



The on-line budget survey

Values but no dollars

For both the 2009 and 2010 budgets, I developed surveys to which residents in the First Ward — and some outside the First Ward — responded. These surveys helped me focus on the priorities for the budget.

This year, the City Administrator asked members of Council to look at a list of services early in the budget process and define those services based on their value to the community, not their impact on the budget. As many of you found when you took the latest survey, looking at a list of services when you don't know what those services really mean, or what they really cost, or how many people's jobs they represent, makes it difficult to say 'this service is important to the community' or even 'this service is not important to the community'.

I received 62 survey responses. That number is more than the first budget survey I conducted in 2009, and of course not as many as the one last year, which was picked up by the media.

Budget Priorities

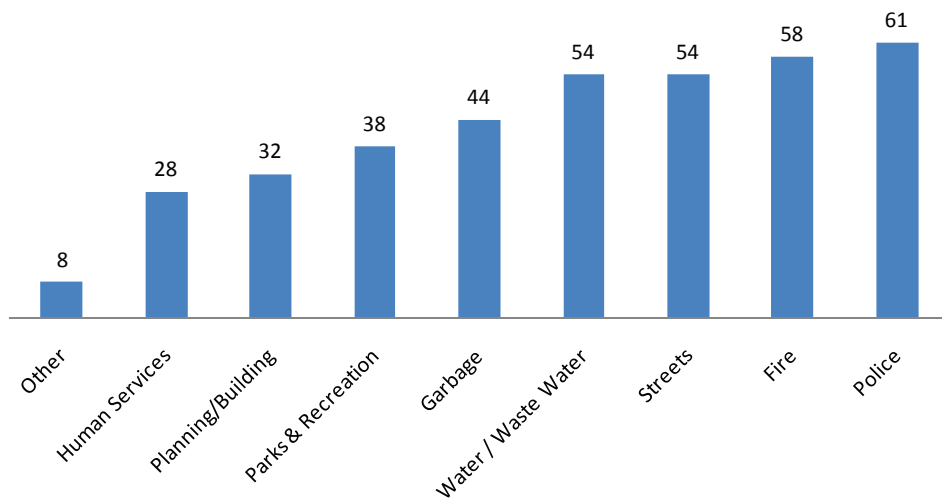
The City Administrator provided a list of services to members of Council. That list, with a couple of refinements and additions, became the survey that you could complete. The list is at the end of this report. But for this first report, I will look at just two areas of the City's budget -- Safety Services in isolation, and wages and benefits as a part of the budget.

Contents

Value of services 1
 Budget Priorities 1

Focus on staffing 2
 Safety Services 2
 Wages and benefits explained 3
 My budget goals 6
 Survey Form 7

Basic Services by Priority



The value of police services may be directly related to how each of us sees that service. Do we anticipate that it will benefit us? Do we see it as a nuisance? If we don't know what it costs to provide that service, perhaps it's easier to see the police as a tool for preventing and solving crimes (patrol, detectives, dispatch, and property crime all received strong community support). Other services provided by the Police Department (working with LAWNET, providing liaisons to AATA and the Schools, various Clean Communities services, Party Patrol, and especially parking enforcement) didn't have the same community value.

The police department includes more than uniformed officers. Within the police department are crossing guards, community standards staff (these folks enforce code violations

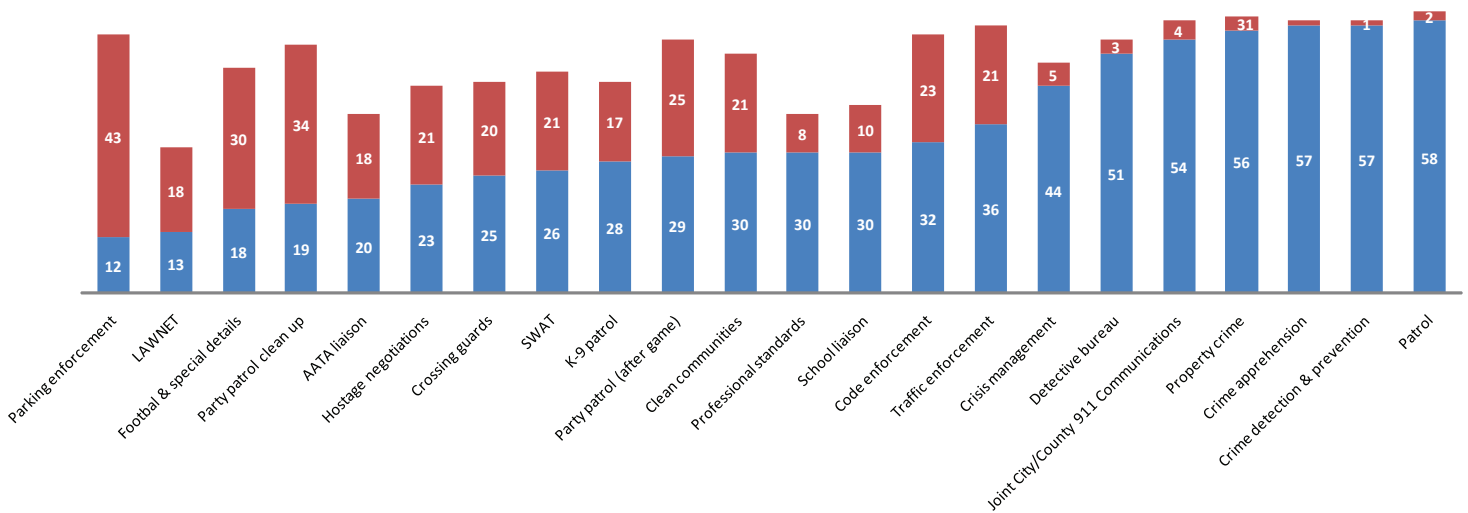
Comments:

There are so many speeders out there - generate income by actually ENFORCING the speed limits on Plymouth, Pontiac Trail, Barton...

Again, continuation of CRITICAL services should take precedence over anything else.

Police Services

■ Priority ■ Not a priority



such as having couches on porches and write tickets for parking violations), and liaison officers. Some officers receive special training to work as hostage negotiators or work as part of a K-9 team (the City has 3 teams).

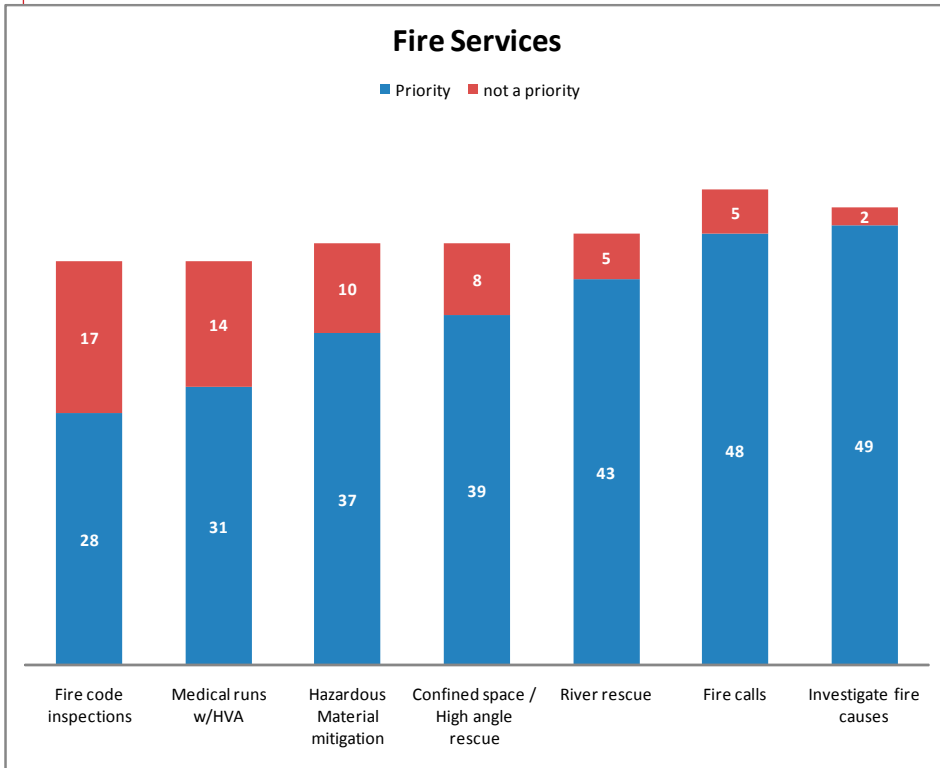
The fire department didn't list as many services, but has a major role. Although there aren't many fires in Ann Arbor, we rely on the fire department the way we rely on insurance — to be there when we need them. As a result, many of us are willing to maintain a full-service fire department even with a dwindling need for fire protection. We want to be confident that we won't have a problem.

The fire department also makes a number of emergency medical runs. Because many members of the fire department staff are trained to provide medical care in emergencies, they are sent to assist Huron Valley Ambulance staff under a variety of circumstances. They also provide assistance when citizens report hazardous material spills.

Should pay up front and not back door via benefits.

Stop employing consultants. Hire locally and use local contractors only. Force the University to pay for the city services it uses or otherwise benefits from. Encourage the University to reach out to the city and offer the expertise of its staff, when it can; for example, as volunteer consultants.

But it's the fire calls and fire investigations that are a consistent community value. This shows as much in the number who identified the services as priorities as those who indicated they were not a priority.



Rescue operations, i.e. river & high angle should pay for themselves via charges. Inspection services are necessary but currently inefficient. Parks: stop planting trees! Reduce services to the minimum. crossing guards: should be transferred to the schools. Fire trucks should NOT respond to emergency calls at residences: overkill, EMS does this adequately.

I rated some of the police/fire services "don't know" because I don't know how much we already spend on them or what those services are. I think our commissions can be smaller and that if we prioritized things like rental housing inspectors, construction inspectors, etc. we would have better code enforcement. I don't know if this makes sense -- I just think that some of what I didn't prioritize can be covered by the services I did prioritize.

Employee costs/benefits make up the majority of the budget, so the city has no choice but to cut those costs either through renegotiated contracts, laying off staff or a combination of those two.

Sharing services with county, etc. is good if it saves money, bad if it doesn't. These questions should be answered by experts under the general instruction to run city services as efficiently as possible.

Regarding salaries/benefits - these should be no more than the lesser of public or private sector norms.

Benefit and pension packages should be similar to what average Michigan employees make. Pay should be comparable to what is standard in the private sector. Ann Arbor city employees are getting better pay and benefits than the typical southeast Michigan private-sector employee.

Wages and Benefits

The City's wages and benefits agreements have not been well understood over the last few years. Of course, ongoing negotiations cannot be public, but as the budget has become increasingly constrained some citizens have examined the benefits packages of current and retired staff and challenged them.

How can I explain the City's current benefits and wages? I've learned quite a bit in the last year or so.

Union Contracts

The City has contracts with several unions. Public employees, even unionized ones, aren't allowed to strike (it's the law).

Safety Service unions (including those that represent the police and fire department staff members) are prevented from any action that would risk the health and safety of the residents of our communities. However, they are able to enter into binding arbitration (this is often referred to as Act 312 arbitration, or just Act 312). After both the City and the Union believe they have exhausted their options in reaching a negotiated agreement, the City will ask for arbitration. The State provides both the Union and the City with a list of arbitrators. Each side can reject names on the list, but the State makes the final determination. Arbitration on wages and benefits occurs based on the offers on the table; the arbitrator does not suggest any new alternatives.

How long does this process take? The State can take six (6) months or longer (there are no limits) to provide a list of arbitrators; the arbitrator selection adds more time. Then the arbitrator meets with the City and the Union negotiators and — eventually — reaches a non-negotiable decision. This can add 12 or more months to the process, during which the union has been operating under the former contract.

Why would a union want to negotiate this way? Right now, as I understand it, the existing contracts with safety services unions were written to provide benefits packages that didn't require any contribution from the employee toward health care. The benefits package that's in operation on the day one retires is the benefits package one receives from the City until the day one dies. This becomes a major issue for negotiations.

All non-unionized employees contribute toward their health care, as do members of some unions. As the City begins another round of contract negotiations, the benefits packages for Safety Services unions (there are several unions for the police department and fire department) and for AFSCME are in discussion.

AFSCME union members aren't in the police and fire departments, but they also are protected by strong laws. The City cannot unilaterally change the nature of the union contract, retroactively change the benefits packages, or reach a contract agreement with the Union without finding some wages and benefits package that works for both the City's budget and the needs of the staff.

Right now, the City hopes to keep wages stable (no increases) and get all staff members to agree to a single benefits package — the same package for administration and file clerks, with choices of co-pay and staff contribution.

The City also hopes that this year each department can focus on the impact of wage and benefit negotiations in the budget process. Each department will be given a percentage to work with — and that percentage will include finding the funds for staffing the department. In the past, personnel costs have been distributed more horizontally.

My budget goals for wages and benefits

Every time the City Council and administration discusses eliminating a service or program, the hidden savings is really at the cost of someone's job. Cities provide services; that's why you pay taxes and why you have voted for additional millages. If we save money by eliminating the services you paid to get, neither you nor I will be satisfied.

At the same time, the cost of maintaining benefits for the City's retired staff has become difficult. Each vested staff member retires with lifetime benefits that were his or hers on the day of retirement. The City has not established a retirement benefits program that allows for reconsideration of benefits packages. I would love to see that change in the future.

A city is defined by the services it provides. Most of the listed services are important for health, safety and happiness of Ann Arbor residents. These services deserve to be streamlined and efficiently performed and most should not be eliminated.

Consider citizen priorities before administrative priorities. Citizens prefer to support parks and recreation services, and historically have approved all tax proposals dedicated to them. Cuts to direct services should not be proposed unless central administration is cut.

Do not destroy the charm and livability of this town during these hard times so that there is nothing unique and enjoyable about it when the economic tide turns.

Staff "pay" implies to me wages. I don't think wages are to be competitive with private employers. The employment value needs to be competitive but that includes wages, benefits, culture, mission, typical extra hours demanded, difficulty of work and threat of job loss. Yes, these are more difficult to measure/survey/benchmark than just wages. But that's why I give the comp items a "2" as individual items. I can't say if benefits should be reduced as I don't know what they are.

Budget 101 (Basics)

Setting Priorities

The Council has an opportunity to decide whether certain services are core to the mission of the City. Which services to you believe are core services and must be always provided by the City?

- Planning / Building
 - Fire
 - Garbage collection
 - Water / Waste treatment / Storm water
 - Streets
 - Police
 - Parks & Recreation
 - Human Services (shelter & care for the needy)
 - Other, please specify
-

Parks & Recreation Facilities and Services

The City supports a number of facilities and services under parks. Please rate these facilities and services, indicating whether these are a priority to you. Also, please tell me in the comments box whether you've used these services within the past two (2) years.

| | Priority | Not a priority | Don't know |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Leslie Golf Course | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Huron Golf Course | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Northside & Bryant Community Center | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Veteran's Ice Arena | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Cobblestone Farm & Facility Rentals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Recreation classes for Children | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Recreation classes for Adults | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Recreation classes for Seniors | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Fuller Pool | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Veteran's Pool | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Buhr Pool | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Senior Center | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Argo Canoe Livery | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Gallup Canoe Livery | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Mack Pool | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Buhr Ice Rink | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Farmers' Market | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Leslie Science Center | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Veterans Fitness Center | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |
| Kempf House Center for Local History | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Additional Comment | | | |

Page 1 - Question 3 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Parks & Recreation Maintenance
The City also maintains parks in various ways and to various degrees. Please indicate the value you place on maintenance in the parks.

| | Important | Not at all important | Don't know |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Forestry (trimming/planting/removing trees) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Mowing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Playgrounds/Amenities/Parking | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Athletic Field/Turf Care | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Snow/Ice removal along paths & in parking lots | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Shelter maintenance | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| NAP (Natural Area Preservation) (includes working with volunteers) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page 1 - Question 4 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Police and Fire Services

| | Priority | Not a priority | Don't know |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Joint City/County 911 Communications | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Patrol | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Crime Detection & Prevention | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Crime Apprehension | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Detective Bureau | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Traffic Enforcement & Education | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Property Crime | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Parking Enforcement | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Code Enforcement | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Clean Communities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Party Patrol (after game crowd control & safety patrol) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Party Patrol (after event clean-up) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Football & Other Special Details | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Crisis Management and Control | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| K-9 Patrol | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Special Tactics (SWAT Team) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Hostage Negotiations | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| LAWNET | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| AATA Liaison | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| School Liaison | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Crossing Guards | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Professional Standards | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Respond to Fire calls | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Yearly Inspection of Businesses for Fire Code | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Investigate Cause and Origin of Fires | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Respond with HVA certain medical calls (Fire Dept.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Hazardous Material Mitigation (Fire Dept.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| River Rescue (Fire Dept.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Confined Space & High Angle Rescue (Fire Dept.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page 1 - Question 5 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Administration
 Running the City also takes time, staff and money. Some services we take for granted. Please help rate the value of these services to you.

| | Priority | Not a priority | Don't know |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Communication (includes web site, WasteNot, advertising, public notices) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Planning & Building permits | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Historic Preservation staff | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Boards of Appeal | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Planning Commission | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Service Desks at City Hall | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15th District Court | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Cobblestone Farm Facilities Rental Desk | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Rental Housing Inspectors | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Construction Inspectors | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page 1 - Question 6 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Comments?

Page 1 - Question 7 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Making Ann Arbor work
 Maintaining the infrastructure (streets, sewers, water supply) and providing curb-side pick-up of household waste might be important services, too. What do you think? How valuable are these services to you?

| | Priority | Not a priority | Don't know |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Repair Streets (potholes, base repair) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Snow Removal | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Sweep streets (two-times/year) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Surface Treatments (painting, crack sealing, etc.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Street lights | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Traffic Signal Maintenance and System Control | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Traffic Operations | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Traffic Signs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Vegetation Removal | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Planting | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Vegetation Trimming | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Mowing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Maintaining non-motorized paths | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Building non-motorized paths | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Waste Collection at residences | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Waste Collection at businesses | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Curbside Recycling | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Recycling at businesses | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Yard Waste Collection | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Compost Center | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Material Recovery Facility (recycling) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Drop-off Center | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Transfer Station | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Water Supply/Treatment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Water Distribution | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Waste Water Treatment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Waste Water Collection | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Storm Water Collection | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page 1 - Question 8 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Comments?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Page 1 - Question 9 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Other Services and Costs
 Several City services are provided broadly, but the public doesn't necessarily enjoy a direct benefit. Some costs (especially those associated with insurance and retirement benefits) are also invisible to the public, although they significantly impact the budget.
 I've created a list of options and choices; please offer your best advice! (Many of the options listed have come directly from some of you; labor negotiations are not public and not part of my responsibilities on Council.)

- Excellent computer support for all City departments, keeping all work in-house
- Adequate computer technical support, with contractors when needed
- Shared computer support between the City, the County and other municipal governments in order to reduce costs to the
- Equipment for computer systems updated every three (3) years, on a rolling basis
- Equipment for computer systems updated every four (4) years, on a rolling basis
- Eliminate the legal department
- Reduce the legal department staff to two (2) and hire outside legal counsel as needed
- Share maintenance of all vehicles with County (County pays for use)

- Share maintenance facility with UM (UM pays for use)
- Share maintenance facility with AATA / School system (AATA / School system pay for use)
- Reduce use of hydrocarbon-fueled vehicles
- Replace vehicles less often / maintain vehicle fleet more efficiently
- Pay for all staff competitive with private employers
- Pay for all staff competitive with public-sector employers
- Pay for new staff competitive with public-sector employers; limited retirement benefits for existing staff
- Benefits packages that mimic those available in the private sector
- Renegotiated contracts with unions to decrease benefits
- Freeze retirement benefits
- Reduce retirement benefits / require higher retirement co-pay

Page 1 - Question 10 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Comments?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Page 1 - Question 11 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Any other comments?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Sabra Briere, First Ward, Ann Arbor City Council 1418 Broadway, Ann Arbor, MI 48105 (734)995-3518 sbriere@A2gov.org sabra.briere@gmail.com

