

CITY OF WAHPETON

CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS

2007



Citizen Survey Results

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2007 Citizen Survey is the third for the City of Wahpeton. This annual survey is meant to provide the City Council and other entities with information pertaining to resident satisfaction, their desires, and characteristics. One of the main reasons the citizens survey was implemented was to gauge citizen feelings regarding the efficient and effective delivery of certain city services. It should be understood that the City wants to gather information on a variety of topics pertaining to life within the City but makes no claim that it can effect change in all areas measured or be directly responsible for the results contained herein. A City cannot be truly effective unless there is a healthy marriage between public, private and non-for-profit organizations.

It is timed so the results can be presented to the City Council at their annual retreat. The annual retreat is the main strategic planning session for the City Council. The retreat is designed to provide as much information to the City Council as possible and then have Council members establish priorities for the City in the upcoming year/s. The creation of the City budget and departmental goals are completed with the resulting priorities.

The survey should be viewed as a City scorecard that provides a reliable cross-section of our residents. Since this is the third Citizen Survey, comparisons can be made to previous survey results to track trends.

This year's survey was shortened from ten pages to seven and more space for general comments was created. Don't Know and Neutral responses were eliminated as an option in several of the survey questions to force residents to choose a response that indicates more value than a neutral response. Each question was evaluated by the City's Leadership Team and approved by the City Council before it was sent to citizens. Comparisons to the 2005 and 2006 surveys can still be made in most major categories.

HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

800 households were selected at random to participate in the survey conducted in late January - early February. The public utilities database was used to generate the 800 selected households. Every third address on the list was mailed a survey. The drawback of using the utilities database is apartment dwellers and other renters may not receive a survey.

The survey was made available to any resident who chose to complete one. City staff mailed two and two others were picked up at City Hall.

The survey (see Appendix) was sent the third week in January with a return date of February 10, 2007. Stamped, self-addressed envelopes were not included in the survey packet. Residents were asked to return the survey instrument to City Hall. They could mail the survey back, drop it off at City Hall or drop it into the utility billing drop box.

103 completed surveys were returned for a return rate of 13%. This falls well below the initial return rate of over 40% and last years return rate of close to 25%. This declining trend is alarming and suggests steps need to be taken to increase the return rate in future years.

Shortening the survey this year was an attempt to increase the return rate. Other communities who have sent similar surveys mail a postcard to all selected residents before receipt of the actual survey. On the postcard they are notified that they have been selected to participate in the survey, the importance of the results to the City Council and whether or not they will complete the survey and return it. If they chose not to participate in the survey they are asked to call or email a city staff member and that address is replaced with another from the database. Several options will be considered and implemented before next year's survey.

STRENGTHS

Knowing and then celebrating a City's strengths is so very important. The positive results from this survey can be used to promote the community in the region and nationally. They can be used to build community spirits, attract new businesses and develop a niche.

It is quite clear that residents in Wahpeton feel very safe. Several questions related to feelings of safety ranked very high. In fact, the highest positive rating received on this years survey was a 99% of respondents who answered they felt Very Safe/Somewhat safe in the City of Wahpeton during the day. Feelings of safety from fire (96%) and being in the City after dark (85%) received the highest ratings ever when compared to previous year's surveys.

An average of 83% of respondents indicated that the City of Wahpeton is an excellent/good place to live & raise children. 88% of respondents also rated their neighborhood as an excellent/good place to live, the highest rating for survey years.

OPPORTUNITIES

Isaac Asimov once said "If knowledge can create problems, it is not through ignorance that we can solve them." Understanding that no person and certainly no City is perfect the following opportunities were reported in this year's survey.

Shopping opportunities has been reported the lowest satisfaction ratings for three years running. In 2005, 6% of respondents rated shopping opportunities in the City as Excellent/Good. In 2006 that number more than doubled to 15% and in 2007 that number remained at 15%.

The largest decline in satisfaction came in the area of dilapidated structures. The question asked respondents to indicate whether or not Run down buildings, weed lots or junk vehicles were a problem - 31% said they were Not a Problem/Minor Problem. This represents a drop of 29% points compared to the score of 60% in 2006.

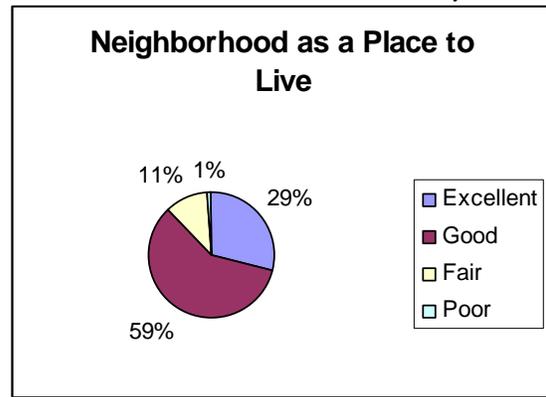
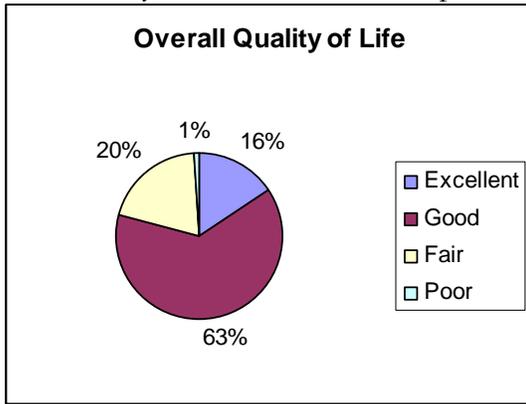
The City spent more resources (time and money) on the elimination of dilapidated properties in 2006 than it has in the past decade and the announcement and commencement of the construction of a Wal-Mart, the most requested store in last years survey, also occurred in 2006.

2007 CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS

The results of this year’s survey will be provided first and then a comparison will be made with previous surveys. The resulting trend will be emphasized in this manner of reporting.

QUALITY OF LIFE

76% of respondents feel the overall quality of life in the City is Excellent/Good and only 1% felt it was Poor. 88% feel their neighborhood is an excellent/good place to live, 85% think the City is an Excellent/Good place to raise their children and 77% think the City is an

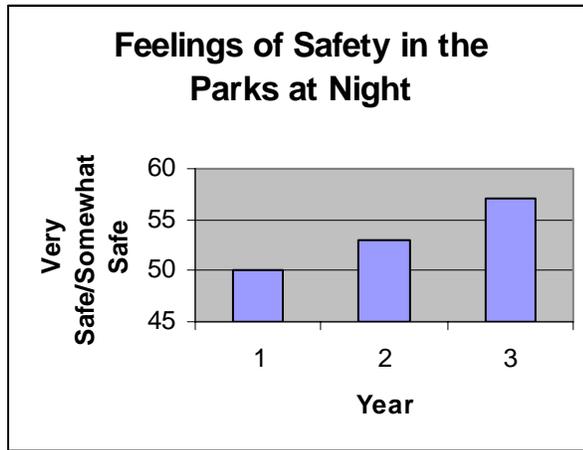
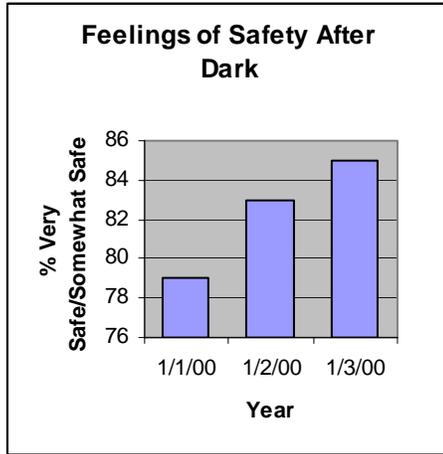


excellent/Good place to live.

SAFETY

Safety is one of the strongest rating areas in this year’s survey. Improvements were reported in overall crime, drugs, and fire related areas. Feelings of safety all showed very strong results. Most notably with respondents rating their feeling of safety after dark and after dark in the park system, these were at their highest recorded levels.

Due to rounding, some totals expressed as a percentage may equal more or less than 100%.



CITY SERVICES

City Services are grouped into a few distinguishable categories and each has their own particular interaction with the residents of Wahpeton. Strengths are considered anything with an approval (Excellent/Good) rating over 60% and Opportunities will be defined as approval ratings of less than 25%. The following results measure the perceptions of the respondents.

As a general rule satisfaction of services provided by political entities is most positive at the closest level of government to the people. In other words when you compare the satisfaction of services provided by the federal government to those services offered by Park Boards, the services offered by Park Boards are considered more favorably. The breakdown for our area based on the respondents is:

Park and Recreation	82%
City of Wahpeton	67%
State Government	54%
Federal Government	50%

Administration & Planning

This year's survey saw some changes in the Administration category. The addition of Planning was added to the title and two new questions were added. This year's survey will serve as the benchmark for future comparisons. Two opportunities exist in this area:

Revitalizing Downtown	10%
Managing Annexations, Zoning & Growth	24%

Economic Development

This year's survey also brought some changes in this category as well so this year will also serve as the benchmark for comparison in future years. Six opportunities for growth exist in this area:

Housing Development	19%
Attracting New Businesses	5%
Attracting/Assisting Business Start-ups	12%
Business Expansion & Retention	17%
Finance Programs	16%
Marketing the Community	21%

Fire

The same questions were asked this year as in past years. There was one strength:

Responding to fire calls	81%
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Library

There were no changes to the questions related to the Library and no strengths and weaknesses per the above definition were delineated. It is noteworthy that in the five satisfaction questions asked, over 30%, on average, chose not to answer the questions. This high number of "no answers" is unusual. The average number of "no answers" is 16% across the rest of the departmental satisfaction questions.

Police

There were no changes in the questions pertaining to the Police department. There was one strength:

Responding to citizen calls	60%
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Public Works

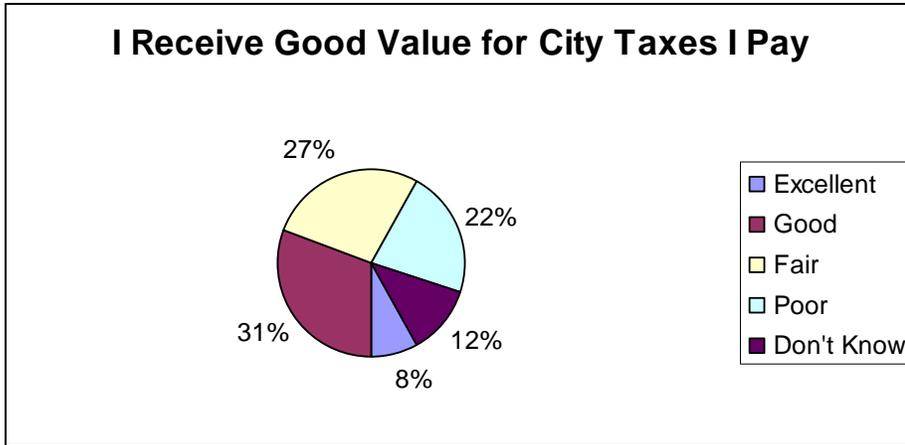
There were no changes in the questions pertaining to the Public Works area. Two areas of strength were noted:

Providing quality drinking water	66%
Providing quality sewer services	76%

TAXATION

Balancing the amount and quality of services with the cost of those services and the impact that cost has on taxpayers is one of the most difficult propositions for elected

officials. The landscape is made more difficult when you consider property taxes are made up of several taxing entities, the big three being Cities, Counties, and School Districts. In an attempt to find out how respondents think the City Council is doing with this balance the following question “I receive good value for the City taxes I pay” is asked.



MISCELLANEOUS

There were specific questions asked this year that may not appear on future citizen surveys. They were asked to obtain information on very specific questions. In order to determine if citizens would prefer an alternate City Council meeting time to try and see if more citizens would attend council meetings the following question was asked:

If the City Council meeting were held in the evening (7:00 p.m.) would you attend?

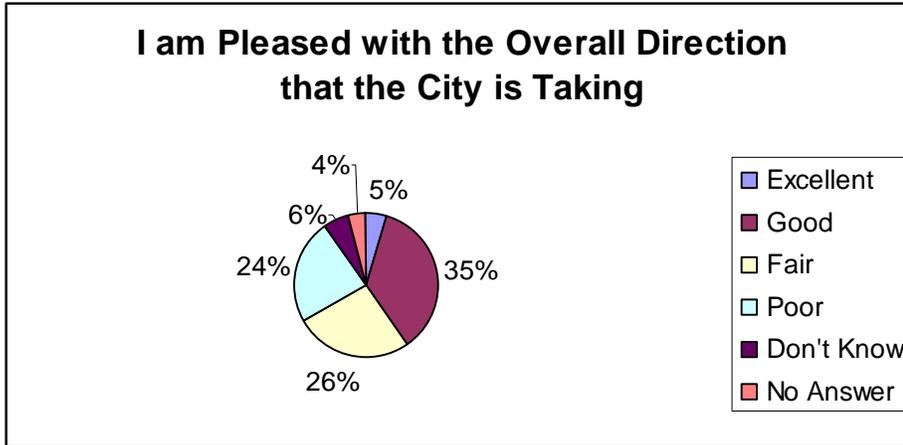
Yes 11% No 65% No Answer 25%

Another specific question that appeared on this year’s survey was related to the use of public funds to support the Arts. The “Arts” was defined loosely as “Art related activities may include painting, poetry, theatre, sculpting, public art displays/monuments, etc.” There were no dollar values attached or public revenue stream identified.

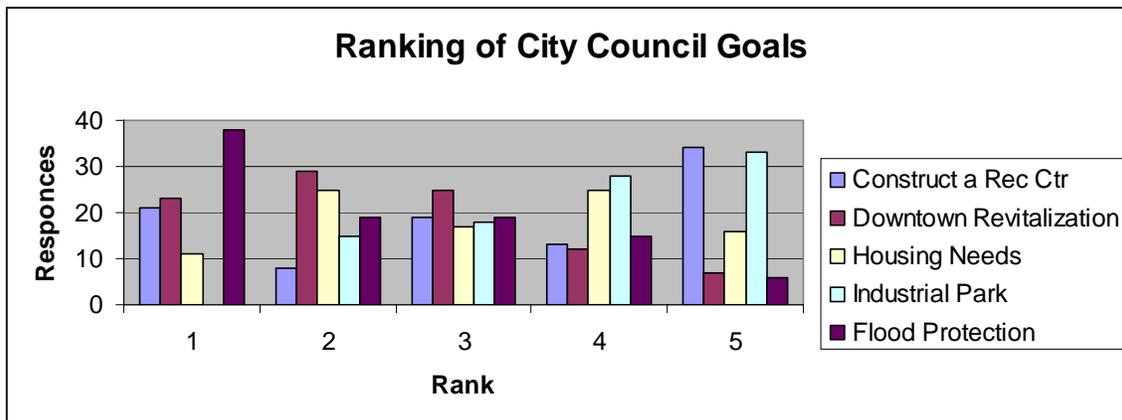
Yes 24% No 73% No Answer 3%

COUNCIL GOALS VS CITIZEN OPINION

This section seeks to compare the established City Council Goals and the desires of the citizens using the results of the citizen’s survey. One direct question is asked on the survey relating to the direction the City is taking with the following results:



Respondents were asked to provide their ranking of current City Council goals. The chart below shows the number of responses each Council Goal received and the rank each respondent placed that goal in. The City Council Goals named in the legend are in the order of priority the City Council placed upon them (Construct a Recreation Center #1, Create a Downtown Revitalization Plan #2, etc.).



By listing the prioritized City Council goals and comparing them with the areas in which the citizens feel the City has the most room for improvement you get the following results:

2005

<u>City Council Goals</u>	<u>Citizen Opinions</u>
1. Make a Decision on the Recreation Center	Shopping Opportunities
2. Continue Flood Mitigation Efforts	Lack of Growth
3. Recommit to Crime Prevention/Drug Enforcement	Opportunities to Attend Cultural Events
4. Research Library Program Enhancement	Job Opportunities
5. Implement Geographic Information Systems	Access to Affordable, Quality Housing & Child Care

2006

- 1. Financial Plan for Flood Mitigation Shopping Opportunities
- 2. Study Industrial Park Creation Access to Quality Child Care
- 3. Implement Realignment of Duties Lack of Growth
- 4. Construct a Recreation Center Job Opportunities
- 5. Decrease Drug/Substance Abuse by Supporting SEMCA Opportunities to Attend Cultural Events
- 6. Develop a Sidewalk Plan Access to Affordable Housing

2007

- 1. Construct a Recreation Center Shopping Opportunities
- 2. Create a Downtown Redevelopment Plan Job Opportunities
- 3. Address Housing Needs Access to Quality Child Care
- 4. Create Industrial Park Overall Appearance of the City

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Completion of the Citizen Survey was not only optional but anonymous. Respondents were provided the opportunity to identify themselves if they so chose. A list of survey respondents is provided in the Appendix.

As stated earlier the Citizen Survey is not only administered anonymously but randomly. It is this effort that tries to assure the relativity of respondents to the citizenry as a whole. Several questions are asked to establish some characteristics of the population.

- Are you currently employed? Yes 67% No 3% Retired 29%
- 89% Live in a single family home 8% Live in duplex/townhomes
- 14% Have kids under the age of 12 living in their household
- 13% Have kids between the ages of 13 and 17 living in their household
- 31% Have someone over the age of 68 living in their household
- 15% Have someone living in their household with a physical handicap (self-defined)
- 2% American Indian 93% White/Caucasian 5% Other

The highest degree completed for the respondent was:

2% Doctoral 11% Master's 24% Bachelor's 31% Associate's 4% Some College

The anticipated household income before taxes was:

5% Over \$100,000 14% \$75,000-\$99,999 31% \$50,000-\$74,999

23% \$25,000-\$49,999 11% Less than \$24,999 16% No Answer

Age of respondents was:

0% 18-24 6% 25-34 10% 35-44 41% 45-54 41% 55-64

3% 65-74 0% 75+

40% Female 58% Male 3% No Answer

If you would run for local elected office, which would interest you?

10% City Council 5% Park Board 1% School Board

4% County Commission 69% None 12% No Answer

COMPARISONS TO PREVIOUS YEARS

	Excellent/Good Rating		
	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>
How do you rate the City of Wahpeton as a place to live?	78%	82%	77%
How do you rate your neighborhood as a place to live?	82%	86%	88%
How do you rate the City as a place to raise children?	84%	86%	85%
How do you rate the overall quality of life in the City?	78%	80%	76%
How do you rate the City of Wahpeton as a place to retire?	45%	44%	46%
Sense of Community	59%	64%	56%
Openness/Acceptance of people with diverse backgrounds	43%	44%	43%
Overall Appearance of the City	59%	63%	38%
Opportunities to Attend Cultural Activities	33%	36%	42%
Shopping Opportunities	6%	15%	15%
Air Quality	62%	64%	39%

Recreational Opportunities	45%	52%	57%
Job Opportunities	34%	36%	33%
Access to Affordable, Quality Housing	37%	38%	39%
Access to Affordable, Quality Child Care	37%	26%	37%
Access to Affordable, Quality Health Care	61%	71%	70%
Ease of Car Travel in the City of Wahpeton	82%	74%	81%
Ease of Bicycle Travel in the City of Wahpeton	52%	41%	49%
Ease of Walking in the City of Wahpeton	62%	59%	62%
	Not a Problem/Minor Problem		
Crime	45%	58%	64%
Drugs	8%	13%	21%
Too much Growth	83%	85%	88%
Lack of Growth	29%	32%	32%
	Not a Problem/Minor Problem		
	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>
Graffiti	83%	86%	84%
Noise	78%	79%	74%
Run Down Buildings, weed lots, or Junk Vehicles	59%	60%	31%
Traffic Congestion	86%	94%	92%
Unsupervised Youth	49%	61%	53%
Consistent & Offensive Odors	44%	55%	34%
Sidewalk Quality & Quantity	52%	47%	46%
	Very Safe/Somewhat Safe		
Violent Crime (i.e. Rape, Assault, Robbery)	88%	91%	84%
Property Crime (i.e. Burglary, theft)	73%	83%	71%
Fire	93%	95%	96%

In your Neighborhood during the Day	98%	100%	98%
In your Neighborhood after Dark	88%	90%	90%
In the City of Wahpeton during the Day	88%	100%	99%
In the City of Wahpeton area after Dark	79%	83%	85%
In the City of Wahpeton's Parks during the Day	96%	95%	95%
In the City of Wahpeton's Parks at Night	50%	53%	57%

Bolded items indicate a rising trend for all survey years

Italics items indicate 2007 was the lowest score for all years, not including ties

APPENDIX

- Citizen Survey Instrument
- Written Comments