

Survey says ...

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Participants in the Livability Learning Lab of the 2016 RCCI Emerging Leaders Cadre set out last year to learn what residents of Rapid City both liked and disliked about their community. The Emerging Leaders wanted to ensure that the pool of respondents closely represented the city's demographics based on U.S. Census data, even targeting populations they saw were underrepresented in their initial survey efforts. In total, more than 830 livability surveys were completed in 2016. The following is a look at the preliminary results.

Age Group Categories

Youth, 2003-2010	24	2.86%
Millennial, 1983-2002	213	25.39%
Generation X, 1965-1982	340	40.52%
Baby Boomer, 1945-1964	238	28.37%
The Great Generation, 1900-1945	24	2.86%

Total respondents 839

What do you like best about living in Rapid City? (Answers listed were named by more than 4% of the respondents. Totals are more than 100% because each person had 3 answers to give.)

Black Hills	82%
Downtown	32%
Size	22%
People	20%
Parks and nature	12%
Location	8%
Climate	6%

Arts	5%
Family friendly activities	4%
Entertainment	4%
Shopping	4%

What do you like least? (Answers listed were named by more than 4% of the respondents. Totals are more than 100% because each person had 3 answers to give.)

Racism	50%
Crime	25%
Homelessness	25%
Traffic, construction, and roads	24%
Lack of affordable housing	23%
Cost-of-living	18%
Not enough events and activities	17%
Transportation system	17%
Too much drugs and alcohol	15%
Weather	12%
Economy/economic development	10%
Airport	10%
Political climate	8%
Not enough bike lanes	7%
Lousy government	7%
Schools	7%
Downtown parking	5%
Healthcare options	4%
Shopping	4%

If you could change only one thing, what would that be?

This section provided considerably more variability in answers as they were often quite long. In order to effectively categorize the answers, the analyst team combined answers into broader categories. These total 100% as there were only one answer allowed. The categories mentioned the most are:

Education	21%*
More affordable housing	13%
More economic development	10%
Help the homeless	10%
Improve race relations	8%
More activities	7%



Coordination of social services	4%
Drugs and crime	4%
More career opportunities	3%
Better public transportation	3%
Less construction	3%
Younger people migrating to RC	2%
Better paying jobs	1%
Help residents of the North side	1%
Less road construction	1%
Stronger families	1%
Outdoor water park	1%
Other	7%

*Answers around education were challenging to categorize. Clearly some wanted improved educational system; others wanted better resources for the education system, and others just wrote down one word, "Education." Other answers were variants on the above and a bit challenging to categorize. Our best estimate divides this category into:

Improve the educational system/public schools	7%
More resources for the school system	6%
"Education"	5%
Other	3%

Notes

According to 2016 Emerging Leader and Livability Learning Lab participant Michelle Schuelke, the livability survey's simple design was intentional so that it may be implemented several times over the course of numerous years or decades. "It's not critical that it be conducted annually," she said, "But a more reasonable expectation would be to reopen it on a periodic basis, say every three years."

Schuelke adds that further data mining could be done, as "the synopsis is that of averages, but certain demographic indicators may have drastically different results when we isolate populations." It is likely the data mining work will continue with the next cadre of Emerging Leaders in 2018, and the more information gained from it, the better.

"These results can help guide business development, advance arts and recreational activities, address affordable housing and fair wages, improve race relations and build a more caring community," Schuelke said.