



WALLA WALLA COMMUNITY COLLEGE & THE CITY OF WALLA WALLA

Walla Walla Citizen Survey Report

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This is a replicated study of a 1996 survey conducted to gauge Walla Walla citizen's opinions of various city services as well as support for funding options regarding street repairs.

Introduction

The City of Walla Walla offers a variety of services to its citizens, ranging from leisurely activities such as the swimming pool and summer recreation programs to the daily necessities of drinking water, sewer, streets, and garbage collection. The City sought public opinion through a citizen survey to be used in the decision-making process regarding these services. Respondents were asked to rank the importance and performance of twenty-five City services. Respondents were also asked to rank their level of support for any of four methods to raise funds to repair the city's streets. The following report summarizes citizens' responses.

Methods

This city survey replicated a 1996 survey that polled City of Walla Walla residents about their attitudes regarding city services. In addition, respondents in this survey were asked their opinions about funding options for local street repair. For each city service (e.g., recycling, ambulance services, parks maintenance), respondents were asked to rate how important the service was to them on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 indicating "not important" and 10 indicating "very important." Following each city service importance question, respondents were asked how well they thought this service was being performed. Respondents again rated each service on a scale from one to 10, with one indicating "poor" and 10 indicating "very well."

Following the rating of the twenty-five city services, each respondent was asked to rank, in order, the three city streets they considered to be in most need of repair, and what proportion, in a percentage, of the budget for street repairs should be applied to arterials versus residential streets. These questions were followed by a brief explanation of four possible strategies identified by the City Council to fund street repairs. These included a property tax increase, a sales tax increase, an increase in vehicle license tab fees, and a bond issue. For each funding proposal, respondents were asked whether they would "definitely support," "probably support," "not support" each measure, or if it "doesn't matter" to them.

Minimal demographic data was tabulated. All respondents were asked if they were over 18 years of age, a registered voter, had voted in the last general election, length of residency in Walla Walla, and their age group. See Appendix 2 for full survey instrument used.

Based on the previous survey experience, Walla Walla Community College students were recruited, trained, and employed as telephone interviewers (see Appendix 1). These interviews were conducted onsite at WWCC under supervision over a three-week period between April 19 and May 4, 2011. All telephone interviews were conducted between 5:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on Monday through Thursday evenings. Student interviewers entered responses onto the computer using an Access database. After completing the desired number of completed surveys, the database results were compiled and queried for the data in this report.

A current, random sample of at least 4,500 residents of the City of Walla Walla was purchased from Labels and Lists, Inc. of Bellevue, WA. The sample size target was 400 interviews; 425 interviews were completed in ten evenings.

Respondents

A key component of the survey was the people who responded to it. It required motivated, willing participants to complete the 10 to 20-minute survey. The local connection was reinforced by the use of WWCC students to conduct the interviews. The survey was also conducted in Spanish for Spanish-speaking respondents.

Ninety-six percent of Walla Walla citizens who responded were registered voters; 93% voted in the last general election. Only 6% of respondents were between the ages of 18-35 years old; the majority (69%) were 55+ years old. Sixty-four percent of respondents have lived in Walla Walla longer than 20 years and 88% own their home. This all indicates that the individuals willing to participate in this survey have lived here long enough to not only see changes in the city, but also have a stake in its future. They are clearly members of the public that have an investment in the city's continued well being and growth. Because of this, they were highly motivated to participate in such a study. Of the citizens that answered their phones, 50% completed the survey.

Results

This survey was conducted in 1996 and repeated in 2011. The results of both surveys are shown comparatively to gauge the changes in the 15 years between studies (see Appendix 3 for survey results per item). The city services section of the 1996 survey was modified to replace a question concerning the DARE/Crime Prevention program with a question about recycling. The median score (or midpoint) of each service ranking is shown in the 2011 survey, although it was not computed in 1996 survey, thus, "N/A" will appear in those 1996 sections. The median is a more reliable indicator of a true central score, because the mean is sensitive to extreme outliers that distort the interpretation of what the "average" response is. However, the mean was calculated in 1996 so a comparison of means is shown below.

people were fined if they did not use recycling bins but I haven't seen many recycling bins available or that it is enforced. 7) Doesn't know what they do with what is collected for recycling. They should let people know what happens to the stuff. It could be incinerated which could be why they don't take glass. 8) More information should be given about recycling. 9) I think we are paying way too much for this. It should pay for itself. The bins are too big. Why not pick them up every two weeks to save money. Add tin and glass to the recycling. 10) Although recycling is fine, I lived in California and they don't charge fees for recycling. Instead they sell items for recycling and get money for it. Also, when a recycling contract is agreed, the price of the contract should not go up. 11) Recycling needs to be done more, encouraged, and taught to children. Rely less on the landfill. 12) Recycling should be pushed more. More recycling bins should be made available. The city should make it so that everyone recycles. That money could be used for street repair so that we are not only helping the environment but we're fixing the streets (as well as not throwing plastics in the landfill where they don't turn into soil). 13) I would like to see the recycling emphasized more. 14) Better recycling availability. 14) The people who recycle should be rewarded for recycling and the people who choose. 15) If they want to save money on recycling, do it every other week. So people will not throw away their trash.

27. What 3 city streets are most in need of repair?

These are streets ranked as in most need of repair. Streets for which there were only 1 or 2 mentions are omitted from this list.

Street	# Respondents
Rose Street	120
Alder Street	85
Howard Street	78
Isaacs Avenue	70
9 th Avenue	41
Poplar Street	39
Tietan Street	38
Wilbur Avenue	38
Bryant Avenue	36
Chestnut Street	33
Plaza Way	28
3 rd Avenue	24
Whitman Street	22
Clinton Street	21
Park Street	17
Melrose Street	14
Main Street	14
Highland Road	14
Blue Street	13
Boyer Avenue	13
13 th Avenue	11
2 nd Avenue	9
Palouse Street	6
School Avenue	5
Chase Avenue	5

Additional Comments:

1) The streets are pretty good when compared to New York City. 2) People shouldn't be able to choose what streets because they would be biased about their neighborhood. 3) Francis Street has a horrible drainage problem. Whenever it rains it goes up on the sidewalk into the landscaping of her property. She lives between Clinton and Division Streets. 4) Fix the curb at 6th Avenue and Main Street, south of the Social Security office.

28. What proportion, in percentage, of street repair funds do you think should be assigned to arterial streets and what proportion, in a percentage, to residential streets?

	median	mean
Arterial	60%	58%
Residential	40%	42%

Additional Comments:

1) If residential streets need more repair then a larger percent should go to them. 2) I am very disappointed in the way the city has squandered the money for arterial streets. There has been plenty of time to fix them. The city gets a failing grade as far as streets go.

29. Property Tax increase of 50 cents	# Respondents	
	#	%
Definitely Support	65	15%
Probably Support	171	40%
Not Support	154	36%
Doesn't Matter	35	8%

Additional Comments:

1) There is too much being taxed on property already. Users should be taxed 2) I would be willing to support the property tax, only if, when the street repair is done, the \$50 is either offered back to me or the city asks again what should be done with the money. It's my money. I should have a say about what is done with it. 3) Owns two homes so this seems a bit steep.

30. Retail sales tax increase of 2 tenths of a cent	# Respondents	
	#	%
Definitely Support	95	22%
Probably Support	128	30%
Not Support	179	42%
Doesn't Matter	23	5%

Additional Comments:

1) Not a good idea because people would stop buying things. Then stores would raise the prices since they wouldn't have many customers.

31. Vehicle license tab fee increase of \$50	# Respondents	
	#	%
Definitely Support	30	7%
Probably Support	46	11%

The streets listed in most need of repair, in order, were Rose Street, Alder Street, Howard Street, Isaacs Avenue, 9th Street, Poplar Street, Tietan Street, and Wilbur Avenue (Appendix 3 has a complete list). On average, respondents indicated that 60% of street repair funds should be allocated to arterial streets and 40% for residential streets. In addition, according to citizen comments, since 1996 there has been increased interest in bicycle trails and lanes.

Most city services were ranked the same in the 1996 and 2011 surveys. Although 63% of the importance rankings stayed the same, the performance of these services has varied over time. (See below in Results section for more details.) The most notable changes were an increase in the performance of police investigation (up 5 points) and a decrease of the performance of the golf course (down 3 points). The importance of street repairs was rated more highly in 2011 than 1996 (up 3 points), and the importance of the public library was rated lower (down 2 points). Among these were many that changed up or down 1 point, as noted in the chart below.