

# BRAINERD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY MEMO



Date: September 17, 2018  
To: City Staff, Steering Committee Members, Planning Commission and City Council  
From: A.Kaisershot; Planning Team  
Re: Survey Responses from Community Survey #1

A community survey was available for approximately six weeks between July 3, 2018 and September 17, 2018. **A total of 633 people completed the online survey.** The survey was available in electronic format and hard copy. The e-survey was available through the project's website, City of Brainerd website, as well as a variety of partner and stakeholder platforms. The hard copies were available at city hall and a variety of other partner locations. The community survey studied two primary areas: *community character* and *livability*. The following is a summary of key themes identified from the responses received.

General definitions:

**Community character** refers to the distinct identity of a place. It is the collective impression a neighborhood or town makes on residents and visitors.

A **livable community** is one that is safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and has supportive community features and services.

The purpose of identifying elements of *livability* and *community character* was to study the physical and social aspects of the city through the eyes of the residents. These components will be used to advance the work of the city's vision and provide the necessary feedback to inform the outcomes of our community visioning session.

**Evaluation and assessment of the community survey reveals a common set of themes where residents would like to maintain the following characteristics:**

- **RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES**  
Residents value their location to area lakes, trail networks, and natural features. Survey respondents see "access" to these amenities as one of the most important aspects of their community.
- **NATURAL RESOURCES**  
Survey respondents noted their passion for improving the natural resources within the city, championing the Mississippi River, and supporting opportunities and expansion of amenities in the general area.
- **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**  
ISD 181 and Central Lakes College were noted as significant community assets.
- **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**  
Respondents noted their support for ongoing efforts to improve the social, physical, and economic components of the downtown.
- **COMMUNITY BRANDING AND BRAINERD HISTORY**  
Survey respondents seek to celebrate Brainerd's history specifically when it comes to historic buildings and neighborhoods.

## **Survey respondents identified a list of areas where change is desired:**

### **BLIGHT AND VACANCIES**

Blighted houses and vacant storefronts play a role in the image of the community. Respondents support efforts to enhance and revitalize neighborhoods, fill or occupy vacant storefronts, and improve the gateway corridors and main arterials into (and throughout) the city.

### **PROVIDE ADEQUATE JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

Noted as the leading area where improvement is needed, 48 percent of survey respondents voiced the importance of improving “high-quality/high-income employment opportunities.” Respondents seek ways to improve and provide adequate employment offerings for a variety of income levels. A diverse economy provides a wealth of investments and employment opportunities. Survey respondents support a concerted effort to support existing businesses to expand employment opportunities and attract new businesses to the city.

### **PROVIDE A SUITABLE RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS**

Survey participants seek an array of housing options that meet their income, size, and quality needs. Various concerns were voiced on the quality of rental units and concerns with the inventory of available units within the city. Safe, well-maintained housing is critical for Brainerd’s community character. Survey participants support a coordinated effort to address blight, improve housing conditions, and increase availability.

### **SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS**

Public safety is an essential component of the health and prosperity of Brainerd residents. Survey respondents noted that improved safety and lowering crime rates are the utmost important. Traditionally a comprehensive plan does not serve as a crime prevention plan, the contents can address socio and economic conditions behind crime and chemical dependency.

### **REHABILITATE DOWNTOWN**

Brainerd’s downtown plays an important role in the economic and social aspect of Brainerd’s identify. Survey respondents identified “rehabilitating the downtown” as one of the greatest concerns when it comes time to growth and development (46 percent). Respondents seek a collaborative approach to improving the physical, social, and economic condition of the downtown.

### **ATTRACTIVENESS**

Overall maintenance and community image play a large role in the community character of the city. Survey respondents see a collaborative effort to enforce city codes, address property maintenance violations, improve city gateways and visual appeal of the main corridors.