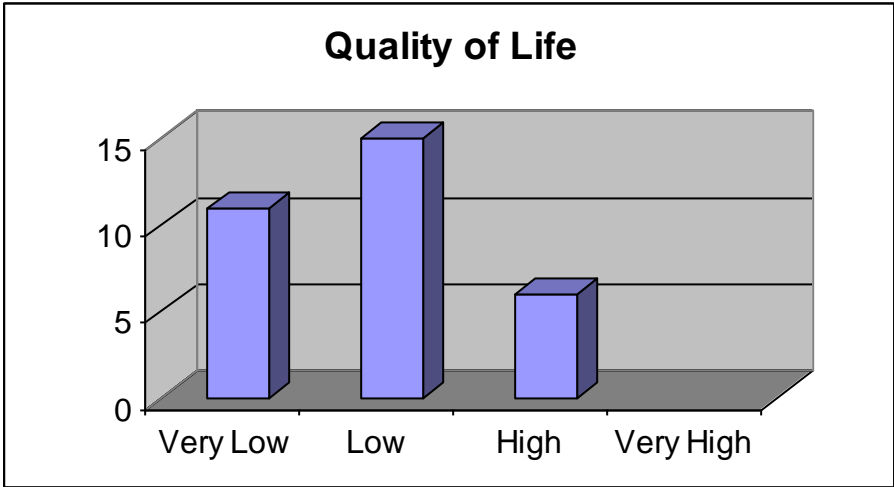


Comments From Respondents

Never has and probably never will. Very self-centered people. The older generation is known for keeping new business out and they have done a good job.
It is beginning to change, not because of town leader, but because of the increasingly vocal population.
If so, there would be much more business located here.
We need more concern!
Individuals and organizations welcome and support. Government is passive.
Some of our Council and Mayor do not change, they only want things to stay the same.
Some businesses that have tried in the past, just keep going because of lack of interest from our town leaders and from the Mayor.

How do you rate the overall “quality of life” (leisure activities, cultural attractions, recreation, etc.) in your community and its surrounding area?

Very Low	Low	High	Very High
1	2	3	4



Comments From Respondents

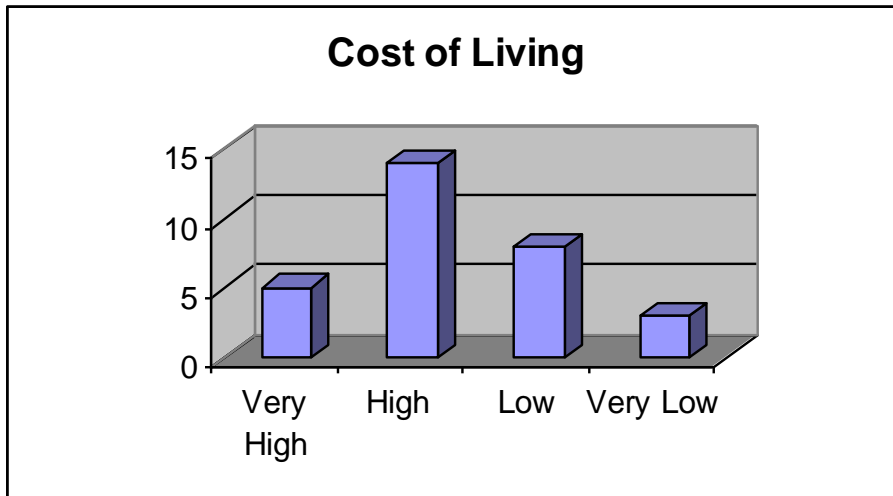
There is nothing to do here – possibilities are unlimited, but no interest to develop. What leisure activities, cultural attractions and recreation? I suppose there is hunting and the museum. My extended family does not visit here because there is nothing to do.

No Attractions, recreation in town. The only attractions were the “Dairy Day” Parade and Christmas Parade, and this year both were in November and did not represent either event properly.

SLU and Hammond have great cultural events.
It could be better if we had more people that cared.

How do you rate the cost of goods and services in your community compared to other communities your size?

Very High	High	Low	Very Low
1	2	3	4



Comments From Respondents

Competitive (respondent did not circle a rating).

On local water service compared to other towns. (Ed. Note: Respondent rated "Very High" and may not have read question. Doubt that local water service is very high compared to other communities.)

Unfortunately there are very few stores here. Possibilities are unlimited, but no interest to develop.

Somewhat. Gas prices are not. Most of my gas is purchased out of town for best prices.

Need more competition as far as grocery store and restaurants are concerned.

List below what you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of your town.

Strengths

Economy

- Good location; Proximity to major cities. (5)
- Kentwood's Britney Spear's/Celebrity status (Ed. City's "name recognition") (4)
- Natural resources (4)
- Kentwood Spring Water/Local businesses are strong. (2)
- We have the ability to have more traffic come in from travelers.
- Well-trained workforce.

Infrastructure

- Interstate – I 55 corridor is 30 miles north and 20 miles south to good sized town.
- Hwy. 51 (10)
- Good Water/Water plant (7)
- Railroad (2)
- Drainage is good
- Strong infrastructure

Quality of Life

- We have a good town, somewhat relaxed and quiet; Quiet atmosphere and relative safety. (3).
- Lack of traffic (2).
- Small town living and the sense of comaradie and friendship it provides.
- Very Clean.
- Good food.
- Hunting.
- Sports (Football and Basketball).

Government

- Zoning ordinances have been under assault for several years, but has managed to be kept in place with some protections.
- Two strong council members who don't mind speaking out for what is right.

Human Relations

- Good people, just need to get along with each other's races; Friendly, helpful, concerned people (for their neighbors); Friendliness, strong Christian community; God fearing; Nice people. (5)
- They all love to come together to support football games on Friday night.
- Religious organizations are strong; Our churches even though the whites don't want to attend with the black. (2)
- God is always with us!! He sees all!!!

Leadership

- Past performance of projects accomplished.
- “New blood” open to ideas and willingness to move towards implementing these ideas.
- People of both races are present in this town that are capable of bringing this town together; Young people (some) who are still fighting to make things work in our town. (2)

Police and Fire

- Low crime rate (7).
- Good fire and police departments.
- Lots of cops on duty.

Education

- Good schools and concerned teachers; We just need to have our own children attend our own schools; Our schools, total programs. (4).

Weaknesses

Miscellaneous

- None (strengths) that I can see in years/ Are not very obvious (2).
- This town needs a “workover”.
- Low income families. Yes, no jobs in town to support families.

Economic

- Not growing, going down
- No fast food franchises (2).
- Competitiveness (ed: uncompetitive)
- No industries or jobs available./No of few jobs available for skilled workers or college grads; Not enough business and high-paying jobs. (3)

Human Relations

- I am very disappointed in this town. We need more people to work together, and stop fighting and take the racial tension out and start helping each other. People need to be more considerate of each other; Racial Bias; Lack of respect for the differences in others;/Racial Tension; White/black relationship/racial problems among whites and blacks; Lack of unity between the races; Racial differences; racial divide; Some blacks do not want to work with the whites., some do, but not as a community (I am black); Lack of any racial unity in working toward any positive goals; Prejudice is so bad here, The whites refuse to work and accept the fact that nothing is the same, that is we (the US) id going to progress, we must work together. (12)
- Lack of unity among all people; Lack of unity and cohesiveness and concern for others. /Slow to change. (3)

- Complacency, extremely reluctant to accept change and outsiders; Lack of Community involvement; If it does not involve football, then, there is not interest. (Ed. Complacency/hopelessness/apathy) (3)
- Whites always refuse to attend schools with blacks.
- Lack of community pride.
- Not enough political strength.

Leadership

- No leadership...poor leadership/Weak government; lack of leadership TOK Mayor and Council. (3)
- Lack of progressive leadership, catering to the "lowest common denominator". Too late? Is the window of opportunity closed???
- They need to come together and support young people's ideas sometime, and stop saying "that idea won't work here in Kentwood." For example, build a YMCA that would bring a lot of money to the community. It would get a lot of kids off the corners of 13th street during the summer months.
- No change/very little change. Talk about change, but do very little about it in the long term.(2)
- Crab mentality and hypocrisy.
- Entrenched community leaders.
- Not being able to exercise our strengths.
- Not moving forward and not being truthful on issues, and very evasive.
- Unwillingness to attract new business. Need to let "big name" business and competition come in. We are a town of monopolies.
- Select few have been making choices that effect our town.
- "Old blood" set in Historic Kentwood and will continue to sit until the buildings fall around them and all the "new blood" is run out to search for better, growing environment.
- Local government not progressive in working toward.
- A mayor who is afraid to speak out and do what is right for all of us.

Police and Fire

- Get rid of the crack dealers.
- Crime and truancy
- Law enforcement fails to enforce laws.

Quality of Life

- Property owners who let their property set empty and deteriorate; Landlords who rent substandard housing and never make repairs.(2)
- Nothing for the children (teenagers) to do, so they have parties wherever they can, drink, have sex, and fight. If there were things they could do that was controlled by adults there might be less of what they do now. (Ask your children?)

Infrastructure

- Roads

What would you like to see happen in your town in the future?

Economy

- See a fast food franchise and restaurants in town (5).
- Better supermarket; Need more groceries (4).
- More competition; New businesses (got enough banks, convenience stores, eating places); more businesses; More places to shop (4)
- Commercial growth and prosperity; Growth; Growth!!! Houses, business, entertainment. (3)
- A motel/Hotel (2)
- Some plants and some type industry come; Industry. (2)
- More business would create more jobs; More industries to help with joblessness. (2)
- More people moving in.
- Large general merchandise store.
- Factory outlet mall at the Interstate
- Campground by the river.
- Small hospital with more doctors.
- Retirement community.
- Chain stores welcomed – recruited.
- We do have some good paying jobs, but could use more!

Leadership

- Total change in leadership; New leadership in government and community leaders. (2)

Government

- Building inspector (full-time) hired to apply local and state building codes and enforce them.
- Fines for civil and criminal court increased. (Town court should be run like a “court” and not a “Kangaroo Court”.) Demand more respect and respect will follow. This will also increase revenues.
- Better pay and supervision for the town’s workers. They keep this town running.
- Have a more business friendly government.
- Open city elected offices to people outside the city limits. They have a vested interest in the town also. If they shop and work there, they should be able to get involved in the town.

- Paid position/person in the area of Main Street or Economic Development for the Town; Economic Development person, could be a combo with Main Street/Chamber of Commerce (this is the case in Canton, MS.) (2)
- Enforcement of ordinances: Demolish burned out and abandoned properties.
- Our town electing council members and a mayor, who will do all they can to help make our town grow and progress, that will openly state that all (blacks and whites) must do all that we can to get along.

Education

- School system needs to be improved; Good education system. (2)
- School system support and enforce legal rules of the school system.
- Whites or blacks should be able to attend schools outside their boundaries.

Human Relations

- Unity; Unity between blacks and whites; People working with each other and understanding each other; Just to grow and work together. -- I would like to see people start working together for the good of the whole community and all the people; Respect for others and a commitment to work toward a common cause; Blacks and whites coming together for a better "us".; Black and white involvement; Togetherness, more community involvement; To come together as a community; The blacks and whites accepting one another. (11)
- Honesty

Quality of Life

- More community activity; More for the community to do; Recreation for youth; Programs designed for all the people...Focus in on youth oriented programs; More activities. (5)
- Affordable decent homes; Get rid of the blighted housing; Get rid of the slum lords. (3)
- Have a clean and safe community we can be proud of.

Fire and Police

- To have a full-time fire department with better pay; Better pay for fire and police so that we can get better trained, better able people that will have respect for the town and not have to work 2-3 jobs to make ends meet. (2)

Responsibility with others and not with self. Helplessness.
Racial Distrust. Comments placed blame on others, but likely both sides needed to look at themselves.
Lack of unity. No shared agenda or vision for the future.