

INTRODUCTION

The Issue Identification chapter is a summary of comments and concerns raised during interviews and/or surveys with the Park Commission, Planning Commission and City Council members and other key stakeholders. Key stakeholders include local developers, business owners, and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, school district, and residential neighborhoods. Feedback was also received from Elko New Market residents via an online survey.

Identification of each and every issue raised in the interview/survey process was not attempted. Rather, issues presented herein represent a broad categorization of topics raised. Generally, there was a strong consensus on many topics; however, where opinions differ, all sides of the issue are presented. The following perceptions and issues represent topics which require specific attention throughout the comprehensive planning process. The following survey/interview responses are numbered for ease of reference and are in no particular order of priority.

GENERAL CITY PERCEPTIONS

Opportunities and/or Strengths

Most of the interview/survey participants have a very positive image of the City of Elko New Market, describing it as a community that offers a “small town” environment with friendly neighborhoods. The following opportunities and/or strengths were identified as contributing to Elko New Market’s quality of life and public image:

1. The most common interview/survey response related to Elko New Market’s positive public image is the City’s “small town” feel. In many cases, the City’s “small town feel” was specifically identified as the primary reason for living in Elko New Market.
2. The City’s proximity to Interstate 35 was identified as a positive community feature. Many respondents stated that Interstate 35 provides convenient access to the Twin Cities and other areas and is therefore considered a positive community asset. Others stated that the Interstate is expected to attract significant economic development to the City and surrounding areas which will positively contribute to the City’s tax base.
3. Several respondents indicated that the City’s partial location within the Lakeville School District (194) is a positive community asset. It was specifically noted from multiple developers that such feature contributes greatly to the appeal of the City.
4. Most respondents described the City as safe, quiet and walkable. It was also conveyed that the City is occupied by “nice” people and that neighborhoods feel “closely knit.”

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5. Several interview/survey respondents indicated that the availability of land to accommodate future growth and the opportunity for the City to guide and manage such growth in a positive manner is a positive feature that is not afforded many cities.
6. Interviewees and survey respondents were generally complimentary of City government operations and delivery of services. Most were particularly satisfied the accessibility of City Staff and City Officials.
7. A walkable downtown area was highlighted by interview and survey respondents as a positive community feature.
8. A few survey respondents expressed an opinion that the quality of the City's services (police, fire etc.) was considered a community strength.
9. Community event opportunities were highlighted as a community strength. In particular, the availability of various children's programs was noted.
10. The proximity of residential neighborhoods to the Eagle View Elementary School, St. Nicholas Church, and Boulder Pointe Golf Club was identified as a community strength.
11. One survey respondent indicated that the present size of the City is considered a community strength in that most negative aspects of larger suburbs do not presently exist in Elko New Market.

Issues and/or Concerns

While interview/survey respondents were complimentary to the City by characterizing it as a desirable place to live, respondents also identified some community weaknesses. The following were viewed as issues and/or concerns within the Elko New Market:

1. In terms of community weaknesses, most interview/survey respondents cited a lack of local commercial goods and services as a significant concern. The need for a grocery store and hardware store were mentioned on many occasions.
2. Related to the desire for goods and services is a concern over "excessive" taxes. It was suggested that future commercial and industrial uses would expand the City's tax base and potentially assist in the tax burden currently imposed upon residents.
3. Utility costs were cited as a community weakness. It was noted by several interview/survey respondents that the cost of such basic services (specifically the cost of water) exceeds that of other nearby cities.

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4. A lack of jobs/employment opportunities in Elko New Market was frequently identified as a community concern.
5. Highlighted was a lack of resident amenities in the City. Interview/survey respondents specifically expressed a desire for more sidewalks/trails, a community garden, a municipal swimming pool/water park and a recycling/compost site.
6. Code enforcement was an expressed community concern. Specific concerns related to unkempt properties and specifically residential properties with excessive outside storage.
7. Some interview/survey respondents feel that City Staff is partly to blame for the lack of new development in the City. It was specifically suggested that City plans need to be prepared and implemented to attract new businesses.
8. Some interview/survey respondents expressed a concern over the City's development process and specifically the restrictions imposed upon the development community. Specific concern was expressed related to the time and expense involved. City development fees were also noted as a concern.
9. Several interview/survey respondents expressed concern over traffic volumes and speeds on County Road 2 and resulting impacts on vehicle and pedestrian safety.
10. While the partial inclusion of Elko New Market in the Lakeville School District was cited as a positive feature, the City's inclusion in two school districts was viewed by some interview/survey respondents as being divisive in that such condition discourages community unity.
11. A few interview/survey respondents feel that the City is presently lacking in character and is not particularly welcoming. It was suggested that a "Welcome to the City of Elko New Market" sign (or signs) would help in this regard. Somewhat related to this issue is an expressed opinion that the name of the City (Elko New Market) is confusing and unappealing.
12. A couple respondents cited noise resulting from Elko Speedway activities (races and concerts) and recreational motorcycle use (dirt bikes) in the City as a community concern.
13. One interview/survey respondent expressed an opinion that that there are not enough activity opportunities provided in the City for children.
14. Another interview/survey respondent raised the illegal dumping/disposal of yard waste in the City as a concern. In this regard, it was suggested that a City compost drop-off site could potentially resolve the issue.

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CHALLENGES

Interview/survey respondents were asked to identify what they perceive to be the biggest challenges facing the City of Elko New Market in the next 20 years. In this regard, the following views were expressed in order of popularity (the most popular response being listed first):

1. Accommodate growth (urbanization) and provide City services in an organized and fiscally responsible manner.
2. Attract commercial development necessary to accommodate expectant population growth.
3. Accommodate future growth (and related service demands) in a well-planned manner while preserving the City's "small town" character.
4. Manage City taxes such that residents are not negatively impacted by greater service demands.
5. Provide a diverse housing mix which appeals to all age and income groups.
6. Provide suburban-type amenities associated with an increased City population.
7. Establish an appealing development character in the City.
8. Maintain a strong and healthy downtown area.
9. Accommodate increased traffic on County Road 2 in a safe and efficient manner.
10. Plan for and provide schools as necessary to meet the needs of the City's increasing population of school age children.
11. Provide public transit opportunities to Elko New Market citizens (specifically connections to south metro suburbs).

RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

Persons interviewed/surveyed were asked for their opinions related to existing and future residential uses in the City. In this regard, the following issues were identified:

1. Regarding the physical condition of the City's existing housing stock, most interview/survey respondents feel that such housing stock is either "good" or "very good."



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2. Several interview/survey respondents expressed concern over the limited availability of single family residential lots in the City.
3. In regard to planning for future residential uses, most interview/survey respondents feel it is important to provide a variety of housing options which cater to different age and income groups.
4. Several interview/survey respondents cited the recent senior housing project (Market Village Apartments) as a benefit to the City as it provides an opportunity for long-time, aging residents to stay in the community. A belief was also conveyed that a market for additional senior housing presently exists in the City.
5. In regard to housing type, most interview/survey respondents feel that low density housing (single family homes – three to five units per acre) should be the City’s top priority in the next 20 years. Several interview/survey respondents indicated that such high priority relates, in part, to the limited number of single family residential lots which are currently available in the City.
6. Medium density housing (five to ten units per acre) and high density housing (ten or more units per acre) are recognized as a community need and generally viewed as equally important in terms of priority.
7. A few interview/survey respondents expressed concern related to the upkeep of some single family residential properties in the City. Concerns related to both the condition/appearance of buildings and or yard areas. Excessive outdoor storage was cited as a specific concern. In this regard, it was suggested that the City should be more proactive in the enforcement of its ordinances which relate to property maintenance.

COMMERCIAL LAND USES

Interview/survey respondents expressed several opinions regarding commercial (retail) land uses within the City. In this regard, the following comments were offered:

1. Nearly all interview/survey respondents feel that there is a lack of basic commercial services in the City. It was specifically noted that traveling to areas outside the City to obtain such services oftentimes presents an inconvenience. Services which were commonly mentioned by the respondents as an immediate need included the following:
 - Grocery
 - Hardware
 - Convenience gas



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- Fast food
 - Medical clinic
 - Pharmacy
 - Commercial daycare
2. In addition to responding to basic community needs, interview/survey respondents feel that basic commercial services will also contribute greatly to the City's tax base.
 3. Most interview/survey respondents view Interstate 35 as a highly desirable community asset. It was specifically noted that the visibility and accessibility of the County Road 2/Interstate 35 interchange area is expected to attract commercial uses in the future. Anticipated commercial uses which were referenced included a grocery store, convenience gas and a home improvement center.
 4. Interview/survey respondents indicated that a need is expected for commercial uses such as restaurants, liquor stores, personal services, medical/pharmacy, hotels, family entertainment centers and large (big box) chain stores by the year 2040
 5. A few interview/survey respondents suggested that the City should take steps necessary to ensure high quality commercial buildings which exhibit a desirable architectural character.
 6. A few interview/survey respondents expressed a desire to establish more locally-owned businesses in the City.
 7. It was suggested that the City's downtown area (Downtown New Market) should not be neglected as a commercial center. Interview/survey respondents suggested that "fun" and "unique" uses which take advantage of the historical character of buildings should be encouraged. It was specifically indicated that small retail shops, restaurants, bars, coffee shops, offices and personal service uses should be promoted. It was also suggested that "mixed uses," meaning multi-story structures with ground floor commercial and upper floor office or residential uses should be considered in the area.
 8. One survey respondent expressed concern about the appearance and upkeep of commercial properties in the Downtown area (Downtown New Market). It was specifically suggested that the City should provide financial incentives for small business owners in the City to improve the physical appearance of their buildings.

INDUSTRIAL USES

Interview/survey respondents provided several opinions related to existing and future industrial land uses in the City. In this regard, the following components were offered:



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1. While generally not considered as high a priority (or need) as basic commercial services, interview/survey respondents feel the attraction of industrial uses in the future is important. Respondents view future industrial development as a means of improving the City's tax base.
2. Job creation associated with future industrial uses was also highlighted by interview/survey respondents as a positive aspect of industrial land uses.
3. Nearly all interview/survey respondents feel that future industrial uses should be located near the Interstate 35 to take advantage of its accessibility. It was specifically suggested by some respondents that such uses should be located on the east side of the Interstate 35 near County Road 2.
4. A few interview survey respondents indicated that long-term industrial uses should also be considered near the intersection of Interstate 35 and County Road 86.
5. Many interview/survey respondents envision uses such as warehouse/distribution centers, data centers and manufacturing facilities being located near Interstate 35, in the industrially guided areas of the City.
6. An opinion was expressed that the City should attempt to accommodate a variety of industrial use types as well as both small and large scale users.
7. Provided it can be done in a fiscally responsible manner, a few interview/survey respondents feel that improvements necessary to accommodate future industrial uses near the Interstate 35 corridor (i.e. utility extensions and transportation improvements) should be provided in the near term as an enticement for future development.

TRANSPORTATION

Interview/survey respondents offered several transportation-related comments. In this regard, the following comments and/or issues were received:

1. The clear majority of survey/interview respondents (approximately 75 percent) indicated that they are satisfied with both the physical condition of the City's existing streets and the street connections which are provided.
2. Improvement/expansion of the Interstate 35/County Road 2 interchange is viewed as the City's highest transportation-related priority going forward. It was specifically stated that improvements are necessary to address safety concerns associated with escalating traffic volumes and to accommodate future commercial and industrial development in the area.



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3. Many interview/survey respondents raised concern over the segment of Xerxes Avenue located south of County Road 2. Specifically, concern was expressed that the roadway, in its current state, is “under built” and is not sufficient to accommodate both existing and future traffic volumes. Concern was also cited related to current pedestrian safety along the roadway.
4. Several interview/survey respondents indicated that it is important that the City secure right-of-way necessary to accommodate increased traffic volumes associated with future City population growth. Further, it was suggested that the City plan for and install appropriate traffic control devices as increased traffic volumes warrant.
5. A few respondents feel that the conversion of gravel-surfaced roads in the City to hard-surfaced (bituminous) roads should be a priority.
6. Some interview/survey respondents feel that transportation connections between the former Cities of Elko and New Market are lacking and are “over dependent” upon County Road 2.
7. Several specific comments/opinions were received related to County Road 2. These included the following:
 - a. Improvements are needed at the County Road 2/ County Road 91 intersection. A few respondents suggested that the intersection should be signalized. One respondent indicated he is not in favor of the placement of a roundabout in such location.
 - b. Within the downtown area, safety concerns were raised related to on-street parking and pedestrian movements.
 - c. It was indicated that the City needs to address an ongoing pavement deterioration issue located directly south of City Hall.
 - d. One respondent raised concern over a “blind spot” encountered by motorists wishing to access the County Road from Church Street.
 - e. An opinion was expressed that improved lighting is needed within the corridor to improve safety.
8. Some respondents feel the City should make ongoing street maintenance a priority and that funds for such efforts should be allocated accordingly.

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9. One survey respondent expressed a belief that long-term planning for County Roads 91 and 86 (including, but not limited to, right-of-way needs) should take place at this time.
10. A few interview/survey respondents feel that the improvement of Main Street in “Downtown Elko” should be made a priority and that on-street parking areas should be better defined.
11. One respondent suggested that lane markings on certain City streets could be improved. Lane markings along Aaron Drive were specifically cited.
12. Several comments were received related to sidewalks and trails which abut City streets. These comments are summarized below:
 - a. Walking paths are needed alongside City streets.
 - b. The width of shoulders which abut City streets should be increased.
 - c. Additional attention needs to be given to pedestrian crossings to ensure safety.

PARKS AND TRAILS

As part of the interview/survey process, the following comments and/or opinions were received related to parks and trails/sidewalks:

1. Most persons interviewed/surveyed (60 percent) consider the City’s existing park system to be “good” or “very good”.
2. A majority of persons interviewed/surveyed (52 percent) feel that all areas of the City are adequately served by parks. In regard to areas thought to be inadequately served, the Boulder Point neighborhood was specifically identified as an area which lacks a nearby park for use by the subdivision’s residents.
3. While generally satisfied with the condition of the City’s sidewalks and trails, several respondents expressed concern over incomplete sidewalk and/or trail linkages in the City. Respondents indicated that such incomplete system raises safety concerns as pedestrians oftentimes must utilize streets as a travel route.



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4. While many interview/survey respondents recognize that future sidewalk/trail construction in the City will accompany future development, many respondents feel that the City should take a more pro-active approach to sidewalk/trail development and promote sidewalk/trail construction in advance of development.
5. As part of future trail planning, some respondents expressed a desire to connect to regional destinations including, but not limited to, nearby cities.
6. Most persons interviewed/surveyed feel that new developments in the City should include sidewalks. Some respondents specifically noted that sidewalks on both sides of a street, rather than just one side (as currently required by the City Code), is preferable.
7. Many respondents feel there is a need for a trail along Xerxes Avenue, south of County Road 2. It was indicated that the roadway surface is oftentimes used by pedestrians which presents a safety concern.
8. One respondent suggested that the upkeep of sidewalks and trails in the City should be made a high priority and that funds should be allocated accordingly for ongoing maintenance.
9. An opinion was expressed that the trail connecting the Fish Rock Country Market and the Whispering Creek neighborhood to the north is in need of an upgrade.
10. It was also noted that, in the future, sidewalk connections to the Eagle View Elementary School will be needed to accommodate children who walk to and from school.
11. Several interview/survey respondents feel that the City is lacking in trails devoted to (or designed for) bicycle use.
12. It was further indicated by such respondents that the City is also lacking in “nature trails.”
13. One interview/survey respondent suggested that the City should be more pro-active in the removal of snow from the City’s trails in the winter months.
14. Another interview/survey respondent suggested the City should advertise trail locations in the City.

CONCLUSION

The preceding stakeholder comments are intended to help establish the basic direction of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update. Such comments identify a variety of community issues related to the following:

- General City Perceptions
- Challenges
- Residential Land Uses
- Commercial Land Uses
- Industrial Land Uses
- Transportation
- Parks and Trails

The extent and scope of received comments speaks to the desirable features of Elko New Market while recognizing that many concerns/issues exist which should be considered as the City continues to grow. In this regard, there is an evident appreciation of the various issues which confront the City. Simultaneously, there appears to be an equal commitment to resolving such issues and preparing for an improved future.

A common theme of the received comments is that community stakeholders are fond of Elko New Market's "small town" feel and believe that efforts should be made to retain such feature while accommodating future community growth.

To be stressed is that the stated stakeholder views and opinions have not been prioritized nor do they include any positions or responses by professional staff. At this stage in the Plan Update process, only the directions desired by community stakeholders are a matter of concern. As may be appropriate in future policy and plan discussions, professional staff recommendations and alternatives will be offered for consideration.

Ultimately, it will be the jurisdiction of City Officials to resolve the content and the direction of the Plan Update. In this regard, attempts will be made to build consensus on priority issues facing the City of Elko New Market (as identified in the interviews/surveys) and the general direction of the Plan.