

2009

## Taking Charge: Survey and Discussion Report, June 2009

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*Taking Charge:*  
Survey and Discussion Report

June 2009

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\* = Issue addressed both on the online survey and in the citizens’ group discussions.

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Finally, and most importantly, we are grateful that so many residents of Lincoln felt it was important enough to invest their time, expertise and interest in the City to provide our local policy makers with such rich and interesting perspectives on the City's budget, programs, and services in a fiscally challenging environment.

## Executive Summary

The data presented in this Report are based on two types of public input. First, Lincoln residents completed 1,812 online surveys between April 21 and May 15, 2009. The surveys asked about residents to give their input on 25 budget, program, and service issues. The survey respondents were randomly presented with a subset of the questions so that the survey could be completed in about 20 minutes by most people. Second, an all-day discussion event was held on Saturday, May 16, 2009. One hundred and eleven residents began the day, with 107 able to stay for the entire discussion. The all-day discussion event focused more in depth on six topics from the online survey. Not all of the discussion groups were able to address the six topics, but all groups were asked to discuss at least three of the topics.

The highlights of the findings from the online survey and the discussion event include:

### ***Safety and Security* the Top Program Priority**

- *Safety and Security* continued to be the top priority for 40% of the online survey respondents (Table 1, p. 12).

### **Consensus to Maintain Programs and Services**

- Online survey respondents were highly unified (83%) in their support of keeping **neighborhood pools** open (Table 21, p. 29). However, they were split on how to achieve that objective: 43% approved increasing property tax about 18 cents per month for the average household, while 40% chose to eliminate evening hours at all 10 City pools.
- Online survey respondents were highly unified (83%) in wanting to maintain **stormwater and floodplain review services** provided by the City of Lincoln (Table 6, p. 17). However, 68% of respondents preferred to maintain the program by funding the services with fees from developers and home buyers. Only 15% preferred to increase property taxes about two cents per month for the average household, in order to protect against flood hazards.
- The online survey respondents were highly unified (81%) in support of keeping **neighborhood libraries** open, though they were split on what strategy to implement: 42% preferred to increase taxes, whereas 39% did not (Table 18, p. 27). Similarly, a large majority of the discussion participants (85%) supported keeping all libraries open, with 60% preferring to increase taxes versus 25% not wanting to increase taxes to keep the libraries open. None of the discussion groups wanted to close neighborhood libraries. Seven groups agreed to increase taxes in order to maintain current services, five groups felt that hours at all libraries should be cut, and three groups were fairly evenly split between maintaining the current level of service versus reducing library hours.
- A large majority (71%) of the online survey respondents preferred to increase property taxes by 18 cents or more per month for the average household to maintain the current **after school youth programs** intended to reduce youth crime (53% preferred to increase taxes by 18 cents, 18% said more than 18 cents) (Table 8, p. 19).

- Seven in ten of the online survey respondents preferred to increase property taxes about one cent per month for the average household to continue providing **health screening for homeless individuals** (Table 10, page 20).
- Two-thirds of the online survey respondents supported a two cent per month increase in property tax for the average household to continue a **Health Department service that eliminates standing water, develops plans to kill mosquitos and traps and tests mosquitos for West Nile Virus** (Table 19, p. 28).
- Most online survey respondents (62%) favored increasing property taxes about 14 cents per month for the average household to continue paying for insurance costs of the 767 senior volunteers who provide the equivalent of \$2.8 million in **community services**, a program funded by two Federal dollars for every dollar the City contributes (Table 14, p. 24).
- Sixty percent of the online survey respondents wanted to increase property taxes by about one cent per month for the average household to maintain **asbestos inspections of buildings**, a program that is funded 71% by Federal funds, 17% by fees, and 12% by tax dollars (Table 16, p. 25).

### **Consensus to Reduce Programs and Services**

- A large majority (73%) of the online survey respondents preferred to *discontinue tax-funded air quality investigations* by the Health Department (Table 17, p. 26). Only 25% agreed to increase taxes to support the program. Half (51%) of the respondents preferred to charge property owners to cover costs of the program, and 22% wanted to discontinue the service. Similarly, about half (56%) of discussion participants chose to pass along costs for the program to property owners, 21% wanted to support the service with a 2.5 cent per month property tax increase for the average household, and 13% chose to end the program. In contrast, nine discussion groups wanted to end the service, and two wanted the program to continue.
- A large majority (71%) of the online survey respondents did not support a tax increase to maintain **free exhibits and use of trails at the Pioneers Park Nature Center**. Half of the respondents (49%), however, preferred instituting user fees to preserve exhibits and trails (Table 24, p. 32).
- Most (63%) of the online survey respondents thought **drafting and reviewing annexation agreements** should be stopped during the coming fiscal year (Table 9, p. 20).
- Nearly 60% of the online survey respondents preferred to eliminate the **comprehensive youth tobacco-use prevention program** (Table 15, p. 24).
- For five of six **Parks and Recreation Department programs**, 55% or more of the online survey respondents wanted most or all of the programs to be *supported by fees rather than taxes*; for programs serving people with developmental disabilities, fewer than half (48%) felt fees should cover most or all of the program costs (Table 12, p. 22).

## Non-Consensus

- Online survey respondents were almost precisely split in whether to support planting as many **trees along City streets** as are removed on a yearly basis: 48% of the survey respondents preferred increasing property taxes about two cents per month for the average household so that as many trees can be planted as are removed annually, while 50% preferred to maintain the program as it currently is operated (Table 22, p. 30).
- Online survey respondents disagreed with one another about whether the City ordinance requiring weeds to be no higher than 6 inches should be changed to 12 inches, saving as much as \$20,000 annually: 50% of the survey respondents preferred **mowing weeds** on City-owned property and street rights of way at 12 inches, while 45% wanted to maintain the current policy of mowing at 6 inches (Table 20, p. 29).
- The public was divided on whether to continue to have Lincoln Police write **accident reports in situations where no one is injured**: 50% of the online survey respondents and 45% of discussion participants preferred to continue writing reports, while 37% of survey respondents and 42% of discussion participants preferred to terminate the practice (Table 7, p. 17). Discussion groups also were also split, with nine discussion groups preferring to end the practice of report writing, six preferring to maintain the program, and one group not coming to an agreement as to their preference.
- Online survey respondents disagreed with one another about whether to continue **“neighborhood protection” activities**, such as review of permits for alcohol sales, child care centers, and building design review for redevelopment projects: 48% of the survey respondents preferred to increase property taxes about five cents per month for the average household to continue the development review activities, while 42% were not in favor of continuing such activities (Table 11, p. 21).
- Online survey respondents disagreed with one another about whether the City should help fund the **Municipal Band concerts**, costing \$100,000 a year of which \$10,000 is paid by the City: 53% of the online survey respondents preferred to increase taxes about one cent per month for the average household, while 46% of respondents preferred not to increase taxes (Table 23, p. 31).

## Change from Non-Consensus (Online Survey) to Consensus (Discussions)

- Online survey respondents were evenly split between funding **Recreation Centers** (45%) and **School Resource Officers** (45%) (Table 2, p. 13) when asked to choose between funding one or the other. More discussion participants chose Recreation Center (50%) than School Resource Officers (12%). Notably, 34% of the discussion participants chose the “Other Preference” option, often reporting they would like to see the School Resource Officers posted to the highest priority schools rather than all middle schools. None of the discussion groups supported the School Resource Officer program as it is currently operated: Six groups selected Recreation Centers over School Resource Officers, five groups preferred School Resource Officers but wanted them to be placed in high-need schools, and



- three groups expressed support for both programs, and two groups did not address the School Resource/Recreation Center issue.
- Online survey respondents were split concerning continuation of a **child injury from bike/auto/pedestrian crashes** reduction program, with 48% in favor compared to 39% against (Table 13, p. 23). In contrast, discussion participants were markedly more supportive of preserving the program. Fifty-five percent of the discussion participants favored continuing the program, and less than 20% preferred to terminate the program. Seven discussion groups supported maintaining the injury prevention program, three chose to eliminate it, one group was split, four groups objected to the question, and the remaining group did not address this issue.
  - Online survey respondents were split on whether to **plow residential streets** after 4 inches (42%) versus 6 inches (56%) of snowfall (Table 5, p. 15). Although their preferred practices differed, there was consensus among discussion participants in not wanting to spend money to immediately remove snow from residential streets. A large majority (70%) of the discussion participants preferred to plow residential streets after 6 inches of snow, and only 13% preferred to plow residential streets after 4 inches. Seven of the discussion groups wanted to continue the current policy of plowing residential streets after 4 inches, while four groups preferred to wait until 6 inches of snow, and three groups chose to wait until 8 inches.

#### **Willingness to Pay Additional Taxes**

- Thirty-three percent of the online survey respondents indicated they were not willing to pay additional property taxes, 31% said they would only be willing to raise property tax if the amount were less than \$1.00 per month, and 30% were willing to pay over \$1.50 per month. In contrast, 11% of discussion participants were not willing to pay additional property taxes, 23% said they would only be willing to raise property tax if the amount were less than \$1.00 per month, and 59% were willing to pay over \$1.50 per month (Table 25, p. 32).

## Background: Public Input for Municipalities' Budgeting, Programs and Services

As part of the move to outcome-based budgeting,<sup>1</sup> in 2008 Lincoln joined a growing number of jurisdictions that have chosen to utilize public input to help make strategic policy decisions related to municipal budgets and to help guide what measures should be used to hold elected officials and department managers accountable for their performances.<sup>2</sup> Lincoln's initiative under Mayor Chris Beutler, called *Priority Lincoln*, used five different types of public input on the City's budget and performance issues and then the City used that input to help inform a variety of policy decisions and the identification of numerous outcome measures.<sup>3</sup>

Over the past decades, it has been found in municipalities across the country that the use of many different methods of public input provide valuable information about the public's perspectives. Some jurisdictions rely on surveys, including Auburn, Alabama; Fort Collins, Colorado; Portland, Oregon; Olympia, Washington; and Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. A few, such as Eugene, Oregon, use telephone surveys, randomly sampling residents.<sup>4</sup> Los Angeles, California, used an online survey asking residents which programs and services should be prioritized, preserved, or cut.<sup>5</sup> Olympia, Washington, conducted focus groups, paying residents \$50 to concentrate on specific issues on which the jurisdiction sought input. Clearwater, Florida, invited its residents to answer specific question online throughout the year.<sup>6</sup> In short, the move to use citizen surveys - through the mail, over the telephone, or through the internet - is becoming increasingly common as municipalities attempt to gather input from citizens.



On May 16, 2009, residents from Lincoln met in facilitated, small groups throughout the day.

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Irene S. Rubin. 1996. Budgeting for Accountability: Municipal Budgeting for the 1990s. *Public Budgeting & Finance*, 16, 112-132.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Jonathan Walters. April 1, 2007. Citizen Surveys. *Governing Magazine*, available online at <http://www.governing.com/article/citizen-surveys>; Ted Greenwood. 2008. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Program to Make Municipal Governments More Responsive to Their Citizens. *National Civic Review*, 97(1), 11-12.

<sup>3</sup> See generally, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center. May 2008. *Budgeting Outcomes and Priorities in Lincoln*, available online at <http://ppc.nebraska.edu/project/BudgetingOutcomesandPrioritiesLincoln>.

<sup>4</sup> Advanced Marketing Research, Inc., December 2008. *City of Eugene Community Survey*, available online at [http://www.eugene-or.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_2\\_323240\\_0\\_0\\_18/2008%20Eugene%20Community%20Survey.pdf](http://www.eugene-or.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_2_323240_0_0_18/2008%20Eugene%20Community%20Survey.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Maeve Reston. December 21, 2008. Los Angeles Survey Seeks Input on Budget Crisis. *Los Angeles Times*, available online at <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/dec/21/local/me-losangelessurvey21>.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Citizen Mini-Poll Results. November 24, 2008. *Official Website of the City of Clearwater, Florida*, available online at <http://www.clearwater-fl.com/poll/results.asp>.

## Public Input Methods Utilized

### *Online Survey*

The online survey data presented in this Report are based on 1,812 surveys completed by Lincoln residents between April 21 and May 15, 2009. The online survey was hosted by Qualtrics, Inc., a company that specializes in online survey software design.<sup>7</sup> Lincoln residents were able to access the survey through the City of Lincoln website and through the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center website.

Respondents to the online survey were not randomly selected; rather, the residents providing input to the survey were self-selected. Residents of Lincoln were made aware of the survey through multiple means. The Mayor's office invited residents to access the survey through a public outreach campaign consisting of media releases<sup>8</sup> and personal appeals across the community by the Mayor, his staff, and City Department heads; through media advertisements available on the City's cable television channel and also posted on YouTube;<sup>9</sup> and as a message broadcast when a caller was placed on hold when phoning the City's offices. There also was an editorial in the *Lincoln Journal Star*<sup>10</sup> and commentary on radio talk shows and in a newspaper column<sup>11</sup> criticizing the public input effort, and columns by the Mayor in the *Lincoln Journal Star* defending the use of the online survey input.<sup>12</sup> Together, these public exchanges raised awareness of the City's *Taking Charge* public input activities. In addition, the Public Policy Center reached out to the 605 random telephone survey respondents from Lincoln's 2008 public input project<sup>13</sup> and invited them to take the online survey. Eighty-six of the online survey respondents self-identified as being part of the random sample of residents in the 2008 phone survey. In fact, 498 respondents to this year's survey reported they had been involved in last year's public input activities.

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<sup>7</sup> Qualtrics, Inc., online at <http://www.qualtrics.com/>.

<sup>8</sup> Mayor's Office, City of Lincoln. April 21, 2009. *Mayor Announces New Online Survey*. Available online at [http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/inthenews/2009/April/MayorAnnouncesNewOnlineSurvey\\_Mayor%27sOffice\\_042109.pdf](http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/inthenews/2009/April/MayorAnnouncesNewOnlineSurvey_Mayor%27sOffice_042109.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> *Taking Charge*, available online at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFbW\\_S82mHM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFbW_S82mHM).

<sup>10</sup> *Be Wary of Survey Results*. April 26, 2009. *Lincoln Journal Star*, available online at [http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/inthenews/2009/April/BeWaryofSurveyResults\\_LJS\\_042609.pdf](http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/inthenews/2009/April/BeWaryofSurveyResults_LJS_042609.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Coby Mach. May 26, 2009. *Don't Depend Too Much on the Survey*, *Lincoln Journal Star*, available online at <http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/inthenews/2009/May/LocalViewDontDependTooMuchOnSurvey.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Mayor Chris Beutler, April 30, 2009. *Public Opinion Survey Results will be Valuable*, *Lincoln Journal Star*, available online at [http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/inthenews/2009/April/PublicOpinionSurveyResultsWillBeValuable\\_LJS\\_043009.pdf](http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/inthenews/2009/April/PublicOpinionSurveyResultsWillBeValuable_LJS_043009.pdf); Mayor Chris Beutler. May 31, 2009. *Survey about Making a Difference*, *Lincoln Journal Star*, available online at <http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/inthenews/2009/May/LocalViewSurveyAboutMakingADifference.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> See University of Nebraska Public Policy Center. May 29, 2008. *Priority Lincoln: Budgeting for Outcomes*, pp. 10 and Appendix A, pp. 24-55. Available online at <http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/Documents/projects/BudgetingOutcomesandPriorities/reports/PriorityLincolnFinalReport.pdf>.

Because not every individual or household has internet access, the online survey was also made available to complete in paper format. Of the 1,812 respondents that were included in the final sample, 33 (1.8%) completed paper versions of the survey. Throughout this Report we will refer to this survey as the “online survey” since such a high proportion of respondents completed the survey online.

The nature of the Qualtrics online survey software<sup>14</sup> is such that any time a respondent accessed the online survey, they were counted as a full respondent to the survey – even if the person only answered one question and then terminated. To make the respondent numbers more reflective of those who actually meant to complete the survey, a cut-off criterion was selected after initial analyses of the entire data set: Respondents who completed less than a third of the possible questions on the survey were not considered in the final tally of the results presented here. In total, 602 partially completed surveys were excluded.

It is possible that a resident or group of residents might want to take the survey multiple times in order to answer a certain question a specific way and have those multiple inputs (unfairly) influence the results. The approach of excluding the 602 partially completed surveys was one defense against that occurring.

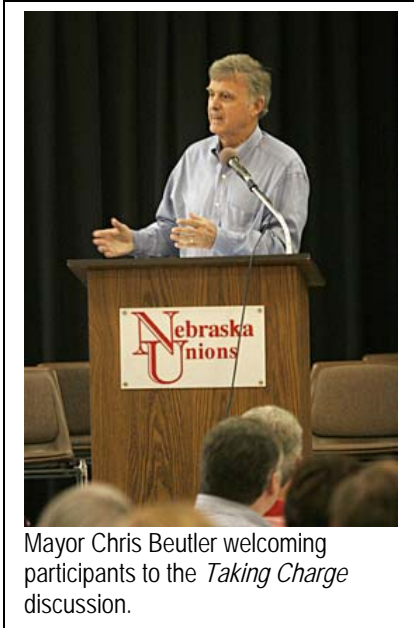
Other approaches were also used to examine the possibility of some trying to influence the results. For example, we examined the 1,812 remaining surveys to determine whether the data might be biased due to respondents trying to skew the results. Although we cannot rule out that some people may have attempted to do so, *the data were tested several different ways*, and regardless of how we teased out the data or ran results excluding certain surveys, the results obtained were within percentage points of the results presented here.



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<sup>14</sup> See note 7.

The survey questions themselves were developed by the City of Lincoln in conjunction with the Public Policy Center and two outside experts, one from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and one from Texas Tech University. The questions selected were designed to identify the preferences of Lincoln residents about City budget and performance issues, specific City services preferences and program trade-offs, as well as attitudes towards the City government. There were numerous questions regarding whether to maintain or eliminate programs and services that had been previously identified as lower priorities.<sup>15</sup> In order to be sure that survey respondents were clued into the fact that their program choices would have taxation consequences, response options were worded so that it was clear that additional taxes would be needed or taxes would be saved, depending on the option selected. This was done to avoid the bias of wanting to keep the status quo array of programs and services. The number of questions would have been too time-consuming to answer each; consequently, a subset of some of the questions was randomly assigned to each respondent answering the survey.



Mayor Chris Beutler welcoming participants to the *Taking Charge* discussion.

#### *Citizens' Group Discussions*

The *Taking Charge* discussion was convened on Saturday, May 16th, 2009. The objective of the day-long event was to engage respondents from the online survey in prolonged and detailed discussions about select city budget, program, and service issues. During the event, participants had opportunities to discuss these issues with other residents in small group sessions facilitated by trained moderators, and ask questions to City department heads about these and other issues. A pre-survey and post-survey to measure changes in participants' opinions about these issues were administered before and after the day's activities.

All 1,812 online survey respondents were invited to participate in the *Taking Charge*, discussion event. Of the 1,812 invitees, 180 affirmatively accepted the invitation to participate, 234 indicated maybe they would attend, and the remaining 1,309 respondents declined to participate. One hundred eleven individuals – 6% of survey respondents – actually attended the event.<sup>16</sup> By the end of the day, 107 pairs of pre- and post-surveys were completed. Participants were provided with \$35 as compensation to offset any

<sup>15</sup> See Mayor Chris Beutler. February 4, 2009. *Memo to Lincoln Citizens re "Taking Charge" Document*, available online at [http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/City/mayor/progress/how\\_to.pdf](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/City/mayor/progress/how_to.pdf). See generally, City of Lincoln, Mayor's Office. 2009. *Taking Charge: City Program Prioritization*, available online at <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/City/mayor/progress/progress.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> See Lincoln Journal Star. May 16, 2009. *Cuts Questioned at City Budget Discussion*, *Lincoln Journal Star*, available online at [http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/inthenews/2009/May/CutsQuestionedBudgetDiscussion\\_LJS\\_05182009.pdf](http://ppc.nebraska.edu/userfiles/file/inthenews/2009/May/CutsQuestionedBudgetDiscussion_LJS_05182009.pdf).

transportation, childcare, or other costs they might incur so that any Lincoln resident would be able to participate in the event.

At the *Taking Charge* discussion event, participants were first *randomly* assigned to one of 16 small discussion groups upon arrival. Numbers of residents ranged from a low of 5 to a high of 10 per group. Residents who had been part of the 2008 randomly selected telephone survey were randomly assigned to one of two groups so there would be two discussions with representatives primarily from the random telephone survey. A few other participants were randomly assigned to these “random sample” groups as well: In one of the two random sample groups, eight of the nine group members were random sample participants, and in the other group, four of the seven group members were random sample participants. When dissimilar, we point out the differences from the random sample groups’ findings compared to the other 14 groups.

Participants sat at their group’s table and began the day’s activities by completing a pre-survey. All the small discussion groups included a facilitator from Creighton University’s Werner Institute for Negotiation and Dispute Resolution,<sup>17</sup> The Mediation Center in Lincoln,<sup>18</sup> or the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.

After completion of the pre-surveys, the day’s information exchange started.<sup>19</sup> First Mayor Chris Beutler welcomed everyone and set out the fiscal realities facing the City. Then Rick Hoppe, Mayor Beutler’s Chief of Staff, provided a more detailed presentation about the City’s budget and gave background information on the *Taking Charge* initiative. Participants then had an opportunity to discuss the issues in their groups and develop questions about city budgetary and service matters they would pose to City department heads in the next portion of the event. The Q&A exchange with the City’s officials lasted approximately 90 minutes.

In the afternoon, participants reconvened in their small group sessions to discuss their thoughts on six specific city programs and services of interest to the City for the new fiscal year:

- Snow Removal: When and where should the City concentrate snow removal operations during periods of heavy snowfall? How much snow should be on the ground before it is removed, and how quickly should the snow be it removed?



Lincoln City Library Director Pat Leach answers questions from discussion participants.

<sup>17</sup> Creighton University School of Law, The Werner Institute for Negotiation and Dispute Resolution, <http://www2.creighton.edu/werner>.

<sup>18</sup> The Mediation Center, <http://www.themediationcenter.org>.

<sup>19</sup> The different information exchange events were recorded and broadcast on the City’s cable channel. These are available online at <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/mayor/cic/5citytv/video.htm> (search “Taking Charge” for the Budget Presentation, Questions for Directors, and Small Groups Report). These same videos are available from the Public Policy Center’s website as well, <http://ppc.nebraska.edu/media>.

- Automobile Accident Reports: Should the Lincoln Police Department continue to write automobile accident reports for non-injury accidents? If so, how quickly should they respond?
- Neighborhood Libraries: Should the City continue to operate neighborhood branches? How should they be funded?
- Recreation Centers and School Resource Officers: Should program funding be decreased or cut for Recreation Centers or School Resource Officers? Which of the programs is preferred over the other?
- Childhood Injury Prevention: Should the Health Department's childhood injury prevention activities continue? How should the program be funded?
- Indoor Air Quality Investigations: Should the Health Department continue to investigate reports of poor indoor air quality in apartments? How should the program be funded?

Participants shared their opinions about these city programs and services issues during the afternoon sessions, discussing their preferences, the trade-offs involved with increasing or decreasing funding for them, and the willingness of participants to increase taxes to support them. A representative from each group reported back findings from their discussions to City officials in a final session. After the report-back session, participants completed a post-survey.



Discussion participants asked questions and shared opinions with City officials on numerous issues.

The pre- and post-surveys that were administered at the discussion included many of the same questions that were asked of respondents on the online survey. In this Report, we present and discuss the results of the post-survey only. There were four residents who came to the beginning of the discussion event, but had to leave for other obligations before the day concluded, and therefore did not provide post-event responses and consequently are not included in the post-event data presented and discussed in this Report.

Note: The results from the online and deliberation surveys primarily are presented in tables. We also provide examples of decisions made by each of the small discussion, but these data *are not* presented in the tables.

### *Caveats*

Throughout the body of this Report, we discuss the results of the online survey, the post-discussion survey, and the decisions of each of the small groups at the discussion. Though there are some clear trends when looking across the information obtained from each form of public input, it is important to keep in mind the public input method that was used to collect each piece of information so that the information can be placed into its proper context.

Both the survey respondents and discussion participants were self-selected, not randomly selected. It appears our respondents were highly motivated, interested, and well-educated (over 40% of the survey and discussion group participants have some graduate degree schooling) (see Appendix A). They scored relatively high on most of the knowledge questions, indicating it is an informed group of Lincolnites that participated in this process (Appendix B). For the most part, those who gave input trusted the City as reflected by their responses to numerous trust, confidence and legitimacy questions we asked (Appendix B). Especially noteworthy is the fact that at the end of the group discussions, the 107 residents had *greater* trust in the City than they did for the Nebraska Supreme Court, the Legislature, or the Office of the Governor (Appendix B).

To reiterate, both the survey and discussion data provide *insights into the public's preferences*. Note that the results presented in this Report represent only these residents' views as opposed to generalized views of the Lincoln public. This is no different than getting other selected viewpoints about budget and programs/services issues (e.g., from the business community, from those with environmental interests, from city employees, etc.), but it is important to recognize that while the input represents a *part of the public's* views, it is *not necessarily the general public's* views.



## I. Overview of Priority and Program Ranking

**Table 1. Please rank the following City programs/budget areas. Rank your highest area with a “1” your second highest a “2” and so on.<sup>20</sup>**

	Mean Score 2009	Discussion Rank 2008	Survey Rank 2009
Safety and Security	2.62	1	1
Livable Neighborhoods	4.11	3	2
Economic Opportunity	4.22	2	3
Accountable Government	4.23	N/A	4
Effective Transportation	4.56	6	5
Environmental Quality	4.64	5	6
Healthy and Productive People	4.80	4	7
Identity Lincoln	6.82	N/A	8
<i>Total Number of Participants</i>		49	1,721

Table 1 presents Lincolnites’ rankings of the City’s program areas. The 2009 prioritization rankings are from the survey only. The 2009 discussion participants were not asked to rank the City’s program areas. The 2008 discussion participants were asked to rank the programs, and we also have included these data for general, albeit not precise, comparison purposes.

**Safety and Security continued to be the top choice** for 40% (684 of 1,721 respondents who answered the question) of the online survey respondents, over two times as many as any other program option. On average, *Livable Neighborhoods* ranked as the second highest budget priority. Survey respondents placed *Economic Opportunity* as the third highest priority, with *Accountable Government* virtually tied with *Economic Opportunity*.

Lincoln residents ranked **Identity Lincoln** as their **lowest priority** by a substantial margin. Half of the survey respondents (52%, 892 of 1,721) rated this program area as least important.

The high rankings in 2009 of *Safety and Security* and the low rankings of *Identity Lincoln* were fairly consistent across the Lincoln online survey respondents. These two program areas had small standard deviations (1.9 and 1.6, respectively), the two smallest standard deviations of the eight program areas. This indicates that most people ranked *Safety and Security* high, and *Identity Lincoln* low. In contrast, the standard deviation for *Accountable Government* and *Economic Opportunity* was 2.3, suggesting slightly greater disparity of opinions among residents about their importance.

<sup>20</sup> In 2008, discussion participants were presented with two additional budget outcome categories including *Quality of Life* and *Equal Access and Diversity* that were replaced by *Accountable Government* and *Identity Lincoln* in the 2009 survey.

## II. Safety and Security

### A. School Resource Officers in Middle Schools, Recreation Centers

**Table 2. It is thought Recreation Centers limit youth crimes and School Resource Officers keep kids safer. The City government consensus is that Recreation Centers are a higher priority.**

**If Safety and Security budget cuts are needed, which program would you choose to fund?**

Response Option	Survey	Discussion
Recreation Centers	45% 812	50% 52
School Resource Officers	45% 813	12% 12
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	10% 183	4% 4
Other Preference	N/A	34% 35
	100% 1,808	100% 103

Overall, online survey respondents were **evenly split between funding Recreation Centers and School Resource Officers** when faced with funding one over the other. Ten percent of survey respondents felt they needed more information and/or question clarification before they could indicate a preference.

The discussion event resulted in some nuanced positions. When asked directly about what they preferred, **more discussion participants selected Recreation Centers (50%) than School Resource Officers (12%)**. Notably, 34% of participants chose another option, often reporting they would like to see resources currently going to four School Resource Officers at ten schools instead shifted to the highest priority schools and that Lincoln Police Department should have the discretion to operate more effectively. A comment by Police Chief Casady about wanting to put Officers in the four schools that most need them may have impacted participants' views.

[Lincoln Police Department] should be given latitude to place officers where they are most effective, not based on the whim of [Lincoln Public Schools].

*-Discussion Participant*

**None of the discussion groups supported the School Resource Officer program as it is currently operated.** Six groups selected **Recreation Centers** over School Resource Officer. Five groups **preferred School Resource Officers but wanted them to be placed**

*in high-need schools*, including the group with four of seven random sample participants (the other random sample group did not discuss this issue). Three groups expressed support for both programs, and two groups did not address the School Resource/Recreation Center issue.

**Table 3. A variety of fitness and leisure activities and programs are offered free or for a minimal charge at Lincoln’s neighborhood recreation centers (Air Park, Calvert, Irving). The centers annually serve nearly 100,000 as participants or spectators.**

**Which would you prefer?**

<b>Response Option</b>	<b>Survey</b>
I prefer to increase property taxes about four cents per month per average household to maintain the current access at the three neighborhood recreation centers.	<b>47%</b> <b>216</b>
I prefer not to increase taxes and end the fitness and leisure activities and programs.	<b>42%</b> <b>190</b>
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	<b>11%</b> <b>50</b>
	<b>100%</b> <b>456</b>

**Table 4. Four Police Officers serve Lincoln’s 10 middle schools. The program costs nearly \$500,000, about \$185,000 from the City and about \$300,000 from Lincoln Public Schools per year. Assigning Police Officers to middle schools is currently considered a lower priority program because it does not have a great impact on the City’s crime rate in comparison with other important law enforcement programs. Thus, the program may be discontinued and the dollars used for law enforcement programs with a greater impact. The cost of the program is about 16 cents in City property taxes for the average household and 25 cents in school property taxes for a total of 41 cents per month.**

**Which would you prefer?**

<b>Response Option</b>	<b>Survey</b>
I prefer to increase City property taxes about 16 cents per month for the average household to preserve the middle school program.	<b>26%</b> <b>466</b>
I prefer not to increase taxes and discontinue the program.	<b>66%</b> <b>1,204</b>
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	<b>8%</b> <b>142</b>
	<b>100%</b> <b>1,812</b>

Posed as separate issues (see Tables 3 and 4), online survey respondents were **split in their support of funding Recreation Centers, but overwhelmingly wanted to eliminate the program assigning police to the middle schools**. When asked solely about supporting neighborhood Recreation Centers, 47% of online survey respondents approved increased property taxes while 42% did not (Table 3). Over 10% of the respondents indicated they needed more information and/or question clarification. A clear majority (66%) of residents who responded to the survey did not support increased taxes to keep police in the City’s 10 middle schools (Table 4).

## B. Snow Removal

**Table 5. The level of snow removal is related to the amount of wheel tax dollars citizens are willing to invest. It requires far less expense to clear arterial streets, intersections, and bus routes for public safety and traffic flow than to clear neighborhood streets. The City could save \$250,000 to \$500,000 per year, by focusing on snow removal for arterial streets, intersections, and bus routes rather than neighborhood streets.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey	Discussion
I prefer residential streets to be plowed after four inches of snow.	42% 753	13% 13
I prefer residential streets to be plowed after six inches of snow and shift the monies to high-priority City street needs.	56% 1,005	70% 72
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	3% 49	1% 1
Other	N/A	17% 17
	100% 1,807	100% 103

Online survey responses indicated a **split on whether to plow residential streets after four or six inches**: Forty-two percent of online respondents wanted to plow residential streets immediately after four inches of snow falls, whereas 56% of respondents wanted to delay plowing until six inches.

Although solutions differed, there was **consensus** among discussion groups in **not wanting to spend money to immediately remove snow from residential streets**. Of the 16 groups, seven wanted to continue the current policy of plowing residential streets after four inches, four groups preferred to wait until six inches of snow had accumulated, and three groups chose to wait until eight inches of snow had accumulated. The current policy of plowing arterial streets within eight hours was supported by 12 groups, and 14 groups preferred the current policy of plowing residential streets within two days. Two groups

supported plowing arterial streets within 12 hours. One additional group expressed backing for preventative services (e.g., administering sand and/or chemicals before snow/ice) already in place, while one did not address this question.

**Seventy percent of the participants in the discussion groups agreed with maintaining the current city policy of plowing arterial streets after four inches of snow, but wanted to do even more. Specifically, they wanted to delay having residential streets plowed until six, or even eight inches, and waiting 48 hours in order to realize a cost savings.** Seventeen percent of the discussion participants selected the “Other” option, and preferred options that would delay plowing or increase the amounts of snow to as much as eight inches before plowing. Participants who had been part of the 2008 **random telephone sample** were especially supportive of delaying snow removal, with over **80% indicating they wanted to wait for six inches or more of snow before plowing.** They also thought neighborhood streets could wait for two days before plowing after a snowfall.

As far as residential streets go I feel than anything less than 8” accumulation should be left unplowed. By the time the side streets are plowed the snow is compacted down and plowing really doesn’t help much except to pile snow in front of the driveways.  
- *Discussion Participant*

The minority of discussion participants who supported the current policy of plowing all streets after four inches within a short time period tended to cite safety concerns or use of alternate modes of transportation in their desire to maintain or increase the current level of service.

Fully fund arterial removal and neighborhoods after 2”. Please keep in mind that not all vehicles are cars. Many of us – and an increasing number of us – commute all year by bicycle and not cleaning the streets makes biking unsafe.  
- *Discussion Participant*

I am in charge of a program run jointly between LPS and the University for 5th grade children in February. One of the issues we face yearly is weather closings. It is important to our program that parents be able to get their children to our venue safely. If we have to cancel school related activities because of unplowed streets, it is costly. I would prefer streets be cleared in as timely and reasonable matter possible and would buy more in taxes to have it so.  
- *Discussion Participant*

### C. Stormwater

**Table 6. The City provides stormwater and floodplain review services for private development to ensure proper drainage and make sure new buildings are not located in areas prone to flooding. The cost is \$21,000 per year, about two cents per month in property taxes for the average household.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about two cents per month for the average household in order to protect against flood hazards.	15% 270
I prefer not to increase taxes, but I prefer to maintain the program by funding the services with fees from developers and home buyers.	68% 1,227
I prefer not to increase taxes and end the program, even though this may potentially increase flood hazards.	15% 267
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	2% 42
	100% 1,806

Eighty-three percent of the online survey respondents **did not support stormwater and floodplain review** services provided by the City of Lincoln, with 15% of residents supporting a tax increase to continue the program. Only 2% of participants needed more information and/or question clarification before answering, indicating strong opinions about this issue.

### D. Traffic Crash Investigation: Non-Injury Accident Reports

**Table 7. The Police Department writes accident reports even in situations where no one is injured. The City does this mainly as a convenience for drivers who make claims on their insurance. Last year, Police Officers issued about 7,100 non-injury accident reports. The amount of time spent was equal to 2.3 Officers and \$160,034 in property tax dollars, about 13 cents per month in for the average household.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey	Discussion
I prefer to increase property taxes about 13 cents per month for the average household and have the Police continue writing accident reports as they have been doing.	41% 743	41% 42

I prefer the Police to respond to accidents even quicker than they have in the past even if that means increasing property taxes more than 13 cents per month.	9% 166	4% 4
I prefer the Police to stop responding to accidents and reduce my taxes.	13% 241	16% 16
I prefer the Police to stop responding to accidents and shift the monies to high priority safety and security needs.	24% 430	26% 27
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	13% 231	5% 5
Other	N/A	9% 9
	100% 1,811	100% 103

Lincoln residents **disagreed with one another about whether to continue to have Lincoln Police write accident reports** in situations where no one is injured: 50% of online survey respondents and 45% of discussion participants preferred to continue writing reports, 37% of survey respondents and 42% of discussion participants preferred to terminate the practice. Nine percent of the survey respondents favored a quicker Police response even if it would mean increasing taxes more than 13 cents per month for the average household, while only 3% of individual discussion participants chose that option. Thirteen percent of the online survey respondents indicated they needed more information and/or question clarification.

I believe the police should continue to be involved in non injury auto accidents because: property loss is involved; all drivers are not insured; an objective voice may be needed to determine fault; citations may be needed for failure to yield, reckless driving, DWI, etc.; insurance rates may go up for the community if this is not done; and to insure the safety of victims and witnesses.  
- Discussion Participant

Feedback from the **discussion groups reflected the split of public opinion**. Nine discussion groups chose to end writing reports, six preferred maintaining the program, and one group could not come to an agreement as to their preference. One of the two groups containing the 2008 random telephone survey participants preferred stopping the program, whereas the other group directly reflected the split, with some participants wanting to continue and others preferring to stop the program. Another of the

Non-injury accidents seem to be low hanging fruit. Taking these monies and allowing the police department to re-allocate them seems to make the most sense. However I am intrigued by my group's proposal to fee-base this service.  
- Discussion Participant

groups proposed that a third-party complete reports in non-injury accidents. Concerns about increased insurance rates were mentioned by several groups.

Some of the discussion groups asked Chief Casady to come to their session in order to learn more about the program; they reported they did not believe other participants understood that the Police would still respond as needed to non-injury accidents. Facilitators also indicated they did not believe many groups correctly understood this distinction. Interestingly, the groups that acquired this additional information voted to end the practice.

**E. Youth Crime Reduction: After School Programs**

**Table 8. The City currently has a low youth crime rate in comparison with its peers. Part of the City's strategy to deal with youth crime is having after-school youth programs with supervised activities from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm, when they are most likely to engage in risky behaviors if unsupervised.**

**These programs and their costs are \$118,866 for Parks & Recreation; \$35,000 for Family Services; and \$40,000 for Boys and Girls Clubs. The total amount is about \$200,000. The cost to the taxpayer is about 18 cents per month for the average household.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about 18 cents per month for the average household to maintain the current youth programs and keep the youth crime rates as-is.	53% 957
I prefer to increase property taxes even beyond 18 cents per month to further reduce youth crime rates.	18% 326
I prefer not to increase taxes and eliminate these programs.	22% 394
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	7% 134
	100% 1,811

A large majority (71%) of online survey respondents preferred **to increase property tax to maintain the current youth programs**. Eighteen percent wanted to continue the program and were willing to increase property taxes *beyond* 18 cents per month in order to further reduce youth crime rates. Twenty-two percent of the online survey respondents wanted to eliminate the City's youth programs.



### III. Economic Opportunity

#### A. Annexation

**Table 9. Annexing property at the City’s edge increases the potential for new tax dollars and helps provide orderly growth, but the drafting and review of these agreements costs in excess of \$114,000 per year in City General Funds.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about eight cents per month for the average household in order to continue annexation preparation.	27% 379
I prefer not to increase taxes, even though it means annexation preparation will be a lower priority in 2009-10.	63% 874
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	10% 142
	100% 1,395

A majority (63%) of online survey respondents thought **annexation preparation should be a lower priority** during the coming fiscal year. Nearly 30% of the respondents thought annexation preparation should continue, and were willing to increase taxes to do so. Ten percent of survey respondents needed additional information and/or question clarification before answering.

### IV. Healthy and Productive People

#### A. Health Screening for Adults who are Homeless or Near Homeless

**Table 10. The Health Department provides five monthly screening and outreach services to adult homeless and near homeless individuals at community agencies. These screenings help prevent more costly health issues later. The cost of providing the screening/outreach services is approximately \$14,000 in tax dollars per year, a cost of about one cent per month in property taxes for the average household.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about one cent per month for the average household and continue providing services to the homeless and near homeless.	70% 311

I prefer not to increase taxes and eliminate the services.	27%
	118
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	4%
	17
	100%
	446

Seven in ten (70%) of online survey respondents preferred to **continue providing health screening** for individuals who are homeless or near homeless. Nearly 30% preferred to eliminate the service.

### B. Neighborhood Protection Activities by Planning Department

**Table 11. The Planning Department spends about \$60,000 on development review activities that primarily are addressed as "neighborhood protection." These review activities include the processing of special permits with public hearings for land uses such as alcohol sales, child care centers, communications towers, site plan reviews for new commercial developments, and building design review for redevelopment projects in downtown, Antelope Valley and the City's older neighborhoods.**

**The Planning Department also responds to concerns expressed about development -- such as billboards out of compliance, or lighting that creates glare for neighbors -- by developing more protective standards and regulations. The cost for these services is approximately five cents per month in property taxes for the average household.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about five cents per month to continue the development review activities.	48%
	224
I prefer not to increase taxes and eliminate the development review activities.	42%
	195
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	10%
	44
	100%
	463

The online survey respondents were **fairly evenly split (48% in favor compared to 42% against) in their support of "neighborhood protection" activities by the Planning Department.** One in ten indicated they needed additional information in order to answer this question.

### C. Parks and Recreation Program Fees

**Table 12. The Parks and Recreation Department offers a number of programs and facilities where a registration fee or an admission fee is charged. Public tax funds cover costs not recovered through fees, helping keep costs affordable for low-income families. Program costs include materials, supplies, staff, and facility expenses. During the 2007-08 fiscal year costs covered by fees were as follows:**

Adult sports programs: 95%  
 Youth sports programs: 89%  
 After-school programs and summer day camps: 75%  
 Outdoor public pools: 63%  
 Recreation programs serving people with disabilities: 25%  
 Pioneers Park Nature Center: 21%

Do you think that fees should cover some, most, or all of the costs of the following programs and facilities, even if it means fewer opportunities for low-income families?

Survey Question	Some	Most	All	
Adult sports programs	39% 711	26% 464	35% 635	100% 1,810
Youth sports programs	36% 659	41% 735	23% 416	100% 1,810
After-school programs and summer day camps	41% 743	38% 687	21% 379	100% 1,809
Outdoor public pools	35% 637	28% 509	37% 663	100% 1,809
Recreational programs serving people with developmental disabilities	52% 941	28% 513	20% 356	100% 1,810
Pioneers Park Nature Center	45% 817	30% 544	25% 448	100% 1,809

There was **very little opposition to having fees support adult and youth sports as well as public pools.** However, online survey respondents felt that tax funds rather than fees should cover the costs of recreation programs serving people with developmental disabilities.

## D. Child Injury from Bike/Auto/Pedestrian Crashes

**Table 13.** The City is attempting to maintain the number of children under age 14 injured from bike/auto/pedestrian crashes to less than 350 per year. The hospital treatment cost associated with the 291 childhood injuries from crashes in 2005 (the most recent year data are available) was \$334,282. In recent years, the injuries were reduced by 40% in part because of the injury prevention programs coordinated by the Health Department. The taxpayer funding provided for this program is approximately \$41,000, which amounts to about four cents per month in property taxes per average household. If the program was eliminated and the injury rates returned to the previous numbers, 116 more children would be injured annually at an anticipated treatment cost of \$133,254.

Which would you prefer?

Response Option	Survey	Discussion
I prefer to increase property taxes about four cents per month for the average household in order to continue the program that has helped reduce injuries by 40%.	48% 227	55% 58
I prefer not to increase taxes and eliminate the program, allowing injury rates to return to the previous level.	39% 184	18% 19
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	13% 62	17% 18
Other	N/A	10% 11
	100% 473	100% 106

Overall, residents answering the **online survey** were **split concerning continuation of a pedestrian injury reduction program, with 48% in favor compared to 39% against.** In contrast, the **discussion participants** were **markedly more supportive of preserving the program.** Over 50% of the discussion participants favored continuing the program, and less than 20% preferred to terminate the program. A number of discussion participants said they felt the question was leading (or misleading). Subsequent explanations by the Health Department Director helped clarify the question for some discussion participants. Nevertheless, more information and/or question clarification were desired by both the survey respondents (13%) and the discussion participants (17%).

I need to see more data correlating the program and the decrease in accidents before I make a decision. I think this program could be done in schools, after-school programs, churches or other places instead.  
- Discussion Participant

Seven discussion groups supported maintaining the injury prevention program, three chose to eliminate it, and one group was split. Notably, **four groups objected to the question**. The remaining group did not address this issue.

**E. Volunteer Programs: Older Adult Volunteers**

*Table 14. The Lincoln Area Agency on Aging contracts with the federal government for three programs that match older adults with community volunteer needs and provide insurance coverage while they are volunteering. It costs about \$165,853 in City and County tax dollars matched with \$342,356 in Federal funds. The 767 volunteers in this program provide the equivalent of \$2.8 million in services.*

Which would you prefer?

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about 14 cents per month for the average household to continue the Agency on Aging programs.	62% 297
I prefer not to increase taxes and eliminate the program, even though the City will lose the use of the Federal funds.	25% 120
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	13% 63
	100% 480

Most people (62%) who responded to the online survey **avored continued support for insurance costs of older adults** who meet community volunteer needs. One-quarter chose to **eliminate the program**, while 13% wanted additional information and/or question clarification in order to make a decision.

**F. Youth Tobacco-Use Prevention**

*Table 15. The City is attempting to reduce the percentage of Lancaster County youth (grades 9 through 12) who smoke to less than 20%. From 1997 to 2007, the percentage of youth who reported smoking in the past 30 days has decreased from 40.7% to 24.8%. A comprehensive approach, including education, enforcement and environmental policy, has been shown to prevent youth from smoking. A comprehensive youth tobacco prevention program is coordinated by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at a cost to taxpayers of approximately \$30,000 per year, which amounts to about three cents per month in property taxes for the average household. If the program were eliminated and youth smoking rates returned to previous 1997 levels (i.e., 40%), an additional 2,500 Lancaster County youth would likely report smoking in the past 30 days.*

Which would you prefer?

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about three cents per month for the average household in order to reach the youth smoking target rate of 20% youth smokers.	36% 155
I prefer not to increase taxes and eliminate the program.	59% 254
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	6% 24
	100% 433

Nearly 60% of the online survey respondents preferred to **eliminate the comprehensive youth tobacco-use prevention program**. Slightly over one-third of the respondents preferred to continue the program.

## V. Livable Neighborhoods

### A. Asbestos Inspections

**Table 16. The Federal Clean Air Act regulates hazardous air pollutants, such as asbestos which causes lung cancer. Building contractors must notify the Health Department any time they might disturb asbestos, and the City conducts inspections to protect people from asbestos. The costs are about \$75,000 per year. Of this amount, \$53,000 is funded by federal grants, \$13,000 is covered by fees, and \$9,000 is paid for by taxes.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes by about one cent per month for the average household to preserve the asbestos inspection program.	60% 225
I prefer not to increase taxes and eliminate the program, even though the City will lose the use of the Federal funds.	30% 113
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	10% 40
	100% 378

**Sixty percent** of the online survey respondents **wanted to maintain asbestos inspections**, whereas 30% wanted to eliminate the program despite the fact that the City

would lose Federal funds that help support it. Ten percent of the respondents desired more information and/or question clarification.

## B. Indoor Air Quality: Asthma

**Table 17. Poor indoor air quality can make people sick, causing asthma and breathing problems. The estimated cost of treating asthma is \$2,077 per year for each adult and \$1,004 for each child with asthma. Health Department staff responds to complaints of poor indoor air quality and conducts about 220 on-site investigations each year. Most of the complaints are received from people living in apartments.**

To avoid eliminating the program, the Department has proposed an increase in property taxes, about 2.5 cents per month for the average household, and charging apartment owners a fee to cover the remaining costs. It is possible that apartment owners will pass this cost on to their renters.

Which would you prefer?

Response Option	Survey	Deliberation
I prefer to increase property taxes about 2.5 cents per month for the average household and continue the air quality program.	25% 94	21% 22
I prefer not to increase taxes, but I do prefer charging apartment owners the full amount to cover the costs of the program, assuming some apartment owners will pass the cost on to the renters.	51% 190	56% 59
I prefer not to increase taxes and to discontinue the service.	22% 81	13% 14
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	3% 11	7% 7
Other	N/A	4% 4
	100% 376	100% 106

A majority (51%) of the online survey participants preferred to charge property owners to cover costs of the Health Department's investigations of air quality complaints. The remaining online survey participants were split between raising property taxes to cover the cost of the program (25%) and discontinuing the service (22%). Similarly, most discussion participants (56%) chose to

Many of the apartments that have poor air quality are in low-income neighborhoods. The tenants will not have much money and may not be able to afford paying the rent increase. In addition, they may not have much recourse in reporting the air quality or misbehavior of their landlord especially regarding how much they pay. I think this is a valuable resource and should be maintained.

-Discussion Participant

pass along costs for the program to property owners, compared to 21% who agreed to increased taxes to support the program and 13% who wanted to discontinue the program.

Nine discussion groups wanted to end the program, and two wanted the program to continue. One discussion group split between keeping and eliminating the program. Two groups chose to cut the program and privatize the service, while one group proposed increasing taxes *and* charging property owners in order to recuperate part of the cost to the City. The remaining group did not discuss the issue.

### C. Libraries

**Table 18. The City has four, full service, quadrant libraries: Anderson, Eiseley, Gere, and Walt. These are open 64 hours per week. In addition, there are three neighborhood libraries: Bethany, South, and Williams (Air Park). These neighborhood libraries serve older established areas and are considered treasured parts of their communities by many. South is open 64 hours per week, Bethany is open 48 hours per week, and Williams is open 24 hours per week.**

**With the City’s current financial situation, \$781,000 in budget reductions to the library system have been proposed, \$511,000 by closing neighborhood libraries.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey	Discussion
I prefer to increase property taxes about 43 cents per month for the average household to maintain the libraries at their current operating levels.	42% 751	60% 62
I prefer not to increase taxes and close down the three neighborhood libraries.	18% 330	7% 7
I prefer not to increase taxes, nor do I want to close the neighborhood libraries. Instead I prefer to reduce the hours and/or days of service at ALL libraries, including the four, full service, quadrant libraries.	39% 696	25% 26
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	2% 33	5% 5
	N/A	3% 3
	100% 1,810	100% 103

**A majority of online survey respondents (81%) supported keeping neighborhood libraries open**, though residents were split on what strategy to implement (42% approved of increasing taxes compared to 39% who did not). About one in five (18%) online survey respondents supported closing the

I believe the libraries should stay open because the service that they offer is greater than the cost.  
-Discussion Participant



three neighborhood libraries. Only 2% of respondents needed more information to make a decision, a clear indicator of strong opinions held by the survey respondents on how to address budget reductions for the library system.

Support for the libraries was also reflected in the discussions. **None of the discussion groups agreed to close neighborhood libraries.** Seven groups agreed to increase taxes in order to maintain current services, though in three of these seven groups there was a minority of individuals who opposed this option. Five groups felt that hours at all libraries should be cut. Three groups were fairly evenly split between maintaining the currently level of service and reducing library hours. One group proposed “charging an occupation tax on gasoline” to fund the libraries.

I prefer to reduce hours at all the libraries and run the neighborhood libraries plus the full service libraries. Use volunteer help, professors, teachers or retired library people to help.  
 - Discussion Participant

**D. Mosquito and Standing Water Inspections**

**Table 19. The Health Department responds to over 200 complaints of mosquitoes or standing water per year. The Department helps people eliminate standing water, develops plans to kill mosquitoes, and traps and tests mosquitoes for West Nile Virus. The cost is about \$37,000 per year, of which about \$13,000 is grant-funded. The other \$24,000 is paid for by taxes. In 2003 (the last year for which data are available), the average cost for treating West Nile per patient in Lancaster County was \$10,704. At \$37,000, the cost of the City's prevention program is about two cents per month in property taxes for the average household.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about two cents per month for the average household and continue the health program.	<b>66%</b> <b>257</b>
I prefer not to increase taxes and eliminate the program.	<b>27%</b> <b>103</b>
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	<b>7%</b> <b>27</b>
	<b>100%</b> <b>387</b>

Two-thirds of survey respondents **supported continued Health Department responses to standing water complaints.** Twenty-seven percent of online survey respondents preferred to eliminate the program.

## E. Mowing

**Table 20. Each year, the City mows approximately 480 acres of City-owned properties and street rights of way (not including park land). If the City ordinance requiring weeds to be no higher than 6 inches were changed to 12 inches, the City could mow less and save as much as \$20,000 annually.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes two cents per month for the average household to pay for the current, 6-inch, level of enforcement.	45% 823
I prefer not to increase taxes, allow weeds to grow 12 inches, and shift the funds to higher priority programs.	50% 903
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	5% 86
	100% 1,812

Lincoln residents were **split on the issue of mowing City-owned property**. Half of the online survey respondents would permit weeds to grow to 12 inches before mowing. Forty-five percent wanted to maintain the current policy of mowing at six inches.

## F. Pools

**Table 21. Lincoln operates 10 outdoor public pools. Five are part of the City's quadrant plan to serve all areas of the City: Eden, Highlands, Star City Shores, University Place, and Woods. Five neighborhood pools are in the older, established neighborhoods: Air Park, Ballard, Belmont, Irvingdale, and Meadow Heights. Together, the five neighborhood pools represent 25% of the annual visits to Lincoln's pools. It costs about 18 cents per month in property taxes for the average household for neighborhood pools.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about 18 cents per month for the average household to preserve the neighborhood pools.	43% 782
I prefer not to increase taxes, but I would like to keep neighborhood pools open by eliminating evening hours at all 10 City pools.	40% 719
I prefer not to increase taxes and close the neighborhood pools.	14% 256

I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	<b>3%</b> <b>54</b>
	<b>100%</b> <b>1,811</b>

Lincolniters surveyed were unified in their support of neighborhood pools; however, solutions on how to continue supporting this service were evenly split. Among online respondents, 43% supported **preserving the neighborhood pools through an increase in taxes** while 40% chose to **eliminate evening hours** at all City pools. A small proportion (14%) of people wanted to **close the neighborhood pools**. Only 3% of people needed more information, indicating strong opinions held by the public on this issue.

### G. Street Trees

**Table 22. In Lincoln, street trees that have been removed due to decline, disease or damage are replaced through a City cost-share program with neighboring property owners. Each year, about 500 street trees are removed, and about 200 replacement trees are planted. The inability to keep up with new tree plantings is due to lack of funding.**

#### Which would you prefer?

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about two cents per month for the average household so that as many trees can be planted as are removed annually.	<b>48%</b> <b>219</b>
I prefer not to pay additional property taxes and keep the program as-is.	<b>50%</b> <b>231</b>
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	<b>2%</b> <b>11</b>
	<b>100%</b> <b>461</b>

Online survey respondents were **evenly split (50% against compared to 48% in support) on their support of planting as many trees** along City streets as are removed on a yearly basis. A very low percentage (2%) of those polled wanted more information, indicating strong opinions on this issue.

### VI. Effective Transportation

No questions correspond primarily to this priority area.

## VII. Environmental Quality

No questions correspond primarily to this priority area.

## VIII. Accountable Government

No questions correspond primarily to this priority area.

## IX. Identity Lincoln

### A. Band Concerts

**Table 23. Each summer, the City helps to sponsor Municipal Band concerts, enjoyed by thousands of Lincoln residents. The concert series costs \$100,000 per year, of which \$10,000 is City funded. To maintain City funding would require about one cent per month in property tax for the average household.**

**Which would you prefer?**

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about one cent per month for the average household to preserve the program as-is.	53% 240
I prefer not to increase property taxes and reduce the number of concerts.	46% 210
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	1% 6
	100% 456

Survey respondents were **somewhat split over whether to increase taxes to fund the summer concert series**. About half (53%) preferred to increase taxes about one cent per month per household, whereas 46% of online respondents preferred not to increase taxes to fund the concert series. Only 1% of respondents needed additional information and/or question clarification in order to answer, indicating strong preferences of people surveyed.

## B. Pioneers Park Nature Center

**Table 24. For more than 40 years, the Pioneers Park Nature Center has provided opportunities to view indoor and outdoor exhibits and use the nature trails at no cost. The annual costs for the Center are approximately \$557,000, and \$125,000 are recovered in educational program fees.**

### Which would you prefer?

Response Option	Survey
I prefer to increase property taxes about 36 cents per month for the average household to maintain free access to Pioneers Park Nature Center.	26% 94
I prefer not to increase my taxes and prefer a decrease in the Center's services.	22% 80
I prefer not to increase my taxes, but I would like to maintain having exhibits and trails funded by a user's admission fee of \$3 to \$4.	49% 181
I need more information, and/or the question is not clear to me.	3% 12
	100% 367

Survey respondents overwhelmingly **did not support funding the Pioneers Park Nature Center** (71%). Only 26% of online respondents said they would be willing to increase property taxes to maintain the Nature Center. However, it appears that respondents do not necessarily wish to see Nature Center services decrease: 49% said that it would be appropriate to collect user fees of \$3-4 to maintain services. Just 3% of respondents requested additional information and/or question clarification.

## X. Willingness to Pay Additional Property Taxes

**Table 25. To preserve some or all of the programs in this survey, I would be willing to pay additional property taxes per month in the amount of:**

Response Option	Survey	Discussion
No additional property taxes	33% 587	11% 12
50 cents or less	20% 364	12% 13

51 cents to \$1	11% 189	11% 12
\$1.01 - \$1.50	7% 117	6% 6
\$1.51 - \$2	5% 96	10% 11
\$2.01 - \$2.50	7% 125	11% 12
more than \$2.50	18% 316	38% 40
	100% 1,794	100% 106

**Discussion participants were more willing than the online survey respondents to pay additional property taxes to fund city services. Thirty-eight percent of discussion respondents said they were willing to pay an additional \$2.50 per month in order to preserve the programs about which they were asked to give their opinion. Only 18% of the online survey respondents said they would be willing to increase taxes that much.**

Overall, **33% of the online survey respondents indicated they were *not willing to pay additional property taxes***, 31% said they would only be willing to raise their property taxes if the amount were less than \$1.00 per month, and 30% were willing to pay over \$1.50 per month. In contrast, **11% of discussion participants *were not willing to pay additional property taxes***, 23% said they would only be willing to raise their property taxes if the amount were less than \$1.00 per month, and **59% of the discussion participants were willing to pay over \$1.50 per month** to preserve programs and services.

# **Appendix A**

## **Demographics**

<b>AGE</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Survey</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>19-35</b>	<b>20%</b> <b>298</b>	<b>12%</b> <b>13</b>
<b>36-55</b>	<b>42%</b> <b>623</b>	<b>33%</b> <b>36</b>
<b>56-74</b>	<b>34%</b> <b>501</b>	<b>44%</b> <b>47</b>
<b>75 and older</b>	<b>3%</b> <b>47</b>	<b>11%</b> <b>12</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>1,469</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>108</b>

<b>RACE</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Survey</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>90%</b> <b>1571</b>	<b>92%</b> <b>99</b>
<b>Black</b>	<b>1%</b> <b>14</b>	<b>0%</b> <b>0</b>
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	<b>1%</b> <b>16</b>	<b>2%</b> <b>2</b>
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>	<b>1%</b> <b>16</b>	<b>2%</b> <b>2</b>
<b>Asian</b>	<b>1%</b> <b>14</b>	<b>1%</b> <b>1</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>2%</b> <b>31</b>	<b>4%</b> <b>4</b>
<b>Prefer not to answer</b>	<b>5%</b> <b>79</b>	<b>0%</b> <b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>1,741</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>108</b>



<b>YEARS LIVED IN LINCOLN</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Survey</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>0-10 years</b>	<b>18%</b> <b>316</b>	<b>15%</b> <b>16</b>
<b>11-20 years</b>	<b>18%</b> <b>319</b>	<b>17%</b> <b>19</b>
<b>21-40 years</b>	<b>42%</b> <b>723</b>	<b>41%</b> <b>45</b>
<b>41-60 years</b>	<b>20%</b> <b>337</b>	<b>26%</b> <b>28</b>
<b>61 years or more</b>	<b>2%</b> <b>37</b>	<b>2%</b> <b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>1,732</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>110</b>

<b>EDUCATION</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Survey</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>Less than High School</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b> <b>2</b>	<b>0%</b> <b>0</b>
<b>Some High School</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b> <b>6</b>	<b>1%</b> <b>1</b>
<b>High School Degree</b>	<b>6%</b> <b>98</b>	<b>4%</b> <b>4</b>
<b>Some College</b>	<b>16%</b> <b>270</b>	<b>18%</b> <b>19</b>
<b>Associate's Degree/Other 2 year Degree</b>	<b>9%</b> <b>156</b>	<b>7%</b> <b>8</b>
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	<b>28%</b> <b>489</b>	<b>27%</b> <b>29</b>
<b>Some Graduate School</b>	<b>12%</b> <b>216</b>	<b>9%</b> <b>10</b>
<b>Master's Degree</b>	<b>18%</b> <b>317</b>	<b>19%</b> <b>20</b>
<b>Doctorate Degree/Other Advanced Degree</b>	<b>10%</b> <b>165</b>	<b>16%</b> <b>17</b>
<b>Prefer not to answer</b>	<b>1%</b> <b>22</b>	<b>0%</b> <b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>1,741</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>108</b>

**Appendix B**  
**Trust, Confidence, and Knowledge**

**Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

Original Scale for Online: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

Orig. Scale for Discussion: 1=Str. Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Slightly Disagree, 4=Neither Agree/Disagree, 5=Slightly Agree, 6=Agree, 7=Str. Agree

Collapsed Scale for Both: 1=Disagree, 2=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 3=Agree

Question	Online		Pre-Discussion		Post-Discussion	
	Mean (SD)	n	Mean (SD)	n	Mean (SD)	n
Citizens can influence the Lincoln City government's decisions.	2.32 (.847)	1,127	2.64 (.727)	109	2.76* (.597)	105
Citizens should support the Lincoln City government even if they disagree with some of its specific decisions or policies.	2.37 (.804)	854	2.67 (.609)	109	2.70 (.635)	106
Even when I disagree with a decision made by the Lincoln City government, I still believe the government deserves respect.	2.76 (.524)	865	2.87 (.434)	108	2.91 (.379)	106
I am satisfied with current policies of Lincoln City government officials.	N/A	N/A	2.17 (.818)	54	2.49** (.800)	53
I am satisfied with current policies of the Lincoln City government.	N/A	N/A	2.33 (.862)	55	2.68*** (.644)	53
I am satisfied with the Lincoln City government.	N/A	N/A	2.42 (.854)	55	2.73*** (.660)	52
I am satisfied with the officials currently serving as part of Lincoln's City government	N/A	N/A	2.23 (.847)	53	2.62*** (.713)	53
I have great confidence in the Lincoln City government officials.	2.08 .830	852	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
I have great confidence in the Lincoln City government.	2.09 (.840)	862	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lincoln City government can usually be trusted to make decisions that are right for the residents as a whole.	2.00 (.855)	862	2.48 (.818)	54	2.77*** (.577)	53
Lincoln City government officials are chosen through fair elections.	2.77 (.540)	1,132	2.77 (.571)	109	2.88 (.432)	105

Question	Online		Pre-Discussion		Post-Discussion	
	Mean (SD)	n	Mean (SD)	n	Mean (SD)	n
Lincoln City government officials are, for the most part, honest.	2.46 (.730)	858	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lincoln City government officials base their decisions on the facts, not their personal interests.	1.82 (.806)	832	2.11 (.896)	109	2.46*** (.844)	105
Lincoln City government officials can usually be trusted to make decisions that are right for the residents as a whole.	2.02 (.855)	848	2.39 (.811)	54	2.47 (.749)	53
Lincoln City government officials have residents' best interests in mind when they make decisions.	2.00 (.845)	887	2.47 (.826)	108	2.75*** (.618)	106
Lincoln City government officials treat residents with respect.	2.34 (.782)	1,139	2.52 (.781)	107	2.70** (.634)	105
Lincoln residents can count on Lincoln City government officials to get the job done.	2.05 (.818)	851	2.30 (.816)	54	2.42* (.795)	53
Lincoln residents can count on the city government to get the job done.	2.03 (.832)	860	2.45 (.812)	55	2.85*** (.456)	53
Most Lincoln City government officials are competent to do their jobs.	2.36 (.746)	874	2.71 (.599)	107	2.78** (.552)	106
Most Lincoln City government officials are honest.	N/A	N/A	2.69 (.619)	109	2.82*** (.474)	106
Most Lincoln City government officials lack integrity.	1.55 (.729)	861	1.40 (.672)	106	1.21** (.511)	106
Public officials in Lincoln City government care about what people like me think.	N/A	N/A	2.49 (.812)	109	2.69* (.681)	106
Residents have a great say in important Lincoln City government decisions.	N/A	N/A	2.21 (.887)	108	2.59*** (.727)	106

Question	Online		Pre-Discussion		Post-Discussion	
	Mean (SD)	n	Mean (SD)	n	Mean (SD)	n
The decisions made by the Lincoln City government are biased.	2.13 (.801)	1,170	2.00 (.854)	108	1.81 (.867)	105
The Lincoln City government has too much power.	1.86 (.757)	903	1.68 (.816)	104	1.60 (.757)	104
The Lincoln City government is a legitimate governing body.	2.76 (.547)	1,180	2.89 (.400)	105	2.96* (.237)	105
The Lincoln City government is greatly in need of reform.	2.14 (.803)	816	2.05 (.886)	109	1.85* (.944)	106
The Lincoln City government is made up of highly qualified individuals.	2.23 (.736)	845	2.57 (.685)	109	2.78*** (.537)	105
The procedures followed by the Lincoln City government are lawful.	2.69 (.570)	1,124	2.78 (.553)	108	2.92*** (.299)	106

SD = Standard Deviation

Note: Pre vs. Post significance levels based on original 7-point scale values.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Please tell us how much confidence you have in each of the following STATE and LOCAL government institutions to do their job.**

Scale: 0=No confidence, 1=Not too much confidence, 2=Some confidence, 3=A lot of confidence

Question	Pre-Discussion		Post-Discussion	
	Mean (SD)	n	Mean (SD)	n
Lincoln City government	1.95 (.693)	111	2.18** (.728)	106
Nebraska Legislature	1.61 (.677)	111	1.67 (.643)	106
Nebraska State Courts	2.04 (.690)	110	2.12 (.675)	105
Office of the Nebraska Governor	1.58 (.977)	111	1.56 (1.006)	106

SD = Standard Deviation

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Knowledge						
Question	Online		Pre-Discussion		Post-Discussion	
	% Correct	n	% Correct	n	% Correct	n
<b>The total amount of charitable funds made available to Lincoln’s public programs and services is estimated to be how large?</b> (125-175 million dollars)	4	1,812	19	111	45****	111
<b>What steps has the City taken to address the budget deficit in the last two years?</b> (Adopt a hiring freeze)	69	1,812	51	111	54	111
<b>What happens after Mayor Beutler decides on the City’s budget in May?</b> (The budget is released to the public in June by the Mayor’s office. The Lincoln City Council votes on tentative changes to the Mayor's budget in July. A public hearing is held in August. Then the Lincoln City Council adopts the final budget.)	N/A	N/A	77	111	74	111
<b>Can the Nebraska Supreme Court declare an act of the Nebraska Legislature unconstitutional?</b> (Yes)	N/A	N/A	82	111	84	111
<b>City government spends the highest percentage of its budget on which category of services?</b> (Public safety services)	53	1,812	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Of each dollar collected in property taxes in Lincoln, City government receives approximately what share?</b> (Less than 15 percent)	45	1,812	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>What is the largest source of revenue for the City’s budget?</b> (Sales taxes)	50	1,812	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>The City of Lincoln’s annual budget is approximately how much?</b> (125-175 million dollars)	56	1,812	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\*\* $p < .001$