2

Community Involvement

This Plan was the product of a concerted effort on behalf of the Planning & Development Department to enlist the aid of the public. In March, 2007 a survey was mailed along with the utility bills to over 34,000 customers. The City also posted a downloadable version of the survey to its official website. Several articles were published within the local newspaper advising the Public of the mail outs as well as the availability of the form online or at the offices of Dothan Utilities.

The staff entered 1,708 survey forms that were completed and returned to the City as of the cut-off date of June 30, 2007. That figure represents a 5% return and was deemed a successful response level.

Following the compilation of the survey data, a Citizen Survey Report was presented during a public hearing to the Planning Commission and during another public hearing to the City Commission.

COMMUNITY SURVEY - WHAT WE LEARNED

1. Dothan as a Whole

- Most people are dissatisfied with the condition of the downtown area.
- Most people are satisfied with the safety afforded us by our roads.
- Response from our survey indicated that people were equally pleased and displeased with the type and amount of entertainment facilities found in Dothan.
- Most people are happy with the amount of parks and open spaces we have.
- We are generally pleased with the quality of design found in our commercial areas.
- We are pleased with the amount of connecting roads in Dothan.
- The majority of residents are pleased with the level of fire protection they receive.

- The majority of residents are also pleased with the level of police protection here.
- Most residents are pleased with the affordability of housing in Dothan.
- Most residents are pleased with the level of utility service we receive.

2. Improving Dothan

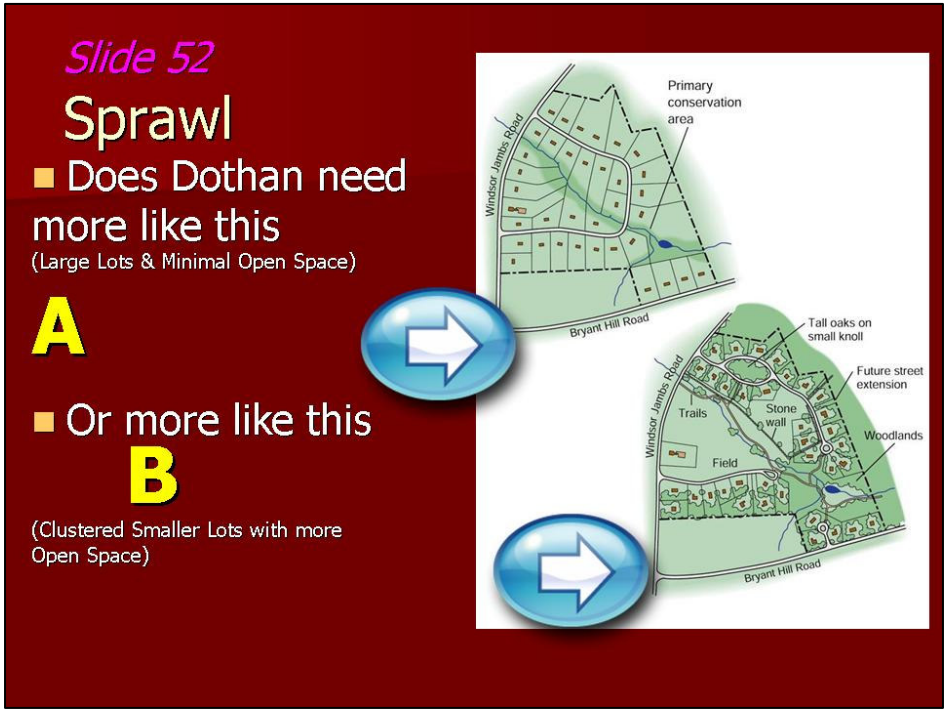
- Most people want more entertainment venues and attractions in the downtown area.
- Most people want the existing civic center improved, enlarged, or demolished and rebuilt as a bigger and better facility.
- Most citizens want the City to do more to protect the environment.
- Establishing a fixed, public transportation, bus route was important to Dothan citizens.
- Another item of importance to citizens is to enforce existing codes and regulations.
- Better communication from the City was another area of importance.
- Of lesser importance was improvement of lighting through additional street lights on Dothan's major roadways.
- Preservation of historic districts was not as important to citizens as other items for consideration.
- The amount of advertising signs along our roadways, in parking lots, and on buildings was not an important topic for the citizens.
- Enhancement of principal gateways into the City with landscape material, banners, or monuments was not an important issue.
- Establishment of police substations out in malls, shopping centers or neighborhoods was not something the public wanted.
- Least of all, the public did not want improvement to our existing points of interest or way-finding signage.

3. Regional Issues

- Most people want traffic circulation improved in and around Dothan.
- Most people want the City to create, seek out, or expand existing job opportunities locally.
- Most people want a defined bikeway/pedestrian trail system planned for and built throughout Dothan.
- Most people want the City to encourage expansion of local colleges.
- Most people want the City to sponsor more downtown activities.
- Not as important, but still desired, is the pursuit of regional transportation links by the City.
- Improvement to or construction of new public schools was not as important as other issues to the public.
- Affordable housing is not an important issue with the public.
- Few people are concerned with the access to our airport or the flight service provided them.
- The development of a major sports venue was not an issue popular to most citizens.

4. Neighborhood/Subdivision Issues

- Most people desire sidewalks installed in neighborhoods.
- Most people want police patrols increased at the neighborhood level.
- Prevention of commercial encroachment into residential neighborhoods is important.
- Most people want the City to encourage creation of neighborhood associations.
- We are generally happy with the amount of parks and recreational facilities at the neighborhood level.
- Few people feel setting aside more open space in new residential developments is important.
- The majority of residents do not want more through streets connecting their neighborhood with an adjoining one.
- The majority of residents do not want additional access points to their neighborhood.



The existing conditions of the City were developed to inventory the community's assets and serve as a baseline or barometer to measure where Dothan stood now and became the foundation for this Plan. The Existing Conditions Report was presented to the LRDP Steering Committee for review and comments. Having received input from the steering committee, the staff then presented the final draft version of the Existing Conditions Report to the Planning Commission during a public hearing. No comments were received from the public in attendance at the public hearing. The Existing Conditions Report was subsequently presented to the City Commission during a separate public hearing. Once again, there were no comments from the audience. The Planning Commission and the City Commission both accepted the Existing Conditions Report with no changes required.

The staff developed a Visual Preference Survey (VPS) along with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) response in an effort to receive additional input from the public. During the months of April, May and June, 2008 the staff held a series of public forums to further involve the public in the planning process.

The first meeting was held in the City Commission chambers. Three of the others were held at locations strategically selected so that two commission districts were visited during each for the convenience of the public. One forum was held at Carver Magnet School for Commission Districts One and Two; the next was held at Beverlye Middle School for Districts Three and Four; the following one was held at Honeysuckle Middle School for Districts Five and Six, and the final forum in the series was held downtown at the Opera House. Although the forums were scheduled by districts, the advertising was clear that the public could attend any or all of the forums regardless of where it was held.

During each one of the forums the audience watched a brief video on smart growth and planning, participated in the VPS and the SWOT and then was able to ask questions of the staff, City Manager, or elected officials. The VPS involved 52 slides where the public was asked their preference on relevant issues regarding sense of place, sense of community, sense of arrival, building types and urban sprawl. Above is an example of one of the slides within the VPS.

Following the series of public forums, the City sent a letter to each of the civic organizations in the City offering to take the VPS and SWOT to one of their meetings to gather input from the members. In the interest of keeping the plan on track, the City allowed each civic organization one month to respond with a request for the presentation. After receiving letters of interest, the City then scheduled presentations with several local civic organizations with the aim of gathering more input, direction and support from the public.

The presentations to the civic organizations concluded in September, 2008. Following is a synopsis of what we heard, learned and gathered at the five (5) public forums and nine (9) civic organization presentations.

VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY - WHAT WE LEARNED

1. Sense of Place

- Most people are dissatisfied with the present method of roadside signage and would like to see more uniformity and control over advertising signs.
- Most people would like to see improvements to the downtown area.
- Most people favored the "feel" of the downtown area when it showed curbside patio dining, people places along the sidewalks, and more visual integrity to the downtown place.
- Most people prefer neighborhoods with trees and tree-lined streets.
- Most people liked the appearance of neighborhoods with sidewalks and those with a landscaped separation between the sidewalk and the curb of the street.
- Most people preferred a more ornamental look to street lighting than the standard.
- The public was in favor of street art and seemed neutral to the genre as long as it was tasteful.
- The public was in favor of alleys as the means for accessing residential garages as long as the alleys were functional and wide enough to serve a purpose. They were adamantly opposed to the alleyways that exist in the downtown area.
- The public favored sidewalks that were separate from vehicle traffic and those that were paved with pavers. They also were in favor of wider sidewalks in the downtown area which would offer spaces for benches, ornamental street lights and landscaping.

2. Sense of Community

- Most people want more attention to the design of residential subdivisions. The typical subdivision in Dothan lacks imagination. The public is becoming more educated as mortgage money tightens. The average home buyer is now shopping for the total environment rather than just the house. They are increasingly concerned with sidewalks, trails, curvilinear streets, neighborhood parks, landscaping, and entry treatments that establish a sense of arrival than they once were.
- Most people agree that landscaping has a place in retail/commercial developments and would prefer shopping at places that were "softened" by landscaping.
- Most citizens want commercial/retail parking lots that are landscaped rather than just a sea of asphalt.
- "Downtown Centers" rather than the traditional strip commercial/retail centers are preferred.
- The public was presented with a choice between dry or wet storm water detention ponds in commercial and residential developments. Overwhelmingly they chose the wet ponds over the dry. To them it established a better sense of place.

- When asked to choose between building types, the majority of the public prefer buildings constructed of brick or stone over the metal-sided or brick and metal-sided construction we typically see along Ross Clark Circle and throughout the City. To the public, brick and stone buildings solicited a more visually stimulating response.
- Preservation of historic buildings with older-styled architecture gained a more favorable response than the construction of newer-styled buildings. The sense of character of Dothan as a place, to the public, is better served by its historic buildings or new buildings constructed in the historic style rather than the newer, modern architecture found along its periphery.

3. Sense of Arrival

We were interested in the public opinion on the appearance and feel of highways, traffic, City gateways, subdivision entries, and streetscapes in this area of concentration.

- Most people preferred a softer feel to the highways which could be achieved through landscape and buffer requirements along our major roads or establishment of scenic corridors along principal gateways to the City.
- Most people would naturally prefer a better level of service on all our roadways. This is something that could be improved by more connectivity.
- Most people liked a monument sign with landscaping as their gateway to Dothan rather than a simple sign on a pole to set the sense of arrival to our City.
- Most people would prefer a more ornate and dramatic entrance to neighborhoods and subdivisions than, with a few exceptions, are currently found in the City.
- Most people would prefer a more landscaped streetscape and narrower and curvilinear residential streets.

4. Building Types and Urban Sprawl

We were interested in the public opinion regarding housing stock and what dwelling types Dothan residents felt the City needed in the future. We also questioned them about their perception of sprawl in Dothan.

- Most people felt there was less need for large, sprawling estate homes than a conservative large two-storied residence.
- The opinion was fairly even regarding the desire for more ranch-styled homes over two-storied, clustered garden homes.
- The reaction to the preference of clustered detached homes over attached town homes was also fairly even with the detached variety edging a little higher in popularity.
- Most people opted for the traditional two-three storied multi-family apartment buildings than stand alone individual structures clustered in a compact area.
- Regarding sprawl, we showed a “bird’s eye view” rendering of a subdivision with large lots and the same piece of property with more conservatively sized lots and large amounts of common open spaces. The public was split on their

preference between these two style development patterns with a slight majority favoring the latter, less sprawl-resulting scenario.

- Finally, we asked the public to compare two renderings of the same property one with a traditional neighborhood design and the other with a conservation-oriented layout with smaller lots clustered along a system of cul-de-sac streets, with a park site and large amounts of open space. (See the figure on page 2-4) Overwhelmingly, the public supported the conservation-oriented layout above the traditional one.

STRENGTH'S, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS - WHAT WE LEARNED

OVERVIEW

During five (5) scheduled public forums during the months of April, May and June, 2008 attendees were given the opportunity to comment on Dothan's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). There were no guidelines or parameters established that would bridle the attendees' comments. They were simply asked to list all that came to mind that they, themselves felt were pertinent to the categories presented.

For the purpose of our SWOT, the following defines the four basic categories of the survey.

- **S**trengths: attributes of the City that are positive existing qualities of the City.
- **W**eaknesses: attributes of the City that negatively influence the existing level of services and quality of life in Dothan.
- **O**pportunities: *future* conditions that is helpful to achieving the objective of improvement to the style of living for our citizens.
- **T**hreats: *future* conditions which could do damage to the City's performance of its responsibilities.

The only restraint given was a time limit in which to write down their comments. They were allotted three minutes for each of the four categories. It was explained to them that the "Strengths" and "Weaknesses" categories should be thought of as existing or current events or conditions in Dothan; while the "Opportunities" and "Threats" categories should address future positives or concerns for Dothan.

Identification of SWOT's is essential because subsequent steps in the process of planning for achievement of the selected objective may be derived from the results.

The turn out and level of public involvement was less than hoped for, although the public participation during the forums contributed greatly to the direction of the LRDP.

Notices of the meetings were sent to all media outlets and department representatives brought the message to a local talk radio program. Overall, by holding numerous forums in various parts of the City and through the several attempts to advertise each event, 100% of the residents of Dothan were given the opportunity to participate and provide input into the process. Local civic groups were also contacted and given the opportunity to allow the Planning Department to present the entire SWOT and Visual Preference Survey (VPS) during one of their scheduled assemblies.

SWOT is an excellent tool for planners to understand the pulse of the public as far as their perception of the state of the City as well as the general direction that they would want it to take. Addressed constructively by the responding public, several fundamental directions and objectives can be identified to aid the Planning and City staff in the identification and stewarding of projects to fulfill the preferences of the public.

The public forums did not define any desired parameters or objectives so that we could hear unsolicited and unrestricted comments and concerns from the public. The result was scattered responses, comments and concerns that were difficult in assigning to a tangible planning-related topic. Those comments that did not fall into the long range planning effort, such as displeasure with the weather, topics of national or world-wide concern were grouped into a catch all topic called "Opinion". Following is a compilation of those comments and concerns, assigned to themes and topics.

The next step is in the identification of common responses to the SWOT. Staff painstakingly sifted through all responses in each of the four categories to identify commonalities among the responses. Bear in mind that these comments are not structured by the Planning Department and all responses come freely from the public on whatever matter or subject that it is they wish to address. Consequently, the task is difficult as every response must be read, organized into specific common themes and then a judgment made regarding the findings. Some responses had little to nothing to do with local planning issues, goals or objectives and are collected into a general topic called "Opinion". These can be seen in detail at the end of the report.

For the purpose of Dothan's SWOT, we have grouped all responses into one of eight themes for each of the four categories in the SWOT.

Themes are:

Amenities
Economy

Leadership
Public Facilities/Services
Community Services
Transportation-Travel
Regulatory Environment
Criticism

Following the analysis by category and theme, is the SWOT Analysis summary which presents a hierarchical list of comments and concerns as well as projects recommended to be accomplished by the City to remedy or improve upon the comments or concerns.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Following are the analyses broken into the four categories and isolated within the eight themes within each category. A pie chart follows each analysis to offer a graphic representation of the responses TOWARD EACH THEME.

STRENGTHS

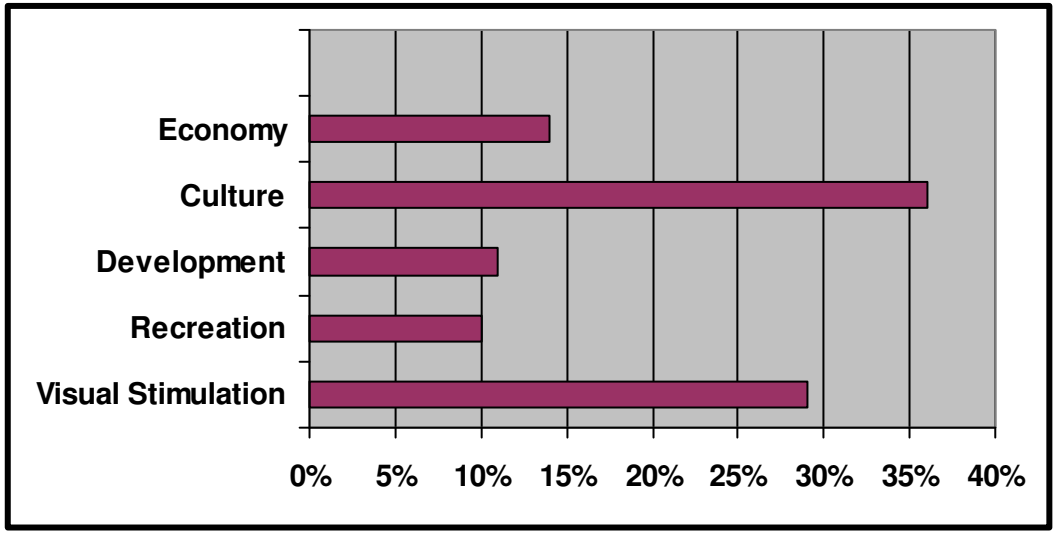
Within this category the following comments and concerns held some commonality among the public responses. Following are tables to recap the comments and concerns regarding each theme within this category. A chart follows the tables to help graphically visualize the responses with regard to relative importance.

Amenities

The number one comment regarding strengths in Dothan had to do with expression of its culture. Thirty-six (36) percent indicated that our greatest strength is in our culture and cultural activities. Twenty-nine (29) percent indicated that aesthetics or visual stimulation represented another one of our strengths.

Amenities

	Aesthetics	Recreation	Development	Culture	Economy
Percent	**29%**	**10%**	**11%**	**36%**	**14%**

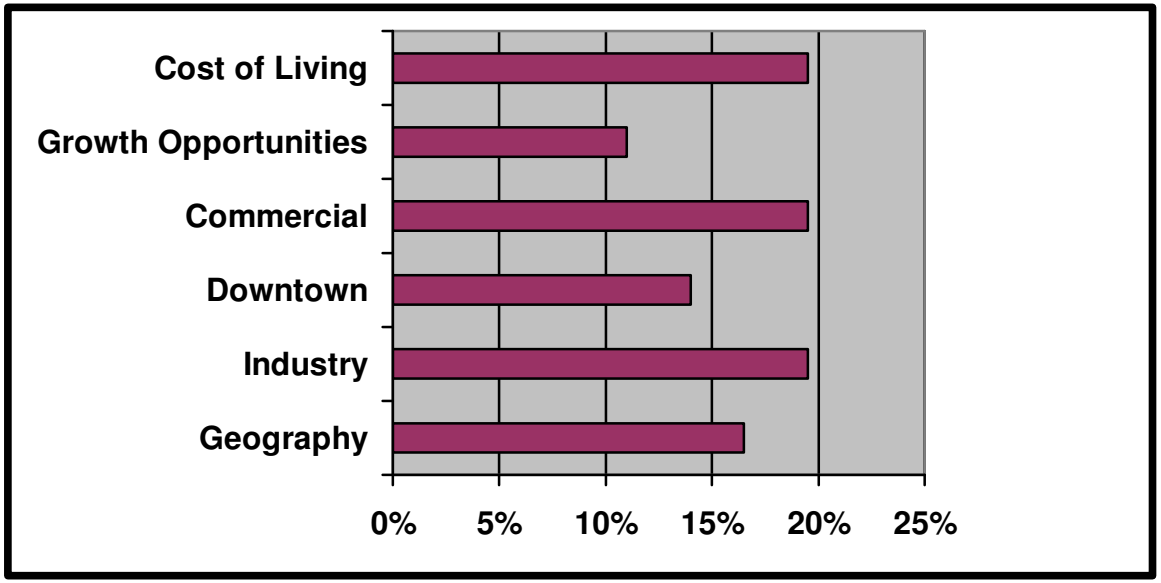


Economy

Three areas tied for first in this theme. Nineteen and one half (19.5) percent of the comments regarding Dothan's "strengths" of its economy dealt with the local commercial attractions, cost of living and industry (jobs). The fact that we are a market center in the tri-state region gained many comments. Dothan's location on the map, or its geographical location, also gained sixteen and one half (16.5) percent of the total comments regarding the strength of our local economy.

Economy

	Geography	Industry	DT	Commercial	Growth Opps.	Cost of Living
Percent	**16.5%**	**19.5%**	**14%**	**19.5%**	**11%**	**19.5%**

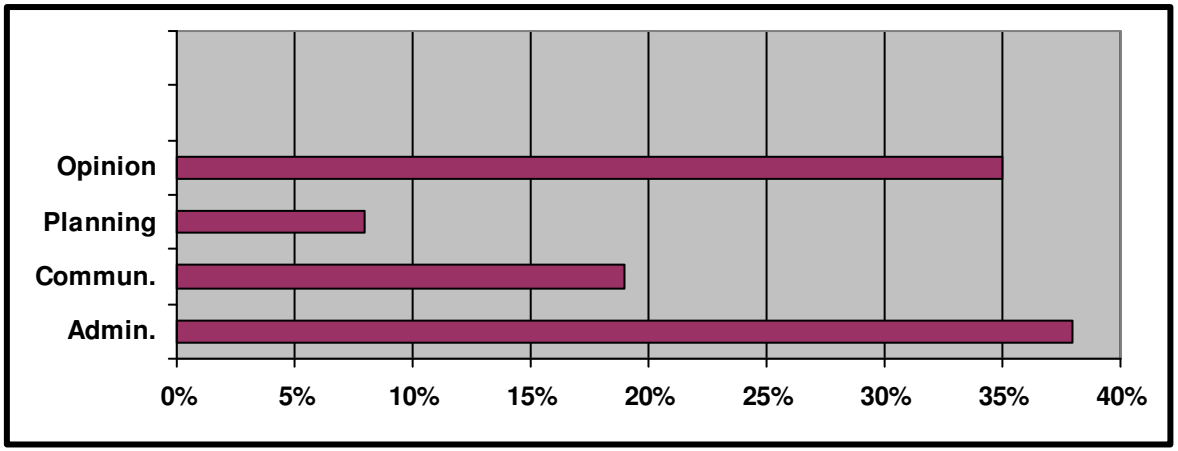


Leadership

Thirty-eight (38) percent of the comments suggest that the current administration and form of government are strengths of Dothan. A very high thirty-five (35) percent of the comments fell into the general opinion area and ranged from favorable impressions of the "dedicated City work force" to "the electronic department".

Leadership

	Administration	Communication	Planning	Opinion
Percent	**38%**	**19%**	**8%**	**35%**

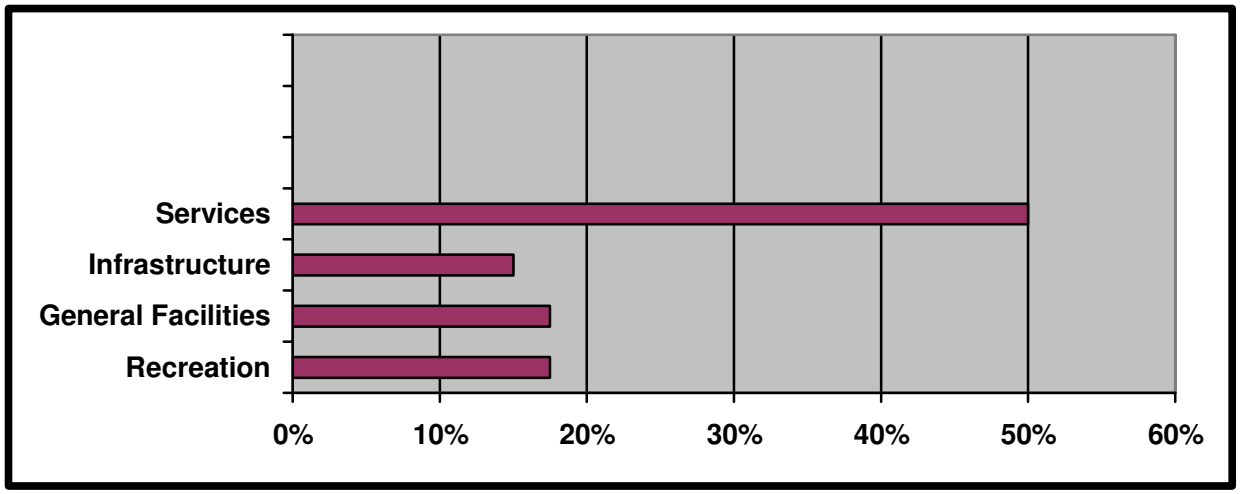


Public Facilities/Services

Fifty (50) percent of the comments mentioned services received from the City as the City's number one "strength". The other three areas of infrastructure, general facilities, and recreation scored low as far as City strengths.

Public Facilities/Services

	Recreation	General Facilities	Infrastructure	Services
Percent	17.5%	17.5%	15%	50%

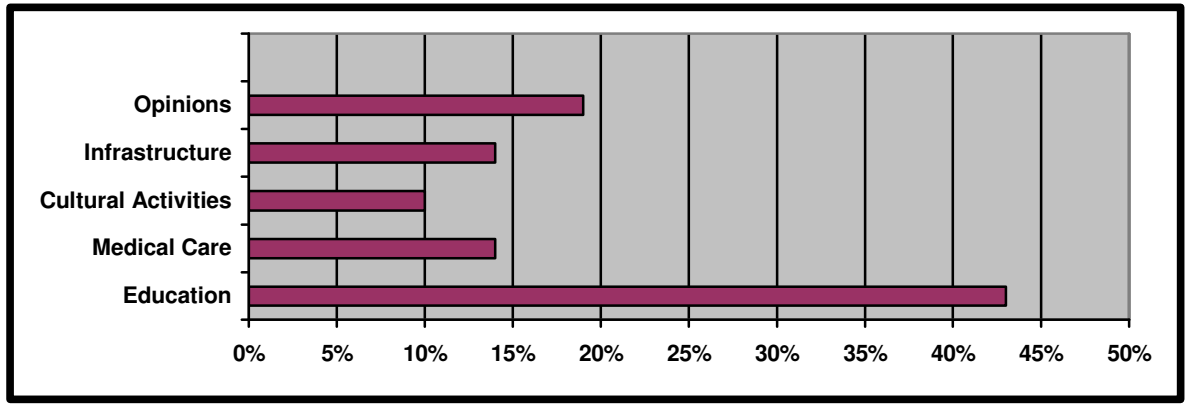


Community Services

With forty-three (43) percent of all comments in this area, Dothan's educational opportunities rank as the area's top strength. The lowest scoring area with only ten (10) percent of the comments was the local cultural activities available. Medical care in the area and local infrastructure tallied fourteen (14) percent of the comments each.

Community Services

	Education	Medical Care	Cultural Activities	Infrastructure	Opinions
Percent	**43%**	**14%**	**10%**	**14%**	**19%**

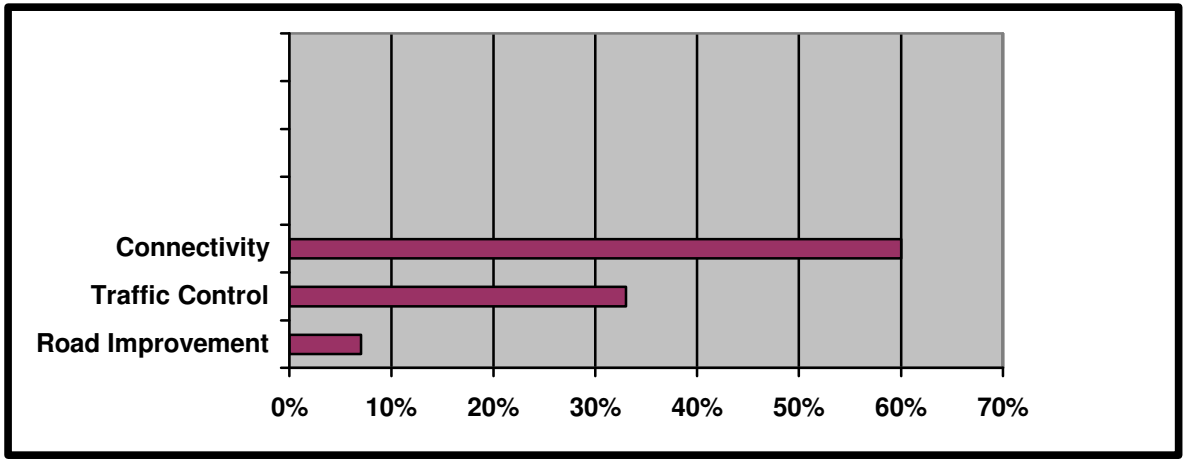


Transportation-Travel

Sixty (60) percent of the comments mentioned the ability to get around town in a timely manner with links to the region as well as road connectivity as the greatest strength in Dothan's existing transportation/travel network. Thirty-three (33) percent felt that traffic control within the City was also a strength. No mention was made of any other mode of traditional transportation, pedestrian, bike, mass transit, rail or air as having significant strength in the existing transportation framework.

Transportation/Travel

	Road Improvement	Traffic Control	Connectivity
Percent	7%	33%	60%

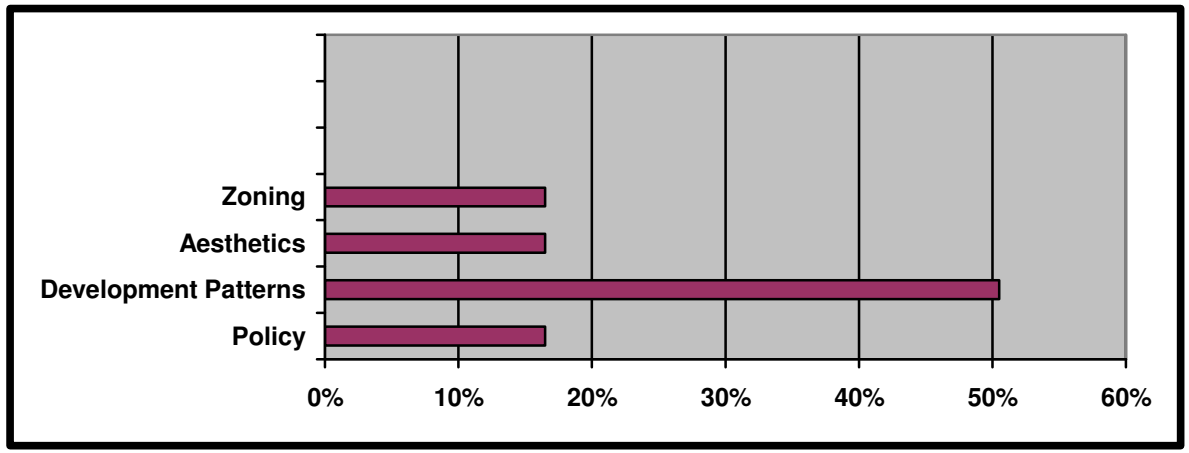


Regulatory Environment

Fifty and one half (50.5) percent of the comments suggested that current development patterns in Dothan today were a strength produced by the regulatory environment. Only sixteen and one half (16.5) percent felt that existing zoning rules, policies and aesthetics could be considered as one of the strengths of the City.

Regulatory Environment

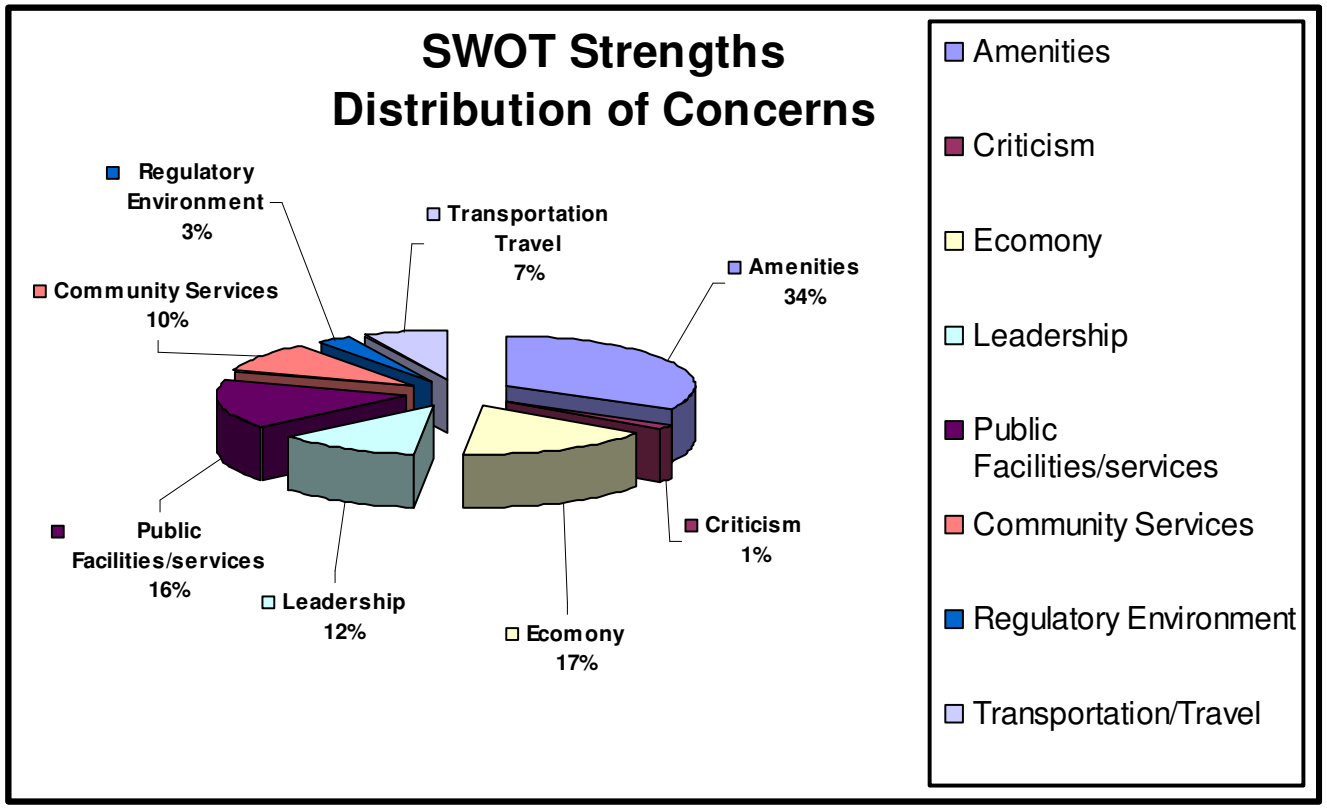
	Policy	Development Patterns	Aesthetics	Zoning
Percent	**16.5%**	**50.5%**	**16.5%**	**16.5%**



The chart found on the following page demonstrates the distribution of the public's concerns when it involves current City strengths. The largest level of confidence in the City occurs in the amenities theme. The two prominent elements in the amenities theme that the public feels are strengths lay in the cultural environment as well as visual aesthetics (murals, streetscapes, open spaces, parks, etc.). However, the aesthetics and zoning policies of the City were rated as not so strong.

Criticism
According to the data collected, there were only three comments of criticism involving an attribute of strength for the City. Two comments involved general opinions, while the third could be classified as a comment regarding communications from the City.

Distribution of Concerns
The following pie chart depicts a consolidation of responses toward the various themes and the percentage of concern received from the SWOT participants.



WEAKNESSES

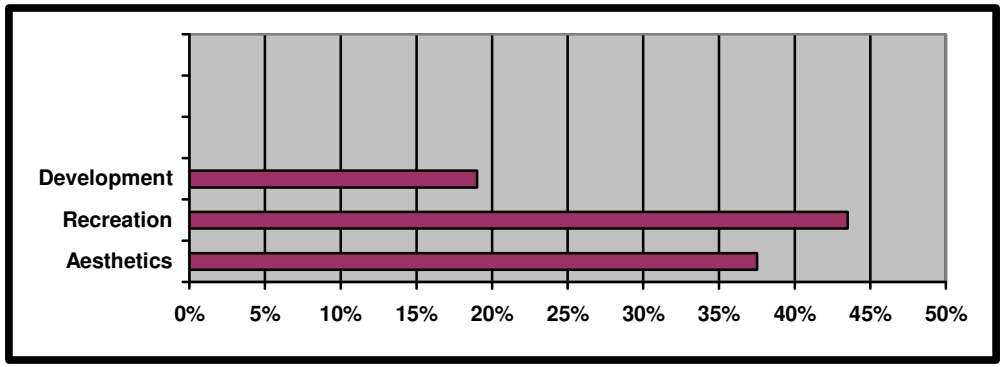
Weaknesses are areas that deserve attention in the Plan. They are perceived by the public to be areas of deficient operation or level of services delivered to the citizens. Following are tables to recap the comments and concerns regarding each theme within this category. A chart follows the tables to help graphically visualize the responses with regard to relative importance.

Amenities

The number one comment, forty three and one half (43.5) percent, within this theme revolves around the lack of open space, parks and recreational opportunities. The public's responses involve the desire for more landscaping and more street trees to improve the aesthetic quality of the City and more outside activities and parks to improve recreational opportunities. To a lesser extent, patterns of land development and an increase in the number of public spaces were also a concern.

Amenities

	Aesthetics	Recreation	Development
Percent	**37.5%**	**43.5%**	**19%**

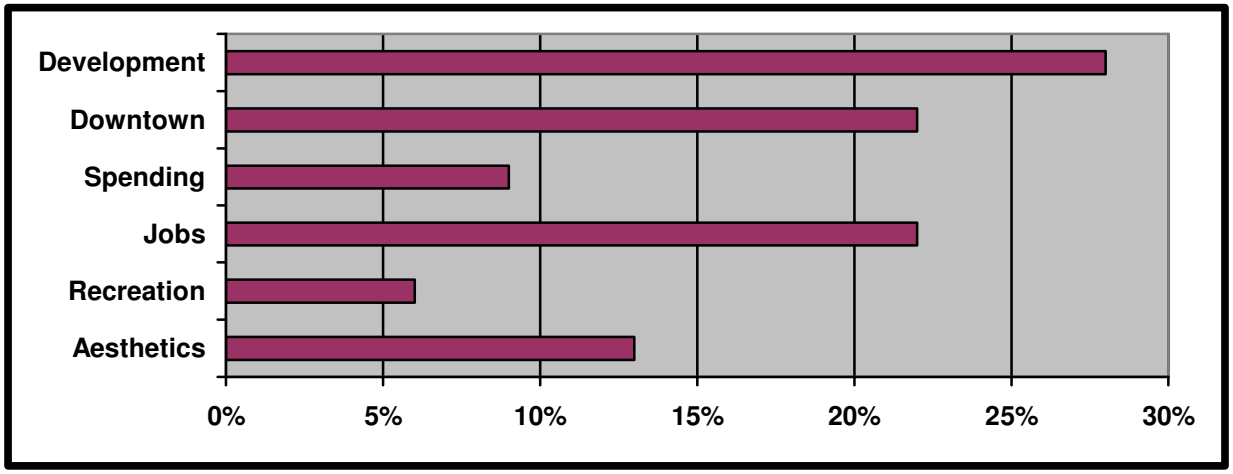


Economy

Twenty-two (22) percent of the responses felt the downtown area as well as the local job market was the most significant of the City's economic weaknesses. Thirteen (13) percent mentioned the inherent aesthetics of the City as a contributing factor to the weakness of the local economy. Nine (9) percent felt that the City overspent and finally six (6) percent of the comments or concerns identified "recreation" or rather the lack thereof as the main thrust and focus for improving the economic quality of life in Dothan's future.

Economy

	Aesthetics	Recreation	Jobs	City Spending or Revenue	Downtown	Development
Percent	**13%**	**6%**	**22%**	**9%**	**22%**	**28%**



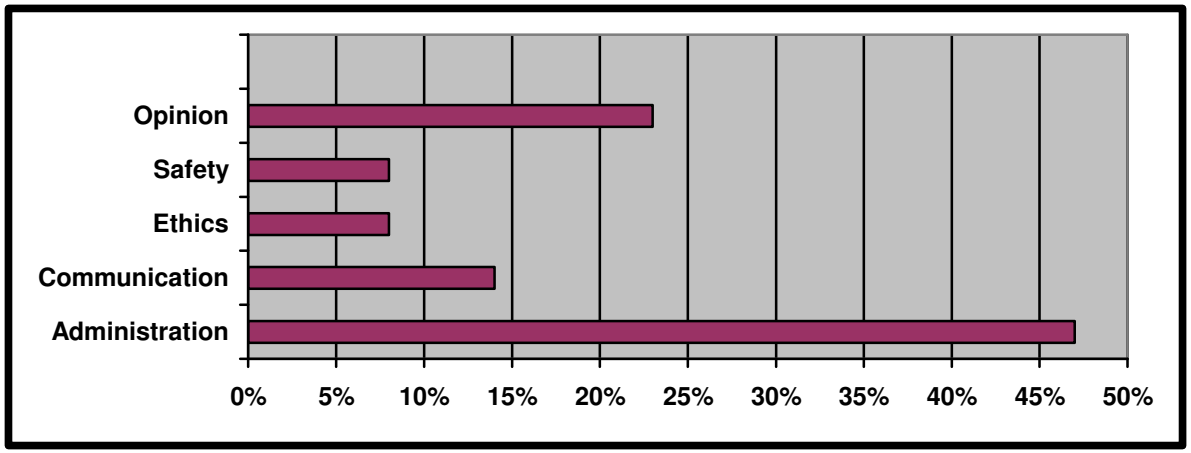
Leadership

This theme garnered a huge amount of focus and comments. Forty-seven (47) percent of the comments or concerns involved ways to improve the existing administration of the government and/or its operation.

The second largest response topic was the "opinion" topic where twenty-three (23) percent of those responding leveled general criticism toward individuals, organizations and committees. The need for better communication between the City and its public received fourteen (14) percent of the total responses received.

Leadership

	Administration	Communication	Ethics	Safety	Opinion
Percent	**47%**	**14%**	**8%**	**8%**	**23%**

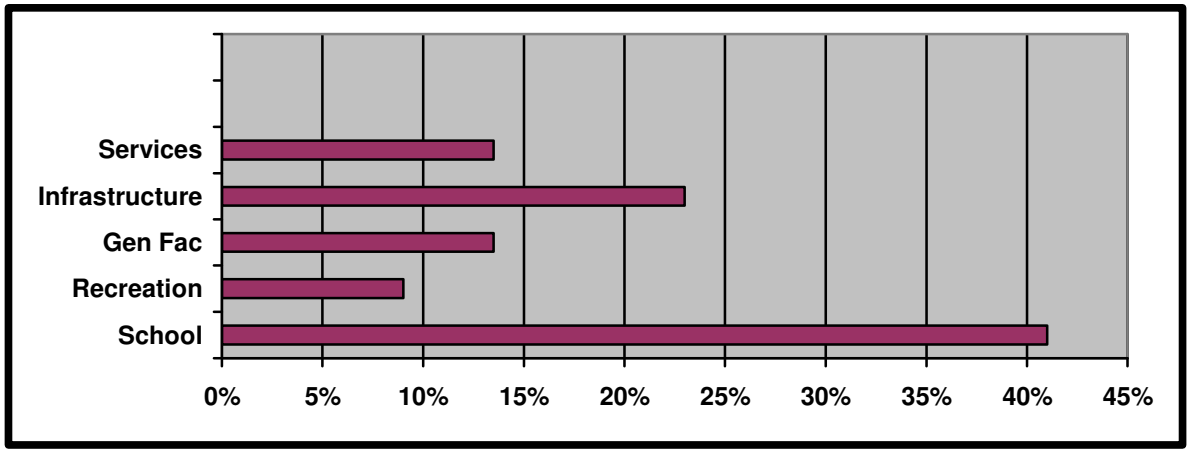


Public Facilities/Services

Forty-one (41) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned the schools or school system as in need of improvement and a current weakness of the City. Twenty-three (23) percent felt that improvements to the existing general City infrastructure were current needs and posed an existing weakness; and thirteen and one half (13.5) percent said that improvement to other facilities would help. Another thirteen and one half (13.5) percent felt that improvements to existing City services were needed.

Public Facilities/Services

	Schools	Recreation	General Facilities	Infrastructure	Services
Percent	**41%**	**9%**	**13.5%**	**23%**	**13.5%**



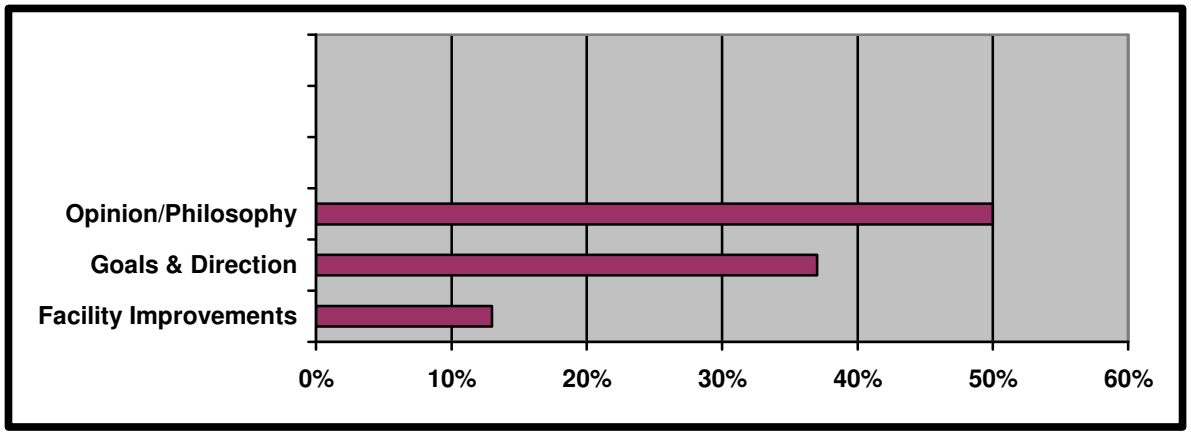
Community Services

Few comments or concerns were recorded regarding the public's perception of this theme as a weakness. Fifty (50) percent of the comments involved personal opinions that could not be grouped into planning strategies, while thirty-seven (37) percent of all comments suggested the existing goals or direction of non-profits and City services in the area were part of the City's weaknesses.

The primary concern is the perceived lack of services, programs and benefits for those in need in the community.

Community Services

	Facility Improvements	Goals & Direction	Opinion/Philosophy
Percent	**13%**	**37%**	**50%**

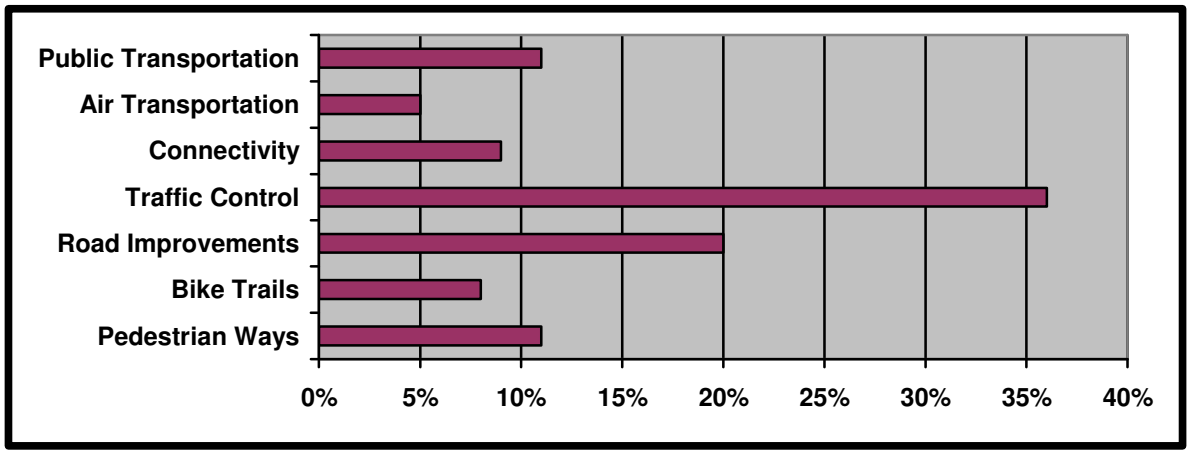


Transportation-Travel

Responses involved four modes of transportation (air, vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian). Thirty-six (36) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned traffic control as a weakness in Dothan's transportation/travel network. Twenty (20) percent felt that existing roadways need improvement; and the lack of mass transit and pedestrian walkways/sidewalks tied for third in the public's perception of Dothan's weaknesses in its transportation system.

Transportation/Travel

	Pedestrian	Bike	Road Improvement	Traffic Control	Connectivity	Air	Public Transit
Percent	**11%**	**8%**	**20%**	**36%**	**9%**	**5%**	**11%**

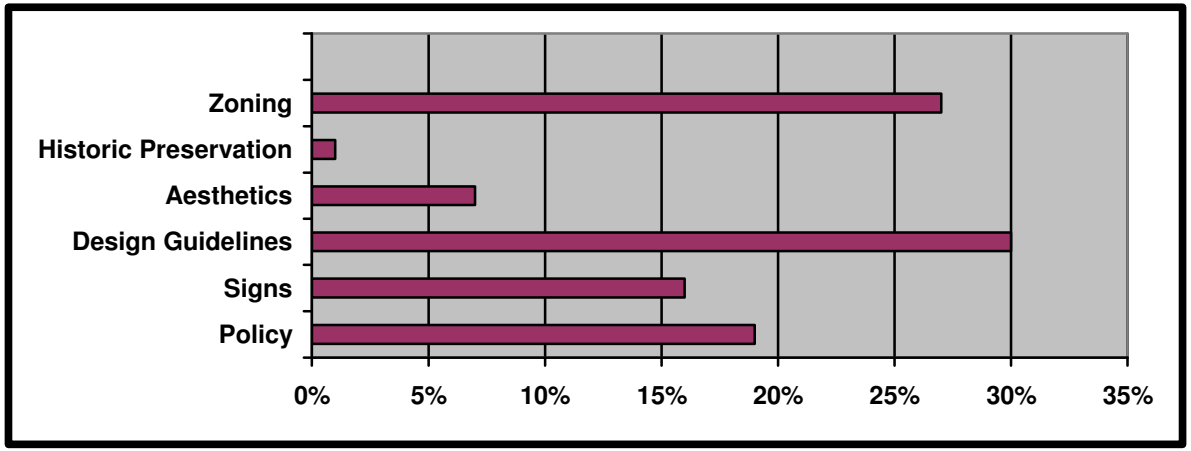


Regulatory Environment

This was the theme that received the largest number of responses concerning Dothan's weaknesses. Thirty (30) percent of the comments and concerns suggested that the lack of design guidelines for architectural, landscaping, and subdivision design was the greatest weakness in Dothan today. Twenty-seven (27) percent felt that non-enforcement of existing zoning rules as well as the current zoning ordinance was a great weakness to the City; and another nineteen (19) percent said that existing policies and activities of elected or appointed officials was a weakness to the City. One (1) percent felt that existing historic preservation measures was a weakness.

Regulatory Environment

	Policy	Signs	Design Guidelines	Aesthetics	Historic Preservation	Zoning
Percent	**19%**	**16%**	**30%**	**7%**	**1%**	**27%**

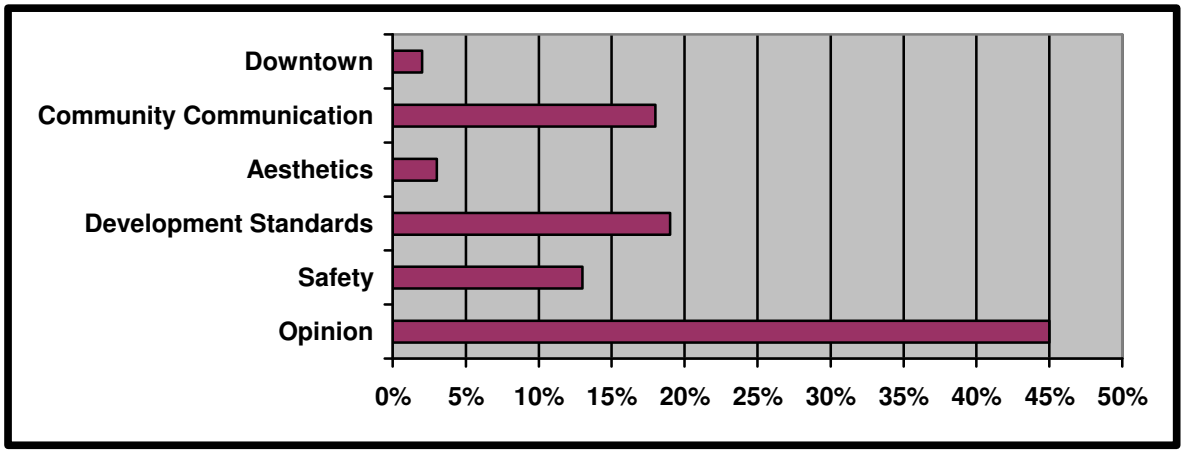


Criticism

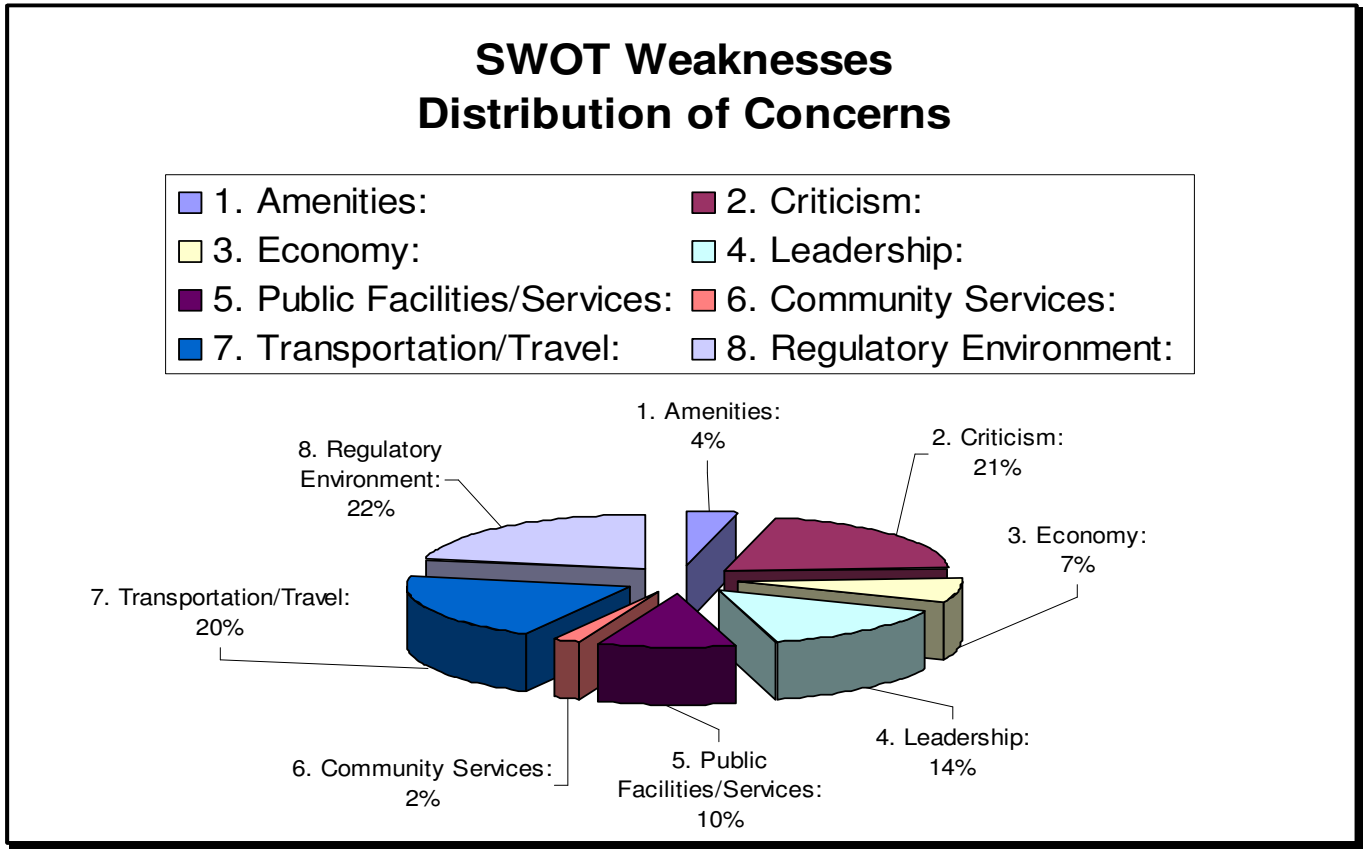
This theme generally contains concerns expressed by the public. It received the largest number of entries (45%) of all the themes in this category. Many of the responses could be grouped as "opinions". Opinions ranged far and wide with very few, if any, common denominators. The predominant tangible criticism is that citizens need to be better informed and educated on the daily workings of the City; and that the City is more congenial and responsive to its citizens. "Community Communication" and "Development Standards" tied for second at eighteen (18) and nineteen (19) percent respectively. The impression of public safety also had a strong showing with thirteen (13) percent of the responses addressing this concern as one of the primary "weaknesses" of the City and its governing body.

Criticism

	Opinion	Safety	Development Standards	Aesthetics	Community Communication	DTown
Percent	**45%**	**13%**	**19%**	**3%**	**18%**	**2%**



The following chart demonstrates the distribution of the public's concerns when it involves current City weaknesses. The greatest concern lay in the area of the regulatory environment, the policies, procedures, tools, and resulting aesthetics caused by our actions. Following closely behind were general criticisms and concerns over specifics related to the City's transportation system and its leadership and management practices.


SWOT Weaknesses
Distribution of Concerns
1. Amenities:
2. Criticism:
3. Economy:
4. Leadership:
5. Public Facilities/Services:
6. Community Services:
7. Transportation/Travel:
8. Regulatory Environment:
1. Amenities: 4%
2. Criticism: 21%
3. Economy: 7%
4. Leadership: 14%
5. Public Facilities/Services: 10%
6. Community Services: 2%
7. Transportation/Travel: 20%
8. Regulatory Environment: 22%

OPPORTUNITIES

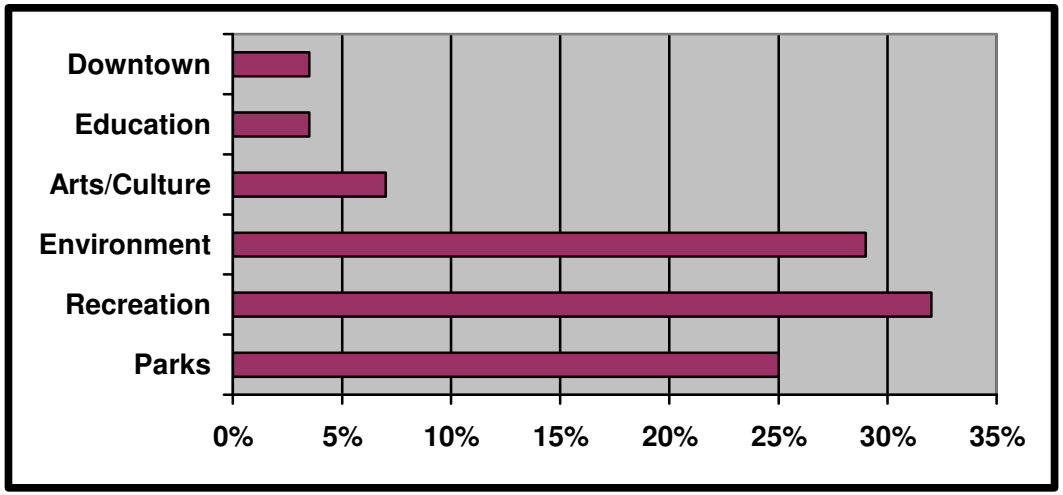
The following comments and concerns were expressed by the public. Opportunities are options that may correct or improve upon existing conditions or services. Opportunities may also refer to areas of service or the utilization of an existing asset which the City could capitalize on or enhance to better the quality of life. The following tables recap the comments and concerns regarding each theme within this category. A chart follows the tables to help graphically visualize the responses with regard to relative importance.

Amenities

A combined seventy-nine (79) percent of the comments, within this theme, revolved around local environmental assets (29%), parks (25%), and recreational opportunities (32%) as a way in which the City could improve the quality of life for its future citizens. The public's specific responses involved the desire for more landscaping, more street trees and more outside activities and parks.

Amenities

	Parks	Recreation	Environment	Arts/Culture	Education	DTown
Percent	**25%**	**32%**	**29%**	**7%**	**3.5%**	**3.5%**

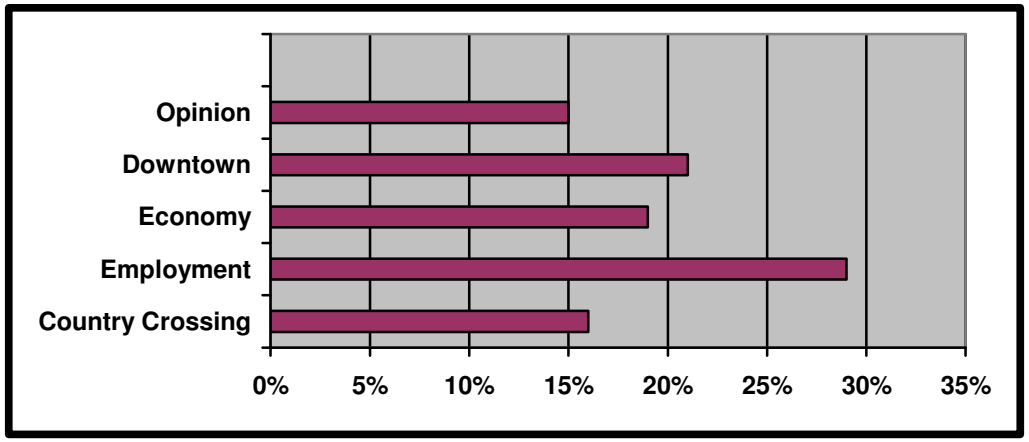


Economy

Twenty-nine (29) percent of the comments or concerns addressed the issue of "employment", while twenty-one (21) percent focused on the issue of "downtown improvements" and finally fifteen (15) percent of the comments or concerns identified "Country Crossing" as the main thrust and focus for improving the economic quality of life in Dothan's future.

Economy

	Country Crossing	Employment	Economy	Downtown	Opinion
Percent	**16%**	**29%**	**19%**	**21%**	**15%**

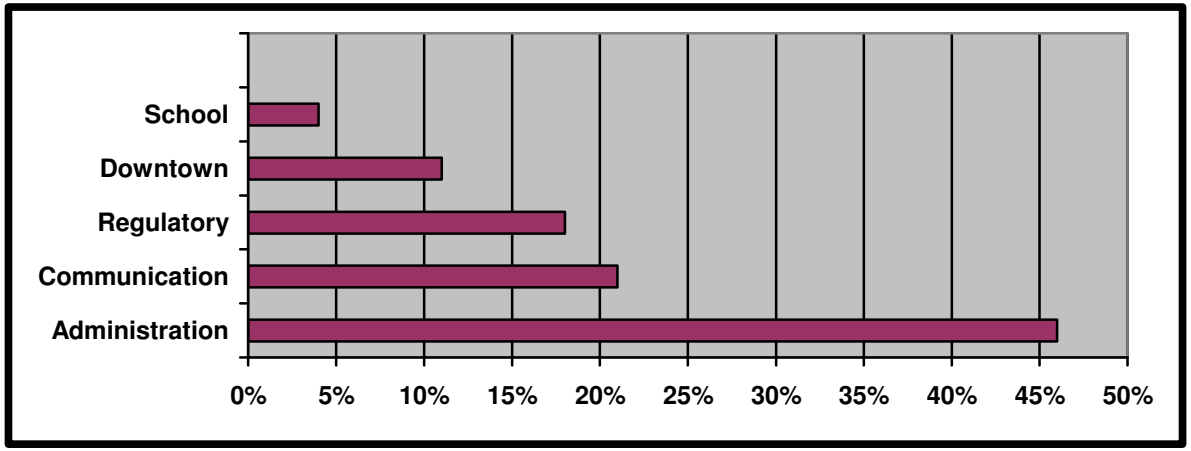


Leadership

Forty-six (46) percent of the comments or concerns involved ways to improve the existing government administration and/or its operation. The comments addressed the need for City administrators to keep the public informed and involved in civic matters. Eighteen (18) percent of the comments and concerns spoke of regulatory issues and enforcement of existing regulations and/or plans as a way to improve the City in the future. Eleven (11) percent said the downtown area and improvements to it held the key to improving Dothan's future.

Leadership

	Administration	Communication	Regulatory	Downtown	School
Percent	**46%**	**21%**	**18%**	**11%**	**4%**

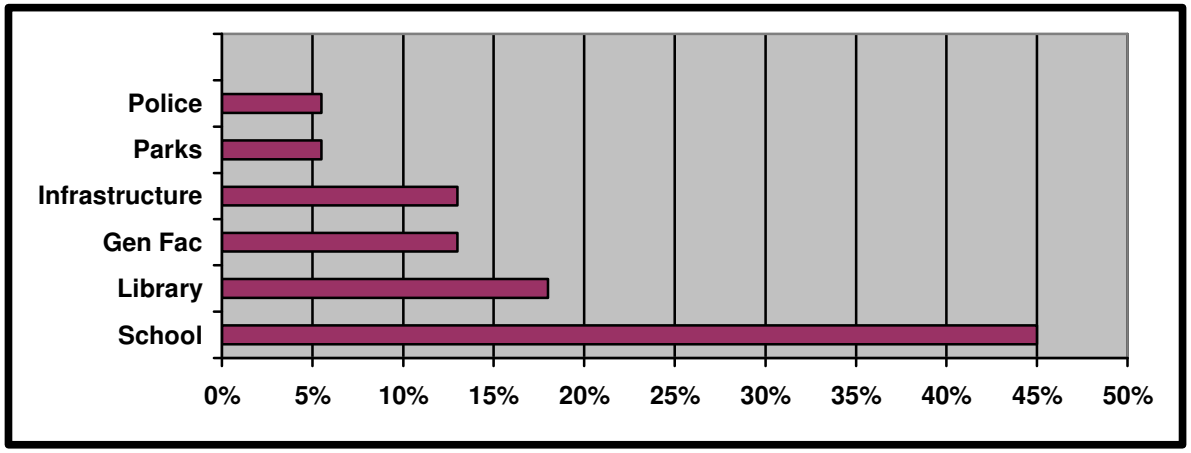


Public Facilities/Services

Forty-five (45) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned the schools or school system as in need of improvement as a way to improve the opportunities for Dothan's future. Eighteen (18) percent felt that a new library would increase the citizen's opportunities in the future; and thirteen (13) percent said that improvement to other facilities would help. Another thirteen (13) percent felt that infrastructure improvements would be the practical way to improve Dothan in this theme.

Public Facilities/Services

	Schools	Library	General Facilities	Infrastructure	Parks	Police
Percent	**45%**	**18%**	**13%**	**13%**	**5.5%**	**5.5%**

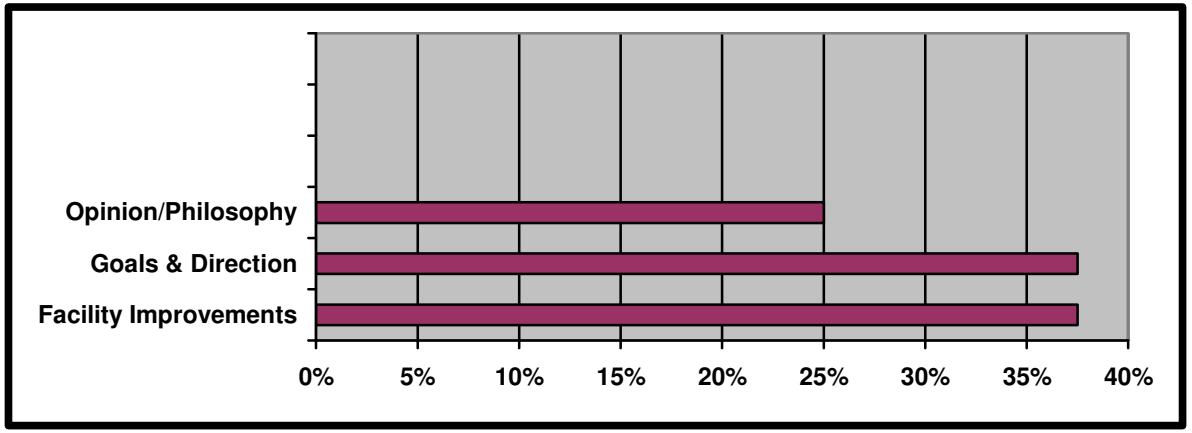


Community Services

Few comments or concerns in this theme were received and there were no clear leaders. Thirty-seven and one half (37.5) percent of the responses suggested that setting new goals and direction for the City was an opportunity; and another thirty-seven and one half (37.5) percent believed that large opportunities lay in the improvement of existing City facilities. The remaining twenty-five (25) percent were classified as general opinions or philosophies. Within this latter topic, some comments involved the support or expansion of non-profits in the area. Others mentioned giving back to the community by those who could afford to. An example of the goals and objectives would be outreach for retirees to move to Dothan. Facility improvement opportunities included the establishment of a senior center; and the need for more facilities such as the "Rotary Miracle Field".

Community Services

	Facility Improvements	Goals & Direction	Opinion/Philosophy
Percent	**37.5%**	**37.5%**	**25%**

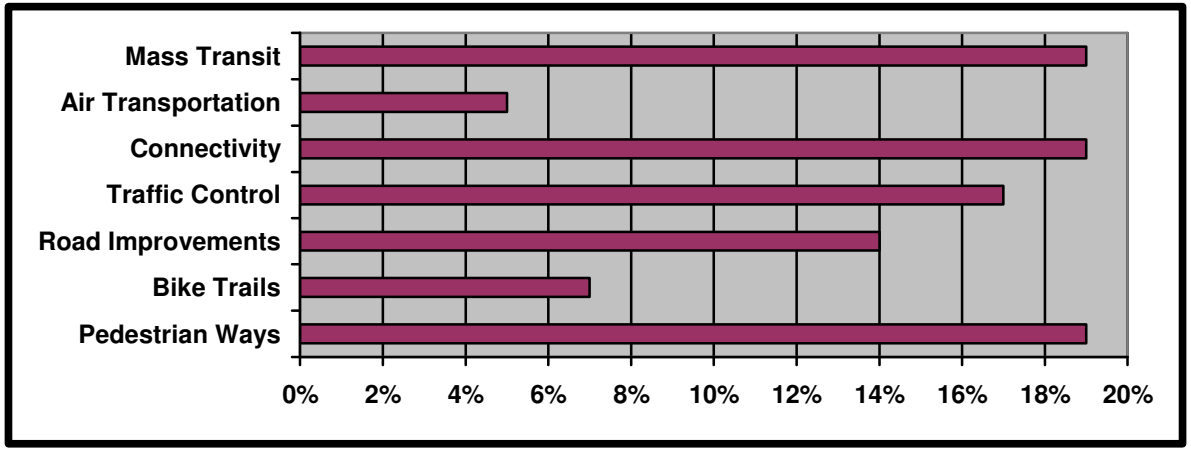


Transportation-Travel

Responses were fairly widespread and involved four modes of transportation (air, vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian). Nineteen (19) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned the pedestrian transportation system, such as trails and sidewalks, as a way to improve the opportunities for Dothan's future. Nineteen (19) percent felt that more connectivity of roadways would increase the citizen's opportunities in the future; and another nineteen (19) percent said that the introduction of mass transit would help. Seventeen (17) percent felt that improvements to the traffic control system and traffic management systems would be the way to improve Dothan with regard to this theme. A mere seven (7) percent and five (5) percent addressed bikeways and air transportation respectively as opportunities.

Transportation/Travel

	Pedstrn	Bike	Road Improvement	Traffic Control	Connectivity	Air	Mass Transit
Percent	**19%**	**7%**	**14%**	**17%**	**19%**	**5%**	**19%**

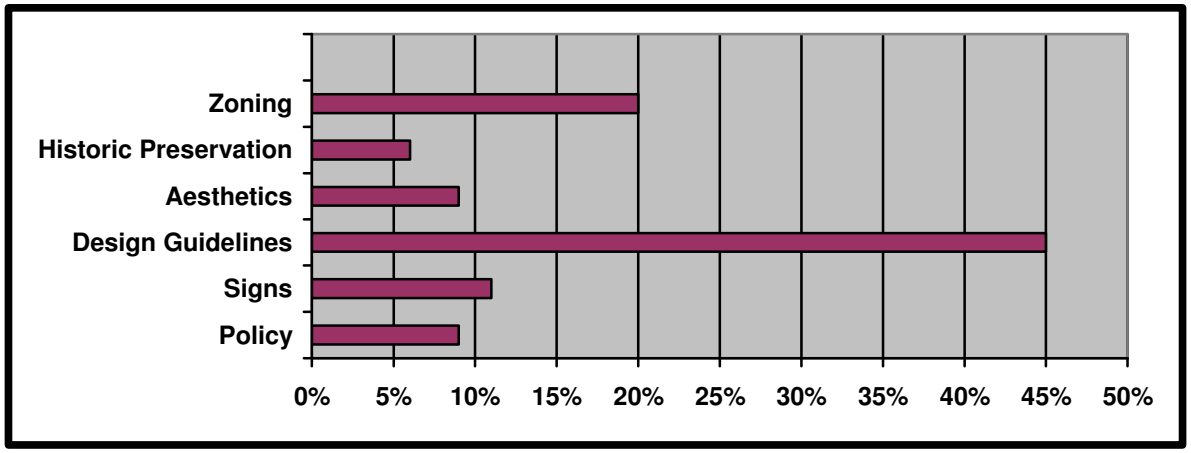


Regulatory Environment

The overwhelming majority, forty-five (45) percent of the comments and concerns suggested that development of a set of design guidelines for architectural, landscaping, and subdivision design was the most important need as a way to improve the opportunities for Dothan's future. Twenty (20) percent felt that enforcement of zoning rules or the creation of a new zoning ordinance would increase the citizen's opportunities in the future; and another combined twenty (20) percent said that improvement to the overall aesthetics (9%) or regulation of billboards and other signage (11%) would help. Only six (6) percent felt that historic preservation was an important opportunity to improve Dothan in this theme.

Regulatory Environment

	Policy	Signs	Design Guidelines	Aesthetics	Historic Preservation	Zoning
Percent	**9%**	**11%**	**45%**	**9%**	**6%**	**20%**



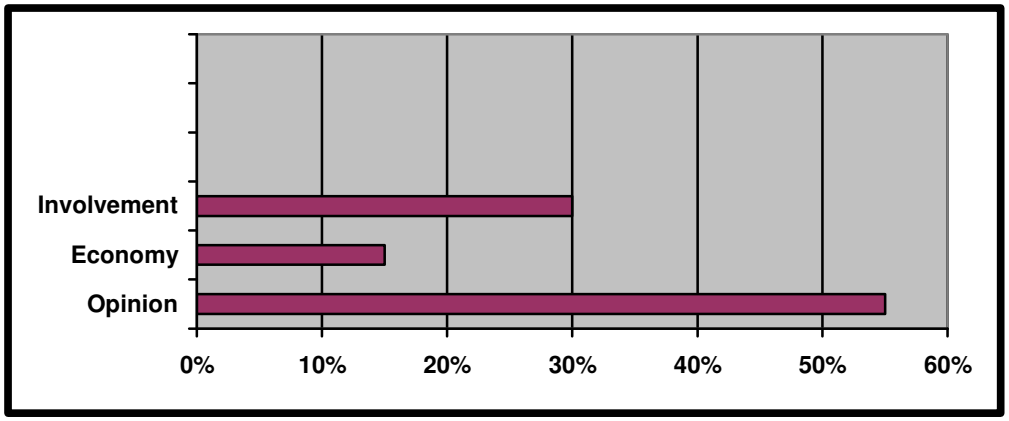
Criticism

Breaking this theme down into areas or groupings of comments or concerns was difficult indeed because the very nature of criticism is formed by opinion and personal bias.

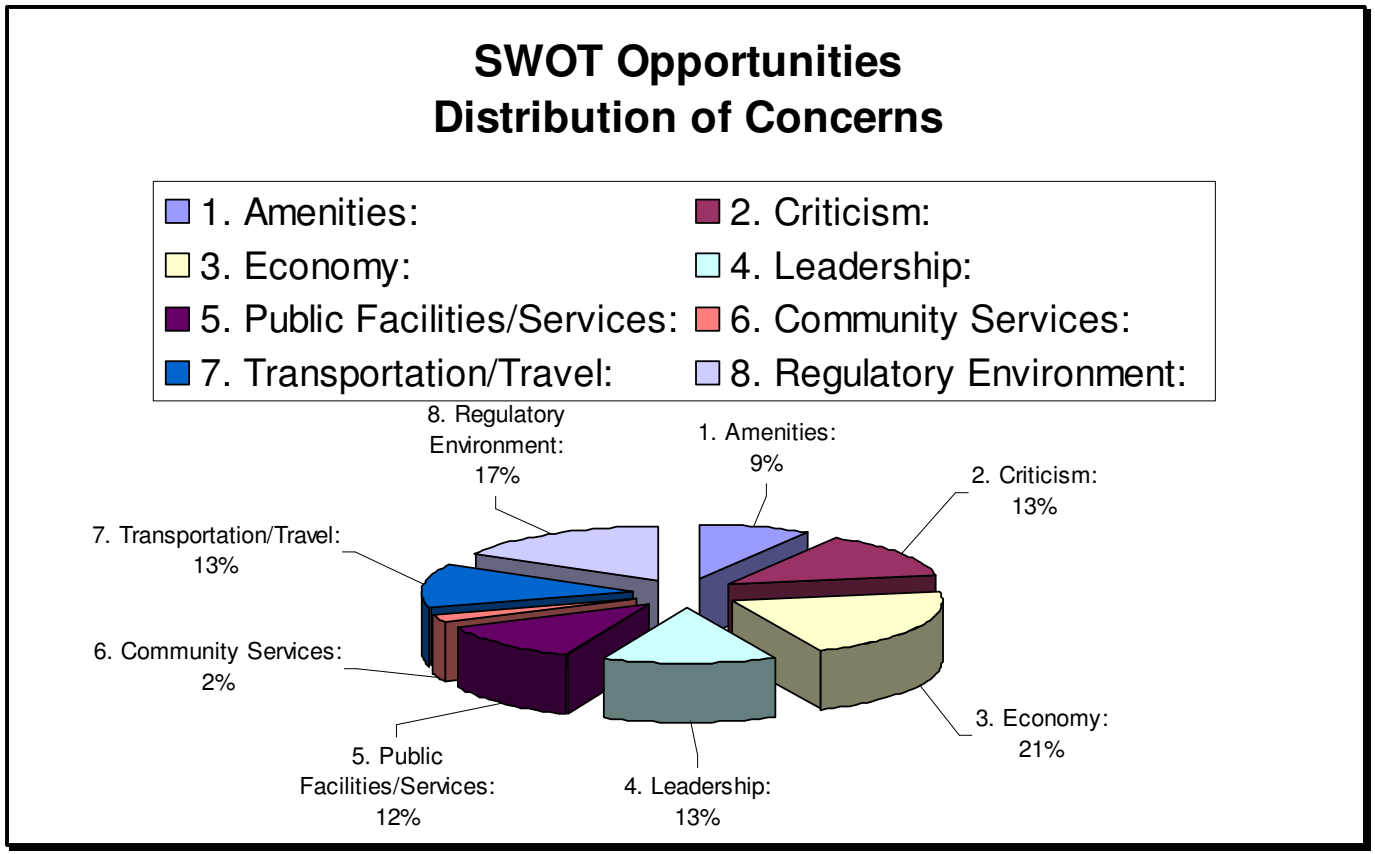
The predominant tangible criticism is that citizens feel the need to be better informed and educated on the daily workings of the City. Thirty (30) percent of the comments and concerns listed an interest by the public in getting or keeping the public educated and informed as a way to improve the quality of life. Fifteen (15) percent of the comments could be tied to the economy, but fifty-five (55) percent of the comments were unclassifiable such as "better lighting in poor communities", "better airline schedules", "more post offices", needing a "movie theater on the east side", "no good Chinese restaurants", and the desire to "put church activities ahead of other activities."

Criticism

	Opinion	Economy	Involvement
Percent	**55%**	**15%**	**30%**



The chart below demonstrates the distribution of the public's comments when it involves the City's future opportunities. The greatest opportunity lay in the area of economic improvements. The public felt that some of our other greatest opportunities for improvement lay in improvements to the existing regulatory environment and the transportation system.



THREATS

Within this category the following comments and concerns held some commonality among the public responses. Following are tables to recap the comments and concerns regarding each theme within this category. A chart follows the tables to help graphically visualize the responses with regard to relative importance.

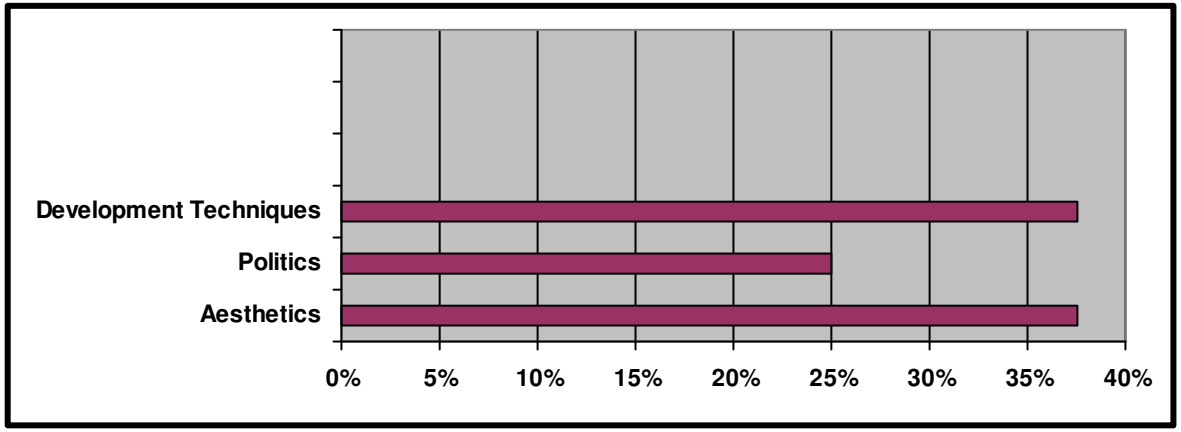
Threats are defined as areas that pose future negative impacts on the City. They are failures or flaws perceived by the public that could affect the future operation or level of services delivered to the citizens.

Amenities

The number one comment or concern, thirty-seven and one half (37.5) percent, within this theme revolves around the threat of poor aesthetics and development techniques.

Amenities

	Aesthetics	Politics	Development Technique
Percent	**37.5%**	**25%**	**37.5%**

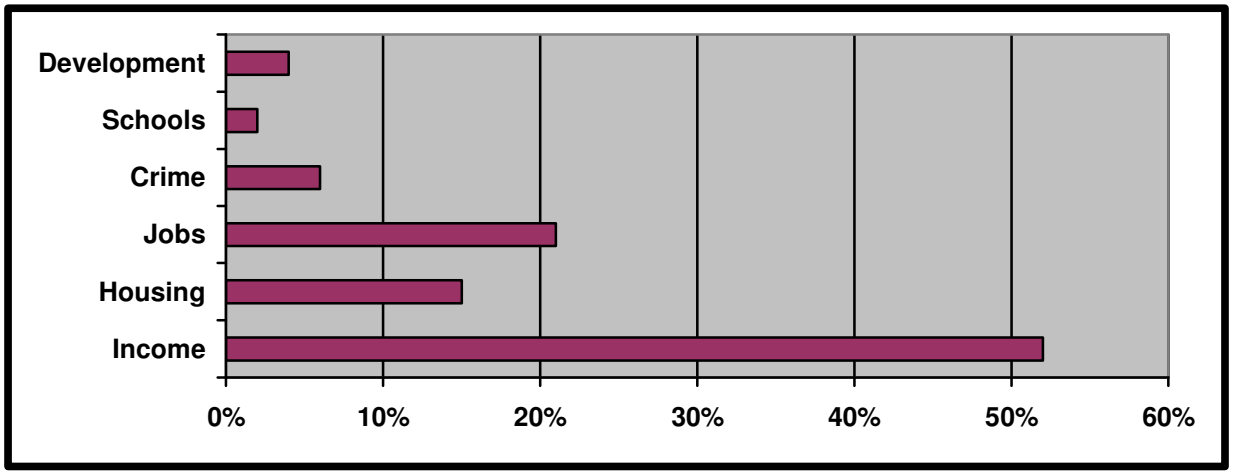


Economy

Leading the way with fifty-two (52) percent of the comments or concerns regarding future threats to Dothan is whether or not personal income will be high enough to sustain individual or family life-styles. The lack of jobs and the cost of future housing were also a major concern to the public.

Economy

	Income	Housing	Jobs	Crime	Schools	Development
Percent	**52%**	**15%**	**21%**	**6%**	**2%**	**4%**



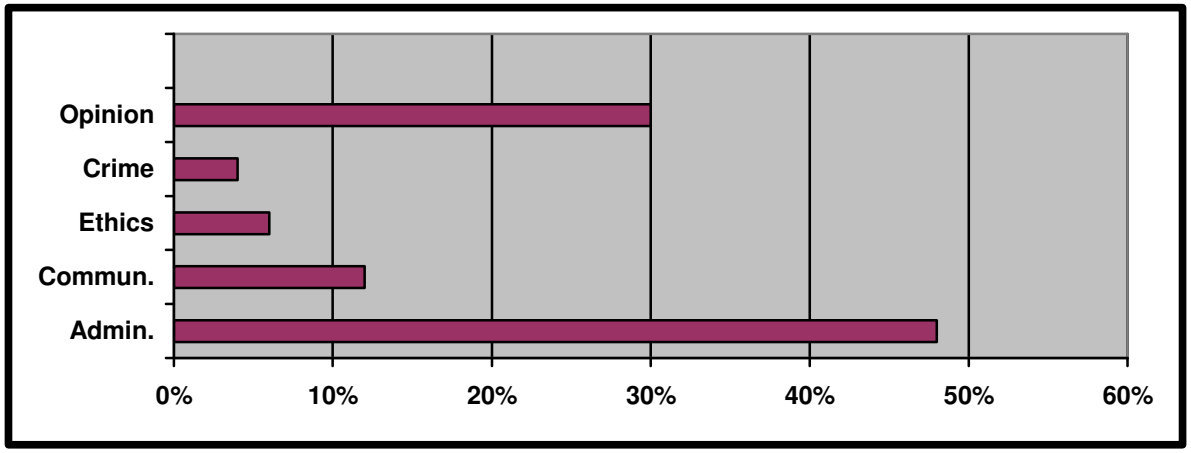
Leadership

Forty-eight (48) percent of the comments or concerns involved the existing government administration and/or its operation as the predominant perceived threat to the future of the City.

The second largest response group was the "opinion" where thirty (30) percent of those responding leveled criticism toward individuals, organizations and committees. The need for better communication between the City and its public garnered twelve (12) percent of the total responses received.

Leadership

	Administration	Communication	Ethics	Crime	Opinion
Percent	**48%**	**12%**	**6%**	**4%**	**30%**

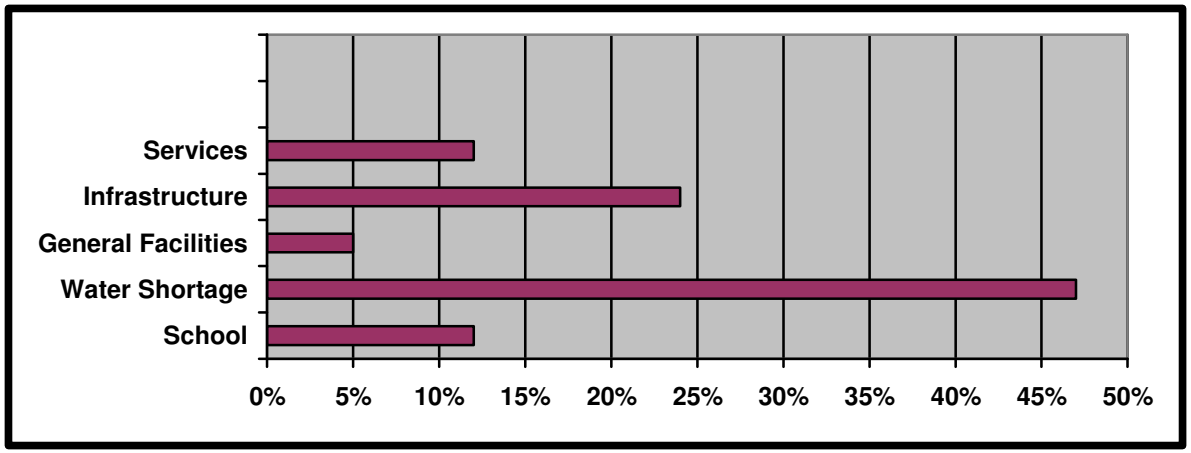


Public Facilities/Services

Forty-seven (47) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned the future water supply as the number one "threat" for Dothan's future. Twenty-four (24) percent cited the condition of our existing infrastructure; and twelve (12) percent said that the level of services and our schools would be a threat to the City in the future.

Public Facilities/Services

	Schools	Water Shortage	General Facilities	Infrastructure	Services
Percent	**12%**	**47%**	**5%**	**24%**	**12%**

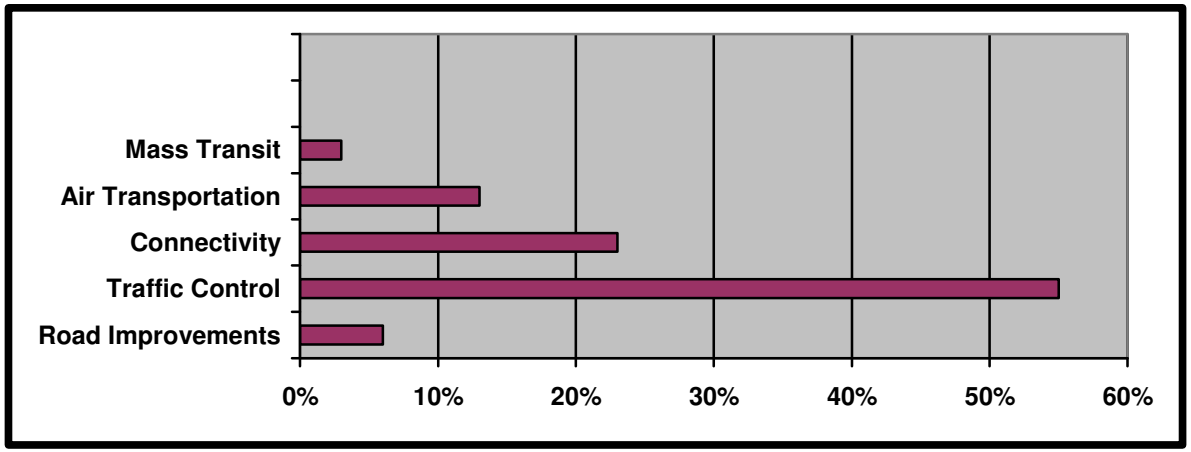


Community Services
Only 1 comment was recorded regarding the public's perception of this theme as a threat to our future. That comment was "overspending (non-profit)".

Transportation-Travel
Responses involved two modes of transportation (air and vehicular). Bike trails and pedestrian movement were of no concern to the groups. Fifty-five (55) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned traffic control as the greatest threat to Dothan's future transportation system. Twenty-three (23) percent felt that the lack of connectivity between neighborhoods and the region was the second greatest threat to Dothan's future transportation system.

Transportation/Travel

	Road Improvement	Traffic Control	Connectivity	Air	Mass Transit
Percent	**6%**	**55%**	**23%**	**13%**	**3%**

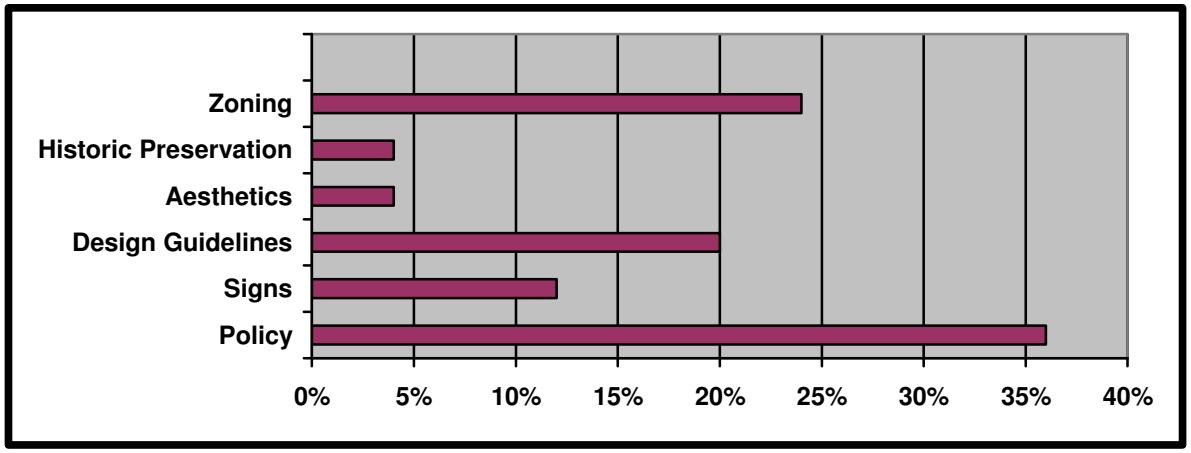


Regulatory Environment

The greatest perceived threat to Dothan's future lies in our policies and enforcement of existing codes. Thirty-six (36) percent of the responses indicated that the area of policy and enforcement would be the most significant obstacle to overcome as a threat within the regulatory environment of Dothan. Twenty-four (24) percent of the comments and concerns suggested that our existing zoning ordinance lacked the ability to carry the City forward; and twenty (20) percent saw the lack of design oriented guidelines to regulate development in the area as a future threat.

Regulatory Environment

	Policy	Signs	Design Guidelines	Aesthetics	Historic Preservation	Zoning
Percent	**36%**	**12%**	**20%**	**4%**	**4%**	**24%**

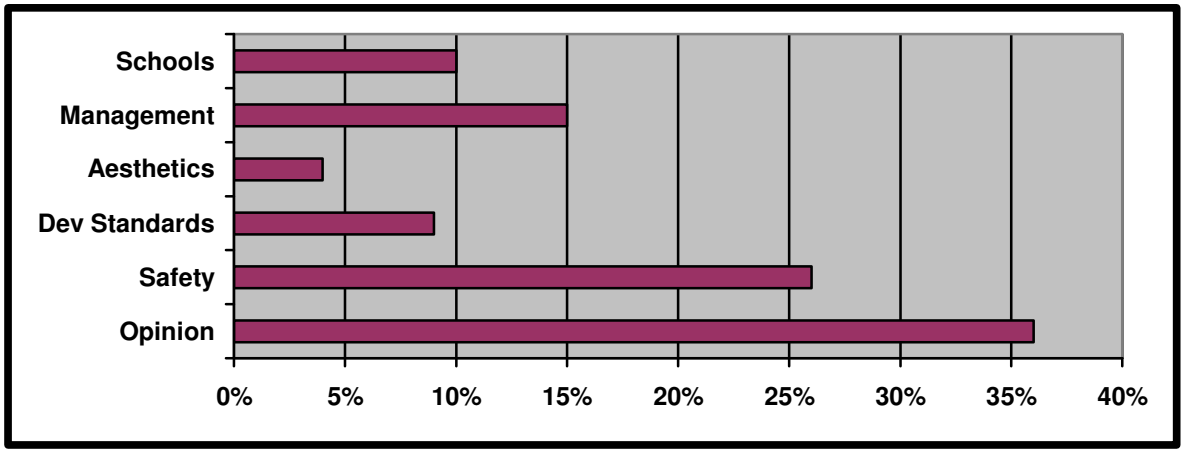


Criticism

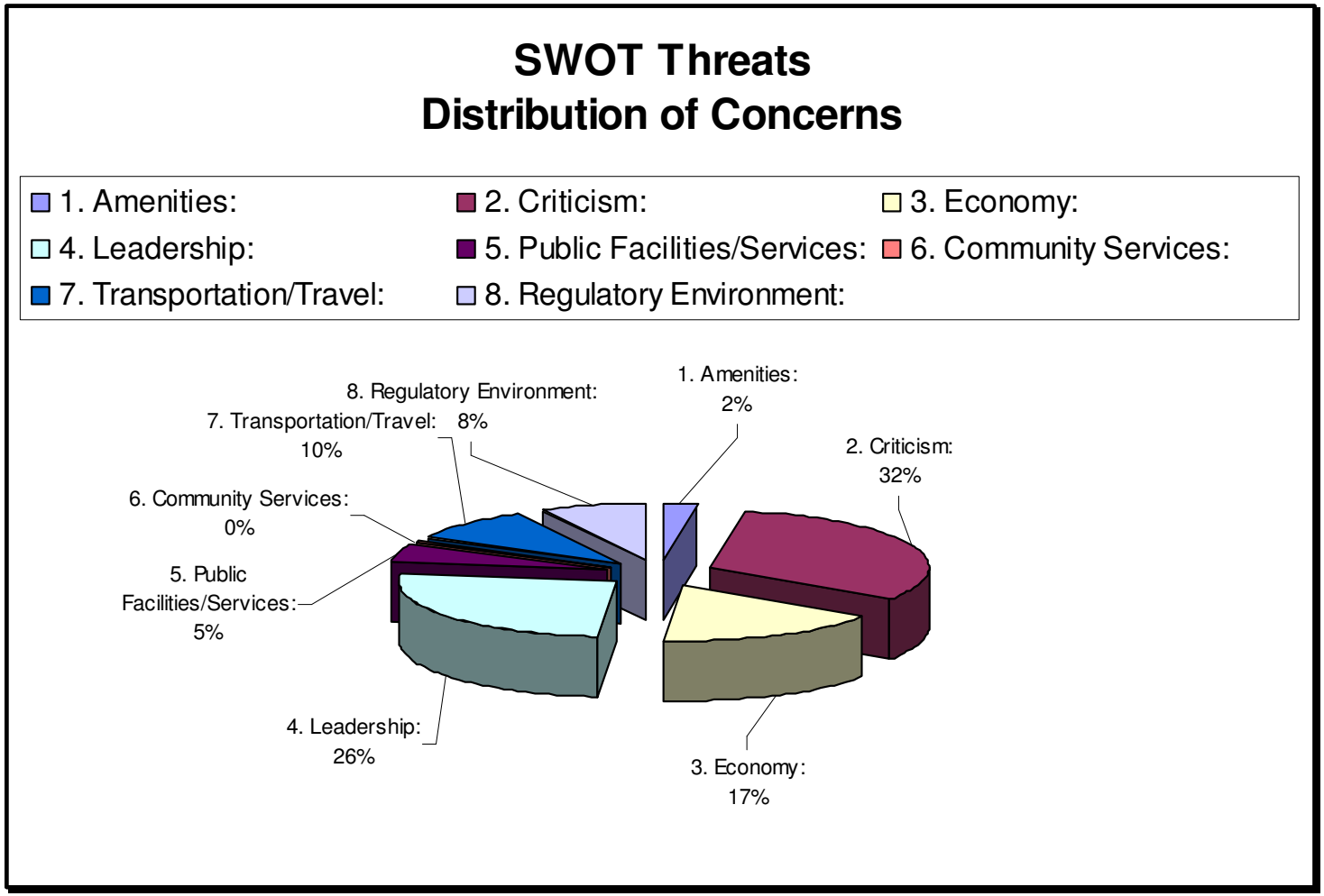
Open opportunities for criticism are avenues for vocalizing generalized concerns and comments. This theme received the largest amount of entries than any other theme presented in this category of "Threats". The majority of the responses are grouped as "opinions" due to the tone and nature of the comments. While it is the theme with the largest entries, the opinions ranged far and wide with very few, if any, common denominators. The predominant tangible criticism is that citizens need to be better informed and educated on the daily workings of the City; and that the City be more congenial and responsive to its citizens. Thirty-six (36) percent of the comments and concerns fell into the "opinion" grouping, with "Safety" (26%) as the second most important topic. Fifteen (15) percent viewed the current management as one of the significant threats to Dothan's future.

Criticism

	Opinion	Safety	Development Standards	Aesthetics	Management	Schools
Percent	**36%**	**26%**	**9%**	**4%**	**15%**	**10%**

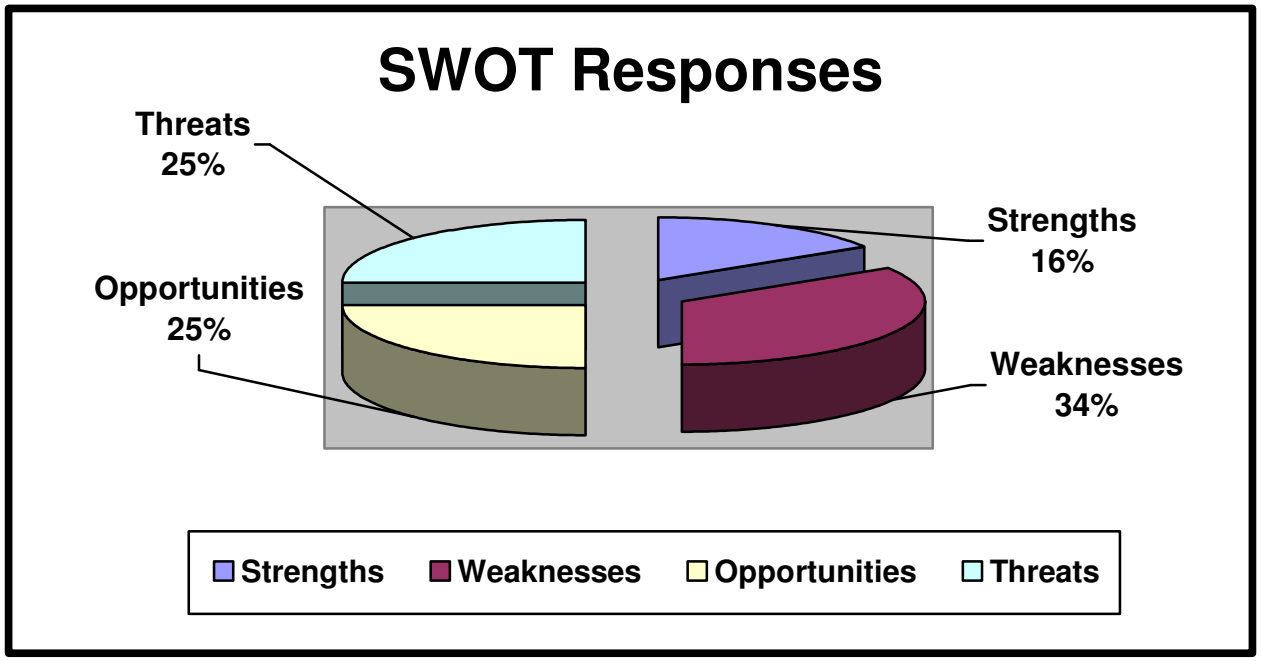


The following chart demonstrates the distribution of the public's concerns when it involves future City threats. The three greatest concerns relevant to future threats to the City and its citizen's quality of life lay in the areas of general criticism, the regulatory environment, and the economy.]



HOW THEY RESPONDED

Following is a chart which displays the overall results of the SWOT in terms of percentages. The results show the percentage of concern regarding Dothan's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, or Threats. Bear in mind that the former two categories are indicative of "current" issues and conditions, whereas the latter two categories address the feel the public has for Dothan's future conditions.



According to the responses, more people believed that there was a higher amount of issues related to Dothan's current weaknesses than any other category. Dothan's strengths received the least amount of responses which would seem to indicate a low level of public approval with how the City is currently operating.

Dothan's future was equally split as far as the public was concerned. They felt Dothan's future held as many positive as it does negative values and qualities. The job of the City would, it seems, to be to address those issues viewed as current weaknesses and future threats by the responding public.

This long range planning effort will incorporate the results of the SWOT as well as the citizen survey administered earlier in the planning process along with the results of the Visual Preference Survey (VPS) accomplished simultaneously with the SWOT.