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Firestone releases survey results

Firestone's recent citizen and business surveys garnered valuable feedback for Town officials as they move forward in making short- and long-term plans for the community. Suggestions and comments from the survey will be valuable in planning future economic development efforts, park facilities, recreation programs, and ongoing services and programs.

"I feel the overall results reflect a positive attitude about Firestone as a place to live and own a business," said Trustee Darrell Walsh. "As expected, we do have areas of special needs and concerns that we need to continue to address. These areas should and will influence decisions as we move forward to meet these needs."

Citizen Survey

The citizen survey showed that residents are 90 percent satisfied with their quality of life in Firestone, and they feel the community is a great place to raise children. Respondents also feel safe in the community, with 93 percent ranking their personal safety as very safe or somewhat safe.

Mayor Chad Auer was extremely pleased with the results and happy to learn that the majority of residents who responded are extremely happy with the quality of life here in Firestone. "Over the course of my service as mayor, increasing citizen participation has been a top priority. It is critical that we, as elected officials, have open lines of communication with those we serve," he said.

When it came to amenities within Firestone, residents feel 85 percent satisfied with community parks, 70 percent satisfied with housing affordability, 78 percent satisfied with streets and roads, and 48 percent satisfied with the quality of schools. However, in the lower percentiles, only 26 percent were satisfied with restaurant options, 28 percent satisfied with retail opportunities and 7 percent satisfied with employment opportunities.

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“This survey also gave me a chance to see where we have room for improvement,” Auer said. “For example, based on the results, I will strengthen my focus on working with developers and entrepreneurs to expand employment opportunities here in Firestone.”

Survey responses on the potential tax increase proved interesting for Town officials and staff. The proposed initiative is a dedicated sales tax increase for streets/parks construction and maintenance that would have an expiration date and would not include grocery items. Of the respondents, 62 percent voted yes in favor of the tax increase. Further questions probed residents on how they would rank projects in priority to be constructed with the dedicated sales tax increase. Sixty-two percent felt Central Park was a priority for them, followed by street maintenance, a Firestone Recreation Center, trail expansion and park maintenance.

The survey also solicited feedback regarding recreational opportunities, as well as satisfaction with the library, fire and sanitation districts, and senior center.

When it came to Town of Firestone operations, 67 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the Town government welcoming citizen involvement, with 70 percent satisfied with the overall direction the Town is taking.

Trustee and Mayor Pro-tem Paul Sorensen said, “Our latest community survey continues to show a very high level of satisfaction by my fellow residents, and is a valuable guide for me on their priorities for continuing services and direction for the Town.”

Business Survey

The business survey was the first conducted by the Town to garner feedback regarding the Town’s economic climate. With the economic downturn at the forefront of many business operations, survey data showed that 51 percent noted their businesses were weathering the downturn well. An additional 42 percent said their business was neither good nor bad. And only 10 percent have had to lay off employees within the past 12 months.

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“Working collaboratively with the business community is also very important to me,” Auer continued. “I spent a lot of energy making sure Firestone is a business-friendly town. The business survey is particularly important because it helps us find new ways to support our local economy, as well as validates the efforts we have already accomplished.”

Survey data also provided insight into the community’s strengths as a place to do business. Low taxes in Firestone and the quality of life were huge strengths in the community. Results also provided information on how businesses were marketing their businesses and potential expansion plans.

Per the survey, businesses responded that the most critical need at this time is affordable retail and office space in the Firestone community. Businesses also noted that a lack of diversified retail shopping is something their customers would like.

The surveys went live in October 2011 on the Town’s website and concluded at the end of the year. This was the second citizen survey conducted by the Town. The first was done in 2009. The business survey yielded a 28 percent response rate from businesses, and the citizen survey garnered a 10 percent return rate. Town staff is pleased with the results and will look forward to utilizing the information in upcoming projects.

Walsh said, “The fact that we can see our strengths and areas for improvement from our citizens and businesses perspective makes these surveys a valuable tool for continuing to meet the needs of our town.”

Complete survey data and charts can be found with this release online at www.ci.firestone.co.us/HomePages/readmoreSurvey2011Results.html.

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