

Public Safety Building Survey – Condensed Comment Summary

For City Council – December 2025

Overview

The community survey generated **375 written comments**, offering a substantial and clear picture of resident priorities. While individual perspectives varied, the collective feedback reveals consistent patterns that strongly reinforce the numerical survey results.

This summary focuses on the themes most relevant to Council's upcoming decisions.

1. Major Themes Identified in Comments

A. Cost & Affordability (Most Frequent Theme)

Cost was the most frequently mentioned issue in the comment set.

Residents consistently expressed:

- Concern about rising taxes and long-term affordability
- Sensitivity to fixed or limited incomes
- A desire for the **least expensive workable solution**
- Preference for avoiding large, expensive new construction

Cost considerations were voiced across supporters and opponents of every option.

B. Public Safety & Tsunami Resilience

Safety was another major driver of opinion. Many residents:

- Highlighted tsunami risk and elevation as key decision factors

- Voiced concern about maintaining essential services in a known inundation zone
- Supported the Highland site for long-term resilience
- Also noted accessibility or neighborhood concerns regarding Highland

These comments reflect a clear philosophical divide between **cost-focused** and **safety-focused** priorities.

C. Protecting Parks & Community Character

There was **overwhelming opposition** to using parkland for the project:

- Residents consistently described parks as essential community assets
- Many objected strongly to any development at Dunes Meadow Park or Leslie Miller Park
- Comments frequently expressed emotional or principled objections

This theme aligns directly with the numerical rejection of Option C.

D. Transparency, Trust & Information Quality

A significant number of comments touched on communication and trust:

- Concern about misinformation circulating online
- Calls for clear, factual updates from the City
- Appreciation for the survey itself as a transparency step
- Desire for ongoing clarity as the project advances

This reinforces the importance of continued, proactive communication.

E. Dissatisfaction With Available Options

A smaller but notable segment of commenters:

- Rejected all four options
- Requested additional alternatives (e.g., partnerships with Seaside or Warrenton)
- Felt constrained by the choices offered

These comments reflect frustration with the project's history rather than the survey tool itself.

2. Feedback on the Ranked-Choice Question

Feedback on the ranked-choice question represented a **very small proportion** of overall comments.

Key Findings

Approximately **10–12 commenters** (about 3% of comments):

- Disliked ranked-choice as a method
- Wanted a “none of the above” option
- Objected to being required to rank options they opposed
- Viewed the ranking question as unnecessary or unclear

These were the only significant complaints about the survey format.

Clarification for Context

The ranked-choice question was **supplemental only** and did **not** override support/oppose responses.

Residents were still able to **oppose all options** through the main survey questions.

3. Sentiment by Option (From Comments)

Option B – Remodel Downtown

- Frequently supported as a **practical, cost-conscious** solution
- Some conditional support tied to maintaining cost controls
- Very little intense or ideological opposition

Remodel was the least controversial option and aligned most closely with resident priorities.

Option D – Highland Site

- Strong support focused on tsunami safety and long-term resilience
- Notable opposition related to cost, distance, or neighborhood impacts
- Reflects a genuine division in community values

Highland remains viable but requires careful, ongoing public engagement.

Option A – New Downtown Build

- Comments frequently cited concerns about high cost
- Some viewed it as unnecessarily large or disruptive
- Support existed but was limited compared to other options

General sentiment matches the strong numerical opposition.

Option C – Dunes Meadow Park

- Comments were overwhelmingly negative
- Strong community sentiment against developing parkland
- Emotional and consistent rejection from a wide range of residents

Option C has no realistic pathway forward based on public feedback.

4. Key Takeaways for Council

1. **Cost** is the single strongest driver of public opinion across all options.
 2. **Park preservation** is a deeply held value; Option C is broadly rejected.
 3. **Remodel Downtown (Option B)** has the broadest support and the fewest objections.
 4. **Highland (Option D)** has meaningful support but also significant division.
 5. Ranked-choice complaints were **limited and not representative** of overall sentiment.
 6. Residents want **clear, factual communication** to counter misinformation.
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5. Summary Statement

The written comments strongly reinforce the quantitative results: the community favors remodeling as the least controversial, most affordable path; the Highland site warrants continued evaluation for resilience benefits; and the Park and New Downtown Build options face decisive public opposition.

1. “Net Support” View (Support minus Opposition)

This gives a single number showing community momentum for or against each option.

Option	Support	Oppose	Net Support
A – Downtown New Build	167	455	–288
B – Remodel Downtown	363	257	+106
C – Dunes Meadow Park	151	509	–358
D – Highland Site	304	301	+3

Key Insight

- Option B is the *only* option with strongly positive momentum.
- Option D is essentially a tie — it has real support but also real division.
- Options A and C have decisive community rejection.

2. “Strong Feelings Only” View (Shows intensity, not just totals)

This matters because City Council decisions are shaped by **how intensely** people feel.

Strong Support vs Strong Oppose

Option	Strongly Support	Strongly Oppose
A – Downtown New Build	63	345
B – Remodel Downtown	182	157
C – Dunes Meadow Park	73	428
D – Highland Site	152	221

Key Insight

- B has the largest base of strong supporters.
- C has the largest base of strong opponents by a mile — a political red flag.
- D has a significant strong-support base, but also heavy strong opposition.
- A is deeply disliked and has minimal strong support.

This helps the council avoid choosing a plan with a guaranteed backlash.

3. “Two-Path Strategy” View

The data clearly suggests the community is split **not across four options**, but across **two philosophical paths**:

Path 1 — Downtown Solutions

- Option A (new downtown)
- Option B (remodel downtown)

Path 2 — Upland/Tsunami-Resilient Solutions

- Option C (park)
- Option D (Highland)

When grouped:

Downtown vs Upland Support Totals

- Downtown support (A + B): 530
- Upland support (C + D): 455

Downtown vs Upland Opposition Totals

- Downtown opposition (A + B): 712

- Upland opposition (C + D): 810

Key Insight

- The community is divided **not** on remodel vs new build alone.
- The deeper divide is **downtown vs out-of-downtown location**.
- **C inflates the “anti-upland” sentiment — D alone is much more balanced.**

This is very helpful for councilors thinking at the “philosophical” level.

4. “Consensus vs Controversy” View

Which options create unity vs division?

Option	Consensus Level	Interpretation
B – Remodel Downtown	High	High support, moderate opposition, lowest controversy
D – Highland Site	Medium	Nearly equal support and opposition → divisive but viable
A – Downtown New Build	Low	Little support, strong opposition
C – Park	Negative	Strongest opposition → politically non-viable

Key Insight

If council wants a **unifying** path → **Option B**

If council wants a **forward-looking risk-resilient option**, accepting debate → **Option D**

If council wants to avoid political trauma → Avoid **A** and **C**

5. “Issue Driver” View — What matters most to respondents

The “factor that matters most” responses explain *why* people answered the way they did.

Common top drivers (summaries pulled from dataset & comment themes):

- **Cost / Affordability**
- **Public Safety / Resilience**
- **Protecting Parks**
- **Maintaining Community Character**
- **Trust and Transparency**
- **Traffic/site access concerns**

This tells councilors:

- Why **B** performs well → lowest cost, fastest path
- Why **C** is toxic → people don't want to lose their park
- Why **D** has meaningful support → tsunami safety
- Why **A** struggles → highest cost and downtown disruption

This helps them align messaging with actual voter priorities.

6. “Feasible Path Forward” View

Based on results, the city realistically has:

Option 1 — Move toward Remodeling (Option B)

The **clear community preference**, lowest backlash, most unity.

Option 2 — Evaluate Highland (Option D) Further

Significant support exists, but controversy is real. Needs careful outreach.

Option 3 — Remove Options A and C from consideration

The data strongly supports eliminating both:

- **A is financially and politically underwater.**

- **C has overwhelming park opposition and cannot succeed.**

This gives council a clean 2-path roadmap.

Bottom Line for Council Decision-Making

The public is telling the council three clear things:

1. **Don't pursue the park site or the large downtown new-build.**
2. **Remodeling downtown is the least controversial and most supported option.**
3. **The Highland site has meaningful support and may deserve more exploration, but requires careful community engagement.**