



FAIRMOUNT NEIGHBORHOOD THROUGH THE EYES OF RESIDENTS

*Part 3: Support of Area
Economic Development*

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Disclaimer

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Introduction

This paper is the third (Part 3) of a three-part series of research papers intended to better understand the Fairmount neighborhood as viewed through the eyes of nearly 400 residents. This understanding is important because the people living in the Fairmount community are instrumental to meaningful community improvement. Given the nature of the challenges that Fairmount faces, meaningful improvement will almost certainly require a collaborative network of public, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, but the contributions by the Fairmount neighborhood form the critical foundation to creating a community of choice. A community of choice is a socio-geographic space where people choose to come together to live, work and play.

Part 1 of this three-part research series found that Fairmount residents are prepared to work together to build a stronger community. Public safety is an essential component of the quality of life for any community. Research reported in Part 1 also found that residents generally hold positive images of community police officers and that with the proper leadership, residents are prepared to work collaboratively with officers to improve public safety in the neighborhood.

Conflict surrounding issues of race are an important, growing part of a national discussion. Although the United States has made considerable progress related to issues of race, much remains to be done. Conflict and division as opposed to meaningful dialogue present formidable barriers to broadly shared quality of life. The United States needs grassroots leadership by communities like Fairmount that are capable of embracing diversity. Research findings reported in Part 1 of this series provide evidence that the Fairmount community has the potential for becoming a much-needed model that teaches us how to embrace issues of race in ways that build community capacity. This means that residents do not merely tolerate diversity but see it as an asset that strengthens the community in ways that are consistent with a community of choice.

Part 2 of this series provides a needs assessment from the perspective of Fairmount residents. Although this assessment includes a broad range of needs, the segment of the report focusing on employment-related needs is particularly noteworthy. This segment of the report is important because of its connections to Wichita State University's place-based economic development model that features creating a community of choice. Findings indicate that Fairmount residents are particularly concerned about employment-related opportunities. Part 2 findings also reveal that there is considerable demand among residents for job training that creates employment opportunity. The economic development model employed by WSU creates opportunity through industry that is driven by continuous innovation and employment training matched to rapidly changing demands. The model creates avenues for social and economic inclusion through job training skills facilitated by a merger between WSU and the Wichita Area Technical College (WATC).

The findings reported in Part 3 of this research series examine resident support for the place-based economic development model that tackles the economic challenges of the broader south-central Kansas region. Section 1 assesses Fairmount residents' support for the changes that are taking place at WSU that involve forming seamless boundaries between the university and the neighborhood to create a community of choice. Because of limitations in questionnaire length, the findings are limited to selected investments that provide preliminary assessments of the propensity of neighborhood residents to see value added to their socio-geographic space.

These assessments include predisposition toward commercial development and propensity to utilize activity centers designed to create a “destination place.”

Section 2 of Part 3 provides an overall assessment of resident support for the placed-based economic development model. This model involves strengthening historic connections between the university and the Fairmount community in ways intended to benefit Fairmount as well as the entire region of south-central Kansas. Since Fairmount residents are an integral part of this development model’s success, it is important to get a preliminary reading of resident support.

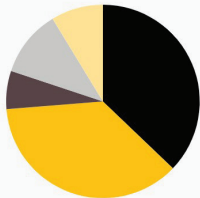
Section 3 of Part 3 explores the interrelationships among the various components of the overall development model. In other words, the analysis in Section 3 provides an assessment of the extent to which the strategies associated with creating a community of choice are logically connected in the minds of residents.



Neighborhood Demographics



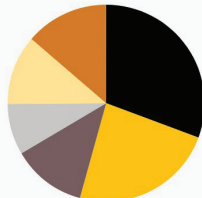
Race



- Caucasian
- African-American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Other



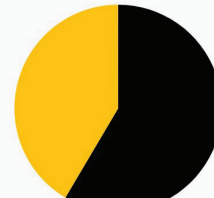
Age



- Below 25
- 25-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-64
- 65 and Above



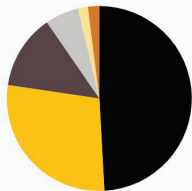
Gender



- Male
- Female



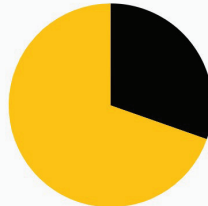
Household Income



- Less Than \$20,000
- \$20,000-\$39,999
- \$40,000-\$59,999
- \$60,000-\$79,999
- \$80,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000 & Above



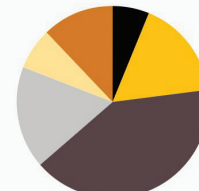
Property Ownership



- Own
- Rent



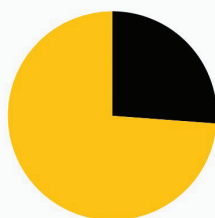
Education



- Not High School Graduate
- High School Graduate
- Some College
- College Graduate
- Some Graduate School
- Graduate Degree



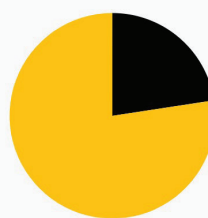
Have USD 259 Student in Household



- Yes
- No



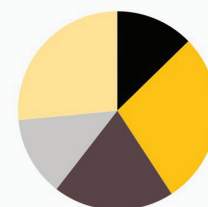
Have International Student in Household



- Yes
- No



Length of Time in Neighborhood



- Less than 6 months
- 1 year
- 2-3 years
- 4-9 years
- 10 years or more

Section 1: Support for Investments and Creating a Community of Choice



The investments being made with the Innovation Campus at WSU are intended to create a stimulating socio-geographic space that encourages interaction between people and the exchange of ideas. The blending of the socio-geographic space between campus and the Fairmount neighborhood promotes the co-mingling of work, pleasure and living space in ways that stimulate collaboration and the collision of ideas. This section of findings uses selected investments to provide insight about the predisposition of Fairmount residents toward development being a contributor to improved quality of life.

RECREATION AND FITNESS CENTER

Nearly 90 percent (89.4%) of the responding residents indicate that someone living at the residence would be interested in a recreational and physical fitness center in the neighborhood or on campus. The youngest residents (94.2%) are more supportive than the oldest (74.1%) of an investment in a recreation and physical fitness center. In spite of these differences based on age, it is worth noting that nearly three-quarters of the responding residents 65 years of age and older find value in the facility. Renters (91.9%) are somewhat more supportive of a recreation and fitness center compared to owners (83%). Households with a WSU student (95.9%) are more likely than those without (83.2%) to support a recreation and fitness center. Hispanics (95.9%), Asians (95.4%) and African-Americans (91%) are more likely than Caucasians (84.9%) to support investment in a recreation and fitness center. Interestingly, there is no statistical difference in support for a recreation and fitness center based on the length of time lived in the neighborhood.

RESTAURANTS

More than three-quarters (76.5%) of the residents indicate that someone living at the residence is likely to be a customer of new restaurants on campus. Respondents less than 25 years of age (85.9%) are more likely than those 65 years of age and older (57.4%) to be customers of new restaurants on campus. Males (84.7%) are more likely than females (65%) to frequent new restaurants on campus. Renters (79.8%) are somewhat more likely than owners (70.1%) to welcome new restaurants on campus. Households with WSU students (92.5%) are much more likely than those without (61.5%) to indicate that someone living at the residence is likely to be a customer of new restaurants on campus. Longtime Fairmount residents, those who have lived in the neighborhood eleven years or longer, are somewhat less likely (72.3%) to frequent new restaurants on campus compared to those who have lived in the neighborhood the shortest amount of time (85.7%). Regardless of differences based on length of residence, nearly three-quarters of longtime residents find value in new restaurants on campus.

GROCERY STORE

The area around the WSU campus has been characterized as a food desert because it is difficult to find healthy food for purchase in the geographic space surrounding the campus. The unfortunate reality is that the immediate area of the Fairmount neighborhood has been unable to sustain a grocery store and selected retail activity. The economic development model employed by WSU focuses on the importance of place. This means that as the student population living on campus or in the surrounding neighborhood increases, retail activity becomes increasingly viable. This also means that as the number of business and industrial collaborators grow there will be increased numbers of individuals living in or visiting the socio-geographic space. The nature of the visitors and the reasons for the visit varies widely. Some of these visitors are associated with business and industry. Others will be residents from across the region seeking to enjoy the created socio-geographic space. Nearly ninety-three percent (92.9%) of the responding residents report that someone living at the residence would shop at a new grocery store in the neighborhood or on campus. Respondents with WSU students living in the residence (95.8%) are slightly more likely than those without (90.2%) to indicate that someone at the residence would shop at a new grocery store located on campus or in the neighborhood. Overall, support for a grocery store is strong and does not vary a great deal based on the demographics of the respondent.

Section 2: Strengthening Historic Connections



The public interest is advanced through efforts that build on or preserve historical connections between the university and the Fairmount neighborhood. This section of findings provides an overall assessment of Fairmount residents' support for changes that are taking place at WSU. In other words, do residents see quality of life gains as the natural outcome of economic development organized around place and the socio-geographic space of neighborhood and campus? The second segment of this section of findings provides a general reading of retention, the extent to which residents expect to be living in the neighborhood and the broader Wichita and south-central Kansas region.

PERCEPTIONS OF POSITIVE CHANGE

Fairmount residents' support for development is instrumental to creating a socio-geographic space that is attractive to investors. Consistent with the place-based economic development model, the evidence indicates broad resident support for the changes that are taking place at Wichita State University. Nearly ninety-four percent (93.9%) of the responding residents indicate that the changes taking place at WSU are making the neighborhood a better place to live. In other words, the vast majority of responding residents support the place-based economic development strategy and feel that the neighborhood benefits from these changes. The support for these changes is so broadly held that there are no statistical differences in the level of support based on any of the demographic attributes examined here. This means that longtime residents are just as likely to see neighborhood benefits from place-based development as more recent arrivals.

Consistent with the need to strengthen historical connections between the university and the neighborhood, more than four-fifths (90.4%) of the responding residents report that university-neighborhood connections make the area a better place to live. Once again, there is broad-based support for the connections between WSU and Fairmount and commonly held convictions that these connections yield returns for the entire area. For example, older and younger residents feel similarly about the connections between the university and the neighborhood and the positive returns for the area that are a product of these connections.

The final assessment in the first segment provides a reading of the extent to which Fairmount residents feel that the changes that are taking place at WSU are yielding positive returns for the overall city. More than ninety-three percent (93.1%) of the residents report that the changes taking place at WSU are making Wichita a better place to live. Much like the earlier findings, the support for the changes that are taking place at WSU are so broadly held that support does not tend to vary significantly based on the demographics of the resident.

RETENTION: FAIRMOUNT NEIGHBORHOOD

Retention issues as they are discussed here include assessments of commitment to the neighborhood and to the city. Fairmount's proximity to the university naturally means that there are diverse reasons for living in the neighborhood with varied implications for connections to the socio-geographic space. Generally, length of residency and commitment to the neighborhood are thought to go hand-in-hand. Naturally, long-term residents are more invested in neighborhood wellbeing and are expected to have stronger commitments to the socio-geographic space. Similarly, longtime residents are more likely to invest in and to collaborate with neighbors in support of improvement. In contrast to the typical community development venture, diversity of reason for living in the area and variation in the length of residency contribute to neighborhood vitality in the case of Fairmount. In other words, concentrations of college students may detract from neighborhood stability but they add to neighborhood vitality through increased activity and personal growth driven by exposure to individuals with diverse life experiences. It is important to note that some of the long-term residents have chosen to live in Fairmount because of its diversity driven in part by proximity to the university. In any case, it is only natural that most college graduates will leave the socio-geographic space of the university and its surrounding neighborhood but many will retain lifetime connections to and have fond memories of Fairmount.

The first retention item assesses the balance between residents who are passing through the neighborhood on their way to another destination versus those with long-term ties to the neighborhood. Long-term residents tend to be stabilizing influences on the neighborhood. More than half (57.2%) of the responding residents expect to be living in the neighborhood three years from now. Individuals between the ages of 56 and 64 years of age (88.6%) are the most likely and those younger than 25 years of age (33.9%) are the least likely to expect to be living in Fairmount three years from now. Two-thirds (67.3%) of those who are high school graduates or less compared to about half (56.8%) of college graduates or those engaged in post graduate studies plan to be living in the neighborhood three years from now. Much as expected, owners (87.2%) are much more likely than renters (43.9%) to expect to be Fairmount residents three years from now. Consistent with expectations, households with WSU students (43.1%) are much less likely than those without (70.3%) to expect to be a resident of the neighborhood in three years. Nearly three-quarters (70.4%) of the responding African-Americans expect to be living in the neighborhood three years from now. Those who have been living in the neighborhood for eleven years or longer (94.0%) are the most likely and those living in the neighborhood two to three years (37.4%) are the least likely to be residents of the neighborhood three years from now.

The development model employed by Wichita State University builds on the understanding that place matters as it applies to the attraction and retention of talented individuals who are critical to innovation and who drive business and industry investment decisions. Each year Wichita and the larger region of south-central Kansas loses young talent to other metropolitan areas throughout the country. The economic viability of this region in an increasingly competitive global economy depends, in no small part, on reversing this talent drain.

The place-based economic development model employed by WSU addresses retention concerns by simultaneously creating employment opportunity and a community of choice in the socio-geographic space that includes the university campus and the Fairmount neighborhood. In contrast to other university-led innovation districts in other parts of the country, WSU has elected to make economic inclusion an important thrust of its development model. Essentially, development associated with WSU involves the creation of a continuum of educational and training opportunities that are not limited to college graduates. The merger between WSU and WATC is attractive to industry because it creates a labor pool with skills that are continuously adjusted to their rapidly changing needs. Historically, manufacturing has been an important segment of the economy because it promotes inclusion by creating an avenue to the middle class.

The last item in this section provides an assessment of propensity to remain in the Wichita area. Slightly more than three-quarters (76.6%) of the responding residents expect to be living in the area three years from now. Residents between 25 and 35 years of age (63.4%) are the least likely and those between 56 and 64 years of age (95.5%) are the most likely to be living in the Wichita area in three years. This finding is consistent with concerns about the annual loss of young talent from the region. Nearly four-fifths of those with high school degrees or less (89.7%) compared to nearly two-thirds with post graduate studies (62.1%) expect to be living in the Wichita area three years from now. Individuals who do not hold a college degree are expected to be particularly interested in job training opportunities channeled through WSU affiliates such as the WATC. Owners (94.8%) are much more likely than renters (68.4%) to anticipate living in the Wichita area three years from now. Households without WSU students living in them (85.4%) are more likely than those with (67.4%) to expect to be living in the Wichita area three years from now. Those who have lived in Fairmount for 11 years or longer (94%) are the most likely and those who have lived in the neighborhood two to three years (65.4%) are the least likely to anticipate living in the Wichita area three years from now.

Section 3. Integration of the Components of the Development Model



Residents are an integral, central component in creating a community of choice. Resources can be more effectively used when residents become actively involved in community improvement that is channeled through collaborating organizations and venues of their choice. The use of resources is further optimized when resident involvement is guided by a systems understanding of the development strategy. This section provides insight into the residents' support for and their understanding of the interconnections between the components of development.

Discussion in this section first summarizes development-related findings associated with each component followed by assessments of the interrelations between components from the perspective of Fairmount residents. Zero-order correlations describe the strength of the connections between selected components of the development model. It is important to note that a correlation between components does not necessarily imply causality but does provide clues about connections from the perspective of residents. Although perceptions do not necessarily match reality, perceptions drive behavior. As social media grows in importance as a source of information, it becomes increasingly important that trusted channels of communication be established to help members of the community separate fact from fiction and to promote convergence between reality and perceptions of reality.

NEIGHBORHOOD ATTACHMENT

Residents' commitment to a neighborhood's wellbeing is instrumental in creating a community of choice. Neighborhood attachment, as it is referred to here, focuses on the strength of connections between residents and their willingness to collaborate with neighbors for purposes of community improvement. A **Neighborhood Attachment Index** has been constructed that summarizes residents' commitment to the Fairmount community. Eight questionnaire items reported in Part 1 of this three-part research series are used to form the index. The index includes survey instrument items such as willingness to collaborate with neighbors to make the neighborhood a better place to live. The findings reported in Part 1 (Section 1) of this research series indicate a surprisingly strong commitment to the neighborhood with more than 94 percent of the residents indicating that they are prepared to collaborate with their neighbors. This finding is surprising because of the diverse reasons that residents have for choosing to live in Fairmount and considerable variability in length of residency.

A second Neighborhood Attachment Index item is particularly worthy of discussion because it concerns issues of diversity. Fairmount's willingness to embrace diversity is an essential component in creating a community of choice. Neighborhood development in the case of Fairmount assumes that differences based on race do not pose important barriers to neighborhood collaboration. The development model advanced here treats diversity as an asset that contributes to the vibrancy of the neighborhood. Fairmount is in the unique position of becoming a model for the broader community if it chooses to act on this predisposition. The research findings reported in Part 1 (Section 3) of this study indicate that nearly all (97.7%) of the responding Fairmount residents report that they are willing to work with people of different races to make the neighborhood a better place to live.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety is essential to quality of life and successful community development. Concerns about public safety impact the functioning of a neighborhood in so many ways that it is difficult to fully characterize its contribution to creating a community of choice. The effectiveness of community policing depends in part on the willingness of citizens to work collaboratively with each other and with law enforcement to create a defended space. A defended space is a neighborhood where residents accept responsibility for the wellbeing of their neighbors. Consistent with this understanding, findings from Part 1 (Section 2) indicate that nearly 93 percent of responding residents report that they are willing to work with police to prevent and solve crimes. Consistent with a defended space, more than 85 percent of the responding residents indicate that they would intervene if they witnessed a stranger threatening a neighbor's home when their neighbor was gone. Issues of race are intertwined with issues of law enforcement in ways that can either add to or detract from public safety. Findings from Part 1 (Section 3) indicate that approximately 82 percent of the respondents feel that neighborhood police officers treat everyone the same regardless of race. The **Public Safety Index** sums respondent scores (Part 1) on six questionnaire items.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NEIGHBORHOOD ATTACHMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Research conducted throughout the United States has consistently found that the success of community policing depends in no small part on both the strength of neighborhood attachment and the willingness of residents to join with community police officers to co-produce safe neighborhoods. Consistent with this basic understanding, the findings indicate a moderate to strong connection in the minds of residents ($r=.474$) between strength of commitment to the neighborhood (Neighborhood Attachment Index) and willingness to work collaboratively with law enforcement and neighbors to prevent or solve crime (Public Safety Index). This finding indicates the potential for synergism between these two components.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD ATTACHMENT

Creating a community of choice requires the resolution of the basic needs and quality of life concerns of residents. This is not an easy task given that resolution is expensive and that these needs tend to interact in ways that make them difficult to resolve independently. As a result, community development ventures to address basic needs sometimes can be facilitated through forming a collaborative network including a variety of community, public and neighborhood-based organizations working together to systematically apply resources in ways that are shaped to the specifics of the neighborhood. In any case, it is difficult to predict connections between neighborhood attachment and household need. A **Needs Assessment Index** has been formed by summing the scores on fifteen questionnaire items reported in Part 2. The findings indicate that household needs (Needs Assessment Index) and commitment to neighborhood improvement (Neighborhood Attachment Index) are unrelated.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN COMMUNITY OF CHOICE AND NEIGHBORHOOD ATTACHMENT

Under the leadership of President John Bardo, WSU is aggressively engaged in activities and strategic investments to increase the number of students that reside on or near campus. These actions and investments are intended to assemble a critical mass of students, including those living in a new student dormitory and in private residential units. Simultaneously, WSU is encouraging private investment in the Innovation Campus. Some of these investments create entertainment opportunities and are intended to improve quality of life in a concentrated socio-geographic space with the intent of creating a community of choice on campus and in the surrounding Fairmount neighborhood. A **Community of Choice Index** has been formed by summing the respondent scores on the three questionnaire items (Part 3). Items included in the Community of Choice Index primarily assess whether residents feel there is value-added with selected investments including propensity of the households to frequent selected business establishments. For example, nearly 90 percent (89.4%, Part 3) of the responding residents report that someone at the residence would be interested in a recreational and physical center in the neighborhood or on campus. The findings indicate a weak positive connection ($r=.107$) between commitment to the neighborhood (Neighborhood Attachment Index) and support for hypothetical investments (Community of Choice Index). Generally, then, these findings provide evidence that although these items may be an effective draw to the socio-geographic space and may contribute to the formation of a community of choice, they do not necessarily connect in the minds of residents to willingness to work for neighborhood improvement.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WSU IMPACT, NEIGHBORHOOD ATTACHMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMMUNITY OF CHOICE

Fairmount residents' predisposition toward the place-based economic development model employed by WSU will have much to do with the pace and effectiveness of transforming to a community of choice. The historical connections between WSU and Fairmount are not only important for understanding the past, but they set the context for shaping the future. As these two socio-geographic spaces blend into one community of choice, historical connections between neighborhood and university will become important to the identity of the socio-geographic space. Section 2 of Part 3 provides important clues about Fairmount residents' support for development. The findings indicate that more than ninety percent of the residents see the connections between the neighborhood and WSU in a positive light. More specifically, most residents feel that the changes taking place at WSU will translate into an improved neighborhood (93.9%) and city (93.1%). The **WSU Impact Index** (Part 3) was formed based on respondent scores on three questionnaire items. The findings indicate that there is a moderate to strong correlation ($r=.466$) between strength of commitment to neighborhood improvement (Neighborhood Attachment Index) and propensity to see positive outcomes from the changes that are taking place at WSU (WSU Impact Index). Similarly, there is a moderately strong connection ($r=.307$) between commitment to improved public safety (Public Safety Index) and support for changes taking place at WSU (WSU Impact Index). Finally, the findings also indicate a moderately strong connection ($r=.350$) between support for new business ventures on campus and in the Fairmount neighborhood (Community of Choice Index) and residents' views of the changes taking place at WSU (WSU Impact Index).



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