



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

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To the Honorable, the City Council:

I am transmitting the results of the bi-annual City of Cambridge Resident Telephone Survey for 2018. I am very pleased to report that overall opinions of the City remain very positive. On perhaps the most all-encompassing measure of resident sentiment, “extreme” satisfaction with overall experiences with the city remains at the record high level for the 18-year history of this survey program. The percentage of respondents who are “totally” satisfied with their interactions with the city remained at the highest level we’ve seen over the course of this survey program. And, the combined overall satisfaction rose from 53% in 2016 to 55% today. I believe this is a reflection on our highly capable and extremely dedicated workforce, and the focus they place on the initiatives and priorities of the Council.

The survey serves as a valuable tool to help inform us about issues and areas where the City is excelling and areas that the City may need to pay particular attention to, and where we might focus even more efforts in the future. I am proud that two key City Council and City Manager priority areas we have been working on have seen increases in “excellent” ratings: ‘a place welcoming to all races and cultures’ (+3%), and ‘public information’ (+6%).

Among the 16 City services we explored for performance, excellent ratings improved on: ‘recreation programs and facilities’ (+3%), ‘city parks and park maintenance’ (+3%), ‘street maintenance and cleanliness’ (+4%), ‘animal control’ (+3%), ‘sidewalk maintenance’ (+1%), ‘children and youth services’ (+3). Moving forward we will closely monitor areas that saw decreases in the “excellent” ratings, such as ‘overall quality of life in Cambridge’ (-3%), ‘Cambridge as a safe place to live’ (-3%), and ‘ability to get around town by public transportation - bus/subway’ (-9%).

Affordable housing/housing (35%) was again identified as the “single most important issue facing the City of Cambridge today”. Housing affordability continues to be a major regional concern. The survey response also echoes the significant amount of attention this topic has received, both in discussions at City Council, public forums within the community, and reaffirms the City’s strong commitment and prioritization of the issue.

On a wide range of issues and city characteristics, the highest percentage of “excellent” ratings for Cambridge in this survey were: ‘place to live’ (49%), ‘quality of neighborhood’ (45%), ‘ability to get



around town on foot' (46%), 'opportunities to attend cultural events' (43%), 'a place welcoming to all races and cultures' (41%), as a 'place to raise a child' (41%), 'open space/recreation opportunities (34%), 'ability to get around town by public transportation' (33%) and 'ability to get around town by bicycle' (30%).

This year's survey also found the highest levels of utilization reported for 'visiting a neighborhood or city park' (46% more than 26 times in the last 12 months), 'riding a bike in the City' (30% more than 26 times in the last 12 months), and 'using the city's public libraries' (24% more than 26 times in the last 12 months).

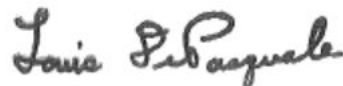
The 2018 Resident Survey included a series of new questions focusing on bicycle and pedestrian safety. Overall, the survey found 36% of respondents in "total agreement" that the City has improved bicycle safety in Cambridge, 31% of respondents in "total agreement" that the City has improved pedestrian safety, and 46% of respondents in "total agreement" that they would like to see the City install more protected bike lanes, with 22% reporting "total disagreement." 47% of respondents indicated that they have never ridden a bike in the City in the past 12 months.

The survey was conducted September 12-October 15, 2018. The statistically valid random telephone survey of residents has been conducted every two years since 2000 by Opinion Dynamics Corporation, a national public opinion research firm, based in Waltham MA. This year's survey was again supplemented by web and print versions. The web version of the survey was completed by 2,587 individual respondents. An analysis by Opinion Dynamics showed that between the telephone and web methodologies, residents displayed similar results. The survey responses provide a snapshot of public sentiment towards various issues and public services in the city, and some variation in the results from survey to survey is expected. In reviewing the survey results, it is important to pay attention to any emerging and long-term trends as well.

I hope that you will look closely at the report by Opinion Dynamics to view all of the changes that occurred in the 2018 survey. Also enclosed is a separate compilation of aggregated results for various responses and corresponding results for each survey since 2000.

I look forward to working with the City Council and City departments to further analyze the results, so that they can be useful in the development of priorities and future work plans, as well as the overall budget process. I anticipate that the survey results will be a valuable tool for the Council and the public to understand community issues. I welcome a more detail exploration of the survey results with the Council and I am happy to ask representatives from Opinion Dynamics Corporation to attend a committee meeting.

Very truly yours,



Louis A. DePasquale
City Manager

LAD/mec
Attachment(s)