



# City of Sun Prairie

Community Survey Report

November 4, 2025





**Our mission is to help community leaders gather, organize, and use data to make strategic decisions.**

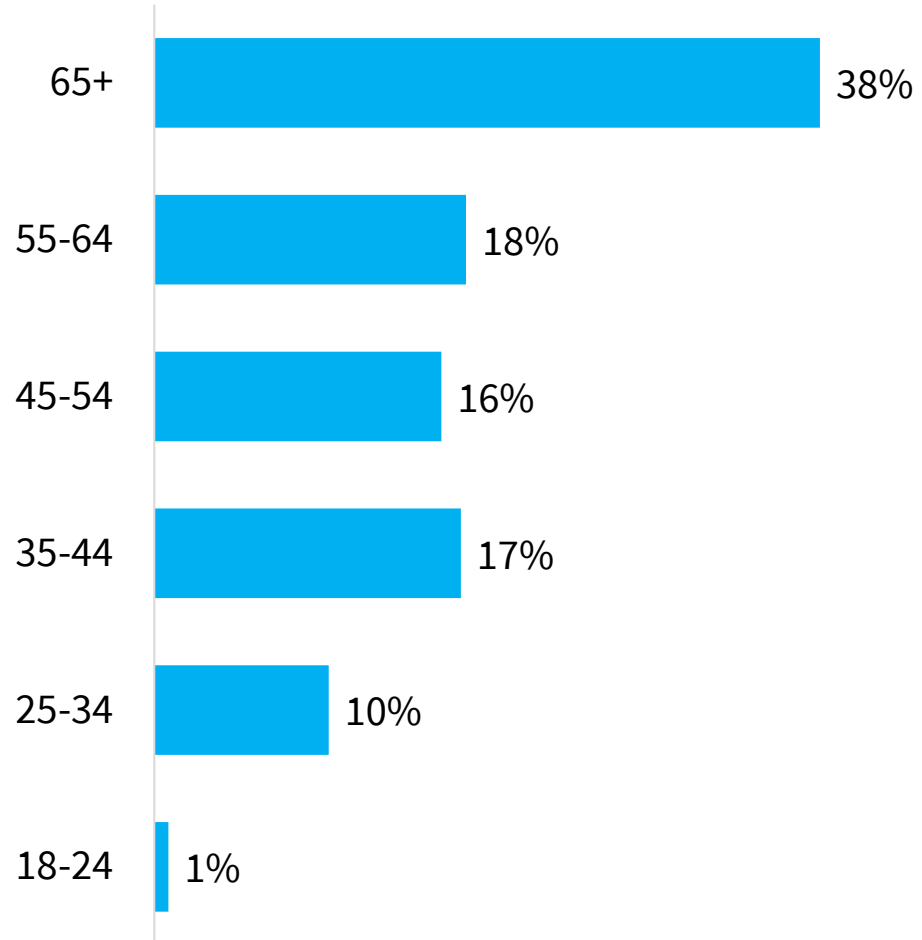
- Founded in **2002** to provide independent research
- Helped more than **1,300** communities navigate the strategic planning and referendum planning process

# Survey Information

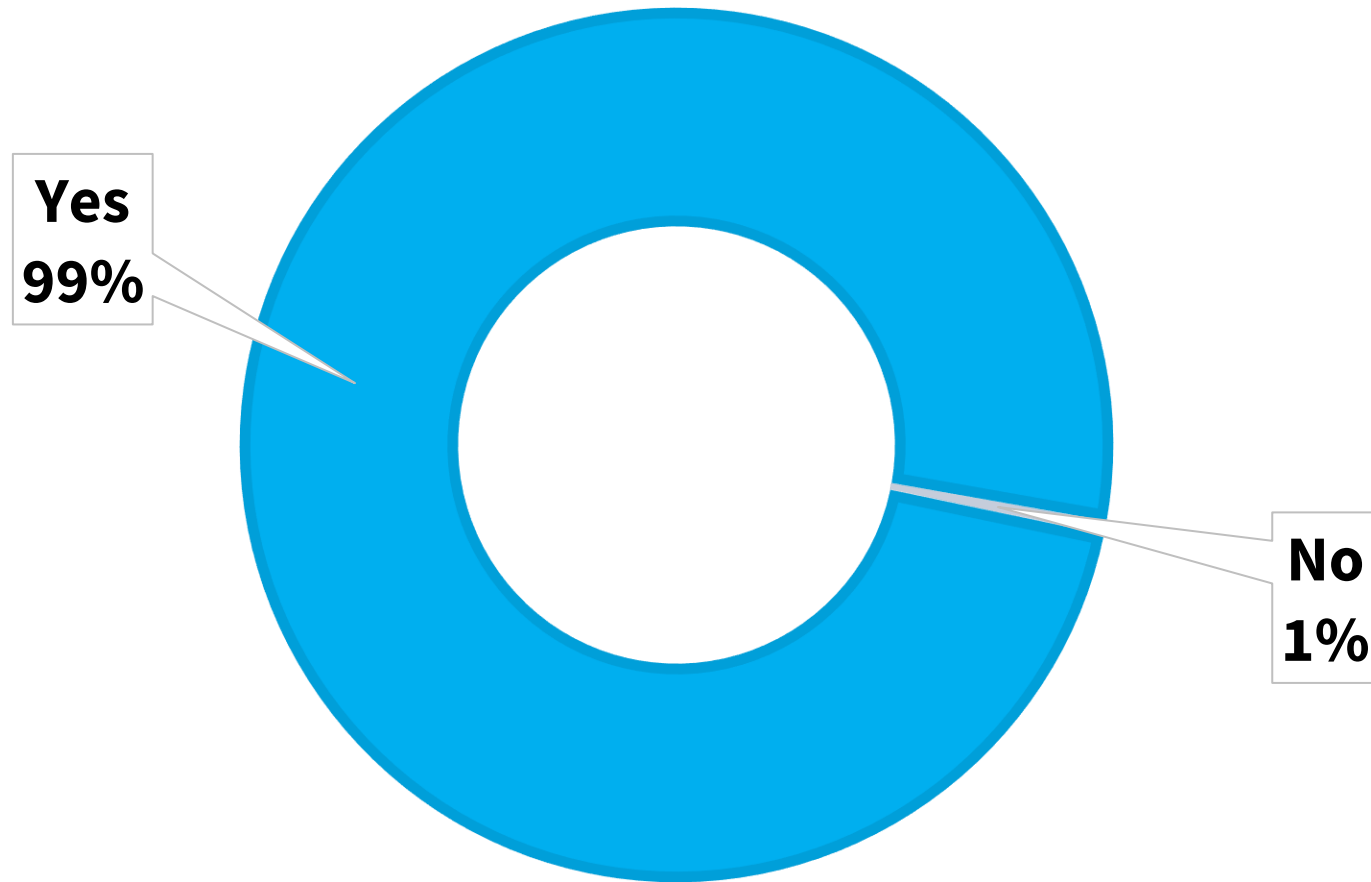
- **October 6, 2025** survey deadline
- **2,159** respondents (*376 needed for statistical significance*)
- **13%** response rate
- **+/- 2.2%** statistical margin of error



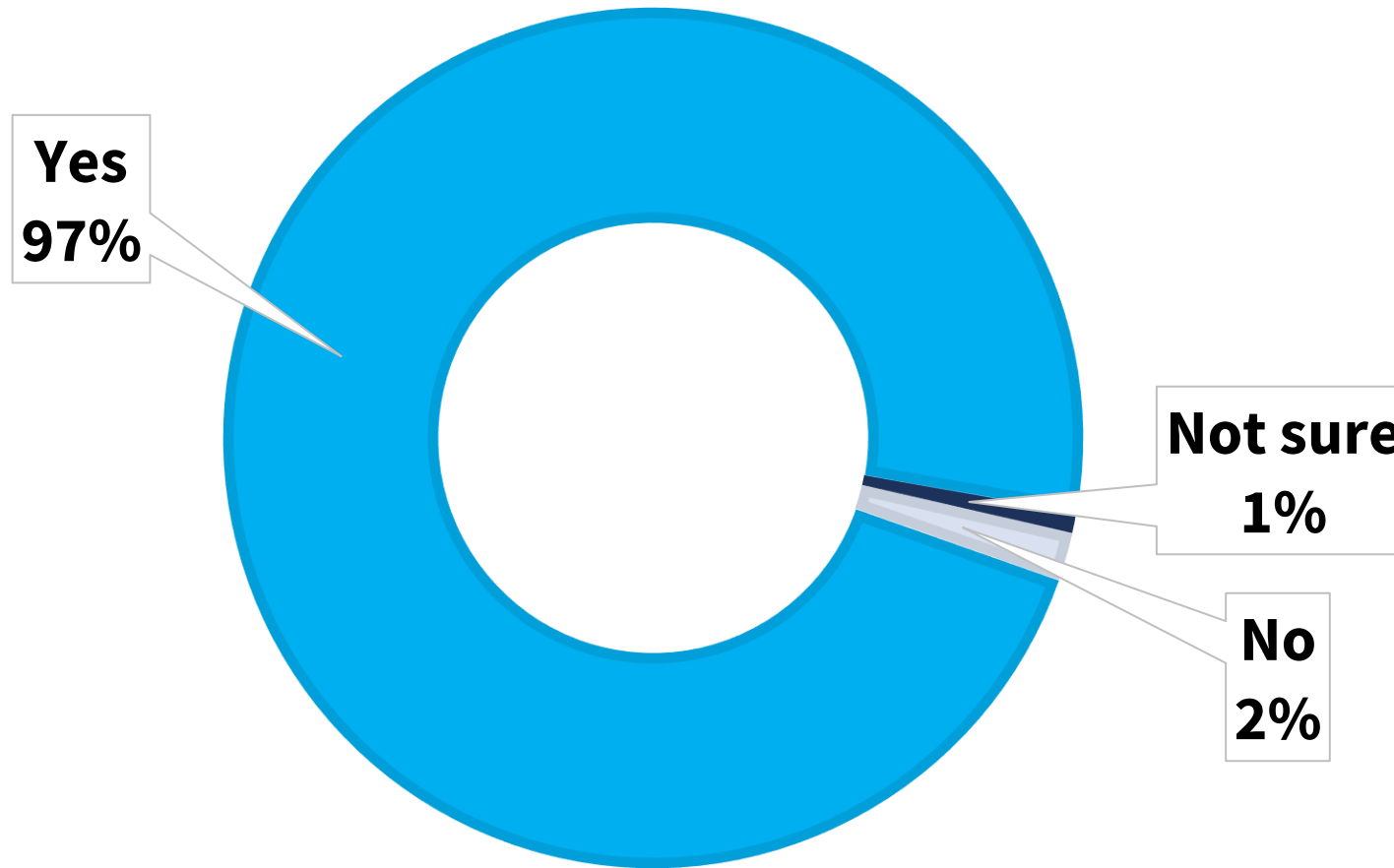
# What is your age?



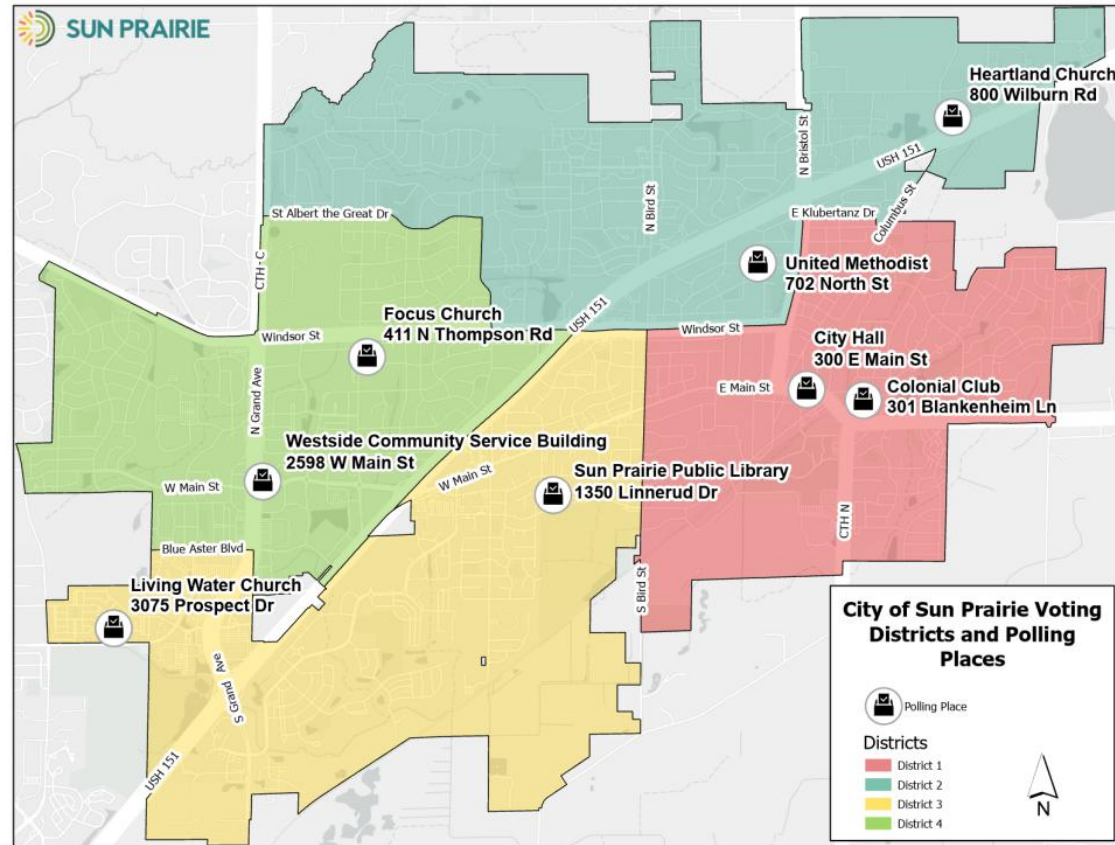
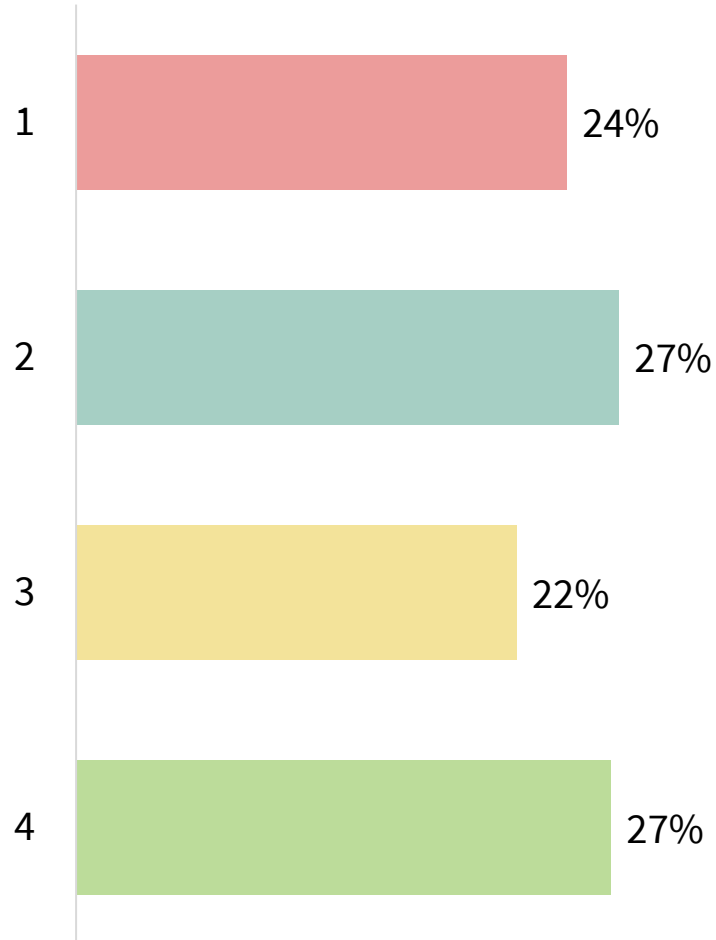
# Is your primary residence in the City?



# Are you registered to vote in the City?

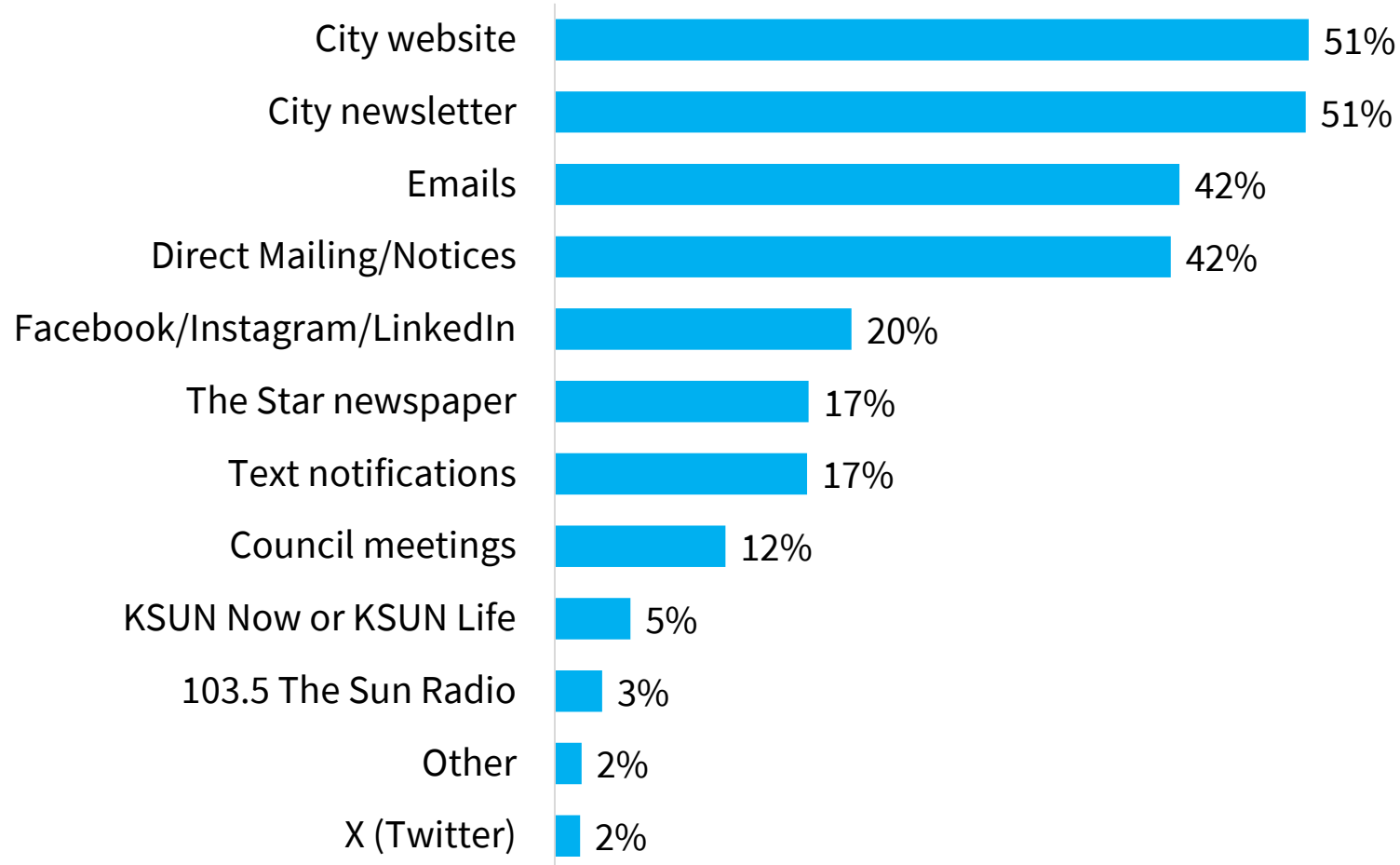


# In which District do you live?



County of Dane, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, US Census Bureau, USDA, USFWS

# How do you like to receive City information?



# Funding to Maintain Services



The City has limited options to address the budget challenges without reducing or eliminating services. Sun Prairie is not alone. Over the last 10 years, more than 75 Wisconsin municipalities have secured additional funding through a voter-approved operational referendum.

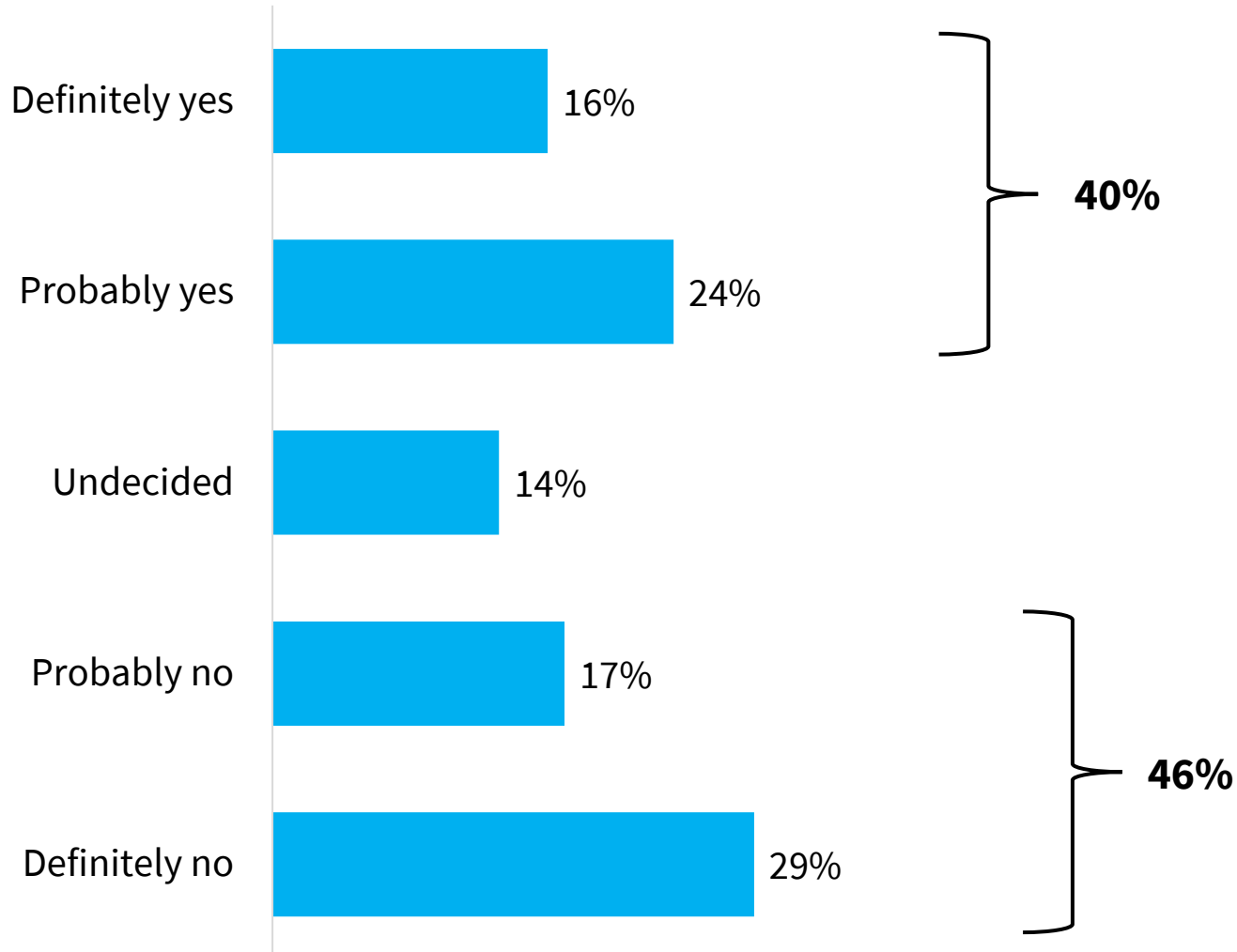
The City of Sun Prairie is also exploring this option. A referendum that provides *\$4.5 million per year on an ongoing (recurring) basis* would allow us to maintain current services for 2027 through 2029.

For more information, visit the City's referendum page at:  
<https://cityofsunprairie.com/fundingsolutions>

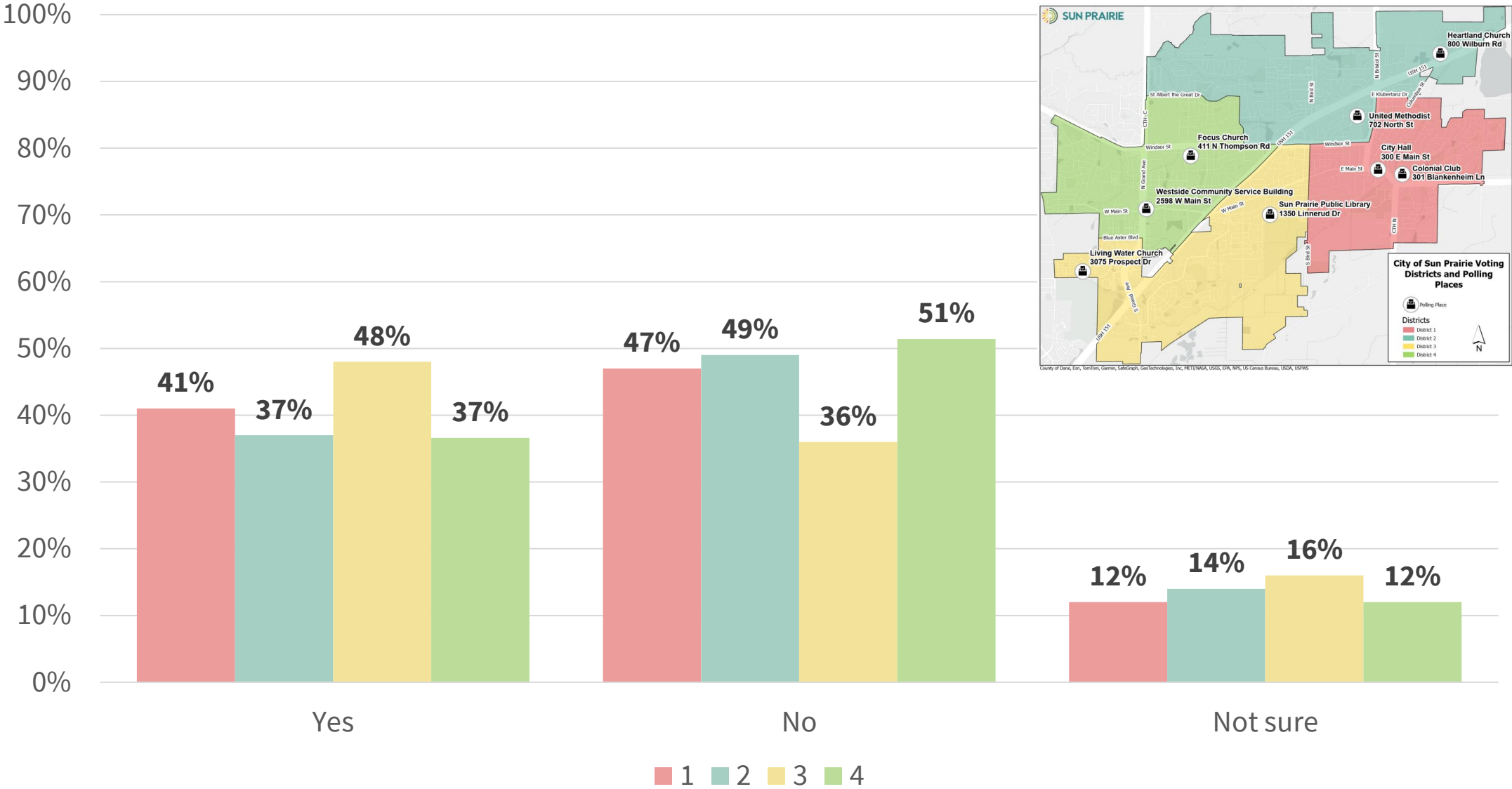


<i>How much would the referendum cost me?</i>			
<b>Amount of Property Value</b>	<b>Estimated City Annual Property Tax Increase <u>Over the 2024 Level</u></b>		
	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>	<b>2029 and beyond</b>
Per \$100,000	\$27	\$46	\$61
\$412,000 (Sun Prairie's average home value)	\$109	\$198	\$272

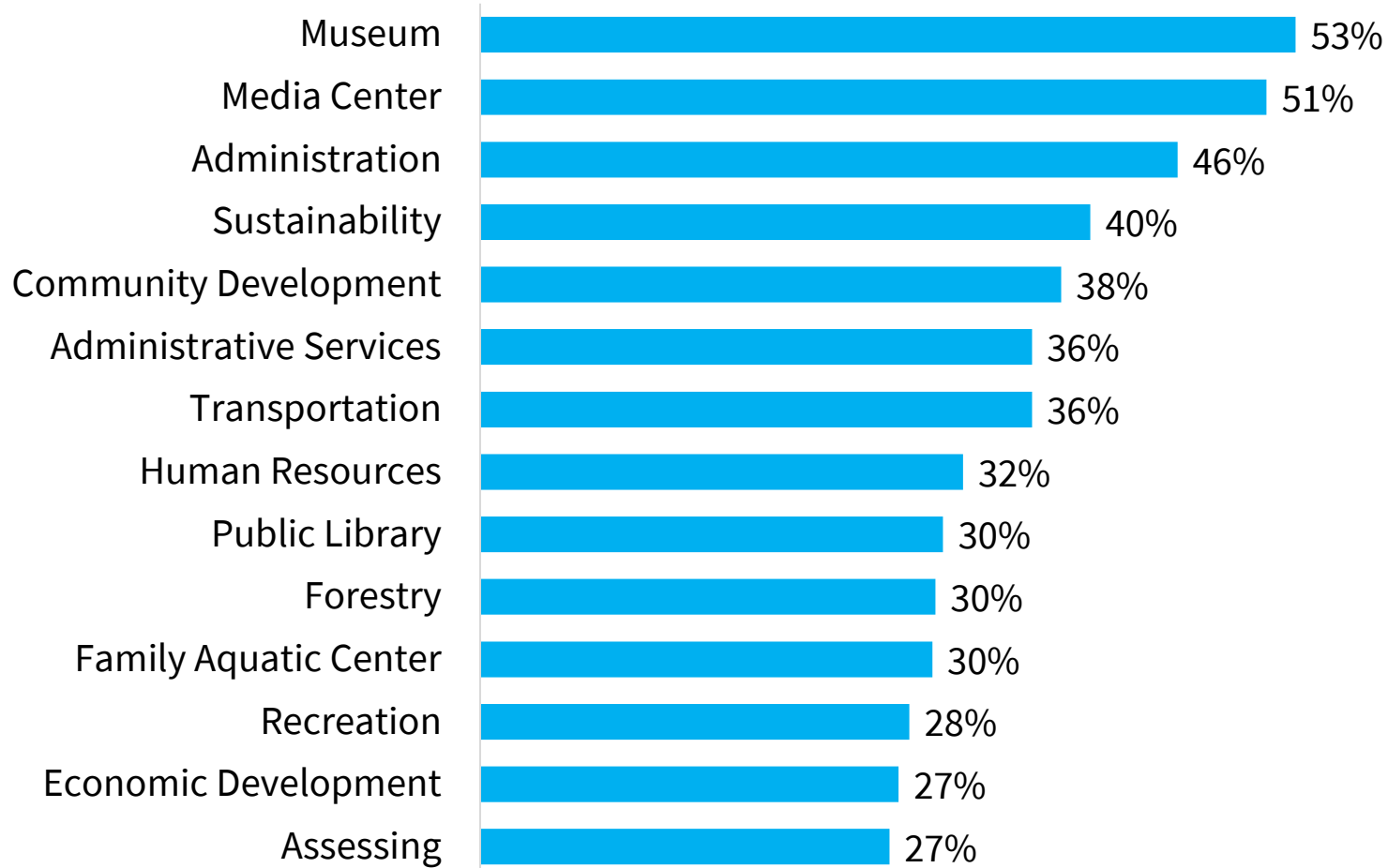
# Would you support a referendum that provides \$4.5 million per year to maintain current services?



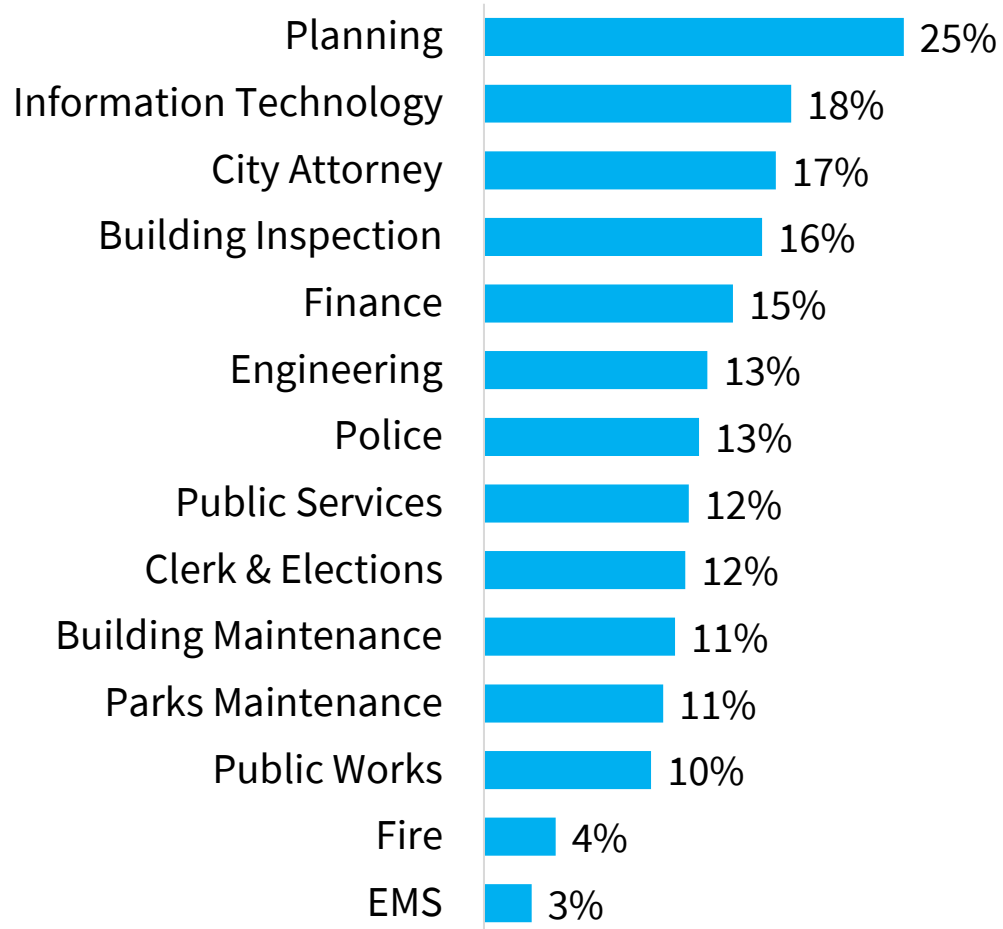
# Referendum Support by District



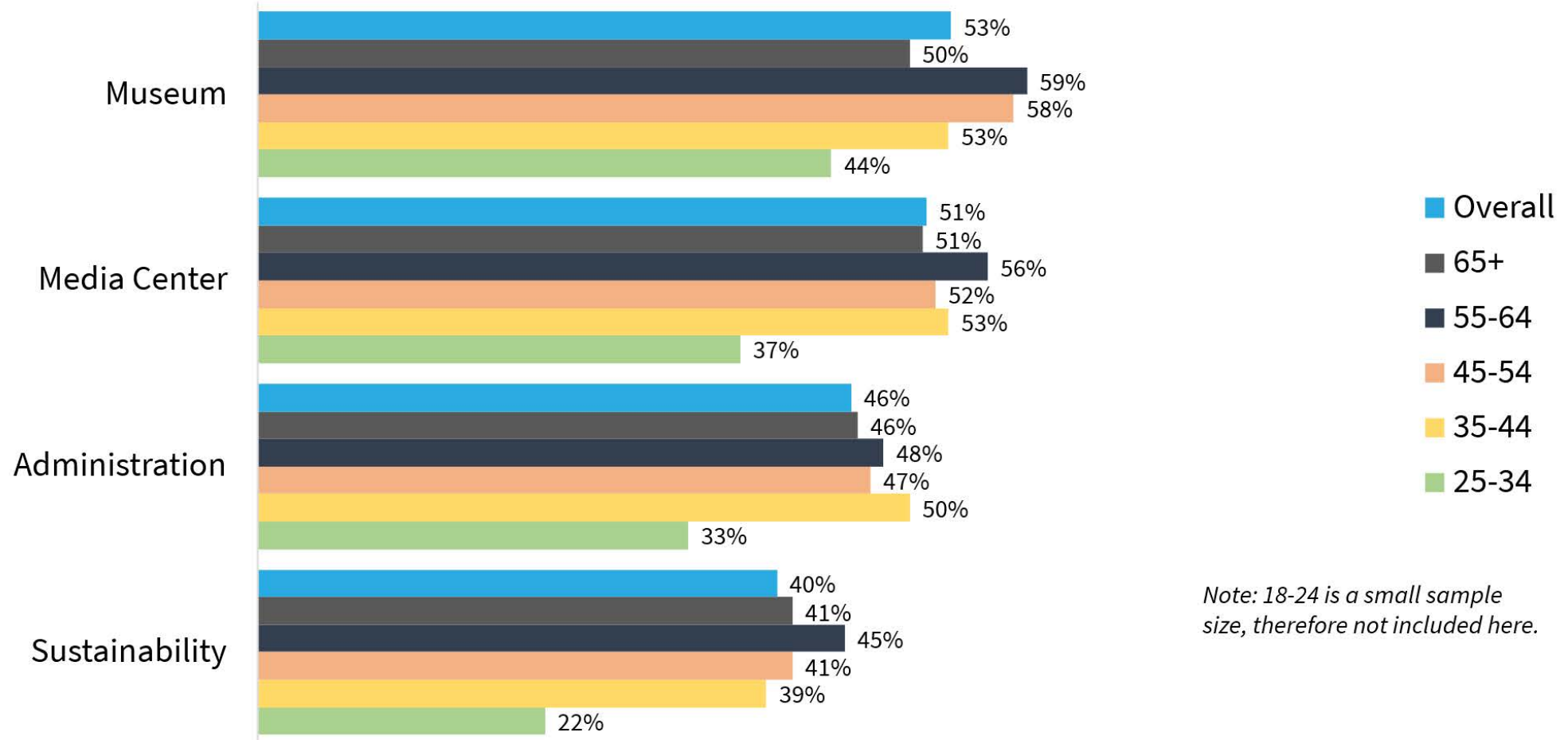
# Cost-Cutting Options (1/2)



# Cost-Cutting Options (2/2)



# Cost-Cutting Options (Age)



Note: 18-24 is a small sample size, therefore not included here.

# Investments in Services

Priority score is calculated based on High = 3, Medium = 2, Low = 1



Fire and EMS (Estimated cost: \$1.7M)		Priority Score = 2.36
Police (Estimated cost: \$1.8M)		Priority Score = 2.25
Public Services and Parks, Recreation, & Forestry (Estimated cost: \$300K)		Priority Score = 1.91
Library (Estimated cost: \$1M)		Priority Score = 1.59

■ High   ■ Medium   ■ Low

# Funding to Invest in Services

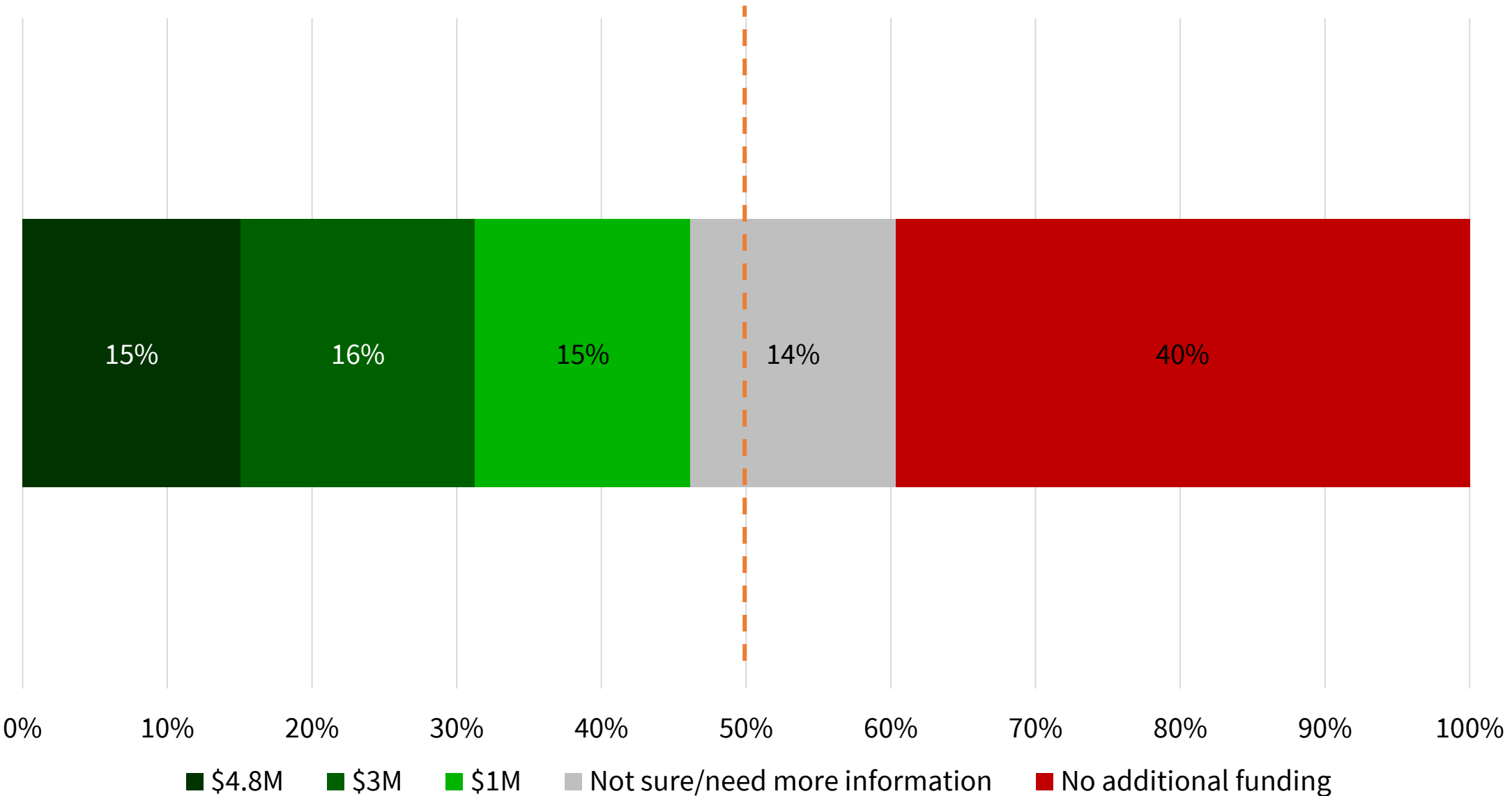


The total cost of all service investments in the plan is nearly \$9.3 million. We know doing all of this at one time may not be realistic. We will use our community's input to determine which services, if any, can be funded at this time.

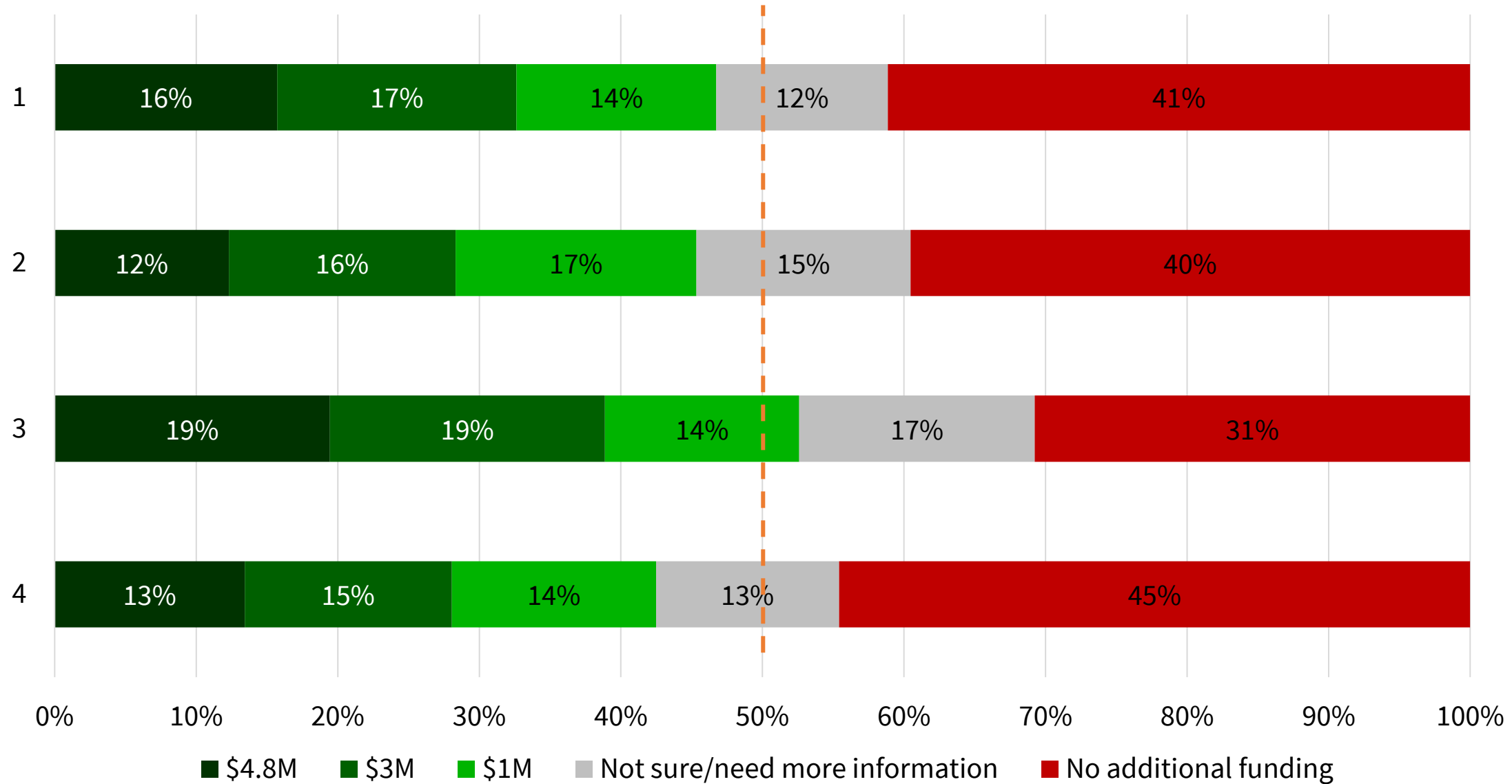
Services	Cost
Maintaining Current Services	\$4.5 million
Police	\$1.8 million
Fire and EMS	\$1.7 million
Library	\$1.0 million
Public Services and Parks, Recreation, & Forestry	<u>\$300,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9.3 million</b>

Estimated Annual Property Tax Increase by 2029 For Each <u>Additional</u> Funding Amount			
<b>Base Referendum</b>	<b>\$4.5 million</b>	<b>\$4.5 million</b>	<b>\$4.5 million</b>
<b>Additional Funding</b>	<b>\$1 million</b>	<b>\$3 million</b>	<b>\$4.8 million</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5.5 million</b>	<b>\$7.5 million</b>	<b>\$9.3 million</b>
Per \$100,000*	\$74	\$102	\$126
\$412,000 (the average home value in Sun Prairie)*	\$333	\$456	\$565

# Additional Funding Support (*All residents*)



# Additional Funding Support by District



# Survey findings



- There is sufficient public support to consider pursuing a referendum on the ballot.
- With 40% survey support for the proposed \$4.5 million plan to maintain existing services, it is unlikely to be approved by voters.
- The City should consider a reduced amount on the ballot as referendum support typically increases as the tax impact decreases.

# NEXT STEPS – Mueller Communications



- 1. REVIEW & DISCUSS:** City Council will review and discuss survey results and other key information to determine the best path forward for the community.
- 2. COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT:** Mueller Communications remains on standby to execute a communications strategy to support public education efforts, as appropriate once a decision is reached.



# Thank you!



COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

# Appendix



# Financial Challenges



The City has taken steps to contain costs and find efficiencies, including:

- Secured \$7.4 million in grants for road projects.
- Implemented a forestry gravel bed system, reducing tree planting costs and enabling in-house planting instead of contractors, saving \$40,000 annually.
- Expanded opportunities for community volunteers, saving \$89,000 annually for the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.
- Collaborated with State and Federal partners for reimbursement of \$42,000 of police operational expenses.
- Partnered with the State Department of Health Services to implement supplemental payment programs for Medicaid reimbursement for EMS.
- Competitively bid health insurance and increased employee cost-sharing.

Even with these actions, the City projects a \$4.5 million deficit because:

- State and local funding has not kept up with increasing costs for equipment, supplies, compensation, and contracted services.
- State law only allows us to increase local property taxes based on the percentage of net new construction within Sun Prairie in any given year.
- Even with Sun Prairie's 24% population growth since 2015 (compared to statewide growth of 3%), net new construction has not kept pace with increasing costs.

# Looking Ahead

City leaders are committed to providing a high quality-of-life for all residents by investing in public safety, parks, bike facilities, transit, sustainability, and community programming and events.

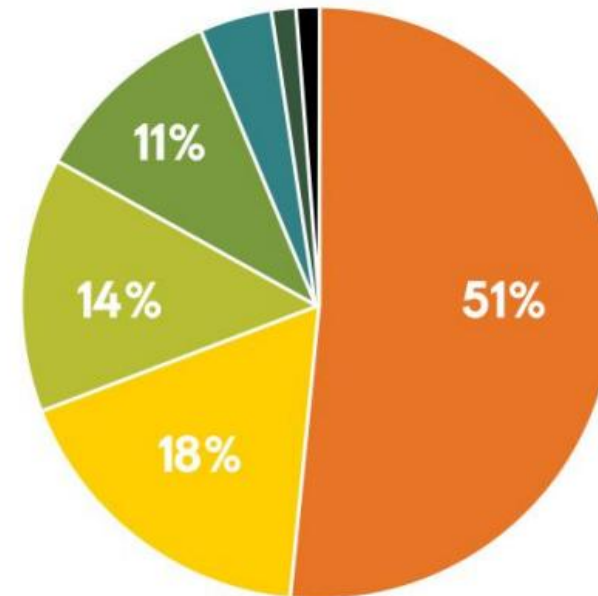
Nearly 80% of our budget pays for personnel. Therefore, any significant budget cuts would require cutting staff and reducing services.

*For more information, visit:*  
<https://cityofsunprairie.com/gov101>



## SPENDING BY FUNCTIONAL AREA

- Public Safety
- General Government
- Culture, Recreation & Education
- Public Works
- Conservation & Development
- Contingency/ Fund Balance
- Health & Human Services



# Cost-Cutting Options

If voters do not support the operational referendum, we would need to cut a total of 34 staff by 2029 (15% of the workforce), which will lead to service reductions. The City has not determined which departments would be reduced. Therefore, please check any areas you believe should be cut/reduced:

To see more information on current staffing levels, visit <https://cityofsunprairie.com/2025Staffing>



# Investments in Services



The operational referendum could be expanded to provide investments in services for our growing community. These investments would be made over the next three years.

What priority would you place on expanding the services below?	
<p><b>Police (Estimated cost: \$1.8 million)</b></p> <p>The department has fewer officers per capita than similar communities and falls below the national staffing average. Community policing is a core priority, but growing call volumes will reduce the department's ability to participate in events, school programs, and neighborhood outreach. The department has had to rely on overtime hours, which cost \$295,752 in 2024 and increases officer burnout.</p> <p><b>To lessen overtime demands and continue department priorities, the City could add eight full-time positions (six patrol officers, one patrol sergeant, and one crime analyst).</b></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> High</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Medium</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Low</p>
<p><b>Fire and EMS (Estimated cost: \$1.7 million)</b></p> <p>Annual calls for service have increased by more than 5,000 since 2015. Because of this, response times for EMS arrival increased by more than two minutes in 2023.</p> <p><b>To improve response times, the City could add 13 full-time positions (10 paramedics, one firefighter, one deputy EMS chief, and one fire inspector).</b></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> High</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Medium</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Low</p>

# Investments in Services



<p><b>Library (Estimated cost: \$1 million)</b></p> <p>Attendance at library events and programs has risen by 75% over the past 10 years and demand for technology services continues to increase. Despite this and the expansion of the library, we have fewer staff than peer communities.</p> <p><b>To support increased service demands, the City could add two full-time staff, seven part-time staff, three teen interns, and increase hours for existing positions.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> High</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Medium</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Low</li></ul>
<p><b>Public Services and Parks, Recreation, &amp; Forestry (Estimated cost: \$300,000)</b></p> <p>The Public Services Department is responsible for street maintenance, snow removal, salting, and stormwater/wastewater management. Demands on this department have increased significantly. However, this department has fewer staff than peer communities and replacing equipment has become more expensive. Parks, Recreation, &amp; Forestry maintain more than 400 acres of parkland and manage recreation programming. Staffing shortfalls mean parks are not mowed, maintenance gets backlogged, and repairs and facility openings are delayed.</p> <p><b>To maintain current operations, the City could add one full-time street maintenance worker. To address increasing service demands, the City could add one full-time parks maintenance specialist and a part-time neighborhood navigator program manager.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> High</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Medium</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Low</li></ul>