

**CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE
CHIEF OF POLICE**

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
REPORT**

Chief of Police

Wheat Ridge, CO

Mr. Gary Peterson, President/CEO
Mr. Mark Helms, Search Consultant

Public Sector Search & Consulting, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

Stakeholder and community meetings were held in the City of Wheat Ridge to gather information from residents and partners concerning their thoughts about what qualities are important in the next Police Chief. Additionally, Public Sector Search & Consulting (PSSC) hosted online surveys to gather input from community members. The input will help inform the City Manager with respect to the selection of the next Chief of Police.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

INFORMATION ABOUT SURVEY RESENDENTS

A total of 148 community members participated in the online Community Survey. Most respondents (87.67%) indicated they were a resident of Wheat Ridge. See Table - Q1. With respect to length of time living in Wheat Ridge, the survey respondents were a cross-section of the community. The overwhelming majority of respondents have lived in Wheat Ridge for more than ten years.

Q1. ARE YOU A RESIDENT OF WHEAT RIDGE?

- 87.67% YES
- 12.33% NO

Q2. HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN THE CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE?

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------|------|
| • N/A | 10.81% | N=16 |
| • Less than 3 years | 6.76% | N=10 |
| • 3-5 years | 13.51% | N=20 |
| • 6-10 years | 10.14% | N=15 |
| • 11-15 years | 10.81% | N=16 |
| • 16-20 years | 12.16% | N=18 |
| • 21-25 years | 15.54% | N=23 |
| • 26 years or more | 20.95% | N=31 |

Q3. IN YOUR OPINION, HOW SAFE IS WHEAT RIDGE COMPARED TO NEARBY COMMUNITIES?

Choices	Percentage	Number
Safer	29.73%	44
About the Same	52.03%	77
Less safe	14.86%	22
Don't know	2.03%	3

The survey participants were asked for their perception of how safe Wheat Ridge is compared to nearby communities. The majority of the respondents (81.76%) believe that Wheat Ridge is either safer or about as safe as nearby communities, while only 14.86% feel the city is less safe than neighboring communities.

Q4. WHAT PERSONAL QUALITIES DO YOU THINK ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR THE LEADER OF THE WHEAT RIDGE POLICE DEPARTMENT? PLEASE RANK THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES. (RANK YOUR TOP 3 WITH 1 BEING THE MOST IMPORTANT).

Most Important Personal Qualities to the Community Survey Participants
1. Record of reducing crime and making neighborhoods safer
2. Strong record of commitment to community-led, problem-solving policing
3. Demonstrated ability to build trust and confidence with people across diverse communities in a mid-sized or large city
4. Strong advocate for openness and transparency

The respondents ranked personal qualities for the new chief in order of importance. Crime reduction and making neighborhoods safer was the highest-rated issue. The responses suggest the need for a thoughtful and transparent chief who has experience implementing crime reduction strategies, who is committed to community engagement, and has experience working with a diverse community.

6. PLEASE REVIEW THE FOLLOWING LIST OF DESIRED CAREER EXPERIENCE, AND RANK THEM IN THE ORDER OF IMPORTANCE FOR THE NEXT CHIEF OF POLICE (RANK YOUR TOP FIVE (5) WITH ONE (1) BEING THE MOST IMPORTANT.)

Top 5 in Order of importance to the Survey Participants
1. Track record of reducing crime
2. Experience collaborating with other jurisdictions and agencies
3. Record of positive community relations
4. Track record of success managing change
5. Experience in police accountability

The top five desired career experiences for the new chief in order of importance are ranked above. The responses suggest the need for a thoughtful chief who has experience that includes: crime reduction strategies, a proven track record of successful collaborations, experience in community relations, change management, and police accountability.

Q7. WHAT CHANGES DO YOU HOPE THE NEW LEADER WILL BRING TO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT?

Several community members suggested the need to improve communication and interaction between police officers and the community. Deeper community outreach and responsiveness to crime is also something that is desired. Respondents recognize that police officers cannot fix everything themselves and therefore must improve community collaboration. The most concrete examples included issues with homeless and raising community awareness and participation when it comes to concerns specific to their neighborhoods.

The community also acknowledged the department needs strong leadership, training and improved communication. The word cloud illustrates the top responses.



Q8. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN THINK OF THAT THE CITY MANAGER SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING THE NEXT POLICE CHIEF?

The word “community” was the most common word used when discussing other things the City Manager should consider when appointing the next chief of police. Some respondents hope the feedback of the rank and file is equally considered. Other selected comments are as follows:

- A good fit for the city
- There are a lot of new officers joining WRPD and the new chief needs to be able to create and sustain a positive culture with high integrity, transparency, and positive relationships with the community.
- More interested in a person who has proven abilities in building relationships with internal and external stakeholders along with an eye for meaningful growth rather than a resume with boxes checked
- It shouldn't be about number of years in the field, but rather integrity, ideas and proven collaboration

The word cloud illustrates the most frequent responses with phrases that include “community, ability, experience.”



COMMUNITY INPUT MEETINGS

Mr. Gary Peterson and Mr. Mark Helms, both retired police chiefs and consultants working for Public Sector Search & Consulting, Inc., facilitated two community discussions. While the meetings were well publicized by City staff, approximately 10 community members attended the two meetings. The community input sessions were streamed on Facebook Live. The meetings were informal to foster open communication about the status of policing in Wheat Ridge, the desired personal characteristics and performance outcomes for the next police chief.

COMMUNITY INPUT QUESTIONS

We started the community conversations by asking four open-ended questions. We acknowledged the responses and moved to the next question after all participants had an opportunity to be heard. The four questions are listed below:

1. What personal qualities do you think are most important for the leader of the Wheat Ridge Police Department?
2. What changes do you hope the leader will bring to the department?
3. What should be the top priority for the leader of the Wheat Ridge Police Department?
4. What other things do you want the City Manager to consider?

DESIRED QUALITIES FOR THE NEXT POLICE CHIEF

HONESTY AND INTEGRITY - The community desires a Police Chief of impeccable character

- A person with a high level of integrity
- A person who leads by example
- A leader with strong community values and the ability to build trust in the community

ENGAGEMENT - Community members want a Police Chief who is engaged with the Wheat Ridge community and the Police Department

- The Chief should introduce new strategies for reducing crime
- Have the ability to work successfully in a diverse community
- A team player who collaborates with community stakeholders and regional law enforcement agencies
- Addresses staff needs and helps develop employees for the future

TRANSPARENCY - the community desires a leader who is an open and engaging communicator

FOCUS ON COMMUNITY POLICING- The next leader should be committed to community policing and understand the complexities of a small city situated in a large metropolitan area.

DESRIED CHANGES A NEW LEADER WILL BRING TO THE DEPARTMENT

- Address homelessness and crime, especially in the areas of Kipling and Interstate 70, greenbelts, and city parks
- Bring a proactive approach to reducing crime
- A greater focus on community-oriented approaches that promote overall safety
- Greater use of Code Enforcement to address community problems
- Enhance and/or expand the use of School Resource Officers
- Better engagement with the community
- Ensure the Police Department is adequately staffed
- Be involved in service clubs
- Be willing to revamp police programs to better align with community needs

TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT

- Collaboration
- Effective community policing
- Find solutions to address homelessness
- Proper police staffing and staff development

OTHER THINGS THE HIRING AUTHORITY SHOULD CONSIDER?

- Choose a Chief who “knows and does” police work and will develop new employees

RELEVANT CONCLUSIONS

IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS AND MORE ENGAGEMENT:
 The community wants the next chief to embrace and engage the community and expand the existing relationships by finding ways to collaborate on issues that concern the public: neighborhood safety, property crimes, issues around the homeless and I-70 and Kipling.

COLLABORATION:
 The public recognizes that police officers cannot fix everything themselves and therefore must better utilize and collaborate with the community. Concrete examples of this included working with organizations and social services to assist in dealing with mentally ill, youth, homeless, raising community awareness and participation when it comes to specific neighborhood concerns.