



CITY OF
PRINCE GEORGE

Citizen Budget 2024 Consultation Report

November 2023

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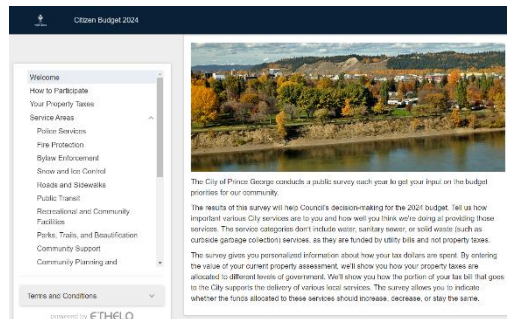
Introduction

From October 3rd to October 31st, 2023, The City of Prince George conducted a [digital community engagement](#) to gather public feedback on municipal budget priorities. The City uses public needs and wants as well as delivery cost information to make decisions about budget funding.

The funding priorities were organized into existing 13 areas.

Participants (all anonymous) were asked to provide feedback on each funding priority through a budget spend slider and a public commenting forum. They were also asked to weigh the importance of each budget item.

Participants were asked to voluntary pieces of demographic information about themselves as well as their current property assessment value.



Summary of the report

The 620 validated participants collectively indicated their desire to keep taxes the same in 8 of the 13 budget areas. The exceptions to this were as follows:

- *Bylaw Enforcement Services: 15% Decrease*
- *Community Planning and Economic Development: 15% Decrease*
- *Corporate Services: 5% Decrease*
- *Police Services: 5% Increase*
- *Infrastructure Management: 5% Increase*

The level of consensus and support for the collective budgets was reasonably high in most of the 13 areas.

The participation level of 41.3% can be considered high.

Road, sidewalks and storm drainage are seen as the top 3 budget priorities.

Satisfaction levels range from 3.3 to 7.2 (out of 10), with an average of 4.7

Participant comments revealed several clusters of particular interest to the community and are shown on pages 7 and 22. The full comment set will be provided electronically to the City.

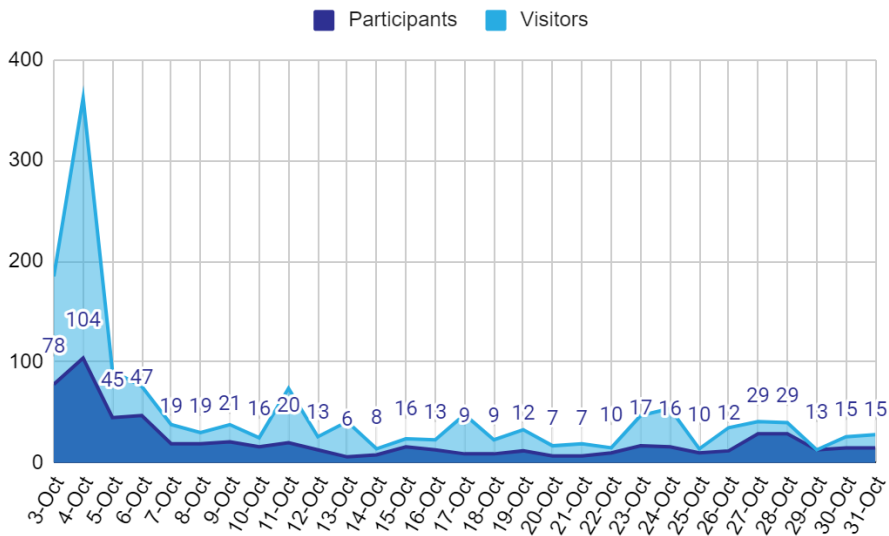
Participation

Over the 4 weeks that the engagement was live, the online platform garnered...

- 1,500 Visitors
- 620 Participants
- 41.3% Participation rate
 - 77% of participants answered at least 25% of the questions
 - 67% of participants answered at least 50% of the questions
 - 37% of participants answered at least 75% of the questions
- 148 public comments (including 149 likes on 87 liked comments)
- 324 written inputs about 2024 city budget topics

Participants

The following chart shows the profile of visitors and participants throughout the consultation period.



Participants were validated using voting pattern, location and self-reported address analysis to ensure the validity of the results.

Service Budgets

Overview

The participants wanted to keep budget spending the same in eight of the thirteen areas. Exceptions to this were Police Services (+5%), Bylaw Enforcement (-15%), Community Planning and Economic Development (+15%), Infrastructure Management (+5%) and Corporate Services (-5%). The overall effect of these changes was very close to keeping the budget the same.

Budget	Funding	Consensus	Support	Approval	Conflict
Police Services	5% Increase	64%	64%	63%	36%
Fire Protection Services	Keep the Same	81%	79%	77%	27%
Bylaw Enforcement Services	15% Decrease	36%	34%	20%	47%
Snow and Ice Control	Keep the Same	79%	77%	75%	26%
Roads and Sidewalks	Keep the Same	80%	77%	76%	25%
Public Transit Services	Keep the Same	73%	72%	67%	31%
Recreation and Community Services	Keep the Same	77%	75%	73%	27%
Parks, Trails, and Beautification	Keep the same	74%	72%	69%	31%
Community Support services	Keep the Same	67%	67%	58%	34%
Community Planning and Economic Development	15% Decrease	68%	64%	66%	25%
Infrastructure Management	5% Increase	76%	73%	74%	25%
Storm Drainage	Keep the Same	87%	84%	87%	21%
Corporate Services	5% Decrease	80%	74%	69%	16%
	Keep the Same	83%	69%	95%	4%



This represented an overall desire to keep the budget the same as the previous year.

Approval is the percentage of people who gave a positive vote rather than a neutral or negative vote. Approval above 50% is a traditional “majority”.

Support is the average value of the votes, where the value of a totally opposing vote is 0 and a totally supportive vote is 100.

Consensus (Ethelo score) is a measure of the overall strength of the decision, considering both support (higher is better) and conflict (lower is better).

Conflict is a measure of the level of disagreement in a group and can be considered as the inverse of variance. Higher conflict scores represent internal resistance and risk of failure. For further information about how Ethelo calculates this and other metrics please visit ethelo.com/deep-dive.

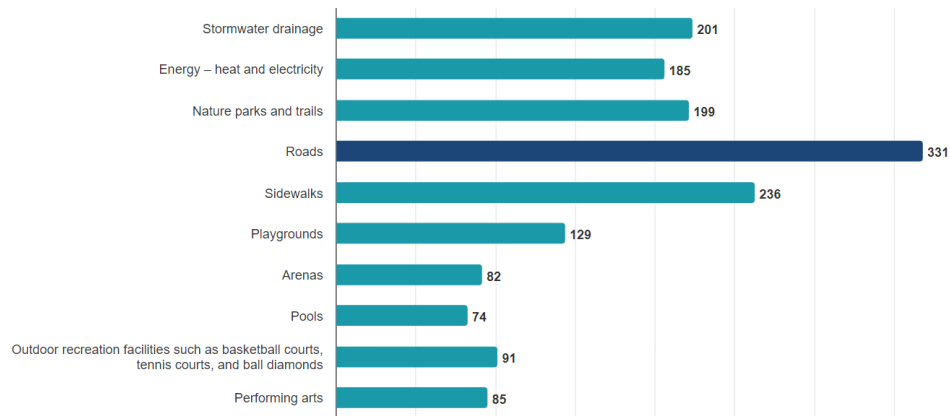
Budget Survey

The budget survey asked participants a single question about infrastructure investment. They were asked to select up to 10 priorities for investment.



Infrastructure Investment

The 450 participant votes were cast as follows:



Key considerations for the 2024 budget establishment

There were 324 non-comment forum messages provided by participants. They are summarized here into ten themes:

Public Safety and Downtown Revitalization: Participants are concerned about public safety, particularly in the downtown area, where issues related to homelessness, addiction, and crime are prevalent. There is a strong desire to revitalize the downtown core to make it safe and attractive for businesses and residents.

Infrastructure Maintenance and Snow Removal: The maintenance of roads, sidewalks, and other critical infrastructure is a common concern, with an emphasis on safe and well-maintained spaces. Efficient snow removal methods without budget overruns are desired.

Affordable Housing and Social Services: Housing affordability is a significant concern, with calls for affordable housing options and support for vulnerable populations. Social services are seen as essential to address issues like addiction and homelessness.

Budget Transparency and Fiscal Responsibility: Participants want greater transparency regarding budget management, including addressing cost overruns. Fiscal responsibility is emphasized, with a focus on reducing unnecessary expenses and controlling taxes.

Cultural Facilities and Business Support: Some participants stress the need for investment in cultural facilities, particularly the performing arts. There is also a call for creating a business-friendly environment and supporting economic development.

Community Engagement and Inclusion: Fostering a sense of community pride and inclusion is important, with a focus on multicultural events, diversity, and accessibility.

Environmental Concerns and Bear Management: Environmental issues like air quality and climate change mitigation are mentioned. Specific concerns about bear activity include the need for bear-proof garbage containers and increased enforcement to secure garbage.

Public Transit: Improving public transit services, including increasing bus frequency, expanding routes, and enhancing infrastructure like bus shelters, is a priority for some participants.

Efficient City Management: Calls to streamline city administration and reduce costs are made, aiming for more efficient and accountable city management.

Community Support and Inclusion: Supporting community initiatives and ensuring inclusion of all Participants, including seniors and those with disabilities, is a key theme.

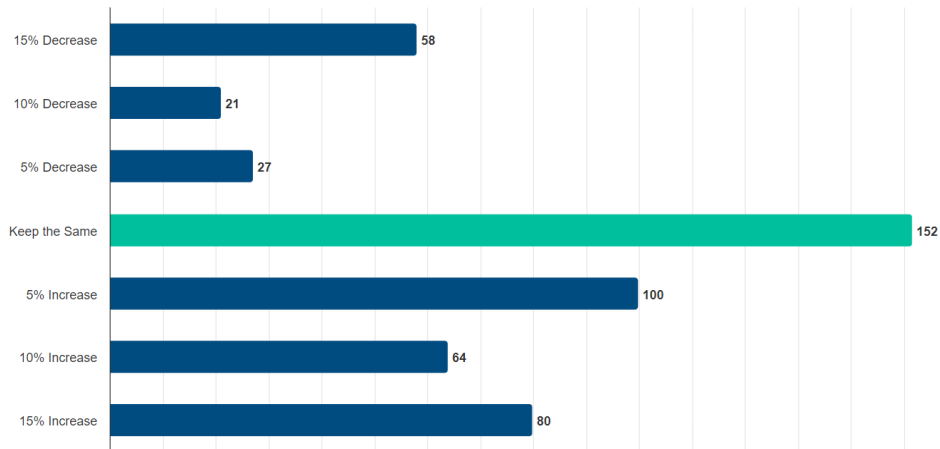
Service Areas

Police Services



Budget Changes

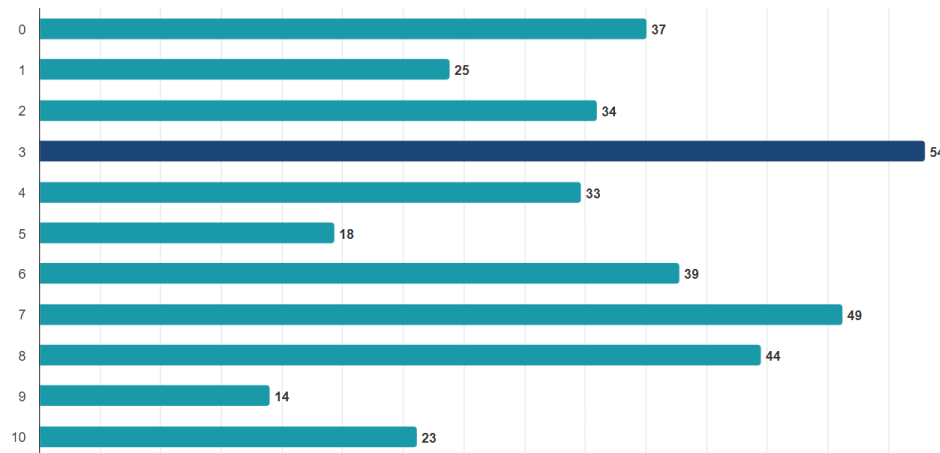
The 502 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 2.3% increase, closest to the best scenario of a 5% increase.

Satisfaction

The following chart shows the distribution of 370 participant ratings. The average rating was 4.7

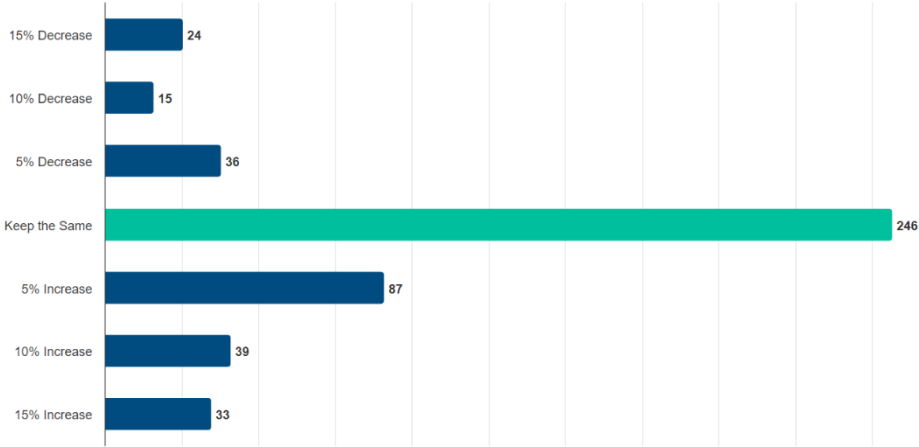


Fire Protection



Budget Changes

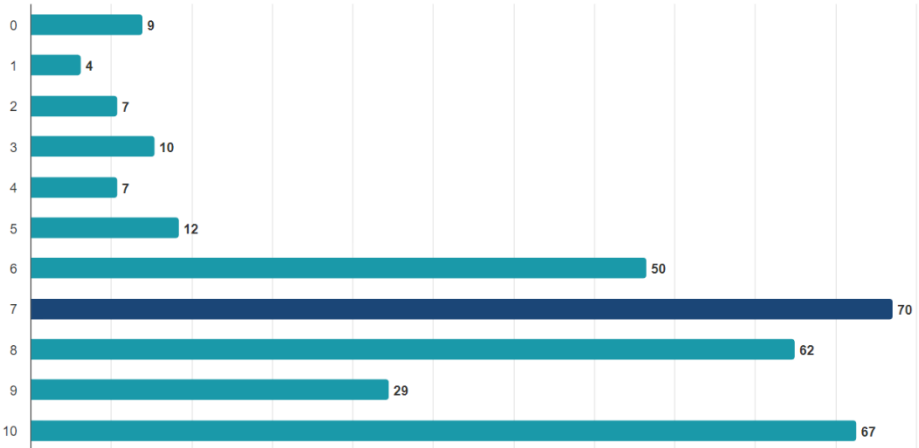
The 480 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 1.3% increase, closest to the best scenario of keeping the taxes the same.

Satisfaction

The following chart shows the distribution of 327 participant ratings. The average rating was 7.2

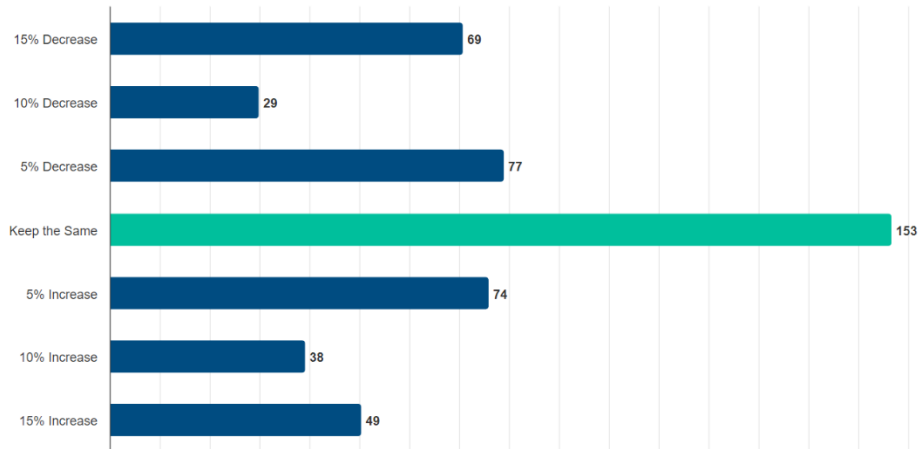


Bylaw enforcement



Budget Changes

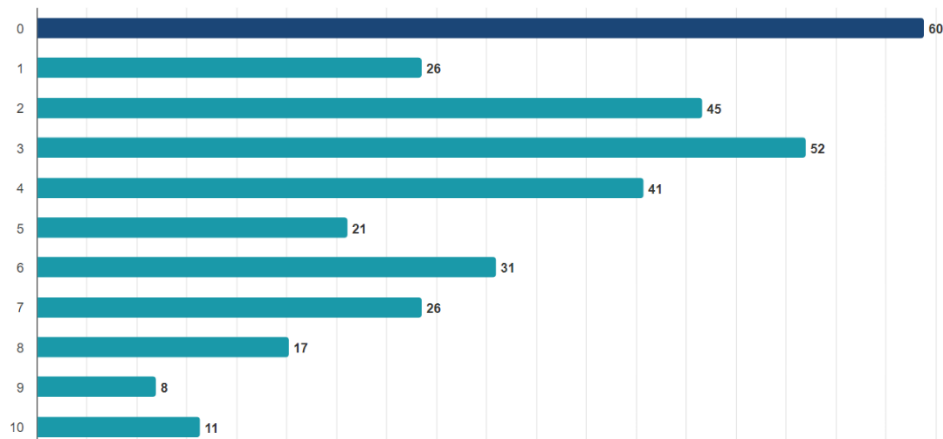
The 489 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 0.3% decrease, closest to the best scenario of keeping the taxes the same.

Satisfaction

The following chart shows the distribution of 338 participant ratings. The average rating was 3.7

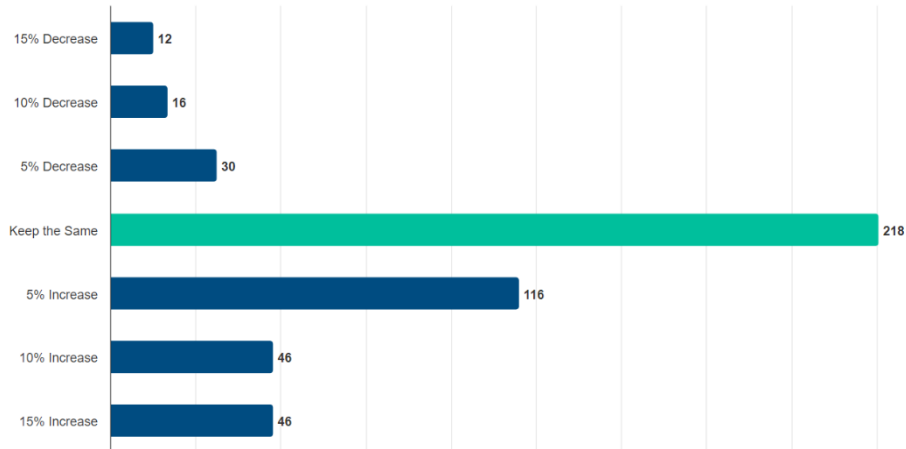


Snow and Ice Control



Budget Changes

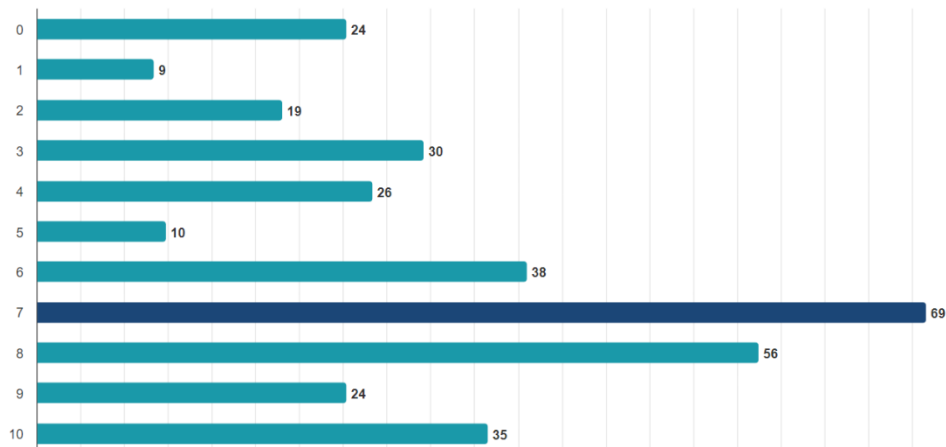
The 484 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 2.5% increase, equal closest to the best scenario of keeping taxes the same.

Satisfaction

The following chart shows the distribution of 340 participant ratings. The average rating was 6.0

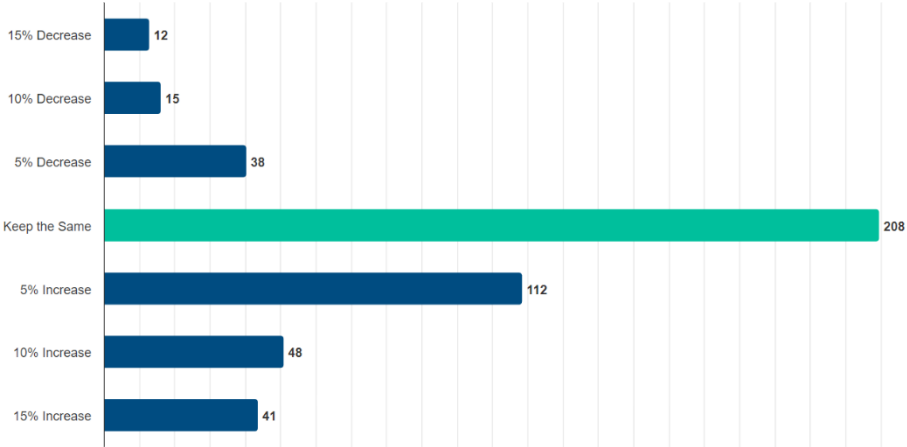


Roads and Sidewalks



Budget Changes

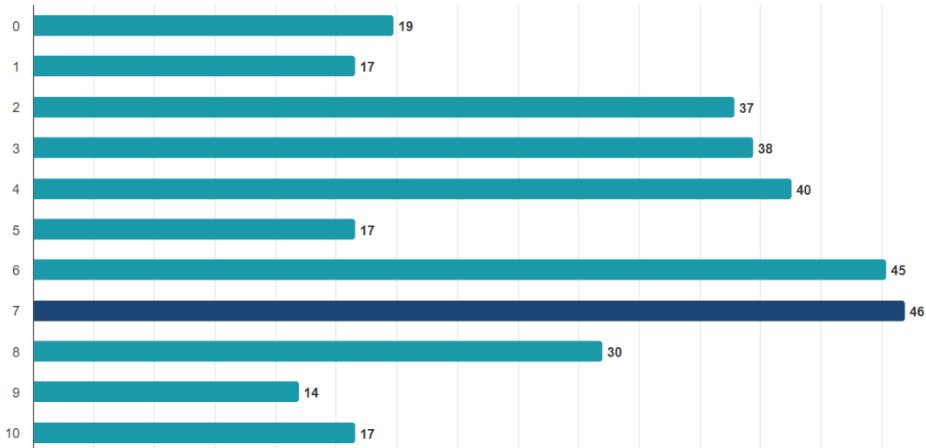
The 474 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 2.3% increase, equally close to the best scenario of keeping taxes the same.

Satisfaction

The following chart shows the distribution of 320 participant ratings. The average rating was 5.0

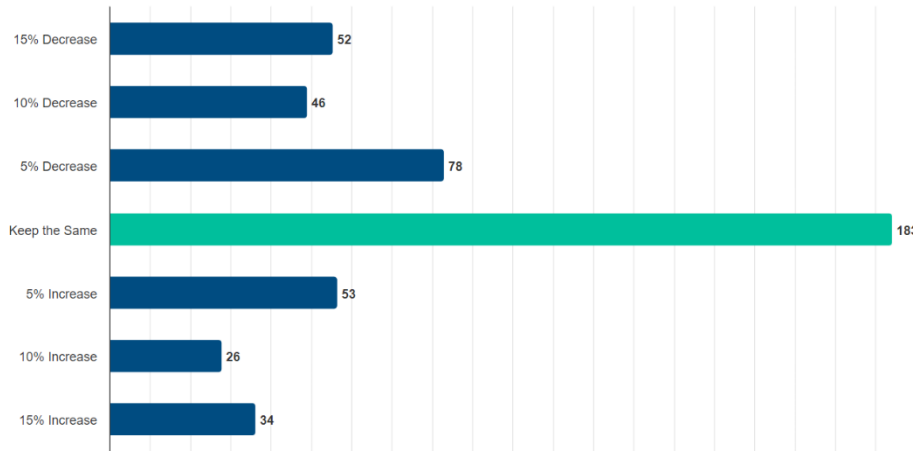


Public Transit



Budget Changes

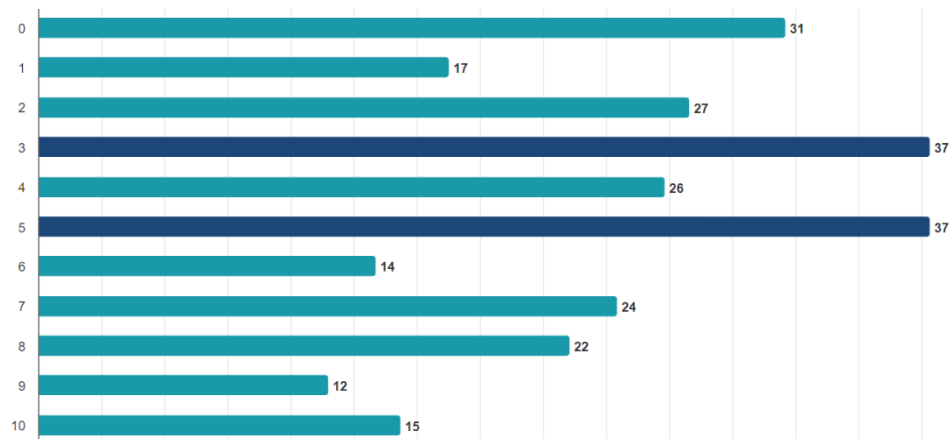
The 472 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 1.3% decrease, closest to the best scenario of keeping taxes the same.

Satisfaction

The following chart shows the distribution of 262 participant ratings. The average rating was 4.4

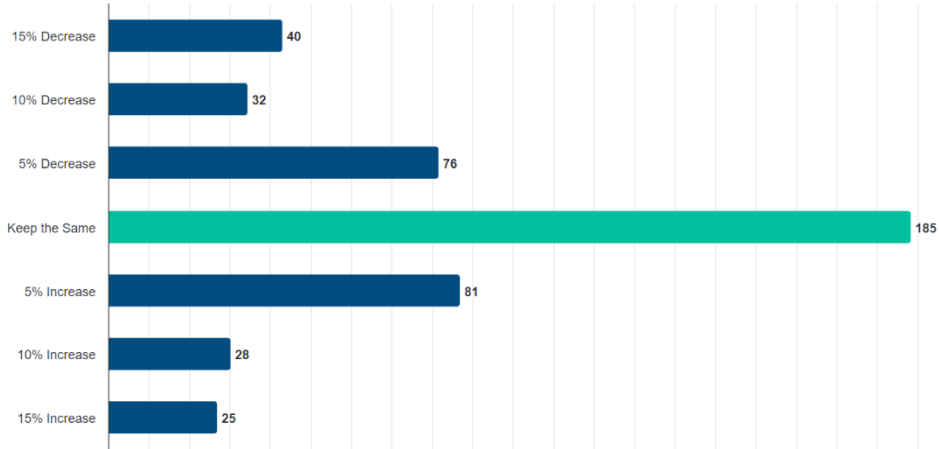


Recreational and Community Facilities



Budget Changes

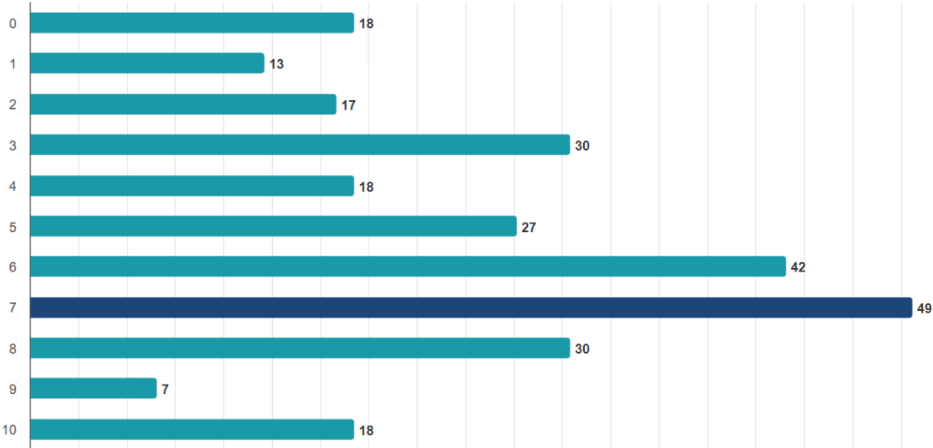
The 467 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 0.5% decrease, closest to the best scenario of keeping taxes the same.

Satisfaction

The following chart shows the distribution of 269 participant ratings. The average rating was 5.3

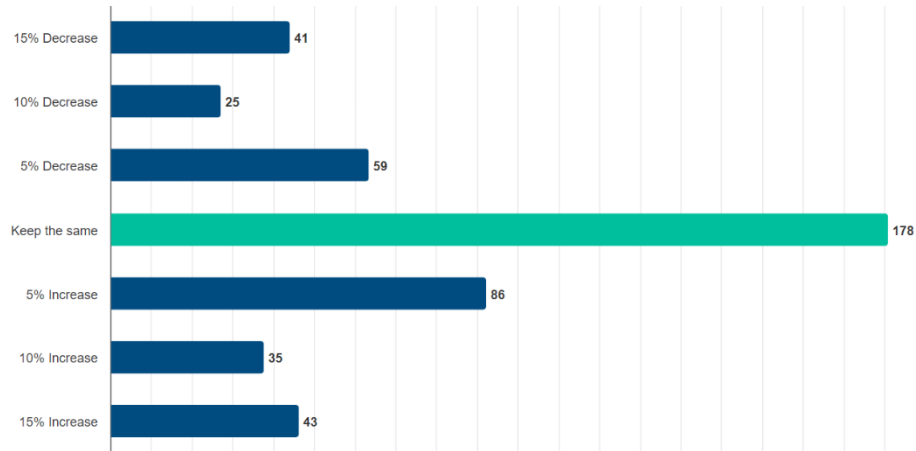


Parks, Trails, and Beautification



Budget Changes

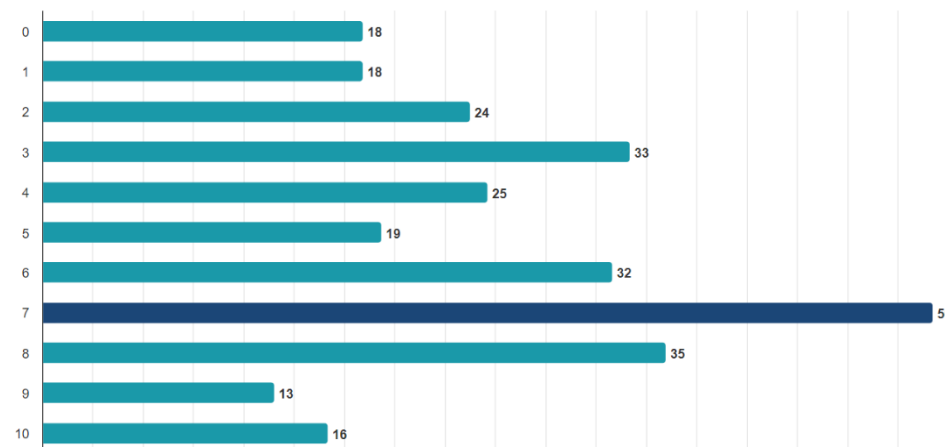
The 467 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 0.6% increase, closest to the best scenario of a keeping taxes the same.

Satisfaction

The following chart shows the distribution of 283 participant ratings. The average rating was 5.2

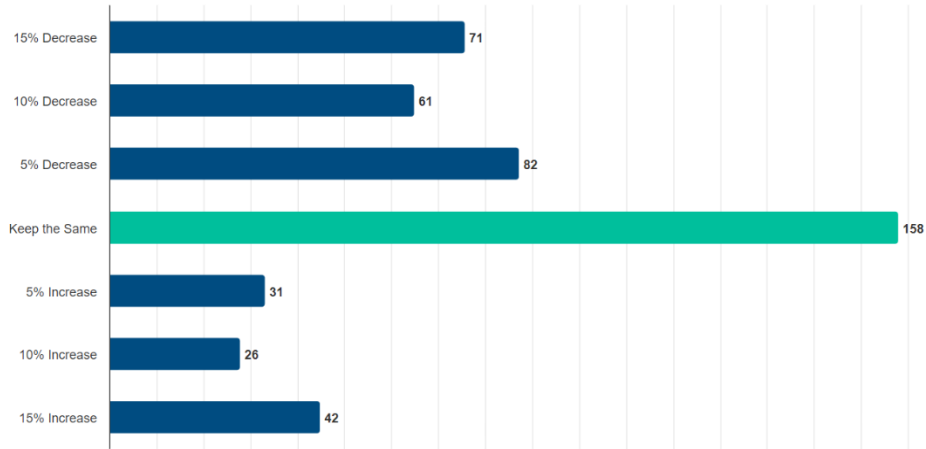


Community Support



Budget Changes

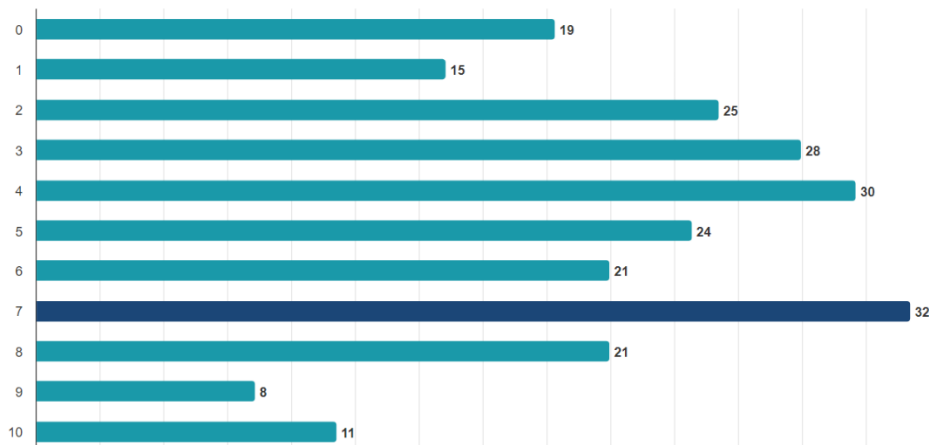
The 471 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 2.2% decrease, closest to the best scenario of keeping taxes the same.

Satisfaction

The following chart shows the distribution of 234 participant ratings. The average rating was 4.7

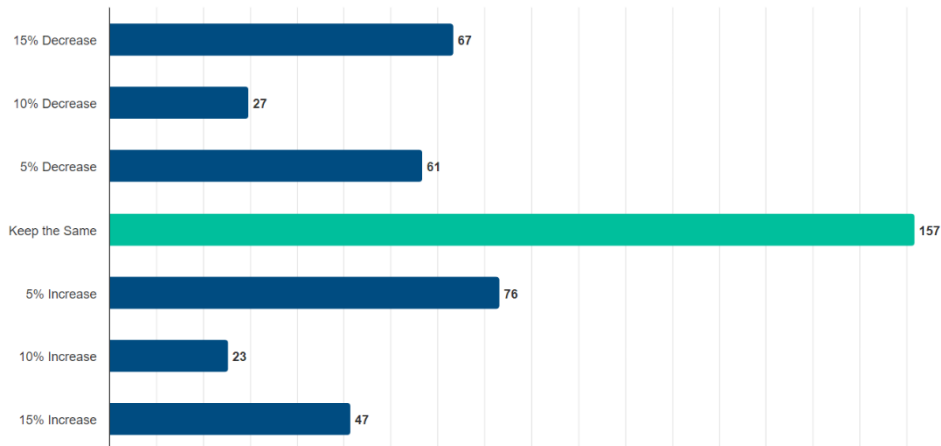


Community Planning and Economic Development



Budget Changes

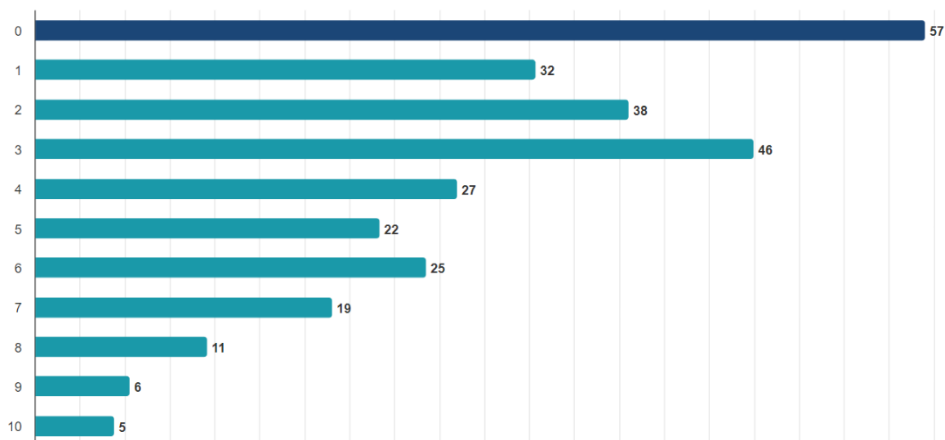
The 458 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 0.4% decrease. The best scenario suggests a 15% decrease.

Satisfaction (Services that attract and retain business and facilitate development)

The following chart shows the distribution of 288 participant ratings. The average rating was 3.3

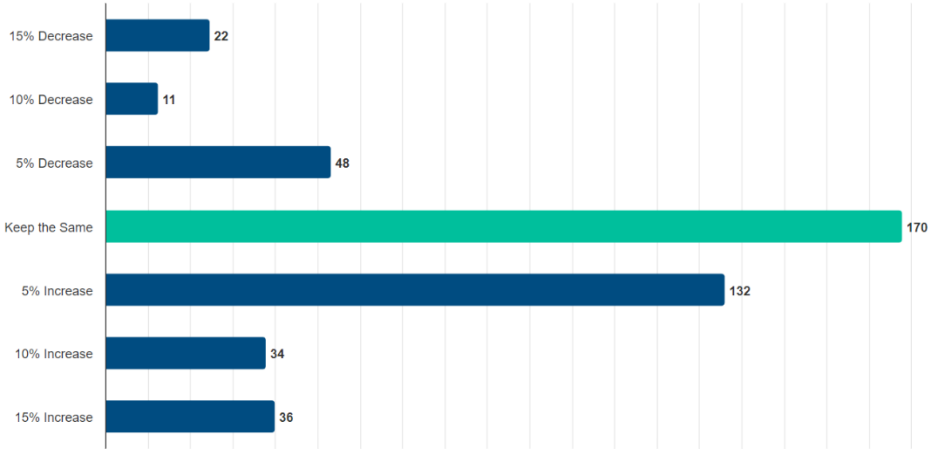


Infrastructure Management



Budget Changes

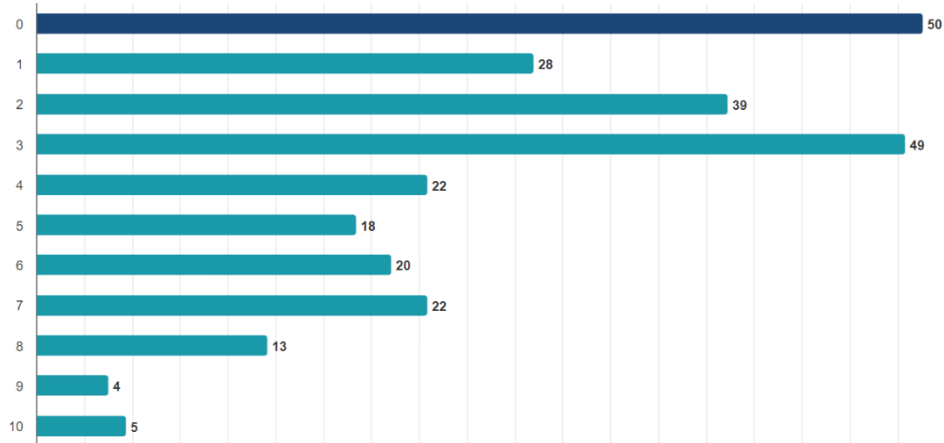
The 453 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 2.0% increase, second closest to the best scenario of a 5% increase.

Satisfaction (Community Planning and Infrastructure)

The following chart shows the distribution of 370 participant ratings. The average rating was 3.3

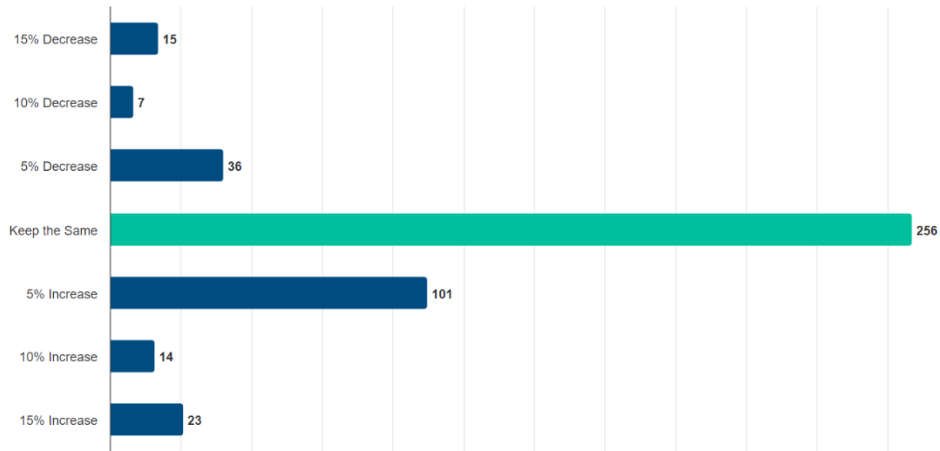


Storm Drainage



Budget Changes

The 452 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



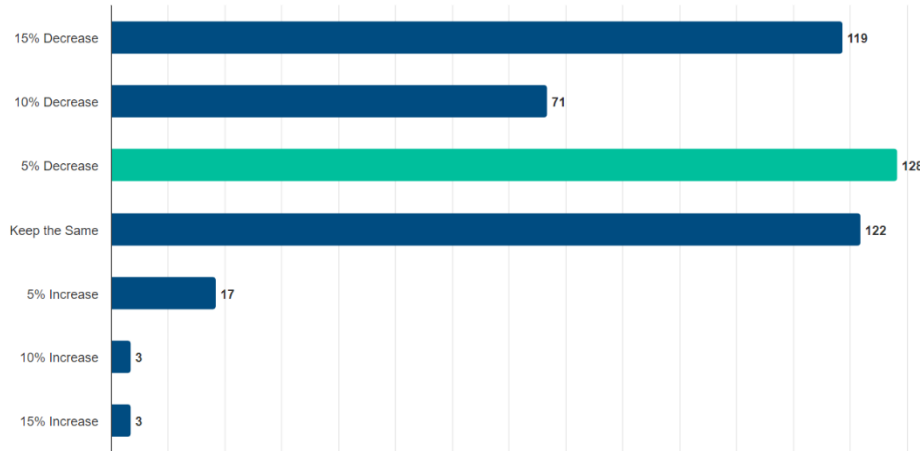
It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 1.2% increase, closest to the best scenario of keeping taxes the same.

Corporate Services



Budget Changes

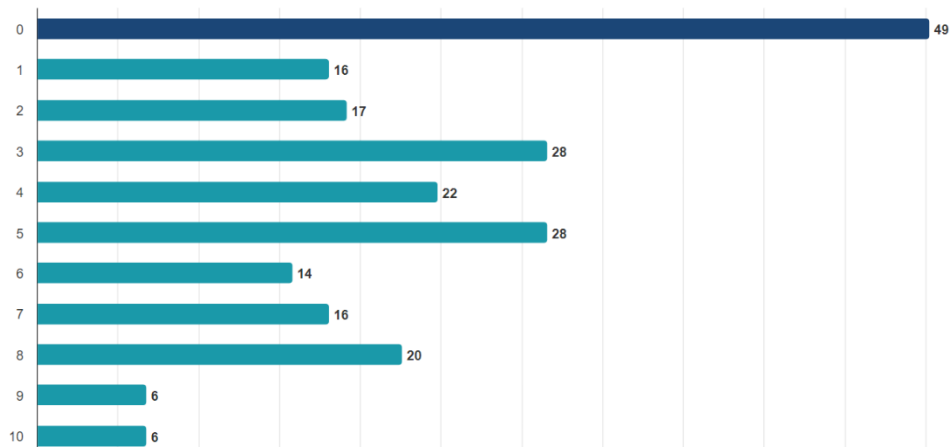
The 463 participant votes on budget allocation were cast as follows:



It can be seen that the most popular option was to keep taxes the same. The average was calculated as a 6.2% increase, closest to the best scenario of a 5% decrease.

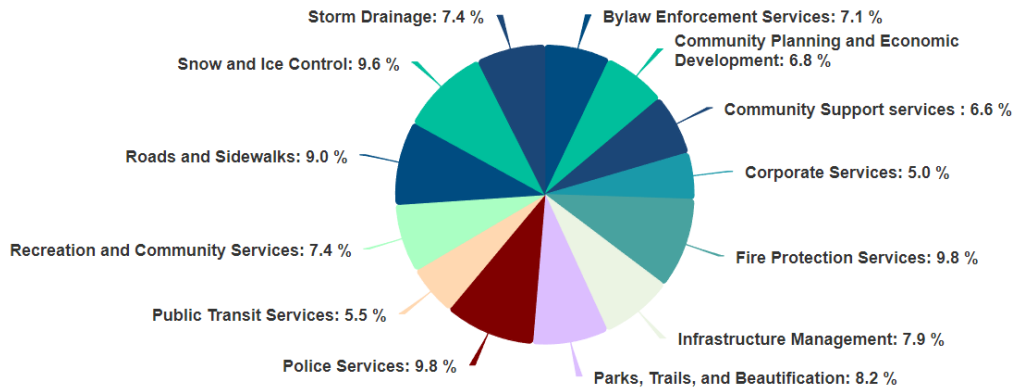
Satisfaction

The following chart shows the distribution of 222 participant ratings. The average rating was 3.8



Service Importance

The relative importance of each of the funding areas is shown below. It can be seen that Fire Protection and Police Services were seen as having the most importance. However, each of the thirteen funding areas were no more than +/- 2.7 percentage points from an average weighting of 7.7%.



General (Final) comments

There were 57 comments in the “Feedback” section of the online engagement. These mostly related to services and are summarized here:

The comments from various individuals highlight several concerns and suggestions related to their city's priorities and budget allocation. Notably, concerns about the shortage of forests, high salaries of city council members, and the neglect of sidewalks are raised. Some commenters express their frustrations with crime, including break-ins and the need to address areas like Moccasin Flats.

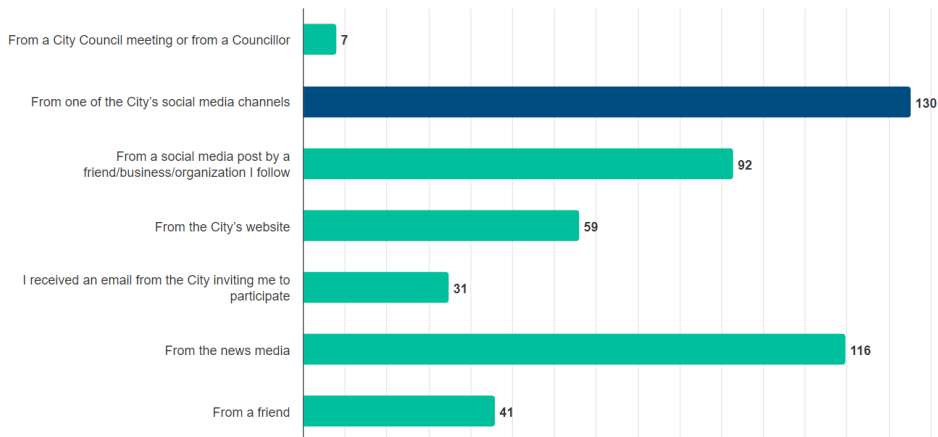
Affordable housing is a recurring theme, with suggestions to convert the old pool parking lot into low-income housing and focus on housing first. There is also a call for cost-cutting, fiscal responsibility, and improved infrastructure. Other suggestions include prioritizing tree planting, reducing fireworks displays, and reconsidering public pool investments.

Some comments advocate for more accessible and informative engagement with residents, while others emphasize the importance of citizen demographics in decision-making. Some commenters advocate for support for the arts, better maintenance of sidewalks around community centers, and reduced city wages. The question of who should have the right to vote or participate in such surveys also arises.

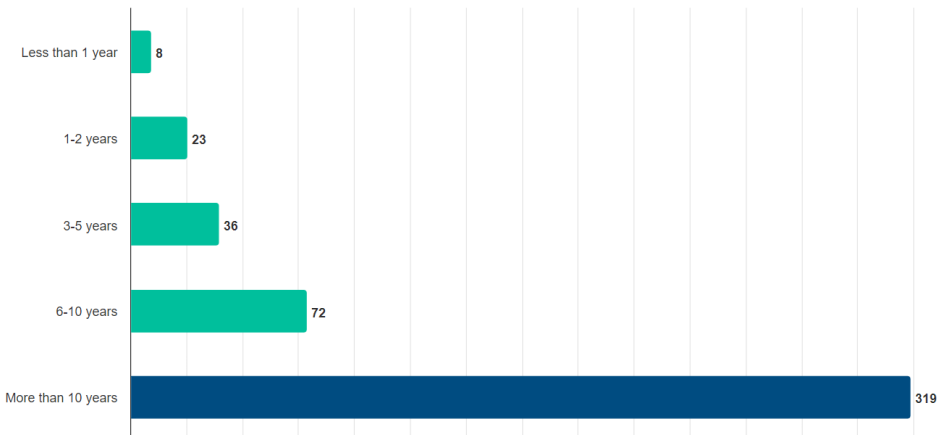
Participant Demographics

The following charts show the demographics of the participants.

Source of hearing about the survey (n=448)

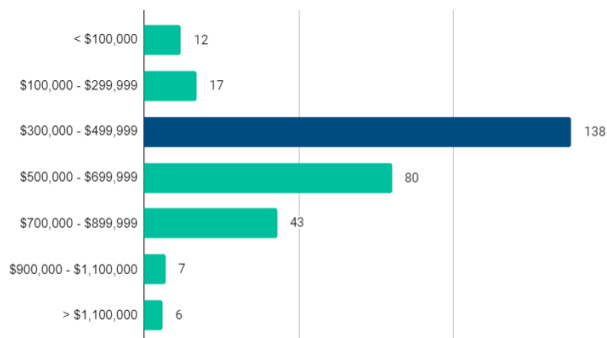


Length of residency (n=458)

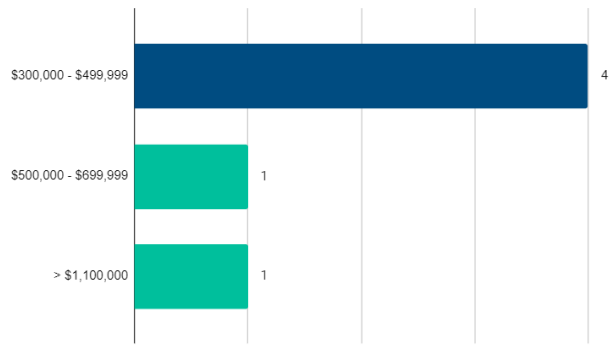


Assessed value

Residential (n=303, av=\$508K)



Commercial (n=6, av=\$1,108K)



Feedback

The following charts highlight the feedback of the consultation experience.

Friend Referral (n=246)

Yes: 80%

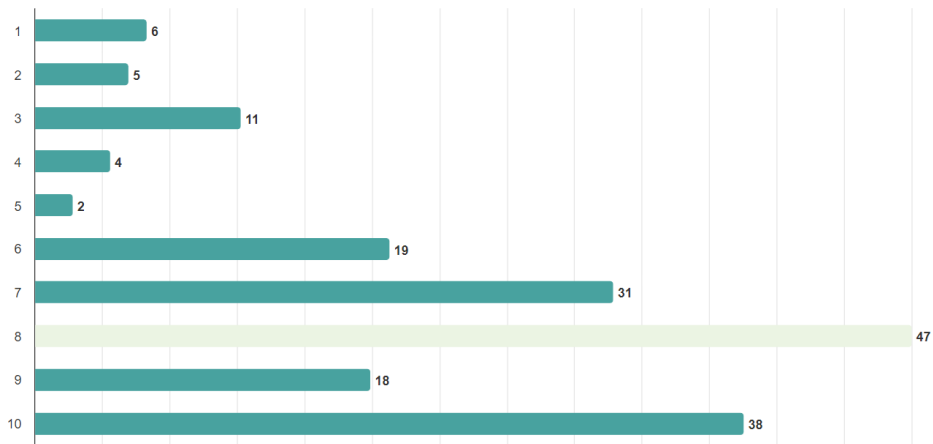
New Learnings (n=228)

No: 53%

Other processes (n=212)

Yes: 80%

Process Evaluation (n=181)



The average rating was **7.3**

Support for Final Decision (n=231)

Yes: 77%

Support for Group Results (n=227)

Yes: 56%

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