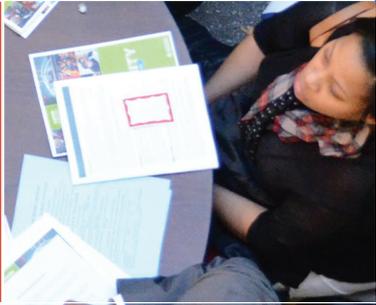




**SAFER**  
and More Vibrant  
Neighborhoods



**MORE**  
Jobs and  
Neighborhood  
Development



**BETTER**  
Schools and  
Educational  
Opportunities



• Telephone Town Hall • Community Input Forum • Online Citizen Survey •

*Your* **OPINION** *Matters*

# COMMUNITY

2015-16 Budget Input Sessions

FINAL REPORT • May 2015

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Rochester is planning now for the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2015 and ends June 30, 2016, or fiscal year 2015-16. The Office of Management and Budget estimates a budget gap of \$34.8 million.

Mayor Warren wants to hear about the community's priorities in relation to City programs and services, as decisions are made on how to close the gap. This report highlights the citizen perceptions and opinions gathered through a telephone town hall, a public citizen input forum and an online survey.

The public was invited by the Mayor to provide input to the budget process in one of three ways:

Date	Event	Participation
April 27	Telephone Town Hall	2,723
April 21	Citizen Input Forum at City Hall	198
April 21-27	Online Survey	373

### Poll results from the telephone town hall included the following:

- 92% support a neighborhood based police model
- 90% were in favor of the purchase and implementation of body cameras for our police force
- 95% support neighborhood investment such as streets and sidewalks, transportation infrastructure, vacant house demolitions, roofing replacement programs and brownfield cleanups
- 94% support City investment in programs to prepare our youth and adults with job skills
- 84% believe the City should continue to operate Durand Eastman beach for swimming during the summer
- 82% feel the City should continue to invest in summer festivals and events

### Some highlights from the online survey results included:

- 81% say that repair and rehabilitation of properties is a way that the City can help support residents with housing needs
- 80% would like to see a website reporting function for the 311 Call Center function
- 59% agree or strongly agree that the reorganization will improve police-community relations
- 51% agree or strongly agree that the Police reorganization will make their neighborhood safer
- Homework help, mentoring programs and organized sports were ranked as the most important services that City Recreation offers
- Among library educational services, respondents felt that summer learning and literacy programs for children in grades K-6 are most important
- If the library were to provide early learning classes for 3-year-olds, survey respondents feel that Central and the Arnett branch would be the best locations

## **THEMES FROM THE COMMUNITY INPUT SESSION UNDER EACH PRIORITY AREA INCLUDED:**

### **Safer and More Vibrant Neighborhoods**

- The RPD should provide more walking patrols to establish trust between officers and the community
- Engage the community - enhance block clubs and neighborhood groups
- Police body cameras will protect citizens and police officers
- Provide Officer assistance to store owners to combat illegal activities

### **More Jobs and Neighborhood Development**

- Need more affordable housing - subsidized and emergency housing
- Provide grants for small businesses for façade improvement, repairs
- Create job development above entry level; encourage college graduates to stay in Rochester
- Create programs for formerly incarcerated individuals - apprenticeship or training programs
- Need greater community input on musical performers at special events

### **Better Schools and Educational Opportunities**

- Mentoring and homework help are the most important recreation activities
- Need more parent engagement at recreation centers, libraries, schools
- Libraries should offer computer and financial literacy programs
- Need more dance and theater, year-round arts programs
- Libraries need extended hours - school holidays, weekends



*“Working together, we can create more job opportunities, safer, more vibrant neighborhoods and better schools for all of our residents.”*

*Sincerely,*

*Lovely A. Warren  
Mayor*

## INTRODUCTION

As the City of Rochester plans for the 2015-16 fiscal year, Mayor Warren provided three different methods for citizens and the community to share their thoughts, concerns and suggestions. This report highlights the citizen input from a telephone town hall, a public citizen input forum and an online survey.

### 1 Telephone Town Hall

A total of 19,452 households in the city of Rochester were directly dialed and invited to participate in the Telephone Town Hall and 2,723 individuals, or 14%, agreed to take part. Ten percent participation is considered typical. Mayor Warren, Budget Director Chris Wagner, Police Chief Mike Ciminelli and Commissioner of Neighborhood and Business Development Baye Muhammad all provided information about current and proposed City programs and services. Twelve callers were put on air to ask questions and six poll questions were asked over the course of the hour-long telephone conference.

### 2 Citizen Input Forum at City Hall

At the April 21 Citizen Input Forum, Mayor Warren provided a welcome and Budget Director Christopher Wagner delivered a presentation on the current state of the budget. Deputy Mayor Leonard Redon then outlined the process to be used to gather information during the community forum. Participants were invited to join breakout groups to further discuss the three major priority areas, or any other topic of their choosing.

Discussion was dedicated to three priority topics:

1. Safer and More Vibrant Neighborhoods
2. More Jobs and Neighborhood Development
3. Better Schools and Educational Opportunities

At the conclusion of the discussion period, the groups came back together to report on their main themes.

### 3 Online Citizen Survey

The online survey asked about issues ranging from Police body cameras to early childhood learning opportunities to enhancements to 311 Call Center services. Responses were received from 373 individuals. Nearly one-quarter of respondents were ages 18 to 34 (23%), while 40% were 45 to 54, 35% were 55 or older and 2% were under 18. More than half of respondents (52%) indicated they live in the Southeast quadrant of the city (such as Browncroft, Culver/Winton, Strong/Mt. Hope, Monroe/Park/East), 14% reside in the Northeast (14621, Upper Falls), 14% live in the Northwest (Charlotte, Maplewood, Lyell, JOSANA) and 2% are from Center City (Downtown, Corn Hill, High Falls).

## CITIZEN RESPONSES

In this section we identify themes heard from a telephone town hall, the citizen input forum at City Hall and online citizen survey. Themes are organized by the Mayor's priority areas.



## POLL QUESTION RESULTS FROM TELEPHONE TOWN HALL

1. Are in favor of the purchase and implementation of body cameras for our police force?  
Yes: 90%                      No: 10%
2. Do you support a neighborhood based police model?  
Yes: 92%                      No: 3%                      Need more information: 5%
3. Do you support neighborhood investments such as transportation infrastructure/streets and sidewalks, vacant house demolitions, or roof replacement program, brownfield cleanups?  
Yes: 95%                      No: 5%
4. Should the City invest in summer festivals and events?  
Yes: 82%                      No: 18%
5. Do you think the City should continue to operate Durand Eastman Beach for swimming during the summer?  
Yes: 84%                      No: 16%
6. Do you support City investment in programs that will prepare our youth and adults with job skills?  
Yes: 94%                      No: 6%

## CITIZEN INPUT FORUM AT CITY HALL

### Priority Area: Safer and More Vibrant Neighborhoods

#### Issue: Rochester Police Department re-organization

Among survey respondents, over half agree or strongly agree that the Police reorganization will make their neighborhood safer and 59% feel it will improve police-community relations. While few disagreed with these statements, about one-quarter to one-third of respondents indicated they don't yet know what the outcomes will be.

Participants in the community forum were largely supportive as well, and shared some of their expectations for the re-organization:

- More walking patrols - establish trust between officers and the community
- Engage community - enhance block clubs and neighborhood groups
- Get citizens and youth more involved - more youth events with officers
- Strengthen relationship between officers and businesses
- Increase RPD presence on commercial streets

The telephone town hall included a polling question about the RPD reorganization and found that 92% support the move to neighborhood based policing.

#### Issue: Body Cameras for Rochester Police Officers

The Mayor has announced plans to purchase and implement the use of body cameras on Rochester Police Officers. In the telephone town hall participants overwhelmingly supported this decision.

Citizen forum participants felt the cameras would protect all involved parties, including citizens and police officers, but questioned who would control when the cameras are used and wondered about the costs associated with purchase and implementation.

Hundreds of comments were provided on this topic in the online survey. Survey respondents are concerned about how the cameras will be used, when they will be turned on and off and at whose discretion. Other concerns include privacy issues, the cost involved and how the data will be reviewed.

On the positive side, survey respondents feel the cameras could help with accountability, that they will provide more accurate information and capture the "truth" about interactions between the police and the community, including positive ones.

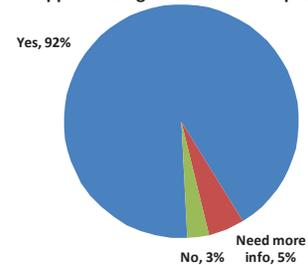
**The Police Reorganization will make my neighborhood safer**

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	61	17%
Agree	121	34%
Don't know	119	34%
Disagree	36	10%
Strongly disagree	18	5%
Total	355	100%

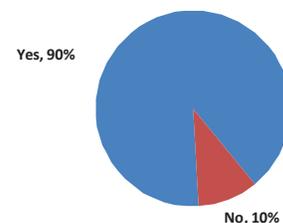
**The Police Reorganization will improve police-community relations**

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	65	19%
Agree	138	40%
Don't know	94	28%
Disagree	27	8%
Strongly disagree	17	5%
Total	341	100%

**Do you support a neighborhood based police model?**



**Are you in favor of the purchase and implementation of body cameras for our Police force?**



### Issue: Fire Department Services

The Rochester Fire Department teaches Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs. CERT educates people about disaster preparedness including skills such as fire safety, search and rescue, team organization and disaster medical operations. The survey asked whether individuals would be interested in participating in such a program and the response was split, as shown in the accompanying pie chart.

The Fire Department also provides a number of Community Risk Reduction programs and the survey asked whether the respondent’s neighborhood association, block club or civic group would be interested. Two-thirds of those responding to the question indicated they would like to team up with RFD on one or more training program. Among those, the most popular choice was smoke and carbon monoxide installations (71%) followed by home safety inspections (63%).

### Issue: 911 Emergency Communications and 311 Call Center services

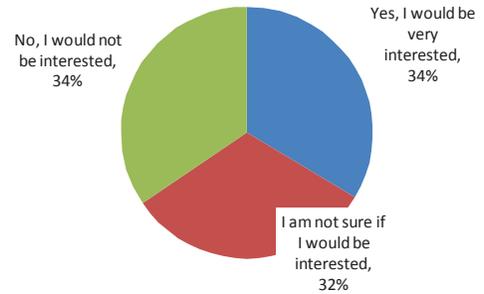
The 911 Emergency Communications Center offers services that the public may not be aware of, including text messaging and the ability to register a cell phone number for reverse calling in an emergency. Based on survey responses, less than one-third of the public appears to be aware of these services.

In addition, the 311 Call Center is considering enhancements to its current services, including a mobile app, a “live chat” interface and a reporting function on the City website. Respondents were supportive of all three possible enhancements, with 80% indicating the website reporting function would be helpful or very helpful. Three-quarters of respondents indicated the mobile app would be helpful or very helpful, compared to 65% who felt this way about live chat.

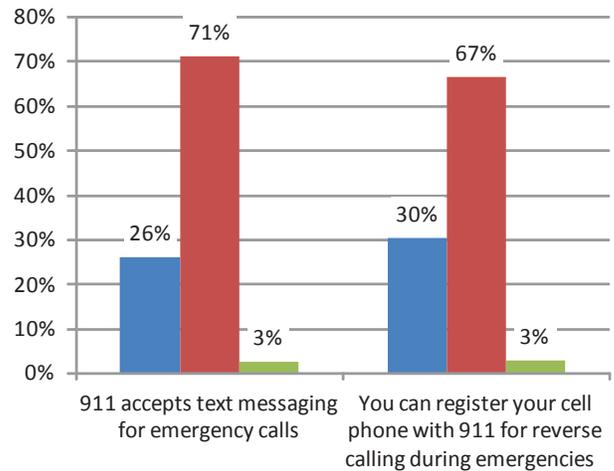
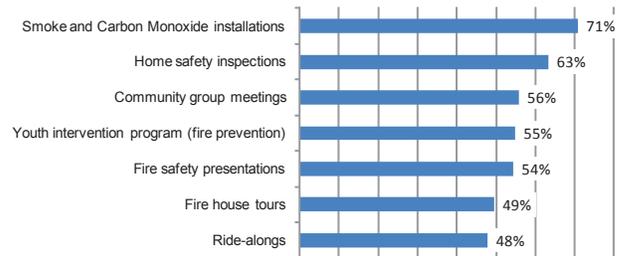
At the City Hall forum, participants stated that the 311 mobile app would enhance communication, especially for people with cell phones.

Percent of respondents who would find each 311 enhancement helpful, or very helpful	
Website Reporting Function	80%
Mobile App	75%
Live Chat	65%

Would you be interested in a Community Emergency Response Team?



Would your group be interested in the following?



Other themes that arose at the public forum on the topic of Safer Neighborhoods included businesses that are involved in illegal activities and challenges with youth violence at the Downtown transit center:

### Issue: Neighborhood Businesses

- Offer assistance to store owners to combat illegal activities
- Penalize store owners who encourage/condone illegal activities. Address loitering and open air drug market
- Control hours of operation of corner stores

### Issue: Downtown Transit Center

- Require RCSD to change bus routes
- Engage parent involvement with transit center concerns
- Have more police officers at transit center

## Priority Area: More Jobs and Neighborhood Development

### Issue: Housing Needs

The survey asked how the City can best support residents with housing needs. Help with repair of properties was the top choice, at 81%. Financial assistance and home maintenance were also supported.

Similar comments and suggestions were shared at the forum:

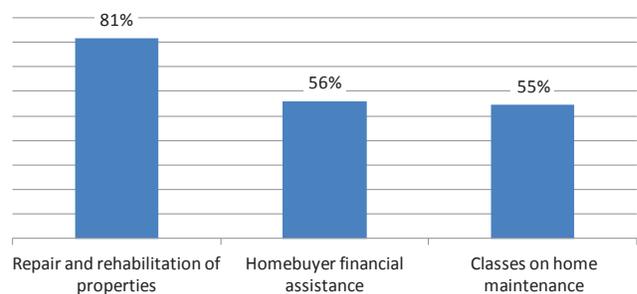
- Need for more affordable housing - subsidized housing, emergency housing
- Assistance for renters, including single people
- Funding and support for renovations - preference to local city buyers for foreclosed homes, vacant homes transformed for low-income families
- Can't we re-purpose existing vacant homes for homeless people?

### Issue: Small Businesses

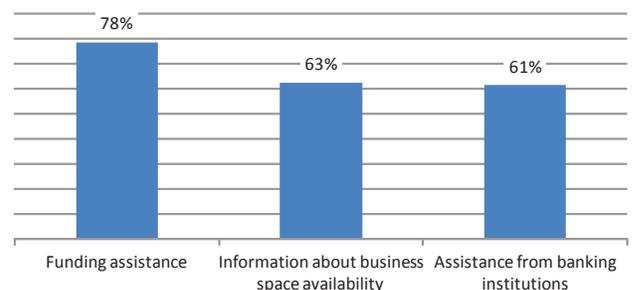
The survey asked what types of services would be best to support neighborhood businesses. Funding assistance was chosen most often among those who answered the question (78%), followed by information about business space availability and assistance from banking institutions. Other suggestions from survey respondents included keeping the neighborhoods safe so that businesses can grow.

Participants in the community forum provided some other suggestions regarding small businesses in the city.

**How can the city best support residents with housing needs?**



**What services would best support neighborhood businesses?**



- Provide grants for small businesses for façade improvement, repairs
- Reduce time to approve permits; assign City staff person to help businesses navigate City processes
- Ensure zoning and code enforcement staff are consistent in their enforcement
- Some stores are not operating in an ideal fashion—City should hold corner stores accountable for drug activities, the types of items on display in children’s view
- First black-owned roller skating rink is in the City and looking for city funding; provides a safe space for youth

**Issue: Jobs**

The public forum generated a number of comments on creating more jobs, how to reach certain population groups and ideas on how the City should prioritize its spending:

- Use social media to publicize City recruitment - particularly Fire Department
- Create programs for formerly incarcerated individuals; apprenticeship or training programs
- Create job development above entry level; encourage college graduates to stay in Rochester
- Support for entrepreneurs, create business cooperatives for neighborhood job creation
- Offer free/low-cost broadband internet access to encourage small businesses to locate in the city
- The Judicial Process Commission provides care and services to ex-offenders. Need to provide mentoring to adults who are trying to get back on the right path
- The “We’ve Got you Covered” roofing program should have hired 100% local workers
- We should not spend money on the marina - give money to small non-profits and churches that offer programming for youth.

The survey asked how the City of Rochester can expand recruitment initiatives for public safety jobs such as Police, Fire and 911 to increase diversity among its employees. Many respondents indicated that recruitment through the schools, elementary through high school or even at MCC is the best way to go and several others mentioned churches as a promising location for such outreach.

**Issue: Special Events**

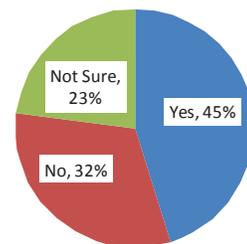
Nearly half of survey respondents thought the City should sponsor more events and festivals, while 32% were opposed.

Forum participants suggested that City-sponsored events may need greater diversity, but also that these events bring everyone together.

- Need greater diversity of events
- Greater community input on musical performers at special events
- These events bring everyone together

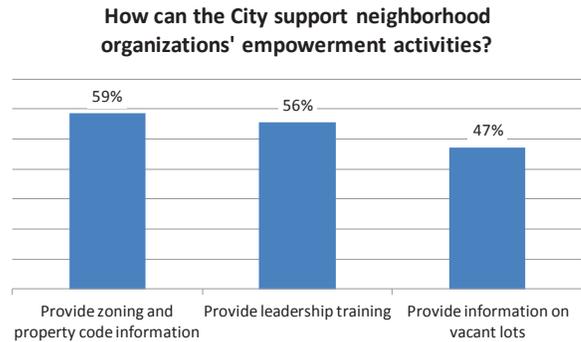
During the telephone town hall, participants were asked whether the city should invest in summer festivals and events and 82% responded “yes.”

**Would you like the City to sponsor (commit funding for) more events and festivals?**



## Issue: Neighborhood Development

Neighborhood organizations provide important services to their communities. The City wants to know how it can best support these organizations' empowerment activities. In the survey results, 59% supported the City providing zoning and property code information and 56% believed the City could provide leadership training to these organizations.



## Issue: Recycling

The City recently piloted a “single stream recycling” program in some neighborhoods. This program allows for all recyclable materials, such as paper, cardboard, plastic and glass containers to be tossed into a single recycling toter. The survey asked whether people would be likely to use this service if it were available in their own neighborhood. Overwhelmingly, the respondents agreed they would be either very likely, or somewhat likely to use this service if it were available (95%).

The City is considering providing e-recycling to residents. This would involve drop-off points for old cell phones, televisions, computers and other electronics. Support for this possible future service was also strong with 88% of respondents indicating they would use it.

## Issue: Bar and Restaurant Hours

The City of Rochester has a policy that requires bars and restaurants in neighborhood commercial areas to close at 11 pm. Recently, a court ruled that the City cannot compel bars and restaurants with liquor licenses to close earlier than 2 am. The survey asked whether residents see this as an important problem that would affect their neighborhoods. Among the 309 individuals who answered this question, 57% said it would be either a minor or major problem for them, while 43% said it is not a problem and these establishments should be able to stay open whatever hours they choose to operate.

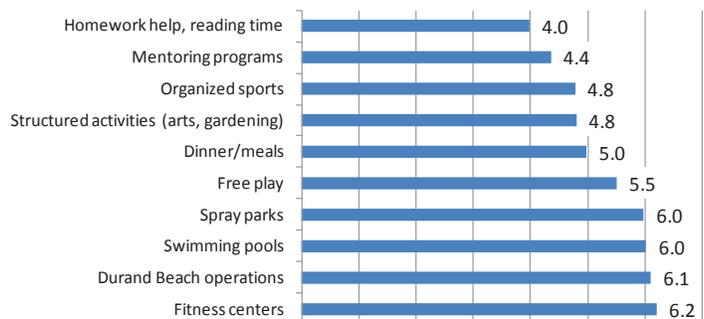
## Priority Area: Better Schools and Educational Opportunities

### Issue: Mentorship and Tutoring

Survey respondents felt that homework help and mentoring programs are the most important services that City Recreation offers, followed by organized sports, structured activities and meals. Forum participants echoed this sentiment:

- Mentoring and help with homework is the most favored recreation activity
- Mentorship and support to help people stay in and finish school

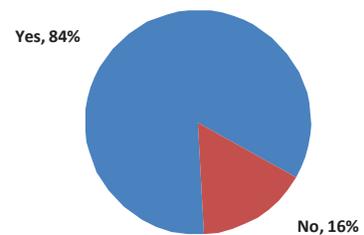
Average ranking of importance of Recreation activities  
1= most important; 10=least important





- More parent engagement at City Recreation Centers, libraries, schools
- Be more conscious of girls and young women; be sure they are comfortable using City Recreation Centers
- Youth acting out at the transit center need to be able to express what they are going through; youth have a lot of talent that needs to be given an outlet, possibly through the arts, dance and acting
- Put the YMCA in the schools - for example Baden Street and School #9 collaborate and it's run by volunteers

Do you think the City should continue to operate Durand Eastman Beach for swimming during the summer?



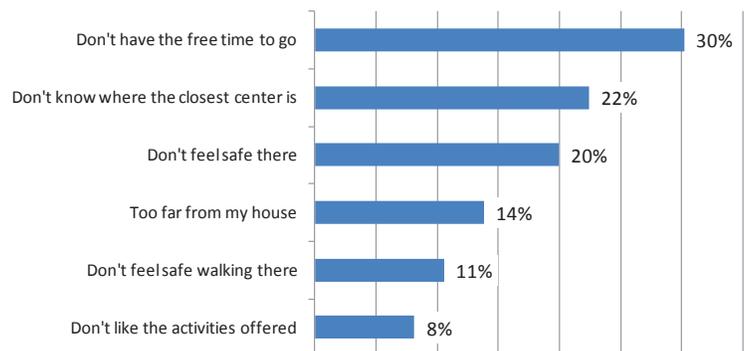
While Durand Beach operations ranked somewhat low as a priority for Recreation services in the survey chart above, in the telephone town hall poll 84% said they think the City should continue to operate Durand Eastman Beach for swimming during the summer.

**Issue: Communication opportunities and barriers to use of recreation programs**

More than a quarter of survey respondents (27%) said they or someone in their family had participated in a Rec program in the last year. Two percent were not sure, but 71% had not used any Recreation services. Among those who have not used a Rec program or service, the most common reason was because the person doesn't have the time to go (30%), or they don't know where the closest recreation center is (22%).

Many survey respondents indicated they do not use recreation programs because they do not have children, because they are older/seniors, or because they use the YMCA or go for walks/hikes instead.

If you have not used a Rec program in the last year, why not?



Forum participants provided some other ideas on how to generate more Recreation center and program use:

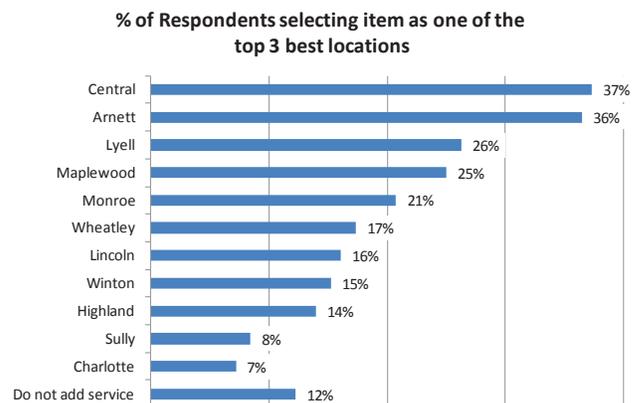
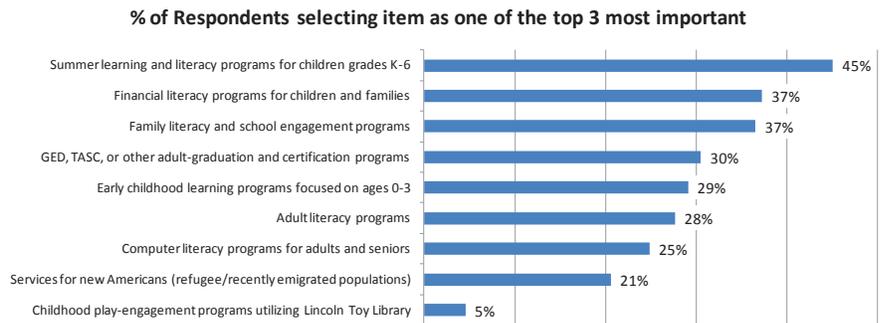
- Use social media to notify participants about activities
- Youth committees can spread information via word of mouth
- Have youth create commercials/ PSAs for television and radio
- Program staff often don't know much about programs
- Use simpler language to describe programs, consider non-native English speakers
- People don't know what programs are offered
- Bring "Rec on the Move" program to schools
- Need bus/transportation from school to City Recreation Centers
- Need transportation to City Recreation Centers with pools

**Issue: Education, skill and career development**

City libraries provide a wide array of services. No longer are libraries simply the place to check out books. Branch libraries have developed partnerships with the Rochester City School District and with area daycare centers to support early childhood learning and literacy engagement. In the survey, we asked what other educational services that libraries provide to City neighborhoods are most important to our community. Survey takers were presented with a list of nine possible choices and were asked to select their top three. The strongest support among survey respondents was for summer learning and literacy programs for children ages kindergarten through grade 6 (45% selected this as one of their top three choices), for financial literacy programs for children and families (37%) and for family literacy and school engagement programs (37%).

Forum participants also mentioned the need for financial literacy, among other needs:

- Offer computer and financial literacy programs
- Information on access to higher education, referrals to training and REOC
- Tutoring for immigrants and youth, including common core aligned materials, help for job-searching parents
- More dance and theater, year-round arts programs
- Community-wide art/vocal/dance competition
- Culinary programs - partner with Wegmans and restaurants
- More internships with stipends



- While a GED is important, what is available after that? What training or co-ops are available?
- Build on Sully library’s group activities which build relationships with patrons
- Offer programs to increase skills for trades and career development
- Libraries should provide extended hours - school holidays, weekends
- Programs for children and adults with disabilities (e.g., ADHD)
- More culturally enriching programs, more culturally-relevant poets, writers, dance teachers

The library is considering offering a formal early learning class for 3-year-olds. The survey asked what branch(es) should offer this class if it is provided. Respondents could choose their top three locations. Among the 236 individuals who responded to the question, 12% said they do not think the library should offer this service. However, 37% indicated that Central was one of their top three choices, followed by Arnett (36%) and Lyell (26%).

## Other Issues

### Issue: City Hall business processes

The City will undergo a property reassessment in the 2015-16 fiscal year. The survey asked property owners how they would prefer to communicate with an appraiser if they have a questions about their assessment and The City offers various payment options for taxes, water and other City issued bills. Options currently include check, cash, credit card (in person or online) and one-time debit or recurring debit from a checking or savings accounts. The survey asked whether the City should offer any other payment options. Only 11% of respondents indicated that the City should offer another form of payment option and some suggestions included PayPal, Bitcoin and money orders. Suggestions also included allowing an extended payment plan, discounts for seniors and eliminating the convenience fees for paying with a credit card.

### Issue: Mobile app for service requests

The survey asked whether respondents might use a mobile app if one were available in order to submit service requests to the City, and to interact with City personnel. More than half agreed they would (57%) and another 19% were not sure.

**Preference for Communication with City Appraiser**

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
In person	108	45%
Over the phone	43	18%
Either is fine	75	31%
Not sure	14	6%

**Would you use a mobile app to submit service requests to the City and to interact with City personnel?**

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	174	57%
No	75	25%
Not sure	57	19%
Total	306	100%

## DEMOGRAPHICS FROM ONLINE SURVEY

If you live in the city, which Quadrant do you call home?	Total	
Center City (Downtown, Corn Hill, Cascade District, High Falls, Grove Place)	6	2%
Northeast (14621, Upper Falls, Marketview Heights)	42	14%
Northwest (Charlotte, Maplewood, Lyell, JOSANA, Dutchtown)	44	14%
Southeast (Strong/Mt. Hope, South Wedge, Monroe/Park/East, Browncroft, Culver/Winton, Beechwood)	157	52%
Southwest (19th Ward, Genesee/Jefferson, Plymouth/Exchange, SWAN)	30	10%
I live in the Monroe County suburbs	23	8%
I live outside Monroe County	2	1%
Total	304	100%

Which of the following represents your age group?		
Under 18	5	1.6%
18 to 34	71	23.1%
35 to 54	123	40.1%
55 or older	108	35.2%
Total	307	100%

How are you connected to the city of Rochester? Do you...		
live in the city?	280	88.9%
work in the city?	192	61.0%
attend events, church, or other activities in the city?	284	90.2%





Thank you to the following city employees who volunteered their time to assist in the Telephone Town Hall, Community Input Forum or the the Online Survey:  
 Megan Bosco • Sarah Boyce • Ted Capuano • Anne Dasilva Tella • Sharla Davenport  
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 Ray Mayoliz • Matt McCarthy • Tom Miller • Rianne Mitchell • Dave Mohney  
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