

## STAFF REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**PRESENTED:** July 22, 2025  
**FROM:** Communications  
**SUBJECT:** YOUR BUDGET INSIGHTS SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

**REPORT:** W25-011  
**FILE:** 0640-2026

### RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**That** the recommendation of the General Manager of Community Engagement and Cultural Services be endorsed.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

**That** the Committee of the Whole (COTW) recommend to Council to receive the Your Budget Insights Survey Summary, attached as Appendix A to COTW Report No. W25-011.

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee of the Whole (COTW) and the community with a summary of results from the “Your Budget Insights” survey (Survey). The Survey is one of the inputs prior to Council deliberations related to the 2026 - 2030 Five-Year Financial Plan. The Survey seeks high-level insights on current priorities for spending, community tolerance for trade-offs, the level of public service satisfaction with municipal services and the public’s understanding of the budget and its process.

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

The Survey was open from April 21 to June 9, 2025 on [engage.whistler.ca](https://engage.whistler.ca) and received 214 responses. This is the third year the public has provided input on spending priorities and service insights in this manner.

The intent of this early engagement opportunity was to:

- increase citizen understanding of municipal budgeting, spending and saving;
- raise awareness about the budget process and the varied municipal functions;
- identify where we can improve our communication to build public understanding of the budget process and budget; and
- clearly identify how and when the public can be involved and help shape decision-making.

The Survey is one part of the overall budget engagement strategy. Earlier this year the Finance team attended the April and June Add Your Voice events to talk budget. The following 2025 engagement events will continue to provide input throughout the budget lifecycle:

- Virtual drop-in sessions with Council
- Cents and Sensibility Quiz Night
- Coffee with Council
- Add Your Voice (fall events)
- Waste Water Treatment Plant tour

These events will coincide with a communications program aimed to increase budget literacy and raise awareness of upcoming budget events. As we move into this next phase of the budget process, education and discussion that supports openness and transparency and forms part of the plan to reach people with key information.

### **Analysis**

The Survey provides valuable insight into community perspectives but is not statistically representative of Whistler's population. The results reflect the views of those who chose to participate and should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive.

We saw a trend in responses that may reflect the local and national news cycle at the time. Themes included calls to continue working on affordable housing, affordability in Whistler, prioritizing needs over “nice to haves”, slowing or stopping taxation increases, requests for increased efficiency in our permitting processes, and staff remuneration.

For context, the news cycle during the survey period included the following stories:

- 2025 Canadian federal election
- Threats of annexation from the United States and subsequent market volatility
- Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) “Building Regulation Bylaw No. 2482, 2025” and “Building Permit Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 2483, 2025” update
- RMOW investments into Festival, Events and Animation programming
- Village of Pemberton announcing its 14.2 per cent tax increase for 2025
- Council approving the draft land-use plan for Whistler Creek West
- “Taluswood Park Reimagination” survey
- Council advancing Northlands rezoning to fall consultation
- “Tree Protection Bylaw No. 2435, 2025” and “Environmental Protection Bylaw No. 2426, 2025”

Demographic questions are valuable for helping Council and staff to understand who responded, and what voices might be missing. Respondents were asked for their age group, time lived in Whistler, household size, neighbourhood, and housing type.

When we compare demographics to 2024, we see similar trends in the survey respondents (see Figures 1 to 4 below) — except for the respondents' age, which shifted by a decade. We saw the highest response from the 35 to 44 age group in 2024, and the 45 to 54 age group in 2025. Otherwise, the respondents remained similar demographically.

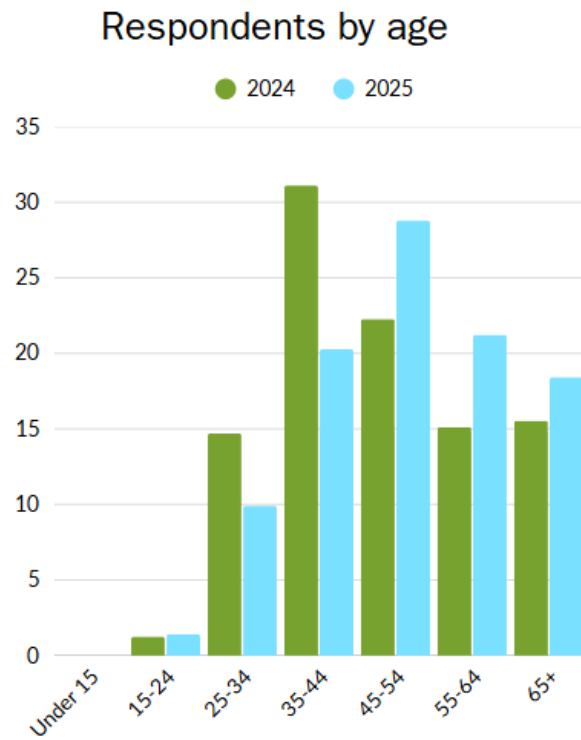


Figure 1

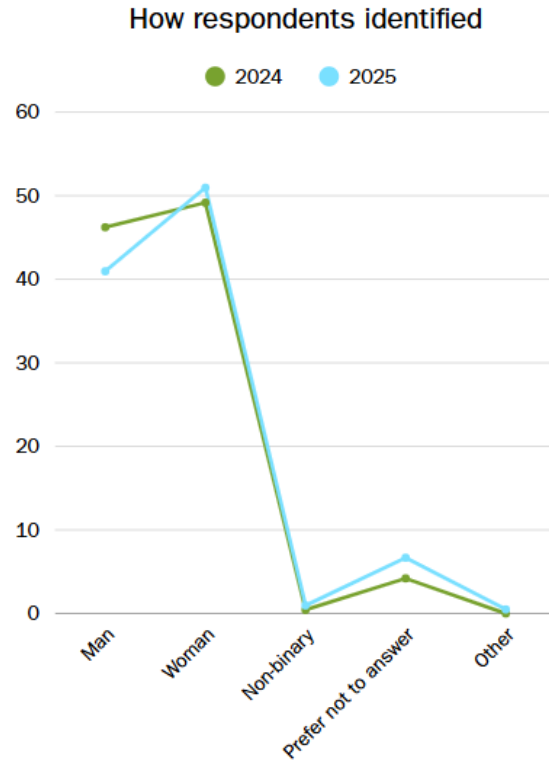


Figure 2

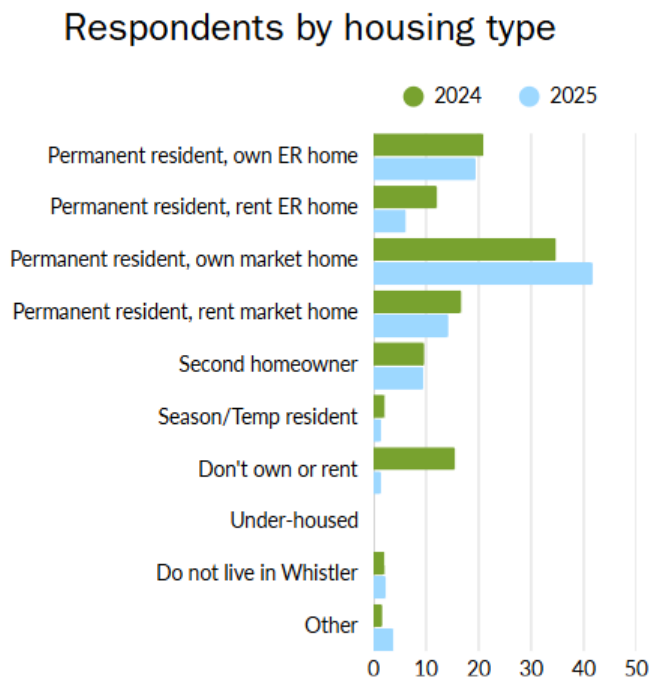


Figure 3

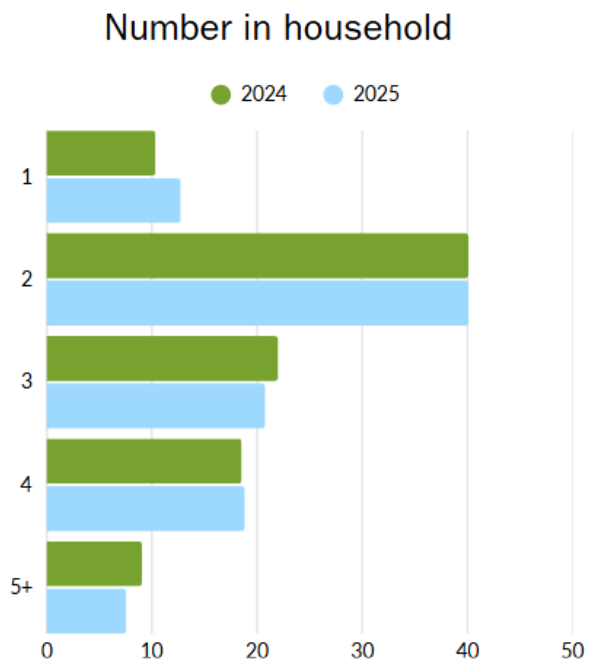


Figure 4

## Respondents by time lived in Whistler

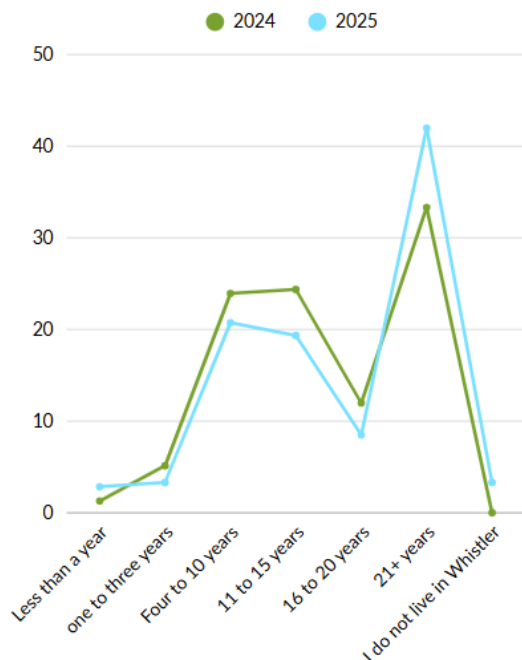


Figure 5

## Council priorities

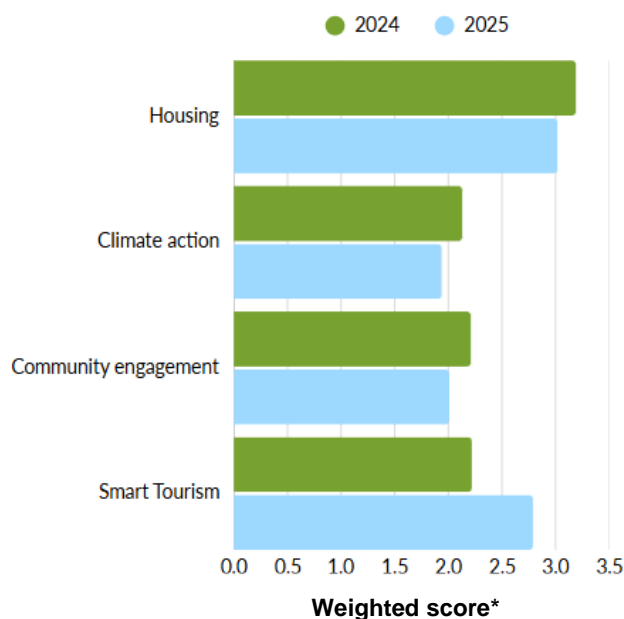


Figure 6

*\*The 'score' weighs the results by the number of contributions. Weights are applied in reverse order. In other words, a participant's most preferred choice (which they rank as number one) has the largest weight and their least preferred choice (which they rank in the last position) has the lowest weight of one. Therefore, the higher the score, the higher the priority.*

This data suggests that we are missing diverse voices, particularly representation from youth and seniors. The survey respondents closely align with the demographics that use our digital channels, which are heavily skewed toward mid-career adults in their, late '30s, '40s and '50s. This insight will help us plan future engagement work.

Housing was the highest ranked Council Priority, which was similar to 2024. The remaining Council Priorities continue to be closely ranked year to year, with Smart Tourism coming out slightly ahead of Community Engagement and Climate Action in 2025 (see Figure 6).

Encouragingly, we saw a slight increase in respondents' understanding of the budget process this year. To make the process and budget easier to understand, respondents wanted more clarity on decision-making and project prioritization, municipal spending versus tourism spending, process transparency and they wanted us to improve communication.

When we look closer at the three most/least important services by age groups, we see a variation:

### Under 35 years

Most important services:

1. Housing
2. Recreation facilities, roads maintenance, transit, emergency preparedness (tied)
3. Climate

Least important services:

1. Online services, building and planning permitting services (tied)
2. Recreation programs
3. Library, protective services, communications, climate action (tied)

### 35+ years

Most important services:

1. Housing
2. Roads maintenance
3. Emergency preparedness, transit (tied)

Least important services:

1. Online services
2. Climate action
3. Building and planning permitting services

If a service was listed as a “least important service” or a service to reduce or cut, it didn’t necessarily mean they were dissatisfied or wanted to cut the service entirely. For example, when we look at those who selected “climate action and environmental stewardship” as their least important service or as a service to cut or reduce, 10 respondents felt it wasn't the RMOW's responsibility, six respondents did not support the RMOW's climate action work and 21 respondents supported the RMOW's “climate action and environmental stewardship” work however they indicated these areas as a low priority or a service to cut because:

- they are happy with the current level of investment;
- they feel the program needs to be balanced with other municipal programs;
- they feel climate action work is at odds with tourism; or
- they feel it may need to be defunded for affordability sake and for balancing the budget.

When respondents ranked options for balancing the budget, “Continuing to offer the same service but at reduced hours” was the highest ranked option, followed closely by “reduce or eliminate certain services” and “Postpone infrastructure projects for new amenities”. “Increase residential property taxes” was least popular.

A total of 59 per cent of respondents said they receive good value for tax dollars, 61 per cent said they received good value for their utility user fees, a new area we probed in this year’s survey.

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## **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions**

September 24, 2024, [COTW Report No. W24-003](#): Budget Prioritization Survey Summary

### **2023-2026 Strategic Plan**

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan outlines the high-level direction of the RMOW to help shape community progress during this term of Council. The Strategic Plan contains four priority areas with various associated initiatives that support them. This section identifies how this report links to the Strategic Plan.

## Strategic Priorities

☐ Housing

*Expedite the delivery of and longer-term planning for employee housing*

☐ Climate Action

*Mobilize municipal resources toward the implementation of the Big Moves Climate Action Plan*

☒ Community Engagement

*Strive to connect locals to each other and to the RMOW*

☐ Smart Tourism

*Preserve and protect Whistler's unique culture, natural assets and infrastructure*

☐ Not Applicable

*Aligns with core municipal work that falls outside the strategic priorities but improves, maintains, updates and/or protects existing and essential community infrastructure or programs*

## Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

The Survey and Budget Engagement aligns with, and advances towards, the goals and objectives of the OCP by providing timely and accessible information to the public; building meaningful input opportunities and by creating a welcoming space for community members to connect with each other and Council.

- 8.3.1.1. Policy - Provide opportunities for residents to connect with each other during municipal initiatives, events and activities.
- 8.5.1.1. Policy - Provide appropriate and meaningful opportunities for community and partner engagement in policy-making and other decisions where relevant and appropriate.

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## BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Community input is a priority for Council and staff, and serves as one input into a complex and challenging budget process where Council must also consider the following data points and financial realities as they make their decisions:

- A growing population putting pressure on civic services, programs and facilities.
  - Immediate infrastructure investments that protect community health.
  - Visitation influenced by macroeconomic trends, weather and competition from other destinations.
  - Projected non-tax revenues including Municipal and Regional District Tax Program, Resort Municipality Initiative, fees and charges, grants and other external funding.
  - Building up Reserve levels that support short- and long-term asset management of the RMOW's infrastructure, whether pipes in the ground or our building assets.
  - Corporate Plans and Policies including the OCP, [Big Moves Climate Action Strategy](#).
  - Council Priorities.
  - The current economic climate.
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## LÍŁWAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the LÍłwat People, known in their language as L'il'wat7úl and the Squamish People, known in their language as the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for planning on unceded territories, as currently managed by the provincial government; achieve mutual objectives; and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy.

The RMOW's engagement design principles ask us to actively seek a diversity of input. As the RMOW evolves and builds its relationship with the LÍłwat People and the Squamish People, staff will seek their feedback and guidance on the best way to engage with their members living within, and outside of Whistler, who may wish to share their thoughts on the RMOW's budget decision-making.

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

☒ Inform    ☒ Consult    ☐ Involve    ☐ Collaborate    ☐ Empower

It is important to note that this is the Survey's third year and we are not seeing a broadening of the audience. In fact, it is quite the opposite. This product was innovative for the RMOW when we launched it, and it did seem our residents responded. Our social channels were just starting to function optimally that year after considerable work to ensure our social engagement was strategic, and the feedback, though limited, was well-rounded and robust. In the two years since, much has changed in social media, and the larger civic dialogue. Following bold moves to respond to the changing political landscape from the tech sector, mistrust of online communication and marketing has deepened. People are leaving platforms in record numbers and the behaviour of how each channel's algorithm behaves, and how citizens choose to engage with algorithm-manipulated environments, has changed. While these are still important tools in a communication program, it is time for us to question whether this tactic is prompting the right form of dialogue and feedback. This is work we will do in the coming year.

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## REFERENCES

Appendix A – "Your Budget Insights" What We Heard Report

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## SUMMARY

In undertaking the Survey, the RMOW receives a variety of perspectives on budget priorities from the community. Although not statistically relevant, the information provides context to help understand community needs, desires and priorities of those most engaged with the budget process to date. The insights from the budget survey, combined with upcoming budget-related engagement can help to inform budget deliberations when the draft Five-Year Financial Plan is presented to Council.

## **SIGN-OFFS**

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