

Springfield (MO) Inclusion Survey 2020

**Survey designed and distributed by City Council of Springfield and the
Mayor's Commission on Human Rights and Community Relations**

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Springfield Inclusiveness Survey

Introduction

From January 21 through March 2020, the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights and the City of Springfield made a survey available to local residents that asked how they view inclusiveness in the Springfield area. This survey was distributed to various groups through several methods. It was sent electronically to the mailing lists of numerous service clubs and nonprofit organizations, the NAACP, Springfield City Council and other city channels. Individuals receiving the survey were encouraged to distribute it to others they thought would be interested. A postcard describing the survey, with information about how to access and complete it, was distributed to attendees at the Springfield Multicultural Festival. The survey was distributed via several social media platforms (Facebook, Reddit) and press releases were sent to the media. The electronic version of the survey used Qualtrics software; this enabled Spanish-speakers to hit a button that translated the survey into Spanish. In addition, physical copies of the survey were distributed at local library branches.

While it is impossible to determine exactly how many individuals received or were made aware of the survey, 2276 individuals returned it. These individuals constituted a convenience and snowball sample, which turned out to be reasonably representative of the city. Regarding location, respondents came from Zone 1 (Northwest), 279 (12.26%); Zone 2 (Northeast), 367 (16.12%); Zone 3 (Southwest), 432 (18.98%); Zone 4 (Southeast), 517 (22.72%); Outside city limits, 640 (28.12%); and there were 41 (1.8%) who were not sure.

Demographically, regarding race/ethnicity, respondents were Asian, 42 (1.76%); Black/African American, 96 (4.02%); White, 1977 (88.72%); Hispanic/Latino, 76 (3.18%); Native American, 73 (3.05%); Pacific Islander, 5 (.21%), and other, 44 (1.84%), with 77 (3.22) preferring not to answer. In terms of sex, 1359 (59.84%) were female; 811 (35.71%) were male; 48 (2.11%) preferred not to answer; and 53 (2.3%) answered "other" (primarily non-binary, gender non-confirming, trans, and questioning). Regarding age, 138 (6.08%) were 18-24; 809 (35.65%) were 25-39; 780 (34.38%) were 40-59; 495 (21.82%) were 60+; and 47 (2.07%) preferred not to answer.

The survey included several closed-ended questions and eight open-ended ones. In general, the survey sought to assess how inclusive Springfield and area residents perceive the area to be. Respondents said Springfield is very inclusive, 249 (12.22%); somewhat inclusive, 812 (39.86%); not very inclusive, 646 (31.73%); not inclusive, 267 (13.11%); or had no opinion/not applicable, 63 (3.09%).

The eight open-ended questions analyzed in this report are:

- *What do you think would make Springfield a stronger, more inclusive community?*
- *If you have experienced barriers to fully participating in the Springfield community, please share the top three barriers you have faced.*
- *Have you personally felt, at any time, that you were not valued based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or age (40+)? Please share. Where did the incidents take place?*
- *Have you or someone you know experienced an incident of unlawful hostility or discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or*

age (40+)? Please share.

- *Have you personally witnessed an incident of hostility or discrimination directed at somebody else based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or age (40+)? Please share.*
- *Please use the following space for anything else you'd like to share about your experiences.*
- *What activities could the Springfield community offer to encourage a more welcoming environment for all cultures?*
- *Do you have any additional comments or suggestions to share?*

Responses exposed a variety of attitudes related to Springfield's inclusiveness. It is hoped that the attitudes and stories revealed by the survey will be used to help Springfield plan its next steps toward creating a stronger, more inclusive community.

Many people provided one-word or one-phrase answers. Responses selected for inclusion here were representative of responses in general, provided helpful details, or were particularly insightful. The responses are preserved in the original language, except where an obvious misspelling has occurred or added punctuation would clarify the comment.

Because the comments provided in this report represent only a small percentage of the total number of responses, it is strongly recommended that readers at least browse through the entire set of original comments (although it is lengthy). While the sample included here is representative, it does not do full justice to the entire range and breadth of thought provided by the respondents.

Question 1: What do you think would make Springfield a stronger, more inclusive community?

Most respondents supported making Springfield more inclusive and noted that the city's homogeneity can make inclusiveness difficult. Comments suggested a number of things to increase inclusiveness.

More diverse community and greater visibility of diversity in community leadership

This category was one of the most frequently represented among the comments. One important way to strengthen the city and increase inclusiveness is simply by having a more diverse population, with increased minority visibility at all levels—leadership with the schools, city government, nonprofit organizations and boards, and so forth. Respondents called for more diversity of all kinds (racial, ethnic, age-related, class, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and disability). Several suggested that inclusiveness would be improved with fewer racist individuals, while some suggested that the only thing that would help inclusiveness is for the older population (i.e., baby boomers) to die off. Along with providing more diversity at all levels, respondents said that the city needs to solicit the opinions of diverse members and actually listen to those opinions.

The following are example comments calling for increasing the city's diversity:

Lack of diversity is fostering an environment where people are subconsciously discriminating in addition to purposefully [discriminating].

Minority population is small. We need to develop methods to make this area inviting to minorities, and all peoples. As our population increases in diversity, hopefully inclusivity will improve.

More diversity in population. More diversity in our work force and employers. A Chief Diversity Officer for the City. More inclusion for Queer and Trans people.

Much more diversity. This community is predominately White and made up of people from this area. We need influences from other parts of the US/World. People here need to see that others are just human beings as well.

Less racist old white guys, to be honest.

Many respondents called for more diverse leadership in all segments of Springfield's society: government, education, health care, the nonprofit world, business, and organizations of all kinds. Of the many comments provided in this category, the following are representative and often insightful:

More women and diverse people in leadership roles (Chamber President, Mayor, City Manager, Higher Ed leaders, Healthcare leaders, County Leaders . . . they are all currently older white males). I believe we can become more intentional with recruiting people of all ages, races and backgrounds in leadership roles.

Also, we need to be more intentional about diversifying leadership roles. It is fine to diversify at the bottom, but diversification also needs to happen in the middle and at the top as it pertains to our organizations and local leadership and decision makers.

Seeing more women of color and other forms of diversity in leadership positions. Pick someone else besides Francine and Wes Pratt, Cheryl Clay and Daniel Ogunyemi to speak, serve on boards, chair committees, etc. There are many professional people of color between ages 25-45 that have lived in Springfield and Greene County for decades that deserve to have a voice and a platform. End the popularity and privilege contests and intentionally seek out input, contributions, and perspectives.

More representation on City Council, the Springfield School Board. Business need to practice more diversity when hiring people. Less discrimination from the Springfield Police Dept., Springfield Fire Dept., City Utilities, Municipal Courthouse. The Springfield Public Library system needs an extreme renovation on their hiring practices.

Intentionally invite and reach out to those stakeholders not usually at "the table." Most of the leaders and community board are made up of the "usual suspects." We need to make it more encouraging and accessible for all citizens to participate and have a voice.

Finally, in addition to inviting diverse citizens to participate in the business and social life of the city, the majority community needs to listen to the voices of diverse citizens:

Ask questions, make no assumptions and LISTEN.

All people feeling not only invited to the table but having a voice and not left out due to differences.

Need to hear from minority people about what makes them feel included or not.

Springfield has the Network for Young Professionals, however it feels as if the Commerce does not really care to listen to them.

We need to make it more encouraging and accessible for all citizens to participate and have a voice.

Opportunities for diverse citizens to interact: Providing education, hosting more community events, providing opportunities for personal interaction

Responses in this category were frequent. Education and training were seen as essential to overcoming the prejudice and ignorance about diversity that many respondents perceive. There was support for designing opportunities that allow diverse citizens to get to know and appreciate one another. Such opportunities could include events and festivals as well as programs designed to increase sensitivity to others. Education about other cultures/ways of living, developing and showing appreciation for diverse cultures, and getting to know one another's personal stories all serve to strengthen the community and support inclusion. And as can be seen from the comments, these ideas overlapped considerably.

Providing educational opportunities, particularly in the schools, was suggested by many respondents. Representative comments:

Make a strong effort to expose children in schools to different cultures and beliefs, emphasizing that people with different beliefs are still people just like them and are entitled to their opinions and have a right to live their lives how they wish, just like they do, while not tolerating intolerance that children may have picked up at home.

Education on the topics of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Most of the hate crimes comes from a place of pure ignorance.

More opportunities for diversity/inclusion training. Employers making it a regular, mandatory part of training would help. We need a shift in attitudes and understanding, which is not an easy goal.

Diversity competence training for all who work for the city of Springfield (ex: respecting people's perceived or known gender identity and/or sexual orientation).

First of all, we need more education on what inclusion means: educate the community on what it means to be inclusive; provide resources on power, privilege, systems of oppression, and how those systems interact; help organize trainings and readings for community members that is offered to all.

Festivals and celebratory events are fun ways through which Springfield's diversity might be showcased, communicated to others, and appreciated. Representative comments, including several that are quite specific:

That we foster understanding among ethnicities through more activities that will bring people of all ethnicities together, like street fairs in neighborhoods, using Jordan Valley for more than just a place for kids to play in the water – have ethnic food fests there, concerts and plays and

performances by different groups of people. Hold programs where people can sit alongside those of groups different than who/what they are.

.. . finding ways to weave diversity and inclusion into existing community events/elements – things like incorporating a diverse group of people in the planning or adding a new twist to an long-standing festival, essentially leveraging where community engagement already exists and is successful to include D & D instead of making it a separate initiative.

Celebrations of prominent holidays from other cultures is a good starting point, especially if the core of it is educational in nature. To foster inclusivity, you must start with bridging gaps in knowledge. If people understood each other a bit better, maybe they'd be more inclusive.

More public events, of all kinds, that encourage social interaction of the different types of communities within the Springfield area . . . you/old/all those in between; affluent/working class/lower incomes; all races; all genders; all sexual orientations'; educated/non-educated; residents/non-residents, etc.

We should see diversity in event advertising, news, and actively practice inclusiveness. Build multiple activities based around all cultures and attend these activities. Encourage people to meet their neighbors.

Several respondents suggested that when people get to know others as individuals, many of the prejudices disappear or are reduced. Springfield is perceived as being divided, with few opportunities for persons of different cultures to interact in a meaningful way. But when people do get to know one another beyond a surface level, inclusiveness increases. Examples:

To be intentional about getting diverse communities involved with dialogue about Springfield. This could involve setting up meeting in the diverse communities and campaigning for their input (churches, restaurants. . .).

Opportunities to tell stories of people of all walks of life so there is an opportunity for people to meet others they assume are very different from them . . . and maybe even make a connection to see that they aren't so different after all.

We have a transgender at our church and she gave a question and answer testimony of her life. Afterwards, I felt more understanding of her situation. I believe education is key to becoming a stronger, more inclusive community.

People that teach things have often tried to use pervasive training such as Facing Racism to solve these [diversity] issues. At the end of the day, the only way to get past this is for people to build relationships and work hand in hand.

More face-to-face dialogue? I feel people are threatened by the "unknown". Maybe opportunities to know people as "individuals" versus stereotypes.

The role of the faith community

According to a number of respondents, the faith community holds great potential for bringing people together, increasing awareness and appreciation of individuals from different cultures and traditions, and teaching respect and kindness. However, many respondents believe the churches are not living up

to this potential.

Several comments referenced what is perceived as a surface-level friendliness, extended only to those who are similar. Representative comments:

I've listened for decades to our community and church leaders touting how "friendly" Springfieldians are. (And people ARE initially friendly to those who are white and Protestant like me.) People who don't fit the preferred demographic aren't invited to join in – even by the churches – and don't feel they are welcome.

It is mainly the Christian churches that exclude people. Whether you are black, Hispanic, gay, trans, homeless these are the ones that the churches do not extend openness or love to . . . This is not what Jesus taught. There are a few churches that do this, but most don't, including the megachurches.

The things that make Springfield so divided are the things that most folks "celebrate" in this city – namely their political affiliation and their religion; both of which are pretty divisive by nature. Your 2-3 most prominent megachurches in this area are preaching a divisive form of politics from the pulpit, it makes it difficult for those folks to then go out into the community and embrace people who aren't straight, white, Republicans. The same goes for religion in and around this area – anti-Democrat, anti-gay, anti-anything that their preacher didn't spoon feed them on Sunday morning.

Many respondents decried what they saw as a disproportionate influence in the social and political sphere of Christian churches, particularly evangelical and megachurches. In response to what would make Springfield more inclusive, the following comments were typical:

. . . reduction in the outsized influence wielded by conservative religious institutions.

Fewer churches.

Less mega churches. And I'm a seminary student

Less exclusion of non-Christians in public places, including holidays, decorations, school, etc.

Stop trying to bend to James River Assembly's idea of how the city should be run.

Stop letting churches lead the cultural direction of our city and tax any religious organization that gets involved in any politics.

Limiting the churches power in elections. Congregations are told how they must vote and churches are constantly running interference to make others feel excluded.

Several respondents called specifically for separation of church and state, and the removal of religious influences in public decision making and religious symbols on public items:

Also take religion out of decisions and talk. Separation of church and state.

I would prefer that religion not be on our police vehicles.

Freedom of religion and freedom FROM religion. Pandering to one group of people (white

Christians) alienates all other people who don't look the same or believe the same. Religious inscriptions/statements should be eliminated from all government property to truly have an inclusive city for ALL people.

Although most who commented about the faith community believed that religion served to divide citizens, others believed that the churches have potential to help Springfield become more inclusive:

That our churches were more welcoming and worked together better (especially with churches that are primarily a different race, ethnicity, or low-income).

I would also like to see the churches working together and put denominations behind them. There are so many non-profits in the area and places that want to help, but very little overlap in how they work together. I think all churches should be part of the Council of Churches . . .

Finally, one individual provided a warning that there should be limits to inclusiveness:

Be careful about applying the concept [inclusiveness] to socially embrace sexual sin. (Gen.19; Lev. 18:22; Matt. 11:23; Rom. 1:24-31; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Jude 7.)

Adding legal protections for LGBTQ and other underrepresented groups individuals

Respondents asked for stronger laws to protect minorities, especially the LGBTQ+ community. About one in 15 mentioned the LGBTQ community as one that particularly needs support and protection. Comments ranged from those generally supportive of inclusion for LGBTQ individuals to those asking specifically that Springfield's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) ordinance be reinstated. This ordinance was passed by Springfield City Council in 2014 and narrowly repealed (51% to 49%) by voters in 2015.

General comments of support included the following:

Building a more LGBTQ friendly community would be a start.

To have equality in our rights for everyone, including the LGBTQ+ individuals.

Creating an environment where out LGBTQ+ friends, loved ones, and neighbors feel safe, welcome, and free from discrimination.

Greater protections for LGBTQ employees.

More support and safe places for non-white heteronormative persons.

Specific calls to reintroduce and pass something like the SOGI ordinance included the following:

Pass SOGI ordinance.

Add protections for LGBTQ people against housing & employment discrimination in Springfield's local ordinances.

To have it in our city charter that we welcome all races, religions, sexual orientations, etc. The repeal of SOGI really made us appear non-inclusive and obviously we are since it was repealed.

Adopt some form of the bias crimes/SOGI ordinance, indicating to the public that the officials

elected to represent the community do in fact support safety for all.

A stronger non-discrimination ordinance that protects the LGBTQ+ community. Perhaps a way to hear the stories of discrimination that happen to people from a variety of minority groups? So many people think it doesn't happen because they don't see it. . . But I do wish there were a good way for potential allies to be better aware.

Economic disparities and the north/south divide

There was a perception among some respondents that the divide between north and south Springfield contributes to a lack of inclusion many experience. Although this was not one of the largest categories (mentioned perhaps one in 50 comments), it came up often enough to be noted. Representative comments:

I feel like there is a huge divide between our south Springfield vs all other parts of Spfld. I think we need to put more focus on bringing communities together and including the central/ north areas in this. A lot of retail and shops are all located on the southside. It feels like the majority of SBJ stories I read about growth are all focused on south side businesses.

The first would be to bridge the gap between North and South Springfield. There are many people on the Southside of Springfield and surrounding towns, i.e. Nixa, Ozark, Republic, that do not want anything to do with those on the Northside of Springfield. This is primarily b/c they perceive it as a high crime area. It is not only where we have pockets of poverty but where much of our diversity exists. In order to be more inclusive, I think the number one goal would be to break down this barrier that currently exists.

We absolutely must start making certain the North half of the city school system is equally on par with those districts in other parts of the city. They [are] critically important to the future of their communities, the city, the region, and beyond in the years to come. Failure to support these practices is the same as saying we are inclusive as long as those that want to be included are in the right financial demographic/situation to be accepted.

We have a dire need for more empathy, and acceptance [of] people from those who live on the South side of town. Especially those who have greater economic resources. I am extremely tired of the snarky, hateful attitudes coming from the people who live south [of] Sunset Street. . . .

Making the North part of the city attractive to new businesses and making it more attractive in general. This area would benefit from a more diverse group of businesses since it is the most diverse area of Springfield.

Addressing societal issues such as income inequality, poverty, crime, drugs and homelessness

Many respondents believe that societal issues cause most of Springfield's problems, including the lack of inclusiveness. Issues of crime, poverty and income inequality, lack of jobs paying a living wage, derelict properties, affordable housing, homelessness and drug use all negatively affect the city. Comments:

The socioeconomic gaps in Springfield is what causes the lack of inclusion, but I don't know how to help fix it.

Ensuring access to citizens' most basic needs such as: housing, transportation, uninterrupted power, clean water and affordable financial services is critical so that more people can participate in inclusive growth and that small businesses can flourish. Inclusion is making sure everyone is included in the conversation and to do this we must also address privilege and opportunity. Antoinette Samuel said: "income inequality and poverty are important issues we need to work on. Inclusiveness means affordability and non-discrimination in housing so that neighborhoods are diverse and representative of a city's population. . ."

Get real criminals and beggars off the streets, get our name out of the national ratings for undesirable places to live, crime ridden statistical views and drug capital for meth/cocaine/heroin [sic] and legalizing the gateway drug. Create some kind of respect for this city and people within it will respect each other.

Revitalization of inner city neighborhoods with a more diverse population, as well as a revitalization of properties. Having nice things often makes people take better care of them, especially if they are the owner of the property.

Having a safe place for the homeless to stay, a bus system that can get them around and give them some dignity. Mental illness among the homeless needs to be addressed so they don't fall between the cracks. (I've always thought the empty Central Bible College could house all sorts of opportunities and safe, clean spaces for the homeless.)

Accessibility and transportation issues, particularly for the disabled

The community would be strengthened and more people would be able to participate in the civic and social life of the city if accessibility and transportation were improved, particularly for the disabled.

Comments:

Springfield lacks some accommodation for people with various disabilities, and the cities [sic] "walkability is lacking, which is a problem for people who cannot utilize the bus system due to their mobility devices. . . . Springfield also lacks family bathrooms and disabled bathrooms . . . many public locations also lack changing tables for younger children.

More accessibility features in the community. As the parent of a special needs child, we struggle getting out. Where am I going to change him? Is the place accessible? Are those features going to be blocked somehow? More accessible parking places in busy places. Downtown is completely out of the question for us because of the amount of walking.

Leaders need to not only read into the community as a whole . . . but reach into the disabled community as well. . . . Curbside shopping needs to be more accessible to people on food stamps. . . . Clothing stores are impossible to enter aisles with a wheelchair due to owners wanting to fill every bit of available space with product. I'm not sure what the answer is here. Maybe shopping assistance upon request? . . . I never realized how small my world would become when my disabilities progressed to being in a wheelchair.

More accessibility, better acceptance of those with different abilities. We have affordable housing crisis, transportation is not Very accessible nor easy, business building not ADA

compliant. Many restaurants I can't go with a friend who utilized a wheelchair due to the lack of space. . . . we need more accepting and open business for those with disabilities.

Sidewalks on every street in town with easy to reach poles for hitting the traffic crossing buttons. Bus shelters at every bus stop in town. Yearly by wheelchair, foot, bike and bus tours by the bosses making decisions about Spgld before they make decisions.

Increase in diversity not necessary/desirable

Interestingly, there were a number of responses to suggest that Springfield doesn't need to do anything to increase diversity—either things are fine as they are, just talking about diversity fosters division, or increasing diversity would make things worse for citizens. While these do not represent a majority of comments—perhaps one comment in 50 or so—they are worth noting because they represent either attitudes that must be acknowledged or potentially teachable attitudes. Comments ranged from the belief that Springfield is already inclusive to active hostility to inclusion. The following are representative of the many comments suggesting Springfield is already inclusive:

I hardly believe "inclusion" is an issue in Springfield. I don't believe that there are any policies/ordinances/laws that stifle inclusion. I think it's pretty fair across the board. Respect isn't something that can necessarily be fostered. It's something that is earned, and Springfield is already a place that can provide that opportunity to properly earn respect.

I think it's quite inclusive. I've seen nothing to suggest otherwise.

As a business owner with many employees in Springfield, I do not see or hear of other businesses turning away potential employees because they are gay. . . . The problem I see is someone is trying to make up a problem. I understand we need to take action if someone is mistreating a person because of their sexuality but most of us don't see that happening. . . . The gay community in Springfield is small and I think they are being treated just fine.

A couple of respondents genuinely wondered who does not see Springfield as being inclusive:

Where/Who did this question originate with and why do they feel left out??

Nothing else needed. What makes you think something is needed or missing?

The following comments are not necessarily hostile to diversity but suggest that calling attention to diversity, particularly if the government is involved, presents a danger or overreach. The following are representative:

Quit dwelling on diversity. It promotes division and adversity

Get out of the diversity business!

I feel like this isn't something the city needs to worry about. It's 2020 and we aren't some small podunk town. The inclusivity in this town is fine and up to par and standard.

Several participants believe that focusing on inclusion promotes identity politics and is counterproductive:

It's fine the way it is. Government should not force inclusive measures on the people.

Nothing. Stop trying to force the issue. It needs to happen naturally or it's just more government overreach, wasted tax dollars, and the end result will be worse. . . ”

Don't force it. Let the community grow naturally diverse. If you ever attach a label to anyone that divides through class warfare, you will cause resentment and derail what you hope to accomplish.

Do not encourage identity politics. Sending out public questionnaires like this one and forming Race and Gender Relations Counsels [sic] within our city government encourages and fosters problems and complaining between citizens who are otherwise completely alike except for their skin color and/or sex or sexual orientation. Why beg for trouble?

Quit doing horrible race bate surveys such as this!

Among the most hostile comments were the following:

Lesser push for inclusion, Not sure we need to be more inclusive,

If ethnic people chose to act decent individuals and not gang bangers. There wouldn't be any issues.

Kick out all the minorities . . . there [sic] not wanted.

Stop with all the faggot and negro parades.

Springfield used to be a charming, safe community that provided quaint shop's [sic] and dining. It has devolved over the years to making national news as being a top most dangerous city to live in and number 1 in Missouri for crime. Stop trying to be inclusive and worry about quality of life for your current citizens.

While it is disheartening to see these comments, all of us must recognize that these represent a segment of our population that fears diversity and sees nothing positive as coming from increasing diversity and encouraging inclusiveness.

Miscellaneous comments

The following comments were not widely represented in the survey but reflect perceptions deemed worth including. Some were general comments suggesting, essentially, that we all need to be nicer to one another:

We can just start by being nicer. Say hello to people you come in contact with. Ask someone you work with to have dinner with you. People of different races mostly eat the same foods, have the same interests, and have the same problems. If we were all blind we wouldn't know the difference.

Kindness and patience

More respect and dignity shown to others, including those of religious backgrounds, sexual orientation, and opposing viewpoints.

Businesses, individuals and churches being more accepting of different cultures and lifestyles.

Some hoped that we would take some action in calling out racism and discrimination when we observed it:

I feel Springfield would be more inclusive if we took more serious measures to reprimand people who are exclusionary/intolerant of those who are different from them, such as loss of job and expulsion from schools. . .

Quit tolerating hate. Those opposed to change hate political correctness, but there is no excuse for not making our language and actions be inclusive.

One respondent suggested that the survey itself was not practicing inclusivity, and four responses were offered in Spanish:

First, make this survey available in other languages. Second, this survey assumes access to the digital world. [Note: the survey available through Qualtrics had a button that translated it to Spanish]

Promover que personas de otras culturas tengan trabajos en entidades gubernamentales. Promover respeto a las diferentes culturas. Hacer más eventos culturales que la comunidad se incluya en todos los ámbitos. Y que en las escuelas incluyan más propuestas para la comunidad minoritaria. Que los americanos tengan conocimiento y aceptación a otras culturas [Encourage people from other cultures to have jobs in government entities; Encourage respect for different cultures. Hold more cultural events so that the entire community is included. And that schools include more proposals for minority community. And that Americans have knowledge of and acceptance of other culture.]

Más eventos culturales, más diversidad en las empresas [more cultural events, more diversity in the companies]

Some comments criticized what respondents saw as hypocrisy from the left:

If those demanding “equality” and “inclusivity” weren’t so hateful to anyone who disagrees with them. Being accepting to those who agree with you is the same thing you accuse of those who disagree with you.

Less hypocrisy from liberal and left leaning factions.

More respect for the conservative Christians.

Some respondents decried government involvement in the issue of inclusiveness:

Less government intrusion – questions about race divide us rather than looking for common ground.

Stop trying to force the issue. It needs to happen naturally or it’s just more government overreach, wasted tax dollars and the end result will be worse.

Questions like this are slanted to encourage one group of people to use the law to force their views on another group. This is not the role of government – stop it.

Finally, some respondents noted that progress to increase inclusiveness has been made, and time will

take care of the rest:

Time. I've lived here my whole life, and we are far more diverse than we were in the 60's and 70's, but we still have a way to go. Only as folks who are NOT white learn that Springfield is accepting of diversity will they come here to live.

Education and time. Springfield is much more inclusive than it was 30 years ago, but one simply needs to read the comments from any post on Facebook from the News Leader or KY3 to see there is work to do.

Some of it is just time...but also more people moving in who either represent a bigger variety of ethnicities and other differences, or who come from places where inclusiveness just goes without saying.

Keep doing what you're doing, it is working, just give it more time.

Question 2: If you have experienced barriers to fully participating in the Springfield community, please share the top three barriers you have faced.

Respondents were first asked, in a closed question, whether they had experienced barriers to participating fully in the Springfield community. Nearly one-third, or 30.52%, said that they had. Respondents then were asked to share the top three barriers they had faced. These related to discrimination due to age, sex, gender/sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability status, religion, and fear related to crime and various types of harassment in Springfield.

Many of the responses were one-word or one-phrase answers without elaboration regarding the nature of the barrier: *sex, LGBTQ, disability, religion, age*, and so forth. The responses selected here attempt to show the nature of the barrier, why it is perceived to be a barrier, or how it has manifested in the life of the respondent.

Barriers relating to disability accommodations and transportation

Barriers relating to lack of disability accommodations were often intertwined with issues of transportation. With respect to disability, representative comments included:

Sidewalk absence or disrepair, lack of repair or obstacle removal when reporting sidewalks blocked, sidewalks too steep in slope for navigating in manual wheelchair, whether it is forward-backward or side-to-side slopes

My husband and I are both disabled. He walks with a cane and I have a condition that makes sitting and standing very difficult from spinal cord injuries. There should be fewer barriers and more handrails at events and meeting sites. Chairs need arms and backs. Fewer big curbs and more handicapped access.

I also see this with restaurants. My friends who use walkers or wheelchairs can't go everywhere and have the same choices or eat and go out with me. They either can't get in to the place or they can't use the restroom while there. This seems so "not" inclusive to the point that it is

discrimination.

Answering for a family member with a developmental disability. She is completely able and willing to work, but employers are struggling with how to work with her. Voc rehab and other employment services for those with disabilities only have so many jobs (cleaning, sorting, etc.) and many people with disabilities can do more creative work if they have the right supports.

I am hearing disabled. Many times I cannot hear at certain public meetings or events.

Related are transportation issues, which cause problems especially for those with mobility issues:

The public bus system is not user friendly. . . There is so much more Springfield could be doing even with limited resources. Oh, the transportation system for seniors and people with disabilities is so fragmented and lacks coordination and cooperation with each other. Training for cab drivers. The cost for Uber, Lift is so much more expensive here than any place I have lived!

Difficulty of traveling around town with [out] a car; government services not centrally located (SSA on E. Battlefield—can you quickly tell me which busses to take to get there from downtown and how long that journey will take?

I run a day program for individuals with disabilities in Springfield. We have run into a few there. Transportation is a huge one. . . . the city bus routes take so long and aren't always the safest. Access isn't easy on our individuals because of the timeframe they could come. . . . I did have one client lose her job over the access bus.

Everything to do with non-vehicular travel in Springfield. . . Not having safe, useful transportation available at all times is limiting because Springfield is designed to be very car-centric and many useful resources in the city (be they the Library, schools, grocery stores, movie theatres, museums, social services, etc.) are not located near to each other. Therefore, trying to go to any number of these eats up a lot of personal time outside of work.

Public transportation. While one street (like Fort) has three very close together [bus stops] (literally two right across from each other) other areas have no bus stop and the closest one is a 20+ minute walk. Commute times are also difficult. I need to get to work and have to get up and ready extremely early due to a two-hour+ bus ride to get to work.

A number of respondents shared difficulties with access, services for children with special needs, or issues related to autism:

I love our parks but I know that when talking with family and friends, if children or parents have disabilities, many of our parks are not set up to enjoy together. There might be one or two accessible playground equipment parks but they are segregated and people who want to spend time together have a barrier and can't.

Bathrooms where I can take my toddler and disabled preteen and change her are virtually nonexistent, bathrooms where my husband can change our daughter ARE nonexistent, parking in many parks is too close to the playground (Dan Kinney) making parenting a flight risk nightmare. . . .

Access to daycare programs for school aged children. Examples include being told my child could not attend after school programs facilitated by the YMCA because they are not “staffed” to support children with needs. Access to summer daycare programs, same as above. Access to extracurricular activities, examples would be parks that include accessible playground equipment.

Kids events not being sensory friendly. No interpretation services for hard of hearing kiddos. Having to travel to LC or St. Louise for basic services related to my multiple children with different abilities.

I’m autistic and extreme noise in this city has is big problem. Fireworks, very loud cars/motorcycles treating the streets like playgrounds, volume at events on the square too loud, art openings too loud, stores too loud. And I mean too loud for my earplugs, loud enough to cause hearing-damage volume. . . . It’s not just autistics with sensory issues. Traumatic brain injury (lots of vets with that and just mundane things like falling off a ladder) causes similar issues. It can make a simple trip out to get groceries a real challenge.

Discrimination based on LGBTQ+ status

Numerous comments described the legal discrimination that LGBTQ+ individuals can and have experienced. Just as heartbreaking is the fear that many LGBTQ+ individuals live with daily in our community. Representative comments:

I’m a gay male and have lived in Springfield for more than 20 years. I can currently be fired by an employer for my sexual orientation without question. I can also be denied housing for the same reason. So #1 [barrier] is laws that don’t support diversity.

LGBTQ+ people are undervalued in areas of employment. Further, there are many verbal attacks when visible. Most of all, LGBTQ+ are discriminated against in housing. Specifically, when searching for rental accommodations.

I was unable to put my children’s other parent on school paperwork because the school secretary refused to put a same sex couple down as parents. I watched my community overturn discrimination protections after only a short time of them being in place. I had a police officer refuse to take a report on a hate crime occurring because we are a same sex couple.

Being treated differently than others in the workforce, because I was gay. I was not allowed to take funeral leave when my partner of 7 years died because we were not married.

Because I’m gay I can’t share my private life with my partner of 34 years in a business setting without fear of repercussions. Because I have not been able to share my private life without fear of judgement or worse, effectively I’m barred from being part of the community, even though I’m considered a community leader.

I have faced a ton of street harassment for exercising outside while being lesbian, including trash and two liter soda bottles being thrown at e out of car windows as they drive past me. I also have never felt comfortable asking to be called anything other than my given name or assigned sex at birth in a professional setting, as I have seen many of my trans peers be belittled and disrespected when they do make this request.

It's incredibly difficult to find trans-specific medical care in Springfield, and it often feels like doctors and hospitals don't know what to do with us. For services such as endocrinology, we have to look as far as Columbia or Kansas City. Finding work as a trans person is difficult anywhere and Springfield is no exception. I'm lucky enough to work from home, but my partner has faced discrimination in the hiring process.

Barriers of race and ethnicity

Another prominent category involved barriers due to race and ethnicity. Many responses simply indicated "race" or "racial discrimination" without specifying how these manifest. Responses provided below are those that provide some idea of how race and ethnicity are perceived as barriers to inclusion:

My husband and I like to walk. In most of the streets I felt welcomed, but in some places, when people listen that my husband and I communicate in Spanish, they act as if we are a threat. In two occasions a buy with a white pick-up truck, drove on the sidewalk to force us to walk on the street.

Some Springfieldians treat other cultures with a sense of fear, disdain, coldness and non-inclusiveness. Some cultures have to "work" to make the Caucasian population feel comfortable in the most common places, restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations, churches, etc. Law enforcement assumption of my household's character, despite being a model citizen with no arrests, good credit, and longstanding job.

Police "suspicion" profiling

Refused or delayed service on many, many occasions based on racial appearance.

When I experienced having my child, I often attended my dr. appointments alone as my husband is very busy with our small business. The Dr. asked me several times if 'the father' was white or black . . . and after I said, "My husband is Caucasian" she proceeded to say, "Well, I can feel all kinds of nappy hair in there." . . . I was so mortified and embarrassed and it was way too late to search for another Dr. . . . the Dr. brought up my child's hair two more times and she expressed her confusion as to why his hair was straight and blonde. This was at the Women's Center at Cox.

No invitations to bond families and make friends among the native Caucasian community here. Culture of being seen as "different" than them. Possibly out of not knowing each other well. Perhaps the local community may not feel the need to include the minority population in the mainstream.

Barriers due to social and economic factors

Many respondents noted that full participation in the Springfield community was curtailed by various social and economic barriers. For example, participation in many clubs and organizations requires schedule flexibility during the day, which many citizens do not have. Finances are a barrier to participation. Many respondents felt that there is a social and cultural elite in Springfield that does not welcome participation from those who are less well connected socially and financially. Many perceive that Springfieldians are biased in favor of those who grew up here or are from old, established families. A number of people simply feel excluded. Here are representative comments:

Being too poor to participate in the community. Participation in public forums, elections, city council meetings, etc., means taking time away from work or caring for family. When you're too busy to participate, that is a barrier. When you are poor, it means that you can't afford the cost of admission to get into the rooms and get to the tables where real decisions are made.

A lot of community meetings are during hours that make it difficult to attend if you are single parent or have small children. For example, with school-aged and smaller children, 7:30 am meetings are hard to attend.

I think it is impossible to be in city council unless you are independently wealthy or a business owner. This excludes so many gifted and concerned citizens.

I would like to serve in a leadership capacity within Springfield on City Council or A City Board etc., but as the primary breadwinner in my family it is difficult to participate in those capacities and maintain a full time employed status as a senior manager at my company where I work. I have to work during the day and cannot afford to take a lesser position or start my own company so I can have a freer schedule with fewer responsibilities or fewer benefits. I see that as a barrier for 'normal people' to participate in local government.

You shouldn't have to buy a ticket to attend the City State of the Union. Citizens should be allowed to hear what is going on in their community without paying for it.

Barriers for non-Christians

The Springfield area is overwhelmingly Christian in its religious tradition. Many respondents perceived barriers to those citizens who are not Christian. These ranged from neglected and exclusion to outright hostility:

Religious intolerance. Religious intolerance. Religious intolerance.

I am Jewish and have been told by too many members of the community that I am going to hell. This is not a welcoming community for my friends who are Muslim. They are harassed almost daily.

1) As an eminently qualified candidate, I was denied a volunteer opportunity, based solely upon the fact that I am atheist. 2) My wife and I were "encouraged" not to continue to pursue foster adoption, based solely upon the fact that we are atheist.

Not being an active member of a Church. (This is always one of the first things I am asked upon a MO native meeting me. When they find out I do not attend Church, they quit talking.)

I have found the need to hide my Humanist values from all but my closest friends. The overt "Christian" culture makes it difficult.

And, the hurt seems to go both ways, although the following comment was in a distinct minority:

. . . and because I'm a conservative Christian woman I'm often excluded from events because of my beliefs . . . (upset because I'm black but don't support liberal causes). . .

Barriers due to age and sex/gender

Many comments related to perceived age and sex or gender discrimination, but often these did not say why age or sex/gender was a barrier. Comments that provided some detail about sex/gender as being a barrier are the following:

As a sexual assault victim, I certainly do not feel that city leadership has my best interests in mind due to their poor response to the rape kit scandal. When something so important (i.e., prosecuting sex crimes) and foundational (i.e., how could any police office feel that destroying evidence is anything other than unethical and helpful to criminals) is swept under the rug, it causes people to doubt that their municipal government is responsive, competent, or caring.

Subtle, but real, sexism and ageism in my time as a clergy member. I am no longer clergy as a result.

Gender discrimination . . . “good ole boy” network has prevented me from promotional opportunities. Stereotyped as “flight” and “too talkative: . . . classic discriminatory language used against females.

1. Being told I can't do a job because I'm a woman and wouldn't be able to handle it.
2. Being paid less than my male peers when I've been at my job longer and have far more experience.
3. Being told I know nothing because I haven't seen the Red Skelton show.

. . . The CEO has actively tried to have our top females on boards that would fit their leadership and be great for the community. However, multiple times boards have said “no, thank you”, but those same boards have taken males for their spots in the community.

The following comments, which provided some detail, relate to age as a barrier. Age was perceived to cut against both older and younger respondents:

The main barrier are infrequent gatherings for senior population, and/or they are at night when we do not want to be out driving. More opportunities would be welcomed during daytime hours.

Lack of full time job opportunities for those over 60—Age discrimination.

Age discrimination by younger citizens.

Hostilities for the elderly.

Trivialized as an older person and a lesbian.

More options for the older population Everything seems geared for the younger.

Distrust of younger people.

- 2) OLD PEOPLE; you want more turn out to events? Stop gearing it toward old people and do stuff 18-30 year olds may enjoy, we make a lot of your community.
- 3) Children; c'mon, do they really need whole days dedicated to kid stuff? Make that happen at the YMCA like it should. You see the giant lack of anything to do for people that are 18-30? Exactly why you have no turn out in that age.

Barriers related to generalized fear of crime, drugs, potential harassment

Several respondents noted that not all areas of Springfield are safe, and that fact represents a barrier to participation. Representative comments:

Safety is the number one barrier. Not feeling safe at community events or in public in general due to an increase in mental health issues and addiction issues. It is not uncommon to be approached by someone in an aggressive manner.

Druggies attacking people or property. Begging for money for drugs or liquor., unable to go to stores comfortably! Family member attacked in own home!!

Being harassed in public places, at the Mall, the Ozark Empire Fair, the Libraries, the baseball stadium, the Christmas and St. Patrick's Day parades, and at city several parks. Witnessed discrimination and harassment of other people. Especially in retail locations, public parks, the libraries, and in the Downtown area.

Criminal activity: There is absolutely no incentive to open up a brick and mortar when inventory is under constant threat of theft and property damage. Again, there is additional officers our city has, we have more officers here than KC, and the crime here continues to rise, again, with NO accountability from Leaders of our city!

As a cyclist and a family of runners, it's surprising how often people throw bottles, cans or trash at you; or they may yell obscene words at you or even try to run over you with their car – you become very cautious of where you go and safety of your ride.

Miscellaneous barriers reported occasionally

The following barriers were mentioned only a few times, but often enough that they seemed worthy of note. They related to communication (finding out about events in time enough to plan), timing of community meetings and events, and political intolerance experienced by some members of the community. Comments:

Lack of information to get in touch with city officials.

Lack of awareness of programs due to limited marketing, timing of events. . .

Times of community/citizen meeting events. . . . Simple awareness – not being aware of when meetings or events are taking place.

A lot of times being a political liberal can also lead to harassment in the workplace, or anywhere, people vandalize your car or yard and can be distrustful of you for merely believing what you believe.

The political interests of my community are not adequately represented on the city council, school board, the state legislature, or the U.S. Congress—this is a huge barrier as a 7-year Springfield resident.

Question 3: If you have personally felt, at any time, that you were not valued based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, or age (40+), please share your experience.

Respondents were asked whether they had personally felt undervalued based on any of the categories listed above. There were 781 (41.12%) respondents who said yes and 950 (54.88%) who said no. The examples mirror the comments shared earlier and represent each of the categories listed, but many of them provided no detail: “All of the above,” “I experience it daily. There are too many experiences to share here,” and “Age discrimination.” While many of the comments may not describe legally sanctioned instances of discrimination, they do reflect a high level of insensitivity, and in many cases outright cruelty, that people experience in everyday life. The comments selected below are ones that provide additional context or detail.

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or national origin

One of the categories most heavily represented was that of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or national origin, with a few individuals feeling discriminated against because they are white.

Representative comments:

Employers’ ignorance to bilingual candidates due to their lack of understanding or tolerance of grammatical, cultural and personal discrimination.

I was called a “damn Mexican.”

Racist comments regarding Hispanic people aren’t rare.

Was told to go back to my country.

Walking down the C-Street, a couple talking about my sister and mine green card status. We are indigenous to North America and 3 generations of born in US.

I have been asked at a supermarket to show my Visa. The employee said she needed to make sure I was not illegally in the country.

There are a lot of anti-immigrant/anti-Latino sentiments that get shared amongst citizens here. I think the city could potentially be more progressive and welcoming to refugees and immigrants and lead by example.

Hearing people around me talking about how they feel the need for a wall to stop immigration. There was one moment someone mentioned everyone who comes to America must speak English fluently because they can’t stand talking on the phone with someone who can’t speak English. Another time was when a woman mentioned she thought she was going to die when she was sitting next to a man of color on the plane while returning to SGF airport.

As a Community Health Care worker and employee of a not-for-profit in Springfield I have definitely seen members of a minority be treated differently, especially in a health care environment. Black mothers face a much higher rate of maternal and postnatal death rates. Yet I still see black mothers be quickly dismissed when complaining of any symptoms. My African American patients may be encouraged to continue working or told their symptoms are likely

normal and they just need to wait to see improvements.

As a customer in many stores in town (I've been followed and asked to leave my bag at the checkout counter). I've been asked what "certain populations" think about a certain idea or situation only for that opinion or view to be dismissed. I have been told to my face that my hiring met a quota.

Shopping for a house with a realtor. We talked over the phone to coordinate our first meeting. My whole family came. . . Once myself and my family got out of the car and met her she obviously (by the look on her face) could see we are a biracial family. Told us she had made a mistake and asked us to meet her at a different house. We followed her to another part of town that she considered "acceptable for your type." Bars on windows, run down boarded up homes. The realtor was white. She said we would be more comfortable in this part of the city. We fired her.

I stopped by a garage sale with my Mom. I saw that there were beautiful dolls on a table for sale. . . When I would ask for the price of each doll, the lady kept saying in a non-friendly way that each doll I pointed at wasn't for sale, while also following me rather closely. . . . Finally after about the third negative answer my Mom spoke up and said we were leaving. . . Mom then told me knew why the dolls weren't for sale . . . [white/Native American respondent]

Every year when it's Native American month there is barely a mention of it When it's black month it's everywhere.

As a Native American who can blend, I am able to see racist remarks toward minorities by white people who think that since I look like them my experiences are the same as theirs. I hear racially charged comments often.

I am a federally recognized member of the Muscogee Creek Nation. In various positions working with the public here, I've been asked if I speak English, if I go to college for free (which is inaccurate), if I live in a tipi (not even my tribe), etc. There is a lot of ignorance regarding indigenous peoples and could be corrected.

. . . as a child, I was made fun of for my round face and my braids. As an adult, it isn't really an issue, however with raising my son there just isn't very much available for Native Americans in Springfield. Everyone seems to focus only on African American minorities.

People in this community have no understanding of diversity. They think it's OK to make comments to Asian women, "Are you Connie Chung?" in the grocery store. My black friends experience people walking up to them and just reading out and touching their hair. This city ATTRACTS poor, uneducated people to do the majority of meaningless jobs.

I'm Asian. Went to MSU. I experienced 3-4 times where white American males would drive by and make racial related comments about me.

I've had interviews where I'm the nicest dressed person in the room. And the person interviewing me will call out my name and look at all of the white applicants. No surprise that I wasn't hired.

Confederate flags make me uneasy; have heard people say white power.

Being called a nigger when doing a school clinician session.

. . . have witnessed racial slurs toward my biracial daughter on more than one occasion.

I have been called racial slurs and/or assaulted due to my race.

I have been called the “n” word. I have been told in the workplace by a Director level supervisor that I should be more willing to have a sense of humor about race issues. I was called aggressive, abrasive, tense, etc., just for being direct and confident in my communication. I have been told by a white coworker in front of the whole team that they should be able to say the “n” word if they want to because it is in a song they like . . . and then I was chastised for having an opinion about it.

I have watched people of color be afraid to walk the streets of downtown Springfield.

I’ve seen shop owners follow people of color through their stores. I’ve had people make insensitive and insulting comments about . . . persons of color as if it were a joke and assuming that as a white person, I would see humor in it.

I have been called a “nigger lover” and accused of harboring “illegal wetbacks” simply because I was with people of color in the community.

Another situation: I work with a lot of people within the community on a daily basis People will hand [hang] signs on their property “no blacks allowed,” “better run nigger” or worse.

As a teenager I was followed in stores when my white peers were not. I’ve been told I spoke good English (assuming that Spanish should be my first language even though I don’t speak it). I’ve been asked how long I’ve been in the country (Born here, thank you).

Because my husband is black and loud, every interaction with the police department is a horrible experience. They assume the worst and treat us that way.

I was in a mixed marriage and my late husband and I at times were stared at and there were whispers. We would smile and say hello and start a conversation, sometimes they walked away in disgust and others we seemed to show we were just like them, my husband just had a better tan.

I had a boss that felt that I had an attitude and was disrespectful any time I had questions for her. She couldn’t see past the color of my skin when we had any type of conversation. She had already made up her mind that I was a “black woman with an attitude” from the first time she met me.

The fact that 90% of the images Springfield promotes are of the white race is what sometimes has me feeling discouraged, invisible, and alone. The fact that I’ve attended two city-wide SGF visioning meetings where attendance was no less than 150 community members and I was the only black in the room to contribute in the decision-making process concerns me. . . . The fact that another friend had to call me three weeks ago to ask me what to do concerning an SPS bus driver who told her 5-year-old daughter that “we” all look alike is more than upsetting . . .

People eyeballing me when I walk into a store. Like I'm going to steal just because I'm black.

Told to stay out of certain towns because you may not be welcome there.

I'll just say housing denied and racial profiling by police. Let me add that I am not a felon or a problem to police, but in Springfield that means nothing.

I've experienced being called an "N-word" while walking downtown. I have had unmarked police cars/possibly sheriffs treat me terribly and disconcertingly on a back road on the west side of town with no reason. I have experienced cops treat me differently than my white friend that was with me at the time of being pulled over. The list goes on. . .

My children are regularly called the n-word at school by other students and given harsher consequences (including 52 suspensions in one school year for "defiance") that I feel were racially charged. In public, my family is followed often at stores to ensure my children, black, are not stealing.

And here are some of the few examples shared of perceived discrimination against straight, white people:

It is official city policy to make Springfield less white. Of COURSE I have felt that I was not valued.

This was a case of reverse discrimination. I tried to help out an aspiring athlete and the parent perceived me to be a white man and did not want any help with his son.

There is a black entertainment channel, BET. That is great! But if there was a TV channel focused on being white, people would lose their minds. There is a gay news network, no way in the world you would ever see a straight news network. It would be considered a hate issue. I don't celebrate my white, straight, Catholic heritage because of the repercussions that would come with it.

I have felt due to being white and middle aged I have been looked over for many opportunities whether it was at events or in the job market. In our attempt to be inclusive we are exclusive at the same time.

I get bothered by bums wanting money because I'm a middle aged white guy who bathes.

I'm a white, middle aged male who likes guns. I need not say any more.

I'm an older white male. . . the worst think you can be in today's America. . . just look at the TV ads, white male is always the one who is made fun of and made to look silly or stupid. . .

African Americans calling me Honky, Cracker.

Being the wrong race and not one of the protected races is a hindrance. We get no special programs or treatment.

White males are under attack. Stop letting the media guide your decisions about the best person for the job.

Early 90's at Central High, group of black girls tried to jump me. 2 weeks ago, an "Asian refugee" man kept trying to talk my daughter (13 yrs) into going over to his house.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

As with the previous question, there were many responses dealing with discrimination based on LGBTQ+ status. The repeal of the SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) ordinance was perceived as a slap in the face to the LGBTQ+ community, and Springfield is seen as unfriendly to that community:

This is not a welcoming community for LGBT People.

I am a member of the LGBTQ+ community and the fact that the nondiscrimination law was overturned in 2015 proves that people have the capability of using their religion as a way to discriminate against people they consider to be different.

I'm bisexual. When the SOGI ordinance was repealed, I felt that City officials and fellow residents didn't have my back.

Being harassed going into LGBT clubs, being harassed by street preachers.

Any questionnaire that forces me to choose either male or female. Quite often, there is no need for the data.

I was denied promotion for being transgender.

I'm transgender . . . and am very publicly transitioning in Missouri. There is not a day that has gone by since I began transitioning which I have not felt that my gender identity marks me as lesser in the eyes of most people I interact with who know I'm transgender.

I have been called multiple slurs just walking downtown. It comes from the protesters bastardizing who I am without any understanding of me as a person. I have felt that due to my "life choices" I am damned by my community. When Prop 2 [the repeal of the SOGI ordinance?] was happening in 2015, I felt that because I was gay I was causing a stink in the town that I know and love, by my own coworkers.

I will not come out due to the danger of being queer in this community. I am polyamorous, and I have had that used as a weapon to push me out of spaces in the community through rumor and innuendo.

I worked for Pet Warehouse on Kearney and they asked me to make a poster for the Cat aisle. I drew a cat playing with rainbow mice (We sell this item) and was told by the manager they would not accept gay pride in the store. . . .I think had I not been gay this would not have been an issue. . . .

In the first years of my employment with the city, special permission had to be obtained for me to be able to use funeral leave when my wife's father passed away. With any heterosexual couple, this was not even questioned.

Sexual orientation—when churches and voters repealed city equal protections and also various other times when hearing lgbt slurs by community, friends, and coworkers.

Well, when you are walking down the street holding hands with your same -sex husband and people drive by and yell homophobic slurs at you repeatedly. It makes it difficult to feel valued.

Multiple wedding venues refused to host our marriage service because we're gay.

Again, moving Pride month from June to October felt like a slight, and it send the message that queer people aren't as important. The strange looks and treatment we receive from people in general contribute to a feeling of isolation (although it's something we're used to).

The news stories about businesses rights to deny service based on sexual orientation and identity made me feel like me and my friends weren't valuable as humans.

Employment: asked to leave after my sexual orientation was known. Not to mention the fear of being outed for many years prior to this experience, in a city so [where] I have no clear assurance would protect me and my family.

My previous employer supposedly fired someone before me for being gay—this made me apprehensive to be myself and allow my sexual orientation to be known for fear of losing my job. This was only one year ago in 2018.

. . .the fact that I could get fired or lose my housing or be denied service because I am in a same sex relationship makes me feel unwelcome and not valued in my community.

I am often given the cold shoulder when I'm out with my same gender spouse and a server realizes that we're a couple.

Being called names simply for going out with my girlfriend. Knowing that any time I could be fired from my job if I was out at work.

I had an icee thrown out of a truck window at me while walking downtown because I was holding hands with another guy.

Yes, when dealing with SPD, I know for a fact I was discriminated against as a single gay man that was trying to make my neighborhood a better place to live and protect my property value. I called police multiple times for thefts in the neighborhood, drug crimes, and neighbor disputes. I ended up being harassed by police and discriminated against.

I'm gay. Several years ago we were at a restaurant with friends. One of our couple friends had a small child they were fostering, and the wait staff and other customers were giving us dirty looks. And my spouse and I were walking down the sidewalk together and a car drove by and the passengers yelled "fags" out the window.

My husband is transgender, and we constantly worry about the threat of violence, or bullying of our children because of it, and because we know that in Springfield there would be no repercussions for the perpetrators.

I've had an employer that purposely pulled me from a "public face" position to work in a back office position, simply because I had cut my hair, and they didn't want people to know they had hired a lesbian (even though I had worked for them for 2-3 years at the time).

Sexism and gender discrimination

Another frequently mentioned category was discrimination based on sex or gender. A few respondents noted that this was more of a problem in years past, but also indicated that problems still exist, particularly with women being taken as seriously as men. Springfield is perceived to be run by white, middle-aged men—good ole boys—and that hasn't changed much. Representative comments:

Through my work I watched the good ole boy system where those in a similar age and gender [older white males] were given opportunities not provided to everyone. I'm no longer there, I gave up and found a job within 30 days that was a promotion and doubled my pay. P.S., that was at the local school district, so it doesn't give me much faith in anyone else if our government agencies set the standards.

Leadership does not value identities that are not male.

As a woman, I have had many experiences where I was not taken seriously or was ignored in a public shopping place, work, or just in a general public place.

It is fairly common to feel belittled or completely ignored as a female & when I have my kids with me in corporation, health care, & legal settings (such as when needing to obtain official records or anything at all to do with financial situations). In all of these settings, if I am addressed at all, it is only to imply that I need my husband there to receive service.

I can give a suggestion at a meeting full [of] white men and have it ignored until a white man says the same thing. I was paid several thousand dollars a year less as branch manager than a man who came into the same role with no experience. Have seen it happen in council meetings.

Often as a professional female we are looked on as not equal, this shows in the opportunities we are given and in our compensation.

I was fired for being pregnant.

Yes, I have in several jobs in Springfield, been treated poorly as a female. I have lost a job because I did not accept advances. My voice not heard at other jobs because I am female or treated like a child. Treated differently than men.

I'm a 40 something white careerwoman who often has to interact with 60+ year old white men who have outdated ideas about my strengths or life experience and those men determine my career direction/company future.

Hired into a position and was not paid based on experience. When I left the position, everyone hired after me had less experience, put in less hours, and received more pay.

I have had several doctors question me for being late 20s and not pregnant. I have also had many doctors tell me I should become pregnant, etc. They would never say this to a man.

I worked at a firearms store, and had an elderly man walk in and ask if there were any men around to talk to. I told him there were not, but I was fully capable of helping him. He scoffed at me and walked out in a huff, saying he would come back when there was a man to talk to.

Sexism – I was not allowed to speak in a particular setting because I'm a woman.

I am constantly catcalled and harassed when I run in the park.

“Well no, little lady, let’s just leave that for the men to decide.” I’ve actually been told this in this century! And there are too many similar examples to type in this box.

I worked for a large corporation here in town that is largely male-oriented. I was frequently prevented from providing input and purposely left out of my job-related discussions and decision making. I was at one point told to “let the men figure it out.” This was just one experience, but there have been many, especially in the workforce.

Working with males in facility maintenance, treated like I don’t know what I’m talking about when explaining work which needs to be conducted.

I had a restraining order against my ex-husband. I was offered by the judge to go back to my home, escorted by a Greene County Sheriff, and that sheriff had his hand on his gun the entire time, staring at me and telling me to hurry up and finish packing because he had better things to do than stand there and deal with a marital spat. It was not a spat. He made me feel unsafe, unrelieved, and unheard.

I have had employers pay me different wages than male co-workers or male predecessors with the exact same job descriptions, even though I have had better performance reviews. I have been directly told that I stood to go far because I was not married and did not have children and that if I wanted to keep my job that I had better keep it that way. I had another employer tell me that his father would be rolling over in his grave if he knew that his son hired a female attorney to work with the office, but that he hired me anyway because he knew that he could ask more of me than a man. Many other similar examples.

I work in a male dominate industry. I have been told that I could never be a manager because I’m a woman.

Any time I go to the mechanic I am treated like an incompetent. A stranger slapped my bottom from their car while I was riding my bicycle through campus. I have received less pay per hour than male coworkers for the same work.

And of course, as a woman, there’s been a number of workplaces where I’ve asked male managers to stop being handsy with me, making sexual jokes at me, etc., and suddenly I’d go from having earned a place as one of the best employees in the workplace to the bottom rung.

I experienced sexual harassment during my career in health care by professional males in positions of authority.

My former employer’s COO was very chauvinistic, believing women should remain in lower level company roles. Also, he also believes a woman’s salary should be based on his assumption of her husband’s wage (i.e., the more the husband makes, the less she should be paid). A single woman’s wage was based on the lower end of the scale of wants for the position.

I will never forget working with a local technology company regarding converting some data in CSV. I carefully explained what I did and why. A man 10 years my junior responded with a condescending email that stated I should to X, Y, Z. My communication explicitly spelled out that I WAS doing X, Y, Z, and yes, I feel that because I was a woman and he was a ‘tech guy’ he did not read a single word I sent not review the data I sent (which was correct). He dismissed me

as a woman who didn't know anything.

In a college class at MSU, a male student made disparaging remarks about a woman's ability to excel in Computer Science. I have also felt objectified by many men, where it seems my only value (or my main value) to them is my appearance.

I bought a hybrid Toyota instead [of another care where she was ignored at the dealership]. The car had issues with sensor alignment that caused unexpected braking. When I reported this, I had at least 3 guys offer to give me driving lessons. I finally called Toyota corporate. They took the problem very seriously . . .

I worked for an organization that had only white males in leadership and they wrote job descriptions to explicitly keep younger women with children out of leadership positions (60 hours/week, travel, no support staff, etc.)

As a woman in ministry I have experienced exclusion and bias based on gender.

It's taken a long time for women to catch up to men at many civic tables in Springfield. There are still way too many situations where women are in a distinct minority.

As a female in business, I have been treated as if I don't fully understand the "way business is done here with handshakes" between white males when I try to document everything and have proper contracts in place.

As a woman, I have felt inferior when involved with city leaders who are all men.

I have been slighted/dismissed by MSU President & Chamber CEO when engaging in issue discussions. I feel there's a general dismissal of women by the male-dominated leadership all over this city.

Old, white men deferring to husband when I'm the one shopping for (insert large purchase.)

Did not acknowledge me in car buying experience when I was with my husband.

And this example of reverse discrimination:

I reported sexual harassment in an interview and was told that men cannot be sexually harassed even if they were told that the only way to get the job was to sleep with the interviewer.

Religious discrimination

Perceived religious discrimination, primarily against non-Christians, was also well represented, although several Christians felt they were being discriminated against as well. Here are comments with enough context to help understand the respondent's point of view:

Public meetings should be respectful and inclusive of all religions, or a person's choice to not be religious. Christian prayer at almost every public event without regard for other religions makes non-Christians feel like outsiders. I have seen some leaders hold a moment of silence and acknowledge all religions rather than recite a Christian prayer.

I am not religious and am uncomfortable about saying I do not attend church since so many just

presume we are Christians. This, of course, is a minor example compared to what others experience.

My child's school distributed Christian propaganda and when I asked that they remain secular I was treated as an outcast.

Religion, specifically, because I do not relate to Christianity. I have been told I would burn in hell and categorized as Atheist even though this is far from the truth of my beliefs.

[Dismissed from a job by a woman] The only conflict I ever had with this person was I did not pray with her in the parking lot of a school while others in the organization joined in.

I'm afraid of coworkers finding out I am non-Christian. I consider myself a good person, but have definitely been treated differently whenever someone finds out I don't attend church.

When the entire city is bathed in Christian messaging and you're not a Christian, it's easy to feel excluded.

Attending events where the audience is expected to join in a prayer.

As a non-Christian . . . I am bombarded with billboards trying to force me to convert, I am denied everything from jobs to social opportunities, to charitable help on the basis that I am not a Christian. . . . I . . . often hide my religion for fear of retaliation or loss of opportunities.

I absolutely feel shunned because of being Catholic. I have brought food to work events that people would not eat because they thought of me as a heathen.

I've had people literally turn their backs on me and walk away after they ask, "What church do you go to?" and responding that I don't attend a local church. . .

I'm Jewish and female. I feel like many times we feel discouraged by being told we're awful people or that we killed Jesus. Just general hostility from the community.

I try to hide the fact that I'm not religious, but at times when individuals or groups have found out, it's dramatically changed their treatment of me for the worse.

You do not attend a "good, Bible-believing church."

People often ask where you go to church in this community within seconds of meeting me. If I tell the truth and say nowhere, I am placed into an undesirable social category.

This is a daily struggle and why I'm leaving this area. The reproductive rights rally downtown last summer proved Christians can get away with anything, including repeated and deliberate physical violence.

Anyone who is not Christian is met with condemnation and criticism in the Springfield area. It is assumed that all people are Christian, and other faiths are basically ignored or disrespected.

I can't tell you how many times people have made rude or hateful comments when they learn I'm Catholic. I've never experience that until I moved to Springfield.

I have been told that Catholics are all cheaters, liars, and drunks at various times since I moved

to here.

At a job interview I was asked what church I attended and was told they only hire Christians so they said I didn't fit the company's needs. I did get hired by another company which required prayer at the start of meetings.

You really cannot say out loud in this town that you are an atheist. The pro-religious bias is so strong that you risk having your tires slashed, not getting hired for a job (such as at Mercy, which requires you to agree to prayers at staff meetings), or worse.

As a single woman willing to volunteer at a community event. Discovered they were grouping volunteers by church. Had no group for "you other people."

Reed Middle School holds a Holocaust exhibit in their boiler room with a fake concentration camp complete with fake incinerator.

I'm an atheist, and suddenly my more openly religious coworkers have stopped being friendly with me or bosses started not scheduling me for prime shifts, etc.

Christianity is very prominent within the area and does not allow different views [about] equal opportunity in the community. I do not bring up my religious views in public or at work, not only because it's courteous, but I also don't want to have to go on the defense when expressing my views.

A few people mentioned being discriminated against because they are Christian, although these were in a minority:

I have sometimes experienced mild hostility based on my Christian beliefs when operating outside the trappings of the Christian community here. I don't see this as surprising or troubling. It is very mild compared to the hostility of much of my Christian community toward those of other beliefs and traditions. Christian bigotry and closed mindedness are a bigger problem and often earns much of the reciprocal hostility I have witnessed.

I worked at a job where raises and promotions only went to members of the owner's religion. A Catholic coworker was fired for mentioning Lent.

Conservative Christians are many times treated as fanatics or haters. This is not true, and we don't deserve that kinds of treatment. Just because we don't agree with certain lifestyles does not make us haters. In fact, it seems that hating Christians is OK, but disagreeing with sinful lifestyles is not OK.

I'm routinely told to keep my Christian beliefs to myself when I get involved with social issues.

I see an incredible bias, disrespect, and sometimes even hate against Christian believers.

I have been looked down on and treated rudely for my Christian faith. But I'm not upset about it.

Yes --- every time I am ashamed to say I believe in God for fear of harassment.

The focus has become so pro-lgbt and Muslim that Christianity seems to be frowned upon in city

events.

As a white, conservative Christian woman, the city is attempting to move to a more liberal, progressive political structure and seeking to silence people like me.

I am a white, conservative Christian male. The only demographic without some sort of federal protection.

People have been hostile/rude towards me because of my faith in Jesus Christ on more than one occasion. It seems that people are less and less civil.

Ageism

Respondents experienced ageism, in both directions. Some mentioned that they were taken less seriously because they were younger, but more noted that they experience a pervasive ageism against older people. Those who experienced discrimination because they were older said such things as:

There are venues where being older causes you to be invisible.

As an older white woman, I can get in the door just about anywhere. But I feel pretty much invisible to young professionals in networking settings.

Over 40 appears to be a weeding-out factor no matter the expertise and experience of the applicant.

A college student said they felt uncomfortable being around a bunch of old people. It was a group of middle-aged women leaving work.

I find there's not a lot of respect for older people, more like we are a hindrance.

Age at times. Sort of a patronizing attitude toward me by some younger adults.

At age 63, I found myself out of a job for the very first time. As an estimator/project manager in the construction industry for nearly 40 years, I was qualified for a number of positions, yet I never was given an interview. Even from the city.

Working at a school as an older teacher and the principal was much younger. My ideas and contributions to the school were not valued.

Employer was biased toward younger, "savvier" [people] who lacked experience, but were treated preferentially.

Too old to matter when requesting help.

I feel there is limited help for elderly and the city will pressure the elderly after storm cleanup to clean up more quickly than the younger and insured citizens.

Not being able to find a full time job that pays a living wage at my age . . . 60 . . . with a Masters Degree . . . Even when I applied for a part time position at Cox Hospital, I was turned down. Their reason: they were looking for someone who was looking for a career working for them. What exactly does that mean?

I have felt at times because of my age the city/community is not interested in my opinion or thoughts on how to make the city better. Everyone views us as a place people come to retire/or go to college but for people who have lived their whole lives here it is more than that and I would like to raise my son in a more rounded city.

My husband hasn't been able to find full-time employment in the 3 years we've been here because he's over 55 years of age. And he has a bachelor's, master & JD degrees.

. . . age (I'm 60) has made it hard to get a good paying job since I moved here 4 years ago! Too many businesses want young people.

Downtown events aren't always for the 60+.

I feel that I have faced age discrimination. I was passed up for a promotion. I had 17 years of experience and the promotion was given to a 23-year-old with 10 months experience.

The local history Museum, while being run on mostly volunteers, I was told I was too old for paid positions and too young for volunteer positions.

Others thinking because of my age that I would [not] be open minded.

In my experience, once a person reaches 50+ years of age, younger, less experienced people are being "bounced" over the corporate ladder instead of having to "climb" the corporate ladder.

It's always hard to be a senior citizen . . . Most people assume you are inferior in some way.

As a former employee of the City, my technical knowledge, education and experience was used but not compensated for to me. Young, inexperienced and lazy employees with college degrees were upgraded and compensated over me. I was told my age affected desire for City to retain me.

Some individuals from the younger generation do not seem to like baby boomers and believe we have nothing to offer.

"OK BOOMER" disrespect.

Those who experienced discrimination because they were younger said such things as:

Older community members have made comments on my age when patronizing several local stores.

People over the age of 40 think I am clueless, lazy, uneducated, not worth listening to.

I'm not 40, but I have felt not valued due to my age because I am young, especially in the workplace.

Disability status

Discrimination due to disability status, although not mentioned as frequently as most of the previous categories, came up often enough to be noteworthy. Even when the discrimination did not rise to the level of legal challenge, the pain of exclusion or embarrassment came through clearly:

Being disabled but not looking disabled is very hard.

When you're a disabled vet, no one will give you a job.

I think some think disabled are the same as homeless.

Those with disabilities are often viewed as victims rather than supported as individuals who have something valuable to add to community organizations. There needs to be a better public understanding of all differences and their value to a community as a whole.

Denied job cause of disability right to live [in] place with a certified service animal.

I have PTSD. Can't tell you the number of times I've been talking with a person, and mention I am disabled, and suddenly the person is not so interested in talking as much. Things were "fine" before disclosing my disability, but not so much immediately afterward.

Any time I cannot participate because it's just unbearably loud. Oh, and that OTC required me to get a new evaluation for autism because I was diagnosed more than 10 years ago.

Many people take advantage of parking in handicapped parking, some buildings don't have handicapped accessible ramps.

I walk slowly from being shot in the war. You assholes in the retail business can f yourselves for me holding up the flow of people because they get behind me. Especially you Battlefield mall.

Springfield isn't as handicapped accessible as it could or should be.

Access to public buildings, including city and county,. No accommodations to programs and events, hearing, vision, etc.

Things not being accessible to me—made to feel inferior.

Every time I have to climb up the stairs because there's no elevator at all.

I was disabled and there were a lot of times where people put us barriers so I could not achieve my potential. One example is while trying to get my college degree. One Disabilities Services Director said she could not build me my "own special room to study and take tests" (sarcasm but inappropriate when trying to find accommodation services for someone with learning disabilities).

I have been treated like I'm from outer space when I ask for accommodations.

It feels like I don't have the same opportunities as others when it comes to job possibilities because of a lack of built in accessibility like accessible computers.

My friend who is in a wheelchair – we angrily asked to move at a restaurant because the limited space between tables for her chair blocked the aisle where we were seated by a hostess. The manager moved us but was rude and it still was an issue so we just had to leave as it was so embarrassing and we could [not] enjoy a simple lunch.

Can't enter a business, restaurant not having accessible bathrooms—having a larger toilet area does not make it accessible if you have to have someone open the doors because they open the

wrong way and block a wheelchair. Ask to move repeatedly at a restaurant because wheelchair block aisle, but there is no room between tables out of the aisle for a wheelchair and the table is too short for a typical wheelchair to fit under.

Feeling invisible in crowds. Navigating in a wheelchair takes room. People don't want to let me pass and act put out by having to move a couple of feet to let me through.

I was in a very large and expensive stand alone retail store (PFI). I was in an electric chair. [Glass doors were too heavy to open, had no electric opener . . . another customer opened the door for me]. . . I looked for a salesperson to help but none would make eye contact with me as I impatiently waited. They were sharing stories with others, not selling a product. I finally asked if someone could help me. A customer finally did. . . . The whole incident upset me.

My previous employee did not understand my disability and therefore disregarded my input on many decisions ,even though I was in upper management.

Many of us have hidden disabilities and are judged by how we look, etc.

Mental health issues can be hard for some people to understand because they can't see it. Some people/supervisors think you're making it up.

My disability doesn't get received in our community. I have severe issues with fibromyalgia, asthma, & allergies.

We are constantly harassed by standers-by for my child's invisible disability, and no one does anything to stop them.

I have a lazy eye. .. I 've had various job interviews where I knew from the interviewer gawking at my eye to know I wouldn't get the job.

Miscellaneous instances of being undervalued

Finally, a few respondents mentioned that they felt undervalued due to political beliefs or because they lived on the north side. Examples:

North-South bias in cutting our town in half.

I've been judged for being a north-sider. When I go to the South side of town where there are more opportunities, I'm stereotyped and treated differently.

We have had multiple instances of property damage on the lit that we own, but because it is north side the cops seem to not want to be bothered.

More so, being someone who lives on the north side., I've been stereotyped as less valued because of perceived socio-economic differences.

I am obese, I am stared at on a regular basis.

I would never dare to put a bumper sticker for a Democratic candidate on my car for the same reason [risk of having tires slashed]. An acquaintance of mine was threatened with a gun simply for driving in a car with such bumper stickers on it.

Minority in political views.

Political viewpoints.

I am not a Republican conservative.

A couple of people noted that discrimination and feeling undervalued is part of the human condition:

Everyone has [experienced being undervalued] at some point. The world isn't perfect. . .

LOL love the "FEELING NOT VALUED." Everyone is excluded from something, has a bad day, takes offense at something . . . mature and empathize.

Everyone experiences some form of this [being undervalued] in their lifetimes. People of different races, socioeconomic backgrounds, different values and beliefs will always look at others differently. That doesn't mean they don't value that individual. The culture at large needs to stop being so hypersensitive to these issues and individuals need to learn to appreciate these differences without feeling the need to be PC constantly for fear of offending someone. It's gotten way out of hand. Freedom of speech only seems to apply if you agree with liberals and the left wing.

Discrimination is everywhere in this area. It's not just these categories, it's Everything. Someone can be too young, too old, not enough money, too much money, it doesn't matter anymore. You need to quit focusing on "certain groups" and look at the entire way the public is treated by Leadership. Until there is a complete overhaul on leadership in this town, there will be discrimination in all areas. . .

Yeah [I have had experiences of being undervalued] but what the hell does it matter. Don't need government to be a nanny.

Question 4: If you or someone you know has experienced an incident of unlawful hostility or discrimination, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or age (40+), please share that experience.

This question is similar to the previous one but asks specifically for examples of unlawful hostility or discrimination. Respondents were first asked whether they or someone they knew had experienced an incident of unlawful hostility or discrimination based on the categories listed. There were 709 (41.46%) respondents who said yes and 1001 (58.54%) who said no. In some cases, the examples provided were the same as had been shared for the previous question and, as before, many examples provided no detail: "Age related," "Sexism," and "Homophobia." Comments selected below provide context for understanding the nature of the discrimination and are different from the ones selected for the previous question. The two categories with the most responses, by far, were discrimination based on race/ethnicity/national origin and sexual orientation/gender identity.

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and national origin

Many respondents reported experiencing or witnessing racial and ethnic slurs being shouted at them, people throwing trash or drinks at them, and related acts of hostility. They reported examples of

minorities, particularly African Americans, being denied jobs, opportunities, and promotions because of their race, and being bullied or harassed at school. According to these respondents, racial profiling by police and in retail establishments is common, as is poor service in restaurants and shops. Many of the comments repeated examples from the previous question; different examples and comments are provided here:

My wife is Hispanic and had to leave her church, because the sermons turned into rants about closing the southern border of this country.

My sister who's Asian has been told in public that she shouldn't be in this country at community events before.

My daughter's boyfriend (Black) was pulled over a police officer. No ticket was issued and nothing was noted as a problem. The officer was just checking. My daughter was horrified.

The owner of the company I work for is a black woman and the landlord for our office space has been actively racist and misogynist toward her. . . This landlord has refused basic services . . . that are clearly lined out in our lease—such as basic maintenance . . .

My bi-racial sons are stopped by SPD far more freq. I have similar vehicle but am a middle age white female and never get detained.

My parents were selling their house. My family and I were helping them. A family came to a house showing. They saw my husband (who is black) and me (who is white) and the grabbed their gun. They left the house immediately saying all kinds of racial slurs. . . .

Patients at our office keep asking to not see "the black doctor." This makes for a very awkward and uncomfortable setting. . .

I had a black employee who was a convicted felon. He worked very hard and was working very hard to put his past behind him. Rode his bike across town to get to work in any weather. Cops constantly harassed him. Pulling him over on his bike every other week only to find nothing.

My neighbor, who is African American, has had to wait in restaurants to be served while everyone white gets served first. This information is not coming from him it's something I've observed. . . . An older African American gentleman, an acquaintance of mine, reported that he gets called "boy" all the time—and he was in his 70s when he told me that.

A good friend is currently struggling to find housing because her boyfriend is a person of color, but when she applies alone as a white woman, gets approved.

A friend's daughter was not able to work as a greeter at a local restaurant because a customer did not want to be greeted by someone of the daughter's race.

Unequal administration of consequences for children of color in the SPS system. More severe for students of color.

At least one acquaintance was assaulted in a supermarket after being accused of being Middle Eastern and told to "go back home." (He is a Native American man).

A family we rented to experienced discrimination when trying to secure an event space. The

price quoted on the phone doubled when they went in person to rent it. The gentleman was Muslim.

As before, a number of white respondents felt that they were the ones discriminated against:

My husband has been a plumber for over 25 years. He has been turned down for jobs because a company chose a minority just to make a demographics goal. I feel that the most discriminated against group is the straight, white male. People talk about white privilege, but we have not seen any privilege.

Group of blacks, very nasty, cutting line and being disruptive at fair. We won't go back. Too unsafe for children.

I have seen people who were more qualified for jobs get passed over for a lesser qualified applicant because that person was a member of a minority class. We've gone too far in the opposite direction. Enough is enough.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

Many respondents reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination in housing and employment against members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially trans men and women. They observed acts of physical and verbal assault, being refused service, profiling by police, and bullying at school and work. Examples provided here are different ones from those reported in the earlier question:

An acquaintance who grew up here but currently lives in Texas came back to Springfield to visit his parents, and brought his [same sex] partner with him. They stayed at a local hotel . . . the hotel called the police. It's shameful a business felt they had the right to call the police because two quite respectable men who just might be gay had booked a room and were staying in their facilities. . .

I've had several friends who've been verbally threatened, one who was beaten, and those who are transgender face threats and violence in much higher proportion. Do we report these? No. Why? It only opens you to further threats and intimidation. So you hide it, let it go, hope it simply goes away.

Some transgender friends and I went to eat at Mexican Villa East. We got the standard chips and salsa then placed our orders. People all around us, even some that came in after us, had gotten their orders, ate, and left. After an hour and a half, multiple inquiries to where our orders were we finally realized what was happening and got up and left.

I asked a male customer to stop calling me honey in a lascivious way and I was reprimanded. A friend's same sex partner was not allowed to see him in the hospital because he wasn't recognized as family.

A friend was denied fertility treatment by a doctor in Springfield because she is married to a woman. A local business refused to give a friend a men's style hair cut because she is a woman.

A neighbor (a trans woman of color) was stabbed several times and I was with her when the police came. They accused her of prostitution, stating that trans people usually are, even though that was not true. They mocked her, using the wrong pronouns and calling her "it" a couple of

times. They told her they could report the assault but they would have to charge her with prostitution. Which what that has to do with a break-in and assault at 4 am I am not sure.

One of my friends was eating at a restaurant and had on a t-shirt with a rainbow flag and the word "gay" on it. A customer came up to him and asked him if he was gay. My friend said yes. The other person then said he didn't like that and shoved my friend's plate off the table.

Academy Bank told a trans male after legally changing his name they would not change his account to his new legal name because "we don't serve your kind."

I have had many friend leave Evangel because of being forced to attend counseling due to their sexual orientation.

It's also hard to have a kid who's gay and hear a minister at my mom's church saying he's less than a person.

And there was one comment from someone who believed she had been discriminated against because she was not gay:

On Park Central Square during some gay pride crap, I went to support a family member. A man dressed as a drag queen called me names and told me to leave because I was an older female and not gay.

Discrimination based on religious beliefs

Churches in the area attempting to use public funds (taxpayer monies) to further push a "Christian only" agenda. Religion does not belong in public schools, nor does it belong in government and governing settings.

A Jewish couple from the east coast chose to live and work in Springfield, had degrees from excellent universities, were amazing contributors to the community, but their kids were harassed at school, and they spent weekends cleaning up the Jewish cemetery, and finally gave up and moved back to the east coast where they felt like they fit in.

Your City government assumes all persons are of a "praying nature" plus breaking the law discussing their religious opportunities on news programs. . . . Also need to remove the "god" stickers off Greene Co police vehicles. Another offense.

I have been in a hostile workplace where I was forced to leave because I am not Christian.

My wife was let go from an employer due to her unwillingness to participate in prayer in the work environment.

I have been denied birth control by Mercy when I wasn't married. Because I was single! My married friends were told by Mercy they needed their spouses' permission.

Sex and age discrimination

There were fewer examples in these two categories. Most of the examples involved workplace discrimination, such as the failure to be hired or promoted due to one's sex or age. Several examples involved serious sexual harassment. Here are representative comments:

. . . When I was younger and unmarried, I had an employer who told me that he owned my personal life and his goal was to keep me busy every night of the week. He would set me up on dates and tell me that they were required for work networking. He made me perform free legal and volunteer services for his friends and for his wife's company, even though I worked on a commission basis.

I have a friend who I believe was passed over on a promotion after studying for months to pass the test required, based on being a female. She was the second highest score and they skipped over her and promoted 2 other males.

I was passed over for a management position because I refused to provide sexual favors to the boss.

Rape kits being destroyed instead of processed. Rape cases being dropped without prosecution.

When questioned by police, target harassment and taunting of a young woman friend of mine who was clearly having a panic attack. She was taunted for her emotionality by at least three cops while her friends knew she was having a panic attack and were trying to calm her down.

My friend who is over 50 applied for a supervisor position that she was clearly qualified for because she was already doing the job. In her interview she was asked, if you don't get the position, how would you feel about training your new supervisor? It was later learned that they already had a younger, less experience male from another area in mind.

And there was one reverse discrimination comment related to sex:

My supervisor told to me he only interviews and hires women.

Discrimination due to disability status

The final major category was discrimination due to disability status. Often, this entailed the lack of appropriate accommodation or curtailed job opportunities due to the disability. Many comments provided no details. Representative comments with context include:

Have been denied housing based on disability.

My individual [from a social service worker] wasn't allowed to volunteer at a restaurant due to him looking "too retarded."

I was talking to a local business in town and was told people with disabilities could not do the work. It was cashier and stocking, she was extremely rude. When I wrote a complaint to the business about the employee, they never responded.

I once was asked an unlawful question about a disability by a job interviewer and then denied the job—based on my truthful answer. All totally illegal. It was at a major medical facility in Springfield.

SPS is terrible for special needs kids and families, they try to force my son into programs they already have instead of doing what he actually needs.

A friend was barred from a church because they felt her chair would tear up the building.

Miscellaneous

Several comments were made regarding discrimination due to socioeconomic status or due to living on the north side of Springfield. Although there were few of these, the comments are worth noting:

My fiancé only lives in Springfield because we are too poor to live [elsewhere]. . . . Lately, our lives have felt more and more in danger. Half the time we go out to enjoy “nightlife” we are verbally harassed.

I have witnessed other shoppers shun and leave the shop when encountering . . . street people, whether homeless or indigent.

City Utilities forces customers with financial hardship to reach out to churches for assistance instead of having a proper citywide fund.

Question 5: If you have personally witnessed an incident of hostility or discrimination directed at somebody else based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or age (40+), please share that experience.

In response to this question about having witnessed acts of hostility or discrimination against others, there were 821 (48.35%) individuals who answered yes and 877 (51.65%) who answered no. Respondents were also asked where these incidents occurred. In order of frequency, they occurred in employment, 344 (22.72%); public accommodation, 238 (15.72%); by goods and service providers, 213 (14.07%); educational institutions, 178 (11.76%); houses of worship, 142 (9.38%); local government, 131 (8.65%); and by healthcare providers, 130 (8.59%). Respondents were permitted to check more than one category, which explains why the total exceeds 821. The “other” category was selected by 138 (9.11%) of respondents, who observed such instances in all sorts of public settings, gatherings, in neighborhoods, on public streets, in bars, financial institutions, by the police, and in homeless shelters. There seems to be no setting in which such incidents do not occur:

It is such a common thing in Springfield that I’ve witnessed it many times. Derogatory and demeaning language is prevalent. Anyone that is not white, straight, Christian, or that in any way looks different from the stereotypical Springfieldian is a target.

Springfield is one big KKK rally.

The responses to this question echoed responses to the previous two questions and numerous respondents referred to their previous answers in response to this question. As before, many respondents provided one-word or short phrase answers: “Sexism,” “ADA access,” or “Too many to begin.” While most of these acts of discrimination do not necessarily represent unlawful acts, they do demonstrate the indignity and cruelty many in our area experience. Reading about some of the nastiness our fellow citizens experience daily is heartbreaking. Representative examples that do not duplicate previous responses are shared as follows.

Race, ethnicity, or national origin

This, by far, was the category with the most comments. Well over half the comments involved the respondent witnessing discrimination due to race, ethnicity, or national origin. The discrimination ranged from name calling and racial/ethnic slurs to discrimination in seeking or retaining employment to

physically assault and abuse. While some of the comments had been shared in response to previous questions, many new ones were mentioned. Representative new comments include the following:

Hostility comes in side comments, looks, suggestions, and other big and small gestures that are baked into an overall undercurrent of the community. I've witnessed this based on race, color, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

There is a bank in town who sponsored a 5K called Run from the Police. When I complained, they could not understand how this was offensive. When black men are shot with alarming regularity by police, sometimes while running away, why would any think this is OK?

I have seen black people called nigger. For example, a female Sonic employee was working in the parking lot when a car drove by and a passenger yelled, "Yeah, take out the trash, nigger!" I have three children in SPS. They tell me terrible stories of racism, starting in elementary. One day during summer school, my daughter witnessed three white boys link arms in the hallway and block a black or brown boy from passing, all while chanting, "Build the wall!" It's incredibly depressing.

A landlord told a couple his property was already rented, when in fact it was not. I was present and questioned him about it after. He told me that he had the right to rent to who he wanted and he didn't want to rent to black people.

A former landlord admitted to "raising" rents to discourage "blacks and other undesirables" from renting his properties.

Social situation where I included an African American friend. The usual white friends just didn't come around.

An older gentleman at a grocery store yelled at a black man who was with his son because he felt the man and his family should not live in his part of town.

I witnessed a young, black man, with no criminal history, be sentenced to prison, by a now retired judge. The charge was for selling a small amount of marijuana to another college student. The young man was married, worked full time, and was going to college full time. The other people in the courtroom were openly shocked, including the young man's attorney. On the same day, the same retired judge gave probation to a young white male, who had pled guilty to a very serious assault.

I was sitting in traffic and noticed a person in a car next to me wave at a white person who crossed in front of their car. Then a black person walked in front of their car and they mimicked shooting the person. They then revved the engine and pulled forward toward the black person.

The only people I have ever witnessed being pulled aside, to have their receipts checked, as they leave Walmart at Glenstone and Kearney, are people of color. Happens every time I visit. My white self has never been asked to show my receipt.

I have seen people at the Price Cutter down the street be stopped, ask to have their bag searched because they are people of color. One time someone literally yelled "filthy n*****s" at a family of black people there.

One of my [fellow employees] was talking about a class he participated in. He said there were a group of Pakistanis in the class and they were standing around taking pictures of the Manufacturing Facility where the class was being held. Another employee said, "You know what they were doing don't you? They were mapping out a plan to bomb the place." I found this

offensive because I know a family from Pakistan and they are very friendly and a loving family. That comment to me was a stupid thing to say.

A few respondents perceived hostility and discrimination to be directed toward white people:

I've actually seen some people of color assume offense where none was intended. We all need to take a step back and forget the labels.

Saw a fight at Trops once, an African American girl kept calling a white girl a "white bitch" and went at her with a bat.

A white male walked out of a Kum N Go and was greeted by a large African American man who punched him so hard that I could hear his body hit the ground from inside my car. The victim was just trying to leave the store.

My friend painted his face black for Halloween and boy howdy he got in a lot of trouble for that one – How else could I describe other than discrimination based on color?

Disability

In previous comments, many respondents noted the difficulty people with mobility disabilities have in navigating the streets and stores of Springfield. Similar examples were shared here, as well as others that highlight the cruelty directed to those with special needs, mental or cognitive disabilities:

And the day I was in school with the assignment to be in a wheelchair all day I experienced how people with disabilities are discriminated against every day in consideration of building and city planning, not being provided the same opportunities for mobility as everyone else.

I have witnessed landlords on more than one occasion discriminate against clients for their disability by refusing them apartments or accommodations based on their disabilities, even after both myself and client showed them the law and that they could not do that.

I have picked up two disabled people who did not have sidewalks to their houses. One was in an electronic wheel chair who had come to the end of the sidewalk on Lone Pine, 2 miles from home. The other was walking home from getting necessary prescriptions at Price Cutter on Division (since closed) and their house was southeast of Cherry street. It was dark and there is no sidewalk south of Cherry on East Gat for quite a ways. These were very difficult situations for these men.

A lady that I work with is in her 60s, she has hearing issues. The millennials in my department talk horribly about her, make rude comments, make fun of her and are downright cruel. When I have said something and stood up for her, then I begin to be treated the same way. This is the behavior of straight, white women who are from this area, the Ozarks. Shameful.

Patients with chronic pain and/or psychiatric type medical problems are not uncommonly treated badly by local medical personnel. They are frequently treated with a demeaning and hostile attitude. It is common that medical symptoms are ignored because "it must be all in their heads" while undiagnosed and untreated medical problems pile up as a result. No wonder they're in pain.

A disabled individual using food stamps was shamed by a customer and cashier at a grocery store. The cashier wasn't trained in how to ring up an EVT purchase and made a big deal of the line being held up. The customer next inline jumped on the bandwagon. Telling her [the disabled woman] she needed to get her fat ass off the electric cart and lose some weight, get a job, and quit taking everyone else's hard earned money.

Religious discrimination

While this was not the largest category, it was well represented. Several comments referenced the harangue by the street preachers in downtown Springfield, while others believe that hatred and division is being sown by ministers from the pulpit:

There are houses of “worship” where hate, bigotry and homophobia are actively “preached” from the pulpit. I feel this is one of the leading causes of discrimination in our community.

Asked if we were Christians; said no and was told “have fun in hell.”

Cannot believe the incidence of Jewish hostility. Still hear insults at public gatherings of public officials.

Public schools scheduling major events on Jewish holidays and coaches leading prayers.

There are public school teachers, and other professionals, in the area who are being encouraged by their churches, Christian leaders and peers to push an unlawful religious agenda upon children in public schools. Some of these teachers willingly participate, while others resist the pressure.

Witnessed anti-Semitic comments from a tech at Mercy hospital.

And there were a few examples of discrimination against Christians:

I saw someone spit on those Christian folks who do their megaphone thing on the square downtown.

People of conservative views being verbally assaulted for sharing their opinions.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

There were many comments to the effect that “The gays don’t get treated well” and “Street preachers, catcalling of LGBT person.” Many comments stated that “I have witnessed people of the LGBTQ+ community be verbally and even physically assaulted.” The repeal of the SOGI ordinance was again mentioned often. While most of the responses had been given in earlier questions, some additional examples that contained more detail or context were shared:

I have seen members of the LGBT community being discriminated against in the workplace, being fired for things that straight people had done and not been fired for and being coached more often.

I bring trans-gendered individuals into my class for my students—who are future educators—to see and listen to. I will have some who refuse to even come to that class day out of feeling “offended” at having a trans individual in the classroom.

Had co-workers who played “guess what gender” people were if it wasn’t obvious. It would make everyone uncomfortable and sometimes may have been loud enough for the other person to hear. It was fun for them but cruel for everyone else.

Customers leaving “gays go to hell” comics instead of monetary tips for openly gay waiters.

Workplaces calling trans people “it,” . . .

A very lovely young man was minding his own business when a group of “friends” gathered around him and told him that he was going to hell because he was gay. These “friends” were told to do such things by their pastor. Absolutely heartbreaking.

Sexism

While this was not the largest category, several comments showed the gender bias many women experience in Springfield:

While on the Greene County Sheriff's ride, I had a man try to run me off the road because he wanted to see if I could keep my bike upright. HE told me before we started that women should be on the back of a bike, not riding her own.

A local trainer didn't "like" any of the new members as they were all young and/or female and/or a minority race. They [the trainer] actually resigned from the organization and refused to schedule orientation sessions with these new members.

Miscellaneous

This category included comments related to ageism and treatment of the homeless population. There were not many examples in either category—ageism, in particular, had been described in response to previous questions—but several examples of mistreatment of the homeless and indigent were particularly distressing. Examples in both categories are included here:

My mother also was searching for employment several years back and was flat told she was too old to be hired.

My husband, a 50-year-old white man, was let go from his position at a Springfield Co. and replaced by a younger Romanian man. So I saw that as age discrimination.

I've seen people yell slurs from their care windows at the homeless . . . I've seen a few police officers (not many, but a few) who are quite disrespectful and tend to bait people. In one circumstance an officer called a homeless individual "one tooth" as in "Shut up, One Tooth."

Homeless person was ignored based on his homelessness by the Springfield police. They thought he was drunk (he was not . . . was suffering a stroke). The police left him with me to deal with it. I was walking my dogs at the time so I called 911. The ambulance came and assessed the situation and dealt with a very sick man.

And this example of hostility by an indigent person against someone else:

A nice old lady had fallen on the sidewalk. I went to help her but she was too frail to get up and too frail for me to assist with getting up. A bum came and asked her for money while she was lying helpless on the ground.

Concerns about raising the issue of inclusion

There were several comments, with examples represented below, of individuals who are concerned about the community focusing so much on inclusion. Some individuals perceive this focus as contributing to the "Balkanization" of America; they would prefer for everyone to consider themselves Americans, without hyphens. Some see the inclusion focus as causing more harm than good:

This "inclusion" focus just highlights race and causes more separation.

The point is, there are, there has been, and there will always be situations where some group thinks they are morally superior or physically or mentally superior to someone else. It is human nature. Constantly trying to change this just makes it worse. It allows people to identify with one group vs. everyone just being an American without a hyphen in front. Stop Balkanizing this country.

Question 6: Please use the following space for anything else you'd like to share about your experiences.

Respondents were invited to share anything else they wanted to add about their experiences. Many repeated comments and stories they had shared in response to previous questions or added additional examples of perceived hostility and discrimination. In addition, many shared opinions about Springfield in general, Springfield's progress (or lack of it) toward inclusiveness, the survey itself and about inclusiveness in general. It was clear that some of those individuals who had not experienced or witnessed hostility or discrimination chose to share their perceptions here. Several individuals thanked the Human Rights Commission and the City for distributing the survey and trying to make the community more inclusive; some thought actions taken to make the community more inclusive will be futile, while others thought that there had been enough talk and it was more than past time for action. A number of respondents thought that surveys like this create more problems than they solved.

Because many examples of lack of inclusion, hostility and discrimination have been provided in detail earlier in this report, the comments shared here contain mostly general impressions of Springfield and opinions about what is needed. Representative opinions are shared here. In general, individuals agreed with the following respondents said:

Inclusivity needs to be on both sides of ideas and decisions. One party, race, age, religion, income status, home location or employment type, supporter, or protester group cannot be allowed to bully and persecute another, and it should not be allowed in this city or anywhere else.

I think it's hard to quantify what it feels like to be other. It's hard to explain what it feels like when the assumed norm is not you.

A challenge – how do you change hearts?

Springfield in general: perceptions of the city

Many respondents shared their general impressions of the city in response to this question. Most perceive Springfield to be a friendly city, but with qualifications: friendly to those who are white, native-born, cisgender, and Christian. Examples:

One-on-one I think our area is very polite. However, on the whole there is a feeling that anybody who doesn't look white, American, and Christian is not welcome here.

When I first came to work in Springfield, I was putting together a pie chart that broke down the population by race for the diversity officer at the public entity I worked for. . . . I said, "Give me a second to check the colors again" . . . to be sure I hadn't accidentally used any colors that might be offensive – e.g., red for Native American, yellow for Asian, etc. She came back with an answer I have always thought represents Springfield as well as cashew chicken, "Oh, I would never have thought of that."

There are many in this city who work for diversity in education, the arts, population – but they are outnumbered by the voices who are threatened by, or who have personal/religious bias against many forms of diversity. . . .

Springfield has become one of the places where outward expressions of hate and racism are becoming normalized, to the extent that marginalized people feel afraid.

There are people that work for the City Administration that have prejudiced/racist views of people of color. For instance, I have personally heard the grants administrator refer to minorities as “coloreds” and homeless people as “street people.” Also, he does not feel the Violence Against Women Act is something that the City needs to take seriously.

The incidents at Kickapoo HS last school year should radiate loudly in this community’s ear. SPS tried to respond—poorly and far too late—but that’s a cancer on the community, not just the school system. Call out racism when it’s projected, when it’s shared on social media, and when it’s honored by the president. If SPFG city leaders don’t feel comfortable doing that loudly, boldly and abundantly clearly, then they shouldn’t be city leaders.

A number of respondents spoke again about the perceived north-south divide in Springfield and expressed the believe that economic inequality and treatment of poorer or indigent citizens is a major problem in the city. Several believed that Springfield has bigger problems than inclusiveness, including homelessness, drugs and crime:

I think that there is a divide between the north and South side (I’ve resided in both). I feel that the South side in general feel superior to the north side.

. . . I worked for a non-profit and many of our clients lived on the Northside of Springfield. Through this, I became acutely aware of the way people on the Northside were viewed by those on the Southside. It is like two different cities. In my experience much of this discrimination focused on those in poverty and the perception that nothing good happened on the Northside of Springfield, everyone was involved in crime.

As an older Caucasian person, the most bias I have witnessed or experienced in Springfield is based on perceived economic status. . . . The attitude that if you want a better quality of life in Springfield, you should move as far south as you are able is only helping to perpetuate the attitude and bias of the North Side. It is harder to live in Zone 1 and care about a city that doesn’t seem to care about me and my neighbors’ quality of life.

I think this community needs to put a greater focus on fighting the underlying causes of problems like crime and work on truly creating economic development and opportunities that will help our huge population of impoverished citizens improve their situations. There is far too great of a focus on the south side and developing new strip malls when the people who really need help and attention and opportunities are suffering.

I notice that there is a high rate of homelessness and drug use in Springfield. My question for Springfield is how can we make this a city that is more inclusive for those individuals who go overlooked every single day in the heat, the cold—many of them may not have been called by their first name in a long time.

Consistent with responses to earlier questions, many respondents believed Springfield is more highly influenced by a conservative Christian perspective, and they see this influence as detrimental to supporting increased diversity and inclusion in Springfield, particularly for non-Christians and the

LGBTQ+ community. Examples:

I love Springfield and have lived here all my life. I do feel that the conservative and religious nature of the population creates cultural barriers for progressive ideas. We need leaders, especially faith leaders, who help educate the population and provide better guidance towards progressive ideas.

Having lived here 40 years I can tell you that Springfield used to be a more inclusive place, but the growing influence of the radical religious right has dramatically changed the culture of our community to be much more homogeneous, and much less accepting of anything outside the narrow norms of the religious Right.

I find the most judgmental, small minded people are those church service weekly attendees who call themselves Christian but act as though they are above most others. Perfect example is the churches like James River Assembly who want to keep themselves secluded and isolated from the lesser people by building their own communities within themselves.

One time my daughter was asked to sit in separate areas in the church because of being LGBT.

I have attended local Catholic churches where you hold hands during prayer and have had people refuse to hold mine. [Asian female, 40-59]

I was a member at Crossway Baptist church for 10 years. Active member. I was told if I openly came out as Trans I would be dropped as a member, I quit going. Now I attend Brentwood Christian church.

Consistent with responses to previous questions, the problems of racism, sexism, ageism, disability and homophobia were again raised in response to this question. Because most of these had been shared earlier, the examples provided here are new ones or are ones that speak about Springfield in general.

I made a job offer once to a woman of color from St Louis. She excitedly accepted . . . The next week, she called me in absolute tears asking me if she could still take the job but work remote. She had googled Springfield . . . , found some very unfortunate history and some other studies retarding perceived/real discrimination against people of color . . . That incident I experienced as a young professional in the area opened my eyes tremendously as to how we're perceived, how we behave, and the lack of self-awareness for so many.

I was completely embarrassed to say I was from Springfield. . . . an older gentleman and a [black] woman [who didn't know each other] were talking. . . The woman said she was from Chicago and was so excited to move back. . . The gentleman asked why she would want to go back to Chicago. She said, Look at me. No one else here looks like me . . . She went on to tell stories of people in Target touching her hair without asking because they had never seen anything like it. . .

Dear White People, Diversity is more than a skin tone. Build your committees with representation from abledness, socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures, and race.

We are doing better at recognizing /acknowledging the city's troubled history of racism . . . I would only suggest that community leaders take every pertinent opportunity to affirm their/our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. We can't say it often enough, and those goals

are never achieved without action and intentionality.

I don't feel that it is safe to call the police in the case of harassment toward minorities like POC and LGBT people. My experiences with the police show that they will do nothing to help and may ask to not be called on again OR they will escalate the situation with the victim.

In addition, some respondents felt discriminated against because they hold traditional values, and they see those values being eroded:

I feel as the values I have are not respected. Me being a white heterosexual Christian, I get ostracized, called out for not being tolerant, or I am a bigot, just because I do not share someone's views about letting a man who identifies as a woman go into the same restroom as my wife and child, for example.

I resent being called xenophobic if my opinion is different than someone else's opinion. . . Every person deserves to be valued. . . However, if I want our immigration laws enforced, that does not make me xenophobic. Having our tax dollars pay to educate persons not here legally puts a huge strain on our educational system.

Support for inclusiveness and initiatives to support it

A number of respondents support the Mayor's Commission's efforts to understand the issue of inclusiveness, and the Commission's and City's initiatives to increase inclusiveness. Many respondents noted that Springfield has made progress in this regard, although it has a way to go. Several supported the idea that Springfieldians talk about difficult issues and have public conversations about them, and some questioned whether any tangible outcome would come from this survey.

Support for the fact that the Mayor's Commission and the city conducted the survey was expressed by many respondents. This contrasts with the responses of some people, later in this section, who questioned the need for the survey and the expense in conducting it. Comments:

I appreciate the fact that you are seeking out this information. I do hope that it leads to a more inclusive Springfield.

The city pays a steep price due to its cultural homogeneous and xenophobic image. I am encouraged that a survey like this will help shape public policy and make Springfield more vibrant.

I think it is great that the conversation on inclusion and equality has gotten to the point where the City has generated this survey. However, I do not think that having a list of personal experiences is a path to a solution. Being able to quantify how many survey takers think we have a problem is a pretty good thing to know.

There were many expressions of support for increasing inclusiveness, with some respondents noting that Springfield's inclusiveness has increased in the past few decades. A number of people said they would do what they could to help, and several noted that the time for action was long past:

I would like to see Springfield actually take action on diversity inclusion. Stop just talking about it and start doing something about it.

Springfield has come a long way and has a way to go. I believe the City is generally leading in the right direction with programs like Forward SGF.

I think the City leadership taking a bold stance on acceptance . . . is the first step to showing what we are about! It will most definitely rub some people the wrong way, but that is an important first step to being a truly inclusive community. Thank you so much for asking about this and I really hope Springfield chooses to take some action.

I love Springfield. I have lived here for 19 years. There are a handful of people trying to make things better, but it is not enough, not widespread enough, and not happening fast enough. More time, effort and funding need to be put toward diversity and inclusion initiatives.

The more we encourage cultural and ethnic diversity and take to heart the experiences and knowledge of others from other places, the more we can grow as a community. It does seem to be increasing noticeably in these recent few years and while it can't be expected to change everything overnight, we can do far more to support this kind of progress.

Despite my experiences, I'm hopeful. I view our current state as an opportunity for internal as well as external change. . . . I see Springfield talking openly about and taking active steps to break down all structures that promote systemic racism making it increasingly difficult for minorities to feel included and valued.

I've witnessed a lot of leaders in our business community really pushing the issue of inclusion the last couple of years. That needs to transcend throughout the community in civic leadership, nonprofit roles, educational institutions, and other prominent places that the general public forms their perceptions of Springfield. . . .

While some respondents (described later) thought that bringing up issues of inclusiveness created divisions and problems, others thought it necessary that such issues be raised and discussed openly:

I feel inclusion needs to be part of the public school program beginning in kindergarten, most children hold their ideals based on what they see and hear at home. They never have the opportunity to visit with, play with, or interact with individuals different from themselves . . .

Having had to work through my own prejudices and having faced prejudice myself, I have come to realize that I am in no place to judge or condemn. Springfield has a long way to go and we will get there by loving each other, being patient with one another, forgiving one another, and engaging each other in open and honest conversation about these things.

. . . but probably a bigger problem faced in communities like SPFD is a refusal among whites to talk about race. White people are scared to use the word, "race." . . . Any community that can't talk about race can't even begin the path toward becoming inclusive, let alone finish that task.

A number of respondents, while supportive of the survey and initiatives to increase inclusiveness, believed that this effort, like others before, would come to nothing:

Springfield, in my experience, would rather brush aside, sweep under and/or just drag it out until you stop, than to deal with the issues.

The Human Rights Commission of Springfield really has no "teeth" to be able to either evaluate

discrimination of the LGBTQ community or to enforce anti-discrimination. They can't even gather evidence or stories from this community. I do not understand why the HRC cannot even document discrimination of this community.

We have taken these surveys before. We have talked to council members, served on committees, written letters, gone to council meetings and more. It is time for the council to take action. Development more committees is not taking action. Creating, supporting and putting real strength behind ordinances is taking action at the community level.

I appreciate that our Mayor has a Commission on Human Rights. However, my expectations from the Commission are low. Not because they don't try. But because the cards are stacked against them. But thank you for asking. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to provide honest input.

I always hold ferociously to a hope that things will get better. Case in point, a survey like this that highlights the real need for inclusion in our city. At the same time, I am tempted to give in to cynicism because part of me doesn't believe that anything meaningful will come of this.

Other perspectives regarding inclusiveness

Judging from the tenor of the remarks to this question, it is likely that many of the respondents were individuals who had not experienced or witnessed incidents of hostility or discrimination. Some believe that Springfield is already inclusive and welcoming; others think that if people perceive discrimination it is somehow their fault: "Get over yourselves." Several think raising the issues, via the survey or in general, creates more problems than it solves; several simply expressed hostility to the idea of inclusion. These perspectives are shared below.

Quite a few individuals find Springfield already to be welcoming and inclusive. These included some families of color. Several believe nothing needs to be done to make the community more inclusive, and that the issue of inclusiveness is a manufactured one:

Springfield is the most friendly and accepting place I have ever seen.

People in Springfield are nice. Meth is our problem, not a lack of inclusivity.

People are already friendly in Springfield. Don't try to change it by forcing artificial inclusion down people's throats. . . . If they don't like one place they could move.

I feel Springfield is a very welcoming and inclusive community. I also feel that claims of discrimination and "hostility" are overblown and hyped up.

This isn't an issue. It's a manufactured crisis you're being guilted into asking about as to appear "woke." It's a waste of time.

I have an ethnically and politically diverse family and NO ONE has ever been treated unfairly or rudely. I have friends and family of other races come visit and they feel welcome in our community.

Several individuals objected either to the survey itself or to raising issues of discrimination and inclusiveness; they suggest that things will take care of themselves and talking about them or asking

people to think about them makes things worse:

I am a person of “color” as YOU would say, but I don’t want to be classified like this and the more you do and make this a big deal, the more you divide.

These types of surveys are just race baiting to try to lame race and inclusion for the lack of leadership this city has shown!

Keep asking these kinds of questions and you open all kinds of possibilities for people to start thinking about every situation they’ve ever had to get their feelings all torn up. . . Government and the media are creating problems that didn’t exist until you created them. Just Stop.

I am 45 years old and never met a true racist. The fact that this survey is being done shows that our city leaders are trying to join the liberals in starting a race war.

People need to stop talking about things like “racism.: It only stirs up the pot. I have lived here since 1994 mostly in Springfield and have NEVER seen racism. But the liberals sure like to talk about it. Springfield needs to do better!

Springfield and the surrounding area is fine regarding so called diversity and inclusion. I supposed this tax payer funded commission/committee will not be content until this area is like Kansas City and St. Louis. What is your purpose and who said you are needed?

Some respondents suggest that issues of perceived discrimination are overblown by those who perceive themselves to be victims—that the situation isn’t as bad as media and others would lead us to believe:

I am not denying the existence of racism or bias, I am denying that these exist at a systematic level. I have personally never experienced these, but if anyone ever has, it can likely be traced to the God given free will of an individual . . . Imposing any kind of mandate for inclusion tuns the risk of infringing on personal liberties

If you obey the law you won’t have any problems. If you do break the law and you do what the cop says and follow directions you will be fine.

Incidents increase when people are bombarded with kooky ideas that are contrary to the norm. They begin to believe that they are different and then perception is altered. People need to be themselves, respect others and treat others with the example provide by Christ.

All groups have good and bad, no matter what, we need to stop being so offended by everything and take care of the problems within those groups.

Finally, there were a few expressions of outright hostility, toward those of other groups and toward the idea of inclusiveness as a positive value:

Springfield is first and foremost for Christians, and others will be marginalized if they deviate from Christian dogma in any way. The 25% of the population that lives in poverty is an abomination to the preaching of Jesus, but is allowed to continue unabated.

Springfield seems to cater to fad groups and leaves out the heterosexual community. I can’t recall an event put on to parade heterosexuals through town.

Many immigrants, refugees, and others who take refuge here are taken care of better than those who were born and raised here. Tax free jobs, free or reduced education, free health care, etc. It does not make sense. That causes a divide and hostility that isn't necessary.

Typically, when the word "inclusive" is used it is to promote the LGBTQ crowd. No thanks.

. . . I am Caucasian. I resent being told or witnessing others being told that it's "White Privilege" that has gotten me or them where we are today. I feel that this is a false narrative that all white people have it better than those of other skin tones. . .

Miscellaneous comments about what Springfield should do

The following comments also fit within the categories described earlier but contain suggestions of what the respondent would like to see happen in Springfield, with the suggestions underlined:

. . . complete revamp of public transportation. It's totally stupid to have to take 2 or 3 busses to get to one location, and better transportation hours so people can actually get to work, day or night, without a two or three hour wait. Totally ridiculous.

The best way we can be more inclusive is to create more opportunities of experiences for everyone and no one in particular. When we specify for certain demographics it alienates someone else. . . Try to implement things that have substantial benefits rather than something that is used for photo and media purposes but no lasting results for those receiving services. . .

. . . MSU is really good [about setting up accommodations] . . . but in school or workplaces we don't have 6 weeks to wait for materials or resources we need. We need it [accommodations] available at the same time as our peers . . . [but we are] an afterthought . . .

I think it would be great to get some playground equipment for disabled children put into the parks.

I would like to see more Springfield businesses being open to hire individuals with barriers to employment.

I wish there was an accessibility challenge that stores could enter. Something that they could earn an accessibility friendly medallion window cling or other recognition . . .

For people who are minorities to feel welcomed and included, they need to see themselves. We need to do a better job of putting their faces on billboards, on business signs, in stores and on products. For instance, go to Cox South on the second floor, mom and baby unit. There are beautiful pictures of babies lining the halls, all of them white.

I really think the fact that sexual orientation isn't protected by the city of Springfield shows that there is a long journey ahead to get anywhere close [to inclusive]. [i.e., pass SOGI]

Wide media coverage to highlight different cultures would make inclusion normal and appeal to the psychological bias of humans.

Question 7: What activities could the Springfield community offer to encourage a more welcoming environment for all cultures?

There were more than 2000 suggestions and other responses given to this question; the sheer number of responses made this a difficult question to assess, in part because suggestions often touched on more than one area. Many of the responses repeated those made to earlier questions. The most often-mentioned categories were community events and festivals and educational activities, particularly those that connect individuals of different cultures and promote honest discussion. Also suggested were faith-based activities and initiatives; legal initiatives, particularly reinstating the SOGI ordinance; media initiatives; integration activities that welcome newcomers and work intentionally to integrate them into the community; addressing poverty, fixing run-down areas of the city, and combatting crime and drugs; and ensuring that the leadership of Springfield include members of minority and marginalized groups.

Festivals, celebrations, public events

The largest category, by far, was this category, which encompassed approximately 25% of the suggestions. Many people suggested “multicultural celebrations” as a good idea to encourage appreciation for various cultures. Several mentioned, also, the cost, timing, and promotion of such events—they preferred free events that exclude no one due to income, weekend events that include most workers, events for children, and more widespread promotion of such events. Food was mentioned often! Some called for more downtown events while others suggested spreading events around the city. A few representative comments are enough to provide a sense of the scope of this category:

Have an inclusion day that would allow Springfieldians to co-mingle with each other, taste different foods from different cultures, drinks goods, etc.

Activities that are welcoming to everyone with broad appeal that are in areas that are more diverse. Example: community activities at Silver Springs Park, Nichols Park, Doling Park, etc. such as community concert, art shows, or cultural events that engage all segments of our community population.

Cultural appreciation weeks. Focus on one culture at a time and tell what restaurants to check out to try their food, stores to shop at, music to listen to, etc.

Think about how to incorporate different cultures in events that aren’t designated as “multicultural.” For example, Route 66 Festival, Ozark Empire Fair, Goldwing Wing Ding, Bass Pro fitness festival.

Ethnic Food Cook-off (similar to Sertoma Chili Cook-off but for local ethnic restaurants).

Springfield offers a number of cultural festivals. Perhaps these need to be more widely promoted so people know about them.

Multicultural film festivals. Many large cities have African American films, indigenous films, etc. showcased.

Art exhibits from diverse cultures that include all age groups.

There were several alternative comments expressed from those who don't particularly believe more festivals, etc., will improve inclusiveness:

Activities???? You need to clean up the town 1st before anything welcoming in the environment can happen!!

I honestly think it isn't about activities, it's about having diverse leadership on boards, and not just as tokens, but as respected equals.

Not sure that additional activities are needed. Just need to focus on making current activities more accessible, especially to those with physical disabilities.

Missouri is not for all cultures. Have them move to California. Stop having events.

Education and training, conversation, creating opportunities for connection

Another highly represented category was that of education; respondents called for more education at all levels about diversity and the importance of diversity, but particularly focusing on the public schools. Education around diversity and inclusion should also include the business, government, civic leadership and faith communities. Respondents called for facilitated community conversations about diversity and for creating opportunities for people to get to know one another as individuals. Representative comments:

Starting with education and creating a training community-based program that goes into schools and trains teachers on how to build community in the classroom and provides guidance on how to educate students on inclusion. This will help with students' exposure and provide confidence within teachers on how to facilitate these conversations.

. . . Education in school would probably be a good place to start, with children who haven't learned prejudice yet.

Build a buddy program in the elementary schools of Springfield that would pair up a Southeast school with a Northwest school, for example, where the kids could each have a buddy at the other school. Have activities that would encourage the children to learn about each other, their likes, dislikes, favorite subjects in school, less favorite subjects. . . Host eh buddies, perhaps monthly, alternating which school hosts.

On teaching children about different cultures within their community, either invite a member of that culture, or at least have the teacher consult with a member, to explain who their traditions are practiced here in Springfield & what challenges they deal with & how they modify what they traditionally do to be compatible with living in Springfield.

Cultural competence and diversity training were mentioned frequently, for all levels of the community:

Better diversity teaching in our schools and public offices.

Cultural competence training for those who work in government, public sector as well [as] those who work in positions that area customer facing.

More police training for de-escalation and diversity.

All city employees, Peace Officers, and Springfield Public school employees be required to attend a daylong implicit bias workshop.

Business requires cultural competency training and community connects/conversations with minority populations and input about their business from these connections.

. . .Train Realtors to understand how important diversity and inclusion are to every single one of us.

Better training for medical staff.

Facilitated conversations and dialogues, where people could get to know one another, were suggested:

This isn't fixed by events that are attended by those who already "get it." This is fixed by a systemic decision to bring it into the light, focus on it, and amplify it.

Facilitated conversations about different cultures and lifestyles.

We need venues where we can come together and get to know one another. . . I have known several individuals who were adamantly anti-LGBT who actually changed their minds when they got to know and like someone on a personal level who was gay, for instance.

Community listening sessions across town where people from diverse backgrounds have an opportunity to discuss community issues in a small but safe group.

Consciously arrange opportunities for people with different beliefs, race, sexual orientation, abilities, and cultures to come together and have a planned activity. Start with just sharing a common experience—painting, making a ceramic piece, playing bingo, it doesn't matter. The idea is just to start with exposure and just being together sharing an activity.

Programs at Drury, OTC and MSU and Evangel where people can get together and have open discussion with people from other cultures. Wes Pratt and Lyle Foster are great at opening up discussions and bringing ordinary people together to learn from each other.

And there were a few alternative perspectives that did not support diversity initiatives:

Diversity is not a strength. If it was . . . it would have shown somewhere by now. All I see is stabbing, drug wars, rape and gang violence from diversity. I moved here to get away from it.

We don't have to be a welcoming community for all cultures.

Faith-based activities and initiatives

Quite a few respondents noted that the churches have potential to bring the community together, although many perceived that the more conservative Christian denominations were creating divisions. Many respondents called for support for the separation of church and state, including not using churches as polling places. Representative comments about interfaith discussions and events:

Host inter-faith conversations with local leaders of different religions.

Encourage multi-denominational events. Maybe Christians won't have to fear or hate people who worship differently, if they can see that other religions are populated with decent people.

The airport. When one flies in during December, have a Christmas tree. Have a menorah. Have an educational display on Kwanza.

City leaders taking part in celebrations of faith from other cultures. i.e., the Mayor or Council members/City leaders attending a service at the Springfield Islamic Center. As a heavy Christian area, it would be great to show that other religions are valuable.

Host an inter-faith panel or coalition that that can find ways for diverse religions to interact or help serve a community need.

There were many suggestions regarding the separation of church and state, and the concern many people have about the power of some Christian churches to set the political and social agenda:

Separation of church and state is extremely important. Every few years there seems to be a new nonsense proposal to include religious symbols or “laws” in government spaces. . . .They [churches] should be taxed. . . There should be zero entanglement between religious organizations and local government.

Make all efforts to separate church and state—no sweetheart real estate deals for churches, no tax exemption for politically active churches, raise expectation of churches to open their doors (remove regulations that keep churches from feeding and housing), no voting in churches!!!. . .

Get rid of “In God We Trust” and prayer from city buildings.

Quit allowing the Evangelical church community to heavy-hand what goes on in this area.

. . . banning churches that are polling places from playing religious music tin their parking lots during elections would be fantastic.

A few alternative perspectives:

Put God back where he belongs. Christians are a target and discriminated [against] all the time and no one cares.

More of God in school and less of government intrusion including forced affirmative action and faux multicultural promotion.

Legal actions

One legal action was mentioned over and over, and that was for Springfield again to pass the SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity protection) ordinance, which was approved by City Council in 2014 and repealed in a narrow vote, 51% to 49%, in 2015. Most respondents who mentioned this simply asked for the ordinance to be reinstated. Sample comments:

Pass SOGI ordinance.

City leadership should show support for anti-discrimination bill.

Laws that protect the rights of citizens if folks aren’t inclined to honor the Constitution . Housing and employment protections specifically.

Must first protect people before developing activities to bring people together who are not

protected, at risk, etc.

And alternative perspectives:

Stop promoting deviant lifestyles.

Less government intrusion in the form of ordinances in our daily lives.

The media and increasing visibility of minority communities

Increasing the visibility of minority communities and increasing public awareness of such communities, via the media and other methods, were mentioned frequently. Making minority group members a visible and essential part of our community is important, and the media can help in this regard. The media also can be used to promote the value of diversity and diversity initiatives. Respondents recognized the important role media play in our perceptions as well as how important it is for all of us to see minority group members throughout our community. Comments:

Many thanks to the City and County leaders for announcing Springfield will be a refugee-friendly community! Make that a front-page issue, have it as a banner on all media, promote that mission, make it a part of "who we are."

Media is one of the most powerful tools we have in our society. Release short stories, articles on life in the day of a person of color, different ethnic backgrounds. A person with a disability, a transgender youth, a gay/binary person. . . When they see how . . . they are made to feel less than, I believe they will have more empathy.

Challenge negative stereotypes with positive stories that show the humanity of the person in varied avenues.

A campaign aimed at businesses to promote inclusion:

(<https://www.facebook.com/HuntingtonOpenToAll/>) [a campaign to promote inclusiveness in Huntington, WV]

More articles in local media about the Jewish community, and various Christian communities often overlooked (example: Orthodox Christians, Seventh Day Adventists, etc.)

Perhaps some advertising on local media for inclusion and anti-bullying campaigns.

Create a website and ad campaign that consistently uses positive messaging to develop an inclusive narrative for the city which informs and drives practice.

On Facebook, do a series like "People of New York" where you interview someone and talk a little bit about their life, their country of origin, their religion and give them a place to introduce themselves. This would involve even the "majority" too and not just a spotlight on foreign cultures, so it's a get to know your neighborhood type post.

Alternative perceptions:

Stop forcing "diversity" in advertisements. If you have someone from a diverse background, great. If not, don't force it. It's obvious when it's fake.

Recruiting, welcoming, supporting, encouraging and promoting members of minority communities

There were many suggestions regarding the recruitment and support of minority group members to become involved in all aspects of city life. Some respondents noted that just simply making an open call for minority group members to apply for leadership positions and become members of boards, and so forth, will not work; people, especially those new to our community, need to be invited personally. It is important to note that “minority group members” does not refer only to racial/ethnic minorities or immigrants, but includes members of the LGBTQ+ community, the disabled, the poor, and women in some instances.

Comments regarding recruiting and inviting minority group members:

Encourage more people from diverse backgrounds to become involved in city government – boards, elected officials, paid positions within the city. Make it clear Springfield isn’t an “old-boys club” anymore, that people of all genders and ethnicities have a say in our future.

We have to be more proactive and intentional with our efforts to include people in underrepresented groups. We can’t just be welcoming when people come through the door, we actually need to invite them to participate. Proactive vs. reactive.

ASK and INVITE active participation and don’t give up if it doesn’t happen overnight. Trust is going to take a long time to grow.

Create opportunities for minorities, women, and younger generations that put them in the public eye.

Involving minority community members in existing activities with broad popular appeal & making some room to incorporate aspects of their culture so that it is presented as just another aspect of Springfield, not a separate entity.

Support is needed to ensure that minority group members can become fully integrated into city life:

Create a welcoming committee that is a first point of contact for individuals moving into the community, to connect them to local resources and help them find their place. Form specific welcoming committees in each district, provide some basics that should be included in a welcome packet.

An event geared toward people who are new to the area to let them know what is available in Springfield and ways to meet people. This can be especially beneficial for people who do not have children, since that is a way that new people to town meet and connect with others.

Grants to pay for language learning classes/free or subsidized language learning courses for citizens who work in a social or government services or who otherwise have direct contact with the public to help the subset of the public who do not speak /English well.

Increase the number of free or low cost ESL classes.

Better funded library and library spaces to host events. I often see new immigrants and international students use the library as a place for language learning resources and to acclimate to the community.

More involvement and inclusion among community families where we are trying to raise our kids. We want to assimilate and be considered locals and feel like we belong here.

Programs to help develop leadership would help ensure full participation of minority group members:

Politics in the Park: A series of fun, free events throughout the year, focused on helping *everyone* become involved in local politics.

Reach out more often to underrepresented groups about opportunities they may not be aware of. Or explain to them how to get in touch with these opportunities.

I want to see leadership programs that teach minorities how to be active leaders in their communities at no cost.

Encourage everyone, but especially organizations that represent minority cultures, to offer training and education on how to become engaged in the community. From the smallest nonprofits to areas of government, all of us can benefit from a more diverse perspective.

A pro-bono class of Leadership Springfield SPECIFICALLY for people in poverty and those from under represented populations and sections of town. We only need so many bankers to understand how collaborative we can be and how our city works.

Addressing issues of poverty, economic inequality, resource inequality

Many respondents believed that inclusion would be supported if poverty and income inequality were reduced. A number of respondents mentioned that areas of Springfield—particularly on the north side—look shabby and do not seem to command the resources available to areas on the south side. Many people expressed the idea that one of the best things Springfield could do to increase inclusiveness was to bring better paying jobs, help those less fortunate, particularly the homeless, and address issues of crime and drugs. Representative comments along this vein are noted below:

Areas of Springfield do not present a good “face” and need to be cleaned up:

When we have guests visit SGF, we stay away from the I-44 corridor and navigate them down 65 to the south side, or James River Freeway from the airport. It would take a long lead zoning initiative to address that one, I know, and \$\$\$\$.

We need to improve the overall attractiveness of community to create an environment people can be drawn to,. It seems incredibly simplistic, but curb appeal of a community makes a huge difference in attracting people.

Poorer parts of town are replete with vacant homes, junked out lots, and overflowing dumpsters. Perhaps a vacant building tax to property owners would create a condition where vacant buildings are properly maintained and inhabited or torn down.

Invest equal amounts of money throughout the city. The south portion gets a great deal of attention in comparison to the north west portion. It’s rumored to be race related.

Put in sidewalks on North side instead of South side, as more people on North side have to walk to and from places. The muddy paths look very bad.

Lack of access to jobs that pay a living wage and hiring discrimination keeps many citizens from full civic participation:

Empower and support the Chamber of Commerce to encourage diverse business to come to Springfield (financial, in-kinds, and other support).

Increase affordable housing and bringing employment that pays a living wage. Work to address poverty and the whole community will be elevated.

Find a way to fix the transportation system in Springfield. There are cities much bigger than Springfield that have a functioning transportation system.

An employment initiative for hiring people with disabilities. Our state ranking is dismal, Springfield could help lead the state to better inclusion.

Because they are part of our neighborhood, have acceptable (to them) places for homeless so they don't camp out in yards, etc.

The problems of crime and drugs are more serious than problems of inclusion:

Let's worry about making the town safe again. Get rid of the panhandlers, meth heads, and prostitutes that accost everyone on the Northside of town.

Protect property from the rampant crime in this city, especially in the downtown area around the Veterans Coming Home Center.

Crack down on crime; remove criminals from our neighborhoods – lock 'em up!

Police protection and enforcement.

And, as before, there were a few alternative perspectives:

I've never lived in a town with more opportunities available.

Less immigration of homeless to Springfield.

How about you spend our taxes helping our countrymen that are out on the streets [as] opposed to dumping more cultures on us.

Making the leadership of Springfield more diverse

One of the recurring themes throughout this survey was the idea that Springfield's leadership—at the city, in business, in the nonprofit world, on boards, and so forth is almost uniformly older, white, and male. Many respondents said that one of the best things we could do to promote inclusivity is to ensure that our leadership be, itself, more inclusive and furthermore that our leadership actually support and speak in favor of inclusiveness. Here are representative comments:

. . . I think seeing city leaders and officials addressing inclusivity is a good start. Lead by example, people will follow.

Activities will cure nothing. The leadership needs to take a more active position of inclusion. Take a look at the lack of diversity in leadership in all areas of boards, employers, and city

council.

City leadership on all levels must engage with and participate in various cultural events and observances. If the leadership doesn't represent the City's interest in its cultural diversity, the culture has no reason to feel welcomed.

Proactively infuse inclusion and diversity as core professional competencies. Hire recruitment firms with proven track records of successfully placing professionals of color with diverse management styles.

Don't focus on "ACTIVITIES," focus on populating the work force and hiring into positions of influence and power with persons of color, persons with disabilities, women and those from SGM populations. Also in places like City Council (9 folks,-- 90% white, 80% male), Chamber of Commerce (Board of Directors-Executive Committee is 90% white, Board of Directors is 85% white), SPS (I know there are efforts being done there).

Encouraging greater diversity among executive and leadership – selections for boards and committees, high profile leadership employees. (More than just the token person.)

Miscellaneous suggestions

The following suggestions did not fall neatly into the categories described earlier, but seemed worthy of mention. For example, many comments throughout the survey chastised the police for racial profiling and discriminatory treatment, but some suggested that the police could be used as ambassadors to promote inclusiveness. Here are sample comments regarding the police:

Use the Springfield Police Department as ambassadors. This group is the most publicly visible representation of the city. Involve them in events like Pridefest, Silver Springs, MLK Day, etc.

Foster a good relationship between law enforcement and the community, especially by taking action against cops who are bad actors.

Make police presence back in the neighborhoods patrolling, not just driving the same streets glancing up and down the streets they pass by . . .With police presences in the neighborhoods it would cut down on possible domestic violence, drug houses, and other mischief in the neighborhoods.

There needs to be accountability for violators of the law and members of the majority community, in particular, need to speak up when observing abuses:

Have a clear community statement about inclusion and post it on documents.

I think we need bystander training—to know what to do as a bystander when you see instances of discrimination, bullying, etc. I do generally speak up, but by that time I'm so angry I don't think I'm very effective.

Others of the majority-- "white people" "straight people"-- need to SPEAK UP ! when they see wrongdoing happen.

Call out racist, bigoted people and let them know that will no longer be tolerated in this community. There is absolutely no blow back on these bullies and there should be.

Work to make stigmatization of others (racist remarks in public, for example) behavior that's considered unacceptable. Speaking as a psychologist, while it's not easy to change the minds of bigots, it's simpler to eliminate the behavior when people like them express disapproval.

Cultural centers and similar places could be established to help citizens learn about other cultures:

A welcome center that provides information about activities available in Springfield for all cultures. Not just the cultural fair that takes place once/twice a year but is available at all times.

Bring a community center where everyone can learn. A free center for everyone (or at least \$10 classes). Make it so everyone can learn.

Maximizing common areas in Springfield with pop-up vendors, artists—something like a market/fairs/outdoor small concerts featuring a variety of cultural performances.

Increased support for the arts could help bring the community together:

Expand art installations and art events beyond downtown.

More investments in the arts for the public.

Activities of the arts in school for elementary age that have the money that the sports teams receive.

Springfield can learn about successful initiatives by consulting with other communities:

Look at other communities and see what they are doing well.

Borrow best practices from other cities. For example, Santa Ana has had a bilingual recruitment policy for all front-line positions at all levels. Over time, increasingly diverse front-line staff have been promoted to management and supervisory positions.

And again, alternative perspectives:

Stop hiring diversity officers or similar.

Quit wasting taxpayer monies on studies, commissions.

Discontinue the Sister City Program. It just benefits the City Council in the form of free trips at taxpayer's expense.

Stop coddling cultural groups. We used to be a melting pot where everyone strove to be good Americans, not hyphenated Americans, just plain Americans.

Question 8: Any additional comments or suggestions you have to share?

The final questions provided respondents one last chance to share any additional comments or suggestions they may have had. Many respondents thanked the Human Rights Commission and the City for providing the survey while others emphasized suggestions or comments they had made earlier. Some provided additional suggestions or simply expressed thoughts they had about diversity in Springfield in general. Examples:

Thank you for doing the survey

Many respondents expressed appreciation for having been given the chance to provide opinions and expressed the hope that the city would share the results and act on them. They supported the city's raising the issue of inclusion and seeking suggestions for improvement:

Thanks for inquiring. I hope that you will quickly collate your results and inform the community of the findings and the intentions of what will be done with them.

I truly hope this is the first step to Springfield becoming more inclusive. We have a terrific diverse population here and each of us deserves the same respect, protection, and freedoms as the next.

I appreciate the city making this effort. I know there's a lot of pushback on "cramming PC culture down people's throats," but fostering a community where people aren't afraid they'll be targeted for their race or religion should be a fundamental part of a civil society.

Springfield is on its way to being a great city full of wonderful opportunity, culture, arts, music, etc. I'm happy that inclusion is part of that conversation.

Thank you for providing this survey and hope it is marketed for historically underrepresented groups to take the survey.

Others, far fewer, thought the survey was a waste of time and money or didn't perceive a reason to be asking about inclusiveness:

I hope this didn't cost the taxpayers any money.

How many resources did the city waste here?

This survey, but its very questions, is slanted and biased.

This is bullshit, unneeded, unwanted and shit they pull in democrat strongholds.

I do not believe the old fashioned white Springfieldians will have a fair voice in your survey. It will be slanted by the weirdos, queers stuffing the survey box.

Respondents stated their support for diversity throughout the survey and re-emphasized it here:

Racism and discrimination are REAL and happen every single day in Springfield in so many places. Black people and trans people face it the worst, in my opinion.

I think this needs to be a priority in our city. We have a long history of institutional racism here. Our community was built on white supremacy and it still exists. . .

I applaud city government for trying to take steps to make our home a safer and more inclusive place for all walks of life, and I hope that good things come from this.

Until Springfield becomes truly diverse, we will never be able to attract good paying jobs and top notch companies to locate here. Smart persons who have diverse experience DO NOT want to live in an area that is backwards and narrow minded!

What Springfield should do to increase diversity and inclusion

Respondents took this opportunity to reaffirm what they had said before, and to emphasize what they thought was most important. Several noted that if Springfield wants to increase diversity and inclusion, it must make these a priority; city leaders in all contexts—government, schools, churches, businesses—have to walk the talk:

I think this is getting the cart before the horse. We need to communicate to Spfd community WHY we need to be inclusive before we figure out HOW to be inclusive. I'm not convinced most Springfieldians believe we need to be inclusive in the first place . . .

Support from institutions like local governments, schools, community networks, faith groups, and the media will be very important to building an inclusive community here in Springfield. The city should prioritize getting these institutions on board for this initiative. Identify and engage leaders in this effort and find ways to show how this will benefit them, as well.

If Springfield community leaders are serious about increasing inclusivity, they will need to make a commitment to keeping that goal at the forefront of community planning. They need to incentivize inclusivity for civic organizations as there is no reason for them to do it otherwise.

There are many things we can do and it starts with real substantial conversations. It is a bit discouraging that the same conversations are being had for decades and nothing substantial appears to be coming from these conversations . . . Focus on people's strengths and what they can do rather than what they lack and let's get away from narrowly talking about race.

City leaders must continue to emphasize – and embody – concern for all citizens, with extra attention to those who are the targets of bigotry. All citizens have to call out and denounce in appropriate behavior when we see it.

Please help. Please believe the marginalized. Please make a forum [for] people to anonymously share discrimination complaints. Springfield is a place where people really want to be good, please give them more options than just ignoring and silencing.

Start by getting along with the county. We need to work together for the people . . .

One obvious way to increase diversity is by increasing it in governance and leadership:

Invite new voices to the table. You have the same privileged people on boards, councils, committees, task forces all the time.

Include more diversity in planning. Groups with disabilities, etc.

Adding a little ethnicity to every group assembled. That should be the goal. When diversity is seen, diversity becomes normal.

There are gems in Springfield that contribute to the quality of life (such as the parks and public art) and these areas can be highlighted. At the same time, areas of the city need to be improved and resources need to be distributed equitably, particularly with respect to repair of sidewalks and roads, whose lack of repair hits the disabled community particularly hard:

The Springfield-Greene County Parks is a wonderful and seemingly inclusive part of our local

community. I love spending time outdoors in our local parks. . . .It's a great atmosphere that I wish were reflected in our community overall. Thank you to our parks.

I wish the city were more decorated with "cultural art" and not just in the city center. . . like West Bypass and Sunshine. The airport is on that side of town, and that is where a lot of our travelers come in through. It is so boring and doesn't really show our culture here. We should have art up in the medians or on the light poles. Even if we just painted the brick decoratively . .

. . . do more to tie north and south together. I think the 4 council zones should be redrawn to include a piece of north and south, like opposite pieces of a cut pie, forcing more even representation where financial decisions are made.

I feel like the city owes it to citizens here to help foster a more inclusive community, and to treat each area equally. Fix the terrible road on Division. . .that have 8,000 potholes. Fix the streetlights. Have PD drive other areas besides Commercial and Division.

Walkability. . . . I personally know a lot of people . . . that are seriously considering a move to Arkansas . . . Bentonville is a great model to what we should strive for . . I think we need to prioritize making this city easier to navigate by foot . . .It does no good to have a public transportation system if you can't access the stops or locations before or after the ride.

Assistance for specific populations is needed:

Springfield does not have a very inclusive disability environment. People always assume the worst when they see someone who is disabled. The disability . . . should not be used as a tool to humiliate a family that may already be stressed financially, physically and emotionally.

I have a neighbor whose daughter has Down's Syndrome. She volunteered at a local hospital for many, many years, when the family discovered she was cleaning bathrooms like paid employees but was not being paid. . . The family was outraged, but never followed through with bringing it to the attention of the administrators because they believed nothing could be done. . . .It goes back to "see something, say something" . . . and I think this should be pounded into the communities for people to take action against instances like this.

PASS NON DISCRIMINATION ORDINANCES!!!!

As a minority, I don't believe Springfield has my back. . .

As was mentioned extensively in response to previous questions, several respondents wanted better training for and more sensitive responses from the police and asked for the power of conservative Christian churches to be restrained regarding public decision making:

Have more education and training for law enforcement around not discriminating and racial profiling.

Auditing SPD to make sure they're doing their jobs and not destroying rape kits. Holding judges accountable for lenient sentences.

Springfield has a lot going for it but it appears to coast on some things. . . sexism is allowed because of the prevalence of small businesses and the underlying "Christianity" that oppresses

women. . .“Christianity” is a shadow over all.

As before, some respondents believe that Springfield has more pressing issues than diversity:

I think Springfield would benefit more people by focusing on the drug problem and decline of neighborhoods.

Continue to crack down on crime – don’t go easy on violators. Thanks!

It would also be nice if our police force would do something about all the meth that the city is full of.

We don’t need more walking trails or theaters, we need to get this city safe and cleaned up.

PLEASE, PLEASE DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE HOLES, PANHANDLERS AND TRASH ON OUR STREETS. . .make trash service mandatory so people won’t dump illegally . . .

Several respondents suggested looking at other cities to see what has worked there:

The city moves too slow. What are we waiting for? . . . there are plenty of templates from other similar sized communities that could be followed. Somehow all we do is talk, talk, talk.

Take some lessons from Fayetteville. They celebrate their rich live entertainment scene, they attract customers that want to go to cool local restaurants and shops instead of pabulum chains, and they have a vibrant diverse population that does not focus on religious dogma. Instead it focuses on inclusion and opportunity.

Embrace things that are special and unique about Springfield. We don’t have to copy other benchmark cities.

Let’s become the most inviting, interesting, and vibrant city in the Midwest! A great way to encourage our educated youth and graduates of our wonderful universities to stick around. Here are my ideas to make Springfield more inclusive and inviting for all:

- Create community murals. . . [Burlington, VT]
- Turn everyday urban hardware . . . into colorful creations: www.muralarts.org/
- Create a community sign initiative like the CoSign project in Cincinnati . . .
- More public benches
- Local car-free day with busses running for free on day a year . . .
[multiple details and suggestions from this individual]

Finally, several respondents thought the problem of inclusion would be resolved if we were just nicer to and more tolerant of one another:

Less singling out people by which group they fit into. It tends to be divisive for everyone. More “were all in this together” regardless of groups type things.

Please, please, please . . . just treat everyone equally . . . even the so-called “majorities” around here . . . All of us are equally deserving of love and respect, even if we’re in a “majority” group . . .

We have good people in the area and I for one have faith the people will grow and learn to be

accepting of others who may be different.

Perceived negative aspects of diversity

The designers of the survey believe that diversity is healthy for a city and that inclusion is necessary for the city to utilize fully all the talent within the city. As one respondent said, in a quote attributed to Lyle Foster, “Diversity is a statistic. Inclusion is a feeling.” Not every respondent supports increasing Springfield’s diversity or inclusion. Some think too much is being made of the issue and that increasing diversity and inclusion is a solution to an artificial problem:

Just grow up and stop being offended by what others thing. Keep government out of our daily lives.

Personally, I think too many people are overly sensitive calling racism, and prejudice on personal life style over incidents that are not. It is more their own antisocial behavior that is not friendly, considerate or inclusive. I appreciate this survey and hope its results are not manipulated or selectively ignored based on bureaucratic dysfunction at the expense of the public.

Springfield is a great place to live. Don’t make this some BS dialogue about how we’re so hateful, racist, sexist, . .etc. We’re SICK of that dialogue already . . .

Others are actively hostile to the idea of increasing Springfield’s diversity:

Stupid survey. Diversity is another name for equal opportunity and so far every diversity position I’ve heard of has been filled by a BLACK. Springfield is diverse enough.

I am not responsible for what other people did more than a hundred years ago. I have worked for every dollar I have. No one gave it to me. I do not have privilege just because I am white. I have nothing to apologize for to people I have never even met.

If you try to make Springfield more like Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco or New York, you are going to end up with the problems that they have there. High crime, racial tension, filthy streets, corruption in business and government, and the exact opposite of the inclusion that you so earnestly seek. Be careful what you wish for in Springfield.

Make the city more diverse and watch it turn into the black plagued hell holes such as LA and SF. Watch the murder skyrocket . . .I did not bust my ass to get citizenship just to have my new home turn into the hell hole I fled.

KICK THE HOMELESS OUT. They are running everything that was decent about Springfield.

Despite the hostility to the concept of inclusion contained in several of those last comments, this section closes with the following comment from one participant, which should give us all hope:

Thank you for addressing these issues! Having grown up in a very biased family, I was extremely closed minded, and unaccepting of those who were different from me. . . After moving away from this area at the age of twenty-one, I found myself interacting with individuals different from myself, and with opened eyes and an opened mind, seeing them for who they were—not what they were. This is why I feel these issues need to be addressed in public schools, beginning at an early age. . .

Conclusion

Recap of major findings

The Springfield Inclusiveness Survey sought to determine how local residents view the area's inclusiveness and what suggestions they might offer to improve diversity and inclusiveness. Respondents to the survey did not represent a random sampling of the community, but the 2276 individuals who completed the survey were reasonably representative of the Springfield area. Respondents came from all areas of the city (Northwest, 12.26%; Northeast, 16.12%; Southwest, 18.98%; Southeast, 22.72%; outside city limits, 28.12%) and were demographically consistent with the make-up of the city (Asian, 1.76%; Black/African American, 4.02%; White, 88.72%; Native American, 3.05%; Pacific Islander, .21%; and other, 1.84%, with 2.11% preferring not to answer). There were more women (59.84%) than men (35.71%), and most respondents were aged 25-39 (35.65%) or 40-59 (34.38%), with fewer being 18-24 (6.08%) or over 60+ (21.82%). Thus, survey respondents represented a workable cross section of the community.

While many respondents believe that Springfield is perfectly fine now, it is compelling that nearly half the respondents had either experienced or witnessed instances of discrimination. Nearly 45% deemed Springfield not inclusive or not very inclusive. 31% said they had experienced barriers to participating fully in the Springfield community; 41% said they had felt undervalued based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, or age. 41% had encountered or knew someone who had experienced unlawful hostility or discrimination based on those categories, and 48% had witnessed such acts against others. Clearly, Springfield has some work to do.

Responses were consistent across questions. The two biggest groups on the receiving end of hostility and discrimination were based on race/ethnicity/national origin and sexual orientation/gender identity. Some of the milder indignities against these groups involved name-calling, failure to be served in restaurants and similar places, and strangers insisting that people speak English instead of whatever language they were using. More serious forms included discrimination in housing, employment discrimination regarding hiring and advancement opportunities, bullying, and failure to be selected for volunteer boards. More hostile forms included people throwing things at such individuals and other physical and verbal assaults. The repeal of the SOGI ordinance was seen as a slap in the face to the LGBTQ+ community. Hostility was particularly vicious against transgender individuals; some of the examples of hostility directed toward these groups were truly heartbreaking.

Discrimination also occurs based on religion, disability, sex and age. A consistent theme throughout the responses involved the perception that certain conservative Christian denominations were able to establish the legal, political, and social agenda in Springfield in a way that is hostile to non-Christians or progressive Christians. Often, respondents noted that Springfield is not a disability-friendly city. Not all areas of the city have sidewalks and the bus system is not as functional as it could be. Some roads and storm water drains are in disrepair, many buildings and stores are not accessible, and many stores and restaurants simply do not know how to deal with disabled individuals. Many respondents perceived the area to be sexist and ageist; most of those examples involved employment issues.

Although economic/class discrimination is not a protected category in discrimination statutes, quite a

few individuals perceived that this was the biggest barrier to full participation in Springfield and believed they had been discriminated against because they are poor or they live on the north side. They perceive that the homeless are not treated respectfully. There is a widespread perception that Springfield resources are not equitably distributed, with the south side receiving more than its fair share.

Next steps

Based on the themes described in this report and the many suggestions provided, the following are logical next steps for the City of Springfield to consider. Because this report summarizes more than 300 pages of comments, readers are advised to take the time to review the actual comments so they can see how prevalent the incidents were and how intense respondents' feelings were.

Some people will never be convinced that increasing diversity is a good idea. The sponsors of the survey clearly support diversity and inclusion efforts and are eager to see Springfield be a welcoming city for all groups. However, not everyone welcomes diversity and inclusion initiatives. This fact is important to consider when the City and the Human Rights Commission undertake initiatives to improve diversity and inclusiveness. Those individuals who are hostile to diversity efforts, thankfully relatively few, will likely remain unconvinced that such efforts will improve Springfield.

Describing why diversity and inclusion are important is a key first step. Although some people are hostile to diversity, there is also a large group of people who have not themselves witnessed or experienced discrimination; many of these do not believe it exists in Springfield. Some believe the issue of inclusion is a manufactured one, not a real one. These people will need to be convinced that there is a problem. But it seems clear from the responses that this group can be convinced that discrimination is a problem here and that increasing diversity and inclusion are worthwhile goals. As one respondent wrote, "I think this is getting the cart before the horse. We need to communicate to Spfd community WHY we need to be inclusive before we figure out HOW to be inclusive. I'm not convinced most Springfieldians believe we need to be inclusive in the first place . . ."

There will need to be a multi-pronged approach to improve the situation in Springfield. If Springfield is serious about addressing the issues of diversity and inclusion, it will have to address those issues on multiple fronts, including working on making leadership more diverse, involving the media, engaging in training, and so forth. There isn't one magic bullet that will solve the problem of lack of diversity and inclusion.

All the key players in the city and area must be on board. These include city and county government officials; leaders of major institutions, including the school system, the universities/colleges, the health systems; the Chamber of Commerce and local business organizations; the faith community; and the boards and committees in the nonprofit sector. All the major players in Springfield must be on the same page regarding diversity and inclusion, so that citizens are hearing a consistent message from all quarters. That message should include:

- Strong statements of support from all major organizations
- Inclusive language
- Diversification of leadership and staff, so that Springfieldians are actually seeing diversity
- Ensuring that governmental and civic leaders are visible at diversity events—walking the talk
- Accountability and transparency, so that discriminatory actions are called out and punished

SOGI must be reinstated. The repeal of the SOGI ordinance was both an insult and a genuine injury to the LGBTQ+ community, who can be discriminated against, legally, in housing and employment. Members of this community have lost housing and employment because of their LGBTQ+ status and they currently have no recourse. This population feels particularly vulnerable and unprotected in the current environment.

Members of the faith community must come together to address issues of discrimination. Quite a few respondents blamed the conservative Christian churches for promoting discrimination, particularly against the LGBTQ+ community but also against others, including other Christians, as well. Some hold the conservative Christian community responsible for what they perceive to be a rampant sexism in the area—that only men should be in leadership positions. However, many respondents also saw the potential for good that can come from interfaith dialogues and actions to support diversity and inclusion. The faith community, including all traditions and denominations working together, has the capacity—as yet untapped—to move hearts and minds so that diversity and inclusion is not just tolerated, but embraced.

Springfield should hold facilitated dialogues where people can discuss issues of diversity, particularly race and LGBTQ+ status, and get to know one another as individuals rather than representatives of a category. Although some respondents felt strongly that discussing issues openly was dangerous and made the inclusion situation worse (some respondents felt this was “race baiting”), many more people felt that open discussion in safe spaces was necessary for members of the community to get to know and understand one another’s perspectives. Missouri State’s “Tough Talks” could serve as a model for such facilitated dialogue, but there are other models that are likewise effective. What is important, however, is for citizens to hear one another’s stories so that movement toward inclusion can happen with empathy and understanding.

Education and training must be provided for citizens throughout the community. Some of the discriminatory actions described by respondents were likely due to ignorance as much as hostility. However, some populations—the Springfield Police Department, public school teachers, city workers, government representatives, city leaders—should be cognizant of how to deal with diverse populations so as to treat all people with sensitivity and de-escalate potential conflicts. It appears that many segments of the population would benefit from such training. The Facing Racism Institute was mentioned as a potential model.

Springfield should look for ways—festivals, events, celebrations of all kinds—to celebrate its diversity. Festivals and events are fun, non-threatening ways that members of diverse groups can get to know one another and begin to appreciate one another’s culture, particularly if there is food involved. Such festivals and events need to be free or low cost, offered at times convenient for families, well publicized, and accessible to the disabled. Some respondents recommended establishing a physical space—a cultural center, for example—where people could learn about other cultures than their own. A caution is in order here, however. One respondent noted that “This [increasing diversity and inclusion] is not about cultural festivals. There needs to be real action.”

Springfield should make intentional efforts to welcome newcomers and diverse members of the community to integrate them fully into the civic life of Springfield. Respondents recommended something like a Welcome Wagon for newcomers. They also noted that people need to be personally invited to attend professional, civic and social gatherings. Recommendations were made to host

leadership development programs as a way to help integrate diverse members of the community fully into Springfield's civic life.

Springfield must attend to economic issues that affect acceptance for diversity. Many respondents observed that Springfield has bigger problems than diversity, and that attention to some of these economic and infrastructure issues would improve the city's inclusiveness. Respondents perceived a significant north-south divide and believe that the south side consumes more than its fair share of resources. Many others called for Springfield to secure more jobs that pay a living wage. Respondents mentioned crumbling infrastructure on the north side—lack of sidewalks, storm drainage issues—that make northsiders feel like second class and unwanted citizens. Economic inequality and inequity were mentioned as barriers to full participation in the city.

Springfield should consult with other cities to learn what has worked there. Several respondents provided website addresses for other cities' initiatives related to diversity and inclusion. Other cities have faced many of the same issues as Springfield and have developed programs we might be able to utilize (such as Grand Rapid, MI's Facing Racism Institute). If we adopt a program or initiative from another city, it is important that we modify it to suit Springfield's specific situation.

There must be accountability for those who violate the law or who exhibit insensitivity or hostility to diverse populations. Violators of the law must be held accountable and there must be an easy and safe way for people to report violators. Quite a few respondents noted that they did not report violations because they feared reprisals or did not believe reporting would do any good. Many people believed that people committing insensitive or hostile actions must be called out; perhaps bystander training, to know how best to intervene, would be useful. One respondent noted that "those that are making Springfield LESS inclusive will continue to do what they do until their (white) peers call them out and tell them to stop. Minorities cannot make this change." This is accurate; we all are responsible for ensuring that Springfield is a welcoming and inclusive community.