



VISION

SMOKETOWN
SURVEY REPORT
POWERED BY THE PEOPLE

PRO CATD TO
OUR BOXING LEGENDS
AND THE CHILDREN OF SMOKETOWN
WHO ARE OUR FUTURE



Kentuckians For The Commonwealth (KFTC) is a 33-year-old grassroots social justice organization working to ensure the voices of Kentuckians are heard and respected in our Democracy. KFTC has over 8,000 members across Kentucky and 13 local chapters, including the Jefferson County Chapter which was established in 1983. We use a set of core strategies, from leadership development to communications and voter empowerment, to impact a broad range of issues, including coal and water, new energy and transition, economic justice and voting rights. Our membership is open to all people who are committed to equality, democracy and non-violent change.

Our Vision

We have a vision ...

We are working for a day when Kentuckians – and all people – enjoy a better quality of life.

When the lives of people and communities matter before profits.

When our communities have good jobs that support our families without doing damage to the water, air, and land.

When companies and the wealthy pay their share of taxes and can't buy elections.

When all people have health care, shelter, food, education, and other basic needs.

When children are listened to and valued.

When discrimination is wiped out of our laws, habits, and hearts.

And when the voices of ordinary people are heard and respected in our democracy.

Goals of Organizing

Help people participate

Empower individuals

Overcome racism and other forms of discrimination

Foster democratic values

Challenge and change unjust institutions

Build organizations

Communicate a message of what's possible

Win issues that affect the common welfare

Have fun

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INTRODUCTION

“I wonder how long you’d have to live in a neighborhood before your opinion will count?”
--Smoketown Resident

Vision Smoketown began as a volunteer based community-canvassing project conceived after Kentuckians For The Commonwealth (KFTC) relocated our Jefferson County office to the Smoketown neighborhood in July 2013. During this time, members of the Jefferson County Chapter’s Economic Justice team were focusing their attention on local affordable housing issues. After moving to Smoketown, the team wanted to understand the desires and needs of Smoketown residents within the changing dynamics of Louisville. From May through August 2014, KFTC members and volunteers went door to door in the Smoketown neighborhood collecting responses to a 51-question survey developed in partnership with Center For Neighborhoods. KFTC collected a total of 140 survey responses and continued building relationships with community members during three Smoketown

community cookouts held in the backyard of KFTC offices during the summer of 2014 and our Smoketown GetDown for Democracy a block party held on September 19, 2014. This canvassing project has evolved into working with residents in defining problems and issues in order to develop strategies that bring positive changes in the neighborhood and to its residents’ everyday lives. KFTC believes that providing a means to convey a community’s voice can lead to a more collaborative community vision and will help develop future neighborhood leaders.

Vision Smoketown is not the first neighborhood-report to focus on Smoketown. In 2011, New Directions Housing Corporation (NDHC) and its community partners released the Shelby Park and Smoketown Quality of Life Action Plan (QLAP). This 2011 report was compiled

with input from 160 individuals living and working in both the Shelby Park and Smoketown neighborhoods. In 2012, Network Center for Community Change (NC3) also completed a two-month Smoketown community engagement mapping project that revealed much about vacancy rates and land ownership in the neighborhood. Since these two reports were released, much has changed in Smoketown, including the dissolution of the Smoketown Neighborhood Association, the closure of Presbyterian Community Center (PCC), the reopening of the first phase of the new Sheppard Square mixed-income housing development, and the recent announcement of other neighborhood development projects, including the Creative Innovation Zone (CIZ), a \$250,000 arts grant awarded in June 2014.[1]

Given the rapidly changing dynamics in Smoketown, KFTC members thought it crucial to gather current information from Smoketown residents in order to spur conversations among the residents, policy makers, investors, business leaders and others about how changes in Louisville will impact the Smoketown neighborhood in the next 10-30 years. More importantly, Vision Smoketown provides an opportunity for existing residents to have a positive influence in shaping the future of their neighborhood.

From housing redevelopment to construction of new infrastructure to the revitalization of a city’s

downtown area, change in neighborhoods is an inevitable part of city life. Neighborhoods that are most susceptible to complete transformation are those that have been neglected over time by both public and private investments. These areas become ripe for redevelopment based on their strategic location, economic opportunity and often their isolation from the political process. Public and private investment interests in and around a neighborhood have the potential to create new opportunities for some. Likewise, the loss of critical neighborhood assets along with investments made without an understanding of the neighborhood’s history and culture have the

potential to displace residents who have called this neighborhood *home* for generations.

KFTC believes that communities thrive best when ordinary citizens have a voice in shaping their neighborhood, and are valued as decision-makers. As a 33-year-old statewide grassroots organization, KFTC remains committed to seeking equitable and sustainable approaches to economic development and neighborhood revitalization that benefit many rather than a few.

VISION SMOKETOWN GOALS

1

Understand what people in Smoketown want and need

2

Highlight existing Smoketown strengths and assets

3

Communicate the need to preserve Smoketown’s rich history, heritage and sense of identity, and other things that its residents value

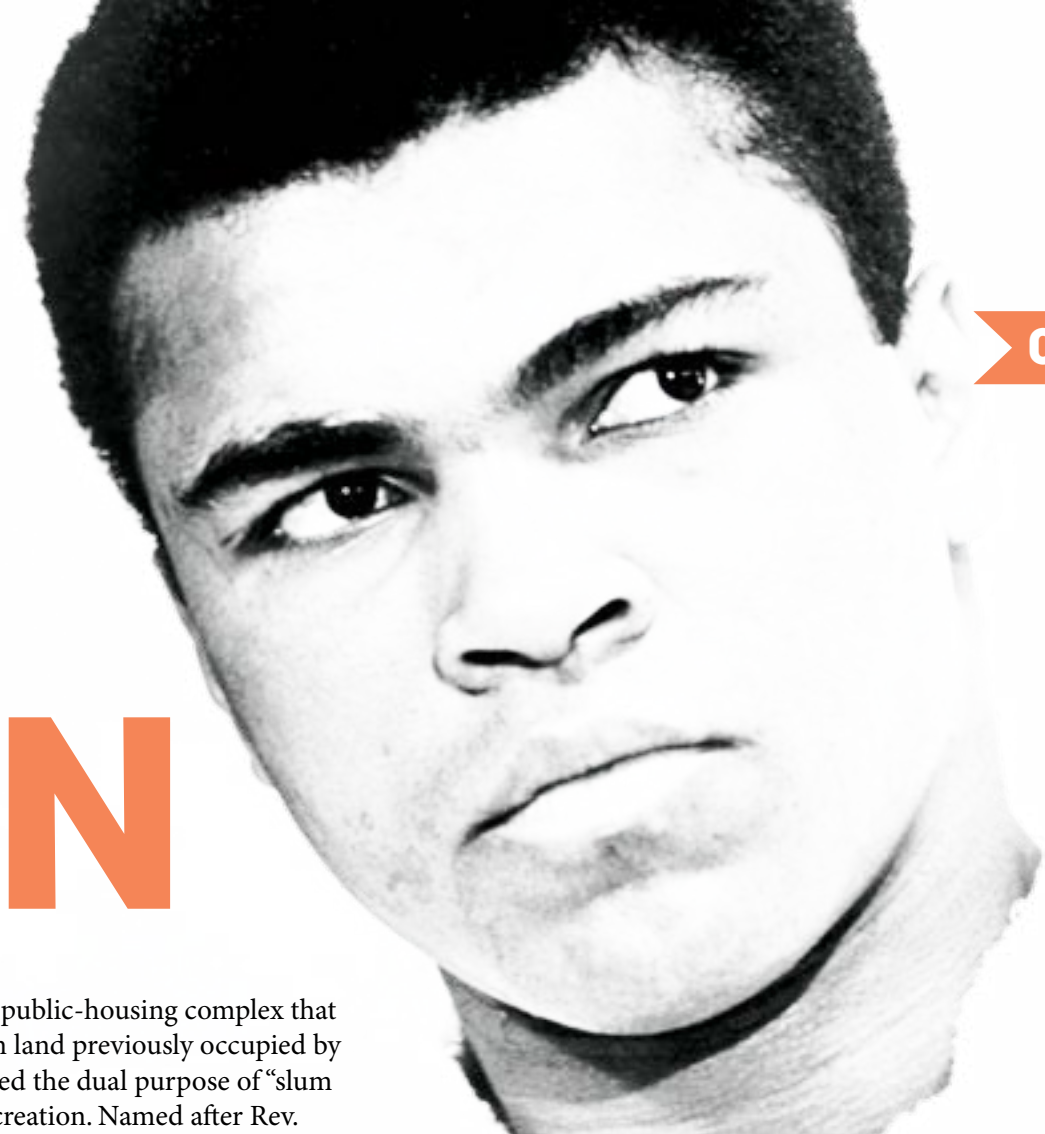
4

Address the need for better community engagement and residents’ desire to participate in community decision-making.



Far Left: Rev. William H. Sheppard (1865-1927)—Born in Virginia in 1865, Sheppard was sent by the Presbyterian Church to the Congo. While there he encountered cannibal tribes, survived whirlpools, and discovered the remote Kuba Kingdom. He is most famous for exposing atrocities committed by Belgian rubber companies against the Congolese. In 1912, Grace Hope Presbyterian Church hired him as a pastor. He and his family moved into a two-story brick house on East Breckenridge Street.[14]

Near Left: Sara Martin (1884-1955)—One of the “Blues Queens,” first to record blues in the early 1920s, Sara Martin was a Smoketown native. She made recording history with fellow Smoketown native and renowned blues guitarist Sylvester Weaver (also pictured), when they recorded “Longing for Daddy Blues”. It was the first time a blues singer was accompanied by a guitarist. Weaver (1897-1960) was a pioneer of country blues, recording “Guitar Blues”, the first blues guitar record. Weaver commemorated the area in the 1924 recording “Smoketown Strut”. [15] Billed as the “Famous Moanin Mama”, Martin is described as excelling as a live performer. In 1930 she appeared in the film, “Darktown Revue”, the first talking picture with an all black cast. The Kentuckiana Blues Society recently dedicated a headstone for her in Louisville Cemetery on September 19, 2014. [16]



Above: Muhammad Ali—Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr., though a resident of Parkland, learned to box in the Historic Smoketown Grace Hope Community Center on Hancock Street. The makeshift boxing ring was located on the gymnasium stage and consisted of a wooden platform on bricks with ropes wrapped around board poles that were held together with duct tape.[17] Fred Stoner, who taught Ali at the Community Center, continued to work Ali’s corner when Ali went pro in 1960 after winning the Olympic heavyweight gold medal.[18]

HISTORY OF SMOKETOWN

After the Civil War, an influx of former slaves joined an already significant population of free black people, concentrating in several neighborhoods of 1880’s Louisville — including Smoketown, Limerick, Brownstown (now St. James Court), and California. German immigrants had begun residential development of Smoketown in the 1850s, but by 1870 the majority of the population was black.[2] By 1880, the neighborhood was a densely populated area with a population of over 15,000.[3] Smoketown is the only neighborhood founded by black people after the Civil War that remains in Louisville today.[4]

While the exact origin of Smoketown’s name is contested, many claim that the neighborhood acquired its name from the large number of smoke-producing kilns in the area during its early brick-making days. Later on, there were many small industrial plants burning soft coal for power and heat. Still others claim the name comes from a racial slur.[5]

In the early days, black residents rented vacant lots from white landowners and developed shotgun cottages on the previously undeveloped properties. Black historian Henry Clay Weeden wrote about these early days of Smoketown’s development, noting “The houses were not the

finest, but furnished a neat appearance.... The war was over and everyone was free and equal.” However, Weeden unhappily noted that later during a period of economic depression when land leases came due, many residents were unable to renew them and subsequently lost their entire investment. According to Weeden, “Our people were in a worse condition than before.”[6]

Development in Smoketown continued, however. In 1874, the Eastern Colored School was built in Smoketown a year after the Central Colored School – the first school in Louisville for the education of black youth – was built.

Educational institutions remain an asset in Smoketown. Founded in 1967, Jackson Junior High continues to serve Jefferson County Public Schools students as Meyzeek Middle School after being renamed in 1977 in honor of Albert Ernest Meyzeek, a celebrated educator and civil rights activist.[7]

Other Smoketown neighborhood institutions also were established. In 1883, the Presbyterian Community Center opened. The Grace Mission, which began as a bible study group in 1899, became Grace Presbyterian Church in 1912, and the Eastern Colored Branch Library opened in Smoketown in 1914.

Sheppard Square, a public-housing complex that was built in 1941 on land previously occupied by 257 structures, served the dual purpose of “slum clearance” and job creation. Named after Rev. William H. Sheppard, the then-modern housing development was seen as a welcome improvement to the neighborhood, offering amenities that were rare in low-income housing. When the housing development was finished in 1942, units rented for as little as \$10 a month, up from the \$8 initially proposed to make up the budgetary shortfall that caused designers to debate eliminating washbasins from bathrooms.[8]

HISTORY CONTINUED

05 In a 1948 study of Louisville's black communities that contrasted Smoketown with the Uptown slums located north of Smoketown, the author wrote "many of the [Smoketown] families [were] home owners and [were] white-collar and professional workers. Within the area [were] such institutions as a junior high school, a branch of the public library and a neighborhood theater." [9]

Smoketown's population began to change in the 1950s with the arrival of sharecroppers from the South moving north after the widespread institution of mechanized farming and the beginning of urban renewal efforts. These factors disproportionately targeted black-owned housing. [10] Simultaneously, stricter environmental laws were passed, which compelled many companies to leave the neighborhood. Small businesses either failed or moved to more viable locations. [11] Many of the high social-strata residents also left the neighborhood as better housing options became available in other areas of the city. Crime in the 1960s, coupled with high unemployment rates, led others to leave the area. [12] All of these factors, taken together, contributed to a diminished economic base in Smoketown. Urban neglect, as evidenced by repeated inattention to the neighborhood's infrastructure (buildings, streets and sidewalks), compounded the problem and contributes to the current shortcomings in the neighborhood's infrastructure.



In June 2011, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA) a \$22 million HOPE VI grant for the Smoketown Revitalization Project. This neighborhood redevelopment project is a \$96.5 million public-private investment made to convert the Sheppard Square housing projects (Sheppard Square) to a mixed-income housing development.

Construction of the new mixed-income Hope VI redevelopment is currently underway, and projected to be completed in December 2015. [13] Sheppard Square was demolished in 2012. With the closing of the housing project, however, many then-existing neighborhood services also left soon thereafter. The first residents moved into Phase 1 of the new mixed-income housing development in March 2014. If the history of prior HOPE VI projects is any indication, few former Sheppard Square housing-project residents will return to the community when redevelopment project is completed.

06 **Left:** Residents from the Smoketown neighborhood wove plastic ribbon through a chainlink fence along Lampton Street to create a public art piece during the Smoketown Getdown for Democracy. The event was held to celebrate the community's participation in the Vision Smoketown survey.

SURVEY RESPONSES

From May through August 2014, KFTC members and volunteers canvassed the Smoketown neighborhood, going door to door to conduct the Smoketown Community survey. Their efforts resulted in the completion of the survey by 140 households in the area (hereinafter, the Survey Respondents).

The Vision Smoketown survey began with three open-ended questions, asking residents what they liked about living in Smoketown, what they felt were the top problems facing the community, and what they felt would make the neighborhood a better place.

— Survey Boundary

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responses to the prompt “Name three things you like about your neighborhood” revealed the following top five characteristics:

- Quality of, and numerous, relationships with neighbors (73 responses)
- Quiet and peaceful (44 responses)
- Location (close to downtown) (40 responses)
- Proximity to resources (i.e., jobs, highways, bus lines, healthcare) (19 responses)
- Businesses serving the area (16 responses)

Other widely valued assets were the neighborhood’s rich history; the availability of nearby parks (especially Shelby Park), and the neighborhood’s churches.

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responses to the prompt “Name three things that are problems in your neighborhood,” revealed these top five concerns:

- Vacant/abandoned structures and lots (39 responses)
- Drug use and drug dealing (35 responses)
- Issues with neighborhood cleanliness and property maintenance (27 responses)
- Crime (25 responses)
- Bad behavior from children and teenagers (23 responses)

Other important concerns widely identified were poor government services for the neighborhood, violence, lack of amenities and activities in the neighborhood, and inconsiderate neighbors.

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responses to the prompt “Name three things that could be done to make your neighborhood a better place,” revealed these top five priorities:

- Better police service/presence (39 responses)
- More activities/programs for children (33 responses)
- Better maintain or rehabilitate vacant/abandoned properties (23 responses)
- Increase cleanliness and beautify neighborhood (21 responses)
- Develop a community center (19 responses). Several respondents specifically noted the closing of Presbyterian Community Center as a loss for the neighborhood.

Other important identified needs to improve the community are the need to attract more quality of life business resources; improve neighborhood infrastructure (particularly the addition of street lights and the repair of neighborhood streets and sidewalks); create a neighborhood association or block watch; and improve engagement between neighbors and among the neighborhood and the local government.

"When I first met my husband, this whole neighborhood was full of houses. Things have changed a lot in 30 years."

"It's quiet and the community looks out for each other."

"We need playgrounds in my community, PCC back, and more togetherness for our elderly & youth to get involved."

"Smoketown was a beautiful neighborhood when I moved in 45 years ago!"

"We should make better use of unused areas and establish a neighborhood identity utilizing historical knowledge."

"Smoketown needs a community center and things for kids to do"

"It's peaceful and everybody knows everybody."

"After Sheppard Square was torn down, all the drug activity moved to my street"

"[I like] the people, that churches and resources are close, and you have easy access to places"

"Everyone gets everything else outside of Smoketown"

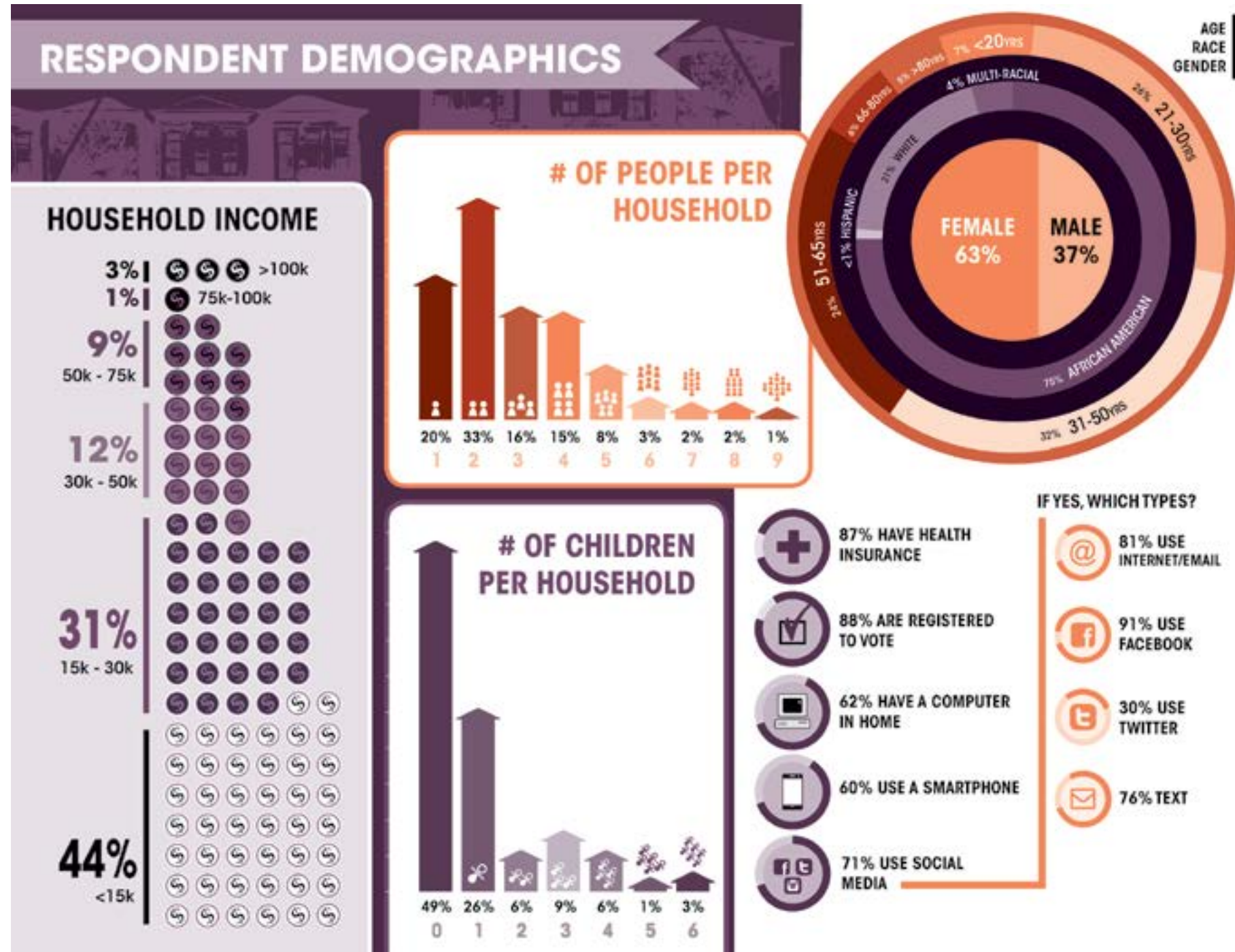
THINGS THAT ARE LIKED ABOUT SMOKETOWN

PROBLEMS IN SMOKETOWN

THINGS THAT COULD MAKE SMOKETOWN BETTER

(quotes do not correspond to the locations on the map)

Demographic data showed that the Vision Smoketown survey engaged a diverse group of Smoketown Residents.



PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LIFE



Community engagement with local government and political leaders in the Smoketown neighborhood has diminished over the years due to the loss of multiple paramount community assets and services. Despite the willingness of many residents to engage civic leaders and policy makers, key resources have been identified as inadequate in meeting Smoketown residents' needs.

MetroCall311, the local government program created to "reduce government red tape" and "improve accountability"[19] may not be as accessible for Smoketown residents (who may be unfamiliar with the smartphone application, the website or the 311 phone service) as for other Louisville residents. Survey responses illustrate these issues of accessibility: 38 percent of survey respondents did not have a computer in their home and 40 percent said they did not use a smartphone. These results suggest that technology is a strong barrier for resident engagement in Smoketown.

Nevertheless, 52 percent of survey respondents said that they have used MetroCall311, in all its formats, to report an issue. Of those who have utilized the service, 41 percent stated that the issue was addressed, 32 percent said it took a long time for someone to assess the issue, and 27 percent said that the problem was never fixed. The remaining 21 percent either received no response or are unsure of the status of their request.

What KFTC members and volunteers learned during the Vision Smoketown canvass is that the best way to engage Smoketown residents is to meet them on their doorsteps and on the streets of the neighborhood. In any event, if one wants to assess this community's need for a service like MetroCall311 that is more accessible, one would only need to walk down one of Smoketown's streets. Smoketown has seen decades of disinvestment and disengagement by policy makers and government institutions.

Neighborhood residents see the condition of Smoketown's failing infrastructure as particular evidence of the local government's lack of attention to the neighborhood's needs.

Indeed, 38 percent of survey respondents were concerned about their safety while biking or walking down their neighborhood streets. Of those concerned, 72 percent said their chief issue lies with the uneven or deteriorating sidewalks. In a neighborhood where 58 percent of the survey respondents walk to visit friends or to shop, adequately maintained sidewalks are vital.



“more political involvement” and “visibility”

Several survey respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the responsiveness of city officials to neighborhood needs, concerns, and questions. When asked to “Name 3 things that could be done to make your neighborhood a better place” one survey respondent wrote, “City officials getting to know the community” and another wrote “Visibility by [Councilman] Tandy”. During a conversation with a canvass volunteer, one survey respondent queried, “I wonder how long you’d have to live in a neighborhood before your opinion will count?” Sixty-one percent of survey respondents answered “no” when asked “Do you know who your Metro Councilperson is?” When contacted about his outreach to Smoketown residents by the Louisville Courier-Journal on September 17, 2014, a spokesman for Councilman David Tandy replied, “When people need him, they find him.”[20]

There are many Smoketown residents who are willing to engage policy makers and community stakeholders in an organized way. In fact, 87 percent of survey respondents are registered voters. Residents often stated in interviews that they wanted “more political involvement” and “visibility” by their elected officials. One resident also recommended that city officials “come to Smoketown for meetings, not make residents go to city hall, because TARC fares are too high.” Moreover, 78 percent of survey respondents would attend a meeting with their Metro Councilperson or other city officials to discuss community issues. Of those who stated that barriers exist to attendance, 50 percent expressed concern about the time of day such meetings would be held. Even though 83 percent of survey respondents said that they had never been part of the former Smoketown neighborhood association, 49 percent expressed a desire to restart the association.

Further, residents living near Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD)-owned properties on Logan Street expressed concern about inadequate community outreach regarding the multi-million dollar, 17 million-gallon sewage overflow basin to be constructed on the approximately 5-acre site in Smoketown.[21] Community outreach on the proposed project has inadequately informed residents about the scope and impact of the project on their neighborhood. The placement of this industrial complex will decrease home values and will displace several families. According to one resident who will lose the family home due to MSD’s construction of the storage basin, “It’s going to be hard to find another place like this.” Still, another resident understood the new storage basin to be a “water park.”

Community Resources Greatly Prioritized by Survey Respondents:

Every community has resources and assets that residents find vital to their neighborhood’s survival and development. Some examples of prioritized assets include: healthcare facilities, food resources, retail spaces, and social groups/organizations, and more. Not all resources that communities utilize are located within a neighborhood’s boundaries, but those resources are still valid representations of a community’s priorities. Through an understanding of what resources a community values and utilizes, a community’s assets can be assessed more realistically.

Smoketown residents primarily seek social and community-oriented programs and venues, including churches, community centers, and other spaces for community meetings.



Of the 69 survey respondents who listed “community resources” used in Smoketown, 33 mentioned specific religious institutions, and 9 noted community centers/meetings (past and present).

One community center that was repeatedly mentioned by Smoketown residents was the Presbyterian Community Center (PCC), which served as both a cultural and social center for the neighborhood. PCC showcased historical memorabilia as well as provided recreational opportunities for adults and youth. Unfortunately after 115 years of service, PCC closed in 2013 due to funding issues. Residents continue to mourn the loss of PCC since 70 percent of the survey respondents accessed its services before the untimely closing.

When asked what services or programs they would use if they were located in the neighborhood, 57 percent of survey respondents said that they would use children’s after-school



programs, 50 percent would use medical and dental care services, 47 percent would participate in organized sports programs, 47 percent would attend fitness or recreation classes, 37 percent would use senior nutrition and activities programs, and 37 percent would access counseling or financial planning services.

Finally, 122 survey respondents would like to see more business development in Smoketown. While many frequented Joe’s Neighborhood Store, Save-a-Lot, the Shelby Mart, Smoketown USA, and Kroger, more businesses are needed. Likewise, although some residents noted a variety of community resources in the neighborhood (i.e. non-profits, municipal services, and youth programs), others felt that there were not enough resources located within their community.





Smoketown, Louisville's oldest and historically black neighborhood since the Civil War, has a rich history. The neighborhood was the center of commerce for tobacco factories and other businesses at the turn of the 20th century. Many residents live in the "Shotgun" houses – built on long and narrow lots – that are characteristic of the neighborhood. **1** Portions of the neighborhood are listed on the US National Register of Historic Places.

2 Indeed, many of the surveyed residents are very proud of the neighborhood's rich culture and historical legacy.

15 Among the greatest assets noted by the 140 survey respondents are the neighborhood's close proximity to the downtown area, resources and the city's public transportation system (59 responses), the general quietness of certain neighbor blocks (44 responses), the general affordability of the neighborhood's housing stock,

as well as the general friendliness and character of their neighbors (78 responses). The residents generally prize the deep connections that they have with one another, gained over many years and sometimes generations.

Indeed, 65 percent of survey respondents have lived in Smoketown for six or more years, with 36 percent of them residing in the community for more than 20 years. Moreover, 78 percent of survey respondents would recommend that other friends and family members relocate to their neighborhood. Consequently, many Smoketown residents hope also to share in any proposed revitalization of their neighborhood, given that 52 percent of the survey respondents own their homes and 66 percent of survey respondents (whether renters or owners) plan to remain in Smoketown at least for the next three to five years. Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents think housing is affordable in Smoketown.

1 75 percent of the housing units in Smoketown were built before 1950, while only 23 percent of the housing units in Jefferson County' were built before that date. [22]

2 Smoketown is an historic district, with approximately 216 properties listed on the US National Register of Historic Places. Most of the units are private residences.

Smoketown residents, however, continue to face some challenges – many have concerns about housing quality and personal safety. The large number of abandoned buildings and vacant lots located in the neighborhood was noted by 70 percent of survey respondents as having an impact on their property. **3** When prompted to identify "how" their property had been impacted by the vacancies, 62 responded that the vacancies were "unsightly," 49 responded that the vacancies resulted in an "increase in rodents/vermin," 48 responded that the vacancies resulted in an "increase in crime in the area," 45 responded that the presence of vacant properties, "diminishes [their] property value," and 41 responded that the vacancies resulted in the "homeless or vagrants using the [vacant] property." **4**

Although 84 percent of survey respondents felt safe in their Smoketown homes, a chief concern among many is their need to reacquire a sense of well-being while walking around their neighborhood since 59 percent of them to walk to visit friends and family or to shop. Most would like a daily life free from the harassment of drug dealers or people engaged in drug-related, or other criminal activities. Many called for increased police patrols throughout the neighborhood with 63 percent of respondents thinking LMPD helps to keep the neighborhood safe, others are concerned about any attendant increase in police profiling or other harassment of law-abiding neighborhood residents. An informed balancing act built on a relationship of trust with the LMPD would go a long way to assuaging the latter group's concerns.

Respondents also voiced concern about the physical appearance of their neighborhood – particularly the

upkeep of its infrastructure. Some noted that the city's agencies could do a better job of clearing debris both from the neighborhood's streets and the alleys – especially when their own work orders created the problems. (Metropolitan Sewer District and Metro Solid Waste Management were singled out as among the chief culprits.) Survey respondents stated that additional street lighting throughout the neighborhood also would help foster a better sense of safety and community among Smoketown residents.

Smoketown residents also voiced concern about drivers who speed through the neighborhood without regard to the children or elderly residents who share the city's streets. **5** Similarly, the residents overwhelmingly called for more gathering places (particularly green spaces and playgrounds) where children, teenagers and the elderly can congregate to find resources and engage in activities that will help keep them educated, informed and involved.

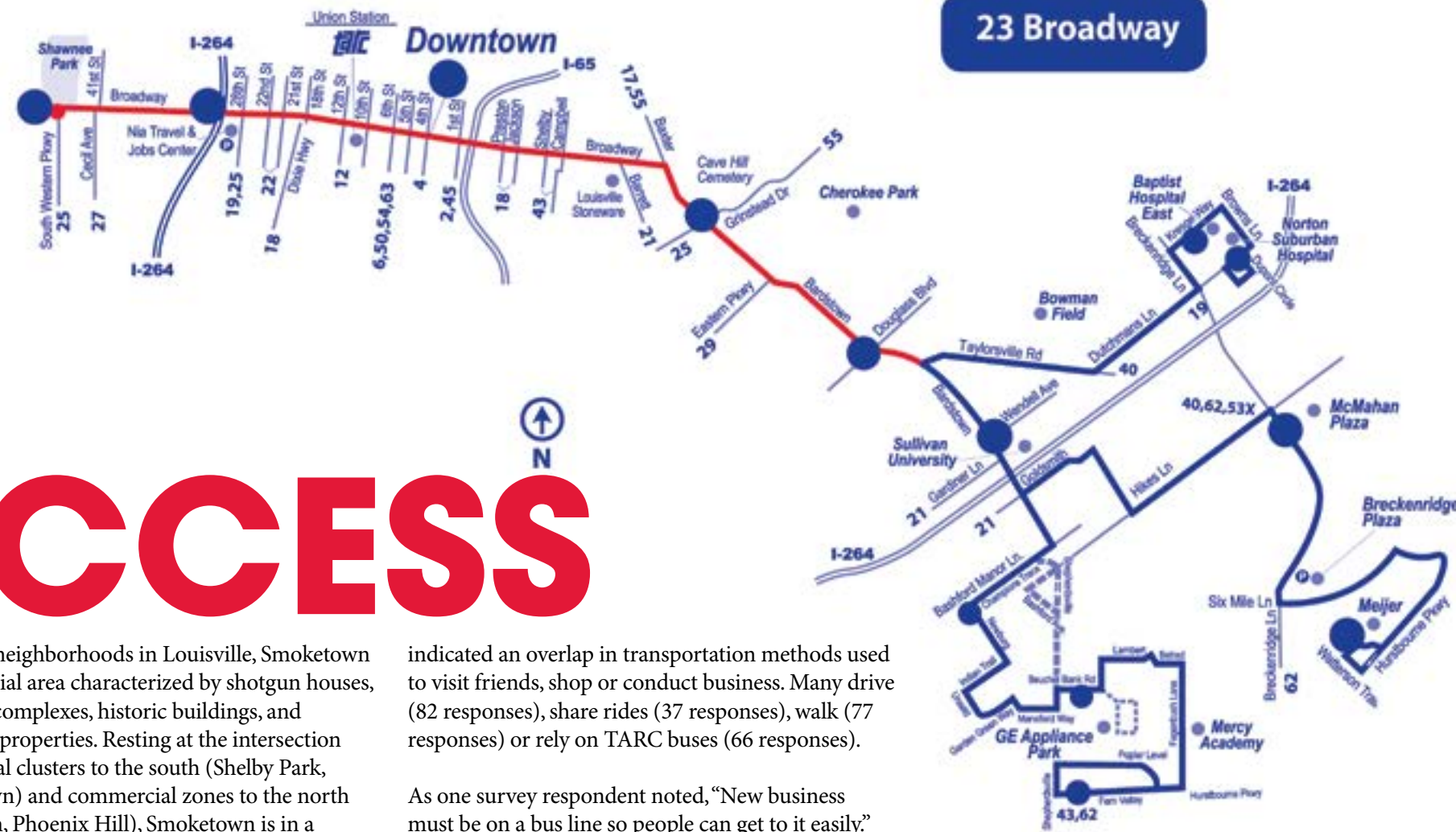
Finally, 75 percent of survey respondents are aware of the mixed-income housing development being built at the Sheppard Square site. When asked what impact the Sheppard Square redevelopment will have on the neighborhood, 78 percent of survey respondents think it will improve the neighborhood, 15 percent think it might create separation within the neighborhood, and 40 percent think it will spur more business development in the neighborhood. Additional comments to this question included concerns about gentrification, frustration about the displacement of former Sheppard Square residents, and worry about crime and drug use returning to the site of the former housing project.



3 Louisville Metro's Department of Codes and Regulations has identified 102 vacant properties in Smoketown, consisting of 75 vacant structures and 27 vacant lots. [23] However, both the Vision Smoketown canvassing data collection and the Network Center for Community Change's community engagement mapping project have found that these figures underestimate the number of vacancies in Smoketown.

4 Home values in Smoketown have decreased as 68 percent of single-family homes were assessed for less than their last sale price.[24]

5 Neighborhood residents point to Preston, Shelby, Breckenridge and Kentucky Streets as through-streets which pose a hazard to neighborhood pedestrians and cyclist since commuters consistently drive over the posted speed limit when traveling through Smoketown.



ACCESS

Like many neighborhoods in Louisville, Smoketown is a residential area characterized by shotgun houses, apartment complexes, historic buildings, and abandoned properties. Resting at the intersection of residential clusters to the south (Shelby Park, Germantown) and commercial zones to the north (Downtown, Phoenix Hill), Smoketown is in a unique location to attract development in both the residential and commercial sectors.

However, the historical pattern of growth in Smoketown and surrounding areas would suggest that any commercial development is likely to remain outside the margins of the neighborhood. If this trend continues, the existing residents will likely be left with limited access to food, healthcare, childcare, and other services.

Respondents identified accessibility as a key asset of the neighborhood's location. Their responses

indicated an overlap in transportation methods used to visit friends, shop or conduct business. Many drive (82 responses), share rides (37 responses), walk (77 responses) or rely on TARC buses (66 responses).

As one survey respondent noted, "New business must be on a bus line so people can get to it easily." However, out of the 40-plus TARC routes that service the city, only three lines run through Smoketown: Route 18, which serves as a north/south connector along Preston Street, linking downtown Louisville to Dixie Highway and the Outer Loop; Route 43, linking the Portland and Fern Valley neighborhoods with stops along Shelby Street; and Route 23, a dedicated line along Broadway that straddles the Phoenix Hill/Smoketown border, but doesn't actually enter the Smoketown neighborhood.

"New business must be on a bus line so people can get to it easily."



Neighborhood walkability was a chief concern of survey respondents, especially given the large number of people without access to a car. When asked whether they experienced any difficulties "biking or walking" in the neighborhood, 39 of the 47 respondents who had difficulties stated that the biggest challenges are "sidewalks [that] are uneven or in poor shape," while 26 of the 47 respondents also noted "potholes or other street/curb issues." The blemished roads and sidewalks proved frustrating for residents, who said the poorly maintained streetscape was an impediment to the safety of pedestrians. Some respondents also noted that many neighborhood sidewalks lack curb cuts that would allow strollers and wheelchairs to safely roll onto the street. A Smoketown resident noticed that repaired sidewalks can help enable elderly residents and others with mobility issues to better travel around the neighborhood.

Another obstacle to mobility noted by a survey respondent is the tendency of many cyclists to "salmon" against traffic, riding in the wrong direction. This problem may stem from the sizeable number of one-way oriented roadways in Smoketown. These streets include: Shelby, Preston, Logan, Breckinridge, St. Catherine, Kentucky and Jackson.

Mindful of these logistic challenges, the Vision Smoketown team sought to pinpoint exactly how far Smoketown residents had to travel in order to access businesses around town. Sixty-three percent of respondents said they travel five miles or less to get to work and 72 percent said they travel five miles or less to get to school.

Seventy-one percent of respondents received healthcare services within five miles of their home, with 29 percent traveling less than a mile

to visit their healthcare providers. Smoketown's close proximity to Downtown hospitals has been identified as an important asset for the community, particularly for senior citizens and disabled residents.

Approximately 26 percent of survey respondents travel less than a mile to shop for groceries and other necessities, while 62 percent travel less than five miles to do their shopping.

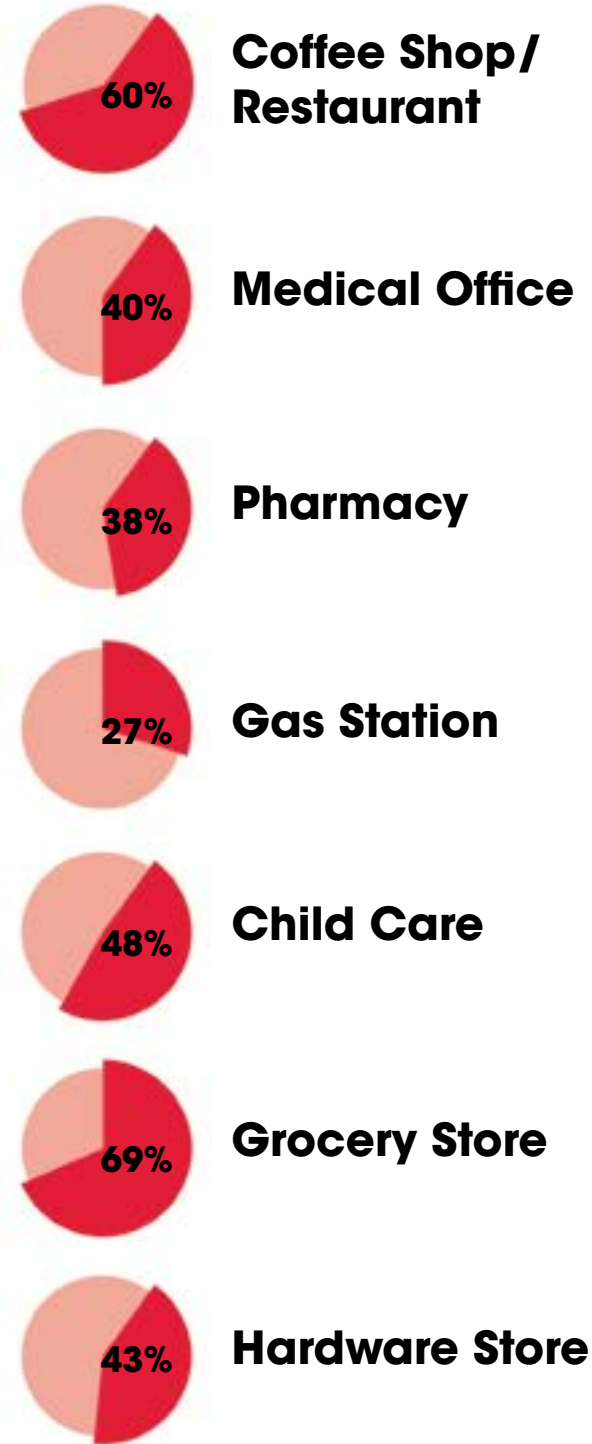
More than 50 of the survey respondents said they shop at the Kroger store that is located on 2nd Street, which is a 20-minute walk from the center of Smoketown; about 30 respondents shop at the Save-a-Lot located on Shelby Street; and approximately 15 shop at Joe's Neighborhood Store located on the corner of Hancock and Lampton streets. It should be noted, however, that Joe's Neighborhood Store does not regularly carry fresh produce. Only 27 percent of respondent indicated that they go to farmer's markets located in nearby neighborhoods.

Responses to the survey question, "What types of businesses would you like to see in Smoketown?" revealed: 69 percent of survey respondents want a grocery store (84 responses); 60 percent of respondents want a restaurant or coffee shop (73 responses); 48 percent of respondents want a childcare business (59 responses); 43 percent of respondents want a hardware store (52 responses); 40 percent of respondents want a medical office (49 responses); 38 percent of respondents want a pharmacy (46 responses); 27 percent of respondents want a gas station (33 responses).

Finally, residents said they are also open to other business and economic developments in Smoketown. Several respondents wanted to see a neighborhood library, clinic, laundromat, Walmart and more public places for neighborhood children to play. At the time of this publication, Ballard Park is the only park in the Smoketown neighborhood, located on Caldwell Street, between Jackson and Hancock Street.

i'd like to see

What businesses and community resources the residents of Smoketown said they'd like to see in their neighborhood.





SUMMARY

Smoketown is a unique neighborhood that benefits from a dynamic and close-knit neighborhood community, close proximity and convenience to the downtown and Phoenix Hill commercial centers, and nearby access to public transportation. Smoketown residents socialize and feel that their neighborhood is friendly and quiet. This may contribute to the trend of residents staying in Smoketown for more than five years. This trend also positively impacts the attitude residents have towards encouraging their friends and families to relocate to this historic neighborhood.

Although Smoketown residents identify very positively with their neighbors and their neighborhood, they have concerns with both visible and visceral signs of neglect. Of the residents surveyed, the presence of vacant lots, dilapidated buildings, sidewalk and street disrepair, and lack of property maintenance are issues that significantly impact the neighborhood.

The majority of the residents surveyed feel very safe in their neighborhood, however, some noted that the prevalence of drugs

and crime give them concern about their personal safety. Likewise, residents feel that crime--ranging from drug-related activities to vandalism-- is pervasive, and intrinsic to the deterioration of the neighborhood.

Moreover, the lack of youth activities and the absence of a neighborhood community center is an issue for most residents. Despite the closeness of the community, there is a lack of public spaces for neighbors to freely socialize, which presents an issue for neighborhood cohesiveness and unity. Residents responded that children in the neighborhood need an alternative sanctuary for both play and learning, similar to the function of the Presbyterian Community Center previously located in the neighborhood.

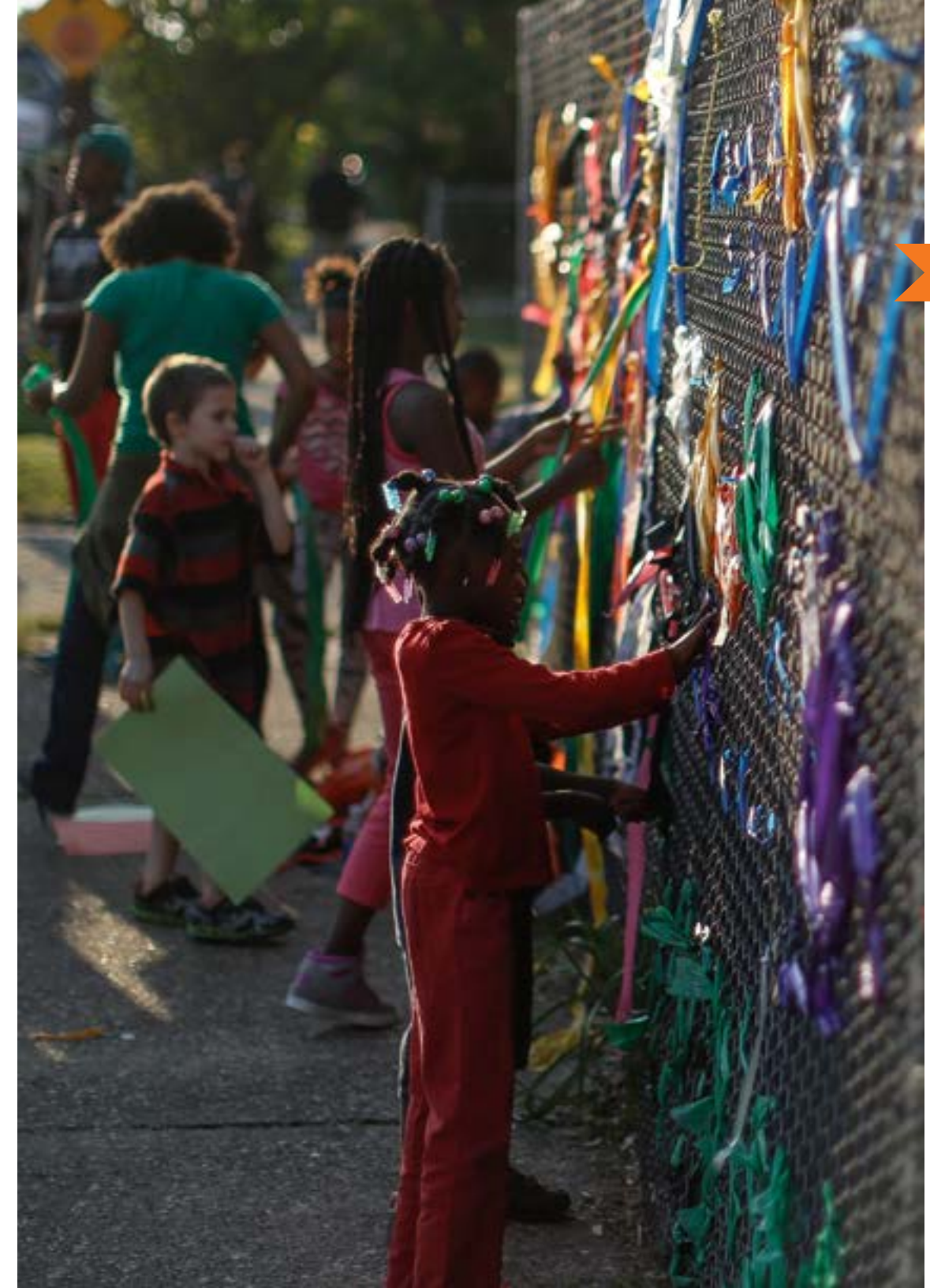
Although Smoketown is in close proximity to downtown and other commercial districts, many survey respondents noted that accessibility to employment opportunities, community resources, and healthcare providers are a major concern.

While there are commercial businesses in the general vicinity (i.e. NuLu, downtown and the Highlands) they may not be affordable options for residents in Smoketown as 44 percent of the survey respondents earn less than \$15,000 a year. In addition, many survey respondents depend on public transit to get around the city, which can make accessing amenities outside of Smoketown challenging.

Government accessibility and transparency are two issues that residents indicated as concerns. Most residents report having mixed to low incidences of response from city services such as Metrocall 311. Access to the Internet, mobile devices and social media may be barriers to reporting incidences in this manner. Some residents feel that when incidences are reported, Metro services are not appropriate, particularly police involvement. Some residents feel that there is an element of police harassment, which disserves the neighborhood rather than protects. Residents strongly support organizing a neighborhood association.



Above: Center For Neighborhoods hosted the kick-off Smoketown Neighborhood Association meeting on October 7, 2014. Twenty Residents and allies attended the first meeting. Plans are set for future meetings.





VISION SMOKETOWN

Community engagement is a necessary component in making any healthy and sustainable changes in a neighborhood.

Community engagement is also a highly misinterpreted concept in urban planning and development. Engaging a community requires an invested interest in forming and maintaining a wide array of neighborhood relationships that ensure partnerships and support. To encourage sustainability in neighborhood projects, community bodies (i.e. residents, community services, local organizations/businesses, etc.) must be engaged and utilized throughout the planning and implementation of ideas.

A successful and sustainable neighborhood development plan is a plan that is well informed by current opinion polls/surveys of people that live in the community. True neighborhood development is not a process of minimizing deficits. It is the act of mobilizing the skills of residents, and utilizing present resources to strengthen the infrastructure that supports a neighborhood's unique history and culture.

When looking at the services available and the services that are needed in Smoketown, it is prudent to focus on "community asset mapping" rather than "need mapping." The key components of any neighborhood revitalization project, again, should be the mobilization of present resources and individuals. By focusing on the strengths

of a neighborhood, gentrification can be avoided through cooperative, relationship driven community development.

In presenting policy recommendations that incorporate the voices of the residents, it is important to begin with community assets and then improve upon them. There were a few recurring themes that emerged from the survey. Smoketown has a rich history of neighborhood cohesion. Survey respondents mentioned how much they loved the neighborliness that exists among them. One of the anchoring points of this cohesion was the outreach and services provided by PCC. The closure of PCC is a palpable loss to the neighborhood. Many survey respondents mentioned the need for a center that could facilitate activities for children; a place that could serve as a meeting point for seniors and adults.

Another emergent theme revolved around vacant and abandoned properties, and a general lack of infrastructural investment. The chronic disinvestment is visible in the very motif of the neighborhood landscape. Uneven sidewalks, litter on the streets, and boarded up buildings all showcase an erosion of social capital. A related concern for survey respondents was the increased rate of crime and delinquency that is often associated with high rates of vacancy and abandoned properties. A final theme revolved around the availability of and proximity to amenities such as grocery stores, coffee shops, and laundromats, among others. In order to address resident input, we present the following recommendations:

COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reopen a “**Neighborhood Community Center**” that serves as a local hub for connecting residents with each other and with various services.

- Provide after-school activities for children such as a Boys and Girls Club; a computer lab and volunteer tutors to help with homework; sports activities; and other extra-curricular activities.
- Provide recreational activities (such as arts and crafts, board games, music, and bingo) for seniors.
- Enable residents to become better informed about issues concerning both the city and the neighborhood. For example, the Center could help connect residents to services such as information about affordable housing; job opportunities; medical and dental services; and childcare services, among others.

2. Establish or re-establish “**Neighborhood Associations**” to enable residents to become educated about and organize efforts around issues that directly impact their continued enjoyment of the neighborhood.

3. Rebuild social capital by addressing the problem of vacant and abandoned properties as well as deteriorating infrastructure.

- Better inform residents about resources for “taking back their neighborhood.” For example, residents should be made aware of the Louisville’s VAPStat program (<http://vapstat.louisvilleky.gov/>). VAPStat (short for “Vacant and Abandoned Property Statistics”) uses data and metrics to assess Metro Government’s performance in tackling the complex problem of vacant properties. This website is a one-stop shop for citizens to learn about the programs and resources available through

Metro to: prevent abandonment; ensure that properties are maintained according to Code via enforcement tools; and to support property redevelopment through acquisition and sale of properties, owned by the city, the Landbank Authority, and the Urban Renewal Commission, including transfer to homeowners wishing to purchase an adjacent lot for \$1 and become responsible for its upkeep and maintenance.

- Beautification of the neighborhood, in terms of planting trees and flower gardens, or raised beds could bring the neighborhood together and increase community pride.
- Upgrading infrastructure in the form of new street lights, leveling out sidewalks, adding “speed bumps” to certain high-trafficked streets, and installing benches at bus stops, and more.

4. Curb crime and delinquency through better coordination with Louisville Metro Police. Increased police presence will mitigate some of the criminal activity and make residents feel safer in their neighborhood.

- It is important to prevent alienation and apprehension of law enforcement through community wide meetings and police reports during Community Council or Neighborhood Association meetings.

5. Increase availability of amenities so as to increase the quality of life for the neighborhood.

- Develop businesses that meet the needs of existing Smoketown residents (i.e. grocery store, restaurant, hardware store, clinic, daycare, etc.) New businesses will give residents access to more amenities within their neighborhood, eliminating the need for them to travel to a different neighborhood for such services.

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Jessica Bellamy, KFTC
Ashanti Dallas, KFTC
Shireen Deobhakta, Ph.D.
Ryan Fenwick, KFTC
Alicia Hurle, KFTC
Rebecca Katz, KFTC
Rosanne Kruzich, Center For Neighborhoods
Kammaleathahh Livingstone, KFTC
Mary Love, KFTC
Brett Marshall, Kertis Creative
Elijah McKenzie, KFTC
Solange Minstein, KFTC
Professor Lisa Nicholson, KFTC
Michael Poindexter, KFTC
Rachel Phillips, KFTC
Curtis Stauffer, KFTC
Christi Stevens, Center For Neighborhoods

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Debi Baldwin, KFTC
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Analise Brown
Susanna Crum, Calliope Arts

Ashanti Dallas, KFTC
Doanta Davis, KFTC
Theo Edmonds, IDEAS 40203
James El-Mallakh, KFTC
Ryan Fenwick, KFTC
Martha Flack, KFTC
Ken Flaherty, KFTC
Denise Groves, KFTC
Sean Hardy, KFTC
Barry Hawthorne, Bates Memorial Baptist Church
Sarah Holloway, University of Louisville
Ryan Holmes
Noah Howard, KFTC
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Tara Kinslow, KFTC
Rosanne Kruzich, Center for Neighborhoods
Bridgette Lewis, Grace Hope Presbyterian Church
Kammaleathahh Livingstone, KFTC
Elijah McKenzie, KFTC
Joshua Miller, IDEAS 40203
Kate Miller, KFTC
Solange Minstein, KFTC
La’Todd Minter, YouthBuild Louisville
Tom Moffett, KFTC
Gloria Moorman, Grace Hope Presbyterian Church
Mari Mujica, KFTC
Pam Newman, KFTC
Professor Lisa Nicholson, KFTC
Lisa Osanka, KFTC
Angela Perry, KFTC
Stephen Peterson, Limerick Assoc. for Neighborhood Development
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Michael Poindexter, KFTC
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Lynn Rippey, YouthBuild Louisville
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Several local nonprofits and businesses showed their support for Vision Smoketown by sponsoring KFTC's Smoketown GetDown for Democracy. This neighborhood block party took place on September 19, 2014 on Lampton Street next to the KFTC office. The event featured live entertainment and art, local food vendors, and neighborhood organizations and businesses and was attended by Smoketown residents, KFTC members, and other folks from across the city. The Smoketown GetDown gave KFTC the opportunity to raise awareness about Vision Smoketown and gather additional community input. Following the block party one Smoketown resident, said, "Thanks for making our neighborhood come to life again. Let's do this more often."

Harambee Health Center, Inc.
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 IDEAS 40203
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 Kertis Creative
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 West Sixth Brewing
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 Awesome Everyday
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 Center For Neighborhoods

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Finally, thank you too all of the residents of Smoketown who shared their time, talent, thoughts, concerns, and visions with us. We appreciate you trusting us with your words and we look forward to continuing to work with you to see your *vision* come to fruition.

SMOKETOWN COMMUNITY SURVEY

Smoketown Community Survey

Volunteer Name(s) _____ Address _____

Hello! Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, a 33-year-old statewide grassroots organization, recently relocated our Louisville office to the Smoketown neighborhood, at 735 Lampton Street. We are going door to door to meet people in the neighborhood and learn more about community issues and concerns. We hope to find ways for Smoketown residents to interact with Metro Government to begin to address these concerns and make Smoketown a better place to live for everyone.

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions in this important community survey.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Name 3 things you like about your neighborhood

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. Name 3 things that are problems in your neighborhood.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. Name 3 things that could be done to make your neighborhood a better place.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

HOUSING

4. How long have you lived in Smoketown? 0-5 years 6-10 years
 11-20 years More than 20 years

5. Do you have friends or family members who live in Smoketown? YES NO

6. Would you recommend that a friend or family member from move here? YES NO

7. Do you plan to live in Smoketown for the next 3 to 5 years? YES NO Don't Know

8. Do you think that housing is affordable in Smoketown? YES NO Don't Know

9. Do you rent or own your home? Rent Own

10. If you rent, would you consider buying a home in Smoketown? YES NO Don't Know

11. If you answered **NO** or **Don't Know**, why? Check all that apply.

No homes for sale Don't plan to be here that long
 Cannot afford to buy a house I don't feel safe in Smoketown
 Not a good value to live in Smoketown Other _____





12. Do vacant or abandoned properties impact your property in any way? YES NO
13. If YES, how? Check all that apply:
- Unsanitary
 - Increase in rodents/vermin
 - Homeless or vagrants using property
 - Diminishes my property value
 - Increase in crime in the area
14. Have you been following what's happening at Sheppard Square? YES NO
15. How do you think the Sheppard Square development will impact the neighborhood?
- Improve the neighborhood
 - Create separation within our neighborhood
 - Bring additional development (stores, businesses) to our neighborhood
 - Other _____

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

16. Have you ever called Metro 311 to report a problem or concern in your community? YES NO
17. If yes, what happened?
- Someone called me back to find out more information
 - The issue was addressed quickly
 - It took a long time for anyone to come see about it
 - It never got fixed
 - I never got a response
 - I don't know
18. Were you satisfied with the outcome? YES NO
19. Do you know who your Metro Councilperson is? YES NO
20. If there was a meeting with your Metro Councilman or City Officials to talk about issues, would you attend? YES NO
21. If NO, what would prevent you from attending?
- Time of day meeting was held
 - Not interested
 - Don't like to go to public meetings
 - Other _____
 - Don't think it would amount to anything

SAFETY

22. Do you feel safe in your home? YES NO
23. Have you ever called the police because of a problem in your neighborhood? YES NO
24. If YES, did the police respond in a timely manner after your call? YES NO
25. Did the police resolve the problem that you called about? YES NO
26. Do you think the police help keep your neighborhood safe? YES NO



COMMUNITY ASSETS

27. List community resources that you use or attend in Smoketown, such as churches, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and community groups.
28. Were you a member of the Smoketown Neighborhood Association? YES NO
29. Would you want to be part of an effort to restart this organization? YES NO Don't Know
30. Did you or anyone in your household go to or access services at Presbyterian Community Center (PCC)? YES NO
31. What services or programs would you use if they were located in the neighborhood?
- Counseling or Financial Planning
 - Visiting Nurse or Medical/Dental Care
 - After School Programs for Children
 - Organized Sports
 - Senior Nutrition and Activities
 - Fitness or Recreation Classes
32. What types of businesses would you like to see in Smoketown?
- Coffee Shop or Restaurant
 - Gas Station
 - Medical Office
 - Child Care
 - Pharmacy
 - Hardware Store
 - Grocery Store
 - Other _____

MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

33. What grocery store do you usually shop at, and where is it located? _____
34. Do you go the Farmer's Markets in Phoenix Hill or NLUU? YES NO
35. How do you get around to visit friends or shop?
- Walk
 - Bus
 - Bicycle
 - Other _____
 - Drive
 - Taxi
 - Rides with Friend/Family
36. How far do you or your children (if appropriate) travel to the following?
- | Activity | > one mile | 1-5 miles | 5-10 miles | 10-20 miles | < 20 miles |
|------------|------------|-----------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Work | | | | | |
| School | | | | | |
| Groceries | | | | | |
| Drug Store | | | | | |
| Gas | | | | | |
| Healthcare | | | | | |

37. Do you have any difficulty or concern biking or walking in your neighborhood? YES NO
38. If YES, what difficulties exist?
- Sidewalks are uneven or in poor shape
 - Potholes or other street/curb issues
 - Trash blocks the path
 - I don't feel safe
 - Cars park or travel in my way
 - Other _____

Tell us a little about yourself.
All personal information will remain confidential.

39. Name _____
Address _____
Phone Number _____
Email _____

40. Age Under 20 51 - 65
 21 - 30 66 - 80
 31 - 50 Over 80

41. Gender Male Female

42. Race African American White
 Asian Multi-Racial
 Hispanic Other specific _____
 Native American

43. Number of people in your household including yourself? _____

44. Number of children under 18 in your household? _____

45. Household income Less than \$15,000 \$50,001 - \$75,000
 \$15,001 - \$30,000 \$75,001 - \$100,000
 \$30,001 - \$50,000 Over \$100,000

46. Do you have health insurance? YES NO

47. Are you a registered voter? YES NO

48. Do you have a computer in your home? YES NO

49. Do you use a smartphone? YES NO

50. Do you use social media? YES NO

51. If YES, Check all that apply.
 Internet/Email
 Facebook
 Twitter
 Texting



SOURCES

- [1] The CIZ intends to facilitate new ways for artists, innovators and Smoketown residents to work together to create new opportunities in education, environmental design and entrepreneurial activity leading to jobs.
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- [22] See American Community Survey 2012, 5 year estimate
- [23] See Vacant Structures. Louisville Metro Government, n.d. Web. 15 Sept. 2014, available at <http://portal.louisvilleky.gov/codesandregs/property-reports/vacantstructures>
- [24] Louisville's Property Value Assessment, 2014.

