My column last week about the city's failure to perform routine maintenance of the downtown improvements or our local parks received a tremendous amount of feedback.

All of it was from readers who agreed that it's high time we started holding our leaders accountable for the decline they have allowed to take place in our city. Most of them had other examples of things like limbs being allowed to pile up on street sides until there was just room for one lane of traffic, neglected properties being allowed to become a blight on entire neighborhoods and storm gutters being cleaned only after there is a problem.

In all the conversations I've had with residents, there seems to be two kinds of people.

The first group are those who are determined to do their part to improve Yazoo regardless of how the city's leadership operates. They are frustrated with the problems, but they're not going to let it stop them from working to help move Yazoo forward.

We need more people like this.

The second group are those who feel a sense of helplessness. They've started to believe that things are heading in the wrong direction, and there's nothing anyone can do to change it.

But there's plenty that can be done.

As I pointed out last week, there are many things that can be accomplished without any government officials getting involved.

Yes, the missing light poles, uneven sidewalks and busted planters downtown that were purchased just a short time ago through grant money are a monument to incompetence, but the progress made on Main Street by private individuals far outshines all of that. On the issue of our parks, there seems to be enough volunteer interest in improving them that the efforts will move forward with or without the city's involvement.

It's also a lot easier than many people realize to remind elected officials that they're working for you. Many people just don't want to take the time to contact an elected official to voice a complaint, but maybe they would if they looked at it like any other customer service issue.

If you were paying for cable and all of a sudden you couldn't get but a couple of channels, I bet you would take the time to call and complain. If the problem wasn't corrected, you'd keep calling until something was done.

Why should you feel any different about your tax dollars?

You're paying for these services, and if you're not getting what you paid for, you at least deserve an explanation.

A lot of people may feel that it won't do any good, but two recent local examples prove otherwise.

Glenwood Cemetery previously reached a disgraceful state because the sexton was no longer allowed to use state inmate labor after it was determined that he had acted inappropriately with the inmates. The problem, and the solution, was obvious, but a majority of our city officials didn't want to make a change.

They stuck to their guns until public outcry became great enough, and then they made a management change. The results have been terrific.

Another example was the ill-advised proposal to include an adult entertainment district in the city's zoning plan. A diverse group of citizens and local ministers packed the boardroom to express their objections. I've never seen so many people come to a public meeting to take a stand.

With that much opposition, the adult entertainment district never had a chance. I was very proud to see how many Yazooans got involved on that day.

Imagine what could be accomplished if residents got half as passionate about other problems affecting our city.

Our elected officials are all decent people, and I believe they truly want what's best for our community. But it's also clear that some important details are being neglected, and it's our responsibility to do our part to try to get Yazoo back on track.

Things are lining up for this to be a great year for our community. New economic development opportunities are on the horizon when the ground is broken on the Willie Morris Parkway. There is enough momentum on Main Street for a downtown revival. There will be many eyes on our city, and we must put our best foot forward if we expect to have any chance of capitalizing on all of these opportunities.

Despite all of the challenges our community has faced, there is still nowhere in the world I'd rather be. I know that many of you feel the same way, and that's why we shouldn't settle for half-hearted efforts.

I urge you to get involved today.