

# Executive Summary

City-Wide Community Needs Survey – City of La Crosse Planning Department

## Introduction

The City of La Crosse Planning Department surveyed over 1300 La Crosse residents and employees on how the City should prioritize its federal community development funds and how to best revitalize its neighborhoods. The survey revealed that the priorities already set by the Mayor and Council are on track. The City should continue to prioritize funding that re-develops the city's older housing stock into newer or renovated housing that meets modern market demand, while addressing urban blight through stepped-up code enforcement. While most citizens felt satisfied with their neighborhoods, they felt the City to continue to focus on safety concerns, address storm water management and flooding issues, provide better street lighting, and continue to maintain and repair existing roads.

## KEY FINDINGS

### *Safety, Security, and Satisfaction*

Safety, security, and satisfaction in La Crosse's neighborhoods are key issues for residents and major priorities for the City government. A large majority of city residents (78%) reported feeling either very safe or somewhat safe in their neighborhoods<sup>1</sup> and a similar majority reported feeling satisfied with their neighborhood<sup>2</sup>. Common reasons for satisfaction and safety included active and social neighborhoods, proximity to parks, schools, and libraries, well-maintained properties, sufficient street lighting, and police presence. These results show that policing, park, and other initiatives so far are yielding results.

### *Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing Programs*

Neighborhood revitalization has emerged as a significant priority for City administration and local non-profit organizations. Housing programs that aim to increase housing quality through increased code enforcement, assisting in rehabilitating existing houses through loans to homeowners, or demolition and replacement of the worst-case houses have become key components in the overall revitalization effort in La Crosse.

These measures had broad support in the survey with 71% of respondents supporting demolition and replacement of worst-case housing, 59% supporting increased code enforcement, and 50% supporting increasing loan programs for homeowners for home repairs<sup>3</sup>. Respondents also expressed very strong support (82%) for focusing ongoing revitalization and housing efforts in neighborhoods of greatest need, with the strongest support for the Powell-Poage-Hamilton neighborhood<sup>4</sup>. Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents expressed that rental property rehabilitation programs are very important to neighborhood revitalization efforts<sup>5</sup>.

### *Capital Improvement Projects*

For City's Capital Improvement projects, respondents showed high levels of support for storm water and drainage improvements, especially relating to the floodplain (57%), and improvements to street lighting (48%)<sup>6</sup>. This reflected a strong interest in addressing many of the flood plain issues that La Crosse faces and the enhanced security that better lighting can bring.

# Executive Summary

City-Wide Community Needs Survey – City of La Crosse Planning Department

## *Community Services*

Respondents also showed strong support for non-profit services aimed at reducing factors that contribute to instability in the community: After school services (52%), job training services (50%), services for the homeless (48%), food pantries (41%), support for domestic violence and child abuse victims (39%), and neighborhood-based social workers (28%)<sup>7</sup>.

## *Economic Development*

Forty local business owners and leaders were also surveyed to assess what programs would help foster increased economic development in La Crosse. The results showed strong support for public infrastructure improvements in support of local businesses, City assistance in acquisition and site clearance for re-development, and job training programs for blue-collar trades<sup>8</sup>. This survey was administered separately from the rest of the Community Needs Survey, but within the same timeframe. The respondents of this survey were primarily drawn from a Mayor's Business Roundtable that met on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

## **About the Survey**

This survey was conducted from August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 through September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The results of this survey were a critical component in assessing community priorities relating to housing programs, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization as part of the planning process for the 5-Year Consolidated Plan that dictates the allocation of the City's Community Development Block Grant funds. The survey was distributed through a link on the City's website, notices in the La Crosse Tribune, as well as meetings and emails with neighborhood groups, community stakeholders, and government agencies.

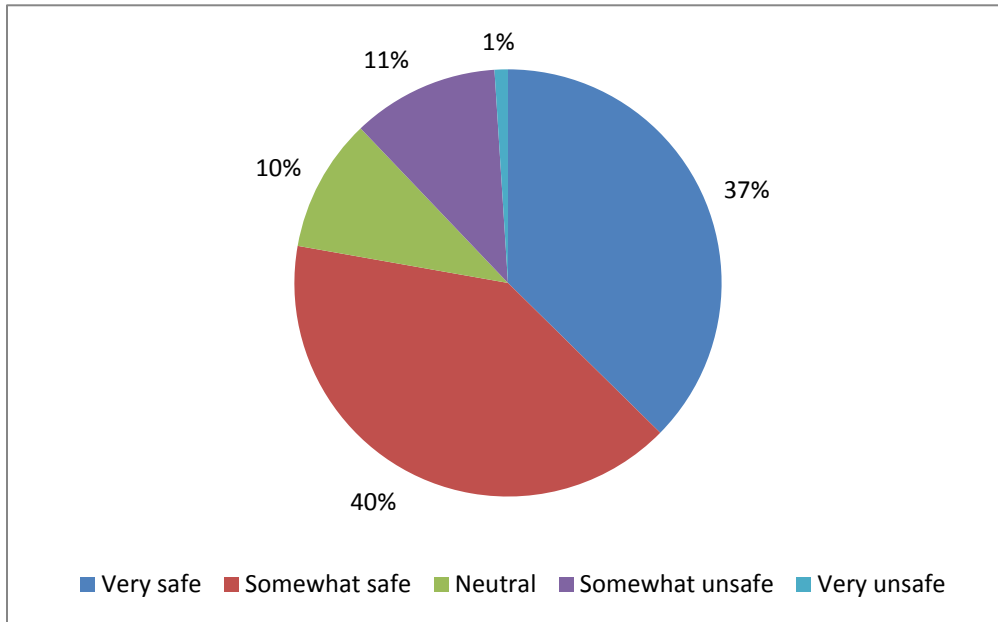
## *Survey Demographics*

Of the total 1300 responses, 82% reported living in the City of La Crosse. Non-residents were primarily non-profit organization staff or City/County employees. A majority of the respondents (75%) were homeowners with a yearly income above \$40,000 and 38% reported income over \$60,000. Racial or ethnic minorities were under-represented with 4% of total responses. While the survey is not representative of the entire city, it does provide important insight into the public opinion of La Crosse citizens.

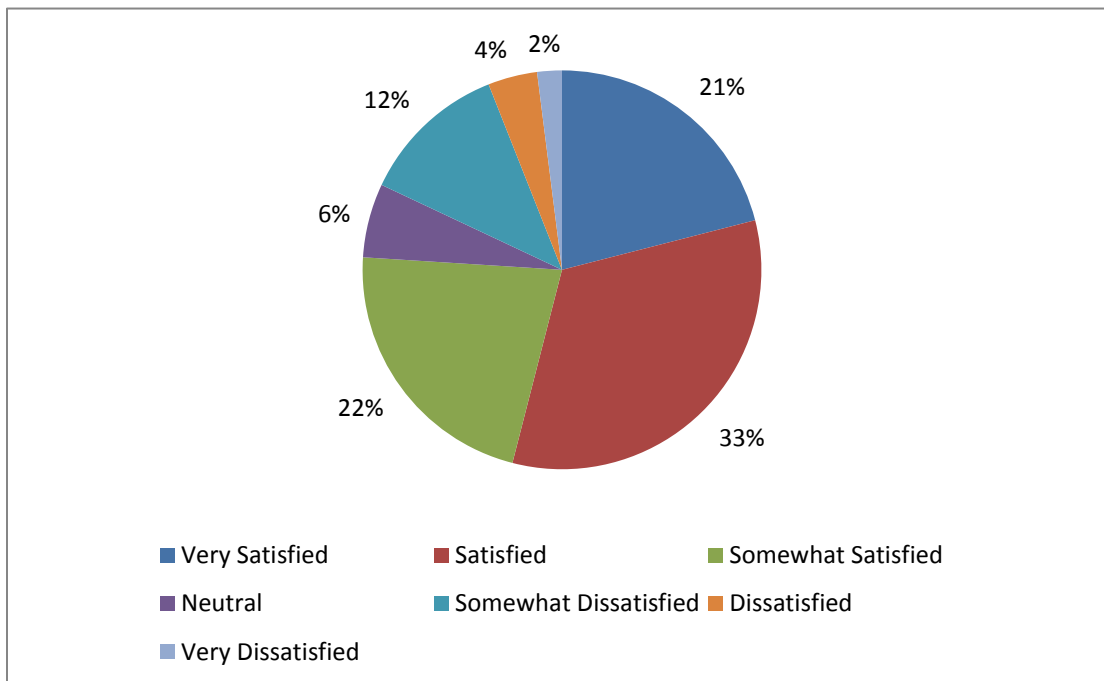
# Executive Summary

City-Wide Community Needs Survey – City of La Crosse Planning Department

*How safe do you feel in your neighborhood?*



*How satisfied are you with your neighborhood?*

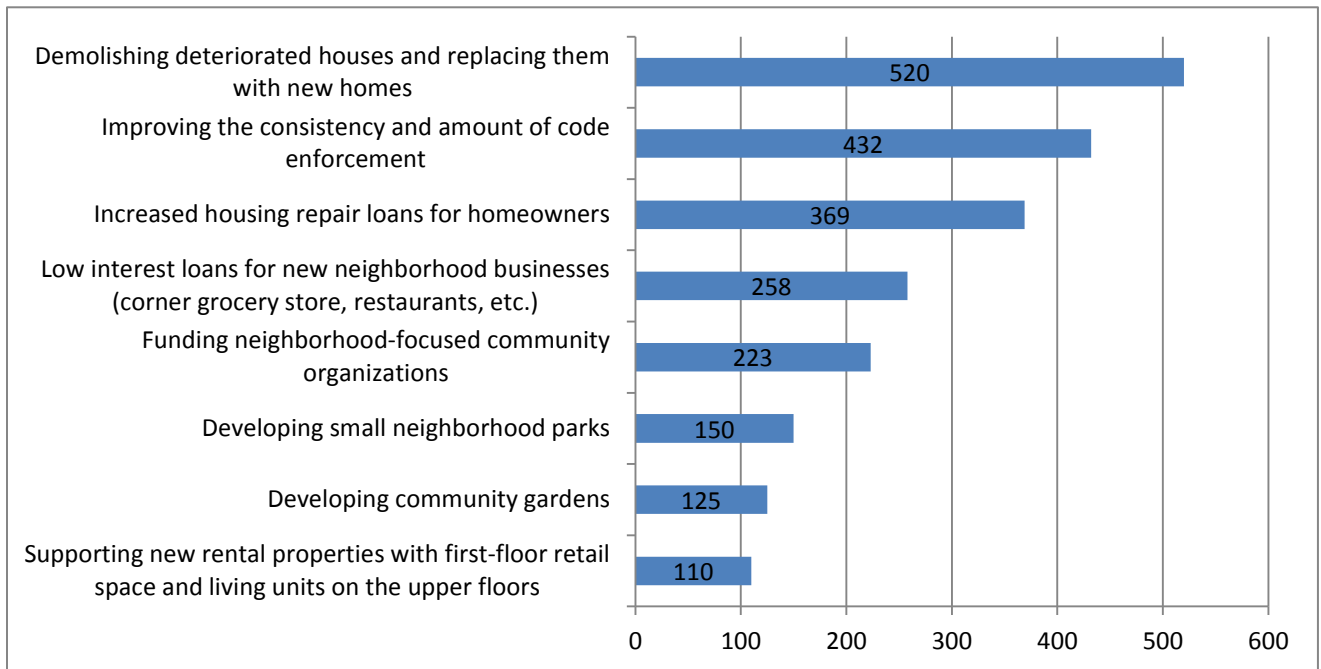


[Go Back](#) ↑

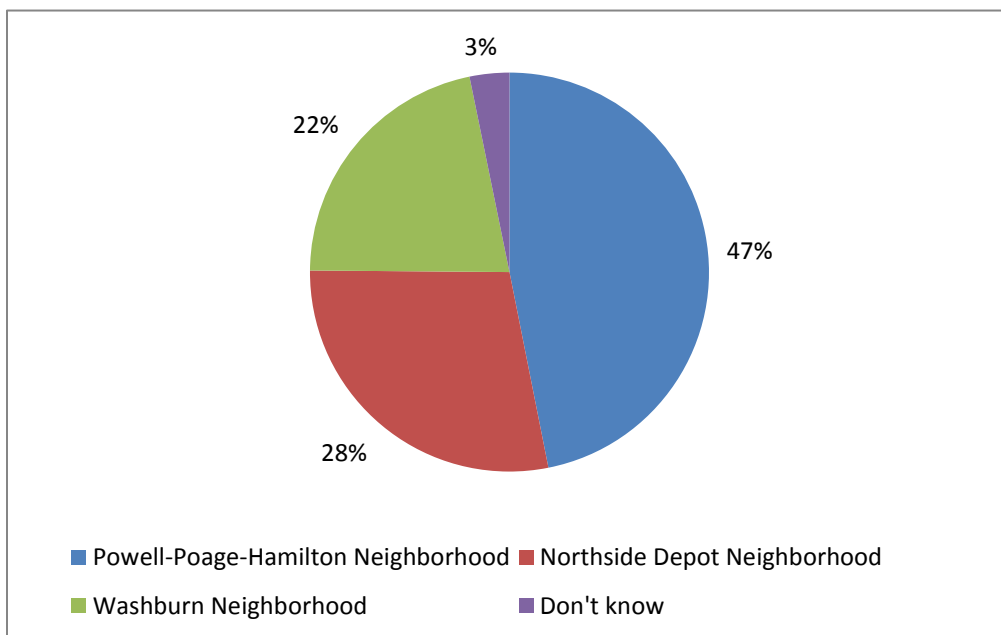
# Executive Summary

City-Wide Community Needs Survey – City of La Crosse Planning Department

*Check three initiatives you think would be the best way to improve neighborhoods.*



*Based on greatest need, which neighborhood should be prioritized?*

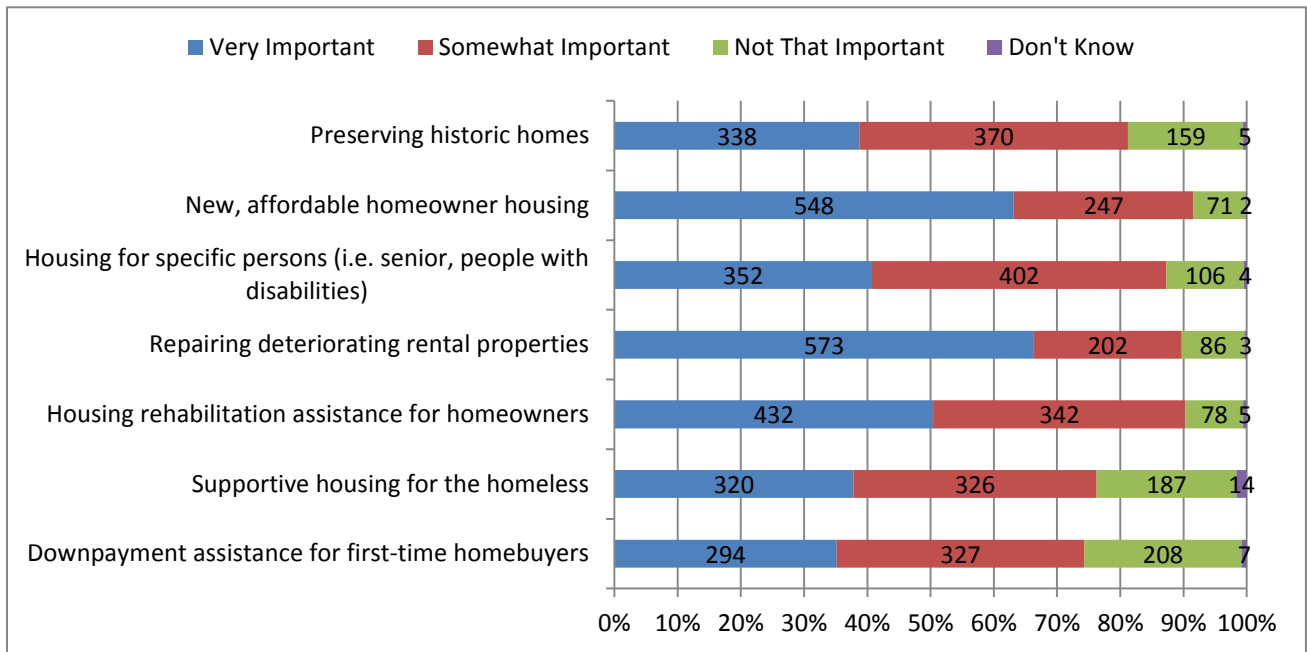


[Go Back](#) ↑

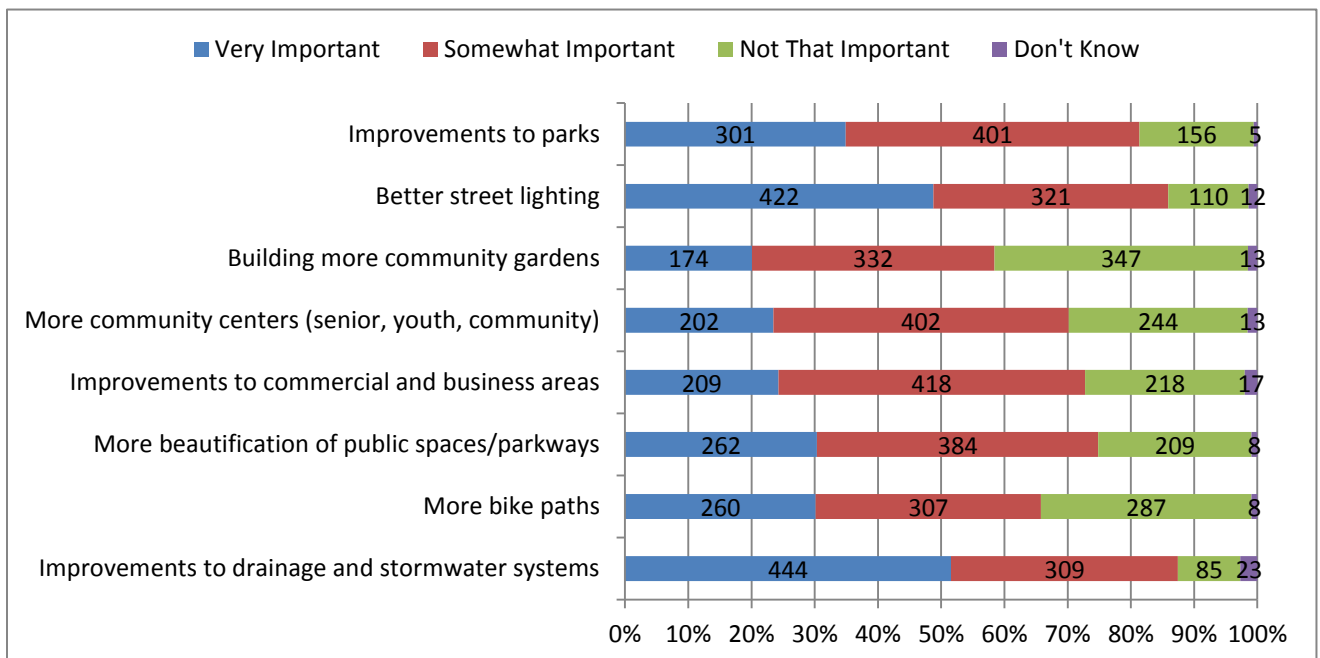
# Executive Summary

City-Wide Community Needs Survey – City of La Crosse Planning Department

*How important are the following housing programs for the City of La Crosse in the next 5 years?*



*How important are the following improvements to the City of La Crosse in the next 5 years?*

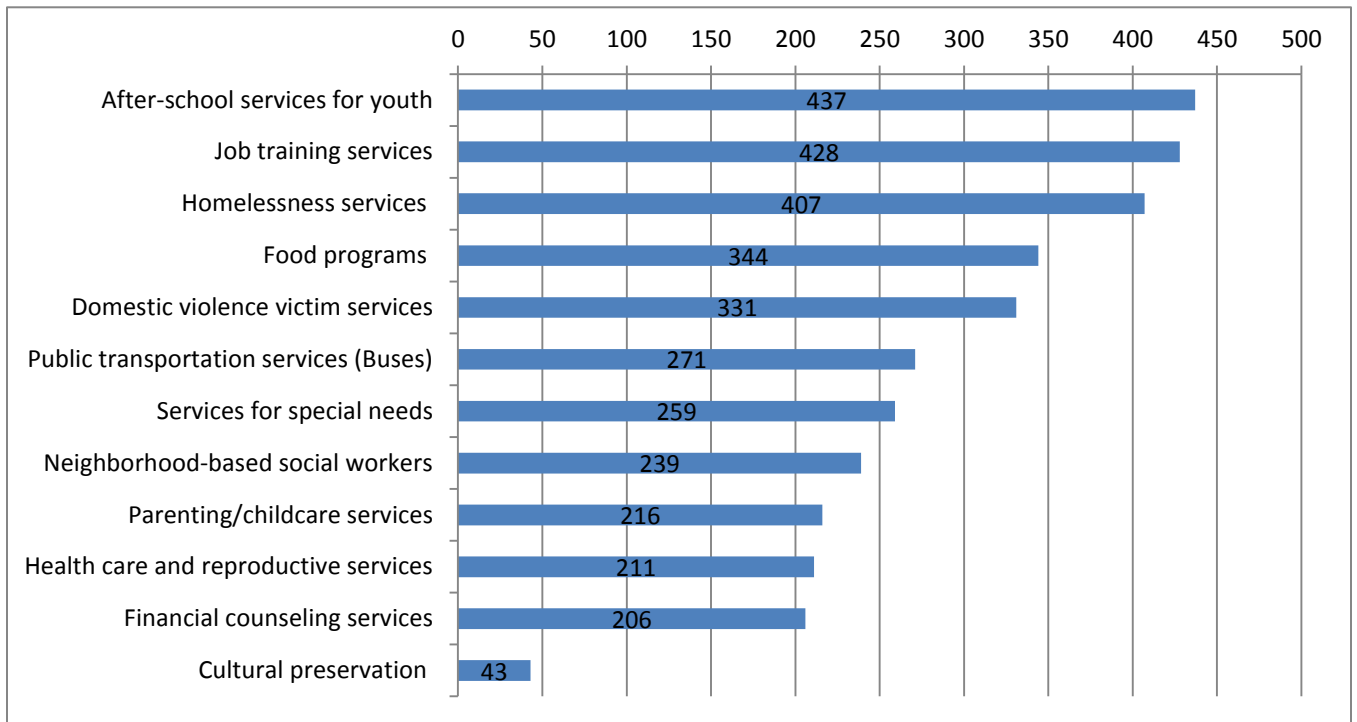


[Go Back](#) ↑

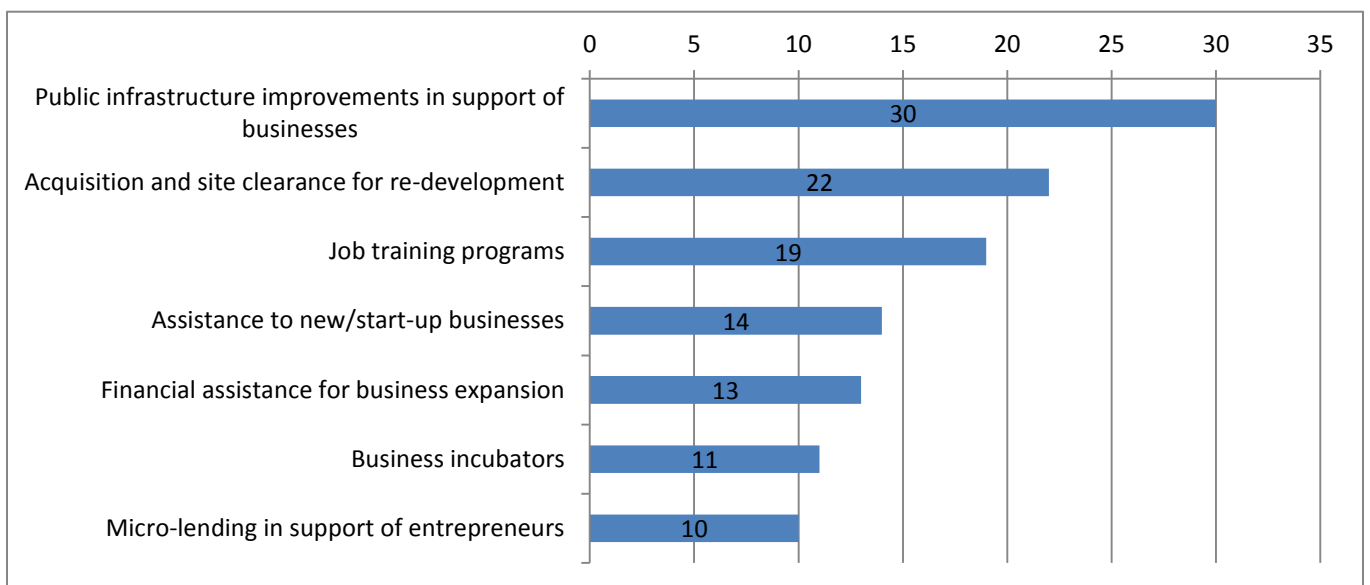
# Executive Summary

City-Wide Community Needs Survey – City of La Crosse Planning Department

*Check four types of services which you think the city should prioritize funding for in the next 5 years:*



*Based on need and effectiveness, check three initiatives which the City should prioritize in the next 5 years:*



# Executive Summary

City-Wide Community Needs Survey – City of La Crosse Planning Department

[Go Back](#)