

Survey Priorities

Council Retreat

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)

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: Support for a 6-Year Temporary Levy



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.”



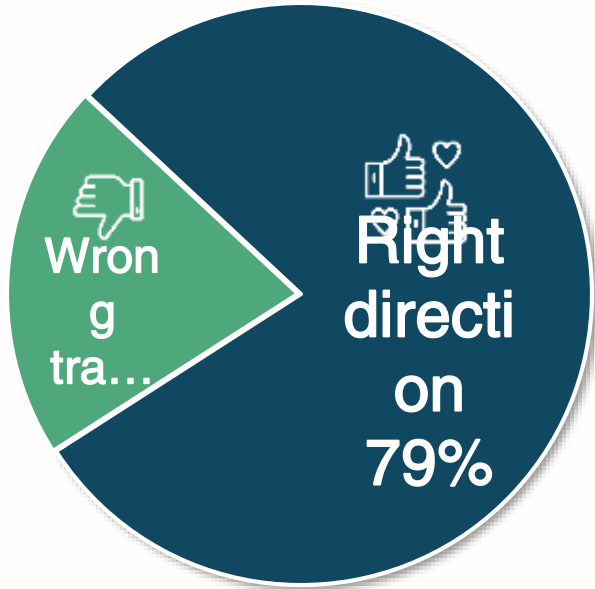
Plans for cost-cutting measures and other examples of belt-tightening will be essential to winning over those who currently oppose the idea of a temporary levy.

- 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!”

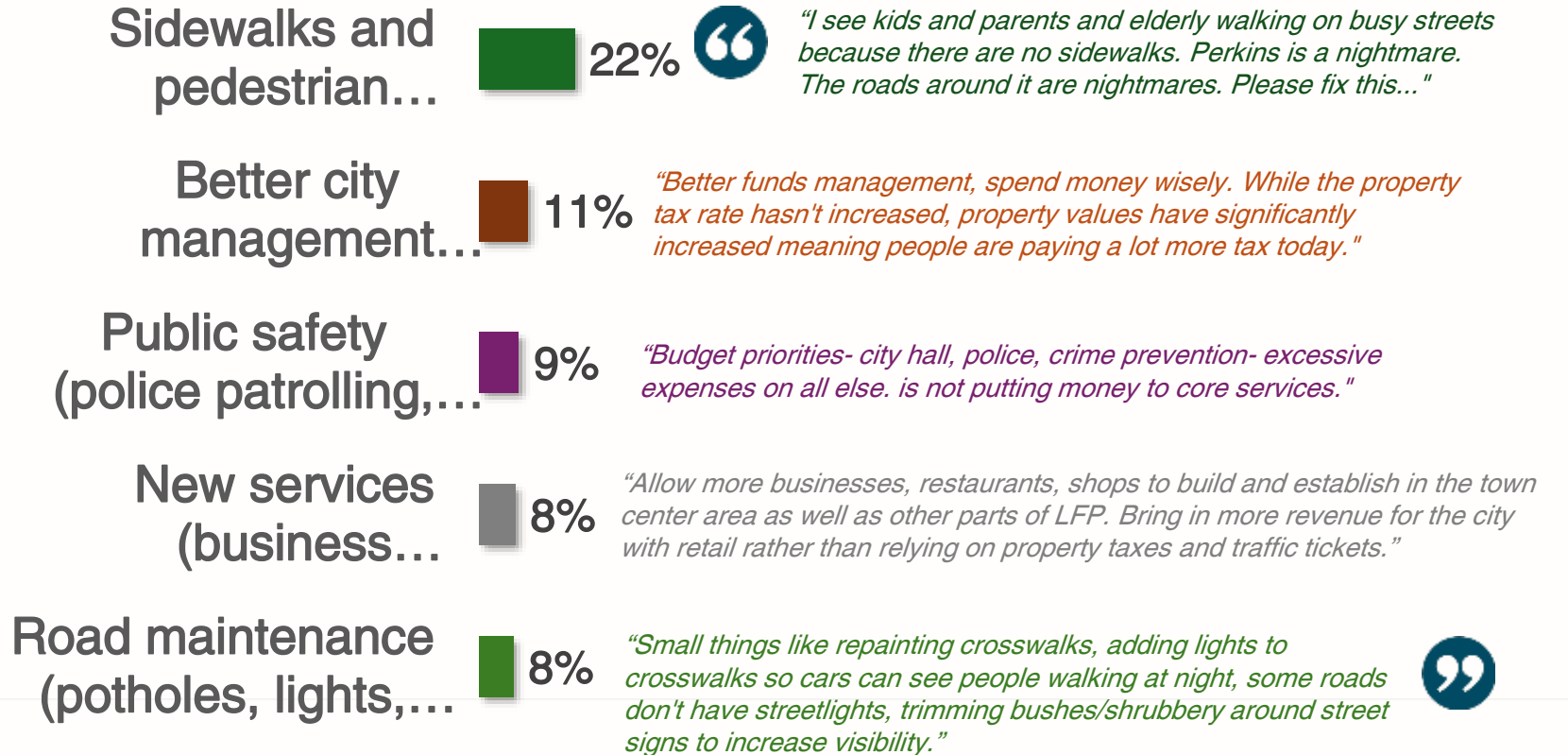
Four out of five believe things in Lake Forest Park are going in the right direction. Sidewalks/pedestrian safety leads as the top suggested improvement.

Things in Lake Forest Park...



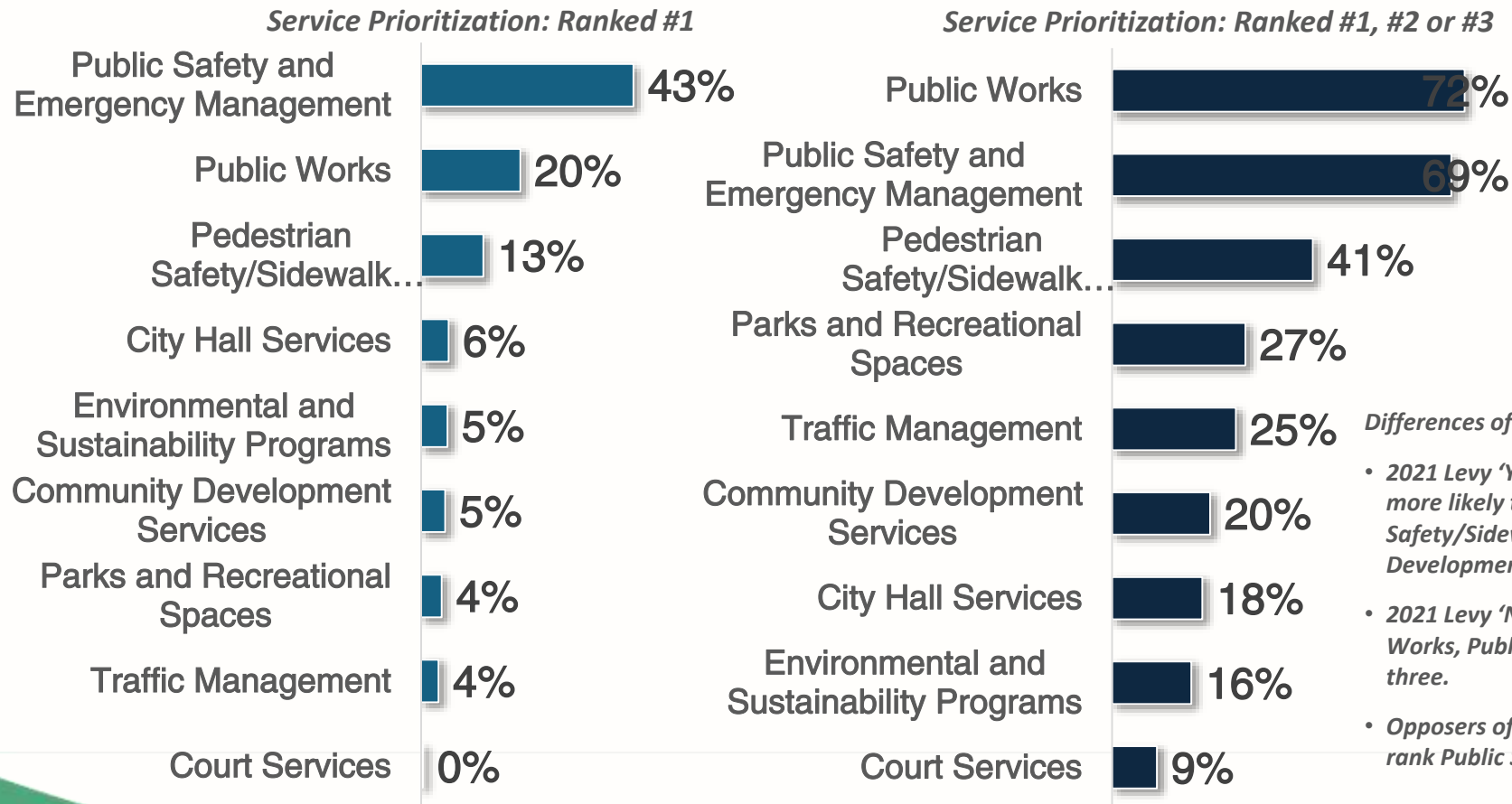
'Wrong track' opinions are significantly higher among those who voted 'no' on the 2021 levy (39%) and those opposed to the 6-Year temporary levy (50%).

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.



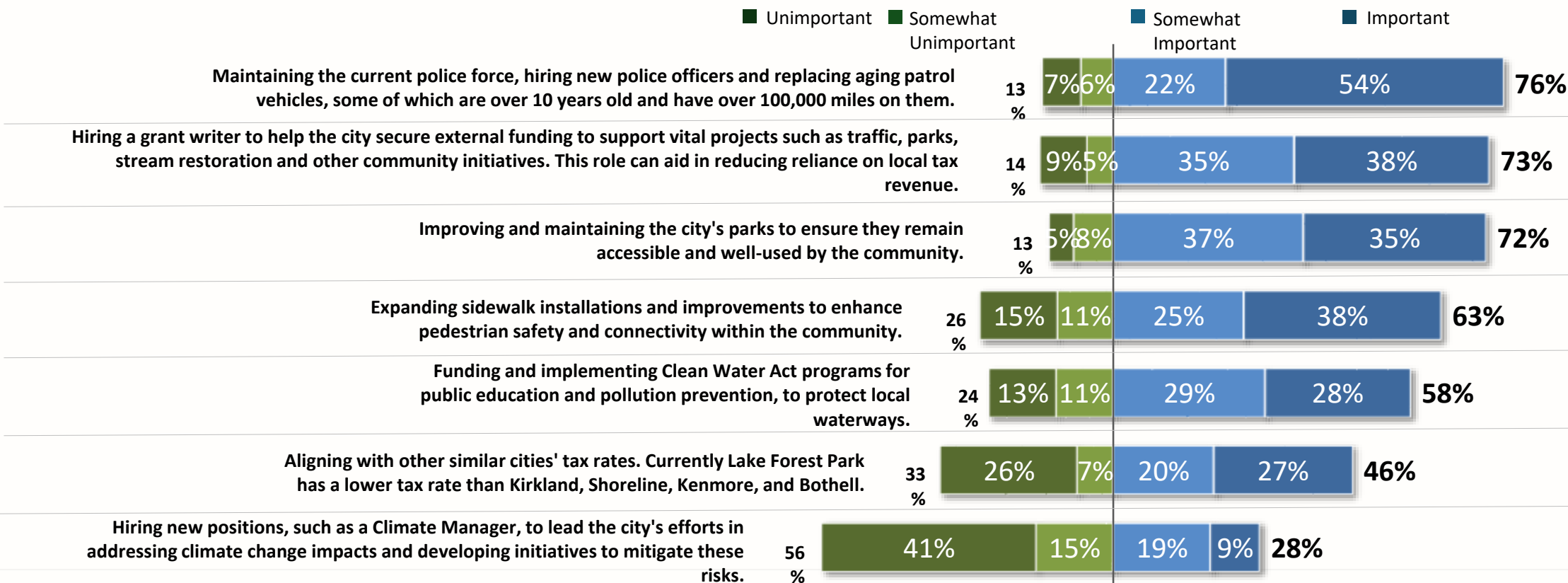
Differences of note...

- 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.



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



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.