Agenda Item Report

Legislative Board:	City Council
Date:	February 17, 2026
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ITEM TITLE: Presentation on the 2026 Community Survey (Public Information Officer Michelle Henley)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Buda has contracted with POLCO, a civic engagement and survey platform, to administer the National Community Survey (NCS) in spring 2026. The NCS is a statistically valid, nationally benchmarked survey that measures resident satisfaction and priorities related to quality of life, city services, infrastructure, safety, and governance. In addition to the standardized survey questions, the City added custom questions tailored to local priorities and upcoming planning and budget considerations. Survey results will provide data-driven insight to support City Council and staff decision-making, strategic planning, budget priorities, and future community engagement efforts.

2. BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The City regularly seeks community input through a variety of engagement methods; however, informal feedback methods do not always provide statistically representative data. To supplement existing engagement efforts, the City contracted with POLCO to administer the National Community Survey, a professionally designed survey instrument used by municipalities nationwide. The last community survey conducted by staff and an outside agency was in 2021.

The NCS allows communities to measure resident opinions using a consistent methodology that supports year-over-year trend analysis and comparison to peer cities across the country. POLCO manages survey sampling, distribution, data weighting, and analysis to ensure results are statistically valid and representative of the community as a whole.

As part of the survey development process, City staff reviewed the standard NCS questions and worked with POLCO to include additional custom questions focused on parks maintenance, communications, community priorities, recreation programming, interactions with City departments, capital improvements, and funding preferences, as outlined in the presentation provided to Council.

3. ANALYSIS

The National Community Survey will be administered through a combination of a randomized mailed survey sample and an open online participation period. POLCO will mail survey invitations to a random sample of Buda households to ensure statistical validity, with the survey open from February 25 through April 8, 2026. An open participation version of the survey will also be made available online beginning March 25 to allow additional residents to participate. Responses from the random sample and open participation will be analyzed separately to preserve the integrity of the scientific

sample.

The City has developed a comprehensive outreach and promotion plan to encourage participation, including social media posts, website alerts, email notifications, printed materials, utility bill messaging, event promotion, and press outreach. Survey distribution has been geographically segmented to ensure representation across different areas of the city.

Following the close of the survey, POLCO will analyze the data and prepare a comprehensive report, with final results anticipated in May 2026. These results will be shared with City Council, staff, and the public, and will be used to inform future planning efforts, service evaluations, and community engagement strategies.

In addition to administering the NCS, the City's agreement with POLCO provides access to additional engagement tools, including live event polling, short online polls, and a library of professionally developed survey templates. These tools may be used in the future to gather timely feedback on specific initiatives or community topics, as needed.

4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding for the National Community Survey and the POLCO platform is included in the approved budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026. There is no significant additional fiscal impact associated with this agenda item. Staff may choose to use social media marketing funds to help promote the survey depending on the quantity of responses, but those funds are also included in the approved budget for FY 2026. The data and engagement tools provided through the POLCO agreement are intended to support informed decision-making and long-term planning efforts across multiple City departments.

The City's contract with POLCO is $20,000. This includes all support, production, and distribution associated with conducting the initial survey as well as access to their community engagement software and tools for two years.

5. STRATEGIC PLAN/GOALS

EXCEPTIONAL CITY SERVICES

6. STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

Deliver City services consistent with our City of Buda mission and core values.

7. PROS AND CONS

Conducting a community survey provides the City with statistically valid data that reflects resident priorities and satisfaction in a structured and representative way. Survey results support informed decision-making, allow the City to track trends over time, and provide context for evaluating services, planning initiatives, and allocating resources. A formal survey also creates a transparent record of community input that can be shared publicly and compared to peer communities.

By contrast, choosing not to conduct a survey avoids the direct financial cost and staff time associated with survey administration and outreach. However, without a formal survey, the City must rely primarily on anecdotal feedback, meeting participation, and informal engagement methods,

which may not represent the broader community. The absence of statistically valid data can limit the City's ability to benchmark performance, measure progress over time, or confidently assess whether decisions align with community priorities.

8. ALTERNATIVES

No alternatives.

9. REQUESTED ACTION / SUGGESTED MOTION / RECOMMENDATION

No action requested.

Attachments:

Council Presentation_POLCO_2.17.26.pdf
DRAFT-The NCS Instrument 2026 - Buda TX.pdf