



THE MAYOR'S MANDATE

The People's Plan for the City of Progress

PRESENTED BY

— Mayor Vivian Flowers' —

TRANSITION ADVISORY BOARD

THE CITY OF **PINE BLUFF**

PINE BLUFF CIVIC CENTER

COMPLETED IN 1967 AFTER SIX YEARS OF VISION, PLANNING, AND EFFORT BY MANY PEOPLE IN ADDITION TO THE OFFICIAL CREDIT TO THE CITY OF PINE BLUFF, THIS CIVIC CENTER IS DEDICATED TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF PINE BLUFF.

MISSION

**PROGRESSING PINE BLUFF TOWARDS
A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR ALL**

OFFICE LITES, SR. 1954-64 AUGUST T. FROWNS 1965

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

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TUNEY BAILEY 1975-78 W. E. BOYD, JR. 1979-82
ROY R. BROWN 1983-86 FRED CONDRAY 1987-90
D. GUY GOODMAN 1991-94 DON T. BROWN 1995-98
JAMES W. KENNEDY 1999-02

THEME

TOGETHER, PINE BLUFF WINS!

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JAMES W. KENNEDY 1999-02 DR. LAWRENCE A. DAVIS 2003-06

VALUES

**UNITY | PROGRESS | SERVICE
ACCOUNTABILITY | OPPORTUNITY**

URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY

STEPHEN A. MATTHEWS 1961-65 HAROLD S. WINGER 1961-62
WILLIAM H. ROBERTS 1963-64 JAMES W. KENNEDY 1965-66
R. S. SEDGUM 1967-68 DR. LAWRENCE A. DAVIS 1966-67

DR. WALTER J. WILKINS, JR. 1968-69 EDWARD DURELL STONE 1969-70
JAMES W. KENNEDY 1971-72 NEED E. WILLIS 1973-74



EDWARD DURELL STONE 1975-78 NEED E. WILLIS 1979-82

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

HARMON CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC.

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LETTER FROM MAYOR FLOWERS



Mayor Vivian Flowers

Dear Residents of Pine Bluff,

It is with deep gratitude and great hope that I present this Transition Report as we begin a new chapter in the life of our city. I want to first thank you—the residents, families, business owners, faith leaders, educators, students, and elders—for believing in the possibility of Pine Bluff’s future. Your voices, your concerns, your dreams, and your determination have guided every step we have taken to prepare for this moment.

My decision to run for mayor, was not simply to hold another office—it was to help move us towards a brighter future full of promise and progress. A future rooted in opportunity, transparency, and most of all, unity. Throughout the campaign and my listening tours

I was inspired by the consistent desire for change. A desire for a city that works for everyone. A city where our children can thrive, where our seniors feel safe and valued, and where every neighborhood is seen, heard, and invested in.

To help lay the foundation for this, I convened a Transition Advisory Board made up of talented and trusted community leaders across multiple sectors. Their work was intentional and rigorous—engaging city staff, residents, and partners to identify both the challenges and the opportunities we face. This report reflects their findings and recommendations, and I thank them for their time, their wisdom, and their commitment to the people of Pine Bluff.

The transition process reaffirmed what I already knew: Pine Bluff is a city of strength, resilience, and untapped potential. The solutions we seek already exist among us—we simply need the structure, strategy, and collective will to move towards the future. This report is not the end of that process—it is the beginning. A blueprint, yes, but also a call to action.

The work ahead will not always be easy, but I am prepared—and I am not alone. With your continued engagement, with honest conversations, and with shared accountability, we will build a Pine Bluff we can all be proud of.

Let us forge ahead together. Because, “Together, Pine Bluff Wins!”

With gratitude and determination,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vivian Flowers', written in a cursive style.

Mayor Vivian Flowers
City of Pine Bluff

LETTER FROM TRANSITION CO-CHAIRS

Dear Mayor Flowers,

On behalf of the members of your Transition Advisory Board, we are honored to submit this report, which reflects the dedication, insight, and collaborative spirit of Pine Bluff residents who are deeply invested in the future of our city.

Over the past several weeks, we have examined the current state of city government, infrastructure, public services, and community engagement across Pine Bluff. Working alongside the rest of the Advisory Board and members of the ten resident-led subcommittees, we have conducted research, listened to residents, reviewed city documents and budgets, and engaged stakeholders from every corner of the community—from longtime homeowners to young professionals, from business leaders to faith leaders, and from city staff to neighborhood advocates. **This work has led to “The Mayor’s Mandate,” conveying the clear directive and responsibility we, the people, have given you to implement a vision for our city.**

This process has reinforced a truth we all know: **Pine Bluff is full of possibility.** The work of this board and its subcommittees represents a commitment to seize that possibility with boldness, clarity, and care. We are proud to present recommendations that not only reflect diverse viewpoints and lived experiences, but also a shared hope for progress.

We would like to extend our deepest thanks to the community members who volunteered their time, knowledge, and passion throughout this process. Their thoughtful contributions, willingness to ask tough questions, and commitment to a better Pine Bluff were vital in shaping this report.

While this document captures our current priorities and suggested next steps, it is intended to serve as a **launching point**—not a final word. We understand that the work ahead will require adjustment, creativity, and continued input from residents and partners alike. Still, we believe this report offers a meaningful framework that can guide your administration, the city council, and the broader Pine Bluff community toward real, measurable progress.

Madam Mayor, we thank you for your leadership and vision. We thank you for the opportunity to serve. And most importantly, we stand ready to support you as you advance the progress of our city onward.

With respect and service,



Calvin Johnson
Dr. Calvin Johnson
Co-Chair, Transition Advisory Board
City of Pine Bluff



Latasha Randle
Latasha McNeely Randle
Co-Chair, Transition Advisory Board
City of Pine Bluff

TRANSITION BOARD



DR. CALVIN JOHNSON
CO-CHAIR



LATASHA MCNEELY RANDLE
CO-CHAIR



TOM BENNETT



TED DAVIS



PASTOR JAMES MURRY



SUSIE POWELL



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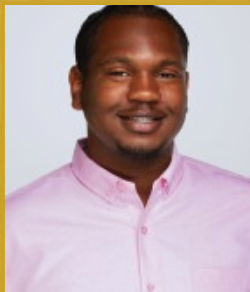
KYMARA SEALS



HANK WILKINS, V



DR. TYRONE JACKSON



AAREYON WALLACE



JAMES WORD



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Winning Together: A New Chapter for Pine Bluff

From the very beginning of my campaign, one message rang loud and clear from the people of Pine Bluff: **we are ready for change**. Whether I was walking neighborhoods, attending church services, meeting with small business owners along Main Street, or visiting elders in the community, the sentiment was consistent — **Pine Bluff is full of promise**, but we must come together with courage and strategy to write a new story for our city.

With your support, I was elected to lead this next chapter — not alone, but with you. Together, we will restore pride, renew opportunity, and reimagine what's possible for every resident of Pine Bluff. In the early days of this administration, I convened a Transition Advisory Board made up of a diverse, passionate, and skilled group of community leaders. Their charge was clear: assess the current state of city government and make thoughtful, actionable recommendations that would lay the foundation for a stronger Pine Bluff. The result is this transition report — a future-focused blueprint rooted in transparency, collaboration, and the lived experiences of our people.

The Transition Advisory Board, led by dedicated subcommittee chairs and supported by more than 100 engaged volunteers, examined a wide range of city functions — from economic development and infrastructure to education, youth investment, public safety, and sustainability. They reviewed city policies, studied budget documents, conducted listening sessions, and met with a wide array of stakeholders across every neighborhood. I am incredibly grateful for their service, and for their unwavering belief in the future of our city.



This report reflects more than recommendations — it reflects the values and aspirations of Pine Bluff. Each section outlines bold yet attainable goals that, when pursued with intention and accountability, will improve how we serve our residents, how we invest in our young people, how we grow our local economy, and how we protect the safety and dignity of every neighborhood.

We are committed to:

- Creating a culture of transparency and fiscal responsibility within City Hall.
- Revitalizing neighborhoods by addressing blight, improving infrastructure, and increasing homeownership.
- Prioritizing public safety through community-centered policing and violence intervention strategies.
- Investing in youth and education by expanding access to opportunity and workforce readiness.
- Elevating Pine Bluff's natural assets to drive tourism and economic growth.
- Engaging faith and community-based organizations as partners.
- Centering our social impact and sustainability in every decision we make.

This is Just the Beginning

The work ahead will take time, discipline, and collective effort. But with a clear vision and a united community, I am confident that Pine Bluff's brightest days are ahead of us. As we begin implementing the recommendations in this report, we will also remain responsive to new opportunities and challenges that arise. We welcome feedback, dialogue, and continued community involvement at every step.

Thank you for believing in our city. Thank you for trusting me to serve. And thank you for walking with us as we move towards the future, **together**.

In Service,

Mayor Vivian Flowers
City of Pine Bluff

BUDGET AND FINANCE



BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: TED DAVIS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Budget and Finance Subcommittee was convened with the primary objective of evaluating the financial health of the City of Pine Bluff and developing a series of strategic recommendations to support fiscal stability, growth, and transparency. The city budget serves as one of the most powerful tools for policy-making, reflecting decisions that impact every department and resident. Through its narrative and structure, the budget not only guides expenditures but also communicates the city's values, priorities, and long-term direction.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The budget is one of the city's strongest policy making tools. Spending guidelines reflect numerous policy decisions. The budget message can give a clear view of city policy on many issues. It describes in narrative form significant items in the budget, financial trends, and the policy implications. The committee has developed evidence-based recommendations to enhance financial transparency and accountability that reflect resident sentiment.

- **Mission Statement:** To review current city financial policies and trends that have developed over the past 3-5 years and recommend potential corrective strategies.
- **Key Issues Identified:**
 - Issue 1: Limited access to timely and accurate financial data hinders the City's ability to make informed decisions about expenditures and resource allocation.
 - Issue 2: There is a lack of informed oversight in the City's purchasing and procurement processes, leading to inefficiencies, potential waste, and reduced public trust.
 - Issue 3: The budget contains substantial unfunded liabilities, which impacts the ability to maintain a balanced budget.
 - Issue 4: Residents seem unaware and uninformed of the city budgeting process or issues regarding transparency, their participation, or availability.

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - **Survey Results**
 - Are you aware of the budget amount of the City of Pine Bluff. 96% No.
 - Have you been a citizen participant in the budgeting process. 99% No
 - Do you feel that the budget is used fairly throughout the city 82% No
 - Are you aware of the city expenditures by categories? 91% No
 - Does the city have to provide an annual budget for review? 83% No
 - Do you feel that the sales tax is the only revenue for the city? 88% No
 - Do you feel that the city budget is operated efficiently? 73% No
 - A local voter-approved public initiative might be required. 84% Yes
 - Do you think that the city will face financial challenges ahead? 71% Yes
 - Having a solid grasp on the city budgeting process is more critical than ever. 93% Yes

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - The committee reviewed the city budget revenue and expenditures over the past 3 years and the statistical data of comparative cities.
 - **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - City Finance Director
 - City Attorney
 - City Clerk
 - Municipal League of Arkansas (Reviewed Municipal Accounting Handbook)
 - City Treasurer
 - Reviewed the city's "Budget Basics"
 - **Community Input:**
 - The committee developed and conducted a random survey of 152 Pine Bluff resident respondents.
 - **Comparative Analysis:**
 - The committee did review other cities but primarily focused on budgetary and finance issues in Pine Bluff over the past 3 years.
-

Recommendation 1: Include Finance Department In Major City Expenditures

- **Description:** The committee recommends that the finance department should become a participant in all discussions regarding major city expenditures.
- **Justification:** To ensure that financial objectives are consistent with expenditures.
- **Expected Impact:** Balanced budget as expenditures will be consistent with projections.
- **Resources Required:** Internal policy change with a directive from the Mayor to all departments and city officials.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 2: Procurement Inclusion In Purchasing Threshold

- **Description:** The committee recommends that a procurement or purchasing officer be involved in all cities purchases over a designated amount. Locate procurement official in the finance department.
- **Justification:** Create and establish consistency in city purchases.
- **Expected Impact:** Streamlines purchases, saves the city money, and improves transparency.
- **Resources Required:** Allocated funding for salary, to be established.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 3: Develop a Community Awareness Program

- **Description:** The city should develop a community awareness program reflecting the city budget and budgeting process utilizing various media.
- **Justification:** Increases resident awareness, accountability and transparency.
- **Expected Impact:** Cultivates trust between the city and the residents.
- **Resources Required:** Staff time for the media campaign
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 4: Address Unfunded Liabilities

- **Description:** The city should address unfunded liabilities in the budget.
- **Justification:** These are short term financial obligations that create inaccuracy in the budget projections and forecasts.
- **Expected Impact:** Improve budget projections and accountability to taxpayer dollars.
- **Resources Required:** N/A
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 5: Encourage Residents to Participate in the Budget Process

- **Description:** Encourage residents to become a participant in the budgeting process
- **Justification:** Creates transparency and dispels negative perceptions.
- **Expected Impact:** Increases resident participation and promotes trust in city financial operations; ensures alignment with residents' desires for the city.
- **Resources Required:** Staff time to develop the project and process.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 6: City Treasurer Share Monthly Financial Reports with Finance Department and City Clerk

- **Description:** The committee recommends that monthly financial reports from the office of the city treasurer be shared concurrently with the finance department and the city clerk.
- **Justification:** The copying of monthly financial records to these departments addresses safe keeping of public records and transparency.
- **Expected Impact:** Greater transparency and collaboration between departments
- **Resources Required:** N/A
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

- **Potential Challenges:**
 - According to the survey, 71% of the respondents feel that the city will face some financial challenges ahead.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - The survey indicates that **85%** of respondents believe **"a local voter-approved initiative might be required."**
- **Timeline:**
 - Decisions of this type are to be made by the mayor to determine best course of action.

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

- These recommendations provide a roadmap for addressing the Budget and Finance processes. Implementing these solutions will impact budgeting and finance accountability and transparency.
- We urge the Mayor and City Council to prioritize these initiatives and work collaboratively with residents and stakeholders to bring them to fruition.

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report.

Destiny Coleman

Ruth Fitzgerald

Percelle Freeman, Jr.

Alan Minor, CPA

Linda Nickerson

Carl Redus, Jr.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: TOM BENNETT (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT)

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Economic Development subcommittee's key focus areas were to analyze Pine Bluff's current economic & community development conditions, identify key areas for growth and new economic development opportunities. The subcommittee recommends initial opportunity sectors in Housing, Business and Industry, Entertainment/Tourism, and Transportation/Aviation. We reviewed studies, reports, and plans from various agencies and organizations specific to Pine Bluff's overall economic development, needs, assessments and opportunities. We also realized there are new Industry opportunities we could explore, i.e. distribution/warehouse centers, broadband/high speed internet (data centers, agricultural technology), commercial office space and light manufacturing, aerospace, and hospitality (recreation, events, resort style lodging). Our focus for this specific report would be to identify the foundational needs and opportunities in order to attract additional development.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

Assess current economic & community development efforts by the city and identify key findings, new opportunities for growth and partnerships.

- **Mission Statement:** to assess Pine Bluff's current economic and community development landscape, identify foundational needs, and recommend strategic opportunities for sustainable growth.
- **Key Issues Identified:**
 - Issue 1: Entry level workforce viewed as poorly skilled, limited moderate to highly skilled workforce.
 - Issue 2: Insufficient single-family housing development and limited investment in neighborhood revitalization have contributed to population decline, reduced property values, and community disinvestment.
 - Issue 3: Underutilization of key communal assets — including the Port of Pine Bluff, major interstates and highways, railroads, the Arkansas River, Grider Field Airport, UAPB, and SEARK College — has limited the city's economic growth, regional connectivity, and workforce development potential.
 - Issue 4: The City's economic and community development efforts operate in silos, lacking coordination and data-driven strategies that could unlock major opportunities for development, expansion, and long-term impact.
 - Issue 5: Residents rate their likelihood to recommend Pine Bluff as a good place to start a business at just 2.6 out of 5, signaling a lack of confidence in the city's current entrepreneurial environment and economic support systems.

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The subcommittee's goal was to analyze current economic conditions, identify opportunities and make recommendations for immediate and long-term development. We have discussed and reviewed plans, studies, programs, budgets, site maps, etc. from various organizations, private and public, and conducted a public survey. These recommendations focus on addressing foundational and immediate conditions, but must be integrated into a broader, comprehensive economic development strategy—one grounded in rigorous research and data analysis to guide long-term planning and sustained growth.

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - 2020 HUD Consolidated Plan
 - 2022 City Comprehensive Plan
 - University Park Neighborhood Plan
 - Urban Renewal Agency Property List
 - NAACP The People's Plan
 - Pine Bluff Retail Recruitment Plan
 - 2022 Pine Bluff Market Study
 - 2021 Affordable Housing CHAS Data
- **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - Committee members 50+ years of experience
 - Pine Bluff Economic Community Development
 - Entrepreneurs
 - Developers
 - Community Development
 - Workforce Development
 - Economic Development
 - Business Development
 - Community Support Services
- **Community Input:**
 - Economic development online survey to residents of Pine Bluff, asking questions in regards to Pine Bluff Economic Development, housing, local government, business, workforce etc.
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - The Infrastructure and Economic Development Subcommittee conducted a comparative analysis to evaluate Pine Bluff's current economic landscape and identify both immediate and long-term development opportunities. The approach combined data-driven research, stakeholder engagement, and community feedback to create a comprehensive understanding of the city's challenges and potential.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Comprehensive Workforce Development Training Program

- **Description:** Develop a city-wide inclusive workforce training program for youth, adults, and seniors.
- **Justification:** This program is needed to enhance and develop a viable workforce for current and future employment opportunities. Strong labor market data can be used to attract business and offer new industry opportunities for Pine Bluff.
- **Expected Impact:** This will increase human capital, allow employers to retain employees with less turnover, increase higher level employment opportunities, and retain our graduates in Pine Bluff.
- **Resources Required:** Dedicated personnel to develop partnerships with stakeholders, sustainable funding, and a designated Economic Community Development Administration
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term (6-18 months) for initial planning; long-term (18+ months) for full deployment and sustainability

Recommendation 2: Housing Development Initiative

- **Description:** Develop and implement comprehensive project plans for new single family housing developments, affordable housing developments, and neighborhood revitalization strategies.
- **Justification:** Public interest/demand for new housing and neighborhood revitalization; it's been roughly 15 years since the last housing development and revitalization efforts by the city. Homebuyers are faced with limited housing stock in areas of interest, which causes us to lose to the county or other municipalities.
- **Expected Impact:** Increases population, tax revenue, private development opportunity, while improving quality of life for residents.
- **Resources Required:** Planning & development costs, implementation cost, local legislative actions personnel, etc.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term to secure funding and develop plans; long-term for construction and development

Recommendation 3: Pine Bluff Business & Industry Opportunity Initiative

- **Description:** Utilizing our current local resources to develop a business and industry opportunities master plan with Grider Field Airport, Railway system, Port of Pine Bluff, Retail, Tourism, Manufacturing, Agriculture and Entertainment. Strategic development of a specialized small business support program for startup, growth, sustainability. This initiative will help expand and identify new industry opportunities, utilizing current resources to create a master plan for entertainment and destination experiences.
- **Justification:** This will be the beginning of our "self-help" economic development model to address many concerns with lack of business, industry, tourism, entertainment etc.
- **Expected Impact:** Immediate economic impact, identify new and expanded industries in our community, i.e. Aviation- Aerospace opportunities, Retail Development opportunities, Tourism & Entertainment industry, distribution/ warehousing etc.
- **Resources Required:** financial resources allocated, personnel, legislative action, etc.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months) to compile existing resources and opportunities; Medium to long term for budget allocations and full implementation of programs.

Recommendation 4: Pine Bluff Economic and Community Development Department Revitalization

- **Description:** There is no true synergy between projects and initiatives with the city, key industries, and stakeholders. This department should be the lead administrator and/or facilitator for all of the Mayor's key economic & community development initiatives, programs and partnerships to create a holistic approach to Pine Bluff's overall economic development plans. Incorporate a renewed focus to increase economic community development offerings, expand the department's role to administer/facilitate programs and initiatives as suggested in this document.
- **Justification:** Create a continuity of short and long term planned development, Leverage projects for capital improvements. This will change public perception, create public support, and create projects that the community understands the purpose and deliverables.
- **Expected Impact:** Create synergy among stakeholders, renewed energy for a common goal, defined partnerships, and development of a true master plan for our city's growth.
- **Resources Required:** Mayor, Economic Community Development Director, and staff allocated to develop an action plan; potential budget allocation for additional support for strategic plan
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

Recommendation 1: Comprehensive Workforce Development Training Program

Potential Challenges:

- Funding constraints for program development and ongoing training operations.
- Limited stakeholder alignment across education, business, and government sectors.
- Participant recruitment may be difficult without targeted outreach strategies.

Mitigation Strategies:

- Pursue federal and state workforce development grants, including Department of Labor and EDA funds.
- Establish MOUs and partnerships with local schools, community colleges, and industry groups.
- Launch a targeted public awareness campaign highlighting program benefits and success stories.

Timeline:

Medium-term (6–18 months) due to foundational planning, stakeholder collaboration, and funding acquisition before program launch.

Recommendation 2: Housing Development Initiative

Potential Challenges:

- High upfront planning and development costs.
- Regulatory or zoning barriers delaying housing project approvals.
- Market skepticism from private developers due to previous inactivity.

Mitigation Strategies:

- Identify and apply for state housing funds and tax credits, including LIHTC (Low-Income Housing Tax Credit).
- Update or streamline zoning regulations and permitting processes to fast-track development.
- Conduct developer roundtables and public-private engagement sessions to build buy-in.

Timeline:

Medium-term (6–18 months) – Initial planning and zoning reform should begin within 6 months, with phased development thereafter.

Recommendation 3: Pine Bluff Business & Industry Opportunity Initiative

Potential Challenges:

- Complex coordination across multiple sectors and infrastructure systems.
- Lack of a unified master plan to guide development across rail, airport, port, and tourism assets.
- Budget limitations for small business support and new industry attraction.

Mitigation Strategies:

- Create a multi-agency task force to lead master planning and coordinate between public and private partners.
- Pursue EDA funding for regional planning and infrastructure investment.
- Partner with chambers, business incubators, and universities to offer technical assistance to entrepreneurs.

Timeline:

Long-term (18+ months) – Master planning and infrastructure alignment will take time but can begin with short-term deliverables like small business support programs.

Recommendation 4: Economic and Community Development Department Revitalization

Potential Challenges:

- Internal resistance to restructuring or expanding departmental responsibilities.
- Lack of clear governance or role definition in the current structure.
- Need for qualified leadership and staff to drive coordination.

Mitigation Strategies:

- Conduct an internal department audit and performance review to identify restructuring needs.
- Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and performance metrics in a strategic action plan.
- Appoint a qualified Economic Development Director with authority and vision to lead cross-sector collaboration.

Timeline:

Short-term (0–6 months) – Organizational changes and department revitalization can begin immediately with executive direction and support from the Mayor.

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

- These recommendations and key findings are a small piece to a vast Economic and Community Development strategy and would have to be reviewed with planning, timing, budgets and personnel in mind. Implementing recommendations addressing findings will have an immediate impact of progress, interest, and support. A Pine Bluff comprehensive development plan, The Economic and Community Development department, with the Mayor's direction and City Council's support can bring everyone and everything together increasing hope and pride for Pine Bluff.
-

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report:

Jeff Collins

Quranner Cotledge

Henry Dabner

Michael McCray

Jeff Pulliam

INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: TOM BENNETT (INFRASTRUCTURE)

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Infrastructure Subcommittee focused on evaluating the current state of Pine Bluff's infrastructure operations and comparing it to cities that have a proven and long-term track record for success in managing its infrastructure. The Subcommittee compared demographics, scope of responsibilities, priorities, challenges, and funding to identify actions and strategies to improve Pine Bluff's Street Department operations. Based on the research, the Committee made several actionable recommendations that if implemented, would result in substantial progress through a more proactive and comprehensive action plan to meet the infrastructure needs of our city. The Committee also attempted to depict a picture of how residents view current infrastructure conditions and willingness to contribute to funding improvements via tax increases.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

Assess current economic & community development efforts by the city and identify key findings, new opportunities for growth and partnerships.

- **Mission Statement:** To evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of Pine Bluff's infrastructure operations through strategic analysis, research, and community engagement. By studying best practices from successful municipalities and examining key factors such as demographics, operational responsibilities, funding mechanisms, and public perception, the Subcommittee seeks to identify actionable strategies that promote proactive, sustainable, and efficient improvements to the city's infrastructure. Our goal is to support a forward-thinking approach that strengthens the Street Department's operations and aligns with the needs and expectations of Pine Bluff's residents, ensuring a safer, more connected, and resilient community.
- **Key Issues Identified:**
 - Issue 1: The city's infrastructure is insufficient to promote or support economic and population growth.
 - Issue 2: If Pine Bluff is to prosper city leaders, citizens, the business community and other stakeholders must unite to make substantial investments (more than money) in and a long-term commitment to infrastructure improvements. Infrastructure is the foundation and base layer and is a requirement, not an option, for a successful city.
 - Issue 3: The city will need to utilize multiple sources (long-term bonds, tax assessments, grants, etc.) to fund capital investments in infrastructure improvements
 - Issue 4: Infrastructure assets and responsibilities need to be data-driven to determine priorities and ensure best use of infrastructure resources in line with the Mayor's vision for Pine Bluff.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

- **Key Issues Identified Continued:**

- Issue 5: Survey results show that the majority of citizens:
 - Would support a bond initiative and tax increases to fund infrastructure improvements
 - Have nonworking streetlights in their neighborhood.
 - Are dissatisfied with road conditions and signage.
 - Do not know how to report an infrastructure problem.
 - Said city was not responsive to reports of infrastructure problems.
 - Wrote in road conditions, sidewalks and lighting as the top 3 infrastructure concerns

- **Scope of Work:**

- The Street Department's stated mission is to provide the best service to citizens by maintaining and improving city streets, drainage, street signs, beautification efforts, other infrastructure components.
-

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Infrastructure Subcommittee's primary goals were to identify best practices across the industry and make actionable recommendations for immediate and long-term impact. The recommendations would need to be a part of a more comprehensive work plan culminating from thorough research and analysis of current infrastructure operations that identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as well as gaps between the current and desired state of operations. Finally, this report cannot exist in a vacuum, as some recommendations are dependent on actions outside of Street Department control, such as a robust and comprehensive city website to facilitate transparency and public communications.

- **Data & Research Sources:**

- Conway, Arkansas website: www.conwayarkansas.gov. very robust website with financial data, historical information, planning and development, current and future projects, etc.
- Department of Transportation, Conway AR
- Street Department, Bentonville, AR
- Conducted Phone interview with Bentonville Street Manager, Daniel Clardy.
- Bentonvillear.com - well populated and maintained website with current and historical information, consumer friendly, easy to use, good contact information.
- Population data, masterplans, project status, ordinance updates, etc.
- Bentonville311.com for reporting infrastructure problems. Easy to use site with 24 categorical links to report not only infrastructure issues, but also noise, open storage, water quality, animal control, etc.
- ActDataScout.com
- Pine Bluff City Clerk

- **Stakeholders Consulted:**

- City of Pine Bluff Finance Director, Street Department Budgets 2010, 2020, and 2024.
- Little Rock, Arkansas, Street Department Operations Division website: www.littlerock.gov.
- Tom Bennett, Former Director, Street Department, Pine Bluff
- Pine Bluff City Clerk
- Code Enforcement
- Committee members 50+ years of experience
- Pine Bluff Economic Community Development
- Entrepreneurs
- Developers
- Community Development
- Workforce Development
- Economic Development
- Business Development
- Community Support Services

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- **Community Input:**
 - Distributed surveys online and hard-copy surveys to eligible voters in Pine Bluff asking key questions that address infrastructure problems, potential funding sources, and responsiveness to addressing infrastructure problems. (Appendix A. Survey Results)
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - Conducted research and interviews with Arkansas cities to learn their best practices, challenges, and priorities (Appendix B. Comparative Analysis with Similar Cities)
 - Conway and Bentonville are top-rated, well-run cities in the state of Arkansas that have track records for successfully and efficiently managing its infrastructure. Pine Bluff would do well to model their success by benefitting from their learning experiences and incorporating their best practices.
 - **Conway, Arkansas**
 - Conway has increased in population from 2000 to 2024 by 61 percent. So, more tax dollars are available; but they have changed the way the city looks, feels and functions. The community and citizens must change their philosophy towards the city. Cities that grow are an attractive place to live. They have tapped into more areas of financing called “Metro Plan” and outsource 100 percent of pavement work. They are transparent about services provided. Residents can go the website to see current, future, and completed projects. The website displays organizational charts for the Department with contact information.
 - **Bentonville, Arkansas**
 - Bentonville’s population has increased by 53 percent since 2010, when the population was approximately 35,000 (just short of Pine Bluff’s current population). Bentonville also sees and positions itself as a regional leader in Northwest Arkansas and has developed a master plan to manage and plan growth and development accordingly. Bentonville’s approach to infrastructure management and development is forward leaning and proactive. The city pulls from a variety of sources to maximize technology, funding sources, human resources, and planning studies to determine priorities.
 - The scope of responsibility for the Bentonville street department far exceeds that of Pine Bluff. Bentonville has 1100 miles of road, 500 miles of open and closed drainage, 80 traffic lights, crosswalks, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian crosswalks to maintain. With a street department staff of only 28 employees, Bentonville successfully maintains its infrastructure by taking full advantage of external resources.
 - Comparatively, Pine Bluff has 35 employees and only about 370 miles of road that it struggles to maintain along with other infrastructure components.
 - **Best Practices**
 - Online work order system where city employees can document work being done and where residents can report infrastructure issues.
 - Contract out select and specialized tasks using state contract pool- IBIQ.
 - Updated and well populated website: Keeps public updated on infrastructure news projects, road closures, etc. Demonstrates transparency.
 - **Challenges**
 - Public communications of road work and coordination with external stakeholders (for road closures, for example).
 - Meeting ever increasing demands of population growth.
 - Public safety, especially for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.
 - **Priorities**
 - Road maintenance
 - Traffic signals
 - Bicycle lanes
 - Street signage

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Restructure and rename Street Department to Pine Bluff Transportation Department.

- **Description:** Restructure the existing Street Department and rename it to the Pine Bluff Transportation Department to reflect expanded roles and responsibilities.
- **Justification:** Modernizes the department to align with future services such as storm water management and rezoning; improves eligibility for transportation-related funding and grants.
- **Expected Impact:** Improved departmental structure, access to more funding opportunities, and better alignment with infrastructure goals.
- **Resources Required:** City Council approval, media/branding costs for logos, signage, stationery, etc.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 2: Create Two Areas: Street Operations Director and Engineering Director

- **Description:** Establish two leadership positions under the new department to divide responsibilities: Street Operations Director and Engineering Director.
- **Justification:** Creates clear lines of authority and specialization, enhancing efficiency and accountability.
- **Expected Impact:** Streamlined operations, improved service delivery, better planning and execution.
- **Resources Required:** Job descriptions, budget allocations, hiring process.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 3: Hire a Dedicated Transportation Grant Writer

- **Description:** Create a new position to focus exclusively on identifying and applying for transportation and infrastructure grants.
- **Justification:** Ensures consistent pursuit of funding opportunities, allows department to access federal and state grants effectively.
- **Expected Impact:** Increased funding for capital improvement projects and transportation initiatives.
- **Resources Required:** City Council approval, salary and benefits, workspace, audit for funding opportunities.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short to Mid-term (0-12 months)

Recommendation 4: Maximize Outsourcing

- **Description:** Evaluate and outsource suitable infrastructure work such as pavement repair through a transparent, qualifications-based process.
- **Justification:** Improves efficiency, quality, and cost-effectiveness; aligns with federal funding requirements.
- **Expected Impact:** Better road conditions, reduced potholes, efficient use of city resources.
- **Resources Required:** City Council approval, policy changes, outsourcing contracts, evaluation process.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Mid-term (6-18 months)

Recommendation 5: Inventory All Equipment

- **Description:** Conduct a full inventory of existing equipment to assess operability, usefulness, and technology standards.
- **Justification:** Ensures employees have the right tools and training to perform effectively; identifies gaps or inefficiencies.
- **Expected Impact:** Enhanced employee performance, informed budgeting and planning for equipment replacement.
- **Resources Required:** Personnel time, evaluation tools, database for tracking.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 6: Launch Comprehensive Online Work Order Request System

- **Description:** Implement a digital platform for internal and public use to initiate and track infrastructure work requests.
- **Justification:** Improves transparency, data collection, and efficiency in handling work orders.
- **Expected Impact:** Faster response times, increased public satisfaction, data-driven decision making.
- **Resources Required:** Software development or purchase, staff training, policy changes.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Mid-term (6–12 months)

Recommendation 7: Install Energy Efficient LED Streetlights, Reflective Street Signs, and New Pavement Markings

- **Description:** Upgrade infrastructure to include LED lighting, reflective signs, and markings across districts.
- **Justification:** Improves visibility and public safety, reduces energy and maintenance costs.
- **Expected Impact:** Safer streets, long-term cost savings, enhanced public perception.
- **Resources Required:** City Council approval, funding for materials and labor, property tax assessment.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Mid to Long-term (12–36 months)

Recommendation 8: Initiate Mandatory Quarterly City-Wide Cleanup and Street Assessment

- **Description:** Conduct regular cleanups and proactive street assessments involving city staff and community volunteers.
- **Justification:** Promotes community engagement, helps identify and address issues before they become major problems.
- **Expected Impact:** Improved city appearance, reduced complaints, better resource management.
- **Resources Required:** Scheduling tools, volunteer coordination, minimal equipment.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0–6 months)

Recommendation 9: Make All Pine Bluff Departments Responsible For Meeting OSHA Requirements

- **Description:** Assign each department the responsibility to meet OSHA standards and designate a trained Point of Contact (POC).
- **Justification:** Ensures safety compliance across departments, reduces liability and improves work conditions.
- **Expected Impact:** Greater safety awareness and lower risk of violations or incidents.
- **Resources Required:** Training programs, certification, departmental coordination.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short to Mid-term (0–12 months)

Recommendation 10: Increase Property and Sales Taxes; Explore Bond Initiative

- **Description:** Propose 1% increases in property, real estate, and sales taxes; explore 30-year bond to fund infrastructure.
- **Justification:** Survey shows public support; needed to counter declining revenue and fund capital improvements.
- **Expected Impact:** Enhanced ability to invest in long-term infrastructure, improved road and lighting systems.
- **Resources Required:** City Council and voter approval, financial planning, legal consultation.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Mid to Long-term (12–24 months)

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

Recommendation 1: Restructure and Rename Street Department to Pine Bluff Transportation Department

Potential Challenges:

- Resistance to change from staff or public
- City Council reluctance to approve
- Costs related to branding and materials

Mitigation Strategies:

- Conduct informational sessions for staff and community
- Present data showing benefits and funding opportunities
- Budget branding and marketing expenses in advance

Timeline:

- Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 2: Create Two Areas: Street Operations Director and Engineering Director

Potential Challenges:

- Budget constraints for creating two new leadership positions
- Difficulty in finding qualified candidates
- Transition period creating confusion over roles

Mitigation Strategies:

- Reallocate existing administrative funds if possible
- Use professional search firms or internal promotions
- Provide clear organizational charts and communication

Timeline:

- Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 3: Hire a Dedicated Transportation Grant Writer

Potential Challenges:

- Justifying budget for new position
- Competition for qualified grant writers
- Lack of initial results while onboarding and training

Mitigation Strategies:

- Emphasize return on investment through increased grant funding
- Offer competitive salary and benefits
- Set realistic goals and provide onboarding support

Timeline:

- Short to Mid-term (0-12 months)

Recommendation 4: Maximize Outsourcing

Potential Challenges:

- Perception of job loss among city workers
- Legal and procedural hurdles in procurement
- Risk of over-reliance on external vendors

Mitigation Strategies:

- Communicate that outsourcing supplements, not replaces, staff
- Ensure compliance with federal/state procurement laws
- Retain core in-house capabilities for oversight

Timeline:

- Mid-term (6-18 months)

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

Recommendation 5: Inventory All Equipment

Potential Challenges:

- Time-consuming data collection
- Lack of centralized asset management system
- Resistance from staff

Mitigation Strategies:

- Use digital tools to streamline inventory process
- Assign team leads to manage sections of the audit
- Provide clear purpose and benefits to staff

Timeline:

- Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 6: Launch Comprehensive Online Work Order Request System

Potential Challenges:

- Upfront costs for system development or purchase
- Staff training and adaptation
- Ensuring equitable access for all citizens

Mitigation Strategies:

- Explore cost-sharing with other departments or grants
- Provide step-by-step training and user guides
- Offer alternative request methods for citizens without internet

Timeline:

- Mid-term (6-12 months)

Recommendation 7: Install Energy-Efficient LED Streetlights, Reflective Signs, and Pavement Markings

Potential Challenges:

- High upfront capital costs
- Potential pushback on tax increase
- Logistics of area-by-area implementation

Mitigation Strategies:

- Educate public on long-term savings and safety benefits
- Phase implementation to manage cost
- Use energy savings to justify bond or tax increases

Timeline:

- Mid to Long-term (12-36 months)

Recommendation 8: Initiate Mandatory Quarterly City-Wide Cleanup and Street Assessment

Potential Challenges:

- Low volunteer turnout or inconsistent participation
- Scheduling conflicts or weather-related delays
- Resource limitations

Mitigation Strategies:

- Partner with local organizations, schools, and churches
- Use flexible scheduling and reschedule options
- Budget for minimal support staff and equipment

Timeline:

- Short-term (0-6 months)

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

Recommendation 9: Make All City Departments Responsible for Meeting OSHA Requirements

Potential Challenges:

- Need for additional training and oversight
- Staff time taken away from daily tasks
- Inconsistent implementation across departments

Mitigation Strategies:

- Develop standardized training and certification program
- Designate and empower OSHA POCs in each department
- Regular audits and interdepartmental support

Timeline:

- Short to Mid-term (0-12 months)

Recommendation 10: Increase Property and Sales Taxes; Explore Bond Initiative

Potential Challenges:

- Political and voter resistance
- Delay in receiving approval
- Perception of over-taxation

Mitigation Strategies:

- Use survey data to support proposals
- Run public awareness campaign
- Emphasize transparency and long-term benefits

Timeline:

- Mid to Long-term (12-24 months)

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

- Ultimately it is incumbent on the Director of the Street Department and the Mayor to determine the true value and viability of the information in this report. The information can feed into and/or help develop a master plan for the city's infrastructure and or serve as building blocks for such a plan. The Director should examine each recommendation to identify low-hanging fruit that will produce quick, high-impact wins. For example, coordinating with citizen volunteers and neighborhood watch groups to organize the first quarterly city-wide cleanup. should also determine which best practices he can begin instituting immediately. He should also consider a visit and tour—at a minimum—to Conway and Bentonville with infrastructure department heads. Finally, the Department should layer each recommendation with monetary costs, staffing, equipment needs, internal and external coordination, points, and a timeline for completion.
- Finally, he should initiate coordination with key stakeholders (such as Code Enforcement for beautification and City Clerk for bidding procedures) to ensure that all aspects of each action are a fully integrated efforts from start to finish.

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report:

Sharon Alexander

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EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE



EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: DR. TYRONE JACKSON

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Education and Workforce Subcommittee, composed of educators, nonprofit leaders, business professionals, and community stakeholders, met throughout February and March 2025 to assess Pine Bluff's educational and workforce development landscape. Through research, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration, the subcommittee identified key gaps and opportunities in educational access, industry partnerships, family engagement, and educator development. The committee's recommendations aim to align education with local workforce needs, strengthen community collaboration, and support lifelong learning from early childhood through career advancement.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The Education and Workforce Subcommittee consisted of educators, non-profit, business and community leaders. The subcommittee convened multiple times over the course of two months to draft a transition report focused on the educational and workforce challenges and opportunities in the Pine Bluff area. In addition to extensive research and discussion, the committee organized a stakeholder meeting to solicit input, listen to concerns and identify available resources for the committee's initiatives. Other actions included small group engagement within the committee and researching best practices in aspirational and comparable cities to Pine Bluff.

- **Mission Statement:** Enhance educational opportunities to better meet the needs of students and employers by evaluating existing educational programs, collaborating with employers and industry leaders, and fostering support for family and community engagement.
- **Key Issues Identified:**
 - Issue 1: There is a need to evaluate existing educational programs, collaborate with Pre-K-12, 2-year, and 4-year colleges, develop partnerships, improve access to education, and promote STEM education.
 - Issue 2: Lack of engagement with employers and industry leaders to develop partnerships that support job training and placement. Identify skill gaps in the local labor market. Identify local high demand careers.
 - Issue 3: There is a need to engage families to gain support for students during their entire educational journey. Educators feel that without this backing, students may struggle to grasp the importance and relevance of their education and training.
 - Issue 4: Lack of strategic initiatives to enhance educational outcomes and community engagement.
 - Issue 5: Enhance the certification and growth opportunities for our educators and educational leaders.

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The subcommittee arrived at its recommendations by holding stakeholder interviews, and best practices gleaned from our meetings and discussions.

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - A 2024 report about Arkansas Community Colleges
 - ADE Data Center Letter Grade Distribution (2022-2023)
 - Providence Talks (Closing the Word Gap), 2013
 - Lightcast Q1 2025 Data Set
 - WIOA Workforce Development pamphlet (American Job Center)
 - Southeast Arkansas College--Strategic Plan (Spring 2025)
- **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - In addition to the research and discussions, the subcommittee held a stakeholder meeting that consisted of educators, business and industry, and community agencies.
- **Community Input:**
 - Focus Group
 - Strategic Plan meetings held by SEARK College
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - The Education and Workforce Committee examined the best practices from approximately 30 comparable and aspirational cities and found insightful information from several cities. One major initiative that stood out was from the city of Providence, Rhode Island.
 - The initiative, Providence Talks (PT), was implemented in 2013. PT is a progressive program that began as a city-wide initiative with the goal of closing the language skills gap among low-income children/families. Data shows that use of this program can lead to improved testing scores on developmental assessments and improved language and literacy skills outcomes. The addition of this program would be a great benefit to the school systems and community of Pine Bluff.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Evaluate existing educational programs, collaborate with Pre-K-12, 2-year, and 4-year colleges, develop partnerships, improve access to education, and promote STEM education.

- **Description:** Develop an overall model which includes a breakout model using a Career Ladder with information about local jobs and wages that starts with Pre-K-12, 2-year, and 4-year colleges. The mayor's office may need to have an education liaison serving as the staff member charged with coordinating items identified in the model to work closely with members of the education community to implement initiatives described below.
 - Include information about the career interest inventory used by the school districts.
 - SEARK's Career Center, open to all districts, will be included.
 - Develop 2+2 agreements between SEARK and UAPB.
 - Short-term training, workforce courses, will be developed based on industry/ community/economic trends and needs and included in the model.
 - Create job training programs for first responders (police, fire, EMT) to upskill personnel and enhance public safety services.

- Soft Skills/Life Skills will be included throughout the model.
- The model will display and promote a smooth (seamless) transition from education to the workforce.
- Develop “Pathways to Success” offering second chance employment and skills training for individuals involved in corrective programs.
- Conduct skills gap analysis in collaboration with local employers, schools, and training centers.
- Create industry certified training programs in partnership with local businesses, trade schools, and community colleges.
- Develop an online job and training resource hub to connect residents with job openings, certification programs, and career counseling. (Ed 2 Go)
- Establish STEM learning hubs in schools, libraries and community centers featuring robotics, coding, and engineering workshops. (Work with the county library system for space).
- Launch STEM mentorship programs where local tech professionals and engineers guide students.
- Partner with regional employers and community colleges/universities to offer scholarships, competitions, and hackathons for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Integrate career exploration programs starting in middle and high schools to introduce students to high paying STEM careers. (Support the city by offering a resource list to assist career coaches, districts, and staff who might rely on callbacks and limited relationships)
- To recruit more students to the area, the city of Pine Bluff should include in its annual budget an appropriation for the local college and university to help with the upkeep of its infrastructure and campuses so that they are more appealing to local and out of town students.
- **Justification:** Stakeholders voiced concerns about current educational programs offered, and if they fit the needs of the community. The lack of collaboration is evident among Pre-K-12, 2-year and 4-year institutions to promote STEM education.
- **Expected Impact:** Students will transition smoothly from Pre-K-12 to the local 2-year and then 4-year institutions. Upon graduation students will be qualified for local jobs/positions.
- **Resources Required:** Meetings, conversations, agreements/MOUs between all local Pre-K-12, 2-year and 4-year institutions. Possible monetary resources as needed to support these efforts.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Conversations: Short-term (0-6 months) Program Development: Medium-term (6-18 months), Agreements and MOU’s: Medium-term (6-18 Months).

Recommendation 2: Strengthen engagement and enhance partnership development with local employers and industry leaders.

- **Description:** *Engage with employers and industry leaders to develop partnerships that support job training and placement. Identify skill gaps in the local labor market. Identify local high demand careers.*
 - *Invite business and industry leaders to a stakeholder meeting. Identify skill gaps, demands, etc.*
 - *Based on information gleaned from the stakeholder meeting adjustments will be made to curriculum, programs, equipment, etc.*
 - *Speak with stakeholders about internships.*
 - *Request that stakeholders become speakers in Pre-K-12 and Colleges.*
 - *Tap (youth and employers) into the Summer Youth program supported by the city.*
 - *Develop retention efforts to keep individuals in Pine Bluff to enter our workforce.*
 - *Establish a community policing workforce initiative where law enforcement collaborates with workforce agencies to provide job referrals and youth outreach.*
 - *Create a youth apprenticeship and internship initiative with stipends or incentives to encourage participation in high demand fields (healthcare, skilled trades, technology) (City Summer Youth Employment Program*

- **Justification:** Educational institutions need to ensure they are offering programs and training that meet the needs of local employers, identify the skill gaps and adjust curriculum/programs accordingly.
- **Expected Impact:** Local employers will have trained individuals that will fill the skill gaps within their companies.
- **Resources Required:** Meetings, conversations, partnership agreements with employers, MOUs with educational institutions. Possible monetary resources as needed to support these efforts.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Conversations: Short-term (0-6 months) Program Development: Medium-term (6-18 months), Agreements and MOU's: Medium-term (6-18 Months)

Recommendation 3: Promote family engagement to gain support for students during their entire educational journey.

- **Description:**
 - Parent/Family days and/or nights with Pre-K-12, 2-year, and 4-year institutions.
 - Take part in summer youth programs supported by the city.
 - Recruit families to take a larger part in Volunteer's for Public Schools (VIPS).
 - Provide other opportunities for parental involvement.
 - Implement a community workforce navigator system to assist residents in accessing education, job training, and social services.
 - Implement a comprehensive social-emotional learning (SEL) program paired with parental engagement.
- **Justification:** Stakeholders voiced concerns about current educational programs offered and determined if they fit the needs of the community. The lack of collaboration is evident among Pre-K-12, 2-year and 4-year institutions to promote STEM education.
- **Expected Impact:** Students will gain support from family and/or caretakers throughout their entire educational journey- educators are witnessing little to no support from families. Without this support, students do not understand or see the relevance of education and training.
- **Resources Required:** Meetings and conversations with parents and caregivers, recruitment efforts for volunteers, and volunteers in general. Possible monetary resources as needed to support these efforts. Enhancing the ability to have affordable sports programs.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Long-term (18+ months) and ongoing

Recommendation 4: Enhance education outcomes and community engagement.

- **Description:** Develop strategic initiatives to enhance education outcomes and community engagement.
 - Study successful initiatives from other school districts and use information gleaned from comparable and aspirational cities (e.g. Providence Talks program included in this report).
 - Gather input from diverse student groups, including those in corrective programs to understand their needs and aspirations.
 - Establish a coalition of leaders from local school districts and higher education institutions to jointly address challenges and assess the needs of students within the city.
 - Organize an advisory board to foster school-community partnerships and ensure the city is effectively supporting educational excellence.
 - Collaborate with local groups, faith-based organizations, and community alliances to maximize resource utilization.
- **Justification:** Education outcomes are low across most Pre-K-12 districts. Retention rates are low, and remediation rates are high among the local colleges.
- **Expected Impact:** Educational institutions will increase outcomes, retention and decrease remediation rates.
- **Resources Required:** Meetings and conversations among districts and colleges, review of successful initiatives and implement new strategies based upon the findings.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Long-term (18+ months) and ongoing

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

- **Potential Challenges:**
 - *Funding constraints, Pre-K-12 districts wanting to adhere to separate agendas without having sufficient collaboration (county/school district effort), and lack of community support.*
 - *The need for colleges to increase the number of 2+2 agreements.*
 - *Employers unable to partner due to fear of legal barriers.*
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - *Public/Private Partnerships: Forge stronger partnerships between government agencies, educational institutions, and the private sector. These collaborations can ensure that workforce development programs are responsive to current industry needs and that the education system is adequately preparing students for the workforce/labor market.*
 - *Internships: Increase the availability of internships and other work-based learning opportunities that allow students to gain practical experience while still in school.*
 - *Support additional paraprofessionals in the Pre-K-12 classrooms to promote STEM educational opportunities.*
 - *Enhance programs that support students with learning disabilities.*
- **Timeline:**
 - *Conversations: Short-term (0-6 months) Program Development: Medium-term (6-18 months), Agreements and MOU's: Medium-term (6-18 Months)*

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

The Mayor's Office should identify a staff member or an individual to serve as the liaison to work closely and monitor the progress of recommendations summarized in this report. The Education and Workforce report should be a standing item on the agenda of city council meetings with the individual providing an update on the progress being made in the area of challenges and opportunities as it relates to education and workforce.

- These recommendations provide a roadmap for addressing workforce education in Pine Bluff. Implementing these solutions will enhance educational opportunities to better serve both students and employers in the area.
- We urge the Mayor and City Council to prioritize these initiatives and work collaboratively with residents and stakeholders to bring them to fruition.

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report.

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FAITH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



FAITH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: JAMES MURRY

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The subcommittee's primary goal was to engage faith-based organizations and community leaders in developing actionable strategies to foster civic engagement, community collaboration, and improve Pine Bluff's overall quality of life. By leveraging the resources and influence of local faith communities, the subcommittee aimed to drive positive change across various sectors, including youth, public safety, economic development, and public relations.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

- **Mission Statement:** To foster a collaborative partnership between the city and faith-based organizations that enhances community cohesion, addresses critical social challenges, and promotes inclusive growth by leveraging the unique resources, networks, and leadership of faith communities.
- **Key Issues Identified:**
 - Issue 1: Community Disconnection
 - There was a noticeable lack of coordination and collaboration among churches, faith-based organizations, and the city's civic bodies. This disconnect limited the effectiveness of efforts to address critical community issues.
 - Issue 2: Negative Public Perception of Pine Bluff
 - Negative perceptions of the city, especially related to crime and urban decline, hindered efforts to attract investment, engage residents, and promote local pride.
 - Issue 3: Limited Resources for Community Development
 - Many faith-based organizations are stretched thin, lacking adequate resources, funding, and support to sustain impactful programs. These organizations face challenges in addressing pressing community needs, including youth programs, addiction recovery, and health services.
 - Issue 4: Lack of Faith Base Community Resource Guide
 - One of the significant barriers to effective collaboration between the city and faith-based organizations is the lack of a centralized, accessible resource guide that outlines available faith-based community services, programs, and support networks. Without a comprehensive guide, both faith communities and city officials struggle to fully utilize the wealth of resources available, leading to missed opportunities for collaboration, duplication of efforts, and inefficient service delivery.
 - Issue 5: Lack of a Formal Structure for Ongoing Engagement Policy Input
 - One of the key challenges in fostering strong partnerships between the city and faith-based organizations is the absence of a formal, structured framework for ongoing engagement and policy input. Without a system in place that facilitates continuous dialogue between city officials and faith leaders, there is a risk of missing valuable insights, overlooking community needs, and not fully leveraging the potential of faith communities in addressing key issues. This lack of structure can also hinder the integration of faith-based perspectives into city planning and policy-making processes.

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The subcommittee’s recommendations were informed by extensive research, community consultations, and a review of best practices from other cities facing similar challenges.

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - Reports on Pine Bluff’s community engagement and crime rates, including a 435-day period with no youth homicides.
 - Case studies on faith-based community engagement programs in other cities.
 - Research on the role of faith communities in urban revitalization efforts, focusing on churches with 501(c)(3) status and the services they provide.
 - List of churches with 501(c)(3) status in a Metropolitan Statistical Area.
- **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - Local churches and faith-based organizations
 - City officials
 - Faith leaders
 - Educators
 - Concerned residents
 - Community organizations
 - Local businesses and nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) status
- **Community Input:**
 - Resident feedback was gathered through surveys distributed at local churches, town hall meetings, and forums where Pine Bluff residents could express their concerns and share ideas.
 - Discussions at the Town Hall meeting helped gather input on community engagement, positive city branding, and challenges faced by faith-based organizations in providing services.
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - The subcommittee reviewed faith-based community engagement models from cities like Little Rock, Arkansas, and Memphis, Tennessee, where churches played an integral role in local development initiatives.
 - Key findings included the importance of forming coalitions among churches, organizing outreach programs, and using digital media for positive community messaging.
 - Faith-Based Models from Little Rock, Arkansas and Memphis, Tennessee.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Establish the Faith-Based Legislative Liaison Program

- **Description:** Establish the Faith-Based Legislative Liaison Program (FBLP) — a structured initiative that empowers and equips faith-based leaders and communities to serve as advocates in legislative processes. The program will connect religious communities with local and state policymakers to promote ethical, moral, and faith-aligned legislation. Core components include leadership and regional coordinators, trained legislative liaisons, and grassroots engagement through education, public awareness campaigns, and legislative monitoring.
- **Justification:** Faith communities in Pine Bluff are deeply embedded in civic life but currently lack formal representation in policymaking spaces. This initiative addresses the gap in moral and values-based advocacy by creating a coordinated structure through which faith leaders and congregants can engage with lawmakers. It empowers them to influence public policy, promote religious freedom, social justice, and uphold shared ethical values in governance.

- **Expected Impact:**
 - Increases civic engagement among faith communities.
 - Strengthens relationships between local government and faith-based institutions.
 - Provides a consistent faith-based voice in legislative matters.
 - Mobilizes grassroots support for ethical and community-centered legislation.
 - Increases transparency and awareness of policies affecting families, youth, and underserved communities.
 - **Resources Required:**
 - Budget: Staff salaries, training materials, advocacy tools, and community outreach resources.
 - Personnel: Program Director, Regional Coordinators, Administrative Support, and Volunteer Liaisons.
 - Training Infrastructure: Legislative education workshops, faith-based policy materials.
 - Legislative Access: Cooperation and communication channels with local/state representatives.
 - Legal Oversight: Ensure constitutional compliance for advocacy work.
 - **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)
 - Develop foundational infrastructure and leadership team.
 - Recruit and train initial cohort of Legislative Liaisons.
 - Begin outreach and relationship-building with policymakers.
 - Launch first wave of community awareness and training events.
-

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

- **Potential Challenges:**
 - Funding Constraints: Limited budget for new initiatives, especially for campaigns and task force operations.
 - Political Barriers: Potential resistance from some city officials or community members to new programs or shifts in priorities.
 - Public Perception: Overcoming negative stereotypes about Pine Bluff may be slow, especially with entrenched media portrayals.
 - Coordination Issues: Ensuring alignment and collaboration among different community organizations, churches, and the city government.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - Funding Constraints: Apply for external grants, partner with local businesses for sponsorship, and leverage volunteer support for campaigns and programs.
 - Political Barriers: Engage political leaders early in the planning process and demonstrate the tangible benefits of the proposed initiatives.
 - Public Perception: Use data-driven results from positive initiatives and focus on local success stories in media outreach.
 - Coordination Issues: Designate a liaison or coordinator to ensure effective communication and minimize duplication of efforts.
- **Timeline:**
 - The timeline for the recommendations varies from short term to long term.

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

- These recommendations provide a roadmap for addressing Faith and Community in Pine Bluff. Implementing these solutions will cultivate a stronger and more unified city.
 - A Legislative Liaison Program Using Faith-Based believers provides a structured approach for faith communities to impact policy while staying engaged in civic responsibilities. By equipping liaisons, educating communities, and fostering legislative relationships, this initiative can effectively advocate for faith-aligned governance and social justice.
 - We urge the Mayor and City Council to prioritize these initiatives and work collaboratively with residents and stakeholders to bring them to fruition.
-

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report.

Pastor Charlene Boone

Kim Brown

Billy Freeman

Ronald Jefferson

Kedrick Jones

Bro. Bail Muhammad

Pastor Judy Rudd

Bridget Sanders

Kim Jones Sneed

GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION



GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: HANK WILKINS, V

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government Transformation Subcommittee has identified key recommendations to modernize and enhance the efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness of Pine Bluff's city government. These initiatives, designed for implementation within 90 days to six months, focus on leveraging technology, improving accountability, and streamlining operations.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

- **Mission Statement:** The primary goal of the Government Transformation Subcommittee was to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of Pine Bluff's city government through modernization, improved communication, and streamlined operations. By leveraging technology, refining administrative processes, and fostering collaboration, the subcommittee aimed to create a more effective and responsive local government that better serves its residents.
- **Key Issues Identified:**
 - Issue 1: Lack of Modern Digital Infrastructure
 - *The city's website and technological systems were outdated, limiting transparency, accessibility, and efficiency in service delivery.*
 - Issue 2: Inefficiencies in Procurement and Resource Management
 - *Redundant and inconsistent purchasing processes led to waste and inefficiencies, highlighting the need for a dedicated Procurement Officer.*
 - Issue 3: Communication Gaps Between the City and Residents
 - *A lack of centralized communication strategies resulted in residents being uninformed about city services, events, and initiatives.*
 - Issue 4: Administrative Redundancies and Lack of Coordination
 - *Overlapping responsibilities among city boards, commissions, and departments hindered operational efficiency, reducing the effectiveness of governance and public service delivery.*
 - Issue 5: Lack of Dedicated Website Maintenance
 - *Departments struggled to keep website content updated, leading to outdated or missing information for residents and businesses.*
 - Issue 6: Limited Adoption of Modern Technology
 - *The absence of a structured approach to integrating new technology resulted in inefficiencies and limited service improvements across departments.*
 - Issue 7: Inadequate Employee Training and Accountability
 - *A lack of structured training programs led to inconsistent service quality, weak customer service, and gaps in departmental collaboration.*
 - Issue 8: Inefficient Blight Management and Beautification Efforts
 - *The city lacked clear protocols for addressing absentee landowner blight, leading to slow enforcement and uncoordinated beautification efforts.*

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Government Transformation Subcommittee utilized a data-driven and community-engaged approach to develop its recommendations. By analyzing existing challenges, consulting key stakeholders, gathering resident feedback, and benchmarking best practices from other cities, the subcommittee formulated a comprehensive strategy to improve Pine Bluff's government operations.

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - The subcommittee reviewed various reports, case studies, and statistical analyses to understand the city's current operational inefficiencies and potential areas for improvement. Key sources included:
 - Internal audits and performance reports from city departments
 - Government transparency and digital services best practice reports
 - Case studies on procurement and resource management in municipal governments
 - Data on civic engagement and communication effectiveness from peer-reviewed studies
- **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - The subcommittee engaged with key organizations, city departments, and subject matter experts, including:
 - Pine Bluff city officials and department heads
 - Local business leaders and economic development organizations
 - IT and digital services professionals with expertise in government modernization
 - Representatives from neighboring cities that have successfully implemented similar initiatives
 - Community advocacy groups focused on urban development and blight management
- **Community Input:**
 - Public surveys – Distributed online and in-person to assess residents' concerns about government transparency, communication, and service efficiency
 - Community meetings and forums – Held across different neighborhoods to hear firsthand experiences and suggestions
 - Feedback from local organizations – Collected through discussions with neighborhood associations and civic groups
 - Online submissions – Residents were encouraged to share concerns and ideas via the city's website and social media platforms
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - To identify effective solutions, the subcommittee examined best practices from other cities that have successfully implemented government modernization initiatives. Findings included:
 - Website Modernization: Cities with centralized web management and digital service integration saw increased transparency and efficiency in public service delivery.
 - Procurement Best Practices: Municipalities with dedicated procurement officers demonstrated cost savings and improved compliance.
 - Technology Adoption: Cities that formed technology task forces benefited from streamlined digital transformations, even in resource-constrained environments.
 - Blight Management: Effective programs incorporated proactive enforcement, public-private partnerships, and community-led beautification efforts.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Modernizing the City Website

- **Description:** Revamp the city website to enhance fiscal, administrative, and political transparency while integrating online payment options and ensuring accessibility for all residents.
- **Justification:** The current website is outdated, making it difficult for residents to find important information, conduct transactions, and engage with city services efficiently.
- **Expected Impact:** A modernized website will improve government transparency, streamline online transactions, and enhance public trust by providing easy access to important city information.
- **Resources Required:** Funding for website redesign, IT personnel, and possible third-party contractors for development and maintenance.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 2: Procurement Officer for Efficiency & Accountability

- **Description:** Establish a City Procurement Officer position to oversee purchasing, eliminate inefficiencies, and ensure financial responsibility.
- **Justification:** The city's procurement processes currently lack coordination, leading to waste and inconsistent spending. A centralized officer will enforce best practices and cost-saving measures.
- **Expected Impact:** Increased financial oversight, reduced redundancies in purchasing, and improved efficiency in acquiring and disposing of city assets.
- **Resources Required:** Budget allocation for a new position, office resources, and integration with finance and operations teams.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-3 months)

Recommendation 3: Dedicated Citywide Webmaster

- **Description:** Hire or designate a City Webmaster responsible for maintaining and updating website content across all departments.
- **Justification:** Departments struggle to keep website content current, leading to outdated or missing information that impacts public accessibility and trust.
- **Expected Impact:** Improved accuracy and timeliness of public information, better user experience, and enhanced transparency.
- **Resources Required:** Salary for a dedicated webmaster, potential training for department liaisons managing content updates.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-3 months)

Recommendation 4: Technology Task Force

- **Description:** Form a Technology Task Force to assess, recommend, and support the integration of modern technologies across all city departments.
- **Justification:** Outdated systems and limited IT resources hinder service delivery, productivity, and cost-effectiveness, particularly in the face of staffing and budget constraints.
- **Expected Impact:** Increased efficiency, better service delivery, and long-term cost savings through innovative, technology-driven solutions.
- **Resources Required:** Volunteer or part-time experts, minimal budget for research and implementation trials, potential grant funding for major projects.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 5: Improved Training & Collaboration

- **Description:** Implement comprehensive training programs for city employees to improve professionalism, customer service, and interdepartmental collaboration.
- **Justification:** Inconsistent service quality, unclear job responsibilities, and lack of coordinated efforts across departments reduce efficiency and public satisfaction.
- **Expected Impact:** Increased public engagement, better-informed residents, and improved trust in city leadership.
- **Resources Required:** Salary for a Communications Officer, software for digital outreach, and production resources for video content.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-3 months)

Recommendation 6: City Communications Officer

- **Description:** Appoint a City Communications Officer to develop a robust public communication strategy, including digital outreach and a web-based city update series.
- **Justification:** Many residents are unaware of city services, events, and policy updates due to inconsistent communication efforts.
- **Expected Impact:** Increased financial oversight, reduced redundancies in purchasing, and improved efficiency in acquiring and disposing of city assets.
- **Resources Required:** Budget allocation for a new position, office resources, and integration with finance and operations teams.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-3 months)

Recommendation 7: Streamlined Blight Management & Beautification

- **Description:** Establish clear protocols to address absentee landowner blight, beautification efforts, and enforcement follow-ups.
- **Justification:** Unaddressed blight contributes to crime, lowers property values, and reduces community pride. The city needs a proactive approach to code enforcement and beautification.
- **Expected Impact:** Safer, cleaner neighborhoods, increased property values, and improved public perception of Pine Bluff.
- **Resources Required:** Coordination between code enforcement and public works, potential policy adjustments, and budget for beautification initiatives.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 8: Review of City Boards & Commissions

- **Description:** Conduct a review of existing city boards and commissions to identify redundancies, improve governance, and optimize resource allocation.
- **Justification:** Overlapping roles and administrative inefficiencies slow decision-making and waste resources. Streamlining these entities will improve city governance.
- **Expected Impact:** More efficient decision-making, reduced administrative costs, and increased government effectiveness.
- **Resources Required:** Legal and administrative review, stakeholder input, and potential restructuring recommendations.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

The successful implementation of the Government Transformation Subcommittee's recommendations will require overcoming several potential roadblocks. Below are the key challenges identified, along with strategies to mitigate them and a realistic timeline for execution.

- **Potential Challenges:**
 - Funding Constraints – Limited budget resources may hinder efforts to modernize technology, hire key personnel, and implement training programs.
 - Political Barriers – Resistance from city leadership or administrative inertia could slow down reforms, especially those requiring restructuring or new positions.
 - Public Perception & Engagement – Residents may be skeptical about changes or unaware of how reforms will benefit them, leading to low adoption rates.
 - Departmental Resistance to Change – City staff may resist new technology, procurement processes, or transparency measures due to unfamiliarity or fear of increased oversight.
 - Technology Integration Challenges – Implementing new systems across departments may face compatibility issues, data migration difficulties, or delays in training staff.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - *Seek Grant Funding & Public-Private Partnerships – Explore state and federal grants, as well as partnerships with local businesses and universities, to offset costs for website modernization, training, and technology upgrades.*
 - *Engage City Leadership & Build Consensus – Present clear data on cost savings and efficiency gains to city officials and department heads to foster buy-in and reduce political resistance.*
 - *Public Awareness Campaigns – Utilize the new City Communications Officer and digital outreach strategies to educate residents on the benefits of government reforms, increasing engagement and support.*
 - *Phased Implementation with Staff Involvement – Roll out changes incrementally, starting with pilot programs, and provide training sessions to help city employees adapt to new processes.*
 - *Leverage Existing Infrastructure Where Possible – Use current technology platforms and optimize existing city resources before investing in entirely new systems to minimize costs and disruptions.*
- **Timeline:**
 - *Short-Term (0–3 months)*
 - *Appoint a Procurement Officer to address inefficiencies.*
 - *Hire/designate a Citywide Webmaster.*
 - *Implement a City Communications Officer to enhance public outreach.*
 - *Mid-Term (3–6 months)*
 - *Revamp the city website for improved transparency and functionality.*
 - *Establish the Technology Task Force to guide modernization efforts.*
 - *Launch initial training and interdepartmental collaboration programs.*
 - *Begin streamlining blight management processes.*
 - *Long-Term (6+ months)*
 - *Fully integrate best practices in procurement and financial accountability.*
 - *Implement ongoing training and performance improvement programs.*
 - *Complete the review and restructuring of city boards and commissions.*
 - *Establish recurring digital engagement strategies, such as a web-based city update series.*

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

The Government Transformation Subcommittee’s recommendations provide a clear and actionable roadmap for modernizing Pine Bluff’s city government. By leveraging technology, streamlining operations, and enhancing communication, these initiatives will improve government transparency, efficiency, and responsiveness. Successful implementation will lead to a more informed and engaged public, better service delivery, and stronger financial stewardship.

- Implementing these solutions will enhance infrastructure, improve public trust, create jobs, and make city services more accessible and efficient. Investing in these reforms will not only address long-standing operational challenges but also position Pine Bluff as a forward-thinking city ready to meet the needs of its residents.
- We urge the Mayor and City Council to prioritize these initiatives and work collaboratively with residents, businesses, and community stakeholders to bring them to fruition. The time to act is now—by embracing these transformative changes, Pine Bluff can build a more modern, transparent, and effective government that truly serves its people.

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report.

Marilyn Farris

Kim Fox

Ernest Jones

Alderman Bruce Lockhart

Courtney Pugh

Nicole Pugh

Anthony Terry

Michael Turley, Phd

Ivan Whitfield

Rev. Hank Wilkins, IV

PUBLIC SAFETY



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: DANNA "SUSIE" POWELL

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Safety Subcommittee analyzed concerns voiced by current and former employees of the police and fire departments, resident input, and independent data retrieval. Combining these data streams with the experience and professional insights of committee members, we present a series of public safety recommendations that will lead to a safer, more stable city. The recommendations address the lack of trust and confidence the public has in the police department, perception and reality of crime, the safety of patrol officers, ineffective recruitment, poor retention in the police department, low case clearance rates, the of lack veteran officers, and the high ratio of supervisors to officers. The subcommittee's recommendations aim to address these challenges to create a safer, more efficient, and more equitable public safety system for Pine Bluff.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

- **Mission Statement:** To address the Public Safety services and needs of the Pine Bluff Police Department and Pine Bluff Fire Department.
- **Key Issues Identified:**
 - Issue 1: The Police Department has inadequate staffing for basic police operations.
 - Issue 2: The Police Department has ineffective recruiting and retention of personnel.
 - Issue 3: The Police Department operates with a dangerously low level of institutional knowledge.
 - Issue 4: Policy and practices do not follow current ordinances.
 - Issue 5: Unaddressed communal blight connected to high crime.
 - Issue 6: Maintain transparent data for the public and internal analysis.
 - Issue 7: The ratio of Police Department supervisors vs. patrol ranked personnel must be corrected.
 - Issue 8: The relationship with the county jail is ineffective.
 - Issue 9: A pervasive culture of favoritism and nepotism exists within the department, leading to broad perceptions of inequity and an environment of distrust.
 - Issue 10: There is a general lack of confidence and trust in the Police Department - both from the community and internally among officers.

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - Statistical Data: Requested from the Pine Bluff Police Department and the Pine Bluff Fire Department. Both agencies use a reporting system (Application Data Systems Inc. (A.D.S.I.) that was utilized for data review. City Ordinances and past surveys were obtained online. Using piecemeal information from the Police Department, spreadsheets were created by the committee based on paper records received.
- **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - Neighborhood Watch, former chiefs of police, city attorney's office, former Mayor, statistical analyst with a doctorate in criminal justice.
- **Community Input:**
 - Neighborhood Watch meetings, community survey, confidential interviews with current employees, interviews with past employees.

- **Comparative Analysis:**

- The committee looked at other city agencies: Hot Springs, Little Rock, North Little Rock, Conway, Bryant, Benton, Sherwood, and Jacksonville Police Departments. Pine Bluff has some unique challenges based on our declining population, high percentage of officers living in poverty, lack of businesses, poor variety of restaurants, and lack of tourism. The committee concludes that Pine Bluff's social and economic conditions are so different from the other communities consulted that many of their strategies aren't directly relevant to our local situation. That said, the pay scales were compared across all eight cities. Pine Bluff Police Department starting salary is an average of \$9,081.12 per year behind the other agencies. This is a major factor driving recruitment and retention issues. (See Appendix for Table)

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Prioritize the recruitment, retention, and adequate staffing of the Police Department, with a specific focus on the Patrol and Investigative Divisions. Change shifts to 12 hours.

- **Description:**

- Current staffing levels present a risk to both public safety and officer well-being. Patrol officers on Swing and Graveyard shifts on Friday and Saturday nights work with as few as **four** officers per shift. The average experience for patrol ranked personnel on swing shift is 2.60 years on Friday night and 1.83 years of experience on Saturday night. The average years of experience for graveyard shift is 1.86 on Friday night and 2.24 average years of experience on Saturday night. This is dangerous for the officers and for our citizens. The Investigative Division does not have enough staff to properly investigate felony crimes causing an unacceptable level of unsolved and open felony cases.
- The committee recommends a shift change from the current 10 hour shift to four 12-hour shifts WITHOUT rotating days off. The new schedule would include the four captains being assigned to a shift, the investigative division being assigned to the same shift but would remain in their division. All personnel including the investigative division would be off three out of four Sundays and work ONE Sunday out of FOUR. This recommendation puts more officers on the street to ensure officer safety and more investigators working felony crimes.

- **Justification:**

- On weekend evenings and nights there has been as few as four officers on duty per shift. One need not look further than the fact that there are six permanent patrol zones to see the severity of the problem. This shortfall creates an eminent safety risk for officers and the community while also providing inadequate service for the community. Until a sufficient number of officers can be hired, trained, and deployed, a comprehensive change in scheduling appears to be the only viable way to increase coverage.
- For background, the committee asked for case clearance data. Cases are considered "cleared when they have been resolved through arrest (or other categories of resolution). This is a measure of how effectively the agency deals with the cases it is assigned. Upon asking, the committee was informed that this data was not readily available. The absence of this kind of very basic operational data by itself indicates a broad and inexcusable administrative failure. (Please see the chart of clearance rates in Appendix.)

- **Expected Impact:** These changes will yield a higher number of officers per patrol shift. This should decrease call response times for officers as well as backup. The Investigative Division will gain a supervisor position through reassignment from patrol. The investigative Division will have a detective available on Sunday to work with the patrol officers - to train them in the fundamentals of report writing, evidence documentation and gathering. The investigation division will also have someone working seven days a week, which will save call-outs which will save in overtime.

- **Resources Required:** There are no budgetary needs, added personnel or legislative action needs for this to be implemented. This requires a policy change and the buy-in from impacted personnel.

- **Implementation Timeline:** This change could occur immediately. The change would need to be started on Sunday of a new pay period.

Recommendation 2: Improve recruiting and retention of essential personnel.

- **Description:**
 - To retain the 25 officers with 0 - 9 years' experience, and the 12 officers with 5-9 years' experience, longevity pay is an absolute necessity.
 - Under the current structure, the department gives a longevity raise at 10, 20, and 28 years of service. These intervals have little impact for early officers. The committee recommends increasing base salaries following this schedule:
 - After of one year successful probation 2.00 %
 - Two years at anniversary date 2.50 %
 - Three years at anniversary date 3.00%
 - Four years at anniversary date 3.50 %
 - Five years, 4.00 %
 - Six years, 4.50%
 - Seven years, 5.00%
 - After seven years, the 5% increase will continue until year 12.
 - At year 12, a 7% percent increase will be given.
 - The last increase will be at 22 years at a rate of 10% that will last until retirement.
 - If any personnel should stay past 33 years, the committee recommends no more increases after the 33 year mark.
 - See Chart in Appendix.
- **Justification:** By giving patrol officers longevity pay, it creates an incentive to stay at Pine Bluff instead of moving to agencies with higher pay. Losing experienced officers hurts the department in several ways. Inexperienced officers are typically less knowledgeable, less decisive, more inefficient, and generally less confident in their work. This creates workplace risks and risks for the community. Longevity pay also addresses another systemic flaw in the department. Absent any other mechanism to reward excellent performance or tenure, promotion is the only avenue for advancement. That has created the situation discussed below where the PBPD has many times more supervisors than it needs or can afford.
- **Expected Impact:** The police department will grow in average years of experience and recruitment deficits will start to resolve.
- **Resources Required:** A significant budget increase for the police department will be required to sustain the longevity pay. Those funds could come from removing 5 officers from the 116 allocation putting the total number of patrol personnel back to 111. This is also subject to union negotiations and legislative action.
- **Implementation Timeline:** medium-term (6-18 months)

Recommendation 3: Establish a formal knowledge retention and transfer program to correct the low level of institutional knowledge.

- **Description:**
 - Recruit Veteran Officers to address both the overall officer shortage and the lack of institutional knowledge; offer a sign on bonus that would extend for the first three years of employment and would end at the three year anniversary hire date. The committee also recommends that experienced officers would have a starting base salary equal to the last rank and years of service held by the officer. For instance, if an applicant were a lieutenant at their last place of employment with 12 years' experience, this person would start at current lieutenant's pay and the pay raises equivalent to 12 years of service with the PBPD.
 - The recommendation for recruiting bonus for experienced officers with 20 years or greater service is \$10,000.00, 15 years \$7,500.00 and 10 years 5,000.00.
 - This recruitment program would run for six months or until the maximum number of officers allowed were recruited, whichever comes first. Any extension would require city council approval. The maximum number of officers to be recruited under this proposal is twenty. (See table for reference in Appendix.)

- While this program would require the assignment of considerable resources, the committee feels the current dangerous staffing situation requires an approach that will provide quick relief. The projected maximum annual cost for this program would be approximately \$200,000.
- The officers recruited under this program would all be assigned to the Patrol Division. Their institutional knowledge and experience would be an invaluable training and acculturation tool for less experienced officers. At the end of the first year, the experienced officers would be transferred to specialized divisions, based on their areas of expertise. At the end of the second year, the experienced officers would be assigned to specialized divisions that addressed whatever the current issues are within the city.
- At the end of the three years, some of the officers would likely retire having locked in the highest possible level of retirement pay under the current LOPFI system guidelines. For the officers that do not retire, they will be assigned at the discretion of the Chief of Police but would no longer receive the extra pay incentives. We believe their experience, mentorship, and influence will help stabilize and grow this PBPD.
- This program would have a great deal of public relations value as it signals a strong change in administrative priorities and a commitment to resolving systemic flaws in current agency practices.
- **Justification:** The low average experience level combined with an overall shortage of officers must be addressed. This approach will address the dire shortage in each shift of the patrol division.
- **Expected Impact:** Along with other system-wide changes, the public will see a better trained, more experienced, more responsive agency. Institutional knowledge and tradecraft will improve. Overall service delivery will improve.
- **Resources Required:** This will require at maximum an additional \$200,000.00 per year for three years. It will likely require less than this figure depending on the qualifications and experience of program applicants. This revenue would come from another reduction of four more of the vacant patrol positions. This would push the number back to 107 budgeted patrol ranked personnel. This reduction would only last for three years when the incentive sign on ends.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Middle-term (6-18 months) to allocate necessary budget.

Recommendation 4: Align Policy and Practices to Follow Current Ordinances

- **Description:**
 - There are currently 64 take home vehicles being used by the Pine Bluff Police Department. At the time of the report, there are 75 sworn personnel employed by the department. Pine Bluff Police Department is following Policy 106 in regard to who is authorized to use a take home vehicle.
 - However, policy 106 does not comply with city ordinance 6804 passed July 5, 2023. Ordinance 6804 changed the wording to read: "Also, employees who have 20 years of service or more with this department and live within the within the city limits of Pine Bluff Jefferson County, Arkansas, may be authorized a take home vehicle with consideration given to past performance and conduct."
 - According to information supplied by the Police Department, after passage of the amendment to Policy 106, take home vehicles were offered as a recruiting tool.
 - An addition to the policy provides that "The Pine Bluff Police Department has set a limitation of 15 miles outside of the city limits, but within Jefferson County, Arkansas, as the maximum geographic boundary of this policy. Officers who reside further than 15 miles outside the city limits will not be able to participate in the take home car program. City owned vehicles must be stored/housed at the address submitted on the permission form for authorization to participate in the program. Vehicles shall not be left on through streets overnight. Cul-de-sacs, and private shared driveways are permitted. If there is no approved space for the vehicle at the officer's private residence, the vehicle must be parked on the city lot at State Street." (See Ordinances 6804, 6178, 6326, and 6804 in Appendix.)

- The mayor, subject to approval by the city council, is the decision maker respecting who make take a city car home.
 - The city council has enacted a general rule that a city employee who uses a city vehicle in his or her job parks it in a city lot when his/her shift ends and does not take it home or some other place.
 - The city council has outlined specific exceptions, specifying who make take a city vehicle home and under what circumstances.
 - The mayor is obligated to compile a list of who takes a city car home, keep it up-to-date, and make an annual report of usage.
 - The Finance Director is to keep track of city vehicles used in travel and ensure compliance with the applicable IRS and state tax rules.
 - Department heads who have been delegated the authority to authorize an employee to take a city vehicle home must document the action to verify compliance with the city council's rules and promptly notify the mayor so she may update her list.
 - Police Department Policy No. 106 must be interpreted to be consistent with Ordinance No. 6178.
 - Revising existing city code should be considered to clear up any confusion.
- **Justification:**
 - The committee recommends the Mayor's office investigate the justification for 64 out of 75 police personnel taking their vehicles home. Ordinance 6804 does that authorize this action. If this practice is going to continue, we recommend it be approved by the Mayor and City Council.
 - Aligning the practice with policy will ensure compliance, potentially save taxpayer dollars, and ensure accountability and transparency.
 - **Expected Impact:** This will address the usage of take home cars to ensure current practices follow legislation and have approval by the Mayor to improve community trust.
 - **Resources Required:** Investigation into this matter by the Mayor or her designee.
 - **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (30 days; 0-6 months)

Recommendation 5: Adopt an Anti-Blight Strategy to address High Crime

- **Description:** The committee has looked at the major blight issues in the higher crime areas in Pine Bluff. The data was collected by using Gun Violence Intervention Committee. This strategy should include aggressive code enforcement, strategic demolition, rehabilitation incentives, and community partnerships to transform abandoned or neglected structures into assets. Cross-departmental collaboration between code enforcement, public safety, planning, and community development is essential to ensure that blight reduction efforts lead to both crime prevention and neighborhood revitalization.
- **Justification:** Blighted properties create physical environments that foster criminal activity by offering cover for illicit behavior and signaling neglect, which can erode community trust and public safety. Numerous studies have shown a strong correlation between vacant, abandoned properties and elevated crime rates, particularly violent crimes.
 - The committee asked for a report from the Code Enforcement Department on February 7, 2025 and then again on February 12, 2025.
- **Expected Impact:** The police department being involved with Code Enforcement would allow the Code Enforcement officers to have backup and not be afraid of intimidation of potential violators. A coordinated and proactive approach to removing or repurposing blighted structures can disrupt crime patterns, improve resident morale, encourage private investment, and help rebuild a sense of ownership and pride in communities.
- **Resources Required:** increased staffing and training, requesting bids for potential contractors, budget allocation to increase blight remediation efforts, and additional funding to secure and redevelop property
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months) for initial strategy and long term for full implementation

Recommendation 6: Establish a comprehensive and transparent data management system to support evidence-based policing and public accountability.

- **Description:**

- The Police Department's current failure to maintain and analyze its own calls for service and crime trend data presents a significant administrative deficiency. Since the transition of MECA's records management system from ADSI to Motorola Flex in 2021, the department has continued using an outdated system (ADSI) that no longer generates core dispatch or call data. This has resulted in a lack of accessible internal data on crime trends, response times, call volume, and resource deployment—critical components of modern policing.
- When requested, data from MECA was provided in formats that were not conducive to analysis. The information required extensive reformatting and conversion before it could be used, highlighting a clear absence of internal data infrastructure. Without a reliable data system, it is unclear how the department allocates resources, evaluates performance, or identifies patterns in crime and community needs.
- City Resolution 4523, passed in April 2022, formally ended the Shared Agency Agreement with MECA and Motorola Solutions due to technical and financial barriers. However, no adequate replacement strategy has been implemented, and the current system continues to hinder transparency, operational efficiency, and strategic planning.
- The committee includes members with extensive experience in law enforcement, public safety policy, and criminal justice research. Collectively, we view this deficiency as a serious threat to effective governance and public safety. The lack of data-informed decision-making is especially concerning given the depth of professional experience within the Police Department's leadership, including several senior officers with graduate degrees and decades of service.
- To move forward, the City should require the Police Department to adopt a modern records management system, align its operational practices with data-driven policing principles, and ensure that crime and call-for-service data is regularly collected, analyzed, and made accessible for both internal and public review.
- When asked what guiding strategies inform the Police Department's operations, leadership referenced the International Association of Chiefs of Police's Six Pillars of 21st Century Policing. While these pillars—such as building trust, promoting officer wellness, and embracing technology—reflect important national standards, the committee found no evidence that these principles are integrated into measurable departmental goals or operational practices.
- Moreover, the lack of interoperability between MECA's Motorola Flex system and the Police Department's outdated ADSI system has severely limited access to real-time data. Without the ability to analyze calls for service, crime patterns, or performance indicators, the department is unable to align its actions with the Six Pillars or develop evidence-based strategies for community safety and resource allocation.
- This breakdown in systems integration represents not only a technical failure but also a leadership gap in prioritizing data-driven management. Reestablishing compatibility between systems is essential to ensuring that strategic goals are not only aspirational but actionable.

- **Justification:**

- Effective policing requires timely and accurate data. Restoring interoperability between records systems will enhance transparency, accountability, and strategic planning across the department.

- **Expected Impact:**

- The Police Department will regain access to the foundational data necessary for operational efficiency, resource deployment, and performance evaluation. Supervisors will be able to track demand, set measurable goals, and respond proactively to crime trends.

- **Resources Required:**

- Technical consultation with MECA and Motorola Solutions
- Potential procurement of updated software or interface solutions
- IT support for implementation and training

- **Implementation Timeline:**

- Medium-term (0–9 months) — Initial vendor consultations and technical assessments should begin immediately to minimize further operational disruption.

Recommendation 7: Rebalance the ratio of supervisory personnel to patrol officers through a promotion moratorium and focused recruitment.

- **Description:** The current structure of the Pine Bluff Police Department reflects a disproportionate number of supervisory roles relative to patrol-ranked officers. This imbalance strains operational capacity and creates inefficiencies in frontline service delivery. As of this report, the department includes one Chief, one Assistant Chief, two Deputy Chiefs, four Captains, eleven Lieutenants, twenty Sergeants, and only 44 patrol officers—less than half of the 80 recommended minimum.
 - This supervisor-heavy structure results in underutilized command personnel while simultaneously leaving critical patrol functions understaffed. Most national law enforcement guidelines, including those from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the U.S. Department of Justice, recommend a span of control between 1 supervisor per 11-15 officers. Given Pine Bluff's high volume of inexperienced patrol officers, a more conservative ratio of 1 supervisor per 5-6 officers may be warranted during the department's rebuilding phase.
 - The committee recommends an **immediate moratorium** on promotions until patrol staffing reaches at least 80 fully certified officers. Of the 36 new hires needed to meet this benchmark, at least 20 should be experienced officers (as recommended in a previous section), with the remaining slots filled by certified or certifiable candidates. Promotions should resume only after these hiring targets have been met and sustained.
- **Justification:**
 - An imbalanced rank structure weakens field operations, overburdens existing patrol staff, and undermines internal morale. Realigning this ratio will help stabilize day-to-day operations, improve supervisory effectiveness, and support the long-term development of the patrol division. Moreover, this realignment will help deter perceptions of favoritism in promotions and encourage a culture of merit-based advancement.
- **Expected Impact:**
 - Improved patrol coverage and officer safety
 - A more efficient and accountable supervisory structure
 - Increased capacity for mentorship, training, and retention of younger officers
 - A healthier organizational culture that prioritizes frontline service
- **Resources Required:** No additional funding required. Use existing budget allocations for new hires. Administrative policy revisions regarding promotions and rank restructuring.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months) - begin with a promotion freeze, targeted recruitment campaign, and staffing evaluation to support a rebalanced workforce.

Recommendation 8: Develop a long-term strategy to ensure consistent and effective jail access for Pine Bluff detainees.

- **Description:**
 - The committee requested data from the Police Department regarding detainee transport and jail refusals but was informed that such records are not maintained internally. Instead, this information must be obtained from the Jefferson County Detention Center. This lack of basic recordkeeping reflects a broader issue of limited oversight and inadequate tracking of detention outcomes.
 - Concerns over ineffective jail access were raised by Pine Bluff police personnel, business owners, and community members, who reported that offenders were frequently not transported or admitted to the county jail. Supervisors within the Police Department confirmed that detainees were routinely refused housing by the Jefferson County Detention Center.
 - This situation stems from a longstanding dispute between the City of Pine Bluff and Jefferson County over jail bed payments. In 2020, the county instituted a \$30 per day fee per detainee. The city disputed this fee based on a previous agreement and subsequently filed a lawsuit. That lawsuit was settled on March 12, 2025, following years of legal wrangling, including a ruling by the Arkansas Court of Appeals in favor of the county.
 - In the absence of a stable jail agreement, Pine Bluff officers have had limited ability to detain individuals, which undermines public safety and the credibility of law enforcement. The committee recommends that the city consider developing its own detention facility, either a limited-use overnight holding facility (Arkansas Code § 18-1001) or a full-service jail (Arkansas Code § 17-1018), with multiple occupancy units.
- **Justification:** A city of Pine Bluff's size and crime rate cannot safely or effectively function without consistent access to a jail facility. When offenders are not detained, the deterrent effect of arrest is diminished, community trust in law enforcement erodes, and officers are limited in their ability to enforce the law. Establishing a city-operated facility would give Pine Bluff autonomy over its jail operations, improve accountability, and restore the integrity of the local justice system.
- **Expected Impact:** Guaranteed space for the housing of detainees, especially violent offenders. Strengthened public safety and deterrence. Greater operational independence from county-level conflicts. Potential for cost recovery if a multi-occupancy model is pursued
- **Resources Required:** Feasibility study and legal analysis; capital funding for construction and staffing; formal approval by the Mayor and City Council; exploration of state and federal funding sources
- **Implementation Timeline:** Long-term, contingent on mayoral priorities, council support, and availability of funding. Initial study and planning should begin within the first year of the administration.

Recommendation 9: Implement transparent and merit-based personnel practices to eliminate favoritism, rebuild morale, and restore organizational trust.

- **Description:**
 - Interviews conducted with more than one-third of current Pine Bluff Police Department officers revealed a consistent and troubling theme: widespread perceptions of favoritism and nepotism at the highest levels of the department. Officers overwhelmingly cited this culture as the department’s most damaging issue—undermining morale, weakening accountability, and contributing to attrition.
 - Reports detailed instances of uneven disciplinary practices, inequitable supervisory assignments, and promotional processes perceived to be influenced more by personal relationships than by qualifications or performance. The Assistant Chief, in particular, was repeatedly identified as a central figure in this dynamic, with concerns that favored personnel were shielded from consequences and rewarded with promotions or lighter workloads. Officers also described a fear of retaliation when voicing concerns, including reassignment or punitive shift changes.
 - This internal imbalance has created deep distrust and fragmentation within the department. Supervisory spans of control are inconsistent, and performance evaluations used in promotions—completed by individuals closely connected to leadership—raise questions about fairness and transparency. The result is a corrosive environment where capable officers feel discouraged, alienated, and professionally stifled.
 - Between 2023 and 2024, 21 officers resigned and 8 were terminated—a reflection of a workforce in distress.
- **Justification:** A healthy and professional police department must operate under clear, equitable, and transparent standards. Favoritism corrodes integrity, deters high performers, and damages community trust. Rebuilding internal legitimacy requires structural changes that remove the opportunity for favoritism and hold leadership accountable. To address this, the committee recommends:
 - Reinstating the Civil Service Commission to oversee promotions for all personnel below the rank of Chief of Police, ensuring fair and independent evaluations.
 - Conducting a performance review of the Chief and Assistant Chief of Police, including adherence to departmental policy and supervision responsibilities.
 - Auditing job descriptions and evaluation processes to align duties with actual performance expectations and eliminate internal conflicts of interest.
- **Expected Impact:** Addressing inequity at the leadership level will:
 - Improve officer morale and retention
 - Promote a culture of fairness and merit
 - Enhance recruitment by fostering a positive agency reputation
 - Rebuild internal and external trust in the department’s leadership
- **Resources Required:**
 - Commitment from the Mayor and city leadership to prioritize transparency and accountability
 - Reinstatement and resourcing of the Civil Service Commission
 - External facilitation or oversight of leadership performance reviews
- **Implementation Timeline:** Immediate initiation recommended, with visible steps taken within the first 90 days of the administration. Full cultural and structural reforms may span 12-18 months.

Recommendation 10: Rebuild trust in the Pine Bluff Police Department through community engagement, transparent practices, elevated hiring standards, and officer wellness initiatives.

- **Description:** The Pine Bluff Police Department is facing a crisis of confidence—both externally from the community and internally among its own officers. This lack of trust reflects not only long-standing local issues but also broader national trends. However, the challenges in Pine Bluff are uniquely shaped by inconsistent leadership, and a failure to modernize recruitment, retention, and wellness systems. To begin restoring credibility and fostering a more effective police force, the committee recommends a four-part approach:
 - **Localized, Values-Based Recruitment**
 - Officers should be empowered and incentivized to serve as community ambassadors who help recruit candidates from within Pine Bluff’s neighborhoods. Building a police force that reflects the demographics, values, and lived experiences of the community is key to fostering mutual trust and understanding.
 - **Strengthen Officer Selection Criteria**
 - The department must raise its hiring standards. Over time, minimum qualifications have eroded, contributing to declines in professionalism and public confidence. The city must commit to attracting high-quality candidates through:
 - Competitive compensation
 - Bonus incentives for education, specialized training, and outstanding performance
 - Clear and fair advancement pathways
 - A commitment to **merit-based promotions** over favoritism
 - **Commit to Transparency and Data Integrity**
 - Public trust is built through consistent transparency, not just in individual interactions but at the institutional level. The department must:
 - Modernize its records and data management systems
 - Respond proactively to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests
 - Engage the community through social media, public forums, and open reporting of crime trends, response times, and departmental initiatives
 - Take ownership of its narrative by ensuring that **community access to accurate information** is a core principle—not an afterthought
 - **Prioritize Officer Wellness and Mental Health**
 - Currently, the department lacks adequate resources for officer wellness, particularly in the areas of mental health, trauma recovery, and behavioral health. Officers face higher rates of PTSD, depression, substance abuse, and suicide than the general population. Without structured support, these challenges lead to burnout, misconduct, absenteeism, and community harm. The city should:
 - Provide access to dedicated first responder mental health professionals
 - Establish peer support and crisis intervention programs
 - Invest in annual wellness check-ins and family support resources
 - Ensure the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is specifically tailored to first responders

- **Justification:**
 - Rebuilding public trust and internal morale requires a foundational shift in how the Police Department operates. Fairness in recruitment and promotion, officer wellbeing, meaningful community engagement, and transparent operations are essential components of effective law enforcement. This is not only a moral imperative—it is a strategic investment in public safety, organizational stability, and liability reduction.
 - **Expected Impact:**
 - Increased community trust and cooperation
 - Improved officer retention, performance, and morale
 - Reduced misconduct and complaints
 - A healthier, more responsive police force aligned with the values of the community it serves
 - **Resources Required:**
 - Budget allocations for recruitment incentives, wellness programs, and technology upgrades
 - City leadership support for policy reforms
 - Coordination with community-based organizations and mental health professionals
 - **Implementation Timeline:** Immediate and ongoing. Efforts should begin in the first 90 days, with short-, medium-, and long-term benchmarks established to track progress and outcomes.
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V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

- **Potential Challenges:** The Pine Bluff Police Department is contending with a series of deeply rooted operational and cultural challenges that, if not addressed with urgency and intentionality, will hinder reform efforts and prolong dysfunction. These challenges span staffing, leadership, recruitment, morale, blight-related crime, and access to reliable data.
 - Staffing Shortages and Inexperience
 - Efforts to improve operations—such as restructuring shifts, assigning experienced officers to mentorship roles, or implementing community-based initiatives—will be limited by the department’s current lack of personnel. With only 44 patrol-ranked officers and a high proportion of inexperienced staff, there is minimal capacity to support reform without first stabilizing recruitment and retention. Efforts to restructure supervision, shift deployment, or implement new training protocols may initially overwhelm existing resources.
 - Limited Fiscal Flexibility
 - Several recommendations—such as offering sign-on bonuses, implementing longevity pay, expanding officer wellness resources, and investing in modern data systems—will require new or reallocated funding. Pine Bluff’s municipal budget constraints may make it difficult to fully fund these reforms in the short term, unless supplemented by grants, state/federal programs, or strategic reprioritization of existing allocations.
 - Entrenched Organizational Culture
 - A deeply rooted culture of favoritism, inequity, and internal distrust may lead to resistance from within the department—particularly from senior leadership. Many of the most urgent reforms, including those related to promotions, supervision, and internal accountability, challenge long-standing norms and behaviors. Change will require strong executive leadership, clear communication, and firm oversight to navigate internal pushback.
 - Resistance from Current Leadership
 - The department’s senior command staff—comprised entirely of internally promoted personnel—has demonstrated limited openness to reform and innovation. There is concern that this leadership cohort may resist outside evaluation, transparency efforts, and structural change. Implementing accountability measures such as external performance evaluations or Civil Service Commission oversight may provoke administrative resistance unless carefully managed.

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- Lack of Data Infrastructure
 - The absence of a reliable internal records management system presents both a technical and cultural challenge. Without access to clean, timely, and consistent data, efforts to track performance, measure impact, or evaluate resource deployment will be significantly hindered. Moreover, there may be a lack of internal expertise or willingness to adopt data-driven decision-making as a standard practice.
 - Coordination Between Departments
 - Several recommendations require interdepartmental coordination—particularly between the Police Department, Code Enforcement, City Attorney’s Office, and Human Resources. Past fragmentation and communication breakdowns between departments may delay implementation unless cross-functional collaboration is deliberately prioritized and managed through clear directives from the Mayor’s Office.
 - Public Skepticism
 - After years of visible dysfunction and inaction, public confidence in the Police Department is low. Even well-meaning reforms may be met with skepticism or fatigue if not paired with clear messaging, transparency, and regular public reporting. Rebuilding trust will require more than internal changes—it will demand consistent community engagement and evidence of follow-through.
 - **Mitigation Strategies:** Overcoming these barriers will require:
 - Strong leadership and political will from the Mayor and City Council
 - A phased implementation plan tied to realistic benchmarks and timelines
 - A robust public communication strategy to build trust and transparency
 - Ongoing feedback loops with department personnel and community stakeholders
 - Identification of state, federal, or philanthropic funding to support reform
 - **Timeline:** The committee recommends a phased implementation strategy to ensure that reforms are both actionable and sustainable. While some changes can be implemented immediately, others will require medium- to long-term planning, resource allocation, and leadership oversight. The timeline below outlines priority actions by stage:
 - Immediate (0–3 Months): These actions are operationally feasible without requiring additional funding or legislative approval and should begin within the first 90 days:
 - Restructure Patrol Shifts: Transition from 10-hour rotating shifts to fixed 12-hour shifts to improve coverage, supervision, and safety.
 - Reassign Investigative and Supervisory Staff to Patrol: Temporarily redeploy captains and detectives to increase street presence and mentorship for newer officers.
 - Launch Interoperability Planning: Begin technical assessment and coordination with MECA to improve police data systems.
 - Initiate Planning for Civil Service Commission Reinstatement: Begin administrative process and policy drafting.
 - Publicly communicate reform goals to internal staff and the community to build trust and transparency early in the process.
 - Short-Term (3–6 Months): These initiatives support early stabilization of staffing, improve operational capacity, and lay the groundwork for deeper cultural reform:
 - Implement Longevity Pay Adjustments: Introduce structured raises to retain early-career officers and reduce attrition.
 - Begin Targeted Recruitment Campaign: Offer competitive sign-on bonuses to attract veteran officers from outside agencies.

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- Initiate Officer Wellness Program Planning: Begin identifying and contracting mental health and behavioral health professionals tailored to first responders.
 - Integrate Code Enforcement with Police Support: Reassign oversight or improve coordination between departments to re-launch blight-reduction efforts such as the S.A.F.E. Team model.
 - Medium-Term (6–9 Months): These reforms are more technical and resource-dependent but are essential to long-term performance and accountability:
 - Complete Technology Upgrades for Data Transparency: Finalize interoperability between police and MECA records systems to support data-driven decision-making.
 - Establish Evaluation Systems for Promotions and Leadership: Implement new performance review structures, aligned with Civil Service Commission guidelines and revised job descriptions.
 - Develop Full Implementation Plan for Recruitment, Training, and Promotion Reforms with measurable benchmarks.
 - Long-Term (9–18 Months and Beyond): These efforts involve structural transformation, culture change, and political coordination. They require sustained commitment and oversight:
 - Correct Supervisory-to-Patrol Ratios: Achieve targeted staffing levels (minimum of 80 patrol officers) before resuming promotions.
 - Address Jail Usage and Detention Strategy: Evaluate options for reestablishing access to detention or building a city-operated facility. Begin city-county negotiations and feasibility study.
 - Shift Departmental Culture: Systematically address favoritism, inequity, and leadership resistance through independent oversight, revised policies, and leadership accountability.
 - Ongoing Oversight and Review: All implementation phases should be supported by:
 - Quarterly progress reviews with the Mayor’s Office and City Council
 - Transparent public updates on reform milestones
 - Engagement with internal staff and community stakeholders to ensure responsiveness and course correction as needed

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

- The comprehensive analysis and recommendations presented by the Public Safety Subcommittee provide a clear and actionable roadmap for addressing critical public safety challenges facing Pine Bluff. Immediate and decisive action is necessary to resolve severe staffing shortages, ineffective recruiting and retention practices, dangerously low institutional knowledge within the police department, pervasive community blight, lack of transparent and useful operational data, imbalanced supervisor ratios, inadequate jail facilities, and entrenched cultural issues such as favoritism and nepotism. Implementing these recommendations will significantly enhance officer safety, increase staffing levels, improve institutional knowledge, foster equitable promotion practices, streamline internal operations, reduce crime, and ultimately restore community trust and confidence in the Pine Bluff Police Department.
- Addressing these systemic issues requires collaboration, determination, and the leadership's willingness to embrace change. The roadmap outlined is both feasible and essential. Implementing these solutions will yield transformative improvements in officer safety, recruitment, retention, and morale, thereby enhancing overall public safety services and significantly reducing the risk of high-profile public safety incidents.
- Given the urgency and gravity of these issues, we strongly urge the Mayor and City Council to prioritize these initiatives immediately. Working closely and collaboratively with residents, community stakeholders, departmental leaders, and the broader community, city leaders can enact the necessary reforms and investments that Pine Bluff desperately needs. The path forward is clear, achievable, and necessary. Now is the time for decisive leadership and unified action to secure a safer, healthier, and more prosperous future for Pine Bluff.

Part 2. Public Safety Committee – Police Department Community Engagement & Involvement

The Public Safety Committee firmly believes that community engagement is a vital component of effective policing in Pine Bluff. Positive interaction between law enforcement and citizens, particularly our youth, fosters trust, strengthens relationships, and enhances public safety. As recently as 2021, the Pine Bluff Police Department's Service Division was actively involved in several impactful community programs, including:

- **Coloring Contest & Essay Contest** – Encouraging creativity and literacy among young residents.
- **Citizens Police Academy** – Providing firsthand insight into law enforcement operations.
- **Easter Egg Hunt** – Offering a fun, family-friendly event that builds rapport between officers and the community.
- **P. A. Y. Camp** (Police and Youth Camp) – Creating mentorship opportunities between officers and youth.
- **National Night Out** – Strengthening neighborhood-police partnerships through community gatherings.

Currently the Department only participates in two events.

These programs provided valuable opportunities for education, entertainment, and service, while also reinforcing the core mission of our police department: to protect and serve. When officers engage positively with the community, they cultivate relationships that enhance cooperation, leading to a safer environment for both citizens and law enforcement personnel.

We acknowledge that staffing shortages have contributed to the discontinuation of these programs. However, as recruitment efforts succeed and personnel levels stabilize, we urge the department to prioritize the restoration of community engagement initiatives. The "service" aspect of policing must remain a fundamental commitment, not an afterthought.

Reinstating these programs will not only rebuild trust but also position our department as a proactive force for unity and collaboration. We strongly advocate for a renewed investment in community-based policing, ensuring that Pine Bluff remains a city where residents and law enforcement work together for the collective good.

- Importance of Community Engagement:
 - The committee believes that community engagement is crucial for effective policing.
 - Positive interactions with citizens, especially youth, are seen as essential for building trust and personalizing the police-community relationship.
 - These programs provide positive activities and opportunities for learning and service, fostering a stronger community.
- Benefits for the Police Department:
 - Improved community relations lead to better cooperation, which enhances both citizen and officer safety.
- Staffing Shortages:
 - The committee acknowledges that staffing shortages are likely the reason for the decline in these programs.
 - They urge the department to reprioritize community service as staffing issues are resolved, emphasizing the "serve" aspect of "protect and serve."

Potential Considerations and Further Discussion:

- Quantifying the Impact:
 - It could be beneficial to explore ways to quantify the impact of these community programs. For example, tracking changes in community trust surveys, crime rates, or youth engagement metrics.
- Volunteer Involvement:
 - Exploring the possibility of increasing volunteer involvement from the community could help alleviate some of the strain caused by staffing shortages. This could include citizens, local businesses, and community organizations.
- Partnerships:
 - Creating partnerships with local organizations such as schools, churches, or community centers, could help to share the workload of organizing these community events.
- Modernizing Engagement:
 - While traditional events are valuable, exploring modern engagement strategies, such as social media outreach, online forums, and virtual events, could broaden the department's reach.
- Sustainability:
 - Creating a sustainable plan for these programs, even with fluctuating staffing levels, is crucial. This might involve creating a dedicated community engagement team or integrating community outreach into existing roles.
- Communication:
 - Clearly communicating the value of these programs to both the police department and the community is vital for gaining and maintaining support.
- Resource Allocation:
 - It will be important to show that the community engagement programs are a valuable use of limited resources.

By addressing these considerations, the Pine Bluff Police Department can strengthen its community engagement efforts and build a stronger, more trusting relationship with the community it serves.

Part 3. The Public Safety Committee: The Pine Bluff Fire Department

I. Executive Summary: The Public Safety Subcommittee dedicated its efforts to enhancing various facets of Public Safety. A focus was placed on transparency, emergency response times, recruitment/retention, quality of life, and fostering community trust. The committee's recommendations underscore the core principles of equitable enforcement, community engagement, and the modernization of department policies to instill a sense of safety and protection among Pine Bluff residents.

II. Subcommittee Overview

- The mission of the Public Safety Subcommittee is to prioritize the safety and well-being of Pine Bluff residents and the members of the departments by implementing strategies that promote a proactive and community-oriented approach to the Fire Department and Public Safety.
- Mission Statement: The primary goal of the Public Safety Subcommittee was to enhance the overall effectiveness, well-being, and community trust in the Fire Department and its members.

Key Issues Identified:

- Issue 1: Deteriorating training facilities
- Issue 2: Extremely low morale throughout all ranks of the department
- Issue 3: Low staffing, with individuals performing multiple jobs
- Issue 4: Low starting pay in comparison to nearby fire departments
- Issue 5: Employee retention issues
- Issue 6: Problems with the emergency response fleet
- Issue 7: Delays in promotions and the creation of promotion lists when a position becomes available
- Issue 8: Lack of communication from leadership

III. Research and Stakeholder Engagement

Through a comprehensive approach that included research, stakeholder engagement, community feedback, and benchmarking against best practices. The subcommittee members arrived at well-informed and data-driven recommendations. By leveraging a diverse assortment of informational sources and perspectives, the subcommittee ensured that its recommendations were robust, inclusive, and forward-thinking.

Data & Research Sources:

- Fire Department Seniority list
- Calls for Service Report 2023 and 2024
- Timecards
- 2025 Base Pay Scale
- Certificate Level Work Sheet
- Budget Worksheets 2023, 2024, 2025
- Department Passenger Vehicle Worksheet
- Sec. 19-134. Recruitment, examinations, and certifications
- Code Of Ordinances Chapter 19 – Personnel Pine Bluff Fire Department
- Station Assignments

- Sec. 10-28. Schedule of Positions; Power and duties of the chief of the Department
- Fire Department Vacation and Sick time Accrued
- Sec. 10-29. – Salaries paid for holidays
- Response Vehicle List- Frontline Engines and Ladders
- Facilities List: Fire stations, Training Center, Fleet maintenance
- 2021 City of Pine Bluff Employee Survey Report. (Public Safety)
- Metropolitan Emergency Communications Association Fire Response Times Analysis Summary
- Incident Type Report 2008 and 2009
- Interviews with department Members and Citizens

Stakeholders Consulted:

- Department Members
- Members of BRAVE
- Members of Fraternal Order of Firefighters
- Members of IAFF Local 14

Community Input:

- Surveys were distributed and collected during a Town Hall meeting held on March 6, 2025, in the Council Chambers

IV. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Conduct an anonymous survey that mirrors the Public Safety Survey from March 2021.

- **Description:** A survey sent to all public safety employees to assess the current state of Public Safety compared to 2021.
- **Justification:** This will help the city's administration understand the issues related to low morale in Public Safety.
- **Expected Impact:** When morale issues can be identified, employee retention will improve.
- **Resources Required:** Funding to cover the creation and analysis of the survey.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term.

Recommendation 2: Upgrade and improve training facilities.

- **Description:** Update training facilities and grounds. *The committee identified this as an urgent and mission-critical necessity.
- **Justification:** The training grounds present safety issues due to the age and deterioration of the training simulators. Additionally, water drainage on the training grounds poses a problem.
- **Expected Impact:** The Fire Department is relatively new and lacks essential experience. 38% of the Fire Department has less than 5 years of service. 20% has less than 10 years' experience. These Firefighters require hands-on training to build experience, ensuring the safety of both citizens and Fire Department members.
- **Resources Required:** Significant capital improvement funds needed via budget allocation, bond issuance, etc.; this financial investment requires legislative action.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term to long-term

Recommendation 3: Return to full staffing. Return 8 positions to the FD and fill these positions. Fund Other needed positions. (Office Manager and Training)

- **Description:** Return the department to full staffing at 100 uniformed and 2 non-uniformed members.
- **Justification:** This will ease the burden of overtime and overworking of current employees. This will address morale issues as well as safety issues.
- **Expected Impact:** This will save on overtime funding and provide more responders for emergencies. This will also speed up response times.
- **Resources Required:** Budgetary needs, personnel, legislative action
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 4: Restructure Longevity pay scale.

- **Description:** reevaluate the way longevity raises are given. Consider giving percentage raises per year.
- **Justification:** During interviews, this issue was repeatedly raised concerning the delays in receiving salary increases.
- **Expected Impact:** This will directly address morale and retention issues in the department, leading to better culture, full staff, and safer city.
- **Resources Required:** Budget allocation and careful financial projections, which likely requires legislative action.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 5: Work to increase the starting pay of firefighters closer to the surrounding departments' and translate the raises through the ranks.

- **Description:** Departments around the area are working towards or have reached the level of \$50,000.00 starting pay. It must be translated through the ranks.
- **Justification:** To maintain high-quality staff and prevent the city from constantly recruiting to replace departing employees, it is necessary to address the issue of promoting employees up the ranks. This is particularly important because recent pay raises for new firefighters were not extended to more experienced members, leading to newer firefighters quickly catching up to their senior counterparts in terms of pay.
- **Expected Impact:** This will benefit the city in terms of retention and hiring.
- **Resources Required:** Budgetary needs and council approval
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term (6-18 months)

Recommendation 6: Rotate fire engines from busier stations to slower stations. Station numbers can be removed and another system put in place.

- **Description:** Given the department's aging fleet and the challenges in securing funding for new fire engines, a strategy of rotating these vehicles from high-activity stations to lower-activity stations could effectively prolong the lifespan of the existing fleet.
- **Justification:** This would allow the existing fleet to continue to be used and allow time for funding to be located in the future to replace fire engines.
- **Expected Impact:** This will benefit the city and the citizens by saving money and allowing the city time to locate or accumulate funding in the future to replace fire engines.
- **Resources Required:** Fire Chief Approval
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 7: Consider switching the shift schedule from 24-hour on duty followed by 48 hours off to a 48-hour on duty followed by 96 hours off.

- **Description:** The 48-96 schedule involves a revised rotation cycle in which each shift completes two consecutive 24-hour shifts, followed by four consecutive days off. This shift pattern is being adopted by numerous departments, with some even leveraging it as a recruitment incentive. There can be a small trial with a single station to see if the members like it. Majority of the members that were spoken to want to at a minimum, do a trial run.
- **Justification:** A boost to morale for the majority of the department, more time for training, 50% reduction in commuting time, Health benefits, fewer communication errors due to fewer shift changes, more time at home. No extra cost to the department with a change to the department's time sheet.
- **Expected Impact:** Reduction in sick time used and reduced overtime
- **Resources Required:** Fire Chiefs approval to test the shift schedule. A change to the department's time sheet. Moving the time week ends from midnight on Sunday to 7 am when shift changes happen on Monday morning.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 8: Promote individuals from the promotional list promptly. At a minimum, set a schedule for promotional testing at the same time of the year.

- **Description:** During the committee's interviews with members, it was described several times that promotional opportunities were available to be filled, and those positions were not filled for weeks or sometimes months with no explanation as to why. After research, it was found that this is a normal occurrence with promotions and not an exception.
- **Justification:** This drastically reduces morale throughout the department as well as depriving the department member the raise that comes with the promotion. These positions have to be filled on a day-to-day basis. It is filled by the promoted individual, a person must "work up" into the open position above them with no added pay, or overtime is paid for that position.
- **Expected Impact:** Better morale from individuals waiting to be promoted. Reduction in paid overtime. Having the individual who earned the promotion in the proper position in case of an emergency. Reduced legal liability in case a lower rank is "working up" to the open position.
- **Resources Required:** Fire Chief approval
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

V. Challenges & Considerations

- **Potential Challenges:** The primary challenge to implementing these recommendations are the budget restraints and costs.
- **Mitigation Strategies:** Many of these restraints will be alleviated with extending the life of the emergency vehicle fleet. The replacement of the training facilities could be financed or emergency funds used to implement. Several of the recommendations can be made with the approval of the Fire Chief and the City Council.
- **Timeline:** Barring the budget considerations, many of these recommendations could be implemented in the short term (0-6 months). Replacement of the training facilities would be Mid-term (6-18 Months)

VI. Conclusion & Call to Action

The committee believes that strong leadership, goal setting, effective communication, and decisive action could alleviate many of the Fire Department's identified issues. The recommendations put forth by the committee offer a clear roadmap for tackling key challenges within Public Safety and the Fire Department of Pine Bluff. We believe that by enacting these solutions, Pine Bluff is poised to improve safety, efficiency, well-being, and community trust in both the Fire Department and its personnel.

We implore the Mayor and City Council to prioritize these initiatives without delay. Collaborative efforts with residents and stakeholders are essential to realizing these recommendations swiftly and effectively.

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report:

Trey Ashcraft - Small Business Association

Bill Brumett - Former Council Member

Fabian Fontenot - Retired Fire Fighter

Dominique Graydon - Former PBPD Employee

Debe Hollingsworth - Former Mayor

Juwana Jackson - Chief Juvenile Officer

Letetia Jenkins - Director of Nursing, Jefferson Regional

Maurion Jordan

Dr. Matthew Pate

James Wilburn - Former Council Member and Law Enforcement

SENIOR OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY



SENIOR OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: JAMES WORD

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Senior Outreach and Advocacy Subcommittee was formed to examine the current conditions affecting the elderly population in Pine Bluff and to identify actionable strategies to improve their quality of life. The subcommittee's mission is to enhance the quality of life for seniors through expanded services, improved access to community resources, and a renewed focus on safety and well-being.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

- **Mission Statement:** To enhance the quality of life for the elderly in the Pine Bluff area.
- **Key Issues Identified: Lack of funding for Senior services**
 - Issue 1: Increase services for Elderly in the Pine Bluff area.
 - Expansion of Meals on Wheels. Currently, there is a \$5,000 annual city budget line item for home delivery of meals. This amount is not enough to cover the individuals with this budget. There are 57 persons on the Home Delivered Meals waiting list. The City currently serves 214 Home Delivered meals per day in the Pine Bluff area at a cost of \$7.50 per meal. The Area Agency On Aging currently spends \$417,300.00 per year. These individuals on the waiting list are homebound and do not have a family support system.
 - Issue 2: Increase the number of Senior Citizen Centers in the Pine Bluff area
 - Currently there is only one Senior Citizen Center in Pine Bluff. This center is located at 801 East 8th Ave. This center can only serve 60 individuals per day. In the past Pine Bluff had 2 Senior Citizen Centers to close on the North Side of town (Coretta Scott King Senior Citizen Center), and on the South Side of town Bradshaw Manor due to the lack of funding.
 - Issue 3: Safety
 - Most elderly persons do not feel safe because of the lack of police patrol and response. With
 - the high vacancies at the Pine Bluff Police Department this leaves the Seniors to feel unsafe.
 - Most of the elderly people do not feel safe due to the lack of policing.

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Senior Outreach and Advocacy subcommittee engaged several key stakeholders through surveying and town hall meetings.

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - A survey was conducted on March 7, 2025.
 - A town hall meeting was held on March 12, 2025 at 801 East 8th Ave in Pine Bluff.
- **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - Area Agency On Aging
 - Division of Aging of Adult Services
 - Department of Human Services
- **Community Input:**
 - Surveys, Town Hall and Stakeholder Meetings
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - Cities of similar, smaller, and larger size were compared. The common source of rendering quality services for senior citizens in those cities and town was direct funding.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Increase Funding for HomeDeliver Meals for Senior Citizens

- **Description:** Increase Funding for HomeDeliver Meals for Senior Citizens in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.
- **Justification:** The need and amount of senior citizens exceeds the amount of funding allocated and creates a long waiting list.
- **Expected Impact:** It will reduce the number of food disparities among the elderly community in the Pine Bluff area
- **Resources Required:** Increased funding in the budget for senior citizen meals
- **Implementation Timeline:** To be considered during the City budget process.

Recommendation 2: Increase Number of Senior Citizen Centers in the Pine Bluff Area

- **Description:** Increase the number of Senior Citizen Centers in Pine Bluff area
- **Justification:** The Coretta Scott King and Bradshaw Manor Senior Citizen Centers were closed due to funding, yet were a valued resource within the community.
- **Expected Impact:** More senior citizens can be served from different parts of the city.
- **Resources Required:** Funding from the City Annual Budget
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term (6-18 months) to be considered during the budget process.

Recommendation 3: Improve Community Safety

- **Description:** To increase Police protection and patrolling in the city of Pine Bluff by installing more lighting and possibly the Skycops.
- **Justification:** Elderly do not feel safe. It hinders them from participating in certain activities in the community.
- **Expected Impact:** It will allow more elderly persons to be more active in the community.
- **Resources Required:** To increase funding to policing (ie: Neighborhood Policing)
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term (6-18 months) to be considered during the budget process.

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

- **Potential Challenges:**
 - The availability of funding to implement programming and reopen senior centers.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - Funding appropriation from State-level agencies (ie: Division of Aging and Adult Services)
 - Apply for additional grants (ie: AARP - Livable Communities and Age-Friendly Housing)
- **Timeline:**
 - To be considered during the City budget process

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

- These recommendations provide a roadmap for addressing Senior Outreach and Advocacy in Pine Bluff. Implementing these solutions will improve the quality of life for the Elderly community.
- We urge the Mayor and City Council to prioritize these initiatives and work collaboratively with residents and stakeholders to bring them to fruition.

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report:

Sharon Alexander

Trey Ashcraft

Darla Barr

Cynthia Bennett

Evernlyn Bryant

Mary Hester-Clifton

Rolonda Murray Earls

Lois Halford

Janetta Kearney

Audrey Long

Joyce Brady Vaughan

Theophis Vaughn

SOCIAL IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY



SOCIAL IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: KYMARA SEALS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Social Impact and Sustainable Development Subcommittee focused on strategies to promote economic growth, environmental resilience, and social equity through innovative policies and initiatives. Our recommendations prioritize business incentives, green energy adoption, food security, and public education to ensure Pine Bluff fosters sustainable development while attracting responsible businesses and creating new job opportunities.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

- **Mission Statement:** To develop and implement policies that encourage sustainable economic development, improve environmental practices, and enhance community well-being through innovative programs and infrastructure investments.
- **Key Issues Identified:**
 - Issue 1: Limited business incentives for eco-friendly development and sustainable infrastructure.
 - Issue 2: Need for a centralized department to oversee green energy projects, urban farming, centralized food hub creation and initiatives, and other programs not covered by any current departments.
 - Issue 3: Lack of education on city functions regarding stakeholder options for healthcare.
 - Issue 4: Insufficient solar lighting in public parks and areas, leading to safety concerns after dark and miss opportunities for future use as events venues
 - Issue 5: Lack of community green spaces and a community agriculture economy.
 - Issue 6: Insufficient long-term drug treatment centers, requiring new housing and care solutions.
 - Issue 7: Limited entertainment and cultural attractions, impacting tourism and local business growth.
 - Issue 8: Lack of education on housing resources, transparency, and due process for stakeholders.

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - Green infrastructure captures, absorbs, and reduces runoff; filters stormwater; and delivers other environmental, social, and economic benefits. Investing in green infrastructure restores wildlife habitat and enhances natural systems while improving the health of residents through greater access to green space. It can improve community safety and provide economic stability by adding green local jobs, reducing infrastructure costs, and decreasing property damage from flooding.
 - [EPA.gov/GreenInfrastructure](https://www.epa.gov/greeninfrastructure)

- Benefits of urban agriculture: Taken together, these findings indicate that urban agriculture, represented by farming cooperatives and community-run gardens, can produce healthy and affordable food that is community-controlled, potentially improving community health and well-being, and benefitting lower-income residents who may have lower access to traditional food retail. National Library of Medicine
 - UrbanAgriculture.gov
- Community Programs Site from City of Little Rock, A central place for Stakeholders, Citizens and City leaders to give and receive information on current ongoing programs within the City of Little Rock, Provides a place for residents to seek information and the status of services within the city.
 - <https://www.littlerock.gov/city-administration/city-departments/community-programs/>
- **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - Committee members, City official - Tiffany Copeland, Ms. Cobb-urban farmer in LR, Local Business owners
- **Community Input:**
 - Resident feedback was collected at the Town Hall meeting and via a survey that was open for a week and posted on Facebook and shared with various community groups via email, GroupMe, and text messages; 97 surveys were completed. See Appendix for results.
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - Cities like Fayetteville, Rogers, and Little Rock have information on their websites (online directory) about activities, services, etc., whether city-sponsored or from their Chamber of Commerce. Little Rock has a Department of Community Programs which has been in operation since 1996.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Establish the Pine Bluff Community Programs Department

- **Description:** Create a city department to oversee sustainable development projects, including but not limited to green energy, urban agriculture, and creation of city food hub initiatives. Educate and outreach to stakeholders, help build public + private partnerships to bring in long term solutions to Pine Bluff in the following areas: Beautification, Inter department use of solar and sustainable building practices to increase public health and safety, Develop public-private partnerships to implement long-term solutions.
- **Justification:** A centralized department is essential to streamline initiatives, increase efficiency, and engage stakeholders in city programs.
- **Expected Impact:** Improved coordination, increased stakeholder participation, greater transparency in city services, enhanced public safety through lighting and beautification, and stronger local food systems.
- **Resources Required:** Budgetary allocation, Initial funding allocation personnel, legislative action to modify or streamline ordinance related to programs under the PBCPD, staffing, and office space.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term (6-18 months) and Long-term (18+ months)

Recommendation 2: Establish a Community Task Force on Entertainment

- **Description:** Form a citizen-led task force (primarily ages 18-45) to develop actionable recommendations for enhancing Pine Bluff's entertainment offerings through public-private-university collaborations.
- **Justification:** Addresses lack of recreational activities, supports youth engagement, reduces crime, and stimulates local economic growth.
- **Expected Impact:** Increased quality of life, improved public-private collaboration, stronger tourism, and enhanced economic vitality.
- **Resources Required:** [Meeting space, city liaison, Parks & Rec collaboration, grant writing support.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months)

Recommendation 3: Community Education Program on City Functions and Stakeholder Healthcare

- **Description:** Implement workshops and create an online portal to educate residents on city services, healthcare options, and business resources. Include a physical and online city services directory, "311" info line, and a transparent portal for zoning, licensing, and taxation.
- **Justification:** Increases awareness of resources, improves transparency, and fosters trust in city operations.
- **Expected Impact:** Enhanced stakeholder engagement, better service access, efficient city operations, and increased accountability.
- **Resources Required:** Staff support, IT infrastructure, interdepartmental cooperation, and marketing.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term (6-18 months)

Recommendation 4: Establish Long-Term Drug Treatment and Wellness Center with Modular Housing

- **Description:** Develop a long-term treatment facility within city limits, integrated with modular housing. Partner with local and new providers to offer prevention and wellness services.
- **Justification:** Addresses substance abuse, reduces drug-related crime, and increases access to local rehabilitation.
- **Expected Impact:** Improved public health, job creation, reduced crime, and stronger workforce development.
- **Resources Required:** Public-private partnerships, land acquisition, town hall input, qualified task force for implementation planning.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term (6-18 months) and Long-term (18+ months)

Recommendation 5: Expand Solar Lighting in Parks And Public Areas

- **Description:** Install additional solar-powered lighting in parks and public spaces to enhance safety and usability after dark.
- **Justification:** Improves public safety, reduces energy costs, and supports environmental sustainability. Expands hours of usable time for groups supporting youth athletics.
- **Expected Impact:** Safer parks, increased community use, lower long-term utility costs.
- **Resources Required:** Solar technology procurement, city maintenance coordination, grants, and state funding.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term (6-18 months) and Long-term (18+ months)

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

- **Potential Challenges:**
 - Funding constraints for new programs and infrastructure.
 - Public resistance to policy changes.
 - Coordination between city departments and external stakeholders.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - Pursue state and federal grants for sustainable infrastructure. Community engagement campaigns to build public support.
 - Interdepartmental collaboration and advisory committees.
- **Timeline:**
 - Prioritize short-term goals while establishing a foundation for long-term projects.

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

- These recommendations provide a roadmap for addressing social impact and sustainability in Pine Bluff. Implementing these solutions will attract better-run businesses, create jobs, improve public safety, provide affordable housing, and enhance overall quality of life.
- We urge the Mayor and City Council to prioritize these initiatives and work collaboratively with residents and stakeholders to bring them to fruition.

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report:

Nyeshia Aldridge

Breonna Bishop

Marlette Boales

Olivia Brown

Teki Hunt

Albert King Jr.

Micheal McCray

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Ka’Lisa Stanfield

Sherri Woodus

Tiffany Copeland - City Liaison

TOURISM AND NATURE



TOURISM AND NATURE COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: CARLTON SAFFA

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The subcommittee focused its efforts on recognizing strengths in the tourism and nature category, with an emphasis on several priority opportunities.

A review of available data demonstrates the city has a strong base from which to build. The subcommittee's recommendations represent a number of specific steps that can be taken with regard to enhancing specific projects as well as some actionable concepts which can be applied across all of tourism and nature in the community.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

- **Mission Statement:** To identify and then provide actionable steps to support the community's tourism and nature assets
- **Key Issues Identified:**
 - Issue 1: Bayou Bartholomew project represents a massive opportunity involving both tourism and nature. Collaborating with stakeholders should be a top priority.
 - Issue 2: Existing opportunities should be better organized and refined, to include an embrace of pro-bicycle initiatives for branding the city, a fresh look at Lake Saracen, renewed focus on next steps for the Delta Rhythm and Bayous Cultural District project, and an emphasis on the "historical superlatives" regarding civil rights and broader culture which call Pine Bluff home.
 - Issue 3: Investment in refining Pine Bluff's search engine results is critical and will benefit a number of categories outside the charge of this subcommittee.

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - Historical AP data
 - Tourism tax data from the State of Arkansas
- **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission
 - Arkansas Game and Fish
 - Arkansas Land of Legends
- **Community Input:**
 - Town Hall Meeting, March 20, 2025
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - Primary comparative analysis was benchmarking status quo versus other communities.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Bayou Bartholomew Development

- **Description:** In short, the recommendation is that the City of Pine Bluff make this project a priority focus for development of Tourism and Nature in the community. This has the potential to be the Buffalo River of the Delta, with all the travel, local business, and prestige to accompany such a moniker. In addition, this represents an opportunity to recognize the community's rich tradition in archery, including the contributions of Ben Pearson.
- **Justification:** With the Bayou being the longest in the world, the city has an opportunity to be home to a best in class, globally, destination.
- **Expected Impact:** Drawing visitors from intrastate, interstate, and international has inherent value. Today the city lacks a draw of this magnitude.
- **Resources Required:** City resources are TBD, but the priority ought be that investment and cooperation should be front of mind as Arkansas Game and Fish and others work towards this project.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months), Dirt work on Hazel Street is imminent. Recommend City of Pine Bluff consider investing attention and financial resources immediately to assist with projects being implemented.

Recommendation 2: Making and Promoting Pine Bluff as a Bicycle Community

- **Description:** Northwest Arkansas has demonstrated the value of being a known destination to attract bicyclists. Further, we are seeing this expand in communities with far less to offer, like Mena. The city ought focus on internal processes to make cycling more prominent as well as promote the area as attractive to bicyclists. In addition, the city's walking trails and parks should also be better identified, mapped, and have new signage. The committee was unable to locate a single-source map of walking trails and parks in the area.
- **Justification:** Building on both nature and tourism, the area boasts a number of high-quality riding , either beginning in the city or within minutes of it. Identifying and promoting these rides can almost immediately draw visitors to the areas.
- **Expected Impact:** Given the Pine Bluff's proximity to a number of major cities as well as established bicycle-heavy areas like Northwest Arkansas, drawing visitors from intrastate and interstate is very possible. These tourists tend to be higher income individuals and their presence would provide for affluent visitors to the areas.
- **Resources Required:** The city should work with local cycling experts to identify and mark, both with physical signage and utilizing online resources, the area's best riding opportunities, both inside the city and just outside. Further, Visit Pine Bluff and/or Land of Legends should promote the city to cyclists. Tour de Bluff should be a focus of resources as well.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months) Work can begin almost immediately to begin to raise awareness of opportunities for cyclists.

Recommendation 3: Delta Rhythm and Bayous Cultural District/Historical Superlatives/Culinary

- **Description:** Building on the already established Delta Rhythm and Bayous Cultural District as well as the highway moniker, the area's collective impact on music, civil rights, and American history as a whole ought be highlighted. While each significant event within the district/region is notable, bundling them and promoting them alongside one another creates a larger attraction. Further, there is an opportunity to continue to embrace Pine Bluff as a culinary destination, building on Saracen's close identification with best-in-class food. Food has, at its core, historic nexus and the foodways of the Delta should continue to be promoted.

- **Justification:** Pine Bluff has changed history and has a number of unique events which have occurred inside its borders. Proper signage and respect needs to be paid to these events and the people that made them happen, and historical and musical tourists will visit if they are identified and marketed correctly. This has proven to work in places like Clarksdale, Mississippi.
- **Expected Impact:** History and the Blues has a proven record of drawing visitors from intrastate, interstate, and international locations.
- **Resources Required:** The city should work to better identify the elements connected to the district, create a plan for better signage, and promote this as a singular visit with many disparate components in one trip.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months), Medium-term (6-18 months), and Long-term (18+ months) Planning for signage and promotion can occur immediately.

Recommendation 4: Embrace UAPB as a Tourism Driver

- **Description:** Committee members as well as attendees to the Town Hall raised a simple contention: UAPB as a tourism driver should be more than just Homecoming weekend.
- **Justification:** UAPB alumni are spread across the country, with heavy populations of Golden Lions in cities with direct flights to Little Rock. Attention to bringing them in to their alma mater can yield tourism dollars but this needs to be done in conjunction with the city.
- **Expected Impact:** A more regular cadence of visits to UAPB sporting events can provide a solid uplift in visitors to the city without stretching the capacity of Pine Bluff in the way Homecoming does. Homecoming will always be a high visitor weekend, but looking to highlight other games or events is additive
- **Resources Required:** The city should better coordinate with UAPB to identify events to promote and methods for promotion
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months) and on-going.

Recommendation 5: Improve the Search Engine Results of Googling Pine Bluff

- **Description:** This item is self-explanatory- but the first impression look people unfamiliar with the city needs to be repaired.
- **Justification:** A simple search for Pine Bluff yields very little positive information.
- **Expected Impact:** Repairing the search engine results will improve the city in ways far beyond just tourism. Economic development in particular would benefit.
- **Resources Required:** The city should consider immediately dedicating resources to search engine optimization as well as work with the chamber or other similar parties to coordinate content for websites for entities located in the region to better effectuate this effort.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months) and on-going.

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

- **Potential Challenges:**
 - Nothing proposed appears controversial or cost-prohibitive. While the Bayou Bartholomew project has costs associated, there are a number of parties working cooperatively on the project with an accompanying number of revenue sources.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - At this time none appear necessary.
- **Timeline:**
 - All items can begin as soon as time permits.

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

- These recommendations provide a series of steps that can begin with minimal cost and include some quick wins to address Tourism and Nature in Pine Bluff. Implementing these solutions will both attract visitors to the community as well as improve the natural resources in place today for city residents.
 - We urge the Mayor and City Council to prioritize these initiatives and work collaboratively with residents and stakeholders to bring them to fruition.
-

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report.

Trey Ashcraft

Joy Blankenship

Jimmy Cunningham

Kenneth Fisher

Sandra Fisher

James Hill

Clarence Holman

Regina Mosley

Theresa L. Orso

Ernest Pointer

Angela White Smith

Sheri Storie

YOUTH INVESTMENT



ENGAGE / ENTERTAIN

YOUTH INVESTMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR/LEAD: AAREYON WALLACE

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To foster youth development and expand opportunities, the city must focus on traditional methods of youth investment: increasing engagement, building workforce-based skills, and providing enriching entertainment. This goal is not only to provide strategies to maintain and strengthen existing youth services but also to reposition the city to reconnect youth with local government and provide a more diverse range of positive activities. To accomplish this goal, the Pine Bluff subcommittee should collaborate with existing youth organizations, educational institutions, and relevant city departments to implement effective programs.

II. SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEW

- **Mission Statement:** To maintain and strengthen youth services in the city of Pine Bluff, reconnect youth to local city government, and provide opportunities for engagement, and enriching entertainment.
- **Key Issues Identified:**
 - Issue 1: Decreased youth engagement and a disconnect from local city engagement, government jobs, agriculture, blue collar, and workforce-based skills hindering youth from career readiness for future employment and economic opportunities.
 - Issue 2: Insufficient development & limited access to transportation and awareness of existing youth services, such as afterschool programs, STEM programs, and the Boys/Girls Club, limiting youth access to valuable resources.
 - Issue 3: Lack of Entertainment and City Events
 - Issue 4: Lack of Activity Programs, Like Recreational Clubs: Swimming, Tennis, Gun Safety, Self Defense Classes, Boxing & Mixed Martial Arts Club.

III. RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Subcommittee recommendations include research methods, stakeholder interviews, community feedback, and best practices from Pine Bluff Arkansas in effect for 10 plus years.

- **Data & Research Sources:**
 - Better Beginnings by Arkansas.gov
 - <https://arbetterbeginnings.com/providers-teachers/provider-tools/school-age-care-provider-tools/toolkit>
 - Introduction to the 40 Developmental Assets training · Youth Program Quality
 - Intervention (YPQI) training or School Age Environment Rating Scale (SACERS).
 - SACERS or Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) training (school age programs).
 - Arkansas Out of School Network
 - <http://www.aosn.org/about-aosn/index.html>
 - For more information on the Arkansas Out-of-School Network (AOSN) contact: Laveta Wills-Hale, Network Coordinator at (501)660-1012 or lwills@astate.edu.
 - Department of Economic & Community Development Department (Aces & Assets)
 - https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/2048/ASBA/5100857/ACES_AND_ASSETS_LG_PDF.pdf

- **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - Department of Economic Community Development
 - Sara’s Learning Disability Program
 - Pine Bluff Boys & Girls Club
 - Targeting Our People’s Priorities with Service (Topps)
 - Pine Bluff Fire Department
 - Group Violence Intervention
- **Community Input:**
 - Surveys
 - coordination of “A Day at City Hall”
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - Mrs. Lori Walk - Guelache use the 40 Developmental Assets chart
 - Other Cities have invested in the city’s recreation such as parks, education, afterschool programs, and youth gun violence programs.
 - Little Rock After School Program Giving Others Ambition Together (GOAT) receives funding from the City of Little Rock in the Value of \$82,500
 - “El Dorado Promise” The El Dorado Promise, funded by Murphy Oil Corporation, gives students in the El Dorado, Arkansas school district - regardless of their economic situation or academic merit -an opportunity to pursue a college degree, free of financial burden.
 - Little Rock approves \$1 million for community programs. All Organizations getting up to \$100,000
 - Our House
 - Second Baptist Church
 - Bridge 2 Success
 - Lightidentity
 - Life Skills for Youth
 - Brandon House
 - Boys and Girls Club (Mitchell)
 - Boys and Girls Club (Penick)
 - Boys and Girls Club (Thrasher)
 - Boys and Girls Club (Whetstone)

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Reinstatement of the Mayor's Youth Council and Enhanced Youth Engagement Initiatives

- **Description:** Re-establish the Mayor's Youth Council, comprised of diverse youth representatives, and implement regular town hall meetings, workshops, and online forums to facilitate youth input on city policies and initiatives.
- **Justification:** Addresses Issue 1 (decreased youth engagement) by providing a direct channel for youth voices to be heard, fostering civic participation and a sense of belonging.
- **Expected Impact:** Increased youth involvement in local governance, improved understanding of youth needs, and a more responsive city government.
- **Resources Required:** Staff time for coordination, budget for meeting logistics and potential stipends, and marketing/outreach resources.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months) for council formation, ongoing for engagement initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Development of a Comprehensive Youth Workforce Development Program

- **Description:** Partner with local businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations to create a structured program offering skills training, mentorship, internships, and job placement assistance for youth.
- **Justification:** Addresses Issue 2 (insufficient workforce skills) by providing practical training and experience, preparing youth for future employment and economic self-sufficiency.
- **Expected Impact:** Improved youth employability, reduced unemployment rates, and a stronger local workforce.
- **Resources Required:** Funding for program development and implementation, partnerships with local businesses, and potential grant opportunities.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Medium-term (6-18 months) for program development and launch, ongoing for program delivery.

Recommendation 3: Creation of a Centralized Online Youth Services Hub and Enhanced Transportation Support

- **Description:** Develop a dedicated "Youth Services" tab on the city website, featuring a comprehensive directory of youth programs (afterschool, STEM, Boys/Girls Club, etc.), including program details, schedules, and registration information. Simultaneously, explore and implement transportation solutions, such as expanded bus routes or shuttle services, to improve youth access to these programs. Include on the website information on programs that help at risk youth, programs that help with workforce development, and programs that help with food deserts.
- **Justification:** Addresses Issue 4 (lack of awareness and transportation) by increasing program visibility and accessibility, ensuring youth can easily find and participate in valuable resources. Also addresses the need to help at risk youth, and to help with food deserts.
- **Expected Impact:** Increased youth participation in programs, improved access to resources, and enhanced overall youth well-being.
- **Resources Required:** Website development and maintenance, transportation funding, and community outreach.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Short-term (0-6 months) for website development, medium-term (6-18 months) for transportation solutions

V. CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

Recommendation 1: Reinstatement of the Mayor's Youth Council and Enhanced Youth Engagement Initiatives

- **Potential Challenges:**
 - Apathy among youth due to a sense of disillusionment with local government and a lack of perceived impact.
 - Limited resources for sustained engagement initiatives in a city with budgetary constraints.
 - Historical distrust between some segments of the community and city officials.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - Focus on tangible projects and initiatives that demonstrate the impact of youth involvement.
 - Partner with trusted community leaders and organizations to build bridges and encourage participation.
 - Utilize social media and other digital platforms to reach youth and promote engagement opportunities.
 - Showcase the successes of the youth council to the community.
- **Timeline:**
 - Short-term (0-6 months) for council formation, ongoing for engagement initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Development of a Comprehensive Youth Workforce Development Program

- **Potential Challenges:**
 - A shrinking local job market and limited high-paying employment opportunities.
 - Lack of access to reliable internet and technology for online skills training.
 - Transportation barriers that prevent youth from accessing training and job opportunities.
 - A high rate of poverty, meaning that many youth need to work to help support their families, limiting the time they have for training.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - Focus on developing skills in high-demand sectors, such as healthcare, technology, and skilled trades.
 - Establish partnerships with regional employers and workforce development agencies to expand job opportunities.
 - Provide access to computer labs and internet hotspots in community centers and libraries.
 - Work with local transportation to create routes to places of employment, and training.
 - Explore programs that offer stipends, or childcare, to help youths that need to support their families.
- **Timeline:**
 - Medium-term (6-18 months) for program development and launch, ongoing for program delivery.

Recommendation 3: Creation of a Centralized Online Youth Services Hub and Enhanced Transportation Support

- **Potential Challenges:**
 - Digital divide and limited internet access in some areas of the city.
 - Budgetary constraints that limit the ability to expand transportation services.
 - Maintaining accurate and current information on the website with limited city staff.
 - Vandalism, and or crime along bus routes, or at bus stops.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - Partner with local internet providers and community organizations to expand broadband access.
 - Prioritize transportation improvements in areas with high youth populations and limited access to services.
 - Utilize volunteers and community partners to assist with website maintenance and content creation.
 - Increase lighting, and security at bus stops, and along bus routes.
- **Timeline:**
 - Short-term (0-6 months) for website development, medium-term (6-18 months) for transportation solutions.

VI. CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

- These recommendations provide a roadmap for addressing the critical needs of youth investment in Pine Bluff. Implementing these solutions will foster increased youth engagement, develop essential workforce skills, and enhance access to vital resources and opportunities, ultimately improving the overall well-being and prospects of Pine Bluff's young people.
 - We urge the Mayor and City Council to prioritize these initiatives, including the reinstatement of the Mayor's Youth Council, the development of a comprehensive workforce program, and the creation of the online youth services hub with improved transportation. We also urge them to work collaboratively with residents, stakeholders, and particularly with the youth of Pine Bluff, to bring these recommendations to fruition. The future of Pine Bluff depends on the successful investment in our youth.
-

Thank you to the dedicated committee members who contributed to this report.

Tavante Calhoun

Jennifer Colvin

Kevin Crumpton

Rance Dukes

Michael Johnson, Jr.

Emmit Kirk, Jr.

Jamanda Love

Shanta Rice

Jordan Sims

Grant E. Williams

Sara Young

APPENDIX

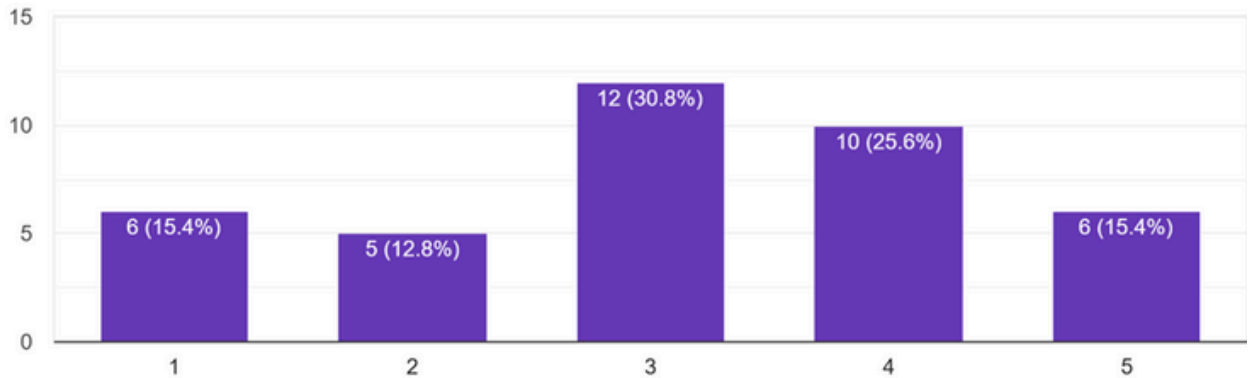


VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Survey:

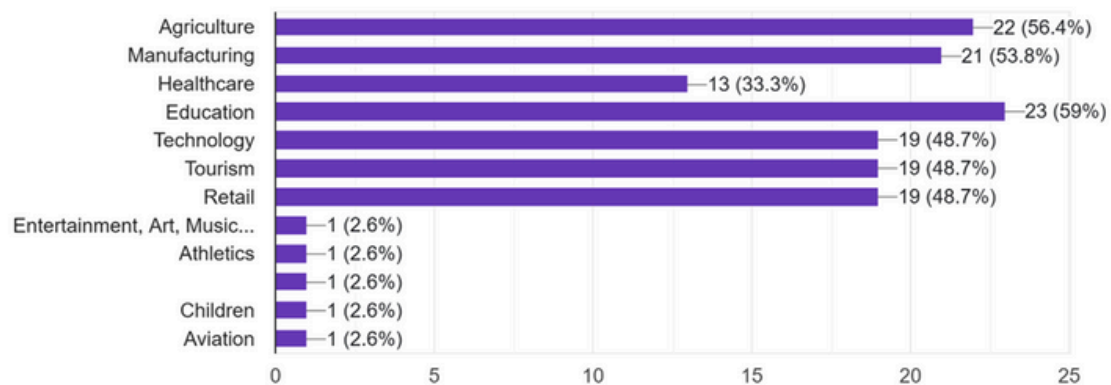
How familiar are you with the current economic development initiatives in Pine Bluff? (Housing, Business, Community, Workforce, etc.)

39 responses



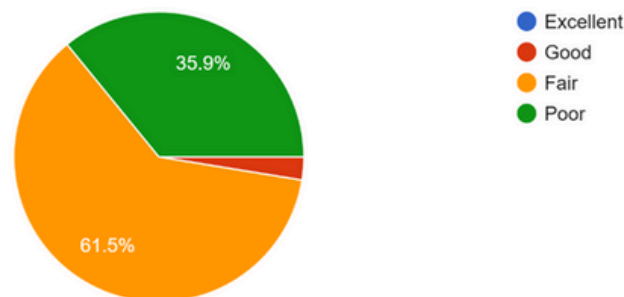
Which sectors do you believe have the most potential for economic growth in Pine Bluff? (Select all that apply)

39 responses



How would you rate the current business environment in Pine Bluff?

39 responses

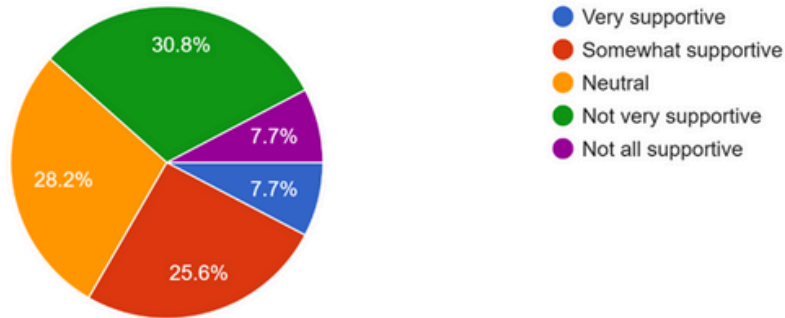


VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Survey Continued:

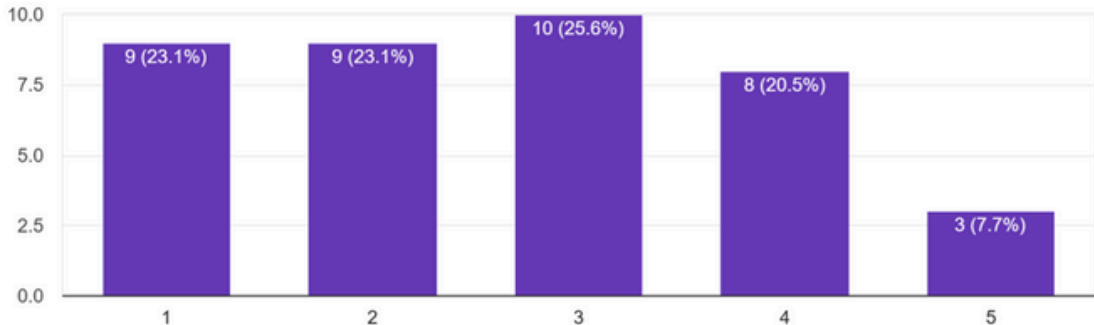
How supportive is the local government in fostering economic development? (Housing, Business, Workforce, Community)

39 responses



How likely are you to recommend Pine Bluff as a place for new businesses to set up?

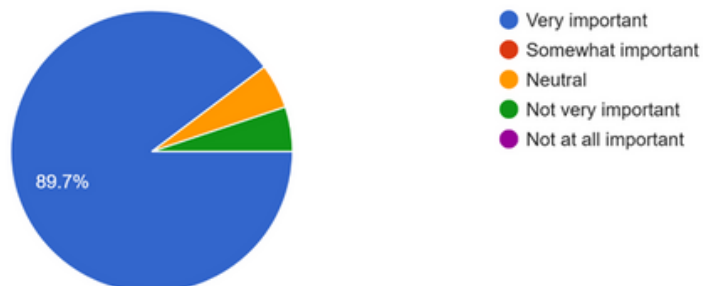
39 responses



1 = Not Likely 5= Very Likely

How important is it to invest in infrastructure development for economic growth in Pine Bluff?

39 responses

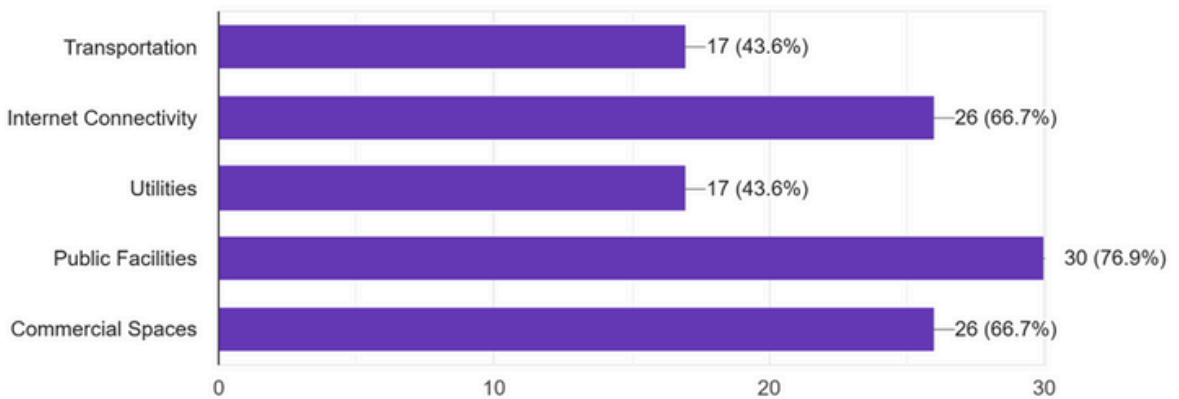


VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Survey Continued:

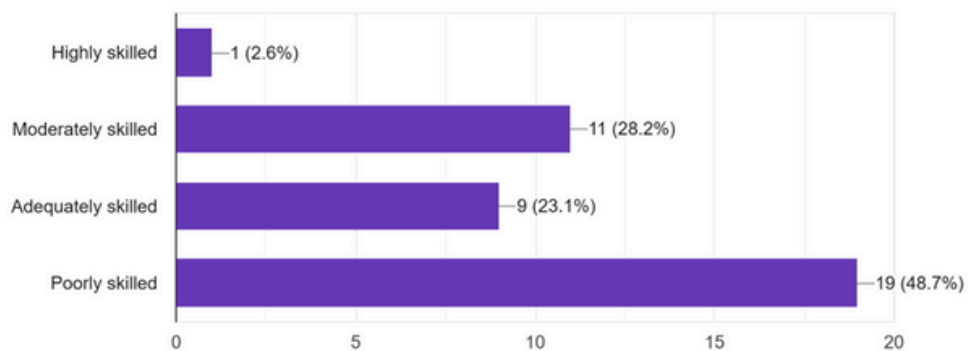
Which types of infrastructure improvements would most benefit businesses in Pine Bluff? (Select all that apply)

39 responses



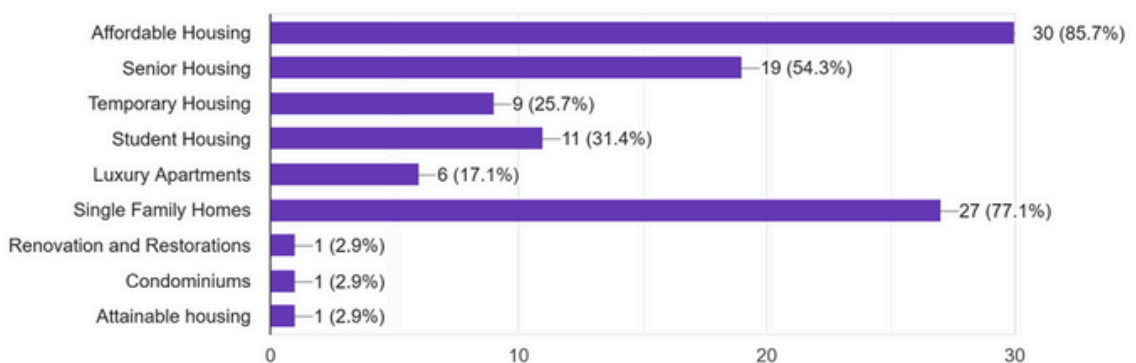
How would you rate the available workforce in Pine Bluff.

39 responses



What types of housing do you think are most needed in Pine Bluff? (Select all that apply)

35 responses

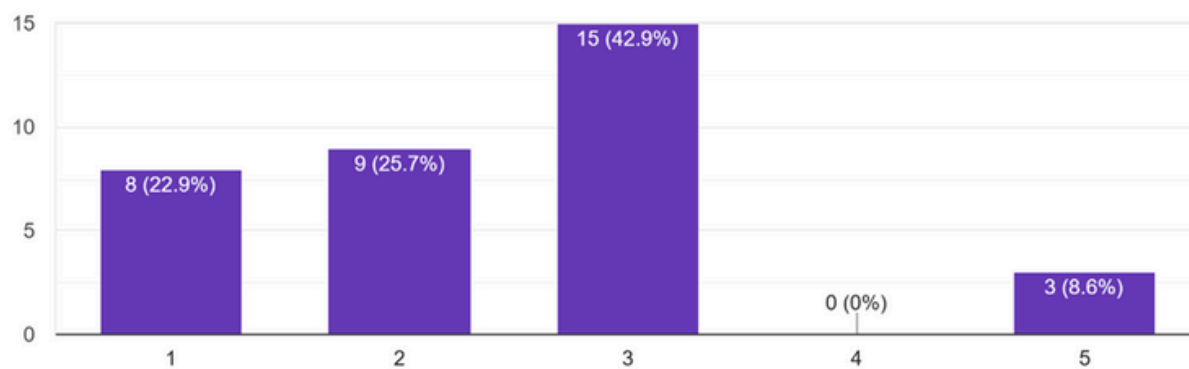


VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Survey Continued:

How satisfied are you with the current housing options in Pine Bluff?

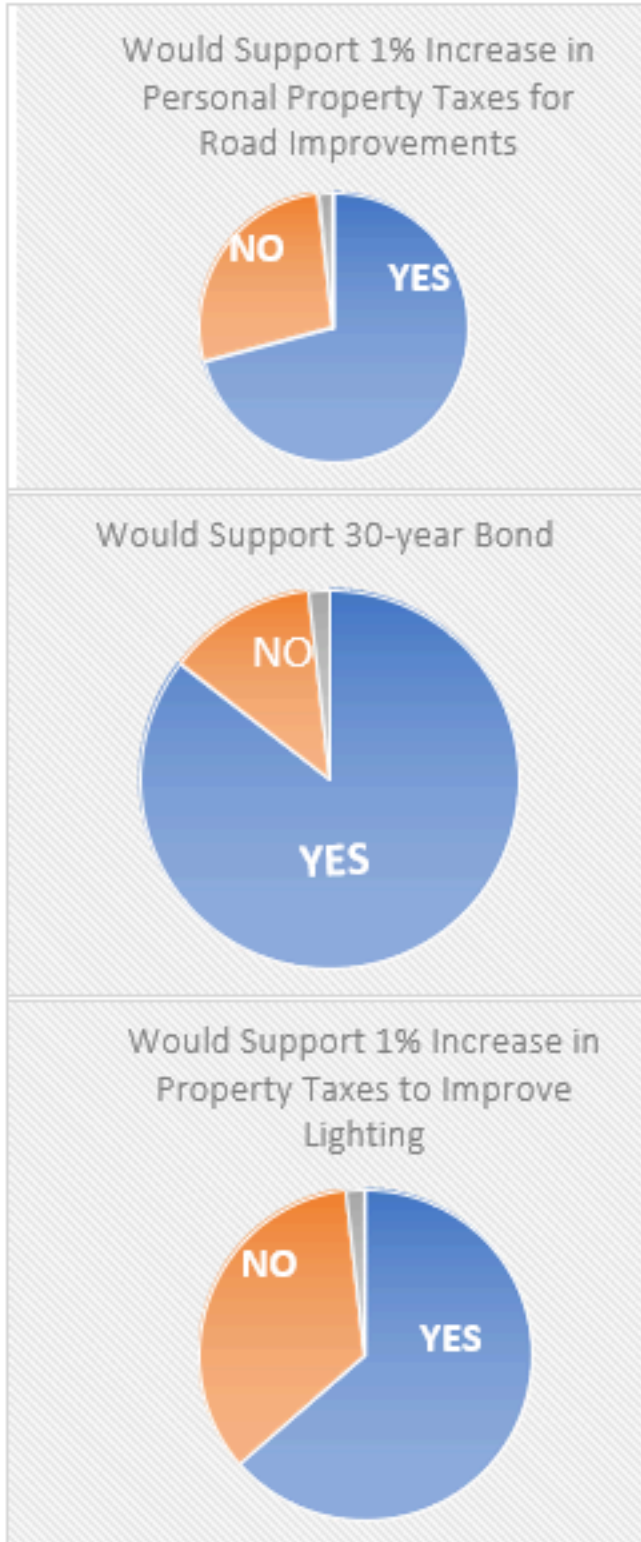
35 responses



1 = Not Likely 5= Very Likely

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Survey Continued:



Top 3 Infrastructure Concerns
1. Road conditions
2. Lack of sidewalks
3. Lighting

Other Concerns Worth Noting
• Striping
• Vacant lots
• Abandoned houses
• Signage
• Cleanliness
• Crime
• Drainage

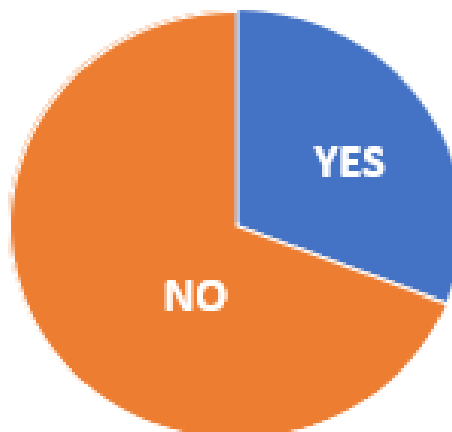
VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Survey Continued:

Satisfied with Road Conditions



Satisfied with Street Lighting



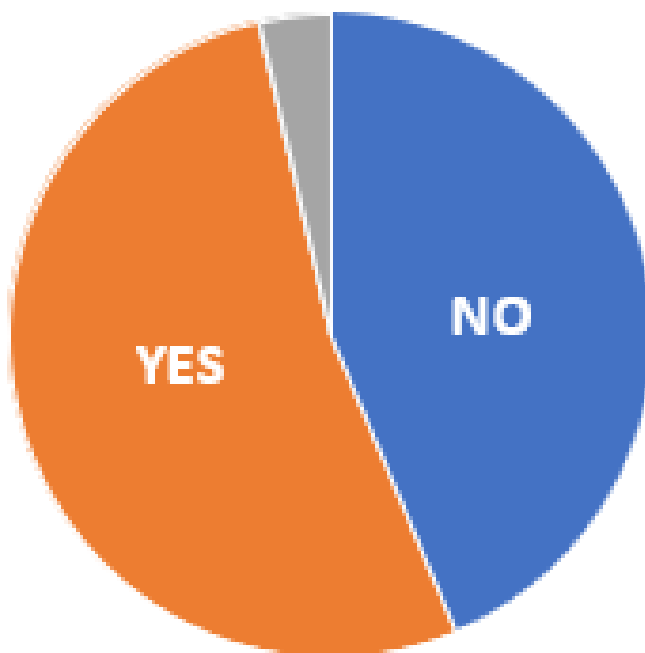
Satisfied with Signage and Striping



VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Survey Continued:

**Do You Have Nonworking Streetlights in
Your Neighborhood?**



**Satisfied with Responsiveness to
Reported Problems**



■ 1 ■ 2

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Survey:

PB Survey Post Hoc Analysis

Primary Category	Communication	Personnel	Equipment	Funding	None	Other (Controllable)	Other (Non-controllable)	Question
Service Interference	5	15	6	5		9	2	What are the biggest challenges your department faces in delivering services efficiently?
Redundancy	4		1		18	11		What city processes or procedures do you believe are redundant or inefficient?
Efficiency					11	19		Are there specific areas where better coordination between departments could improve efficiency?
Coordination	19		1		5	6		In response to the previous question, how might departments better coordinate with one another?
City-Citizen Communication	Yes	10	Somewhat	13	No	7		Do you feel that city government communicates effectively with employees and the public?
Communication Methods	18				7	6		In response to the previous question, please explain how the city does or does not communicate effectively with its citizens and employees.
Resources Needs	5	8	9	3	3	10		What tools or resources do you need to improve service delivery in your department?
Technology or Software		1	5	1	10	14		Are there technology upgrades or software improvements that could make your job easier and improve efficiency?
Transparency	14	1		1	14	5		What suggestions do you have for increasing government transparency?
Additional	6	1	1	1	18	5		Do you have any additional recommendations for improving city administration and operations?

EMPLOYEE RESPONSES

Biggest Challenges for Employees

City employees are facing several significant challenges. Equipment failures and understaffing, which may also indicate efficiency issues, are major concerns. There are difficulties with collaboration and cooperation among departments, compounded by budget constraints and workforce limitations. Accessing permits and construction data at job sites is problematic, likely due to technological shortcomings. Additionally, there is a need for better training and clearer definitions of titles and responsibilities to enhance overall efficiency and effectiveness. Significant modernization and digitization of office processes are needed, as the current system is no longer optimally efficient. Transitioning to online platforms would offer considerable advantages in terms of productivity, collaboration, and cost-effectiveness. Most customers would prefer to fill out necessary paperwork, pay online, and receive their licenses, renewals, etc., via email or USPS mail.

Key Issues: Equipment, understaffing, collaboration, funding, field access, training, role clarity, modernization,

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Survey Continued:

Redundancies and Inefficiencies

City employees believe that redundancies and inefficiencies in operations stem from several key issues. A lack of communication leads to missed steps in required licensing and inspections, and there are problems with the enforcement of ordinances. The inability to make online payments or report complaints further complicates matters. Slow response times from the police department when assistance is needed are a significant concern. Additionally, inefficiencies are noted in purchasing processes, the generation of monthly reports, and the onboarding process, including the creation of city badges at Transit. There is also a need for updating and automating payroll systems to streamline operations.

Most respondents agreed on better coordination and collaboration to improve efficiency (19 Yes, 7 unsure, 4 no)

Key Issues: Communication, enforcement, online portals, police, purchasing, reports, onboarding, payroll

Suggestions for Better Coordination and Collaboration

City employees suggest several ways to enhance coordination between departments. Improving communication is a top priority, including electronic communication on existing permits and prompt responsiveness. They believe Cemetery Deeds should be issued by the Cemetery Department rather than the City Clerk. Better communication is needed for plans or projects requiring multiple department cooperation. Monthly meetings to report on events and happenings are recommended. Embracing technology to replace antiquated processes is crucial. Centralized records for finance (payroll) and HR (personnel leave) would improve efficiency, along with a better understanding of finance functions. Overall, departments need to come together to understand their interrelationships and roles with one another.

Key Issues: communication, meetings, technology, role clarity

Effective Communication Between City and Employees

Responses: 10 yes, 7 no, and 13 somewhat

City employees believe that communication within the city is ineffective and fragmented. Departments often lack awareness or understanding of what other departments require and how they fit into the overall picture of city services. There is a need to upgrade the website to facilitate online payments and complaints. Communication tends to be selective, primarily involving department heads, and a consistent policy is needed. Employees call for greater transparency and the embrace of technology to improve processes. Advertising and ensuring decisions are made with employee notification are also important steps to enhance communication and coordination.

Key takeaways: communication, website, transparency, technology

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Survey Continued:

Specific Resources Needed by Department (copied as is)

- Aviation–Equipment updates such as new or newer fuel trucks. They are revenue generators for the airport. Ours are 30 years old and fail occasionally.
- Inspection and Zoning –up to date information on the city's website. also up to date telephone directory; the Combination Technical Inspector said: permits & related information accessible while in the field via IPAD vs cell phone calls (lots of complaints about this department's personnel; she should've known what the pain points for her department are),
- Advertising and Promotion Commission–An officer or enforcement person to check with food trucks and restaurants that are in operation. Are they open or closed, operating with a state & city license, health inspection? (Doesn't realize this is their job).
- Maintenance –Funding, equipment
- Aquatics –nothing needed
- HR–A user-friendly website with an updated online application process. I would also like to see an employee portal so that employees can view and make changes to benefits, submit FMLA or ADA documentation, access the employee handbook, etc.
- Animal Control –At least two more field officers and that will include vehicles necessary for the new personnel. From the Director: Manpower which will require more employee vehicles and funding to secure a veterinarian to help out in our shelter and to outfit a surgery suite in the shelter
- Collector –Updated computer systems and equipment, as well as, the office being painted, refreshed and updated. The overall look and feel of the office is depressing
- Economic Development– An integrated project management system would be great where I can track the progress of activities and staff in real time without having to coordinate update meetings. (My suggestion: Smartsheet); Housing Specialist: A tablet for onsite inspections and checklists would be helpful to save time on reports.
- Street Department –access to more training, more visibility from higher ups coming in to speak with lower employees
- Cemetery –To improve service delivery in the City Cemetery Department, several tools and resources would be beneficial in addressing the challenges we face and enhancing overall efficiency. These resources would help streamline operations, improve communication, and ensure we provide high-quality service to the public. Here are some key tools and resources that would help: 1. Comprehensive Cemetery Management Software, 2. Mobile Access for Field Staff,3. Enhanced Public Communication Tools and 4. Collaboration with Local Funeral Homes and Community Organizations.
- Public Works –updated computer equipment
- Grant Writer –another person, grant software
- Fire Department –More people, fire apparatus and equipment. budget increase
- Special Projects Coordinator –Financial support for programs/events,
- Transit –More drivers and vehicles

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Survey Continued:

Needed Technology or Software Upgrades (copied as is)

- Aviation—We need new computers. Myself, bookkeeper, line staff and public computers. We could also use a new surveillance system. Ours is 10+ years old.
- A and P—We have just invested in Gov.os also known as MuniRev for our tax collections. I think the city would benefit with providing businesses the ability to pay taxes and apply online. (WHY ARE THEY COLLECTING TAXES AND ISSUING LICENSES)
- Website
- Animal Control —A more up to date radio and body worn camera system would make communication and documentation more efficient in our department.
- Collector —Yes, new computers and online platforms to efficiently process all financial transactions. This includes license and permit fees, occupational taxes, fines, etc. This could also be done through an App.
- Fire —Yes, Increase number of people working in I.T. department. Modern equipment/software
- Transit —Transit specific programs (fare collection; route management; reporting) need to be upgraded and more user training.

Employee Suggestions for Improvement

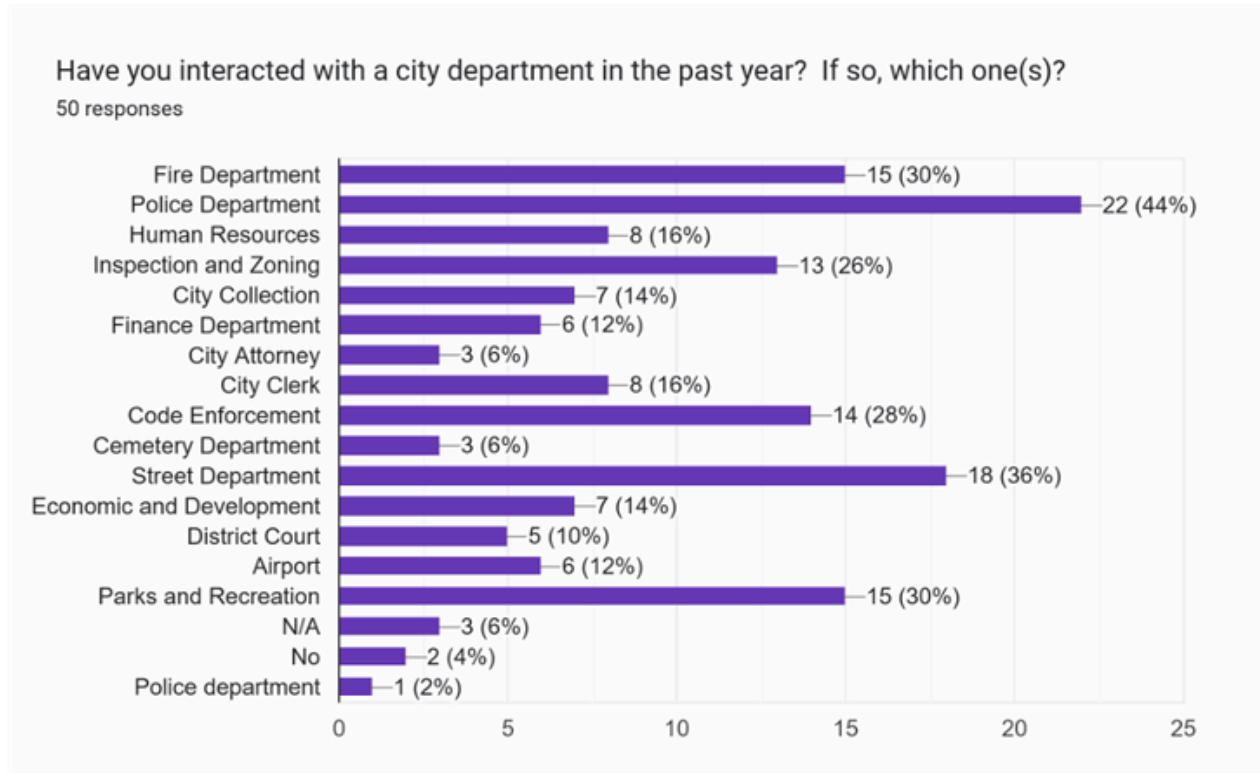
City employees have suggested several ways to improve city services, including increasing the city's online presence and possibly engaging in radio discussions. A comprehensive website redesign is essential to enhance transparency and accessibility, making it user-friendly and informative. Developing an app to improve real-time communication with citizens, sharing emergency alerts, road work updates, and providing access to all city services in one place is also suggested. Scheduling one-on-one meetings with department heads to ensure transparency, publishing regular reports and updates, and maintaining clear, accessible communication on policies and changes are important steps. Streamlining the complaint and feedback system, holding regular public forums or "town hall" meetings, and establishing community advisory boards or committees are also recommended. Improved communication between departments and city heads can boost morale and operations. Providing necessary resources for departments to deliver expected services and ensuring transparency are crucial. Lastly, a clear chain of command should be established to avoid confusion and stress, as department heads currently report to multiple "bosses," making it challenging to manage their responsibilities effectively. A more robust online presence could improve and enhance citizen engagement by developing a comprehensive system that allows residents to easily access city information and communicate regarding non-emergency matters.

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

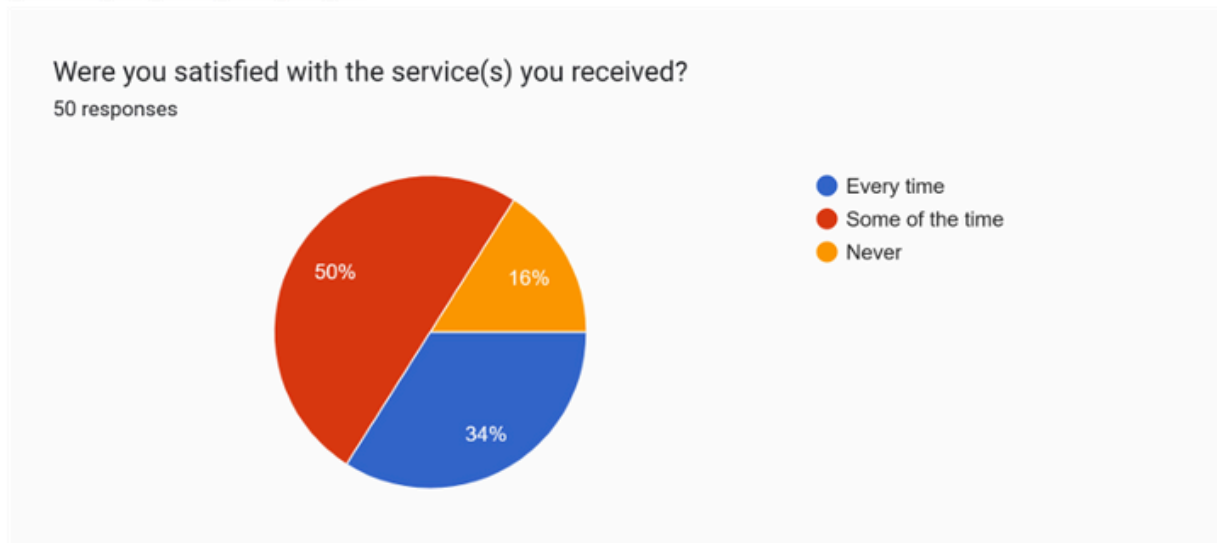
Survey:

CITIZEN RESPONSES

Interactions



SERVICE SATISFACTION



VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Survey Continued:

Citizens have raised several concerns regarding city services. They highlighted issues with follow-through, response time, professionalism, and competency. Communication problems were noted, including unanswered phones and the inability to pay online. Code enforcement practices were questioned, with concerns about how properties are selected, unequal application of regulations, and issues with unkept lots and vacant homes. There is a perception that police focus mainly on homicides and engage in selective policing, with limited neighborhood patrols. Infrastructure issues were also mentioned, such as the visibility of street lines and the cleanliness of MLK park. Additionally, there are concerns about staff coordination, with staff being unclear on their roles and authority, inconsistent responses within departments, and a need for better collaboration between departments. Citizens were most satisfied with the Fire Department; a couple indicated police and others

Key Issues: Service quality, communication, Code Enforcement personnel, police services, infrastructure, departmental coordination

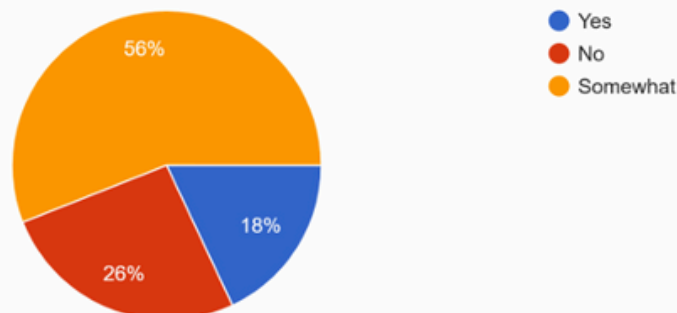
Most Improvement Needed By Number of Responses

- Street Department –27
- Police Department –11
- Code Enforcement –13
- Parks and Recreation –5
- Inspection and Zoning –5
- Animal Control –3
- Economic Development –7

Transparency and Accessibility

Do you feel that city government is transparent and accessible?

50 responses



VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Survey Continued:

Citizens have expressed significant concerns about the transparency and accessibility of the city government. Trust issues persist due to past administrations and events, and specific information is often difficult to obtain from public sources, requiring in-person attendance for accessibility. The city is perceived to be in a "Technological Dark Age," with a strong desire for monthly updates on city accomplishments. Communication is generally lacking, with insufficient newspaper coverage and difficulty in determining who handles various responsibilities within the government. Financial transparency is a major issue, with no clear information available and a lack of prosecution for misappropriations. Additionally, there are complaints about incomplete projects and a general lack of communication about ongoing city activities.

Key Issues: Mistrust, information accessibility, technological, communication, role clarity, financial transparency, incomplete projects

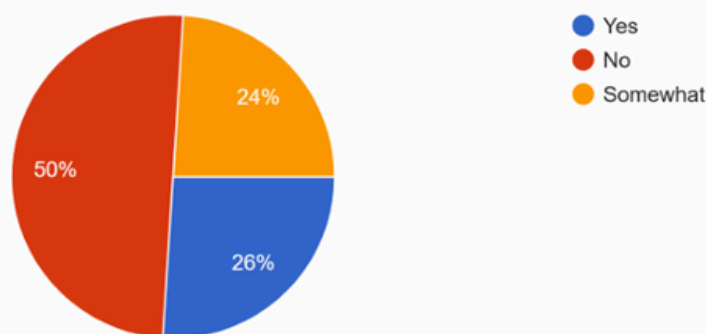
What methods would help improve communication between the city government and residents?

50 responses



Have you had problems accessing city services?

50 responses



VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Survey Continued:

Citizens have faced numerous challenges when accessing city services. They struggle with knowing who to contact and getting directed to the correct facility, often encountering unanswered phones and an unhelpful website. There are frequent complaints about receiving no response and experiencing poor customer service marked by apathy. Issues with promptness and delays are common, and there are specific concerns about the maintenance of public areas, such as mowing ditches and sidewalks.

Key Issues: Information, contact, website, customer service, delays, maintenance

Suggestions to Improve Efficiency and Accessibility

Citizens have suggested several ways to improve the efficiency and accessibility of city services. They recommend training employees on the functions of other departments to enhance coordination and responsiveness. Directly addressing issues and improving building accessibility are also key suggestions. Citizens emphasize the importance of friendlier customer service and consistent application of services. Better communication, addressing complaints promptly, and providing quarterly updates on city projects are seen as essential improvements. Additionally, offering more services online, increasing transparency, and implementing a unified call system are suggested to streamline access and enhance overall service delivery.

Key Issues: Training, resolution, customer service, communication, online services, transparency, unified call system, professionalism

Improving Administration and Eliminating Inefficiencies

Citizens have proposed several suggestions to improve city administration and eliminate inefficiencies. They emphasize the need for better cooperation and collaboration among departments, along with regular audits to assess service delivery and efficiency. Ensuring efficient resource allocation and streamlining code enforcement activities with employee accountability are also key recommendations. Establishing a Department of Sustainability and appointing a city manager are suggested to enhance oversight and focus. Citizens advocate for the use of more technology, clarifying titles, roles, and responsibilities, and conducting reviews to identify departmental inefficiencies. Hiring competent professionals and increasing transparency are also seen as crucial steps to improve overall city administration.

Key Issues: Collaboration, audits, resource allocation, streamlining, technology, city manager, clarification, professionalism, transparency

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Survey Continued:

Additional Comments

Citizens have offered various suggestions to improve city governance. Addressing blight and enhancing city branding are seen as important steps. Utilizing inmate labor and resolving severe personnel issues in zoning are recommended. The Chamber and Alliance are urged to contribute more effectively. Evaluating all departments and providing proper training to ensure competence is emphasized. Establishing a priority system for animal control and developing an innovative campaign to encourage citizens to keep the community clean and take pride in the city are suggested. Citizens believe restoring pride in Pine Bluff and enforcing upkeep is crucial. Implementing Lean and Six Sigma principles to cut waste and improve workflows is advocated. Additionally, more development on the Northside near UAPB and fostering cooperation and collaboration among departments are recommended.

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Charts and References:

Comparative Analysis

Starting Pay for Entry Patrol	Comparison	PBPD	Difference	
Pine Bluff	41,402.00	----		
Sherwood	47,192.00	41,402.00	5,790.00	
Jacksonville	48,000.00	41,402.00	6,598.00	
Bryant	49,604.00	41,402.00	8,202.00	
North Little Rock	50,428.77	41,402.00	9,026.77	
Conway	50,923.55	41,402.00	9,521.55	
Benton	51,000.00	41,402.00	9,598.00	
Hot Springs	51,555.00	41,402.00	10,153.00	
Little Rock	55,161.60	41,402.00	13,759.60	
				Average Difference
				9,081.12

Recommendation 1: Justification

Crime Category	Year	Reported Incidents	Arrests	Unsolved/Under Investigation
Residential Burglaries	2023	217	14	203
	2024	213	15	198
Commercial Burglaries	2023	112	5	107
	2024	95	9	86
Rapes and Attempted Rapes	2023	31	2	29
	2024	14	4	10
Robberies	2023	46	4	42
	2024	19	4	15
Aggravated Assaults	2023	122	28	94
	2024	120	21	99
Homicides	2023	28	19	9
	2024	16	8	8
Domestic Disputes & Fights	2023	473	-	-
	2024	555	-	-

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Charts and References:

Recommendation 3: Description Table

Shift	Category	Total Years	Number of Officers	Avg. Years of Experience
Day Shift	Supervisors & Patrol Ranked	97.42	12	8.12
	Patrol Ranked Only	49.17	9	5.46
	Sunday	26.25	6	4.38
	Monday	16.58	5	3.32
	Tuesday	29.91	4	7.48
	Wednesday	36.58	4	9.15
	Thursday	32.58	4	8.15
	Friday	33.17	6	5.53
	Saturday	21.58	7	3.08
Swing Shift	Supervisors & Patrol Ranked	69.33	14	4.95
	Patrol Ranked Only	35.16	11	3.20
	Sunday	13.50	6	2.25
	Monday	20.08	6	3.35
	Tuesday	25.92	6	4.32
	Wednesday	27.92	6	4.65
	Thursday	22.25	6	3.71
	Friday	18.17	7	2.60
	Saturday	12.83	7	1.83
Graveyard Shift	Supervisors & Patrol Ranked	127.25	14	9.09
	Supervisors Only	45.50	3	15.17
	Patrol Ranked Only	81.75	11	7.43
	Sunday	32.75	7	4.68
	Monday	71.50	6	11.92
	Tuesday	71.67	6	11.94
	Wednesday	71.42	6	11.90
	Thursday	55.08	7	7.87
	Friday	11.17	6	1.86
Saturday	13.42	6	2.24	

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Ordinances Referenced:

Ordinance 6804 states the following:

ORDINANCE NO. 6804

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING POLICY NUMBER 106 OF THE PINE BLUFF POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL, RESPECTING TAKE HOME VEHICLES, AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES:

WHEREAS current police department policy permits employees who reside within the City limits of Pine Bluff to, under specified criteria, "take home" a police unit; and WHEREAS many police officers live in proximity to the city limits, but reside in Jefferson County, and it is desired to give the chief of police the discretion to allow an Officer who lives in the county and otherwise meets all criteria to take home a department vehicle; and WHEREAS it is necessary to amend department policy to effect this change.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS:

Section 1. That Policy Number 106 in the Pine Bluff Police Department Policy & Procedures Manual is amended as follows:

In Part II. Policy, change the second paragraph to read:

"Also, employees who have 20 years of service or more with this department and live within the within the city limits of Pine Bluff Jefferson County, Arkansas, may be authorized a take home vehicle with consideration given to past performance and conduct."

(Old language stricken and new language in italics.)

Section 2. That all ordinances are parts thereof in conflict with this Ordinance are repealed to the extent of the conflict.

Section 3. This Ordinance, not being of a general or permanent nature, need to be published and shall take effect immediately.

For clarification, an opinion was written by Assistant City Attorney Joe Childers. The opinion that was written on March 5, 2025 is below:

TO: Joyce Campbell, Office of the Mayor

FROM: Joe Childers, Assistant City Attorney

DATE: March 5, 2025

RE: "TAKE HOME" CITY VEHICLES

The ordinances discussed below address "take home" vehicles. Police Department Policy No. 106 also addresses the subject and is discussed.

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Ordinances Referenced:

Ordinance No. 6178, passed July 5, 2006, is the primary source for regulations concerning take home vehicles. This ordinance codified in Section 2-4 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Section 1 of the ordinance states: "No city owned vehicle shall be operated outside the corporate limits of the City of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, unless the vehicle is being operated in the line of duty on city business, pursuant to city contracts, or as required by Arkansas law." This continues to be the rule today. As chief executive, it is the mayor's duty to ensure this proscription is followed.

Section 2 of the ordinance was extensively amended on the date of adoption. The general rule, consistent with Section 1, is that an employee who operates a city vehicle in the course of employment will park it in a designated lot when their shift ends. In other words, the city vehicle is not to be taken home or other destination.

Subsections (a)-(d) create exceptions to the general rule. These are: an employee (uniformed or nonuniformed) who is on 24-hour call for emergency service requiring immediate response to the site of the emergency.

Samples include -the chiefs of the police and of the fire and emergency service department; the deputy chiefs of these departments; officers with 20 years of service who reside in the city and who are available for rapid response; and the heads of the Street Department and Animal Control Department.

an employee who is on-call and operates a city-owned vehicle specifically to perform his job-related duties. The samples given are- vice/narcotics police officers and detectives; officers on the call out list; employees on-call for the Street, Animal Control, and Inspection Departments. an employee certified by the mayor to the city council as needing to continue in possession of a city vehicle outside of regular hours, which is confirmed by the council.
AND

a department head may allow an employee to take a city vehicle home for travel to and from job related meetings or conferences which begin the following day, and when it is more economical.

These provisions make clear that the privilege of a take home vehicle should be restricted to law enforcement/emergency services officers who are "on-call" to react to an event during the period there are on-call, along with employees whose city vehicle essentially is part of the equipment needed to handle the event. An employee scheduled for out-of-town, job-related travel may take a vehicle home the night before. Everyone else requires special designation by the mayor and approval of the city council.

Subsections 3 and 4 address record keeping obligations and restrictions on use of the city vehicle.

Section 3(a) requires the mayor to create and maintain a list of employees who are authorized to regularly retain possession of a city vehicle after hours and file the list with the city clerk's office. The mayor is to update the list regularly and conduct an annual review to prevent abuse of the privilege.

Subsection 3(b) imposes the duty on all city departments to submit an itemized accounting on a periodic basis established by the Finance Department, identifying city employees in the department who have been authorized to take a vehicle home for business travel as allowed under Section 2(d) of the ordinance. This itemized accounting is to be made on a form created by the Finance Director, who in turn must provide a quarterly report to the Ways and Means Committee of the city council of vehicle usage.

Section 4(a) prohibits a city employee who is permitted to take a city owned vehicle home from using it for personal errands or travel, except in case of an emergency. Only the employee or other authorized city official may operate the vehicle.

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Ordinances Referenced:

Subsection 4(b) explains the possible penalty for ignoring 4(a).

Section 5 of the ordinance makes explicit that it covers all city vehicles of whatever nature.

Ordinance No. 6178 has not been repealed or specifically amended since its adoption. When adopted it would have superseded prior legislation or rule then in existence which conflicted with its provisions. Though it did not contain a specific or general repealer clause, as the last (at the time) general legislative declaration on the subject matter, it would prevail and govern over prior enactments or rules.

Ordinance No. 6178 does not explicitly identify who makes the decision to authorize an employee to take home a vehicle in every case, except as noted in subsections 2(c) (mayor) and 2(d) (department head). However, given that the mayor as chief executive is responsible for carrying out the ordinances of the city, and that the mayor has reporting duties under the Ordinance, it stands to reason the mayor is the ultimate decision maker. The mayor may, of course, delegate a decision of this nature to a department head, preferably in writing, and setting forth the parameters of the of the delegation

Two subsequent city ordinances touch on this issue. Both concern Pine Bluff Police Department Policy No. 106, which addresses "Take Home Vehicles."

Ordinance No. 6326, passed August 2, 2010, approved amendments to the Police Department's Policies and Procedures Manual. This amended several department policies, including Policy No. 106. The previous edition of 106 was issued July 5, 2006, which happened to be the same day Ordinance No. 6178 was passed. In Part II of 2006 version, the first paragraph contained no reference to the chief of police as decision maker. It did provide in the third paragraph that the chief would authorize an officer to take home a vehicle on a "case-by case basis."

Without any explanation, this language was changed when the policy was amended in 2010. Part II now identified the chief of police as the decision maker regarding who in the police department may take home a city vehicle. These include on-call officers and members of the "Crisis Management Team." Also included are officers with 20 plus year of service in good standing who live in the City of Pine Bluff. The final paragraph in Part II emphasizes that the chief's decision is on a case-by-case basis.

It should be noted that until the abolition of the Civil Service Commission the Police Chief was appointed by the commission. When the commission was abolished the authority to appoint the chief was vested in the mayor.

Police policies are for the internal governance of the department only. In order to harmonize Policy No. 106 with requirements of Ordinance 6178, the chief of police must be understood to be acting as the mayor's delegate in making these decisions. This effectively means that the chief maintains all the recordkeeping requirements of Ordinance No. 6178 on behalf of the mayor, and provide the mayor with the records so the mayor can carry out her responsibilities in this regard.

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Ordinances Referenced:

The final ordinance touching on take-home vehicles is Ordinance No. 6804, was passed July 5, 2023. This ordinance amended Police Department Policy No. 106 in Part II, second paragraph, by removing the restriction an officer lives in Pine Bluff and replacing it with "Jefferson County, Arkansas."

The bottom line:

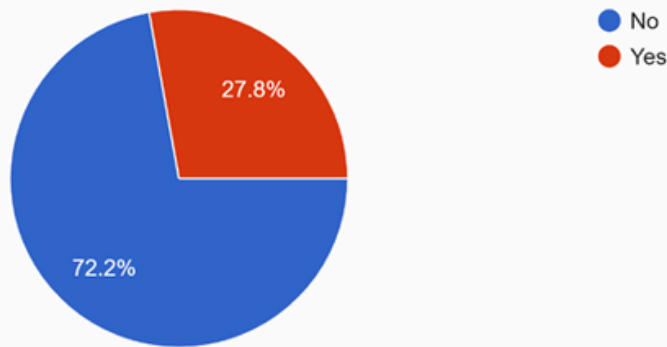
- (1) The mayor is the final decision maker respecting who make take a city car home, except when the city council expressly declines to approve her decision. The chiefs of police and the fire and emergency services department, as well as the heads of other city departments, are responsible to the mayor and must comply with the recordkeeping requirements the council has enacted respecting take-home vehicles.*
- (2) The city council has enacted a general rule that a city employee who uses a city vehicle in his or her job parks it in a city lot when his/her shift ends and does not take it home or some other place.*
- (3) The city council has outlined specific exceptions, specifying who make take a city vehicle home and under what circumstances.*
- (4) The mayor is obligated to compel a list of who takes a city car home, keep it up-to-date, and make an annual report of usage.*
- (5) The Finance Director is to keep track of city vehicles used in travel and ensure compliance with the applicable IRS and state tax rules.*
- (6) Department heads who have been delegated the authority to authorize an employee to take a city vehicle home must document the action to verify compliance with the city council's rules and promptly notify the mayor so she may update her list.*
- (7) Police Department Policy No. 106 must be interpreted to be consistent with Ordinance No. 6178.*
- (8) Revising existing city code should be considered to clear up any confusion.*

VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: SOCIAL IMPACT & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Survey:

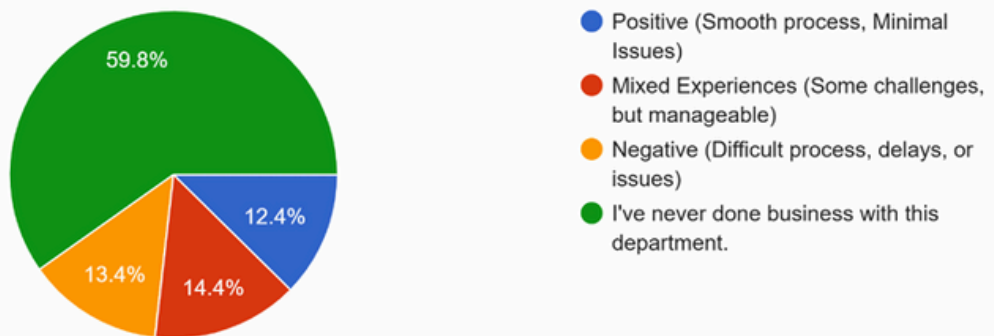
Do you know where to find information about affordable housing?

97 responses



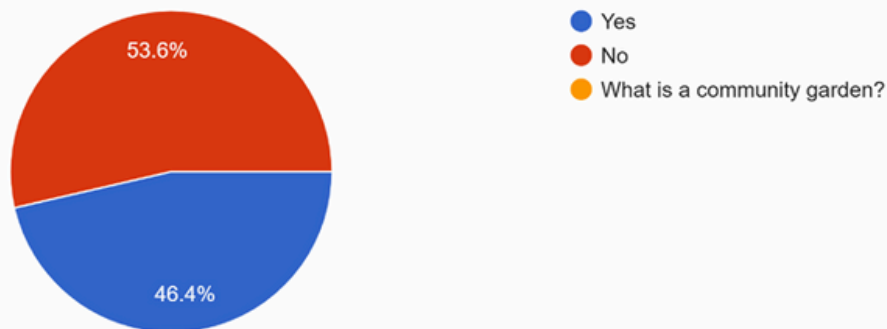
Could you describe your experiences with the Inspection and Zoning Department?

97 responses



Do you have access to a community garden/local grown produce?

97 responses

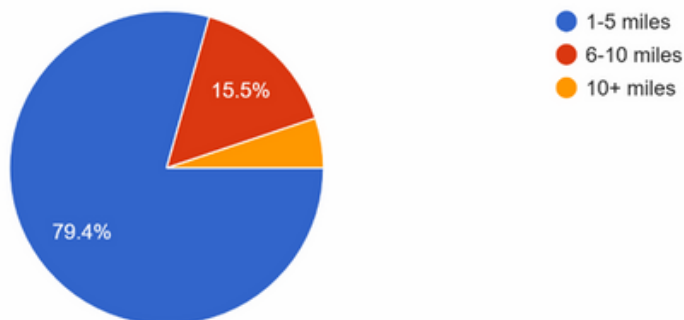


VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: SOCIAL IMPACT & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Survey:

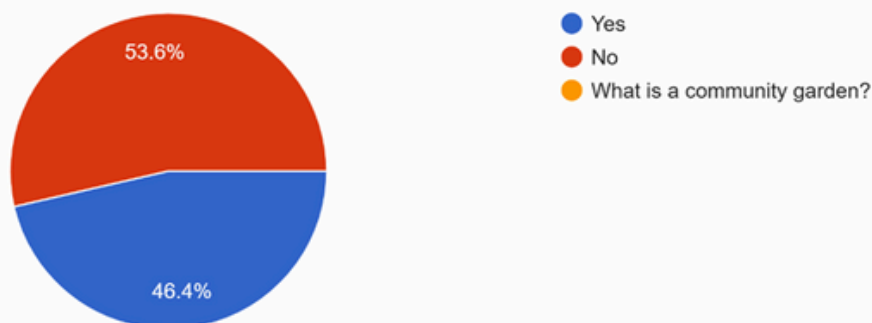
How far are you from a store that sells fresh produce (fruits and vegetables), dairy, eggs, & meat?

97 responses



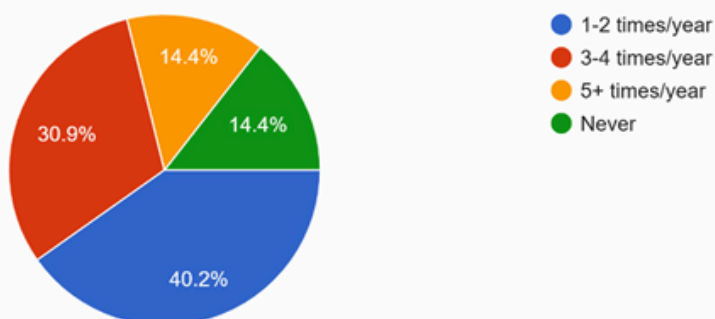
Do you have access to a community garden/local grown produce?

97 responses



How often do you have to seek health care services (doctor/dentist/therapy) outside of Pine Bluff?

97 responses

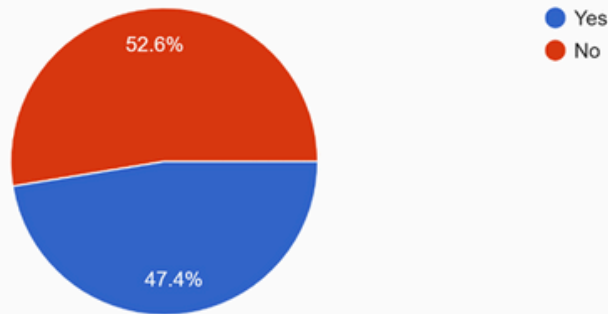


VII. APPENDICES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: SOCIAL IMPACT & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Survey:

Do you know about the transportation services available for getting to your medical or health-related appointments?

97 responses



How do you feel about the appearance of our community?

97 responses



Would you be more likely to support businesses that prioritize sustainability (recycling programs, eco-friendly packaging, etc.)?

97 responses

