



Staff Report

To: Mayor and Council
From: Bernie Morton, CAO
Date: October 1, 2018
Re: **Public Budget Engagement Survey Results**

Background/History:

Setting a budget is one of the most significant decisions a City Council makes as the budget lays the foundation for all services, projects and activities conducted by the municipality.

To ensure the budget is reflective of residents' wishes and in alignment with the new Public Participation and Engagement Policy, the City conducted public engagement activities asking residents their opinions about how the City should allocate funding for the 2019-2022 budget cycle.

Desired Outcomes:

One of Council's primary goals is to *increase effectiveness of communication between Council, the City and residents*. Asking residents for their input on budget allocation and new projects was an excellent opportunity to create dialogue and ensure decision making was in line with citizen expectations.

The goals for the project were threefold:

1. Residents participated and provided constructive feedback to assist Council and Administration in creating a budget that is reflective of the community's desires.
2. Awareness of municipal budgeting and the opportunity to participate increased.
3. Residents feel that the City is eager to be more engaged with them and value their opinions and ideas.

Engagement Efforts

The City budget has a direct impact on every resident's taxes, so we wanted to reach as many residents as possible and seek their input on budget priorities. The campaign ran from July 27 to September 17.

Vision Chestermere is a sustainable lakeside recreational community that is safe and family oriented.

Mission Chestermere is creating an amazing place to call home through innovation and community collaboration.

Values Accountable · Connected · Transparent · Inclusive · Viable · Ethical

Engagement efforts included:

Interactive Engagement Tools: To ensure residents could participate in a meaningful way, we provided two opportunities to participate. First, they could indicate whether they thought budgets for each service area should be decreased, increased or stay the same using the [Citizen Budget Tool](#). Second, they could propose projects on a map or comment on others' ideas using the [Interactive Mapping Tool](#).

Eye-Catching Branding: As the engagement was taking place in the summer, we developed a fun, light-hearted campaign (How will you slice the pie?) to get attention in an unbiased way. This work included creating a consistent brand, website pages and marketing materials. Our website page had 1599 views during the campaign.



In Person Connections: Staff and members of Council met with residents face to face during Coffee with Council, block parties, the Country Fair, Energizer Night, Pie Pop-Ups in the Park, an internal pie potluck, weekly pie giveaways and community pie drop-offs. We estimate that this amounted to over 200 personal conversations about the budget engagement opportunities.

Traditional Media: Throughout the campaign, we posted three stories on the City's website. It was featured as a full-length article in the local newspaper.

Direct Mail: A small flyer was sent to all homes in Chestermere (over 6000) asking them to participate in the budget engagement.

Social Media: During the campaign, there was a budget-related post on the City's social media sites every day (and sometimes multiple times a day). These posts included links, photos, videos and polls. We estimate that the cumulative organic reach of these posts was approximately 47,000 impressions and an average reach of 1150 per post.

Posters & Road Signage: To raise awareness and provide reminders to participate, we distributed over 100 posters to various locations in Chestermere and placed five road signs in communities during the last few weeks of the campaign.

Advertising: We advertised the campaign in the Anchor for five weeks. The City also utilized Google Adwords and Facebook Ads for a combined digital reach of 7181.

Samples and photos of these activities are attached in Appendix 1.

Engagement Results

The completed number of surveys was 205 for the Citizen Budget tool and 38 for the mapping tool. When we removed duplicate responses and accounted for residents who completed both, we estimate the total number of residents who provided formal feedback about the budget was 223. Two individual letters were also submitted as part of the budget engagement.

Analysis & Evaluation of Results

With the sample size of 223 respondents, we can estimate that the results shown will be accurate 95% of the time within a margin of error being +/- 7%. Please see the chart below for a comparison of different statistical results based on a population of 20,732:

Description	Confidence level	Margin of Error	Respondents
Outstanding	99%	+/- 3%	1,698
Above Average	99%	+/- 5%	645
Average	95%	+/- 5%	378
Actual Results	95%	+/- 7%	223

Further, the demographic information from the actual results does not align with the City's overall demographic. In addition, this was a voluntary survey which means it is not scientific and it is likely that most respondents participated because of displeasure. As a result, staff recommend interpreting the results with caution, as there is likely a significant variance between this sample and the community as a whole.

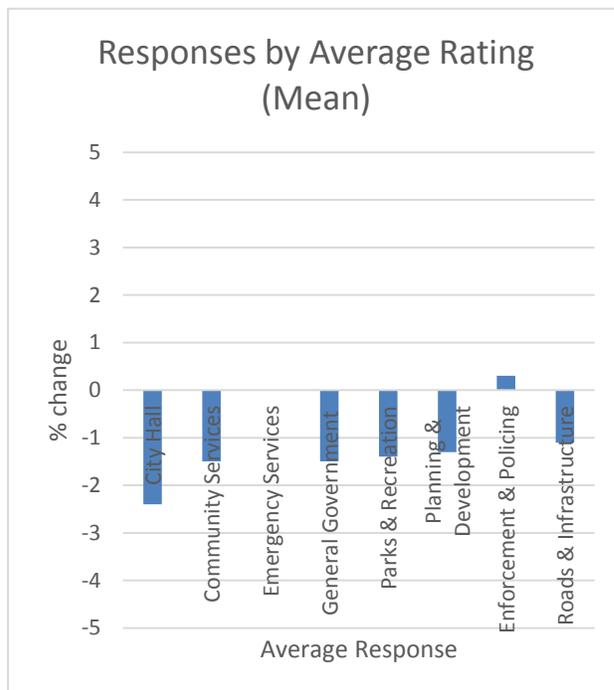
Citizen Budget Tool Trend Summary

Staff received 195 unique responses through the citizen budget tool. This tool allowed residents to indicate which of the seven service areas should receive an increase, decrease or the same amount of funding. The options provided were 0%, +/- 2.5% or +/- 5.0%.

The general trend is that residents would like to see reductions in all areas except for Emergency Services and Enforcement & Policing.

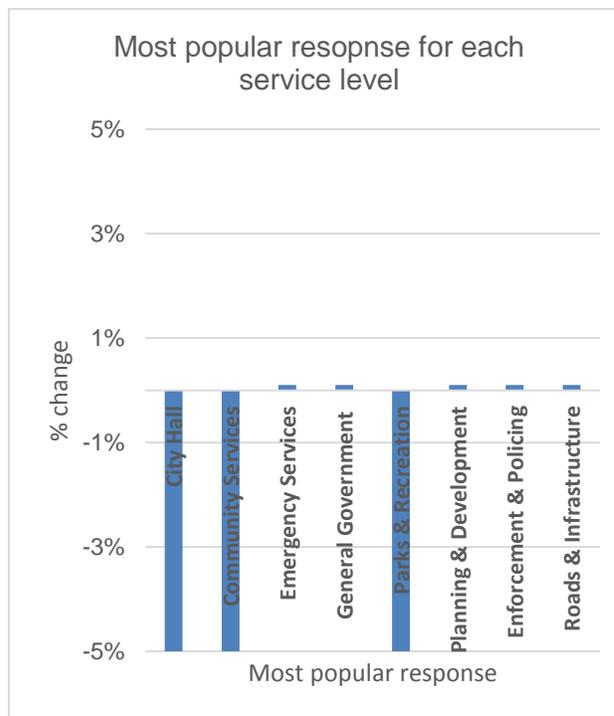
Responses by the average ranking are:

- City Hall Services:** 2.4% decrease
- Community Services:** 1.5% decrease
- Emergency Services:** No change
- General Government:** 1.5% decrease
- Parks & Recreation:** 1.4% decrease
- Planning & Development:** 1.3% decrease
- Policing & Enforcement:** 0.3% increase
- Roads & Infrastructure:** 1.1% decrease



The following are the most popular responses for each service level:

- City Hall Services:** Decrease by 5%
- Community Services:** Decrease by 5%
- Emergency Services:** No change
- General Government:** No change
- Parks & Recreation:** Decrease by 5%
- Planning & Development:** No change
- Policing & Enforcement:** No change
- Roads & Infrastructure:** No change



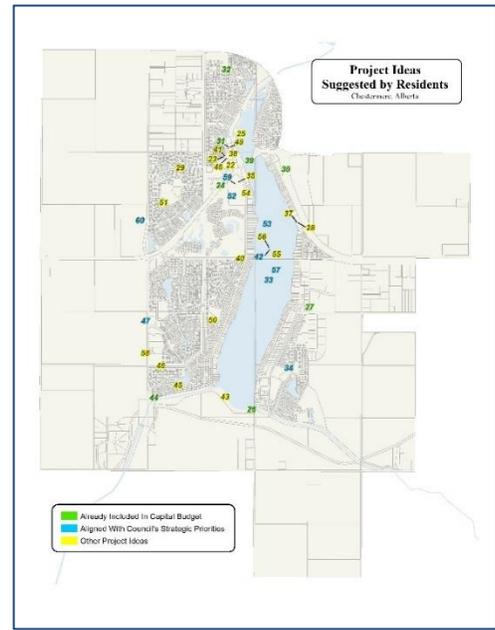
These results could be viewed as a ranking of general priorities and indicate that further education might be beneficial.

The full listing of comments provided and charts of responses is attached in Appendix 2. Please note that comments have been reviewed to ensure no personal information is shared (FOIP compliance) but otherwise are verbatim submissions.

Mapping Tool Summary

38 suggestions were submitted to the mapping tool for consideration as projects. Administration has reviewed these suggestions and can advise that:

- **8 suggestions are already included in the capital budget** (examples include improving pathways, adding a park at the south end of the lake, etc.)
- **9 suggestions may be aligned with Council's priorities.** We recommend that Council review these in detail to determine whether they should be included in the budget and strategic plan as action items.
- **21 are not currently included in long-term plans.** These suggestions are not tied to any existing plans, but we recommend that Council reviews them.



The full listing of comments provided and an Administration evaluation of these proposals is attached in Appendix 3.

Conclusion

The number of respondents who participated is lower than staff hoped for and anticipated. That being said, the City only had approximately 10 people provide comments and feedback during the last budget cycle, so this is an improvement. In addition, the residents who chose to participate took the time and energy to provide detailed comments and recommendations to Council and Administration which are invaluable and should be considered thoroughly.

Attachments:

- Appendix 1: Engagement Efforts (9 Pages)
- Appendix 2: Citizen Budget Results & Comments (36 Pages)
- Appendix 3: Mapping Submissions (7 Pages)

Next Steps:

Following Council and Administration's review of the summary results, staff will post these results on the City's webpage (this report along with the appendices). An email will be sent to all who completed the survey to let them know that results are available and encourage them to visit the site and review the recommendations. In addition, Administration will indicate, through the budget process, where results were directly impacted by citizen engagement.

Submitted by:
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