



SUBJECT: 2022 budget engagement

TO: Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk & Accountability Cttee.

FROM: Finance Department

Report Number: F-37-21

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 435-03

Date to Committee: November 30, 2021

Date to Council: December 14, 2021

Recommendation:

Receive and file finance department report F-37-21, providing the 2022 budget engagement process.

PURPOSE:

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

Background and Discussion:

Open and transparent government remains a priority for the city. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact in-person public engagement for the 2022 budget process. In response to ongoing restrictions for in-person gatherings, this year's engagement approach continued to be mostly virtual. Staff have continued to enhance the online public engagement process for the 2022 proposed budget using existing and new digital engagement tools.

The following report outlines the efforts and results of the budget engagement process used this year as well as provides an outline of the feedback received from the public to date.

City of Burlington Website and Social Media

Staff continue to use the city's website as a communication medium through videos, webcast and online surveys.

There are two videos available on the city's website. The "Budget to Basics" video which explains how the city develops its budget. In addition, the City's Long-Term Financial Planning video which explains the City of Burlington's strategic financial objectives and how they help manage the city's finances while planning for the future.

A revised version of Burlington Open Budget, on the City's website, is available to the public to allow residents to view the City's 2022 budget data in an intuitive and illustrative form.

In addition to the City of Burlington's website, the city's social media platform on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are utilized to help share messaging. Between July 21, 2021 and November 24, 2021, we have had 33 posts for the 2022 Budget, which received 70,888 impressions and 724 engagements overall (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram). The Engagement Rate (per Impression) was 1.0% while the City's overall Engagement Rate (per Impression) during this time was 2.7%.

The following is a summary of social media activity within the above noted timeframe:

	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram
Posts	23	7	3
Impressions	50,338	12,614	7,936
Engagements	353	214	157

Note:

Impressions - The number of times our content is displayed/delivered to someone's feed.

Engagements - The number of interactions (likes, comments, shares, retweets) of our content.

Get Involved Burlington Website

The Get Involved Burlington website is the City's online engagement site that allows residents and business owners to contribute their ideas and feedback related to the City of Burlington.

On this website, with respect to the 2022 proposed budget, residents can:

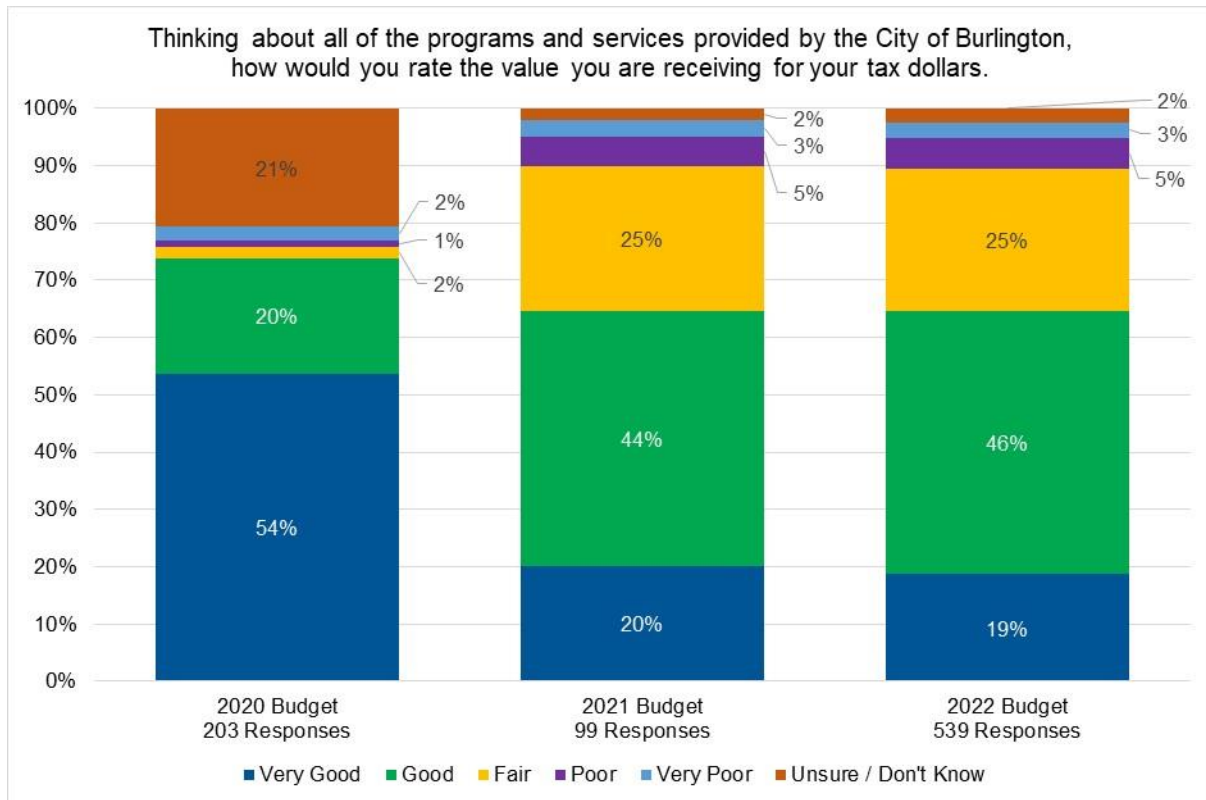
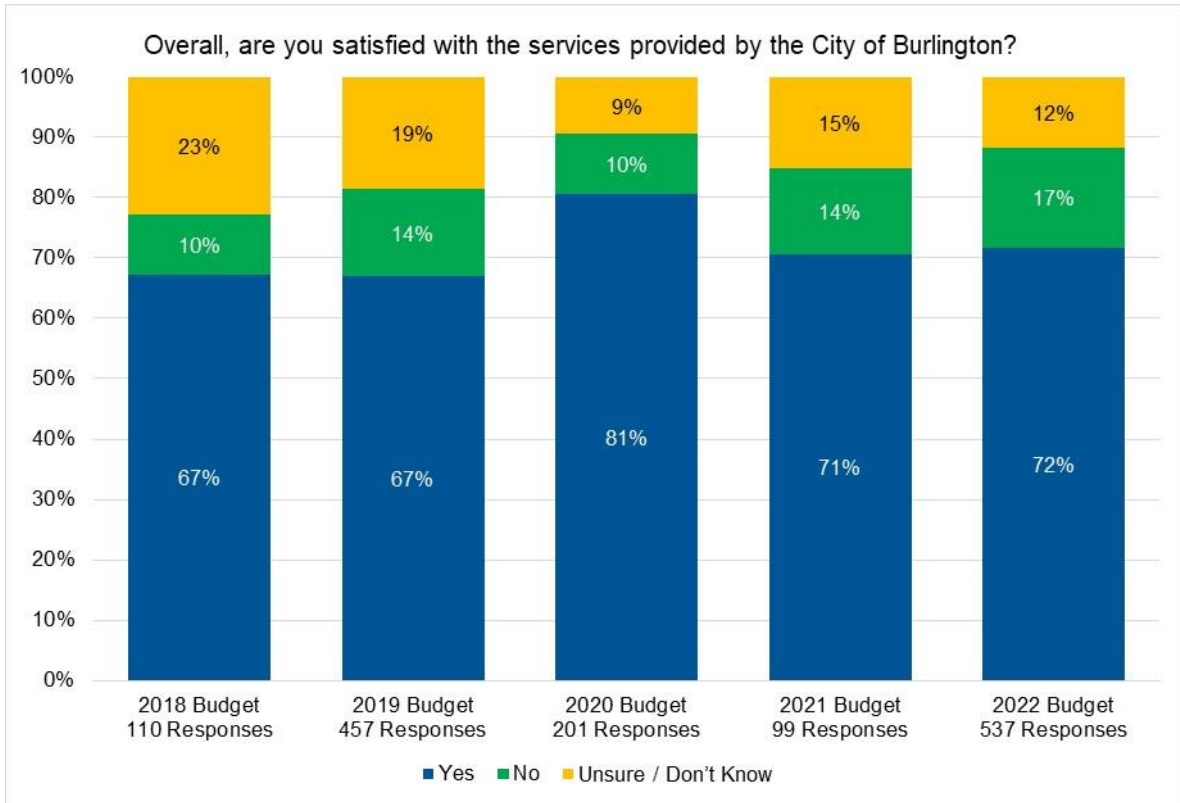
- Take a Survey
- Provide their feedback
- View the 2022 budget timeline
- View the “Budget Basics” video
- View the City’s Long-Term Financial Planning video
- View “Why Invest in Asset Management?” video created by Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
- Access Burlington Open Budget
- Access the Budget Simulator (Balancing Act)
- Access the Taxpayer Receipt estimator
- Access budget reports
- Links to Service Information Workshops (held September 22, 23, 28 and 29)

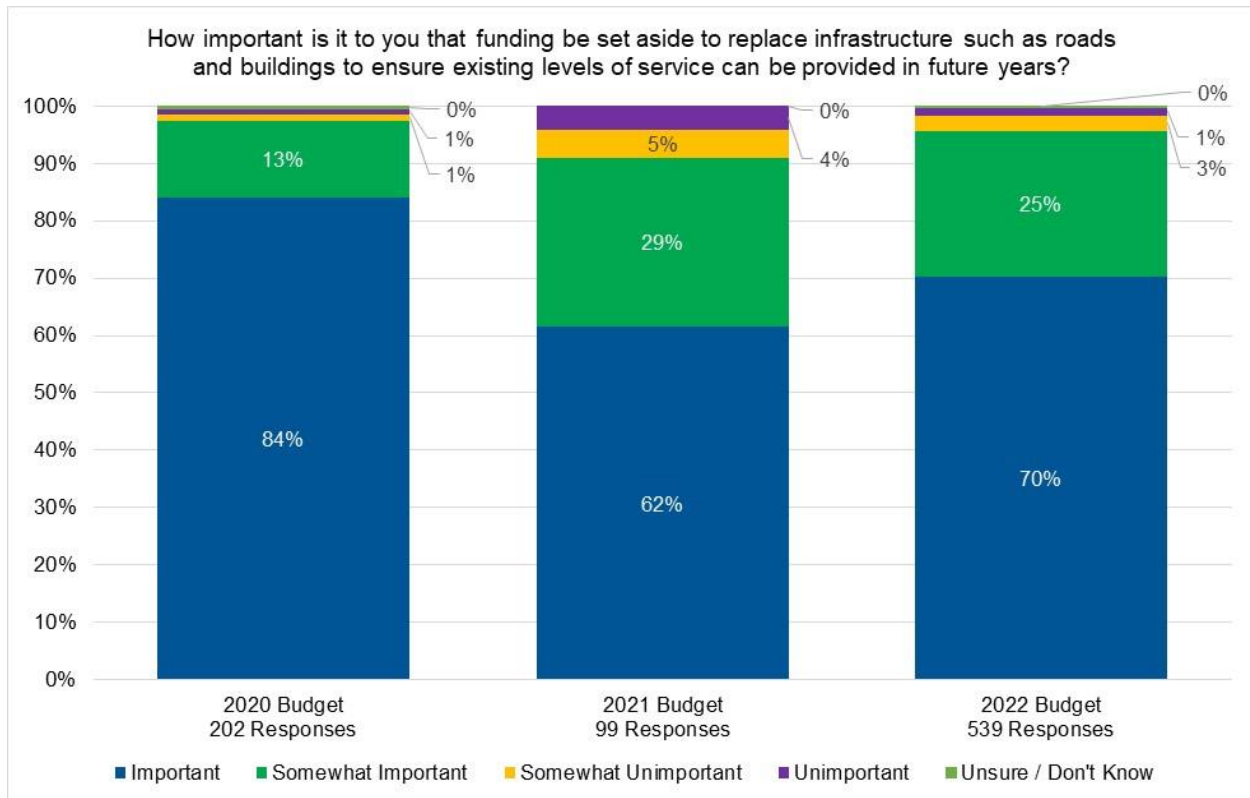
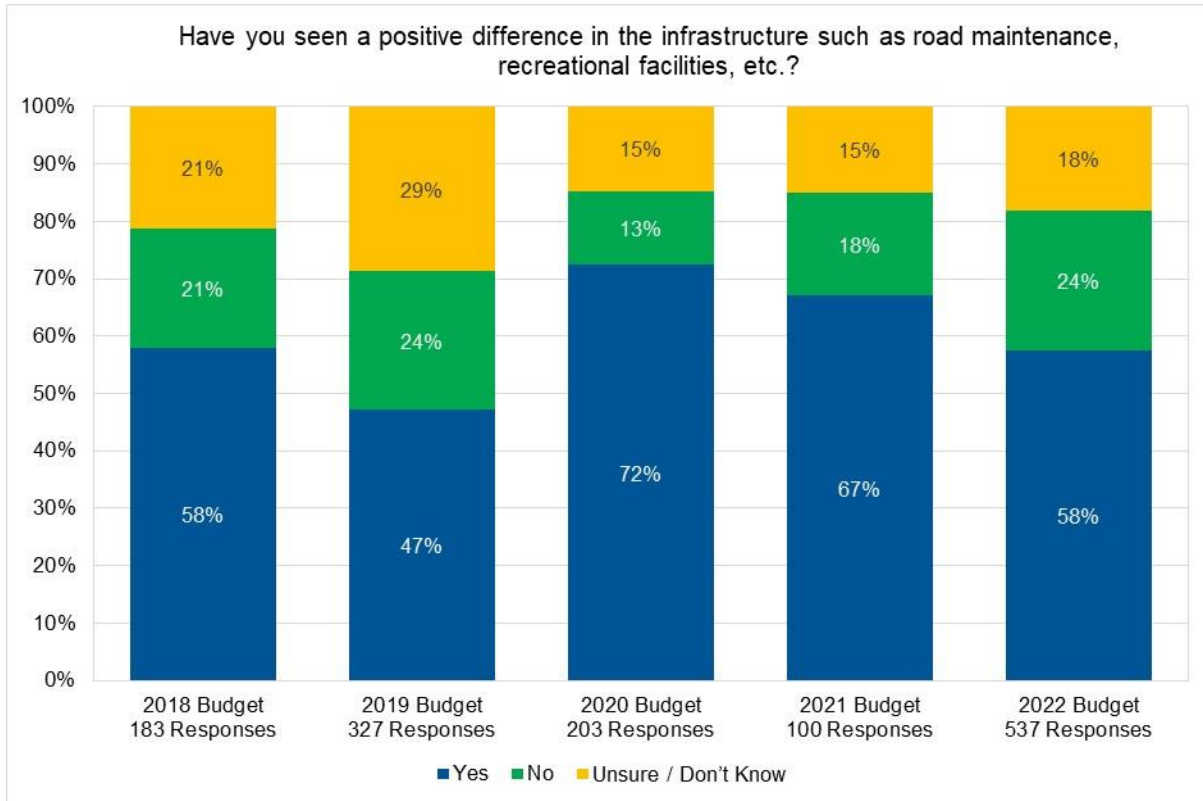
Statistics for the Get Involved Burlington budget page as of November 23, 2021 are:

- 942 unique visitors to the budget page
- 1 new registration to the site as a result of the 2022 Budget (participants did not have to register to take the survey)
- 36 people downloaded documents, for a total of 52 downloaded documents
- 793 started with the Budget page and visited at least one other project page

2022 Budget Survey

The 2022 budget survey was available on the City’s Get Involved Burlington website from July 5, 2021 to September 30, 2021. A total of 539 responses were received. The results of the 2022 Budget Survey were included in the 2022 Budget Overview report (F-36-21) as Appendix B. In addition to the information provided in the 2022 Budget Overview report, the historical results from this non-statistically valid survey are presented in the following graphs. The number of years presented in each graph were dependent on the number of years the same question was surveyed.





Mayor's 2022 Budget – Virtual Budget Town Hall

On November 22, the City of Burlington hosted a Virtual Budget Town Hall using TEAMS live format. This event allowed residents, organizations and business owners to learn more about the 2022 budget priorities with Mayor Marianne Meed Ward and senior staff. There were approximately 40 participants in the Virtual Budget Town Hall along with 40 questions submitted.

Ward Meetings

In addition to the Virtual Budget Town Hall, finance staff attended a virtual Ward 3 meeting on September 27 to provide a budget presentation and answer questions.

Balancing Act

This year Burlington continues to use a budget simulation tool called Balancing Act, to educate the public on different elements of the City's budget and highlight the challenge of maintaining and improving services to the public with limited sources of revenue.

Using the 2020 budget as a baseline, as it represents a year of typical investments not reflective of adjustments related to COVID, the public can simulate where they would recommend either increasing or decreasing overall spending and revenues in City Service budgets. Spending and revenues should be as close to balance as possible, as the City is required by law to maintain a balanced budget.

The primary objective of this tool is to raise awareness of the challenges and trade-offs involved in balancing the City's budget. It was also an opportunity for the public to provide input about areas of the budget in which they would prefer the City increase or decrease funding.

To date, there has been limited response to the Balancing Act tool (14 submissions), however we will continue to promote this budget simulation tool on social media and Get Involved Burlington. Appendix A provides a listing of the comments by service received through the Budget Simulator tool from one respondent (other respondents did not provide comments).

The following table provides an overall summary of how the participants on average would either increase or decrease funding for the different City Services.

A City that Grows	Increase	A Safe City	Decrease
Building Code Permits and Inspections	Increase	Animal Services	Increase
Burlington Economic Development	Decrease	Municipal By-law Enforcement	Increase
Community Design and Development Review	Increase	Emergency Management	Increase
A City that Moves	Decrease	Emergency Response Service	Decrease
Parking Management	Decrease	Fire Communications	Decrease
Road and Sidewalk Maintenance	Decrease	Fire Prevention and Education	Decrease
Road and Structures Design and Construction	Decrease	Halton Court Services	No Change
Traffic Operations Management	Decrease	Good Governance	Decrease
Transit Conventional Service	Increase	Corporate Legal	Decrease
Transit Specialized Service	Increase	Corporate Management	Decrease
Transportation Planning	Increase	Council and Citizen Committee	Decrease
A Healthy and Greener City	Increase	Internal Audit	Increase
Cemetery	Decrease	Mayor and Council	Decrease
Environment and Energy	Increase	Enabling Services	Decrease
Organized Sport Support	Decrease	Asset Management	Increase
Parks and Open Space Design and Development	Increase	Facilities and Buildings - Design and Construction	Decrease
Parks and Open Space Maintenance	Increase	Financial Management	Decrease
Recreation	Increase	Fleet Management	Decrease
Surface Water Drainage	Increase	Geographic Information and Mapping	Increase
Tree Management	Increase	Human Resources	Decrease
An Engaging City	Decrease	Information Technology	Decrease
Art Gallery of Burlington	Decrease	Service Burlington	Decrease
Arts and Culture	Decrease	Signs Production Services	Decrease
Burlington Museums	Decrease	Corporate Expenditures	Increase
Burlington Performing Arts Centre	Decrease	Capital Financing Transactions	Increase
Burlington Public Library	Increase	Financial Transactions	Decrease
Strategic Communications and Government Relations	Decrease	Shared Costs	Increase
Tourism Burlington	Increase	Other Corporate Expenditures	Increase
		Corporate Revenues	Increase
		Taxes	Increase
		User Fees	Increase
		Other Revenues & Recoveries	Increase

Financial Matters:

Approximately, \$1,066 in advertising costs was spent on Burlington Post and increased social media reach (boost). The Virtual Budget Town Hall was facilitated internally using Microsoft TEAMS at no additional cost.

Engagement Matters:

Utilizing the City's website and online platforms appear to be good communication vehicles to inform the public through videos, webcasts, e-newsletters and surveys of upcoming committee meetings for the review of the 2022 proposed budget. Staff will continue to use this platform for 2022 and future budgets.

In addition, a ward meeting and the Mayor's 2022 Budget Virtual Town Hall allowed residents to ask 2022 proposed budget related questions and receive feedback.

Conclusion:

Staff continue to look for ways to engage the public in the budget process using various communication and engagement approaches.

Respectfully submitted,

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Appendix:

A. 2022 Budget Simulator Comments

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.