



# AGE-FRIENDLY NATIONAL CITY

Mid-Project Report  
February 16, 2021

National City, California became part of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)'s **Livable Communities** Network in 2019. In an effort to engage residents and community leaders in increasing livability even further, especially for older adults, the City partnered with The San Diego Foundation, AARP, and Circulate San Diego to better understand resident's perceptions and needs. The following is intended to report insights gleaned from conducting a project survey and collecting additional insights through online input tools, printed questionnaires, and resident phone call discussions through Summercrest Apartments.

PART A: **Summary of Survey Findings**

PART B: **Summary of Online Input via Social Pinpoint, Printed Questionnaires, and Resident Phone Calls**

## PART A: Summary of Survey Findings

**What we asked:** Respondents were asked to indicate their experiences with the **Domains of Livability** using AARP's survey model.

**Who took the survey:** 369 responses were received in August 2020. Seventy percent of the respondents were female and the average age was 71 years old. One third of respondents reside in the Westside/Old Town/Kimball community and 43% selected "Other," meaning that they did not identify with any of the communities listed. Over 71% have an annual income of less than \$50,000, and 27% reported an annual income less than \$10,000. Sixty-one percent of the respondents have lived in National City for more than 15 years, with the range of residence as less than five years to more than 45 years. The percentage of residents who own the rent the home they live in is 54%.

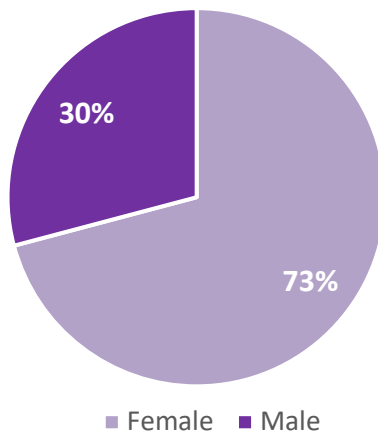


Figure 1 - Gender breakdown of survey participants

Table 1 below illustrates demographic information about survey participants, as well as an overall



commuting rating of National City as a place to live as people age:

|                              |                                  |                    |                      |                   |            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                | Female<br>70%                    | Male<br>30%        |                      |                   |            |
| <b>Community</b>             | Westside/Old Town/Kimball<br>33% | El Toyon<br>13%    | Las Palmas<br>11%    | Other<br>43%      |            |
| <b>Socio-Economic Status</b> | < \$10,000<br>27%                | \$10-49,999<br>46% | \$50 – 99,999<br>15% | >\$100,000<br>11% |            |
| <b>Place to Live</b>         | Excellent<br>20%                 | Very Good<br>39%   | Good<br>23%          | Fair<br>14%       | Poor<br>4% |

Table 1 - Survey demographics and insight about aging in National City

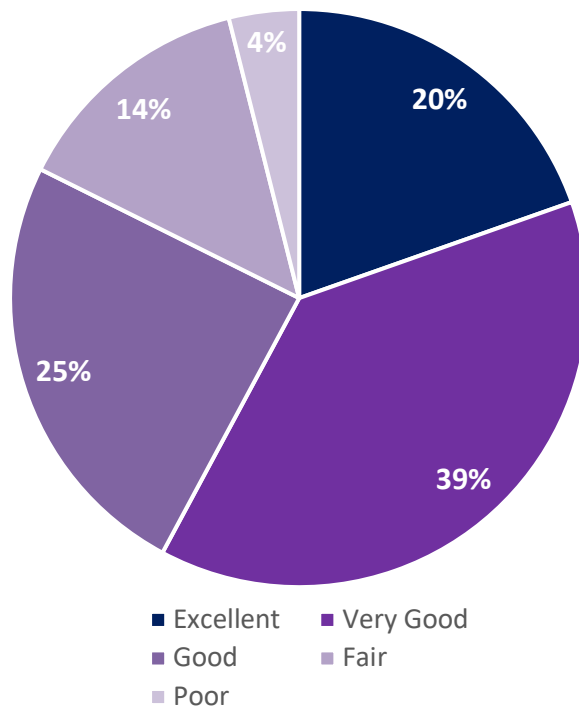


Figure 2 - National City rated as a place to age



**Summary responses from the survey are as follows:**

The survey questions were developed by AARP and are based on the [Domains of Livability](#). Typically, there are Eight Domains of Livability, which include Housing, Outdoor Spaces & Buildings, Transportation, Social Participation, Respect & Social Inclusion, Work & Civic Engagement, Communication & Information, and Community and Health Services. Those topics have been included and consolidated into the six topic areas shown below, including an additional topic related to COVID-19. Table 2 shows a summary of the key themes from each topic area, followed by a more detailed summary from each topic area. The full survey results can be viewed in Appendix A.

| Domain of Livability                  | Key Themes   |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Housing</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing <b>maintenance</b> and <b>safety</b></li> <li>▪ Importance of <b>independent living</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Affordability</b> and <b>accessible</b> housing options</li> </ul>                  |
| <b>Outdoor Spaces and Buildings</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Well-maintained</b> public spaces</li> <li>▪ Improved <b>accessibility</b> of facilities</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Transportation</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved <b>pedestrian infrastructure</b></li> <li>▪ Maintained or bettered <b>public transportation</b> services and costs</li> <li>▪ <b>Convenience</b> and timeliness</li> </ul>               |
| <b>Health and Wellness</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved <b>healthcare options</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Affordable</b> health programs</li> <li>▪ <b>Diverse</b> healthcare staff and services</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Social and Civic Participation</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Isolation</b> concerns</li> <li>▪ Need for <b>socialization</b> and programming</li> <li>▪ Desire for <b>employment</b> and <b>volunteering</b> opportunities</li> </ul>                       |
| <b>Community Information</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve <b>accessibility</b> for diverse populations</li> <li>▪ Maintain or improve access to the <b>internet</b></li> <li>▪ Expand <b>information methods</b> to reach more residents</li> </ul> |
| <b>COVID-19*</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High concern about <b>COVID-19</b></li> <li>▪ Need for <b>resources</b> and <b>programs</b></li> <li>▪ Improved <b>community connections</b> and support</li> </ul>                               |

*\*COVID-19 is not a typical Domain of Livability, but survey questions were added under this category to assess the impacts of the pandemic on livability in National City.*

*Table 2 - Key findings within the Domains of Livability*



Details about each livability topic and respondents' perception of their functional ability follows:

**Housing** Of those surveyed, 44% of the respondents live in a single-family house, 32% live in an apartment, and 42% of respondents own their home. Most respondents agreed that National City homes and properties are maintained *good* or *very good* (56%), however, 34% said homes and properties are *poorly* maintained. Eighty-seven percent of respondents said that it is *very important* or *extremely important* to be able to live independently in their own home as they age, and 54% said that their home does not need any major modifications or changes to be able to stay there as long as possible. Respondents considered the trustworthiness and affordability of modification and repair options to be *good* or *very good* (49%). However, a majority of respondents rated home repair services for low-income and older adults were as *poor* (14%), *fair* (17%), or *good* (25%). Several housing attributes were noted for receiving *fair* or *poor* ratings, including well-maintained, safe low-income housing (41%), affordable housing options for adults of varying income levels (39%), and having housing options that are built with things like a no-step entrance, wider doorways, and first floor bedrooms and bathrooms (36%). In evaluating a respondent's desire to stay in National City as they age or to move, major factors include personal safety or security concerns (68%), having a home that helps them live independently, living in a place with lower costs of living (48%), and the cost of maintaining their current residence is a major factor (47%).

**Outdoor Spaces and Buildings** Respondents rated most aspects of this domain *good* or *very good*, including well-maintained parks (60%), safe parks (56%), sidewalks that are in good condition, safe for pedestrians, and accessible for wheelchairs or other assistive mobility devices (53%), and public buildings and spaces (including restrooms) that are accessible to all abilities (48%). Of the respondents, 47% said the quantity of benches for resting in public spaces is *good* or *fair*. Neighborhood watch programs were rated as *poor* or *fair* by 48% of the respondents.

**Transportation** A majority of respondents get around National City by driving themselves (70%), followed by walking (60%), using public transportation (43%), being driven by others (41%), using a ride share company (i.e., Lyft) (24%), and 21% said that they do not get out of the house. Public transportation received mostly *good* or *very good* ratings for accessibility and convenience (56%), safety of use for all abilities (51%), affordability (51%), timeliness (50%), and special transportation services for people with disabilities and older adults (47%). Nineteen percent of respondents said that the accessibility and convenience of public transportation is *excellent*, which is one of the highest ratings in the entirety of the survey. Beyond public transportation, respondents rated aspects of this domain *good* or *very good* for easy-to-read traffic signs (54%), well-let, separate pathways for bicycles and pedestrians (50%), accessible, safe streets and intersections for all users (49%), audio and visual pedestrian crossings (49%), and well-maintained streets (48%). Aspects rated *poor* or *fair* by respondents included offering driver education or refresher courses (37%) and enforced speed limits (36%).

**Health and Wellness** In general, respondents rated their health as good (38%) or very good (32%). Forty-eight percent of the respondents said that having access to better healthcare is a major factor for moving outside of National City. Many respondents rated the quality of healthcare services as *good* or *very good*, including respectful and helpful hospital staff (54%), health professionals who speak different



languages (53%), a variety of healthcare professionals and specialists (49%), well-trained certified home healthcare professionals (47%), conveniently located health and social services (45%), easily understandable and helpful local hospital/clinic answering services (46%), affordable home healthcare providers (43%), affordable health and wellness programs and classes (43%), affordable fitness activities geared towards older adults (43%), and services that help older adults find and access health services (40%).

**Social and Civic Participation** Many respondents said that the availability of continuing education classes or social clubs to pursue new interests, hobbies, or passions is *poor* (18%), *fair* (15%), or *good* (22%) in National City. When it comes to diversity of activities, respondents said that National City is mostly *poor, fair, or good* at offering activities that involve both younger and older people (63%) and a variety of cultural activities for diverse populations (60%). Local schools involving older adults in events and activities was rated as *poor fair* by 21% of the respondents. When it comes to companionship respondents *sometimes* or *often* feel a lack of companionship (27%), feel isolated from others (17%), and feel left out (17%). When it comes to employment and training, respondents rated many services *poor* or *fair*. This includes job training opportunities for older adults who want to learn new skills (44%), policies that ensure older adults can continue to have equal opportunities to work (42%), jobs that adapt to meet the needs of people with disabilities (42%), and having a range of flexible job opportunities for older adults (42%). A majority of respondents rated access to volunteering opportunities and participating in decision making bodies as *poor, fair, or good*. This includes opportunities for older adults to participate in decision making bodies (63%), easy to find information on local volunteer opportunities (64%), a range of volunteer opportunities (58%), volunteer training opportunities (54%), and transportation to and from volunteer activities (51%).

**Community Information** Respondents in National City rely heavily on the internet for information and communication at 70%. Other primary means of retrieving information include family or friends (76%), local senior centers (72%), doctor or other health professional (68%), and faith-based organizations (62%). Respondents rated the free access to computers and the internet in public spaces as *good, very good or excellent* (65%). Overall, access to information is well rated, including offering community information in different languages rating *good, very good, or excellent* by 55% of the respondents. However, respondents gave *poor or fair* ratings to clearly displayed printed community information with large lettering (33%) and community information that is delivered in-person to people who may have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home (29%).

**COVID-19** Unique to this time period\*\*\*, the survey included questions related to the impacts of COVID-19. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents are *somewhat concerned* or *very concerned* about Coronavirus. A majority of respondents have had to adjust plans for travel, attending large events, volunteering, and in-person (non-emergency) medical appointments. Twenty-five percent of respondents have seen their income decrease because of COVID-19 and 18% said that they lost their job or had work suspended. Thirty-one percent of respondents said that they have put themselves at risk of exposure to Coronavirus because they can't afford to stay home and miss work. Due to COVID-19, respondents have sheltered in place (88%), stocked up on food, household supplies, and medications (87%), ordered groceries, household supplies, and medications online (66%), and transitioned to working from home (61%). Additionally, respondents said that because of COVID-19, they have not



moved to a new location (99%), had to take out a loan or additional debt (88%), stopped using home healthcare services (76%), asked someone to get groceries, home supplies, or medications (65%), gone outside more for exercise (62%), or have had to homeschool children (61%). Related to transportation, 31% of the respondents have driven themselves around more than they did before Coronavirus and 84% said that they no longer use transportation services like buses, trains, rideshare, or special services for older adults with disabilities because of Coronavirus. When it comes to social interaction, 69% of respondents said that they feel more socially isolated because of Coronavirus, but over 75% of the respondents have used video chat, social media, or a phone to connect with others. Other than attending a health appointment virtually, most respondents have not participated in a community meeting, classes, or social activities in a virtual setting. Fifty-five percent of respondents said that they do not think their community taken steps to make it easier for people to gather in public places, such as parks or recreation centers, and still be able to appropriately social distance from one another.

- \* Some of the findings discussed can be categorized into several categories and are not exclusively reviewed based on the category they are shown a part of above.
- \*\* Demographics indicate that the people who completed the survey (and attended the community workshops) may have been disproportionately well off, English-speaking, highly educated, and physically mobile compared to census data for the general population of those 45 years old and older.
- \*\*\* Survey responses were collected August 2020 and data is specific to this point in time. Changes to the degree of impact as a result of COVID-19 are possible, but are not included in the findings at this time.





## PART B: Summary of Online Input via Social Pinpoint, Printed Questionnaires, and Resident Phone Calls

**What we asked:** Residents and leaders were encouraged to participate in the engagement tools through e-newsletters, senior living community outreach and meals programs, school district outreach, information from City leaders, social media, by participating in a Virtual Town Hall via Zoom, and word of mouth.

**Who participated in Social Pinpoint:** **101** comments have been posted to the Ideas Wall and **12** comments have been posted to the Mapping Tool through the Social Pinpoint online engagement platform, hosted on the project webpage. The online tools launched in September 2020 and are currently still available and available for comments through the [Age-Friendly National City webpage](#). Paper versions of the online engagement questions were delivered to targeted community locations, and completed forms were collected and inputted into the online platform (these forms have been included in the total counts shown).

To expand upon the outreach efforts done online through Social Pinpoint, phone calls were also made to residents living in Summercrest Apartments in National City to increase accessibility to participate in the project. Residents were provided with a summary about the project and asked questions from the printed questionnaire. City staff and volunteers from AARP had a total of **17** conversations with residents who primarily speak Spanish and Tagalog. All questions were designed in a way to be uploaded and added to the online input tool via the phone call volunteers. Data from these calls have been included in the total count of the online tool participants.

In addition, a Virtual Town Hall was held on September 24, 2020 (in English and Spanish) to share background information about the project, initial findings from the survey, information about how to use the online input tools, and solicit feedback about how to grow participation for the project. The recording of the Virtual Town Hall can be viewed on the project webpage at <http://nationalcityca.gov/afnc>.

The data summarized below includes resident feedback on Social pinpoint, which includes input from the printed questionnaires and phone calls to Summercrest Apartments residents.

**Ideas Wall participant comments have been summarized by Domains of Livability and include:**



The summaries below are from comments and suggestions provided by residents. Health & Wellness was not included as an Ideas Wall category because survey results indicated that most residents felt good about local health services. However, Health & Wellness-related topics appeared on the Ideas Wall through this outreach, and a summary of those comments have been extracted and included below, under “Other Topics of Discussion.”

- 1. Civic Participation & Employment** This domain received limited comments on the Ideas Wall. However, of the comments received, most related to access and availability of information.

Comments and suggestions about Civic Participation & Employment included:

- *Need more ways to be kept informed about City decisions and laws that are passed*
- *Would like to know what is going on throughout the City*
- *Needs to be seminars and community gatherings for residents of National City to come together and talk about problems and solutions*
- *Need opportunities for participation*

- 2. Communication & Information** This topic received a variety of input, related mostly to communication between the City and residents, as well as community event information.

Comments and suggestions about Communication & Information included:

- *Seniors should be more included*
- *There should be better communication to seniors about events happening*
- *Facebook and Instagram are the main ways to get information from the City,*
- *How do you find information from the City, not just community events (recent policies passed, updates from City Council)*

- 3. Housing** This topic has crossover with other domain topics. Residents highlighted affordability, community and personal needs, and specific insight about a senior living community experience when it comes to housing.

Comments and suggestions about affordability:

- *Affordable senior housing is restricted by occupancy and larger units are too expensive (respondent cannot live with husband because of single-occupancy rule at the complex)*
- *Need affordable housing personally, and want that for others*
- *Will pay rent first and then buy necessities with limited money left*
- *Housing is expensive (respondent prays to lower rent and housing bills)*
- *Make rents less expensive*
- *More affordable housing; love National City and want to stay*
- *Need more affordable housing, rent is too high*
- *Rent is high*
- *Housing is most important because rent is going up*
- *Housing is so expensive; fortunately, there is senior housing, which is more reasonable*





Comments and suggestions about housing opportunities and needs:

- *Everyone should have a place to live and no one should be living on the street*
- *Housing and health; without good health, the housing won't help*
- *Important to live close to daughter*
- *Important to have a home that is centrally located; close to transportation, grocery stores, and department stores*
- *Need more housing security*
- *Like living in National City*
- *Love housing because it is a place that is my own*
- *Want my own home*
- *Having my family near is important*
- *Need more housing because of homelessness*
- *National City is one of the better places to live in San Diego; not heavily congested and close to everything*
- *Hard to find a comfortable apartment, especially without a good job*
- *Would like to stay in home as long as possible, but know that there are other housing options in National City if needed*
- *Want to know more about senior living*

Comments and suggestions specifically about Kimball Towers (senior living community):

- *Live in Kimball Towers 14 years and like how calm it is*
- *Kimball Towers should be cleaner, inside and out*
- *Cheaper to live at Kimball Towers, thankful for the government subsidy*
- *Don't have many resources at Kimball Towers*
- *The rent at Kimball Towers is more economical*
- *90 years old and thankful to be living at Kimball Towers*
- *Happy with Kimball Towers*
- *Kimball Towers doesn't have good internet and cell phone reception*

#### **4. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings** Themes that residents shared relate most to improving upon existing facilities, as well as open space access.

Comments and suggestions about outdoor spaces and buildings:

- *Sidewalks are not in good condition; use a walker and sidewalks are uneven or have potholes so it is unsafe to walk to the park*
- *Like going to the park and going on walks*
- *Need to improve powerlines to provide more power and reduce the chance of wildfires*
- *Important more now because there are not spaces to walk and be with friends*
- *Need these spaces*
- *Need more space to do exercises and relax*
- *National City has good parks but lights are always off or poorly lit; can lights stay on (especially during Daylight Savings)*
- *Zoning needs to be visited to allow larger companies who want to set-up in National City*
- *Commercial and Real Estate companies should be mandated to keep up their buildings*



**5. Respect & Inclusion** This domain received limited comment. However, respect was regarded as an important principle.

Comments and suggestions about respect and inclusion included

- *Having respect towards others is needed*
- *Respect is the most important thing because it's needed among the community*
- *Feel socially isolated*

**6. Transportation** The key take-aways for the transportation topic related mostly to public transportation and how transportation systems operate, especially for older adults.

Comments and suggestions that relate to essential trips and transportation resources:

- *Transportation is a benefit of being a Medi-Medi beneficiary*
- *Do not have anyone to provide a ride to the doctors*
- *A transportation system for senior citizens would be greatly appreciated*
- *Transportation is important, don't have a car*
- *If I pay bills, I need transportation*
- *Difficult to get to weekly dialysis appointments, do not drive and public transportation is not reliable*
- *Wish there was better public transit for elderly (do not have a car)*
- *Elderly and have difficulty using public transportation; need a way to get to doctors' appointments*
- *Grove and Plaza Boulevard is a concerning area, always backed-up by traffic and roadway potholes*
- *Transportation is important, cannot take the bus during COVID-19*

Comments and suggestions that relate to convenience and timeliness:

- *MTS takes too long and the bus needs to come more often*
- *Buses take too long*
- *Don't have a car to get around*
- *In 26 year, have never owned a car, but have not had a good experience with public transportation (long wait time)*
- *Don't have a car and public transportation is important*
- *Need more buses, the wait time is too long*
- *MTS buses are inconvenient for the elderly, often have to wait over an hour for a bus to arrive*
- *Need comfortable transportation for elderly, perhaps smaller vans*
- *Need more MTS routes*
- *Elderly sometimes needs transportation to come immediately and cannot wait for the bus to arrive*



**Other Topics of Discussion** Other topics that residents had comments about that fall outside of the six domain topics included Health & Wellness.

Comments and suggestions about health and wellness included:

- *Retired and comfortable, there are parks next to where I live*
- *Live alone and caregiver helps with the house and errands*
- *With good health we have everything*
- *The most important thing is to have improved medical care*
- *Healthier when people surround me*
- *Health and well-being are a big concern as a senior citizen*
- *Want everyone here to be healthy*
- *Health and well-being are important, cannot move without it*
- *Exercise is important for keeping the body in good condition*
- *Important to have good health*
- *Nothing else matters without health and wellness*
- *Health and wellness create happiness, and this is a main concern*
- *Getting more difficult to be mobile it would be nice to have doctors within walking distance*
- *Walkability and safety to health services*
- *Need food*
- *Wish there was a button to press to get help from someone in a medical emergency*
- *Exercises and over the counter medicine should be more available*
- *Caring for a parent, and health and wellness for them is important (caregiver)*
- *Wish to stay healthy, do not drive and still working*
- *Need healthy bodies and to not get sick*
- *Like San Ysidro Health Center*

Comments within health and wellness that relate specifically to Coronavirus include:

- *Want to take care of health, especially during COVID-19*
- *Health is more important because of the pandemic*
- *People should follow the rules regarding Coronavirus; very worried during COVID-19*
- *No longer have exercise programs because of COVID-19*

**Mapping Tool participant comments have been summarized by the comment type and include:**

**Existing Age-Friendly  
Example in National City**

**Issues & Concerns**

**Opportunity areas**



The summaries below are from comments and suggestions left by residents on the Mapping Tool. In this platform, an interactive map allowed participants to drop a pin at an exact location and leave a comment about that location, using one of three comment types. The Mapping Tool included input from Sweetwater Union High School students, as well as residents throughout the City.

- 1. Existing Age-Friendly Example in National City** A resident would select this comment type if they knew of a location/feature in National City that demonstrates a current example of livability within the City.

Examples of livability in National City currently include:

- *Summercrest Apartments – Enjoy living at Summercrest*
- *Summercrest Apartments – Close to public transit and a grocery store*
- *Euclid Ave, near E 20<sup>th</sup> Street – Great bike lanes*

- 2. Issues & Concerns** A resident would select this comment type if they wanted to identify a location/feature in National City where a livability issue or concern exists.

Issue & Concern locations and comments included:

- *Sweetwater Union High School – Need more lights around the school and town because it's dangerous to walk at night and it's a safety concern*
- *E Plaza Boulevard and Euclid Avenue - The bus stop on Euclid Avenue and Plaza Boulevard used to be closer to apartment complex near Summercrest, but it was switched to the other corner. Cars are always speeding down Plaza Boulevard and Euclid Avenue; don't feel safe having to go to across the intersection. Elderly and can't walk that fast; afraid to get hit by a car.*

- 3. Opportunity Areas** A resident would select this comment type if they wanted to identify a location/feature in National City where there is an opportunity to improve livability.

Opportunity Area locations and comments included:

- *El Toyon Park – Because of COVID-19, a lot of social activities have been cancelled; really want those activities back when the time is right. Favorite thing to do is go to the park, get some fresh air, admire nature and people watching. At my age I can't really move around all that much but I enjoy sitting at the park bench having a social conversation with my friend.*
- *El Toyon Street, near E 4<sup>th</sup> Ave – The closest park is El Toyon park, but there are no senior activities going on there like there is at the park by the city offices, Kimball Park. If I wanted to go to the Senior Center, I would have to go all the way across town. If the goal is for every one of all ages to live a healthy life what about your residents who don't live near Kimball park. Can we alternate different activities between the parks? That way everyone gets a chance to participate.*
- *Summercrest Apartments – Really wish Summercrest was a smoke free apartment complex or has a smoking area. Sometimes the smoke comes into my apartment and it makes me cough. Second hand smoke it not good for people. Especially the elderly.*



## NEXT STEPS

The quantitative and qualitative data gathered as part of Baseline Assessment will be used to determine which Domains of Livability are the most relevant for the City of National City. Suggestions and concerns will be connected to current efforts and resources, as well as efforts that are planned, but have not yet been initiated.

A series of Community Action Planning Sessions will be conducted in the Spring for residents and stakeholders to provide input. The sessions will be diverse in time and content to maximize participation. City Staff and Community partners who are responsible for and/or working on related efforts or activities will be available at the meetings to provide information and opportunities.

A DRAFT Report/Action Plan will be developed following the Action Planning Sessions and will be circulated for review and input, including public comment.

The FINAL Action Plan will be presented to the City Council for approval and adoption in August 2021.

