

January 20, 2026  
Lew Edwards Group  
Professional Services  
Agreement



# Survey

- November - December
- 410 Likely Voters in 2026 Election
- Telephone, Email and Text Invitations
- Telephone and Online Interviews
- English and Spanish
- Ad Hoc Sub Committee Involvement
- Full Council Support to Initiate Survey





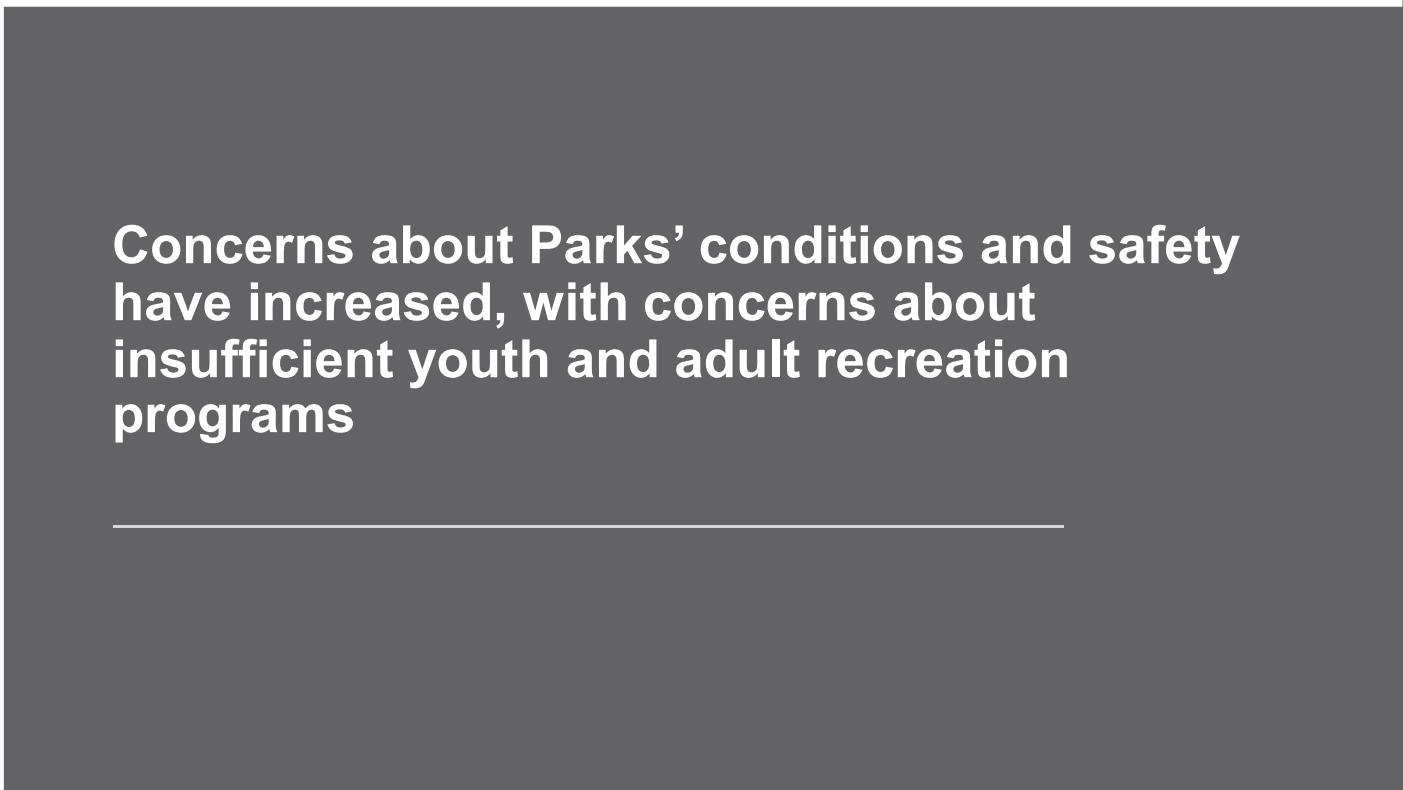
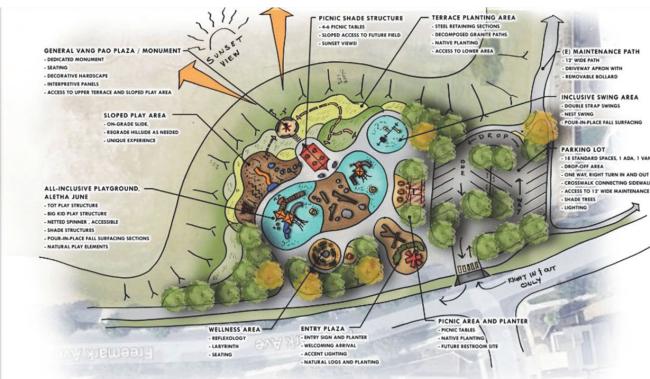
Significant Issues  
Homelessness  
Health Care  
Gangs and Youth Violence  
Drugs and Narcotics  
Cost of Living  
People living in poverty



## Public Safety Highlights

Public safety concerns have held constant

- Drugs and narcotics
- Crime in general
- How quickly police and fire respond to 911 calls
- Risk of spreading neighborhood fires





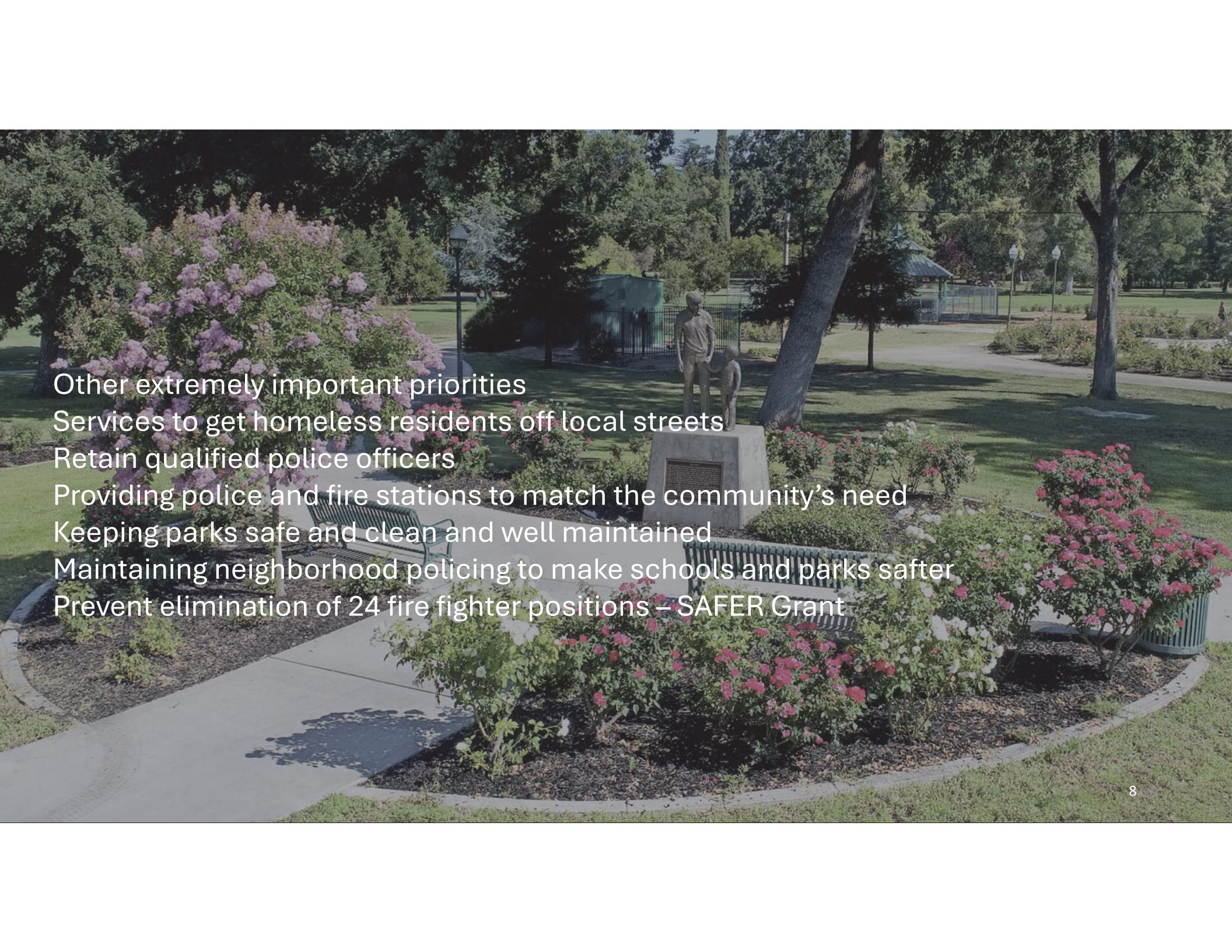
Survey tested three options

- General Sales Tax
- Special Public Safety Tax
- Special Parks Tax



## Top Priorities

- Addressing homelessness & encampments
- Responding quickly to neighborhood fires
- Preventing gang activity
- Maintaining the city's ability to respond to natural and medical needs
- Protecting and maintaining 911 police response times
- Fixing potholes
- Maintain Merced's local quality of life

A scenic view of a park. In the foreground, there is a paved walkway and a flower bed with pink flowers. In the middle ground, there is a statue of a man and a child on a pedestal. In the background, there is a gazebo, a fence, and a building. The park is surrounded by trees and green grass.

Other extremely important priorities  
Services to get homeless residents off local streets  
Retain qualified police officers  
Providing police and fire stations to match the community's need  
Keeping parks safe and clean and well maintained  
Maintaining neighborhood policing to make schools and parks safer  
Prevent elimination of 24 fire fighter positions – SAFER Grant



Important but less intense  
Affordable housing options  
Medical staff on every fire engine  
Maintaining city parks – clean park bathrooms  
Increasing crime prevention efforts  
Protecting and maintaining neighborhood police patrols

Compelling rationale for support

- Emergency Response
- SAFER Grant – Fire Fighter Preservation
- Homelessness



# Next Steps (Scope of Services)

## LEG Role

- Coordinate project strategy and timeline for City staff
- Support public information and community input (infrastructure, safety, general fund)
- Refine clear, neutral messaging using City communication channels
- Advise/train staff on effective project communications
- Recommend informational outreach tools; draft content for City review
- Assist with earned media and misinformation clarification

## City Control & Limits

- City Manager & City Attorney approval all content
- Advisory only – no policy authority

# (FAQs)

- **Is this a political or campaign consultant?**  
No. Services are informational and advisory only, not advocacy or persuasion.
- **Is this related to an election or ballot campaign?**  
Only to ensure factual, legally compliant informational materials in coordination with the City Attorney.
- **Who controls the messaging?**  
The City. All content is reviewed and approved by City staff and legal counsel.
- **Is public money being used for campaigning?**  
No. There is no campaign spending and no independent messaging.
- **Why conduct a community survey?**  
To understand resident priorities and awareness, not to influence votes.
- **Can the consultant expand the scope later?**  
No. The role is clearly defined and limited to the approved scope.
- **Who pays for mailers, ads, or digital outreach?**  
The City, using its own vendors, outside the consultant agreement.

# Recommendation

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- Approving a supplemental appropriation within the unreserved, unencumbered fund balance in the General Fund in the amount of \$104,375
- Approving an Agreement for Professional Services with The Lew Edwards Group
- Authorizing the Finance Officer to make the necessary budget adjustments
- Authorizing the City Manager or the Deputy City Manager to execute the necessary documents.

