



CITY COUNCIL LISTENING SESSIONS – AUGUST 2023

Report to the Red Wing City Council and Residents

What: The City of Red Wing held a series of six 90-minute listening sessions over four days from August 21 through August 24, 2023. A detailed list of the locations and the Council and staff participants is included at the end of this document. A note of how the sessions were publicized is also at the end of this document.

Purpose: The purpose of the listening sessions was for City Council members to hear from residents across the community about concerns, ideas, and questions, including on issues related to the Council's upcoming 2024 budget decisions.

How this information will be used: A final report will be published on the City's website and City Beat, attached to a Council budget workshop packet, and included in a Council agenda packet.

How the sessions were run: Four to seven Council members and the mayor attended each meeting. The meetings were all publicly noticed so any member could attend without concerns of a quorum. Between four and nine staff members also attended each meeting. When residents arrived, they were asked to individually write down their answers to four questions: (a) What is your favorite thing about living in Red Wing?; (b) What do you think is the most serious issue in Red Wing? (c) What topics do you want covered in this session? (d) What questions do you have for City Council members at this session? Residents wrote their answers on sticky notes and placed the notes on large sheets on the walls. The City's Community Engagement Facilitator, Michelle Leise, facilitated each session, grouping the conversation by topic based on what people had written. Residents were also asked at the end of each meeting to write down their answer to this question on a sticky note: "How would you cut costs?" After each session, residents were also invited to stay a bit afterward to connect with individual Council members and staff if desired.

A total of 121 people attended the sessions, including 114 unique individuals. (7 residents attended more than one session.) Residents were, in general, older in age than the median demographic age in Red Wing.

MOST COMMON TOPICS RAISED BY RESIDENTS & DISCUSSED IN SESSIONS

- Potential Tax Increase in 2024 Budget
- More Housing for All Ages and Incomes (especially affordable options)
- Concern About City Overspending
- Business Development in Downtown and Old West Main Street areas
- More Opportunities for Teens and Young Adults in Jobs, Entertainment, and Housing
- Speeding (plus additional questions on roads and construction)
- Parking
- Marijuana (mostly legal questions based on the state's new ruling)

The following pages list what residents wrote as their answers to the questions. Tally marks show the number of people who wrote similar ideas. Not every person wrote notes down, and some people wrote multiple things.

MOST SERIOUS ISSUE IN RED WING

- Need for more diverse and affordable housing options IIIIIIII
- Rising property taxes/taxes too high IIIIIIIIII
- Too much spending IIIIII
- Too much talk of cutting taxes; need more solutions IIII
- Property valuations increasing IIII
- Concern about cutting parks (please don't) IIIIII
- Need more incentives to keep young adults in town IIIIII
- Parking IIII
- Speeding IIII
- Marijuana use and legal questions IIII
- Our urban forest / trees IIII
- Discipline/safety in the schools IIII
- Need more public transportation options IIII
- Trust IIII
- Homeless IIII
- More street repair IIII
- Too many empty storefronts IIII
- Overspending on arts and equity line items IIII
- Private property neglect IIII
- Messy properties with junk in yards and no mowing IIII
- There are too many parks IIII
- How do we meet the diversity of interests and needs of everyone? IIII
- Lack of political discourse due to political climate IIII
- Open denial of class, racism
- Feel some Council members dismiss constituents' ideas and needs before discussing them. Some sabotage programs before due process. IIII
- Narrow roads IIII
- Need recycling options for non-standard items like electronics and chemicals IIII

WHAT PEOPLE LIKE MOST ABOUT RED WING

- Beauty of the parks I I I I I I I I I I
- Walking and biking trails I I I I I I I I I I
- Beautiful landscape / natural features I I I I I I I I I I
- Mississippi River I I I I I I I I I I
- Beautiful downtown area I I I I I
- Friendliness and sense of community I I I I I
- Arts community I I I I I
- Business community and the independent businesses available I I I I
- It's a small town I I I I
- History I I I I
- Peaceful and quiet I I I I
- Family here I I I I
- Library I I I I
- Pretty city I I I I
- Flower baskets I I I I
- Tourism I I I I
- Lots of senior housing I I I I
- Outdoor recreational activities I I I I
- Diversity of interests I I I I
- Proximity to the metro area I I I I
- Fully funded police, fire, and EMT departments I I I I
- Incredible City staff I I I I
- Investments in community building I I I I
- The new Council members I I I I
- There's a good amount of services and stores to meet all needs I I I I
- Trash collection by the City I I I I
- Pickleball I I I I
- Music in the park I I I I
- Like the city's unique street layout – not a grid! I I I I
- Community's openness to cultural literacy and reconciliation, the arts, and youth I I I I

HOW WOULD YOU CUT COSTS?

Note: Residents were asked to write down their answers to this question on sticky notes after each meeting. Many people did not answer the question; the sheet was fairly blank after most meetings. Most of the answers below came from a small handful of people.

Cut capital projects II

Cut staffing III

Don't need to cut services. Just cut pet projects. I

Less TIF projects – let developers pay their way. I

Eliminate airport subsidy/funding II

Don't cut anything! (except the airport) I

Cut spending money on consultants I

Cut arts/culture/equity spending II

Cut several boards and commissions I

Sell some City properties to increase the tax base II

Consider a housing tax abatement. Or a housing vacancy tax for vacant homes? I

Do not have a six-month overlap for the City Administrator's transition – too excessive I

Cut the bike route to Colvill I

Cut splash pad I

Cut tree program I

Consider cutting the Port Authority I

Reduce admin staff positions II

Stick to these priorities: Fire/Ambulance/Police, Water/Sewer, Streets, and the Library I

Drastically reduce parks and rec spending I

Quit providing out-of-towners with taxpayer money. I

Taxpayers aren't responsible for providing entertainment for other citizens. I

If things such as ballfields and recreation areas are no longer used to capacity, close them down without delay. Determine one or two parks for use in winter and close down the rest. I

Cut out fireworks. II

Cut spending on affordable housing II

Cut spending on economic development (we spend more than larger cities) I

Increase revenue generation – restore Xcel's previous property tax (we're being held hostage)

Continue to maintain the quality of city staff. I

Remove hanging baskets from city burden. Put it on businesses to pay. II

Mow grass less frequently at parks—even when it's dry. I

Cut boards and commissions, food, half the Tommy gates, air boat, funded studies, fireworks, new public buildings, and funding special interests I

Seek money from people who use the airport, the Red Wing boat ramps, and the riverboats. I

Get more money from Xcel II

Increase revenue by renting out the fire training facility I

Consolidate by using City spaces for other things: the library basement, City Council Chambers, 419 Bush Street, Colvill Courtyard I

Stop treating parks with herbicides and fertilizers I

Don't cut anything I

TOPICS & QUESTIONS

These are topics and questions/comments residents wanted to cover in the session they attended.

-Overall Budget

-Let's focus on what government can do that no one else will or can do

-What are we willing to pay now versus paying later (when it will cost more dollars)?

-Property Taxes

-Stop expensive updates the City does that benefit only a small group of people

-City needs to stop spending money on extra things for some community members, rather than on necessary services for all community members.

-Concern about cost of capital projects like Levee Park and the Old West Main Street project

-We should use zero-based budgeting.

-Too many tax dollars spent on want-to-be projects and then later ask for more dollars for real needs

-Personnel (staffing)

-What percent of the budget is for salaries, benefits, retirement, and health insurance?

-How our City boards and commissions function and their future

-How many open positions are there at the City? Is there a hiring freeze for any positions?

-Capital Improvement Plan

-City Services

-I enjoy the amenities but am willing to do without some

-Government needs to pay for the lead pipe removal and cleanup

-Housing

- Single-family home lots that are buildable for a middle/higher income family
- Need to incentivize home buying for smaller home

-Diversity and Inclusion

- Inclusion and accessibility
- Cultural reconciliation

-Speeding & Noise

- Excessive noise from vehicles on the street (cars, trucks, semis)

-Parking

- Explain parking regulations and required spaces for businesses

-Crime

- Drugs
- Car break-ins
- People with behavior issues walking in downtown at night

-Commercial/Retail:

- Keep working on real estate with commercial and residential. Coordinate effort with new developers to purchase buildings for mixed-use businesses and rental units for young people and families.
- Losing businesses

-Youth and Youth Development

- Invest in places and spaces to bring young people from the high school and college downtown.
- Need to find out how to recruit young adults and families
- RW needs an Activity Center for families and youth to connect with community (grade 7 through college)
- Need for family and youth areas in Red Wing
- Need more collaboration between the school district, city, Y, college, etc.
- Upper Harbor Area – turn the parking area into a winter sledding hill & skating rink for night-time skating run by youth
- Want to keep city money in the budget for City internships and communications (like Channel 6 and social media).
- Need to get students back to pre-pandemic levels

Roads & Construction

- Road maintenance schedules because residential streets are in disrepair

- Need better signage for road construction
- Cars in left lane passing at a high rate of speed and crossing the solid white line
- What's happening with the road project on East 7th Street?
- Climate resilience
 - What are our long-range plans and climate?
 - For water conservation, could the City buy rain barrels and sell them to us?
- Garbage costs II
 - I've heard Council members saying that the City cannot be competitive in that area unless they overcharge. That's a business the City should not be in.
- Community Development
 - Save the parks and arts
 - Pickleball
 - Incentives for solar installation
 - Long-range plans to improve the community?
 - Council support of police and police staffing. How will Goodhue's police force resignations affect Red Wing?
 - Undocumented residents
 - AI and our future AI budget
 - Systemic racism
 - Historical Preservation – increase telling the stories of cultures who lived in Red Wing

Resident Questions on the Notes:

- What is the Council's plans for future spending and/or cuts in spending?
- Where and when can marijuana be used in and around the city? When will that be decided?
Will the public be able to have input into these decisions? III
- Who decides what types of businesses start up in Red Wing?
- What's going on in the field at the old Central Research Building?
- Does the City regulate murals on buildings?
- When was the last time we did RFP's on our third-party vendors?
- How is City progressing with Air BnB permits?
- When can the public review CIP items?
- Have the cost-cutting suggestions from the October 2022 workshop all been implemented yet?
- Why do we tell people to put their recycling in plastic bags?

- What is the long-term strategy for the ambulance fund?
- How can we incentivize home ownership?
- Do you get many questions from citizens in your area?
- As our climate changes, how are we developing resilience plans and preparing for climate refugees?
- Please fix the bike trail along Hwy 61 from A.P. Anderson Park past Burnside School
- Why do we need all those police cars sitting in front of the jail?
- Is crime on the increase?
- What is the status of 3M and their projection to increase employment by 100+ in return for tax benefits?
- Has anything been done to replace the damaged/vandalized kiosk in Memorial Park?
- Can we convert some park spaces into prairie to save costs on mowing?
- How can we see the line items of each budget?
- Why can't Council come to us with specific priorities they want us to choose between?

(Questions will be answered in future Status Reports.)

(See next page for session details)

When, Where, Who

Listening Session #1:

Fire Station 2 – 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. on Monday, August 21

City Council members attending: Kim, Janie, Ron, Don, Becky, Mike

City Staff attending: Marshall Hallock, Sue Iverson, Mike Warner, Gordon Rohr, Jay Owens, Shawn Blaney, Michelle Leise (facilitator)

39 residents attended

Listening Session #2:

Colvill Park Courtyard Building – 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 22

City Council members attending: Evan, Vicki, Janie, Mike

City Staff attending: Marshall Hallock, Jay Owens, Mike Warner, Kiley Lindholm, Peter Hanlin, Michelle Leise (facilitator)

10 residents attended

Listening Session #3:

Library Lower Level (Foot Room) – 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 23

Site was relocated in advance from LaGrange Park due to excessive heat

City Council members attending: Vicki, Ron, Don, Becky, Mike

City Staff attending: Marshall Hallock, Sue Iverson, Mike Warner, Gordon Rohr, Jay Owens, Kyle Klatt, Shawn Blaney, Michelle Leise (facilitator)

11 residents attended

Listening Session #4:

Library Lower Level (Foot Room) – 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, August 23

City Council members attending: Becky, Evan, Ron, Don, Mike

City Staff attending: Marshall Hallock, Sue Iverson, Kyle Klatt, Jay Owens, Shawn Blaney, Peter Hanlin, Michelle Leise (facilitator)

23 residents attended

Listening Session #5:

Library Lower Level (Foot Room) – 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, August 24

Site was relocated in advance from Bay Point Park due to excessive heat

City Council members attending: Ron, Don, Vicki, Janie, Mike

City Staff attending: Marshall Hallock, Sue Iverson, Peter Hanlin, Trent Wentlandt, Quin Kehren, Steve Kohn, Jay Owens, Michelle Leise (facilitator)

8 residents attended

Listening Session #6:

Library Lower Level (Foot Room) – 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 24

City Council members attending: Ron, Don, Vicki, Mike

City Staff attending: Marshall Hallock, Nick Sather, Peter Hanlin, Jay Owens, Shawn Blaney, Kyle Klatt, Randy Decker, Trent Wentlandt, Michelle Leise (facilitator)

30 residents attended

How the Sessions Were Publicized

--Through City's avenues: City Beat (twice), Channel 6, Facebook multiple times, website

--Chamber newsletter twice

--Republican Eagle article

--Interview on the KWNG radio and additional short reminders on air

--25 posters distributed throughout the community

--500 small cards distributed throughout the community

Promotion cards were distributed across a wide range of locations, including the Library, two laundromats, the Hiawatha Bus Transit station, Pier 55, Red Wing Arts, Hanisch Bakery, Mandy's, Randy's, Caribou Coffee, Red Wing Y, Red Wing Arts, Ignite, City Hall, Public Works, Buchanan's, Fair Trade Books, and Pepin Woods. Large signs were placed at each park when the locations were moved to the library due to excessive heat. Large signs were also at each entrance of the library on Wednesday and Thursday.