

Memo

To: Lisa Shelley, Interim Village Manager
From: David Powers, Communications Director
CC:
Date: Nov. 19, 2021
Re: SurveyMonkey/Web Page Commenting Overview

Pursuit of effective citizen engagement has been a goal within the Village of Oak Park municipal government for at least two decades – or as long as anyone currently on staff can recall. Public meetings were the cornerstone of all early efforts, which were held often at various locations with elected officials interacting face-to-face with citizens under the heading of gathering community input.

Meetings soon were augmented with dedicated email addresses and the list serve *enews*, which was launched in the spring of 2006. The *National Citizens Survey*, considered the gold standard of municipal citizen input gathering tools, was first used here in 2000, and every two to three years since has continued to provide the only available statistically valid look at how citizens view quality of life in the community and the value of municipal services. The results of the last eight surveys are posted on the Village website at www.oak-park.us/communitysurveys.

As the Village added online capabilities, ways to augment these traditional tools were sought to make it easier for citizens to provide input on more narrow issues and in a timelier fashion. The Village was an early municipal government adopter of social media, the first *Facebook* page launched in March 2009 followed by *Twitter* three months later. *SurveyMonkey* was adopted in 2011 and while not a true quantitative sample of citizen views, the tool did provide a snapshot of how those who chose to participate saw specific issues. And when the current website was launched in 2013, the ability to allow commenting on individual pages became available. While each of these tools still have value, their administration is time-consuming and requires considerable manual interaction to assess findings.

While no central tally of the many community meetings has been maintained, we can provide information on the number of respondents to *SurveyMonkey* surveys and comments on single-issue webpages. It is important to note that no analysis has been made as to why some issues drew greater interest than others – all were promoted in the same ways. The results seem to reflect that those issues most likely to affect a specific

category of residents appear to get the most activity. But with participants self-selecting to participate the results should not be viewed as an indication of community wide sentiment. They are merely a snapshot of how those most interested in a particular topic chose to respond. For example, if only a dozen individuals comment, you cannot reasonably say they represent dozens or hundreds more who share the same views, but chose not to participate. The only valid conclusion is that the comments reflect the views of the dozen who actually did comment.

SurveyMonkey Activity (July 2011 – November 2021)*

Topic	Responses
Preferred uses for Borders Bookstore	520
Community Choice Aggregation Participation	191
Use of Village Parking Garages	61
Water Conservation	118
Website Use	221
Sculpture Walk	52
Nicor Community Challenge	2,156
Tobacco-Free worksites	92
Valet Parking	20
Single-Use Shopping Bags (consumers)	612
Single-Use Shopping Bags (businesses)	63
Sewer Backup Protection	68
On-Street Parking Rules	744
Internet Usage	923
Parking Signs	376
Police Chief Search	308
LED Streetlights	57
Multi-Family Dog Limitation	39
Arts District Parking (businesses)	21
Farmers' Market Customer	272
Housing, Homeless and Community Development Needs	190
Police Interaction Listening Session	15
Slow Streets	915
Parking Signs	243
Adjudication Customer Service (ongoing)	119
ARPA	335
Parking Pilot Program	878

***54 total surveys since July 2011 - 27 external, 27 internal**

Website Commenting (July 2013 – November 2021)

Topic	Comments
Eisenhower Expressway	
Thoughts on the Ike	42
Sidewalk/Street Widths	28
Traffic/Pedestrian Movement	5
Air Quality/Noise - Harlem Interchange	11
Air Quality/Noise - Austin Interchange	2
Noise Walls/Blue Line Vision	8
Noise Wall/Aesthetic Treatments	17
How Property Taxes Have Impacted You	136
Strengths/Weaknesses of Local Government Services	15
Opportunities for Local Government Cooperation/Consolidation	6
Service Alternatives that Work in Other Communities	6
Ideas to Improve Services/Lower Costs	12
Duplicative/Redundant Local Government Services	8
Parking Signage	27
Parking Pilot Program	141
Austin/Harlem On-Street Parking	22
North Avenue/Roosevelt Road/Adjacent Neighborhood Parking	9
Short-Term Rental Ordinance	73

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