



CITY OF  
**Sterling Heights**

Innovating**Living**

# Keys to Successful Millage Proposals

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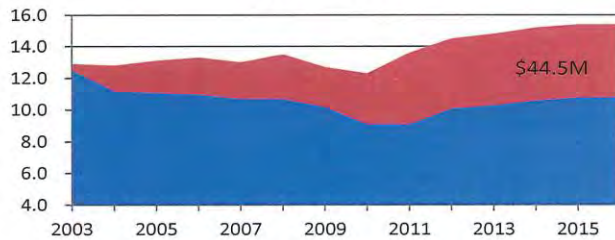
# Recently Passed Millages in Sterling Heights

- Millage Adjustment 1.9 mill (2010) = \$9.4 million per yr.
- Safe Streets (2013), \$10 million = \$10 million per yr.
- Recreating Recreation (2016) = \$4 million per yr.

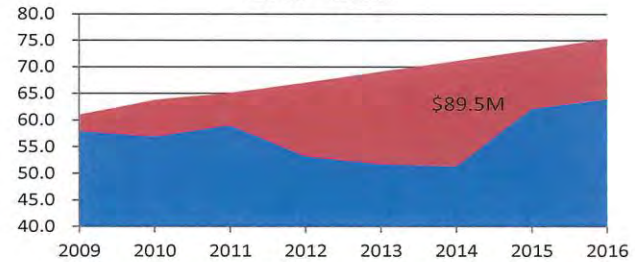
# The “Why”

## City of Sterling Heights (\$ millions)

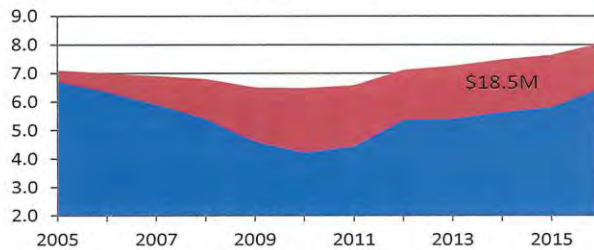
**Cumulative Revenue Sharing Loss  
2003 - 2016**



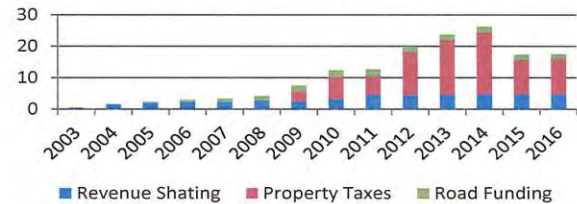
**Cumulative Property Tax Loss  
2009 - 2016**



**Cumulative Road Funding Loss  
2005-2016**



**Total Revenue Loss  
\$152.5 million**



# Financial Strategy Update

Sustaining Excellence in  
Sterling Heights



EXPENDITURE SAVINGS:

ANNUAL SAVINGS

Eliminated 201 full-time positions	\$15.9 million
Wage & benefit contract savings 15%	\$6.2 million
Reduced overtime costs	\$2.3 million
Program cuts & vendor savings	\$2.1 million
Outsourced Custodial, Detention & Dispatch	\$1.6 million
Increased employee health care co-pays and deductibles	\$1.5 million
Reduced future retiree health care costs and eliminated benefits for new hires	\$1.5 million
Reduced existing fixed pensions for all employees & eliminated Public Safety DROP	\$1.2 million
Eliminated fixed pensions for general employees	\$0.5 million

**TOTAL ANNUAL SAVINGS:**

**\$32.8 million**

## Pension and Retirement Benefit Reform

### RETIREE HEALTH CARE:

- Retirees that have health care will have to pay increased deductibles, co-pays and premium sharing. Health care may also change in retirement.
- New hires do not receive retiree health care.
- Approximate \$50 million in actuarial savings over time.

## Pension and Retirement Benefit Reform

### RETIREMENT PENSION SAVINGS:

#### DEFINED BENEFIT

- Increased employee contribution from 5% to 8% of wages.
- Multiplier reduced from 2.3% to 2% for service earned on and after July 1, 2013.
- 80% reduction in leave banks paid out that are utilized in pension calculations reduced pension by 10%.
- Elimination of Police and Fire DROP.
- New hires in Police and Fire will have a pension multiplier reduced from 2.8% to 2%. They are not eligible for Social Security.

## RETIREMENT PENSION SAVINGS:

### DEFINED CONTRIBUTION

- Defined Benefit will continue to be phased out over time and replaced by the DC Plan. DC Plan started in 1997.
- City contribution has been reduced from 7% to 4% of wages.

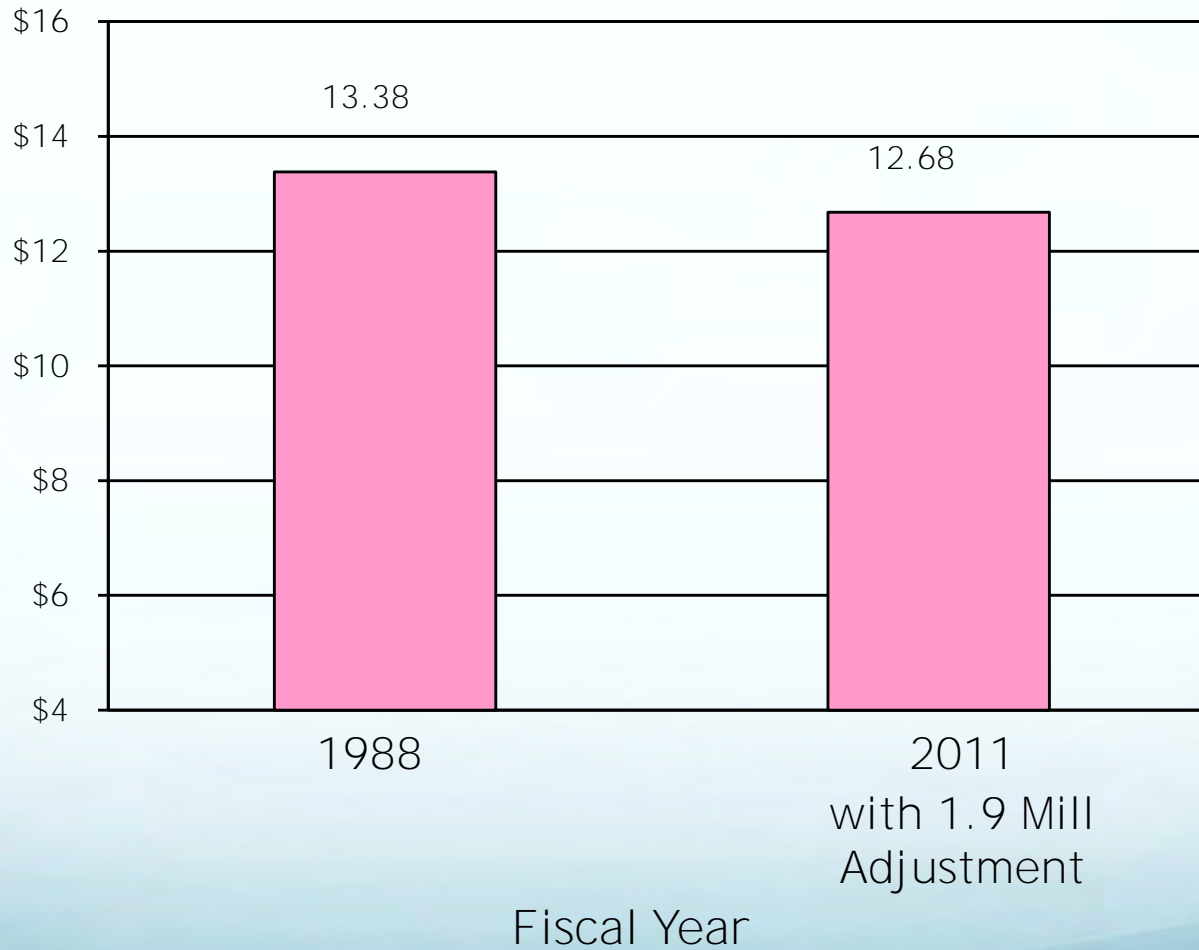


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Implementing the final phase of the  
**City's financial strategy is critical if**  
priority services are to be retained.

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# 1.9 Mill Adjustment Needed to Recover \$9.4 Million (or 40%) of the \$21 Million Loss



## Property Tax Comparison

### Macomb City Tax Rates

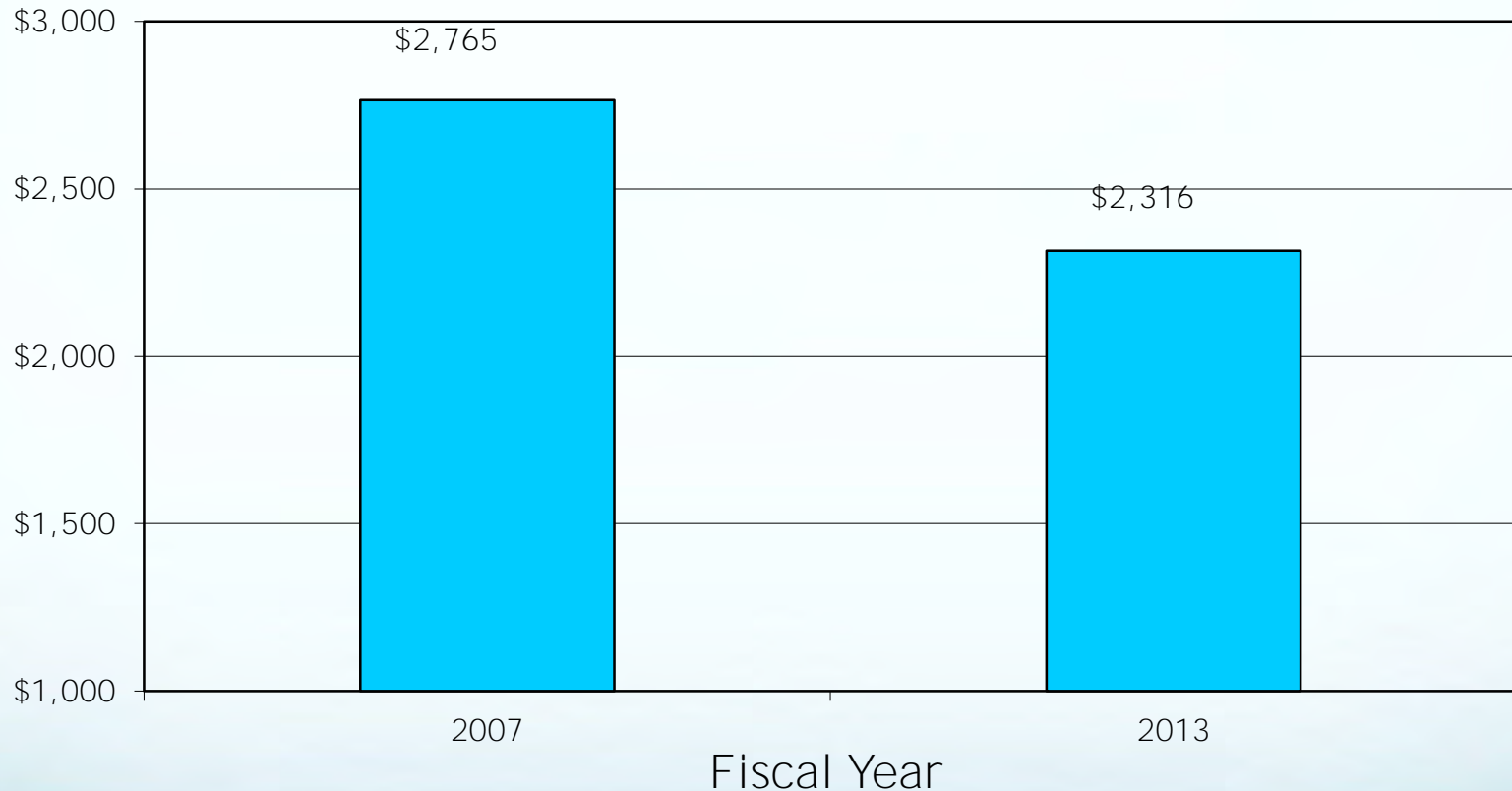
1. Centerline	\$38.70
2. Warren	25.67
3. Eastpointe	25.15
4. Roseville	24.61
5. Fraser	23.26
6. Mount Clemens	22.13
7. St. Clair Shores	21.23
8. Utica	20.99
9. Richmond	16.56
10. <b>STERLING HEIGHTS</b>	<b>15.19</b>

Macomb Average: 20.62 mills

### STERLING HEIGHTS TAX RATE:

- Lower than 90% of all Michigan cities
- Lowest of any city in Macomb County
- 2.5 mills below next lowest city in Macomb County
- 8.2 mills below average of all *Macomb County* cities
- 4.0 mills below average of all *Michigan* cities (50,000 population)

# Average Homeowner's Tax Bill Remains Lower Than in 2002



**Average property tax bill has decreased by \$449 or 16.2% since 2007.**

# **S**afe **Streets** PROPOSAL

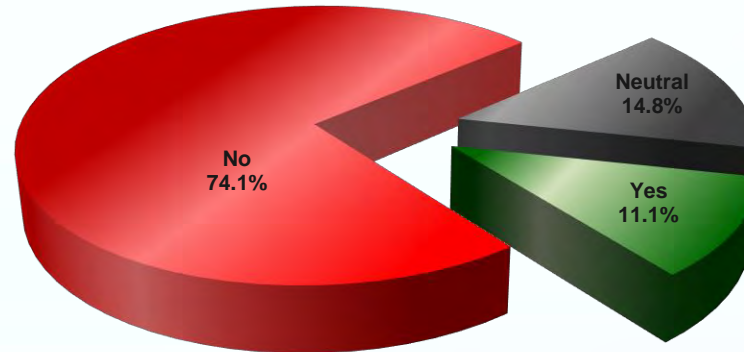


**POLICE - ROADS - FIRE**

# Sterling Heights 2012 Survey

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## Layoff Additional Police & Fire



- Key Results – keep police & fire staffing at current levels

Clearly, vast majority of respondents do not want to see additional layoffs of police & fire personnel

Performance is good (> 81%)

Current staffing important (> 90%)

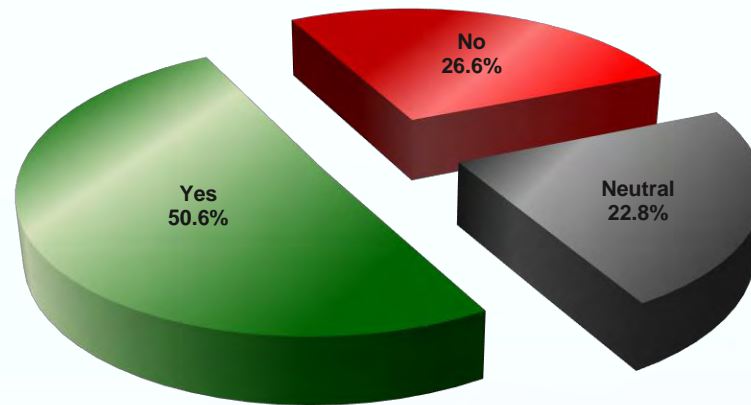
Response times important (> 93%)

Feel safe (92%)

Some concern that maintaining current staffing levels will cause taxes to increase (11.1%)

# Sterling Heights 2012 Survey

## Increase Millage Rate



- Key Results – some support for millage rate increase

About half of respondents support (to some degree) a millage rate increase to maintain current police & fire staffing levels

- 25% “strongly” support this measure
- Almost a quarter (23%) are neutral
- About a quarter (27%) oppose this measure 13.8% “strongly” disagree

Community Growth • Quality of Life • Technology  
2030  
Stability • Core Services

# Visioning



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Innovating Living





*Re*creating  
**Recreation**



CITY OF **Sterling Heights**

# Timing is Key

- Current financial picture of the community as it stands at time of election
- Consider voting demographic in Presidential, Gubernatorial or Local elections

# Framing the Issue

- Have community leaders been discussing the topic as of late?
- Has there been public comment on the topic?
- Is the community aware of the issue at hand?
- Strategic Planning presentation

- Community Relations Director, Bridget Kozlowski played a major role developing the City's Communication Plan required to successfully pass the millages.

# Communication Plan

- Develop recognizable proposal name and corresponding logo for easy recognition
- Consider each subset of voters and how they receive information
  - Traditional print media
  - Signage at public buildings, city events
  - Social media platforms
  - In-person public forums
  - “Going to where people are”
- Plan for public education on the topic to be heavy for at least six months prior to election

# Safe Streets PROPOSAL



**POLICE - ROADS - FIRE**

# Should this station be *closed?*

**S**afe  **Streets**  
PROPOSAL

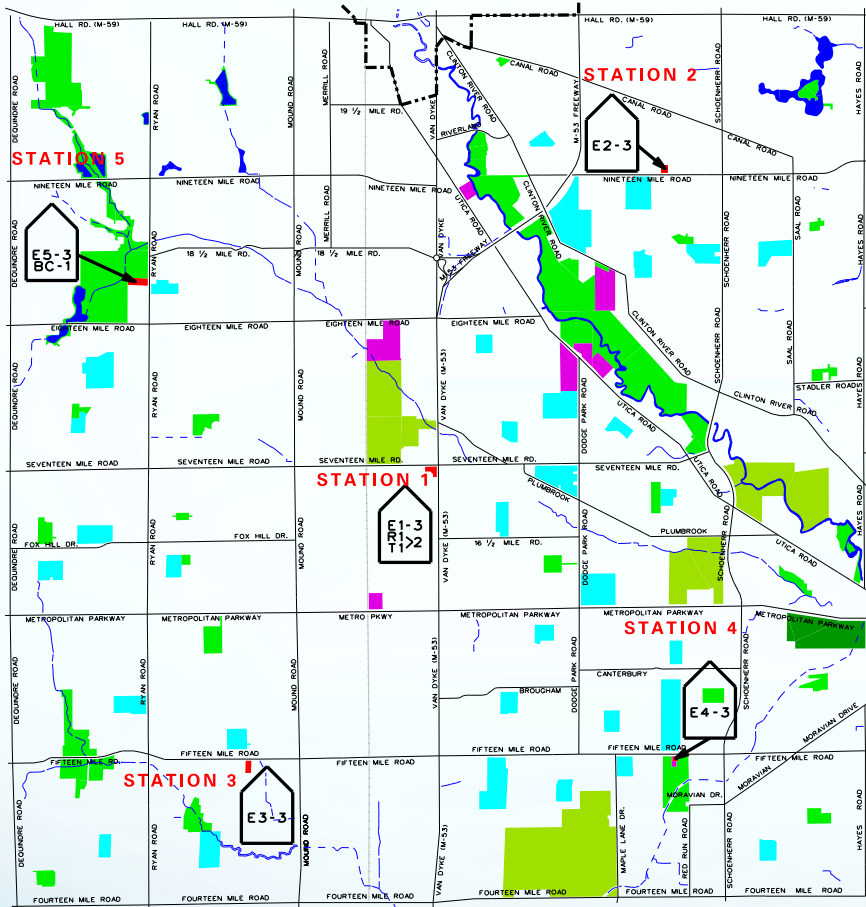


**POLICE - ROADS - FIRE**

**VOTE NOVEMBER 5<sup>th</sup>**

SafeStreets Information: [www.sterling-heights.net](http://www.sterling-heights.net)

**Map 1 - Current deployment. All 5 stations open. 5 advanced life support engines in service with 3 personnel. Cross staffing of rescue and truck companies with 2 personnel, 1 Battalion Chief. Response time average under 4 minutes.**



**18 EMPLOYEES**  
**FIRE STATION STAFFING**  
**2013/2014 BUDGET**  
 CITY STREET DIRECTORY  
 STERLING HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN



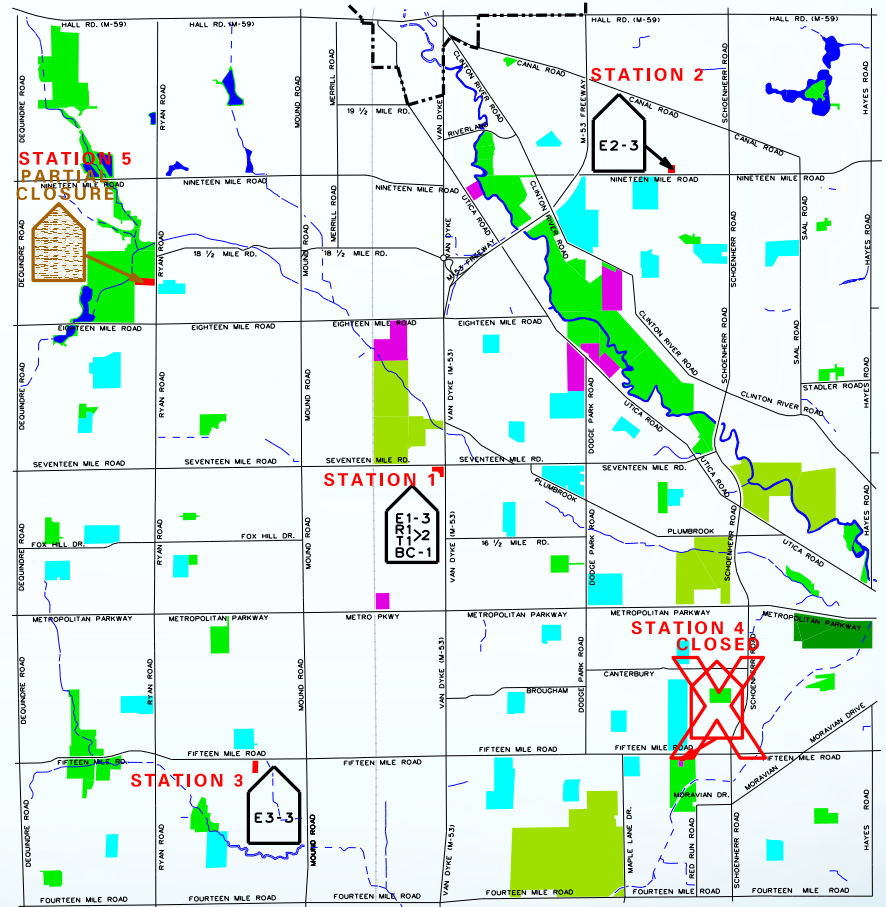
- MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS
- CITY PARKS
- SCHOOLS
- PUBLIC GOLF COURSES
- FIRE STATIONS



PREPARED BY  
 ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT  
 REVISED 03-08-13

**E1-3 = ENGINE 1, 3 FIREFIGHTERS/PARAMEDICS**  
**R1 = RESCUE TRUCK**  
**T1 = LADDER TRUCK**  
**BC = BATTALION CHIEF**

**Map 2 - Deployment with unsuccessful millage. Stations 4 and 5 closed. 3 advanced life support engines in service with 3 personnel. Cross staffing of rescue and truck companies with 2 personnel, 1 Battalion Chief. Response times will at least double in Stations 4 and 5 areas (42% of City). Response times will significantly increase in all other areas by at least 2 minutes on average due to cascade effects.**



**12 EMPLOYEES**  
**STATION 4 CLOSED**  
**STATION 5 BROWNED OUT**  
**FIRE STATION STAFFING**  
**UNSUCCESSFUL MILLAGE**



CITY STREET DIRECTORY  
 STERLING HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN

- MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS
- CITY PARKS
- SCHOOLS
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## The Bottom Line: What it means to you



As discussed publicly over the past several years, the city can either continue cutting services and positions or seek to recover a portion of lost property taxes to prevent further reductions to public safety. Based on the December 2012 community survey, residents continue to place a high value on public safety and do not want to see further reductions in this area. A majority indicated they would support a public safety millage to avoid further layoffs in public safety.

City administration has determined that 1.7 mills are needed in order to prevent an additional reduction of 65 public safety staff and to adequately fund public safety equipment, thereby avoiding a delay in public safety response times.

Local streets also rated very high on the community survey. To bring most of the city's local streets up to a fair or good rating, the city will need a long-term sustainable revenue source of 0.8 mills a year. This will provide \$3.3 million per year for asphalt resurfacing, concrete repairs, and local street reconstruction.

In total, Sterling Heights will need 2.5 mills per year over the next six years to prevent further cuts to public safety staffing and to repair local streets. If approved, the city's millage rate will remain the lowest of any city in Macomb County.

For the average homeowner, the 2.5 mills will equate to a \$137 annually or \$13 per month increase in their current total property tax bill. However, the average tax bill will be \$292 or 10.6% lower than in 2007.



[www.sterling-heights.net](http://www.sterling-heights.net)

# VOTE

NOVEMBER 5, 2013

# Safe Streets PROPOSAL



**POLICE - ROADS - FIRE**



**Comprehensive public information on Sterling Heights' ballot proposal: Millage for Police and Fire Protection, and Local Street Improvements.**

- General Election Info
- Ballot Language
- Questions & Answers

## Shape the future of Sterling Heights



Dear Sterling Heights Resident:

By any measure, the City of Sterling Heights has established itself as a premier Michigan municipality during its nearly 45-year existence. Renowned for quality public services delivered at a low cost to taxpayers, the city's efficiency-based operating model has worked well. Unfortunately, the last six years have proven to be the most financially challenging in the history of this community. The combination of an unprecedented decline in property assessments, continued cuts in state revenue sharing and now the elimination of personal property taxes on manufacturer's equipment have eroded Sterling Heights' revenues at an alarming rate.

The city responded to this looming crisis six years ago with a proactive approach implementing labor savings and legacy reforms in the areas of pension and retiree health care. Sterling Heights has reduced its municipal workforce by 200 full-time positions and cut programming in the library and parks and recreation departments. These cost containment measures have saved more than \$33 million, but still not enough to make up for more than \$50 million in lost revenues! Sterling Heights is now at a critical point in its history.

This fall, Sterling Heights residents will have a chance to shape the future of this city like never before. On Tuesday, Nov. 5 voters will determine if the city should continue to delay necessary road improvements and cut vital services or recover a portion of lost revenue through a dedicated millage to preserve excellent police and fire services and improve neighborhood streets.

If approved, Sterling Heights' **Safe Streets** proposal will provide funding to avoid the loss of 45 police officer and 20 firefighter positions. Improvements will also be made to most neighborhood streets throughout Sterling Heights. The city will continue to be one of the safest in the country with excellent response times and low crime. In addition, quality of life programs offered by the library, nature center and parks and recreation will forego further cuts. Simply put, the city's reputation as a great community to live, work and play will be preserved for future generations. Sterling Heights will still have one of the lowest millage rates in the State of Michigan, continuing its long tradition of low cost government.

Thank you for your continued support of this success story we call Sterling Heights.

Respectfully yours,

Richard J. Nott, Mayor  
City of Sterling Heights



**Safe Streets** PROPOSAL **INFORMATION CENTER: [www.sterling-heights.net](http://www.sterling-heights.net)**



# Questions & Answers

## Q1. Why is the city putting the Safe Streets Proposal before the voters for approval?

**A1.** From a historical perspective, the City of Sterling Heights has recently gone through the worst economic period in its forty-five year existence. The combination of unprecedented declines in property values, continued cuts in state revenue sharing, and the elimination of the personal property tax has devastated the revenues available to the city to fund public services. Despite deep reductions in city expenditures, including employee layoffs, across the board wage and benefit reductions, and cuts in capital investment, there remains a significant imbalance between available revenues and expenses.

In order to preserve police and fire services at current levels, Sterling Heights needs to recover a portion of lost revenue. In addition, new revenues are needed to address the deteriorating condition of local streets throughout the city. The **Safe Streets Proposal** seeks voter approval of a 2.5 mill increase, allocating revenue for police and fire protection (1.7 mills) and local street improvements (.8 mills). If approved, this dedicated millage can be levied by the city for six years, from 2014 to 2020.

The City Council has made the very difficult financial cuts in order to sustain the city through this difficult period. Additional cuts will dramatically impact the level of police and fire services, which have been a hallmark of Sterling Heights since its inception. Fundamentally, it is left to the residents of this community to decide the future course of the city. **Safe Streets** is a referendum on the future of Sterling Heights.

## Q2. What will be the impact on police and fire services and the condition of local streets in Sterling Heights if the Safe Streets Proposal fails?

**A2.** The city will be forced to eliminate 45 police officers and 20 firefighters. This reduction will occur through a combination of layoffs and not filling vacancies created through retirements.

However, the impact on the community will be more than just fewer numbers of police officers and firefighters. A police department with only 100 sworn officers to police a city of over 129,000 residents will not be able to provide the level of protection and services that has made Sterling Heights one of the safest municipalities in the United States. The Traffic, Youth Services, and Detective Bureaus will be dramatically reduced or eliminated. Response times to 911 calls will increase as police manpower dedicated to street patrol will be reduced by 24%.

On the fire side, the excellent response times of the Fire Department will be negatively impacted as one of the city's five fire stations will close and another station will close for short durations. Depending on 911 call volume, it is projected that the Fire Department's response times will increase from three to ten minutes.

The deteriorating condition of Sterling Heights' local streets is readily apparent to every resident. The state funding mechanism for maintenance, repair, and replacement of local streets is broke and state government cannot agree on how to fix it. Simply put, the local streets continue to get worse and the cumulative cost to remedy the conditions increases. The city has dedicated all available funding to the repair of the worst of its local streets. But the number of local streets in poor condition is growing. If the **Safe Streets Proposal** fails, the condition of the city's local streets will deteriorate as there will not be sufficient revenue to maintain or repair them. This will negatively impact property values and public safety.

## Q3. How much will the Safe Streets Proposal cost if it is approved by the voters?

**A3.** The average homeowner will pay an additional \$157 in city taxes if the **Safe Streets Proposal** is approved. This equates to \$13 more per month or an additional \$43 per year. However, the average tax bill will be \$292 or 10.6% lower than in 2007.

Even with the 2.5 mill increase, Sterling Heights' overall millage rate will be the lowest of any city in Macomb County and one of the lowest tax rates of any city in the State of Michigan.

## Q4. Has Sterling Heights considered alternatives to the Safe Streets Proposal?

**A4.** The city has made significant cuts in personnel, employee wages and benefits and discretionary spending. For example, non-public safety departmental staffing has been cut in half with more than 200 full-time positions eliminated. Unfortunately, further cutting in these departments will not close the structural imbalance. The amount of reductions remaining to balance Sterling Heights' budget must come from police and fire. Before making this level of reduction in public safety, the residents of this community need to weigh in.

Contracting with the Macomb County Sheriff's Department for police services and/or converting to a volunteer fire department are models that assure a decreased level of service for the residents of Sterling Heights. Therefore, these are not viable alternatives to the full-service police and fire protection currently afforded residents. If residents turn down the **Safe Streets Proposal**, the city will have no choice but to implement a decreased level of police and fire service based upon available revenues.

## Q5. If the Safe Streets Proposal is approved, will other city departments benefit?

**A5.** Not directly. However, by stabilizing Sterling Heights' financial condition, all city departments will be spared from further cuts, which have compromised the delivery of quality public services. By eliminating the need to continually cut services, the city can return its focus to the long range planning necessary to ensure quality Public Works, Library, Parks & Recreation, Economic Development and other community oriented services important to our future success.



### BALLOT QUESTION

#### CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS MILLAGE FOR POLICE AND FIRE PROTECTION AND LOCAL STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Shall the Sterling Heights Charter be amended to authorize the levy of an additional ad valorem millage of not more than 2.5 mills for 6 years, from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2020, for the purpose of providing revenue for police and fire protection, and local street improvements? This 2.5 additional millage authorization shall be specifically delineated as follows:

- 1.7 mills for police and fire protection
- 0.8 mills for local street improvements

This increased millage authorization will raise an estimated \$10,400,000 in the first year if fully tested.

YES  
 NO

### General Election Info

- The General Election featuring the **Safe Streets** ballot proposal and the races for mayor and city council will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2013.
- The last day to apply for and receive absentee ballots by mail for this election is Nov. 2, 2013 at 2 p.m. You may obtain an absentee voter application by going to the city's Web site ([www.sterling-heights.net](http://www.sterling-heights.net)) to download the form or call the City Clerk's Office at (586) 446-2420. The completed absentee ballot must be delivered to the Sterling Heights City Clerk's Office before Election Day or by 8 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 5.
- In addition, residents who want to vote in the Nov. 5 General Election, but have not yet registered to vote must do so at the City Clerk's Office by Monday, Oct. 7.
- If you would like to verify that you are registered to vote, find out where your precinct is located (you must vote in your assigned precinct) and view a sample ballot for your precinct, please visit [sterling-heights.net](http://sterling-heights.net) and click on the "VOTER INFORMATION CENTER" icon on the home page.

*Note: Remember to bring a driver's license or other acceptable picture ID to the polls. Those without proper identification will need to give an affidavit in order to vote.*



For further information on the **Safe Streets Proposal**, please access the **Safe Streets Proposal** Information Center at [www.sterling-heights.net](http://www.sterling-heights.net) or call (586) 446-2470.



*Re*creating  
**Recreation**



CITY OF **Sterling Heights**

## BALLOT QUESTION

### CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS CITY CHARTER AMENDMENT FOR PARKS AND RECREATION MILLAGE

Shall Section 10.01 of the Charter of the City of Sterling Heights, Michigan, be amended so as to permit the levy by the City of an additional ad valorem tax in an amount not to exceed ninety-seven hundredths mill (0.97 mill) for twenty (20) years, from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2037, to acquire, construct, furnish, equip and operate parks and recreation improvements, including a new community center?

YES  NO

### General Election Info

- The General Election featuring the Recreating Recreation ballot proposal and the races for president, congressional, state and county offices will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2016.
- The last day to apply for and receive absentee ballots by mail for this election is Nov. 5, 2016 at 2 p.m. You may obtain an absentee voter application by going to the city's Web site ([www.sterling-heights.net](http://www.sterling-heights.net)) to download the form or call the City Clerk's Office at (586) 446-3420. The completed absentee ballot must be delivered to the Sterling Heights City Clerk's Office before Election Day or by 8 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 8.
- In addition, residents who want to vote in the Nov. 8 General Election, but have not yet registered to vote must do so at the City Clerk's Office by Tuesday, Oct. 11.
- If you would like to verify that you are registered to vote, find out where your precinct is located (you must vote in your assigned precinct) and view a sample ballot for your precinct, please visit the "VOTER INFORMATION CENTER" at [mh.gov/vote](http://mh.gov/vote).

*Note: Remember to bring a driver's license or other acceptable picture ID to the polls. Those without proper identification will need to sign an affidavit in order to vote.*



# Recreating Recreation



## VOTE

November 8, 2016



Dear Sterling Heights Resident:

Creating an exceptional quality of life in Sterling Heights has been and will continue to be a priority for the City Council and City Administration. For the first forty-eight years of the City's existence, quality of life in Sterling Heights is defined by exemplary police and fire services, clean and safe neighborhoods, excellent schools, low taxes, and a strong industrial tax base. All of these ingredients fueled the growth of Sterling Heights from an upstart city in 1968 to now being the fourth largest municipality in Michigan. Rest assured, our commitment to keeping Sterling Heights safe and a model of efficient government is as strong as ever.

Unfortunately, the past provides no guarantee for the future. As the City prepares for the next fifty years, it is vitally important that we are providing quality of life amenities that are not only a benefit to our current residents, but attractive to families and businesses looking to locate in Sterling Heights. The time to consider and prepare for our future is now. For too many communities, the failure to evolve and remain vibrant has led to an overall decline in quality of life. This cannot be Sterling Heights' fate.

Recreating Recreation is a placemaking initiative designed to create opportunities for our residents to connect with their community in new, exciting, and most importantly, fun ways. Consider just a few of the ways that you will be able to experience the Sterling Heights of the future:

- Visiting a new Community Center, outdoor sprayground, refrigerated ice rink, Farmers Market pavilion, skate park, mini-turf soccer field, and indoor bocce ball court for year-round enjoyment in the heart of the City;
- Spending some off-leash time with your dog in a new dog park;
- Canoeing and kayaking the best stretch of the Clinton River right here in Sterling Heights;
- Hiking a new trail that will link, for the first time, with the City's nature preserve; and
- Visiting one of the many upgraded City parks in close proximity to your home for recreation and relaxation.

On November 8th, 2016, you will have the opportunity to influence the future of Sterling Heights by voting on whether to approve a 0.97 mill dedicated millage that will finance the Recreating Recreation improvements. I strongly encourage you to learn more about Recreating Recreation and exercise your right to vote.

If approved, I am confident that we will make our bold vision for an exceptional quality of life in Sterling Heights a reality.

Respectfully yours,

  
Michael C. Taylor, Mayor  
City of Sterling Heights



INFORMATION CENTER:  
[www.sterling-heights.net](http://www.sterling-heights.net)

## What is Recreating Recreation?

Recreating Recreation is an initiative to enhance the quality of life for residents by improving upon existing and creating exciting new parks and recreational opportunities within Sterling Heights.

If successful, Recreating Recreation will create the following amenities that will provide residents of all ages and abilities with new ways to connect with the City:

- A new community center to be constructed in the Richard J. Norte City Center. This new 122,000 square foot facility will replace the existing 13,000 square foot recreation center that is over 40 years old and provides an inadequate space to host the myriad of recreational programs delivered by the Parks and Recreation Department. With multi-purpose gyms, dance and fitness rooms, a community room, and multiple meeting spaces, the new community center will be a magnet for drawing residents in for physical fitness and community functions.
- A permanent pavilion in Dodge Park to house the popular Farmers Market in the summer and serve as a cover over a brand new refrigerated ice rink for winter skating enthusiasts.
- An outdoor spray ground in Dodge Park for families to escape the summer heat in a safe and fun water environment.
- A multifunctional skate park to be constructed in the City Center. This will be a great amenity for an age group that traditionally lacks recreational opportunities.
- Enclosed bocce ball courts at the Senior Center which will ensure a comfortable environment for year round play.
- A mini soccer field that will provide a great "pitch" for players of the world's most popular game.
- A dog park in Magnolia Park for man's best friend to enjoy some off-leash time in a dog-friendly environment.



- Construction of a canoe/kayak livery and launch and landing pads along the route of the Clinton River to facilitate access to this previously underutilized recreational resource.
- Development of an option for City residents to have full access to aquatics opportunities, including swimming and water activities.
- Installation of a hike / bike trail linking Joseph J. Della, Jr. Major Park with the City Nature Preserve. The hike / bike trail promises to create a unique recreational opportunity that few communities can match.
- Capital improvements to every neighborhood and major park situated within the City.

These amenities are representative of needs expressed by City residents through surveys, the master plan process, community forums, and social media outlets over the course of many years. As other municipalities have filled these needs for their residents, Sterling Heights is at a quality of life disadvantage.

## Why is Recreating Recreation a priority?

As the City approaches the 50th anniversary of its incorporation in 1968, it is necessary and appropriate to have a strategic plan for the future. City leaders, with input from residents and business owners, completed a thorough visioning process, Visioning 2030, that identifies enhancement of the City's parks and development of unique recreational opportunities as critical ingredients to creating a "... vibrant, inclusive community for residents and businesses that is safe, active, progressive and distinctive."

To make this new vision statement a reality, the City must create new ways for its residents and businesses to connect with and develop a passion for the City. Equally important, that positive connection and passion becomes a draw for others to make Sterling Heights their home. The result is a Sterling Heights that is thriving, not declining.

## How will the City pay for the Recreating Recreation improvements?

The cost of the Recreating Recreation improvements is estimated at \$45 million. Unfortunately, the City does not have ability to absorb this cost while at the same time maintaining the existing level of quality public services. While the City parks are clean and well maintained, there is no surplus to finance the desired improvements set forth within Recreating Recreation proposal. A dedicated millage of 0.97 mills for a period of 20 years will not only allow the City to construct the Recreating Recreation Improvements, but operate the new facilities. Because the proposed dedicated millage requires an amendment of the City Charter, Sterling Heights voters must approve it. The City Council has approved placing the Charter amendment question on the November 8th, 2016 ballot.

## What is the cost of Recreating Recreation for the average homeowner?

The owner of the average Sterling Heights residence can expect to pay an additional \$63 in City taxes if the Recreating Recreation proposal is approved in November 2016. Some homeowners will pay more and some will pay less depending upon the value of their home. If this proposal is approved, the average homeowner's total property tax bill will still be \$137 or 5.0% less than it was nine years ago.

In developing Recreating Recreation, the City has made the effort to ensure that the new parks and recreation amenities are accessible to everyone who is paying for them. So, contrary to many municipalities, there will be no annual membership fees. For certain recreational activities, such as ice skating and kayaking, there will be reasonable rental fees to participate. There also will continue to be customary registration fees for those participating in Parks and Recreation programs.

## What are the benefits of public parks?

Parks have the power to transform communities and the people who reside in them. Consider the following evidence:

- An overwhelming majority of Americans surveyed report that they and the communities where they live benefit from local parks. Research further indicates that living near and visiting public parks lowers symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress, increases the level of physical activity and fitness, and lowers the incidence of obesity, especially in children.
- Local parks generate economic activity and four in five Americans surveyed concur that local parks are well worth the tax dollars spent on them. The value of properties actually increase due to their proximity to a public park.
- Parks and the trees within them remove pollutants and carbon dioxide from the air, prevent flooding, and cool the communities where they are situated.

For further information, please access the Recreating Recreation information center at [www.sterling-heights.net/recreatingrecreation](http://www.sterling-heights.net/recreatingrecreation) or call 586/446-2470.



Learn more:



# Example: Water billing insert



Recreating Recreation is an initiative to enhance the quality of life for residents by improving upon existing and creating exciting new parks and recreational opportunities within Sterling Heights. If successful, Recreating Recreation will create amenities that will provide residents of all ages and abilities with new ways to connect with the City.

These amenities are representative of needs expressed by City residents through surveys, the master plan process, community forums, and social media outlets over the course of many years. As other municipalities have filled these needs for their residents, Sterling Heights is at a quality of life disadvantage.



**VOTE** **8<sup>th</sup>** **November**



# Example: Dedicated Webpage

- Recreating Recreation Home
- Proposed Construction Timeline
- Community Center
- Tax Calculator
- Video Series
- Related Documents
- City Financial Overview

- Agendas & Minutes
- Notify Me®
- ePay
- Submit a Request
- Employment

You are here: Home > Community > Recreation & Culture > Recreating Recreation

## Recreating Recreation



The Recreating Recreation initiative will leverage the existing natural resource assets to create a City that provides its residents with year-round recreational opportunities. The millage will fund the City's Recreating Recreation initiative that will deliver a diverse mix of recreational opportunities to the City's 130,000-plus residents, including:

[\(For a photo gallery of the proposed Recreating Recreation facilities and recreational opportunities, click here\)](#)

- Construction of a new 122,000 square foot Community Center that would be a draw for all residents participating in the wide-array of cultural and recreational programming produced by the Parks & Recreation Department.
- A permanent facility for the highly successful Dodge Park Farmers Market.
- A refrigerated ice-rink for winter enthusiasts seeking a place to enjoy outdoor skating.
- An outdoor sprayground that will provide families with a great place to cool down.
- A multi-use skatepark that will be a unique recreational opportunity for the more adventurous crowd.
- Development of a hike/bike trail linking Joseph J. Della, Jr. Major Park with the City Nature Preserve. This hike/bike trail will, for the first time, allow residents to access the 110+ acre preserve from Della Park.
- A dog park where man's best friends can enjoy some off leash time together.
- Facilities for canoe and kayak enthusiasts to enjoy the best stretch of the Clinton River in Macomb County.
- Capital improvements to nearly every one of the City's 26 neighborhood and 5 major parks.
- Access for City residents to enjoy an aquatics option for year-round water activity.
- A mini turf soccer field for those who enjoy playing the world's most popular sport.



"There is so much potential to develop Sterling Heights as a place renowned for recreational opportunities," said Sterling Heights Mayor Michael C. Taylor. "Creating new levels for our residents to connect with the City is exactly what placemaking strives to do. These new recreational amenities will be destinations for our residents and an attraction for families looking for an outstanding quality of life."

The City estimates that the total cost to develop all of the proposed projects is \$45 million. The cost to the average Sterling Heights homeowner is \$62.96 per year for 20 years. [Click here to use the tax calculator to estimate the impact on your household.](#)

[To read the full press release announcing the Recreating Recreation initiative, click here.](#)

[To view a presentation and City Council vote on Recreating Recreation, click here to view a clip of the June 7, 2016 City Council meeting.](#)

[To view the official Nov. 8 election results from Macomb County, click here.](#)

# Example: Online tax calculator

- Recreating Recreation Home
- Proposed Construction Timeline
- Community Center
- Tax Calculator
- Video Series
- Related Documents
- City Financial Overview
-  Agendas & Minutes
-  Notify Me®

You are here: Home » Community » Recreation & Culture » Recreating Recreation » Tax Calculator

## Recreating Recreation Homeowner Tax Calculator

1. Enter Your Home's Estimated Market Value

Assessed Value 50% (estimated)

Taxable Value 40% (estimated)

Recreating Recreation Millage

<b>Annual Homeowner Cost</b>	<input type="text" value="\$62.86"/>
<b>Net Cost (After Income Tax Deduction)</b>	<input type="text" value="\$47.14"/>

*\* Those who itemize their taxes can claim a federal & state income tax deduction for property taxes. This example assumes a 25% deduction which lowers the net cost to the homeowner.*



# Example: Using concrete data to tell the story



# *Example: Video storytelling*

***“RECREATING RECREATION IN STERLING HEIGHTS”***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQel-KjIHrs>

# Public Forums and Interaction

- Three (3) traditional, interactive public forums (day and night start times)
- “New Resident Forum” presentation
- Presence at City events (Sterlingfest, National Night Out, DPW Open House, etc.)
- State of the City Address

# Media Outreach

- Along with regular press releases or news bites on the topic, reach out to local and regional Editorial Boards
- Meetings with Editorial Boards signify the City's willingness to educate the public and be transparent on the topic
- Even if you don't receive an endorsement, you're aiding in the communication on the millage proposal, clarifying questions/misconceptions, promoting accurate coverage

# Encouraging Engagement

**Sterling Heights City Hall**  
June 8, 2016

Last night, the Sterling Heights City Council voted to place a charter amendment on the Nov. 8 ballot for a voter approval of a dedicated parks and recreation millage. If approved, the millage will fund the City's "Recreating Recreation" initiative that would deliver a diverse mix of recreation opportunities to its 130,000-plus residents.

The #RecreatingRecreation initiative seeks to leverage the existing natural resource assets to create a City that provides its residents wi... See More



**Sterling Heights puts parks and recreation millage on November ballot**

Sterling Heights property tax increase would fund new community center, splash pad, ice rink and skate park.

FREEPOOL

12,082 people reached

Boost Post

177

46 Comments 128 Shares

**12,082** People Reached

**822** Reactions, Comments & Shares

<b>535</b> Like	<b>158</b> On Post	<b>377</b> On Shares
<b>34</b> Love	<b>19</b> On Post	<b>15</b> On Shares
<b>6</b> Wow	<b>0</b> On Post	<b>6</b> On Shares
<b>119</b> Comments	<b>70</b> On Post	<b>49</b> On Shares
<b>128</b> Shares	<b>128</b> On Post	<b>0</b> On Shares

**1,784** Post Clicks

<b>1</b> Photo Views	<b>391</b> Link Clicks	<b>1,392</b> Other Clicks
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**NEGATIVE FEEDBACK**

<b>5</b> Hide Post	<b>0</b> Hide All Posts
<b>0</b> Report as Spam	<b>0</b> Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on post.

**Victoria Sklavos** I'm excited for splash pads and the dog park. I hope the dog park has splash pads for the pups!

More activities to keep the youth of Sterling Heights occupied sounds fun. ... See More

**Lorene Laurence** I attended the meeting last night. The pool issue was addressed. The presentation stated there was no land available for a pool.

**Lorene Laurence** But everything else looks amazing and I feel very positive about the plans.

**James Toal** Has my yes vote!

**Emily Naz** Fred Naz

**Gil Koza** We need to move forward to make this city even better for our future generation. Thanks to Kyle, and all of the great people behind him for putting this masterpiece together. Way over do....Yes!!!

**Beverley Litwin** A pool?

**Pam Purnell** Water park!!! Woo hoo!

**Angela Mead** We so need these upgrades. We have lived here for 13 years and raised our daughter here and love living close to the Clinton River and Dodge Park, but the city needs more to offer. Definitely on the right track with these ideas. I hope this happens sooner rather than later!

**Jessica Mao Allen** Yesss

**Dawn Ginal Haslett** SWIMMING POOL!

**Beverley Litwin** City needs to include a swimming pool in these plans. The cities of Troy and Warren both have pools why can't we?

**Leah Donegan** Sterling Heights residents really need a pool. We would utilize it all of the time. I love raising my kids in this community and want to see it flourish.

**Jason Rubel** I am excited for these new renovations, but I agree with the other residents. I do think we need a city pool with indoor water park to keep our residents in our community all year round. Plus it gives the middle aged children something to do all year rather than cause ruckus because they are bored.

**Jamie Belfiori-Zebari** I agree we need indoor water park facility like macomb township. Gives families place to go in winter at discounted rates.

# Encouraging Engagement

**Sterling Heights City Hall** added 3 new photos.  
November 7, 2016 · 🌐

Among the numerous park improvements, installation of a hiking/biking trail, kayak livery and more, the Recreation Recreation initiative also includes plans for a new community center.

The proposed 122,000 square foot community center will replace the existing 13,000 square foot recreation center and house multi-purpose gyms, dance and fitness rooms, a community room and multiple meeting spaces for residents interested in physical fitness and community functions.

For more inf... See More



7,534 people reached

100 Reactions 48 Comments 27 Shares

7,534 People Reached

313 Reactions, Comments & Shares

150 👍 Like	93 👍 On Post	57 👍 On Shares
11 ❤️ Love	10 👍 On Post	1 👍 On Shares
3 😲 Wow	2 👍 On Post	1 👍 On Shares
2 😞 Sad	1 👍 On Post	1 👍 On Shares
119 💬 Comments	98 👍 On Post	21 👍 On Shares
28 👍 Shares	27 👍 On Post	1 👍 On Shares
1,482 Post Clicks		
104 👁️ Photo Views	98 🔗 Link Clicks	1,280 👍 Other Clicks

- Sarah Heuman Radislav Tasevski** this is what I was talking about earlier!  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · November 7, 2016 at 8:28pm
- Claire Collier Nick Collier Katie Amaradio Taylor Andy Taylor** this will be awesome!!!!  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 2 · November 7, 2016 at 8:38pm  
↳ 5 Replies
- Mike John Jack** To maintain a pool is a huge expense between maintenance and insurance , and if your talking about space being taken in Dodge park, it would kill lots of green space. The Warren community center pool is just fine, a pool, splash park, lazy river, it would fit our city needs.  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 3 · November 7, 2016 at 8:46pm
- Catherine Castro** Definitely yes!  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 1 · November 7, 2016 at 7:11pm
- Melanie Page-Mena** If we want to compete with other growing cities we need to consider projects like this for our city. Why should a newcomer move to Sterling Heights? I try to sway new transplants to our area and then often end up in other municipalities with better ame... See More  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 3 · November 7, 2016 at 7:31pm  
↳ 3 Replies

- Kevin Lee** Vote No!!! Many hidden taxes!!!  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 3 · November 7, 2016 at 1:02pm  
↳ 3 Replies
- Amanda Lewinski** YES!! I'd love one of these!!!  
Like · Reply · Message · November 7, 2016 at 1:04pm
- Denise Krupa** Please think of the future of our city and neighbors and vote in favor.  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 4 · November 7, 2016 at 1:17pm
- Barbara Chudzik** Voting YES! This tax only amounts to less than \$2.00 per week! (Or approx .25 per day)  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 5 · November 7, 2016 at 1:18pm  
↳ 5 Replies
- Kevin Ruskowski** Voting yes! This would add so many things the city and finally give it the family culture feel. Tax increases aren't dramatic, and could potentially increase the overall health of the city.  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 3 · November 7, 2016 at 1:29pm
- Denyce Detkowski** NO!!!!  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 2 · November 7, 2016 at 1:33pm
- Darlene Therrien Vachon** Legit question before casting my vote, where do the operating/maintenance costs for the facility come from once the facility is built? I apologize in advance if the information was missed.  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 1 · November 7, 2016 at 1:51pm
- Sterling Heights City Hall** Hi Darlene, breakdowns of all the costs can be found here: <http://www.sterling-heights.net/DocumentCenter/View/2861>  
Like · Reply · 🌐 · 1 · Commented on by Bridget Kosowski 🌐 · November 7, 2016 at 3:11pm  
↳ View more replies
- P. Joseph Raju** I live in Sterling Heights. Glad that City is planning something big for the community.  
Like · Reply · Message · 🌐 · 1 · November 7, 2016 at 2:01pm

# Using Feedback

- What are you hearing at in-person and online forums?
- Are there rumors, misconceptions or items that need clarification?
- Use feedback to pivot and respond when needed
- Pool example: Recreating Recreation plan did not include a pool, but after feedback, the City sought an opportunity with Warren to share facility

# Anticipate snags... and re-adjust

- Water rate increase in September 2016 led to outcry
- Removed “VOTE” flyer in water bills for final cycle

The screenshot shows a newspaper website with a navigation bar at the top containing links for NEWS, SPORTS, A&E, LIFESTYLES, OBITUARIES, BUSINESS, CALENDAR, GAMES, SCORE!, shop, and a search icon. Below the navigation bar is a trending topic: "Elite fishing tournament, festival coming to Lake St. Clair - Harrison Township". The main article is titled "Residents get sticker shock on pricier water bills" by Eric Czarnik. It features a photograph of a garden with a sprinkler system. To the right of the article are two advertisements: "INSTANT WINNER WEDNESDAYS" featuring a red speedboat and "Win a Family 6-Pack of Tickets to the Renaissance Festival" featuring a man in a historical costume. Below the article is a "YOU MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED IN" section with three news items: "Ethnic committee's diversity winners named", "Grant to help pay for firefighter hires", and "City adds, repairs bicycle amenities". At the bottom of the article is an advertisement for a 2017 Ford Escape SE, priced at \$149, with a "3 Payments!" offer, available at Dean Sellers Ford at Troy Motor Mall.



# Approaching the Business Community

- Connect with Chamber of Commerce, DDA and major businesses in the community to begin telling your story
- Set up formal meeting with full presentation
- Ask business leaders to consider public endorsement of millage if they support

# What a Business Community Endorsement Means

- Business community pays enormous amount of taxes, specifically manufacturing in Sterling Heights
- A possible endorsement from business community could carry heavy weight with residents and other businesses when considering the measure
- Helps to build open lines of communication, allows city to adjust educational messaging if needed


# What does this mean for the business community?

- Increased tax revenue
- Increased prices and perceived product quality
- Attraction of key demographics
- A healthier workforce

# Lessons Learned

- Consider the timing of your millage (financial outlook, election type, etc.)
- Begin the conversation early, even years before the proposal to take community temperature
- Develop identifiable marketing plan geared to reach residents of all ages, demographics, ethnicities
- Encourage resident engagement through as many forums as possible and use feedback to shape Q&A, messaging
- Remind residents to VOTE! as much as possible as the election draws nearer

Questions?

A black marker is positioned at the bottom right of the image, pointing towards the word 'Questions?' written on the lined paper. The marker has a black cap and a black body with some white text on it, which is partially visible.