

Appendix B

Business Survey Results

2025 BUDGET SURVEY

City of New Westminster

Final Report – Businesses

October 10, 2024



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2025 Budget Survey | October 2024



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01 INTRODUCTION

Background and Objectives

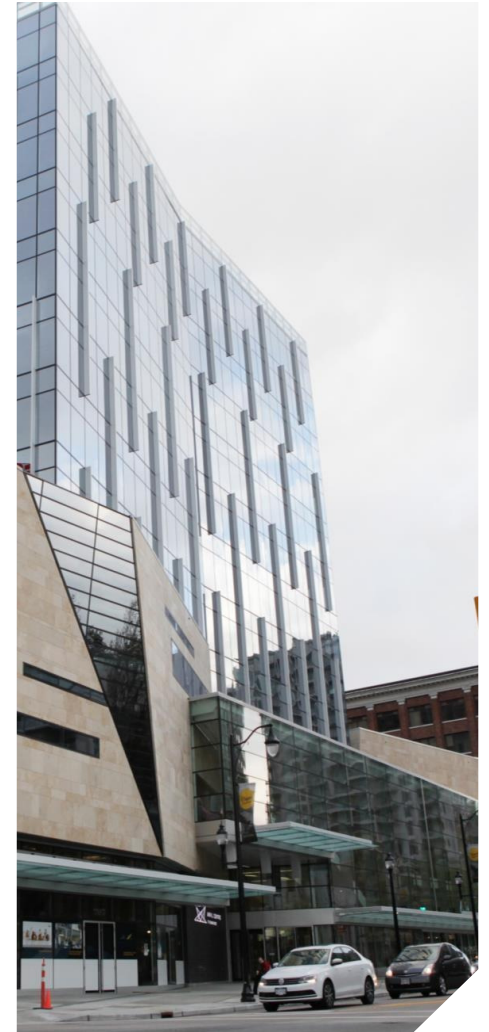
Each year, the City of New Westminster conducts public engagement to hear community opinions on priorities for the annual budget. All residents and business owners/operators are encouraged to participate in the budget process.

As part of the budget development process for 2025, the City commissioned Ipsos to conduct a survey of New Westminster residents and businesses. The main purpose of this survey is to obtain input on important community issues, City services, and priorities for investment. The results of the survey will be considered in the preparation of future City budgets.

A total of three online surveys were conducted as part of the 2025 Budget Survey:

- Resident survey (random)
- Resident survey (open invitation)
- Business survey

This report presents the results of the Business Survey. The results of the Resident Surveys (random and open invitation) are reported under a separate cover.



Methodology

Invitations to an online survey were mailed to all available New Westminster-based business addresses.

Each invitation included a link to an online survey and a unique password that businesses could use to answer the survey securely and anonymously online. To ensure the integrity of the data, each password could only be used to complete the survey a single time.

All respondents were screened to confirm they are 18 years of age or older and own or operate a business in New Westminster. Those employed by the City of New Westminster (either as staff or an elected official) were excluded from the survey.

All fieldwork was completed between August 15 and September 2, 2024.

As an incentive, those completing the survey were offered the opportunity to be entered into a prize draw for one of three \$100 gift cards to a local business of their choice.

Of the 1,780 survey invitations mailed, a total of 28 business owners and operators completed the survey, for an overall response rate of 1.6%.

No weighting was applied to the business sample. No margin of error is applicable.

Notes to Reader

A sample size of 28 is not large enough to draw any statistically meaningful conclusions. While the findings suggest general trends and insights, they should not be considered as representative of the broader business community.

Given the small sample size, the results presented in this report are shown as counts, not percents (e.g., 14 out of 28 instead of 50%). Additionally, responses to all open-ended questions are included as verbatim comments rather than coded themes.

02 SURVEY RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1

Executive Summary



QUALITY OF LIFE

- Businesses participating in the survey say New Westminster offers a good quality of life overall but feel this has worsened over the past three years.
- Perceptions of the City's performance on Council's five strategic priorities are mixed.
 - The area scoring the highest is *working to create a community where everyone belongs and has the opportunity to connect and contribute*.
 - This is followed by *working to ensure infrastructure are resilient to meet the community's needs today and into the future, working to ensure New Westminster has all types of homes needed by people today and tomorrow, prioritizing homes for those with the greatest need, and working to maintain a local, nimble, resilient, and competitive economy that serves our local community*.
 - The lowest score goes to *working to make streets safer for the movement of people on foot, cycle, and transit*, with less than half of participating businesses agreeing the City is doing a good job in this regard.



IMPORTANT LOCAL ISSUES

- Businesses participating in the survey identify a variety of important issues facing the community.
- Common themes include financial pressures (costs, debt, rent, taxes, inflation), transportation issues (traffic, parking, street closures, road maintenance), crime/public safety, public drug use, and homelessness.



CITY SERVICES

- Most businesses participating in the survey say they are satisfied with City services overall.
- Businesses are also largely satisfied with specific services provided by the City. Of the 20 evaluated services:
 - The services receiving the overall highest satisfaction ratings are *fire and rescue services* and *electrical services*.
 - The least satisfactory service is *economic development*.
- All the evaluated services are important to the businesses participating in the survey.

Executive Summary



FINANCING CITY SERVICES

- Perceptions of value for money are positive but moderate, described as ‘fairly good’ rather than ‘very good’.
- Overall, businesses participating in the survey prefer tax increases over service reductions. More specifically, the leading preference is for ‘tax increases in line with inflation – to sustain current service levels’.
- Support for other revenue generating ideas varies. In an effort to bring in more revenues and reduce tax increases:
 - Businesses participating in the survey are the most supportive of *advertising in City facilities*.
 - Opinion is mixed on *higher user fees to recover more of the cost of City subsidized programs and services, such as recreation programs and facilities and pay parking at City facilities*.
 - There is generally little support for *higher permit, licensing, and inspection fees and more parking meters or higher parking rates*.



CAPITAL INVESTMENT

- Most of the businesses participating in the survey say they would support the City borrowing funds to deal with the backlog of capital replacement and upgrade projects on a more frequent basis.



PROPERTY TAXES AND TAX BURDEN

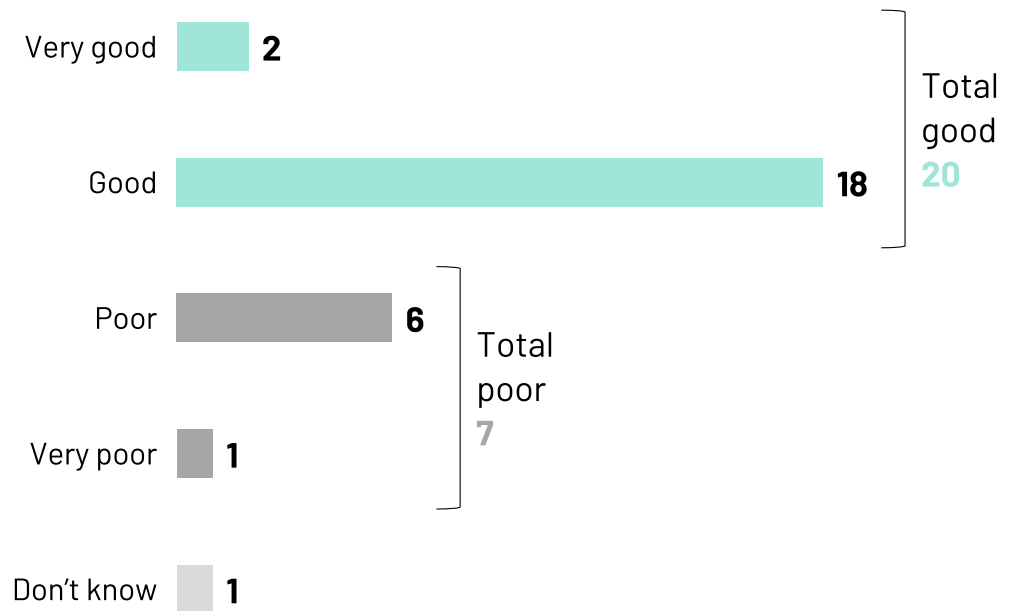
- Half of participating businesses say they would support the City adjusting the property tax allocation between residents and businesses if a review finds that businesses in New Westminster pay a higher or lower percentage of the property tax levy compared to businesses in neighbouring municipalities.

QUALITY OF LIFE

2.2

Overall Quality of Life in New Westminster Today

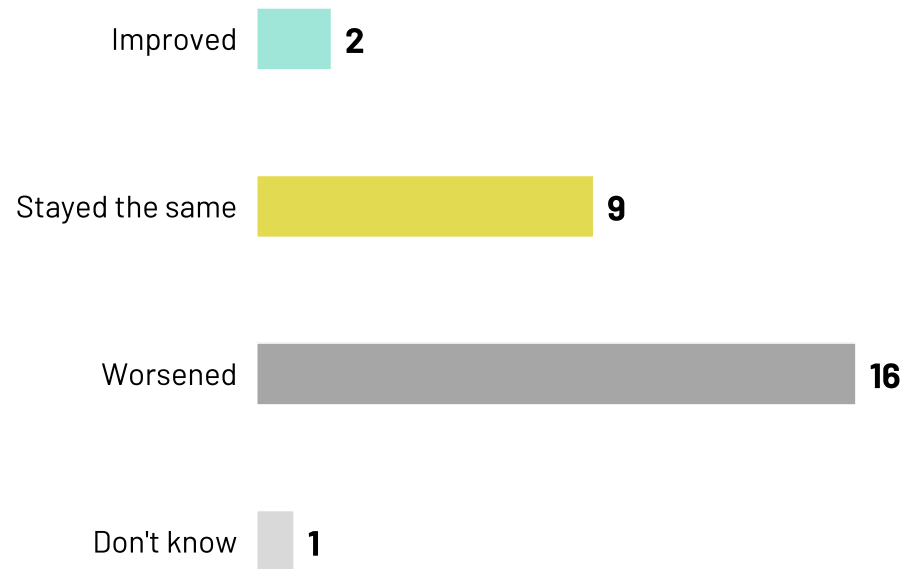
- In total, 20 out of the 28 participating businesses rate the overall quality of life in New Westminster today as either 'very good' (2) or 'good' (18).
- A total of 7 rate the quality of life poorly.
- The remaining 1 business is unsure ('don't know') how they would rate the overall quality of life in New Westminster.



Base: All respondents (n=28)
Q2. How would you rate the overall quality of life in New Westminster today?

Change in Quality of Life in Past Three Years

- Despite overall positive perceptions, most (16) businesses participating in the survey feel that the quality of life in New Westminster has 'worsened' over the past three years.
- Another 9 feel the quality of life has 'stayed the same'. Only 2 feel it has 'improved' and 1 says 'don't know'.



Base: All respondents (n=28)
Q3. Do you feel that the overall quality of life in New Westminster in the past three years has...?

Reasons Quality of Life has Improved

(among those saying improved)(verbatim responses)



Housing, restaurants, bike lane.

Don't know.

Base: Those saying the quality of life has improved (n=2)
Q4. Why do you think the quality of life in New Westminster has improved?

Reasons Quality of Life has Worsened (page 1 of 2)

(among those saying worsened)(verbatim responses)



Amount of drug addicts/homelessness/filth.

Because no one is managing the crime and drug use. The social services are placed in what should be a thriving downtown hub but instead is overrun with addiction. Current government only cares about development and has zero interest in supporting small business. The crime is out of control and the downtown core feels incredibly unsafe.

Busy.

Crime and open drug use.

Increased visibility of open drug use on streets and in parks, developments tearing down small business retail and office space, new developments too expensive for most small businesses. City planners and Council not using zoning to restrict street-level activated areas and allowing non-retail to take up prime walkable community spaces.

Inflation costs have risen without possibility of revenue increases.

It looks awful downtown. Open drug use and users make it ugly here.

More crime, less police integration in community, more dilapidated buildings, especially in Columbia between 4th and 6th.

Open drug use especially in transit hubs.

Safety, drugs, mental health issues.

Worsened so it can hopefully get better, meaning too many construction projects all at the same time. Living and working here is a mobility nightmare right now, but we understand it's temporary and value, but it has killed a lot of "community feel" with construction literally everywhere.

Base: Those saying the quality of life has worsened (n=16)
Q5. Why do you think the quality of life in New Westminster has worsened?

Reasons Quality of Life has Worsened (page 2 of 2)

(among those saying worsened)(verbatim responses)



As city has grown, not enough anti-poverty services, not enough supports for people facing homelessness, no food bank in the city.

City streets, garbage overflowing and general maintenance of common areas.

Increase of homeless population and average living cost has gone up.

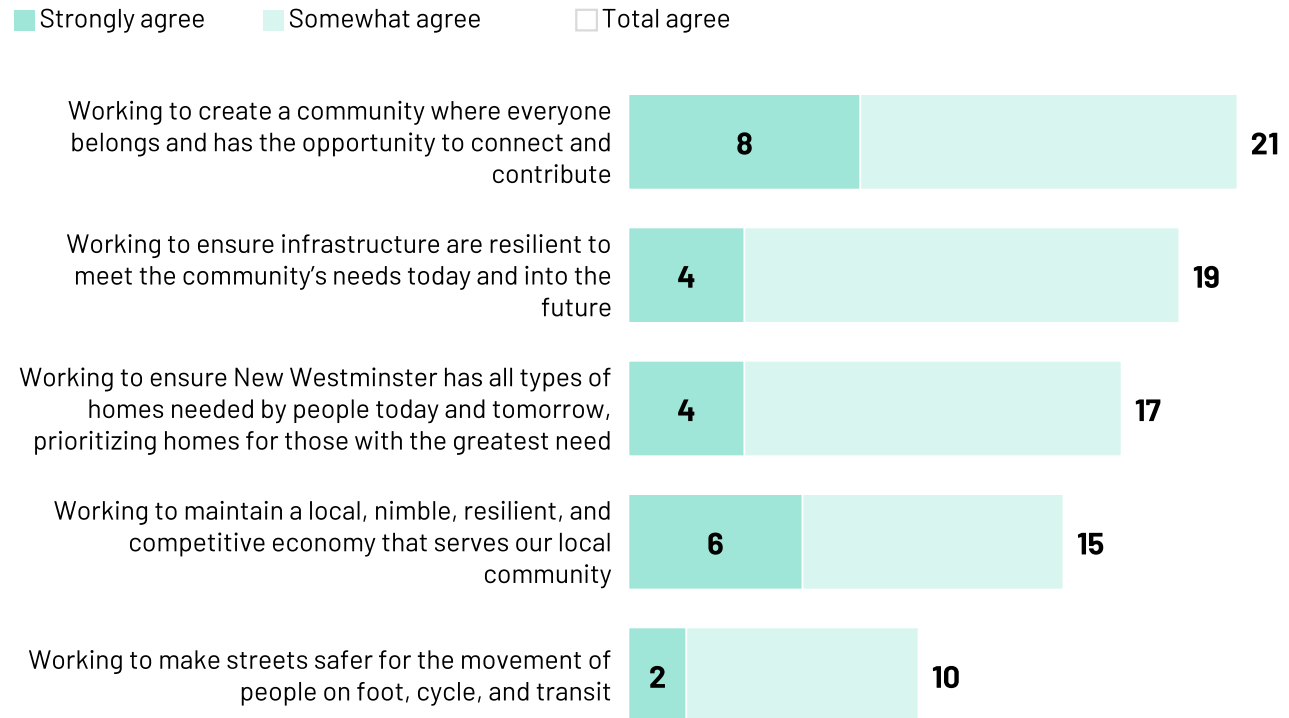
More theft, more drug abusers, more homeless.

Too much homeless are coming.

Base: Those saying the quality of life has worsened (n=16)
Q5. Why do you think the quality of life in New Westminster has worsened?

Performance on Council Strategic Priorities

- Perceptions of the City's performance on Council's five strategic priorities are mixed.
- The area scoring the highest is *working to create a community where everyone belongs and has the opportunity to connect and contribute*, with 21 out of the 28 participating businesses agreeing the City is doing a good job in this regard.
- The lowest score goes to *working to make streets safer for the movement of people on foot, cycle, and transit*, with less than half (10) of businesses participating in the survey agreeing the City is doing a good job in this regard.



Base: All respondents (n=28)

Q6. New Westminster City Council has five strategic priorities that guide Council and staff decisions. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the City is doing a good job at each of the following?

Comments/Feedback on Council Strategic Priorities (page 1 of 2)

(verbatim responses)



As a citizen I LOVE this city and its strategic priorities, as an owner of multiple vibrant businesses we feel the city is incredibly hard to work with, is not willing to actually discuss or hear what we have to say (mostly on parking, I know you all hate talking about parking but it's absolutely necessary to make changes), and doing nothing to attract new (thinking retail on this one) businesses to bring more small shops into New West (every time we get one it seems to close so fast, it's needed so what can we do to help them through their first few years so that a bunch of small shops can open up and thrive off one another). I do thank you for blocking the Sapperton dentist, these actions are so important for cities to be fun, welcoming and vibrant.

As the City consistently increases the property taxes, cost for paid parking, limited free parking and taking away existing parking with bike lanes, bulging sidewalks and parkettes, this impacts small business and the patrons who would like to support them. Bring back free public parking, lower property taxes so commercial leases are more affordable and stop building more housing as the core of NWest is already over bloated with bottle-necked traffic.

Council is not doing well at most of these unless there is pressure from the public on social media platforms.

Fix the crime and the homelessness problem. Forget about development for even a single year and instead focus on solving the actual problems. A single year! Imagine what could be done.

Great job by Council.

Having bike lanes make sense and safe for cyclists and drivers. The nonsense of 6th makes driving precarious - if it can be done properly in downtown Vancouver it should be able to done here too.

I would like to emphasize the importance of balancing long-term infrastructure improvements with the immediate needs of local businesses. While I appreciate the Council's focus on enhancing the city's infrastructure, it's crucial that these projects are managed in a way that minimizes disruption to businesses.

It feels like Council is blind. Yesterday daytime walked by five people all on drugs sitting in a row with kids walking by.

Base: All respondents (n=28)
Q7. Are there any specific comments or feedback you would like to add about the strategic priorities identified by Council?

Comments/Feedback on Council Strategic Priorities (page 2 of 2)

(verbatim responses)



Local economies thrive when people are prioritized over profit. Tenant protections that keep housing affordable (1/3 of income), better mass transit, festivals/community events, etc.... make New West livable, which means that all residents regardless of income can participate in the local economy.

Money is not the answer to all our problems - action is.

No comment.

The Council needs to focus on revitalizing the downtown area and do better at supporting businesses through the current issues in the area. Council also needs to make it more streamlined to get permits for new businesses coming into the city.

Water and hydro.

Get rid of the bicycle lanes on Main Street. So many side streets are under utilized. Designate those for bike users so they would not get run over.

Spend least money on bike lane.

We don't see anything regarding the homeless and drugs abuse.

Don't know. (12 responses)

Base: All respondents (n=28)
Q7. Are there any specific comments or feedback you would like to add about the strategic priorities identified by Council?

IMPORTANT LOCAL ISSUES

2.3

Important Local Issues (page 1 of 4)

(verbatim responses, multiple mentions allowed)



Business health / Prosperity.

Competitive costs.

Complete notifications on street closures for events going by business.

Crime.

Crime and open drug use.

Debt and financial challenges.

Density, we need more homes.

Emergency services call times.

Facing homelessness and drug issues turns customers away.

Homelessness.

Inequitable street parking that favours homeowners vs all citizens, staff who work and make our city vibrant and business visitors.

Ongoing infrastructure projects in New Westminster have significantly increased traffic congestion, making it challenging for customers to access local businesses. This directly impacts sales and disrupts the flow of goods and services.

Recycling.

Rising costs of rent.

Base: All respondents (n=28)

Q1. In your view, as a business owner or operator in New Westminster, what are the most important issues facing your community today, that are the issues you feel should receive the greatest attention from your local leaders?

Important Local Issues (page 2 of 4)

(verbatim responses, multiple mentions allowed)



Small biz being pushed out of leases because of costs and redevelopment.

Support from the city.

Terrible road surfaces.

Traffic.

Homeless.

Housing.

Increasing housing prices.

Out of control spending by government leading to increased taxes.

Safety and security.

Vandalism and homelessness.

Wider economic issues such as inflation/unaffordable housing.

Affordable living.

Business rental protections similar to renting a home, going along with empty retail spaces that aren't putting pressure on reducing or maintaining the rental market.

Community / business safety.

Base: All respondents (n=28)

Q1. In your view, as a business owner or operator in New Westminster, what are the most important issues facing your community today, that are the issues you feel should receive the greatest attention from your local leaders?

Important Local Issues (page 3 of 4)

(verbatim responses, multiple mentions allowed)



Drug addicts.

Drug use in the downtown core affecting positive growth.

Government funding for training.

Labor shortage and supply China distribution.

Looks dumpy – garbage.

More community/gathering spaces.

Outrageous bureaucracy.

Parking.

Rent inflation.

The construction has also led to decreased foot traffic, as customers find it harder to navigate around the city. This reduced accessibility is particularly concerning for small businesses that rely on consistent customer visits to sustain operations.

Traffic.

Traffic jams.

Construction and road closures/parking fees.

Crime, drug abuse and homelessness.

Base: All respondents (n=28)

Q1. In your view, as a business owner or operator in New Westminster, what are the most important issues facing your community today, that are the issues you feel should receive the greatest attention from your local leaders?

Important Local Issues (page 4 of 4)

(verbatim responses, multiple mentions allowed)



Drugs.

Increasing rental prices.

Lack of support for businesses.

Street drugs.

Don't know. (3 responses)

Base: All respondents (n=28)

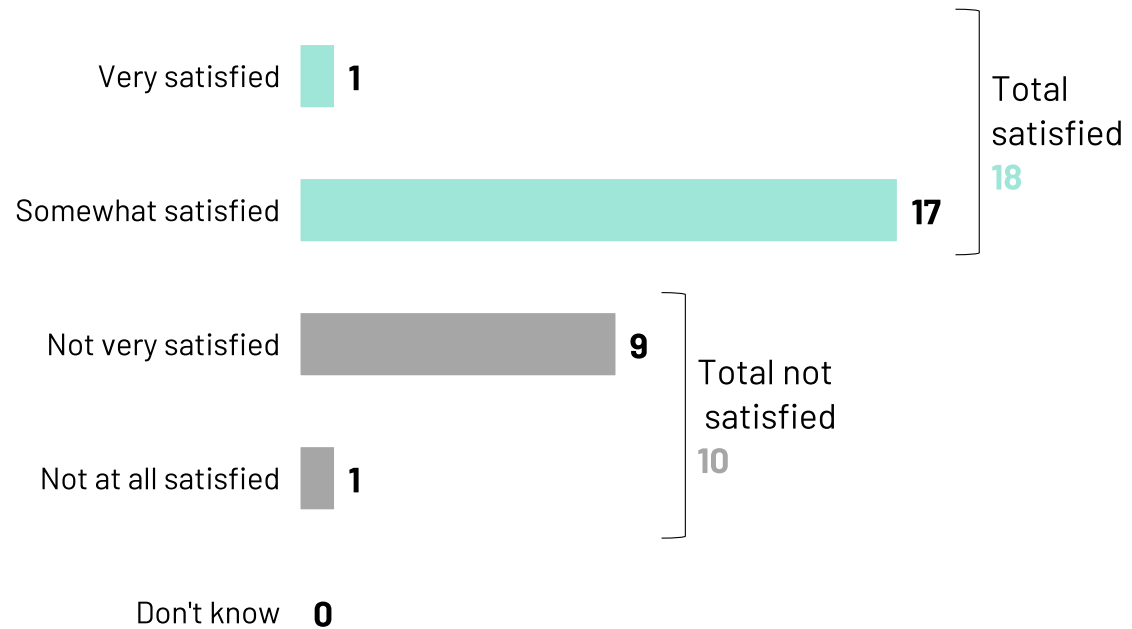
Q1. In your view, as a business owner or operator in New Westminster, what are the most important issues facing your community today, that are the issues you feel should receive the greatest attention from your local leaders?

CITY SERVICES

2.4

Overall Satisfaction with City Services

- In total, 18 out of the 28 participating businesses say they are satisfied with the overall level and quality of services provided by the City.
- Of these, only 1 says 'very satisfied' while 17 say 'somewhat satisfied'.
- A total of 10 say they are not satisfied with the City's overall service delivery.



Base: All respondents (n=28), Q8. How satisfied are you with the overall level and quality of services provided by the City of New Westminster?

Reasons why Not Satisfied with Overall City Services

(among those saying not satisfied)(verbatim responses)



24-hour care needed or ask other communities to break up the care here of others.

Bad roads; hard to get into, around and out of the city; too much public drug use.

Because they aren't efficient, they lack communication and clarity from the government offices. Businesses have no idea what's available to them for support. We're completely on our own.

I only get utility bills. As a business, I don't know what other services there are provided by the city.

Layers of bureaucracy and combative attitude.

The City never does anything for the community.

Too much emphasis on growth over maintenance of actual resources – seems wasteful.

Too much focus on niche projects.

We have made numerous complaints about city trees and our employee safety that have been ignored.

City services have been worse than before.

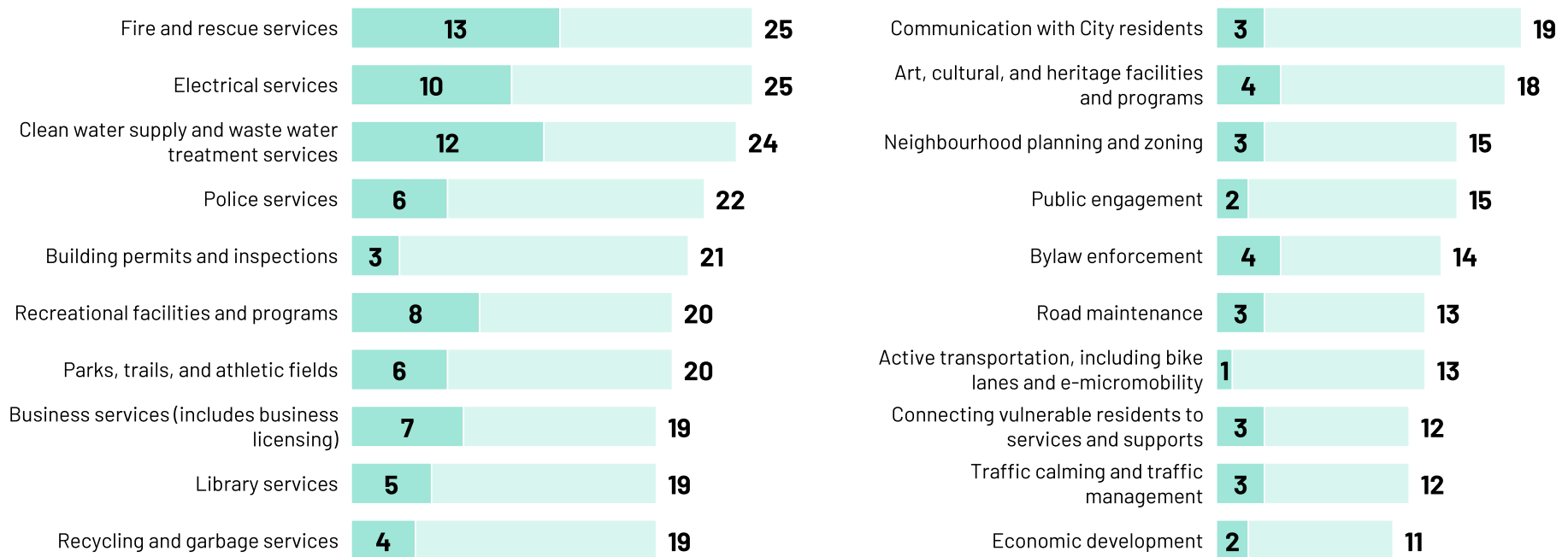
Base: Those saying they are not satisfied with the overall level and quality of City services (n=10)
Q9. Why are you not satisfied with the overall level and quality of services provided by the City of New Westminster?

Satisfaction with Specific Services

- Satisfaction (combined 'very/somewhat satisfied' responses) with the delivery of specific City services varies.
- Of the 20 evaluated services, the following seven receive the overall highest satisfaction scores, with at least 20 out of the 28 participating businesses saying they are satisfied.
 - *Fire and rescue services* (25)
 - *Electrical services* (25)
 - *Clean water supply and waste water treatment services* (24)
 - *Police services* (22)
 - *Building permits and inspections* (21)
 - *Recreational facilities and programs (includes pools, arenas, community centres, etc.)* (20)
 - *Parks, trails, and athletic fields* (20)
- At least half of participating businesses say they are also satisfied with the following eight services:
 - *Business services (includes business licensing)* (19)
 - *Library services* (19)
 - *Recycling and garbage services* (19)
 - *Communication with City residents* (19)
 - *Art, cultural, and heritage facilities and programs* (18)
 - *Neighbourhood planning and zoning* (15)
 - *Public engagement (seeking community input to inform decision making)* (15)
 - *Bylaw enforcement* (14)
- The least satisfactory services overall are:
 - *Road maintenance* (13)
 - *Active transportation, including bike lanes and e-micromobility* (13)
 - *Connecting vulnerable residents to services and supports (e.g., unhoused, seniors, newcomers)* (12)
 - *Traffic calming and traffic management* (12)
 - *Economic development* (11)

Satisfaction with Specific Services

Very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Total satisfied



Base: All respondents (n=28)
 Q11. Below is a list of services provided to you by the City of New Westminster. How satisfied are you with each of these services?

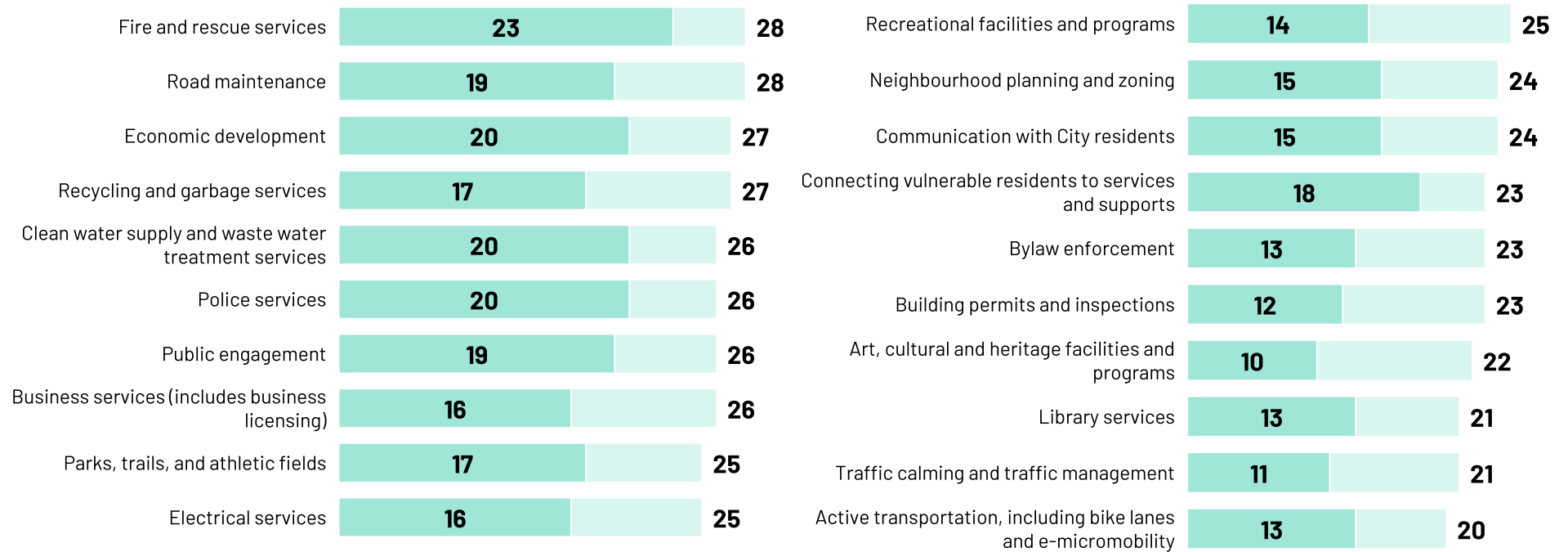


Importance of Specific Services

- All the evaluated services are important (combined 'very/somewhat important' responses) to the businesses participating in the survey. Many also receive high 'very important' scores.
- Overall, the two highest scoring services are *fire and rescue services* and *road maintenance*, with all 28 participating businesses saying these services are important.
- This is followed by:
 - *Economic development* (27)
 - *Recycling and garbage services* (27)
 - *Clean water supply and waste water treatment services* (26)
 - *Police services* (26)
 - *Public engagement (seeking community input to inform decision making)* (26)
 - *Business services (includes business licensing)* (26)
- The remaining services are rated as important by at least 20 of the participating businesses:
 - *Parks, trails, and athletic fields* (25)
 - *Electrical services* (25)
 - *Recreational facilities and programs (includes pools, arenas, community centres, etc.)* (25)
 - *Neighbourhood planning and zoning* (24)
 - *Communication with City residents* (24)
 - *Connecting vulnerable residents to services and supports (e.g., unhoused, seniors, newcomers)* (23)
 - *Bylaw enforcement* (23)
 - *Building permits and inspections* (23)
 - *Art, cultural, and heritage facilities and programs* (22)
 - *Library services* (21)
 - *Traffic calming and traffic management* (21)
 - *Active transportation, including bike lanes and e-micromobility* (20)

Importance of Specific Services

Very important Somewhat important Total important



Base: All respondents (n=28)
 Q10. Below is a list of services provided to you by the City of New Westminster. How important is each service to you personally?

Suggestions for New Services or Enhancements to Existing Services

(page 1 of 2)(verbatim responses, multiple mentions allowed)



Better neighbourhood planning for all residents; while housing vulnerable populations is important, so is appreciating that people that are committed to live in this community.

I would like the City to consider implementing a program that offers financial or promotional support to businesses impacted by construction projects. This could include temporary tax relief, grants, or City-sponsored marketing initiatives to help draw customers to affected areas.

Lower taxes.

Mental health care.

New recreational services.

No – stop expanding the Empire – the bureaucracy is not the answer – they are high cost and low effect.

No. I want the City to use the money they have more efficiently.

Re-look at permit parking and parking time limits in residential area. I'm in no way complaining about the price, it's availability and equitable parking for all.

Senior priority in housing.

Sorry, but from what I've experienced City can barely keep up with the services they already provide.

Stop making the road more congested with road safety initiatives.

Cut back on City Counsellors and City Hall staff. Too many contribute to inflated payroll.

Base: All respondents (n=28)

Q12. Adding new services or enhancing existing ones requires additional funding beyond inflationary property tax/user fee rate increases needed to maintain existing service levels. Are there any new services or specific enhancements to existing services that you would like the City to consider?

Suggestions for New Services or Enhancements to Existing Services

(page 2 of 2)(verbatim responses, multiple mentions allowed)



Getting homeless people and drug users off the street.

Homelessness.

Housing services (supportive/transitional).

Enhancing public transit options and increasing available parking near business districts would greatly benefit both customers and employees. This could involve extending transit routes, increasing the frequency of service, or creating additional parking spaces to make it easier for people to access local businesses.

More bold initiatives & communication from the economic development to fill empty units and create sustainable rental units for businesses.

More community engagement of police - they used to walk around and talk to the community, now you rarely see them out of their cars.

New economic drivers.

Anti-poverty/human services, like food banks and newcomer welcomes.

Moving the safe injection site and shelters out of the downtown core.

Don't know. (13 responses)

Base: All respondents (n=28)

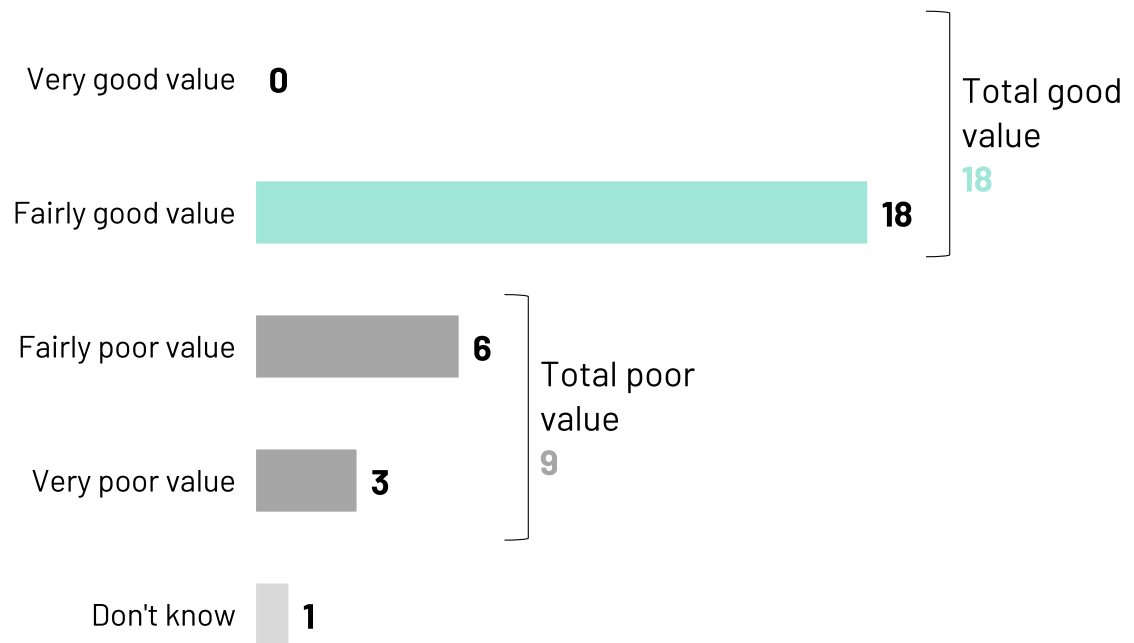
Q12. Adding new services or enhancing existing ones requires additional funding beyond inflationary property tax/user fee rate increases needed to maintain existing service levels. Are there any new services or specific enhancements to existing services that you would like the City to consider?

FINANCING CITY SERVICES

2.5

Value for Money

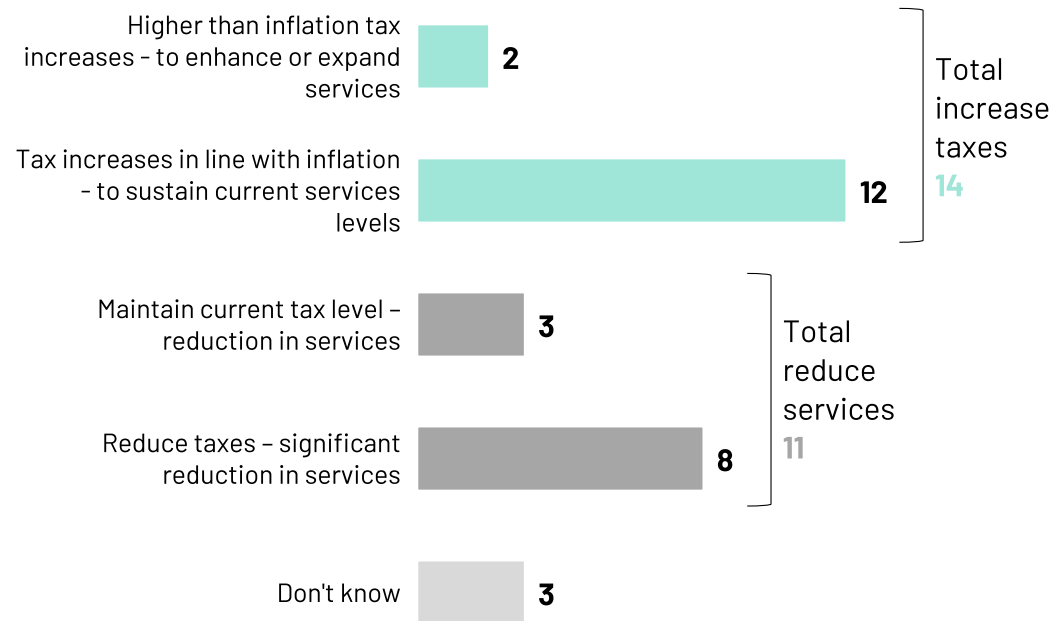
- In total, 18 out of the 28 participating businesses say they receive good value for the money they pay for the utility services they receive from the City.
- Of these, all describe the value they as receive as 'fairly good'. None say they receive 'very good value'.
- A total of 9 rate the value for money poorly.
- The remaining 1 business is unsure ('don't know') how to rate the value for the money they pay for the utility services they receive from the City.



Base: All respondents (n=28)
Q13. Thinking about all the utility services you receive from the City of New Westminster, such as electrical, water/sewer, garbage collections and recycling, would you say that overall you get good value or poor value for your money?

Balancing Taxation and Service Delivery Levels

- Overall, businesses participating in the survey prefer tax increases over service reductions.
- A total of 14 say they prefer tax increases, with most (12) of these saying 'tax increases in line with inflation - to sustain current service levels'. Only 2 say they would like the City to pursue 'higher than inflation tax increases - to enhance or expand services'.
- Conversely, a total of 11 opt for service reductions, including 8 saying 'reduce taxes - significant reduction in services' and 3 saying 'maintain current tax level - reduction in services'.
- The remaining 3 businesses are unsure ('don't know') which approach they would like the City to take.

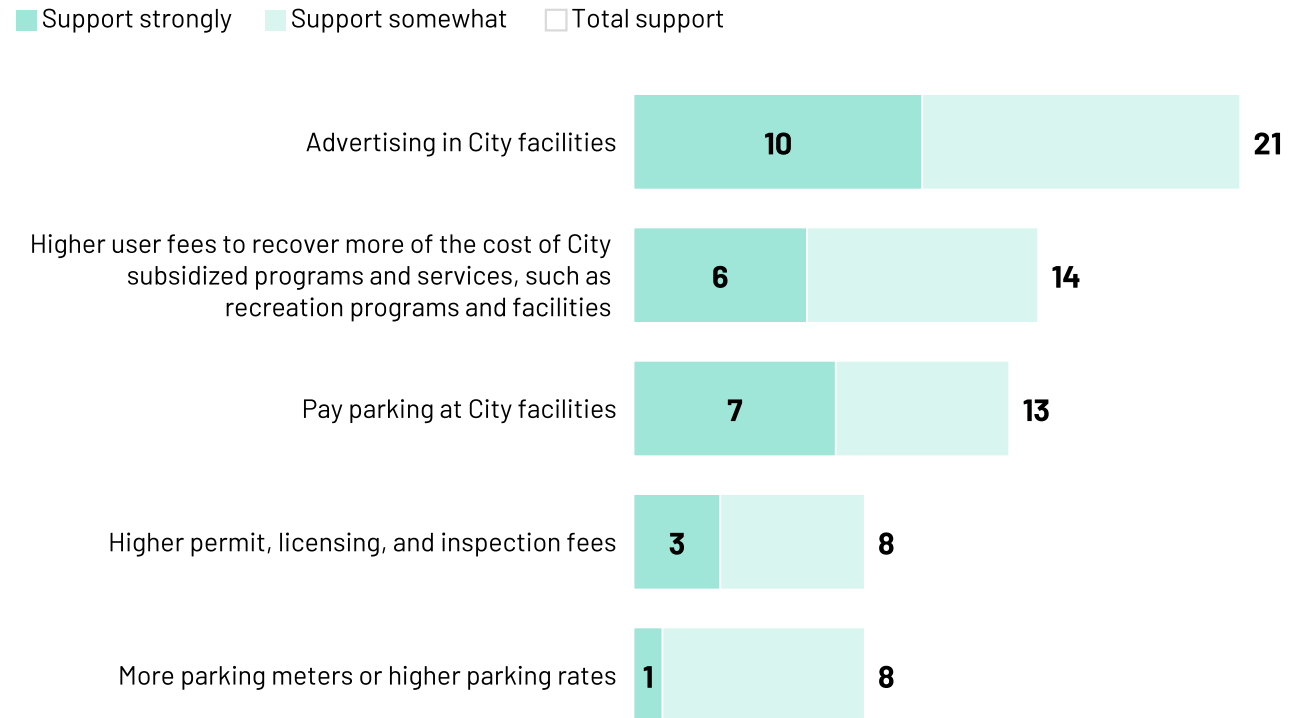


Base: All respondents (n=28)

Q14. Property taxes are the primary way to pay for services such as police, fire, transportation, planning, library, bylaw enforcement, parks and recreation services provided by the City of New Westminster. Due to the increased cost of maintaining current service levels and infrastructure, the City of New Westminster must balance taxation and service delivery levels. To deal with this situation, which one of the following four options would you most like the City to pursue?

Support for Other Revenue Generating Ideas

- Support for other revenue generating ideas varies.
- Overall, there is the greatest support for *advertising in City facilities*, with 21 out of the 28 participating businesses saying this is something they would support in an effort to bring in more revenues and reduce tax increases.
- Opinion is mixed on *higher user fees to recover more of the cost of City subsidized programs and services, such as recreation programs and facilities* (14) and *pay parking at City facilities* (13).
- There is generally little support for *higher permit, licensing, and inspection fees* (8) and *more parking meters or higher parking rates* (8).



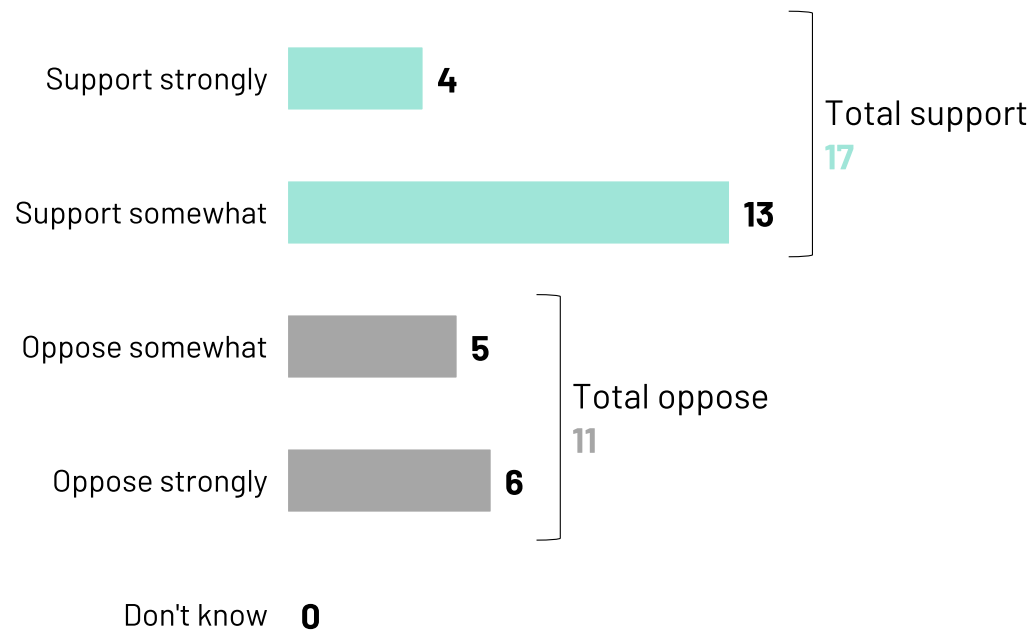
Base: All respondents (n=28)
 Q15. In an effort to bring in more revenues and reduce tax increases, to what extent would you support or oppose each of the following?

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

2.6

Support for City Borrowing Funds

- Most (17) of the 28 businesses participating in the survey say they would support the City borrowing funds to deal with the backlog of capital replacement and upgrade projects on a more frequent basis.
- A total of 11 are opposed.



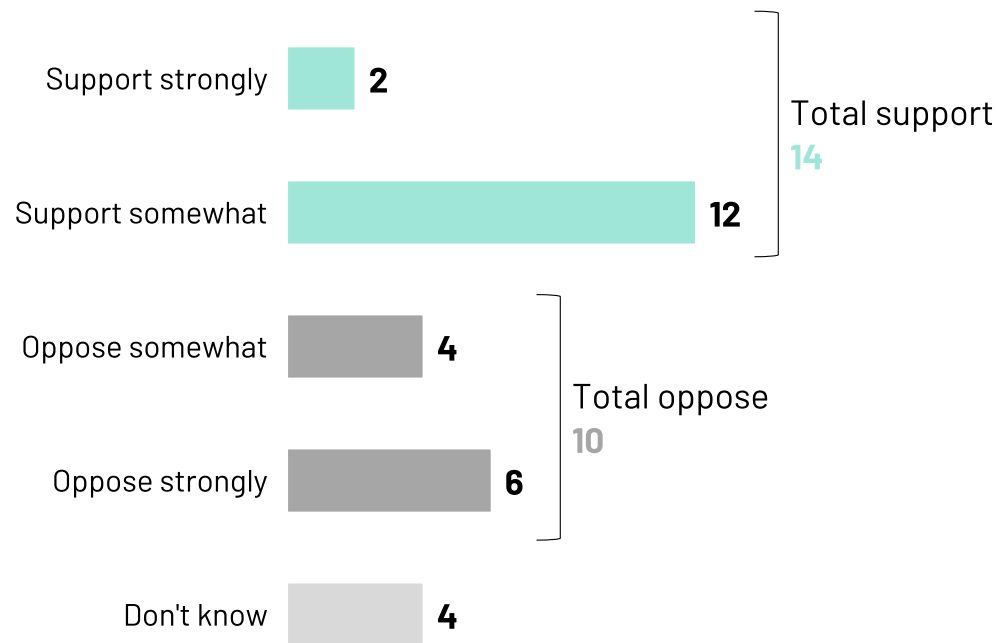
Base: All respondents (n=28), Q16. To what extent would you support or oppose the City borrowing funds to deal with the backlog of capital replacement and upgrade projects on a more frequent basis? Borrowing would enable the City to deal with the backlog of capital replacement and upgrade projects, but would lead to increased overall project costs due to interest charges. Increases to property taxes and/or utility user fees may be necessary to service the debt.

PROPERTY TAXES AND TAX BURDEN

2.7

Support for Adjusting Property Tax Allocation between Residents and Businesses

- Out of the 28 businesses participating in the survey, half (14) say they would support the City adjusting the property tax allocation between residents and businesses if a review finds that businesses in New Westminster pay a higher or lower percentage of the property tax levy compared to businesses in neighbouring municipalities.
- A total of 10 are opposed.
- The remaining 4 are unsure ('don't know') if this is something they would support or not.



Base: All respondents (n=28)
Q17. As you may know, the City collects property taxes from New Westminster residents and businesses. Currently, residents pay 65% of the City's property taxes, businesses pay 30% of the City's property taxes, and the remainder is from other property classes. If a review finds that businesses in New Westminster pay a higher or lower percentage of the property tax levy compared to businesses in neighbouring municipalities, would you support or oppose the City adjusting the property tax allocation between residents and businesses?

03 APPENDIX: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS



Sample Characteristics

	All Businesses (n=28)
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	
0 (i.e., self-employed)	3
1 to 3	7
4 to 9	8
10 to 24	7
25 to 99	2
100 or more	1
Prefer not to answer	0
TYPE OF BUSINESS	
Retail	5
Health services	5
Commercial	4
Office	4
Educational services	2
Manufacturing	1
Food services	1
Other	5
Prefer not to answer	1

	All Businesses (n=28)
BUSINESS AREA	
Downtown	11
Uptown	7
East End	7
West End	1
Queensborough	1
Prefer not to answer	1
LIVE IN NEW WESTMINSTER	
Yes	13
No	14
Prefer not to answer	1