The results are in!

Find out what Jackson residents believe should guide transparency and accountability in their city.

Running the Civic Dialogue

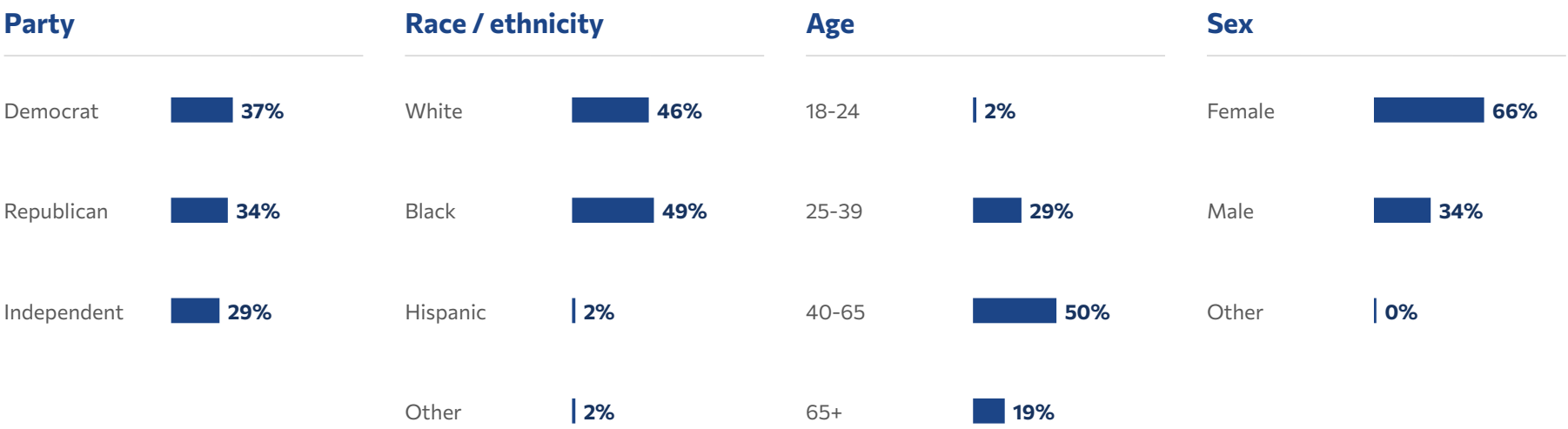
On October 8, 2026, 123 Jackson residents came together on Zoom to discuss how the city can be more transparent and accountable to residents. Change.org specifically recruited a group that reflected the city in terms of age, sex, race, and political leaning.

The set of policy options they discussed was determined through research and conversations with practitioners. Participants were provided briefing material ahead of the session to ensure a more informed discussion.

Discussions were held primarily within small groups of 5-8 residents, over the course of four focused breakout sessions. Sessions covered the principles that should guide the city, open books on budgets, audits, and contracts, fair treatment of every part of the city, and how the city answers residents when they speak up and when things go wrong. Residents were compensated for the time spent to participate in the surveys & dialogue.

WHO ATTENDED

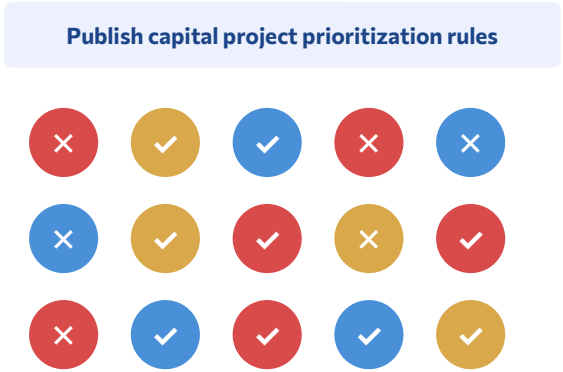
Share of dialogue attendees by demographic.

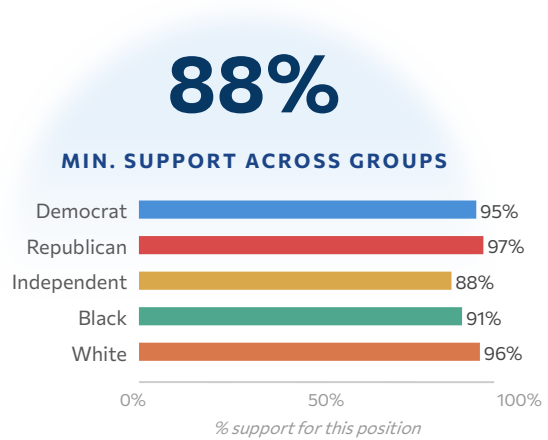


Share of the 123 residents who attended the dialogue.

UNDERSTANDING THE

Bridging Score





After the Dialogue, we polled all participants on **specific policy positions** related to transparency and accountability in Jackson.

We found the share of Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and Black and White residents who supported each statement, then used the lowest of those as the "bridging score." **This way, we identify policies that all groups significantly support.**

Resident quotes throughout this report are drawn from participants' small-group discussions during the dialogue.

Principles to Guide Jackson's Approach

Ask residents first, and show the effect	The city should ask for residents' input before major decisions are made, and say publicly how that input changed the outcome, even if it makes some decisions take longer.	**77%**
Tell residents early when things go wrong	When something goes wrong at the city, like a missed audit deadline, city leaders should tell residents promptly, even before they have a fix or all the answers.	**73%**
More staff time for resident follow-up	The city should dedicate more staff time to communicating with residents and following up on their concerns, even if that means fewer resources for other city services.	**53%**

Policy Recommendations for Transparency & Accountability in Jackson

All 10 Policy Recommendations shown alongside their bridge score — the minimum support across all groups

Treatment of Different Parts of the City

Publish Capital Project Prioritization Rules	88%
Publish Enforcement Counts by District	69%
East Jackson Town Halls Twice a Year	59%

Weather Emergency Response

Publish a Review of the Winter Storm	88%

City Finances After the Late Audit

Plain-Language Budget Summary	88%
Monthly Audit Status Updates	85%

Conflicts of Interest in Contracts & Decisions

Put Contracts and Procurement in Plain View	85%
One Page for Officials' Interests	81%

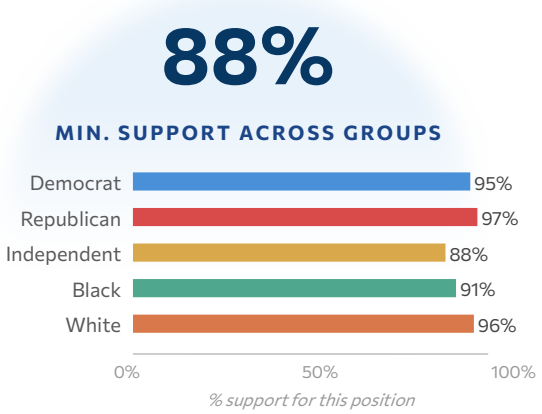
Hearing Back on Issues Residents Raise

Case Numbers and Closure Reasons for 311	88%
Response-Time Goals for 311 and Records	87%

TREATMENT OF DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE CITY

#1 Publish Capital Project Prioritization Rules

Make public the rules for how streets, parks, and other capital projects get prioritized across parts of town, including how "fairness" is measured. When a project goes ahead out of that order, the city must say why in public.



Why Jackson Residents Support this:

"I had a street resurfaced in my neighborhood a year ago... And I'm still wondering. I never really did see the criteria that the city uses to decide what part they are resurfacing and what part they're not and how they're prioritizing."
— 40-65, Independent Male

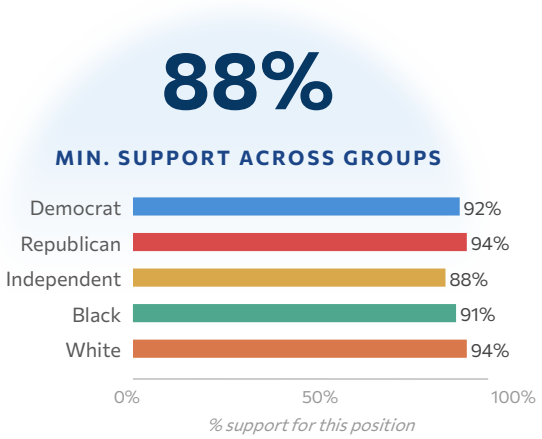
"...if I lived in a part of town where I was waiting for them to renovate my park or something, I would like to see a list of where that ranked. Or is there 14 things above that, or is it the next thing or something?"
— 65+, Republican Female

"...why they paving them folk road across the street over there?... We've been waiting for the last 10 years to get ours... How are you making the decision to do one street over another street? What is the process?"
— 40-65, Democratic Male

WEATHER EMERGENCY RESPONSE

#2 Publish a Review of the Winter Storm

The city conducts and publishes an official review of last winter's storm response: what happened, what went wrong, what was learned, and what is being changed, including which problems belonged to Jackson Energy Authority or the state.



Why Jackson Residents Support this:

"I can handle failures. You know, my line of work, you learn from your failures... You have the lessons learned compiled, but then you have to apply them. And that doesn't always happen. So there has to be that follow through."
— 40-65, Independent Male

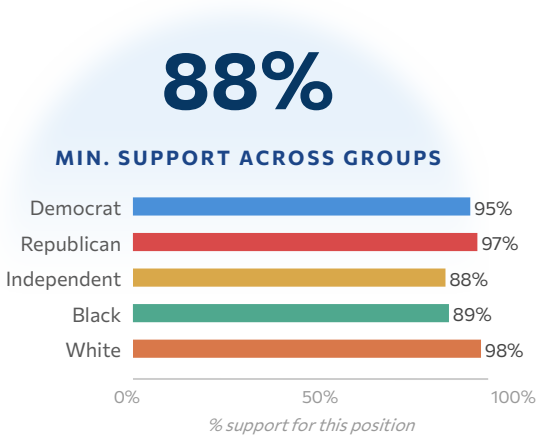
"...to have three out of five salt trucks down, that's just kind of crazy... when I moved to White House, Tennessee, do you know what their salt trucks were? They were the garbage men on the back of the garbage trucks with garbage cans full of salt... where there's a will, there's a way."
— 40-65, Independent Female

"...the idea of them releasing some sort of a statement saying like, hey, this is what went wrong, but also we're actually doing something to fix this. And here's what we're doing. We're getting a couple new salt trucks... Some sort of a follow through. And that would help me, I think."
— 25-39, Democratic Male

CITY FINANCES AFTER THE LATE AUDIT

#3 Plain-Language Budget Summary

Post a simple summary next to the city's budget data explaining what changed from last year, why the numbers moved, and what they will affect.



Why Jackson Residents Support this:

"As an accountant and a past auditor, I can tell you if I start speaking in accounting, I can shuffle numbers and the average person wouldn't understand what I'm saying. And I can hide. I can hide things."
— 65+, Republican Female

"...a lot of times if you go look at these documents, it's just the copy paste over of whatever got submitted to the state... Almost having like an average Joe in the communication department that has to look at everything. If he can't understand it in five minutes, it's like, nope..."
— 25-39, Democratic Male

"...although I'm a voter, I do feel as though my view of the financial spending of a city is quite ignorant. So having plain language information available as a taxpayer I do feel is important."
— 25-39, Independent Female

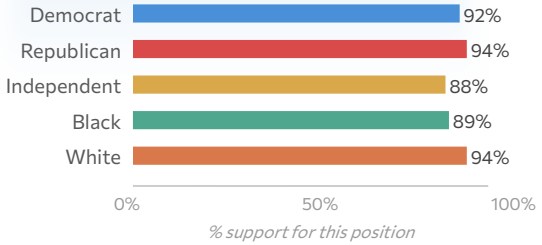
HEARING BACK ON ISSUES RESIDENTS RAISE

#4 Case Numbers and Closure Reasons for 311

Whenever a 311 report is made by phone or in the app, the reporter gets a case number to check its status. If a case is closed with no resolution, a reason must be recorded.

88%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Jackson Residents Support this:

"UPS, FedEx, Postal Service... they can send you though. So I don't understand why we can't set our 311 up to do the same thing. Like once they've accepted your problem and somebody's working on it, they should be able to send you update."
— 40-65, Independent Female

"...what happens when you have a, an accident or you get a police report, you get a claim number and if you pop it in then you could see what the status is. And if there's no, if there's no information, it could just show no information yet"
— 65+, Democratic Female

"...I went on the app and scheduled a trash pickup and they never came. And I called the number and said hey, I scheduled a trash pickup and nobody ever came. She said yeah, that doesn't work very well... why do you have it if I have to call you"
— 65+, Republican Female

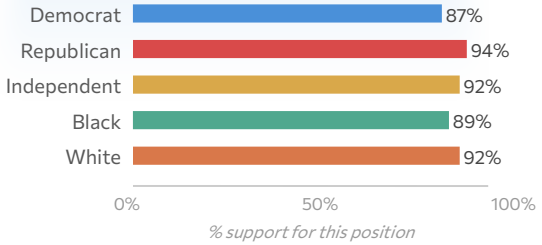
HEARING BACK ON ISSUES RESIDENTS RAISE

#5 Response-Time Goals for 311 and Records

Set and publish a clear time goal for answering 311 calls and public records requests, then regularly report how well the city is meeting it, using tools it already has.

87%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Jackson Residents Support this:

"...I think there needs to be specific response times. Like if you report something, then in three days you should be able to go back and see. Okay, what's the progress on this?... If it gets closed out, you need to know why it got closed out. And there needs to be benchmarks on that."
— 65+, Republican Female

"...an automatic text message after you've left your statement or complaint or whatever, on 31 1, an automated text message saying you're. We have received it. Should hear from someone within 72 hours. Real easy. Very easy."
— 40-65, Independent Female

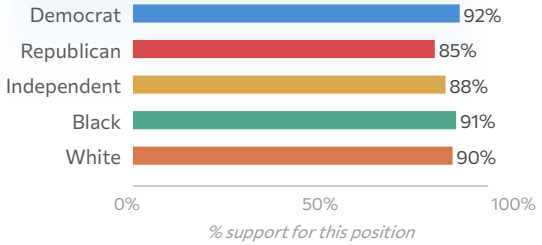
"...I think that follow up, knowing what happened and figuring out how. How to do that more effectively is really important. That once you do get people to provide you with input... or report issues that are happening, then you do need to be ready to respond."
— 65+, Democratic Female

#6 Put Contracts and Procurement in Plain View

The city publishes a contracts and vendors portal with plain-language explanations of how purchasing works. Each procurement review committee includes at least one member of the public, and its report explaining the decision is published to the portal.

85%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Jackson Residents Support this:

"...making it plain view, that does help to control, you know, the, what's the term I'm looking for, the, the good old boy term. When you got your buddies putting in for these contracts and you're in these government positions, this, that, that will help to, to govern and oversee that"
— 40-65, Democratic Male

"...cheaper contracts and cheaper vendors don't necessarily mean good work. And if our money is going to it, shouldn't we be, you know, shouldn't our money go to something that's going to be worthwhile and lasting?"
— 25-39, Republican Male

"...a timeline that shows like, okay, we opened this up for bids in January. We got 15 bids. We reviewed all those bids for three months... that seems like a full process as opposed to we get to the end of it and you see, it's like, well, hey, that's your cousin"
— 25-39, Democratic Male

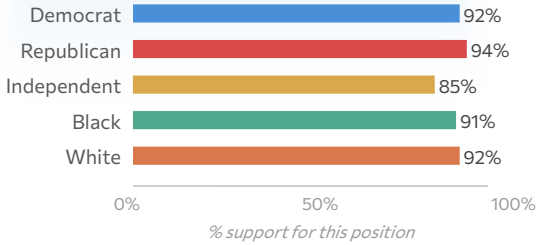
CITY FINANCES AFTER THE LATE AUDIT

#7 Monthly Audit Status Updates

Until each year's financial audit is filed with the state, the city posts every month where it stands, why any deadline was missed, and what is being done to fix it.

85%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Jackson Residents Support this:

"I'd rather find out about it in advance of me missing the deadline versus finding out about it after the fact... if you don't feel like you're gonna meet the deadline, give me at least a projection. Hey, we feel like we're gonna be 90 days out, 120 days out."
— 40-65, Democratic Male

"I am the executive director of a non profit. We get state funding and we are required to have our audit completed and submitted by December 31st... I know that we won't get funded. And, and I am the executive director. So that means it does stop with me."
— 40-65, Independent Female

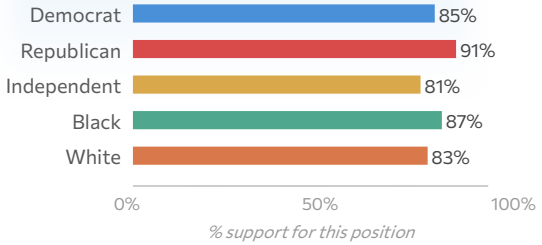
"...I care less about deadlines and more about what communication is happening in the moment. So even if the update was just as simple as we have made a formal request and then that formal request was denied by the state..."
— 18-24, Republican Male

#8 One Page for Officials' Interests

The city keeps one web page for the mayor and each council member that links their state conflict-of-interest disclosure and every personal interest they declared before a vote, and points to where their campaign finance reports can be requested.

81%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Jackson Residents Support this:

"...I think that interest page will be good though. I mean, you can look up people's campaign disclosures, but it's, it's pretty difficult to find that stuff. So yeah, making it easier wouldn't be a terrible thing."
— 25-39, Independent Male

"...you got to look at who funds campaigns... if a politician is receiving money from a certain group of individuals, he gets voted in and then the contracts he hands out goes to a certain group of people. Well then there ought to be some kind of repercussion for that"
— 40-65, Republican Male

"...things are buried, even like the officials interest page and stuff. You have to really work to find the stuff. And the common everyday person either A doesn't know where to find it, B doesn't have the time to dig"
— 40-65, Independent Female

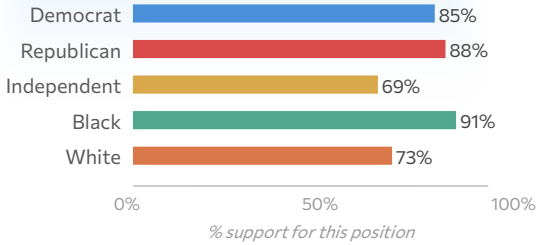
TREATMENT OF DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE CITY

#9 Publish Enforcement Counts by District

Regularly publish anonymized counts of code violations (opened/closed) and traffic stops, broken out by district, with context on what drives the numbers, so residents can see enforcement activity over time.

69%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Jackson Residents Support this:

"...in our neighborhood, we have a lot of renters and you don't know who owns the building... you can call it in, but nobody's coming. They. No, nobody's coming. I don't know who the landlord is."
— 40-65, Republican Female

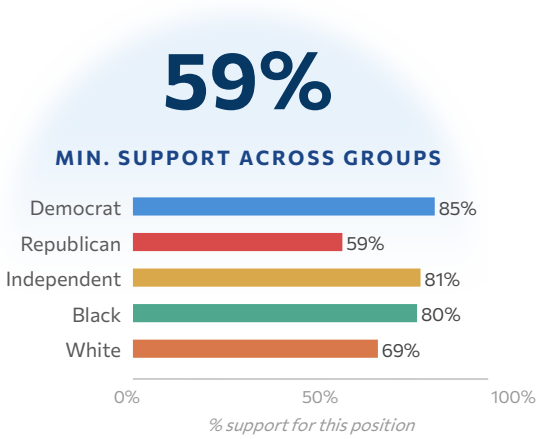
"I think if they regularly publish traffic stop counts, that will help with the safety issues all around the city because people will be more careful Running lights. Running lights and stop signs. Speed."
— 65+, Republican Female

"That's what we need. We need that follow through to help everyone in the town now to get back on target with the enforcement data."
— 40-65, Independent Female

TREATMENT OF DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE CITY

#10 East Jackson Town Halls Twice a Year

The mayor and other city leaders hold a town hall in East Jackson twice a year, in person, with questions taken from attendees and a written follow-up on what was raised.



Why Jackson Residents Support this:

"...As a teacher, I mean, you know, you, you take care of all of your students but sometimes a certain student needs a little extra help right now and the others have to wait. And so that's kind of I assume where East Jackson is right now."
— 40-65, Republican Female

"I attended both town halls earlier this year and I found them to be very informative... I thought it was great. It was extremely well intended. It's like standing room only for both town halls."
— 65+, Republican Female

"I deliver mail. I think that East Jackson is a little neglected and I like to deliver in East Jackson because the residents are very kind to me... you go to East Jackson, you know, I have to find proper places to have a restroom break... everywhere is a gas station."
— 40-65, Democratic Female

PRIORITIES

If the city has an additional $250,000 a year to spend on transparency and accountability efforts, where should it go? Residents ranked these from most to least important.

Ranked by priority for each group (1st = top priority)

		Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind
1	**Easy to understand communications:** plain-language summaries telling residents what the city already offers.	1st	1st	T-2nd	2nd
2	**Internal audit and oversight:** check that the city is doing what it says, and report on it.	2nd	3rd	1st	1st
3	**Finance and budget:** catch up on audits faster and post monthly status updates.	3rd	T-5th	T-2nd	3rd
4	**A staff person** dedicated to pushing openness across all city departments.	4th	2nd	5th	5th
5	**311 response and code enforcement:** follow up on reports, record why cases close, and track response times.	5th	T-5th	4th	6th
6	**Town halls across the city** where residents can talk directly with officials.	6th	4th	6th	4th

Groups ranked by average rank across participants. T = tied within group.

PREFERRED WAYS TO CONNECT WITH RESIDENTS

The city can't do everything well at once. Residents ranked these ways of connecting with residents from highest to lowest priority.

Ranked by priority for each group (1st = top priority)		Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind
1	**Tell people what already exists:** outreach so residents know about 311, the Connect app, the finance portal and city boards.	1st	1st	1st	1st
2	**Show up in person:** town halls and meetings in neighborhoods, with written follow-up.	2nd	2nd	2nd	4th
3	**Publish online:** plain-language reports, dashboards and status updates anyone can look up.	3rd	3rd	3rd	T-2nd
4	**Answer individuals:** make sure every report or question a resident sends gets a real answer.	4th	4th	4th	T-2nd

Groups ranked by average rank across participants. T = tied within group.

TRUST IN CITY GOVERNMENT

If the city adopted the commitments you supported, how would your trust in Jackson's city government change?

Share of participants choosing each option

	Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind
Somewhat more trust	**46%**	**51%**	39%	**48%**
Much more trust	44%	41%	**55%**	36%
No change	6%	8%	3%	8%
Not sure	3%	0%	3%	8%

Columns may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Darkest chip = most chosen within that group.

HOW TO BEST INFORM RESIDENTS

If the city wanted to make sure you heard about something important, which two ways would work best for you? Participants selected two.

Share of participants selecting each option

	Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind
Text message alerts	**44%**	**46%**	**36%**	**52%**
Local TV, radio, or newspaper	28%	23%	30%	32%
Posts on the city's Facebook page	22%	26%	18%	20%
Push notifications from the Jackson TN Connect app	21%	15%	**36%**	8%
A printed newsletter mailed to your home	21%	15%	27%	20%
A weekly email update	16%	15%	18%	16%

Share of participants including each option among their two choices. Darkest chip = most chosen within that group.

RANKING POLICIES BY WHICH SHOULD COME FIRST

Of the ten commitments discussed, residents selected the three the city should take on first.

Share of participants selecting each commitment	Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind
Plain-Language Budget Summary	**42%**	**41%**	42%	**44%**
Publish a Review of the Winter Storm	39%	38%	**45%**	32%
Response-Time Goals for 311 and Records	38%	36%	**45%**	32%
Monthly Audit Status Updates	34%	23%	42%	40%
Publish Capital Project Prioritization Rules	34%	36%	36%	28%
Put Contracts and Procurement in Plain View	28%	26%	24%	36%

Share of participants including each commitment among their three priorities. Darkest chip = most chosen within that group.

Now that we're done,

What's Next?

- These results are being shared with Mayor Conger, the City Council, and city department heads as they consider what Jackson does next on transparency and accountability.

- The full results will be available at www.civicdialogues.org/jackson.

Thank you!

To Mayor Conger, city staff, all our community partners, and every resident who shared their views throughout this process.

If you have any questions, reach out at info@civicdialogues.org.