

**RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER**

4325 Blackcomb Way
Whistler, BC Canada V8E 0X5
whistler.ca

TEL 604 932 5535
TF 1 866 932 5535
FAX 604 935 8109

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: October 26, 2023
FROM: Communications
SUBJECT: BUDGET EARLY INPUT SURVEY SUMMARY

REPORT: 23-107
FILE: 0620-20-2024

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council receive the Budget Early Engagement Summary Report as attached as Appendix A to Administrative Report No. 23-107.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide Council the Budget Early Engagement Summary results. This public feedback forms just one component of the many inputs that will inform Council deliberations related to the 2024 budget. The intent of the early engagement process was to receive input from the community on their needs and priorities prior to departmental budgets being finalized and to inform Council decision-making.

☒ Information Report ☐ Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

DISCUSSION

Background

In August 2023, the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) initiated a Budget Early Engagement Survey on its online platform, Engage Whistler.

The intent of this early engagement opportunity was to:

1. Provide guidance to staff on community needs and priorities prior to the preparation of draft operating and capital budgets; and
2. Provide Council with community inputs for consideration during budget deliberations.

The anonymous survey was open August 22 to September 25. This early engagement opportunity was added this year and supported staff in developing the draft 2024 budget. The 'Building the 2024 Budget' engagement page received 637 visits, with 205 survey submissions.

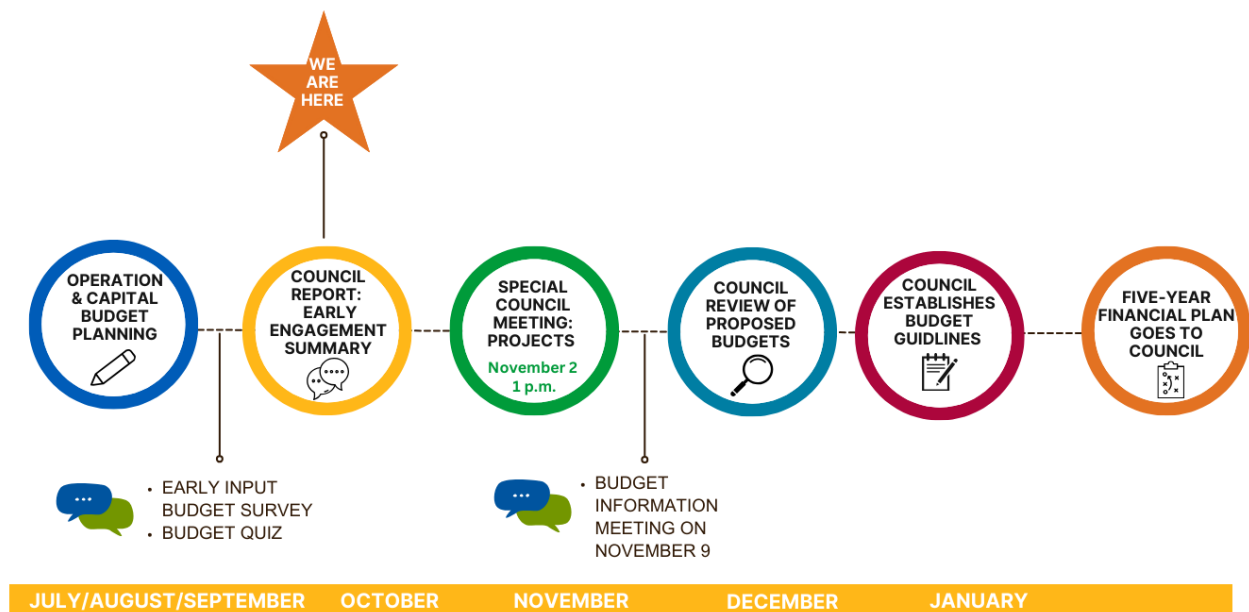
Respondents were taken through a series of demographic questions and prioritization exercises, then given the opportunity to share their rationale for how the municipality should allocate budget dollars. Finally, they were provided with one key message to give Council regarding the 2024 spending priorities. This information is included in the report as Appendix A.

In addition to the survey, a Budget Quiz was posted to the 'Building the Budget' engagement page. The quiz is being used to help staff identify topics and themes which require further communications support and enhance awareness of how a municipal budget works.

The survey and quiz are in addition to the budget lunchtime and evening information sessions, which will be hosted at the Whistler Public Library (WPL) on November 9.

Promotion of this early input opportunity was through the RMOW social channels (organic and paid), Pique newspaper ads, direct emails to community groups and in RMOW's Whistler Today. The survey was also promoted on the Whistler Housing Authority website.

2024 Budget Timeline



Analysis

The engagement program was developed under the RMOW's Engagement Design Principles, following the core values of the International Association of Public Participation.

The survey respondents were self-selected; therefore, the results are not considered statistically representative, as some demographics are over-represented, and others are under-represented. They do accurately represent the opinions of those who responded to the survey.

Key takeaways:

- When asked to rank Council Priorities, Housing emerged as the most important, followed by Climate Action, Community Engagement and Smart Tourism. When filtering responses by time lived in Whistler, the average rank changed. While Housing remained the top ranked priority for both demographics, climate and smart tourism changed positions.
 - 1-15 years lived in Whistler: Housing, Climate, Engagement, Smart Tourism
 - 15-25+ years lived in Whistler: Housing, Smart Tourism, Engagement, Climate
- On average, respondents felt most municipal services should remain at current funding levels to preserve important services but most notably for the provision of water and sewer services, solid waste management and the WPL.
- Climate Mitigation and Adaptation, Investments into active transportation and Transit saw the most respondents opt for increased funding (43%, 46% and 49% respectively). It should also be noted that 28% of respondents felt that Climate Mitigation and Adaptation should be decreased.
- While 47% of respondents felt that Building and Development Services funding should remain the same, 34% felt it should be increased.
- While most respondents felt Festivals, Events & Animation (FE&A) and Resort Operations funding should remain the same, 33% and 26% respectively felt funding should be decreased. We did not make it clear in the survey that non-municipal tax dollars fund FE&A, so this may have impacted results.
- When asked how respondents would like to see the RMOW make its financial decisions, 79% said they want to “balance spending on critical needs of today, while also saving for the future.” 14% said they want to reduce contributions to reserves and focus on the needs and wants of today, while 7% said they think the RMOW should “plan and save for the future through adding to reserves.”

Upon review of the data, the following demographic observations were noted:

- Self-identified seniors accounted for the highest number of responses (32%), followed by those who self-identify as an Immigrant (16%) and 31% indicated they did not self-identify as being from a diverse background.
- Seasonal and temporary workers accounted for only 0.5% of responses.
- Alpine Meadows, Cheakamus Crossing and Emerald Estates were the most engaged neighbourhoods in the survey.
- Of those who participated 43% identified as Female, 52% identified as Male, and 5% ‘preferred not to say’.

- Diverse voices are missing, particularly Indigenous Peoples, those whose second language is English, 2SLGBTQ+, people living with disabilities, people living in poverty and racialized people.

Budget decision-making

In addition to the community's input, staff have reviewed and considered additional data that will inform the proposed budget including:

- Demands of growing population and visitation;
- Projected non-tax revenues;
- Infrastructure immediate and future needs;
- Corporate Plans and Policies (including Official Community Plan (OCP), Big Moves Strategy and Council Priorities); and
- Current economic climate in terms of inflation, supply chains, and cost of goods.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- [February 21, 2023: Administrative Report 23-020 Strategic Planning Outcomes](#)
- [October 6, 2020: Community Engagement Review Report No. 2098](#)

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 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. This report and engagement summary 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.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

There are no budget considerations related to this initiative at this time, although this survey data is one part of the information that will inform staff and Council's budget deliberations in the coming weeks.

LÍLWAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Lílwat 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 Crown land planning; achieve mutual objectives; and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy.

Our engagement design principles ask us to actively seek a diversity of input. As the RMOW evolves and builds its relationship with Lílwat Nation and Squamish Nation, 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.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

☐ Inform ☒ Consult ☐ Involve ☐ Collaborate ☐ Empower

REFERENCES

Appendix A – 'Building the 2024 Budget' Early Input Survey: Summary of Results

SUMMARY

In undertaking the early input budget survey, the RMOW was able to help departments build their proposed capital and operating budgets while increasing awareness of the budget process in its earlier stages. The results of the early input survey give important community insights on needs and priorities to assist Council in the lead up to, and during, the decision-making process.

SIGN-OFFS

Written by:

Jill Brooksbank,
Senior Communications Officer

Reviewed by:

Karen Elliott,
General Manager, Community Engagement and
Cultural Services

Virginia Cullen,
Chief Administrative Officer