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Center for  
Community  
Performance  
Measurement



WORCESTER  
REGIONAL  
RESEARCH  
BUREAU

Benchmarking  
Municipal  
and  
Neighborhood  
Services  
in Worcester

# Welcome...



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## Dear Citizen,

We are pleased to publish this third report in a series from the Center for Community Performance Measurement (CCPM). The CCPM was established at the Worcester Regional Research Bureau in January, 2001, with generous support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, to measure and benchmark municipal and community performance in Worcester in the areas of economic development, municipal and neighborhood services, public education, public safety, and youth services. This report focuses on municipal and neighborhood services.

It is our hope that these reports will highlight the areas in which Worcester is succeeding and where it is in need of improvement. The indicators presented here were developed in collaboration with representatives of a wide variety of organizations, as well as public officials, to ensure their relevance to Worcester. These indicators will serve as a benchmark against which our future performance can be measured. This report on municipal and neighborhood services also includes some comparisons to similar cities in New England. A general profile of these comparison cities is presented at the end of the report.

This report, as well as those in the rest of the series, has been designed to be readable by a broad audience so as to encourage widespread discussion about the future of our community and about how performance measures can serve as a basis for making sound public policy. Next year, when we re-release this report with updated information, the community will be able to ask, "What has changed, what have we accomplished, and what challenges are still before us?"

Although each report in the series is published separately, they should not be considered in isolation from one another. For example, efficient and effective municipal services influence decisions to establish a business or buy a home. Similarly, there is a substantial relationship between student academic achievement in our public schools and the kind of workforce needed to enhance economic development opportunities. Hence, individual reports should be seen in light of the whole series.

Indicators appearing in this report are also interrelated. The effectiveness of the services that the municipal government provides to the City's neighborhoods cannot be measured by only one or two of these indicators. For example, an improvement in the physical condition of neighborhoods (**Indicator 3: Physical Condition of Neighborhoods**) should result in increased citizen satisfaction (**Indicator 4: Citizen Satisfaction with Delivery of Services**).

Thank you for taking the time to read this important report. We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions on the project.

Sincerely,



Mark Colborn - President

Roberta R. Schaefer, Ph.D. - Executive Director

Richard H. Beaman - Manager, CCPM



## What are Performance Measures?

Performance measurement has been defined as “measurement on a regular basis of the results (outcomes) and efficiency of services or programs.”<sup>1</sup> Thus performance measures are quantifiable indicators that, when analyzed, determine what a particular program or service is achieving.

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. The measures presented in this report on municipal and neighborhood services directly relate to the goals contained in the City’s strategic plan. For example, the first goal presented in the strategic plan for the Executive Office of Neighborhood Services is to “provide safe, clean, attractive neighborhoods where citizens can work, live, and conduct business.” If the City successfully accomplishes this goal, there should be appreciable change in this report’s indicators over time. The strategic plan also contains objectives directly related to some of this report’s indicators. For example, the plan says that the City will use the data from the Research Bureau’s ComNET<sup>SM</sup> project (see **Indicator 3: Physical Condition of Neighborhoods**) to improve neighborhood conditions such as potholes and broken sidewalks.

<sup>1</sup> Harry Hatry *Performance Measurement: Getting Results* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 1999), p. 3.

## How should these measures be used?

The performance measurement data in this report do not explain **why** a particular measure improved or declined. For example, this report presents data on the number of individuals applying for municipal boards and commissions. These data do not determine why a majority of the applications for these positions are from residents living in particular areas of the city, nor do they indicate whether the mix of applicants needs to be changed. Therefore, the data must be used in conjunction with other information to develop sound public policies.

It should be emphasized at the outset that municipal departments are not the only entities that are 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. Therefore, 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.

These data can also be used to set benchmarks, or reference points to which Worcester’s performance can be compared. For example, one benchmark could be the performance of another city on the same indicator. Alternatively, we can set our own performance goals and compare future achievement to our past performance. The Worcester community will have to determine how this information should be used in order to achieve the highest level of impact.

## Benchmarking Municipal and Neighborhood Services in Worcester

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## 1

# Cost Effectiveness of Municipal Services

## Why is it important?

Citizens expect their municipal government to provide services in the most effective and efficient manner possible. The kinds of services and the quality of their delivery vary from one community to another, depending in part on the financial and human resources available. The City of Worcester would be called a “full-service” community in that it provides a very broad range of services from refuse collection to a regional library. In many neighboring communities, residents have to hire their own refuse collection service, or travel to Worcester for extensive library services. The delivery of services affects what is commonly referred to as the “quality of life.” Because of the nationwide recession and the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist strike, Worcester, like most communities in the nation, is facing a shortage of financial resources. Therefore, the City faces the dilemma of trying to maintain acceptable levels of service while having to reduce overall expenditures.

It should be noted, however, that the data in this section, which deal with services provided by the Department of Public Works and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cemetery, are based on information gathered by departments prior to the onset of the recession. This will have to be borne in mind as we look at subsequent years, which will reflect the impact of reductions in personnel and funding.

## How does Worcester perform?

The data in this section that pertain to the City of Worcester were provided by the Office of the City Manager and relevant departments. (Most information came directly from data provided to the International City/County Management Association’s performance measurement project.) The Research Bureau sent surveys to department heads in comparable cities to collect additional data.

### Department of Public Works

As shown in **Table 1-1**, Worcester spent \$2.4 million for road rehabilitation<sup>1</sup> in FY01, or \$2,156 per lane mile for which the City of Worcester is responsible. This level was lower than expenditures in the comparable cities of Hartford (\$5,169) and Providence (\$3,997), and about equal to expenditures in Springfield (\$2,182).

Expenditures for snow and ice control vary from year to year based on the total number of days during which snow and ice clearing efforts are undertaken. This indicator is particularly difficult to compare with other cities because of climate differences. For example, the City of Worcester cleared snow and ice during 63 days during FY01, compared to 30 days in Providence and Hartford, and 22 days in Springfield. During FY01, as shown in **Table 1-1**, for each lane mile for which Worcester is responsible, expenditures for snow and ice control were \$62.86 per day that efforts were undertaken. This level was higher than expenditures in Springfield (\$57.85 per lane mile per day), Providence (\$53.33 per lane mile per day) and Hartford (\$30.77 per lane mile per day).<sup>2</sup>

During FY01, Worcester’s Department of Public Works spent approximately \$1,289 per vehicle or other equipment for fleet maintenance.<sup>3</sup> This level is lower than those of Providence, Springfield, and Hartford, as shown in **Table 1-1**. For refuse collection, Worcester spent \$98.32 per ton of refuse collected in FY01. Providence’s expenditures for refuse collection (\$91.17 per ton) were slightly below Worcester’s, whereas Hartford and Springfield’s expenditures were higher. These expenditures do not include the cost of refuse disposal, as disposal costs vary widely among cities depending on the methods of disposal available.



**Table 1-1: Indicators for the Department of Public Works, FY01**

	<b>Worcester</b>	<b>Hartford</b>	<b>Providence</b>	<b>Springfield</b>
<b>Total expenditures for rehabilitation of roads</b>	<b>\$2,400,000</b>	<b>\$3,360,000</b>	<b>\$1,998,599</b>	<b>\$2,400,000</b>
<b>Total lane miles in jurisdiction</b>	<b>1,113</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>1,100</b>
<b>Expenditures for rehabilitation of roads, per lane mile</b>	<b>\$2,156</b>	<b>\$5,169</b>	<b>\$3,997</b>	<b>\$2,182</b>
<b>Expenditures for snow and ice control, per lane mile and per day efforts were undertaken</b>	<b>\$62.86</b>	<b>\$30.77</b>	<b>\$53.33</b>	<b>\$57.85</b>
<b>Expenditures for fleet maintenance, per vehicle</b>	<b>\$1,289</b>	<b>\$1,348</b>	<b>\$3,602</b>	<b>\$3,991</b>
<b>Expenditures for refuse collection (not including refuse disposal), per ton of refuse collected</b>	<b>\$98.32</b>	<b>\$110.00</b>	<b>\$91.17</b>	<b>\$102.27</b>

<sup>1</sup> Road rehabilitation includes resurfacing and pothole repair. This does not include road reconstruction.

<sup>2</sup> Worcester's higher expenditures for snow and ice control may be because Worcester typically receives more snow per storm than the three other cities, regardless of the number of days that snow and ice control efforts are undertaken. Worcester, on average, receives 67.7 inches of snow per year, whereas Providence receives 35.6 inches, Hartford receives 47.3 inches, and Springfield receives 49.7 inches ([www.weatherbase.com](http://www.weatherbase.com)).

<sup>3</sup> This only includes maintenance expenditures for vehicles and equipment under the responsibility of the Department of Public Works, and does not include police or fire vehicles.



Continued on next page ➔

(Continued)

## Department of Parks, Recreation and Cemetery

Worcester's operating and maintenance expenditures for parks and recreation services, not including the golf course, were \$974 per acre of park land (\$1,666 per acre of *active* park land and as shown in **Table 1-2**). This level is approximately the same as Hartford's expenditures of \$971 per acre, but lower than Springfield's expenditures of \$1,387 per acre (\$4,432 per *active* acre).<sup>4</sup> All of the operating and maintenance expenditures in Worcester and Springfield are derived from tax levy, whereas Hartford receives approximately 7% of its total parks and recreation expenses from state and federal grants.

As shown in **Table 1-2**, the total revenue earned by Worcester's Department of Parks, Recreation and Cemetery from parks and recreation services was \$17,764 during FY01. This was greater than the revenue generated in Hartford (\$10,500), but significantly lower than the revenue generated by Springfield (\$628,604). The high revenue earned by Springfield is largely due to entrance fees to its skating arena, vehicle storage fees (parking) at park facilities, and revenue generated from an annual Christmas celebration.

Expenditures for reinvestment in parks and playgrounds were \$1,192 per acre of active park land in Worcester during FY01. During that year, expenditures were \$11,111 per acre in Springfield and \$255 per acre in Hartford.

<sup>4</sup> Providence had received a survey, but as of the publication of this report the survey had not been returned.

<sup>5</sup> "Windshield Time" or "Wrench Time." *Some Proposals for Improving Worcester's Fleet Management*. Report No. 00-2, April 6, 2000.

## What does this mean for Worcester?

*This information will serve as the baseline by which future performance will be measured. Data for some of the comparison cities require additional interpretation, such as the lower per lane mile expenditures for road rehabilitation in Worcester. Is Worcester providing this service more **efficiently** or are Hartford and Providence providing a higher **level** of service? As well, Worcester spends more than the comparable cities for snow and ice control. Although climate and topography differences may account for part of this discrepancy, why are Worcester's expenditures higher? Does Worcester provide a higher level of service, such as clearing roads more frequently during storms? Alternatively, is Worcester providing the same level of service less efficiently? Determining the reasons for the discrepancies might highlight how to provide the highest level of service with the resources that are available.*

*Worcester spends less than Providence and Springfield for fleet maintenance. Again, further analysis is required to determine whether this indicates that Worcester is providing the service more efficiently or whether Worcester is not adequately maintaining its fleet. A report issued by the Research Bureau in 2000<sup>5</sup> outlined several possibilities for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of fleet management, including new information technology for tracking fleet maintenance and alternate work shifts to accommodate the operating characteristics of the fleet.*

*Worcester's per acre expenditures for parks and recreation are below those in Springfield and slightly higher than those in Hartford. As well, Springfield has significantly higher earned revenue from a variety of services and spends more for reinvestment in parks and playgrounds. Based on Springfield's success at increasing revenue, is it possible for Worcester to increase revenue in a similar way?*

*These data should be seen in light of other indicators in this report, such as **Indicator 3: Physical Condition of Neighborhoods**. Improving the cost effectiveness of the services described above may increase the availability of funds for addressing other neighborhood issues in Worcester.*

# Benchmarking Municipal and Neighborhood Services in Worcester



Table 1-2: Indicators for the Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department, FY01

	Worcester	Hartford	Springfield
Acres of active <sup>6</sup> park land	1,007	N/A <sup>7</sup>	720
Acres of passive <sup>6</sup> park land	715	N/A	1,580
Total acres of park land	1,722	2,553	2,300
Total operating and maintenance expenditures for parks and recreation services, excluding golf courses or other self-sustaining programs	\$ 1,677,772	\$ 2,479,286	\$ 3,190,763
Operating and maintenance expenditures per acre of park land	\$974	\$971	\$1,387
Operating and maintenance expenditures for parks and recreation services, per acre of <i>active</i> park land	\$1,666	N/A	\$4,432
Percent of operating and maintenance expenditures for parks and recreation services derived from tax levy	100%	100%	97%
Total revenue earned from parks and recreation services	\$ 17,764	\$ 10,500	\$ 628,604
Total amount of reinvestment for parks and playgrounds, per acre	\$ 1,192	\$ 255	\$ 11,111



<sup>6</sup> *Active park land* refers to those parks that are developed and are used for a variety of recreational purposes. *Passive park land* includes undeveloped open space that is under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Departments in each city.

<sup>7</sup> Hartford did not provide the active and passive status of its total acreage.

# 2 Library Services

## Why is it important?

The Worcester Public Library provides free information and services that promote lifelong learning and personal enrichment. Library services increase the cultural environment of a city and serve as congregating points for community events and other activities.

The Worcester Public Library recently opened a new, state-of-the-art facility in downtown Worcester. This new facility includes additional space for new materials as well as new rooms for community events. In addition to this central library, there are two branch libraries in the city: the Frances Perkins Library at 470 West Boylston Street and the Great Brook Valley branch at 87 Tacoma Street. The Worcester Public Library also receives appropriations from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to serve as a resource for the entire region.

Historically, the Worcester Public Library had additional branch libraries throughout the city. Prior to the budget crisis that occurred in the city in the early 1990s, there were seven branches. In 1990, however, six of these branches were closed because of financial difficulty. (The Great Brook Valley branch remained open with funds from the Worcester Housing Authority.) Since then, the Frances Perkins Branch has been re-opened. The library also had a bookmobile that visited neighborhoods without library access; this service was discontinued in 1991.



## How does Worcester perform?

**Table 2-1** shows relevant performance data for the Worcester Public Library, as well as for the public libraries in the comparable cities of Hartford, Providence, and Springfield.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the new library was opened during FY02, therefore usage statistics for Worcester may be lower than usual. Future releases of this report will demonstrate how the new facility has impacted service levels.

Each of the other cities has more library branches than Worcester does; Hartford has 11 branches and Providence and Springfield have 10 branches. Worcester's per capita expenditures of \$24.65 were below those of Providence (\$48.36), Hartford (\$48.18) and Springfield (\$46.83). Worcester's per capita spending level, however, is similar to the average of other libraries in similarly sized cities across the country (\$25.10).

Worcester spends less per capita for materials (\$3.55) than Providence (\$6.51), Hartford (\$4.46) or Springfield (\$4.47). Again, Worcester's spending is about the same as the average for all libraries in similarly sized cities.

Finally, per capita circulation for the Worcester Public Library during FY01 (3.54 items per capita) was below the other cities. This low activity level is probably due to the library being temporarily located on Fremont Street during FY01.



## What does this mean for Worcester?

*With the opening of the new facility, the Worcester Public Library is at a crossroads. While this report shows that circulation is lower in Worcester than in the other cities, this may change as more citizens take advantage of the new building.*

*Worcester has significantly fewer points of service than does Providence, Springfield, or Hartford. It is unfortunate that only one branch has opened in Worcester since six were closed in 1990. Future releases of this report will determine whether activity increases at the central library as well as the other branches, or if additional branches are needed to adequately serve the entire city.*

**Table 2-1: Library Performance Data**

	Worcester FY01	Hartford FY00	Providence* FY01	Springfield FY01	Average for Jurisdictions with Populations of 100,000 to 249,999 FY00 (n=236)
Population	172,648	124,500	173,618 (1,001,838)	152,082	154,900
Number of service points	3	11	10	10	6.59
Total operating expenditures	\$4,255,715	\$5,998,229	\$8,396,726	\$7,122,616	\$3,887,427
Per capita operating expenditures	\$24.65	\$48.18	\$48.36 (8.38)	\$46.83	\$25.10
Total expenditures for materials	\$612,167	\$555,400	\$1,130,371	\$679,183	\$584,238
Per capita expenditures for materials	\$3.55	\$4.46	\$ 6.51 (1.13)	\$4.47	\$3.77
Annual Circulation	611,837	471,495	815,544	848,191	1,028,614
Per capita circulation	3.54	3.79	4.70 (0.81)	5.58	6.60

\* For comparison purposes, the figures for Providence are for the City population. The legal jurisdiction of the Providence Public Library is the entire state; statistics for the legal jurisdiction are provided in parentheses.

<sup>1</sup> Each of the other libraries provides relevant data annually to the Public Library Data Service. Because the data have not yet been published for FY01, the Worcester Public Library requested copies of the templates that were submitted for each of the cities.



## 3

## Physical Condition of Neighborhoods

**Why is it important?**

The physical condition of a neighborhood has serious impact on the quality of life of its residents and the perception of outsiders. Various municipal departments provide services that affect the physical conditions in Worcester's neighborhoods. The Department of Public Works is responsible for paving streets, patching potholes, cleaning catchbasins, and collecting refuse. The Department of Public Health and Code Enforcement is responsible for ensuring that buildings do not have broken windows, missing porches, or other safety threats. To determine the effectiveness of these critical neighborhood services, the CCPM adapted the Computerized Neighborhood Environment Tracking (ComNET<sup>SM</sup>) project, which was developed by the Center on Municipal Government Performance of the Fund for the City of New York. In collaboration with neighborhood associations,<sup>1</sup> the CCPM trained resident volunteers in four neighborhoods to use handheld computers and digital cameras to systematically record the various physical conditions in their respective neighborhoods. (See **Appendix A** for a list of all conditions that are tracked.) During the survey the resident surveyors walked a predetermined route through their neighborhood and recorded the exact location of the conditions they felt should be addressed. The information was then compiled and transmitted to various municipal departments and organizations that have some responsibility for addressing the conditions. The surveys will be repeated annually to track the conditions that were recorded in the first survey and to determine whether the overall condition of neighborhoods is improving.

**How does Worcester perform?**

ComNET<sup>SM</sup> project surveys were conducted in four Worcester neighborhoods during the summer of 2001. The first survey covered a group of four smaller, contiguous neighborhoods: Crown Hill, Piedmont, Elm Park Prep+, and the Arts District. The other three neighborhoods covered were Bell Hill, Green Island, and Brittan Square. These survey data provide baseline information for each neighborhood with which future surveys will be compared. (More detailed information about the project, including maps of the areas covered and an interactive data-search tool can be found at [www.wrrb.org/Neighborhood](http://www.wrrb.org/Neighborhood).)

A total of 3,465 conditions<sup>2</sup> were recorded in the four neighborhoods. **Chart 3-1** shows the distribution of these conditions among the major categories of broken and hazardous sidewalks, unsightly litter, overgrown vegetation, dilapidated buildings, and uneven and dangerous streets. The adjacent table shows the number of conditions recorded and the distribution of conditions in each neighborhood. Broken and hazardous sidewalk conditions were the most frequently recorded problem in each of the four neighborhoods.

**Chart 3-2** shows the distribution of conditions by the department that has some responsibility for resolving the conditions. The Department of Public Works is responsible for addressing a total of 2,434 conditions (71% of all conditions recorded). The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for 535 conditions (15%), primarily because of overgrown vegetation, and the Department of Public Health and Code Enforcement is responsible for 276 conditions (8%). Private property owners are responsible for approximately 156 conditions (4.5%).

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to the various associations and groups who collaborated with the Research Bureau on this project: Bell Hill Neighborhood Association, Brittan Square Neighborhood Association, Crown Hill Neighborhood Association, Elm Park Prep+ Neighborhood Association, Green Island/Vernon Hill CDC, UMass Memorial Health Care Community Relations Department, and Worcester Common Ground.

<sup>2</sup> Asset conditions, such as neighborhood institutions, well-kept signs, benches, and vegetation were also recorded during the survey but are not reported here. For detailed lists of asset conditions in the neighborhoods, see [www.wrrb.org/Neighborhood](http://www.wrrb.org/Neighborhood).



**Table 3-1: Distribution of Physical Conditions by Neighborhood**

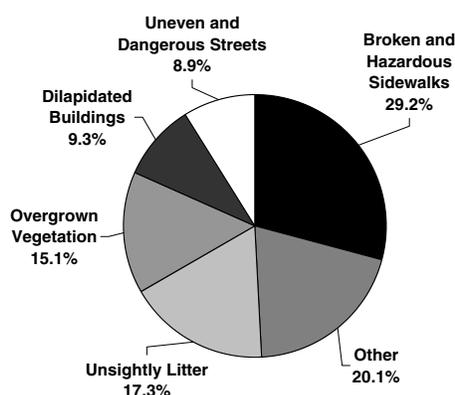
	TOTAL	CROWN HILL AREA <sup>3</sup>	BELL HILL	BRITTAN SQUARE	GREEN ISLAND
Broken and Hazardous Sidewalks	1,011 (29.2%)	354 (28.6%)	208 (26.2%)	238 (36.0%)	211 (27.4%)
Unsightly Litter	601 (17.3%)	237 (19.1%)	161 (20.3%)	49 (7.4%)	154 (20.0%)
Overgrown Vegetation	523 (15.1%)	159 (12.8%)	139 (17.5%)	96 (14.5%)	129 (16.8%)
Dilapidated Buildings	323 (9.3%)	69 (5.6%)	95 (11.9%)	69 (10.4%)	90 (11.7%)
Uneven and Dangerous Streets	310 (8.9%)	101 (8.2%)	56 (7.0%)	83 (12.6%)	70 (9.1%)
Other (Missing curbs, broken lampposts, clogged catchbasins, etc.)	697 (20.1%)	319 (25.7%)	136 (17.1%)	126 (19.1%)	116 (15.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,465</b>	<b>1,239</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>770</b>

Note: Comparisons should not be made across neighborhoods because the neighborhood size varies.

<sup>3</sup> Crown Hill Area includes Crown Hill, Elm Park Prep+, Piedmont, and Arts District neighborhoods.

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**Chart 3-1: Distribution of Physical Conditions Recorded During ComNET<sup>SM</sup> Surveys**

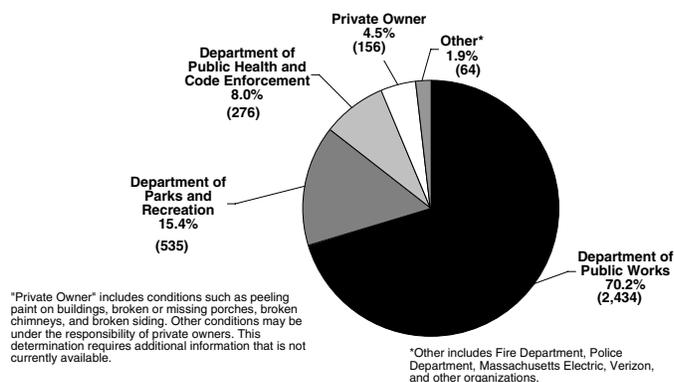


# 3

## Physical Condition of Neighborhoods

(Continued)

**Chart 3-2: Distribution of Conditions by Department Responsibility**



### What does this mean for Worcester?

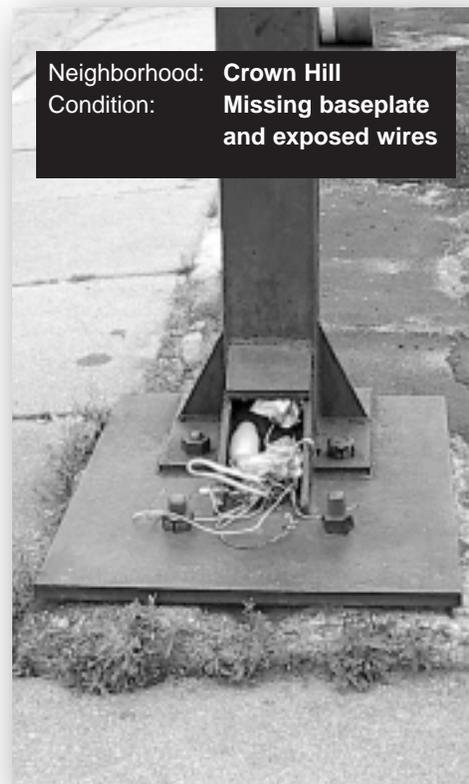
Improvements are needed in the four neighborhoods reported here, particularly in the areas of broken and hazardous sidewalks, unsightly litter, and overgrown vegetation. These data will serve as the baseline with which future performance will be measured. If the Department of Public Works, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Public Health and Code Enforcement, and a variety of other agencies and private organizations are successful in improving the physical condition of these neighborhoods, we will expect to see appreciable change in these data over time. Surveys will be conducted in these neighborhoods again during the spring of 2002 to determine if the conditions reported here have been addressed or are still present. The information that is collected during these upcoming surveys will be reported in the next release of this report.

Municipal departments cannot address all the conditions that are recorded by the ComNET<sup>SM</sup> project. For example, homeowners are responsible for the 93 buildings that were recorded as having peeling paint. Therefore, homeowners, private organizations, and community institutions will need to work together to improve the quality of life in Worcester's neighborhoods.

Four more neighborhoods will begin participating in this project in 2002, and an additional four will be added in 2003. By the end of 2003 the physical conditions in twelve of Worcester's neighborhoods (approximately one-third of the city) will be tracked on a regular basis.



# Benchmarking Municipal and Neighborhood Services in Worcester



# 4 Citizen Satisfaction with Service Delivery

## Why is it important?

Telephone surveys of residents are one way to determine satisfaction with the municipal services that affect residents' daily lives, such as street maintenance, snow removal, public safety, and fire prevention. Such surveys also allow the City administration and municipal departments to identify strengths and weaknesses in the provision of services. As services are improved, satisfaction ratings should increase.

## How does Worcester perform? <sup>1</sup>

As shown in **Chart 4-1**, 59% of all residents who were surveyed by the City Manager's Annual Satisfaction Survey in 2001 said that the municipal government has done a "good" or "excellent" job of improving their neighborhood, a statistically indistinguishable increase from 58% in 2000. Respondents who live on the west side of the city reported being more satisfied in 2001 than they were in 2000. By contrast, the percent of residents of the northern area of the city who said that the City has done a "good" or "excellent" job improving their neighborhood dropped from 64% in 2000 to 47% in 2001.

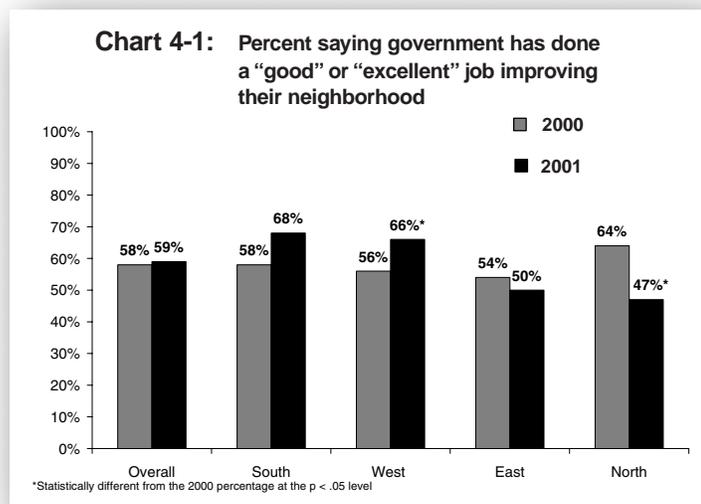
For various City services, as shown in **Chart 4-2**, satisfaction with the police, fire, and trash collection have increased over the last year and remain very high.<sup>2</sup> The percent of respondents saying that water quality is "good" or "excellent" in the city increased significantly from 68% in 2000 to 76% in 2001.

As shown in **Chart 4-3**, there was an increase in the satisfaction with street lighting from 62% in 2000 to 67% in 2001 and an increase in the satisfaction with snow removal services. Satisfaction with neighborhood street and sidewalk conditions, however, is low. From 2000 to 2001, there was a decline from 36% to 30% in the number of respondents who were satisfied with neighborhood street conditions. (The survey did not ask about sidewalk conditions in 2000.) According to the survey, litter and dirt and vacant buildings are serious concerns. Only 30% of respondents in 2001 said that litter and dirt are not serious problems and 22% said that abandoned buildings are not a serious problem.

Of those residents who had some contact with at least one City employee, 82% said that they were satisfied with the employee's helpfulness. This was a decline from 86% in 2000 (as shown in **Chart 4-4**). Although it was a relatively small decline, it is statistically significant.

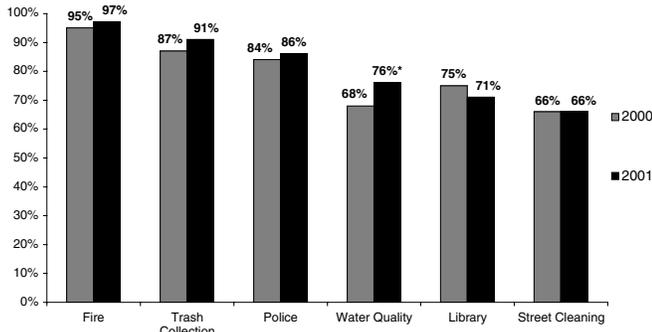
<sup>1</sup> All data presented here are from the Annual Citizen Satisfaction Survey conducted under contract with Professor John Blydenburgh of Clark University under the auspices of the Office of the City Manager.

<sup>2</sup> The survey did not ask whether respondents had any direct contact with the fire or police department. A majority of respondents probably do not have regular contact with these services.





**Chart 4-2: Percent responding that these services are “good” or “excellent”**



\*Statistically different from the 2000 percentage at the  $p < .05$  level

Note: The survey did not ask whether respondents had some contact with the fire or police department. A majority of respondents probably do not have regular contact with these services. Therefore, these high ratings do not reflect the perspective of those who have direct knowledge of the quality of the services these departments provide.

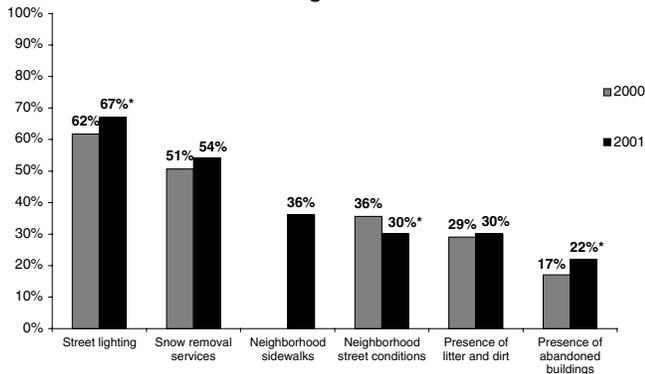
## What does this mean for Worcester?

Residents are very satisfied with several services provided by the City government. According to this survey, residents are overwhelmingly satisfied with fire services, trash collection, and police services. As well, the percent of residents who are satisfied with Worcester's water quality increased fairly substantially over the last year.

Residents are generally dissatisfied with neighborhood street conditions, the presence of litter and dirt in the city, and the presence of abandoned buildings. In particular, over the last year, more residents have been dissatisfied with neighborhood street conditions. The presence of these conditions is also reflected in Indicator 3: Physical Condition of Neighborhoods.

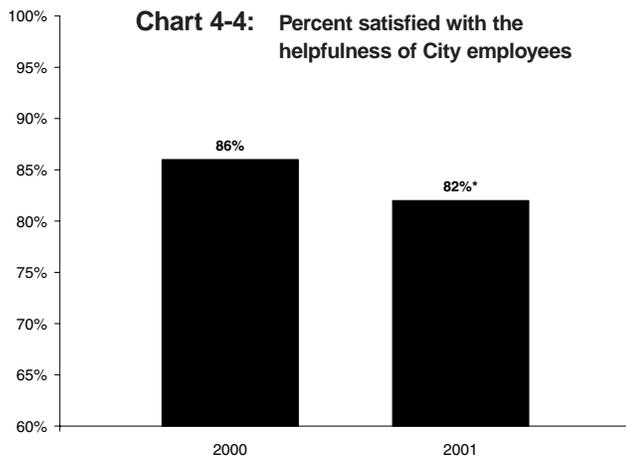
Several areas of this survey show changes over the last year. First, the percent of residents in the west area of the City who are satisfied with the job the City has done improving their neighborhood has increased significantly. In the north area of the city, however, the percent of residents who are satisfied has declined significantly. Further analysis is required to determine why these changes have occurred and what the City administration can do to affect residents' satisfaction. Also, the percentage of residents who are satisfied with the helpfulness of City employees has declined over the last year. Some other cities have instituted customer service training programs for employees to address this issue.

**Chart 4-3: Percent of citizens satisfied with neighborhood conditions**



\*Statistically different from the 2000 percentage at the  $p < .05$  level

**Chart 4-4: Percent satisfied with the helpfulness of City employees**



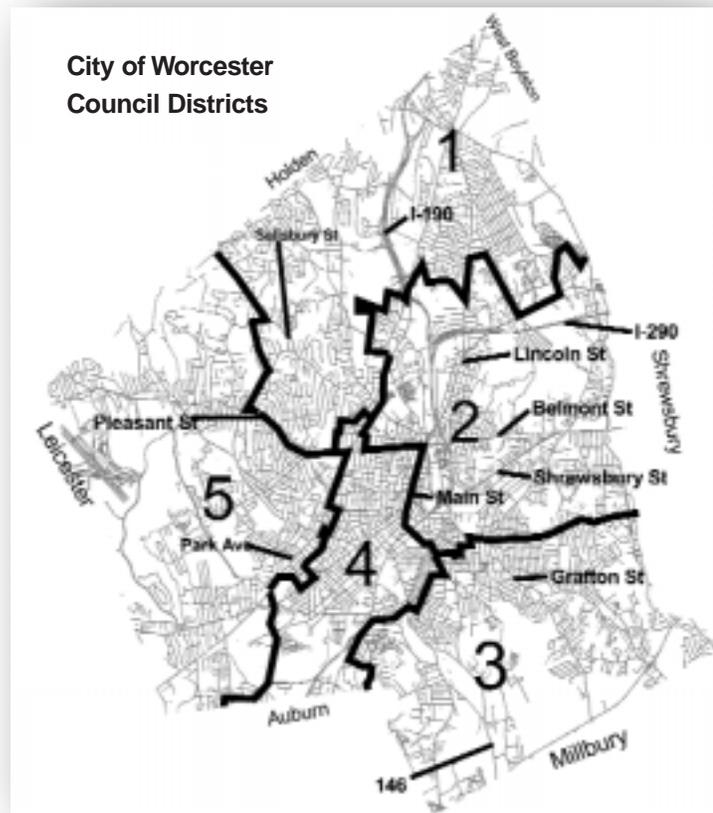
\*Statistically different from the 2000 percentage at the  $p < .05$  level



## Why is it important?

One way that residents can influence the delivery of municipal services is to serve on municipal boards and commissions and to vote in municipal and general elections. Through this active engagement in the democratic process, residents are able to voice their views about the services provided and other aspects of life in Worcester.

There has been concern in recent years about the possible decline of civic participation in the United States. For example, Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam, in his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, argued that a decline in civic engagement had occurred as social capital, or the networks of people and organizations that existed in the past, had slowly eroded.<sup>1</sup> For community institutions and the municipal government to be most responsive to residents' needs, citizens should be involved in a variety of capacities.



## How does Worcester perform?

There are 31 municipal boards and commissions on which residents can serve, representing a total of over 200 resident positions. These positions become vacant at various times, depending on the length of the term and whether there are any resignations. Boards and commissions that are classified as advisory or regulatory are required to have representatives from each of the five districts of the city. For those that are classified as executive, district representation is not required. If a resident is interested in a position, he or she submits an application to the City's Office of Human Resources. The applicants are then interviewed by the Citizens' Advisory Council (CAC), which selects three candidates. These names are forwarded to the City Manager who usually appoints one of those recommended, although he is not required to do so.

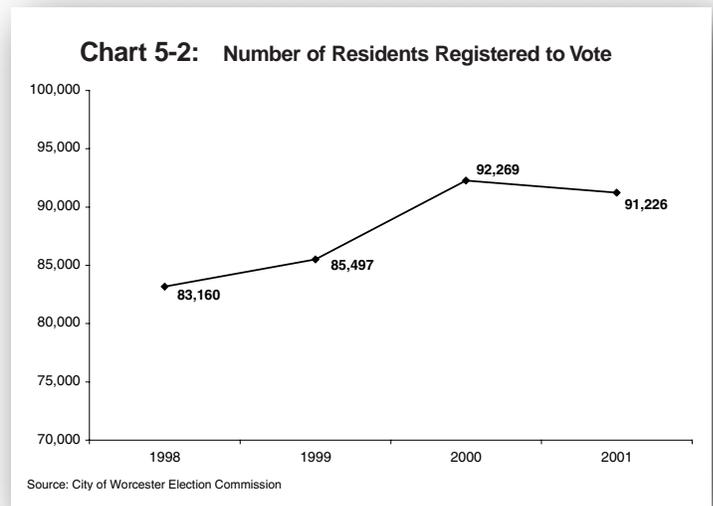
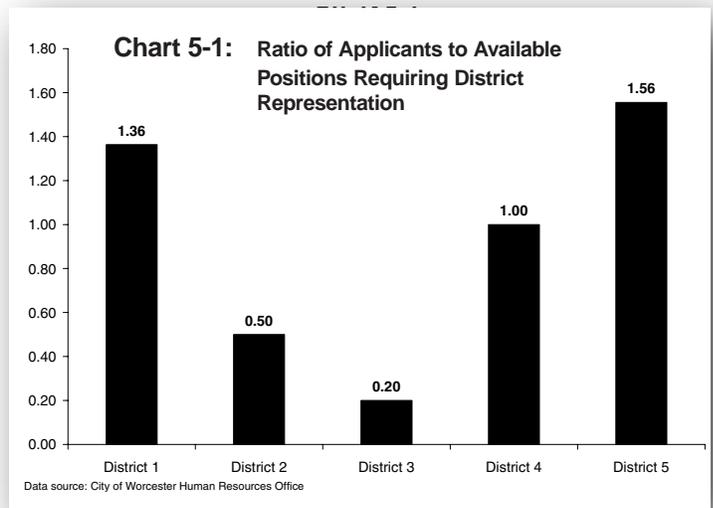
From January to December, 2001, there were a total of 25 positions available on boards and commissions that do not require district representation. The CAC considered a total of 93 applicants for these positions, or a ratio of 3.72 applicants per available position. For those boards and commissions that require district representation, District 5 had the highest ratio of applicants to available positions. (A larger ratio indicates that more people are applying for available positions in that district.) As shown in **Chart 5-1**, the ratio in District 5 was 1.56, followed by District 1 (1.36), and District 4 (1.00). On average, there was less than one applicant per available position in District 2 (0.50) and District 3 (0.20). These low ratios indicate that some positions remain vacant for extended periods of time due to a lack of applicants.

# Benchmarking Municipal and Neighborhood Services in Worcester



As shown in **Chart 5-2**, the number of residents who are registered to vote increased steadily from 83,160 in 1998 to 92,269 in 2000 and declined slightly to 91,226 in 2001. Although it is difficult to determine exactly how many residents are eligible to be registered to vote (some adult residents are not U.S. citizens), a rough estimate can be made by comparing the total number of registered voters to the total number of individuals over the age of 18. The number of residents over age 18 has remained fairly steady from 131,916 in 1990 to 131,921 in 2000. Therefore, the percent of the voting age population that is registered to vote has risen from approximately 63% in 1998 to about 69% in 2001. This level is still below the statewide registration of 84% and the national rate of 76% in 2000.<sup>2</sup>

As shown in **Chart 5-3**, voter turnout, or the percent of registered voters who vote, was higher during the general election of 2000 (59%) than in 1998 (50%), most likely because of the presidential election. Approximately 41% of the voting age population cast a ballot in the 2000 election. This is above the rate in Hartford (34%), the same as the rate in Springfield (41%), and below the statewide rate of 57.6% of the voting age population who cast a ballot in 2000. Voter turnout during municipal elections is lower than during general elections. As shown in **Chart 5-4**, citywide turnout declined slightly from 29% in 1999 to 28% in 2001. In 2001, this represents just 19% of the total voting age population. Turnout was highest in both municipal and general elections in Districts 1 and 5.



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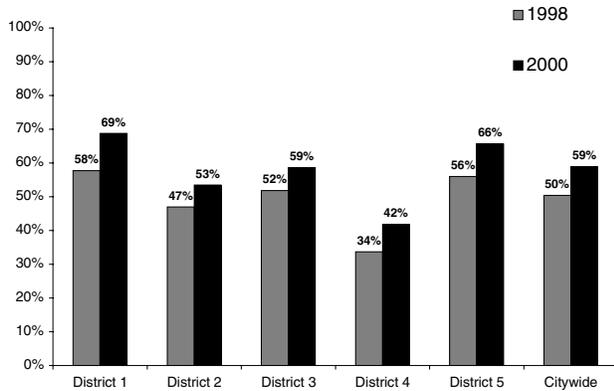
<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Putnam *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> According to the Federal Election Commission: <http://www.fec.gov>.

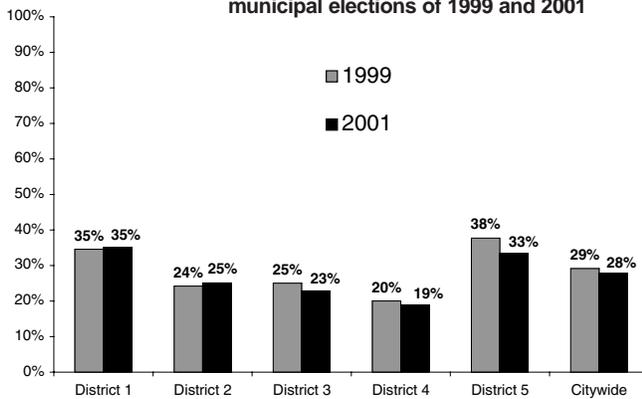


(Continued)

**Chart 5-3: Voter Turnout, General Elections of 1998 and 2000**



**Chart 5-4: Percent of registered voters voting in municipal elections of 1999 and 2001**



<sup>3</sup> For example, see Everett C. Ladd *The Ladd Report* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

## What does this mean for Worcester?

*It will be important to monitor the number of applicants to boards and commissions in the future. The current level of 3.7 applicants per position on boards and commissions that do not require district representation seems to be an adequate baseline. However, the City should seek to maximize the number of qualified applicants for these positions. For those boards and commissions that do require district representation, there are few applicants from the east and southeast areas of the city (Districts 2 and 3).*

*The percent of the voting age population who are registered to vote in Worcester is substantially below the statewide and national rates. Monitoring the trend of registered voters will determine if the recent decline in the number of registered voters continues. As well, attention should be given to strategies that could be used to increase voter turnout, especially in municipal elections.*

*The two indicators presented here do not adequately describe the total level of civic engagement in Worcester. As some critics of Putnam's thesis have pointed out, other forms of community involvement may have replaced the forms that have declined during recent decades.<sup>3</sup> These other forms of involvement, such as attending neighborhood association meetings, participating in local crime watch groups, or serving on boards of local nonprofit organizations, are difficult to quantify. There is evidence that suggests that involvement in these activities in Worcester is high; there are over 25 active crime watch groups organized in various areas of the city. These forms of involvement may be just as important, if not more important, as serving on one of the City's chartered boards and commissions to strengthening the city and its neighborhoods. Nonetheless, they should not be regarded as a substitute for voting.*

# Benchmarking Municipal and Neighborhood Services in Worcester



## Appendix A: Neighborhood Conditions Tracked by ComNET<sup>SM</sup> Project

CATEGORY	CONDITION		
<b>Animals</b>	Not on leash	Threatening	Wandering
<b>Bench</b>	Bills posted Paint peeling	Graffiti Well-maintained	Missing slats
<b>Building</b>	Bills posted Paint peeling Roof/chimney broken Steps/walkway broken Walls/fences broken	Burned out Porch broken Siding broken Under construction Windows boarded	Graffiti Porch missing Vacant Unsecured Windows broken
<b>Bus Stop</b>	Bills posted	Glass broken	Graffiti
<b>Catchbasin</b>	Broken Ponding	Clogged	Odors
<b>Crossing</b>	Faded Walk signal missing	Missing	Walk signal broken
<b>Curb</b>	Broken Missing	Cracked Not level	Curb cut missing
<b>Fire Hydrant</b>	Cap missing Water running	Leaning	Not cleared
<b>Institutions</b>	Church Day care center	College Nursing home	Community center School
<b>Lampposts</b>	Baseplate missing Exposed wires	Baseplate open Glass broken	Bills posted Graffiti
<b>Litter</b>	Broken glass Dumpster overflowing Parking lot Street Wastebasket overflowing	Catchbasin Lawn Shopping cart Tree pit Yellow Bags	Dumping Needles Sidewalk Vacant lot Other
<b>News Box</b>	Bills posted	Blocking passage	Graffiti
<b>Parking Meter</b>	Bills posted Missing	Graffiti	Leaning
<b>Public Telephone</b>	Bills posted Graffiti	Exposed Wires Missing	Glass broken
<b>Sidewalk</b>	Cracked Graffiti Trip hazard	Dirt/sand Missing Uneven	Encroachment Ponding
<b>Signs</b>	Bent Knocked over Paint peeling	Bills posted Leaning Well-kept	Graffiti Obstructed
<b>Street</b>	Dirt/sand Under construction Not level with sidewalk	Ponding Uneven Not level with street	Pothole Utility cover Missing Unstable
<b>Vegetation</b>	Overgrown Tree stump	Tree dead Well-maintained landscaping	Tree pit hazard
<b>Vehicles</b>	Abandoned Windows broken	On sidewalk	Wheel missing

## CCPM Advisory Committee

The Research Bureau gratefully acknowledges the following individuals for their advice and assistance during the development of this project:

### Community-at-Large

<b>Bruce S. Bennett</b>	Telegram & Gazette
<b>P. Kevin Condron</b>	Central Supply Company
<b>Agnes E. Kull</b>	Greenberg, Rosenblatt, Kull & Bitsoli
<b>Dr. Peter H. Levine</b>	UMass Memorial Health Care
<b>Dr. Franklin Loew</b>	Becker College
<b>Kevin O'Sullivan</b>	Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives
<b>Robert L. Thomas</b>	Martin Luther King Jr. Business Empowerment Center
<b>Richard P. Traina</b>	President Emeritus, Clark University

### Public Officials

<b>Thomas R. Hoover</b>	City Manager
<b>Jill Dagilis</b>	City Manager's Office
<b>Jody Kennedy-Valade</b>	Executive Office of Economic Development
<b>Dr. Ogretta H. McNeil</b>	Worcester School Committee
<b>Erin Whitaker</b>	Executive Office of Economic Development

### Community Development Corporations

<b>James A. Cruickshank</b>	Oak Hill CDC
<b>Debra M. Lockwood</b>	Green Island/Vernon Hill CDC
<b>Dominick Marcigliano</b>	Worcester East Side CDC
<b>J. Stephen Teasdale</b>	Main South CDC
<b>Michael F. Whalen</b>	Worcester Common Ground

### Neighborhood Business Associations

<b>Lawrence Abramoff</b>	Tatnuck Booksellers
<b>Robbin Ahlquist</b>	Sole Proprietor and Highland Street Business Association
<b>John W. Braley III</b>	Braley and Wellington Insurance and North Worcester Business Association
<b>Charlie Grigaitis</b>	Uncle Charlie's Tavern and Grafton Hill Business Association
<b>Chistos Liazos</b>	Webster House Restaurant and Webster Square Business Association
<b>Rick Spokis</b>	International Muffler and Brake and Madison North Business Association

### Neighborhood Associations

<b>Marge Begiri</b>	Quinsigamond Village
<b>James Connolly</b>	Elm Park Prep+
<b>Ann Flynn</b>	Crown Hill
<b>Sally Jablonski-Ruksnaitis</b>	Quinsigamond Village
<b>Edith Morgan</b>	Brittan Square
<b>Jane Petrella</b>	Quinsigamond Village
<b>Cathy Recht</b>	UMass Memorial Health Care and Bell Hill

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# MISSION STATEMENT

*The Worcester Regional Research Bureau is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to conducting independent, non-partisan research on financial, administrative, management and community issues facing Worcester's municipal government and the surrounding region.*



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