

GRANGEVILLE COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT



December, 2016

Executive Summary

In the fall of 2015 the City Council established a survey committee to gather community input on the strengths and weaknesses of Grangeville. Committee members were nominated by Council and served on a volunteer basis. The survey was developed through consensus with the underlying methodology approved by Council.

City services were rated as satisfactory in over 3/4 of the areas. The highest ratings were fire, clerk, police, and library. The lowest ratings were sidewalks and curbs, streets, and ordinances.

Community services were rated as needing improvement in 2/3 of the areas. The highest ratings were hospital & ambulance, professional services, and school facilities. The lowest ratings were community & youth centers, retail stores, and retiree services & housing.

Two of the three revenue options presented as ways to close potential funding shortfalls were supported (Limited Option Tax; business tax incentives to build the tax base). The LID was moderately **not** supported.

The survey design was generally sound, and the distribution and data collection efficient and cost-effective. The response rate was relatively low and did not reflect 2010 Census data.

Although survey findings should not be extrapolated to the Grangeville population as a whole, the surveys do provide actionable information the Council can use to further explore community strengths and weaknesses. The survey should be incorporated into the City's strategic planning and budgeting processes and documents.

Methodology

Developing the Survey

The Grangeville City Council established a survey work group including current and past Grangeville City Council members (Council) and volunteers from the community who had been nominated and reviewed by Council members. The work group was tasked with developing a survey that would satisfy the requirements of the Gem Community program; the last related effort occurred in the late 1980s. It was noted that the Gem Community program, particularly an up-to-date one, could be an effective reference for writing grants and competing for other funding streams. It could also serve to guide and inform City Council priorities.

The work group (“Group”) met in Council chambers several times during the fall/winter of 2015/16 to design and test the survey. Academic literature was researched to weigh the pros & cons of different approaches, such as telephonic or in-person surveys, focus groups, and written surveys.¹ The approach chosen was to develop a written survey using focus groups, and distribute the survey through the monthly City utility bill. Written surveys are cost-effective, allows for a systematic distribution of the survey, and provides for a relatively detailed assessment of survey topics. Written surveys tend to suffer from relatively low response rates and can be confusing or intimidating to respondents unfamiliar or suspicious of surveys.

Preserving respondent anonymity and keeping the costs of the survey low were key considerations. Although coding the surveys to correspond with actual households (which would allow targeted follow-ups to households that not responded) was possible, it was decided coding would be viewed as undermining anonymity and undermine participation. Additional mailings would also have increased costs. Accordingly, follow-up beyond the first mailing was not a part of the survey strategy.

In designing the survey, the Group reviewed surveys used in other Idaho communities, while incorporating the unique attributes of Grangeville. The draft survey, and the distribution/methodology strategy, were also shared with Clearwater Economic Development Association (CEDA) for additional comments. The draft survey was presented to the Council, and then given to approximately 40 Grangeville residents selected by Group members to test the survey for readability and potential problems. Some minor corrections were made to the survey, but otherwise the survey was deemed ready for distribution. The survey is included as Appendix A.

¹ O’Sullivan, Rassel, Berner. Research Methods for Public Administrators. Longman. Fourth Edition. 2003.

Although the survey focused on services and infrastructure directly controlled by the City of Grangeville, the Group decided to include services and infrastructure controlled by other entities (i.e. the hospital and school district) as these are key areas of interest to Grangeville residents. Since decision making for these entities was outside the City's direct jurisdiction, the "Priority" scoring column was omitted on the survey for these non-City entities.

Distributing and Coding the Survey

Prior to its distribution, the survey was explained and advertised through a front-cover story in the *Idaho County Free Press*; the story included supporting comments by the Mayor and Council members. The survey was distributed with the April, 2016 utility bills. Some were returned through the mail, but most were dropped off in person at City Hall. A large majority of the completed surveys were returned within the first two months, with a few additional ones trickling in through July.

Survey results were recorded in Microsoft Excel by City Clerk staff. Survey responses were assigned an integer number (i.e. 1, 2, or 3) corresponding to the nature of the response. For example, a survey response of "Needs Improvement" was coded a 1, "Satisfactory" a 2, "Very Good" a 3. Responses in the "Priority" column were assigned a number by the respondent (1 = Critical; 2 = Important; 3 = Less Important); the numbers were transposed directly to the spreadsheet. An electronic copy of the survey results spreadsheet is available at City Hall.

Upon receipt by the Clerk, each survey was assigned a number for easy reference within the results spreadsheet. An audit of several dozen surveys and their corresponding spreadsheet inputs was conducted by survey Group members to validate data entry accuracy. A very small number of data entry errors were found and corrected, and the tabulated results were deemed sufficient for analysis.

The Survey also solicited written comments. The Group reviewed comments and developed a method of categorizing those with sufficient detail to warrant additional consideration. The full tally of these comments is provided in Appendixes B and C.

Survey Data

The sample

1200 surveys were distributed to city utility customers. 285² surveys were returned, achieving a response rate of approximately 24%. Based on a sampling of academic research, this is

² The final four surveys were returned after the data set had already been established & are not included in the data used in the report. The surveys returned were from older age group respondents and generally reflected the

somewhat to the low side of typical mailed response rates. The response rate may have improved if additional follow-up measures – such as post card reminders or media outreaches – were pursued. As previously discussed, the costs of those efforts and the possible threat to the anonymity of survey respondents precluded the use of these follow-up strategies.

Survey respondents varied considerably from the actual Grangeville population. The 2010 Census indicated the ratio of citizens in the 18-44-year-old group to those 45 and older was approximately 3 to 4. In contrast, the survey response ratio was one survey of the younger (under 45 years old) cohort, to 6.5 of the older.³

Because of the under-representation of the younger population, the survey may be biased toward older respondents.

Due to these sampling limitations, survey findings should not be generalized to the overall population of Grangeville. Findings are limited to the opinions of the respondents and may be affected by other factors. Other factors may include respondent misunderstanding of questions and the fact that those who responded were those who chose to respond. The opinions of non-respondents, and their reasons for not responding, are unknown.

Despite these limitations, the survey is still a useful tool for policy makers. Information from the survey will be helpful for investigating areas where Grangeville can improve. The completion this survey may also improve the quality of external funding submissions such as grants.

Data consolidation decisions and data representation

The original data analysis plan envisioned testing survey responses across four age categories, home ownership, business ownership, three household sizes, and three groupings for numbers of children in the household. After testing these combinations across nearly half of the survey data, it became apparent that the clear majority of these combinations either had too few responses or were inconsequential to the overall average score of the survey question.

For this report, results were consolidated to those under age 45 versus those 45 and older; homeowners and non-homeowners; business owners and non-business owners; and households with children and those without children.

Survey data was collected and coded in a Likert scale fashion (i.e. “needs improvement” = 1, “satisfactory” = 2).⁴ A “2” is not twice as good as “1”. Results are reported as averages (the

answers received from similar surveys. Excluding these surveys had no material impact on the findings. Any written comments were included in Appendixes B and C.

³ 82% of the survey respondents provided an age range; 18% did not.

⁴ In a Likert design, a numerical value is given to the response to each of several items, and the values are averaged to obtain a value for each case.

arithmetic mean). Those averages are intended to show tendencies between Likert scale numbers and not differences in arithmetic ratios. For example, a 2.5 average would indicate the typical response was midway between “satisfactory” and “very good.” In the priority column, a 1.25 average shows a response as favoring “critical” over “important”, and a 2.5 as a toss-up between “important” and “less important.”

Problems with responses in the “Priority” column

Whereas nearly 90% of the respondents provided a “Needs Improvement,” “Satisfactory,” “Very Good,” or “Support/Not Support” score, less than half of the respondents completed the “Priority” section of the survey. No comments were provided as to why the Priority sections were left blank. The survey Group believed there was confusion as to what the question was asking, or that respondents felt they lacked the information to form a credible opinion.

Findings

The following table summarizes and codes the survey results. Each survey question has an overall average. The averages for both age groups, home ownership, children in household, and business ownership are also displayed.

Overall results have been color coded to indicate survey respondent opinion.

1.76 to 2.25 averages were colored YELLOW (Satisfactory)

1.5 to 1.75 average were colored ORANGE (Moderately Negative)

< 1.5 were colored RED (Negative)

2.26 to 2.5 (1.25 – 1.5 for LID, LOT, & business tax incentives) averages were colored LIGHT GREEN (Moderately Positive)

Results that vary more than 0.15 from the overall average are colored LIGHT BLUE.

Survey areas with less than five responses are coded MEDIUM BLUE.

2016 GRANGEVILLE SURVEY – SUMMARY RESULTS

	Total Responses	Mean	% Resp	18-44	45 & Up	Kids - Yes	Kids - No	Home - Yes	Home - No	Bus - Y	Bus - N
Water	255	2.20	90.7%	2.37	2.18	2.25	2.17	2.23	2.07	2.38	2.16
Water P	114	1.60	40.6%	1.73	1.52	1.78	1.53	1.57	1.67	1.54	1.57
Streets	257	1.67	91.5%	1.74	1.67	1.73	1.66	1.67	1.60	1.75	1.64
Streets P	140	1.66	49.8%	1.67	1.64	1.70	1.65	1.68	1.50	1.58	1.71
Walks	254	1.53	90.4%	1.57	1.52	1.44	1.53	1.54	1.13	1.61	1.47
Walks P	139	1.96	49.5%	1.84	2.01	1.66	2.02	1.97	1.50	2.09	1.92
Police	257	2.36	91.5%	2.45	2.36	2.25	2.39	2.36	2.36	2.41	2.33
Police P	112	1.58	39.9%	1.67	1.52	1.78	1.51	1.54	2.00	1.42	1.60
Fire	257	2.47	91.5%	2.40	2.48	2.39	2.50	2.46	2.47	2.50	2.43
Fire P	110	1.52	39.1%	1.53	1.45	1.55	1.47	1.46	2.00	1.28	1.53
Pool	240	2.27	85.4%	2.20	2.26	2.13	2.29	2.29	1.93	2.25	2.23
Pool P	111	2.46	39.5%	2.31	2.46	2.29	2.46	2.45	2.40	2.29	2.47
Rodeo	244	2.20	86.8%	2.28	2.20	2.13	2.21	2.20	2.07	2.20	2.13
Rodeo P	109	2.66	38.8%	2.67	2.62	2.67	2.62	2.64	2.50	2.61	2.65
Golf	220	2.26	78.3%	2.32	2.27	2.24	2.25	2.24	2.33	2.24	2.25
Golf P	105	2.81	37.4%	2.88	2.78	2.83	2.77	2.79	2.75	2.78	2.79
Ski	227	2.22	80.8%	2.17	2.23	2.16	2.21	2.21	2.14	2.17	2.19
Ski P	108	2.58	38.4%	2.60	2.52	2.64	2.52	2.57	2.25	2.26	2.64
Parks	244	2.18	86.8%	2.03	2.20	2.09	2.19	2.17	2.07	2.17	2.16
Parks P	110	2.25	39.1%	2.00	2.29	2.13	2.31	2.28	2.25	2.23	2.27
Sports	224	2.15	79.7%	2.04	2.16	2.02	2.16	2.13	2.08	2.12	2.10
Sports P	103	2.47	36.7%	2.25	2.47	2.43	2.44	2.47	2.00	2.36	2.46
Ordinance	242	1.96	86.1%	1.93	1.93	1.91	1.95	1.94	2.00	2.06	1.89
Ordinance P	112	2.13	39.9%	2.18	2.07	2.25	2.10	2.12	2.20	2.25	2.06
Clerk	253	2.40	90.0%	2.19	2.45	2.35	2.42	2.41	2.31	2.40	2.40
Clerk P	111	2.21	39.5%	2.40	2.12	2.41	2.11	2.20	2.40	2.17	2.18
Library	250	2.36	89.0%	2.10	2.42	2.27	2.38	2.37	2.31	2.42	2.32
Library P	114	2.33	40.6%	2.35	2.31	2.42	2.33	2.34	2.4	2.36	2.31
Centers	209	1.57	74.4%	1.45	1.59	1.42	1.60	1.56	1.50	1.52	1.55
Housing	211	1.75	75.1%	1.86	1.77	1.71	1.77	1.75	1.58	1.70	1.77
Retail	242	1.69	86.1%	1.90	1.65	1.66	1.68	1.69	1.56	1.63	1.66
Prof Svces	235	2.04	83.6%	2.07	2.06	2.07	2.06	2.06	2.20	2.13	2.03
Retiree	217	1.72	77.2%	1.75	1.72	1.75	1.71	1.73	1.54	1.65	1.71
Schl Facd	231	2.03	82.2%	1.89	2.09	1.93	2.12	2.04	2.07	2.00	2.07
Education	231	1.99	82.2%	1.80	2.04	1.87	2.07	1.98	1.93	1.82	2.05
Hosp/Amb	242	2.22	86.1%	2.07	2.28	2.20	2.29	2.26	2.13	2.29	2.23
Information	208	1.92	74.0%	1.93	1.90	1.90	1.95	1.93	1.92	2.00	1.87
LID	247	1.72	87.9%	1.90	1.70	1.83	1.71	1.74	1.64	1.59	1.78
LOT	251	1.45	89.3%	1.41	1.45	1.28	1.47	1.46	1.33	1.50	1.43
Tx Incentive	247	1.31	87.9%	1.22	1.31	1.18	1.34	1.33	1.21	1.21	1.35
			84.8%								
			Negative							< 5 responses	
			Mod Neg								
			Sat	(Neutral for LID)						Varies > .15 from mean	
			Mod Pos								
			Positive								

Services Provided by the City

City services were rated as satisfactory in over 3/4 of the areas. The highest ratings were fire (2.47), clerk (2.40), police (2.36), and library (2.36). The lowest ratings were sidewalks and curbs (1.53), streets (1.67),⁵ and ordinances (1.96).

Services Provided by the Community

Community services were rated as needing improvement in 2/3 of the areas. The highest ratings were hospital & ambulance (2.22), professional services (2.04), and school facilities (2.03). The lowest ratings were community & youth centers (1.57), retail stores (1.69), and retiree services & housing (1.72).

The “Priority” category responses

Water & sewer, streets & signage, police, and fire were rated more in the “Critical” range. The rodeo grounds, ski hill, and golf course were rated more in the “Less Important” range. All the other survey areas were rated in the “Important” range.

Possible approaches to solve potential funding shortfalls

Surveys with the “Support” block check were coded as 1; “Not support” was coded as 2. A 1.0 score would be 100% support; 2.0 would be 0% support; 1.5 would be 50% support, 50% against.

Two of the three approaches were rated as supportive. These strategies included a tax incentive for business (1.31 score) which received the highest support.

The local option sales tax was also supported (1.45 score).

The Local Improvement District (LID) received a score of 1.72, indicating it was generally **not** supported.

Survey written responses

Respondents were invited to make written comments on the survey form. Most of the written responses generally restated the score the respondent provided on the survey. For example, streets and signage, and sidewalks and curbs, scored low; many written comments were received noting problems in these areas. As expected, negative comments were more prevalent than positive ones.

⁵ Several negative comments specifically mentioned Main Street, which was resurfaced after the survey was conducted. Regardless, poor streets & signage is still an area of major concern.

Examples of positive comments from the most frequently commented upon survey questions

Survey Question 10 - Parks and Connecting Pathways

Parks are well kept.

Survey Question 13 – Office of the Clerk

Tonya's staff does a great job and is always helpful.

Survey Question 5 – Firefighting Services

Fast response. Good work, guys!

Survey Question 6 – Swimming Pool

Good family recreation.

Survey Question 10 – Professional Services

Professional services are very good.

Examples of negative comments given in the most frequently commented upon survey questions

Survey Question 2 – Streets and Signage

More stop signs needed.

Survey Question 3 – Sidewalks and Curbs

Too many broken sidewalks and curbs.

Survey Question 12 – Ordinances

Fees too high for permits.

Survey Question 15 – Community and Youth Centers

Definitely need a multi-functional community center.

Survey Question 17 – Retail Stores

Not enough retail stores.

Survey Question 19 – Retiree Services and Housing

Could use more retiree services and housing.

Survey Question 22 – Hospital and Ambulance

Need less turnover of employees.

Recommendations

The Council should review this report and consider a vote to approve or not approve it, with additional clarifying statements as necessary. Clarifying statements should note the limitations of the survey as discussed in this report. If approved:

1. Make a copy of the report available to citizens.
2. Conduct hearings and media outreaches to discuss survey findings and limitations.
3. Establish committees to further explore potential areas of improvement identified in the survey.
4. Discuss the findings related to non-City assets with the appropriate responsible entities. Consider partnership opportunities to address common concerns.
5. Require this survey to be referenced in City of Grangeville budgeting and strategic planning documents, as well as not-for-profit, county, state, and federal funding and planning efforts.
6. Develop a schedule to complete this survey on a regular basis. Consider strategies to improve the response rate and correlation to Grangeville's census data.