

Community Engagement

the Vibe
ARTISAN GALLERY

What We Heard

2026 Budget Consultation Report

May 2025

What We Heard

2026 Budget Engagement Survey

The City of Vernon invited the community to provide feedback to help guide important decisions about how the City allocates its resources.

Community engagement overview

1,527 People visited the Budget engagement page

657 People completed the survey

60.1% Participants were under 55 years old

Where we connected



City Hall



Engage Vernon



Recreation Centre



Halina & Schubert Centre

Key priorities

How respondents ranked Council's Priorities (1 being most important to 5 being least important)



Top themes

Eight key themes emerged



Affordability



Road Maintenance



Homelessness



Youth Activities



Housing



Trees & Shade



Transit



Events & Culture

Highlights

70.7% Oppose increases to property taxes

57.7% Satisfied with the current quality of City services

48.5% Willing to pay more in user fees to maintain/improve services

\$70.52 Average property tax increase residents are willing to pay to support improvements to services

Areas for future investment



Road Upgrades



Bike Lanes & Trails



Infrastructure



Events & Culture



Parks & Recreation



Climate Action

What people said

Arts and community

"As someone in the 19-30 demographic I'd like to see more support for the arts and creativity in downtown whether that's through festivals, show and shines or more markets...something to get people to focus on buying local and supporting our existing artists and try to sprout new ones."

Lower income accessibility

"We need to have a type of sliding scale of income when it comes to service fees. Our low and middle income people are really struggling."

Infrastructure investment

"I would be concerned about the aging city buildings. They have not changed, improved or grown since they have been built. I feel the city should prioritize these buildings before committing to expensive projects like the cultural centre."

Background

As part of the City of Vernon's early planning for the 2026 Budget, a Budget Engagement Survey was conducted to gather initial public input. This marks the first phase of community engagement, aimed at collecting feedback before Council begins its formal budget review. The insights gathered will help shape priorities and inform future decision-making.

Summary

From **May 6 to May 26, 2025**, we asked for public feedback to help guide important decisions for the 2026 Budget.

This first round of public input helped to understand:

- How residents perceive the importance of each Council priority
- Willingness to explore different financial strategies to help balance the budget
- Openness to adjusting or reducing certain services, if necessary
- Attitudes toward potential increases in user fees and property taxes
- Overall satisfaction with the current quality of City services
- Key areas where residents see opportunities for improvement and future investment

A second round of engagement will take place in the late fall when the Draft Budget is presented for public feedback.

During the engagement period, there was a total of 1,527 visitors to the online engagement website **engagevernon.ca/budget**.

- 1,232 unique visitors were **aware** - visited the project page
- 884 visitors were **informed** - opened further documents on the project page
- 657 visitors were **engaged** - completed the survey

The community was notified about the public engagement opportunities using several notification methods - all of which included the link to the online engagement website (engagevernon.ca/budget). Notification methods included:

- Initial opening and final reminder press releases
 - Several news stories were published as a result of these news releases
- Weekly social media posts on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram
 - Stories were regularly posted on Facebook and Instagram in addition to weekly posts
- Two printed newspaper ads
- Printed copies of the survey were available at City Hall, the Recreation Centre, Halina Centre, and Schubert Centre

Who we heard from

Age demographics:

- 65+ : 22.1%
- 55-64 : 17.8%
- 45-54 : 17%
- 35-44 : 20.4%
- 25-34 : 16.7%
- 19-24 : 5.5%
- > 18 : 0.6%

Household demographics:

- Single adult living alone: 15%
- Couple without children: 37.6%
- Single parent with child(ren): 6.3%
- Multi-generational household: 28.3%
- Roommates or unrelated adults sharing a home: 4%
- Other: 8.9%

Area demographics:

- City of Vernon: 84.5%
- District of Coldstream: 6.4%
- RDNO: 7.5%
- Other: 1.5%

What we heard - online engagement results

An online survey was available and hosted on engagevernon.ca and paper copies of the survey were also made available. It is important to note that respondents were not required to answer all questions.

The qualitative outcomes of the feedback reflect the opinions of those that participated in the process.

The primary goal was to hear from members of the community about priorities to help guide decisions for the 2026 Budget. For complete results, see the full survey responses in Attachment 2.

Which of Council's current priorities do you believe are most important for the 2026 Budget? Please rank the following from the list below (1 being most important and 5 being least important)

Priorities ranked in order, with average weighted score:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) Livability - 2.03 | 4) Vibrancy - 3.42 |
| 2) Recreation, Parks & Natural Areas - 2.78 | 5) Governance & Organizational Excellence - 3.56 |
| 3) Environmental Leadership - 3.05 | |

The City has several financial tools to help balance the budget. Please indicate your level of support for each option below:

- *Increase user fees for existing City services:* 51% somewhat to strongly support, 45% somewhat to strongly oppose
- *Increase residential property taxes:* 49% strongly oppose, 22% somewhat oppose, 27% somewhat to strongly support
- *Introduce new user fees for currently free services:* 50% somewhat to strongly support, 46% somewhat to strongly oppose
- *Continue offering the same services, but at reduced levels:* 49% somewhat to strongly oppose, 45% somewhat to strongly support
- *Reduce or eliminate some City services:* 51% somewhat to strongly support, 41% somewhat to strongly oppose

If the City considers reducing or eliminating some services, which of the methods do you believe should be used? (check all that apply)

- *Prioritize services that are less essential or have lower public demand* - 389 votes (59.9%)
- *Focus on services that can be more efficiently delivered by investing in modern technology* - 362 votes (55.8%)
- *Postpone major infrastructure or capital projects* - 201 votes (31%)

Would you be willing to pay more in user fees (e.g. facility rentals, permits, recreation programs) to maintain or improve the services you or your business use?

- 48.5% said Yes, while 32.6% said No

To support improvements to City services (e.g. better roads, expanded transit, upgraded parks), how much more would you be willing to pay annually in municipal taxes?

- 32% said \$0 and 28% said \$1 - \$50
- Weighted average \$70.52

Thinking about your overall experience as a Vernon resident, how satisfied are you with the current quality of City services?

- 57.7% said somewhat satisfied to very satisfied

Do you feel you receive enough information about the City's budget, spending, and taxation?

- 47.2% said no, 37% said yes