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MEMORANDUM

Date: Sept. 8, 2026
To: Mayor and City Councilmembers
Through: Kelly DiMartino, City Manager
Denzel Maxwell, Assistant City Manager / IES Director
From: Amanda King, Chief Communications & Engagement Officer
Subject: **2026 Community Survey Results**

BACKGROUND

Since 2001, the City of Fort Collins has contracted with Polco/National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) to administer the Community Survey with a representative sample of households to help determine attitudes and perceptions about City services and overall direction. Community Survey results and survey reports dating back to 2010 are available on the City website at FortCollins.gov/CommunitySurvey.

The Community Survey serves as a consumer report card for the City by providing residents the opportunity to rate the quality of life in the city and their satisfaction with community amenities and local government. Residents also provide feedback to the City government on what is working well and what is not and identify priorities for community planning and resource allocation.

METHODOLOGY & REPORTING:

Polco conducts the statistically valid survey and works with staff to ensure questions align with the seven key outcome areas described in the City Strategic Plan and Budget. City staff review the survey instrument before each administration to ensure the accuracy and relevancy of questions. Questions are constructed carefully—where possible and appropriate—to enable comparative regional and national benchmarking.

The scientific survey was mailed to a probability-based sample of Fort Collins households in both English and Spanish. Respondents received a postcard (with link to the online survey) and

CC: [list any additional recipients]

a paper survey packet. An identical “opt-in” online survey was made available May 16-31 to the entire community, with responses representing the open participation sample.

In keeping with best practice, survey results are weighted so that the gender, age, housing tenure (rent or own), housing unit type (attached or detached) and area of residence are represented in the proportions reflective of all adults in households in Fort Collins (based on U.S. Census data). Details about systemic sampling and blending of the statistically valid response and open participation groups can be found in Appendix G: Survey Methodology (page 223 of the detailed report)

2026 RESPONSE:

- 4,400 household surveys mailed to Fort Collins households
- 900 total survey responses
 - 537 mailed survey responses received
 - 363 open participation (opt-in) responses received
- Survey was provided in English and Spanish; 3 Spanish response received
 - 8% of survey respondents self-identified as Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish origin.
- 95% confidence interval with +/- 3% margin of error (consistent with 2024-2025)

KEY FINDINGS:

- Fort Collins residents continue to report an excellent quality of life (87%), while affordability — particularly affordable housing and childcare—remains a challenge.
- Residents continue to feel safe throughout Fort Collins; overall safety remained high and stable, though perceived safety on trails declined slightly from 2025.
- Active travel continues to lead transportation satisfaction, with ease of travel by bicycle the highest-rated measure; several other transportation ratings declined from 2025, especially public transportation and accessibility.
- Fort Collins remains positively rated as a place to work, but availability of job opportunities fell from 35% in 2025 to 25% in 2026, the lowest rating in the trend period.
- Overall City services and interactions with City employees remain strongly rated; City utilities also continue to receive high satisfaction from customers.
- Public information ratings remained stable after rebounding in 2025, with 50% rating the City positively for informing community members.

Results and trends are included in the attached detailed report and can be compared by respondent subgroups using demographic characteristics and geographic location.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Residents identified these top three items as budget priorities to focus on in the next five years:

1. Environment and Neighborhood Livability and Social Health (both with 57%)
2. Transportation (54%)
3. Economy (53%)

Other rankings – Culture, Parks and Recreation (33%), Safety (27%), and General Government (15%). Compared to 2025, most priorities remained stable.

The top five items below were identified as the ONE item residents want the City to improve on:

1. Transportation improvements, mobility, paths and trails (18%)
2. Housing cost or affordability (17%)
3. Cost of living/economy/jobs (11%)
4. Government policies, spending, service delivery, etc. (10%)
5. Environmental issues/sustainability and traffic, roads and parking (7% each)

BENCHMARKS

Results are also compared to Front Range and National benchmark cities through a national benchmark database. Benchmark comparisons are provided when similar questions on the Fort Collins survey are included in Polco's database.

Fort Collins had similar or higher rankings than the Front Range benchmarks in every category.

Fort Collins ranked higher than the Front Range benchmarks in 13 categories:

- Recommend living in Fort Collins to someone who asks
- Quality of shopping opportunities
- As a place to work
- Ease of travel by bicycle
- Street maintenance
- Overall appearance of the city
- Emergency preparedness
- Natural areas and open space
- Parks Overall
- Quality of recreational opportunities
- Availability of quality healthcare
- Quality of arts and cultural opportunities

- Volunteered your time in Fort Collins

Fort Collins ranked higher than the National benchmarks in nine categories:

(* indicates a much higher ranking)

- Ease of travel by bicycle *
- Street maintenance
- Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone
- Overall appearance of the city
- Natural areas and open space *
- Parks Overall
- Quality of recreational opportunities
- Availability of quality healthcare
- Volunteered your time in Fort Collins

Fort Collins ranked lower than the National benchmarks in two categories:

- Availability of affordable quality housing
- Availability of affordable quality childcare

HOW DATA IS USED:

The survey results are an important factor in the City's strategic work planning and budgeting processes. Community Survey data is used by departments as an input to measure the perceived effectiveness of various projects and programs, development of work plans, and to identify areas of focus for improvement. Several survey data points serve as metrics which are reviewed quarterly by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and department heads.

SURVEY ECOSYSTEM

All survey requests are routed through the central communications office to ensure coordination and alignment with City policies. When a new survey is proposed, we review whether the annual Community Survey already captures the information sought and review other current or recently completed surveys for overlaps or opportunities to integrate geographically or topically. This helps reduce the effect of 'survey fatigue' in our community while improving efficiency and quality of the feedback collected. We are continually seeking to improve this process, updating

our survey guidelines and protocols, exploring new digital survey platforms, and ensuring all surveys are aligned, fit for purpose and providing data to support decision-making.

BUDGET

The City of Fort Collins, through the Communications and Public Involvement Office (CPIO) contracts with Polco/National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) to administer the Community Survey at a cost of \$39,600. This includes survey printing and mailing, language translation (Eng -> Spanish), online interfacing, data capture and analysis and a detailed report. Historically, a small budget is allocated within CPIO for paid advertising to promote the survey.

NEXT STEPS:

2026 Community Survey results are shared with Departments to inform strategic and annual work planning. Individual department presentations will be conducted as requested, and the survey reports are shared online with the community.

Attached are the Executive Summary of the scientific survey and the full report. These materials are also available online at FortCollins.gov/CommunitySurvey and can be printed upon request. If Council is interested, individual district reports or presentations can be coordinated through the City Manager's and Communications and Public Involvement Offices.