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TO: The Honorable City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director

Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: January 21, 2025

RE: Legislative Policy Division Community Outreach Ordinance-

District Community Budget Priorities Virtual Forum Report for 2024

On October 20, 2020, the City of Detroit enacted the Community Outreach Ordinance to demonstrate the city's commitment to community outreach that promotes transparency and accountability and ensures community awareness on legislation, contracts, agreements, and resolutions related to various City-Wide Proposals and Neighborhood Class A-D Proposals as defined by the ordinance. A "City-Wide Proposal" includes all initiatives considered by City Council relating to the Mayor's annual recommended budget, bond proposals, and City-Wide Non-Motorized Urban Transportation Plan, and City-Wide Park Improvement Plan, and ballot initiatives that are led by either the administration or City Council.

Included in the City-wide Proposals process is the requirement of the ordinance that prior to submitting a City-wide Proposal to City Council for consideration, a representative of the administering department in collaboration with the Department of Neighborhoods, will hold one outreach meeting in each of the seven City Council districts. This report details the results of the community engagement from the City-wide Community Budget Priorities Forums held throughout the month of October 2024 and two in November 2024, in each City Council district¹.

Background

In accordance with the Community Outreach Ordinance passed in 2020, community meetings were held in each council district during the month of October 2024. Hosted by the Department of Neighborhood's District Managers, City Council members representing each district and at-large City Council members met with their constituents virtually via Zoom. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss and determine constituents' priorities for the upcoming FY

¹ Per the Community Outreach Ordinance, the City Council will appoint a liaison from the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) to monitor the community outreach process set forth in the ordinance to provide updates to City Council.

2025 – 2026 city budget. The meetings were facilitated by the District Managers and staff; in attendance were City Council Members and their staff; LPD staff and OCFO Office of Budget staff. Attendance at these district's zoom meetings averaged 50 participants, inclusive of city personnel.

Donnie Johnson, Deputy Director - OCFO Office of Budget began the discussion with a brief overview of the city's budget process and timeline, followed by an outline of pertinent details of the current FY 2025 budget, and ended with questions from the community. The District Managers facilitated an interactive discussion on the community's priorities. The interactive discussion involved polling questions and a deeper probe of the community's highest concerns for their districts.

The OCFO Office of Budget is in process of preparing the Mayor's Recommended Annual Budget for the city's programs, services and activities in the upcoming fiscal year, July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The Recommended Annual Budget is scheduled to be presented with the Four-Year Financial Plan to the Detroit City Council on or before March 7, 2025, for their review and adoption.

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer continued its approach to improving communications between residents and the city. To begin the process and in compliance with the City Charter, the Office of Budget held two Public Budget Meetings (Part I and II) on September 23rd and September 30, 2024. The next step in this process was the virtual district community forums. The District Community meetings were immediately held after the two public budget meetings while the information was still fresh. The goal is to receive public comments earlier in the budget process for consideration in the city's budget development. Part I of the budget meetings included presentations from the General Services Department, Department of Public Works, and the Detroit Water & Sewerage Department. Part II of the budget meetings included presentations from Fire, Health, Police and Public Lighting Department/Public Lighting Authority. Residents were able to ask questions and comment on many of the issues that were discussed in the subsequent District Community meetings. This resulted in less budget process inquiries during the District Community meetings to follow.

Below is a brief outline of some of the citizens' issues raised during the 2024 Public Budget meetings.

City Retiree issues	DDOT fares and funding operations
 Improve City Communications with Residents Cannabis revenues and city services Status of Tree Removal Program Status of Sidewalk Program Property Tax Exemptions 	 Health Issues Dept programing- increase services to former levels Infant Mortality rates
 DPW Issues Sidewalk Repair Program Street improvements; Speed bumps; streetscapes Street cleaning - Pothole- sinkhole repairs 	GSD Increase funding for Tree trimming, cutting and removal.
DWSD Issues Neighborhood water line replacement, Lead Pipe Removal Program	 Action on residents' concerns raised in the Community Outreach process.
Fire Issues Dept Smoke Detector Program at block clubs Fire Dept CPR Training for Community Organizations	 Police Issues Homicide closure rates Improved communications with citizens (case status), finances, etc. Transparency and Accountability Police advocacy on auto insurance in Lansing Legal assistance- Probable Cause hearings
	 PLD-PLA Issues Alley lighting and the reuse of inactive poles. How to report street lighting outages?

District Meetings

The District Community meetings began with a ten-minute brief overview of the budget followed by three interactive questions. Digital technology was implemented for the interactive segment of the meeting. Participants were able to respond to the pre-selected questions using the Slido app., through the Zoom chat function and the Zoom raise hand function. The Slido app allowed participants to respond using brief phrases and the District Manager provided an opportunity for residents to verbally expand on their responses.

Observations on the Process

Citizens who participated in the process where without a doubt engaged and able to effectively voice their requests and concerns. It appeared that more citizens participated in the process this year than the previous year, as a few of the forums hosted 50-60 participates, up from the 20-30 average from last year. However, this number can still be expanded upon for the process to achieve its full potential.

As in past years, there were a short series of polling questions posed to the public participants to better understand the specific needs and desires of the community. This year the budget department included a slightly different variation of questions from those presented in 2023. In 2023, the department asked the following survey polling questions:

2023 questions:

- 1. What would you like to see prioritized in the budget?
- 2. These are the citywide priorities we heard last year; how would you rank these priorities?

The department then provided the list of citywide priorities from the previous year such as: Home repair, code enforcement, alley cleanup, transportation, streetlights, senior supports, litter cleanup, illegal dumping and affordable housing. The participants then ranked these prior year's citywide priorities looking toward the current year's budget.

The department then took the top 2 responses and ask the following question relative to those priorities. The top 2 Responses:

- Affordable Housing: How would you like to see affordable housing be improved?
- Home repair: How would you like to see home repair improved in the city of Detroit?

2024 questions:

This year's survey questions differed slightly from last year. The first polling question remained the same. However, the department eliminated one question and only inquired about the top response from the previous year's priority.

- 1. What would you like to see prioritized in the budget?
- 2. These are top priorities citywide from 2023, how would you rank these priorities today? (Home Repair, Senior Support, Transportation, Affordable Housing, Youth Programs, Neighborhood Rebuilding, Public Safety, Parks Funding, Safer Street Design) Top response: Home Repair.
 - Home repair: How can this (home repair) be improved?

By homing in on only the top response, the elimination of the one question this year served to decrease the range of discussion, which is not a bad thing. But last year's forum also included more community participants who were allowed to speak live during the meeting. And in doing so, they spoke on a wider range

of issues which might not have been on topic at the time, but it created the feeling of a space open to more ideas, while this year it appeared that most of comments were made in the chat. In our opinion, the discussion was more vibrant last year, while the process seemed more succinct this year.

As noted last year, the process could still benefit from the inclusion and outreach to faith-based organizations, fraternities, sororities, and professional organizations to assist in gaining more ideas, suggestions, and experiences from a broader cross section of our community.

District Budget Priorities Overview

Again, concerns relating to housing: affordable housing, home repair grants, and home ownership opportunities ranked high in participants priorities. Numerous comments focused on the need for assistance to secure and maintain home ownership for residents of the city of Detroit. Certain groups were specifically identified for increased assistance: youths, seniors, and disabled citizens. Residents voiced their thoughts on the definition of affordable housing; that it is not the same as low-income housing, the Area Median Income (AMI) and other eligibility issues. Also, raised was the desire to expand the income limits on the home repair program eligibility.

Detroit has a greater percentage of single-family homes than any city in the country with a population over 350,000.² Unfortunately, now our citizens cannot afford the upkeep. Although affordable housing was not as high on the list as it has been in the past, it remains a high priority. Additionally, access to home repair has remained one of the highest priorities for the past couple of years. Residents voiced the need for more home repair grants, not only for seniors and low income, but for middle-income families. In addition, there were requests for wider dissemination of information relative to home repair grants. The ability to maintain one's property is one the foundations of home ownership. However, in one of the poorest cities in America the ability to maintain property can be a challenge for many residents.

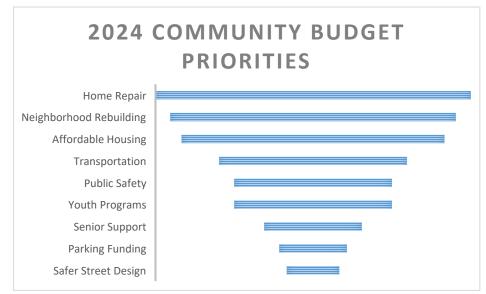
Transportation as a priority was the number one issue in District 5, however, it declined from its previous position in some districts. We do not believe this decline is because the state of our transportation system has improved. It can most likely be attributed to either the community has given up hope for ever having improvements in our transportation system or they find other issues more pressing.

We observed that despite the highly publicized drop in crime in the city, the request for funding for additional public safety has gained momentum as a priority for many citizens. The mayor has pledged to continue funding for the "Shotstopper" program where community groups are empowered to assist in crime prevention and receive monetary assistance based upon the reduction of crime statistics in the community. In addition, the mayor has voiced support for pending legislation in Lansing that will provide additional funding.

The results of consecutive community surveys have confirmed that there is a need and desire for more home repair loans and grants to be made available to a wider range of income levels within the community. An explanation of what the city is doing to address the need for more home repair programs and the creation of more affordable housing opportunities should be included as part of future presentations by the Administration, as well as steps being taking to implement other initiatives identified in the previous year's community priority outreach.

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² U.S. Cities with the Most Single-Family Homes [2024 Edition] - Construction Coverage



This year's top priorities- All districts

Home Repair Programs: expanding home repair programs to include more than roofing, home modifications for safety and accessibility, financial assistance for various income groups and other housing support. Neighborhood Rebuilding: investment in neighborhood redevelopment, more and diverse business opportunities; streetscapes. Affordable Housing: revise eligibility requirements to impact more lower income residents, more 3- family bedrooms housing, other universal design elements and other **Transportation:** availability issues. increase support for DDOT. Public Safety: safe and secure neighborhoods. Programs: more funding to support our youth. Parks: increase green spaces. Senior Support: address various concerns of seniors and the disabled community. Safer street design: increase funding.

Results by District

District 1- Thursday, October 24, 2024

Hosted by: Karla Williamson, District Manager; City Council Member: James Tate, President-Pro Tem; OCFO-Office of Budget Presenter: Donnie Johnson, Deputy Budget Director

Housing continues to be of primary concern for District 1 residents. The top priority for 2024 was Affordable housing replacing Home repair programs in 2023. Eligibility to receive funding for home repairs, the quality of housing stock and the need to fix or demolish vacant homes and garages were discussed. In response to how residents would like the city to address Affordable housing concerns, residents suggested the following: 1. More access to truly attainable housing for those at the lowest end of AMI (Area Median Income); 2. More three-bedroom Affordable housing for families; 3. Management of affordable housing stock; 4. More funding for non-profit housing groups; 5. Address property tax foreclosures; 6. Help small business; 7. Create Community Capital Fund (1% investment fund); 8. More repairs for driveways as well as sidewalks; 9. More tiny homes construction; 10. Use of Community Land Trusts; and 11. Ensure residents have access to the development of affordable housing. Other suggestions submitted: 1. Local Option Sales tax to generate and diversify city revenues; 2. Strategic tree plantings to help mitigate climate change (reforesting); 3. Additional funding to increase the capacity of the Office of Sustainability; 4. Direct payments to residents; 5. Income tax assessments; 6. Use of shrubs in the Tree replacement program and 7. More funding for youth programs.

Other issues raised were sidewalk repair program and tree trimming; continuation of the Dead Trees Removal program, other beautification efforts; garage debris not being hauled away when demolished, odor- smell assessment for 8 mile, and workforce development strategy.

We observed that illegal dumping was much discussed in 2023, but not so in 2024 leading us to assume that the changes made to refuse collections: weekly bulk pick-up; inclusion of home repair debris in garbage pick-up has had a positive impact on the community overall.

District 1 Year over Year Comparisons			
Rank	October-2024 Issues-Concerns	Rank	October-2023 Issues-Concerns
1	Affordable Housing	1	Housing: home repair programs, accessible housing, and home modification programs
2	Home Repair Programs	2	Illegal dumping

District 2- Tuesday, November 12, 2024:

Hosted by: Kim Tandy, District Manager; City Council Member: Angela Whitfield-Calloway; OCFO- Office of Budget Presenter: Donnie Johnson, Deputy Budget Director

Public comments this year included a number of priorities for the district: transportation, public safety, infrastructure, food security, land purchase opportunity, more sidewalk repair, snow removal, home demolitions, auto insurance rates, tree cutting, mental health services, public lighting, community beautification, more citizens in college, small business assistance, affordable housing, alley clean up, housing equity, public restrooms, minority business opportunity, home improvement grants, slowing traffic on the streets.

In an expanded discussion on the top concern from last year that residents of District 2 raised: Neighborhood Rebuilding, residents made the following suggestions on how to improve this issue. More engagement with residents and business owners around the types of businesses that come to the neighborhood and the streetscape that happens and the willingness to correct if wrong; actually allow residents to acquire DLBA property to restore or repair; all neighborhoods should be required to have an urban garden with resources provided by the city in the general fund; lower income housing needs to be available in and around middle to upper class areas; community centers for children; sidewalk repair; incentives to those who maintain their residence; home repair funding; safety spaces for children; more assistance for small business owners with development and renovations; more funding to maintain and sell vacant properties; more police presence; fixing blighted properties owned by absent landlords; alley maintenance.

Next there was discussion on how the responses of the residents are incorporated into the departmental budgets, as the individual city departments will be submitting budget requests soon. Budget Department personnel explained that their comments will be reviewed and added to the department's budgets over the next few months.

District 2 Year over Year Comparisons			
Rank	November-2024 Issues-Concerns	Rank	October-2023 Issues-Concerns
1	Neighborhood Rebuilding	1	Housing: Affordable Housing
2	Home Repair	2	Housing: Home Repairs

District 3- Tuesday, October 22, 2024:

Hosted by: Kayana Sessions, District Manager; City Council Member: Scott Benson OCFO- Office of Budget Presenter: Donnie Johnson, Deputy Budget Director

Priorities raised for District 3 this year include public safety, pensions for retirees, city ordinance enforcement, wellness of residents, literacy programs, workforce programs, and community services.

The priorities that were heard last year were ranked: Number 1 was public safety, others were senior supports, neighborhood rebuilding, youth programs, home repair, transportation, affordable housing, safer street design, and parks funding.

Residents were next asked how they would like to see public safety improved. Responses were programs for candidate physical agility of the fire department; code enforcement; more police neighborhood interaction engagement with youth; reduce violent crimes; reduce thefts; get youth and young adults involved in constructive activities. A question was asked about administrative fees in the library budget. This was explained as city administrative fees such as payroll processing, computer access, human resources, etc. that are allocated to various departments. The library budget is available on the website www.detroitmi.gov/budget

Other comments included dollars should be available for walk-in showers, and programs for the improvements to the state of teens and young adults.

District 3 Year over Year Comparisons			
Rank	October-2024 Issues-Concerns	Rank	October-2023 Issues-Concerns
1	Public Safety	1	Illegal Dumping
2	Senior Support	2	Litter Cleanup

District 4- Tuesday, November 19, 2024:

Hosted by: Erinn Harris, Deputy Director Department of Neighborhoods; City Council Member: Latisha Johnson OCFO- Office of Budget Presenter: Donnie Johnson, Deputy Budget Director

In District 4, last year's priorities included blight remediation, returning citizens program information, increasing levels of city services, initiatives regarding taxation, renovation of the Monteith Library, workforce development, park improvements, housing, right-of way walkways, infrastructure improvements, greenways, and code enforcement. This year's priorities for District 4 differed slightly from the previous year but still covered a variety of issues such as, sidewalk repair, alley cleanup, tree removal, parks-recreation, and transportation.

When reranking last year's citywide priorities, home repair remained a top concern, followed by affordable housing and neighborhood rebuilding. Transportation, which was one of the highest-ranking issues, last year citywide, dropped in ranking to 5 (for District 4).

When District 4 residents were asked to rank last year's citywide priorities Affordable Housing moved up from last year's position, as well as public safety.

District 4 Year over Year Comparisons				
Rank	November-2024 Issues-Concerns	Rank	October-2023 Issues-Concerns	
1	Home Repair	1	Home Repair	
2	Affordable Housing	2	Transportation	

District 5- Wednesday, November 20, 2024:

Hosted by: Josh Roberson, District Manager; City Council Member: Mary Sheffield, President

OCFO- Office of Budget Presenter: Donnie Johnson, Deputy Budget Director

District 5 had a significant number of participants (74). When asked what they would like to see prioritized in the budget this year, Affordable Housing ranked number 1, followed by bike lanes, public transportation, sidewalk repairs and home repair.

Question 2 asked that they look at the top citywide priorities from 2023 and rank them today, Transportation was the number one priority for District 5, which was the second highest priority citywide in 2023, followed by Safe Street Design which did not appear in the list of top responses citywide in 2023.

When residents were asked how they would improve transportation, they requested an overall better transit system, mass transit options, new bus shelters and benches, and the should city double the funding for DDOT.

District 5 Year over Year Comparisons			
Rank	October-2023 Issues-Concerns	Rank	October-2022 Issues-Concerns
1	Transportation	1	Illegal dumping
2	Safer Street Design	2	Senior support

District 6- Thursday, October 17, 2024:

Hosted by: Eva Torres, District Manager; Antonio Mora-Mills, Deputy District 6 Manager; City Council Member: Gabriela Santiago-Romero; OCFO- Office of Budget Presenter: Donnie Johnson, Deputy Budget Director

Unlike last year's response, the primary budget items of concern specific to District 6 this year where solutions for the homeless problem, followed by the need for better public transportation. These responses differ from last year as home repairs and the need for more police presence, infrastructure, and blight/illegal dumping topped the list.

The second survey question looks at the citywide priorities from last year and ask the participants to rank these items according to importance in this year's budget process. Last year's top 4 priorities citywide were home repair, transportation, affordable housing and youth programs. When surveyed regarding the priority of these issues in the upcoming budget, District 6 residents responses indicated that Home Repair is still a top priority citywide followed closely by affordable housing. Other priorities where senior support, neighborhood rebuilding and youth programs. Transportation was no longer in the top 6 priorities. When asked how would you like to see Home Repair improved respondents had a variety of suggestions. Offering home repair grants based on income, forgivable loans and grants for home repair, prioritizing women and black owned contractors for home repairs, and more robust options to obtain assistance for individuals of multiple income levels. These responses did not deviate much from last year where voices in the community requested unrestricted funds for repairs to roofs, windows, and porches based upon a grant model versus a loan model and expressed concerns relative to the use of funds for home repair.

The primary takeaway is that the Administration must work to better facilitate access to available programs, for home repair.

District 6 Year over Year Comparisons			
Rank	October-2024 Issues-Concerns	Rank	October-2023 Issues-Concerns
1	Home Repair	1	Home Repair
2	Affordable Housing	2	Street Lighting

District 7- Wednesday, October 30, 2024:

Hosted by: Alexia Davis, Deputy District Manager; City Council Member: Fred Durhal, III

OCFO- Office of Budget Presenter: Donnie Johnson, Deputy Budget Director

This year, public safety, neighborhood improvements, business activation, housing, grants for entrepreneurs, beautification, home repair, and block club grants were the major topics for District 7 residents. Another item listed was money for home repairs for seniors to make their homes handicap accessible, including walk in showers.

The priorities that we heard last year were ranked: neighborhood rebuilding, public safety, home repair, transportation, youth programs, senior supports, and affordable housing. The next question asked was "How would you like to see Neighborhood rebuilding be improved?". Comments included: more lighting in the neighborhoods; figure out how to make it easier for people to purchase existing homes when the banks are refusing to provide loans for homes under \$100,000; support the development of local businesses and localized planning to fill in gaps in what people want; the city and the residents should be engaged through the entire budget process; make residents responsible for keeping up their lawns; make owners responsible for the property security of their vacant homes; and retail and dining amenities.

District 7 Year over Year Comparisons				
Rank	October-2024 Issues-Concerns	Rank	October-2023 Issues-Concerns	
1	Neighborhood Rebuilding	1	Home Repairs	
2	Public Safety	2	Senior support	

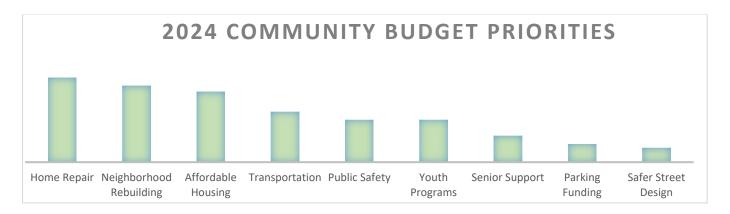
CONCLUSION

Results All Districts

This chart displays the results compiled from the virtual Community District meetings held this past October and November 2024. Concerns/ issues/ priorities were segmented and ranked into 9 categories. This chart shows the outcome of rankings for the top five.

	ALL DISTRICTS Year over Year Comparisons			
Rank	October/November -2024 Issues-Concerns	Rank	October -2023 Issues-Concerns	
1	Housing Programs: Home Repair (1); Affordable Housing (3)	1	Housing Programs	
2	Neighborhood Rebuilding	2	Senior Support/ Funding for Specific Groups: Disabled, Seniors	
3	Transportation	3	Effective City Services- illegal dumping/ litter- trash-alley/ vacant lot cleanup, code enforcement	
4	Public Safety	4	Transportation	
5	Youth Programs	5	Recreation	

In reviewing year over year results, we observed six issues were of primary concern to residents of all seven districts: affordable housing, home repairs, neighborhood rebuilding, transportation, youth programs and public safety. Housing concerns continue to top the list of community priorities with affordable housing, home repair programs and rebuilding neighborhoods with housing for all, inclusive of housing needs for specific groups. Increase support for the city's youth, seniors, and the disabled ranked high as well as recreation- parks funding and designing safer streets. Year over year changes in citizen's concerns saw Effective City Services fall out of the top five priorities in 2024 as the city enacted a number of changes in operations that addressed many of the concerns residents expressed last year (illegal dumping, cleanliness, beautification efforts, etc.). Transportation issues ranked higher than the previous year. Although residents acknowledged the positive DDOT changes implemented in 2024 (increased wages, more buses, etc.) they still felt more needed to be done.



Recommendation

Residents continue to express concerns about how their feedback and priorities are presented in the city's budget. LPD again recommend creating documents for the public that illustrate community feedback (detailed, specific requests) to related budget decisions.

It would be beneficial to connect programmatic impact or performance output with budgetary decisions. LPD, again recommends the Office of Budget publish an update on the Outcome Budgeting process and ongoing efforts to demonstrate how citizen input informs budget recommendations. It would assist in City Council's consideration in aligning citizens' priorities with budgetary allocations. The goal of Outcome Budgeting is to make government programs more result oriented, instead of outlay-expenditure oriented. It can better measure outcomes of government programs and services (if city money spent met its goals and objectives). The community continues to request that this information be presented on a district level, again to determine if any of their recommendations are considered and enacted.

Additional process improvement suggestions were made on page 4 of this document to assist with obtaining more directed input from the community.

In accordance with the Community Outreach Ordinance, the administration will provide City Council a report detailing the itemized concerns raised by the impacted neighborhoods during the community outreach process and a proposed method to address each of those concerns. LPD understands this report will accompany the Mayor's proposed Fiscal Year 2025- 2026 Budget and FY 2027 – 2030 Four Year Financial Plan scheduled to be presented to City Council by March 7, 2025.

Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance.

cc: Jay Rising, Chief Financial Officer
John Naglick, Chief Deputy CFO-Finance Director
Tanya Stoudemire, Chief Deputy CFO-Policy & Administration – Interim Budget Director
Donnie Johnson, Deputy Budget Director
Gail Fulton, Mayor's Office
Malik Washington, Mayor's Office