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City of Elgin gearing up to do its first resident survey in four years to get feedback on safety, parks, streets, other services

FEEDBACK

By **GLORIA CASAS**

ELGIN COURIER-NEWS | MAY 07, 2021



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Elgin residents have a chance to voice their opinion on how the city is running via a survey being sent out later this month.

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The city has hired ETC Institute to design and administer a formal, statistically valid citizen survey to gauge residents' feelings on a variety of topics, including public safety, code enforcement, parks and recreation, streets and quality of life.

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“Municipalities use community surveys to determine the satisfaction level of their residents and to establish benchmarks for setting and measuring the progress of organizational goals,” City Manager Rick Kozal said at a recent city council meeting.

City officials usually get feedback from those with special interests or based on how people vote in local elections, but a survey provides a chance to weigh in on specific subjects, city spokeswoman Molly Gillespie said.

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A random sample of 500 residents will receive the survey, but “every Elgin resident will have an equal chance of receiving the survey,” she said.

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Anyone who doesn't receive a survey can still fill one out on the city's website once it becomes available, officials said. However, only the results from the random sample will be included in the report presented to the council.

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Elgin's last community survey was done in 2017, and the results showed the city should focus on maintaining streets, sidewalks and infrastructure and enforcing codes and ordinances, Gillespie said.

The city's strategic initiatives took those topics into account when creating new positions and hiring staff, she said. One example of that was the decision to hire two code compliance officers, which allowed the city to restructure districts into smaller, more manageable areas, she said.

"I'm really happy to see that we are continuing to do this survey to measure how our citizens' how they are feeling about the city and what we are doing," Councilwoman Carol Rauschenberger said at this past week's meeting.

While the random sample is only 500 residents, it will be a scientific-based survey, Gillespie said. "We want to make sure the sample matches our demographics," she said.

ETC Institute, which is being paid \$24,500 for their work, will ensure the sample is representative of the population, she said.

Gloria Casas is a freelance reporter for The Courier-News.

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