

# City of South Bend

# Budget Feedback

# 2024

## Get involved

[southbendin.gov/budget](https://southbendin.gov/budget)



- Take budget survey  
[southbendin.gov/budgetsurvey](https://southbendin.gov/budgetsurvey)
- Call 311  
Leave a budget voicemail

The City of South Bend invites residents to share their thoughts on next year's budget!

# BUILD THE BUDGET

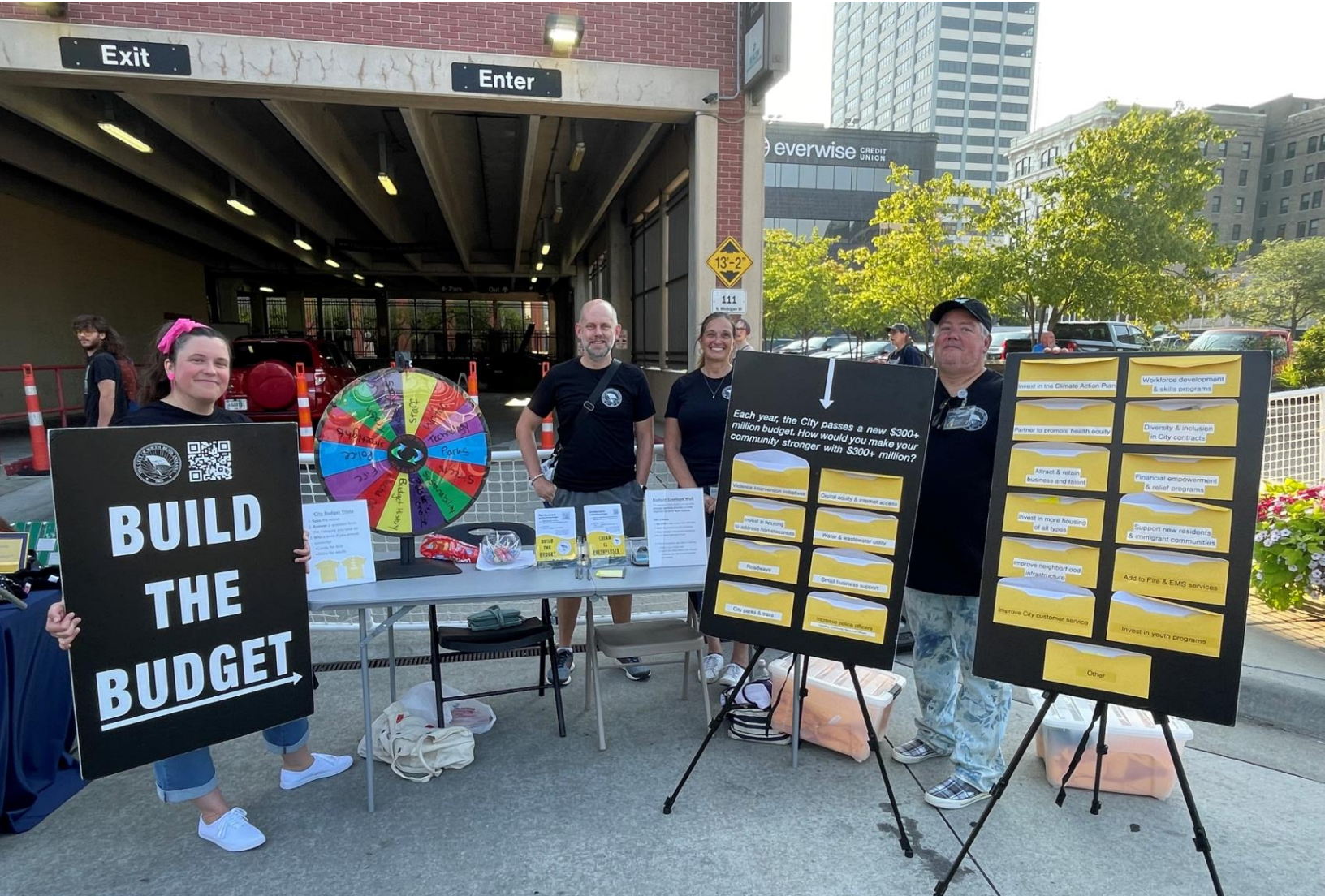


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**BUILD  
THE  
BUDGET**



# Letter from the Mayor



Dear Neighbor,

This year, the City team continued our “Build the Budget” engagement program to encourage public feedback on the 2024 budget. This is the third year we've done this participatory budgeting engagement sprint in late summer and early fall. Any way we can get more residents shaping City planning is a win!

Just as before, the City Administration collected online survey responses, coded hundreds of 311 voicemails, and facilitated budget feedback and trivia sessions at festivals and events.

I'm pleased to say that Build the Budget 2024 broke last year's record. We saw almost 1,200 resident engagements this season, beating last year by a healthy margin.

This report will share the major takeaways from the different facets of the Build the Budget program. We believe we've crafted a budget proposal that aligns well with the resident feedback we've received.

Our proposed investments – from public safety programming to affordable housing to traffic calming - will build stronger neighborhoods, give us infrastructure we can be proud of, and make South Bend a safer city for everyone.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Mueller". The signature is fluid and cursive.

James Mueller  
Mayor, City of South Bend

“The optimist in me says that we should improve streets, sidewalks, etc. in the “forgotten” parts of town, not just downtown. I think that maybe then people could more easily be proud of the streets they live on and the city they live in...Maybe people would be more inclined to fix up their houses or stay in the area. The areas that look like they haven’t had new streets or sidewalks put in in a long time don’t feel very safe to walk through or live in.”

**- Survey 204**

“Continue to look at increased safety. And also, infrastructure and quality of place continue to be important for the livelihood and growth of the community.”

**- Voicemail 232**

“How to fill vacant houses & buildings! These cause more crime & detract from the city. Force owners to upkeep their properties & keep them clean. Vacancies kill neighborhoods.”

**- Survey 277**

# Executive summary

The City of South Bend spends hundreds of millions of dollars each year on everything from vehicles to public safety to staff salaries.

Influencing the budget means influencing the future of our city – how much we pave, what we repair, and how our neighborhoods are supported. It's an important process that deserves more engagement and attention.

Unfortunately, resident involvement has been low in past budget cycles. Sometimes only 1-2 residents would come to a budget hearing. This isn't because residents don't care about their city or the budget. Traditional ways of engagement often required people to go out of their way to meet the City *where we are* instead of the other way around.

For the 2024 budget season the City of South Bend continued the "Build the Budget" initiative for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year to increase resident engagement in the budget planning process. Our goal was to try new things and demystify the annual budget process itself.

Using an online survey, voicemails, and community outreach activities we deployed several ways for residents to voice their ideas and build the budget.

316

Online survey responses

+

433

In-person envelope wall participants

+

406

Budget feedback voicemails

=

1,155

Total pieces of resident feedback

# Executive summary

Across the 1,155 engagements, five themes surfaced over and over. These priorities appeared in the top 10 for the online survey, 311 voicemails, and in-person envelope wall activity.

Residents who participated in Build the Budget want:

## 1 Resurfacing & repairs for roads and streets

In the online survey, the Roadways category had the most money allocated to it. This topic was also the most frequently mentioned across voicemails. Residents often cited streets they want to see repaired in their neighborhood; with some noting work they've seen already seen done through the Rebuilding Our Streets Initiative and expressing a desire for it to continue.

## 2 Improvements to neighborhood infrastructure

Across feedback methods residents also prioritized infrastructure improvements that promote neighborhood functionality and safety. Specific infrastructure improvements within this category were: Curbs, Sidewalks, Traffic Calming, and Streetlights.

## 3 Safe, non-violent communities

Increasing police officers (including community resource officers) and violence intervention initiatives were top priorities that residents want to see continued support for with city funds.

## 4 Housing availability, accessibility, and affordability

Residents also emphasized a desire for increased housing of all types, as well as housing that specifically meets the needs of the homeless population. Invest in housing for the homeless population was the top priority at in-person events.

## 5 Continued investment in City parks & trails

Residents highlighted what an asset public parks and recreational spaces/programming are to the City's quality of life. They expressed a desire to see continued investments in these spaces.

This report goes into further detail about the themes and information collected.



# Resident Engagement Timeline

Build the Budget engagement ran for ~6 weeks, from August 1 – September 10. Check out the timeline below to see how Build the Budget was promoted to residents and what events we took the budget table to this year.

 **August 1: National Night Out Event**



*August 2: Build the Budget Press Release*

- 311 Voicemails & Online Survey go live
- Social Media Post #1

 **August 4: Downtown South Bend First Fridays Event**



*August 9: Social Media Post #2*




*August 11: Facebook Build the Budget Ads begin*

 **August 12: Linden Pop-Up Market Event**



*August 15: Social Media Post #3*

 **August 19: ArtBeat Event**



*August 25: Social Media Post #4*

 **August 27: Potawatomi Park Summer Concert Event**



*August 29: Social Media Post #5*



*September 6: Social Media Post #6*

 **September 7: Meet the Mayor Event**

 **September 9: Fusion Fest Day 1**

 **September 10: Fusion Fest Day 2**

# How Residents Built the Budget

## The Online Survey

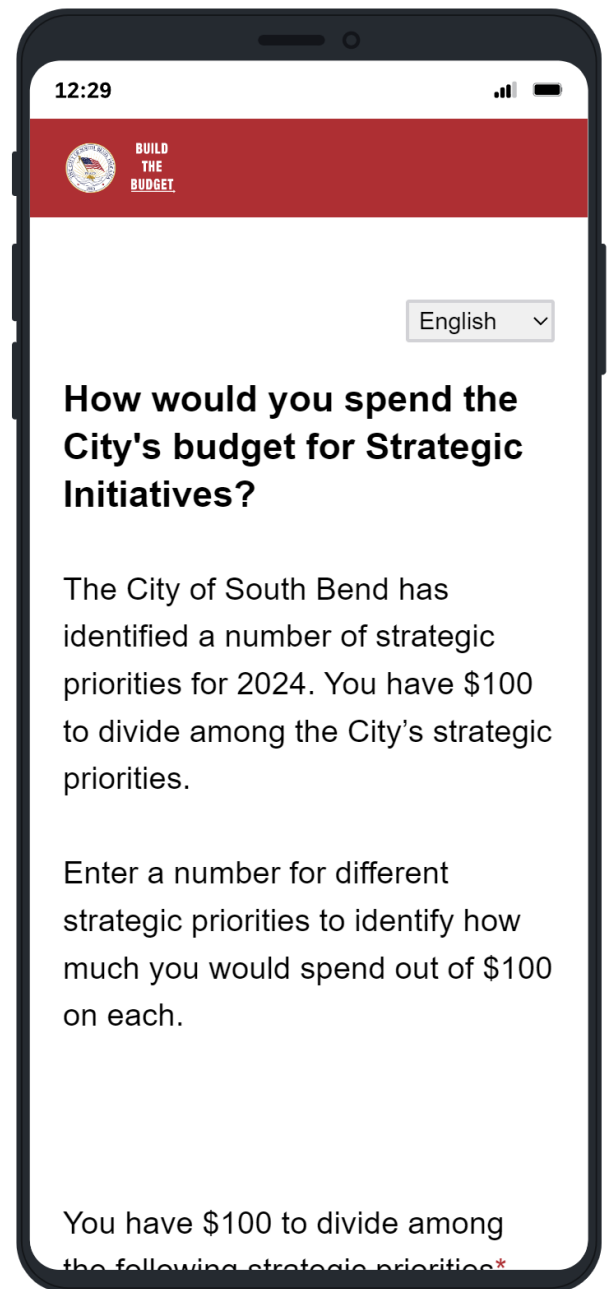
**316 residents completed an online budget feedback survey.**

The survey was available through a link posted to the City website and social media as well as a QR code printed on promotional materials.

Our goal was to offer an online feedback opportunity that would be quick and easy for residents too busy to attend an in-person hearing or who might not encounter the budget table at a community event.

The goal of the survey was to assess residents' preferences when managing a limited amount of funds. Residents were asked to allocate a fictional \$100 across several budget priorities. Residents were also presented with a list of investment areas, asking which ones the city should increase, maintain, or reduce.

This mimics the difficulty of the city budget process: there are always tradeoffs and there is no such thing as infinite money to support everything we want!



## 311 Voicemails

Residents also had the option to leave a voicemail via 311 suggesting what they want to see prioritized in the 2024 City Budget.

The City received a total of **406 budget feedback voicemails.**

City staffers listened to each voicemail and coded them by category/priority topic.

## Envelope Walls

To mirror the information collection of the online survey, the City created two interactive envelope walls to display at public events.

Participating residents each received \$100 in fake bills to allocate across strategic spending categories in the 2024 annual budget.

Over August and September, the envelope walls went to **8 public events.**

**\$43,300 in fake money** was allocated by residents who participated in the envelope wall activity.



## Budget Trivia Game

The budget trivia game is an eye-catching, fun way for residents to learn about the city budget. Residents spin the budget trivia wheel, land on a category, and get an opportunity to answer a question and win a prize (“Build the Budget” t-shirts for adults and candy for kids).

### Over 600 people played budget trivia!

This game didn’t help us learn about resident priorities, but it was an effective way to draw people into a conversation about the city budget and various city operations. After playing, residents were asked to participate in the envelope wall activity.

**Sample Trivia Question: How many 311 calls did the City receive in 2022? Over or under 100,000?**

**Answer: Over! 311 received 113,192 calls in 2022.**



“Invest in alternative modes of transport; increasing bike access with a bigger network of protected bike lanes, boosting Transpo with more frequent service along major routes, and making more streets safely accessible for pedestrians with maintained sidewalks, bump outs near intersections, and buttons/cameras to activate lights.”

**- Survey 245**

“I would like to see more of the potholes filled before the winter if possible. And cleanup in the neighborhoods on the Northwest side.”

**- Voicemail 319**

“I appreciate the City's support of the 24/7 mental health services being created at Oaklawn as well as their support of the Motels 4 Now program after the County Council reversed its commitment to support these programs that are resources for people throughout our county. These projects support safety for all members of our community and improve our overall health and self-sufficiency.”

**- Survey 241**

# Resident Feedback: Online Survey

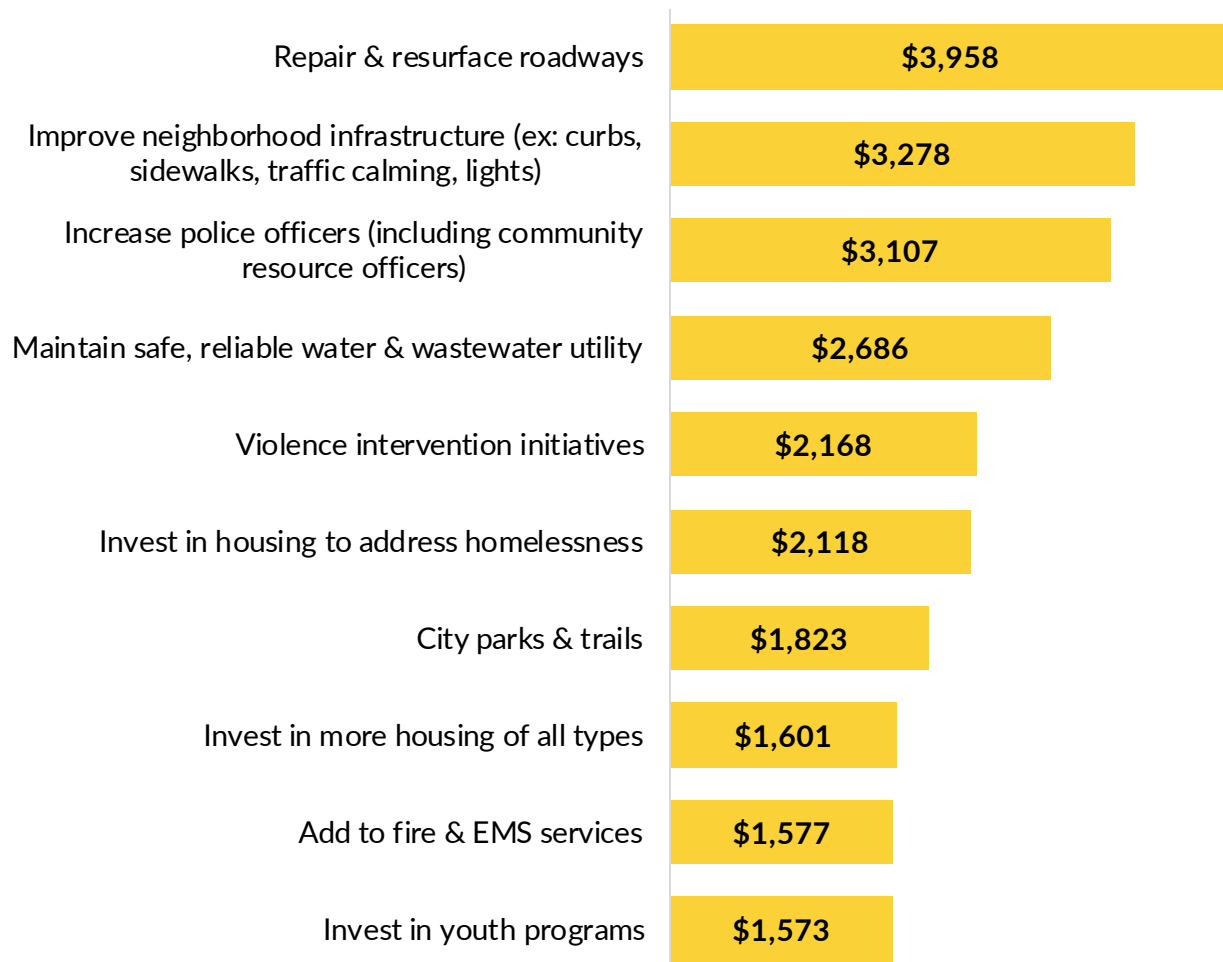
## Strategic Spending Priorities

When asked how 2024 strategic budget dollars should be allocated, survey respondents' top priority was repairing and resurfacing roadways, followed by neighborhood infrastructure and increasing police officers.

See the top ten categories below.

### Online Survey Strategic Spending Priorities

Top 10 categories by total dollars assigned



# Resident Feedback: Online Survey

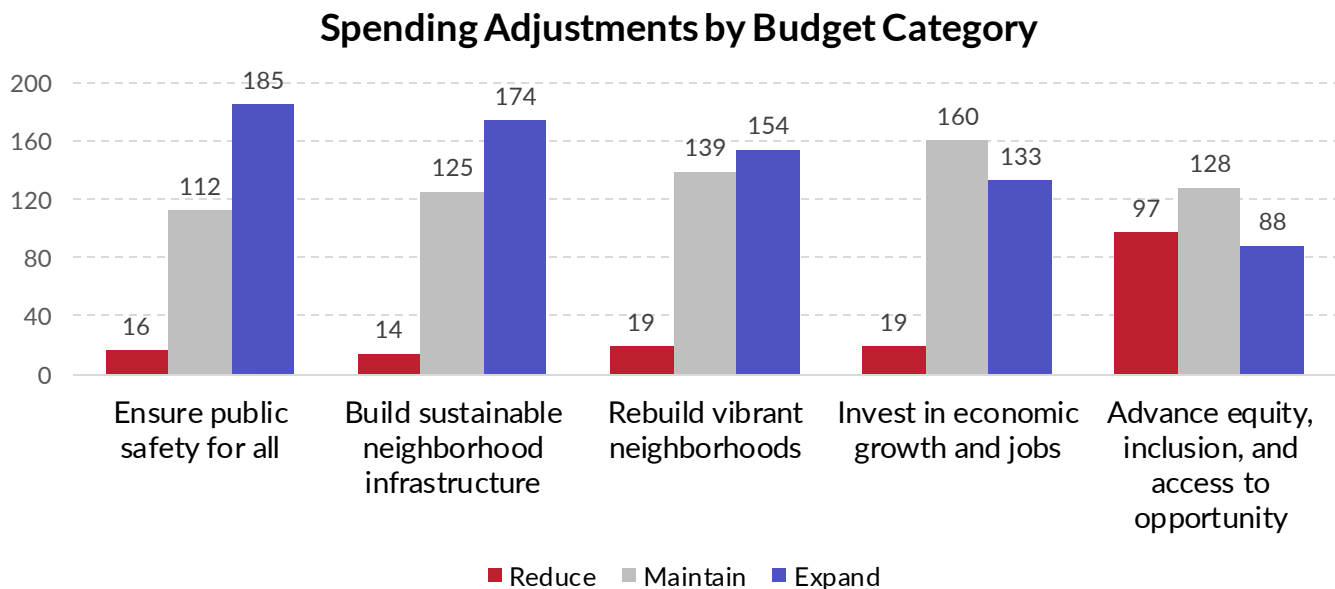
## Spending Adjustments

Survey respondents were also asked how they would adjust spending across 5 broad budget categories based on their current perceptions of City operations. Those categories were:

1. Ensure public safety for all
2. Build sustainable neighborhood infrastructure
3. Invest in economic growth and jobs
4. Rebuild vibrant neighborhoods
5. Advance, equity, inclusion and access to opportunity

For each budget category respondents could select to Reduce, Maintain, or Expand spending.

The chart below provides details on the spending adjustments indicated by respondents.



- Ensure public safety for all had the most Expand responses
- Invest in economic growth and jobs had the most Maintain responses
- Advance equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity had the most Reduce responses

# Resident Feedback: Online Survey

## Survey Responses by Council District

The table below is a breakdown of the online responses by council district for the online survey. Districts 1, 3, and 4 had the most engagement this year. The Blank category accounts for respondents who did not select an answer to this question.

Council District	2022 Budget responses	2023 Budget responses	2024 Budget responses
District 1	40	13	71
District 2	18	12	29
District 3	19	19	61
District 4	33	18	63
District 5	19	31	37
District 6	11	9	27
Blank	0	34	28
Grand Total	140	136	316

## Strategic Spending Priorities by Council District

The following pages, 17-19, present the top 10 strategic spending priorities for residents of each district.

### Notable takeaways:

- **Repair and resurface roadways** was the top category for four Council Districts (1, 2, 5, 6)
- There were **five categories that were in the top 10 Strategic Priorities for all Districts**  
Those were:
  - Repair and resurface roadways
  - Neighborhood Infrastructure
  - Increase police officers
  - More housing of all types
  - Maintain safe, reliable water and wastewater utility



# Resident Feedback: Online Survey

## Top 10 Strategic Spending Priorities by Council District

### Council District 1, (71 respondents)

Rank	Strategic Spending Priorities	Average \$ (out of 100)
1	Repair and resurface roadways	\$13
2	Invest in housing to address homelessness	\$11
3	Increase police officers (including community resource officers)	\$10
4	Violence intervention initiatives	\$7
5	Maintain safe, reliable water & wastewater utility	\$7
6	Improve neighborhood infrastructure (ex: curbs, sidewalks, traffic calming, lights)	\$7
7	City parks & trails	\$7
8	Invest in more housing of all types	\$5
9	Invest in the Climate Action Plan	\$5
10	Small business support	\$4

### Council District 2, (29 responses)

Rank	Strategic Spending Priorities	Average \$ (out of 100)
1	Improve neighborhood infrastructure (ex: curbs, sidewalks, traffic calming, lights)	\$12
2	City parks & trails	\$12
3	Repair and resurface roadways	\$11
4	Increase police officers (including community resource officers)	\$11
5	Invest in youth programs	\$11
6	Maintain safe, reliable water & wastewater utility	\$7
7	Small business support	\$6
8	Add to fire & EMS services	\$5
9	Invest in more housing of all types	\$5
10	Invest in housing to address homelessness	\$5

# Resident Feedback: Online Survey

## Top 10 Strategic Spending Priorities by Council District

### Council District 3, (61 responses)

Rank	Strategic Spending Priorities	Average \$ (out of 100)
1	Repair and resurface roadways	\$11
2	Improve neighborhood infrastructure (ex: curbs, sidewalks, traffic calming, lights)	\$11
3	Maintain safe, reliable water & wastewater utility	\$9
4	Increase police officers (including community resource officers)	\$9
5	Violence intervention initiatives	\$8
6	Invest in housing to address homelessness	\$6
7	Add to fire & EMS services	\$6
8	City parks & trails	\$4
9	Invest in more housing of all types	\$4
10	Invest in youth programs	\$4

### Council District 4, (63 responses)

Rank	Strategic Spending Priorities	Average \$ (out of 100)
1	Improve neighborhood infrastructure (ex: curbs, sidewalks, traffic calming, lights)	\$13
2	Repair and resurface roadways	\$12
3	Invest in more housing of all types	\$8
4	Maintain safe, reliable water & wastewater utility	\$8
5	Increase police officers (including community resource officers)	\$8
6	Invest in housing to address homelessness	\$7
7	Violence intervention initiatives	\$7
8	City parks & trails	\$5
9	Invest in youth programs	\$4
10	Create good jobs by attracting and retaining businesses and talent	\$4

# Resident Feedback: Online Survey

## Top 10 Strategic Spending Priorities by Council District

### Council District 5, (37 responses)

Rank	Strategic Spending Priorities	Average \$ (out of 100)
1	Repair and resurface roadways	\$12
2	Increase police officers (including community resource officers)	\$11
3	Maintain safe, reliable water & wastewater utility	\$9
4	Invest in youth programs	\$9
5	Improve neighborhood infrastructure (ex: curbs, sidewalks, traffic calming, lights)	\$8
6	Add to fire & EMS services	\$7
7	City parks & trails	\$7
8	Violence intervention initiatives	\$7
9	Invest in more housing of all types	\$5
10	Advance digital equity & Internet access	\$4

### Council District 6, (27 responses)

Rank	Strategic Spending Priorities	Average \$ (out of 100)
1	Repair and resurface roadways	\$17
2	Increase police officers (including community resource officers)	\$14
3	Improve neighborhood infrastructure (ex: curbs, sidewalks, traffic calming, lights)	\$13
4	Add to fire & EMS services	\$13
5	Maintain safe, reliable water & wastewater utility	\$12
6	Violence intervention initiatives	\$9
7	Create good jobs by attracting and retaining businesses and talent	\$3
8	Invest in more housing of all types	\$3
9	Small business support	\$3
10	Invest in housing to address homelessness	\$3

“I would like to see the youth in our community prioritized. A vision program for youth so that violence can go down in the community. There’s a piece missing and it’s youth feeling like someone sees them, hears them, and appreciates them.”

**- Voicemail 35**

“It is my opinion that this city has the population, the housing, the amenities, the proximity to other large cities, the universities, and the diversity to produce a successful, thriving community. Looking around the city- the thing that has improved the city the most and will continue to improve is business attraction. We need to continue to encourage more downtown destinations and shops. I'd like to see more incentives for businesses to open and thrive downtown and in our neighborhoods.”

**- Survey 154**

“I would like to see speed bumps on Leer Street, new sidewalks and streetlights.”

**- Voicemail 7**

# Resident Feedback: 311 Voicemails

## 311 Voicemail Overview

At the end of each call, 311 liaisons asked callers if they'd like to leave a budget voicemail. If they said yes, the caller was directed to a voicemail box and given the following prompt:

*After the tone, please share your idea for the 2024 City Budget. What would you like to see prioritized?*

**A total of 406 budget-related voicemails\* were collected, categorized, and analyzed.**

Given the free-form nature of the voicemails, each recording was listened to by a City analyst who then coded the response according to the priority topic(s) that the resident touched on. Just as in-person and survey participants could split their \$100 across multiple categories, so too could a voicemail be coded as touching on multiple priority topics.

Across the 406 voicemails, there were 35 priority topics and 645 unique topic mentions. "Other" topics were priorities that were not encapsulated by the existing categories presented in the online survey/envelope wall.

## Report Quotes

One benefit of collecting priorities via voicemail was capturing the unique tone, ideas, and expression of South Bend's residents.

We've spread quotes from voicemails, as well as survey text responses throughout this report. We think they add a personal lens to many of the important priority areas being weighed this budget season.

*\*We make the note "budget-related" because some voicemails received were off-topic (10) or had no message recorded (21). These were not counted towards total engagements as they did not provide budget feedback.*



# Resident Feedback: 311 Voicemails

## Strategic Spending Priorities

Below is a table that presents the top 10 priorities mentioned in the budget voicemails. Two topics clearly stood out as the most frequently mentioned across voicemails: Road/Street repair and Improving neighborhood infrastructure.

Priority	# of Mentions
Repair & Resurface Roadways	144
Improve neighborhood infrastructure	116
Other: Code enforcement	39
Invest in housing to address homelessness	37
City parks & trails	35
Public safety	32
Financial empowerment & relief programs	24
Other: Solid waste service	21
Other: Lower bills	20
Other: Alleys	18

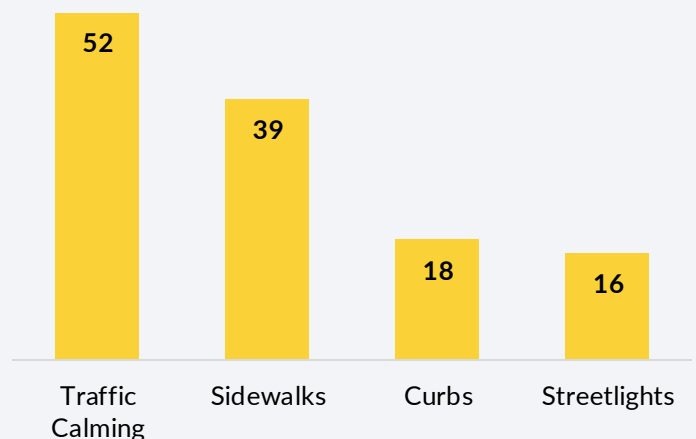
### Note on Neighborhood Infrastructure

In the online survey and envelope wall neighborhood infrastructure was noted as including Curbs, Sidewalks, Traffic Calming, and Streetlights.

When a voicemail brought up a neighborhood infrastructure topic it was first coded into the broad category and then coded into a subcategory if a particular improvement was mentioned.

This helped us get a more specific understanding of what type of infrastructure improvements residents were most interested in.

Neighborhood Infrastructure mentions by subcategory



“Development of additional housing, particularly dense urban housing in and around DTSB, development of a public broadband utility like the water and sewer utilities, better utilizing and promoting the riverfront.”

### **- Survey 60**

“Bringing more jobs into the city. Good paying jobs are hard to find. More resources to get financial help. Also, the homeless population is increasing, and they need somewhere to go, there needs to be more affordable housing.”

### **- Voicemail 77**

“More streetlights and more stop signs, especially over here on Jensen street. The Mayor has really done a great job with the improvements that have been done so far. But over here on the West side and North side of the South Bend there just needs to be more improvement.”

### **- Voicemail 366**

# Resident Feedback: Envelope Walls

## Envelope Wall Overview

For the envelope wall activity, we asked residents to allocate \$100 dollars in fake bills across different strategic priorities for the 2024 budget. Each envelope on the wall was labelled with a specific topic representing a strategic spending priority.

**433 residents participated in this activity.**

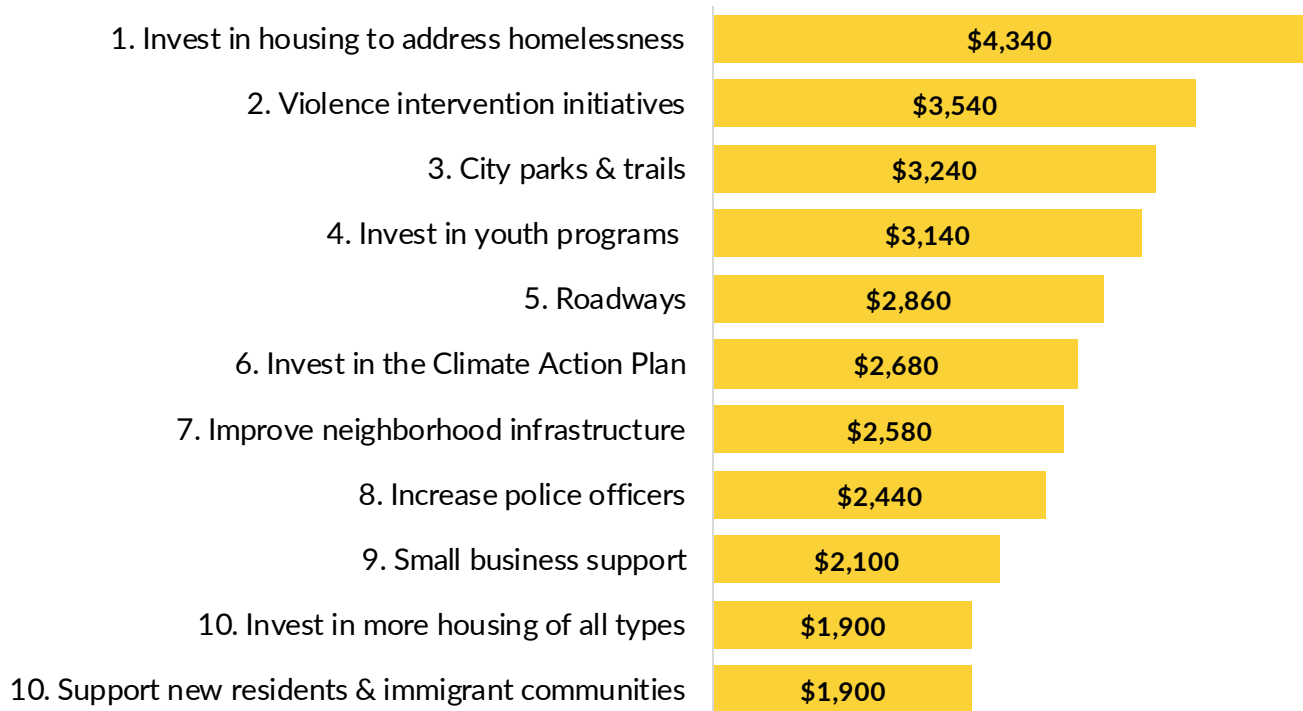
## Strategic Spending Priorities

Some clear priorities for residents who completed this in-person activity were:

- Housing (1, 10)
- Public Safety (2, 8)
- Recreational programming (3, 4)
- Infrastructure (5, 6, 7)

### Envelope Wall Strategic Spending Priorities

Top 10 categories by total dollars assigned





“I would like to see the city create more affordable housing for the homeless, low income and single parents. It would be wonderful to see the city invest in homeowners that have fallen on hard times. Maybe by providing grants and zero interest funding to do repairs and upkeep.”

**- Survey 123**

“We have a good Climate Action Plan; I would like money to go towards putting in in action.”

**- Voicemail 379**

“Howard Park is an excellent example of how a community space can have a ripple effect of positivity. The park is a positive thing for the city, from music festivals to daily visitors to the complimentary amenities. It would be great for South Bend to continue investing in these large-scale projects that can reshape multiple city blocks and add/redevelop third spaces for our community.”

**- Survey 64**

# Conclusion

Citywide, the five major themes that emerged were:

- 1. Resurfacing & repairs for roads and streets
- 2. Improvements to neighborhood infrastructure
- 3. Safe, non-violent communities
- 4. Housing availability, accessibility, and affordability
- 5. Continued investment in City parks & trails

We'd like to thank every resident who provided ideas, thoughts, and feedback during Build the Budget process.

If you have ideas to improve budget engagement so we can continue to engage with more residents next budget season, please email [sbit@southbendin.gov](mailto:sbit@southbendin.gov).



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