



The Research Bureau

## Benchmarking Municipal and Neighborhood Services in Worcester: 2007

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Center for Community Performance Measurement



# The Research Bureau



Dear Citizen,

This is the sixth annual *Benchmarking Municipal and Neighborhood Services in Worcester* report prepared by The Research Bureau's Center for Community Performance Measurement (CCPM). The CCPM was established in 2001 with support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to measure and benchmark municipal and community performance in the areas of economic development, public education and youth services, municipal and neighborhood services, and public safety.

This report is designed to:

- Provide an assessment of how well the City is meeting the neighborhood services goals described in its strategic plan;
- Inform City leaders, policymakers, businesses, nonprofit organizations, funders, and residents about municipal and neighborhood services issues; and
- Serve as a catalyst for setting priorities and promoting action to make Worcester an even more attractive and satisfying place to live and work.

The indicators in this report describe the performance of several municipal agencies, including the Department of Public Works and Parks, the Code Enforcement and Housing Enforcement Divisions, the Worcester Public Library, as well as measuring residents' civic engagement. We measure performance by asking, "What has changed since last year, what have we accomplished, and what challenges are still before us?"

Performance measures come in many different forms, including inputs (such as financial resources), outputs (the number of customers served), and outcomes (the quantifiable results of the program). Regardless of their form, performance measures should relate to a particular initiative or strategy of an organization, and as noted above, the measures presented in this report directly relate to the goals contained in the City's strategic plan.

We caution the reader that the performance measurement data in this report do not explain why a particular measure improved or declined. It is not our purpose in this report to provide recommendations for action. Rather, we are presenting the data to stimulate discussion about options for improving Worcester's performance, and it is important that the data presented here be used in conjunction with other information to develop sound public policies.

We would also emphasize that municipal departments are not the only entities responsible for improving the measures set forth in this report. For example, the physical condition of neighborhoods is dependent on property owners maintaining their properties. Similarly, neighborhood organizations and agencies can encourage voter registration and voter turnout.

We wish to thank the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for its continued support of the CCPM, as well as the Greater Worcester Community Foundation for its sponsorship of this report. We hope that this report will encourage widespread discussion of municipal service delivery issues, serve as a basis for sound priority-setting and decision-making, and promote greater adoption of performance measurement practices at the municipal level.

Sincerely,

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## Why is it important?

Citizens expect municipal government to provide services in the most effective and efficient manner possible. The kinds of services provided and the quality of their delivery are dependent in part on a municipality's financial and human resources. The City of Worcester is a "full-service" government, providing a broad range of services, including municipal water and sewer, snow removal, refuse collection, leaf collection, a regional public library, and a municipal golf course. In many neighboring communities, residents must hire their own refuse collection service or travel to Worcester for extensive library services. The quantity and quality of services delivered can affect residents' and visitors' perceptions of the quality of life experienced by those who live and work in a city. Worcester, like many other communities across the country, is faced with the challenge of providing quality services to its residents while experiencing significant fiscal constraints.

## How does Worcester perform?

### Department of Public Works and Parks

The Department of Public Works and Parks (DPWP) provides a number of tax-levy-supported services including the following: solid waste collection and disposal, equipment services, and traffic and civil engineering; and maintains the City's streets and highways, parks and recreation areas, buildings, and cemetery. (Water and sewer operations are supported by user fees.) As shown in **Table 1.1** and **Table 1.2**, in FY07 (the budget year coinciding with the most current performance data available), the Department's budget for public works operations was \$25.2 million, and supported 270 tax-levy positions.<sup>1</sup>

During FY07, DPWP was responsible for maintaining 1,277 street-lane miles as well as 483 sidewalk miles. From calendar year 2005 to 2006, spending on resurfacing for streets increased by about 42%, from \$3.3 million to \$4.7 million. As shown in **Table 1.1**, this funding increase resulted in a 29% increase in the number of street miles resurfaced (from 11.7 to 15.1 miles). Spending on sidewalks has increased substantially in recent years, from \$1.3 million in 2005 to \$2.6

million in 2006, which has led to a 72% increase in City sidewalk miles repaired (from 10.4 to 17.9). The extent to which street and sidewalks are still in need of repair is further documented in **Indicator 3: Physical Condition of Neighborhoods**.

In FY07, the City of Worcester collected and disposed of more than 26,000 tons of refuse, at a total cost (i.e., labor and disposal fees) of about \$105 per ton. The number of tons of curbside recycling collected has slightly increased since FY03 (2%), but the cost of recycling per ton has risen substantially (55%), from \$110 per ton in FY03 to \$184 per ton in FY07.<sup>2</sup> The curbside recycling budget has increased by 60% since FY03, and further increases are budgeted for FY08.

Expenditures for snow and ice removal vary from year to year based on total snowfall and the number of days during which snow- and ice-clearing efforts must be undertaken.<sup>3</sup> From FY03 through FY05, annual appropriations for snow removal remained constant at \$1.17 million. Since snow-removal expenditures consistently exceed the amount budgeted, (the Massachusetts Department of Revenue allows cities and towns to underfund this account in order to balance their budgets) in FY06, snow removal funding was increased to \$1.3 million, and increased again in FY07 to \$1.6 million. But even with these budget increases, actual snow-removal costs have exceeded the budgeted amount in each of the last five years.<sup>4</sup> In FY05, snow-removal expenditures exceeded the budget by more than \$4.2 million.

The Keep Worcester Clean (KWC) initiative is an interdepartmental effort to improve the overall cleanliness of the City. The Departments of Public Works and Parks, Health and Human Services (Code and Health Divisions), Police, Fire, and the Treasurer's Office have combined resources and developed a coordinated approach to dealing with litter, illegal dumping, and graffiti throughout the City. The combined efforts of City staff and members of neighborhood associations throughout the City resulted in the removal of more than 166 tons of trash and debris during calendar year 2006. DPW reported that 1,354 bags of litter and miscellaneous debris were accumulated during clean-ups, while 405 shopping carts and 332 tires were removed from various locations.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The complete *City of Worcester Fiscal 2007 Annual Budget* is available at <http://www.ci.worcester.ma.us/reports/BudgetFY07.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> This rise in cost is due to different contracts with Waste Management; the current contract began in FY04.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the total amount of snowfall, length of lane miles to be cleared, and number of days requiring snow removal efforts, the depth of snow cover, length of storms, temperature fluctuations and other factors also affect the cost of snow and ice clearing efforts.

<sup>4</sup> As reported in the *City of Worcester Fiscal 2008 Annual Budget*, were the City to avoid incurring an annual snow removal deficit, assuming an average seasonal snowfall total of 80 inches, it would need to budget more than \$3.5 million for snow removal activities.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Department of Public Works and Parks.



*Dept. of Public Works and Parks and Dept. of Health and Human Services' Housing Enforcement and Code Enforcement Services (continued)*

**Table 1.1:** Department of Public Works and Parks (Non-Enterprise Divisions)

	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07
Total Expenditures*	\$20,800,581	\$18,100,307	\$21,216,183	\$20,208,029	\$21,279,168
Expenditures per Capita**	\$118	\$103	\$121	\$115	\$121
Salaries	\$7,799,176	\$7,162,550	\$6,914,876	\$7,867,850	\$9,620,764
Overtime	\$1,148,747	\$915,864	\$1,037,327	\$872,550	\$711,065
Number of Positions (Funded)	229	200	200	213	213
Ordinary Maintenance	\$4,884,365	\$4,880,201	\$5,239,430	\$6,364,730	\$6,790,339
Street Lights	\$2,373,978	\$2,541,115	\$2,497,386	\$2,492,700	\$2,557,700
Snow Removal (Budgeted)	\$1,171,000	\$1,171,000	\$1,171,000	\$1,300,000	\$1,600,000
Snow Removal (Actual)	\$4,275,000	\$2,442,000	\$5,380,000	\$3,107,000	\$2,224,942
Snow Removal (Deficit)	-\$3,104,000	-\$1,271,000	-\$4,209,000	-\$1,799,020	-\$624,942
Refuse collection and disposal expenditures	\$2,845,856	\$2,600,375	\$2,544,941	\$2,500,050	\$2,730,730
Tons of refuse collected	27,721	27,833	27,079	26,723	26,079
Refuse expenditures per ton	\$103	\$93	\$94	\$94	\$105
Curbside recycling expenditures	\$1,061,000	\$1,148,000	\$1,365,000	\$1,586,000	\$1,660,000
Tons of recycling collected	9,617	10,065	9,802	9,671	9,040
Recycling expenditures per ton	\$110	\$114	\$139	\$164	\$184
Abandoned Vehicle Removal	na	\$41,050	\$56,000	\$56,000	\$4145***
Vehicles Tagged and Removed	na	2,000+	1,400+	1,300+	900+
	<b>CY02</b>	<b>CY03</b>	<b>CY04</b>	<b>CY05</b>	<b>CY06</b>
Number of street miles resurfaced	7.40	8.38	13.23	11.67	15.13
Number of sidewalk miles repaired	10.76	5.73	8.15	10.42	17.91

*Source: City of Worcester Annual Budgets, FY03 - FY07; City of Worcester Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (2002-2006)*  
 \* Total expenditures do not include fringe benefits      \*\* Expenditures per Capita are based on Census Bureau Population Estimates  
 \*\*\*The reduction in the cost of this program is due to the awarding of a new contract in October 2006 which changed the cost of the program from paying the contractor \$39.99 to remove a vehicle to no cost for towing and the City receiving \$66.75 for each towed vehicle.

As part of the Keep Worcester Clean campaign, DPWP's Abandoned Vehicle Removal Program tags and tows vehicles that have been abandoned on City streets. In FY07, 924 vehicles were tagged and removed (either towed or moved by the owner). From April 2003 (when DPWP became responsible for the program) through June 2007, about 6,000 vehicles were tagged. The revenues collected from fines issued to the owners of towed vehicles have exceeded the towing and storage costs incurred by the Department, enabling the program to be self-sufficient and a revenue generator for the City. Since its inception, the program has collected \$321,593, with \$78,298 of this generated in FY07.

The City has established a centralized reporting mechanism to log and track citizen requests for service and/or reports of problem conditions such as potholes, litter, unplowed streets, non-working street lights, etc. The Customer Service Center (508-929-1300), managed by DPWP, began operations in October 2002. Its computerized service request/work order system logs and tracks all citizen requests and inquiries.<sup>6</sup> In October 2003, the Center began taking abandoned-vehicle complaint calls and in October 2004, calls to the City Manager's office were directed to the Center. During FY07, call center staff received 96,750 calls (including informational requests). These calls and the more than 390 complaints submitted online resulted in the generation of more than 29,400 work orders.

<sup>6</sup> While DPWP is not responsible for responding to all of the complaints, the Customer Service Center facilitates the direction of all service requests to the appropriate department (e.g., Code or the Worcester Police Department). The system also allows for tracking of outstanding or unresolved work orders.



**Dept. of Public Works and Parks and Dept. of Health and Human Services' Housing Enforcement and Code Enforcement Services (continued)**

**Table 1.2: Division of Parks, Recreation, and Hope Cemetery**

	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07
Total Expenditures*	\$3,683,980	\$3,097,403	\$3,323,105	\$3,452,864	\$3,917,227
Expenditures per Capita**	\$21	\$18	\$19	\$20	\$22
Salaries	\$2,689,486	\$2,299,384	\$2,473,428	\$2,435,738	\$3,020,577
Overtime	\$293,164	\$263,182	\$282,785	\$331,237	\$195,025
Number of Positions (Funded)	67	54	54	56	57

*Source: City of Worcester Annual Budgets, FY03 - FY07*  
 \* Total expenditures do not include fringe benefits      \*\*Expenditures per Capita are based on Census Bureau Population Estimates

**Table 1.3: Department of Health and Human Services, Code Enforcement & Housing Division Budget**

	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07
Total Expenditures*	\$2,085,995	\$1,939,740	\$2,057,482	\$1,455,274	\$1,987,077
Expenditures per Capita**	\$12	\$11	\$12	\$8	\$11
Salaries	\$2,007,502	\$1,773,673	\$1,871,632	\$1,337,734	\$1,770,048
Overtime	\$33,360	\$44,674	\$49,121	\$47,512	\$34,600
Number of Positions (Funded)	63	58	41	37	37
Ordinary Maintenance	\$74,910	\$121,393	\$136,729	\$70,028	\$69,388

*Source: City of Worcester Annual Budgets, FY03 - FY07*  
 \*Total Expenditures do not include fringe benefits      \*\*Expenditures per Capita are based on Census Bureau Population Estimates

The Parks Division of DPWP is responsible for maintaining the City's 60 parks and playgrounds, including City pools and beaches, Hope Cemetery, the City's grass medians, islands, and squares, and the trees that line City streets, as well as the coordination/set-up of some City events. As shown in **Table 1.2**, the Division's budget in FY07 was \$3.92 million, which represents a 6.3% increase since FY03. Since FY03, the Division's staffing levels have declined by 15% (10 positions), from 67 to 57.

The Parks Division also has administrative oversight of Green Hill Municipal Golf Course. Although the golf course is an enterprise account, under which revenues generated from user fees fund its operations, for the last five years the golf course has been unable to generate sufficient revenues to cover expenditures. In FY07, the golf course ended the fiscal year with a deficit of \$116,546, which necessitated transfers from the City's tax-levy budget to cover the gap.

**Department of Health and Human Services, Housing Enforcement Division and Code Enforcement Division**

The Department of Health and Human Services' Housing Enforcement Division performs housing and sanitary-code inspections and enforcement services for violations including the following: dirty/unsanitary yards or property and illegal dumping; complaints of substandard housing (e.g. no heat, no hot water, broken windows, mold, etc.); enforcement of the City's trash-bag program; management of the abandoned-building program; and management of weeds and vegetation overgrowth from private property onto public ways. These activities are conducted by inspectors from the Housing Enforcement Division with support from Code Enforcement as needed.

Inspections occur following receipt of a complaint to the Division (including complaints received through the DPWP Customer Service Center) or as part of the systematic inspectional program, and are funded by a combination of local (tax levy) and federal (Community Development Block Grant) funds. As is shown in **Table 1.3**, the FY07 combined budget for the Code and Housing Divisions was \$1.99 million.



**Dept. of Public Works and Parks and Dept. of Health and Human Services' Housing Enforcement and Code Enforcement Services (continued)**

In FY07, housing inspectors completed 2,426 initial inspections, roughly equal to FY06 when 2,424 initial inspections were completed. The data in **Table 1.4** show that more than half (53%) of these inspections were in response to housing complaints while 47% responded to reported failures to maintain a property (e.g., trash and litter complaints, unregistered vehicle complaints, and illegal dumping). These inspections yielded the discovery of 5,452 violations. Staff in the Division attribute the substantial decline in initial inspections in FY06 (2,424 compared to 4,257 in FY05) to several factors, including a reduction in the number of inspector positions and a resulting decrease in systematic inspections, overall improvements in the physical condition of Worcester's neighborhoods resulting in fewer complaint-driven inspections, and a reduction in the number of duplicate complaints recorded in the database (as a result of improved record-keeping).

**Table 1.4** also shows that the 17,407 initial housing inspections that have occurred following complaints or as part of the

systematic inspectional program during the five-year period from FY03 through FY07 resulted in the identification of 25,228 violations.<sup>7</sup> Orders to abate or remedy the violation were issued for 97% of these violations.

The Division of Code Enforcement issues building, electrical, gas, and plumbing permits for all construction work completed within the City. Overall, the number of permits issued has increased in each of the last five years. A substantial number of permits are issued for construction work intended to remedy violations cited during housing inspections, but at this time we are unable to separate these permit requests from the totals detailed in **Table 1.5** below. Annual permit fee collections by the City increased from almost \$2.3 million in FY03 to \$2.6 million in FY07. However, between FY06 and FY07, the construction value of permits decreased by about \$47 million.

**Table 1.4: Housing Enforcement Division Inspections**

	Total Inspections	Total Violations	Orders Issued		Housing		Trash/Yard	
			Inspections	Violations	Inspections	Violations	Inspections	Violations
<b>FY03</b>	4,030	5,771	2,015	5,496	2,274	5,353	1,756	418
<b>FY04</b>	4,270	4,593	2,068	4,469	2,685	4,166	1,585	427
<b>FY05</b>	4,257	4,122	2,497	4,089	2,258	3,333	1,999	789
<b>FY06</b>	2,424	5,290	2,220	5,187	1,316	4,239	1,108	1,051
<b>FY07</b>	2,426	5,452	2,380	5,349	1,292	4,233	1,134	1,219
<b>% Change FY03-FY07</b>	-39.8%	-5.5%	18.1%	-2.7%	-43.2%	-20.9%	-35.4%	191.6%

*Source: Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Housing Enforcement*

**Table 1.5: Construction Permits Issued**

	Permits Issued	Permit Fees Collected	Construction Value of Permits
<b>FY03</b>	10,156	\$2,266,878	\$213,488,805
<b>FY04</b>	10,341	\$2,357,913	\$179,704,807
<b>FY05</b>	10,485	\$2,462,593	\$227,314,780
<b>FY06</b>	10,238	\$2,687,973	\$222,278,560
<b>FY07</b>	9,892	\$2,600,778	\$175,033,594

*Source: Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Code Enforcement*

<sup>7</sup> These data reflect initial inspections only; Housing Enforcement staff indicated that most complaints require the inspector to complete several follow-up inspections. Therefore, these data reflect only a portion of the inspectional staff's workload in any given year.



### What does this mean for Worcester?

Much of the data discussed above are input data, which must be considered in light of other indicators in this report, such as **Indicator 3: Physical Condition of Neighborhoods** and **Indicator 4: Citizen Satisfaction with Service Delivery**.

It is important to measure whether increases or decreases in spending in some categories, such as road rehabilitation and fleet maintenance, and/or increases or decreases in staffing levels (such as housing inspectors) correspond to improved or worsening conditions in the City. Obtaining direct feedback from residents regarding their level of satisfaction with the cost, amount, and type of services provided by municipal government is one means of measuring the City's performance and enables City leaders to set priorities, particularly during tight fiscal times, when increased spending in one area could require reduced spending in another.

In the past, the City has used free cash to fund its significant snow-removal deficits; however, this practice places the City's bond rating in jeopardy.<sup>8</sup> As specified in the City Manager's comprehensive fiscal policy strategy, the City will no longer target free cash to cover a prior-year snow deficit.<sup>9</sup> Instead, free cash will be used to build reserves, and the snow budget will be gradually increased in the next few years to a level sufficient to pay for an expected median snow season. Until this level is reached, deficits will be financed from operating funds.

Annual operating deficits incurred by the City in its operation of the Green Hill Municipal Golf Course raise the question of whether tax levy funds should continue to subsidize a non-essential government service, or whether the golf course should be privatized so those funds can be used for essential municipal services such as public safety and public education. Since FY03, the golf course has received tax-levy subsidies totaling more than \$500,000.

In October 2007, the City Manager announced several new initiatives to deal with nuisances that may detract from the physical appearance of a neighborhood, including the following:

- A proposed ordinance to strengthen enforcement capabilities, including incremental fines ranging from \$25 to \$300 against property owners and landlords who refuse to care for their buildings and properties;
- The establishment of a Problem Properties Resolution Team that will meet regularly to identify and share information about persistent problem properties;
- The formation of a "Clean Team" to organize neighborhood clean-ups and encourage residents and visitors to be actively involved in keeping Worcester clean. Three clean-ups held in October resulted in the removal of over 11,000 pounds of trash in the Main South, Vernon Hill, and Bell Hill neighborhoods.

<sup>8</sup> When a deficit occurs, the City uses surpluses that exist in other accounts or free cash to eliminate the deficit at year end. The Commonwealth allows any portion of the snow-removal deficit that is not eliminated by year end to be carried into the next fiscal year.

<sup>9</sup> The City Manager's plan is available at <http://www.ci.worcester.ma.us/reports/FiscalPolicyStrategy.pdf>



The Worcester Public Library's Vision Statement is as follows:

*The Worcester Public Library will be a welcoming destination and the leading provider of resources to inform, enlighten, and enrich our diverse community.<sup>10</sup>*

### Why is it important?

Public libraries in the United States have a long tradition of providing citizens with free access to information and services to promote life-long learning and personal enrichment. The Worcester Public Library- through its main library located in downtown Worcester and two branch libraries (Frances Perkins Branch in Greendale and the Great Brook Valley Branch) - offers access to books, journals, videos, music CDs and other media; in-person and online reference services; and computers which provide access to the Internet, computerized databases, and other electronic information sources (over 90 computer workstations are available to the public at the main library as well as wireless internet). Library patrons can search the library's databases from home or work via the Internet, and take advantage of inter-library loan services as well as programming such as children's story time, computer skills classes, and language and literacy support classes. Additionally, library facilities are often used for cultural and civic events, and the library's public meeting rooms are regularly used by a variety of local organizations.

### How does Worcester perform?

**Table 2.1** shows comparative input and performance data for the Worcester Public Library (WPL) and the public libraries in Hartford, CT; Providence, RI; and Springfield, MA.<sup>11</sup> From FY02 to FY06, the service hours per week declined for each of the four library systems shown in **Table 2.1**, with Providence experiencing the greatest reduction - an 18% decline (from 436 to 356 hours) - during this period. However, from FY05 to FY06, the number of library service hours per week greatly increased in Worcester and Hartford. In Worcester, hours were increased at the two branches in FY06. The Francis Perkins branch expanded its weekly hours

by 13, and the Great Brook Valley Branch was open an additional three hours per week. Nevertheless, in FY06, Worcester's service hours were below those of each of the three comparison library systems, and Worcester's staffing levels ranked ahead only of Springfield's. However, the higher staffing levels and service hours in the comparison cities are likely a function of these cities operating more branch libraries than Worcester does. While Worcester operated two branch libraries in FY06, Hartford, Providence, and Springfield each operated nine. Because Worcester's staff-to-service-hours ratio was substantially higher than each of the other cities, Worcester libraries had more staff on duty at any given time than the other libraries.

Circulation of WPL materials increased by 5% overall from FY05 to FY06 (circulation at the Main and Francis Perkins libraries was up by 10%, while the Great Brook Valley branch experienced a 4% increase), though FY06 circulation levels were about 1.7% below FY02 levels. **Table 2.1** also reveals a steady and significant decline in annual reference transactions in recent years in each of the four communities examined. The decline in reference transactions (i.e. patrons using the assistance of a reference librarian) is likely a function of libraries expanding their subscriptions to- and promoting patron access to-- a wide variety of authoritative resources available online (many of which patrons are able to access via the Internet without physically visiting a library).

<sup>10</sup> Worcester Public Library, <http://www.worcpublib.org>

<sup>11</sup> The Public Library Data Service's annual Statistical Report provides financial information, annual use figures, technology-related statistics, library resources, and more. The most recent data are for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2006.



## Library Services (continued)

Table 2.1: Comparative Performance Data

		Worcester	Providence	Hartford	Springfield <sup>(1)</sup>	National Average for all jurisdictions 100,000 - 249,999
Number of FTE Library Staff	FY02	96.0	158.6	112.6	101.0	76.8
	FY03	77.0	152.5	110.3	70.0	76.3
	FY04	77.0	143.0	119.0	81.5	76.5
	FY05	80.0	139.8	133.5	89.0	79.0
	FY06	80.0	158.4	104.5	77.0	na
Service Hours Per Week <sup>(2)</sup>	FY02	129.0	435.5	472.0	337.0	291.5
	FY03	98.0	435.5	428.0	276.0	282.7
	FY04	97.0	418.5	377.0	276.0	271.4
	FY05	97.0	367.0	361.0	276.0	284.0
	FY06	113.0	355.5	420.0	277.0	na
Annual Circulation	FY02	687,451	883,979	539,849	783,374	1,133,207
	FY03	662,704	819,982	557,646	579,795	1,186,475
	FY04	698,787	896,214	559,887	585,087	1,190,539
	FY05	643,512	914,984	622,939	606,627	1,387,761
	FY06	675,603	861,496	512,832	611,521	na
Annual Reference Transactions	FY02	151,335	178,385	436,761	155,921	168,686
	FY03	177,273	171,798	371,983	105,614	169,678
	FY04	138,501	182,097	573,513	136,922	178,852
	FY05	132,837	163,291	499,239	124,006	174,375
	FY06	114,483	143,765	310,713	109,090	na
Total Operating Expenditures	FY02	\$4,813,053	\$8,396,726	\$6,590,877	\$7,139,127	\$4,399,648
	FY03	\$4,782,116	\$8,859,392	\$6,564,005	\$6,151,246	\$4,748,434
	FY04	\$4,301,896	\$9,842,685	\$6,278,472	\$4,988,252	\$4,857,907
	FY05	\$4,477,028	\$9,199,436	\$6,368,083	\$5,297,295	\$5,170,692
	FY06	\$5,049,971	\$9,067,807	\$7,545,959	\$5,482,887	na
Total Expenditures per Resident	FY02	\$27.49	\$47.72	\$52.98	\$46.97	\$28.14
	FY03	\$27.25	\$50.15	\$52.68	\$40.42	\$30.14
	FY04	\$24.47	\$55.26	\$50.40	\$32.82	\$30.73
	FY05	\$25.50	\$52.09	\$51.21	\$34.97	\$32.01
	FY06	\$28.78	\$51.74	\$60.60	\$36.27	na
Expenditures for Materials	FY02	\$555,247	\$1,130,371	\$657,175	\$649,142	\$612,299
	FY03	\$629,236	\$794,233	\$669,010	\$624,406	\$629,989
	FY04	\$498,653	\$821,551	\$633,098	\$609,830	\$628,947
	FY05	\$521,027	\$721,369	\$638,244	\$620,016	\$660,648
	FY06	\$566,959	\$648,095	\$705,062	\$609,363	na
Materials Expenditures per Resident	FY02	\$3.17	\$6.42	\$5.28	\$4.27	\$3.92
	FY03	\$3.59	\$4.50	\$5.37	\$4.10	\$4.00
	FY04	\$2.84	\$4.61	\$5.08	\$4.01	\$3.96
	FY05	\$2.97	\$4.08	\$5.13	\$4.09	\$4.06
	FY06	\$3.23	\$3.70	\$5.66	\$4.03	na

Source: Public Library Data Service and Worcester Public Library.

(1) Springfield's Main Library was closed for renovations during 2003. While its collection was available through the branch libraries, it is not counted in the "Number of Service Points." Three additional branches were completely closed and the remaining branches were open only one day per week.

(2) Service hours reflect the total public service hours for all service outlets (i.e., central branch, branches, and bookmobiles).



Table 2.2: FY06 Sources of Funding

	Worcester	Providence	Hartford	Springfield
Local	\$4,062,489	\$3,000,000	\$6,486,227	\$4,482,489
State	\$757,415	\$2,246,661	\$214,957	\$372,188
Federal	\$9,408	\$240,147	\$67,073	\$194,259
Other	\$177,179	\$5,114,345	\$777,702	\$433,951
Total	\$5,006,491	\$10,601,153	\$7,545,959	\$5,482,887

Source: Public Library Data Service surveys for FY06.  
Other: Gifts, donations, interest income, fines, fees, and anything else that does not fall into the other three categories.

## Expenditures

The WPL spends less on materials than any of the other libraries, and its materials expenditures of \$3.23 per resident in FY06 are well below Hartford's (\$5.66), Springfield's (\$4.03) and Providence's (\$3.70).

**Table 2.2** details sources of funding for each of the four library systems in FY06. About 81% (\$4.06 million) of the Worcester Public Library's funding is derived from local tax levy dollars. The remainder comes from state, federal, and other sources, with state funding comprising the largest component (\$757,415, or about 15% of total funding). Similarly, Springfield receives 82% of its funding from local sources, and Hartford receives a slightly higher percentage, 86%, from local tax dollars. The greatest share of Providence's funding (48%) came from other sources (e.g. gifts, donations, fines, fees), followed by local funding (28%) and the state (21%). Federal funding levels are higher in the comparison cities than in Worcester, where federal dollars comprise a mere .2% of its total.<sup>12</sup>

Springfield was the only city listed in **Table 2.1** to report substantial declines in each of the categories examined. Since FY02, the Springfield library system has experienced almost a 25% reduction in total operating expenditures (from \$7.1 to \$5.5 million), a 24% reduction in staffing, an 18% reduction in weekly service hours, and a 22% decrease in annual circulation.<sup>13</sup>

During the summer of 2006, the Center for Community Performance Measurement mailed its annual survey of citizen satisfaction with municipal services and quality of life to 10,000 randomly selected Worcester households.<sup>14</sup> Respondents were asked approximately how often they or other members of their household had used the Worcester Public Library during the previous 12-month period. Nearly one in ten respondents reported that they, or someone in their household, had used the WPL at least once per week; 15% had used it about once a month; and about 34% had used its services less frequently, but at least a few times during the prior year. On the other hand, 42% of respondents indicated that neither they nor other household members had used the WPL during the past 12 months. Respondents between the ages of 35 and 44 used the library with the greatest frequency; 35.4% of these individuals reported that they (or someone in their household) used the WPL "at least once a week" or "about once a month."

Overwhelmingly, respondents were satisfied with the assistance provided by the library staff (95.7% satisfaction), children's programs (94.1%), the WPL's computer resources/online services (93.4%), and the selection of library materials (93.3%). Users of Worcester's public libraries expressed the greatest level of dissatisfaction with the libraries' hours of operations: about 18% were either "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the branch libraries' hours, and 15.6% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the Main Library's hours of operation.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners administers state and federal grant programs for libraries of all types throughout the Commonwealth. A portion of federal funds received is used for statewide services, and a portion is awarded to libraries applying for competitive direct grants. According to Worcester's Head Librarian, since these grants usually do not permit salary support, the WPL is reluctant to apply for grants that would fund programs which it would not be able to adequately staff given already limited staff resources.

<sup>13</sup> Prior to FY03, the Springfield Public Library was under the jurisdiction of a non-profit Library and Museum Board, and a substantial amount of the library's budget was allocated to support administrative overhead associated with the Board, as distinguished from expenditures directly related to Library operations. Therefore, caution is necessary when comparing budget figures prior to July 2003 with later data.

<sup>14</sup> The survey response rate was approximately 16%, with analyses based on 1,615 completed surveys. For a complete discussion of the survey findings, see CCPM publication 07-01, Citizen Satisfaction with Municipal Services and Quality of Life in Worcester: 2006 Survey Findings, available at [www.wrrb.org](http://www.wrrb.org).

<sup>15</sup> Currently, of the WPL's two branch libraries, the Francis Perkins branch in Greendale is open a total of 45 hours Monday through Friday while the Great Brook Valley branch is open 2pm – 5pm Monday through Friday, primarily to serve students after school.



**What does this mean for Worcester?**

The City is home to the largest public library in Central Massachusetts. In FY06, there were over 770,000 visitors to the library, attendance at WPL-sponsored programs was more than 20,000, and more than 50,000 items were lent to other libraries in the region, all of which are increases from the previous year. While Worcester residents are afforded fewer points of service as well as fewer service hours than residents of Springfield, Hartford, and Providence, it appears that Worcester residents are utilizing the services that are available to a higher degree.

In FY06, WPL expenditures per resident were substantially below the expenditure levels in the three comparison cities.

**Table 2.1** also shows that Worcester's per capita total expenditures have consistently been below the national average for all libraries in similarly-sized jurisdictions with populations of 100,000 – 249,999.



### Why is it important?

The physical condition of a neighborhood affects the quality of life experienced by residents as well as the neighborhood's overall vitality. Signs of physical decay such as litter-strewn yards, illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, boarded and/or vacant buildings, overgrown vegetation, and crumbling streets or sidewalks can result in a diminished sense of community, decreased property values, lost tax revenue, and increased crime rates.

A number of municipal departments are responsible for addressing the physical condition of Worcester's neighborhoods. Besides its responsibility for street and sidewalk maintenance, the Department of Public Works and Parks cleans catch basins, collects refuse, removes abandoned vehicles on streets, maintains over 1,300 acres of land in sixty parks and playgrounds, cares for the trees that line city streets, and maintains and repairs public buildings. The Division of Housing Enforcement provides inspectional and enforcement services to ensure compliance with building and sanitary codes, and responds to violations of the City's unregistered vehicle ordinances. Neighborhood residents themselves are responsible for remediation of certain conditions including deficient maintenance of residential buildings (e.g., peeling paint, broken porches and windows) and litter and overgrown vegetation on private lots.

Initiated in 2001, ComNET (Computerized Neighborhood Environment Tracking) is a tool to help residents and City leaders identify and document more than 275 specific problems affecting residents' quality of life, ranging from potholes to faded crosswalk markings, abandoned and unregistered vehicles, illegal dumping, and overgrown vegetation in 13 of the most socio-economically-challenged neighborhoods in Worcester.<sup>16</sup>

Neighborhood volunteers, students from the College of the Holy Cross, and high school students from South High Community School's Academy for Education, Service, and Government who participate in the ComNET surveys are trained to systematically observe and record the location of problems and assets using a handheld computer and digital camera, while following a prescribed route through a neighborhood. Data are uploaded to a database and analyzed, then shared with neighborhood associations which develop and communicate priorities to residents and municipal government. City departments receive a detailed electronic listing of the location and type of problems they are responsible for addressing. This process not only helps City departments and neighborhoods to identify problems but is also a tool to highlight improvements that have been made and to help citizens hold municipal government accountable for results.

### How does Worcester perform?

**Table 3.1** shows, by neighborhood, the number of newly-documented problems recorded each year ("na" indicates that the neighborhood was not surveyed during that year). Fifty-eight surveys have been conducted in the 13 participating neighborhoods since ComNET began in 2001; they have resulted in the documentation of more than 13,000 problem conditions overall.<sup>17</sup> In addition to recording neighborhood problems, residents also list community assets such as schools, churches, community centers, etc. The purpose of noting assets is to identify potential partners to which City and neighborhood leaders can turn to for assistance in addressing the problems.

Among all problems identified since 2001, about one in five have been street-related (potholes, uneven pavement, dirt/sand, faded crosswalks, missing curb cuts, clogged catch basins, etc.). Litter has been documented in more than 2,000 locations (on both public and private spaces). Over 1,800 sidewalk trip-hazards have been recorded, and overgrown weeds and vegetation have been documented more than 1,500 times (on both private properties and park lands).

Several municipal agencies are responsible for resolving the documented problems, with some agencies accountable for a larger percentage than others. The Department of Public Works and Parks (DPWP) is responsible for the largest proportion of identified problems, around 61%. On average among the 13 neighborhoods, about one-quarter of the problems identified are the responsibility of neighborhood residents themselves (e.g. overgrown vegetation and litter on private property and peeling paint and broken fences, windows, and porches on residential buildings). The Division of Housing Enforcement is responsible for remediation of about 13% of all problems identified, including abandoned buildings and unregistered vehicles on properties.

Citywide, almost seven out of ten problems (69%) identified through ComNET have been resolved by City agencies or neighborhood residents and property owners. The resolution rate for "community problems" (such as overgrown vegetation on private properties, peeling paint, and broken windows) is 80%, while 76% of problems that fall under Code Enforcement's responsibility have been resolved. While the resolution rate for problems that are the responsibility of DPWP is lower than the rate for other agencies, (65%), DPWP, as noted, routinely deals with substantially more problem conditions than the other agencies. Additionally, a number of the problems reported to DPWP require substantial capital investment (e.g., repaving entire streets) and therefore may not be subject to immediate resolution.

<sup>16</sup> ComNET was developed by the Fund for the City of New York's Center on Municipal Government Performance and adapted for use in Worcester.

<sup>17</sup> Detailed reports for each of the 13 neighborhoods covered by ComNET are available on our website, <http://www.wrrb.org>.



**Physical Condition of Neighborhoods (continued)**

When looking at resolution rates by problem type, 67.5% of street problems (i.e. potholes, faded crosswalks) have been resolved, 63% of sidewalk problems (i.e. trip hazards, construction) have been resolved, and 75% of sites with litter have been cleaned up. **Chart 3.1** shows resolution rates for several other major problem categories including dumping, overgrown vegetation and abandoned/unregistered vehicles.

**What does this mean for Worcester?**

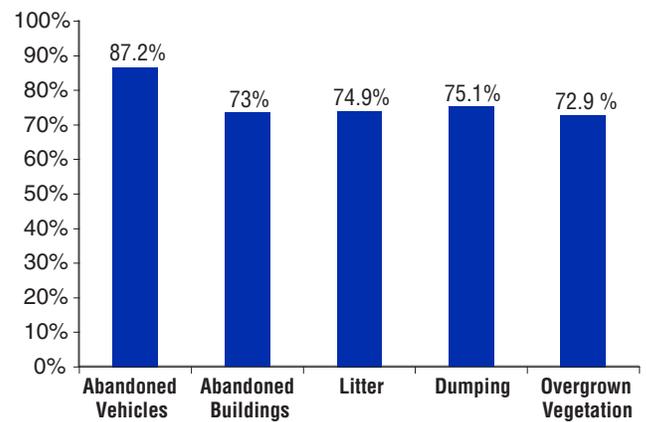
We believe that the problem resolution rates described above demonstrate ComNET’s success as a tool to improve the physical conditions and overall quality of life in Worcester’s neighborhoods. Follow-up surveys afford residents an opportunity to observe improvements and systematically track the resolution of problem conditions. In addition, since each survey also presents an opportunity to identify problems that did not previously exist or were not previously documented, the survey provides neighborhood residents with timely monitoring and the ability to track a neighborhood’s condition over time. In his April, 2006 article on Worcester’s ComNET program in *Governing*, author Jonathan Walters notes that “As data accumulates from year-to-year, neighborhoods get a clearer picture of specific areas of need, along with a gauge of whether they’re dealing effectively with documented problems.”<sup>18</sup>

ComNET has led to a better understanding of who is responsible for what when it comes to addressing neighborhood problems. Residents and City officials have used ComNET data to improve their response and to identify new strategies for resolving issues as illustrated by the following: Residents now

regularly organize cleanups and share tools to assist neighbors whose physical or financial condition prevent them from maintaining their property. ComNET data provided quantifiable evidence of an increasing problem of abandoned vehicles on City streets. The problem was a major frustration for residents who complained that the City’s response had been ineffective. Using ComNET data which documented the extent of the problem, the City’s DPWP assumed control of the abandoned vehicle removal program in 2003 and improved performance.

As the City analyzes the data collected and develops strategies in response to identified problems, it should consider establishing performance targets against which the work of departments and public officials may be measured.

*Chart 3.1: Resolution Rates by Category, 2001-2007*



Source: The Research Bureau, ComNET Surveys

**Table 3.1: Number of New Problems Documented by Neighborhood, 2001-2007**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Bell Hill	756	141	197	na	289	351	na	1,734
Brittan Square	632	155	35	245	97	na	133	1,297
Brown Square	na	na	na	na	na	181	na	181
College Hill	na	na	81	na	219	na	na	300
Columbus Park	na	326	113	142	na	99	na	680
Crown Hill	202	66	62	107	89	na	na	526
Crystal Park	na	na	549	179	na	161	364	1,253
Elm Park	371	8	4	115	80	na	na	578
Green Island	740	133	84	172	na	263	na	1,392
Main Middle	608	421	6	250	na	96	na	1,381
Quinsigamond Village	na	194	92	na	433	211	na	930
South Worcester	na	na	289	282	145	na	216	935
Union Hill	na	627	160	317	282	na	496	1,882
Total	3,309	2,071	1,672	1,809	1,634	1,362	1,212	13,069

Source: The Research Bureau, ComNET Surveys

<sup>18</sup>Jonathan Walters. “Tracking Team,” *Governing*, April, 2006, pp 76-78.



**Why is it important?**

Surveys can be an effective means of obtaining residents’ opinions about the quality of life in their neighborhoods and the level and quality of services provided by municipal government such as street maintenance, snow removal, refuse collection, public education, and public safety. The findings from such surveys, in conjunction with other performance measurement data, can be used by municipal leaders to identify opportunities and initiatives to improve the quality of City services.

The findings described below are based on a mail survey sent to 10,000 randomly selected Worcester households in July, 2006.<sup>19</sup> Respondents were asked to rate the quality of life in the City, the community’s amenities, and local government service delivery. A total of 1,615 surveys were completed and returned, for a response rate of 16%. Survey respondents were fairly evenly distributed across the City’s four quadrants.

**How does Worcester perform?**

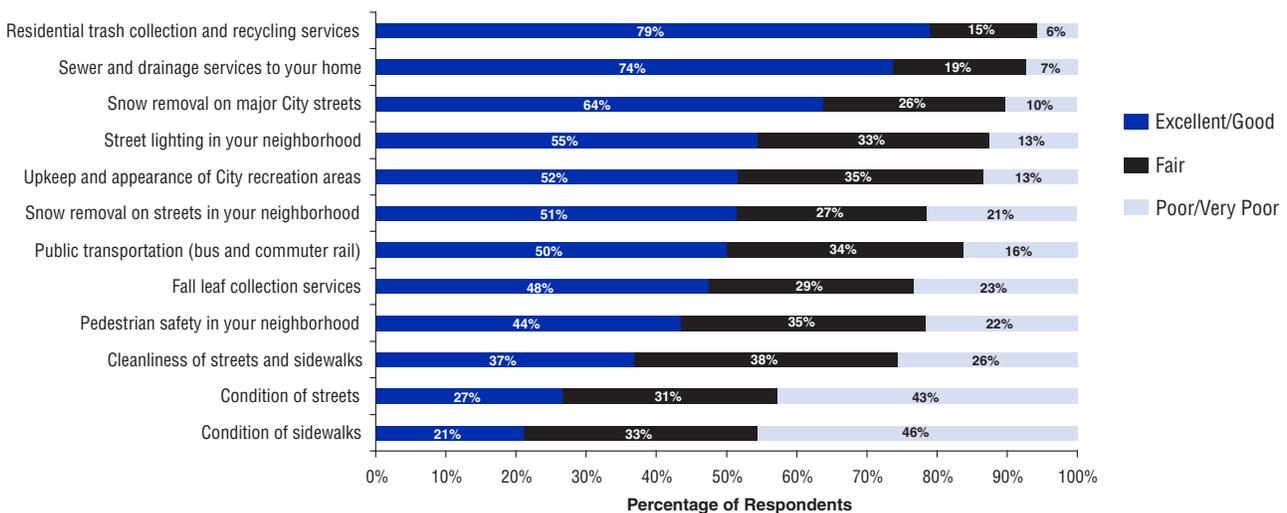
The results of the 2006 City of Worcester Citizen Satisfaction Survey indicate that the majority of respondents are satisfied with Worcester as a place to live, the services the City provides, and the quality of life in their immediate neighborhoods. Residential trash collection services received a high rating, with an “excellent” or “good” rating given by 79% of respondents. However, less than two-thirds of respondents (61.2%) expressed satisfaction with Worcester as a place to rear children. As noted in **Indicator 2**, respondents who reported using the Worcester Public Library (WPL) were overwhelmingly satisfied with the services offered by the WPL.

Of all neighborhood conditions and city services included in the survey, the condition of streets and sidewalks had the poorest ratings (see **Chart 4.1**). Twenty-seven percent of respondents rated the condition of their neighborhood streets as “good” or “excellent,” 31% said it was “fair,” and 43% said it was “poor” or “very poor.” Twenty-one percent of respondents thought that the condition of neighborhood sidewalks was “good” or “excellent,” 33% said it was “fair,” and the largest proportion, 46%, reported that it was “poor” or “very poor.” Additionally, slightly more than a third of respondents (37%) gave a positive rating for the cleanliness of streets and sidewalks in their own neighborhood.

Among respondents receiving assistance from Worcester’s emergency service providers –Police, Fire, and UMass Memorial EMS (ambulance service) – the vast majority were satisfied with providers’ response times, professionalism, and quality of service. Respondents were also asked about their perceptions of neighborhood safety. About 13% of respondents reported that they or a member of their household had been a victim of crime during the previous 12-month period. Citywide, slightly more than three-quarters of these victims said they had reported the crime to police.

About 30% of respondents expressed a belief that crime in their neighborhood had increased in the past year, and over one-half of these respondents also reported a decline in the overall quality of life in their neighborhood during the past five years. Respondents, not surprisingly, felt safest when walking alone in their own neighborhood and during the daytime (91.5% stated they felt very or somewhat safe), while 72% of respondents who frequently or occasionally spent time downtown stated that they felt very or somewhat unsafe in downtown Worcester at nighttime.

**Chart 4.1: Respondents' Ratings of Various Municipal Services**



<sup>19</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the survey results, see Citizen Satisfaction with Municipal Services and Quality of Life in Worcester: 2006 Survey Findings (report no. CCPM-07-01) at [http://www.wrrb.org/documents/CCPM-07-01\\_000.pdf](http://www.wrrb.org/documents/CCPM-07-01_000.pdf)



Respondents were also asked to express their views about taxes, spending, and budget priorities. Forty-five percent of respondents stated that they were satisfied with the value of services received for their City tax dollars, while 55% were dissatisfied. Nearly eight out of ten respondents (79%) indicated that they were unwilling to pay more in property taxes in order to see municipal services increased. When asked whether there are areas where municipal spending should be increased, 70% of respondents said “yes.” Almost one in three respondents thought that spending on the Worcester Public Schools should be increased. When asked whether there are areas where municipal spending should be reduced, 55% of respondents said “yes.” About one in five of these respondents proposed reducing the City’s workforce (including specific suggestions to reduce spending on management positions).

### **What does this mean for Worcester?**

While almost two-thirds (64%) of the survey respondents expressed positive views (“satisfied” or “very satisfied”) with the overall quality of life in Worcester in 2006, a sizeable minority – one in three respondents – are dissatisfied. Residents surveyed in 2006 indicated their overall satisfaction with a number of municipal services provided by City government, including library services, trash collection, and snow removal. Residents are generally less satisfied with the condition and cleanliness of their streets and sidewalks. The existence of these problems is also reflected in the data presented in **Indicator 3: Physical Condition of Neighborhoods**.

While generally satisfied with the provision of services, less than half (45%) of all respondents expressed satisfaction with the value of services received for their tax dollars, and residents overwhelmingly opposed service expansion if it meant raising taxes to pay for the expansion.

We can only surmise that the expression of dissatisfaction with value received, in contrast with high degree of satisfaction with services themselves, reflects concern about whether the City is using its resources in the most economical manner-- reflecting widespread unhappiness about increasing property taxes.

A subsequent citizen satisfaction survey of Worcester residents was not conducted in 2007. However, we anticipate carrying out such a survey in 2008.



### Why is it important?

Measures of civic engagement include the number of citizens applying to serve and serving on municipal boards and commissions, voting in municipal and general elections, attending public hearings, and participating in civic activities such as neighborhood associations and crime-watch groups. These activities provide residents with an opportunity to voice their views about municipal service delivery as well as an opportunity to help improve in the quality of life in the communities they represent.

Voting rates are a key measure of how engaged members of a community are in the democratic process. They may reflect the degree of citizen confidence in our social and political institutions and the extent to which voters believe their opinion makes a difference.

### How does Worcester perform?

Worcester's City Charter establishes 31 municipal boards or commissions, members of which are nominated for appointment by the City Manager upon the recommendation of the Citizen Advisory Council, which publicizes vacancies and recruits and screens applicants.<sup>20, 21</sup> There are a total of 212 positions available on these boards and commissions, with the number of members appointed to each board or commission ranging from 3 to 15. While some boards must legally require candidates to possess certain expertise, most appointments do not have unusual educational or vocational pre-requisites. The only universal requirements are that candidates be bona fide Worcester residents and registered voters. In some instances, candidates cannot be City of Worcester employees.<sup>22</sup> Vacancies may occur at various points throughout the year due to resignations or the expiration of a member's term (the length of appointment varies by board or commission). Regulatory boards (for instance, the Election Commission and the Planning Board) and advisory commissions (e.g., Worcester Public Library Board and the Commission on Disability) are required to have representation from each of the City's five council districts, while district representation is not required for those that are classified as executive (e.g., the Airport Commission and the Board of Health).<sup>23</sup>

The number of advertised vacancies totaled 65 during the 2006 calendar year, 38 of which occurred on boards or commissions classified as regulatory or advisory. **Table 5.1** shows the distribution of applications by district. During the same period, 27 vacancies occurred on boards or commissions

that did not have district representation requirements. The Citizen Advisory Council considered 94 applicants for these positions, or a ratio of 3.5 applicants per available position.

**Charts 5.1** and **5.2** show Districts 4 and 5 (in the southern and northern parts of the City) produced an increasing number of applicants, regardless of board or commission type, from 2003 to 2006. During 2006, District 5 overwhelmingly had the greatest number of applicants for both executive and advisory/regulatory boards and commissions. From 2003 to 2005, applicant data also show a consistently higher number of applicants for positions on executive boards and commissions compared with advisory and regulatory boards and commissions, despite the greater number of vacancies occurring on the latter. However, in 2006, the number of applicants between the two types of boards and commissions was roughly equal.

**Table 5.1: Board and Commission Vacancies, 2006**

<b>Total Board and Commission Vacancies</b>		<b>65</b>
<b>Vacancies on Regulatory &amp; Advisory Boards</b>		
	<b>Vacancies</b>	<b>Applications</b>
Total	38	97
District 1	6	20
District 2	2	10
District 3	7	15
District 4	7	20
District 5	2	32
Various*	6	na
Any	8	na
<b>Vacancies on Executive Boards</b>		
	<b>Vacancies</b>	<b>Applications</b>
Total	27	94
District 1	na	16
District 2	na	9
District 3	na	11
District 4	na	20
District 5	na	38

\*Candidates from more than one district were eligible to apply for the vacant position

Source: City of Worcester Executive Office of Human Resources

<sup>20</sup> This procedure was established by the Home Rule municipal charter approved by Worcester voters in 1985.

<sup>21</sup> Each of the City's Boards and Commissions is classified as either executive (policy setting), regulatory (administrative and/or adjudicatory, establishing policy in specific areas and/or applying laws and ordinances), and advisory (providing information and advice to City agencies and public officials).

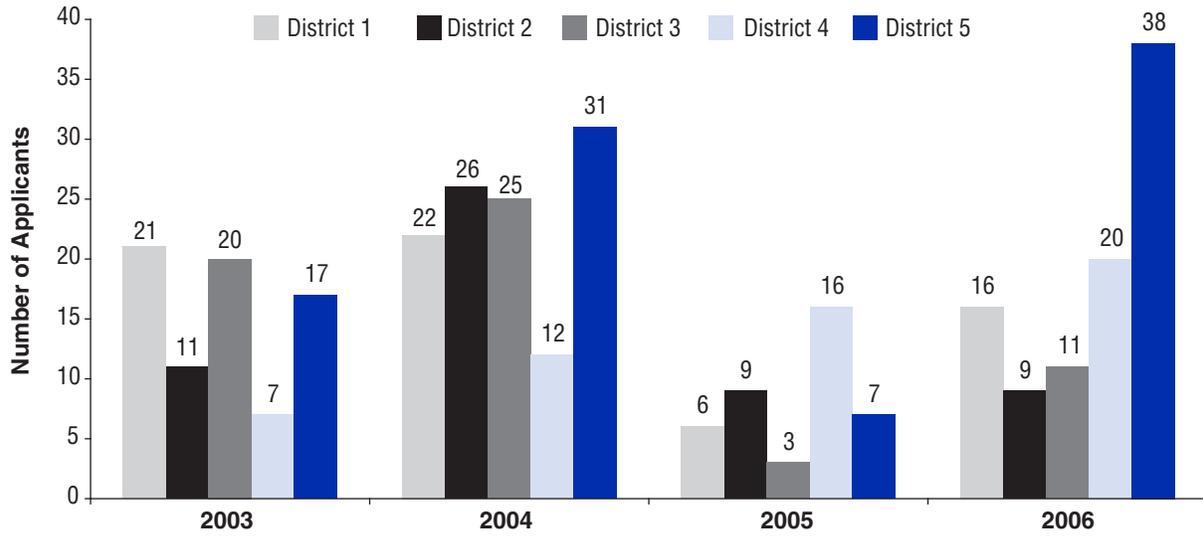
<sup>22</sup> In 2007, City of Worcester employees became eligible to serve on certain boards and commissions. Restrictions include: serving on the Citizen's Advisory Council, Executive and Regulatory Boards and Commissions, and boards and commissions in direct relationship with the department the employee is working in.

<sup>23</sup> A description of each of the 31 boards and commission is available on the City's website at [www.ci.worcester.ma.us](http://www.ci.worcester.ma.us).



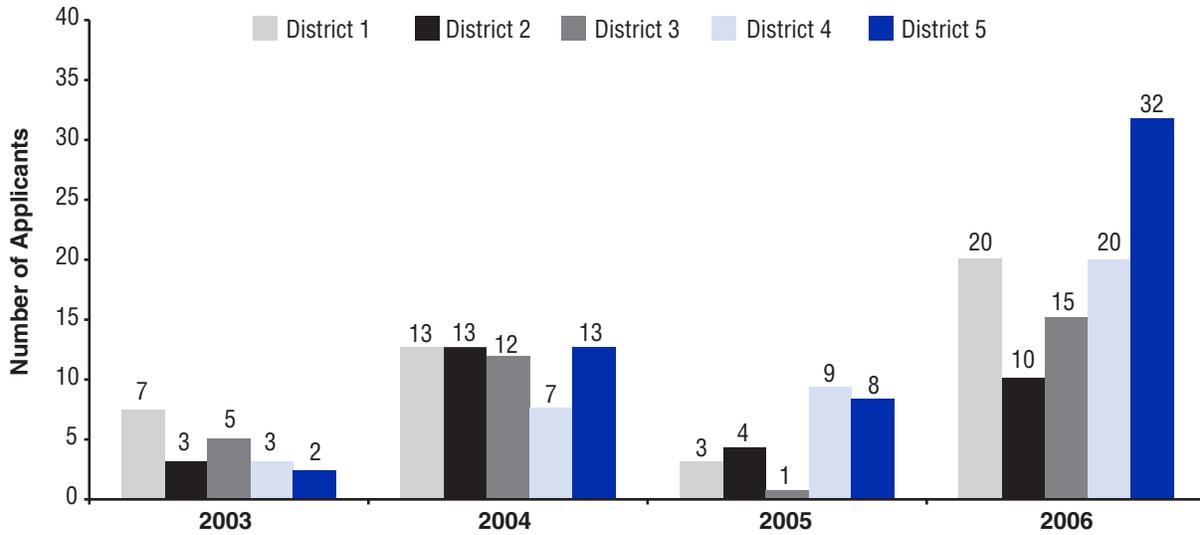
*Citizen Involvement (continued)*

**Chart 5.1:** Applications for Positions on Executive Boards and Commissions, (2003-2006)



Source: City of Worcester Executive Office of Human Resources

**Chart 5.2:** Applications for Positions on Advisory and Regulatory Boards and Commissions, (2003-2006)



Source: City of Worcester Executive Office of Human Resources



*Voting in Worcester*

From October 2005 to October 2006, the number of registered voters in Worcester increased by 4%, from 89,249 to 92,592. About 46% of those who were registered in Worcester actually voted in Massachusetts' 2006 gubernatorial election, compared to 57% of registered voters participating in the 2004 presidential election and 22% participating in Worcester's 2005 municipal election.<sup>24</sup> As shown in **Chart 5.3**, voter turnout (the percentage of registered voters who actually voted) in 2006 was roughly equal to what it had been during the previous gubernatorial election held in 2002 (46% vs. 47%, respectively).

**Chart 5.3** also shows that voter turnout in each district in the 2006 gubernatorial election was similar to that in 2002, with District 5 experiencing the largest gap (a 3 percentage point decrease). Turnout rates for the 2006 gubernatorial election were substantially higher in each of the five districts than in the 2005 municipal election, (with increases ranging from 13 to 27 percentage points). However, voter turnout for the 2006 gubernatorial election was lower than the 2004 presidential election, averaging an 11% drop in voter turnout Citywide. These fluctuations in turnouts are similar to statewide and nationwide trends.

In 2006, slightly more than three-quarters (78%) of Worcester's voting-age population was registered to vote, while approximately 35% of the voting age population actually voted. **Table 5.2** breaks down by age the percentage of the population registered to vote, and the percentage of registered voters who actually voted in 2006. Voter registration rates were lowest among 18- and 19-year olds, with a little more than one-third registered to vote, and turnout among those registered in this age group was about 24%. While 77% of all 20-24 year olds were registered to vote, only 21% of them cast a ballot in 2006, resulting in the lowest turnout among any age group. The 60-64 year old group had both the highest percentages of registered voters (90%) and registered voters casting a ballot (64%). These voting patterns are typical nationwide.

**What does this mean for Worcester?**

Citywide efforts to increase citizen participation on boards and commissions have resulted in increased applicants. The City is actively engaged in focused outreach and recruitment strategies, presentations and promotions to community groups, religious, cultural, and non-profit establishments, as well as increased media coverage. An ongoing collective effort including the City, neighborhood groups, and community leaders to encourage residents to apply and serve on boards and commissions is commendable. If, however, seats on regulatory and advisory boards and commissions continue to be left vacant due to a lack of candidates from the district in which the vacancy occurs, the current board and commission structure may need to be changed. Restructuring by eliminating district requirements for these boards and commissions would require changes to the City Charter.

While voter registration rates have increased in the City, little progress has been made in increasing the proportion of these individuals who actually vote. In the 2006 gubernatorial election, slightly fewer than half of Worcester's registered voters participated.

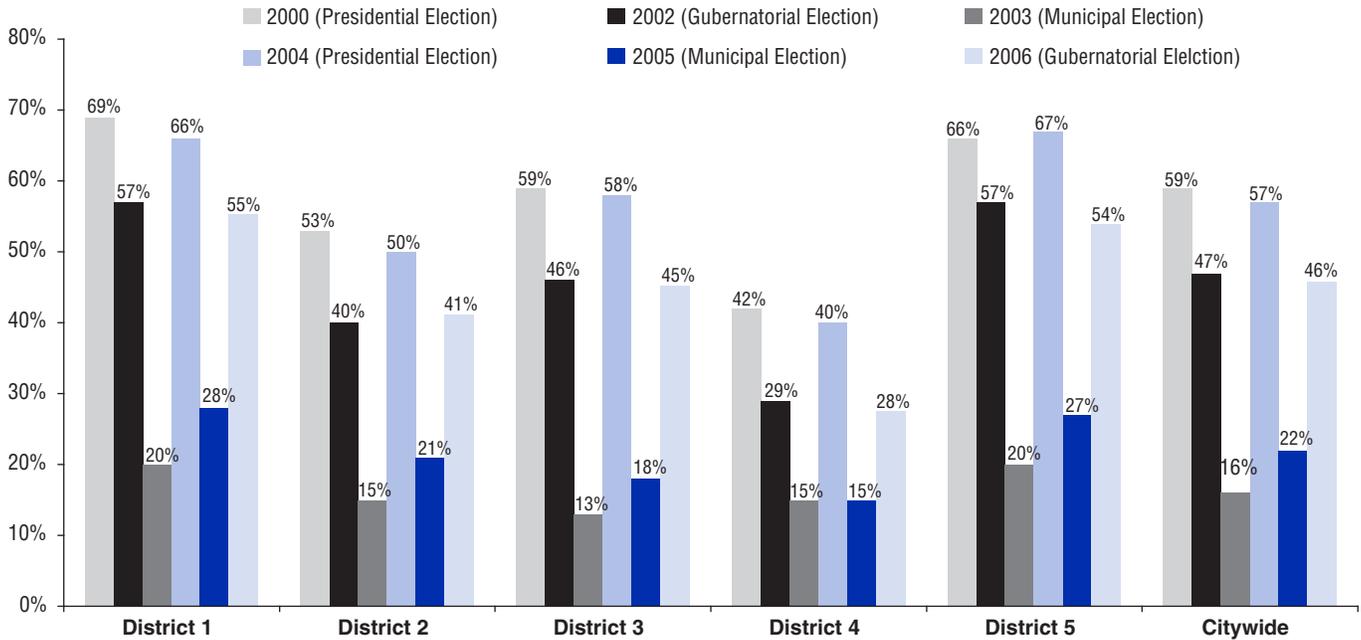
Voter registration rates are lowest among 18 and 19 year olds, and voter turnout is poorest among 20 to 24 year olds in the City. There is ample evidence that these are national trends, because younger residents are less likely to think that they have a stake in the outcome of an election. They may not own property and may not have children in school, and as a result, may feel that many of the campaign issues, in local elections especially, do not directly affect their lives. If non-voting reflects a lack of trust and/or lack of knowledge of politics, it suggests an opportunity for business and civic leaders, along with policymakers to strengthen efforts to communicate with and engage young voters on an ongoing basis.

The estimated total value of all community service performed by students attending institutions that belong to the Colleges of Worcester Consortium was \$11 million in 2006, providing evidence that some members of this age group are already involved in the community. Efforts to encourage further civic involvement may yield greater participation in other arenas, such as voting.

<sup>24</sup> Typically voter turnout rates are much higher during presidential and gubernatorial election years since interest in those elections tends to be greater than interest in municipal elections.



Chart 5.3: Voter Turnout in Worcester, 2000-2006



Prepared by The Research Bureau  
 Data Sources: US Census Bureau and Massachusetts Election Division

Table 5.2: Characteristics of Worcester's Voting Age Population and Voters, 2006

Age	% of Population Registered to Vote	2006 Voter Turnout (% of Registered Voters Casting Votes)
18-19	36.9%	24.3%
20-24	76.8%	20.6%
25-29	63.0%	24.6%
30-34	68.9%	29.8%
35-39	94.1%	35.6%
40-44	77.3%	44.3%
45-49	82.1%	52.3%
50-54	75.8%	57.1%
55-59	87.4%	62.6%
60-64	90.1%	63.7%
65+	85.9%	63.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.5%</b>	<b>45.7%</b>

Prepared by The Research Bureau  
 Data Sources: US Census Bureau and Massachusetts Election Division



*Mission Statement:*

*The Research Bureau serves the public interest of the Greater Worcester region by conducting independent, non-partisan research and analysis of public policy issues to promote informed public debate and decision-making.*



## The Research Bureau

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