2018 City of Durango Citizen Engagement Survey

Submitted to the City of Durango, CO

by:
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Overview and Methodology

ETC Institute administered Citizen Engagement Survey to residents in the City of Durango during the summer of 2018. The purpose of the survey was to gauge support for generating additional revenue to maintain the General Fund services and infrastructure.

The five-page survey was administered by mail and online to a random sample of households in the City of Durango. A total of 401 surveys were completed. The results for the random sample of 401 households have a precision of at least +/- 4.9% at the 95% level of confidence.

Interpretation of “Don’t Know” Responses. Since the number of “don’t know” responses often reflects the utilization and awareness of city and county services, the percentage of “don’t know” responses has been provided in the tabular data section of this report. When the “don’t know” responses have been excluded, the text of this report will indicate that the responses have been excluded with the phrase “who had an opinion.”

Major Findings

- **Agreement With Statements Regarding Tax Increase.** Three-fourths (75%) of residents surveyed, who had an opinion, either strongly agreed or agreed that they are generally satisfied with City services; 14% were neutral and 12% disagreed. When asked about specific statements pertaining to a tax increase, 74% who had an opinion strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, “A sales tax increase makes sense because everyone contributes, including tourists and seasonal residents.” The statement residents disagreed with most was, “A modest sales tax increase will cause local residents to shop in Farmington or online” (52% disagreed).

- **Perceived Condition of Various Community Assets.** Sixty percent (60%) of residents surveyed, who had an opinion, indicated the sidewalks in the Downtown area were in excellent or good condition; 59% felt the streets in their neighborhood were excellent or good, and 58% believed major City streets (not including state highways) were in excellent or good condition. Residents were least satisfied with the condition of residential alleys (48% indicated the condition as fair or poor).

- **Support for General Fund Operations.** Fifty-eight percent (58%) of residents surveyed indicated they would support increasing the sales tax to ensure General Fund operations are financially sustainable. Other actions that residents would support include: increasing user fees to make some services self-supporting (55%), reducing or eliminating some services (54%), and increasing property taxes (33%). Multiple responses were allowed on this question.
Support for an Increased Tax to Fund Various Types of Projects. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of residents surveyed, who had an opinion, were very willing or somewhat willing to support an increased tax to fund the sealing of cracks and filling of potholes on neighborhood streets. Other projects that residents were either very or somewhat willing to support with an increased tax include: sealing cracks and filling potholes on major City streets (76%), resurfacing major City streets (69%), and resurfacing neighborhood streets (67%). Residents were least willing to support an increased tax to fund paving and correcting drainage in residential alleys (46% very willing or somewhat willing).

Resident Expectations for City Services. Most residents (91%) who had an opinion felt the maintenance of street signs was completely or mostly meeting their expectations; 7% were neutral and only 2% felt their expectations for the maintenance of street signs were not being met. Other services that residents indicated were completely or mostly meeting their expectations include: maintenance of traffic signals (90%), snow removal on major city streets (89%), library hours and operations (88%), maintenance of city buildings (88%), police department services (88%), and overall cleanliness of city streets (86%). The city service that residents indicated was meeting their expectations the least was building permit services (57%).

Services That Residents Are Most Willing to Support With an Increase in Taxes. Based on the sum of their top four choices, the city services that residents are most willing to support with an increase in taxes include: 1) maintenance of city parks, 2) overall maintenance of city streets, 3) maintenance of sidewalks, and 4) police department services.

How Residents Would Vote on a Tax Increase to Fund Infrastructure Maintenance. More than half (52%) of residents surveyed indicated they definitely or might vote in favor of a tax increase to fund infrastructure maintenance and improvements; 16% are not sure how they would vote, 10% indicated they might vote against a tax increase, and 21% would definitely vote against it.

How Residents Would Vote on a Tax Increase to Fund a New Police Station, Police Services and Street Maintenance. Forty-eight percent (48%) of residents surveyed indicated they definitely or might vote in favor of a tax increase to fund a new police station, police services and street maintenance; 18% are not sure how they would vote, 11% indicated they might vote against a tax increase, and 23% would definitely vote against it.

How the Level of Support for a Future Tax to Fund Street Maintenance Would Change. Residents were asked how their level of support for a future tax to fund street maintenance in Durango would change knowing that major street repairs are 70-80% more costly than preventive maintenance. Fifty-four percent (54%) of residents surveyed, who had an opinion, indicated they would be more supportive; 6% would be less supportive, and 40% said it would not change their level of support for a future tax.
Preferred Tax Structure if a Tax Increase Was Approved. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of residents surveyed, who had an opinion, indicated they prefer a sales tax increase if any type of tax increase was approved; 6% prefer a property tax increase, and 36% prefer a combination of property and sales tax increase. The remaining 20% do not support a tax increase.

Type of Tax Increase Residents Would be Most Willing to Support. Among those who support a tax increase, 43% are most willing to support a 1 cent sales tax; 20% would support a ½ cent sales tax, 30% would support a ½ cent sales tax combined with an 8 mill property tax, 5% would support a 16 mill property tax, and 2% would support an 8 mill property tax.
Q1. Level of Agreement with the Following Statements
by percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 1 to 5 on a 5-point scale (excluding don't knows)

- I am generally satisfied with City services: 14% Strongly Agree, 61% Agree, 14% Neutral, 12% Disagree
- A sales tax increase makes sense because everyone contributes, including tourists & seasonal residents: 30% Strongly Agree, 44% Agree, 10% Neutral, 16% Disagree
- A sales tax increase is a fair way to pay for capital projects: 17% Strongly Agree, 42% Agree, 18% Neutral, 23% Disagree
- A property tax increase is a fair way to pay for capital projects: 9% Strongly Agree, 27% Agree, 20% Neutral, 44% Disagree
- A modest sales tax increase will cause local residents to shop in Farmington or online: 13% Strongly Agree, 17% Agree, 17% Neutral, 62% Disagree

Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Q2. Perceived Condition of Various Community Assets
by percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 1 to 5 on a 5-point scale (excluding don't knows)

- Sidewalks in Downtown area: 14% Excellent, 46% Good, 24% Average, 16% Fair/Poor
- Streets in your neighborhood: 11% Excellent, 48% Good, 22% Average, 20% Fair/Poor
- Major City streets (not state highways): 7% Excellent, 51% Good, 27% Average, 15% Fair/Poor
- Sidewalks/curbs/gutters in your neighborhood: 10% Excellent, 33% Good, 23% Average, 35% Fair/Poor
- Sidewalks along North Main Ave.: 6% Excellent, 32% Good, 28% Average, 35% Fair/Poor
- Residential alleys: 4% Excellent, 21% Good, 27% Average, 48% Fair/Poor

Source: ETC Institute (2018)
Q3. Prior to this survey, did you know the City of Durango is preparing for a budget shortfall of approximately 2 million dollars per year for street maintenance?

by percentage of respondents

- Yes: 50%
- No: 50%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Q4. What actions would you support to ensure General Fund operations are financially sustainable?

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)

- Increasing sales tax: 58%
- Increasing user fees to make some services self-supporting: 55%
- Reducing or eliminating some services: 54%
- Increasing property taxes: 33%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)
Q5. Willingness to Support an Increased Tax to Fund the Following Types of Projects
by percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 1 to 4 on a 4-point scale

Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Q6. How the Following Services Are Currently Meeting Expectations
by percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 1 to 4 on a 4-point scale (excluding “not provided”)

Source: ETC Institute (2018)
Q7. Services That Residents Are Most Willing to Support With an Increase in Taxes

by percentage of respondents based on the sum of their top four choices

Maintenance of City parks: 26%
Overall maintenance of City streets: 24%
Maintenance of sidewalks: 22%
Police department services: 21%
Maintenance of existing infrastructure: 21%
Maintenance & preservation of Downtown: 18%
Library hours & operations: 16%
Snow removal on neighborhood streets: 16%
Code enforcement: 12%
Traffic enforcement: 12%
Adequacy of street lighting: 9%
Overall cleanliness of City streets: 8%
Maintenance of residential alleys: 8%
City communication with the public: 7%
City efforts to prevent flooding: 7%
Maintenance of curbs & gutters: 7%
Snow removal on major City streets: 6%
Building permit services: 6%
Maintenance of City buildings: 5%
Maintenance of City’s information system infrastructure: 4%
Maintenance of traffic signals: 4%
Maintenance of street signs: 3%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Q8. How Residents Would Vote on a Tax Increase to Fund Infrastructure Maintenance and Improvements

by percentage of respondents

Might vote in favor: 34%
Definitely vote in favor: 18%
Not sure: 16%
Might vote against: 10%
Definitely vote against: 21%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)
Q9. How Residents Would Vote on a Tax Increase to Fund a New Police Station, Police Services and Street Maintenance

by percentage of respondents

- Might vote in favor: 30%
- Definitely vote in favor: 18%
- Not sure: 18%
- Might vote against: 11%
- Definitely vote against: 23%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Q10. How the Level of Support for a New Infrastructure Sales Tax Would Change if the Tax Included Dedicated Funding for Library Operations and Improvements

by percentage of respondents (excluding don’t knows)

- Support would stay the same: 47%
- Support would increase: 30%
- Support would decrease: 23%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)
Q11. How the Level of Support for a Future Tax to Fund Street Maintenance in Durango Would Change
by percentage of respondents (excluding don’t knows)

- More supportive: 54%
- Less supportive: 6%
- Does not change my level of support: 40%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Q12. Preferred Tax Structure if a Tax Increase Was Approved
by percentage of respondents (excluding "not provided")

- All property tax: 6%
- All sales tax: 38%
- Combination of property & sales tax: 36%
- I don't support a tax increase: 20%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)
Q12a. Type of Tax Increase Residents Would be Most Willing to Support

by percentage of respondents who support a tax increase (excluding "not provided")

- 1 cent sales tax: 43%
- 1/2 cent sales tax: 20%
- 8 mill property tax: 30%
- 16 mill property tax: 5%
- 1/2 cent sales tax + 8 mill property tax: 2%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Q13. Demographics: Age

by percentage of respondents (excluding "not provided")

- 65+: 27%
- 55 to 64: 23%
- 45 to 54: 19%
- 35 to 44: 18%
- Under age 35: 13%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)
Q14. Demographics: Ages of All Household Members
by percentage of persons in household

Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Q15. Demographics: How long have you lived in Durango?
by percentage of respondents (excluding "not provided")

Source: ETC Institute (2018)
Q16. Demographics: Gender
by percentage of respondents (excluding "not provided")

Source: ETC Institute (2018)

Q17. Demographics: Are you registered to vote?
by percentage of respondents

Source: ETC Institute (2018)
Q18. Demographics: How often do you vote (including primary and city elections)?

by percentage of respondents (excluding "not provided")

- Always: 76%
- Most of the time: 22%
- Never: 1%
- Hardly ever: 2%

Source: ETC Institute (2018)