2026 Bond Survey – Summary of Findings

This document consolidates the preliminary findings from the 2026 Bond Survey, conducted between May 19th and June 23rd, 2025, to support the Bond Election Advisory Task Force (BEATF) in their decision-making process for the creation of a GO Bond package.

1. Survey Overview

- **Survey period**: May 19th through June 23rd, 2025
- **Total responses submitted**: 2,002
- **Total open-ended comments analyzed**: 1,637
- **Public Dashboard**: https://publicinput.com/Report/v1fcbg35qz0
- **Bond 2026 Survey link:** https://publicinput.com/s14056

2. Methodology Overview

- **Survey Design**
  - The survey was designed to identify community funding priorities, budget allocation preferences, and tax willingness for future bond investments. It was structured around Bond Categories defined by BEATF and Capital Delivery Services to align survey feedback directly with potential projects.
- **Launch and Monitoring**
  - The survey launched on PublicInput.com on May 19th and was actively promoted via traditional media as well as at libraries and community centers across Austin with support from Capital Delivery Services (CDS), the Communications and Public Information Office (CPIO), the support from the Board Election Advisory Taskforce (BEATF) and more than 30 partner staff from City departments.
- **Analysis of results**
  - PublicInput.com results were downloaded and manually verified.
  - Open-ended comments were thematically coded based on predefined BEATF Bond Categories.
  - AI-assisted coding outputs (ChatGPT 4.0) were validated against manually reviewed data, tables, and dashboards generated on PublicInput.com.
  - A staff review group provided feedback on our preliminary results to ensure accuracy and compliance to the City of Austin's guidelines for AI use.

The following sections break down the results of each section of the survey. The Appendix section provides additional information, tables, attachments, and helpful links.

3. Community Priorities

The following table summarizes top community-identified needs, sorted by thematic category, across open-ended responses.

Survey Question: ***"What is the greatest need Austin has today?"***

Theme	%	Summary of Comments
Housing & Homelessness	**34%**	Respondents expressed significant concern about rising rents, evictions, and displacement, as well as widespread recognition of homelessness as a critical issue. Many called for urgent and sustained investment in affordable housing, shelters, and tenant protections.
Transportation	**22%**	Many respondents emphasized the need for reliable, accessible transit options, including improved bus service and safer bike and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. Traffic congestion and road safety appeared frequently as concerns across responses.
Parks & Parkland	**9%**	Survey respondents consistently described parks as essential public assets that promote health, connection, and neighborhood identity. Suggestions focus on maintenance, canopy expansion, trail infrastructure, improved safety while using park facilities, and equitable access—particularly in suburban areas lacking green space.
Public Safety Facilities	**9%**	Respondents are divided: many support expanding Emergency Medical Department (EMS) and fire stations, widely seen as essential services, while others express skepticism toward investing in police infrastructure and emphasize the importance of alternative community-informed strategies to increase public safety.

Flood Protection, Water Quality, and Protected Lands	**5%**	Respondents support proactive investment in flood mitigation, creek protection, and green infrastructure. Comments emphasize concerns about water quality in creeks, erosion, and prevention of water loss from aging infrastructure.
Climate & Sustainability	**4%**	Respondents emphasized the need for resilience to extreme heat and weather emergencies, canopy coverage, water conservation, and long-term adaptation strategies. Many called for neighborhood-level solutions, with concerns often overlapping Parks, Transportation, and Flood Protection categories.
Community Facilities	**3%**	Respondents called for greater investment in libraries, clinics, childcare centers, and other neighborhood-serving facilities. Comments emphasized accessibility, particularly in underserved communities as these spaces are seen as essential hubs for resources, education, and social wellbeing.
Other	**14%**	Participants voiced a variety of topics that didn't align directly with our predefined categories. However, many comments in this group focused on cost of living, taxes, and fiscal accountability, often expressing skepticism or frustration toward public spending and government priorities.

Coding comments:

All 1,637 open-ended comments were thematically coded using ChatGPT 4.0 to match the Bond categories defined by the BEATF. To assess accuracy, staff manually reviewed a random sample of 100 coded comments and found that 93% were fully correct, 7% incorrect, and 27% partially correct (i.e., missing one or more applicable codes).

Reviewing the analysis:

Word root and word cloud analyses confirmed 'Housing and Homelessness' and 'Transportation' as the most frequently mentioned themes, followed by Parks and Parkland. These tools were also used to support the creation of thematic summaries, helping ensure that each reflects the core concepts found across a broad range of responses.

Example:

In responses about "safe streets," a word cloud might highlight "lighting," "traffic," and "sidewalks," showing frequency. But a word root analysis reveals that "safe," "safety," and "safest" all connect to the same core concern—**public safety**—ensuring we don't miss key patterns just because people use different forms of a word.

Word Root and Word Cloud tables are both included in the Appendix.

4. Ranking of subcategories

Survey Question: ***"Rank the following subcategories in order of importance to you"***.

- **Housing and Homelessness**: New affordable housing units.
- **Community Facilities:** Public health centers.
- **Public Safety Facilities:** EMS stations.
- **Flood Protection, Water Quality, and Protected Lands:** Acquisition of environmentally sensitive land.
- **Parks and Parkland:** Parkland improvement.
- **Transportation:** Pedestrian and bike safety improvements (sidewalks, bikeways, urban trails, and pedestrian crossings).

The list above highlights only the **top-ranked subcategory** within each bond category. A complete breakdown of all subcategories and rankings is available in the appendix.

5. Importance of Climate and Sustainability

Survey question: ***"When thinking about the design and construction of the project types above, how important are climate and sustainability to you?"***

Importance of category in design and construction of projects	**% of responses**
Very or somewhat important	**81%**
Not at all or not very important	**13%**
Neutral	**6%**

81% of survey respondents consider Climate and Sustainability crucial for bond project selection, despite having a low percentage of thematic matches in the first question. This is likely due to the

overlapping of themes related to Climate and Sustainability in the “Transportation”, “Parks and Parkland”, and “Flood protection, water quality, and protected lands” categories.

6. Budget Allocation Preferences ($100 Exercise)

Survey Question: ***“Imagine you have $100; how much would you spend on each improvement category?”***.

Category	% of Total Budget
Transportation	**19.82%**
Housing and Homelessness	**18.51%**
Parks and Parkland	**16.34%**
Flood protection, water quality, and protected lands	**14.79%**
Public Safety Facilities	**14.63%**
Community Facilities	**10.87%**
Other	**5.04%**

Budget allocation mirrors community priority rankings closely, with transportation slightly ahead of Housing and Homelessness in financial support.

Comments related to “Other” funding category expressed concerns regarding taxes, city expenditures, and climate resilience priorities.

7. Tax Willingness Summary

Question: **“Would you be willing to pay more in taxes to support the categories that are important to you?”**

Option	% of Respondents
No, I don't want to pay more taxes	30%

Over $20/month	25%
$20	15%
$10	13%
$5	11%
$15	5%

***$10/Month is the median tax increase across respondents*.**

Tax-related skepticism and budget accountability are present across many open-ended comments and are often tagged as “Other” in the thematic analysis.

8. Demographic Overview

The average respondent identifies as White, is typically a single-family homeowner aged 35–44, with a household income over $120,000 per year, likely residing in neighborhoods such as South Lamar (78704), Mueller (78723), or Central East Austin (78702).

9. Key Insights & Final Takeaways

1. Housing and Homelessness, along with Transportation, consistently emerge as primary priorities across feedback and financial allocations
2. While Housing and Homelessness is cited most frequently as a priority, Transportation receives the highest hypothetical budget allocation, indicating practical investment preferences
3. There is strong support (81%) for prioritizing climate and sustainability in bond planning. Its also important to note that these topics often overlap with other categories -such as transportation, Parks & Parkland, and Flood Protection, etc. The results affirm their perceived importance even when climate concerns are not explicitly coded in the thematic analysis.
4. There are mixed views on public safety but strong support for EMS/Fire, this is shown across open-ended comments, rankings on public safety facilities, and the sentiment analysis provided by PublicInput.com.
5. There is a majority willingness (70%) to accept some tax increase (median: $10/month), but a significant segment of survey respondents (30%) remains resistant or cautious of additional taxation

6. The average survey's respondent demographic skews toward higher-income, white homeowners, highlighting underrepresentation of lower-income Austinites and historically underserved communities. This gap presents an opportunity for future engagement phases to build an even broader and inclusive participation across Austin.