

Public education has been ranked the highest priority of survey respondents and is also the most popular answer when the survey asks respondents to share what they feel is the City's greatest obstacle. How do the City and Danville Public Schools plan to improve the state of education in Danville?

The City Council has identified improving education as its number one priority and I am glad to hear the public is on the same page. We plan to work closely with the new superintendent to make sure that every child has the resources he or she needs to succeed. That starts with outstanding instruction in the classroom and that happens when we are able to attract and retain the best teachers. We will be looking for creative solutions on how we can make Danville and Danville Public Schools an attractive place for teachers who want to make and have a real shot at transforming the lives of students. We will also put a focus on wrap-around services for students who have more barriers to success. With these new resources, we will be able to implement programs that we could not previously afford.

One respondent shared that they had trouble finding the kind of home they were looking for when they were offered a job in Danville, and said they almost took a job elsewhere because of housing options. How can the influx of revenue be used to address housing issues in Danville?

We conducted research on our housing market and can confirm that there is a lack of housing options available – especially for middle income families. The reason behind this is because there is an over-supply of housing in general, which has caused a depressed housing market. This means that there is no incentive to reinvest in homes or build new homes because the value of those improvements are not translated to higher property values. Over the past 7-8 years, the City has worked to reduce blight and improve housing. If we are successful in improving our school system, we will give families more reasons to buy a house in Danville. In addition, with new jobs in our area, demand for housing will increase. I believe the market will respond by renovating existing homes and building new homes for people in all income brackets. We can encourage this in the short term by making strategic investments in housing and neighborhoods with the goal that the market will take over.

Multiple respondents have praised the City's low cost of living. How does the City preserve this value for its residents and prevent dislocation/gentrification while also promoting development?

One of the goals of this process is to make sure that we are intentional about addressing the risk of dislocation/gentrification. We will make sure that our focus on improving housing does not result in an affordability issue for long-time residents. Our initial thoughts are to make sure that any incentive to improve housing includes affordable options and does not lead to increased costs for existing residents. We plan to pay for close attention to how the housing market shifts and will implement strategies to combat dislocation/gentrification.

Multiple respondents have expressed a need to retain and attract young people to Danville. What assets does the City already have in the effort to attract and retain residents? Where do you see potential for growth?

There are a lot of reasons to love living in Danville. I often hear from new residents about how much they love living in our community. We have an opportunity to build on some of the great assets in our region like our Riverwalk Trail and other outdoor recreation options, our growing and

vibrant downtown, increased shopping and restaurant options, new and existing entertainment options, and proximity to larger metro areas, our geographic location half way between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Atlantic Ocean. Since the casino resort will attract millions of visitors every year, there will be new funds and reasons to invest in tourism-related amenities. This would make our area even more attractive to visitors, bringing additional spending to our community, and result in even more jobs and business opportunities. We plan to listen to our young people to find out what Danville needs to give them a reason to stay home after completing their education.

Respondents have expressed both praise for the River District's redevelopment and frustration with a perceived lack of investment elsewhere. Can you talk a little about the reinvestment strategy so far, and give us an idea of where the City would like to focus investment next?

About ten years ago, the City made the decision that it could no longer tolerate the fact that the majority of downtown buildings were boarded up and falling apart. Studies have shown that cities that invest in their downtowns have a greater return on investment than if they encourage/allow continued commercial sprawl. That's because the infrastructure already exists and cheaper to maintain in relation to tax value. The City and its public partners have invested about \$30 million in downtown improvements, which have resulted in over \$160 million in private investment. Our downtown apartments have a waiting list and are often at least 50% pre-leased before construction begins. This private investment has produced new tax revenue for the City, which we've been able to use to maintain the high quality of services we provide to all our citizens. Having a vibrant downtown is an important component to quality of life that attracts new residents and industries. While the City has made these investments, it has not neglected other parts of the City. Service levels have remained constant and investments in education have increased. Our next focus will be to step up investments in housing and neighborhoods so that everyone has an opportunity to live in safe and energy efficient homes and prices they can afford. We will reduce blight and invest in public infrastructure so that our neighborhoods are safe and attractive.

Some respondents have suggested sports complexes as an investment that would see use from the community and spur more tourism, and I know the City has investigated this option in the past. What kind of sports complex does the City believe would be the most economically beneficial?

A recent sports tourism study suggested that a baseball and softball complex in our area would attract enough tournaments for the operations to be self-sufficient. We would explore this option and also work with our Parks and Recreation Department to offer local baseball and softball programs at an affordable price for our children. We would also work to break down barriers of participation.

Some survey responses express concern with crime increasing due to the casino. Is there any reason to believe the City will need to increase safety spending because of the casino?

Our consultants studied how casinos have impacted public safety in areas similar to Danville and have learned that increases in crime are similar to what any large scale development with that many visitors would create. In exchange, there will be a large increase in resources available to not only address the negligible impact of the casino but to improve on our community policing program that will result in safer neighborhoods throughout our City. The availability of new jobs

will provide more opportunity to our residents, which will improve the overall economic conditions that lead to increased crime.

Suggestions from the survey for increasing tourism range from indoor waterparks to starting an artists' colony. How important is thinking outside the box when it comes to tourism, and how does tourism fit in to a wider economic development agenda?

It will be very important to think outside the box. We have a unique opportunity to take some risk and try some things that wouldn't have been possible when our resources were so tight. We believe that it is important to capitalize on new visitors and new revenue in our City by investing in and promoting existing tourist attractions and in attracting new tourism assets. If we can give visitors multiple reasons to come to Danville, that is more outside money coming into our community, which will help improve opportunity for everyone.

When the survey asks for other projects or programs the City should consider, broadband access has been mentioned multiple times as a potential investment. Has the City invested in expanding broadband access in the past?

The City has already invested in an open fiber network called nDanville. This has been deployed in areas of the City that have shown enough interest to justify the expense. Expanding its availability is certainly an option worth exploring – especially if the private sector is not meeting the demand.

Some projects or programs respondents would like to see:

- **Green energy on both the macro and micro level to help get residential, business and industrial energy rates down. incentivize homeowners and private business owners (of all income levels) to invest in solar. increase availability to recycling and subsidize the current recycling collection fees. wouldn't it be great to set a goal of being a "green" Danville by 2050?**
- **Perhaps start a youth commission to help with race relations. Try getting our youth of different races, socio-economic status, religion, sexual orientation, etc. to work together on community projects to promote tolerance and acceptance.**
- **A larger senior center that provides at least a daily lunch and a backpack weekend program for children and seniors that do not have access to meals during those times.**
- **Should invest in a general contractor program so people who live here and want to see the city improve can become licensed contractors to rebuild the abandoned homes and buildings**
- **Put up soundproof walls on both sides of railroad tracks from NC to Schoolfield site.**

All of these ideas are worth exploring and should be considered along with other specific suggestions for making our community a more attractive and sustainable place to live.