TYLER 1st

Building our future, together

2. The Community Speaks

A. The Community Speaks: Public Participation

Successful comprehensive plans are rooted in an understanding of the values, aspirations, and concerns of the communities whose future they are intended to guide. The Tyler 21 Comprehensive Plan is based on an extensive public outreach and participation process that is unique and unprecedented in Tyler's history. During the first phase of the planning process, the public participation process focused on making Tylerites aware of Tyler 21, soliciting their opinions on current issues and concerns, and engaging them in structured discussions about the long-term identity and future they desire for their city. The goal for this phase of the plan was to find a consensus set of elements that would define an ideal future for Tyler in the next 25 to 30 years—the Tyler of the next generation.

The community process included a variety of activities and outreach methods, including a survey, focus groups, a major citywide workshop retreat to create a vision for the future, neighborhood open houses, and displays in locations where people go in everyday life. These many forms of outreach and activities were necessary in order to reach residents with different characteristics and to gather diverse as well as broad views. The results of no single activity should be taken as being more definitive or representative than another. It is from the cumulative and balanced results of these activities, events and discussions that the Tyler 21 vision for the future emerged.

After adoption of the Vision and Principles, additional public workshops focusing on Downtown and the North End were held. Eight Working Groups composed of Tyler citizens worked with City staff and the consultant team on specific elements of the plan. All meetings were open to the public, which was also kept informed through a project website and project newsletters. When the draft plan was complete, the public was invited to review and comment on the plan at a public forum, three neighborhood open houses, and through the website. Finally, public hearings before the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council provided additional opportunities for public comment.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The public outreach activities were designed to reach a broad cross-section of Tyler residents and provide a variety of different ways for people to participate. It was important to integrate a certain amount of redundancy into the outreach efforts, because people receive information in different ways. Similarly, different kinds of events and opportunities to comment and participate can accommodate the variety of ways in which residents will want to be part of this process. Some people will attend meetings and be highly active; some will not be able to attend meetings, but will want to send comments by email or by other means; and some will want to be informed and accompany the process, but will not actively participate or comment unless sparked by a particular issue. Outreach activities included the following:

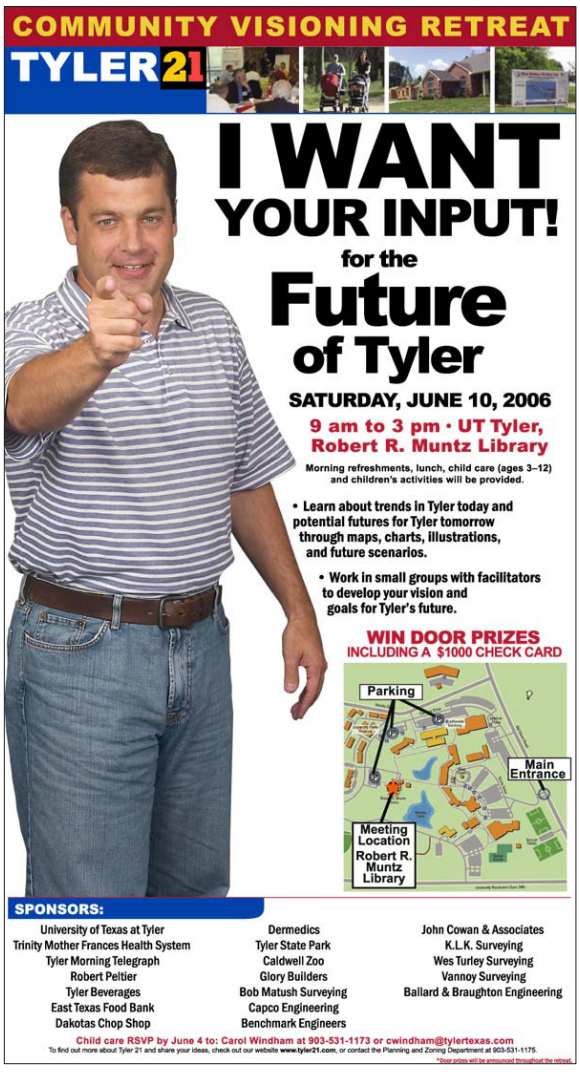
- **Tyler 21 website.** The consultant team created a website, www.tyler21.com, which included information on the structure of the plan, the planning process, meeting schedules, and a library of documents, maps and images created in the planning process. Residents could provide comments through the website through the home page interactive section which invited residents to answer a question or through a "Contact Us" email feature. Residents signed up to be notified by email whenever a new item was posted to the website. The Tyler 21 website was linked with the City's website.
- **Tyler 21 newsletters.** Tyler 21 newsletters were published as inserts in the *Tyler Morning Telegraph* and on the website and were distributed at events.
- **Mayor's events.** Mayor Seeber talked about Tyler 21 and associated activities at a number of events, such as in the State of the City address, and in appearances before community organizations.
- **Press releases and press contacts.** The City's communications coordinator kept the media up to date with releases on Tyler 21 events. Stories on Tyler 21 appeared regularly in the *Tyler Morning Telegraph, Tyler Today* and local radio and TV stations.
- **Event flyers.** Flyers for Tyler 21 events were distributed at public events and to numerous organizations and were translated into Spanish.

Tyler 21 Comprehensive Plan website

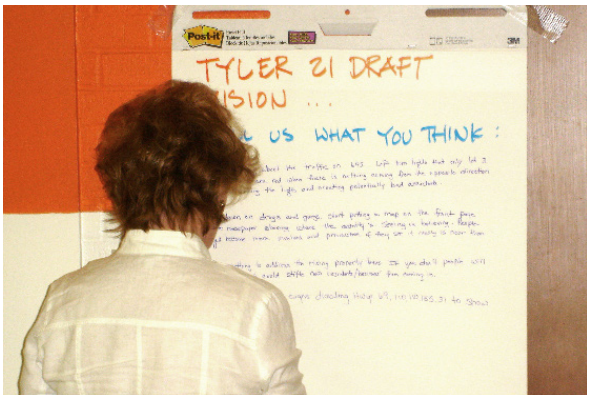
- **Newspaper advertisement.** In advance of the day-long visioning retreat, the City inserted a large advertisement in the *Tyler Morning Telegraph* newspaper.
- **Television.** The city prepared a TV spot for Channel 3 (My Tyler TV) to promote Tyler 21 and the visioning retreat.
- **Community survey.** Five thousand Tyler households had the opportunity to participate in a survey.
- **Interviews and focus groups.** The consultants interviewed a number of officials, members of the business community, and representatives of various interests. In addition, the consultants met with focus groups from the Tyler Area Builders Association, the African-American Leadership Council, the Hispanic Leadership Council, the Heart of Tyler Main Street program, and other groups.
- **Juneteenth celebration.** A member of the consultant team was at the Juneteenth celebration in Woldert Park on June 17, 2006, to talk about Tyler 21 with attendees. Unfortunately, the event was curtailed by very rainy weather.
- **Community Visioning Retreat.** A day-long retreat on Saturday, June 10, 2006, brought together nearly 200 residents to discuss their hopes for Tyler's future.
- **Neighborhood Open Houses.** Approximately a week after the retreat, on June 19 and June 20, 2006, a draft vision based on the retreat and survey results was brought to five neighborhood locations for review and comment in drop-in events. This draft was also posted on the website.
- **Display sites.** Between June 21 and June

Community Visioning Retreat–Discussion Group 3

An open house attendee talks to a local reporter.



28, 2006, the draft vision boards were displayed with comment sheets at five community sites: the Tyler Public Library, Glass Recreation Center, the Southside Bank Main Branch, Albertson's Supermarket, and Broadway Square Mall. The sites were chosen because they are places that people go in their everyday lives and could attract the attention of people who otherwise might not be able to attend events or be aware of the Tyler 21 process.



A citizen provides written feedback at one of the open houses.

- **Final review.** The draft plan was presented for final review at a public forum, neighborhood open houses, on the website, and at the public library.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

A community survey conducted from April to June 2006 was designed to solicit Tyler residents' opinions about current conditions and the issues they think the city should focus on in the future, as well as their level of satisfaction with municipal services and activities. The survey questions were developed by the consultant team in consultation with city officials and the Tyler 21 Steering Committee. In general, surveys of this type are intended to "take the temperature" of the community for a reading on the concerns uppermost in residents' minds—the survey is not a referendum on what the plan's recommendations should be. The results help identify issues and symptoms of problems that need attention, but they do not necessarily identify underlying causes of these problems or the best or most appropriate solutions. Survey forms were mailed to 5,000 City of Tyler households in April 2006, and over 1,015 surveys were returned by June 2006, meeting the goal of at least 1,000 completed surveys. The results of the random sample of 1,015 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-2.9%.

Who Responded to the Survey?

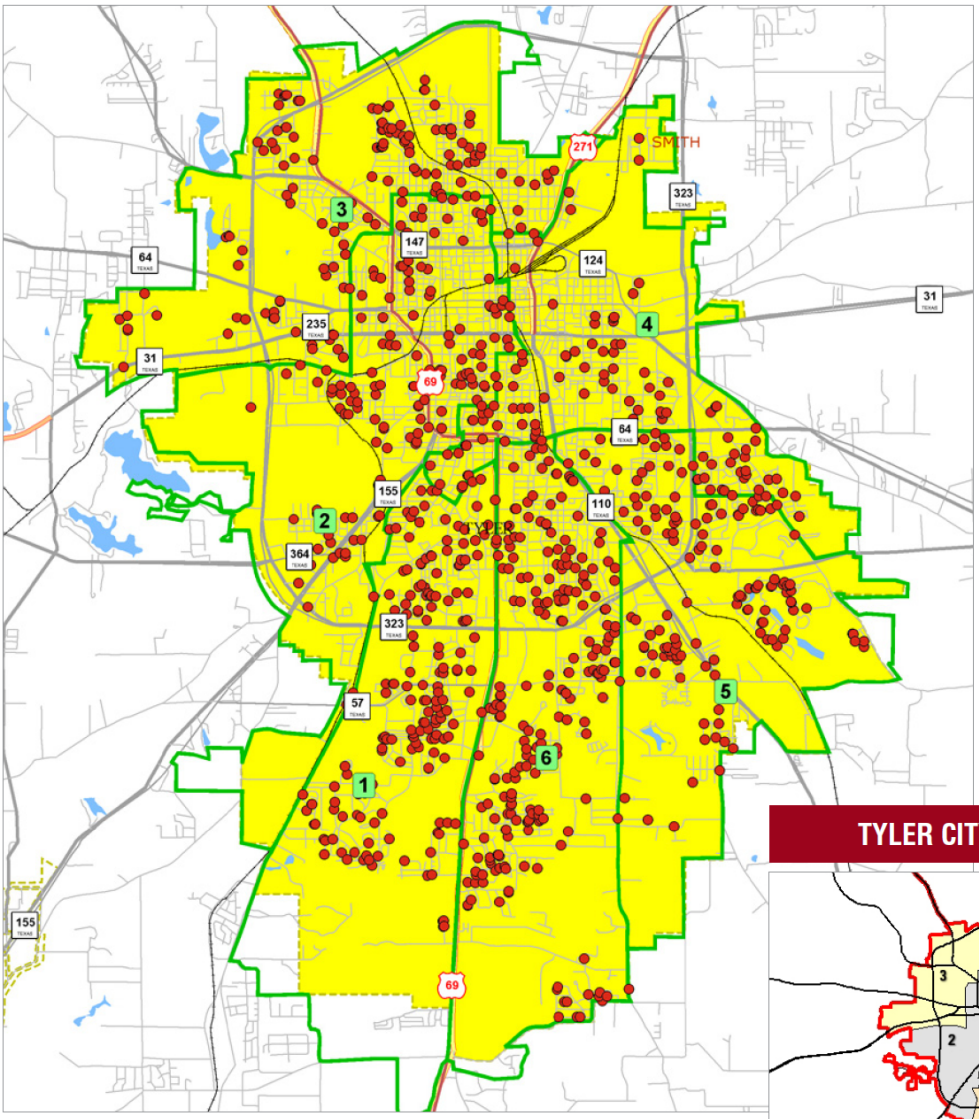
As is typically the case for these kinds of surveys, the respondent group's characteristics do not reflect Tyler's population in several important ways, with certain groups being significantly underrepresented. Respondents to planning surveys are often older, more affluent, more likely to be homeowners, and more likely to be long-time residents than the city's population as whole because they have made a longer-term commitment to the city. This holds true for the present survey. Compared to the composition of the population as shown in the 2000 census (the best data available), renters, apartment-dwellers, young adults, recently-arrived residents, households with incomes under $50,000, and people of Hispanic origin were underrepresented in the survey respondent group. Although the census data are now somewhat old, and incomes, for example, have likely increased for all income groups, some of the differences between the respondent group and the census data are sufficiently large to suggest that they cannot be accounted for simply by changes in the last six years.

TYLER SURVEY RESPONDENT GROUP AND TYLER CENSUS CHARACTERISTICS		
Characteristic	**Respondent Group**	**Census 2000**
Race/Ethnicity		
White, non-Hispanic	71%	55.6%
African-American, non-Hispanic	21%	26.5%
Hispanic, all races	8%	15.8%
Other, non-Hispanic	7%	2.1%
No answer	3%	N/A
Age		
Under 35	14%	30.4%
35-44	15%	19.4%
45-54	17%	17.0%
55-64	17%	11.4%
65-74	21%	10.4%
75+	16%	11.3%
Housing Tenure		
Own	84%	56.2%
Rent	14%	43.8%
No answer	2%	N/A
Type of Home		
Single Family	90%	69.3%*
2- or 3-Family	3%	7.7%**
Apartment/Condo	6%	21.9%
Mobile Home	0%	1.3%
No answer	1%	N/A
Annual Household Income		
Under $25,000	16%	36.5%
$25,000 - $49,999	22%	30.2%
$50,000 - $74,999	23%	14.9%
$75,000 - $99,999	12%	8.1%
$100,000 - $149,999	10%	5.7%
$150,000+	10%	4.7%
* Census 2000 data includes single-family attached home		
** Census 2000 data includes 4-family homes		

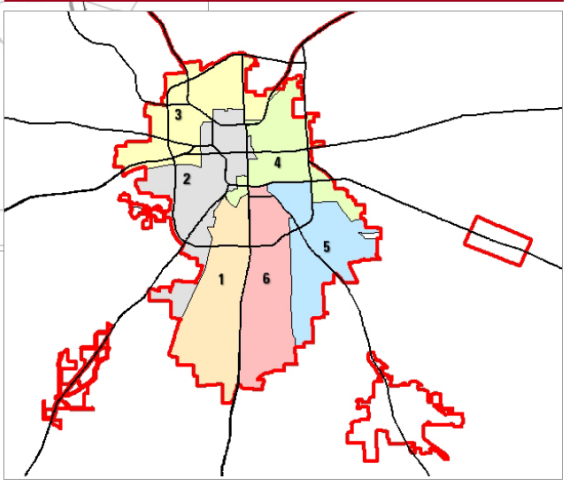
The above table compares survey respondent characteristics and the city's population characteristics according to the 2000 census. In addition, 51% of the respondents have lived in Tyler for over 20 years, and another 19% have lived in Tyler for over 10 years. Although the census does not have data that corresponds exactly to this question, in 2000, 57% of householders had moved into their units since 1995. While some of them undoubtedly

moved within the city of Tyler, 24.2% lived outside of Smith County in 1995. This suggests that people who have recently moved to Tyler were probably underrepresented in the survey. The sample addresses were chosen to ensure geographical distribution among the six city council districts and the respondent profile reflected a relatively even distribution, although District 1 and District 6 had slightly more respondents than the other districts.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



TYLER CITY COUNCIL DISTRICTS

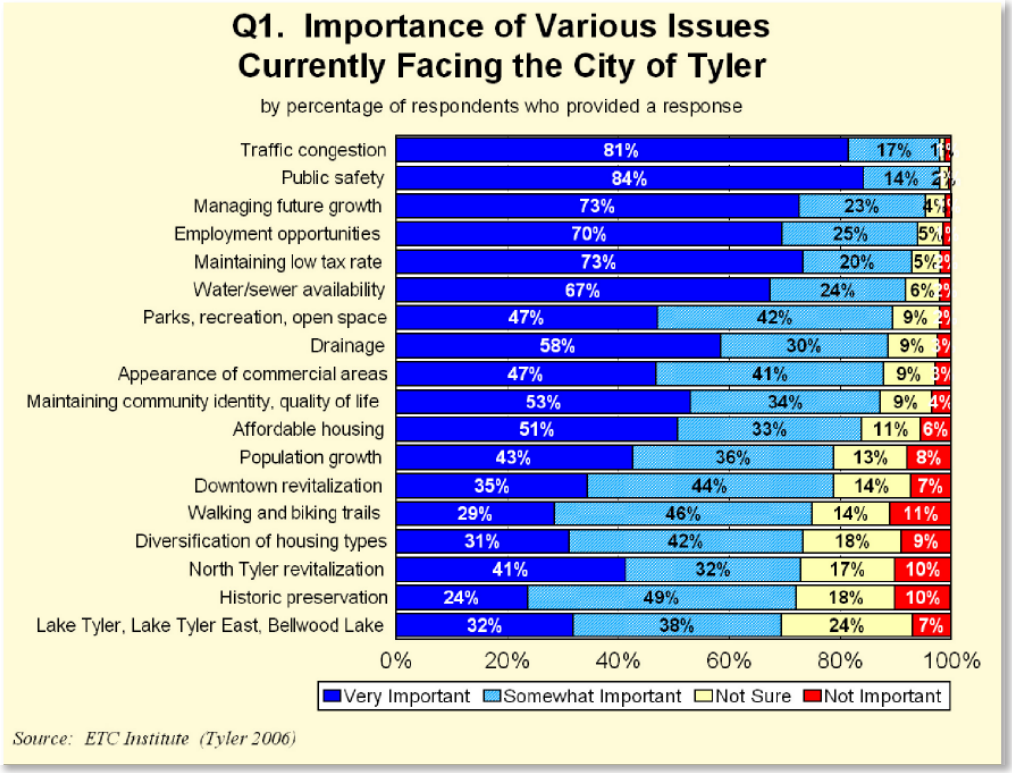


Findings

Most survey questions involved rating levels of satisfaction or identifying most important items from a list.

- ***What are the most important issues facing Tyler?***

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of 18 issues those they felt were most important in 2006. Two-thirds of the respondents identified six issues as being "very important": public safety (84%), traffic congestion (81%), maintaining a low tax rate (73%), managing future growth (73%), employment opportunities (70%), and water/sewer availability (67%). All 18 issues presented had at least 70% of respondents rate them as either "very important" or "somewhat important." This indicates that no one single issue was seen as overwhelmingly important.

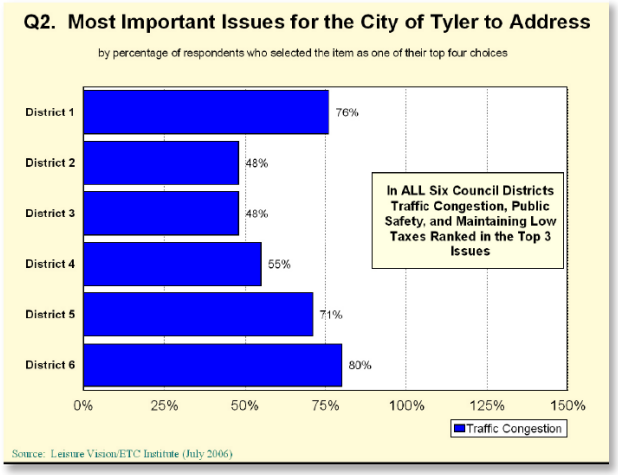


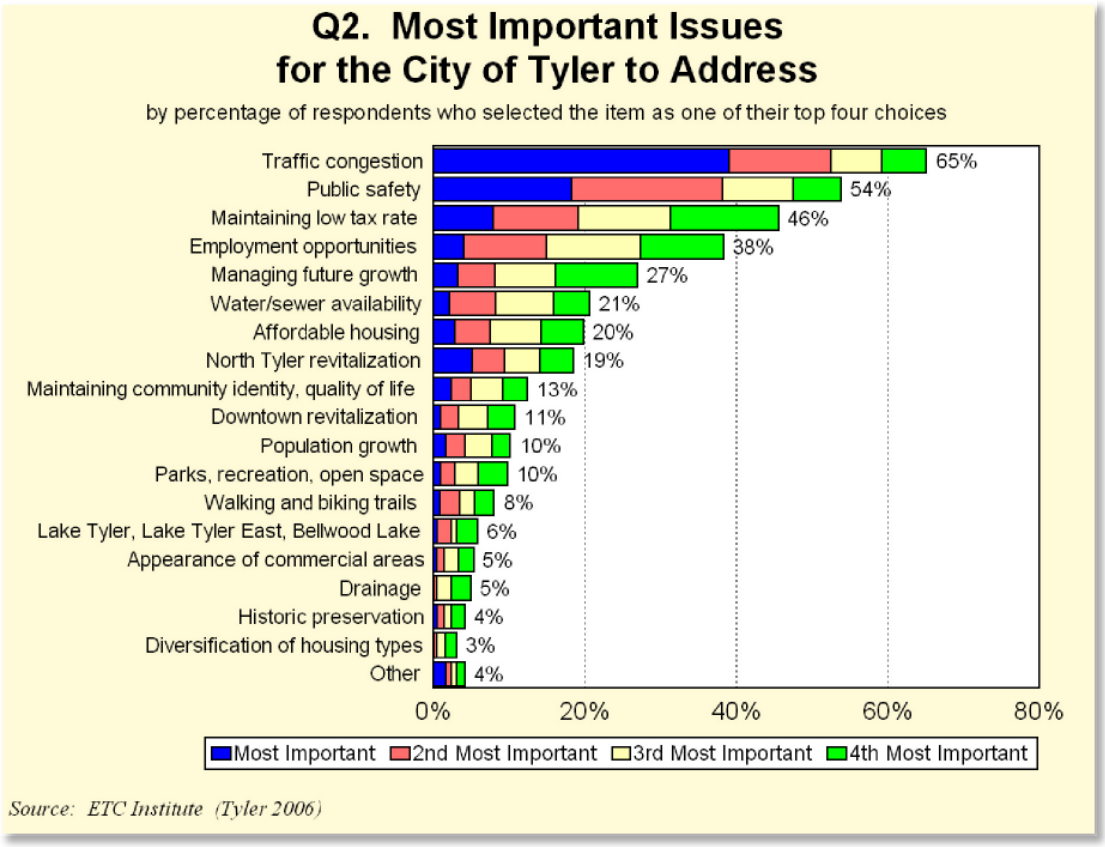
- ***What are the most important issues that the City should address in the future?***

Drawing upon the list of 18 issues, respondents were asked to select the four that they felt were most important for the City of Tyler to address. The top four issues were traffic congestion (65%), public safety (54%), maintaining a low tax rate (46%), and employment opportunities (38%). Almost
40% of respondents selected traffic congestion as their number one issue. However, the ranking of these four issues varied among different geographic areas and different groups.

Respondents in the South Tyler council districts 1, 5 and 6 were more likely to include traffic congestion as among their top four important issues than residents of the other

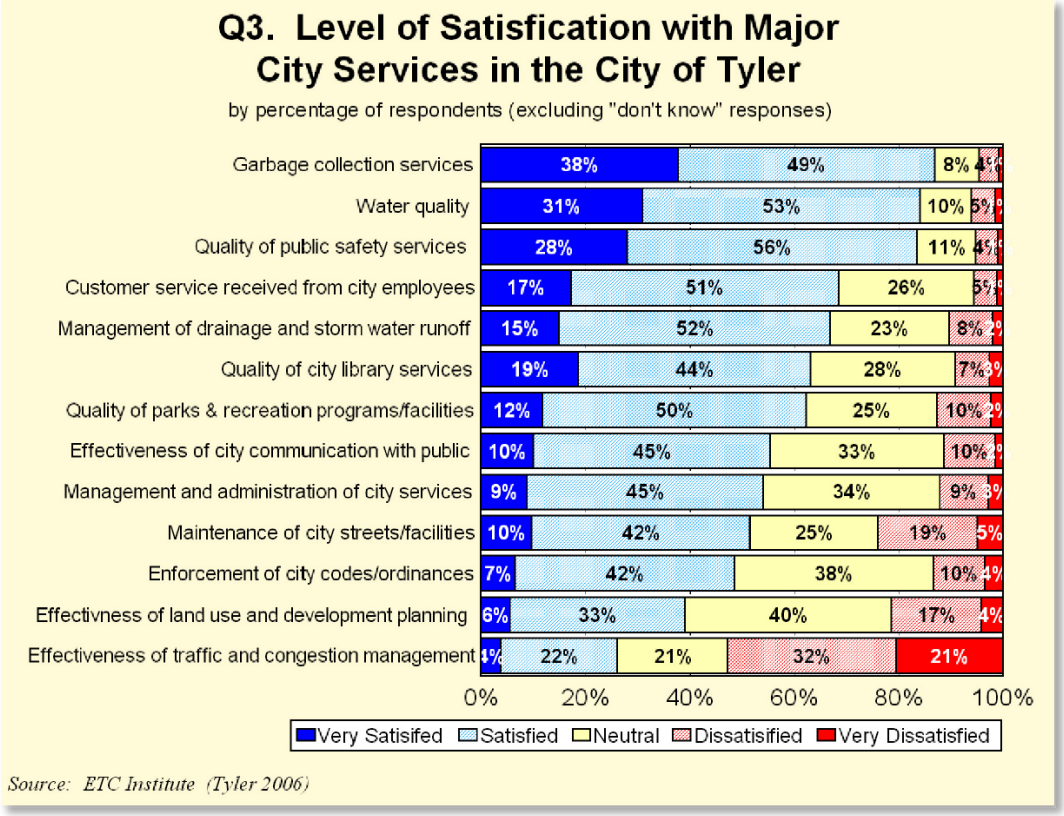
council districts. All districts except District 3 rated public safety as the second most important issue, with District 6 respondents particularly focused on public safety issues, while District 3 respondents rated it the third most important issue. Renters rated public safety as most important and employment opportunities as the second most important issue. African-American respondents and those living in zip code 75702, which covers North Tyler, rated revitalization of North Tyler as the most important issue.





- ***How satisfactory are City services?***

Respondents were asked to rate their levels of satisfaction with 13 City services. Thirty-eight percent of respondents were "very satisfied" with garbage collection, 31% were "very satisfied" with water quality, and 28% were "very satisfied" with quality of public safety services. Only 3 services had less than 50% of respondents rate them as "satisfied" or better: enforcement of city codes and ordinances (49% "satisfied" or better), effectiveness of land use and development planning (39% "satisfied" or better), and effectiveness of traffic and congestion management (26% "satisfied" or better).

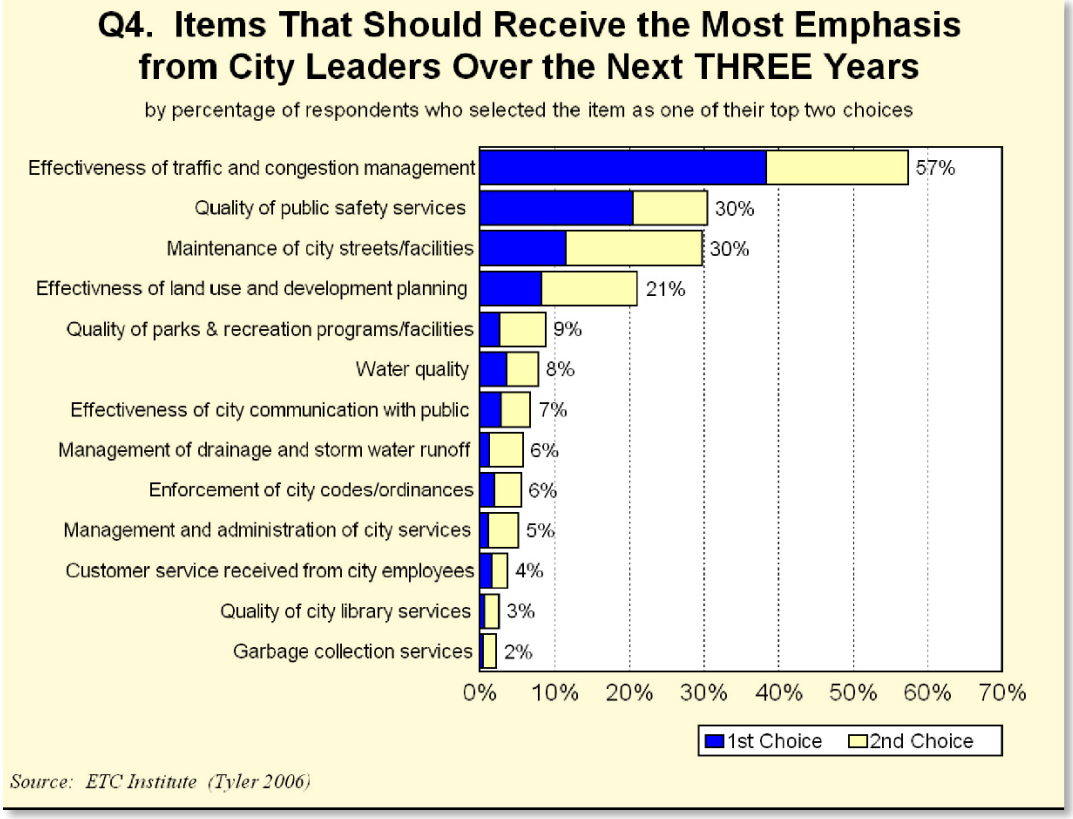


Source: ETC Institute (Tyler 2006)

- ***Which City services should get the most attention from city leaders?***

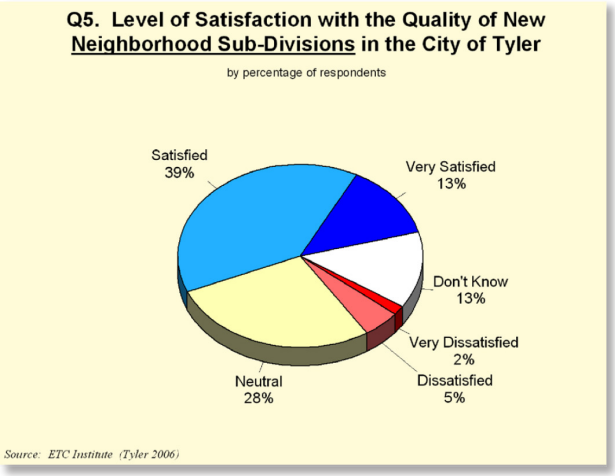
From the list of 13 City services, respondents selected two that they felt should receive the most emphasis over the next three years. Fifty-seven percent said that effectiveness of traffic and congestion management was the most important, while 30% chose the quality of public safety services and 30% said the maintenance of City streets and facilities was most important.

Respondents from all the council districts except District 2 chose traffic and congestion management as the most important issue as did all household types, all racial and ethnic groups, all income groups, zip code groups, and both male and female respondents. In District 2, the top issue was City streets and facilities, while traffic and congestion management was second. District 3 respondents chose City streets and facilities as their second most important issue. In the remaining districts, public safety services were in second place.

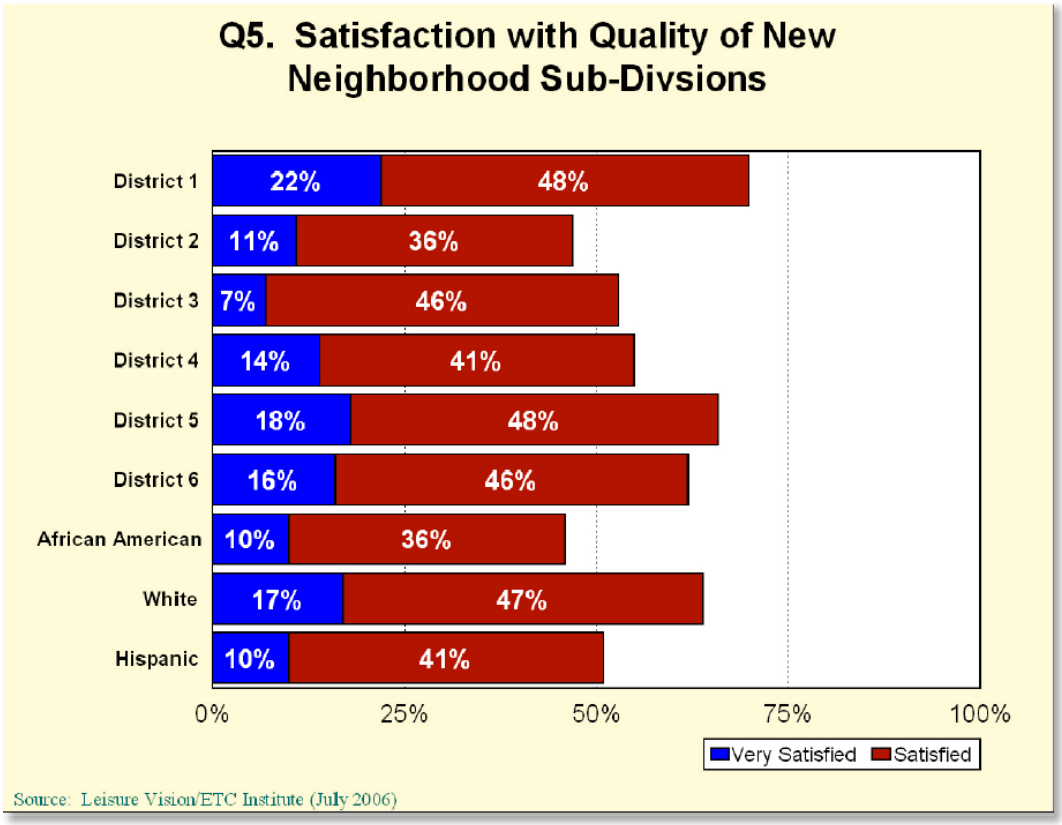


- ***How satisfactory are new neighborhood subdivisions?***

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the quality of new neighborhood subdivisions in Tyler. Thirteen percent said that they were "very satisfied," while another 39% said that they were "satisfied." Only 2% reported being "very dissatisfied," but 28% stated that they were "neutral" and 13% replied that they "don't know."

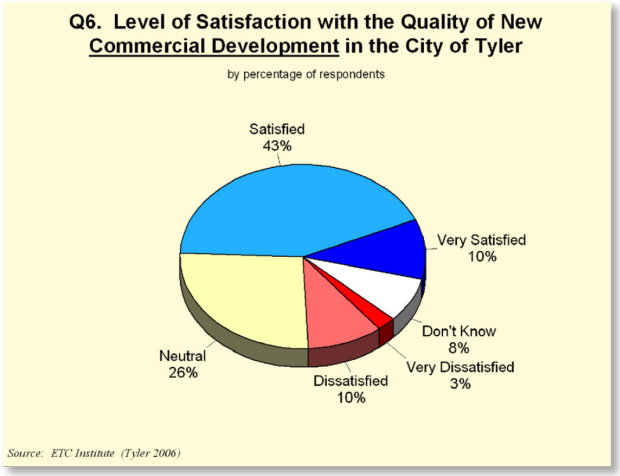


The highest level of satisfaction was in Council District 1 and among households with incomes of $100,000 or more and the lowest level of satisfaction was in Council District 2 and among households with incomes of $25,000 or less. African-American households were less satisfied than white or Hispanic respondents. Homeowners were also more satisfied with the quality of new neighborhood subdivisions than renters.

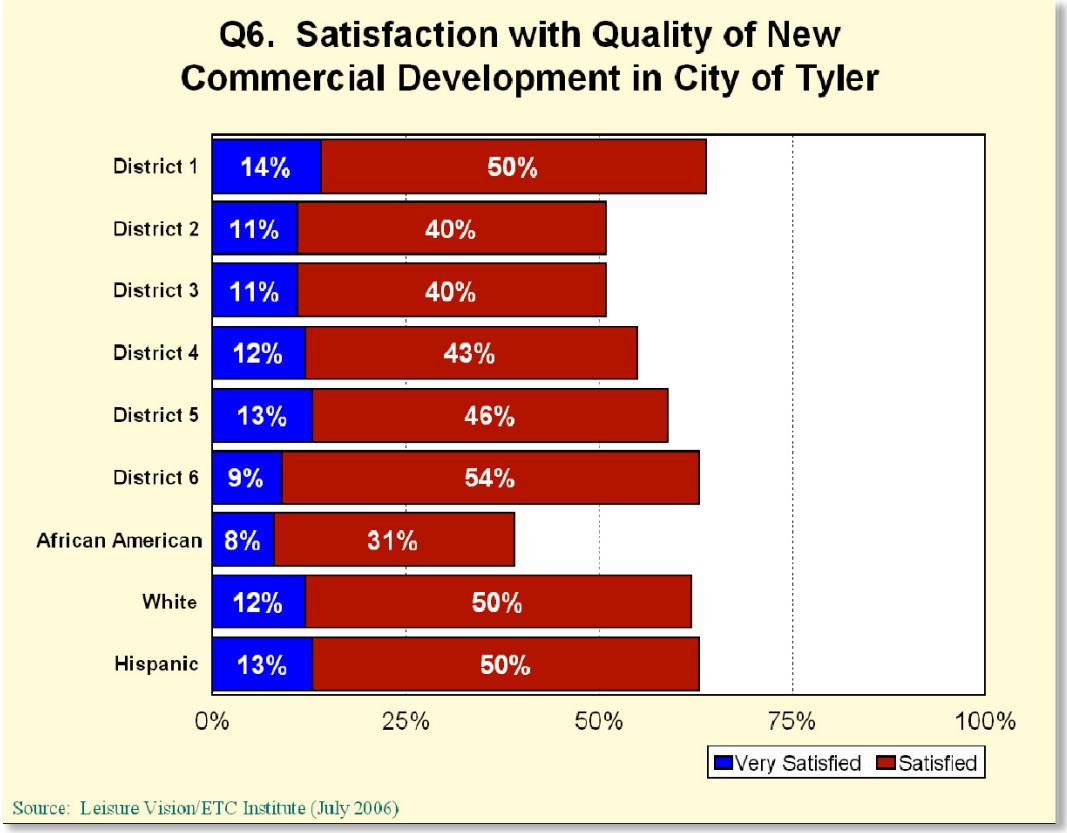


- ***How satisfactory is new commercial development?***

The survey also measured respondents' level of satisfaction with the quality of new commercial development in Tyler. Ten percent indicated that they were "very satisfied," and 43% reported being "satisfied." Three percent were "very dissatisfied," but 26% were "neutral" and 8% "don't know."

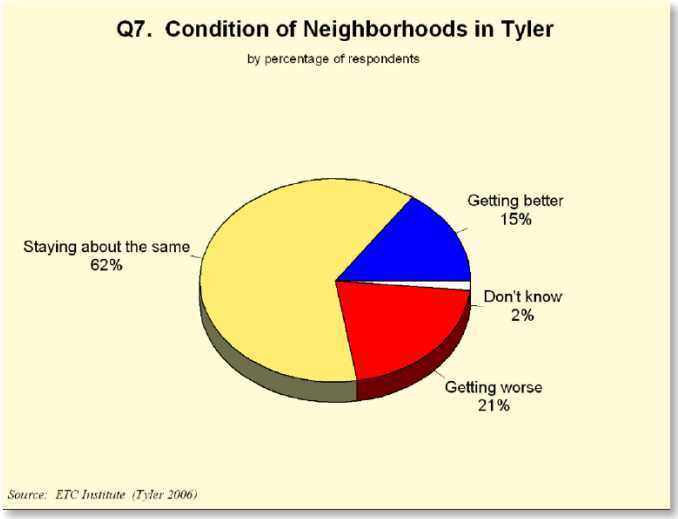


As was the case with new neighborhood subdivisions, the highest satisfaction was found in Council District 1 and the lowest satisfaction in Council District 2. Similarly, African-American households and low-income households were the least satisfied.



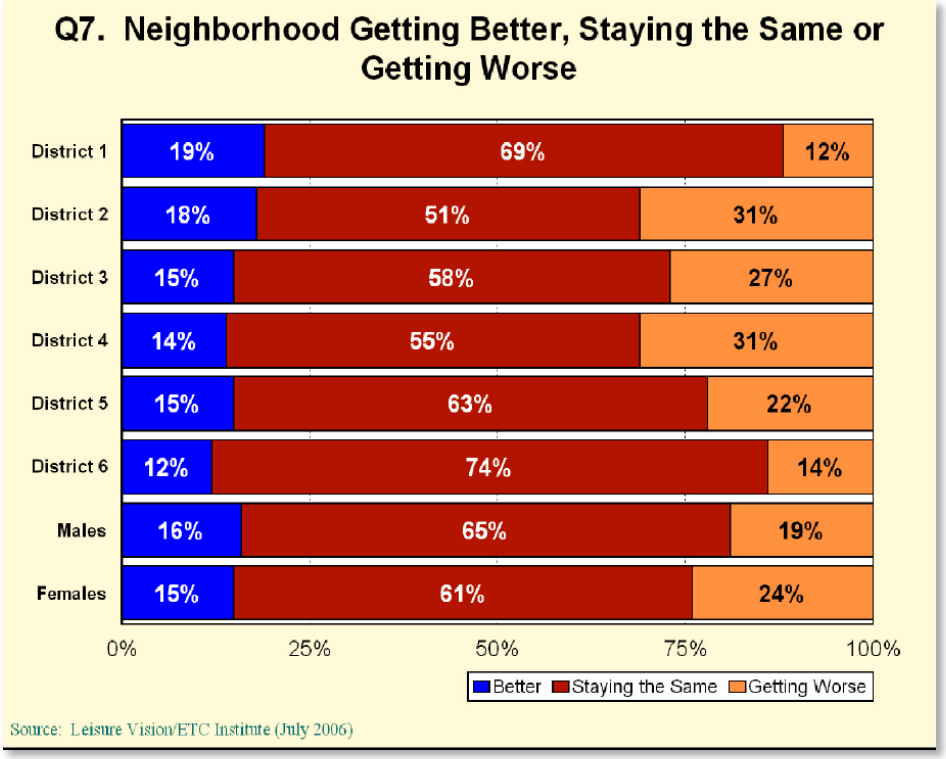
- ***Are neighborhoods improving, declining or staying the same?***

Respondents were asked if their neighborhoods were getting better, staying the same or getting worse. Most respondents thought their neighborhoods were staying the same. Sixty-two percent stated that their neighborhood is "staying about the same," and 15% reported that their neighborhood is "getting better." However, 20% determined that their neighborhood is "getting worse," and 2% "don't know."



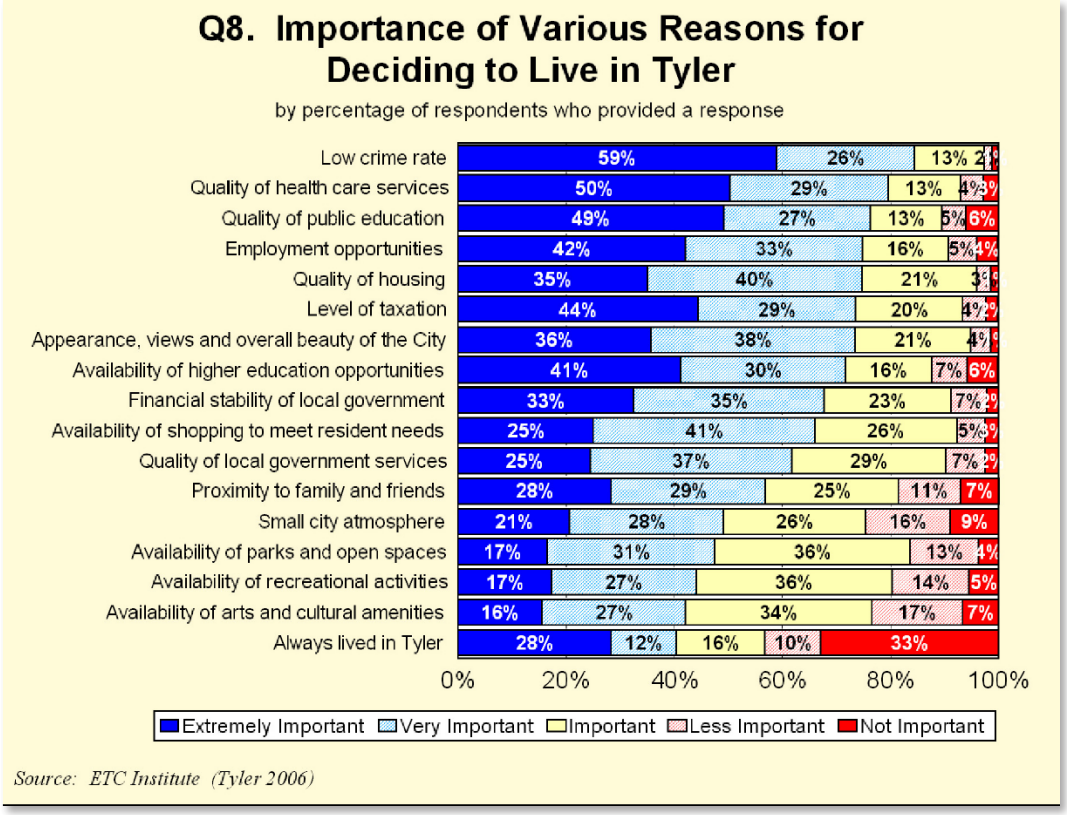
Relatively few respondents in all Council Districts felt their neighborhoods were getting better, with 19% in District 1 accounting for the largest percentage in any district reporting improvement. In all of the council district, with the exception of District 1,

more respondents reported that their neighborhoods were getting worse than said their neighborhoods were getting better. In both Districts 2 and 4, almost one-third (31%) of respondents thought their neighborhoods were getting worse. Forty-two percent of African-American respondents said their neighborhoods were getting worse, while only 20% of Hispanics reported their neighborhoods were getting worse. Over 50% of all income groups responded that their neighborhoods were staying the same, with the highest percentage (65%) among respondents with $100,000 or more in annual household income and the lowest percentage (56%) among respondents with annual household incomes under $25,000.



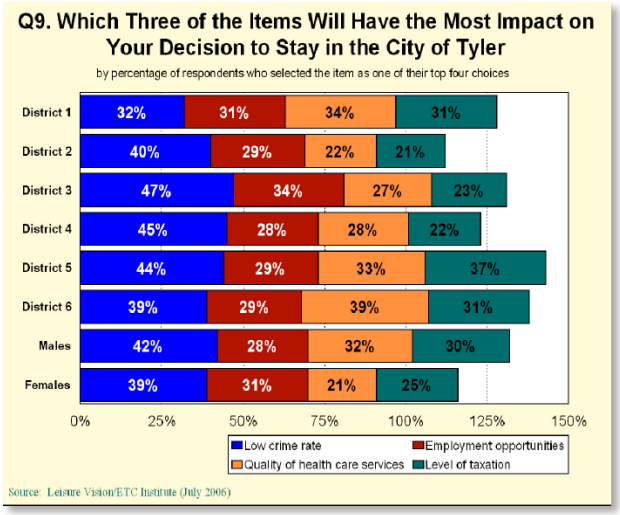
- ***Why do people come to live in Tyler?***

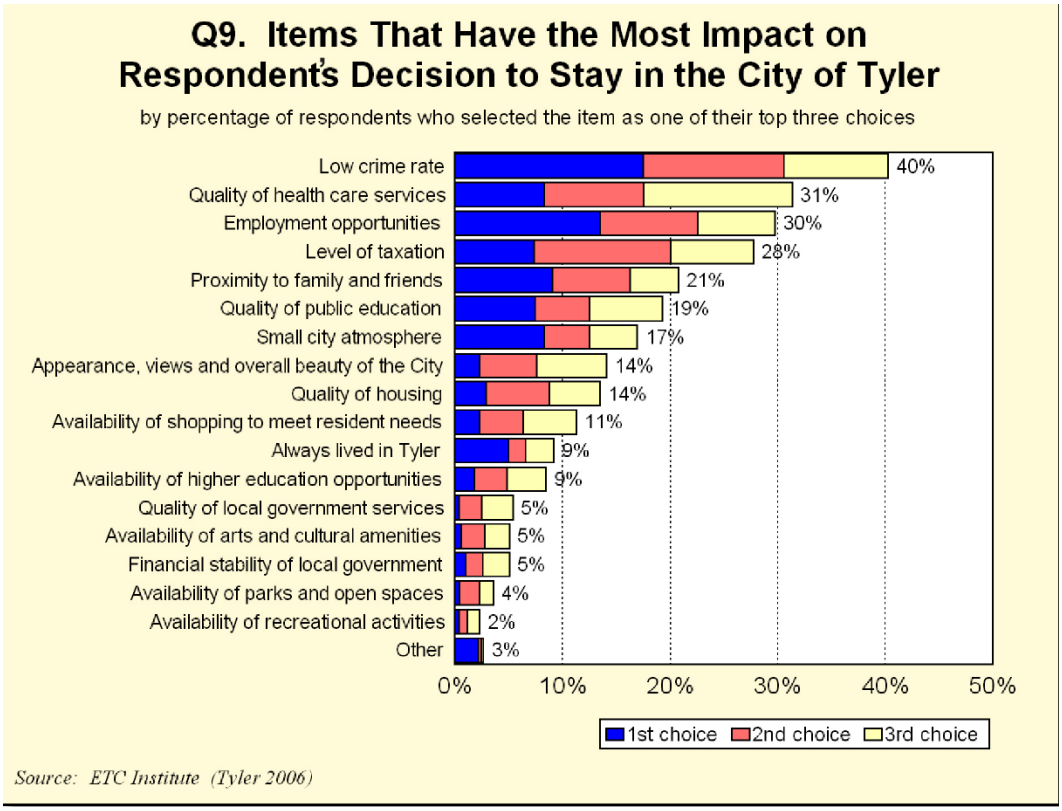
Respondents were offered a list of 17 reasons for living in Tyler and asked to rate which ones were most important to them. Over 45% of respondents identified three reasons as being "very important": low crime rate (59%), quality of health care services (50%), and quality of public education (45%).



- ***Why do people stay in Tyler?***

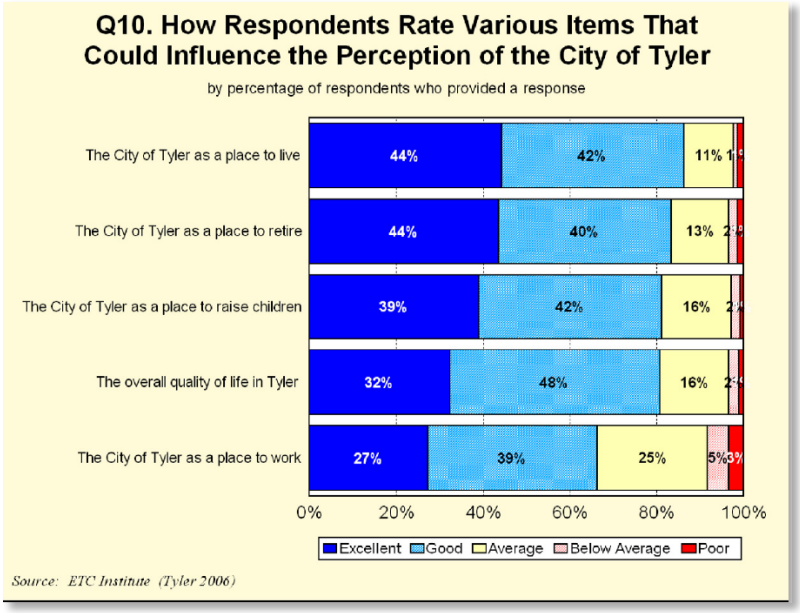
Respondents were asked to select three of the 17 reasons that will have the most impact on their staying in Tyler. Forty percent selected "low crime rate" as one of their top three choices, while 31% selected "quality of health care services" and 30% selected "employment opportunities."





- ***How does Tyler rate overall as a place to live and work?***

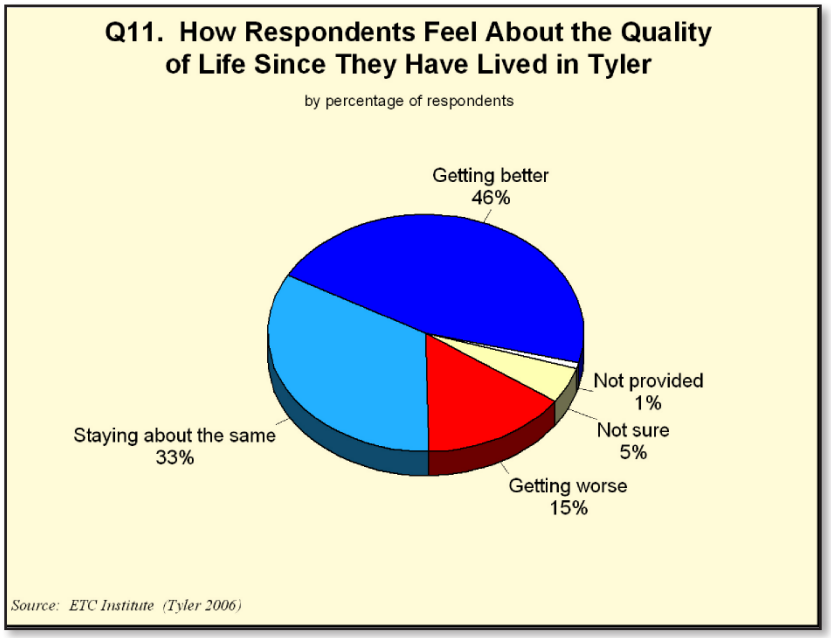
Tyler residents think that Tyler is a good place. Respondents were asked to rate Tyler as a place to live, retire, raise children, and work, as well as the overall quality of life. Eighty-six percent believed that Tyler is a "good" or "excellent" place to live, and 84% believed that Tyler is a "good" or "excellent" place to retire. "The City of Tyler as a place to work" received the lowest ratings: 27% identified the work environment as "excellent" and 39% identified it as "good." One-third of respondents found the overall quality of life to be "excellent" and an additional 48% said it was "good."

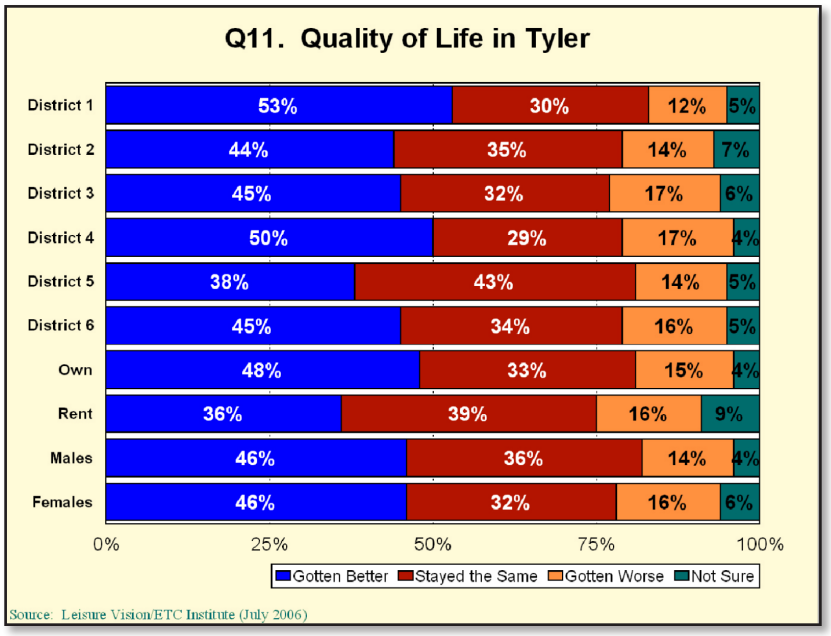


- ***Is Tyler's quality of life getting better?***

When respondents were asked whether quality of life is getting better, staying the same or getting worse since they have lived in Tyler, 46% said it is "getting better" and 33% reported it is "staying about the same." Fifteen percent said that the quality of life is "getting worse," 5% were "not sure," and 1% did not respond.

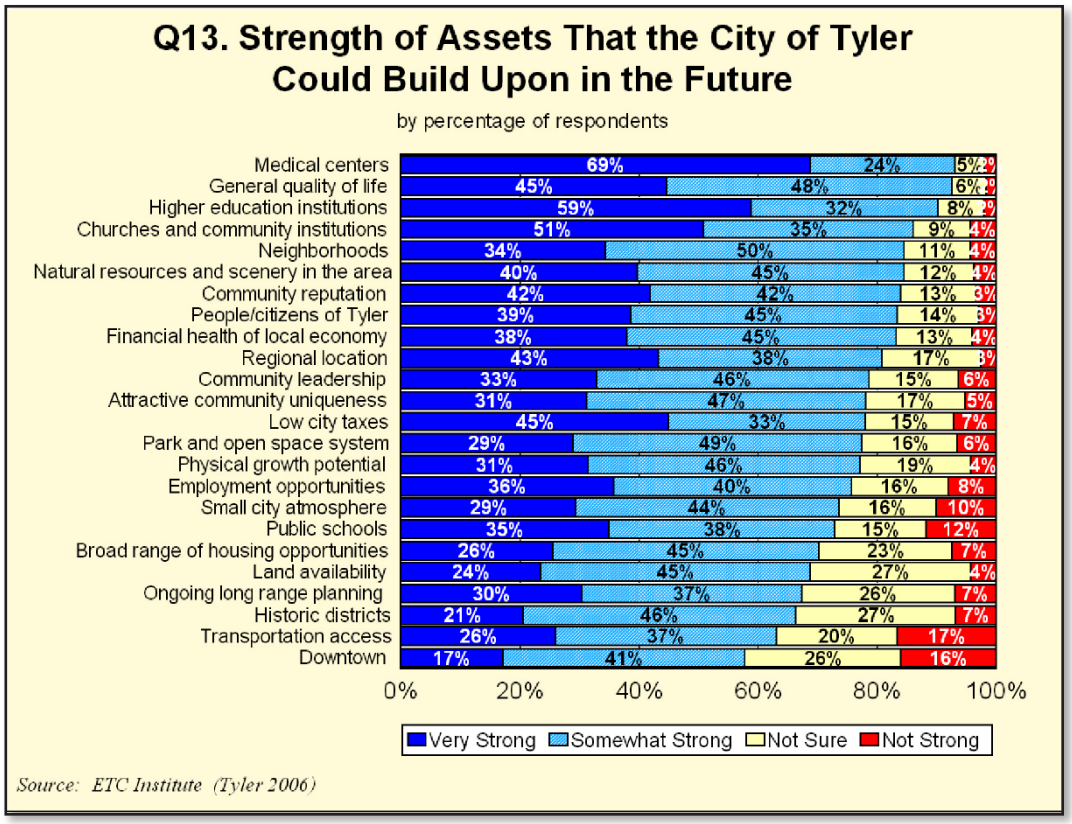
In all but District 5, at least 40% of respondents said quality of life has improved and in all six districts, at least 75% reported that it is staying the same or getting better. At least 75% in all racial and ethnic groups, all household types, and in households of all income levels also agreed that Tyler's quality of life is staying the same or getting better.





- ***What are the strongest assets the city has?***

Respondents were given a list of 24 assets that Tyler has today and were asked to rate them as very strong, somewhat strong, not strong, or indicate that they were not sure. Over 50% of respondents rated three assets as being "very strong": medical centers (69%), higher education institutions (59%), and churches and community institutions (51%). Nineteen out of the 24 listed assets had more than 70% of respondents rate them as either "very strong" or "somewhat strong."



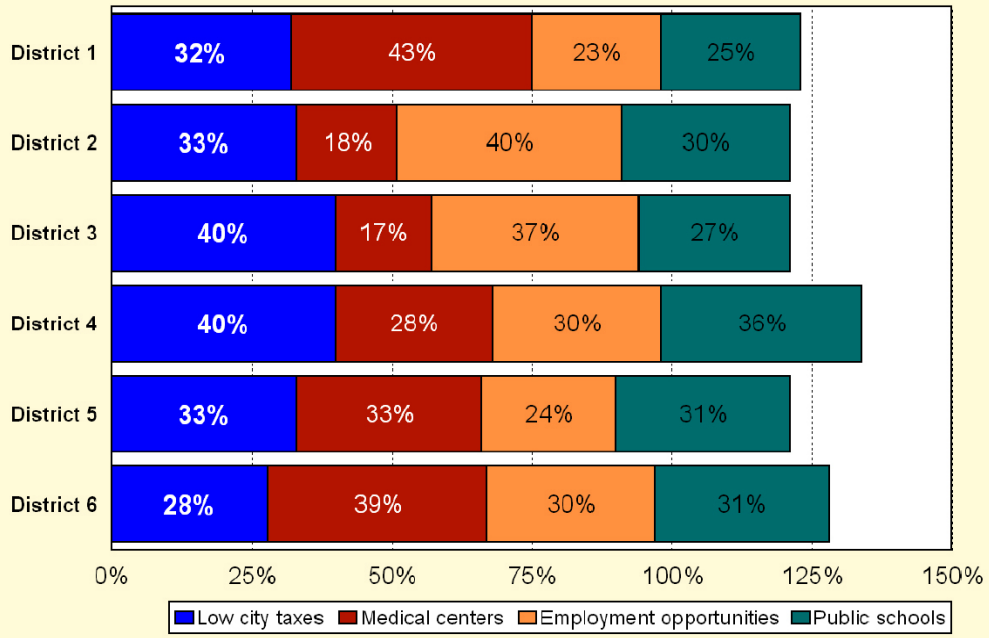
- ***What are the most important assets to build on in the future?***

Respondents were asked to select four choices from the list of 24 assets that they felt were most important for the City of Tyler to build upon. Thirty-three percent said "low city taxes," 32% said "medical centers," 31% said "employment opportunities," and 30% said "public schools."

Although respondents in all six council districts rated low city taxes as among the top three assets to build on, this item took the top spot in Council Districts 3, 4, and 5. The medical centers were seen as the most important asset in Districts 1 and 6, tying with low taxes in District 5. In District 2, employment opportunities were identified as the most important asset. White respondents saw the most important asset to be the medical centers, while African-Americans identified employment opportunities as most important. Not surprisingly, public schools were the most important assets for households with children.

Q14. Which Four of the Assets Are Most Important for the City of Tyler to Build Upon in the Future

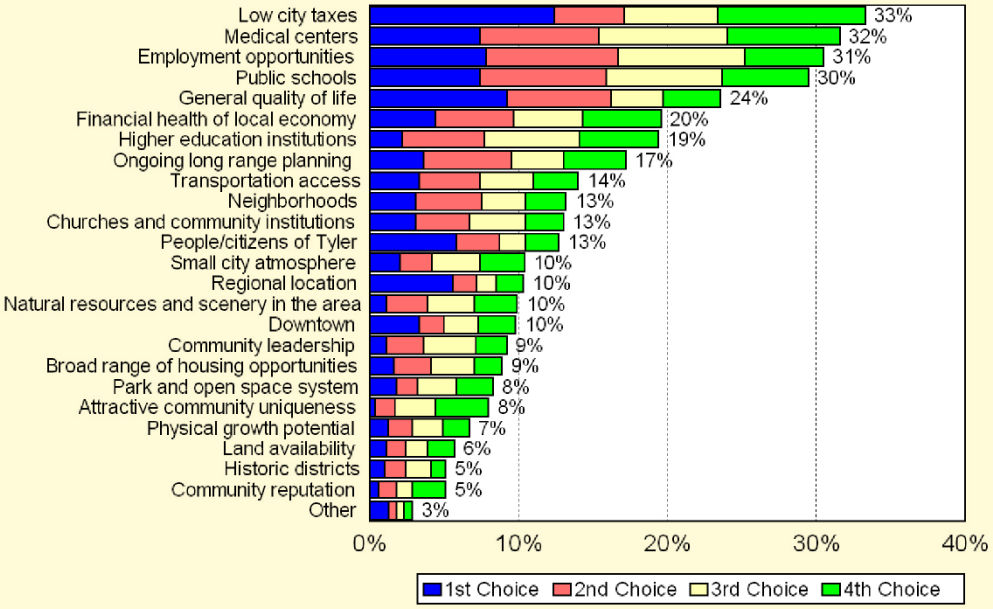
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top four choices



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (July 2006)

Q14. Most Important Assets That the City of Tyler Could Build Upon in the Future

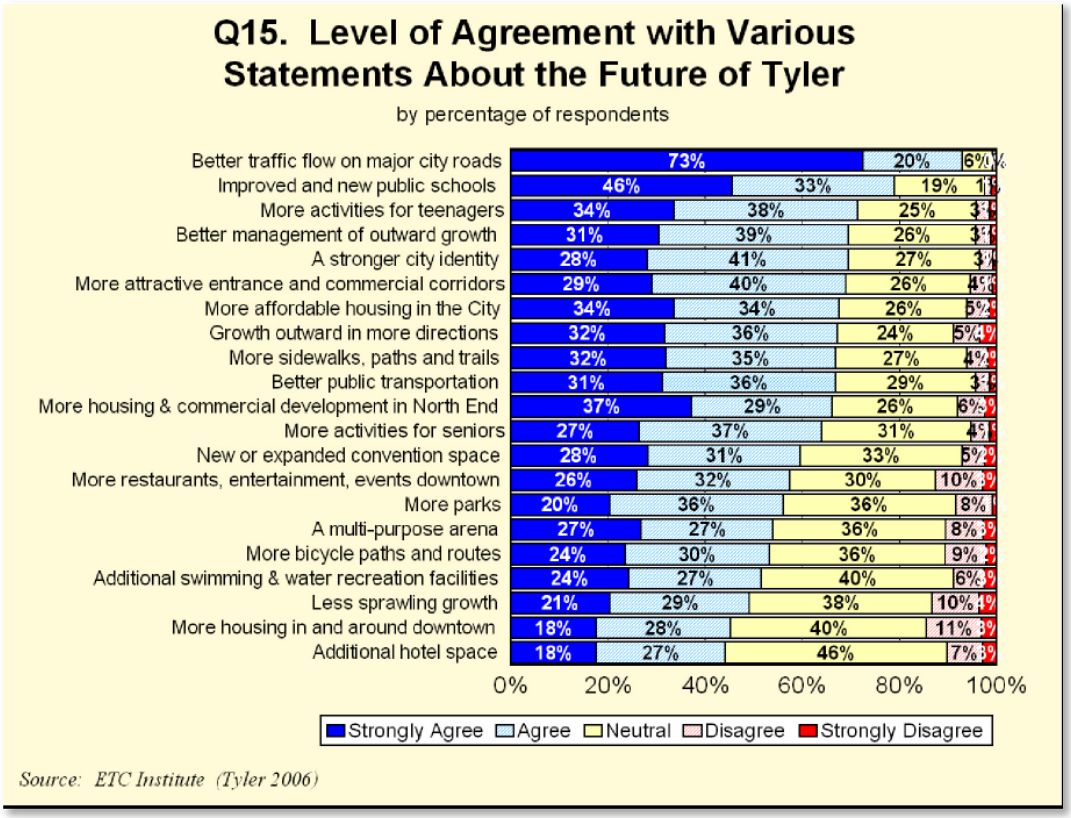
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top three choices



Source: ETC Institute (Tyler 2006)

- ***What should be in Tyler's vision for the future?***

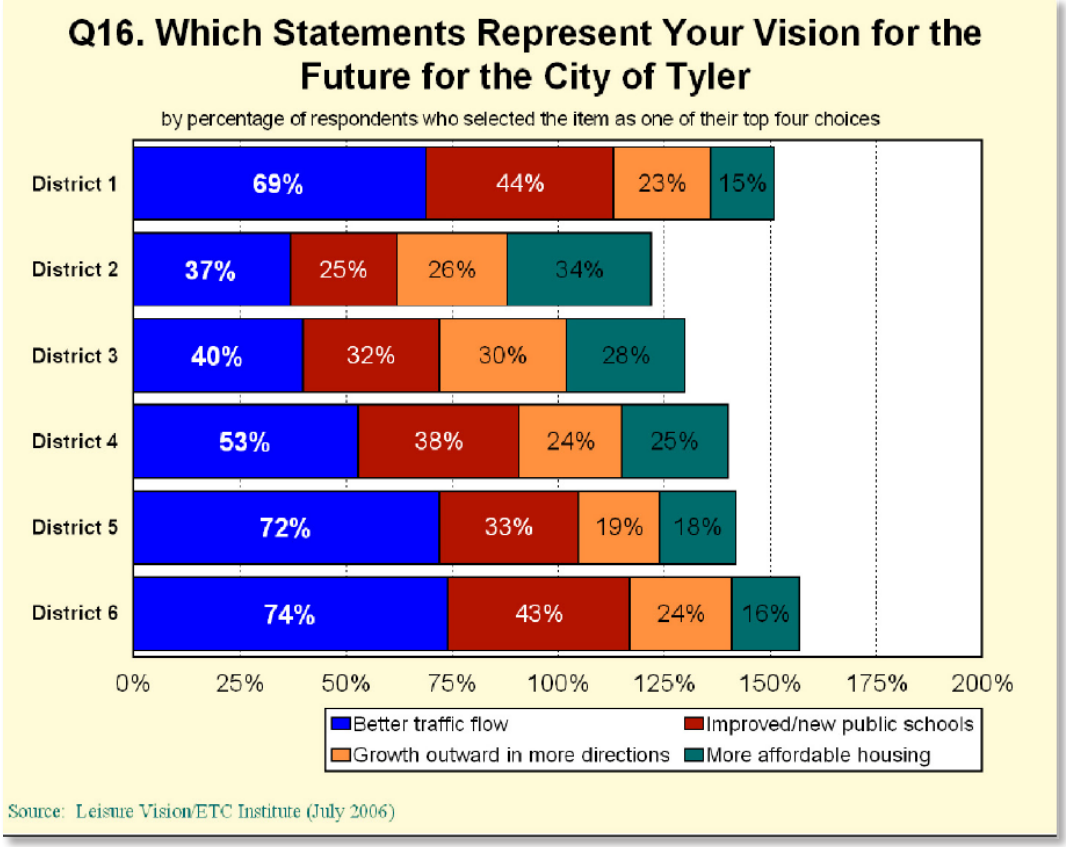
The survey provided 21 statements about a vision of the future of the City of Tyler and asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with each one. Over 35% of respondents "strongly agree" with three statements: "better traffic flow on major city roads" (73%), "improved and new public schools" (46%), "more housing and commercial development in the North End" (37%), and "more activities for teenagers" (34%). At least 50% of respondents either "strongly agree" or "agree" with 18 out of the 21 statements.

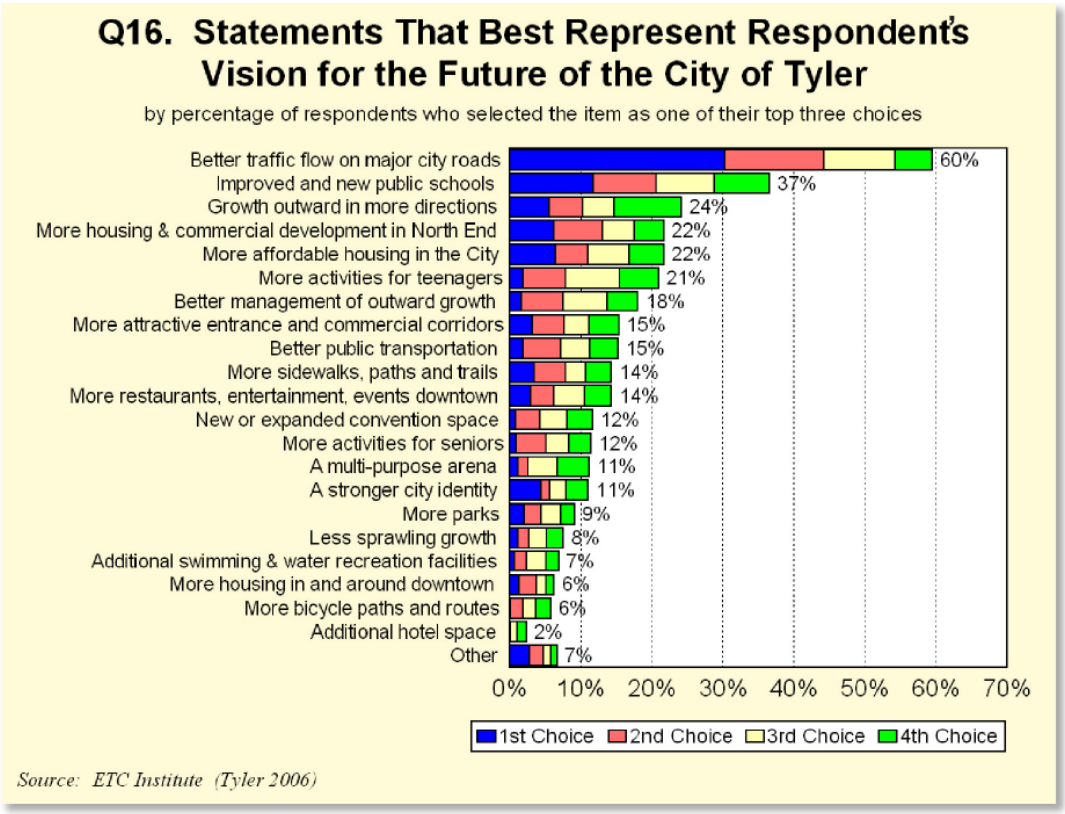


- ***What are the top four elements that should be part of the Tyler vision?***

Respondents were asked to select four items from the 21 statements that they feel best represent their vision for Tyler's future. Sixty percent want to see "better traffic flow on major roads," 37% want "improved and new public schools," 24% want "growth outward in more directions," 22% would like to see "more housing and commercial development in the North End," and 22% also would like to have "more affordable housing in the city."

Better traffic flow was the top choice of respondents in all council districts except District 3, which chose more housing and commercial development in the North End. African-Americans also chose this item, with more activities for teenagers as the second most important element. For white and Hispanic respondents, better traffic flow and improved and new public schools were the top two elements.


Q16. Which Statements Represent Your Vision for the Future for the City of Tyler
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top four choices
District 1
69%
44%
23%
15%
District 2
37%
25%
26%
34%
District 3
40%
32%
30%
28%
District 4
53%
38%
24%
25%
District 5
72%
33%
19%
18%
District 6
74%
43%
24%
16%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
125%
150%
175%
200%
Better traffic flow
Improved/new public schools
Growth outward in more directions
More affordable housing
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (July 2006)


Q16. Statements That Best Represent Respondent's Vision for the Future of the City of Tyler
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top three choices
Better traffic flow on major city roads 60%
Improved and new public schools 37%
Growth outward in more directions 24%
More housing & commercial development in North End 22%
More affordable housing in the City 22%
More activities for teenagers 21%
Better management of outward growth 18%
More attractive entrance and commercial corridors 15%
Better public transportation 15%
More sidewalks, paths and trails 14%
More restaurants, entertainment, events downtown 14%
New or expanded convention space 12%
More activities for seniors 12%
A multi-purpose arena 11%
A stronger city identity 11%
More parks 9%
Less sprawling growth 8%
Additional swimming & water recreation facilities 7%
More housing in and around downtown 6%
More bicycle paths and routes 6%
Additional hotel space 2%
Other 7%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
1st Choice
2nd Choice
3rd Choice
4th Choice
Source: ETC Institute (Tyler 2006)

Understanding the Survey Results

The survey shows that most residents think life in Tyler is good. Residents are quite satisfied with city services, along with their neighborhoods and commercial development. Residents appreciate Tyler's health care services, public schools, and low tax rate both as advantages for residents and as attractors for business investment. Most people see Tyler as having many assets that will enhance future growth, such as the medical centers, the higher education institutions, a good economy, natural resources, and the community's reputation for friendliness.

Residents feel good about Tyler and are proud of it. However, most survey respondents did not characterize quality of life as excellent and the majority did not see quality of life or their own neighborhoods as having improved significantly in the time they have lived there. Only a minority felt conditions were getting worse, but most reported that conditions had stayed the same. Although Tyler is a good place to live, work and raise a family, with many attractions, there is room to make it even better.

The survey shows that Tylerites support improvements and change in a number of areas. Traffic congestion is a major preoccupation for Tyler residents and they want to see improvements in managing traffic. It is not clear, however, that most residents understand the link between traffic congestion and choices about development and land uses. (Respondents' focus on public safety and low crime may reflect the fact that at the time of survey there had been recent arrests of figures in a drug distribution ring.) Many people also would like to see improved schools, more balanced growth, a better community appearance, and more focus on downtown and North Tyler. Several survey questions listed numerous items and asked respondents to choose between them, such as questions about assets and issues in Tyler. It is notable that on these questions, over 70% of respondents felt that all of the assets or issues were important. These high ratings indicate not only that Tylerites have a positive view of many aspects of Tyler but that they understand that Tyler faces more than one or two key issues as it grows.

VISIONING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

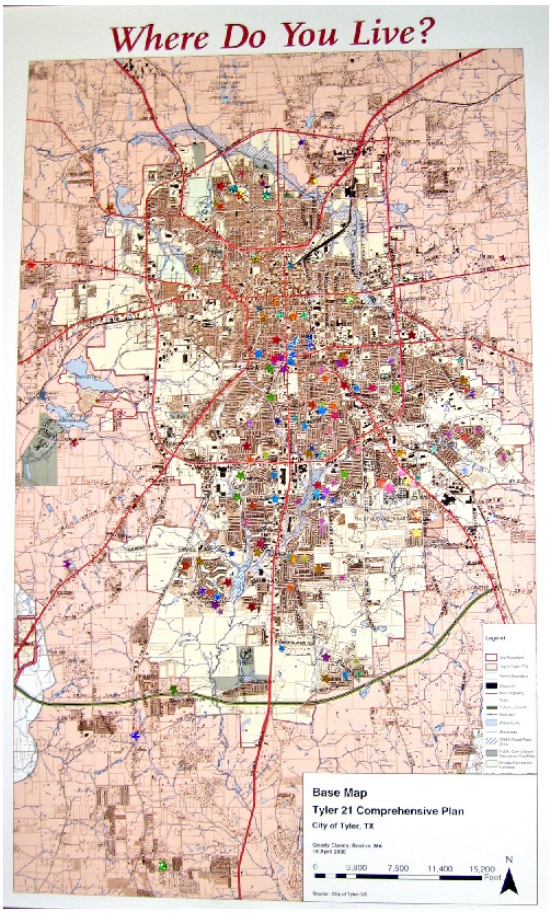
A series of community activities during the month of June 2006 engaged Tyler residents in discussions about a vision for the future of the city:

- **The Community Visioning Retreat**, a workshop on Saturday, June 10, at UT-Tyler's Muntz Library, attracted nearly 200 participants for a day of discussion and sharing ideas.
- Five **Neighborhood Open Houses** brought the results of the retreat in the form of a draft Tyler 21 vision and planning principles to all parts of the city.
- Five **Display Sites** brought two display boards with a summary of the retreat results and the draft vision and principles, as well as comment sheets, to locations around the city for a week.

Many residents who had not attended the community-wide meeting offered input at the open houses and display sites.

COMMUNITY VISIONING RETREAT

The retreat brought a diverse group of Tylerites together to share ideas about the city's future. The retreat was designed to provide a forum for participants to learn and think about the city as whole, to express their hopes and visions for the Tyler of the future, and to share and discuss their ideas with other participants in the retreat. The results of the retreat, along with the survey and other sources of community input, were the foundation of a Tyler 21 vision and principles created by the consultant team for review by city residents and the Tyler 21 Steering Committee. The visioning retreat focused on identifying the elements of an ideal future Tyler. It was not intended to present recommendations or discuss specific implementation actions.



Retreat participants identified their residences with stars. The map shows that they came from all parts of the city.

One hundred and eighty-eight people participated in the Visioning Retreat. As participants arrived, they were asked to place stars where they live on a map of Tyler. This "Where Do You Live?" exercise showed that participants came from all parts of the city and many places in the county. Participants received folders with the first Tyler 21 newsletter; a set of fact sheets about Tyler's population, housing, economy, natural resources, parks and recreation, and transportation; and a comment sheet, if they wished to leave further written comments. Exhibits included nine maps showing Tyler's position in the county, its growing boundaries over time, land use, zoning, natural and cultural resources, parks and open space, transportation infrastructure, and development opportunities in 2006. A series of eleven "Tyler Today" photo boards highlighted assets and issues in various parts of the city in 2006.

The visioning retreat was designed both to inform the public about current trends in Tyler and to learn how the public viewed the Tyler of 2006 and the Tyler of tomorrow. The retreat was broken into several parts: opening remarks by Mayor Seeber, a formal presentation by the consulting team, small-group discussions, an outdoor lunch, and reports from the break-out groups to the group as a whole.

Mayor Seeber opened the meeting by talking about the importance of planning for the future. He pointed out how the Tyler that everyone appreciates today is the product of

Mayor Seeber leads the discussion.

decisions made by previous generations, who planted saplings they would not see as mature trees and who laid the foundation for Tyler's current successes. He drew an analogy with the Tyler 21 process, which also asked the community to think ahead and plan for the next generation, and commended the retreat participants for giving up a Saturday to share their hopes and ideals for the future of Tyler.

In a brief presentation, the consultant team reviewed important aspects of Tyler today, summarized the results of the survey, presented possible growth patterns for the future with some of their implications, and presented a series of "vision identities" to spark discussion on what Tyler should be known for in the future:

- City of Trees and Lakes: *the best small city park and open space system in Texas*
- City of Neighborhoods: *quality neighborhoods for people at all stages of their lives and priced for a range of incomes*
- Capital of East Texas: *a vibrant regional downtown that attracts people from all over East Texas*
- Engine of the Region: *economic and institutional energy radiating throughout the region*
- Community of Shared Places: *a city of excellent public spaces with activities that bring the entire community together*

City of Tyler employees help make the Retreat a success.

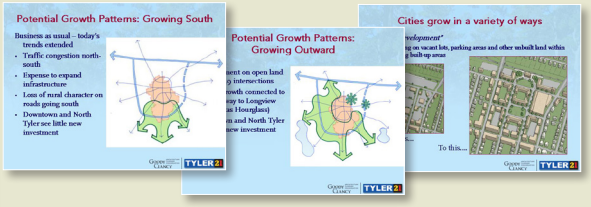
Small-group participants vote on priorities.

Retreat participants then broke into small groups to discuss desired changes for the city as well as to identify those places and characteristics of Tyler that they hope will endure into the future. Each group prioritized the preservation and change items and, after a brief discussion, did a "dot voting" exercise, in which they were given adhesive dots which they could distribute among the five vision identities (or invent their own) to indicate which they felt best represented the direction that they thought the city should take in the next generation. Everyone adjourned for a barbeque lunch outside under a tent before regrouping in the UT-Tyler library to share the results from each small group. The reports revealed that many of the small groups had the same priorities and shared the same hopes for twenty-first century Tyler. Over the course of the day local celebrities visited the Retreat to draw winners of a variety of door prizes generously donated by Tyler businesses.

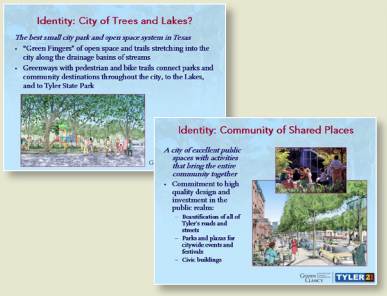
what we did

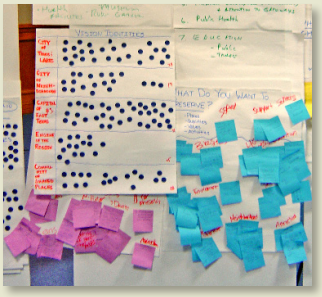
LOOKED AT MAPS AND PHOTO BOARDS ANALYZING TYLER

LEARNED ABOUT DIFFERENT WAYS TYLER COULD GROW



CONSIDERED DIFFERENT IDENTITY STATEMENTS





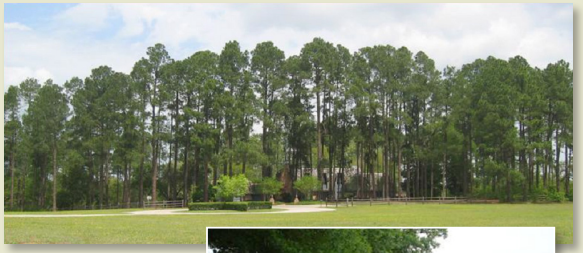
SHARED IDEAS, VALUES, HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS

what we said:

common themes that emerged

WHAT WE WANT TO PRESERVE ABOUT TYLER:

- Our **small-town atmosphere** and **East Texas friendliness**
- Our **values** and **strong sense of community**
- The **natural landscape**, trees, lakes, azaleas and roses
- Our **history,** historic buildings, streets and districts
- **Safe neighborhoods** that are good places to raise a family
- **Unique places** like the Rose Garden and Caldwell Zoo
- A **strong business environment** and **diverse economy**



Preserving and expanding Tyler's green character as a city of trees, flowers and green spaces was a repeating theme.

WHAT WE WANT TO IMPROVE OR CHANGE ABOUT TYLER:

- We should **expand our natural beauty** into more places, such as along public streets.
- We need to **make it easier to travel around Tyler** by improving traffic flow and public transportation options.
- **Growth and development** should be encouraged **in all parts of the city.**
- Downtown and North Tyler need **revitalization.**
- The city needs a greater **variety of housing types** and **more affordable housing.**
- There should be **more people, activities and things to do downtown.**
- Tyler needs **more recreation opportunities,** such as swimming pools, community centers, and recreation at the lakes.
- Our **cultural and arts** activities should be **expanded.**
- **Employment and business opportunities should be enhanced** with new facilities, such as a hotel and convention center, and with both vocational training and more professional jobs.
- **Public education** should continue to be **improved.**

Participants agreed on the need to encourage growth in all parts of the city, particularly North Tyler.

Expanded bus service and other public transportation options were mentioned as one way to help manage Tyler's traffic congestion problems.

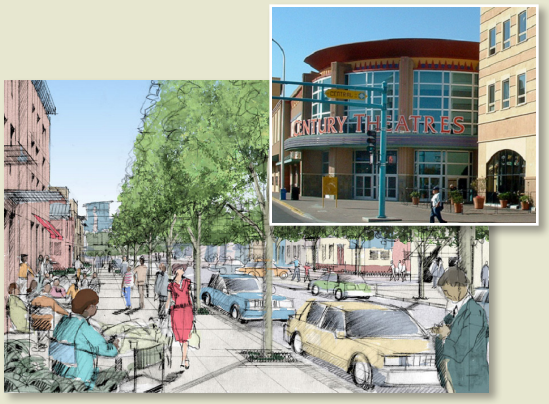
WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TYLER TO BE KNOWN FOR IN THE FUTURE:

Participants in the Retreat were asked to rank five "vision identities" in terms of how the identities represented the direction they would like to see Tyler take in the future. All five of the identities received substantial support:

- **City of Trees and Lakes:** The best small city park and open space system in Texas
- **City of Neighborhoods:** Quality neighborhoods for people at all stages of their lives and priced for a range of incomes
- **Capital of East Texas:** A vibrant regional downtown that attracts people from all over East Texas
- **Engine of the Region:** Economic and institutional energy radiating throughout the region
- **Community of Shared Places:** A city of excellent public spaces with activities that bring the entire community together

Many participants said that they would like to see a combination of all these identities and also mentioned:

- **A Community of Involvement**
- **The Hub of East Texas—the Best of Everything**
- **The Leader of East Texas**

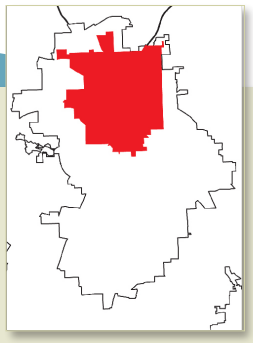


Many residents desire a lively downtown with restaurants, shops and activities.

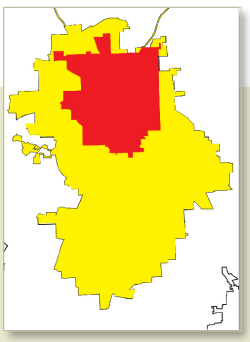
Retreat participants were interested in creating walk-able neighborhood centers with different kinds of housing.

why we did it

In 1950, Tyler was home to 50,000 people. Since 1950, Tyler's population has doubled and its land area has increased dramatically. What kind of place do we want to be a generation from now, in 2030 or 2035? With a common vision of our ideal future, we can work together to make the vision a reality.



Tyler's 50,000 population lived in the red area in 1950.



The next 50,000 people expanded into the yellow area by 2006.

The retreat discussions reinforced the survey results that showed that most residents believe that Tyler is a good place to live. The retreat participants identified a number of Tyler assets:

- natural resources, such as trees, lakes, and flowers;
- parks and trails;
- intact historic districts and older neighborhoods, including the downtown;
- cultural amenities, such as the art museum, the library, the symphony, and the zoo;
- the medical centers;
- institutions of higher education;
- a low crime rate;
- good City services; and
- a diverse economy and a progressive business climate.

A small-group representative reports her group's priorities.

One intangible asset was discussed by many groups: community character. Participants defined its elements in different ways, but most agreed that Tyler has the feel of a friendly small town. This, along with physical and cultural assets, gives Tyler a unique identity in East Texas as an urban center that retains a small-town friendliness. Meeting participants wanted very strongly to maintain this character, but feared that Tyler's future growth may erode it. Many people had a strong sense of urgency that it was the time to preserve this character before rapid growth changes Tyler into an anonymous city that looks like "Anywhere, USA."

During the break-out group discussions, participants were asked to write down their priorities for preservation and change in Tyler on post-it notes. Below are representative comments in the participants' own words.

What Should Tyler Preserve into the Future?

- ***Natural beauty***
  - "Tyler's wonderful natural atmosphere"
  - "Neighborhood pride in being safe and green"

- ***Small-town community character***
  - "Tyler as a good place to raise children"
  - "Tyler as a beautiful city with family values"
  - "Tyler's small-town friendliness with the big town amenities"

- ***Historic resources***
  - "Tyler has unique and historic architecture, with downtown as a non-generic center"

- ***Community generosity***
  - "The high level of philanthropic spirit in Tyler"
  - "The 'can-do attitude' of people in Tyler"
  - "Keep Tyler's welcoming spirit"

- ***Emphasis on health care***
  - "Tyler's commitment to health care and social services"

- ***Welcoming business climate***
  - "Strong community leadership and a strong business environment"

The small-group responses to the question "What do you want to preserve?" showed that many Tylerites are concerned that growth will erode Tyler's traditional identity as a city of natural beauty and a rich history. Many small groups spoke out strongly for protecting Tyler's trees and lakes, along with older, tree-lined neighborhoods. They find great beauty in many older parts of the city—such as the Azalea District—and Tyler's natural areas. Retreat participants also value downtown and the historic districts for their ties to Tyler's past. These areas embody local history, and many Tylerites would like to see them preserved because they convey Tyler's unique East Texas identity. Another part of Tyler's identity was a major concern for participants: preservation of the special feeling around the city of people knowing each other and being willing to help each other, much like a small town, even though Tyler is a growing city. Several people identified this sense of community as a reason why Tyler is a good place to raise a family and why it feels safe. Participants do not want Tyler to become a generic community, indistinguishable from Dallas suburbs or other places in East Texas.

What Should Change in Tyler?

- ***Transportation***
  - "Ensure safe routes in north, south, east, and west for travel by cyclists and pedestrians."
  - "Reduce traffic congestion through better-planned growth, improved zoning criteria, and by taking control of random development."
  - "Reduce traffic problems through better public transportation."

Retreat participants discuss community issues.

- ***Natural resources/open space***
  - "Maintain our image as the Piney Woods of East Texas."
  - "Cluster development and preserve trees—don't clearcut lots!"

- ***Recreation***
  - "Create bigger and better parks."
  - "See all parks maintained in the same fashion, not isolated from the community and where you are afraid to send your children."

- ***Historic preservation***
  - "Preserve and restore more of our historic homes and older neighborhoods."
  - "Provide financial support for the preservation of Tyler's heritage."

- ***Housing***
  - "Provide more choices for affordable housing. Homeownership is the backbone of the family, and family values are the backbone of Tyler."

- ***Growth/development***
  - "Change the attitude that one part of town is better than another."
  - "Don't think of just one area for development. We need good places for all steps on the economic scale."
  - "Make Downtown alive."
  - "In North, South, East, and West, create clean, safe neighborhoods."

- ***Cultural resources***
  - "Provide more stuff for creative young adults."
  - "Redevelop East Texas Fairgrounds to a cultural center that includes a new convention center, arts, theatre, museums, rose gardens, and a park, if there is room."

- ***Community appearance***
  - "Expand the feel of the Azalea District to the rest of the city."
  - "Beautify areas—especially improve the poor image of too much cement and too many parking lots."
  - "I would like to see Tyler maintain a sense of a community working together to keep Tyler beautiful."

- ***Social divisions***
  - "Promote more interaction and cooperation between cultural and religious groups."
  - "Ensure greater participation of minorities in city decision-making. You must go out and seek input from minority communities."

What Should Tyler Be Known for in the Future?

In addition to discussing preservation and change, retreat participants also considered possible identities for twenty-first century Tyler. These identities focused on community qualities or elements that could be enhanced as Tyler grows. Participants were given five identities and asked to determine which one would be their choice for Tyler's future identity. These included:

- City of Trees and Lakes: *The best small-city park and open space system in Texas*
- City of Neighborhoods: *Quality neighborhoods for people at all stages of their lives and priced for a range of incomes*
- Engine of the Region: *Economic and institutional energy radiating throughout the region*
- Capital of East Texas: *A vibrant regional downtown that attracts people from all over East Texas*
- Community of Shared Places: *A city of excellent public spaces with activities that bring the entire community together*

No one identity emerged with a clear majority of votes, though "Capital of East Texas" was the highest vote-getter, edging out "City of Trees and Lakes." Many participants spoke in favor of combining two or more identities, because all characteristics in the proposed identities seemed valuable and they would like to see Tyler grow to embody all of these characteristics through careful planning. One common theme emerged, however, from the identity discussions: Tyler residents already see their city as unique in East Texas and want to maintain this sense of uniqueness as Tyler grows in the future.

Converging Consensus

Although participants identified many assets, they also discussed a variety of challenges to future quality of life. When considering what aspects of Tyler they would like to change, retreat participants were encouraged to "think big" and outline their hopes and aspirations for Tyler's future. During the group discussion, fiscal or logistical constraints were to be secondary to ideas about an improved city.

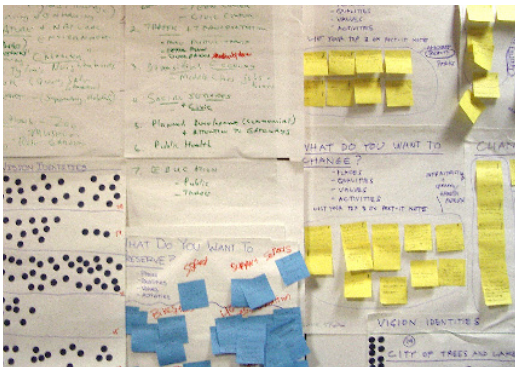
Participants offered a wide variety of suggestions in their small groups, but they reached consensus on many topics:

- **Transportation:** Mitigate South Broadway congestion, improve public transportation, expand air service, add more bicycle routes, and make connections to regional transportation.

- **Natural resources and open space:** Preserve more trees, create new parks and trails, and make the lakes available for public recreation.

- **Recreation:** Provide more recreation opportunities for all ages, build pools and recreation centers in different parts of the city, and provide better access to recreation opportunities through more parking, public transportation routes that service parks, and trails and sidewalks.

- **Historic preservation:** Add new historic districts, protect historic properties from inappropriate alterations, and create design guidelines that control historic district infill.



The written outcome of small-group discussions

- **Cultural resources:** Provide more cultural activities for all age groups and ethnicities, create new performance space, and hold more city-wide cultural events.
- **Public realm:** Make the streets pedestrian-friendly, extend natural beauty into public spaces, and create more public spaces.
- **Community appearance:** Make the gateways to Tyler more attractive, use trees and plantings to improve the appearance of commercial and industrial areas, and have better code enforcement and development standards.
- **Housing:** Provide more housing options throughout the city—including downtown—and construct attractive affordable housing in Tyler.
- **Growth and development:** Create incentives and regulations that will encourage the development of retail and housing in areas other than South Tyler, improve connections between neighborhoods, encourage development of walkable neighborhoods, and improve development standards to promote more landscaping and tree preservation.
- **Economic opportunities:** Create more jobs, particularly for young and mid-level professionals; provide vocational training; diversify the economy; encourage small business development; and build a convention center/hotel.
- **Education:** Continue to improve school facilities, work with T.I.S.D. to improve school quality, and expand higher education opportunities.
- **Social divisions:** Erase the perceived divisions between South Tyler and the rest of the city and embrace Tyler's diversity.

The outcome of the group discussions about change and future identities showed that much of what residents want for the future builds upon Tyler's current identity. Retreat participants like Tyler's character, and want to enhance it for the twenty-first century. Tylerites want to preserve things that make Tyler unique, such as its trees, flowers, and historic neighborhoods, and manage better the forces that they see as eroding these resources. They also want to expand cultural opportunities and revitalize areas of the city that once thrived, such as downtown and North Tyler, reinforcing neighborhoods and reviving the dispersed commercial areas that relate to these neighborhoods. The problems created by unbalanced growth—traffic congestion, lack of affordable housing, loss of trees and natural landscapes—are changing Tyler in ways that worry many Tylerites. The retreat participants would like for Tyler to continue to be known for more than South Broadway's regional retail concentration and the regional medical centers. They want Tyler to be a beautiful city of safe, cohesive, and well-connected neighborhoods and a city with balanced development patterns that benefit all parts of the city and all resident groups. Tylerites support growth, but want to see Tyler grow in planned ways that protect and enhance the best things about its character.

NEIGHBORHOOD OPEN HOUSES

All comments received at the retreat were synthesized, and the consultant team prepared a draft vision and principles based on this public input. The results were displayed at five different open houses around the city:

- **June 19, 2006:** Tyler Junior College, Main Campus, Jean Brown Theatre; Glass Recreation Center; Tyler Junior College, West Campus

- **June 20, 2006:** Tyler Area Builders Association (TABA); Hubbard Middle School

At an open house, a resident discusses the Tyler 21 Vision and Principles with a member of the consultant team.

During the open houses, residents were free to drop in and comment on what they would like to see for Tyler's future and respond to the vision and principles. A total of 85 people visited the Neighborhood Open Houses.

Many open house participants had been unable to attend the retreat, and provided their opinions what should be preserved and what should be changed. Most comments received at the open houses supported themes that emerged from the retreat. Response to the vision and principles also was very positive, and several people expressed appreciation that the community's input formed the basis for this vision document.

Comments from Open Houses

- ***Downtown***
  - "I would love to see downtown developed into a family friendly area, where everyone could enjoy the growing diversity of this beautiful city we call home. Along with that diversity I would like to see some sort of Farmers Market or Market Square development. Fresh produce, flowers and the cultural pride of North Tyler could be a focus and shared by all. Thank you for this plan!"

- ***Housing***
  - "Upscale, loft-style apartments are an up-and-coming trend among 20s-30s singles or just-marrieds . . . . This age group will also bring more music, art and diversity to our town. They will help work at new businesses such as shops and restaurants. Tyler has a wonderful, diverse culture, and it would be great to see it adapt some new housing ideas downtown."

- ***Growth/development***
  - "Subdivisions need to have appearances that are controlled and blend in with the city's existing architectural styles."

- "Develop on vacant lots within the city before you expand the city more. Take care of your own land now and then move outward."
- "We need more entertainment opportunities for young people."
- "Why is growth being forced southward? We need more balanced growth around the city."

Open house participants look at photo boards about key city assets and issues.

- ***Transportation***
  - "Build bridges at major intersections. We need to think like a big city and not a small East Texas town."
  - "I'd ride the bus if it was more convenient. Implement a better bus transit schedule."
  - "This is not a very pedestrian-friendly town."
- ***Natural resources***
  - "Currently, there is nothing to protect residential environments or against the clearcutting of trees, grading hillsides to flat, denuded lots and/or enforcement of required plans. If the number one goal is to preserve the quality of Tyler, this item should be #1 on the list! For this is something that can be done immediately without additional taxpayers' dollars!"
- ***Historic preservation/community character***
  - "Preserve established neighborhoods, especially older ones; they are important to community character."
- ***Community appearance***
  - "There are too many junky-looking homes inside and outside of the city."

Display Sites around Tyler

After the open houses, the vision materials were taken to five high-traffic display sites around Tyler:

- Broadway Square Mall
- Tyler Public Library
- Albertson's Supermarket
- Southside Bank, Main Branch
- Glass Recreation Center

At these sites, residents were able to review the vision and principles and offer additional written comments. The materials were on display from June 21 to June 28, 2006; then the many comments were collected and added to the growing body of public input. Most comments reinforced themes from the retreat and open houses.

Comments from Display Sites

Residents review boards illustrating the outcomes of the Community Visioning Retreat.

- ***Balanced growth/development***
  - "North Tyler appears to be very neglected. Development should be encouraged so that not all of the development and housing goes to South Tyler."
  - "The Northwest and West Central areas of Tyler need to be addressed in a real way since Wal-Mart and other developers have started to realize this."
- ***Preserve natural beauty***
  - "In the 26 years I've lived here the beauty of Tyler has almost disappeared. I particularly like the idea of tree preservation and green spaces."
  - "Please don't cut down all our native trees for cold concrete!"
- ***Improve community appearance***
  - "Beautify the I-20 entrances to the city, because the vast majority of visitors get their first impressions by coming off of I-20."
- ***Build new parks and recreation facilities***
  - "I would like to have an exercise facility like the Glass Recreation Center on the south side. Contrary to what some may believe, we are not all able to pay for private memberships."
- ***Make Tyler more pedestrian-friendly***
  - "Put sidewalks in whenever you build a community. Why do we have to walk in the street and risk getting hit by a car?"
- ***Improve long-term planning***
  - "We need to begin working toward this vision now. Every day decisions are being made which promote or destroy this vision of Tyler."

TYLER 21 WEBSITE

Citizens were also able to offer input through the Tyler 21 website, which went online in March 2006. Many comments were received prior to the Community Visioning Retreat in June, and others came in after the community-wide meeting. As with the other opportunities for public participation, website comments paralleled the concerns of retreat participants. The website comments also were added to the list of public input and helped form the Tyler 21 vision.

Comments from the Website

- ***Preserving and enhancing natural assets***
  - "I would like to comment on a point that I heard repeatedly at the retreat. Many suggested that we needed more lakes, trees, and open spaces. I don't think that we need

more, but I do think that we should preserve what we already have and enhance them to obtain their fullest potential."

- ***Preserving water quality***
  - "I think everyone will agree that the quality of a lake is one of the biggest assets a city or county can have. We all know the value of GOOD water. The hydrilla problem at Lake Tyler East MUST be addressed."

- ***Balanced growth/community appearance/traffic mitigation***
  - "I believe that other areas of the city would thrive just as much as the south side, if real, consistent effort was put into changing the appearance and the perception of these areas. Those who enter the city from Interstate 20 enter on the north side. I would think that we would like for those who come into the city to see a vibrant, active city instead of empty buildings, vacant lots, and few business establishments. This could also help the traffic problems on the south side."

- ***Downtown development/retaining young professionals***
  - "I am a 30-something professional who would like to enjoy entertainment and activities in the evening and on weekends. I think this is very important in maintaining young professionals in the area instead of losing them to the Dallas or Shreveport areas."

- ***Creating more entertainment options***
  - "I am . . . a passionate sports fan who FIRMLY believes that a town the size of Tyler should offer sports entertainment options more advanced than high school football."

- ***Balanced growth/eliminating social divisions***
  - "My vision for Tyler is not extremely complex. I envision equality of resources and economic development in all areas of the city. Maybe a village concept that would place retail establishments, eateries, and services establishments in every area of the city. I see an increase in diverse cultural, social and entertainment activities in the area. A sort of 'night life' if you will, but maintaining the character and integrity of the city."

- ***Alternate forms of transportation***
  - "In a country with spiraling energy costs and obesity becoming the number one cause of death, each community should maximize the opportunity for citizens to exercise and commute by bicycling. Please add more and more bike lanes and trails and connect existing bike lanes with park trails. Put some bump reflectors along the bike lanes to discourage cars from driving in them. Put a sidewalk along the NW Loop and Gentry Parkway. I've seen several people in wheel chairs trying to negotiate the foot paths worn in the grass in these areas."

- ***Affordable health care***
  - "Tyler needs a network/system to pay for indigent health care (hospital, outpatient, ancillary services, etc). Tyler also has many fine Assisted Living facilities but they are mostly private pay. Tyler needs to develop an innovative plan to bring affordable assisted living to lower and middle class Tylerites. This would likely involve a joint venture with the State, the city, and county, and providers."

- ***Investing in education***
  - "How can you plan for the future without including our children? At the rate our bond issues are passing there is no way our schools ever be any better than they are now, which is pitifully overcrowded, inadequate and substandard. If Tyler really wants a bright future, instead of just building more jails, it needs to invest its children. Particularly in its low-income preschool children."

CREATING THE VISION

The consultant team took all of the comments received from the retreat, the open houses, the display sites, and the website and analyzed them for common ideas. Several themes emerged from each set of public comments:

A Retreat participant is proud to be a Tylerite.

- Tyler's natural beauty should be preserved, and new development projects should enhance this beauty through landscaping and tree preservation;
- Tyler's small-town character, which includes strong family values, should be preserved as the city grows;
- Tyler is a safe place to raise a family;
- Tyler's historic resources give the city a unique identity worth keeping and enhancing;
- Tyler has a good business climate, but needs to diversify its economy and provide more employment opportunities and vocational training;
- New development should be encouraged in downtown and North Tyler;
- Alternate forms of transportation should be encouraged in order to help mitigate South Tyler's traffic problems;
- Tyler should work on streetscape improvements and pedestrian safety;
- Tyler needs different housing options, including attractive affordable housing for first-time homebuyers and low-income families;
- More cultural and recreational opportunities are needed, including downtown activities and new recreational facilities; and
- Tyler needs to work with T.I.S.D. to improve the quality of public education.

These themes formed the basis of the vision and principles for the Tyler 21 Comprehensive Plan. The plan principles are founded on the idea of Tyler as the leading city of East Texas, unique because of its natural and cultural assets and its identity as a regional economic center. Each principle relates to a theme that emerged from the public participation process and expands upon that theme to show ways in which the goal might be realized. The principles form the basis for the Tyler 21 Comprehensive Plan, and the vision statement and principles together are the framework guiding the plan.

DOWNTOWN AND NORTH END WORKSHOPS

In addition to the Community visioning retreat, the Tyler 21 process included public workshops for the Downtown Master Plan and the North End Revitalization Plan held in November 2006. Descriptions of these workshops and summaries of the results are in Chapters 4 and 5.

WORKING GROUPS

Over 100 Tyler citizens appointed by the Mayor gave their time to serve on Working Groups that focused on specific elements of the Tyler 21 Plan:

- Downtown
- North End Revitalization
- Historic Preservation
- Parks, Open Space, Recreation and Lakes
- Housing, Neighborhoods and Community Identity
- Transportation and Circulation
- Public Facilities and Services

The Tyler Economic Development Council and the Chamber of Commerce organized meetings and focus groups to provide input for the Business and Economy element of the plan and review the draft chapter. From fall 2006 to spring 2007, these Working Groups met with city staff and the consultant team to develop the plan's recommendations. Working Group meetings were open to the public. Each Working Group approved a draft chapter of the plan that was then sent on to the Steering Committee for final review.

Members of the Joint Committee for Code Review were appointed by the Mayor to work with the City, assisted by the consultant team, in revising the City's zoning code to be more user-friendly and to be compatible with the goals and recommendations of the Tyler 21 Comprehensive Plan. The Joint Committee for Code Review began meeting in spring of 2007, as the draft Tyler 21 Plan was taking shape, with the expectation of completing its work in early 2008.

MEETINGS WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS

During the course of the planning process, the consultant team and City staff met with representatives of a variety of community groups and institutions to solicit input and give updates on the planning process. Among these groups were:

- Northeast Texas Regional Mobility Authority
- University of Texas at Tyler
- Tyler Junior College
- East Texas State Fair
- University of Texas Health Center at Tyler
- East Texas Medical Center
- Trinity Mother Frances Health Center
- Historic Tyler, Inc.

- Tyler Museum of Art
- Fourth Partner Foundation
- Tyler Independent School District
- Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce
- Tyler Area Builders Association
- Developers' Roundtable
- Hispanic Leadership Group
- African-American Leadership Group

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Mayor appointed eighteen Tyler citizens broadly representative of the city's diversity and community leadership to a Steering Committee charged with overall guidance of the planning process and review of the draft comprehensive plan before it was presented for public comments. The Steering Committee met 20 times, first to discuss and guide the planning process and then to review, in detail, the draft chapters of the plan that were approved by the Working Groups. In the course of its review, the Committee discussed the plan's recommendations and made a few, limited changes to the draft plan. These changes were then incorporated into a final draft plan, which was made available for public review and submitted to the City Council for adoption.

PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE FINAL DRAFT PLAN

The final draft plan incorporating the Steering Committee changes was placed on the Tyler 21 website and a hard copy was made available for the public at the Tyler Public Library. The website also solicited comments on the plan.

A Town Hall Forum to present the final draft plan was held on October 1, 2007 and attended by approximately 100 people. A presentation of the plan to the attendees was followed by an informal opportunity to discuss, ask questions, and leave written comments with City staff and members of the consultant team who were stationed around the room at tables corresponding to the chapters of the plan. Copies of the final draft plan chapters and the executive summary poster were available for participants to take with them.

The Town Hall Forum was followed by three neighborhood open houses on October 2, 2007, held at the Glass Center, TJC and the TABA offices. The open houses were drop-in events where residents could obtain copies of plan chapters and the executive summary, discuss the plan, ask questions, and provide written comments.

Additional review meetings were held with the development community and public hearings before the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council provided additional opportunities for members of the public to comment on the plan and suggest changes. Comments and proposed changes to the final draft plan were recorded by City staff and submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council with an indication of recommended changes.

ADOPTION OF THE PLAN

The final draft plan, with a small number of recommended changes, was approved by the City Council on November 14, 2007.

B. Five Year Update: Tyler 1st

In the summer of 2012, City staff began the process of updating the comprehensive plan. The goal was not to reinvent the plan but to memorialize the original while reviewing what implementation items had been accomplished since adoption of the plan in addition to reviewing the goals and policies to ensure that they were still consistent with the community's vision. This comprehensive plan update was also chosen as a time to rebrand the plan with the new name: Tyler 1st.

TYLER 1st
Building our future, together

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Because Tyler 1st is an update rather than a complete reinvention of the comprehensive plan, the public engagement was not conducted on the same scale as the Tyler 21 process. However, the same methods were used to engage the community to receive their feedback throughout the process in a variety of ways which would allow citizens to be a part of the update process. Outreach activities included the following:

- **Tyler 1st newsletters.** Tyler 1st newsletters were published as inserts in the Tyler Morning Telegraph as well as on the website and were distributed at events.
- **Mayor's events.** Mayor Bass talked about Tyler 1st and associated activities at a number of events, such as in the State of the City address and in appearances before community organizations.
- **Press releases and press contacts.** The City's communications coordinator kept the media up to date with releases on Tyler 1st events. Stories on Tyler 1st appeared regularly in the Tyler Morning Telegraph, Tyler Today and local radio and TV stations.

- **Community survey.** A total of 427 Tylerites were surveyed encompassing a variety of ages, income, and household sizes evenly dispersed among the City Council districts. The same questions were asked as those in the 2006 survey. The consulting firm who conducted both surveys compared the results and highlighted areas of significant change from the original survey.

- **Tyler 1st website.** The City staff created a webpage which could be accessed from the City of Tyler homepage at www.cityoftyler.org. The page included information on the planning process, meeting schedules, agendas and presentations from steering committee meetings, a copy of the updated citizen survey, a link to the Tyler 21 plan website and a library of documents, maps and images created in the planning process.
- **Open Houses.** A total of nine open houses were conducted at approximately one month intervals throughout the Tyler 1st process. Each open house focused on a specific chapter of the plan.
- **Steering Committee Meetings.** A steering committee of citizens and officials selected by the mayor was formed to review each chapter and provide insights based on their knowledge and using the community feedback collected. Beginning on January 30, 2013, the Tyler 1st Steering Committee began conducting monthly meetings to review each chapter and suggest updates based on survey results and public feedback collected from the website and open houses.
- **Final review.** The draft updates from the steering committee's feedback was presented for final review at a public forum, community open house, and on the website.

TYLER 1ST WEBSITE

Citizens were able to offer input through the Tyler 1st website, which went online in January 2013. Online surveys were posted seeking citizen feedback on the quality of services provided related to specific chapters. There were also open ended questions posed for some chapters which allowed citizens to personalize their responses using a forum option on the city website called Tyler Speaks. A total of 602 responses were given on various issues through the website.

OPEN HOUSES

To coincide with the topic of an upcoming steering committee meeting, an open house was conducted which focused on a specific chapter of the plan. The open houses were each held at a location which served as an established focal point for people interested in the topic.

• April 4, 2013:

Topic: Transportation and Circulation

Location: Tyler Senior Center

• April 16, 2013:

Topic: Parks, Open Space, Recreation & Lakes
Location: Harvey Hall

• May 9, 2013:

Topic: Historic Preservation
Location: Gallery Main Street

• May 30, 2013:

Topic: North End Revitalization
Location: Neighborhood Services Building

• June 27, 2013:

Topic: Business and Economy
Location: Park Place Center

• July 23, 2013:

Topic: Public Facilities and Services
Location: Tyler Development Center

• August 27, 2013:

Topic: Downtown
Location: Gallery Main Street

• October 15, 2013:

Topic: Education
Location: Liberty Hall

• October 17, 2013:

Topic: Future Land Use and Annexation Guide
Location: Tyler Development Center

Open houses were conducted in a manner that was conducive to one-on-one interactions with participants and City staff, allowing them to comment on what they would like to see for Tyler's future and respond to the vision and principles. A total of 224 people visited the Open Houses.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Mayor convened a committee consisting of the City Council, City staff department leaders and 52 Tyler citizens chosen to represent the city's diversity and community leadership. The committee was charged with the overall guidance of the planning process and review of the draft comprehensive plan before it was presented for public comments. The steering committee met 12 times over a one year period. The first meeting was to review the citizen survey and comment on major items to be included during the process. Throughout the discussion, the committee came to a consensus on the necessity for a new chapter regarding education. All subsequent meetings dealt with a specific aspect of the existing plan or with the newly proposed chapter.

Mayor Barbara Bass participates in the vision and principles exercise (left). Councilman Martin Heines presents the report out for his group at a Steering Committee meeting (right).

PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE FINAL DRAFT PLAN

The final draft plan incorporating the Steering Committee changes was placed on the Tyler 1st website and a hard copy was made available for the public at the draft update open house held on February 5, 2014.

ADOPTION OF THE UPDATE

The final draft plan, with a small number of recommended changes, was approved by the City Council on April 9, 2014.