



Town Council Retreat
Participant's Package
January 11, 2024



PARTICIPANTS PACKAGE

In this package:

I. Agenda and Meeting Logistics

II. Survey & Interview Findings

Your pre-session assignment is to review these materials and be prepared for our review and discussion of them during the session.



Meeting Logistics

Date: *Thursday, January 11

Time: 8:30 a.m. gathering

9 a.m. start

Address: Our Lady of the Snows Center

10189 E State Highway 210

Alta, UT 84092

*In case of canyon closure the morning of Jan 11, the retreat will be rescheduled for a later date.



Draft Retreat Agenda

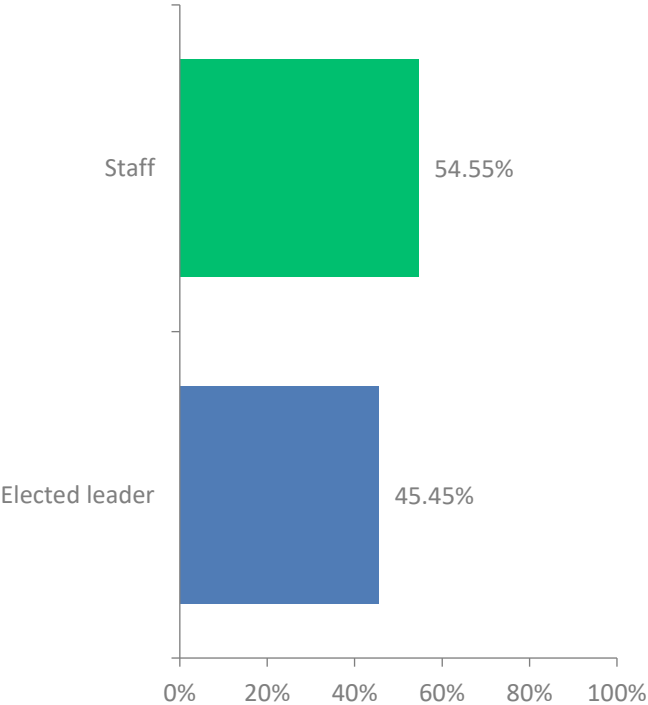
Thursday, January 11, 2024

8:30	30-min	Coffee and goodies
9:00	30-min	<i>Morning Session:</i> Welcome and Opening
9:30	60-min	Strategic Assessment: Where are we Today?
10:30	30-min	Strategic Assessment Summary
11:00	15-min	Break
11:15	45-min	Vision of Success
12:00	30-min	Lunch
12:30	45-min	<i>Afternoon Session:</i> Group Vision of Success for 2030
1:15	30-min	From-To Shift
1:45	15-min	BREAK
2:00	50-min	Core Strategies and Short-term Goals
2:50	10-min	Wrap up
3:00		Adjourn



Assessment Review

What is your role?



What do you view as the greatest contributors to success of the municipality?

STAFF LEADERS

- Shared vision and expectations (5)
 - Strong sense of community and place among elected officials, staff, residents, voters, seasonal residents/employees, visitors, etc.
 - Broad stakeholder participation
 - Defined mission and core values
 - 53 yrs of experience since incorporation as a municipality
 - Credible delivery of services
- Dedicated staff (3)
- Strong partnerships
- Community loves Alta
- A well-maintained budget
- Leadership
- Availability to the citizenry

ELECTED LEADERS

- Elected leaders mesh very well
- The professionalism and commitment of our full-time staff
- Local leadership that is grassroots oriented with a vibrant, engaged constituency
- Maintaining the character of Alta



What are the obstacles that hinder the organization the most?

STAFF LEADERS

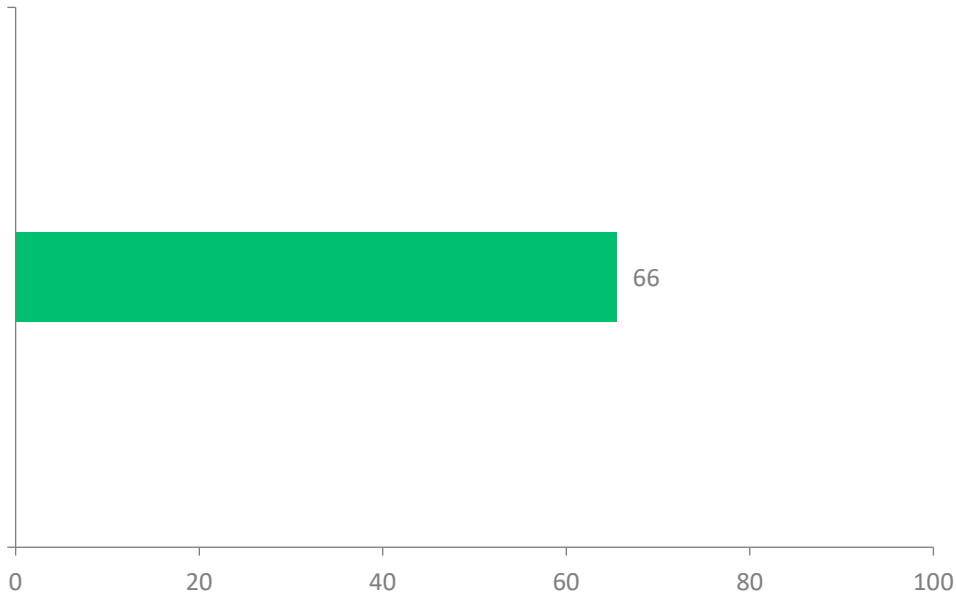
- Limited budget / lack of financial resources, revenue / lack of capital (5)
- Lack of clear-cut goals: priorities must be established and well defined / Limited future and long-term planning (4)
 - Urgent crowds out the strategic, too many short-term challenges to clarify a future path
- Staff size (3)
 - Everyone is always putting out the "fire of the day" while bigger issues smolder
- Resistance to change (2)
 - Risk averse culture and information reporting that favors insiders only - meaning it is too complex for outsiders to easily digest
- Major variables that are outside the town's control
 - 1) ski industry trends and ownership of Alta Ski Area
 - 2) federal land ownership
 - 3) climate change
 - 4) population growth
- Outside interference from appointed/elected officials
- Community/constituents want more services than this municipality can provide
- Lack of facilities
- Outdated systems and processes create excess paperwork and slow things down (i.e., not accepting online payments and relying instead on checks to be delivered in the mail)

ELECTED LEADERS

- Flow of information should be more formal (3)
 - Circular arguments that can distract our elected officials and hired staff
 - Practicing true democracy with transparency and effective communication is time consuming and not everyone's natural style of leadership
 - Rules of order are not followed as much as they should
- Boundaries between council with staff (2)
- Bureaucratic stagnation
- Asking the staff what they need next
- We are an unusual, isolated small ski town with extreme economic diversity and many second homeowners (some people are out of touch)
- Outside forces who frequently want to change Alta into something else, most prominently the gondola project

How well do you think Town leaders (staff and elected leaders) leverage their core competencies today?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 1



- Staff answers ranged from 32 to 80
- Average = 55
- One staff skipped

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- Elected answers ranged from 50 to 100
 - Average = 76

From your perspective, describe the vision of success for the town as a public service agency - What are you ultimately striving to achieve?

STAFF LEADERS

- Financial sustainability, infrastructure resilience, watershed stewardship
- Success would be realizing we are a small town and concentrating on the essential public services to serve the public. Focus and prioritizing are key. Have not had any clear direction in the past. Direction of activities has been all over the map.
- Town has good relationships with local constituents and relationships with collaborative agencies
- Provide services that enhance quality of life for residents and ensure safe, harmonious, and life for residents
- Generational burden for capital replacement
- Trust
- Transparency and inclusion of the community in decision making. Alta is a very small town and community. It should not IMO be difficult to get more meaningful community input to create a cohesive long-term direction
- Delivery of credible and reliable municipal services
- The municipal government is: nimble, efficient, and pragmatic; focused on services within
- The Town of Alta provides the structure that allows Alta to remain governed at the local (vs county) level - including local elected officials, utilities, and municipal services (post office, local police department, etc). Alta residents and businesses get the advantage of working with familiar and friendly faces right here in Little Cottonwood Canyon. Without the Town, all of those services would be diverted to Salt Lake County which has wildly different needs and priorities. Another shared value is "Keeping Alta, Alta" - as a Town, we have more agency in preserving (or changing) Alta in ways that would be impossible if governed by Salt Lake County

ELECTED LEADERS

- A cleaner, greener, quieter Alta, the Mountain Town that chooses not to race to the bottom as so many have with development and environmental degradation, but embraces being different. This difference is in fact a business advantage.
- Transportation - hindering success
- Long-term healthy sewer, water, transportation infrastructure to ensure the town is best prepared for continued increase in human impact and to avoid catastrophes due to insufficient planning on the part of our administration
- Resist the outside forces trying to change us into something we aren't

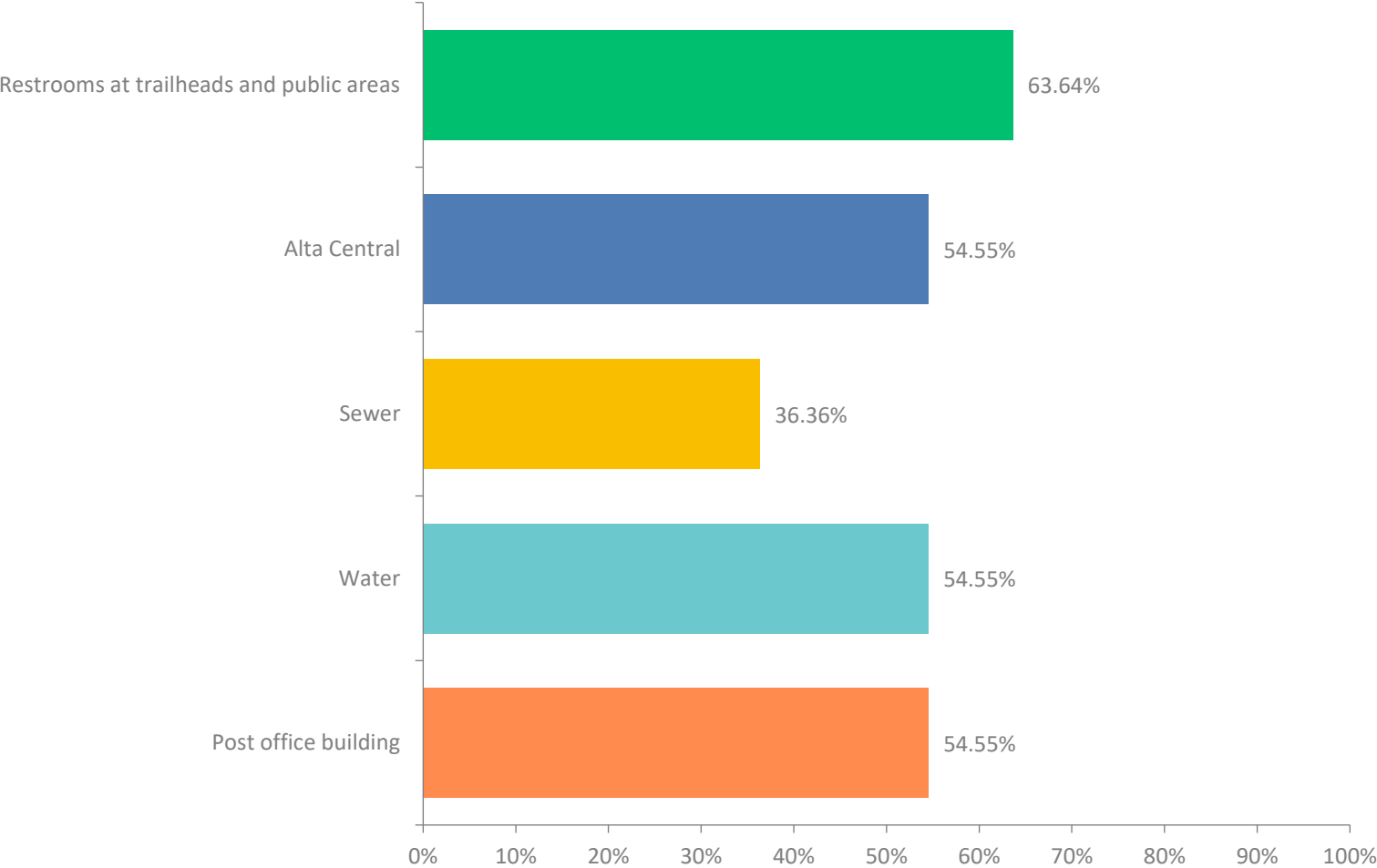
Shared agreement around themes:

- **Planning and prioritizing**
- **Provision of essential public/municipal services**
- **Community-centric, self-determination**

“ We are doing our job to the extent that we have long term invisibility – no one will see how well it is all being managed - - no crises because we did our job well”

From your perspective, what are the town's greatest capital improvement needs?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0



- Staff overwhelmingly identified Restrooms, Alta Central and Post Office Building
- Staff chose more than the elected overall
- One staff and one elected chose every option on the list



How should we prioritize these needs?

STAFF LEADERS

- Planning and evaluation (4)
 - Create an infrastructure master plan giving each department the opportunity to address their critical needs; 2-Identify funding/bonding opportunities; 3-Agree on design; 4-Break ground and get it done
 - Buildings are most in need of planning and investment, and the replacement cost of the oldest buildings is significant. We won't know how to prioritize between without more planning and evaluation. Water and sewer improvements seem to be easier to plan and act upon in segments. Visitor facilities such as TH restrooms are important but are primarily the responsibility of other entities. We can contribute funding and input but we can't make decisions about them
 - Rank projects
 - This would include input from the staff and public comment (limited) in meetings
 - Taxpayer input

ELECTED LEADERS

- Use the Planning Commission more to help with these priorities and plan
- Water and sewer updates
- Buildings need renovations, new windows
- Updating stuff for dispatch, latest and greatest for marshals
- Shore up the walls on the post office building (our current community center)--if we had a community center we could repurpose the post office building for housing and office space
- Next to the Rustler (small old toilets back in the day) and falling down - building sitting there
- Partner with UDOT to make sure we are not at odds with what they are planning to offer (esp. around bus stop).
- Coffee shop - up by Alta Lodge
- Parking near the Post office
- Community building would be nice
 - Lady of the Snows – Little parking, building is too small
- Affordable housing is difficult up here but needed
- Long term planning and investment in sewer and restrooms occupy the highest priority
- These needs do not include the missing middle need of community housing and ownership which I would place above all those listed in 5, as does the wider SLC community
- Do the ones that are relatively easy first, in particular trailhead restrooms

What trends or realities could make a significant impact, positive or negative, to the residents and the Town of Alta overall?

STAFF LEADERS

- Visitation / Population growth (4)
 - The population growth of the Salt Lake metro area and change in demographics toward outdoor enthusiasts have already and likely will continue to place real pressure on limited canyon resources
- Concentrate on the essentials, police, fire, sewer, water administration (3)
- Traffic/Transportation (3)
 - Transportation projects could provide opportunities for investment in public facilities and services
 - The proposed gondola project may irreversibly and fundamentally change the character of the town
- Climate change will shrink ski industry: how will Alta afford local public services without revenue from 5 month ski season? (2)
 - Severe weather emergencies or natural disasters
- A new community center (2)
 - An ADA compliant, street level multi-discipline municipal office building/community center
- Limited eligible/available candidates for public office, especially Mayor - does ToA have a reliable future as a Town as we know it?
- Losing local Police and Dispatch services
- Construction/Development
 - Potentially the Patsy Marley development project could also have a significant impact - though so far it has been reasonably controlled
- If Alta Ski Area was ever sold out to one of the mega ski corporations
- Olympics in 2034

ELECTED LEADERS

- Transportation (4)
 - Gondola
 - Highway
 - UDOT
- Visitation / Population Growth / Climate change (4)
 - The continued descent of the masses on the canyon are inevitable and going to impact our infrastructure and the fragility of our environment
 - Reluctance to engage experts that can in a nonpartisan fashion make projections about capacity limits, a pro-business, environment sacrificing culture as well as winning the winter Olympic bid for 2034
- Affordable housing - little private land
- Lodges (caretaking units for larger homes)
- Community center - it would be nice to have something
- Welcome and info center at trailhead
- Trailhead bathrooms
- Need public bathrooms in town

When you take the long view, what do you define as the greatest assets that will be depended on for success?

STAFF LEADERS

- Staff (4)
 - Hiring the right people to provide services
 - Long-serving staff members
 - Our staff and their ability to execute a shared vision and/or direction as articulated by leadership
 - Competent staff
- Long term plan for the Town (2)
 - The greatest asset of Alta is the relatively (compared to Park City/ Deer Valley) undeveloped Little Cottonwood Canyon. That is why I called out the major development projects as the greatest threats. ToA spends all of their time on short term Town issues and very little of its time dealing with or mapping out a plan for success. We don't even have a long-term plan (last updated in 2008)
- Identity and reputation
 - Alta's singular identity and reputation. One of the world's great landscapes: people want to be here and preserve Alta. Strong partnerships. Town is currently nimble and efficient.
- Prioritization of the most essential services
- Business community
- Property values
- Our long-standing partnerships
- Credible facilities and equipment
- Information Technology
- Well informed and unbiased elected officials

ELECTED LEADERS

- Staff is biggest asset
- Mitigating/controlling noise
- Planning and budgeting
- Our natural resources, biodiversity, and beauty. A rare and precious resource that once destroyed will take down our water quality and tourism dollars with it. Next to our environment and parallel in importance is the diversity of our people and our ability to offer them strength and support with affordable housing ownership and living wages.
- Our greatest asset is the natural beauty that surrounds us. The fragility of this asset is often unrecognized. If that beauty is damaged, it can't get repaired.

Conversely, what are our greatest vulnerabilities?

STAFF LEADERS

- Vulnerability to natural disasters, box canyon, one road (2)
- Lack of planning (3)
 - Lack of defined priorities and understanding of what a small town is supposed to do - - The Town is too scattered and the citizens and especially the employees suffer
 - Narrowness of scope and shortness of time horizon that is the default position of the ToA council. The ToA is in a difficult position because they unilaterally control very little. The Alta Ski Lift Company and the Forest Service have major control and influence. This often leads to finger pointing to the other entities. So usually the town council focuses on the easy to do part. But of these three entities only the ToA council is elected and hence the only body through which taxpayers and other stakeholders can influence policy and direction of the area- but only if the ToA will tackle and discuss these difficult topics
 - Existing assets are in urgent need of maintenance or replacement
- Concentrated, seasonal economy
- Public safety failures
- Large scale infrastructure failures
- Civil liability for failure to perform at best practice standards
- Communication / interference
- Climate change - our success relies disproportionately on the weather and the ski industry
- Maintaining a community of year-round residents
- Maintaining qualified staff

ELECTED LEADERS

- Climate change (2)
- Lack of planning in the face of the impending onslaught
- Conflicts between council, and staff and appointed officials
- Confidence around how we run the town council meeting – rules of operation
- Transportation, canyon
- Elites making decisions for elites at the expense of workers and our fragile Alta environment
- Commercial interests that want to exploit our natural environment for their own benefit-- They are willing to kill the goose to get the golden egg
 - Unchecked peak capitalism and an open, uncritical embrace of the idea that Alta is a company town and the company that rules it is the Alta Ski Lift Corporation

What will be critical to optimize for future success?

STAFF LEADERS

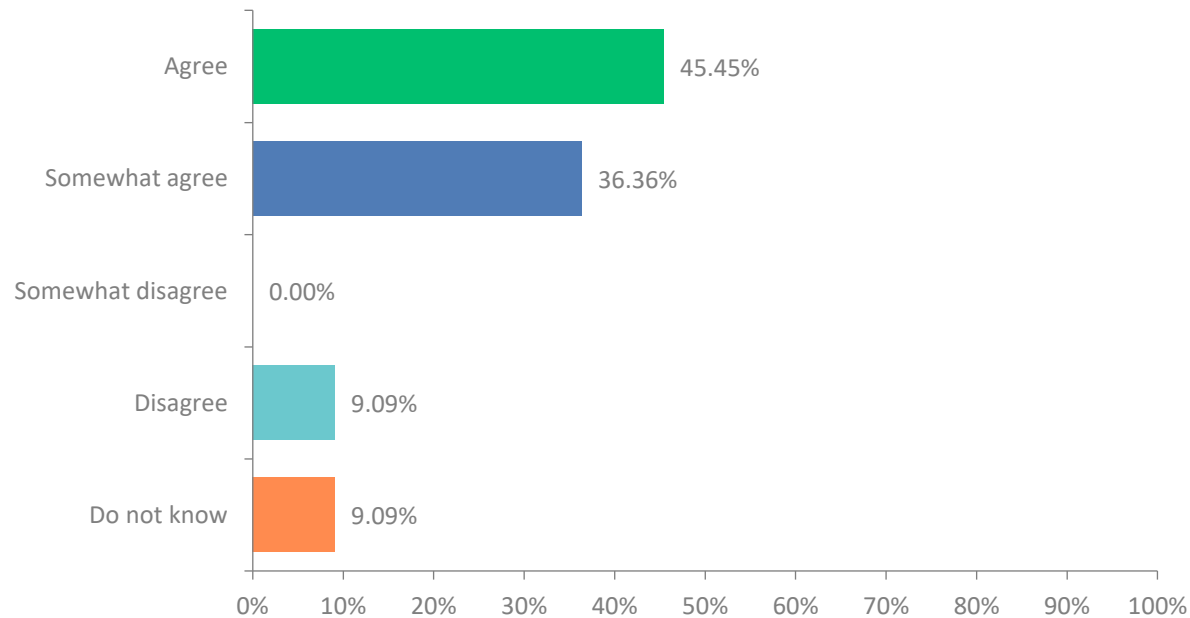
- Long-term vision and planning (5)
 - Leadership and direction
 - Medium-term unifying roadmap to guide decision making
 - Shared goals
- Focus on attainable outcomes, topics within Town's jurisdiction (2)
 - Focus on defined priorities of public service (Stop trying to do everything, this is a small town)
- Maintaining and continuing to leverage strong partnerships
- Focus on resilience and sustainability: financial, environmental, social

ELECTED LEADERS

- Flow of information (3)
 - Don't waste staff time
 - Go through mayor and town manager
 - Small staff and they work hard
- Allies on the side of keeping the unique beauty of this area
- New town manager position
- Cohesive and collaborative teamwork among the staff and elected officials
- Wider representation of the workers of Alta in leadership and decision making

The Town of Alta is fiscally responsible with its resources

Overall, elected leaders “Agree” while staff leaders more often “Somewhat agree”



Comments:

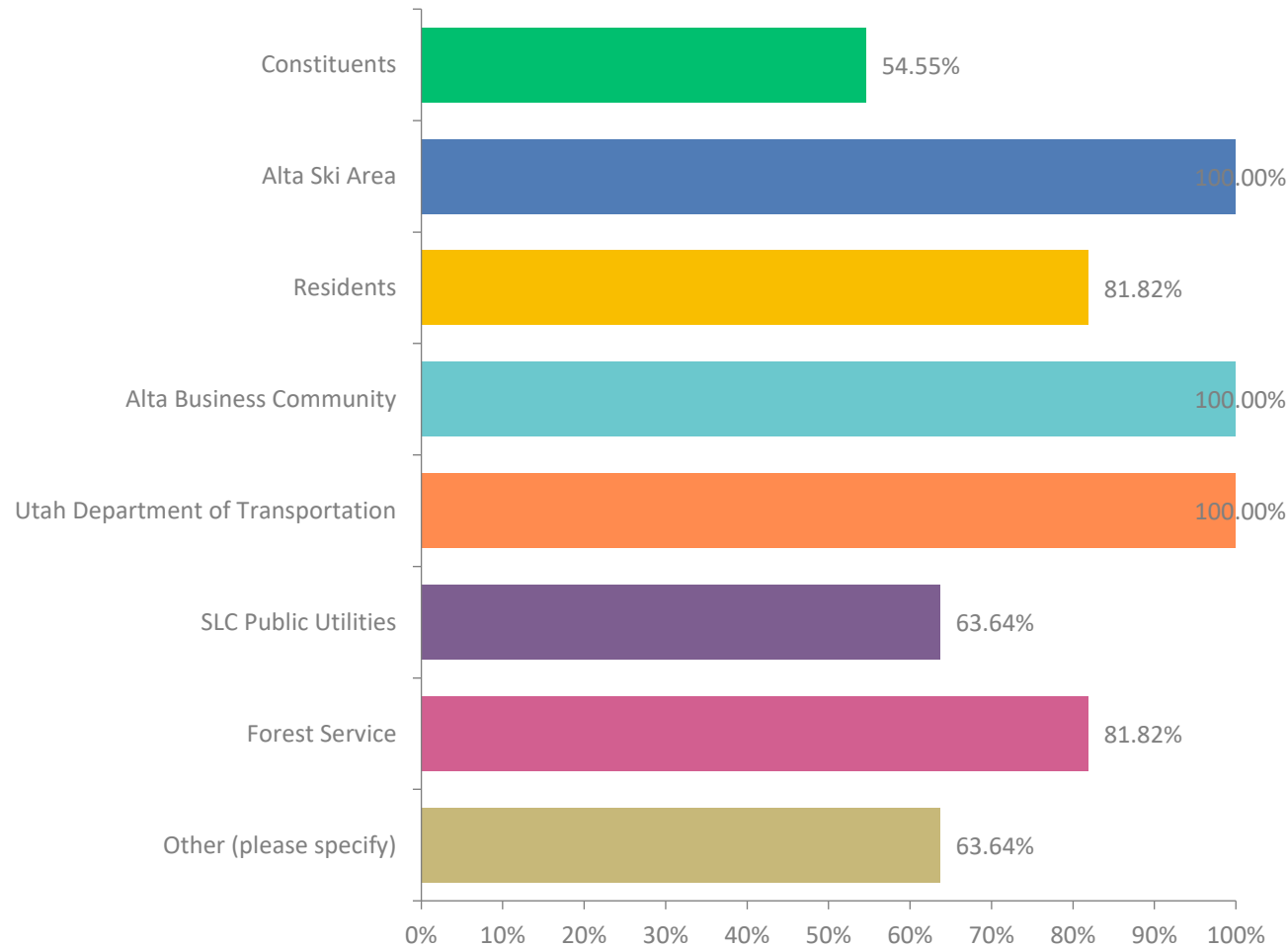
STAFF LEADERS

- Great job of micromanaging but that doesn't matter – there is no attention to strategic allocation of resources over time
- We budget conservatively and make smart expense decisions - - We need to improve project delivery and expedite plans for major capital replacement

ELECTED LEADERS

- We are sales tax dependent
- Budgets are moral documents. Do all Alta voters scrutinize and agree with the morality behind our expenditure priorities and amounts? If labor creates tax revenue, where is the reinvestment in labor?
- Hard question -- Don't know

Who do you define as partners? These entities, in some way, add value to what you are accomplishing. (Check all that apply and add to the list as needed)



Other partners mentioned:

- Friends of LCC
- Local and regional nonprofits
- Salt Lake City
- Salt Lake County
- Salt Lake County Emergency Management
- Salt Lake County Service Area #3
- Salt Lake Valley Emergency Communications Center
- Salt Lake Valley Health Department
- Save Our Canyons
- Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort
- State of Utah, esp Division of Drinking Water
- Students for the Wasatch
- UFA
- Unified Fire
- Unified Police/SLCO Sheriff
- Utah Transit Authority
- Visitors/tourists

Comments:

- UDOT might be a foe! Delicate balance with them. If town ran a transportation service I would support that
- All who live Alta, the place and the concept



What are the critical issues that must be discussed in this planning process?

STAFF LEADERS

- Setting priorities (3)
 - How to focus on, pick and limit goals and priorities realizing that we can't just jump on every other "good" project that somebody brings up. They're all good, but not all essential. This process has to be open and transparent, not something decided by a few power players at dinner
 - Facilities planning
- Vision for the Town – are we aligned? (2)
 - The retreat will primarily be a "listening session" for council members and staff. Do we have the same future vision for the town we always have, or do we need to dedicate time to establishing a new vision? What problems do we want to solve--can we solve them? What are our 2-5 year priorities?
 - My neighbor asked the fundamental question of: Why does Town of Alta exist? By this he meant that if the only purpose is to run the water and sewer and other minor services - these could all be done by the county very professionally. If the ToA does not help it citizens deal with the difficulty of dealing with Alta Ski Lifts and the US Forest Service on citizen requests, (usually they just direct you to one or both of the other entities) or deal with the medium term development issues already cited I think he is right.
- Process and procedure, roles and responsibilities (2)
 - ORG CHART! Clear guidance on who is responsible for what
- Building consensus (2)
 - DE-CONFLICTING council/staff relationships
- Staff recruiting and retention

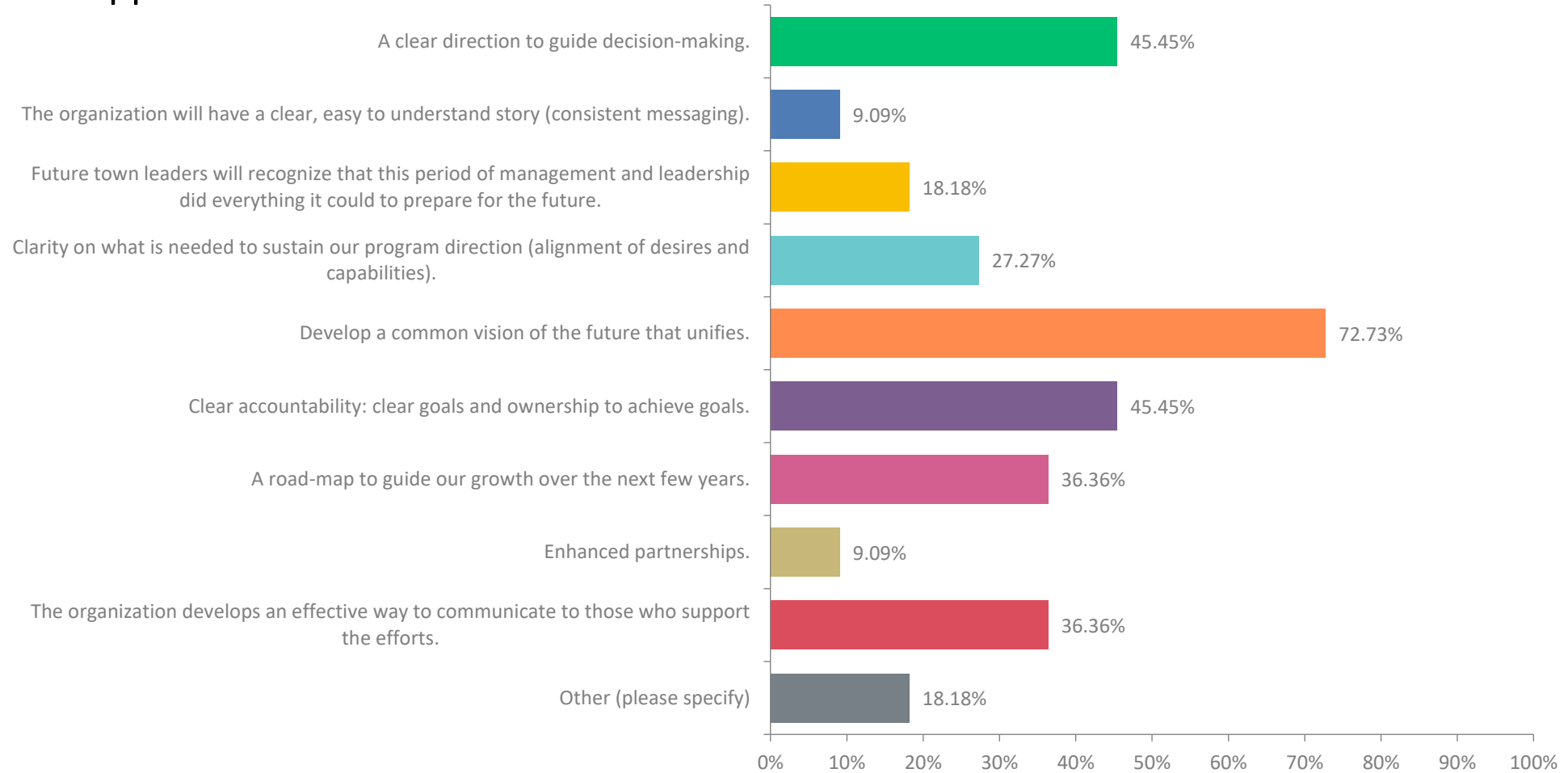
ELECTED LEADERS

- Roles and responsibilities (2)
 - Staff need confidence in knowing who they report to - what each of us can ask others for
 - How Chris envisions how he wants things to go and to be run!
- Decision-making process around the budget
- Transportation is a major issue, don't want to see our community ruined by a gondola (we have an obligation to deal with that)
- Respect and emotional regulation during disagreements. Knowing one's lane and respecting each other's areas of expertise. Rebuilding trust with staff and between council members
- How are we going to guard against those forces that want to change Alta into something that it isn't

Shared agreement around key themes of setting priorities and a vision for the town and clarifying roles and responsibilities for staff and elected leaders.

If this planning process is wildly successful in your eyes, what will happen during it or as a result of it? Select the top two or three.

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0





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