City of WHITEWATER
Live • Work • Play • Learn

MEMORANDUM

TO: Common Council
FROM: John S. Weidl, City Manager
DATE: September 4, 2026
RE: 2026 Community Survey: Transmittal and a Proposed First Step

---

Transmitted with this memo are ETC Institute's 2026 Community Survey Findings Report and Appendix A (GIS Maps). The survey was mailed to a random sample of households in July and August; 512 completed it, giving results a precision of ±4.3% at the 95% confidence level (p. i). This is the City's first ETC survey, so the numbers are a baseline rather than a trend.

What the survey says. Whitewater rated above both the Plains and national averages in 29 of 45 benchmarked items (p. iv), with the strongest results in fire and EMS (80-84%), police response (79%), solid waste (81%), library services (80%), and wastewater (73%) (pp. ii-iii). Residents rated us lower on the condition of streets (41%) and sidewalks (45%) (p. 11); on how well the City is planning for growth (25%) and the value received for taxes and fees (31%) (p. 4); and on communication, where 39% feel the City keeps them informed, 30% are satisfied with the timeliness of information, and 23% with the level of public involvement in decision-making (p. 28). ETC's Importance-Satisfaction analysis identifies ten "very high" priorities, and every one falls into three groups: streets, sidewalks, and snow removal; water and wastewater rates and drinking-water quality; and communication and public involvement (p. v; Section 3). On longer-term questions, 69% see a need for more single-family homes, 60% support City action to increase housing availability, and a grocery store tops the list of desired retail (pp. iii-iv); those results are inputs to the comprehensive plan rewrite.

I would like Council's direction on priorities. Rather than bring you a staff agenda, I am asking that at the presentation each of you tell us what you consider most important to focus on. Staff will begin working those priorities into the budget now, and Council can carry them into the full strategic plan update planned for 2028. My own reading of the report points to streets and communication, but I would rather hear yours first.

What stood out to me. One suggestion in the open-ended comments (p. 83) asked that the City divide the community into manageable sections and hold a meeting in each. That idea lines up with several findings elsewhere in the report:

- Half of residents are interested in providing feedback to community leaders, but only about a third are aware of opportunities to do so (p. 18).
- Residents are engaged: 81% voted in a local election and 25% attended a Council meeting in the past year (p. 6). The barriers they name (pp. 63-66) are meeting times, short notice, agendas without topics, and information that does not reach them.
- Only 25% believe the City is planning well for growth (p. 4), while the comments ask for the very things our plans contain: jobs, housing, downtown investment, and better streets.

Proposal. Hold a meeting in each of the five aldermanic districts (Attachment B) ahead of the 2028 strategic plan update, using the format the comprehensive plan rewrite has already established, with two purposes: show residents, on maps of their own district, the plans already in place (capital improvements, utility replacements, plow priorities, public safety response, land use, and development districts), and collect their input for staff, Council, and the strategic plan. After each meeting, staff would publish what was heard and what was done in response. The meetings will also tell us whether the growth-planning number reflects plans residents do not see or plans they do not support. This addresses three of ETC's very-high priorities directly and supports the streets priority by making the plan visible.

What will follow. For streets, staff will bring funding and pace options, showing what the current program delivers each year and what it would take to change the trajectory, as part of the 2028 budget and CIP. For water and wastewater, staff will bring a briefing on rates, reserves, and drinking-water quality in the first quarter of 2028. Repeating the survey ahead of the strategic plan update would give it a second data point.

Attachment A lists the display boards staff would prepare for each meeting, the responsible department, and the data source. If Council supports this approach, staff will return with a schedule.

Attachment A

District Meeting Display Boards: Assignments by Department

Each board is prepared for the specific aldermanic district being visited, at a common scale on the GIS base map, and printed as a poster. Departments supply the data; Media Services designs and prints.

Display board	Data source
Public Works: Streets	
PASER pavement ratings, every street in the district	WISLR/PASER ratings submitted to WisDOT
5-year CIP for the district (reconstruct, mill/overlay, sidewalk), year labeled per segment	Adopted CIP; Engineering project list
Sidewalk gap and condition	Sidewalk inventory/inspection records
Stormwater flooding locations and planned drainage work	MS4/stormwater utility maps; complaint log; CIP
Bike/trail network and gaps (joint with Parks)	Comp plan bike-ped element; existing trail inventory
Public Works: Water & Wastewater Utility	
Main replacements coordinated with repaves, 5-year	Utility CIP cross-referenced to street CIP
Main age / lead service line status	Utility asset inventory; LSL inventory filed with DNR
Water and wastewater rate history and what a rate dollar funds (joint with Finance)	PSC rate orders (water); Council rate resolutions (wastewater); utility budgets
Police	
Police response geography, generalized	CAD/dispatch data
Calls for service by type	RMS, excluding identifying detail
Traffic and speed complaint locations with planned calming	PD complaint log; Engineering speed studies
Fire/EMS	
Fire and EMS response geography, generalized	CAD/dispatch; ePCR incident locations
Community Development	
Draft future land use for the district	Comp plan consultant working draft
Housing pipeline: approved and under construction, including the sub-$350K homes	Permit and plat records
Rental vs. owner-occupied parcels or rental-registration density	Rental licensing database; assessor class codes
Tax-exempt parcels (university, nonprofit, government)	Assessment roll exempt property list; county land records
TIF districts and proposed overlays, what each finances	TID project plans; boundary maps
Wastewater utility → TID → developer loan structure, rates at each step, homes produced	Loan agreements; development agreement
Downtown districts only: façade, streetscape, activation projects	CDA/downtown project list
Finance	
Property tax bill breakdown by taxing jurisdiction	Current tax bill apportionment; Treasurer records
Parks & Recreation	
Parks, trails, facilities with planned improvements	CORP; parks CIP
Chief of Staff / Media Services	
Design and printing of all boards	Department-supplied maps and data
Common legend template and QR codes linking each board to its digital version	Media Services
"Your district" board: alderperson and contact, meeting schedule, notification sign-up, polling place	Clerk records for polling place and meeting calendar
Sticky-note asks board; next-round "what we heard / what we did" board	Meeting log
Promotion through the Banner, Whitewater Anything, city channels	Communications plan
GIS	
Common base map, district outline, and scale for all map boards	GIS
Plow routes and priority tiers covering the district	GIS route layer; Streets division for tier policy
Overlay and mapping support for department boards (TIF, land use, response geography, parcels)	GIS, with department-supplied data

Attachment B

Aldermanic Districts (City Clerk / GIS, April 2026)

ALDERMANIC DISTRICTS

CITY OF WHITEWATER

City of WHITEWATER City Clerk

