



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY

HUGO WALL SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

*Public Policy and
Management Center*

CITY OF GARDNER ACCESS SURVEY

JUNE 2017

PREPARED BY

WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY
Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs
Public Policy and Management Center

Misty R. Bruckner, Director
Sarah Shaffer, Program Manager
Kevin Ash, Graduate Assistant
Erica Wilt, Graduate Assistant

Mark Glaser, Faculty Adviser

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The City of Gardner partnered with the Public Policy and Management Center (PPMC) at Wichita State University’s Hugo Wall School to assist with the development of an online citizen survey regarding accessibility for people with physical disabilities. The purpose of the survey was to solicit community input on priorities, perceptions and overall community direction regarding barriers for people with disabilities.

METHODOLOGY

The PPMC first conducted stakeholder interviews with community leaders in Gardner to define areas of interest and concern regarding accessibility issues. Those informed interviews assisted in defining the issues and questions for the survey. (See Attachment A.) The survey was promoted and released by the City of Gardner during February and March 2017. All survey responses are anonymous with no specific response attributed to any individual. The surveys were available online. Paper copies were distributed and collected at facilities or organizations serving people with physical disabilities.

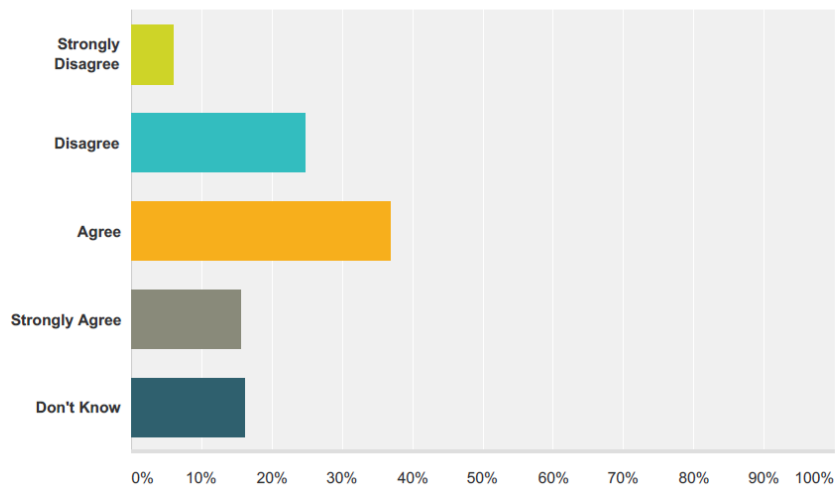
SURVEY RESULTS

More than half of the respondents (53%) agree that people with disabilities in Gardner have a lot of challenges accessing services in the community.

Chart 1.

Q1 People with disabilities in Gardner have a lot of challenges accessing services in our community.

Answered: 165 Skipped: 1

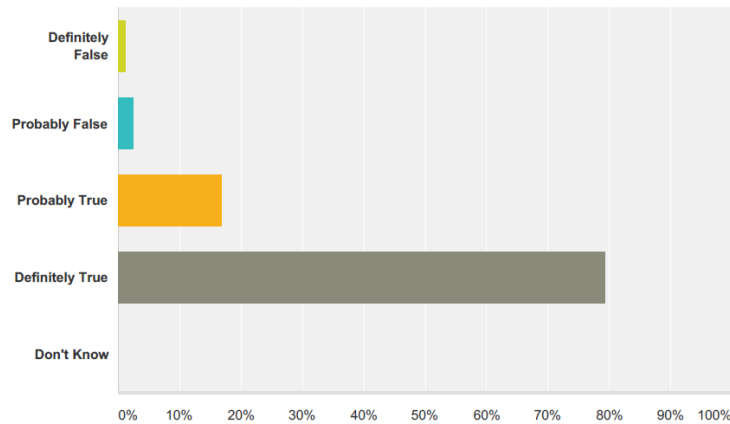


A large majority of respondents (96%) firmly or ‘probably’ believe that the community has a responsibility to ensure access to public facilities and services for people with physical disabilities.

Chart 2.

Q2 The community has a responsibility to ensure access to public facilities and services for people with physical disabilities.

Answered: 165 Skipped: 1

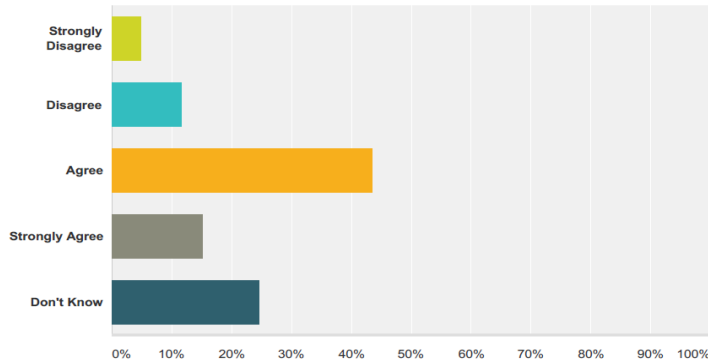


Most respondents (58%) agreed that the city has made significant accessibility improvements for people with disabilities in the past five years; however, 17% disagreed and the remaining 25% did not know.

Chart 3.

Q3 The City of Gardner has made significant accessibility improvements for people with disabilities in the past five years.

Answered: 163 Skipped: 3



Question Four on the survey focused on “important community concerns” for people with disabilities in the City of Gardner. The survey indicates strong priorities for the community. For the survey, ninety-two percent or more of respondents indicated that access to public buildings (95%), accessible parking (94%), safe crosswalks (93%) and easy-to-navigate sidewalks (92%) are important community concerns for people with disabilities in Gardner. These concerns are crucial considering the majority of disabilities are mobility-related.

Further, sixty-nine to eighty-eight percent also indicated that access to information about available services (88%), access to private businesses (86%), access to parks/playgrounds (80%), transportation opportunities (78%), and recreational programming opportunities (69%) are all important community concerns for people with disabilities in the city.

When asked for suggestions regarding how the City of Gardner might improve its service delivery to individuals with disabilities, some survey respondents mentioned that the city is doing a great job with addressing ADA accessibility, while others had some concerns.

Sidewalks

The most common concern pertained to having sidewalks connecting to businesses and safer crosswalks. One respondent said, “Please provide sidewalks down 167th.” Another respondent wrote, “None of the streets east of Gardner Elementary have sidewalks. The one elementary school dedicated to special needs - E Washington, E Shawnee, N Cherry, none have sidewalks. They are long straight streets, so cars go fast there. E Washington St has the entrance to the greenway, with big playground...yet, no sidewalks to get the kids there safely.” “Keep up on sidewalk repairs. Require installation and upkeep in front of businesses. This *(is)* important for everyone’s safety, but vital for those with handicaps,” commented another.

Public Building Improvements

There were more comments for public building improvements (especially City Hall/Senior Center), including installation of ramps, handrails, automatic doors, accessible restrooms and designated parking stalls. One respondent asked, “Where is the wheelchair ramp for the front door or the side door (Senior Center)?” Another wrote, “The Senior Center needs a handrail at the west door for people who are dropped off at that door.” Lastly, a respondent commented, “The City needs to add better parking at the front of City Hall for disabled persons, or a better ramp for them to get in and not walk a long way from the side of the building.”

Transportation

Survey respondents expressed a need for people with disabilities to have access to transportation, specifically to and from Olathe, where many appointments take place. According to one respondent, “Accessible transportation around Gardner and to Olathe is highly needed. Ability to get a ride to the field house, celebration park, high school, shopping.” Another said,

“We need transportation to Olathe for physical therapy.” “I don’t know if there are public transit options here in town that would assist individuals getting to services, but a small route with stops downtown and at the grocery store would help with mobility independence,” stated another respondent.

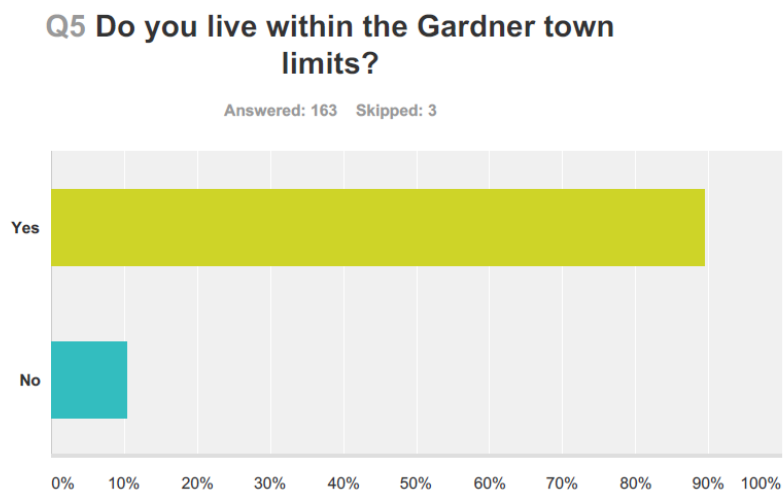
Parks & Recreation

In addition, respondents mentioned the need for recreational and social programs which are accessible for children with disabilities, including park improvements such as accessible play equipment and restrooms. One respondent said, “Ensure all restrooms are truly handicap accessible. Particularly the old ball fields by the nursing home. Porta potties don’t sit flat enough for wheel chairs and the old concession stand restrooms are not wide enough for wheel chairs to access.” Another stated, “Social opportunities for disabled persons is needed. Boccia sports team for wheel chair bound folks....family support for families with young disabled children,” wrote one respondent. “Parks should offer at least one ADA swing so children in the community are able to feel inclusion. The mulch also doesn’t allow a wheelchair to be included to play,” expressed another respondent.

Overall, community members appreciate the City seeking input from individuals with disabilities. One person stated, “Everyone I have spoken with at the City government has been very friendly and found needed answers...you do good, just feel that you could benefit from using a disabled member on the committee to give you a better perspective. If you are not disabled, you do not have any clue what it can be like for some of us.” *(Note: The City does have people with disabilities on the ADA Committee or members have family members with disabilities.)*

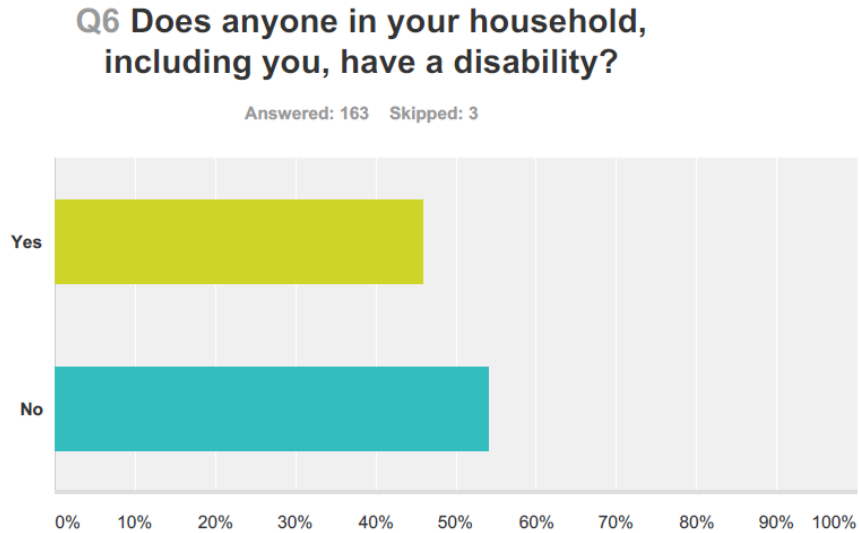
Ninety percent (90%) of survey respondents live within the Gardner city limits.

Chart 4.



Almost half (46%) of the respondents indicated that someone in their household has a disability, indicating a slight majority did *not* have a disability.

Chart 5.



Of those who answered ‘yes,’ thirty-seven percent have one person with disabilities, six percent have two people with disabilities, one percent has three people with disabilities, and two percent have four or more people with disabilities in their household.

The main types of disabilities are mobility-related (69%), followed by mental disabilities (19%), hearing disabilities (10%) and visual disabilities (9%). Twenty-nine percent (29%) have a disability type of ‘other.’

Families with Disabilities/Families without Disabilities

Some survey questions resulted in differences between those with disabilities in the family and those without disabilities in the family. For example, when asked if, “*People with disabilities in Gardner have a lot of challenges accessing services in the community,*” those without a personal disability or a disability in their family were more likely to answer “Don’t Know,” while those with a disability within their family were more likely to “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” on this issue.

Chart 6.

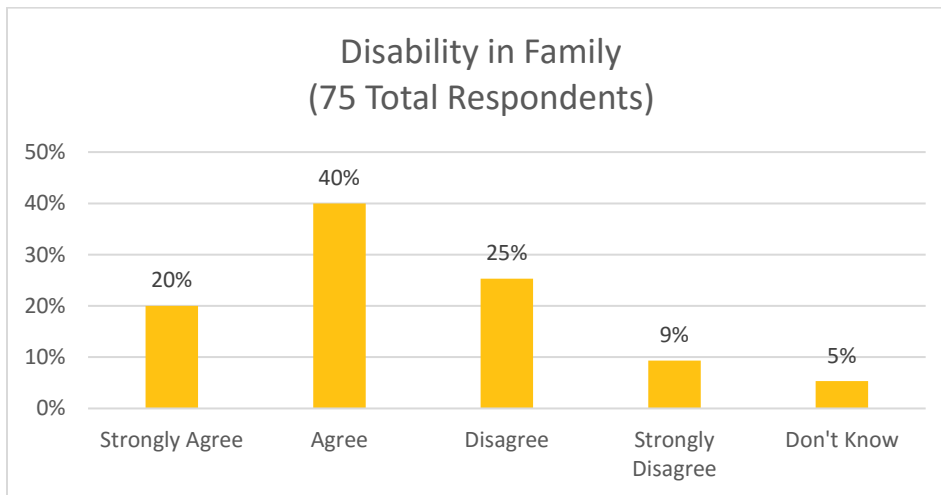
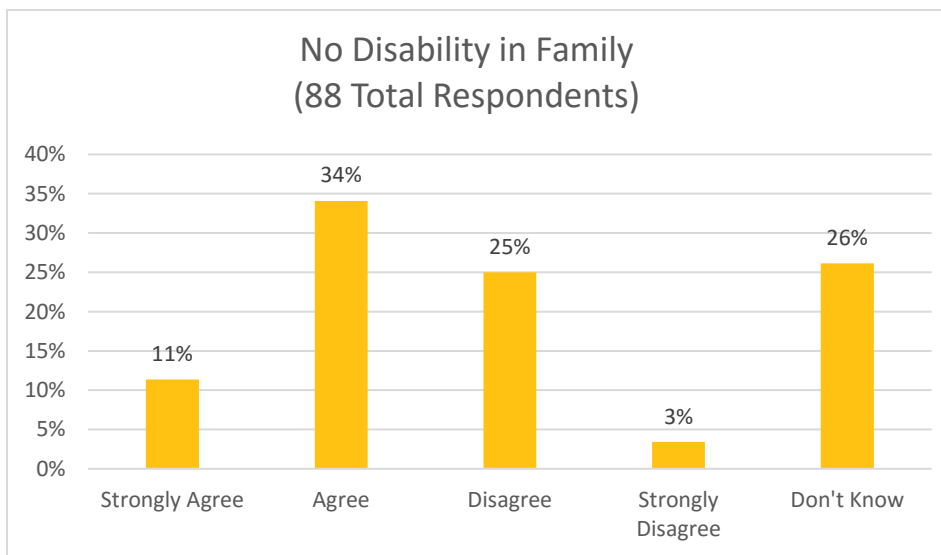


Chart 7.



Community Responsibility

The survey question regarding the community having a responsibility to ensure access to public facilities and services for people with physical disabilities had little difference between people with household members with disabilities and those that do not. The near-identical charts indicate all surveyed respondents strongly feel that access to public facilities is a community responsibility that must be addressed.

Chart 8.

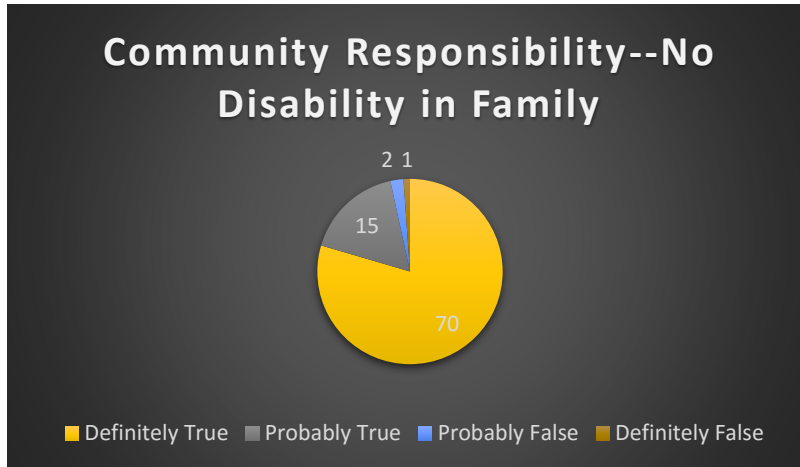
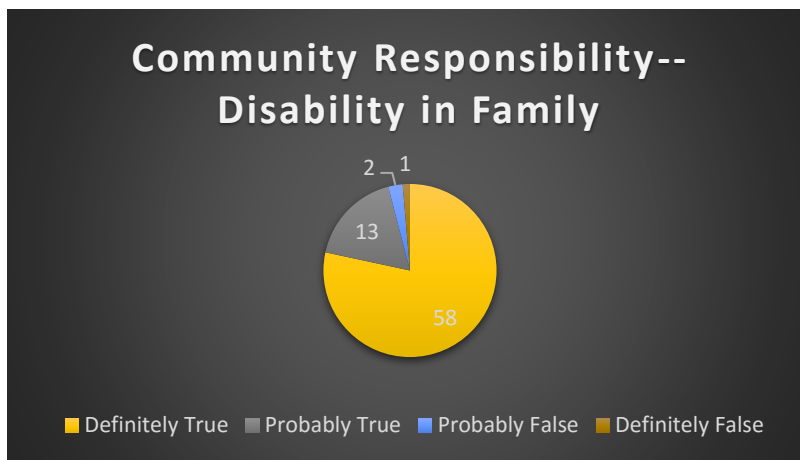


Chart 9.



Sidewalks

Individuals with a disability in their family were ten percent more likely to say that sidewalks were a very important issue. However, most respondents believed that sidewalk safety was an issue regardless of disability status.

Chart 10.

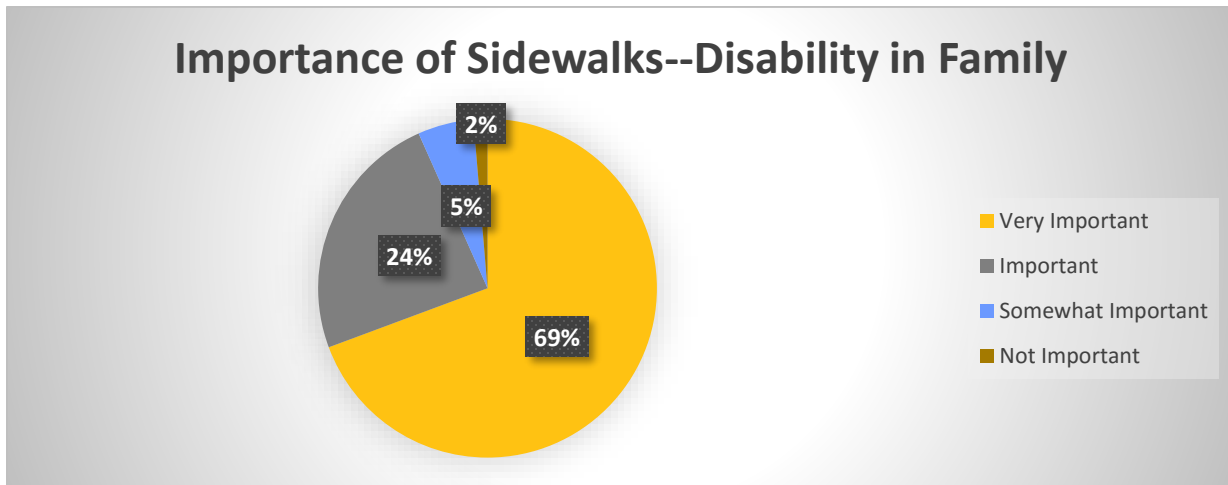
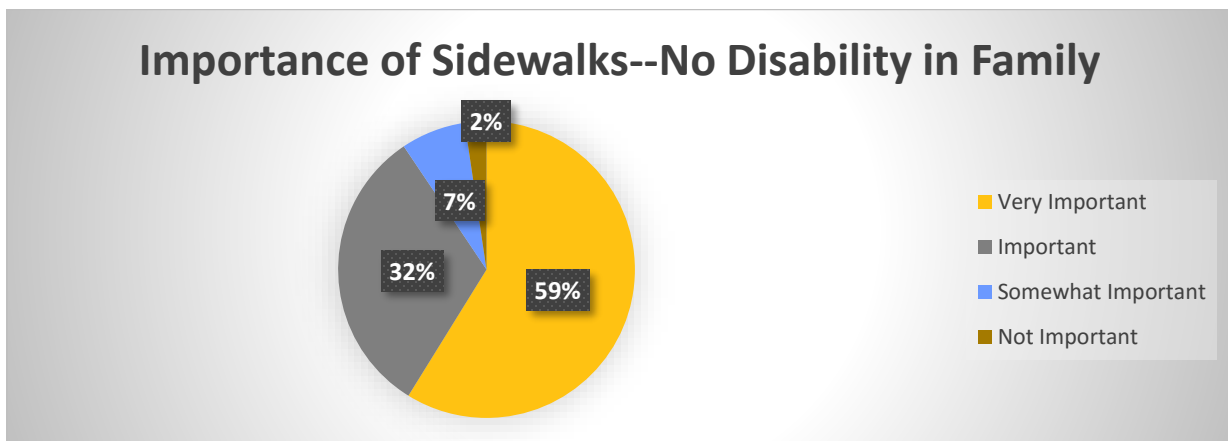


Chart 11.



Existing concerns of those, even without a disability in the family, are evident from some of the participants' written comments on the survey, such as, "Sidewalks. It is difficult to walk anywhere in Gardner due to poor sidewalks, or lack of them completely. This is absolutely unacceptable and unsafe for citizens with or without disabilities." Another wrote, "I do not have anyone currently disabled in my family. Regardless, the city should make sure they are in compliance with disability act requirements by auditing public service locations and other applicable businesses and upgrade those facilities to be in compliance, if failing." And lastly,

“Not a disabled family, but we are avid users of sidewalks. Issues that inconvenience our use of the sidewalks would make their use very difficult for anyone in a wheelchair...sidewalks in very poor condition or completely non-existent (the stretch of 175th between the airport and where it hooks up with Main St is very dangerous for anyone walking and there really isn’t an alternate route to get into town without going far out of your way). Connectivity of sidewalks is very poor. Ramps onto the sidewalks are also lacking in a lot of places.”

Parking

Parking differences between those with and without a disability were found to be minimal. The most noticeable difference was that a larger percentage of individuals with a disability in their family (67%) stated that parking was a very important issue. No individuals with disabilities listed parking as not important, which indicates all respondents with disabilities care some about this issue. The majority of both groups believed that parking was a very important issue.

Chart 12.

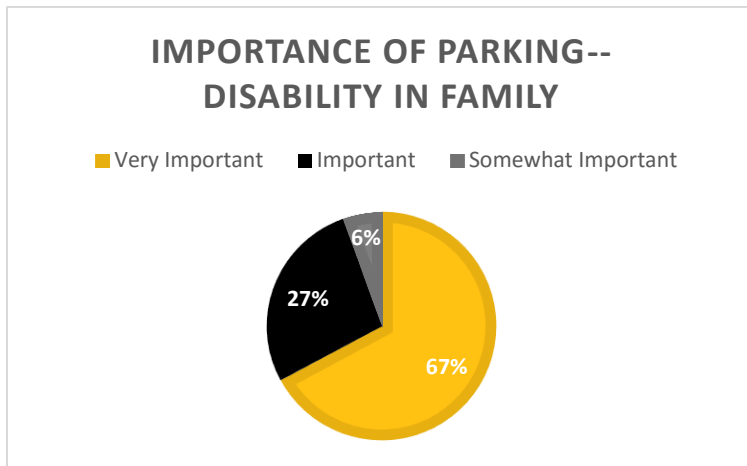
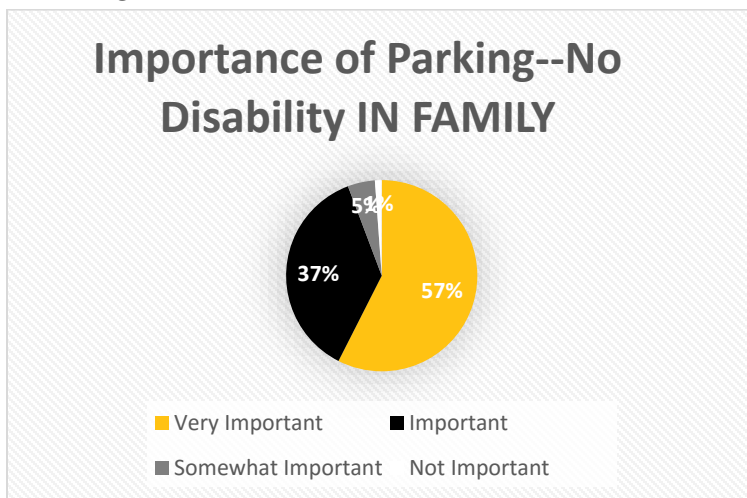


Chart 13.



Information Access

Respondents with a disability in their family were much more likely to believe that getting information on services was very important (64%); however, a much larger percentage of those without a disability in their family than those with stated that information would only be somewhat important (7% vs. 13%). This data could indicate that those without a disability do not know that information is as needed as it is within the disabled community.

Chart 14.

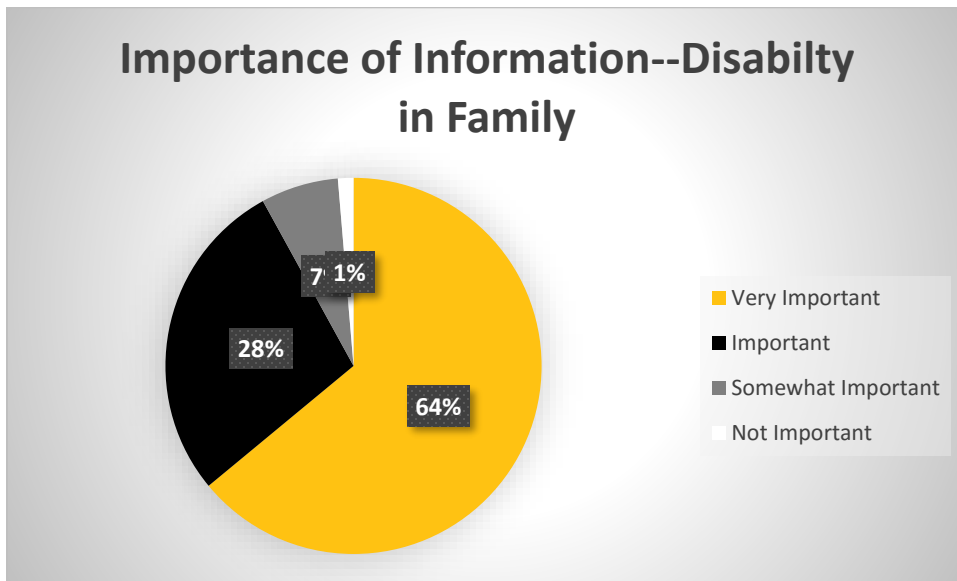
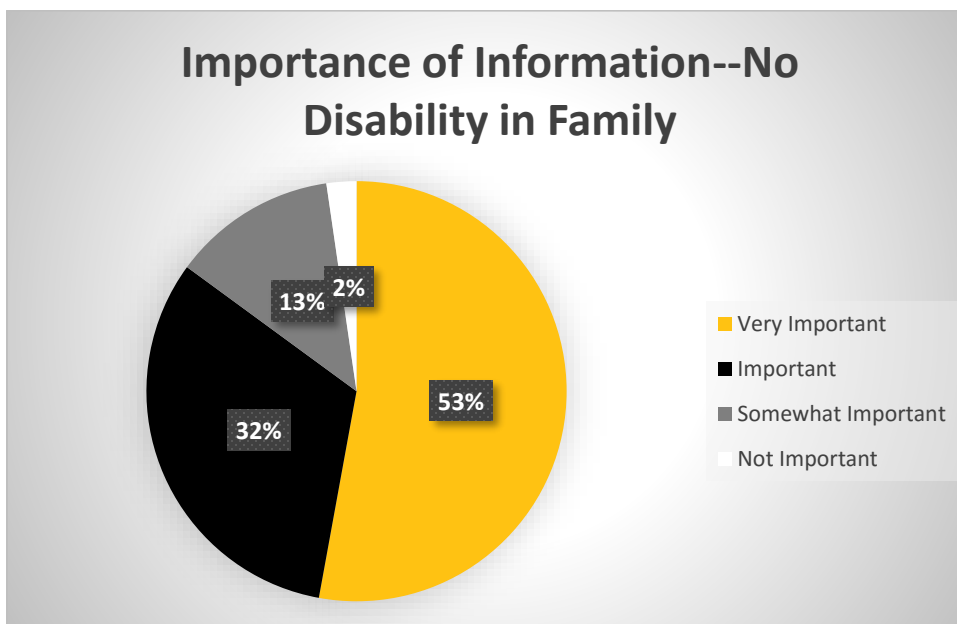


Chart 15.



Improvements Efforts

In regards to improvements being made in Gardner, households with disabilities and without disabilities view the world similarly. Most respondents (46% of households with disabilities and 42% without disabilities) tend to agree, but not strongly agree (15% of households with disabilities and 16% without disabilities), that improvements have been made for those with disabilities within the last five years. A large portion of both groups (21% of households with disabilities and 28% without disabilities) also indicated that they did not know if improvements had been made.

Chart 16.

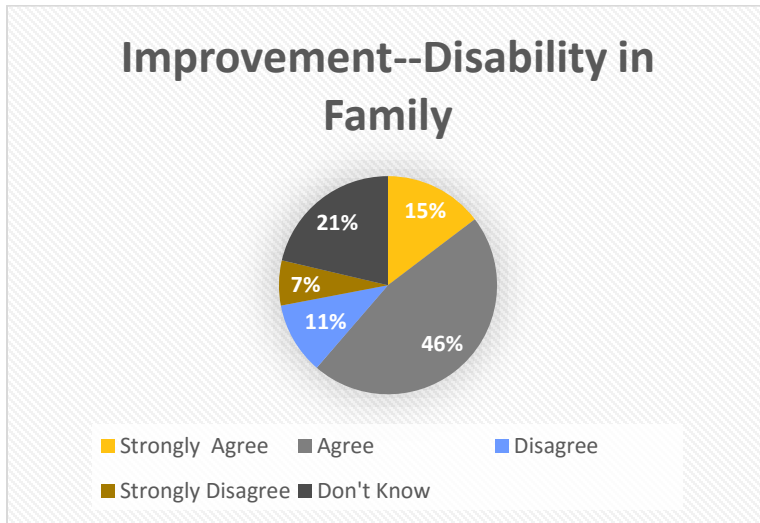
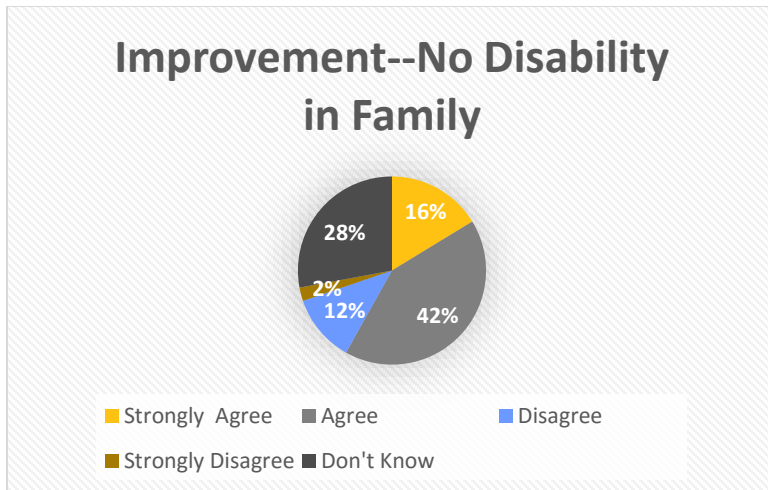


Chart 17.



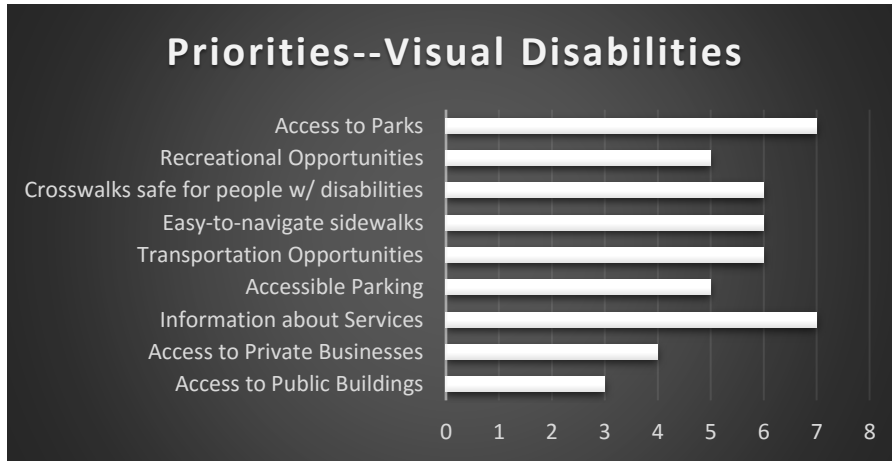
Priorities of Disability Groups

All respondents were asked questions regarding various concerns within the City of Gardner. For this analysis, the number of respondents who said that various initiatives were “Very Important” were analyzed. Each disability group was reviewed separately in order to see the needs of individual groups.

Visual Disabilities

Respondents with visual disabilities prioritized park access as a concern, with all seven of the total respondents in this group stating that this was very important to them. Everyone with visual disabilities also stated that they could use information about potential services available. Crosswalks, sidewalks, and transportation opportunities were other relevant concerns listed.

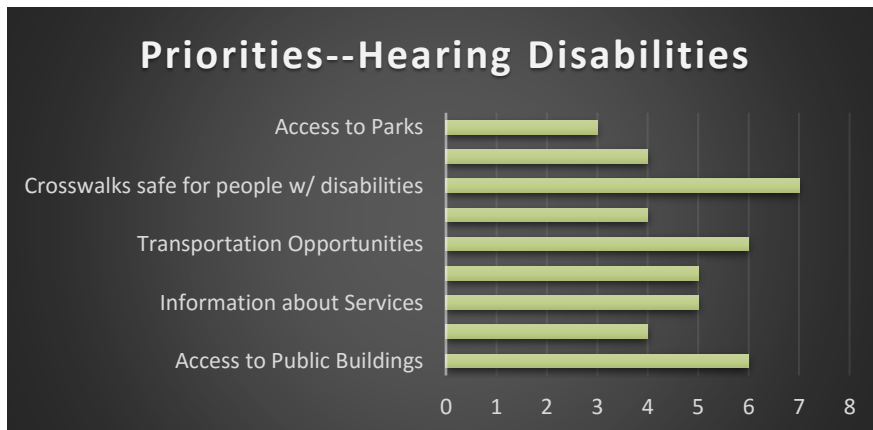
Chart 18.



Hearing Disabilities

People with hearing disabilities reported a need for crosswalks that are safe for those with disabilities, with seven of the eight respondents reporting that this was a concern. Transportation opportunities and access to public buildings were also listed as priorities among this group.

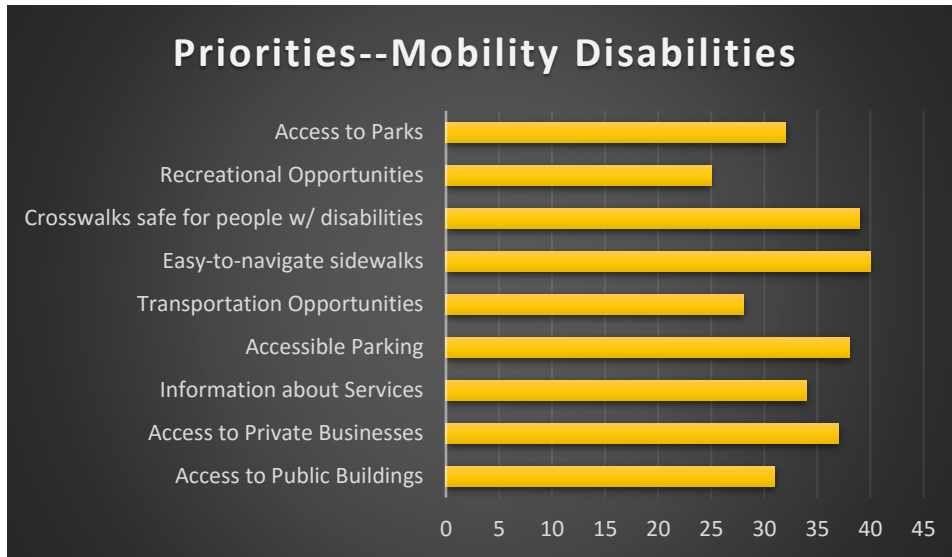
Chart 19.



Mobility Disabilities

Respondents who had mobility disabilities were the largest category, with a total of 52 individuals surveyed. The largest number of individuals with mobility disabilities stated that they need safe crosswalks, easy-to-navigate sidewalks, accessible parking, and better access to private businesses.

Chart 20.



Mental Disabilities

Those with mental disabilities put less priority on all issues than other groups. This could indicate there were other concerns which were not listed. The frequently listed concerns of people with mental disabilities included information about services, access to parks, recreational opportunities, and crosswalks that are safe for individuals with disabilities.

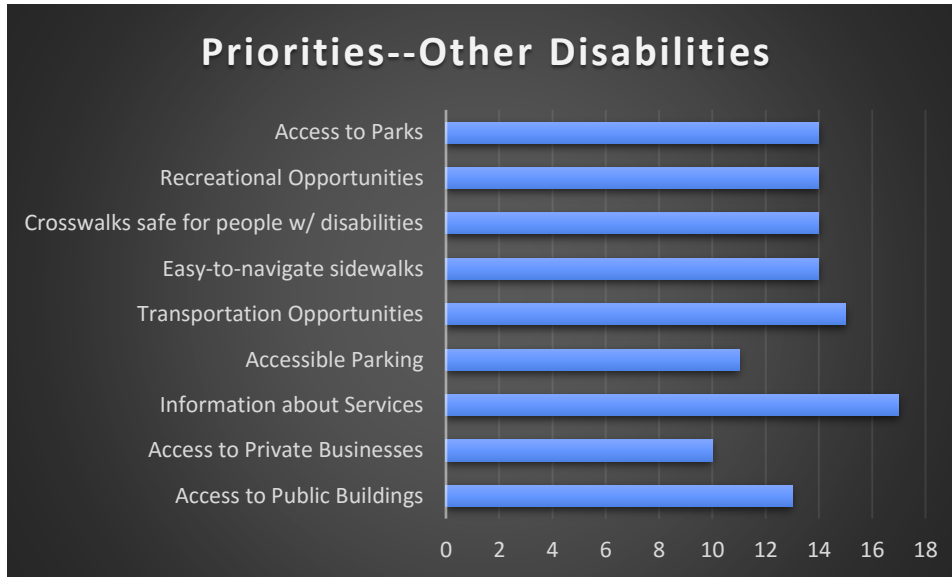
Chart 21.



Other Disabilities

Some individuals with disabilities did not fall under the other categories listed. These respondents put the highest priority on information about services. They had a fairly high amount of need in most other categories, as well.

Chart 22.



(It is important to note that there was some crossover among categories. There were individuals with multiple disabilities that took the survey, and these individuals were included for each individual category.)

FINDINGS

There are five main findings from the interviews and survey:

1. The City of Gardner has made progress in recent years in improving accessibility, which is recognized by the public. More so, there is significant public support for the City of Gardner to continue to address accessibility issues.
2. Basic access to public buildings and public parking were the highest priorities and should be the focus for resources.
3. Survey respondents also felt strongly about safety and mobility issues as top concerns, such as crosswalks and sidewalks.
4. The City of Gardner should continue to dedicate resources to public information on accessibility for the community and engage the disabled community in policy discussions.
5. Partnerships may be helpful in addressing community concerns regarding transportation, recreation and other service alternatives.

ABOUT THE WSU PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT CENTER

The WSU Public Policy and Management Center at the Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs works to enhance the quality of public affairs by assisting public officials and community organizations to meet the challenges of governance and improve service delivery.

Faculty and staff at the Public Policy and Management Center serve as content experts, neutral facilitators and researchers for a variety of public and nonprofit organizations. Requests come from local and state government, nonprofit community organizations and community interest groups.

The Public Policy and Management Center has more than 55 years of experience working directly with local and state governments, and nonprofit organizations, in the areas of applied research, technical assistance, facilitation and professional development. The solid history in serving organizations and communities in Kansas, and throughout the Midwest, ensures the Public Policy and Management Center has the professional knowledge and financial ability to implement, manage and ensure completion of projects.