

## 2020 Draft Budget - Public Input

### RECOMMENDATION:

None.

### **PREVIOUS COUNCIL/COMMITTEE ACTION**

January 7, 2020 – Committee of Council

*That Committee of Council:*

1. *Approve the corporate workplans for 2020; and*
2. *Authorize staff to issue to draft operating budget for public consultation.*

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report describes the community's response to the 2020 Budget at a Glance brochure, which was mailed to every home and business to obtain feedback on the draft budget. The general themes of the 971 responses received were consistent with the past few years with respondents most satisfied with fire services and parks and least satisfied with traffic control and road conditions.

A lot has changed in the environment since the end of the survey period on March 2, 2020. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in emergent priorities that were not contemplated at the time the survey was prepared. As such, this report captures information historically and does not speak to the impact of the City's COVID-19 response. The public input is being presented to Committee for consideration, but staff are not recommending any changes to the draft budget flowing from the public survey.

### **BACKGROUND**

In early February, the City mailed the 2020 Budget at a Glance brochure to every home and business to obtain feedback on the draft operating budget. The draft budget, which was approved on January 7, 2020 by Committee of Council, has the following impact for the average residential home.

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	2019	2020	\$ Change	% Change
Property Tax	\$1,932.43	\$1,941.76	\$9.33	0.48%
Parcel Tax	25.00	25	-	0.00%
Solid Waste	215.89	222.54	6.65	3.08%
Water	448.05	464.99	16.94	3.78%
Sewer	332.43	339.08	6.65	2.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,854.35</b>	<b>\$ 2,953.47</b>	<b>\$39.57</b>	<b>1.39%</b>

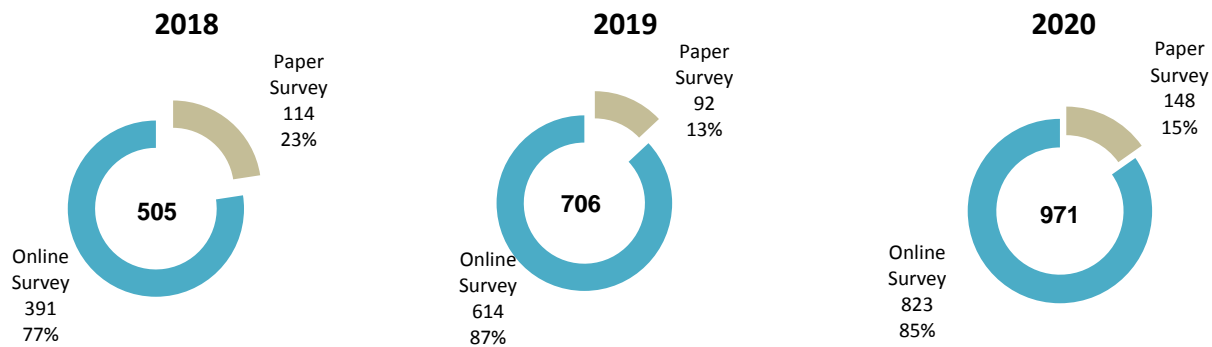
The budget public consultation period ended on March 2, 2020, with the City receiving 971 responses. Residents were asked for their input on a number of issues including:

- Satisfaction with service levels
- Service enhancements
- Service reductions
- Satisfaction with communication relating to the budget

Not everyone who responded answered each question or provided comments. However, all responses received have been provided to each department for further analysis and review.

### DISCUSSION

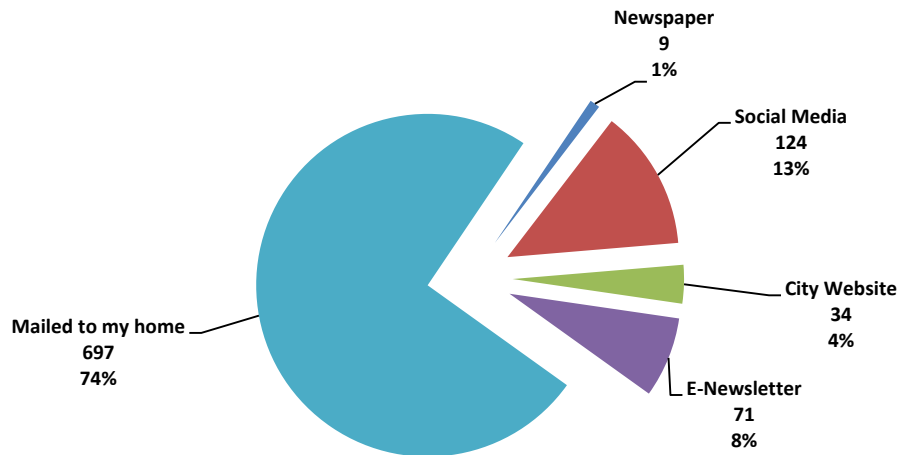
#### 1. How Many Responses?



The City received 971 responses in 2020 out of 25,601 mailed out, up from the 2019 total of 706. Consistent with previous years, most respondents completed the survey electronically as opposed to the paper survey.

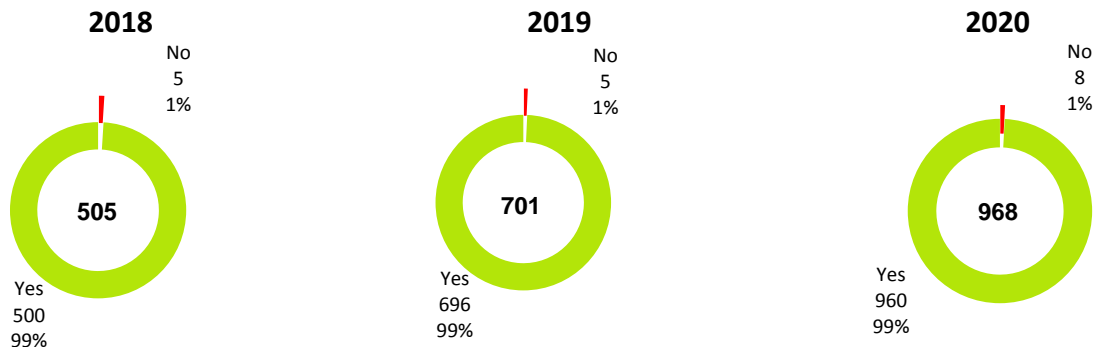
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### 2. How Did Respondents Learn About The Survey?



The City's practice of mailing the "Budget at a Glance" brochure to each home continues to be the primary channel by which respondents learned about the survey.

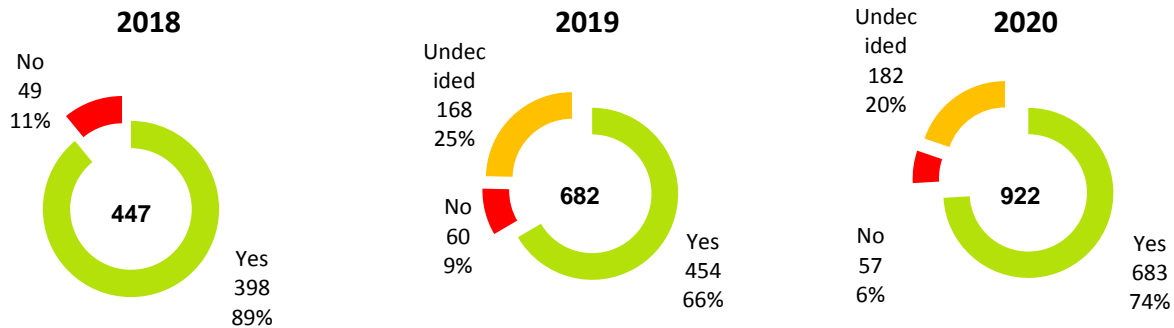
### 3. Are Respondents Port Coquitlam Tax Payers?



Consistent with prior years, nearly all feedback was received from Port Coquitlam residents and taxpayers.

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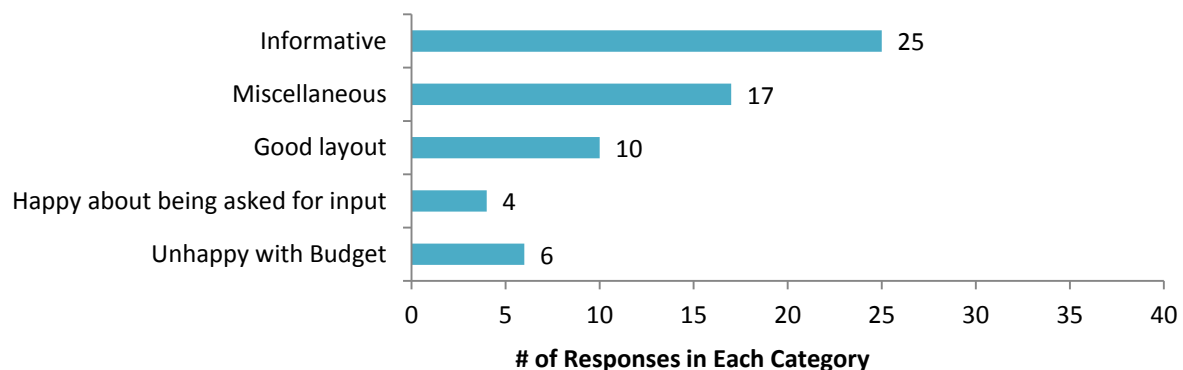
### 4. Are Respondents Satisfied With Budget Information?



Overall, the community continues to be satisfied with the effort the City is making to provide budget information, with 74% of respondents indicating they are satisfied with the budget information available to them. This represents an increase of 8% from the prior year. The budget information presented to the public was in the same format as prior years so it is difficult to assess what is causing the increase. In 2019 “undecided” was added as an option in response to resident feedback on previous surveys.

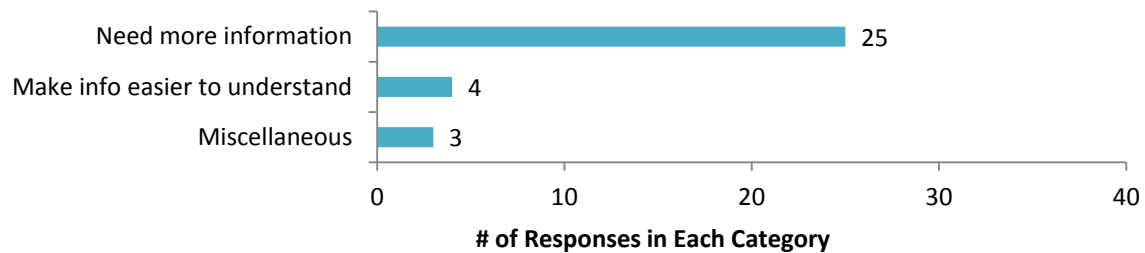
Of the 922 who answered this question, 144 provided comments broken down as follows:

#### Comments From People Who Are Satisfied With the Budget Information

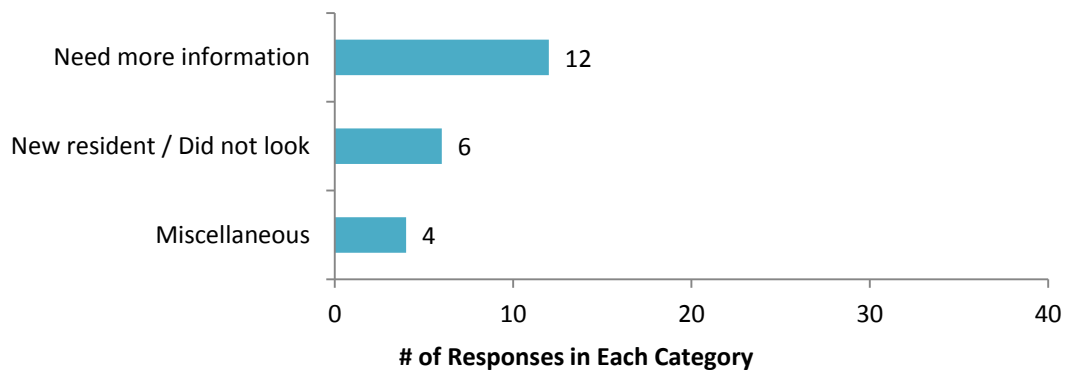


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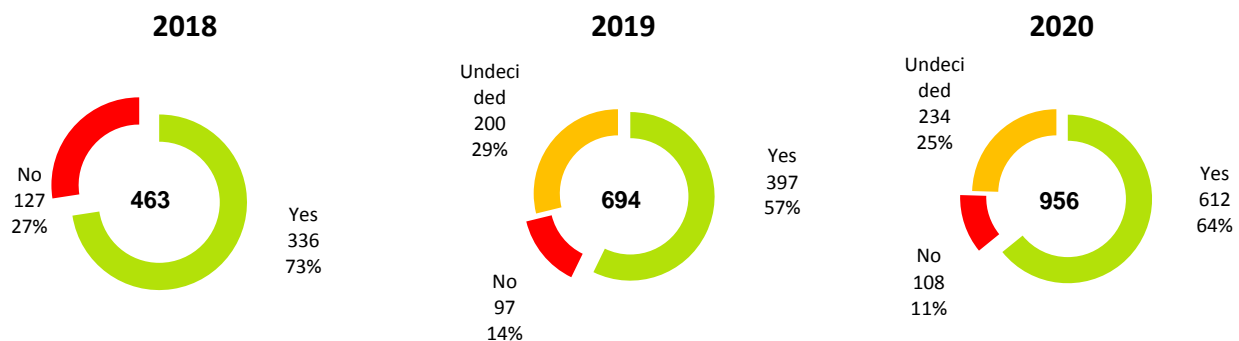
### Comments From People Who Are Not Satisfied With the Budget Information



### Comments From People Who Are Undecided



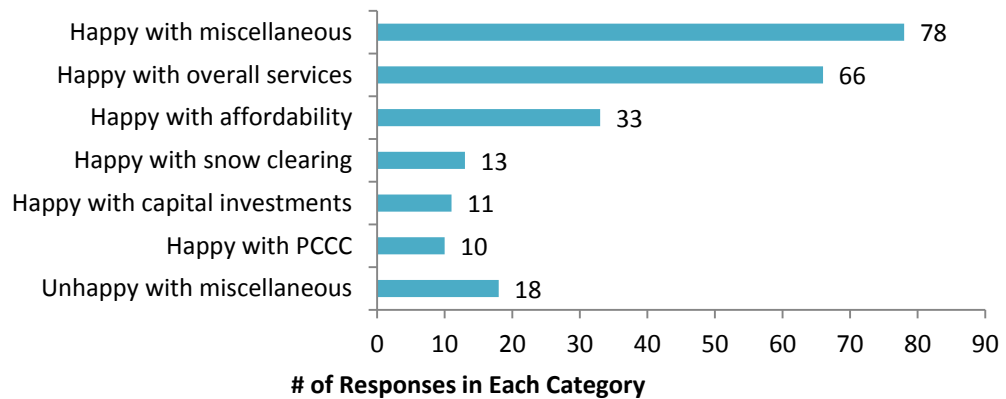
### 5. Do respondents feel they get value for their tax dollars?



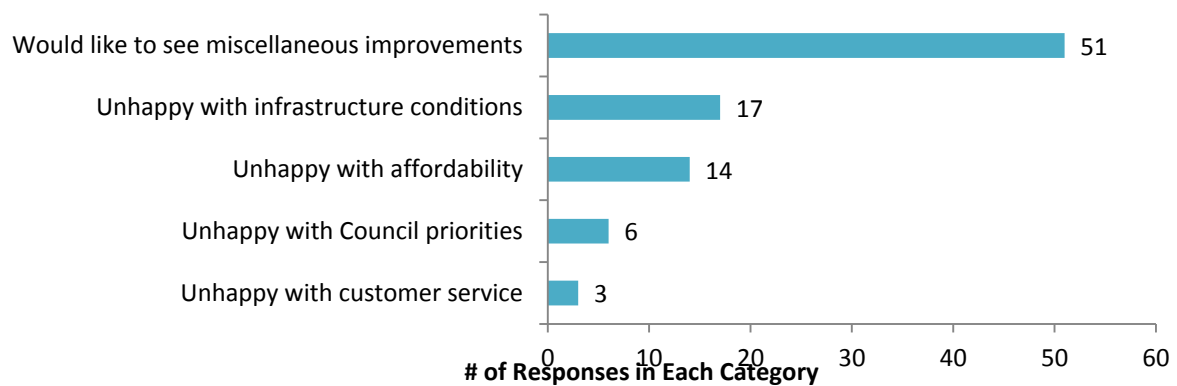
The City's focus on keeping things affordable with a tax rate of 0.48% seems to resonate with respondents; with 64% indicating they feel they get good value for their tax dollars. This represents an increase of 7% from the previous year. In 2019 "undecided" was added as an option in response to resident feedback on previous surveys. Of the 956 who answered this question, 336 provided comments broken down as follows:

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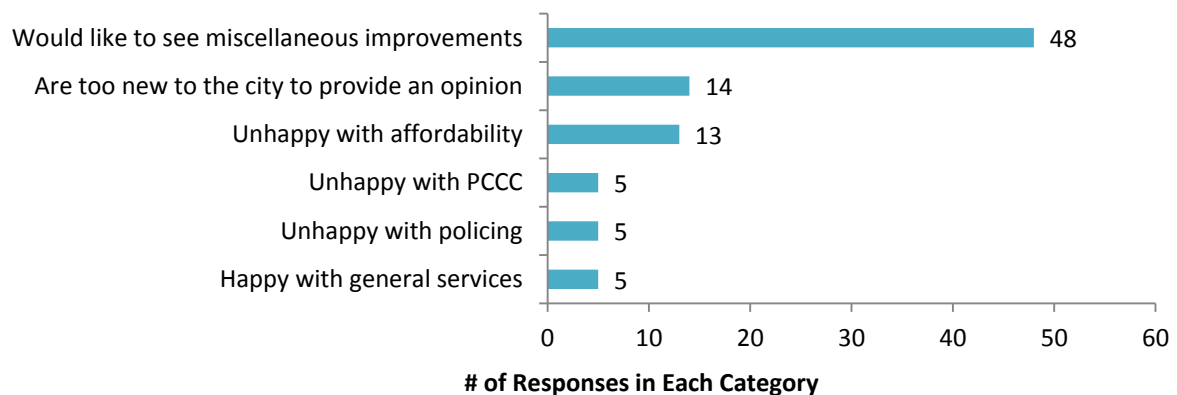
### Comments From People Who Answered Yes



### Comments From People Who Answered No



### Comments From People Who Answered Undecided



### 6. What Is the Overall Level of Satisfaction with City Services?

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with nine City services (listed in the table below). Available rating options were: “Needs Improvement”, “Meets Expectation”, “Exceeds Expectation”, and “Did Not Use”. The inclusion of “Did Not Use” is intended to be able to better filter the data, as historically people who have not used the service have still filled out a satisfaction level thereby skewing the results.

As with previous years, the options of “Needs Improvement”, “Meets Expectation”, and “Exceeds Expectation” were assigned a score from 3 to 1 respectively. Those that indicated “did not use” were not included in the calculation. The closer a service is to a score of 1, the more satisfied the respondent is with the service. The weighted average of each category response was calculated as shown in the table below.

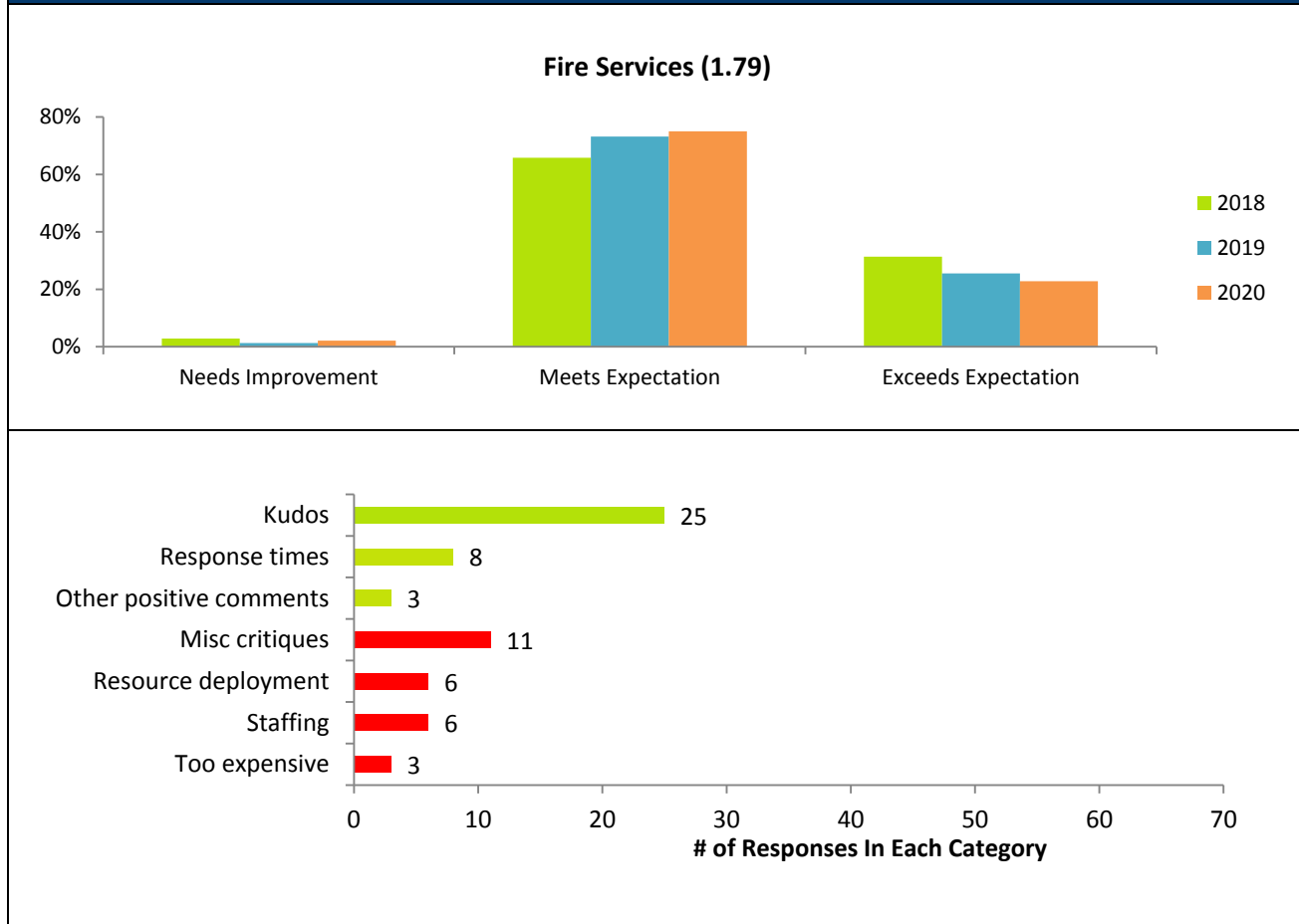
	2020 Ranking	2020 Score	2019 Ranking	2019 Score	Comparison to 2019
Fire Services	1	1.79	1	1.76	Worse
Parks and Trails	2	1.93	2	1.88	Worse
Garbage, Recycling and Green Cart	3	1.97	3	1.98	Better
Recreation and Culture	4	1.99	5	2.09	Better
Police Services	5	2.09	4	2.03	Worse
City Cleanliness and Attractiveness	6	2.13	6	2.18	Better
Business and Development	7	2.20	7	2.21	Better
Traffic Control	8	2.27	8	2.33	Better
Road Conditions	9	2.39	9	2.44	Better

All services, on average, met or exceeded expectations with Fire Services and Parks and Trails in the top two positions and Traffic Control and Road Conditions in the bottom two positions. With the exception of Recreation and Police which switched places, all other services retained their rankings from the previous year. It’s likely that the opening of the PCCC helped contribute to the improvement in satisfaction with Recreation. Five out of nine services showed a marginal increase in satisfaction when compared to 2019, with Fire, Parks and Trails and Police Services being the only ones to decrease.

Where respondents provided comments, some did not pertain to the question at hand and were excluded from the analysis of results. Additionally, in other cases a comment could touch on a number of items within a service category. In these instances, each distinct item mentioned in the comment was counted separately for the purpose of summarizing the number of responses.

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### Fire Services



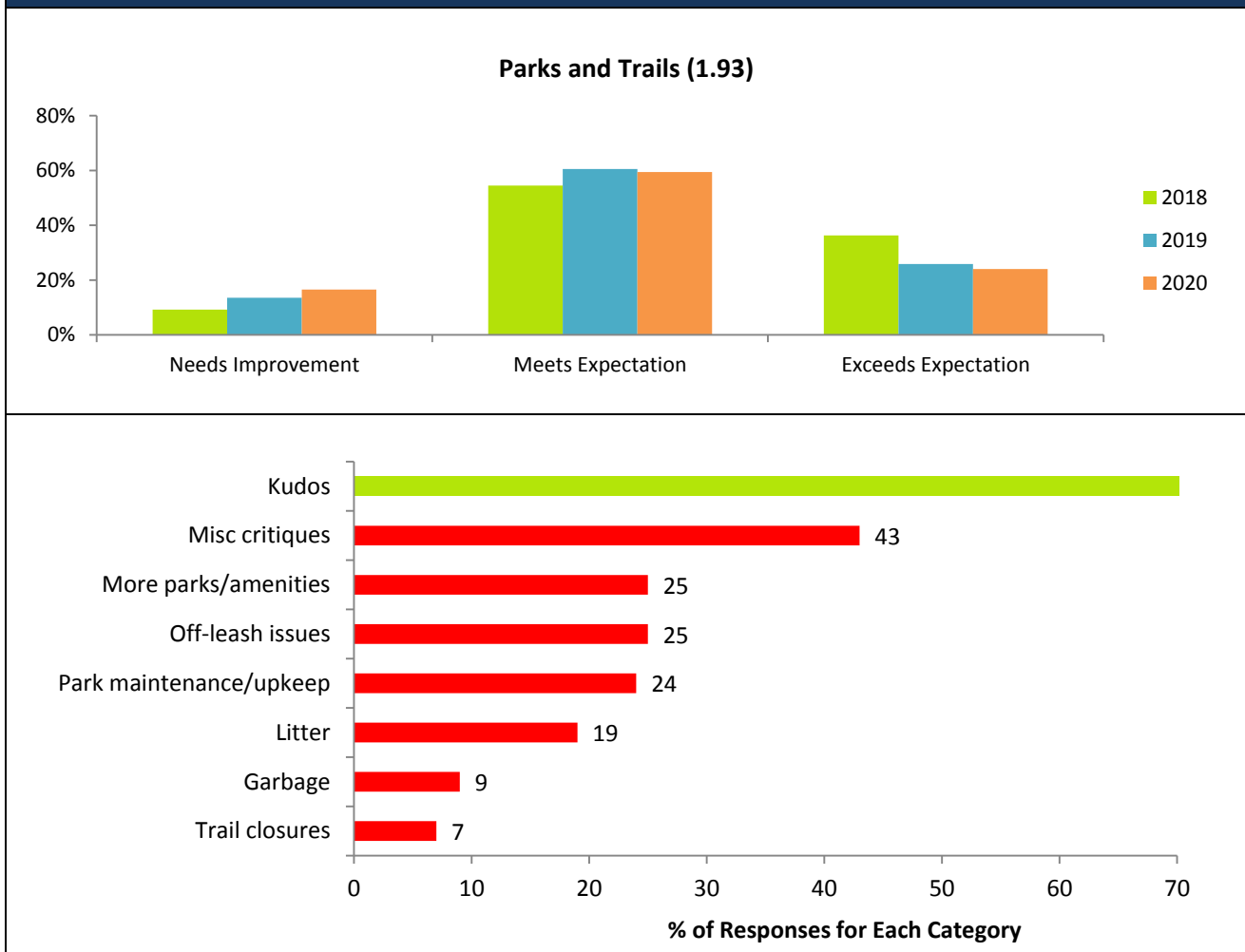
907 people answered this question, with 60 providing comments. Respondent satisfaction with Fire Services ranked highest out of the nine categories. Positive comments focused primarily on general appreciation for the work that fire personnel do, with specific positive feedback on responsiveness.

At 6 comments each, the areas most specifically cited for improvement were a desire for increased staffing, and looking at how resources are deployed (e.g. attendance at medical calls).



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### Parks and Trails

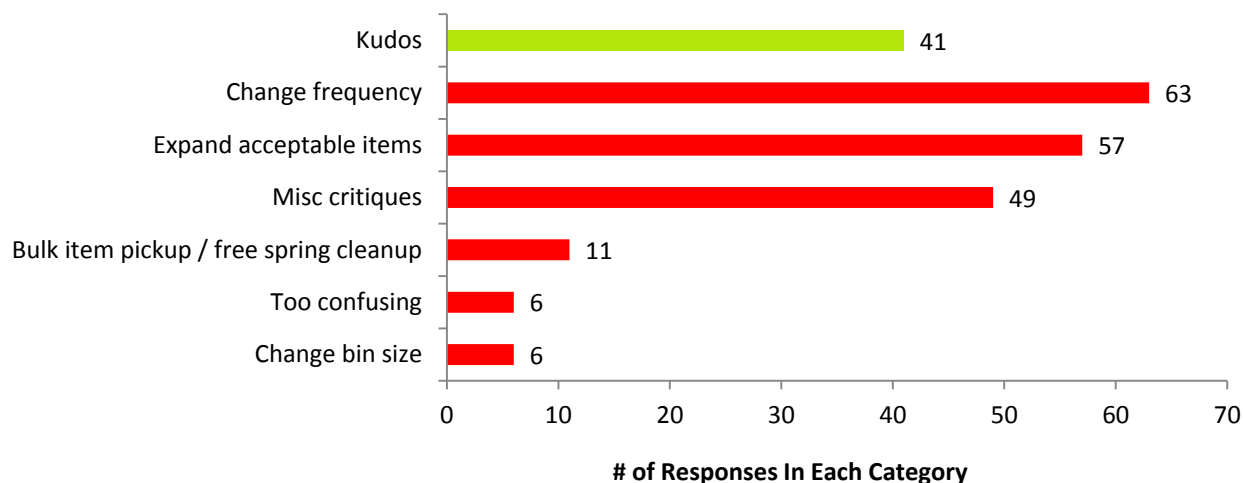
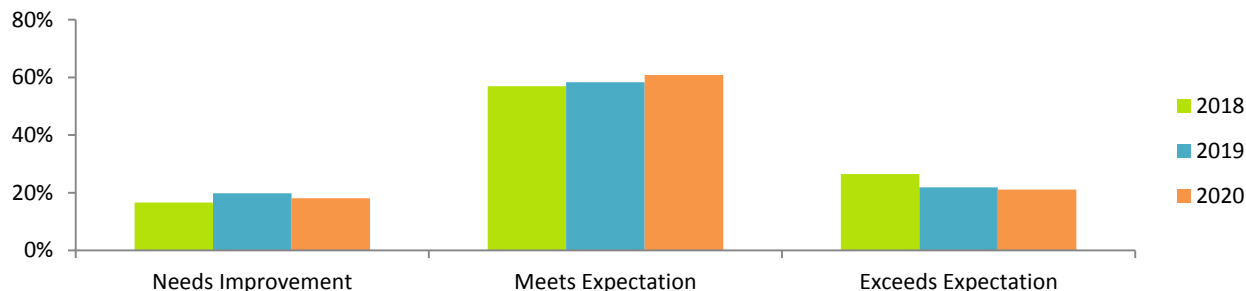


897 people answered this question, with 215 providing comments. Respondent satisfaction with Parks and Trails ranked second highest out of the nine categories with many positive comments about the beauty of our parks/trails and the benefit of being so close to nature.

At 25 comments, the areas most specifically cited for improvement were a desire for more parks or upgrades to existing amenities and concerns about off-leash dogs.

### Garbage, Recycling and Green Cart

Garbage, Recycling & Green Cart (1.97)



A total of 899 people answered this question, with 95 providing comments. Respondent satisfaction with garbage, recycling & green cart service ranked third highest out of the nine categories. Positive comments reflected feedback such as the timeliness of service and the ease of using the smart phone application.

At 63 responses, the most frequently cited comment was to change the frequency of pickup (primarily increase green waste to year round weekly). At 57 responses, the second most cited comment was to increase the types of items accepted by recycling (e.g. glass, plastics, Styrofoam).

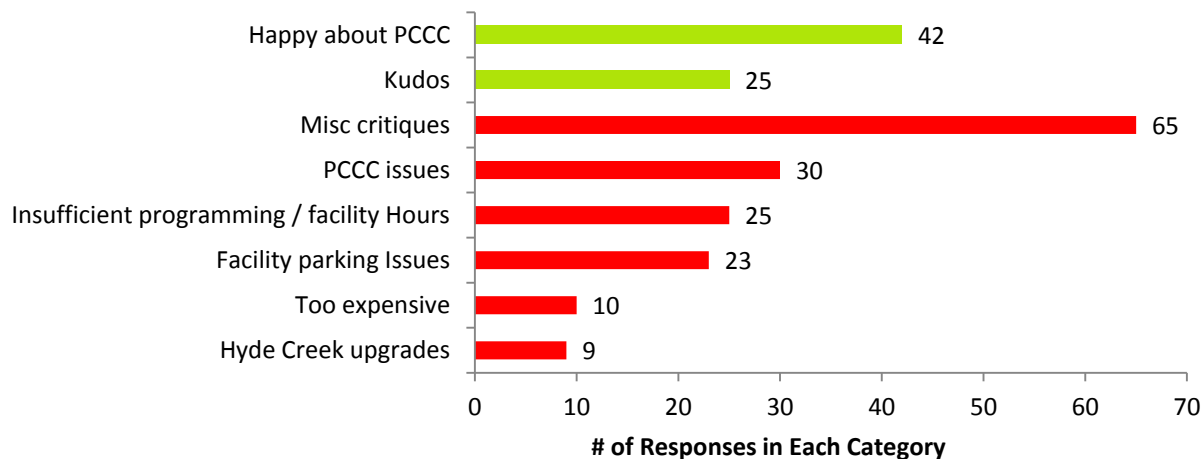
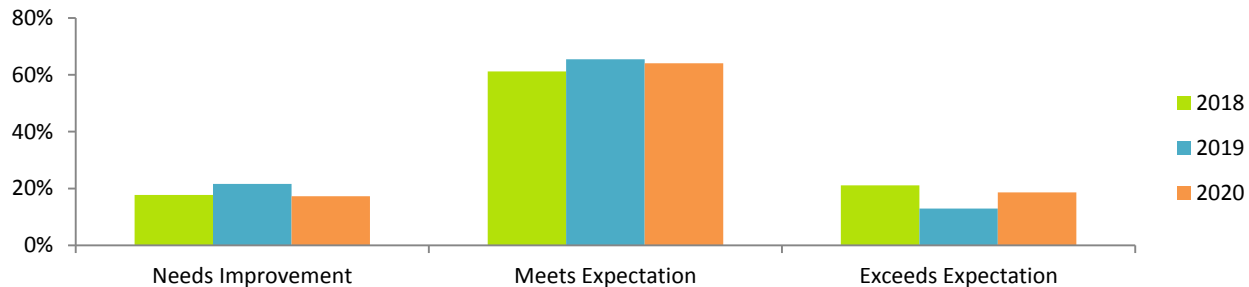
On March 24, 2020, Council approved the immediate implementation of weekly green waste pick up, prior to adoption of the 2020-2024 Financial Plan which addresses the feedback on this issue.

In response to the types of materials accepted in the curbside recycling program, this program is regulated by the province via a third party (Recycle BC) and the City unfortunately does not have the jurisdiction as to what materials are included in the program.

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### Recreation Services

Recreation Services (1.99)

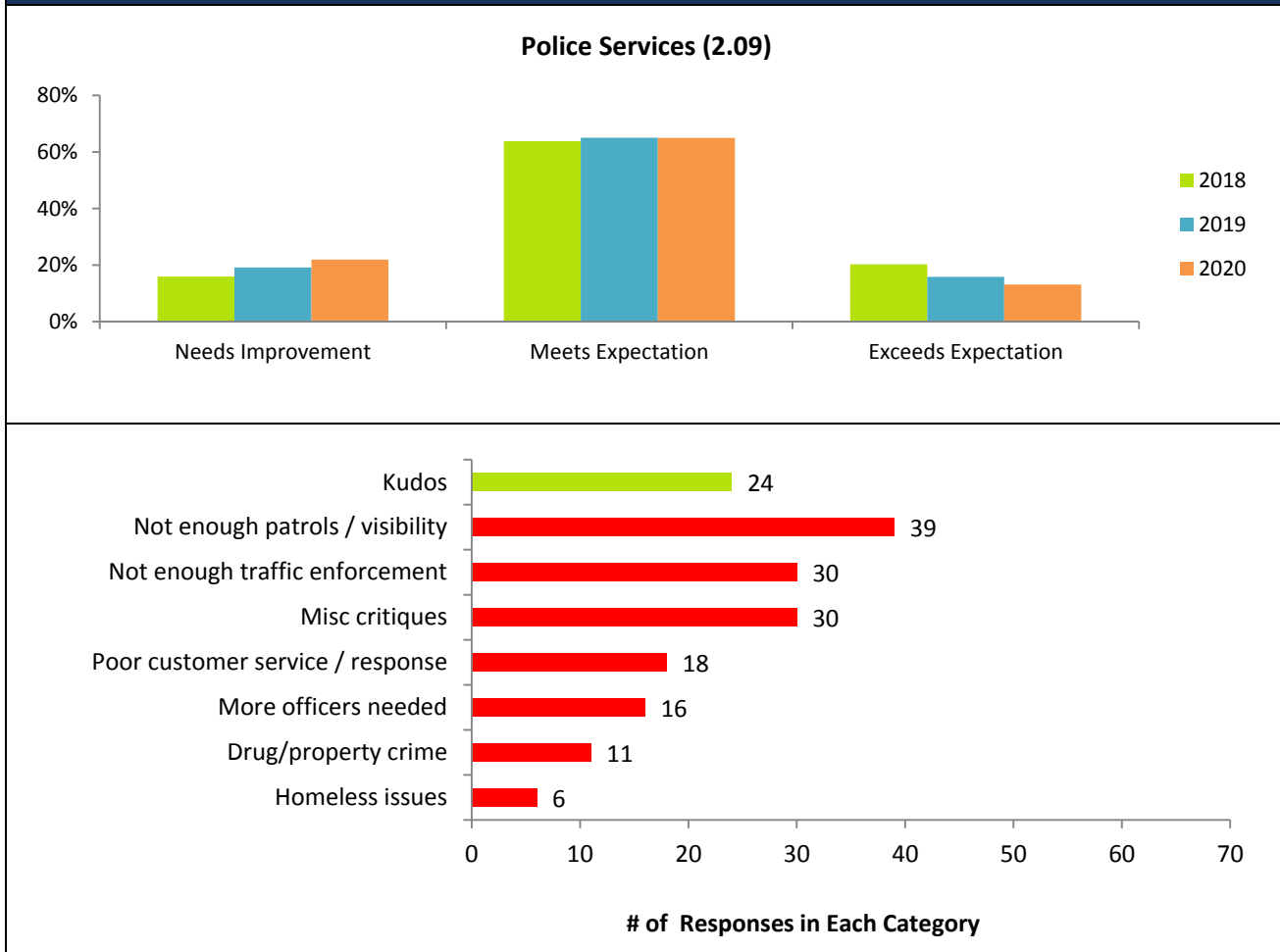


A total of 896 people answered this question, with 209 providing comments. Respondent satisfaction with recreation services ranked fourth highest out of the nine categories, up one spot from the previous year. 42 respondents expressed positive comments about the new Community Centre, 25 expressed positive comments about recreation services and facilities.

At 31 comments, the most cited specific area for improvement was PCCC (pool size, arena seating, etc.)

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### Police Services



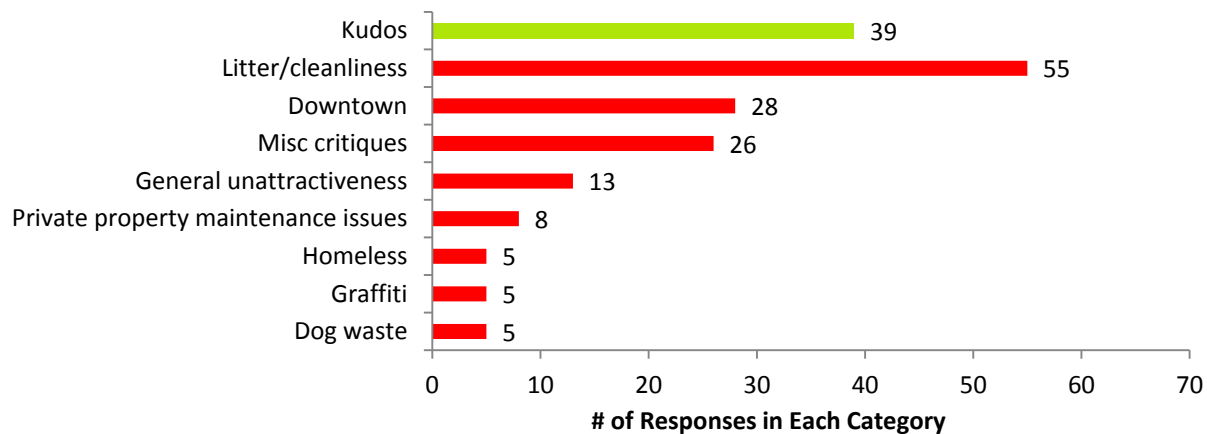
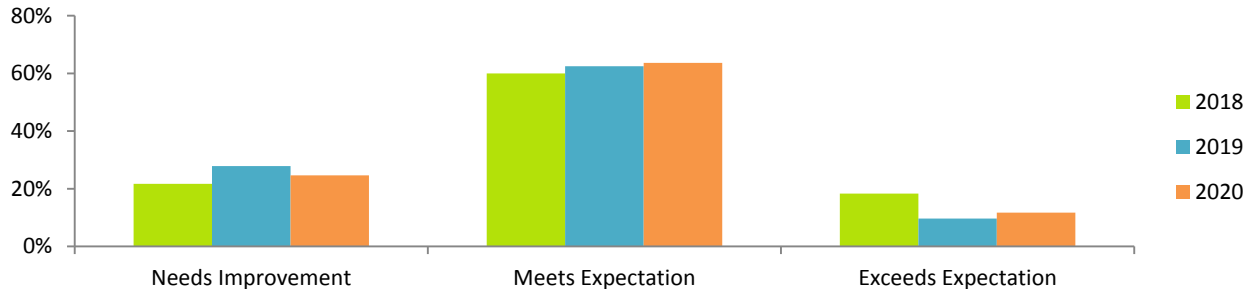
A total of 927 people answered this question, with 158 providing comments. Respondent satisfaction with police services ranked fifth highest out of the nine categories, down one spot from the prior year. Positive comments generally related to overall responsiveness when issues are reported as well as appreciation for a job well done.

At 39 comments, the most frequently cited complaint related to a desire for increased police presence (patrols) throughout the community. At 30 comments, the second most cited issue was insufficient traffic enforcement at major intersections, school zones and parks.

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### City Cleanliness & Attractiveness

City Cleanliness & Attractiveness (2.13)



A total of 904 people answered this question, with 218 providing comments. Respondent satisfaction with City cleanliness & attractiveness ranked sixth out of the nine categories. Positive comments typically focused on landscaping (gardens and flowers).

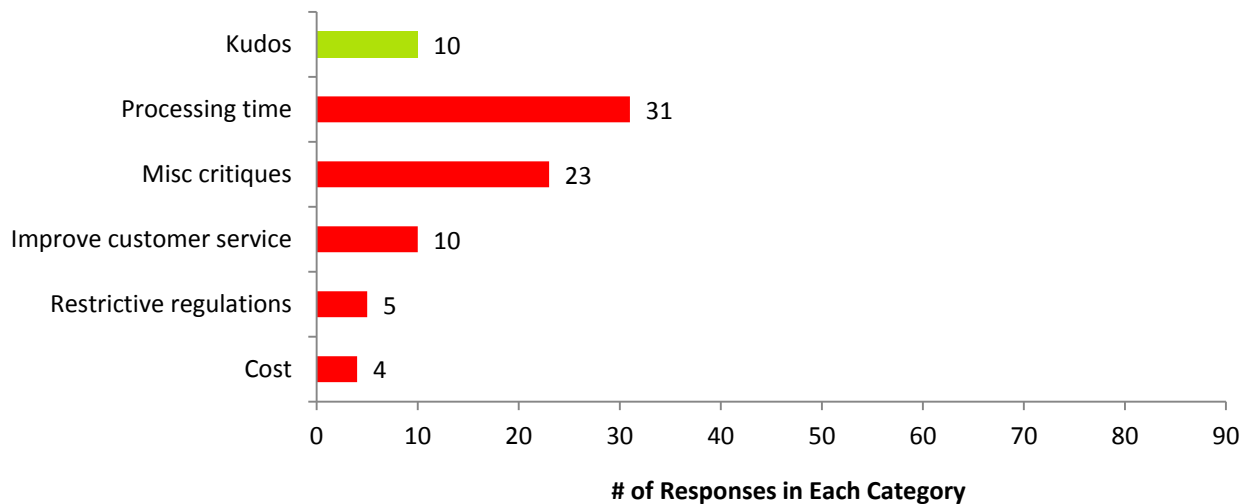
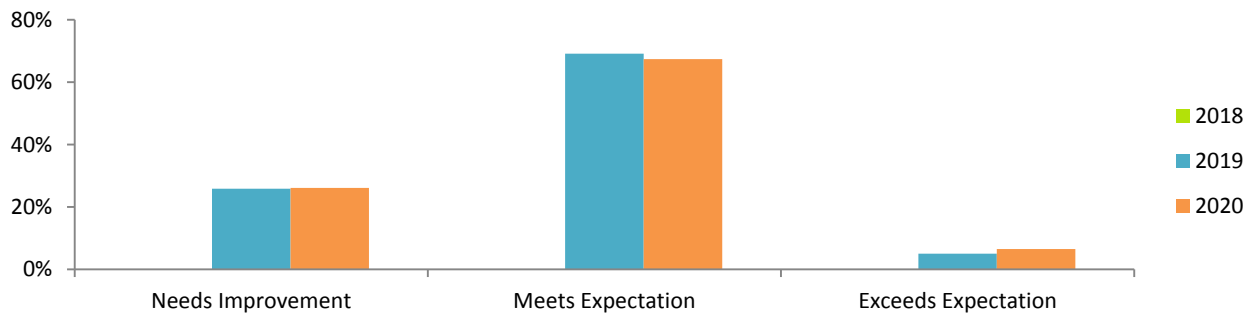
At 55 comments, the most often cited area for improvement related to cleanliness (e.g. too much trash/litter, general untidiness). The second most cited category, at 28 comments, related specifically to downtown (need for redevelopment, need to increase attractiveness, etc.).

The litter collection trial period was a big success and was well received by the community. The trial project ran 99 working days, over which time 186kg of material was collected. This equates to twenty eight 240L carts worth of candy wrappers, chip bags, papers, coffee cups and containers, 85% of which was recycled.

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### Business Licensing, Building Permit, and Development Services

#### Business and Development (2.20)



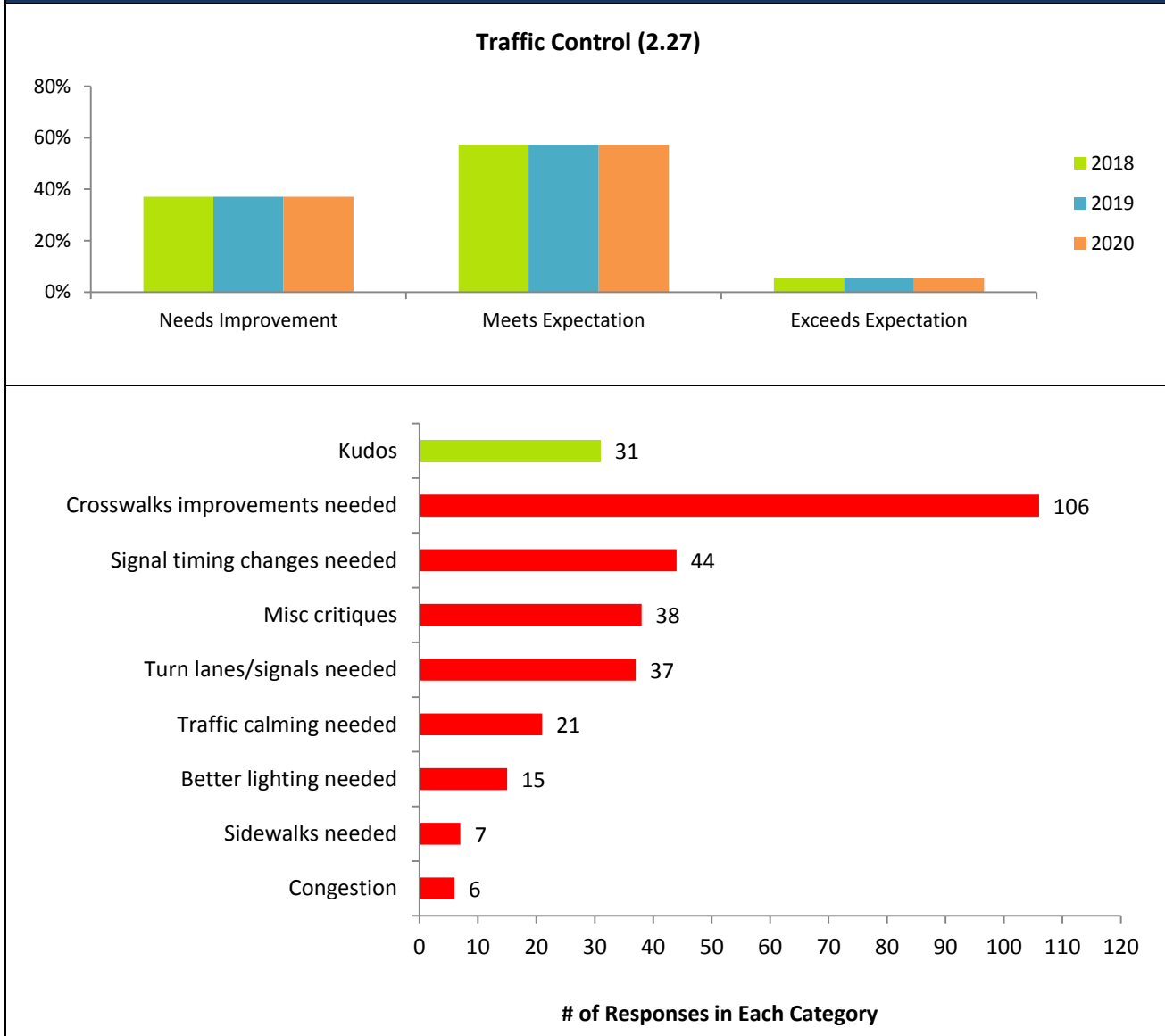
A total of 900 people answered this question, with 80 providing comments. Respondent satisfaction with business and development services ranked seventh out of the nine categories. Positive comments focused primarily on good customer service.

The addition of this category was new for 2019, and was changed slightly in 2020 to provide additional clarity by adding business licensing and building permits as part of the question. At 31 comments, the most cited area for improvement was the City's slow processing times.

Development Services processes are currently being reviewed for improvements in processing time to address this ongoing concern.

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### Traffic Control



A total of 944 people answered this question, with 302 providing comments. Respondent satisfaction with traffic control ranked second worst out of the eight categories. Positive comments related to recognition of some of the City's recent pedestrian safety improvements.

At 106 comments, the most often cited area for improvement related to insufficient pedestrian crossings and the need for lit pedestrian-controlled crossings. The second most specific category mentioned was timing of traffic signals at 40 comments.

The 2020 to 2022 capital plan addresses a number of these comments through the following programs:

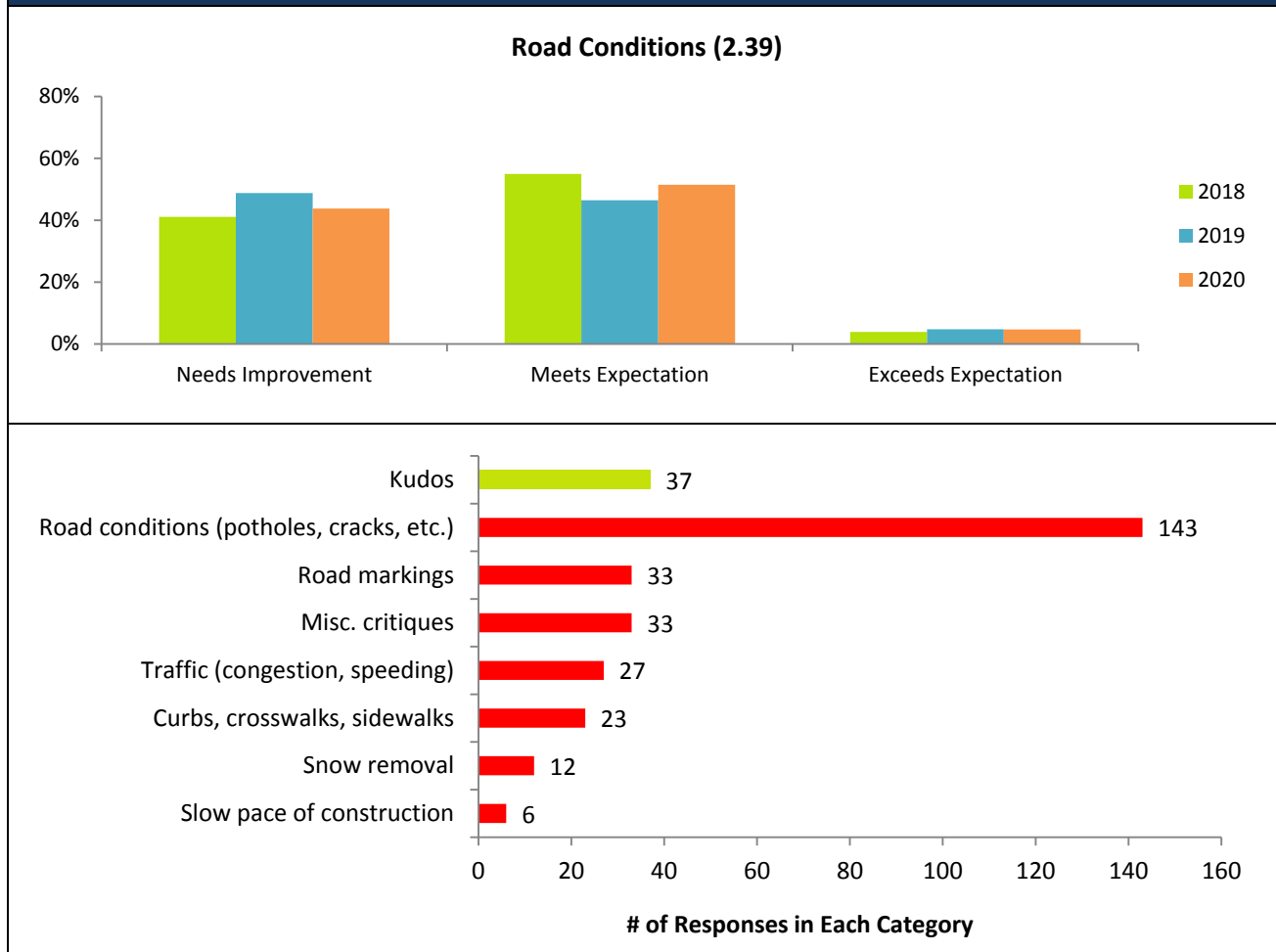
- Sidewalks and Pedestrian Safety:
  - 2020:
    - 5 pedestrian flashing beacons
    - 6 sidewalk projects (560m)
  - 2021:
    - 3 sidewalk projects (580m)
    - 3 pedestrian flashing beacons
- School & Park Road Safety Improvements
  - 2021:
    - 4 flashing pedestrian beacons
    - 20 raised crosswalks
  - 2022:
    - 8 flashing pedestrian beacons
    - 7 raised crosswalks
- Various neighbourhood traffic calming projects

In addition, traffic operations staff review signal timing on an annual basis following the collection of updated traffic volume data.



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### Road Conditions



A total of 945 people answered this question, with 329 providing comments. Positive comments generally expressed appreciation for snow clearing efforts over the winter.

At 143 comments, poor road conditions was the most cited area for improvement. At 33 comments, the second most cited area for improvement related to the desire to see improved street lighting and lane markings.

The timing of the budget survey, during the winter freeze/thaw cycle, will always lead to more comments about potholes and cracks than at other times in the year. Timing notwithstanding, the 2020/2021 capital plan includes unprecedented spending on road infrastructure rehabilitation. This \$52.7-million 2020-2021 capital plan represents Port Coquitlam's largest one-time investment to date in upgrades to neighbourhood infrastructure such as streets and utilities. Neighbourhood rehabilitation projects account for approximately half of this with over 10 lane-kilometers of improvements scheduled for 2020.

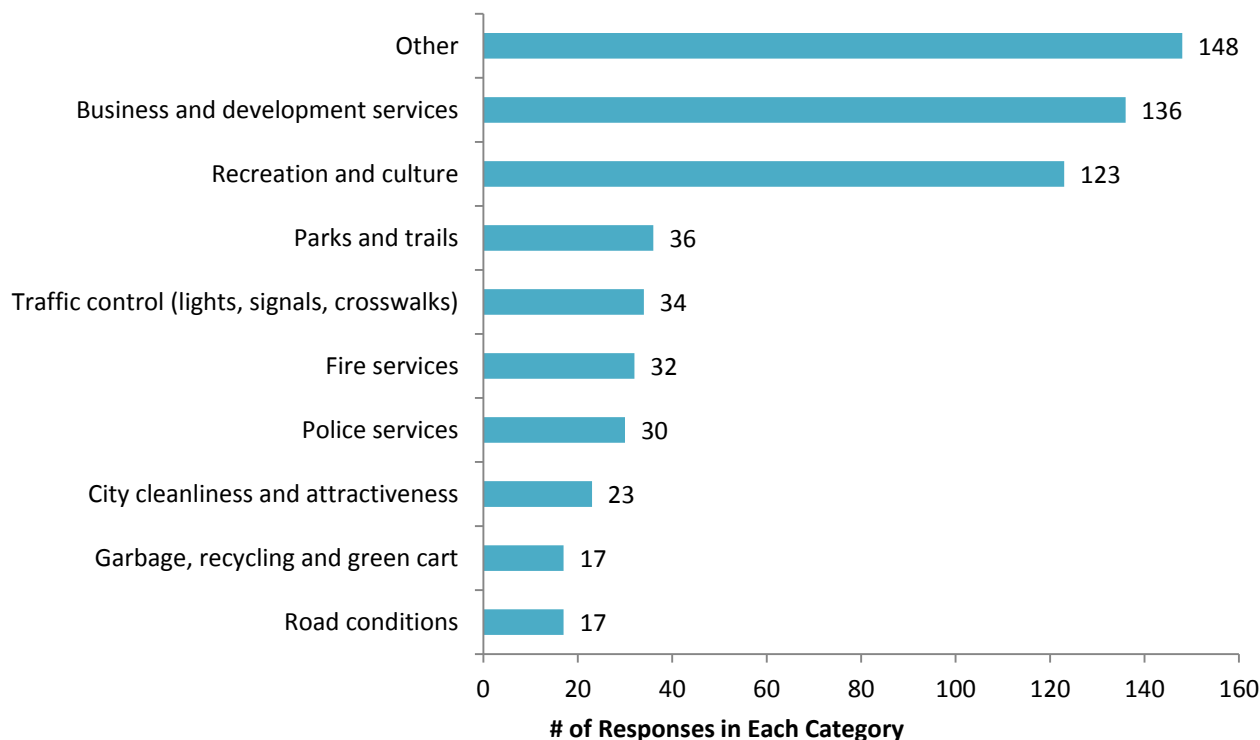
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Projects next year will include the final year of LED streetlight replacement along with new streetlight locations and a new lane paving program.

In addition the City applies approximately 55km of road markings per year. This ensures all painted road markings are refreshed annually; and all thermoplastic markings are refreshed every eight years.

### 7. What Service Would Respondents Trade for Lower Taxes?

Residents were asked about their interest in decreasing one of the nine services listed above if it would result in lower taxes/rates. They were also given the option of selecting “other”.



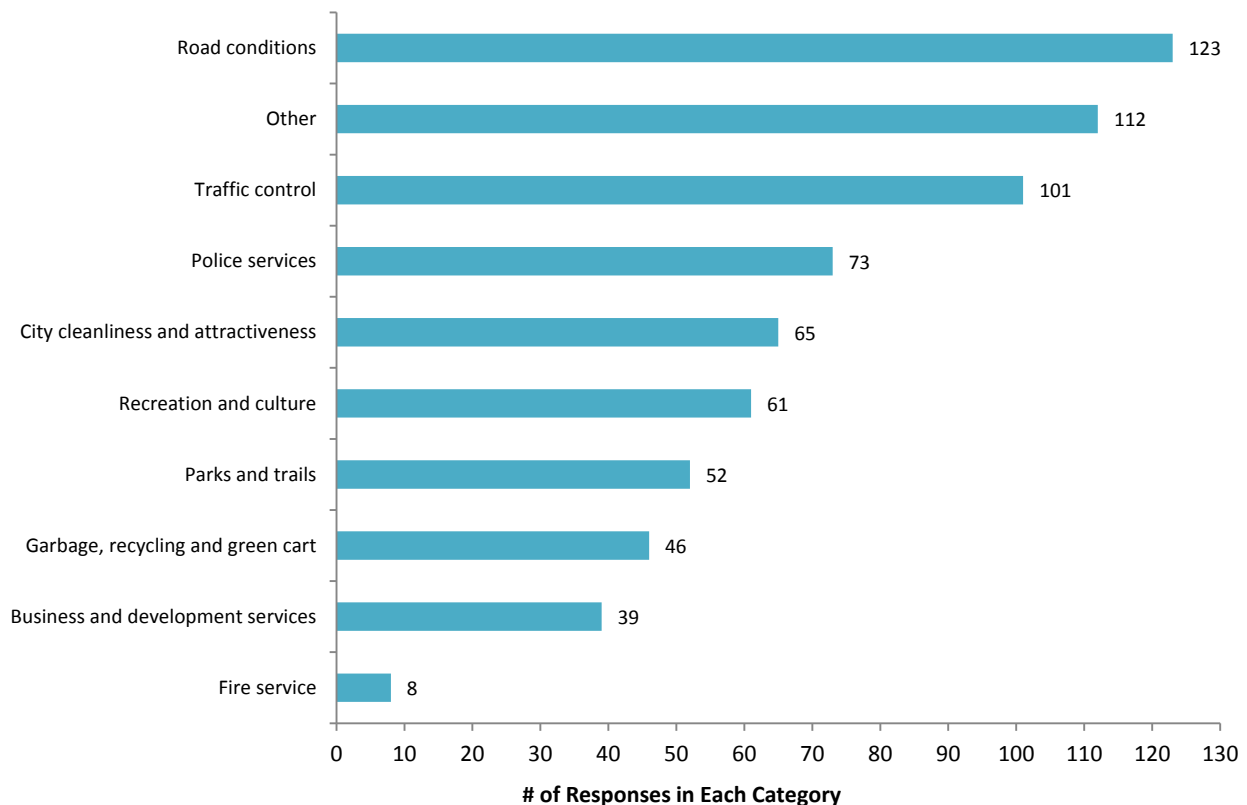
Of the 148 that marked “Other”, 70 provided comments with 29 stating they are comfortable with the level of taxation for the services provided, 8 did not want to reduce any services but instead wanted the City to reduce wages or find efficiencies, the remaining 34 provided a broad range of suggestions or did not know what to cut.

136 respondents selected “Business and Development Services” but of those, 92 answered “have not used” when previously asked about their level of satisfaction with the service. It is evident that

additional clarification of this service is required in future surveys in order to obtain better feedback from respondents.

### 8. What Service Would Respondents Pay to Improve?

Residents were asked about their interest in increasing or improving a service even if it may result in higher taxes. 680 respondents answered the question.

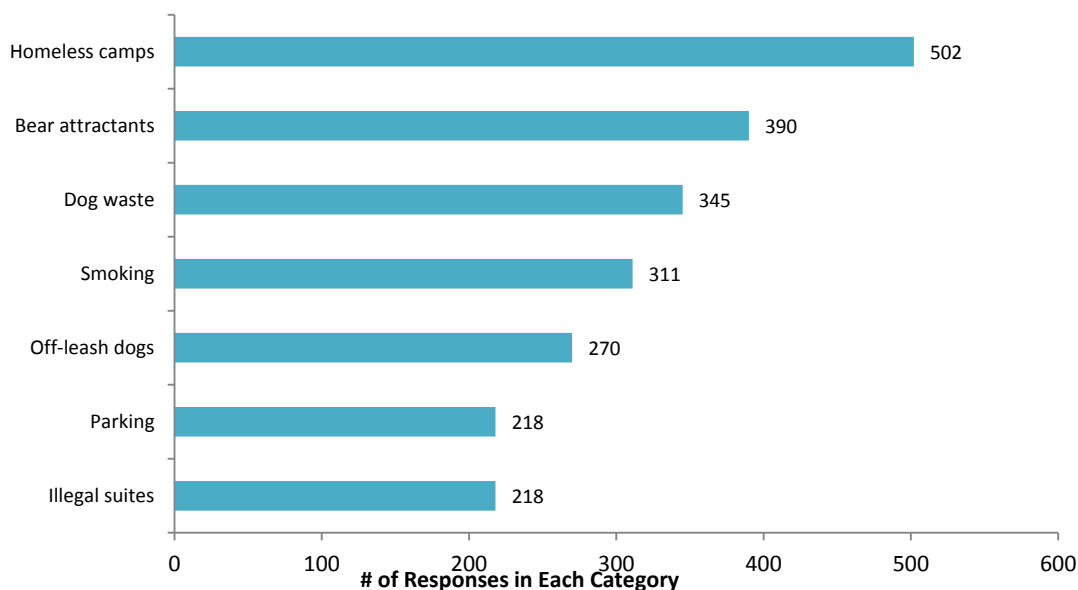


Consistent with comments seen in the section covering satisfaction with City services, the areas residents would be most comfortable spending money to enhance correspond to the areas most frequently cited as needing improvement (road conditions and traffic control).

Of the 112 that marked “Other”, 17 provided comments indicating they do not want an increase with the remainder providing an assortment of suggestions or did not know what to cut.

### 9. In What Areas Would Respondents Like to See More Bylaw Enforcement?

To help inform possible service levels for bylaw, residents were asked what areas they would like to see more enforcement. Respondents could select more than one category for their answer. 947 respondents answered the question, with 321 providing comments.



Of the comments, policing related issues (theft, drug use, traffic enforcement) was the most frequently commented on topic, followed closely by parking and then homeless issues. Staff are bringing forward a separate follow-up report specifically addressing the proposed bylaw services levels.

#### Analysis of Input

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data from the survey reveals the following themes:

##### Positive themes:

- 64% of respondents believe they are getting good value for their tax dollars
- 74% of respondents are pleased with the level and type of budget information provided to them
- Respondents are most satisfied with the city's Fire, and Parks & Trails services

##### Areas for improvement:

- Condition of City roads: The 2020 survey included a number of positive comments about the impact of the neighbourhood rehabilitation program. However, overall road conditions continue to be a concern for residents.

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- Pedestrian safety: While residents have started to notice the impact of the pedestrian safety program, there is still a strong desire to see more done in this area.

The earlier section of the report notes the initiatives currently underway addressing these areas of improvement.


### Conclusion

The public input is presented to the Committee for consideration in finalizing the 2020-2024 Financial Plan Bylaw and to help guide the work of the Committee in establishing infrastructure policies and capital program priorities. Specific comments have been provided to the impacted departments for further action. The public input will also be considered as part of the 2021 financial planning process. Should Committee choose to make amendments to the 2020 draft budget in response to public feedback, these amendments may require further analysis to determine impact to budgets and/or workplans. Follow-up budget meetings are tentatively scheduled for April 14 and 21 if required.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No changes are recommended to the budget as a result of the public budget survey.

### OPTIONS (✓ = Staff Recommendation)

	#	Description
	1	None.
	2	Direct staff to bring forward an adjusted service level based on budget feedback.

### ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1: Budget survey comments

Attachment #2: Emailed budget feedback

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**Contributing author(s):** Karen Grommada, Kristen Dixon, Forrest Smith