

RESULTS



Budget 101 Workshops

**Final Report Presented to
Manatee County Government**



May 2026

Introduction

In January 2026, Manatee County Government (MCG) hired Results 1st to strengthen the budget decision-making process by designing and facilitating educational opportunities in order for residents to learn about the County's budgeting process.

Results Achieved:

- MCG has an approach for the design and facilitation of workshops.
- This approach was presented to the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) on February 11, 2026.
- Clear and concise content was designed for workshops, including handouts and a video that educates residents on how MCG makes budgeting decisions.
- Residents were actively engaged in five in-person workshops and one virtual workshop.
- Feedback from residents who attended the workshops was captured using Mentimeter, an interactive presentation and audience engagement tool, as well as paper surveys.
- Based on information captured at the workshops, Results 1st provided input and made recommendations on strategy to design, execute, and capture residents' feedback regarding priorities through a survey that MCG will administer after this project.

The Approach

- Results 1st met with MCG staff to determine the targets to be achieved with this engagement. The following targets were achieved:
 - Budget 101 participants have a better understanding of the budget process and how decisions are made by MCG.
 - MCG can replicate and when needed, design additional resources to help the public gain a better understanding of the budget and decision-making process.
 - Budget 101 workshop participants' input regarding budget priorities was captured and shared with the BOCC.
- Results 1st designed an approach to accomplish the targets.
- Results 1st presented the proposed approach and timeline to the BOCC, captured their input, and answered questions on February 11, 2026.
- Results 1st partnered with MCG staff to design clear and concise content and format for workshops, including a video, PowerPoint, and handouts to educate residents on the County's budgeting process to engage residents in understanding how MCG makes budgeting decisions.
- Results 1st facilitated six workshops in partnership with MCG staff to educate the public on the budget process. A link to the full workshop presentation, the 1-page handout titled, "Where Your Money Goes," and the workshop survey can be found in the Appendix starting on Page 18.

Workshop Dates and Locations

The workshop dates and locations were selected by MCG staff to provide access to in-person workshops across the County. A virtual workshop was added to allow residents to engage remotely. All workshops were scheduled from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

March 3, 2026	Palmetto Branch Library	923 6 th St W, Palmetto, FL 34221
March 5, 2026	Rocky Bluff Branch Library	6750 US 301, Ellenton, FL 34222
March 11, 2026	Lakewood Ranch Town Hall	8175 Lakewood Ranch Blvd, Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202
April 16, 2026	The Bridge Church	4000 75 th St W, Bradenton, FL 34209
April 28, 2026	South Manatee Branch Library	6081 26 th St W, Bradenton, FL 34207
May 12, 2026	Virtual	

Cumulative Survey Results

A total of 78 participants attended one of the six workshops provided by MCG. At each workshop, attendees had the opportunity to respond to six questions in real time by using the Mentimeter online survey tool.

The six questions consisted of two open-ended questions, where respondents could type an answer, three selection questions, where respondents could select from a provided list, and one 'yes/no' question. The questions were:

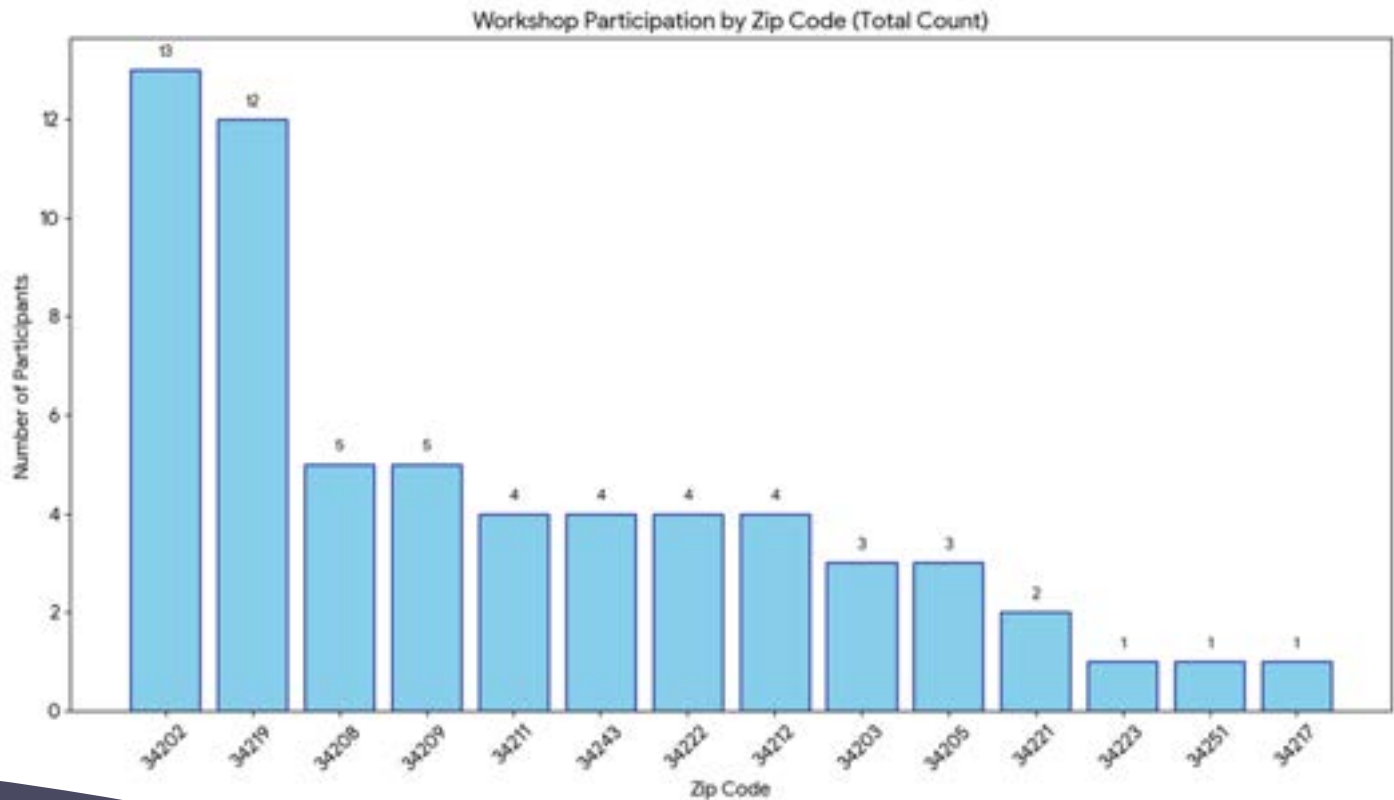
- 1. In which zip code do you reside?*
- 2. Which five services, if any, would you consider reducing or eliminating?*
- 3. Which five County services are most important to preserve or maintain?*
- 4. If you could protect only one service from cuts, which would it be?*
- 5. What is one thing you learned about the County's budget process today?*
- 6. Would you support maintaining the current tax rate to continue existing service levels?*

Cumulative Survey Results

Not all of the 78 participants answered every question, and not all respondents selected five options as prompted in questions #2 and #3. Four of the 78 residents provided responses on paper instead of using the Mentimeter online tool. Key findings for each question, across all workshops, are summarized below and on the following pages.

Q#1. In which zip code do you reside?






- 62 out of 78 participants provided their zip code.
- The zip codes with the highest representation were 34202 (13) and 34219 (12), representing over 40% of the total survey responses.
- Zip code 34202 had a presence at every workshop.
- A summary of the number of participants by zip code can be found in the chart below.



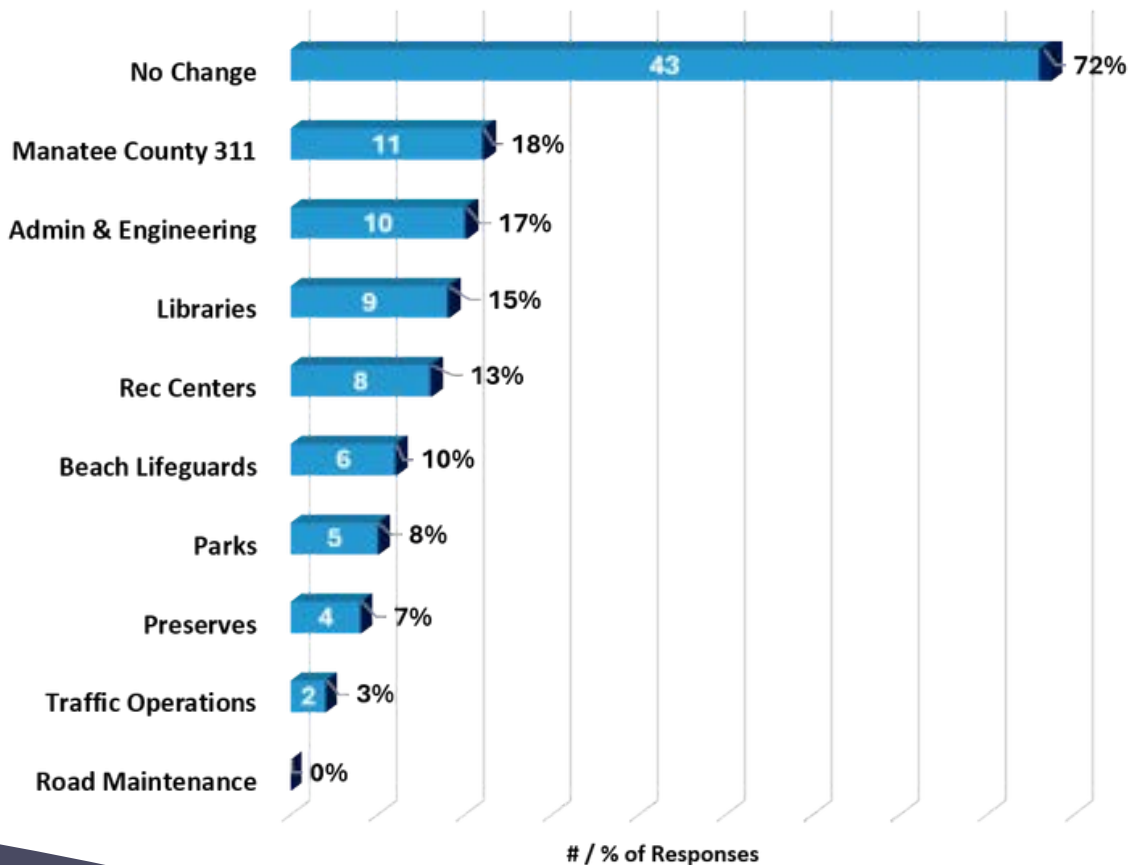
Cumulative Survey Results

Q#2. Which five services, if any, would you consider reducing or eliminating?

The top five services residents would consider reducing or eliminating include:

-  43 out of 60 (72%) chose 'No Change'
-  11 of 60 (18%) chose **Manatee County 311**.
-  10 of 60 (17%) chose **Project Administration and Engineering**.
-  9 of 60 (15%) chose **Libraries**.
-  8 of 60 (13%) chose **Recreation Centers**.

Services Residents Would Consider Reducing or Eliminating




Cumulative Survey Results


Q#3. Which five County services are most important to preserve or maintain?


The top five services residents want to preserve or maintain include:

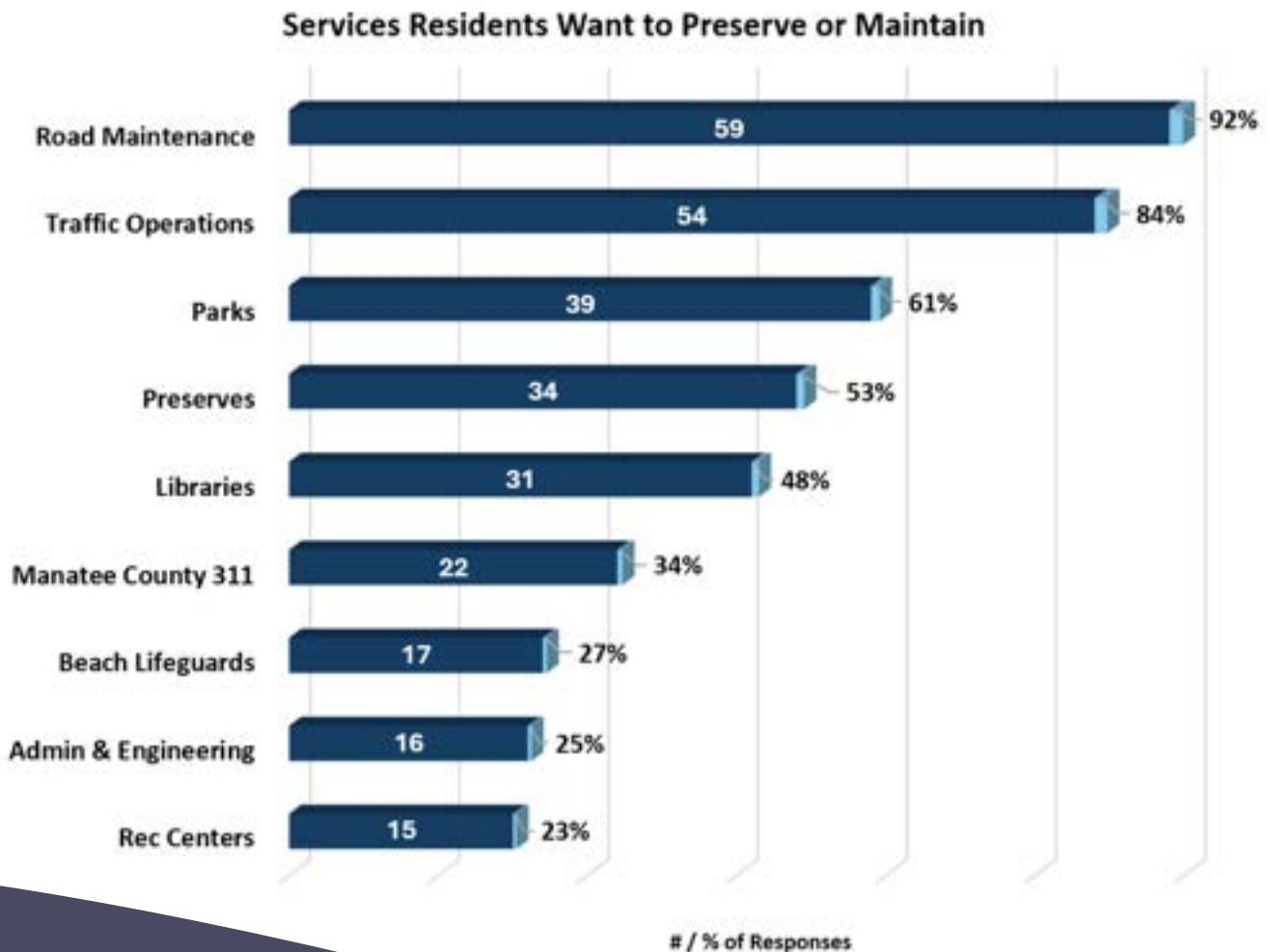
 59 of 64 (92%) chose **Road Maintenance**.

 54 of 64 (84%) chose **Traffic Operations**.

 39 of 64 (61%) chose **Parks**.

 34 of 64 (53%) chose **Preserves**.

 31 of 64 (48%) chose **Libraries**.












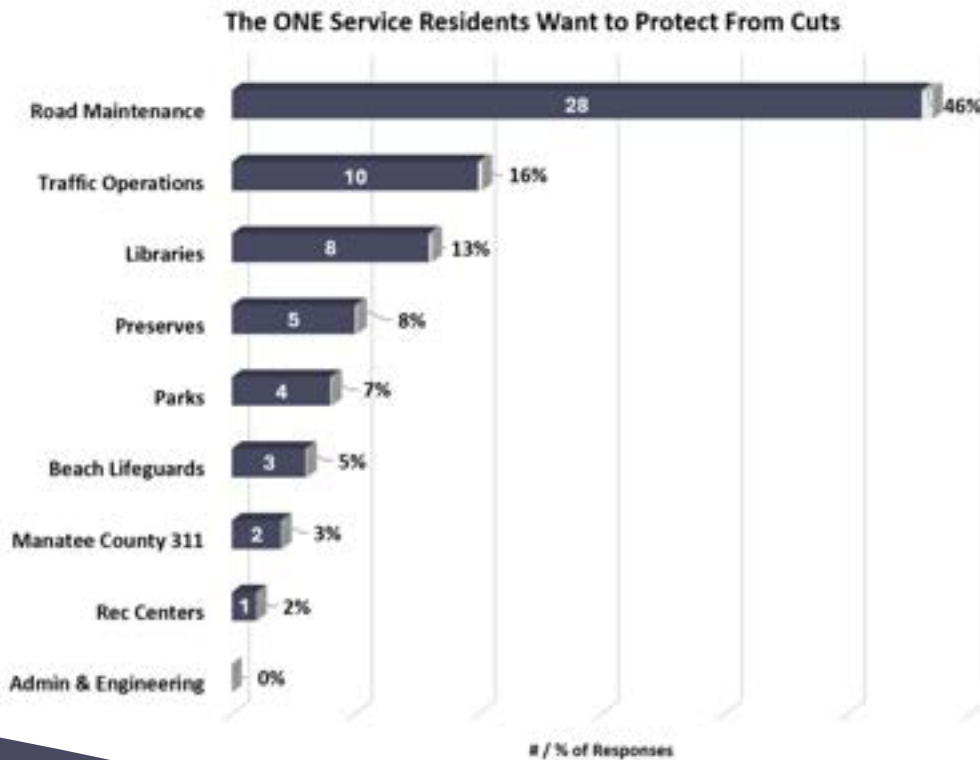
Cumulative Survey Results

Q4. If you could protect only one service from cuts, which would it be?

61 out of 78 attendees provided a response to this question, while 17 left it blank.

The one that service residents want to protect include:

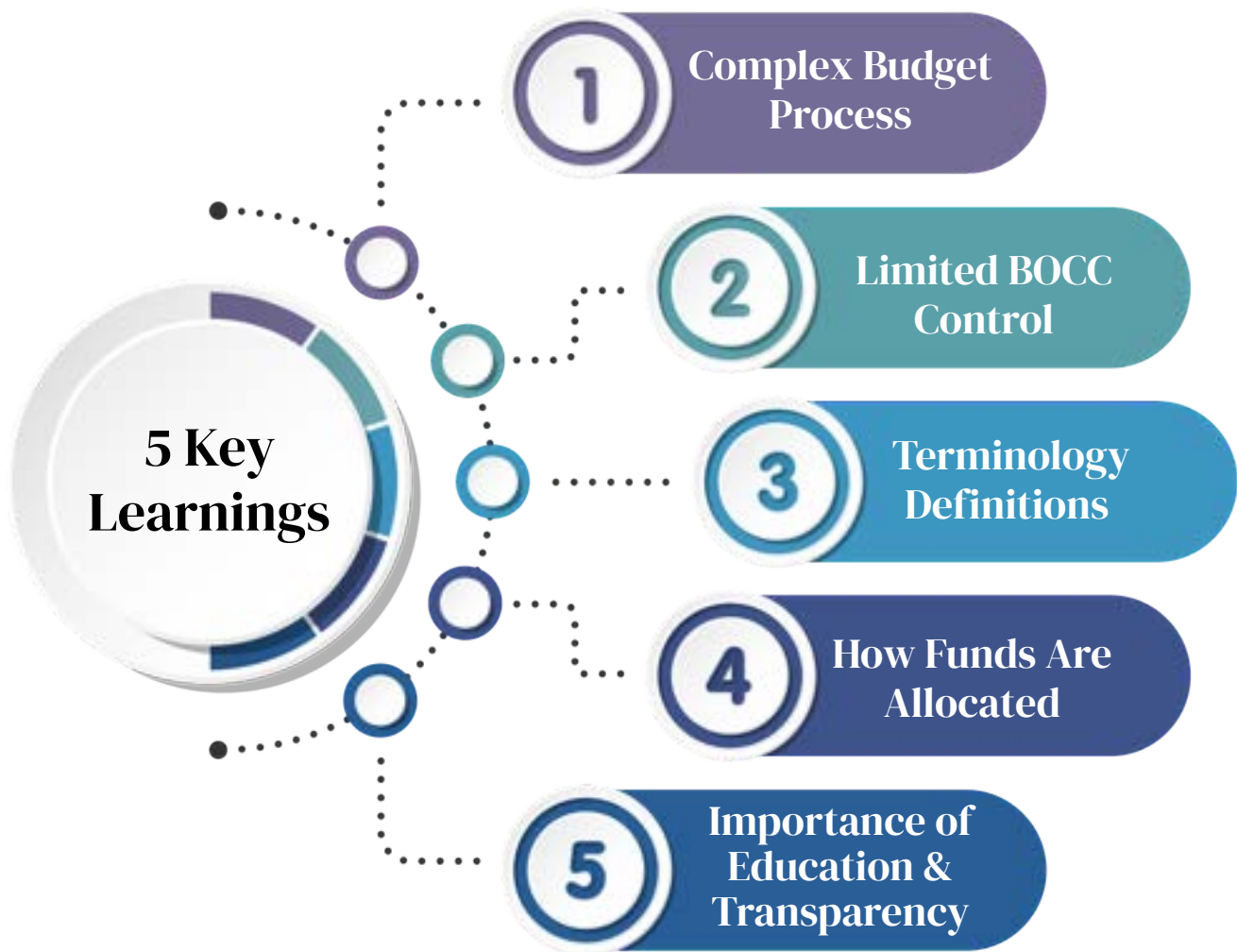
-  28 out of 61 (46%) chose **Road Maintenance**.
-  10 out of 61 (16%) chose **Traffic Operations**.
-  8 out of 61 (13%) chose **Libraries**.
-  5 out of 61 chose (8%) **Preserves**.
-  4 out of 61 chose (7%) **Parks**.
-  3 out of 61 chose (5%) **Beach Lifeguards**.
-  2 out of 61 chose (3%) **Manatee County 311**.
-  1 out of 61 chose (2%) **Recreational Centers**.
-  0 out of 61 chose (0%) **Project Administration & Engineering**



Cumulative Survey Results

Q#5. What is one thing you learned about the County's budget process today?

Below is a summary of five key themes that emerged in a qualitative analysis of the 63 responses to this open-ended question about what participants learned in the workshop, listed in order of prevalence. A more detailed summary is provided on the next page.



Cumulative Survey Results

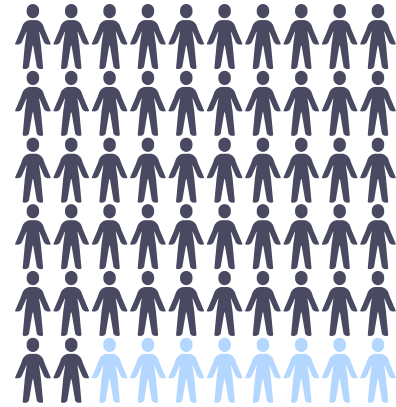
Summary of Key Learnings

- 1. Complex Budget Process** - The majority of respondents described the County budget process as far more complicated, lengthy, and detailed than they previously realized. Many were surprised by the extensive timeline, the number of moving parts, and the structured nature of the process. Residents used words like “exhaustive,” “complicated,” “cumbersome,” “detailed,” and “time consuming.” Several respondents were surprised that the process takes many months and involves extensive planning and hearings. Many comments reflected a new appreciation for the complexity of local government budgeting. Sample quote: “9-month process- like making a baby! WOW!”
- 2. Limited BOCC Control** - Residents were surprised at how little direct control the County has over overall taxes. Many participants learned that the BOCC has less discretion than residents often assume. They also noted the role of schools, and other entities in shaping the budget. Several comments reflected increased understanding of why commissioners receive criticism for things outside their authority. Respondents learned a small fraction of overall taxes are actually discretionary. Sample quote: “The BOCC has very little power and gets a lot of negativity from people who don’t know better.”
- 3. Terminology Definitions** - A significant number of respondents said they learned about the meaning of millage rates, ad valorem and non-ad valorem taxes, TRIM notices, and how property taxes are calculated and distributed. Residents appreciated learning this budget terminology, and some respondents said they gained a clearer understanding of tax notices and escrow-related details. Sample quote: “Very complicated!! Learned how millage is calculated and learned more about the process.”
- 4. How Funds Are Allocated** - Many respondents said they better understood how County funds are allocated across departments and services, including schools, law enforcement, infrastructure, parks, libraries, and public safety. Residents expressed surprise at the size of school and police budgets. Some respondents questioned funding priorities or perceived imbalances. Sample quote: “That public safety is funded less than parks and libraries. Schools and Sheriff take a majority of the budget.”
- 5. Importance of Education & Transparency** - Several respondents emphasized that this information is important for citizens to understand and suggested a need for more public education or deeper engagement opportunities. Some respondents want more detailed sessions or strategic discussion. Others noted that citizens generally lack understanding of the process. A few comments reflected appreciation for the transparency and the organization of the presentation. Sample quote: “This is very important information that all citizens should know about.”

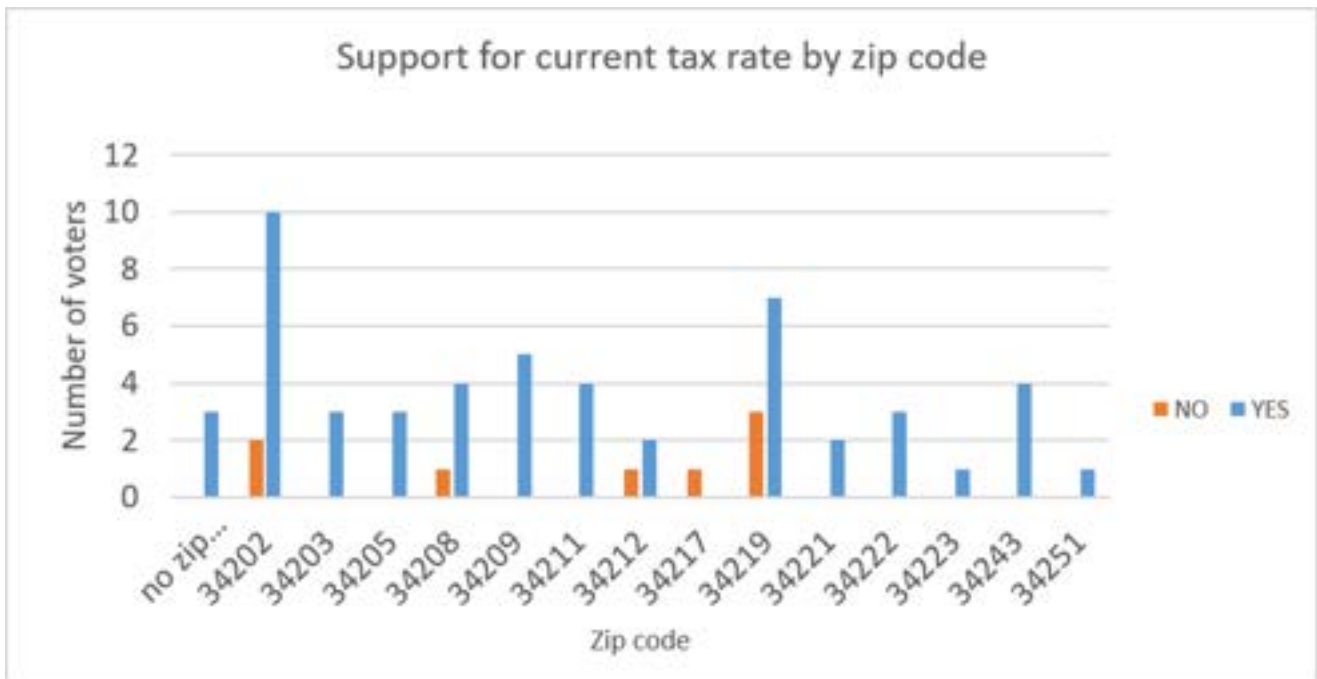
Cumulative Survey Results

Q6. Would you support maintaining the current tax rate to continue existing service levels?

52 out of 60 respondents (87%) responded 'Yes' to maintaining the current tax rate to continue existing service levels.



The chart below shows the zip codes for the 8 individuals out of 60 (13%), represented in orange, who would NOT support continuing the current tax rate. These residents live in 34202, 34208, 34212, 34217, and 34219.



Recommendations

- Use the Results 1st methodology when designing educational content.
- Define what is to be achieved and then design the content to ensure clarity.
- This report should not be used to make broad budgetary decisions based on the limited number of survey responses. However, clear themes did emerge and are worth exploring further, such as:
 - Road Maintenance, Traffic Operations, Parks, and Preserves are key resident priorities.
 - Project Administration & Engineering, 311, and Life Guards are viewed as less important.
 - Libraries received mixed and somewhat conflicting responses.
 - In general, people do not want to see ANY cuts to services.
 - Residents are appreciative of, and eager for more, educational opportunities and want to provide input.
- The Key Learnings summary on Pages 7 & 8 can be used to inform future workshops, as well as enhance community-level communications.
- Use an audience survey tool such as Mentimeter to increase engagement in future public workshops.
- Commission a research institution or consulting firm to conduct a broader survey of residents' service priorities.
- Assess County communication and outreach strategies to enhance resident participation rates for future workshops and/or surveys.

Survey Results By Workshop

March 3, 2026

Palmetto Branch Library - 923 6th St W, Palmetto, FL 34221

- 11 out of 15 attendees reported their zip codes. These include 34219 (3), 34221 (2), 34208 (2), and 1 each for 34202, 34203, 34211, and 34243.
- When asked, “Which five services, if any, would you consider reducing or eliminating?”
 - 12 out of 12 respondents chose ‘No Change.’
 - 1 out of 12 also chose Libraries.
- When asked, “Which five County services are most important to preserve or maintain?”
 - 11 out of 12 respondents chose Road Maintenance.
 - 10 out of 12 chose Traffic Operations.
 - 9 out of 12 chose Parks.
 - 7 out of 12 chose Preserves.
 - 7 out of 12 chose Libraries.
 - 7 out of 12 chose Manatee County 311.
 - 3 out of 12 chose Beach Life Guards.
 - 3 out of 12 chose Recreational Centers.
 - 3 out of 12 chose Project Administration and Engineering.
- When asked the open-ended question, “What is one thing you learned about the County’s budget process today?”
 - 4 out of 12 respondents cited the complexity or detail of the budget process.
 - 3 out of 12 cited that the property tax bill was color-coded.
 - 2 out of 12 cited how time-consuming the process was and the timeline.
 - 2 out of 12 said that it was informative.
 - 1 out of 12 cited how little control the County has over the tax bill.
- When asked, if you could protect only one service from cuts, which would it be?
 - 9 out of 12 chose Road Maintenance.
 - 1 out of 12 chose Manatee County 311.
 - 1 out of 12 chose Parks.
 - 1 out of 12 chose Libraries.
- When asked, would you support maintaining the current tax rate to continue existing service levels?
 - 12 out of 12 respondents (100%) said YES.
- Click this [LINK](#) for the Mentimeter report for the Palmetto workshop.

Survey Results By Workshop

March 5, 2026

Rocky Bluff Branch Library - 6750 US 301, Ellenton, FL 34222

- 15 out of 18 attendees reported their zip codes. These include 34219 (5), 34222 (4), 34202 (2), and one each for: 34223, 34211, 34212, and 34251.
- When asked, which five services, if any, would you consider reducing or eliminating?
 - 7 out of 13 respondents chose 'No Change.'
 - 4 out of 13 chose Recreational Centers.
 - 3 out of 13 chose Libraries.
 - 3 out of 13 chose Beach Lifeguards.
 - 3 out of 13 chose Projects Administration and Engineering.
 - 3 out of 13 chose Manatee County 311.
 - 2 out of 13 chose Parks.
 - 2 out of 13 chose Traffic Operations.
- When asked, which five County services are most important to preserve or maintain?
 - 13 out of 13 respondents chose Road Maintenance.
 - 13 out of 13 chose Traffic Operations.
 - 9 out of 13 chose Preserves.
 - 6 out of 13 chose Parks.
 - 5 out of 13 chose Project Administration and Engineering.
 - 5 out of 13 chose Manatee County 311.
 - 4 out of 13 chose Libraries.
 - 1 out of 13 chose Beach Lifeguards.
- When asked the open-ended question, what is one thing you learned about the County's budget process today?
 - 3 out of 13 respondents cited millage and how it impacts taxes.
 - 2 out of 13 said that it was overly complex or cumbersome.
 - 2 out of 13 cited how little control the BOCC has over the tax bill.
 - Other areas mentioned were:
 - Traffic operations
 - Where tax dollars are spent and which department gets the funds
 - Public safety is funded less than parks and libraries.
 - The Sheriff gets the majority of that budget.
- When asked, if you could protect only one service from cuts, which would it be?
 - 5 out of 11 respondents said Road Maintenance.
 - 3 out of 11 respondents chose Preserves.
 - 1 out of 11 respondents chose Parks.
 - 1 out of 11 chose Libraries.
 - 1 out of 11 chose Beach Lifeguards.
- When asked, would you support maintaining the current tax rate to continue existing service levels?
 - 9 out of 10 respondents (90%) said YES.
- Click this [LINK](#) for the Mentimeter report for the Rocky Bluff workshop.

Survey Results By Workshop

March 11, 2026 - Lakewood Ranch Town Hall
8175 Lakewood Ranch Blvd, Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202

- 13 out of 18 attendees reported their zip codes. These include 34202 (10), and one each for: 34211, 34212, and 34243.
- When asked, which five services, if any, would you consider reducing or eliminating?
 - 10 out of 12 respondents chose 'No Change.'
 - 2 out of 12 chose Manatee County 311.
 - 1 out of 12 chose Libraries.
 - 1 out of 12 chose Project Administration and Engineering.
- When asked, which five County services are most important to preserve or maintain?
 - 12 out of 14 respondents chose Road Maintenance.
 - 11 out of 14 chose Traffic Operations.
 - 8 out of 14 chose Parks.
 - 7 out of 14 chose Libraries.
 - 6 out of 14 chose Beach Lifeguards.
 - 5 out of 14 chose Recreational Centers.
 - 5 out of 14 chose Preserves.
 - 4 out of 14 chose Project Administration and Engineering.
 - 3 out of 14 chose Manatee County 311.
- When asked the open-ended question, what is one thing you learned about the County's budget process today?
 - 5 out of 15 respondents cited complexity and detail.
 - 2 out of 15 cited how much money goes to education.
 - 2 out of 15 cited the timeline and process.
 - Other areas mentioned included:
 - How little control the BOCC has over the tax bill
 - What small percentage is spent on basic services
 - Small fraction of taxes is discretionary
 - The Sheriff is expensive
 - Informed about millage
- When asked, if you could protect only one service from cuts, which would it be?
 - 6 out of 15 respondents chose Road Maintenance.
 - 5 out of 15 respondents chose Traffic Operations.
 - 2 out of 15 respondents chose Libraries.
 - 1 out of 15 chose Preserves.
 - 1 out of 15 chose Recreational Centers.
- When asked, would you support maintaining the current tax rate to continue existing service levels?
 - 13 out of 15 respondents (87%) said YES.
- Click this [LINK](#) for the Mentimeter report for the Lakewood Ranch workshop.

Survey Results By Workshop

April 16, 2026

The Bridge Church 4000 75th St W, Bradenton, FL 34209

- 6 out of 8 attendees reported their zip codes. These include 34209 (4) and one each from 34212 and 34219.
- When asked, which five services, if any, would you consider reducing or eliminating?
 - 3 out of 6 respondents chose 'No Change.'
 - 3 out of 6 chose Libraries.
 - 2 out of 6 chose Parks.
 - 2 out of 6 chose Preserves.
 - 2 out of 6 chose Manatee County 311.
 - 1 out of 6 chose Recreational Centers.
 - 1 out of 6 chose Beach Lifeguards.
- When asked, which five County services are most important to preserve or maintain?
 - 6 out of 6 respondents chose Road Maintenance.
 - 5 out of 6 chose Traffic Operations.
 - 3 out of 6 chose Parks.
 - 3 out of 6 chose Preserves.
 - 3 out of 6 chose Libraries.
 - 2 out of 6 chose Project Administration and Engineering.
 - 1 out of 6 chose Beach Lifeguards.
- When asked the open-ended question, what is one thing you learned about the County's budget process today? Respondents provided the following statements:
 - 2-year operational budget process
 - It's complicated and not fully controlled by the BOCC.
 - Nothing
 - Timeline for process
 - How a dollar breaks down into different departments
 - Where my money goes
 - Learned about non-ad valorem, valorem, Trim, millage.
- When asked, if you could protect only one service from cuts, which would it be?
 - 3 out of 6 respondents chose Road Maintenance.
 - 1 out of 6 chose Preserves.
 - 1 out of 6 chose Libraries.
 - 1 out of 6 chose Traffic operations.
- When asked, would you support maintaining the current tax rate to continue existing service levels?
 - 4 out of 6 respondents (67%) said YES.
- Click this [LINK](#) for the Mentimeter report for the Bridge Church workshop.

Survey Results By Workshop

April 28, 2026

South Manatee Branch Library 6081 26th St W, Bradenton, FL 34207

- 6 out of 6 attendees reported their zip codes. These include 34205 (2) and one each from: 34203, 34208, 34209, 34243.
- When asked, which five services, if any, would you consider reducing or eliminating?
 - 5 out of 5 respondents chose 'No Change.'
- When asked, which five County services are most important to preserve or maintain?
 - 6 out of 6 respondents chose Road Maintenance.
 - 5 out of 6 chose Libraries.
 - 4 out of 6 chose Traffic Operations.
 - 4 out of 6 chose Parks.
 - 3 out of 6 chose Preserves.
 - 3 out of 6 chose Beach Lifeguards.
 - 2 out of 6 chose Manatee County 311.
 - 2 out of 6 chose Recreational Centers.
 - 1 out of 6 chose Project Administration and Engineering.
- When asked the open-ended question, what is one thing you learned about the County's budget process today? Respondents provided the following statements:
 - 9-month process- like making a baby! WOW!
 - This is very important information that all citizens should know about
 - How the Constitutional Offices affect the county budget
 - The length of time it takes from beginning to end
 - Not enough money for all projects
 - How much the millage affects important day-to-day operations
- When asked, if you could protect only one service from cuts, which would it be?
 - 3 out of 6 respondents chose Beach Lifeguards
 - 2 out of 6 chose Parks
 - 2 out of 6 chose Libraries
 - 1 out of 6 chose Road Maintenance
 - 1 out of 6 chose Traffic operations
 - 1 out of 6 chose Manatee County 311
- When asked, would you support maintaining the current tax rate to continue existing service levels?
 - 6 out of 6 respondents (100%) said YES.
- Click this [LINK](#) for the Mentimeter report for the South Manatee workshop.

Survey Results By Workshop

May 12, 2026

Virtual

- **11 out of 13 attendees reported their zip codes. These include 34219 (3), 34208 (2), and one each for 34203, 34205, 34211, 34212, 34217, and 34243.**
- **When asked, which five services, if any, would you consider reducing or eliminating?**
 - **6 out of 12 respondents chose 'No Change.'**
 - **6 out of 12 respondents chose Project Administration and Engineering.**
 - **4 out of 12 chose Manatee County 311.**
 - **3 out of 12 chose Recreational Centers.**
 - **2 out of 12 chose Beach Lifeguards.**
 - **2 out of 12 chose Parks.**
 - **1 out of 12 chose Preserves.**
 - **1 out of 12 chose Libraries.**
 - **1 out of 12 chose Traffic Operations.**
- **When asked, which five County services are most important to preserve or maintain?**
 - **11 out of 12 respondents chose Road Maintenance.**
 - **11 out of 12 chose Traffic Operations.**
 - **9 out of 12 chose Parks.**
 - **7 out of 12 chose Preserves.**
 - **6 out of 12 chose Libraries.**
 - **5 out of 12 chose Manatee County 311.**
 - **4 out of 12 chose Beach Lifeguards.**
 - **3 out of 12 chose Recreational Centers.**
 - **2 out of 12 chose Project Administration and Engineering.**
- **When asked the open-ended question, what is one thing you learned about the County's budget process today? Respondents provided the following statements:**
 - **Definition of millage**
 - **Long and complicated**
 - **The timeline for the budget hearings**
 - **The BOCC doesn't control as much money as I thought**
 - **Where the money goes based on what is collected and what is controlled by the county vs. what is not**
 - **It is complicated!**
 - **There is not enough review of strategy and the big picture**
 - **There's a lot I'm required to pay for that does not benefit me as a senior. Totally unfair**
 - **Very complicated!!**
 - **Learned how millage is calculated and learned more about the process**
 - **How long the budget process takes**
 - **How important it is to understand where specific portions of the tax bill go**

Survey Results - By Workshop

May 12, 2026
Virtual (cont.)

- When asked, if you could protect only one service from cuts, which would it be?
 - 5 out of 11 respondents chose Road Maintenance
 - 4 out of 11 chose Traffic Operations
 - 2 out of 11 chose Libraries
- When asked, would you support maintaining the current tax rate to continue existing service levels?
 - 8 out of 11 respondents (73%) said YES.
- Click this [LINK](#) for the Mentimeter report for the virtual workshop.

Appendix A: Workshop Presentation

Click the title below to access the full Citizen's Budget 101 Workshop slides.

CITIZEN'S BUDGET 101 WORKSHOP



Appendix B: Workshop Handout






Where Your Money Goes

When the Tax Collector processes your annual Property Tax bill, only **some** of that collection goes toward Manatee County Government. The illustration below shows how an average tax dollar is divided:



What is your \$0.14 to Manatee County Providing?

BOCC APPROVED

- \$0.04**  **Parks & Libraries**
 (Recreational Centers, Parks, Preserves, Libraries)
- \$0.03**  **Public Safety & Justice**
 (Emergency Medical Services, 911 Dispatch, Beach Lifeguards, Emergency Operations Center, Court Administration, State Attorney, Public Defender, Guardian Ad Litem, Other Court Costs)
- \$0.03**  **Transportation**
 (Road Maintenance, Project Admin, Traffic Operations, Engineering)

VOTER APPROVED

- \$0.03**  **Children's Services**
- \$0.01**  **Environmental Lands**

Some County services that your property tax dollar does **NOT** pay for:

- Water, Sewer & Solid Waste
- Building Codes Inspections, Permitting & Enforcement
- Disaster Recovery Programs
- Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Beach Renourishment
- Opioid Recovery Programs

VISIT MYMANATEE.ORG/TAX FOR MORE INFORMATION

Appendix C: Workshop Survey



Services Survey

In which ZIP code do you reside? _____

Which five services, if any, would you consider reducing or eliminating?

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| No Changes | _____ | Beach Lifeguards | _____ |
| Recreational Centers | _____ | Road Maintenance | _____ |
| Parks | _____ | Project Admin & Engineering | _____ |
| Preserves | _____ | Traffic Operations | _____ |
| Libraries | _____ | Manatee Co. 311 | _____ |

Which five County services are most important to preserve or maintain?

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Parks | _____ | Road Maintenance | _____ |
| Recreational Centers | _____ | Project Admin & Engineering | _____ |
| Preserves | _____ | Traffic Operations | _____ |
| Libraries | _____ | Manatee Co. 311 | _____ |
| Beach Lifeguards | _____ | | |

What is one thing you learned about the County's budget process today?

If you could protect only one service from cuts, which would it be?

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Parks | _____ | Road Maintenance | _____ |
| Recreational Centers | _____ | Project Admin & Engineering | _____ |
| Preserves | _____ | Traffic Operations | _____ |
| Libraries | _____ | Manatee Co. 311 | _____ |
| Beach Lifeguards | _____ | | |

Would you support maintaining the current tax rate to continue existing service levels?

Yes _____ No _____

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RESULTS



<https://results1st.org/>