

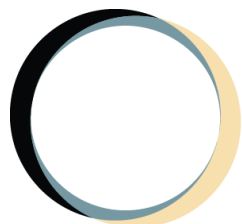
THE NCSTM

The National Citizen SurveyTM

Asheville, NC

Open Ended Responses

2015



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The National Citizen Survey™
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The NCS™ is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

NRC is a proud member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

Summary

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities. This report includes the verbatim responses to an open ended question included on The NCS 2015 survey for Asheville. Additional reports and the technical appendices are available under separate cover.

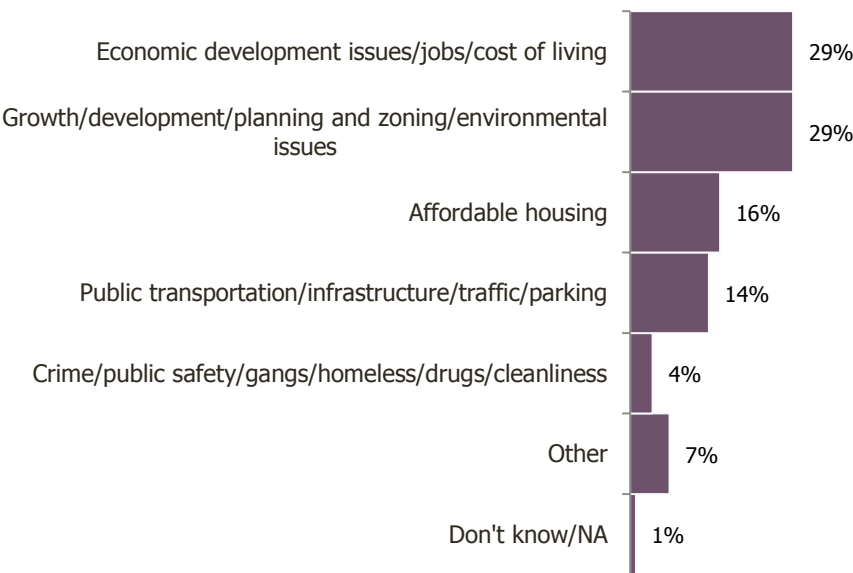
Respondents were asked to record their opinions about issues facing Asheville in the following question:

- What do you think is the single biggest issue facing Asheville over the next three to five years?

The verbatim responses were categorized by topic area and those topics are reported in the following chart with the percent of responses given in each category. Because some comments from residents covered more than a single topic, those verbatim responses are grouped by the first topic listed in each comment whenever a respondent mentioned more than a single topic.

Results from the open-ended question are best understood by reviewing the frequencies that summarize responses as well as the actual verbatim responses themselves. A total of 337 surveys were completed by Asheville residents; of these 280 respondents wrote in responses for the open-ended question. Close to 3 in10 residents indicated economic development issues/jobs/cost of living and growth/development/planning and zoning/environmental issues as the two biggest issues facing Asheville over the next three to five years. Around 16% of respondents identified affordable housing as the single biggest issue facing Asheville over the next three to five years.

Figure 1: Question 17
What do you think is the single biggest issue facing Asheville over the next three to five years?



Verbatim Responses to Open Ended Question

The following pages contain the respondents' verbatim responses as written on the survey and have not been edited for spelling or grammar. Responses have been organized by coded topic areas.

What do you think is the single biggest issue facing Asheville over the next three to five years?

Economic development issues/jobs/cost of living

- I think that Asheville needs to focus on bringing more professional jobs for young professionals, to the area. I'm glad to see the service industry grow, however the cost of living is increasing and salaries are staying the same. As a young professional in order come to make more money, I have to relocate to Charlotte.
- Economic development, public safety (police, etc).
- Jobs & housing.
- Work opportunities- increase wages improving transportation routes- decrease congestion.
- Jobs, roads, decent pay scale.
- Figuring out how to keep the tourist economy from dominating local residents needs-tourists don't need bike lanes!
- The cost of living. The hippies/artist can't afford to live here which is why a lot of people visit. When they're gone, then Asheville is just another mountain town!
- 1. Economic gap between rich & poor. 2. Educational & housing availability, affordability, & equal opportunity 3 Racial tension & prejudice.
- Redirecting the city's "social" agenda to economic realities.
- Appropriate upkeep of commercial properties and city streets and sidewalks.
- Do attract businesses that hire professionals for professional wages. To have the high tax base that you have, & the low salaries/wages you are creating a very "extreme" economy of "have's & have nots". It is not welcoming & supportive of a strong middle class which is not sustainable long term.
- Food insecurity & available living wage job opportunities. Clean air & water.
- Too much reliance on tourism. We have enough hotels and breweries. We need more long term, full time careers for people to live here long term. Even a Costco, apple store and Tesla dealership would be a great start. There's too many rich snow birds who only live here part of the year- not good for locals or business. Let's invite real businesses to come here and create jobs. No, we don't need more grocery stores or fast food. Also, can we zone some land for tiny houses? Real estate is getting high too!
- Lack of industry and lack of mid-level jobs. It is impossible to earn a living here if you don't work in a hospital, we are viewed as an anti business. We have attracted the wrong kind of people to move here. Panhandlers and Rastafarian's are not good employable type of people. Normal straight people do not want to co-habitat with gays and lesbians. This is not, and should not be sold as the San Francisco of the east. The town is full of mentally ill people. It is just not normal here anymore.
- Possibility of chain hotels & businesses. In order to keep Asheville from being an "every town" please keep locally owned restaurants & other businesses so that Asheville is special & unique. Also, please provide affordable housing.
- Taxes.
- Cost of living increases. As Asheville becomes a destination, not only for vacation but for new residents, it will be increasingly important to consider living wages and affordable housing.
- It is too expensive to live here. Housing, utilities, food (cost of living) is too high. Pay is too low.
- Economic development & job opportunities other than tourism. Real estate prices.
- Expanding w/commercial interest is wrecking the integrity of what Asheville used to be all about. I used to love Asheville because everything was local & focused on natural beauty & community. Now it seems the direction is all about expanding to please tourists. Job market is horrible. Mission health system is awful! There is little to no value in the citizens of Asheville anymore. We are planning to move to raise our family.
- Jobs, school facilities & teachers pay, affordable housing.
- Decent paying jobs. Environmental protection/preservation.

- Attracting good paying, progressive minded companies who will bring much needed financial investment and work to better our community. We cannot survive on wealthy retirees and tourism alone. This is absolutely essential. We must provide whatever incentives they require. As long as they are progressive minded.
- Economic development.
- Good paying jobs-minimum wages-up.
- Employment opportunities/affordable housing.
- Being efficient with tax dollars. Keeping taxes lower.
- Opportunities for work, with \$15 minimum wage.
- Attracting business- jobs improving infrastructure.
- Rate of pay does not match up with increasing cost of living especially for renters like us.
- Supporting lower and middle class lives (housing, transportation, amenities) of residents instead of catering to \$\$\$.
- Poverty of the locals. Becoming a place only for tourists & the local population is all just service industry folks.
- Asheville is seemingly becoming the "New Boulder" it is extremely difficult for a lot of the employees downtown (food service, etc.) To actually afford to live in Asheville in this situation, most people are struggling & living paycheck to paycheck. It very difficult to save money.
- Economic development.
- Jobs and affordable housing for our young people.
- Job growth.
- Growth of employment opportunities!!! More options for jobs outside of healthcare.
- Re-localization, creating a sustainable regional economy.
- Affordability of citizens verses the desire to build city systems for tourists, they should not be our only economy nor is beer. We need real economic opportunities.
- Will Asheville remain a place where people of varying income levels can afford to live.
- Tourists are far less important than residents. Let's go back to being a community with a viable workforce and economy rather than a seasonal toy town.
- Living wages.
- Jobs, housing (affordable), over development too quickly.
- Cost of living.
- Lack of a living wage.
- Challenges of attracting a young, skilled, and educated population base given limited opportunity in employment for such potential residents.
- Taxes to high need to let big business back into let taxes go back down. Also bring jobs back.
- The influence of tourists and retirees overshadowing the needs of residents who struggle with the high cost of living in Asheville.
- Balancing the influx of tourism with maintaining quality of life and good quality jobs for residents.
- Socio/class- economic gap is widening, and lowest income earners can't afford to live here, resulting in an eventual displacement of an entire strata of the community, which in turn depletes diversity, services, interest, tourism, prosperity & happiness.
- Need for growing quantity of middle class jobs.
- Unemployment "living wage" opportunities.
- We demonize business - I wouldn't come here with a business.
- Becoming more & more expensive to live here; too much focus on tourism & hospitality industry.
- Affordability of retirement for middle class persons that have lived and worked in Asheville all their life.
- Attracting industry and businesses.
- cost of living
- High cost of living compared to the wages of the average citizen.
- Reduction of the cost of living
- overall cost of living (work opportunities and housing)
- Economic growth
- Jobs.

Growth/development/planning and zoning/environmental issues

- Rapid growth. We need affordable housing. We need better-paying jobs to match the cost of living, which has risen dramatically in the past 2 years.
- Managing growth generally and tourism in particular, while maintaining "alternative" character and quality of life.
- Rapid over development of massive apartment and living complexes.
- Balancing the growth of the building in the city while being proactive in reference to the infrastructure shortcomings (roads, traffic, parking, police enforcement, et al).
- Too much development!
- Growth traffic esp areas like Patton Ave, Merrimon, West gate bridge!
- Over development.
- Development of downtown apartment/condos.
- Over development, loss of green spaces.
- Over development.
- Overcrowding-too many to feed & house- too political- every decision made is on a political basis.
- Controlling growth to ensure quality of life, beauty & sustainability.
- Too many hotels too many brewery's.
- Population growth.
- Asheville is gaining popularity. The influx of people may cause problems related to traffic, cost of living, etc. Asheville is authentic & I wouldn't want to see it get too commercial/touristy. Public school & teacher satisfaction is an issue as well.
- Control of growth.
- Many people are coming to AVL, affordable housing and decent jobs are already extremely hard to come by. Getting a decent job in AVL has always been extremely difficult. Please do something about your bus system, I have used it and I was amazed at how difficult it is to get around via bus! Some route diagrams stops/locations and pick up times at the stops would be a great place to start.
- Over development. Lack of open space. Sidewalks, no safety in multiple tenant housing. Street congestion by parking in residential neighborhoods. Storm water sewers blocked by debris in streets. Parking in no parking zones & by fire plugs.
- Too many people moving to AVL.
- Development and growth- city center is becoming an environment for tourists; too many/too big multi-family buildings is changing the scale; the creative life blood of the city is unsupported and marginalized in development i.e. too many RAD condos and no subsidized studio spaces, etc.
- Managing the growth- zoning & affordable housing.
- Unrestricted growth phasing out coal.
- Too fast and too much growth.
- Development downtown is seriously affecting the feel of Asheville. The new hotels are an eye sore. City planners need to talk with a long term picture in mind. I never really go downtown now.
- (1) Managing the effects on water, social services, the natural mountain environment, and housing prices that the large population influx, both tourist and residential, poses to Asheville.(2) The republican party!
- Growth but maintaining its diverse character and its cultural activities.
- Growth.
- Growth & conflicting politics.
- Too much housing on a single street. Traffic is too much to accommodate all the housing.
- The serious problem of Asheville letting developers build anything, anywhere, needs to stop.
- Growth-accommodating roads, services.
- I believe population is increasing rapidly. Roads need to be wider, at least a turning lane, especially on Sweeten Cr Rd. Also we need a rail system or quicker and more accessible bus routes.
- Managing the influx of population in regards to opportunities, housing, environment & tax fairness.
- Spatial planning, pedestrian walkways & related safety. Also affordable quality housing.
- Lack of city planning. No long range vision for sustainable growth and building.
- Responsible growth cleaning up downtown.

- "Built environment"- watch sprawl, planned neighborhoods, transport/access & jobs beyond service industry. AVL is on the cost of growth/sprawl now is the time to plan for it.
- Loss of natural habitat by residential & commercial builders. Nothing is done to stop people from clear cutting property to build anything! Nothing is done to limit destruction by duke energy as it slashes through our tree cover. Shame on Asheville for doing nothing to save what made Asheville the beautiful mountain city it once was.
- Uncontrolled growth. Putting houses in every last green space- too dense! Taxes too high/price of living w/ availability of good paying jobs - Not equal. Too much focus on tourism, not quality of life. The toxic water supply get flourish [?].
- Growth.
- Destruction of natural environment!
- Maintaining our identity & making it an affordable & great place to live while dealing with the influx of tourists and new residents.
- Managing growth, affordable housing, traffic.
- I would like to see more compacted land use of businesses & residences & more green space therefore saved/reserved for public use.
- Over Building. Over development of downtown- we really need 2 to 3 new hotels??
- Managing it's huge growth while keeping in mind the essence of Asheville and it's diverse population. Supporting our underserved populations is in dire need of attention, housing, food & employment.
- Too much development in neighborhoods.
- Sustainable growth and wages.
- Green space development and retention in light of all the construction.
- Haphazard development and failure of transportation infrastructure to keep pace.
- Downtown new construction of "tall" buildings such as hotels!! Street repair.
- Growth.
- Over populated.
- Too many people for the way city was originally, mountains not like a spacious big city with wide streets, 6 lane highways, etc. Mountains somewhat restrictive to these things, not like areas with less hills and valleys.
- Continuous buildings of condos & hotels should be stopped!!
- Growth and development of affordable housing.
- Growing so fast & large that we lose the small town vibe. Need decent jobs- population growing faster than new jobs.
- Maintaining the same access to local establishments that residents have been able to experience while accommodating the high tourism rates that will bring new developments, businesses, attractions.
- Over population.
- Managing increased population of citizens.
- Control commercial growth.
- Climate change, state government.
- Too many people, too few jobs. Getting to expensive to live.
- Development. Many people moving to Asheville & the city not able to accommodate them.
- Permitting process needs to be streamlined seems very business unfriendly currently.
- Over development in the city of Asheville. Turning Asheville into a Charlotte with ugly high rise buildings. Changing the character and historical flavor of Asheville with incongruous modern structures, that after obscure the mountain views, example the Indigo- ugly building! Unnecessary, poorly planned architecture planning & zoning, city council need to wake up. (But more village does it right)!
- Regulating/limiting development of open spaces.
- Managing population growth, especially regarding employment opportunities, affordable housing, and traffic congestion.
- Economic growth in living- wage sectors other than medical. Graduated tax for long-time residents to preserve current character of city. (Place like Annapolis, MD taxed older residents out and the city changed and suffered in quality and characteristics that made it unique and desirable).
- Planned development- safe walking, bldgs. With character (not like Aloft), limitation/lessening of messes like Patton & Merrimon.
- Uncontrolled growth and development.

- What seems like out of control growth traffic congestion.
- Environmental protections & sustainability- including social sustainability. So everything from dealing w/ coal ash & water pollution to public transportation bike & walking paths (interconnected & practical not just the pretty areas)& green commons areas. All that stuffed circled as "essential" on question #14.
- Sustainable growth
- Gentrification
- preservation of the natural environment
- keeping up with growth and maintaining its character

Affordable housing

- Affordable housing.
- Affordable housing!
- A decrease in affordable housing for local residents and the danger that Asheville will be a community of tourists and not a community catering to locals. We need to feel that changes are being made to improve our quality of life vs the quality of the tourist experience.
- Affordable housing.
- Next 3-5 years- lack of affordable rental properties long term- renovation or replacement of old houses.
- Affordable housing/cost of living.
- Affordable housing.
- Affordable housing ok higher paying jobs. Asheville/Buncombe county is one of the highest taxed counties in N.C. Need higher paying jobs to offset the higher taxes.
- The rising cost of housing within city limits & the lack of affordable housing.
- Affordable housing & over emphasis on tourism!
- Lower cost housing.
- Affordable housing.
- Affordable housing; racial discrimination; substance abuser treatment; better public transportation; more green ways; environmental sustainability; better services & job opportunities for young people & minorities.
- Affordable housing, living wage, smart development, public transit.
- Affordable housing- not the ridiculous amounts put forth by federal standards.
- The lack of respect from the housing authority for the taxpayers of AVL- too much public housing! Public housing has ruined AVL.
- Low income housing & high rates the police Dept is a mess.
- Affordable housing or roads & infrastructure.
- Affordable housing; balance of cost of living w/ wages in the area.
- Affordable housing! Improved relation between police and black community.
- Affordable housing.
- Affordable housing for all.
- A statue (cap) needs to be put in place for these landlords to stop raising the rent especially when minimum wages is not increasing.
- Affordable housing & taxing.
- Affordable housing with emphasis on disabled & elderly assisting homeless (facility to accommodate them). Better curb cuts for those in wheelchairs parking for disabled- more handicap spaces & not metered more day care opportunities for low income mental health designated facility.
- Too much emphasis on tourist & retiree \$\$..Please more affordable housing for those of us who live & work here!
- Affordable housing for seniors, safe publication transport park, I love Asheville always have.
- Affordable housing. Improving streets and walk ways.
- Affordable housing/jobs and job growth.
- Affordable housing & jobs w/ good income outside of retail and food services.
- Affordable housing for lowest income residents that is not public housing.
- Housing, jobs, public transportation.
- Housing for the low income!!
- Affordable housing.

- Sustainable development focusing on affordable housing & non-tourism development. Make Asheville a place where people want to live, work & stay not just a place to visit on the weekends.
- Affordable housing for all.
- (1)Housing (2) Available living-wage employment.
- Not able to provide housing for people whose income is less than 30,000.
- Affordable housing development.
- (1) Affordable housing. (2) I-26 corridor improvement with I-240.
- Affordable housing & economic equality.
- Affordable housing for lower income families- race relations.
- For low income, affordable housing & quality produce people living in apartment buildings need access to rent able garden space to be able to eat quality vegetables. I personally cannot afford organic prices.
- Housing.
- Affordable housing & jobs w/ benefits Re: Natural environment: Landscaping maintenance of downtown city parks is excellent. (County areas not so much). But the health and quantity of mature trees in a city are a huge factor in the overall appearance. Asheville is badly deficient in this area. Mature tree are constantly hacked up for power lines or cut down to be replaced by saplings. This is ugly and raw-looking.
- Affordable housing!
- Affordable housing- taking care of all residents of Asheville.
- Affordable housing. Growth management.
- Affordable housing options for the working class who help make the city a pleasant tourist destination i.e: servers, bartenders, artists, musicians, clerks, craftsmen, working class. These people are the lifeblood and heartbeat of the city of Asheville.
- affordable housing from \$150k-\$300, starting with at least 1150 sq-ft
- housing

Public transportation/infrastructure/traffic/parking

- People that have drives park along side of the road, it make it hard for people to get by if they are allowed to park on the road then they should have a parking permits cause it not right for on going traffic have to stop to let one another by, especially on South French Road where school buses have to come through and kid's walking from school crossing between park car's along the road I am a tax payer and I have the right to have full access to the road.
- Making downtown more livable- better walking/biking infrastructure, a walkable grocery store, and more residential living opportunities.
- Sidewalks in inner-ring neighborhoods need serious attention.
- Traffic in so. Asheville due to only 2 main roads (Hendersonville Re & Sweeten Creek) along with the increase in apartment development between these roads on mills gap & also out further on Sweeten Creek where traffic is already congested.
- Roads parking water repair.
- Sidewalks and pedestrian safety.
- More bus routes.
- Maintaining enough wide roads for all the apartments being built (in south AVL).
- Aged water system.
- Traffic- roads are narrow and too many apartment buildings have been built (not affordable).
- Repairing infrastructure and updating utility services (new pipes, etc.)
- Infrastructure to support all the folks moving here.
- Potholes & sidewalk repairs.
- Traffic, roads, maintenance, reduce regulation.
- Handling comfortably the increasing traffic issues that are developing with our steady growth.
- Roads.
- Affordable rented property for "working class".
- Walk ability; keeping the state out of local business; regressive taxation; high property taxes.
- Affordability. City of Asheville taxes are high in light of poor road, absence of sidewalks, & bike paths & cost of other services like water & sewer. Hard for low wage earners & retirees to be able to afford to live here.

- Traffic.
- Roads!! Good high paying jobs that keep up with the cost of living which is way to high!!! Also property taxes are outrageous!! I struggle with getting taxes paid every year.
- Roads with bike lanes, greenery & open space.
- Traffic & parking & housing i.e.: More people moving here.
- Roads cannot handle growth of population & visitors, especially Merrimon Ave (very busy & unsafe). How do we keep feeling like a "small town" & keep thriving.
- Parking or lack of housing- lack of, good paying jobs- lack of, do not overbuild hotels. Why was hotel Indigo allowed to build so high? Who passed that? No more. People cannot find parking to go to restaurants.
- Parking availability in downtown Asheville.
- Infrastructure issues-everything is aging.
- Storm water runoff/drinking water/taxes our kids should not have to learn another language in school for the people that can't speak our language and don't want to learn English they are the ones that moved here and they get all the breaks.
- We need sidewalks more things locals born hear need.
- I-26 connector.
- Determining best alignment/design for I-26 connector.
- Road systems in and around Asheville are congested, confusing & getting worse each year with the growth of Asheville. Also, downtown parking is terrible, especially if there is an event going on. We are losing parking garages for example, the one that was torn down to build a hotel. It was very in the heart of downtown. That is really going to impact local businesses in that part of town. Need more downtown parking.
- Bike lanes, sidewalks, public transport.
- Too many cars on bad streets & too many new homes & streets I liked Asheville better 15-20 yrs ago.
- Traffic, Merrimon Ave being taken over by terrible businesses "moes" "sport clips" "fire house subs".
- Roads & transportation & jobs.
- Pedestrian safety: Traffic enforcement and lack of sidewalks.
- Traffic affordable housing clean air.
- Parking & managing traffic.
- We need more sidewalk and bike paths, but mostly we need to be careful that development preserves the natural beauty of Asheville and its historic buildings.
- Asheville is booming. Residents and visitors need good roads, sidewalks and bike paths to get around downtown and South Asheville.
- Sewers backing up into businesses along tunnel RD, need sidewalks there are very few.
- Roads.
- Traffic choke downs or abandoned buildings.
- Safety of alternative transportation (i.e, biking/ walking).
- providing options for people to safely get from one place to another without relying on automobiles to do so, not just downtown but throughout the city-connecting city neighborhoods to the various areas of the city with safe bike routes and pedestrian routes where even kids can join parents in getting around.

Crime/public safety/homeless/cleanliness

- Increase police officers in APD. Increase deputies in sheriff's office.
- Public safety.
- Safety and security.
- Maintaining safety & affordable place to run business downtown.
- Crime rate increasing, lack of good housing and public streets/sidewalks repair.
- Restoring confidence (trust) in the police/sheriff departments/keeping affordable housing options available.
- (1) Cleaning up the appearance of downtown- still dirty looking. (2) Ease or roads & driving- congestion on 240 bypass roads have out ground the population- need to look ahead for ways to help traffic flow. 3. Affordable housing.
- Hire police chief within Dept. This outta hiring sucks.
- Crime prevention at all levels.
- Housing homeless.

- Treatment of young black men by police providing the symphony with good/fine performance hall.
- Making neighbors safe. Not to put up so many apartment building.
- Crime control, safety and graffiti eradication.
- There is a huge problem with people being homeless and not enough help for them.
- Safety.
- Police, animal shelter (no kill).
- Regaining public confidence in the Police Department

Other

- Living in the present, not being concerned with image but self-honesty.
- Parity and inclusion of all citizens, equal educational experiences across the board.
- Value of services us. Taxes paid.
- City and county government.
- Protect our public school teachers. Limit traffic on crowded roads. Assure health care of all provide free day care for children of single working parents. Enforce noise problems with motorcycles provide more sidewalks on major thoroughfares.
- Mayor is a wholly owned subsidiary of development interests.
- This place will once again turn into a ghost town!!!
- The corruption of city government- or the lack of quality health care (like choosing between the witch & a devil).
- Good.
- The cost of gas & oil.
- Race.
- Good leadership.
- Allowing minorities to vote paying teachers more.
- Racism especially from the Negros.
- COA is too focused on diversity and should be returning to traditional family values. The questions regarding worship should be of no concern to COA. That is not to say it is not important, just no concern of the city's.
- Preventing state government from taking control of city & county control of gov.
- Upgrading education.
- Having elected officials work together.
- Electing a competent city council for some real leadership, which is severely lacking- clean up all the trashy streets!
- Opportunities for families with special needs children. I have a four year old severely autistic son and I am appalled of the lack of help available for families with special needs kids. I have found this to be my calling in life. To be a lobbyist. I want to make a difference, so no other family will go through this.
- The decline of "kitschy, weird destinations" especially with new Marijuana prohibition replacements. It's easy to find were should be legal and taxed. You guys aren't called "Hashville" for no reason.
- the stupid-ass, repugnant, idiotological Republican federal and state "representatives" who have curtailed cities' power to annex and self-determination.

Don't know/NA/nothing

- Don't think there is one major issue that is mandatory. A decent performance center would greatly benefit the city.
- N/A.
- I don't know.
- Don't know.
- I don't know.