

BACKGROUND

Over the past two decades, Northwest Arkansas leaders pursued a successful economic development strategy that helped catapult the region into national rankings for job growth and quality of life. But the fruits of that success created new challenges as a rapidly rising population contributed to a considerable increase in the region's cost of living.

With exponential growth expected to continue, the Northwest Arkansas Council is collaborating with community leaders to develop an intentional strategy to address growth's many challenges while also preserving and even enhancing what residents love about Northwest Arkansas.

To inform the strategy, the Council conducted public opinion research to gain insight that will shape a regional growth plan.

The research identified four consistent concerns: infrastructure, traffic, housing and the need for leadership to devise and execute a growth plan.

METHODOLOGY



Phone poll conducted January 19-23 of 505 registered voters in Benton and Washington counties.



Four focus groups held Jan. 31 and Feb. 1. Participants were registered voters – half long-term and half short-term residents.



One-on-one interviews with leaders, including mayors, county judges and regional leaders.



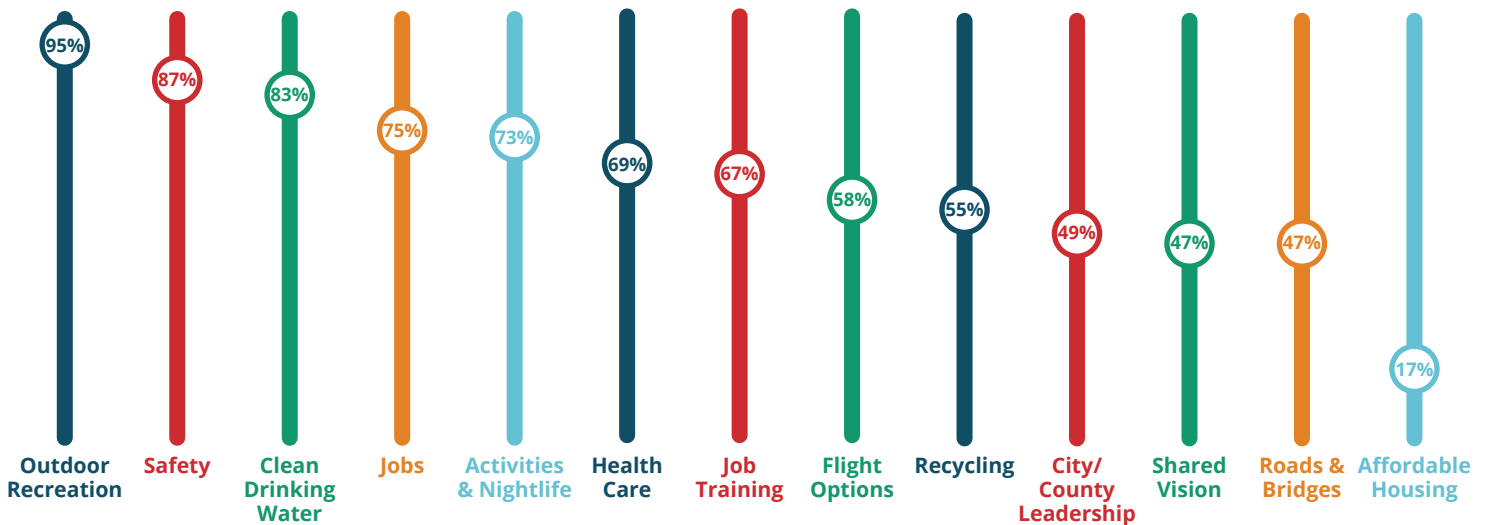
Online survey of 2,120 people, conducted in English and Spanish.

KEY FINDINGS

QUALITY OF LIFE

A strong majority (**70%**) of Northwest Arkansas residents believe the region is heading in the right direction and rate its quality of life as good to excellent (**83%**). However, when looking to the future, most residents believe the quality of life is not improving (**46%**) or getting worse (**26%**). Of those surveyed, **27%** believe quality of life is improving.

Rated Aspects of Quality of Life*



*Percentage of residents rating the aspect good or excellent

REGIONAL CHALLENGES

The vast majority (**71%**) of residents believe the shortage of affordable housing is the single biggest challenge, followed by traffic congestion (**64%**) and the loss of green space (**40%**).

IDENTIFYING GROWTH PRIORITIES

When identifying priorities for growth planning strategies, residents were clear that regional leaders should focus on improving physical and social infrastructure.

Residents were split on their views of future growth with a most residents (**55%**) saying growth has more upsides than downsides.

TAXATION

61% of survey participants said they would not oppose a tax if they felt the planned project benefited the community.

Top Priorities for Growth Planning Strategies

