



# 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 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024

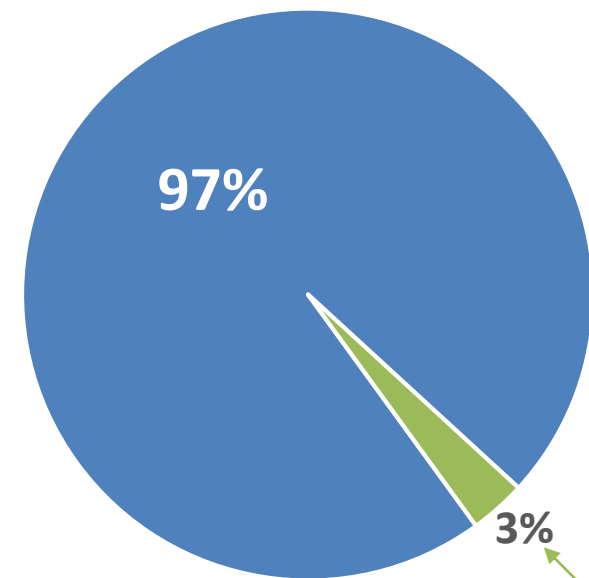
- *526 (online) and 413 (mail-in and phone-in) surveys were collected.*
- *Respondents who are not registered to vote, not planning to register, and/or unlikely to vote in the next election were removed from the total respondent data set.*
- *Duplicate respondents (those responding both online and through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

# 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.

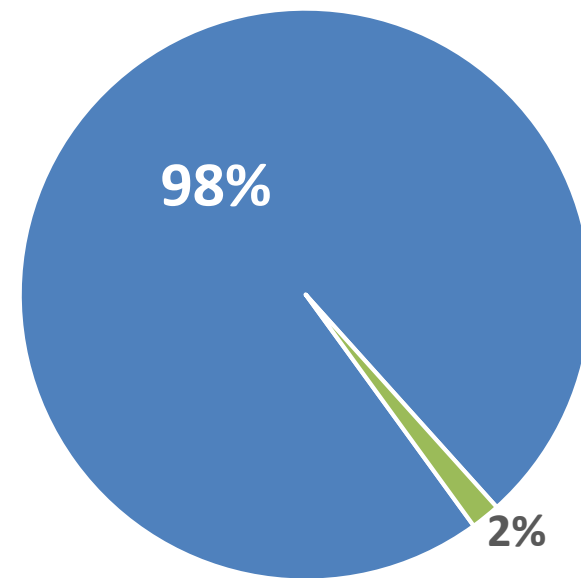
Currently registered to vote in LFP



■ Yes ■ No/Not Sure

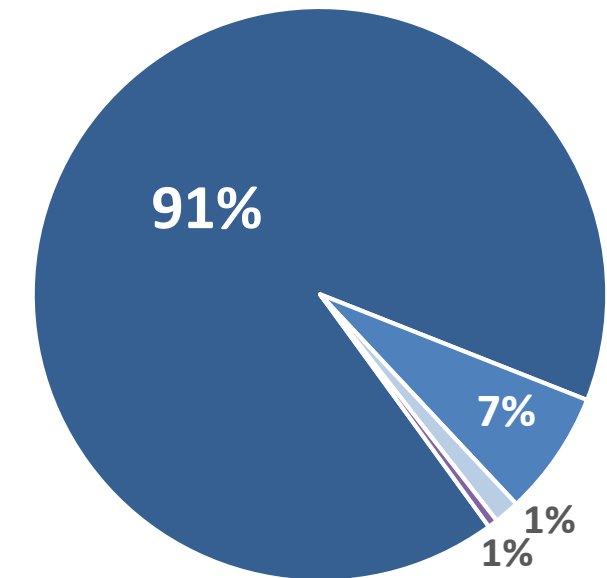
*1% are likely to register before the Nov. 2025 election, 1% are unlikely to register and 1% are unsure.*

Voted in 2024 General Election



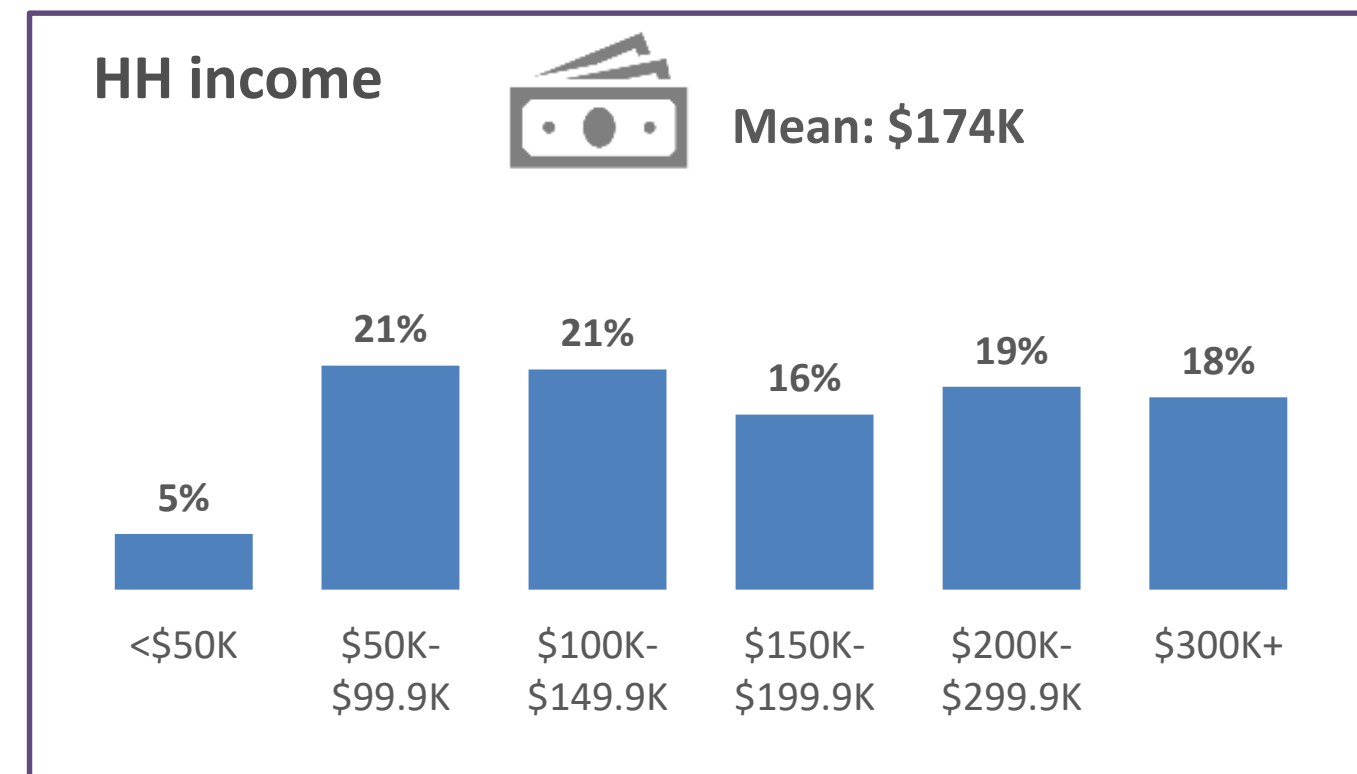
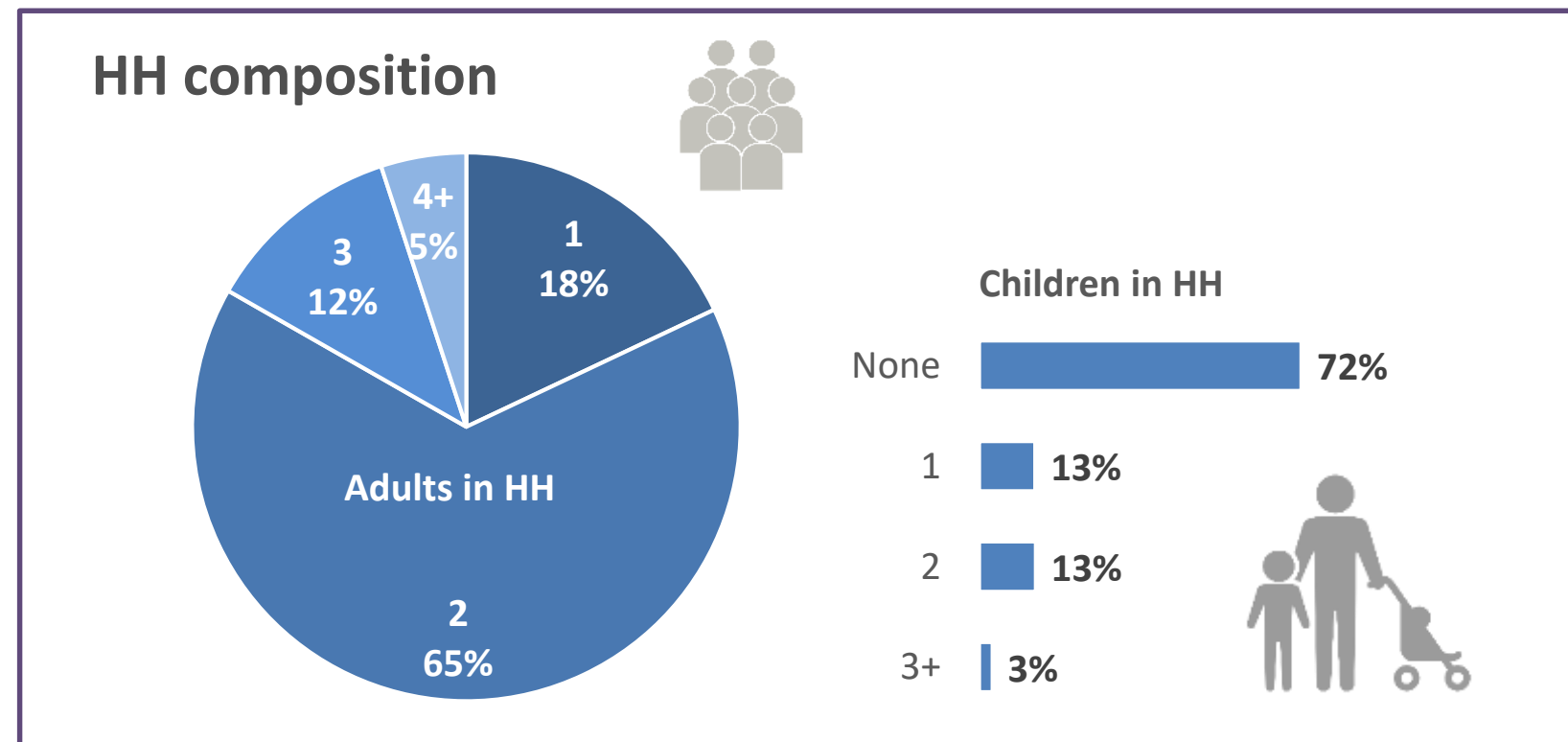
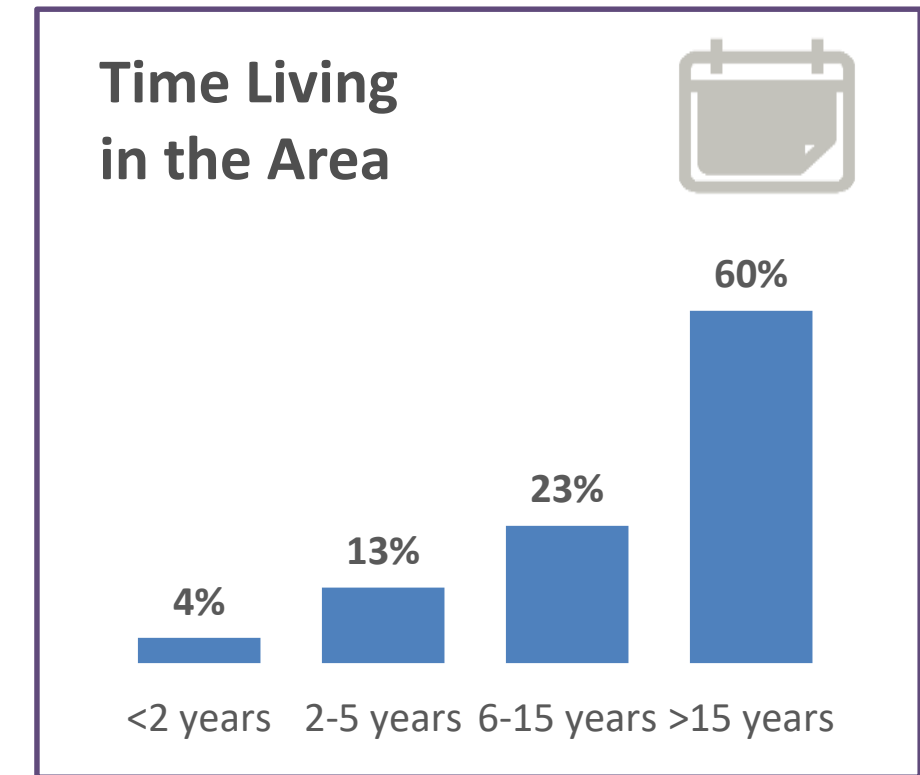
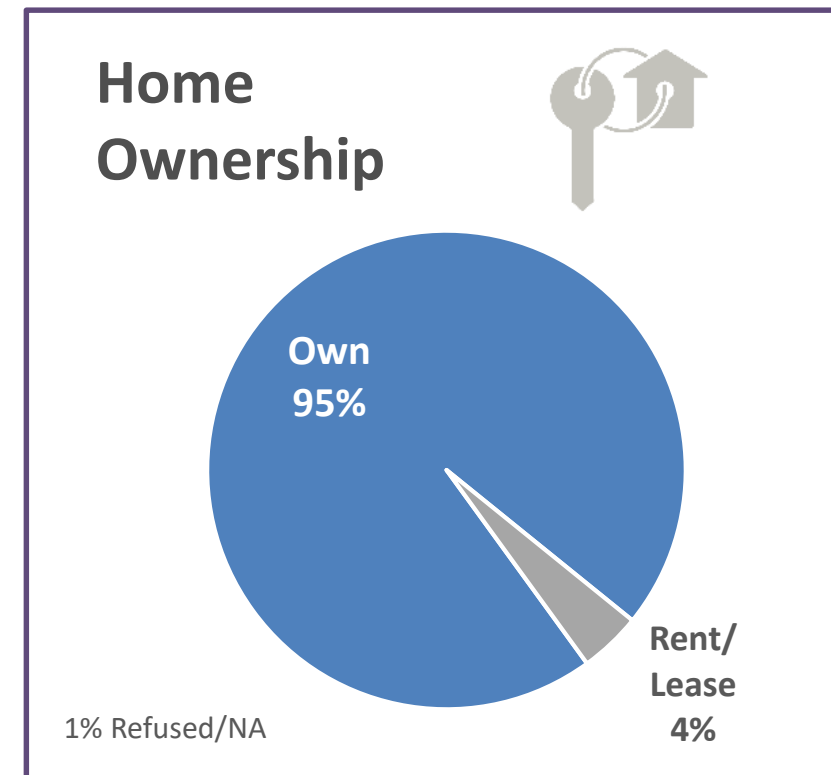
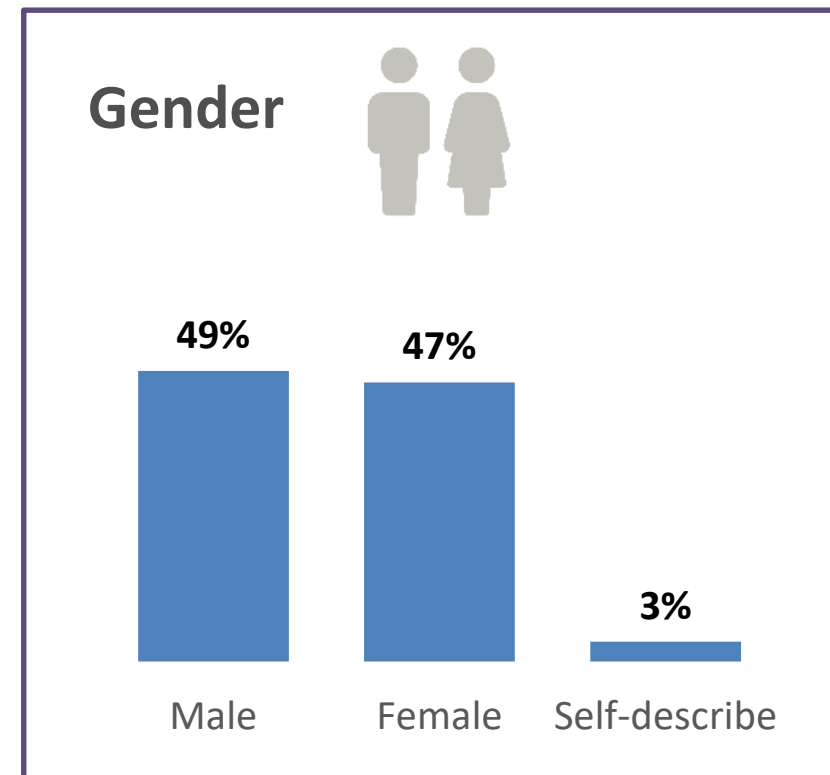
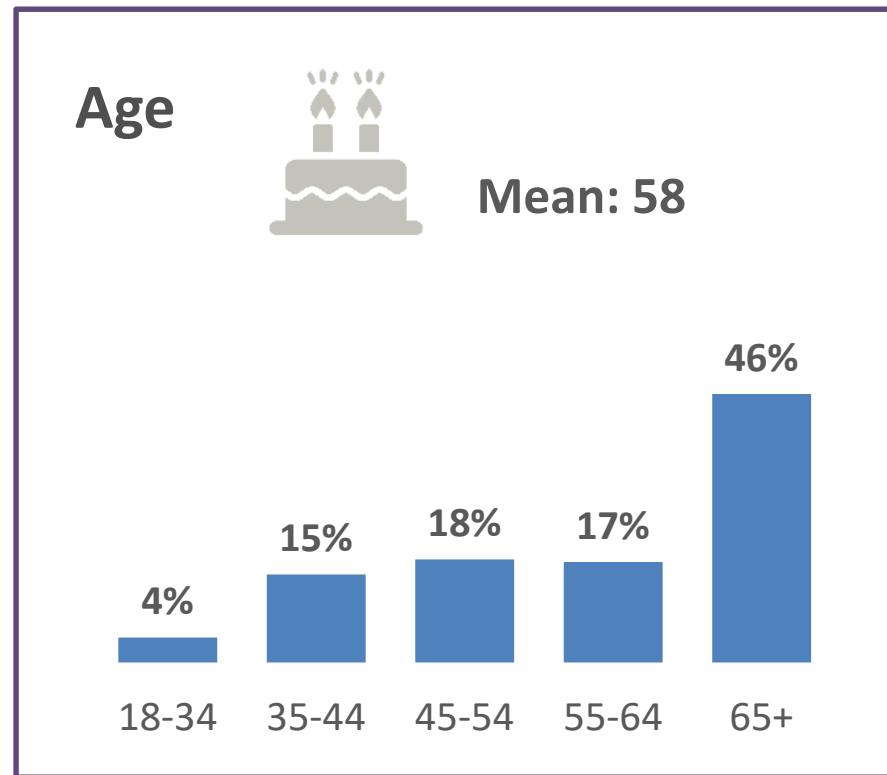
■ Yes ■ No

Voting in November 2025 Election



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

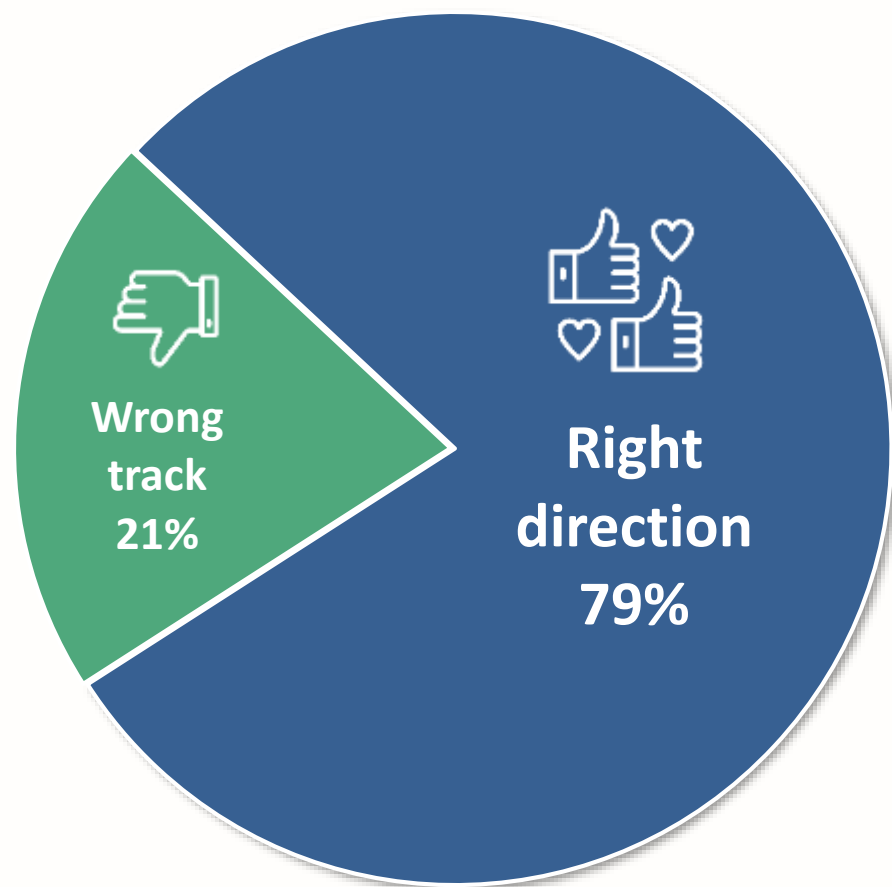
# Demographic Overview of Survey Respondents





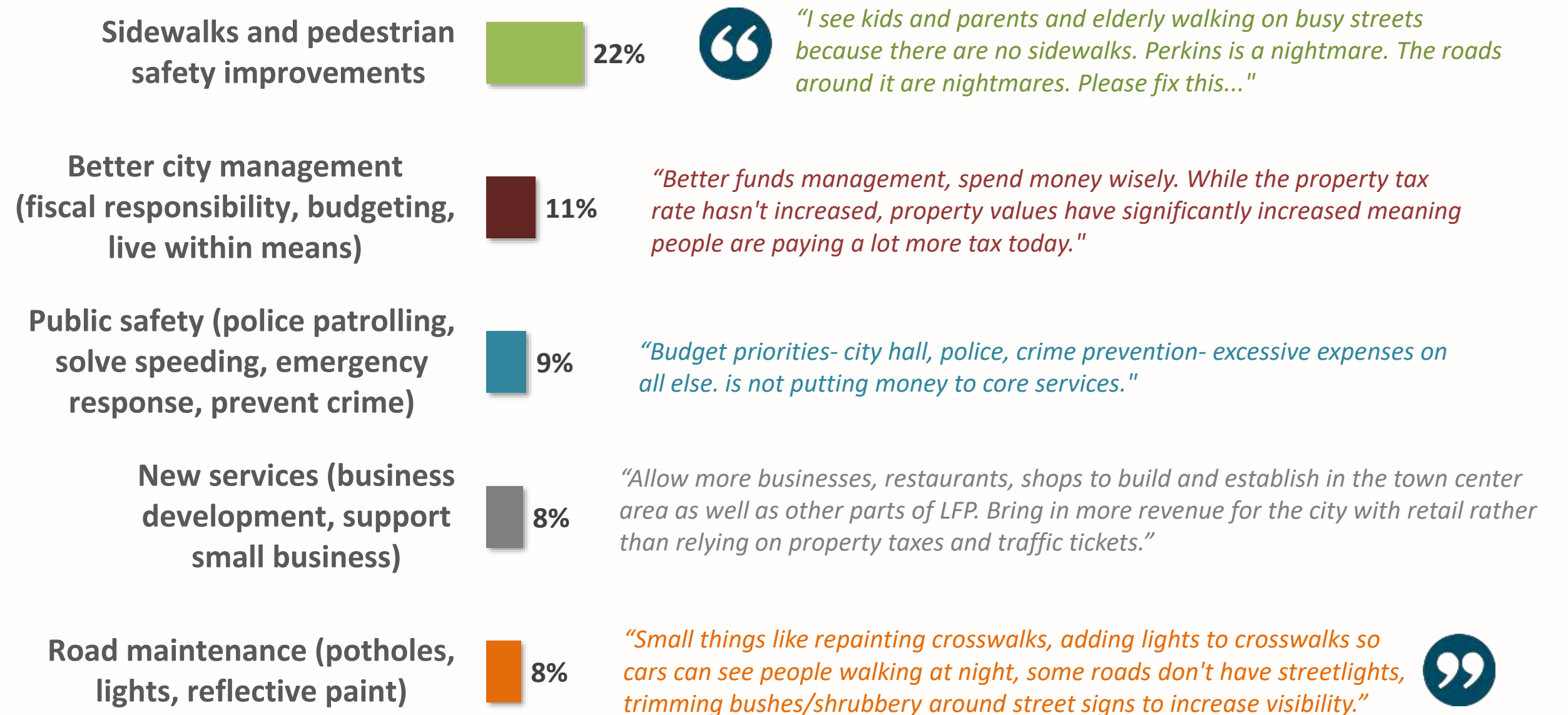
# Four out of five believe things in Lake Forest Park are going in the right direction. Sidewalks/pedestrian safety leads as the top suggested improvement.

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%).

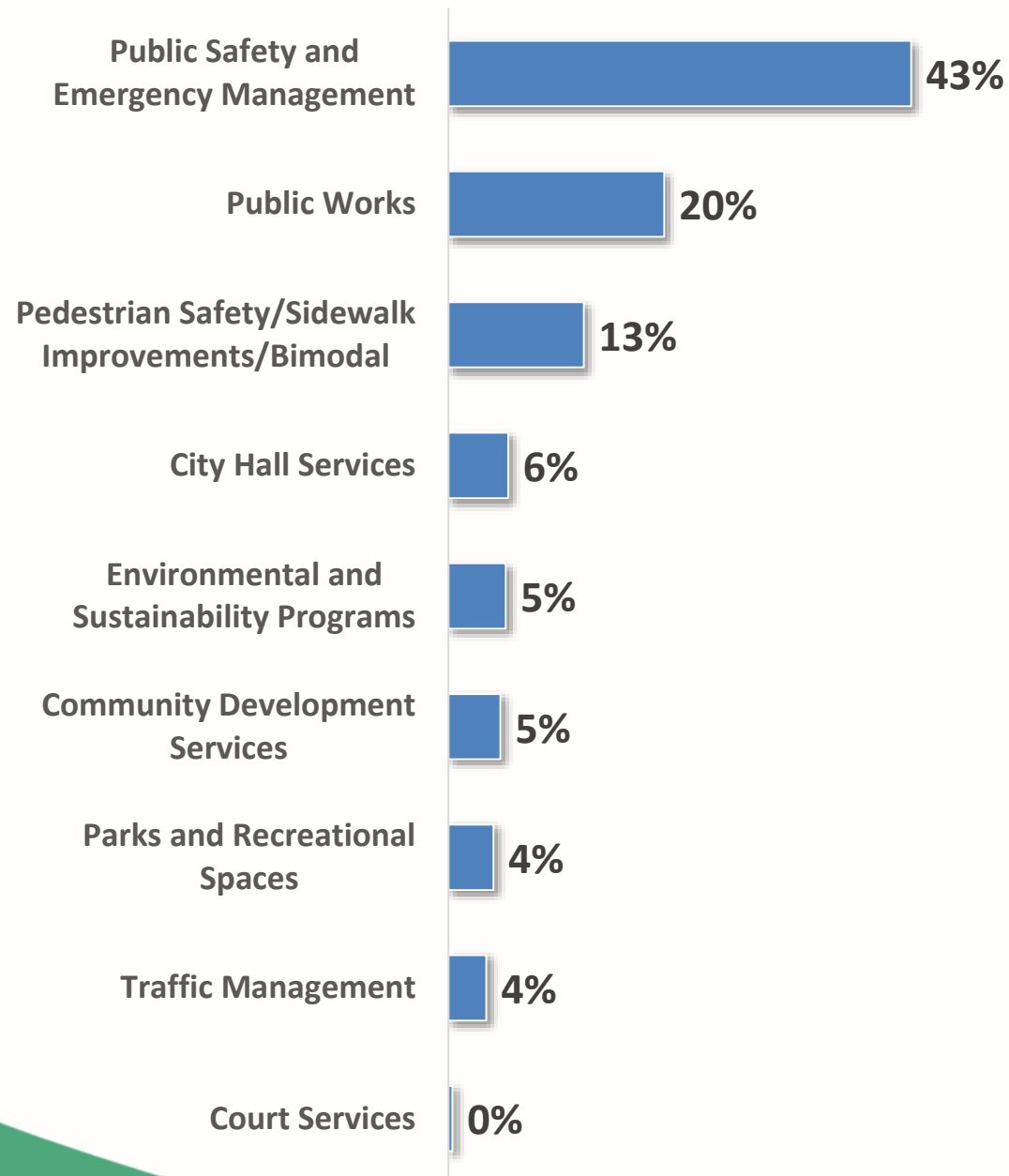
Suggestions for Improvement (Top Mentions)



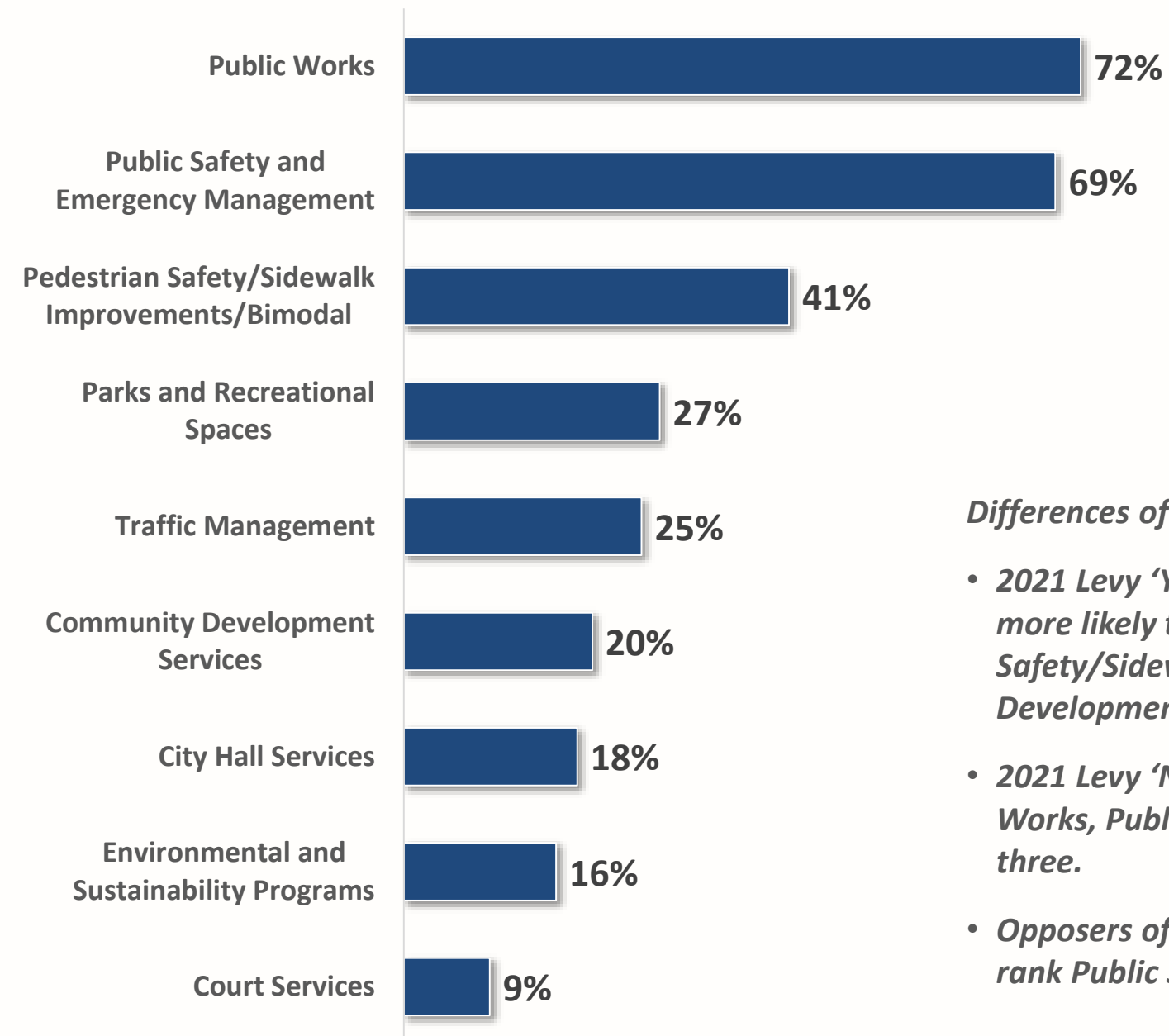


# Public Safety/Emergency Management stands apart as the #1 prioritized service, followed by Public Works and, more distantly, Pedestrian Safety.

*Service Prioritization: Ranked #1*



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



**Top Priorities**

#1 

#2 

#3 

*Differences of note...*

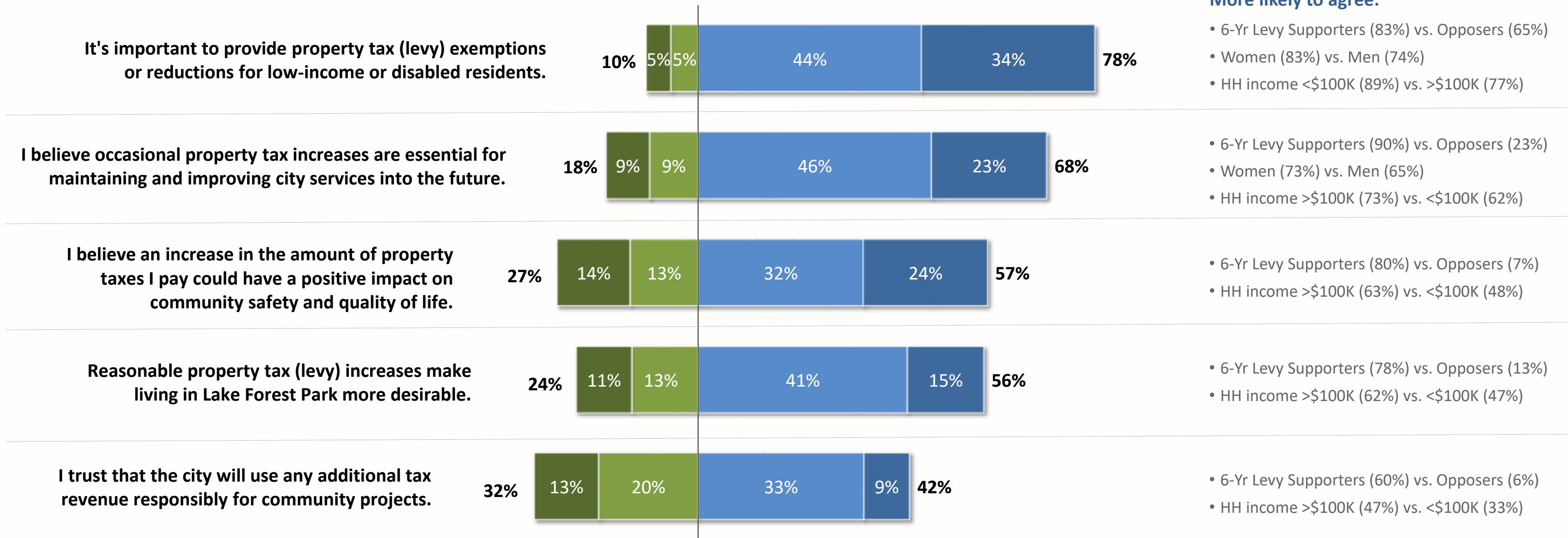
- 2021 Levy 'Yes' voters and Supporters of the proposed 6-Year Levy are more likely than their counterparts to rank Pedestrian Safety/Sidewalks/Bimodal, Parks and Rec Spaces, and Community Development among their top three.
- 2021 Levy 'No' voters are more likely than 'Yes' voters to rank Public Works,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



# 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.



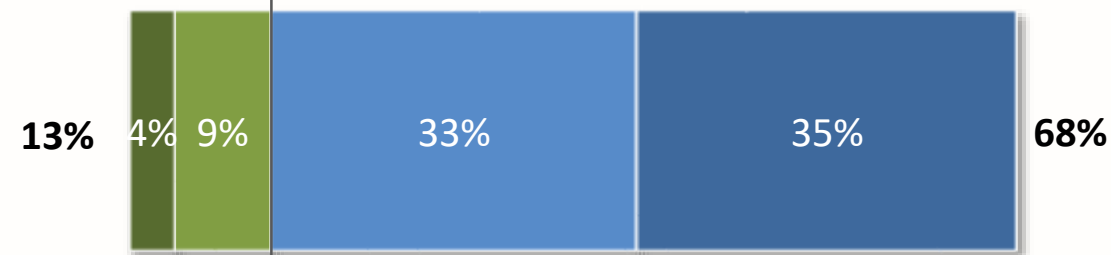


**Most believe the city should have explored all other options before asking for a property tax increase. They don't feel the city has clearly communicated the reasons for requested tax increases and how additional revenues will be used.**

Statement Agreement

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

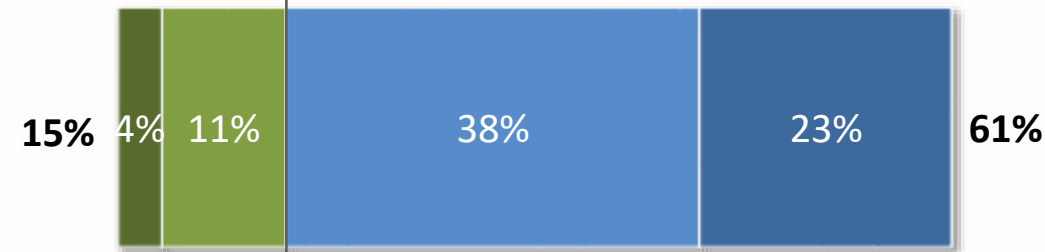
Despite the City Council's efforts to raise revenue, I believe the city should still explore further funding sources before considering a property tax (levy) increase.



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.

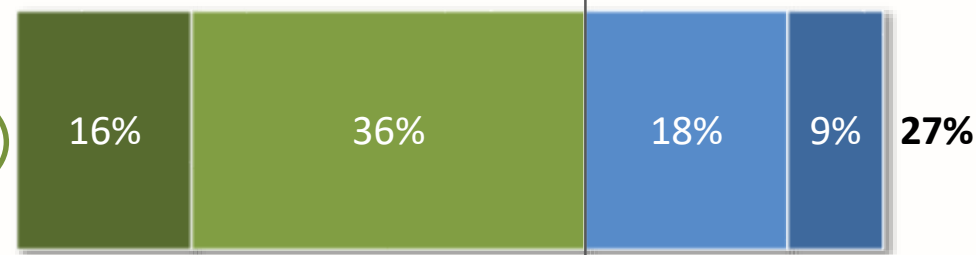


More likely to agree:

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

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

52%



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%)

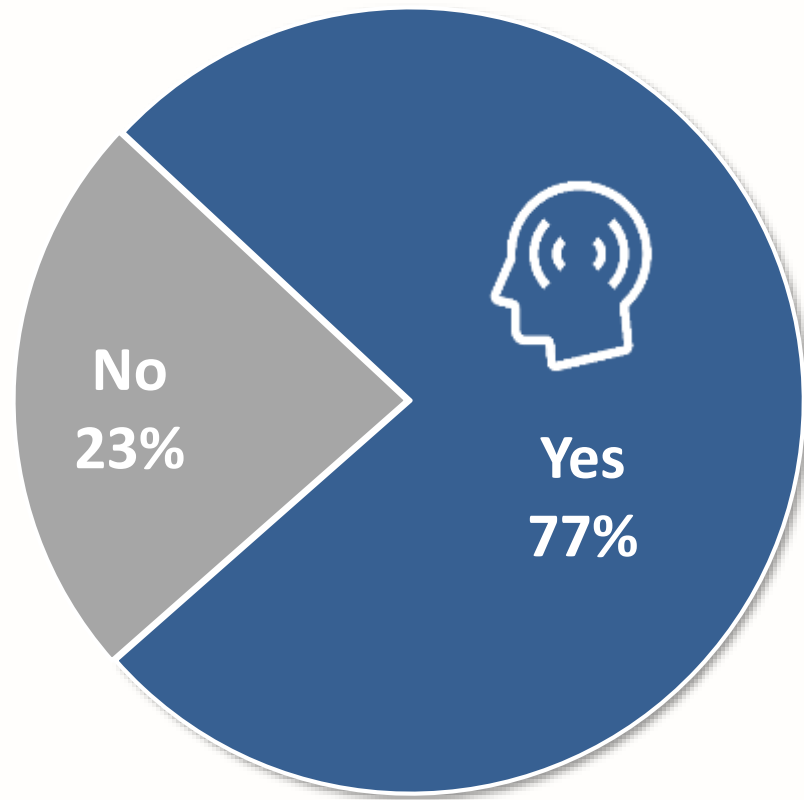
**Half DISAGREE, indicating that they DO BELIEVE the city services they use would benefit from additional funding.**

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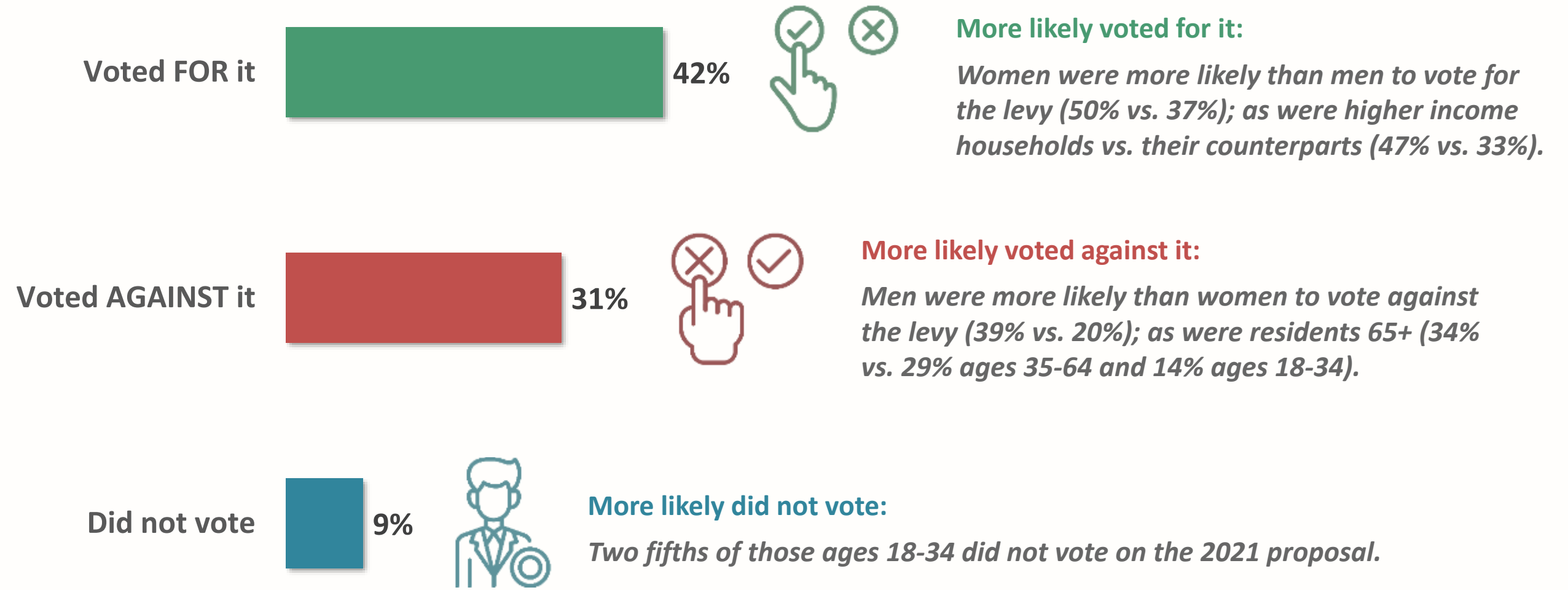
# Close to four in five were aware of the 2021 Levy proposal and its objectives, but just two in five say they voted for it.

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



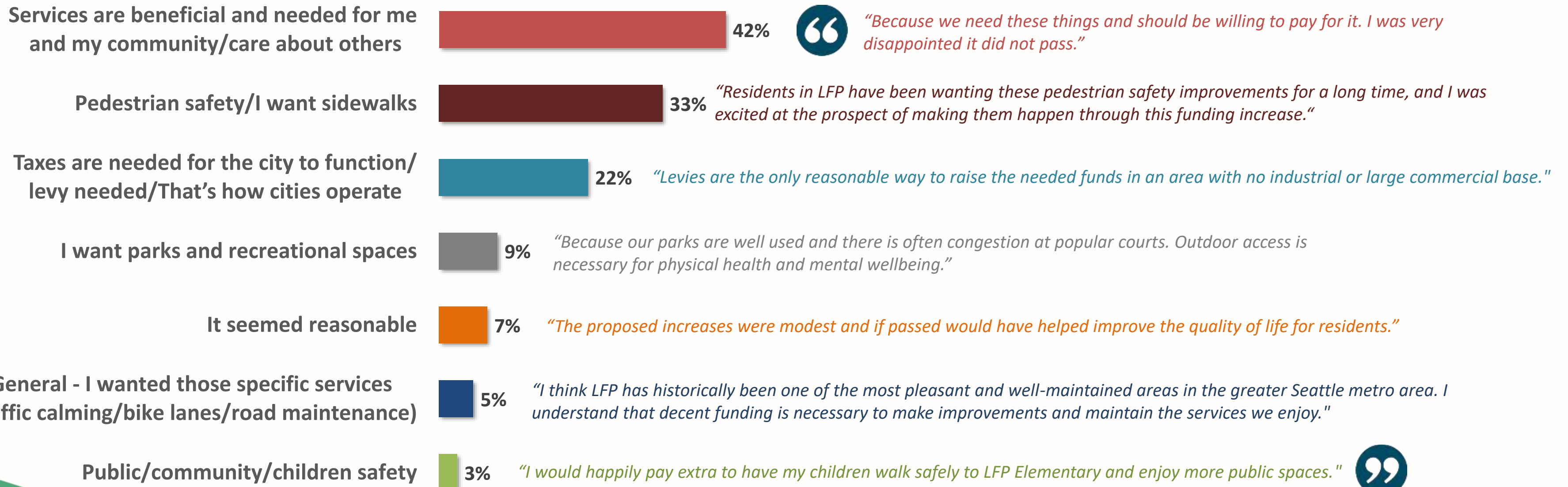
Note: 18% did not recall



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.



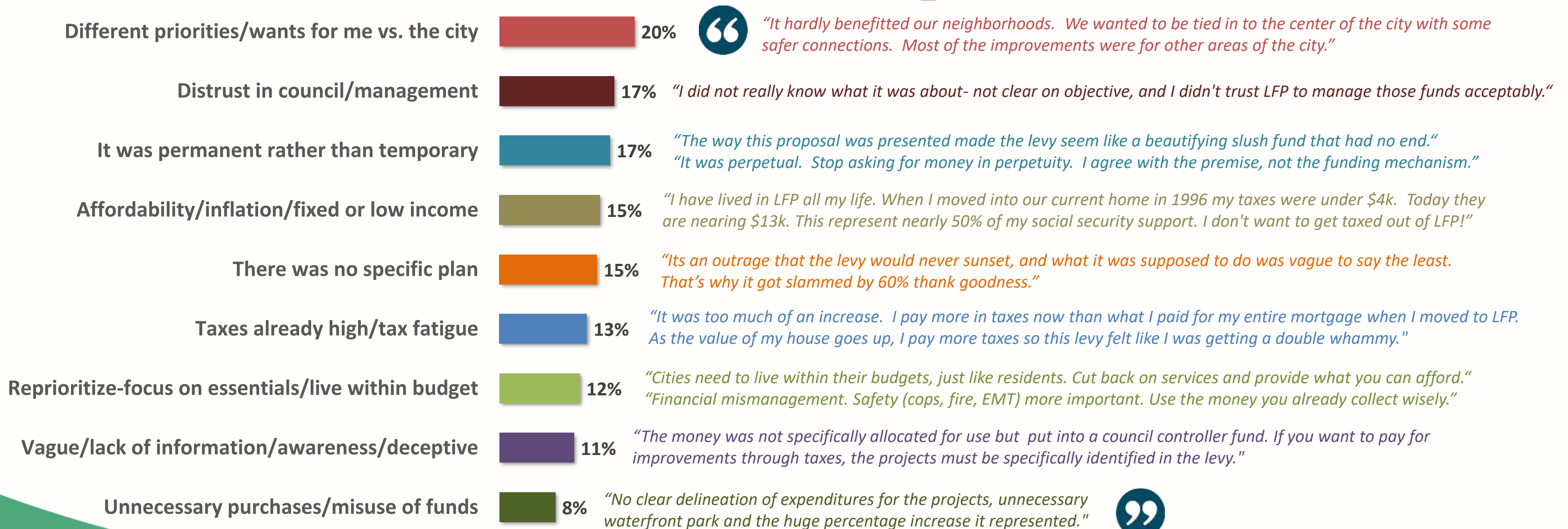
Reasons for Voting "YES" on 2021 Levy (Top Mentions)





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



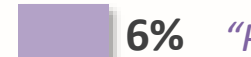
*"Bad communication from the city. It made it look like it was all about the waterfront park."*

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

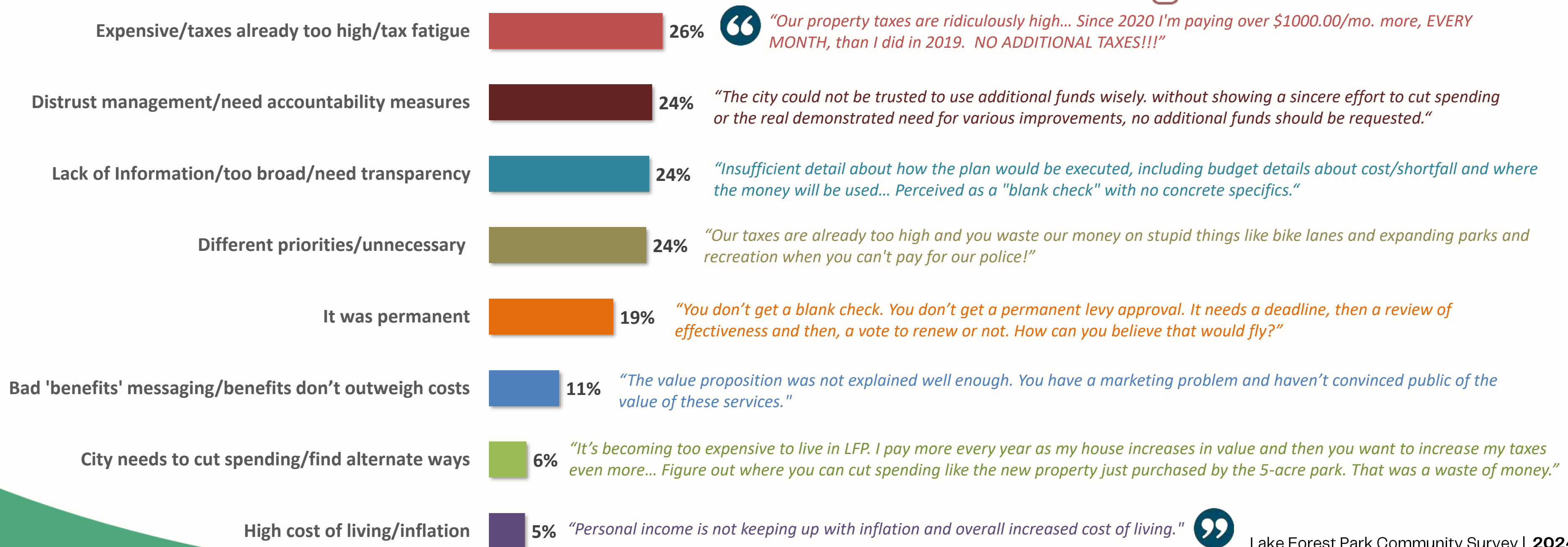


*"People either not understanding how much good the levy would do for everyone or thinking it costs them more than they want to pay."*



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)



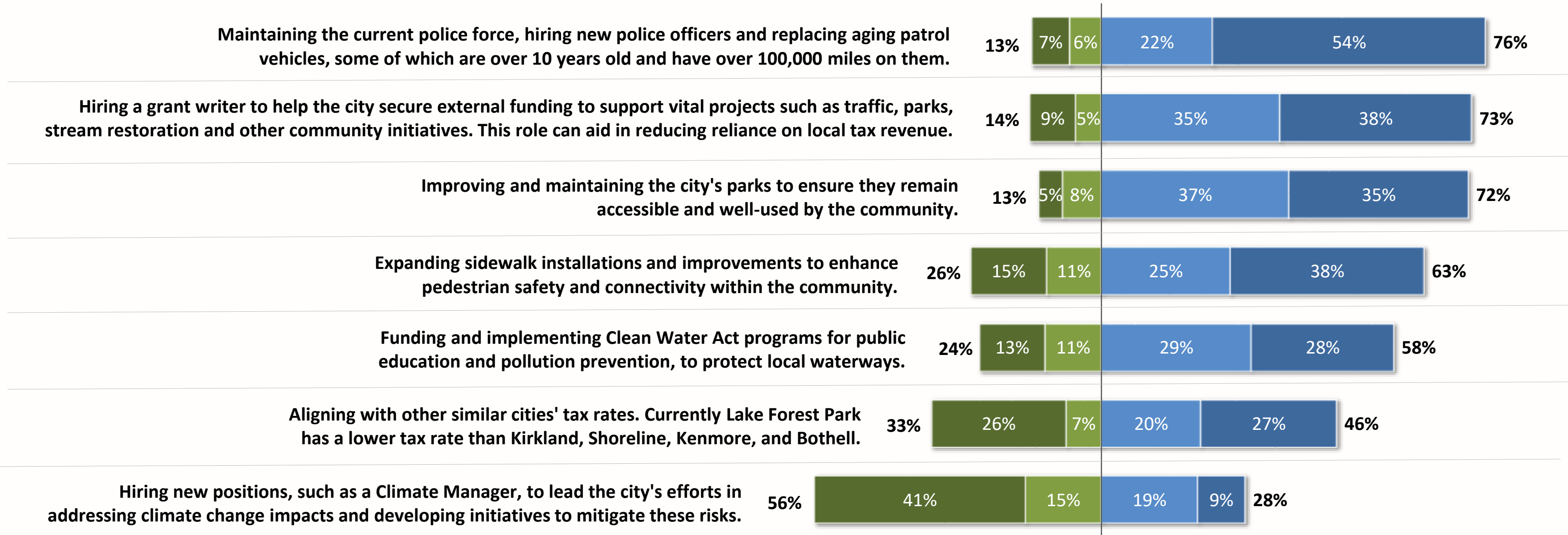




**Given the budget shortfall, most residents, in total, would prioritize addressing policing needs, hiring a grant writer to secure external funding, and improving/maintaining the city’s parks.**

Priorities for Addressing Budget Shortfall – Among TOTAL

■ Unimportant ■ Somewhat Unimportant ■ Somewhat Important ■ Important



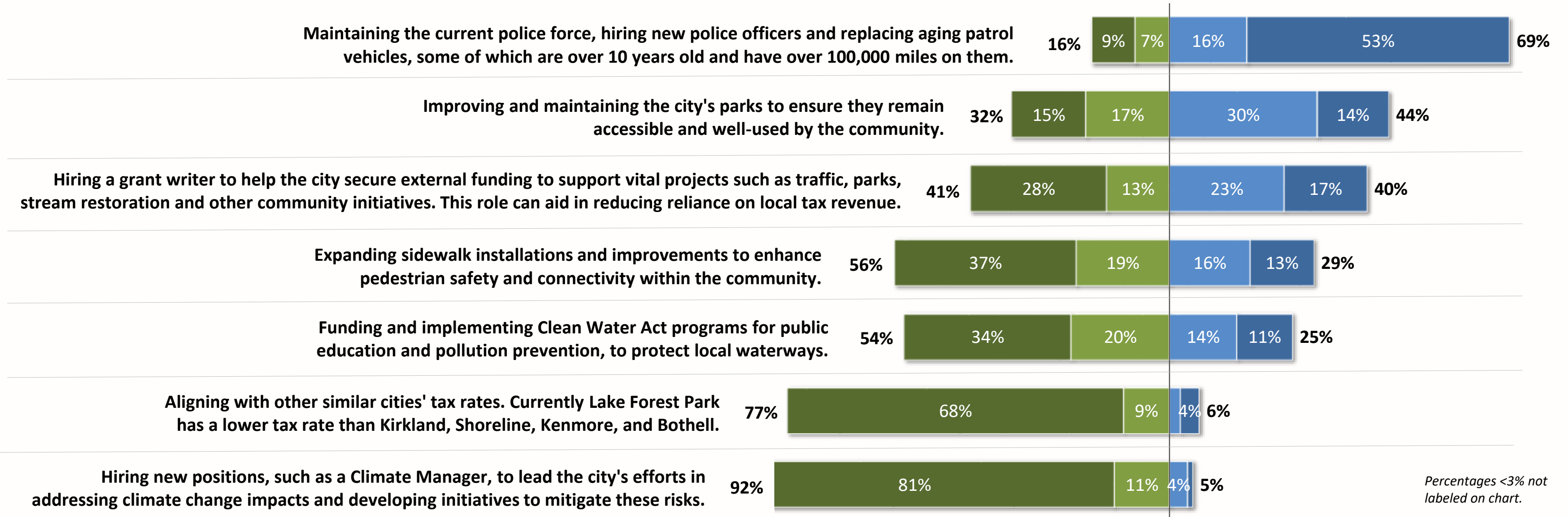
Only ratings of important (4-5) or unimportant (1-2) are shown. (Ratings of neutral (3) are not shown.)  
The **bold** percentages represents the corresponding net total Important / Unimportant.



# 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.

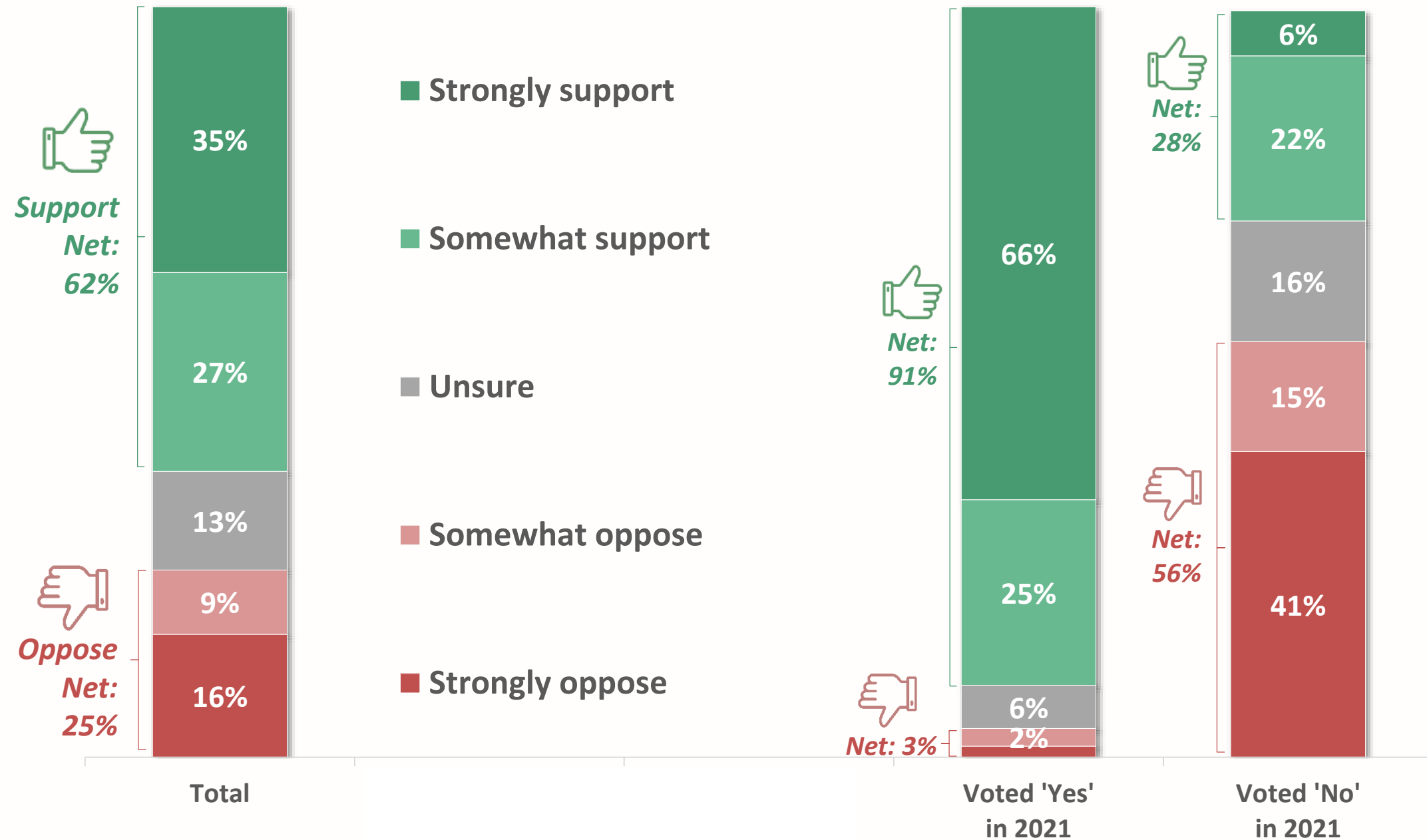
Only ratings of important (4-5) or unimportant (1-2) are shown. (Ratings of neutral (3) are not shown.) The **bold** percentages represents the corresponding net total Important / Unimportant.

# 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%).

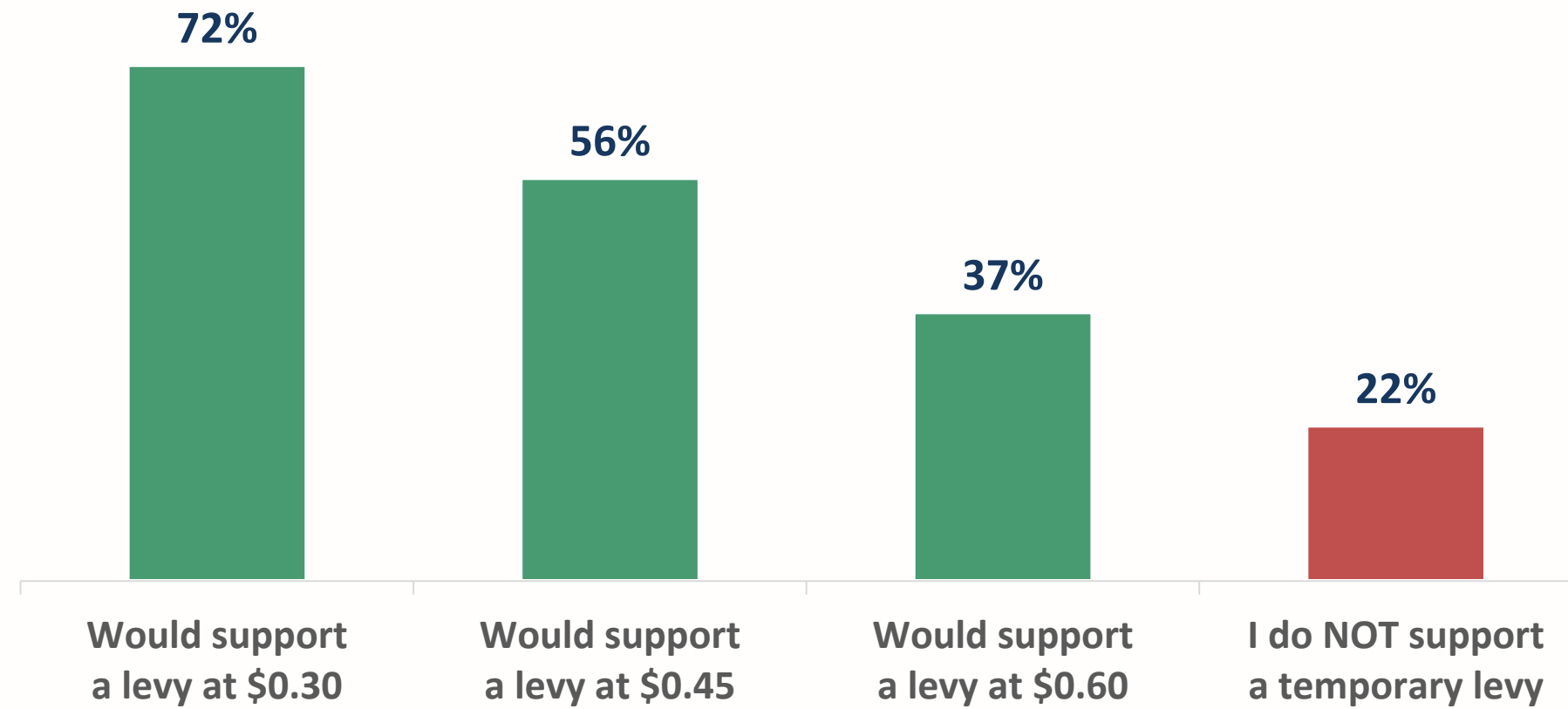






**While seven in ten would support a levy of \$0.30 to partially address the budget shortfall, support falls to just over half at the \$0.45 rate, and fewer than four in ten at the \$0.60 rate.**

*Reaction to Proposed Levy Rates\**



**More likely to oppose any levy:**

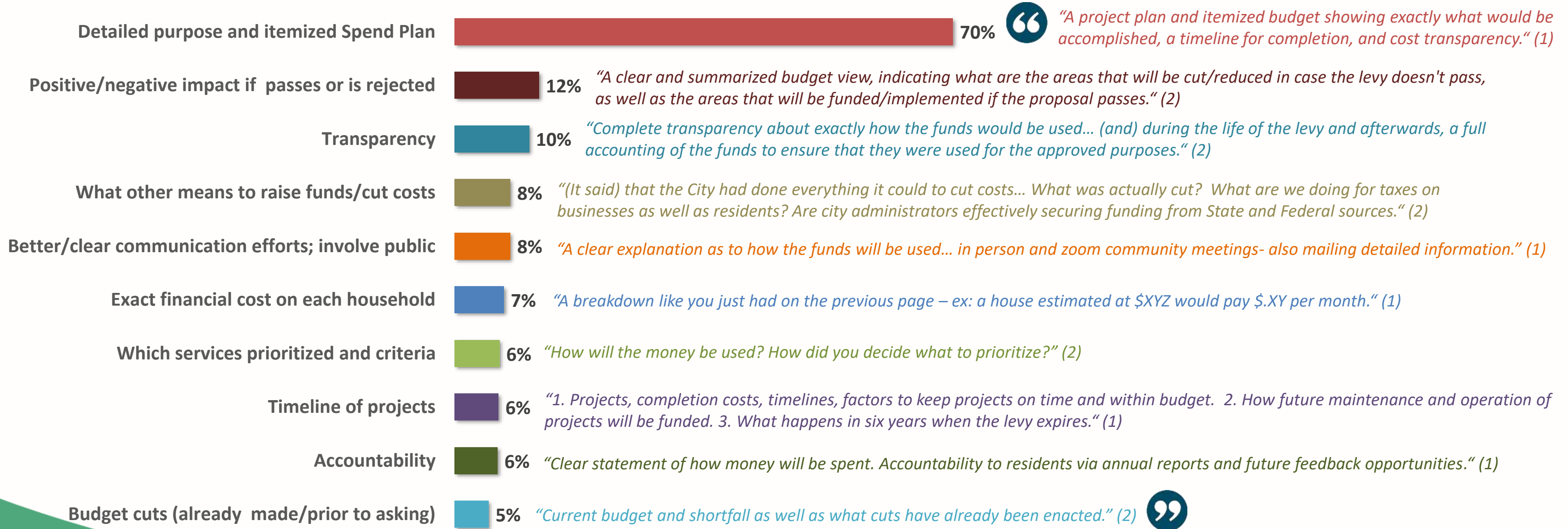
*Households with income <\$100K were more likely than higher income households to oppose any levy (30% vs. 17%); as were residents 65+ (26% vs. 18%-20% of middle aged or younger).*

*\*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)

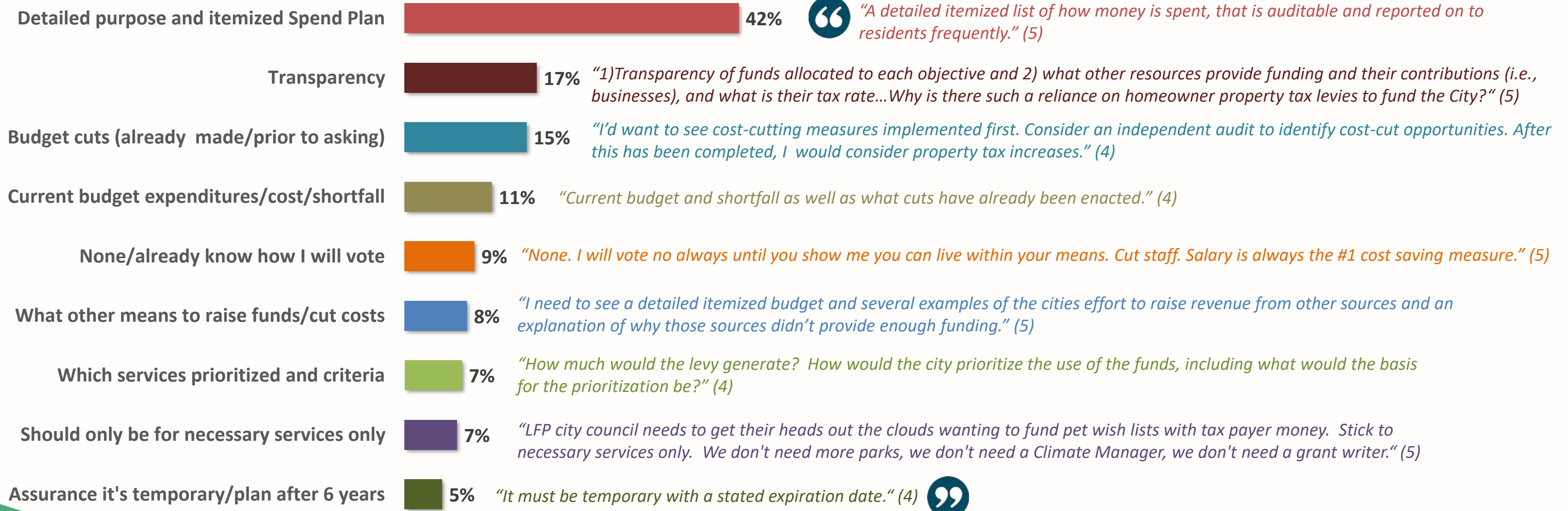


\*Verbatim codes: 1=Strongly Support, 2=Somewhat Support.



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)

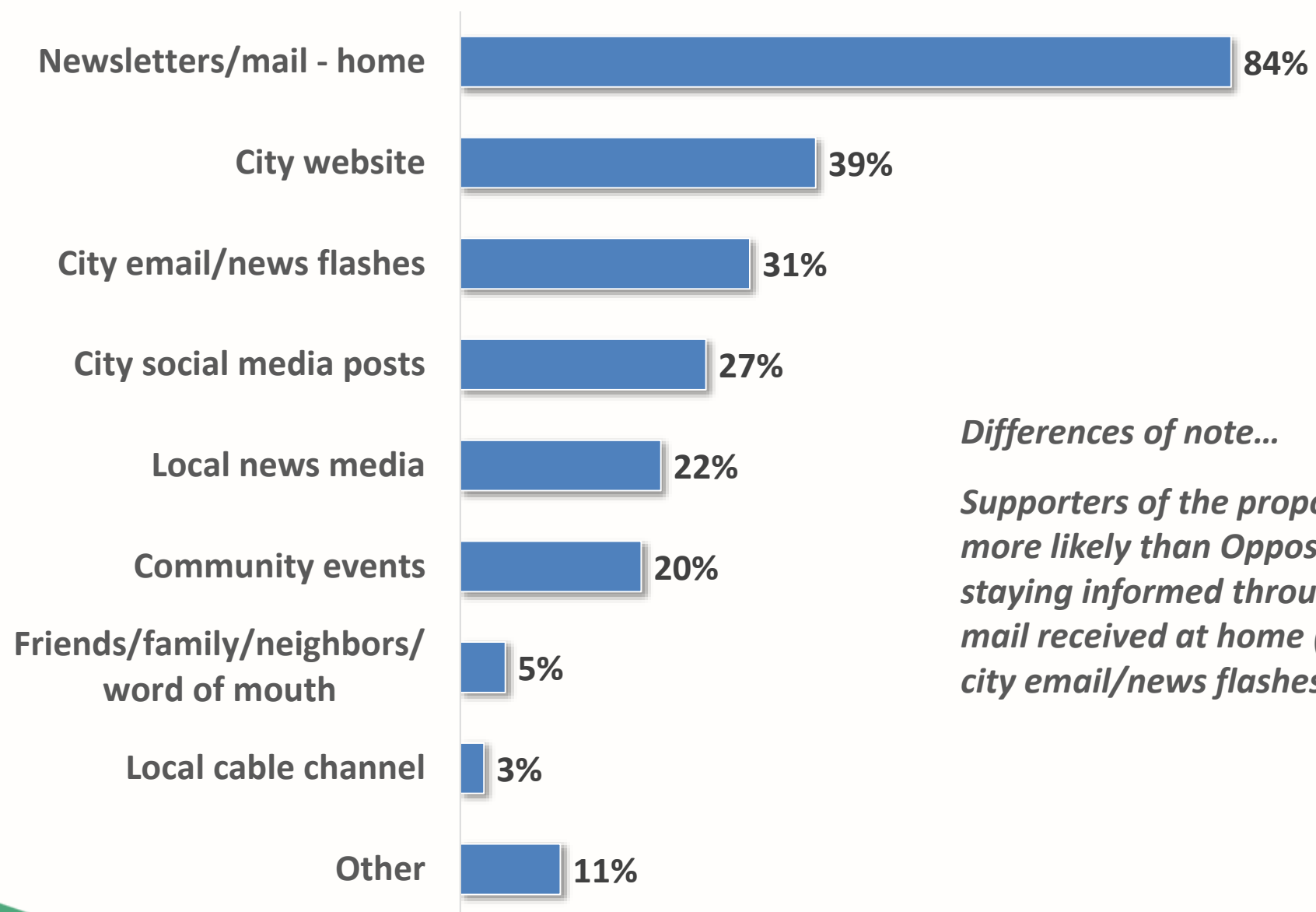


\*Verbatim codes: 5=Strongly Oppose, 4=Somewhat Oppose.



# 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.

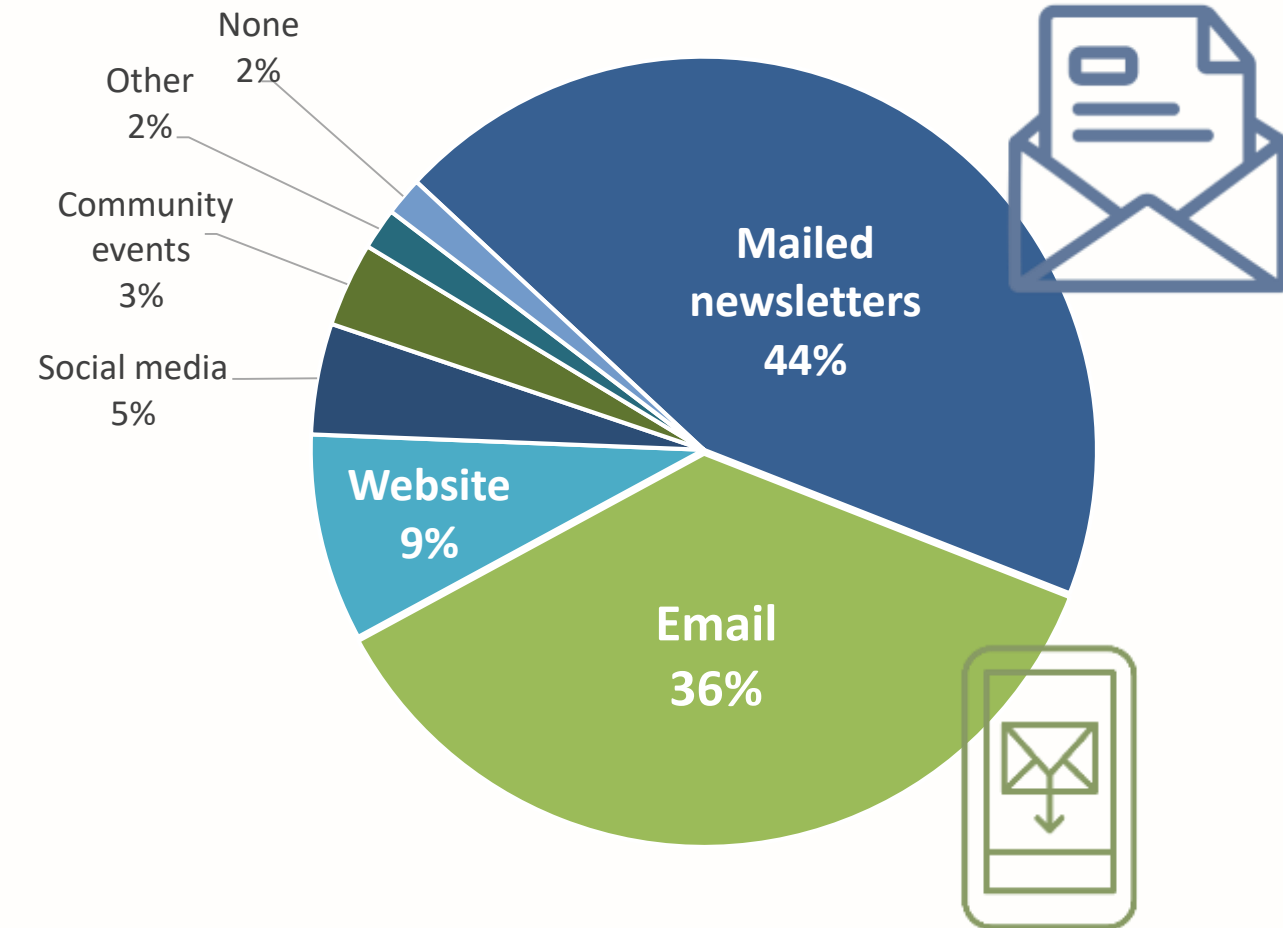
*City Engagement / Staying Informed*



*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*



**Questions?**