



Financial Conversations: Engagement on The City's finances and services – What We Heard

Report overview

The public engagement input summarized in this report is one piece of input used by Administration to provide recommendations to Council for the annual budget and plan adjustments. Starting on Nov. 9, 2020, Council will review Administration’s proposed adjustments and make decisions on the 2021 service plans and budgets.

This report captures everything that we heard through public engagement between July and September 2020.

Please note that this report does not have all of the verbatim comments attached. To see the verbatim comments as well as the translated reports visit <https://engage.calgary.ca/yourservices>

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About budgets and plans

Every year The City reviews its plans and budgets to ensure they are aligned with the needs of Calgarians. This year, the process is called [Mid-Cycle Adjustments](#). In July, Council set the [indicative tax rate for 2021](#). Administration prepares recommendations to achieve the proposed tax rate through adjustments to its plans and budgets.

The [Solutions for Achieving Value and Excellence \(SAVE\)](#) Program is also a key element of the Mid-Cycle Adjustments process. The SAVE Program supports The City’s financial sustainability and is committed to finding, implementing and realizing savings. Specifically, it is targeting savings of \$24 million by the start of 2021, and \$50 million by the start of 2022 from tax-supported budgets.

What is engagement at The City and how is my input used?

Engagement at The City is defined as purposeful dialogue between The City and stakeholders to gather information to influence decision making.

Engagement is about getting as many ideas and perspectives on a project or topic to get a full understanding of the topic or project. This means that people can participate multiple times in engagement.



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It also means that it is not a vote. It is about understanding the interests, needs and impacts to make better decisions.

Engagement approach

Engagement on The City's plans and budgets was open during the state of emergency that was initiated as a result of COVID-19. To ensure the safety of our citizens, all feedback was collected online or through 311.

- Engagement that informed the Mid-Cycle Adjustments process was open from July 27 to Sept. 6.
- Engagement that informed the SAVE was open from Aug. 26 to Sept. 16.

As part of an ongoing commitment to increase access to public engagement, the engagement questions were translated into Spanish, Arabic, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese and Punjabi. The engagement was also actively promoted in all languages and through social media, digital ads, partner organizations, posters in recreation facilities and through multicultural radio and print advertisements. The link to the engagement website was also available on all Calgary Public Library computers.

In total, the webpages were viewed 24,183 times. We received a total of 3,336 responses. Specifically:

- 1,018 responses were received to inform Mid-Cycle Adjustments.
- 2,318 contributions were received to inform the SAVE program.

What we asked

To inform our plan and budget adjustment process, we routinely ask about expectations of City services to better understand the needs and desires of Calgarians. This year, we asked about:

1. Your top expectation for Calgary right now, from a list of five.
2. Details on how Administration and Council can demonstrate those expectations.
3. Information needs and barriers to accessing information.
4. Demographic questions to help us understand who we are reaching and who we are missing.

Additionally, as part of the SAVE program, The City collected input on four specific areas related to business cases that were being considered in order to find additional cost savings. This feedback was focused in four areas: fire services, user fees, civic partner funding and digital services.

Business case area	Topics discussed
Fire services	We asked about perspectives on whether stakeholders felt it was reasonable for the City to take on more risk related to fire service response times to find cost savings, and what we should consider when making that decision.
User fees	We asked about impacts of different user fees, where the person who uses a service pays more directly at time of use.
Civic partners	We asked about what value for investments looks like for different focus areas. These were: arts and culture, tourism, cultural attractions, recreation and parks, poverty reduction, library services, heritage preservation.



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Digital services	We asked about services that we can deliver online. We asked about both positive and negative impacts.
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All questions were asked in all five languages. To see the exact questions asked, visit <https://engage.calgary.ca/yourservices>

What we heard – Budget Adjustments

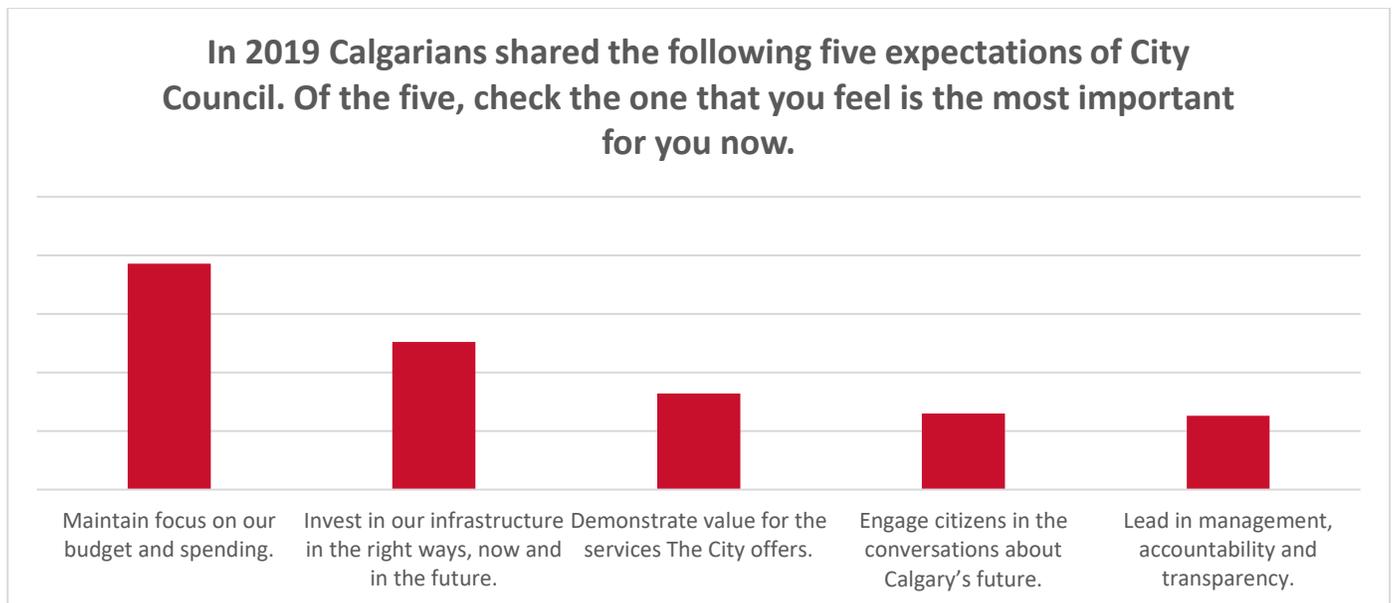
Please note that this report does not have all of the verbatim comments attached because of the number of comments received. To see the verbatim comments visit <https://engage.calgary.ca/yourservices>

Question 1: In 2019 Calgarians shared the following five expectations of City Council. Of the five, check the one that you feel is the most important for you now.

Since the start of the One Calgary process, we have been asking Calgarians to provide feedback on their expectations for Council and Administration. These expectations include:

- Demonstrating value for services the City offers.
- Engaging citizens in the conversations about Calgary’s future.
- Investing in our infrastructure the right ways, now and in the future.
- Leading in management, accountability and transparency.
- Maintaining focus on budgets and spending.

Participants in our 2020 engagement most often prioritized maintaining focus on budgets and spending; followed by investing in our infrastructure the right ways, now and in the future; demonstrating value for services the City offers; engaging citizens in the conversations about Calgary’s future; and then, leading in management, accountability and transparency.





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Question 2: What does it look like when City Administration meets that expectation?

Question 3: What does it look like when City Council meets that expectation?

As in 2019, we heard that “maintaining focus on budgets and spending” remains the top expectation of Council and Administration. When looking at the detailed responses that participants submitted, there was no one single definition of what this looked like. For some this meant discussing a general reduction to the budget, for others this meant suggesting an increase in services and investments. A more detailed breakdown of the key themes found in the text responses can be found below.

It should also be noted that for many participants, the expectations for City Administration were the same as the expectations for City Council. Some participants talked about the relationship that Administration has with Council, while others didn't identify a difference between the two. To capture these common responses, much of the feedback from Question 2 and Question 3 have been grouped together into overall themes. The last section of themes includes feedback that was directed specifically to City Council.

Themes about budget reductions

- The desire for an across the board reduction to spending.
- The expectation that Administration and Council should keep services like Calgary Police, Fire and Roads (maintenance and snow clearance) at current or better levels.
- That existing projects should be cut, including the events centre, Green line and public art.
- The desire to reduce the number of staff and wages (Administration and Council), as well as to create a list that compares City staff salaries with equivalents in the private sector.
- The perception that outsourcing services would be more cost effective.
- General statements of keeping only the needs versus the wants or nice to have. However, specifics on the differences between needs and wants are was not clearly identified.
- Comments about The City's debt and multiple pensions for councillors and staff.

Themes about increasing services

- In general, there is a very strong theme to increase services that support those in need. This includes increasing the health and wellbeing of Calgarians, and the focus on services that contribute to the long-term well-being of citizens.
 - Homelessness, affordable housing, mental health, parks and cycling were the key services that people wanted to see better or more addressed now and in the future. We also heard the need for ongoing transit investments and general request to make the city more walkable.
- Thoughts on what classifies an essential service was mixed. We heard from some the desire for increased or maintained funding, while others were seeking reductions. We specifically heard the desire for a reduction to Police and for those funds to be diverted to programs, services and organizations that address the root causes of crime and addiction (such as Alpha House and affordable housing).
- There was a strong emphasis on libraries and family programs. We heard a general satisfaction of the existing levels and a desire for them to be expanded. We also heard about the importance of parks and walkability, especially during the current pandemic and for the long-term quality of life in Calgary.



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Themes about long-term planning and planning for all

- This was the first time that equity, and the need for long term planning for all in Calgary, was shared in both Council and Administration expectations.
- The need for long-term plans (meaning plans, services, taxes, budgets) was discussed as a need for Administration and Council.
- This also included comments about how to diversify the economy, moving away from Oil and Gas dependency.
- There was interest in strong climate action, while maintaining fiscal restraint.
- There were also expectations for both Council and Administration to commit to addressing systemic issues (race and gender were two specific examples).

Themes about transparency and public involvement in decision making

- We heard from many about the importance of transparency and information sharing. We heard about the desire for both Administration and Council to do a better job of sharing information about decisions in general and specific to how budgets are allocated across services.
- We heard that it is important for both Administration and Council to listen and share what was done with public information and ideas.
- We also heard the theme of evidence-based decision making. For many this looked like Council using the advice given by administration in the decisions they make. On this topic we also heard that there needs to be better recognition and awareness of the training and expertise within Administration both by Council and by the public.

Themes related to how Council can meet expectations

There were four key themes that emerged about how Council could demonstrate meeting specific expectations. We heard that:

- Ongoing engagement and communication with all constituents were important. This included the desire for transparency and an easily accessible list of all votes.
- Leadership, ethics, decorum, transparency in votes and decisions, working with community leaders, including youth in decision making, allowing time for engagement of community (specific frustration with arena), and an overall expectation for clear and concise decisions were all expectations.
- We also heard the desire for good and better financial management and the expectation for advocacy and stimulus during the economic downturn. We specifically heard about leading and advocating for more technology investment in Calgary, as well as supporting local businesses.
- We also heard about the need for evidence-based decisions as an expectation of Council. This included listening to Administration, the need for less 'grandstanding' and more moderated, clear decisions and better, more clear working relationships between Council and Administration.

Question 4: Which City service would you like to provide feedback on?

Question 5: What should we know about this service?

Participants were provided with a link to information outlining the range of services that the City provides and were given an opportunity to provide feedback specific City services. The feedback heard for each service is summarized below; however, not all City services received stakeholder feedback.



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Affordable housing

Most respondents appreciated the efforts being made to provide affordable housing in Calgary and many offered suggestions for improvement. A small number said that our current stock is enough or that there are individuals abusing the system.

Themes:

- The impact of health issues on housing options
- The need to consider determinants of health
- The possibility of repurposing empty business into affordable housing, and the development of tiny home options
- As well as the impact of illegal housing and renovations causing dangerous situations for first responders

Appeals and Tribunals

We heard two suggestions that the processes should be simplified, but no details were provided.

Arts & Culture

Many respondents are in favour of reducing the number of funds allocated to Arts & Culture projects. Respondents suggested that there should be a greater emphasis on local artists and Indigenous art and artists. It was recognized that this was a 'lightning rod' issue and some respondents felt this was a non-essential service and should be defunded. A few respondents were also concerned about Black Lives Matter artwork.

Building Safety

Respondents commented on the impact of the current economic situation on the maintenance budget of building operators. Specifically, concern was raised about increased health concerns, more specifically, air quality. There was also mention of interest in seeing the inspection processes streamlined. We heard that currently there are multiple inspections and inspectors for the various building components.

Bylaw

Respondents commented on complaint response time and suggested greater citizen involvement in bylaw approval processes.

Calgary 911

Respondents commented on the critical nature of this service. We heard concerns about provincial consolidation of the services, and concern that it would create delays.

Citizen Engagement & Insights

Respondents commented on the need for citizen engagement on important issues that impact residents. Concerns were raised regarding the current economic situation and need to engage citizens who are impacted by decisions. This included those who experience barriers to engagement and city services.

Citizen Information & Services

Respondents assumed this referred to 311. Most felt that 311 was a valuable service, although comments suggested that wait times were too long and that response time to service requests were generally too long.

City Cemeteries

No comments were received about cemeteries.



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City Planning and Policy

We heard the desire for more efficiency. Respondents suggested that there be more focus on densification and sustainability. Urban sprawl was a concern as well. A few respondents were not in favour of densification.

Development Approvals

Respondents suggested that there is too much oversight by Council. Those who responded wanted a decrease in oversight and an easier process. We heard both support and opposition to more density.

Economic Development & Tourism

Economic Development is seen as key to the future of Calgary. We heard a desire for:

- Diversification of industry to respond to the current economy.
- Suggestions for attracting high-tech and alternative energy companies.

A few responses talked about Calgary's image. They talked about the current image of a western oil and gas town being negative for tourism.

Emergency Management

We did not receive any comments related to emergency management.

Environmental Management

Respondents indicated that they were in favour of the City of Calgary continuing to invest in 'green' environmental solutions. Alternative energy sources and adoption incentives were also mentioned.

Enabling Services

Respondents suggested that cost-savings could be realized by increasing funding for innovation and change. We heard that there should be a digital transformation of frontline services. And an overall streamline of services to reduce costs.

Fire & Emergency Services

Most respondents are in favour of either maintaining or increasing funding to support fire services. This is one service that was clearly identified as essential. Suggestions for improvements included flattening the organizational structure and the re-evaluation of the need to dispatch large equipment to minor road accidents.

Fire Inspection

Respondent considers this an essential service.

Fire Safety

Fire prevention education for homeowners was mentioned but no details were shared about fire safety.

Land Development

We heard about new suburban development and densification as key concerns. Carbon and pollution offset projects linked to new developments was also mentioned as ideas for new land development.

Library Services

Most respondents expressed pride and satisfaction with this service. Improvements such as increased hours and increased cultural programs were suggested.



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Municipal Elections

Respondents wish to see improvements to this service. Examples of issues included ballot shortages and improvements in voter registrations processes.

Neighbourhood Support

We heard about dispute mediation, snow removal, garbage collection, urban development and heritage site protection. A few respondents mentioned the need for continued support for programs that address social isolation and community economic development.

Parking

Respondent comments varied. Reduction of parking rate and increases in parking availability in the core were mentioned as a concern. We heard a general request for parking cost reduction, and the removal of parking allotment minimums was also mentioned. We also heard some general concerns about non-City parking lots.

Parks & Open Space

This service was appreciated by all respondents. Suggestions for improvement included developing more greenspace and outdoor gathering spaces as well as increased maintenance of existing parks and the development of an 'adopt-a-park' initiative.

Pet Ownership and Licencing

A majority of respondents were not in favour of breed-specific legislation. Suggestions included licencing of all animals, increased fines for animal nuisance incidents and more fenced off-leash areas.

Police Services

Most of the responses received that touched on this service specifically, suggested a reduction in funding to this service. Respondents suggest that funds should be diverted to programs and services that deal proactively with the social conditions that lead to criminal activity. Some comments spoke to defunding this service without further explanation. Other respondents commented on the current political climate that influences the perception of policing and its impact on society. Increased accountability, transparency and training were also mentioned. We also heard concerns that the look of cars and uniforms is making the police look more like the military.

Property Assessment

Most respondents would like to see a reduction of property taxes, citing current economic conditions. Respondents also mentioned that spending should be indexed to economic conditions.

Public Transportation

We heard an overall appreciation for how complex transit service is in a large city. We heard:

- Comments on scalability. Specifically, the need to address decreased ridership during COVID-19 with smaller more frequent buses.
- Comments that this service has the largest impact on low-income citizens, and some talked about the need to provide more low or no-cost options for those citizens.
- Concerns about safety, unreliable or late service, poorly timed connections and issue with purchases expiring after one week on the transit app.
- Suggestions for more service to attract long-term ridership.
- Desires for more service and to make it easier, cheaper and more appealing.



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- A desire for a train to the airport.
- A need for on demand transit in outlying areas

Real Estate

We heard that The City should only be involved with affordable housing, heritage and essential services sites. We also heard comments about the need for more density.

Records Management

We heard one request that The City expand open government by making more information available on an open data site.

Recreation

Most respondents appreciate the recreation offerings provided by the City of Calgary. There were a few suggestions regarding the reduction of fees as well as to increase the availability of programs across the city.

Sidewalks & Pathways

Most respondents appreciate the pathway system and the walkability of communities. Suggestions for improvement include:

- Accessibility, specifically consistency in ramps for wheelchairs and strollers
- Better maintenance and improved communication regarding sidewalk and pathway closures

There were also comments about downtown bike lanes and the challenges some create between pedestrians, bike riders and cars.

Social Programs

Most respondents support the City of Calgary's role in addressing social issues. However, many of the comments referred to non-city services like healthcare and education. There appeared to be confusion as to what role the City plays in the provision of services and where funding originates. A few respondents felt that social programs are not the responsibility of the City and should not be funded by the City.

Specialized Transit

From those who responded, this service is seen as essential and that the costs of provision appear to be reasonable.

Stormwater

We heard general comments about system capacity and maintenance. A few shared concerns about the impact of new housing developments on existing infrastructure, and cost recovery of flood mitigation services.

Streets

Many respondents focused on the improvement of service, maintenance and pedestrian safety. Comments ranged from issues with road repair signage and lighting to the need for ongoing road repair, specifically for potholes. Some felt alternative solutions to the application of sodium chloride to roads would decrease damage to vehicles and roadways. We heard about Vision Zero and other City climate policies and that they should be taken into consideration when maintaining streets. Others felt that user fees and privatization of services would reduce costs. Pedestrian safety was also mentioned and the need to focus on pedestrians, not cars, creating a 20 km/h zone for bikes downtown. We also heard about issues with the 311 app.



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Taxation

Most respondents want to see personal and business taxes reduced. We heard comments about the downturn in the local economy and the impact of the pandemic on both personal and business earnings. In general, respondents want the City to focus on essential services and reduce spending on non-essential services instead of a tax increase.

Taxi & Car Hire Services

We received two questions about this topic: Why taxis have an exclusive service agreement at the airport? Why is The City involved in these services?

Urban Forestry

Most respondents appreciate this service. Many commented on increasing both the number of trees planted as well as improved maintenance of new trees. Acceleration of the Urban Canopy Expansion program was mentioned. As well as one target suggested was to plant one million trees in addition to replacement of old and damage trees.

Waste & Recycling

Those who responded wanted to pay less and have fewer blue and green cart. We also heard general concerns about needing blue carts. Many respondents are not in favour of privatization saying that it would cost more for less service. One suggestion was to allow for shared bins for small townhouse complexes.

Wastewater

We heard the desire for more strict water conservation measure prior to a climate crisis. We also heard that that the cost of this service is too high. We had one questions about why is there a wastewater fees for water used on lawn and gardens.

Water Treatment

Respondents commented that they feel this is an essential service and should be supported. We also heard that they felt the charges are too high.

Question 6: What barriers have you experienced in getting the information you want about where taxes are spent?

Overall, we heard that having more information about how taxes are distributed and more detailed information about taxes, budgets and plans would be beneficial. Specifically, we heard about the desire for more transparency on where money is spent, what is funded and who is responsible for what (federal, provincial and municipal).

When asked about barriers to information, many said that they didn't experience any barriers or could find what they are looking for on City websites. From those who talked about specific barriers, we heard the following:

- Can't find what they are looking for, haven't looked or don't know where to start.
- Want more and detailed budget information, specifically by service.
- Want more information in plain language. We heard about the desire for more proactive social media information. This included general praise for existing social media accounts like Instagram.
- We heard a general lack of understanding of provincial and municipal services, and where and how taxes are broken down.



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Question 7: What do you need more information about? Check all that apply.



What We Heard – SAVE Business Cases

To see the verbatim comments visit <https://engage.calgary.ca/yourservices>

Fire Response Service Levels

As part of our engagement on the SAVE Program, the first business case we discussed was Fire Response. In general, we mostly heard a desire for an increase in Fire service. Specifically, we heard:

- The importance of it for peace of mind, safety, and not just fire response but in all emergencies.
- When respondents discussed reductions, they mostly talked about ‘the right vehicle for the job’. Specially talking about size of truck. People also provided feedback on salaries and organizational structure, position and relationship with Alberta Health Services (AHS) when talking about cuts.
- We had one comment that mentioned that fire inspection and for fire education were important.

Feedback saw responses that were not in favour of increase services times to save money. Those respondents were concerned about safety, insurance premiums going up (and thus still costing them the same or more per household), and about long-term impacts to people and communities.

Responses that spoke against an increase in fire response times could be divided into two main perspectives.

- The first did not want to see any reductions and feel any reductions would be irresponsible or unsafe. Many in this group talked about their willingness to pay more on their taxes. Some talked about the importance of improving services and their willingness to pay more for that improvement.
- The second would like to see the cuts realized in other areas instead. This had a wide variety of suggestions where those cuts should happen, but it can be divided into fire service reductions and other parts of the organization.

Does not support reductions: find efficiencies in Fire

- Through better policy: this included both fire code updates and policy decisions about communities.



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- For fire codes, people talked about building material requirements and housing separation requirements.
- For community policy, we heard about not approving more communities and reducing sprawl, and making new communities pay for their stations.
- Through reorganization of existing resources: this included reorganization and specific suggestions about deployment and equipment use.
 - More fire education, reorganization of staff and internal resources including trucks. We heard about ongoing innovation in staffing and practice and looking to other municipalities as examples (Edmonton, Toronto, Vancouver, New York, South Metro Colorado, LA, LACOFD, for example). Some also talked about adding a volunteer fire force.
 - Examples include incorporating EMS and Fire, cross staffing engines, stations units, and replacing trucks.
 - There were mixed opinions about the relationship with Alberta Health Services, EMS and Fire. Some comments saw the need for EMS to be brought into the City, while others wanted a stronger distinction between the two. Of note is that perceptions of cost-saving were mixed in creating a stronger distinction between the two.

Does not support reductions: increase taxes

We heard strong support for paying the approximate estimate of \$6.90 per household tax bill to not reduce the average response time. We also heard from many that they would be fine with paying more to further to decrease the existing Fire response times.

Does not support reductions: find efficiencies in other service lines

For those not specific to fire, people talked about reducing funding in the following areas to increase Fire funding: arts, library (making a fee service again), staff or Council salaries and pensions and general service cuts. Many also responded about Police funding being diverted to Fire.

Supports reductions

A small number of the responses were supportive of reductions. While most of these comments were okay with the reduction in cost overall, they also felt that efficiencies could be realized within the existing service. Most respondents provided feedback on the types of calls that were answered, what type of equipment should be provided, shift scheduling (24-hour shifts), and specific examples of equipment and organization structure from other municipalities.

The underlying theme in these responses is about the relationship with AHS and Fire. These respondents saw the need and opportunity to change or create a distinction between what EMS and what Fire responds to, and some talked about a change in equipment and vehicles (smaller trucks for initial response) specifically as an opportunity for further savings.

We also heard about the importance of fire education and prevention, in regard to policy and community design.

A small number of responses also talked about being ok with slower times if houses were further apart from one another.

Other themes

Many questioned the survey and found this question leading. Respondents requested more information and felt the question didn't show the full impact or picture of the scenario being proposed.



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Civic Partner Values

As part of our engagement on the SAVE Program, for the second business case we discussed was value for investment related to Civic Partners. We asked about what value for civic partners looks like in general.

General values: Using the prompting words above, or in your own words, tell us what value for investment means to you?

When it came to general value for partner investments, we heard that all the themes listed below were important. We did also hear general comments about reductions across all City services.

- **Efficiency** was seen both as efficiency in the Partner organization and in how money is spent. For the organization, this meant maximizing the money received to get the most benefit for the user, and balancing quality and affordability. For many this looked like reducing duplication in services and finding ways to increase the impact across different services.
- **Affordability** was mostly about cost and access, but also about the organization spending within its means and planning long term. We also heard about return on investment and accountability. This was about transparency on spending, citizen oversight, dignified access to services and tangible benefits. Long term planning and future needs were also seen as important/to efficient organizations.
- **Specialization** was about the organization and staff. This included the importance of competent and well-trained staff, as well as improved policies with less red tape that maximise the impacts for those using the service. We did also hear about the importance of funding partners and organizations that do the work directly. There were a number of comments talking about provincial government service gaps, and discussion about how The City should not be jumping in to fill those gaps.
- **Equity** was about access and the diversity of services and needs of all Calgarians. This included comments about the importance of funding and supporting diverse needs, creating access to those who need it most. There were mixed opinions about what “for all Calgarians” meant, however. Some talked about diversity and addressing unique needs, while others talked about value being realized when the majority of people are served. We also heard about multiple impacts to various generations and creating community cohesion.
- **Innovation** was about creative problem solving. It included flexibility, trying new things and doing things differently. We heard about the importance of supporting local groups and business and innovation in diversifying the local economy. We also heard about that innovation should support City resilience, specifically our local economy and people’s wellbeing. This included both innovation during the pandemic and for recovery aft.

Specific area: Arts Partnerships

Like in other areas, we heard comments about general cuts. We heard about the need to focus only on the “must haves”, but there was little specific mention of what these are. There was a strong divide in the value of this service. We heard both a general dislike for arts and culture. and general support, value and importance for the service. We heard that:

- Arts and culture should be focused on ‘local’, supporting local artists, organizations and events.
 - This looked like art and culture being accessible by all. People talked about the importance of inclusion, telling Indigenous histories, and allowing youth and all Calgarians to participate and learn about history, culture and art.
 - Those who were critical of the arts also placed an emphasis on local arts and supporting the local economy through art.



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- Some also talked about the importance of attracting world class acts. That this is a measure of a great city.
- There is a need for transparency and public input in the selection process, specifically for capital projects.
- Strong appreciation and desire for more community events, performances, and programs. This also included the ability and desire for a focus on education, job creation and accessibility for all in Calgary.
- We heard about art and events, along with the organizations that provide them needing to be “sustainable”, although this was not specifically defined.
- We heard that art and culture play a role in making Calgary a world class city and that it is important for economic growth. Specifically, the importance of art and culture in attracting tourists, jobs and people to live in Calgary.
- We heard about the importance of art and culture for people’s health and sense of community, especially during the pandemic.
- There is a need for innovation. This was about partnerships and creative uses of existing spaces in the city. People talked about using spaces in different ways in their community and supporting access for all to use it.

Specific area: Heritage Partnerships

Like in other areas, we heard comments about budgets cuts. We also heard many comments that support or want to maintain current levels of heritage preservation.

In the responses where participants talked about values, we heard that accessibility for everyone in Calgary should be the most important. People talked about the need for spaces and venues to bring perceived value to the city, be tourist attractions that generate revenue and that historical events and monuments should help tell our diverse history including our Indigenous history.

The other points that were mentioned were the importance of ongoing investment in maintenance to prevent large one-time repairs and the benefits of partnerships with developers, architects, communities and other organizations.

Specific area: Economic Development Partnerships

As in others, we heard comments about strict cuts to spending. When it came to values around economic development, supporting local and diversifying the economy were the two key themes. Specifically, regarding the need to move away from Oil and Gas, and to support local businesses. We also heard about the importance of attracting new business, specifically technology companies. However, there was mixed sentiment about multinational corporations like Amazon. Generally, the ideas focused on:

- Innovation: supporting a wide variety of businesses (breweries, film and television, and technology were some of the industries suggested) and increasing risk tolerance.
- Equality: investing in a variety of areas, attracting diverse working populations, and creating opportunity for the majority of Calgarians. We specifically heard about equality in opportunity, access, and the importance of organization’s and community partners’ support for all Calgarians, not just the wealthy.
- Accountability and oversight: More accountability, transparency and clearly communicated return on investment for the public on economic promotion and partnerships.



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Specific area: Tourism Partnerships

In the general comments about tourism, we heard the same thoughts about 'no funding', 'cut taxes' and 'no funding right now because of the pandemic'.

Overall, the comments were supportive of tourism, with people seeing general value in it. Like in other areas the value of supporting local also was important for tourism.

There was a wide range of ideas but overall, we heard that innovation in tourism looked like more variety and options beyond the Stampede and proximity to the mountains. We heard a strong desire for more winter events, and support for more and existing all-year venues like the Central Library. The Library was used multiple times an example of value and return on investment. We heard that having tourism attractions that support the local community, multiple cultures and events like the library are important.

We also heard that specialization is important, and for many this looked like collaboration between different sectors (tourism and the economy, culture). We heard that this is important for the future of Calgary as well as that there is a need to be innovative in this area to bring and support more and different local attractions.

Efficiency was about economic prosperity as well as post pandemic recovery. It also was about regional partnership and easy access to different attractions.

Specific area: Library Services

Overall, we heard a strong appreciation for how the library service are run, the impact they have on the community and the value that they bring to all Calgarians and the economy through tourism.

We heard that:

- The existing accessibility and affordability of the service were key, and many shared appreciation and desire for more funding to continue growing the accessible and free programs and services.
- The existing focus on equity and culture were important and should continue. We heard about the importance of personal, professional community support and development that library services provide, especially during the pandemic, and that this focus should be maintained or increased. We heard about programs and services for all ages (from kids to seniors) and across all demographics.
- We again heard the importance of local and community. There was a very strong appreciation for the uniqueness of each branch and their contribution to local community character.
- Other terms used to demonstrate the value of libraries were family and education. This included thoughts on family spaces, programs and services and the ability of the library to support all ages.
- Finally, Accessibility and efficiency of the library were mentioned. Accessibility was about the variety and affordability of the accessible and digital programs and services offered. The free service is thought to be quite efficiently and desired to be maintained. On the opposite view, there were some comments about reductions, bringing back fees to maintain current levels of funding and wanting to communicate more about the value they bring.

Specific area: Cultural Attraction Partnerships

Like in other areas, we heard comments about funding reductions and a focus on economic recovery. We also heard an equal amount of general support and value for same spending on cultural attractions though.

Accessibility, efficiency and affordability were used interchangeably to describe the desire to make sure that the cultural attractions were affordable and usable by as many people in Calgary as possible.



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Accountability and return on investment by the providers of the attractions were described as being able to articulate the value to users and citizens about connecting and partnering with other sectors (supporting the local economy) and also about public engagement and education.

The most popular comments were about specialization and equity.

Specialization was about variety and supporting local culture and events. This included innovation through various means and supporting a variety of providers. Specialization also tied into the importance of creating community gathering spaces, supporting opportunities to learn about culture and introducing roles for community associations in supporting local culture.

Equity was about showcasing and supporting all Calgarians. It was again about local community, being accessible and open to all, and the importance of removing barriers to access. It also pertained to the importance of supporting and partnering with Indigenous communities to increase equity for all.

Specific area: Recreation Partnerships

Overall, there was very strong support for recreation in Calgary, and strong value placed on recreation, facilities, pathways and parks in general. Respondents wanted to keep or increase existing levels of maintenance, number of parks, amenities like washrooms and to support the overall maintenance of existing facilities. Sustainability and maintenance were two key words used when talking about existing parks, pathways and facilities. We also heard about efficiency in relation to maintenance of existing facilities.

The most important element of recreation and parks is that they are accessible. Many people talked about the pandemic and the importance of the parks and outdoor spaces in health and wellbeing. However, in terms of support for quality of life for everyone, access also meant available year-round and a way to connect with family, friends and the community. People also felt recreation had an equitable aspect that supports local ecosystems and creates social connection for all.

Specific area: Poverty Reduction Partnerships

Overall, there was a strong desire for either the same or more poverty reduction programs. Some talked about this being a federal or provincial responsibility, while some didn't think this is something the City should do at all.

Two key values were shared by respondents: partnerships and prevention.

Partnerships was the expectation of consolidation of services to minimize duplication, including coordination with other orders of government. There was a desire for City policies that support different ways of poverty reduction, like basement suites. It was also about sharing and measuring returns on investment.

Prevention was about addressing the root causes of poverty and addictions and providing evidence-based supports, programs and services to address these. We heard about value in a multifaceted approach as well as the continuity of existing approach and partnerships.

Online services

As part of the overall conversation we have heard that a clear majority of respondents are in favour of The City adopting a more robust digital presence.



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Opportunities and challenges

More digital services were considered a positive and cost-effective solution by most respondents. We heard that it is important that service levels should not be impacted by any changes though. We heard that some City wait times are still long (311 was one example) and if things move to digital then they still need to be user friendly, intuitive and safe.

Accessibility was brought up as a need if we do become more digital. Some suggestions like having service kiosks in City facilities such as libraries, recreation centers and transit hubs were made. Real-time GPS tracking of busses was also suggested as an opportunity to improve experience. The other suggestion was for better search options on calgary.ca and an improved online recreation system.

Personal impact: recreation service information online-only

Most respondents commented that they would prefer online-only access, while some did say that they still prefer paper catalogues and would appreciate access to hard copies.

Many commented about challenges with the current booking and registration online processes. We heard that any changes need to be accessible by all, clear and easy to use.

Personal impact: property tax information and annual bill online-only

Most respondents were in favour of property tax information and annual billing being online-only. We did hear concerns about security, access and the desire for paper records though.

Some suggested that if it was online-only, having customizable reminders, ability to add deadlines into calendars and having printer friendly options would make the transition better.

User Fees

As part of the overall conversation we heard from those who responded most are in favour of The City user fees.

How would an increase in user fees, where customers pay more but less is paid through property tax increases, impact you and your family?

Respondents were divided in their responses to this question. We mostly heard about access and equity. Specifically, we heard concerns that this would make certain services unaffordable to some Calgarians.

Others felt that there should be no increase to basic essential services, but they would be comfortable with users paying most, if not all the costs of 'optional' services. Some respondents did define the services as Policing, Fire, Transit and infrastructure support and repair like roads and water, while other included the arts, libraries and services that support people and community. A few people also felt that it should be a full user fee cost for all services, while others shared that it important that the cost be spread out across everyone to support subsidies.

How would a decrease in user fees, where individual customers pay less but more is paid through property tax increases, impact you and your family?

Like with an increase, we heard a wide range of impacts and perspectives on a fee reduction. Opinions ranged from full support of total user fees to elimination of user fees. When talking about elimination of fees, we mostly heard about essential services.



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We did hear from many people that they would be comfortable with a modest increase in taxation to support subsidizing those most in need to create equal access options for services. Some talked about the general need to remove all 'luxury' services but were not specific on what services.

We also heard about:

- Indexing of costs to inflation rate
- Pay-as-you-go
- Inclusive services

Parking fees for unreserved stalls

When asked about potential parking fees to help pay for increased security and lot maintenance including lighting and snow clearing, we heard that overall, this would have a negative impact on those who responded. We heard that it would deter them from using transit.

We heard the suggestion that adding incentives and more cost recovery on transit should be considered. The following suggestions were made: gated entry to platforms, oyster cards like London and toll roads to recover road maintenance costs. We also heard that parking fees at stations will increase community parking.

Next steps

- Nov. 9: Financial Conversations: Engagement on The City's finances and services available
- Nov. 9: Special Council Meeting on Service Plans and Budgets
- Nov. 23-27: Service Plan and Budget deliberations
- To learn how to watch and participate in Council meetings visit <https://www.calgary.ca/citycouncil/citycouncil.htm>

Written submissions must be received in English. Should you wish to provide comments in-person or on the phone, interpretation services are available. Please contact publicsubmissions@calgary.ca for assistance.