



# **City of Smithville Community Insights™ Report: Research Findings**

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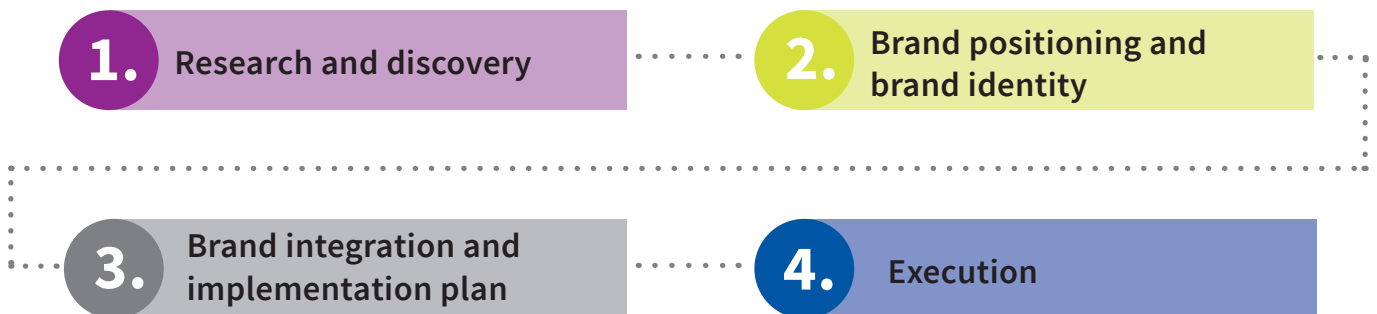


candid marketing + communications is dedicated to growing community brands through integrated marketing solutions. candid offers communities a combination of research, strategy, creativity and action. This process — called Community Insights™ — provides direction for development of the brand.

### *About the Community Insights Report™*

Insights rooted in research are key to developing a successful strategy. The Community Insights Report™ summarizes the first stage — Research and Discovery — and helps determine the road map for the development of the City’s brand position and subsequently the brand identity.

This process is divided into four stages:



### *Our Approach to Community Branding*

Branding is an exciting process that requires a commitment of time and resources. The brand development journey will help define key attributes of the City of Smithville. Developing a new brand identity will allow the City to embrace the elements that make it unique, while differentiating itself from other communities in the Kansas City area.

# Executive Summary

## *Brand Partners*

The City of Smithville, through City Staff and elected officials, contracted with candid to determine the City's true, unique and relevant brand position to help the area distinguish itself in the marketplace. This Executive Summary represents a snapshot of the critical highlights from all phases of the Community Insights process.

Detailed findings are compiled in the Appendix that follows.

## *Research and Discovery Findings*

candid conducted research to identify what differentiates Smithville from its neighbors and competitors. The Research and Discovery Stage examined the community (stakeholders, residents and businesses), consumers (visitors and economic development) and the competition (neighboring communities).

### **The In-Market Research Methodology consisted of six distinct phases.**

1. Economic Development Insights
2. Community Engagement
3. In-Market Immersion Findings
4. Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey
5. Community Insights SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)
6. Insights and Conclusions

## Where Smithville's Brand Has Been and Why

To understand Smithville's current brand positioning, candid assessed the environment; demographics and psychographics of residents; perceptions of residents and stakeholders; current communications and the competition. Most importantly, we gathered input from Smithville and its constituents.

We look for current attitudes regarding the brand. We also work to spot behavioral trends that exist around that brand. This stage is critical because it uncovers the relationship between three factors: the community's physical qualities, communication materials and the position the community holds in the minds of its constituents.

Our assessment shows that Smithville's brand has been rooted around a few key themes: small town, bedroom community, great place to raise a family, peaceful and friendly, good school district and Smithville Lake. In addition, a select group of older residents still reference two fairly significant community events — the flood in 1965 and the hospital purchase — both of which are likely contributing factors to a sense of lagging progress. Traditionally, the community has not been viewed favorably by economic development decision makers because of perceived challenges of permitting costs, land costs and the attitudes and lack of desire for growth of past elected officials.

The community is also divisive regarding the perception of itself. Some of the “old guard” seem unwilling to make changes needed for progress, fueled by a preference to keep things the same and perpetuating the “Mayberry” mentality while the “new guard” is desperately seeking change and advancement in recreational amenities, retail, events and entertainment. Both however, have unrealistic expectations about how to achieve their desired goals.

Because Smithville has the lowest tax rate in the Kansas City metro area, the community remains at a deep disadvantage in delivering quality of amenities or services to its constituents. Decisions that were made decades ago by City leadership stunted the ability of the City to progress like other neighboring communities who have been successful at growing their residential housing and commercial tax bases. The school district will also continue to be challenged by the attitudes of voters who are unwilling to support tax increases, while the expectation by many in the community is for the school district to accommodate growth and maintain high academic standards without additional funds. This puts Smithville at a crossroads with its identity and future. With a relatively new and energized leadership that is looking forward, along with a new resident population that includes many young families, the community is poised to overcome this challenge.

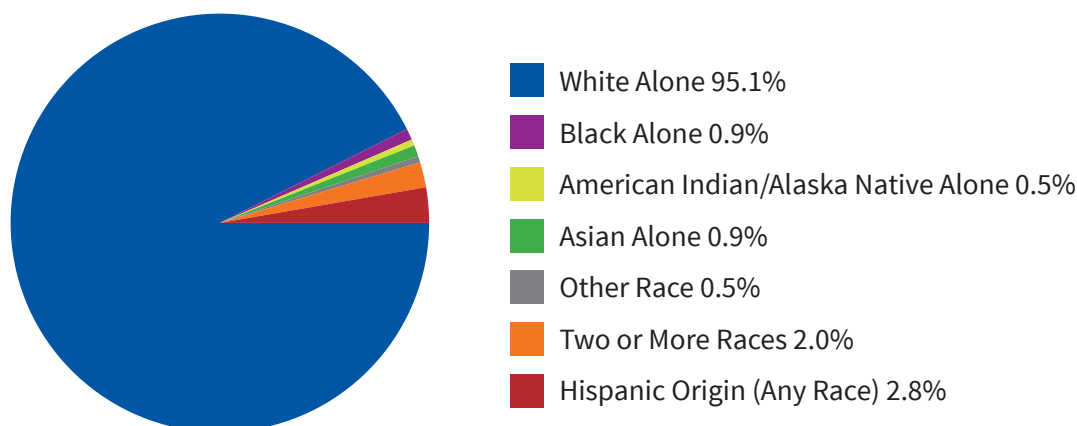
Today, Smithville does not have an identifiable brand of any kind, but the potential to build one is great.

## Community Profile: *Demographics*

Data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau's Five-Year 2012 American Community Study, the Missouri Department of Revenue, along with Esri forecasts for 2015 and 2020 support trends that Smithville is projected to see a small increase in its population base.

### *Demographic Profile Highlights*

- Smithville's population has grown from 2,786 in 1990 to 8,768 in 2012, a 318% increase.
- 2015 population is 8,870. In 2010, the Census count in the area was 8,425. The rate of change since 2010 was 0.95% annually.
  - The five-year projection for the population in Smithville is 9,439, representing a change of 1.25% annually from 2015 to 2020. Currently, the population is 49.1% male and 50.9% female.
- The median age in the area is 39.3, compared to a U.S. median age of 37.9.
- Racial Composition



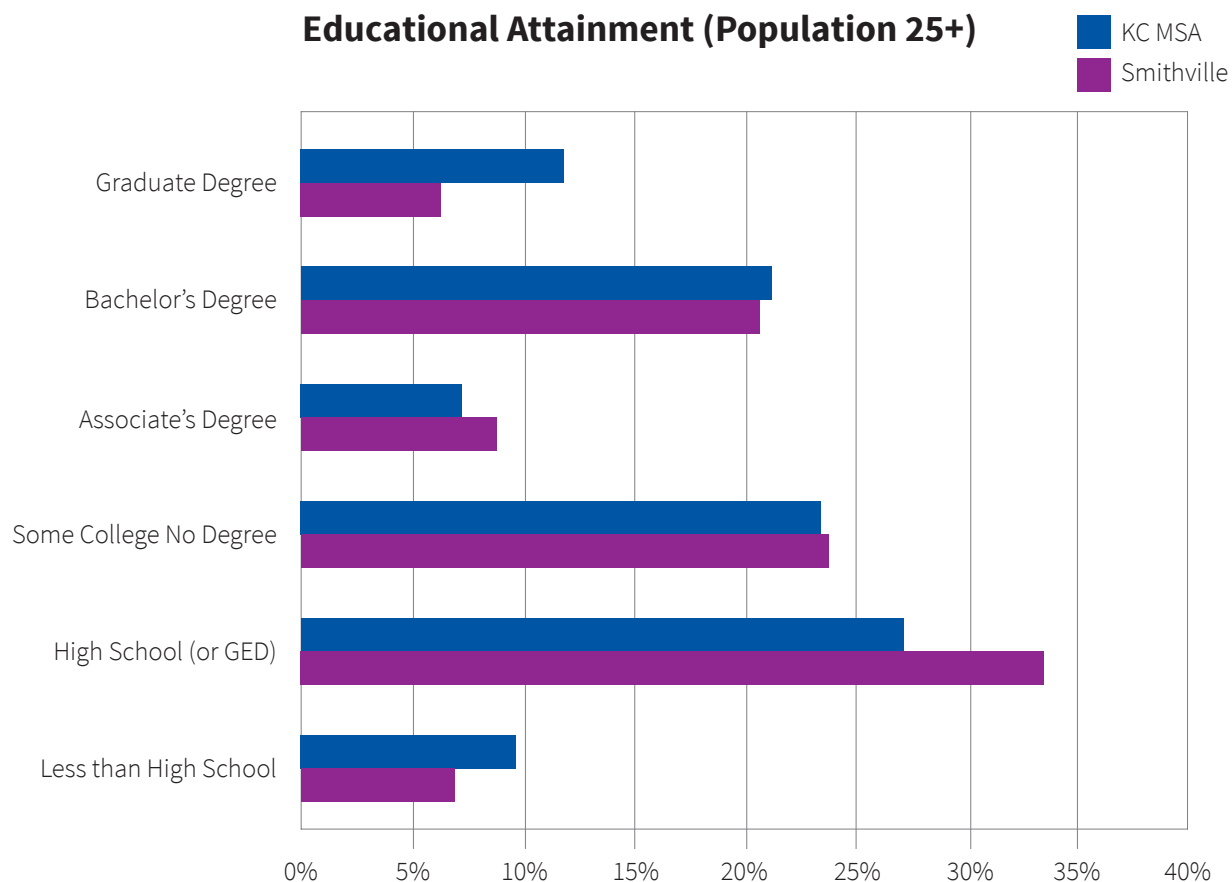
### • Households by Type (2010)

<b>Total</b>	<b>3,115</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Households with One Person	682	21.9%
Households with Two+ People	2,433	78.1%
Family Households	2,321	74.5%
Husband-Wife Families	1,899	61.0%
With Own Children	963	30.9%
Other Family (No Spouse Present)	422	13.5%
With Own Children	271	8.7%
Nonfamily Households	112	3.6%
All Households with Children	1,308	42.0%
Multigenerational Households	89	2.9%
Unmarried Partner Households	141	4.5%
Male-Female	126	4.0%
Same-Sex	15	0.5%
Average Household Size	2.68	
Average Family Size	3.13	

- The household count in Smithville has grown from 3,115 in 2010 to 3,281 in 2015, a change of 0.95% annually.
- The five-year projection of households is 3,492, a change of 1.25% annually from the 2015 total.
- Average household size is currently 2.68, same as in the year 2010. The number of families in 2015 is 2,443.

## Community Profile: *Demographics*

- Current median household income is \$70,788, compared to \$53,217 for all U.S. households. Median household income is projected to be \$80,482 in five years, compared to \$60,683 for all U.S. households.
  - 2015 – 2020 annual projected rate of growth 2.60%.
  - Average household income is projected to be \$92,412 in five years, compared to \$84,910 for all U.S. households.
- Current per capita income is \$30,605 in the area, compared to U.S. per capita income of \$28,597.
  - 2015 – 2020 annual projected rate of growth 2.36%.
  - The per capita income is projected to be \$34,386 in five years, compared to \$32,501 for all U.S. households.
- Currently, 79.4% of the 3,349 housing units in the area are owner occupied; 18.5% renter occupied and 2.0% are vacant. Currently, in the U.S., 55.7% of housing units are owner occupied; 32.8% are renter occupied and 11.6% are vacant. In 2010, there were 3,280 housing units in Smithville — 77.3% owner occupied, 17.7% renter occupied and 5.0% vacant. The annual rate of change in housing units since 2010 is 0.98%. Median home value in the area is \$212,297, compared to a median home value of \$200,006 for the U.S.
- In five years, median home value is projected to change by 4.01%.
- Smithville has slightly lower levels of educational attainment than the Kansas City metro. Just 21% of Smithville's adult population (25 and over) have at least a bachelor's degree. In the Kansas City metro, that figure is 22%.



# Community Profile: *Community Tapestry Study*

## Community Tapestry Study

Tapestry segmentation identifies neighborhood segments in Smithville and describes their socioeconomic quality and demographic composition. This profile mirrors the involvement of residents who participated in the Brand Smithville Survey at [www.visionsmithville.com](http://www.visionsmithville.com) and [brandsmithville.com](http://brandsmithville.com).

### Top Tapestry Life Mode Groups

- 1. Suburban Periphery
  - a. Soccer Moms
  - b. Midlife Constants
- 2. Semirural
  - a. Middleburgs
- 3. Rural
  - a. Green Acres

An index compares the percent of households or population in the area, by Tapestry segment, to the percent of households or population in the U.S., by segment. An index of 100 is the U.S. average. The study period is 2015.

### 1. Tapestry Urbanization Group: Suburban Periphery Composition

- Urban expansion: affluence in the suburbs or city-by-commute.
- The most populous and fastest-growing among Urbanization groups, Suburban Periphery includes one-third of the nation's population.
- Commuters value low-density living, but demand proximity to jobs, entertainment and the amenities of an urban center.
- Well-educated, two-income households; accept long commute times to raise their children in these family-friendly neighborhoods. Many are heavily mortgaged in newly built, single-family homes.
- Older householders have either retired-in-place, downsized or purchased a seasonal home.
- Suburbanites are the most affluent group, working hard to lead bright, fulfilled lives.
- Residents invest for their future, insure themselves against unforeseen circumstances, but also enjoy the fruits of their labor.

<b>Tapestry Urbanization Group:</b>	Suburban Periphery (Soccer Moms and Midlife Constants)
<b>Total Population:</b>	4,577
<b>Percent:</b>	51.6%
<b>Index:</b>	167



# Community Profile: *Community Tapestry Study*



## **a. Soccer Moms**

Total Population: 3,117

Percent: 35.1%

Index: 1,112

Soccer Moms is an affluent, family-oriented market with a country flavor. Residents are partial to new housing away from the bustle of the city, but close enough to commute to professional job centers. Life in the suburban wilderness offsets the hectic pace of two working parents with growing children. They favor time-saving devices, like banking online or housekeeping services, and family-oriented pursuits.

### **ABOUT SOCCER MOMS**

- Soccer Moms residents prefer the suburban periphery of metropolitan areas.
- Predominantly single-family homes are in newer neighborhoods; 36% built in the 1990s (Index 253), with 31% built since 2000.
- Owner-occupied homes have high rate of mortgages at 74% (Index 163), and low-rate vacancy at 5%.
- Median home value is \$226,000.
- Most households are married couples with children; average household size is 2.96.
- Most households have two or three vehicles and long travel time to work, including a disproportionate number commuting from a different county (Index 133).
- Median age is 36.6.
- Outdoor activities and sports are characteristic of life in the suburban periphery, like bicycling, jogging, golfing, boating and target shooting.
- Seventy-nine percent (79%) are white, non-hispanic.

### **SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS**

- Education: 37.7% are college graduates; more than 70% with some college education.
- Low unemployment at 5.9%; high labor force participation rate at 72%; two out of three households include two+ workers (Index 124).
- Connected, with a host of wireless devices from iPods to tablets; anything that enables convenience, like banking, paying bills or even shopping online.
- Well-insured and invested in a range of funds, from savings accounts or bonds to stocks.
- Carry a higher level of debt, including first (Index 159) and second mortgages (Index 154) and auto loans (Index 151).
- Most households own at least two vehicles; the most popular types are minivans and SUVs.
- Family-oriented purchases and activities dominate: four+ televisions (Index 165), movie purchases or rentals, children's apparel and toys and visits to theme parks or zoos.
- Home maintenance services are frequently contracted, but these families also like their gardens and own the tools for minor upkeep, like riding mowers and tillers.
- Medium household income: \$84,000.

### **TOP FIVE GENERAL TYPES OF OCCUPATION (WORKERS 16+)**

- Healthcare practitioners and technical
- Management
- Education training and library
- Sales and related
- Office and administrative support

# Community Profile: *Community Tapestry Study*



## **b. Midlife Constants**

Total Population: 1,460

Percent: 16.5%

Index: 720

Midlife Constants residents are seniors, at or approaching retirement, with below-average labor force participation and above-average net worth. Although located in predominantly metropolitan areas, they live outside the central cities, in smaller communities. Their lifestyle is more country, than urban. They are generous, but not spendthrifts.

### **ABOUT MIDLIFE CONSTANTS**

- Older homes (most built before 1980) found in the suburban periphery of smaller metropolitan markets.
- Primarily married couples, with a growing share of singles.
- Settled neighborhoods with slow rates of change and residents who have lived in the same house for years.
- Single-family homes, less than half still mortgaged, with a median home value of \$141,000 (Index 80).
- Median age is 45.9.
- 86.9% are white, non-hispanic.
- Leisure activities include scrapbooking, movies-at-home, reading, fishing and golf.

### **SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS**

- Education: 64% have a high school diploma or some college.
- Unemployment is lower in this market at 7.4% (Index 86), but so is the labor force participation rate (Index 89).
- Almost 42% of households are receiving Social Security (Index 150); 28% also receive retirement income (Index 160).
- Traditional, not trendy; opt for convenience and comfort, not cutting-edge. Technology has its uses, but the bells and whistles are a bother.
- Attentive to price, but not at the expense of quality. They prefer to buy American and natural products.
- Radio and newspapers are the media of choice (after television).
- Prefer practical vehicles like SUVs and trucks (domestic, of course).
- Sociable, church-going residents belonging to fraternal orders, veterans' clubs and charitable organizations, participating in volunteer work and fund-raising.
- Contribute to arts/cultural, educational, political and social services organizations.
- Do-it-yourself homebodies that spend on home improvement and gardening.
- Media preferences: country or Christian channels.
- Median household income: \$48,000.

### **TOP FIVE GENERAL TYPES OF OCCUPATION (WORKERS 16+)**

- Healthcare practitioners and technical
- Management
- Education training and library
- Sales and related
- Office and administrative support

# Community Profile: *Community Tapestry Study*

## 2. Tapestry Urbanization Group: Semirural Composition

- The most affordable housing — in smaller towns and communities located throughout the country.
- Single-family and mobile homes in the country, but still within reach of some amenities.
- Embrace a quiet, country lifestyle, including country music and hunting.
- Prefer domestic products and vehicles, especially trucks.
- Shop at large department and discount stores like Walmart.
- Fast food and dinner mixes/kits are much more common than fine dining.
- Many make a living off the land through agriculture, fishing and forestry.
- Time off is spent visiting nearby family, rather than flying to vacation destinations.
- When services are needed, the Yellow Pages are within reach.



### **a. Middleburgs**

Total Population: 3,363

Percent: 37.9%

Index: 412

Middleburgs' neighborhoods transformed from the easy pace of country living to semirural subdivisions in the last decade. Residents are conservative, family-oriented consumers. Still more country than rock-and-roll, they are thrifty, but willing to carry some debt and already investing in their futures. They rely on their smartphones and mobile devices to stay in touch and pride themselves on their expertise. They prefer to buy American and travel in the U.S. This market is younger, but growing in size and assets.

#### **ABOUT MIDDLEBURGS**

- Semirural locales within metropolitan areas.
- Neighborhoods changed rapidly in the previous decade with the addition of new single-family homes.
- Include a number of mobile homes.
- Affordable housing, median value of \$158,000 with a low-vacancy rate.
- Young couples, many with children; average household size is 2.73.
- Median age 35.3.
- 80.7% white, non-hispanic.
- Residents are partial to trucks, SUVs, and occasionally, convertibles or motorcycles.
- Entertainment is primarily family-oriented; TV and movie rentals or theme parks and family restaurants.
- Sports include hunting, target shooting, bowling and baseball.
- TV and magazines provide entertainment and information.
- Media preferences: country and Christian channels.

#### **SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS**

- Education: 66% with a high school diploma or some college.
- Unemployment rate lower at 7.4%.
- Labor force participation typical of a younger population at 66.7%.
- Traditional values are the norm — faith, country and family.
- Prefer to buy American and for a good price.
- Comfortable with the latest in technology — for convenience (online banking or saving money on landlines) and entertainment.
- Spending priorities focus on family (children's toys and apparel) or home DIY projects.
- Median household income: \$55,000.

#### **TOP FIVE GENERAL TYPES OF OCCUPATION (WORKERS 16+)**

- Management
- Production
- Transportation and material moving
- Sales and related
- Office and administrative support

# Community Profile: *Community Tapestry Study*

## 3. Tapestry Urbanization Group: Rural Composition

- Country living featuring single-family homes with acreage, farms and rural resort areas.
- Very low population density distinguishes this group — typically less than 50 people per square mile.
- Over half of all households are occupied by persons 55 years and older; many are married couples without children at home.
- The least diverse group, with over 80% white, non-hispanic.
- Mostly home owners (> 80%), but rentals are affordable in single-family or mobile homes.
- Long trips to the store and to work — often driven alone in a truck or SUV, listening to country radio.
- Blue collar jobs dominate the landscape including manufacturing, agriculture, mining and construction.
- Many are self-employed, retired, or receive income from Social Security.
- Satellite TV and landline phones are necessary means to connect.
- More conservative in their spending practices and beliefs.
- Comfortable, established and not likely to move.



### **a. Green Acres**

Total Population: 930

Percent: 10.5%

Index: 62

The Green Acres lifestyle features country living and self-reliance. These individuals are avid do-it-yourselfers, maintaining and remodeling their homes, with all the necessary power tools to accomplish the jobs. Gardening, especially growing vegetables, is also a priority, again with the right tools, tillers, tractors and riding mowers. Outdoor living features a variety of sports: hunting and fishing, motorcycling, hiking and camping, and even golf. Self-described conservatives, residents of Green Acres remain pessimistic about the near future, yet are heavily invested in it.

### **ABOUT GREEN ACRES**

- Rural enclaves in metropolitan areas, primarily (not exclusively) older homes with acreage; new housing growth in the past 10 years.
- Single-family, owner-occupied housing, with a median value of \$197,000.
- An older market, primarily married couples, most with no children.
- Median age is 43.
- Ninety-one percent (91%) are white, non-hispanic.
- Green Acres residents pursue physical fitness vigorously, from working out on home exercise equipment to playing a variety of sports.
- Residents are active in their communities and a variety of social organizations, from fraternal orders to veterans' clubs.

## Community Profile: *Community Tapestry Study*

### **SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS**

- Education: 60% are college educated.
- Unemployment is low at 6% (Index 70); labor force participation rate is high at 67.4%.
- Income is derived not only from wages and salaries but also from self-employment (more than 15% of households), investments (30% of households) and increasingly, from retirement.
- Cautious consumers with a focus on quality and durability.
- Comfortable with technology, more as a tool than a trend. Banking or paying bills online is convenient, but the Internet is not viewed as entertainment.
- Economic outlook is professed as pessimistic, but consumers are comfortable with debt, primarily as home and auto loans, and investments.
- Purchasing choices reflect Green Acres residents country life, including a variety of vehicles from trucks and SUVs to ATVs and motorcycles, preferably late model.
- Homeowners favor DIY home improvement projects and gardening.
- Media of choice are provided by satellite service, radio and television, also with an emphasis on country and home and garden.
- Median household income: \$72,000.

### **TOP FIVE GENERAL TYPES OF OCCUPATION (WORKERS 16+)**

- Healthcare practitioners and technical
- Management
- Education training and library
- Sales and related
- Office and administrative support

# Economic Development Insights

Smithville's industry landscape indicates a 100% leakage\* in retail, electronic and appliance stores, lawn and garden stores, all retail (clothing, specialty items, etc.) and special food services (restaurants). The summary also indicates large gaps of retail opportunities that can be filled with three industry categories: Retail Trade, Food and Drink.

\* Retail leakage means that residents are spending more for products than local businesses capture. Retail sales leakage suggests that there is unmet demand in the trade area and that the community can support additional store space for that type of business. However, retail leakage does not necessarily translate into opportunity. For example, there could be a strong competitor in a neighboring community that dominates the market for that type of product or store.

## Total Retail Trade, Food and Drink

NAICS: 44-45,722\*  
Demand (retail potential): \$110,959,467.00  
Supply (retail sales): \$70,957,469.00  
Retail Gap: \$40,001,998.00  
Leakage/Surplus Factor: 22.0  
Number of Current Businesses: 73

## Total Retail Trade

NAICS: 44-45\*  
Demand (retail potential): \$99,499,871.00  
Supply (retail sales): \$61,354,961.00  
Retail Gap: \$38,144,910.00  
Leakage/Surplus Factor: 23.7  
Number of Current Businesses: 62

\*North American Industry Classification System 44-45 sectors comprises two main types of retailers: store and non-store retailers.

1. Store retailers operate fixed point-of-sale locations, located and designed to attract a high volume of walk-in customers. In general, retail stores have extensive displays of merchandise and use mass-media advertising to attract customers. They typically sell merchandise to the general public for personal or household consumption, but some also serve business and institutional clients. In addition to retailing merchandise, some types of store retailers are also engaged in the provision of after-sales services, such as repair and installation.
2. Non-store retailers, like store retailers, are organized to serve the general public, but their retailing methods differ. The establishments of this subsector reach customers and market merchandise with methods, such as the broadcasting of "infomercials," the broadcasting and publishing of direct-response advertising, the publishing of paper and electronic catalogs, door-to-door solicitation, in-home demonstration, selling from portable stalls (street vendors, except food), and distribution through vending machines.

## Total Food and Drink

NAICS: 722\*  
Demand (retail potential): \$11,459,596.00  
Supply (retail sales): \$9,602,508.00  
Retail Gap: \$1,857,088.00  
Leakage/Surplus Factor: 8.8  
Number of Current Businesses: 11

\*North American Industry Classification System 722 sector comprises industries in the food services and drinking places subsectors preparing meals, snacks and beverages to customer order for immediate on-premises and off-premises consumption. There is a wide range of establishments in these industries. Some provide food and drink only; while others provide various combinations of seating space, waiter/waitress services and incidental amenities, such as limited entertainment. The industries in the subsector are grouped based on the type and level of services provided. The industry groups are full-service restaurants; limited-service eating places; special food services, such as food service contractors, caterers, and mobile food services; and drinking places.

# Economic Development Insights

## LocationOne Information System (LOIS)

LOIS is the leading online economic development site selection tool in the U.S. LOIS provides a GIS-enhanced site database system, which gives a strong competitive advantage in the rough-and-tumble-world of site selection.

Currently, the City of Smithville does not have LOIS integrated into the City's website and the database has not been populated with available land, sites or buildings. This is a service that should be considered as part of actively marketing Smithville for economic development. LOIS is however, integrated with the Clay County Economic Development Council's (EDC) website. Please note the following comment in LOIS about Smithville pulled from various GIS data sources:

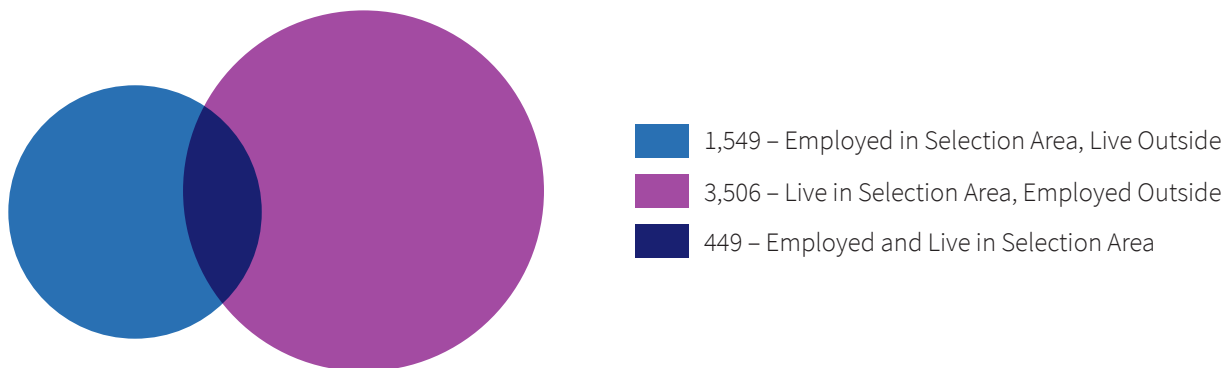
*The majority of the residential growth in Smithville over the last five years has been young families, parents average age 34.5, with two children. The reasons these families are moving to Smithville according to surveys provided through the Chamber of Commerce Hospitality Hostess program is for the exceptional Smithville R-II School District and the small-town atmosphere.*

## Clay County Economic Development Council

The Clay County Economic Development Council is a partnership of the private and public sectors aimed at the overall economic development of Clay County, Mo. A non-profit organization, its mission is to maximize economic well-being and opportunity throughout the county. Smithville data from 2011 and 2012 is being used in presentations to key decision makers to attract businesses to Clay County using the following profiles:

- Demographics (age, households, income, etc.)
- Economy
- Housing

### Inflow/Outflow Job Counts in 2011



## Economic Development Insights

- Twenty-two percent (22%) of employees working in Smithville, also live in Smithville. The bulk of the remaining employees commute in from other suburban communities in Clay and Platte counties.
- Smithville residents working outside of Smithville totals 3,506. The vast majority of these workers commute to the south to employment centers along the I-29 corridor, the Fairfax district in Kansas City, Kan. and Kansas City, Mo.'s central business district.
- Smithville's overall pull factor is .65, indicating there is a good amount of retail leakage. A pull factor of 1 would indicate balance with the rest of Clay County.

$$\text{Smithville Pull Factor} = \frac{\left( \frac{\text{Smithville Taxable Sales}}{\text{Smithville Population}} \right)}{\left( \frac{\text{Clay County Taxable Sales}}{\text{Clay County Population}} \right)}$$

$$\text{Smithville Pull Factor} = \frac{\left( \frac{\$74,534,334.70}{8,411 (2011 - 2012)} \right)}{\left( \frac{\$3,114,996,446.09}{227,577} \right)} = .65$$

### Smithville Pull Factors: 1 = Balanced

Retail Industry	Pull Factors
Lumber and Other Building Materials	0.57
Hardware Stores	1.17
Grocery Stores	1.19
Womens Ready-To-Wear Stores	0.42
Family Clothing Stores	0.06
Eating and Drinking Places	0.82
Drug Stores and Proprietary Stores	0.13
Auto Repair Shops	2.24

- Smithville meets (and exceeds) retail demand for Hardware and Grocery Stores with pull factors greater than 1. It does particularly well in Auto Repair, suggesting that non-Smithville residents are purchasing these services in Smithville. This perhaps reflects a relationship to the large number of visitors to Smithville Lake.



# Economic Development Insights

## Smithville Growth Trends

2015	Smithville	Clay County	Missouri	National
Population	1.25%	.95%	0.42%	0.75%
Households	1.25%	.85%	0.46%	0.77%
Families	1.15%	n/a	0.37%	0.69%
Owner Households	1.34%	n/a	0.44%	0.70%
Median Household Income	2.60%	n/a	2.73%	2.66%

Census	2010	2015	2020	2015 – 2020 Change	2015 – 2020 Annual Rate
Population	8,425	8,870	9,439	569	1.25%
Median Age	36.7	39.3	40.2	0.9	0.45%
Households	3,115	3,281	3,492	211	1.25%
Average Household Size	2.68	2.68	2.68	0.00	0.00%

Population by Age	Census 2010		Census 2015		Census 2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0 – 4	586	7.0%	534	6.0%	559	5.9%
5 – 9	716	8.5%	604	6.8%	600	6.4%
10 – 14	747	8.9%	716	8.1%	675	7.2%
15 – 19	557	6.6%	657	7.4%	673	7.1%
20 – 24	325	3.9%	481	5.4%	509	5.4%
25 – 34	1,047	12.4%	917	10.3%	1,077	11.4%
35 – 44	1,413	16.8%	1,325	14.9%	1,272	13.5%
45 – 54	1,305	15.5%	1,417	16.0%	1,392	14.7%
55 – 64	867	10.3%	1,104	12.4%	1,319	14.0%
65 – 74	449	5.3%	666	7.5%	834	8.8%
75 – 84	286	3.4%	300	3.4%	368	3.9%
85+	127	1.5%	150	1.7%	161	1.7%

# Research and Discovery: Community Engagement

## Methodology

“Community Engagement” is defined as promotion and awareness of how Smithville residents and stakeholders could participate in the brand development process.

Residents and community stakeholders were asked to visit [www.visionsmithville.com](http://www.visionsmithville.com) and participate in a vision survey.

## Communication and Outreach

- Dedicated website, [www.visionsmithville.com](http://www.visionsmithville.com).
- candid staff t-shirts promoting the project for man-on-the street interviews.
- One thousand (1,000) promotional cards and 50 posters distributed throughout the community.
- City website links and multiple social media pushes through Facebook.
- Chamber of Commerce support in distributing posters/cards and a link on website.
- Article on front page of Smithville Herald promoting participation.
- Advertisement in City’s October newsletter.
- Print and online ads in the Smithville Herald.
- Message in water bill.
- Hard copy surveys at City Hall and Senior Center.

### Promotional Cards

**YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!**

Please help Smithville create the **perfect brand message and identity** for our community by participating in a community-wide survey.

**Share your perceptions about Smithville.**

Visit [www.visionsmithville.com](http://www.visionsmithville.com) to engage online

If you do not have internet access, please stop by City Hall and pick up a survey. **Survey ends November 6, 2015.**

### Posters

**YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!**

Please help Smithville create the **perfect brand message and identity** for our community by participating in a community-wide survey.

The City is working with **candid marketing + communications**, a local company specializing in community branding, and this survey is an essential part of the research necessary to create a new strategic brand message for Smithville.

**Share your perceptions about Smithville.**

Visit [www.visionsmithville.com](http://www.visionsmithville.com) to engage online

We hope you will take **5 minutes** to participate in the community conversation and take the survey. And of course, share additional thoughts and ideas about why you think Smithville is a special place to live.

We will not share your information with anyone. All information collected will be presented in total. **Please complete the survey before November 6, 2015.**

Please forward this survey link to friends, family or co-workers that live or work in Smithville. We want everyone's voice to be heard!

[www.justbecandid.com](http://www.justbecandid.com) [smithvillemo.org](http://smithvillemo.org)

### Link from City’s website

**Smithville Missouri**

Home Community Government Residents Visitors How Do I?

**We need your help!**

Please see this notice on 11/05/15.

Please stop by the website page to get your input and perceptions of Smithville.


**YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!**

Share your perceptions about Smithville. Visit [www.visionsmithville.com](http://www.visionsmithville.com) to engage online

All Smithville residents, members of the business community and those who work here are encouraged to participate. Please provide honest feedback - both positive and negative - so we can better assess the City's advantages and opportunities.

Thank you for participating in this important community endeavor!

Survey closes November 6, 2015



[View All News](#)

### Website

**CITY OF SMITHVILLE MISSOURI**

**YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!**

Help the City of Smithville create the perfect brand!

The City of Smithville is working with **candid marketing + communications**, a local marketing firm specializing in community branding, to conduct community research to help create the perfect brand image, identity and message for our community to attract residents, visitors and businesses.

All Smithville residents, members of the business and civic community and those who work here are encouraged to participate two ways:

- 1 Visit [www.brandsmithville.com](http://www.brandsmithville.com)**  
Share your perception of Smithville by taking five minutes to answer five questions.
- 2 Click here to take the online Vision Survey**  
This anonymous survey should take you no more than 15 minutes to complete. Simply complete the survey by checking the boxes that most apply and click done when finished!

Thank you for participating in this important community endeavor!

Interested in getting more involved with the City's branding initiative?  
Contact Becky Freerby-Gerber at [becky@justbecandid.com](mailto:becky@justbecandid.com) for more information!

**Survey ends November 6, 2015.**



### Smithville Herald Ad

**LAST CHANCE...  
YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!**

Please help Smithville create the perfect brand message and identity for our community by participating in a community-wide survey. All Smithville residents, members of the business and civic community and those who work here are encouraged to participate by visiting [www.visionsmithville.com](http://www.visionsmithville.com).

This anonymous survey will allow the community to share their perceptions of Smithville, along with thoughts and ideas about why Smithville is a special place to live. Copies of the survey are also available at City Hall.

**DEADLINE TO COMPLETE SURVEY  
IS SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2015.**



### Online Ad

**LAST CHANCE...  
YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!**

Help Smithville create the perfect brand message and identity for our community by participating in a community-wide survey.

**DEADLINE TO COMPLETE SURVEY  
IS SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2015.**

**CLICK HERE**



# Research and Discovery: *In-Market Immersion Findings*

## Community Conversations: Residents and Community Stakeholders

### *Methodology*

A “Community Conversation” is defined as in-market immersion and research to understand the attitudes and perceptions of the community-at-large using:

- Stakeholder interviews
- Key messaging sessions
- Man-on-the-street interviews

These conversations were conducted by phone or in-person. More than 150 residents were reached by phone or in-person during various canvassing-the-community events, such as the homecoming parade, Chamber of Commerce lunch, individual meetings and man-on-the-street interviews.

The in-market immersion study was conducted September – November 2015.

### **Highlights from Resident and Stakeholder Conversations**

#### *Primary assets include:*

- Smithville Lake, however, many feel it should be utilized more for visitor and economic development attraction.
- Friendly small town, highly desirable school district, great place to raise a family.
- A strong desire by many to find a solution to make the community better; a safe community with low crime.

#### *Primary challenges include:*

- Although Smithville is very close to neighboring communities, there is little recreation outside of the lake for young families and children.
- An “old guard vs. new guard” struggle is preventing the community from moving forward.
- Limited tax dollars due to lack of commercial development cause a lack of amenities and inadequate infrastructure.
- A perception that Smithville has expensive permitting and land costs.
- General concern about the future of elected leadership.

#### *Primary opportunities include:*

- Increased City-sponsored Parks and Recreation programs and events.
- Leveraging the ease of access to downtown Kansas City to attract young professionals and families.
- Revitalizing the entry into the community from Highway 169.
- Strong belief by many interviewed that the lack of commercial growth is a solvable challenge.

# Research and Discovery: *In-Market Immersion Findings*

## Highlights from Elected Officials and City Staff

### *Primary assets include:*

- Strong community core.
- Staff committed to improving the vision and perception of the community.
- Strong desire to communicate with residents to explain why changes or decisions are made.
- The ability to grow the City intelligently.

### *Primary challenges include:*

- Communication channels that reach a diverse resident base who want to receive information differently.
- Lowest taxes in the Kansas City metro area with residents not inclined to raise them.
- Community with an identity crisis.
- Overcoming resistance from a small minority of negative residents who are unwilling to change, while managing the expectations of many.

### *Primary opportunities include:*

- Leveraging the positive perception of the school district to attract new residents.
- Opportunity to move the community from a “small town to a small city” through strategic planning.
- Connect and engage with residents who want to be a part of the change.
- Promote and market the community and its successes to residents with a focus on attracting economic development.

## Research and Discovery: *In-Market Immersion Findings*

### **Online Engagement Portal: [www.visionsmithville.com](http://www.visionsmithville.com)**

Ninety-three (93) residents and community stakeholders were actively using the open forum, online engagement portal: [www.visionsmithville.com](http://www.visionsmithville.com) during the in-market immersion study.

**19,970 Views:** Views are defined as how many times [www.brandsmithville.com](http://www.brandsmithville.com) appeared or was viewed in social media newsfeeds, and how many people actually visited the site. The portal does not separate the two out, which is why the number is so high. A view was generated every time the City, Chamber or Smithville Herald promoted the site via Facebook or Twitter. Because the link appeared in their followers' newsfeeds, it was considered a "view".

There were five topics and an open forum to share ideas and insights:

1. Describe Smithville to someone who has never heard of it/been here.
2. What are Smithville's biggest opportunities?
3. What are Smithville's biggest challenges?
4. What does Smithville look like in 10 years?
5. If you were Mayor, what would you add to Smithville to make it even better?

An optional comments section was also available for those who wanted to share more feedback.

# Research and Discovery: *In-Market Immersion Findings*

## *Key Themes from the Online Engagement Portal, [www.visionsmithville.com](http://www.visionsmithville.com)*

### **Topic 1: Describe Smithville to someone who has never heard of it/been here.**

Total number of participants engaging on this topic: 19

Number of views: 4,475

#### ***Top Aggregated Themes***

- A unique suburb of Kansas City, perfect for families and those who enjoy outdoor activities.
- Quiet city just 25 minutes north of downtown Kansas City. Safe place with great neighborhoods spread throughout the city. Plenty of outdoor activities including golf, hiking and boating. Good schools, but they are becoming overcrowded. Lacks any indoor activities or things for youth to do other than the parks. Nowhere to be able to get most household goods. Lack of dining options.
- Seems to be turning the corner on many years of bad decisions and starting to make progress in preparing for growth.
- Smithville is a close-knit community with a small town feel, while being within an easy distance to the airport and downtown Kansas City. Parent involvement in the school system is at a high level, which enhances the experience students have in their education experience. I have found the teachers to be responsive to questions and concerns raised. The administration of the school has done a great job of managing the funds and bringing in growth to our schools. The Performing Arts Center is a great addition and puts us on a level playing field with other schools in Kansas City. Police response times are good. This is a safe community to raise our kids. Seniors like it, too. They can enjoy a slower pace and less congestion than other parts of KC.
- Smithville is a quaint bedroom community. It has lots of small town charm with close city amenities of Kansas City. It has many outdoor adventures to be found from biking, hiking, boating, to camping. What is best about Smithville is the heart of its people. Caring and supportive community who take care of each other. It hosts several nonprofit groups that raise money to support others in need. The people truly make this community great!

# Research and Discovery: *In-Market Immersion Findings*

## **Topic 2: What are Smithville's biggest opportunities?**

Total number of participants engaging on this topic: 15

Number of views: 4,258

### ***Top Aggregated Themes***

- The biggest opportunity are recreation resources. With Smithville Lake, the parks, the trails and a growing downtown, the city could truly capitalize as the recreation center for the Northland.
- Centrally located in the Northland with a beautiful lake and wooded, rolling hills. Only 10 minutes to the airport, 30 minutes to downtown. Great parks and trail systems. Would love to see cabins for rent at Smithville Lake. Would make a great destination and bring more people in who would stay for a weekend or longer. Would love to see canoe, paddle board & paddle boat rentals available at the lake. How about an off-leash dog park? We have the space in our parks.
- Major beautification effort needed for 169 corridor through town. Landscaping requirements would help. Islands with trees and turn lanes would warm up the entrance. Also, it's impossible for someone not from here to understand how to find downtown. Route DD? Should reconsider street name for entrance off 169. Encourage development in keeping with historic nature of downtown. Better promotion of lake and parks. Restaurant on lake!
- A major push to build trails that connect to the lake and to Kansas City's trail system. This would bring many more people into the city to utilize our businesses.
- The lake, trails and historic downtown area (just waiting for re-vitalization). Make Smithville a destination; more dining opportunities, places to stay ... B&Bs? Keep the small-town atmosphere.

## **Topic 3: What are Smithville's biggest challenges?**

Total number of participants engaging on this topic: 14

Number of views: 3,908

### ***Top Aggregated Themes***

- There seems to be a strong vocal group of longtime residents who prefer to look back to the past instead of to the future, and this will hamper this city.
- A big challenge is having decision makers that "get it." There are some in town that seem to want to relive the past and others that just don't ... "get it." I have been told we have a City Council member that brags that he doesn't do any of his shopping here. Overcoming that kind of attitude is a big challenge.
- City leaders that fail to listen to the concerns of citizens and are not proactive when it comes to economic development.
- Finding ways to generate revenues to keep the city and the schools great. There are several ways to do this ... bring in retail? Raise taxes? Capitalize on recreation? The latter is the best way to accomplish the goal while setting Smithville apart from the rest of the communities. We need to support our schools. People will not move here if there are not enough classrooms for their children.
- We need larger retail stores, which bring in tax revenue to help support our schools and infrastructure. If the City doesn't bring in more business, it will end up just south of the City. The City will then get all the problems of the increased traffic without any of the benefits from revenue.

## Research and Discovery: *In-Market Immersion Findings*

### **Topic 4: What does Smithville look like in 10 years?**

Total number of participants engaging on this topic: 13

Number of views: 3,661

#### ***Top Aggregated Themes***

- Growth is inevitable for Smithville to remain a desired community. Controlled growth will be the key to being a successful city. If Smithville goes the same way as, say Liberty, then it will just be a “me too” city. The key will be attracting businesses and retail that help to keep Smithville’s unique identity.
- If Smithville stays on same track as present: it’ll look like Raytown, Mo. With proper planning and investment, there’s no reason why Smithville can’t create its own unique identity as a recreation mecca with unique dining and shopping options. A fabulous place to live! Unless there is more economic development, it will probably look pretty much the same.
- It depends. It seems like some of the leadership in town are trying to apply good planning to our growth. If that thinking is allowed to prevail, Smithville will be a community (one of the few in the Northland) with a unique identity (and a lake!).
- The plans I’ve heard City Hall talking about will likely fix much of the poor decisions of the past, so growth will not overwhelm us. Diversity in housing options on the south end if the City sells its incredibly low taxes compared to every other city in the metro.
- Without a true perspective and development of business opportunities, especially downtown, Smithville will just become a bedroom community of Kansas City. We already have the assets that other small communities are trying to develop in order NOT to just become an extension of Kansas City.

### **Topic 5: If you were the Mayor, what would you add to Smithville to make it even better?**

Total number of participants engaging on this topic: 17

Number of views: 2,092

#### ***Top Aggregated Themes***

- Focus on recreation. Connecting neighborhoods with trails, connecting downtown to the lake. Attract businesses that compliment Smithville. Encourage more events: festivals, street fairs, farmers’ markets, etc. to draw more attention to the community and make it a “staycation” destination.
- Seek out larger business prospects that benefit the entire community. Provide incentives to business owners to come to Smithville to help grow the City in a positive direction.
- Taxes are certainly high enough — raising taxes would sure not encourage new growth, it is a problem, the City does not have enough higher income/residences, but you cannot put that burden on them to pay it all. Big retail needs to be closer to Smithville (like Barry Road corridor) — face it ... a Costco, Sam’s or a “Big-Box” anything will not be coming to Smithville.
- Taxes are the lowest of any city in the Metro, so with limited resources, citizens need to manage expectations to the level of taxes! Smithville is a community, we can’t just leave it up to a Mayor or City Council. They need our input and opinions to make these kinds of decisions!
- Lowes, Walmart, community center w/indoor pool, retail development by the lake. Manufacturing or other business to provide local jobs. This would keep more shopping in town and therefore attract new businesses and stabilize existing ones. I would have never chased off Walmart and left a million dollar project to rot away. Work with the county to get a few more retail opportunities at the lake.



## Research and Discovery: *In-Market Immersion Findings*

### **Topic: Other thoughts, comments or ideas that you would like to share about the development of the City of Smithville brand?**

Total number of participants engaging on this topic: 15

Number of views: 1,576

#### ***Top Aggregated Themes***

- Like it or not, Smithville is going to grow. Those in charge who are fighting against this may feel this is good — but ... traffic will continue to grow on 169. Are they going to stop in Smithville or the next town further south? The schools are going to get overwhelmed and then it will be too late to fix it. Is anyone looking to the future and simply fighting off growth? Problem is, Smithville might get caught short as the world grows around us.
- A family-friendly brand that encourages a wholesome, fun place to live and visit. Downtown made more alive in our historic buildings creating a fun, 'vintage' place to shop and spend our dollars locally. The return of a farmers market would also be lovely.
- Smithville is a great little city. With a focus on our resources already here, we could be even greater.
- If you drive through town, you'll see more boats and campers than other cities, and the lake is amazingly situated for Smithville to capitalize on Clay County's park, assuming the commissioners in Liberty don't kill everything at the lake. They've shut down the marina restaurant for four years, and this hurts Smithville. Our brand is tied to recreation with the lake, so that is what we need to focus on. What still amazes me is that there still is no hotel/conference center or at least cabin rentals around the lake. There's a nice example of a corps lake in Iowa that does it well called Honey Creek on Rathbun Lake.
- The restaurant is a perfect example of where the Smithville leaders must proactively work with Clay County to bring assets into/back to Smithville — realize the limits of the area and focus on the strengths — don't spend money and efforts on unreachable goals.
- More people who are willing to "own" the process of making our town great. It's a long and hard process that belongs to us all. We all have to do our part, even if that part is to educate ourselves on what's going on or be encouraging to those that are doing the hard work.
- I'd like to see more trails to connect the downtown areas to other parts of Smithville, such as a trail between downtown Smithville to the strip center across from Price Chopper. Think all of the businesses that would benefit if it were more walkable. Add walking trail along the creek. Add more attractions to our community. How about zip lining business? We have some hilly areas that would accommodate this. Off-leash dog park is another idea. Think we can add some of these types of things and still maintain the small-town community.
- Unique, quaint, a must-visit area.
- Because we have the lake already, let's add more recreational opportunities that would draw people from KC. Trails, festivals, adventure racing, major bicycling events, etc.

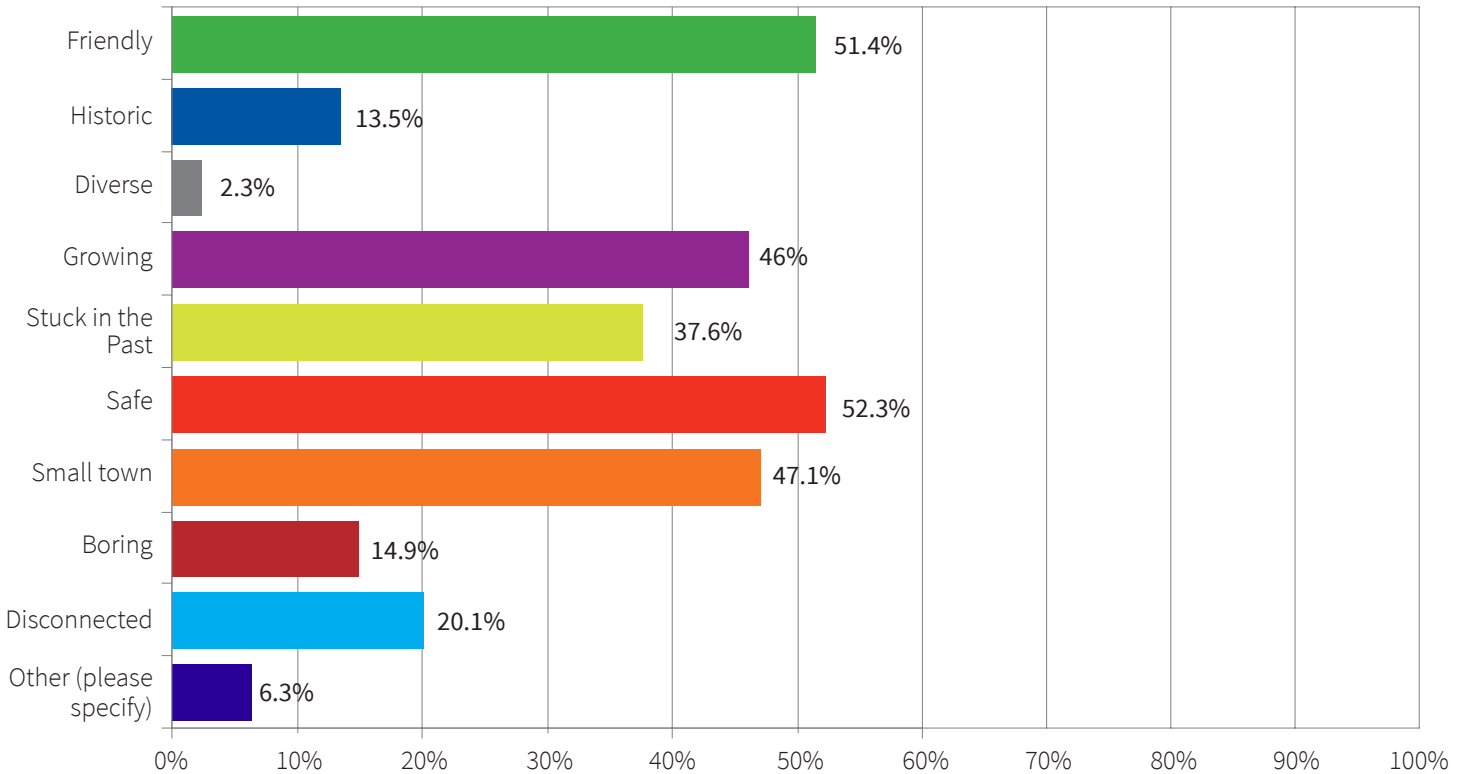
# Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

## Methodology

Four hundred and fifty (450) residents and businesses participated in an online, 20-question community vision survey. For those residents who could not take the survey online, hard copy surveys were printed and circulated throughout the community and made available at City Hall.

Twenty-one (21) hard copy surveys were completed, mailed back and incorporated into the results.

### Q1: How would you describe Smithville today? (Select up to three choices.)



## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Top common themes aggregated from Q1. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.**

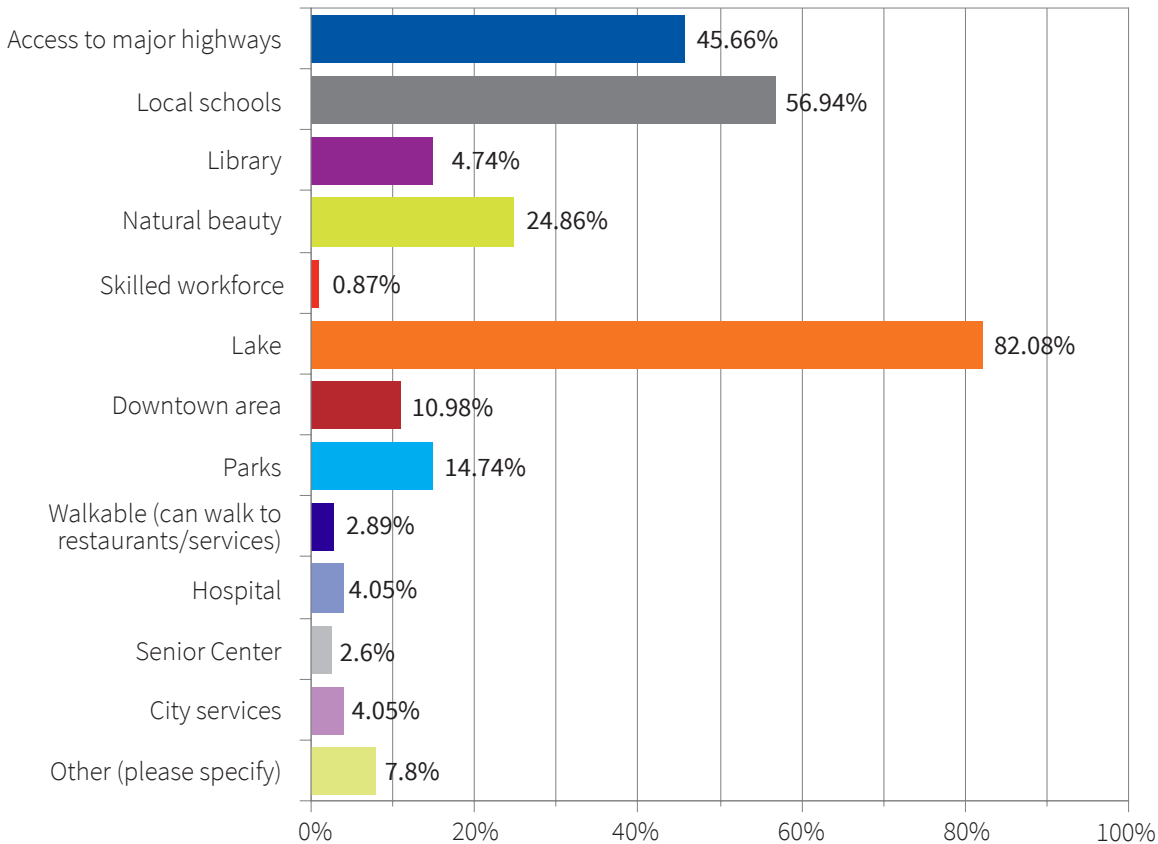
Number of comments: 22

Number of respondents: 348; zero skipped this question

- Smithville has the potential to be a much more attractive place to live. When visitors go “downtown,” they see the lack of code enforcement. People should not be allowed to have junk cars in their yards, nor should homes be allowed to deteriorate. We look backward and unkempt.
- A small town with very limited amenities. If you want to go swimming, you have to go to another town or to the lake. If you want to take the kids to the park in town, there’s only one, other than the ones located at schools or residential communities. The rural roads are always in pothole condition. It is also an extremely white-dominated community that seems to have its fair share of differing opinions.
- Has potential to be a destination town that has not been realized. Lack identity, identity crisis, nice town, but stagnant, confused, mired in small town politics, not spending money wisely, locals are cliques, low income, slow to grow. Dedicated to being forever a bedroom community with absolutely no regard for the active, involved, members of the community. No activities for children, no anchor businesses with no plan or drive to change it.
- City officials and aldermen are quick to pass the buck. They need to be more proactive in the community instead of deterring growth. There are factions that want growth and change, factions that want to go back to 1950, and factions that are indifferent or blind to the changes going on in the community.
- Smithville is growing in the business area. There needs to be a quicker advancement in areas that appeal to young families, more play equipment at current parks and more parking at sports fields, etc.

## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

### Q2: What is Smithville's greatest asset? (Select up to three choices.)



### Top common themes aggregated from Q2. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.

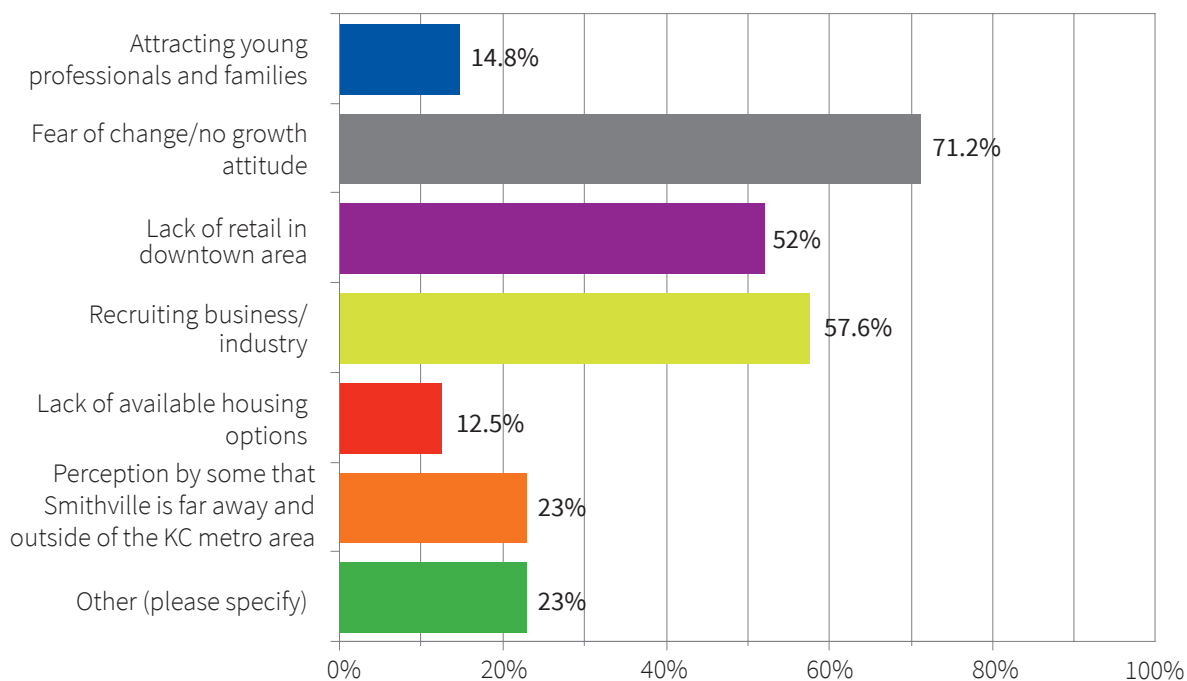
Number of comments: 22

Number of respondents: 346; two skipped this question

- Parks in natural beauty. The lake and trails are our greatest assets. We should be capitalizing on this by providing services that visitors want when visiting the lake/trails. Smithville should have a fully functional hospital and ER that can handle health needs. City services could be better. The Library is great ... it is a jewel for our area. The local schools continue to try to raise taxes because they mismanaged the money.
- Smithville is a small, safe & friendly community, but also has close access to the convenience of city life. Smithville has that rural feel with the convenience of working in Kansas City. Close to KC, but far enough away to see the stars at night.
- Potential, great community feel, caring people and trails around the lake. Smithville has no assets. Low taxes, growth, peaceful.
- The lake used to be a major asset, but it has become a boring dinosaur. The town never has capitalized on the lake. The workforce in Smithville work everywhere EXCEPT Smithville. There are no jobs or industry in town.
- Smithville's greatest asset is its opportunity. We have the opportunity for great change. Without change and investment, our schools and city services will continue to suffer and decline.

## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Q3: What is the greatest challenge currently facing Smithville? (Select up to three choices.)**



## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Top common themes aggregated from Q3. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.**

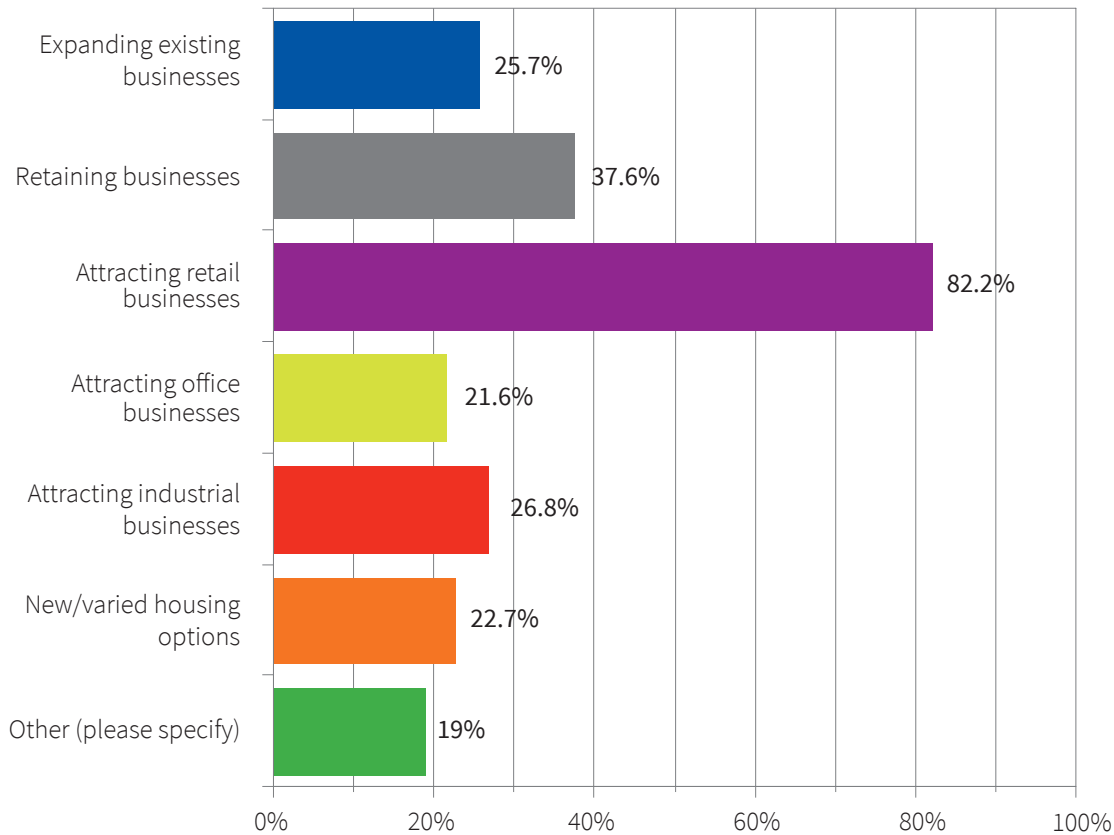
Number of comments: 79

Number of respondents: 344; four skipped this question

- Negative attitude of lifetime residents. Infrastructure to allow for growth and the lack of community support for children and their schools. Trying to deal with the City to do development and the lack of city leaders who will work with builders/developers. The inability to recognize opportunities to improve the community — such as building an aquatic center or community center. The City, chamber and schools working in contest with each other, as opposed to working with each other. Old timers resisting change. The thought we are still small and don't want to grow and that people want to change Smithville. It's a great small town and should be kept that way. Everyone knows everybody. Small town home town. The mindset that the City needs to grow.
- Administration, no clear communication from the City to the people, website doesn't work for this, nor does the lacking newspaper. Need to be better at maintaining what we already have (old homes, sidewalks could be kept up better) The low-tax mentality. The greatest challenge is getting a consensus about how we want Smithville to look. Personally, I want to keep it small and quaint. Growth for the sake of a larger tax base is a bad idea.
- Blight downtown. We are sending a clear message to investors/developers that we are a trashy town and not a good place to invest. Need to be more proactive in developing downtown. Come for the lake and leave. Nothing holding visitors here.
- Diversity, our community does not represent a large variety of national origins, color, religions and socioeconomic groups. How do we make our community open and attractive to a more diverse population?
- Attracting more shopping opportunities, such as Walmart, Target, CVS and Walgreens. There are no competing grocery stores or pharmacies. Target would help draw business and families. Need Walmart. Low selection of restaurants, including fast food. We need better restaurants so that people don't always think about driving down the road every time they want to do something. Need more restaurants that will stay open with reasonable prices. Need a big-box retail store.
- We need a better Parks and Rec Department. Build a community center, including a community pool. We have a lack of fitness/recreation facilities. Nothing for kids who don't participate in sports to do.
- Schools becoming overcrowded and lack of funding for schools and emergency services. Updating and expanding school spaces. Addressing the growing needs of students in the school district. If schools are not given priority, people will start leaving or look to better districts when considering a move. A lack of vision by the voters in allowing and equipping our schools to grow and develop as they need to.

## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

### Q4: What is the greatest opportunity for growth in Smithville? (Select up to three choices.)



### Top common themes aggregated from Q4. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.

Number of comments: 65

Number of respondents: 347; one skipped this question

- Changing attitude toward growth. The appeal of Smithville as the small-town family, friendly environment, and if there is too much big business brought in, then Smithville will lose itself. The greatest opportunity would be to stop trying to be KC and focus on the small community and its small businesses. The only people that want different are people that moved here from large towns. No growth needed. Comfortable, beautiful views, clean, and safe community. Smithville would benefit by building on the small-town appeal.
- Repairing the damage done by the school board last fall. Continue to provide excellent schools, update the facilities and attract innovative teachers. Taxes for schools will better support the school system. New schools, so our kids aren't in overcrowded, outdated buildings.
- Complete the Commons. Promote downtown by updating the buildings. "Connecting" the downtown to the lake. Leverage the lake; it's the best asset and it is not utilized. Expanding tourism options and features at the lake. We should build on with Justus Drugstore, Paradise Meats and Ladoga.
- Parks and recreation. A Smithville community center and pool would be an excellent catalyst for growth. We need park improvements.

## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

### Q5: How likely would you be to recommend Smithville to a friend or colleague to:

	Extremely unlikely	Unlikely	Not sure	Likely	Extremely likely	Total	Weighted Average	
Live in Smithville	5.19% 18	8.36% 29	10.09% 35	35.16% 122	41.21% 143	347	3.99	
Visit Smithville	4.40% 15	9.68% 33	7.92% 27	39.59% 135	38.42% 131	341	3.98	
Conduct business in Smithville	11.40% 39	19.88% 68	25.44% 87	26.32% 90	16.96% 58	342	3.18	



## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Q6: Please describe why you would or would not recommend Smithville to a friend or colleague.**

**Top common themes aggregated from Q6. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.**

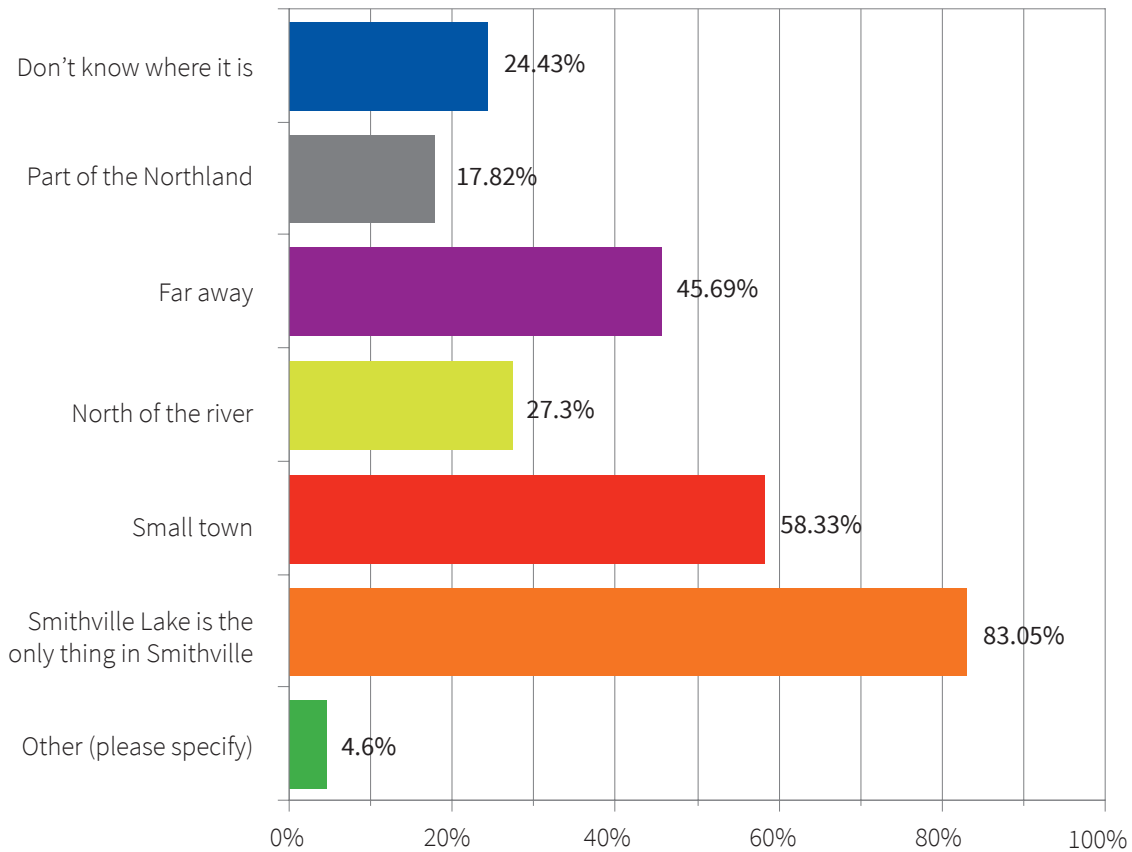
Number of comments: 217

Number of respondents: 217; 131 skipped this question

- It's a safe town. It's a nice place to raise a family. It's good that it is growing, but I am afraid it is growing too rapidly. I don't want to lose the small-town feeling. Smithville used to be a great community that was friendly and supportive to its town and visitors. Today, it's rude and overrun by money and politics. There is no sense of community and trust within its boundary. The over population and need to change has lost all local support and trust within. It's a great little town, but a few old families have blocked progress and new business for a long time, maybe too long.
- The City has great potential, but until the old guard is gone, they won't listen to you. If you're okay with that; it's pretty and the schools are great. Some older Smithville residents are snotty. Stuck in ways and snub newcomers who don't feel welcome. I feel most people move to Smithville for open space and opportunity to own acreage or be close to the lake. With stagnant leadership and a substantial segment of the population adamantly opposed to any growth or local taxes, Smithville's infrastructure is failing.
- Recommending a family with kids puts them in a school district that has funding issues. Lack of community support when it comes to change or something new. Not recognizing or supporting needs of our school district and because of the overcrowding of the schools.
- Smithville has got to make a decision as to whether it is going to stay small town or become a destination. Smithville just doesn't have much to attract people other than the lake. We are a "drive thru" city, but a good place to raise a family. We need to get some more retail stores in Smithville to keep the sales tax dollars in our own community. Limited shopping choices and the schools are overcrowded. Also need new fire station, but no one will vote to increase tax for needed growth. Wonderful schools, safe, can walk around any time of day or night without worry.
- No reason to visit Smithville except for Justus Drugstore Restaurant. Would recommend for families looking for a safe place to live, good schools, country atmosphere, but close to city amenities. It's a great place to live. You need to drive down the road for most places to eat and shop. We have a great police force and it is nice to feel safe in your own community. I love living here due to its potential. It only takes a well informed and connected community to make it great! Low taxes, affordable housing, recreation options and great schools. The lake is a great place for boating, camping, biking.
- Would not recommend Smithville to my friends who are mostly young professionals with young families. This community has shown they do not want us here. Would not recommend business since the Smithville residents do not shop local. I would let them know of the sewer issues. But would recommend our schools. It's a nice place to live, but there isn't anything to do. We need restaurants, not the fast food drive-thru. We need a reason to visit Smithville other than nature. No coffee to purchase (daily) outside of QuikTrip and City Council seems to entertain issues from residents that don't want to see growth. I love Smithville as a place to live and as a community. However, I would not advise a friend to bring their business.
- It seems as though new businesses have a difficult time thriving. I have been disappointed with the seemingly lack of wanting to promote a business-friendly environment. We find ourselves constantly making a 20-mile drive to conduct our shopping needs. The Commons is a testament of our failure as a community to bring in the business our residents need. We get a rehashed grocery store, while Kearney gets a brand new one in an area where other new business can be built. We live here for convenience to the major highways, but wished we chose another location. Nothing here for our children or for families to do together unless it's the lake or camping, which we don't do year-round, schools are okay, but need serious help with improving buildings. Kids will never be a priority and will continue to suffer if the old guard continues to prevent change. No reason to visit Smithville except for Justus Drugstore Restaurant and it's not for everyone.

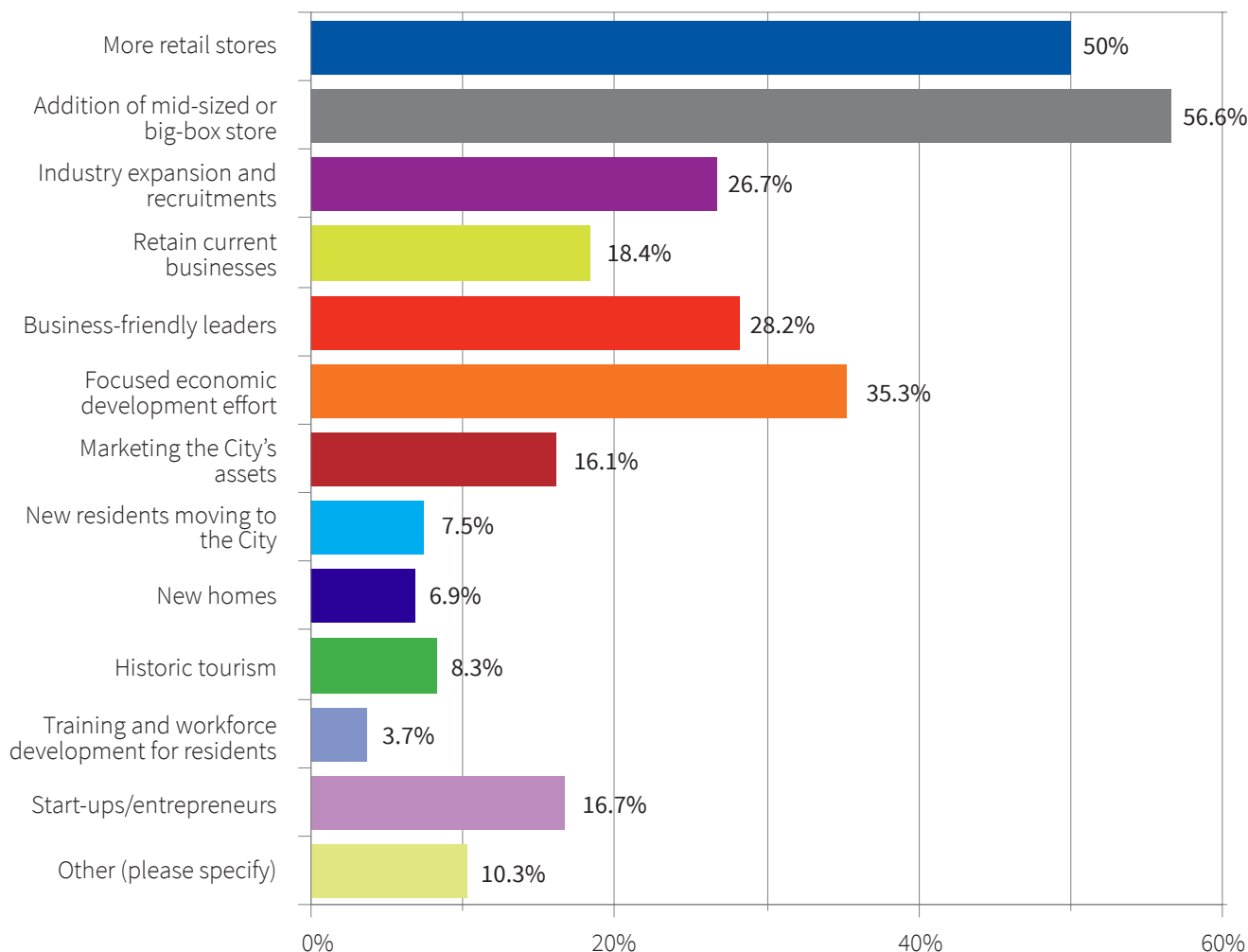
## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Q7: How do you believe most people who do not live or work in Smithville view the City? (Select up to three choices.)**



## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Q8: In your opinion, which of the following would create the most jobs for Smithville? (Select up to three choices.)**



## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Top common themes aggregated from Q8. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.**

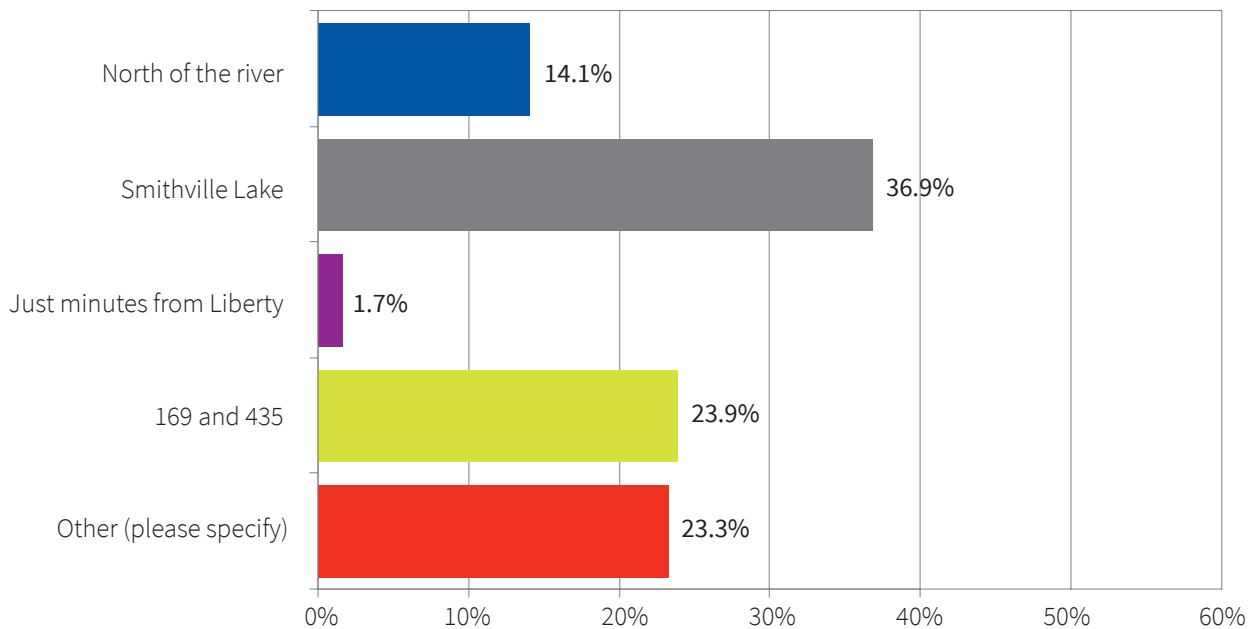
Number of comments: 36

Number of respondents: 348; zero skipped this question

- Aldermen that don't want any new businesses to move in; we need new blood running the City. Price building permits to compete with other communities. Improved community development. It's worked great and been successful, so no need to change. The population is there to attract big-box stores, which brings tax base. But we need to have business leaders who will view this as an opportunity to grow their business and not as a threat to taking away their business. We're already losing to other communities. The low taxes here are becoming more of a detriment to us than they are a help. A city government that wants to change. Going to have to do some tax credits to bring in major companies. Better City services.
- Emphasis on small-business development in the high school education curriculum — kids learning to manage and grow/market a business. Creating good jobs vs. jobs is critical to bring people to the City and making them part of the community. Big-box and small retail will create lower wage jobs unlike industry that pays better. Create a creative entrepreneur culture that builds excitement and pride within the community and attracts new businesses and residents.
- Clean up the downtown area, including the surrounding blocks by enforcing maintenance codes. You don't need to create jobs in Smithville; there are thousands of jobs within 20 minutes of driving distance.

## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Q9: How do you describe where Smithville is located? For example, what reference points do you use to tell people how to find Smithville?**



**Top common themes aggregated from Q9. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.**

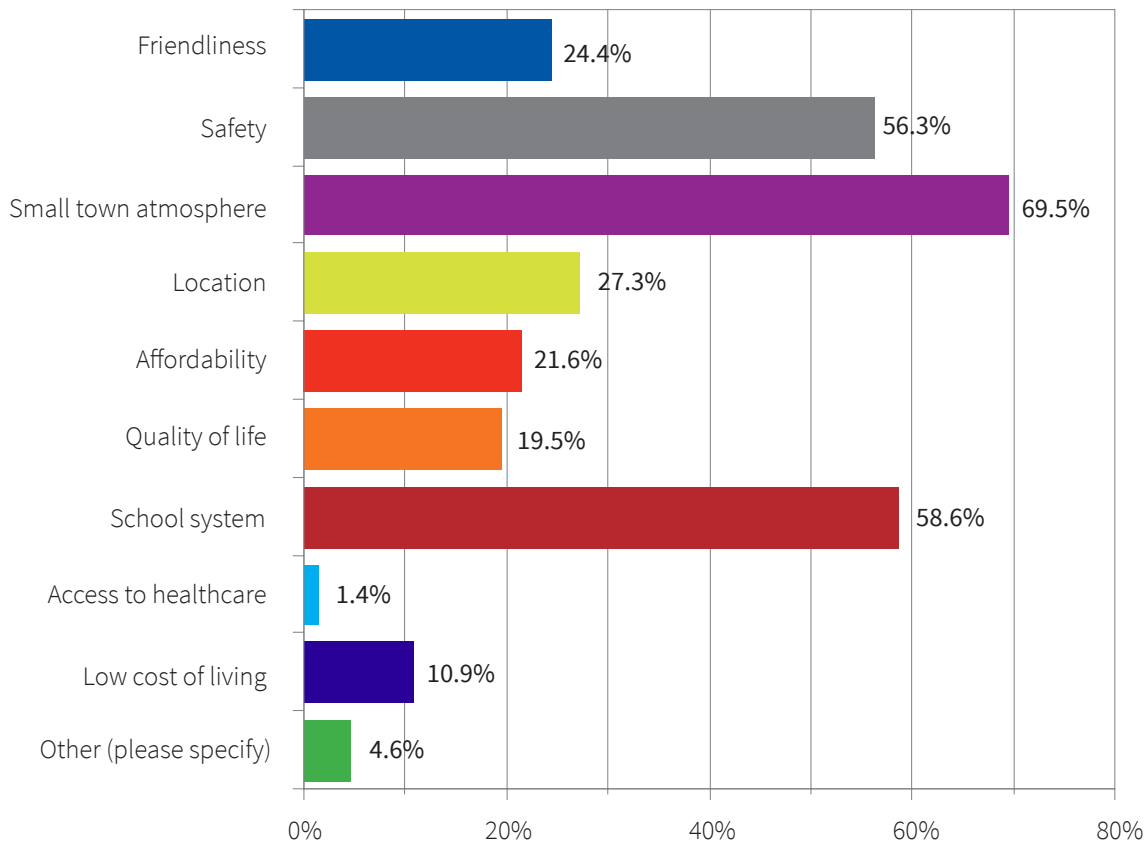
Number of comments: 81

Number of respondents: 347; one skipped this question

- Twenty-four (24) miles north of the Broadway bridge. North of Kansas City between I-29 & I-35. Less than 10 minutes from KCI; 25 miles south of St Joseph. North on Hwy 169 (in between Platte City & Kearney).
- Far away. A suburb on the north side of the Kansas City, Mo. border. North of the Northland. Take 169 north until you run into it. Fifteen to twenty (15 – 20) minutes north of the old Metro North Mall between Worlds of Fun and the airport off 435 & 169 Highway.

## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Q10: Residents of Smithville are most attracted to which of the following? (Select up to three choices.)**



**Top common themes aggregated from Q10. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.**

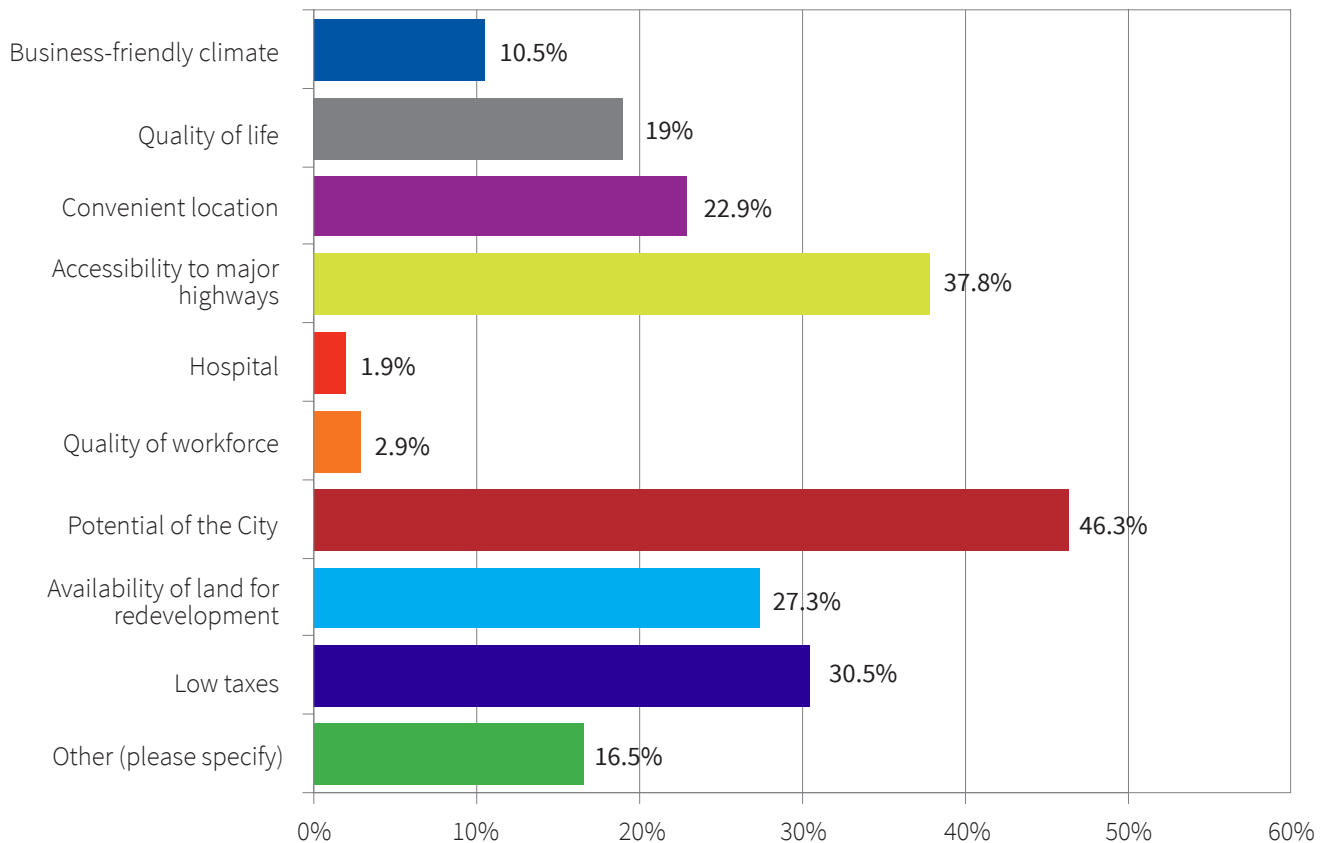
Number of comments: 81

Number of respondents: 348; zero skipped this question

- The natural beauty of the area is Smithville's biggest asset and draw. The lake, trails and gorgeous countryside. The lack of crime. If you bring in industry to increase revenue and population density, you will destroy the safety and natural assets.
- Escape the congested traffic in the original Northland with aging housing areas and lower income residents. School system would be even better if administrators lived in the community. They're much more likely to make better decisions if they're forced to live within the community they serve.

## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Q11: Most businesses are attracted to Smithville due to which of the following? (Select up to three choices.)**



**Top common themes aggregated from Q11. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.**

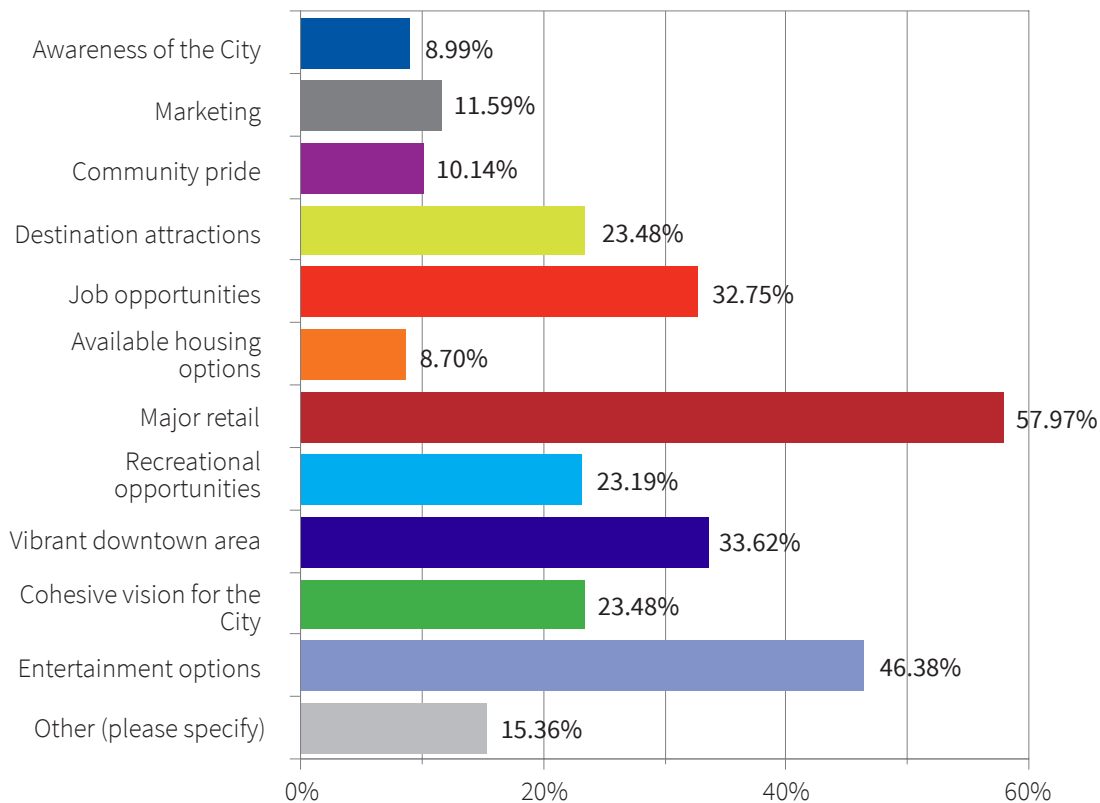
Number of comments: 52

Number of respondents: 315; 33 skipped this question

- There are hardly any businesses here. We do not have a business-friendly climate. The fear of the Smithville school tax increase that was voted down last year will be brought up again. There is nothing here in Smithville for much of any business and the City doesn't want any new business in town. Cost of rent/purchase.
- School system. Less competition. I would think the population of the town and the incomes represented would draw businesses in. A need for what they offer and sell. Businesses would be smart to locate in Smithville, because the growth potential is incredible. People are flocking to Smithville to escape the crowded mess to the south. There are some serious opportunities and not a lot of competition is in town yet. We just have to be welcoming to it.

## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

### Q12: What is missing in Smithville? (Select up to three choices.)



### Top common themes aggregated from Q12. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.

Number of comments: 53

Number of respondents: 345; three skipped this question

- Realistically you could have checked “all of the above.” It’s hard to have pride when the area around downtown is not kept up. We need nice places for people to go and have nice meals and conversations. We need nearly everything on the list. First, we need to clean up the place.
- Smithville is missing everything. A cohesive vision for the City and entertainment options, too. Better rural roads. Community services. A drugstore that is open when we get back into town from working in the city. Community center/community pool. A great town as is. Leadership. Another school. Better park system. More restaurants, fast food choices.



# Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

## Q13: Please rate the following community attributes.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent	Total	Weighted Average	
Friendly community	2.91% 10	7.85% 27	23.84% 82	38.37% 132	27.03% 93	344	3.79	
Diversity	18.10% 61	37.09% 125	29.38% 99	10.68% 36	4.75% 16	337	2.47	
Safety	0.88% 3	2.05% 7	13.45% 46	38.60% 132	45.03% 154	342	4.25	
Entertainment/nightlife	58.94% 201	28.45% 97	10.85% 37	0.59% 2	1.17% 4	341	1.57	
Quality of schools	1.18% 4	5.29% 18	19.71% 67	41.76% 142	32.06% 109	337	1.97	
Arts and culture	34.72% 117	39.76% 134	19.88% 67	4.75% 16	0.89% 3	331	2.20	
Restaurants	24.49% 84	38.78% 144	25.95% 89	9.04% 31	1.75% 6	343	2.25	
Community pride	5.26% 18	14.04% 48	28.36% 97	35.38% 121	16.96% 58	342	3.45	
Affordable cost of living	3.22% 11	14.04% 48	42.40% 145	27.78% 95	12.57% 43	342	3.32	
Great place to raise a family	0.87% 3	5.25% 18	20.99% 72	34.69% 119	38.19% 131	343	4.04	
Intercultural interaction	36.39% 123	32.54% 110	22.19% 75	6.80% 23	2.07% 7	338	2.06	
Recreation opportunities	15.54% 53	19.94% 68	26.39% 90	21.11% 72	17.01% 58	341	3.04	
Distinct identity	17.11% 58	27.73% 94	33.63% 114	14.75% 50	6.78% 23	339	2.66	
Healthcare	14.71% 50	31.18% 106	35.88% 122	14.12% 48	4.12% 14	340	2.62	
Retail	51.61% 176	34.60% 118	10.26% 35	2.93% 10	0.59% 2	341	1.66	
Community events	15.29% 52	30.88% 105	34.41% 117	15.59% 53	3.82% 13	340	2.62	
Strength of City leadership	21.18% 72	32.94% 112	29.12% 99	13.53% 46	3.24% 11	340	2.45	
Vibrant downtown	33.24% 114	39.94% 137	19.53% 67	5.54% 19	1.75% 6	343	2.03	
Appearance of the City	15.79% 54	31.29% 107	30.99% 106	16.96% 58	4.97% 17	342	2.64	
Volunteerism	15.36% 51	28.31% 94	39.76% 132	11.45% 38	5.12% 17	332	2.63	

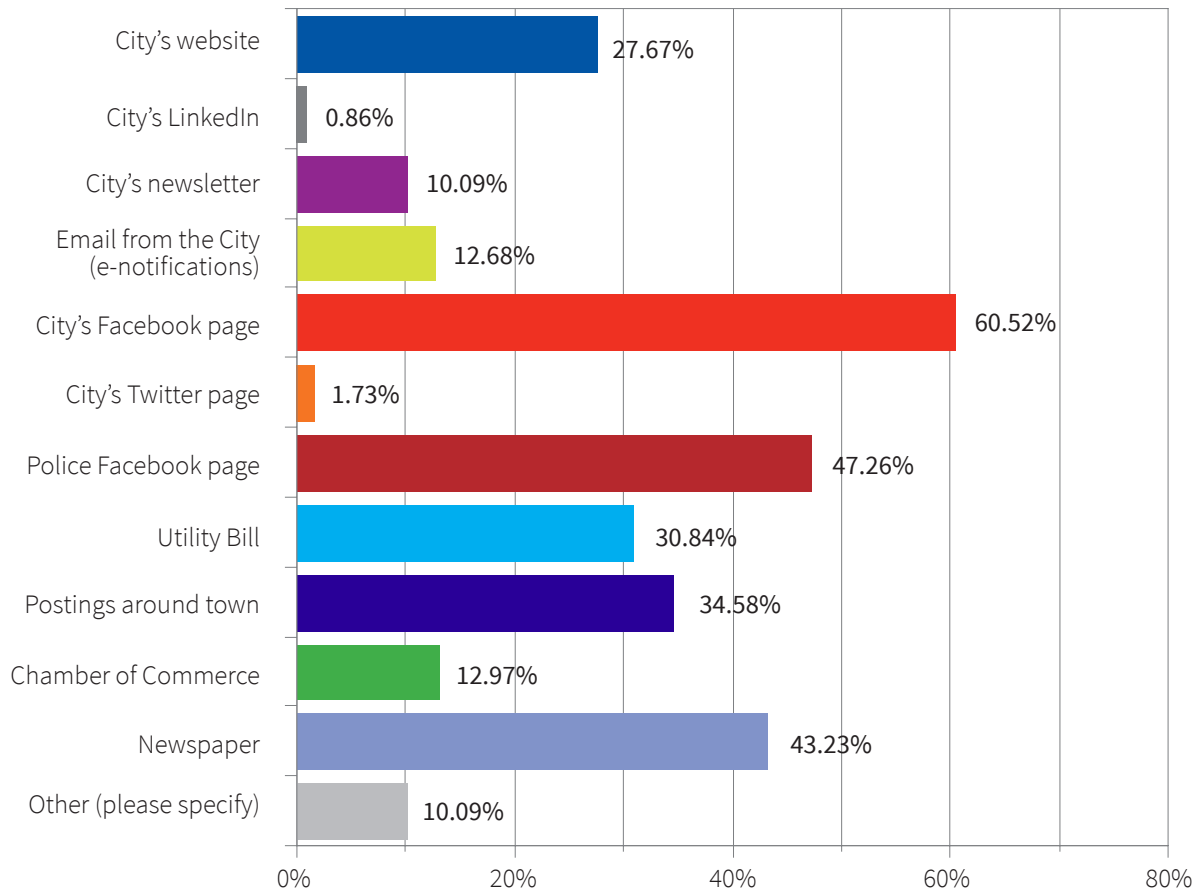
## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

### Q14: Please rate the following business attributes.

	Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good	Excellent	Total	Weighted Average	
Access to major highways	0.88% 3	2.92% 10	35.09% 120	32.75% 112	28.36% 97	342	3.85	
Support for small businesses	7.58% 25	24.55% 81	46.36% 153	16.67% 55	4.85% 16	330	2.87	
Collaboration among businesses	5.61% 18	28.66% 92	50.47% 162	10.90% 35	4.36% 14	321	2.80	
Business-friendly climate	8.87% 29	27.83% 91	42.81% 140	15.60% 51	4.89% 16	327	2.80	
Convenient location	1.76% 6	10.29% 35	46.47% 158	27.65% 94	13.82% 47	340	3.41	
Attracting and retaining young professionals	19.64% 65	48.94% 162	24.77% 82	5.44% 18	1.21% 4	331	2.20	
Employment opportunities	29.25% 98	53.73% 180	14.63% 49	1.49% 5	0.90% 3	335	1.91	
Entrepreneurial environment	15.85% 52	46.65% 153	32.32% 106	4.27% 14	0.91% 3	328	2.28	
Awareness of business strengths by those outside of Smithville	30.42% 101	46.08% 153	20.18% 67	2.71% 9	0.60% 2	332	1.97	
Skilled workforce	10.94% 36	27.36% 90	45.90% 151	12.46% 41	3.34% 11	329	2.70	

## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Q15: How do you get news about events and other things happening in Smithville? (Select all that apply.)**



**Q16: Are there other ways in which you would like to receive news about Smithville?**

**Top common themes aggregated from Q16. To see all unedited comments, please refer to the Appendix.**

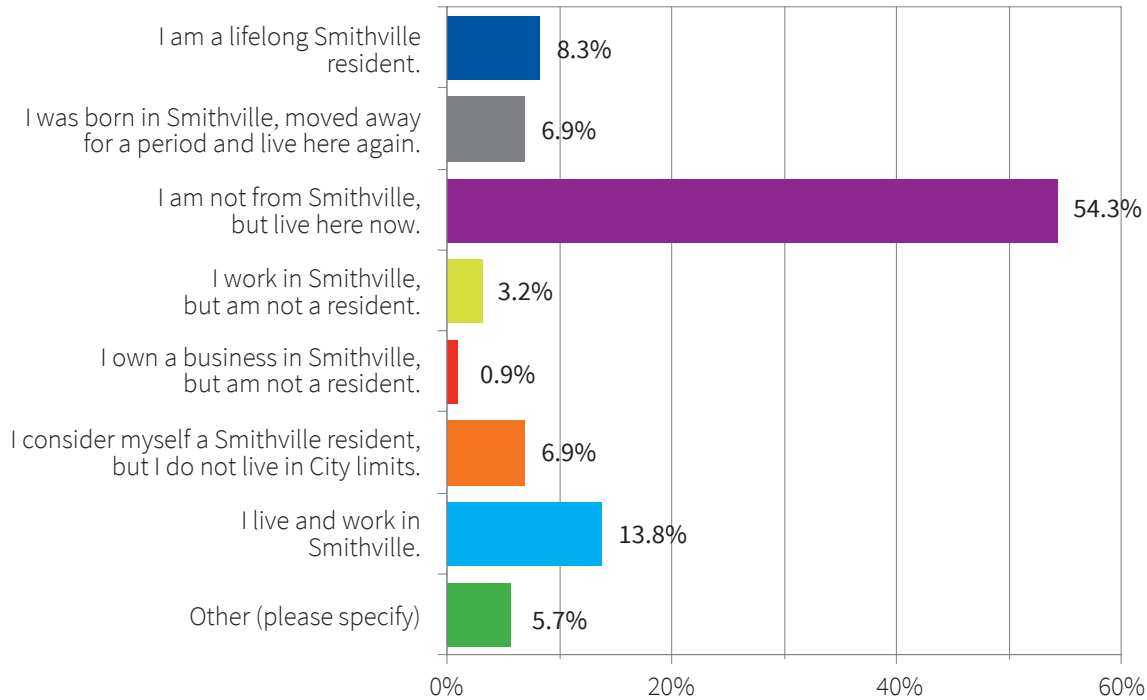
Number of comments: 57

Number of respondents: 57; 291 skipped this question

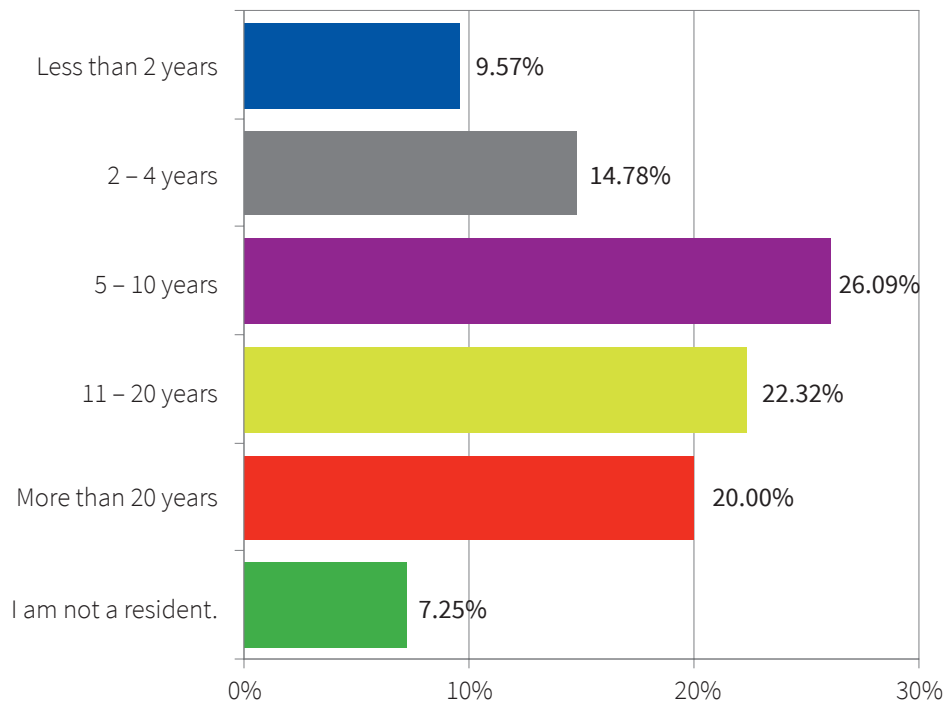
- Maybe an event calendar by City Hall. Collaborate with the schools and send information through their resources. Billboards possibly north of Second Creek Road on 169 announcing big city events. Texting, emails, quarterly newsletters, direct mail, Facebook and a local flyer at Price Chopper.

## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

### Q17: Which option best describes your relationship with Smithville?

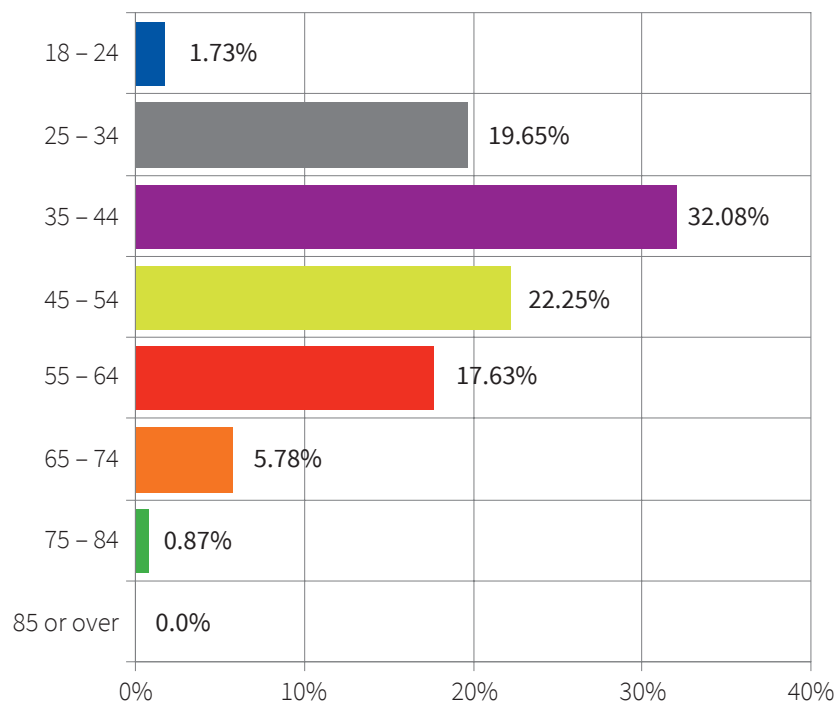


### Q18: If you are a resident of Smithville, how long have you lived here?

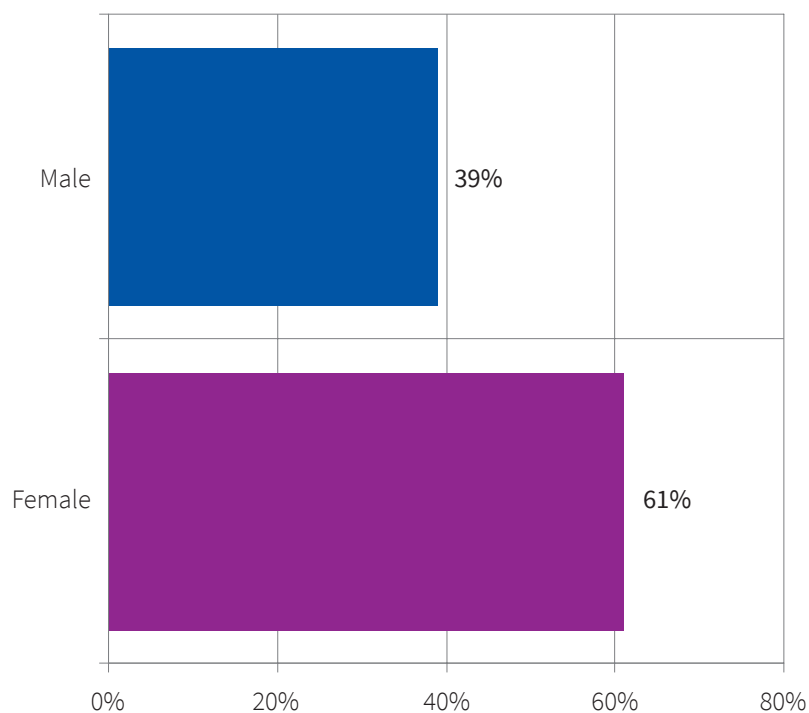


## Research and Discovery: *Citizen and Key Stakeholder Vision Survey*

**Q19: Please indicate your age.**



**Q20: What is your gender?**



## Research and Discovery: *Community Insights SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)*

### *Strengths*

Research regularly revealed that Smithville offers an enviable quality of life in the Kansas City metropolitan area. A safe community with an excellent school district, the activities in and around Smithville Lake, proximity to the greater Kansas City area, along with access to major highways impacts the high regard for the community's quality of life.

Safety and friendliness are among the top community attributes with affordability, the school district and the small-town atmosphere as key decision points considered when choosing to live in Smithville.

A well-managed, affordable living city with such high quality of life factors is particularly compelling for economic development and business attraction interests as they choose where to relocate their company and employees or where to grow their enterprise. The community is poised for growth, particularly in the restaurant and retail industries. However, many residents define retail as mid-sized retailers and most in the community understand more business is needed to level the tax base. Big-box retailers may diminish the small town atmosphere — a compelling reason many choose to live in Smithville.

Although a perception exists that Smithville is far away or defined by Smithville Lake, as well as being lumped into the “Northland,” it is actually very accessible via downtown Kansas City and the greater metro area. The community also enjoys accessibility to all major retailers and dining options in neighboring cities — Liberty and Platte City — and has ideal proximity to the airport.

There is a strong desire by many in the community for change. Change is needed in the vision of how the community is seen by others (especially young families) and amongst each other. Consistent communication will help bridge the gap between the “old guard” and the “new.” The survey indicated there are several key population segments who are interested in being more involved in the community. There is also a strong desire for the school district to retain its standard of excellence.

Many stakeholders view the City as having enormous potential in attracting, retaining and expanding businesses because of its accessibility, available land for redevelopment and because of the personality of the community.

We learned that Smithville is comprised of residents and businesses with a strong sense of community, focused less on self and status, than perhaps others in the metro area. Many have great community pride and most residents surveyed selected to live in Smithville for its quality-of-life factors and natural beauty.

## Research and Discovery: *Community Insights SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)*

### *Weaknesses*

No community is without challenges. We learned about respondents' concern for the lack of quality housing, which attracts a younger demographic bringing families and new opportunity to the community. There is also a significant lack of amenities for younger residents and children outside of the school district, with particular concern about City parks and not enough Parks and Recreation programs. Smithville's weak promotion of itself and lack of consistent communication has frustrated some.

Research pointed to a few immediate concerns expressed by community stakeholders including, apathy or lack of innovation by some at the City (staff and elected officials) and residents, the need for more residential housing options, more entertainment, and more retail and dining options. The majority of stakeholders surveyed are concerned that although Smithville has leaders who want to improve the community, there is a small group of citizens who continue to hold the community back. Seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents selected, "Fear of change/no growth attitude" as one of three choices for the question, "What is the greatest challenge currently facing Smithville?". This is validated by the failed passing of two school district bond issues along with an emergency services request for tax increase and several possible economic development projects that were unsuccessful for varying reasons, some out of the City's control.

Some respondents believe that many who serve on the Board of Aldermen do not believe that Smithville needs to change. A few comments indicated that some Aldermen are visibly unseen in the community and some believe that several Aldermen purposely vote down opportunities that provide the possibility for change. Other comments indicate that many who hold leadership positions in the community do not have a global view of the development success that many of Smithville's neighboring communities have had in the last decade. There is a growing frustration by some who would classify themselves as the "new guard." Generally, those surveyed acknowledge needing balance between keeping Smithville a small town, while growing intelligently.

Even though Smithville enjoys a small amount of charm in its downtown area, the primary entryway to Smithville on Highway 169 is undefined and lacks inviting aesthetic. The consensus of many is that several parts of the community, as well as residential homes around the downtown area need cleaning up.

Respondents also shared their concern about the need for broadening the tax base by attracting new businesses in order to gain the amenities they desire, and more critically, keeping the school district properly funded.

Like many communities, addressing and solving weaknesses is a significant challenge.

## Research and Discovery: *Community Insights SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)*

### *Opportunities*

Smithville's opportunities are rooted in its greatest strengths: accessibility and desire for growth. The quality of life factors will continue to attract the residential tax base, but the opportunity for economic development improvement is higher than most communities in the area. Using the tools available to the City to elevate its location, sites and buildings, along with communication with key economic developer influencers will create an environment for development to occur.

Participation and promotion of Smithville, particularly by the energetic next generation of residents, needs to be thoughtful, loud and frequent. The community can spur change by engaging with those residents and community partners (Chamber of Commerce, religious groups, civic clubs and school district) who want change and will help to make it happen.

Increasing promotion of the City and implementing consistent communications in the mediums where citizens consume information may help solve frustration, confusion and negativity. Smithville Lake is also an emerging key theme of opportunity from the results of the survey, as both a recreational asset, as well as an economic development and visitor attraction.

A key element many seek is growth and betterment of the community. By taking the brand journey, Smithville is taking the first steps to continue to build the right environment for growth.

### *Threats*

Respondents indicate Smithville's greatest threat is people in the community itself, primarily the attitudes of some who have a fear of change or an anti-growth philosophy. It is critical for growth to occur in Smithville, however, the gap between the majority of citizens surveyed who want growth, and the small group of citizens who don't, needs to be addressed. This attitudinal threat will never allow for Smithville to intelligently grow and diversify the tax base.

Additionally, the threat of non-engagement with next generation leadership is concerning for the future of Smithville. There is a critical need for emerging leaders to engage with the City and the opportunity to serve in elected positions. Change in Smithville will not occur if the community continues to have elected leaders who don't share in the same pro-growth/change philosophy as the majority of the survey respondents. By increasing communication and engagement with citizens, growth can be achieved by marketing and promoting Smithville's economic development assets using channels that have a broader reach.

Primary threats for economic development include Liberty, Platte City and Kearney, yet residential threats are few because of Smithville's small-town, quality-of-life factors, and the desire for some to live in a community that has such a value system.

The challenges and threats inherent to attracting investment and development/redevelopment is rooted in the past. Previous City leaders stunted Smithville's growth by past decisions. Still, the community is ready and has the opportunity to become a "small city." While City management is seen as mostly cooperative, many surveyed feel that policymakers in Smithville make conservative decisions and push personal agendas on topics of progress that impede growth. What's more, the current economic climate nationally is a threat to every community.



## Insights and Conclusions

### **Smithville cannot be everything to everyone.**

It does not work to try and meet everyone's needs all of the time, especially when Smithville is competing with other communities with larger City budgets. There are two clear resident segments in Smithville — those who want growth and those who will do what they can to prevent it. This puts Smithville at a concerning crossroads.

### **Narrow the focus.**

Smithville needs to find more channels of communication to reach a diverse population. The perceived lack of communication from City Hall frustrates those who are interested in engaging with the community and hinder the City's ability to identify next generation leadership. Better communication will help City Hall build a singular voice that is consistent and cohesive.

Intelligent economic development is a high priority for the community. The City must find a way to use existing partners and resources to initiate an economic development strategy that has a realistic view of what industry and business sectors fit the community.

Once the strategy is in place, internal City departments and elected officials must unify to support the plan and implement it.

### **Differentiate.**

Smithville has the opportunity to differentiate itself from competitive communities with one clear message disseminated broadly and frequently.

Smithville has several unique assets; however, the reason why people choose to live in Smithville is its greatest — small town, friendly atmosphere, wide open spaces, access to lake-related activities and close proximity to major interstates. The majority of Smithville citizens surveyed want to find a way to balance the small-town value system with economic development progress.

Smithville's neighboring communities have lost their uniqueness by attracting templated big-box retail centers and entertainment venues. Unlike those neighboring communities, the majority of Smithville citizens surveyed do not have that desire. This differentiation factor gives Smithville the ability to communicate its unique position to key economic development influencers and potential residents who are seeking a more authentic community experience. Smithville is suited for tailor-made economic development projects.

## Insights and Conclusions

### Smithville has potential.

Many citizens believe the potential for Smithville is great only if there is change. The community believes there is potential to enhance quality of life factors like healthy lifestyle amenities and mid-sized retailers and restaurants. Others view potential as leveraging the lake as a dynamic tourism asset for the City's tax benefit. Many see the potential of overcoming funding challenges to ensure the school district not only survives; but thrives.

The potential can only be realized if the community can unify. If Smithville does not find a way to connect citizens of all generations through communication, education and engagement, it will remain stagnant and the tax base will increase at a slower rate.

### Smithville residents are concerned about the future of the community.

The majority of citizens surveyed are primarily concerned and frustrated by the overall lack of economic development progress in Smithville. There is also a general concern about the lack of support to fund the school district appropriately, as well as limited code enforcement around the downtown area.

Other dominant concerns relate to City government and elected officials. Current and past attitudes by some on the Board of Aldermen and City Staff have sent a strong and clear message to the community that there is no desire for growth or change. Regardless of the validity of these concerns and frustrations, it is a general community view and perception shared by many.

This perception is largely advanced because Smithville has a small, older-citizen segment who opposes change. As local voting trends indicate, this citizen segment doesn't generally support tax increases of any kind.

Conversely, Smithville has a large newer citizen population segment with a strong desire for progress and the greatest concern for the community's future. This group is comprised of young, working family households with children in the school district.

Although this large segment of the population is present, it will be a challenge to find ways to engage them in civic or political endeavors because of their family and career commitments.

Engagement with this group is a critical step in resolving opposition voter trends. The City of Smithville cannot be solely responsible for finding the solution to connect, engage and motivate the community. However, it must play an active role in working to better communicate and educate this target segment through its community partners.

# Insights and Conclusions

## Brand Insights

Smithville was compared to Cities of a similar size that participated in the same research methodology to identify a community brand. The results of the survey indicate a higher level of participation and engagement rate.

- Using the current population which is estimated at 8,954, the overall citizen participation rate was just below 5% (.046). Typically, a less than 1% participation rate is expected.
- Comparatively, the voter turnout rate at the last General Municipal Election (with three Alderman Wards on the ballot), the voter turnout rate was less than one percent (.012).
- The voter turnout rate at the Smithville R-II Bond Election November, 2014 was just below 42% (.419) with 311 determining the vote.

The community brand will be part of a long-term strategy, and it will need strong champions to pioneer the effort. There are three killers to any community brand:

1. Local politics
2. Lack of champions
3. Lack of money, both public and private

Community brands should represent the personality of the community. It is the promise of what people can expect when they are in Smithville. Branding is not a cure-all; it is just one part of a clear focus that the community can rally behind.

The brand will avoid words and phrases such as “conveniently located”, “inviting”, “safe” and “small town atmosphere”. These terms are overused and trite.

Smithville must tell its own authentic story using words and phrases that uniquely describe the community experience.

If you can plug in any other town name into your headline and it still works, you’ve got trouble.