



COMMUNITY BUDGET SURVEY 2026

SURVEY FINDINGS

103 responses • Current through September 8, 2026



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Executive Summary

This report summarizes 103 responses to the 2026 Community Budget Priorities Survey and pairs each finding with the departments responsible, NCBA's prior related recommendations, and the specific accountability question ("Ask Now") the Committee should raise this cycle.

Top-Line Findings

- Homelessness, mental health, and substance use is the single most urgent issue in the dataset — a 4.2/5 average impact rating with 77% of respondents rating it 4 or 5, the highest concentration of any metric in the survey.
- Core infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, pavement) has the broadest consensus support — it topped both the funding-priority question (64%) and daily-impact question (62%), and residents rank it least willing to cut (12%).
- 80% of respondents (82 of 103) say the City's budget process lacks transparency or leaves them uncertain — a supermajority finding that stands independent of any single policy area.
- Emergency preparedness is a disconnect point: 49% feel "not prepared" and only 1% feel "very prepared," yet it does not appear as a named funding priority — residents are not connecting the risk to the budget ask.
- When forced to choose cuts, residents converge on arts/culture (67%) and youth programs (33%) first, while protecting infrastructure, public safety, and behavioral health — a workable trade-off signal for budget negotiations.

Methodology Note

Three Neighborhood Councils — Venice, Del Rey, and Panorama City — account for 62% of respondents. Findings should be read as strongly representative of these communities and directionally suggestive citywide; Sylmar, Encino, Sherman Oaks, and Van Nuys are the thinnest-represented areas among those that responded and are priority targets for the next outreach cycle.

Section 1: Funding Priorities & Daily Impact

Q1. If new funding were available, which two areas should the City prioritize?

Multi-select. Respondents could choose two areas.

Response Option	Count	Pct
Core infrastructure repairs (roads, sidewalks, pavement)	66	64%
Homelessness response and housing stabilization	48	47%
Public safety and crime reduction strategies	32	31%
Mental health care and addiction treatment access	25	24%
Youth investment and community program expansion	14	14%
Arts, culture, and economic vitality initiatives	9	9%

Response Option	Count	Pct
Other	3	3%

Departments to Watch

Public Works • LADOT • LAHD • Homelessness service agencies • LAPD • LAFD • Behavioral-health partners • Recreation & Parks • Budget/Finance

What NCBA Previously Recommended

Public Works: restore management capacity, strengthen performance tracking, expand CleanLA workforce, improve community engagement and modernize procurement. LAHD: improve housing-program oversight, transparency and housing production. LAPD: improve staffing, fleet readiness, recruitment, dispatch and operational capacity. LAFD: fully fund staffing and fleet readiness; improve dispatch and emergency readiness.

ASK NOW: What was funded after last year's recommendations, what remains unfunded, and where are the biggest gaps today?

Q2. Which issues impact your daily life the most?

Multi-select. Respondents could choose up to three issues.

Response Option	Count	Pct
Street conditions (potholes, sidewalks)	64	62%
Homelessness / encampments	60	58%
Cost of living	43	42%
Traffic / congestion	41	40%
Crime / safety concerns	35	34%
Trash / cleanliness	29	28%
Lack of programs / services	9	9%
Other	1	1%

Departments to Watch

Public Works • LADOT • LAHD • Homelessness service agencies • LAPD • Sanitation

What NCBA Previously Recommended

Public Works: prioritize preventive maintenance, neighborhood cleanliness, performance tracking and coordination. LASAN: fund illegal-dumping enforcement and protect critical sewer/storm-drain infrastructure.

ASK NOW: Which resident-identified problems are already funded, which are unfunded, and what is the timeline for the highest-priority problems?

Q3. Which one park improvement should the City prioritize to deliver the greatest immediate benefit to the community?

Response Option	Count	Pct
Expansion of park space and active recreation facilities	39	38%
Restroom construction and full rehabilitation	21	20%
Lighting upgrades to improve safety and visibility	17	17%
Playground safety and equipment upgrades	11	11%
Community center modernization and rehabilitation	9	9%
Other	6	6%

Departments to Watch

Recreation & Parks • Public Works / Street Lighting where applicable

What NCBA Previously Recommended

Recreation & Parks: eliminate the Full Cost Recovery plan, increase available funding/reimbursements, and promote the Park Needs Assessment through Neighborhood Councils and community organizations.

ASK NOW: Which park projects are funded now, which are waiting for funding, and how do these priorities compare with the Park Needs Assessment?

Q4. If budget cuts are unavoidable, which areas should be reduced first?

These are hypothetical trade-off signals, not a Committee recommendation to cut any category.

Response Option	Count	Pct
Arts, culture, and non-essential programs	69	67%
Youth and community-based services	34	33%
Homelessness response and housing programs	27	26%
Other	27	26%
Public safety and crime reduction operations	24	23%
Mental health care and addiction treatment services	13	13%
Core infrastructure maintenance and repairs	12	12%

Departments to Watch

Budget/Finance • City Administrative Officer • Departments affected by any proposed reductions

What NCBA Previously Recommended

No directly related recommendation identified in the previous report. The prior White Paper emphasized fiscal discipline, performance management and protecting core operational capacity.

ASK NOW: Which proposed reductions are being considered, and what service, safety and financial impacts would each reduction have?

Q5. To what extent does the City provide real transparency and meaningful public engagement in its budget process?

82 of 103 responses (80%) were negative or uncertain when the bottom three categories are grouped.

Response Option	Count	Pct
Lacks transparency and fails to meaningfully engage the public	35	34%
Not sure / no clear visibility into the process	25	24%
Minimal transparency and weak public engagement	22	21%
Somewhat transparent, but engagement is limited	16	16%
Fully transparent and genuinely engaging the public	5	5%

Departments to Watch

Office of Finance • City Administrative Officer • Budget/Finance • Department budget offices

What NCBA Previously Recommended

Public Works: strengthen performance reporting, community engagement and procurement transparency. The White Paper also emphasizes accountability and fiscal oversight.

ASK NOW: What budget information can residents see now, what is still difficult to track, and what will the City change before the next budget cycle?

Q6. How prepared is your community for a major emergency?

Single choice.

Response Option	Count	Pct
Not prepared	50	49%
Somewhat prepared	34	33%
Not sure	18	17%
Very prepared	1	1%

Departments to Watch

Emergency Management Department • LAFD • LAPD • General Services

What NCBA Previously Recommended

Emergency Management / General Services: maintain emergency readiness, reliable infrastructure, staffing, fleet capacity and coordinated disaster response. LAFD: fully fund staffing/fleet readiness and improve dispatch, wildfire mitigation and emergency response capacity.

ASK NOW: What are the biggest preparedness gaps identified by the City, what is funded to address them, and what remains unfunded?

Section 2: Issue-Area Impact Ratings

Questions 7–10 asked respondents to rate impact on a 1–5 scale. Results below show the average rating and the share of respondents rating impact a 4 or 5.

Q7. How much does housing affordability and stability affect your community?

Average Impact Rating	3.3 / 5
High-Impact Share	51 of 103 (50%) rated the impact 4 or 5.

Departments to Watch

LAHD • Community Investment Department • Housing-related service partners

What NCBA Previously Recommended

LAHD: strengthen housing-program monitoring, public reporting and updates on housing projects and production.

ASK NOW: What measurable housing outcomes are funded for the coming year, and where are the largest remaining gaps?

Q8. How much does public safety affect your community?

Average Impact Rating	3.3 / 5
High-Impact Share	47 of 103 (46%) rated the impact 4 or 5.

Departments to Watch

LAPD • LAFD • Emergency Management

What NCBA Previously Recommended

LAPD: improve staffing, fleet readiness, recruitment, dispatch and operational capacity. LAFD: fully fund staffing and fleet readiness and improve emergency response capacity.

ASK NOW: Where do current staffing, fleet or response-capacity gaps remain, and what funding is needed to close them?

Q9. How much do homelessness, mental health and substance use affect your community?

Average Impact Rating	4.2 / 5
High-Impact Share	79 of 103 (77%) rated the impact 4 or 5 — the highest concentration of any metric in the survey.

Departments to Watch

Homelessness service agencies • LAHD • Behavioral-health partners • LAPD/LAFD where response overlaps

What NCBA Previously Recommended

LAHD: improve housing-program oversight, transparency and production. Public Works: strengthen performance tracking for homelessness-related cleaning programs.

ASK NOW: What outcomes are being measured across housing, outreach and behavioral-health services, and where are the biggest gaps in funding or service capacity?

Q10. How much do streets, transportation and accessibility affect your community?

Average Impact Rating	3.9 / 5
High-Impact Share	65 of 103 (63%) rated the impact 4 or 5.

Departments to Watch

Public Works / Street Services • LADOT • Street Lighting • Sanitation

What NCBA Previously Recommended

Public Works: preventive maintenance, infrastructure investment, performance tracking, neighborhood cleaning and stronger coordination. Street Lighting: track theft-related costs, improve deterrence and restore service quickly. LASAN: protect critical infrastructure and target illegal dumping hotspots.

ASK NOW: Which resident-reported street, sidewalk, lighting and transportation problems are funded, which are not, and what is the expected completion timeline?

Section 3: Open-Ended Issues & Outreach Effectiveness

Q11. What is one issue the City should focus on that wasn't listed?

Recurring themes: homelessness and encampments; parks and neighborhood conditions; traffic, speeding, and dangerous intersections; road and sidewalk repairs; street cleanliness and illegal dumping; affordable and supportive housing; lighting and pedestrian safety; bike and pedestrian infrastructure; public transportation safety.

Named Locations Flagged by Respondents

Kester & Nordhoff, Cypress Ave, Cattaraugus, Palms Blvd, MLK Drive & Leimert Blvd, Venice Boardwalk, Washington Blvd, MacArthur Park, Hope Street, Ballina Canyon, Superba, Lincoln Blvd, Abbot Kinney.

Departments to Watch

Public Works • LADOT • Street Lighting • Sanitation • LAPD • Recreation & Parks • Homelessness service agencies, depending on the issue

What NCBA Previously Recommended

Prior White Paper recommendations relevant to recurring issues include infrastructure maintenance and performance tracking, illegal-dumping enforcement, street-light reliability, public safety capacity and park funding.

ASK NOW: Which of these resident-reported locations or problems already have a funded response, who owns the response, and what remains unresolved?

Q12. Which outreach method was most effective in reaching you and prompting your participation?

Response Option	Count	Pct
Official Budget Advocates communications (website, email, newsletter)	41	40%

Response Option	Count	Pct
Direct community engagement (events, meetings, word of mouth)	26	25%
Social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)	18	17%
Other	15	15%
Printed materials (flyers, postcards, mailers)	3	3%

Departments to Watch

Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates • Neighborhood Councils • Community outreach partners

What NCBA Previously Recommended

No directly related department recommendation identified in the previous report. Prior survey findings support continued Budget Advocate communications and direct community engagement, with expanded social-media distribution.

ASK NOW: Which outreach channels should NCBA prioritize next, and where are we still underrepresented?

Section 4: Geographic Representation

Neighborhood Councils / Communities Represented (Top 11 of 24)

Response Option	Count	Pct
Venice	34	33%
Del Rey	15	15%
Panorama City	14	14%
Echo Park	5	5%
Downtown Los Angeles	5	5%
Sylmar	4	4%
Encino	3	3%
Sherman Oaks	3	3%
Van Nuys	2	2%
MacArthur Park	2	2%
Prefer not to answer	2	2%
All others (13 areas)	13	13%

ZIP Codes Represented (Top 8 of 31)

Response Option	Count	Pct
90291	28	27%
91402	12	12%
90292	10	10%
90066	7	7%
90230	6	6%
91342	4	4%
90026	4	4%
90013	3	3%
All others (23 ZIPs)	29	28%

Actionable Takeaways

- Continue using Budget Advocate communications and direct community engagement as the primary outreach channels — they outperform social media and print combined.
- Use the Neighborhood Council and ZIP-code participation counts to target the next outreach cycle toward underrepresented areas, particularly the San Fernando Valley outside Panorama City.
- Carry unresolved prior recommendations into 2026 department discussions rather than treating this as a standalone survey.
- For every department listed in this report, ask the same four questions: what was funded, what remains unfunded, who owns the response, and what is the timeline.

Source: Community Budget Survey 2026 (Final 12Q).csv. 103 responses. Percentages rounded. Multi-select questions are reported by selection count. Prior recommendation language is drawn from supplied NCBA material.

— **Prepared by Gabriel Avelar, Chair, Budget Survey Ad Hoc Committee**

