

Auburn Community Conversation #1

Location: Edward Little High School

Date: September 17, 2013

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Given the difficult decisions that our community must face, and the reality that property tax increases must be minimized, what are our priorities for Auburn's future?

PRIORITIES INTRODUCED BY RESIDENTS

Listed in order of priority as discussed by residents.

- Education
- Economic development
- Increase civic engagement
- Downtown vibrancy
- Safety
- Neighborhoods
- Parks & Recreation

DISCUSSION NOTES

Points of view included:

Education ---identified as the top priority.

- Auburn's education system should be a center of excellence. A source of pride.
- Can we afford to be #1?
- Quality education is essential to future economic development.
- Role of technical education to prepare for the needs of the local workforce, especially with pending retirements among employees in the manufacturing sector and electricians, plumbers, and other highly skilled workers.
- Role of college-ready education for every student.
- Schools should be a center of community connection.
- Many young people could benefit from a strong mentoring program.
- Many people do not understand benefits of new approach with mass customized education. Is it just the next fad?
- Schools must build more buy-in since so many residents don't have children in the school system anymore.
- Help achieve the goal of everyone gets a high school diploma.
- Help achieve higher levels of literacy. 1 of 5 can't read at 5th grade level.

- Need to attract and retain young people and families. Educational quality is essential.
- Pre-K for every child is important.
- Chamber of Commerce is advocating for a longer school year, week.
- Early release days are very hard on working parents and erode support for the local school district.
- Professional parents who move to the area often choose to live elsewhere because of perceptions of the local schools.
- What is the link, if any, between quality educational programs and the facilities?

Economic development

- Quality of life and place is the foundation for economic development and business attraction.
- Innovation and talent needed for the next wave of economic development.
- Must attract and retain young people to spark innovation-based business development--link to downtown vibrancy.
- Must attract and retain young families—link to quality of education system.
- Auburn has advantages of land (68 sq miles) and location as a hub of transportation.
- Manufacturing sector is 15% of economic activity--a good percentage and growing. Workforce is older though and will retire soon.
- Need to brand “an Auburn experience.”
- Brand L-A as a college town and healthcare center.
- TIFs: what are they? How are they used in Auburn?
- Need to know where future employment opportunities will be. Link to education.
- Help L-A high school graduates know what’s here in LA. Offer early awareness of career opportunities. Mentoring?

Civic Engagement

- Information needed to help residents understand complex tradeoffs in schools and municipal budgets
- Residents want to think through where to make future investments
- How can information be made available?
- How can people from different age groups be encouraged to get more involved?
- Could we bring people together with mentoring?
- Could we organize a series of community field trips so more people could see more about what is going on in the community?
- Need to increase the sense of community in Auburn.

Downtown vibrancy

- Must be hip to attract young talent needed for the innovation-centered future economic development.

Safety & neighborhoods

- Neighborhoods must offer a quality living environment. Link to parks and recreation.
- Need to attract and retain young families with quality of life. Link to education.

Parks & Recreation

- Agreed not a priority at this time.
- Parks need updated equipment.
- Parks need to be cleaned up.

Other

- L-A as a single place. Combined?
- Roads
- Auburn's demographics—aging population
- What is a service center city?
- Why are taxes so high? Higher than elsewhere?