



Lake Forest Park

Community Survey


Olympic Research
and Strategy

Study Background

*The City of Lake Forest Park is facing a **\$1.5 million** annual budget shortfall driven by rising costs for essential services such as public safety, and infrastructure maintenance. Limited by a 1% annual property tax revenue cap, the city has implemented cost-cutting measures but still faces tough decisions. Previous levy proposal of 2021 has not passed, highlighting the need to understand community concerns and priorities prior to introducing a temporary levy in 2025.*

Study Objectives



Understand why previous levy efforts were unsuccessful.

Identify a levy structure and positioning that resonates with residents to address the budget shortfall.

Gauge community reactions to a temporary levy option as a potential solution.

Develop effective messaging and communication strategies for introducing a potential 2025 levy.

Methodology

Multi-methodology

- *Address-based paper survey with QR code and unique pin for online survey option*
- *Telephone survey option*
- *Post-notification post cards sent after the paper survey to encourage participation*
- *Paper surveys and post cards were sent to 5,395 households*
- *Online survey offered in both English and Spanish*

Data collected between: November 6th, 2024, and November 26th, 2024

- *526 (online) and 413 (mail-in and phone-in) surveys were collected.*
- *Respondents who are not registered to vote, not planning to register, and/or unlikely to vote in the next election were removed from the total respondent data set.*
- *Duplicate respondents (those responding both online and through mail) had their second entry deleted.*
- *A total of (918) surveys are included in the final data set.*

Response rate – 17.02%

Confidence interval of +/-2.95% (95% confidence level, assuming worst case scenario)

Demographic Summary of Respondents

Research respondents had a mean age of 58 years, with 49% male and 47% female. Most (95%) were homeowners and long-term residents, with 60% having lived in Lake Forest Park for over 15 years and 23% for 6-15 years. The mean household income was \$174,000, and household composition varied, with 65% having 2 adults, 18% with 1 adult and fewer with 3 or more adults.

Weighting

- *Weighting was applied to ensure the survey results accurately reflect the distribution of voting-eligible adults in the City of Lake Forest Park. Each household's weight was based on the number of adults eligible to vote and those who reported that they "absolutely will vote" in 2025.*
- *For example, a household with two adults who are certain to vote received a weight of 2, while a household with one adult absolutely certain to vote received a weight of 1.*

Objective

- *Ensure proportional representation of voting-eligible adults.*
- *Prioritize responses from residents most likely to participate in the upcoming ballot.*

Summary Overview: Community Satisfaction



Overall, LFP residents value their community and appreciate what it has to offer.

- 4 in 5 believe things in Lake Forest Park are going in the right direction.
- However, many residents shared opinions on changes they would like to see to improve the community and its management.



Most **AGREE** that occasional property tax increases are essential for maintaining and improving city services into the future, and they are twice as likely to agree (than disagree) that an increase in their property tax could have a positive impact on the community and their quality of life, and make living in LFP more desirable.

That said, substantial numbers **DO NOT** feel the city clearly communicates reasons behind a property tax increase and how additional revenue will be used. Some doubt whether the city will use additional tax revenue responsibly for community projects.



They want to see the City **CUT COSTS** and explore **OTHER FUNDING** before considering a property tax increase.

- 3 in 4 support the idea of hiring a grant writer to help the city secure external funding.



Summary Overview: Community Engagement



LFP residents are highly engaged voters.

- Nearly all are currently registered to vote, voted in 2024, and are certain or likely to vote in November 2025.
- While four in five were aware of the Permanent Property Tax Levy in 2021, just 2 in 5 voted for it – *confirming that the City will face some challenges garnering sufficient votes on a proposed Multi-Year Temporary Levy.*

42%

YES



2021 Levy Supporters:

- Voted YES because they felt the services were beneficial and necessary for themselves and the community, they wanted pedestrian safety improvements, and/or they felt that the taxes were necessary for the city to operate.
- Think that the main *barriers* to its passing were a lack of information and full transparency of how the money would be utilized, and the fact that people, in general, resist paying more taxes.

31%

NO



2021 Levy Opposers:

- Voted NO because they didn't see a match between the city's priorities and theirs, they mistrust city management, the levy was permanent, the plan lacked specifics, and/or they felt their taxes were already high.
- Cited their existing 'high' tax burden, distrust of city management/lack of accountability measures, lack of information/transparency, having different priorities or feeling the levy was unnecessary, and the fact that the levy was to be permanent among the top *barriers* to its passing.

Summary Overview: Support for a 6-Year Temporary Levy



Support
62%



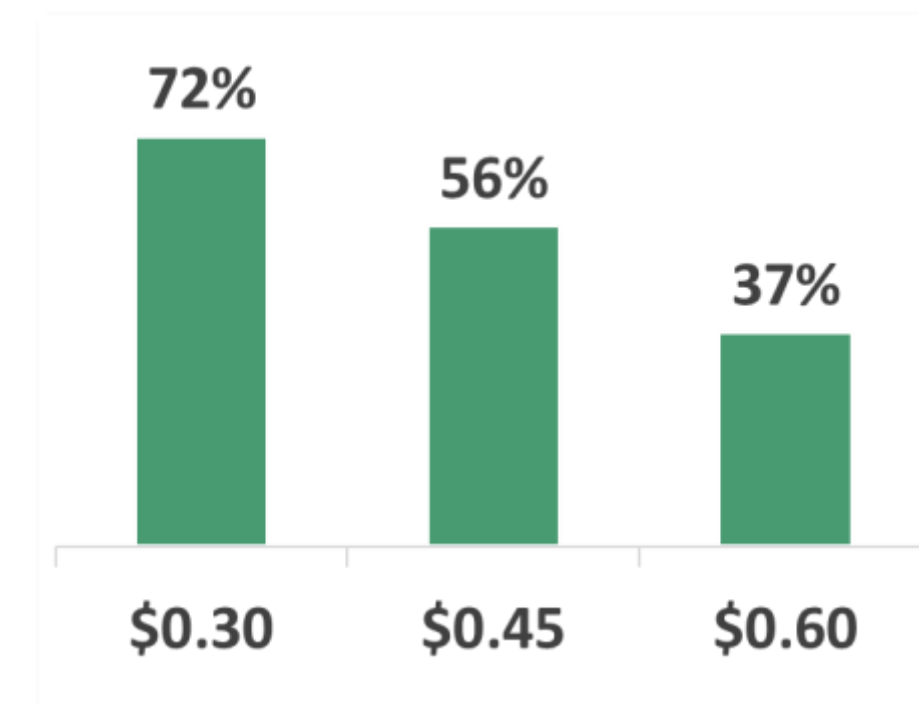
Oppose
25%

In total, 3 in 5 support the idea of a six-year LFP temporary levy and a quarter oppose it.

- 2021 Levy ‘Yes’ voters are more than three times as likely as ‘No’ voters to support the six-year levy.
- Support is higher among younger and middle-aged residents and higher income households.

SUPPORT FOR THE LEVY AT DIFFERENT RATES

- The potential for passing a temporary levy at a rate of \$0.30 to partially address the budget shortfall is *promising*, as more than seven in ten say they would support it.
- That support falls to just over half (56%) at the \$0.45 rate, requiring more effort to garner support in order to reach the sixty-percent threshold to pass.
- Just thirty-seven percent say they will support the levy at the \$0.60 rate.
- Two in ten (22%) say they will not support any temporary levy.



Summary Overview: Information Required for Support



Detailed information, clearly and transparently communicated, will be key to garnering support for the proposed temporary levy – among both those who support the idea as well as those who currently oppose it.

- SUPPORTERS of the Temporary Levy primarily want the city to provide them with details on its purpose, and specifics regarding what will be included in the spending plan – itemizing each project and its cost, location, rationale, and timeline.

“A very detailed breakdown of how it would shore up the budget and specifically what services would be maintained and what would be improved in each of the 6 years the levy is in place. A well written summary of the community benefits and why each was chosen.”



Plans for cost-cutting measures and other examples of belt-tightening will be essential to winning over those who currently oppose the idea of a temporary levy.

- In addition to an itemized spending plan, OPPOSERS of the proposed levy want the city to transparently provide information on what budget cuts have already been or will be made, details on the current budget and shortfalls, and information about other means for raising funds and cutting costs.

“Any private for-profit business facing revenue shortfall would immediately initiate cost reduction and improved efficiency measures. LFP has done neither. Get on it!”

Summary Overview: Information Required for Support



Residents want the City to make the case for how the projects will benefit the community overall, as well as those directly impacted.

“I can imagine folks having a hard time approving a new tax that just generally will help fund the city without understanding the specific benefits they can expect to get.”



They want to know what other sources of funding the city is pursuing in order to put less of a burden on residential property owners. They want to see that the City is taking steps to encourage business development and other measures to broaden the tax base.

“What are we doing for taxes on businesses as well as residents? Are city administrators effectively securing funding from State and Federal sources or are we not very good at that?”

“Don't forget about redevelopment of the town center having the potential bringing in more tax revenue and more renters/condo owners.”

Summary Overview: Information Required for Support



Residents want to see the City offer more opportunities for engagement.

“I would also like better ways to engage with city leadership, e.g. coffee with the mayor or other dedicated engagement times.”

“Outreach meetings are great, but some of them should be scheduled outside of traditional work hours. Community emails or links to websites explaining the levy are also helpful.”



Supporters think the City needs to communicate not only the benefits to the community if the levy passes, but also what will happen if it does NOT pass. They feel the City should be well-prepared to counter any “No” Campaign that will be galvanized by those who oppose the levy.

“A clear written description of what could be gained, as well as a description of what could be lost should the levy fail to pass. Also - a more aggressive (visible) campaign to prompt passage of the levy.”

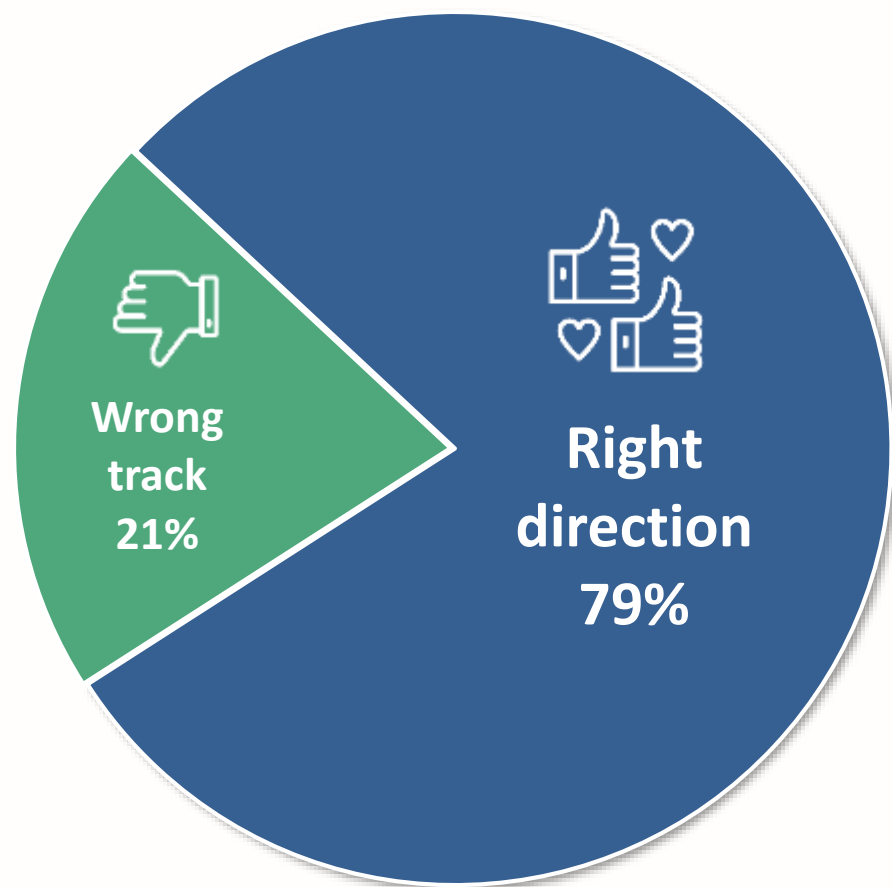
“Specific examples of improvements, strong and early campaign to educate voters as the NO campaign will come out in force again (signs are already going up!).”

Detailed Findings



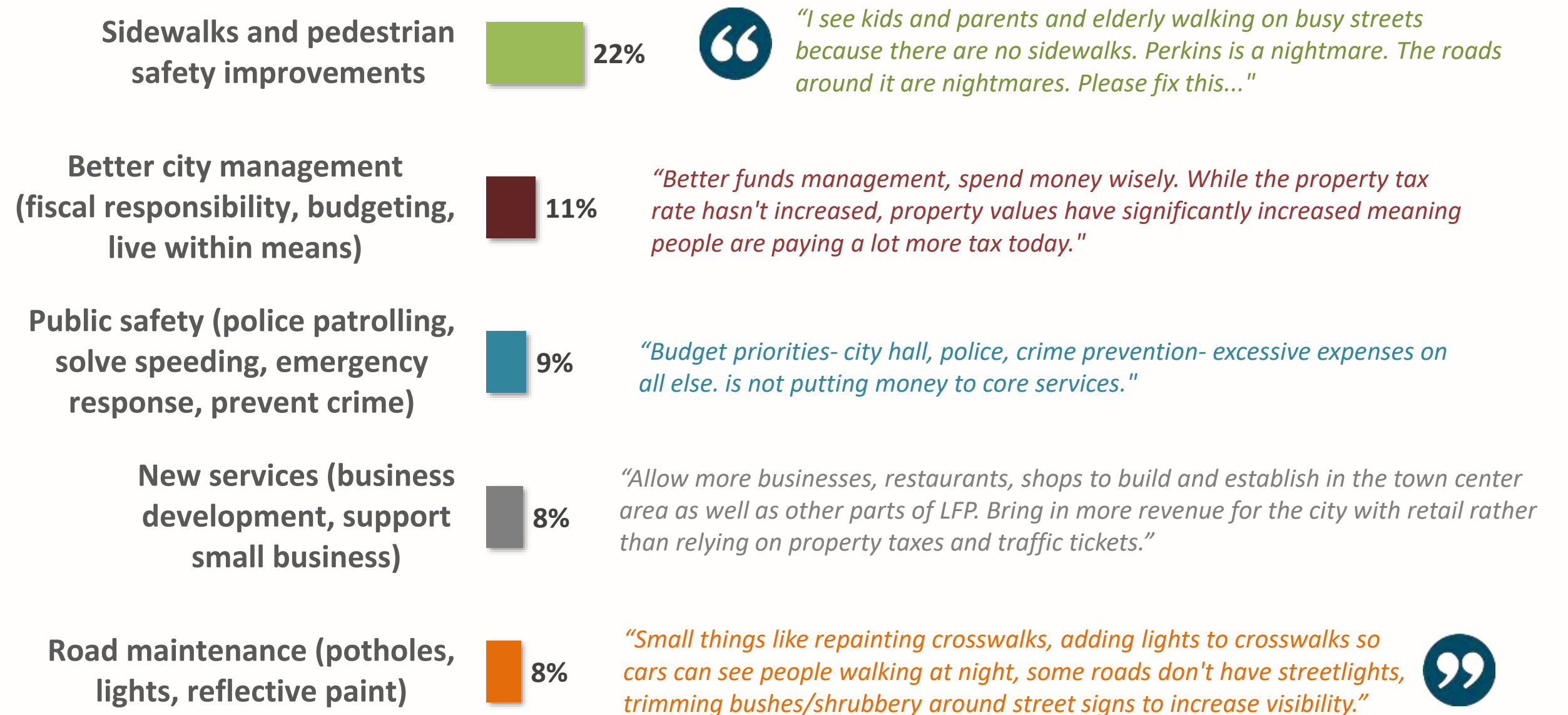
Four out of five believe things in Lake Forest Park are going in the right direction. Sidewalks/pedestrian safety leads as the top suggested improvement.

Things in Lake Forest Park...



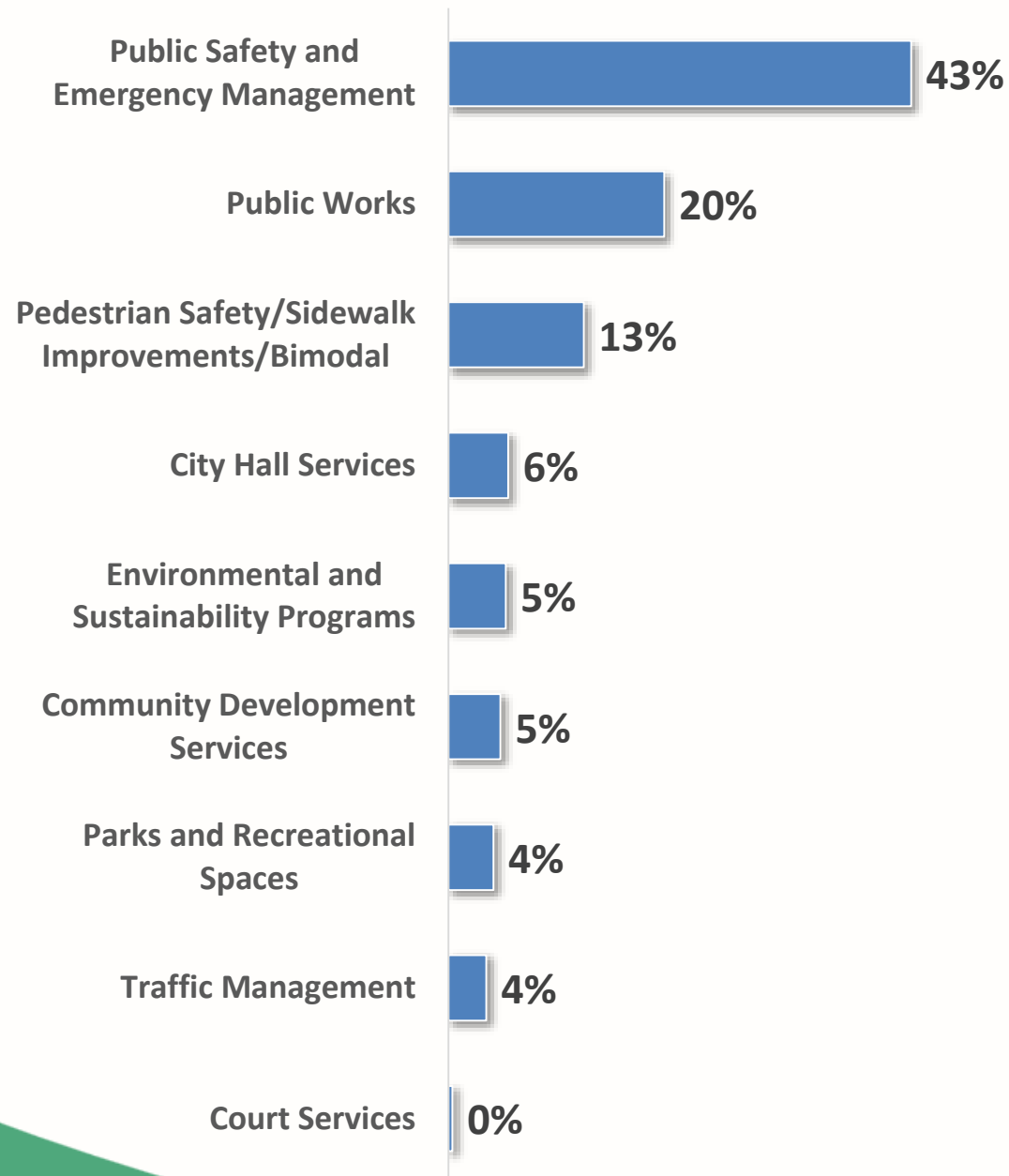
'Wrong track' opinions are significantly higher among those who voted 'no' on the 2021 levy (39%) and those opposed to the 6-Year temporary levy (50%).

Suggestions for Improvement (Top Mentions)

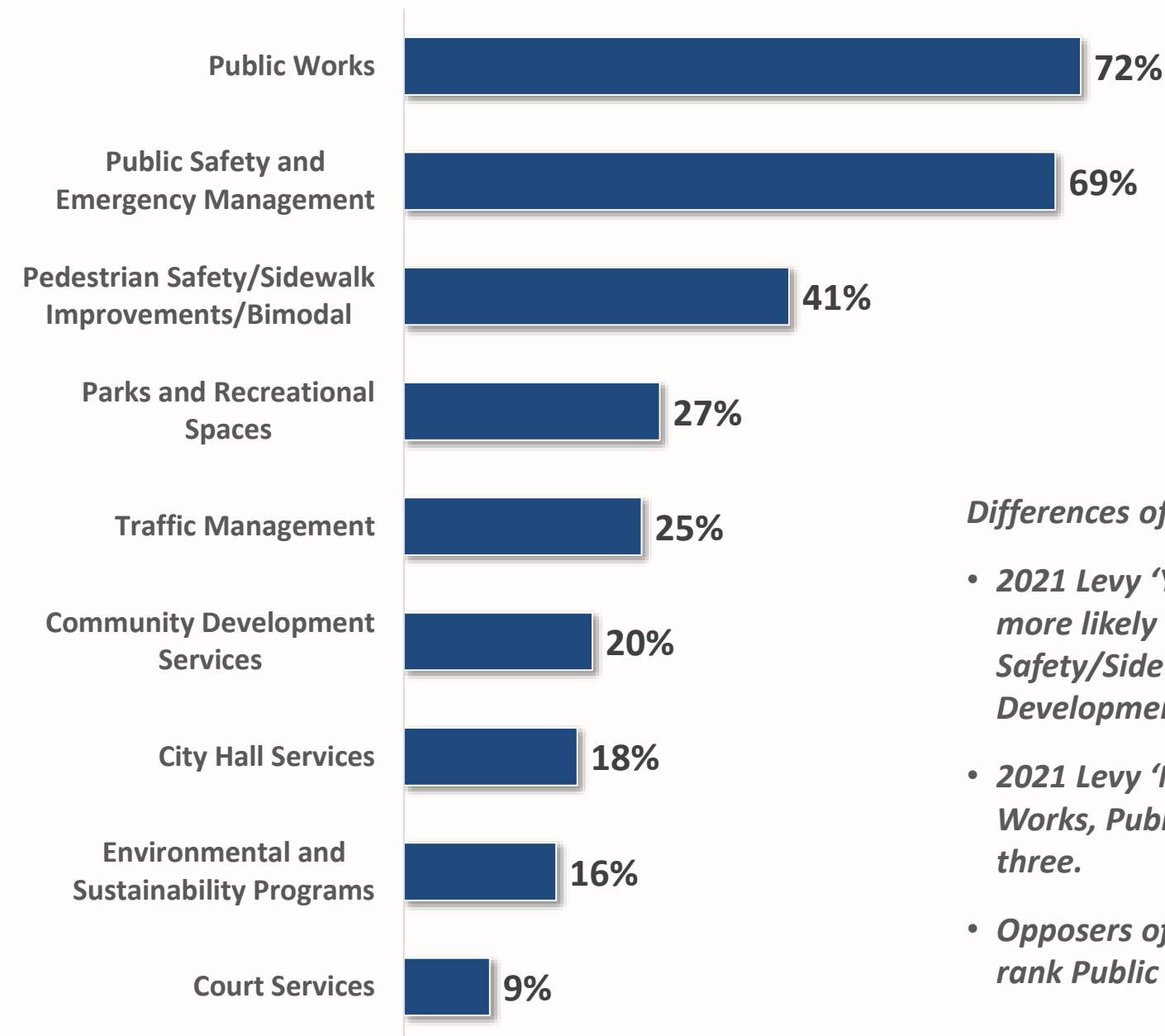


Public Safety/Emergency Management stands apart as the #1 prioritized service, followed by Public Works and, more distantly, Pedestrian Safety.

Service Prioritization: Ranked #1



Service Prioritization: Ranked #1, #2 or #3



Top Priorities

#1 

#2 

#3 

Differences of note...

- 2021 Levy 'Yes' voters and Supporters of the proposed 6-Year Levy are more likely than their counterparts to rank Pedestrian Safety/Sidewalks/Bimodal, Parks and Rec Spaces, and Community Development among their top three.
- 2021 Levy 'No' voters are more likely than 'Yes' voters to rank Public Works, Public Safety, Traffic Management, and Court Services in their top three.
- Opposers of the proposed 6-Year Levy are more likely than Supporters to rank Public Safety and Traffic Management in their top three.

A third offered suggestions for additional services, re-emphasizing the priorities of public safety and public works, and their desire to see the city cut costs/ explore other funding. Tree maintenance, zoning/business development, and improved walkability, parks, and public spaces rounded out top suggestions.

Other City Services to be Prioritized (Top Mentions)

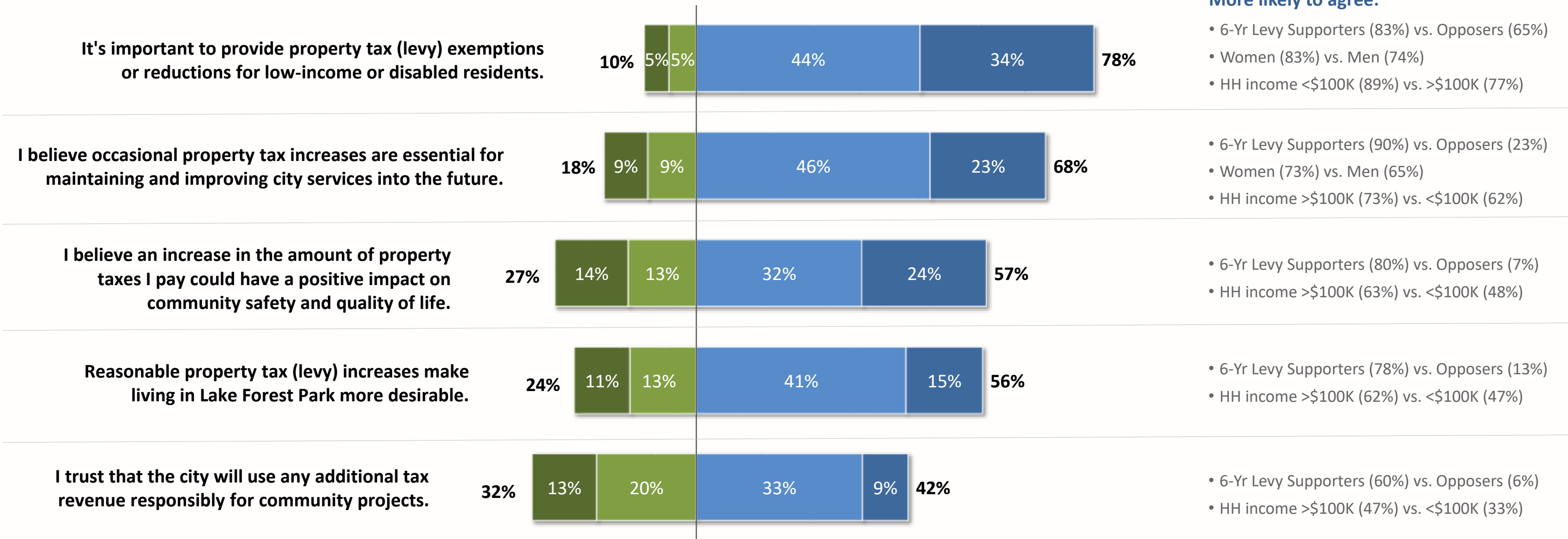




Over three fourths feel it is important to have tax exemptions or reductions for some residents, and two thirds agree occasional tax increases are essential for maintaining and improving services.

Statement Agreement

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree



More likely to agree:

- 6-Yr Levy Supporters (83%) vs. Opposers (65%)
- Women (83%) vs. Men (74%)
- HH income <\$100K (89%) vs. >\$100K (77%)
- 6-Yr Levy Supporters (90%) vs. Opposers (23%)
- Women (73%) vs. Men (65%)
- HH income >\$100K (73%) vs. <\$100K (62%)
- 6-Yr Levy Supporters (80%) vs. Opposers (7%)
- HH income >\$100K (63%) vs. <\$100K (48%)
- 6-Yr Levy Supporters (78%) vs. Opposers (13%)
- HH income >\$100K (62%) vs. <\$100K (47%)
- 6-Yr Levy Supporters (60%) vs. Opposers (6%)
- HH income >\$100K (47%) vs. <\$100K (33%)

Only ratings of agree (4-5) or disagree (1-2) are shown. (Ratings of neither agree nor disagree (3) are not shown.)
The **bold** percentages represents the corresponding net total Agree / Disagree.

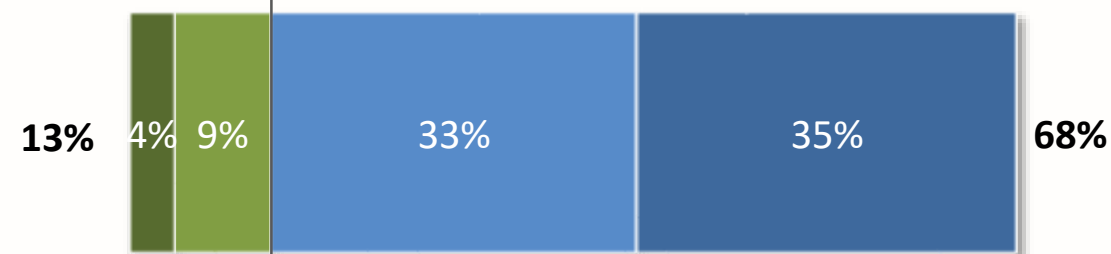


Most believe the city should explore other options before a property tax increase. They don't feel the city clearly communicates the reasons for an increase and how additional revenues will be used.

Statement Agreement

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

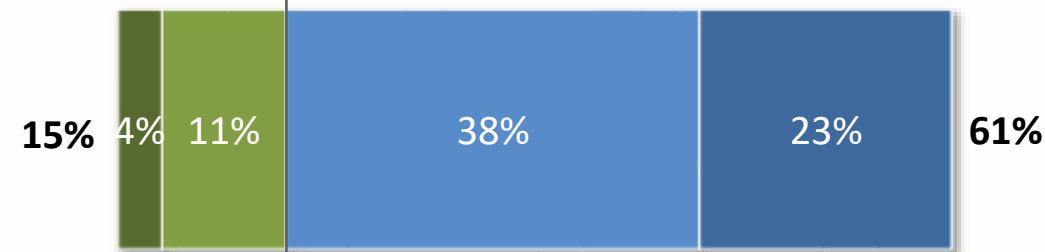
Despite the City Council's efforts to raise revenue, I believe the city should still explore further funding sources before considering a property tax (levy) increase.



More likely to agree:

- 6-Yr Levy Opposers (91%) vs. Supporters (55%)

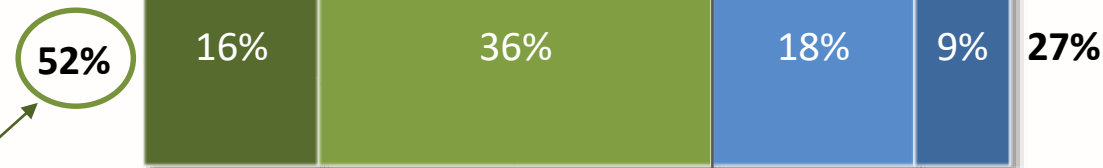
I don't feel the city clearly communicates with the residents on certain topics such as the reasons for a property tax (levy) increase and how additional revenues will be used.



More likely to agree:

- 6-Yr Levy Opposers (77%) vs. Supporters (52%)

I don't believe the city services I use would benefit from additional funding.



More likely to disagree:

- 6-Yr Levy Supporters (70%) vs. Opposers (16%)
- Ages 18-34 (73%) vs. 35-64 (55%) or 65+ (46%)
- HH income <\$100K (44%) vs. >\$100K (57%)

More likely to agree:

- 6-Yr Levy Opposers (64%) vs. Supporters (9%)
- Men (30%) vs. Women (21%)
- HH income <\$100K (35%) vs. >\$100K (23%)

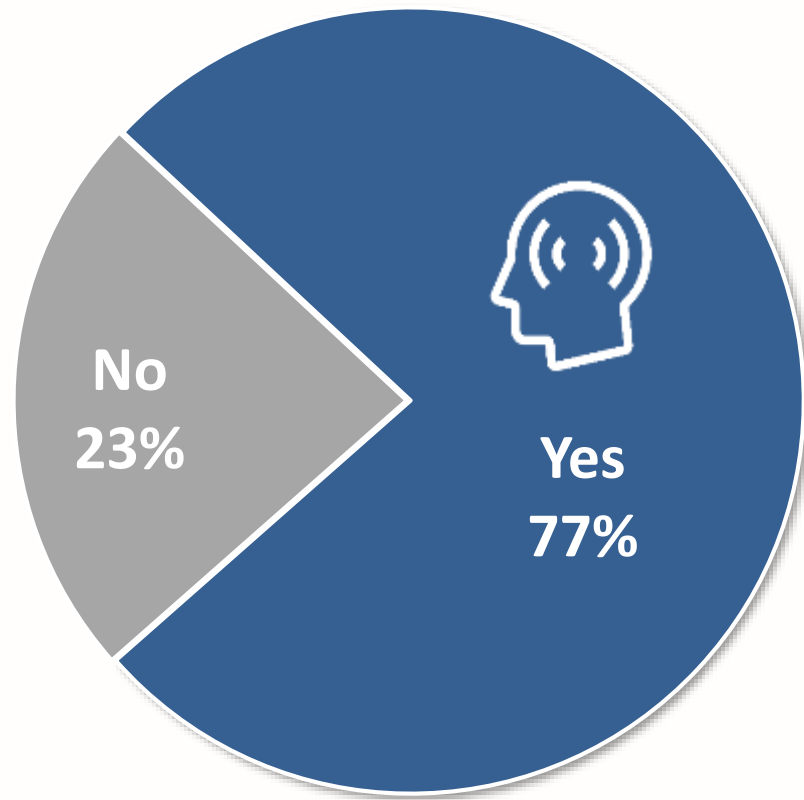
Half DISAGREE, indicating that they DO BELIEVE the city services they use would benefit from additional funding.

Only ratings of agree (4-5) or disagree (1-2) are shown. (Ratings of neither agree nor disagree (3) are not shown.)
The **bold** percentages represents the corresponding net total Agree / Disagree.



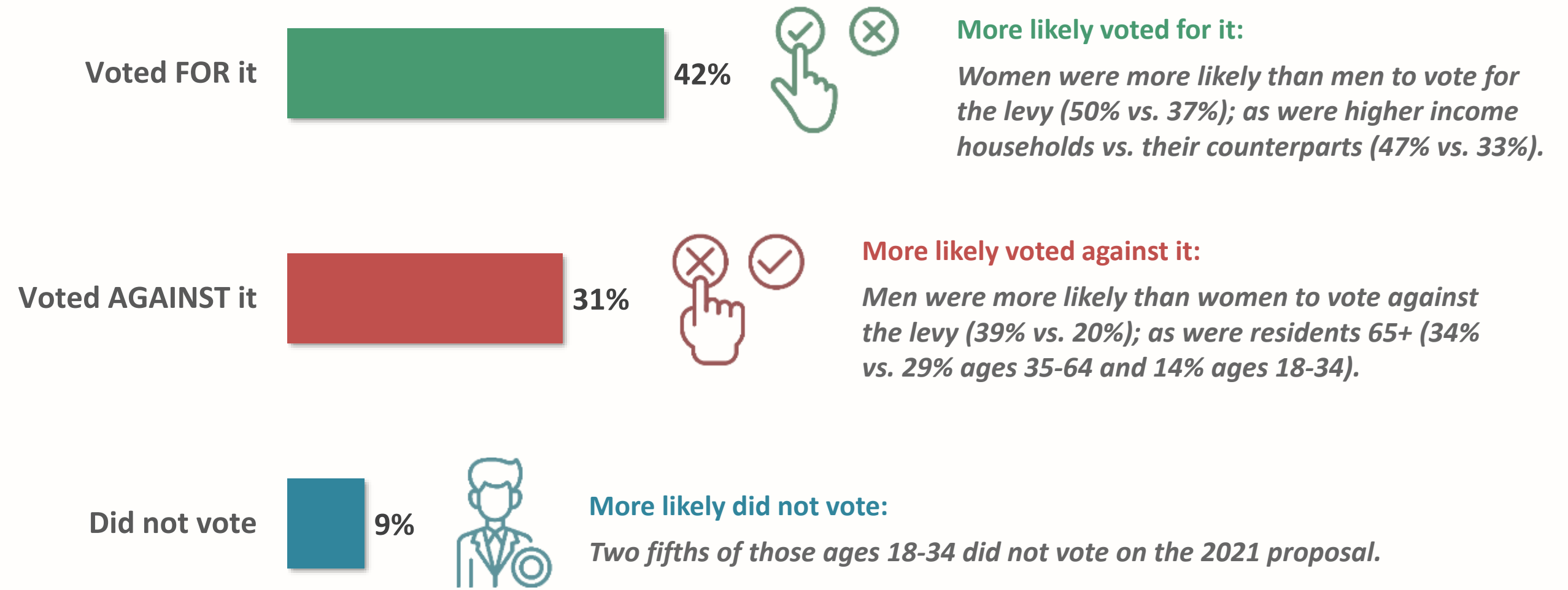
Close to four in five were aware of the 2021 Levy proposal and its objectives, but just two in five say they voted for it.

Aware of 2021 Levy



Awareness was significantly higher among ages 35 and older (78%); more than half (55%) of residents ages 18-34 were unaware of the levy.

2021 Levy Voting Behavior



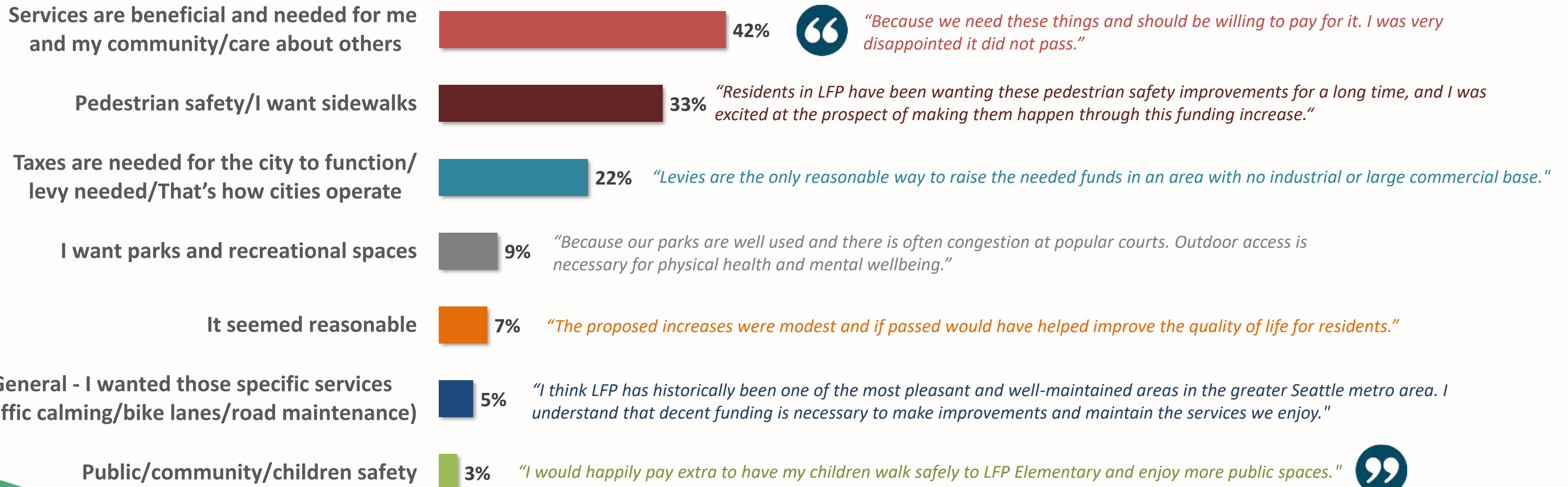
Note: 18% did not recall



Those who voted in favor of the 2021 levy did so primarily because they felt the services were beneficial and necessary for themselves and the community, they wanted pedestrian safety improvements, and/or they felt that the taxes were necessary for the city to operate.

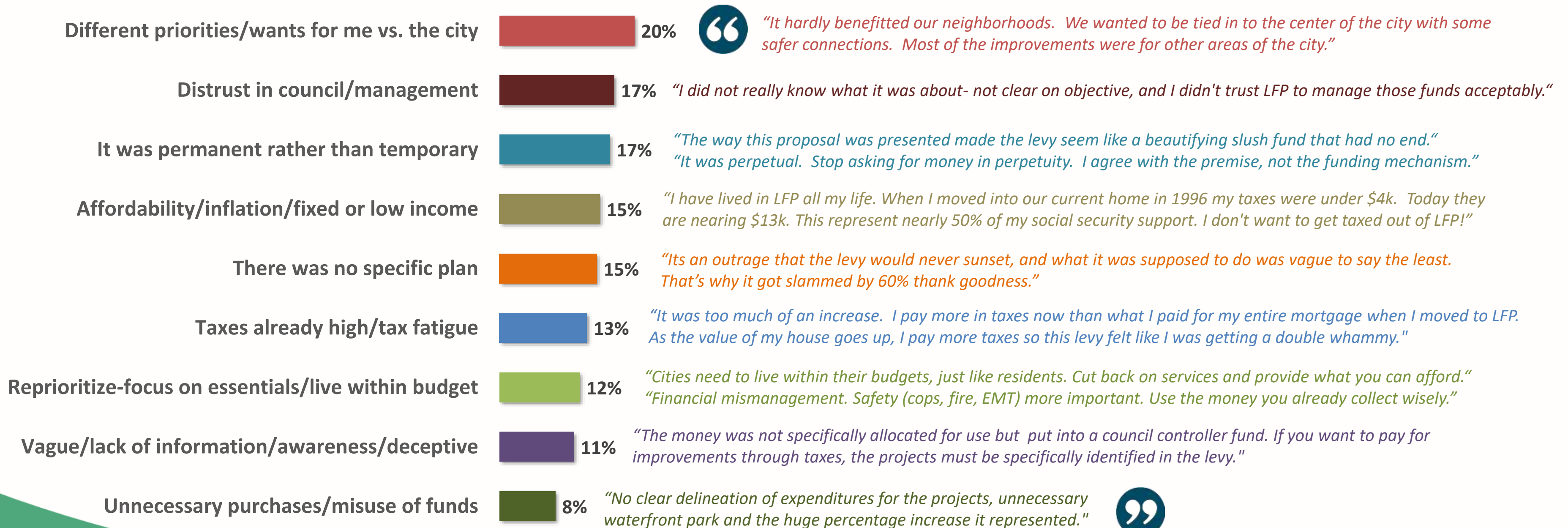


Reasons for Voting "YES" on 2021 Levy (Top Mentions)



Those who opposed the 2021 levy did so primarily because they didn't see a match between the city's priorities and theirs, they mistrust city management, the levy was permanent and the plan lacked specifics, and they felt their taxes were already high, especially those with fixed/limited income.

Reasons for Voting "NO" on 2021 Levy (Top Mentions)



Those who voted in favor of the 2021 levy think that the main *barriers* to its passing were a lack of information and full transparency of how the money would be utilized, and the fact that people, in general, resist paying more taxes.

Barriers to 2021 Levy Passing: Among Those Who Voted "YES" (Top Mentions)



Lack of Information/too broad/need transparency



"I think residents would like to see how our town is spending the revenue they have before just voting to give the town more money. Fiscal responsibility requires transparency..."

No one wants to pay more money/taxes



"People can't stand tax increases because they see them as a slippery slope. The wording of the levy must spell out very clearly... what the money will be used for, and that it will not continue to go up every year."

Self-absorbed/selfish/short-sighted residents



"Anti-tax selfishness... 'Me first' thinking rarely proves positive for the vast majority of citizens."

Bad timing/Covid



"Let's not forget Covid either where many people lost jobs/income and are still trying to crawl back out of a deep hole!"

Expensive/taxes already too high/tax fatigue



"Our taxes are already too high. We are being priced out."

The NO campaign



"1. Disinformation 2. The anti-prop 1 campaign got an early start and promulgated fuzzy math and lack of community spirit."

Distrust management/need accountability measures



"Concern about council's ability to manage within a budget and not overreach."

It was permanent



"Making it permanent was an avoidable over reach."

Bad messaging/benefits don't outweigh costs



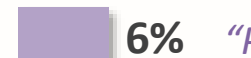
"Bad communication from the city. It made it look like it was all about the waterfront park."

High cost of living/inflation



"Asking for more at a time when residents were already strapped and fighting inflation, similar to now, was a bit tone deaf."

Different priorities/unnecessary

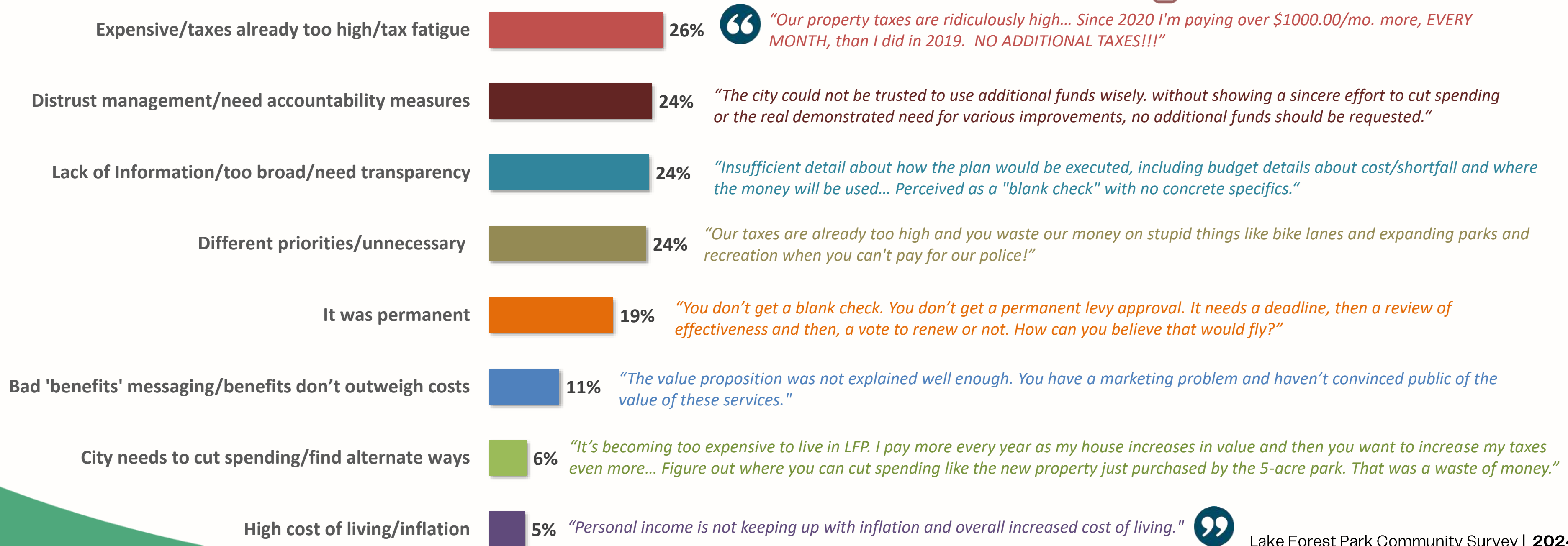


"People either not understanding how much good the levy would do for everyone or thinking it costs them more than they want to pay."



Those who voted against the 2021 levy cited their existing ‘high’ tax burden, distrust of city management/lack of accountability measures, lack of information/transparency, having different priorities or feeling the levy was unnecessary, and the fact that it was to be permanent among the top *barriers* to its passing.

Barriers to 2021 Levy Passing: Among Those Who Voted “NO” (Top Mentions)

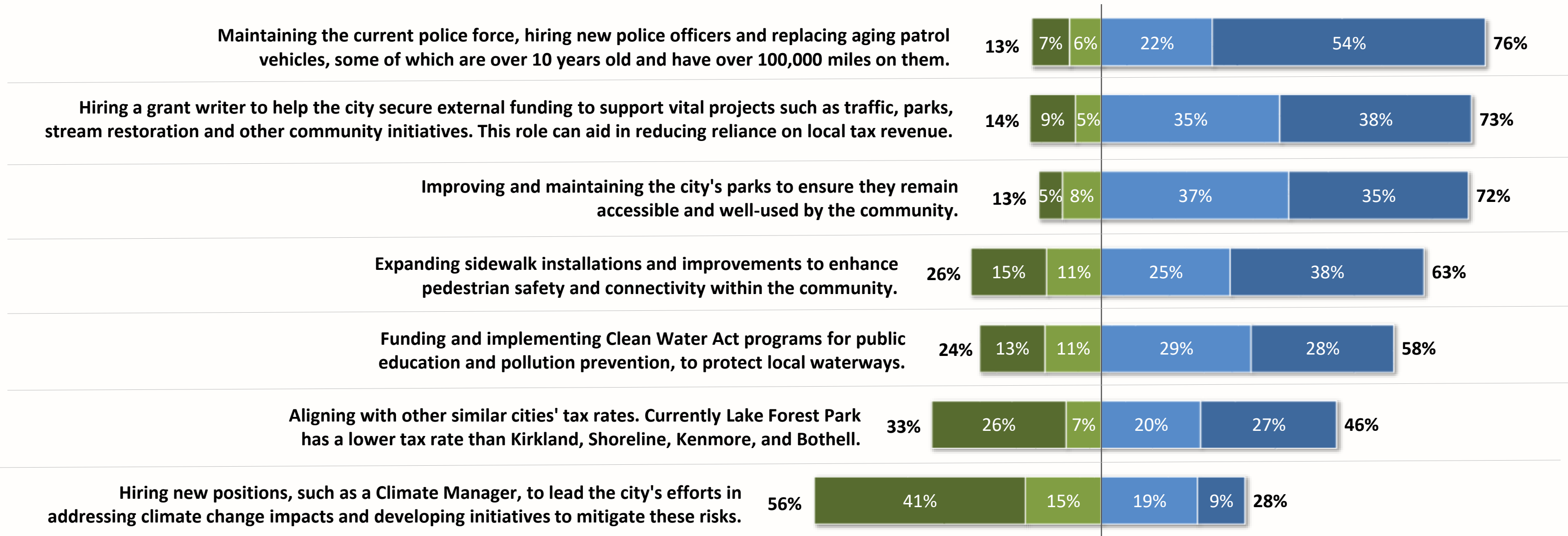




Given the budget shortfall, most residents, in total, would prioritize addressing policing needs, hiring a grant writer to secure external funding, and improving/maintaining the city’s parks.

Priorities for Addressing Budget Shortfall – Among TOTAL

■ Unimportant ■ Somewhat Unimportant ■ Somewhat Important ■ Important



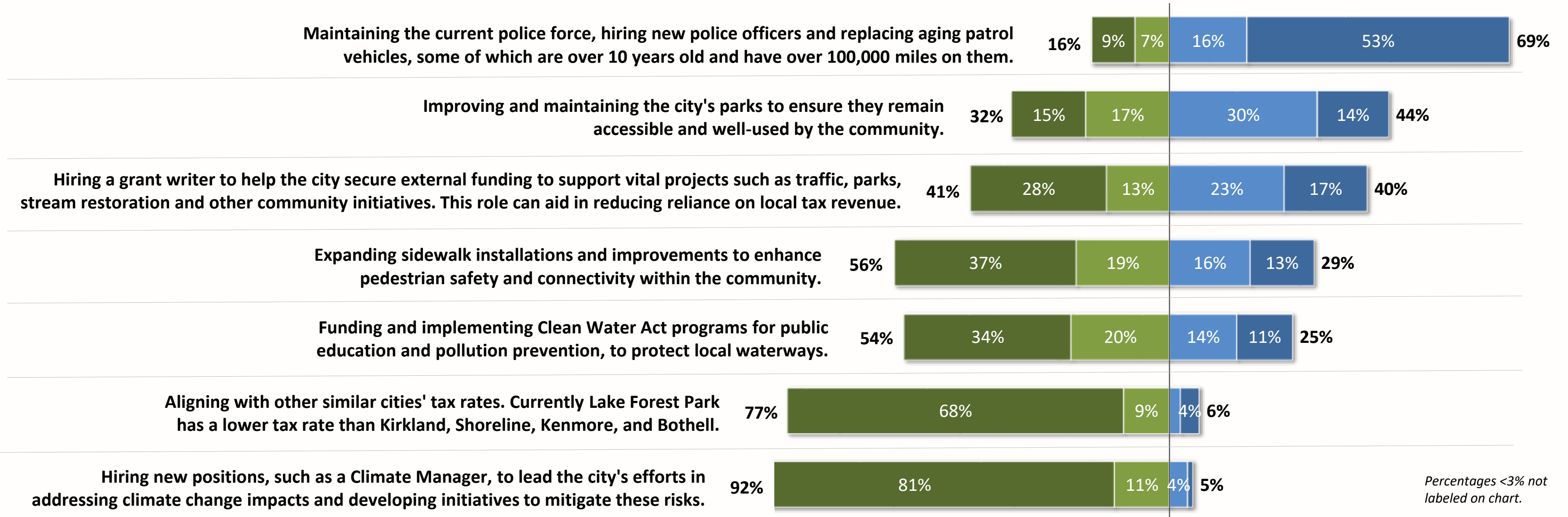
Only ratings of important (4-5) or unimportant (1-2) are shown. (Ratings of neutral (3) are not shown.)
The **bold** percentages represents the corresponding net total Important / Unimportant.



Seven in ten who oppose the 6-year levy feel it *is important* to address policing needs, but only a minority of the opposed feel it is important to address other needs, especially aligning with other cities' tax rates or hiring new positions to address climate impacts.

Priorities for Addressing Budget Shortfall – Among OPPOSERS of 6-Year Levy

■ Unimportant ■ Somewhat Unimportant ■ Somewhat Important ■ Important



Percentages <3% not labeled on chart.

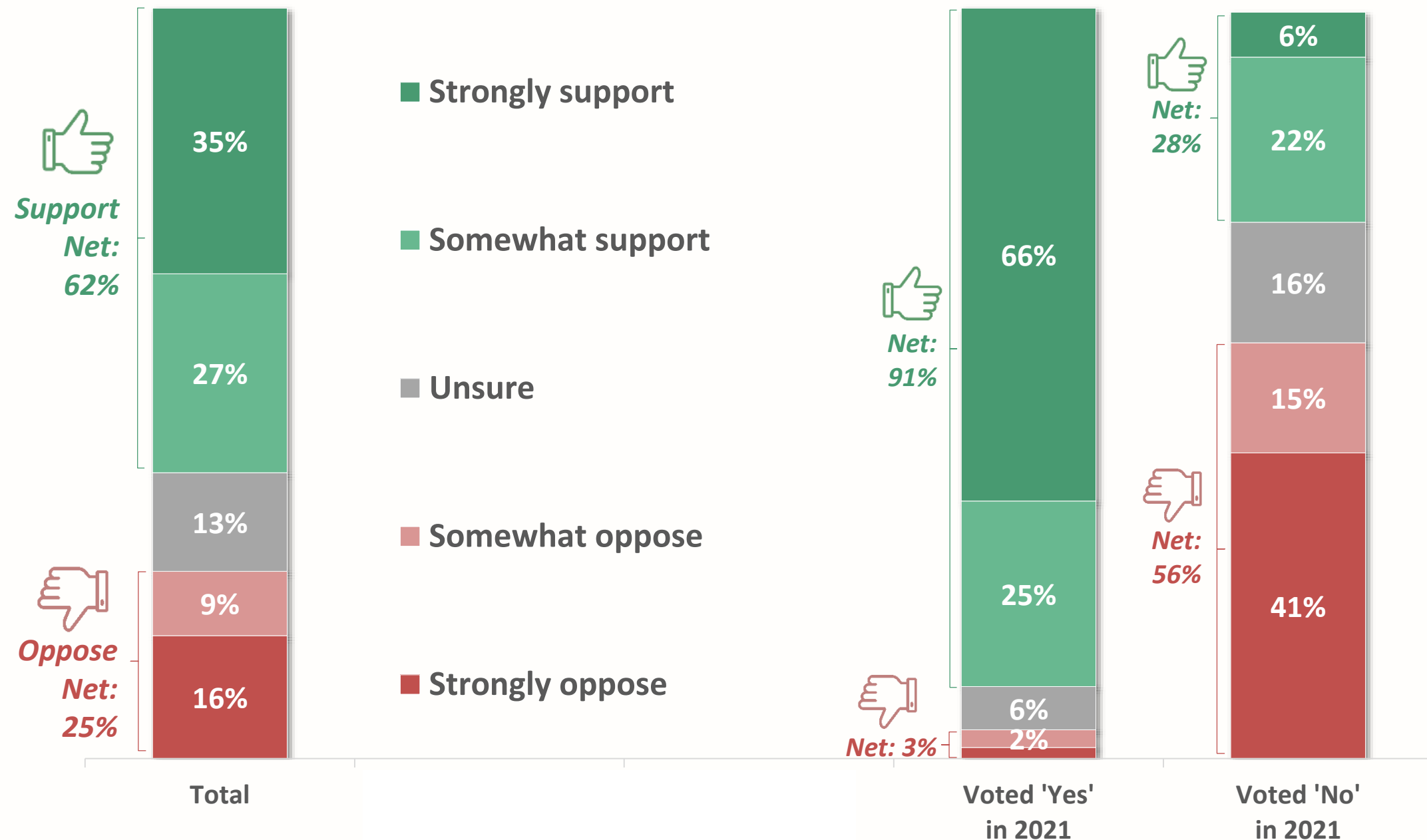
Only ratings of important (4-5) or unimportant (1-2) are shown. (Ratings of neutral (3) are not shown.) The **bold** percentages represents the corresponding net total Important / Unimportant.

In total, three fifths support the idea of a six-year LFP temporary levy and a quarter oppose it.

Reaction to a City of Lake Forest Park Seeking a Six-Year Temporary Levy

More likely to support the levy (net):

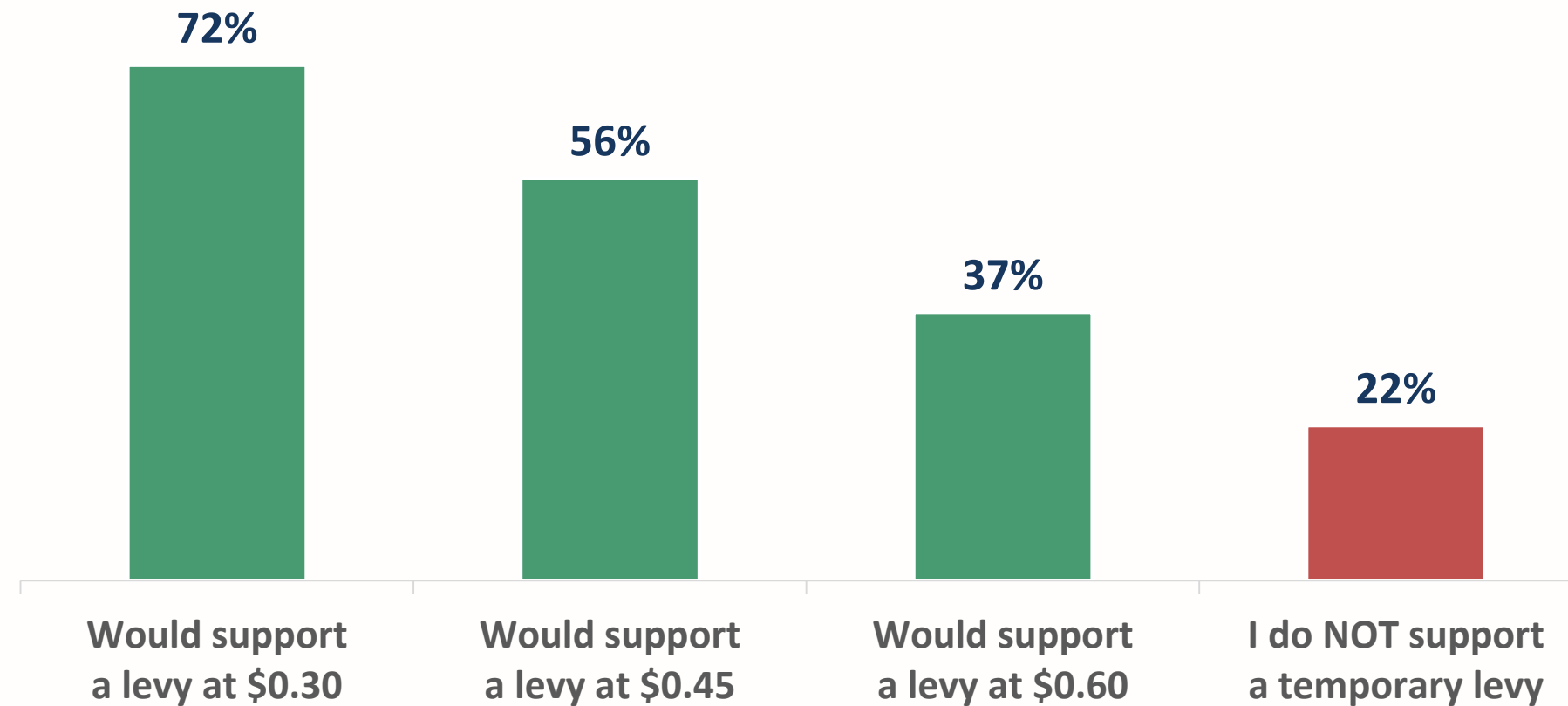
- 2021 Levy 'Yes' voters are more than three times as likely as 'No' voters to support the six-year levy at a rate of 91% to 28%.
- Support is higher among younger (70%) and middle-aged (66%) residents than those age 65+ (57%).
- Higher income households (69%) are more likely to support the levy than households with income under \$100K (48%).





While seven in ten would support a levy of \$0.30 to partially address the budget shortfall, support falls to just over half at the \$0.45 rate, and fewer than four in ten at the \$0.60 rate.

*Reaction to Proposed Levy Rates**



More likely to oppose any levy:

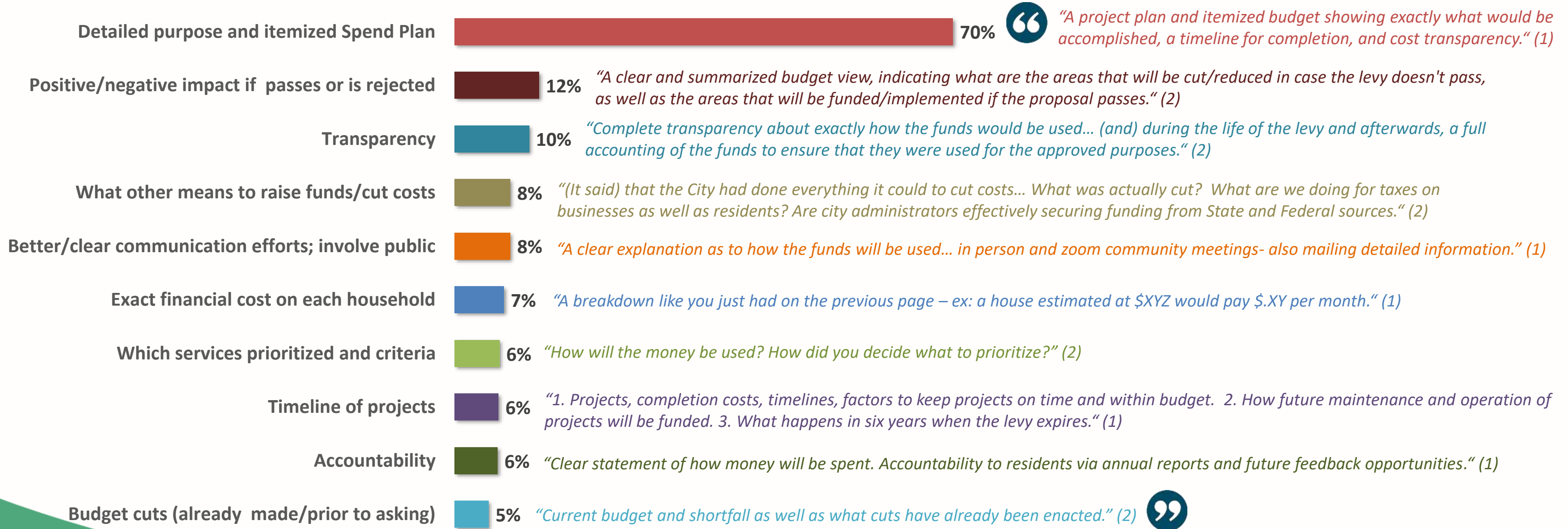
Households with income <\$100K were more likely than higher income households to oppose any levy (30% vs. 17%); as were residents 65+ (26% vs. 18%-20% of middle aged or younger).

**See Notes section for full description of each option shown.*



Those who support the proposed levy primarily want the city to provide them with details on its purpose and specifics regarding what will be included in the spending plan, itemizing each project and its cost, location, rationale, and timeline.

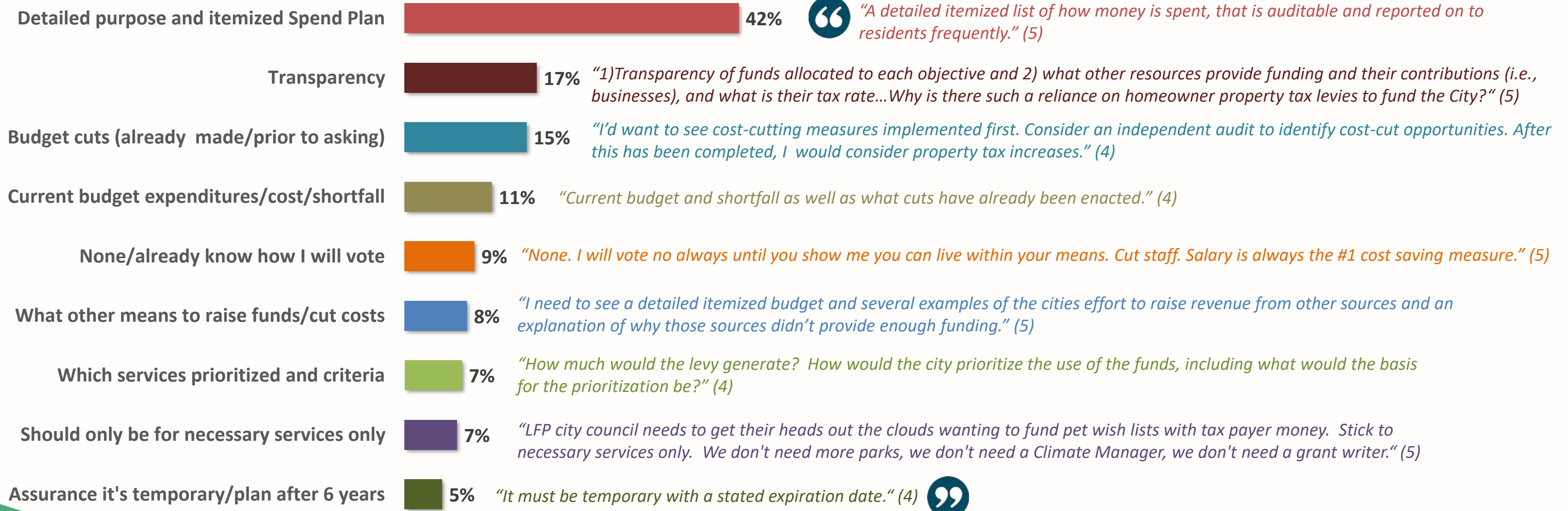
Information Needed from the City to Decide How to Vote: SUPPORTERS* of the Proposed Temporary Levy (Top Mentions)



*Verbatim codes: 1=Strongly Support, 2=Somewhat Support.

In addition to an itemized spending plan, those who oppose the proposed levy want the city to transparently provide information on what budget cuts have already been or will be made, details on the current budget and shortfalls, and information about other means for raising funds and cutting costs.

Information Needed from the City to Decide How to Vote:
OPPOSERS* of the Proposed Temporary Levy (Top Mentions)

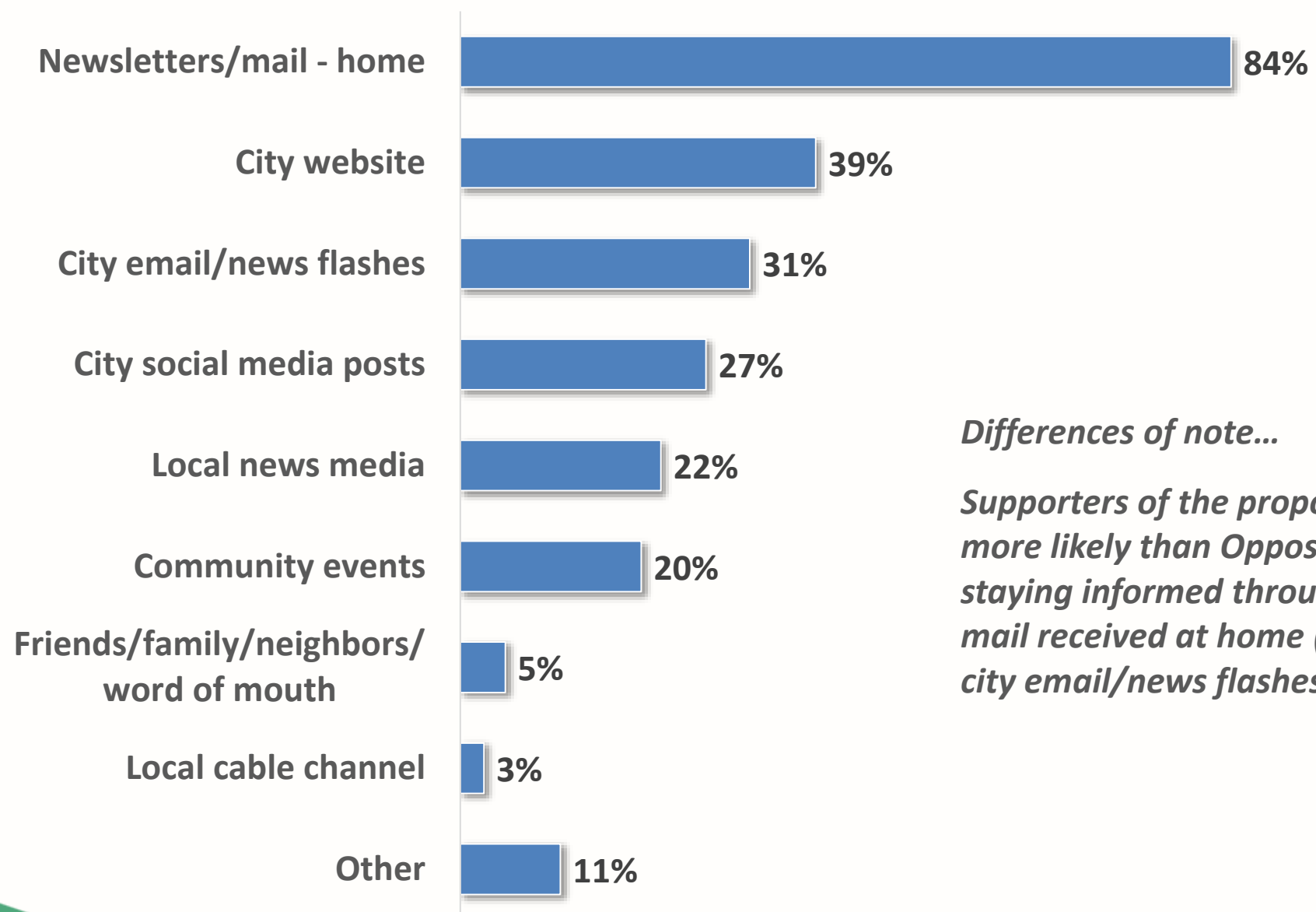


*Verbatim codes: 5=Strongly Oppose, 4=Somewhat Oppose.



Most stay informed about city services through newsletters/mail received at home. Mailed newsletters and email hold top spots for their *preferred* method of city engagement.

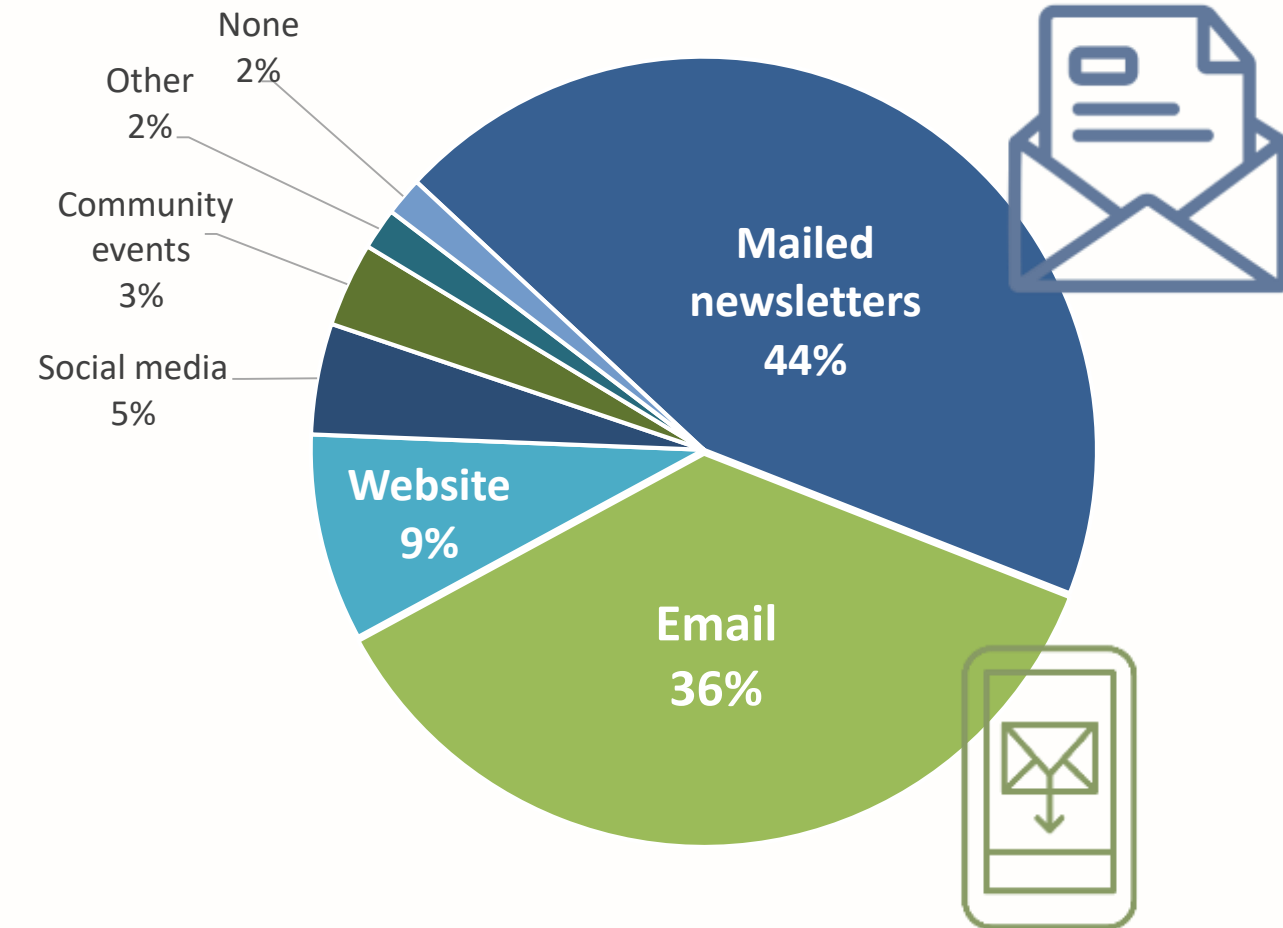
City Engagement / Staying Informed



Differences of note...

Supporters of the proposed 6-Year Levy are more likely than Opposers to mention staying informed through city newsletters/mail received at home (88% vs. 77%) and city email/news flashes (34% vs. 24%).

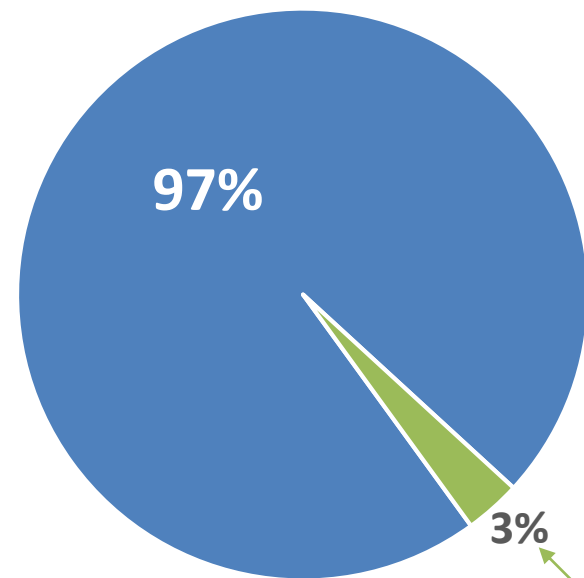
First Choice for City Engagement



Appendix

These LFP survey respondents are highly engaged voters. Nearly all are currently registered to vote in LFP, voted in the 2024 general election, and are certain or likely to vote in the November 2025 election.

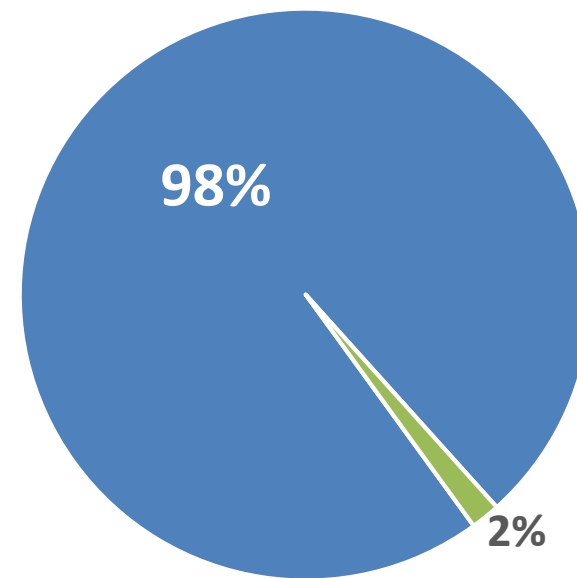
Currently registered to vote in LFP



■ Yes ■ No/Not Sure

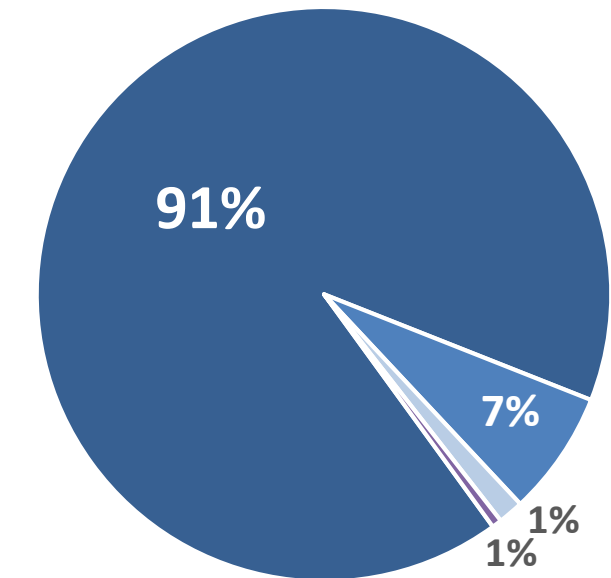
1% are likely to register before the Nov. 2025 election, 1% are unlikely to register and 1% are unsure.

Voted in 2024 General Election



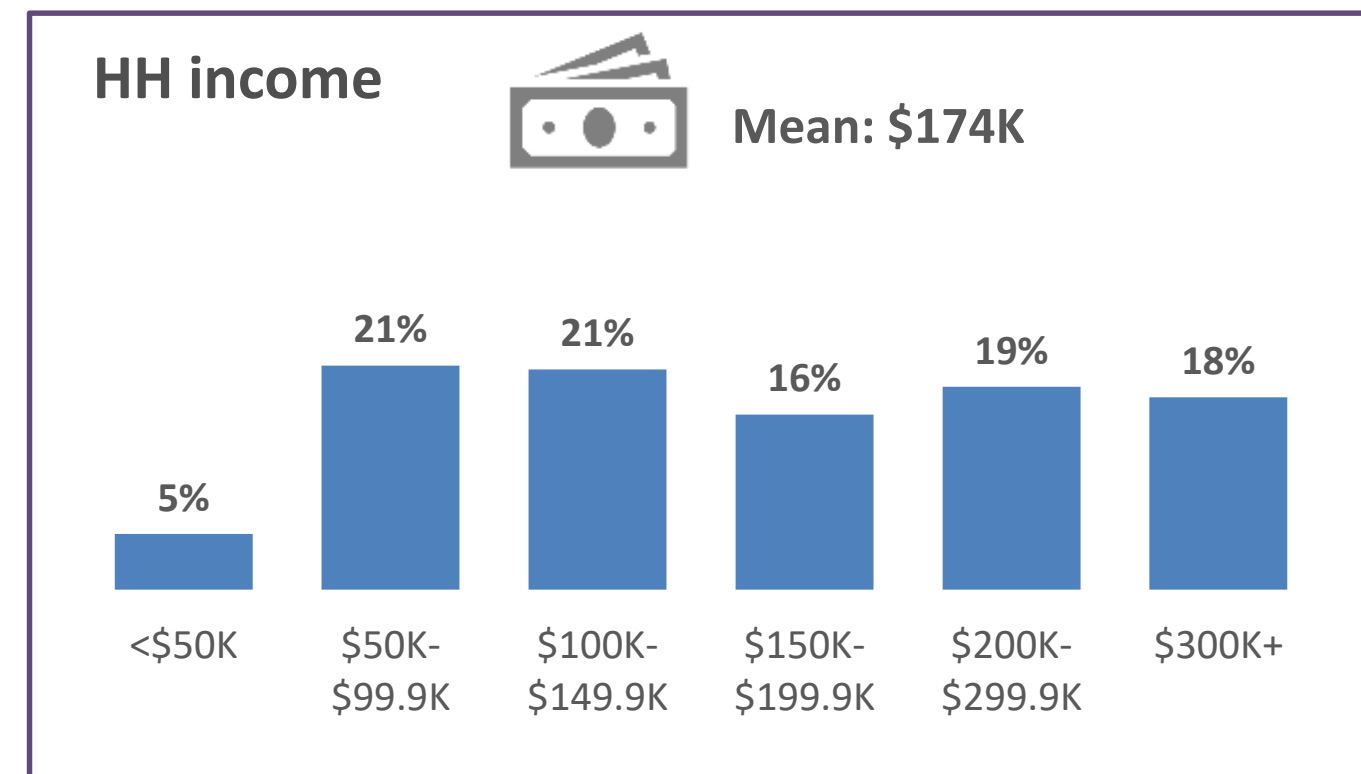
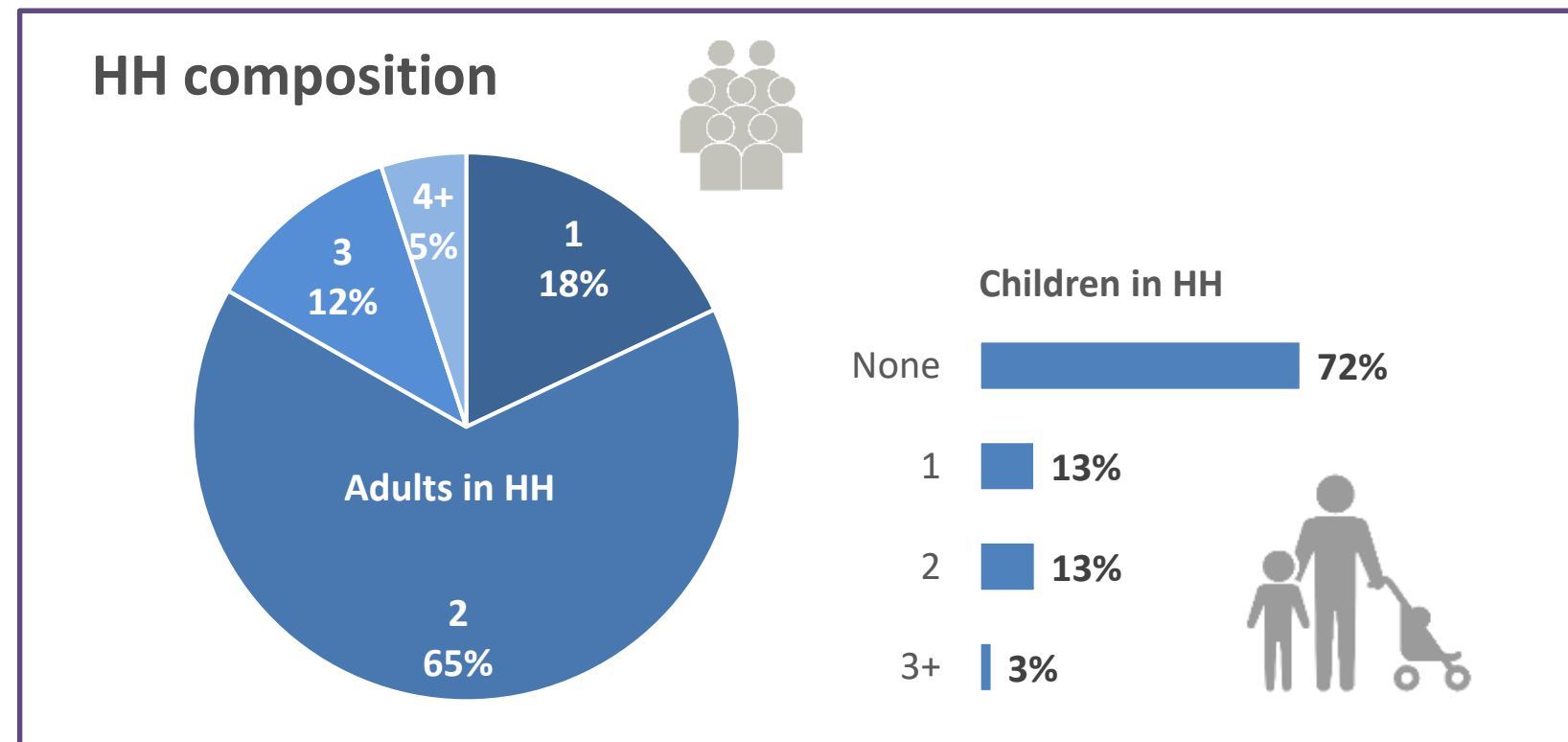
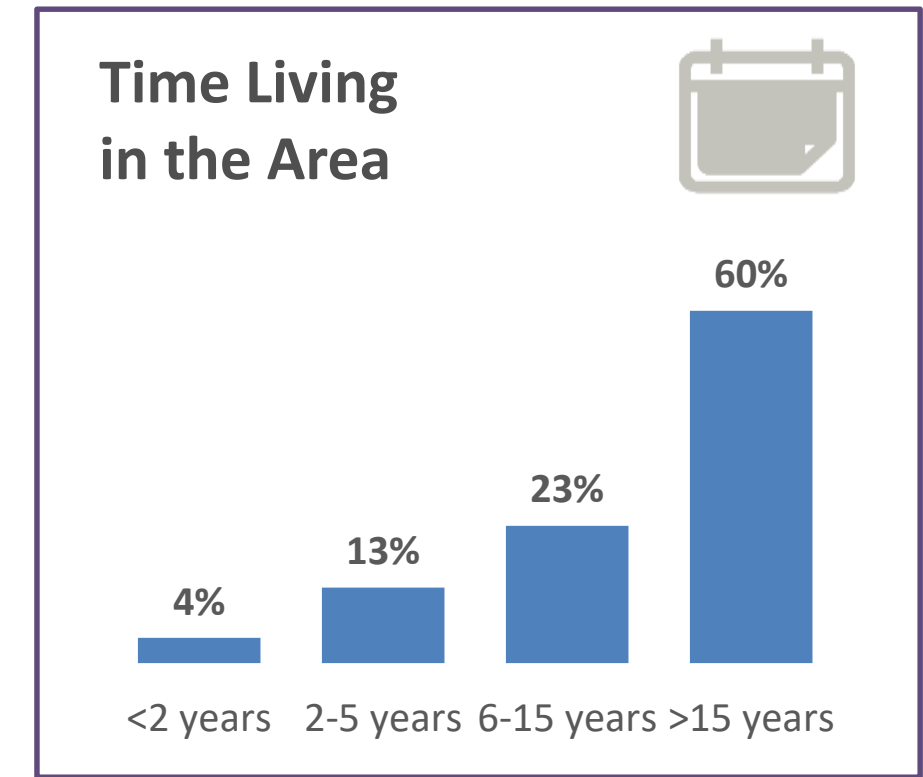
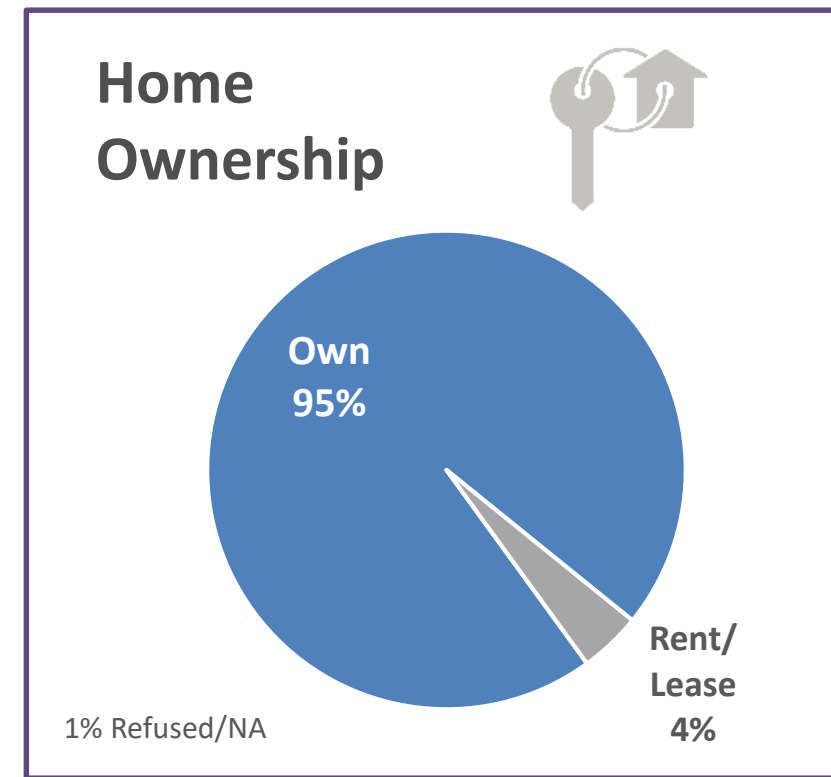
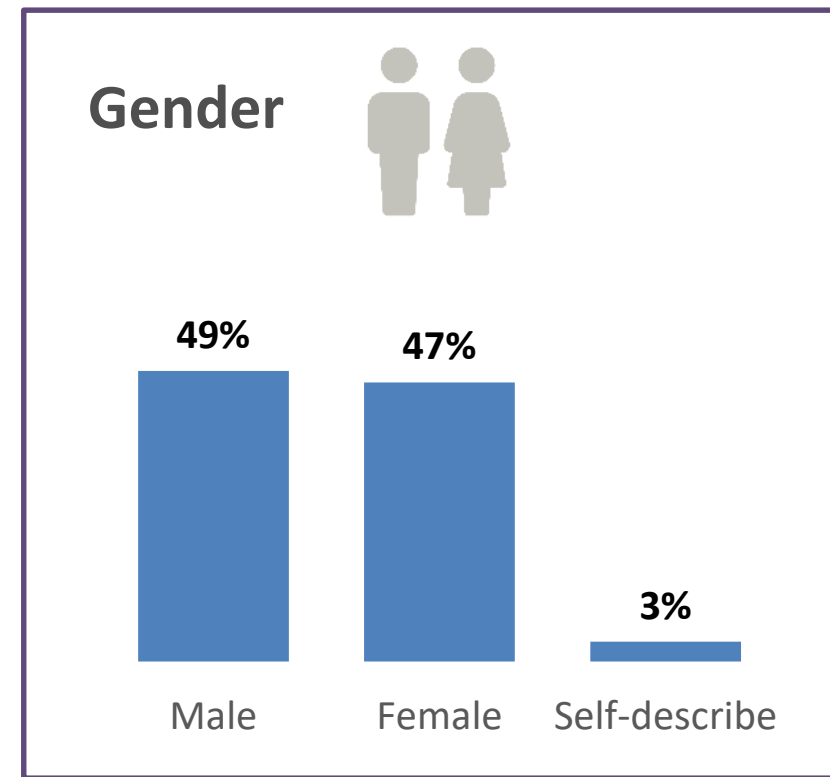
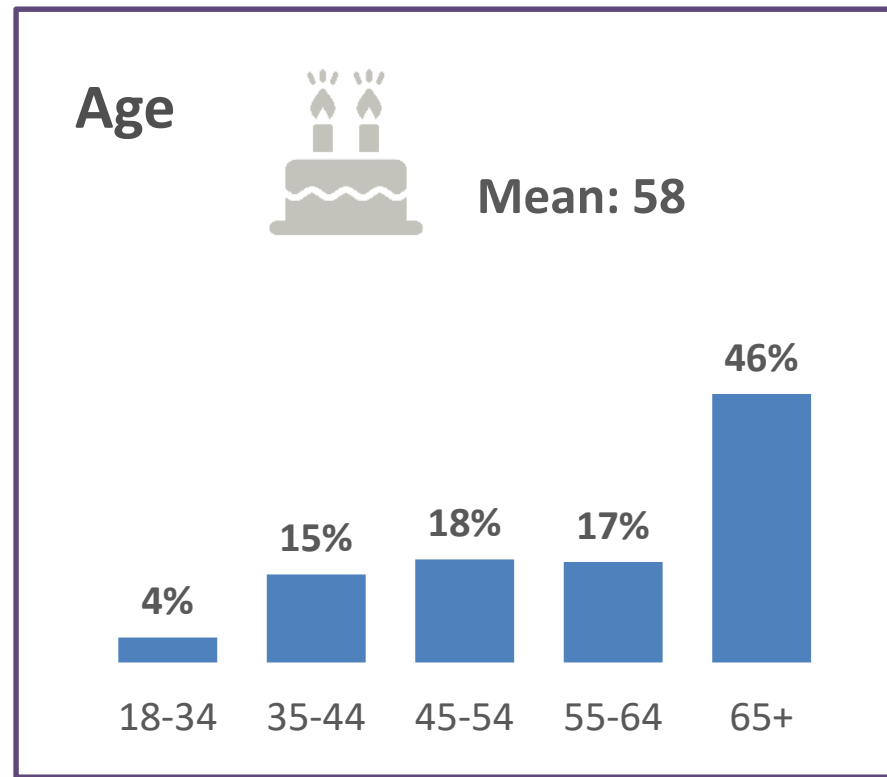
■ Yes ■ No

Voting in November 2025 Election



■ Absolutely certain to vote
■ Probably will vote
■ Chances are 50-50
■ Will not vote

Demographic Overview of Survey Respondents





Post Card



TAKE A SURVEY TO GUIDE THE CITY'S FUTURE

Your unique code to access the survey:

<<PIN>>

SCAN THE QR CODE or GO TO



LFPcommunitysurvey.com

Your feedback is essential in helping shape the future of The City of Lake Forest Park. The survey takes less than 10 minutes, and your input can make a big difference. Please complete the survey by **November 20th**.

Esta encuesta también está disponible en español en nuestro sitio web.



Neighbor, your voice matters! Don't miss the chance to share your opinion.

The City of Lake Forest Park is facing significant budget challenges. Costs for services are exceeding the revenue the city collects in fees, property and other taxes to pay for them. Most of these costs are beyond the city's control. For example, we pay an agency for 911 dispatch services and this amount increased by \$284,000 per year. Jail costs increased by \$350,000 over the past two years. Insurance costs are up by \$109,000 and public defender costs are up by \$30,000 per year.

At the same time, our property tax revenue growth is capped at 1% per year. In 2024, the 1% increase equaled just under \$34,500.

We have developed this community survey to ask residents about their budget priorities and want to hear from you.

Please fill out the brief survey by **November 20th** using one of the following options:

- Return the survey, you should have received by mail last week, in the postage paid envelope provided.
- Complete the survey online at LFPcommunitysurvey.com or scan the QR code on the front of this postcard and enter your unique PIN.
- Call (206) 291-0746 to complete the survey by phone.



c/o Olympic Research and Strategy
PO Box 46396
Seattle, WA 98146