



City of Des Moines Budget Town Hall October 22, 2024

Objective:

- The primary goal for the Budget Town Hall was to educate residents on the City's budget, budgeting process, provide clarity on current budget challenges, and discuss strategies for closing the budget gap. The event aimed to help residents understand how the City's budget works, core services provided, staffing, department highlights, and how funds are allocated.

Recap of Activities:

- **Event Date/Location:** Hosted a public meeting on October 20, 2024 at the Beach Park Auditorium.
- **Presentation:** PowerPoint presentation by the Finance Director, Jeff Friend, which provided an overview of the structure and components of the City's budget to include the current budget challenges and proposed strategies to close the budget gap.
- **Interactive Stations:** Set-up stations throughout the auditorium for residents to engage with staff, ask questions, and learn more about core services, staffing, department budget, budget strategies and challenges.
- **Dollars and Decisions Challenge:** Residents participated in a budgeting activity, where they allocated their "City Des Moines Buck\$" to various budget priorities, exploring the complexities of budgeting and making trade-offs.

Key Outcomes:

- **Budget Education:** Provided residents with an opportunity to better understand the City's budget and the budgeting process.
- **Resident Engagement:** Facilitated meaningful interactions between residents and City staff, allowing for direct engagement with the staff that provide City services.
- **Budget Simulation:** Engaged residents in the budgeting process through the "Dollars and Decisions" challenge, highlighting the complexities of balancing limited resources and competing priorities.
- **Dialogue Kickoff:** Initiated the groundwork for ongoing community engagement around the City's budget and future planning.

Feedback from Residents:

- Feedback was generally positive regarding the Town Hall.
- Participants expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage in the budgeting process.



- Top three (3) areas of funding: public safety, infrastructure, and community enrichment.

Challenges Encountered:

- **Low Turnout** (33 attendees): Despite efforts to promote the event, participation was lower than expected, indicating a need for more outreach and broader engagement strategies.
- **Location Limitations:** The venue may not have been ideal for maximizing participation, suggesting the need for alternative locations.

Next Steps/Recommendations:

- **Broaden Outreach:** Plan to take future budget discussions on the road to different locations to increase accessibility and participation.
- **Enhance Interaction:** Explore adding more interactive components, such as small group discussions or real-time polls, to encourage deeper community engagement.
- **Expand Promotion:** Broaden communication channels and outreach strategies to engage a larger, more diverse group of residents.

Resources:

- Visit: https://www.desmoineswa.gov/departments/finance/budgets/budget_townhall_meeting to review results from the “Dollars and Decisions” A Budgeting Challenge.