



# Billings, MT

Open Ended Responses

FINAL  
2016



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The National Citizen Survey™  
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The NCS™ is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

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# Summary

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities. This report includes the verbatim responses to an open ended question included on The NCS 2016 survey for Billings. Additional reports and the technical appendices are available under separate cover.

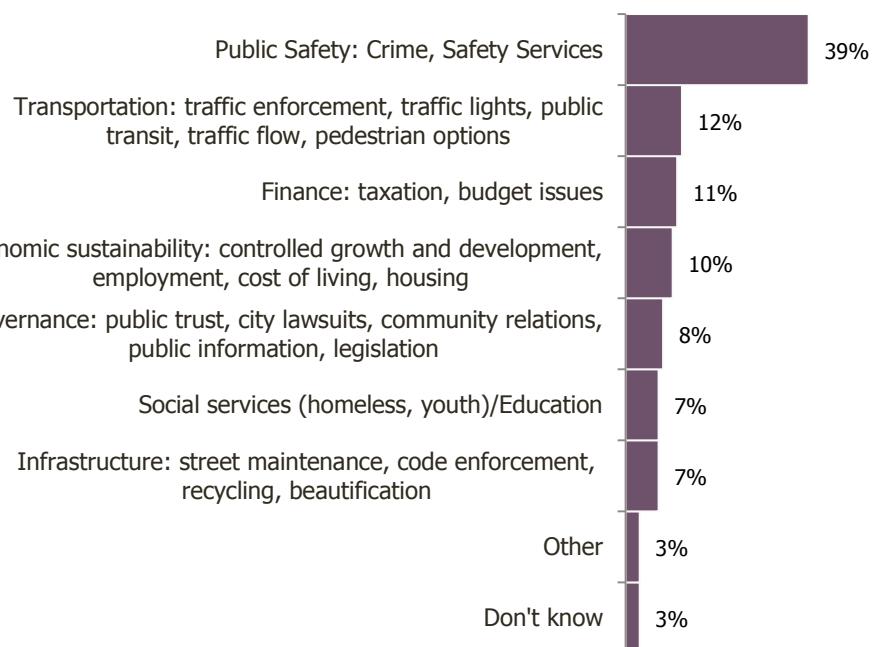
Respondents were asked to record their opinions about pressing issues in Billings in the following question:

- What is the single most pressing issue for our City government to address in 2016/2017?

The verbatim responses were categorized by topic area and those topics are reported in the following chart with the percent of responses given in each category. Because some comments from residents covered more than a single topic, those verbatim responses are grouped by the first topic listed in each comment whenever a respondent mentioned more than a single topic.

Results from the open-ended question are best understood by reviewing the frequencies that summarize responses as well as the actual verbatim responses themselves. A total of 395 surveys were completed by Billings' residents; of these, 254 respondents wrote in responses for the open-ended question. Nearly 4 in 10 residents indicated that the most pressing issue in Billings to be addressed in the coming year was public safety, including crimes and safety services. Around 1 in 10 survey respondents indicated that transportation, finance or economic sustainability were the most pressing issues for the City government to address in Billings.

Figure 1: Most Pressing Issue in Billings for 2016/2017  
*What is the single most pressing issue for our City government to address in 2016/2017?*



## Verbatim Responses to Open Ended Question

The following pages contain the respondents' verbatim responses as entered in the web survey and have not been edited for spelling or grammar. Responses have been organized by coded topic areas.

## What is the single most pressing issue for our City government to address in 2016/2017?

## Public Safety: Crime, Safety Services

- Increase police force and increase traffic enforcement
- Increased violence.
- Jail overcrowding, lower property taxes.
- Keep crime down get rid of "gangs".
- Lack of accountability of police officers.
- Make the roads/street safe to drive on again. (Speeding tickets etc).
- More police hired for higher presence on city streets to thwart increasing crimes and traffic violations.
- More police officers, I would rather pay for that than beautification. Get people who have common sense in offices. Billings wastes money like crazy!!!
- More police officers.
- More police, as the crime is increasing.
- More police, patrolling streets at night!! To many burglaries!!
- More policeman/policewomen.
- More policemen.
- Need more law enforcement- too many drugs.
- Number of police, law enforcement & jail. Also more drug & rehab (criminal) programs.
- Police & fire protection - Streets clean.
- Police dept and public safety!!
- Police force and street maintenance.
- Prosecution of persons committing criminal offenses.
- Public safety adequate police & fire and well trained & selected.
- Public safety, homelessness, reduced layers of Admin Staffing.
- Public safety.
- Public safety.
- Public safety.
- Public safety.
- Reduce crime-mostly drug related.
- SAFETY
- Safety and growth.
- Safety for all.
- Safety for all.
- Safety for residents.
- Safety- Improvement in YCDF.
- Safety of its citizens.
- Safety particularly traffic safety.
- Safety- police need be catching folks running red lights- it's terrible & dangerous. Example- 8th & Grand - Happens all the time. Safety in general is important. Parks too.
- Safety- there are a lot of break-ins.
- Safety.
- Safety.
- Safety.
- Safety/crime.
- Safety/crime.
- Safety/get transients cleaned up off streets.
- Safety/traffic speed limits.
- Safety-enforcing traffic-red lights-tickets given for violations, pedestrians run over and bike riders run over.
- Safety-Police & fire need to increase. We need a sidewalk on Aronson between Governor's Blvd & Nutter.
- Supporting the Billings PD w/cameras & more officers.
- Texting and driving.
- The amount of crime, we need more officers.
- Too Much Crime, Drunk, drugs on our streets and available. Something has to be done!
- We need more police.

## Transportation: traffic enforcement, traffic lights, public transit, traffic flow, pedestrian options

- Another quicker route for traffic in and out of the heights.
- Bus or transit services.
- Complete streets, alternative transportation, non-discrimination.
- Completion of inner belt loop connecting wicks to Hwy 3.
- Don't put in any more 4 ways.
- Getting rid of roundabouts.
- Heights bypass, downtown train congestion, nicer airport.
- Improve bus system. No bus after 6 PM takes away the ability to support - opera, concerts, athletic events etc etc.
- Improving access to safe paths for bikers.
- Insurance traffic-overall Billings.
- Mass transit. Buses are excellent but hours of coverage suck. Cabs are of very limited use.
- More crosswalks and safer walk/bike trails, especially around the new middle schools.
- My pet peeve is no traffic enforcement. Too much speeding, distracted driving, and very poor driving habits.
- Public transportation for the disabled to get to shopping, public events, appointments....
- Public transportation/reducing DUI/ Uber!
- Safe routes for cyclists & pedestrians/ drug related crimes.
- Street Safety- Traffic light offenses - Distracted drivers (running red lights).
- Too many drivers speeding, running red lights, etc.
- Traffic and making it easy to get to businesses on all streets.
- Traffic concerns from West end to the Heights.
- Traffic control and enforcement.
- Traffic control.
- Traffic enforcement.
- Traffic law enforcement i.e. spending, cell phones, stop signs/lights.
- Traffic on west end.
- Traffic violations- hire more police.
- Traffic.
- Traffic.
- Unused public transportation the bus system who needs it where & when.
- West end traffic, 24th & 32nd.

## Finance: taxation, budget issues

- Budget. How to keep property taxes at a reasonable rate.
- city sales tax to reduce property taxes and improve the cities infrastructure
- City taxes- there too high now.
- Do not allow non-property owners to vote on property tax increases.
- Expenditures
- Find away to lower property taxes without a sales tax.
- Increase efficiency on tax money is spent.
- Keep taxes low/ no unnecessary spending.
- Local option tax.
- Lower tax.
- Marijuana Legalization creates tax revenue for city/education.
- Miss appropriating funds loosing respect of residents/causing future denials of increases for schools & services-lack of open bidding on improvements "good ole boys club & pricing".
- No new taxes.
- No sales tax.
- Not over taxing people for redundant issues.
- Operate within budget by keeping money local (hire local consultants). Audit each department and eliminate non-essential people.

- Planning and implementation of financed fire/rescue & police presence not keeping up w/growth.
- Prop taxes- safety.
- Property taxes - How owning a home makes you a personal bank to schools, police, fire etc. Needs a better way to pay for this than through the poor home owner.
- Property taxes.
- Property taxes.
- Provide more funds to Billings parks & rec. Provide ways for residents to recycle. Consider ways to keep younger population in town. Improve Downtown: Provide funds for vocational school.
- Pulled off the lower the property tax line of crap! Then ya just raise it later!
- Sales tax.
- Stop spending tax payers \$ on Special Interest Programs!!!
- Taxes- why do property owners have to pay for everything? How about visitors to our city paying their share!
- Taxes! Education in public schools.
- Taxes.
- Taxes.
- Taxes.
- Taxes.
- The mis-allocation of taxes.
- To see tax dollars go somewhere besides schools for more people can see their dollars at work.

#### Economic sustainability: controlled growth and development, employment, cost of living, housing

- Access to affordable housing & healthcare.
- City growth - Police & fire protection.
- Continued economic growth.
- Cost of living and drug issues. Drunk driving should be a bigger concern than it is.
- Creating with rent engaged community.
- Economic development.
- Economic growth through commerce, health, and education.
- Economy.
- Housing & police.
- How to attract or encourage quality businesses that will provide more competitive and affordable prices for food and family entertainment.
- Job opportunities so our young people don't feel the need to move out of area.
- Job salary & public assistance income.
- Jobs!
- Maintaining economic vitality in a downtown.
- Making business opportunities attractive.
- Organized residential and commercial development as the City expands.
- Plan growth/work with economical development.
- Promote tourism. I think there's a lot to offer but not much effort is taken into advertising & tourist attraction.
- Property mgmt Co.'s too expensive & terrible at repairing or replacing needed (i.e. plumbing) items to live; rents & deposits too high; difficult to deal with even when you are a good renter.
- Reduced revenue from natural resources.
- Spending vs income.
- Sprawl with a lack of mixed-use, downtown development. Enough with the stupid car! WALKING / BICYCLING.
- Stop expansion going west - taking out farm ground. This ground cannot be replaced. Expand South Hills or North of Billings.
- Two much concrete, not enough green space.
- Zoning lack of small/commercial in residential areas stop allowing ugly/crappy casinos to be built everywhere.

## Governance: public trust, city lawsuits, community relations, public information, legislation

- Accountability.
- Change in city administrator & lack of cleanliness on streets/run rocks.
- Common sense concerning the non-discrimination ordinance- I think it is totally unnecessary and nothing more than lip service, respect for others is needed for all and should happen w/o a superficial ordinance.
- Cut the bureaucracy- get the \$s to the "Street" level.
- Equality! Justice for all citizens - cops not shooting citizens constantly & mayor needs to learn about equality for all!
- Get to know the "average" person and seniors on social security!
- Honesty.
- I think a new city administrator would help a great deal.
- Informing public on disaster preparedness what they need to do .terrorism.
- Making sure that no form of NDO is passed.
- More awareness of city events.
- N.D.O.
- NDO - It is impactive to get this passed.
- Non-discrimination ordinance. Updating traffic signals (please put a left turn arrow on 27th & Montana that also works when a train is passing. The backups there are atrocious.) Heroin/meth/vagrants.
- Replace city administrator she has not a senior leadership team that is progressive & visionary.
- Sense of community through events & downtown safety!!!
- Tina Volek or her job in general, needs to go.
- Trust in government.
- Unite the community. Treat every part of billing equally. The heights needs to be included. Street maintenance. Many gravel roads that should have been paved years ago when the heights was annexed into the city.
- Voters should vote on all annexations to stop sprawl!
- Winning back people's trust after the incompetent handling of the essential services mill levy where they tried to run through a 10 fold tax increase in a 10 year plan.

## Social services (homeless, youth)/Education

- Caring for homeless.
- Education- Aid to those on gifted spectrum.
- Getting rid of the homeless people & shipping the drunk Indians back to the reservation.
- Homeless and feeding the hungry children!
- Homeless population primarily downtown.
- Homelessness in billings. And, how to be happy about living in America when Trump or Clinton become president.
- Homelessness.
- Homelessness.
- How to pay for 2 new schools without coal tax revenue.
- More rides for the disabled (transportation).
- Panhandlers - Encourage Employment.
- Panhandling-homeless Downtown.
- Regulation of intoxicated individuals downtown.
- School funds, need to find a better way to get them & not keep increasing property taxes.
- Second chance program/support for felons.
- Teacher contracts SD2.
- The drunken native Americans living around is so bad for our city. The panhandling is also such a poor image.
- The homeless people wandering around downtown panhandlers on every corner.
- The homeless population & better more centralized services for the homeless "1 stop shop" kind of place that is not downtown.
- The homeless population.

## Infrastructure: street maintenance, code enforcement, recycling, beautification

- Cleaning up the city and the reputation it has.
- Downtown beautification.
- Having proper city structure in place before expansions (ex storm drains roads, more police, snow removal etc.) 2nd issue schools education is very poor.
- Improvements to make Billings an attractive place to live & work.
- Infrastructure/budget use.
- Infrastructures.
- Keeping a clean and safe city.
- Maintaining & improving infrastructure.
- Maintaining streets.
- Recycling.
- Road maintenance, traffic signage, park beautification especially Two Moon Riverside, and Swords Park Billings needs an interesting museum.
- Snow removal, replace sidewalk that are bad.
- Street maintenance.
- Streets I lived here 30yrs ago-streets are still bad. If you had cameras at busy intersections-it would pay for the streets.
- The city should have a door to door recycling program. Add the fee onto our taxes & the city should hire the existing recycle pick-up businesses! Recycle should be mandatory!
- To increase the overall aesthetic value of city of Billings.
- Trash along I-90 & appearance entering city. Traffic violators.
- Widen Zimmerman trial to Hesper to 4 lanes! Increase police & fire!

## Other

- 32nd St W to Zimmerman stupid!! Single lanes - could have should have been double lanes instead of planting wasting money on trees!! Will only get busier & busier with time!
- Do your job right the first time.
- Energy.
- Hooking up Lockwood to the heights.
- I would like to see treatment plant moved further out of town - Stinky in H5.
- Making sure Montana keeps up with our other states and not be so in the past.
- More handicap accessible parking places.
- None - continue doing as well as have been. Stays to improve - more policeman clean up & beautiful entrances into Billings, especially via Interstate 90.
- Raze the 1960-ish Airport & compete stop internal hiring - get new ideas!
- Removal of fluoride from public drinking water.
- The amount of people of welfare, just because they are lazy! And they can't and won't try to hold a job. It's not fair to us tax payers to have to support them!! This included deadbeat parents!!
- When and where do we eat?

## Don't know

- Don't know.
- Don't know.
- Don't know.
- Don't know.
- I'm not sure; I haven't lived here very long.
- Not sure at this time.