

RESULT ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUPS:

The Impact Group conducted three focus groups in the City of Springfield. These were open discussions guided by questions to ascertain the issues, their importance and priority as well as examining the level of knowledge of the populace as it pertains to city operations.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

- Citizens desire better communication from the city.
- There is a perception of a lack of transparency which leads to a feeling of mistrust for the city.
- There is a feeling that crime is quite bad and that it is on the rise.
- Citizens are upset about the quality and maintenance of the streets.
- Citizens desire leadership; a plan that they may follow to guide them out of the current downturn.
- Jobs and economic development are viewed by most as a needed first step.
- It is believed that a tax increase would hinder an economic comeback.
- There was more acceptance when asked about a temporary tax increase to stimulate economic development.
- There is a feeling of pride for what the community was, and hope for what it could be again.

May 4th, 2016 1:30 pm session:

The session in the afternoon began very well, there was an eclectic group from both sides of the city and of varying financial means. This group seemed to know much of what was happening within the city. The first major obstacle uncovered was the lack of communication from the city to the residents. They requested a mailer go out with the utility bill that informed citizens of current events. The expressed concern was with the crime and the streets. They also understood that the police and fire departments were operating at minimum standards. There were plenty of good things to say about the city, including friendly people, rich parks and activities as well as low cost of living but they feel that the need to bring new business into the center of town is critical.

Once asked about a potential tax issue, there was no buy in. Many of them stated that they would pay an additional tax if there was a financial plan associated with that tax, and if the city's financials were available for everyone to see online.

May 4th, 2016 6:30 pm session:

The evening group was smaller and bit more negative. They did express the same issues with communication from the city, that they want to see transparency in finance before they will trust what the city is doing with the money. This group had a lot more positive things to say about the city as far as amenities and experience with neighbors, but noted that crime has risen everywhere and that the streets are terrible. When mentioning the tax issue, the group was much less agreeable than the first. They believe that the city is untrustworthy and until they see a clear plan and open the books for everyone to see online, they would not vote for a tax increase.

May 9th, 2016 1:30 pm session:

This session was with elderly individuals. They were much more understanding of the situation and showed experience with the history of the city and where it has gone. The main issues with this group stemmed from their lack of knowledge of what the city is responsible for and what they spend money on. Communication is the required fix for this. They also said they would support a retirement tax to pay their fair share if the money is going to an economic development plan that would revitalize the downtown area.

These results as well as the phone and online polls are the basis of the communication plan and concurrent SMARTstart.