Attachment 1

What We Heard Report 2027–2030

City Budget Public Engagement

ADVISE

edmonton.ca/budget

SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

September 8, 2026 - City Council | FS03346

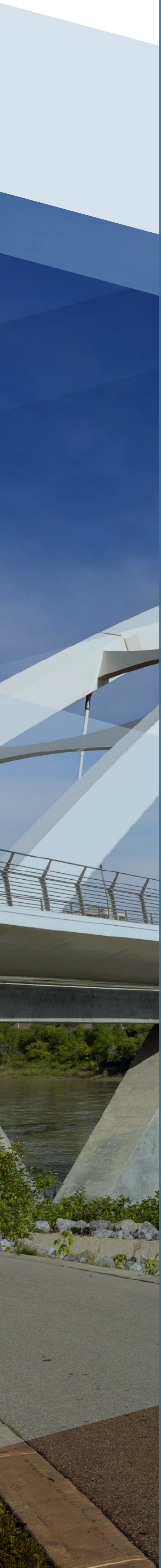


TABLE OF CONTENTS

What We Heard Report 2027–2030

City Budget Public Engagement

1

Acknowledgements

What We Heard Report:
2027–2030 City Budget Public Engagement

Acknowledgements

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside, is in Treaty Six Territory. We would like to thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as nêhiyaw (Cree), Dené, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux) and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples. We also acknowledge this as the Métis' homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in public engagement activities throughout the spring of 2026. Your contributions are greatly appreciated and we hope you see your ideas, comments and input reflected in these pages.

Executive Summary

Thousands of Edmontonians from across the City stepped up to share their priorities as part of the 2027–2030 Budget Engagement. All their input was documented, reviewed for themes and trends, and represented in this report.

Developing a four-year budget for a growing city of 1.2 million people looking toward a future of two million is an exercise in measuring the full breadth of what residents value, synthesizing their competing priorities and ultimately choosing the trade-offs that best fit the City's goals, ambitions and circumstances.

The 2027—2030 budget engagement set out to understand the choices Edmontonians want the City to make when resources are constrained. This open invitation to all Edmontonians revealed a diverse set of perspectives and priorities from across communities. Edmontonians came to this process with as many perspectives as there are distinct communities within its borders.

Public engagement goals

Through an inclusive process that combined both digital and in-person methods, the engagement went beyond just asking what participants value, challenging Edmontonians to consider the trade-offs they are—and are not—willing to accept across service levels, infrastructure investment and revenue approaches. This deep layer of analysis gives Administration and City Council the robust data needed to weigh alongside fiscal realities, technical requirements and other inputs that will inform decision-making for a four year budget that will include difficult decisions.

Several aspects of the City's budget were explored, including:

Impact of Lived Experience

+ Experiences living, working and operating in Edmonton: how current budget decisions affect residents, businesses, organizations and communities
+ The most important changes participants would like to see in the City's next four-year budget
+ Broader perspectives on how the City should balance community needs, growth and long-term financial sustainability

Service and Capital Priorities

+ Service areas and programs participants believed should be prioritized, maintained, expanded or reduced
+ Priorities related to projects, programs and facilities, including infrastructure maintenance, renewal, rehabilitation and new capital investment

Revenue and Trade-offs

+ Perspectives on property taxes, including taxation approaches, user fees and affordability
+ Trade-offs between service levels, access to services, infrastructure investment and various revenue approaches
+ Perspectives on balancing the budget within financial constraints and growing service demands

Where participants were most likely to agree

While participants did not always agree about how to prioritize the City's spending, the root of their feedback was often aligned—they are feeling the pressure of inflation and are resistant to anything that will reduce their quality of life or make their day-to-day life more expensive.

Common themes across the participant feedback included:

+ When faced with trade-offs, most **participants favoured a familiar status quo**—accepting modest inflation-driven increases while resisting anything more
+ Participants persistently explored ways the City could balance the budget **without reducing services or increasing taxes**
+ A first principle for participants in this budget was for the City to **demonstrate improved fiscal responsibility and reduce what they defined as wasteful spending** within the context of this budget cycle, participants consistently called for the City to **focus on core and essential services** they viewed as benefitting the most people
+ When considering infrastructure and physical assets, participants **prioritized maintenance of existing builds and completion of current projects** rather than starting new projects
+ Participants viewed **winter road and pathway maintenance** as their highest service priority
+ Participants in this engagement signalled an **openness to increased user fees** to support operations of City programs and facilities

Perspectives as diverse as the City's population

Overall, 11,728 inputs were received across all public engagement opportunities, with over 460,000 words submitted, transcribed and coded. Edmontonians expressed diverse, often competing priorities, with no single open-ended theme registering with more than 16 per cent of survey participants.

The volume and diversity of input revealed a wide spectrum of distinct community priorities. This included:

+ Some groups held opposing perspectives to others, reflecting different relationships with City services, including Community Safety and Well Being, Edmonton Police Service, Edmonton Transit Service, Affordable Housing, and support for arts, culture, tourism, inclusion and economic development
+ Different priorities from those representing businesses and organizations as compared to the average resident participant
+ Many participants expressed a desire for the City to focus on core services; however, they did not always agree on the definition of "core." Survey participants saw all services as generally valuable, with 45 per cent or more participants ranking each as important to their daily life
+ No universal budget solution emerged that would satisfy all participants, with nearly half or greater than half of survey participants opposing each of the five options presented in this engagement

What emerges from the analysis is a set of tensions throughout this report that Administration and Council must navigate with care.

2

Public Engagement Overview

Public Engagement Overview

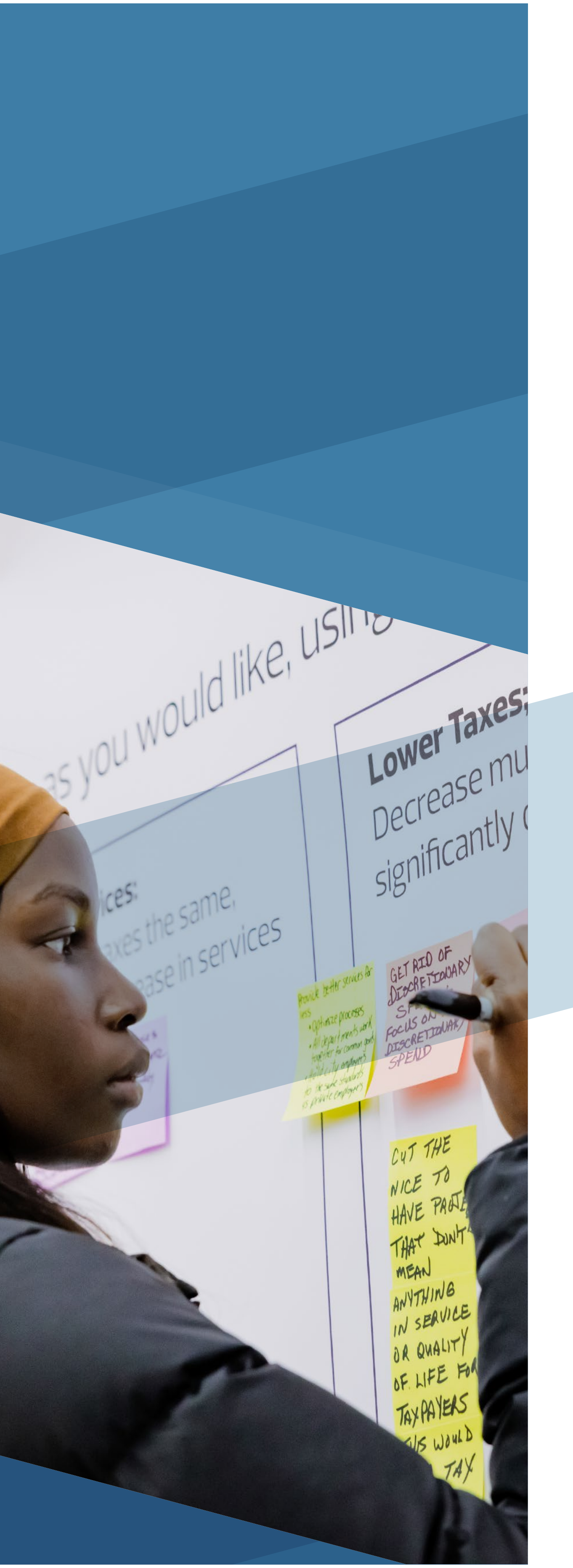
Project background

> The City of Edmonton is building a new four-year budget to take Edmonton from the start of 2027 to the end of 2030. There are two main parts to the 2027–2030 budget: the operating budget the City uses every day to run the programs and services Edmontonians rely on; and the capital budget the City uses for infrastructure—from new structures to maintaining and extending the life of the parks, bridges, paths, roads, buildings and LRT lines that Edmontonians use every day.

Understanding budget choices and trade-offs
The next four-year budget will be about making trade-offs in the context of complex financial choices while considering the diverse needs and perspectives of over 1.2 million Edmontonians. The purpose of this engagement, conducted in April and May 2026, was to gather resident and interest holder input on three core decision areas:

1. **Service Priorities:** What matters most to members of the public?
2. **Trade-offs and Budget Directions:** What do Edmontonians say about balancing the budget, and what trade-offs are they willing to consider?
3. **Revenue Approaches:** What are the public's preferences about taxes, fees and affordability when it comes to the ways the City pays for services?

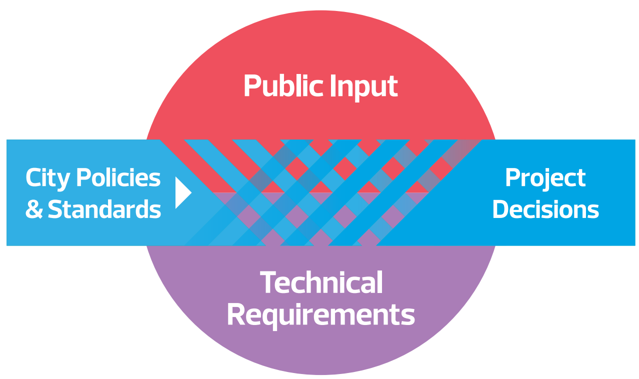
This engagement also sought to gather perspectives on the factors participants felt should guide budget decisions, such as views on alternative revenues or efficiencies and how different tax and service scenarios would affect them and other residents. The feedback collected through this engagement will be an informational resource to help inform City Administration's proposed 2027–2030 budget and support City Council's deliberations as they evaluate different budget options.



What will inform the City budget

The variety of factors that Administration and Council will be considering as they make decisions about the 2027–2030 budget this year will include:

- **Public input** gathered through engagement sessions and activities
- **Long-term goals,** including The City Plan and ConnectEdmonton
- **Council priorities:** economic development, growth management, safety and quality services **and principles**, fiscal sustainability, affordability and relationship driven
- **Financial realities,** including inflation, population growth and affordability
- **Service and infrastructure needs**
- **Opportunities for efficiencies and cost savings**
- **Legislative and regulatory requirements**
- **City of Edmonton Policies, bylaws and procedures**



Reading this Report

Feedback was gathered and analyzed across all methods of input including the online survey, budget tool, in-person engagement activities and interest holder interviews and discussion groups. Where relevant, the specific engagement method has been noted and percentages with base sample sizes are referenced.

"Base" refers to the total number of responses or comments for the given methodology and question. Comments or themes specific to a particular demographic or identity subgroup are highlighted throughout the report when distinct differences emerge.

Reflecting the diversity of opinion

The engagement process for the 2027–30 budget was designed to allow Edmontonians to provide perspectives reflecting the diversity of communities that make up our city, using multiple methods to increase access to the process in ways that met participants where they are. However, as with any public engagement, its design, input and analysis have limitations. Public engagement seeks diverse opinions, experiences and information so that a wide range of perspectives are available to City Administration and Council. This report aims to faithfully reflect the perspectives of those who took part in a broad engagement process, but we are mindful that in any public input exercise, there are always voices and communities that, for a variety of reasons, do not participate.

Reading and interpreting the findings

This report reflects the input of all who participated, but does not provide a statistically representative picture of Edmonton's population.

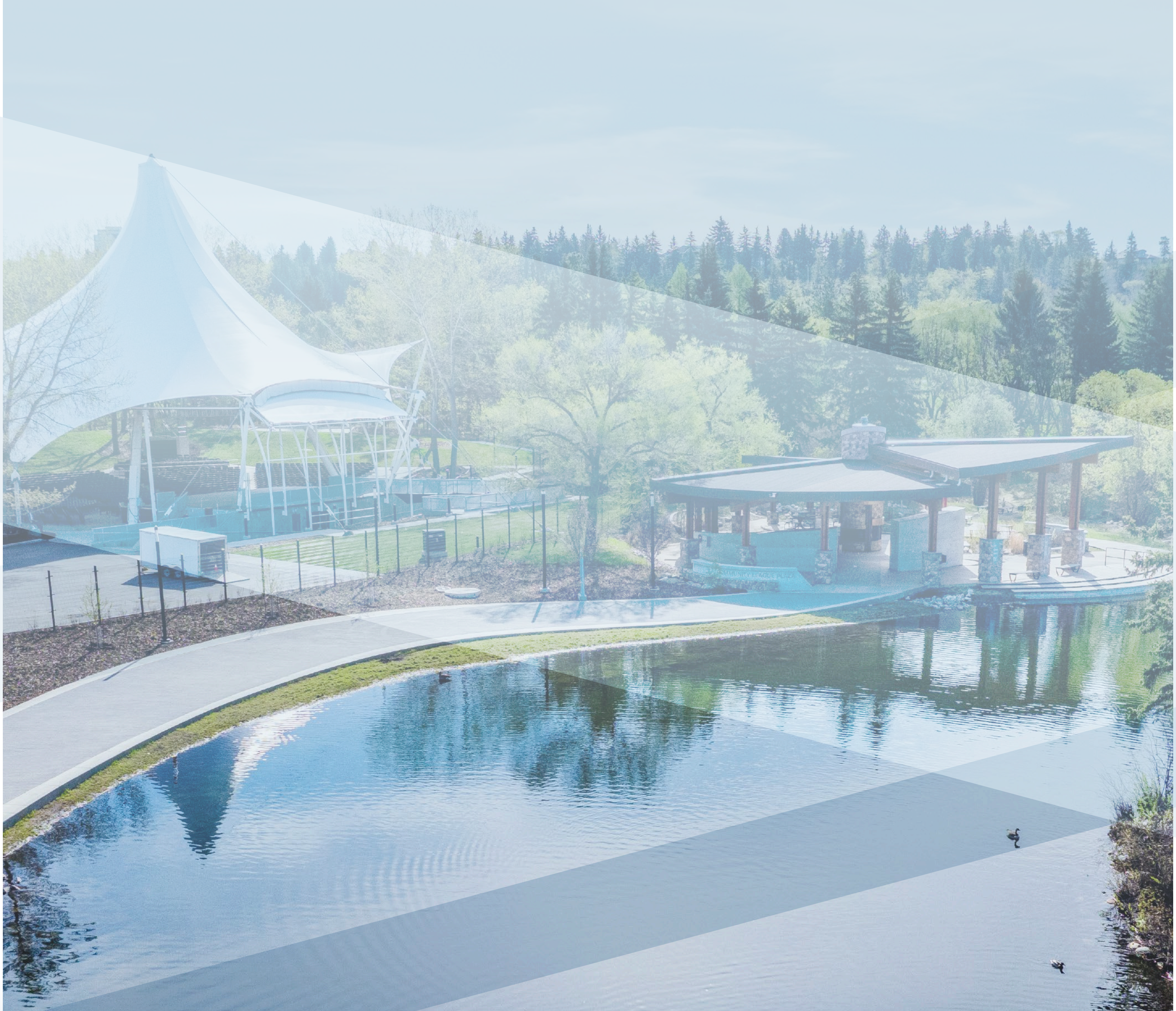
Due to the mixed methodology of this engagement, findings are presented in two forms: quantitative results from closed-ended survey questions and the budget tool; and qualitative findings drawn from open-ended survey questions, in-person sessions (in wards and at community pop-ups) and interest holder interviews and discussion groups.

Quantitative survey results are reported as percentages and should be interpreted according to the stated sample size, or "base" — the total number of responses or comments for a given methodology and question. Where relevant, the specific engagement method is noted alongside percentages and their base.

Qualitative responses are organized into themes, with frequencies expressed as a percentage of responses. These percentages do not indicate what proportion of all participants share that view, or the importance participants placed on it relative to other themes. Because participants raised different topics, expressed different levels of emphasis, and were not asked to comment on every subject in every engagement method, qualitative theme frequencies are not statistically comparable to one another.

An important note for readers of this report is that within the qualitative findings, the wide variety of input from those who participated resulted in a deep inventory of themes. This means that ideas raised by smaller percentages of respondents still represent important perspectives. In some cases, the top theme from a single methodology may have been raised by 20 per cent or fewer participants. Many of these ideas are reported to provide context and nuance about the diversity of perspectives that emerged. In discussion groups and interviews in particular, a single mention may have been the strongest theme to emerge from that conversation. Counts and percentages are provided for transparency, but should not be treated as a sole indicator of importance. Comments or themes specific to a particular demographic or identity subgroup are highlighted throughout the report when distinct differences emerged.

Regardless of the number of mentions, the project team reviewed all feedback received through every methodology. Further themes and feedback can be found in the Budget Engagement 2027–2030 Supplementary Material.



3

Methodology and Engagement Approach

Methodology and Engagement Approach

Public Engagement Approach

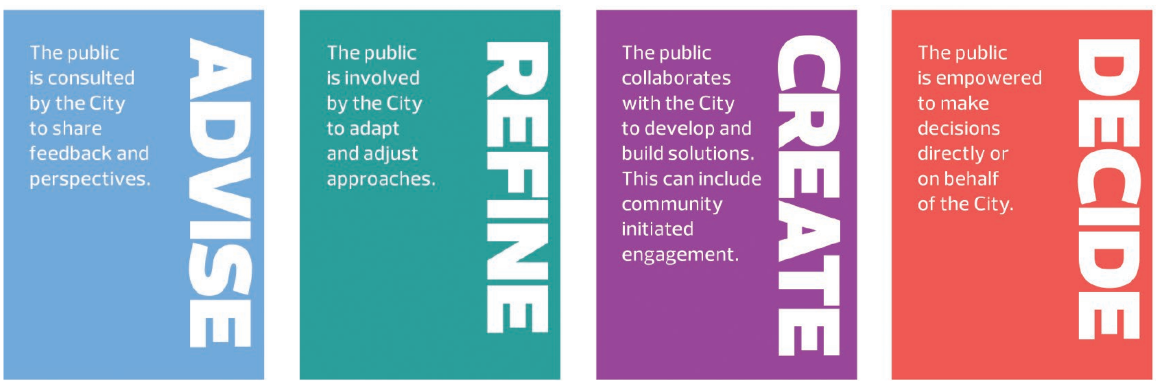
The City's Public Engagement Policy and Framework define the public's level of influence in engagement processes along a spectrum. For this project, participants engaged at the **ADVISE** level on the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum, meaning Administration invited everyone to share their feedback and perspectives for consideration as part of the 2027-2030 budget.

Visit edmonton.ca/PublicEngagement for more information on the City's public engagement process.

How we engaged

The public engagement for the 2027-2030 Budget took place from March 23 to May 14, 2026, offering a mix of online, in-person and targeted outreach methods designed to provide broad and inclusive opportunities for participation across Edmonton that included:

+ General public across all wards
+ Equity-deserving and underrepresented communities and organizations
+ Interest holders, including businesses, non-profits, community organizations, institutions and sector representatives



GBA+ considerations

A Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens was applied throughout the 2027–2030 budget engagement process to support inclusive and accessible participation. Applying a GBA+ lens throughout the process allows the City to better understand residents' diverse perspectives, experiences and needs across demographic groups, to help the City better serve all Edmontonians.

The engagement opportunities were designed to reduce barriers and gather input from a broad range of residents, with intentional outreach to equity-deserving and underrepresented communities.

The locations for the ward sessions were carefully selected to include geographic areas and communities identified through the City's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)[1], allowing for barrier-free access to the engagement space and access to transit. Pop-ups were also held in community locations where underrepresented and under-engaged residents already gather, including libraries and transit centres.

The GBA+ approach aimed to improve representation from diverse communities across Edmonton, through online engagement, ward sessions, pop-up activations, interest holder discussions and targeted outreach activities. Relationship-based outreach through trusted organizations and community partners was particularly effective in supporting participation from equity-deserving communities.

Further details about participant demographics can be found in the Appendix.

[1] The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) utilizes socioeconomic and demographic metrics – including income, age, housing status, and language isolation – to identify areas with the highest barriers to service access.

Engagement streams and participation

Overall, **11,728 participants** engaged across all public engagement streams[2]. Over 460,000 words were submitted, carefully transcribed and coded—enough to fill about a 1,000 page novel.

Engagement Stream	Participation Results
Online survey + The survey was available in seven languages and included responses from the Edmonton Insight Community (EIC) (41%) and the open survey link (59%)	**8,912 submissions including:** + 8,734 Edmonton residents + 120 businesses/corporations + 58 social or community service organizations Of the surveys received, 33 were translated from a language other than English
Online balance the budget tool + An interactive tool that enabled participants to explore budget decision-making under constrained financial conditions	**1,512 submissions including:** + 1,467 Edmonton residents + 15 businesses or corporations + 12 social or community service organizations
Drop-in engagement sessions + Facilitated, 3-hour drop-in sessions held across Edmonton wards to gather input on service priorities and budget trade-offs	**12 sessions, 413 participants**
Staffed pop-up activations + Targeted engagement in accessible locations to reach equity-deserving and underrepresented communities	**11 sessions, 829 participants**
Discussion groups with interest holders + Facilitated discussions with non-profit, business, Indigenous and community organizations	**11 groups, 38 participants**
Interest holder interviews + One-on-one interviews to supplement engagement data and address representation gaps	**17 interviews, 24 participants**

All wards were represented across the various engagements, though participation varied depending on the methodology.

[2] This total represents the cumulative number of responses and interactions across all engagement channels, reflecting the overall feedback volume rather than a unique participant headcount (participants may have engaged in more than one engagement stream).

Participants by Ward and Engagement Methodology

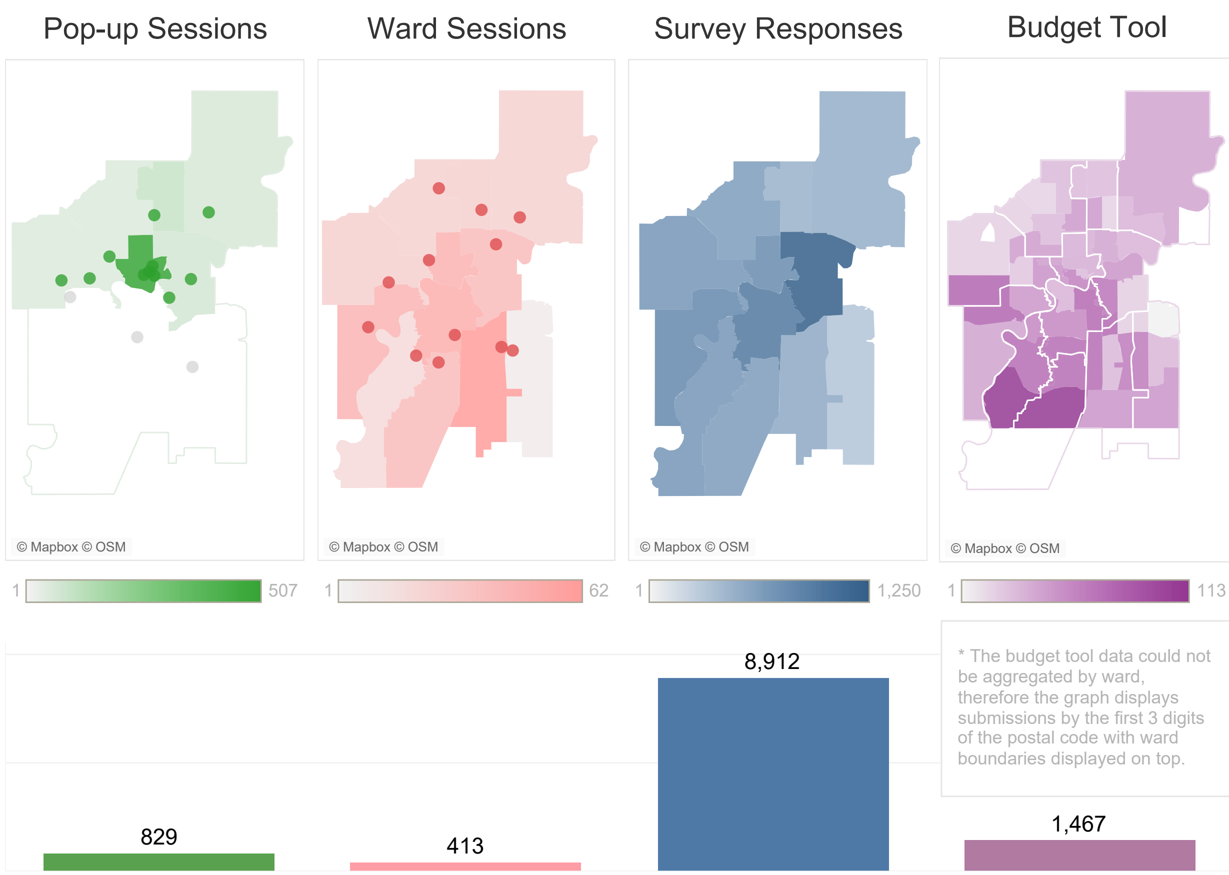


Figure: Geographic location of participants for pop ups, Ward Sessions, Survey and budget tool submissions. This does not include interest holder engagement, as interest holders often had multiple locations or represented many geographic areas. Planned pop-up sessions in south Edmonton neighbourhoods were unable to proceed due to conditions on site[3].

Further details about engagement streams and participation can be found in the Budget Engagement 2027-2030: Supplementary Material.

[3] Due to unforeseen on-site constraints, the planned south Edmonton pop-up sessions were unable to proceed. To maintain demographic equity across wards and areas identified via the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), outreach to these groups was redirected through coordination with relevant community organizations.

How We Communicated and Connected with Edmontonians

The City undertook a substantial communications and marketing campaign from March 23 to May 1, 2026, to raise awareness about budget engagement and encourage participation from as many Edmontonians as possible. This included a media launch and other media relations efforts; an ad campaign with placements at City facilities, on road signs, in community newsletters, on digital screens across Edmonton, on the radio and online; a social media campaign promotion by City Council; and outreach to interested parties. This campaign drove high participation numbers, with 51,979 visits to Engaged Edmonton (up about 20,000 from the last four-year budget engagement), and the attendance of over 413 people at in-person engagement events in each ward.

Method	Results
Advertising Campaign	**34+ million impressions from:** + Radio ads on CISN, UP93, Now, Kiss917 and CHED887 + Online ads on Google display and Meta + Digital screens including billboards, malls, movie theatres and restaurants across Edmonton + Road signs (2/ward) + Ads at City facilities + Community newsletter ads
Social Media Campaign	+ Regular posts on X, Facebook and Instagram stories + Promoted videos saw over 50k views over 12 days
Media Coverage	+ Media launch on March 25, 2026 + Coverage received from CTV, Global, CBC, Edmonton Journal, City News, Top Stories (Lisa MacGregor) and Taproot
Community Outreach	+ Communication led by members of City Council + Promotional toolkit emailed to 200 key interest holders and all Community Leagues; featured in Neighbourhood Repository and Indigenous Relations bulletins + Included/shared by Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL), Business Improvement Area (BIA), Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), Building Industry and Land Development (BILD), Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (ECVO), Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, Edmonton Arts Council, Councillor newsletters and Carfac Alberta. + Stories in community newsletters + Approximately 900 postcards and 250 information handouts distributed

Additional detail on the methodology for this engagement can be found in the Budget Engagement 2027-2030: Supplementary Material.

4

Analysis

Analysis

Survey responses from the open-link survey and those collected via the Edmonton Insight Community (EIC) feed into a single data set. Given that they represent the same survey, were consistent between themes and that overall findings were not being impacted, there was no reason to separate them for analysis. To support a GBA+ approach, subgroup analysis was used to identify differing perspectives among populations (e.g., by age, gender, ward, etc.), with differences between subgroups of ±10% noted as meaningful.

Data and feedback from the budget tool, which required participants to navigate trade-offs and resource allocation priorities to balance the budget, was analyzed separately from the online survey results.

As participation was voluntary, the results are not statistically representative of the broader city of Edmonton population and reflect the views of the engagement participants only. Results should be interpreted with caution and cannot be generalized to reflect Edmontonians as a whole.

For much of this report, quantitative results are rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not always add up to 100 per cent either due to rounding or multiple responses recorded.

All qualitative feedback was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach and broken down by channel and not merged together. All qualitative coding, grouping, theming and thematic analysis was thoroughly reviewed by project team members [4].

[4] Note on In-Person Session Transcription Method: Sticky note responses at in-person sessions were transcribed using optical character recognition (OCR) technology and then verified using digital tools in alignment with the City of Edmonton Generative AI Standard to identify likely transcription errors. This process was used to support accuracy and efficiency in converting handwritten feedback into text. This initial automated review focused on preserving the original wording, meaning, and intent of each participant's response. These tools were not used to reinterpret, summarize, or alter the substance of the feedback; any corrections were limited to clear transcription issues where the intended wording could be reasonably confirmed. All transcriptions were then subject to human review as a final quality-control step to ensure the material remained faithful to the original sticky notes.

5

What We Heard: Key Themes

What We Heard: Key Themes

At in-person sessions, the top messages participants wanted the budget team to hear are about what it's like to live in Edmonton and that it's a great place to live (14%, Base: n=330). However, many participants expressed frustrations with affordability, safety, vibrancy and the overall dynamic of their neighbourhoods changing. These frustrations paint a picture of a City in transition, where quality of life is threatened by several pressures at once.

Overarching themes and strong sentiments

While there were only a few broadly agreed upon insights in the engagement, some recurring themes emerged across the input mechanisms. Below are some of the most common overarching themes.

Prioritize maintenance and completion over new capital projects

Participants across methodologies mentioned a preference for completing existing commitments and maintaining current infrastructure to limit the City's spending and mitigate more costly repairs later. In total, 80 per cent of survey participants agreed with focusing on essential maintenance and rehabilitation projects. In the open-ended responses, some survey participants (3%, Base: n=5,881) also expressed frustration with unfinished projects and costs associated with delays and wanted to see the City demonstrate better financial stewardship of existing commitments before taking on new ones.

The need for maintenance was particularly common around road infrastructure, with 10 per cent (Base: n=5,881) of survey open-ended responses expressing a desire for the City to increase its focus and spending on road maintenance and repairs. Road widening and new road infrastructure were less popular, with eight per cent (Base: n=406) of in-person responses noting this as something the City should invest in less.

Interest holders also mentioned a need to complete existing long-term projects, such as key bike network connections and river valley pathway connections to ensure that original investment is not wasted.

Road maintenance is a clear priority

Road maintenance emerged as one of the most consistently prioritized service areas across digital and in-person public engagement methods. Winter roads and pathways were survey participants' #1 priority when asked to rank 15 different City service categories. A total of 10 per cent (Base: n=5,881) of open-ended survey responses called for increased focus and spending on road maintenance, repairs and upgrades—one of the top five themes participants mentioned when they were asked to share their other thoughts about the City's next four-year budget.

When asked what services they would be willing to increase taxes for, 19 per cent (Base: n=2,076) mentioned road maintenance. This was also echoed in-person, where road maintenance (7%, Base: n=568) and snow and ice control (10%) were two of the top three themes when participants were asked what the City should invest in more.

Notably, some participants expressed a desire to delineate between roads and pathways in the survey and budget tool open-ended responses, as they prioritized the two differently.

Focus on core and essential services

Across all engagement methods, participants emphasized the need for the City to focus on core or essential services. The sentiment was one of the most frequently raised themes in the digital engagement, appearing in 11 per cent of the survey open-ended responses (Base: n=5,881) and 10 per cent of the budget tool open-ended responses (Base: n=965). It was also one of the top themes in the in-person sessions across multiple questions. Participants felt that the City should focus spending on "need to haves" rather than "nice to haves" in this budget to limit tax increases.

However, the definition of core/essential services varied among participants. Some mentioned roads and bridges, others fire and police, and others libraries, recreational facilities and social supports in various combinations. In the survey, winter road and pathway maintenance, fire, EPS, ETS and summer road and pathway maintenance emerged as top priorities for many, but not all.

This is important context for weighing competing priorities, as there were no universal definitions for "core" services.

Participants are resistant to both tax increases and service cuts

The choice between higher taxes or lower services, which is the reality of municipal finance, was one that was rejected by many participants across methodologies, with an expectation for the City to deliver the same or better services within the existing budget. This was one of the defining dynamics of the engagement overall.

The budget tool submissions provided interesting context: when asked to balance the budget under constraints similar to those the City faces, many participants ultimately chose modest tax increases over higher service cuts. This suggests that while the preference for lower taxes without sacrificing services is strong, participants could accept difficult trade-offs when they were faced with limitations.

Close to half of resident survey participants opposed each of the five proposed tax and service trade-off options, ranging from: lower taxes and increase services, freeze taxes and keep services the same and lower taxes and keep services the same. "Maintaining the service status quo by increasing municipal property taxes only to keep up with inflation and maintain services" was the most supported option, with just 39 per cent somewhat/strong support. Notable exceptions are social / community organizations, renters, those under 35 years old, persons with disabilities and those who identified as 2SLGBTQIA+, who were more likely than businesses and resident participants to accept higher taxes to increase services.

Resistance to increased property taxes was heard in qualitative input as well: 11% (Base: n=5,881) of survey open-ended responses raised concerns about taxes being too high (a top five theme from residents, businesses and community organizations), with a similar sentiment heard in 5% (Base: n=965) of the budget tool responses. In-person participants often stressed that increasing property taxes combined with increasing property values has made the tax burden difficult to bear in recent years.

Improve fiscal responsibility and reduce spending participants described as wasteful

Fiscal responsibility was the most common qualitative theme across all methodologies. It was the top theme in open-ended responses from both the survey (23%, Base: n=5,881) and the budget tool (23%, Base: n=965), as well as one of the top two comments from in-person sessions when asked what big change the City should make with its next budget (11%, Base: n=619). Participants called for a more disciplined approach to spending and a reduction in what they described as wasteful spending or "pet projects" to stay within the existing budget, rather than increasing taxes or cutting services.

Interest holders also raised this as one of their top concerns (7% of comments, Base: n=821), and specifically emphasized the importance of longer-term, strategic focus rather than fragmented investment (19%). Interest holders expressed concern that municipal resources are sometimes spread too thinly across too many pilot projects and short-term priorities without sufficient focus on long-term impact and operational sustainability. They also noted that long-term investment could create stronger outcomes and more reliable data to evaluate those outcomes, both for the City and the organizations it funds.

Lastly, some participants mentioned a need for greater accountability and transparency, calling for the City to focus spending around clear KPIs and share outcomes broadly. Interest holders suggested that residents can understand difficult financial realities when those realities are communicated honestly, transparently and with good leadership that can inspire public confidence.

Participants are open to funding services through user fees, rather than the tax levy

Across the engagement, there was a general tolerance for funding City programs and facilities mostly through user fees rather than relying on funding from the tax levy. Participants were the most open to increasing permits and parking fees, though 50 per cent or more of survey participants felt licenses and fees, parking, attractions, rec centres and facility passes, and transit fares should be mostly or entirely funded through user fees. Participants were also supportive of increasing fines.

For services that are often used by lower-income Edmontonians, such as transit fares and recreation passes, participants often favoured tiered fee models, which is consistent with current City practice.

Complex tensions

In some cases, participants had opposing views about a particular spending or revenue category. This section represents some of the most common areas of tension between participants across the methodologies—areas where people felt strongly on opposing sides of a topic.

Community safety and social development programs

When asked to weigh priorities against each other, community safety and social development programs were among the lower priorities (11 out of 15) for resident survey participants—23 per cent of resident participants indicated this as one of their top five service areas that the City should prioritize over the next four-year cycle—however, 45 per cent of community organization participants listed this as a top priority in the survey.

Resident participant views on this category were almost evenly split in the survey open-ended responses, but diverged meaningfully across other methodologies.

However, in-person and interest holder engagements told a different story: when asked to name the biggest change they would make to the budget, 11 per cent (Base: n=619) of the comments in the in-person engagement mentioned increased investment in social support programs; six per cent (Base: n=821) of the comments from interest holder engagement called for greater social supports from the City, noting the importance of these services for the Edmonton's economic and social well-being.

Community organizations were more than twice as likely than residents to list community safety and social development as a top five priority; several interest holder participants noted that Edmonton's non-profits can deliver this work more economically than the City could on its own, making investment in the non-profit sector both a social and a fiscal priority.

The divergence in these responses suggests that those with the most direct knowledge or proximity to these services tended to place a higher value on them than the general survey population.

Public transit

Public transit was a contested service area in the engagement, rating highly in both of the investment and reduction priorities across different methodologies. It was the fourth highest service category priority for survey participants; however, in the budget tool, ETS received the second highest nominal decrease—those under 35 (33%) were less likely to decrease this service than those over 55 (73%).

In the survey, seven per cent of open-ended responses (Base: n=5,881) called for a reduction in transit spending, while five per cent called for an increase, and an additional 1.5 per cent called specifically for an increase in transit safety and security. When asked in the survey what services they would be willing to pay more taxes for, ETS and LRT services was the top response (27%, Base: n=2,076). Increasing focus and spending on public transit was also one of the top five most common themes in the budget tool open-ended responses (8%, Base: n=965).

In-person, transit was the most common theme when participants were asked what the City should invest in more (13% of comments, Base: n= 568), but it also appeared among the top five areas participants wanted the City to invest in less (6% of comments, Base: n=406). Interest holders who mentioned transit investment often supported it, emphasizing that accessible transit is essential for allowing residents to access the services they need and participate in the economy.

When it came to transit fares, 57 per cent of survey resident participants (n=8,734) felt that transit should be mostly/all funded by user fees rather than being mostly/all paid for by taxes. This opinion was not held by as many renters (32%), those under 35 (38%), persons with disabilities (45%) or those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ (29%).

Police spending

Police spending was a nuanced conversation that generated some of the most polarized responses in the engagement. Edmonton Police Service (EPS) ranked third overall in service priorities for resident survey participants, but it was also one of the most commonly referenced service areas that participants accepted or called for reductions to in-person (14% of comments, Base: n=406) and in the survey open-ended responses (6%, Base: n=5,881). However, 13 per cent of open-ended responses from business participants in the survey (Base: n=112) believed the City should invest in EPS more.

EPS received a large average reduction in the budget tool (-$43.76 million or 7% reduction). On the other side, three per cent of survey open-ended responses called for increased EPS investment, citing concerns about crime rates and a need for greater police presence.

The responses from interest holders were similarly nuanced, acknowledging both safety concerns that require police presence as well as a need for community programs and police alternatives to deal with root causes of safety concerns.

Sprawl versus infill development

While affordable housing and homelessness initiatives overall were a higher priority for survey participants (ranked sixth out of 15), participants held conflicting views about how the City should approach population growth, particularly in-person. Both urban sprawl (7% of comments, Base: n=406) and infill housing development (5%) were among the top areas participants wanted the City to invest in less. In the survey, three per cent of open-ended responses (Base: n=5,881) from residents described concerns with infill, but six per cent of business survey open-ended responses (Base: n=94) raised concerns about sprawl and the pace of growth. This tension suggests competing visions about the type of city Edmonton should be and the type of neighbourhoods participants want to live in.

Cycling infrastructure

Despite roads and pathways being a priority for many survey participants, the most common area for reduced investment across the in-person and open-ended digital public engagement was bike lanes. Participants were not asked specifically about bike lanes in any aspect of the engagement; however, it surfaced more often than many other qualitative themes as an area to reduce spending.

In the survey, 17 per cent (Base: n=5,881) of open-ended responses called for a reduction in cycling infrastructure. This was echoed by the budget tool participants (11%, Base: n=965), as well as in-person when participants were asked what the City should invest in less (17% of comments, Base: n=406).

However, it is worth noting that bike lanes also appeared in the top five areas the City should invest in more during the in-person sessions, with seven per cent (Base: n=568) of the comments mentioning bike lanes as a top priority. Some interest holders also emphasized the importance of completing key bike network connections to make cycling a viable transportation option.

This data reflects a strong preference for reduced investment for some, alongside a meaningful minority with an opposing view and a significant portion of participants who did not register bike lanes as either a top or bottom priority.

Unique perspectives from different subgroups

Many findings in this report reflect the aggregate of the participants across methodologies and demographics. However, in some cases, specific groups have a meaningfully different perspective on a topic from the average response. This section highlights some areas where interest holders, community organizations, businesses or demographic subgroups held perspectives that diverged from the others. It is important to highlight these differences as they often reflect the views of those with unique expertise or those who are most directly affected by the topic at hand.

Efficiency versus equity in spending priorities

A tension emerged between participants who called for the City to cut what they viewed as "pet projects" that impacted relatively few people and those who argued that budget decisions should intentionally prioritize the needs of underrepresented or highly affected communities. In total, six per cent of survey participants who provided open-ended responses (Base: n=5,881) shared the view that the City's spending should reflect majority preferences rather than those of a few; however, interest holders often mentioned the importance of intentionally considering the needs of underrepresented and equity-deserving communities (5% of comments, Base: n=821). Community organizations also mentioned increasing support programs for various underrepresented and equity-seeking communities as a top five theme across their open-ended survey responses (Base: n= 58).

This reflects a tension that the City must consider as it balances the diverse needs and voices of all residents in this next budget, particularly when those decisions impact more vulnerable populations.

Arts, culture, tourism, inclusion and economic development: lower public priority, high interest holder priority

In the survey, arts, culture, tourism, inclusion and economic development ranked last among the 15 service categories, with 13 per cent of resident participants placing it among their top five. However, businesses were more likely than residents to prioritize this category, and interest holders often mentioned this as one of the most important service areas for the economic health of the City.

In the open-ended survey comments, five per cent of resident participants mentioned they would be willing to pay more in taxes to increase arts and culture (Base: n=2,076), and six per cent of comments from interest holders across business, non-profit and community organizations (Base: n=821) called for more support for the arts and culture industry, making it one of the top ten most cited themes from these conversations. Those under 35 (49%) and renters (43%) were less likely to decrease this category in the budget tool than the average resident participant (63%).

Interest holders emphasized the importance of investing in making Edmonton worth investing in, and that meaningful business consultation is needed to ensure all decisions—not just budget-related ones—are not disproportionately harming the businesses and organizations that drive economic activity in the City.

Some argue further that the City's economic prosperity is inherently dependent on the vibrancy driven by the arts and culture sectors, and that Edmonton's identity, tourism appeal and economic development all benefit from the health of this sector.

In order to fund this sector efficiently, interest holders emphasized that long-term funding (rather than ad-hoc, one-year or program-restricted grants) would build stability and improve the City's return-on-investment.

Reconciliation requires intentional investment

Indigenous interest holders brought perspectives to the engagement that were not well represented in the broader survey participants. An overarching theme from Indigenous interest holder engagement was that reconciliation cannot happen without intentional investment, and that culturally appropriate, flexible approaches are needed to support and measure Indigenous economic activity and outcomes.

Public safety and vibrancy are imperative to the City's economic health

Public safety was a concern throughout the engagement, both as a quality-of-life concern for resident participants and as an economic consideration for businesses and organizations.

Community safety and social development programs were seen as particularly important to their daily lives by survey participants who identified themselves as renters (72%) vs owners (58%) and women (69%) vs men (53%). More community organization participants (45%, Base: n=58) listed this as a top five priority than resident participants (23%, Base: n=8,734) as well. Indigenous interest holders also reinforced the argument for prevention and care over intervention, noting that poverty is the root cause of many safety and social disorder concerns.

For interest holders more generally, restoring vibrancy was seen as an important step to building a City identity worth investing in, and it requires a coordinated effort that spans safety interventions as well as infrastructure maintenance and arts and culture funding.

Reducing services to limit tax increases: social organizations diverge from the aggregate

Although one of the main themes from this engagement was a concern about increasing taxes, social organizations were more likely to accept increased taxes for the benefit of City services. In the survey, social/community organizations (Base: n=58) were more likely to support the two highest tax options, with 59 per cent supporting Highest Tax; Highest Outcomes and 66 per cent supporting Higher Taxes; Better Services. They were also much more likely to disagree with reducing services to pay less taxes (79%). In the interest holder engagement, some organizations mentioned that they would support a moderate increase in taxes if they were able to see a demonstrated improvement in services, with a particular focus on social services.

Although affordability and the impact of increased taxes was still a concern for these organizations, they tended to see more value in paying for supports through taxes than many others did in the engagement. A few demographic groups in the survey were also more likely to disagree with reducing services to pay less taxes, notably renters (70%), those under 35 (60%) and those who identified as 2SLGBTQIA+ (74%).

Longer-term investments and more strategic planning could improve outcomes across sectors

Businesses, non-profits and community organizations felt that the City has a fragmented, short-term focus, burdensome regulations and disproportionate fees and taxes that are hindering the City's investment outcomes across sectors. Interest holders called for the City to make longer-term commitments that support small business, economic development and social supports, which would generate more meaningful impact than spreading its resources out too thinly across multiple pilots and program-limited grants. This is in line with resident feedback that the City should focus on achieving stronger return on investment.

Interest holder emphasis on downtown

Support for investment in downtown Edmonton received relatively few mentions in the online public engagement, where participants tended to focus on services that affect their daily lives and neighbourhoods. However, interest holders across business, housing, tourism and non-profit sectors emphasized the importance of restoring downtown as a revenue generator for the City of Edmonton (7% of comments, Base: n=821). Interest holders described downtown Edmonton as both an economic engine and a symbolic representation of the city's overall health and identity. Business participants in the survey (Base: n=112) also listed improving public safety downtown as one of the top three things the City could invest in more that would have a positive impact on their business.

That this priority was largely absent from the public engagement but prominent in interest holder discussions highlights a difference in how organizations view economic opportunities compared to residents.

6

What We Heard: Participant Perspectives on Revenues

What We Heard:
Participant Perspectives on Revenues

The City pays for the services it provides through these revenue streams:

+ Property taxes: All property owners in Edmonton pay property taxes, which cover the costs of services used by all residents, businesses and organizations (such as roads or parks)
+ User fees: For some services used directly by individuals (such as recreation centres, building permits or public transit), the City relies on a portion of revenue to be collected through permits, fares and admission/ user fees
+ Other revenues: Other sources of revenue include investment earnings and dividends from the City's ownership of EPCOR

Inflation and population growth increase costs every year, requiring the City to increase its revenue to keep up with current service levels.

Taxes

Property taxes are the City's largest revenue source, representing over 60 per cent of the revenue the City receives. Across engagement methods, participants were asked their opinions about different ways the City should approach taxes and service levels.

Affordability is a root concern

The preference for stable or lower taxes without sacrificing service levels was seen across all engagement mechanisms, though some participants acknowledged that increased municipal taxes may be a necessity for the overall well-being of the City. For instance, when presented with constraints in the budget tool, participants often accepted higher taxes to balance the budget.

Many participants expressed that taxes are too high (survey 11%, Base: n=5,881; budget tool 6.2%, Base: n= 965), and some mentioned that the combination of increased taxes with increased property values has made their recent tax bills particularly difficult to bear.

In interest holder engagement, non-profits and community organizations reported an increasing demand for services as their clientele face rising costs of living, and businesses mentioned that rising taxes and fees are making surrounding municipalities more appealing to businesses than Edmonton.

Addressing inflation

In the survey, 50 per cent or greater of Edmonton resident participants disagreed with each of three statements around how the City could approach taxes and services to address inflation and population growth.

The statement that received the highest support was to significantly reduce services in order to pay moderately less in property taxes; however, this was still the preference of less than half of the survey participants, and some demographics were much more opposed to this, including renters (70% disagree) and those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ (74% disagree).

Those who supported paying more taxes **for services or supports that are underfunded by other orders of government** (28% agree) were asked in an open-ended question about the services they would be willing to pay more for. Their top five responses included (Base: n=2,076):

+ Edmonton Public Transit and LRT services/ETS (27%)
+ Support programs (21%)
+ Snow and ice removal services (20%)
+ Roadway maintenance and repairs (19%)
+ Recreational facilities, services and programs (16%)

Resident participant perspectives on property taxes and service levels

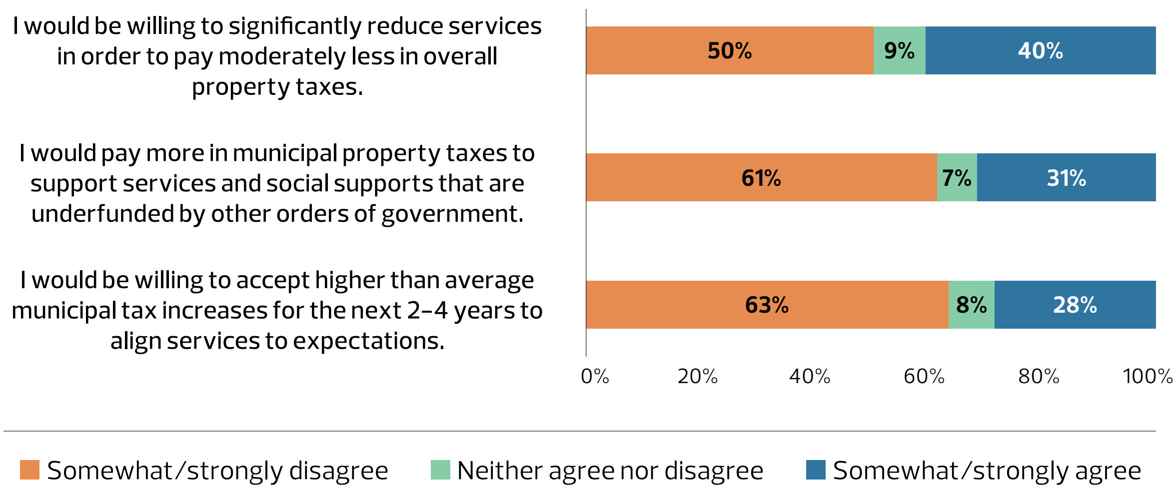


Figure: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: responses from Edmonton resident participants through the online survey (n=8,734). "Don't know" responses (1% for each statement) not shown.

Tax and service trade-offs: a preference for paying slightly more to maintain the status quo

In the survey and the ward session engagements, participants were asked their perspectives around five potential tax/service trade-off scenarios. Although this is not an exhaustive list of options the City could consider, they represent a set of challenging but realistic options that Administration sought to gather input around.

Amongst these proposed five tax and service trade-offs, **maintaining the service status quo by increasing municipal property taxes only to keep up with inflation and maintain services was the most supported option** across resident survey participants (39% somewhat/strongly support). Organizations (26%, Base: n=58), residents (39%, Base: n=8,734) and businesses (34%, Base: n=120) in the survey were most closely aligned in their support of this option as well.

Businesses were mostly aligned with resident perspectives; however, they were most likely to support Lower Taxes; Reduced Services (43%, Base: n=120), a divergence of more than 20% from organizations and 15% from residents.

Community organizations did not align as closely with residents and businesses about the other options, choosing Higher Taxes; Better Services as their preferred strategy (66% somewhat/strongly support, Base: n=58), and strongly opposing both Lower Taxes; Reduced Services (10% somewhat/strongly support, Base: n=58) and Same Taxes; Reduced Services (9% somewhat/strongly support, Base: n=58).

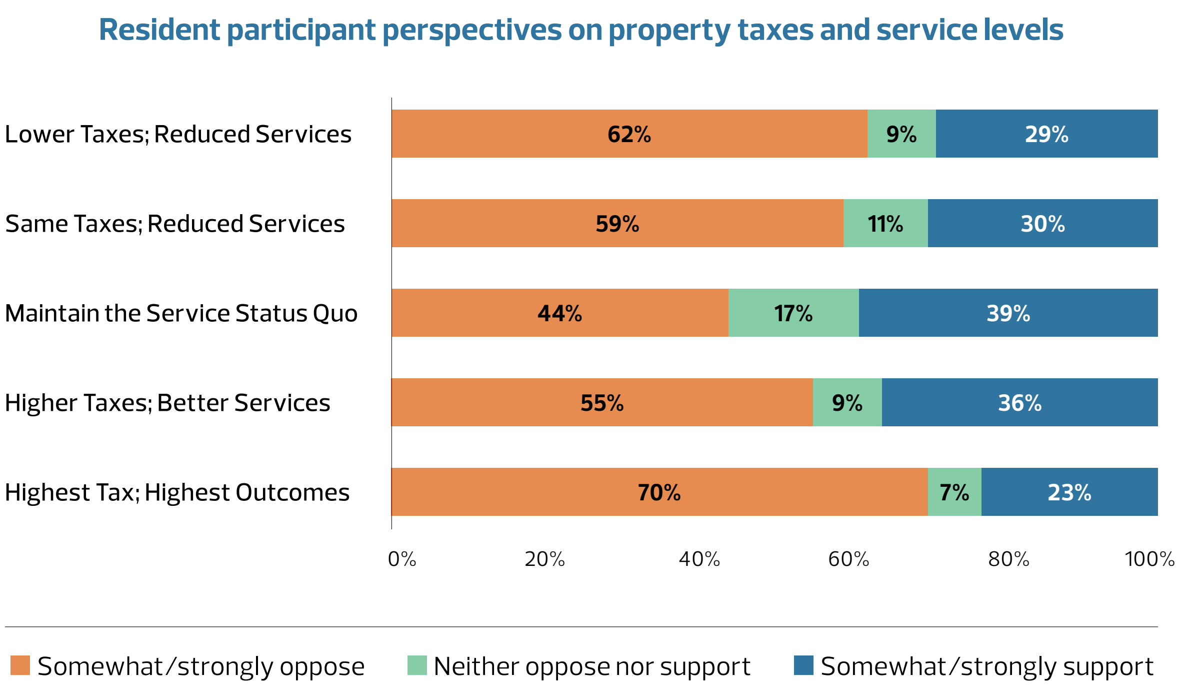


Figure: Please indicate how much you support or oppose each of these tax strategies for the City of Edmonton. Base: responses from Edmonton resident participants through the online survey (n=8,734). Statement options shortened in this figure for readability.

Preferred tax strategies

At the in-person sessions, participants were asked to vote for their preferred tax strategy. Their responses generally aligned with the survey preferences, but with Higher Taxes; Better Services receiving just slightly higher support (33%, Base: n=290) than Maintain the Status Quo (32%).

During the in-person ward sessions, participants were further asked how each scenario might affect their day-to-day life. A common theme across wards was that decreasing services would decrease quality of life for many, and that investment is needed for Edmonton to be a great place to live, especially for future generations.

Some participants felt that none of the five options presented were acceptable. Alternative options tend to reject the idea of trade-offs altogether, and included:

+ Lower taxes and increase services
+ Freeze taxes and keep services the same
+ Lower taxes and keep services the same

These recommendations often asked the City to find efficiencies in order to achieve these outcomes. Some of the common efficiency recommendations are included on page 38 of this report.

	Highest Tax; Highest Outcomes	Higher Taxes;, Better Services	Maintain the Status Quo	Same Taxes: Drop in Services	Reduce Taxes; Reduce Services
TOTAL (n=290)	51	95	92	30	22
	17.6%	32.8%	31.7%	10.3%	7.6%

Figure: Please indicate which tax strategy you prefer for the City of Edmonton. Base: Participants who voted in-person (n=290).

Balancing the budget: meet Peeka the Magpie

Meet Peeka! Peeka is a common Edmonton magpie that represents the **average response across all the Edmontonians** who participated in the budget tool. Like many Edmontonians, Peeka cares about where their property taxes are going. Peeka carefully counted the dollars and cents and came up with a budget using the budget tool. It is important to keep in mind that **Peeka represents the average response received from the budget tool** and that submitting either a balanced budget or a surplus was mandatory. Peeka could not submit a deficit.

The budget tool presented several constraints to simulate similar limitations that Administration and Council face when balancing the real budget. The constraints included:

1. Limits on how much a person was able to increase or decrease certain expenses and revenues
2. Some categories were locked altogether to reflect the similar limitations the City faces
3. Participants started with a $150 million deficit to reflect costs of inflation and population growth

Balancing the budget: revenue — what the City should collect (average)

In the budget tool, participants could adjust both services and revenues in order to balance the budget.

The chart below shows the entire range of revenue submissions by percentage increase/decrease from participants:

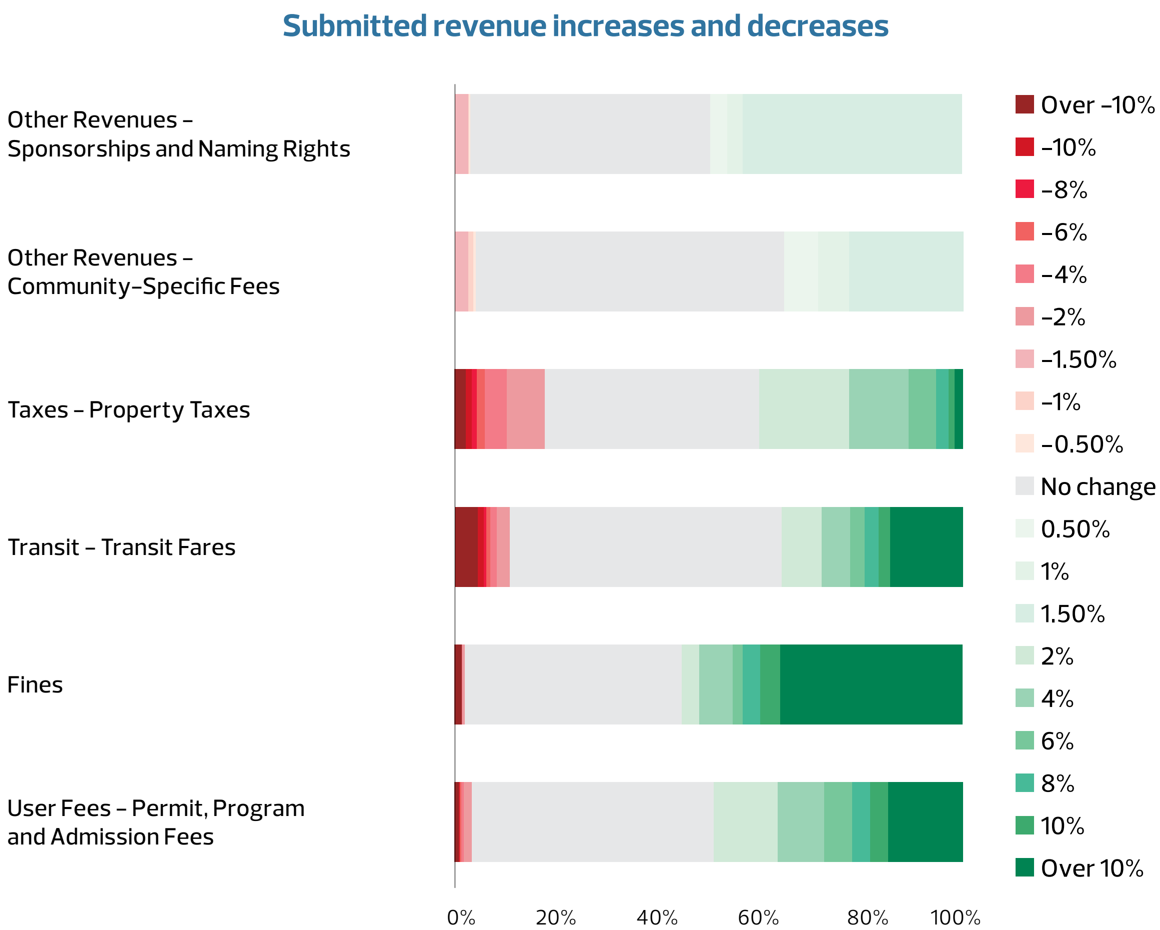


Figure: Percentage of participants – Submitted revenue increases and decreases from budget tool

If Peeka was responsible for building the budget they would like the City to **collect**:

Revenue Category	Final Submitted Amount	Change from Base ($)	Change from Base (%)	Maximum Reduction	Maximum Increase
Property taxes	$2.52 billion	+$18.68 million	+1%	–$1.30 billion	$2.45 billion
Permit, program and admission fees	$369.35 million	+$13.95 million	+4%	–$71.08 million	$71.08 million
Fines	$44.32 million	+$14.30 million	+48%	–$30.03 million	$1.01 billion
Transit fares	$114.35 million	+$2.81 million	+3%	–$22.31 million	$22.31 million
Community-specific fees	$19.26 million	+$72,727	+0.4%	–$287,835	$287,835
Sponsorships and naming rights	$633,099	+$4,099	+0.7%	–$9,435	$9,435

Balancing the budget: property taxes

In the budget tool, property taxes were set at $2.5 billion (rounded to approximately what the City budgeted for this revenue in 2026). Participants were able to increase or decrease this amount by $2.5 billion. While nearly half of resident participants (42%; Base: n=1,467) who interacted with the budget tool kept property taxes the same, nearly the same number of participants (40%) chose to increase property taxes to balance the budget and only 18 per cent decreased property taxes.

It is important to remember that this is the choice participants made when faced with constraints and limitations. It should not necessarily be interpreted as participants wanting to increase taxes; rather, it indicates that participants made the choice to maintain or increase taxes as a trade-off to their other choices, such as maintaining services they value.

Peeka the Magpie would collect:
$2.52 billion in property taxes (an $18.68 million or 1% increase on average).

User fees and fines

For some services used directly by individuals (such as recreation centres, building permits or public transit), the City relies on a portion of revenue to be collected through permits, fares and admission/user fees.

Across methodologies, there was a general tolerance for the City to support the operation of those services mostly through user fees. Participants were also particularly open to seeing licensing and permits increase. Very few participants mentioned user fees being too high in the qualitative responses.

However, some participants across methodologies noted that providing affordable access to services was important for lower-income residents, and recommended keeping or expanding tiered user fees in line with income levels. Some participants also recommended increasing fees for non-residents, such as toll roads or increased admission fees for attractions.

In the survey, for all five services measured, Edmonton resident participants primarily indicated that these should be funded mostly or entirely by user fees. Recreation centre/facility passes and transit fares received a slightly higher proportion of responses who believed the City should fund mostly or all of these services through property taxes (16% and 22%, respectively). Homeowners in particular were more likely than renters to agree with increased user fees.

Resident participant preferences for funding municipal services through property taxes and user fees

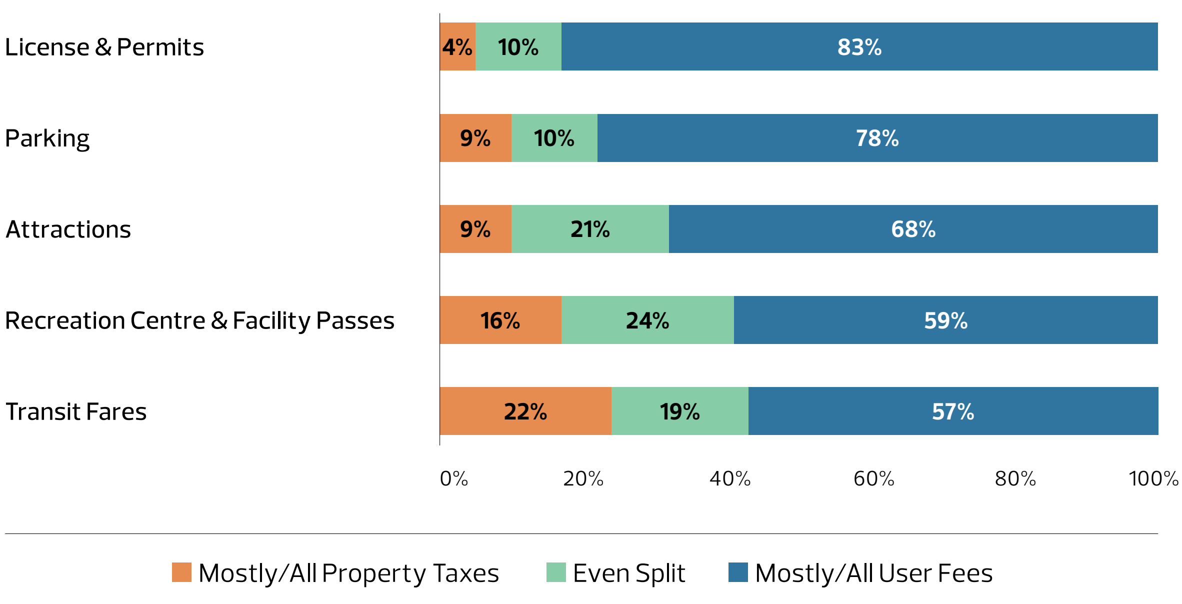


Figure: Please indicate the degree to which you feel each of these services should be funded by user fees or taxes. Base: responses from Edmonton resident participants through the online survey (n=8,734). Don't know responses (1%–4%) not shown.

Balancing the budget: permits, programs and administration fees

In the budget tool, this revenue was set at $355.4 million (rounded to approximately what the City budgeted for this revenue in 2026). Participants were able to increase or decrease this amount by $71.1 million. Like with property taxes, nearly half (48%) of participants kept this revenue source unchanged and the other half (49%) decided to increase this revenue source to balance the budget.

Peeka the Magpie would collect:
$369.35 million in permit, program and admission fees (a $13.95 million or 4% increase on average)

Balancing the budget: fines

Fines were the line item participants were most supportive of increasing.

In the budget tool, this revenue was set at $30 million (rounded to approximately what the City budgeted for this revenue in 2026). Participants were able to increase or decrease this amount by $30 million. Over half (55%) of participants increased this revenue source and (43%) decided to keep this unchanged to balance the budget.

One common theme in the comments was to improve the City's bylaw enforcement generally (survey 3%, Base: n=5,881), with specific recommendations in smaller numbers to increase fines for traffic and bylaw infractions, as well as fines and penalties for non-compliant developers.

Peeka the Magpie would collect:
$44.32 million in fines (a $14.30 million or 48% increase on average)

Balancing the budget: transit fares

In the budget tool, this revenue was set at $111.5 million (rounded to approximately what the City budgeted for this revenue in 2026). Participants were able to increase or decrease this amount by $22.3 million. Over half (54%) of participants kept this revenue source unchanged and (36%) decided to increase this revenue to balance the budget. Those over the age of 55 were more likely to indicate an increase for this revenue source (42%).

Peeka the Magpie would collect:
$114.35 million in transit fares (a $2.81million or 3% increase on average)

Balancing the budget: community-specific fees

In the budget tool, this revenue, which consists mainly of neighbourhood improvement fees, was set at $19.2 million (rounded to approximately what the City budgeted for this revenue in 2026). Participants were able to increase or decrease this amount by $287,835. In total, 61 per cent of participants kept this revenue source unchanged and (35%) decided to increase this revenue to balance the budget.

Peeka the Magpie would collect:
$19.26 million in community-specific fees (a $72,727 or 0.4% increase on average)

Balancing the budget: sponsorships and naming rights

In the budget tool, this revenue was set at $629,000 (rounded to approximately what the City budgeted for this revenue in 2026). Participants were able to increase or decrease this amount by $9,435. Nearly half (47%) of participants kept this revenue source unchanged and 50 per cent decided to increase this revenue to balance the budget.

Peeka the Magpie would collect:
$633,099 in sponsorships and naming rights (a $4,099 or 0.7% increase on average)

Additional detail on participant perspectives on revenue can be found in the Appendix.

7

What We Heard: Participant Perspectives on Expenses and Services

What We Heard:
Participant Perspectives on Expenses and Services

In the online survey engagement, participants were asked to provide input on 15 different service categories that the City provides, ranking their top and bottom five priorities to indicate which services they felt were most important to their individual lives and to Edmonton as a whole. In the budget tool, they were asked to increase or decrease how much the City spends on each service in order to bring the budget to a balance.

While some clear priorities emerged for resident participants from the digital engagement, subgroup analysis and qualitative input provide more nuance around what participants value beyond the limitations of the quantitative tools. Below are some of the most resonate themes around services and City spending.

Balancing the budget: expenses — what the City should spend (average)

Similar to the revenues submitted in the budget tool, participants could adjust the amount the City spends on different services in order to balance the budget. Again, there were limitations on how much a participant could increase or decrease services to provide realistic conditions.

These constraints made balancing the budget a particularly challenging task—Just because Peeka reduced a service in the tool does not necessarily mean they want the City to provide less of this service—in fact, in the survey, many participants rated all of these areas as important to them and to Edmonton as a whole. Instead, it shows what tough trade-offs they were willing to make when faced with these limitations.

The chart below shows the entire range of submissions by % increase/decrease from participants:

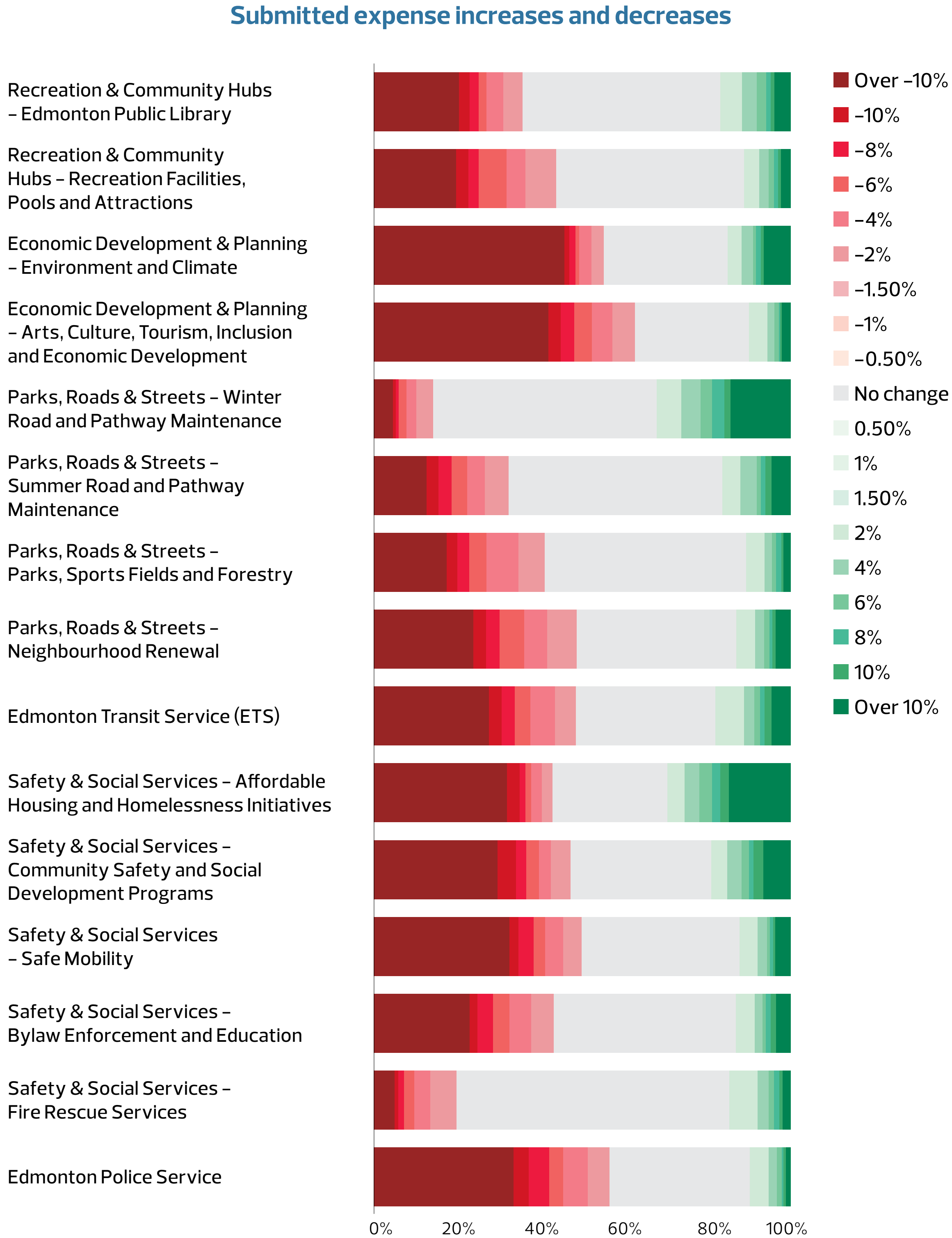


Figure: Percentage of resident participants – Submitted expense increases and decreases from the budget tool

If Peeka was responsible for building the budget they would like the City to **spend**:

Expense Category	Subcategory	Final Submitted Amount	Change from Base ($)	Change from Base (%)	Maximum Reduction	Maximum Increase
Recreation & Community Hubs	Recreation facilities, pools and attractions	$161.90 million	–$6.67 million	–4%	–$33.71 million	$33.71 million
Safety & Social Services	Bylaw enforcement & education	$65.71 million	–$2.90 million	–4%	–$13.72 million	$13.72 million
Safety & Social Services	Affordable housing and homelessness initiatives	$43.36 million	–$1.50 million	–3%	–$8.97 million	$8.97 million
Safety & Social Services	Community safety and social development programs	$52.46 million	–$2.65 million	–5%	–$11.02 million	$11.02 million
Safety & Social Services	Safe mobility	$58.83 million	–$3.84 million	–6%	–$12.53 million	$12.53 million
Recreation & Community Hubs	Edmonton public library	$66.10 million	–$2.25 million	–3%	–$13.67 million	$13.67 million
Edmonton Transit Service (ETS)	Edmonton transit service	$473.41 million	–$24.07 million	–5%	–$99.50 million	$99.50 million
Safety & Social Services	Fire rescue services	$274.73 million	–$1.97 million	–1%	–$55.34 million	$55.34 million
Parks, Roads & Streets	Neighbourhood renewal	$166.32 million	–$8.06 million	–5%	–$34.88 million	$34.88 million
Economic Development & Planning	Arts, culture, tourism, inclusion and economic development	$146.27 million	–$13.48 million	–8%	–$31.95 million	$31.95 million
Parks, Roads & Streets	Parks, sports fields and forestry	$90.25 million	–$3.32 million	–4%	–$18.71 million	$18.71 million
Parks, Roads & Streets	Summer road and pathway maintenance	$75.44 million	–$1.59 million	–2%	–$15.41 million	$15.41 million
Parks, Roads & Streets	Winter road and pathway maintenance	$71.62 million	+$1.53 million	+2%	–$14.02 million	$14.02 million
Edmonton Police Service	Edmonton police service	$576.57 million	–$43.76 million	–7%	–$124.07 million	$124.07 million
Economic Development & Planning	Environment and climate	$23.04 million	–$1.96 million	–8%	–$5 million	$ 5 million

SURVEY: Resident priorities for services and investment: roads and pathways, fire rescue, EPS and ETS

Survey participants rated all services as generally important to the City, with 45 per cent or more participants ranking each as important to their daily life. When survey participants were asked to prioritize services, winter road and path maintenance was a clear stand-out, but it should be noted that the engagement took place shortly after a period of record snowfalls in the City. Winter road and path maintenance was also the only expense category to receive an increase in the budget tool.

Fire Rescue Service, Edmonton Police Service, Edmonton Transit Service and summer road and path maintenance rounded out the top five priorities in the survey. Participants who identified as residents, organizations and businesses alike all ranked Fire Rescue Service as highly important to both Edmonton and their daily lives, one of the most universal statements across the engagement. More nuance around EPS, ETS and summer roads and pathways emerged through qualitative input, which are noted in sections below.

Resident participant priorities for City services and investment

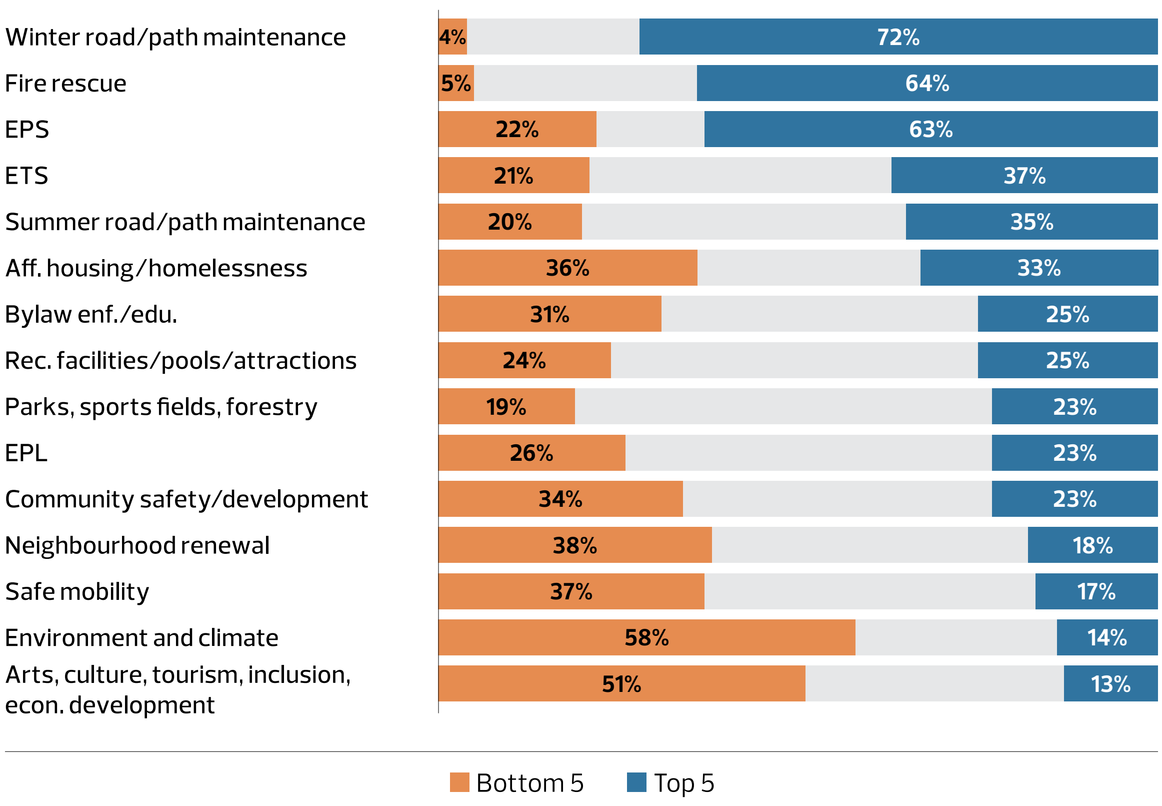


Figure: Which five service areas should the City of Edmonton and Council prioritize the most? Which five service areas are your lowest priority for City investment? Multiple responses recorded as participants could pick up to 5 for each of their top and bottom priorities. Participants could not select a service that was in their top five for their bottom five. Base: resident participants who completed the online survey (n=8,734).

Resident participant perspectives on the importance of municipal services

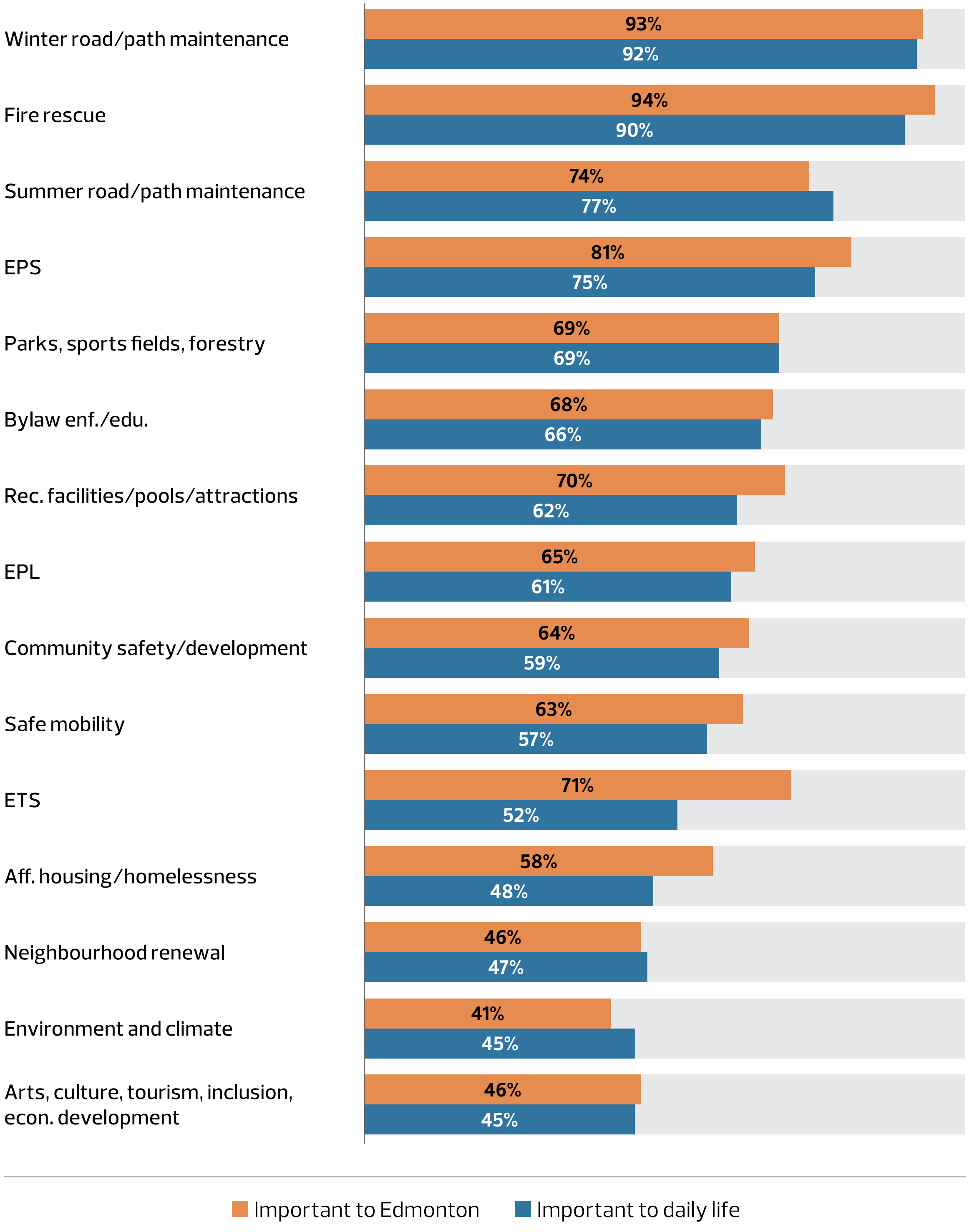


Figure: Per cent of participants that found this service somewhat or very important to their daily life and somewhat or very important to Edmonton by participant group. Base: resident participants who completed the online survey (n=8,734).

A consistent call for the City to focus on core and essential services. Across all engagement methods, one of the most common themes participants expressed was a desire for the City to get back to basics with this budget. However, there was no universal definition of "core services." What one participant saw as essential another saw as wasteful.

In some cases, core services were described as roads and bridges. Others mentioned fire, police, LRT and libraries. Others still considered pools and rec centres to be core services. Different services showed up in different combinations with different emphasis, indicating that what is "core" to one person is not universally shared by others.

Some of the sharpest tensions emerged around community safety and social programs, Edmonton Police Service, Edmonton Transit System and arts, culture, tourism, inclusion and economic development.

For instance, community organizations were more than twice as likely than residents to list community safety and social development as a top five priority; businesses were more likely than residents to prioritize arts, culture, tourism, inclusion and economic development, and interest holders often mentioned this as one of the most important service areas for the economic health of the City.

EPS and ETS were both listed as top-five priorities in the survey, but they also received some of the largest decreases in the budget tool, reflecting possible tensions between how much a participant values a service and how they would fund it when faced with limitations.

Participants suggested opportunities to spend less on bike lanes. Reducing spending on cycling infrastructure was a common qualitative theme across the engagement methodologies, despite this not being an individual service category listed in the survey or budget tool. While this was not a universal theme (many in-person and interest holder participants also called for increase / completion of bike infrastructure), it is nonetheless one of the most consistent pieces of unsolicited qualitative feedback heard throughout the engagement.

Participants expressed that public safety and vibrancy are imperative to the City's economic health. Public safety was a concern throughout the engagement, both as a quality-of-life concern for resident participants and as an economic consideration for business and organization participants. Particularly for interest holders, restoring vibrancy was seen as an important step to building a City identity worth investing in, and it requires a coordinated effort that spans safety interventions as well as infrastructure maintenance and arts and culture funding.

Interest holders expressed that longer-term investments and more strategic planning could improve outcomes across sectors. Some businesses, non-profits and community organizations felt that the City has a fragmented, short-term focus, regulations and fees and taxes that are hindering the City's investment outcomes across sectors. Interest holders called for the City to make longer-term commitments that support small business, economic development and social supports, which would generate more meaningful impact than spreading its resources out across multiple pilots and program-limited grants. This is in line with resident feedback that the City should focus on achieving stronger return on investment.

More detailed findings on each of the 15 service categories can be found in the Appendix.

8

What We Heard: Capital Budget and Other Considerations

What We Heard: Capital Budget and Other Considerations

Capital budget considerations: participants prioritize maintenance and rehabilitation over new construction.

Across all engagement methods, the strongest capital budget theme was a desire to maintain and finish what the City has already started, rather than committing to new capital projects. This reinforces participants' desire for prudent spending and a return to "essentials."

The survey asked participants the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with several statements about how the City could fund its capital investments over the next four years. Survey participants overwhelmingly agreed that the City should focus on essential maintenance and rehabilitation projects (80%). This theme emerged across engagement methodologies, with participants consistently emphasizing maintenance over new projects for this next four-year budget. Some participants noted that investing in maintenance is a critical fiscal priority, noting that deferred maintenance often costs much more in the long run. This theme emerged across sectors and service categories, including roads, recreation infrastructure, neighbourhood renewal projects and affordable/supportive housing.

Opinions were split on new transportation infrastructure and new service infrastructure projects. In both statements, a nearly equal percentage of survey participants agreed and disagreed with focusing on these areas.

Survey participants who identified as a business (Base: n=120) were less likely than residents and organizations to support this (38% agreed to funding new transportation infrastructure and 29 per cent agreed to funding new service infrastructure projects).

When it came to funding new quality of life projects, such as new rec centres and parks, resident survey participants were more likely to disagree (55%). This is also consistent with themes across engagement methods, with many participants noting that the City should avoid the "nice to haves" to rein in spending. However, organizations (41%, Base: n=58) were more likely to agree with the City focusing on these projects.

Interest holders across sectors noted that existing infrastructure should be evaluated for utilization and efficiency before new investments are made to maximize the value of existing facilities. The connection between capital and operating budgets was also raised by interest holders in particular, who noted that new capital investments without sufficient operating funding will undermine the sustainability of those assets.

Just over half of survey participants also demonstrated a preference for closing facilities that are nearing end-of-life with 51 per cent choosing this as their preferred approach to maintaining City infrastructure, rather than raising taxes or reducing services to prioritize that maintenance.

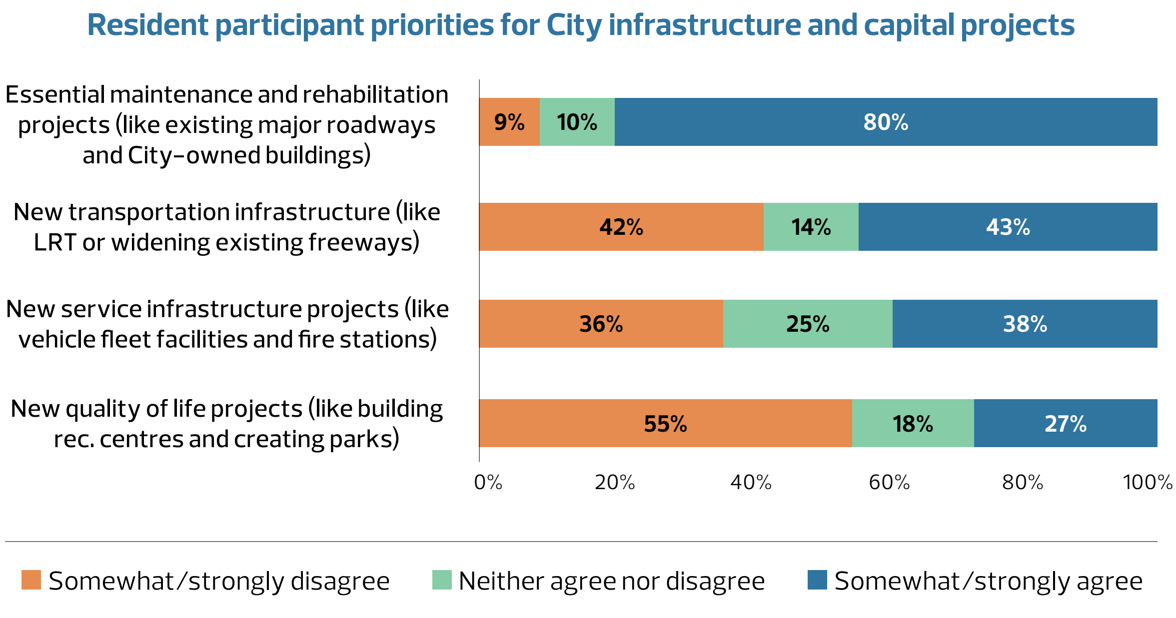


Figure: Thinking about your needs for the next four years, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, keeping in mind that each new project will require additional operating costs? For the next four years, the City should focus on funding... Base: responses from Edmonton residents through the online survey (n=8,734). Don't know/not stated responses (1%–2%) not shown.

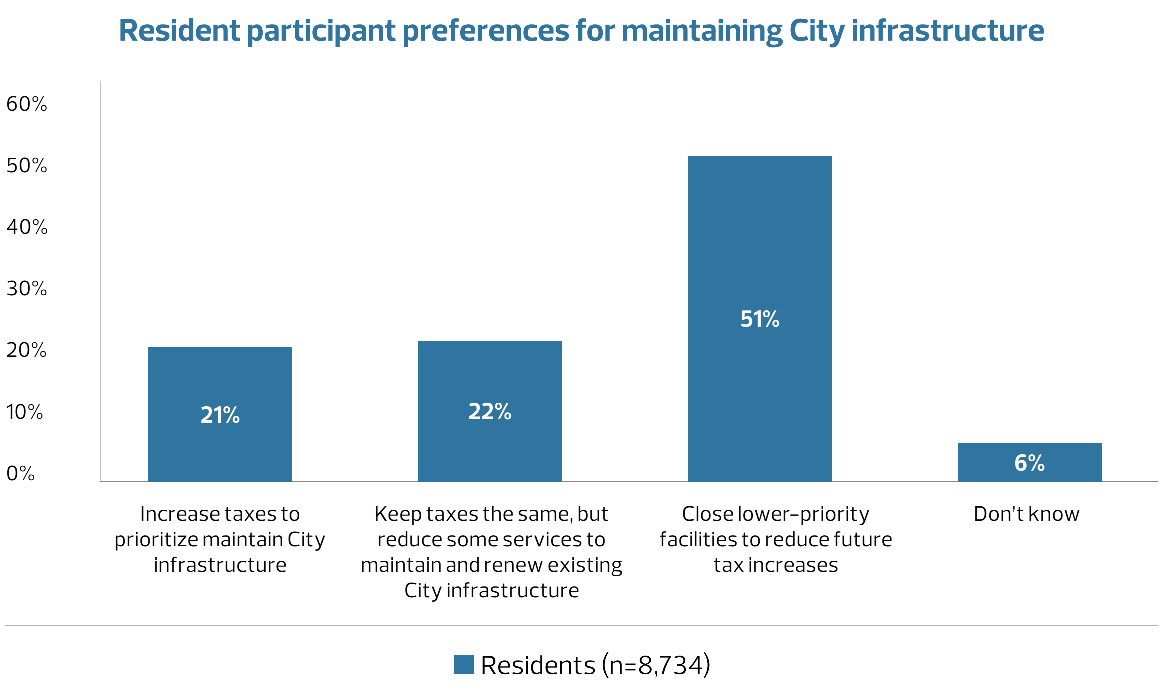


Figure: Per cent of participants that selected their preferred approach to maintaining City infrastructure (single response). Base: responses from Edmonton residents through the online survey (n=8,734).

Additional Thoughts

One of the most common themes from participants across qualitative methodologies was a desire for the City to improve fiscal responsibility and reduce what they described as wasteful spending (survey: 23%, Base: n=5,881; budget tool: 23%, Base: n=965). Similarly, many survey participants (11%) mentioned the City must focus on providing core/essential services, a sentiment that was echoed throughout all methodologies.

When possible, participants were prompted for more detail on these comments to provide specific recommendations or perspectives about how they felt the City could be more efficient. Although many participants did not elaborate, some repeated recommendations emerged, in no particular order included:

+ Eliminate duplication within City operations and between the City and organizations it funds
+ Reduce overlap between Peace Officers and EPS
+ Identify services the City currently provides that could be done more efficiently by private or non-profit organizations and step back from those lines of business
+ Improve cross-department coordination to reduce administrative overlap
+ Attach KPIs and ROI metrics to budget line items and be transparent about outcomes
+ Audit and reduce City staffing levels, specifically at the management level
+ Streamline procurement processes and reduce red tape around permitting, design approvals and development processes to better support private sector investments
+ Audit underutilized City assets and facilities to determine whether the City should continue owning and operating it
+ Audit and improve management of City construction projects to reduce delays, overspending and construction impacts on local businesses
+ Reduce urban sprawl to control growth-related costs
+ Reduce spending on "pet projects" that cater to small groups (Note: some interest holders emphasized that the City should ensure budget decisions intentionally consider the needs of underrepresented groups)

Some participants acknowledged that they feel the City has been making cuts and efficiencies for many years, and noted that there is not much left to reduce without meaningfully impacting people who rely on City services. With that context, this call for efficiency should not be interpreted as a mandate to entirely move out of service delivery.

Additional thoughts and suggestions: revenue generation and return on investment considerations

The need for the City to find additional ways to generate revenue was raised by participants across methodologies, acknowledging that relying primarily on property taxes is not sustainable given population growth and inflationary pressures. Some participants (mentioned in fewer than 4% of the comments in any methodology) offered recommendations for revenue generation and to improve the City's return on investment. Examples include:

+ Introducing tiered tax and user fee structures to increase revenue without over-burdening lower-income Edmontonians
+ Apply higher taxes to second homes and larger lots
+ Increase developer cost-sharing requirements for new subdivisions
+ Consider new or increased fees for non-residents, such as toll roads
+ Improve advocacy and relationships with provincial and federal governments and pursue funding rather than investing City budget on services outside of the municipal mandate
+ Expanding paid parking, including at City-run attractions, as a revenue tool that also encourages transit use (this contradicts a small number of survey participants (<1%) who called for reduced parking fees)
+ Explore private-public partnerships for infrastructure and service delivery, with careful consideration for long-term cost implications and accountability
+ Increase fines for non-compliant builders and those who close roads/sidewalks for construction
+ Focus on pro-business investments, including increasing investment incentives and evaluating regulations, taxes and fees that may make other municipalities more attractive than Edmonton, particularly for small businesses, the industrial sector and mixed use developments
+ Invest in the economic development landscape broadly, looking at models that are successful (e.g., Calgary)
+ Invest in the tourism economy, which some interest holders noted generates a significant return on investment
+ Find ways to regional cost sharing initiatives with surrounding municipalities that rely on Edmonton infrastructure and services
+ Invest in downtown vibrancy as a revenue strategy

Next Steps

Detailed findings from this engagement have been used by City administration to build the next four-year budget. This What We Heard report has been provided to City Council for consideration as they deliberate to deliver the budget in the fall of 2026.

For more information about this process and to stay informed about next steps, please visit **edmonton.ca/budget**.

Want to read more about what we heard and who we heard from?

Complete details are available in the Budget Engagement 2027-2030: Supplementary Material

What We Heard Report 2027–2030

City Budget Public Engagement

Publication Date: August 2026

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Edmonton