



ASHLAND DISCOVERY TOOL RESULTS

AUGUST 2014



Table of Contents

About the Discovery Tool..... 2

Ashland Discovery Tool Process..... 2

Community Vision, Sense of Place, Culture of Change, and Leadership 3

Infrastructure, Digitally Connected, Education/ Workforce IQ and Entrepreneurial Support
Systems 7

Community Uniqueness..... 11

Ashland Projects, Business Opportunities, and Educational Opportunities..... 11

Demographics 13

About the Entrepreneurial Community Activation Process (ECAP) 15

Appendix 1: Open-Ended Responses 16

 What makes your community a great place to live? 16

Appendix Table 1. Percent Rating Items as High Priority by Age



About the Discovery Tool

The Discovery Tool is an online tool developed to measure how residents view their community relative to the eight characteristics. Residents are asked to rate various dimensions of their community. For these items respondents rated each on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 denoted “not at all” and 5 indicated “completely.” Residents are also asked a couple open-ended questions about their community as well as some standard demographic questions that are used to make comparisons among community residents.

Ashland Discovery Tool Process

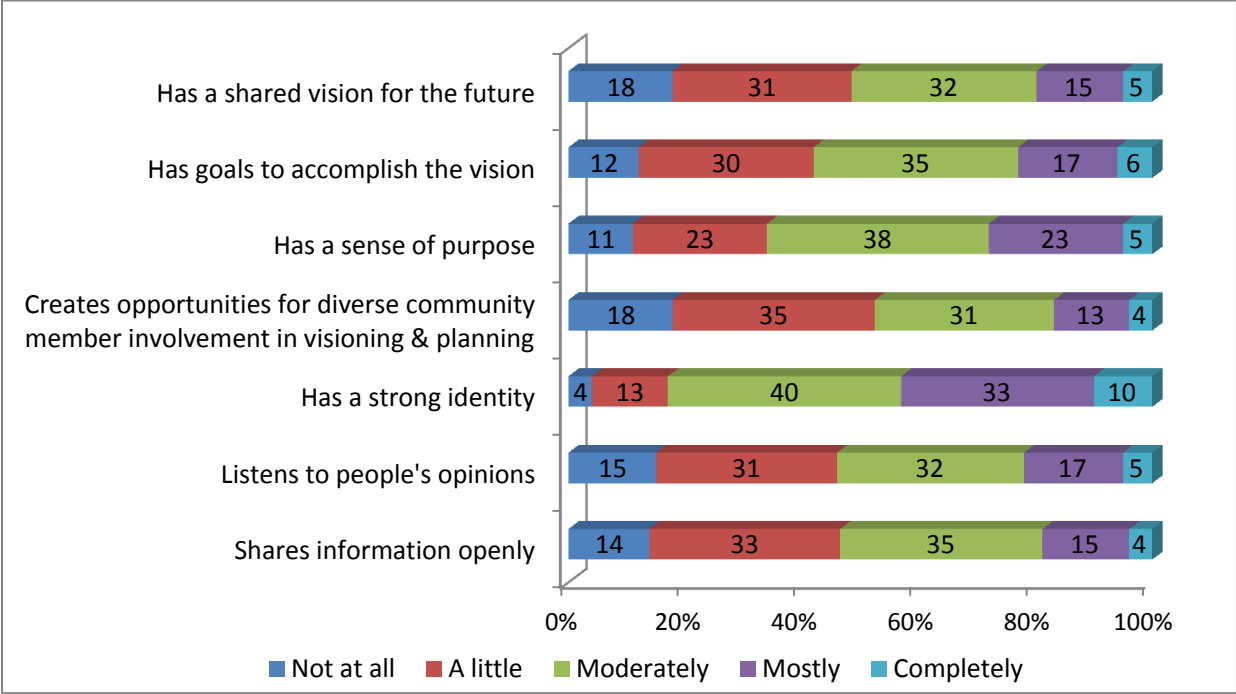
In Ashland, the online ECAP Discovery Tool was marketed to community residents through various sources. The residents also had the option of completing a paper copy of the survey. A total of 446 residents completed at least some of the community rating scales in the Discovery Tool – 374 completed it online and 72 returned completed paper surveys.

Community Vision, Sense of Place, Culture of Change, and Leadership

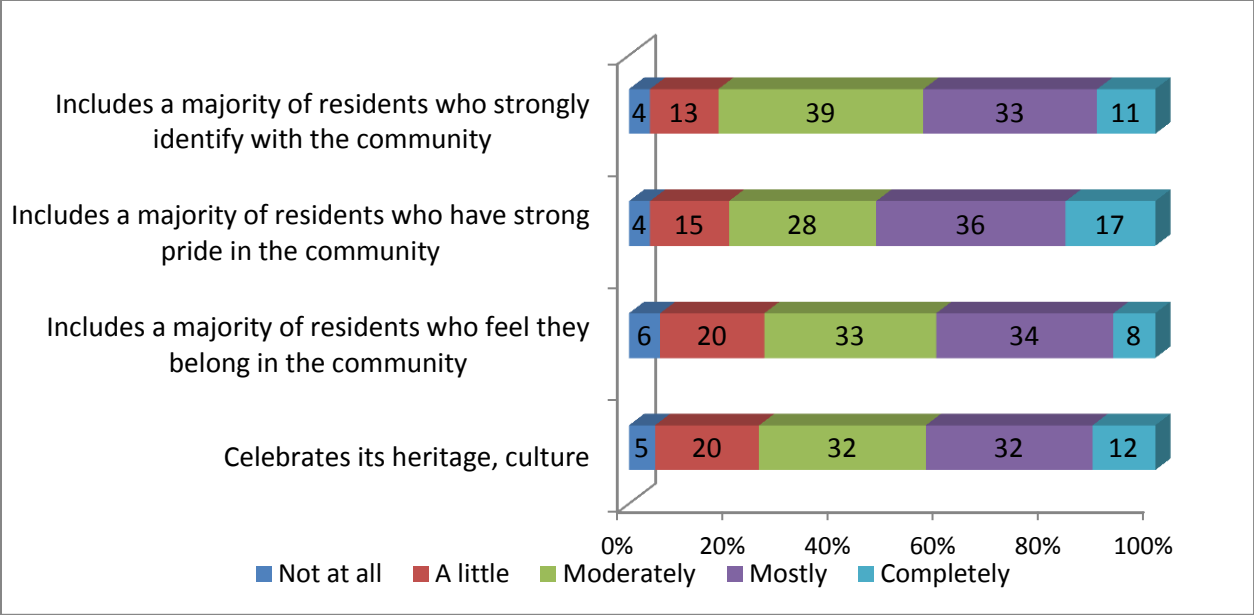
The community was rated by residents on 32 different dimensions, each using a five-point scale where 1 indicated “not at all” and 5 denoted “completely.” The responses to 18 of the dimensions are shown in the following charts.



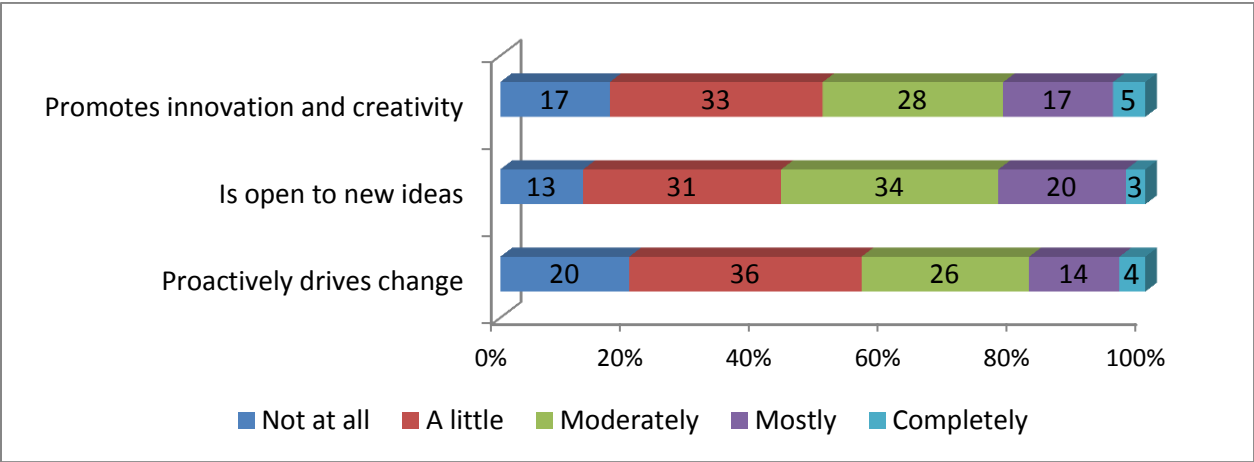
Over four in ten respondents believe that their community has a strong identity. And, just over one-quarter of the respondents think their community has a sense of purpose. However, less than one-quarter of the respondents believe the community creates opportunities for diverse community member involvement in visioning and planning processes, has a shared vision for the future, has goals to accomplish the vision, that the community listens to people’s opinions, and that it shares information openly.



Over one-half of the respondents believe their community has a majority of residents who have strong pride in the community. And, almost one-half of the respondents believe the community has a majority of residents who strongly identify with the community, that the community celebrates its heritage and culture, and has a majority of residents who feel they belong in the community.

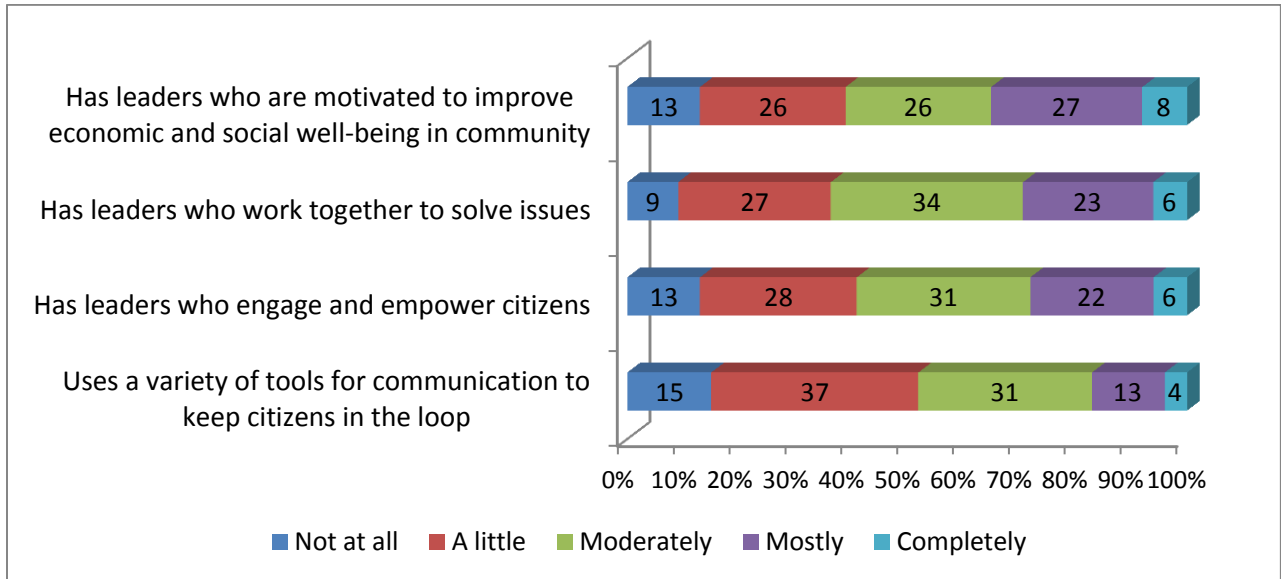


Less than one-quarter of the respondents believe the community is open to new ideas, that it promotes innovation and creativity, and that the community proactively drives change.



Over one-third of the respondents believe the community has leaders who are motivated to improve the economic and social well-being in the community. Over one-quarter of the respondents believe the community has leaders who work together to solve issues and leaders who engage and empower citizens. Less than one-quarter of the respondents believe that the community uses a variety of tools

for communication to keep citizens in the loop.



Demographic Differences

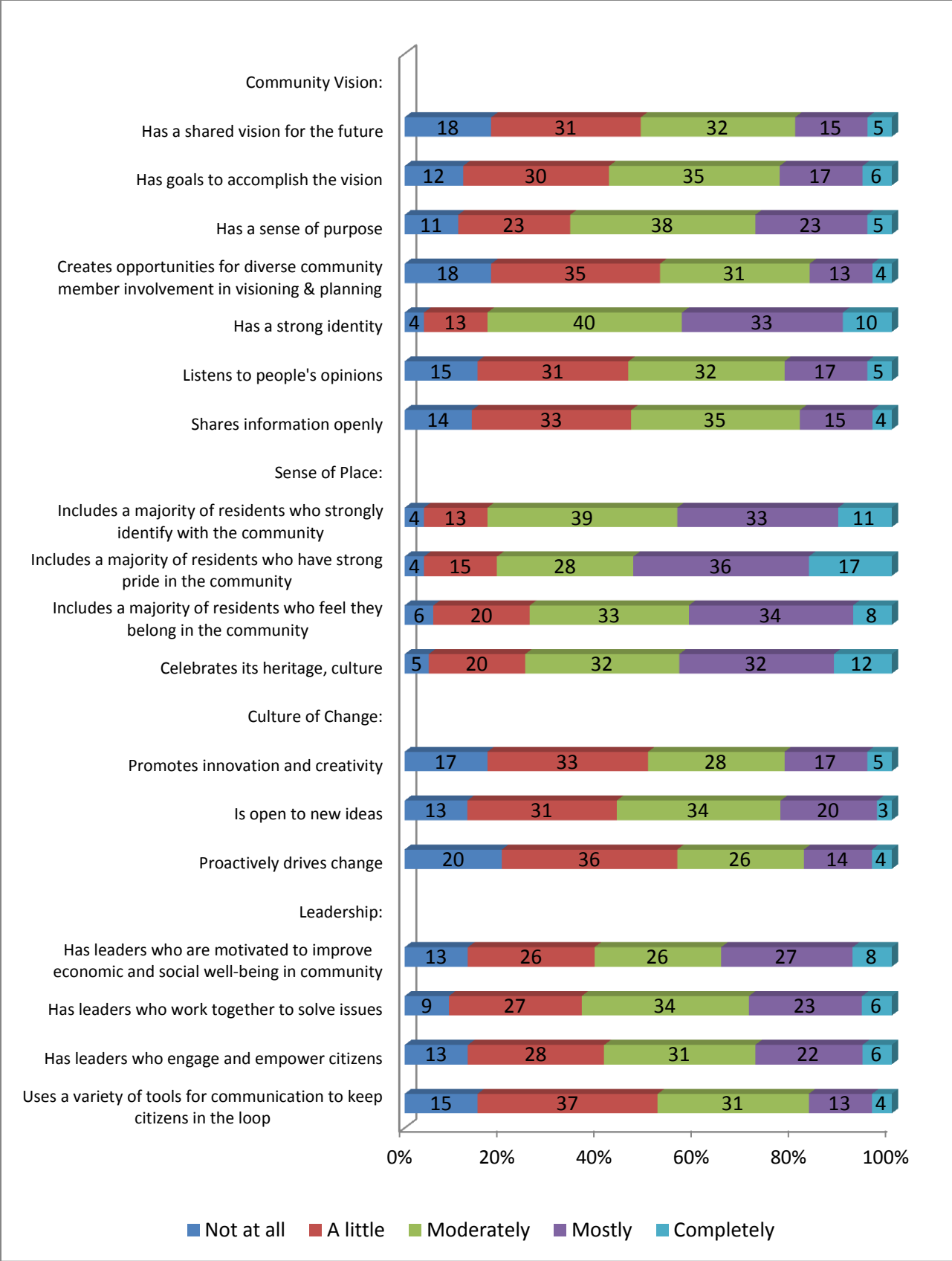
Statistically significant differences were detected for the following:

Age:

- Younger persons (under the age of 21) are more likely than older persons to believe the community includes a majority of residents who feel they belong in the community.
- Younger persons (under the age of 40) are more likely than older persons to believe the community has goals to accomplish the community vision and has leaders who work together to solve issues.
- Persons age 21 to 39 are the age group most likely to believe the community listens to people's opinions.

Education level:

- Persons with lower education levels are more likely than those with more education to believe the community promotes innovation and creativity and proactively drives change.

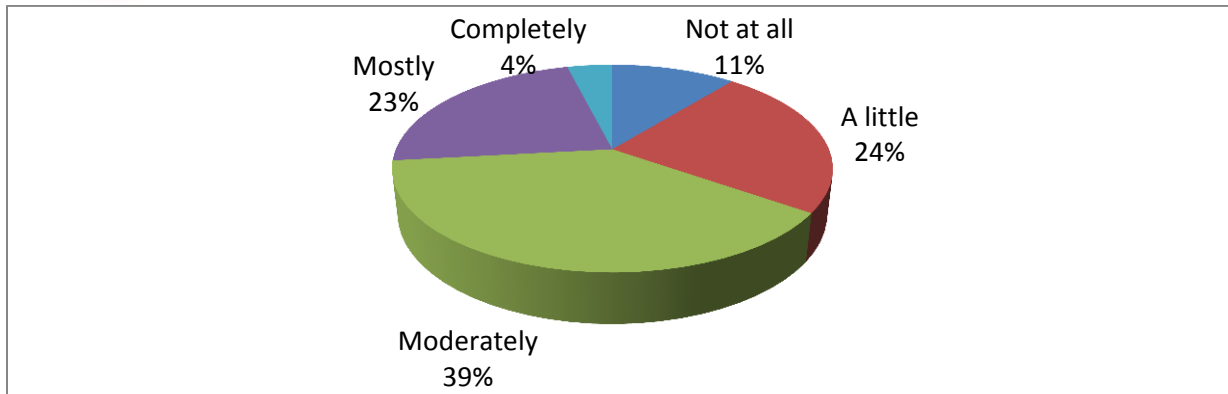


Infrastructure, Digitally Connected, Education/ Workforce IQ and Entrepreneurial Support Systems

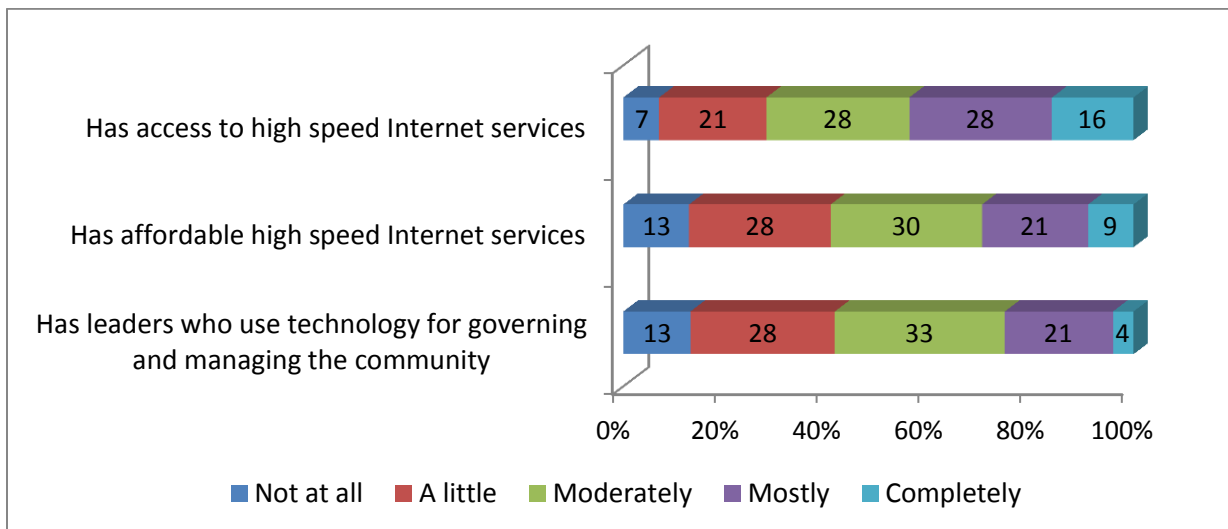
The responses to the remaining 14 community rating scales are shown in the following charts.



Almost one in three respondents believe the community provides and maintains adequate infrastructure for agriculture, business, manufacturing and industry.

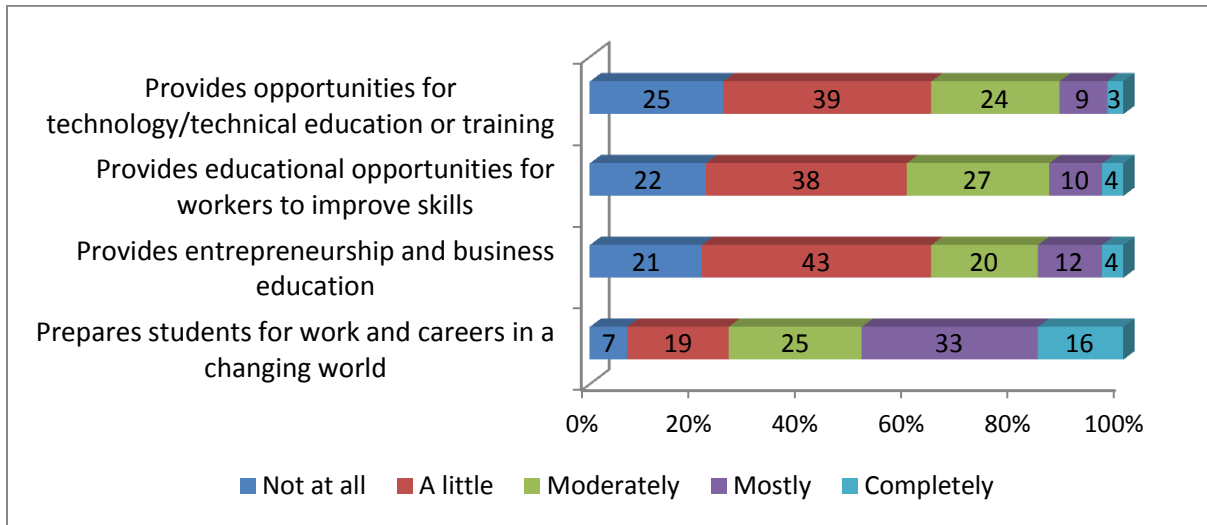


Over one-half of the respondents believe the community has access to high speed Internet services. Over one-quarter of the respondents believe the community has affordable high speed Internet services and has leaders who use technology for governing and managing the community.

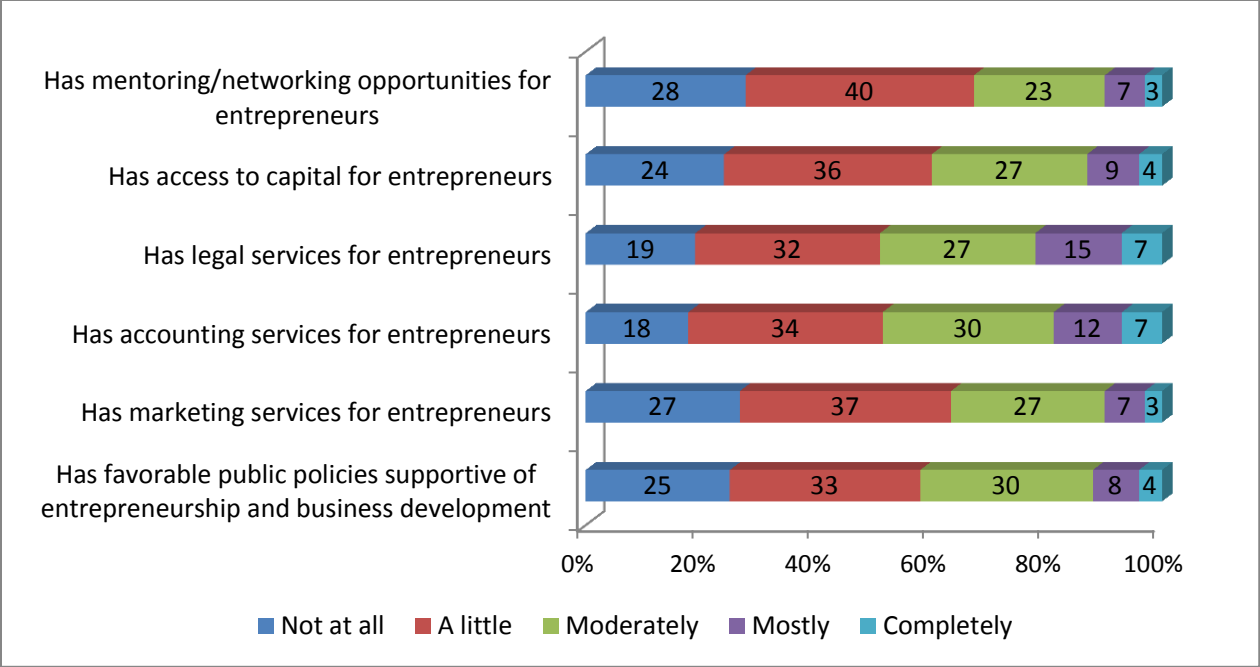




Almost one-half of the respondents believe the community prepares students for work and careers in a changing world. Less than two in ten respondents believe the community provides educational opportunities for workers to improve personal and job-related skills, provides opportunities for technology/technical education or training, and provides entrepreneurship and business education for youth and adults.



Less than one-quarter of the respondents believe the community does the following items: has mentoring and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs, has access to capital for entrepreneurs, has legal services for entrepreneurs, has accounting services for entrepreneurs, has marketing services for entrepreneurs, and has favorable public policies supportive of entrepreneurship and business development.



Demographic Differences

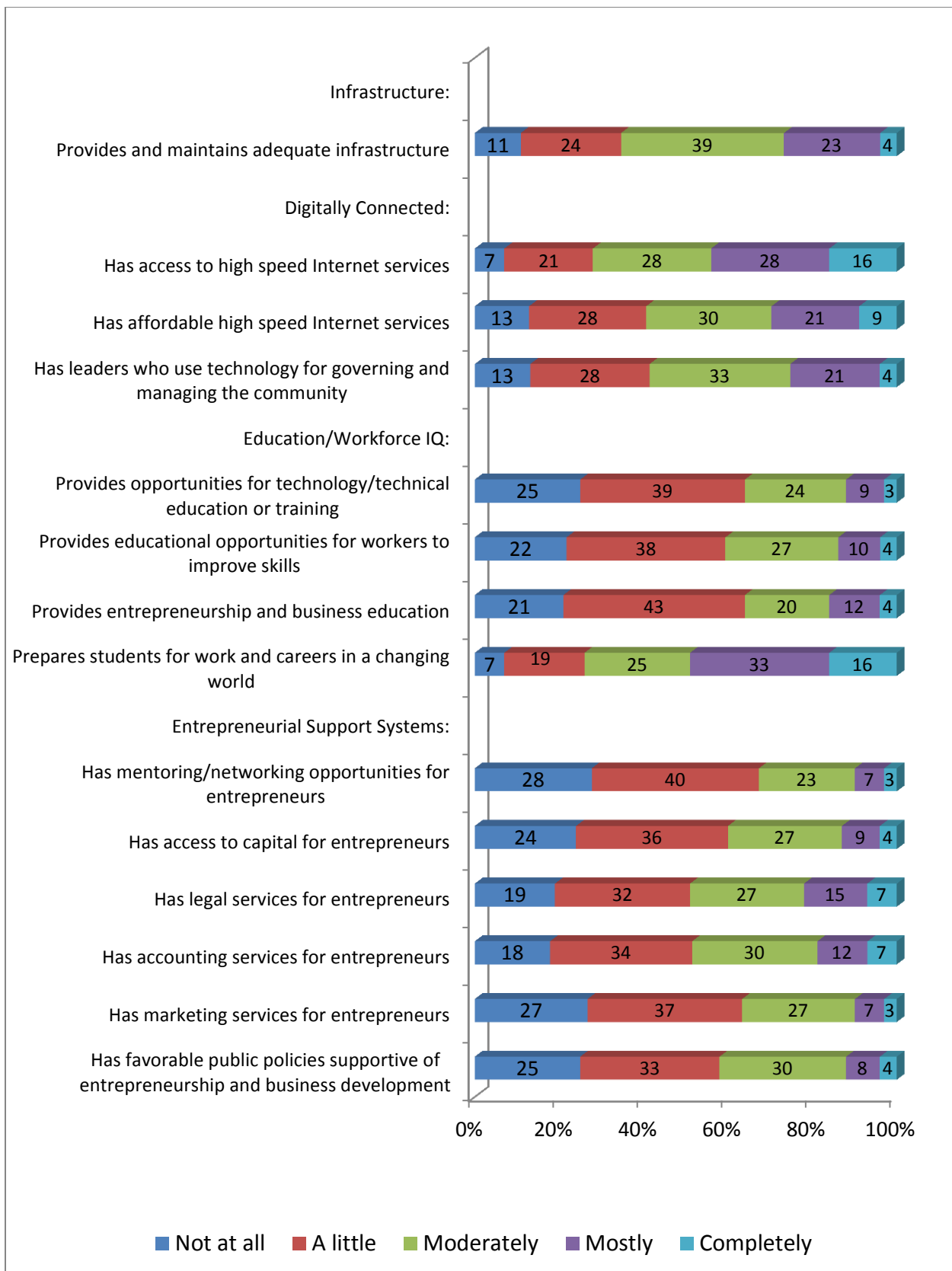
Statistically significant differences were detected for the following:

Age:

- Younger persons (under the age of 21) are more likely than older persons to believe the community provides and maintains adequate infrastructure for agriculture, business, manufacturing and industry; provides entrepreneurship and business education for youth and adults; has marketing services for entrepreneurs; and has favorable public policies supportive of entrepreneurship and business development.

Education level:

- Persons with lower education levels are more likely than those with more education to believe the community provides and maintains adequate infrastructure for agriculture, business, manufacturing and industry; provides opportunities for technology/technical education or training; has mentoring and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs; provides entrepreneurship and business education for youth and adults; has marketing services for entrepreneurs; and has favorable public policies supportive of entrepreneurship and business development.
- Persons with higher education levels are more likely than those with less education to believe the community prepares students for work and careers in a changing world.



Community Uniqueness

Respondents were asked what they see as the strengths and assets of Ashland. Comments were made by 336 of the respondents.

They were next asked what makes their community a great place to live. Comments were made by 290 of the respondents.

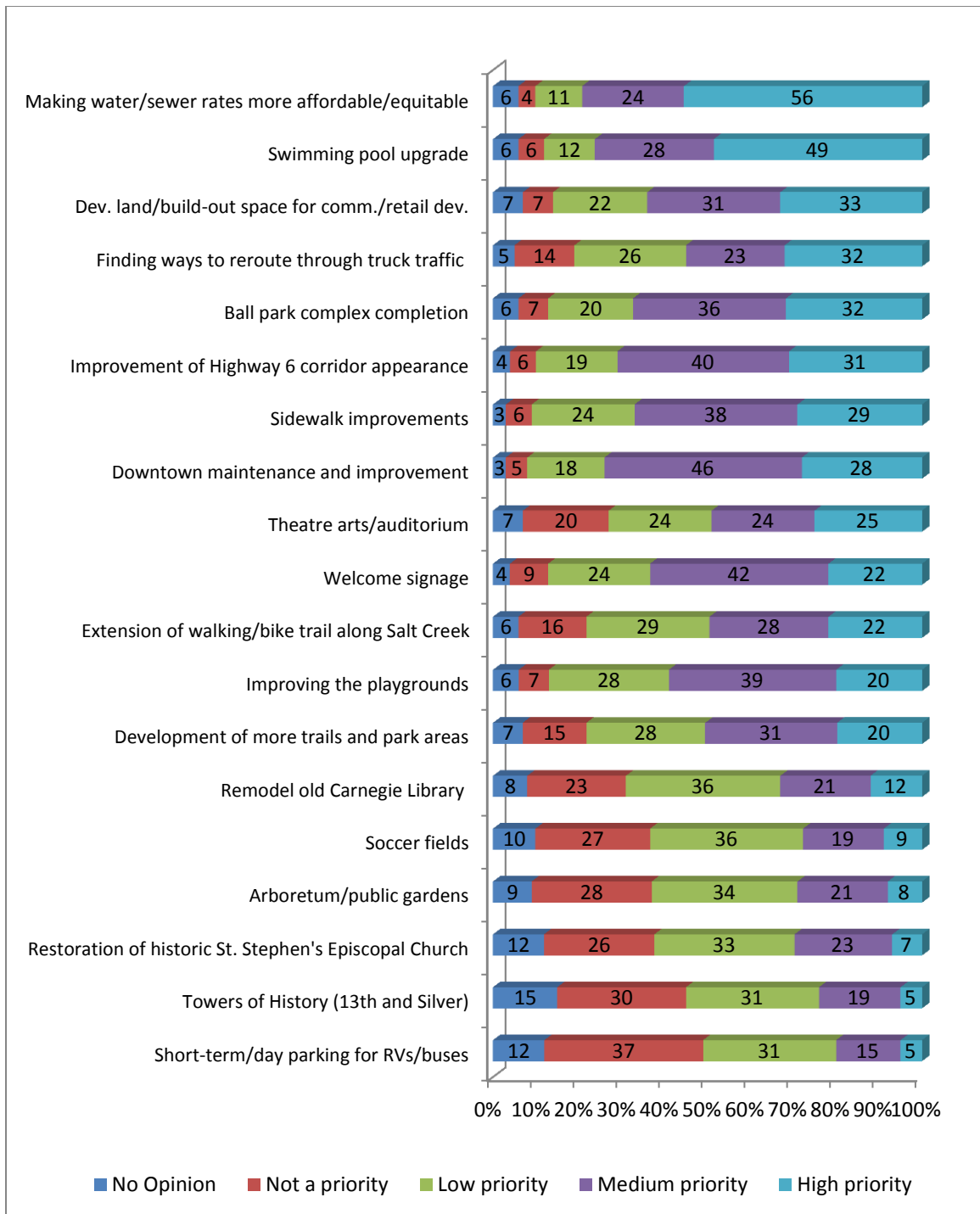
They were also asked how their community encourages economic growth. Comments were made by 214 of the respondents.

If respondents had moved to Ashland from another community, they were asked what brought them here. Comments were received from 257 respondents.

Ashland Projects, Business Opportunities and Educational Opportunities

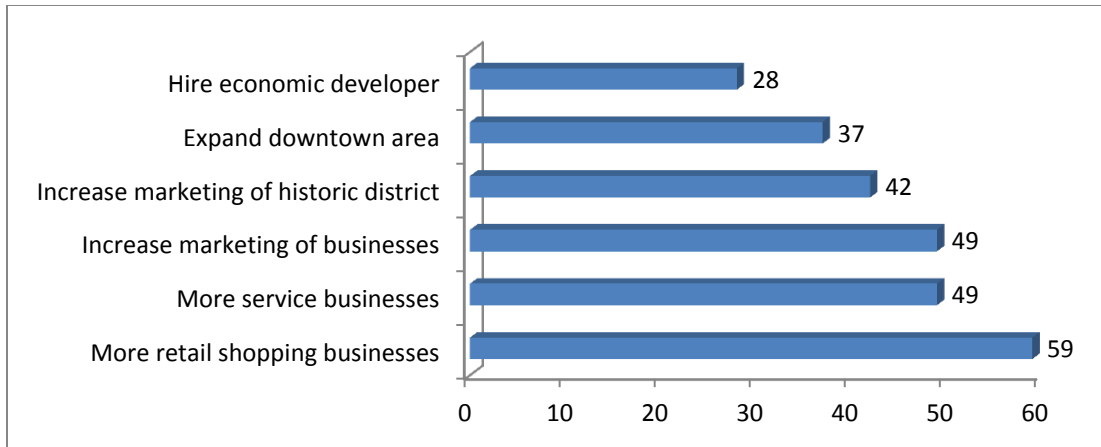
Respondents were given a number of proposed projects and were asked to rate the priority they would give to each. More than one-half (56%) of the respondents rated making water/sewer rates more affordable and equitable as a high priority. Almost one-half (49%) rated the swimming pool upgrade as a high priority. Most of the projects listed were rated as either a high or medium priority by at least one-half of the respondents. The complete responses to each are shown in the chart on the following page.

When viewing the responses by age, many statistically significant differences are detected. Older persons are more likely than younger persons to rate the following projects as high priority: welcome signage, improvement of Highway 6 corridor appearance, downtown maintenance and improvement, restoration of historic St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Towers of History (13th and Silver), short-term/day parking for RVs/buses, development of land and build-out space for commercial and retail development, making water/sewer rates more affordable and equitable, and finding ways to reroute through truck traffic around Ashland. Persons age 21 to 64 are more likely than both younger and older persons to rate the swimming pool upgrade and development of more trails and park areas as high priority. Persons age 21 to 39 are the age group most likely to rate improving the playgrounds as high priority. The youngest persons (under the age of 21) are more likely than older persons to rate the following items as high priority: soccer fields, theatre arts/auditorium, ball park complex completion, and remodel the old Carnegie Library for use by the Ashland Area Historic Foundation.



Business Opportunities

Next respondents were asked what new business, services or efforts are needed to strengthen the Ashland business district. Most of the respondents (59%) believe more retail shopping businesses are needed. Almost one-half (49%) think more service businesses as well as increased marketing of businesses would strengthen the Ashland business district.



If they said more businesses were needed, they were asked what type. Comments were received from 230 respondents.

When asked if they have ever envisioned starting a business in Ashland, just over one-third (35%) answered yes. Those that answered yes were asked what type of assistance would help them begin this venture. Responses to this question were received from 95 respondents.

Next, respondents were asked what they think would improve the historic downtown district. Over two hundred (236) responses were received.

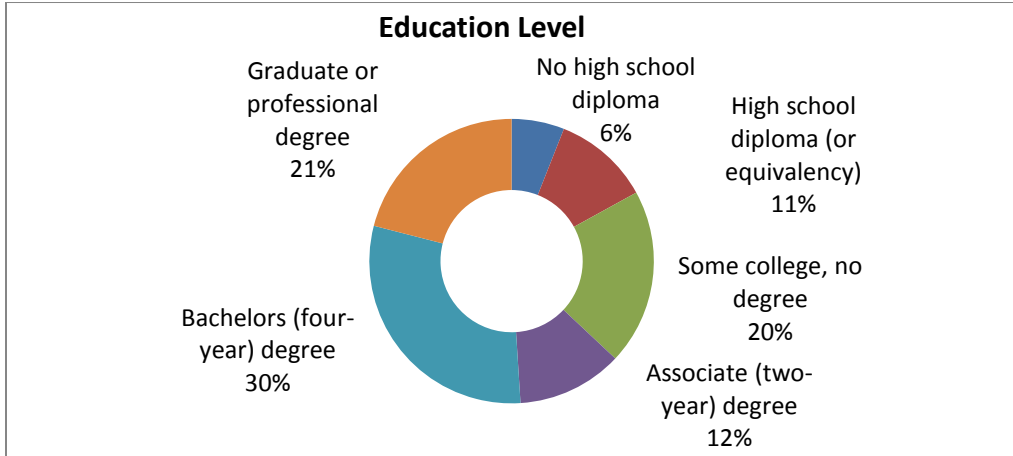
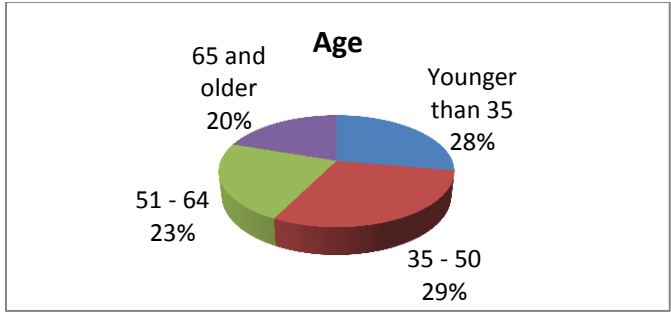
Educational Opportunities

Finally, respondents were asked what type of educational opportunities they would like to see offered at the new community resource center/library. Responses were received from 212 respondents.

Demographics

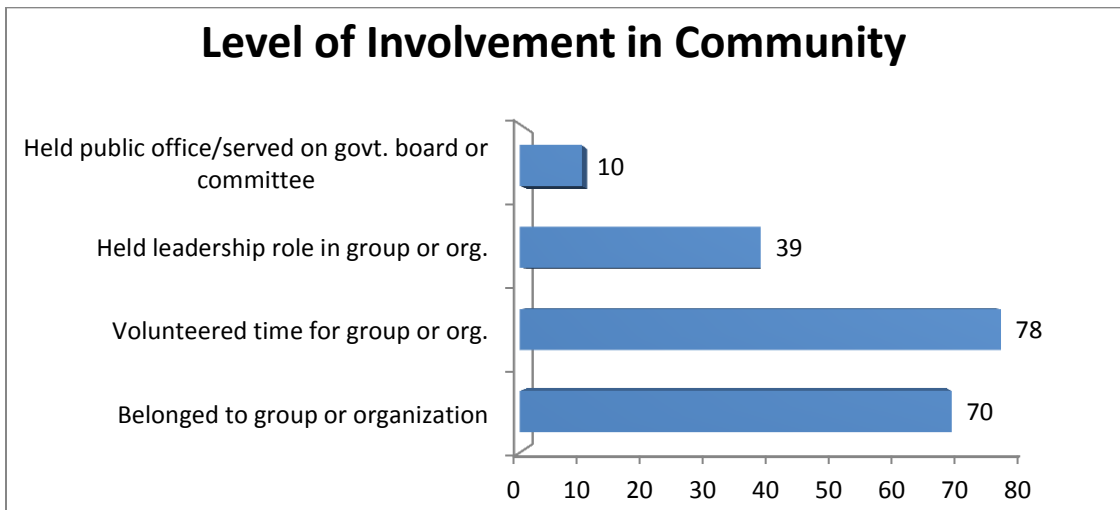
Twenty-eight percent of the respondents are under the age of 35. Thirty percent are over the age of 65. Most of the respondents (94%) have at least a high school diploma, with over one-half (51%) having at least a four-year college degree.

Most of the respondents (82%) most closely identify with Ashland. Eighteen percent identified a different community with which they most closely identify, with Omaha being the most frequently mentioned (6% of total respondents). Over one-third (38%) of the respondents have lived in their community for ten years or less, while 38 percent have lived there for more than 20 years.



Community Involvement

Seven in ten respondents (70%) have belonged to a community group or organization in their community during the past five years and over three-quarters (78%) have volunteered their time for a community group or organization. Almost four in ten respondents (39%) have held a leadership role in a community group or organization during the past five years and 10 percent have held a public office or served on a government board or committee.



Respondents were also asked if they would like to become more involved in the community (as a volunteer, elected leader or serving on a community organization). Over four in ten respondents (41%) would like to become more involved.

About the Entrepreneurial Communities Activation Process (ECAP)

The Entrepreneurial Communities Activation Process (ECAP) is a holistic facilitative process with the goals of attracting and retaining working age population and creating entrepreneurial environments that lead to community vitality. ECAP helps communities support innovation and entrepreneurship by understanding their unique characteristics, community assets and potential opportunities. An extensive review of literature has identified a model of eight characteristics that consistently characterizes entrepreneurial communities, and that contributes to their positive entrepreneurial cultures: Community Vision; Culture of Change; Leadership; Sense of Place; Infrastructure; Digitally Connected; Education/Workforce IQ; and Entrepreneurial Support Systems.

Appendix 1: Open-Ended Responses

What makes your community a great place to live?

Appendix Table 1. Percent Rating Items as High Priority by Age

	Total	Under 21	21 - 39	40 - 64	65 and older
	% rating each as high priority				
Making water/sewer rates more affordable and equitable	56%	20%	51%	57%	69%
Swimming pool upgrade	49	23	55	53	45
Development of land and build-out space for commercial and retail development	33	7	28	37	42
Finding ways to reroute through truck traffic around Ashland	32	7	30	31	56
Ball park complex completion	32	50	34	32	27
Improvement of Highway 6 corridor appearance	31	7	27	37	34
Sidewalk improvements	29	17	28	27	37
Downtown maintenance and improvement	28	0	21	35	33
Theatre arts/ auditorium	25	67	18	26	16
Welcome signage (welcome to downtown from Highway 6)	22	7	13	28	29
Extension of walking/bike trail along Salt Creek	22	17	32	23	9
Development of more trails and park areas	20	7	31	21	9
Improving the playgrounds	20	14	24	17	22
Remodel the old Carnegie Library for use by the Ashland Area Historic Foundation	12	23	8	9	19
Soccer fields	9	17	8	8	6
Arboretum/ public gardens	8	10	11	7	6
Restoration of historic St. Stephen's Episcopal Church	7	10	4	6	12
Towers of History (13 th and Silver)	5	3	4	3	16
Short-term/ day parking for RVs/buses	5	0	6	4	7

**ECAP is a product of the
University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Entrepreneurship Team
and Funded By**



University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

