
2018 West Des Moines DirectionFinder® Survey

Executive Summary Report

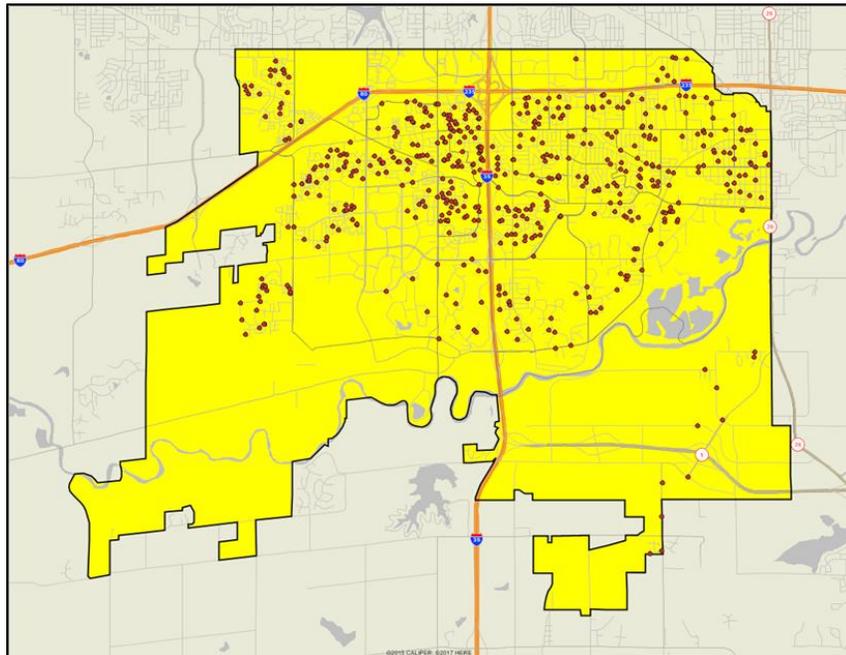
Purpose and Methodology

Purpose. The City of West Des Moines conducted its eighth *DirectionFinder*® survey during the summer of 2018 to assess citizen satisfaction with the delivery of major city services and to help determine priorities for the community as part of the City’s ongoing planning process. The first survey was conducted in 2002.

Methodology. The survey was administered by mail and online to a random sample of households in the City. The goal was to obtain a total of at least 400 completed surveys. This goal was far exceeded, with a total of 564 surveys having been completed. The overall results for 564 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 4.1%.

“Don’t Know” Responses. The percentage of “don’t know” responses has been excluded from many of the graphs and the benchmarking data shown in this report to facilitate valid comparisons between city services. Since the number of “don’t know” responses often reflects the utilization and awareness of city 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.*”

In order to better understand how well services are being delivered by the City, ETC Institute geocoded the home address of respondents to the survey. The map to the right shows the physical distribution of survey respondents based on the location of their home.



This report contains the following:

- a summary of major findings
- charts depicting the overall results of the survey along with comparisons to the results from 2016 and 2002
- benchmarking data that show how the survey results for West Des Moines compare to other cities
- Importance-Satisfaction analysis
- GIS maps
- tabular data that show the overall results for each question on the survey
- a copy of the survey instrument.

Major Findings

- **Perceptions of the City.** Most (94%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with their overall quality of life in West Des Moines; 93% were satisfied with their overall feeling of safety, and 91% were satisfied with the overall image of the City.
- **Overall satisfaction with City services.** Ninety-two percent (92%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied (ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) with the quality of police, fire, and emergency medical services; 91% were satisfied with the maintenance of city buildings and facilities, and 89% were satisfied with the city's parks, recreation, programs and facilities. Residents were least satisfied with the flow of traffic/congestion management (65%).
- **City Services That Residents Think Are Most Important to Emphasize Over the Next Two Years.** The major city services that residents thought were most important for City leaders to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) flow of traffic/congestion management, (2) quality of the City streets system, and (3) quality of City water services.
- **Public Safety.** Ninety-two percent (92%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the quality of local fire protection; 91% were satisfied with how quickly fire fighters respond to emergencies, and 90% were satisfied with overall quality of local police protection. Residents were least satisfied with the quality of fire prevention education (76%).
- **Public Safety Services That Residents Think Are Most Important to Emphasize Over the Next Two Years.** The public safety services that residents thought were most important for City leaders to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) local police protection and (2) officers' attitudes and behavior towards citizens.
- **Parks and Recreation.** Ninety percent (90%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the maintenance of City parks; 88% were satisfied with Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge, 83% were satisfied with the number of City parks, and 83% were satisfied with Raccoon River Park Softball Complex. Residents were least satisfied with the City's senior citizen recreation programs (62%).

- **Parks and Recreation Services That Residents Think Are Most Important to Emphasize Over the Next Two Years.** The parks and recreation services that residents thought were most important for City leaders to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) maintenance of City parks, (2) walking and biking trails in the City, and (3) access to desired destinations via the bike and trail system.
- **Code Enforcement.** Seventy-six percent (76%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the enforcement of fire safety codes and regulations; 72% were satisfied with the enforcement of building codes related to residential construction, and 71% were satisfied with the enforcement of the maintenance of business property. Residents were least satisfied with enforcing the removal of junk cars and other nuisances (57%).
- **City Maintenance.** Ninety-four percent (94%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the maintenance of City buildings; 90% were satisfied with the City's weekly curbside trash collection, and 88% were satisfied with overall cleanliness of City streets. Residents were least satisfied with the maintenance of City streets (71%).
- **City Maintenance Services That Residents Think Are Most Important to Emphasize Over the Next Two Years.** The City maintenance services that residents thought were most important for City leaders to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) maintenance of City streets and (2) snow removal on City streets.
- **City Water Services.** Ninety-four percent (94%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the reliability of water service to their home, and 79% were satisfied with the variety of payment options available. Residents were least satisfied with the quality of water delivered to their home (63%).
- **City Communications.** Eighty-two percent (82%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the quality of the City's WDM Magazine, and 73% were satisfied with the availability of information on City programs and services. Residents were least satisfied with the level of public involvement in local decisions (45%).

Other Findings

- More than three-fourths (79%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the quality of business growth in West Des Moines; 78% were satisfied with the rate of growth, and 75% were satisfied with the quality of residential growth.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the Public Library, and 60% indicated they had visited the West Des Moines Library in the last six months.

- When residents were asked which sources they have used during the past year to get information about the City, 79% indicated they used WDM Magazine; 66% used the City website, and 24% used the City Facebook page (multiple responses could be given to this question).
- Residents were asked which improvements were needed most in their neighborhood. The top three responses were (1) street maintenance, (2) more enforcement of traffic laws, and (3) more enforcement of property maintenance codes.
- Forty-six percent (46%) of the residents surveyed indicated it is “very easy” or “easy” to travel by bicycle in the City of West Des Moines. Nearly half (48%) of residents think it is “very important” or “important” for the City to make it easier to travel by bicycle within the City.

Trends

The significant increases and decreases among all of the items that were assessed in 2016 and 2018 are listed below; changes of 4% or more were considered significant.

Significant Increases:

- Enforcement of the maintenance of business property (+6%)
- Flow of traffic and congestion management (+5%)
- Enforcement of building codes pertaining to residential construction (+5%)
- Adequacy of City street lighting (+5%)
- Amount of parking provided (new commercial development) (+5%)
- How quickly fire fighters respond to emergencies (+4%)
- Enforcement of sign regulations (+4%)
- Enforcement of the maintenance of residential property (+4%)
- Quality of water delivered to home (+4%)
- Attractiveness of commercial development (+4%)
- Traffic circulation in parking lots (new commercial development) (+4%)

Significant Decreases:

- The City’s youth recreation programs (-7%)
- Quality of emergency medical services (-4%)

How West Des Moines Compares to Other Communities

West Des Moines is setting the standard for the delivery of city services. The City **rated above the Midwest Regional average** in 49 of the 51 areas that were assessed. The states that make up the Midwest Region are North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. West Des Moines rated significantly higher than the Midwest Regional average (4% or more above) in 48 of these areas. The areas in which the City rated at least 20% above the Midwest Regional average are listed below:

- Overall quality of services provided by the City (+36%)
- City aquatic centers (+32%)
- Customer service from City employees (+30%)
- Overall value received for City tax dollars and fees (+27%)
- Overall quality of City streets system (+25%)
- Maintenance of sidewalks in public areas (+25%)
- Availability of information on City programs/services (+25%)
- Quality of parks, recreation, programs and facilities (+23%)
- Mowing and trimming along City streets and other public areas (+22%)
- Overall image of the City (+21%)
- Maintenance of City buildings and facilities (+21%)
- Effectiveness of City communication with the public (+20%)
- Overall cleanliness of City streets (+20%)

West Des Moines **rated above the National average** in 50 of the 51 areas that were assessed. The City rated significantly higher than the National average (4% or more above) in all of these areas. The areas in which West Des Moines rated at least 20% above the National average are listed below and on the following page:

- City aquatic centers (+44%)
- Overall quality of services provided by the City (+41%)
- Customer service from City employees (+33%)
- Overall value received for City tax dollars and fees (+31%)
- Maintenance of sidewalks in public areas (+29%)
- Overall quality of City streets system (+28%)
- Maintenance of City buildings and facilities (+28%)
- Availability of information on City programs/services (+27%)
- Overall image of the City (+27%)
- Overall cleanliness of City streets (+26%)
- Effectiveness of City communication with the public (+25%)
- Quality of parks, recreation, programs and facilities (+25%)
- Mowing and trimming along City streets and other public areas (+25%)
- Overall feeling of safety in the City (+24%)
- How well the City is planning for growth (+24%)
- Walking and biking trails in the City (+24%)

- Adequacy of City street lighting (+23%)
- Overall quality of life in the City (+21%)
- Maintenance of City streets (+21%)
- Quality of the City’s stormwater management system (+20%)
- Maintenance of City parks (+20%)
- Overall quality of local police protection (+20%)
- How quickly police respond to emergencies (+20%)
- Enforcement of the maintenance of residential property (+20%)

Investment Priorities

Recommended Priorities for the Next Two Years. In order to help the City identify investment priorities for the next two years, ETC Institute conducted an Importance-Satisfaction (I-S) analysis. This analysis examined the importance that residents placed on each City service and the level of satisfaction with each service.

By identifying services of high importance and low satisfaction, the analysis identified which services will have the most impact on overall satisfaction with City services over the next two years. If the City wants to improve its overall satisfaction rating, the City should prioritize investments in services with the highest Importance-Satisfaction (I-S) ratings. Details regarding the methodology for the analysis are provided in this report.

Based on the results of the Importance-Satisfaction (I-S) Analysis, ETC Institute recommends the following:

- **Overall Priorities for the City by Major Category.** The first level of analysis reviewed the importance of and satisfaction with major categories of City services. This analysis was conducted to help set the overall priorities for the City. Based on the results of this analysis, the major service that is recommended as the top priority for investment over the next two years in order to raise the City’s overall satisfaction rating is listed below:
 - Flow of traffic and congestion management in the City (IS Rating= 0.1635)
- **Priorities within Departments/Specific Areas:** The second level of analysis reviewed the importance of and satisfaction of services within departments and specific service areas. This analysis was conducted to help departmental managers set priorities for their department. Based on the results of this analysis, the services that are recommended as the top priorities within each area over the next two years are listed below:
 - **Public Safety:** none of the public safety services were selected as a “high priority” for improvement
 - **Parks and Recreation:** none of the parks and recreation services were selected as a “high priority” for improvement
 - **City Maintenance:** maintenance of City streets