



Residents name priorities for major city projects

More than 500 Hampton residents looked through potential city projects and have offered their views on what is most important.

Although the results were varied, there was a common theme of caution:

- *Before we build new commercial areas we need to utilize the spaces we already have that are empty now. We need to have our infrastructure maintained rather than taking on new projects in this economy.*
- *Spend my money wisely! Budget like the average family in Hampton. We need to encourage businesses to come to Hampton to increase jobs. The jobs are going away and soon the people will follow.*
- *I believe that in this time of financial constraints that some projects can and should be held off for the next few years until the economy regains its strength. Some of these proposed projects have been this way for some time and can remain the same for a little longer. We need to watch our money now and not spend when it's not absolutely necessary... unless it is for schools, fire, rescue, police, etc.*
- *Let's concentrate on improving and upgrading what we already have instead of new projects. Hampton has a lot of potential. Quality of life is important (new parks, nature trails, etc.) rather than quantity of structures.*
- *Keep doing what works.*

Residents were given a list of several proposed projects that totaled about \$95 million. The list did not include projects that were already approved or for which City funds were slotted to match federal or state funds. Recent five-year capital plans have ranged from \$160 million to \$300 million.

Some residents wanted to see more on the project list: Efforts in Phoebus; more progress on Master Plans; new schools; new fire stations; and continued redevelopment. Some people noted the absence of projects related to waterways and flooding. (Those projects were not on the survey because the citizen Waterways Committee had not yet set priorities, but waterways projects are still being considered for the 5-year spending plan.)

In all, most of the projects were rated of “moderate” importance. Projects that drew more high-priority votes included: increasing funds for public school and City building improvements; a relocation of fire and rescue services into one building; and upgrading the human resources and

payroll system. Projects that drew more low priority votes included two road extensions: Coliseum Drive and Franklin Street. Comments indicated the residents wanted to know more about proposed projects or why the roads were needed. Similarly, 47 percent of residents rated a traffic study for improvements to Old Buckroe Road as low or somewhat low. Projects to add sidewalks in several places in the Coliseum Central area also were seen as a somewhat lower priority, including North Armistead, Cunningham Drive, Marcella Road, Hardy Cash-Executive Drive.

A proposal for a Coliseum Drive pedestrian overpass over Mercury Boulevard for \$3 million in FY17 drew the most varied responses, with 36 percent rating it high or somewhat high; 23 percent moderate; and 41 percent rating it low or somewhat low.

Hampton has asked residents for input on the City's 5-year capital plan earlier than in previous years, so the input could be considered before a plan was drafted. Other input was gathered during the same time period, from meetings with business groups, boards and commissions.

Now, the City's capital budget committee will consider all the input – as well as such other factors as the City's financial policies, and progress of Community Plan and Master Plan initiatives – as they draft a proposed 5-year plan. The draft will go to the Planning Commission, which will evaluate it against the City's Community Plan, and then to City Council. There will be additional opportunities for public input on the draft. The first year of the 5-year plan will be adopted as part of the City's FY13 budget. Projects and timetables in the outlying years are subject to change annually.

Although residents were asked only about capital projects, some citizen comments focused on operating expenses, such as salaries. Citizens will be given a chance to weigh in on city services and the operating budget via in-person meetings and an online survey in February and March.

To view the capital spending results, visit:

http://www.hampton.gov/media/pdf/cip_survey_results.pdf