

To the Atherton Town Council:

With this note I would like to voice my support for the idea of a community survey being conducted in Atherton focusing on all major town functions and services.

By way of background, my name is Matt McWright and I have lived in Atherton since 2005. My interest in this survey is primarily driven by my role serving on the board of Atherton Disaster and Preparedness Team (ADAPT), an organization I have been a part of for approximately ten years.

While no one questions the merits and need to be disaster prepared living in our area, people exist on a wide spectrum of readiness to in fact take action to be prepared. This is no doubt due to a host of factors and conflicting demands. Our community having a volunteer organization devoted to helping our neighbors be better prepared is sensible and prudent, of course. That being said, what do we really know about how our fellow residents feel about being prepared, and what exactly would help them become better prepared, are relevant questions.

Having been a part of ADAPT across three eras of its leadership, I am struck by the inconsistency we experience in our efforts to engage with our residents. It often feels in fact like we are “a service in search of a market,” when it would optimize our efforts to know our market first and adapt our services accordingly.

A community survey would be a very useful exercise to these ends. Since the relative ambivalence about being disaster prepared could undermine participation in a survey devoted to just this topic, I am a big fan of this survey being embedded in a broader survey of other Town functions—library, police, administration, etc.—that ought improve the likelihood of ADAPT getting quality feedback (while of course garnering useful information for these functions). In terms of execution, I would advocate for less is more, such that each function seeking feedback be exacting and targeted in the questions asked, that the overall survey demands don’t become onerous to our residents.

In any case, I can certainly pledge ADAPT’s readiness and willingness to participate in the construction of any such survey should the Town Council see the wisdom in this exercise. As I understand it, it has been a decade since such a survey took place, and given the changes in our Town during that time, I’d say we’re due.

Sincerely,

Matt McWright