

State of the Cities

2024

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About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the voice of America's cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people. NLC works to strengthen local leadership, influence federal policy and drive innovative solutions.

About the Center for Research and Data

NLC's Center for Research and Data provides research and analysis on key topics and trends important to cities, creative solutions to improve the quality of life in communities, inspiration and ideas for local officials to use in tackling tough issues, and opportunities for city leaders to connect with peers, share experiences and learn about innovative approaches in cities.

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Foreword

— 4 In the dynamic landscape of local governance, the *State of the Cities* report reflects the collective vision and unwavering commitment of local leaders. This comprehensive study, supported by data from annual mayoral speeches and a survey of mayors, offers an unparalleled window into the administrative heartbeat of our cities, towns and villages.

As we navigate through the complexities of the year 2024, the report identifies economic development as the foremost priority, underscoring the relentless pursuit of prosperity and growth that defines our cities' ambitions. Infrastructure, the backbone of any municipal life, stands as the second priority, highlighting the ongoing efforts to fortify the frameworks upon which our daily lives depend. Housing follows closely, addressing the fundamental need for safe and affordable shelter that supports the dreams of our residents.

Public safety and health services also feature prominently, reflecting a holistic approach to governance that prioritizes the well-being and security of every individual. These priorities are not mere policy points but are the pillars upon which the structure of our future is being constructed. They represent a promise of progress, a blueprint for action and a testament to the resilience and adaptability of our cities.

The *State of the Cities* report is a narrative encapsulating the challenges our cities, towns and villages face, and the innovative solutions that mayors across the nation employ to usher in an era of unprecedented local renewal. As you delve into the pages of this report, let it be a guide and an inspiration. The journey ahead is filled with potential, and together, we stand on the cusp of transforming our city landscapes into thriving spaces of opportunity and inclusivity for all.



Clarence E. Anthony
CEO AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
National League of Cities

Intro

Now in its eleventh iteration, the *State of the Cities* report offers an in-depth exploration of the complex challenges confronting municipal governments across the United States and the strategic objectives city leaders set to elevate the quality of life for their residents. This comprehensive report synthesizes insights from a broad array of data sources, including annual addresses delivered by mayors from a diverse range of American cities, extensive survey responses from a representative cohort of city mayors nationwide, and the perspectives of the local populations.

The report is structured to spotlight the predominant themes that have surfaced from the mayors' annual addresses. These themes include Economic Development, Infrastructure, Housing, Public Safety and Health. Within each thematic section, the report presents a detailed

summary of the key issues highlighted by the mayors, outlines the significant challenges that municipal governments are grappling with, and identifies the strategies that municipal leaders are employing to address these challenges. Additionally, the report integrates data gathered from surveys, enriching the narrative with quotes and statistics that shed light on the mayors' visions and action plans for their cities.

Through this report, readers gain a nuanced understanding of the priorities that are top of mind for city leaders, the obstacles that cities must navigate and the innovative solutions being crafted to foster sustainable development. The *State of the Cities* report thus stands as a testament to the ongoing efforts of municipal governments to forge a brighter, more prosperous future for all residents.



Top Mayoral Priorities in 2024

6

Analysis of annual mayoral *State of the City* speeches reveals that economic development emerged as the most prominent topic, accounting for 32 percent of the overall speech duration. It was followed by infrastructure, which comprised 24 percent of the discourse, housing with 14 percent, public safety with 10 percent, and public health with 9 percent.

Other notable themes include energy/environment and budget/management. Subsequent sections will more closely examine the five primary themes and explore their associated subtopics in greater detail.

Mayors' emphasis on economic development in their 2024 State

of the City speeches underscores its critical role in municipal governance and strategic planning. Economic development shapes the quality of life for residents, determines the city's competitive edge and influences its ability to attract investment and talent. Focusing on this area, mayors are not only addressing immediate fiscal stability but are also crafting a vision for sustainable growth. This forward-thinking approach can lead to the creation of jobs, support for local businesses and the development of infrastructure that meets future demands. In essence, economic development is a multifaceted strategy that can drive innovation, enhance livability and ensure long-term prosperity for cities.

With infrastructure securing the second top spot (accounting for almost a quarter of the total speech content), the evidence indicates that municipal leaders are attentive to the condition, upkeep and new demand of community infrastructure and utilities, such as water systems, power grids and transportation networks.



Most prominent topic

32%

Economic Development

This topic emerged as the most prominent issue among mayoral speeches.

Another essential topic that mayors frequently discuss is housing, representing about 14 percent of the speech content and underscoring the critical role of housing in municipal policy and the economy. Affordable housing is fundamental to the well-being

of residents, serving as a cornerstone for stable communities. It influences not only the quality of life but also economic vitality, as affordable housing can attract a diverse workforce and reduce the strain on local resources. Addressing housing challenges,

Figure 1

Economic Development, Infrastructure and Housing among Top Mayoral Priorities in 2024*

MAYORAL PRIORITIES IN 2024 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESSES



Source: Content Analysis of Mayoral Speeches given between January-April 2024.

Notes: Size of font is based on percentage which denotes the average portion of State of the City addresses that reference this topic.

* See Appendix C for more information on percentages of each topic covered in mayoral speeches.

including affordability, homelessness and supply, reflects a commitment to fostering inclusive, sustainable cities for the future.

In mayoral addresses, public safety also frequently emerges as a key theme, comprising roughly a tenth of the discourse. The multifaceted nature of public safety is often explored, encompassing topics from crime deterrence to the reform and responsibility of law enforcement, as well as readiness for emergencies, fire safety measures, and cybersecurity threats. A recurrent sentiment in these speeches is the acknowledgment and appreciation directed toward the dedicated individuals who contribute to the safety of their localities.

Another topic mentioned in speeches is public health. Public health and human services issues account for about 9 percent of speech content, with mayors emphasizing the importance of providing residents with quality social services, mental health services and recreation opportunities.

Many of these issues have been continuously prevalent among mayoral priorities; over the last decade (see Appendix B), infrastructure, economic development, public safety and housing were among the top issues for cities nationwide.

“ We need to focus more on [firefighters’ and EMS workers’] personal health. They put us first in times of need, now we need to do the same.”

Mayor Amy Shuler Goodwin, Charleston, WV

PROMINENT TOPICS:

- **Economic Development** is connected to shaping the quality of life for residents, determining the city's competitive edge and influencing its ability to attract investment and talent.
- **Infrastructure** remains a top priority for cities. The urgency of addressing the aging infrastructure in American cities cannot be overstated.

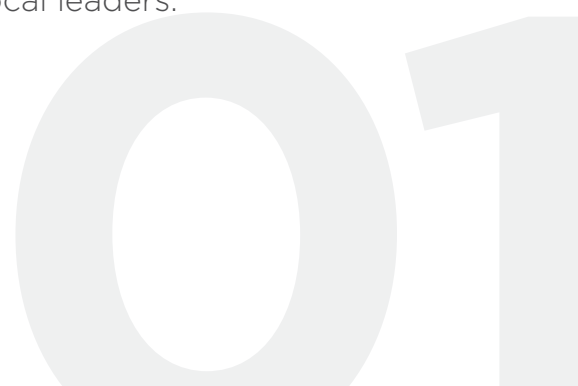


■ Housing

The struggle to provide adequate housing continues to be a formidable obstacle across America's cities, towns and villages.

■ Public Health & Public Safety

The well-being and protection of the community is a crucial issue for local leaders.



Mayoral and Public Priorities Aligned

Communication with residents regarding municipal policies is a multifaceted endeavor. Seventy seven percent of mayors utilize social media platforms, reflecting the modern trend toward digital engagement. Sixty-eight percent of mayors make use of town hall meetings, a more traditional approach, followed by press releases and newsletters with 58 percent and 55 percent, respectively. These findings highlight the diverse strategies city leaders employ to foster transparency and civic involvement in the governance process.

Social media can be an effective proxy for gauging community interests because it allows for real-time interaction and feedback. Residents often use social media to express concerns, preferences and suggestions, providing local officials with immediate insights into the pulse of the community. Town hall meetings, press releases and newsletters also play significant roles, offering more traditional, in-depth platforms for discussion and information dissemination. However, the immediacy and accessibility of social media make it uniquely suited for understanding and addressing the most pressing issues residents face in their daily lives.

77%

of mayors use social media platforms to communicate with residents, reflecting the modern trend toward digital engagement.

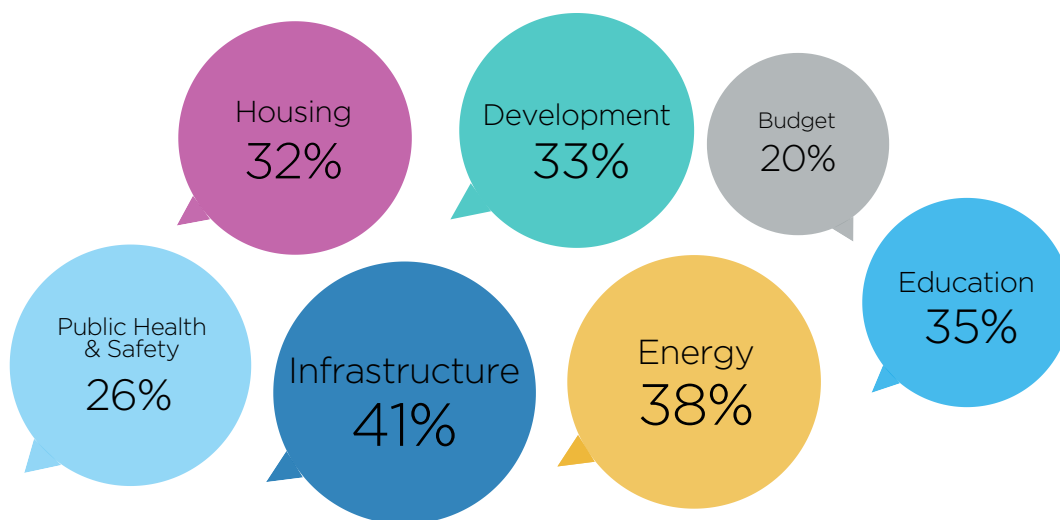


Using data collected from a popular social media platform* over the last year, researchers investigated the areas of policy around which communities engaged the most with their local leaders (in the form of retweets in response to government tweets in various areas). Infrastructure, energy and education garnered the most attention from residents on social media (Figure 2). When combined with mayoral speeches the top priorities for mayors and residents alike are infrastructure, economic development and housing.

Figure 2

Infrastructure and Energy/Environment Garnered the Most Attention from Citizens in 2023-2024

PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN 2023-2024 BY RESIDENTS



Source: Data gathered from the Quorum Local Platform from April 25, 2023, to April 25, 2024.

Notes: Public Engagement on X (i.e., platform formerly known as Twitter) measures the ratio of posts issued by local authorities to the number of times these posts were shared by residents within each category. The sample for tweets differs from one another, ranging from the highest one found for the Housing category, with a total of 1,060 tweets, to the smallest sample of 117 tweets for the Budget category.

* X (i.e., the platform formerly known as Twitter).

Economic & Workforce Development

Like prior years, economic development continues to be a major topic of discussion for mayors in their State of the City addresses and in response to our survey (see Appendix A for details). Mayors see leading local economic competitiveness and strengthening the financial stability of local communities as critical to their communities' success. In the dynamic landscape of municipal economic development, mayors play a pivotal role in shaping the future of their cities. Data from this survey reveals a sense of hopefulness among city leaders, with more than 80 percent rating their city's economic situation as *acceptable to excellent*.

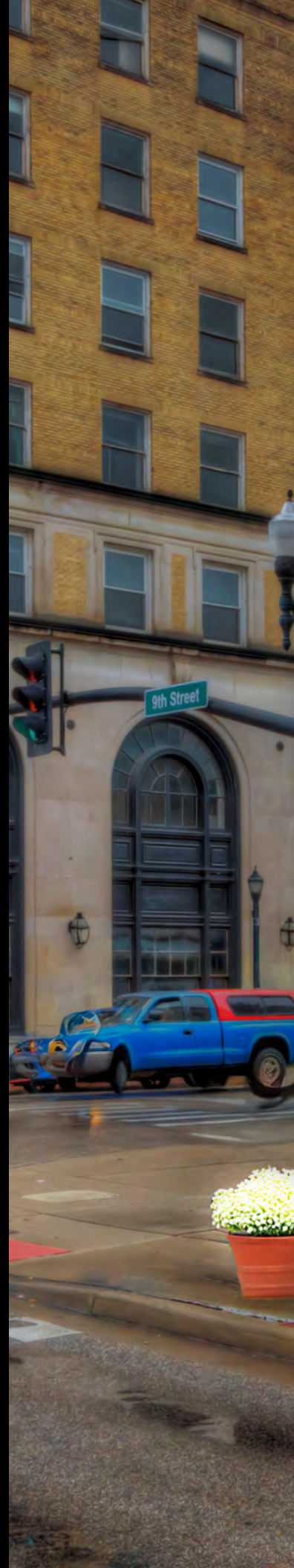
The survey data presents an intriguing dichotomy in the perspectives of city mayors regarding their economic landscapes. On the one hand, there is a sense of guarded confidence, with a majority viewing their cities' economic situations as either acceptable, good or excellent – a testament to the resilience

and potential of municipal economies.

On the other hand, the data unveils underlying challenges that persist beneath the surface of this optimism. Thirty-three percent of mayors pinpoint the difficulty in attracting businesses as a primary economic hurdle, highlighting the competitive nature of economic development and the need for cities to differentiate themselves to lure enterprises.

Furthermore, 11 percent of mayors underscore the issue of insufficient federal investment, which suggests a gap in support that could hinder growth and stability despite the existing federal funding opportunities available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), among others. Ten percent of responding mayors also consider poverty as a main economic challenge in their communities.

This juxtaposition paints a realistic picture: while mayors may acknowledge the strengths of





33%

of mayors identified attracting and retaining businesses as their primary economic challenge.

80%

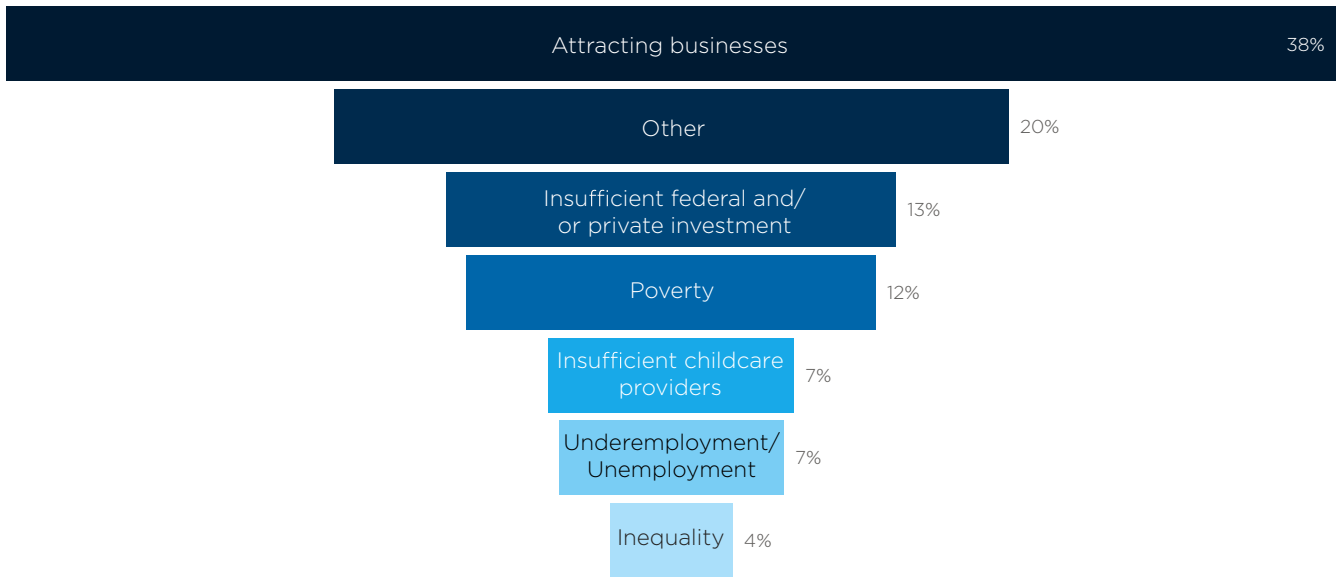
CITY LEADERS

Rated their city's economic situation as acceptable to excellent.

Figure 3

Attracting Businesses and Insufficient Federal Investment Among Major Economic Challenges Facing Cities

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES IDENTIFYING ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACING CITIES IN 2024



Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey.

Notes: Percentages are calculated as the proportion of all total responses to the question - respondents were able to select multiple options so the total of the count column is greater than the total number of respondents. Sample size (N): 169 responses.

their cities' economies, they are acutely aware of the obstacles that could impede progress and the continuous efforts required to overcome them. Mayors consider a wide range of strategies in addressing these economic development challenges. Survey data shows that business attraction and retention, downtown revitalization, and workforce development are strategies mayors most utilize in the face of economic development challenges (Figure 4).

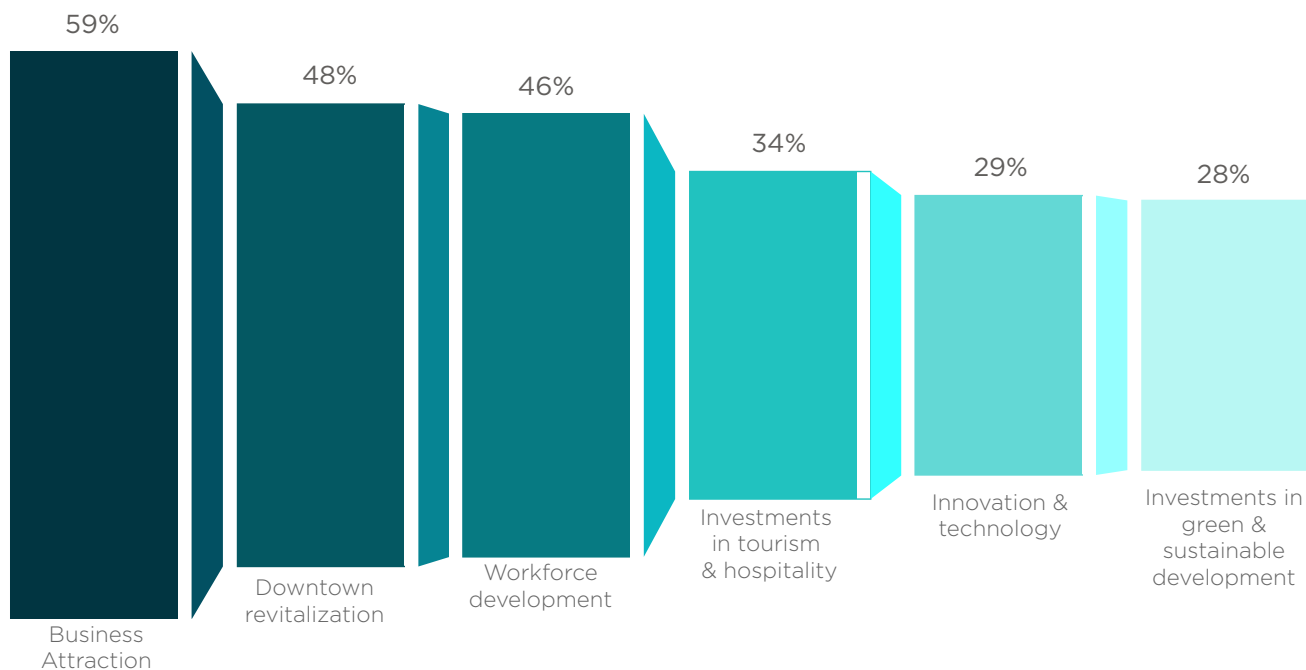
In the last year, NLC member cities have demonstrated strong commitment, with over 250 cities participating in the [City Inclusive Entrepreneurship Network](#), the [Southern Cities Economic Inclusion initiative](#) as well as [Good Jobs Great Cities](#) initiative.

This extensive involvement underscores the proactive steps these cities are taking to address economic disparities and foster inclusive growth.

Figure 4

Business Attraction, Downtown Revitalization, and Workforce Development Among the Most Utilized Strategies by Mayors to Address Economic Development Challenges

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES BY PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES



Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey.

Notes: Percentages are calculated as the proportion of all total responses to the question - respondents were able to select multiple options so the total of the count column is greater than the total number of respondents. Sample size (N): 200 responses.



Economic development is actually the only true objective measure of the success of a community to attract people and businesses.”

Mayor Jim Gilvin, Alpharetta, GA

04 Infrastructure

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Infrastructure continues to remain a top priority for cities. The U.S. economy relies on a vast network of roads and bridges, water systems, freight rail and ports, electrical grids and broadband networks. Many current systems were built decades ago, and many are in need of repair and modernization. The urgency of addressing the aging infrastructure in American cities cannot be overstated, especially as its resilience is put to the test.

Extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods and heat waves are becoming more frequent and intense, exacerbating the existing vulnerabilities of roads, bridges and public utilities. Flooding and extreme weather events are among the most common natural disasters threatening local infrastructure.

Additionally, water and sewer systems, roads and bridges are among the types of infrastructure most vulnerable to climate change. This current study shows that only one-fifth of mayors consider their cities *very* (18%) prepared to face natural disasters.

NLC's [Local Infrastructure Hub](#) has been working with nearly 2,000 cities to secure funding to address these and other infrastructure issues. This aligns with mayor's responses to our survey, in which they identify a

host of tools and strategies (including increased funding, seeking external support and implementing new technologies) that cities plan to implement over the next five years to attend to major infrastructure assets, including water systems, broadband grids, roads and public transportation.

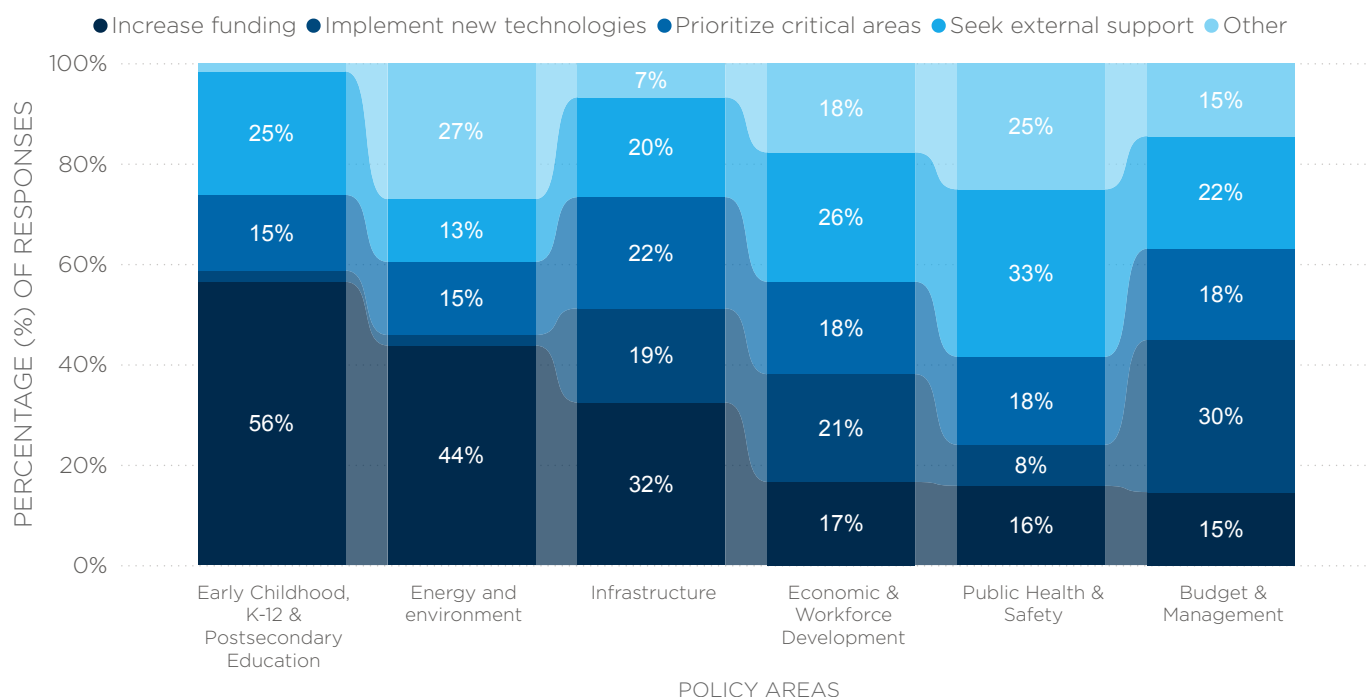
Figure 5 shows various tools and techniques municipal governments implement to address community needs and demands in various policy areas. Mayors identify increased funding as a foundational component of improving water systems and roads (not shown here). Seeking external support, on the other hand, seems to be the main strategy reported by mayors in addressing broadband and public transportation challenges. Finally, implementing new technologies appears to be the main strategy relied upon in addressing energy infrastructure challenges.



Figure 5

Increased Funding and Seeking External Support Among the Methods to Address Community Needs in Various Policy Areas

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES IDENTIFYING METHODS TO ADDRESS NEEDS, BY POLICY AREA



Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey.

Notes: Percentages are calculated as the proportion of all total responses to the question - respondents were able to select multiple options so the total of the count column is greater than the total number of respondents. Sample size (N): 201 responses.

Housing

Housing instability, homelessness and the lack of a permanent residence rank highly among critical public welfare issues. The struggle to provide adequate housing continues to be a formidable obstacle across America's cities, towns and villages. Notably, for the first time in a decade, housing is one of the top three priorities for mayors, according to this report.

The availability and affordability of housing in urban areas have long been topics of concern, but recent survey data sheds new light on the severity of the issue as perceived by city leaders. Survey data shows that a staggering 60 percent of mayors describe the state of housing in their cities as less than satisfactory, with over 41 percent labeling it as *poor and nearly 18 percent as very poor*. This is a stark contrast to the mere 14 percent who view their housing situation positively (either *good* or *excellent*). The remaining 26 percent consider the availability of housing in their community as merely *acceptable*.

The primary challenges identified by these mayors are twofold: the high cost of housing and a lack of supply. These issues are intertwined, as the limited availability of housing inevitably drives up prices, making affordability a significant hurdle for many residents. The survey indicates that nearly 70 percent of mayors are grappling with these challenges, which are fundamental barriers to ensuring that all residents have access to safe and affordable housing.

Despite these unfavorable statistics, there is a silver lining. Mayors are not standing idly by; instead, they are actively seeking solutions to increase the housing supply and resolve housing challenges and issues.

Working with multiple national partners, NLC recently released the [Housing Supply Accelerator Playbook](#), which highlights the challenges and opportunities cities encounter as they strive to create housing solutions.

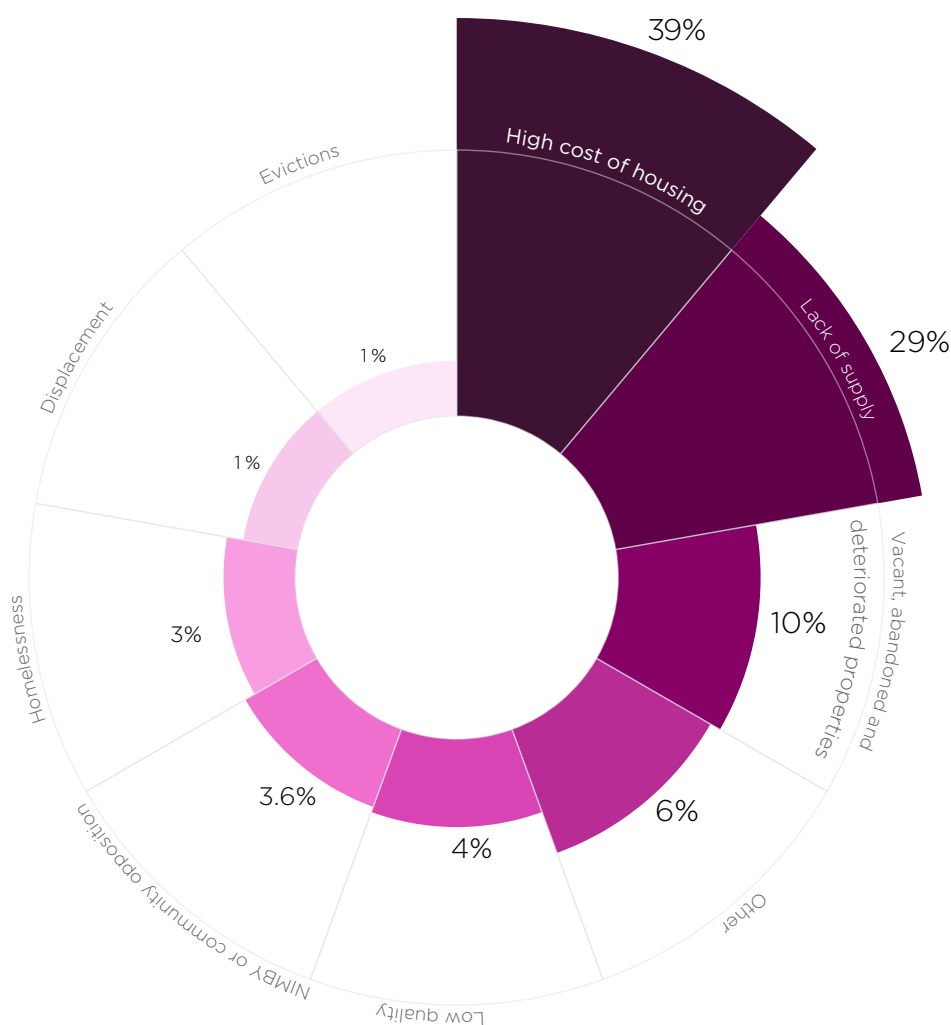
60%

of surveyed mayors describe the state of housing in their cities as ***less than satisfactory***.

Figure 6

High Costs and Lack of Supply Among the Main Housing Challenges for Cities

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES IDENTIFYING A MAIN HOUSING CHALLENGE FACING CITIES



Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey.

Notes: Percentages are calculated as the proportion of all total responses to the question - respondents were able to select multiple options so the total of the count column is greater than the total number of respondents. Sample size (N): 163 responses.



IOWA CITY, IA, has allocated \$700,000 for construction of senior apartments, including 36 affordable units, and a domestic violence shelter.

LITTLE ROCK, AR

Mayor Frank Scott, Jr. is launching a “Homeless Village” to reduce homelessness, increase supportive housing and establish a vacant property registry.

MILWAUKEE, WI, is

addressing neighborhood decay through the Raze and Revive Program. The city spent \$5 million to demolish 180 derelict houses, according to Mayor Cavalier Johnson in his 2024 address.

This proactive stance is crucial, as it addresses the immediate shortage and stabilizes housing costs in the long term. City leaders are taking a comprehensive approach to tackle the housing crisis by focusing on both the supply side and the cost.

The survey’s findings highlight a critical juncture for housing policy. With a clear recognition of the issues at hand and a commitment to action from city leaders, there is a path forward. A path that not only relies on what cities can do but also on how public-private partners can work together to address this issue, including support from both state and federal governments.³

The efforts to ramp up the housing supply, as reported by mayors across the country, are a testament to the resilience and dedication of our municipal leaders to overcome the challenges they face. Additionally, looking at the ways mayors are addressing these housing challenges, the intersection between housing supply and public health and safety is clear, making it unsurprising that these issues are the next highest priority areas in mayoral speeches.



Public Health & Safety

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Public Safety and Health were the fourth and fifth top priorities, respectively, in mayoral speeches. The well-being and protection of the community is a crucial issue for local leaders throughout the United States. The challenge of maintaining safety in American cities is complex, requiring the collaboration of multiple stakeholders and requiring the leadership of local leaders. In response to these concerns, the National League of Cities' recent report on [*Lessons Learned through Collaborative Community Safety Initiatives*](#) aims to facilitate discussions among municipal leaders and help them formulate strategies to forge a renewed approach to safety in communities.

In the landscape of public safety and health, mayors across the nation are prioritizing the diversification and strengthening of their workforce. Thirty-seven percent of mayors have identified the retention and recruitment of a diverse public





Public Safety

The well-being and protection of the community is a crucial issue for local leaders.



Public Health

Mayors continue to sound the alarm on the challenges of substance use, mental health and suicide.

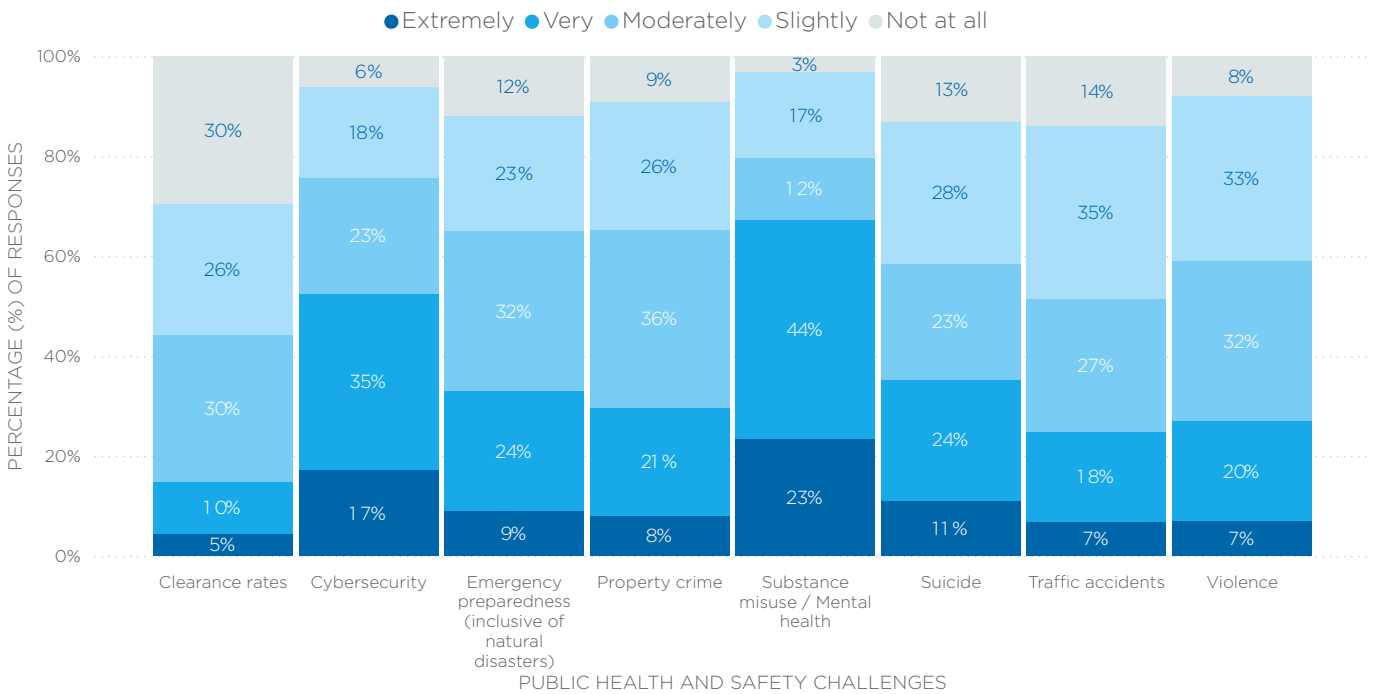
health and safety workforce as their top priority for 2024.⁴ This reflects a growing recognition of the challenges of recruitment for public safety positions and the importance of inclusivity and representation in these critical sectors. Additionally, 20 percent are focusing on the creation or expansion of civilian-led crisis response teams, indicating a shift toward more specialized and community-oriented approaches to public safety.

The development of community violence intervention plans is also on the agenda for 15 percent of mayors, showcasing a proactive stance on reducing violence through strategic planning and community engagement.

Figure 7

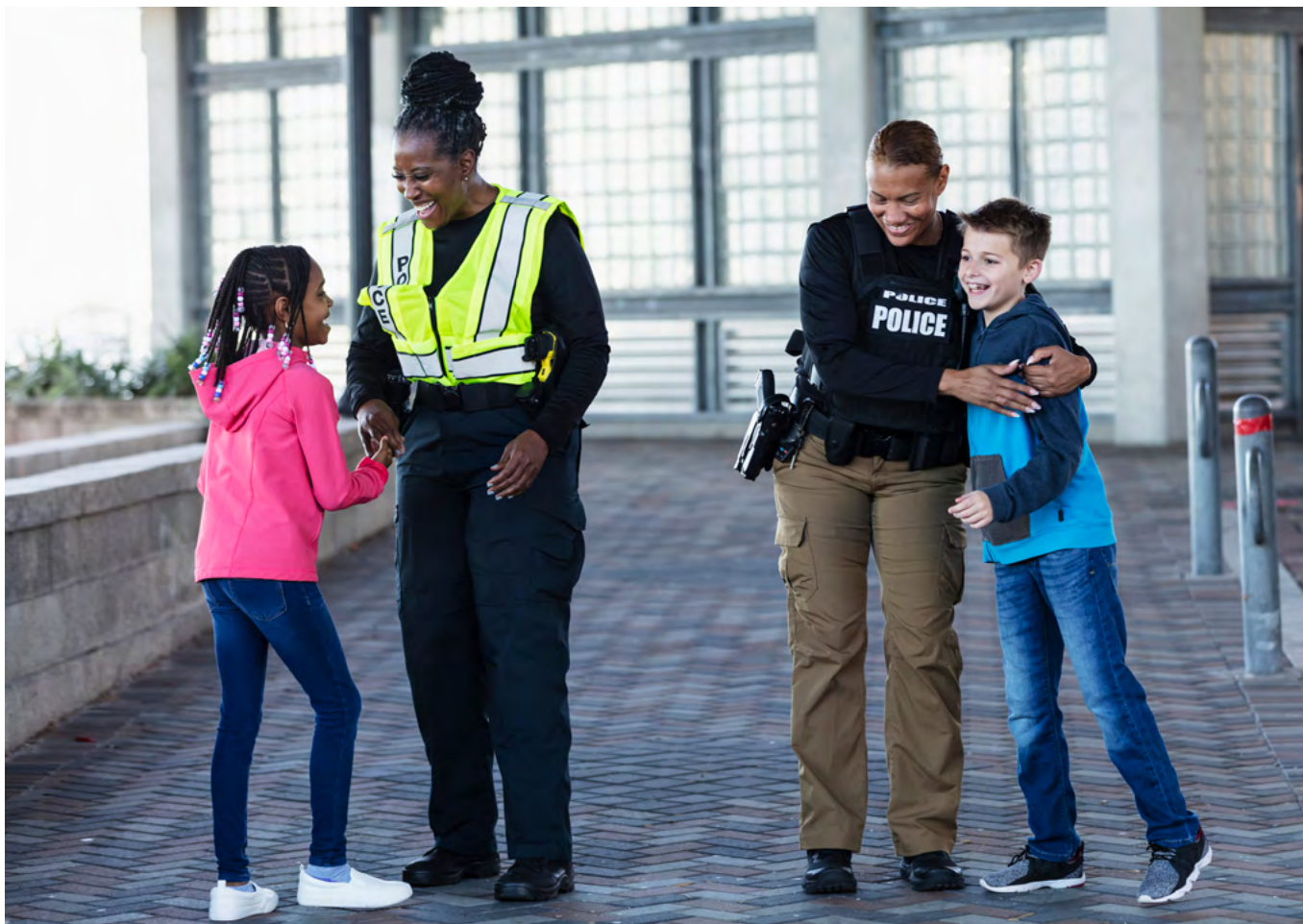
Substance Use, Mental Health, and Cybersecurity Among the Most Concerning Public Health/Safety Issues for American Mayors

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES BY LEVEL OF CONCERN FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY



Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey.

Notes: Percentages are calculated as the proportion of all total responses to the question. Sample size (N): 200 responses.



Meanwhile, police accountability remains a pressing issue, with nearly 14 percent of mayors choosing it as a priority, highlighting the ongoing need for transparency and trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

On the public health front, mayors are continuing to sound the alarm on the challenges of substance use, mental health and suicide. These concerns underscore the multifaceted nature of public health and safety, where cities are increasingly investing in co-responder models to address the emergency response needs of their community. With an increasing number of local governments experiencing cyber-attacks in the last year, many mayors also highlighted the challenges around addressing cybersecurity in their operations. As mayors navigate these complex issues, their choices reflect a commitment to addressing both the immediate and long-term needs of their constituents, ensuring a safer and healthier future for all.

Despite these challenges, city leaders are actively seeking solutions to improve the safety and health of their communities.

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FAYETTEVILLE, AR, has secured a \$400,000 Department of Justice grant to enhance their Crisis Intervention Response Team, aiming to assist more individuals during mental health emergencies.

LUBBOCK, TX, has allocated \$3.5 million from ARPA funds to establish the Hope Center, a mental health facility aiding law enforcement and EMS.

BOULDER CITY, NV, is developing The Healing Center to provide specialized treatment for trauma victims.

FOLSOM, CA, is rebranding its Community Crime Suppression Unit to the Problem-Oriented Policing team, focusing on broader community issues such as homelessness and local business thefts while also improving communication between the police and community through an expanded public information team.



37%

of mayors have identified the retention and recruitment of a diverse public health and safety workforce as their top priority for 2024.

066

Conclusion

The 2024 *State of the Cities* report offers a comprehensive overview of the pressing issues confronting cities, towns and villages across the United States, along with their strategies and blueprints for what lies ahead. It synthesizes an array of data sources, notably expanding beyond the annual addresses delivered by mayors from municipalities of varying scales and locales to include a survey of these mayors and assessment of the concerns of their residents based on social media engagement. The findings of this year's report highlight shared objectives and concerns among municipal leaders, as well as the distinct approaches and innovations they employ to tackle these issues.

Economic development is a critical aspect of leading local economic competitiveness and strengthening the financial stability of local communities, and mayors play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our cities. While there is a sense of cautious optimism among city leaders regarding their cities' economic situations, there are underlying challenges that persist beneath the surface of this optimism. Attracting businesses and insufficient federal investment are significant hurdles that mayors face in their efforts to promote economic development.

Infrastructure is another critical area of concern for cities, with the need to address aging infrastructure and the resilience of systems to natural disasters being top priorities. Mayors are actively seeking solutions to increase the housing supply and overcome housing challenges, recognizing the importance of

addressing the availability and affordability of housing in urban areas.

Municipal governments are increasingly prioritizing the well-being and protection of their residents. City leaders are acutely aware of the necessity to confront challenges including the increasing rates of substance use disorder, increasing community-wide mental health needs and the security of digital infrastructure, alongside a spectrum of other public health and safety matters.

Support delivered through ARPA has been a lifeline for municipal governments, enabling them to stabilize budgets and invest in essential services during challenging times. While not all municipalities have applied for and received these funds, the success stories highlight the need for continued federal support and more streamlined guidance to ensure all local governments can access and utilize federal funds and resources effectively in the future.⁵

The *State of the Cities* report highlights mayors' efforts to tackle crucial issues facing their communities. It underscores their commitment to enhancing residents' quality of life through equity, inclusion and sustainability. Demonstrating resilience and optimism, mayors are dedicated to improving their communities and are keen to collaborate with federal agencies to achieve common objectives.

Appendices

Appendix A: Methodology

For this report, the National League of Cities (NLC) utilized three different methodologies: a content analysis of mayors' State of the City Address speeches, a survey of mayors and a quantitative analysis of public engagement with the mayors' priorities. For these different methods, we gathered and analyzed data from three different sources.

a. Mayoral Speeches

We conducted a content analysis of 50 State of the Cities (SOTC) addresses delivered by mayors between January 1 and April 1, 2024. Mayoral speeches were collected from municipal governments' official websites. At the time of this analysis, these 50 SOTC speeches were the only ones the researchers could locate online and then code.

To analyze each SOTC address delivered, we considered only the forward-looking and actionable plans mayors expressed in their speeches. We then categorized each of these plans into one the following priority categories: Budget and Management, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Housing, Public Safety, Education, Data and Technology, Health and Human Services, and Energy and Environment. For each category, we counted the

words expressed in the speeches. Lastly, we calculated the ratio of the number of words counted for each category to the total number of words counted for each speech.

b. Survey of Mayors

NLC fielded a survey to a sample of mayors from cities of various sizes across the country (all members of the NLC) to identify their main priorities for 2024. The survey was sent to 2,230 mayors and was open for responses from March 28, 2024, to April 26, 2024. In total, 202 mayors completed the survey and, therefore, were included in our analysis. The analytic sample varies by question as we use all available responses as the denominator for each question.

Survey respondents were asked to assess different topics in the following categories: Budget and Management; Economic and Workforce Development; Infrastructure; Housing; Public Health and Safety; Early Childhood, K-12, and Postsecondary Education; and Energy and Environment (contact authors for the instrument).

The distribution of the responding cities' populations is mostly balanced among the different population size categories. A greater percentage of

respondents are from cities with less than 10,000 residents and cities with population sizes between 10,000 and 49,999, while cities with more than 30,000 residents make up the lower percentage of survey respondents.

This aligns with the distribution of cities across the country by population size. As for regional distribution, we observed a low rate of response from the Northeast census region and relatively well-balanced responses from the other regions.

Population	% Responses
<10,000	48.5
10,000-49,999	32.2
50,000-99,999	7.4
100,000-299,999	10.4
300,000+	1.5

Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey and Census Bureau for population sizes of Cities, Towns, and Villages.

Region	% Responses
South	47.5
West	34.0
Midwest	16.0
Northeast	2.5

Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey, and Census Bureau for the distribution of Cities, Towns, and Villages.

C. Public Engagement

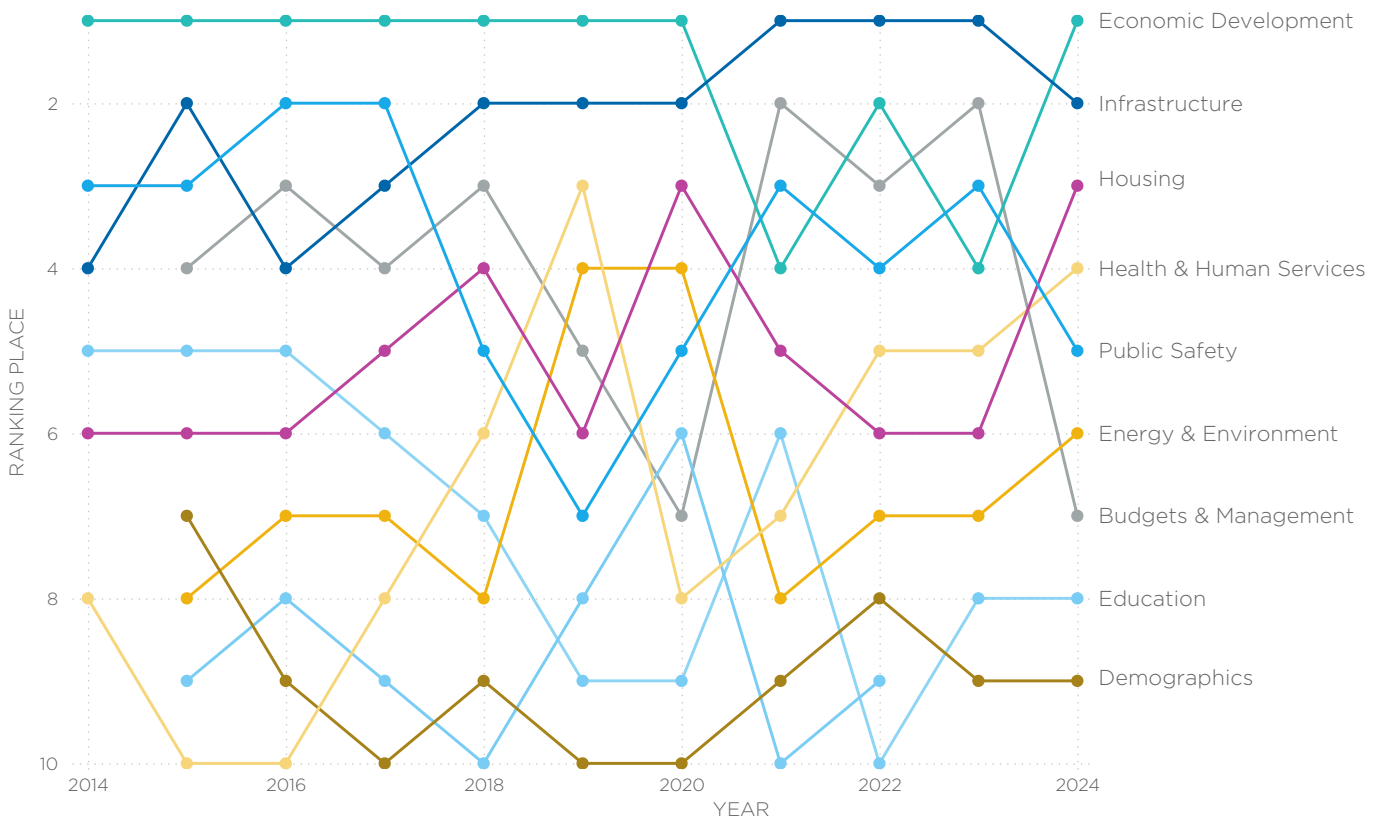
To understand residents' sentiments regarding governments' priorities, we analyzed social media engagement. To conduct this analysis, we gathered data from Quorum Local Platform. Our analysis was based on the most frequent hashtags used on X (i.e., the platform formerly known as Twitter) from April 25, 2023 to April 25, 2024, for the same main categories as the ones used in the survey: Budget and Management; Economic and Workforce Development; Infrastructure; Housing; Public Health and Safety; Early Childhood, K-12, and Postsecondary Education; and Energy and Environment.^{6, 7}

Public Engagement on X (i.e., platform formerly known as Twitter) measures the ratio of posts issued by local authorities to the number of times these posts were shared by residents within each category. The sample for tweets differs from one another, ranging from the highest one found for the Housing category, with a total of 1,060 tweets, to the smallest sample of 117 tweets for the Budget category. Please contact the authors for more detail.⁸

Appendix B: Mayors' Priorities Over the Last Decade

Appendix Figure 1

Rankings of Priorities 2014-2024



Source: NLC State of the Cities reports 2014-2024.

Appendix C: Figure Tables

Table 1

Economic Development, Infrastructure and Housing Among Top Mayoral Priorities in 2024

Priority Category	% Responses
Economic Development	31.7
Infrastructure	23.5
Housing	14.3
Public Safety	9.5
Health-Human Services	9.4
Energy-Environment	5.5
Budget-Management	3.8
Education	1.5
Data-Technology	0.7

Source: Content Analysis of 50 Mayoral Speeches Given between January-April 2024.

Figure Note: Percentages denote the average portion of State of the City addresses dedicated to each topic.

Table 2

Infrastructure and Energy/Environment Garnered the Most Attention from Residents' Public Engagement in 2023-2024

Priority Category	% Responses
Infrastructure	40.8
Energy and Environment	38.1
Education	34.5
Economic Development and Workforce	32.6
Housing	32.3
Public Health and Safety	25.9
Budget and Management	19.7

Source: Data gathered from Quroum Local 2023-24.

Figure Note: Public Engagement on X (i.e., platform formerly known as Twitter). For more details refer to Appendix A.

Table 3

Attracting Businesses and Insufficient Federal Investment Among Major Economic Challenges Facing Cities

	% Responses
Underemployment/Unemployment	5.5
Attracting businesses	32.5
Insufficient childcare providers	6.0
Poverty	10.0
Inequality	3.0
Insufficient federal and/or private investment	11.0
Other	16.5

Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey.

Sample Size (N): 169 responses.

Figure Notes: Percentages are calculated as the proportion of all total responses to the question; respondents were able to select multiple options so the total of the count column is greater than the total number of respondents.

Table 4

Business Attraction, Downtown Revitalization, and Workforce Development Among the Most Utilized Strategies by Mayors to Address Economic Development Challenges

	% Responses
Innovation and technology (entrepreneurship services and/or incubator programs)	29.0
Workforce development (skills training/wrap-around supports for workers)	46.0
Business attraction and retention	59.0
Investments in tourism and hospitality	33.5
Increased green and sustainable development (bike lanes, parks, green spaces, etc.)	28.5
Downtown revitalization (arts investments, sports investments, Business Improvement Districts, etc.)	47.5
Other	5.5

Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey.

Sample Size (N): 200 responses.

Figure Notes: Percentages are calculated as the proportion of all total responses to the question; respondents were able to select multiple options so the total of the count column is greater than the total number of respondents.

Table 5:

Increased Funding and Seeking External Support Among the Methods to Address Community Needs in Various Policy Areas

	% Responses				
	Increase funding	Seek external support	Implement new technologies	Prioritize critical areas	Other
Water	32.4	19.9	18.8	22.2	6.8
Energy	14.6	22.4	30.3	18.2	14.6
Broadband	16.6	25.8	21.5	18.4	17.8
Roads	56.4	24.6	2.2	15.1	1.7
Public Transportation	15.8	33.3	8.2	17.5	25.2
Other	43.8	12.5	2.1	14.6	27.1

Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey.

Sample Size (N): 201 responses.

Figure Note: Percentages are calculated as the proportion of all total responses to the question.

Table 6

High Costs and Lack of Supply among the Main Housing Challenges for Cities

	% Responses
Lack of supply	29.5
High cost of housing	39.3
Low quality	4.3
Evictions	0.6
Homelessness	2.5
Displacement	0.6
Vacant, Abandoned and Deteriorated Properties	10.4
NIMBY or Community Opposition	3.7
Other	9.2

Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey.

Sample Size (N): 163 responses.

Figure Note: Percentages are calculated as the proportion of all total responses to the question.

Table 7

Substance Misuse, Mental Health and Cybersecurity Among the Most Concerning Public Health/Safety Issues for American Mayors

	% Responses				
	Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very Concerned	Extremely concerned
Violence	8.0	33.0	32.0	20.0	7.0
Property crime	9.2	25.5	35.7	21.4	8.2
Clearance rates	29.6	26.1	29.6	10.2	4.6
Traffic accidents	13.9	34.7	26.7	17.8	6.9
Emergency preparedness (inclusive of natural disasters)	12.0	23.0	32.0	24.0	9.0
Substance misuse/Mental health	3.1	17.4	12.2	43.9	23.5
Suicide	13.1	28.3	23.2	24.2	11.1
Cybersecurity	6.1	18.2	23.2	35.4	17.2
Other	14.3	0.0	0.0	14.3	71.4

Source: State of the Cities 2024 Mayoral Survey.

Sample Size (N): 200 responses.

Figure Note: Percentages are calculated as the proportion of all total responses to the question.

Endnotes

- 1 National League of Cities (2023). *Municipal Infrastructure Conditions in 2023*. National League of Cities. <https://www.nlc.org/resource/municipal-infrastructure-conditions-in-2023/>
- 2 National League of Cities. *Municipal Infrastructure Conditions in 2023*.
- 3 National League of Cities and American Planning Association (2024). *The Housing Supply Accelerator Playbook: Solutions, Systems, Partnerships*. National League of Cities. <https://www.nlc.org/resource/housing-supply-accelerator-playbook/>
- 4 The National League of Cities is urging Congress and the Biden administration to offer multifaceted support aimed at bolstering diversity and mental health services within public safety sectors. This includes assistance in technology, finance and recruitment, alongside initiating a nationwide marketing campaign to draw a greater number of women and minorities. Furthermore, NLC is advocating for a boost in the COPS hiring grants, the implementation of the HELPER Act for improved mortgage conditions for first responders and the allocation of these funds towards the employment of co-responders and crisis intervention units.
- 5 Omeyr, F., Bauer, J., & Montes Diaz, I. (2024). How ARPA Funds Helped Stabilize Budgets & Investment in Municipal Services. National League of Cities. <https://www.nlc.org/article/2024/03/05/how-arpa-funds-helped-stabilize-budgets-investing-in-municipal-services/>
- 6 Please note that the criteria for choosing the specific hashtags was that the number of appearances be significant (>10), and the description/wording of the hashtag make sense with the category analyzed.
- 7 For each category, we focus only on specific hashtags to be more accurate in the topic. For each category, the hashtags utilized were the following:

Infrastructure: #infrastructure, #transportacion, #infrastructureworks

Budget and Management: #budget

Economic Development and Workforce: #economicdevelopment, #hiring, #workforce, #workforcedevelopment

Housing: #Housing, #Affordablehousing, #homelessness, #homeless

Education: #earlychildhood, #childcare, #k12, #education

Energy and Environment: #energy, #cleanenergy, #energyefficiency, #sustainability, #environment

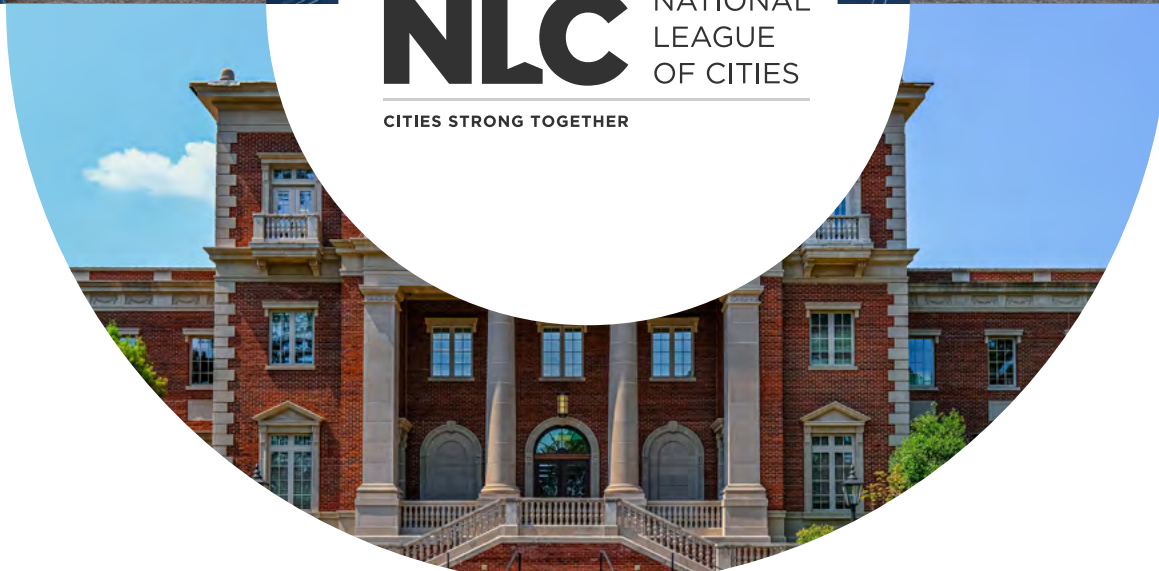
Public Safety: #publicsafety

Health-Human Services: #publichealth
- 8 To clarify, the database does not allow for a count of how many times a post was reshared by platform users. Our assumption for the quantitative calculation is that each post was shared only once.



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