

Sterling, KS

Strategic Planning

December 19, 2005



Ranson Financial Consultants, L.L.C.

Strategic Planning

- The results indicated here reflect 19 residents' differing opinions from focus group research conducted on November 12, 2005.

- There were 18 surveys administered in addition to the focus group sessions. This small number of citizens represents a mere snapshot of the community. The results are directional but they are not projectable. This is also true for the surveys administered.

Issues Affecting The Future of Sterling

1. Quality of Life in Sterling
2. Sterling's Regional Economy
3. Life in Sterling
4. Possible Improvements Downtown
5. Possible Park Improvements
6. Impression of City Employees
7. City of Sterling Services
8. City Communications With the Public
9. Funding of City Services
10. Future City Funding

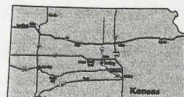
Top 10 Issues Affecting the Future of Sterling

1. To attract and keep young families
2. Assist in creating and maintaining attractive schools and college campuses
3. Continue to improve Sterling's downtown area
4. Maintain quality City services
5. Market and promote the city as a great place to live and work

Top 10 Issues Affecting the Future of Sterling

6. Promote redevelopment of commercial properties
7. Provide cost effective City services that meet the needs of users
8. Promote community involvement and service opportunities
9. Maintain access to regional jobs, goods, and services
10. Require that property be kept up in appearance

Focus Group



Issues Affecting the Future of Sterling

(5 = Very Important... 1 = Not Important)

Attract and keep young families	4.94
Assist in creating and maintaining attractive schools and college campuses	4.89
Continue to improve Sterling's downtown area	4.61
Maintain quality City services	4.56
Market and promote the City as a great place to live and work	4.44

Issues Affecting the Future of Sterling

(5 = Very Important... 1 = Not Important)

Promote redevelopment of commercial properties	4.44
Provide cost-effective City services that meet the needs of users	4.35
Promote community involvement and service opportunities	4.28
Maintain access to regional jobs, goods, and services	4.12
Require that property be kept up to appearance	4.11

Focus Group



Quality of Life in Sterling

(5 = Excellent, 3 = Fair, 1 = Poor)

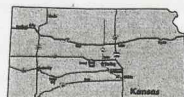
- Overall quality of life in Sterling 4.33
- Quality of schools 4.94
- How would you rate Sterling as a place to raise children 4.89
- Overall appearance of the city 4.77
- How would you rate the quality of your immediate neighborhood 4.33
- How would you rate Sterling as a place to live when retired 4.33

Quality of Life in Sterling

(5 = Excellent, 3 = Fair, 1 = Poor)

- How would you rate Sterling as a place for teens 4.28
- Opportunities to serve others through community organizations (civic groups) 4.22
- Travel on paved streets and highways 4.00
- Sense of community acceptance, friendliness, belonging 3.94
- Housing value (assessed valuation) 3.56
- How would you rate Sterling as a place for young single adults to live 2.89
- Travel on unpaved roads 2.56

Focus Group

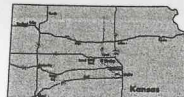


Sterling's Regional Economy

(5 = Excellent, 3 = Fair, 1 = Poor)

- Opportunities to participate in/watch sporting events 4.26
- Opportunities to attend cultural activities 4.06
- Opportunities for personal recreation - Biking, swimming, hiking, etc. 3.56
- Access to shopping and dining 3.28
- Access to jobs 3.11
- Opportunities for peer social interaction - night life, dating, etc. 2.78

Focus Group



Life in Sterling

(5 = True, 3 = Somewhat True, 1 = Not True)

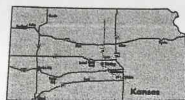
- "I need/want to live in Rice County and Sterling is the best choice." 4.78
- "I would recommend Sterling to my friends." 4.61
- "I like Sterling better than other communities surrounding the greater Wichita/Hutchinson area." 4.50
- "The next time I move, I will consider remaining in Sterling." 4.39
- "I can afford a better home than in other suburban communities." 4.00
- "I would move somewhere else if I could afford to." 1.50

Life in Sterling

(5 = True, 3 = Somewhat True, 1 = Not True)

- "I feel safe in Sterling." 4.89
- "I feel safe walking downtown after dark." 4.94
- "I feel safe from crime walking alone at night in my neighborhood." 4.83
- "I feel safe walking at Sterling Lake after dark." 4.78
- "I feel that my loved ones are safe playing in Sterling." 4.78

Focus Group



Possible Improvements Downtown

Percentages saying Yes, No, No Opinion

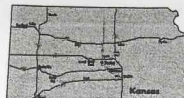
- No interest in further developing Sterling's downtown 5.6, 94.4, 0.0
- A mix of cafes and retail shops 100.0, 0.0, 0.0
- A mix of housing and commercial opportunities 83.3, 5.6, 11.1
- Community/Senior Center 83.3, 16.7, 0.0

Possible Improvements Downtown

Percentages saying Yes, No, No Opinion

- Space for activities such as art shows/classes, dance/music/theater productions 66.7, 22.2, 11.1
- An outdoor band shell, picnic area, play equipment, and benches 66.7, 27.8, 5.8
- Off-street parking 61.1, 22.2, 16.7
- A small performance theater (seats for less than 100) 33.3, 38.9, 27.8

Focus Group



Possible Park Improvements

"Which of the following improvements would you like to see in Sterling Parks?"

- Increase the number of public restrooms at Sterling Lake 55.6
- Band shell/stage 50.0
- Community movie night 50.0
- Musical/theatrical productions 50.0
- Increasing the number of campsites at Sterling Lake 50.0
- Addition of historical lighting to Peace, Evergreen, and/or Dysart Parks 38.9

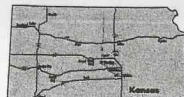
Possible Park Improvements

"Which of the following improvements would you like to see in Sterling Parks?"

(Participants indicated favorably by marking an X)

- | | |
|--|------|
| • Convert the tennis courts into a skate park | 27.8 |
| • Addition of historical lighting at Sterling Lake | 27.8 |
| • Gazebo | 22.2 |
| • Expand Sterling Lake | 16.7 |

Focus Group



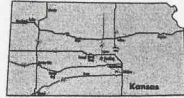
Impression of Sterling Employees

"What was your impression of City of Sterling employees in your most recent contact?"

(5 = Excellent, 3 = Fair, 1 = Poor)

- | | |
|--------------------------|------|
| • Overall impression | 4.67 |
| • Courtesy | 4.56 |
| • Timeliness of response | 4.56 |
| • Knowledge | 4.33 |

Focus Group



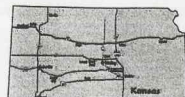
City of Sterling Services Top 5

"How would you rate the quality of each of the following City of Sterling services now?"

(5 = Excellent, 3 = Fair, 1 = Poor)

- City pool 4.76
- Police Department's response to emergencies 4.59
- City Parks cleanliness 4.56
- Fire Department's response to emergencies 4.53
- City Parks playground equipment 4.50

Focus Group

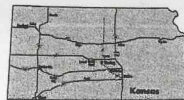


City of Sterling Services Lowest Concern

"How would you rate the quality of each of the following City of Sterling services now?"
(5 = Excellent, 3 = Fair, 1 = Poor)

- | | |
|--|------|
| • Response to neighborhood appearance complaints | 3.24 |
| • Snow & ice removal from public streets | 3.22 |
| • Storm water management / flood control | 3.22 |
| • Recreation amenities | 3.06 |
| • Smoothness of streets | 3.06 |

Focus Group



City Communications with the Public

"In your opinion what is the best way to let citizens like yourself know about city programs, events, policies, news, etc?"

Yes, No, No Opinion

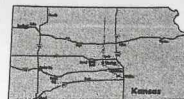
- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| • City website | 83.3, 16.7, 0.0 |
| • City newsletter | 72.2, 22.2, 5.6 |
| • Electronic community sign | 66.7, 16.7, 16.7 |
| • The Sterling Bulletin | 66.7, 16.7, 16.7 |

City Communications with the Public

"In your opinion what is the best way to let citizens like yourself know about city programs, events, policies, news, etc?"
Yes, No, No Opinion

- City electronic distribution list / email
50.0, 16.7, 33.3
- Current community sign in front of power plant
38.9, 44.4, 16.7
- Public channel on Cox Cable TV
22.2, 50.0, 27.8

Focus Group



Funding of City Services

"Think about how you would like the following services to be financed."

Fees only, Taxes only, Fees & Taxes, Not a city responsibility

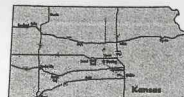
- Library programs & services
0.0, 22.2, 72.2, 5.6
- City pool
27.8, 5.6, 61.1, 5.6
- Public safety (police, fire, etc.)
0.0, 38.9, 55.6, 5.6
- Library building
0.0, 38.9, 55.6, 5.6

Funding of City Services

"Think about how you would like the following services to be financed."
Fees only, Taxes only, Fees & Taxes, Not a city responsibility

- City pool house / Bath house 27.8, 11.1, **55.6**, 5.6
- City burn site 33.3, 5.6, **55.6**, 5.6
- Development of an industrial park 11.1, 33.3, **44.4**, 11.1
- Street & storm water system maintenance 5.6, **50.0**, 38.9, 5.6

Focus Group

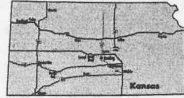


Future City Funding

"Please indicate which choice best describes your view."

- "An increase in City property taxes equal to inflation is OK to keep City services the same." 16.7%
- "City property taxes should not increase at all even though this may reduce or change City services." 5.6%
- "City property taxes should be reduced, even if it means reducing City services." 0.0%
- "City property taxes should be increased if necessary to maintain a high quality of life, services, and property values." 77.8%

Focus Group



Priorities and Recommendations

Priorities/Recommendations

	Priorities	Recommendations
1.	Attract and keep young families. Market and promote the city as a great place to live and work.	<p>A. Citizens believe that Sterling is a safe place to live, work, and raise a family. Market the community as a safe place.</p> <p>B. Citizens believe that they have excellent quality schools. Market the community emphasizing its high quality schools.</p> <p>C. Citizens believe that Sterling is a beautiful city. Market Sterling using a "Small is Beautiful and Safe" theme.</p>

Priorities/Recommendations

	Priorities	Recommendations
2.	Continue to improve Sterling's downtown area. Promote redevelopment of commercial properties.	Citizens want (1.) Restaurants, (2.) Thrift Store e.g. Dollar General, (3.) Bookstore/Coffee shop. Use Community Ad Hoc Committees to examine these options.
3.	Maintain quality City services. Provide cost-effective City services that meet the needs of users.	This supports priority #1.
4.	Citizens believe that Sterling is a great place to live in retirement.	Market Sterling emphasizing this theme.

Priorities/Recommendations

	Priorities	Recommendations
5.	Most citizens want opportunities to become involved and serve the City of Sterling.	Create new opportunities and activities for citizen involvement.
6.	Citizens believe that police and fire department responses to emergencies are excellent.	This supports priorities #1, #3, and #4.
7.	Citizens believe that the City pool and parks are excellent.	This supports priorities #1, #3, and #4.

Priorities/Recommendations

	Priorities	Recommendations
8.	Citizens believe that there need to be after school activities for young children and teens.	Focus groups mentioned ballet and tap dance lessons, arts and craft classes (pottery, drawing, & painting), movies, and sports. Have an instructor teach a class a few times a week. Citizen groups should look into these possibilities.
9.	Citizens raised questions about the smoothness of paved City streets.	Can street surfaces be improved? Citizen groups should look into these possibilities.
10.	Citizens believe that recreation and other amenities are not very good.	Can recreation amenities be improved? Citizen groups should look into these possibilities.

Priorities/Recommendations

	Priorities	Recommendations
11.	Several citizens were concerned about the quality of City water.	Can the City take actions to improve the quality of water?
12.	Several citizens want alcohol e.g. a glass of wine with dinner.	Should the City Council address the issue of allowing alcohol sales?

Priorities/Recommendations

- For further analysis, I would ultimately recommend a smaller version of the existing survey (**Appendix B**) be sent out with resident's water bill. This would provide a cost effective way to gather information and would also provide a larger demographic representation of the Sterling, Kansas population.

Thank You

Many thanks to the City of Sterling residents who participated in the focus groups conducted on November 12, 2005

Brian Silcott for his insight and help facilitating the focus groups
and
The City of Sterling, KS
