

NO: R190

COUNCIL DATE: November 20, 2023

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **November 15, 2023**

FROM: **General Manager, Finance**  
**General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture**

FILE: **0250-07**

SUBJECT: **2024 Budget – Outcome of Budget Engagement**

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Finance Department and Parks, Recreation & Culture Department recommends that Council receive this report for information.

## INTENT

The intent of this report is to provide Council with information related to the budget engagement process undertaken regarding the City's 2024 budget.

## BACKGROUND

In undertaking its 2024 budget process, the City completed a budget engagement process prior to the preparation of the draft 2024-2028 Five Year Financial Plan. This process followed a similar framework to the 2023 budget engagement process conducted earlier this year.

## DISCUSSION

The budget engagement process provided an early opportunity to listen and learn from residents and businesses regarding their budget input and priorities for the city and preferred funding methods. Engagement opportunities included an online survey and six open houses held in each of Surrey's six communities. Engagement opportunities were promoted through extensive digital communications and multichannel marketing efforts aimed at directing traffic to a digital hub project website [surrey.ca/budget2024](https://surrey.ca/budget2024). Further targeted outreach was conducted through a series of street team activations both in central business district areas and high traffic commercial locations. Part of the outreach included direct engagement with invited business leaders who participated in focused meetings to learn about business-related budget considerations and provide input. The online survey was also available through libraries and city hall which provided residents and businesses with an opportunity to provide individual, anonymous input into the budgeting process including input on revenue options, spending priorities and future investment.

## Engagement Results

The summary data showed that 506 participants attended open houses in person and 2,865 surveys were completed. Overall, 50,725 community members were reached through community outreach and informed of the budget process and responded to engagement efforts through web and project page visits; direct social media engagements (through clicks, reactions, comments and shares); CitySpeaks panel member activity; newsletter subscriber emails; on street digital billboard advertisements; and community newspaper ads and media releases.

The survey was open and accessible to anyone wishing to provide feedback and respondents were self-selected and not part of a random sample. Therefore, the results are not considered statistically representative; however, the results do effectively represent the opinions of those who responded to the survey. The data highlights that 96% of the survey respondents reported that they lived in Surrey while 28% were noted to work in Surrey, 15% owned property in Surrey, and 6% owned a business in Surrey.

Key findings of the survey results revealed the following:

- The majority of respondents support a moderate property tax and user fee increase to help maintain or expand program and service offerings.
- Top 3 Core Services and Program Priorities: transportation infrastructure, public safety and emergency services, and parks and open space.
- Top 3 Emerging Issue Priorities: housing supply and affordability, homelessness, and sustainable transportation.
- Top 3 Capital Investment Priorities: transportation infrastructure, fire halls and emergency equipment, and engineering infrastructure.
- 77% want more information on how tax dollars are allocated.
- 98% indicated that future engagement feedback was desired with most respondents preferring online or digital engagement (online surveys, virtual event or social media) over in-person sessions (open houses, focus groups or public hearings).

A comprehensive summary report that includes the full demographic profile is attached in the 2024 Budget Engagement Report (Appendix “I”).

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this budget engagement process will help to inform the City’s 2024 budget. Findings regarding how participants would like to be included in future budget engagement processes will be utilized to inform subsequent public engagement initiatives.

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Appendix “I”: 2024 Budget Engagement Report

City of Surrey

# 2024 Budget Engagement Report



October 19, 2023

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## Executive Summary

Engagement for the City of Surrey's 2024 budget has provided an opportunity for the City to hear the public's input as the next financial plan is developed. The project spanned from August to October 2023, from planning, to implementation and analysis.

Objectives for the 2024 budget engagement aimed to inform, consult and involve the community. The project aimed to share information about the budget processes and provide an opportunity for the public to share their funding priorities and preferred funding mechanisms.

There were two opportunities for the public to learn about the project and share their input:

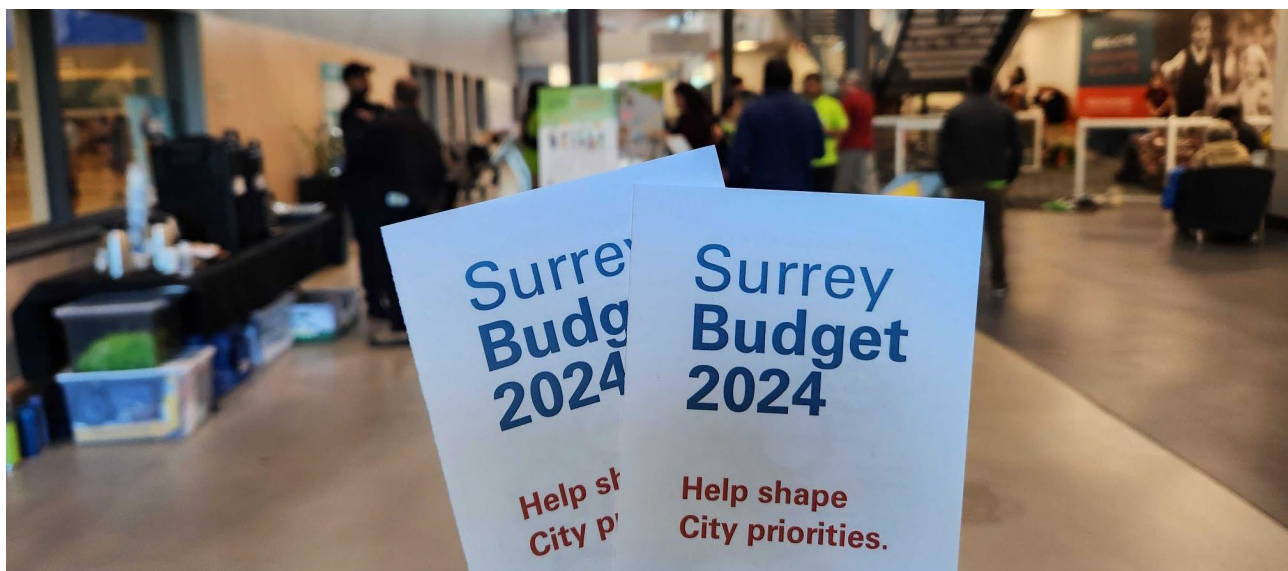
- 1) An online survey (open from September 11 to October 5)
- 2) Six in-person open houses (hosted at every Surrey town centre at a mix of recreation centres and commercial destinations)

The open houses and online survey generated over 3,300 engagement interactions combined. Additionally, more than 50,000 community members were informed about the project, for example by visiting the engagement webpage, receiving an e-newsletter, or viewing posts on the City's social channels.

From this engagement, the City heard that respondents' top priorities for the budget include transportation (74%), policing and public safety (67%) and engineering infrastructure (including roads and transportation) (60%). Key emerging priorities were housing supply and affordability (62%), homelessness (51%) and sustainable transportation (48%). Comments also revealed general opposition to tax increases. Forty-six percent of respondents wish to maintain programs and services, while 32% would like to see them expanded. The City will carefully consider these priorities as the 2024 budget is developed.

Awareness of the budget and process was higher this year than previously, with 50% somewhat or very aware of the budget and process (8% higher than 2023 budget engagement). This suggests that knowledge around municipal budgeting and civic processes is increasing in Surrey.

Additionally, the City's Economic Development division consulted Surrey's business community through two separate roundtable dialogues.



## Context and Background

### Why We Engaged the Community

Surrey City Council values community when making important decisions. For the second year in a row, the City has led engagement to involve the community in its budget planning process by sharing information and providing opportunities to hear from the Surrey community on their priorities and preferred funding mechanism. This helps Council understand what’s important to the people of Surrey when creating the budget. It also helps the City prepare for future budget planning and engagement projects.



### Summary of 2024 Budget Engagement

Engagement for the 2024 Budget featured an online survey and six community open houses—one in each of Surrey’s town centres.

#### How feedback will be used

The feedback received from this engagement will help inform Council to address the decision statement (below). The decision statement is a clear direction for the outcome this engagement supports. It explains what is being decided and why the community may want to engage in the process.

The decision statement is: **Surrey Council will adopt the 2024-2028 Financial Plan.**

#### Community involvement

There were a total of 3,371 interactions and 50,725 informed community members on the budget engagement process. Input received through the online survey and open houses has been summarized in this report and will be used to help Council understand community needs and funding preferences when adopting the 2024 budget.

### Project Milestones

Event	Date
Online survey launch	September 11
Online survey promotion	September 11–October 5
City Centre open house	September 23
Guildford open house	September 24
Fleetwood open house	September 26
Cloverdale open house	September 30
South Surrey open house	October 1
Newton open house	October 5
Online survey close	October 5

### Engagement Phases

The project’s public engagement plan included three phases as follows.

#### 1. Planning (August to September 2023)

The purpose of this engagement phase was to plan for implementation, including the development of an engagement and communications plan, project scheduling and creation of engagement and communications materials (such as the online survey, engagement webpage, FAQs, video, and open house information boards).

#### 2. Implementation (September to October 2023)

Engagement implementation included promoting the engagement opportunities and gathering input from diverse Surrey residents to inform the 2024 budget. A media release was issued on September 11 to mark the launch of the engagement webpage and online survey, which was complemented by a robust multi-channel communications campaign. Respondents were asked to provide feedback on the following:

- Priorities for the 2024 budget;
- Preferred funding mechanisms for the 2024 budget; and
- How they would like to be involved in future engagements on the City’s budgeting processes.

#### 3. Analysis and Reporting (October 2023)

Analysis and reporting on the engagement process and results were completed in October once the open houses were completed and the online survey had closed. Both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed and have been compiled into a final report, attached as Appendix “1” in this report. Results will be shared through digital channels including direct follow-up to CitySpeaks participants, updates to eNews subscribers and posting the engagement report to the engagement webpage.

How we engaged and informed the community

## By The Numbers

# 3,371 Engagement Interactions



An “engagement interaction” is defined as an individual that has participated in the 2024 budget engagement process by attending an open house event (including intentional and walk-by interactions) and completing the survey.

**2,865** survey respondents

**506** open house engagements

# 50,725 Informed Community Members



“Informed” is defined as an individual that has made at least one visit to the engagement website, received a direct email, or engaged through social media.

**5,609** engagement page and website visits

**5,518** CitySpeaks panel members

**39,384** emails sent to eNews subscribers

**214** direct social media engagements through clicks, reactions, comments, and shares



## Communications Goal and Objectives

### Communications Goal

*To share information with the Surrey community about how the City budget is developed, seek input on priorities and available funding mechanisms and communicate how participants' feedback will help inform Council's decision on the 2024 Budget.*

### Communications Objectives

The communications objectives detail the information shared with key audiences as well as the anticipated results.

1. To share information and promote the engagement opportunities (specifically, the open houses and online survey) so that community members and key interested parties are motivated to learn more and engage in the 2024 budget process.
2. To build common understanding about the City's budget process, including the constraints and opportunities within the process as well as available funding mechanisms.
3. To communicate how and when the 2024 budget will be adopted and how community feedback will help to inform the budget.
4. To report back on what was learned in the engagement process and next steps for the 2024 budget process (following engagement).



## Engagement Goal and Objectives

### Engagement Goal

*To receive input from community members on their key priorities and preferred funding mechanisms to balance the 2024 budget.*

### Engagement Objectives

The engagement objectives detail who will be engaged, at what level of the engagement spectrum, for what result, and by when. All engagement aligned with the City of Surrey [Public Engagement Strategy](#), including IAP2 best practices. The City of Surrey's engagement spectrum is available in [Appendix A](#).

1. To share about the budget development process and opportunities to give input. (INFORM)
2. To receive feedback on funding priorities so that Council can better understand what is most important to the community when adopting the 2024 budget. (CONSULT)
3. To receive feedback on the funding mechanisms the community believes are most equitable and manageable. (CONSULT)
4. To receive input on how the community would like to be engaged on future budget planning processes, including engagement opportunities, communications techniques, and topics of interest. (INVOLVE)

### Engagement Techniques

The engagement for the 2024 budget offered two opportunities for the public to learn about the project and share their input: a series of in-person open houses and an online survey. A third opportunity specifically invited the Surrey business community to participate in a roundtable discussion.

#### Open Houses

Six open houses were hosted at town centres across Surrey. Drawing on learnings from 2023 budget engagement in January 2023, the engagement expanded beyond recreation centres to include commercial destinations. Each open house offered a number of opportunities for the public to engage, including:

- Information boards with details on the budget, budget process and engagement process;
- Takeaway cards and an informational brochure with the survey QR code and URL, which were handed out to participants;
- A comment board for participants to add sticky notes with their budget comments and questions;
- City staff at the open house who greeted participants, encouraged them to take the survey and review the information boards, helped anyone who required assistance to take the survey, responded to questions and offered translation into multiple languages;
- City staff pairs roving at nearby secondary locations to promote the open house and online survey;
- Kiosks with iPads that participants could use to complete the online survey;
- Printed surveys for participants to fill out; and
- Refreshments and games for participants.

Open house location	Date	Time	Interactions*
City Centre (between Central City Mall and the Surrey Central SkyTrain Station)	September 23	11am–1pm	68
Guildford Recreation Centre (with a secondary location at the Guildford Mall)	September 24	11am–1pm	95
Surrey Sport & Leisure Complex	September 26	4–6pm	81
The Agriplex (outside the Cloverdale Craft Fair, with a secondary location at the Cloverdale Recreation Centre)	September 30	11am–1pm	76
South Surrey Recreation Centre	October 1	11am–1pm	52
Newton Business District (137 Street near 73A Avenue, with a secondary location at the Newton Recreation Centre)	October 5	4–6pm	134
<b>Total number of interactions</b>			<b>506</b>

\*Interactions refer to participants who were engaged (by receiving a card, looking at a board, having a conversation with staff, completing the survey, or adding a comment).

### Online Survey

An online survey was hosted on the engagement webpage on Engage Surrey from September 11 to October 5, 2023, using an open link. It included a series of multiple choice and rating questions to gather feedback from respondents, as well as one open ended question that provided an opportunity for any additional comments. See [Appendix B](#) for the survey questionnaire. The survey included the option to enter to win one of three \$100 prizes.

A total of 2,865 participants responded to the survey. Of these respondents, 2,631 completed the entire survey while 234 partially completed it. Partial completes include those who responded to three or more questions. The survey respondents were self-selected and not a random sample; therefore, the results are not considered statistically representative.

Almost half of the survey respondents were CitySpeaks panel members who received a direct invitation to participate. The second most common method of accessing the survey was through the project webpage.

Source	Number of respondents
CitySpeaks panel	1,490
City website	812
City eNews	319
Open house iPad kiosks (including seven paper surveys entered manually at the open houses)	92
Other/referrals	152
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,865</b>

### Roundtable Discussions with the Business Community

Surrey’s business community was consulted as an important stakeholder as part of the 2024 budget engagement. The City’s three Chambers of Commerce (Surrey Board of Trade, South Surrey and White Rock Chamber of Commerce and the Cloverdale Chamber of Commerce) and four Business Associations (Downtown Surrey BIA, Fleetwood BIA, Newton BIA and Cloverdale BIA) were invited to participate in two separate roundtable dialogues.



### Who We Engaged - Participant Demographics

#### Online Survey and Open House Interactions

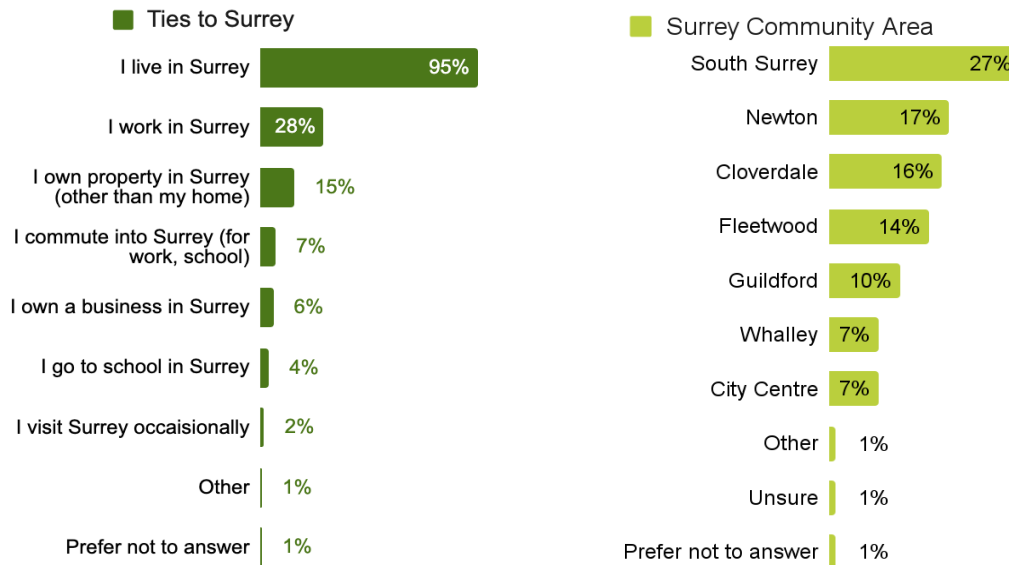
Between the online survey and the open houses, there were a total of 3,371 interactions throughout the budget engagement process.

Activity	Interactions
Open Houses	506
Online Survey	2,865
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,371</b>

#### Location

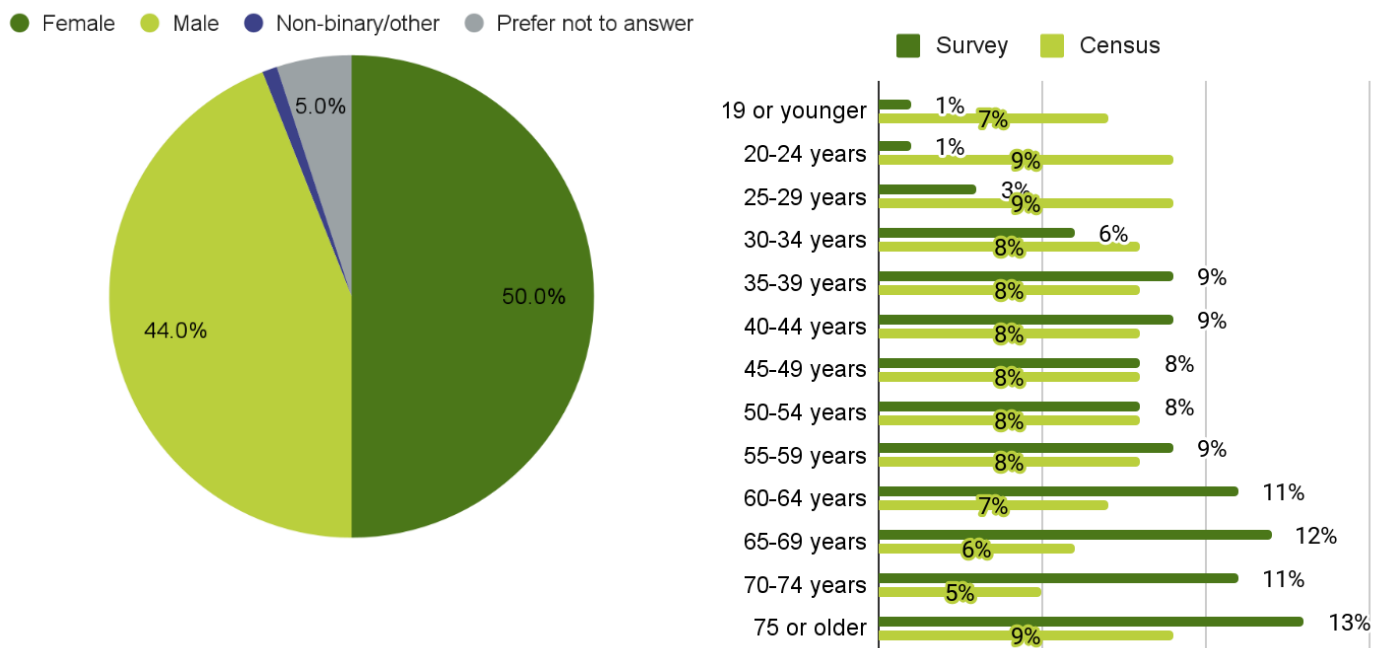
Most survey respondents (95%) reported that they live in Surrey while 28% also work in Surrey, 15% own property in Surrey other than their principal residence, 6% own a business in Surrey and another 7% commute into Surrey. Fewer go to school in Surrey or were visitors.

All Surrey community areas were represented through the online survey, with the largest number of respondents living in South Surrey (27%), followed by Newton (17%), Cloverdale (16%), Fleetwood (14%), Guildford (10%), Whalley (7%) and City Centre (7%).



### Gender and Age

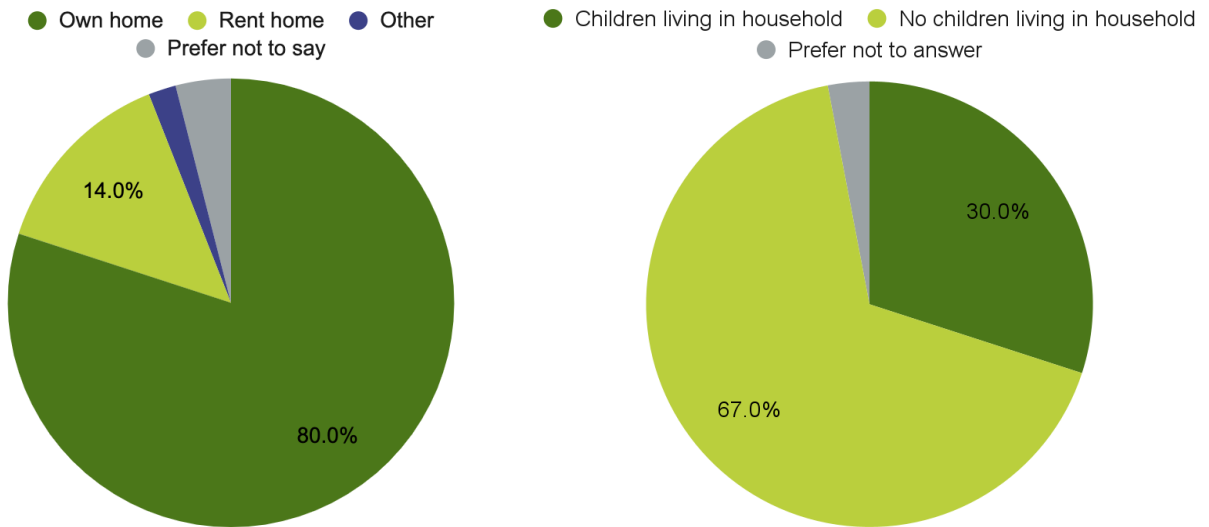
The demographics reflected a gender balance of 50% female, 44% male and 1% non-binary/other, while 5% chose not to indicate their gender. One in ten respondents (11%) were under the age of 35, which is a smaller proportion than Surrey’s overall population of that age range according to the 2021 Census (33% between age 15-34). About a third (34%) were between 35 and 54, which is comparable to the Census (32%). The majority of respondents (56%) were 55 and over, indicating an over-representation compared to Census data (35%).



### Household Demographics

The majority (80%) of respondents owned a home, which is proportionally higher in comparison to 2021 Census rates of 69%. The remaining 14% were renters (proportionally lower than the 31% Census comparison).

In terms of household makeup, three in ten respondents (31%) had children under the age of 18 in their household.



The majority of respondents (91%) noted English as the language spoken most often at home. For other languages spoken most often at home, 9% of respondents spoke Punjabi, 5% French, 4% Mandarin, 4% Hindi, 3% Tagalog and 2% Cantonese. Six additional languages (Urdu, Korean, Arabic, Spanish, Vietnamese and German) reported under 1% representation with a total of 6% in the “other language” category. This is proportionally lower than the Census comparison for languages spoken across Surrey. However, from the 2023 budget engagement to 2024, the City has reached double the number of Punjabi and Cantonese speakers and triple the number of Tagalog and French speakers (proportionally).

Respondents were also asked to identify (optionally) whether they belonged to other groups, with the following results:

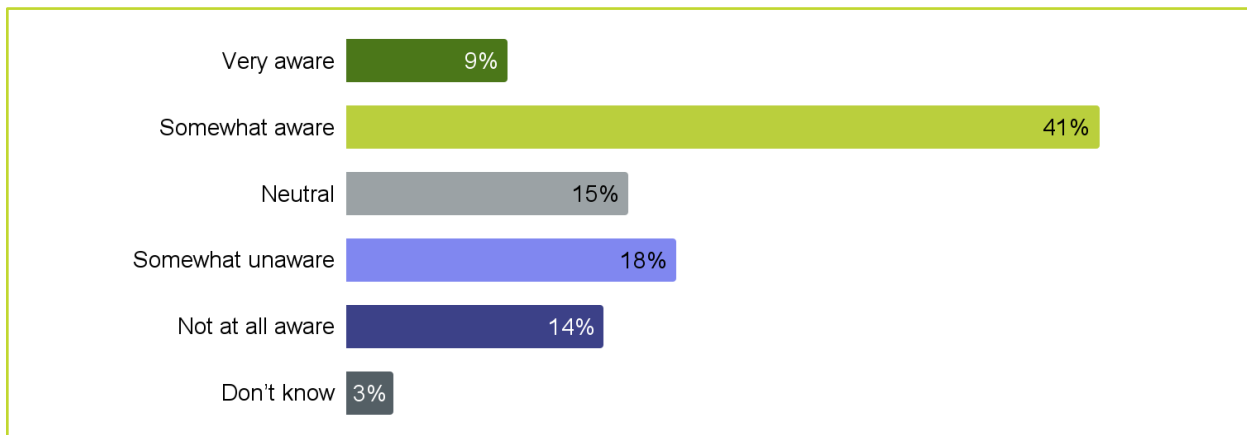
Self-identification	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Visible minority	362	15%
Immigrant	325	13%
Low income	242	10%
Person with a disability	198	8%
LGBTQ2S+	100	4%
Indigenous	41	2%
Refugee	9	<1%
Student	47	2%
Prefer not to answer	295	12%



## Engagement Results

### Awareness of Budget and Process

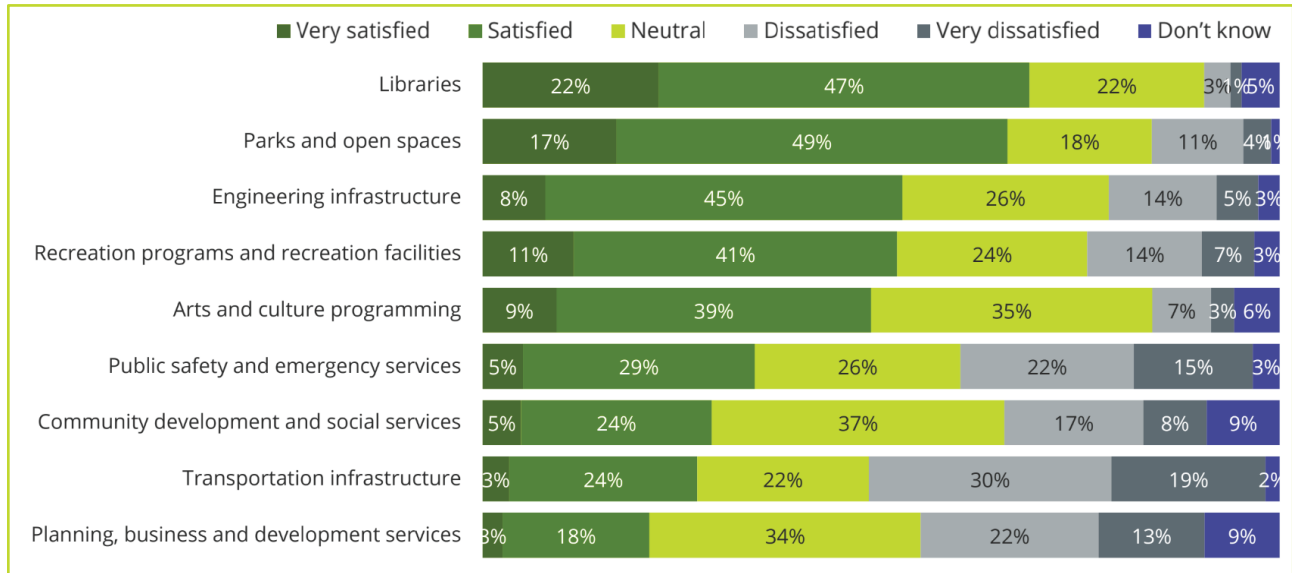
Half of the respondents noted familiarity with how and where budget dollars are spent, with 50% somewhat or very aware. Thirty-two percent were somewhat unaware or not aware at all. Awareness of the budget and process was higher this year than last year by 8%. During engagement for the 2023 Budget, 42% reported being somewhat or very aware and 42% somewhat unaware or not aware at all.



### Satisfaction with Services, Amenities, and Infrastructure

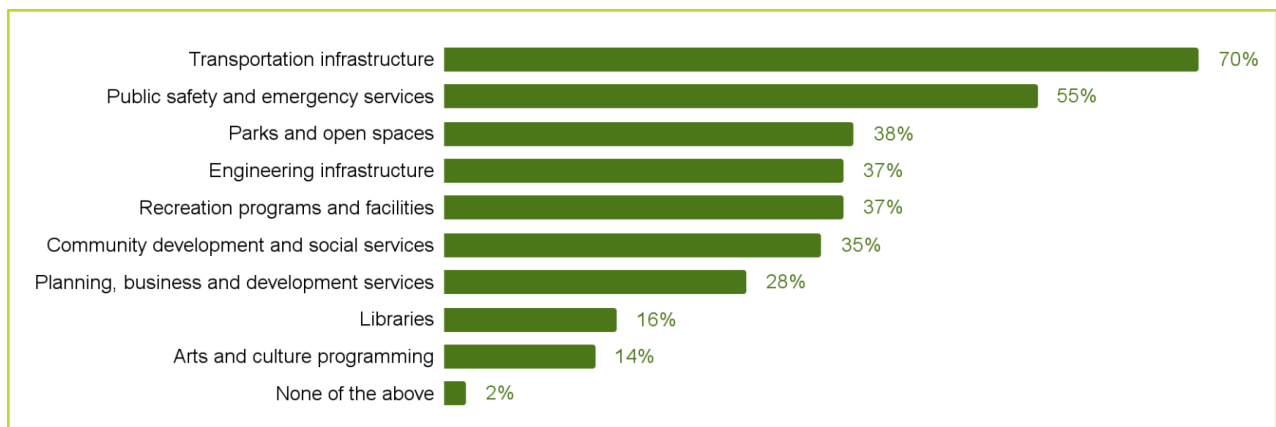
Respondents were asked about their level of satisfaction with existing City services, amenities and infrastructure projects. Respondents were most commonly satisfied with libraries, parks and open spaces, engineering infrastructure and recreation programs and recreation facilities.

Transportation infrastructure received the lowest level of satisfaction (with 49% of respondents dissatisfied or very dissatisfied). Planning, business and development services also received a low level of satisfaction (with only 21% of respondents satisfied or very satisfied).



### Future Investments in Services, Amenities, and Infrastructure

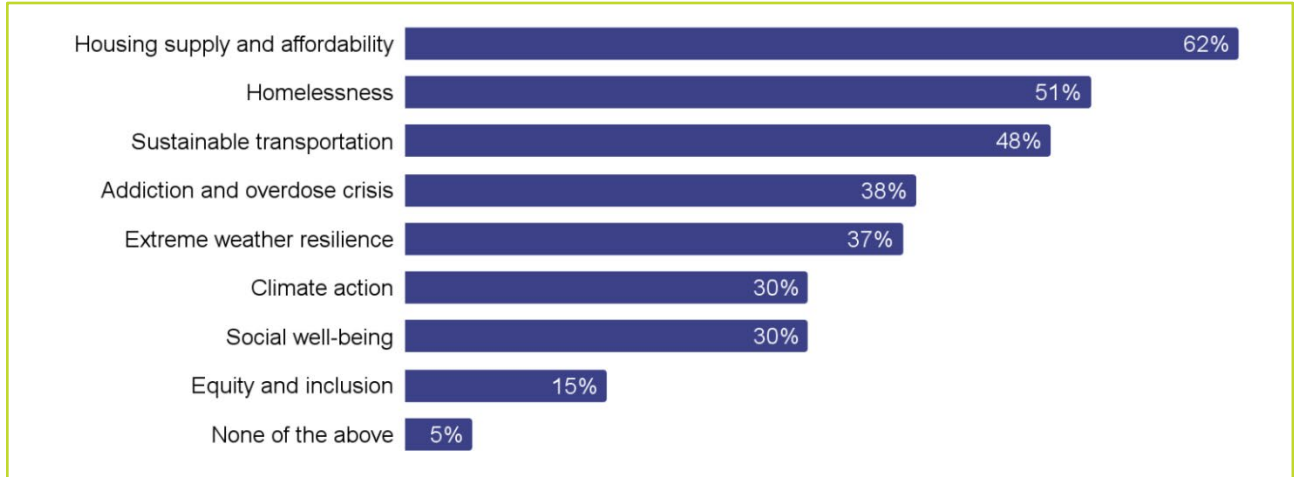
Respondents were asked to prioritize the City’s core services, amenities, and infrastructure projects for the 2024 Budget—based on how important each of the areas was to them considering that each compete for funding dollars. The majority of respondents prioritised transportation infrastructure (70%) as well as public safety and emergency services (55%). Additional priorities included parks and open spaces, engineering infrastructure and recreation programs and facilities.



### Emerging Priorities

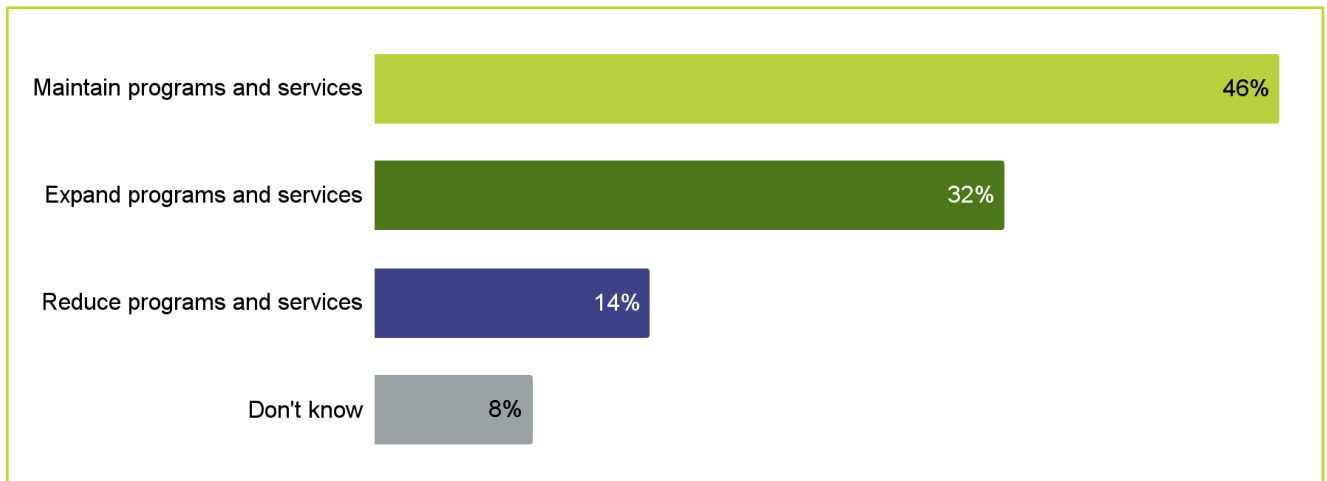
Respondents were asked to consider how they would like to see new and growing issues prioritised for the 2024 budget. Top priorities identified by the majority of respondents included housing supply and affordability (62%) and homelessness (51%). Respondents also shared that they would like to see investment towards sustainable transportation, addiction and the overdose crisis, and resilience in the context of extreme weather.



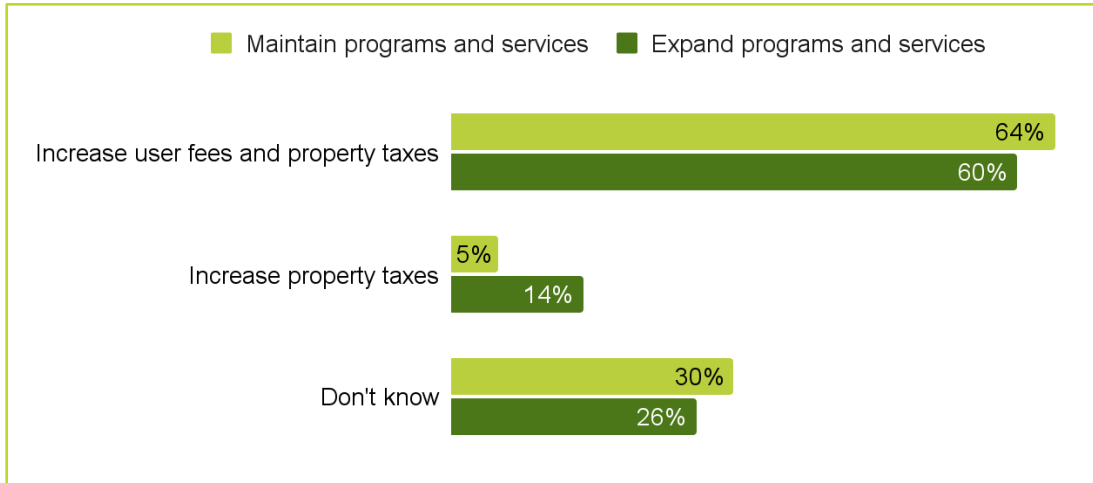


### Balancing the Budget

The survey asked respondents to comment on whether the City should expand, maintain, or reduce the programs and services that it offers—while addressing growth and new priorities. The highest level of support was received for maintaining the City’s programs and services (46%).

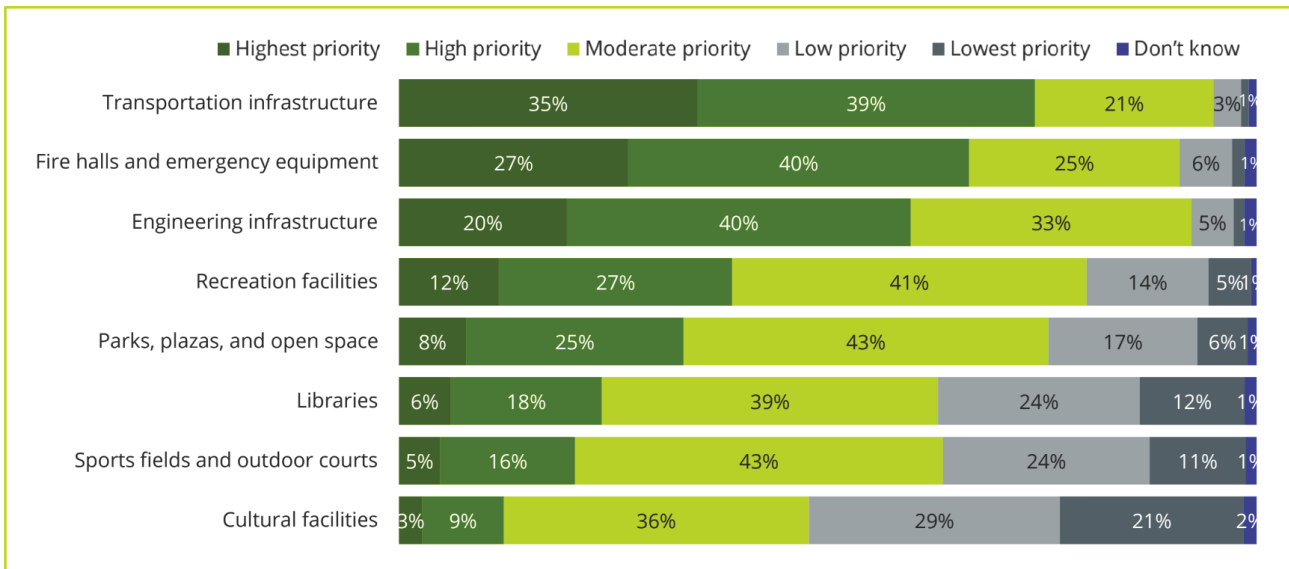


Respondents who answered that programs and services should be expanded most commonly noted that funding should be provided through a combination of increasing user fees and property taxes (60%). Similarly, respondents who answered that programs and services should be maintained most commonly noted that funding should be generated through a combination of increased user fees and property taxes (64%). Overall, respondents were less supportive of the options that relied only on property tax increases.



### Capital Investments

Respondents were asked to prioritize the City’s capital investments for the 2024 budget, based on how important each of the areas was to them. Respondents' top priorities included transportation infrastructure, fire halls and emergency equipment and engineering infrastructure.



## Open Ended Comments

After the multiple choice questions in the survey, respondents were invited to share any additional comments. Participants who attended the open houses were also invited to provide their comments on the budget, which they wrote onto sticky notes that were recorded. A total of 2,632 open ended comments were received.

A number of themes emerged through the survey responses and open house comments. The most common themes are detailed below. A number of these themes reflect the priorities and concerns heard during the 2023 budget engagement period.

### 1) Police and Public Safety

The most commonly mentioned theme was around police and public safety. This theme included a range of different perspectives. Respondents mentioned the ongoing transition from the RCMP to the Surrey Police Service (SPS), as well as preferences for generally investing more or less into community safety.

Regarding policing, a significant number of comments indicated either support or concern for transitioning from the RCMP to the SPS. The main concern around transitioning to the SPS was the additional cost and burden on taxpayers. Some expressed a willingness to pay more for the SPS and enhanced public safety services. Others stated they would rather their tax dollars be used elsewhere and that a tax increase to fund police should be avoided. A number of respondents requested additional information around the cost and implications of the transition. These comments prioritized transparency in the decision making process (around the transition and generally around policing) as well as efficiency in the implementation of policing and the need to finalize a decision.

Respondents also spoke to generally improving public safety. This included enhanced support and resources allocated toward fire, ambulance and police services (such as crime prevention programs and visibility through patrolling). Many comments mentioned the need for improved safety in Surrey, but did not detail how that should be achieved. For example, comments such as “policing and emergency services are the highest of priorities” and “I don’t feel safe in my city” reflect the general sentiment of many respondents.

### 2) Community Services and Amenities

As the second most common theme, respondents highlighted a variety of services and amenities as priorities for the City to invest in through the next budget. In particular, respondents identified the needs of specific groups across Surrey, including youth, seniors and families with children. A top priority for youth and seniors alike was access to more activities and programs (such as physical activity and recreation) in close proximity to where they live. A top concern for families included long waitlists and limited programs at recreation centres (especially swimming pools) as well as concern around limited child care across Surrey.

Respondents also identified infrastructure priorities. This included new and expanded hospital and health care facilities, medical services, social support services and family services. Another top priority was to expand funding to support new and existing public schools in neighbourhoods across the city. A number of comments expressed that essential services and physical infrastructure should be prioritized over anything non-essential (with non-essential examples given such as social issues, climate change, arts and culture and programs for newcomers).

New and expanded recreational facilities were another top priority in many neighbourhoods. This was noted most commonly for Whalley, Newton, City Centre, Cloverdale, Clayton and South Surrey. There was a range of additional services and amenities that respondents hoped to see supported and expanded, including parks, arts and culture, food and employment options and general community spaces (such as theatres, libraries and sports courts). A common sentiment was that Surrey's community services and amenities will need to expand to address growth and support quality of life across the city.

### **3) Taxes and Affordability**

Even while many respondents' open-ended comments supported the transition to the SPS and to improve City services and amenities, there were very few comments in support of a tax increase. Respondents commonly shared that the City should not raise property taxes at all, or should reduce current tax levels. The general sentiment shared was that residents cannot afford any more increases (after the last increase of 12.5% and in the face of rising costs of living). Many of these comments noted that other streams of revenue should be explored in order to balance the budget (such as improving efficiency within City processes, see item 5 on Internal City Processes and Efficiencies).

Many of the same comments that expressed concern over current and future tax rates also noted the rising costs of inflation and the housing crisis. On the cost of living generally, respondents had concern over the price of groceries, post-secondary education and public transit. A significant number of respondents also commented on the cost of housing and shared the need for more housing; improved development processes; incentives to rent and build rental units; the need for density; the need to limit new luxury homes; and other ways of reducing housing costs (such as removing parking minimums). A number of respondents (in particular seniors and newcomers) shared concern that they will need to move from Surrey because of rising costs.

Overall, there was both strong concern around raising taxes and a hopeful sentiment that the City will spend money wisely in order to accommodate residents who are already financially stressed.

### **4) Roads and Transportation**

Another common theme was around roads and transportation, including transportation services and infrastructure. Within this theme, respondents brought up the need for road maintenance and safety improvements. This included fixing existing roads and expanding the road network as well as investing in safety improvements, for example around intersections and traffic enforcement. Similarly, existing sidewalks require maintenance and new sidewalks are needed in the neighbourhoods where none exist, raising concerns around accessibility, safety and walkability (especially for seniors).

Many respondents suggested improving public transit. This included expansion of rapid transit (such as light rail and SkyTrain) and improvements to the existing bus services (such as the quality of bus stops and regularity of service). Other respondents spoke to the need to improve a variety of transportation options across Surrey, including car share and active modes of transportation. Many of these comments suggested expanding the cycling network and improving cycling infrastructure, such as bike lanes and crosswalks. A smaller number commented against new cycling infrastructure and suggested its removal.

In many cases, these road and transportation comments were framed around efficiently meeting the diverse needs of a growing population—offering options for transportation, reducing commute times and mitigating congestion on the roads.

## 5) Internal City Processes and Efficiencies

Respondents shared a number of comments around internal City processes related to the budget. A number of respondents suggested that the City look internally to review its processes and expenditures in order to maximize efficiency and help alleviate budget pressures. Examples included: exploring ways to mitigate additional staffing and administrative costs; reviewing City business processes to increase efficiency; automating City processes where applicable; reducing non-essential City services and contracting out some City services. Additionally, a number of comments shared that the City should remain within its jurisdiction and avoid overlapping with any provincial or federal programs or taxes.

Respondents also shared external opportunities for the City to improve efficiency and increase revenue. A common recommendation was more strict bylaw enforcement, especially around parking infractions, unpermitted construction and collecting fees from unregistered secondary suites. A number of respondents agreed that tax collection should be more representative of the number of people and families living in a home.

There was a general sentiment for the City to “stay on top of” new development, both as an opportunity for additional revenue and as an opportunity to address acute housing needs. A number of respondents encouraged the City to increase building permit costs and better regulate new development (in particular to allow more density and rental units to accommodate a growing population). There were also suggestions to raise the taxes on casinos and raise property tax for luxury homes on agriculturally zoned land.

## 6) Additional Themes

The following themes were mentioned less commonly, but still heard from a number of open-ended responses through the survey and the open houses.

**Addressing homelessness, mental health and addiction:** Responses on this theme were widely varied, with comments mentioning equally that the City should and should not be responsible for addressing social issues such as homelessness, mental health and addiction. A number of people shared that the City and the community alike need to care for all residents (investing proactively in community based programs for vulnerable populations, including youth and seniors).

**Improving open spaces, greenery and parks across the city:** Responses on this theme largely shared that more outdoor green spaces are needed, especially to accommodate a growing population. Additional comments included that investment in natural infrastructure is cost effective in the long term (for residents’ well-being, as well as to protect City infrastructure). Several comments noted that outdoor spaces cater to all backgrounds and abilities (seniors, youth, families, people with dogs, etc.). However, existing trees and green spaces need to be maintained and protected from the impacts of development.

**Addressing climate change and sustainability:** A number of comments agreed that climate change is a top priority for cities and communities right now. The City plays a key role in addressing climate change and mitigating its impacts, for example investing in sustainable transportation and incentivising buildings to transition to cleaner energy sources. Respondents want to see the City leading the way with strong climate related policy and practices (and, for example, not leaving City cars idling). A smaller number of comments did not support the City’s efforts to address climate change and considered adaptation strategies (like tree canopy) to be non-essential.

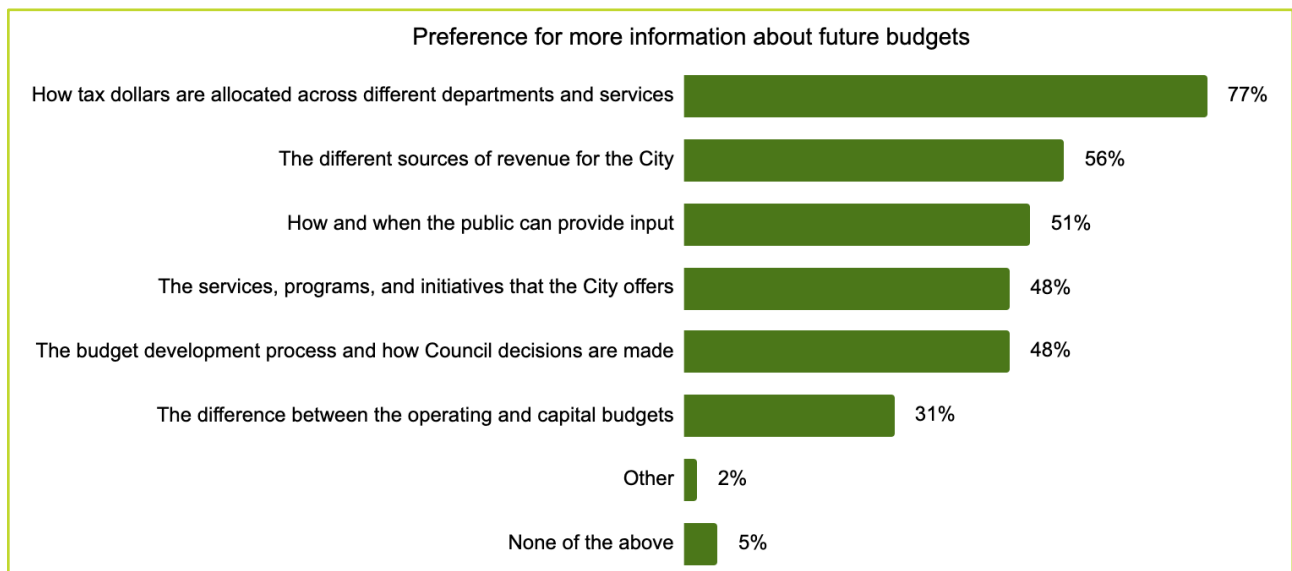
**Concern around population growth and increasing diversity:** Some respondents shared concern over the rate of new development, immigration and overcrowding in Surrey, sharing that the City should play a more active role in regulating growth. A small number of comments share concern over the use of City funds to accommodate newcomers and address related social issues.

**Improving equity and community well-being:** Respondents shared a range of comments on improving equity, inclusion and well-being through the annual budget. Comments highlighted the need to offer services for new immigrants and to create communities where residents can age in place (with programs and facilities that are easy for seniors to access). Comments also highlighted the need for the City to support local business and employment opportunities. A number of comments also spoke to allowing cannabis dispensaries in Surrey (noting personal and economic benefits).

**Future budget processes:** Respondents shared their priorities for future budget processes, including easily accessible and digestible information about the budget (its development and outcomes). A number of respondents commented that they are not as well-informed as they would like to be and recognized that they could learn more. There was also a shared sentiment for more decisive action—efficient and timely implementation—from the City after the budget is developed each year.

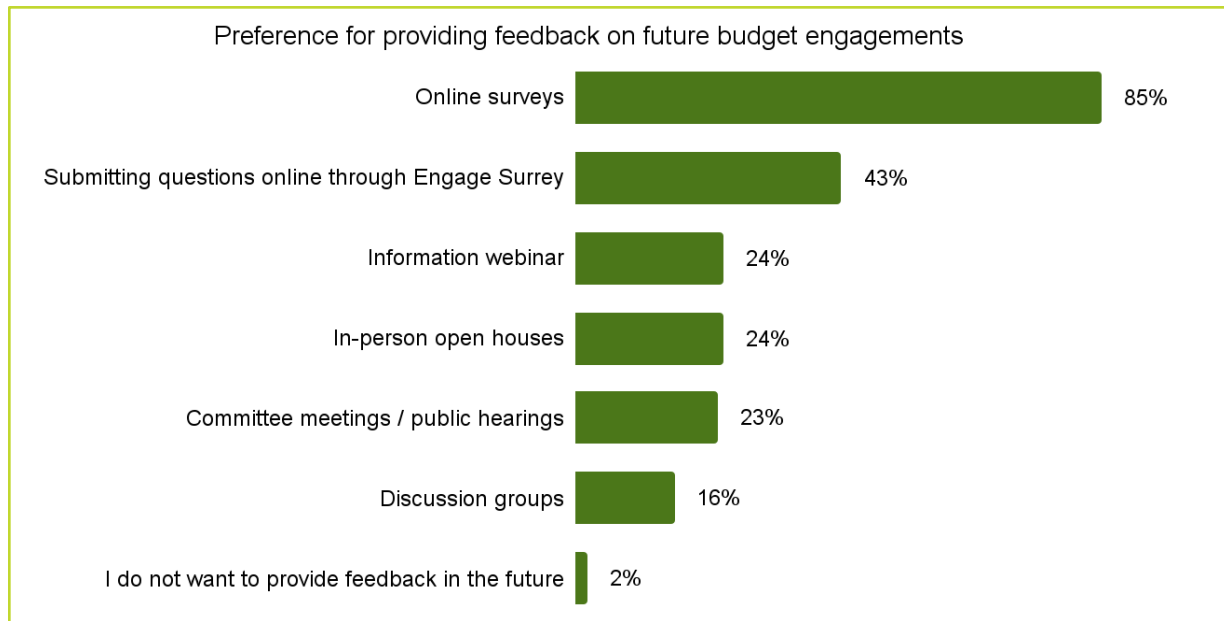
### Future Engagement

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked about their preferences for future engagement on the budget and planning process. To inform the public during future engagement about the City budget, respondents first and foremost wanted more information about how tax dollars are allocated across departments and services, with the overwhelming majority (77%) indicating they would like to get more information about this topic. Over half (56%) would appreciate information on the different sources of revenue for the City, and half (51%) would like to know how and when the public can provide input. Just under half of respondents (48%) would like to learn more about the range of City services, programs and capital investments. The same number (48%) would like to learn more about the development process and how Council decisions are made. Only a third (31%) of respondents would like more information on the difference between the operating and capital budgets.



The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they would prefer to provide feedback on future budget engagements through online surveys (85%). Two out of five respondents (43%) would prefer to submit questions online through the project webpage on Engage Surrey. Less than a quarter of respondents (24%) would prefer information webinars or in-person open houses, and a similar proportion (23%) would prefer committee meetings or public hearings. Only a small proportion (16%) indicated they would prefer to attend a discussion group.

Less than one in five respondents were interested in other avenues to provide feedback, including: public hearings (20%), virtual open houses (19%), in-person open houses (17%), webinars (14%), virtual focus groups (14%), engagement project hub submissions (12%), in-person focus groups (11%) and committee meetings (8%).



### Business Community Consultation

Surrey’s business community was consulted as an important stakeholder during Surrey’s 2024 budget engagement. Two roundtable discussions captured priorities from the City’s various chambers of commerce and business associations.

Top investment priorities for the business community included: engineering infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, and public safety (closely reflecting public input from the survey and open houses). Feedback from the business organizations indicated that Surrey should invest in more walkable, transit-oriented neighbourhoods. In order to support accelerated development and keep up with community growth, the input also suggested the City increase efforts and investments that streamline and reduce permitting and rezoning times. Improving the city's livability, sense of safety, beautification projects, entertainment Infrastructure, investment opportunities and bold development initiatives were also identified as recurring themes. To manage these additional expenses, the organizations suggested the City explore alternative financing opportunities to reduce the property tax burden on businesses.

## Summary, Reflections and Next Steps

From September to October 2023, a number of engagement activities were planned and implemented in order to inform the public of the City of Surrey's 2024 budget process and to hear their input on priorities. This report summarizes the engagement and communication efforts, as well as what was heard from all who participated. With 2,865 survey responses and more than 500 visitors to in-person engagement opportunities, this engagement had strong turnout from the Surrey community and demonstrated ongoing general interest in the City budget process.

Respondents' top priorities for the 2024 budget included transportation infrastructure, policing and public safety, engineering infrastructure (including roads and transportation), community amenities (such as recreational facilities) and housing. Public preference was to balance the budget by maintaining current services through a combination of increasing property taxes and user fees. However, open ended comments revealed general opposition to tax increases and concern over the rising cost of living.

In line with Surrey's Public Engagement Strategy, reflections on the engagement process have been prepared to support staff in conducting future budget engagement processes. Notably, the project fulfilled all four of the engagement objectives. The combination of digital and in-person opportunities for engagement, hosting open houses at locations other than City facilities, and engaging members of the CitySpeaks panel all contributed to the project's success. To solicit representative responses from residents across Surrey, in-person engagement was conducted in all six town centres. We recommend continuing each of these approaches.

The following suggestions are offered to further strengthen the City's future budget engagement projects:

- Many participants provided their email addresses to stay informed on the budget process. Continuing to notify participants who are members of the public (in addition to the CitySpeaks panel) regarding future budget engagement opportunities could help promote the project.
- The 2024 budget engagement process saw a considerable increase in the percentage of participants who speak languages other than English. Targeted outreach to community organizations whose membership includes newcomers and non-English speaking groups could further enhance demographic representation within this engagement process.
- The 2024 budget engagement process—from planning to implementation and analysis—took place between August and October 2023. Initiating planning for the budget engagement process earlier in the summer would ensure adequate time to identify and engage a more representative sample of the community, as well as to identify and confirm optimal locations for in-person engagement. Similarly, lengthening the implementation phase by one or two weeks and avoiding Statutory holiday weekends could allow for more optimal dates.

The next step is for City staff and Council to review the engagement results and to utilize input where possible to guide the 2024 budget as it is developed over the next few months. As a target timeframe, it is anticipated that the budget will be finalized in early 2024.





## APPENDIX “A”

### City of Surrey Public Engagement Spectrum

#### ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) is a non-profit organization committed to advancing the practice of public engagement. Municipalities across Canada and around the world use IAP2 guidance. The City of Surrey uses IAP2 to ensure engagement follows international best practices.

The City has adopted a modified version of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. This approach assumes that all engagement serves to ‘inform’ and that meaningful engagement aims to consult, involve, collaborate and/or empower, depending on the specific engagement objectives.

	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<b>Public Participation Goal</b>	To obtain public feedback on analysis alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
<b>Promise to the Public</b>	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the direction.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 

## APPENDIX “B”

### Survey Questionnaire: 2024 Budget Engagement

#### What matters to you?

*Thank you for taking this survey. Your feedback will help us identify community priorities for the City of Surrey’s 2024 budget, to help inform Council’s decisions. You don’t need to be familiar with the City’s budget to take part!*

*Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you can stop the survey at any time. All feedback will be anonymous. Your responses will be analyzed by a neutral consulting firm on behalf of the City. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.*

*The City wants to gather feedback from as many Surrey residents as possible, so we are promoting this survey in a number of different ways. You may receive a City eNewsletter referring to the survey or hear about it on social media, however, we ask that you **only complete the survey once**.*

Would you like to be entered to win one (1) of three \$100 Visa gift cards?

Yes

No

Which of the following describe your ties to Surrey? (Please select all that apply)

I live in Surrey

I own property in Surrey (other than my home)

I work in Surrey

I own a business in Surrey

I go to school in Surrey

I commute into Surrey (for work, school)

I visit Surrey occasionally

Other

None of the above

Prefer not to answer

### BUDGET PRIORITIES

*The City is working to provide more information to community members on the budget process and to gather feedback to help inform the next budget.*

Please rate your level of awareness about how and where budget dollars are spent.

Very aware

Somewhat aware

Neutral

Somewhat unaware

Not at all aware

Don't know

The City funds and operates many services, amenities, and infrastructure projects. Please rate how satisfied you are with each of the following.

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
<b>Planning, business and development services</b> (e.g., bylaws, licensing, permitting, city planning)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Engineering infrastructure</b> (e.g., water, sewer, drainage, climate adaptation, energy, garbage and recycling)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Transportation infrastructure</b> (e.g., road, sidewalk, and path maintenance, road improvements, sustainable transportation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Parks and open spaces</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Arts and culture programming</b> (e.g., festivals, public art, museums and theatre)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Libraries</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Public safety and emergency services</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Recreation programs and recreation facilities</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Community development and social services</b> (e.g., community safety, social support programs)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Considering these services, amenities, and infrastructure projects are competing for funding dollars, in what areas would you like to see more investment? (Please select all that apply)

Community development and social services (e.g., community safety, social support programs)

Public safety and emergency services

Recreation programs and recreation facilities

Libraries

Engineering infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, drainage, climate adaptation, energy, garbage and recycling)

Transportation infrastructure (e.g., road, sidewalk, and path maintenance, road improvements, sustainable transportation)

Planning, business and development services (e.g., bylaws, licensing, permitting, city planning)

Arts and culture programming (e.g., festivals, public art, museums and theatre)

Parks and open spaces

None of the above

The City is also responding to new and growing community priorities. In what areas would you like to see more investment? (Please select all that apply)

Equity and inclusion

Extreme weather resilience (e.g., wildfires, flooding, heat waves)

Addiction and overdose crisis

Climate action

Sustainable transportation (e.g., walking, cycling, transit)

Housing supply and affordability

Homelessness

Social well-being

None of the above

## OPERATING BUDGET

*The City's **operating budget** is the money the City uses to deliver everyday programs and services. Some of these were mentioned above, such as emergency services and community programs. In order to balance the budget (i.e., ensuring total expenditures do not exceed total proposed funding sources) while maintaining services and addressing new and growing priorities, the City will consider a combination of funding options. Note that the option to maintain programs and services may require tax increases in order to balance the budget due to factors such as inflation, increasing construction costs, and the effects of climate change.*

Should the City *expand, maintain, or reduce* the programs and services that it offers?

Expand programs and services

Maintain programs and services

Reduce programs and services

Don't know

*[If you answered "Expand programs and services" above] Since the City is required to balance its budget, how should the expansion of programs and services be funded?*

Increasing property taxes

A combination of increasing user fees and property taxes

Don't know

*[If you answered "Maintain programs and services" above] Since the City is required to balance its budget, how should programs and services be maintained, while addressing growth and new priorities?*

Increasing property taxes

A combination of increasing user fees and property taxes

Don't know

**CAPITAL BUDGET**

The capital budget pays for all the things the City builds - from new structures to maintaining what we've already got, including: roads, recreation centres, City vehicles, fire halls, pools, arenas and libraries.

Please rate how the City should prioritize the following capital investments based on how important they are to you.

	Highest priority	High priority	Moderate priority	Low priority	Lowest priority	Don't know
<b>Recreation facilities</b> (e.g., pools, arenas, fitness centres, gyms)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Transportation infrastructure</b> (e.g., road improvements, sustainable transportation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Sports fields and outdoor courts</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Cultural facilities</b> (e.g., arts and heritage facilities, museums, theatres, Indigenous spaces)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Engineering infrastructure</b> (e.g., water, sewer, drainage, climate adaptation, energy, garbage and recycling)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Libraries</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Fire halls and emergency equipment</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Parks, plazas, and open space</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please briefly provide any comments you might have about the 2024 Budget, or our future budgets, that you have not yet been able to share.

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**FUTURE ENGAGEMENT**

The City is committed to public engagement on the budget each year. When it comes to future budgets, what would you like to have more information about? (Please select all that apply)

- The difference between the operating and capital budgets
- The budget development process and how Council decisions are made
- How and when the public can provide input
- The different sources of revenue for the City
- How tax dollars are allocated across different departments and services
- The services, programs, and initiatives that the City offers
- Other
- None of the above

How do you prefer to provide feedback on future budget engagements? (Select all that apply)

- Online surveys
- Committee meetings / public hearings
- In-person open houses
- Discussion groups
- Submitting questions online through Engage Surrey (<https://engage.surrey.ca/>)
- Information webinar
- I do not want to provide feedback in the future

**TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF**

Where do you live?

- |                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Abbotsford      | Pitt Meadows         |
| Burnaby         | Port Coquitlam       |
| Chilliwack      | Port Moody           |
| Coquitlam       | Richmond             |
| Delta           | Vancouver            |
| Langley         | West Vancouver       |
| Maple Ridge     | White Rock           |
| Mission         | Other                |
| New Westminster | Prefer not to answer |
| North Vancouver |                      |

Do you own or rent the home in which you live?

- Own
- Rent
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

What is your age group?

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 19 or younger | 50-54 years          |
| 20-24 years   | 55-59 years          |
| 25-29 years   | 60-64 years          |
| 30-34 years   | 65-69 years          |
| 35-39 years   | 70-74 years          |
| 40-44 years   | 75 or older          |
| 45-49 years   | Prefer not to answer |

How do you describe yourself?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

Do you self-identify as belonging to any of the following groups? (Select all that apply)

- Person with a disability
- LGBTQ2S+
- Low income
- Indigenous
- Visible minority
- Immigrant
- Refugee
- Student
- None
- Prefer not to answer

Do you have children who live with you (18 years and younger)?

- Yes
- No

Prefer not to answer

What languages do you speak at home? (Please select all that apply)

- |           |                      |
|-----------|----------------------|
| English   | Korean               |
| French    | Mandarin             |
| Punjabi   | Spanish              |
| Arabic    | Tagalog              |
| Cantonese | Urdu                 |
| Farsi     | Vietnamese           |
| German    | Other                |
| Hindi     | Prefer not to answer |

**Thank you for participating in the 2024 Budget Engagement Survey!**