

**Full Report
for the
City of Midland
Budget Priorities
Community Roundtables**

City of Midland, Michigan

Submitted to the City of Midland City Council
February 7, 2005



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Full Report

Conclusions

The “Snapshot”

- **Overall, citizens believe that life in Midland is good.**
Relative to concerns heard in other communities, residents of Midland are generally satisfied - even pleased - with life their community and the role the City plays in it. Few critical comments were expressed by Roundtable participants, with the exception of concerns about traffic.

- **The responses of Midland’s citizens reveal four fundamental values that underlie citizens’ attitudes toward the role of the City, the services it provides and how the services are funded:**
 1. Residents understand that the services and amenities they enjoy contribute significantly to Midland’s sense of community and pride in its identity as a special place;
As a consequence, citizens are generally unwilling to relinquish services.

 2. Citizens place a high value on planning;
The need to plan for growth and its associated impacts, for economic development and industrial / commercial / business diversification, and for land use was a theme heard consistently throughout discussion. Midland citizens want to know where their community is headed and that its future is responsibly planned.

 3. Midland citizens believe that access to services should be available to all of the city’s residents;
Proposals for fees for service or removal of subsidies for individual families was inevitably countered in discussion with a caution about the importance of continuing to assure access to all of the city’s citizens.

 4. Citizens value communication and involvement with their City government.
The importance of communication between the City and its citizens ranked as one of the highest scores among all the rankings requested of Roundtable participants. In addition, the responses to the Roundtables themselves overwhelmingly endorsed the discussions and often asked that the City sponsor some form of community dialogue on an ongoing basis. Citizens were very pleased that the City asked for their advice.

- **Advice about the budget and services is consistent with advice given in 1997 about the approach to balancing revenues and service:**
Maintain the same services, work as efficiently as possible, raise taxes only if necessary to keep the City's current quality and level of service.

Specific suggestions were made for efficiencies of service delivery, but none was consistent enough for a strong recommendation. In terms of elimination of a service or expenditure, Barstow Airport is at the top of the list for many Midland citizens, although some would contest that decision and believe that the Airport does provide a community benefit.

- **More than a few citizens are interested in the City's development of criteria for applying user fees, expressing a desire for a standard application on which Midland residents can rely. Among the thoughts heard:**

- Do not apply user fees for children's programs and activities;
- Make sure there is an adequate option for people who cannot afford fees;
- Consider applying fees primarily to services used by comparatively few citizens, especially those who can afford to pay for the service; and
- Consider non-resident fees.

- **Traffic remains a major and specific issue to be addressed.**

If nothing is done to address this issue, Midland citizens will continue to find it a major source of dissatisfaction with City service.

- **In Midland, both in 1997 and in 2005, it is evident that there is a clear culture of contribution that is strongly imbued in the citizens.**

The written Evaluation Form used at the end of the Roundtables has been used in communities across the country. The question, "What prompted you to attend?" tends to reveal the fundamental civic character of a community. In towns and cities experiencing rapid growth with its related potentially negative impacts, people will write that they are participating because they "have an interest in...", usually citing a site-specific or impact-specific concern. In other communities, there is no cohesive sense of response, and the answers to that question will vary widely from personal interest to civic interest.

Midland residents participating in the Roundtables said over and over again that they were prompted to attend by civic duty, their responsibilities as citizens, because their City needed them, because they were asked.

Background and Methodology

Background

Like many cities across the country, Midland in 2004 found itself facing significant budget challenges, with increasing costs of providing the stellar services that Midland citizens have long enjoyed coupled with an anticipated decline in revenue due to the state budget dilemma and to general economic conditions. Knowing that difficult decisions regarding maintaining the quality and level of City services at a reasonable cost lay ahead, the City Council and administrative staff understood the importance of hearing the community's priorities as a source of guidance in making those decisions. Rather than ask residents to respond to a proposed budget, Midland City government honored its progressive tradition in engaging Midland's citizens in discussions so that their values, preferences, and priorities could be clearly understood and considered as near-term and longer-term service and budget decisions are made.

Members of City Council as well as many individuals within the City administration devoted significant time to assembling these Roundtables, and deserve credit for their success. However, without the exemplary participation and dedication of Midland citizens and the willingness of each of them to dedicate three hours to their City and community, there would have been no deliberation and no give-and-take discussion of values and preferences. This report is their work.

Methodology

Initiating the Discussion

In the fall of 2004, City Council selected KezziahWatkins to work with them in conducting community Roundtable discussions to probe residents' ideas and concerns about City services and the budget, Midland's growth, as well as communication between the City and its citizens. Community Roundtables were selected as the method providing both effectiveness and efficiency, in that they can be structured to provide in-depth information not possible with a random sample survey. Equally important, they offer an opportunity for Midland citizens to hear from each other, in an exchange of thoughts and ideas that has proven to be highly valuable to participants, both in Midland and in other cities and towns across the country. The section in this report on page 25 entitled "Assessing the Roundtables," includes some of the comments participants wrote in evaluating the Roundtables and underscores the value placed on community deliberation.

These discussion groups, similar to focus groups in their structure, cannot be said to be a statistically valid representation of an entire population. Like focus groups, however, they do produce findings about attitudes and beliefs that are reliable and may be assumed to be held by a broader population. Participants self-selected by agreeing to attend a group, and so were not entirely random populations. In addition, because the Roundtables were held at various times of day, attendance at daytime groups was often more convenient for those who are retired than for residents with work or child-care commitments, resulting in some groups that seemed out of balance in terms of the age demographic. Overall, however, it's likely that while the entire participant group may have missed a strong representation of families with young children, there was sufficient distribution to contribute to good discussion with varied perspectives and to conclusions that are sound.

In preparing for the sessions, ideas about topics needing exploration came from members of City Council, the City Manager, and the City's administrative staff. A discussion guide was developed for review, revision and approval by City Council and City administration.

Inviting Participation

Members of City Council and the City administration used a broad variety of ways to invite participation in the Roundtables, initially scheduled for the late fall of 2004. Residents were contacted personally, received notice of the opportunity through the City's *At Your Service...* newsletter and through letters of invitation, had access to information about how to sign up through the City's web site and electronic newsletter, MGTV, and the local media, had access to flyers given out by area organizations such as United Way and the Midland Area Chamber of Commerce, and heard presentations made by City officials at civic groups and gatherings. As the holiday season encroached, a decision was made to defer the Roundtable schedule until January, still in time to be useful for the 2005 budget. People who had originally signed up were contacted with information about the rescheduling.

Shortly after Christmas, two additional steps were accomplished: the City randomly selected 200 names from among the utilities ratepayers and sent them personal letters of invitation followed up with phone calls; and a last plea was made through the local media, notifying the community that the City Council felt it would not be productive to proceed with the Roundtables if fewer than 165 citizens signed up to participate. The Midland community responded. Seven Roundtables were held from January 10th through January 13th with a total of 185 participants. The list of Roundtable participants may be found in Appendix A of this report.

How the Roundtables Worked

Once citizens had signed up to attend, they received a packet of background information about the City's services and budget for their review prior to the sessions. At the Roundtables, people heard presentations from City Manager Karl Tomion covering additional information about the City's budget and

services, providing perspective through comparison with other cities in the region. Mr. Tomion's presentation may be found in Appendix G; the Power Point presentation is available online at www.midland-mi.org.

The agenda and discussion items were identical for each Roundtable, organizing questions and discussion into three major segments. The majority of each session was devoted to questions about experiencing life in Midland, about the overall performance of City government, and about the City's budget, level of service and service delivery. The second segment dealt with issues of Midland's growth, and the final segment probed for ideas about communication between Midland residents and the City. The Roundtable discussion guide can be found in Appendix D.

Although the agenda was structured to be identical for each group, facilitators leading the discussion were responsible for guiding the conversation to cover specified topics but were also charged with allowing discussion to cover issues, concerns and ideas raised by group participants. These dual responsibilities resulted in discussion that varied from group to group. The complete record of discussion for each question can be found in Appendix B, along with that same discussion organized by group in Appendix C.

Roundtable participants were provided with two ways to express opinions, beliefs and preferences. In addition to the discussion, each participant was asked to fill out a written response form at the end of the session, once all ideas and perspectives had been heard. The response form can be found in Appendix F complete record of response forms can be found in Appendix E. This report contains information from both sources, organized by topic.

Findings by Topic

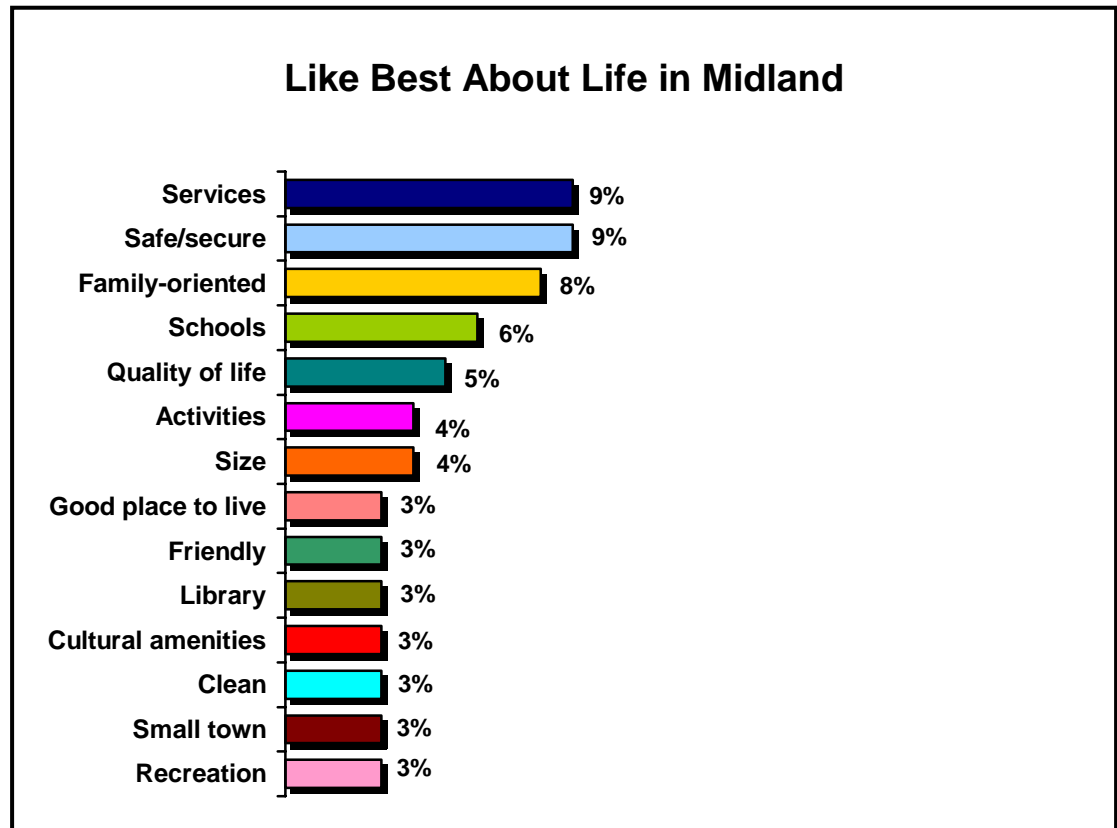
"I like the availability and convenience of services, both public and private."

"I like the safety and security for families."

"We have good services as a small town."

While the primary purpose of the Citizen Roundtables was to solicit Midland residents' preferences and priorities related to the City budget, the gatherings also presented the opportunity to probe more general topics. The responses to the more general questions, while not specific to budget decisions facing the City, can provide City leaders with a good sense of the big issues on residents' minds as it relates to life in Midland as well as the overall role of the City.

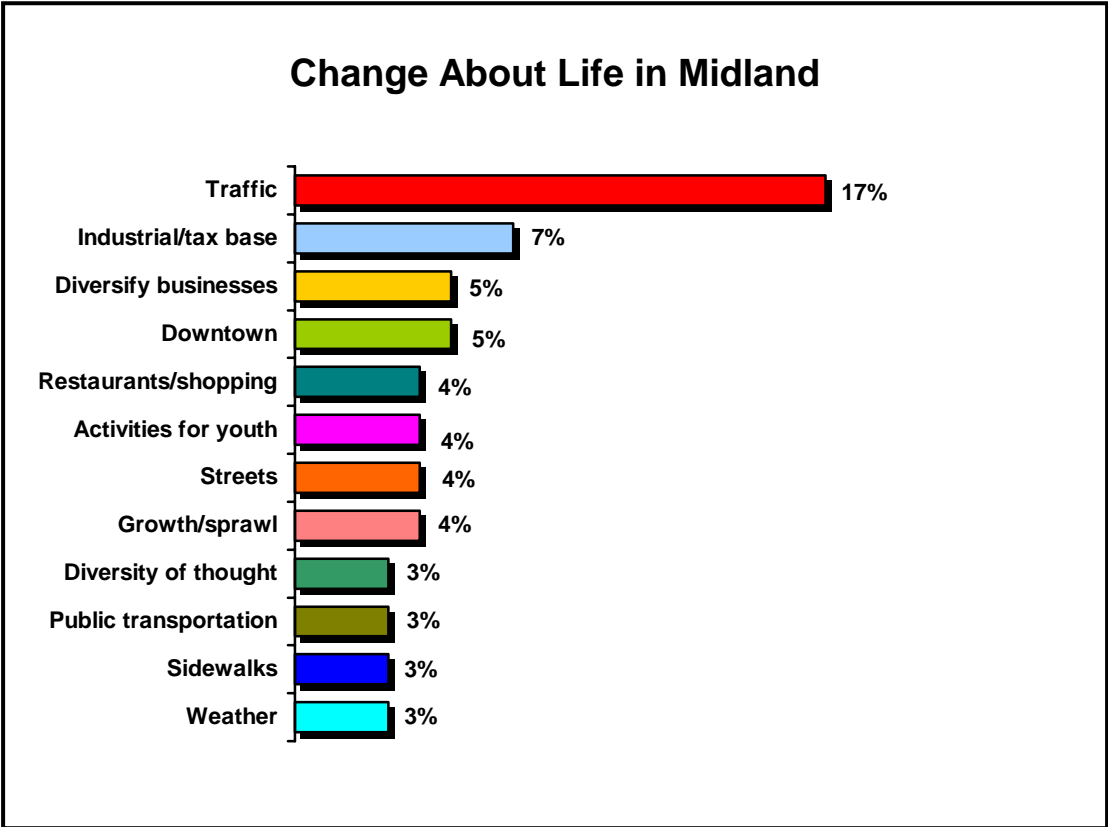
Roundtable discussions began by asking each participant to briefly introduce herself / himself and to offer up "one thing that you like best about life in Midland and one thing you'd change if you could."



Roundtable participants cited many positive attributes about their city. The chart above lists those that were most frequently mentioned. Other attributes cited less frequently were: small town with big-city amenities; quality community; easy to live here; people work together; diversity; parks; and peaceful. Participants cited more things they like about life in Midland than they did things they'd like to change.

When people spoke about services, one of the attributes mentioned most often in the “like best” category was the amount of services people receive, the convenience of having those services delivered to them and the quality of the services. An equal number of mentions were made related to people feeling safe and secure in Midland.

“I would change the traffic flow into and around Midland.”



“The traffic situation is getting intolerable.”

Roundtable participants had a wide variety of things on their minds when it came to the changes they would like to see. The chart above lists those that were most frequently mentioned. Also cited were: the local economy / job climate; traffic enforcement; speed limits; land use planning; more help to people with needs; city ordinances that micromanage; dioxin / environment; more diversity; hiring outside consultants; tax appeals; and transportation planning.

“We need to broaden our industrial base.”

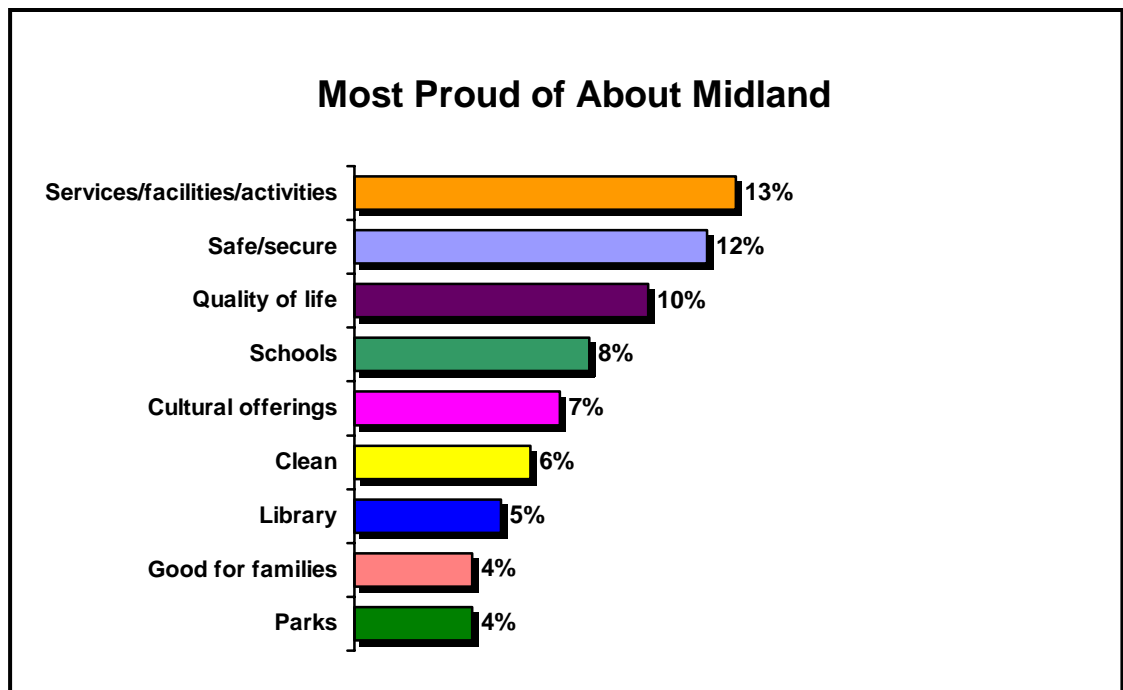
Traffic was clearly the primary concern mentioned when it came to change, with a number of participants citing frustrations with traffic flow, traffic congestion and the synchronization of traffic lights, and many people specifically talking about their concerns related to traffic around the Mall. The second-most mentioned topic for change dealt with the community’s economic / tax base and the expressed need to diversify and expand the industrial presence in the community, closely followed by the related desire to diversify the number and types of businesses and commercial operations in Midland.

"It's the quality of services and the level of quality the City provides."

When participants spoke of change in relation to downtown Midland, some talked about their desire to have the downtown area expanded, while others called for better planning for the downtown / riverfront area and others suggested an additional variety of retail outlets downtown.

Another general question, posed to participants on their individual response forms, was "When it comes to the Midland community, what are you most proud of?" The responses to this question closely mirror those to the "most like about life in Midland" question that began the Roundtable discussions, with identical characteristics receiving the most responses to each question. As they did in describing what they like most, participants said they were most proud of the services offered in Midland, including the opportunities provided to them by the many facilities and activities available in the community. Some specifically cited the quality and scope of City services, while others spoke in more general terms about the services offered as a whole within the community. Another frequently mentioned attribute people said they like best and are most proud of is the feeling of safety and security they report experiencing in Midland. Some spoke of safety / security in terms of being good for families, while others enjoy knowing that their neighborhoods are secure and that they can feel safe in any part of the city.

"It's safe-as a single mom I feel safe alone or with my daughters."



"I like the quality of life. 'My Three Sons' and 'Ozzie and Harriet' could live here."

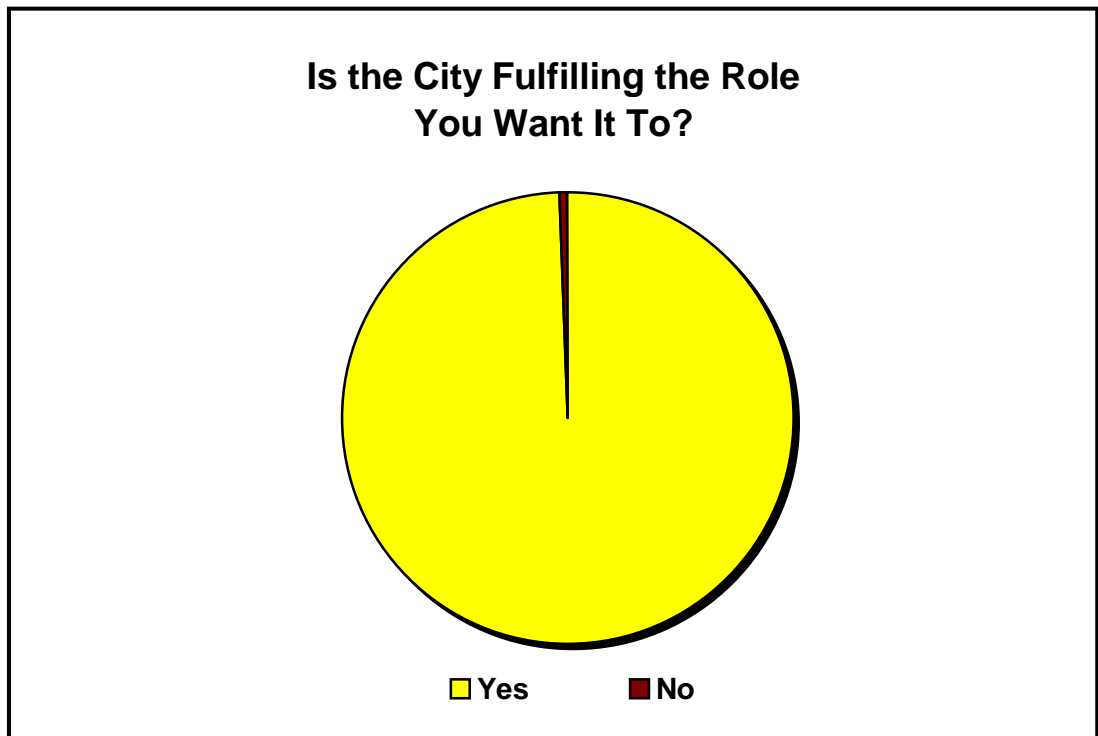
Roundtable participants are proud of many things about Midland. The chart above lists those that were most frequently mentioned. Other characteristics cited with pride were: recreation programs; community cooperation / involvement; excellent big-city amenities; good City government; attractive; generous; nice neighborhoods; diverse population; small town atmosphere; and health care / hospital.

"We live in a well-run city with lots of benefits and few problems."

The third most-mentioned community attribute that participants listed as a source of pride was the quality of life they enjoy as residents of Midland. In describing what defines that quality, citizens wrote such specific things as recreation, safety, schools, parks, as well as more general terms like "atmosphere" and "life in general".

The final general question asked of participants focused on the role of City government. As part of the Roundtable discussions, people were asked, "Is the City of Midland fulfilling the role you want it to when it comes to the overall provision of services?" The responses were very nearly unanimous, with all but one participant responding in the affirmative.

"I like the excellent services and City government."

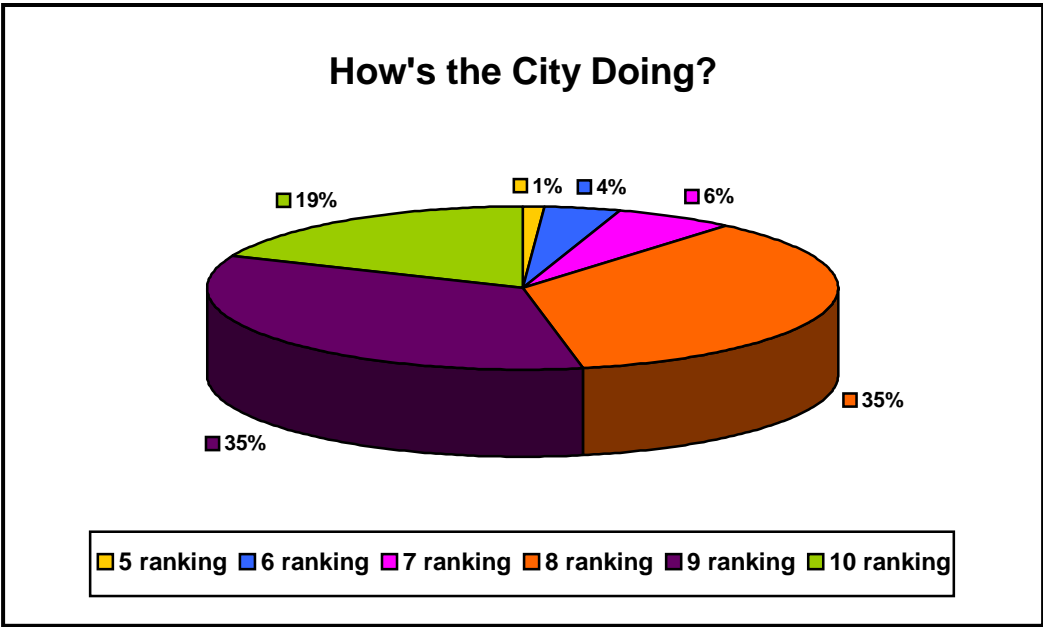


City Services and Budget

"The level of service is vastly superior to other cities of any size, down to competent and helpful people answering the phones in City Hall."

The overwhelming emphasis in Roundtable discussion centered around the City of Midland's municipal budget and the services it provides. Information comparing Midland's revenue sources and services with those of neighboring Bay City, Saginaw and Mount Pleasant provided points of contrast and background for the subsequent group conversation.

The written response form included a question asking respondents to indicate how they believe the City is doing when it comes to the overall delivery of services and programs. Their responses appear in the chart below.



"I like the quality of services and the level of quality the City provides."

Roundtable participants were asked to rank how they believe the City of Midland is doing when it comes to the overall delivery of services and programs, with a '1' indicating "couldn't get any worse" and a '10' indicating "among the best in the country." Please note that none of the participants assigned any of the lowest rankings of 1 to 4.

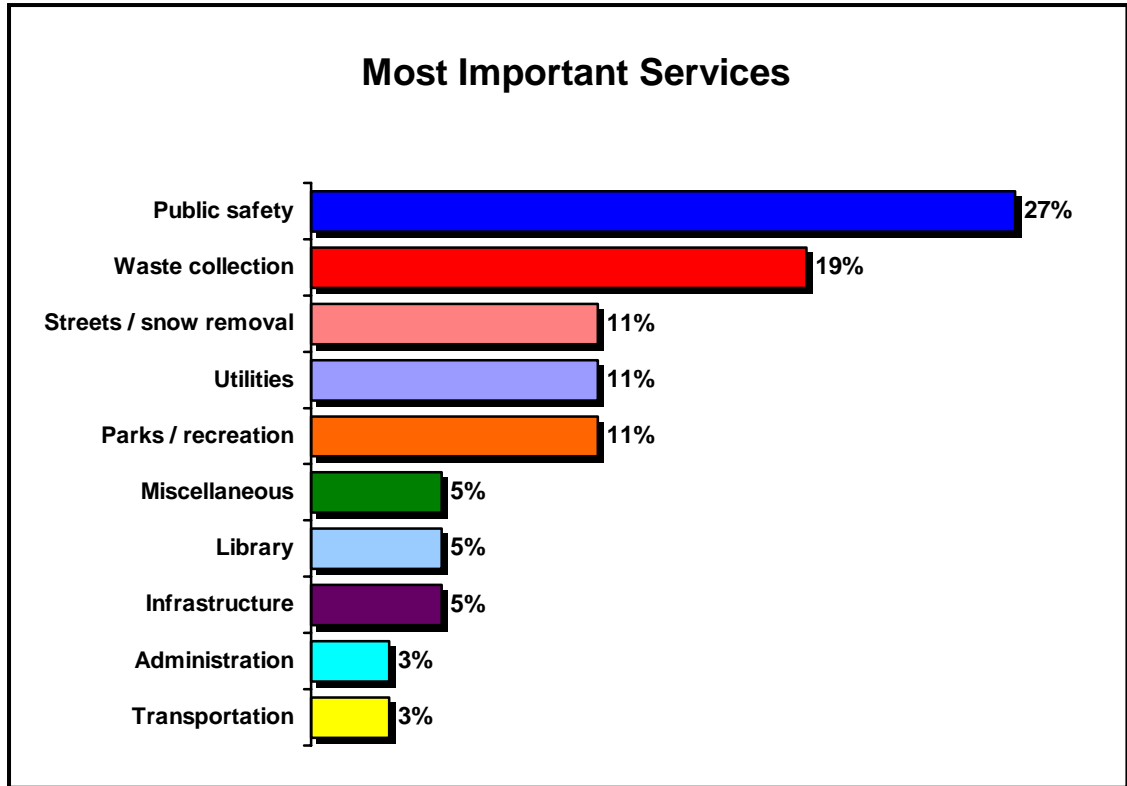
Mean score of 8.5

These responses represent an overwhelming endorsement of City services, with no ranking lower than a '5' and 89% of participants ranking City services overall at '8' and above.

"Midland is the envy of many other cities."

The next question on the response form asked residents to list those services they believe to be most important. As would be the case in most every community, public safety is the first consideration for the citizens of Midland. Reflecting the value that residents expressed for living in a safe community, 27 percent of respondents listed police and fire protection as the most important service, reflecting the highest number of mentions.

"Keep the quality of life here - if we want people to want to live here, we need to keep our cleanliness, parks and services."



"I've lived in other places and I think the snowplowing here is great."

All Roundtable participants were asked to list on their individual response forms the City services that they believe are most important. The total responses are reflected in the chart above.

In contrast to many other communities, however, the second most important City service to residents is waste collection, including trash pick-up, large item pick-up, the availability of yard waste pick-up and recycling. This service was a topic of discussion in most groups, with some people suggesting there be a user fee, while many others disagreed, saying that the cleanliness of the community was important and would be at risk if only those willing to pay a fee availed themselves of the service.

As the groups discussed City services, the initial question to begin discussion asked whether there are any services that participants believe the City could or should no longer provide.

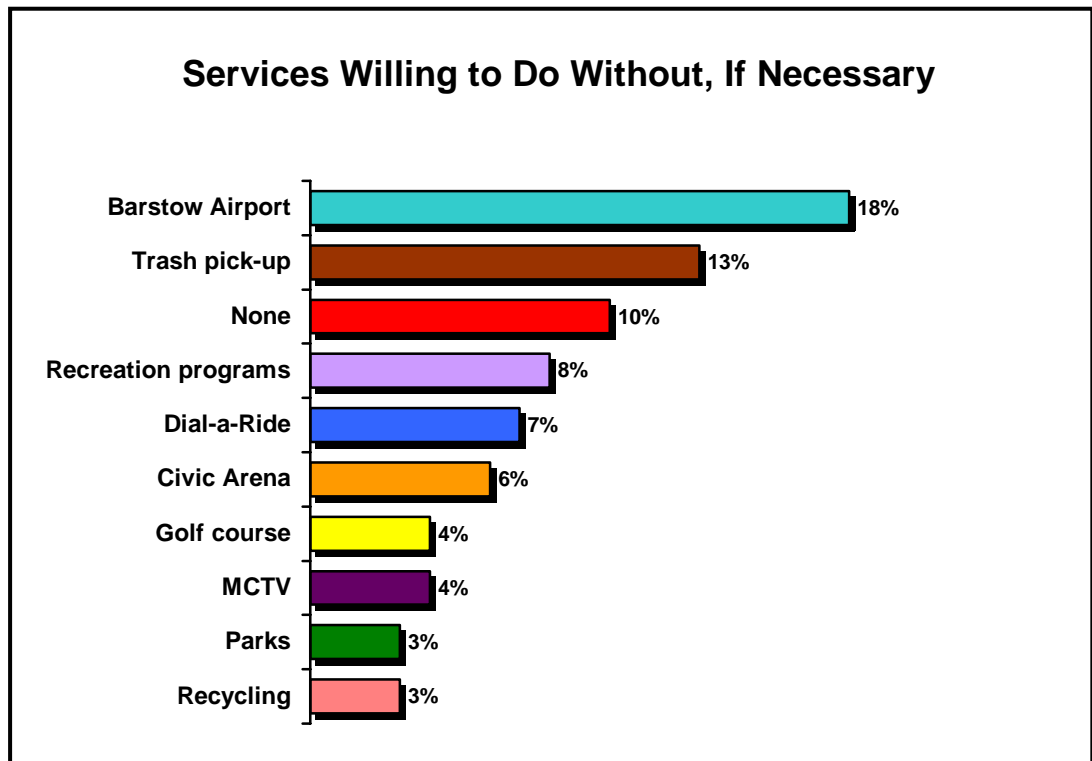
"Cut the Airport - very few people use it. It should be privatized."

Barstow Airport (and its subsidy) was almost inevitably the first mention when groups were asked about services they could do without. There were several participants who advocated for its support by the City, but it seems to be "top of mind" when residents think about services they could do without. Comments made point to residents' perception that the Airport is a publicly supported service that provides benefits to only a few residents.

"I'm not sure we should have such extensive refuse service, especially for heavy items. Do we really need it?"

Interestingly, the collection of waste, cited as the second most valued City service, was also second on the list of services people said they were willing to do without, if absolutely necessary. Perhaps that seeming contradiction occurs because Midland residents seem to understand how fortunate they are when it comes to municipal services, particularly when compared to other communities. Could it be that Midland's citizens say they are willing to give up luxuries that other communities don't enjoy if they absolutely must, to adjust to becoming more like other municipalities? While that explanation is a possibility, it's also highly probable that Midland residents would strongly resist ceding a service so strongly valued for so many reasons.

"It's political death, but I would support a small increase in taxes before the quality of life which we all say we like is diminished."



The chart above lists the services most frequently mentioned by participants when asked to list any City services they would be willing to do without, if absolutely necessary. In addition to the above service eliminations or reductions in service, participants also listed the following services less frequently: Library / reduce Library funding; City Calendar; deliver services more cost-effectively; MGTV; DARE; reduce City employee retiree benefits; sidewalk additions / replacements; sidewalk snow removal

"I'm astounded at the Library costs...I'm not at all against the Library though."

It's also important to note that the third highest "service" offered up for elimination was "None". People clearly value the array and level of services available to them.

In group discussions, the question of proposing services to eliminate shifted rather quickly to suggestions for changes in funding sources or service delivery. In discussing potential changes in the funding and / or delivery of City services, people often mentioned user fees, with some endorsing fees for specific

"I'm frustrated with citizens who want 'everything' but don't want the things that go with it (more traffic, higher taxes for better services, etc.)."

services, while others said they would prefer a slight increase in taxes to user fees because of the inequity of services available and potential negative impacts on the community with a user fee system. Moving some services to funding through Enterprise Funds was suggested by some people, specifically Barstow Airport and Dial-a-Ride. A few others suggested privatizing some City services, such as housing and "any that could be done more cost-effectively by non-employees," as one participant wrote. At the same time, a few people offered a contrasting view, observing that the contracting business could be located outside of the city, causing Midland's public funds to leave the community. And lastly, there was advice about maintaining par with the private sector, particularly with respect to pension benefits for City retirees.

There were also multiple suggestions for improving the efficiency of providing some services, many having to do with the frequency of or extent to which those services were offered. Overall there was no single suggested efficiency that was mentioned consistently enough to warrant recommending specific change. Certainly, though, it's important for City administration to consider each suggestion as they configure future budgets.

One additional point about user fees: several participants indicated that they would support the development of a set of criteria to be applied to decisions about user fees. Those residents seemed to be seeking a standard that the community could rely on in establishing or expanding user fees for specific City services.

"As user fees are instituted, please consider higher fees for non-residents."

A follow-up question for discussion asked whether there were any services people would like the City to add, and, not surprisingly in light of the information provided with respect to declining revenues and reasons for the Roundtables in the first place, there were no suggestions for additional services.

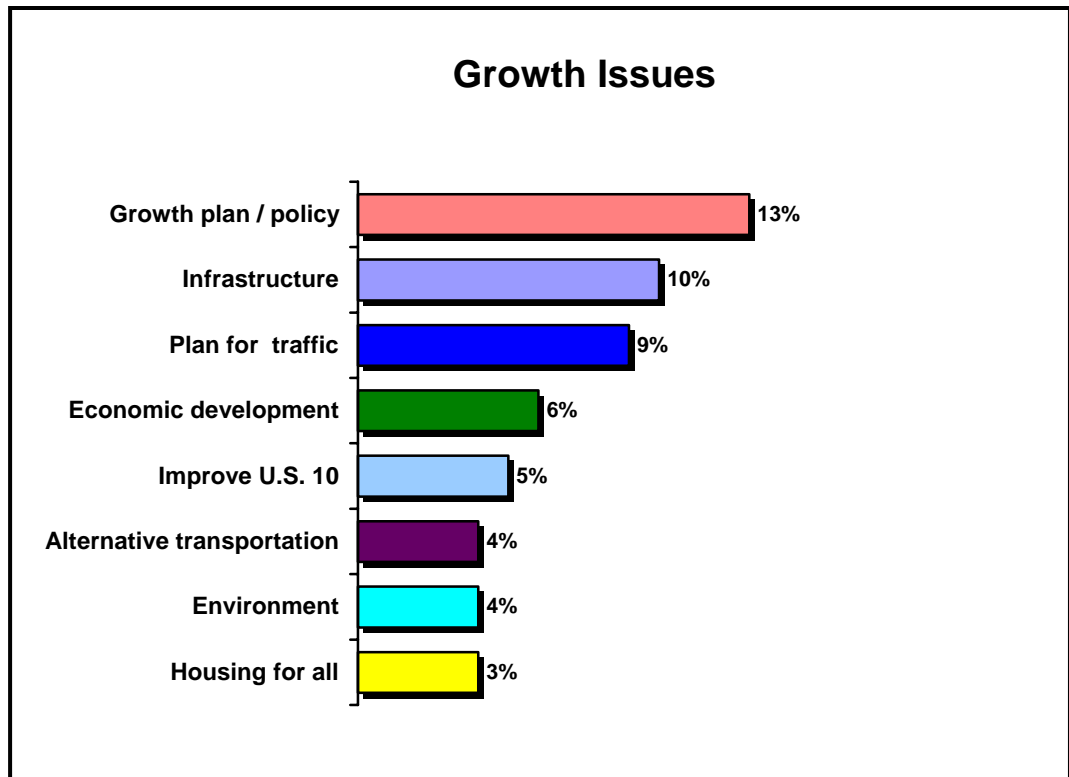
Finally, in discussion about the City budget and services, participants were reminded of the advice Midland residents had given the City through its focus groups eight years ago. That advice was to maintain the same services, to work as efficiently as possible and to raise taxes only if necessary to keep the City's current quality and level of service. People were then asked whether that advice still held or whether they would change it. Overwhelmingly, Roundtable participants endorsed those principles as a continued sound approach to balancing services and Midland's budget.

Growth

"Even with small, steady growth we'll lose the community feel over time."

One of the areas of discussion Midland's City Council and staff wanted to explore was the issue of growth. Midland has experienced a small but steady rate of growth, as was explained in the presentation of information preceding discussion. The first several groups were asked to respond to the premise that successful communities encourage a gradual and steady rate of growth, believing that slow or no growth risks stagnation while rapid growth strains services and community resources. Participants were asked whether they fundamentally agreed or disagreed with that premise. Every group expressed agreement with the principle, with a few participants cautioning against both rapid growth and cumulative population growth that could diminish Midland's small town feel. There was such consistency of response that the question was not pursued in later groups and discussion time was used to probe other issues as described below.

"Does the City try to help bring in new businesses? It should - that would help maintain our facilities."



"I disagree with the assumption that zero growth strangles a community; we need to decide why we want to expand."

Participants were asked to list the most important issues regarding growth that they would like the City of Midland to consider. The chart above illustrates the most frequently mentioned issues. Participants additionally offered a wide variety of items to the list, including: create a balance of types of businesses; plan for commercial / neighborhood integration; don't over-regulate businesses or growth; avoid sprawl; maintain positive

relationships with employers; protect quality of life; and a number of miscellaneous comments.

"We need to have a plan for the infrastructure that will be needed for growth."

Another topic that was raised for discussion for which there was remarkable consistency was the issue of the relationship of infrastructure to growth. Groups were asked whether they believed it makes more sense for Midland to allow growth to occur naturally and for the City to build roadways, utilities and other infrastructure when necessary to respond to that development, or whether it is better to try to anticipate growth, forecasting where and how it will occur and to build infrastructure ahead of that growth. As people talked about those issues, they clearly preferred that the City take an approach that would plan for growth, be ready to invest in the major infrastructure projects just ahead of growth and build smaller-investment elements such as roads on an as-needed basis. Here too, there was so great a degree of consistency that the question was dropped to allow time to pursue more specific issues of concern.

"Traffic design at the Mall is awful - like it was designed by a pack of blind squirrels or something."

Because participants had repeatedly cited Midland's traffic as one thing they would change if they could, a question was added in later groups to probe for the specific concerns regarding traffic. People talked about site-specific concerns as well as general traffic flow issues and difficulty getting around. Nearly everyone who offered specific sites as examples included the Mall. As discussions progressed, it was not uncommon for people to give each other advice as to alternate routes to avoid traffic on Eastman at the Mall entrance.

A number of people also spoke about various frustrations with Eastman Avenue, including the intersection with Joe Mann Boulevard, left turns at Saginaw and Eastman and the general safety of the roadway. Other areas of concern include the exit / entry areas at U.S. and Waldo Road and at Wheeler. A number of citizens expressed unhappiness with the left turn lanes / signals at various intersections in the city, particularly around the Mall. There were other problems mentioned, including speed limit enforcement, and several people asked about improving and / or installing bike lanes and widening sidewalks for bicycle / pedestrian use, particularly along Eastman Avenue.

"Three or four cars in a row is a traffic jam here. We really don't have a traffic problem when you look at other cities."

Other people offered a countervailing view about traffic, however. In the words of one person, "It's the only city I've ever lived in where you can leave late and get there early. I don't think there's a problem, compared to other cities."

In addition to issues of traffic, a related concern arose in most groups: the need for public transportation that provides more options than the present system and the need to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Dial-a-Ride. Dial-a-Ride was the service mentioned by 11% of participants on the written response form as the service they would do without if absolutely necessary. Many others discussed keeping the service but making it more useful and cost-effective.

In a few groups, there was also time to explore the idea of economic development, which had been mentioned as a "change" item in early discussions. The reference most often was a need to diversify the economic

"I'm concerned that the City isn't looking out far enough. What has happened to Saginaw in the last 50 years may happen to us in the next 50 years. We need to put together a future growth vision."

base of the Midland community. As the conversation expanded, people talked not only about diversification of the industrial / commercial / business base, but endorsed the need for Midland to position itself regionally as well. Residents described their hopes for Midland as a regional destination, with people coming to the city for cultural events, to enjoy tourist attractions, and to shop, resulting in increased revenue to City coffers. When asked about the most appropriate role for the City to play in promoting Midland regionally and nationally, responses ranged from encouraging the City to play a strong leadership role to urging the City to continue its role in supporting Midland Tomorrow and serving as a key participant in economic development efforts and initiatives.

The last question about growth in the Roundtable sessions asked participants to identify issues important to them, both positive and negative, with regard to growth - ideas they wanted to make sure to pass along to City Council and administration about growth. Without evaluation, people created the "Quick List" of ideas represented in the chart on page 14.

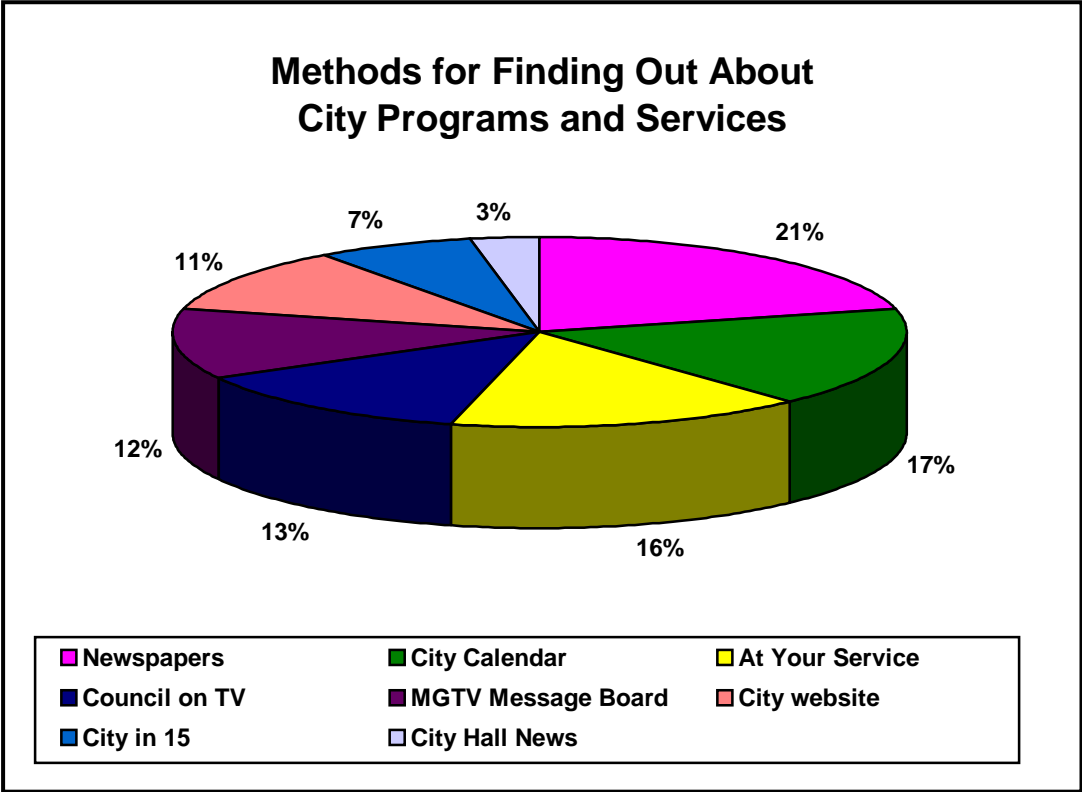
The desire for a coordinated policy and plan for growth was the strongest response in creating this list. A few residents cited the visionary leadership that had created the Midland Urban Growth Agreement(s) (MUGA) years ago, and asked that the same long-range thinking be applied again. The need to plan for infrastructure and traffic was a significant consideration, as was support for economic development. With regard to the growth issue, Midland residents clearly support progressive and innovative planning.

Communication

"The At Your Service newsletter is still needed for non-online users."

The City of Midland maintains a significant focus on communication with residents. As a result, a number of questions in both the Roundtable discussions and on the participant response form asked participants to comment on the variety and quality of the communication tools employed by the City. Questions also probed for the relative value citizens place on their ability to access City information and complete online transactions and on routine communication from the City.

"The website is getting better over time."



"Does anybody really watch Cablecast meetings of City Council?"

In order to gauge the effectiveness of the various communication methods the City employs to stay in touch with residents, participants were asked on their response forms to review the list of methods and to answer the following question: How do you find out about City programs and services?

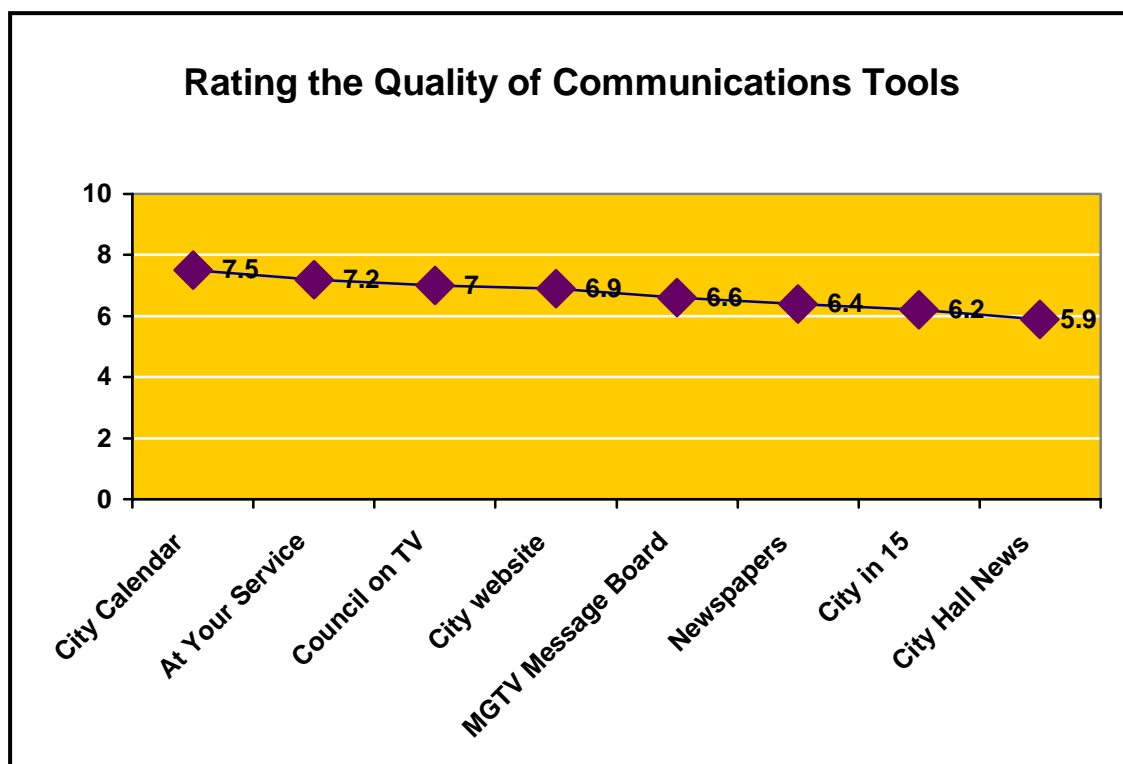
Of the communication-related questions asked of Roundtable participants on their response forms, the first explored what communications methods they utilize to get City-related information. The highest number of mentions cited the *Midland Daily News* and the *Saginaw News* as participants' sources of City

information. The next-mentioned sources of information were the City-generated City Calendar and Services Guide and the *At Your Service* newsletter.

As a follow-up question, participants were then asked to rate the quality of each of the City’s communications tools. The two tools that are most used - the City Calendar and Services Guide and the *At Your Service* newsletter - were also the highest rated, receiving 7.5 and 7.2 respective ratings on a 10-point scale. In addition, Roundtable attendees were instructed to indicate on their forms if they believe any of the communications tools are outdated or should be discontinued. Five participants suggested the City Calendar and Services Guide be discontinued. Four thought the *At Your Service* newsletter should be discontinued, while one person suggested it be combined with the City’s website.

"The City Calendar is a good service."

"I think the City does a good job overall. I don't have any needs not being satisfied with current means."



"Encourage putting GPS and all information online - that would be a huge benefit."

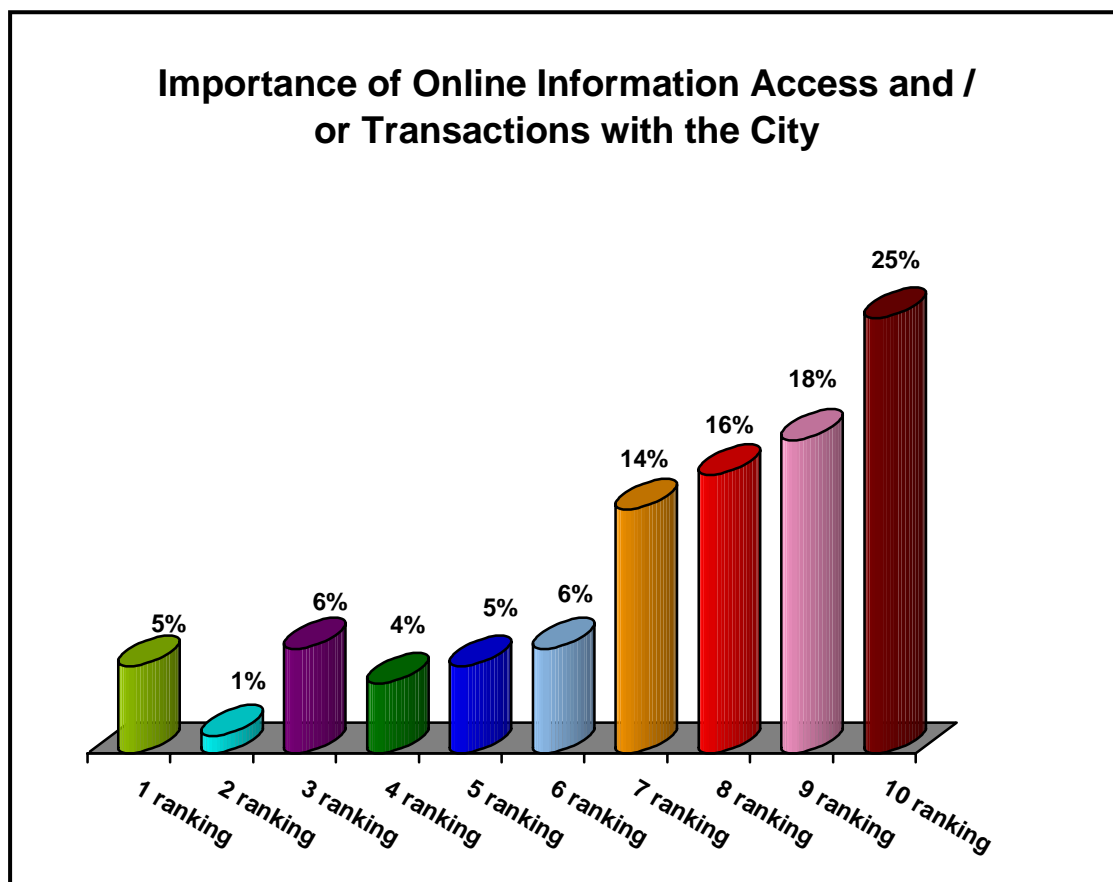
Another communications area pursued through both Roundtable discussions and on participant response forms dealt with online communication with the City. Residents were asked the following question on the response form: How important is it that Midland residents be able to access information and / or conduct transactions with the City online?

Two questions related to online communication and access were also asked as part of the Roundtable discussion. The first asked people what City-related information they would like to access online and what transactions they would like to complete. In response, participants suggested a wide variety of information be available online, ranging from GPS [Global Positioning System]

information to recreation activity updates. The online transactions most frequently mentioned included paying water bills and taxes. Other transactions requested included such things as swimming and softball registrations, picnic shelter reservations, and reserving refuse containers.

"Keep aware of computer access issues for low and moderate income people and people who don't know how to use computers."

Some participants additionally suggested that residents be able to use credit cards in their online transactions. A few participants voiced initial reluctance for expansion of the City's online information offerings and the opportunity for transactions because of concerns about increased costs. However, when the City Manager explained that the City would likely incur slightly less cost because of increased efficiencies in staff time handling citizen requests for information and transactions, those participants then said they were in favor of expanded online operations. Other residents advised the City to keep in mind that not all citizens have computers and that a dual system for accessing all information be maintained to assure equal access to all.



"I would have to take vacation to go to City Hall during the day - I would love to get the information online."

"I don't like the breach of confidentiality. Is there another way?"

Participants were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 10, with '1' indicating "not at all important" and '10' indicating "extremely important," how important it is that Midland residents be able to access information and / or conduct transactions with the City online.

Mean score: 7.4

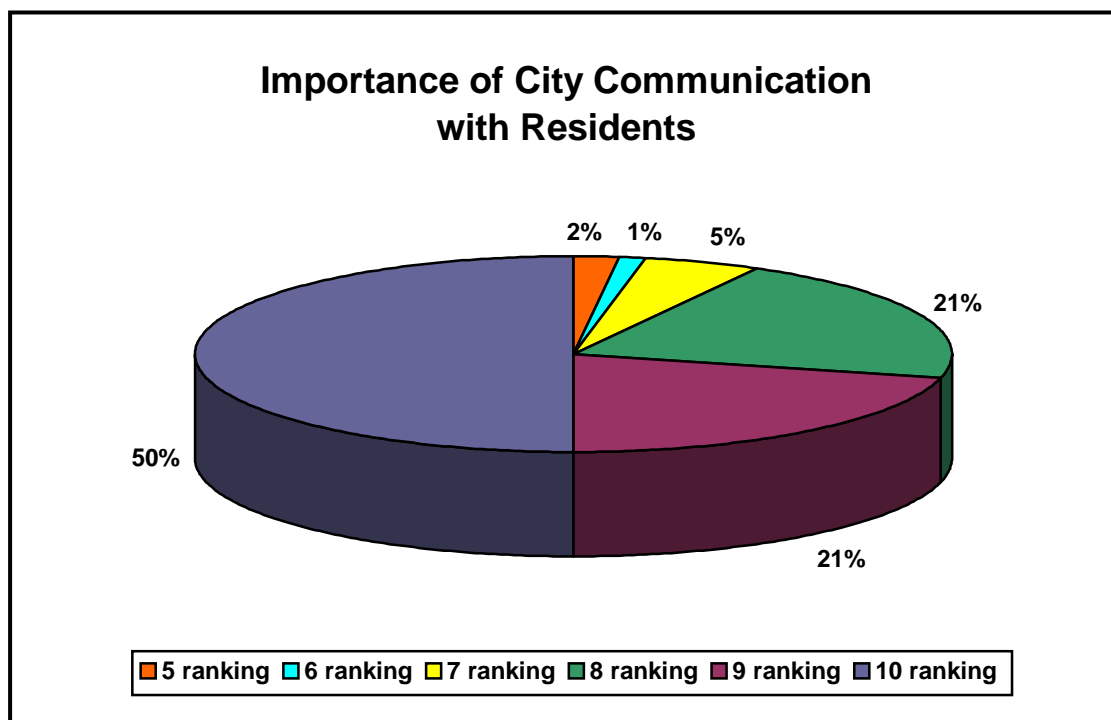
A second discussion question related to online communication asked participants to address the issue of personal convenience versus public access

"There have been times when I've read of a 'done deal,' something I had not been aware of at all."

to public records and the concerns that might arise as a result of providing easy access. Generally, more Roundtable attendees were supportive of putting City records online than not. Many of those speaking in favor cited the convenience of 24-hour access to the information, increased efficiency of City staff, and the fact that the information is already a matter of public record. However, there were also those who were strongly opposed to increasing the ease of public access to personal information, believing that by not putting the information online the City would make access harder for people and would help maintain citizens' personal privacy.

Another response form question asked Roundtable attendees to rank the importance of the City regularly communicating with its residents. Based on the very high rankings, residents place high value on consistent communication from the City.

"Give more advance notice on new site plans that could adversely impact residential neighborhoods."



The chart above illustrates Roundtable participants' responses to the following question: On a scale of 0 to 10, with '0' indicating "not at all important" and '10' indicating "extremely important," how important is it that the City communicate regularly with its residents? Please note that no participants assigned rankings in the 0 to 4 range.

Mean score: 9.1

"I think the City does a good job. I just don't pay close enough attention."

As a follow-up question, the response form also asked residents what kinds of information they would like to receive from the City that they're not getting now, and how they would like to receive that information. People suggested a wide variety of types of information: some said they would like to receive budget-related data from the City; some would like information about growth

"I'd like information on long-term projections of where we will need to spend money and change what we offer."

and planning issues; others requested minutes of City meetings and notice on upcoming City Council agenda items; and some wanted information related to any changes the City is planning around neighborhoods.

As for the methods for receiving information, many people said they would like the information to be available to them online. At the same time, several people emphasized providing information in many ways for residents who do not have or use a computer. Others reported wanting to receive it through the multiple existing methods the City currently uses, such as the website, the local news media and direct mailings to residents' homes. Generally, residents seemed satisfied with the communications methods being currently employed by the City, with the exception of wanting more online access to information.

1997 - 2005 Research Comparison

General Findings

1997

2005

The Situation

There is a threat of loss of substantial municipal revenue if pending tax appeals are successful. If that is the case, how shall the City balance severe reductions in revenue with the expectations for a high level and quality of municipal service?

The tax appeals seem to be heading toward outcomes that are reasonably easy to manage. However, state revenue contributions will decline, investment income is likely to be reduced proportionately, and the cost of providing service is increasing.

Like Best

Safety and security

Safety and security

Broad array of amenities and services

Broad array of amenities and services

Change

Sewer system

Traffic / traffic patterns and flow

Road construction/maintenance

Industrial tax base

Traffic patterns / enforcement

Diversify commercial / businesses

Expand industrial / business base

Downtown

Satisfied with City's Role?

Generally yes

Overwhelmingly yes

City needs to communicate with residents more

Communication is great

Want more involvement in City decisions

Want more involvement in City decisions

Plan for Midland's future

Plan for Midland's future

City is well run

City is well run

1997 - 2005 Research Comparison

General Findings

1997

2005

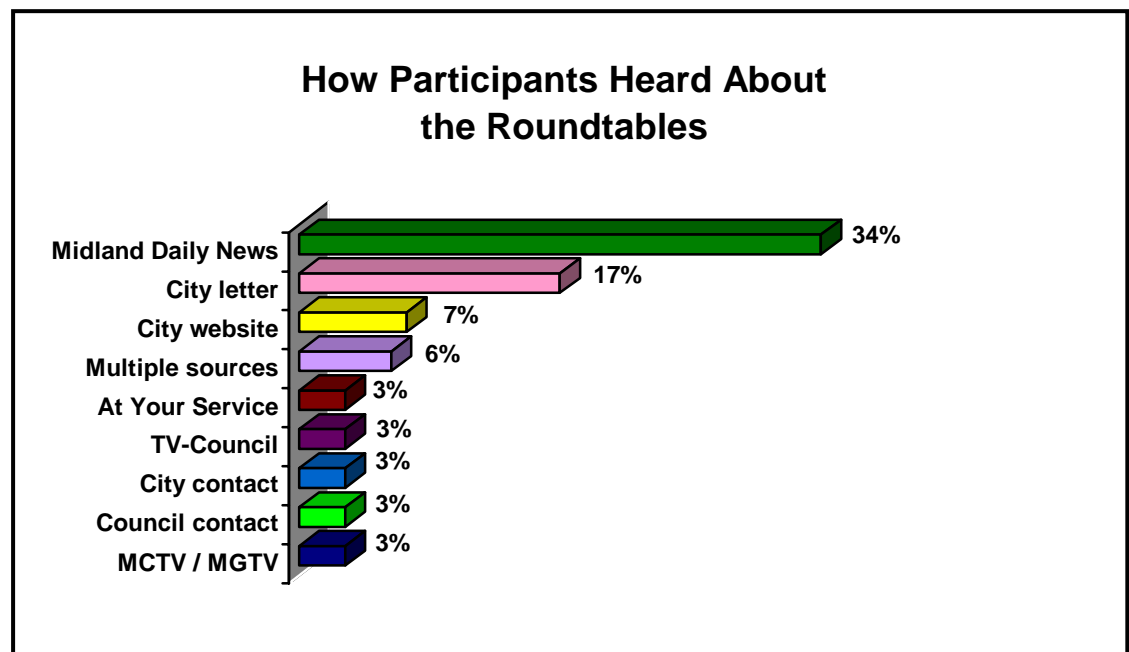
<i>Services</i>	
Residents appreciate and enjoy the high level of services they receive	Residents appreciate and enjoy the high level of services they receive
Very reluctant to eliminate services	Very reluctant to eliminate services
Possible cuts / changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Barstow Airport - Small parks - Refuse collection - Fire first response 	Possible cuts / changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Barstow Airport - Refuse collection - None - Recreation programs
<i>Revenues</i>	
Increase revenue base through business / industrial development and expansion	Increase revenue base through business / industrial development and expansion
Small to moderate support for user fees for some services	Small to moderate support for user fees for some services
Consider developing user fee criteria	Consider developing user fee criteria
Consider non-resident fees	Consider non-resident fees
Consider the needs of those on fixed or limited incomes	Consider the needs of those on fixed or limited incomes
<i>Communication</i>	
Need much more directly from the City	Good job, but need more online
Online access to information is not an issue	Generally high level of support for online access; some have concerns

Assessing the Roundtables

"My family and I live in Midland and we want it to continue to be a good city."

The final series of questions on the participant response form were designed to assess the effectiveness of the Roundtables. In order to measure the impact of the City's efforts to recruit Roundtable participants through multiple means, participants were asked how they had heard about the Roundtables. Many reported learning about them through the *Midland Daily News*. A significant number reported receiving a personal letter sent to their home from the City inviting them to attend.

"I came because of a City Councilman's request, plus hearing that the meeting wouldn't be held without enough participants."



Participants mentioned many methods when reporting how they had heard about the Roundtables. The chart above illustrates those most frequently mentioned. Among the other methods receiving multiple mentions were: television; the Home Builders Association; City Hall News; Library signs / Board meeting; Chamber of Commerce; and a phone call from City staff. Other methods were mentioned by individuals as well.

"I'm civic-minded and couldn't resist your invitation."

The response form also asked people what prompted them to attend the Roundtables. The responses were varied, but there were a few consistent themes. One theme focused on the belief that, as a citizen of Midland, it was a resident's 'civic duty' to participate, a response not frequently heard in communities across the country. Many residents used terms like "citizen responsibility," "duty," and "part of citizenship" in explaining their willingness

to be a part of the Roundtables. A closely related theme was an expressed interest in the community and a willingness to give back to it. Another was a specific desire to learn more about the City budget.

"I feel they wanted us here and did listen to us."

Residents were also asked on the response form what was of greatest value about the Roundtables. Again, consistent themes emerged. The most frequently mentioned value was hearing what other residents had to say, hearing diverse views and having them respected. Many participants also said they particularly liked the City Manager's presentation and the detailed information provided about the budget and the provision of City services. The response form also asked residents if they had any suggestions for improving the Roundtables. Many people offered very positive comments about the Roundtables themselves and about the City's willingness to host them. A number of participants commented that they would like to see the City continue to sponsor methods for direct citizen response.

"I love that Midland cares about what I say."

Suggestions for improvement of the Roundtables included the desire for smaller groups so that there would be more time for individual participant interaction and discussion. Others suggested spending less time on the presentation of information and more time on discussion and / or sending out to participants prior to the Roundtables all of the information contained in the presentation. A few even suggested it would have been good to have each group meet twice so that participants would have the opportunity to explore issues in more depth. Some said they would have liked the groups to represent a more diverse population, particularly to include more young adults and to invite high school students.

"Confirmed what I already know - Midland is a great place to live!"

The final question on the response form asked participants for any additional comments they might have. Residents frequently used this question as an opportunity to reinforce ideas about specific issues discussed. Some of those topics mentioned multiple times included: the amount of money the City spends on employee and retiree benefits; speed limits; growth; the City's role in affordable housing; user fees; taxes; and traffic. Again, many people expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the Roundtables and appreciation of the City's interest in hearing citizens' ideas.

"I asked a learned citizen last night if he was participating. He said, 'No, all they want to do is feed us their views and soften us up for taxes.' He said emphatically, 'They are not interested in participant views.' He was wrong."

Appendices

Appendix A
List of Roundtable Participants

Roundtable Participants

Sid Allen
Tom Anderson
Stephen Andrews
Christina Anganis
Carol Arnosky
Kevin Arthur
Bill Bajzer
Orrin Barrett
Linda Barth
Kevin Battjes
Susan Bauer
Edward Becker
Larry Belville
Dale Bement
Jack Bennett
Lucille Bicknell
David Black
Mark Bluemer
Roger Bohl
Thomas Bradley
Mary Kay Brandt
Diane Bristol
Bruce Brooks
Don Carlsen
Dave Carlson
John Carter
Gerry Caterer
Cynthia Cerame
Ralph Cook
Joann Cook
Wilma Lee Cook
Jody Cooley
John Copping
Cheryl Corbett
Mary Currie
Jay Dauer
Don Deibert
David DeLeeuw
Julie DeLeeuw
Valerie Diggins
Maureen Donker
Rob Donovan
Penny Ecarius
David Eigsti
Clifford Emrick
Michael Engwis
William Fagley
Mark Faucher
James Flynn
Isabel Flynn

Hedi Frazier
Kevin Frazier
Denise Freer
Bill Garchow
Thomas Gillespie
David Goodman
Sarah Gornicki
Bruce Grant
Darren Gross
James Guidarini
Reigh Gunderson
Don Hall
Frances Hamburg
Doug Hand
Rich Harden
Margot Haynes
Louis Hebben
Dawn Hebben
Chuck Hepenstal
Lola Hess
Glen Hignite
Angela Hine
Carol Humbyrd
Kerry Irons
Matt Janson
Tami Johnson
Paula Jurado
Steven Kaganove
Duane Kenaga
William Kennett
Millard Kent
Dan Kozakiewicz
Mike Kozuch
Christopher Lauckner
William Lauderbach
Ray Leenhouts
Sharon Leenhouts
Donald Leslie
Sheldon Levy
Mary Levy
Geoffrey List
Joseph Logan
Robert Loomis
Dirk Love
Cindy Lowery
Walter Lueth
Karen McCarthy
Patrick McCormick
Charles Melchi
Mary Mersereau-Kempf

Bob Meslar
Cliff Miles
Dan Miller
Randy Moore
Jim Morey
Jim Morgan
Joe Mortensen
Kaywin Motheral
Craig Murchison
Dan Murphy
John Muste
Rodney Nelson
Jim Orlando
Mary Ouellette
Steven Paul
Bob Pierce
Annette Pierce
Lary Pillepich
Maureen Pillepich
Jennifer Plude
Jim Pollack
Joseph Powers
John Prior
Jacques Randolet
Mike Rapanos
Steven Rapanos
John Rapanos
Gerri Reado
Gunilla Reed
Lois Ann Reed
James Reigler
John Reisner
Paul Robert
Harold Rockwell
John Rogers
Roger Rohrband
Ceil Rokosz
Tom Rokosz
Ryan Ruzala
Sharon Salinger
Rudy Salinger
Julie Schmidt

Jim Schroeder
Paul Schultz
Jean Selby
Ted Selby
Betty Shangle
Jim Siler
Lloyd Smith
Carl Smith
Katie Soules
Denise Spencer
Bob Stafford
Judy Stein
Harvey Steinberg
Lucille Stickney
Jim Struthers
Carol Struthers
Jan Sutherland
Sally Ann Sutton
Carol Svenson
Len Szymanski
JoAnn Tanzini
Terry Townley
Joseph Trombka
William Trull
Jenee Velasquez
Christian Velasquez
Dan Veresh
Richard VonKorff
Mary Waite
Lanny Waite
Kevin Wale
Greg Weckesser
Elizabeth Wehrly
Joe Weir
Floyd Wetmore
Phillip White
Fay Wood
Larry Wright
Rob Wright
Thomas Yanz
Richard Yeakle
Jan Yuergens

Appendix B
Verbatim Comments by Question

Roundtable Verbatim Comments by Question

Using no more than a word or a short phrase, please write the answer to this question on your pad of paper: List one thing that you like best about life in Midland, then one thing you'd change if you could.

Like Best About Life in Midland

Amount / convenience / quality of services	9%	26 mentions
Safe /secure	9%	26 mentions
Family-oriented / good place to raise a family	8%	22 mentions
Miscellaneous	8%	22 items
Schools / colleges / community values education	6%	17 mentions
Quality of life	5%	14 mentions
Activities	4%	11 mentions
Size	4%	11 mentions
Feels good / good place to live / feels like home / comfortable	3%	10 mentions
Friendly / positive attitude / welcoming	3%	9 mentions
Library	3%	9 mentions
Cultural services / amenities	3%	8 mentions
Clean / attractive	3%	8 mentions
Small town atmosphere	3%	8 mentions
Recreational facilities / services	3%	8 mentions
Small town with big city amenities	2%	7 mentions
Quality community / community resources	2%	7 mentions
Easy to live here / convenience	2%	7 mentions
People work together in community / volunteer base	2%	6 mentions
Diversity	2%	5 mentions
Parks	2%	5 mentions
Peaceful / quiet	2%	5 mentions

Community involvement / involvement in City decisions	2%	5 mentions
Community amenities / opportunities / facilities	1%	4 mentions
Neighborhoods / neighbors	1%	3 mentions
Pride / pride of ownership	1%	3 mentions
Easy to get around	1%	3 mentions
Efficient / effective City administration	1%	3 mentions
Churches	1%	2 mentions
Tennis Center	1%	2 mentions

One Thing I'd Change

Miscellaneous	17%	35 items
Traffic flow / traffic congestion / traffic lights	17%	34 mentions
Diversify industrial base / tax base	7%	13 mentions
Diversify businesses / commercial	5%	10 mentions
Expand / improve downtown / better planning	5%	10 mentions
Better restaurants / shopping	4%	8 mentions
Activities / employment for youth	4%	7 mentions
Condition of streets	4%	7 mentions
Too much growth / sprawl	4%	7 mentions
More diversity of thought	3%	6 mentions
Public transportation	3%	6 mentions
Unsafe sidewalks / make wider for pedestrian / bike use	3%	5 mentions
The weather	3%	5 mentions
City ordinances that micromanage	2%	4 mentions
Dioxin / the environment	2%	4 mentions
More diversity	2%	4 mentions

Traffic enforcement	2%	4 mentions
Give more help to people with needs	2%	3 mentions
Hiring outside consultants	2%	3 mentions
Land use planning	2%	3 mentions
Speed limits	2%	3 mentions
Strengthen the economy / job climate	2%	3 mentions
Tax appeals	2%	3 mentions
Transportation planning / system	2%	3 mentions
Better daily newspaper	1%	2 mentions
Code enforcement	1%	2 mentions
Greater voice in City decisions	1%	2 mentions
Property taxes are too high	1%	2 mentions
Public driving habits	1%	2 mentions

Supporting Data

Like Best

Its size
 Pleasant environment; safe and secure
 Different services and activities
 The small town atmosphere with big town amenities
 The school system
 It's clean and attractive
 It's safe and comfortable
 It's a small community with good services
 Efficient, effective City administration
 People work well with each other
 Outstanding; easy to get around
 I like it here
 Recreational facilities are fantastic
 The general environment: the size; services; and cultural amenities
 Small town atmosphere; it's safe
 Diversity of people; recreation services; the churches
 Schools; family services
 It's a friendly environment
 Family-friendly; the Library
 It feels good here

The concern for the disadvantaged
The benefits for a city this size - adds to our quality of life
Overall services and activities
The small town life
- Recreation facilities
Recreation facilities; services
It's great for people of all ages
Great place to raise a family
Availability and convenience of services, both public and private
Excellent City services
Everything
Good, livable community
Good neighborhood and neighbors
Relatively crime-free
Safety
Small town atmosphere and convenience with Arts Center and other advantages of a larger place
Quality of life
Neighbors; the pride of ownership
Quality of life
Safety; what the community has to offer
I've never been anyplace else
Easiness, both in living and doing business
Excellent City services
Rail Trail
Small town atmosphere; a good place to grow old
Right size; right resources
Great place to live and raise a family
It's like a large city contained within a small city
The Library
How we all work together
City recreation programs
The different services
Basic City services
Safeness; peacefulness of community
Schools
The quality of services provided; things for families
Family activities; community involvement
Many denominations of churches
The services available
Safety
Schools; parks
Schools
Schools; parks
Comfortable; secure
Schools; parks
Sense of security
Services; amenities
Safe and secure; recreation opportunities
Recreation opportunities, for example the Tennis Center
Safe; clean; good quality of life
Size; community feeling; positive attitude
The services available for retirees

The services offered; the volunteer base
How groups and individuals come together to solve problems
Juvenile Care Center
Safety
The community involvement
If there's a good idea, somehow folks in Midland will make it happen
You can be involved and part of the community
I'm pretty content
It's a good place to raise a family
Good for families; clean
Quality of life
Level of municipal services
Public safety; low crime; road maintenance
Quality of life; quality facilities
Family-oriented
Quality of life; family; cultural; parks and recreation; safety and security; diversity
Strong sense of ownership and pride; City allows us to have a voice
Good programs for lower income people
Multiple opportunities to participate
Big city amenities with small town feel
Cultural facilities - schools, Arts Center, Library
Easy to raise a young family here; things to do; diverse
Uniqueness; friendliness
High quality of life; services
Good for families
The economic base allows us to have a high quality of life; good schools
Accessibility to rich community resources
Midland Public Schools
Comfortable community; community TV stations
Lots of stuff to do
It feels like my hometown
The community values education
The people; a quality community
Safety and security for families
Family activities
Friendly; safety; values; feels like home
Family-friendly; safe; good activities
Quality and diversity of activities
Small town atmosphere
Cultural facilities and activities, especially the Library
Small community with big-city amenities
Priority placed on education
Family activities and emphasis
Small town atmosphere; welcoming
Safety and security
Improvements; opportunities
Good education for kids
Growth has been great
Library is top notch
Education is valued and there's a commitment to schools
It's like coming home to my hometown in Sweden
Services, like the Library, parks and Dow Gardens
Clean, pretty

Friendly; sense of community
Fiscal responsibility of City
School system; community volunteers
Good services as a small town
Quality of neighborhoods
Community size; attitudes of people; services
Peacefulness
Quiet atmosphere; good planning
Don't have to drive long to get places
Family-friendly size
General upkeep; safety; City administration
Proximity to 'up north'
Safety
Excellent services
Quality of life
Cultural activities
More of same
Traffic light synchronization
Abundant activities for all ages
Community spirit
Sense of family
Community spirit
Size; quality of life
Family community; excellent services and City government
Tennis Center
So much to do; small town atmosphere
People are caring and friendly
Good quality of life
Perfect place to live
Peace; security; physical beauty
Quality of services at good cost
Small size
Quality of life
Ease and convenience
We're a 'diamond in the rough': good activities; shopping; safety
Music, culture and the Library
Facilities such as the Library
Family-oriented; excellent resources to offer
Small town; strong family feel; lots of good things to do for its size
Variety of things going on; colleges; people from all over the world
Volunteerism opportunities; safe; quiet; good for bringing up a family
People involvement, both individuals and groups
The variety of people; pride; cleanliness
Good leaders
Clean appearance - people keep up their properties
Small town atmosphere; activities for families
Schools
Educational system; good health care
Agree with everything mentioned
Well organized; beautiful; friendly people
Small town with access to good things - lots of choices
Safety
Safety; quality of life

Ease of getting to work - most of the town has a minimal amount of traffic; wide range of services and facilities, especially the Library
Schools; medical community; literary and arts community; Barstow Airport
Safe; family-oriented
Safe neighborhoods; family-oriented
Easy to live here; excellent facilities; raising a family
Easy to live here
Wildlife; cultural and arts; minimal traffic congestion

Change

Small industrial base
People's driving habits
It's a one-horse town
February weather
The streets
Poor transportation
Needs increased tax base
Public transportation
Need to expand tax base
Unsafe sidewalks
Pave Ashman
Expand the tax base
Not growing middle class services and housing
Diversity of businesses
Traffic flow patterns
Traffic flow in some areas
Weather, environment (dioxin), diversity of businesses
Less government
Traffic in some areas; speed limits
Currie Golf Course marketing its product; support for the MMI
How CDBG money is spent
People ignore the speed limit
Expand the tax base; review the City Master Plan more frequently
Improve activities for youth
People drive too fast and there's too much traffic; make the sidewalks wider to accommodate both pedestrians and bicycles
Improve the activities for youth
Traffic at the Mall area
How the roads are paved
We need a better industrial base
Traffic flow into and around Midland
Traffic flow
Time the stoplights better
Need a real newspaper
Neighborhood Clinic closure
Its location for travel - two hours from Detroit
Eastman Avenue from the expressway back
Decrease substance abuse; our streets; the timing of stoplights
Traffic flow, especially one-way streets and the Circle area
There's a drift toward blight because of a lack of code enforcement
Enforce the laws, for example dogs, noise, running red lights

Stop hiring outside traffic consultants to tell us what we need - they don't know
Midland
City goes overboard on getting outside consultants; traffic flow
Our attitude toward tourism
We need to broaden our industrial base
We're not inclusive - we don't do enough for those with special needs
Management of public service crews
Uncontrolled growth
Tax appeal and its effect on the community; the dioxin issue
Should pay more attention to repairing streets; local drivers; enforcement of working
headlights
Narrow-minded and not accepting of minorities, including gays and lesbians
Uncontrolled growth
Tax appeal; dioxin; people running red lights
The urban density of downtown - more and different uses
Pay water bills electronically
Traffic problems
High property tax
Traffic
The decline of the Circle area
Unemployment
More diversity of businesses
Outward sprawl - it's getting too suburban
More diversity in industrial and commercial
Traffic
Planning - there's excessive growth by the Mall without the necessary infrastructure
Acquire new park land near new houses; update the City Master Plan
More for teenagers to do
Traffic flow
Entertainment for young people
Outward sprawl with the downtown and Circle area needing attention
More diverse employment for our children
Better restaurants
Teen activities
More diversity
Adjust egress of traffic on the west side of the Mall
Increase diversity of businesses
Traffic all over the city - you have to stop for a lot of lights
Helping children in unfortunate situations
Traffic flow / traffic lights
Put more effort toward downtown improvements
Better communication about the real needs of some people in the community
Transportation, especially for people with disabilities
We need to be more enterprising
Reality - we need to open our eyes as a community
No fine dining restaurants
Stronger economy
Transportation; question the effectiveness of the tax appeal - seems like communication
on that could've been better
Our reliance on very large companies as our main source of revenue
Make downtown more vibrant
The economy - bring in small enterprises
No fine dining restaurants

Transportation, especially the traffic from the Mall to downtown and in the Circle area
Transportation; make the community more user-friendly to newcomers
Low-income people's voices are not always heard; they have no say in programs
Challenging job climate
Traffic enforcement at intersections and people running red lights
Long-range planning at the Mall about transportation. Is there a downtown plan in place?
Lack of long-range planning; Mall is a mess - looks like Las Vegas
Better balance between what business pays and what residents pay
Daily newspaper
Diversity of thought
The economic base - need for small business; need for green spaces and space for tranquility
More participation - too much apathy
More diversity of employment; more affordable housing; traffic
Traffic at the Mall
Traffic flow is horrible at times
Better teamwork with Midland City departments and with the County
Wish people would have more faith in the future of the community
Diversification of industrial base
Tax abatements and un-funded mandates, and too much time spent on them
Diversification of economic base; nice dog park
Traffic flow; appearance in some areas
Downtown and the waterfront areas
Nothing
Restrict growth around the Mall and focus on downtown
Less Dow orientation
More visionary
Traffic flow throughout the city
Greater cultural diversity
Leaf pick-up
Better public transportation
Apartment/condo families - they're missing the pluses of being in a house
Better police enforcement of traffic laws
More focus on dance as an art
It's not as safe as people think; complaints to police not followed up on
Chopping up trees for utility lines
Enrich downtown; have more activities for youth
More attention paid to parks
Diversity of businesses
True industrial development; more recreation opportunities
More politically even - half Democrats and half Republicans
Diversity of thought
Dollar-rated average for making decisions
Diversity
None
Expansion of medical facilities; participation of hospital in drug testing
New business attraction
Traffic patterns, particularly at the Mall
More retail services
Diversity in businesses
Traffic situation is getting intolerable
Diversity of thought
Unsafe to bike/walk in some areas because of traffic

Better snowplowing in neighborhoods
Better shopping
Better cooperation and communication between the City, the County and businesses
Downtown expanded past Main Street
Non-motorized transportation opportunities
Commercial/industrial diversity
More opportunities for people to participate in government
Diversity in opportunities will bring in diversity of people
The climate
Change will come when enough people want it
Do more with downtown area - we're missing revenue and tourism dollars
Site development, such as at the Mall
They keep asking for more money
More emphasis on commercial development
Less cookie-cutter
Upgraded stores
Diversity of thought and opportunities for the interchange of thought
Eastman Road traffic mess; keeping large discount stores out of town
I don't know enough about the community yet
Traffic congestion on Eastman; traffic patterns north of the Holiday Inn
The weather
Good shopping
Constant amount of road repair
Midland's image needs to be publicized more
Prevent more sprawl
Traffic is bad; sprawling; Midland trying to annex
Property taxes are out of control
Property taxes; City ordinances that micromanage
Agree with the ordinance micromanaging
Agree with that too - let up a bit
I agree; fire existing employees and hire all new people at Currie Golf Course
Midland's reputation regarding the environment
Shopping; restaurant variety; improve the entrances to the City; more vibrant downtown
Rental properties are run down
Greater voice in City government on neighborhood issues
The City should offer upgraded street lights
Eastman Avenue is as bad as you can get
Public transportation system - Dial-a-Ride is not adequate
Transportation system
More restaurant variety; more winter sunlight

You've just heard up-to-date information about the City, the services it provides, and its revenues and budget issues. The first question for you is: Is the City of Midland fulfilling the role you want it to when it comes to the overall provision of services?

Yes - 184 participants

No - 1 participant

Is there any service that the City currently provides that you believe the City could or should stop providing?

Reduce MCTV - we have enough cable TV

The subsidy for the local Airport - make it a user fee

Look at how you're handling retirement benefits

If we want to attract new businesses it's important not to pay public employees something private sector employees don't get

City employees should pay for a share of their benefits

The ice Arena should be operated privately

The City shouldn't be in the golf course business—that's inappropriate

I dispute that - the City doesn't run it, it just oversees it

The City Airport is unnecessary

I agree on the ice Arena and golf course - the private sector should run them

I disagree that the City shouldn't be in the golf course business - it's great as long as it's self-supporting. The course is in the City and is close by. It's just like running a swimming pool or a community center

The Civic Arena is appropriate for the City to subsidize

The City's spending too much on the Library

I'm not sure we should have such an extensive refuse service, especially for heavy items - do we really need it?

I agree, especially for reconstruction by homeowners - it's part of neighborhood blight.

Roofers should get rid of shingles, not the City

Heavy pick-up prevents that stuff being put somewhere else

The things that we're talking about eliminating are the things that make life worthwhile here

I object to a service offered to limited number of people, for example the Barstow Airport; there should be no City subsidy of that. I also don't think we need an ice Arena for the number of people who use it - we could've upgraded the current two sheets of ice

At the Library, how are people who live out of the City and who use it also supporting it? Maybe we should increase user fees there

With the ice rink I'm concerned that \$200,000 may not be sufficient. Why is only the City providing a subsidy? The County should also subsidize

We can't just pick on the Airport - I pay a lot of taxes for things I personally don't use

Eliminate funding for sidewalk replacement

I agree - I had my sidewalks replaced a few years ago and they really weren't that bad

Replacement of sidewalks; DARE - there's still a need but take care of it differently

Maintenance of some sidewalks

Take a look at selling some City property in the outskirts

Barstow Airport - somebody else should provide that service

The Airport - a very small portion of the population uses it. It should be privatized

We have the MBS Airport and don't need it

It's necessary but we need to look at outsourcing Barstow Airport. Could we also outsource Dial-a-Ride?

Keep the business in Midland - be careful with outsourcing to outside companies

We need to support MBS

Barstow Airport is for private planes. The Wings of Mercy that flies in there is a good thing for medical needs

Don't fill driveways after they are shoveled

Liability insurance coverage

Take some parks to use for commercial development - re-use them

Barstow Airport should be self-supporting; raise golf fees to make the course self-supporting

People going downtown should help pay for the Downtown Development Authority

The Civic Arena and the Housing Authority should be self-supporting. The City should provide for health and safety first

The City has worked out cooperative agreements with surrounding areas so land is not a problem

Charge fees for heavy refuse and trash collection

Large refuse pick-up - charge a user fee for it and streamline the way the City does it

Now let's talk about possible changes in service. What services or programs do you need less of? More of?

The City needs a better way to cut down trees - six or seven people to cut down one tree is unnecessary

The City should use its own people instead of outside consultants

Private people cutting down trees leave a mess

The City should inform new people moving in about codes regarding auxiliary buildings and trailer parking

Increase the dependence on user fees that don't benefit the whole community, for example the Airport, Arena, Library, and pools

Toxic waste disposal is inconvenient - we need an area at the City landfill where you could take it and the City should publicize it

Should people living outside of the City pay an increase in fees?

I'm stunned by the amount of park acreage we have - it's a like Lexus and maybe we need more of a Chevy

Many of the parks don't have public access and I would like that changed

I like the number of parks we have but many of them aren't used much - maybe we should sell them

Some neighborhood parks are not used much. Many are more like real estate add-ons because of lack of public access. We need to build up the major park areas that get a lot of use

Levy fees on those private parks because they do add property value

We have too many softball diamonds in this town

Parks are scattered all over town but there's not a lot of acreage in any of them

Can you develop existing parks into something else?

Many City offerings are enterprise funds. I would like more enterprise funds established; establish them for Barstow Airport, Dial-a-Ride, the Building Department and the Cemetery

Can the City find a more cost effective way to provide retiree benefits?

Consider mass / public transportation to reduce traffic

Full retirement benefits are a thing of the past for some; phase out some of the benefits over time. The City should be more like the private sector

Move the County Fairground into the City

Cooperate with area cities to promote the region and take a regional approach to services

Eliminate non-essential public safety services - it looks like we have another Lexus there

Provide affordable, safe, adequate housing. I think the Lexus level is fine for safety. We have a fine community because of the fine people running it and looking out for it. I'd like us to be as generous with them as we can be regarding benefits; that's how we attract and retain good people

For services used by fewer residents, look at how they are paid for; for example kids sports - should that be paid for by general revenues or user fees?

Do Dial-a-Ride better

Look at the demographics of services, the benefactors versus who pays for them.

Consider more user fees

That will hurt our lower income families if you increase user fees for children's programs

There are scholarships

It's ridiculous that a City the size of Midland doesn't have bus service. Dial-a-Ride is a joke

It may be a joke but it helps the non-car people

We don't want to be a community where only the rich can afford to send their kids to activities and programs. Some low-income people couldn't get to work without Dial-a-Ride

I'm astounded at the Library costs - look at who's utilizing it for what. The \$46 per user seems high to me. I'm not at all against the Library, though

City residents are paying and the County residents also use it but they pay a fee

It's a broad question: is there a way to reduce costs? You need to look at the overall funding structure of the City

I don't know where the \$46 [at the Library] is going - how's the money allocated?

Could we also look at the park system - who's using it, what are the costs?

Have we examined all services for who's using them? Hit the right and / or enough people

If you cut too much you lose the uniqueness of Midland. We need to bring in more money, not cut

The foundation community has created endowment funds for gifts, so there are opportunities. That's another way to look at revenue for the City

We should get into services that people want that will generate cash - maybe we're in the wrong areas. For example, use City land for soccer fields

Three sheets of ice will bring in money from other communities and will help local businesses

I wouldn't mind paying a user fee to use Stratford Park but it's not well maintained

I don't want to pay tax money for people from Saginaw to use our community facilities

When you start bringing in tournaments that generates a lot of money

Put a 1 percent tax on hotel rooms as a revenue generator

I think that's a good idea, but I don't want it to go into a general fund - it should be earmarked to build beautiful facilities. Midland's losing its character - we need outside patios along the river, for example

Keep the quality of life here - if we want people to want to live here, we need to keep our cleanliness, parks and services

User fees and contracting out - move in that direction but very carefully to reduce costs while maintaining our quality of life

If we charge fees, we need to be careful. For example, if trash fees are too high, the people will dispose of trash in other, less desirable ways

We need a base of commercial and industrial uses

Is there an opportunity to use prison labor as unskilled labor at a reduced cost?

Evaluate a user fee for trash collection

We need a re-assessment of residential property - it's way overdue

The signage at the Mall is bad. We need better signage throughout the community

Is there any organization that coordinates tournaments?

Does the City need the Commission on Community Relations again to talk through community issues like we're discussing here?

I want completely automated trash pick-up

Look at marked patrol cars for police traffic enforcement

Get EMS staff and reduce the number of firefighters

Consider a Public Safety Department

I think we need more police and fire and less Dial-a-Ride because we're in a growth mode

Dow just eliminated a lot of jobs this year so I don't see us in a growth mode

Look at marked patrol cars for police traffic enforcement
Charge more recreation fees, like cross country skiing fees, Rail Trail fees
When we charge ourselves a fee we're double-taxing ourselves. We should just have fees for out-of-town users
Our cities have non-resident fees
We need marketing of tourism
In some instances user fees make sense but some don't. When people can specifically reserve a facility, user fees work
Library funding, fire funding, parks and recreation, Barstow, and the Building Department could all be scaled back and reduce the level of service
I wonder how many of our citizens use Barstow Airport compared to the amount of public money going to it. What good does the community as a whole get from it? Somebody needs to get information out to people about why we support it
We need information about the amount of user fees and subsidy at the Airport
I'd like user fees for heavy refuse collection
User fees are okay - they provide a lot of things for a lot of different people
I'd like a user fee for heavy refuse. Some of us use Barstow Airport, but we don't play golf and the City supports golf courses
I think Parks and Recreation should be a separate entity reporting directly to the City Manager
The golf course is self-supporting
A user fee is fine for heavy refuse collection, but we need to make sure we keep the town from getting messy
Some parks don't get lots of use - explore doing something else with that land
Some contracted service will go to companies outside of Midland and that's sending our money outside of this community. When we pay City employees, that money stays here
I'm willing to pay to maintain our current level of services

Some people in these groups have talked about user fees for services. Do they make sense for some services more than others?

Library cards
I would be happy to pay a bit more in taxes instead of user fees - I like the level of City services and the convenience. User fees' impact on the budget is limited and taxes are not
Form regional consortiums to share resources and costs
Pay a little more taxes to keep the things we want. You have to process user fees so that ups the administration costs
Some people and businesses might move away with increased taxes
The deductibility of taxes helps
Add a tax to motel stays
People coming in to the community are wearing out what we pay for with our taxes
It's an insult to have a user fee for something that's been offered to me - I'd rather pay a little more tax
You have to have a balance - there are some who just can't afford user fees. We need to use our best intelligence to allocate the money we're putting into government
How will all user fees be distributed?
Look at best practices in other cities to see how they handle budget situations like this
It's hard to draw an absolute on user fees - it makes sense in some instances, like paying a fee to reserve a Library conference room for a meeting, and not in others
I think there are some fees that could be updated

Some of the Center for the Arts fees are outrageously high, especially for the elderly - they need a tiered system

I think there should be a service fee for all medical runs

Increase tourism attraction to bring money in to the community

It's better for people to spend their money here. Selfishly, if it inconveniences me, there's a point of diminishing returns - I don't want to have to wait in line at facilities because of out-of-town people

I would like to bring people downtown, not to the north side

If we do this, we need to heavily market Midland

I don't want that

I don't think we need to advertise to get events here because it already happens

Trash

The City hasn't charged for trash in the past because it's a way to keep the city clean

There are costs beyond financial, like the environment, for example. I hope the City is balancing the need for user fees with the other costs, like offering trash collection but not recycling

Communities that don't offer trash service have problems - without trash service the city would be a mess

I agree - user fees for trash is a bad idea. People would throw their junk in parks and other public areas

Maybe change the schedule and frequency

You'll have additional administrative costs with user fees

Some cities charge for leaf pick-up and some won't remove snow on subdivision streets

How about cable franchise fees - could they be used for other than community TV? I think community TV is good but do we need four channels?

They're just spending the money that's there

We shouldn't have a user fee on heavy refuse pick-up - I want to make it as easy as possible for people to keep their houses nice

Charge them for non-Midland residents, like at Currie Golf Course or the skating rink - whatever we charge Midland residents for now

I agree - there are lots of non-residents on softball league teams and they pay the same as we do

It's cheap to order reference materials at the Library - could you charge more?

Parks and Recreation overall is a good place to look at for user fees, especially for non-residents

Should there be a difference in user fees for children and adults?

They should be less for children *[wide agreement in group]*

I like the City sponsorship and facilities for large tournaments that are brought in - that brings money in to our community

What do the rest of you think about paying more to maintain your current level of City services?

Absolutely - I would be more than happy to pay extra and subsidize our lower income people who couldn't afford user fees

I agree. Our quality of life is directly proportional to services. Let's look at efficiencies too. Let's maintain what we have

I would be willing to pay a modest increase in taxes but also want the City to look for efficiencies. I'm not worried about the need for a big tax increase

The percentage of retirees is increasing, so be careful about raising taxes

I agree

Taxes are a user fee in a way. We've been lucky with all the facilities that have been donated to us - now we have to maintain them all

It's important for the City to communicate how they've made operations as efficient as possible. If we've cut to the bone, then I'm okay with taxes but I'd have to be convinced

If a tax increase is needed the City needs to communicate comparative information with other communities on tax rates

In other nearby communities, many people live in townships

What about any service that's prompted you to think, "If only the City of Midland would offer that, I'd be a happy citizen"?

Public transportation, especially Dial-a-Ride

I agree - I question why all the money is going to it when there are so few riders

Use smaller vans

The Dial-a-Ride service needs to be more effective

Would adding GIS be an option? Getting it online would be good

Online technical and patent information would be good

Is outsourcing cheaper? We spend a lot of money for outside counseling when we have talented staff, like the money we're spending here

The privatizing services concept is good - have employees bid against the private companies to reduce costs

I would like to see money spent on telling Midland's positive story. We need to have our citizens know how good it really is here, particularly our young people

I would like a more efficient system for the small buses - you should do a study to increase efficiencies

Look at the employees and services we have now to make sure we are operating as efficiently as possible

More snowplowing

The disposal of computers is going to be a problem - I have seen other cities play a role in that and our City should consider it

More times and places for hazardous or computer disposal are needed

I've lived in other places and I think the snowplowing here is great

We need a central place for lost and found items

Trim trees over the roads

Promote the community to attract more commercial and industrial businesses

How much of a detriment is the amount of taxes commercial and industrial companies pay when you're trying to get them to come to Midland?

We need to help small businesses - that's a very important issue because they don't have the clout of industrial businesses

By offering abatements to large businesses all other businesses have to support the community

We need to convince others this is a good place to live

We should get into services that people want that will generate cash - maybe we're in the wrong areas. For example, use City land for soccer fields. Are there assets we have that we can offer to other communities to get money coming in? Don't add services for us, but develop regional draws to other people to come in and use them

Electronic collection of bills

Seven years ago in the City's budget focus groups, you told the City to maintain the same services, work as efficiently as possible, raise your taxes only if necessary to keep the City's current quality and level of service. Does that advice still hold, or would you change it?

I agree with it and also suggest we still rely too much on local industry for our revenues;
we need a pool of grant writers to raise revenues

The last thing we want to do is raise taxes. We need to examine each service for its value and efficiency

We also need to look at productivity

The City needs to be on board fighting state and federal regulations

I like the idea of writing grants

As rich as this city is, it would be bad to go for grants because we'd be taking money away from other areas that really need it

We ought to go out and chase industrial and commercial businesses, go out and find revenue. Propose a plan to get people to invest and go out and make personal appeals

We need to minimize federal and state regulations that increase the cost of doing business

Get people to volunteer to help with City programs

All levels of government are in a permanent financial crisis and it's a structural problem.

We need to look at the major cost items and make sure we're getting the biggest bang for the buck

You said that in the Fire Department only 2 percent of the calls are for fires - looks like there could be some efficiencies there

I agree that we need to keep young people in Midland - we need businesses to hire them

We need balance

It was wise to move MCTV into the educational system. We need our kids to understand our financial system

There are lots of retired people here - ask them to volunteer

The Council on Aging uses lots of volunteers

Volunteers do a lot in this town

Without regulations to protect the area, people won't want to move here. Be careful with privatizing - make sure you analyze that carefully

Increase cable TV rates. Double the cost of trash bag tags

Increase user fees

Add to sales tax - is that possible? You wouldn't get general support for an income tax.

How about a motel room tax?

You may have to add services to maintain quality

User fees will discourage people from using things which means your maintenance costs will go up. You need to look at the purpose of having these things - user fees can be counter-productive

Look at the Arena - it generates lots of revenue for the community - you can't look at it with 'I don't use it so I won't pay for it.' Some things should be for the good of the community

I support the 1997 results. The City administration is doing a good job and doing a good job with the money they're bringing in - if they need more we should listen. A City income tax drives people out of cities. Keep the system like it is now

Does the City try to help bring in new businesses? It should - that would help maintain our facilities

I think the heavy refuse service - like having a dumpster on your property - should require a fee

I agree with that

Don't return the tax appeal money to taxpayers so we can continue to support the services we have now

Take a hard look at putting the costs on the users
We are better off in Midland than our neighboring communities. What's wrong with being something like a Lexus? User fees are okay when appropriately applied
The 1997 advice is fine; also add additional enterprise funds
There's been a 'Wal-Mart-ing of America,' with decreases in expenses and costs and the same should apply to City government costs - we simply can't afford the same things anymore
I object to the policies of the company you just mentioned
One qualification would be something that someone sees a need for - I can see designated funding for special needs that could be voted on
Do a special assessment for road improvements around the Mall - people from out-of-town go there
We need to be more business-friendly, not less
Efficiencies have been made that have saved money. Golf course maintenance might be more efficient
The 1997 advice is good and the City has done a good job following it. Is there any big thing looming that could impact the budget?
How about the big water pipeline that needs repair?
Major road improvements that are being made already have funding
1997 is good advice but the situation has changed - is it still feasible?
I support the 1997 statement with the comment that working efficiently is important.
City Council should set annual efficiency goals
Keep the pressure on for constant improvement and reward people for doing well
We're becoming a mature city and often people start moving out of mature cities to townships

Many people in these groups have mentioned traffic. Specifically, what are your concerns with traffic? Do you have any suggestions for a fix?

Very slow moving City trucks should wait until after the Dow traffic subsides before they get out on the roads
Three or four cars in a row is a traffic jam here - we really don't have a traffic problem when you look at other cities
I don't think Midland has a big traffic problem. When parents are dropping off kids at school it's bad, but that's about the only time
Look at different ways to doing things - Jefferson and Washington should be one-ways
On Jefferson and Wackerly it's impossible to make left turns. We need turn lanes and longer turn lights at certain times of the day
There's lots of technology to detect traffic flow - we need it here
We need better signage
Part of the problem is the initial design of the roads
Make the community more walkable; put schools near residential areas
The majority of the growth is in the north and northwest and is classic sprawl - access is much more difficult out there
People should get involved in upcoming zoning ordinance discussions at Planning Commission
We need more bike lanes
It's the only city I've ever lived in where you can leave late and get there early. I don't think there's a problem, compared to other cities
In general, it's good, compared to other cities but it's bad around the Mall. The stacking lanes are bad
On the west side of the Mall it backs up with people getting on Eastman. We need a right-turn only or service roads

Getting out at Meijer's is bad; we need left turn lights at Jefferson
I would like an exit at U.S. 10 and Jefferson
The State Highway Department won't approve that. A lot of work should be done all over the city on turn lanes
The City should consider another portion of the city for commercial development. A bridge at Sano to Stark Road would be good
Do a special assessment for bike paths
There's a huge amount of land for commercial development on the east side of town
Eliminate the flashing red at Saginaw and Patrick
Develop other routes around the Mall. Traffic and utilities should be included in all development plans
Land on the east side is available but all the activity will be on the north side
Leave the Circle alone - it won't make a difference to the merchants there
We could use lights at U.S. 10 exits and at Wheeler and at Waldo Road
Street lights at Joe Mann Boulevard are needed
Use low impact lighting so it doesn't bother surrounding neighborhoods
Any traffic problem is a non-issue, relatively speaking. We need pre-planning. The biggest problem is north of the interstate. Recently I couldn't get out from Best Buy at the Mall. There needs to be an extension of Joe Mann Boulevard at Eastman
There's no value-added growth at the Mall. I would rather see growth that brings value to the community and services that we don't already have
I would like to see other forms of travel besides automobiles - I would like bike paths
I would love the City to put some thought into facilities for walkers and bikers and for them to enhance Dial-a-Ride
Look at a regular route for a bus. We're spending a lot of money but not serving a lot of people as it is. How about a route to the Mall? From the Senior Center?
The planning for the Mall wasn't good. The only way to alleviate Mall traffic is to put in an overpass
Sidewalks on Eastman are dangerous - they're too close to the road. Eastman's not nearly the quality of everything else we have in Midland
The left-hand turn at Saginaw and Eastman is very dangerous, especially at noon - it backs up at McDonalds. It's not the wait that bothers me - it's that it's dangerous
Eastman is not safe - a majority of accidents happen there. I would like that looked at by local people, not an outside traffic consultant
The speed limit on Eastman is too high
Limit access onto Eastman

Let's talk now about growth. Many people believe that successful communities encourage a gradual and steady rate of growth, believing that slow or no growth risks stagnation while rapid growth strains services and community resources. Do you fundamentally agree or disagree with that belief? Why?

Growth should be gradual so it is there to accommodate generational growth
It's not growth, it's the rate of growth that matters
Do we have any control over the rate of growth?
Who finances the infrastructure?
Make growth equal to the rate of inflation. Often infrastructure doesn't keep up with growth which leads to negative impacts - it's a balancing act
The key issue is control and how you manage growth - make sure the City and not townships manage growth. For example, look at what happened with the Mall in Saginaw
I would support small growth. We need to promote our positives to get new people to come here

I agree with slow, steady growth. Business attraction and retention are both important.

Maybe we need a new group to bring in new businesses

We need to look at where businesses are located - look at getting representatives from all areas to work with City people on growth patterns and where growth should occur

I disagree with the assumption that zero growth strangles a community; we need to decide why we want to expand

Growth is not always expanding, it's also redevelopment

If you don't have growth you will have people on welfare which will cost you more. We need business growth

I don't think you can choose your rate of growth. We need to maintain an environment so people will want to come in. If I could choose, I would say a 3 to 5 percent growth rate. There needs to be a balance of commercial, residential and industrial

Who should promote growth?

When I started my business 20 years ago I got no support from the Economic Development Office. We need to do things to support small businesses

We should have an understanding of national impacts of growth - if one place grows it affects another place

There's not enough being done for small businesses but we are beginning to do more for them. We all need to work together on business attraction

We need a venture capital incubation program

We also need advice for small businesses

We should get business owners to advise others and get those who are already here to expand their businesses

You can do it on an individual basis. We go to Bay City for ice cream and we encourage the owner of that shop to expand into Midland

One hundred dollars a year from each citizen would create a venture capital fund for small business development - we need a situation where people can start businesses that they can turn over to their kids

I agree with slow and steady growth. Midland has been able to maintain quality with that approach

Could you even get rapid growth here?

It seems like development around the Mall has been rapid and I don't like it - the traffic is bad

Stores are coming because people trade at them - people want the benefits of the Mall but don't like the traffic it generates

We don't have a choice regarding growth. Slow and steady has worked well for us. What happened in Saginaw is that they lost control of their destiny

We need growth in technology jobs

I hear traffic complaints but have never had to wait for more than five minutes - compare that to big cities

I've never lived in a city before where four cars is considered a traffic jam. We're getting people coming in from all over the region to shop at the Mall and that's bringing in outside money to our community

I have a love - hate relationship with the Mall area. We need better traffic flow and planning in that area. I believe in the business but also in traffic improvements there

The Mall is an example of rapid, exploding growth. I'm more interested in growth in technology and technology jobs

You need to have people for those jobs and you need technology schools that teach people how to think

The City has been very proactive in putting in roads around the Mall. The City has plans to increase capacity of other roads in the area. They've done a good job of planning for growth. I think growth is a good thing but we need to make sure it's the commercial growth we want for our community

We could all make an investment in technology - people could invest in venture capital to help bring in such companies

Yes *[wide agreement in group]*

When is enough enough? Even with small, steady growth we'll lose the community feel over time. I don't disagree with the principle but I do want it to be proportional

It needs to be qualified. Residential growth is expensive but commercial growth is not

Can't you put another crossing over the interstate at the Mall - can't you tax those businesses to do that?

If residential growth around the Mall increases traffic will become an even bigger problem

The outside traffic consultant the City uses doesn't live in Midland so he doesn't know the real impacts of his decisions

We have awful traffic signs. That traffic consultant must design them on sunny days because on rainy days you can't see the signs

There's no traffic here - the wait here is nominal

Any future large road projects need more than a consultant who's here only part of the time

I agree that moderate growth is best *[wide agreement in group]*

I would like to know about the industrial growth rate

We want growth in jobs, not things that are a burden on City resources. Growth should be revenue-neutral

We have a Master Plan that controls growth; citizens don't have much control over it

We need to have sustainable growth to maintain a vibrant community and focus on infrastructure and services

I would like moderate growth, not slow

We've grown because of the bad school system in Bay City and the racial tensions in Saginaw and we'll continue to grow because of our quality of life

I don't think growth extremes are relevant. If we're going to have sustainable growth it's got to come from industrial growth. The industrial growth in the past has given us our quality of life today. The City needs to promote industrial growth

When it comes to community growth, there seem to be two schools of thought. One is for growth to occur naturally and for the City to build roadways, utilities and other infrastructure when necessary and in response to that naturally-occurring development. The other is to try to anticipate growth, to watch how growth occurs in other similar communities, to forecast where and how growth will occur and to build the roads, utilities and infrastructure ahead of growth. In general, which of these approaches makes the most sense for Midland? Why?

Some of each - build some infrastructure as growth occurs and some on the leading edge of growth

Do the big investments ahead, but things like roads you can do as needed

It depends on the area and its needs at that time - that's why looking at the City Master Plan is so important

It's both - it shouldn't be a surprise to the City that the Mall would require additional streets, but I also belong to a big church and the City's done a good job of providing the infrastructure needed around it

We need to have a plan for the infrastructure that will be needed for growth

I congratulate the City on its work with brownfield sites

You don't have to put in the infrastructure before the need is there

We need to put in infrastructure ahead for those things that affect existing citizens, like sewers, for example

It's important that the City communicate with surrounding areas to encourage continued growth and to look at extending City boundaries

We don't need sprawling growth; it's also important to keep a strong downtown
 We need to be open to agreements with surrounding areas; we need to be open to annexation and agreements that foster controlled growth
 We need to re-use existing areas. Too many regulations make it too restrictive and people go outside the City
 Build it first - that would cut down on costs
 MDOT determined bridge sizes around Midland in 1952 and the City had little to say about it. We need to encourage MDOT to enlarge them
 We're not willing to invest money for improvements for 40 years for now because we won't be here
 Most people aren't interested in paying for improvements for people to use tomorrow
 Controlled growth should result in balance. We shouldn't speculate on new businesses coming in
 The Mall location wasn't even in the City years ago. You have a fragmented political situation to make these decisions about the future
 An educated workforce is one of the best infrastructures you can invest in
 Traffic design at the Mall is awful - like it was designed by a pack of blind squirrels or something
 I'm concerned that the City isn't looking out far enough. What has happened to Saginaw in the last 50 years may happen to us in the next 50 years. We need to put together a future growth vision, like they did years ago with MUGA. We need a group of visionary people to work on that
 Some of those visionary people are still on the City staff. Are things being done by staff that are long-term thinking?
 We've already seen that building it as it's needed doesn't work - look at U.S. 10. You have to build ahead of the need. You feel it most with roads
 I think it's a matter of planning. It needs to be in the middle of the two approaches - be ready to build but don't build
 I agree. I'm not willing to pay ahead of time; plan for it but don't develop too quickly
 I like that idea
 We have examples of private investors being willing to put in infrastructure
 A water system can't be put in by a private entity, so sometimes it makes sense for public entities to do things up front
 We should take a look at if we're properly charging users for infrastructure
 If we don't solve the dioxin issue we won't have to worry about growth

What are the most important issues regarding growth that you'd like the City of Midland to consider? Let's make a "Quick List", using just a short word or phrase to make sure we get everybody's ideas up.

Miscellaneous	30%	28 items
Plan for / control growth / have growth policy	13%	12 mentions
Provide adequate infrastructure / infrastructure maintenance	10%	10 mentions
Plan for traffic / traffic control	9%	8 mentions
Recruit new companies / expand existing / support economic development	6%	6 mentions
Improve U.S. 10 exit / entry	5%	5 mentions

Consider alternative modes of transportation	4%	4 mentions
Protect the environment	4%	4 mentions
Provide housing that's affordable	4%	4 mentions
Create a balance of types of businesses	3%	3 mentions
Carefully plan integration of commercial and neighborhood uses	3%	3 mentions
Don't over-regulate business / growth	3%	3 mentions
Avoid sprawl	2%	2 mentions
Maintain positive relationships with major employers	2%	2 mentions
Protect quality of life	2%	2 mentions

Supporting Data

Regulations
 Business permits
 Culture
 Strengthen and maintain MUGA [Midland Urban Growth Agreement]
 Provide services
 Classification of businesses - keep it balanced
 Support brownfield development
 Schools' relationship with growth
 Relationship with corporations
 Maintain status quo in tough economic times
 Justify speculation on business
 Support tax credit programs with state economic development
 Have a partnership with major employers in town - it's becoming an adversarial relationship
 Prompt and sound resolution on the dioxin issue
 Infrastructure
 Water, sewer
 Traffic control
 Access to emergency services
 Code enforcement
 Work with landowners and developers to coordinate turf issues
 DEQ issues
 Jail
 Housing affordability
 Incorporating surrounding communities
 Re-examine the MUGA policy
 Determine what kind of growth you want before it comes
 Infrastructure to support it
 We're not filling in the city, we're expanding outside instead. I don't want our inner city to decay; we need to control where growth goes

We have a challenge and that's the need to foster a better environment for commercial development, for example over-regulating zoning
Sometimes we need to re-use land instead of abandoning it
We need quality affordable housing spread around the community, not large developments
We need to provide for inner city growth and also allow growth other places; you can over-regulate growth
You're only showing future growth as residential - we also need industrial and commercial growth. We need to promote Midland as a place to do business
When they put in the interstate by Bay City they talked about an Enterprise Zone there but nothing ever happened
Focus on businesses that will produce a product instead of 'big box' businesses
We also need service businesses. We need forethought in planning growth; we need a balance of businesses
Traffic
Safe places for runners, bikers and non-organized sports
Are we trying to bring in companies? How can we talk about growth when we don't know our growth policy? Do we have one? We need a growth plan
A growth plan should consider access / frontage roads
The City can't control private property owners, but is the City trying to bring in companies that can sustain our growth? There should be vehicular access across town to the west side
Be mindful of providing green space and park land available to residents and businesses in all areas of the community
Because of wetlands much of our area is inaccessible to development
The impact on our environment will be key in the future - wetlands is only one issue. The City needs to put more emphasis on communication. Lots of what people talked about today is already being looked at but people don't know about it
We need to look at the whole city when it comes to growth - diffuse traffic
When you defer maintenance you never catch up. I would gladly pay more for infrastructure maintenance
We need good access to U.S. 10 at Waldo and Wheeler
We need to focus on the potential Circle area and the whole city
Increased traffic problems
The bottleneck at the Mall - we need planning regarding curb cuts and site plans. The City can direct where additional traffic will go
We need infrastructure and planning around the Arena site
The City did well with placing curb cuts around Home Depot
Consider a westbound off ramp off U.S. 10 at Waldo; we need more police officers as we grow
Pay attention to the hospital and fire station locations as we grow
We need housing that's affordable for young families
I wish the City would promote exit / entry ramps at Waldo
I agree - that's a natural point. We need more traffic control there
The City does a terrible job holding contractors accountable for putting in sidewalks in a reasonable amount of time. They also need to control permits so you don't end up with empty store fronts
Signage can make a place look crummy - they need to look at that too
The new downtown shops are good. I would like to see more specialty shops and restaurants and direct traffic to them
Our street is still a dead-end and the City won't make the developer put in the court that was promised
The City should continue its support of Midland Tomorrow and try to increase it

Be aware of where new developments are going and make sure the streets are in place to get around
Support diversity through affordable housing
Continue the Master Growth Plan
Not growth at all costs - protect our quality of life
Growth with taste and uniqueness
Consider 100 percent tax abatements for industry that's already here to expand their operations
Don't sacrifice environmental quality
Listen and hear what citizens are saying
Get adequate road capacity in to handle growth
Disperse growth
Businesses will want to locate at the Mall. The City should ease the tax burden along the M20 corridor - there are lots of businesses out there that have failed. Push businesses to locate out there
Eastman is a classic feeder street
Consider the need for sidewalks and alternative transportation as roads are built
Consider an interchange at Waldo
Consider a second wastewater plant to serve areas to the west. I would like another bridge over the river south of town
Maintain a focus on increasing the current city inside the highway area. Do mixed-use zoning. Avoid sprawl. Maintain population density within the city
Zoning now separates residential and commercial - it's set up so you have to have a car
Having residential and commercial together is a matter of scale - small shops are okay but not big commercial development
We ought to look at insisting on landscaping so we don't have 'boxes' ensconced on asphalt
It's possible to do better than we're doing when it comes to zoning and sprawl. Zoning has become a self-fulfilling prophecy
It's difficult not to be able to afford to move out of a neighborhood when commercial comes into your neighborhood. Council doesn't listen one bit when that happens
Growth has surpassed our planning and zoning in our city. Twenty years ago the zoning may have been okay but not now. We don't get full-size restaurants here and I don't understand why
I love the big box retailers and think the City has done a good job of isolating them. We have small restaurants and shops because that's all the local population can support. We need to become a regional commercial center. We don't have to worry about sprawl because the growth rate is very low. We should embrace retail growth and develop a regional economy

Some people have said they would like more industrial expansion. What do you think about that?

Look at Flint - we need to take preventive measures
Citizens should make sure we have a good balance of commercial, residential and industrial
Diversity is a good thing *[wide agreement in group]*

When it comes to the diversity of growth, is the community doing okay or does it need more emphasis?

Some growth is appropriate and some is not - we need to determine the form of diversity most appropriate for this community

We're not diversified enough when it comes to the types of jobs we have. The City can't do it alone; they need to work with the Chamber and the state

Who decides what kinds of jobs are needed?

Government should bring recommendations about jobs to the community for discussion and be willing to be questioned about it regarding the trade-offs involved

There's lots of industrial land in the community that's controlled by Dow

Should there be a business recruitment effort? If so, what should the role of the City play in that effort?

Yes, there needs to be recruitment, but I don't know what the City would do

We need to have the infrastructure to accommodate growth. Agencies should work together to promote growth and the City should be active in that effort

Venture capital is coming into the community. All kinds of effort is being put into the new Dow development

Has the City promoted business growth in the past?

The City shouldn't take the lead but be supportive and provide the infrastructure

All Michigan cities would like industrial development but our quality of life will be a big draw. How can we make Midland unique?

The highway by the Mall divides the community and that's not good for us. I would like the City to overcome the physical barriers in our community in their planning

If we remove industrial impediments that will increase our chances of bringing in industry - that's a proactive approach that doesn't cost money

You have to waive taxes these days to be competitive. We need to sell all of our community's positives. We need to keep our strong structure going

Increasing taxes would be hard on those with fixed incomes and the retired and they'll move away

If we give away too much to business we'll lose our advantage - we have to find a balance

We have organizations in place that promote industrial development but I don't know how successful they are. The City has a role in promoting

If we're going to grow we're going to have to grow the industry within our community

We have two disincentives - our climate and our location. It would be good to work on business expansion here

Development should be driven by the private sector with the City and County providing the infrastructure and being responsive. They've done a good job with that

The City can promote our quality of life to industry by openness on information, for example on the dioxin issue. It must be handled carefully and openly

We need brains and money - we have the quality of life

Our old money has stayed here through the foundations. Industry needs to know this.

City government needs to let industry know what we've got here

Let's talk now about information provided by the City and communication with the City. What City information would you like to be able to access online? And what transactions would you like to be able to do online? Again, let's create a "Quick List", not discussing the merits, just getting the list up.

Pay water bill

Building construction and City services

To pay taxes or to make sure they're paid

Any City fees

Make appointments; sign up for services

Picnic shelter reservations

The phone is better for details and the personal customer contact is good

Give each person a code number to make it private

Plat maps, utilities locations

Information on growth patterns

The Library is already online and it's wonderful for my family - it's a good setup

A directory with a key word search

You must keep in mind that many people still don't have computers, still have rotary phones and no cable

I use the City's website regularly and think it's great

I would like the City to keep code enforcement complaints confidential

I'd like to pay my water bill online

Pay taxes

Water bill automatic deduction

Pay taxes with a credit card

Get annual parks and recreation passes

Pay for waste bin stickers

Pay my taxes and my water and sewer bill

The City does a good job updating its website in the fall regarding things like leaves but needs more updating of information in the winter

We need winter recreation activity information online

The website is pretty good; there's lots of good information on it

Water bills and tax payments

Automatic clearinghouse payments

An avenue to get people more involved in the City - many don't know how to get involved

Communications. We need personnel to respond to questions - I've asked questions before and have gotten no response

I pay my bills by check and am happy with that

I would like to be able to pay by credit card

Using credit cards would cost the City something - do we want to do that?

The house prices in the area

My water bill - both get it and pay it

Pay my taxes

Get yearly waste permits

Pull permits

Reserve refuse containers and picnic shelters

The City should do automatic debits

Pay water bills, taxes - take out of my checking account

Waste bin fees - anything we'd have to go to City Hall for

Swimming lesson and softball registration

There's nothing I'd like online that has personal information

Minutes of meetings would be good

Encourage putting GPS and all information online - that would be a huge benefit

People could sign up for paying fees online. Put shelter reservations online
How many people can access information online? Make sure there's equal access
Have a dual phone and online system
Keep aware of computer access issues for low and moderate income people and people who don't know how to use computers
I'm all for information online and for GPS. How much more are we going to spend for GPS administration? Let's not pay more in administrative costs
I'd like to pay water bills and taxes online
I'd like to pay my water bill online using my credit card
Offer accessibility to all through a dual system

One last thing about City information: if you are able to do all these things online, how concerned would you be about confidentiality?

[Note: Because of clarification required on this question for the first few groups, this question was changed in subsequent groups to ask: *City records and information are available now—they are public records—with access through a trip to City Hall. Putting the information online would not change its availability but would change the convenience of access both for you and others. Is your convenience worth easier access by others?*]

You just to have good security
You can use it 24 hours a day, much more time than the City offices are open
You can either believe in the spirit or the letter of the law - I think all information should be accessible
Put in a system so people can't browse through records
It cuts down on the City's time having to answer all those questions; for example, when landlords need information on whether people have paid their rent in the past
If the City puts information online, I would prefer that people can opt in or out
Why put it online? My privacy shouldn't be violated for someone's convenience
Can you opt out?
Are there advantages to the City in doing this, like efficiencies?
It would be easier for 'Nosy Nellies' to look but it's already public information anyway so why not make it available?
But people buying a house could look up all prices in the neighborhood - I don't want information online
I've looked up my taxes to make sure they're in line with my neighbors - I would like the information online
I don't like the breach of confidentiality. Is there another way?
If it's available now, so be it - put it online
Automate it if I can get it anyway through the Freedom of Information Act
It will be costly to keep updated so I don't know if I'd support it just because of that. I'm all for it if it doesn't increase costs or if it decreases City costs
Add a disclosure statement regarding using the information properly so people don't abuse it and enforce a penalty if they do abuse it
If the information's more difficult to get that's probably better - it's nobody's business and shouldn't be handed to them on a platter
If it's a matter of public record anyway it's okay to give it out
Find out what the potential abuses are first. Seek advice from experts to find out potential downsides and let the public know and then decide
We need it to be as transparent as possible
Transparency is okay but not letting commercial enterprises get personal information

A casual Internet user getting all that information is not good. There should be something built into the system to track that. You should have to work for the information if you have to go to City Hall to get it

If it's public information it should be readily available online

Mass marketers can get it anyway so why not put it online?

If you have to register to get it physically you should have to register to get it online

To put limitations on public information means it's not public information anymore

Can't you make it secure?

I'm open to having all information online - people may need it

I'm not sure how I feel about it - I want the convenience but I don't want information about me available to everyone

It's not a draw for me

It's already available, it's just a question of how easy do you want to make it? I have no problem with it

What's the cost? Why do it?

You get payments quicker and get a better return when it's done online

If someone wants that information, they're going to get it anyway - I have no problem with it

I don't want people seeing my records - I don't think putting it on the web is necessary

I don't find it necessary

I'm concerned about putting too much online

I'm concerned too - I think it's unnecessary

You can already compare tax assessments

It will make it easier for businesses if information is online; people are technologically savvy

Keep hard copies too if you go online with all the information

I want Council and Planning Commission agenda and maps with zoning requests

Picnic shelter requests and subscribe for special Council meeting minutes

Construction information

I would like no one to see what I use in water and gas - next would be a floor plan of my house

Put it all online *[wide agreement in group]*

The City will save money by putting all information online

If it's not protected by law, it should be online

I disagree - I would like to maintain my privacy and make it harder to get the information

I would have to take vacation to go City Hall during the day to get the information. I would love to get it online

I'm opposed if you can do a name search to get the information

I would like more information but want it to be secure. Charge a user fee to get it

I don't have a problem with putting the information online

You won't ever be able to solve the security problem - I don't give a damn if you put it online

Appendix C
Verbatim Comments by Group

Roundtable Verbatim Comments by Group

Group 1

11 a.m. January 10, 2005

26 participants

Using no more than a word or a short phrase, please write the answer to this question on your pad of paper: List one thing that you like best about life in Midland, then one thing you'd change if you could.

Like Best

Its size
Pleasant environment; safe and secure
Different services and activities
The small town atmosphere with big town amenities
The school system
It's clean and attractive
It's safe and comfortable
It's a small community with good services
Efficient, effective City administration
People work well with each other
Outstanding; easy to get around
I like it here
Recreational facilities are fantastic
The general environment: the size; services; and cultural amenities
Small town atmosphere; it's safe
Diversity of people; recreation services; the churches
Schools; family services
It's a friendly environment
Family-friendly; the Library
It feels good here
The concern for the disadvantaged
The benefits for a city this size - adds to our
Overall services and activities

Change

Small industrial base
People's driving habits
It's a one-horse town
February weather
The streets
Poor transportation
Needs increased tax base
Public transportation
Need to expand tax base
Unsafe sidewalks
Pave Ashman
Expand the tax base
Not growing middle class services and housing
Diversity of businesses
Traffic flow patterns
Traffic flow in some areas
Weather, environment
diversity of businesses
Less government
Traffic in some areas, speed limits
Currie Golf Course marketing its product and the Michigan Molecular Institute
How CDBG money is spent
People ignore the speed limit
Expand the tax base; review the City Master Plan more frequently
Improve the activities for youth
People drive too fast and there's too much traffic; make the sidewalks wider to accommodate both pedestrians and bicycles

You've just heard up-to-date information about the City, the services it provides, and its revenues and budget issues. Is there any service that the City currently provides that you believe the City could or should stop providing?

Reduce MCTV - we have enough cable TV

The subsidy for the local Airport - make it a user fee

Look at how you're handling retirement benefits

If we want to attract new businesses it's important not to pay public employees something private sector employees don't get

City employees should pay for a share of their benefits

What about any service that's prompted you to think, "If only the City of Midland would offer that, I'd be a happy citizen"?

Public transportation, especially Dial-a-Ride

I agree - I question why all the money is going to it when there are so few riders

Use smaller vans

The Dial-a-Ride service needs to be more effective

Would adding GIS be an option? Getting it online would be good

Online technical and patent information would be good

Is outsourcing cheaper? We spend a lot of money for outside counseling when we have talented staff, like the money we're spending here

The privatizing services concept is good - have employees bid against the private companies to reduce costs

I would like to see money spent on telling Midland's positive story. We need to have our citizens know how good it really is here, particularly our young people

I would like a more efficient system for the small buses - you should do a study to increase efficiencies

Look at the employees and services we have now to make sure we are operating as efficiently as possible

Seven years ago in the City's budget focus groups, you told the City to maintain the same services, work as efficiently as possible, raise your taxes only if necessary to keep the City's current quality and level of service. Does that advice still hold, or would you change it?

I agree with it and also suggest we still rely too much on local industry for our revenues; we need a pool of grant writers to raise revenues

The last thing we want to do is raise taxes. We need to examine each service for its value and efficiency

We also need to look at productivity

The City needs to be on board fighting state and federal regulations

I like the idea of writing grants

As rich as this city is, it would be bad to go for grants because we'd be taking money away from other areas that really need it

We ought to go out and chase industrial and commercial businesses, go out and find revenue. Propose a plan to get people to invest and go out and make personal appeals

We need to minimize federal and state regulations that increase the cost of doing business

Get people to volunteer to help with City programs

All levels of government are in a permanent financial crisis and it's a structural problem

We need to look at the major cost items and make sure we're getting the biggest bang for the buck

You said that in the Fire Department only 2 percent of the calls are for fires - looks like there could be some efficiencies there

I agree that we need to keep young people in Midland - we need businesses to hire them
We need balance

It was wise to move MCTV into the educational system. We need our kids to understand our financial system

There are lots of retired people here - ask them to volunteer

The Council on Aging uses lots of volunteers

Volunteers do a lot in this town

Without regulations to protect the area, people won't want to move here. Be careful with privatizing - make sure you analyze that carefully

Increase cable TV rates. Double the cost of trash bag tags

Let's talk now about growth. Many people believe that successful communities encourage a gradual and steady rate of growth, believing that slow or no growth risks stagnation while rapid growth strains services and community resources. Do you fundamentally agree or disagree with that belief? Why?

Growth should be gradual so it is there to accommodate generational growth

It's not growth, it's the rate of growth that matters

Do we have any control over the rate of growth?

Who finances the infrastructure?

Make growth equal to the rate of inflation. Often infrastructure doesn't keep up with growth which leads to negative impacts - it's a balancing act

The key issue is control and how you manage growth - make sure the City and not townships manage growth. For example, look at what happened with the Mall in Saginaw

I would support small growth. We need to promote our positives to get new people to come here

I agree with slow, steady growth. Business attraction and retention are both important

Maybe we need a new group to bring in new businesses

We need to look at where businesses are located - look at getting representatives from all areas to work with City people on growth patterns and where growth should occur

I disagree with the assumption that zero growth strangles a community; we need to decide why we want to expand

Growth is not always expanding, it's also redevelopment

If you don't have growth you will have people on welfare which will cost you more. We need business growth

I don't think you can choose your rate of growth. We need to maintain an environment so people will want to come in. If I could choose, I would say a 3 to 5 percent growth rate. There needs to be a balance of commercial, residential and industrial

Who should promote growth?

When I started my business 20 years ago I got no support from the Economic Development Office. We need to do things to support small businesses

We should have an understanding of national impacts of growth - if one place grows it affects another place

There's not enough being done for small businesses but we are beginning to do more for them. We all need to work together on business attraction

We need a venture capital incubation program

We also need advice for small businesses

We should get business owners to advise others and get those who are already here to expand their businesses

You can do it on an individual basis. We go to Bay City for ice cream and we encourage the owner of that shop to expand into Midland
One hundred dollars a year from each citizen would create a venture capital fund for small business development - we need a situation where people can start businesses that they can turn over to their kids

When it comes to community growth, there seem to be two schools of thought. One is for growth to occur naturally and for the City to build roadways, utilities and other infrastructure when necessary and in response to that naturally-occurring development. The other is to try to anticipate growth, to watch how growth occurs in other similar communities, to forecast where and how growth will occur and to build the roads, utilities and infrastructure ahead of growth. In general, which of these approaches makes the most sense for Midland? Why?

Some of each - build some infrastructure as growth occurs and some on the leading edge of growth

Do the big investments ahead, but things like roads you can do as needed

It depends on the area and its needs at that time - that's why looking at the City Master Plan is so important

It's both - it shouldn't be a surprise to the City that the Mall would require additional streets, but I also belong to a big church and the City's done a good job of providing the infrastructure needed around it

We need to have a plan for the infrastructure that will be needed for growth

I congratulate the City on its work with brownfield sites

You don't have to put in the infrastructure before the need is there

We need to put in infrastructure ahead for those things that affect existing citizens, like sewers, for example

It's important that the City communicate with surrounding areas to encourage continued growth and to look at extending City boundaries

We don't need sprawling growth; it's also important to keep a strong downtown

We need to be open to agreements with surrounding areas; we need to be open to annexation and agreements that foster controlled growth

We need to re-use existing areas. Too many regulations make it too restrictive and people go outside the City

What are the most important issues regarding growth that you'd like the City of Midland to consider? Let's make a "Quick List", using just a short word or phrase to make sure we get everybody's ideas up.

Regulations

Business permits

Culture

Strengthen and maintain MUGA [Midland Urban Growth Agreement]

Provide services

Classification of businesses - keep it balanced

Support brownfield development

Schools' relationship with growth

Relationship with corporations

Maintain status quo in tough economic times

Justify speculation on business

Support tax credit programs with state economic development

Have a partnership with major employers in town - it's becoming an adversarial relationship

Prompt and sound resolution on the dioxin issue

Let's talk now about information provided by the City and communication with the City. What City information would you like to be able to access online? And what transactions would you like to be able to do online? Again, let's create a "Quick List", not discussing the merits, just getting the list up.

Pay water bill

Building construction and City services

To pay taxes or to make sure they're paid

Any City fees

Make appointments; sign up for services

Picnic shelter reservations

The phone is better for details and the personal customer contact is good

Give each person a code number to make it private

Plat maps, utilities locations

Information on growth patterns

The Library is already online and it's wonderful for my family - it's a good setup

A directory with a key word search

You must keep in mind that many people still don't have computers, still have rotary phones and no cable

One last thing about City information: if you are able to do all these things online, how concerned would you be about confidentiality?

You just to have good security

You can use it 24 hours a day, much more time than the City offices are open

You can either believe in the spirit or the letter of the law - I think all information should be accessible

Put in a system so people can't browse through records

It cuts down on the City's time having to answer all those questions; for example, when landlords need information on whether people have paid their rent in the past

If the City puts information online, I would prefer that people can opt in or out

Group #2

11 a.m. January 11, 2005

27 participants

Using no more than a word or a short phrase, please write the answer to this question on your pad of paper: List one thing that you like best about life in Midland, then one thing you'd change if you could.

Like Best

The small town life
Recreation facilities
Recreation facilities and services
It's great for people of all ages
Great place to raise a family
Availability and convenience of services,
both public and private; excellent City
services
Everything
Good, livable community
Good neighborhood and neighbors
Relatively crime-free
Safety
Small town atmosphere and convenience
with Arts Center and other advantages
of a larger place
Quality of life
Neighbors; the pride of ownership
Quality of life
Safety; what the community has to offer
I've never been anyplace else
Easiness, both in living and doing business
Excellent City service
Rail Trail
Small town atmosphere; a good place to grow
old
Right size, right resources
Great place to live and raise a family - special
It's like a large city contained within a small city
The Library
How we all work together
City recreation programs

Change

How the roads are paved
We need a better industrial base
Traffic flow into and around Midland
Traffic flow around the Mall
Traffic flow
Time the stoplights better
Need a real newspaper
Neighborhood Clinic closure
Its location - two hours from Detroit
Our attitude toward tourism
Eastman Avenue from the
expressway back
Decrease substance abuse; our
streets and the timing of stoplights
Traffic flow, especially one-way streets
and the Circle area
There's a drift toward blight because of
lack of code enforcement
Enforce the laws, e.g. dogs, noise,
running red lights
Stop hiring outside consultants to tell
us what we need - they don't know
Midland
City goes overboard on getting outside
consultants; traffic flow
We need to broaden our industrial base
We're not inclusive - we don't do
enough for those with special needs
Management of public service crews
Uncontrolled growth
Tax appeal and its effect on the
community; the dioxin issue
Should pay more attention to repairing
streets; local drivers; enforcement
of headlights not working
Narrow-minded, not accepting of
minorities, including gays and
lesbians
Tax appeal; dioxin; people running red
lights

You've just heard up-to-date information about the City, the services it provides, and its revenues and budget issues. The first question for you is: Is the City of Midland fulfilling the role you want it to when it comes to the overall provision of services?

Yes - All participants

Next, is there any service that the City currently provides that you believe the City could or should stop providing?

The ice Arena should be operated privately
The City shouldn't be in the golf course business—that's inappropriate
I dispute that - the City doesn't run it, it just oversees it
The City Airport is unnecessary
I agree on the ice Arena and golf course - the private sector should run them
I disagree that the City shouldn't be in the golf course business - it's great as long as it's self-supporting. The course is in the City and is close by. It's just like running a swimming pool or a community center
The Civic Arena is appropriate for the City to subsidize
The City's spending too much on the Library
I'm not sure we should have such an extensive refuse service, especially for heavy items - do we really need it?
I agree, especially for reconstruction by homeowners - it's part of neighborhood blight.
Roofers should get rid of shingles, not the City
Heavy pick-up prevents that stuff being put somewhere else
The things that we're talking about eliminating are the things that make life worthwhile here

What about any service that's prompted you to think, "If only the City of Midland would offer that, I'd be a happy citizen"?

More snowplowing
The disposal of computers is going to be a problem - I have seen other cities play a role in that and our City should consider it
More times and places for hazardous or computer disposal are needed
I've lived in other places and I think the snowplowing here is great
We need a central place for lost and found items

Now let's talk about possible changes in service. What services or programs do you need less of? More of?

The City needs a better way to cut down trees - six or seven people to cut down one tree is unnecessary
The City should use its own people instead of outside consultants
Private people cutting down trees leave a mess
The City should inform new people moving in about codes regarding auxiliary buildings and trailer parking
Increase the dependence on user fees that don't benefit the whole community, for example the Airport, Arena, Library, and pools
Toxic waste disposal is inconvenient - we need an area at the City landfill where you could take it and the City should publicize it
Should people living outside of the City pay an increase in fees?

Seven years ago in the City's budget focus groups, you told the City to maintain the same services, work as efficiently as possible, raise your taxes only if necessary to keep the City's current quality and level of service. Does that advice still hold, or would you change it?

Increase user fees

Add to sales tax - is that possible? You wouldn't get general support for an income tax.

How about a motel room tax?

You may have to add services to maintain quality

User fees will discourage people from using things which means your maintenance costs will go up. You need to look at the purpose of having these things - user fees can be counter-productive

Look at the Arena - it generates lots of revenue for the community - you can't look at it with ' I don't use it so I won't pay for it.' Some things should be for the good of the community

I support the 1997 results. The City administration is doing a good job and doing a good job with the money they're bringing in - if they need more we should listen. A City income tax drives people out of cities. Keep the system like it is now

Does the City try to help bring in new businesses? It should - that would help maintain our facilities

I think the heavy refuse service - like having a dumpster on your property - should require a fee

I agree with that

Let's talk now about growth. Many people believe that successful communities encourage a gradual and steady rate of growth, believing that slow or no growth risks stagnation while rapid growth strains services and community resources. Do you fundamentally agree or disagree with that belief? Why?

I agree with slow and steady growth. Midland has been able to maintain quality with that approach

Could you even get rapid growth here?

It seems like development around the Mall has been rapid and I don't like it - the traffic is bad

Stores are coming because people trade at them - people want the benefits of the Mall but don't like the traffic it generates

We don't have a choice regarding growth. Slow and steady has worked well for us. What happened in Saginaw is that they lost control of their destiny

We need growth in technology jobs

I hear traffic complaints but have never had to wait for more than five minutes - compare that to big cities

I've never lived in a city before where four cars is considered a traffic jam. We're getting people coming in from all over the region to shop at the Mall and that's bringing in outside money to our community

I have a love - hate relationship with the Mall area. We need better traffic flow and planning in that area. I believe in the business but also in traffic improvements there

The Mall is an example of rapid, exploding growth. I'm more interested in growth in technology and technology jobs

You need to have people for those jobs and you need technology schools that teach people how to think

The City has been very proactive in putting in roads around the Mall. The City has plans to increase capacity of other roads in the area. They've done a good job of planning for growth. I think growth is a good thing but we need to make sure it's the commercial growth we want for our community

We could all make an investment in technology - people could invest in venture capital to help bring in such companies

When it comes to community growth, there seem to be two schools of thought. One is for growth to occur naturally and for the City to build roadways, utilities and other infrastructure when necessary and in response to that naturally-occurring development. The other is to try to anticipate growth, to watch how growth occurs in other similar communities, to forecast where and how growth will occur and to build the roads, utilities and infrastructure ahead of growth. In general, which of these approaches makes the most sense for Midland? Why?

Build it first - that would cut down on costs

MDOT determined bridge sizes around Midland in 1952 and the City had little to say about it. We need to encourage MDOT to enlarge them

We're not willing to invest money for improvements for 40 years for now because we won't be here

Most people aren't interested in paying for improvements for people to use tomorrow
Controlled growth should result in balance. We shouldn't speculate on new businesses coming in

The Mall location wasn't even in the City years ago. You have a fragmented political situation to make these decisions about the future

An educated workforce is one of the best infrastructures you can invest in

Traffic design at the Mall is awful - like it was designed by a pack of blind squirrels or something

I'm concerned that the City isn't looking out far enough. What has happened to Saginaw in the last 50 years may happen to us in the next 50 years. We need to put together a future growth vision, like they did years ago with MUGA. We need a group of visionary people to work on that

Some of those visionary people are still on the City staff. Are things being done by staff that are long-term thinking?

What are the most important issues regarding growth that you'd like the City of Midland to consider? Let's make a "Quick List", using just a short word or phrase to make sure we get everybody's ideas up.

Infrastructure

Water, sewer

Traffic control

Access to emergency services

Code enforcement

Work with landowners and developers to coordinate turf issues

DEQ issues

Jail

Housing affordability

Incorporating surrounding communities

Re-examine the MUGA policy

Determine what kind of growth you want before it comes

Let's talk now about information provided by the City and communication with the City. What City information would you like to be able to access online? And what transactions would you like to be able to do online? Again, let's create a "Quick List", not discussing the merits, just getting the list up.

I use the City's website regularly and think it's great
I would like the City to keep code enforcement complaints confidential
I'd like to pay my water bill online
Pay taxes
Water bill automatic deduction
Pay taxes with a credit card
Get annual parks and recreation passes
Pay for waste bin stickers

One last thing about City information: if you are able to do all these things online, how concerned would you be about confidentiality?

Why put it online? My privacy shouldn't be violated for someone's convenience
Can you opt out?
Are there advantages to the City in doing this, like efficiencies?
It would be easier for 'Nosy Nellies' to look but it's already public information anyway so why not make it available?
But people buying a house could look up all prices in the neighborhood - I don't want information online
I've looked up my taxes to make sure they're in line with my neighbors - I would like the information online
I don't like the breach of confidentiality. Is there another way?
If it's available now, so be it - put it online

Group #3

6:30 p.m. January 11, 2005

26 participants

Using no more than a word or a short phrase, please write the answer to this question on your pad of paper: List one thing that you like best about life in Midland, then one thing you'd change if you could.

Like Best

The different services
Basic City services
Safeness; peacefulness of community
Schools
The quality of provided; the services;
things for youth
Family activities; community involvement
Many denominations of churches
The services available
Safety
Safety
Schools
Schools and parks
Schools and parks
Comfortable; secure
Sense of security
Services and amenities
Safe and secure; recreation opportunities
Recreation amenities, e.g. the tennis center
Safe; clean; good quality of life
Size; community feeling; positive attitude
The services available for retirees
The services offered; the volunteer base
How groups and individuals come together
to solve problems
Juvenile Care Center
Safety

Change

The urban density of downtown; we need
more and different uses
Traffic problems
Pay water bills electronically
Better restaurants
High property tax
Traffic
The decline of the Circle area
Unemployment
More diversity of businesses
Outward sprawl - it's getting too
suburban
More diversity in industrial and commercial
Teen activities
Planning; there's excessive growth by the
Mall without the necessary
infrastructure
Acquire new park land near new houses;
update the City Master Plan
More diversity
More for teenagers to do
Traffic flow
Entertainment for young people
Outward sprawl with the downtown and
Circle area needing attention
Increase diversity of businesses
More diverse employment for our children
Adjust egress of traffic on the west side of
the Mall
Increase diversity of businesses
Traffic all over the city - you have to stop
at lots of lights
Helping children in unfortunate situations
Traffic flow / traffic lights

You've just heard up-to-date information about the City, the services it provides, and its revenues and budget issues. The first question for you is: Is the City of Midland fulfilling the role you want it to when it comes to the overall provision of services?

Yes - All participants

Next, is there any service that the City currently provides that you believe the City could or should stop providing?

I object to a service offered to limited number of people, for example the Barstow Airport; there should be no City subsidy of that. I also don't think we need an ice Arena for the number of people who use it - we could've upgraded the current two sheets of ice

At the Library, how are people who live out of the City and who use it also supporting it? Maybe we should increase user fees there

With the ice rink I'm concerned that \$200,000 may not be sufficient. Why is only the City providing a subsidy? The County should also subsidize

We can't just pick on the Airport - I pay a lot of taxes for things I personally don't use

Eliminate funding for sidewalk replacement

I agree - I had my sidewalks replaced a few years ago and they really weren't that bad

What about any service that's prompted you to think, "If only the City of Midland would offer that, I'd be a happy citizen"?

Trim trees over the roads

Promote the community to attract more commercial and industrial businesses

How much of a detriment is the amount of taxes commercial and industrial companies pay when you're trying to get them to come to Midland?

We need to help small businesses - that's a very important issue because they don't have the clout of industrial businesses

By offering abatements to large businesses all other businesses have to support the community

Now let's talk about possible changes in service. What services or programs do you need less of? More of?

I'm stunned by the amount of park acreage we have - it's a like Lexus and maybe we need more of a Chevy

Many of the parks don't have public access and I would like that changed

I like the number of parks we have but many of them aren't used much - maybe we should sell them

Some neighborhood parks are not used much. Many are more like real estate add-ons because of lack of public access. We need to build up the major park areas that get a lot of use

Levy fees on those private parks because they do add property value

We have too many softball diamonds in this town

Parks are scattered all over town but there's not a lot of acreage in any of them

Can you develop existing parks into something else?

Many City offerings are enterprise funds. I would like more enterprise funds established; establish them for Barstow Airport, Dial-a-Ride, the Building Department and the Cemetery

Can the City find a more cost effective way to provide retiree benefits?

Consider mass / public transportation to reduce traffic

Full retirement benefits are a thing of the past for some; phase out some of the benefits over time. The City should be more like the private sector

Move the County Fairground into the City

Cooperate with area cities to promote the region and take a regional approach to services

Eliminate non-essential public safety services - it looks like we have another Lexus there

Provide affordable, safe, adequate housing. I think the Lexus level is fine for safety. We have a fine community because of the fine people running it and looking out for it. I'd like us to be as generous with them as we can be regarding benefits; that's how we attract and retain good people

Seven years ago in the City's budget focus groups, you told the City to maintain the same services, work as efficiently as possible, raise your taxes only if necessary to keep the City's current quality and level of service. Does that advice still hold, or would you change it?

Don't return the tax appeal money to taxpayers so we can continue to support the services we have now

Take a hard look at putting the costs on the users

We are better off in Midland than our neighboring communities. What's wrong with being something like a Lexus? User fees are okay when appropriately applied

The 1997 advice is fine; also add additional enterprise funds

There's been a 'Wal-Mart-ing of America,' with decreases in expenses and costs and the same should apply to City government costs - we simply can't afford the same things anymore

I object to the policies of the company you just mentioned

Let's talk now about growth. Many people believe that successful communities encourage a gradual and steady rate of growth, believing that slow or no growth risks stagnation while rapid growth strains services and community resources. Do you fundamentally agree or disagree with that belief? Why?

Yes [wide agreement in group]

When is enough enough? Even with small, steady growth we'll lose the community feel over time. I don't disagree with the principle but I do want it to be proportional

What are the most important issues regarding growth that you'd like the City of Midland to consider? Let's make a "Quick List", using just a short word or phrase to make sure we get everybody's ideas up.

Infrastructure to support it

We're not filling in the city, we're expanding outside instead. I don't want our inner city to decay; we need to control where growth goes

We have a challenge and that's the need to foster a better environment for commercial development, for example over-regulating zoning

Sometimes we need to re-use land instead of abandoning it

We need quality affordable housing spread around the community, not large developments

We need to provide for inner city growth and also allow growth other places; you can over-regulate growth

You're only showing future growth as residential - we also need industrial and commercial growth. We need to promote Midland as a place to do business

When they put in the interstate by Bay City they talked about an Enterprise Zone there but nothing ever happened

Focus on businesses that will produce a product instead of 'big box' businesses

We also need service businesses. We need forethought in planning growth; we need a balance of businesses

When it comes to community growth, there seem to be two schools of thought. One is for growth to occur naturally and for the City to build roadways, utilities and other infrastructure when necessary and in response to that naturally-occurring development. The other is to try to anticipate growth, to watch how growth occurs in other similar communities, to forecast where and how growth will occur and to build the roads, utilities and infrastructure ahead of growth. In general, which of these approaches makes the most sense for Midland? Why?

We've already seen that building it as it's needed doesn't work - look at U.S. 10. You have to build ahead of the need. You feel it most with roads
I think it's a matter of planning. It needs to be in the middle of the two approaches - be ready to build but don't build

I agree. I'm not willing to pay ahead of time; plan for it but don't develop too quickly
I like that idea

We have examples of private investors being willing to put in infrastructure
A water system can't be put in by a private entity, so sometimes it makes sense for public entities to do things up front

We should take a look at if we're properly charging users for infrastructure
If we don't solve the dioxin issue we won't have to worry about growth

Let's talk now about information provided by the City and communication with the City. What City information would you like to be able to access online? And what transactions would you like to be able to do online? Again, let's create a "Quick List", not discussing the merits, just getting the list up.

Pay my taxes and my water and sewer bill
The City does a good job updating its website in the fall regarding things like leaves but needs more updating of information in the winter
We need winter recreation activity information online
The website is pretty good; there's lots of good information on it

One last thing about City information: if you are able to do all these things online, how concerned would you be about confidentiality?

[Note: Because of clarification required on this question for the first few groups, this question was changed in subsequent groups to ask: *City records and information are available now—they are public records—with access through a trip to City Hall. Putting the information online would not change its availability but would change the convenience of access both for you and others. Is your convenience worth easier access by others?*]

Automate it if I can get it anyway through the Freedom of Information Act
It will be costly to keep updated so I don't know if I'd support it just because of that. I'm all for it if it doesn't increase costs or if it decreases City costs
Add a disclosure statement regarding using the information properly so people don't abuse it and enforce a penalty if they do abuse it
If the information's more difficult to get that's probably better - it's nobody's business and shouldn't be handed to them on a platter
If it's a matter of public record anyway it's okay to give it out
Find out what the potential abuses are first. Seek advice from experts to find out potential downsides and let the public know and then decide
We need it to be as transparent as possible
Transparency is okay but not letting commercial enterprises get personal information

A casual Internet user getting all that information is not good. There should be something built into the system to track that. You should have to work for the information if you have to go to City Hall to get it

If it's public information it should be readily available online

Mass marketers can get it anyway so why not put it online?

If you have to register to get it physically you should have to register to get it online

To put limitations on public information means it's not public information anymore

Group #4

9 a.m. January 12, 2005

26 participants

Using no more than a word or a short phrase, please write the answer to this question on your pad of paper: List one thing that you like best about life in Midland, then one thing you'd change if you could.

Like Best

The community involvement and participation
If there's a good idea, somehow folks in Midland
will make it happen
You can be involved and be a part of it
I'm pretty content
It's a good place to raise a family
Good for families; clean
Quality of life
Level of municipal services
Public safety, low crime; road maintenance
Quality of life; quality facilities
Family-oriented
Quality of life; family; cultural; parks and
recreation; safety and security; diversity
brought in by corporations
Strong sense of ownership and pride; City
allows us to have a voice
Good programs for lower income people
Multiple opportunities to participate
Big city amenities with small town feel
Cultural facilities - schools, Arts Center, Library
Easy to raise a young family here; things to do;
diverse
High quality of life and services
Family-oriented
Uniqueness and friendliness
Good for families
The economic base allowed us to have our
high quality of life; good schools
Accessibility to rich community resources
Midland Public Schools
Comfortable community; community TV stations

Change

Put more effort toward downtown
improvement
Better communication about the real
needs of some people in the
community
Transportation, especially for people
with disabilities
We need to be more enterprising
Daily newspaper
Reality - we need to open our eyes as a
community
No fine dining restaurants
Stronger economy
Transportation; question the
effectiveness of the tax appeal -
seems like communication on
that could've been better
Our reliance on very large companies as
our main source of revenue
More of same
Make downtown more vibrant and alive
Challenging job climate
The economy - bring in small business
enterprises
Transportation, especially the traffic
from the Mall to downtown and in
the Circle area
Transportation; make the community
more user-friendly to newcomers
Traffic at the Mall area
Low-income people's voices are not
always heard; they have no say in
programs
Traffic enforcement at intersections
and people running red lights
Long-range planning at the Mall on
transportation. Is there a
downtown plan in place?
Lack of long-range planning; Mall is a
mess - looks like Las Vegas
Better balance between what business
pays and what residents pay

The economic base - need for small business; need for green spaces and space for tranquility
More participation - too much apathy
More diversity of employment; more affordable housing; traffic

You've just heard up-to-date information about the City, the services it provides, and its revenues and budget issues. The first question for you is: Is the City of Midland fulfilling the role you want it to when it comes to the overall provision of services?

Yes - All participants

Next, is there any service that the City currently provides that you believe the City could or should stop providing?

Replacement of sidewalks; DARE - there's still a need but take care of it differently
Maintenance of some sidewalks
Take a look at selling some City property in the outskirts
Barstow Airport - somebody else should provide that service

What about any service that's prompted you to think, "If only the City of Midland would offer that, I'd be a happy citizen"?

We need to convince others this is a good place to live
We should get into services that people want that will generate cash - maybe we're in the wrong areas. For example, use City land for soccer fields. Are there assets we have that we can offer to other communities to get money coming in? Don't add services for us, but develop regional draws to other people to come in and use them

Now let's talk about possible changes in service. What services or programs do you need less of? More of?

For services used by fewer residents, look at how they are paid for; for example kids sports - should that be paid for by general revenues or user fees?
Do Dial-a-Ride better
Look at the demographics of services, the benefactors versus who pays for them.
Consider more user fees
That will hurt our lower income families if you increase user fees for children's programs
There are scholarships
It's ridiculous that a City the size of Midland doesn't have bus service. Dial-a-Ride is a joke
It may be a joke but it helps the non-car people
We don't want to be a community where only the rich can afford to send their kids to activities and programs. Some low-income people couldn't get to work without Dial-a-Ride
I'm astounded at the Library costs - look at who's utilizing it for what. The \$46 per user seems high to me. I'm not at all against the Library, though
City residents are paying and the County residents also use it but they pay a fee
It's a broad question: is there a way to reduce costs? You need to look at the overall funding structure of the City
I don't know where the \$46 [at the Library] is going - how's the money allocated?

Could we also look at the park system - who's using it, what are the costs?
Have we examined all services for who's using them? Hit the right and / or enough people
If you cut too much you lose the uniqueness of Midland. We need to bring in more money,
not cut
The foundation community has created endowment funds for gifts, so there are
opportunities. That's another way to look at revenue for the City
We should get into services that people want that will generate cash - maybe we're in the
wrong areas. For example, use City land for soccer fields
Three sheets of ice will bring in money from other communities and will help local
businesses
I wouldn't mind paying a user fee to use Stratford Park but it's not well maintained
I don't want to pay tax money for people from Saginaw to use our community facilities
When you start bringing in tournaments that generates a lot of money
Put a 1 percent tax on hotel rooms as a revenue generator
I think that's a good idea, but I don't want it to go into a general fund - it should be
earmarked to build beautiful facilities. Midland's losing its character - we need
outside patios along the river, for example
Keep the quality of life here - if we want people to want to live here, we need to keep
our cleanliness, parks and services
User fees and contracting out - move in that direction but very carefully to reduce costs
while maintaining our quality of life
If we charge fees, we need to be careful. For example, if trash fees are too high, the
people will dispose of trash in other, less desirable ways
We need a base of commercial and industrial uses
Is there an opportunity to use prison labor as unskilled labor at a reduced cost?
Evaluate a user fee for trash collection
We need a re-assessment of residential property - it's way overdue
The signage at the Mall is bad. We need better signage throughout the community
Is there any organization that coordinates tournaments?
Does the City need the Commission on Community Relations again to talk through
community issues like we're discussing here?

Let's talk now about growth. Many people believe that successful communities encourage a gradual and steady rate of growth, believing that slow or no growth risks stagnation while rapid growth strains services and community resources. Do you fundamentally agree or disagree with that belief? Why?

It needs to be qualified. Residential growth is expensive but commercial growth is not
Can't you put another crossing over the interstate at the Mall - can't you tax those
businesses to do that?
If residential growth around the Mall increases traffic will become an even bigger problem
The outside traffic consultant the City uses doesn't live in Midland so he doesn't know the
real impacts of his decisions
We have awful traffic signs. That traffic consultant must design them on sunny days
because on rainy days you can't see the signs
There's no traffic here - the wait here is nominal
Any future large road projects need more than a consultant who's here only part of the
time

What are the most important issues regarding growth that you'd like the City of Midland to consider? Let's make a "Quick List", using just a short word or phrase to make sure we get everybody's ideas up.

Traffic

Safe places for runners, bikers and non-organized sports

Are we trying to bring in companies? How can we talk about growth when we don't know our growth policy? Do we have one? We need a growth plan

A growth plan should consider access / frontage roads

The City can't control private property owners, but is the City trying to bring in companies that can sustain our growth? There should be vehicular access across town to the west side

Be mindful of providing green space and park land available to residents and businesses in all areas of the community

Because of wetlands much of our area is inaccessible to development

The impact on our environment will be key in the future - wetlands is only one issue. The City needs to put more emphasis on communication. Lots of what people talked about today is already being looked at but people don't know about it

We need to look at the whole city when it comes to growth - diffuse traffic

When you defer maintenance you never catch up. I would gladly pay more for infrastructure maintenance

We need good access to U.S.10 at Waldo and Wheeler

We need to focus on the potential Circle area and the whole city

Let's talk now about information provided by the City and communication with the City. What City information would you like to be able to access online? And what transactions would you like to be able to do online? Again, let's create a "Quick List", not discussing the merits, just getting the list up.

Water bills and tax payments

Automatic clearinghouse payments

An avenue to get people more involved in the City - many don't know how to get involved
Communications. We need personnel to respond to questions - I've asked questions before and have gotten no response

I pay my bills by check and am happy with that

I would like to be able to pay by credit card

Using credit cards would cost the City something - do we want to do that?

One last thing about City information: if you are able to do all these things online, how concerned would you be about confidentiality?

[Note: Because of clarification required on this question for the first few groups, this question was changed in subsequent groups to ask: City records and information are available now—they are public records—with access through a trip to City Hall. Putting the information online would not change its availability but would change the convenience of access both for you and others. Is your convenience worth easier access by others?]

Can't you make it secure?

I'm open to having all information online - people may need it

I'm not sure how I feel about it - I want the convenience but I don't want information about me available to everyone

It's not a draw for me

It's already available, it's just a question of how easy do you want to make it? I have no problem with it

What's the cost? Why do it?

You get payments quicker and get a better return when it's done online

If someone wants that information, they're going to get it anyway - I have no problem with it

I don't want people seeing my records - I don't think putting it on the web is necessary

I don't find it necessary

Group #5

6:30 p.m. January 12, 2005

27 participants

Using no more than a word or a short phrase, please write the answer to this question on your pad of paper: List one thing that you like best about life in Midland, then one thing you'd change if you could.

Like Best

Lots of stuff to do
Feels like my hometown
It values good education
The people - a quality community
Safety and security for families
Family activities
Friendly; safety; values; feels like home
Family-friendly; safe; good education
Quality and diversity of activities
Small town atmosphere
Cultural facilities and activities, especially
the Library
Small town with big city amenities
Priority placed on education
Family activities and emphasis
Safety and security
Small town atmosphere; welcoming
Improvements; opportunities
Good education for kids
Growth has been great
Library is top-notch
Education is valued and there's a
commitment to schools
It's like coming home to my hometown
in Sweden
Services, like the Library, the parks,
Dow Gardens
Clean, pretty
Friendly; sense of community
School system; community volunteers
Fiscal responsibility of the City

Change

Traffic at the Mall
Traffic flow is horrible at times
Better teamwork with Midland City
departments and with the County
More focus on dance as an art
Wish people would have more faith in
the future of the community
Chopping up trees for utility lines
Diversification of industrial base
More attention paid to parks
Tax abatements and unfunded
mandates, and too much time
spent on them
Diversification of economic base; nice
dog park
Traffic flow and appearance in some
areas
Downtown and the waterfront areas
Diversity of businesses
Nothing
Restrict growth around the Mall and
focus on downtown
Less Dow orientation
More visionary
Traffic flow throughout the city
Greater cultural diversity
Leaf pick-up
Better public transportation
Apartment/condo families - they're
missing the plusses of being in a
house
Better police enforcement of traffic
laws
It's not as safe as people think;
complaints to police not
followed up on
Enrich downtown and have more
activities for youth
True industrial development; more
recreation opportunities

You've just heard up-to-date information about the City, the services it provides, and its revenues and budget issues. The first question for you is: Is the City of Midland fulfilling the role you want it to when it comes to the overall provision of services?

Yes - All participants

Next, is there any service that the City currently provides that you believe the City could or should stop providing?

The Airport - a very small portion of the population uses it. It should be privatized

We have the MBS Airport and don't need it

It's necessary but we need to look at outsourcing Barstow Airport. Could we also outsource Dial-a-Ride?

Keep the business in Midland - be careful with outsourcing to outside companies

We need to support MBS

Barstow Airport is for private planes. The Wings of Mercy that flies in there is a good thing for medical needs

Now let's talk about possible changes in service. What services or programs do you need less of? More of?

I want completely automated trash pick-up

Look at marked patrol cars for police traffic enforcement

Get EMS staff and reduce the number of firefighters

Consider a Public Safety Department

I think we need more police and fire and less Dial-a-Ride because we're in a growth mode

Dow just eliminated a lot of jobs this year so I don't see us in a growth mode

Look at marked patrol cars for police traffic enforcement

Charge more recreation fees, like cross country skiing fees, Rail Trail fees

When we charge ourselves a fee we're double-taxing ourselves. We should just have fees for out-of-town users

Our cities have non-resident fees

We need marketing of tourism

In some instances user fees make sense but some don't. When people can specifically reserve a facility, user fees work

What kinds of things would make sense for charging user fees?

Library cards

I would be happy to pay a bit more in taxes instead of user fees - I like the level of City services and the convenience. User fees' impact on the budget is limited and taxes are not

Form regional consortiums to share resources and costs

Pay a little more taxes to keep the things we want. You have to process user fees so that ups the administration costs

Some people and businesses might move away with increased taxes

The deductibility of taxes helps

Add a tax to motel stays

People coming in to the community are wearing out what we pay for with our taxes

It's an insult to have a user fee for something that's been offered to me - I'd rather pay a little more tax

You have to have a balance - there are some who just can't afford user fees. We need to use our best intelligence to allocate the money we're putting into government

How will all user fees be distributed?

Look at best practices in other cities to see how they handle budget situations like this

It's hard to draw an absolute on user fees - it makes sense in some instances, like paying a fee to reserve a Library conference room for a meeting, and not in others

I think there are some fees that could be updated

Some of the Center for the Arts fees are outrageously high, especially for the elderly - they need a tiered system

I think there should be a service fee for all medical runs

Increase tourism attraction to bring money in to the community

It's better for people to spend their money here. Selfishly, if it inconveniences me, there's a point of diminishing returns - I don't want to have to wait in line at facilities because of out-of-town people

I would like to bring people downtown, not to the north side

If we do this, we need to heavily market Midland

I don't want that

I don't think we need to advertise to get events here because it already happens

Many people in these groups have mentioned traffic. Specifically, what are your concerns with traffic? Do you have any suggestions for a fix?

Very slow moving City trucks should wait until after the Dow traffic subsides before they get out on the roads

Three or four cars in a row is a traffic jam here - we really don't have a traffic problem when you look at other cities

I don't think Midland has a big traffic problem. When parents are dropping off kids at school it's bad, but that's about the only time

Look at different ways to doing things - Jefferson and Washington should be one-ways

On Jefferson and Wackerly it's impossible to make left turns. We need turn lanes and longer turn lights at certain times of the day

There's lots of technology to detect traffic flow - we need it here

We need better signage

Part of the problem is the initial design of the roads

Make the community more walkable; put schools near residential areas

The majority of the growth is in the north and northwest and is classic sprawl - access is much more difficult out there

People should get involved in upcoming zoning ordinance discussions at Planning Commission

We need more bike lanes

Let's talk now about growth. Many people believe that successful communities encourage a gradual and steady rate of growth, believing that slow or no growth risks stagnation while rapid growth strains services and community resources. Do you fundamentally agree or disagree with that belief?

I agree that moderate growth is best [wide agreement in group]

I would like to know about the industrial growth rate

We want growth in jobs, not things that are a burden on City resources. Growth should be revenue-neutral

We have a Master Plan that controls growth; citizens don't have much control over it

Some people have said they would like more industrial expansion. What do you think about that?

Look at Flint - we need to take preventive measures
Citizens should make sure we have a good balance of commercial, residential and industrial
Diversity is a good thing [*wide agreement in group*]

When it comes to the diversity of growth, is the community doing okay or does it need more emphasis?

Some growth is appropriate and some is not - we need to determine the form of diversity most appropriate for this community
We're not diversified enough when it comes to the types of jobs we have. The City can't do it alone; they need to work with the Chamber and the state

Who decides what kinds of jobs are needed?

Government should bring recommendations about jobs to the community for discussion and be willing to be questioned about it regarding the trade-offs involved
There's lots of industrial land in the community that's controlled by Dow

What are the most important issues regarding growth that you'd like the City of Midland to consider? Let's make a "Quick List", using just a short word or phrase to make sure we get everybody's ideas up.

Increased traffic problems
The bottleneck at the Mall - we need planning regarding curb cuts and site plans. The City can direct where additional traffic will go
We need infrastructure and planning around the Arena site
The City did well with placing curb cuts around Home Depot
Consider a westbound off ramp off U.S. 10 at Waldo; we need more police officers as we grow
Pay attention to the hospital and fire station locations as we grow
We need housing that's affordable for young families
I wish the City would promote exit / entry ramps at Waldo
I agree - that's a natural point. We need more traffic control there
The City does a terrible job holding contractors accountable for putting in sidewalks in a reasonable amount of time. They also need to control permits so you don't end up with empty store fronts
Signage can make a place look crummy - they need to look at that too
The new downtown shops are good. I would like to see more specialty shops and restaurants and direct traffic to them
Our street is still a dead-end and the City won't make the developer put in the court that was promised

Let's talk now about information provided by the City and communication with the City. What City information would you like to be able to access online? And what transactions would you like to be able to do online? Again, let's create a "Quick List", not discussing the merits, just getting the list up.

The house prices in the area
My water bill - both get it and pay it

Pay my taxes
Get yearly waste permits
Pull permits
Reserve refuse containers and picnic shelters
The City should do automatic debits

One last thing about City information: if you are able to do all these things online, how concerned would you be about confidentiality?

[Note: Because of clarification required on this question for the first few groups, this question was changed in subsequent groups to ask: City records and information are available now—they are public records—with access through a trip to City Hall. Putting the information online would not change its availability but would change the convenience of access both for you and others. Is your convenience worth easier access by others?]

If it's not protected by law, it should be online

I disagree - I would like to maintain my privacy and make it harder to get the information

I would have to take vacation to go City Hall during the day to get the information. I

would love to get it online

I'm opposed if you can do a name search to get the information

I would like more information but want it to be secure. Charge a user fee to get it

I don't have a problem with putting the information online

You won't ever be able to solve the security problem - I don't give a damn if you put it online

Group #6

2 p.m. January 13, 2005

31 participants

Using no more than a word or a short phrase, please write the answer to this question on your pad of paper: List one thing that you like best about life in Midland, then one thing you'd change if you could.

Like Best

Good services as a small town
Quality of neighborhoods
Community size; attitudes of people;
services
Peacefulness
Quiet atmosphere; good planning
Don't have to drive long to get places
Family-friendly size
General upkeep; safety; City administration
Proximity to 'up north'
Safety
Excellent services
Quality of life
Cultural activities
Traffic light synchronization
Abundant activities for all ages
Community spirit
Sense of family
Community spirit
Size; quality of life
Family community; excellent services and
City government
Tennis Center
So much to do; small town atmosphere;
good quality of life
People are caring and friendly
Perfect place to live
Peace; security; physical beauty
Quality of services at good cost
Small size
Quality of life
Ease and convenience
We're a 'diamond in the rough': good
activities; shopping; safety
Music, culture and the Library
Facilities such as the Library

Change

More politically even - half Democrats
and half Republicans
Diversity of thought
Dollar-rated average for making
decisions
Diversity
None
Expansion of medical facilities;
participation of hospital in drug
testing
New business attraction
Diversity of thought
Traffic patterns, particularly at the
Mall
More retail services
Diversity in businesses
Traffic situation is getting intolerable
The climate
Diversity of thought
Unsafe to bike/walk in some areas
because of traffic
Better snowplowing in neighborhoods
Change will come when people want it
Better shopping
Better cooperation and communication
between the City, the County and
businesses
Downtown expanded past Main Street
They keep asking for more money
Non-motorized transportation
opportunities
Commercial/industrial diversity
More opportunities for people to
participate in government
Diversity in opportunities will bring in
diversity of people
Do more with downtown area - we're
missing revenue and tourism dollars
Site development, such as at the Mall
More emphasis on commercial
development

Less cookie-cutter
Upgraded stores
Diversity of thought and opportunities
for the interchange of thought
Eastman Road traffic mess; keeping
large discount stores out of town

You've just heard up-to-date information about the City, the services it provides, and its revenues and budget issues. The first question for you is: Is the City of Midland fulfilling the role you want it to when it comes to the overall provision of services?

Yes - All participants

Next, is there any service that the City currently provides that you believe the City could or should stop providing?

Don't fill driveways after they are shoveled
Liability insurance coverage
Take some parks to use for commercial development - re-use them
Barstow Airport should be self-supporting; raise golf fees to make the course self-supporting
People going downtown should help pay for the Downtown Development Authority
The Civic Arena and the Housing Authority should be self-supporting. The City should provide for health and safety first
The City has worked out cooperative agreements with surrounding areas so land is not a problem
Charge fees for heavy refuse and trash collection

What about any service that's prompted you to think, "If only the City of Midland would offer that, I'd be a happy citizen"?

Electronic collection of bills

Some people in these groups have talked about user fees for services. Do they make sense for some services more than others?

Trash
The City hasn't charged for trash in the past because it's a way to keep the city clean
There are costs beyond financial, like the environment, for example. I hope the City is balancing the need for user fees with the other costs, like offering trash collection but not recycling
Communities that don't offer trash service have problems - without trash service the city would be a mess
I agree - user fees for trash is a bad idea. People would throw their junk in parks and other public areas
Maybe change the schedule and frequency
You'll have additional administrative costs with user fees
Some cities charge for leaf pick-up and some won't remove snow on subdivision streets
How about cable franchise fees - could they be used for other than community TV? I think community TV is good but do we need four channels?
They're just spending the money that's there

A number of people in these groups have mentioned concerns with traffic. What's the nature of the problem?

It's the only city I've ever lived in where you can leave late and get there early. I don't think there's a problem, compared to other cities
In general, it's good, compared to other cities but it's bad around the Mall. The stacking lanes are bad
On the west side of the Mall it backs up with people getting on Eastman. We need a right-turn only or service roads
Getting out at Meijer's is bad; we need left turn lights at Jefferson
I would like an exit at U.S. 10 and Jefferson
The State Highway Department won't approve that. A lot of work should be done all over the city on turn lanes
The City should consider another portion of the city for commercial development. A bridge at Sano to Stark Road would be good
Do a special assessment for bike paths
There's a huge amount of land for commercial development on the east side of town
Eliminate the flashing red at Saginaw and Patrick
Develop other routes around the Mall. Traffic and utilities should be included in all development plans
Land on the east side is available but all the activity will be on the north side
Leave the Circle alone - it won't make a difference to the merchants there
We could use lights at U.S. 10 exits and at Wheeler and at Waldo Road
Street lights at Joe Mann Boulevard are needed
Use low impact lighting so it doesn't bother surrounding neighborhoods

Seven years ago in the City's budget focus groups, you told the City to maintain the same services, work as efficiently as possible, raise your taxes only if necessary to keep the City's current quality and level of service. Does that advice still hold, or would you change it?

One qualification would be something that someone sees a need for - I can see designated funding for special needs that could be voted on
Do a special assessment for road improvements around the Mall - people from out-of-town go there
We need to be more business-friendly, not less
Efficiencies have been made that have saved money. Golf course maintenance might be more efficient
The 1997 advice is good and the City has done a good job following it. Is there any big thing looming that could impact the budget?
How about the big water pipeline that needs repair?
Major road improvements that are being made already have funding
1997 is good advice but the situation has changed - is it still feasible?
I support the 1997 statement with the comment that working efficiently is important.
City Council should set annual efficiency goals
Keep the pressure on for constant improvement and reward people for doing well
We're becoming a mature city and often people start moving out of mature cities to townships

Let's talk now about growth. Many people believe that successful communities encourage a gradual and steady rate of growth, believing that slow or no growth risks stagnation while rapid growth strains services and community resources. Do you fundamentally agree or disagree with that belief?

We need to have sustainable growth to maintain a vibrant community and focus on infrastructure and services

I would like moderate growth, not slow

We've grown because of the bad school system in Bay City and the racial tensions in Saginaw and we'll continue to grow because of our quality of life

I don't think growth extremes are relevant. If we're going to have sustainable growth it's got to come from industrial growth. The industrial growth in the past has given us our quality of life today. The City needs to promote industrial growth

Should there be a business recruitment effort? If so, what should the role of the City be in that effort?

Yes, there needs to be recruitment, but I don't know what the City would do

We need to have the infrastructure to accommodate growth. Agencies should work together to promote growth and the City should be active in that effort

Venture capital is coming into the community. All kinds of effort is being put into the new Dow development

Has the City promoted business growth in the past?

The City shouldn't take the lead but be supportive and provide the infrastructure

All Michigan cities would like industrial development but our quality of life will be a big draw. How can we make Midland unique?

The highway by the Mall divides the community and that's not good for us. I would like the City to overcome the physical barriers in our community in their planning

If we remove industrial impediments that will increase our chances of bringing in industry - that's a proactive approach that doesn't cost money

You have to waive taxes these days to be competitive. We need to sell all of our community's positives. We need to keep our strong structure going

Increasing taxes would be hard on those with fixed incomes and the retired and they'll move away

If we give away too much to business we'll lose our advantage - we have to find a balance

We have organizations in place that promote industrial development but I don't know how successful they are. The City has a role in promoting

If we're going to grow we're going to have to grow the industry within our community

We have two disincentives - our climate and our location. It would be good to work on business expansion here

Development should be driven by the private sector with the City and County providing the infrastructure and being responsive. They've done a good job with that

The City can promote our quality of life to industry by openness on information, for example on the dioxin issue. It must be handled carefully and openly

We need brains and money - we have the quality of life

Our old money has stayed here through the foundations. Industry needs to know this. City government needs to let industry know what we've got here

What are the most important issues regarding growth that you'd like the City of Midland to consider? Let's make a "Quick List", using just a short word or phrase to make sure we get everybody's ideas up.

The City should continue its support of Midland Tomorrow and try to increase it
Be aware of where new developments are going and make sure the streets are in place to get around

Support diversity through affordable housing

Continue the Master Growth Plan

Not growth at all costs - protect our quality of life

Growth with taste and uniqueness

Consider 100 percent tax abatements for industry that's already here to expand their operations

Don't sacrifice environmental quality

Let's talk now about information provided by the City and communication with the City. What City information would you like to be able to access online? And what transactions would you like to be able to do online? Again, let's create a "Quick List", not discussing the merits, just getting the list up.

Pay water bills, taxes - take out of my checking account

Waste bin fees - anything we'd have to go to City Hall for

Swimming lesson and softball registration

There's nothing I'd like online that has personal information

Minutes of meetings would be good

One last thing about City information: if you are able to do all these things online, how concerned would you be about confidentiality?

[Note: Because of clarification required on this question for the first few groups, this question was changed in subsequent groups to ask: *City records and information are available now—they are public records—with access through a trip to City Hall. Putting the information online would not change its availability but would change the convenience of access both for you and others. Is your convenience worth easier access by others?*]

I'm concerned about putting too much online

I'm concerned too - I think it's unnecessary

You can already compare tax assessments

It will make it easier for businesses if information is online; people are technologically savvy

Keep hard copies too if you go online with all the information

I want Council and Planning Commission agenda and maps with zoning requests

Picnic shelter requests and subscribe for special Council meeting minutes

Construction information

I would like no one to see what I use in water and gas - next would be a floor plan of my house

Group #7

6:30 p.m. January 13, 2005

22 participants

Using no more than a word or a short phrase, please write the answer to this question on your pad of paper: List one thing that you like best about life in Midland, then one thing you'd change if you could.

Like Best

Family-oriented; excellent resources to offer
Small town; strong family feel; lots of good things to do for its size
Variety of things going on; colleges; people from all over the world
Volunteerism opportunities; safe; quiet; good for bringing up a family
People involvement, both individuals and groups
The variety of people; pride; cleanliness; good leaders
Clean appearance - well-kept
Small town atmosphere; activities for families
Schools
Educational system; good health care
Agree with everything mentioned
Well organized; beautiful; friendly people
Small town with access to good things - lots of choices
Safety
Safety; quality of life
Ease of getting to work - most of the town has a minimal amount of traffic; wide range of services and facilities, especially the Library
Schools; medical community; literary and arts community; Barstow Airport
Safe; family-oriented
Safe neighborhoods; family-oriented
Easy to live here; excellent facilities; raising a family here
Easy to live here
Wildlife; cultural and arts; minimal traffic congestion

Change

I don't know enough about the community yet
Traffic congestion on Eastman; traffic patterns north of the Holiday Inn
The weather
Good shopping
Constant amount of road repair
Midland's image needs to be publicized more
Prevent more sprawl
Traffic is bad; sprawling; Midland trying to annex
Property taxes are out of control
Property taxes; City ordinances that micromanage
Agree with the ordinances micromanaging
Agree with that too - let up a bit
I agree; fire existing employees and hire all new people at Currie Golf Course
Midland's reputation regarding the environment
Shopping, restaurant variety; improve the entrances to the city; more vibrant downtown
Rental properties are run down
Greater voice in City government with neighborhood issues
The City should offer upgraded street lights
Eastman Avenue is as bad as you can get
Public transportation system - Dial-a-Ride is not adequate
Transportation system
More restaurant variety; more winter sunlight

You've just heard up-to-date information about the City, the services it provides, and its revenues and budget issues. The first question for you is: Is the City of Midland fulfilling the role you want it to when it comes to the overall provision of services?

Yes - 184 participants

No - 1 participant

Next, is there any service that the City currently provides that you believe the City could or should stop providing?

Large refuse pick-up - charge a user fee for it and streamline the way the City does it

Now let's talk about possible changes in service. What services or programs do you need less of?

Library funding, fire funding, parks and recreation, Barstow, and the Building Department could all be scaled back and reduce the level of service

I wonder how many of our citizens use Barstow Airport compared to the amount of public money going to it. What good does the community as a whole get from it? Somebody needs to get information out to people about why we support it

We need information about the amount of user fees and subsidy at the Airport

I'd like user fees for heavy refuse collection

User fees are okay - they provide a lot of things for a lot of different people

I'd like a user fee for heavy refuse. Some of us use Barstow Airport, but we don't play golf and the City supports golf courses

I think Parks and Recreation should be a separate entity reporting directly to the City Manager

The golf course is self-supporting

A user fee is fine for heavy refuse collection, but we need to make sure we keep the town from getting messy

Some parks don't get lots of use - explore doing something else with that land

Some contracted service will go to companies outside of Midland and that's sending our money outside of this community. When we pay City employees, that money stays here

I'm willing to pay to maintain our current level of services

What do the rest of you think about paying more to maintain your current level of City services?

Absolutely - I would be more than happy to pay extra and subsidize our lower income people who couldn't afford user fees

I agree. Our quality of life is directly proportional to services. Let's look at efficiencies too. Let's maintain what we have

I would be willing to pay a modest increase in taxes but also want the City to look for efficiencies. I'm not worried about the need for a big tax increase

The percentage of retirees is increasing, so be careful about raising taxes

I agree

Taxes are a user fee in a way. We've been lucky with all the facilities that have been donated to us - now we have to maintain them all

It's important for the City to communicate how they've made operations as efficient as possible. If we've cut to the bone, then I'm okay with taxes but I'd have to be convinced

If a tax increase is needed the City needs to communicate comparative information with other communities on tax rates

In other nearby communities, many people live in townships

A number of people have talked about user fees. What services do you believe are appropriate to be paid for with user fees?

We shouldn't have a user fee on heavy refuse pick-up - I want to make it as easy as possible for people to keep their houses nice

Charge them for non-Midland residents, like at Currie Golf Course or the skating rink - whatever we charge Midland residents for now

I agree - there are lots of non-residents on softball league teams and they pay the same as we do

It's cheap to order reference materials at the Library - could you charge more?

Parks and Recreation overall is a good place to look at for user fees, especially for non-residents

Should there be a difference in user fees for children and adults?

They should be less for children *[wide agreement in group]*

I like the City sponsorship and facilities for large tournaments that are brought in - that brings money in to our community

Some people in these groups have voiced concerns about traffic. How is it a problem? Where? For whom?

Any traffic problem is a non-issue, relatively speaking. We need pre-planning. The biggest problem is north of the interstate. Recently I couldn't get out from Best Buy at the Mall. There needs to be an extension of Joe Mann Boulevard at Eastman. There's no value-added growth at the Mall. I would rather see growth that brings value to the community and services that we don't already have

I would like to see other forms of travel besides automobiles - I would like bike paths

I would love the City to put some thought into facilities for walkers and bikers and for them to enhance Dial-a-Ride

Look at a regular route for a bus. We're spending a lot of money but not serving a lot of people as it is. How about a route to the Mall? From the Senior Center?

The planning for the Mall wasn't good. The only way to alleviate Mall traffic is to put in an overpass

Sidewalks on Eastman are dangerous - they're too close to the road. Eastman's not nearly the quality of everything else we have in Midland

The left-hand turn at Saginaw and Eastman is very dangerous, especially at noon - it backs up at McDonalds. It's not the wait that bothers me - it's that it's dangerous

Eastman is not safe - a majority of accidents happen there. I would like that looked at by local people, not an outside traffic consultant

The speed limit on Eastman is too high

Limit access onto Eastman

What are the most important issues regarding growth that you'd like the City of Midland to consider? Let's make a "Quick List", using just a short word or phrase to make sure we get everybody's ideas up.

Listen and hear what citizens are saying

Get adequate road capacity in to handle growth

Disperse growth

Businesses will want to locate at the Mall. The City should ease the tax burden along the M20 corridor - there are lots of businesses out there that have failed. Push businesses to locate out there

Eastman is a classic feeder street

Consider the need for sidewalks and alternative transportation as roads are built

Consider an interchange at Waldo

Consider a second wastewater plant to serve areas to the west. I would like another bridge over the river south of town

Maintain a focus on increasing the current city inside the highway area. Do mixed-use zoning. Avoid sprawl. Maintain population density within the city

Zoning now separates residential and commercial - it's set up so you have to have a car

Having residential and commercial together is a matter of scale - small shops are okay but not big commercial development

We ought to look at insisting on landscaping so we don't have 'boxes' ensconced on asphalt

It's possible to do better than we're doing when it comes to zoning and sprawl. Zoning has become a self-fulfilling prophecy

It's difficult not to be able to afford to move out of a neighborhood when commercial comes into your neighborhood. Council doesn't listen one bit when that happens

Growth has surpassed our planning and zoning in our city. Twenty years ago the zoning may have been okay but not now. We don't get full-size restaurants here and I don't understand why

I love the big box retailers and think the City has done a good job of isolating them. We have small restaurants and shops because that's all the local population can support.

We need to become a regional commercial center. We don't have to worry about sprawl because the growth rate is very low. We should embrace retail growth and develop a regional economy

Let's talk now about information provided by the City and communication with the City. What City information would you like to be able to access online? And what transactions would you like to be able to do online? Again, let's create a "Quick List", not discussing the merits, just getting the list up.

Encourage putting GPS and all information online - that would be a huge benefit

People could sign up for paying fees online. Put shelter reservations online

How many people can access information online? Make sure there's equal access

Have a dual phone and online system

Keep aware of computer access issues for low and moderate income people and people who don't know how to use computers

I'm all for information online and for GPS. How much more are we going to spend for GPS administration? Let's not pay more in administrative costs

I'd like to pay water bills and taxes online

I'd like to pay my water bill online using my credit card

Offer accessibility to all through a dual system

One last thing about City information: if you are able to do all these things online, how concerned would you be about confidentiality?

[Note: Because of clarification required on this question for the first few groups, this question was changed in subsequent groups to ask: City records and information are available now—they are public records—with access through a trip to City Hall. Putting the information online would not change its availability but would change the convenience of access both for you and others. Is your convenience worth easier access by others?]

Put it all online *[wide agreement in group]*

The City will save money by putting all information online

Appendix D

Roundtable Discussion Guide

City of Midland Citizen Roundtables
January, 2005
Discussion Guide

I. OPENING / GROUND RULES *(10 minutes)*
Welcome; thank you for your commitment of time

Purpose of Roundtables: to give you information about the City of Midland's budget and to get your ideas about priorities that should be considered as the City makes both short-term and long-term budget decisions

Ground rules for discussion:

1. All perspectives are valuable and valued
2. You have a responsibility to say what you think
3. No decisions are needed from this group, so you don't need to agree. In fact, please disagree; if you have ideas different than those being expressed, please speak up so that we can know the full range of thinking
4. Listen carefully to the opinions and beliefs of others
5. Please do not dominate the discussion; allow everyone to have the opportunity to participate fully by keeping your remarks brief
6. Please allow us to challenge you by asking "why" you hold a belief or idea; we won't be trying to be disagreeable, we just want to make sure we understand your intent and your thinking

City staff's role: they will be giving a presentation today / tonight about the City budget; we may ask them during our discussion to clarify information, if needed; they've also joined us in order to hear first-hand what you have to say

- They genuinely want to know what's on your minds, and have thick skins, so feel free to be candid in your remarks
- You'll receive a copy of all the slides - so don't feel like you have to take highly detailed notes on the numbers being presented

The record will be kept with flip chart notes; no attribution will be made to any individual—we'll write down what you said but not who said it

- We ask you to hold the same confidence: you are free to discuss what was said at this session, but we ask that you not attribute specific responses to any individual

Are those ground rules acceptable to everyone? Can you all agree to them?

(If there are news reporters present)

We have _____ here from (name of media outlet) and he / she is willing to abide by the following conditions, if you agree:

- so that each of you can speak freely, he /she will not attribute any remarks made during our discussion today / tonight to any individual by name
- he / she may interview any of you, for attribution, after the Roundtable is over, if you agree to an interview

- no story will appear until after all the Roundtables are finished so that the results aren't influenced

Do any of you have an objection if he / she stays?

Are you ready to begin?

II. INTRODUCTORY QUESTION *(15 minutes)*

Using no more than a word or a short phrase, please write the answer to this question on your pad of paper:

List one thing that you like best about life in Midland, then one thing you'd change if you could.

III. PRESENTATION / DISCUSSION

PRESENTATION "A" - Basic City Government 101 *(15 minutes)*

- Revenue sources
- Budget categories
- Defining the budget problems: demand for service is continuing to increase; cost of service delivery increasing; revenues constant; cost of health care on the rise; state shared revenues and investment earnings declining; tax appeals

DISCUSSION "A" - BASIC CITY SERVICES *(35 minutes)*

You've just heard up-to-date information about the City, the services it provides, and its revenues and budget issues. The first question for you is:

1. Is the City of Midland fulfilling the role you want it to when it comes to the overall provision of services? Why or why not?
2. Next, is there any service that the City currently provides that you believe the City could or should stop providing?

Probe: Do you believe there's no longer a need? If need continues, who else could / should provide the service?

3. What about any service that's prompted you to think, "If only the City of Midland would offer that, I'd be a happy citizen"?
4. Now let's talk about possible changes in service. What services or programs do you need less of?

More of?

5. Seven years ago in the City's budget focus groups, you told the City to maintain the same services, work as efficiently as possible, raise your taxes only if necessary to keep the City's current quality and level of service. Does that advice still hold, or would you change it?

PRESENTATION "B" - GROWTH INFORMATION (15 minutes)

- Growth trends and populations, local/historical, as compared to neighboring communities
- Master Plan
- City's basic responsibility in growth (infrastructure, utilities)
- Funding (pay as you go, bonding)
- Why we've been successful historically (MUGA) as compared to other cities (Saginaw)
 - Future Growth Challenges
- Trends from region / state / nation that could affect revenues and mandated expenditures
- "Best guess" local forecast

DISCUSSION "B" - GROWTH INFORMATION (35 minutes)

6. Let's talk now about growth. Many people believe that successful communities encourage a gradual and steady rate of growth, believing that slow or no growth risks stagnation while rapid growth strains services and community resources.

Do you fundamentally agree or disagree with that belief?

Why?

7. What are the most important issues regarding growth that you'd like the City of Midland to consider? Let's make a "Quick List", using just a short word or phrase to make sure we get everybody's ideas up.
8. When it comes to community growth, there seem to be two schools of thought. One is for growth to occur naturally and for the City to build roadways, utilities and other infrastructure when necessary and in response to that naturally-occurring development. The other is to try to anticipate growth, to watch how growth occurs in other similar communities, to forecast where and how growth will occur and to build the roads, utilities and infrastructure ahead of growth.

In general, which of these approaches makes the most sense for Midland?

Why?

PRESENTATION "C" - INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

(10 minutes)

- Overview of what 1997 groups said about information
- Changes made as a result of the 1997 citizen guidance on the budget
 - Efficiencies increased
 - Fees for services
 - Services reduced (any?)
- Review of various communications vehicles used by the City

DISCUSSION "C" - INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

(20 minutes)

1. Let's talk now about information provided by the City and communication with the City. Your focus groups in 1997 said you wanted more information from the City and increased communication opportunities with the City. Since that time the City has initiated the Citizen Comment Line, a City Hall e-mail address, has launched a website, issues a weekly e-newsletter, has its own governmental cable station with message board, informational programming and cablecasting of City Council meetings and meetings of all boards and commissions.

How do you find out about City programs and services? Please check all that apply in answering Question #5 on your Response Forms now.

Now, just for those you checked, please take a few minutes to rank the quality of each communication tool by circling a number below the listing with '1' representing "poor" quality and '10' representing "outstanding" quality

And then, if there is any communication tool listed that you believe is outdated or no longer effective and should be discontinued, please note that by that particular line.

2. What City information would you like to be able to access online? And what transactions would you like to be able to do online? Again, let's create a "Quick List", not discussing the merits, just getting the list up.

Next, how important is it that Midland residents be able to find this information and conduct these transactions online?

Again, please turn to your Response Form and answer Question #6.

One last thing about City information: if you are able to do all these things online, how concerned would you be about confidentiality?

Prompt if needed: For example, if people can pay fines online, is there a concern about online access to their individual records?

VI. WRAP-UP / RESPONSE FORM INSTRUCTIONS *(5 minutes)*

Responses from all seven groups will be compiled. Consistencies and general themes will be identified, as will areas where there was significant disagreement. That information will be forwarded to City Council for consideration as it develops the 2005 - 2006 budget and considers short- and long-term City policies. A report on the results will be made to City Council at its February 7th meeting, which you're all encouraged to attend, and a summary of results will be sent to each of you, either through the mail or e-mail. Results will also be posted on the City's website and at the Government Information Center at the Library.

We want to thank you again for your time and your interest in your city.

Now please take a few minutes to complete your response forms. Once you're finished, please leave it on the table, and you're free to go.

(20 minutes, if needed)

Appendix E
Response Form Verbatim Results

Verbatim Responses from Participant Response Forms

Question 1: When it comes to the Midland community, what are you most proud of?

Quality of services /facilities / activities for all	13%	45 mentions
Safe / secure	12%	40 mentions
Quality of life/ great place to live	10%	33 mentions
Schools / education valued / educated community	8%	26 mentions
Cultural offerings / facilities	7%	24 mentions
Clean / well maintained	6%	19 mentions
Grace A. Dow Memorial Library	5%	18 mentions
Good for families	4%	13 mentions
Parks	4%	15 mentions
Recreation programs / opportunities	3%	11 mentions
Community cooperation / involvement	3%	10 mentions
Excellent big city amenities	3%	10 mentions
Good City government / well run / responsive	3%	10 mentions
Attractive community	2%	6 mentions
Generous community	2%	5 mentions
Health care / hospital	2%	5 mentions
Nice neighborhoods	2%	5 mentions
Small town atmosphere	2%	5 mentions
Diverse population	1%	4 mentions
Miscellaneous	5%	17 mentions

Supporting Data

Cooperation

(MBS airport, Delta College, water system - external; Midland Tomorrow, County, etc. - internal)

Quality of life (recreation, safety, schools, parks)

Highly educated population

Wealth of services / activities

Little crime

Great place to live - clean, safe, family environment

Great schools

Good government

Our facilities and cultural opportunities

Variety of actions available

People helping people, but don't count just on volunteers

Clean, attractive city, poor transportation

Center for the Arts

Good place to live (none better)

MPS

Family-oriented community

Safe!!

Safety

Facilities

Safe

Pleasant

Small community with great services and cultural events

Total spectrum of unique services and centers for people's interests

Safety and security

Overall orderly appearance

Effective City government

Cultural opportunities

Services / activities

"Life" in general

"Generous" community

Diversity

Recreational activities

Shopping advantages - not Mall area because of traffic pattern!

Diversity of churches and schools and residential

Services and accessibility

Safe

Close-knit

Big-city amenities

Safe, friendly place to live / work / raise a family

It's small enough to be easy to get around but with large city offerings (e.g. Center for the Arts)

Services

Activities

The trees

Size

Community, family town

Concern for disadvantaged

Safety

Green areas
Schools
Library
Extras - Santa House, Tridge, pool
A beautiful city with great neighborhoods
We live in a well-run city with lots of benefits and few problems
Parks and rec facilities
This is a good livable community!
Good schools
Nice neighborhoods
Low crime
It is a city that is great for people of all ages to live in
Dow Library
Center for the Arts / Dow Gardens
Generally healthy, supportive, responsive relationship between citizens, City and other
community organizations
Ability of the city's residents to cooperatively solve community problems
Recreational facilities
Appearance of residential neighborhoods
Library
Library
Schools
Safety!
Center for the Arts
Library
Quality of life
Good neighbors
Nice community
Easy living, driving
Low crime
Library
Safe place to raise family!
Safe
Small city atmosphere
Senior services
The neighborhoods
The parks and recreational facilities
Its variety
Availability of so many services, arts, entertainment, etc.
Amenities for life style
Schools
Relative safety - crime does exist, but non-violent
Services and amenities
Security
Abundance of services
Diversity of activity
The generosity of Midland's people, to include foundations and businesses, past and
present, and their foresight and wise use of resources
Services offered as a whole within the community
Safe, well-maintained neighborhoods
The safety, cleanliness and quality of life in a medium / small town
Midland offers much for its size and convenience
Small town 'USA' atmosphere

Services available
Many fine amenities at low (tax) cost
Safe community
It's the envy of many other cities
Extent of City services
Parks and playgrounds
Schools
Safety
Parks
Excellent amenities
Schools
Safety
Services provided
Safety of community
Schools
Opportunities - Center for the Arts, etc.
Services
Positive community
Safe and desirable community
Lots of recreational opportunities
It is a welcoming, generous community
The schools are especially fine
Midland Public Schools
Livability
Quality of life
Facilities
Available cultural events
It being for the betterment of the family unit
Family
The type of city it is
Services for low-income individuals
Multiple and diverse opportunities
I like that we integrate all levels of families and situations (disabled adult care homes- I love that!)

Our Library!
The good economic tax base
The comfortable, safe, well maintained community
Diversity of population
Community involvement in public issues - participation
The activities and options that are available
That it is clean
Safe - as a single mom I feel safe alone or with my daughters
Family-friendly
Quality of life
Services
Safety
Great place to raise children
36 square miles
2,700 acres of parks, recreation
Sense of ownership and pride that citizens have
Quality of life
Cultural offerings
Parks and recreation opportunities

Health care
High quality community
A great place to raise kids
Lots of opportunities for sports, arts
We feel safe
The physical appearance - clean, well maintained
Quality of life
Cultural advantages
Cleanliness
Quiet
Welcoming
The nice parks
Dow Gardens
The Tridge
The Center for the Arts
Its quality of services and the level of quality the City provides
How much is available (City / foundation supported) for a city of this size
Responsiveness of City
Small town friendly feel
All the amenities of a large town
Concern of citizens about their community
Education is highly valued
Citizens, foundations and City Council are willing to spend resources for recreational opportunities, e.g. Trilogy Skatepark, new Civic Arena, water parks, Plymouth Park pool improvements
Education
Public safety
Family-friendly atmosphere
Amenities
Roads
Its people and their attitudes
Its Library
The support of education, art, music, health
Fiscal comment
Educational quality and availability
Safety of living
Schools
Midland Center for the Arts
Library
The educational system
Good schools
Parks
Public works
Services
Library
Clean
Friendly
Safe environment
Education
Plentiful entertainment choices
Hometown atmosphere
Activities for the children
The lack of crime

Good educational system
The efficient and courteous City staff
The level of service is vastly superior to other cities of any size, down to competent and helpful people answering the phones at City Hall
The Grace A. Dow Library
The Center for the Arts and the Dow Gardens
The diversity of activities available
Friendly people
Great schools
Impressive hospital complex
Community facilities - parks, sports facilities, Center for the Arts, etc.
Cleanliness / trash pick-up
City Parks and Recreation
Library
Parks
Ease of moving about
Community support
Cultural opportunities for a city of its size
Quality of life
Community involvement
Great neighborhoods everywhere
General upkeep
Safety
Operation of City government
The Library
The quality of services when compared with our cost
The planning and policies that have resulted in the city we now have
The quality of activities and facilities available - schools, Library, Center for the Arts, Community Center, etc.
People - diversity / education
City management
Quality of life
Safety
Cleanliness
Overall quality of life
Effective, efficient City government / services
Quality of life - "My Three Sons", "Ozzie and Harriet" could live here
Quality of life here
Quality of life
Peacefulness
Safety
Family-oriented community
Excellent services and activities
Clean streets and yards
Parks
Recreation
Planning
Quality of parks, cultural facilities and recreation opportunities
Midland is a diamond in the rough - many good things
The many opportunities available for recreation (all types)
Safety
Cleanliness
Community services

The quality of life
Range of cultural activities available
Security
Services available
As a realtor, I'm always able to sell Midland as a wonderful family-oriented community
Cultural value such as Library / music / theater
The quality of life provided by the City
Beautiful trees
Well-kept streets and yards
Well-organized services
Secure neighborhoods
Educational system
Health care services
Excellence in schools / education
The cultural amenities
Parks
The advantages for family activities
Recreational activities
Small town atmosphere
Our schools
Our medical facilities
Our Library and arts communities (Center for the Arts and Dow Gardens)
Local airport
Livability
Variety of opportunity
Very low number of violent crime incidents
Availability of services
Cleanliness of town
Small town feel but many "big town" perks (Library, Center for the Arts, community centers, airport, parks and sports, etc.)
Low crime rate - feel safe in any part of the city
People involvement / volunteerism
Family atmosphere
Cleanliness
Volunteerism
Safe and relatively quiet community
Good for families
Schools
Library
City's overall appearance
High level of services
Atmosphere (quality of life)
Aesthetics
Appearance
Parks
People
Pride of city
All of the facilities that are available
Quality of facilities
Parks and recreation facilities
Library
Center for the Arts
Facilities - MCFTA, Library

Parks
 Low crime rate
 Friendly city
 A "Dow" city but not overdone as is Hershey, PA
 Generosity of industry-derived foundations
 Nature Center
 Dow Gardens
 The appearance and cleanliness
 The wonderful buildings
 Parks
 Cultural activities

Question #2: Please indicate how you believe the City of Midland is doing when it comes to the overall delivery of services and programs. A '1' indicates "couldn't get any worse" and a '10' indicates "among the best in the country." (Circle one number below)

1 ranking		0 mentions
2 ranking		0 mentions
3 ranking		0 mentions
4 ranking		0 mentions
5 ranking	1.2%	2 mentions
6 ranking	3.7%	6 mentions
7 ranking	6.2%	10 mentions
8 ranking	35.8%	58 mentions
9 ranking	34.6%	56 mentions
10 ranking	18.5%	30 mentions

Total responses 162

Mean score: 8.5

Comments:

"Among the best in the country" Haven't lived anywhere else (Score of 10)
 Always room for a little improvement (Score of 9)
 Which may be too costly...(Score of 9)

Question #3: Please list the City services you believe are most important.

Public safety	27%	126 mentions
Waste collection / recycling	19%	87 mentions
Street maintenance / snow removal	11%	53 mentions
Utilities: water / wastewater	11%	52 mentions
Parks, recreation and sports	11%	50 mentions
Miscellaneous	5%	24 items
Library	5%	23 mentions
General infrastructure / all public services	5%	22 mentions
City government / administration	3%	16 mentions
Transportation / access	3%	14 mentions

Question #4. Please list any City services you would be willing to do without, if absolutely necessary.

Barstow Airport / Barstow subsidy	18%	44 mentions
Refuse / major trash pick-up / heavy refuse / leaf pick-up	13%	32 mentions
Miscellaneous	11%	27 items
None / don't eliminate services	10%	24 mentions
Parks and recreation / recreation programs	8%	20 mentions
Dial-a-Ride	7%	16 mentions
Civic Arena / Civic Arena subsidy	6%	14 mentions
Currie Golf Course	4%	10 mentions
MCTV	4%	10 mentions
Parks / park cleaning	3%	8 mentions
Recycling / reduce frequency	3%	8 mentions
Library / reduce Library funding	2%	6 mentions
City Calendar	2%	4 mentions

Deliver services more cost effectively reduce staff / reduce costs	2%	4 mentions
MGTV	2%	4 mentions
DARE	2%	3 mentions
Reduce City retiree benefits	1%	2 mentions
Sidewalks / sidewalk additions / replacement	1%	2 mentions
Sidewalk snow removal	1%	2 mentions

Supporting Data

Playground programs
 Reduce frequency of recycling
 MCTV
 MCTV
 Barstow Airport subsidy
 Dial-a-Ride
 Airport subsidy
 Park cleaning; public volunteers would do if recorded on certain day of week; public sees them helping Midland on TV
 As for MCTV, if it runs after midnight, shut power off; on again 7:00 a.m.
 None
 Rubbish pick-up
 Housing inspection
 None
 MCTV
 Dial-a-Ride
 None
 Answered in discussion
 Dial-a-Ride and replace with more effective / efficient service (smaller vehicles, better route schedules and rules, salaries in line with responsibilities / skills)
 Refuse - trash
 I would like to see the summary of management concurrent controls for Dial-a-Ride
 Dial-a-Ride
 Fire Dept. to ambulance calls
 MCTV - except for emergencies
 Dart
 MGTV
 Dial-a-Ride
 Airport
 MCTV
 Big box pick-up of trash
 None; we use many of the services and appreciate them
 Golf course (services that could be commercialized, i.e. user pays and community does not benefit)
 Recreation
 None
 Online website

MGTV
Barstow Airport
Tax appeal legal defense - minimize this and go to arbitration from the get-go when conflict develops on taxes
Minimize outside consultant costs - use local talent more (businesses have many skilled people for \$ or for volunteer input)
Personally, most of the recreational areas BUT they are very important to others
City airport
Recycling
Airport
Cemetery
MCTV is out of control
Civic Arena
Golf
DARE program - research nationwide has shown it does not impact substance abuse
Waste disposal
None
Civic Arena
Swimming pools (outdoor)
Plowing sidewalks
Hockey / ice rink
Airport
Pool
Soccer fields
Major trash pick-up
None
Civic Center
Airport
Some unused parks
Airport
Library
Park and Rec
None
Fall leaf program - but bagging may be more costly for the City
Street sweepers make a bigger mess than any benefit
Barstow Airport
3 sheet ice arena
Calendar
Barstow Airport
Golf course (Sorry, Jack! As a last resort)
Neighborhood parks
None. I'm accustomed to having the services; I don't want any taken away
Housing services
Public transit
Recreational support - this can be supported by users - but some program is needed to assist low income users in this situation
None
Reduce Parks and Recreation offerings - too many, too expensive
Recreation facilities
All the softball diamonds
Basic message: relentless cost reduction!
The breadth of parks and recreation offerings
Non-essential public safety services

The breadth of Library funding
Any service that could be done more cost-effectively by non-employees; contract out more work to cut cost
Heavy refuse: make it fee-based
Any service that is not "basic" - make them fee-based
Skating / Civic Arena - make it much more fee-based
Pay private contractor for trash removal
Reduce staff #s
Re-work retiree benefits
Heavy pick-up
Free yard waste
Large item pick-up
Lawn and garden curb pick-up
Could spend less on Library, but couldn't do without
Make more services fully user-pays, especially rec stuff like Civic Arena, etc.
Recycling
Some parks
Airport
Fewer neighborhood parks
Airport
BMX bike trail
Skate park
Airport
Recycle
Recreation
None; I'm spoiled - not willing to do without
Large refuse collection - if private service available
Civic Center ice arena
Library
None
Sidewalk additions
Airport
City Arena (maintenance beyond user fees)
Parks and recreation
Refuse (can be privatized)
City maintenance crews (can be privatized)
Dial-a-Ride
None
Heavy garbage pick-up
DARE
Airport
City paying to replace sidewalks
Studies show that DARE is not effective
Airport
Land in county
Library
Extra tax for hotels
Commission on community relations
Three sheets of ice - hotel business
Residential tax reassessment
Dial-a-Ride
Barstow Airport
Expanded recreation for new activities

Barstow Airport
Leaf collection the way it's done now
Airport
None. Get rid of Bush's stupid tax cuts so more federal support is restored; rein in Bush adm. trying to run the world
Heavy refuse
None
Once-a-month big item pick-up
Baseball diamond recreation
Ice skating rink recreation
Barstow Airport
Cut back on sanitation - big pick-up, recycle
Cut back on the number of parks
Barstow Airport
Currie Golf Course (I like to golf, but could use Sandy Ridge in a pinch)
None. I would not eliminate services, but streamline
Dial-a-Ride
Golfing
Downtown parking
Unbagged yard waste
Yard waste pick-up
Curbside recycle
Dial-a-Ride
Currie Golf Course
MCTV
I guess we are just lemmings; we are followers and if we don't like something, we adjust
Civic Arena subsidy!
Yard waste pick-up
Dial-a-Ride
None. Would rather increase property taxes than do without services - or add user fees
Airport
Reduction of City government; run the City "smarter not harder"
Airport
None
Airport
Calendar
Newsletter (convert to more interactive website)
Airport
Public transportation
City TV station
City calendar
Airport should be limited to residents & self-supporting; should have been moved out of present area
Airport
The present Zoning Board of Appeals; Sutton is awful!
Garbage - privatized or less frequent large item pick-up
Consolidation of City and County policing
Some sidewalks (maybe one side of street, longer between replacement)
TV
Airport
None
Civic Arena - could be privatized
Barstow Airport - could be privatized

Building additional low income housing - could be privatized
Downtown development - could be privatized
Summer playground program in some areas of town
Airport
None
Airport
Costs related to the Civic Arena
Subsidized Parks and Recreation
Fully subsidized trash collection
None; I would hate to lose any of them
Parks and Rec
Heavy trash once a month
None
Sidewalk snow removal
Forestry
Airport
Heavy refuse pick-up
MGTV
Airports
Dial-a-Ride
Currie
Half of Community TV
Barstow Airport
No "large" trash pick-up unless assessment is paid
Affordable housing - should be private sector
Barstow Airport could be privately funded (included funding by corporations which rely on them)
The calendar they send yearly
Airport - never use it; let those who do use it pay for it
Eliminate Dial-a-Ride
Cut back Library funding
Cut back fire protection
Cut back Parks and Rec support
Cut back support of Barstow Airport
Cut back Building Department
Don't know enough about all services to make a choice
The micro-managing of the City employees
Heavy waste pick-up
Certain administrative services (bureaucratic fat)
Once-a-month heavy refuse pick up - should be a user fee
Health care insurance service to retirees (how much do they pay? co-pays? can they carry more of the burden?)
Items that cost the most & benefit / used by the least
Curbside recycling
None; increase taxes
Not sure
Heavy refuse pick-up - replace with low-cost service
Golf
Ice rink
Large trash pick-up
Less parks
Golf course
Airport (Barstow)

Santa House
Local airport
Airport
Golf course
Heavy pick-up
Airport - otherwise, increase taxes
Curbside recycling

[The following information was contributed by a roundtable attendee who was prepared to offer his thoughts about user fees and Enterprise Funds. He was asked to submit his list, which he kindly did.]

At the end of the Round Table session I attended, you requested that I provide you with my list of Midland City services that might be considered for an Enterprise Fund or be supported by user fees to a greater extent. I appreciate your interest (as a facilitator) in assuring that my inputs have been fully captured. I also greatly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the Round Table session. The information presented has served to modify and extend my thoughts on this as well as other city issues. I believe some soak time has also helped my thought process so being able to provide inputs subsequent to the session is great.

I have come to the realization that the message (that the two overheads that Karl Tomion flagged as the most important in his first presentation) is that paying for services with user fees rather than property taxes can result in Midland residents paying more. Actually there is another factor that was not included in this analysis that would favor property taxes also (that I should have inputted during the session). Many residents (me included) receive Michigan Property Tax Credits which can be as much as 60% of the incremental property tax we pay!

Given the above realization, I began to wonder if there was a criterion under which user fees were appropriate. I would certainly be interested in any such criteria the City may have developed on this. I guess my thinking now is that user fees are appropriate where the usage for a service at all or the level thereof varies widely. One of the criteria for subsidizing a service from the General Fund vs. using an Enterprise Fund that was stated at the session was whether there was substantial youth involvement.

Using the above criteria I have narrowed my list of services for which it might be beneficial to use an Enterprise Fund to Dial-a-Ride, Barstow Airport, the Building Department and the Cemetery. I also strongly feel that the size of the subsidy required by the Library needs to be significantly reduced.

On another subject, I believe the City could greatly benefit from broader communication of the "Overview of City of Midland Services and Budget". One perception that this could help to change is that City of Midland property taxes are high relative to other communities.

Again, I greatly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the Round Table sessions. It has reinforced my pride in being a Midland resident.

Question #5: How do you find out about City programs and services? (Please check all that apply)

Midland Daily News / Saginaw News	21%	146 mentions
City Calendar and Services Guide	17%	119 mentions
At Your Service... newsletter	16%	113 mentions
Watching Cablecast meetings of City Council or Boards and Commissions	13%	87 mentions
MGTV-5 MESSAGE BOARD	12%	84 mentions
City of Midland Website	11%	76 mentions
City in 15 (news program on MGTV-5)	7%	46 mentions
City Hall News (City's electronic newsletter)	3%	22 mentions
"Word of mouth" added by 1 participant		

Please indicate how you'd rate the quality of each communications tool by circling a number below each one, with '1' representing poor quality and '10' representing excellent quality. If you believe that any are outdated or should be discontinued, please note that beside that item.

City Calendar and Services Guide

Mean score: 7.5

Total responses 141

Total score 981

Comments:

- Outdated - eliminate
- This is a good service
- Maintain
- Very convenient!
- Posted in office
- Discontinue - little benefit
- Receive but don't use much
- Would not do
- Did not receive one this year!
- Discontinue
- Discontinue
- Discontinue calendar; waste of money

***At Your Service...* newsletter**

Mean score: 7.2

Total responses 136

Comments:

- Phase out over time; go electronic
- Discontinue; low usage
- Would not do
- Combine *At Your Service...* and City of Midland Website
- ? Not aware
- Still needed for non-online users
- Discontinue
- Discontinue - junk mail
- Discontinue

**Watching Cablecast meetings of City Council
or Boards and Commissions**

Mean score: 7.0

Total responses 109

Total score 763

Comments:

- This is necessary and important
- Does anybody really watch these?
- Maintain
- Any chance this can be added to the local satellite TV offerings? If you're not a Charter customer, you can't get this!
- Reaches out only to the diehard viewer
- Time-consuming
- No cable
- I question value of broadcasting SOME boards and commissions
- Would not do
- Seldom use
- Note: do not have cable and do not subscribe to "MDN". Attend ZBA and Planning Commission meetings in City Hall. Also do not have Internet. Many in my neighborhood do not have Internet and do not subscribe to "MDN".
- Only used when items of interest
- Don't use
- All are high quality, but I use Website and CableCast most often; prefer to rank use of tool rather than quality
- Production needs work but the content is always helpful!
- Occasional use

City of Midland Website

Mean score: 6.9

Total responses 94

Total score 650

Comments:

- Continue to improve
- Getting better over time
- Use at least weekly
- Don't have computer
- I need to take a look at this

- Haven't used
- Very seldom use
- Don't use
- Will use in the future
- Don't use

MGTV-5 MESSAGE BOARD

Mean score: 6.6

Total responses 100
Total score 664

Comments:

- Serial format makes info difficult to find
- I do not have Cable TV; use a satellite; MCTV discriminates against people without Cable
- Eliminate?
- Getting obsolete
- Rare use
- TV not plugged in
- Not available in household
- Don't use
- Not useful
- Don't use
- Improve

Midland Daily News / Saginaw News

Mean score: 6.4

Total responses 166
Total score 1056

Comments:

- *Saginaw News* more at times
- John Palen *Midland Issues* - good publication
- Maintain
- Articles are a 2; Sat Ad a 7
- Not always accurate
- Balanced coverage an issue
- Need better coverage
- Out of City's control in many ways

- *Saginaw* 8, *MDN* 3
- *Midland Daily News* 1; *Saginaw News* 9

City in 15 (news program on MGTV-5)

Mean score: 6.2

Total responses 65
Total score 400

Comments:

- Not seen
- Eliminate?
- Rare use
- Don't use TV

- Outdated
- Not used
- Would not do
- Don't use
- Eliminate one [of City in 15 or City Hall News] or combine info in best format
- Don't use
- Don't know what's on when
- Don't use
- Discontinue
- Discontinue

City Hall News (City's electronic newsletter)

Mean score: 5.9

Total responses 35

Total score 208

Comments:

- How do you sign up to receive this?
- Not seen
- Make this area known more
- Continue to improve
- Would like to learn more
- Good - could contain more info
- No computer
- Not used
- Wasn't aware of this
- Don't use
- New subscriber
- Don't use

Question #6: How important is it that Midland residents be able to access information and/or conduct transactions with the City?

1 ranking	5%	9 mentions
2 ranking	1%	2 mentions
3 ranking	6%	10 mentions
4 ranking	4%	7 mentions
5 ranking	5%	9 mentions
6 ranking	6%	11 mentions
7 ranking	13%	23 mentions
8 ranking	16%	28 mentions
9 ranking	18%	32 mentions
10 ranking	25%	44 mentions

Mean score: 7.4

Total - 175 responses

Comments:

- Only if it is cost-effective
- It's the future
- I only want to be able to pay my bills online
- Limited access - privacy concerns

- 10 for conducting transactions and 2 for accessing information
- Some, like water bill
- Without incurring large expense

Question #7: On a scale of 0 to 10, with "0" being not at all important and "10" being extremely important, how important is it that the City communicate regularly with its residents?

0 ranking		0 mentions
1 ranking		0 mentions
2 ranking		0 mentions
3 ranking		0 mentions
4 ranking		0 mentions
5 ranking	2%	4 mentions
6 ranking	1%	1 mention
7 ranking	5%	9 mentions
8 ranking	21%	37 mentions
9 ranking	21%	36 mentions
10 ranking	50%	88 mentions

Mean score: 9.1

Total - 175

Question #8: What kinds of information would you like to get from the City that you're not getting now? How would you like to receive that information?

GIS; receive - electronic access

Water bills payments; receive - phone call requested by me. I think I can already do this
I think the City does a good job overall. I don't have any needs not being satisfied with
current means

Ideas of things that can be started to help Midland, projects, etc.; receive - any
information on paper

Projects and expansions; receive - U.S. mail

Death records; receive - on Internet

More information about Master Plan; receive - booklet available on a periodic basis

The type of information that is presently released or is available; receive - e-mail,
websites, newspaper

Receive - some methods currently employed

Pay water bills, taxes, etc.; financial issues; are my taxes paid; City services
appointments; security code / confidential; growth patterns; location maps; keyword
search; receive - in newsletter

Receive - newspaper and newsletter

What plans the City has for the future; receive - any way

Access to bills and fees; receive - online

Can I reserve a park pavilion at Emerson online; receive - online or mail / TV

Receive - online

If not getting it, not know!

Information service is good; receive- e-mail / Internet and newspaper

Receive - newspaper regular - written by City, not reporter
Receive - newspapers, online information
When will my street be snowplowed; receive - TV or online
Budget information / trends or change on a quarterly basis; receive - newspaper release
Better detail regarding the jail decision - reasons why downtown is being rejected;
receive - *At Your Service* and *Midland Daily News*
The information needed is available and only limited by the time commitment of the
resident
Communication is excellent
Not sure
Ordinances, building code; receive - online
Would be nice to be able to access personal account status, e.g. taxes, water, etc. Also,
pay bills electronically
Direct communication - I don't buy / read the *Daily News*; receive - direct to taxpayer
Receive - newspaper or mail
Budget information - City Manager's presentation was very helpful / enlightening - to
better understand its allocation of funds; receive - online and / or TV
Open meetings with City Council, town meetings with give and take format. City Council
format doesn't welcome free interchange
Issues for "blind side" residents, proposed R.V. parking restrictions; receive - e-mail /
website - cost effective
I have access to everything "I" need through one of the identified mediums; receive -
Internet newsletters, mailing through USPS
Receive - e-mail
Update on expansion / building going on throughout city, especially new construction,
new businesses, etc.; receive - either online or printed
Costs, rates, hours of operation up-to-date; receive - Internet access
What is the risk of the industrial tax base reducing significantly? What is the City's
mitigation plan?; receive - upgrade the quality / format on the e-mail newsletter
Receive - TV
Information on taxes and spending, such as the handout that was sent to us in preparation
for this meeting; receive - electronically or via normal mail
Pretty thorough; receive - electronically
I am totally satisfied now
Needed to know the City has a very useful website; receive - *Midland Daily News*, radio
I am getting all the information I need to have at present
Receive - Internet
Decisions and bases for determining who benefits versus who pays for services; receive -
online, MGTV
How each department is doing, etc., so information could be useful for complete picture
of Midland and services offered
More involvement from public and how to get more involved; receive - online
How to get involved; receive - newsletter
None
Amount is OK; receive - delivery is OK, but have the "how," various delivery ways - MCTV,
U.S. mail, Internet- publicized more on radio, MCTV and *Midland Daily News*
Online payments and access of information; receive - websites and / or online
Receive - the newspaper
I was going to suggest a newsletter - didn't realize there is one now - why am I not getting
it?; receive - mail, but I have a P.O. box - is that the issue? If so, thousands in Midland
have them !!
Planning information; receive - e-mail
None

More information on meetings - written (such as what you see in Midland issues); receive - e-mail

Long-term projections of where we will need to spend money and change what we offer; receive - e-mail, Internet

None that I know of

I'm satisfied with level; receive - newsletters are great

More about growth in city, new buildings; receive - mail / newspaper

Don't know - I think that most information is available but it is a matter of making the effort to find out, read the website, watch or attend City Council; receive - e-mail

More advance notice on new site plans that could adversely impact residential neighborhoods. Planning Commission often only gives one week's notice!!!; receive - by any means necessary

None

Receive - cable TV, City Council meetings

Would like to see property information; receive - online

Growth information; receive - monthly letter and TV schedule and website

This meeting was excellent and I appreciate being asked to take part. Karl did an excellent job. I enjoyed the comparisons he made to neighboring cities; receive - this format is excellent

Links to pay water bills, etc. online, yard waste bin stickers, taxes, permits, etc.; receive - City newsletter - information on tax bills - newspaper

Communication of meetings from the various organizations; receive - e-mail

Would access real information, minutes of meeting agendas, long-range plans, etc.; receive - Internet would be excellent

Receive - letter

Electronic bills - water, refuse, parks, bills and payments; receive - newsletter, newspaper

More information in regard to what the taxpayers are getting for their taxes; receive - through newspaper

Statement on results of projects and programs; receive - hard copy reports, periodic

Article on various parts of the budget and how they are faring. Changes made to stretch dollars. Follow up on tax abatements to industry (Did they employ numbers they said? If not, pay back taxes to community); receive - newsletter

Where cuts will be made and how they will affect us; receive - newspaper, mailings, available online

Long-range plans, traffic; received- website

Minutes to commission meetings; receive - via e-mail

OK with what's given

There have been times when I've read of a "done deal," something I had not been aware of at all; receive - newspaper articles

Receive - online minutes of any or all public meetings

Budget / tax issues, local zoning issues

Receive - online

Receive- TV

Water bill; receive- online

What kind of development is being proposed and what kind of development they are seeking; receive - mail or online

None

Midland Daily News; receive - I subscribe

None - they satisfy my needs; receive - newspaper

Break down or additional information regarding funding of Civic Arena, Library, etc.; receive - through current publications

Receive - online, newsletter

Any serious Council plans to eliminate or scale back current service; receive - timely press release

None; receive - newspaper, website, public radio, mail

I find I have always been able to get the information I have sought; receive - thanks for doing a great job

More detail on upcoming City Council meetings; receive - Internet with opportunity to provide comments which could be considered by the Council

More detailed budget information, airport as example; receive - U.S. mail

Schedules for City meetings, hours of operation, etc; receive - online but it's not available to everyone

I think the City does a good job; I just don't pay close enough attention; receive - printed, direct mail

None

Changes that the City is planning around your neighborhood; receive - by e-mail or letter, not the newspaper. In the past the City has hidden behind their public notices in the paper and Library

Tax information on City property; receive - online

Question #9: How did you hear about these Roundtables?

<i>Midland Daily News</i>	34%	64 mentions
Letter from City	17%	33 mentions
City website	7%	13 mentions
Multiple sources	6%	12 mentions
<i>At Your Service</i>	6%	11 mentions
City Council on TV	3%	6 mentions
Phone call / personal contact from City	3%	6 mentions
Phone call / personal contact from City Council	3%	5 mentions
MCTV / MGTV	3%	5 mentions
TV	2%	4 mentions
Home Builders Association	2%	4 mentions
City Hall News	2%	4 mentions
Library signs / board meeting	2%	3 mentions
Chamber of Commerce	1%	2 mentions
Phone call / personal contact from staff	1%	2 mentions

Other mentions:

- AT ZBA meeting
- Posting on bulletin board
- Midland-Mi. org
- Advertisements
- Flyer at Rotary
- Word-of-mouth from a retired City employee
- Leadership Midland Group e-mail
- Co-workers
- Personal plea from a friend
- A ten - great job
- E-mails from Leadership Midland
- Personal contact
- Don't remember
- Harassment
- Word-of-mouth

Question #10: What prompted you to attend?

- Council meeting on MGTV
- Interested in City's future
- Home Builders Association and my own civic duty
- Representing Home Builders Association
- An opportunity to provide my viewpoint
- I help public and seniors a lot. I look for ways to help start or stop things to help public
- Concerns about some City services
- Interested
- Duty as Midland resident
- Prompt greater fiscal responsibility
- Opportunity to contribute ideas
- 42-year resident with interests in long term of the city
- Civic interest in improvement
- Interest in financial well-being of our city
- Concern - for short / long term planning
- Desire to be involved in community planning / decisions and / or to be knowledgeable
- Interest - participation
- Citizen responsibility
- Learn details, try to slow over-regulation
- I care
- To keep a balanced view of what the City does
- Interest
- Lack of interest by others
- I feel it is important to take an active role in City government and the growth and direction of City policies
- Attended in 1997; want to contribute to City; want to be informed
- Citizen responsibility
- Responsibility as citizen. City hears almost every complaint - mine and others. I should attempt to understand issues
- Concerned
- Newspaper announcements
- My husband decided not to participate, so I decided to
- Civic duty

Interest in the city where I live
Personal interest in wanting to help
Be better informed
Interest in City government as a taxpayer
Wanted to provide input
Responsibility as a citizen
Interest
General interest in Midland
Thought it would be interesting and thought I may be able to help
Interest as a citizen
Time
Duty
Part of citizenship
Interest in community, jobs for young people
Wanted to better understand City budget
Urgent request for people to attend
As a citizen
General interest
Concern about the future of my community
Interested in my city
Interest in the community
Want to be sure that commercial and residential development and values are considered
in tax and user fee implementation
A chance to participate for my community
Disappointed that the sign-up was so low - needed to support community
Interested in City / community services
I want to know where my money is coming from and how it is spent
Interest in keeping City budget manageable
Civic pride
Civic duty
Seeking further knowledge of City budgets
Community involvement - it's a responsibility
Curiosity
Needed people to hold meetings
Concern for our community
High taxes
Civic responsibility
City Council needs advice
Wanted to learn more about how the City spends its money
Interest in community and able to effect future
Personally invited
General interest and willingness to contribute
I feel citizen involvement was important
Concern for changes in Midland and hope for continued quality with less emphasis on
commercial
I wanted to add my 2 cents worth
Information, opportunity to give / share thoughts
Concern about future
To have personal input
As a civic duty
General concern
The belief that lower income people would not be represented
I care about Midland and want to help where I can

It's a good idea
Concern for continued quality of life and financially feasible services to continue
Civic responsibility
I'm "new" in town after living away for many years. I was interested in gaining information about Midland "now"
I wanted to learn the direction that Midland is taking
Wish to participate rather than remain passive
Desire to be involved in Midland's future
I believe in the "seek first to understand" ... philosophy
Interest in voicing opinions
Learn more about programs
My family and I live in Midland and we want it to continue to be a good city
Interest in City's future. Also involved with Midland Tomorrow and Planning Commission
Interest to serve
New to the area and first time homebuyer
You asked for more attendees and I thought I could at least occupy a chair
Wanted to participate
Involvement in City through Planning Commission
City Councilman's request, plus hearing that meeting wouldn't be held without enough participants
MDN editorial and guilt! (e.g. "Put your money where your mouth is")
Wanted to be more informed and offer an opinion
Want to be actively involved
Important civic interaction
Higher taxes
The invitation
Need to be involved in community
Curious of participation of other people
The personal invitation from the City
Feel responsibility as a citizen of the community
Wanted to have input on City's future
Chance for the City to hear my voice
I wanted to protect services that are important to me and advocate property tax increases
Interested in direction City is going
Concern for Midland
Curiosity
I felt like it was my duty
Concern for Midland's fiscal future
Have before
Interested citizen
Concern
Interest in influencing our local government
Original response was low
Curiosity
Community interest
Civic responsibility and interest in local government
Interest in government
Duty and curiosity
Like to influence public policy
Lived here since 2000 and curious how it works
Civic concern
Need to be informed, have a better understanding
Interest

Interested in seeing "the process"
Interest
Sense of need for public input by everyone
Citizen concerns
Joe's persistence!
It sounded interesting
Business owner
General interest
Interested in promoting the best interests of City. I serve the community and have always been proud to do so
Wanting to give back to the community that has given us so much
Concern over high taxes
I'm civic-minded and couldn't resist your invitation
Concern over the high tax rate
Learn and perhaps contribute perspective of resident of 40+ years
Concerned citizen
Finding out what others in my community think and feel
Civic responsibility
Interest in transportation "budget"
A chance to voice my thoughts
Get my 2 cents in!
Civic duty
I care
Civic duty
News articles on lack of attendance threatening to eliminate
Interest in municipal affairs
Information gathering
I want to stay informed and give input!
Interest in the City of Midland
Desire to better understand Midland
Felt a need to get more involved in the community
To find out what may be the City's agenda or plans for the next few years. To provide some input into these plans
A chance to tell what is on my mind about the city

Question #11: What was of greatest value about the Roundtable?

Met some new and interesting residents
Hearing other people's ideas
Karl's summary of all the services relative to surrounding areas
City Manager's presentation
Insightful and informative
Public getting together and City taking time to work with public
Very interesting session, learned a lot about City government
Information on complete operations
Better understanding of the City operations
Great opinions, swaying opinions
Hear other's concerns
Open to all - diverse views respected
Hearing about issues on growth / business
Better understanding of our City's finances and standing when compared to neighboring cities
Hearing input from other residents - good exchange!!!

Karl's presentation. Hopefully comments on growth and taxes will be considered by City staff as the staff plans and spends
As citizens we should be the voice of the City
Member views and opinions; City government explanations
Learning details of Midland's current standing
Learning more about City management; hearing perspectives about growth
Heard many different viewpoints and have a better understanding of administration
Diversity of thought
Information
Current information
Learning more details about the budget and how the City is managed
Learn more of revenue versus service expense
How well our City is managed
Other participants' views
Listening to other people's opinions
I will be able to see the consensus of the opinions of the citizens of Midland in helping to determine how our budget is developed
Hearing ideas of other citizens
Re-familiarization with City activities / costs / revenues; ability to "serve" as free volunteer to aid City on budget decisions
Printed information, Karl's presentation, general comments
Hearing many views on a broad spectrum of issues
Opportunity to express desires
Size of City and information about budget
Exchange of ideas
Getting a sense of what people in the community are thinking
Loved the statistics!
Budget review
Communication of ideas between City and residents
City Manager presentation of budget
To share views - no other source to share is available
Information learned
Group interaction, City information
Interesting to hear the views of others
New ideas (new to me)
Voice my concern and hear the opinions of others
The budget and service presentations and the values of the attendees
The generation of ideas / topics
Explanation / additional information about budget, City policies, etc.
Hearing community responses / ideas and learning more about the City functions
Everything
Explanation of details and reasons for some items
Many opinions
Handouts provided, comparisons of other communities and generalized discussion of other participants
Other people's opinions
Learned about how Midland stacks up versus Bay City, Saginaw, etc.
Confirmed what I already know - Midland is a great place to live!
The diversified ideas
Feel of contribution
Increasing knowledge about how the City is run
None - these needed more discussion
Karl's presentation

Learned more details - easily; respect for citizen's opinions
Seeing how Midland compared to other communities. Hearing from the City Manager
Improved understanding of revenue and expenditures
Karl Tomion's presentation, getting an opportunity
Hear other people's responses to questions
Presentations
Information, expanded thought process
Citizens feedback
The input to better Midland
See more involvement. I feel they wanted us here and did listen to us
Not sure
Listening to other's opinions as well as communicate my own
All the information that Karl presented and the total discussions by people
Getting concerned citizens involved. Also, learning more on how City government works
The personal contact with others at the meeting
It was very interesting to hear what others thought on these issues, it was a diverse group
Hearing what others had to say
Better understanding of the budget
Information exchange
Comments by other residents
I learned a lot about Midland - and lots of ideas
New (to me) opinions
Hearing other's comments and Karl's presentation
Involvement
Hearing what lots of others had to share
Hearing the variety of concerns
Learning about budget, listening to view of citizens
Information about the city's growth, use of revenues
Thoughtful responses of other participants
It was good to hear other citizens' concerns
Being able to comment
Hearing concerns of fellow citizens, speaking my views
City Manager, slides
Information gleaned
Interaction with fellow citizens and hear their opinions
Everything discussed
The information Karl gave us
Being able to express our opinions. Hearing facts from Karl Tomion and hearing other
people's opinions
Got to see / hear different points of view
Hear what else the citizens have to say
The comparison with other cities in our area in terms of level of taxation and
expenditures
Opportunity to express need to continue support for key services
To hear of other ideas and concerns which had not occurred to me
Better understanding of city (size, growth, budget)
It increased my pride in Midland - I loved listening to Karl's presentation and wish all
citizens could see this
Honest expression of ideas
Hearing others, Karl's presentation
Learning issues and positions of City, hearing other citizens' concerns and expectations
Spread of information
Hearing other people's opinions on services, having the opportunity to give my opinions

The comments of Karl Tomion and my fellow participants
Better understanding of City operations
Hear ideas of others
Karl's presentation on taxes and how they relate to services. Excellent!
Karl's presentation
How things are being done
Understanding what the "costs" are
Information
General information
Charts, presentation
Learning more about Midland and its people
Information about population growth and hearing other residents
Varied viewpoints, exploring our diversity
Getting a wide range of opinions from all segments of the community
Future-oriented
Hearing concerns of citizens, City Manager's obvious competence
Additional information on "workings of Midland" as well as historical information. Karl Tomion did a great job - Atta Boy!
A greater understanding of the big picture
Got a good understanding of the way City operates
The presentations by Karl - clarification of services and growth trends
City Manager presentation of finances
Extra communication
Hearing the thoughts of others
Getting a broad spectrum of ideas
Learning more about this city and how it works
That the City cares
Got a chance to speak my mind
City Manager's presentations and explanations, especially budget comparisons
The differences of opinions expressed
Being educated and being part of the process!
Being able to hear other viewpoints
Learning of the details of the budget and comparisons to other cities and learning about growth history
Hearing the room full of citizens express their opinions and desires in an orderly, non-confrontational way
The excellent presentation by Karl Tomion, the excellent discussions I heard. The handouts were excellent

Question #12: Do you have any suggestions for improving the Roundtables?

No, well done
Not really
Ask public to bring suggestions in on paper to help you understand what public wants and how it would work
None - done wonderfully!
Try to keep a few people, who have a need to answer every question, from dominating the discussion by having people be recognized by the leader before they start talking
Good process!
Provide handout at table with names of facilitators, ground rules, etc (helps us pronounce names better and helps those coming late who missed introduction and ground rules); hand out slides before (or as) it's presented so we can make notes on them; reduce the size to facilitate more involvement

Was there a reason for us gathering. If we have to either make cuts or raise taxes, state right up front, then get more specifics on what to do

Mini groups of members with special interest and / or experience in specific areas of city operations

Use volunteer facilitators - Dolinski, Rouse, etc., are professional facilitators; e-mail session results to participants Feb. 7 - great idea

Use present city employees

Increase diversity of participants - age, income, sex

More diversity in age needed to get better input

Consider a short presentation by City planner and City engineer regarding growth and infrastructure issues

No, seemed adequate. Meeting room was cold near the floor - feet were cold

No - and thank you for providing lunch. It was a nice way of showing appreciation for our time. Thank you for the information you provided us and for soliciting our opinions

Deeper discussion regarding trends in residential, commercial and industrial tax base

Library Lounge should be more easily barrier free

Consider annual re-play at future budget times

When advertising for participants, tell about prior roundtables - content, participation.

Tell the community about specific benefits the City got from the last roundtables - give 'em proof that their views ARE IMPORTANT TO THE CITY for future decision-making

Limit the comments - I'm tired of all the old Dow boys thinking we still care what they think

NONE

Give the leader a microphone or speaker system. We can't hear her

More diversity - could some high school students be allowed to attend?

Getting younger people to attend - look for a different form for getting information

Was very well done

No - except moderator did not control some people from interrupting and speaking out to dominate. Poorly done

No. Seemed organized and appropriately timed

Well run discussion group

Could not hear people talking and could not see lady writing on paper

Benchmark other communities outside of the Tri-Citys, e.g. Traverse City, Alpena

Smaller groups - more interaction

This was conducted very professionally - great job!

More time for open discussion on topics

Hand out the Karl slides before he starts speaking so folks can take notes on them; put a date on Karl's slides - minor point

Perhaps smaller groups, meet twice to permit more time for discussion

Sometimes need to force sticking to topic or question

I would like to have more time to ask questions about information presented by the City Manager (really for my personal interest versus enhancing the goals of the Roundtable)

Consider using voting tools and more specific questions. Ask more questions and get feedback

Groups could be a little smaller

Smaller groups

More conversation from attendees instead of Karl defending his cost expenses

Maybe do something like this more often. As often as twice a year

Do demographics to make sure community represented. Can't come if you can't afford daycare. Reach out to poor and disabled to get them involved

Smaller groups

This is not "Leadership Midland" where presentation takes up more - or the bulk of - the time. More time needs to be allowed in the free-flowing discussion, although I realize three hours are limited - but maybe not so much spent on Karl's presentation (although important). No time was given to questions I had about the "Tax Appeal Fund" - the size of this collection today. What will be done with any excess, if any, when appeal is finished? Cost of outside consultants (e.g. the cable franchise agreement, the first sewer consultants). The costs effectiveness of tax abatements

Give more of the presentation data out prior to meetings
Please keep offering them [roundtables], even if only one or two groups can be filled
Good job!

Attempt to get a younger cross-section of people. Attempt to get a greater set of demographic people
Smaller. Separated by age - may be interesting to diversify the feedback
Continue to do them
Very well done
Nice job!!!
Have water bill, etc. payable online
Thanks for inviting me
No, I think it was done great!
Smaller groups / more information - always seems to go so fast
Structure for more input (and less information-giving)
I would like to see more openness to questions - I did not like the atmosphere of squelching questions - they often lead to better discussion
Two - three hour sessions, more data review beforehand
Would like to have had two meetings and more time for discussion with Karl
None - handled very well
More young people
Don't let Jim in again!
Actually, it worked very well, even surprisingly well. I think it was well designed and well run
Stay focused to what the subject is, i.e. City budget
List of facilities, City Manager, etc. - names, phone numbers, e-mails to make contact after roundtable for comments or questions after roundtable. Would appreciate follow-up
No, it was handled well
Time for questions, comments not on agenda
Writing on the flip chart seemed unnecessary - having two active moderators would have been a better use of personnel. The marker was squeaky and movement was distracting and worker was a nice moderator with a loud voice and this was wasted
Mail Karl Tomion's statistics to participants a couple of weeks ahead of meeting time and do not use roundtable time for him if you really want to hear what residents think
Well done
Very well run
More of same
Be sure February 7 and report is well covered by newspapers
Needs a break halfway through! Please
Format was very good. Nice job!
Good format. I think this was very worthwhile
More diverse crowd. This session was very "older," to put it as nice as I can
Good discussion and facilitation
Was very well done
Feedback to participants
Not off hand - it went very well

Smaller groups!

Pass out the slides first so they are available to take notes; compare Midland community with Saginaw Township and other "suburb" communities - in a major sense, Midland residents identify with those communities, versus city managers, managed as a city; group size - too many people leads to too much time - consider one topic or two, then go into depth

Fewer people, more select group; but I understand why the City feels it needs to be more inclusive

No, except they should be held more frequently

Question #13: Please add any comments you may have

Appreciate opportunity to be a part of the City's future

Great community involvement

Midland's big problem is everyone wants something but no one wants to take time to get started

I think the City needs to compare the benefit packages they provide, with those evolving in the private sector. These two, health care costs and pension benefits, are having a significant impact on the General Fund expenditures. According to the 2005 budget detail, health care costs have doubled from \$3 million to \$6.2 million in four years. During this same period pensions have grown from \$2 million to \$3.1 million. These costs, especially healthcare, cannot be allowed to continue at this rate

I would have spoken more but needed to clarify some items first - we were asked to hold questions. Since the questions were relatively few, they could have been forwarded to us via e-mail or in writing and we could have brought more thoughts with us

Private sector for the most part has nowhere near the healthcare coverage of government employees. Make government coverage more equal to private sector

City does a great job

Present City management has better information than attendees at this meeting. Make the decisions to the best of their abilities

City is not doing a very good job communicating its portion of the tax bill. City values property and collects taxes. Many people look at the tax bill and assume it all goes to the City when in fact only a relatively small portion does. So to a certain extent the City is chastised because they are the bearer of bad news

Streets within the city and residential areas should have the same speed limit. It currently jumps from 25 to 35 mph too often. Why does the garbage truck go down my street and I assume all others two times to collect one on each side of the street? Would it not be more efficient to employ two people and go down once? People don't realize the hospital is one of the major employers in Midland

Remove "builds" from slides

Do not raise taxes in this economic climate with so many folks unemployed, under-employed, and retired. Not everyone is affluent in Midland in spite of so many big home and churches and Mall area enterprises. Please consider building / constructing wider sidewalks in main access areas (residential and commercial) to accommodate walkers, bikers, strollers, etc. Please reconsider plan to change Circle area back to a circular traffic flow when so much money is involved and revenue is less than expenditure (last sentence in mail-out) and many in this town have lived through many transitions from Circle to Avenues

I would have like to have seen a comparison of a city outside our immediate area, e.g. Grand Blove (?), Michigan, St. Joe, Michigan or (?)

It's great how much we agreed about our wonderful city and how well our city is being served

More aggressive pursuit of delinquent tax money or sooner transfer of problem to a collection agency

Midland Daily News sometimes doesn't get its information totally correct - but it's better than it was back 30 years ago, when very little "bad" news got into the MDN

I asked a learned citizen last night if he was participating. He said, "No, all they want to do is feed their views and soften us up for taxes." He said emphatically, "They are not interested in participant views." He was wrong

Makes a good source of obtaining information

I am a "satisfied customer"! Thanks

Growth - quit assuming we need it. As our major taxpayers leave the country and the city, Midland will be scrambling to maintain population. Project Daytona and its 80 jobs are nothing compared to the 760 that were reduced, eliminated over the last 12 months. Population growth for the past four decades does not ensure continued growth. The three major employers have all experienced net job reductions and are incorporating new ventures in Canada and Europe / East

Very valuable time

Nice job facilitating

Excellent idea

Consider mass transportation within the country

The implementation of user fees for the Library should be avoided at all costs. It is nothing less than economic imposed censorship. I agree in principal with the feedback of the 1997 focus groups. However, I strongly encourage growth and development with forethought. We need to explore development of areas that are on the decline - and not just relocating business and service to the outlying areas. This is the same philosophy that has affected all major metropolitan areas - move out of the inner city to the suburbs. However, in the case of Midland, this is a much smaller scale at this time

We live in an excellent and superior managed community. Keep up the good work!

If the budget needs cutting, you have to go where the money is - and that is people costs.

I do not believe City is overstaffed or overpaid; but we should look at pension systems as private employers are. Dow management and Dow employees should not have to pay for City pensions they can not have themselves

Thank you for the opportunity, but feel like a smaller impact on the larger picture.

Reduce an expense - eliminate the "traffic consultant" that caused more problems than he resolved. Increase fees with property taxes, not user fees!

If job opportunities (jobs) that provide a livable wage are not available to youth of this county and neighboring counties, crime will become a problem

Provide quality, affordable housing for low income residents

Thank you for scheduling these meetings - keep asking for input!

The City needs to re-think its involvement in housing for low-middle income. Private market should be allowed to provide for this need

As user fees are instituted, please consider higher fees for non-residents in areas such as picnic shelter reservations

We need roundtable meetings for the Master Plan

To increase community diversity we need to reduce property taxes

Add a service fee for the use of the large bins that residents may use to remove large amounts of rubbish. Change the "City laws" that require a public vote for the City to sell or otherwise use public facilities. The City government should be empowered to act quickly when opportunities arise

It was a privilege to be able to learn more about this wonderful community. Thank you for allowing me to participate. I appreciate that every comment was recorded. I was wondering if the people being contracted to provide services are being paid a fair wage with benefits or if they are being mistreated like at Wal Mart

Glad that these were not cancelled. Watch out for the typical, more passionate citizens that are actively involved in issues - their messages have already been heard through other forums

Many thanks

Cut spending in each department by 10% for the summary's thrust seems to emphasize how revenues can be increased to provide services. Not enough emphasis was given to understanding costs for purpose of cost control

Thanks and I learned a lot

To draw more people to community you need to find out why people leave in the first place

Don't eliminate DARE

Did you make note of questions brought up? Will we see the flip chart lists of concerns from the roundtables? (question answered)

Positive experience! Worth attending. Karl's presentations were effective

Council agenda the Saturday before the meeting is not enough time to write a letter if you can't go. I can't watch the Council meetings because I have Dish Network. Like ESPN broadcasting - can the meeting be available online?

Thank you for offering the chance to participate

Thanks for inviting me

For the future benefit to the quality of life in Midland, the City needs to prepare and budget for the inevitable invasion of the Emerald Ash Bores. We are a lowland area in many places around the city. We have a very large ash tree population that could be hammered. There are federal and state grants available for replacement. The Planning Commission should be looking at developments in ash tree areas, etc. It should be a concern and plans should be developed. Thanks

How did you get such a great turnout?

The City would benefit from more such interactions and clear feedback

It would be nice to enlarge the Police Department, by combining Police and Fire into a Public Safety concept. Get rid of Airport. Continue to promote sports activities to bring people into Midland. Work with County Connection and Dial-a-Ride to be more efficient. Combine computer systems within the City Police / County Sheriff / Central Dispatch so everyone can work as a team

Good job - thanks!

Roundtables were a great idea. Very informative

We have lived in Midland 30+ years. My husband was born and raised here. My biggest love in this city is the Library. I have raised three children and they were very busy in all sports, and this was the best part of our lives living in Midland. Please slow down residential growth to give Midland homes a chance to reflect the importance and pleasures there are to becoming a "home" and be a part of "Midland." This is turning into a condo or high-end "housing". I live in a great area and that is why we moved here. I feel you should depend on these areas more so these homes don't sit empty because the condos are out there.

Again, I can't say enough about being thankful for this opportunity. Thank you so much

Good job. Thanks

Important to offer all citizens opportunity to conveniently access all information which is legally available publicly (under FOIA) by putting it online and allowing FOIA requests to be made online

It was well led and directed. The facilitators were very skillful

I love that Midland cares about what I say

I think the millage is so low that the City should feel free to raise millage to make up for slow growth and maintain services at the current levels. Use millage rather than a bunch of annoying user fees

I would like more emphasis on infrastructure improvement from tax dollars - road improvement, lighting, sewers and more "pay as you go" for the recreational pursuits. Numerous recreational activities and sites have been added in last few years. Many Midlanders will never make use of any of them, especially seniors on fixed incomes. The people using these facilities should pay the bulk of the costs to operate / maintain them. Tax increases should be a last resort! Many on fixed incomes are being squeezed out of their homes

City streets need to be improved. Snow removal needs earlier response. Need to prioritize services

Thank you

Thank you

It's political death, but I would support a small increase in taxes before the quality of life which we all say we like is diminished

Stop micromanaging citizens' lives, e.g. city ordinance against garage sale signs. Change it so signs have to be dated and City workers will remove them every Monday (if not done by the citizen), rather than pulling them down during the sale). This issue may seem petty, but is very aggravating and sends the message that we, the people, are too stupid or irresponsible to remove our own signs. Many other ordinances fall into this same category. Feel like my freedom is being squashed!

It was a pleasure to participate!

Thanks for asking!

Excellent format for community input. It's great to hear City is interested in the opinions of its citizens

Good program. Well run

Excellent experience - well worth my time. Would do it again

Well run - on target

Citizens committees to work on special areas of interest such as traffic, parks, bicycle paths. They could go into detail on things we discussed here

Please reduce residential property taxes

Great job

Comparisons between Saginaw and Midland growth should be avoided. The socioeconomic dynamics of why growth has occurred in Saginaw versus Midland are historically diametrically opposite

Keep providing citizens with information on the City in a language that is not dumb-down but is easy to understand. Review zoning and review the mindset that makes our present zoning inflexible and without options

This is a great place but it's not easy to get around. Dial-a-Ride is horribly inefficient. A regular route would be more useful, more easily administered, and lower cost

Frustrated with citizens who want "everything", but don't want the things that go with it (more traffic that new retailers bring, higher taxes for better services, etc.)

I would like to see the jail and courthouse remain in the downtown location where they are. I would like to see some good use for the old arena building rather than tear it down. Maybe the City could sponsor a contest for engineers / architects / citizens to come up with plans for both projects

I was not sure what to expect but was pleased to see how well it was done. I believe more effort needs to go into LONG RANGE planning. I am not happy about the poor traffic signs and directions for those unfamiliar with the city and for those of us who are but find them inadequate in the dark and in bad weather when alone and with the need to pay strict attention to the road with some impatient driver behind or when blinded by too bright headlights facing you. The traffic consultant for signs should be required to be unfamiliar with the area. People who know the area do not heed signs in broad daylight with sunshine. The consultant should be required to check signage at night and in bad weather

Well presented and conducted
Thanks for having me and listening to me!
I was impressed with the pride expressed by the residents

Appendix F Response Form

12. Do you have any suggestions for improving the Roundtables?

13. Please add any other comments you may have.

Many thanks!

Appendix G

City Manager's Roundtable Presentation

PDF of Presentation Available
on Roundtables web page
of City of Midland Website
at www.midland-mi.org,
in segments:

- Overview of the City budget & City services
- Growth trends & the City's policy on growth
- Results of similar focus groups held in 1997