

Your City/Your Decision

Phase II Report: Community Workshop Results

March 2006

**Submitted by:
Community Focus**

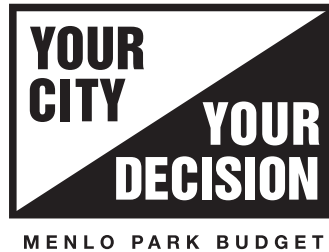


MENLO PARK BUDGET

Your City/Your Decision

Phase II Report: Community Workshop Results

March 2006



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Your City/Your Decision

Early in 2005, the City of Menlo Park forecast a \$2.9 million gap between revenues and expenditures in the General Fund for fiscal year 2006-2007. The City faces difficult choices about reducing services, increasing revenues and/or finding alternative ways to provide services at lower cost. On February 1, 2005, the City Council of Menlo Park approved a recommendation from City staff to engage the community to better understand its priorities in order to develop a budget based on these preferences. Council members decided to take a full year to involve community members in making decisions about a sustainable services and funding strategy. In addition, they directed that a Budget Advisory Committee, an ad-hoc residents' advisory group, be formed. Members of this committee were appointed by City Council to provide input into the City's 2006-07 budget process and to facilitate community involvement in the civic engagement effort.

Your City/Your Decision is a two-phase community engagement and education process that not only asks the community about City service priorities but also elicits feedback from the community about how the City should deal with the difficult trade-offs involved in balancing the budget. Also central to this process is the education provided to community members about the complexity of the budget and the nature of the difficult decisions facing the City. The resulting overall process is designed to enhance the existing budget process and to help the City make decisions towards the central goal of developing a community-supported, sustainable balanced budget.

Your City/Your Decision is a conversation with the community to understand community recommendations on how to develop a balanced-budget solution. In the first phase of this conversation, the City asks the community to describe its priorities regarding City services and funding. Based on the community response, in the second phase, the City gauges support for specific budget-balancing strategies, both net cost reductions to services and tax options.

This report summarizes the public's thinking and response from the second phase of this conversation and compares data from both phases. A separate report was prepared summarizing the results of the Phase I survey.

Tools of the Process

Different tools were used to gather community input in Phase I and Phase II of *Your City/Your Decision*. Each tool and phase was designed to complement the other.

In Phase I, a survey was developed for community members that required respondents to wrestle with the trade-offs necessary in balancing the budget while describing their priorities for City services. This survey was distributed through three avenues: 1) a community-wide mailing, 2) an online survey, and 3) a random sample survey.

Phase II of *Your City/Your Decision* used a different method to engage citizens. Instead of a detailed publication and worksheet being mailed to homes and businesses, Phase II engaged citizens in face-to-face deliberations with their neighbors. Community budget workshops were held throughout the city. At the workshops, citizens worked in small groups, acting as simulated city councils charged with developing a balanced budget for Menlo Park. Recommendations about the budget were made by the groups through majority vote. The budget-balancing exercise in Phase II asked that these small groups balance the budget by choosing from a set of detailed budget-balancing strategies.

The strengths of the survey tool (broad reach, accessibility of participation, measure of representative-ness and consistency) were complemented by the strengths of the workshops (opportunity for depth of deliberation, dialogue, creative thinking, community building).

Using the Survey Results as a Guide

In comparing the results from the survey and the workshops, there is a level of consistency that offers a measure of confidence that the results reflect general community attitudes to net cost reductions and revenue increases. However, the findings in this report are most useful as a guide to the City Council on community preferences alone: the report does not factor in the myriad other factors (state mandates, existing contractual arrangements, public health, safety concerns, etc.) that also influence development of a sustainable budget solution. In addition, *Your City/Your Decision* focuses community input on the difficult choices and tradeoffs regarding net cost reductions to services and tax options that could help balance the City's budget in the near term. There may be other approaches, including longer term strategies, that City Council may wish to consider and implement as it develops a sustainable solution to provide needed services to the City.

KEY FINDINGS

Key findings from the data-gathering activities are provided below.

Overall Approach

*Do citizens prefer to solve the budget deficit by reducing net costs of services, increasing taxes, or by using a combination of these approaches?*¹

A majority of the workshop groups (93%) chose a combination approach, using both net cost reductions and tax options to balance the budget. This finding is also consistent with Phase I survey results.

¹ Please note that "reducing net costs" does not necessarily mean a reduction in services. "Reducing net costs" can also include the option of increasing user fees to cover the cost of the particular service or finding alternate ways to provide the same level of service at a reduced cost.

Service Strategy Preference

*In what service areas are citizens willing to support net cost reductions?
What types of net cost reductions are supported?*

The survey and workshop data show a preference for fee increase strategies over reduction or service elimination strategies. As discussed in Chapter 4, thirteen of the fourteen most selected strategies are fee increase strategies.

Varying levels of support exist for reduction and service elimination strategies depending on the service area. Phase II workshop results demonstrate a preference to preserve services that support the health, safety and general welfare of the City. Both Phase I and Phase II results show majority support for service reductions for some services in Community Services, Public Works and Community Development. Under these departments, in general, there is consistency in the service areas chosen for reduction in Phase I and Phase II. Both Phase II workshop results and Phase I survey results show some consistency in supporting preservation of services located in the Belle Haven neighborhood.

Variations between Phase I and Phase II with regard to the above departments are most likely explained by the different types of information offered in Phase I (service descriptions and general impact descriptions from unspecified reductions) and Phase II (specific service strategies with dollar amounts and impacts). There are inconsistencies in the data for some services in the Public Safety department.

Tax Options

Do citizens support increased tax options? If so, what options do they support?

The data shows that a utility user tax is most supported by both workshop groups and survey respondents. A larger majority (89%) of workshop groups chose some level of utility tax compared to a lower percentage (between 50% or 56%) of survey respondents who chose a utility user tax.

Open-Ended Comments

In order to capture new creative ideas from workshop participants, suggested strategies were recorded on blank chart paper at each table during the workshops. In addition, participants were given the option to record personal thoughts and comments on blank comment cards. These comments give additional depth and texture to the data gathered from the budget-balancing exercise. Please see Appendix J for a compilation of these comments.

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW

Background

Early in 2005, the City of Menlo Park forecast a \$2.9 million gap between revenues and expenditures in the General Fund for fiscal year 2006-2007. This gap represented 10% of the City's annual operating budget and was projected to widen if no measures were taken. After having gone through years of trimming the budget through short-term savings, lower-impact cuts, and the deferral of maintenance and repairs, the budget was still not in balance. The City required a more sustainable solution and turned to the people of Menlo Park for their input in facing this series of important decisions.

On February 1, 2005, the City Council of Menlo Park approved a recommendation from City staff to develop and conduct a process to engage the community to understand its priorities in order to develop a budget based on these preferences. The City of Menlo Park enlisted the help of Community Focus, a non-profit organization that helps bring government and community together to create solutions, to develop a process not only to solicit and gather community input, but also to educate residents about the important budget issues at stake. The resulting process is called *Your City/Your Decision*.

In addition, the City Council directed that a Budget Advisory Committee, an ad-hoc residents' advisory group, be formed. The members of the Budget Advisory Committee were appointed by the City Council and given the task of providing input into the City's 2006-07 budget process and facilitating community involvement.

Your City/Your Decision

Your City/Your Decision is a two-phase community engagement and education process that not only asks the community about City service priorities but also elicits feedback from the community about how the City should deal with the difficult trade-offs involved in balancing the budget. Also central to this process is the education provided to community members about the complexity of the budget and the nature of the difficult decisions facing the City.

Phase I gathered information about the priorities of the community through a survey that asked residents to balance the budget. Each household and business received a survey with information about City services, their current net costs after program revenues are subtracted, the potential service impact of reduced net costs, and potential tax options. The respondent was then asked to give input about his/her particular priorities by using net cost reductions and/or tax increases to balance the budget.

From this data, the City staff developed a list of possible specific budget-balancing strategies (e.g., various service levels, alternative ways to provide a service, revenue increases, etc.) to

address the community's priorities in more detail. In addition, City staff not only determined specific levels of projected savings for each strategy, but also developed descriptions of the probable impact of the budget-balancing strategies on City service levels and results.

In Phase II, the City presented the strategies, projected savings and impact descriptions to the community in community workshops held in three different neighborhoods across the city. Participants were organized into small groups to simulate what the City Council might experience. Participants deliberated over the possible strategies, with each group voting for or against each presented strategy and finishing with a recommended balanced budget solution.

Part of a Larger Process

Management of the City's fiscal health and stability is a complex process that requires a variety of approaches, both short and long term, to achieve a balanced and sustainable budget. *Your City/Your Decision* focuses on engaging the community in the area of service priorities in the context of trade-offs. This does not discount other approaches that may be possible or necessary in balancing the budget, but gathers input on service priorities, acceptable areas for service reductions, and initial support for possible tax measures to better inform the City staff and City Council as it faces both urgent short-term decisions and long-term planning strategies.

Furthermore, *Your City/Your Decision* is an important enhancement to the existing budget process that also utilizes the expertise of City staff and the deliberations and final decisions by the City Council. The proposed budget solutions from the survey and workshops are not intended to be directly translated into the actual City budget, but will be used by the City Council as a gauge of community preference. *Your City/Your Decision* is not a replacement or substitute for the traditional budget process: community input is one source of information that must be balanced with long-term cost analyses, legal requirements and limitations, and a number of other important factors. Ultimately, it is the elected City Council that has the responsibility for adopting a service and funding strategy for the city.

CHAPTER TWO: TOOLS OF THE PROCESS

Process Goals and Objectives

The ultimate goal of the *Your City/Your Decision* is to create a community-supported, balanced, sustainable City budget. *Your City/Your Decision* addresses this goal through two objectives:

- 1) **educating the community** about the complexity of the budget shortfall and how City services are funded, and
- 2) **eliciting community input** regarding service priorities and tax options in the context of navigating the difficult tradeoffs central to balancing the budget.

In achieving these objectives, the City gathers information about community preferences to be considered in the development of a sustainable budget, educates the community about why certain difficult choices may be necessary, and in the process, develops community support for the resulting decisions.

Conventional community feedback processes (town-hall meetings, public hearings, etc.) are often limited in their effectiveness. Not only do a small number of community members participate, but the feedback received is often general, one-sided, uninformed or, worse yet, ill-informed. This type of information is often not particularly helpful in guiding policy decisions.

Community Focus worked with the City of Menlo Park to design a process to overcome the shortfalls of conventional feedback processes by balancing broad engagement with depth of input elicited from the community. Also, it gives community residents background information in order to produce an informed opinion that is more stable and reliable than one formed without such information. *Your City/Your Decision's* community engagement tools deliver community input at a higher level of specificity, depth and context to more effectively assist policy-making. The completion of *Your City/Your Decision* will yield information such as willingness to accept certain trade-offs, support for different net cost reductions, and support for different types of revenue options.

Complementary Tools

The survey and the workshops used in successive phases each offer a different snapshot of community input with neither one more valuable than the other. They are intended to complement each other in their strengths and shortcomings in the types of data gathered.

Phase I: Individual Surveys

In Phase I, a survey was developed for individual community members that required respondents to wrestle with the trade-offs necessary in balancing the budget while describing their priorities for City services. It focused on identifying respondents' preferences for the range and level

of city services. For example, do respondents favor the city's provision of recreation services? If so, which services and at what level? Do respondents favor or oppose the use of fees to fund recreational services? In addition, it asked respondents to rate their support for business development possibilities and increased taxes. This information gave the City a picture of what services are most important to community members when all services are considered together in context. In addition, the survey provided space for open-ended comments. The survey was distributed through three avenues: a community-wide mailing to all households and businesses, a random sample survey and an online version available on the City's website.

The unique strengths of the survey tool included: 1) broad reach, education and engagement, 2) accessibility and convenience of participation, 3) a measure of "representative-ness" through the random sample survey, and 4) a measure of consistency through cross-source (community-wide mailing, random sample survey, online survey) results comparison. However, since the survey was designed to be filled out on an individual instead of a group basis, this tool lacked the opportunity for deliberation, dialogue, and iterative discussion with the City and among fellow community members. In addition, the information offered was static without the ability to clarify or answer questions.

Phase II: Community Workshops

In Phase II, a budget-balancing exercise was developed to elicit feedback about the budget-balancing strategies developed by City staff in response to the Phase I results. The exercise in Phase II is different from the survey in Phase I in two ways: (1) groups were asked to use specified strategies (with dollar amounts attached) to balance the budget, and (2) it was designed to be completed by a group, not an individual. Workshop participants sat in small groups, considered the possible strategies, discussed the different options, and developed a group recommendation by voting on each strategy. The exercise, once again, forced decisions in a trade-off context and gathered information about community support for specific strategies when given information about their impact on services.

The strengths of the workshop format addressed the weaknesses of the survey tool used in Phase I. The workshop format strengths included: 1) opportunity for iterative dialogue and deliberation, 2) exposure to challenge from multiple perspectives, 3) opportunity for questions and answers, 4) opportunity for group creativity, and 5) opportunity for connection and community building. The workshops, however, were not designed to be representative of the community. Due to the nature of a community workshop, participation is self-selected by community members. In addition, the participation generated with a community workshop is far more limited than with a community-wide mailed survey.

When considering the results, it is important to recognize the differences in the types of information gathered and to use them as complementary data sets. The surveys offered community-wide reach and methodological strength. The workshops offered opportunity for deliberation, live dialogue and group creativity. Both provided education about the budget shortfall and City services, and also gauged community preferences about how to balance the budget. Together in this process they offered a strengthened approach to eliciting community input and developing community support regarding a sustainable, balanced budget solution.

CHAPTER THREE: PHASE II PROCESS AND DATA-GATHERING METHODOLOGY

As was discussed in the previous chapter, three community workshops were hosted by the City to gather input in *Your City/Your Decision: Phase II*. This chapter discusses the methodology of the Phase II Community Workshops. For a full discussion of the survey methodology used in Phase I, please see the *Your City/Your Decision: Phase I Report*.

Workshop Overview

Community Focus worked with City staff to design and implement workshops based on similar community engagement processes used in Eugene, Oregon and Sacramento, California. The workshops placed participants in small groups which acted as simulated city councils charged with developing a balanced budget for Menlo Park.

In order to maximize participation, workshops were offered on three different dates in three different locations in Menlo Park. The dates, locations and times of the workshops were as follows:

- February 9, 2006 – 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. – Belle Haven School
- February 11, 2006 – 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – Burgess Recreation Center
- February 15, 2006 – 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. – La Entrada School

Each workshop ran three hours long and was open to all Menlo Park residents and local business representatives. Workshop participants were randomly assigned to small groups as they arrived at the workshops. Depending on the overall workshop attendance, the groups varied from five to thirteen participants. (Larger groups were necessary in some cases due to the number of available facilitators.) Each group was facilitated by a neutral, volunteer facilitator.

The workshops began with opening comments by the Mayor, a description of the City budget shortfall by the City Manager, and an overview of workshop goals by Community Focus. The majority of the workshop activities were then held in the small groups. Each group participated in a short opening exercise designed to gauge a “gut level” reaction to different general approaches to balancing the budget. Following the opening exercise, each group worked through the budget-balancing exercise to develop a group recommendation on how to balance the budget.

Opening Exercise–General Budget–Balancing Approaches

An opening exercise was designed to gauge “gut level” reactions to four general budget-balancing approaches: 1) reducing services, 2) increasing taxes, 3) reducing labor costs, and 4) pursuing business development. Workshop participants were given a brief description of each approach and then were asked to rank, from 1 to 4, their “gut level” support for the different approaches.

This exercise was used as an “ice-breaker” and was designed for the workshop at the request of the Budget Advisory Committee to acknowledge other approaches to balancing the budget and to gauge the initial approach of participants prior to engaging in the workshop’s deliberative process. The results of the exercise were tabulated and presented in a memo to the Budget Advisory Committee. The memo is included as Appendix G in this report.

Budget-Balancing Exercise

The Phase II budget-balancing exercise built upon the Phase I survey results. As mentioned earlier in this report, City staff developed more specific budget-balancing strategies based on the community response in Phase I. These strategies were accompanied by descriptions of the probable impact on services, if used. For example, instead of simply specifying a level of funding for, say, landscaping services, the workshops offered strategies from which community members could choose how the cost savings should be achieved. For median/roadway landscaping, residents could choose to recommend the following strategies: 1) reduce median/roadway landscape maintenance, and/or 2), charge the Garbage Service Fund for median/roadway litter. The strategy description summarized the impact of services if the strategy were used, including the estimated General Fund savings.

The strategies and impact descriptions were reviewed by both the Budget Advisory Committee and City Council before being presented to the community at the workshops. Feedback from the Budget Advisory Committee and City Council was incorporated into the final strategy descriptions. In order to provide flexibility in choice, a total of \$3.6 million in net cost reduction strategies was offered to the community as well as a variety of tax options. This total includes \$580,000 in General Fund savings that the City is committed to achieve through reductions in overhead and administrative efficiencies. Therefore, the remaining shortfall to be closed by each group, net of these upfront reductions, was \$2.32 million.

As the main exercise of the workshop, participants were asked to consider the different strategies listed, discuss the possibilities and, as a group, vote for the options they found acceptable to balance the budget.

In order to support informed decision-making, participants were given a packet describing the different City services, the possible strategies to reduce net service cost, the impact of each strategy on the services, and the possible tax options. Each strategy description specified the level of savings to the General Fund. The packet also contained a summary of the *Your City/Your Decision* process, and a fact sheet providing further context and information about the City budget.

City staff members were also available to provide additional information about the City services and the possible strategies. Each table was supported by a City staff member who could answer basic questions about City services. Furthermore, there were additional “roaming” City staff members who could provide expert information about specific City service or strategy questions.

Each small group was instructed to use the strategies to balance the budget within \$100,000 of the \$2.9 million shortfall. Guided by the small group facilitators, the small groups reviewed each strategy, read through the accompanying pertinent information, shared personal perspectives and opinions, and voted on whether or not to recommend the strategy to the City. In order for a strategy to be recommended by the group, it required simple majority support. Groups were not required to review the strategies in any particular order. Each group chose its own starting point and had the flexibility to skip certain strategies and return to them later. In the end, however, each group was required to consider all strategies before finishing. Each group used a budget-balancing worksheet to track the strategies supported, and to tally the running total of the shortfall balanced.

One of the strengths of group discussions is the creativity that is generated by the sharing of multiple perspectives. New ideas and strategies were not able to be directly incorporated into the budget-building exercise since they still required cost savings analysis. In order to capture ideas arising from group creativity, the small group facilitators recorded new ideas and strategies that evolved from discussion. Individual participants also had the option to write personal comments on blank comment cards. As did the open-ended comments in Phase I, these strategies, ideas and comments provide additional depth and texture to the data gathered through the budget-balancing exercise.

In order to protect the integrity of the group process, participant latecomers (i.e., those arriving after small groups began the budget-balancing exercise) could fill out a survey individually and submit it to the City. These results are not included in the group results discussed in this report. Individual latecomer responses are included in Appendix K.

In order to understand the make-up of the participants at each table, workshop participants filled out demographic information at their table. Workshop participants were also asked to fill out workshop evaluation forms at the end of the workshop.

Workshop Support Roles

Volunteer Small Group Facilitators – Volunteers were recruited from the City of Menlo Park and throughout the Bay Area. Budget Advisory Committee members also volunteered to be Small Group Facilitators. Community Focus provided facilitator orientations to all volunteers that included information on the background of *Your City/Your Decision*, instructions on how to facilitate the workshop exercises (including sample scripts for introducing each agenda item), how to maintain neutrality as a facilitator, and tips on how to support the group process.

Small Group Support Staff – City staff members were seated at each table to provide support to the group. City staff answered basic questions about the City, were knowledgeable about the mechanics of the exercise, helped direct questions to the appropriate Issue Expert, and provided other general support to the facilitator and group process (e.g. tracking the running tally of the group's budget solution, recording group ideas on chart paper, etc.) City administrative

staff provided orientations to Small Group Support Staff that included information about the workshop mechanics, how to support the group process, and how to answer questions about the City while maintaining a neutral tone.

Issue Experts – Each department provided a City staff member to act as an Issue Expert. Issue Experts were prepared to answer detailed questions about their particular department and the strategies listed under their department in the budget-balancing exercise. Table facilitators called Issue Experts over to the small group tables when workshop participants raised questions that could not be answered by the Small Group Support Staff. City administrative staff provided orientations to Issue Experts that included information about the workshop mechanics, their role in supporting the group process, and how to answer questions about City services while maintaining a neutral tone.

Troubleshooters – City staff and Community Focus staff were available as Troubleshooters. Troubleshooters helped problem-solve miscellaneous workshop issues (e.g. missing materials, addressing participant concerns, facilitator questions, etc.).

Reducing Barriers to Participation

In order to respond to the diversity of communities that exist in a city, when planning a community process, it is important to reduce barriers to participation that may be unique to particular sectors of the community. Voting patterns show that people from lower-income communities and communities of color have a lower participation rate in civic engagement processes. Though many factors contribute to this outcome, steps can be taken to reduce barriers and encourage accessible participation. To this end, *Your City/Your Decision* incorporated the following strategies.

- 1) *Workshop Locations* – Workshops were held at three different locations in Menlo Park. Locations were chosen for their ability to provide accessibility to different communities in Menlo Park and their ability to support the workshop logistics (e.g., size, parking availability, etc.).
- 2) *Spanish Language Support* – Simultaneous Spanish interpretation was available at each workshop. Responding to the larger Latino population in the Belle Haven community, four Spanish-speaking Small Group Facilitators were recruited to facilitate small groups in Spanish for the February 9th workshop. Spanish-speaking Small Group Support Staff were also stationed at the Spanish-speaking small groups. Workshop materials were available in Spanish. Spanish language outreach materials were also used in workshop outreach.
- 3) *Childcare* – Childcare was offered at all three workshops.
- 4) *Targeted Outreach* – Additional outreach was conducted in the Belle Haven community in both Spanish and English.

Workshop Outreach

Successful community engagement can be fairly elusive, especially when the type of participation sought is complex in nature. Though there are a number of factors that can be controlled (location of outreach, type of outreach, amount of outreach, languages used, etc.), there are many that cannot (life circumstances of potential participants, a potential participant's pre-existing values around civic engagement, interest in the particular issue, etc.). Participation in any process requires that the potential participant (1) is aware of the process; (2) is able to participate; (3) has a desire to participate; (4) decides to participate; and then (5) acts on the decision. An outreach strategy can help address the first three steps, but the final two (the decision to participate and the precipitating action) rest with the individual. An outreach strategy focuses on directly influencing the first three factors in hopes of indirectly influencing the final two.

Therefore, the goals of the *Your City/Your Decision* outreach were to:

- heighten awareness about the project and its process
- demonstrate the importance of the project
- demonstrate the uniqueness of the opportunity
- remove barriers to participation

Outreach Subcommittee

In order to more effectively connect the development of the specific outreach strategies to the community, an Outreach Subcommittee was formed as a subcommittee of the Budget Advisory Committee. (As stated earlier, the Budget Advisory Committee is an ad hoc residents' group appointed by the City Council to provide input into the City's 2006-07 budget and facilitate community involvement in the process.) The primary role of the Outreach Subcommittee was to:

- develop the outreach and marketing plan
- develop outreach/marketing roles for BAC members/City staff/City Council/others
- encourage and recruit others into outreach implementation
- drive implementation and provide overall direction

Community Focus worked with the Outreach Subcommittee and City staff to develop a range of outreach strategies. These strategies were then implemented by Budget Advisory Committee members, City staff and City Council. Table 1 describes the outreach strategies utilized.

Outreach Strategies

Repeated exposure to the project and process in a variety of venues was important in creating awareness. Outreach included placing banners over Santa Cruz Avenue, distributing flyers in a multitude of locations, making announcements at events, and making presentations at various community meetings. (See Table I for a complete description of outreach strategies.) In Phase I, the Outreach Subcommittee developed a comprehensive list of different types of venues in the community. Budget Advisory Committee members, City staff and City Council members implemented the outreach strategies at those different locations. (See Appendix C for a detailed description of locations).

The outreach implemented in Phase II continued the outreach conducted in Phase I. All outreach strategies in Phase I also included information about the February community workshops. Most of the Phase I strategies were also used in Phase II. Phase I survey respondents were asked to provide their phone number if they wished to receive a phone call reminder about the community workshops. One week prior to the workshops, a number of phone call reminders were made.

Outreach efforts were helpful in demonstrating the importance and uniqueness of this opportunity. Linking well-known institutions and people (community leaders, City Council, City Manager, other City staff, The Almanac, other media, etc.) to the process was necessary not only to establish credibility, but also to emphasize the importance of this project. City staff worked with local media to cover various aspects of the process. It is worth noting that there was more media coverage of the Your City/Your Decision process during Phase II leading up to the community workshops than there was in Phase I. Some of the coverage resulted from the interest generated by the release of the Phase I survey results and the initial public release of the draft budget-balancing strategies. Also, due to the interest generated by the release of the survey results and the saliency of the issues, community members added to outreach efforts through their own networks and contacts.

As was mentioned earlier, measures were also taken to reduce barriers to participation in this process during the outreach. Multiple forms of outreach were utilized in order to reach citizens in different circles. Outreach materials were translated into Spanish. In order to increase the participation in communities with traditionally low participation in civic engagement processes, additional outreach was implemented in the Belle Haven community (e.g. distributing flyers at local stores, conducting a presentation to parent group at Belle Haven Elementary School, placing an article in the Belle Haven neighborhood newsletter – Belle Haven News, etc.) For a complete list of outreach locations and strategies, please see Appendix C.

TABLE 1
 Outreach Strategies
 Utilized for Phase II of
Your City/Your Decision

	OUTREACH STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
1	Flyers	Distributed flyers through community groups, faith-based institutions, public locations, businesses, schools, neighborhood groups, etc.
2	Speakers Bureau	Provided speakers to present to community groups, businesses, neighborhood groups, faith-based institutions about <i>Your City/Your Decision</i> .
3	City-Hosted Hotline and Email	Established a phone hotline and email address for people seeking more information.
4	Website	Provided information and documents related to <i>Your City/Your Decision</i>
5	Email Lists	Distributed outreach emails through a variety of email lists and listserves.
6	Media Outreach	Worked with local media outlets to cover developments in the process.
7	Banners	Hung large street banners in public locations.
8	Outgoing City Documents	Attached flyer or announcements to outgoing City documents (e.g. receipts and applications).
9	Radio Announcements	Submitted announcement to Spanish language radio programs for families.
10	Counter Displays	Set up counter displays at public City department counters.
11	Scroll on Government Channel	Placed announcement on government channel scroll.
12	Local Newsletters	Inserted article in local newsletters.
13	Phone Call Reminders	Called Phase I survey respondents who had provided their phone numbers for a phone call workshop reminder.
14	Bill Inserts	Added <i>Your City/Your Decision</i> flyers as City bill inserts.
15	Events	Made announcements, passed out flyers at local events.

CHAPTER FOUR: PHASE II WORKSHOP RESULTS

This chapter covers the results from the Phase II Community Workshops. It also offers a comparison of results between Phase II and Phase I. The workshop results discussion will be organized around the three major questions that the workshop was designed to answer:

1. *Do citizens prefer to solve the budget deficit by reducing net costs of services, increasing taxes, or by using a combination of these approaches?*¹
2. *In what service areas are citizens willing to support net cost reductions? What types of net cost reductions are supported?*
3. *Do citizens support increased tax options? If so, what options do they support?*

After a review of the workshop results, a discussion comparing them to the Phase I survey results follows.

Using the Results as a Guide

The data reported in this chapter is an important reflection of community input into the budget process. It represents public judgment from a cross-section of the community about service levels and revenue options at a particular point in time. Phase II was designed to build upon Phase I results; the input gathered in Phase II offers a sampling of public judgment about specific budget-balancing strategies that are at a higher level of specificity than those in Phase I. While Phase I gathered input about the general service areas in which community members were willing to support reductions, as well as the dollar amounts, it did not focus on exactly what type of net cost reductions or tax options would be acceptable. In continuing the conversation with the community, Phase II returns to the community with those very questions.

The data from *Your City/Your Decision* is best used as a gauge of general community preference for services, possible budget-balancing strategies and/or tax options. City Councils as elected officials are responsible to make many decisions to support the general health and welfare of a City. However, public input can help guide policy decisions to not only uphold the aspirations of representative democracy, but to also produce an outcome that is supported by the community. This is particularly applicable when City Councils are faced with difficult and possibly controversial choices that have the potential for great impact on city residents.

By choosing to engage the community, the City Council of Menlo Park has sought important information about community preferences. As the City faces difficult decisions resulting from the budget shortfall, this information can be used to help guide choices regarding services and acceptable budget-balancing strategies towards the goal of a community-supported, sustainable, balanced budget.

¹Please note that “reducing net costs” does not necessarily mean a reduction in services. “Reducing net costs” can also include the option of increasing user fees to cover the cost of the particular service or finding alternate ways to provide the same level of service at a reduced cost.

As was also noted in the Phase I Report, there are some inherent limitations to the data as a guide to policy that are worth noting again.

- **The data is part of a larger picture.** There are other important considerations upon which to base service and revenue policy choices such as state mandates, existing contractual arrangements, public health, safety concerns, etc. Furthermore, though not the focus of this process, there are longer-term approaches that can also be considered in creating a sustainable balanced budget. It is the responsibility of City staff and the City Council to balance these various factors based on their expertise and experience. Public input is an important enhancement to a pre-existing budget process that also incorporates necessary City staff and City Council expertise and experience.
- **The data reflects public judgment at a particular point in time.** Although this process is designed to garner a more stable and informed judgment about budget policy issues, public opinion still changes over time as community members acquire more information and have opportunities for deliberation with other community members. In addition, emerging opportunities, changing local needs and broader national events can affect public priorities.
- **The data is only as specific as the tool.** The data gathered in this process provides important information about community preferences. That said, it is important to recognize that there is a limit to the level of specificity at which the data can be analyzed. It is not possible to have the same level of control in a public input process that is possible in a scientific experiment. Given this, the numbers reflected in the data should not be taken as exact measurements. Instead, they point to general trends and patterns of community priorities.

Demographics

The strengths of a community workshop lie in its ability to foster dialogue, deliberation, depth of understanding and an increased sense of community. However, as stated above, due to the fact that attendance at a community workshop is a self-selected process, it is not designed to be a representative process. Unlike Phase I (where the random-sample surveys provided a benchmark for assessing the consistency of the data), the Phase II community workshops do not have a scientific measure of community representation.

That said, by achieving healthy participation from a sampling of a cross-section of the community, the workshop results can provide useful insight into community preference and thinking. In order to achieve a good sampling, it is important, while designing and implementing a civic engagement process, that the issues and challenges endemic to civic participation be addressed and mitigated when possible. Overall, it is important to use as many avenues of outreach possible to raise awareness of the public participation process, importance of the issue and how residents can participate. The usefulness of this process can best be judged against the more conventional ways of gathering public input: voting, public hearings, committees/commissions, town-hall meetings, etc.

Voter registration and voting patterns consistently show that people who vote tend to be older, have higher incomes, and are more likely to own a home than the general population. They also show that there is a higher participation rate in the non-Hispanic/White community. Community engagement efforts consistently show similar difficulty in engaging immigrant communities in civic engagement processes. There are many factors that contribute to these results. As was described in Chapter Two, Community Focus worked with the City of Menlo Park to plan and implement strategies to help mitigate some of the barriers to participation.

Workshop participants were asked to fill out anonymous demographic questionnaires at each table. Questionnaires were then placed in an envelope that marked the table number and the workshop location. However, it was observed that several participants moved during the workshop program to different tables. As a result the recorded table numbers do not necessarily correlate to the demographic questionnaires. Accordingly, the demographic numbers are presented in this report by workshop location.

Tables 2, 2a and 2b show workshop attendance numbers based on a count estimate, registration sign-in sheets, and returned demographic questionnaires. These numbers compare favorably to similar processes held in Eugene, Oregon and Sacramento, California in that there was a higher participation rate in Menlo Park among typically hard-to-engage groups.

WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE

TABLE 2 Based on count estimate

Workshop	Number	Percent
Belle Haven	140	62%
Burgess Park	45	20
La Entrada	40	18
Total	225	100%

TABLE 2a Based on registration sign-in

Workshop	Number	Percent
Belle Haven	113	59%
Burgess Park	42	22
La Entrada	37	19
Total	192	100%

TABLE 2b Based on returned demographic sheets

Workshop	Number	Percent
Belle Haven	93	56%
Burgess Park	40	24
La Entrada	34	20
Total	167	100%

Tables 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 show workshop demographic information for residence, number of children, household income, ethnicity, age, and neighborhood of residence. The numbers reflected in these tables demonstrate that a healthy sampling of a cross-section of Menlo Park residents attended the workshops. Residents with various demographic backgrounds attended the workshops. Compared to the Phase I survey, a higher percentage of workshop participants were from communities with traditionally low participation rates in civic engagement processes.

Due to many factors, including language and cultural differences, Spanish-speaking community members often do not participate in civic engagement processes. Though not captured in the demographic questionnaire, it is important to highlight that this process was relatively successful in engaging Spanish-speaking residents. Workshop counts estimate that 37 workshop participants chose to sit at tables with Spanish-speaking facilitators. This represents an estimated 16% of the total participants.

DEMOGRAPHICS

TABLE 3 Menlo Park Residence and Work

Work/Residence Status	Number	Percent
Resident of Menlo Park		
Homeowner	101	60%
Renter	24	14
Decline to state	24	14
Not a resident	18	11
Total	167	100%
Works in Menlo Park	33	20%
Owns a business in Menlo Park	16	10%
Neither works, owns a business nor lives in Menlo Park	13	8%

TABLE 4 Number of Children

Number of Children	Number	Percent
No children	70	42%
One child	15	9
Two children	36	22
Three children	13	8
More than three children	14	8
Decline to state	19	11
Total	167	100%

TABLE 5 Household Income of Workshop Participants

Income	Number	Percent
less than \$25,000	34	20%
\$25K - \$49,999	38	23
\$50K - \$74,999	15	9
\$75K - \$99,999	14	8
\$100K - \$149,999	23	14
\$150K - \$199,999	3	2
\$200K - \$249,999	5	3
More than \$250,000	18	11
Decline to state	17	10
Total	167	100%

TABLE 6 Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
African American	23	14%
Asian American	2	1
Hispanic	53	32
White, Non-Hispanic	73	44
Native American	1	1
Multiple ethnicities	6	4
Other	2	1
Decline to state	7	4
Total	167	100%

TABLE 7 Age of Participants

Age	Number	Percent
20 – 29	19	11%
30 – 39	43	26
40 – 49	28	17
50 – 59	30	18
60 – 69	22	13
70 – 79	16	10
Older than 80	3	2
Decline to state	6	4
Total	167	100%

TABLE 8 Neighborhood Residence of Participants

Neighborhood	Number	Percent
Belle Haven/Bohannon Indus. Park*	46	27%
Flood Triangle/The Willows	55	33
Central Menlo/Downtown	13	8
West Menlo	22	13
Sharon Heights	10	6
Decline to state	21	13
Total	167	100%

* Based on registration sign-in sheets, this number is lower than the actual number of Belle Haven participants. It was observed at the workshop that some participants misread the map on the demographics questionnaire. It is unknown to what extent this occurred.

Reliability

It is also possible to help gauge the reliability of the workshop results by comparing the Phase II workshop results to the Phase I survey results. Although there were differences in the questions asked of survey respondents and workshop participants, the data gathered is similar enough to look for consistent patterns and trends. In addition, since Phase II builds upon Phase I, results should follow similar trends. As will be discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter, the data shows that there is consistency between the results of Phases I and II. This gives further confidence in the reliability of the workshop data.

Reconciling Trade-Offs

As was discussed in Chapter Two, dealing with the trade-offs in balancing the budget is central to the budget-balancing exercise. It is not only important to know which services are supported by citizens, but it is also important to know where citizens are willing to accept reductions or raise taxes in order to preserve the priority services.

In order for workshop input to be the most useful, workshop groups were instructed to balance the budget within \$100,000 of the \$2.9 million shortfall. Table 9 shows the number and percent of groups that balanced the budget successfully. Figure 1 displays the percentages in a chart format. Table 10 shows the number of groups that balanced the budget successfully by location of workshop. They show that a majority of workshop groups (20 groups) balanced the budget successfully within at least 10% of the budget shortfall.

Table 11 shows the percent of workshop groups selecting service strategies and tax options broken out by success in balancing the budget. This table gives a sense of where workshop participants were willing to support net cost reductions or tax options when pushed to balance the budget. Tables 12 and 13 show workshop group support for different tax options.

TABLE 9

Success in Balancing the Budget

Percent Above or Below Balanced	# of Groups	Percent of Groups
More than 15% short	3	11%
11% - 15% short	2	7
6%-10% short	3	11
1% - 5% short	4	14
Within 1%	6	21
1%-5% over	7	25
6% - 10% over	0	0
11%-15% over	0	0
More than 15% over	3	11

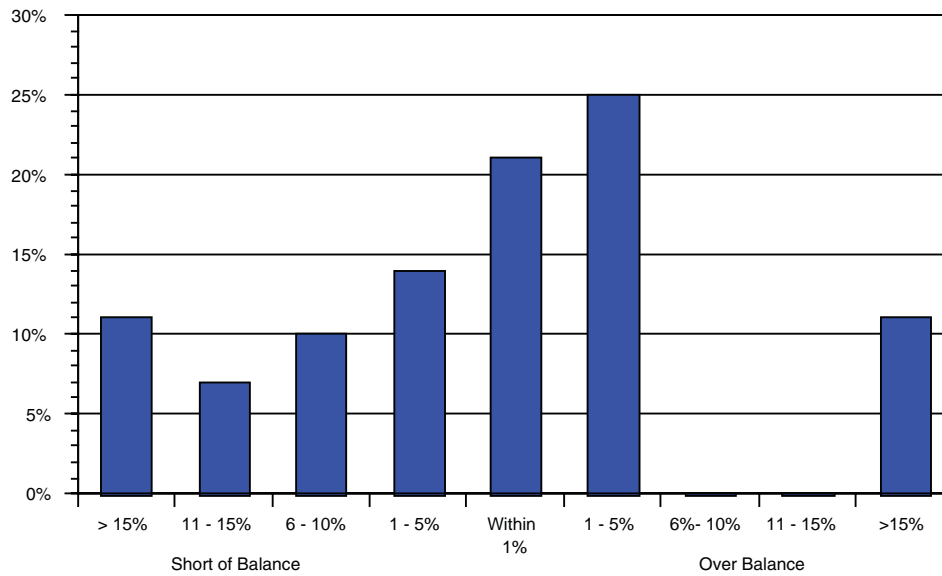


FIGURE 1 Percent of Groups Successfully Balancing the Budget

It is, however, still useful to consider the results from the groups that were not able to reach a balanced budget within the targeted goal. These results still show some of the types of strategies or tax options workshop groups are willing to support. Furthermore, as reflected in Tables 10, 11, and 12, there is general consistency in the results throughout the different groupings.

In order to include all information about workshop group support for different strategies, this report will use the “All Groups” category when discussing results.

TABLE 10 Success in Balancing the Budget, by Location

Percent Above or Below Balanced	Belle Haven	Burgess Park	La Entrada	All Groups
More than 15% short	3	0	0	3
11% - 15% short	1	1	0	2
6-10% short	2	0	1	2
1% - 5% short	2	1	1	4
Within 1%	2	2	2	6
1%-5% over	4	1	2	7
6% - 10% over	0	0	0	0
11%-15% over	0	0	0	0
More than 15% over	1	1	1	3

TABLE 11 Percent of Workgroups Selecting Each Service Strategy, by Success in Balancing Budget

ID	Action	All Groups (n=28)	Within +/- 10% (n=20)	Less than 10% Short (n=23)
PUBLIC SAFETY				
<i>Patrol Response</i>				
1a	Reduce police patrol staffing by 6%	18%	15%	17%
1b	Reduce police patrol staffing by 11%	4	5	4
1c	Reduce police patrol staffing by 22%	0	0	0
2	Reduce police management	46	45	43
3	Reduce police dispatch coverage	7	5	4
<i>Investigations</i>				
4	Reduce police investigative capacity	4	0	0
PUBLIC WORKS				
<i>Fields/Grounds Maintenance</i>				
5	Reduce field & park maintenance	29	35	30
6	Increase downtown parking permit fees	79	75	78
<i>City Tree Maintenance</i>				
7	New fee for tree protection plan review & inspection	86	90	83
8	Increase fee for banner installation	93	90	91
9	New fee for premium tree-trimming service	82	80	78
<i>Heritage Trees</i>				
10	Increase heritage tree fees	93	95	91
<i>Right-of-Way/Street Maintenance</i>				
11	Reduce engineering design & support	71	70	70
12	Reduce street maintenance	7	10	9
13	Increase encroachment permit fees	86	95	91
14	Charge street maintenance to other funds & programs	39	40	43
15	Reduce street marking and signage	4	5	4
16a	Reduce street lighting by 25%	4	5	4
16b	Reduce street lighting by 50%	0	0	0
17	Charge for special event set-up	93	95	96
<i>Median/Roadway Landscaping</i>				
18	Reduce median & roadway landscape maintenance	32	35	30
19	Charge Garbage Service Fund for litter collection	86	90	87
<i>Stormwater Management & Environmental Programs</i>				
20	Discontinue storm water discounts	29	35	30
<i>Transportation/Congestion Management</i>				
21	Reduce transit consultant services	50	55	57
22	Reduce promotion of bicycling as a commute alternative	39	40	43

n=number of workshop groups

Percent of Workgroups Selecting Each Service Strategy, by Success in Balancing Budget				
ID	Action	All Groups (n=28)	Within +/- 10% (n=20)	Less than 10% Short (n=23)
COMMUNITY SERVICES				
Senior Services				
23a	Eliminate Senior Center transportation	4	0	4
23b	Charge transportation fee to non-residents	50	50	52
Menlo Children's Center				
24a	Increase Menlo Children's Center fees 15%	54	60	57
24b	Increase Menlo Children's Center fees 22%	29	20	26
Belle Haven Child Development Center (BHCDC)				
25a	Eliminate BHCDC classroom	4	5	4
25b	Eliminate 2 BHCDC classrooms	0	0	0
Peninsula Partnership				
26	Reduce community summer school program	0	0	0
Burgess School Age Child Care Program				
27a	Increase Burgess School Age Child Care fees	79	75	78
27b	Restructure Burgess School Age Child Care Program	4	0	0
Belle Haven School Age Child Care Program				
28a	Increase Belle Haven School Age fees to non-residents	25	20	17
28b	Restructure Belle Haven School Age Child Care Program	14	10	9
Teen Services				
29	Decrease counseling services grant	14	15	13
Youth Sports				
30	Increase fees for youth sports	82	85	83
Adult Sports				
31	Eliminate adult sports program	57	60	57
Gymnastics				
32	Increase gymnastic class fee	89	90	91
Aquatics				
33a	Close the Burgess warm pool for 6 months	57	55	57
33b	Close the Burgess warm pool for 9 months	25	20	22
34a	Reduce the Belle Haven pool schedule by 50%	18	5	9
34b	Close the Belle Haven pool	0	0	0
Community Classes				
35	Offer more revenue-generating contract classes	89	90	87
36	Eliminate recreation classes provided in-house	54	55	52
37	Increase recreation class and rental fees	93	90	91

n=number of workshop groups

Percent of Workgroups Selecting Each Service Strategy, by Success in Balancing Budget				
ID	Action	All Groups (n=28)	Within +/- 10% (n=20)	Less than 10% Short (n=23)
Events and Concerts				
38	Eliminate events and concerts	25	30	30
LIBRARIES				
Main Library				
39	Close Burgess Library on Sundays	39	30	30
Belle Haven Library				
40	Reduce City funding of Belle Haven School library services	14	5	13
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT				
Comprehensive Planning				
41	Reduce comprehensive planning	32	35	30
Planning Level Review				
42	Increase planning review fees	82	80	78
43	Use contract services for plan review	61	65	61
Development Information Services and Permit/Inspection Services				
44	Reduce permit counter support	36	45	39
Permit/Inspection Services				
45	Reduce building inspection hours	25	30	26
OTHER SERVICES				
Community Funding				
46a	Reduce social service grant program by 34%	18	20	17
46b	Eliminate social service grant program	7	0	9
Community Relations				
47	Eliminate grant to Midpeninsula Community Media Center	50	50	48
48	Reduce City publications	68	75	74
49	Eliminate contract services for community surveys.	61	65	65
TAX STRATEGIES				
Utility User Tax				
50a	Charge a new 1.0 utility user tax	54	50	48
50b	Charge a new 1.5 utility user tax	18	25	22
50c	Charge a new 2.0 utility user tax	18	20	17
50d	Charge a new 2.5 utility user tax	0	0	0
50e	Charge a new 3.0 utility user tax	0	0	0

n=number of workshop groups

Percent of Workgroups Selecting Each Service Strategy, by Success in Balancing Budget				
ID	Action	All Groups (n=28)	Within +/- 10% (n=20)	Less than 10% Short (n=23)
Business License Tax				
51a	Increase business license tax by 10%	32	25	22
51b	Increase business license tax by 20%	4	5	4
51c	Increase business license tax by 30%	18	25	22
Parcel Tax				
52a	Charge a \$50 parcel tax	25	20	17
52b	Charge a \$100 parcel tax	4	5	4
52c	Charge a \$150 parcel tax	0	0	0
52d	Charge a \$200 parcel tax	0	0	0
52e	Charge a \$250 parcel tax	0	0	0
Special Assessment Districts				
53a	Create an Infrastructure Maintenance Assessment District & charge \$50 parcel	21	10	9
53b	Create an Infrastructure Maintenance Assessment District & charge \$100 parcel	0	0	0
53c	Create an Infrastructure Maintenance Assessment District & charge \$150 parcel	0	0	0

TABLE 12 Percent of Workgroups Selecting Some Level of Each Tax Strategy

Tax Strategies	All Groups (n=28)	Groups balancing budget within +/- 10% (n=20)	Groups balancing budget with a deficit less than 10% (n=23)
Utility user tax	89%	95%	87%
Business license tax	54	55	48
Parcel tax	29	25	22
Special assessment district	21	10	9

TABLE 13 Number of Tax Strategies Selected by Workgroups

Number of Tax Strategies	All Groups (n=28)	Groups balancing budget within +/- 10% (n=20)	Groups balancing budget with a deficit less than 10% (n=23)
No tax selected	7%	0%	9%
One tax selected	25	25	26
Two taxes selected	46	65	57
Three taxes selected	11	10	9
Four (all) taxes selected	11	0	0
Percent selecting at least one tax	93%	100	91

n=number of workshop groups

Overall Approach

Do citizens prefer to solve the budget deficit by reducing net costs of services, increasing taxes, or by using a combination of these approaches?

- 93% of workshop groups chose to use a combination approach of using both net cost reductions and increasing taxes to balance the budget.
- Workshop groups raised an average of \$1.314 million in taxes and selected an average of \$0.933 million in net cost reductions. The \$0.580 million cost savings from efficiencies and overhead solve the remaining portion of the \$2.9 million budget shortfall. (See Table 14)
- The data suggests an overall preference for a budget-balancing approach that combines net cost reductions with increasing taxes, rather than a strategy that relies solely on one or the other.

Workshop participants were offered a variety of net cost reduction strategies and tax options to balance the budget. In the budget-balancing exercise, a total of \$3.6 million in strategies were offered to balance a \$2.9 million shortfall, of which \$580,000 will be met through savings in efficiencies and overhead, resulting in a remaining shortfall of \$2.32 million for the groups to solve. Due to the range of options offered, it was possible to balance the budget through choosing only net cost reductions, by choosing only tax options, or by choosing a combination of both approaches.

None of the groups chose to use a tax-only approach, and only 7% of the groups chose to use net cost reductions alone. 93% of the groups chose a combination approach of using both taxes and net cost reductions to balance the budget. (See Table 15)

TABLE 14 Average Net Cost Reductions and Tax Increases

	Amount	% of Budget Shortfall
Average net cost reduction	\$993,000	34%
Savings from efficiency and overhead cost reductions	580,000	20
Average tax increase	1,314,000	45
Total	\$2,887,000	99%

TABLE 15 General Approaches to Balancing the Budget (Phase II Workshops)

	# of Groups	% of Groups Shortfall
Net cost reductions alone	2	7%
Increased taxes alone	0	0
Combination of reductions and taxes	26	93%

Current Services

*In what service areas are citizens willing to support net cost reductions?
What types of net cost reduction strategies are supported?*

- Workshop groups showed a strong preference for strategies that increased fees over service elimination strategies.
- In general, workshop groups chose to preserve services that contribute to the health, safety and general welfare of the City.
- A majority of workshop groups chose net cost reductions to some services in the Community Services, Public Works and Community Development departments.
- In addition, a majority of workshop groups chose to preserve services located in the Belle Haven neighborhood.

Workshop participants considered and voted on each individual strategy. Table 16 shows the percentage of workshop groups selecting a service strategy by location of workshop. It demonstrates that although there are differences in the percentage of workshop groups selecting a particular service strategy at different workshops, there is some consistency in the general pattern of choice throughout the three workshops. (This similarity in pattern is more visually demonstrated by the corresponding bar charts in Appendix E.)

Table 17 shows a rank-ordered list of the percent of all groups selecting each service strategy. The data suggests a preference for strategies that increase fees over ones that reduce or eliminate services. Table 17 shows that the fourteen most selected strategies are revenue increase strategies with thirteen out of those fourteen being fee increase strategies. With the exception of strategy 31 (Eliminate adult sports), 49 (Eliminate contract services for community surveys) and 36 (Eliminate recreation classes provided in-house), a majority of the workshop groups did not choose service elimination strategies. This data is further supported by open-ended strategy suggestions that ask the City to further explore increased fees to cover costs or privatization options. (See Appendix J)

The data also suggests a general preference to preserve services that support the health, safety, and general welfare of the City and its residents. Strategies that made reductions to such services (e.g. reduction in police patrol staffing, decrease in counseling grant, reduction in street maintenance, etc.) were not chosen by a majority of workshop groups.

Furthermore, the data suggests a preference to preserve services located in Belle Haven. Seventy-five percent or more of the workshop groups chose not to select strategies that would alter Belle Haven services.

Important Considerations

The rank-ordered list in Table 17 organizes the workshop data in a format that helps demonstrate important patterns to note. However, this rank-ordered list is not intended to be used as an ordered prioritization list for strategy approval. In theory, one could start at the top of the list and work downwards, reducing services until the budget was balanced. There are, however, a few key problems with this approach.

The first problem is a fundamental one: the strategies that are most often chosen do not, individually, yield substantial savings. If all strategies which were chosen by a majority of workshop groups are tallied, the total savings would only amount to \$804,000.

Another problem is endemic to the use of public opinion data as a guide for this type of decision. *Your City/Your Decision* offers a substantial amount of education about City services, strategies, and strategy impact, when compared to other community engagement processes. However, there are still further levels of complexity unfamiliar to the majority of the public. Members of the public are more likely to be familiar with services that they recognize from their everyday lives. It is difficult to measure how much the uneven level of knowledge of different services affects the choices made in the budget-balancing exercise.

And finally, there is a problem with the specificity with which the data can be interpreted. This arises as a basic limitation of a community engagement process. When conducting a scientific experiment in a laboratory, there is a great deal of control that is not possible in a public input process. Using the rank-ordered list as a priority list for service reductions would assume a level of specificity in the data-gathering tool that is simply not present nor intended to be.

As has been stated earlier, the workshop data is best used as a complement to the Phase I survey results. By identifying consistent and common patterns in the results from both Phases I and II, the data presented provides a reasonably clear assessment of public judgment and can help guide policy decision towards a community-supported approach.

TABLE 16 Percent of Workgroups Selecting Each Service Strategy, by Location

ID	Action	Belle Haven (n=15)	Burgess Park (n=6)	La Entrada (n=7)	All (n=28)
PUBLIC SAFETY					
<i>Patrol Response</i>					
1a	Reduce police patrol staffing by 6%	20%	0%	29%	18%
1b	Reduce police patrol staffing by 11%	0	0	14	4
1c	Reduce police patrol staffing by 22%	0	0	0	0
2	Reduce police management	33	33	86	46
3	Reduce police dispatch coverage	7	0	14	7
<i>Investigations</i>					
4	Reduce police investigative capacity	7	0	0	4
PUBLIC WORKS					
<i>Fields/Grounds Maintenance</i>					
5	Reduce field & park maintenance	33	17	29	29
6	Increase downtown parking permit fees	87	67	71	79
<i>City Tree Maintenance</i>					
7	New fee for tree protection plan review & inspection	87	100	71	86
8	Increase fee for banner installation	100	100	71	93
9	New fee for premium tree-trimming service	80	100	71	82
<i>Heritage Trees</i>					
10	Increase heritage tree fees	93	100	86	93
<i>Right-of-Way/Street Maintenance</i>					
11	Reduce engineering design & support	73	83	57	71
12	Reduce street maintenance	7	17	0	7
13	Increase encroachment permit fees	80	100	86	86
14	Charge street maintenance to other funds & programs	40	50	29	39
15	Reduce street marking and signage	0	17	0	4
16a	Reduce street lighting by 25%	0	0	14	4
16b	Reduce street lighting by 50%	0	0	0	0
17	Charge for special event set-up	87	100	100	93
<i>Median/Roadway Landscaping</i>					
18	Reduce median & roadway landscape maintenance	47	17	14	32
19	Charge Garbage Service Fund for litter collection	80	100	86	86
<i>Stormwater Management & Environmental Programs</i>					
20	Discontinue storm water discounts	27	33	29	29
<i>Transportation/Congestion Management</i>					
21	Reduce transit consultant services	53	50	43	50
22	Reduce promotion of bicycling as a commute alternative	33	50	43	39

n=number of workshop groups

Percent of Workgroups Selecting Each Service Strategy, by Location

ID	Action	Belle Haven (n=15)	Burgess Park (n=6)	La Entrada (n=7)	All (n=28)
COMMUNITY SERVICES					
Senior Services					
23a	Eliminate Senior Center transportation	0	17	0	4
23b	Charge transportation fee to non-residents	40	83	43	50
Menlo Children's Center					
24a	Increase Menlo Children's Center fees 15%	47	67	57	54
24b	Increase Menlo Children's Center fees 22%	33	17	29	29
Belle Haven Child Development Center (BHCDC)					
25a	Eliminate BHCDC classroom	0	17	0	4
25b	Eliminate 2 BHCDC classrooms	0	0	0	0
Peninsula Partnership					
26	Reduce community summer school program	0	0	0	0
Burgess School Age Child Care Program					
27a	Increase Burgess School Age Child Care Program fees	73	83	86	79
27b	Restructure Burgess School Age Child Care Program	7	0	0	4
Belle Haven School Age Child Care Program					
28a	Increase Belle Haven CC Prog fees to non-residents	20	50	14	25
28b	Restructure Belle Haven School Age Child Care Program	13	17	14	14
Teen Services					
29	Decrease counseling services grant	7	33	14	14
Youth Sports					
30	Increase fees for youth sports	67	100	100	82
Adult Sports					
31	Eliminate adult sports program	47	83	57	57
Gymnastics					
32	Increase gymnastic class fee	80	100	100	89
Aquatics					
33a	Close the Burgess warm pool for 6 months	73	50	29	57
33b	Close the Burgess warm pool for 9 months	27	33	14	25
34a	Reduce the Belle Haven pool schedule by 50%	20	33	0	18
34b	Close the Belle Haven pool	0	0	0	0
Community Classes					
35	Offer more revenue-generating contract classes	80	100	100	89
36	Eliminate recreation classes provided in-house	27	83	86	54
37	Increase recreation class and rental fees	87	100	100	93

n=number of workshop groups

Percent of Workgroups Selecting Each Service Strategy, by Location

ID	Action	Belle Haven (n=15)	Burgess Park (n=6)	La Entrada (n=7)	All (n=28)
Events and Concerts					
38	Eliminate events and concerts	20	50	14	25
LIBRARIES					
Main Library					
39	Close Burgess Library on Sundays	60	33	0	39
Belle Haven Library					
40	Reduce City funding of Belle Haven School library services	13	33	0	14
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT					
Comprehensive Planning					
41	Reduce comprehensive planning	53	17	0	32
Planning Level Review					
42	Increase planning review fees	80	83	86	82
43	Use contract services for plan review	40	83	86	61
Development Information Services and Permit/Inspection Services					
44	Reduce permit counter support	40	33	29	36
Permit/Inspection Services					
45	Reduce building inspection hours	33	0	29	25
OTHER SERVICES					
Community Funding					
46a	Reduce social service grant program by 34%	7	17	43	18
46b	Eliminate social service grant program	7	0	14	7
Community Relations					
47	Eliminate grant to Midpeninsula Community Media Center	67	33	29	50
48	Reduce City publications	60	50	100	68
49	Eliminate contract services for community surveys.	60	50	71	61
TAX STRATEGIES					
Utility User Tax					
50a	Charge a new 1.0 utility user tax	53	50	57	54
50b	Charge a new 1.5 utility user tax	20	17	14	18
50c	Charge a new 2.0 utility user tax	20	17	14	18
50d	Charge a new 2.5 utility user tax	0	0	0	0
50e	Charge a new 3.0 utility user tax	0	0	0	0

 n=number of workshop groups

 Percent of Workgroups Selecting Each Service Strategy, by Location

ID	Action	Belle Haven (n=15)	Burgess Park (n=6)	La Entrada (n=7)	All (n=28)
Business License Tax					
51a	Increase business license tax by 10%	33	0	57	32
51b	Increase business license tax by 20%	0	0	14	4
51c	Increase business license tax by 30%	33	0	0	18
Parcel Tax					
52a	Charge a \$50 parcel tax	33	33	0	25
52b	Charge a \$100 parcel tax	0	0	14	4
52c	Charge a \$150 parcel tax	0	0	0	0
52d	Charge a \$200 parcel tax	0	0	0	0
52e	Charge a \$250 parcel tax	0	0	0	0
Special Assessment Districts					
53a	Create an Infrastructure Maintenance Assessment District & charge \$50 parcel	27	17	14	21
53b	Create an Infrastructure Maintenance Assessment District & charge \$100 parcel	0	0	0	0
53c	Create an Infrastructure Maintenance Assessment District & charge \$150 parcel	0	0	0	0

 n=number of workshop groups

TABLE 17 Percent Selecting Each Service Strategy, All Groups, Rank Ordered (in \$1,000s)

ID	Action	% Selecting Option	Savings	Cumulative Savings*
8	Increase fee for banner installation	93%	\$14	\$14
10	Increase heritage tree fees	93	24	38
17	Charge for special event set-up	93	9	47
37	Increase recreation class and rental fees	91	10	57
32	Increase gymnastic class fee	89	39	96
7	New fee for tree protection plan review & inspection	86	51	101
13	Increase encroachment permit fees	86	31	132
19	Charge Garbage Service Fund for litter collection	86	52	184
35	Offer more revenue-generating contract classes	89	40	224
9	New fee for premium tree-trimming service	82	8	232
30	Increase fees for youth sports	82	17	249
42	Increase planning review fees	82	29	278
6	Increase downtown parking permit fees	79	18	296
27a	Increase Burgess School Age Child Care fees	79	46	342
11	Reduce engineering design & support	71	11	353
48	Reduce City publications	68	23	376
43	Use contract services for plan review	61	64	440
49	Eliminate contract services for community surveys.	61	10	450
31	Eliminate adult sports program	57	98	548
33a	Close the Burgess warm pool for 6 months	57	136	684
24a	Increase Menlo Children's Center fees 15%	54	87	771
36	Eliminate recreation classes provided in-house	54	33	804
21	Reduce transit consultant services	50	5	809
23b	Charge transportation fee to non-residents	50	9	818
47	Eliminate grant to Mid-peninsula Community Media Center	50	10	828
2	Reduce police management	46	183	1011
14	Charge street maintenance to other funds & programs	39	46	1057
22	Reduce promotion of bicycling as a commute alternative	39	6	1063
39	Close Burgess Library on Sundays	39	35	1098
44	Reduce permit counter support	36	20	1118
18	Reduce median & roadway landscape maintenance	32	48	1166
41	Reduce comprehensive planning	32	30	1196
5	Reduce field & park maintenance	29	59	1255
20	Discontinue storm water discounts	29	17	1272
24b	Increase Menlo Children's Center fees 22%	29	130	1402
28a	Increase Belle Haven Child Care fees to non-residents	25	62	1464
33b	Close the Burgess warm pool for 9 months	25	181	1645
38	Eliminate events and concerts	25	175	1820

Percent Selecting Each Service Strategy, All Groups, Rank Ordered (in \$1,000s)

ID	Action	% Selecting Option	Savings	Cumulative Savings*
45	Reduce building inspection hours	25	6	1826
1a	Reduce police patrol staffing by 6%	18	171	1997
34a	Reduce the Belle Haven pool schedule by 50%	18	37	2034
46a	Reduce social service grant program by 34%	18	26	2060
28b	Restructure Belle Haven School Age Child Care Program	14	115	2175
29	Decrease counseling services grant	14	13	2188
40	Reduce City funding of Belle Haven School library services	14	64	2252
3	Reduce police dispatch coverage	7	98	2350
12	Reduce street maintenance	7	18	2270
23a	Eliminate Senior Center transportation	7	52	2420
46b	Eliminate social service grant program	7	87	2507
1b	Reduce police patrol staffing by 11%	4	473	2980
4	Reduce police investigative capacity	4	136	3116
15	Reduce street marking and signage	4	18	3134
16a	Reduce street lighting by 25%	4	28	3162
25a	Eliminate BHDC classroom	4	134	3296
27b	Restructure Burgess School Age Child Care Program	4	37	3333
1c	Reduce police patrol staffing by 22%	0	611	3944
16b	Reduce street lighting by 50%	0	55	3999
25b	Eliminate 2 BHDC classrooms	0	166	4165
26	Reduce community summer school program	0	33	4198
34b	Close the Belle Haven pool	0	74	4272

*Please note that the cumulative savings column tallies split choice a/b strategy decisions. In split choice situations, workshop respondents could choose either “a” or “b.” It was not possible to choose both. Though the cumulative savings column gives a general estimate of cumulative savings, it is not accurate due to the inclusion of both “a” and “b” choices. Different permutations of the split choices can be calculated to reflect different scenarios.

Increased Taxes

Do citizens support increased tax options? If so, what options do they support?

- A large majority of workshop groups chose to increase taxes as part of their solution to balance the budget.
- Eighty-nine percent of workshop groups chose the utility tax, 54% chose the business tax, 29% chose the parcel tax, and 21% chose the special assessment tax.

Workshop participants could choose to recommend four different types of taxes. Each tax was offered at multiple levels. Table 18 shows that 93% of the workshop groups selected at least one tax in their budget-balancing solution. Table 19 shows the number and percent of workshop groups selecting different levels of tax options for each type of tax. One can assume that those workshop groups that chose a particular tax at a higher level would be willing to support the same tax at a lower level. The utility tax received a clear majority support with 89% of workshop groups choosing to support a utility tax of at least 1.0%.

TABLE 18 Number of Tax Strategies Selected by Workgroups

Number of Tax Strategies	# of Groups	# of Groups Selecting
No tax selected	2	7%
One tax selected	7	25
Two taxes selected	13	46
Three taxes selected	3	11
Four (all) taxes selected	3	11
Selecting at least one tax	26	93%

TABLE 19 Percent of Workgroups Selecting Some Level of Each Tax Strategy

	# of Groups	% of Groups Selecting
Utility user tax	25	89%
Business license tax	15	54
Parcel tax	8	29
Special Assessment District	6	21

Comparison of Results from Phase I Survey and Phase II Workshops

The data from Phase I and Phase II shows consistency in trends and offer further support for findings described in the earlier sections of this chapter. There were some differences in support for reductions in specific strategies between Phase I and Phase II. This is, however, to be expected. Workshop groups had specific strategies to consider. In contrast, Phase I survey respondents could only respond with general support for a net cost reduction for a given service and did not have the opportunity to specify what type of reduction. We see that general support for a net cost reduction does not necessarily translate into support for a specific type of strategy. By using both data sets, it is possible to gain insight into determining service areas in which community members are more willing to accept net cost reductions and also on what types of reductions are more likely to be supported.

Please see Appendix A for the Phase I tables referred to in this section.

Overall Approach

Both data sets suggest a preference for an approach of using both net cost reductions and tax options to solve the budget shortfall. The majority of survey respondents and workshop groups preferred this combined approach. (See Table 14) (See Phase I Table 19 in Appendix A)

Phase II workshop groups, on average, chose to use tax increases to balance a larger percentage of the budget shortfall than was chosen by Phase I survey respondents. This is likely due to the response to specific service strategies and to participants gaining a deeper understanding of their impact on services. On average, Phase I survey respondents balanced about 63% of the budget shortfall through net cost reductions and about 35% of the budget shortfall through tax increases. On average, including cost savings from overhead and efficiencies, Phase II workshop groups chose to balance about 55% of the budget shortfall through net cost reductions and 45% of the shortfall through tax increases.

Strategy Preferences

Both data sets suggest support for fee-increase strategies over service elimination strategies. In Phase I, many of the service areas most often chosen for reduction correlated with service areas in which respondents supported fee increases. The rank-order table listing the most-often-chosen strategies by workshop groups shows the most-chosen strategies to be fee increase strategies. With the exception of three service elimination strategies, service elimination strategies were not chosen by a majority of workshop groups. Though Phase I survey respondents did not have service elimination strategies to respond to, on average, there was no service that received a net cost reduction of over 39%. In fact, most net cost reductions were under 30%. (See Table 16) (See Phase I Table 20 in Appendix A)

Service Preferences

Services that received majority support for net cost reductions in both Phases I and II fell under the Community Services, Public Works and Community Development departments. As shown in Table 17, a majority of workshop groups selected strategies for five of the eight services receiving majority support for net cost reduction by survey respondents. The strategies were all fee increase strategies with the exception of the reduction in service at the Burgess warm pool. In the three remaining service areas, Phase II results varied from those in Phase I. These variations could be a result of influence by the preference for fee increase strategies over service reduction or elimination strategies. (In Phase I, because survey respondents could not specify the type of net cost reduction chosen, it was not possible to ascertain preference for fee increases over service reductions for a particular service. In contrast, the workshops were designed to gauge this preference by providing a list of specific strategies from which workshop participants could choose.) For example:

- The Events and Concerts service was chosen by 64% of Phase I survey respondents for an average net cost reduction of 27%. Only 25% of Phase II workshop groups chose to eliminate events and concerts.
- The Fields and Grounds Maintenance service was chosen by 54% of Phase I survey respondents for an average net cost reduction of 6%. But for Phase II workshop participants, there were two strategies offered for this service. Whereas the strategy to increase downtown parking permit fees was chosen by 79% of workshop groups, only 29% of workshop groups chose to reduce field and park maintenance.
- The Median/Roadway Landscaping service was another example of this type of approach. In Phase I, 53% of survey respondents chose an average net cost reduction of 9% for Median/Roadway Landscaping. Phase II workshop participants were offered two strategies for net cost reductions. The fee increase strategy (Charge Garbage Service Fund for litter collection) was chosen by 86% of the workshop groups while the reduction to median and roadway landscape maintenance was chosen by 32% of the workshop groups. (See Table 16) (See Phase I Table 22 in Appendix A)

There were some variations observed in results for the Public Safety department between Phase I and Phase II. In Phase I, Public Safety's Community Outreach was the second most often chosen service of all services for reduction with 74% of survey respondents electing to make a reduction. Traffic Enforcement was chosen by 53% of survey respondents for a net cost reduction. However, in Phase II, Public Safety service strategies were not chosen by a majority of workshop groups. There are a couple of possible explanations, one being that a majority of workshop respondents chose to preserve Public Safety services. It is also possible that the unique structure of the Public Safety strategies (i.e. strategies 1-3 collapsed multiple services into individual strategies) influenced workshop group decision-making.

The Phase II workshop data more strongly suggest a general preference to preserve services that support the health, safety and general welfare of the City than do the Phase I survey results. (The survey results do not necessarily contradict this finding, but it is not especially evident.)

For example, a majority of groups chose to preserve maintenance of City streets and public safety over City publications or in-house recreation classes.

Both workshop results and survey results show support to preserve services located in the Belle Haven neighborhood. The workshop results more strongly support this finding. Twenty-five percent or fewer of the workshop groups chose strategies that would alter Belle Haven services. Out of survey respondents, 48% or fewer respondents chose net cost reductions for Belle Haven services.

Tax Options

The data shows that a utility user tax is most supported by both workshop groups and survey respondents. Eighty-nine percent of workshop groups chose to recommend a utility tax. The survey data shows that 50% to 56% of survey respondents (depending on result source – community-wide, online, or random sample) chose a utility tax. (See Table 19) (See Phase I Table 23 in Appendix A)

It is clear that a higher percentage of Phase II workshop groups chose to recommend a utility tax than did survey respondents in Phase I. This is likely due to the fact that, at the community workshops, more information about the impacts of cost reduction strategies was made available (through the materials as well as through the conversations with City department staff). When faced with the more specific strategy choices available at the workshops, a majority of workshop groups chose to raise a tax over further net cost reductions to services.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Your City/Your Decision represents a conversation with the community. Each phase represents a different iteration of the dialogue. As such, the questions asked and the answers given evolved from one iteration to the next to a higher level of specificity. In the first phase, the City asked its first round of questions. What are community preferences regarding service priorities and tax options? In considering service priorities and tax options, how do community members recommend that the City deal with trade-offs? The community's response was captured through a survey process. The City then developed more specific budget-balancing strategies in response to these priorities and asked another round of questions. What types of specific budget-balancing strategies, including both net cost reductions and tax options, are community members willing to support? At this level of specificity, how do community members recommend that the City navigate trade-offs? Participants answered these questions in the community workshops hosted by the City.

Chapter 4 of this report described the public's thinking and response to the questions posed in Phase II and compared them to the response from Phase I.

As the City staff and City Council deliberate over building a sustainable services and funding strategy, the information from this process can help inform decisions with community input on service priorities, preferences for service net cost reductions and possible tax options.

Summary of Findings

There is a general consistency between the Phase I survey results and the Phase II workshop results, indicating a measure of reliability in the Phase II workshop results, (even though the Phase II participants were self-selected and not chosen at random.)

- A majority of the workshop groups chose a combination approach, using both net cost reductions and tax options to balance the budget. This finding is also consistent with Phase I survey results.
- The survey and workshop results show a preference for fee increase strategies over service reduction or service elimination strategies.
- Varying levels of support exist for reduction and service elimination strategies depending on the service area. Survey and workshop results show majority support for service reductions for some services in Community Services, Public Works and Community Development. There are variations between the Phase I and Phase II data sets with regard to some services in the Public Safety department.
- Phase II Workshop results demonstrate a preference to preserve services that support the health, safety and general welfare of the City.
- Both workshop results and survey results show consistency in supporting preservation of Belle Haven services.

- The data show that of the potential taxes listed, a utility user tax is the one most supported by both workshop groups and survey respondents. A large majority (89%) of workshop groups chose some level of utility tax while a lower percentage (between 50% to 56%) of survey respondents chose a utility tax.

Workshop Evaluation

The Community Workshops were designed to elicit community input about specific budget-balancing strategies while offering opportunity for discussion, deliberation, creative thinking, and the sharing and receiving of multiple community perspectives.

Participants were asked to fill out a workshop evaluation form. A total of 149 workshop participants filled out an evaluation form. Evaluation data show that a large majority of respondents felt that the workshops were a valuable experience (96%) and that they would attend future community workshops (98%). In addition, a large majority felt that they were able to express their perspective on the budget (98%) and that hearing other perspectives was not only valuable (96%), but also shifted their perspective on the City budget (90%). Furthermore, 38% of workshop participants increased their comfort level of understanding the City budget, 14% decreased their comfort level, and 70% had no change in their comfort level of understanding of the City budget. Please see Tables 24 and 25 in Appendix B for the full evaluation results.

Closing Thoughts

In an age of low voter registration and turnout, achieving robust civic engagement can seem to be an overwhelming challenge. *Your City/Your Decision* demonstrates that civic engagement is not only possible, but can be accomplished in such a way to effectively support policy-making decisions. Processes such as *Your City/Your Decision* reinvigorate and uphold the ideals of participatory democracy. Furthermore, they demonstrate that citizens can and will engage in an informed, sophisticated discussion of issues as complex as a City budget.

Acknowledgements

The authors of this report would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this project.

Special thanks go to:

Ed Weeks, Director of the Masters Degree Program in Public Policy and Management and Director of the Deliberative Democracy Project at the University of Oregon. We thank Dr. Weeks, who pioneered this deliberative democracy approach in other cities, for his guidance and support throughout this entire process in general, and for his support and work on the data analysis.

The City staff of Menlo Park, who have shown tremendous dedication to their community and who have put in countless additional hours in order to successfully engage their community in *Your City/Your Decision*.

The City Council of Menlo Park, for their support of *Your City/Your Decision*, and their commitment to engaging and listening to the community.

The hundreds of residents and local business people who took the time to help solve the City's budget challenge by filling out the *Your City/Your Decision* survey and/or attending a workshop.

Draegers Market and Landmark Theatres for donating prizes for the Phase I survey raffle and Staples for donating calculators for use at the workshops.

The Principals, teachers and staff of the Belle Haven and La Entrada Schools for providing space for the community to meet.

The Budget Advisory Committee who dedicated countless hours to learning about the City's budget and helping guide *Your City/Your Decision*.

And all the volunteers who generously donated their time and energy towards the success of this process.