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Quality Community Initiative Results

2012

Background

The purpose of the Quality Community Initiative stakeholder group (QCI) is to ultimately advise and present a recommendation to City Council on a strategy to achieve long-term capital improvement goals that are well supported not just by the committee but also the community at-large.

Since November 2011, a diverse group of local residents, business owners, non-profits, developers and special interests have met 14 times to educate themselves about the city's budget, project needs and financial strategies. The initiative reached agreement on a list of possible capital projects based on the city's draft long-range financial plan, but acknowledged prioritization and funding strategies could not occur without greater input from citizens. In order to meet the group's stated goal, QCI identified a community engagement process to solicit public input on project priorities and potential funding options. The quantitative and qualitative results from these strategies will formulate QCI's recommendation.

The results of this process will be used to formulate the initiative's final recommendation to City Council on Jan. 28, 2013. The following report identifies the engagement process selected by QCI and its results. For more information about this report, please reach out to Mizraim Cordero, intergovernmental relations manager, at 303-227-8839.

Community Survey

The city contracted with Corona Insights, a respected, third-party research firm to complete a community survey. The bilingual (English and Spanish) survey instrument was collaboratively designed by Corona Insights, Commerce City staff and QCI members. The primary research goals guided survey development with attention to the intricacies of mail survey research. Due to the complexity of the topics covered, Corona and the City worked to provide additional background information on each project need and funding source within the survey itself, so respondents could provide more informed responses. 4,130 households were randomly selected from a list of Commerce City residential addresses provided by Commerce City.

Survey Process

Corona worked with city staff to complete the survey and data collection ran from the end of August through October 2012. The process for the mailing was as follows:

1. The City sent an **announcement letter**, in both English and Spanish, to those households that would receive a survey alerting them to the upcoming survey and to encourage participation.
2. A few days later Corona sent a **survey packet**, containing the survey booklet and an additional cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and the importance of hearing from them. An online response option was also provided. Both the mailed surveys and online option were available in Spanish and English.
3. After approximately two weeks a **postcard reminder** was sent to households who had not responded. This included a copy of the online link and their unique log-in information. This included both Spanish and English language options.
4. After approximately another two weeks, Corona sent a **second survey packet** to those households who had not responded. This included both Spanish and English language options.
5. Due to low response rates in the southern region, Corona sent an **additional mailing** to a fresh sample of households. The survey content was the same, but only offered in English. Due to time constraints this mailing did not include a pre mailing, postcard, second survey mailing, or online response option.

The survey mailing also offered residents an opportunity to respond online. Corona programmed and managed the online survey, including a Spanish language option, which residents could access to respond. Access was controlled through unique Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) provided on the mailed surveys to ensure that one person could not respond to both the mail and online survey, or provide multiple online responses.

Survey Results

In total, 421 surveys were completed, including 45 surveys completed online. The survey had a 6.3 percent margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level for the overall City population and each region of analysis.

On a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is the most important need and 6 is the least important need, citizens believed “transportation” (average ranking of 2.5) was the area most in need of improvement among the six options presented to them. “Parks, open space, and trails” and “recreation” were ranked second (3.3 each). Other infrastructure including “storm water drainage” and “city buildings and systems” was ranked, on average, fourth and fifth. “Arts and culture” had the lowest average ranking of 4.6. Both the northern and southern regions of Commerce City were similar in the top and bottom rankings, with “transportation” being the highest average ranked need and “arts and culture” being among the lowest (in the south, “arts and culture” was slightly higher than “city buildings and systems,” the lowest ranked need).

Citizen support for funding mirrored their priorities above for community needs in Commerce City. “Transportation” received the highest support, followed by “parks, open space, and trails” and “recreation.” “Arts and culture” received the least amount of support for increased funding. In addition to receiving the least amount of “strongly” or “somewhat” support, “arts and culture” had the largest proportion of citizens against increased funding, including both “strongly” or “somewhat” against. However, all six areas had more support than opposition.

When it came to specific funding desires, respondents generally preferred “additional impact fees on new development” more than any other option. It was the only option to receive more than one-half of respondents indicating “very good” or “good.” With the exception of “entertainment admissions tax,” tax increases were among the least popular options (including sales tax increase, employment head tax, and property tax). In general, the broader the base of the fee or tax, the less popular it was; whereas taxes or fees that would perhaps be levied on a smaller group of individuals (and perhaps „other“ individuals besides the broad base of current residents) were more popular.

See Appendix A to review the community survey and results.

Community meetings

A series of community meetings held toward the end of the survey process were conducted to obtain qualitative feedback on project priorities and areas of importance. In total, 13 meetings were held in various parts of the city to maximize participation by residents across the community and diverse audience groups. Some meetings were targeted to reach the Hispanic, business and older adult populations within the city.

Format

QCI approved an interactive meeting design to solicit feedback. Using the capital project list created earlier by QCI, city staff designed an interactive exercise titled “It’s your city, It’s your vision.” The exercise required meeting attendees to determine which projects are a priority by using adhesive dollar bills in various denominations. With the list of 21 projects broken out into

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six categories, participants moved around the meeting room, deciding where to invest their money based on perceived priority. Attendees also were able to prioritize self-identified projects not listed. A facilitated discussion followed the exercise to understand why specific projects and categories were more of a priority than others.

Following discussion, keypad polling was used to solicit opinions on nine ways to fund these priorities. The keypad polling provided anonymity and results were displayed on a screen to the audience, eliciting reactions and responses from attendees. The format was consistent regardless of meeting as to not skew results.

City staff recorded attendee project priorities and documented the facilitated discussion. Software captured the results of keypad polling.

Meeting Attendees

Each meeting had between four – 30 participants. Based on sign-in sheets and meeting materials used, an average of 12 people attended per meeting, for a total of 144 participants. Of those individuals, 28 percent attended meetings in the northern part of the city (96th Ave and heading north) and 73 percent attended meetings held in the southern part of city (96th Ave heading south), from those 73 percent, 38 percent attended the Hispanic focus groups.

Outreach Efforts

On behalf of QCI, city staff used the following tools to inform residents and businesses about the meetings:

- Two City newsletter articles, with distribution of 21,000 households
 - Two ads
 - August, October and November editions
- Two direct postcard mailings to 16,500 households
- Social media
- Posters and fliers
- Event cross-marketing
- Earned media
- Letters
- Church bulletins
- Channel 8

See Appendix B for communication tools, meeting materials and sign-in sheets.

Meeting Results

Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative data collected from the 13 meetings was captured to determine the communities' top capital projects and funding choices for those projects. The analysis relied on the following assumptions:

1. Value. Staff assigned a total value of the dollar bills assigned to each identified project. In some cases, the overall category was important, so its value was labeled the general category name. Staff then added all monetary value of each specific category, labeling it the Total Value.
2. Value Ranking. This section is based on the value that was given to the projects as well as the overall category. Staff then ranked based on monetary value. This allowed the Value Ranking to be compared and contrasted with the Priority Ranking.

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3. Percentage. The percentages provided are based on the specific value divided by the overall value from the overall monetary given to the category. The percentage tells us, based off the monetary aspect, which projects are high priority to the participants based off money.
4. Ranking Priority. Because the participants were asked to rank their most favored priority with the \$100 bill and their lowest priority with the \$1 bill, the ranking priority shows, based on how many \$1, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100 bills were given to each category, what participants top priority is. For the most part, the ranking priority was consistent or very close to the value rankings.
5. Staff totaled the outcomes from the keypad polling software and analyzed the results from an overall perspective as well as northern vs. southern meeting attendees, Hispanic focus groups and business owners focus groups.

Findings

Refer to Appendix C for detailed information on the findings.

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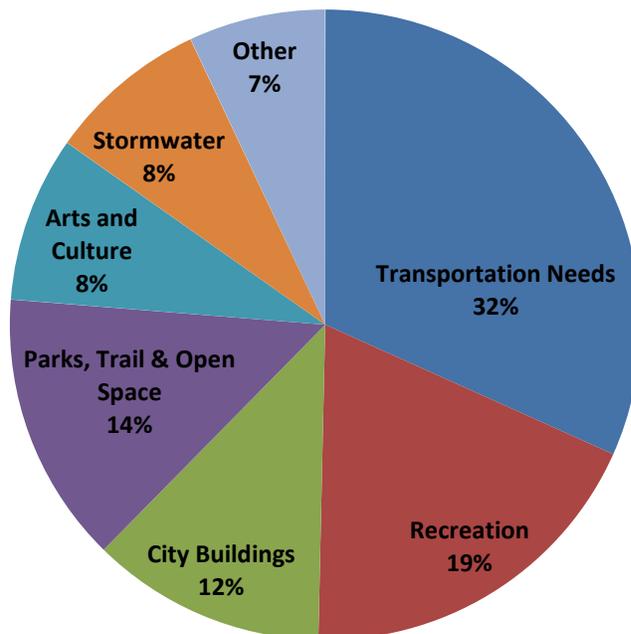
Overall ranked categories: This graph shows each category and its ranking.

The Overall Category Rank by Value shows the top priority among the participants based off monetary value —from all meetings. Based on dollar assigned, \$24,737, Transportation Needs was ranked number one with 32 percent. Second priority, with \$4,607 dollar assigned, and a 19 percent is Recreation. With 14 percent and \$3,443 dollar assigned, Parks, Trails and Open Space is the third priority.

Projects that ranked the lowest in priority are 'Other', 7 percent, with a monetary value of \$1,737. The Other boards are projects that participants identified as a priority, but were not in any of the six categories provided. The second lowest is stormwater at 8 percent with a monetary value of \$2,037. The third lowest is Arts and Culture, 8 percent, with a monetary value of \$2,113.

During the discussion groups, a recurring theme discussed was Transportation Needs, ranking number one in value with **traffic congestion**, caused by too many railroad tracks in Commerce City, cited as a common issue within that theme. Noise and safety of youth and elders who have to cross these tracks, were also noted as issues with train tracks. **Stormwater** is ranked low in priority and common themes discussed were the lack of information about this subject. Many confused stormwater for drinking water, but after having staff give a brief explanation in some of these meetings many said it should be a priority to the city. A common theme for Arts and Culture is that it is less of a necessity than other projects, but for others it would bring revenue and pride to the city.

Overall Category Rank by Value



Priorities: Transportation

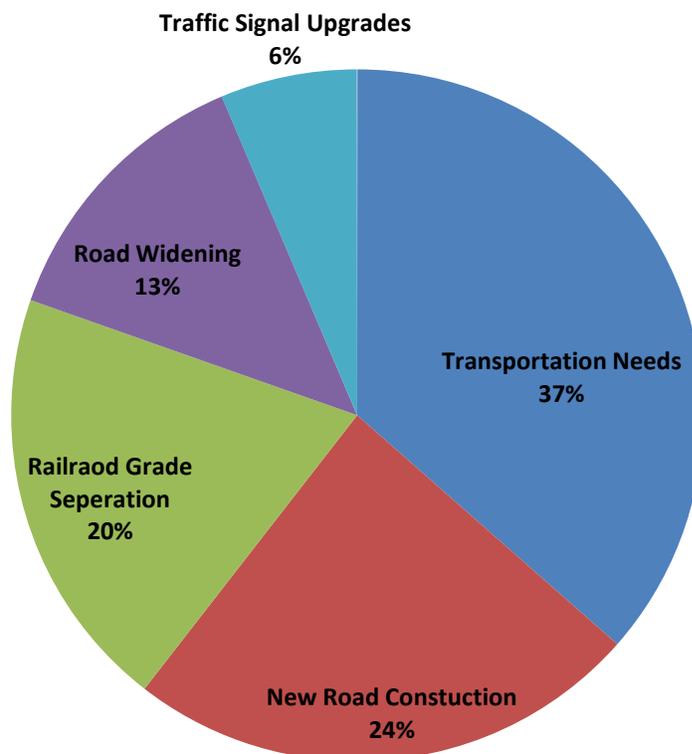
Transportation Needs are the number one priority among the participants based off monetary value —from the Overall Category Rank by Value. Based on dollar assigned, \$2,865, New Road Construction/Improved Roads is ranked number one with 37 percent. Second priority, with \$1,880 assigned at 24 percent, is Railroad Grade Separation. Third priority, with 20 percent and \$1,561 assigned, is Transportation Needs in general. The participants felt that all the projects under Transportation Needs was a priorities.

The project that ranked the lowest in priority is Traffic Signal Upgrades at 7 percent with a monetary value of \$505. The second lowest is Road Widening at 13 percent with a monetary value of \$1,032.

Common Themes:

- New/ Better RTD routes
- New/ Improved roads bring jobs and increase economic development.
- Only two ways to travel from the South part of the city to the Northern part of the city. Vice versa.
 - These two ways of traveling seems to divide the city.

Transportation Needs



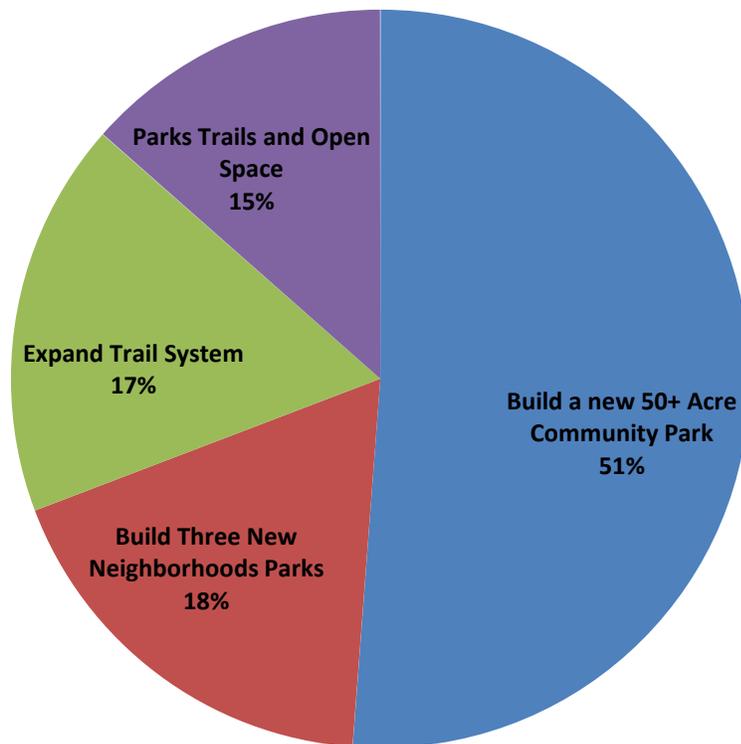
Priorities: Parks, Trails, and Open Space

Parks, Trails and Open Space is the fourth priority among the participants based off monetary value —from the Overall Category Rank by Value. Based on monetary value of \$1,761, Build a new 50+ Acre Community Park is ranked number one with 51 percent. Second priority, at \$621 and 18 percent, is Build Three New Neighborhood Parks. Third priority, with 17 percent and \$595, is Expand Trail System.

The project ranked the lowest in priority is Parks, Trails and Open Space in general at 14 percent and \$466. The second lowest is Expand Trail System at 17 percent with a monetary value of \$595. Common Themes:

- Children need more access to parks; it keeps them off the streets, lowers crime, and increases healthy lifestyles.
- Parks in the core city are too small and reservations are needed six months in advance.
- Trails are cheaper to maintain, connects community and drives people to neighborhoods.

Parks, Trails and Open Space



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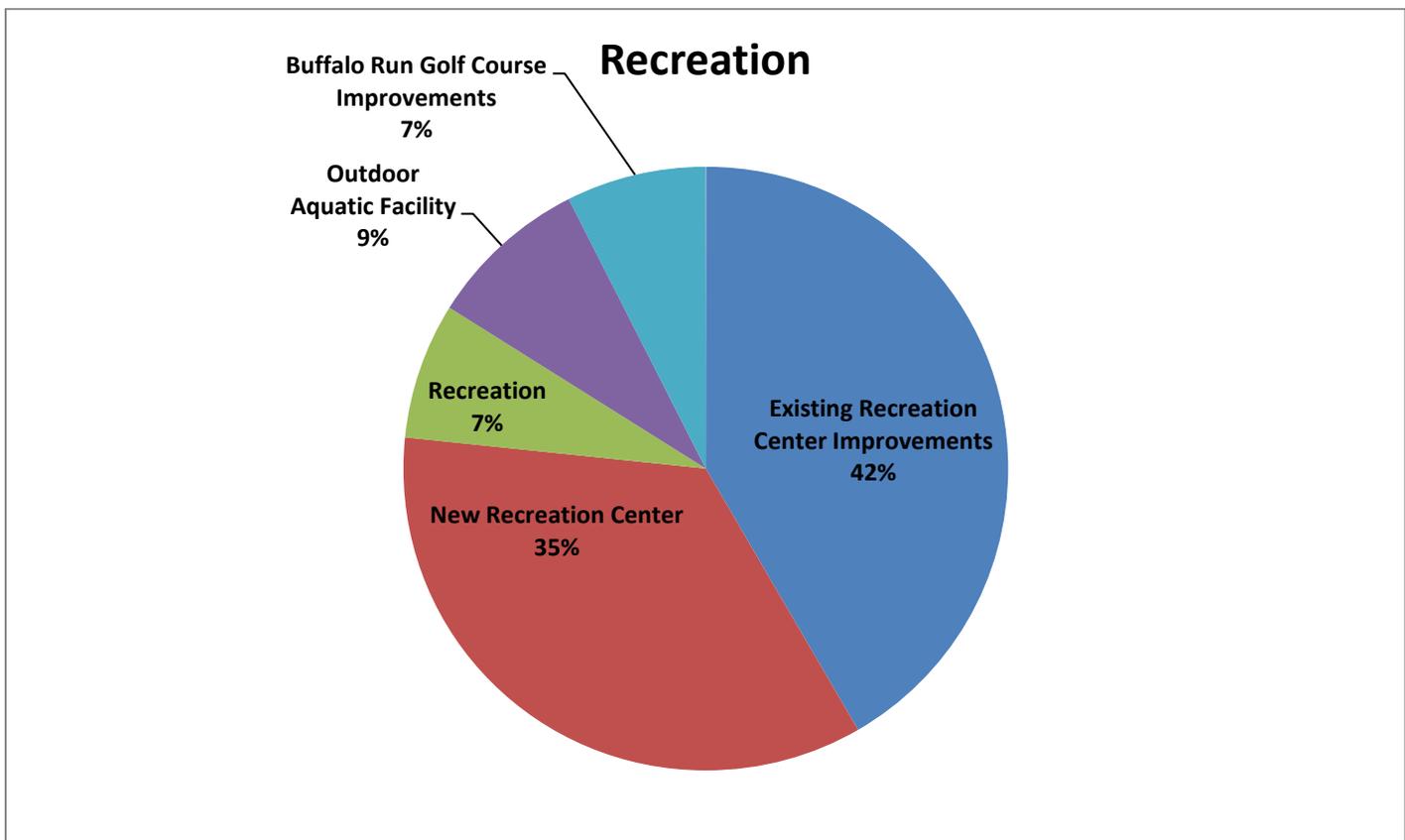
Priorities: Recreation

Recreation is the second priority among the participants based off monetary value —from the Overall Category Rank by Value. Based on a monetary value of \$1,919, Existing Recreation Center Enhancements is ranked number one with 42 percent. Second priority, with \$1,615 and 35 percent, is a New Recreation Center. Third priority, with 7 percent and \$336, is Recreation in general. The participants feel that all the projects under Recreation are a priority.

The project ranked the lowest in priority were Buffalo Run Golf Course Improvements at 8 percent with a monetary value of \$343. The second lowest is Outdoor Aquatic Facility at 9 percent and \$394. Recreation in general scored higher than Outdoor Aquatic Facility because within monetary value prioritization it received more \$100 and \$50 bills than Outdoor Aquatic Facilities which received more \$10's and \$20's.

Common Themes:

- The northern part of the city needs a recreation center. If you are not a Reunion community resident, you are not able to become a member and daily passes are highly expensive.
- Recreation is a benefit to children; keeps them off the streets and prevents obesity.
- For participants that live in the northern part of the city, coming to the existing recreation center is too far.



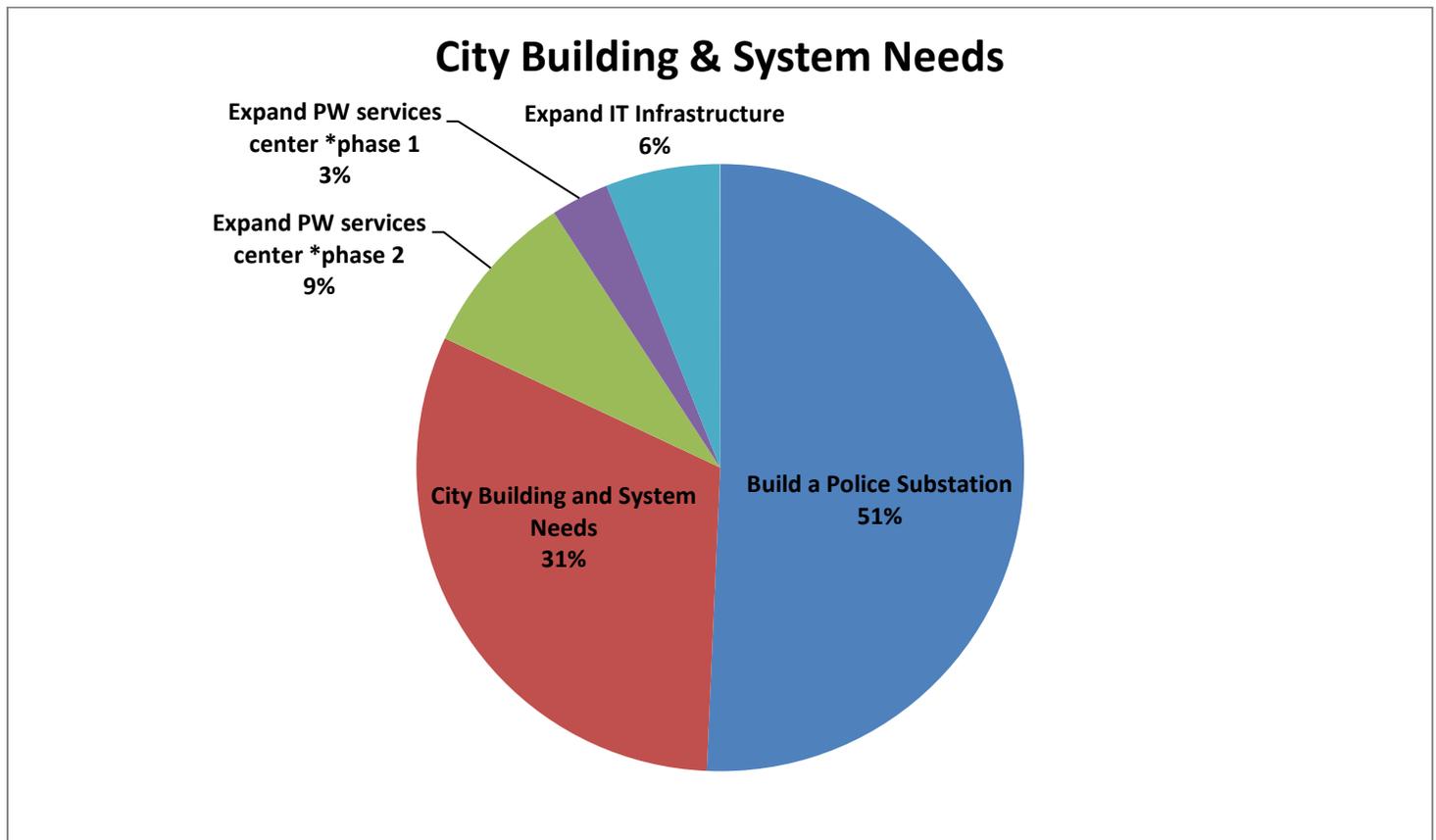
Priorities: City Buildings and System Needs

City Buildings and System Needs are the third priority among the participants based off monetary value —from the Overall Category Rank by Value. Based on a monetary value of \$1,500, Build a Police Substation is ranked number one with 51 percent. Second priority, at \$924 and 31 percent, is City Buildings and System Needs in general. Participants feel that all the projects under City Buildings and System Needs are priorities. Third priority, with 9 percent and \$260, is Expand Public Works Services Center Phase 2.

The projects ranked the lowest in priority were the Expansion of the Public Works Services Center Phase 1 at a 3 percent and monetary value of \$92. Expansion of Informational Technology Infrastructure at 6 percent and \$181 is the second lowest priority. Expand Public Works services phase 1 scored higher than Expand IT Infrastructure, because within monetary value prioritization it received more \$100 and \$50 bills than Expand IT Infrastructure that received more \$10's and \$20's.

Common Themes:

- Support future growth
- Police protection is important. Response rates need improvement in the northern part of the city.



Priorities: Stormwater

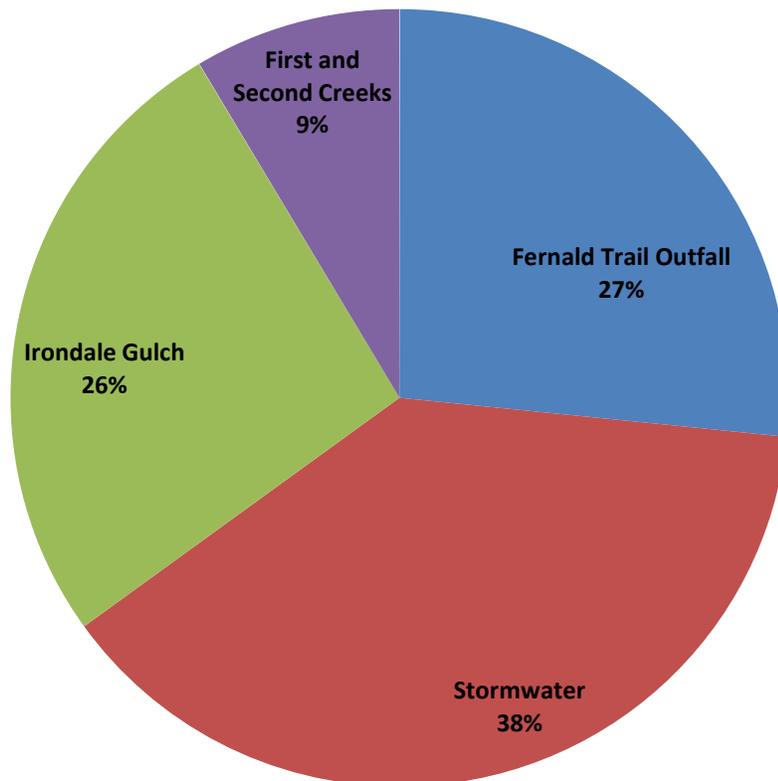
Stormwater is the sixth priority among the participants based off monetary value —from the Overall Category Rank by Value. Based on a monetary value of \$783, Stormwater in general is ranked number one with 38 percent. Second priority, with \$541 and 27 percent, is Fernald Trail Outfall.

The project ranked the lowest in priority is First and Second Creeks at 9 percent and a monetary value of \$175. The second lowest is Irondale Gulch at 26 percent and \$538. Irondale Gulch is close to Fernald Trail Outfall (27 percent), but Irondale Gulch received more \$10's and 20's, while Fernald received \$100's bills.

Common Themes:

- Lack of information of the importance of stormwater

Stormwater



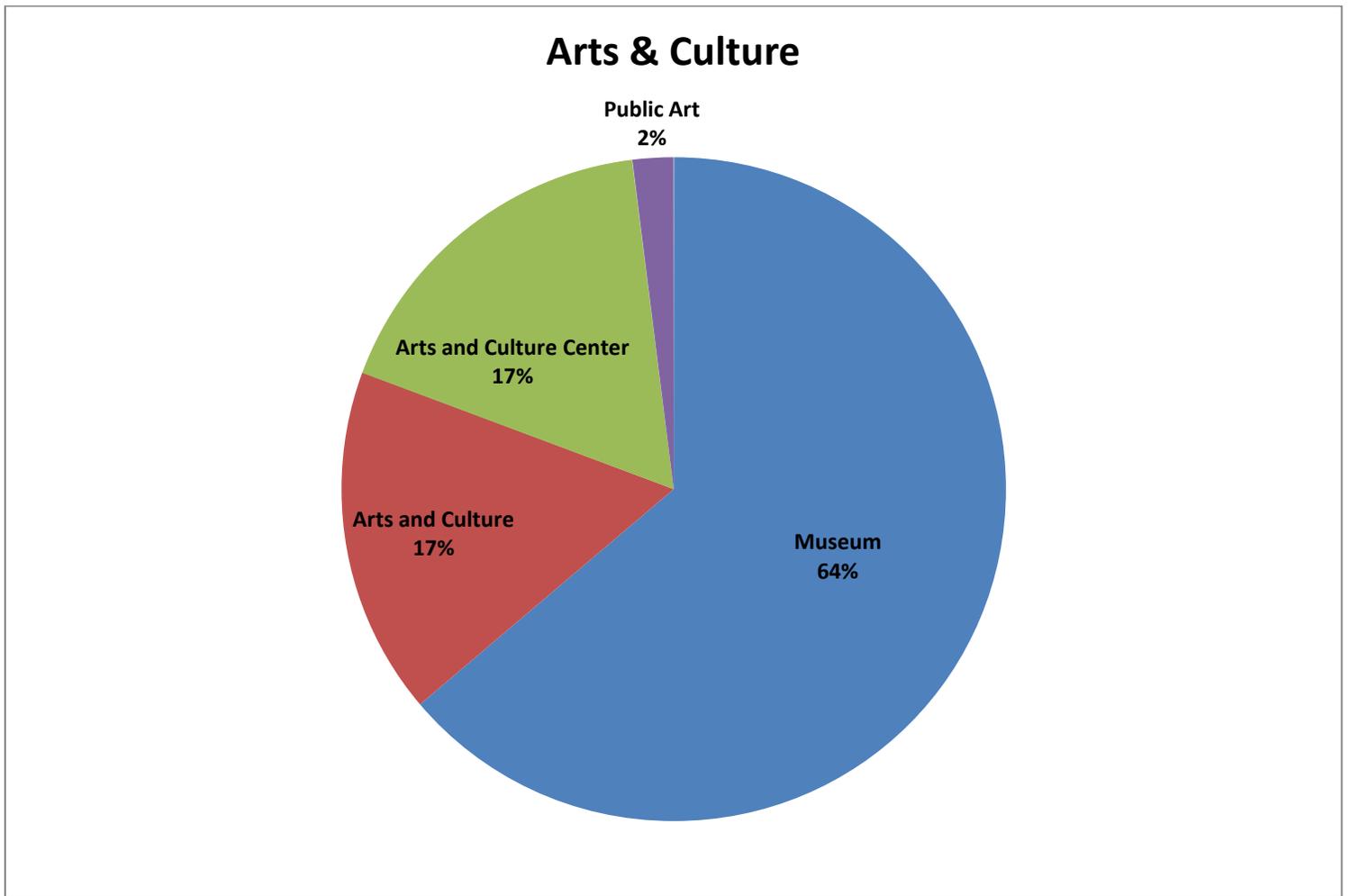
Priorities: Arts and Culture

Arts and Culture is the fifth priority among the participants based off monetary value —from the Overall Category Rank by Value. Based on a monetary value of \$1,348, a Museum is ranked number one with 64 percent. Second priority, with \$365 and 17 percent is Arts and Culture Center.

The project ranked the lowest in priority is Public Art at 2 percent and \$43. The second lowest is Arts and Culture in general at 17 percent and a monetary value of \$357. The Arts and Culture in general was close to an Art and Culture Center (both 17 percent), but received more \$10's and 20's, while Arts and Culture Center received \$100 and \$50 bills.

Common Themes:

- Art draws people to the city.
- Unites the northern and southern parts of the city



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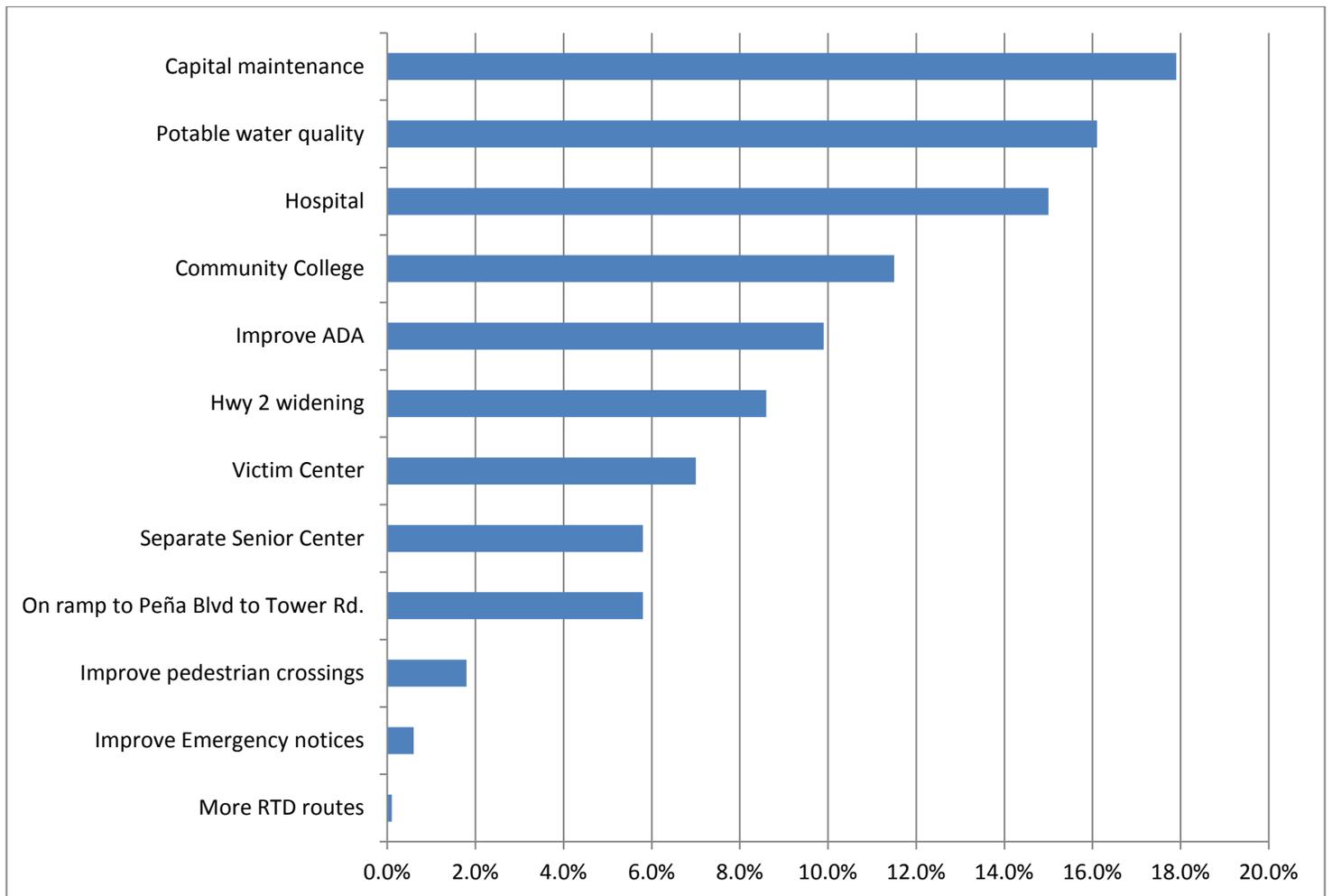
Priorities: Other

The Other category is the seventh priority among the participants based off monetary value —from the Overall Category Rank by Value. Based on the monetary value of \$311, Capital Maintenance is ranked number one with 18 percent. Second priority, with \$280 and 16 percent is Potable water. Third priority, with 15 percent and \$261, is a Hospital.

The project ranked the lowest in priority is More RTD routes with an insignificant 0.1 percent and monetary value of \$1. The second lowest is Improve Emergency Notices at 0.6 percent and \$10.

Common Themes:

- Commerce City water is not drinkable, it is too hard.
- If Commerce City's growth doubles in the next 10 years we need to have a community college for not only residents, but also bring other students here.
- Why should we worry about new projects when we need to worry about existing capital maintenance?



Funding

Funding Choice Overall

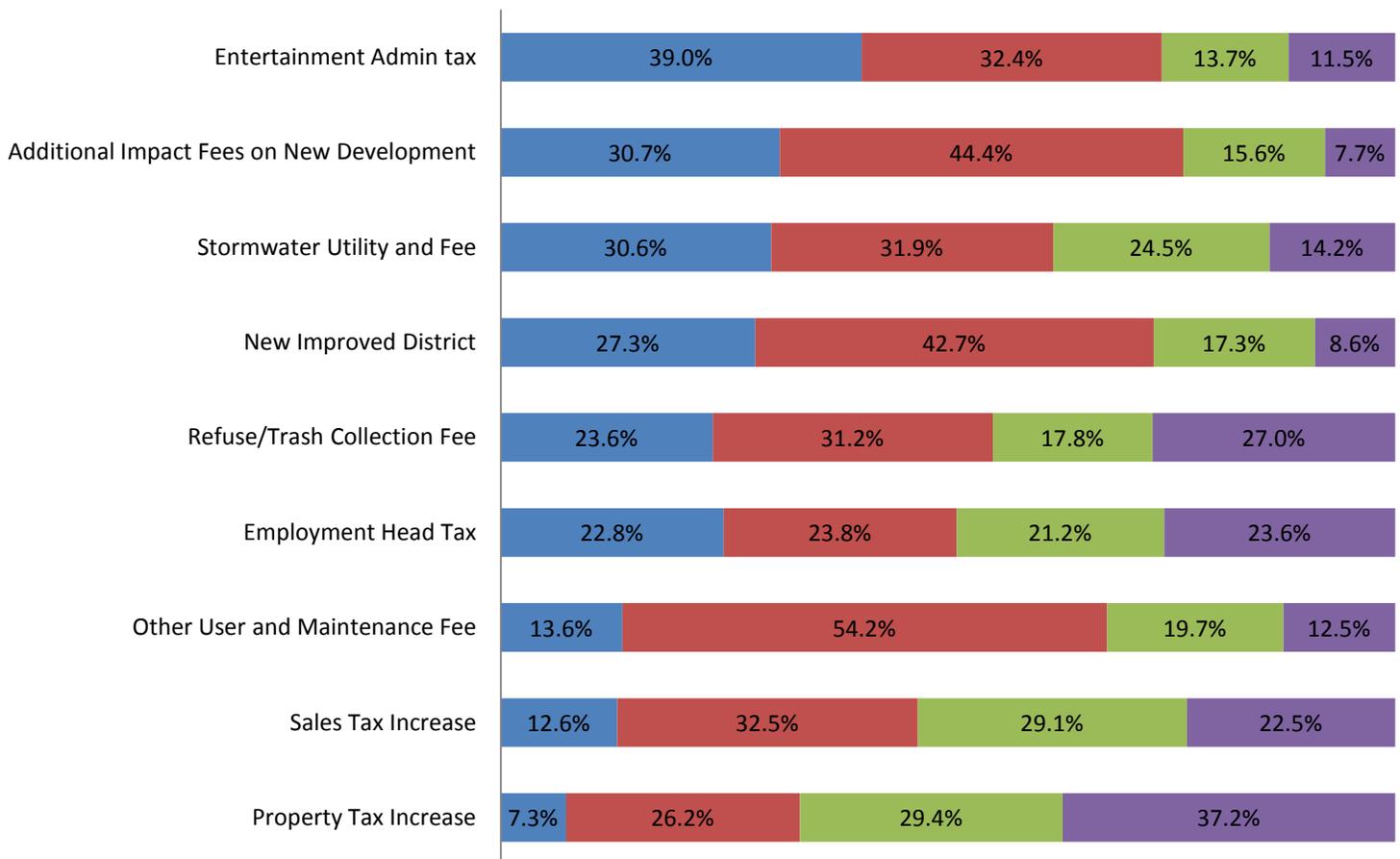
See Appendix D for.....

Funding Choices Overall shows the nine funding options participants were polled on in all meetings. Based on our polling, Additional Impact Fees is ranked number one with a 75 percent of participants identifying it as being a very good and good idea. Second best option for funding at 71 percent identifying it as being a very good and good idea is Entertainment Head Tax. With 70 percent identifying it as being a very good and good idea, New Improved District is the ranked the third best option for funding.

The funding option that ranked the lowest at 34 percent identifying it as being a very bad and bad idea is Property Tax Increase. The second lowest is Sales Tax Increase with 45 percent identifying it as very bad and bad idea. The third lowest is Employment Head Tax with 47 percent identifying it as very bad and bad idea.

Funding Choices: Overall

■ Very Good Idea ■ Good Idea ■ Bad Idea ■ Very bad Idea



The following analysis segments the overall Funding Choices results (above) into Northern, Southern, Hispanic and Business to provide a better sense of those demographics within the city as they may provide different perspectives.

Funding Choice-Northern

Based on our polling representing participants from the northern part of the city, Entertainment Head Tax is ranked number one with 83 percent identifying it as being a very good and good idea. Second best option for funding, with 75 percent identifying it as being a very good and good idea, is Additional Impact Fees. With 72 percent of respondents identifying it as being a very good and good idea, Other User and Maintenance Fee is the third best option for funding.

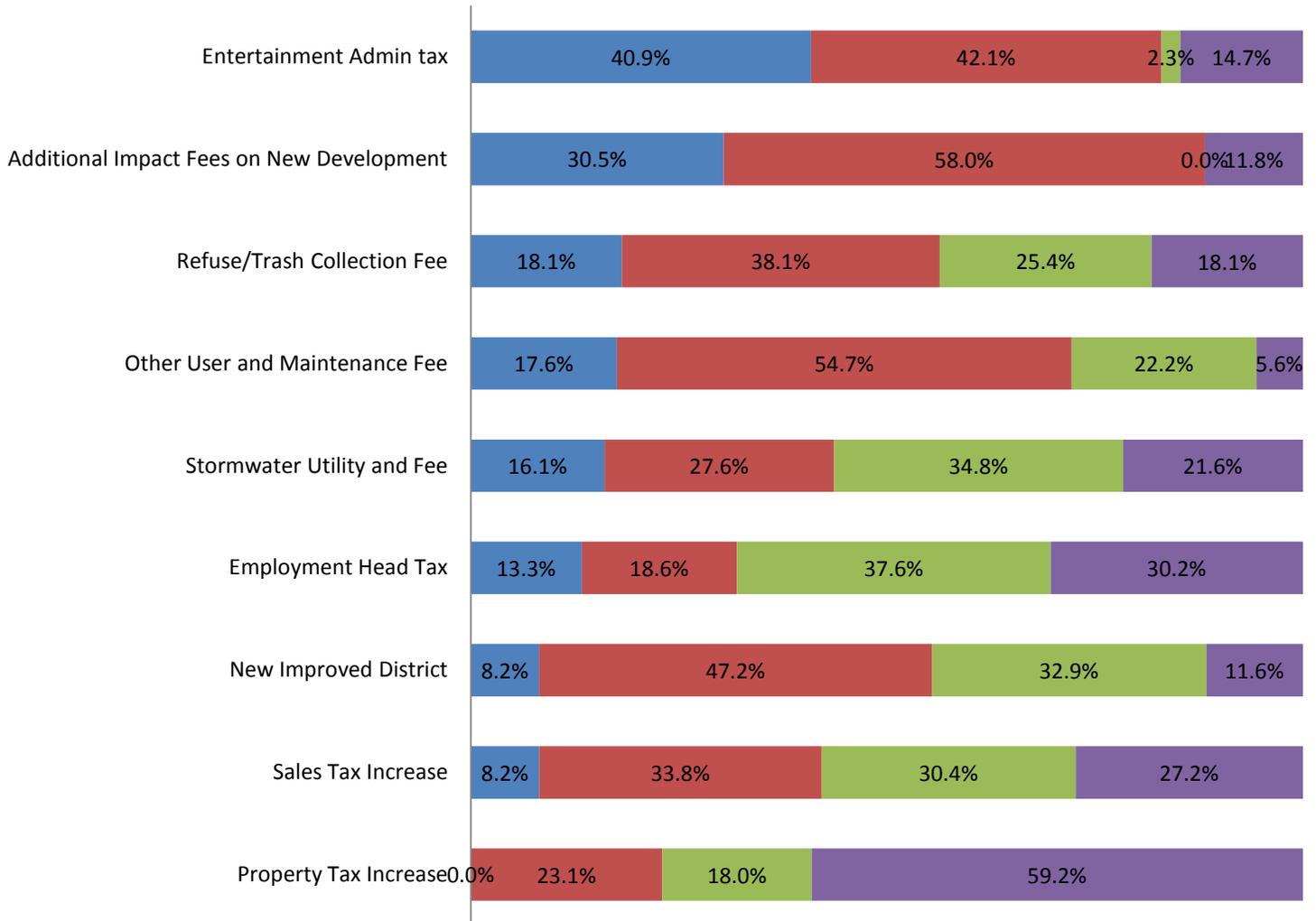
The funding option ranked the lowest, with 77 percent identifying it as being a very bad and bad idea is Property Tax Increase. The second lowest is Sales Tax Increase at 45 percent identifying it as a very bad and bad idea. The third lowest is Employment Head Tax at 68 percent.

Common Themes:

- Property Tax Increase:
 - Too high already (northern part of the city's comment)
 - This comment was based on the dollar bill that was given through the PowerPoint presentation.
- Entertainment Tax:
 - People who are coming to Commerce City will pay for that tax, not necessarily those who are residents.
 - Hard for people to pay with a economic recession.
 - Minimal tax, less impact, and is expected by user.
- Trash Collection Fee:
 - Northern meetings: Most of them pay for trash collection, might as well have all the city pay.
- Other user and Maintenance fee: Good idea, you pay for what you use.
 - Senior Center: This means that cost for programs, sports, will increase and not everyone can afford current fees.

Funding Choices: Northern Meetings

■ Very Good Idea ■ Good Idea ■ Bad Idea ■ Very bad Idea



Funding Choice-Southern meetings *not including Hispanic focus groups

Based on our polling representing participants from the southern part of the city, New Improved District is ranked number one with 75 percent identifying it as being a very good and good idea. Second best option for funding at 75 percent identifying it as being a very good and good idea is Entertainment Tax. With 68 percent, Additional Impact Fees is the third best option for funding.

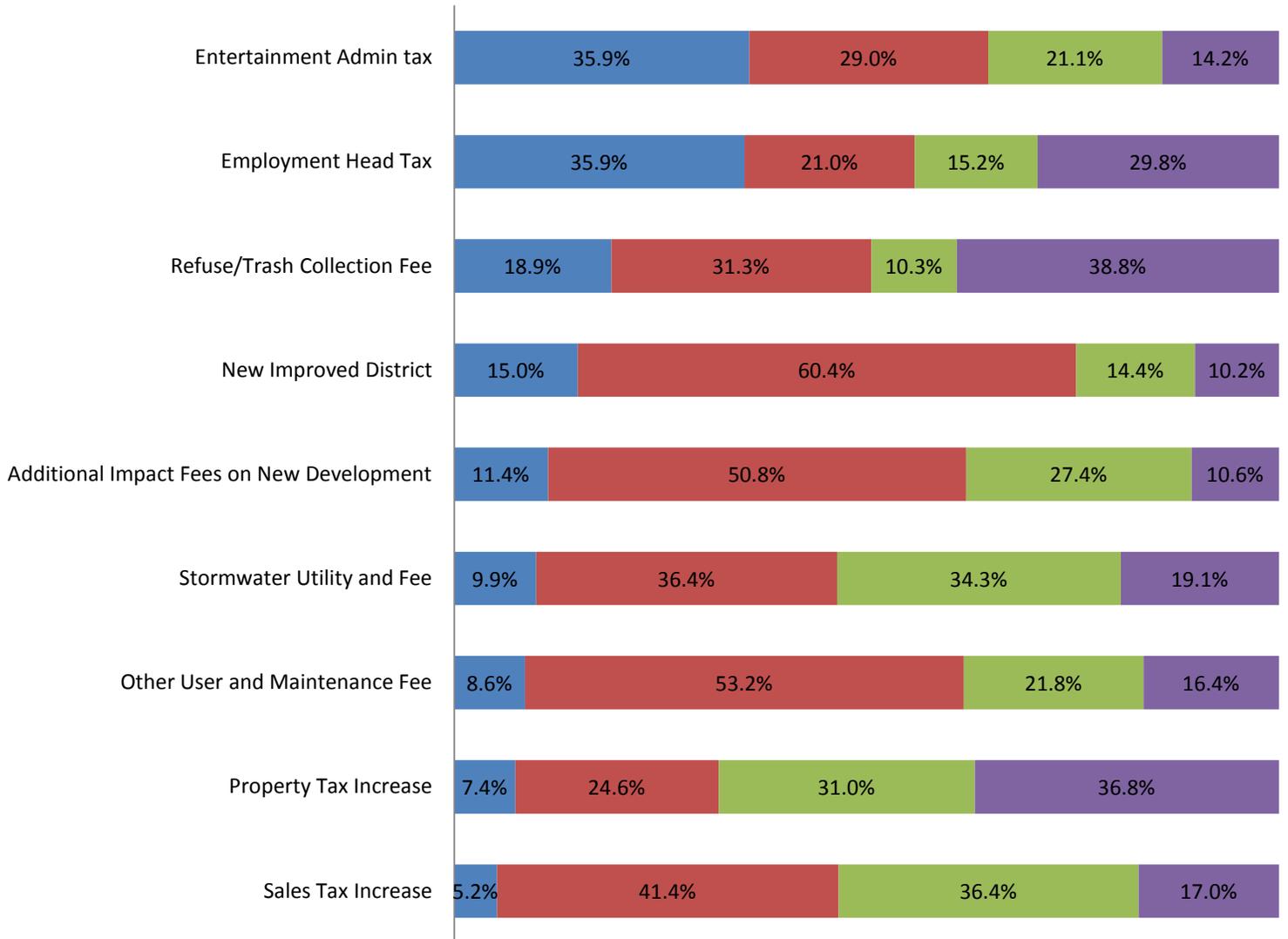
The funding option ranked the lowest with 63 percent identifying it as being a very bad and bad idea is Additional Impact Fees. The second lowest is Storm water Utility and Fee at 53 percent identifying it as a very bad and bad idea. The third lowest Employment Head Tax at 38 percent.

Common Themes:

- Sales Tax Increase:
 - If the sales tax increases it will be hard for the city to attract businesses
 - There needs to be an education campaign informing the community that this sales tax impacts mostly business to business and not business to residents' transactions.
- Employment Head Tax:
 - \$5 dollars is a small amount of money that each employee could pay to the city.
 - It's a good idea because this tax does not only affect Commerce City residents, but those who come from other cities.
 - Other cities such as Denver and Aurora have this head tax. Why not Commerce City?
 - This may cause a decrease in economic development.
- Stormwater Utility and Fee:
 - Many people were not aware about what is stormwater.
 - Many thought it was included in our water bill.
- Additional Impact Fees
 - This would be for new developers, if they have money to come in and build they have money to pay a little bit more.
 - Bad idea. The fee would be passed to the resident from the developer.
- Trash Collection Fee
 - If the City starts a fee for trash collection, this city will become a dump. Not only will there be trash everywhere, people who have more trash than other will drop off their trash with neighbors.
- Property Tax Increase
 - We don't pay that much in taxes (southern part of the city)
- New Improved District
 - Good idea.
 - Ex: Reunion. Residents there pay to live in that neighborhood.

Funding Choices: Southern Meetings

■ Very Good Idea ■ Good Idea ■ Bad Idea ■ Very bad Idea

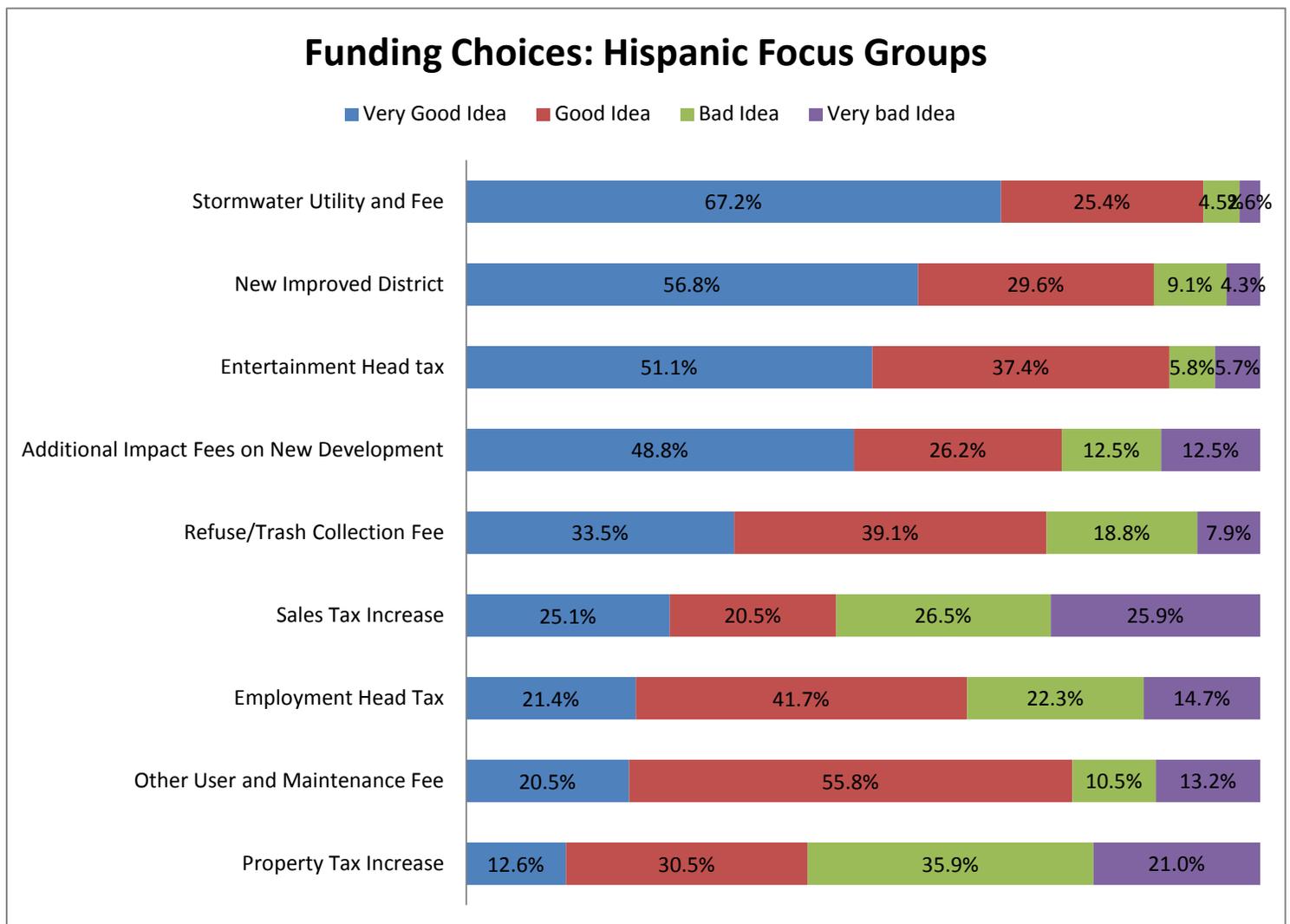


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Funding Choice: Hispanic focus groups

Funding Choices among the Hispanic community show the nine funding options participants were polled. Based on our polling representing participants from in the Spanish-speaking meetings, Stormwater Utility and Fee is ranked number one with a 93 percent identifying it as being a very good and good idea. Second best option for funding, with 89 percent identifying it as being a very good and good idea, is Entertainment Admin Tax. With 86 percent, New Improved District is the third best option for funding.

The funding option that ranked the lowest, with 57 percent identifying it as being a very bad and bad idea, is Property Tax Increase. The second lowest is Sales Tax Increase with 52 percent identifying it as a very bad and bad idea. The third lowest is Employment Head Tax at 37 percent.



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Funding Choice: Business Focus Group

Based on our polling representing participants from the business community, Other User and Maintenance Fee is ranked number one with a 100 percent identifying it as being a very good and good idea. Second best option for funding, with 94 percent identifying it as being a very good and good idea, is New Improved District. With 66 percent, Refuse/Trash Collection Fee is the third best option for funding.

The funding option that ranked the lowest, with 56 percent identifying it as being a very bad and bad idea, is Storm Water Utility and Fee. The second lowest is Property Tax Increase with 55 percent identifying it as a very bad and bad idea. The third lowest is Sales Tax Increase at 50 percent.

