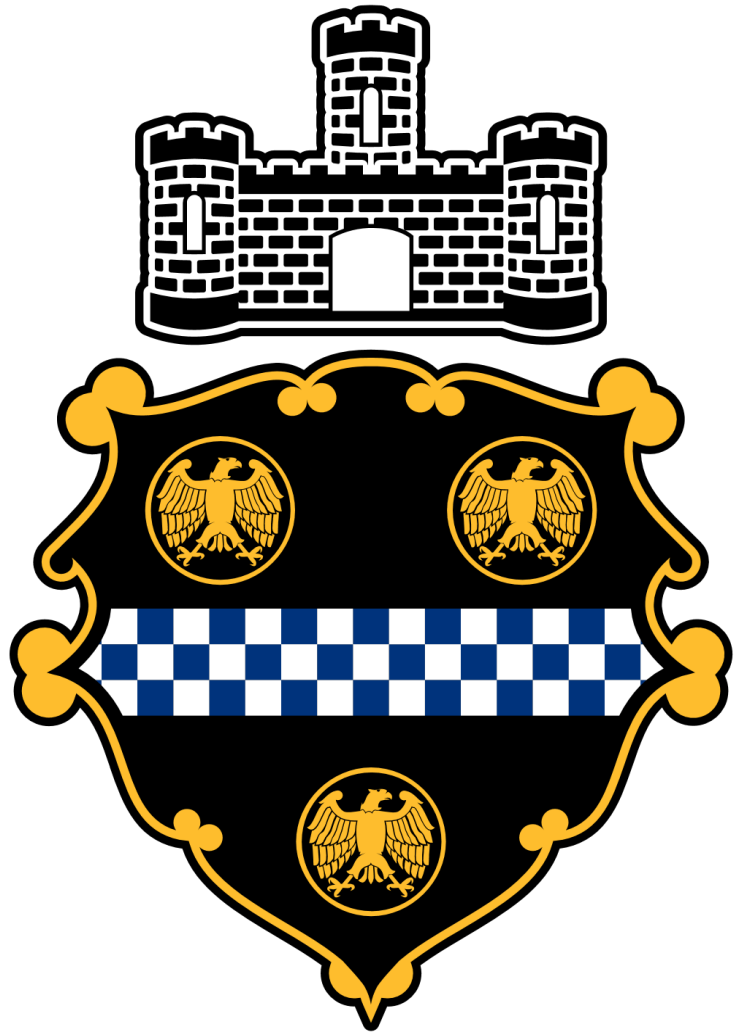


DECEMBER 14, 2020



# 2021 OPERATING BUDGET CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

[Section 504](#) of the City of Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter requires that the administration “conduct public hearings to obtain the advice of other officials and citizens as part of the preparation of [the operating and capital] budgets.” Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and social distancing requirements, the Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) held one virtual forum.

Additionally, OMB utilized an online survey and budgeting simulation tool to capture opinions from the public on the 2021 Operating Budget.

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## OPERATING FORUM

OMB hosted the Operating Budget Public Forum on Wednesday, September 16, 2020 via Zoom. It was also livestreamed on YouTube. The goal of this year’s forum was to educate constituents about the budget process, how to interpret the budget, source of revenue, and major expenditures. Staff also discussed current and expected impacts of COVID-19 on the City’s finances and how the administration had responded. There was time for questions and answers following the presentation.

The Department of Innovation and Performance (I&P) recorded the presentation and it is available to watch on [YouTube](#).

70	Zoom participants
135	YouTube Views as of December 14, 2020

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## SURVEY

A survey was posted on the [EngagePGH](#) platform for residents to complete. The survey was open from September 4, 2020 through October 19, 2020.

1,403	Responses
9 of 9	Council Districts represented
68 of 90	Neighborhoods represented

Several submissions were completed by non-residents.

### Revenue

A plurality of respondents indicated that they would support increases in taxes and user fees to fund community priorities. A majority of respondents indicated that they would support increases in permit fees to fund community priorities.

The survey asked respondents, “What other changes to revenue sources, if any, would you support?” Five hundred sixteen (516) respondents typed in their own answers. Common answers included:

- New taxes on non-profit organizations, marijuana, non-resident wages, commuting, pollution, and/or tourism
- Increased sales, gasoline, and/or parking taxes

- Restructured property taxes, to be graduated based on property value
- Restructured property taxes, to differentiate between vacant land and parcels with structures
- Restructured earned income taxes, to be graduated based on level of earnings
- Active collections of the billboard and/or parks taxes
- Market-based revenue opportunities and sponsorships
- Issuing more public bonds
- Eliminating tax credits for developers
- Adding new fees for certain services (bulk refuse, composting, bicycle licenses, etc.)
- Selling City-branded merchandise

Please note that the City of Pittsburgh does not have the authority to impose many of the above suggestions without federal or state intervention.

### Expenditures

The survey asked respondents if they would decrease, maintain, or increase funding for twelve different service areas. Nearly two-thirds of respondents recommend decreasing funding for policing. A plurality of respondents recommend increasing funding for parks maintenance, parks and recreation programming, and mobility and infrastructure services. The majority of respondents recommend maintaining funding for all other general government, public safety, and public works service areas.

Five hundred and eight (508) individuals commented on specific new programs or services that they would like to see. Some of the programs that citizens would like to see created include:

- Mental health resource programming
- Police alternatives for 911 calls, when appropriate
- New processes for the condemnation of vacant property
- Composting for residents
- Bus rapid transit
- Alternative energy production
- Natural meadows in parks
- Public internet

Five hundred and thirty-eight (538) individuals commented on existing programs that they would like to see expanded. These include increases to:

- Affordable housing
- Programming for senior citizens
- Programming for youth
- Litter pick-up
- Park improvements
- Yard waste collections
- Bike lanes
- Recycling services
- Pedestrian safety
- Open data and transparency
- Public transportation

- Storm water management
- ADA accessibility

Six hundred and four (604) individuals commented on programs that they would like to see reduced. The vast majority of these responses expressed interest in reducing expenditures related to policing. Other answers referenced decreases to:

- City employee travel expenses
- Public Safety overtime
- Street sweeping
- Bike lanes

Please note that some of the programs above are or would be under the jurisdiction of a different government or authority, including Allegheny County, Port Authority of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, Pittsburgh Parking Authority, Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, and/or the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

Several data visualizations can be found in Appendix A.

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## BALANCING ACT

By engaging with Balancing Act simulations, residents are able to move money around various categories in the current adopted budget to create their “ideal” budget.

528	Page views
77	Simulation submissions

### Revenue

The only simulation engagement that respondents had was with real estate taxes. The average submission increase real estate taxes by \$441,000. There were submissions that both increased and decreased this revenue line.

Submitted comments reference:

- Reductions in real estate tax millage
- Taxes on non-profits
- Implementation of the parks tax
- Implementation of non-resident passes for City amenities
- Increasing sales taxes
- Increasing parking taxes
- Eliminating real estate transfer taxes

### Expenditures

Completed simulations increased funding, on average, for Public Safety Administration, Emergency Medical Services, Fire, Animal Care and Control, all Public Works bureaus, and Mobility and Infrastructure.

Completed simulations decreased funding, on average, for Police and Innovation and Performance. Simulations did not change funding for Finance, Law, and Human Resources and Civil Service.

Submitted comments reference:

- Decreasing elected officials' salaries
- Increasing funding for positions related to constituent outreach
- More frequent recycling pick-up
- Increasing public transit
- Hiring more medics
- Decreasing the size of the Bureau of Fire
- Defunding the police and re-allocating those resources
- Increasing health and human services programming

Again, these recommendations may not fall under direct City of Pittsburgh jurisdiction.

Please note that the simulations cannot be edited once they are posted. This is a constraint of the third-party provider. As a result, there was no way to edit survey questions based on public feedback without losing all of the data gathered to that point. Future iterations will take this into consideration.

Several visualizations can be found in Appendix B.

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## **FUTURE PARTICIPATION**

In future years, OMB hopes to:

- Increase participation
- Conduct in-person forum sessions
- Clarify and streamline language for the survey and simulation tool
- Gather additional demographic data

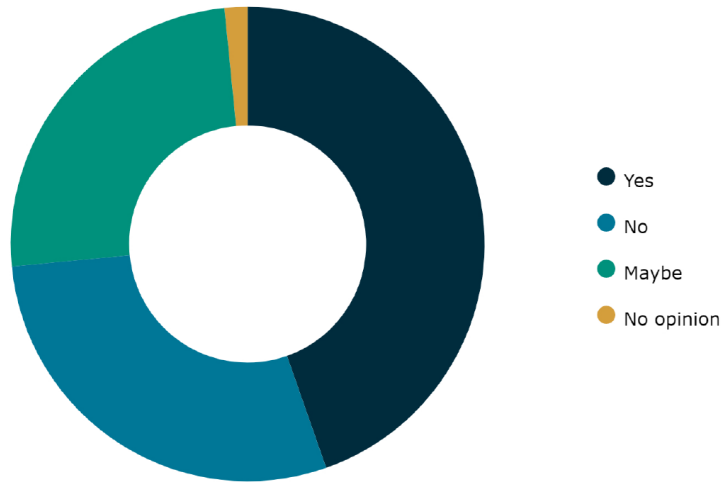
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## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

More information is available on OMB's [Operating Budget Engagement Page](#).

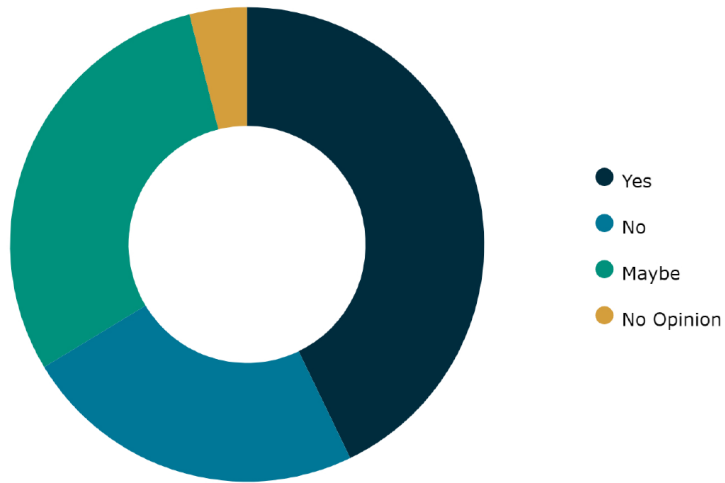
## APPENDIX A – SELECTED SURVEY DATA

**2. Would you support an increase in City of Pittsburgh property taxes to help fund community priorities?** Required  
Multiple Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 1,403 (100%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	44.62%	626
No	28.87%	405
Maybe	24.95%	350
No opinion	1.57%	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>1,403</b>

**3. Would you support an increase in user fees to help fund community priorities?** Required  
Multiple Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 1,403 (100%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	42.84%	601
No	23.52%	330
Maybe	29.72%	417
No Opinion	3.92%	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>1,403</b>

**4. Would you support an increase in permit fees to help fund community priorities? Required**

Multiple Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 1,403 (100%)



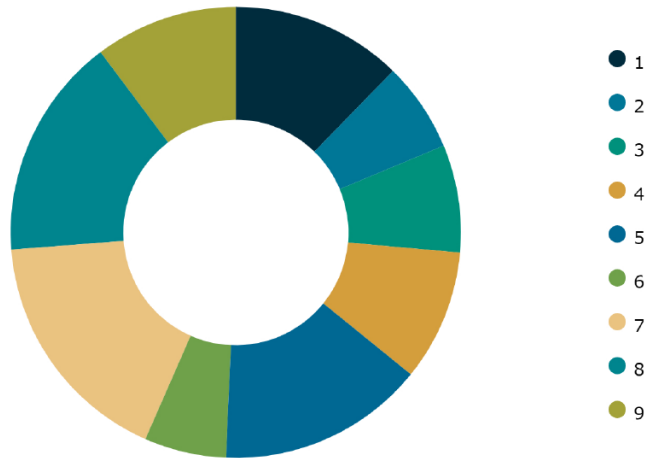
Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	53.39%	749
No	19.17%	269
Maybe	24.52%	344
No Opinion	2.92%	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>1,403</b>

Service Area	Percentage of Respondents Who Would Recommend...		
	Decreasing Funding	Maintaining Funding	Increasing Funding
Elected Offices	46.19%	50.96%	2.85%
General Government	31.72%	60.44%	7.84%
Public Safety - Emergency Medical Services	2.14%	61.65%	36.21%
Public Safety - Fire	8.98%	69.14%	21.88%
Public Safety - Police	60.01%	21.81%	18.18%
Public Safety - Animal Care and Control	13.40%	72.77%	13.83%
Public Works - Street Maintenance	5.92%	50.89%	43.19%
Public Works - Parks Maintenance	14.83%	41.84%	43.34%
Public Works - Facility Maintenance	14.18%	63.65%	22.17%
Public Works - Refuse and Recycling	11.19%	52.67%	36.14%
Parks and Recreation	16.18%	41.05%	42.77%
Mobility and Infrastructure	14.61%	38.56%	46.83%



**22. What Council District do you live in?**

Multiple Choice | Skipped: 468 | Answered: 935 (66.6%)

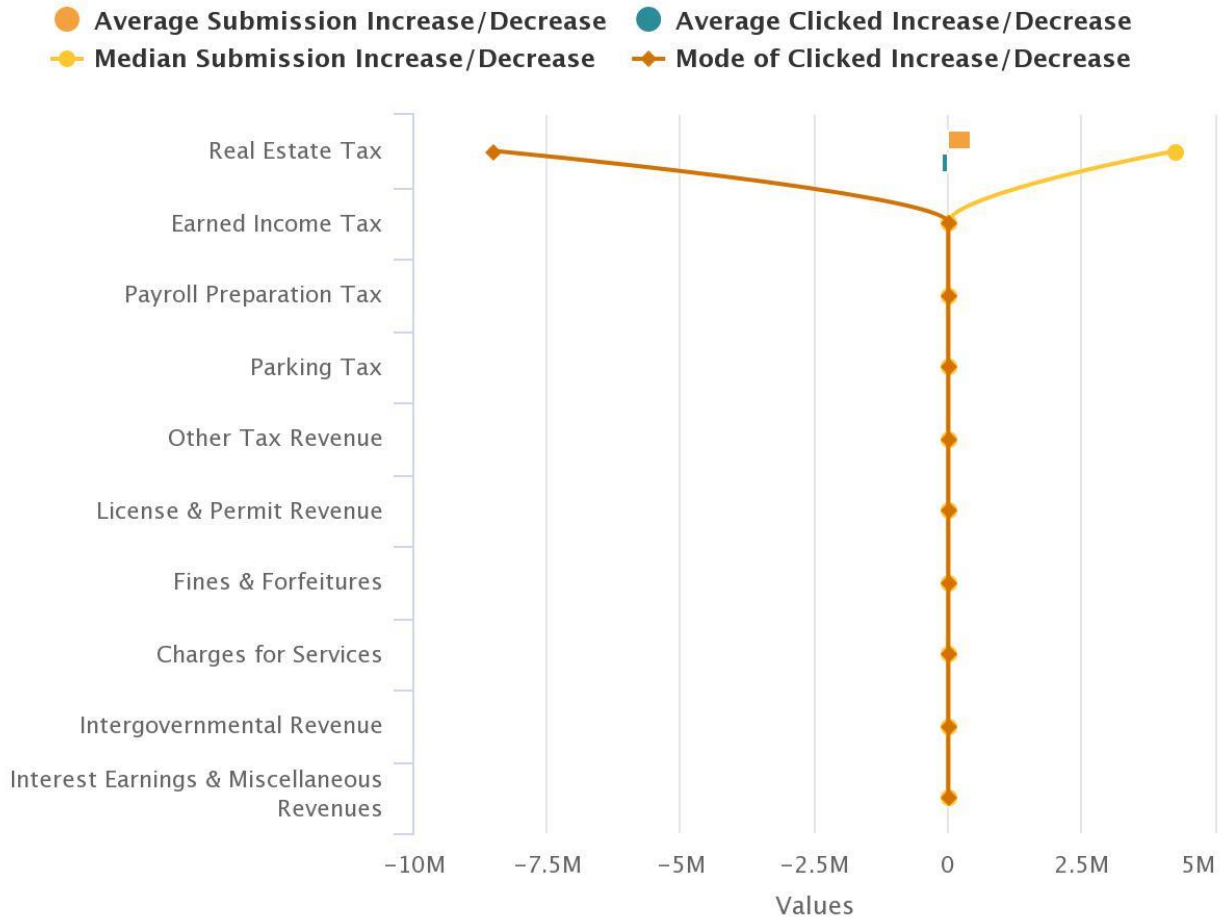


Answer choices	Percent	Count
1	12.30%	115
2	6.42%	60
3	7.70%	72
4	9.41%	88
5	14.87%	139
6	5.88%	55
7	17.22%	161
8	15.94%	149
9	10.27%	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>935</b>

## APPENDIX B – SELECTED BALANCING ACT DATA

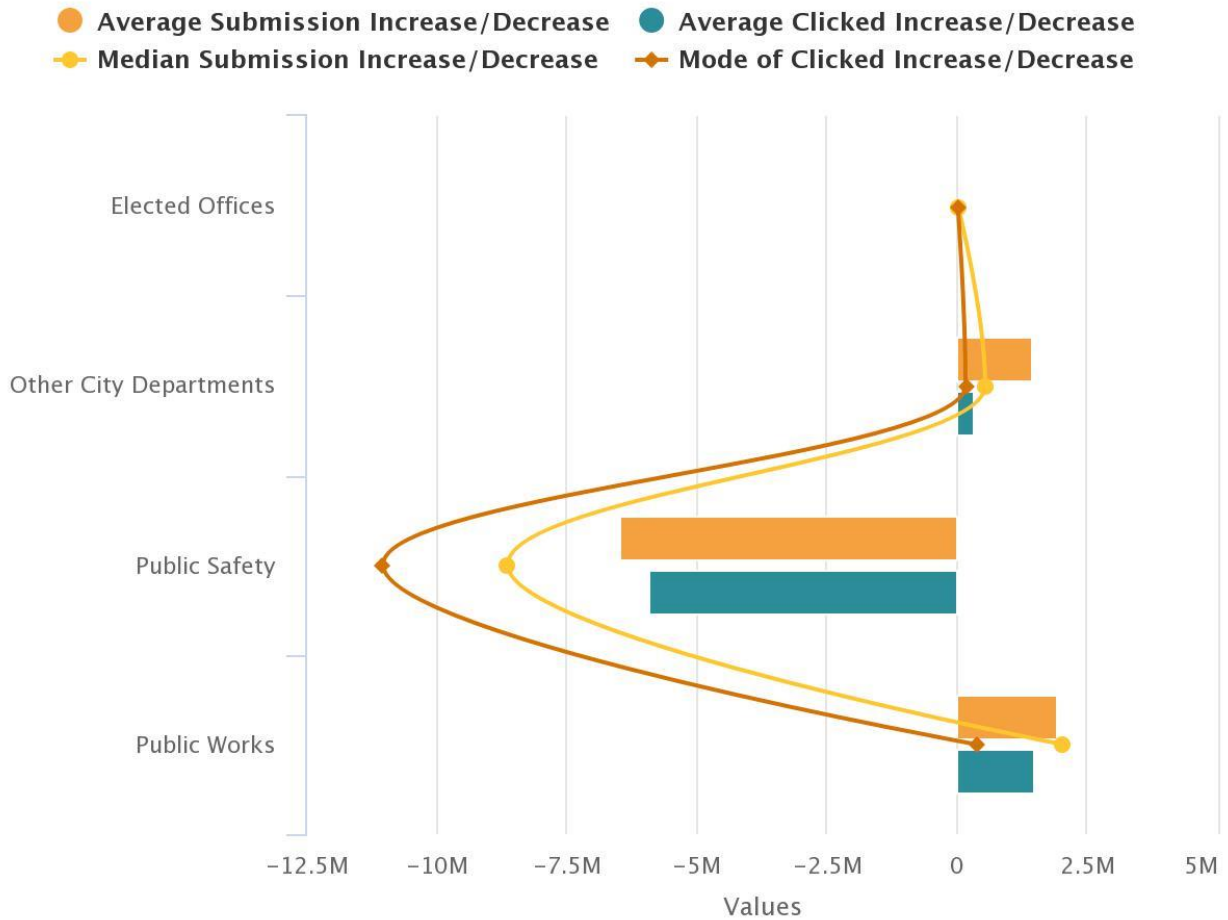
### Revenue Budget Comparison

Decreases vs. Increases (Click to hide)



## Expenses Budget Comparison

Decreases vs. Increases (Click to hide)



Department/Bureau	Average Change, in Dollars	Average Change, as a Percentage of Budget
Innovation and Performance	\$ (34,449.66)	-0.2%
Finance	\$ -	0.0%
Law	\$ -	0.0%
Human Resources and Civil Service	\$ -	0.0%
Public Safety - Bureau of Administration	\$ 138,160.86	1.2%
Public Safety - Bureau of Emergency Medical Services	\$ 785,446.64	3.3%
Public Safety - Bureau of Police	\$ (7,900,000.00)	-6.9%
Public Safety - Bureau of Fire	\$ 492,335.01	0.5%
Public Safety - Bureau of Animal Care and Control	\$ 21,457.24	1.3%
Public Works - Bureau of Administration	\$ 139,115.82	12.1%
Public Works - Bureau of Operations	\$ 116,223.17	0.7%
Public Works - Bureau of Environmental Services	\$ 1,100,000.00	6.1%
Public Works - Bureau of Facilities	\$ 482,077.92	2.3%
Mobility and Infrastructure	\$ 1,400,000.00	16.6%
Other Departments	\$ 71,296.57	0.2%