

# FY 2024 Budget Engagement

Engagement Period: Dec. 14, 2022 - Jan. 20, 2023

February 1, 2023



# FY 2024 BUDGET ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The following shows a snapshot of the FY 2024 budget engagement approach and insights from the community.

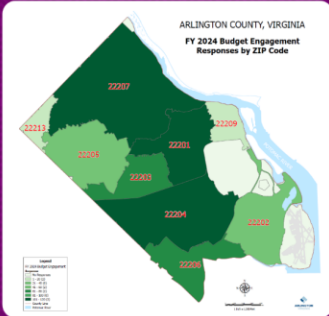
## Who participated?



- 1,678 online participants
- 717 from pop-up engagements
- 38 submitted paper forms
- 3 participated via voicemail

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**2,436 Total Participants**

Responses came from community members in nearly all Arlington zip codes and 60 neighborhoods.

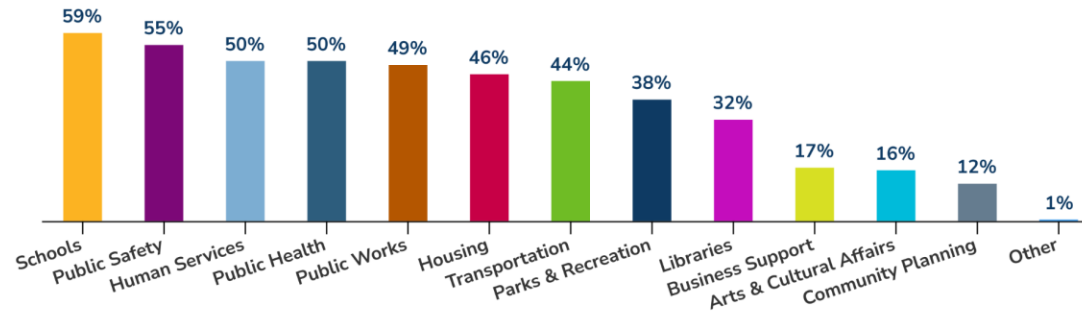


## How were participants reached?

- Individual outreach to community partners, including multi-family buildings.
- 17 pop-up engagements hosted at food distributions, multi-family buildings and grocery stores.
- Distributed 500 promotional business cards in the community.

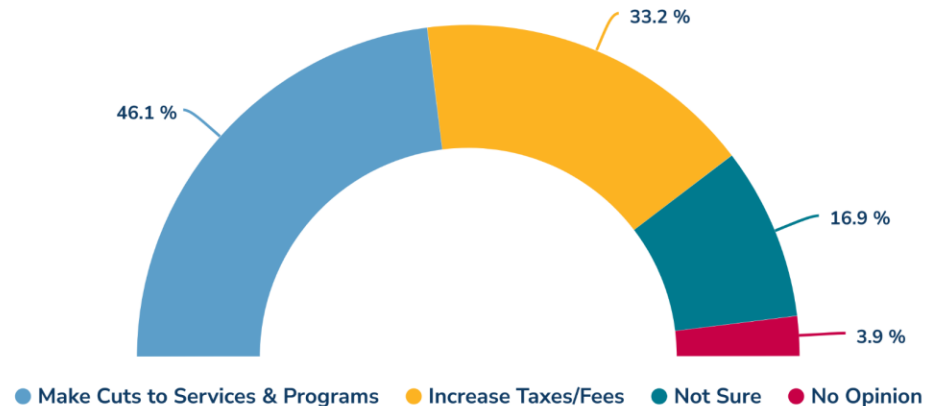
## Budget Priorities

Participants were asked to select 5 services and programs they would recommend the County keep as top priorities in the FY 2024 Budget.  
(2,268 respondents answered the question)



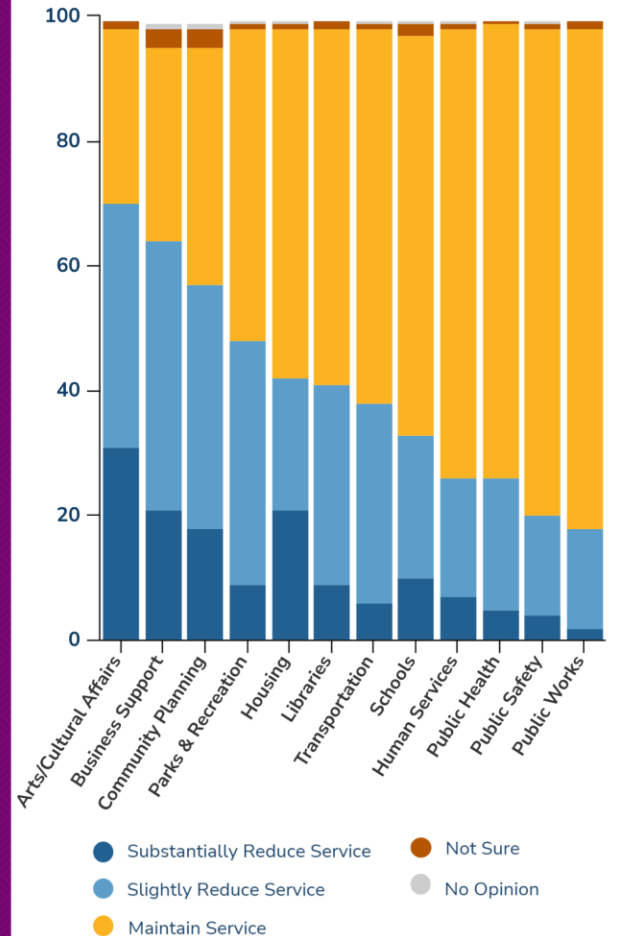
## Balancing the Budget

Participants were asked how they think the County should approach balancing the budget.  
(2,267 respondents answered the question)



## Changes to Services & Programs

Participants were asked how they would consider reductions of services for FY 2024.  
(1,615 respondents answered the question)



# Who Participated?

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# Number of Participants

## 2,436 Participants

1,678



### ONLINE FEEDBACK FORM

**1,678 Online  
Feedback Forms**

*Forms available in English,  
Spanish, Amharic, Arabic,  
and Mongolian*

38



### PAPER FORMS

**38 Paper Forms**

*17 in English  
14 in Mongolian  
7 in Amharic*

717



### POP-UP ENGAGEMENTS

**717 Participants**

*543 (English)  
174 (Spanish)*

3

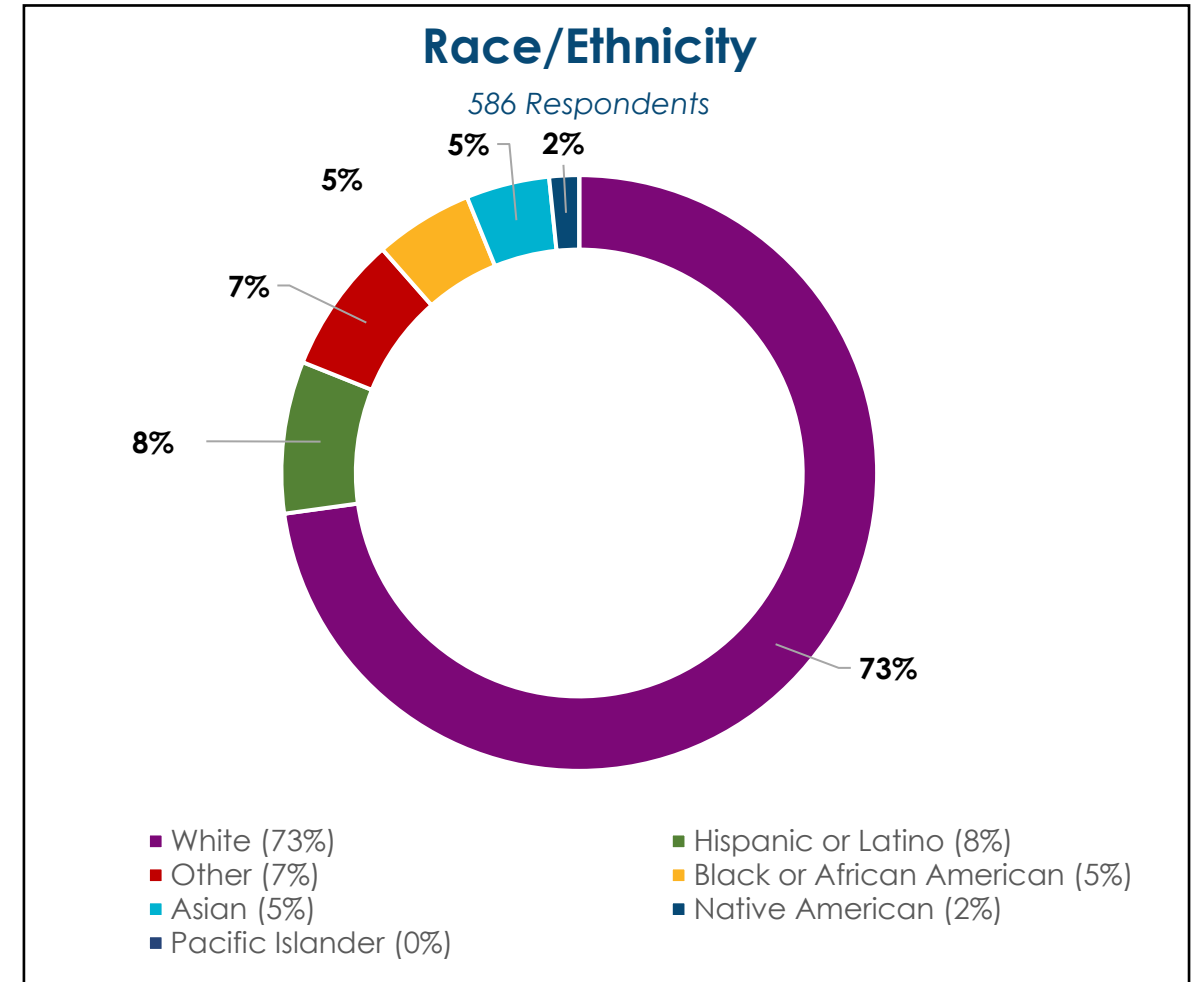
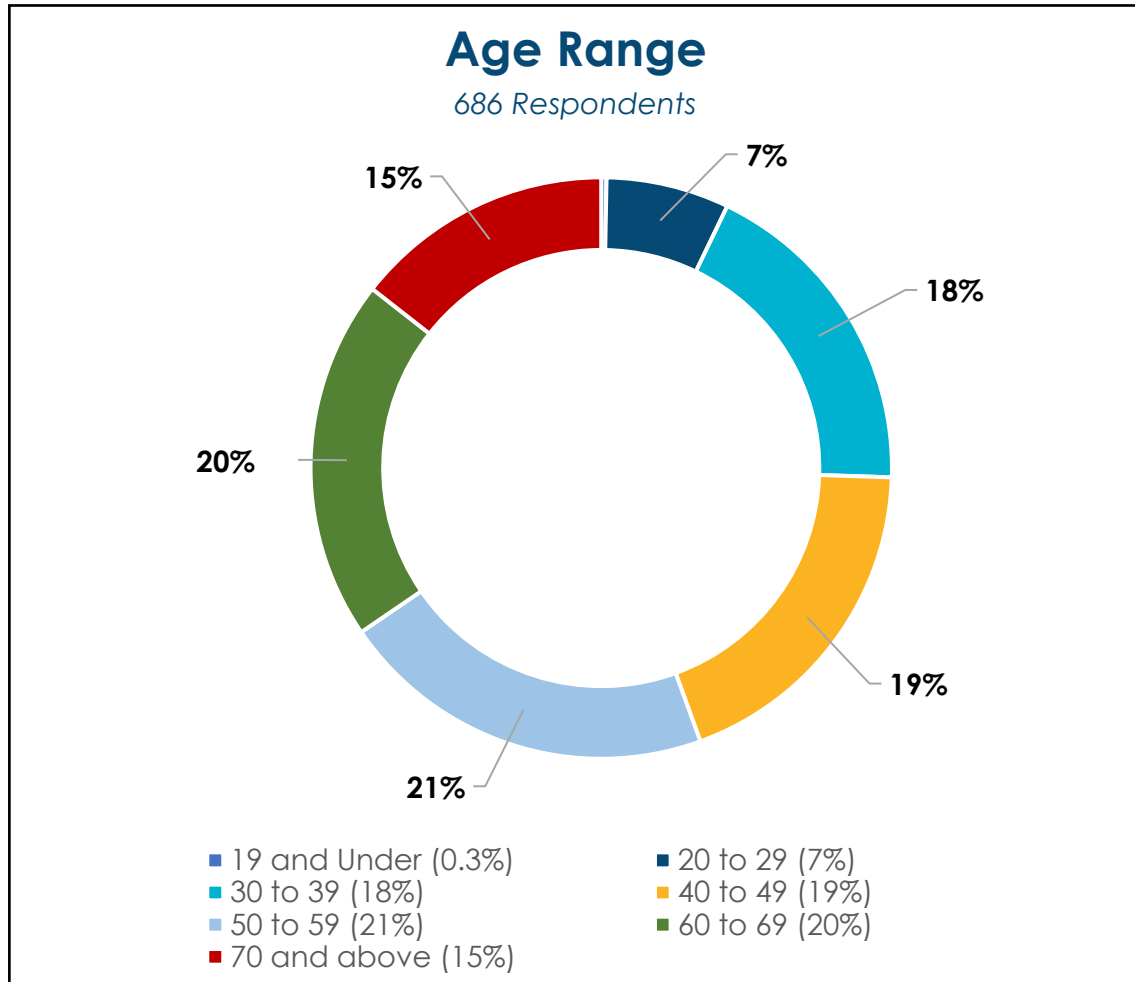


### VOICEMAIL COMMENTS

**3 Voicemail Comments**

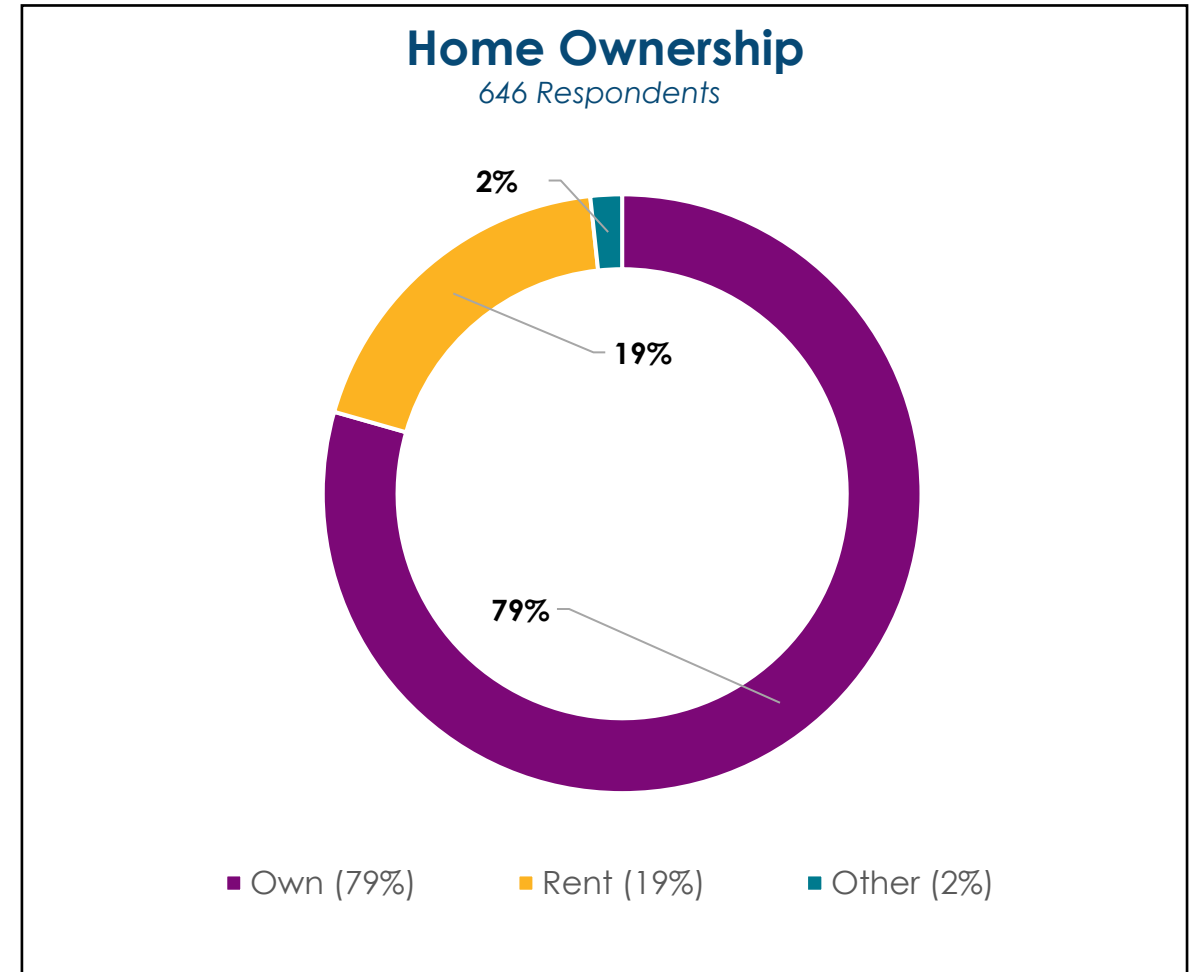
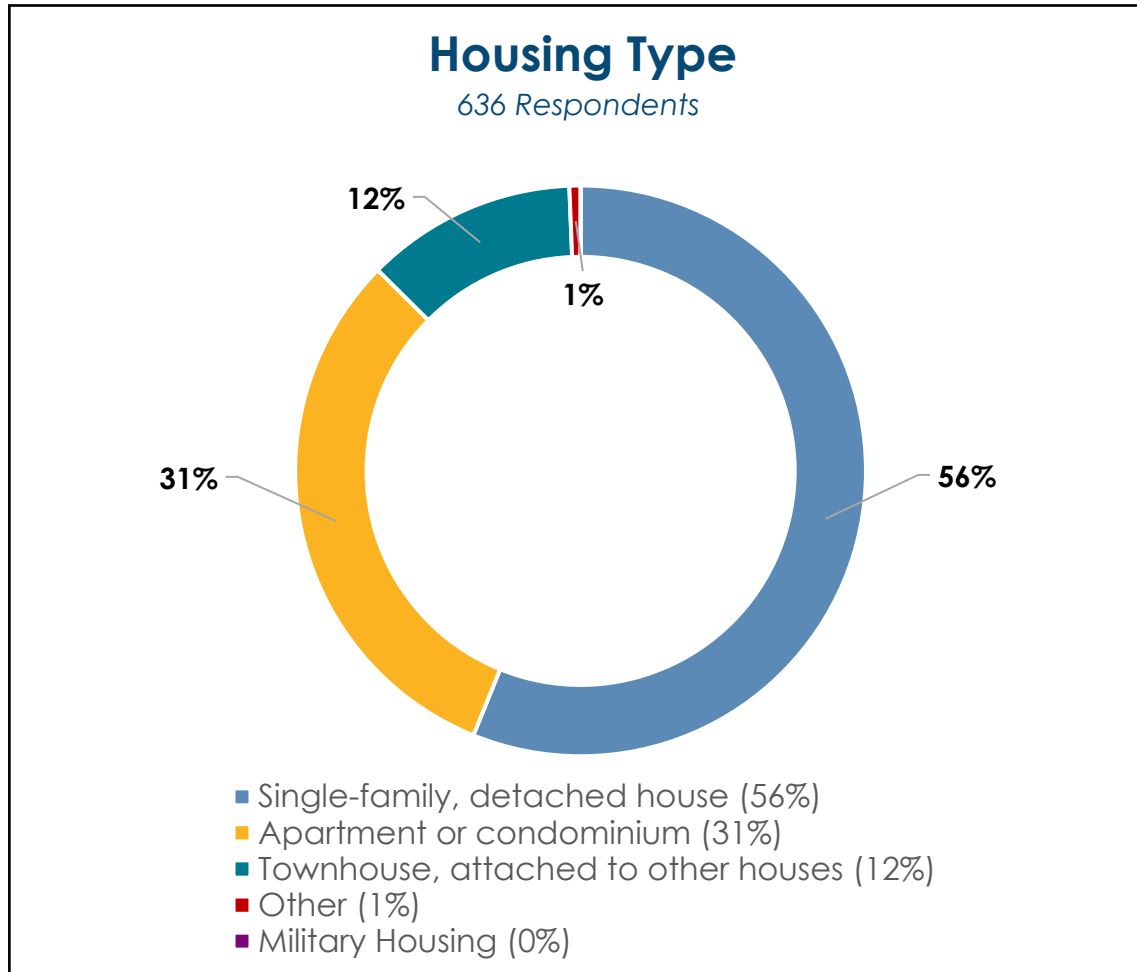
# Who Participated: Online/Paper Forms

Participants: 1,716



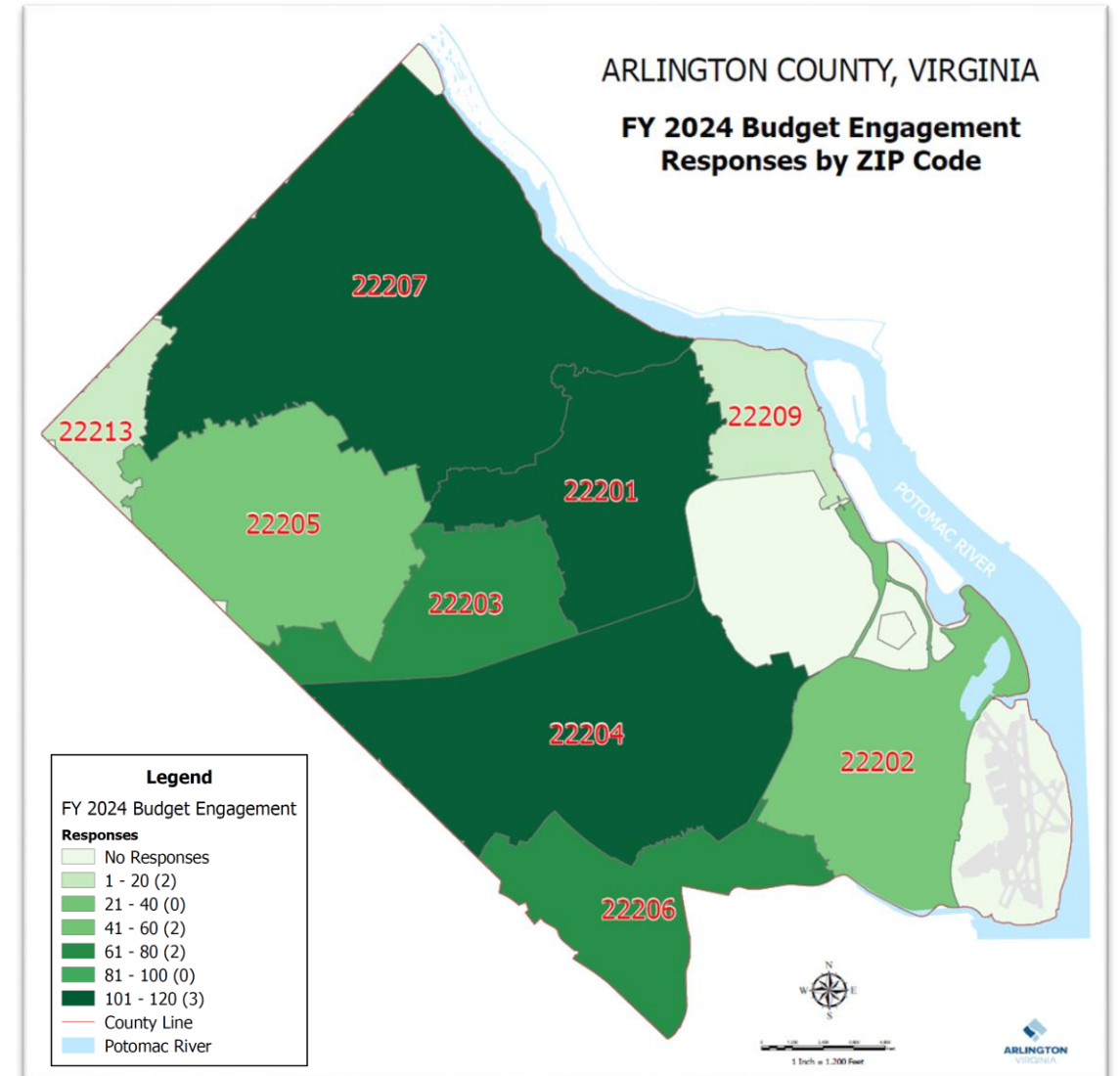
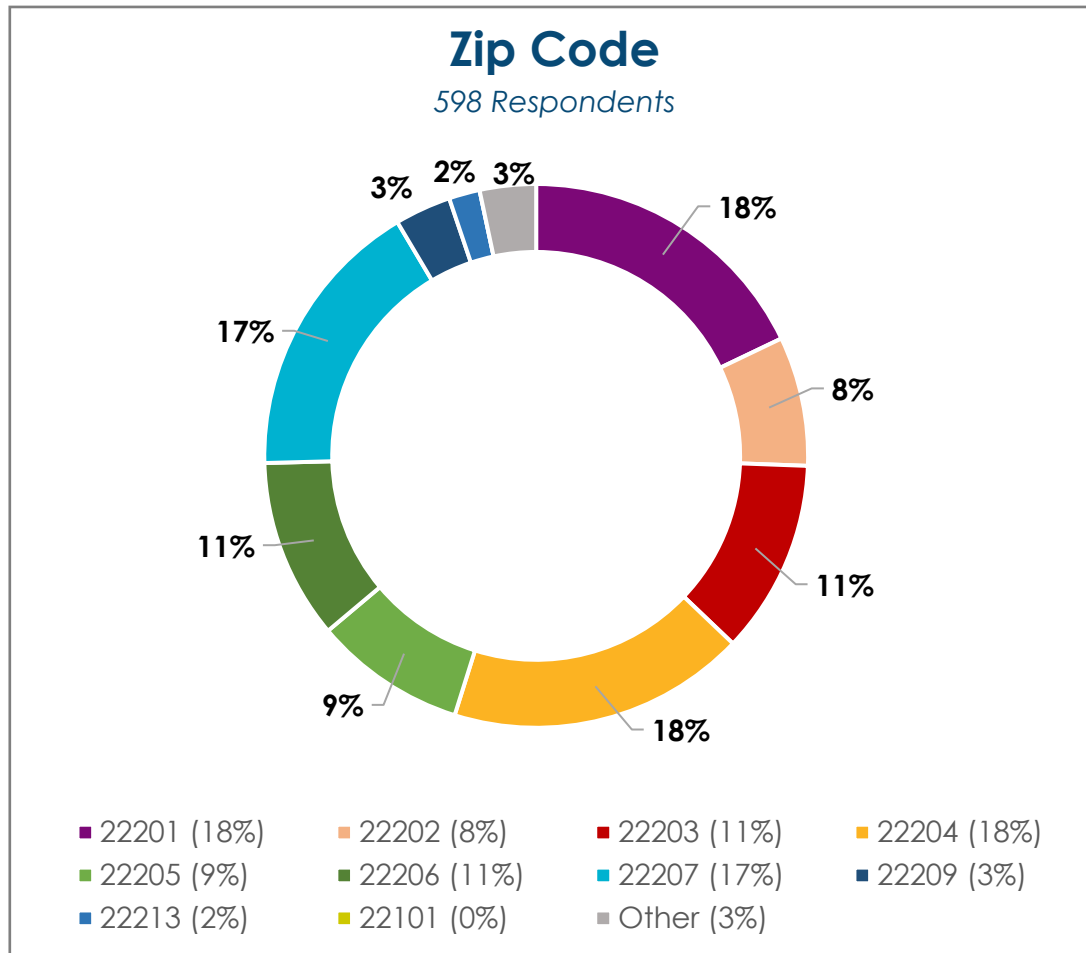
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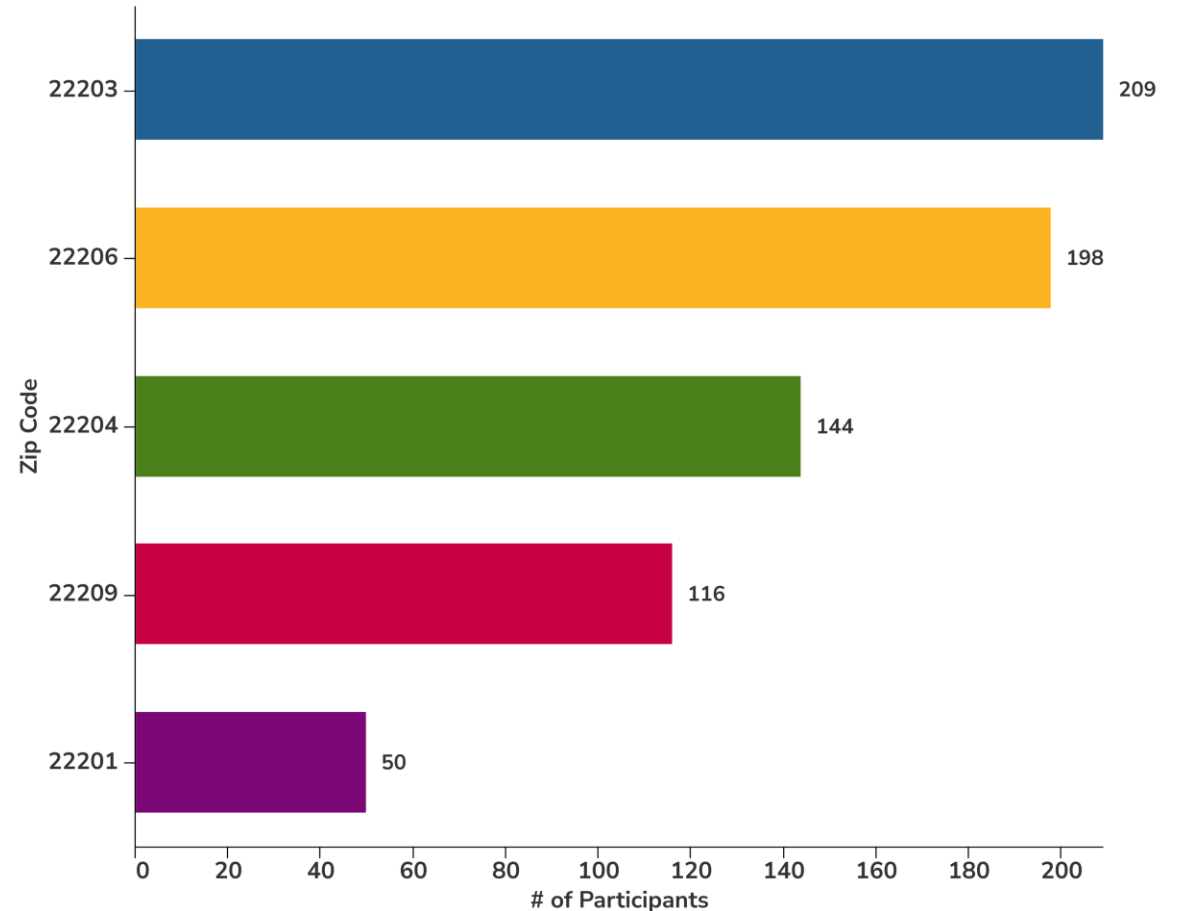
# Who Participated: Pop-Ups

Pop-Up Participants: 717

**Pop-up sites were selected to engage communities we often do not reach online. Locations included:**

- Affordable Housing Communities (APAH, AHC)
- Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC)
- Grocery Stores
- Special County Events at Community Centers and Libraries

*Participation by Zip Code*



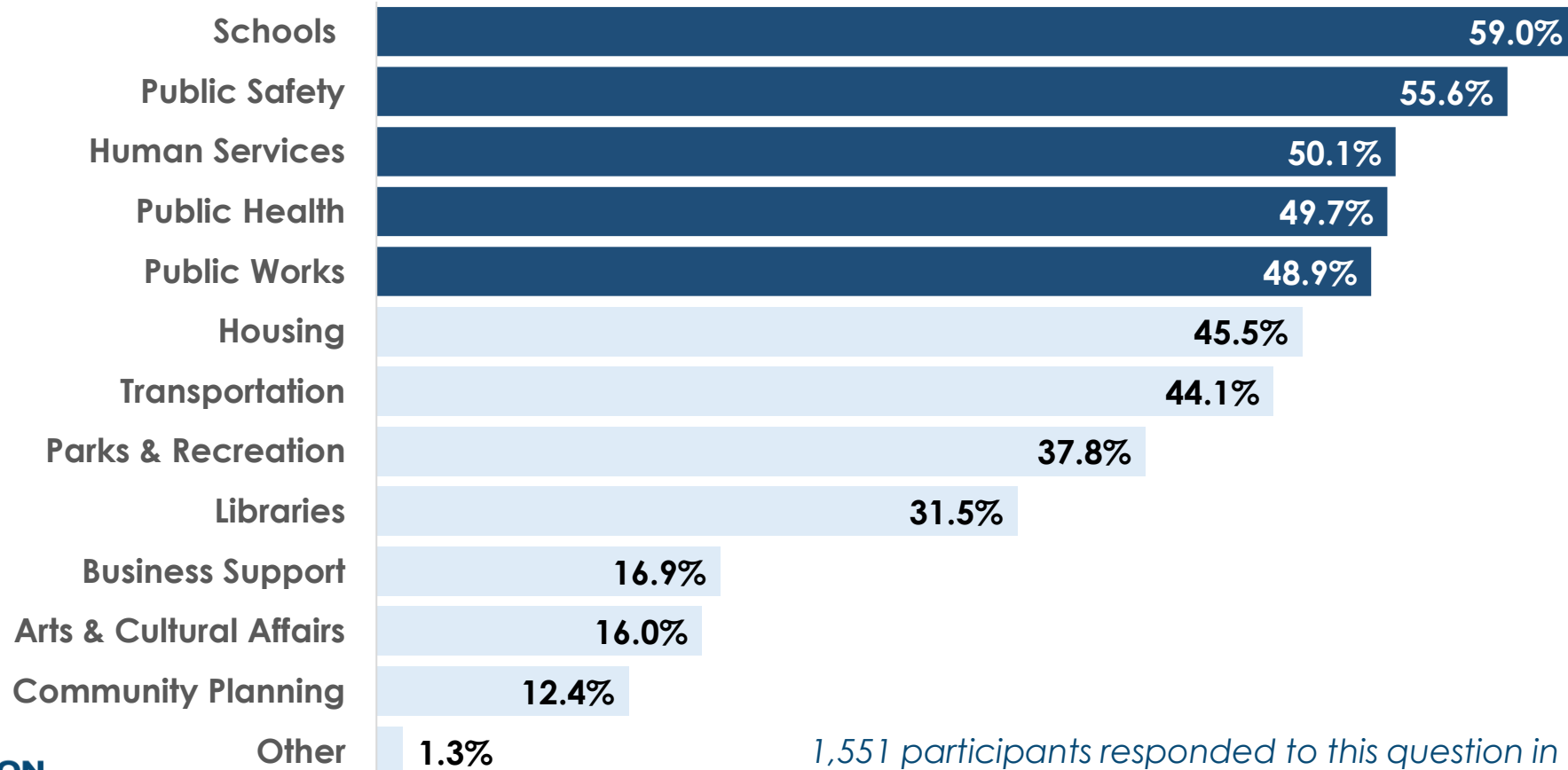


# Budget Feedback



# Budget Priorities For FY 2024

Participants were asked to select 5 programs and services they recommend the County keep as top priorities in the FY 2024 Budget.

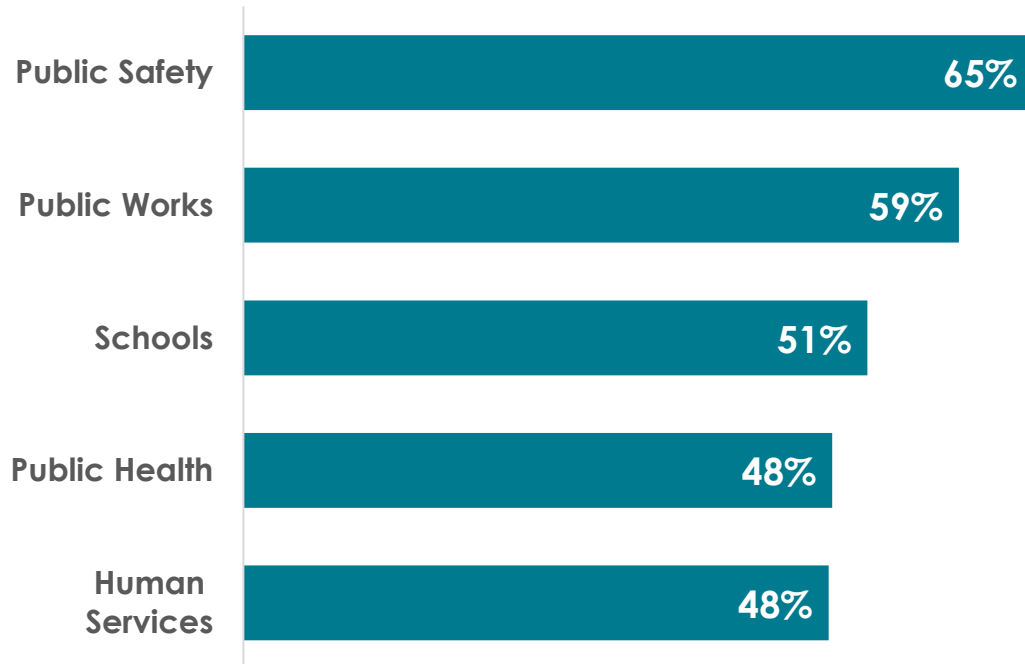


*1,551 participants responded to this question in online/paper forms  
717 participants responded at pop-ups*

# Budget Priorities For FY 2024

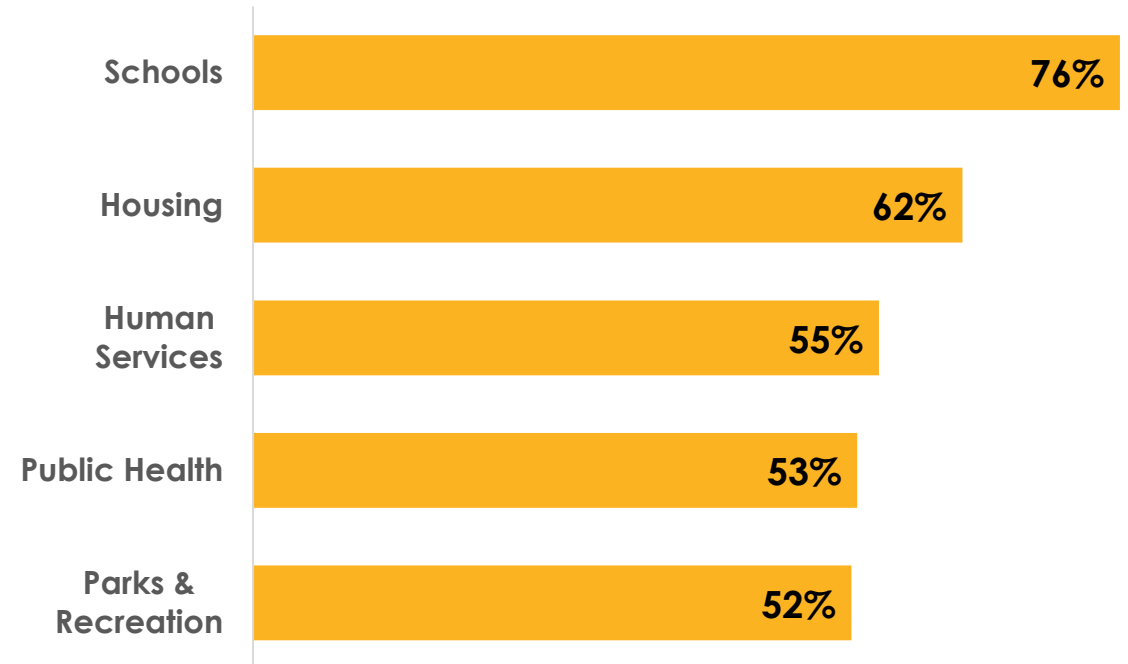
## Top 5 Priorities (Online/Paper Forms)

1,551 participants responded to this question in the online/paper form



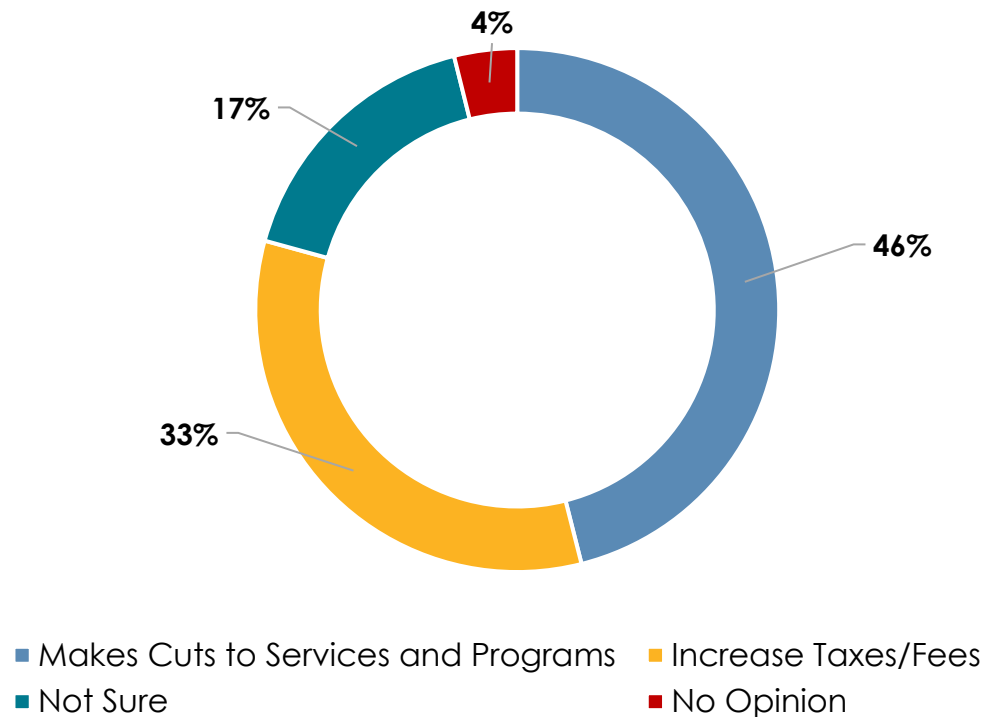
## Top 5 Priorities (Pop-Up Engagements)

717 participants responded at pop-ups

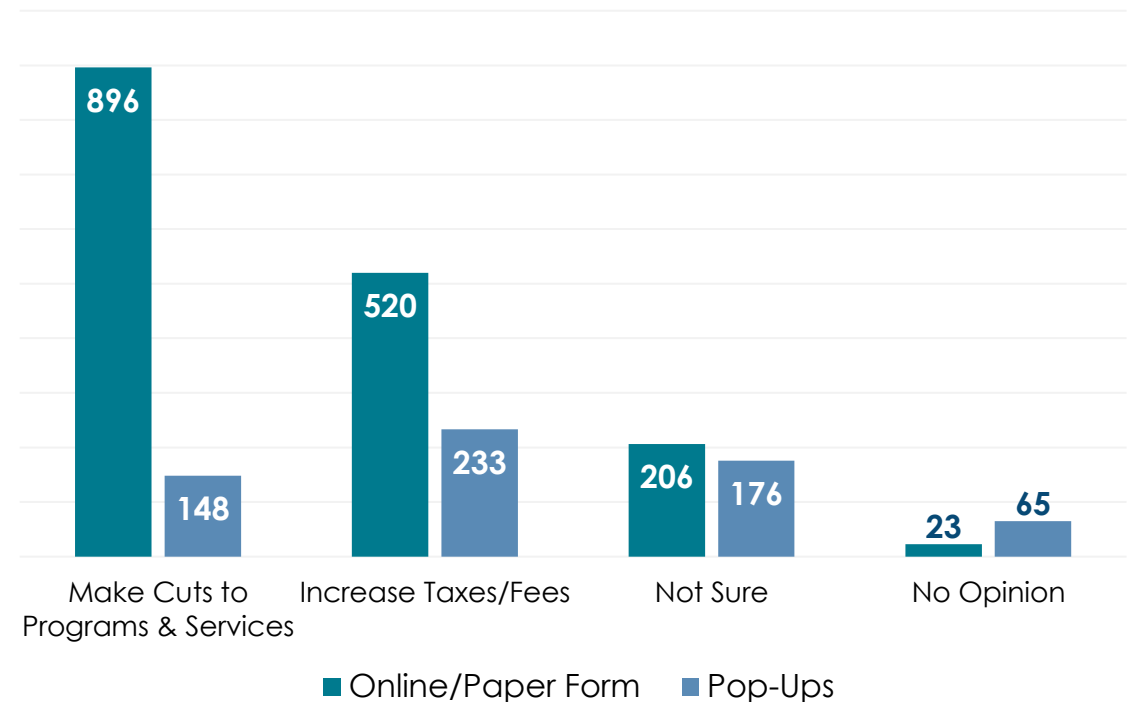


# Balancing the Budget

Of 2,267 respondents (pop-ups and online), 46.1% recommend making cuts to services & programs to balance the budget, compared to 33.2% who recommend increasing taxes/fees.



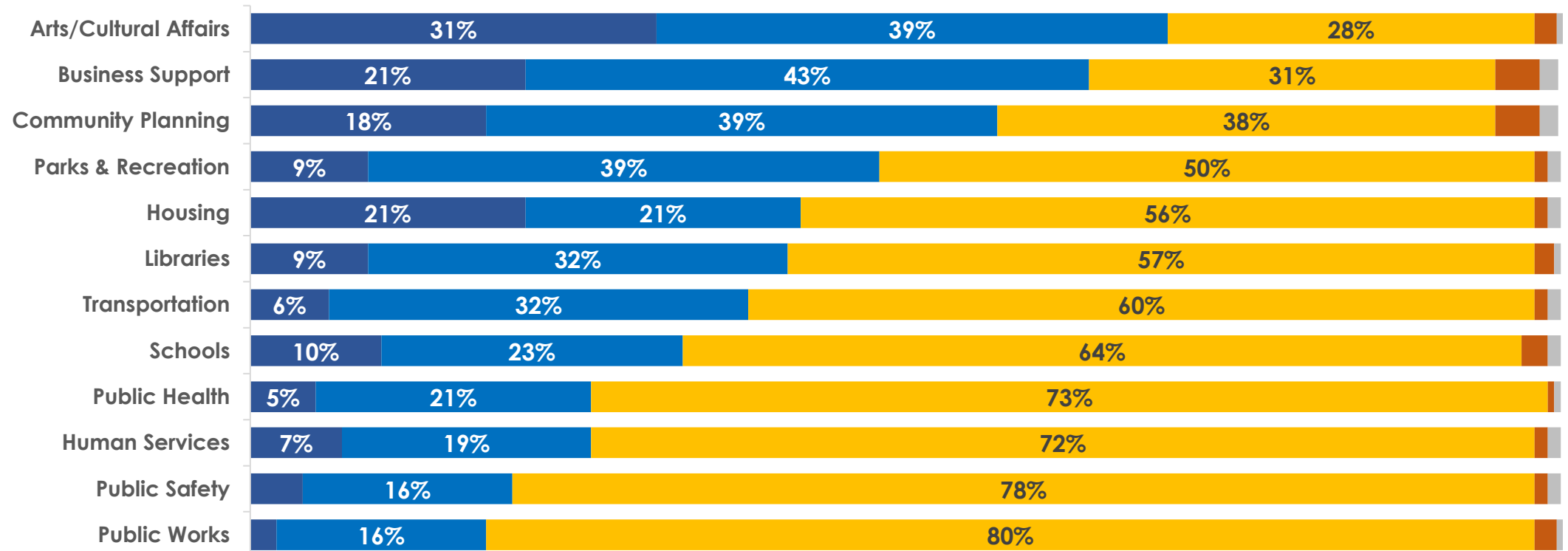
Participants submitting the online form were more likely to recommend making cuts to services & programs than participants at pop-up engagements.



# Changes to Programs & Services

Respondents: 1,615

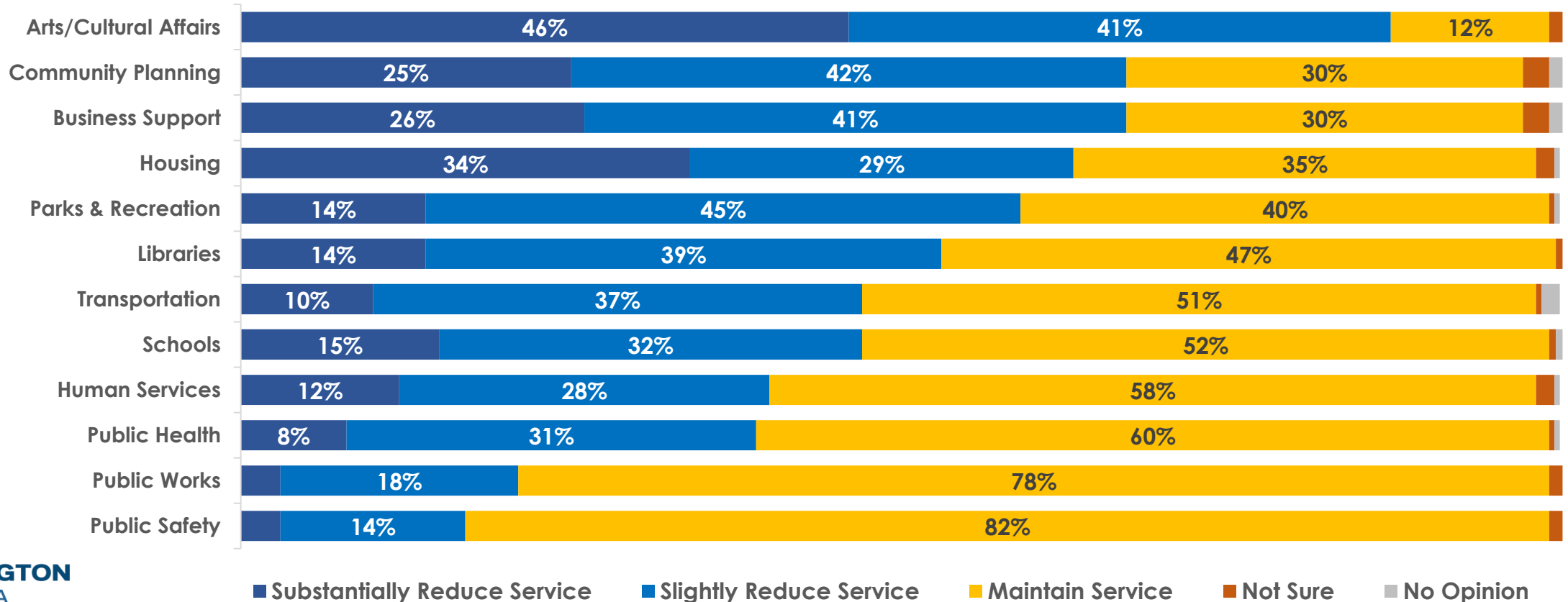
The majority of respondents (online/paper form) would **CONSIDER SUBSTANTIALLY OR SLIGHTLY REDUCING SERVICES** for Arts & Cultural Affairs (70%), Business Support & Retention (64%), and Community Planning (57%).



# Maintaining Services/Programs

Respondents: 867

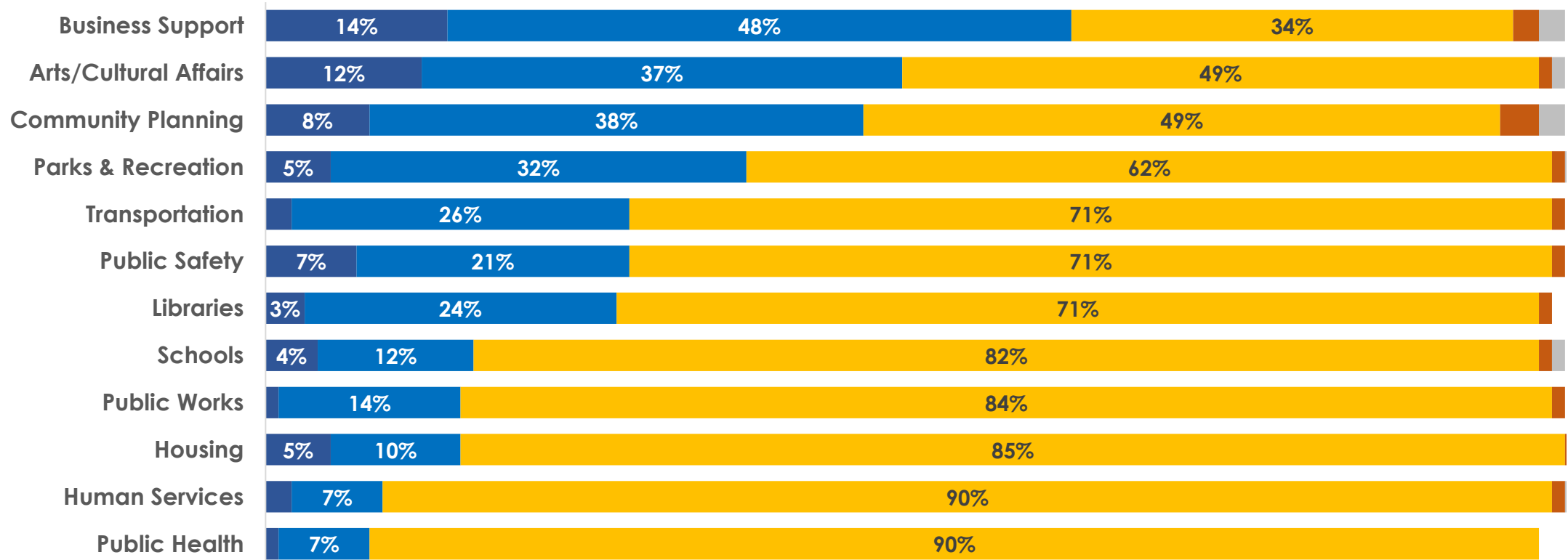
Respondents who recommend **MAKING CUTS TO SERVICES & PROGRAMS** to balance the budget would consider ***maintaining services*** for Public Safety (82%), Public Works (78%), and Public Health (60%).



# Maintaining Services/Programs

Respondents: 488

Respondents who recommend **INCREASING TAXES AND FEES** to balance the budget would consider ***maintaining services*** for Public Health (90%), Human Services (90%) and Housing (85%).



# Open-Ended Comments

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# Balancing the Budget

773 Total Comments

Theme	Fiscal Responsibility	Taxes/Fees: Cuts or No Increases	Spending & Program Cuts	Raise Taxes/Fees	Combination of Program Cuts & Raising Taxes/Fees
Count	125	88	48	39	16
Summary	<p>Suggestions for <b>fiscal responsibility</b> include reviewing spending for inefficiencies and eliminating duplicate efforts across programs, curtailing vanity and “nice to have” projects, providing more oversight on how money is spent, and maximizing the use of State funds, and evaluating annual bonds that have long-term impacts on the budget. One comment also noted the need to avoid cutting short-term costs that can lead to significant spending in the future.</p>	<p>Comments focused on <b>reducing or not increasing taxes</b> in Arlington. Participants noted that an increase in taxes can drive people out of the middle class and negatively impact fixed-income older adult populations. Comments also noted that families are struggling and are unable to afford tax increases on top of inflation, and that lower middle-class residents who don't qualify for services would be unable to afford their bills if they are overtaxed.</p>	<p>Respondents commented on the need for <b>cutting spending</b> to reduce the tax burden on residents, especially spending on non-essential budget items and programs/services that benefit a small portion of the population. Suggestions for reducing spending include placing a freeze on hiring County staff, reducing spending on non-essential services, making equitable cuts across all programs, and placing a moratorium on new programs. One comment suggested making only temporary cuts to balance the budget.</p>	<p>Comments were in favor of <b>increasing taxes and fees</b> in Arlington as a source of revenue for maintaining programs and services, including Human Services, Public Health, Parks and Recreation, and Arts and Cultural Affairs. As it relates to taxes, several respondents noted that taxes should be increased for high-income earners so there is not an undue burden on low-income households. Comments also included taxing large companies to compensate for the impact on the community and keeping tax increases below 2%.</p>	<p>Commenters noted that a <b>combination of making cuts to services and programs and an increase in taxes/fees</b> is needed to address the budget shortfall. One suggested that a review of program efficiency and effectiveness should be conducted to identify service adjustments and cuts. Another noted that spending cuts can be made for programs and services that can be paid for through alternative funding options, such as Federal funding and grants.</p>

# Commercial & Residential Taxes

773 Total Comments

Theme	Commercial Taxes & Office Vacancies	Residential Property Taxes
Count	29	25
Summary	<p>Comments addressed the issue around <b>commercial taxes and office vacancies</b> in the County, noting the need to increase commercial taxes to bolster the tax base and ensure the burden doesn't sit only with residential property owners. Respondents also suggest reexamining commercial taxes and other incentives to ensure large corporations in Arlington are paying their share, considering their impacts on County infrastructure. Further, responses also addressed the need to support prioritize Arlington Economic Development in its effort to both attract new and retain existing businesses in the County.</p> <p>Respondents also noted their concern about <b>commercial vacancies</b> in the County which can lead to an overwhelming tax burden on County residents. The comments cited a need for changes to start filling empty office space or converting office space for other uses to bolster the tax base.</p>	<p>Respondents providing comments related to <b>residential property taxes</b> suggested that the County should not increase property taxes for homeowners, with some noting that the tax rate need to be decreased. One comment stated that other counties have reduced their real estate taxes and Arlington should do the same. Some noted that Arlington is becoming increasingly unaffordable for residents, and this increases in property taxes will negatively impact older adult populations.</p>

# Comments on Programs/Services

773 Total Comments

## Arts & Cultural Affairs

### Prioritize Arts & Cultural Affairs (31 Comments)

Most comments related to the arts identified **Arts and Cultural Affairs as a priority** for Arlington County, noting that the arts is integral to the County in supporting the community's wellbeing while also bringing economic benefits. Respondents commented that Arts & Cultural Affairs has seen budget cuts in the recent past, and that because funding for the arts is such a small portion of the budget, any cuts would not help close the gap. One comment proposed streamlining essential programs between Parks and Recreation, Libraries, and Arts & Cultural Affairs.

### Cuts/No Increases to Arts & Cultural Affairs (13 Comments)

Comments focused on **reducing funding for Arts and Cultural Affairs**, with some noting that even though arts should not be prioritized, it still brings value. Comments and suggestions include prioritizing public works, infrastructure, and public safety over Arts and Cultural Affairs, eliminating public art "vanity" projects and unnecessary art displays, and reducing funding for the Historic Preservation Program. One comment suggested that non-governmental community arts organizations in Arlington are equipped to fill any void that reduced funding may bring.

## Business Support and Retention

### Prioritize Business Support and Retention (20 Comments)

Comments that focused on **prioritizing Business Support and Retention** highlighted the importance of supporting existing businesses in Arlington in addition to attracting new businesses to bolster the tax base and lower commercial vacancies. Many commented noted the County should prioritize supporting and retaining small businesses (such as shoe repair shops and grocery stores) and cut assistance to large businesses.

### Cuts/No Increases to Business Support and Retention (12 Comments)

A subset of comments addressed **cutting funding for Business Support and Retention**, stating that the County should stop subsidizing and zoning for large businesses and corporations. One comment noted that the County's priorities have only been to support large businesses instead of small, while another comment said the County has been irresponsible in its effort to support businesses by allowing commercial spaces to remain vacant. Further, one respondent noted that funding for the business sector should be redirected to Human Services programming.

# Comments on Programs/Services

773 Total Comments

## Housing

### Prioritize Housing (32 Comments)

Comments addressing **Housing as a priority** suggest that program cuts should not be made that impact those experiencing housing insecurity or who are at risk of eviction, and that affordable housing should be a priority the community – that housing assistance is one of the things that makes Arlington great. One comment focused on the need to support housing that can help older adult populations age in place, while other comments addressed the need for the County to do more to help with the housing crisis.

### Cuts/No Increases to Housing (6 Comments)

Comments suggested **cutting funding for affordable/subsidized housing** for a variety of reasons. One comment cited the need to only offer subsidized housing for teachers and County workers in police and fire, while another comment said the County should stop placing subsidized housing only in one area of the County. The comments also noted that affordable housing, while beneficial to recipients, only increases the market rate for other housing, and that housing grants should be cut entirely.

## Human Services

### Prioritize Human Services (52 Comments)

Comments that identified **Human Services as top priority** for the budget specified the need for behavioral health and substance use services, along with other essential services. One respondent commented that by prioritizing human services (and housing), this could reduce spending on public safety and policing. Another comment suggested redirecting funds for businesses to health and human services.

### Cuts/No Increase to Human Services (1 Comment)

One comment suggested making cuts to social programs and instead focusing funding on core government services.

# Comments on Programs/Services

773 Total Comments

## Libraries

### Prioritize Human Services (17 Comments)

Comments expressed the importance of ***maintaining and prioritizing the County's Libraries*** because of the role they play in the community. Comments noted that the library system has been essential for low-income households, those experiencing housing insecurity, in addition to families with children. One comment noted that the library services are okay but can be improved upon.

### Cuts/No Increases to Libraries (6 Comments)

Comments about ***funding cuts to Libraries*** suggested making cuts to author talks, as well as opportunities for efficiencies with better coordination between the Library system and Parks and Recreation. One comment suggested reducing funding for Libraries temporarily to prioritize Public Safety and Public Works.

## Parks and Recreation

### Prioritize Parks & Recreation (34 Comments)

The comments that highlighted ***Parks and Recreation as a priority*** cited the need to protect and create more green space, better maintain parks, acquire more parkland in the County, create more pickleball courts, increase services without raising fees, and improve the Parks registration system.

### Cuts/No Increases to Parks & Recreation (11 Comments)

Comments about ***reducing funding for Parks and Recreation*** suggested reducing new park development and renovations and to instead prioritize schools, waste disposal, and roads. One comment suggested striving for fiscal responsibility by not wasting money on unnecessary dog parks, art displays, and anything "new and shiny".

# Comments on Programs/Services

773 Total Comments

## Planning, Development, Zoning, and Code Enforcement

### Prioritize Planning, Development, Zoning & Code Enforcement (7 Comments)

Comments related to **prioritizing Planning, Development, Zoning, and Code Enforcement** suggested increasing staff so Plan Langston Boulevard can move ahead in its redevelopment. One comment stated that Community Planning, Development, Zoning and Code Enforcement is a function the County must provide its citizens and should therefore be a priority.

### Cuts/No Increases to Planning, Development, Zoning & Code Enforcement (2 Comments)

These comments stated that the County planning team is wasting resources and that spending should not be spent on zoning changes.

### Code Enforcement (11 Comments)

Comments on Code Enforcement pointed out the need to enforce stormwater violations at construction sites and to ensure oversight of developers.

## Public Health

### Prioritize Public Health (26 Comments)

Comments related to **Public Health as a priority** noted its importance to resident wellbeing. Suggestions include redirecting spending from school construction, trendy programs, and other unnecessary items to strengthen public health in the County, including school health.

### Cuts/No Increases to Public Health (3 Comments)

3 Comments noted that **Public Health spending should be cut** because funding for COVID is no longer needed.

# Comments on Programs/Services

773 Total Comments

## Public Safety

### Prioritize Public Safety (60 Comments)

Comments that focused on **public safety as a top priority** for the County noted that this is a key government service. Several comments addressed the issue that police is currently understaffed.

### Cuts/No Increases to Public Safety (11 Comments)

Several comments proposed **reducing spending on Public Safety**, specifically reducing or reallocating funding for police.

## Public Works

### Prioritize Public Works (32 Comments)

Comments that identified **Public Works as a top priority** noted that Public Works is as a key government service that impacts everyone, and should be prioritized overspending on “nice to have” amenities. One comment suggested the focus for the County should be on maintaining roads and utilities, and cuts could be made by reducing ART routes and spending on public art.

### Cuts/No Increases to Public Works (2 Comments)

2 Comments suggested **curtailing spending on Public Works**, specifically noting optional infrastructure work and ending the street sweeping program.

# Comments on Programs/Services

773 Total Comments

## Schools

### Prioritize Schools (50 Comments)

Fifty comments highlighted Schools as a priority in the budget. Comments discussed funding free school meals for all students, increasing teachers' salaries, and ensuring schools have the budget to support students' behavioral health and food security.

### Cuts/NO Increase for Schools (22 Comments)

These comments suggest reducing the transfer to schools, noting that the school's budget increases significantly with each year. One comment sought full transparency for how APS is spending their money, and other comments suggested reducing overhead expenses and large-scale school construction projects.

## Transportation

### Prioritize Transportation (45 Comments)

**Transportation priorities** include maintaining funding for Vision Zero, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, traffic safety and speed reduction measures, road maintenance and repairs, and improved transit service.

### Cuts/NO Increase for Schools (19 Comments)

Comments for **spending cuts on transportation** include traffic circles and bump-outs, unnecessary street cleaning and road work, and extra bike lanes.



# Comments: Other Key Themes

773 Total Comments

Theme	Staffing/Wages	Missing Middle	Environment	Equity & Diversity
# of Comments	64	55	33	28

Theme	Safety Net / Essential Services	Nonprofit Support	Bikes/Biking	Older Adults/Aging
# of Comments	22	15	14	14

[Read all comments here.](#)