Troy Community Opinions Analytical Report
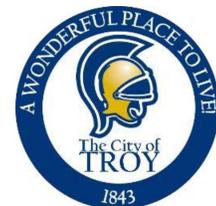
February 2017

Acknowledgements

This project was conducted as a joint effort between the Department of Social Science and Leadership at Troy University and the Office of the Mayor for the City of Troy. The following individuals contributed to the success of this project.

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Please know that a heartfelt thank you is due to the residents of Troy who took the time out of their busy schedules to participate in the series of focus groups. Without their assistance, this project would not have been possible.

Front cover photo credits: Jonah Enfinger Photography, City of Troy Website (www.troyal.gov).

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The mayor of the city of Troy, Mr. Jason Reeves, is dedicated to improving the quality of education, the quality of the economy, and the quality of life for the citizens of Troy. In order to successfully achieve these goals, it is important for Mayor Reeves to have accurate and up-to-date information concerning the opinions of the residents of Troy.

Troy is a warm and friendly community nestled in the heart of lower Alabama. Approximately one-third of the town's residents are college students who attend Troy University, and around one in every ten residents are age 65 or older. In order to better understand the needs and desires of his constituents, Mayor Reeves agreed to allow Dr. Christopher Bradley and his two undergraduate interns, Ms. Selena McEwen and Ms. Taylor Nowlin, to design a research project that would obtain feedback from Troy residents.

The current research project was designed to gather opinions from three key demographics of the Troy community via a series of focus groups. The project sampled participants from three key demographics:
   • college students (i.e., persons ages 19 to 64 who attend Troy University);
   • senior citizens (i.e., persons who are age 65 and older), and;
   • adult residents of Troy (i.e., persons ages 19 to 64 who are not attending Troy University).

The primary rationale for conducting this research project was to provide Mayor Reeves with information concerning the opinions of the residents of Troy. Additionally, the project helped two Troy University undergraduate students (Selena McEwen and Taylor Nowlin) with an internship opportunity that would allow them to obtain hands-on experience with focus group research methods and techniques.

Mode of Administration

Data were collected for this project by way of three focus groups that were conducted on September 16th, 2016. The first focus group was comprised of senior residents of Troy who were not currently attending Troy University, while the second focus group was comprised of Troy residents age 19 to 64 who were not currently Troy University students. The final focus group was comprised of Troy University college students age 19 or older.

As Neuman (2011) notes, a focus group is a qualitative data collection method that allows an interviewer to discuss issues with several individuals simultaneously. The advantage of a focus group is that it allows for an open discussion among the members of the group whereby ideas and commentary can be generated synergistically. It should be noted that the use of a focus group to gather data is common within American society. Indeed, it was estimated by Nelemes (2003) that approximately 200,000 focus groups were conducted in 2003 alone, a statistic which suggests that the focus group is a common data collection method.

Although a focus group is a commonly used qualitative data collection method, it should be noted that the information generated in a focus group has the disadvantage of not being generalizable to a larger population of people. In other words, the data gathered in a focus group is reflective of the opinions of the members of the focus group, and not the population from which the members of the focus group were drawn. Nevertheless, the ability of a focus group to take a quick snapshot of public opinion is a distinct advantage that is typically not present in other data collection methods.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedures

The population of interest for this project was Troy residents who were age 19 or older. According to current Census Bureau estimates, the population of Troy in July 2015 was 18,696. A total of 15 residents from this population agreed to enroll as voluntarily participants within the study. Specifically, three demographics within this population were targeted: college students (i.e., persons ages 19 to 64 who attend Troy University), senior citizens (i.e., persons who are age 65 and older who are not attending Troy University), and adult residents of Troy (i.e., persons ages 19 to 64 who are not attending Troy University).

In order to solicit participants from the college student demographic, a solicitation letter was hand-delivered to a convenience sample of approximately 100 students who were enrolled in school at Troy University. As Neuman (2011) notes, a convenience sample is one that is selected on the basis of subjects being easy to reach or being readily available. A total of four students agreed to participate within the college student focus group.

In order to solicit participants from the adult residents demographic, a solicitation letter was hand-delivered to a convenience sample of approximately 100 adults who were residents of Troy. A total of five residents agreed to participate within the adult resident focus group.

In order to solicit participants from the senior citizen demographic, a solicitation letter was hand-delivered to a convenience sample of approximately 100 seniors who were residents of Troy. A total of six seniors agreed to participate within the senior citizen focus group.

Once contact was established with the research subjects who agreed to participate within the focus groups, a date and time was scheduled for the respondents to show up and participate in one of the three different focus groups. A follow-up letter, along with a map of directions to the location of the focus groups, was sent to those persons who agreed to participate.

Focus Group Location

All three focus groups were conducted at the Troy Public Library in Troy, Alabama. The ability to conduct all three focus groups at the Troy Public Library was due to the generous cooperation of the Library Director, Mr. William White, and the Assistant Library Director, Ms. Karen Bullard.

Data Collection Technique

All three focus groups were conducted on September 16th, 2016. The senior citizen focus group was conducted at 10:30 a.m., while the adult resident focus group was conducted at 12:00 p.m. The college student focus group was conducted at 2:00 p.m. All three focus groups were video recorded for accuracy of information and later transcription of responses; in addition, all three focus groups were audio recorded as a redundancy in case there were any technical problems with the video recording process.

Once respondents arrived at their scheduled focus group, each participant was issued a $20.00 incentive for participating within the focus group. After the incentive was distributed, all of the participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form. After completing this document, the focus group moderator then led a given focus group through a semi-structured discussion centered on the questions contained in the moderator's script (see Appendix). As a focus group is generally intended to be a semi-structured environment (Neuman, 2011), the moderator's script was used as a guide to stimulate discussion among respondents concerning the questions in the script.

It should be noted here that any information that could potentially link a respondent back to his or her answers was redacted from all focus group transcriptions prior to all data analyses. Pseudonyms were substituted for the names of respondents in each focus group transcription in an effort to increase respondent anonymity. Institutional Review Board approval was obtained from Troy University prior to the onset of all data collection. The average length of a focus group was approximately 36 minutes, with the range being between 17 minutes and 48 minutes.

Data Analysis Technique

The open-ended data within the transcriptions for the three focus groups were analyzed via a qualitative inductive coding strategy. Themes within the qualitative data were identified and developed for each question as part of an initial data exploration. Each identified theme was then cross-referenced for any notable similarities among response types in an effort to develop overarching themes for the four primary questions asked during the focus groups. Qualitative data analysis was accomplished with the aid of QSR International's NVivo 10 data analysis software.

Findings are presented in the report in three different sections: these include (1) focus group data analysis, (2) demographics, and (3) takeaway points.

Question 1. It has been said that Troy is not a college town, but rather a town with a college in it. Do you think Troy should be turned into a college town?

Senior Citizens Opinions

Among the senior citizen respondents, the general consensus was that it would not be a good idea to have Troy become a college town, as doing so might diminish quality of life for town residents who are not involved with the college. Opinions among the seniors also suggested that turning Troy into a college town would make the town a little bit messier and a little bit louder than it already is. As Elizabeth pointed out,

> I have college students in my neighborhood, too. As a rule, the neighbors in the established area prefer not to have college students. They're not quite as quiet... They're not as quiet. They're not as particular and careful about their yards and stuff like that.

The senior citizen respondents also expressed doubt as to whether or not the city of Troy could even be turned into a college town.

> Elizabeth: I don't know how you'd make it into a college town in the first place. I mean there's already a college here and I think it's as much of a college town now as it could ever be. I can't see you turning it into just a college town.

When asked if Troy should be a college town, several of the seniors expressed concerns about the summertime when college students would be away from Troy:

> Darlene: And when, during the summer or when they are not in here...
>
> Jennifer: It would be dead.
>
> Darlene: It would be dead here without [them].
>
> Elizabeth: And the grass isn't cut in the houses where they live.

Adult Resident Opinions

In contrast to the senior citizen demographic, the adult town residents were generally supportive of the notion of Troy becoming a college town. As Thomas noted, he agreed "whole-heartedly" with the idea as a way to solve the fact that there seemed to be a "disconnect" between the campus and the downtown area. Thomas went on to state that

> in fact, I was just talking to someone about it today. It seems like with each new semester, the class schedule seems to dictate the busy times or slow times on the square downtown, and you can never really make heads or tails of it.

Eddie quickly followed up Thomas' comments with his suggestion of how to turn Troy into more of a college town:

> I don't know if the shuttle service that Troy University uses could make mandatory routes through the downtown square area so that students can see the square, whether they're going there or not. They might have to drive through there and stop and open the door and say, "You want off here at the town square?", and they can get off if they want to and go to the best pastry shop in Troy and South Alabama, or Mama Goldberg's, or shopping in any of the other locations.

When Stephanie noted that Troy is a place with "a college inside of a town" where there was "not a lot of interaction" between the college and the town, Lori noted that there used to be more.

> There used to be... I went to the university, but it was 20 years ago, and there was more of an interaction back then than there is now. It's like it's separated now, but back then there was, you know, you could go as long as you had your ID, you could get a discount anywhere. They did cater more to the university then than they do now.

College Student Opinions

The college students in the focus group universally supported the idea that Troy should be a college town.

> Ginger: I think it would be great if there were more things that catered to college students... It would be nice to have more 24-hour things and more things that are open late at night and delivery things.

> Katie: Yeah, I agree with that... Like she said, it is hard to do things when you do have a community that's not for college students that are here all the time.

> Ronald: Pretty much the same thing.

> Focus Group Moderator: Do you have anything?

> Rebecca: Nah, I agree with what they say.

First follow-up to question 1. If Troy were to become a college town, what kind of establishments would you like to see in Troy?

Senior Citizens Opinions

The majority of the senior citizens suggested that any new establishments should cater to both

Troy University college students and the residents of Troy who are not college students. Suggestions among the senior citizens included the building of a Cracker Barrel, a Panera Bread, or an otherwise well-known franchise restaurant.

Adult Resident Opinions

Like the senior citizens, the majority of the adult town residents also favored the construction of more restaurant choices. That said, one of the town residents (Eddie) suggested that more "watering holes for students and the general public" be made available. Coffee shops were also raised as a possible alternative to the fast food options that are currently available in town by several respondents.

College Student Opinions

When presented with the question, the college students in the focus group stated that they would like to see more shopping places, more coffee shops, and more restaurants. One point that was raised among the college students what that any new options should be affordable:

> Katie: We're broke college students; you know, we don't have a whole lot of money, and if we just need something like quick on the go and we just needed to look nice its kind of hard to just have a shop that's cheap but nice at the same time.

A number of the participants in the college student focus group noted that they would like to see more options in town that were open around the clock. An exchange among the members of the focus group and the focus group moderator illustrates this point:

> Katie: I'd really like a coffee shop as well.

> Ginger: Yeah.

> Katie: Like a 24-hour coffee shop. Village Coffee is the bomb, but...

> Focus Group Moderator: They have really weird hours.

> Ronald: Kinda small too.

> Katie: Yeah, they have limited hours and I need coffee at all hours.

> Ginger: This summer there was this place close to where we had Beach Project and they did breakfast. It was this little tiny shop and they had donuts all day and had some breakfast biscuits and had some cheeseburgers and stuff and were open till late. Opened early morning and open till late, but it was a variety of things. It would be nice to just have something like that where you could get a variety of things and it's open late. Honestly,

anything open till late would be great.

Focus Group Moderator: Besides Waffle House.

Ginger: Yeah, besides Waffle House.

Second follow-up to question 1. If Troy were to become a college town, what kind of festivals or events would you like to see in Troy?

Senior Citizens Opinions

The senior citizens had no suggestions concerning festivals or events.

Adult Resident Opinions

The adult town residents suggested a variety of possibilities, including a chamber music festival, an expansion of existing events (such as 5th Saturday and A Little Taste of Pike County), and the construction of a skating rink.

College Student Opinions

The college students suggested the expansion of the existing farmers market and the possibility of having more concerts.

Third follow-up to question 1. If Troy were to become a college town, what do other college towns do that you would like to see Troy do?

Senior Citizens Opinions

The senior citizens had no suggestions concerning what the city of Troy could do that would be similar to other college towns.

Adult Resident Opinions

The adult town residents suggested a new shopping mall and more clothing stores as possible options. As part of the discussion concerning this question, Stephanie and Thomas had a conversation where they suggested that any new shopping be aimed at serving the diverse student population of Troy University.

> Stephanie: I think it's just about inclusion, you know, if you're coming to Troy you kind of, you don't know what it is first. You're just kind of like, "Well where am I supposed to

go for this, where am I supposed to go for that?" And even though I've been here for four year living only in Troy, I've been in Alabama for fourteen, but in Troy for the better part of six years, four consistently, and it's hard for me to find things.

Thomas: Well, my honest opinion, you've said the word diversity, made me think that, I think being a little southern town, a lot of our [residents] are very backward and not progressive, and so people think that businesses are not inclusive, [that they] don't cater to everyone. And we have, you know, a lot of international students, a lot of Muslim students, and we have a reputation for being an old southern town.

Stephanie: (Laughs) Yes, I'd agree with that, and there are a lot of international students. Troy's very well known for their international programs, and I think that is in and of itself a very big key to helping the city grow and improve. If we, you know, include...

Thomas: Be more open.

Stephanie: ...in the type of garment districts that we put out, the type of clothing, the type of foods, activities that, you know, there might be a multicultural day that you can have on the square.

College Student Opinions

The college students generally thought that the best thing to make Troy more of a college town would be to have more partnerships between local businesses and Troy University. One example would be to have local restaurants partner with the university for the benefit of college students:

Ginger: One time I stayed with my cousin, she goes to Vanderbilt, and they did this cool thing where some of the restaurants there are partnered with the school. You could use your flex points at the restaurants, local restaurants, and they weren't like school restaurants or anything, they just had partnerships. I don't really know how it all works, but it was really nice because it was like you were getting to eat at some healthy places... Like there's this kosher Jewish place, and you could use your flex points there and just a bunch of other different options, you know?

Another college student in the focus group, Rebecca, continued the line of thought concerning Ginger's example:

Rebecca: That's pretty cool that a business would partner with [the university]. I think it'd be cool if more businesses would do something like that for students. I wouldn't always just say discounts, but maybe rewards or something, you know? I'd have more of an incentive to go and spend money.

Question 2. What do you think about living in Troy?

Senior Citizen Opinions

Opinions about life in Troy were universally positive within the senior citizen focus group. Terms such as "friendly," "small-town atmosphere," "wonderful," "love," and "great place to live" were used several times during the conversation about living in the city of Troy. Several excerpts from the transcripts illustrate this point.

> Jennifer: One thing is the lack of traffic, and the other thing is the friendliness of the people. They seem to be more caring, and I have more friends here than I have ever had anywhere else that I have lived my entire life.

> Lauren: I love the small town atmosphere… I love it, and what she was saying that she knows everybody, and the reason that she knows everybody better now, we have a fabulous senior center.

> Monica: I think we have a wonderful, a great place to live.

> Lauren: I love Troy. We have an art center, people come and go, we have Troy University that we take advantage of all the time, we have our Troy Arts Counsel, whatever we have, four, five, six times a year there.

One of the more interesting conversational tangents that emerged from asking this question involved the senior citizens center in the city of Troy. Although feelings about the senior citizens center were generally positive, a few of the members of the senior citizen focus group did note that there was room for improvement.

> Lauren: [The senior center] on Elm Street. We're hoping to get rid of that one, sell it to Troy University and buy, let us have [a new] one… A couple things I would like to see: a place, a patio home area that would have a common building that we could do things in, you know, even have music come in, that kind of thing. Games, a pool even. We [seniors] are in desperate need of that… We need a step down, assisted living. I have been to see in Dothan, they've got this wonderful place and it's called Grove Park. It's across from the hospital there, Flowers Hospital. We need something like that.

> Elizabeth: Well I hate to sound like Negative Nelly (laughs) but I've lived in other places and I don't like cities either, but I do like having things to do. And to me it's sort of sad that the only place we have to go is the senior center. I would like to have somewhere to go to, relax and walk around a little bit, and that walking trail can't count because it's up a big hill and down another one and in the woods.

Adult Resident Opinions

The adult town residents also generally agreed that life in Troy was good, and that this was due to the fact that the city of Troy had a "small-town feel."

> Lori: I like the small town feel... I like the community feeling that everybody knows everybody, you know? You know your friends, you probably grew up with your friends, they are still there, and I just like the small town feel.

It was also the case that this "small-town feel" was viewed as helpful among the members of the Troy community:

> Stephanie: When you have the opportunity to help someone else, that's a good feeling, and the morale that is boosted from that person will spread to the next person. That is a contagious feeling and to help is, you know, a part of what a community is supposed to do.

College Student Opinions

Among college students, opinions about Troy were also generally positive. That said, the general consensus among the college students was that there should be more things to do within the town that will benefit college students.

> Katie: I love it, I just wish there was more to do.

> Katie: I feel like a lot of times I just end up staying on campus, and if you're not one of the party people, you don't really have a whole lot to do... Other than that I love the town and I love the community.

> Ronald: You got to leave Troy to go do something.

> Ginger: It is really hard if you're not into partying to have something to do. I think that really stinks.

First follow-up to question 2. What do you think of the sidewalks?

The consensus opinion found in all three focus groups is that more could be done to improve the quality of sidewalks within the city of Troy.

Second follow-up to question 2. What do you think of the hospital?

Opinions among the senior citizens concerning the hospital were generally positive, with phrases such as "very good" and "great place" being used to describe the hospital. Among adult town residents, opinions about the hospital were not quite as good. One participant within the adult

town resident focus group (Lori) described the hospital as "the edge of death," while another participant (Thomas) opined that "our hospital has probably the worst reputation of any in Southeast Alabama." Opinions of the hospital among the college students aligned with the opinions expressed in the adult town focus group. Phrases such as "creepy," "it scares me," and "sketchy" were used to describe the hospital. The general consensus among the college students was one of trying to avoid the hospital if possible. An excerpt from Katie underscores this point: "if I want to go to the doctor if it's an emergency, I'm gonna be like, take me to Dothan."

Third follow-up to question 2. What do you think of the quality of the drinking water?

Opinions concerning the quality of drinking water in Troy were generally negative in all three focus groups. Words like "greasy" and "tastes weird" were used by focus group members to describe city tap water. Several of the focus groups members noted how they filter their tap water, while other focus group members noted that they prefer to use bottled water instead of city tap water. That said, one of the members of the adult town resident focus group noted how the city tap water in Troy was much better than tap water in Los Angeles.

Fourth follow-up to question 2. What do you think of the Troy police department and Troy police officers?

Statements made by members of all three focus groups concerning the Troy police department were universally positive. Phrases such as "wonderful," "always been really nice," "very professional," and "I admire them greatly" were used by participants. One focus group participant (Stephanie) stated that she felt that Troy police officers were "not given enough credit" for the job that they do. Several of the senior citizens noted how the Troy police were willing to provide assistance no matter what task was.

> Lauren: One night I heard something in my trashcan I think, anyway, I heard a noise, and I went out there and behind my recycle cans where it was, there was an opossum with these beady eyes, you know how they're the ugliest things ever. And so I tried to throw something to make him leave and he wouldn't, he just bowed up, so I went to the phone to call the police station and they said, "What is your emergency?" and I said, "I don't have an emergency, but I would like one of the guys to come out here and get this opossum." They came.

> Elizabeth: One day my dog and I walked up to the front door and just from here to there I could see a big snake on my front door. It's an enclosed area which means it was kind of trapped unless it came straight toward me. I couldn't think of the other number so I had to call 911 and say, "This might not be an emergency to you, but it is an emergency to me." And two or three of them came: the animal control officer, another fella who lives in the neighborhood and wanted to make sure it wasn't a poisonous snake in the neighborhood, and a third one [a police officer], they just all came. Unfortunately they didn't find the snake, but they all came.

Fifth follow-up to question 2. What do you think of traffic in Troy?

General opinions among the members of the three focus groups were that traffic is occasionally an issue in Troy, depending on the time of day and the presence of trains near the downtown area. Words such as "hectic," "congested," "terrible," "horrible," and "bumper to bumper" were used to describe traffic within the city of Troy. Several suggestions to ameliorate congested traffic conditions in Troy included using more traffic lights, putting up more stop signs, and creating more service roads as a way to aid with traffic flow. An exchange among several of the members of the adult town resident focus group centered on how trains often interfere with traffic in the downtown area.

> Lori: That train parks around my house, right over and it stays there and the refrigeration on it is constantly going so all you hear is this low hum all the time, and it gets annoying.

> Stephanie: I thought you meant like, oh you know, the train will come and it will block traffic.

> Thomas: Occasionally it does.

> Lori: It does, right, sometimes.

> Stephanie: Yeah, we have all been through that. Trying to get around the train.

> Thomas. And there is only one overpass on Elm Street. That's it.

Sixth follow-up to question 2. Do you have any problems with vermin, bugs, or cats, and if so, what can be done to fix the vermin, bug, or cat problem?

A wide variety of vermin were mentioned in response to this particular follow-up question. Focus group members noted how they occasionally had problems with raccoons, opossums, deer, armadillos, wild turkeys, and snakes. That said, every respondent did comment about how the city of Troy has an issue with the feral cat population. The primary solution that was suggested to combat the feral cat population was to construct a humane shelter; otherwise, the attitude of focus group members was one of how wild animals are to be expected in a small town. This viewpoint is best illustrated through a comment made by Jennifer:

> But then like I said, there's gonna be snakes and there's gonna be bugs and there's gonna be wild animals wherever you live.

Question 3. What do you think could be done to improve the overall quality of life in Troy? In other words, what specific services could the city of Troy provide to you to improve your overall quality of life?

Senior Citizen Opinions

Although the participants within the senior citizen focus group agreed that quality of life in the city of Troy was very good, they also agreed that there could be some room for improvement. Specifically, more choices for shopping, more job opportunities, more public transportation options, and a greater development of recreational activities were all cited as areas for improvement.

> Monica: More choice of shopping... We have to go to Montgomery or Dothan or Enterprise if you can't find it at Wal-Mart and you can't always find things at Wal-Mart... It would be nice to have a department store.
>
> Anna: I would say job opportunities, particularly for college grads, local people. They don't have opportunity here.
>
> Jennifer: I would like something done about transportation. I mean there are no, there are no busses, there are no taxis.
>
> Lauren: I don't go in this area much, but off of Murphree Street there used to be Murphree Park, and that could be developed where it would be something like, you know, it used to be wonderful for children. They had children's areas and they had picnic areas so do some type of the art things, some really good things that, in that area, for children all the way through seniors. That would be a good place for the patio home area.

Adult Resident Opinions

As was the case in the senior citizens focus group, more public transportation options were also suggested as a way to raise quality of life in Troy during the adult town resident focus group. The adult town residents also discussed the possibility of creating activities that would allow for more time to be spent between parents and children.

> Stephanie: We have a lot of moms who are at home, dads who are at home that just need somewhere for their kids to go other than a park. Maybe an indoor facility where they can kind of bounce off the walls and not get hurt, maybe a 'mommy and me' type of class? It would be nice to have just something like that... to have an option for those who want to take a ceramics class or an art class or some sort of hands-on recreational activity.

College Student Opinions

The college students also agreed that quality of life in the city of Troy was generally high, but as

was the case with the senior citizens and the adult town residents, the college students had a few suggestions on how to raise quality of life further. These suggestions included the construction of a miniature golf course and a bowling alley. Embedded within all of the suggestions made by the college students was a desire for more options that would be open late at night.

Question 4. Do you know who the Mayor of Troy is?

When directly asked this question, all six of the senior citizens, all five of the adult town residents, and two of the four college students indicated that they knew who the mayor was. Several of the respondents across all three focus groups indicated that they had voted for Mayor Reeves in the most recent mayoral election.

First follow-up to question 4. What do you think of the job that the mayor is doing?

Opinions concerning the job the mayor is doing were universally positive among the members of the three different focus groups. Although a single respondent did note that there was always room for improvement, the general consensus was that the mayor is doing an excellent job. Several excerpts from the transcriptions attest to this point.

> I have to say, he takes care of the seniors. (Lauren, senior citizens focus group participant)

> I think he is doing an excellent job. I think since he's taken over being mayor, Troy has grown a lot. I don't want to say anything bad about the previous mayor, but [Mayor Reeves] has done a lot to grow the city. (Lori, adult town resident focus group participant)

> I agree that our previous mayor did a wonderful job, but Mayor Reeves has come in with fresh eyes and a new vision and new ideas. In the first four years there has been a lot of attention and focus on Troy growing its infrastructure and in [growing] every department in the city of Troy, whether police or fire or public works or parks and recreation... He is just a fine Christian man. (Eddie, adult town resident focus group participant)

> The fact the city is growing would attest to his leadership. The short time I've been here Troy has been better, it's growing, it's becoming more inclusive, and more resources are getting to the smaller areas of the city. (Stephanie, adult town resident focus group participant)

> I think he's done well! (Ginger, college student focus group participant)

> Being a freshman, I don't know much about the mayor or anything he's really been doing, so it was nice to walk into class like that, the mayor was gonna want to have a focus group to hear from the students. It's nice to know that your opinion is wanted... It's nice to know that you are heard. (Rebecca, college student focus group participant)

Second follow-up to question 4. What could the mayor do that would make life in Troy better for you?

One suggestion that was voiced across all three focus groups was a desire to have more opportunities to provide feedback to the mayor of Troy. Several of the focus group respondents indicated that they enjoyed participating within the focus group and that they would like to see similar opportunities to provide feedback to the mayor.

> Elizabeth: I think he could have some open forums like this and ask people what they would like.

> Jennifer: Yeah, I think that's a very good idea, listen to the citizens periodically.

> Stephanie: I'm glad that you all are doing this. It's one thing to talk among ourselves that this needs to change, but I'm glad that there's actually a focus group that's pushing for the issues we are concerned with and trying to see what the best solution is.

> Ginger: The fact that he's trying to even hear us is so nice. I appreciate that and I think that's cool to just keep reaching out.

A second suggestion that emerged spontaneously within the adult town resident's focus group was the possibility of growing the town square into some of the city blocks adjacent to the square.
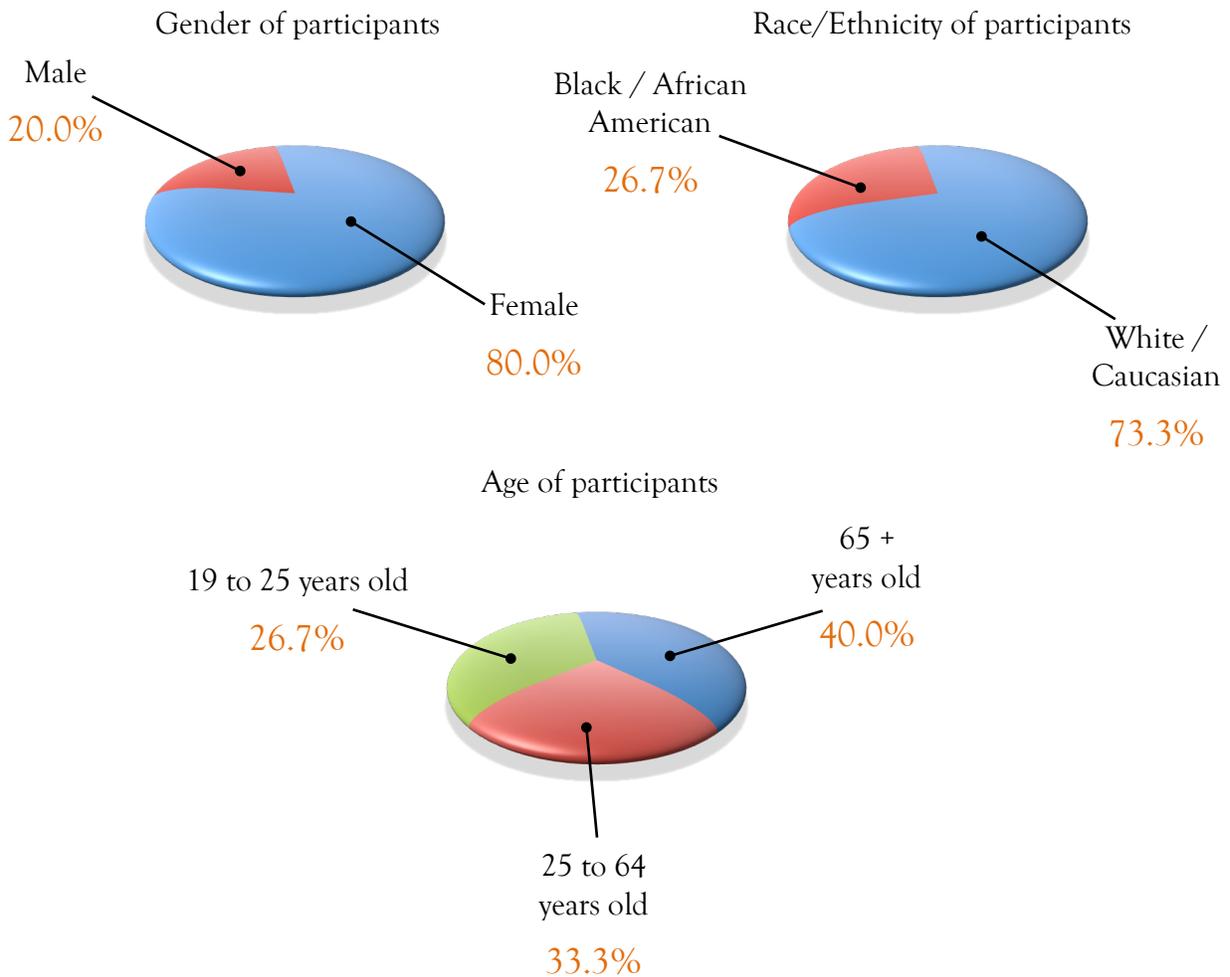
> Eddie: There are a couple of streets [where there] are businesses that have been closed for twenty, thirty, forty years if not more, and it would be great if all those secondary streets would have businesses with restaurants and gift shops.

> Thomas: It would be good to see the square grow beyond the square!

> Eddie: Yes sir, yes sir, and I know for the business owners and property owners that may not be viable investment, but if it's through grant money or if it is deemed a historic downtown area, that would be even more of a reason for people to go to the downtown area.

> Thomas: I know that some of the businesses that are there a block off the square feel left out of the conversation a lot.

> Eddie: I can see that, and it just that something would have to change with perception that there's more to downtown than just what's on that square, that there's a great restaurant and it not on the square, its right off and next to it is that coffee shop.

Gender of participants

Male
20.0%

Female
80.0%

Race/Ethnicity of participants

Black / African American
26.7%

White / Caucasian
73.3%

Age of participants

65 + years old
40.0%

19 to 25 years old
26.7%

25 to 64 years old
33.3%

Senior Citizen Demographics
- All six focus group participants were female.
- All six focus group participants were age 65 or older.
- Five of the focus group participants were White/Caucasian, while one focus group participant was Black/African American.

Adult Resident Demographics
- Three of the focus group participants were female and two were male.
- All five focus group participants were between the ages of 19 and 64 years old.
- Two of the focus group participants were White/Caucasian, while three focus group participants were Black/African American.

College Student Demographics
- Three of the focus group participants were female and one was male.
- All four focus group participants were between the ages of 19 and 25 years old.
- All four of the focus group participants were White/Caucasian.

- Generally speaking, both the college students and the adult town residents were in favor of transforming Troy into a college town. The senior citizens were against the idea.

- Most of the focus group participants favored the construction of more restaurants in the city of Troy. Both the adult residents and the college students voiced their support for more coffee shops; that said, the college students indicated an additional desire for affordable shopping. Finally, the college students stated how they would like to see dining options that were available 24 hours a day.

- In terms of shopping, it was noted how issues of inclusivity and diversity should be respected when providing new shopping options. College students also suggested partnerships between the university and local shopping options.

- All three focus groups held positive opinions about living in the city of Troy. That said, it was the opinion of focus groups members that city sidewalks, the local hospital, and city tap water could be improved. The Troy police department received high praise from all focus group participants. Traffic was seen as a problem, depending on location and time of day. Finally, the feral cat population in Troy was seen as an issue that needs to be addressed.

- All of the participants within the three focus groups agreed that quality of life in the city of Troy was very good. That said, all participants agreed that there could be room for improvement. Suggestions for improvement in quality of life included more choices for shopping, more job opportunities, more public transportation options, and a greater number of recreational activities available to town residents.

- All but two of the 15 focus group participants knew who the mayor was. Opinions concerning the mayor were universally positive. Focus group participants enjoyed having the opportunity to provide feedback to the mayor via a focus group and would look forward to doing so again in the future. A suggestion for improvement involved growing the downtown area beyond the central town square area.

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Moderator Script

Good (MORNING/AFTERNOON)! My name is (INSERT NAME HERE) and I will be serving as the moderator for this focus group. Assisting me this (MORNING/AFTERNOON) is (INSERT NAME HERE), who will be taking notes during the session.

Before we start, I'd like to say thanks to all of you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to let us know your opinions about living in Troy. The information you provide will be used by the Mayor of Troy to determine how he can better serve the needs of residents in our town.

This focus group will last between 45 and 50 minutes, so we should be out of here within the hour. We are both video and audio recording this session, but only so we can have an accurate transcript of the session. All of the information we collect will be kept strictly confidential with respect to who provided it. None of your names will be linked to your answers, and the recordings will be destroyed after we transcribe everything. So please, feel free to speak plainly, as we want your honest opinions here.

Also, please be aware that you will receive a $20.00 incentive regardless of whether or not you participate within the entirety of the focus group. In fact, I would like to distribute your incentive at this time (HAND OUT SEALED ENVELOPES THAT CONTAIN MONETARY INCENTIVE). Now that we have handed out the incentive, I would like to go over the process of informed consent (READ CONSENT FORM ALOUD, HAVE RESPONDENTS SIGN THE FORM).

(START RECORDING DEVICES ONLY AFTER INFORMED CONSENT IS COMPLETE)

To start with, let's all introduce ourselves (START WITH MODERATOR, GO AROUND THE TABLE AND HAVE EVERYONE SAY THEIR NAME AND THEIR OCCUPATION).

OK, now that we know one another, let me begin with an easy question.

1. It has been said that Troy is not a college town, but rather a town with a college in it. Do you think Troy should be turned into a college town?

(POSSIBLE PROMPTS)

- (IF YES) Why? (IF NO) Why not?
- If Troy were to become a college town…
- What kind of establishments would you like to see in Troy?
- What kind of festivals or events would you like to see in Troy?
- What do other college towns do that you would like to see Troy do?

2. What do you think about living in Troy?

(POSSIBLE PROMPTS)

- What do you think of the sidewalks?
- What do you think of the hospital?
- What do you think of the quality of the drinking water?
- What do you think of the Troy police department and Troy police officers?
- What do you think of traffic in Troy?
- Do you have any problems with vermin, bugs, or cats? (IF YES) What can be done to fix the vermin, bug, or cat problem?

3. What do you think could be done to improve the overall quality of life in Troy? In other words, what specific services could the city of Troy provide to you to improve your overall quality of life?

4. Do you know who the Mayor of Troy is?

(POSSIBLE PROMPTS)

- What do you think of the job that the mayor is doing?
- What could the mayor do that would make life in Troy better for you?

That concludes the focus group- I'd like to again thank everyone for participating!