

CITY OF BESSEMER VISION 2040 FRAMEWORK

NOVEMBER 2020

PREPARED BY
STRADA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

STRADA Professional Services, LLC would like to acknowledge everyone who was responsible for providing the content found in this document. They each played a significant role in development of the City of Bessemer's Vision 2040: Forging Bessemer's Future Together.

The Mayor of Bessemer

The Honorable Kenneth E. Gulley

Bessemer City Council

Councilor Jarvis Collier - District 1
Councilor Kimberly Alexander - District 2
President Cynthia Donald - District 3
Councilor Donna Thigpen - District 4
Councilor Ron Marshall - District 5
Councilor Jesse Matthews - District 6
Councilor La Tricia Crusoe - District 7

The Visioning Committee Members

Councilor Jarvis Collier
Teco Stephens
Cynthia Prince
Dave Paige
Dan McCrimmon
Attorney Kem Marks
Ralph Ruggs
Dr. Autumm Jeter, Bessemer City
Schools Superintendent
Karen Wadlington
Captain Carlton Jackson

City of Bessemer Staff

Mayor's Assistant – Toraine Norris
City Attorney – Shan Paden
City Engineer – Ron Gilbert, P.E.
Stormwater Specialist – Freddie Freeman
Information Technology Staff –
Rick Singleton and Carlton McCullough
The City of Bessemer Economic and Community
Development Department

STRADA Professional Services, LLC

Edmond Watters, Project Director
Dorothy George, MBA, Project Manager
Alfredo Acoff, Senior Consultant

Special Thanks

The Citizens of Bessemer
Dr. Cynthia Anthony, Interim President of
Lawson State Community College
Brian Giattina, Co-Founder of BLOX

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------------|
| Executive Summary | ES1 |
| City of Bessemer Vision | ES2 |
| Vision 2040 Strategic Priorities..... | ES3 |
| Four Environments | ES4 |
| Social Environment..... | ES4 |
| Economic Environment | ES4 |
| Built Environment..... | ES4 |
| Natural Environment..... | ES4 |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Visioning and Planning Process | 1 |
| Community Engagement Process | 2 |
| Use of Vision 2040..... | 4 |
| Community Profile | 5 |
| Bessemer Yesterday | 5 |
| City of Bessemer Demographics..... | 6 |
| Population | 6 |
| Race and Ethnicity | 7 |
| Age and Sex | 7 |
| Income, Education and Employment Data..... | 8 |
| Income | 8 |
| Education..... | 9 |
| Employment | 10 |
| City of Bessemer SWOT Analysis..... | 14 |
| Strengths..... | 14 |
| Weaknesses | 15 |
| Opportunities | 15 |
| Threats..... | 16 |
| Vision Framework | 17 |
| Vision 2040: Forging Bessemer's Future Together..... | 18 |
| Community Values | 18 |

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Vision 2040 Strategic Priorities, Goals, and Objectives | 19 |
| Social Environment Strategic Priorities | 19 |
| Strategic Priority 1: Communications and Public Image | 19 |
| Strategic Priority 2: Community Pride..... | 20 |
| Strategic Priority 3: Education..... | 21 |
| Strategic Priority 4: Health and Human Services..... | 22 |
| Strategic Priority 5: Public Safety | 23 |
| Economic Environment Strategic Priorities..... | 24 |
| Strategic Priority 1: Economic Development | 25 |
| Strategic Priority 2: Revitalize Downtown..... | 27 |
| Built Environment Strategic Priorities | 28 |
| Strategic Priority 1: Design Guidelines and Standards | 28 |
| Strategic Priority 2: Housing | 29 |
| Strategic Priority 3: Land Use | 30 |
| Strategic Priority 4: Parks and Recreation..... | 32 |
| Strategic Priority 5: Public Utilities and Infrastructure..... | 33 |
| Strategic Priority 6: Transportation and Mobility..... | 33 |
| Natural Environment Strategic Priorities | 35 |
| Strategic Priority: Natural Environment..... | 35 |
| Key Actions and Next Steps | 37 |
| Bibliography | 39 |
| Appendices..... | 40 |
| Appendix A: Number of Online Survey Interactions | 42 |
| Appendix B: Online Survey Questions and Survey Results..... | 43 |
| Appendix C: List of Interview Questions and Interview Summaries | 58 |
| Appendix D: Workshop Materials..... | 64 |
| Appendix E: Common Themes Identified from Individual Interviews | 83 |

Executive Summary

Vision 2040: Forging Bessemer's Future Together

The City of Bessemer contracted with the consulting firm STRADA Professional Services, LLC (STRADA) to develop a Vision Framework for the anticipated Comprehensive Plan. Bessemer is experiencing new growth in industrial development. This growth has created a need for housing, infrastructure, public services, and other requirements to sustain a growing city. Bessemer welcomes the future and plans for positive change through the commitment to do the work by forging a future together and making Bessemer the place to grow, invest, live, work, and visit.

The first phase of the Comprehensive Plan was the development of the Vision Framework for the City of Bessemer. The Vision Framework encompass the Vision, Values, and Strategic Priorities for the City. During this phase of the Plan, STRADA conducted surveys, interviews, and workshops that engaged various Community Vision work groups which included educators, planners, engineers, City staff/officials, members of the community, including property owners, residents, business owners, and various stakeholders.



“
THE CITIZENS OF BESSEMER
ARE ONE OF THE
GREATEST ASSETS OF THE CITY.

- Mayor Kenneth Gulley

City of Bessemer Vision

Vision 2040: Forging Bessemer's Future Together

The City of Bessemer has a rich history, rich resources, and a bright future. Bessemer is strategically located in the heart of Central Alabama. It is an economic engine driving development in the Birmingham Metropolitan area.

Bessemer grew rapidly in its early years due to iron ore manufacturing and earned its nickname "The Marvel City." Bessemer is now home to a diverse blend of industries and companies. It has continued innovating through diverse economic development through local, national, and international business partnerships.

Bessemer envisions being a city that is livable, with a high quality of life where all people can find opportunities to succeed and grow. Bessemer will be an inviting, attractive, diverse, and inclusive community. We want to provide a variety of housing types and choices for all residents. Bessemer will be a healthy, safe, and secure city with well-defined greenspaces, parks, and recreation. It will be a vibrant place where people live, work, and play in revitalized and re-imagined neighborhoods throughout the City, with a special focus on reinvigorating Bessemer's downtown.

As a city, Bessemer welcomes the future and will plan for positive change through our commitment to forge our future together and make Bessemer the place to grow, invest, live, play, work, and visit.

To achieve this vision, the City of Bessemer will:

1. Develop and implement creative, community-based strategies to build stronger neighborhoods, sustain and grow economic opportunities, and foster an environment for enhanced quality of life and growth city-wide.
2. Focus on continued collaboration with businesses, citizens, communities, and the education system.
3. Promote innovative technology use and adoption.
4. Maintain integrity and pride in the delivery of services to our citizens and stakeholders.
5. Promote effective communication to the citizens and stakeholders.
6. Promote effective communication and cooperation in the City's leadership.

Community Values

Values are considered our most closely held beliefs and ideals. Based on input from the community, the following core values were identified as important to the Bessemer community:

- Civic Involvement
- Diversity
- Dynamic Leadership
- Education
- Efficiency
- Excellence
- Heritage
- Innovation
- Opportunity
- Safety
- Sense of Place
- Sustainability
 - Community
 - Business
 - Environment
- Teamwork

Vision 2040 Strategic Priorities

Vision 2040: Forging Bessemer's Future Together requires focus and follow-through. Community outreach efforts in the form of an online survey, workshops, and interviews were conducted to gather data. A SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, Analysis of Impediments to the Fair Housing document, and other official documents were used to understand the current environment, gain insight into the desires of a broad range of city stakeholders, and identify critical issues facing the City of Bessemer. Once the community values were established and the SWOT analysis completed, the following strategic priorities were identified:

1. Communications and Public Image
2. Community Pride
3. Design Guidelines and Standards
4. Economic Development
5. Education
6. Environment
7. Health and Human Services
8. Housing
9. Land Use
10. Parks and Recreation
11. Public Safety
12. Public Utilities and Infrastructure
13. Downtown Revitalization
14. Transportation and Mobility



Figure 1: Four Environments

Four Environments

The strategic priorities represent the major themes and topic areas discovered during the community engagement and data collection process. The goals and objectives are structured around each of the identified strategic priorities. Each strategic priority is grouped based on which of the four environments – Social Environment, Economic Environment, Built Environment, and Natural Environment -- it correlates with. Below is a description of these four environments.

Social Environment

The social environment is focused on immediate physical and social settings in which people live or in which something happens. Examples of the social environment would include relationships, institutions, culture, healthy food, safe housing, living wage jobs, health care access, and safety. The strategic priorities associated with the social environment are provided below.

- Communications and Public Image
- Community Pride
- Education
- Health and Human Services
- Public Safety

Economic Environment

The term economic environment refers to all the external economic factors that influence buying habits of consumers and businesses and therefore affect the performance of an organization. These factors are often beyond an organization's control and may be either large-scale (macro) or small-scale (micro). The strategic priorities associated with the economic environment are provided below.

- Economic Development
- Revitalize Downtown

Built Environment

The built environment refers to anything human made for humans and to be used for human activity. Examples of the built environment would include buildings, urban spaces, walkways, roads, green spaces, and parks. The strategic priorities associated with the built environment are provided below.

- Design Guidelines and Standards
- Housing
- Land Use
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Utilities and Infrastructure
- Transportation and Mobility

Natural Environment

The natural environment encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally on earth. Examples of the natural environment would include vegetation, micro-organisms, water, natural resources, and climate. The strategic priorities associated with the social environment are provided below.

- Natural Environment

Introduction

The City of Bessemer is the hub of western Jefferson County, Alabama, and is an economic engine that is driving growth and expansion in the Birmingham Metropolitan area. Bessemer is unique in that it owns and operates its own power and water utilities, as well as an airport that serves as a reliever airport for Birmingham International Airport. Just as the City saw rapid growth in its early years, earning it the nickname "The Marvel City," it has recently seen significant growth as new corporate partners are moving into the City. The City's new growth in both retail and industrial development, with the associated increased demands for housing, infrastructure, public services, and other necessities of a growing city requires the development of a comprehensive plan.

At the end of August 2020, the City of Bessemer started the first phase of creating the City's Comprehensive Plan with an initiative called "Vision 2040: Forging Bessemer's Future Together." This first phase of work is focused on the development of a citywide vision as a foundation for the development of the City of Bessemer's Comprehensive Plan. The goal of creating the vision framework is to identify the community's shared vision, mission, values, strategic areas of focus, and specific goals that define how the City's leadership will respond to the needs and aspirations of Bessemer's citizens. These strategic actions will assist the City in better preparing for and managing change and achieving overall growth city-wide.

Visioning and Planning Process

The Visioning Process was designed and facilitated by STRADA Professional Services, LLC (STRADA). The key factor in the development of this process came from the City of Bessemer leadership's belief that Vision 2040 should be a community effort and not the exclusive vision of the City's leadership. STRADA's first step in this process was to recommend that the Mayor and the City Council members establish a Stakeholder Committee to meet at key milestones during the development of the City's vision and through the visioning process to discuss critical issues. Upon that recommendation, a 10-member stakeholder committee was formed consisting of the following members:

- One City Council member
- Six citizens selected from each of the districts
- One member selected by the Mayor
- One member from the Bessemer Area Chamber of Commerce
- The Bessemer City School Superintendent



VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Traditionally, a visioning process is based on an organization's mission. The mission is a companion to the vision. During the process of developing Vision 2040, STRADA discovered that the City of Bessemer does not have a mission or mission statement. The mission statement explains the purpose of the City's existence and serves as a guide to the future destination established during the visioning process.

The visioning process was comprised of four steps. These steps included 1) developing a community profile, 2) identifying current trends to create a probable scenario, 3) considering, preferred scenarios and developing a community vision, and 4) preparing an action plan. The process is illustrated below.



Figure 2: Vision Framework Development Process

Community Engagement Process

The approach to undertaking both the development of the City of Bessemer's vision and the creation of the vision statement, was to engage the City's citizens and stakeholders in a highly interactive, iterative, and inclusive planning process. To maximize the opportunity for successful community engagement, the following five basic principles were used to guide the process:

- 1. The Process was Clarified and Established:** The process and expectations were clearly defined and explained from the outset. All participants were updated throughout the process so that everyone always knew where they were in the process.
- 2. Involvement of a Variety of Stakeholders:** A wide variety of stakeholders including governmental/public-sector, institutions of higher learning, service providers, businesses and property owners, residents, etc. were included in the process.

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

3. **Developed an Understanding & Respect Varying Stakeholder Agendas:** Stakeholder agendas are sometimes conflicting. STRADA, in the role of facilitator, was able to find the appropriate middle ground to formulate the City of Bessemer Vision Framework, which required a detailed understanding of each party's ideas and priorities.
4. **Used a Variety of Input Formats:** STRADA utilized a wide variety of input tools for different audiences and circumstances including but not limited to such measures as: one-on-one interviews, short-answer survey questions, ranking of visual images, voting on issues, and workshops.
5. **Provided a Constructive Format for Collaboration:** Maximized opportunities for input and minimized "talking head" presentations. During the workshops and individual interviews, STRADA promoted a loose, fun, informative yet structured environment that created a positive atmosphere and encourage the entire group to participate.

Stakeholder Workshops. Two Stakeholder Workshops were held, centering around topics such as education, business development, the redevelopment of downtown, recreation, community health, transportation, and housing. During these workshops, the groups included representatives from each district, the business community, education, non-profit agencies, public agencies, and association groups.

Community Survey. A highly visual and interactive survey was created to engage citizens online. This online survey was open to all stakeholders of the City of Bessemer. There was a total of 215 survey interactions online. Of the 215 surveys, 46 were submitted and marked completed, 59 were started, and 110 were opened.

The data collected from the outreach process provided the foundation for Vision 2040: Forging Bessemer's Future Together. Using this input, the following was examined:

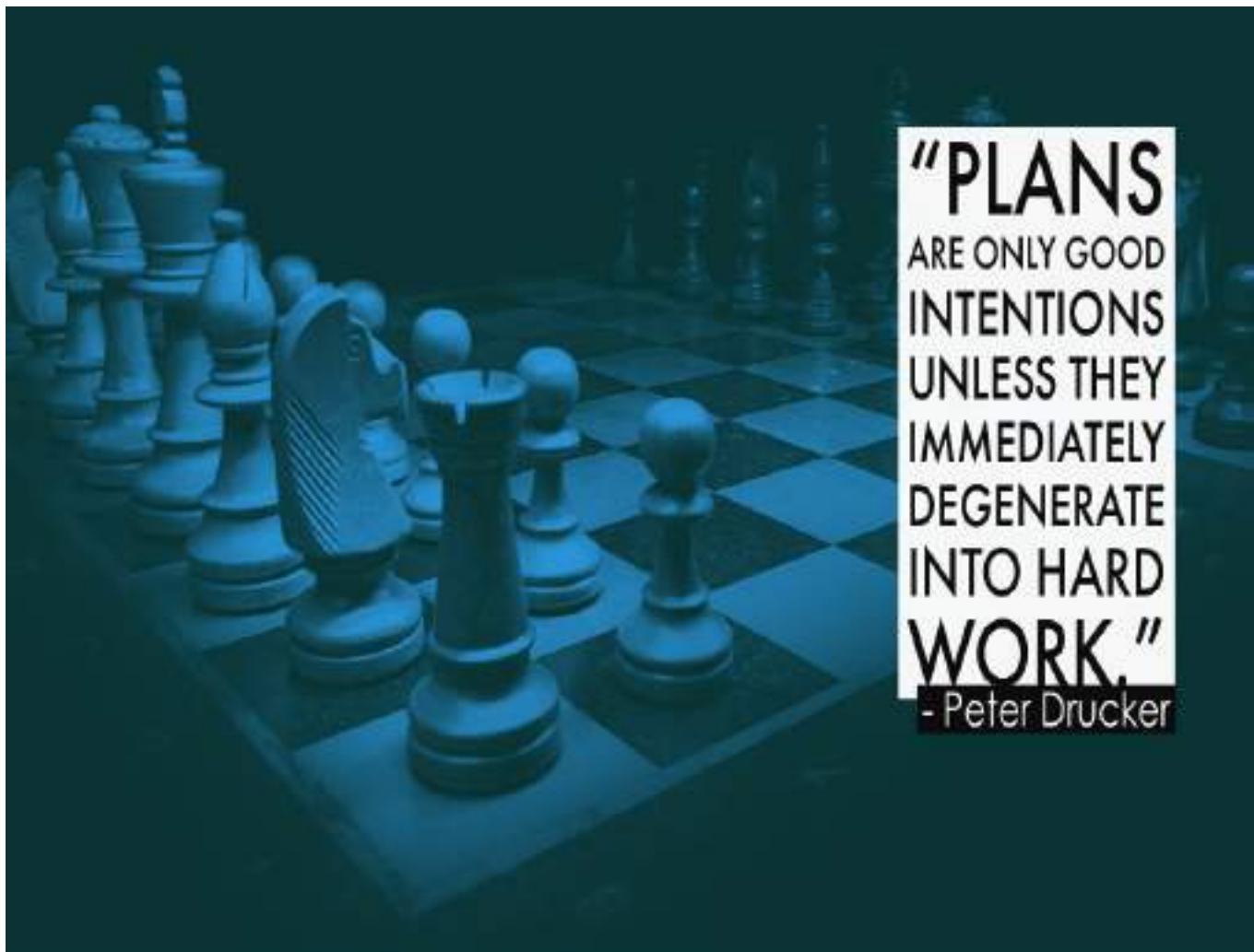
- The City of Bessemer's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- The character, image, and assets of the City
- The City's guiding principles and core values

Please see **Appendix A** for Number of Online Survey Participants and **Appendix B** for Survey Results.



Use of Vision 2040

Vision 2040: Forging Bessemer's Future Together is not an operational or a strategic plan. It is the framework that will guide the development of the City of Bessemer's Comprehensive Plan. More importantly, it sets the direction for the City's future and gives a voice to the community's highest aspirations. This framework provides guidance when the City's leadership and other members of the community must make key decisions related to the future of the City. Finally, it provides property owners, residents, businesses, industries, developers, and others with insight on how to help the City achieve the shared vision.



**"PLANS
ARE ONLY GOOD
INTENTIONS
UNLESS THEY
IMMEDIATELY
DEGENERATE
INTO HARD
WORK."**

- Peter Drucker

Community Profile

Bessemer is a city southwest of Birmingham in Jefferson County, Alabama, with a population of 26,472.¹ It is within the Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), of which Jefferson County is the center. Bessemer sits in the lower section of Jones Valley, in the southern part of Jefferson County, and is 18 miles southwest of Birmingham and eight miles from Hoover, Alabama. The City's land area is 39.85 square miles.¹

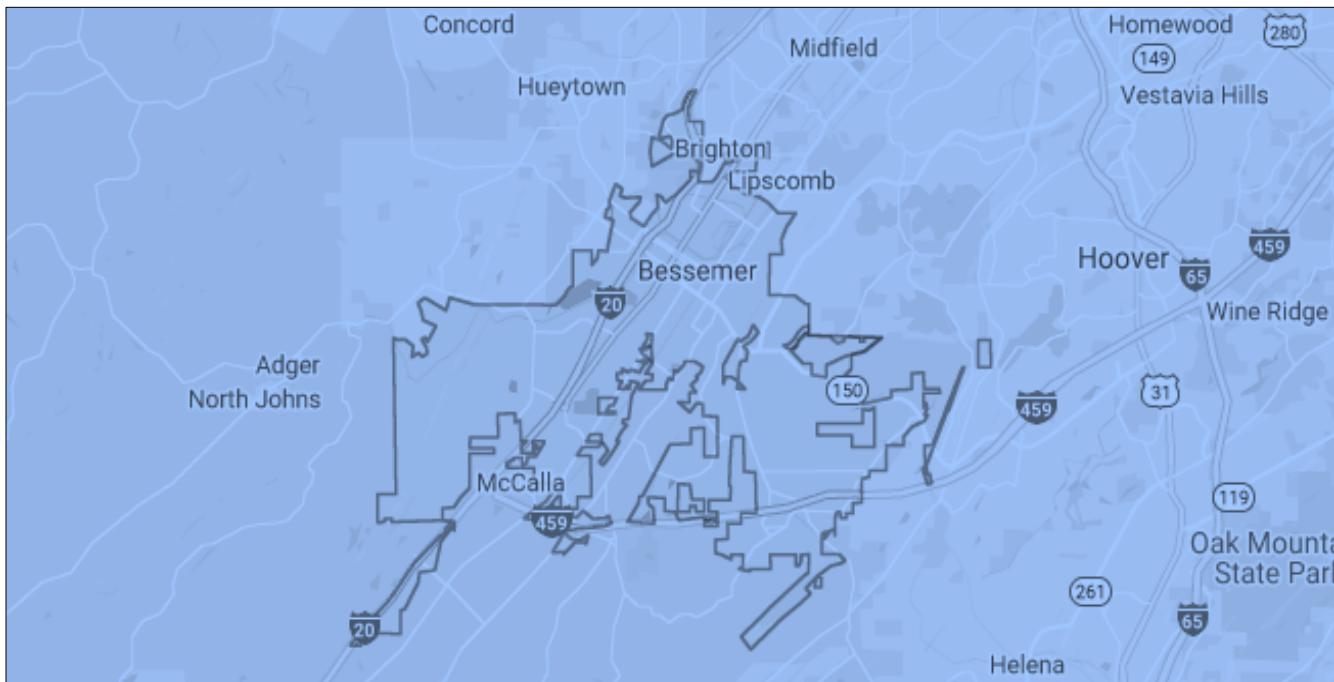


Figure 3: City of Bessemer Area Map (Source: Google Maps)

Bessemer Yesterday

In July 1886, Bessemer was selected as the site for two iron furnaces. Bessemer was founded in the spring of 1887 as an important industrial center, and within a year, Bessemer had a population of 3,500 residents. The growth of Bessemer continued to be phenomenal, and the city became popularly known as the "Marvel City." In the next year, Bessemer boasted more than 4,000 citizens. The City reached fourth in the state in terms of population by 1890 and remained there for several years afterward. Bessemer is currently 17th in Alabama by population.



¹ "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice." The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. June 2020. Pg. 6. <https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Analysis-of-Impediments.pdf>

City of Bessemer Demographics

Population

According to the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Report for the City of Bessemer, there has been a 4.3 percent decrease in population since the 2010 Census. The population has decreased a total of 11 percent over the past 20 years.² The population density for the city is estimated at 689 persons per square mile according to the 2010 Census.² The Birmingham Association of Realtors has predicted that there will be a slight population increase of 0.16 percent by 2024.²



| BREAKDOWN OF RACE GROUP POPULATION GROWTH AND REDUCTION CITY OF BESSEMER | | | |
|---|---------|-------------|--------------------|
| Race/Ethnicity | Current | 2000 Census | %Increase/Decrease |
| WHITE | 6260 | 8990 | -30% |
| BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN | 19,549 | 21,444 | -8.83% |
| AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE | 82 | 88 | -6.8% |
| ASIAN | 27 | 53 | -9% |
| TWO OR MORE RACES | 439 | 221 | +98.6% |
| HISPANIC OR LATINO | 1181 | 383 | +208.4% |
| NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER | 0 | 5 | -100% |

Figure 4: Breakdown of Race Group Population Growth and Reduction² (Source:2010 and 2019 U.S. Census Data)

Compared with Jefferson County and the State of Alabama, Bessemer has a significant number of residents below the age of 65 identified as having a disability.³ There are six areas of disability defined by the Census Bureau's American Community survey: hearing, vision difficulty, cognitive difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, self-care difficulty, and independent living difficulty. An estimated 20.7 percent of Bessemer residents under the age of 65 identified as having a disability.³ The Jefferson County average is 11.4 percent, and the Alabama average is 11.6 percent.³

²"Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice." The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. June 2020. Pg. 6 and 7. <https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Analysis-of-Impediments.pdf>

³ "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice." The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. June 2020. Pg. 21. <https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Analysis-of-Impediments.pdf>

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Race and Ethnicity

Bessemer has a decrease in population across each racial group except the Hispanic population, which is the largest growing population. It increased by 208.4 percent from 383 in 2000 to 1,181 in 2020.⁴ The White population has decreased by 30 percent from 8,990 in 2000 to 6,260 in 2020.⁴ The black population declined by 8.83 percent from 21,444 in 2000 to 19,549 percent in 2020.³ The Asian population decreased by 49 percent from 53 in 2000 to 27 in 2020.⁴

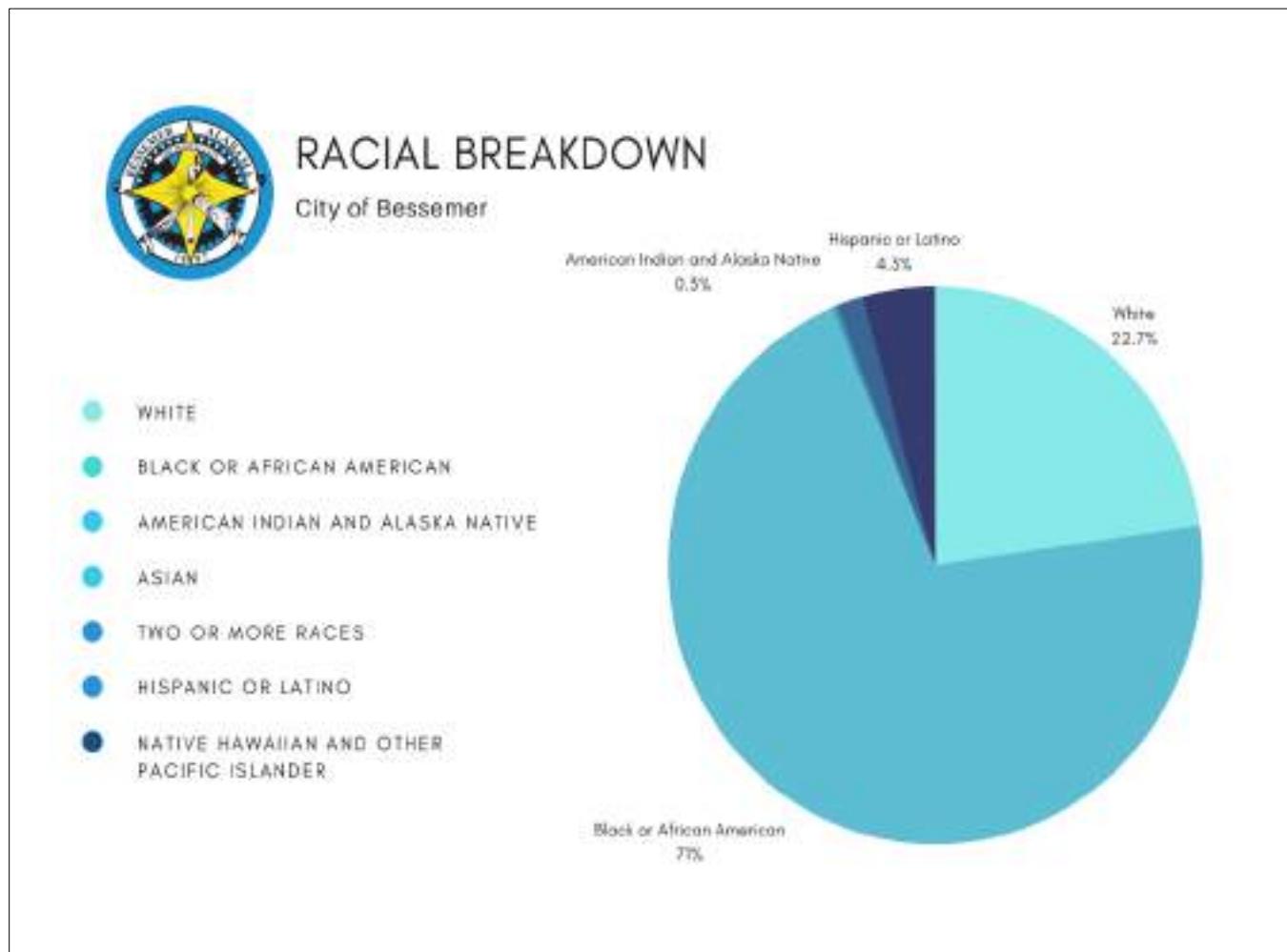


Figure 5: Racial Breakdown⁴ (Source: 2019 U.S. Census Data)

Age and Sex

The age range for residents in the City of Bessemer, varies. Residents under the age of 18 represents 22.4 percent of the population and forms the largest group.⁴ Residents 65 and over make up 17.9 percent of the population. About 6.4 percent of the population is below the age of 5.⁴ Approximately 77.6 percent of Bessemer's population is over the age of 18 and 24.4 percent of that population is age 60 or over.⁴ The median age is 39.1 years.⁴ Females represent 53.5 percent.⁴

⁴ "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice." The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. June 2020. Pg. 6, 7 and 8 <https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Analysis-of-Impediments.pdf>

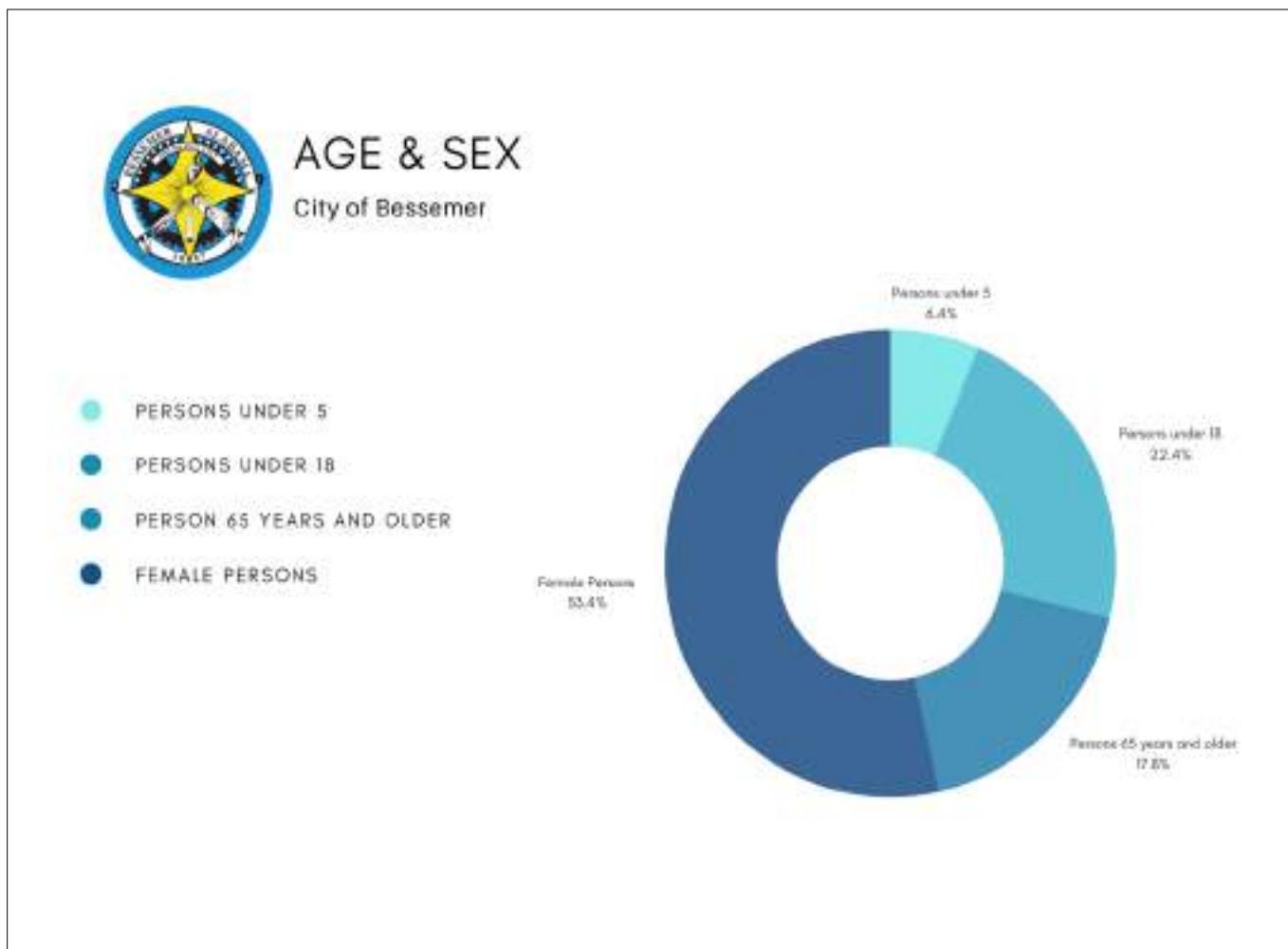


Figure 6: Population in Terms of Age and Sex ⁴ (Source: 2019 U.S. Census Data)

Income, Education and Employment Data

Income

According to the 2010 Census, the median household income for the City of Bessemer is \$31,610.⁵ Bessemer residents on average have a lower medium income per capita compared with both the state and county average. The poverty rate is also higher than the state and county average at 28.1 percent.⁵ The median male income in Bessemer is \$19,607, and the median female income is \$15,888.⁵ Males out-earn females by 20.9 percent.⁵

“As we encounter each other, we see our diversity — of background, race, ethnicity, belief — and how we handle that diversity will have much to say about whether we will in the end be able to rise successfully to the great challenges we face today.” — Dan Smith

⁵ “Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.” The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. June 2020. Pg. 9 <https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Analysis-of-Impediments.pdf>



COMPARISON OF THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, PER CAPITA INCOME, AND POVERTY RATE CITY OF BESSEMER

| GOVERNMENTAL UNIT | MEDIAN INCOME | PER CAPITA INCOME | POVERTY PERCENTAGE |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| State of Alabama | \$48,486 | \$26,846 | 16.8% |
| Jefferson County Alabama | \$51,979 | \$30,657 | 16.1% |
| City of Bessemer | \$31,610 | \$18,295 | 28.1% |

Figure 7: Comparison of the Median Household Income, Per Capita Income, and Poverty Rate ⁶

(Source: 2019 U.S. Census Data and Alabama Department of Labor)

Education

According to the Census, it is estimated that 83.9 percent of the City of Bessemer's residents over the age of 25 have attained a high school diploma or higher, while the state of Alabama average is 85.8 percent and Jefferson County was 89.7 percent.⁶ It is estimated that 13.8 percent of residents over the age of 25 have earned a bachelor's degree or higher, while the state of Alabama, is 24.9 percent and Jefferson County is 32.4 percent.⁶ Bessemer averages below both the state and county for high school diplomas, bachelor's degree, or higher.

⁶ "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice." The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. June 2020. Pg. 9 <https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Analysis-of-Impediments.pdf>

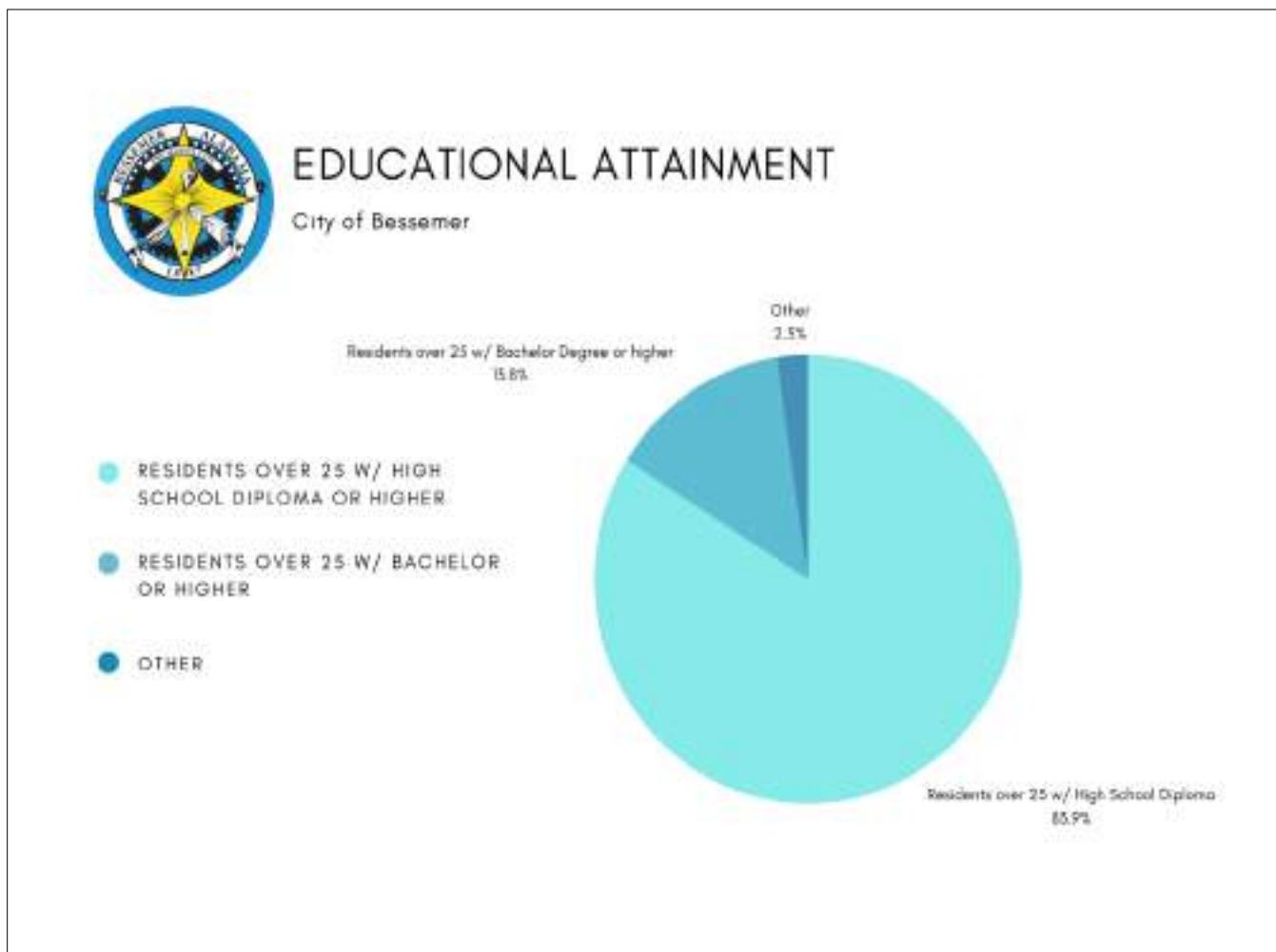


Figure 7: Bessemer Residents' Education Attainment ⁷

(Source: 2019 U.S. Census Data and Alabama Department of Labor)

Employment

According to the Alabama Department of Labor, it is estimated that the civilian labor force in Bessemer comprised 9,993 workers for 2020. Due to COVID-19, by April of 2020, 801 residents were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 19 percent. However, the average unemployment rate in Bessemer was set at eight percent for 2020. Since 2010, Bessemer has added approximately 5,000 jobs. Bessemer is a city of economic growth and development.⁸

The City of Bessemer is home to several major industries and companies. Amazon, Steyr Arms USA, BLOX, Milo's Tea, and Dollar General have facilities in Bessemer. Bessemer once flourished through iron ore manufacturing, and now it has a diverse blend of industries. The City of Bessemer is also a major employer followed by the Bessemer Board of Education, Jefferson County, and Lawson State Community College.

⁷"Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice." The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. June 2020. Pg. 9 <https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Analysis-of-Impediments.pdf>

⁸"Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice." The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. June 2020. Pg. 12. <https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Analysis-of-Impediments.pdf>



Figure 8: City of Bessemer Top 10 Employers⁹

(Source: City of Bessemer Department of Revenue, May 2020 – Pending Update)

⁹ "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice." The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. June 2020. Pg. 12. <https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Analysis-of-Impediments.pdf>



Conceptual Design of a Downtown Bessemer ready for Live, Work, and Play

“
“
**ONE CANNOT MAKE
ARCHITECTURE
WITHOUT STUDYING THE
CONDITION OF LIFE IN THE CITY.**

- Aldo Rossi

SWOT Analysis



VISION 2040:
FORGING BESSEMER'S
FUTURE TOGETHER

City of Bessemer SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis was used as strategic tool to evaluate the City of Bessemer's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Recurring themes and remarks were identified using the SWOT Analysis. The strategic priorities were selected to recommend provide urban development solutions and policies in this area that will help the City build on what it is doing well, address where the City is lacking, reduce risks, and take advantage of all opportunities for success. Please see **Appendix E** for a complete list of all the themes identified throughout the community engagement process.



Figure 9: City of Bessemer SWOT Analysis

*Note: The size of the text is not an indication of the significance of the topics listed.

Strengths

Qualities that will help the City reach parity with its vision and achieve its goals. It is the capital, knowledge, skill, and other capabilities, and resources available to help meet the needs of the community and other stakeholders in providing value.

- Airport
- Amazon
- Business friendly
- Carvana
- City owns and manages utilities
- Dollar General
- Economic development
- Fed Ex
- Financial health
- HubZone location
- Golf course
- Good right-of-way/reserved land for transportation purposes
- Industrial Board
- Job growth
- Lawson State Community College
- Location (Centrally located and interstate access into and out of the city)
- Opportunity Zone
- Perimeter growth of the City

Weaknesses

Qualities that will prevent the City from reaching parity with its vision and reaching its goals. It is a lack of resources and capabilities that limit a City's ability to provide value to its community and other stakeholders.

- Citizens' access to healthcare
- Food desert
- Lack of a formal city-wide comprehensive plan
- Lack of an updated city-wide masterplan
- Lack of city ordinance enforcement
- Lack of civic involvement
- Lack of design guidelines
- Lack of design uniformity downtown
- Lack of downtown development and growth
- Lack of public outreach
- Lack of togetherness
- Landlords do not maintain properties appropriately
- Loss of local hospital
- Median income below Jefferson County and the State
- Misinformation about the City circulated through unofficial communication channels
- No entertainment downtown
- No formal and centralized communication with the citizens (public relations)
- No formal historic preservation commission
- No strategic marketing for the City
- Not enough diversity in business types
- One recreation center
- School district
- Transit and transportation
- Vacant housing
- City's image
- City's crime ranking
- Lack of a mission statement

Opportunities

Agents, factors, and forces in the City's external environment that can directly or indirectly affect your success or failure. They arise when a City can take advantage of them to plan and execute strategies that enable the City to provide sustainable value.

- Establishing a Land Bank Authority
- Expanding Public Participation Plan for more than the Community Development Block Grant
- Expanding relationships with Lawson State Community College
- Expansion of housing supply
- Federal and state funding opportunities
- Green Development
- Hire an urban planner or provide a MSA to a firm for those services
- Increased visibility by large corporations
- More private and public partnerships
- Location in Opportunity Zone and HUBZone
- Workforce development partnership
- Development of ecotourism
- Leveraging economic development based on the City's current surge in growth
- Commercial tax base

Threats

Agents, factors, and forces in the City's internal or external environment that can directly or indirectly affect its success.

- BJCTA/MAX Transit limited operating hours and facilities
- Citizen's lack of education on Fair Housing, financial management, and credit use
- Declining population
- Domestic violence
- National and international economy
- Hospital being replaced with a mental facility
- Housing affordability -- renters and homeowners
- Lack of new affordable housing
- Media
- Lack of new housing
- Pandemic
- Political instability
- Public transportation connectivity
- Unfair image



“ ”

**STRATEGY
WITHOUT
TACTICS IS THE
SLOWEST ROUTE TO
VICTORY. TACTICS
WITHOUT
STRATEGY
IS THE NOISE
BEFORE DEFEAT.**

- Sun Tzu

Vision Framework:

Vision 2040

Strategic Priorities, Goals, and Objectives

Key Actions and Next Steps



VISION 2040:
FORGING BESSEMER'S
FUTURE TOGETHER

Vision 2040: Forging Bessemer's Future Together

Bessemer envisions being a city that is livable, with a high quality of life where all people can find opportunities to succeed and grow. Bessemer will be an inviting, attractive, diverse, and inclusive community. We want to provide a variety of housing types and choices for all residents. Bessemer will be a healthy, safe, and secure city with well-defined green spaces, parks, and recreation. It will be a vibrant place where people live, work, and play in revitalized and re-imagined neighborhoods throughout the City, with a special focus on reinvigorating Bessemer's downtown.

As a city, Bessemer welcomes the future and plans for positive change through our commitment to forge our future together and make Bessemer the place to grow, invest, live, play, work, and visit.

To achieve this vision, the City of Bessemer will:

1. Develop and implement creative, community-based strategies to build stronger neighborhoods, sustain and grow economic opportunities, and foster an environment for enhanced quality of life and growth city-wide.
2. Focus on continued collaboration with businesses, citizens, communities, and the education system.
3. Promote innovative technology use and adoption.
4. Maintain integrity and pride in the delivery of services to our citizens and stakeholders.
5. Promote effective communication to the citizens and stakeholders.
6. Promote effective communication and cooperation in the City's leadership.

Community Values

Values are considered our most closely held beliefs and ideals. Based on input from the community, the following core values were identified as important to our community:

- Civic Involvement
- Diversity
- Dynamic Leadership
- Education
- Efficiency
- Excellence
- Heritage
- Innovation
- Opportunity
- Safety
- Sense of Place
- Sustainability
 - Community
 - Business
 - Environment
- Teamwork



Vision 2040 Strategic Priorities, Goals, and Objectives

Social Environment Strategic Priorities

The social environment is focused on immediate physical and social settings in which people live or in which something happens. The following five strategic priorities were identified in the social environment and are listed below:

1. Communications and Public Image
2. Community Pride
3. Education
4. Health and Human Services
5. Public Safety

Strategic Priority 1: Communications and Public Image

Establish a unified and official system of communication with citizens and stakeholders to promote pride in the City of Bessemer.

Goal 1: Improve the City's overall communication with the community.

Objectives:

- Develop a strategic communications and marketing plan for the City.
- Provide appealing gateway and wayfinding signage to direct people to key destinations in the City.
- Collect email addresses and mobile numbers from residents to form an official City email and text messaging list.
- Develop a database/distribution list with citizens' cell phone numbers and email addresses to leverage access to Everbridge to communicate emergency and informational messages to the citizens.
- Maintain a community resource and events calendar.
- Create a communication strategy to share economic development progress with citizens, the development community, and target industries.
- Improve communication between workforce training providers, the local school district, higher education institutions, job seekers, and local business leaders.
- Increase public involvement efforts and engage citizens more in planning and decision making.
- Develop key performance indicators from the Vision Framework and create a public campaign to allow the community to track the City's progress in achieving set goals from the plan.
- Make the City's website more interactive.

Goal 2: Foster and promote a common sense of community identity.

Objectives:

- Develop distinctive branding for each neighborhood and district within the City.
- Design and execute a marketing strategy that communicates the City's identity to the citizens and potential investors.
- Expand outreach to the underserved population in the community.
- Establish a volunteer coordination program to provide residents with more opportunities to get more involved with various events happening in the City.
- Work with City to identify food deserts within each district.

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

- Re-establish grocery stores in the underserved communities.
- Sponsor neighborhood events like outdoor movies at the different neighborhood parks, continue to support events like the Bob Syke's Blues Festival, and create new signature events.
- Partner with local farmers to institute a community Farmer's Market that would feature special programs, events, crafts, and other communal activities.



Strategic Priority 2: Community Pride

Build a sense of community, retain a small-town feel, and promote pride in the City of Bessemer.

Goal 1: Improve, enhance, and maintain public and private property throughout the various neighborhoods in the City to reflect a sense of pride in the community.

Objectives:

- Organize community clean-up and improvement efforts in the individual neighborhoods.
- Involve each district, local businesses, and individual neighborhoods in improvement planning.
- Create volunteer opportunities for citizens and stakeholders to facilitate neighborhood maintenance.
- Incorporate use of murals and landscaping to beautify empty lots, facades, and transportation routes.

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Goal 2: Promote and celebrate people, places, and events that are unique to the City and the individual neighborhoods within the City.

Objectives:

- Strive to ensure diversity in commission, board, and committee appointments of community stakeholders.
- Identify and promote iconic people, businesses, institutions, and cultures in the City.

Strategic Priority 3: Education

Re-establish excellent schools and provide high-quality education in the City of Bessemer.

Goal 1: Strengthen the array of recognized, high quality, and specialized education opportunities that exist in all levels of the Bessemer City Schools.

Objectives:

- Use the City's website and social media sites to periodically recognize and celebrate academic, athletic, and other noteworthy achievements of students and teachers in the Bessemer City School District.
- Host an education summit to explore how schools, businesses, non-profits, and others can collaborate to improve and strengthen the Bessemer's education system.
- Coordinate collaborative long-term planning efforts with the school district and the City and include the school needs for facilities, technologies, and tool

Goal 2: Acknowledge and support the link between excellence in education, economic prosperity, and a high quality of life.

Objectives:

- Increase the percentage of citizens with a post-high school education.
- Promote life-long learning as a quality-of-life value by developing job opportunities that increase income potential.
- Create industry-responsive educational pathways.
- Collaborate with schools, service organizations, businesses, the county, the state, and other members of the community to address issues such as hunger, poverty, deficient housing, gang violence, and other factors impacting a student's ability to learn.
- Explore opportunities to work with schools and private enterprise to form collaborative partnerships for internships, athletic sponsorships, and mentoring programs in the different neighborhoods within the City of Bessemer.
- Collaborate with all educational institutions and businesses to support workforce development for specific industry needs.

“Education is the passport for the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.” – Malcom X

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Strategic Priority 4: Health and Human Services

Ensure more social sustainability and promote more economic independence and healthy lives for the citizens of the City of Bessemer.

Goal 1: Deliver effective social services to those who can most benefit from them.

Objectives:

- Conduct a gap analysis of current social services and facilitate cooperation between the public and private social service providers to better meet the community needs.
- Collaborate with social service providers to provide input on barriers for the unemployed and underemployed.
- Study and address poverty issues through qualitative and/or quantitative analysis.
- Partner with local healthcare systems and relevant stakeholders to provide more vigorous public and mental healthcare infrastructure with strategically placed satellite healthcare facilities throughout the City.
- Provide opportunities and places for the City's aging population to increase civic engagement and more activities for an enhanced social life.
- Adopt measures to reduce and prevent homelessness.
- Raise awareness about domestic violence
- Host periodic health and wellness fairs, seminars, training, and physical activities.



Goal 2: Invest in quality care and services for seniors.

Objectives:

- Expand senior activities, classes, and connections throughout the City in each district.
- Create transportation solutions for senior and people living with disabilities travelling to community events and essential services.
- Provide help to seniors who want to stay in their homes.

Strategic Priority 5: Public Safety

Create a community where people feel safe.

Goal 1: Exceed citizens' expectations of all public safety services.

Objectives:

- Conduct a needs assessment for the City of Bessemer's police and fire departments and develop a plan to meet desired service levels and community expectations through applied public safety measures.
- Implement a comprehensive strategy to recruit and hire diverse and highly qualified public safety personnel.
- Continually provide professional development and training for all public safety personnel.
- Continue providing great customer service to the citizens of Bessemer.
- Assess the need for additional fire and police staff and facilities throughout the City.

Goal 2: Achieve a community where people feel safe and are comfortable engaging in a full range of community life.

Objectives:

- Provide a high level of quality communications, emergency preparedness, law enforcement, and fire and rescue services available with properly trained personnel who are prepared for a variety of emergencies, and who serve the community in an effective and coordinated manner.
- Improve quality of life for all people by preventing crime through enforcement of the law, creation of partnerships through communication and education, and problem solving using innovative policing strategies.
- Continually improve emergency preparedness and hazard mitigation efforts to ensure restoration of City services and normal enjoyment of life following a natural or manmade disaster.

“ ”

**SAFETY AND SECURITY
DON'T JUST HAPPEN, THEY ARE THE
RESULT OF COLLECTIVE CONSENSUS AND PUBLIC
INVESTMENT. WE OWE OUR CHILDREN, THE MOST
VULNERABLE CITIZENS IN OUR
SOCIETY, A LIFE FREE OF VIOLENCE AND FEAR.**

- Nelson Mandela

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Goal 3: Maintain a secure and strong community.

Objectives:

- Reduce crime through strategically increasing patrol, based on the police department needs assessment.
- Support proactive criminal justice initiatives that help address root behavior issues like poverty and mental health issues.
- Strengthen the community's relationship with law enforcement and the fire department by expanding volunteer opportunities.
- Identify ways to strengthen positive police interactions within the community.
- Enhance and improve the City of Bessemer jail.
- Increase public involvement in emergency preparedness and prevention planning.

Economic Environment Strategic Priorities

The term “economic environment” refers to all the external economic factors that influence buying habits of consumers and businesses and therefore affect the performance of an organization. These factors are often beyond an organization’s control and may be either large-scale (macro) or small-scale (micro). The strategic priorities associated with the economic environment are provided below.

1. Economic Development
2. Revitalize Downtown



Conceptual Design of a bustling and lively Downtown Bessemer City Center

Strategic Priority 1: Economic Development

Continue economic development and diversifying the economy.

Goal 1: Enable proactive and sustainable economic development that improves the quality of life through increased earned income and prosperity for the residents of the City of Bessemer.

Objectives:

- Perform a comprehensive market analysis/industry sector validation study to evaluate the current business mix for the purpose of identifying Bessemer's competitive advantage, gaps, and opportunities to diversify the local economy.
- Update Bessemer's community profile.
- Increase sales tax revenue accruing to the City.
- Increase median household income of City's residents.
- Inventory buildings, properties, and areas of the city with underutilized potential and prepare a strategy for optimizing inventory.
- Identify and facilitate new infrastructure development to improve and promote commercial and residential development.
- Encourage the revitalization of downtown to create a major economic center.
- Partner with Lawson State Community College, the Bessemer Chamber of Commerce, and large industry businesses to develop a small-business incubator and accelerator programs to encourage diverse and innovative small business growth.
- Develop connections between the community and the Bessemer Airport, including enhanced road, transit, and utility infrastructure to facilitate future development.
- Create targeted support strategies to help small and existing businesses succeed as downtown grows.

Goal 2: Foster a dynamic and comprehensive workforce development.

Objectives:

- Collaborate with collegiate partners such as Lawson State Community College, The University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Miles College to form a public-private education programs with local business and industry partners for students and adult residents interested in higher education and skilled trades.
- Partner with the state and county for workforce development.
- Develop a partnership with the Bessemer City Schools, Lawson State Community College, and businesses to expand career technical education.

“The ultimate resource in economic development is people. It is people, not capital or raw material, that develop an economy.”

– Peter Drucker

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Goal 3: Maintain the business-friendly reputation that the City of Bessemer has created since 2010.

Objectives:

- Assess the City's regulatory environment and permit process on a quarterly or bi-annually basis to remove unnecessary delays while still preserving the integrity of the City's process.
- Create opportunities for local small businesses to procure contracts with the City by adopting purchasing policies and programs that expand opportunities for DBE's, Veterans, SBA 8(a), etc.
- Develop a standard process for reviewing and scoring prospects for incentives, with priority given to projects that create permanent, diverse, and high paying jobs.
- Partner with banks, the Small Business Administration, and entities like angel funds, equity funds, and other related funding sources to increase private and public investment capital sources.
- Enhance existing businesses in the City.
- Improve the City's relationship with small business.
- Partner with the City's larger corporations and host a Small Business Summit and quarterly town hall meetings for businesses in the City.



Conceptual Design of retail shops in Downtown Bessemer

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Strategic Priority 2: Revitalize Downtown

Create a vibrant downtown and business district in the City of Bessemer.

Goal 1: Create a recognizable, vibrant, walkable mixed-use downtown.

Objectives:

- Develop a Downtown Revitalization Plan.
- Implement public access wi-fi throughout downtown.
- Create a development strategy to address blighted properties.
- Diversify housing options with an emphasis on transit-oriented design and increased mixed-use design.
- Identify potential sites, programs, and incentives to establish anchor businesses downtown.
- Create spaces for local music and artistic performances strategically throughout the city.
- Develop a cultural arts center through a private-public partnership.
- Create a marketing plan to attract unique retail shops and dining.

Goal 2: Enhance the appearance of downtown buildings and the streetscape in the City of Bessemer.

Objectives:

- Re-establish the Bessemer Historic Preservation Commission.
- Develop design standards and guidelines for downtown and throughout the City.
- Create unique districts downtown such as a loft district, a theatre district, and a cultural arts district.
- Provide incentives for property owners downtown and throughout the City to renovate blighted properties.
- Create a strategy to promote public art like murals and sidewalk art.
- Create a development strategy to address blighted properties.



Conceptual Design of a uniformed Downtown Bessemer

Built Environment Strategic Priorities

The built environment refers to anything human made for humans and to be used for human activity. Examples of the built environment would include buildings, urban spaces, walkways, roads, green spaces, and parks. The strategic priorities associated with the built environment are provided below:

1. Design Guidelines and Standards
2. Housing
3. Land Use
4. Parks and Recreation
5. Public Utilities and Infrastructure
6. Transportation and Mobility

Strategic Priority 1: Design Guidelines and Standards

Create mixed-use housing and guidelines to protect the historic identity and uniform image of downtown and the various neighborhoods within the City of Bessemer.

Goal 1: Promote architecturally appealing and walkable urban form in the City design.

Objectives:

- Utilize human-centered design in new development and redevelopment including:
 - Pedestrian-friendly road design
 - Interconnectivity of new local streets with existing local streets
 - Connectivity of road and pedestrian networks
 - Preservation of natural areas
 - Satisfaction of stormwater management requirements
 - Mixed-use neighborhoods including mixed housing types
- Protect significant public and private architectural and historic resources in the City.
- Develop design guidelines for each district, with an emphasis on the designated historic district and buildings, utilizing a combination of standards and guidelines.
- Incentivize the use of green building techniques on major public construction projects and provide special incentives for private business and residential development.



VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Goal 2: Create a strong identity and sense of place throughout the City of Bessemer.

Objectives:

- Create well-planned commercial and mixed-use areas to connect the different neighborhoods and communities within the City.
- Enhance streetscape and urban design in each of the City's district through coordinated public and private improvements.
- Encourage pedestrian activity and interaction by incorporating lighting, signage, and landscaping when making public and private improvements.
- Establish an improved neighborhood image and character by transforming the existing streetscape.
- Encourage high-quality private development that reflects pedestrian-friendly orientation.
- Continue to create and enhance the City's network of parks, trails, and greenways to beautify the community, provide recreation, and enhance quality of life.

Strategic Priority 2: Housing

Diversify housing and neighborhood options for the City of Bessemer.

Goal 1: Increase the appreciation rate of City home values.

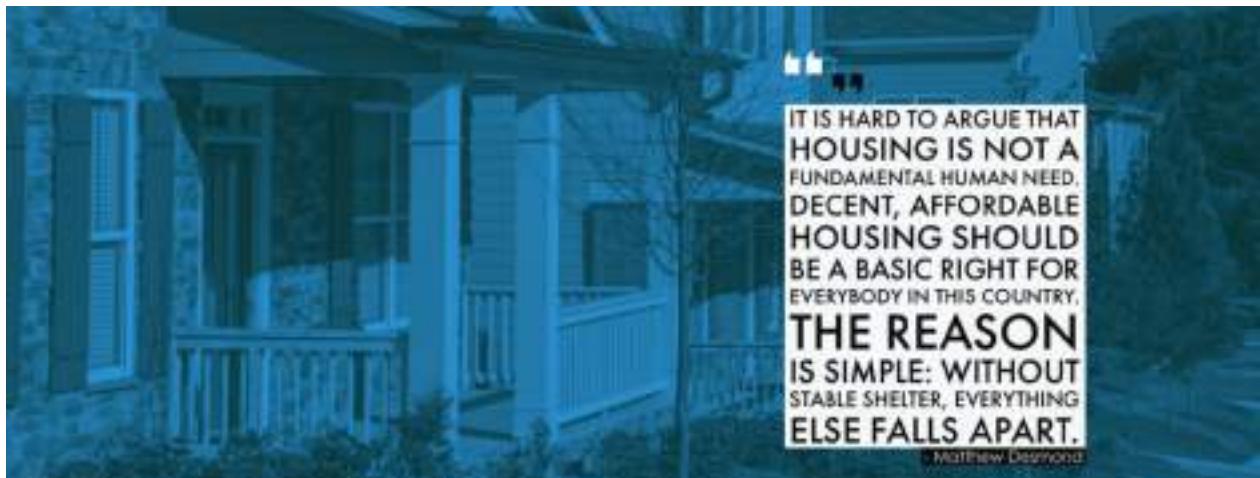
Objectives:

- Provide diversified housing options to serve citizens with varying needs.
- Provide opportunities for new mixed-income and mixed dwelling types in residential areas.
- Actively enforce code to eliminate blight and undue overcrowding in residential areas.
- Increase home ownership opportunities.
- Ensure equal housing opportunities.

Goal 2: Promote well-maintained and stable neighborhoods protected from blight or incompatible land use.

Objectives:

- Review and update city ordinances regarding maintenance of property.
- Develop a process to enforce city codes related to property maintenance.
- Update and improve notice of requirements for zoning changes.



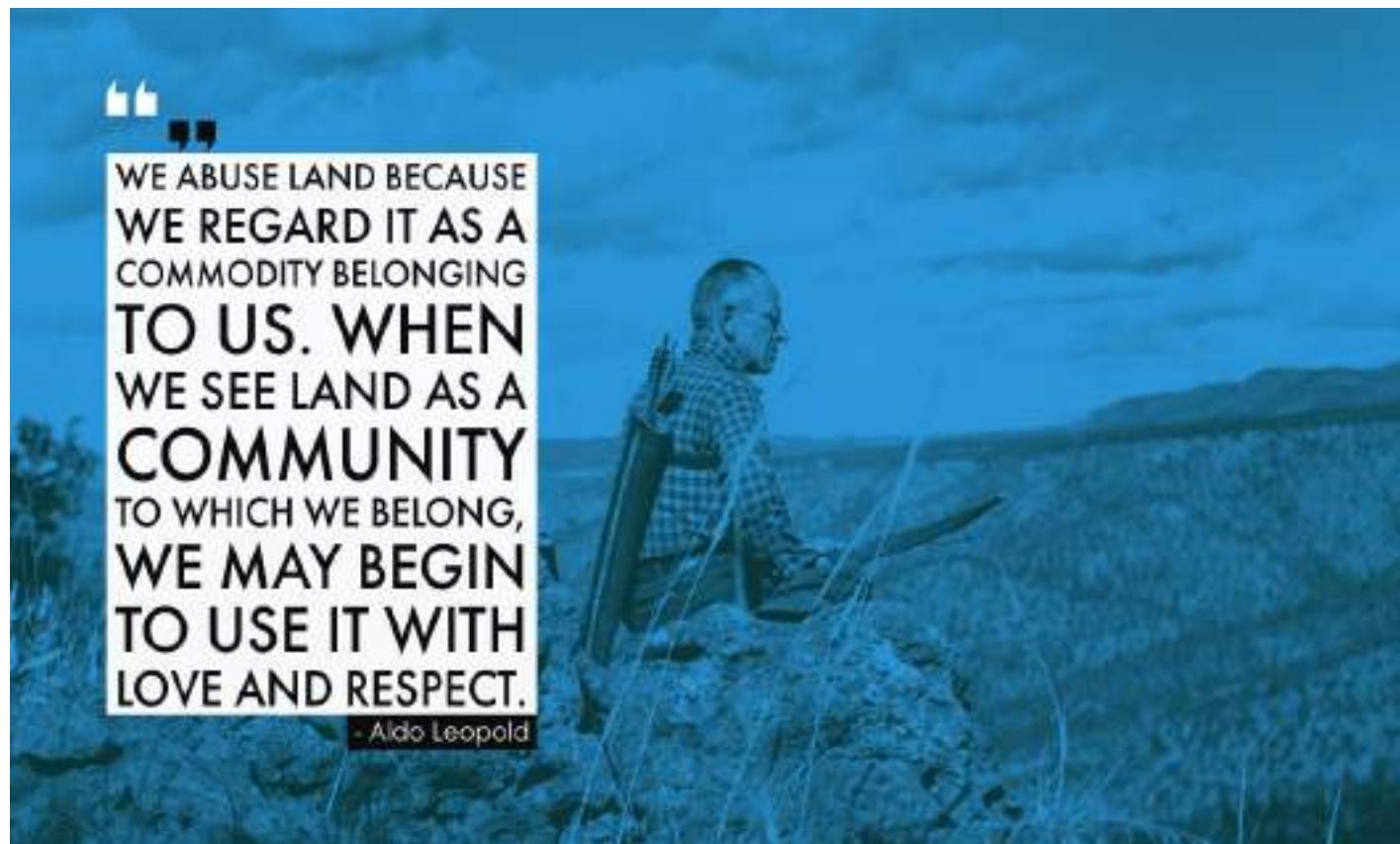
Strategic Priority 3: Land Use

Create sustainable physical development of the City and create vibrant and livable neighborhoods throughout the City of Bessemer.

Goal 1: Create a community with balanced and diverse land uses.

Objectives:

- Develop and adopt a Land Use Master Plan that provides a strategic framework for future rezoning and appropriate development.
- Create a Land Use Vision Map that is based on development intensities specified in the City's preferred scenario.
- Create a Sustainability Plan to identify affordable and realistic sustainable practices and adopt the Plan.
- Create a Land Development Code for commercial and residential developments.
- Align infrastructure plans to achieve desired scenarios.
- Provide greater land use, predictability, and transparency.
- Designate desired development patterns, streets, environmental features, and other logical boundaries.



VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Goal 2: Guide the development of land to prepare for long-term growth and strategic redevelopment of communities and neighborhoods within the City.

Objectives:

- Develop strategies to create viable reuse of old and run-down commercial and industrial properties.
- Provide citizens with a healthy, attractive, and safe physical environment that includes access for all modes of transportation.
- Facilitate the rehab of existing poor housing and continue to promote new construction to attract higher-income residents.
- Develop workforce housing that is accessible to transportation facilities and that is strategically developed around the industrial base.
- Identify public land uses in locations that enhance improves quality of life in the City and facilitate institutional uses in locations that support social, spiritual, physical, and mental health needs of the community.



Conceptual Legend of a Master Plan for Downtown Bessemer

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Strategic Priority 4: Parks and Recreation

Create more access to nature, leisure, and the arts in the City of Bessemer.

Goal 1: Provide well-maintained public facilities that meet the needs of the community in the City.

Objectives:

- Develop more quality recreational facilities strategically throughout the city to help address the growing recreational and fitness needs of all age groups.
- Create a Sidewalk Master Plan and a City Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Review and approve an infrastructure plan every five years to ensure that the goals set in the Comprehensive and Vision Plan are being met.
- Evaluate and assess the library's role and services, including public access to technology.

Goal 2: Create a differentiated collection of connected and easily navigated parks and public spaces.

Objectives:

- Develop a comprehensive way-finding system for the City and include all transportation options from trails to roads.
- Create and implement a policy that ensures adequate resources are identified to develop and maintain parks and public spaces.
- Establish a linked system of passive recreational and natural open space to provide opportunities for activities like biking, jogging, and walking.
- Continue to ensure that existing and new residential development has reasonable proximity to neighborhoods parks as well as convenient bike and pedestrian access to trails.

Goal 3: Enhance the community's access to nature, leisure, and the arts.

Objectives:

- Establish a Tourism Committee to identify and promote community facilities, local museums, Tannehill Park, travel destination places like Alabama Adventures and Splash Adventure and the Bright Star, and events like the annual Christmas parade that make Bessemer stand out as a place to visit.
- Develop an Art in Public Places program and identify areas of the city that could be used for this effort.
- Expand outreach to promote festivals, programs, and events for the community.
- Establish a Cultural Arts Committee to identify strategic locations within the community for a Cultural Arts District in the City.



Strategic Priority 5: Public Utilities and Infrastructure

Provide safe drinking water, create efficient delivery of utility services, enhance roadways, and improve walkability.

Goal: Improve and maintain the management of public utilities and infrastructure needs for the City of Bessemer.

Objectives:

- Ensure that the environmental quality of drinking water and wastewater treatment are in full accordance with standards established by local, state, and federal regulations.
- Identify and fund necessary infrastructure improvements that increase water capacity and reduce water system loss to support current and future needs associated with increased economic expansion and residential density.
- Improve customer service to citizens.
- Conduct a rate structure study to make sure that revenues collected cover costs, provide equity among all customer class, and use the information to balance water and energy conservation goals.

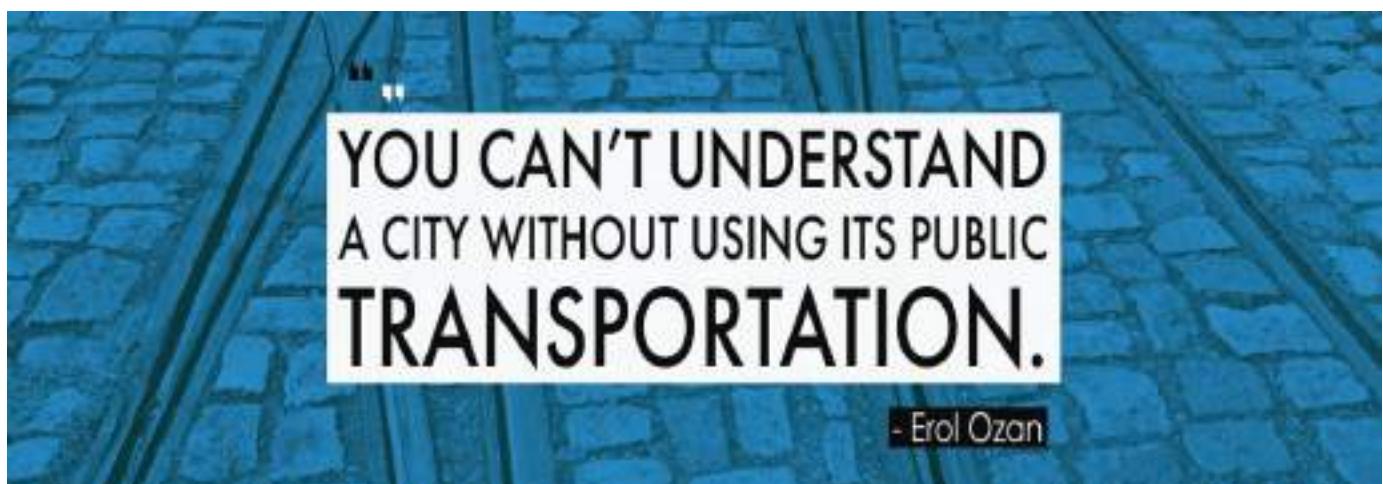
Strategic Priority 6: Transportation and Mobility

Improve transportation modes, connectivity, while creating and maintaining safe, efficient, and environmentally sustainable mobility and improve transportation modes.

Goal 1: Develop a safe, strategically coordinated transportation system in an environmentally and sustainable manner.

Objectives:

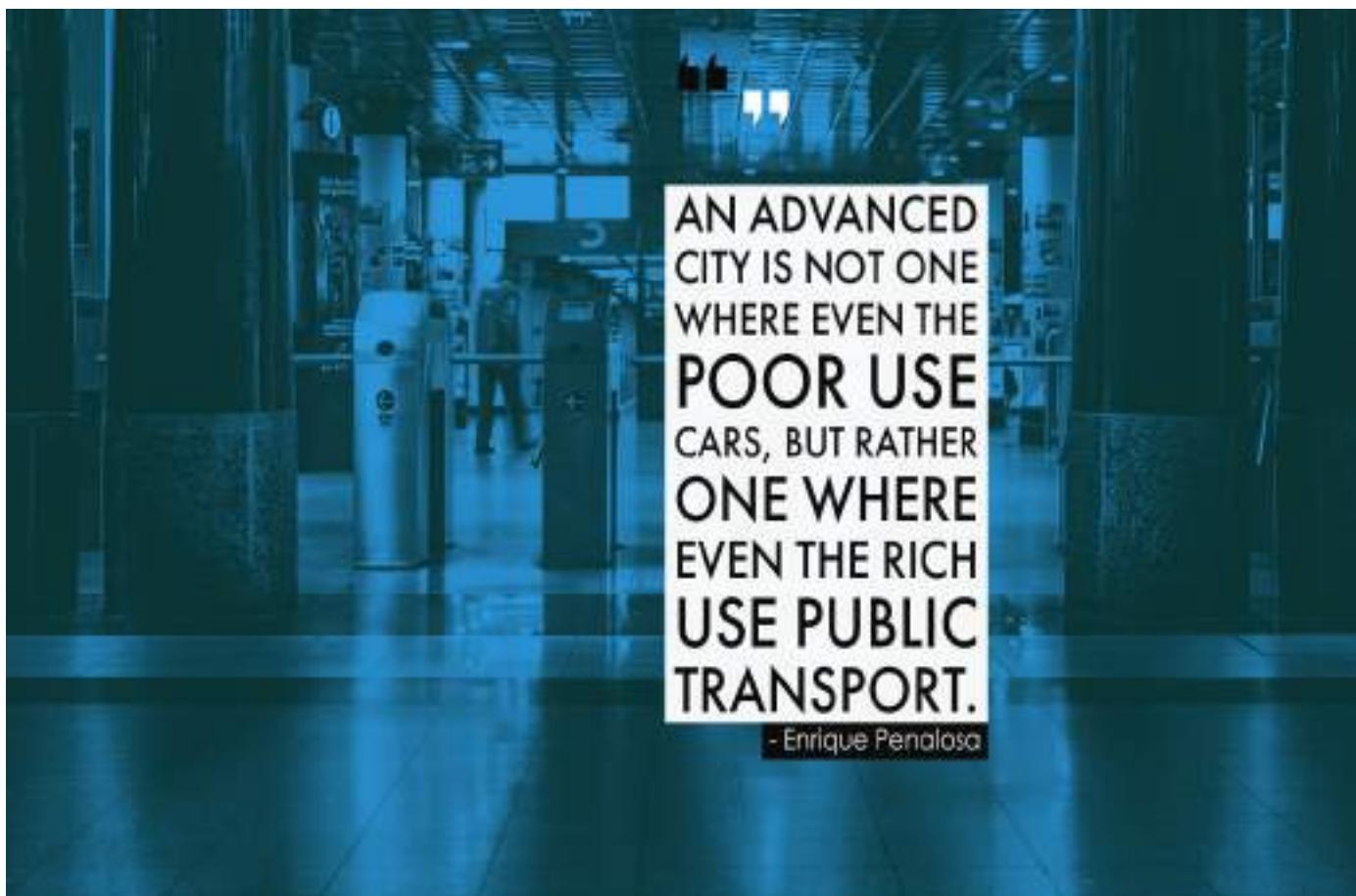
- Update the City's 2019 Transportation Plan and assess transportation issues and use the City's Comprehensive Plan to provide viable and sustainable solutions to those issues.
- Determine appropriate modes of transportation in and around new developments in the City.
- Develop a Traffic Impact Analysis process to regularly address future traffic impact.
- Maintain a Current Travel Demand Model to be utilized for continued analysis of the City's transportation network.



Goal 2: Develop a multimodal transportation network to improve accessibility, improve mobility, minimize congestion, and reduce pollution.

Objectives:

- Develop and implement a Complete Streets Policy to coordinate with other transportation entities such as the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, Smart Growth America, and the Alabama Department of Transportation.
- Encourage the use of alternate modes of mobility including walking, bicycling, and public transportation to reduce citizens' dependency upon automobile use.
- Increase safety on thoroughfare streets and bike and pedestrian trails where they cross railroad tracks and busy street intersections.
- Consider and plan for parking and a comprehensive system of sidewalks and walking paths.
- Analyze ways to improve intersection safety for pedestrian and vehicle traffic flow.
- Evaluate the City's need for electric charging stations for hybrid and electric vehicles as they become more prevalent on the roadways.
- Build a multi-modal facility to improve access and in anticipation of the City's future growth.



Natural Environment Strategic Priorities

The natural environment encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally on earth. Examples of the natural environment would include vegetation, micro-organisms, water, natural resources, and climate. The strategic priorities associated with the social environment are provided below:

- Natural Environment

Strategic Priority: Natural Environment

Improve environmental sustainability and reduce impact to the environment in the City of Bessemer.

Goal 1: Reduce the City's carbon footprint and environmental impact on air quality.

Objectives:

- Perform an assessment of the City's current carbon footprint and develop an approach for reducing the City's carbon footprint by 2040 by **XX percent** 
- Encourage residents and the business community to help create a more sustainable and responsible community
- Develop an educational program illustrating the location of environmentally sensitive areas and how residents and businesses can co-exist in these places.
- Establish a team with representatives from Jefferson County, the City, and other public and private entities to identify environmentally sensitive lands and develop policies for the preservation of those areas.

NOTE: This information will be provided by the City of Bessemer

Goal 2: Identify natural resources necessary to the City's health, well-being, and prosperity secured for future development.

Objectives:

- Create a point system to measure the sustainable elements of proposed development to qualify for utility, process, and other incentives.
- Create a connected network for non-automobile transportation like bike and walking trails.
- Build community gardens and food gardens in each of the City's districts.

Goal 3: Develop pro-active policies to encourage conservation, recycling, and resource energy efficiency.

Objectives:

- Develop a coordinated tree preservation and planting program.
- Model sustainable practices in infrastructure, operations, and facilities in City projects.
- Adopt comprehensive ordinances that actively support local food production and development of urban farms.
- Partner with businesses that are environmentally responsible and develop a community recycling program and provide incentives to residents who participate.
- Provide incentives for weatherization.
- Partner with state and federal agencies to increase energy efficiency, reduce energy consumption, promote energy-efficiency and renewable-energy technologies, and make energy efficiency more affordable.

WE CAN SIT BACK, DO NOTHING, AND WATCH OUR PLANET BE DESTROYED. OR WE CAN TAKE ACTION, BECOME ADVOCATES, AND START MAKING LIFESTYLE CHOICES WHICH ARE KINDER TO PEOPLE AND THE PLANET.

- KIRA SIMPSON



"EACH ONE OF US MATTERS, HAS A ROLE TO PLAY, AND MAKES A DIFFERENCE. EACH ONE OF US MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR OWN LIVES, AND ABOVE ALL, SHOW RESPECT AND LOVE FOR LIVING THINGS AROUND US, ESPECIALLY EACH OTHER."

- JANE GOODALL

Key Actions and Next Steps

The City of Bessemer's strategic visioning process has produced the following outcomes:

- Documented a thorough understanding of the community's views across a range of important topics and future-shaping factors.
- Allowed detailed discussions of possible future scenarios with expected and preferred futures.
- Identified a shared vision for the City's future.
- Identified key strategic priorities and goals.

The City of Bessemer Vision 2040 Framework was developed based on solid public participation and both thoughtful and constructive dialogue. Now the next phase of work needs to begin. The following immediate steps are recommended:

- **Develop a Mission Statement.** During the visioning process, it was discovered that the city does not have a mission statement. The mission statement explains the purpose of the City's existence and serves as a guide to the future destination established during the visioning process and is required for the comprehensive plan. **Note:** STRADA has provided a start to the development of the mission statement for the purpose of developing this document, but this will take the collaboration of the City's leadership to further develop and adopt a final mission statement once the Vision Framework is adopted.
- **Comprehensive Planning process.** This process has already started with the strategic visioning. It provided the City with a great start to engaging the community and planning for Bessemer's future. The next step in comprehensive planning is studying the City's existing conditions and doing more in-depth data collection to develop the rest of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- **Develop an Implementation Plan.** Now that the strategic priorities, goals, and objectives have been outlined, an action plan needs to be created for setting the plan into motion. The citizens have expressed the desire to not just have another plan that does not get used.
- **Identify Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).** Once the action plan is developed, then key performance indicators should be identified and used to show progress and create transparency with the community. The City should add this to the website and update as often as progress is made in achieving set goals.
- **Identify Plan Budget and Schedule.** The City's Comprehensive Plan needs an estimated budget and schedule implementing the actions. The success of the Plan is based on accountability in implementing it.
- **Develop a dedicated website for the City's Comprehensive Plan.** The City needs to have a centralized place to post all documents and studies pertaining to building the Comprehensive Plan and this would be a great place to house the KPI's.
- **Create strong strategic partnerships.** It is important to identify strategic partners according to the strategic priorities, goals, and objectives set in the Vision 2040 Framework.
- **Establish a Community Advisory Committee.** Currently, the City's leadership has established the Visioning Committee. This committee should be expanded and changed to the Community Advisory Committee. This committee will serve throughout the development of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

“
”

BY FAR THE GREATEST
AND MOST
ADMIRABLE
FORM OF WISDOM
IS THAT NEEDED
TO PLAN AND
BEAUTIFY
CITIES AND HUMAN
COMMUNITIES.

- Socrates



Bibliography

“Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.” The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. June 2020.

<https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Analysis-of-Impediments.pdf>

“City of Bessemer 2020 Citizen Participation Plan.” The City of Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. Bessemer, Alabama. October 2020.

<https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/revised-2020-citizen-participation-plan.pdf>

“City of Bessemer Transportation Plan FY2020.” STRADA Professional Services, LLC and EEFS Company, P.C. Bessemer, Alabama. August 2019. https://www.bessemeral.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/FY2020-Bessemer-Transportation-Plan_v5_20190821.pdf

Cuthill, Michael, Katelyn Anderson, Ravalli County, Wendy Wedum, and Cascade County. “Community Visioning: Facilitating Informed Citizen Participation in Local Area Planning on the Gold Coast.” *Urban Policy and Research* 22 (2004): 427-45.

Lachapelle, Paul. “Strategic Visioning for Community Development.” Montana State University, Bozeman, MT, August 2011.

“The Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Handbook.” National Civic League. Denver, Colorado, 2000.

Appendices



VISION 2040:
FORGING BESSEMER'S
FUTURE TOGETHER

Appendix A: Number of Online Survey Interactions



Appendix B: Online Survey Questions and Survey Results



Introduction and Profile

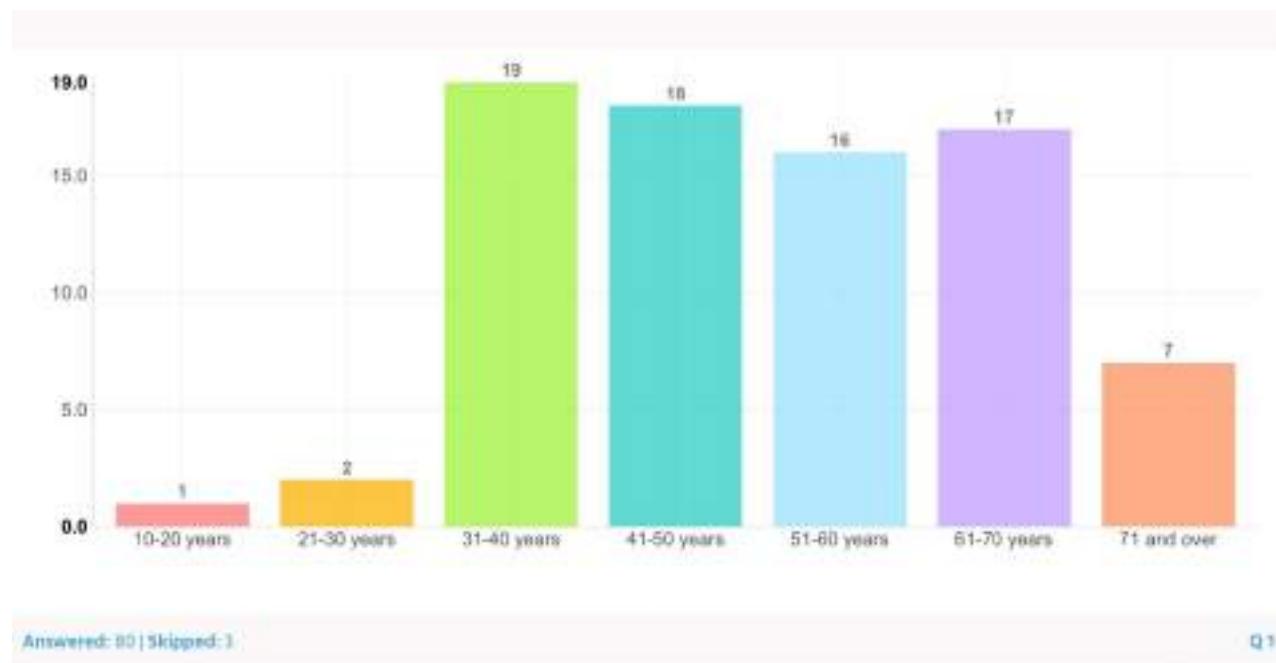
Welcome to the City of Bessemer Community Visioning survey. We would like to understand your perspective about key trends shaping the future of Bessemer. Responses to this survey will be combined with data collected from individual and group interviews, and a series of visioning workshops to create the foundational components to the City of Bessemer Comprehensive Plan.

PLEASE NOTE: We are asking a series of multi-dimensional and in-depth questions in this survey. There are 14 questions, and it will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Some questions may seem repetitive, but we are asking your views in terms of key factors in different ways. We really appreciate your input and effort in completing this survey.

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

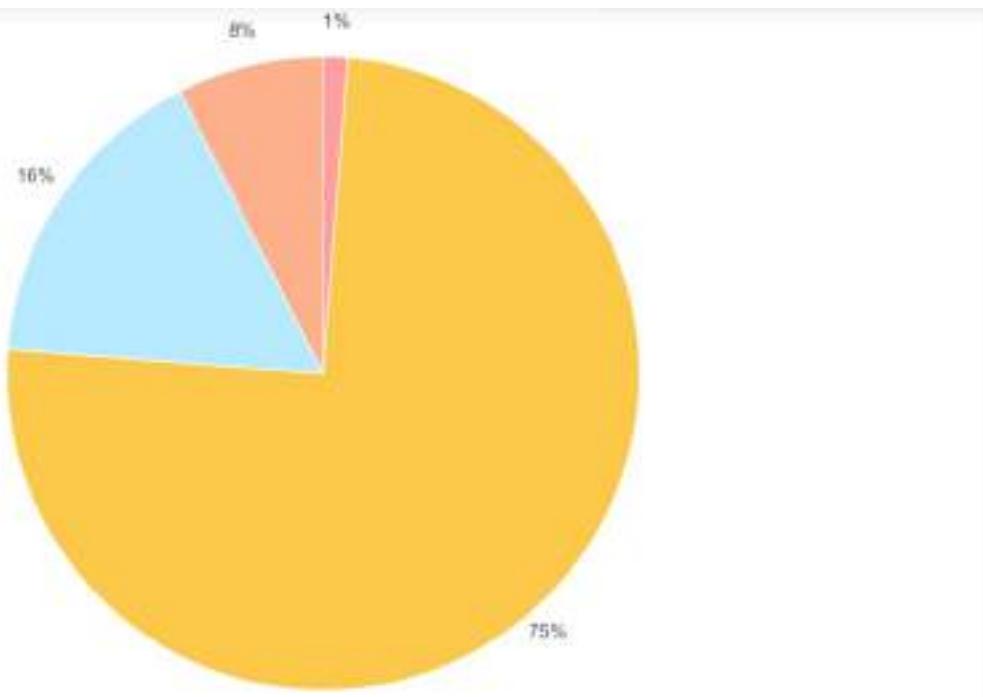
1. What is your age grouping?

- 10-20 years
- 21-30 years
- 31-40 years
- 41-50 years
- 51-60 years
- 61-70 years
- 71 and over
- Prefer not to answer



2. How would you best describe yourself?

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American/American Indian
- White/Caucasian
- Multi-Racial
- Prefer not to answer



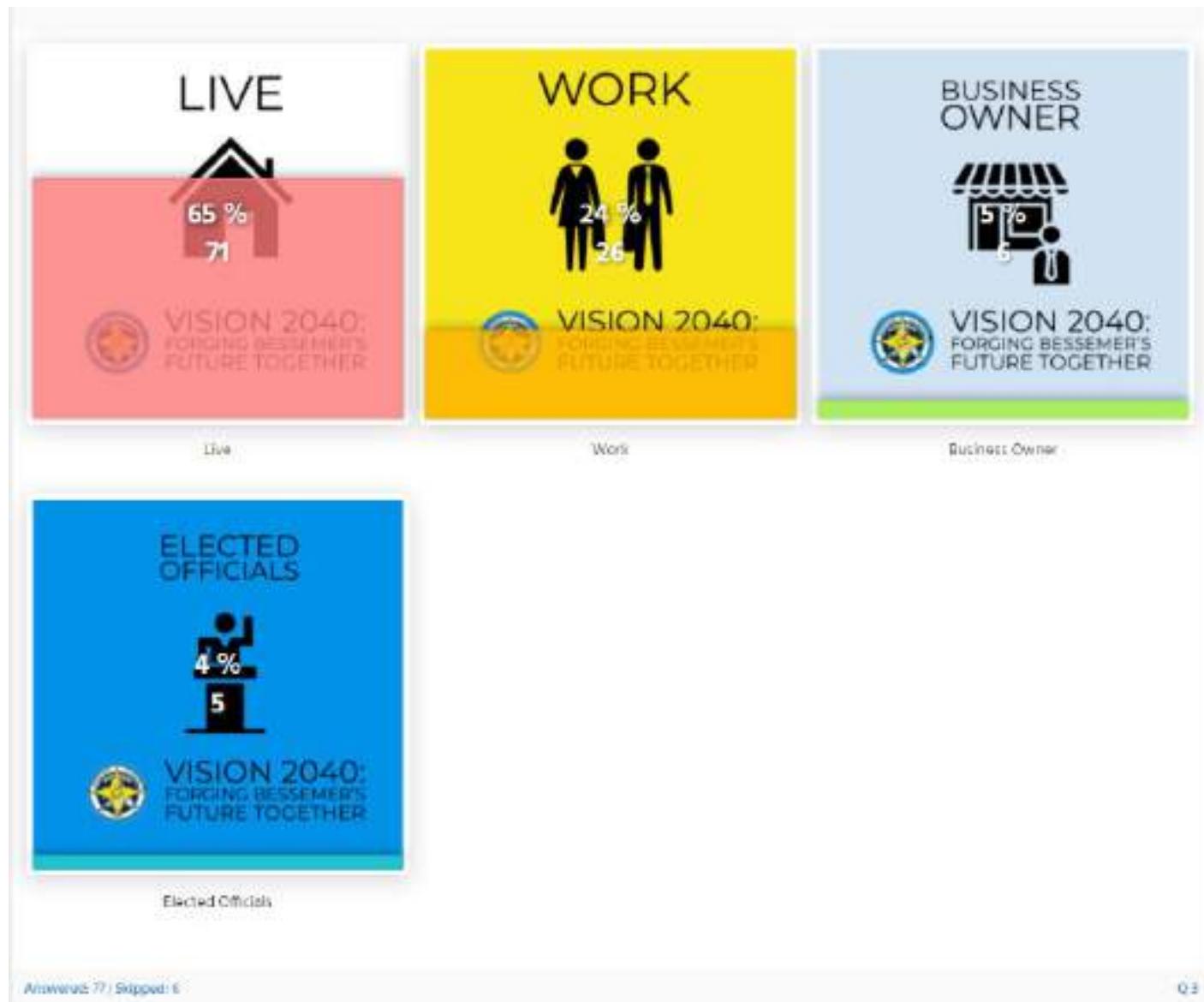
| Answer | Count |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 1 |
| Black/ African American | 60 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 0 |
| Native American/American Indian | 0 |
| White/Caucasian | 13 |
| Multi-Racial | 0 |
| Prefer Not To Answer | 6 |

Answered: 80 | Skipped: 3

Q2

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

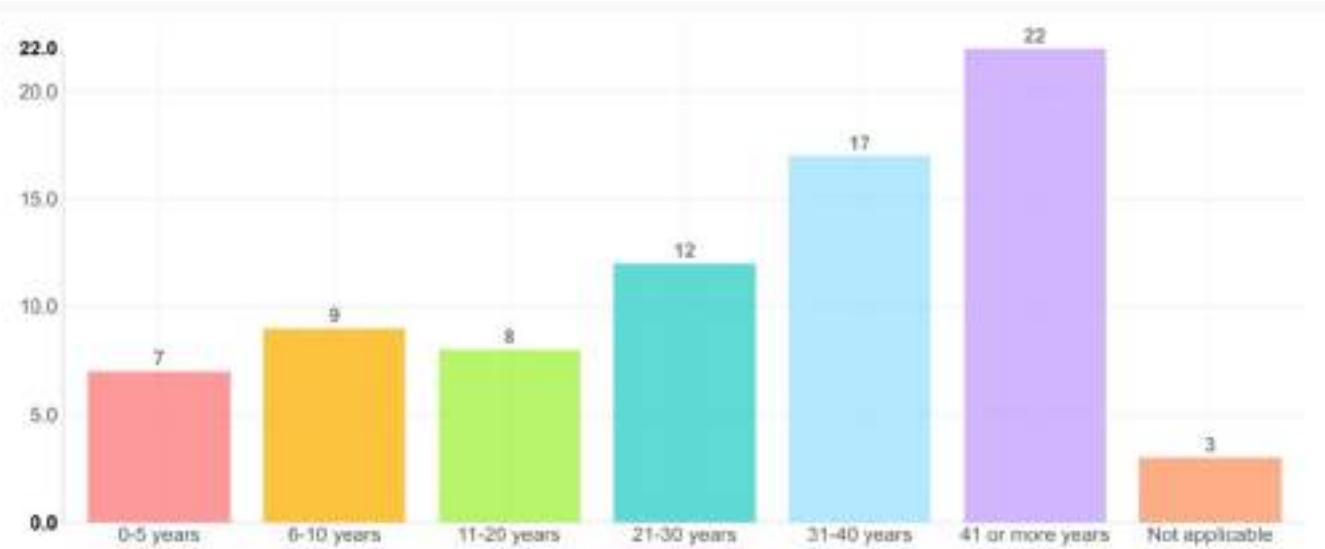
3. Select all the following that describes how you relate to Bessemer:



1. Live: 65%
2. Work: 24%
3. Business Owners: 5%
4. Elected Officials: 4%

4. How long have you lived or worked in Bessemer?

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- 31-40 years
- 41 or more years
- Not applicable



Answered: 78 | Skipped: 5

Q 4

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

5. Are you affiliated with any of the following community stakeholder groups? If so, please select all that apply.

- a. Local Government officials (City staff, Boards/Commissions, City sponsored committees)
- b. Planning or economic development professionals
- c. Educational institutions
- d. Hospitality sectors
- e. Tourism groups
- f. Arts and Entertainment institutions
- g. Nonprofits/Community organizations
- h. Local volunteer groups
- i. Faith communities
- j. Industry or Business groups
- k. Healthcare sectors
- l. Stay at Home parents
- m. Students
- n. Business Owners
- o. Retirees
- p. Neighborhood Leaders
- q. N/A



VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

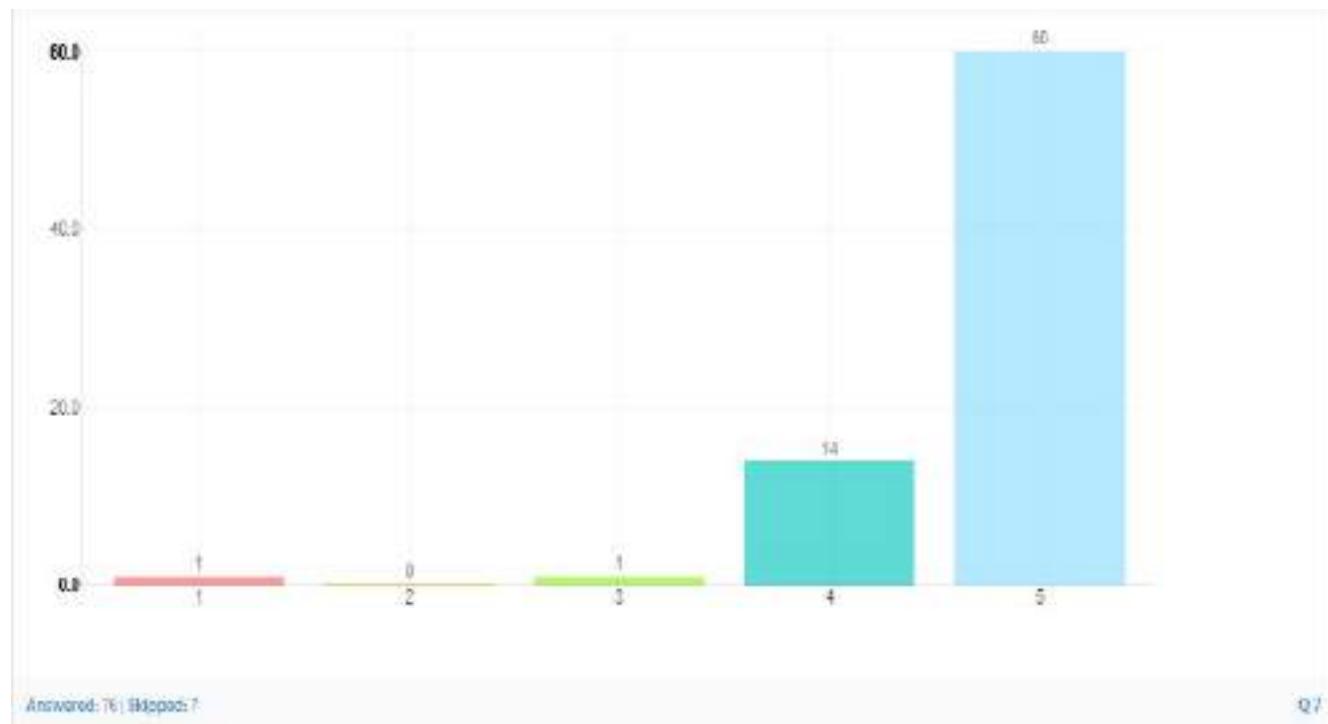
6. In which broad category of topics do you find yourself as being most interested?





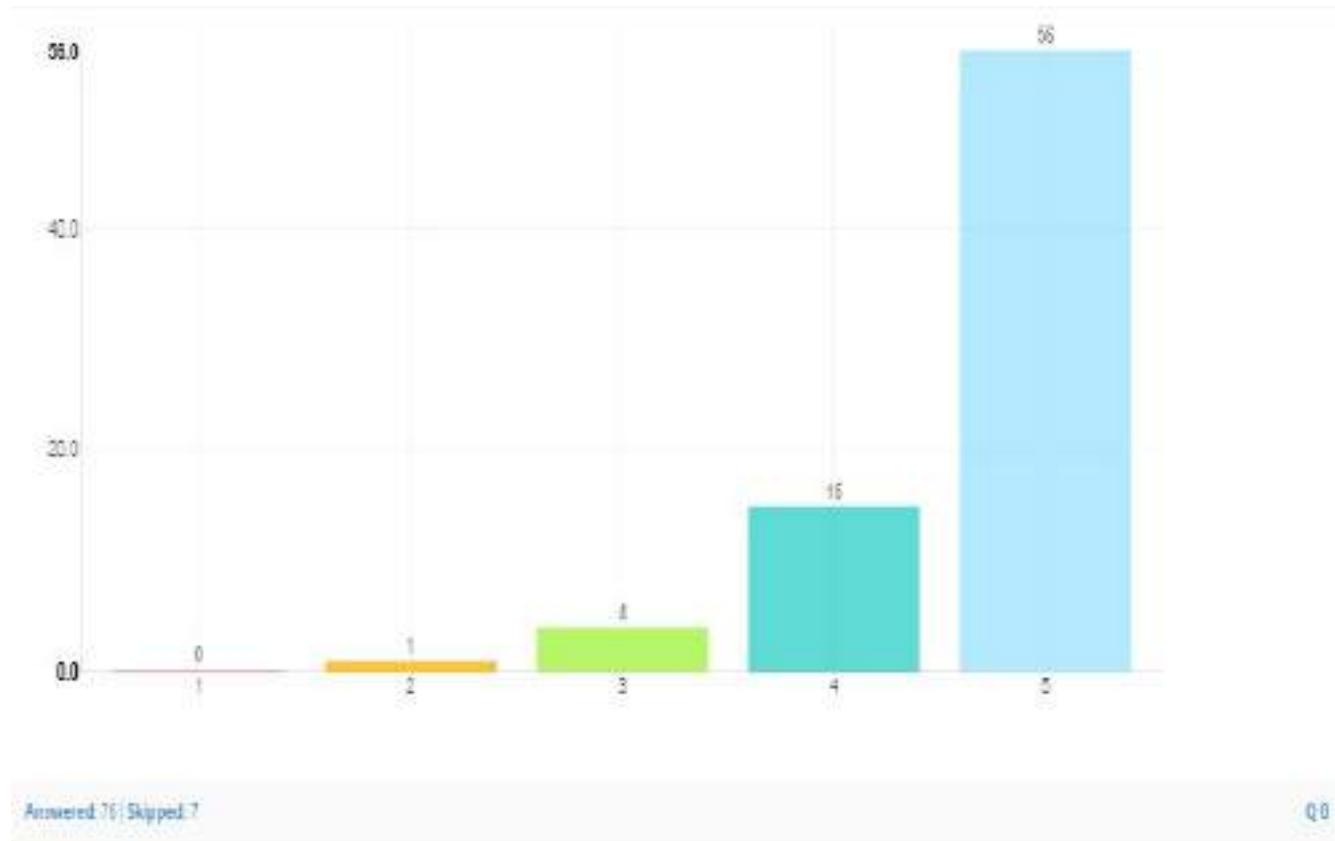
7. How important do you think it is to have a SHARED VISION for the future of Bessemer?

1 Not Important 2 3 4 5 Highly Important (*Start with 5-Most Important on the Survey.*)



8. How important is it to consider the shared vision when MAKING DECISIONS for Bessemer?

1 Not Important 2 3 4 5 Highly Important (*Start with 5-Most Important on the Survey.*)

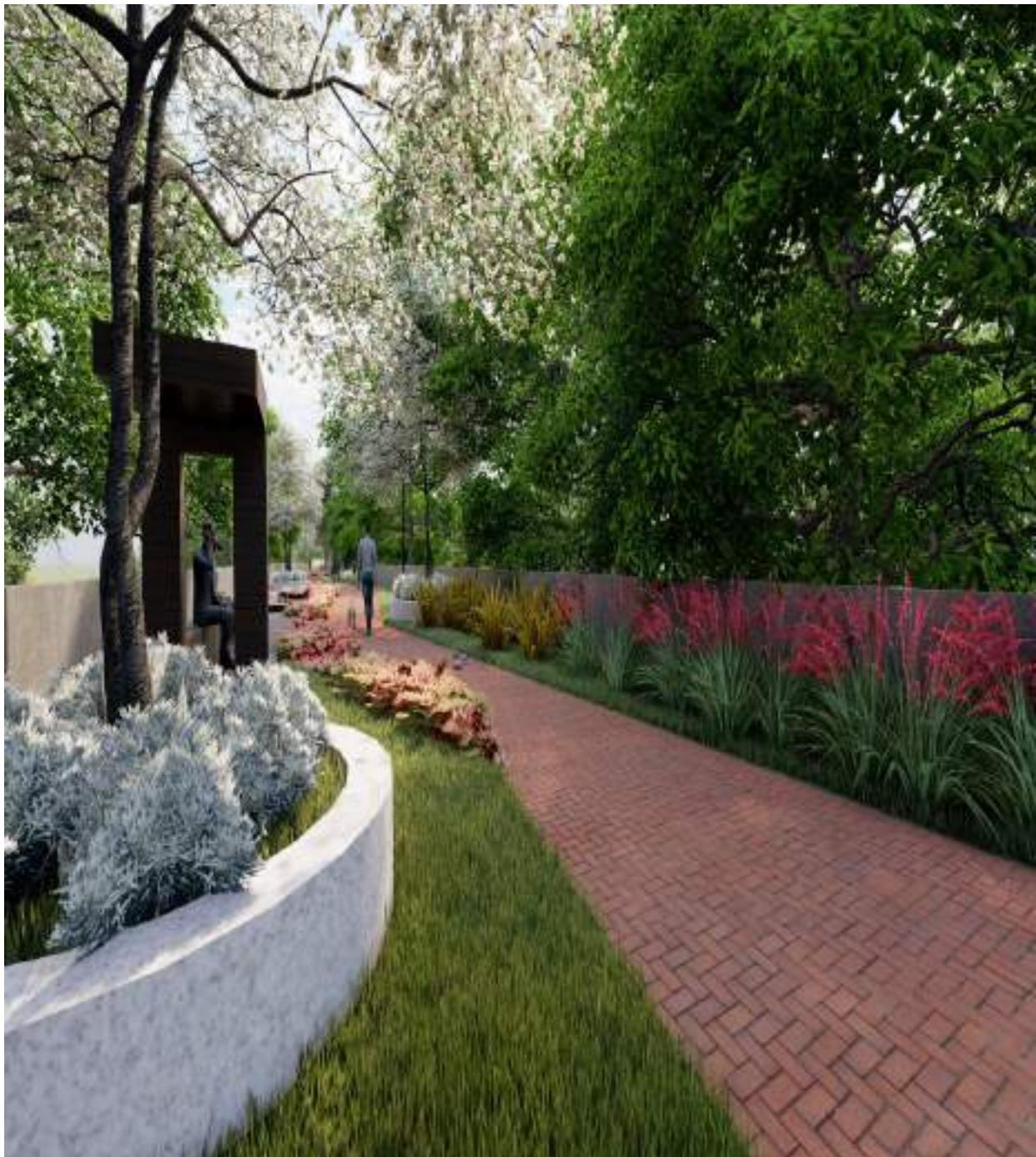


9. How do you rate the following services?



| Categories | Positive | Fair | Negative |
|--|----------|------|----------|
| Parks and recreation | 40% | 58% | 3% |
| Schools | 22% | 43% | 35% |
| Workforce Development | 34% | 49% | 16% |
| Economic Development | 49% | 38% | 13% |
| Library | 55% | 40% | 5% |
| Traffic | 42% | 48% | 40% |
| Pedestrian and Biking Facilities | 10% | 56% | 34% |
| Public Transportation | 18% | 45% | 37% |
| Planning and Zoning | 25% | 46% | 29% |
| Fire Protection | 61% | 32% | 6% |
| Police Protection | 46% | 48% | 7% |
| Healthcare Access | 27% | 56% | 16% |
| Infrastructure (Streets and Utilities) | 11% | 51% | 38% |
| Garbage Collection | 4% | 43% | 14% |
| Environmental Safety and Recycling | 23% | 38% | 39% |
| Quality of Life | 16% | 74% | 10% |
| Housing | 14% | 59% | 27% |
| Sense of Community | 17% | 60% | 22% |
| Arts and Culture | 17% | 38% | 45% |
| Downtown Revitalization | 25% | 48% | 27% |

10. What is your idea of the perfect Bessemer?



Open Ended Answers:

- 1) I would like to see life brought back to the downtown Bessemer district and bring more business into the city. Also, tearing down the abandon home and cleanings those lots. And, to keep Bessemer clean!
- 2) A perfect Bessemer would have a thriving school system, economic growth for the city and its citizens, diverse social environments, and citywide revitalization.
- 3) There is no perfect place anywhere. Bessemer can improve in the cleanest of the city, such as houses that need to be demolished the roads need to be paved in the community. I think the police should be more visible in the community in all areas.
- 4) Have shopping within the city and more restaurants.
- 5) Safe, community oriented, recycling, tear down old buildings, old houses, help residents start to take pride in their neighborhood, remove people whose idea is to tear down the city through crime, a neighborhood/city like what is on this page. And what is up with the outside low wattage lights on at stores at night? More police presence in a friendly but professional manner. More local churches involved in the community.
- 6) A perfect Bessemer would be safe, have more lighting, reduced crime rates, upscale stores, updated water sewage electrical services, and improved school system.
- 7) It would have redeveloped properties.
- 8) Quality education, safe communities, many job opportunities, quality health care, variety of activities for adults and children
- 9) Pursue a thriving downtown, the protection and renovation of historic homes is CRUCIAL, address violence, a clean city address litter problem make landscaping a higher priority (look at Fairhope). Encourage a sense of community for everyone, not just those in power. Encourage a sense of pride.
- 10) Our park should look like railroad park and be an inviting place. Old building needs to be renovated in the downtown area. More restaurants, I get tired of Logan's and taking my money outside the city. Youth programs for young men. Fine arts for low-income families. Our high school band should be amazing, I miss how our band director pushed us to play outside the Rap and R&B songs. Also, middle school girls need programs to teach them how to be young ladies.
- 11) A perfect Bessemer would be one with a semblance of uniformity or community: streetlights, sidewalks, trash cans, and absence of litter.
- 12) A perfect Bessemer would be one where the people who live here can work here, play here, and take care of here together.
- 13) Nowhere is perfect, however when the people care about each other, they will care about their community.

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

- 14) My idea of a perfect Bessemer is a crime free loving community where everyone is welcome and happy to live where they are, they take care of their properties and old historic homes are saved and preserved, and our community can work as one.
- 15) It would have more schools.
- 16) It would have less crime.
- 17) A perfect Bessemer would have Jesus, love, community connection, new family restaurants, ex: Red Lobster, Fresh Seafood Market, reduction of crime.
- 18) I would like to see Bessemer grow but maintain (or go back to) a hometown community feel. I would like to see more invitations to the community for involvement. Bessemer is vast and we need to connect each area, and all grow together.
- 19) It would be healthy and a community thriving economically and socially.
- 20) A perfect Bessemer would be a growing community with common, shared goals.
- 21) A perfect Bessemer would be one where family and friends get together.
- 22) It would be family friendly, have a top-notch school system, adult night life after five, make Bessemer attractive to businesses, green spaces, playgrounds and sitting areas for the seniors.
- 23) A perfect Bessemer would have an excellent school system, violent and noise free community, city and citizens input in business and education, etc. I would like to see a decrease in violence and respect for everyone, and there would be more police visible in community.
- 24) It would be a place where everyone is working together to maintain our beautiful city, clean their front yards and porches, and keep up what we have. We should keep our city clean. Our mayor is doing a great job. I am endorsing him in future endeavors.
- 25) I would like to see economic development in downtown. Aesthetic improvement downtown and historic areas including lighting/landscaping. Revitalization and encouragement of historic structures. Green space laws implemented for business license applications.
- 26) A perfect Bessemer would have downtown arts and cultural offerings such as galleries, studios, and coffee shops. Select artists to create murals on some of the buildings. Walking areas with bars/brewery and restaurants. Manicured green spaces where people feel encouraged and safe to spend time in. Residential, streets and sidewalks addressed. Littering fines and renewed community pride. (People continually throw trash out of their car windows into our yards)
- 27) Community. Inclusion. Safety. Nightlife.
- 28) A perfect Bessemer would have more community involvement.
- 29) It would have clean streets, be safe, have variety of activities to do in the city where I live, and job opportunities (that hiring is fair).

- 30) It would have more career opportunities available, safe neighborhoods and streets, and beautification of the neighborhoods.
- 31) A perfect Bessemer would work to build up the downtown area.
- 32) It would have better jobs, increased wages, improved community such as: housing, jobs for the youth, police involvement in community education on gangs, and mentoring programs.
- 33) It would have a better education system and a more aggressive crime monitoring and prevention team.
- 34) We would like to at least get downtown Bessemer up to par with business and no vacant buildings then other areas of Bessemer can do the same.
- 35) An almost perfect Bessemer would be an attractive downtown with businesses to fit the needs every citizen, an A grade education system, neighborhoods that attract the income of all types of life, revitalized the Bessemer housing authority by tearing down the current housing projects and rebuilding low-income housing that is more attractive to our city and input programs to help those better their current financial situations, open more after school programs to accommodate all age groups, offer more sports programs for our youth, involve our local churches in city development.
- 36) A perfect Bessemer would have all new successful schools and with no areas that flood. There would be more quality businesses, clean and safe neighborhoods, and new affordable housing.
- 37) A thriving neighborhood with multicultural individuals working together for the betterment of the city. Surveillance cameras and city lights posted throughout the city. A local center for sick kids to be cared for while parents are forced to work. More transportation into neighborhoods for the elderly without cars or family support. Bigger and better department and grocery stores in Bessemer. Free civic events on a quarterly basis for seniors and young teens to attend.
- 38) It would be a place with safer communities where crime is reduced, people feel safe to live & work. Efforts would be increased to beautify the city & the creation of ordinances to reduce eyesores in communities, downtown would be revitalized, and there would be litter control city-wide. There would be increased business opportunities to fund making the city a safe, beautiful & desirable place to live and work.
- 39) A perfect Bessemer would provide a safe and positive environment where everyone has a voice. It would be place where we all have a hand in the future of this city to make it better than it has ever been!
- 40) It would be a place where everyone is treated with respect and fairly. Where our schools offer the best education. Our kids have a variety of activities to participate in.
- 41) It would have a booming and thriving downtown like Homewood and a top-rated school system. The City and School Board must work together more.
- 42) It would focus on improving all the neighborhoods and not just academy drive. The perfect Bessemer would have a top-notch school system.

43) It would be a community of engaged individuals striving for advancement for each resident.

44) It would be a city where all citizens and stakeholders work together to bring up all areas of the city. I envision a city that is not a pass over area but a destination. I see a future Bessemer that has amenities for citizens but for visitors also. Bessemer has the potential to be a place where community is not just a buzzword but a way of life for its citizens and those who stop by.

Survey Results Link

<https://www.surveylegend.com/s/2rbt>

Appendix C: List of Interview Questions and Interview Summaries

List of Interview Questions

The following questions were used for individual interviews to gather information to develop the City's vision and vision statement:

What is your dream/vision for our community?

What would you like to see change?

What kind of community (or program, policy, school, neighborhood, etc.) do we want to create?

What do you see as the community's major issues or problems and why should these issues be addressed?

What do you see as the community's major strengths and assets?

What would success look like?

Which of the following factors do you consider most important to the future of the City of Bessemer:

- a. Education
- b. Economic Development
- c. Public Safety
- d. Housing
- e. Transportation
- f. Parks and Recreation
- g. Sense of Community
- h. Arts and Culture
- i. Environmental Safety
- j. Downtown Revitalization

Interview Summaries

Mayor Kenneth Gulley Visioning Interview Summary

The Mayor Kenneth Gulley has been the Mayor of Bessemer since 2010. Since that time, he and the Bessemer City Council have worked together to create approximately 5000 jobs. The leadership in the City of Bessemer has been able to build a new city hall, recreation center, and more. Since 2010, the City has seen substantial growth with the following corporations bringing significant investment in the City:

- Carvana
- Milo's Tea
- Dollar General
- Amazon
- FedEx

These corporations provide jobs with above minimum wage. His goal is to provide a job for each citizen that wants a job to be able to find one. The Mayor looks at growth throughout the Birmingham Metropolitan Area in

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

neighborhoods such as Avondale and Woodlawn and he says, "Why not Bessemer?" He believes that the City of Bessemer with all its resources can achieve the same type of renaissance. His vision is continuing to redefine and diversify industry.

The Mayor's vision includes the following:

- Continuing to bring growth to the City of Bessemer
- Downtown revitalization
- Improving education

The Mayor Identified the following City Assets:

- The City's Golf Course
- Ownership of the water system
- Utilities
- The Bessemer Airport
- Industry
- Citizens
- Rail and interstate access
- Location
- Leadership is fiscally responsible
- New courthouse

The Mayor identified the following issues:

- City's self-esteem
- Crime rate
- Domestic violence
- Unfair image
- Paving
- Lack of downtown revitalization
- Historic resources are not protected

Councilor Ron Marshall Visioning Interview Summary

Ron Marshall's vision is to see Bessemer grow. The City of Bessemer is making great strides in industrial development based on the last eight years. When the mayor and council work well together it signals strength to future business owners and residents. The convenient location is good for development. He would also like to capitalize on the businesses that bring people into Downtown Bessemer. He wants a real development plan to revitalize Bessemer. He would like to work with the landowners to bring up the property value to making it more attractive. He would like to see downtown Bessemer with good shopping like antique and furniture stores, novelty shops, or specialty shops that no other city has that would make downtown Bessemer unique. The historic nature needs to be developed through investments. Offering whatever a resident would want that would take care of all their shopping needs for leisure time. Having musical venues such as a jazz club.

Downtown Bessemer could be the place where a person gets "what they want and what they need," and a place where citizens are proud of and putting tax dollars back into the city.

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

How does he see himself as being in tune with the city?

- Having a listening hear to those things with merit and see how to use the political arena.
- A stable government is what citizens see in the city and providing services that is expected. Encourage citizens to take pride in their city by encouraging each other to do the things they are not doing as they should.
- Let residents know there is a filter to handle city concerns. It really takes operating as a partner to build and maintain the City.
- Engage the citizens in the development processing. "Working together works," is his motto.

Ron Marshall's vision is to see Bessemer grow by capitalizing on the following:

- Making downtown unique and attractive to business owners, residents, and shoppers
- Musical venues like a jazz club
- Antique and furniture stores
- Historic landmarks
- A place for leisure
- Services
 - Fire Department
 - Sanitation
 - Police

Councilor Jarvis Collier Visioning Interview Summary

1. What is your Vision for Bessemer and your District?
 - Better living conditions for the citizens of Bessemer by repairing the homes within the neighborhood.
 - Establish renting guidelines when property is purchased for rental and have owners set a standard where there is a safe, sanitary, and livable conditions
 - Stop the buyers/owners from putting very little money into the homes
2. What is the Goal you have for Bessemer and your District?
 - Get the citizens and the neighborhoods to take pride in their community.
 - Start with making it cleaner and safer community by upgrading all of downtown.
3. What is the Mission you have for Bessemer and your District?

The citizens of Bessemer need better customer care/service the community needs to be educated on the position of what the elected official duties. Teaching the community about the process of economic growth and how it impacts their lives.
4. What People are saying about Bessemer?

People are saying it is a great place to work be not a great place to live, because of the education system and the housing.

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

5. What do you want for the future of Bessemer?

- Continued great leadership.
- Provide more civic education by educating citizens about the requirements of for each political office positions on the local, state, and federal level.

Jarvis Collier wants better living conditions for the citizens of Bessemer by repairing neighborhood homes and through teaching methods, such as:

- Economic growth and how it impacts their lives.
- Elected official duties.
- Better customer service
- Ordinance to be enforced in the future

Councilor Jesse Matthews Visioning Interview Summary

1. What is your Vision for Bessemer and your District?

- Focus on getting more industry into Bessemer.
- Established a strong school system.
- Focus on the keeping the historic business in Bessemer, like Bright Star, and Simmons Sporting Goods for example.
- Work to get the vacant buildings downtown Bessemer with new businesses and come up with ordinances to keep the buildings uniform and help with the growth.
- Develop more green spaces in Bessemer.

2. What is the Goal you have for Bessemer and your District?

- Develop more green spaces in Bessemer.
- Work to expand Bessemer's growth.
- Develop more parks and recreation areas.
- Work to get communities move out of areas flooding their homes. Develop better flood zone compliances for flood zones areas.
- Develop land bank authority.

3. What is the Mission you have for Bessemer and your District?

- Building a better environment for Bessemer.
- Working to continue to keep the business growth in Bessemer.
- Maintain Businesses in Bessemer, we do not ignore what they bring to the community.

4. What People are saying about Bessemer?

Bessemer is moving and advancing in the workforce community. Bessemer needs better a better school system and better housing.

5. What do you want for the future of Bessemer?

- Work to improve the ordinances in Bessemer to keep the progress moving toward the future.
- Develop the land bank to get rid of dilapidated properties.
- Continue to focus on the quality of life and there is concern with the citizens of Bessemer.

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

City of Bessemer Employee Visioning Interview Summary

STRADA met with key City of Bessemer personnel to discuss the history of the City, the City's assets and problems that are impediments to the City's growth. The group identified the following assets for the City of Bessemer:

- Growth around the perimeter of the City
- Major throughfares
- Good Right- of- Way
- Bessemer Airport
- Increased development
- Opportunity Zone designation
- Central location of the City and being in a HUBZone
- Ownership of the City's water system

The following were identified as impediments to the City's growth:

- Infrastructure and people are not investing in downtown
- Not having an Urban Planner or a firm to subcontract those services to
- Lack of diversity in businesses
- Lack of regulations on landlords in the City
- Not having a Land Bank Authority
- Food dessert

Dr. Anthony's Visioning Interview

How can Lawson State work with the City of Bessemer and the Bessemer City School District?

- Provide quality education at Lawson continuously.
- Help create work-ready citizen as key higher education facility.
- Maintain a good working relationship with the Bessemer Chamber of Commerce and the City of Bessemer.
- Be a partner with the city to provide a secure workforce readiness in the community, beginning in the elementary schools.
- Enhance and expand Lawson Stats' partnership with Bessemer City School's CTE program.

The new environment of COVID-19 has created opportunities of doing things. Dr. Anthony is confident that Dr. Jeter will continue to move the school forward by partnering with Lawson through dual enrollment and scholarships. Lawson can grow pathways in logistics, automotive, and computer science. Also, academic abilities by engaging in the STEM Program for opportunities. This includes getting the parents involve in supporting the students.

Upward Bound programs help reach high-risk students when there is no parental involvement. There are numerous students currently participating in the Upward Bound and mentoring programs. Summer camps and girls' impact is a mentoring program which is part of the stem programs. This will empower them to build on their knowledge and assist those who are not in touch with their abilities. Lawson has also partnered with the City of Bessemer and Apple, Inc. in "Bessemer Can Code".

Dr. Anthony would also like to focus more on mentoring and other opportunities at Lawson where the community is engaged. There is a community development center, free workshops, and training for both parents and students. If students do not enroll, the Lawson staff will go to their school and enlighten them at early ages. The athletes and Phi Theta Kappa groups also work with the schools and community support activities available.

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Dr. Anthony plans to work with District Attorney Washington, who has phenomenal programs with the schools as well. They have not been able to work out the details of the educational mentoring yet due to COVID-19, but it is on their radar. Her goal is to get the educational piece back where it was.

Dr. Anthony would like Bessemer City High School graduates who are succeeding in their careers to come back to the schools to let them know what is available to them. Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs are two other opportunities available to Bessemer area students. Dr. Anthony's goal is to get the educational piece back to its original competitive status. She feels this can be accomplished by:

- Expanding Lawson's involvement through Career Technical Education Programs.
- Partnering with Dr. Jeter and her staff
- Dual enrollment and scholarship programs
- Grown pathways in logistics, automotive, and computer science
- Getting parents involved in the student's education
- Working with DA Lynneice Washington to build on her current programs
- Engage in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs

[Brian Giattina Visioning Interview Summary](#)

Brian Giattina is the Co-Founder of BLOX. He loves the location and the business-friendly environment in the City of Bessemer. His company is a strategic partner with the City, and he is working towards addressing the issue of blight and establishing workforce housing covering the communities of the Northside, Abrams School, and Braswell Homes. Giattina is also wanting to partner with the Bessemer City Schools to provide internships and apprenticeships for students in the school district.

Appendix D: Workshop Materials

Workshop Presentation and Booklet



AGENDA

- I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
- II. ORIENTATION TO THE WORKSHOP
- III. VISIONING EXERCISE 1
- IV. TOPIC DISCUSSIONS – SMALL GROUP
- V. SAMPLE VISION STATEMENTS
- VI. VISIONING EXERCISE 2
- VII. QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND NEXT STEPS

STRADA



STRADA

VISION 2040
FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

STRADA

INTRODUCTIONS AND
ICEBREAKER

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

EACH MEMBER OF THE GROUP INTRODUCES THEMSELVES BY STATING TWO TRUTHS AND ONE LIE ABOUT THEMSELVES.

THE STATEMENTS DON'T HAVE TO BE INTIMATE, LIFE-REVEALING THINGS—JUST SIMPLE HOBBIES, INTERESTS, OR PAST EXPERIENCES THAT MAKE EACH PERSON UNIQUE.

THE LIE CAN BE OUTRAGEOUS AND WACKY, OR IT CAN SOUND LIKE A TRUTH TO MAKE IT HARDER FOR THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS.



WORKSHOP ORIENTATION

STRADA



GROUND RULES

1. BE HERE NOW
2. CONSENSUS MEANS "I CAN LIVE WITH IT"
3. SILENCE OR ABSENCE IMPLIES CONSENSUS
4. MAKE YOUR THINKING VISIBLE
5. BRING A PROBLEM, BRING A SOLUTION
6. DON'T BEAT A DEAD HORSE
7. NOBODY IS SMARTER THAN EVERYBODY
8. RESPECT EACH OTHER
9. FAST PACED AND HIGH ENERGY
10. STAY FOCUSED ON THE TOPIC



STRADA



STRADA

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIONING WORKSHOP?

WE ARE SETTING THE FOUNDATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF BESSEMER'S STRATEGIC PLAN.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE VISION STATEMENT?

A VISION STATEMENT DESCRIBES A COMMUNITY'S VALUES AND ASPIRATIONS AND A SHARED IMAGE OF WHAT THEY WANT THEIR COMMUNITY TO BECOME OVER THE NEXT 10 TO 20 YEARS IN THE FUTURE.

THE STATEMENT SHOULD ADDRESS ALL ASPECTS THAT MAKE UP A COMMUNITY SUCH AS THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FABRIC.

STATEMENTS SHOULD BE FORWARD THINKING AND WRITTEN IN A POSITIVE, AFFIRMATIVE AND INSPIRATIONAL STYLE.

VISIONING EXERCISE 1

What are people saying about the City of Bessemer?

1. How do people see the City of Bessemer today?
2. What would you like to see in the City of Bessemer's future?

STRADA

GROUP DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Economic Development
2. Social Environment
3. Natural Environment
4. Built Environment



VISIONING EXERCISE 2

What will Bessemer be like in 2040?

It is 2040 and the Western Star wants you to write a story about the City of Bessemer. This is a great opportunity to showcase our city and recruit new residents, businesses, and visitors. What is the headline? What are the pictures? What are people saying?

STRADA

SAMPLE VISION STATEMENTS

STRADA



TYPES OF VISION STATEMENTS

Quantitative

Example: we will generate \$100 million in sales for the next ten years

Competitive

Example: we will be better than XYZ Company

Role-Model

Example: we want to have an efficient organization like XYZ Company

Superlative

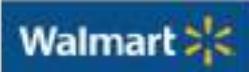
Example: we will be the best or we will be number one is 2030

STRADA

STRADA

SAMPLE VISION STATEMENTS

"TO BECOME A \$125 BILLION COMPANY BY 2000"



"YAMAHA WO TSUBUSU! WE WILL DESTROY YAMAHA"





STRADA

SAMPLE VISION STATEMENTS

"TO BECOME THE HARVARD OF THE WEST"

**Stanford University**

"BY THE YEAR 2020, [WE] WILL BE COMMONLY RECOGNIZED AS THE MOST LIVABLE CITY IN TEXAS."

**FORT WORTH.**



SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENTS

"OUR MISSION IS TO EMPOWER EVERY PERSON AND EVERY ORGANIZATION ON THE PLANET TO ACHIEVE MORE."



"TO INSPIRE AND NURTURE THE HUMAN SPIRIT – ONE PERSON, ONE CUP AND ONE NEIGHBORHOOD AT A TIME."



"TO ORGANIZE THE WORLD'S INFORMATION AND MAKE IT UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE AND USEFUL."





STRADA

Questions, Comments, and Next Steps

City of Bessemer | Rail Trail Concept



Live, Work and Play in the Marvel City!

STRADA



Vision 2040 Forging Bessemer's Future Together

*Thank you for working with us as we help prepare
the City of Bessemer for continued growth and expansion.*

STRADA
WE BRING SOLUTIONS TO LIFE!

CONTACT



P.O. Box 55375
Birmingham, AL 35255



dgeorge@stradaps.com



Office: 205.307.6655
Mobile: 205.492.1952

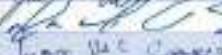


www.stradaps.com

STRADA

VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Workshop Sign-In Sheets for September 30, 2020 and October 15, 2020

| City of Bessemer Visioning Committee Workshop Sign-in | | | | 10/14/2020 | STRADA |
|---|------------|--------------------------------|------------|---|--------|
| Last Name | First Name | Email | Date | Signature | |
| Shipers | Taco | twodogsgreen@gmail.com | 10/14/2020 |  | |
| Hines | Cynthia | jhinesclasscyn1938@hotmail.com | |  | |
| Collie | Jawn | | |  | |
| Page | Dave | DOFAICED@us.ibm.com | |  | |
| McCormick | Dan | | |  | |
| Marks | Kem | kmarks0@icloud.com | |  | |
| Bupp | Ralph | ralphdon080@gmail.com | |  | |
| Jeter | Autumn | ajeter@bessemer12.org | |  | |
| Washington | Karen | karen.washington.69@yahoo.com | |  | |
| Jackson | Carleen | ccjackson@bessemer12.org | |  | |

City of Bessemer Visioning Worksheet



City of Bessemer Visioning Worksheet

Considerations for developing your Vision Statement:

- A vision statement is a statement about ideal conditions or how things would look if the issue important to you were completely, perfectly addressed.
- Common characteristics of vision statements:
 - An understanding and shared view by members of the community
 - Broad enough to include a variety of local perspectives
 - Inspiring and uplifting to everyone involved in your effort
 - Easy to communicate- for example, they are generally short enough to fit on a T-shirt
- Examples:
 - Caring communities
 - Safe streets, safe neighborhoods
 - A Better Bessemer

Instructions:

1. Identify one person to take notes while the group brainstorms ideas and one person to document the decision reached through consensus
2. Ask the following questions, record key points, and discuss common themes:
 - a. Essential why: What is the dream or ideal that you and your community seek?
 - b. Essential what: What would have to change for this dream to come true?
3. Come to consensus about what the vision statement should be by considering the following:
 - a. Will it draw people to the common work?
 - b. Does it give hope for a better future?
 - c. Will it inspire community members through positive, effective action?
 - d. Does it provide a basis for developing the other aspects of your action planning process?
4. Write down the agreed upon statement on your handout.

Notes:

Considerations for developing your Mission Statement:

- A mission statement describes what the group is going to do and why it is going to do that.
- Guiding principles for mission statements include:
 - Concise. Mission statements generally get their point across in one sentence.
 - Outcome-oriented. Explain the fundamental outcomes your organization is working to achieve.
 - Inclusive. Make broad statements about your groups' key goals but are not limiting to specific strategies or sectors of the community.
- Examples:
 - Promoting child health and development through a comprehensive family and community initiative.
 - To develop a safe and healthy neighborhood through collaborative planning, community action, and policy advocacy.
 - Promoting Bessemer's community health and development by connecting people, ideas and resources.

Instructions:

1. Identify one person to take notes while the group brainstorms ideas and one person to document the decision reached through consensus.
2. Carry forward ideas generated in developing your vision statement. Gather the ideas generated that described the "essential why" or the dream/ideal you seek and the "essential what" or what would have to happen for the dream to come true.
3. As a group select the statements that have particular relevance for the vision statement identified and brainstorm potential mission statements (e.g. Our mission is to _____ (essential why) through (or by) _____ (essential what)).
4. Come to consensus by considering the following:
 - a. Does it describe what your group will do and why it will do it?
 - b. Is it concise (one sentence)?
 - c. Is it outcome oriented?
 - d. Is it inclusive of the goals and people who may become involved in the work?
5. Write down the agreed upon statement on your handout.

Notes:

Then Mission of our initiative is (the essential why):

through (or by) (the essential what):

Notes:

If you would like to complete this worksheet as an observer of today's workshop, please feel free to do so. If you would like to take a copy with you, please complete it and mail it back to the mailing address listed below:

STRADA Professional Services, LLC
P.O. Box 55375
Birmingham, AL 35255

If you have questions or additional comments please email STRADA Professional Services, LLC at info@stradaps.com or deorge@stradaps.com.

Visioning Committee Worksheet Responses

STRADA

City of Bessemer Visioning Worksheet

Considerations for developing your Vision Statement:

- A vision statement is a statement about ideal conditions or how things would look if the issue important to you were completely, perfectly addressed.
- Common characteristics of vision statements:
 - An understanding and shared view by members of the community
 - Broad enough to include a variety of local perspectives
 - Inspiring and uplifting to everyone involved in your effort
 - Easy to communicate- for example, they are generally short enough to fit on a T-shirt
- Examples:
 - Caring communities
 - Safe streets, safe neighborhoods
 - A better Bessemer

Instructions:

1. Identify one person to take notes while the group brainstorms ideas and one person to document the decision reached through consensus
2. Ask the following questions, record key points, and discuss common themes:
 - a. Essential why: What is the dream or ideal that you and your community seek?
 - b. Essential what: What would have to change for this dream to come true?
3. Come to consensus about what the vision statement should be by considering the following:
 - a. Will it draw people to the common work?
 - b. Does it give hope for a better future?
 - c. Will it inspire community members through positive, effective action?
 - d. Does it provide a basis for developing the other aspects of your action planning process?
4. Write down the agreed upon statement on your handout.

Notes:

1. *Safer Communities*

2A) *Excelling School System*

2B) *Multi-use living, work, entertainment (play)*

Getting together with like minded individuals in the community

Exceptional communication

STRADA Professional Services, LLC | 85 Boggy Drive, Ste. 208 | Homewood, AL 35209 | (205) 367-6665 | www.stradas.com

Visioning worksheet from Workshop 1 provided by workshop participants.

STRADA

City of Bessemer Visioning Worksheet

Considerations for developing your Vision Statement:

- A vision statement is a statement about ideal conditions or how things would look if the issue important to you were completely, perfectly addressed.
- Common characteristics of vision statements:
 - An understanding and shared view by members of the community
 - Broad enough to include a variety of local perspectives
 - Inspiring and uplifting to everyone involved in your effort
 - Easy to communicate- for example, they are generally short enough to fit on a T-shirt
- Examples:
 - Caring communities
 - Safe streets, safe neighborhoods
 - A Better Bessemer

Instructions:

1. Identify one person to take notes while the group brainstorms ideas and one person to document the decision reached through consensus
2. Ask the following questions, record key points, and discuss common themes:
 - a. *Essential why:* What is the dream or ideal that you and your community seek?
 - b. *Essential what:* What would have to change for this dream to come true?
3. Come to consensus about what the vision statement should be by considering the following:
 - a. Will it draw people to the common work?
 - b. Does it give hope for a better future?
 - c. Will it inspire community members through positive, effective action?
 - d. Does it provide a basis for developing the other aspects of your action planning process?
4. Write down the agreed upon statement on your handout.

Notes:

Reenvisioning Bringing Back "The Marvel City"
Encourage Major Businesses To Give Back to
The City!
Encourage people to take pride in Bessemer
Building A Brighter Bessemer: school systems, neighborhoods
Businesses - Helping One Another to Be The Best Bessemer of the
Future!



City of Bessemer Visioning Worksheet

Considerations for developing your Vision Statement:

- A vision statement is a statement about ideal conditions or how things would look if the issue important to you were completely, perfectly addressed.
- Common characteristics of vision statements:
 - An understanding and shared view by members of the community
 - Broad enough to include a variety of local perspectives
 - Inspiring and uplifting to everyone involved in your effort
 - Easy to communicate- for example, they are generally short enough to fit on a T-shirt
- Examples:
 - Caring communities
 - Safe streets, safe neighborhoods
 - A Better Bessemer

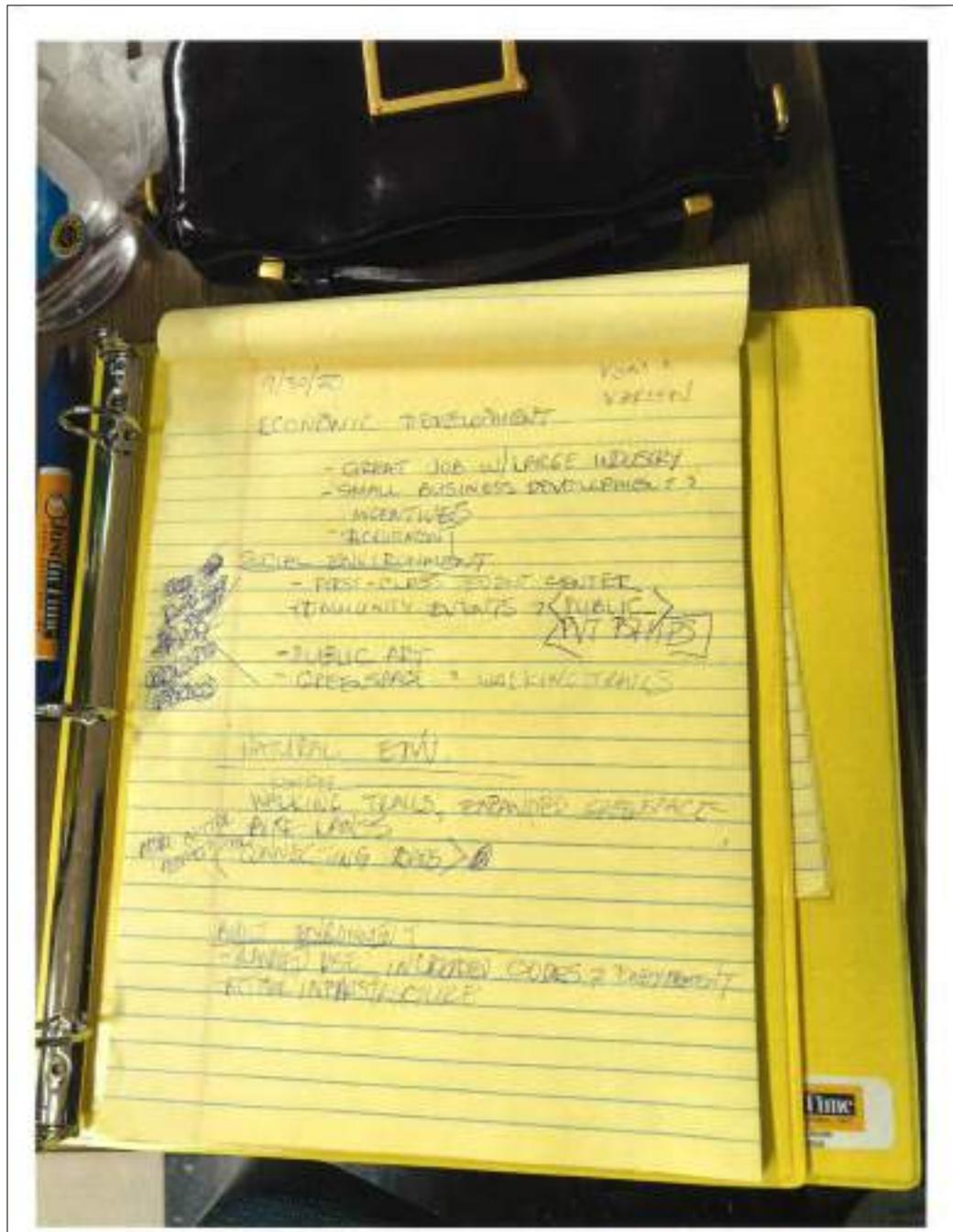
Instructions:

1. Identify one person to take notes while the group brainstorms ideas and one person to document the decision reached through consensus
2. Ask the following questions, record key points, and discuss common themes:
 - a. Essential why: What is the dream or ideal that you and your community seek?
 - b. Essential what: What would have to change for this dream to come true?
3. Come to consensus about what the vision statement should be by considering the following:
 - a. Will it draw people to the common work?
 - b. Does it give hope for a better future?
 - c. Will it inspire community members through positive, effective action?
 - d. Does it provide a basis for developing the other aspects of your action planning process?
4. Write down the agreed upon statement on your handout.

Notes:

Revising Bringing Back The Marvel City
Encourage Major Businesses To Give Back to
The City.
Encourage people to take pride in Bessemer
Building A Brighter Bessemer: school systems, neighborhoods
Businesses - Helping One Another to Be The Best Bessemer in the
Future!

Visioning worksheet from Workshop 1 provided by workshop participants.



Visioning worksheet responses from Workshop 1 provided by workshop participants.

October 1, 2020

City of Bessemer Visioning Workshop

Vision Statement

The City of Bessemer is the place to live with sustained economic development, safe communities, safe streets, well defined green space, and mixed-income housing.

Mission Statement

To achieve our vision, the City of Bessemer will:

Focus on sustained collaboration among, businesses, communities, and the education system;
Promote innovative technology;
Maintain integrity and pride in the delivery of services to its citizens; and,
Promote effective communication and cooperation to share success stories.

Sample Vision and Mission Statement from Workshop 1 provided by workshop participants.

Appendix E: Common Themes Identified from Individual Interviews

- Safer Communities
- Better Educational System/More Support from The City
- Downtown Revitalization
- More Small Business Development
- More Public and Private Partnerships
- Housing Issues and Empty Lots
- Food Desert
- Lack of Official Communication from the City to the Citizens
- No Shopping Downtown
- More Civic Energy and Engagement
- Restoring Each Neighborhood
- Green Spaces
- Public Art
- Public Relations
- Transportation
- Entertainment District
- Streets need paving
- More mixed use building downtown
- Cohesive Leadership
- City's Self-Esteem/Community Pride
- Domestic Violence
- Historic Resources Not Protected
- More Paved Roads
- More Sidewalks
- Unfair Image
- Workforce Housing
- Land Use Planning-Future and Current Land Use
- Economic and Workforce Development
- Improvement of Living Conditions
- Cleaner Community
- Home Ownership
- Educating the Public on Civic Engagement
- Creating a Technology Hub: Wi-fi Downtown/Smart City
- Recreational Facilities
- Walking and Biking Trails
- Use of Natural Resources
- Small Business Incubator
- Accessing Federal and State Monies Available to Municipalities
- Diversifying Business Types
- Dilapidated Buildings and Empty Lots



VISION 2040: FORGING BESSEMER'S FUTURE TOGETHER

Our heartfelt THANK YOU to the City of Bessemer for entrusting STRADA Professional Services, LLC with this awesome opportunity. We are excited to be a part of this very important project as the City prepares for its continued growth, improving the quality of life for its citizens, and revitalization.

**WE BRING
SOLUTIONS TO LIFE!**
STRADA

www.stradaps.com

