



DATE: October 13, 2020

TO: Anne McEnery-Ogle, Mayor
City Council

FROM: Eric J. Holmes, City Manager

RE: Public Outreach Initiatives / 2021-2022 Biennial Budget

Vancouver continues making measured progress toward becoming a safer, more welcoming, vibrant, and prosperous city.

The 2021-2022 Recommended Budget was formulated around the touchstones of the community vision, the City's strategic plan, and adopted financial policies. It also considered input from a variety of sources, including the substantial and robust community engagement associated with the A Stronger Vancouver initiative, the 2019 community survey, and the City's new on-line budget education and engagement tool.

It is important to recognize that each of the tools outlined below were used as information sources, but did not direct preparation of the recommended budget.

Stronger Vancouver (2019-2020)

In July 2019, the City embarked on a second phase of public engagement on the Stronger Vancouver initiative in order to garner community feedback on the capital projects, programs and services in the proposed Stronger Vancouver plan.

The goal of the outreach was to educate and raise awareness about the initiative, gather feedback on how important each of the proposed projects and services are to residents and to hear ideas about the community's priorities for the future of Vancouver.

The City used various outreach strategies – including tabling at community events, open houses, an online survey, discussion groups, focus groups and more – to reach as many members of the community as possible.

Over the course of these outreach activities, the City engaged with more than 2300 community members regarding their priorities and preferences for the future of Vancouver. **A link to the Stronger Vancouver Community Engagement & Feedback Report can be found [here](#).**

Community Survey

As Council is aware, during the winter of 2020, ETC Institute administered a community survey on behalf of the City to assess overall satisfaction with the delivery of major city services and help determine priorities for the community as part of the City's ongoing service delivery and budget planning process.

A five-page survey was administered by mail and online to a random sample of Vancouver residents. Of the households contacted, a total of 454 completed surveys were returned. The results for the random sample show a 95% level of confidence. The results of the survey were originally presented to the City Council at their July 11, 2020 retreat. **A full copy of the Executive Report is available [here](#).**

It is worthy to note that the survey sample appears to deviate from Vancouver demographics in a way that might influence results. For example, the survey sample reflects 67% homeownership, where latest data from the census indicates a homeownership rate of 51%. In addition, at 27% the sample appears to reflect a disproportionately high number of retirees relative to the total population. 8% of respondents indicated they were not employed, at a time when reported unemployment was about 4%. Other considerations are that the survey was conducted prior to the pandemic and resulting recession, as well as preceded the emergence of racial justice as a prominent and significant community issue. Additionally, a traditional survey tool like this is generally not effective in accounting for underrepresented voices and perspectives in the community.

Budget Prioritization Tool

During the full month of September, the City offered an online budget simulation tool, Balancing Act, to educate residents about the City budget categories and enable feedback to help inform the City Manager's 2021-2022 recommended budget. The tool was intended to be both educational that illustrates the challenges of trade-offs at a very high level as well as gather high level feedback about tradeoffs. It was the first time the City had used a tool such as this and looks forward to refining it for future budget cycles. The interactive page garnered over 1,000 views and received 354 total submissions. Additional feedback was also gathered via six surveys and an idea board on the Be Heard Vancouver project page. An executive summary of results is attached for Council's reference. It is notable the stark difference between the result from this non-scientific, self-selected engagement tool and the community survey results that historically (and again in 2020) rank public safety and police among the highest priorities for the community and among the highest satisfaction levels of city services.

City of Vancouver Balancing Act Summary

Project Description: Between September 1 and 30, 2020 the City offered an online budget simulation tool, Balancing Act, to educate residents about the City budget categories and to enable feedback to help inform the City Manager's 2021-2022 biennium recommended budget. The following is an overview of the results including stats and charts. Additional feedback was also gathered via six surveys and an ideas board on a Be Heard Vancouver project page. A summary of this is in process.

(Please note, users were able to make adjustments to "Expenses" but not "Revenues" in the simulation)

"Balancing Act" Budget Simulation Tool Stats:

- 1,107 Total Page Views
- 8m 25s Average Time on Site
- 354 Total Submissions

Top Expenses Increased - Average of All Increases Across All Submissions:

- Community Economic Development: +\$1,772,227
- Parks and Recreation Department: +\$1,336,188
- Miscellaneous Operations: +\$1,334,970

Top Expenses Decreased - Average of All Decreases Across All Submissions:

- Police Department: -\$8,789,139
- Parks and Recreation Department: -\$1,334,375
- Community Economic Development: -\$1,106,029

Themes of Comments:

Among the more than 500 comments received, some common themes included:

•City employee pay and benefit reductions ranging from 1% and 10% pay cuts in addition to reducing healthcare benefits to make up the budget deficit.

- Reduction and re-allocation of VPD funds to support mental health, drug/alcohol addiction services, and homeless resources.
- More significant infrastructure investment throughout the city.
- Other suggestions ranged from making individual neighborhoods responsible for maintenance of their parks, to automating parts of city operations to reduce staff levels, to stopping all payments to other government entities.

Category Breakdown:

Revenues:

- **General Fund – Total Budgeted Amount: \$177,000,000** *(Users could not adjust these amounts.)*
 - Business License Fees, Charges, Surcharges, and Permits: \$10,600,000
 - Fines: \$1,500,000
 - Grants: \$5,800,000
 - Property Taxes: \$50,668,492
 - Sales/Retail Taxes: \$46,000,000
 - State Shared Revenues and Transfers: \$4,700,000
 - Utility Taxes on City and Privately Owned Utilities: \$57,700,000

Expenses:

- **City Administration: Operations & Administration - Total Budgeted Amount: \$5,000,000**
 - Average Submitted Amount: \$4,654,802
 - Average Submitted Increased Amount: \$187,500
 - Average Submitted Decreased Amount: \$446,707
 - Total Budget Increases Submitted: 20
 - Total Budget Decreases Submitted: 210
 - Total Submission Unchanged: 124
- **Community Economic Development: Operations & Administration – Total Budgeted Amount: \$11,700,000**
 - Average Submitted Amount: \$11,647,449
 - Average Submitted Increased Amount: \$1,772,227
 - Average Submitted Decreased Amount: \$1,106,029
 - Total Budget Increases Submitted: 76

- Total Budget Decreases Submitted: 191
 - Total Submission Unchanged: 87
- **Fire Department: Operations & Administration – Total Budgeted Amount: \$37,400,000**
 - Average Submitted Amount: \$37,340,836
 - Average Submitted Increased Amount: \$755,633
 - Average Submitted Decreased Amount: \$686,913
 - Total Budget Increases Submitted: 54
 - Total Budget Decreases Submitted: 109
 - Total Submission Unchanged: 191
- **Police Department: Patrol Operations & Administration – Total Budgeted Amount: \$58,500,000**
 - Average Submitted Amount: \$50,508,305
 - Average Submitted Increased Amount: \$871,141
 - Average Submitted Decreased Amount: \$8,789,139
 - Total Budget Increases Submitted: 23
 - Total Budget Decreases Submitted: 262
 - Total Submission Unchanged: 69
- **Justice Support Services: Total Budgeted Amount: \$20,200,000**
 - Average Submitted Amount: \$20,013,977
 - Average Submitted Increased Amount: \$784,235
 - Average Submitted Decreased Amount: \$755,304
 - Total Budget Increases Submitted: 55
 - Total Budget Decreases Submitted: 150
 - Total Submission Unchanged: 149
- **Parks and Recreation Department: Operations & Administration – Total Budgeted Amount: \$17,500,000**
 - Average Submitted Amount: \$17,127,754
 - Average Submitted Increased Amount: \$1,336,188
 - Average Submitted Decreased Amount: \$1,334,375
 - Total Budget Increases Submitted: 74
 - Total Budget Decreases Submitted: 173
 - Total Submission Unchanged: 107

- **Streets, Infrastructure, Capital & Grounds Maintenance: Operations & Administration – Total Budgeted Amount: \$22,700,000**
 - Average Submitted Amount: \$22,787,006
 - Average Submitted Increased Amount: \$879,653
 - Average Submitted Decreased Amount: \$583,168
 - Total Budget Increases Submitted: 81
 - Total Budget Decreases Submitted: 138
 - Total Submission Unchanged: 135

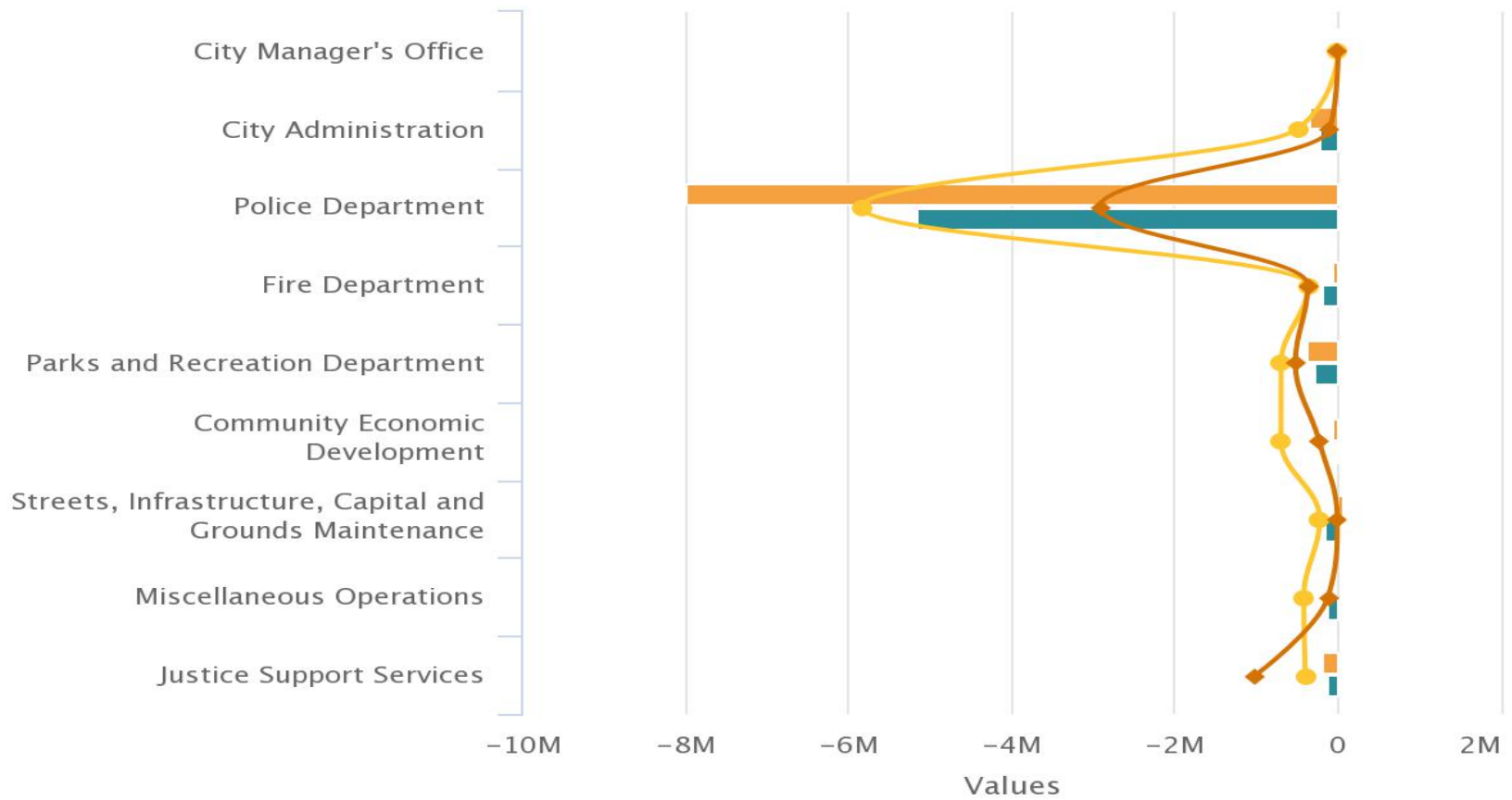
- **Miscellaneous Operations: 2 Sub-categories - Total Budgeted Amount: \$12,000,000** *(Debt Service of \$4,200,000 is included in this amount. Users were unable to change this amount.)*
 - Average Submitted Amount: \$12,023,266
 - Average Submitted Increased Amount: \$1,334,970
 - Average Submitted Decreased Amount: \$744,432
 - **General Government Support Services and Grants: Total Budgeted Amount: \$1,600,000**
 - Average Submitted Amount: \$1,757,424
 - Average Submitted Increased Amount: \$416,900
 - Average Submitted Decreased Amount: \$133,474
 - Total Budget Increases Submitted: 50
 - Total Budget Decreases Submitted: 123
 - Total Submission Unchanged: 181
 - **Support of Community Partners: Total Budgeted Amount: \$6,200,000**
 - Average Submitted Amount: \$6,065,842
 - Average Submitted Increased Amount: \$763,131
 - Average Submitted Decreased Amount: \$609,562
 - Total Budget Increases Submitted: 57
 - Total Budget Decreases Submitted: 179
 - Total Submission Unchanged: 118

Demographic & Use Charts:

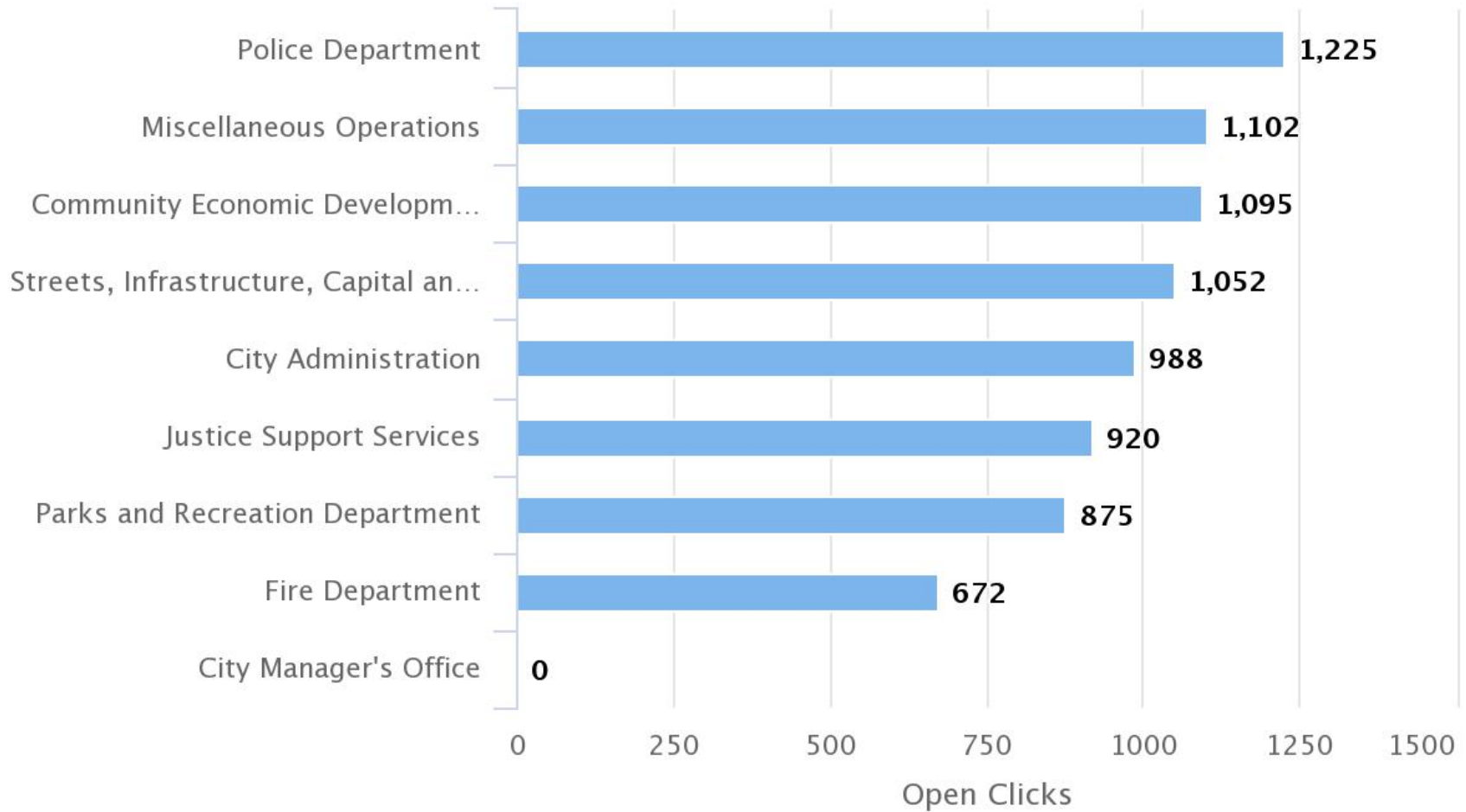
Expenses Budget Comparison

Decreases vs. Increases (Click to hide)

- Average Submission Increase/Decrease
- Average Clicked Increase/Decrease
- Median Submission Increase/Decrease
- Mode of Clicked Increase/Decrease

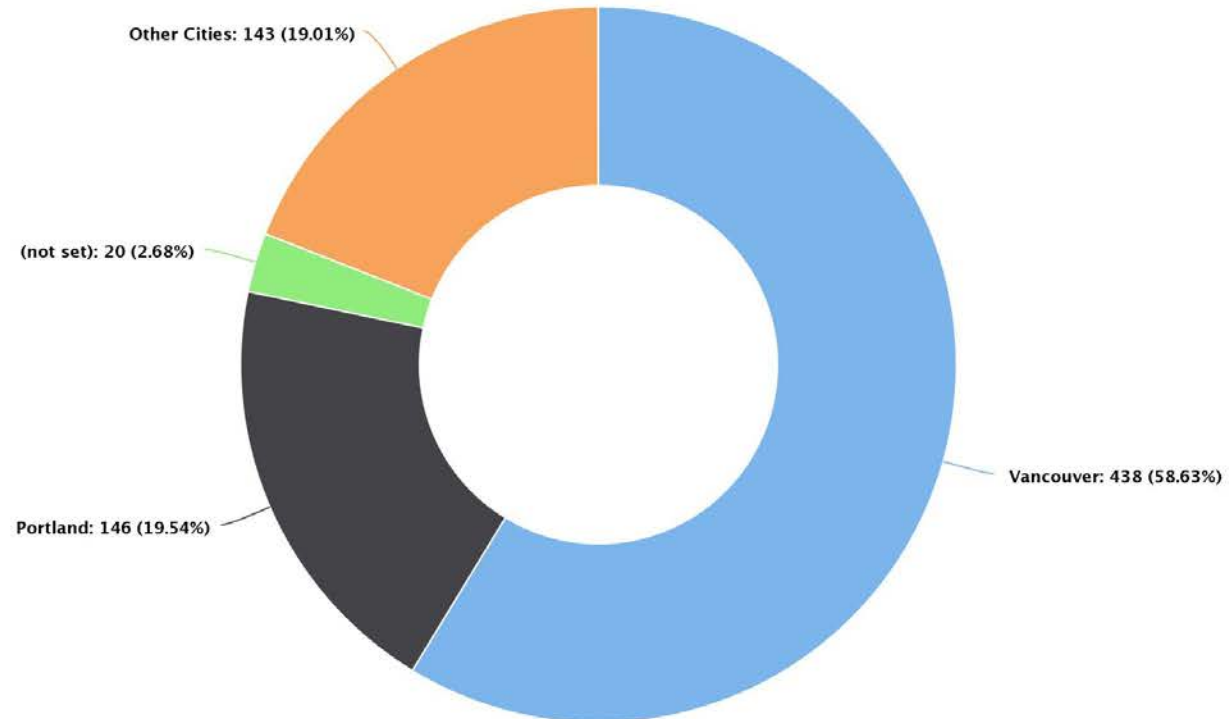


Opens by Expense Category



Sessions by City

Based on where Google Analytics thinks the user is when accessing the simulation.

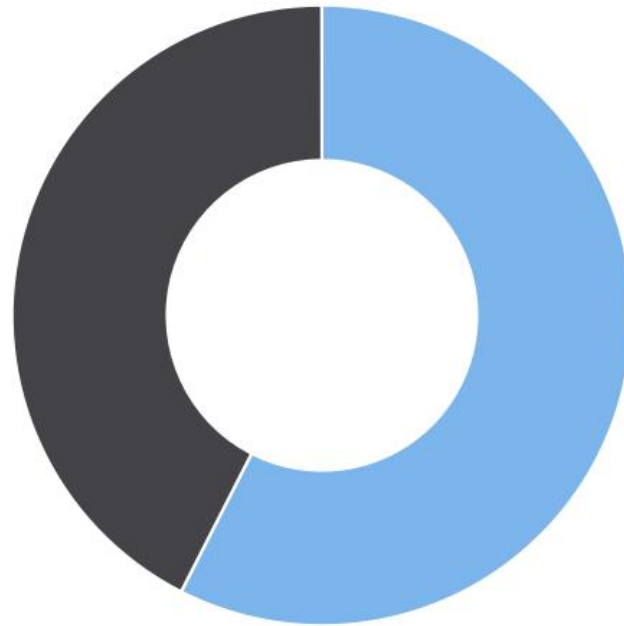


Sessions by Age



● 18-24 ● 25-34 ● 35-44 ● 45-54 ● 55-64 ● 65+

Sessions by Gender



● male ● female

Zip Code



● 98661
● 98682
● 98665

● 98660
● 98663
● 98686

● 98683
● 98664
● 98685

● 98684
● 98662
● Other Zip Codes