

2021 Budget Questionnaire

Summary Report

JANUARY 28, 2021

District of Oak Bay

Summary Report

Overview

Background

Each year, the District of Oak Bay seeks public input to support the annual budget process. Council considers resident feedback when setting, reviewing and revising priorities.

The District's annual budget questionnaire is one of many ways residents can provide feedback.

Topics Covered

The 2021 Budget Questionnaire asked residents whether they wished to increase, decrease or maintain a variety of District services. The questionnaire included brief, high-level service descriptions so that residents had information on current service levels when providing feedback. As well as asking about service levels, the questionnaire also asked residents for feedback on Council's priorities and on the District's COVID-19 response.

Timing

The 2021 budget questionnaire was launched through an online platform www.connect.oakbay.ca on November 2, 2020 and closed on November 30, 2020. Paper copies were also available at District recreation centres.

Responses

320 questionnaires were returned by the deadline. Of those, 287 were completed online and 33 were completed on paper. Responses to paper questionnaires were entered into the online data base by staff and are reflected in the detailed response report. A few responses on paper questionnaires could not be entered due to the manner in which

they were answered (directional arrows to other questions, providing detailed comments on closed questions etc.) or due to illegibility.

Returns were slightly lower than for the 2020 budget questionnaire (341), which is not surprising given COVID-19 restrictions.

Ten responses were from people living outside Oak Bay. Those responses were removed from the analyzed data set. Within Oak Bay, there was an even distribution between North Oak Bay and South Oak Bay responses.

Questionnaire respondents differed somewhat from Oak Bay’s population profile. Residents in the 45-64 age group are over-represented while respondents in the 25-34 and 75+ categories are under-represented.

Population Aged 18+	2016 Census	Questionnaire respondents
18-24	3%	2%
25-34	13%	7%
35-44	10%	11%
45-54	16%	26%
55-64	20%	27%
65-74	20%	22%
75+	18%	6%

Sixty percent of respondents have lived in Oak Bay for more than ten years.

Residents were invited to comment on as many or as few questions as they wanted, so response totals differed by question. While there was no mechanism to prevent individuals from responding more than once, staff deployed checks and balances and did not detect evidence of response stacking.

Statistical Significance

The questionnaire is not a random-sample survey and cannot be considered statistically significant. The questionnaire does, however, provide an indication of the preferences of those who responded to the questionnaire.

Promotion

The budget questionnaire was promoted through advertisements in Oak Bay News (1 ad costing \$566.67), on Facebook and Instagram (\$350) and through Google Ads (\$94.50). The questionnaire was also promoted for free on the District’s website, through an article in Oak Bay News, via school newsletters, with social media posts, through community associations and word-of-mouth, community notice boards, featured on Henderson Recreation Centre’s electronic sign, and links in Council/staff email signatures. Facebook and word-of-mouth were the most common ways that respondents found out about the questionnaire. Advertising cost per completed questionnaire was \$3.16. By comparison, 2020 budget questionnaire promotions cost \$1149.44, for a cost per completed questionnaire of \$3.57.

Highlights

Most services received strong **support for being *maintained*** at current levels.

Seven services received strong **support (more than 40%) for being *increased***:

Service	2020 Budget Questionnaire	2021 Budget Questionnaire
Maintain sewer infrastructure	Not asked	66%
Maintain drainage infrastructure	Not asked	65%
Maintain water infrastructure	Not asked	55%
Manage road pavement	61%	50%
Manage deer population	56%	49%
Mitigate and adapt to climate change	Not asked	47%
Regulate to protect the environment	48%	42%

Two services that, last year, received relatively strong support for increases, this year, saw somewhat **decreased support for increases**:

Service	2020 Budget Questionnaire	2021 Budget Questionnaire
Develop land use policies	48%	33%
Regulate vacation rentals	42%	31%

No services received strong **support (more than 40%) for being *decreased***. The service with the highest support for being decreased was “install and maintain public art” which came in at 39.9%.

A few services had **mixed support** – in that almost equal numbers favoured increases and decreases.

Service	Decrease	Maintain	Increase
Provide areas where dogs are allowed off-leash	23%	50%	27%
Regulate vacation rentals	21%	47%	31%
Provide electric vehicle charging station	26%	46%	29%
Provide road space dedicated to cycling	28%	40%	32%

Support for Council Priorities

The 2021 Budget Questionnaire asked respondents to indicate whether they felt that the package of initiatives (consisting of many individual projects) was insufficient/inappropriate or sufficient/appropriate for advancing each of Council’s five priorities. Feedback was requested on the suitability of the *portfolio* of projects rather than of any *individual* projects listed. A majority of residents felt that the *package* of

initiatives for all Council’s priorities was sufficient/appropriate, although initiatives supporting two priorities (Diverse Housing and Quality of Life) were deemed less sufficient/appropriate than the others. With respect to Diverse Housing, there were several comments questioning the need for/value of further studies and pressing instead for action. With respect to Quality of Life, there were many comments relating to deer.

Council Priority	Responding Sufficient/Appropriate
Sustainable Service	85%
Health and Resilience	85%
Service Excellence	84%
Diverse Housing	74%
Quality of Life	72%

COVID-19 Response

Respondents were invited to comment on the District’s response to COVID-19 by answering open-ended questions asking for feedback on up to three things the District did well and up to three things the District could improve upon.

Interestingly, the same two themes emerged from both questions -- patio seating/sidewalk expansions and communication. There were those who felt that the District did very well in those areas and those who felt that these were areas for improvement. Residents indicated appreciation for enhanced waste transfer stations. A few residents expressed frustration with matters outside District control (e.g. opening of library, early lack of mandatory masking). Some respondents remarked that they were unaware of the District’s efforts or unable to differentiate the District’s efforts from those of the Province.

Next Steps

The upcoming budget process will provide an opportunity for Council to consider service adjustments to respond to community feedback.