

Appendix F: Tax and Utility Affordability Survey Additional Feedback Summary

This report presents a summary of the written feedback provided to administration through mail, email and service requests. A total of 37 written responses were received.

11 respondents (30%) have expressed support for an affordability program for the following household groups:

Target Beneficiary Group	No. of Respondents (n)
Seniors	<i>n</i> = 5
All Low-Income Households	<i>n</i> = 1
All Income Groups	<i>n</i> = 1
Low income, multi-family properties run by non-profit companies	<i>n</i> = 1
Single Mom	<i>n</i> = 1
Newcomers	<i>n</i> = 1
Low-Income Groups excluding renters of landlords in the inner City	<i>n</i> = 1
Total	<i>N</i> = 11

14 respondents (38%) have expressed that they *do not* support an affordability program. The most common reason was the already high utility and property tax rates which makes them reluctant to pay more. The reasons for not supporting an affordability program are summarized below:

Reasons	No. of Respondents (n)
The utility and property tax rates are already high making them reluctant to pay more.	<i>n</i> = 8
Instead of an affordability program, the City should focus on managing its spending and addressing operational inefficiencies to address the affordability issues.	<i>n</i> = 4
Raised concern about the City's jurisdiction or responsibility for providing social assistance.	<i>n</i> = 2
Would like the ability to choose who to help if extra income is available	<i>n</i> = 2
Don't feel the need to provide any (further) assistance to others	<i>n</i> = 2
Raised concern about the ability of homeowners receiving the assistance or subsidy to maintain their properties.	<i>n</i> = 1

12 respondents (32%) did not provide any level of support for affordability programs. These respondents provided comments on the program administration or the survey design. Opinions and ideas on City policy, programs, and related services were also expressed.

Categories & Themes

Beyond the respondents' feedback on level of support for an affordability program, themes are identified through the written response:

Program Administration of a Potential Affordability Program

- Expressed the need to define the program eligibility by defining the threshold for low-income status and establishing criteria for granting assistance or subsidy.
- Expressed the need to inform taxpayers on how much additional taxes will be paid should the City decide to move forward with an affordability program.
- Provided suggestions on the income grouping of households and on the program affordability options.
- Raised concern that a subsidy program might encourage the subsidized group(s) to consume more water.
- Would like a consultation before moving forward with any affordability program.

Comments on City Policies, Programs and Related Services

- Consider the following in the utility costs calculation/billing and allocation:
 - Transfer the fixed portion charged on utility bills to tax.
 - Eliminate consumption-based charging for sewer and drainage use.
 - Eliminate the recycling charge and add the cost to the property tax.
 - Base charge should be consumption-based.
 - Make the utility bill smaller to make it easier to create operational efficiencies, and the cost of delivering services can decrease.
 - Stop downloading services off the property tax.
- Consider the following in the tax allocation and exemptions:
 - Stop exempting property from paying their fair share of taxes.
 - Review the relationship between residential and commercial taxes.
- Consider the following in the review of related City policies and programs:
 - Eliminate the leak adjustment policy.
 - Eliminate the condo waste rebate program.
 - Allow residents to opt out of recycling and put the garbage onto the utility bill.
- Expressed support for initiatives that promote environmental stewardship and sustainability such as use of rain barrels and other water collection systems, education campaign for newcomers on reducing household consumption as well as linkage to groups that assist them and providing homeowners option to go digital for their property tax/education tax notices.
- Expressed concern on whether they are getting value for the property taxes that they pay (e.g., noticed that parks are unevenly cleaned or maintained, rusty lamp posts, garbage blown by the wind, noisy backyard, irregular street sweeping, lack of winter maintenance, etc.)
- Expressed the need for Council to listen to citizens' concerns and complaints.

Survey Design

- Expressed appreciation that they are being consulted through the survey.
- Would like the ability to provide comments or feedback in the actual survey, and to vote against or refused an affordability program.
- Expressed the need to provide more context to the survey by providing data and statistics that will support an informed decision.