



CITY OF BILLINGS, MT 2012

Report of Open-ended Question



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CONTENTS

Survey Background.....	1
About The National Citizen Survey™	1
Understanding the Results	2
About Closed-ended and Open-ended Questions	2
Verbatims.....	2
Verbatim Responses to Open-ended Questions	3
What is the most pressing issue for our city government to address at this time?	3
Public safety: crime, safety services	3
Transportation: traffic enforcement, traffic lights, public transit, traffic flow, pedestrian options.....	4
Economic sustainability: controlled growth and development, employment, cost of living, affordable housing.....	6
Infrastructure: street maintenance, code enforcement, recycling, utilities	7
Finance: taxation, budget issues, maintaining levels of service	8
Social services: services to homeless, low income and youth	8
Governance: public trust, city lawsuits, community relations	9
Education: funding, quality.....	10
Other	10
Don't know/No comment.....	11

SURVEY BACKGROUND

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY™

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality survey methods and comparable results across The National Citizen Survey™ jurisdictions. Participating households are selected at random and the household member who responds is selected without bias. Multiple mailings give each household more than one chance to participate with self-addressed and postage paid envelopes. Results are statistically weighted to reflect the proper demographic composition of the entire community.

The National Citizen Survey™ customized for this jurisdiction was developed in close cooperation with local jurisdiction staff. The City of Billings staff selected items from a menu of questions about services and community problems; they defined the jurisdiction boundaries NRC used for sampling; and they provided the appropriate letterhead and signatures for mailings. City of Billings staff also determined local interest in a variety of add-on options to The National Citizen Survey™ Basic Service.

UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

ABOUT CLOSED-ENDED AND OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Questions can either be asked in a closed-ended or open-ended manner. A closed-ended question is one where a set of response options is listed on the survey. Those taking the survey respond to each option listed. Open-ended questions have no answer choices from which respondents select their response. Instead, respondents must “create” their own answers and state them in their own words. The verbatim responses are categorized by topic area using codes. An “other” category is used for responses falling outside the coded categories. In general, a code is assigned when at least 5-10% of responses will fit the code.

Advantages of an open-ended question include:

- Responses are not prompted, allowing respondents to provide answers that are not anticipated or well known.
- This type of question tends to capture response options that come to mind most quickly.
- The final result can be richer, since verbatim responses are included in an appendix, giving you and others a chance to “hear” the voice of respondents in their own words.
- There is a smaller risk of missing important dimensions.

VERBATIMS

Respondents were asked to record their opinions about pressing issues in the following question:

- What is the most pressing issue for our city government to address at this time?

The verbatim responses were categorized by topic area and those topics are reported in the following table with the percent of responses given in each category. Those verbatim responses are grouped by the first topic listed in each comment whenever a respondent mentioned more than a single topic. Verbatim comments that contain more than one topic nevertheless appear only once (in the category of the first topic listed). Results from the open-ended question are best understood by reviewing the table of frequencies that summarize responses as well as the actual verbatim responses themselves.

What is the most pressing issue for our city government to address at this time?	
	Percent of Respondents
Public safety: crime, safety services	24%
Transportation: traffic enforcement, traffic lights, public transit, traffic flow, pedestrian options	19%
Economic sustainability: controlled growth and development, employment, cost of living, affordable housing	15%
Infrastructure: street maintenance, code enforcement, recycling, utilities	11%
Finance: taxation, budget issues, maintaining levels of service	10%
Social services: services to homeless, low income and youth	6%
Governance: public trust, city lawsuits, community relations	5%
Education: funding, quality	3%
Other	7%
Don't know/No comment	2%
Total	100%

VERBATIM RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The following pages contain the respondents' verbatim responses as written on the survey and have not been edited for spelling or grammar. Responses have been organized by coded topic areas.

WHAT IS THE MOST PRESSING ISSUE FOR OUR CITY GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS AT THIS TIME?

Public safety: crime, safety services

- Safe community
- With the recent growth in Billings, safety is of paramount concern.
- I am concerned with the fire department and the effects their charges rating will play on my insurance. I do not like the private Ambulance service they are not curtious and professional.
- Enforce laws on DUI! Enforce laws on talking/taxing on cell phones
- Medical response not actually @ times they are to be at. Need honest evaluations by private source & ambulance need to be held to response times, Actual time of all of calls not just their reports. More police & fire.
- Safety; honesty integrity in govt; schools that educate children properly; commercial development encouraged.
- Crime and the police departments time of arrival
- Crime
- Police protection, drug use on high school campus
- Safe community, like routes along more streets in connection with each other easier. Trails so far apart. Hard to travel in west end to work on bike or to downtown.
- Safety, jobs, adequate funding support for public schools, clean safe environment (this is not a jobs vs environment choice) orderly growth - be smart about this issue, let's be looking down. The road here.
- Community safety
- Drugs-burglary-air quality
- Safe community
- Help prevent and prosecute people committing vandalism.
- Safe community!!! It's out of control to be such a small city comparing to bigger cities in bigger state
- Safe community, learning opportunities, economic development, housing
- Crime on the north side especially above north park over to 27th (6th ave north to 12th ave north being the worse. Burnstead apts being the heart of it all.)
- Crime
- Safe Community
- Safety in neighborhoods as well as safety at night. Drunk driving is such an issue of unsafe behavior to residents in Billings.
- Safety
- Safety of my neighborhood after dark, We need security guards patrolling my area during the nighttime - here at rose park apts.
- Providing police & fire protection.
- Police protection streets- Repair & upkeep found use
- Safe community

- Keeping an effective and experienced police force.
- Having a safe community during the day and at night.
- DUI & crime noise control
- Drugs & associated crime
- Safety, crime prevention. Leveling cell phone use while driving! & preventing
- Overall, safety is always my biggest concern. Next in line right now is better mass transit & biking & walking accessibility. Throughout Billings. This will help attain a stronger sense of community & preserve community resources. The more you get people out of their cars where they are isolated & out on the streets walking & biking & riding the bus together the stronger their sense of ownership & community will be.
- Safety is always #1
- Crime Drug abuse
- Safety - driving on the streets & punishing criminals Slum land lords The lack of a middle class.
- I would like to see more police officers on duty. According to the gazette we are seeing an increase in burglaries and as our population increases i'm sure we will see an increase in crime.
- Police not willing to accept crime report except from property owner Timing of certain stoplights Montana Ave when trains passing 1st Ave No. headed east in afternoons airport a main east in afternoons airport a main
- Crime, transportation to outlying areas-west west end.
- Public safety and quality of life especially in public schools
- Burglaries / too many
- Safety of citizens Best use of funds available Redwood tracks location
- Quality crime control plus better traffic enforcement. In a normal day i see many infractions in the area of traffic. People violate the traffic laws daily.
- 22, safe community! Lets keep Billings, Billings! safe
- Crime
- Medical marijuana your chicken law is ridiculous clean up the south side
- Response to natural disasters!
- What happened to the fire dept.s clown team? Billing fire dept. has the same amount of guys today that they did in 1978. If you ask me, they are way understaffed. Time to clean out management.
- Safe community
- Enforcement of laws that already list. Follow up or city workers & enforcement of ruled & reefs/bus drivers running red lights, etc. Aggressive driving.
- Crime prevention
- Home burglary seems out of control

Transportation: traffic enforcement, traffic lights, public transit, traffic flow, pedestrian options

- I'm sure there are more important issues presently, but i would like to see better street cleaning & for bike lanes & trails to have easy access - some paved areas do not have ramps properly installed and appear to be ill-designed I understand in time it can only get better as population increases so you have more tax payers.
- Increase traffic patrols (Red light runners, cell phone use, speeding).
- Traffic
- Crack down on wire phone use while driving (give fines)
- No more roundabouts and enforcement of 15 mph in roundabouts.
- Motor vehicle traffic, 75% of drivers dont want to obey the speed laws & stop signs.

- Connected bike trails limit repairs growth
- Downtown parking parks poor condition/boothill cementary shameful
- Bicycle lanes and paths.
- Traffic poor planning all over town. Traffic lights on 24th s w. Mall drive and Market Place Drive lights are green way to long. There are not near enough north, south streets.
- Traffic for a city this size, it takes too long to get from one place to the other, especially when traveling crosstown.
- Bus systems that connect us to land & run longer hours for people who work late without transportation
- Getting dumb drivers, cell phone users and racing cars off the street-safety for pedestrians and children on bikes. saw a man riding a motor cycle texting
- Traffic enforcement! I see people speeding all the time and no. Police are ever around. People in this town drive like nuts.
- The danger of accidents/injuries from driven running (ignoring) and lights at intersections
- Traffic flow downtown on main streets.
- 1) Public transportation needs to be taken away from the airport authority completely! 2) Home development: a serious restriction placed on water hook ups for new homes. Infill must be connected to developers. Billings sprawl is a big problem. 3) Renters rights : most folks rent here and have no rights - they can be evicted anytime for no reason (30 day notice)
- To keep up w/growth - traffic is already becoming a challenge in the king / 24th area at certain times of day.
- Limited bus service - times & areas and lack of advertising promoting the current bus service
- Remove diagonal parking down town. It is a definite traffic hazard.
- Traffic in Billings Heights, to and from downtown and around schools. Alternate route for residence for Skyview High School school traffic is really bad need more roads around 1 main artery!
- Downtown parking, homeless teens & families eg. Affordable housing choices
- Traffic! We need right turn lanes, widen Rim Rock to 4 lanes, widen Zimmerman Trail/32nd St. To 4 lanes. There needs to be ways to pass people that are going too slow!
- Wast or resources, like bike trails. That 5% use! Most bike riders use side walks & streets.
- Traffic enforcement, code enforcement
- Make the roads safer for bikers. It's getting better, signs that day share the road even will help, hopefully.
- Roads and education for kids.
- How to make walking and bicycling safer, bringing higher paying jobs to Billings
- Traffic
- Traffic control - driver education
- Another access road out of the heights
- Finish grand avenue reconstruction from 19th/ to 24th/: hire the additional fire fighters and police that the safety mill levy paid for a quit using that money to pay for administrative mistakes!
- Completion of widening of roads - too many 2 lane - 4 lane - back to 2 lane roads - speed limits way too low (- overall living in Billings is like living in "leave it to beaver" ville)
- If we had a longer running hours better bus system, less people would drive = less accidents. We need everyone to recycle - Why isn't this huge?
- Continuing to make bike/walking trails throughout Billings great natural areas, connect the rims, river, and the rest to the city. Make exercise easier for all. Safer too! Great selling points for Billings.
- The lack of response to calls of speeding on our street dead end
- Remove the round abouts people hate them

- Traffic flow - crime (enforcing penalties) more response to non-emergency calls
- Traffic violations
- Sahara park parking traffic control on Aronson Ave

Economic sustainability: controlled growth and development, employment, cost of living, affordable housing

- Take sane & orderly advantage of Bakken Oil and related possibilities that could make more jobs & more money for our needs
- Increasing job opportunities,
- Job growth and public entertainment and attractions.
- Economic development - jobs
- Growing population.
- Responsible planning during growth
- Growth development more jobs - school district 2 meets to get together.
- Jobs for those in need 50 years & order. Regulate rent for seniors and those in need.
- Planning now for future growth. West & east sides. Another access from north into city. Zimmerman into 32nd bottleneck now. Imagine future- yipee!
- Quality affordable single family housing
- Jobs
- I believe the city & state should be more economy friendly to low income families that actually try to improve themselves and their families instead of treating them as though they have the income of middle class.
- Almost no job opportunities
- Attracting jobs - retaining jobs. Safety for pedestrians/bikers
- Economic development to attract more businesses
- Cost of living, everything keeps going up, where is the stable balance, utility bills, rent, services - etc.
- Creating employment, mid to low income housing attempt. To curtail minor property crimes esp during school holidays, Keep a close watch on community changes due to influx of population due to local oil fields.
- Economic development
- Sustainable economic development
- Long - term planning
- Job growth - employment opportunities
- Jobs & crime
- 1) Growth deceleration, zoning for growth 2) School overcrowding 3) Impoverished and chronically unemployed citizens
- Fill in vacant areas in town before continuing to grow to the outskirts.
- Sustainable economic development
- Jobs
- Jobs
- To get better jobs come to blgs.
- Jobs
- Affordable housing! And better billing in city court. Pd bill 3yrs ago; no bills sent (because pd); now out of blue credit bureau is harassing me for the-says city has no record of pmt now I have to pay my bank to research pmt? Did same to my son! Get w/ it!!!
- Employment opportunities

- Better paying jobs
- Long range planning for growth

Infrastructure: street maintenance, code enforcement, recycling, utilities

- Provide and improve recycling centers and encourage people to recycle. There is so much waste! Find how other cities handle recycling, such as Lake Oswego, Oregon, as an example.
- Lack of zoning & code enforcement. The ugliness of the city ie. Across from ultra recycling too many used car dealers. Trailer parks next to neighborhoods in city limits. Zero traffic enforcement
- Street repair & upgrades stop putting bike lanes on every busy street
- The city wants you to clean your property of leaves in the fall, but they let their leaves blow all over hell around. The parks.
- Recycling more materials. We recently moved here from Cincinnati, OH & were used to recycling for free w/the city. I don't mind dropping it off but I have to make several trips. No place to recycle plastics.
- Quick & timely repair & restore neighborhood streets after - Digging up for under ground work. Efficient & honest city government by all elected officials-
- Repaving of streets & better job maintenance alley
- Fix deteriorated sidewalks
- Weed control needs to be enforced! Blocked sidewalks by cars. Elderly + children have to walk in street to get around-called police-they told him not to do it. (fine them) they continue to do it. We have- motor homes, horse trailers (boats) parked on street for wks. Enforce your law's. This is on Beloit is, dragging neighborhood down.
- Road maintenance, road construction, city planning of roads
- Snow removal on streets.
- Street repair snow removal - weeds junk vehicle
- Cleaning up downtown particularly the medical district and surroundings neighborhoods. Push out the drifters and force the drunken crows back onto the res. - Good start would be getting the Hub out of town.
- Code enforcing parking traffic
- Clearing the weeds
- Cleaning up south side-abandoned houses, overgrown lawns, broken windows, etc. Recycling at every household! Very inconvenient to have to drive to walmart to drop it off it should be picked up with the garbage.
- Recycling services should be made available-no where to recycle glass or cardboard
- Street repair put holes getting that water tank repaired
- Road closures & work to be done
- (1) So have a letter recycle program (2) More stricter cell phone while driving. (3) Better police presence.
- Clean up and removal, of the old hotel's downtown, and just north of down town, as they attract gangs and street thugs who push drugs and make Billings unsafe! That's your priority!
- Some of the streets are in need of dire repair.
- Snow removal
- Litter- red light running
- Infrastructure maintenance & repair

Finance: taxation, budget issues, maintaining levels of service

- Taxes - traffic flow
- Ineffective vs inappropriate spending.
- Keep taxes low
- Taxes - The economy
- Getting budget under control; added levees & taxes for parks library, other services are out of control. Also - bus service up blue creek.
- Costs economic development
- Get a handle on the budget and quit developing and spending our project like the taxpayers has an unlimited amount of money! Remember 27% of Billings population is over 65!
- Orderly growth & development
- Revise the to property tax exemptions for profiteering non profits.
- Continue to provide current service levels while keeping taxes and fees at an affordable level.
- Property taxes are so high & cost of housing.
- Budget! how to afford improvements & maintenance w/out raising taxes!
- To keep taxes down to a bearable amount to pay
- Stop pushing issues like the park requirements to all tax paying people especially after the terrible library issue.
- Property takes & cost effective and competent education system. Just throwing more money at the system is not the avenue.
- Better paying jobs
- Taxes for public park
- Sustainable economic development
- Unnecessary tax spending : gazebo so. Park, bike paths that are built & not maintained. Tina Vollick should be looked at when it comes to "favors" of the fire dept. & other needed services. The new federal building & library are a total misuse of money!
- Quit wasting money on useless things like the library
- Fiscal responsibility
- Quit spending money we don't have.
- Taxes. The city needs to have the option, with upper approval, to have an option tax
- I feel the money in tax dollars that i pay the fine department should be better. They should provide ambulance service
- Better use of tax dollars - more police protection of get rid of those one way streets they are a hazard - fix the main streets, those more trialed
- Changing the tax base from property to sales tax
- Efficient use of resources. Creating and maintaining systems to make each citizen as productive and healthy as possible.

Social services: services to homeless, low income and youth

- The "urban outdoors men"-You know-'those who wander the city streets begging-disrespecting others property-dreaming tax money and demanding a handout. They pay no taxes - add nothing but problems to the city - It is time to clean up billing - start with controlling these "outdoorsmen" make them pay for the services they willingly take
- Home less, rent
- *Vagrancy & Panhandling gives Billings a very bad name, * Public transportation - extending schedules into evenings and better coverage on weekends would give better access to jobs.

- The homeless people roaming the state up town, and pan handlers looking for money in Albertsons parking lot on 27th St.
- Stop the panhandling at 24 St & King businesses. It makes our city look really bad. Also no bikes on Zimmerman Trail. This is an accident waiting to happen. Very very scary.
- Address needs of low income - housing, health care - get good legal advise so city is not force to pay settlements
- Homeless people & Crime the area by holiday & hardees on 27th is very dangerous gangs
- Huge rise of homeless on streets. Parks are known to be unsafe at nights because of large amount of drug deals ad illegal activities
- Homeless people and vagrants in downtown & industrial area.
- Keeping the hub zone and help the homeless that are less fortunate that have to disabilities live & eat & have good lives just as the one people that have income coming in.
- The ordinance against panhandling in Billings needs to be enforced - either that or tax the persons engaging in it.
- Promote more things for our teen age kids to do here so their not getting in trouble!
- Run the annoying beggars at all the intersections out of town. You can't even go to walmart without seeing 10 of them! Make our city look terrible!
- Too many transients soliciting money on street corners. This should be outlawed

Governance: public trust, city lawsuits, community relations

- 1) Lack of honesty & truthfulness in city government 2) Building department distain for its charges 3) Fine quality legal department & litigation attitude taint always fails 4) City manager & assistant city manager replacement
- Mr. Don Vegge - he is the biggest pain in the_. I will stack my fire wood the same way I have been since 76 when I built the addition on our house to hold our 5th kid
- Get the existing city government officials out and some new ideas in! Too much "old boy buddy" b.s. Going on!
- Less intrusive, self- interested rule making and more listening to the wants/needs of citizens. Use of good, common sense.
- The rudeness of the police department the high cost of renting a house, apt or whatever the fixing of the roads - no notice is given.
- Transparency-anything needed to do in privacy is probably not in Billings' best interest.
- Address the lack of honesty & integrity of certain city staff (administrator, attorney, Mumford) & council members. There is a growing trend to misrepresent issues to council & for council not to make the effort to understand the detailed info provided & to question those presenting the information.
- Our city administrator should make sure that all city employees are paid daily & in accordance with the laws or with union contract, etc so we (the city) aren't sued hundred of thousands dollars every time we turn around.
- The lack of sound management by city officials have subject taxpayers to frivolous law suits. It the loses came out of your pockets alone. Perhaps you have to be not concise.
- Improves communications before city council members improves communications with the public. To deliver outcomes and decision in a clean under traffic way
- City government
- Example - Really listening to the public. The council pushing thru the park maintenance District - was a slap in the face city Gov at it worse! We need planned growth - Not annexing half the county - Then raising rates to pay for the growth.

- City council and employs sign pledge to be truthful discharge assistant city manager privatize fire department
- Number & law suit too high on both city & county level. Need honesty and apinnes!
- Listen to the public.
- Court system - lack of communication
- Stop so many law suits - avoid litigation - get to the problem. Before it is a problem. (ie. Hours worked are hours worked/slander & back stabs should not be tolerated) hire from within community do not always go "national"

Education: funding, quality

- Schools
- Education
- Supporting high quality schools & educational facilities such as the library.
- Schools and the quality of teachers, curriculum and standards. Do away with the tenure systems and go to a merit system
- Federal bonds short-fall schools? Then make it so taxpayers don't have to pay the differences - Get traffic lights sequenced green on Montana Ave. With the train in operation (like Moore Lane) and get sequenced on 1st Av. So. - They have been bad for years!
- Maintaining + fixing the public schools and parks
- Schools! Efficient long term planning; boundaries
- # 1 Education
- School district #2

Other

- All of the above why would any of the issues not be pressing?
- Ground water contamination from truck wrecking yard on orchard increase in home robberies/vandalism. Increased recognition of military service personnel.
- Need control.
- Buildings are not wheel chair accessable. Even if you can get in, aisles are narrow. Bathrooms are smalls, Doors are not automatic, Bus drivers (some) are rude.
- I think for the city council to concentrate on all above matters + Not spend + Waste valuable council time on people raising chickens in their backgrounds as attention to: Repairs to h2o plant - street repair, etc parks preservation.
- Dealing with voices of the dead people the devil gave life after death to. Like he offered Jesus in the 4 gospels. And fallen angels and the humans that worship them! Of dont even know about it
- Folish
- More dog parks, more walking trails. More horse stables, more foreign students; more education opportunities more special needs services
- More green space and sports fields - more parks. Available down town parking - Traffic flow from 19th 5th to 20th St accessibility for disable in down town.
- I do not see Billings preparing for boom development on infrastructure to maintain fast growth "4th most dangerous city to drive in". Cell phone use enforcement!!!!
- Banning "Montana's trailhead" what a stupid slogan. It says go anywhere but here - we don't have anything to offer you. It's as bad as Montana's "get lost" campaign!!!

- Addressing small claims court, too expensive for minor car accidents, minor crimes, lawyers needed for everything, why not let responsible parties solve minor things between parties with a judge no lawyer!
- Health care - Not Obama's change of our country of sterling with his lies, have all of Billings vote against Obama
- I wonder if the broken ramifications (all issues) will bubble to the surface? I imagine that activity will change the social and socio-economic landscape of Billings eventually.
- Get the regilious groups out of running the city.
- Remain conservative.
- Stop voting for everything obama puts on the bell at
- Preserving Zimmerman Trail on the rims.

Don't know/No comment

- Don't know
- Unknown
- I don't know, I'm 80 years old, lucky to be alive.
- Don't know
- I'm really not involved much. Except like living here.
- Don't know
- Don't know