

# **Summary of Residents' Views on the Use of Town Reserves**

Prepared by:  
Long-Range Planning Committee  
March 6, 2014

## Summary of Residents' Views on the Use of Town's Reserves

To provide the Town Council with input on community priorities for the use of the town's budgetary reserves, the Long-Range Planning (LRP) Committee was asked to organize a public forum aimed at eliciting residents' views on this issue. This report presents the steps taken by the committee to gather this information and the results of its activities.

### Step 1: Reaching Out to Town Residents

The LRP Committee developed a work plan for carrying out this request and made modifications based on input from the Town Council prior to its implementation. The plan involved two critical steps. First, to engage town residents on the issue, we mailed a questionnaire to each residence requesting that they submit their ideas on ways the town reserves could be used. The questionnaire stated:

*"Are there new or expanded Town programs, services or initiatives that are of interest to you? As the Town Council begins planning for next year's budget, we want to know your ideas on ways to use available Town reserves for anything from multi-year spending on a specific project to a one-time expenditure."*

Over 100 town residents responded to the questionnaire. They submitted over 250 ideas for potential uses of town reserves. The vast majority of these ideas satisfied the criteria specified in the questionnaire – that any ideas should further a public purpose, benefit a significant number of residents, and be something a town government can accomplish. With support from the Town staff, the LRP committee reviewed these responses and grouped those that were similar. Based on this review, the committee identified the following 11 topics as those receiving the broadest support:

- Charitable Giving
- Open Space Acquisition/Recreational Uses
- Purple Line Assistance
- Rainy Day Fund
- Rebates
- Sidewalk Snow/Ice Removal
- Street Lighting
- Streets and Sidewalks
- Town-Sponsored Events
- Town Tree Canopy
- Undergrounding Utilities

These 11 ideas were presented at the Town forums (see below) on individual poster boards. Fourteen additional ideas submitted by residents were also presented at the forums on a single poster board entitled “Additional Submissions.” This set of additional submissions were:

- Benches: *Install more* around Town
- Bus service: Provide *service to the Metro* and/or for shopping
- Composting: Expand service to include *backdoor pickup*
- Consultants: *Advocate for Town* on planning issues and *evaluate parking restrictions* in town
- Environmental initiatives: Provide *subsidies* for home insulation and *energy conservation*
- Historic documentation: *Photograph all houses* to establish historic record.
- Housing subsidies: *Provide for lower income residents* to maintain mixed character of neighborhood
- Lawton Center improvements: *Install tennis wall* and *better fitness equipment*
- New construction: *Mitigate negative impacts* (e.g., privacy, damage to trees, storm water impacts) on individual neighbors, the environment or the community as a whole
- Noise ordinance: Provide for *more enforcement*
- Overgrown vegetation: *Cut back plants* infringing on sidewalks
- Street signage: *Install more* visible street signs
- Video cameras: *Install* throughout Town or at all entrances
- Yard trash: *Collect twice a week* in the fall

## **Step 2: Public Forums**

In developing the format for the public forum, the LRP committee sought to address the following objectives:

- Attract as many residents as possible;
- Display background information on the town’s revenues, expenditures and reserve;
- Provide a straightforward means for residents to view the ideas submitted; and
- Provide residents with a simple method for registering their preferences.

The forums were scheduled in February so the results could be reported to the Town Council for its consideration in developing the Town's budget for the coming year.

Based on the positive experience of town residents at a series of forums hosted by the Climate and Environment Committee, the LRP committee focused on a format that would allow residents the flexibility to participate at two different times (one weekend day and one weekday night). In addition, the committee developed a format that displayed information on options around the room, allowing residents the flexibility to come and go at their convenience and spend as much time as they wanted in reviewing the options and registering their preferences. For context, we also provided several posters with information about the Town's budget over time, where revenues come from and what the town spends, along with information on the size and growth of the reserve over time.

Almost 150 town residents attended the forums. The first forum was held on Sunday, February 9 from 2 to 5 pm, and was attended by 55 residents. On Tuesday, February 11, from 5-8 pm, an additional 93 residents participated.

Upon arriving at the Town Hall residents were informed that the ideas received from the mail questionnaire were displayed around the room and that information on the town budget and surplus was also presented. The most popular ideas suggested by Town residents were displayed on 11 poster boards which included background information and potential costs (where available) for each option. In addition, 14 suggestions also submitted by residents were listed with brief descriptions as options for consideration on a single poster board. Each resident received a sheet to list his or her top three priorities in order of preference. They were also given sticky notes to write down any additional ideas or comments. Almost 100 residents took advantage of this opportunity and added new ideas or comments on their priorities. These comments are summarized below along with the priorities listed by residents.

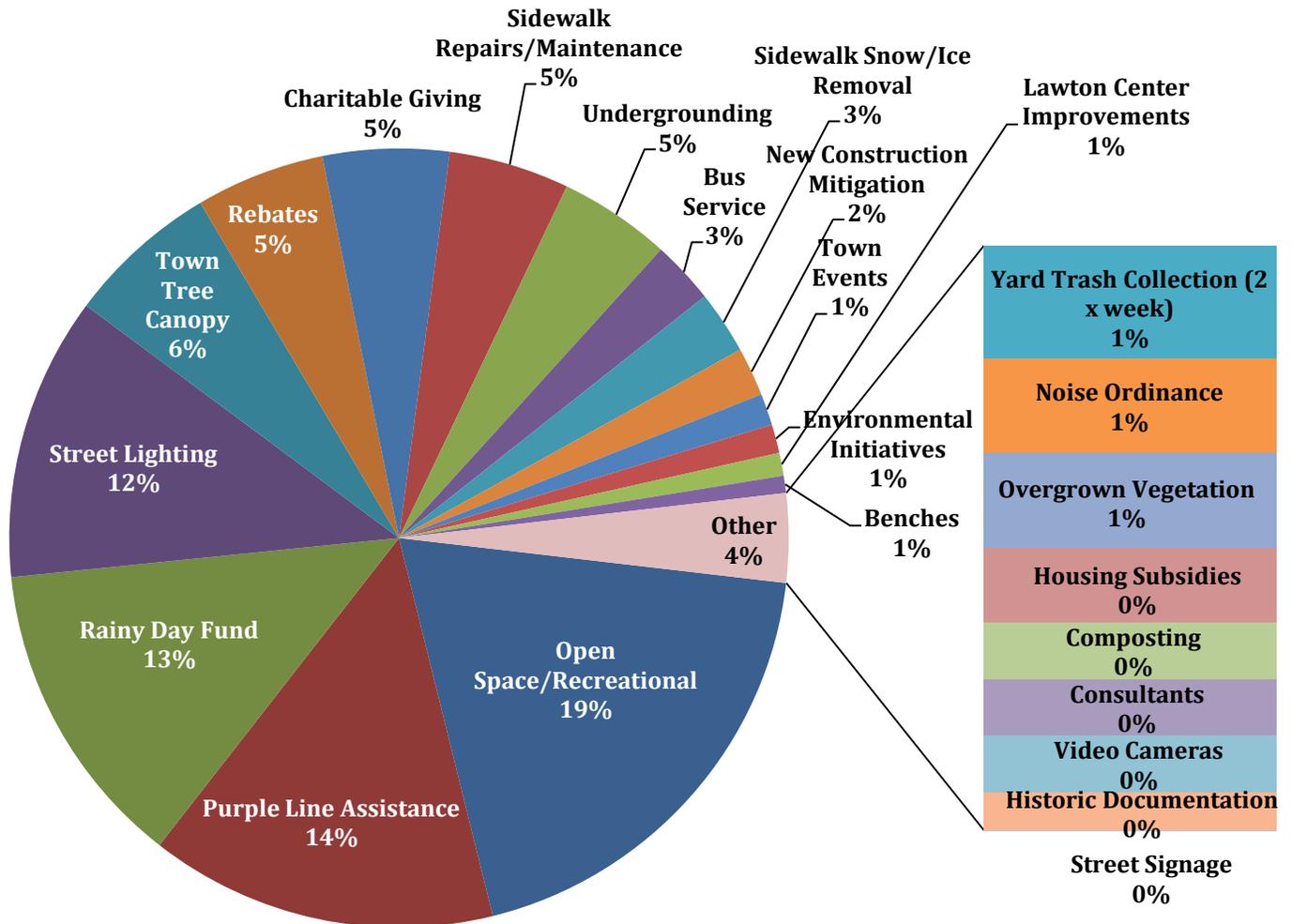
The following table and pie chart summarize the priorities listed by residents for the 25 topics covered on the poster boards (11 on individual boards and the remaining 14 on a single board). The results reflect a simple weighting scheme with the 1<sup>st</sup> preference given 3 points, the 2<sup>nd</sup> preference 2 points and the 3<sup>rd</sup> one point. Open space acquisition/recreational uses, Purple Line assistance, rainy day fund, and street lighting were the top four selections.

### Summary of Residents' Preferences for Uses of Reserves

| <b>Option</b>                       | <b>1st</b> | <b>2nd</b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup></b> | <b>Total<br/>(unweighted)</b> | <b>Total<br/>(weighted)*</b> |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Open Space/Recreational             | 31         | 27         | 15                    | 73                            | 162                          |
| Purple Line Assistance              | 28         | 14         | 9                     | 51                            | 121                          |
| Rainy Day Fund                      | 21         | 15         | 15                    | 51                            | 108                          |
| Street Lighting                     | 11         | 26         | 14                    | 51                            | 99                           |
| Town Tree Canopy                    | 6          | 11         | 13                    | 30                            | 53                           |
| Rebates                             | 11         | 3          | 6                     | 20                            | 45                           |
| Charitable Giving                   | 7          | 7          | 9                     | 23                            | 44                           |
| Sidewalk<br>Repairs/Maintenance     | 4          | 10         | 10                    | 24                            | 42                           |
| Undergrounding                      | 8          | 5          | 5                     | 18                            | 39                           |
| Bus Service                         | 5          | 2          | 3                     | 10                            | 22                           |
| Sidewalk Snow/Ice<br>Removal        | 2          | 6          | 4                     | 12                            | 22                           |
| New Construction<br>Mitigation      | 3          | 3          | 2                     | 8                             | 17                           |
| Town Events                         | 1          | 3          | 4                     | 8                             | 11                           |
| Environmental Initiatives           | 2          | 1          | 2                     | 5                             | 10                           |
| Lawton Center<br>Improvements       | --         | 3          | 2                     | 5                             | 8                            |
| Benches                             | --         | 3          | --                    | 3                             | 6                            |
| Yard Trash Collection (2 x<br>week) | --         | 1          | 4                     | 5                             | 6                            |
| Noise Ordinance                     | 1          | --         | 2                     | 3                             | 5                            |
| Overgrown Vegetation                | --         | 2          | 1                     | 3                             | 5                            |
| Housing Subsidies                   | 1          | --         | 1                     | 2                             | 4                            |
| Composting                          | --         | 1          | 1                     | 2                             | 3                            |
| Consultants                         | --         | 1          | 1                     | 2                             | 3                            |
| Video Cameras                       | --         | 1          | 1                     | 2                             | 3                            |
| Historic Documentation              | --         | --         | 2                     | 2                             | 2                            |
| Street Signage                      | --         | --         | --                    | 0                             | 0                            |

\* Weighting based on 3 points for 1<sup>st</sup> preference, 2 points for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1 point for 3<sup>rd</sup>.

# Residents' Preferences (Weighted)



The written comments provided by residents included a wide range of ideas presented below with no single suggestion receiving support from more than 4 residents. In addition, a limited number of residents commented on topics that they did not want town money spent on. These included opposition to spending on the Purple Line, a town pool, rebates, video surveillance, and additional trees.

**Written Comments/Suggestions Offered by Residents (times suggested):**

Art in public spaces  
Café/market in town (2)  
Conservation easements  
Distributed generation/microgrids (4)  
Establish “Green Streets”  
Generators to those requesting them  
Incentives for solar  
Increase policing of traffic (2)  
Property tax rebate for seniors (2)  
Recycle batteries and paints  
Register dogs/DNA feces  
Rehab parks/ playgrounds (2)  
Speed bumps  
Support drainage improvements (2)  
Update community resource book  
Wi fi/high speed internet (2)  
Video stream town events