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Tonasket Survey

November 2019

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Summary:

Over the summer and fall of 2019 residents of Tonasket and the surrounding areas were surveyed about issues related to the city, police force, library, and communication. The purpose of this survey was to gain a better understanding of the needs and perspectives of our community members.

This survey was created with an estimated 25 hours of volunteer labor. With multiple communication avenues (described in more detail in the Methodology section) every attempt was made to contact as many city residents and business owners as possible. With over 200 respondents, only 78 residents of the city limit completed the survey. The City of Tonasket plays an important role in all local residents, even the ones that live outside of the city limits. This reality was echoed in the data with multiple comments of frustration about being unable to vote in city elections despite working in or living directly outside of the city.

On many topics, there is a wealth of diverse viewpoints. The topics of the Perfect Passage and Law Enforcement have even divided opinions and have major implications for the future of Tonasket.

In the responses of many questions, the need for better communication was expressed. Additionally, the challenge of getting accurate information especially for citizens that are unable to attend meetings but still want to hear before the rumor mill adds embellishments.

This survey found a community that has a large sense of pride and wants to continue to enjoy the aspects of their home that brought them here. It is my hope that as a city we can leverage the findings of this survey to improve our community, find solutions, and continue to build a better Tonasket.

-Alisa

Methodology:

The survey was presented in English and Spanish from April 2019 to November 2019. It was distributed in paper copies at local businesses, door to door, and city meetings. An online version was distributed via www.tonasket.org and Facebook.

The following adjustments were made to the data to protect the identity of individuals and to accommodate analysis:

1. Survey responses with 90% or more questions unanswered were removed (2 surveys)
2. Survey responses that targeted a particular city employee, elected official, or private citizen were edited to either “elected official”, “city employee”, or “private citizen” These changes are noted in Red in the data set. (12 surveys)
3. Spanish responses were translated into English. These changes are noted in Orange in the data set. (2 surveys)

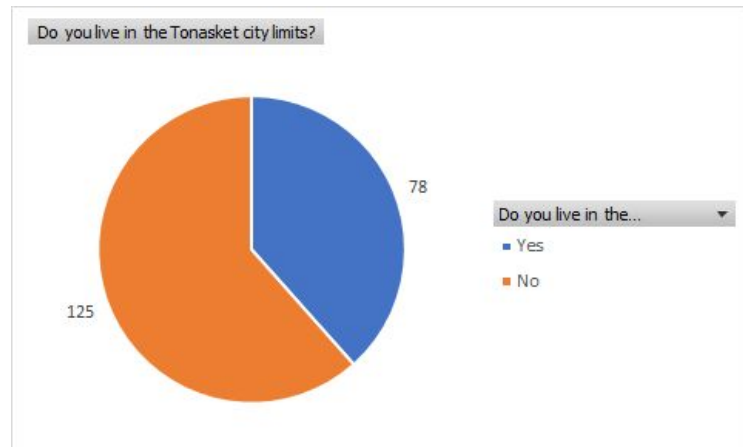
The full data set is available at www.tonasket.org with minor edits as described above.

This was not a scientific study and the results should be interpreted as an informal survey. Based on the response rates and demographic disclosures it is evident that the survey results do not represent all groups. For example, no respondents reported being younger than 21, or older than 80. Additionally, the survey distribution method may have favored certain populations instead of a true random sampling.

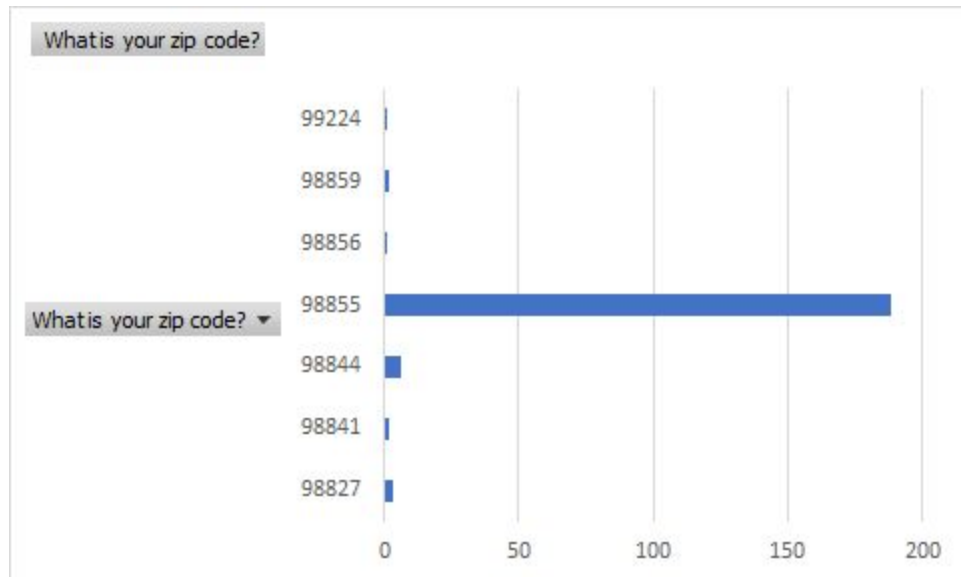
Who Took the Survey:

There were 203 responses, of which 78 or 38% live within the Tonasket City limits.

Of the 125 respondents that live outside of the city limits, 66 more reported that either they or a member of their household work within the city limits. This brings the total of respondents with direct ties to the city to 70%.

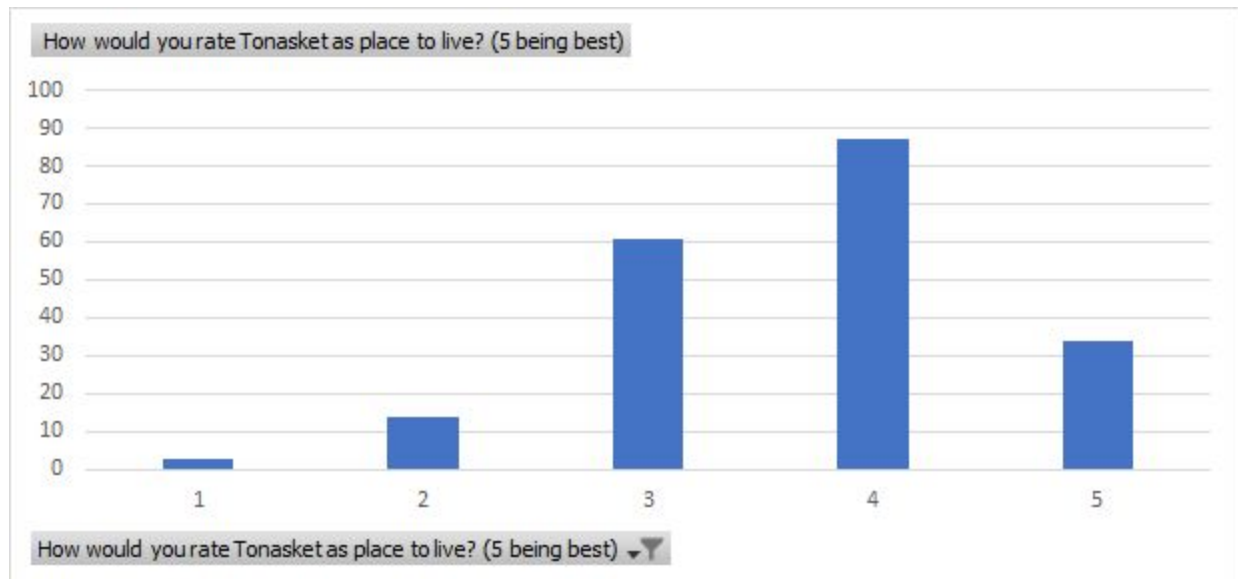


Of all respondents, the vast majority live in the 98855 zip code.

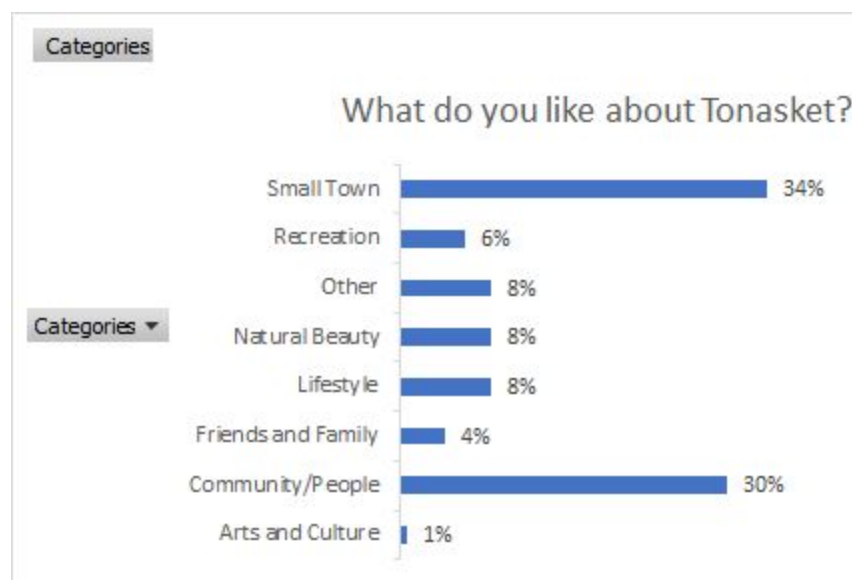


How do you like Tonasket?

The majority of the respondents rated Tonasket highly as a place to live.



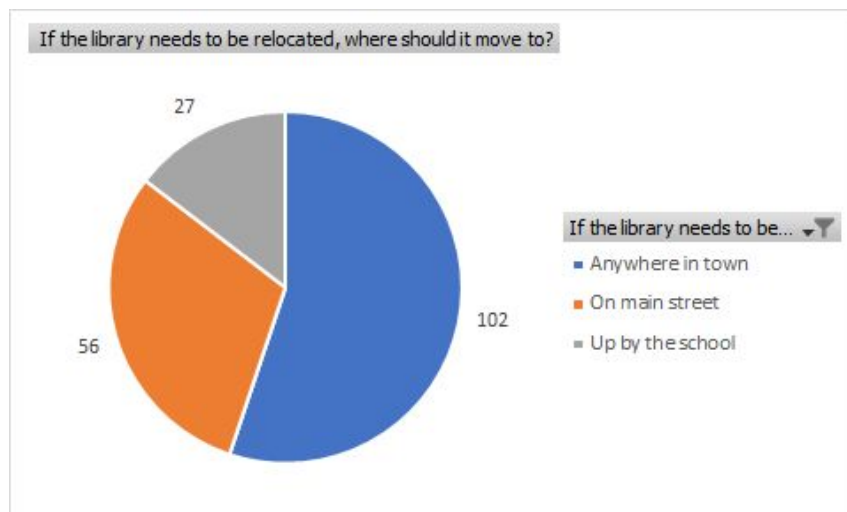
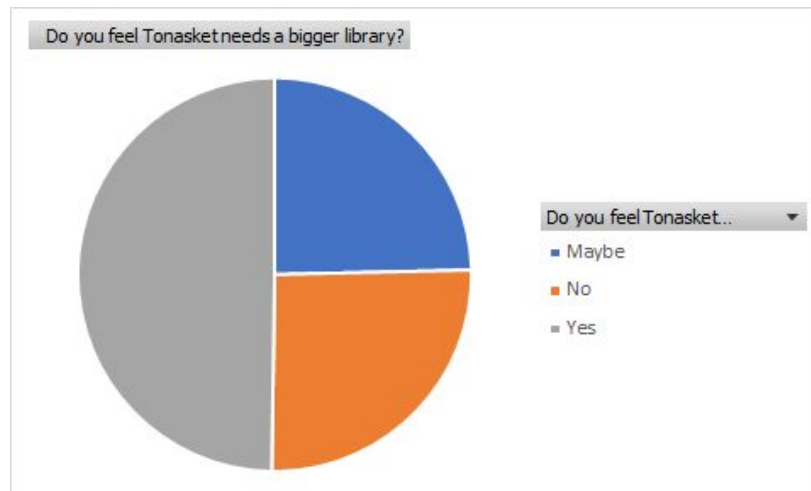
The respondents were given the opportunity to leave open-ended comments about what they like about Tonasket. 168 responses included comments that were categorized into the following areas:



Many comments focused on the benefits of a small town and the community that exists in Tonasket.

Library:

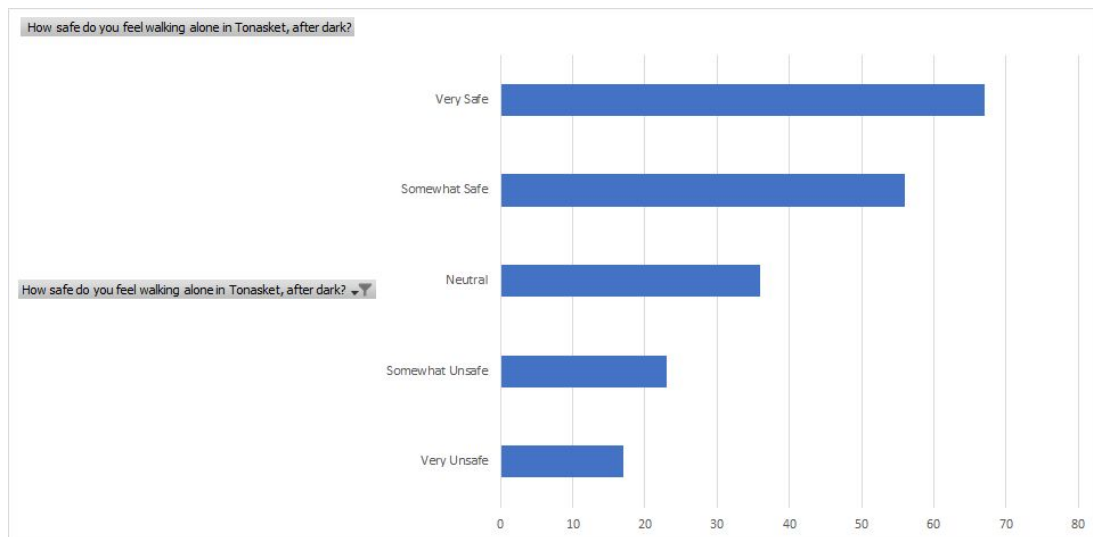
Two questions were asked about the size of the library and the potential relocation of the library from its current location adjacent to the city hall.



Safety and Law Enforcement:

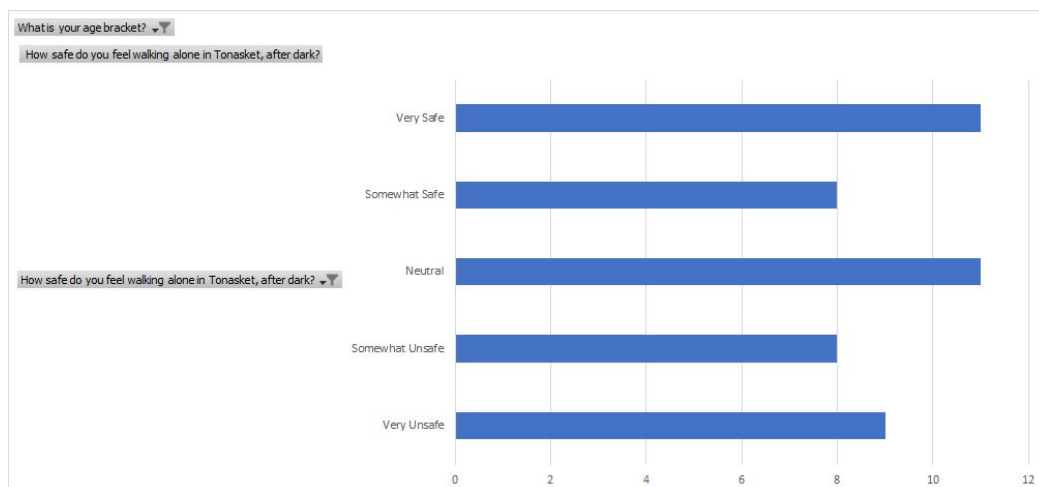
In January 2019 the Tonasket Police Department was disbanded and a contract was signed with the Okanogan County Sheriff to provide services to the city limits.

To gauge how safe citizens felt in Tonasket the survey asked: “How safe do you feel walking alone in Tonasket after dark?”

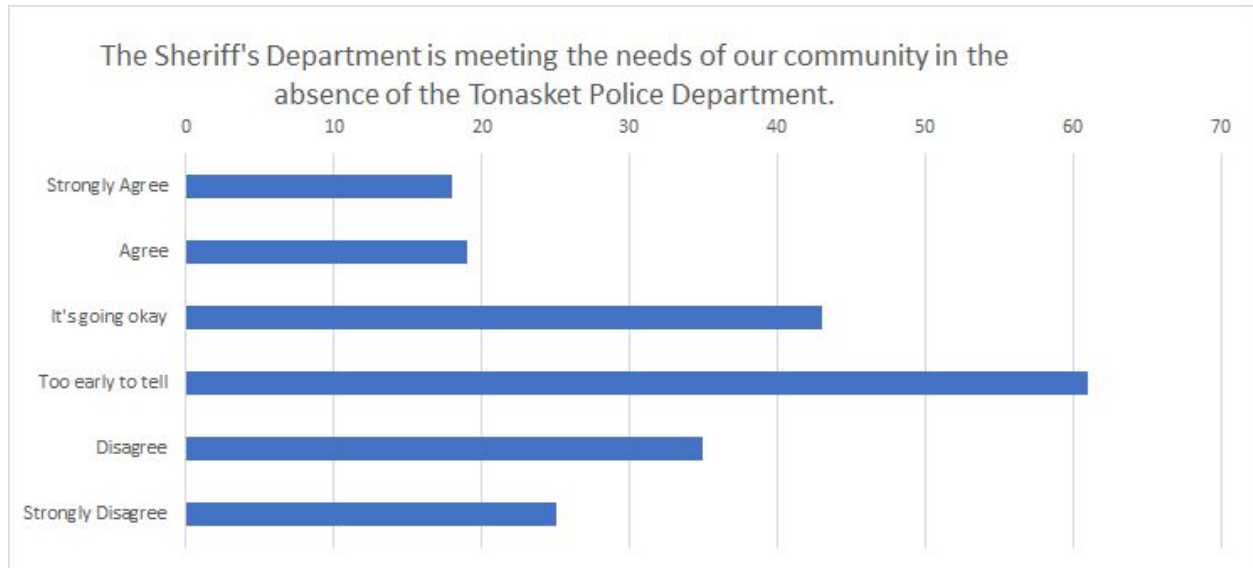


Overall the results suggest that most respondents felt safe, but the results varied when sorted by demographics.

Respondents aged 51-60 felt the least safe after dark in Tonasket:



When asked about the performance of the Sheriff's Department a plurality of respondents felt it was "Too early to tell".



113 comments were received from the question "If anything, what do you feel is missing from our coverage from the Sheriff's Department?"

Category	Times Occurring
Code Enforcement	3
Communication	1
Drug Response	3
No Issues	12
Other	12
Patrols/Presence	47
Performance	2
Relationships	12
Response Time	14
Staffing	5
Traffic Control	2
Grand Total	113

If you feel unsafe, what are the reasons? (please list your top 2 reasons)

Category	Number of Times Occurring
Criminals	6
Dogs	3
Drugs	41
Drunks	2
Lighting	8
Mental Illness	1
Recent Murder	2
No Police	31
Not Pedestrian Friendly	3
Other	12
Sketchy People	9
Transients	4
“Round-Up” Residents	3
Grand Total	125

Perfect Passage:

The Perfect Passage (previously called The Magnificent Mile) project is a proposed Downtown Corridor Redevelopment Project that is focused on Whitcomb Ave between the two Siwash Creek and Bonaparte Creek. The project seeks to rebuild stormwater infrastructure and regrade the streets to prevent flooding, create ADA access, and relocated utilities under the street.

Respondents were asked, “Are you familiar with the project?”

- 114 (56%) responded “No”
- 88 (44%) responded “Yes”

Of the 88 “yes” responses, they were asked if they supported the project:

Are you familiar with the Perfect Passage Project? (Whitcomb Ave. Renovation)		Yes
Row Labels		Do you support this project?
Yes		27
Unsure		37
No		24
Grand Total		88

Respondents were offered the opportunity to provide feedback and 60 comments were received. The comments have been sorted into categories:

Any additional feedback on this project?	Category
Concern council shoves things through without resident and business input.	Against
Conflicts with traffic on hwy 97. It will be difficult to use as planned.	Against
Hey nope	Against
If it is going to cost more tax payers money- NO!™	Against
IMO we need to get our house in order before thinking we are capable of managing such a project and monies funding such project	Against
It's already difficult to park.	Against
Our streets are fine. Let's invest the \$1 million project into a recall against the <<elected official>>.	Against
The general population of Tonasket can not afford higher taxes	Against

There is literally no reason for anyone to stop in Tonasket. Nothing to bring them in so why should we pay to make a tourist trap that will never be used.	Against
Trying to make big city suburbia. Pedestrian friendly? People working hard and not strolling about.	Against
Unaffordable to put a cute pedestrian friendly project in a town of 1000 to be used by 10s of thousands using it. Individual business window and flower decorations mark our area nicely.	Against
We need our police more importantly than this	Against
We need to focus on fixing our city buildings first	Against
We need to work on rebuilding our infrastructure. The Police Department, our City owned buildings, bring businesses to this City.	Against
WHY ??? We need to Spend our hard earned monies wisely- sure if the need to fix culverts is needed and we get loan monies, do it. The plan is lacking common sense, trees, support for local business and ease of access for travelers to want to stop.	Against
wont work	Against
Expanding the triangle park or adding more trees would be nice.	Desires
I hate roundabouts. Hope these are not used.	Desires
I hope it will be well planned and not have a negative impact on business owners	Desires
I hope it will incorporate bike lanes.	Desires
I hope that the city puts in more trees downtown. I miss the huge trees they took out for the new hospital/assisted living project and I must say, it hurts even more that the assisted living failed, we lost those trees for a failed project.	Desires
Need more input from businesses in town and community	Desires
ONLY WORRY IS MORE PEOPLE & TRAFFIC	Desires
Parking for business owners is vital for their success	Desires
please no roundabouts	Desires
The only reason <<city employee>> is pushing diagonal parking is to get the curb or bulb outs. The state is the one with the money, and there are strings attached. We are his puppets and don't need to be. If we all, residents and outlying residents, were to vote on a design, diagonal parking would not win.	Desires
The two things that will get travelers to stop and spend time in town are big signs showing where there are public rest rooms, and big signs showing there is free Wi-Fi city wide.	Desires
We need a comprehensive design strategy for city renovation.	Desires
We should not lose any parking. It is an issue in this town already.	Desires

While I think it's a fantastic idea, I am also under the impression that it will decrease parking and create more work for city maintenance employees. Plus, trees grow. Eventually they will need to be replaced or cut down.	Desires
worried about traffic issues and small town feel	Desires
I want to meet specs of more strength than the current heavy haul requirements. Without truck traffic Tonasket will become a detour route. We need heavy haul and solid railroad up to 25mph. A month or so ago the railroad sold though. Highway 97 needs to be the next route 66 or highway 101. I would like to keep 12' sidewalks and parallel parking even though back-in diagonal would be super cool. Dr. Nau will retire soon enough and more parking will be made, although more parking for the upcoming clinic would rock right now. NVH employees and Nau employees could park in the double decker NVH parking lot across the street. Trust me, I have the perfect window to see this.	Other
Clean up some of the unsightly places. Project doesn't seem cost effective.	Other
I support some parts of it. I really support moving the utilities out from under Whitcomb Ave and place them in an alley or another street.	Other
n/a	Other
Not many understand what it is about. Why hasn't there been more progress on beautifying the town? Does it include upholding zoning protocol? re: building of junk around warehouse on the north end and other places	Questions
?	Questions
don't know a whole lot about it	Questions
Educate me - keep articles in the forefront on social media as well as news agencies that some of us do not have	Questions
Has consideration as to how this would affect Main Street vendors occurred?	Questions
Have not seen a mock-up or perspective of it	Questions
I don't know the final details and want to be informed	Questions
I have only seen small articles on the project in the papers. I don't really know any of the details, and it would be great if some could be available on the city web site. I did some quick searches and didn't find any information. It's hard to support a project that I don't know about.	Questions
I honestly don't know how this project emerged as a priority for the City or Council. Within our circle and in our community interactions my family had not heard of any lead up or any prior concern or had not observed any lead up prior to this project coming to my attention this year in 2019.	Questions
I still can't understand the logic.	Questions
I would like to be involved in meetings for this project, but it is hard to find information about when the meetings will be held	Questions
leaves from trees are a big nuisance and someone has to water and clean up after them. we don't	Questions

keep our streets clean or maintained now, how will that be handled?	
More info needed	Questions
Never heard of it.	Questions
Our town is small, how do you pay for such a huge project? and not incur a large debt?	Questions
would be interested in learning more	Questions
Downtown could sure use some sprucing up...	Support
Downtown needs some upgrading to stay relevant, starting with the main drag through town	Support
Flowers goes a long way Look at Chewelah	Support
get `er done	Support
I support this project as long as Tonasket does not accrue liabilities.	Support
If this project is to better the town with a new library, police (hurray) station and help business owners then I support this~	Support
Making our little town the best it can be is a project I'm all for!	Support
Prioritize people not vehicles. It is okay for the trucks to have a harder time getting through town and for them to need to slow down. I support parking, roundabouts, trees, and art installations.	Support
We need the streets fixed, drains fixed, business in town need to clean there garbage up in front.. Duds looks horrible! There needs to be city laws and rules! That need to be put in place.. resistance in city limits should have laws to keep yard nice no garbage!	Support

Following the questions directly related to the Perfect Passage, survey takers were asked their satisfaction level with their neighborhood's infrastructure:

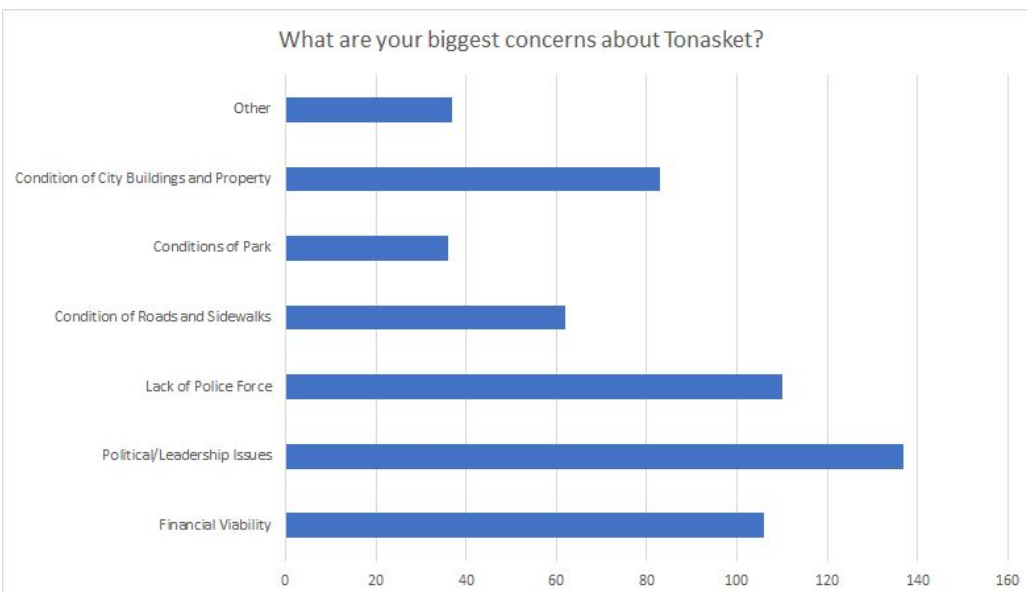
In general, how satisfied are you with your neighborhood's infrastructure such as streets, sidewalks, and landscaping?	
Very Unsatisfied	26
Somewhat Unsatisfied	29
Neutral	74
Somewhat Satisfied	45
Very Satisfied	11
Grand Total	185

Concerns and Outcomes:

Respondents were asked:

What is your biggest concerns about Tonasket? Check all that apply:

- ☐ Financial Viability
- ☐ Political/Leadership Issues
- ☐ Lack of a Police Force
- ☐ Condition of Roads and Sidewalks
- ☐ Condition of Parks
- ☐ Condition of City Buildings and Property
- ☐ Other: _____



199 respondents selected 571 topics including 37 responses that registered a concern in addition or instead of the prepared listed. The most common topic added in the open response section was related to the success of local businesses and a lack of community unity.

If financial reality required it, would you rather:	
Reduce city services	9
Reduce the number of city employees	37
Increase taxes	36
Combination of the above options	65
Other	39

The 39 “Other” Responses are listed below:

Anything that keeps the maintenance department at current or greater staff.
Better community unity & less political humdrum from our City Officials, A Mayor That can make decisions without being told what to say and do by City Council.
Decrease the salaries or cut the fat cats out who don't do anything.
Don't live in city
Financial counseling
Find a way to get more funds from imbalances in the government funding for cities vs. rural areas which are highly underserved.
Fire <<city employee>>
Get <<elected official>> and <<city employee>> that care about their residents and businesses.
get a grant writer
how could you reduce city employees? Short handed already
I
I would rather see fundraisers instead of hurting a persons purse or take jobs away
I'm not informed enough to have an opinion
I'm not sure how many city employees we have, and what their responsibilities are.
Implement merit base pay/remove full paid benefits & remove longevity pay.

Improve management
Increase taxes and become more financially viable. We need a clean attractive town. We can also turn into Ellisforde or Riverside is a one day ride with horse and carriage from Riverside. We're here because people love it here. Keep the love!
Increase Taxes with reductions for those who live below the poverty line.
MORE accountability of CITY EMPLOYEES, if they aren't doing the job find someone who WILL
More efficiency, less BSing, reality checks
Need all new city officials, ones you take the time to wage properly
Need more info - always lean towards more efficient work rather than more workers
Never increase taxes Enough already!
none
None of the above
Not sure
Prioritization of essential over nonessential services. A City manager/administrator could also create greater efficiencies and cost savings through their oversight and through adaptive management.
Reduce <<city employee>> pay and do away with longevity pay
Re-evaluate spending and budgets.
Remove full paid employee benefits and longevity pay. Go to merit based pay standards.
Replace management and leadership
REPLACE OUR <<elected official>>
Require fiscal responsibility
shift funds until a new police force is provided. there's 200k available yearly. use it to clean up the town and fix the buildings to house a new force. We have 4 years to do it. Start serving papers on known building and clean up issues. Do your job.
Some are way over paid!
Support businesses and farming/ ranches that support the community
take a critical and transparent look at city employee salaries
Unsure
We can be more fiscally responsible.

Communication and News:

In general, how well informed would you say you are about Tonasket City Government?	
Very Uninformed	4
Somewhat Uninformed	22
Neutral	24
Somewhat Informed	11
Very Informed	5
Grand Total	66

Most respondents listed multiple methods of staying in touch with the news in Tonasket. The most common responses were Facebook, Newspapers, and in-person communication or meeting attendance.¹

Facebook usage was highest among younger responders, and newspapers highest among older responders.

Facebook as a News Source by Age		Newspapers as a News Source by Age	
All Ages	30%	All Ages	45%
21-40	47%	21-40	35%
41-50	30%	41-50	37%
51-60	21%	51-60	46%
61-70	20%	61-70	54%
71-80	7%	71-80	86%

¹ The survey was distributed via Facebook and mentioned in the Gazette-Tribune which potentially overstates the results in this report due to selection bias.

Other Topics:

The final question of the survey asked respondents if any topics were important to them but were not included in the survey. There were 64 responses listed:

Water and sewer services are very expensive, we pay a lot of money.
Access to healthcare and pharmacy.
Affordable housing
All
Am not interested. Nothing ever gets done
Assistance for poor community members
Attracting and keeping new & relevant businesses. Oh, and awnings.
Can the City and Council have a Resident/Citizen advisory board and allow residents to participate in Council committees.
Can't vote for city council so doesn't really matter what I think.
City leaders to listen to residents concerns and give them answers.
constant speeding on residential streets
crack meth prescribed drug addicts
Derelict vehicles in town
Doctor shortage
Does city gov have a strategic plan for the future of the city besides Perfect Passage Project? What are goals for next 5-10 years?
Drugs
Economic Stimulation/Attracting Businesses (industry?)
Education
Extend and fix all sidewalks

Extending the area of which the mayor can live to 5 miles of city limits. Might get better candidates that way.
Fire Works should be sold again, with a designation that they can be set off only in the park by the river, during designated hours.
Government transparency.
Homelessness...need shelters to accommodate them..and give them the resources to move forward in life
Honesty and/or transparency at city office.
Honesty in the members of council and clerk
How all of this will effect business owners.
How do we help <<private citizen>> get elected to the City Council?
How to run for offices
i am curious about the library move/expansion. the regional library meets many needs.
I think community involvement should be promoted better. Lots of people want to help. We have a great community and the negativity does not need anymore energy or additional platforms.
I think if you own a business in the city limits you should be able to vote and run for political office!
I wish more people were willing to run for office. But when those who are on council are so attacked as they have been recently, we'll never get reasonable people to run for office. It's been that way a long time. Only worse these last few months.
I wish there were a tennis court in town!
I would like the public input bout Farmer's Markets - location, vendors, time of event, season of event ways to improve it.
I would like to know how to help people learn how to be more active in their local government.
I'd like to see our citizens backing our council instead of raising objections & roadblocks to every idea, suggestion & proposed project
If we are creative and we work together, we can find solutions.
It's always bothered me that those of us living outside city limits are not allowed to vote. I live in the Tonasket zip code, I pay taxes, I shop in Tonasket, I used to work there. If you live in the 98855 zip code you should be able to vote in the city elections.
It's the things I don't yet know to ask about that concern me... I WANT WATER LINES TO HANGING BASKETS ON LIGHT POLES ALONG DOWNTOWN!!!
Leadership change and training
Loitering of homeless people

Look at resource economies and less tourist-driven economy.
Management of disintegrating flop houses that generate crime community.
No
Please put real bathrooms in the park. The portable potty at the history park is very nasty 9/10 times I've used it.
Quit taxing me for schools....I've no relatives attending so I've no interest
Should the <<elected official>> be recalled?
Solutions instead of rehearsing complaints.
Steps the Chamber can take to increase recreational opportunities.
Stop taking city council members to court-we have to pay for their council \$\$\$\$
stop the knee jerk reactions by our officials and take the time to look at all sides of the issues and impacts
Taking care of homeless people
The <<city official>>'s mental illness.
the city government really needs to build ways that encourage interested citizens to meaningfully interact with city government, so that we can capitalize on the talent of willing people who have been frustrated from participating in city government by the lack of mechanisms and seeming lack of interest by the council, mayor, and staff. the city should take advantage of the well-spring of volunteer talent and do-it-yourself interest that this community offers. we need more transparency in city government - they make decisions without accountability.
The general trashiness allowed around town, IE: Western Ave, Across from Junction.
the homeless population
to give "kids" (teens and pre-teens) something to do ~ that aren't into Rodeo's or sports ~ focus on them ~
To many to say.
Triangle Park looks awesome! My kids would have loved it when they were little.
we need to revive our downtown area with businesses, cafes, flowers, courtyards, walking paths
Wheelchair accessibility to all sidewalks
Why !??. I don't think it would actually matter what I or anyone else thinks !
Why do we continue to pay to maintain the cemetery plot west of hy 7?
Zoning issues, <<private citizen>> for City Council. How can we help her get elected?

Conclusion:

Thank you all so much for your input in our survey. The information given has given me a clearer picture of why people love living here, the needs people have and the areas where we can improve upon. My goal now is to work with our Local Government and agencies to prioritize and then address the concerns aired.

At the end of the survey respondents were able to leave contact information to receive the results of the survey. Those residents have been emailed a copy of this report, however, some of the emails were either illegible or had a typo and the emails bounced back. Apologies to those that were expecting a response directly.

Thank you to all of the survey responders and those that shared the survey with others. Also, thank you to all the volunteers that helped make this happen! Your contribution is greatly appreciated!

The base data was too lengthy to include in a readable format but is available at www.tonasket.org.

If you have questions or comments, please connect with me at alisa@tonakset.org. I'd be happy to hear from you.

-Alisa