Stouffville



2027 Budget Engagement Report

What We Heard: Community Feedback on Budget Priorities

Date: September 30, 2026

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Introduction

The “What We Heard” report highlights the valuable feedback shared by our community on budget priorities gathered through our recent public survey. Engaging with residents is an essential part of the municipal budgeting process, and public input plays a key role in shaping the Town’s decisions. These insights will help guide evidence-based planning for the 2027 budget and beyond. By working together and encouraging open participation, we continue to advance the Town’s Strategic Plan, strengthening transparency and supporting our commitment to Organizational Effectiveness.

Engagement Overview: Methodology & Participation

Methodology:

The Town adhered to the IAP2 public participation framework, focusing on the initial two levels: ***Inform*** and ***Consult***. IAP2, or the International Association for Public Participation, provides a globally recognized framework for engaging the public in decision-making. Its spectrum includes five levels: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower, each representing increasing degrees of public influence.

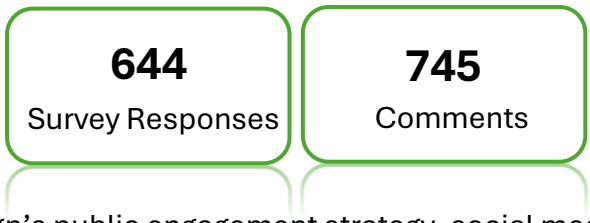
The Town’s approach began with ***Inform***, sharing clear and accessible information through social media, On The Road magazine articles, printed materials, mailed buckslips, outreach events, roadside banners, and digital signage. The ***Consult*** phase invited public input via an online survey through a QR code and iPads provided at engagement events, as well as paper copies at community locations, and the Mayor’s Budget Town Hall.

Engagement timeline:

June 1	• Online Survey Opened • Budget Priorities Tool launched
June 27	• Meet the Budget team at Strawberry Festival
July 4	• Meet the Budget team at Library Discovery Day
August 13	• Meet the Budget team at Moonlight Madness
August 17	• Online Survey Closed • Budget Priorities Tool closed
Jan 2027	• Mayor's Budget Town Hall

Participation Summary:

The infographic presents a snapshot of public engagement metrics for the Town of Stouffville's budget process. It highlights that ***644 surveys*** were completed, reflecting strong community participation. In addition to structured responses, the Town received approximately ***745 individual comments or open-ended responses***, offering rich qualitative insights beyond the multiple-choice format. Together, these figures illustrate a multi-channel engagement strategy that captured both broad and detailed public input.



As part of the campaign's public engagement strategy, social media played a critical role in informing, educating, and engaging residents. During the reporting period, **11 social media posts** generated **10,856 impressions**, with an average reach of **645 per post**. Content received a total of **100 engagements**, representing an engagement rate of approximately **0.9%,** indicating **strong audience interest** and interaction.

Although fewer social media posts were published during this year's campaign, by streamlining the content strategy, we saw an improved average reach per post and helped connect budget messaging with a more targeted audience.

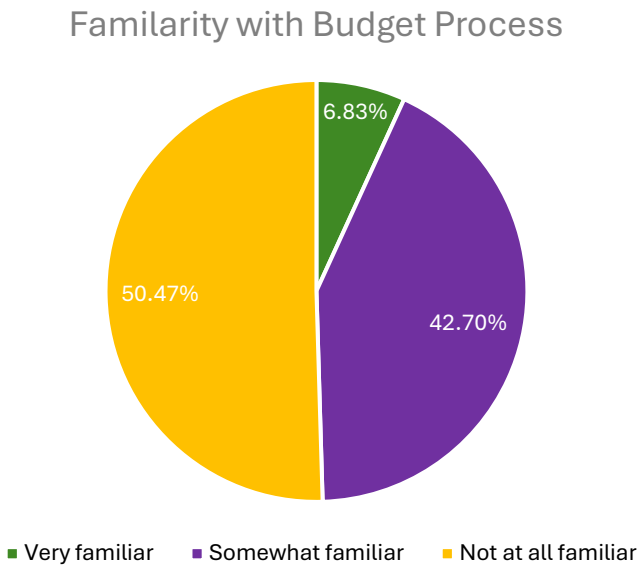
Key Findings: What We Heard

Question 1: Familiarity with the Town's Annual Municipal Budget

Residents were asked to indicate how familiar they are with the Town of Stouffville's annual municipal budget. The question aimed to gauge the level of public awareness and understanding of the budgeting process.

What we heard:

- Just ***6.83%*** of respondents reported being ***very familiar***, stating that they review budget details annually.
- A larger portion, ***42.70%,*** described themselves as ***somewhat familiar***, indicating general awareness without engaging in detailed review.
- The majority, ***50.47%,*** said they are ***not at all familiar*****,** suggesting limited or no knowledge of the municipal budget.

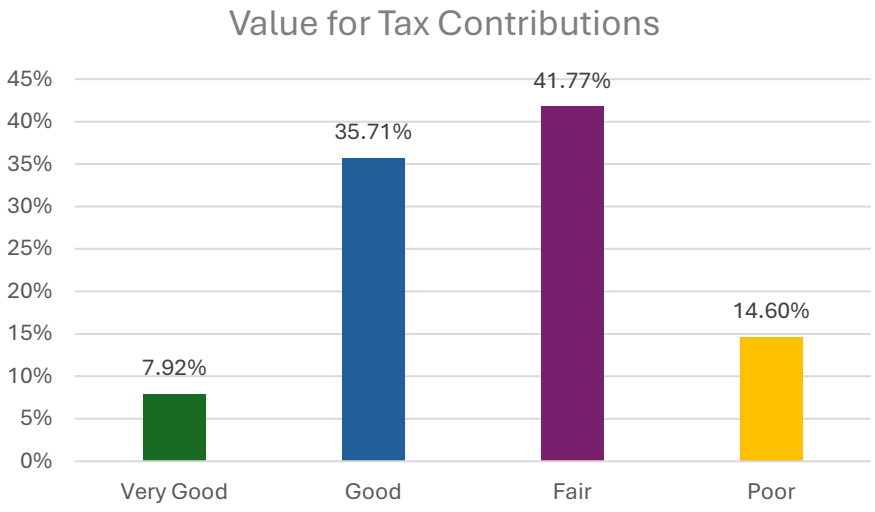


Question 2: Assessing Value for Tax Contributions

Respondents were asked to evaluate the overall value they feel they receive from the portion of their property taxes retained by the Town. The question explained that the Town only keeps about 34% of property taxes received – 44% goes to York Region and 22% to the Province.

What we heard:

- A majority of respondents rated the value **positively**, with ***35.71%*** selecting ***"Good"*** and ***7.92%*** selecting ***"Very Good."***
- ***41.77%*** felt the value was ***"Fair,"*** indicating room for improvement or mixed perceptions.
- ***14.60%*** rated the value as ***"Poor,"*** suggesting dissatisfaction with the services received relative to the tax contribution.



Question 3: Most Important Outcome for Budget Spending

Residents were asked to identify the outcome they consider most important when it comes to how the municipal budget is allocated. This question aimed to understand community priorities and values in relation to public spending.

What we heard:

- The top two priorities were closely aligned: ***28.88%*** of respondents selected ***maintaining or improving existing services***, while ***22.98%*** chose *investing in* ***infrastructure*** such as roads, utilities, and buildings.
- ***17.55%*** preferred ***reducing taxes***, even if it meant cutting some services.
- ***13.82%*** of participants emphasized ***long-term sustainability*** *and future planning*, indicating a forward-looking perspective.
- Other priorities included *supporting* ***local business growth*** *and tourism* (***7.76%***), *improving* ***environmental sustainability*** *initiatives* (***3.11%***), and *addressing the housing crisis* (***3.26%***).
- An additional ***2.64%*** selected ***Other***, providing custom responses that may reflect unique or emerging concerns.

Open-Ended Feedback: What Matters Most in Budget Spending

In addition to the multiple-choice options, respondents provided open-ended comments that revealed several recurring themes:

- ***Community Amenities***: Demand for expanded recreation facilities and programming continues to grow. Additional programs and support for youth and seniors were identified as priorities.
- ***Winter Maintenance:*** Enhanced snow clearing and winter maintenance services were frequently requested.
- ***Infrastructure***: Improved roads, sidewalks, traffic management, and transit remain key priorities. Utility reliability, particularly power outages, remains a significant concern.
- ***Sustainability & Tourism***: Supporting local businesses and revitalizing Main Street were common themes. Residents value investments in parks, trails, and environmental sustainability.
- ***Traffic & Public Safety*****:** comments included concerns for overdevelopment-caused increase in traffic as well as increase in crime rates.

- ***Growth Management & Rural Preservation*:** Residents want growth managed responsibly while preserving community character.
- ***Taxes***: Residents emphasized affordability and limiting property tax increases.

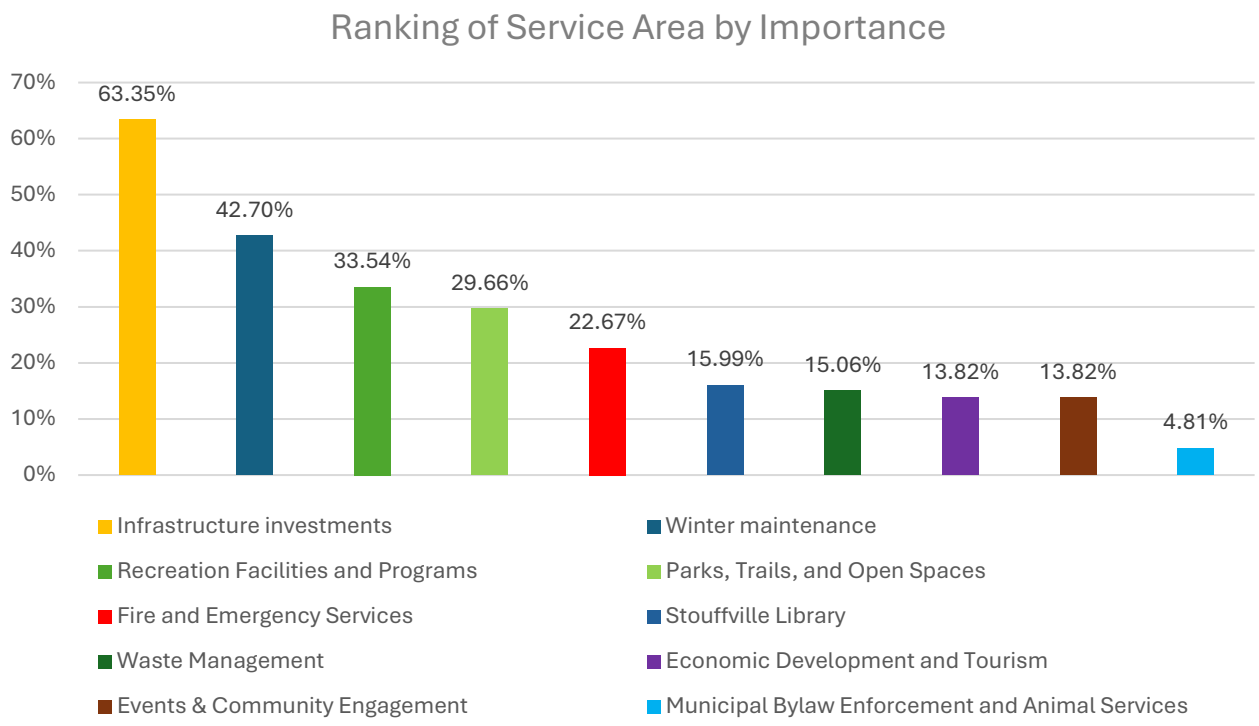
Overall, the open-ended responses reinforced the multiple-choice trends while adding depth to community priorities, especially around inclusivity, infrastructure, and quality of life.

Question 4: Ranking Service Areas by Importance

Residents were asked to select their top 3 municipal service areas based on importance to them.

What we heard:

- ***Infrastructure investments***, including roads, facilities, and water systems, emerged as the top priority with a ***63.35%*** vote rate, signaling strong public support for foundational services.
- ***Winter maintenance*** (road and sidewalk plowing, sanding, and salting) followed at a rate of ***42.70%,*** reflecting seasonal service expectations.
- ***Recreation facilities and programs*** (including aquatics, camps, 55+ programming, fitness, and sports fields) was also highly sought after at a rate of ***33.54%,*** indicating steady interest in community wellness.
- ***Parks, trails, and open spaces*** followed at a rate of ***29.66%,*** underscoring the public enjoyment of natural environments.
- Other areas such as ***fire and emergency services*** (***22.67%***), ***library services*** (***15.99%***), and ***waste management*** (***15.06%***) received moderate importance ratings.
- ***Economic development and tourism and Events and community engagement*** both received ratings of ***13.82%*** respectively, showing appreciation for business expansion and community engagement.
- ***Municipal by-law enforcement and animal services*** were ranked lowest at ***4.81%,*** suggesting these are viewed as less critical relative to other service areas.



Question 5: Budget Adjustments in Response to Inflation

Residents were asked which budget adjustment strategies they would support in light of rising costs and inflation. This question allowed multiple selections to reflect the range of acceptable trade-offs.

What we heard:

- The most supported option was ***increasing user fees for specific services*** (e.g., recreation programs, facility rentals), chosen by ***45.50%*** of respondents.
- ***44.41%*** were willing to support ***reducing service levels in certain areas*** to avoid tax increases.
- ***28.26%*** supported a ***slight increase in property taxes*** to maintain or improve services.
- ***8.23%*** selected *Other*, offering custom suggestions or expressing alternative views.

Open-Ended Feedback: Budget Adjustments in Response to Inflation

In addition to selecting from predefined options, respondents shared a wide range of suggestions for how the Town might adapt its budget. Four key themes emerged:

- ***Cost-Cutting***: Many respondents advocated for reducing expenses, reassessing spending priorities through finding efficiencies, and reducing cost hikes on procurements by using local providers.
- ***Alternative Revenue Sources***: Suggestions included implementing new or increased fees such as developer fees, user fees for non-residents, rental fees for event booths, as well as stimulating local business and development.
- ***Efficiency Improvements***: Respondents called for strategic budget planning and finding more efficiencies in tax planning.
- ***Tax Fairness***: Several comments focused on equity, proposing progressive taxation models such as higher rates for wealthier residents and corporations.

These insights reflect a desire for a balanced approach that maintains service quality while exploring creative and equitable solutions to financial pressures.

Question 6: Willingness to Pay More for Service Improvements

Residents were asked how much more they would be willing to pay annually in municipal taxes to support improvements to Town services such as better roads, enhanced recreation programming, and upgraded parks.

What we heard:

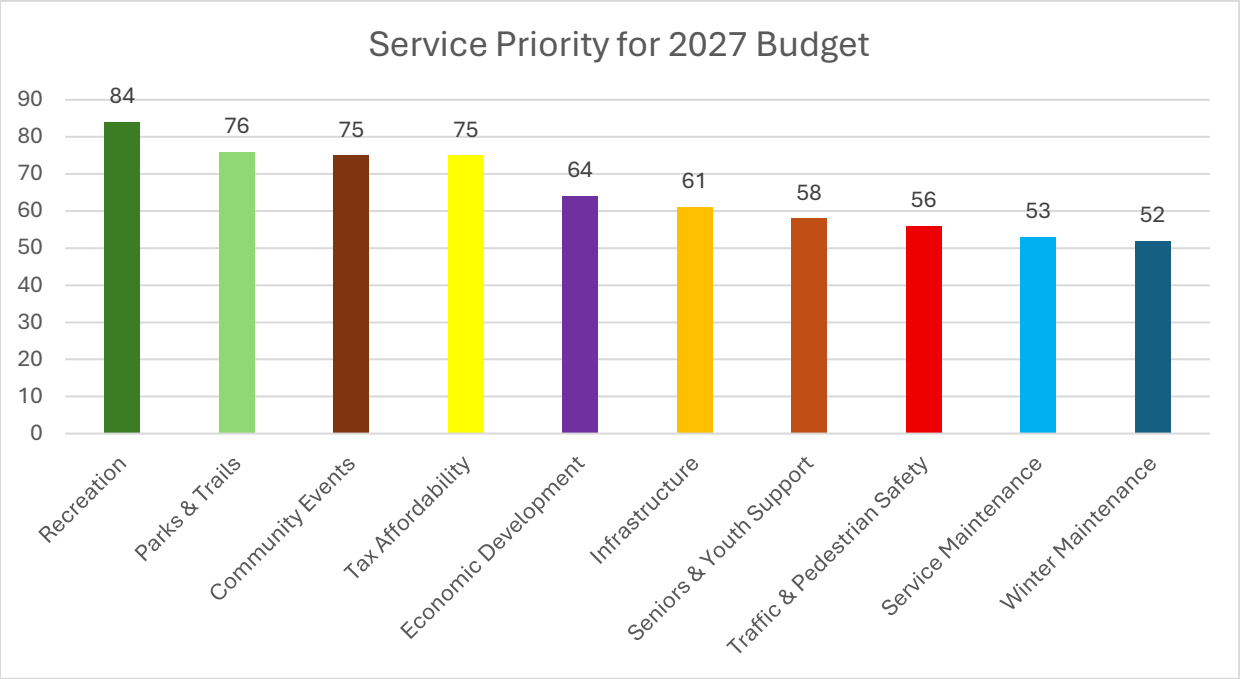
- ***34.01%*** of respondents indicated they are *not willing to pay more*
- ***23.60%*** were open to a *modest increase of $1–$50*, while ***17.86%*** supported a *$51–$100* increase.
- ***9.01%*** were willing to pay *$101–$200*, and ***4.50%*** supported increases of *$201 or more*.
- ***11.02%*** selected *Unsure/Don't know*, indicating uncertainty or a need for more information before deciding.

Question 7: Top Suggestions for 2027 Budget Priorities

Residents were invited to share any comments or suggestions for the Town's 2027 budget priorities such as new services or reduction of existing services. The responses revealed the below themes:

- ***Recreation, Sports, and Facilities (84 mentions)*:** Expand and improve pools, arenas, community centers, sports fields and accessible recreational programs.

- ***Parks, Trails, and Green Space (76 mentions):*** Maintain parks, connect trails, add playgrounds and protect natural areas.
- ***Community Events, Culture and Library (75 mentions)*:** Continue valued events and library services while reviewing participation and costs.
- ***Affordability and Taxes (75 mentions):*** Limit property-tax increases and recognize household affordability pressures.
- ***Economic Development (64 mentions)*:** Attract diverse businesses, support local shopping and broaden the commercial tax base.
- ***Roads & Core Infrastructure (61 mentions):*** Prioritize road repairs and timely investment in infrastructure for future growth.
- ***Seniors, Youth, and Family Supports (58 mentions):*** Provide more inclusive programs, spaces and services for residents in different age groups.
- ***Traffic and Pedestrian Safety (56 mentions):*** Address speeding and improve sidewalks, crossings, lighting and intersection safety.
- ***Service Maintenance and Improvement (53 mentions):*** Preserve valued services while improving quality, accessibility and delivery.
- ***Winter Maintenance (52 mentions):*** Improve snow clearing, salting and winter upkeep of roads and sidewalks.



Question 8: Method of Communication in Budget Decision-Making

When asked how residents prefer to receive updates about the municipal budget, residents showed a clear preference for digital channels:

- The ***Town website*** was the most popular choice, selected by ***48.89%*** of respondents.
- ***Social media platforms*** such as Facebook and Instagram followed closely at ***38.57%,*** indicating strong interest in timely, accessible updates.
- ***Email notifications*** (***36.51%****)* and the ***Town e-newsletter*** (***29.68%***) were also widely preferred, reinforcing the value of direct-to-inbox communication.

Traditional methods received less support:

- ***On the Road Magazine*** was chosen by ***27.78%,*** while ***Public Town Hall Meetings*** (***11.75%***) and ***community open houses*** (***10.16%***) were less favored.
- Only ***2.38%*** * chose *Other* including suggestions of forums, billboards, and insertions in tax bills.

*Respondents were permitted to select more than one answer, which is why the percentages do not total 100%.

These results suggest that residents want budget information delivered in formats that are easy to access, digest, and share, especially online. This insight can help guide future engagement strategies to ensure broader reach and participation.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Summary of Insights

In summary, residents who participated in the 2027 budget engagement overwhelmingly prioritized ***core infrastructure improvements & maintenance***, including roads, facilities, streetlights, and other foundational services. There was also strong support for ***maintaining and enhancing existing services***, particularly in ***parks, recreation, and community amenities***. Safety, accessibility, and service quality were recurring themes, with many respondents calling for better winter maintenance, local economic growth, and inclusive programming.

Participants also offered ***creative ideas for revenue generation and cost savings***, such as developer fees, event revenues, and more efficient use of resources such as procuring from local businesses. While opinions varied on tax increases, most respondents favored a ***balanced approach*** supporting modest user fees or service adjustments over significant tax hikes.

Importantly, residents expressed a clear desire for ***transparency and meaningful involvement*** in budget decisions. They want budget information to be accessible, digestible, and shared through digital channels like the Town website, social media, and email.

Resident Satisfaction Survey and Budget Engagement Feedback

Earlier this year, the Town of Stouffville conducted a Resident Satisfaction Survey that identified several recurring themes in community priorities. These included concerns about ***growth and overdevelopment, infrastructure capacity, crime and community safety, lack of amenities and recreation options, lack of police presence, and homelessness and mental health challenges*****.** These findings align closely with the results of the 2027 Budget Engagement, where residents similarly prioritized ***investment in infrastructure, recreation facilities, and service improvements targeting increase in population***. Both surveys highlighted a desire to preserve the town's character while managing growth responsibly, focusing on community safety, and expand amenities for youth and families. The consistency across these engagements reinforces the importance of addressing these shared priorities in the upcoming budget and strategic planning efforts.

How Community Feedback Will be Used

The feedback gathered through this engagement process is shared with the **Senior Leadership Team, and the Mayor** and will be used to inform the development of the 2027 municipal budget and beyond**.**

While the input is advisory, it plays a critical role in shaping decisions about **funding allocations, service enhancements, and strategic planning**. Specific themes-such as infrastructure investment, recreation expansion, and digital communication-will be considered as part of the upcoming budget proposal.

To continue the conversation, the Town will host a **Mayor's Budget Town Hall** in January 2027**,** where residents can hear updates and provide further input. A follow-up "Final Engagement Report" report will be published to close the feedback loop and demonstrate how public input influenced final decisions.