



# Grand Forks Community Survey Services Action Plan

## Introduction

The Action Plan utilizes feedback from the Community Survey to help understand and prioritize City services and programs. The results and actions will provide insight to priority setting, budgeting and annual administration workplans.

In spring 2017, 1000 residents in Grand Forks were randomly selected and invited to participate in the Community Survey, either via an online link or using a paper copy. 280 of those residents participated in the survey. A further 191 residents answered identical questions through a separate link on the City's website.

Responses suggest that residents most like Grand Forks' overall quality of life, its walkability and ease of moving around, and the local food and farmers markets. Other top choices for what is most liked about the community include the climate and Grand Forks' natural beauty/scenery. The services on the survey were divided into three recommendation categories based on the results. Target actions for services that need the most improvement, room for improvement, and maintain and continue service for those that met a standard acceptable to the community.



### Targeted Actions

Road  
Maintenance &  
Repairs

Economic  
Development

Growth and  
Development  
Planning



### Room for Improvement

Communications

Proactive  
Maintenance of  
Utility Services

Council Governance



### Maintain & Continue Service

Revenue & City  
Budgeting

Customer Service

Parks &  
Recreation

Development and  
Building Inspection

Water  
Conservation

## Programs and Services

Respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction with most City services; fire protection services is ranked as both the most important, and best. Over three quarters of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied in these categories:

- Parks
- Sidewalk Maintenance and Accessibility
- Downtown Cleanliness
- Street Lighting
- Ease of Travel by Car

### Services Requiring



#### *Targeted Action*

Respondents identified three services as important *and* as dissatisfied with the City's level of service: road maintenance and repairs, economic development, and growth and development planning. These three areas also correspond to a high percentage of citizens (over 40 per cent) indicating spending and service levels should increase, with a further half suggesting that spending should stay the same.



#### *Targeted Action*

### Roads, growth, and development



#### **ACTIONS**

- Review the capital and operating budgets and annual staff workplans to identify opportunities to improve services by increasing spending and activity on road maintenance and repairs, economic development and growth and development planning.
- Identify opportunities to improve customer service in each service area.
- Audit process of intake and processing of land use and development applications to identify redundancies and opportunities to streamline and speed service.
- Consider introducing technology to allow citizens to request road repairs online or using a City app.



#### *Targeted Action*

### Economic Development

Most respondents indicated they are not satisfied with the pace of economic development in the community (over 80 per cent). In Grand Forks, citizen responses interpret economic development to mean new companies opening, more and better jobs, stability or expansion in existing businesses, and opportunities for youth. When asked to allocate funds to various economic development activities, respondents allocated the most dollars to attracting new large industries as well as new small businesses. Preference was also given to using funds

to attract investment and support existing businesses grow and expand. Over half of the respondents indicated preference for locating new commercial businesses along the highway, while over 35 per cent prefer downtown.



## ACTIONS

- Partner with community organizations to develop and support entrepreneurship in the community (i.e. host start up networking events, deliver workshops, host a 'start up weekend', celebrate entrepreneurs through community recognition and awards etc.)
- Leverage existing large industry to attract new mid to large industries.
- Pilot shared services between two or more separate businesses (i.e. grocery store and coffee shop) to help reduce startup costs.
- Ensuring downtown areas maintain their viability is a key strategy for sustainable development, and small business and resident attraction.
- Establish a forum for all economic development agencies to collaborate and work towards similar goals (i.e. City of Grand Forks, Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Boundary, Boundary Museum Society, Selkirk College etc.)
- Ask large industry how they could expand or develop new business opportunities.
- Enhance lifestyle amenities in the community and region to attract remote workers – natural environment and outdoor amenities, affordable and diverse housing stock, cultural, recreation, and youth activities.
- Review development incentive options, and consider waiving development cost charges or property taxes to encourage new business.
- Maintain Grand Forks high overall quality of life to retain residents and attract new ones.

## Communications



### *Room for Improvement*

About half of citizen responses rank the City's ability to communicate information about important issues, Council agenda items and key decisions as average. While a quarter stated communications in those areas were generally good or very good, about the same number stated it as poor or very poor. These results suggest significant room for the City to improve how it communicates with citizens.

Citizen responses suggest that the top ways of communicating information and decisions are through newspaper articles, websites, fact sheets, and public meetings. Council agendas and informational videos received the fewest selections, which suggests they are the least effective forms of communication. Citizen responses

indicate that they most prefer surveys and public meetings as methods for the City to gather feedback about important issues.



### ACTIONS

- Establish consistent, regular communication with citizens.
- Create a highlight reel for Council agenda items and decisions that is written in plain, accessible language. Publish in newspaper, website and social media posts.
- Use fact sheets as a method of providing additional information to citizens. Make the fact sheet accessible in a variety of formats – newspaper, website, and social media posts.
- Engage residents with simple written and online surveys and public meetings. To reach a wider audience, incorporate pop up engagement at community events, or host an interactive online forum.

## Utility Services



### *Room for Improvement*

Most residents prefer a proactive approach to maintaining public works services such as electrical, sewer and water services. Preference for using citizen education to limit damage to infrastructure outweighs the preference for simply allocating funding as necessary to effect repairs (about 66 to 23 per cent).



### ACTIONS

- Evaluate utility disruptions to identify opportunities for changes in use that reduce maintenance (i.e. responsible toilet use and flushing practices).
- Develop an engaging education and awareness campaign for the proper use of utility services. Education should be visual, entertaining, and incorporate information about cost and tax implications.
- Get the word out using a variety of tools, including newspaper articles and advertisements, web stories, newsletters, and social media posts.

## Bylaw Enforcement



### *Room for Improvement*

Responses indicate the performance and responsiveness of bylaw enforcement is average (46 per cent) and more responses indicate satisfaction over dissatisfaction. A large portion of resident responses (79 per cent) suggest low support for increasing taxes to provide a more proactive level of service.



### ACTION

- Maintain current level of performance and responsiveness related to bylaw enforcement.
- Consider simple technology or process improvements to improve response times or service efficiency.
- Track the types of bylaw enforcement requests. For frequent complaints, consider introducing an education/awareness campaign to remind citizens of rules and obligations (i.e. unsightly premises, noise education etc.)

## Council Governance



### Room for Improvement

Responses indicate there is considerable room for improvement related to Council governance. In particular a higher number of responses were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied than the opposite when it comes to the following responsibilities of Council:

- Applying good judgement to decisions
- Balancing the greater good of the community
- Effectively balancing limited resources
- Following through on decisions



### ACTIONS

- Ensure all Councilors have access to training related to public office and governance.
- Increase accountability by attaching implementation considerations to all Council decisions.
- Adapt Council reports to include a section about tradeoffs and budget implications of one decision against the rest of City services.

## Revenue



### Maintain and Continue

In general, when faced with increased costs, citizen responses indicate a preference for keeping taxes and services the same, or reducing services if necessary (almost half). About 30 per cent of respondents indicate preference for increasing taxes to keep service levels the same. Similarly, responses indicate residents prefer an increase in its long term liabilities when investing in new service and liabilities.



## ACTIONS

- Review service and operating budget allocations in detail every two years to identify efficiencies and opportunities to reduce costs without impacting the level of service.
- Consider the long-term implications and benefits of building a community centre. Should the project proceed, resident responses indicate preference for utilizing long term borrowing to finance the infrastructure.
- Explore alternative methods of service provision that do not require budget and corresponding tax increases (i.e. creative partnerships, technology, and citizen initiatives).

## Customer Service



### *Maintain and Continue*

Respondents indicate that the level of customer service is generally good or very good.



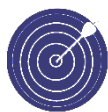
## ACTIONS

- Maintain current level of customer service.
- Enhance customer responsiveness in key areas (as identified throughout this Action Plan – communications, bylaw enforcement, economic development, road maintenance and repair).

## Parks and Recreation

About 20 per cent of respondents use City parks a few times a week, and another 20 per cent use parks a few times per month. However, about 44 per cent only use City parks a few times per year. There is a high level of satisfaction with all parks and rec services provided by the City, including landscaping, recreation trails, racquet courts, playgrounds, sports fields, and the cemetery. Responses indicate the importance of maintaining current service levels.

About 40 per cent of respondents do not see the need for a community centre. The majority of remaining respondents support long term borrowing as a method of financing a future community centre.



## ACTIONS

- Explore opportunities to encourage higher and more frequent uses of City parks and recreation facilities.
- Host 'get to know your parks' events at different locations (1 per season).

- Convene an inclusive community conversation about the need for a community centre using a variety of methods (online and in person).
- Preserve key wildlife corridors, natural features, and environmentally sensitive areas.

## Building Inspection



### *Maintain and Continue*

A high number of responses are neutral when it comes to the City's development and building inspection services. This could be attributed to a high number of residents not using these services often, if at all.



### ACTIONS

- Maintain current level of service for development and building inspection.
- Consider implementing simple technology or process improvements to improve response times or service efficiency.

## Water Conservation



### *Maintain and Continue*

About half of respondents have an automated outdoor or underground irrigation system; of those, most are programmed to water every other day. Citizen respondents employ a wide range of methods to optimize and conserve water. Most popular include adjusting sprinklers to irrigate landscaped areas instead of sidewalks or roads, watering during the early parts of the day, and optimizing grass length. Respondents indicated preference for converting grass to plants requiring less water, and optimizing irrigation systems. In general, responses indicate citizens are satisfied with the City's water conservation efforts.



### ACTIONS

- Focus future water conservation campaigns on outdoor irrigation.
- Provide an automated outdoor or underground irrigation optimization service blitz.
- In Spring 2018, begin a communications campaign to raise awareness about outdoor watering and methods to reduce water requirements.
- Partner with a local nursery to offer a rebate or discount on xeriscape plants.