

WHAT WE HEARD.



2025 Budget

Project Overview:

Each year the City prepares an annual budget plus a budget projection for the next three years. The City also prepare a 10-year capital plan that outlines major projects to be funded over the next decade. In April and May 2024 – City Staff sought feedback from Airdrie residents and businesses on their priorities for the coming year. An information and feedback booth was available for residents at the Airdrie Home & Lifestyle Show April 26-27 and an online survey and feedback tool was available online at Involve Airdrie from April 24 to May 20, 2024. Approximately 90 participants provided feedback at the Home & Lifestyle Show, 268 residents provided feedback online and 21 businesses completed the online Business Survey. This report provides a synopsis of the feedback received by City Staff.

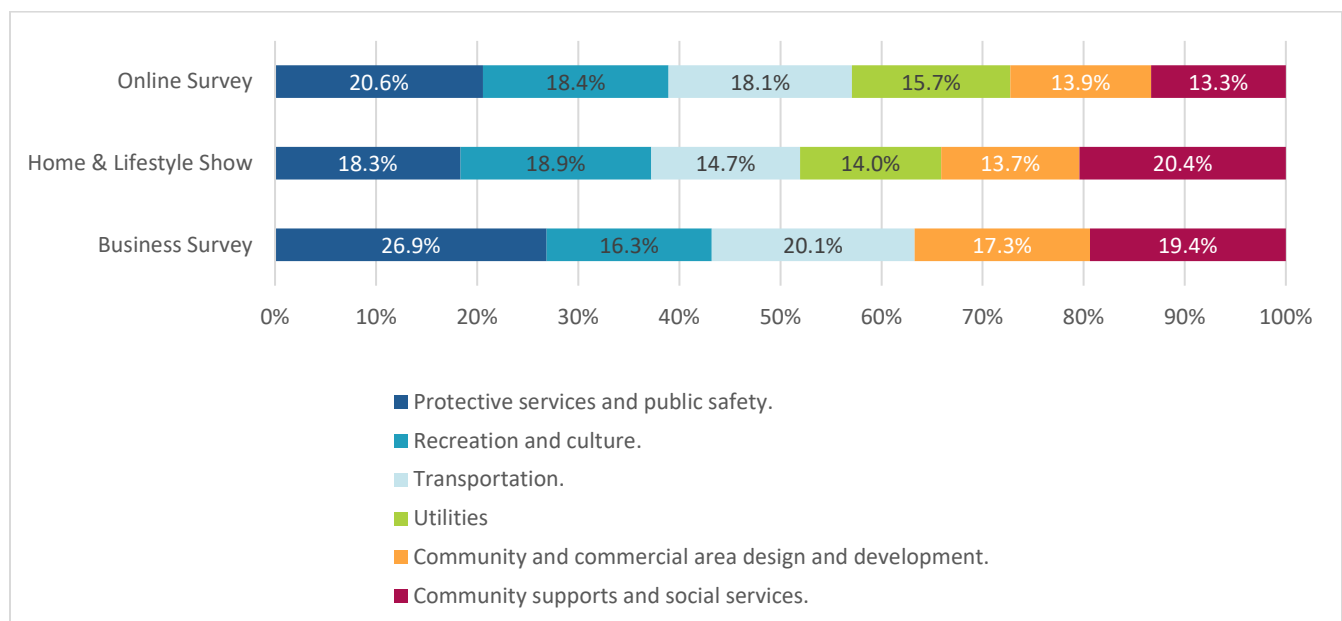
Date: June 27, 2024

Prepared by City of Airdrie

Executive Summary

Each year the City prepares an annual budget plus a budget projection for the next three years. The City also prepare a 10-year capital plan that outlines major projects to be funded over the next decade. City budgets are reviewed, deliberated and approved by Council in the fall each year.

In April and May 2024, City Staff undertook public participation on the 2025 Annual Budget in order to gather information from Airdrie residents and businesses on their priorities for the upcoming year. Participants were asked about which service areas they felt needed the most focus in the 2025 budget, as well as which services within those services areas should be a priority next year. Finally, participants were asked about their top priorities for the 10-year capital plan.



Overall respondents prioritized services related to protective services and public safety expressing concerns related to increased vandalism and disorderly behavior, a desire for more outreach and education for Airdrie youth as well as a desire for more Bylaw enforcement related to noise, problem animals, sidewalk snow removal and parking.

Respondents also want to see a focus on recreation and culture as well as transportation in the coming budget cycle. Here respondents discussed the need for more recreation facilities, more dog parks, protection and expansion of natural areas, addressing traffic congestion, expanding transit services, and looking at options for residential handicapped parking and restrictions for parking near mailboxes.

The information from participants will be used by City Staff to consider as they build the 2025 budget as well as shared with Council for their consideration during budget deliberations in the Fall of 2024.

Project Information

The City of Airdrie uses principles of zero-based budgeting to create the annual budgets. This means that each City business unit starts from zero and creates a budget based on what is needed to deliver Council endorsed services and to advance Council's focus areas.

Typical operational expenses for the City include the cost to provide services such as street cleaning, recreation, water services, streetlights, trails, pathways, playgrounds, parks, public transit, arts and culture, police, fire and municipal enforcement.

The capital budget on the other hand covers large projects, like a new recreation facility or fire hall. The utility fund covers water and waste and recycling services.

Each year the City prepares an annual budget plus a budget projection for the next three years. The City also prepares a 10-year capital plan that outlines major projects to be funded over the next decade. City budgets are reviewed, deliberated and approved by Council in the fall each year.

Public Participation Approach

In April and May 2024, City Staff undertook public participation on the 2025 Annual Budget in order to gather information from Airdrie residents and businesses on their priorities for the upcoming year.

The engagement plan included an in-person opportunity to provide input where City Staff attended the Airdrie Home & Lifestyle Show April 26-27, 2024, hosted at Genesis Place. As well as an online opportunity for feedback hosted on the City's online Engagement Platform, "Involve Airdrie."

Approximately 90 participants visited the City's Budget booth at the Airdrie Home and Lifestyle Show and provided feedback. 268 participants provided feedback through the online feedback tools targeted to residents and 21 businesses completed the online Business Survey (also hosted on Involve Airdrie).

Participants were asked about which service areas they felt needed the most focus in the 2025 budget, as well as which services within those services area groupings should be a priority next year. Finally, participants were asked about their top priorities for the 10-year capital plan.

Summary of Public Participation Input

Overall respondents prioritized services related to protective services and public safety, followed by recreation and culture, transportation, utilities, community and commercial area design and development, and community supports and social services.

Construction of the SW Recreation Centre and a Yankee Valley Blvd. underpass at CP Rail were top capital project priorities for respondents. Followed by new sanitary and sewer lines from Calgary, construction of sports fields, courts and other amenities at the NE Regional Park and a Veterans Blvd. overpass at CP Rail.

The following sections provide summaries of responses to each feedback question organized by category of question.

Contents

Q1 Service Areas 5

Q2 10-Year Capital Plan..... 6

Priorities Activity 7

 Q3 Community Supports and Social Services 7

 Q4 Community and Commercial Area Design and Development.....9

 Q5 Protective Services and Public Safety 11

 Q6 Recreation and Culture 13

 Q7 Transportation..... 15

 Q8 Utilities, Waste and Recycling..... 17

Additional Results from the Business Survey 19

Notes:

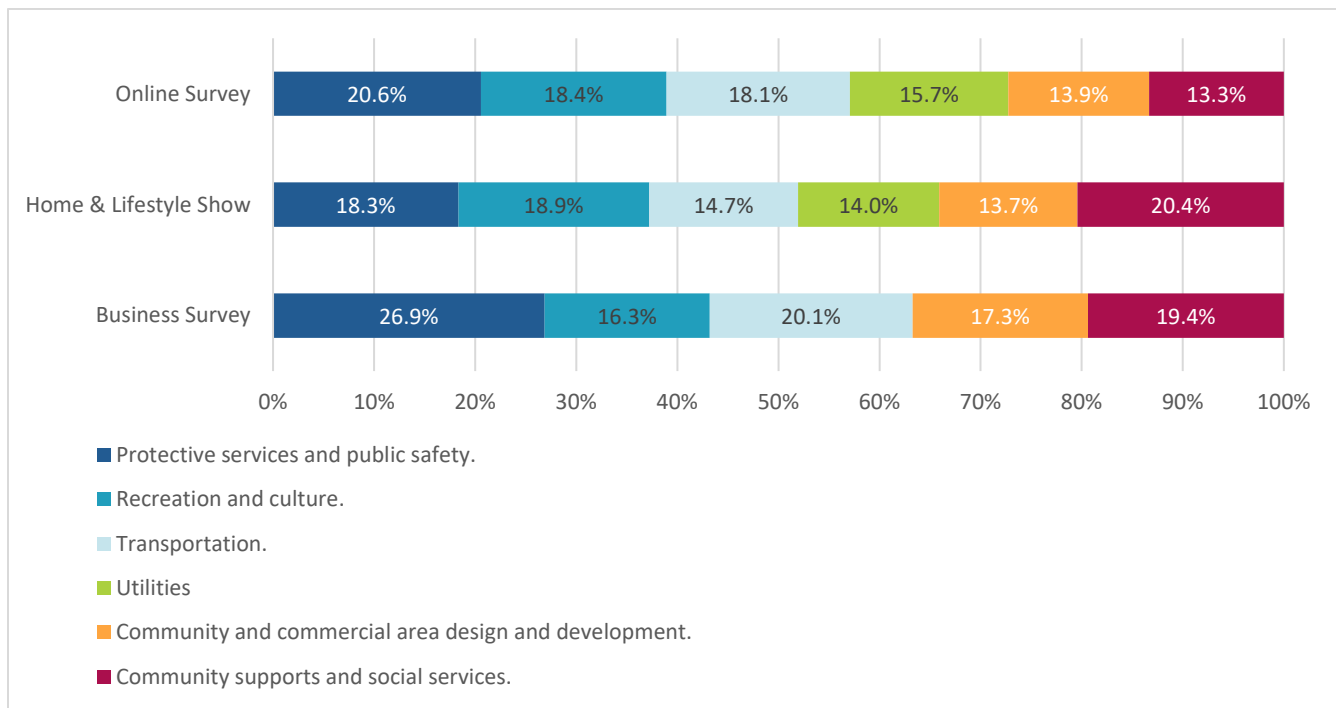
- Numbers of respondents to individual questions in the survey are reported as n=x for example, “Online Survey (OS) n=127”
- Numbers of respondents from the Home & Lifestyle Show are approximate as responses there are not tracked by individual response ID as is the case with online feedback methods.
- A single comment from a respondent may identify more than one topic which means numbers of mentions for key themes, identified in brackets such as (mentions 13), may not equal the number of comments received.

Q1 Service Areas

The Service Areas priority question sought to gather information about priorities across Service Areas for the coming year.

- **Online Survey (residents):** What tax supported service areas do you think Council should focus on most in next year's budget? Drag and drop the service areas in the left-hand column below into your order of priority in the right-hand column.
- **Home & Lifestyle Show:** Use your allocation of 3 sticker dots to identify the service areas you feel need the most focus in the coming year.
- **Business Survey:** What tax supported service areas do you think Council should focus on most in next year's budget? Drag and drop the service areas below into your order of priority.

Online Survey (OS) n=159 Home & Lifestyle Show (HLS) n~129 Business Survey (B) n=20



Data Table			
	OS # of Points	HLS # of Dots	B # of Points
	1091	71	79
	975	73	48
	963	57	59
	832	54	
	738	53	51
	708	79	57

Q2 10-Year Capital Plan

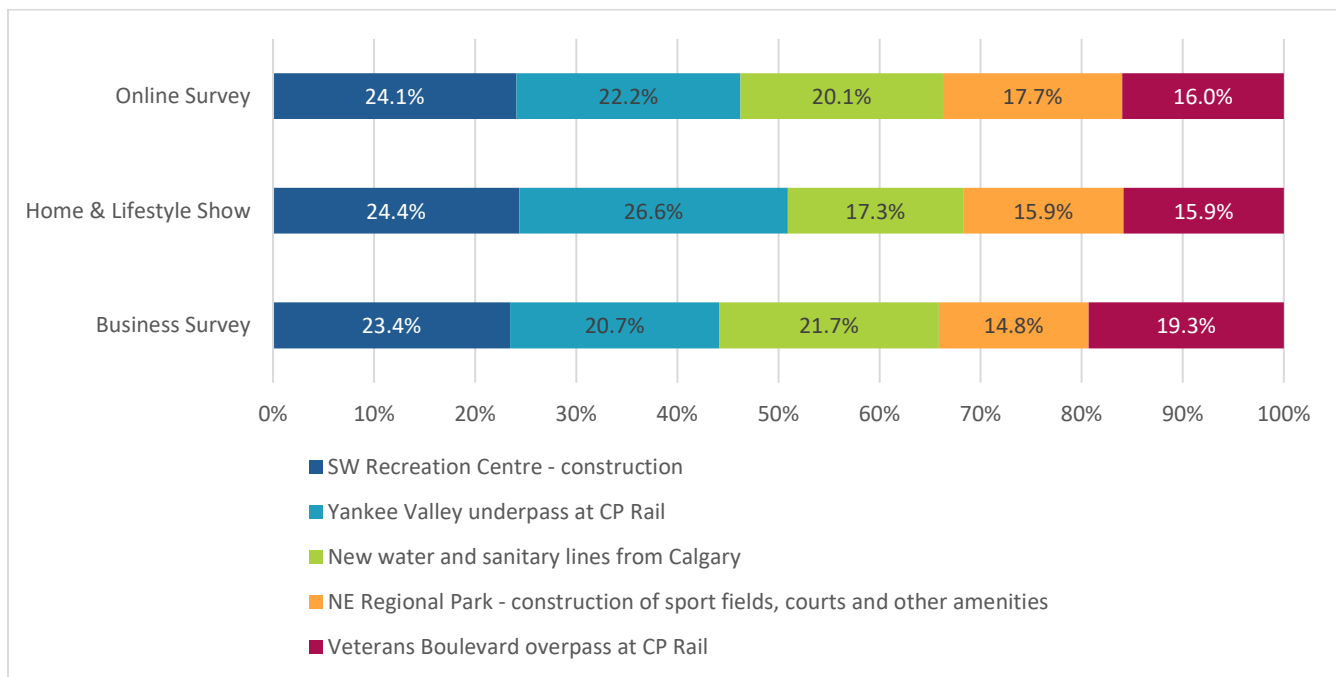
The 10-Year Capital Plan question sought to gather information about priorities for the long-term capital investment plan.

Online Survey (residents): For the following projects from the 10-Year Capital Plan not yet started, drag and drop the projects in the left-hand column into your order of priority in the right-hand column.

Home & Lifestyle Show: Use your allocation of 3 sticker dots to identify which of the following 10-Year capital plans are most important to you.

Business Survey: For the following projects from the 10-Year Capital Plan, not yet started, drag and drop the projects into your order of priority.

Online Survey (OS) n=268 Home & Lifestyle Show (HLS) n~90 Business Survey (B) n=20



Data Table			
	OS # of Points	HLS # of Dots	B # of Points
	550	66	68
	506	72	60
	458	47	63
	405	43	43
	365	43	56

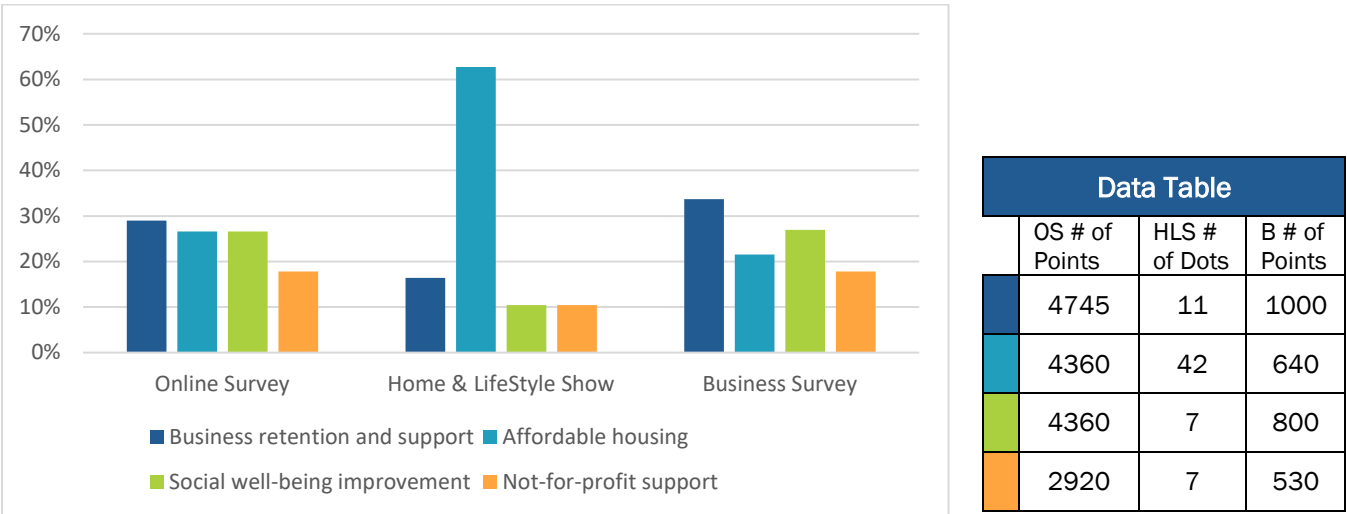
Priorities Activity

The Priorities Activity sought to gather information about service priorities within the service areas described in the survey. Questions asked in each service area grouping were as follows:

- **Online Survey (residents):** Use the up and down arrow buttons to allocate your 'budget' of 100 points on the services below to indicate what are your top priorities for the next year. Allocate more points to items of higher priority for you and fewer points to items you don't feel need as much focus in the next budget cycle.
- **Home & Lifestyle Show:** Use your allocation of 20 tokens to identify the services within each service area groupings you feel need the most focus in the coming year.
- **Business Survey:** Using the slider underneath the services described here. Assign a number of points between 0 and 100 to identify your top priorities in this service area for 2025.

Q3 Community Supports and Social Services

Online Survey (OS) n=176 Home & Lifestyle Show (HLS) n~19 Business Survey (B) n=18



Q3 b. Is there anything else we should know about what is important to you related to community supports and social services?

Key Themes (Resident Comments: n=37)

1. **Social Services and Support** (mentions 12)
 - Respondents identified a need/desire for more and easier access to social services. Some programs or supports desired by respondents included: programs to build a sense of community, free kids' programs, more programs for 13 to 15-year-olds, as well as for newcomers and seniors. Respondents feel there is value in supporting/valuing local non-profits. There was a recognition that the well-being of people enhances communities.

2. Support for Seniors and Disabled Residents (mentions 7)

- Some respondents want to see more focus on supporting the needs of seniors and people with disabilities in Airdrie. There were some comments for more services for seniors in general, a desire to keep seniors in their homes, and for more bungalows for seniors. Other comments expressed a desire for more enforcement of accessibility requirements at retail and restaurant businesses, as well as more accessibility for wheelchairs on sidewalks and streets.

3. Economic Development and Employment (mentions 6)

- Some respondents identified a desire for more local jobs, supporting local businesses, helping newcomers find jobs, reducing costs to businesses to reduce the need for residents to meet their needs in other municipalities.

4. Affordable Housing (mentions 5)

- Some respondents highlighted the need for more affordable housing in Airdrie. Concerns include the high cost of land and housing.

5. Growth Rate (mentions 3)

- Some respondents want to ensure there is a focus on Airdrie's existing population before focusing on growth. There is a sense that too much housing is being built without enough amenities or programs, and that the growth rate is harming social connections.

6. Municipal taxes (mentions 1)

- A comment mentioned reducing municipal spending to reduce taxes/expenses for residents.

Key Themes (Business Comments: n=2)

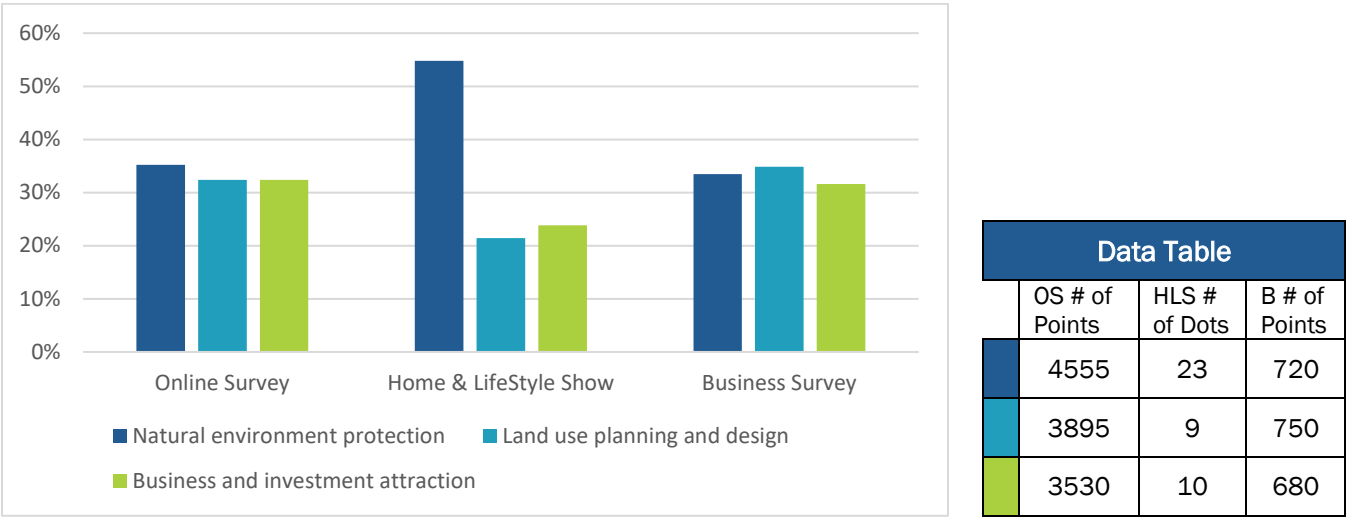
- The City should not support not-for-profit
- High fees and rents discourage business attraction and retention.
- Support local businesses.

"Airdrie needs more affordable housing and greater access to social services for those struggling to find shelter, food, clothing etc. We need to make it affordable for business to thrive and succeed in Airdrie ..."

"I think there should be more programs accessible for new moms in Airdrie as it can be extremely lonely. [One of the two options I was given] had an age limit... but I have [both] a toddler & an infant. I have since joined a group in [a municipality north of Airdrie] as they accommodate for a larger age group."

Q4 Community and Commercial Area Design and Development

Online Survey (OS) n=126 Home & Lifestyle Show (HS) n~19 Business Survey (B) n=15



Q4 b. Is there anything else we should know about what is important to you related to community and commercial area design and development?

Key Themes (Resident Comments: n=24)

- Green Spaces and Environment:** (mentions 10)
 - Calls for maintaining natural spaces, increasing tree cover, protecting wetlands, and managing watershed areas responsibly.
 - Mixed feelings about green initiatives; some support preserving green areas, while others are skeptical about the city’s focus on greenhouse gas reductions.
- Growth Management** (mentions 6)
 - Concerns about rapid housing development without adequate infrastructure support like schools, shopping centers, and recreational facilities.
 - A desire for the City to explore developer/builder levies to fund recreation facilities.
- Economic Development** (mentions 3)
 - Preference for more local businesses and unique enterprises, there is a need for more small and affordable business spaces.
 - Desire for a healthy industrial base to support the tax base and provide local employment opportunities.
- Urban Planning and Design** (mentions 3)
 - A concern that there is too much high-density housing in Airdrie.
 - Concern about rezoning residential areas for new suites.
 - Need for improved bike paths, and pedestrian paths for better connectivity between commercial areas and communities.

Key Themes (Business Comments: n=3)

- Focus on business attraction.
- Focus on environmental protection.
- Just one office for land use and design
- Plant trees to reduce erosion.
- Protect and beautify the environment.
- Use all existing housing for solar generation (to protect farmland from being used)
- Water conservation from all residential downspouts

"It is important to have plenty of trees and green spaces to provide places for everyone to appreciate the beauty and importance of nature."

"We are building homes too fast. We need sports facilities [and] swimming pools, ... so we can stay healthy in Airdrie. We need to work and stay healthy here, not in Calgary."

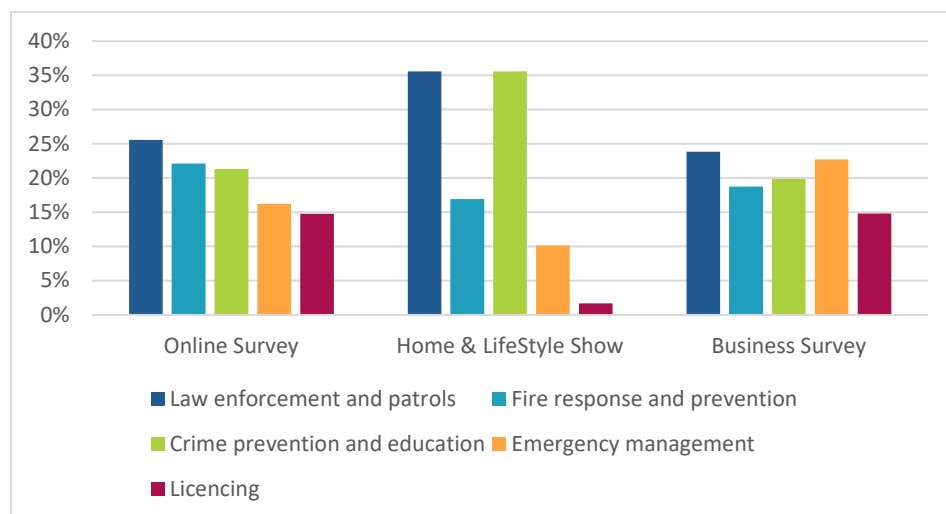
"I am a business owner and I mostly work from home. it would be great If I can afford to have a business space."

Q5 Protective Services and Public Safety

Online Survey (OS) n=167

Home & Lifestyle Show (HLS) n~19

Business Survey (B) n=13



Data Table			
	OS # of Points	HLS # of Dots	B # of Points
Law enforcement and patrols	4610	21	660
Fire response and prevention	3980	10	520
Crime prevention and education	3840	21	550
Emergency management	2660	6	630
Licencing	1295	1	410

Q5 b. Is there anything else we should know about what is important to you related to protective services and public safety?

Key Themes (Resident Comments: n=34)

1. Law Enforcement and Patrols (mentions 19)

- Some respondents expressed concern with rising levels of vandalism and public disorder, such as broken glass in parks and noisy neighbors, with an interest in more community patrols at night by RCMP and better lighting in public areas.
- Some respondents wanted to see a focus on minor traffic infraction enforcement shifted towards other crimes such as vandalism.
- A suggestion was received for the establishment of neighborhood watch programs and increased community involvement in crime prevention.

2. Bylaw Education and Enforcement (mentions 6)

- Some participants would like to see stricter enforcement of bylaws, including noise control, parking regulations, and handling problem animals. Issues with current bylaw enforcement practices included a feeling that there is a lack of response and inadequate fines.
- Another area of bylaw enforcement mentioned by some respondents related to ensuring snow and ice removal from sidewalks to better support accessibility and mobility for seniors and disabled residents.
- Some respondents feel there needs to be more education on bylaws in Airdrie to residents.

3. Education and youth outreach (mentions 3)

- A suggestion was received to provide more resource officers to high schools need to handle increasing issues with drugs, weapons, and fights.
- Advocating for more education on proper disposal of pet waste and maintaining safe natural spaces for mental and physical well-being.

4. **Emergency Services Access** (mentions 1)
 - A concern was expressed about the ability of emergency services to reach all areas of the City, particularly those affected by train tracks.
5. **Building inspections** (mentions 1)
 - A concern was received about needing stricter inspections, and consequences for non-compliance, for new build home construction.
6. **General Feedback and Praise** (mentions 1)
 - Some residents expressed satisfaction with RCMP and Fire Staff in their interactions with residents, and specifically with residents who are visible minorities.

Key Themes (Business Comments: n=2)

- Focus on RCMP.
- Focus on supporting first responders.
- Reduce speeding tickets.
- More enforcement on merging, parked cars blocking sidewalks.

"My experience with [RCMP and firefighters] in my decade of living in Airdrie and raising my family has been a good experience. ... I am a visible minority. [With] the stigma about law enforcement in our media it is so nice to be treated like a human, an equal, worthy human."

"Provide crime prevention resources and education to youth and teens in Airdrie."

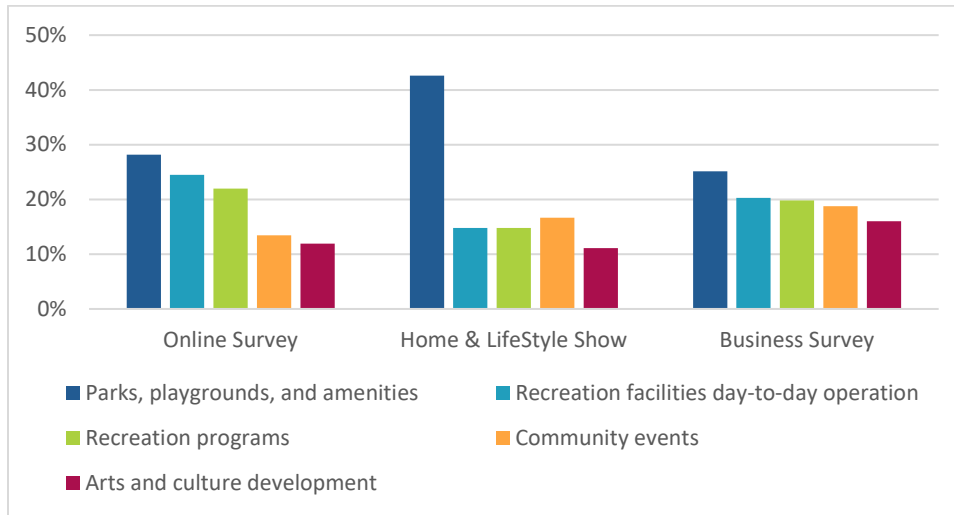
"...furnaces [bought] in bulk [get installed] in units of any size [rather than] the correct sized furnaces to heat the square footage of a home. ...Timely ...third party inspections should occur."

Q6 Recreation and Culture

Online Survey (OS) n=148

Home & Lifestyle Show (HLS) n~19

Business Survey (B) n=19



Data Table			
	OS # of Points	HLS # of Dots	B # of Points
Parks, playgrounds, and amenities	4085	23	990
Recreation facilities day-to-day operation	3545	8	800
Recreation programs	3185	8	780
Community events	1950	9	740
Arts and culture development	1725	6	630

Q6 b. Is there anything else we should know about what is important to you related to recreation and Culture?

Key Themes (Resident Comments: n=40)

1. Recreational Facilities (mentions 28)

- Respondents expressed a strong interest in additional indoor recreation facilities to accommodate the growing population, indoor spaces also included an interest in more ice rinks and indoor soccer. Genesis Place was mentioned as being overcrowded and expensive. There is a call for more facilities that can host various programs, including swimming lessons, fitness classes, and community events.
- Respondents identified a desire for more outdoor sports and fitness amenities including soccer fields, ball diamonds and fitness spaces.
- Some respondents expressed concerns about the high cost of memberships and program fees at existing facilities, especially for seniors and single adults. These respondents are looking for more affordable access to recreation facilities.

2. Dog Parks (mentions 6)

- Respondents hoped to see more off-leash dog parks, particularly in specific areas like Sagewood, Bayside/Bayview, NW Airdrie and the north end of Airdrie. There was also a comment requesting a refresh of existing dog park amenities such as benches at East Lake Dog Park.

3. Parks and Green Spaces (mentions 5)

- **More Trees and Greenery:** Respondents expressed a desire for more trees and green spaces in parks and along walking paths. Residents appreciate the existing pathways but see room for improvement in maintenance and expansion.
- **Natural Playgrounds:** Interest in developing more natural playgrounds and outdoor fitness spaces to encourage active lifestyles.

4. **Community Programs and Cultural Activities** (mentions 5)

- Arts and Culture: Suggestions for increasing arts and cultural activities, including live music venues and clubs, to enrich community life.
- Youth and Family Programs: Emphasis on the need for more free and affordable programming for children and community-building events.

Key Themes (Business Comments: n=3)

- Leave summer camps to private providers.
- Recreation is very important.
- Provide plenty of greenspaces.
- Host Canada Day fireworks.
- Maintain parks.

"I would love to see more trees and greenery in the parks and walking paths."

"A dog park ... would also be incredibly beneficial ... There are plenty of dog owners ... and those who choose to use the dog parks [must] drive 10-15 minutes to the nearest one."

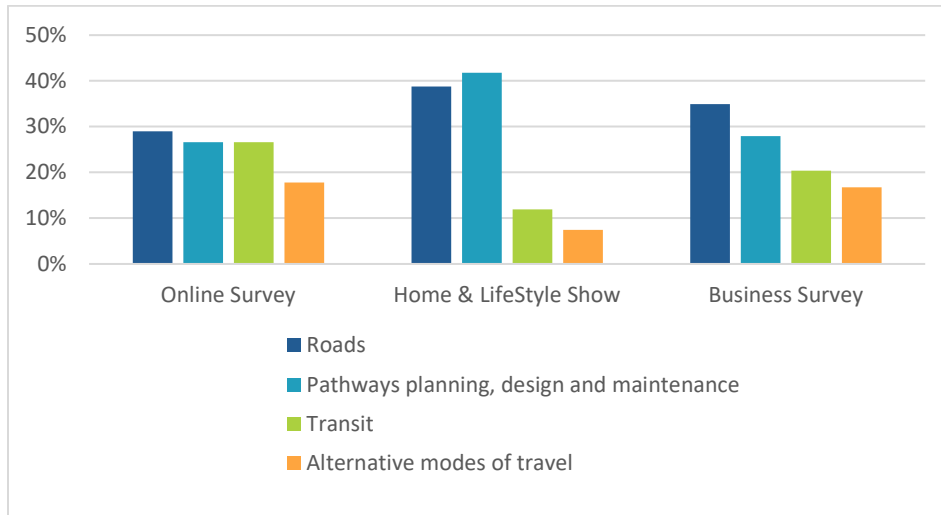
"More focus ... on a new rec center ... [Currently,] fitness programs and swim lessons are booked solid well in advance. Affordability is ... focused on large families while seniors and single people pay a premium. We [pay] the highest [monthly membership] prices in Alberta."

Q7 Transportation

Online Survey (OS) n=146

Home & Lifestyle Show (HLS) n~19

Business Survey (B) n=19



Data Table			
	OS # of Points	HLS # of Dots	B # of Points
	5230	26	1150
	4120	28	920
	3090	8	670
	1865	5	550

Q7 b. Is there anything else we should know about what is important to you related to Transportation?

Key Themes (Resident Comments: n=41)

1. Traffic and Road Infrastructure (mentions 14)

- Participants identified concerns about congested main roads, with specific mentions of Yankee Valley Boulevard, Veterans Boulevard, and 8th Street. Suggestions include adding lanes to reduce gridlock.
- Respondents requested designated right turn lanes (e.g. East Lake Blvd. & Meadowbrook Dr.) and synchronizing traffic lights to alleviate rush hour tie-ups and improve traffic flow.
- Some respondents are looking for better maintenance of roads and pathways, particularly in winter, and ensuring developers contribute to the development of traffic systems before new housing projects are completed.

2. Pathways and Bike Lanes (mentions 14)

- Respondents identified maintenance and expansion of walking and biking paths as a priority and expressed interest in a connector pathway to Calgary. Respondents emphasized the importance of pathways for health and wellness of the community.
- Participants expressed mixed opinions on bike lanes, with some residents advocating for more bike paths and trails, while others suggest focusing on road maintenance over bike lanes due to the long winter months.

3. Public Transportation (mentions 13)

- Some respondents expressed interest in more frequent and accessible bus services, including extending transit coverage to new neighborhoods and the south end of Kings Heights. Specific requests also included better connection times to Calgary early in the mornings and on the weekend.

- Suggestions for an accessible transportation service for people with disabilities, including to and from Calgary. Concerns about the limited reach of current transit routes and the need for inclusive options for all residents.
 - A comment was received to limit transit services to Airdrie residents only, requiring proof of residency for pass purchase.
4. **Parking** (mentions 11)
- Respondents expressed a need for more handicapped residential parking spaces, better enforcement of parking bylaws, and the creation of loading zones in front of mailboxes. Residents express frustration with inadequate parking enforcement and the challenges of navigating icy conditions in winter made worse by parking.
5. **Accessibility and Mobility** (mentions 6)
- Some participants emphasized the need for improved accessibility for wheelchairs and other mobility aids. Suggestions include more visible and larger ramps, especially at handicap parking stalls, and better designed pathways, sidewalks, and curbs.
 - Some participants expressed the importance of prioritizing snow removal from streets, sidewalks and pathways to ensure accessibility for all, particularly for handicapped individuals and seniors.

Key Themes (Business Comments: n=5)

- Walkability supports safety, health, social connections.
- Sync the traffic lights.
- Reduce traffic congestion.
- Growth is outstripping infrastructure (to get around).
- Privatize transit.
- Bus stops contribute to congestion.

“Wheelchairs and other mobility aids need to be included in your alternative modes of travel as a needed focus. To improve and design all pathways, sidewalks and curbs everywhere with easy visible access [and more ramps].”

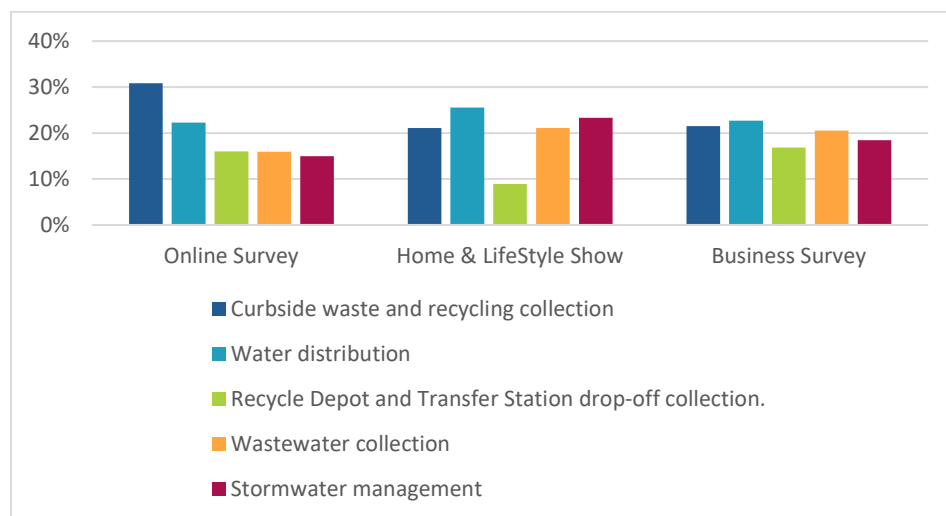
“The City of Airdrie is growing exponentially, and people need to be able to get around.”

Q8 Utilities, Waste and Recycling

Online Survey (OS) n=127

Home & Lifestyle Show (HLS) n~19

Business Survey (B) n=18



Data Table			
	OS # of Points	HLS # of Dots	B # of Points
	3660	19	920
	2645	23	970
	1905	8	720
	1890	19	880
	1780	21	790

Q8 b. Is there anything else we should know about what is important to you related to Utilities waste and recycling?

Key Themes (Resident Comments: n=30)

1. Waste Management and Garbage Collection (mentions 22)

- Several respondents would like to see black bins replace garbage bags for this curbside service. These participants believe bins would improve the city's appearance on garbage days, reduce the problem of garbage being scattered by wind and animals, and decrease the use of plastic bags.
- A suggestion was received to incorporate air vents in bin lids (similar to bins in Didsbury), to reduce incidents of bins being tipped due to wind.
- Another suggestion was received to privatize curbside service.
- Some respondents provided positive feedback on the existing recycling program and the helpful staff at the Recycle Centre. However, some residents question the effectiveness of recycling certain plastics and suggest exploring alternative waste-to-energy solutions, such as incineration for power generation.
- Suggestion to engage local businesses, especially in the food industry, to find alternative uses for unsellable food instead of discarding it.

2. Water Management and Conservation (mentions 5)

- Respondents provided recommendations for utilizing runoff for irrigation, promoting the use of rain barrels, alternate days water schedules, developing alternative ways to capture and use water, as well as assistance for seniors to implement these solutions as they may find it difficult to water lawns late at night (per recommendations).
- A comment was received to test the water in the canals and share the results publicly.
- A comment was received that Airdrie needs its own water source.

3. **Community Infrastructure and Services** (mentions 3)

- Some respondents expressed a desire for effective stormwater management, with suggestions that land use planning and design could minimize the effort and cost required for this service.
- A concern was expressed that the rate of growth in Airdrie is outstripping services. Encouragement to invest in future infrastructure now to save costs in the long term. Residents highlight the importance of building and maintaining essential infrastructure.

4. **General Feedback and Praise** (mentions 3)

- Some residents express satisfaction with the current waste and recycling programs, commending the city and its staff for their efforts and customer service.
- Some concerns about high utility bills compared to other provinces, with residents feeling they are paying too much.

Key Themes (Business Comments: n=2)

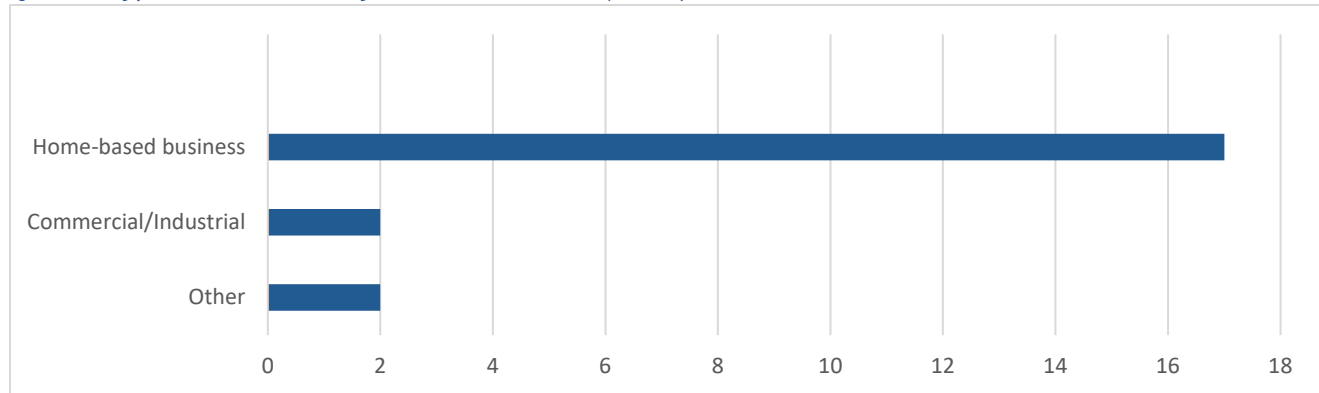
- Improve business water usage.
- Do not understand costs associated with stormwater management.
- Focus on environmental protection.
- Improve cart design – not to tip over in wind.

“It would be great if we could incorporate black bins for waste disposal (like Calgary has) instead of using garbage bags.”

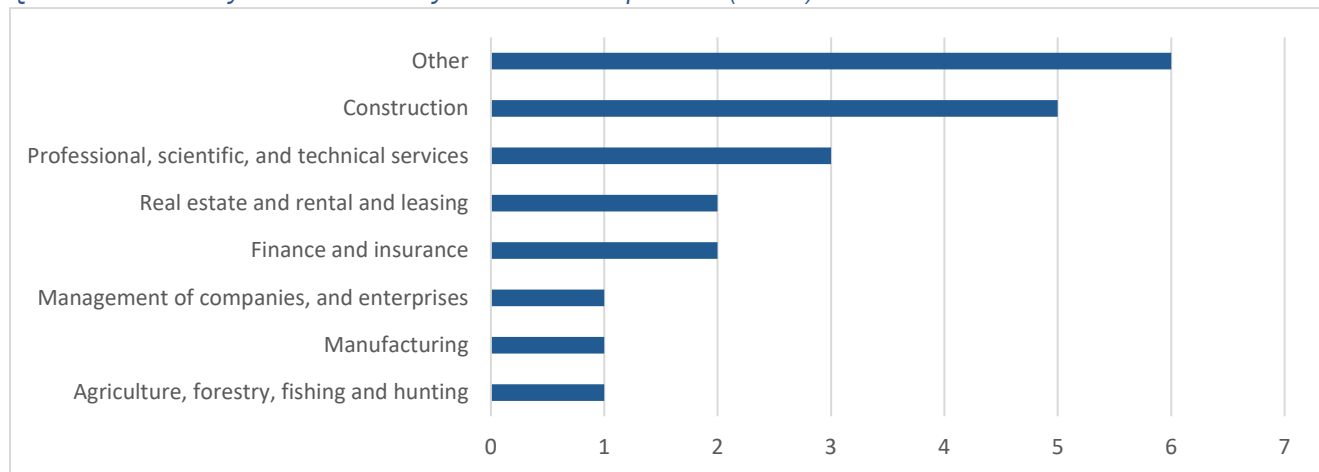
Help us develop alternative ways to capture water, to water lawns and gardens. Maybe find ways for water from tubs and showers to water lawns. Watering after dark, late in the season, is dangerous for seniors. ... Alternate days we can water, ... so we don't break the laws.

Additional Results from the Business Survey

Q: What type of business do you own in Airdrie? (n=21)



Q: In what industry or sector does your business operate? (n=21)



Other: Automotive, Nail Salon, Party and tent rental, Bookkeeping and consulting, Sewing, Birth and postpartum support.

Q: Is there anything else the City should consider in preparing the budget for 2025 from the perspective of your business? (n=5)

- Focus on roads before building more housing.
- The average resident in Airdrie is paying 40% less in taxes than the average across Alberta's cities. This should be celebrated!!
- Law enforcement, water and roads should be prioritized.
- Prioritize getting more input from citizens/residents.
- Law enforcement and crime prevention should be prioritized.

What's Next & Timelines

The feedback provided by the public is used by City Staff for consideration in creating the 2025 budget. It will also be shared with Council to provide them insight into what Airdrie residents and businesses identified is important, which Council can weigh alongside many other factors and provincial obligations that they must weigh in on during budget deliberations in November 2024.

Contact Information

For more information regarding the 2025 Budget Public Engagement, please contact:

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