

TO Interested Parties

FROM FM3 Research

RE: City of Atwater Community Issues Survey

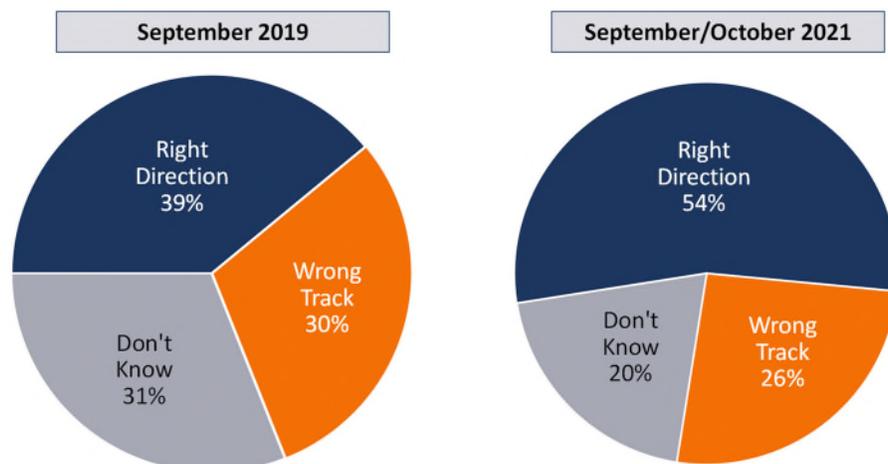
DATE December 17, 2021

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently conducted a survey of 321¹ respondents within the City of Atwater to examine the local population's general attitudes and concerns about their city. **The study found that a majority of respondents believe the City is on the right track, but a majority believe the City has a need for additional funding.**

Key findings from the study include:

- Views of life in Atwater have improved since September 2019.** In September 2019, respondents were largely split on whether they felt the City was headed in the right direction or off on the wrong track (see **Figure 1**). The recent survey, however, shows that a majority believe the City is headed in the right direction (54%), while only about a quarter believe it is off on the wrong track (26%). One-in-five remain unsure about the City's direction. **Similarly, the City government's approval ratings overall have increased by ten percentage points**—increasing from 49% who said they strongly or somewhat approved of the job Atwater City government is doing in September 2019, to 59% in September/October 2021. In contrast, only about a third indicated they somewhat or strongly disapproved of the job the City government is doing today (36%).

Figure 1: Perceived Direction of the City of Atwater



- Homelessness is seen as the most serious problem Atwater is facing today.** Over seven-in-ten participants indicated that homelessness is an extremely or very serious problem in Atwater (72%). Other problems including public safety issues such as gangs and youth violence and crime in general, as well as drought and water supplies are also considered to be serious problems by a majority (see **Figure 2**). However, low wages, waste and inefficiency in City government, and the amount people pay in City taxes are not considered to be extremely or very serious problems by a majority of participants, among other issues.

Figure 2: Problems Being Faced by the City of Atwater

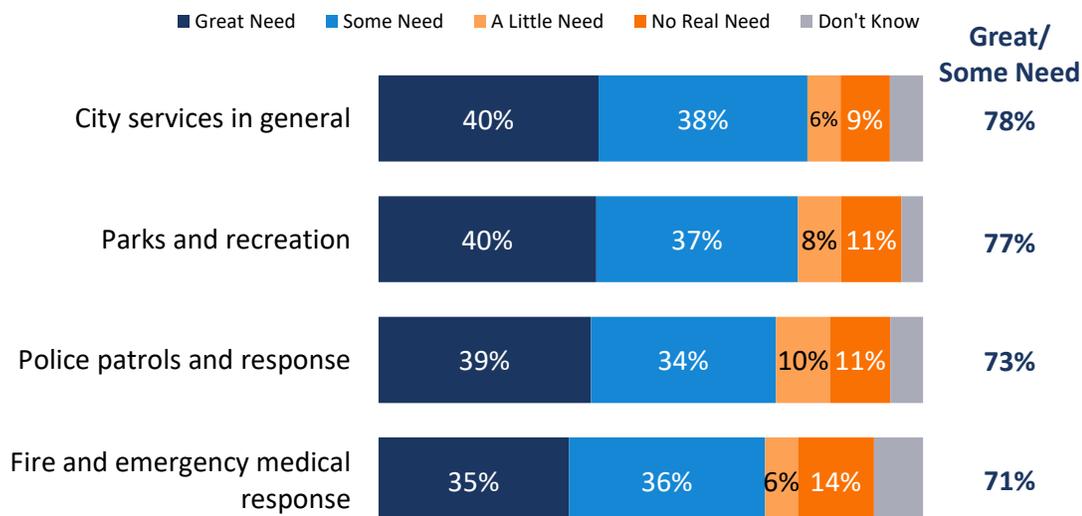
Ranked by Most Extremely or Very Serious

Project or Feature	“Extremely/Very Serious Problem”
<i>Homelessness</i>	72%
<i>Gangs and youth violence</i>	61%
<i>Drought and water supplies</i>	59%
<i>Crime, in general</i>	52%
<i>Low wages</i>	44%
<i>How quickly police and fire responds to 911 calls</i>	41%
<i>Waste and inefficiency in City government</i>	40%
<i>Traffic congestion</i>	36%
<i>Parks maintenance</i>	35%
<i>The amount people pay in City taxes</i>	33%
<i>Too much growth and development</i>	14%

- A majority of respondents believe the City of Atwater has a significant need for funding.** Over three-quarters of all respondents believe the City has either a great or some need for additional funds for general City services (78%) (see **Figure 3**). Over seven-in-ten also believe that the City’s public safety services including police patrols and response, and fire and medical emergency and response, need additional funding.

Figure 3: Need for Additional Funding for City of Atwater Services

Would you say that the City of Atwater has a great need for additional funding, some need, a little need, or no real need for additional funding for _____?



- **Majorities of the City expressed support for ballot measure generating funds for the City.** Seventy percent support renewing (at the one-cent rate) the City’s existing, voter-approved, dedicated sales tax for police, fire, and 911 emergency response, with a two-thirds majority—meeting the required threshold for passage. Similarly, two-thirds also support an alternative one-cent general sales tax with a simple majority.

Figure 4: Support for Potential Revenue Measures

Measure	Total Yes	Total No	Undecided
1-Cent Sales Tax Renewal for Public Safety	70%	24%	6%
1-Cent Sales Tax for General Services	66%	28%	6%

- **Respondents prioritize ensuring funding for maintaining local police protection and medical emergency response services.** Overall, respondents gave the highest priority to “providing police officer training,” with over nine in ten (92%) indicating it is an extremely or very important feature to fund. Similarly, “investigating violent crimes” (89% extremely/very important) and “maintaining emergency medical response services” (84% extremely/very important) are also high priorities, with over eight in ten respondents indicating these were each extremely important. See **Figure 5** below for a list of the proposed measure’s projects and features that a majority of respondents prioritize funding.

Figure 5: Top Priorities for Funding and Measure Features by Total “Extremely/Very Important”

Project or Feature	“Extremely/Very Important”
<i>Providing police officer training</i>	92%
<i>Investigating violent crimes</i>	89%
<i>Requiring that all funds remain local in Atwater</i>	87%
<i>Maintaining the City’s financial viability as a full-service city</i>	85%
<i>Maintaining local police protection</i>	85%
<i>Maintaining local public safety services</i>	84%
<i>Maintaining emergency medial response services</i>	84%
<i>Preventing the elimination of the Atwater Police Department</i>	82%
<i>Protecting against property loss due to fire</i>	81%
<i>Maintaining emergency heart attack and stroke response services</i>	81%
<i>Maintaining police patrols on neighboring streets</i>	81%
<i>Maintaining local fire protection</i>	78%
<i>Investigating property crimes, like thefts and burglaries</i>	77%
<i>Ensuring Atwater is prepared for any future health emergencies or other catastrophic disasters</i>	76%
<i>Maintaining the City’s long-term financial stability</i>	75%

Overall, survey results indicate that a majority of respondents in the City of Atwater have a favorable view of the City’s direction, but are aware of the City’s need for additional funding for services. Over two-thirds support renewing (at the one-cent rate) the City’s existing, dedicated sales tax for public safety services, as well as an alternative one-cent sales tax for general services, meeting the required thresholds for passage for either of the measures respectively. Respondents prioritize funding for both police protection and medical emergency response services.

¹ Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) conducted a dual-mode survey through telephone (landline and cell phone) and online between September 25- October 5, 2021 among 321 voters registered in the City of Atwater who are likely to vote in the November 2022 election. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the full sample is +/- 5.5% with a 95% confidence interval. Margins of error for population subgroups will be higher. Some percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.