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MEMORANDUM

TO: John Leach, Municipal Administrator, City and Borough of Sitka
FROM: Sara Singer Wilson, SSW Consulting
DATE: November 12, 2025
SUBJECT: Community Survey Outreach Summary

INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the Assembly strategic planning retreat on November 22, 2025, SSW Consulting conducted a community survey to gather constituent perspectives on the improvements made in the community over the last year as well as input on their priorities and what changes would make the biggest impact in the community. The community input will inform the development of CBS priorities in the strategic plan to be addressed over the coming year.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Responses

- 232 responses
 - 182 community members
 - 48 CBS employees
 - 2 visitors

2024-2025 Improvements

- 65% (145) have noticed improvements over the last year
- ~47% (109) people feel favorably about the improvements they have seen over the last year
 - Better management of summer tourism
 - Felt more manageable
 - New bathroom – Crescent Harbor, Lincoln Street
 - Crossing guides during tourist season
 - Not having Lincoln Street closed during summer 2025
 - "They tried using crossing guards near centennial. Also staggering busses into town helped keep crowds slightly more controlled. Improvements to public facilities such as public restrooms."
 - Infrastructure + Capital Projects
 - Boat Haulout
 - Airport expansion
 - Road repairs
 - Projects gaining momentum
 - Community garden
 - Trails, landscaping



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- Communications to community members
 - “Communications from CBS are more regular and clear. This helps citizens understand the work the city is doing so we can be more proactive and understanding of city work.”
- Interim police chief
- Park and Recreation programming
- ~34% (79) noted they did not see improvements
 - Most comments were blank so difficult to understand source of concern
 - Anti-tourism, short-term rentals, any noticeable improvements were for tourists only
 - High cost of living
 - Poor condition of roads

The top themes are highlighted in the following bullet points:

Affordable Housing Access (25%)

- More affordable options
- More housing supply (Focus on workforce housing, not million-dollar second homes)
- Reduce short-term rentals
- Housing policy to reduce million-dollar homes

Tourism Management (24%)

- Manage tourism's impact on the community, infrastructure, and local resources.
- Balance economic benefits of tourism with its impact on local infrastructure and quality of life.
- Concerns about overcrowding, strain on public services, and the importance of sustainable tourism practices.
- Calls for better regulation and planning to ensure tourism growth does not negatively affect residents.
- Managing visitor numbers, especially during peak seasons.
- Improving facilities and services to accommodate tourists while protecting community resources.
- Ensuring that tourism development aligns with the needs and values of Sitka residents.
- Concerns about noise, crowding, and air pollution on land and water (sea planes and jet ski rentals, whale watching tours, charter fishing).

Infrastructure Maintenance and Upgrades (25%):

- Calls for ongoing maintenance and improvement of roads, utilities, and public facilities.
- Desire for more substantial road improvements, not just patches.
- A lighted crosswalk at the intersection of Maksoutoff Way and Harbor Drive.
- Concerns about aging infrastructure and the need for timely repairs and upgrades.



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- Expand/Modernize infrastructure to meet future needs, such as new community facilities, improved transportation options, and upgraded public spaces.
- Desire for improved cellular coverage, changes to cell tower zoning (specific idea: Cell On Wheels (COW) for use during the summer if there are areas that are impacted by service during those times.)

Cost of Living + Community Support Services (22%)

- Concerns about the high prices of housing, groceries, utilities, and other essentials.
- Requests for CBS to explore ways to reduce living expenses or provide support for those struggling with affordability.
- Comments about the impact of rising costs on families, seniors, and lower-income residents.
- Would like to see CBS reduce utility costs, support local businesses to keep prices competitive, and increase access to affordable goods and services.
- Would like to see CBS invest in and expand support networks, including access to health and wellness programs, family support, and services that foster inclusion and resilience.

Childcare (20%)

- More accessible and affordable options
- Limited availability impacts parents' ability to work
- Increased support, funding, or incentives to expand childcare facilities

Downtown Revitalization + Local Business Support (11%)

- Encourage the growth and sustainability of local businesses
- Provide resources or incentives for small businesses
- Promote local shopping and entrepreneurship

Parks and Recreation (8%)

- Enhance existing parks and recreational facilities to be accessible, safe, well-maintained
- Create new community spaces or programs
- New playground equipment (especially mentioned for Keet, Moeller)
- More and improved sports fields (better turfed field for multiple sports)