



Human Resources Department

Organizational Development and Training

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From: Organizational Development & Training Office
To: Mayor Paul Soglin and Madison Common Council
RE: **Improving Citizen Involvement—Community Budget Conversations**

OVERVIEW

Mayor Soglin and Council President Lauren Cnare met in the spring of 2011 to discuss ways to improve citizen involvement in the 2012 budget deliberations process. Out of those initial discussions a team of City staff, alders and representatives from the Mayor's Office was formed to develop a process for conducting Community Budget Conversations throughout the City.

Five Community Budget Conversations were held in July and August of 2011. Topics and dates for the conversations were:

Community Development and Services.....	July 26, 2011
Administration	August 1, 2011
Infrastructure.....	August 16, 2011
Community Facilities & Parks (Recreation).....	August 22, 2011
Public Safety	August 31, 2011

Attendance varied, but participant numbers ranged from 50-130 people at each conversation, with an overall estimate of around 550 people taking part in all the conversations.

Along with the conversations, the Budget Process website (www.cityofmadison.com/budgetprocess) was developed to educate people on the budget, provide background on each of the sessions and enable people to complete a web survey. The web survey provided an additional participation opportunity to people who could not attend a specific meeting or who wanted to give feedback on the entire set of City services. Overall, 1,563 commented on some part of the survey, with 731 people "completing" all parts of the survey.

The results are divided into two sections: information gathered from the conversations and information gathered from the web survey. The web survey allowed participants to offer feedback on all City services while the conversations only allowed input on specific departmental services covered by the conversation topic.

The Community Budget Conversations and web survey were intended to be a qualitative experience, and not a representative sampling of the community. Because participation was voluntary, results are not statistically accurate. The feedback from the conversations and the web survey is only one source of input on the budget and will be used in conjunction with other resources; such as public meetings, review and analysis of various censuses, and operational and other departmental data; during the Mayor and Common Council's budget deliberations.

COMMUNITY BUDGET CONVERSATIONS

Process

Participants were educated on the City budget process and provided feedback on the importance of specific values and City services. Participants were asked to take part in a values exercise and to also rate services as “low,” “medium” or “high” importance to “You,” “Your Neighborhood” and “Your City.” At the end of each conversation, there was a discussion on what people had learned and what type of information they would like the Mayor and Common Council to take into account.

The first Community Budget Conversation differed from the other conversations because participants were asked to rank only the top four values and services. Due to participant feedback, there was a process change in how results were collected. In the last four conversations, participants were asked to rank all six value statements and services as “low,” “medium,” or “high.”

Values

The values exercise was used to gather feedback on the importance of specific values to participants. Participants were asked to rate the importance of six core values (Public Space & Community, Growth & Economic Development, Sustainability & Planning, Basic Services & Daily Life, Social Justice & Community Services and Responsibility) that were important to “You,” “Your Neighborhood” and “Your City.”

For more information:

- Appendix I for Description of Values
- Community Budget Conversations Values Results

Services

Participants were asked to rate the importance of various services to “You,” “Your Neighborhood” and “Your City.” Individual department service rankings are provided by conversation category and alphabetical order. The results show the actual number of checkmarks placed in the “low,” “medium” and “high” importance matrix.

The number listed in the conversation services results represents the actual number of checkmarks participants placed on the matrix. Data was also compiled into a list of 30 services by the greatest percentage of total responses that rated them of “high” importance for “Your City” and the 30 services with the lowest percentage rated “high” importance for “Your City.”

For more information:

- Community Budget Conversations Services Results by Category
- Community Budget Conversations Services Results A to Z
- Community Budget Conversations: 30 Services with Greatest Percentage of “High” Importance Rating
- Community Budget Conversations: 30 Services with Lowest Percentage of “High” Importance Rating

WEB SURVEY

Process

The web survey provided an additional participation opportunity to people who could not attend a specific meeting or who wanted to give feedback on the entire set of City services. Overall, 1,563 commented on some part of the survey, with 731 people “completing” all parts of the survey (participants had the choice to skip over sections of survey, so not all parts of the survey were responded to by all participants).

Values

Participants were asked to rank all the values on a matrix of “low,” “medium” and “high” importance to “You,” “Your Neighborhood” and “Your City.” This differs from the ranking of 1-6 offered at the last four conversations. The Values statements are ranked according to the “high” importance to “Your City” responses.

For more information:

- Appendix I for Description of Values
- Web Survey Values Results

Services

Survey participants were able to provide feedback on the key services offered by agencies. Data was compiled into a list of 30 services by the greatest percentage of total responses that rated them of “high” importance for “Your City” and the 30 services with the lowest percentage rated “high” importance for “Your City”. Results are grouped according to conversation topic and also alphabetically. (Compiled responses for the “You” and “Your Neighborhood” sections of the matrix are located in the Web Survey Complete Data.)

For more information:

- Web Survey Services Results by Category
- Web Survey Services Results A to Z
- Web Survey: 30 Services with Greatest Percentage of “High” Importance Rating
- Web Survey: 30 Services with Lowest Percentage of “High” Importance Rating
- Web Survey Complete Data

ATTACHMENTS

- www.cityofmadison.com/budgetprocess
- Community Budget Conversations Services Results by Category
- Community Budget Conversations Services Results A to Z
- Community Budget Conversations: 30 Services with Greatest Percentage of “High” Importance Rating
- Community Budget Conversations: 30 Services with Lowest Percentage of “High” Importance Rating
- Community Budget Conversations Values Results
- Web Survey Services Results by Category
- Web Survey Services Results A to Z
- Web Survey: 30 Services with Greatest Percentage of “High” Importance Rating
- Web Survey: 30 Services with Lowest Percentage of “High” Importance Rating
- Web Survey Values Results
- Web Survey Complete Data

APPENDIX I

Values are the deep-seated beliefs that people, institutions, communities and societies share. Values identify things and processes within which a community will invest time, energy, money and resources to bring about change.

Basic Services and Daily Life focuses on improving the delivery of public services, including: individual and community safety, fire prevention and suppression, emergency response services, public health initiatives, public transportation options, affordable housing and supportive neighborhood, senior, youth, child and family service.

Growth and Economic Development focuses on creating a healthy and diverse business climate by promoting and attracting economic development; fostering job creation and employment; supporting business friendly policies and expanding regional business development initiatives.

Public Space and Community focuses on maximizing the aesthetic beauty and use of public and open spaces for community recreational and cultural opportunities, free expression and community building.

Responsibility focuses on fiscal and social responsibility including sound financial decision-making, practices and policies, equal opportunity and equal provision of services to all citizens.

Social Justice and Community Services focuses on ensuring that all citizens have access to basic services, and that policies and practices support diversity and the opportunity for everyone to realize their full potential.

Sustainability and Planning focuses on long-term solutions and planning for the future, including: balanced land use; infill development; decision-making based on environmental, economic and sustainability principles that support preservation, conservation and sustainable expansion of the natural and human built environment.

