

**Project ConnectJxn Focus Groups Summary:  
Key Findings & Themes**

**April 23, 2021**

**Prepared by:**

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Mississippi Urban Research Center  
Department of Urban and Regional Planning**

## **Introduction**

This report is part of a larger community data gathering project called “ConnectJxn” (Connect Jackson). The following excerpt provides a description of the project’s purpose and need for community input such as the five focus group summaries presented in this report:

*“It's been 20 years since the City of Jackson revealed its comprehensive plan called FABRIC, which means For A Better Revitalized Inclusive Community. The City of Jackson has undergone many changes since then, and is looking ahead to the next 20 years.*

*In order to create the city of the future, the City of Jackson is producing its new comprehensive plan that will lay the vision for future growth and development. Input and feedback from the community is critical to this process.*

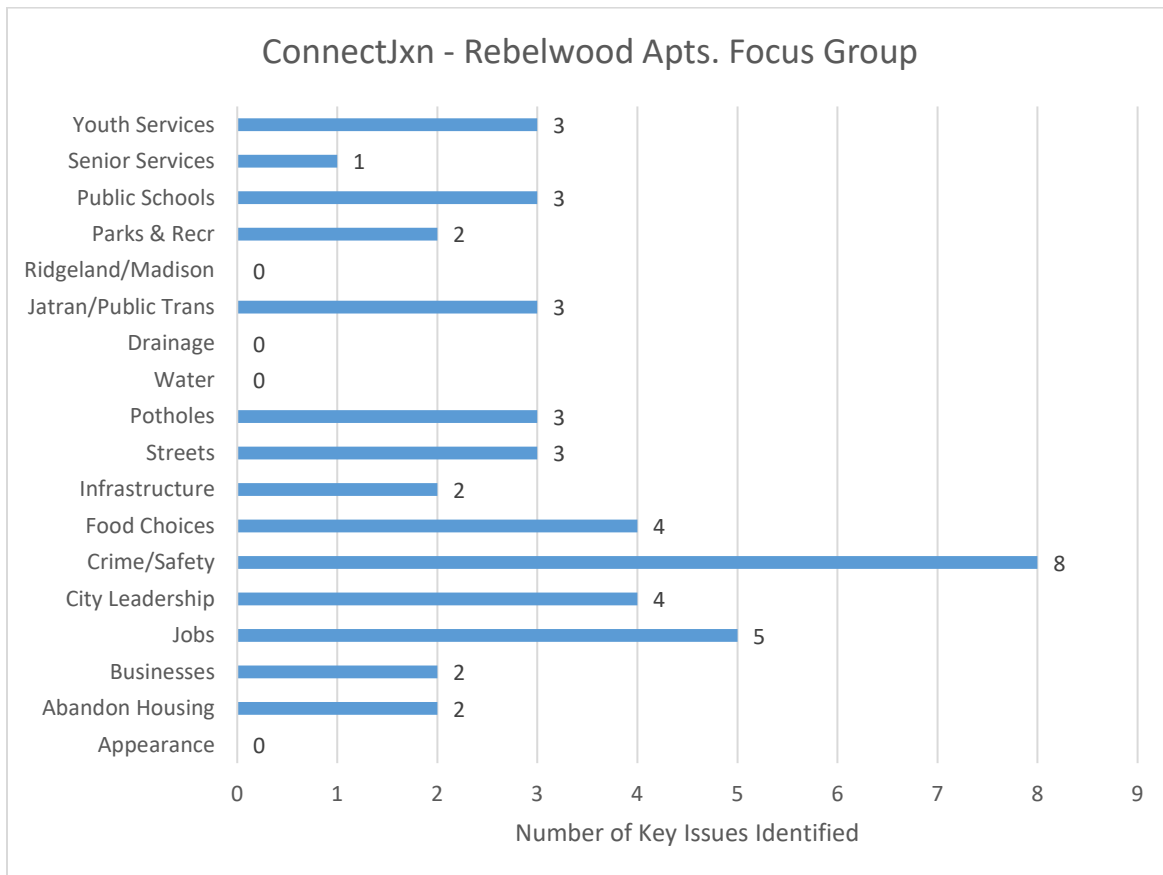
*Comprehensive planning is a public engagement process that determines community goals and aspirations, resulting in a blueprint for future growth and development. The City of Jackson needs to hear directly from residents about what they envision for their city in the next two decades. This information will help to inform the resulting plan for future growth and development, which will include land use, zoning decisions, transportation plans, maps, and policy recommendations that will lay the foundation for transforming a vision into a reality.”*  
(Source: <http://www.connectjxn.com/about> / About ConnectJxn Subsection, Fall 2020.)

The City of Jackson (MS) collaborated with One Voice Mississippi and the Central Mississippi Planning and Development District to gather community input on Jackson’s current and future needs. One Voice Mississippi reached out to Jackson State University’s Mississippi Urban Research Center (MURC) and the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (URP) for assistance with community engagement activities.

This report presents a summary of five focus group sessions held with a wide range of community stakeholders. Based upon feedback received from the focus groups, MURC and URP analyzed that feedback to identify common themes (that is, “topics”, “issues”, “viewpoints”) expressed by participants. MURC/URP then converted those frequently mentioned topics, issues, and/or viewpoints into numbers (“data points”) for comparing and grouping responses. The following sections of this report presents and compares those issues discussed during the five focus group sessions.

**Focus Group #1: Rebelwood Apartments Group**  
**Saturday November 7, 2020**  
**Hosted by Nsombi Lambright (Executive Director, One Voice)**  
**Facilitated by Sam Mozee (Mississippi Urban Research Center) and Bernece Herbert**  
**(Department of Urban & Regional Planning, Jackson State University)**

**Summary Chart**



**Key Themes from Focus Group:**

- \* High crime rates in Jackson
- \* Need more jobs
- \* Need more grocery
- \* Too many abandoned houses
- \* Infrastructure (especially “streets”) need repair

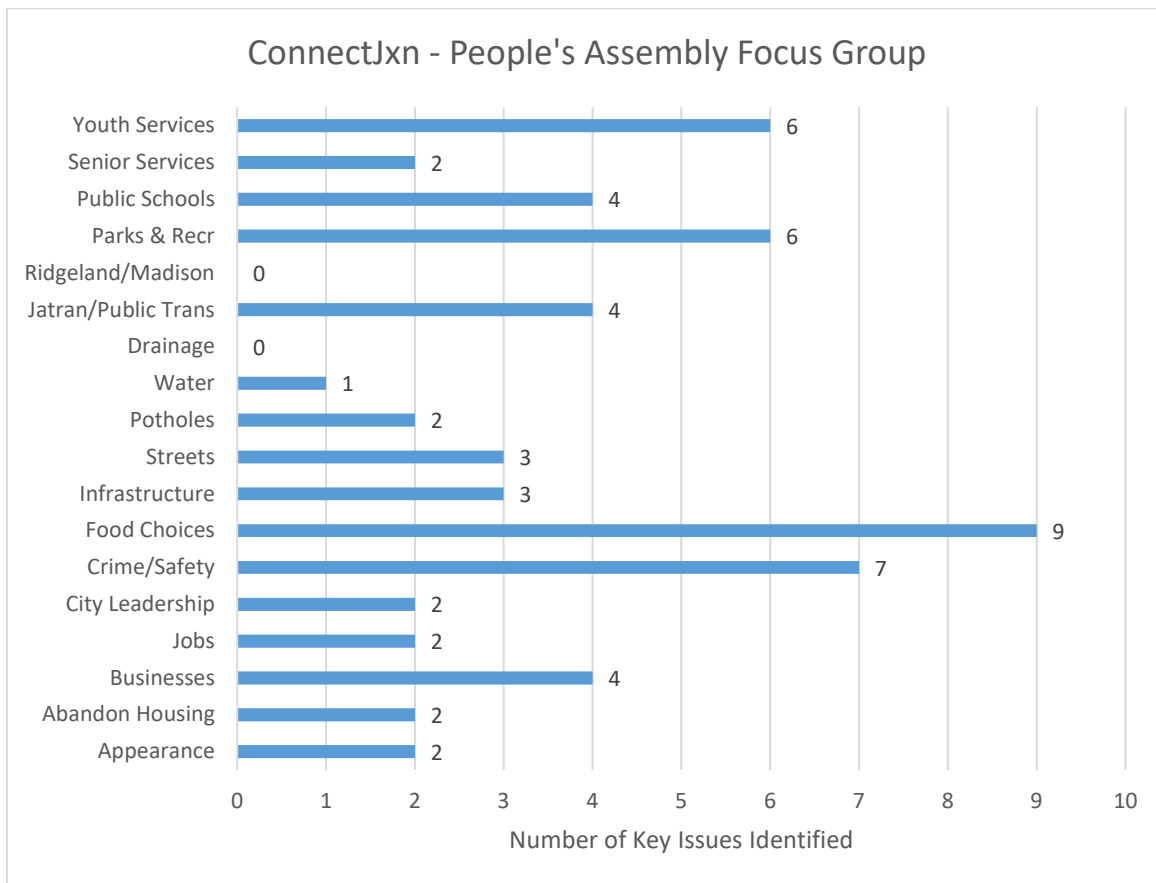
**Focus Group #2: Jackson People's Assembly**

**Date: Thursday, November 19, 2020**

**Hosted by: Ms. Candace Adul-Tawwab**

**Facilitated by: Dr. Bernece Herbert (Department of Urban & Regional Planning, Jackson State University) / Note-taker: Sam Mozee (MS Urban Research Center)**

**Summary Chart**



**Key Themes from Focus Group:**

- \* Lack of grocery stores
- \* Lots of crime in Jackson
- \* Parks not well-maintained / Not enough recreational activities (especially for youth)
- \* Public transportation not adequate / Not safe to use Jatran / Need more Jatran Routes

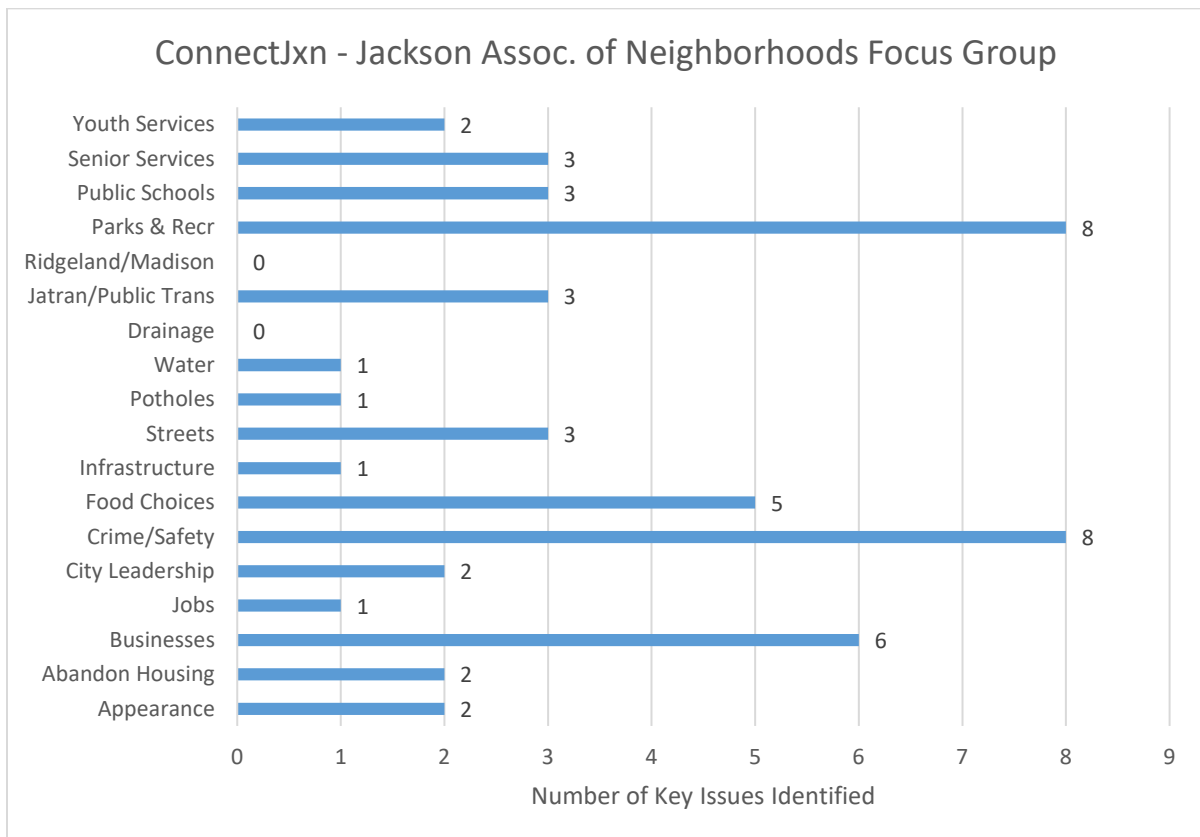
**Focus Group #3: Jackson Association of Neighborhoods**

**Date: Wednesday, December 16th, 2020**

**Hosted by: Mr. Andy Frame**

**Facilitated by: Sam Mozee (JSU/MS Urban Research Center) / Note-taker: Ms. Sheryl Bacon (JSU/MS Urban Research Center) & Dr. Bernece Herbert (JSU/Department of Urban & Regional Planning)**

**Summary Chart**



**Key Themes from Focus Group:**

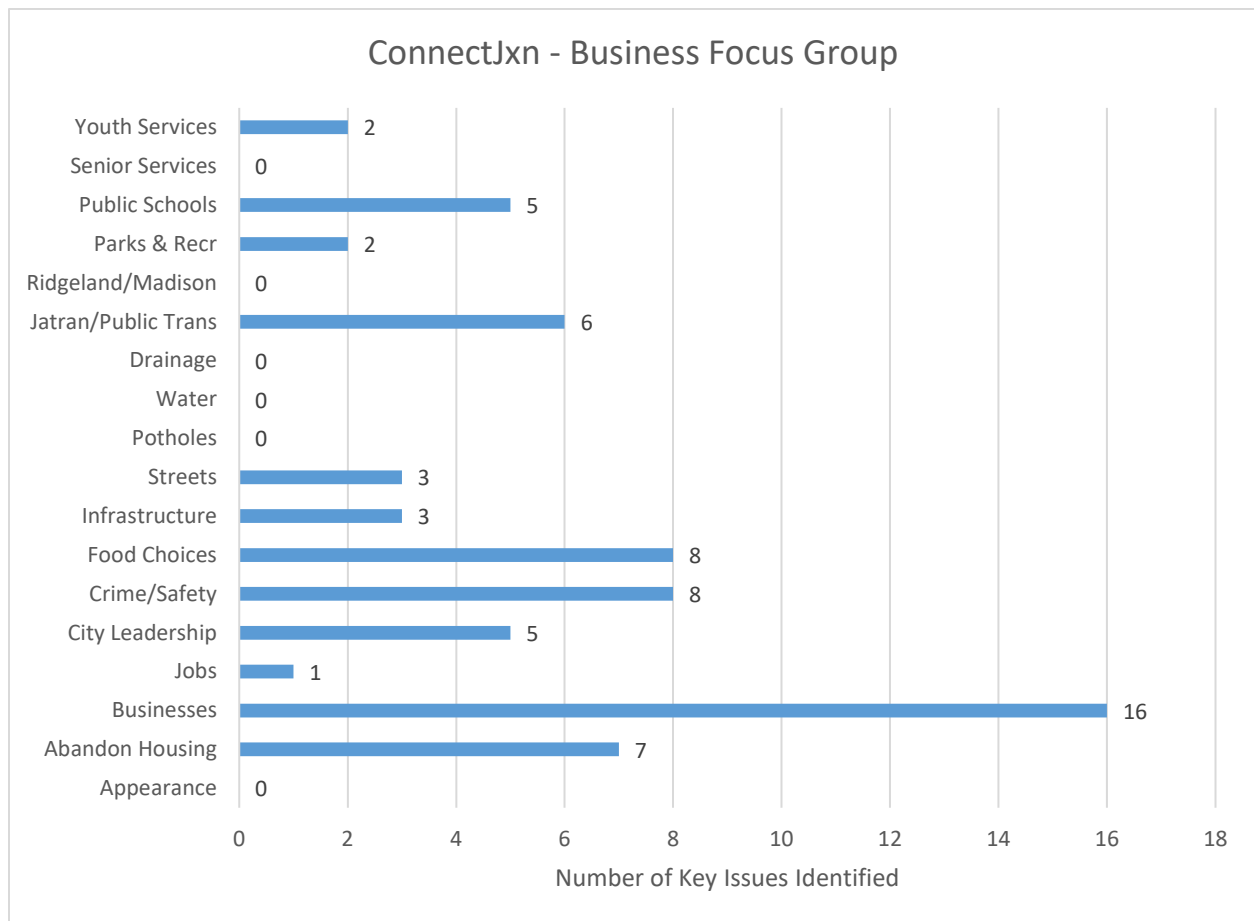
- \* Crime is a problem in Jackson
- \* Need to better maintain parks; need more recreational activities
- \* Grocery stores are too far; Problems with quality and price of food
- \* Jackson streets are bad

**Forum #4: Jackson Business Group**

**Date: Friday, February 05, 2021**

**Facilitated by: Dr. Sam Mozee (MS Urban Research Center) / Note-taker: Bernece Herbert (Department of Urban & Regional Planning, Jackson State University)**

**Summary Chart**



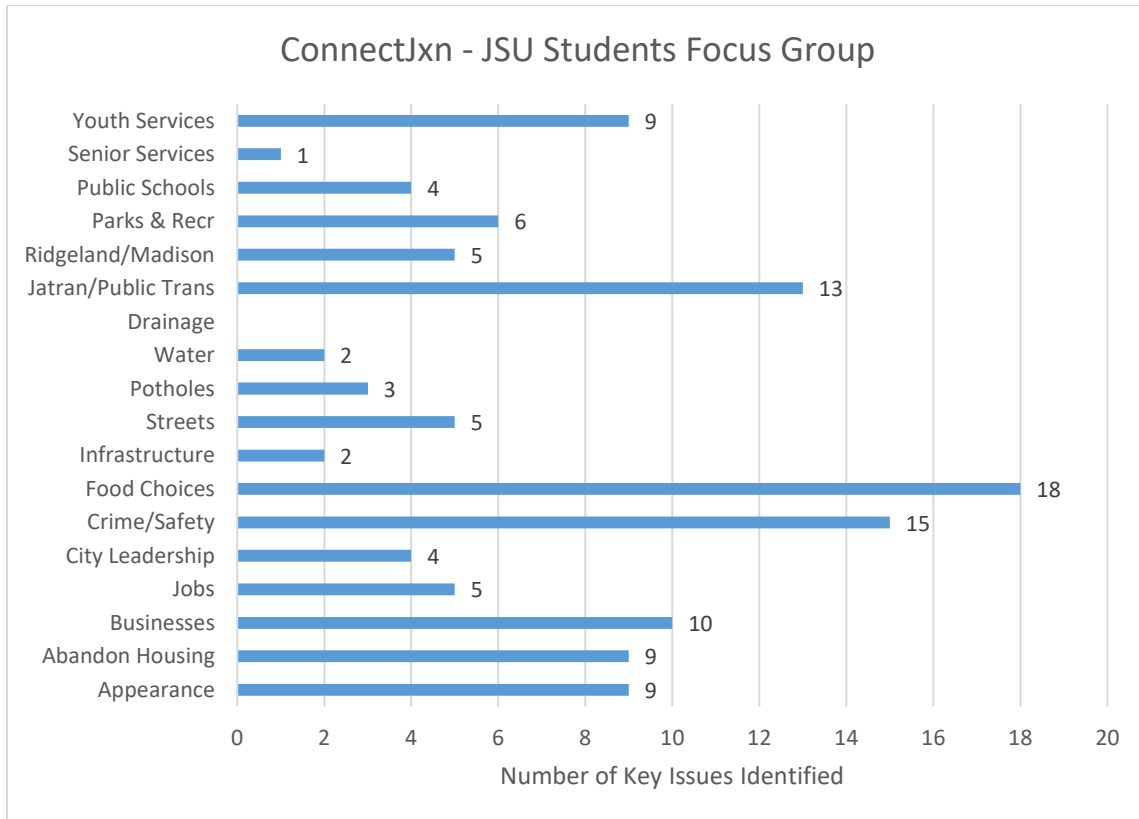
**Key Themes from Focus Group:**

<NOTE --Businesses' responses over-represented due to Business composition of Focus Group>

- \* City needs to provide more support for Jackson businesses
- \* Reducing crime needs to be a priority
- \* Jackson has good food choices, just a problem with the distance to get to them
- \* Limited-to-no-use of Jatran; Safety is an issue; Need to expand service routes

**Focus Group #5: JSU Students**  
**Date: Monday, February 08, 2021**  
**Facilitated by: Sam Mozee (JSU/MS Urban Research Center) / & Dr. Bernece Herbert**  
**(JSU/Department of Urban & Regional Planning)**

**Summary Chart**

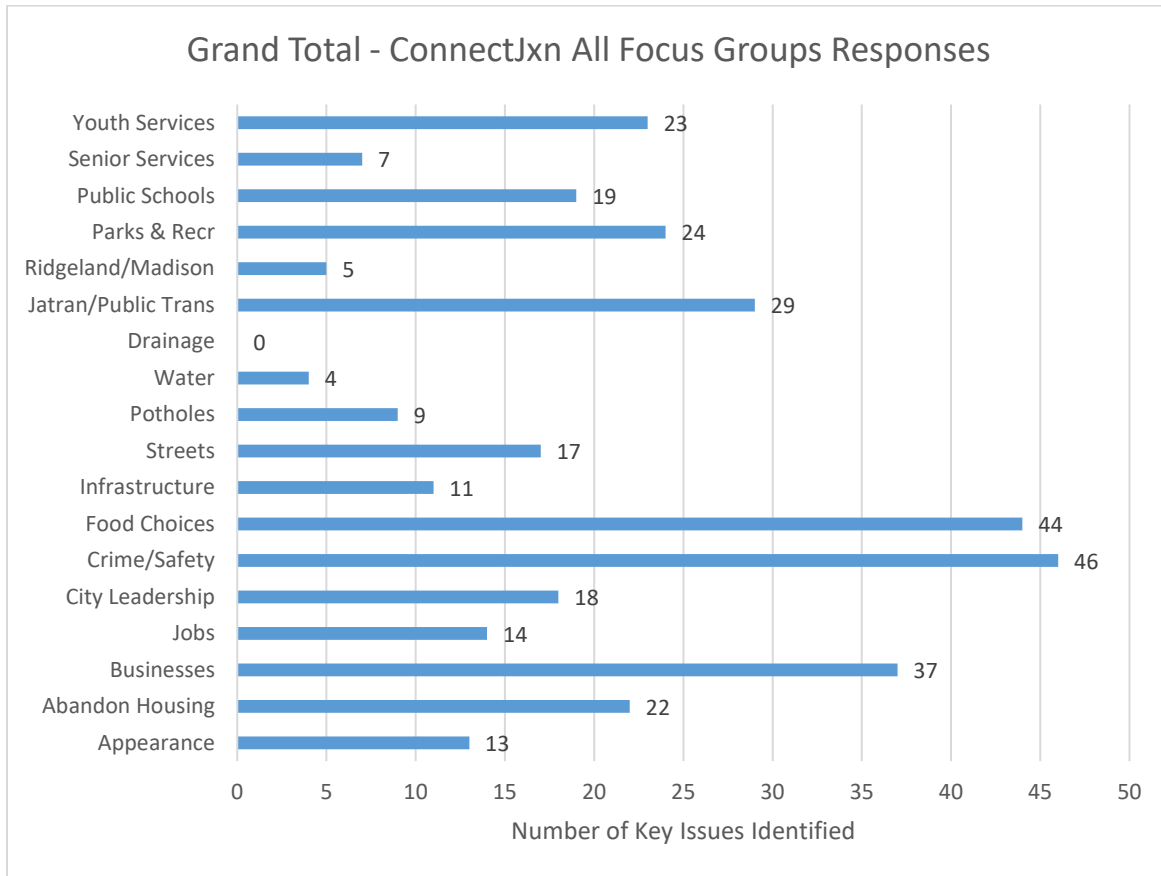


**Key Themes from Focus Group:**

- \* Limited food choices (especially regarding quality Restaurants) is a major issue
- \* Limited-to-no-use of Jatran; Riding Jatran carries a negative stigma
- \* Crime is a major issue; students do not feel safe leaving campus
- \* Need more services and activities for youth
- \* Lack of job prospects a major reason students plan to leave Jackson after graduation

## Grand Total --- All 5 Focus Groups

### Summary Chart



### Key Themes from Focus Groups:

- \* Crime problem is a major issue
- \* Lack of support for businesses and limited jobs
- \* Reluctance to use public transportation (especially Jatran) due to safety issues
- \* Poor infrastructure (especially streets) is a major concern
- \* Limited food choices (especially accessible grocery stores)



## **Common Focus Groups' Advice/Recommendations for Next 20 Years**

- Take steps to lower crime rates
- Improve the quality of Jackson Public Schools
- Better jobs and better opportunities
- Invest more funding in education
- Provide more services and programs targeting youth
- Improve the local parks; better maintain parks
- Need people who know what is going on and what to do (Leadership)
- Invest in the roads and infrastructure
- Provide healthy food choices
- The city definitely needs a strategic plan
- Better communications between city leaders and local communities
- Jackson needs to do a better job promoting itself
- Clean-up abandoned properties and buildings
- Streets need to be repaired
- City should promote strong neighborhood associations because the city can't do everything on its own; more investment in neighborhood associations
- Improving the way the City looks (for example, putting up more street lights, putting down some sidewalks, cutting the grass around the city, putting up more trees)

## **Conclusions**

This community consultation report presents the views of a wide range of stakeholders obtained during the focus groups sessions. Hosting small dialogues that focused on a specific segment or sector of the community proved to be very useful and informative for shaping Jackson's next 20 Year Comprehensive Plan. These dialogues are important vehicles for sharing information and providing opportunities for residents, business owners, students, neighborhood organizations and a variety of other stakeholders to participate in decision-making processes connected to the comprehensive planning process. During these listening and learning community conversations, key actionable information collected provided valuable insight for shaping Jackson's future planning components and initiatives.

Overall, the findings emerging from the focus groups align around three common themes that include: (1) Concern for safety, equity, and distribution of resources (particularly economic & education); (2) Ageing City assets and need for improving infrastructure and amenities; and (3) building community capacity to foster economic and social resilience. This project's collaborating organizations (One Voice Mississippi; Central Mississippi Planning and Development District; the Mississippi Urban Research Center; and the Department of Urban & Regional Planning at Jackson State University) would like to thank all community participants for their valuable contributions towards shaping Jackson's future.