



**City of Lincoln
Mayor's Office**

2008 Media Releases

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CITY TO SEEK PUBLIC INPUT ON BUDGET PRIORITIES

Process will include scientific phone survey

Mayor Chris Beutler today announced that the City is launching a major effort to solicit public opinion on how the City should spend tax dollars. Beutler said the project is a necessary first step toward implementing "outcome-based budgeting," a process that ties programs to the goals that citizens want local government to accomplish.

"We're looking at a fundamental change in the way City finances operate, and we need to start the process with the people we are elected to serve," said Mayor Beutler. "Outcome-based budgeting has proven to be effective in other communities that have faced budget challenges similar to ours – escalating costs and declining revenues. This is a great opportunity for citizens to have a real impact, and I hope many will participate."

The City is working with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center and the University of Nebraska - Lincoln Bureau of Sociological Research. (More information on the organizations is available at ppc.nebraska.edu and bosr.unl.edu.)

The project will include a scientific phone survey of 600 randomly selected residents. The surveying will begin later this month. Citizens also will be able to comment in writing, online and at public meetings.

"We encourage people to let us know what they think," said Alan Tomkins, Director of the Public Policy Center. "We will share the survey responses with the rest of the community as well as with the City. It is an unprecedented opportunity for the public to guide the policy process and to make sure the community members' voices are heard." Tomkins said he hoped that people respond when they are called and asked the survey questions to insure the scientific validity of the research.

"Budget decisions must be based on the needs of the entire community, not the special interests or those with the loudest voices," said Beutler. "This year's tax-funded City budget is more than \$130 million. We want to hear how taxpayers prefer their funds to be spent."

The Mayor is scheduled to make his decisions on the 2008-2009 City budget in May, and the budget is released to the public in June. The City Council votes on tentative changes to the Mayor's budget in July. The public hearing is scheduled for August 11, and the Council is scheduled to adopt the budget August 25.

"We are a City of a quarter-million people and a tiny percentage attend the annual public hearing on the budget or share their ideas with us in writing," said Mayor Beutler. "To move our community forward, we need consensus on the level of City services we want and what we are willing to pay."

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