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From the City Manager: Here are just a few updates from this short, summer week...

July 4th Debrief: Many City staff worked to make last weekend’s Fourth of July Celebration safe and fun. They reported that everything went well, though there were fewer people in attendance than has been seen in prior years. The internal planning team will meet to debrief, and we will begin to consider plans for future years. With the pandemic disrupting traditions, households may have found other routines for the Fourth, and it may make sense to study the day of the week that the Fireworks occur and to continue to consider the location.

Those who did attend had high praise for the event. Staff were pleased to receive thanks from the community for a well-planned event (see below for quotes). Most of all, we were happy that the whole community celebrated safely. Thanks also to Festival Foods, who sponsored the fireworks.

- “It was great to see all the families that came after the game enjoy the evening sitting and playing on the field. Seeing all the firework mishaps on the national news, I have a big appreciation for leaving things to the professionals. It was an AMAZING show, and all the families I talked to had a great time.”
- “The fireworks were wonderful. Thanks for all the preparation and for keeping us safe. I truly enjoyed my time at Carson Park!”
- “Best fireworks show I’ve seen in a long time! Thank you!”

Council Action on ARPA, Referendum, and Budgets: Just as a reminder, this Monday, 7/11, will be a Public Discussion on the proposed ARPA spending. We have reached out to prior community members who commented to let them know. Please spread the word as well among your constituents.

- **July 11th:** Public Discussion on ARPA spending (as well as a Hearing on proposed TID 15 creation)
- **July 12th:** For Tuesday’s meeting, we plan to present for your consideration:
 - Resolution indicating intent to pursue referendum (with specific language to be determined on July 25th)

- Proposed ARPA spending for Phase I.
- July 19th: We moved the first work session for the operating budget to the meeting on July 19th, to be considered along with the CIP budget.
- July 25th: Baker Tilly consultant Don Lifo will answer Q&As for the Council, followed by a Public Discussion period. Please see attached for final batch of data from Baker Tilly.
- July 26th: Finalize Ballot Question language.

Odor and Noise Complaints Related to Manufacturing: With the summer weather resulting in open windows and higher humidity, we have received complaints about odor. On a day like this past Wednesday, when there was a low cloud coverage and high humidity, a smell of rubber could be detected across the area around downtown and Boyd Park. Residents have expressed concerns about odors they believe come from American Phoenix, which is an industrial rubber mixing company inside the Banbury complex. Residents can contact the Health Department with odor concerns, though the DNR regulates emissions. For more information, please contact: Matt Steinbach, Health Department Environmental Sciences Division Manager, Matt.Steinbach@co.eau-claire.wi.us, 715-839-5092. Matt explained what happens when he receives a complaint: “In these instances, we typically play the role of connector, facilitating discussions between constituents, WDNR, and American Phoenix staff. WDNR has indicated to us in the past that they were working to resolve the odor issues through the development and implementation of an odor management plan. Meanwhile, American Phoenix has requested that residents notify them of active odor issues in a timely manner to help promptly locate the source in the operations.”

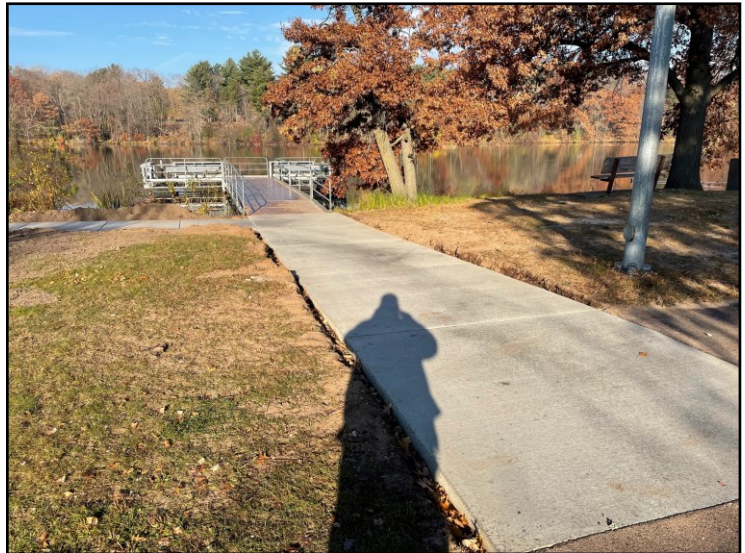
Residents have also asked about how to issue noise complaints related to industrial and manufacturing activity. Staff noted that, in the past, it has sometimes proved hard to identify the origin of the noise, in particular because the shape of Eau Claire with valleys and hills creates acoustic mysteries, with sounds not always coming from where they seem like they are coming from. However, the Health Department will investigate when it receives requests, so please reach out.

Owen Park Shout-Out: Council Member Christopherson passed along a note of appreciation that she received, and we, in turn shared it with staff. The constituent wrote: “Last year I reached out to you about my safety concern in Owen Park. The uneven terrain between the street and the seating area had worried me, especially given the age of a lot of folks who enjoy the Municipal Band concerts (I play in the band). The week before I reached out a woman had actually fallen and been taken away in an ambulance. You connected me with some folks from the



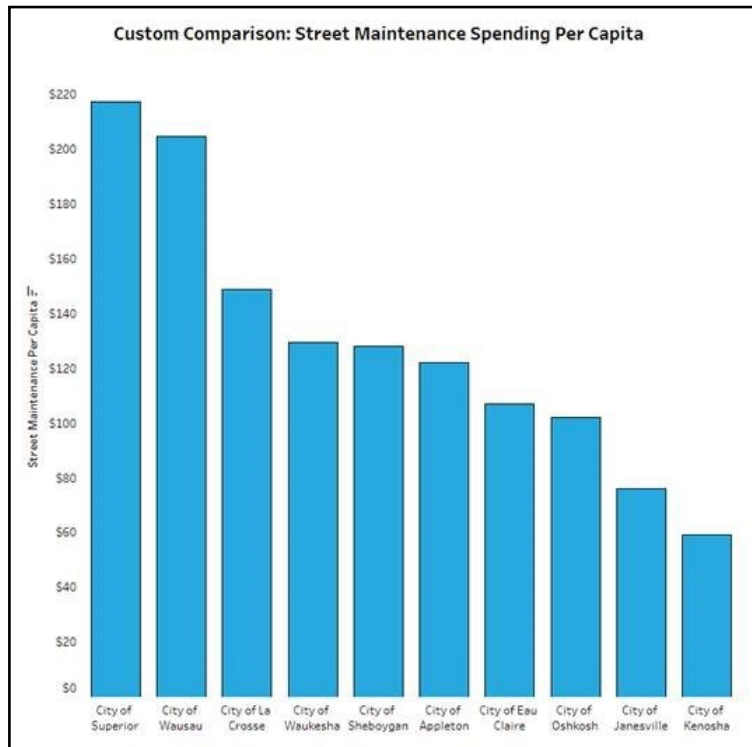
City who contacted me for further details. There is now a BEAUTIFUL SIDEWALK which provides safe passage from the street to the seating area!!!! I'm writing to thank you for your prompt response to my concern last year! I'm beyond impressed at the responsiveness of the City as well. I've no doubt that this walkway will prevent other injuries moving forward. I'm very grateful 🙌🙌🙌!"

Steve Plaza shared that the work completed was completed by the Parks Department and Engineering Department, working together with \$250,000 in CIP monies for ADA improvements in our parks. He said: "This sidewalk was one of many ADA improvements to help people get access to many of our park amenities with sidewalks and curb cuts throughout our system. We made improvements in Demmler Park, Owen Park, Brauns Bay, Jeffers Park, McDonough Park, Carson Park, and Birch Pavilion with the ADA funds. John Lofgren and Christien Huppert were our key staff members who have been working with this project over the past three years. Our funds



will be expended this year but the program was such a success that I will be request future funds for our upcoming CIP cycle." Pictured here are two improvements.

Street Maintenance Dollars: As a follow on to the discussion about street quality, one of the team working on performance management shared this graph, which can be generated using the tools located here: Wisconsin Policy Forum website at [Wisconsin Policy Forum | Municipal DataTool \(wispolicyforum.org\)](https://www.wispolicyforum.org/) In Eau Claire, residents' opinions of streets are HIGHER than national averages. Meanwhile, spending is LOWER than the many other Wisconsin communities – way to go Streets and Engineering for your work doing so much with the limited resources we have!



Employee Spotlight:

Here's our next Employee Spotlight! (Feel free to highlight someone using this form: [Spotlight Form.](#))

This week's spotlight is for **Carrie Riepl**! One of Carrie's co-workers said this about Carrie: *"Awesome to work with. Knows the answer to basically every question. Is always prepared. Works like a machine. Is extremely pleasant to talk to. Very kind."*



Here's a little bit more about Carrie:

- **Position:** "I have worked for the City for 11 years, currently as City Clerk and in HR for six years before that. When I first started as Clerk, I knew very little about elections - I have learned a lot in the last five years!"
- **What people may not know:** "In November my mother-in-law moved in with us and we moved to a new home."
- **Favorite Activity:** "I love spending time with family and friends, most of which is spent at softball fields with my daughter this time of year."
- **Best part about working for the City:** "Being a part of a team that cares about the community and each other. We have dedicated and caring people throughout the organization that are willing to help when needed."
- **Life philosophy:** "Be positive and do the best to your ability. The world works because we are all different and have different things we are good at doing or being."

Council Calendar

- Monday, July 11:
 - Public Discussion on ARPA and Public Hearing on TID 15
- Tuesday, July 12:
 - Resolution to appropriate ARPA funding for items that have been discussed (Council may amend resolution or postpone and/or may ask for another public discussion for 7/25)
 - Resolution indicating Council's support for a referendum, with specific ballot language to be decided on July 26
- July 19:
 - City Council CIP Budget work session #2
 - 2023 Operating Budget Parameters work session (moved from 7/12)
- Monday, July 25:
 - Public discussion of Referendum
 - Work session: Q&A on Referendum with Baker Tilly Consultant Don Lifto to finalize specific language for ballot

- Tuesday, July 26:
 - Resolution finalizing referendum ballot language
 - Council CIP Budget work session #3
- Monday, August 8th: Public discussion for 2023-2027 Proposed CIP
- Tuesday, August 9th: City Council adopts 2023-2027 Proposed CIP
- Saturday, October 1st: City Council receives 2023 Proposed Operating Budget
- Tuesday, October 4th: Operating Budget work session #1
- Monday, October 10th: Public Hearing on the Proposed Operating Budget
- Tuesday, October 11th: Operating Budget work session #2
- Tuesday, October 18th: Operating Budget work session #3
- Tuesday, October 25th: Operating Budget work session – amendment discussion
- Tuesday, November 1st: Budget amendments due Monday, November 7th: Public Hearing on 2023 Proposed Operating Budget
- Tuesday, November 8th: City Council action on 2023 Proposed Operating Budget
- Tuesday, November 22rd: City Council action on levy

Upcoming Events:

- McDonough Park Re-Dedication, July 11

Stephanie A. Hirsch
City Manager

Attached: Additional Referendum Survey data from Consultant



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Community Survey – Open-Ended Responses

Prepared for the

City of Eau Claire

July 2022

City of Eau Claire
Community Survey – Open-Ended Responses
July 2022

Introduction

This report is intended to supplement Baker Tilly’s analysis of the community survey we recently performed for the City of Eau Claire. It includes a review of the comments given by participants in response to the survey’s open-ended question. Our survey included a random sample of 306 registered voters in the City, who were contacted between June 1st and June 10th.

One open-ended probe was included in our interviews. Early in the City’s section of the survey, before participants were asked whether they would support or oppose a proposal to raise local taxes, they were asked, “If you could change one thing about living in Eau Claire, what you would change?”

Not every participant had specific thoughts to share. Of the 306 people interviewed, 61 (18%) responded with variations of “I don’t know” or “no comment.” An additional 14 people showed confusion about the question and offered criticisms of the School District instead of the City. The remaining 231 participants cited 259 things they would change (some people offered more than one thing to change).

While the overall results in our other reports used weighting factors to adjust responses to arrive at a representative sample, such weighting is not applicable to the open-ended responses in this analysis. As a result, it would be appropriate to approach this report as a qualitative look at the most common issues on people’s minds.

The pages which follow include a summary of the responses offered for the open-ended question and a brief discussion of the most-mentioned topics.

Things to Change

When participants were asked what they would change about living in Eau Claire, the top answer was a positive: people who stated they had no changes to make. These “nothing to change” responses are distinct from the 61 “I don’t know” responses referenced in the introduction to this report.

Following this topic there was a wide variety of topics which were cited by numerous participants. The most-mentioned topics included:

Amenities: this topic included requests for more options for dining, shopping, community events and entertainment.

Taxes: this category included comments about high taxes.

Housing: these participants mentioned high costs for renting or purchasing a home, and a desire for more affordable housing options.

Policies: this category included City Council and senior leaders at City Hall, policy decisions, spending and budget priorities.

Streets: this topic included street maintenance, snow plowing and traffic issues.

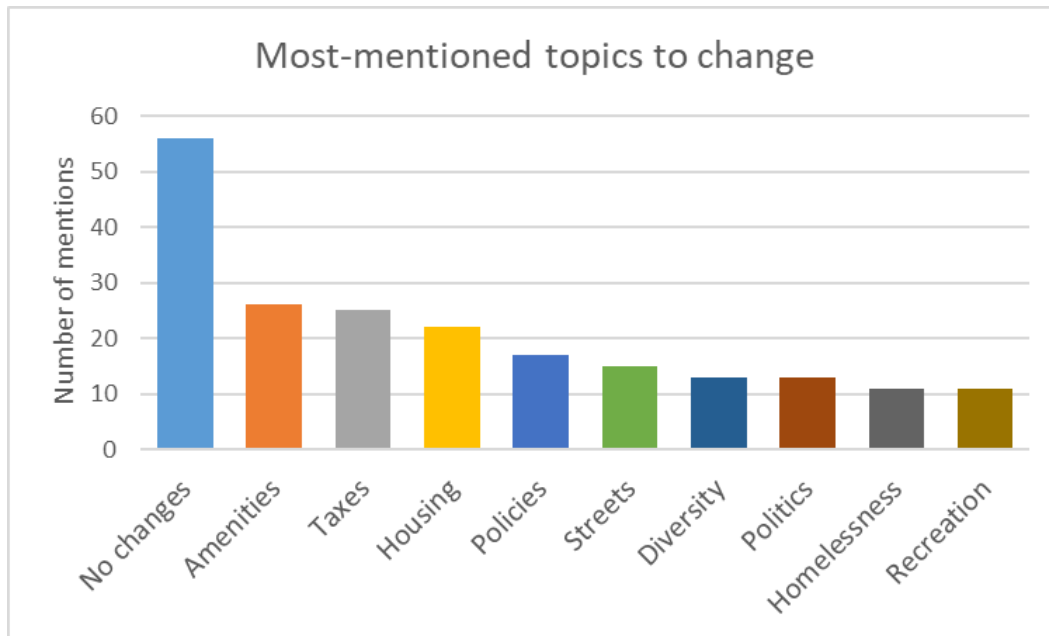
Diversity: this included wishes for the City to become more diverse and to be more accepting of diverse residents.

Politics: of the 13 respondents in this group, 9 said the City was too liberal, 2 said it was too conservative, and 2 said the local climate was too political in general.

Homelessness: one response in this group thought that the City devoted too many resources to the homeless; the rest thought the City should provide more services and resources to address homelessness in the community.

Term	Frequency
No changes	56
Amenities	26
Taxes	25
Housing	22
Policies	17
Streets	15
Diversity	13
Politics	13
Homelessness	11
Recreation	11

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Recreation: participants in this category wanted more walking and biking trails as well as activities for young people.

The ten categories above cover the most-mentioned topics we heard in our interviews. These categories incorporate more than 80% of the responses we received. There were numerous additional topics mentioned by our participants, which we summarize below:

General: these respondents replied with non-specific comments about changing the City in general.

Transportation: this group wanted to see more options for buses and public transportation.

Crime/safety: this included concerns about drug use, crime, and being able to feel safe in public areas of the City.

Environment: this included references to water quality and taking care of local water resources, as well as references to litter and cleaning up after pets.

Cost of living: this category included those concerned about rising costs for fuel, groceries, and other essentials.

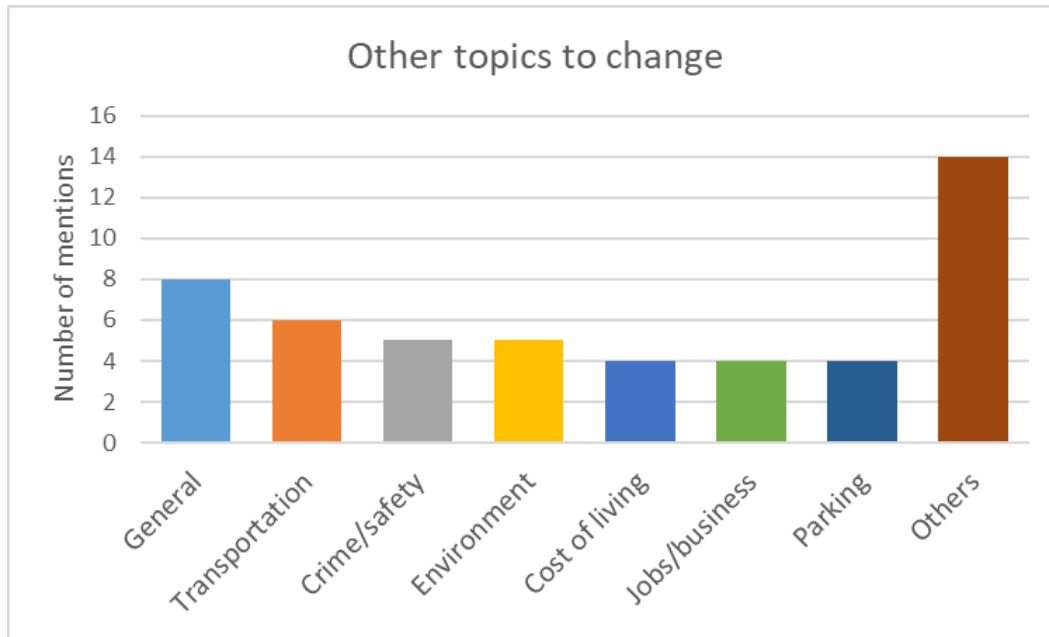
Jobs/business: these responses were related to a desire for more jobs in the community and making it easier to start new businesses.

Parking: these participants mentioned a need for more parking in popular areas of the city such as Water Street and Phoenix Park.

Term	Frequency
General	8
Transportation	6
Crime/safety	5
Environment	5
Cost of living	4
Jobs/business	4
Parking	4
Others	14

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Others: this was a catch-all category for topics mentioned in only one or two interviews. It included a wide array of subjects, from population growth to weather to medical facilities and architecture.



Closing

We hope that this review of the most common topics extracted from the survey's open-ended question proves useful to the City as it reviews the overall survey responses and plans its next steps.