



**City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 26-006**

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer
Resource Staff: Lana Foulds, Director, Financial Service
Date of Meeting: December 16, 2025
Subject: 2026 Budget Engagement Results

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: Financial measures/budget

Goal: See above

Executive Summary:

Community input is essential in shaping the City's operating and capital budgets. Through budget engagement activities, participants are able to influence how tax dollars are allocated, helping to support transparency and trust. The 2026 budget engagement process began in August 2025 with the launch of the 2026 Budget Get Involved Kingston project page and the budget engagement survey. This report outlines the engagement tools and activities used and summarizes the feedback received throughout the 2026 budget engagement process.

Survey results and other engagement feedback were collated and forwarded to the respective departments/agencies for consideration during the 2026 budget development process and to provide input into future budget processes. Future budget engagements will continue to shift from a fixed annual timeframe to a more dynamic year-round approach for education and information sharing.

Feedback gathered from ongoing budget engagement activities provides input into the budget development process. While the budget is established by the Mayor under the Strong Mayor Powers legislation, the Mayor's proposed 2026 budget incorporates many of the priorities and themes identified by the community.

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Recommendation:

This report is for information only.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF

FINANCIAL OFFICER & CITY TREASURER

**Desiree Kennedy, Chief
Financial Officer & City
Treasurer**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	Not required
Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services	Not required
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services	
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Jenna Morley, City Solicitor	Not required
Ian Semple, Commissioner, Transportation & Infrastructure Services	Not required

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Options/Discussion:**Background**

An important component of the city's budget process is engagement with the community. Various engagement tools are used not only to provide insight into the municipal budgeting process but also to provide opportunity for participants to influence priorities, service levels, and resource allocation. Various budget engagement tools are utilized to reach a broad cross-section of the community.

Guided by feedback from prior engagements as well as the City's Public Engagement Framework, the 2026 engagement plan was implemented throughout the summer and fall of 2025. All budget engagement activities were promoted through the Get Involved Kingston budget engagement page, social media, news releases, and the Get Involved Kingston email newsletters.

Who we heard from and what we heard

Based on the engagement statistics, 387 participants completed surveys or submitted future engagement ideas, and 1,400 participants visited the project page. Staff estimate that at least 275 participants took part in the interactive activities at the pop-up events.

A summary of the budget engagement results is included in Exhibit A, with key highlights presented below.

Budget engagement survey

The budget engagement survey ran from August 6 to November 2, 2025. The community was provided opportunities to participate online, through the Get Involved Kingston webpage, or by phone or email. A total of 374 survey responses were received, down from 531 in 2024.

The survey included both closed and open-ended questions including topics such as value for tax dollars, asset management investment priorities, and property tax impacts on service levels.

- Value for tax dollars

This question asked respondents to rate the overall value of their tax dollars on a scale from poor to excellent.

Survey results show that 80% of respondents rated the value of their tax dollars as fair, good, or excellent, with 43% falling in the good-to-excellent range. These results have improved over the 2025 engagement results which reported 39% in the good-to excellent range. As discussed below, similar patterns emerged at the pop-up events, where the majority of ratings were fair to good.

This question was also included on the Get Involved Kingston page as a "Quick Poll" question. The results were slightly less favorable, with 67% of the participants rating fair or better value.

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- Asset management investment

When asked to prioritize investment in capital assets, survey participants identified roads and bridges (23.9%), sidewalks (15.7%), and transit vehicles and infrastructure (12.2%) as the top priorities.

- Service levels

Survey participants were asked to consider whether they would be willing to pay more in property taxes to maintain or increase various service levels. Participants were asked to select up to three services.

Road and sidewalk maintenance received the most votes, by an overwhelming majority, followed by public transit, road and sidewalk snow clearing, multi-use pathways and trail maintenance and development, and libraries.

Survey participants were also asked where a reduced level of service could be considered should the City needed to reallocate funding to support the services selected above. Participants were asked to select up to three services. Cultural facilities and programs accounted for nearly a third of all responses followed by by-law enforcement.

Pop-up events

Two in-person pop-up events were held – one on August 7th at Springer Market Square and one on September 13th at the Princess Street Promenade. Participants had the opportunity to talk with and ask questions of the City's Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer and Finance staff and to participate in different interactive activities.

The Princess Street Promenade event was one of the most successful budget engagement initiatives to date, with line-ups at the booth to participate in the activities. Exhibit A provides illustrations of the resulting interactive activity boards, as well as additional comments submitted by visitors at the in-person events.

Similar to the survey question discussed above, participants were asked to provide input on how they would rate the value received for their tax dollars. Similar patterns emerged at the pop-up events, where the majority of ratings were fair to good. Exhibit A provides illustrations of this interactive activity board.

The second in-person pop-up activity provided participants the opportunity to allocate budget resources across competing priorities. Participants were given three green stickers to place on the activity board where they felt Council should increase investment in various City services and strategic priorities and three red stickers where they felt investment could be reduced. More than 1,600 stickers were placed on the activity boards during the two pop-up events.

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Service areas and priorities were summarized under four main categories:

- Getting around;
- Enforcement and Emergency Services;
- Life in the community;
- Kingston's 2023-2026 Strategic Priorities.

The top three areas chosen for increased investment, based on the estimated total number of stickers were:

- Support housing affordability (190)
- Public transit (88)
- Road and sidewalk maintenance and replacement (83)

The top three areas chosen for reduced investment, based on the estimated total number of stickers were:

- By-law enforcement (161)
- Police services (122)
- Drive inclusive economic growth (68)

Exhibit A provides illustrations of these interactive activity boards.

Ideas Tool

To encourage creative cost saving measures, staff used the "Ideas tool" feature on the Get Involved Kingston Budget page to gather suggestions for service changes that could improve efficiency or reduce costs. Participants could view, comment on, and 'like' posted ideas.

The Get Involved Kingston Ideas Tool generated thirteen ideas for service changes, only some of which aimed at improving efficiency or achieving cost savings. These ideas are detailed in Exhibit A with themes supporting increased revenue opportunities, reductions in current service levels and prioritization of asset management investment.

Feedback

Demonstrating that participant feedback provides input to the budget process is an essential part of the engagement process. Survey results and engagement input were compiled and shared with relevant departments for consideration in the 2026 budget process and many

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priorities and themes have been incorporated into the Mayor's proposed 2026 budget that will be tabled under the Strong Mayor Powers legislation.

Future engagement strategies

Additional survey questions focused on the respondent's familiarity with the city's budgets, how budgets impact property taxes and what tools would be most useful in learning more about how the City spends its dollars. 80% of respondents indicated that they were somewhat or very familiar with the city's budgets and their impact on property taxes. When asked how they prefer to learn more about the City's budget processes, the most common choices were budget-highlight newsletters, infographics and fact sheets, and online information sessions. This information will be used to inform future budget engagement plans and ongoing budget communications.

Staff previously recommended adopting a year-round approach to information sharing, outreach, and education. Despite a slow start this year, this strategy remains the intended focus for future engagement initiatives, while continuing to align with the City's planning and budgeting cycles. This will also allow for broadening our reach to different demographic groups such as local youth and the business community.

Existing Policy/By-Law

[Municipal Act, 2001](#), s. 290(1) as it pertains to the annual budgeting process.

[City of Kingston Public Notice Policy](#)

Notice Provisions

There is no legislated notice provision related to the budget engagement process.

Financial Considerations

None

Contacts:

Lana Foulds, Director, Financial Services & Deputy Treasurer, 613-546-4291 extension 2209

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Autumn Hulme, Communications Officer, Communications and Customer Experience

Kelsey Pye, Communications Officer, Communications and Customer Experience

Exhibits Attached:

Exhibit A – 2026 Budget Engagement Results

2026 Budget Engagement Results

Budget engagement survey

The budget engagement survey was launched on August 6th on the Get Involved Kingston platform. The survey was accessible online, by phone, and via email. The survey closed on November 2nd with 374 participants completing the survey (531 in 2024, 151 in 2023 and 450 in 2022).

The following provides a summary of highlights from the survey responses. Comments have been condensed for clarity, and any feedback that did not meet the City of Kingston’s Guidelines for Participation has been excluded from the tables.

1. In 2025, the average residential property valued at \$328,100 paid \$4,174 in property taxes for all municipal services, including roads, sidewalks, pathways and trails, winter control, fire, police, recreation, parks, transit, garbage and recycling. How would you rate the overall value received for your tax dollars?

Response	Number of Respondents	2025 Response %	2024 Response %
Excellent	21	5.6%	5.6%
Good	140	37.4%	33.5%
Fair	137	36.6%	34.5%
Poor	74	19.8%	24.9%
Skipped or prefer not to answer	2	0.6%	1.5%
Total	374	100.0%	100.0%

2. What tools would you find most useful in learning more about how the City budgets and spends its money? Check all that apply.

Response	Number of Respondents	Response percentage
Email newsletters with budget highlights	260	29.6%
Infographics or fact sheets	235	26.8%
Online information sessions	141	16.1%
Social media posts	99	11.3%
Short videos	77	8.8%
In-person open houses	64	7.3%
Skipped question	2	0.0%
Total	878	100.0%

3. An asset is anything the City of Kingston owns and maintains, this includes everything from sidewalks and roads to parks and recreation facilities like arenas and pools. Over the next few years the City will need to prioritize investment in maintaining the assets we currently own. Which types of municipal assets do you believe should be prioritized most for improvement or maintenance in our community? Please select up to three.

Response	Number of Respondents	Response percentage
Roads and bridges	248	23.9%
Sidewalks	163	15.7%
Transit – buses, bus stops, and shelters	127	12.2%
Parks	115	11.1%
Libraries	91	8.8%
Pathways and trails	77	7.4%
Recreational facilities – aquatics and fitness centres	67	6.5%
Community Centres	44	4.2%
Cultural facilities (museums, Grand Theatre)	39	3.8%
Recreational facilities - arenas	23	2.2%
Sports fields	19	1.8%
Other *	28	2.4%
Total	1,038	100%

*Additional comments under the “Other” category:

- Sewer and water
- Safe cycling infrastructure, including repairs to existing roads and bike lanes
- Conservation of green spaces including waterfront land
- Natural spaces, trails, paths, and parks
- Affordable housing and shelter system
- Airport
- Expansion of public housing
- Additional safe consumption sites
- Improvements to waste collection
- Emergency services (fire, police, and ambulance)
- Renewable energy generation
- Childcare management system

4. Thinking about the services below, which ones would you be willing to pay more in property taxes to maintain or increase the service? Select up to three.

Response	Number of Respondents	Response percentage
Road and sidewalk maintenance	159	18.2%
Public transit	90	10.3%
Road and sidewalk snow clearing	84	9.6%
Multi-use pathways and trail maintenance and development	84	9.6%
Libraries	82	9.4%
By-law enforcement	64	7.3%
Indoor recreation facilities	49	5.6%
Cultural programs and events	39	4.5%
Garbage collection	38	4.4%
Outdoor recreation facilities	32	3.7%
Recreation programs and events	32	3.7%
Rideaucrest Home for the Aged	31	3.6%
Cultural Facilities	27	3.1%
Other *	61	7.0%
Total	872	100%

*Additional comments under the “Other” category:

- No tax increases
- Stop spending on non-essentials
- Parks – specifically tree planting
- Increased police presence
- Increased by-law enforcement
- Support for the unhoused and vulnerable populations
- Climate emergency support
- Green energy transition
- Increased road repair
- Another municipal pool
- Bike paths, parking, and lock stations
- Infrastructure projects to mitigate combined sewer overflows
- Off-lease dog conservation areas
- Airport
- Temporary housing and homeless shelters
- Road and sidewalk maintenance, including snow clearing
- Emergency services (police, fire, and ambulance)
- Increased traffic and speed enforcement

5. If the City needed to reallocate funding to support the services selected above, which services could be considered for a reduced level of service? Select up to three.

Response	Number of Respondents	Response percentage
Cultural programs and events	149	16.8%
Cultural Facilities	135	15.2%
By-law enforcement	110	12.4%
Outdoor recreation facilities	85	9.6%
Multi-use pathways and trail maintenance and development	72	8.1%
Recreation programs and events	69	7.8%
Indoor recreation facilities	65	7.3%
Libraries	41	4.6%
Rideaucrest Home for the Aged	36	4.1%
Public transit	28	3.2%
Garbage collection	22	2.5%
Road and sidewalk maintenance	19	2.1%
Road and sidewalk snow clearing	15	1.7%
Other *	42	4.7%
Total	888	100%

*Additional comments under the “Other” category:

- New homeless shelters
- Road maintenance and snow removal
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Road signage
- Weekly garbage collection
- Advertising and marketing
- Heritage designations
- Police - enforcement
- Dedicated bike lanes
- Removing subsidies to economic development and tourism
- Sell theatre and museums
- Administration overall staffing levels
- Recreation and cultural activities
- Reduction of development incentives
- Policy
- New trails
- Splash pads
- Arenas

6. I am completing this survey as a:

Response	Number of Respondents	Response percentage
Property owner	287	72.3%
Tenant	73	18.4%
Business owner	27	6.8%
Non-resident	4	1.0%
Skipped question	6	1.5%
Total	397	100.0%

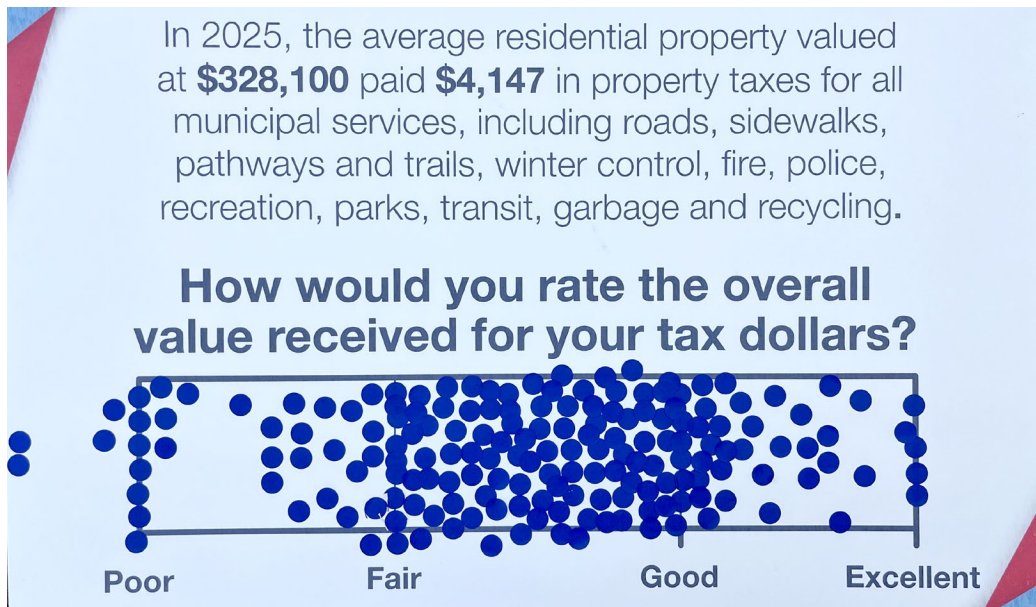
7. How familiar are you with the city's budgets and how they impact your property taxes?

Response	Number of Respondents	Response percentage
Very familiar	99	26.5%
Somewhat familiar	199	53.2%
Not very familiar	75	20.1%
Skipped question	1	0.2%
Total	374	100.0%

In-person pop-up events

Two in-person pop-ups were held – one at Springer Market Square and one at September Princess Street Promenade.

At both events, participants were asked to provide input by placing a sticker on a display board indicating how they would rate the value received for their tax dollars. The results are illustrated below:



As a second activity, participants were asked to consider how they would balance competing priorities by determining where budget dollars should be spent. They were given three green stickers and three red stickers and asked to place the green stickers on areas where they would like to see an increase in spending in order to increase the quality or quantity of service, or accelerate the progress of the strategic priority, and the red stickers on areas where they would like to see a reduction in spending. Participants were asked to use both their red and green stickers in order to “balance the budget”.

More than 1600 stickers were placed on City services and strategic priorities.

The top three areas of increased investment (green stickers) were:

- Support housing affordability (190)
- Public Transit (88)
- Road and sidewalk maintenance and replacement (83)

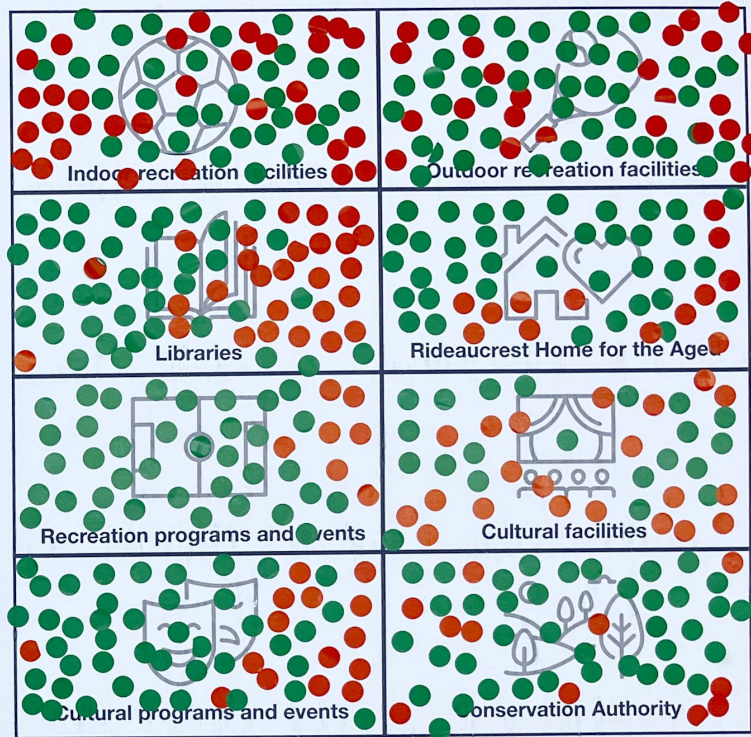
The top three areas of reduced investment (red stickers) were:

- By-law enforcement (161)
- Police services (122)
- Drive inclusive economic growth (68)

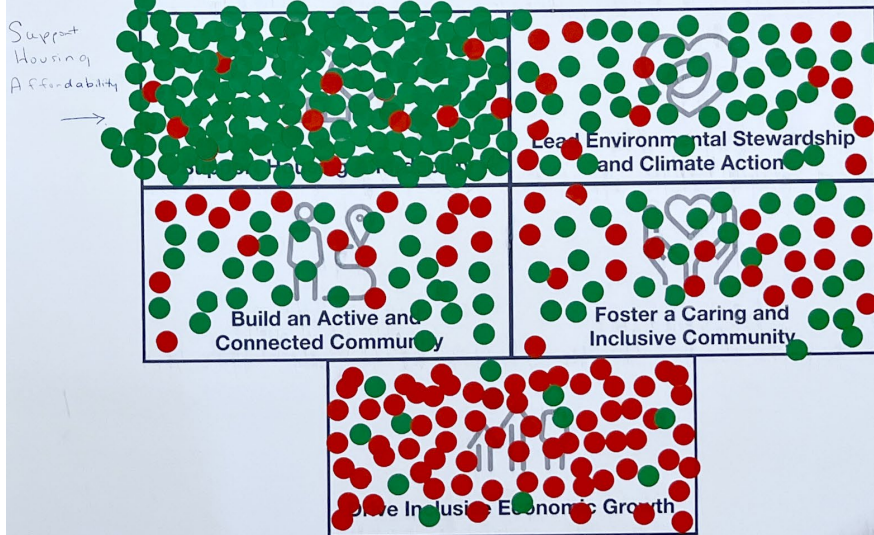
The results are illustrated below:



Life in the community



Kingston's 2023-2026 Strategic Priorities



The following are additional comments submitted by attendees at the in-person events, through discussion with staff and/or by filling out a comment card.

- Increase sidewalk snow clearing
- Better public transit
- Better and wholistic supports for the unhoused near the Memorial Centre
- No waterpark
- Clean sidewalks and pathways
- Increase property taxes and parking fines to support free transit
- Focus on the homeless and hungry
- More plants and trees
- Increased smoke-free by-law enforcement
- Implement a parking grace period for expired tickets
- Additional traffic police for speed control
- Increased recycling and garbage bins around downtown
- More bike racks in many areas throughout the city
- Spend more on sidewalk and bike path maintenance
- Enforce event recycling
- No Wellington Street extension
- Bring back buses to stops around Queen's community housing
- Pick different sticker colours in engagement activities for those with colour deficiencies

Quick poll

The Get Involved Kingston 2026 Budget engagement page had a “Quick Poll” question that supplemented the survey question and the pop-up engagement activity on overall value received for property tax dollars.

There was a total of 203 votes submitted through the “Quick Poll” question.

Response	Number of Respondents	Response percentage
Excellent	8	3.9%
Good	53	26.1%
Fair	75	36.9%
Poor	67	33.1%
Total	203	100.0%

Ideas Tool

As part of the 2026 budget engagement, the City used the “Ideas Tool” on the Get Involved Kingston Budget page to ask the following question: Are there any services you receive from us that could be reduced or changed in some way to save on costs or become more efficient?

This interactive feature allowed participants to share ideas. Others could see the ideas submitted and could comment on an idea or show their support by “liking” their favourite ones. Thirteen suggestions were received, summarized below, with twenty-two responses in total.

- Implement paid parking on all streets or reduce road and street widths to reduce costs
- Let parks go wild. Don't cut grass.
- Less bike lanes and special crossings
- Increase bike/cycling network

- Stop unnecessary repaving of certain streets
- Make all traffic signals smart to make travel time more efficient
- Don't invest in developing lands outside the urban boundaries. Invest in asset management of existing assets
- Sync traffic signals on Highway 15
- Consider parking reform – increased metering with scalable rates based on vehicle and park space size
- Develop Cataraqui West community park to provide the outdoor recreational space needed. Also, consider increased cricket fields throughout the city
- Preserve and improve what we have – prioritize maintenance of public parks over new additions
- Ensure walkways and pathways are accessible
- Don't invest in seasonal, high-impact commercial attractions but use monies to support park and pathway accessibility, signage, landscaping, and repairs