

## Stakeholder Outreach Summary

---

### A. INTRODUCTION

Obtaining stakeholder feedback is one of several tools the City of Bellevue uses to plan its biennial budget. As part of the 2003-2004 Budget process, the City of Bellevue conducted a telephone survey to obtain resident feedback on budget priorities, held three public hearings, and held a series of meetings with different sectors of the Bellevue community.

### B. OPERATING BUDGET/CIP SURVEY

Each budget cycle, the City of Bellevue conducts a statistically valid survey of residents' perceptions of community needs and services. The Budget Survey is designed to enhance the City's knowledge of Bellevue residents' perceptions about the City and to help City leaders better understand community priorities and expectations regarding City services. The survey has been conducted on a biennial basis since 1998 to help support decision making for each upcoming budget. The City Council and management staff used the 2002 Budget Survey along with other information to help make decisions for the City's 2003-2004 Operating Budget and the 2003-2009 Capital Investment Plan.

The 2002 survey was based on past surveys to facilitate trend analysis but contained some changes and enhancements. Northwest Research Group conducted the 2002 survey and analyzed the results. Interviewing was conducted by phone between March 27<sup>th</sup> and April 17<sup>th</sup>. A total of 409 residents were interviewed in the 2002 survey. For a survey sample of this size, the margin of sampling error is about plus or minus 5% at the 95% level of confidence.

#### **Key Conclusions of the Survey:**

- Bellevue residents generally feel that the quality of life in the City (95%) and in their own neighborhood (93%) is "good" or "excellent".
- Most residents view City services and facilities as quite important; more than two-thirds of the service areas asked about in the survey received average importance ratings of at least 6.0 (on the 1-7 scale) and no service area received an average importance rating below 4.9. In general, residents are more satisfied with the services they feel are most important.
- Eight out of ten residents feel that they are getting their money's worth and nearly as many feel that City tax and service levels are about right.
- When asked about the biggest problem that they would like the City to address, 71% of the residents mentioned a concern related to traffic or transportation.

**Quality of Life**

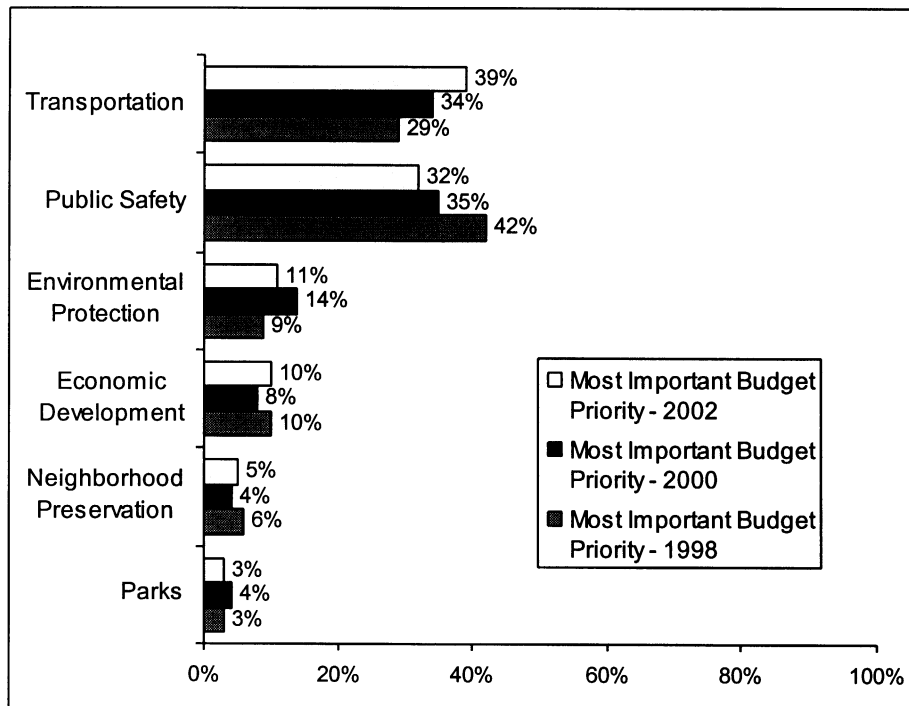
Nearly all of those responding to the survey rate the quality of life in the City and in their own neighborhood as “good” or “excellent.” The majority of residents (95%) who participated in the Budget survey rate the quality of life in the City as “good” or “excellent.” Similarly, most (93%) rate the quality of life in their own neighborhood as “good” or “excellent.” Respondents tend to view the quality of life in their own neighborhoods as “excellent” more commonly than they view the quality of life citywide as “excellent.” At the neighborhood level, ratings of “excellent” are almost as common as ratings of “good”, while at the citywide level, ratings of “excellent” are significantly less common than ratings of “good”. Very few respondents give poor ratings to the City or to their neighborhood. These quality of life questions were added to the survey this year.

For both the citywide and the neighborhood quality of life questions, respondents giving a rating of less than “excellent” were asked to indicate what would help improve quality of life in the City and in their neighborhood. At both the citywide and neighborhood levels, transportation-related concerns are most commonly cited, with traffic being—by far—the dominant transportation-related issue mentioned at the citywide level.

**Budget Priorities**

As in past surveys, respondents were asked to select their top budget priority from among six general service areas. Since 1998, there has been an increase in the percentage choosing Transportation as the top budget priority upon which they would like the City to focus. In the 1998 survey, significantly more respondents chose Public Safety as the top priority than chose Transportation, but in the 2000 survey almost as many chose Transportation as Public Safety and in the 2002 survey Transportation was most commonly chosen as the top priority.

**Figure 9-1  
Top Budget Priorities**



## Gaps Between Importance and Satisfaction

Services that residents feel are most important tend also to be those with which they are most satisfied. Useful insights are, however, provided by analyzing the size of gaps between the mean importance and satisfaction ratings given by respondents. An example is provided below of how gaps between mean importance and satisfaction ratings are calculated.



Generally, on the Budget Survey, services are given somewhat higher importance than satisfaction ratings. Relatively large gaps—in which the mean rating of importance is at least 1.0 rating points higher than the mean rating of satisfaction—merit a particularly close look by the City. A gap of 1.0 or more may signal a need for more public education and outreach regarding a particular facility or service. Or, such a gap may signal that resources are not adequate or are not deployed as well as they could be. Large gaps may also reflect broad frustration with challenges that have aspects that are regional in scope and that local government has only limited ability to impact.

**Figure 9-2**  
**Services and Facilities with Largest Gaps in 2002 Survey**

| <b>Services and Facilities</b>                                  | <b>Gap*<br/>(Importance &gt; Satisfaction)</b> |
|---|--|
| <b>1<sup>st</sup> Tier of Importance (6.0 or higher):</b>       |  |
| Building Or Widening City Roads to Help Ease Traffic Congestion | 1.7  |
| Maintaining Existing Streets & Sidewalks                        | 1.1  |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Tier of Importance (5.5 – 6.0):</b>           |  |
| Reducing Residential Traffic                                    | 1.3  |
| Managing the City's Physical Development                        | 1.2  |

\*In figuring gaps between importance and satisfaction, importance and satisfaction ratings were carried out to two decimal places before the gaps were calculated. Only then were the gaps rounded to one decimal place.

Results of the 2002 survey produced only four service areas with gaps of 1.0 or more compared to about twice as many in the 2000 and 1998 surveys.

## Opinions Regarding Taxes and Service Levels

The Budget Survey asked residents whether they feel they are getting their money's worth for the taxes they pay for city services. In 2002, almost eight out of ten city residents surveyed (79%) say that they are getting their money's worth for their tax dollar. Only 16% say that they are not getting their money's worth, and 4% say that they don't know.

Each year this question has been asked on a budget survey, a substantial majority of respondents have replied that they are getting their money's worth for their tax dollar. The percentage saying this in 2002 and 2000 is higher than it was in either 1996 or 1998, with the difference between 1996 and 2002 being large enough to be statistically significant (72% in 1996 and 79% in 2002).

**Figure 9-3**  
**Value for Tax Dollar: Trends in Responses**

|                           | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | 2002 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Getting Money's Worth     | 72%  | 73%  | 78%  | 79%  |
| Not Getting Money's Worth | 20%  | 22%  | 16%  | 16%  |
| Don't Know / Refused      | 8%   | 5%   | 6%   | 5%   |

Another question on the Budget Survey offered respondents a choice of tax and service levels and asked them which of three approaches they prefer. Slightly more than three-quarters of survey participants (76%) say they want tax and service levels kept about the same. Fifteen percent (15%) indicate they would prefer to see an increase in service levels and taxes, while six percent (6%) say they want a decrease in tax and service levels. Responses to these questions were similar from 1996 to 2000. The exception is that at 15%, the percentage of those who indicated they want an increase is significantly higher in 2002 than it was in prior years. (By comparison, the percentage saying increase was 9% or 10% in all prior years the question was asked: 1996, 1998, and 2000).

**Figure 9-4**  
**Tax and Service Levels: Trends in Responses**

|                      | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | 2002 |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Keep Where They Are  | 77%  | 74%  | 74%  | 76%  |
| Increase             | 10%  | 10%  | 9%   | 15%  |
| Decrease             | 9%   | 8%   | 9%   | 6%   |
| Don't Know / Refused | 4%   | 8%   | 8%   | 3%   |

### C. DIVERSITY OUTREACH

The diversity discussions engaged 85 residents from 23 different countries. These residents were already participating in several language and cultural awareness programs at various locations throughout the City. We were able to attend many of these programs as "special guests." None of the residents at these programs spoke English as a "first" language.

#### Diversity Population Priorities

Staff provided residents with an overview of Bellevue's service delivery programs and an indication of programs not provided by Bellevue such as libraries and courts. Afterward, residents were asked to "help develop" the City's budget by showing how they would divide \$1.00 among the City's six major program areas. We asked participants to allocate resources according to their own perception of service priority.

The exercise was conducted with the 85 residents who spoke English as a second language. Of the 85, 54 returned the exercise during the meetings.

Figure 9-5 shows the priorities of diversity residents. In this year's exercise, Transportation has emerged as the second priority, just one percentage point higher than Environmental Protection which two years ago was fifth.

**Figure 9-5  
Diversity Residents Budget Priorities**

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Public Safety                | 24% |
| Transportation               | 18% |
| Environmental Protection     | 17% |
| Economic Development         | 16% |
| Parks and Community Services | 14% |
| Neighborhood Preservation    | 11% |

### **Comments From Bellevue's Young People**

We met with 22 representatives from Bellevue's Youth Link Council and with 15 young people from a Bellevue School program called "Proyecto PODER." This alternative program of the Bellevue School District helps to get Hispanic youth back to school and on the road to a better life. It provides support, education, and empowerment to a small number of Bellevue's Hispanic youth, although youth from other countries were present also. The meetings were similar in content to the meetings conducted with Bellevue's adult diversity residents. We briefly described our City services (and those not provided by the City) and listened to the comments and priorities voiced by these participants. Comments from Bellevue's young people ranged from wanting more programs geared to Hispanic youth to the need to have better street lighting. Also, Bellevue youth want more opportunities for recreation and places to go after school and in the evenings. They believe that Bellevue is a clean and relatively safe city.

## **D. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Although only a single public hearing is required by State of Washington code, the City of Bellevue held three public hearings on the 2003-2004 Budget to provide stakeholders multiple opportunities to officially comment on the budget. Two public hearings -- one in May and the other in September -- were held prior to the submission of the Preliminary Budget to the Council. These two public hearings offered residents and other stakeholders the opportunity to let the Council know what issues were important to them before City management leaders formulated their budget request. The third public hearing was held after the Council received the Preliminary Budget. This public hearing gave interested parties the chance to address new budget proposals, comment on significant budget issues, and ask the Council to include funding for initiatives not recommended by City managers.

During the three public hearings, nearly 60 stakeholders addressed the Council. Topics of interest or concern to the stakeholders included funding for human services programs, increased funding for the performing and visual arts, purchase of a new municipal facility, and several road construction projects.