
2020 West Des Moines DirectionFinder® Survey

Executive Summary Report

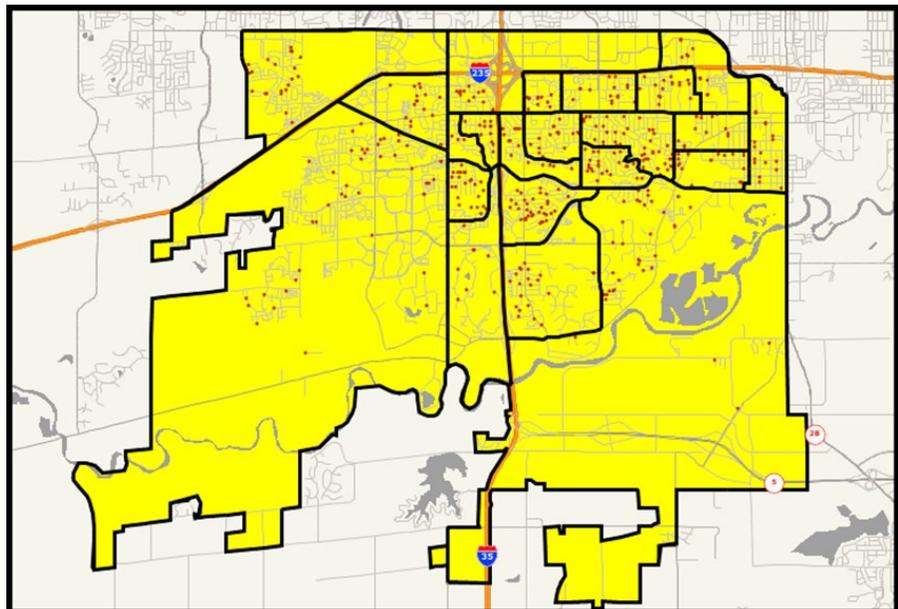
Purpose and Methodology

Purpose. The City of West Des Moines conducted its ninth *DirectionFinder*® survey during the summer of 2020 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 504 surveys having been completed. The overall results for 504 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 4.3%.

“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 above 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 2018 and 2002
- benchmarking data that show how the survey results for West Des Moines compare to other cities
- Importance-Satisfaction analysis
- 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 (92%) 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 90% were satisfied with the overall image of the City.
- **Overall Satisfaction with City services.** Ninety-one percent (91%) 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; 89% were satisfied with city's parks, recreation, programs and facilities, and 86% were satisfied with the maintenance of city buildings and facilities. Residents were least satisfied with the overall enforcement of code violations (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) overall quality of the City streets system, (2) flow of traffic/congestion management, and (3) quality of police, fire, and emergency medical services.
- **Public Safety.** Ninety-three percent (93%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the quality of local fire protection; 92% were satisfied with the quality of emergency medical services, and 92% were satisfied with how quickly emergency medical services respond to emergencies. 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) officers' attitudes and behavior towards citizens and (2) local police protection.
- **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 85% were satisfied with the variety of payment options available. Residents were least satisfied with the quality of water delivered to their home (60%).

- **Parks and Recreation.** Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge; 87% were satisfied with the number of City parks, and 82% were satisfied with walking and biking trails in the City. Residents were least satisfied with the City’s senior citizen recreation programs (65%).
- **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) walking and biking trails in the City, (2) access to desired destinations via the bike and trail system, and (3) City park restrooms and shelters.
- **Code Enforcement.** Seventy-five percent (75%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the enforcement of fire safety codes and regulations; 70% were satisfied with the enforcement of building codes related to commercial construction, and 69% were satisfied with the enforcement of building codes related to residential construction. Residents were least satisfied with enforcing the removal of junk cars and other nuisances (58%).
- **City Maintenance.** Ninety-three percent (93%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the maintenance of City buildings; 93% were satisfied with the City’s weekly curbside trash collection, and 90% were satisfied with weekly curbside recycling collection. 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 Communications.** Eighty-three percent (83%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the quality of the City’s WDM Magazine, and 74% 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 (44%).

Other Findings

- Three-fourths (75%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the rate of growth in West Des Moines; 74% were satisfied with the quality of residential growth, and 73% were satisfied with the quality of business growth.
- Eighty-nine percent (89%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the Public Library, and 53% 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, 82% indicated they used WDM Magazine; 69% used the City website, and 25% 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) high-speed internet, (2) street maintenance, and (3) more enforcement of property maintenance codes.
- Forty-four percent (44%) of the residents surveyed indicated it is “very easy” or “easy” to travel by bicycle in the City of West Des Moines. More than half (52%) of residents think it is “very important” or “important” for the City to make it easier to travel by bicycle within the City.
- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the residents surveyed indicated they are “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the value they receive for the portion of their property taxes that fund the City’s operating budget and the services they receive; 23% are “neutral,” 13% are “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied,” and 6% do not have an opinion.

Trends

The significant increases and decreases among all of the items that were assessed in 2018 and 2020 are listed below; changes of 4% or more were considered significant.

Significant Increases:

- City’s youth recreation programs (+7%)
- Variety of payment options available (West Des Moines Water Works) (+6)
- Quality of emergency medical services (+4%)
- How quickly emergency medical services respond (+4%)
- The number of City parks (+4%)
- Overall quality of recreation program services (+4%)
- Fees charged for recreation programs (+4%)

Significant Decreases:

- Quality of business growth (-6%)
- Attractiveness of commercial development (-5%)
- Maintenance of City buildings/facilities (-5%)
- West Des Moines Service Desk (-4%)
- Innovation/uniqueness of commercial development (-4%)
- City aquatic centers (-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 50 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 46 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 (+40%)
- Overall quality of City streets system (+33%)
- Customer service from City employees (+32%)
- City aquatic centers (+32%)
- Overall value received for City tax dollars/fees (+30%)
- Availability of info on City programs/services (+27%)
- Effectiveness of City communication with public (+24%)
- Overall cleanliness of City streets (+24%)
- Maintenance of sidewalks in public areas (+24%)
- Overall image of the City (+23%)
- How well City is planning for growth (+23%)
- Mowing/trimming along City streets/public areas (+23%)
- Quality of parks/recreation/programs/facilities (+22%)
- Maintenance of traffic signals and street signs (+22%)
- Adequacy of City street lighting (+22%)
- Maintenance of City buildings/facilities (+20%)

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

- Overall quality of services provided by the City (+42%)
- City aquatic centers (+42%)
- Customer service from City employees (+39%)
- Overall value received for City tax dollars/fees (+34%)
- Availability of info on City programs/services (+32%)
- Maintenance of sidewalks in public areas (+31%)
- Overall quality of City streets system (+30%)
- Overall cleanliness of City streets (+30%)
- Overall image of the City (+29%)
- Quality of parks/recreation/programs/facilities (+28%)
- Effectiveness of City communication with public (+28%)
- How well City is planning for growth (+28%)
- Overall feeling of safety in the City (+27%)

- Mowing/trimming along City streets/public areas (+27%)
- Walking and biking trails in the City (+24%)
- Maintenance of City buildings/facilities (+23%)
- How quickly police respond to emergencies (+23%)
- Adequacy of City street lighting (+23%)
- Maintenance of City streets (+23%)
- Quality of City's stormwater management system (+22%)
- Weekly curbside trash collection (+21%)
- Weekly curbside recycling collection (+21%)
- Overall quality of life in the City (+20%)
- Overall quality of local police protection (+20%)
- The number of City parks (+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 services that are recommended as the top priorities for investment over the next two years in order to raise the City's overall satisfaction rating are listed below:
 - Overall quality of the City streets system (IS Rating = 0.1330)
 - Flow of traffic and congestion management in the City (IS Rating = 0.1174)
- **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