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Maryland Municipal League Municipal Service Delivery in Maryland



UNIVERSITY OF
BALTIMORE

Schaefer Center for
Public Policy

**Maryland Municipal League
Municipal Service Delivery in Maryland**

Submitted by

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Maryland Municipal League Municipal Service Delivery in Maryland

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine the services that Maryland's municipalities provide, how residents use those services, and the costs of delivering them. The findings are based on internet research and a survey distributed to Maryland's municipalities. The research produced several key findings across these study areas, highlighting important trends and providing context on the complexities of the quality-of-life services offered by Maryland's municipalities.

According to this study's findings, nearly all municipalities (91%) provide services related to housing, planning, and development, with public works and infrastructure, as well as public safety, also common. On average, Maryland municipalities provide nine of the 15 services included in the study's scope; however, because this excludes services for which there was no conclusive evidence, the true average is likely higher. There is also evidence of a relationship between the number of services provided and a municipality's population—specifically, larger municipalities are more likely to offer more services, but this is not always the case.

Survey data provides compelling insights into municipal service usage. A top-of-mind issue in the State of Maryland is housing; according to survey findings, the average number of commercial and residential permits issued by municipalities is 227 per year. The findings also revealed that municipal governments play a role in promoting a sense of community by hosting an average of 18 public events per year. Additionally, municipal public safety officers responded to an average of over 12,000 requests for assistance per year. Providing everyday services to their constituents comes with a cost to municipal governments. Public safety was the highest annual budget item at \$5.4 million, while water and wastewater plant operations were among the most expensive at an average annual cost of nearly \$3.2 million and \$4.3 million, respectively.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) contracted with The Schaefer Center for Public Policy (Schaefer Center) at The University of Baltimore to document the services provided by Maryland’s 157 incorporated municipalities to their residents, businesses, and visitors. This research catalogs the range of services that local governments deliver and organizes the services into six major categories: housing, planning, and development; public works and infrastructure; economic and workforce development; public safety; environmental stewardship; and recreation and parks. For each category, the catalog provides information on the prevalence of service provision, use, and cost to show how municipal governments serve their communities.

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

The data collection process consisted of two parts: (1) internet data collection and (2) a survey of municipalities. In terms of data collection, the research team consulted multiple online sources—including the [Maryland Manual Online](#) as well as municipalities’ individual websites, social media pages, charters, budgets, and other relevant online sources—to identify whether each municipality provides specific services. To supplement the internet data, an online survey was distributed to identified¹ municipal representatives. The survey was open from September 25, 2025, through October 22, 2025. The response rate for the survey was 49% with representatives from 77 of Maryland’s 157 municipalities responding to at least one question in the survey.²

Following data collection, the research team developed and implemented a verification process to ensure consistency of the data and across the data sources. This process prioritized survey responses when they were available, as these reflected direct input from municipal representatives. In cases where no survey data were available, or when respondents selected “Don’t Know,” the research team relied on the information collected during the internet data collection process.

More detailed information on the methodology is available in Appendix A: Methodology.

¹ MML provided the research team with contact information for city or town administrators and clerk for each municipality. Two municipalities were not included in the list provided by MML.

² Two of Maryland’s four special districts that are members of MML also responded to the survey. Their responses ultimately were not included in the analysis.

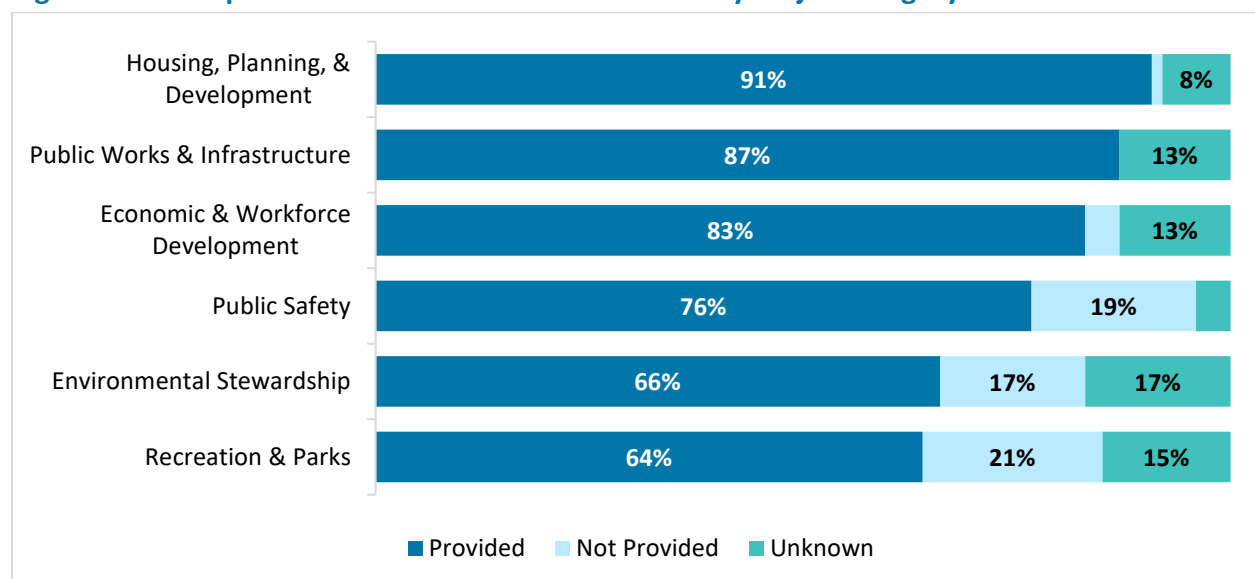
CHAPTER 2: SERVICE PROVISION

This chapter analyzes service provision among Maryland’s 157 incorporated municipalities across 15 services. For the purposes of this catalog, these 15 services are grouped into six major areas: housing, planning, and development; public works and infrastructure; economic and workforce development; public safety; environmental stewardship; and recreation and parks. This chapter begins with an overview of the main findings from the service provision data and the relationship between the number of services provided by a municipality and the municipality’s population, followed by more detailed information on service provision for each of the 15 services. After the overview, the chapter is organized by the six major service areas.

OVERVIEW OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY MUNICIPALITIES

Findings from the internet and survey data revealed variation in service provision across Maryland’s municipalities. Figure 1 shows the proportion of municipalities that provide at least one service within each of the six major categories. Notably, more than half of the municipalities provide at least one service in each category. Nearly all municipalities (91%) provide services related to housing, planning, and development. Services in public works and infrastructure, economic and workforce development, and public safety are also common, with 87%, 83%, and 76% of municipalities, respectively, offering at least one service in these areas.

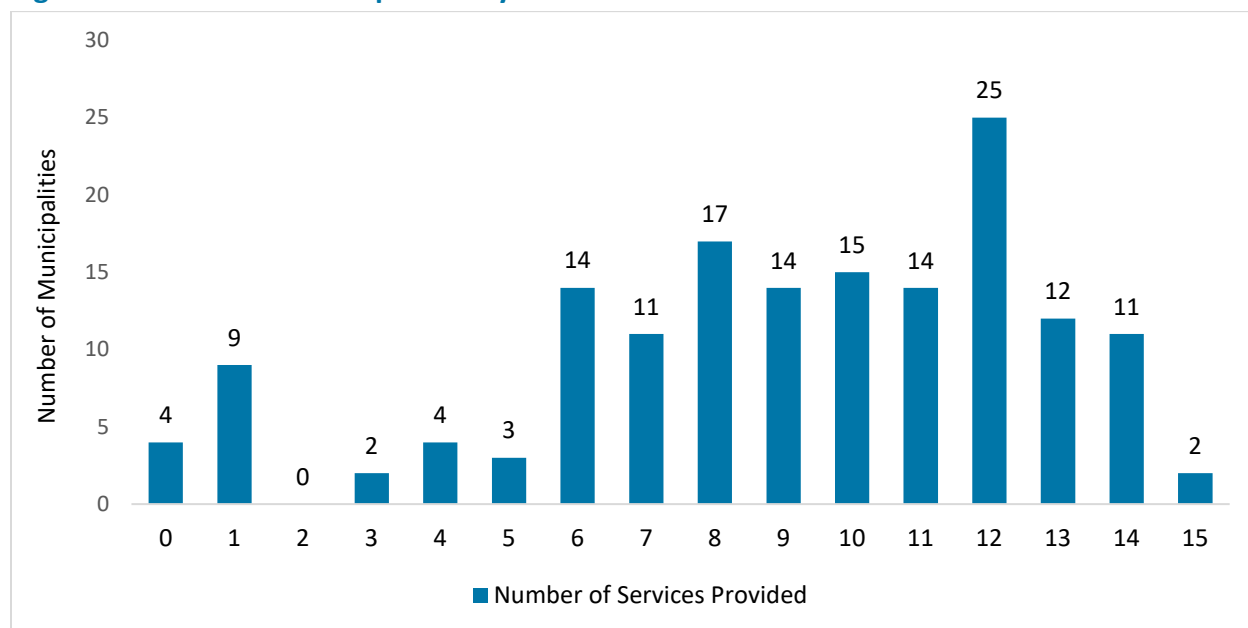
Figure 1: Municipal Provision of at Least One Service by Major Category



Notes: n = 157. Percentages 5% and under are not shown for readability.

Baltimore City and Cumberland were the only municipalities for which there was evidence that they provided all 15 services included in the study (Figure 2). Notably, evidence indicates that at least 11 other jurisdictions provide 14 of the services. There were nine municipalities for which there was evidence of only one of the services being provided, and four municipalities for which there was no evidence of any of the services being provided. On average, Maryland municipalities provide nine of the services that are part of the study; however, since this only includes those services for which there was evidence, the true average number of services is likely higher. The standard deviation of the number of services was 3.69, suggesting wide variation in the number of services provided by municipalities in Maryland.

Figure 2: Number of Municipalities by Number of Services Provided



Notes: $n = 157$.

In order to determine if there may be a relationship between the size of a municipality and its level of service provision, two analyses were performed. First, a simple visual examination of the data was conducted. Table 1 shows the population of the smallest and largest municipality for each level of service provision. There is a trend for municipalities with larger populations to provide more services, but it is not consistent. For example, excluding Baltimore City—which is the largest municipality and one of only two that provides all 15 services—the largest municipalities providing 13 and 14 services (33,161 and 68,417 residents, respectively) are smaller than the largest providing 11 and 12 services (70,686 and 89,537 residents, respectively). Similarly, the largest municipality providing eight services is larger than that providing seven services.

Table 1: Number of Services Offered—Smallest and Largest Populations

Number of Services	Smallest Population	Largest Population
0	67	457
1	21	476
2	N/A	N/A
3	269	516
4	375	2,118
5	427	1,017
6	107	2,927
7	84	7,296
8	135	34,667
9	469	17,856
10	946	9,635
11	587	70,686
12	538	89,537
13	283	33,616
14	1,660	68,417
15	18,643	568,271

Second, a correlation analysis was conducted to see if a municipality's population and number of services provided are related—essentially, if larger municipalities provide more services and smaller municipalities provide fewer services. A positive result would indicate that population and number of services move in the same direction (i.e., as population increases, the number of services increases), while a negative result would indicate that the variables move in opposite directions (i.e., as population increases, the number of services decreases). A correlation close to 0 would suggest there is no relationship between population and number of services, while a correlation close to 1 would suggest there is a perfect relationship between population and services. Spearman's Rank Correlation was used because the distribution of the population of Maryland's municipalities is extremely skewed with one very large municipality and many very small municipalities.

The resulting correlation was .71, suggesting a strong relationship between population and the number of services provided. In other words, as population increases, the number of services increases. However, due to the nature of the data, this correlation does not indicate the exact rate of change in the relationship but rather shows that there is a strong, consistent relationship.

The following sections provide more detailed information about the individual services delivered by the municipalities. The services are grouped into the six major service areas and presented in descending order, from the most common service area to the least common. Each section begins

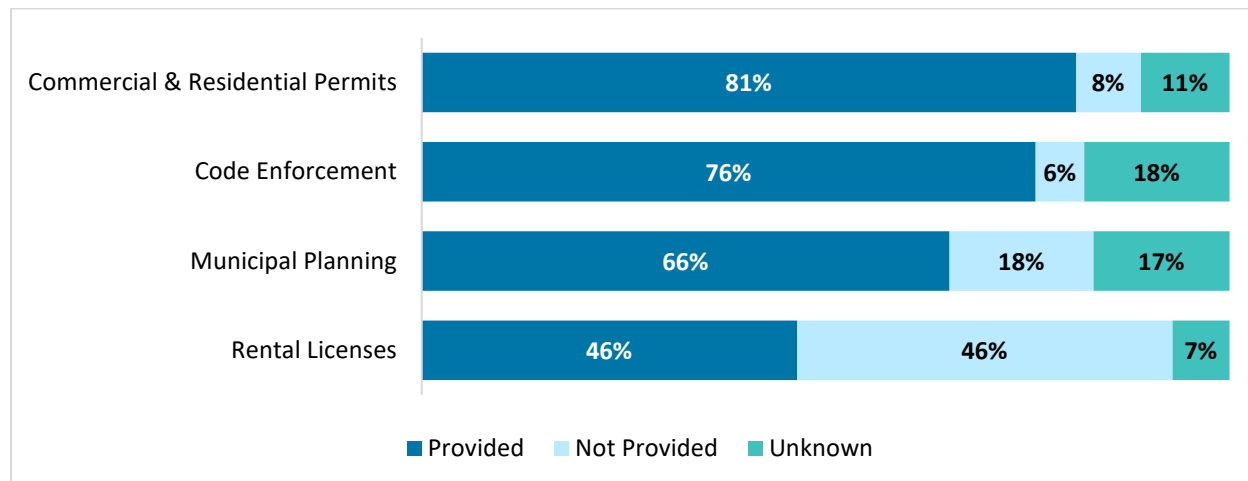
with a summary table listing the specific services within that category, along with the number and percentage of municipalities that provide each service.

For each of the services, the discussion focuses on the number of municipalities found to provide or not provide the service through the survey or internet research. If the survey respondent reported not knowing if the municipality provided the service or if there was no clear evidence indicating whether the service was provided or not, the service status is shown as “unknown” in the figures below. Therefore, the numbers and percentages of municipalities shown as providing a service are likely a minimum, as further data collection—beyond the scope of this research—would help clarify whether a service is provided in municipalities currently classified as “unknown.”

HOUSING, PLANNING, AND DEVELOPMENT

Services under the housing, planning, and development category include planning activities, rental licenses, code enforcement, and commercial and residential permits. The most commonly provided service is commercial and residential permits, and the least common service is rental licenses (Figure 3). Each of the services is discussed below.

Figure 3: Municipalities Providing Housing, Planning, and Development Services



Notes: $n = 157$. “Provided” indicates when the municipality directly provides the service to its residents. “Not Provided” indicates that the municipality does not provide the service to its residents; the service may be provided by the county, another jurisdiction, a nonprofit organization, or a private business or not provided. “Unknown” indicates that there was no evidence, either from the survey or the internet research, whether the service was provided by the municipality or not.

COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL PERMITS

Commercial and residential permits refer to the process a municipality uses to review, issue, and manage permits for construction, renovation, or other significant changes to properties. Over three-quarters (81%) of the municipalities provide commercial and residential permit services for their residents, while 11% do not.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Strictly defined, code enforcement is the process by which a municipality ensures that residential housing complies with health, safety, and building codes. Some jurisdictions define code enforcement more broadly to encompass compliance with all aspects of the municipality's legislative governing code. Approximately 76% of municipalities conduct their own code enforcement activities, while 6% do not.

PLANNING

Planning offices or departments are responsible for managing land use and development in a municipality and may handle the municipality's capital investments and budget. Two-thirds (66%) of municipalities have specific staff that handle planning activities. In municipalities without their own planning department or agency, planning services are handled by the county, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), or by citizens in accordance with municipal and county laws and community guidelines.³

RENTAL LICENSES

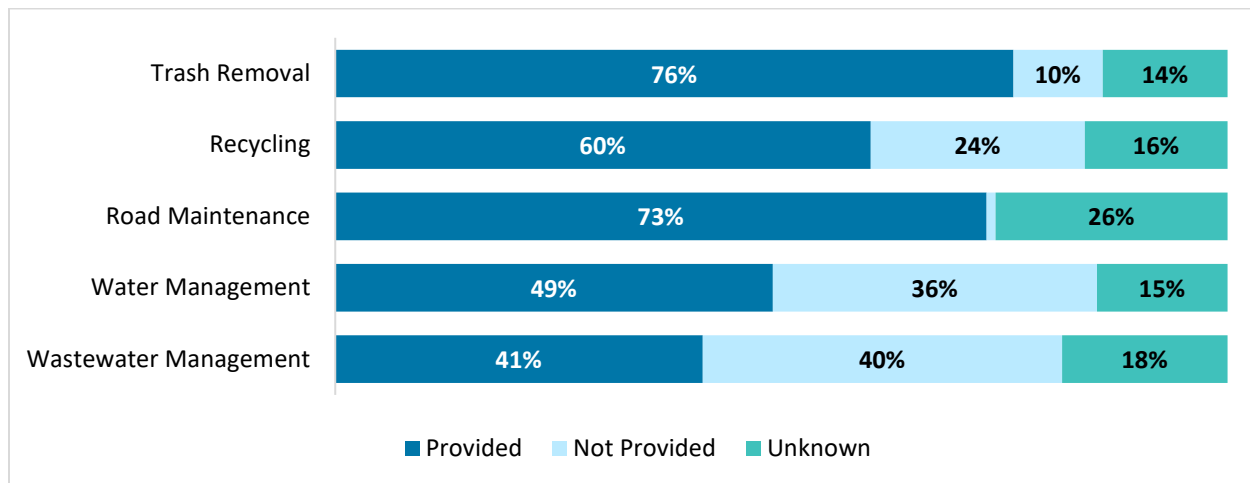
Rental licensing services represent the office or staff that inspect and approve housing units for renting to a third party. Less than half (46%) of municipalities provide their own rental licensing services.

³ In Montgomery and Prince George's counties, many planning functions are handled by M-NCPPC rather than by individual municipalities. This structure may affect how planning service provision appears in the results, since municipalities in these counties rely on M-NCPPC instead of providing the service directly.

PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Public works and infrastructure services include trash removal, recycling, road maintenance, water management, and wastewater management. The most common service is trash removal, and the least commonly provided service is wastewater management (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Municipalities Providing Public Works and Infrastructure Services



Notes: n = 157. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. “Provided” indicates when the municipality directly provides the service to its residents. “Not Provided” indicates that the municipality does not provide the service to its residents; the service may be provided by the county, another jurisdiction, a nonprofit organization, or a private business or not provided. “Unknown” indicates that there was no evidence, either from the survey or the internet research, whether the service was provided by the municipality or not.

TRASH REMOVAL

Trash removal includes the collection, transport, and disposal of household waste within the municipality, and it can be performed by the municipality’s paid employees or contracted out by the municipality to a private company but still paid for by municipal residents through their property or other taxes. Almost three-quarters (76%) of municipalities provide their own trash removal services. In municipalities where the service is not directly provided, the county provides the service or the residents must dispose of their own waste, which may include contracting with a private vendor or dropping off their trash at the dump.

RECYCLING

Recycling services include the collection, transport, and disposal of household waste diverted from conventional waste collection to reduce landfill use and conserve resources. As with trash removal, it can be performed by the municipality’s employees or a private company but, to be included here, is paid for by the municipality using the residents’ property or other taxes. A smaller share of municipalities is providing recycling compared to trash removal—only 60% of

municipalities were found to provide recycling to residents. As with trash removal, in municipalities where the service is not directly provided, the county provides the service or residents must dispose of their own waste via a private vendor or the dump.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Road maintenance was defined as general maintenance and repair of public roads and streets within the municipality's borders. For all municipalities except Baltimore City, this excludes the portions of all the Interstate Highway System and state roads, which are the responsibility of the Maryland Department of Transportation. Approximately 73% of municipalities provide their own road maintenance services. In municipalities where the service is not directly provided, the county provides the service.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Water management services include the planning, sourcing, and delivering of clean, potable drinking water to residents within a municipality. Nearly half (49%) of municipalities provide their own water management services. In municipalities where water management is not provided by the local government, a water utility company provides the service.⁴

WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

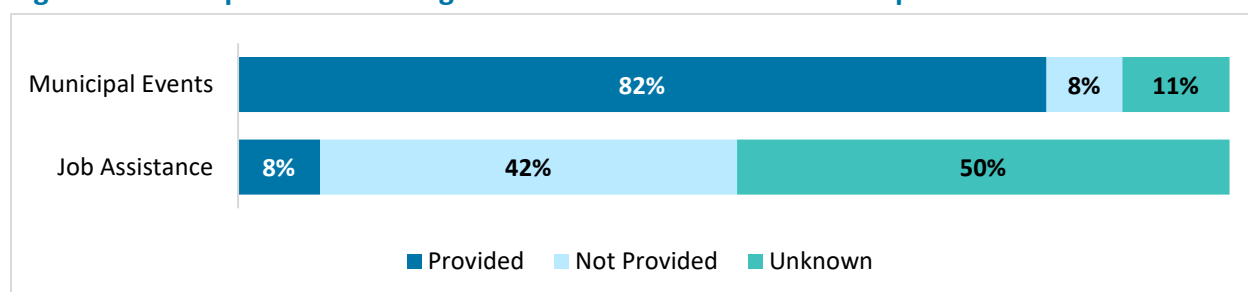
Wastewater management is the collection, treatment, and safe disposal of wastewater generated in the municipality. This may include graywater (e.g., kitchen, laundry, and bathing water), toilet waste, stormwater runoff, industrial wastewater, and other concerns. Forty-one percent of municipalities have their own wastewater management services. In municipalities where water management is not provided by the local government, Maryland Environmental Services, the county, a private company, or a regional water utility company provides the service.

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Economic and workforce development services in this report include municipal events and job assistance services. Municipalities in Maryland commonly provide events but rarely provide job assistance (Figure 5).

⁴ It is important to note that the majority of municipalities in Montgomery and Prince George's counties are serviced by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC Water). Because they fall within this regional entity's designated service area, these municipalities do not have the ability to provide independent water or wastewater services. This is likely why the number of municipalities offering water and wastewater management services is comparatively low.

Figure 5: Municipalities Providing Economic and Workforce Development Services



Notes: n = 157. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. “Provided” indicates when the municipality directly provides the service to its residents. “Not Provided” indicates that the municipality does not provide the service to its residents; the service may be provided by the county, another jurisdiction, a nonprofit organization, or a private business or not provided. “Unknown” indicates that there was no evidence, either from the survey or the internet research, whether the service was provided by the municipality or not.

MUNICIPAL EVENTS

Municipal events are events primarily funded or logistically coordinated by the municipality. They do not include events managed by the county or a nonprofit organization unless the municipality is providing most of the funding. They may include activities such as farmers’ markets, holiday fireworks, marathons or shorter races, clean-up days, cultural or music festivals, or parades. Over three-quarters (82%) of municipalities provide their own events.

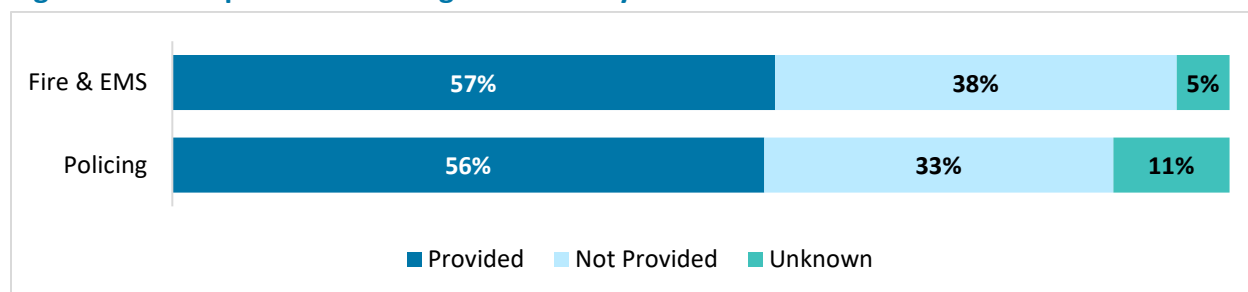
JOB ASSISTANCE

Job assistance services provided by a municipality or one of its agencies (such as an office of workforce development or public library) may include a listing of jobs available in private or nonprofit organizations, job fairs, resume or interview workshops, worker training or upskilling, apprenticeship programs, or other services. Only 8% of municipalities were found to provide this service.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The services under public safety include fire and emergency medical services (EMS) and policing. Just over half of municipalities were found to provide both services (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Municipalities Providing Public Safety Services



Notes: $n = 157$. “Provided” indicates when the municipality directly provides the service to its residents. “Not Provided” indicates that the municipality does not provide the service to its residents; the service may be provided by the county, another jurisdiction, a nonprofit organization, or a private business or not provided. “Unknown” indicates that there was no evidence, either from the survey or the internet research, whether the service was provided by the municipality or not.

FIRE AND EMS

Fire and EMS protect people and property from fires, medical emergencies, and other hazards. Just over half of municipalities have a paid fire and/or EMS service or contribute funds to a volunteer service within the municipality. Approximately 57% of municipalities directly provide fire and EMS or contribute to local volunteer fire and EMS services. In municipalities that do not provide paid fire and EMS or contribute to volunteer fire and EMS, services are provided by the county fire department or a nearby municipality.

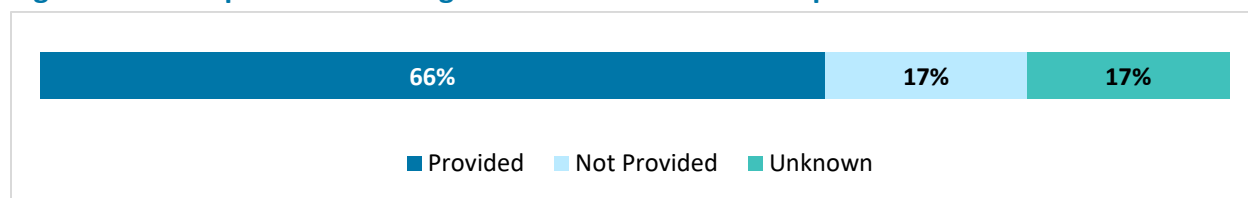
POLICING

Policing services are defined as public safety activities to enforce laws and prevent crimes. Just over half (56%) of municipalities also provide their own policing services. In municipalities that do not provide their own policing services, the Maryland State Police and/or county sheriff provide policing services.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Environmental stewardship includes actions taken to preserve and protect the natural environment. For this purpose, environmental stewardship included activities related to stormwater management, sediment control, and forest conservation. Almost 66% of municipalities performed at least one of these services related to environmental stewardship (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Municipalities Providing Environmental Stewardship Services

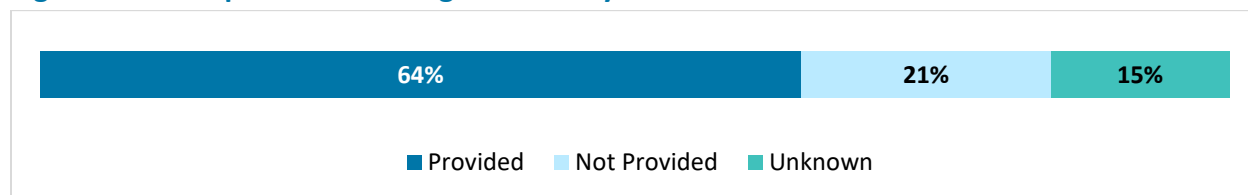


Notes: $n = 157$. “Provided” indicates when the municipality directly provides the service to its residents. “Not Provided” indicates that the municipality does not provide the service to its residents; the service may be provided by the county, another jurisdiction, a nonprofit organization, or a private business or not provided. “Unknown” indicates that there was no evidence, either from the survey or the internet research, whether the service was provided by the municipality or not.

RECREATION AND PARKS

Community centers and recreation facilities are public buildings where the municipality offers public programs for residents or where groups in the community can meet and hold public activities. These may include public parks, nature centers, gymnasiums or sports complexes, skate parks or bike tracks, inclusive play spaces, public pools, and splash pads. Over half (64%) of municipalities provided these types of facilities for residents (Figure 8).⁵

Figure 8: Municipalities Providing Community Centers and Recreation Facilities



Notes: $n = 157$. “Provided” indicates when the municipality directly provides the service to its residents. “Not Provided” indicates that the municipality does not provide the service to its residents; the service may be provided by the county, another jurisdiction, a nonprofit organization, or a private business or not provided. “Unknown” indicates that there was no evidence, either from the survey or the internet research, whether the service was provided by the municipality or not.

⁵ Municipalities in Montgomery County and Prince George’s County may offer community centers and recreation facility services; however, many of these functions in these counties are carried out by M-NCPPC. This service structure may influence how recreation and parts service provision appears in the results, as municipalities in these counties may rely on M-NCPPC rather than offering the service themselves.

CONCLUSION

Maryland's municipalities provide many services for residents, and there is a fairly strong correlation between the number of services provided and their size of the municipality's population. The most common services that are provided by most municipalities are those related to housing, planning, and development, especially those for commercial and residential permits and code enforcement, and those for public works and infrastructure, especially trash removal. The least common services provided by municipalities in Maryland include rental licenses, wastewater management, and job assistance.

The following chapters explore what is known about the use and cost of these services drawn from the survey of municipalities.

CHAPTER 3: SERVICE USE

Building on the previous chapter, which focused on service provision among Maryland’s 157 incorporated municipalities, this chapter analyzes service use. For the purposes of this catalog, “use” refers to how often a service is accessed, provided, or carried out within given period—typically a fiscal year. In other words, “use” measures the level of activity or demand for a particular service across municipalities. To ensure consistency and due to limitations in the availability of service use data online, this section relies solely on the “use” data provided by survey respondents. Similar to the previous chapter, this chapter is organized into six major service areas: housing, planning, and development; public works and infrastructure; economic and workforce development; public safety; environmental stewardship; and recreation and parks.

HOUSING, PLANNING, AND DEVELOPMENT

Table 2 shows summary statistics on the use of the housing, planning, and development services examined in this study. The table shows the minimum, maximum, and average use of commercial and residential permits, code enforcement, planning, and rental licenses as reported by municipal survey respondents. The calculated average use and the average use per 1,000 residents (when appropriate) are also included. The use of each service is discussed below.

Table 2: Use of Municipal Housing, Planning, and Development Services, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Use	Maximum Use	Average Use	Average Use per 1,000 Residents
Commercial and Residential Permits	0 issued	5,640 issued	227 issued	23 issued
Code Enforcement	0 properties inspected	18,117 properties inspected	767 properties inspected	74 properties inspected
Planning	2 Commission meetings	39 Commission meetings	13 Commission meetings	N/A
Rental Licenses	0 properties licensed	9,750 properties licensed	716 properties licensed	57 properties licensed

Note: The average use per 1,000 residents is not provided for planning since number of meetings per year per population is not pertinent.

COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL PERMITS

Forty-two municipalities reported the number of construction-related permits issued in Fiscal Year (Fiscal) 2025. All 42 municipalities reported residential permits, and only 36 reported commercial permits. The total number of permits issued by these municipalities in Fiscal 2025 was 9,527—one municipality did not issue any permits, and one municipality issued 5,640 permits. Municipalities issued an average number of permits of 227 in Fiscal 2025. Adjusting for the population of the municipalities, the average number of permits issued was 23 per 1,000 residents.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Municipalities that conducted their own code enforcement were asked how many properties were inspected in Fiscal 2025. Forty municipalities responded and reported that between zero and 18,117 properties were inspected. Three respondents said their municipality did not inspect any properties in Fiscal 2025. The average number of properties inspected was 767. Adjusted for population, the average number of properties inspected was 74 per 1,000 residents.

PLANNING

Survey respondents were asked how many meetings their municipality's Planning Commission or similar body held in Fiscal 2025. There were 34 responses. The minimum number of meetings in Fiscal 2025 was two, and the maximum number of meetings was 39. The average response was 13. This suggests that Planning Commissions generally meet monthly, and, if the meeting frequency differs, they will meet more rather than less frequently.

RENTAL LICENSES

Survey respondents were asked how many residential properties received rental licenses in Fiscal 2025. Twenty-four municipalities said that between zero and 9,750 residences were licensed. The average number of licensed properties was 716. Adjusted for population, the average number of licensed properties was 57 per 1,000 residents.

PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Table 3 displays the summary information for the use of public works and infrastructure services, specifically the minimum use, maximum use, average use, and average use per 1,000 residents of trash removal, road maintenance, water management, and wastewater management by survey respondents. Use of each service is discussed below.

Table 3: Use of Public Works and Infrastructure Services, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Use	Maximum Use	Average Use	Average Use per 1,000 Residents
Trash Removal	0 residential properties served	22,000 residential properties served	2,043 residential properties served	345 residential properties served
Road Maintenance	0 road lane miles	340 road lane miles	37 road lane miles	N/A
Water Management	0 individuals relying on system	85,000 individuals relying on system	9,929 individuals relying on system	922 individuals relying on system
Wastewater Management	7 gallons per day	5,740,000 gallons per day	793,665 gallons per day	77,747 gallons per day

Note: The average use per 1,000 residents is not provided for road maintenance since the number of lane miles per population is not pertinent.

TRASH REMOVAL

Survey respondents who said that their municipality provided trash removal—including if it was contracted out to a non-governmental organization such as a for-profit business—were asked how many residential properties waste was collected from in Fiscal 2025. Forty-eight survey respondents said that between zero and 22,000 properties were served. The average number of residential properties served was 2,043. Adjusted for population, the average number of residences served was 345 per 1,000 residents.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Forty survey respondents said that their municipalities completed road maintenance in Fiscal 2025 ranging between zero and 340 miles. The average road length per municipality was 37 miles.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Survey respondents who said their municipality provided a potable water management system were asked how many people relied on the system. Twenty municipalities responded, and the answers ranged from zero to 85,000 people, which includes a regional water system. The average number of people relying on municipal water systems was 9,929; adjusted for population, the average number relying on municipal water systems was 922 per 1,000 residents.

WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

Survey respondents who said their municipality provided wastewater management were asked how many gallons of wastewater were handled per day in Fiscal 2025. There were 13 respondents to this question, and the responses ranged from seven to 5.7 million. The average

number of gallons was 793,665, and, adjusted for population, the average number was 77,747 gallons per 1,000 residents.

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Table 4 shows the use of the two economic and workforce development services included in this study. Specifically, it shows the minimum and maximum use as well as the average and population-adjusted average use of municipal events and job assistance of survey respondents. Each service is discussed below.

Table 4: Use of Economic and Workforce Development Services, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Use	Maximum Use	Average Use	Average Use per 1,000 Residents
Municipal Events	1 event	100 events	18 events	6 events
Job Assistance	0 individuals assisted	50 individuals assisted	20 individuals assisted	1 individual assisted

MUNICIPAL EVENTS

Survey respondents were asked how many events their municipality held in Fiscal 2025. There were 49 responses, ranging from one event to 100 events. The average number of events was 18, and, adjusted for population, the average number of events was six per 1,000 residents.

JOB ASSISTANCE

Only four survey respondents indicated how many individuals received job assistance services from their municipality in Fiscal 2025. Of these responses, two were zero, while the others were 31 and 50. As such, an average of 20 people were served in the four municipalities, producing an average of one individual assisted per 1,000 residents.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Survey respondents that provide their own policing services to residents were asked how many requests for assistance were made in Fiscal 2025.⁶ There were 21 responses, and the range in responses was between 600 and over 70,000 requests for assistance (Table 5). The average number of requests was 12,044, and, adjusted for population, the average number of requests was 1,147 per 1,000 residents.

⁶ Use of fire and EMS was not included in the survey.

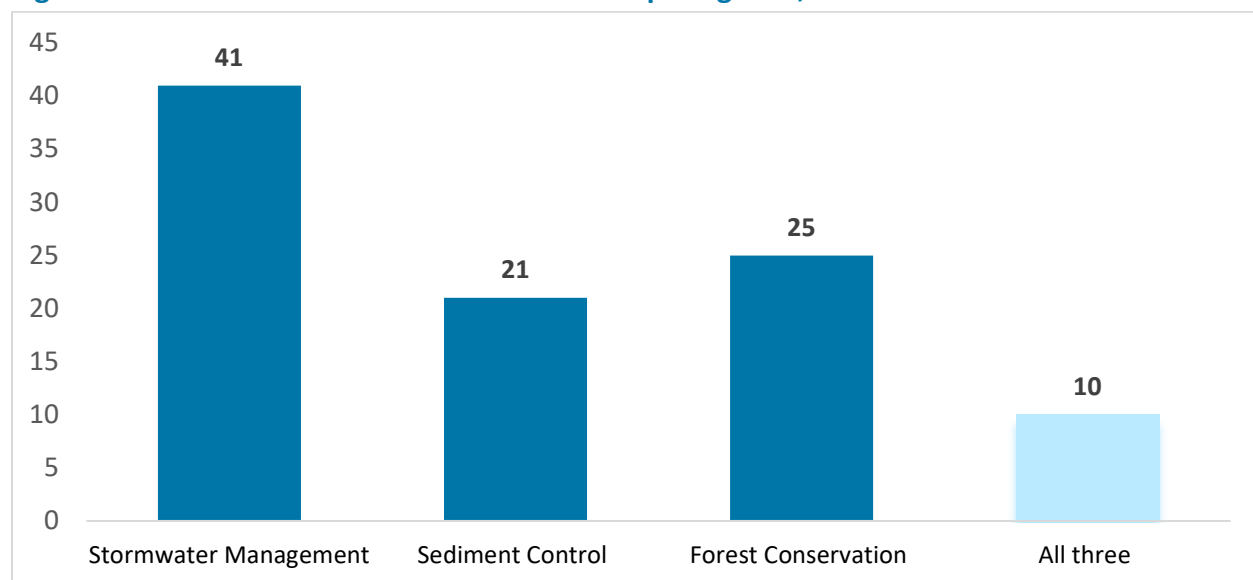
Table 5: Use of Policing Services, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Use	Maximum Use	Average Use	Average Use per 1,000 Residents
Policing	600 requests for assistance	70,469 requests for assistance	12,044 requests for assistance	1,147 requests for assistance

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Environmental stewardship was measured as the presence of one or more the following three policies: a stormwater management program, a sediment control program, and a forest conservation program. Forty-eight survey respondents said their municipality had at least one of the programs, and 10 said their municipality had all three programs (Figure 9). The most common of the three programs was stormwater management, which 41 (53%) municipalities provided. Twenty-five (33%) municipalities had forest conservation programs, and 21 (27%) had sediment control programs.

Figure 9: Presence of Environmental Stewardship Programs, Fiscal 2025



Notes: $n = 77$.

RECREATION AND PARKS

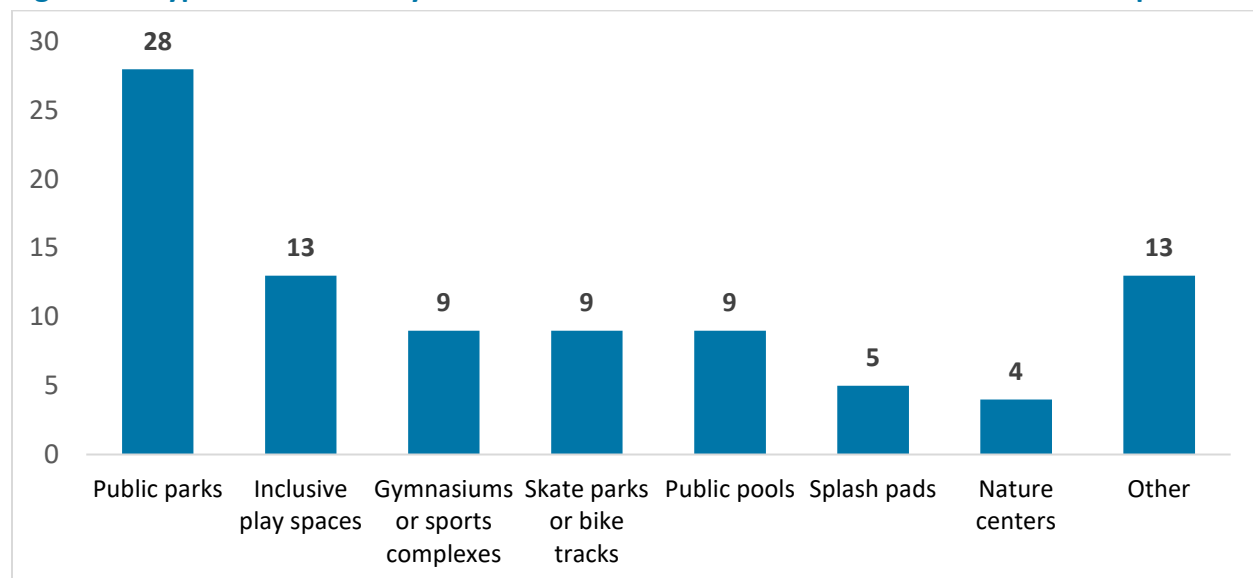
Survey respondents were asked how many community centers and recreational facilities their municipalities provided for residents. There were 31 responses, which ranged from zero to 30 (Table 6). The average number of community centers and recreation facilities was six. Adjusted

for population, the average number of facilities was three. Survey respondents were also asked to identify the types of community centers and recreational facilities provided by their municipality. As can be seen in Figure 10, the most common spaces available are public parks, which were selected by 28 respondents, followed by inclusive play spaces (13 respondents).

Table 6: Number of Community Center and Recreation Facility Services, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Number of Centers	Maximum Number of Centers	Average Number of Centers	Average Number of Centers per 1,000 Residents
Community Center and Recreation Facilities	0 centers and facilities	30 centers and facilities	6 centers and facilities	2 centers and facilities

Figure 10: Types of Community Center and Recreational Facilities Available in Municipalities



Notes: n = 77. "Other" responses included the following: community building, community center, dog park, golf course, railway trail, rifle range, senior center, tennis courts, and town hall.

CHAPTER 4: SERVICE COST

While the previous chapters focused on service provision and use, this chapter analyzes the service cost among Maryland's 157 incorporated municipalities. Cost was determined using the municipalities' Fiscal 2025 budgets for each of the 15 services included in this catalog. Similar to the previous chapter on use, this section relies solely on the use data provided by survey respondents to ensure consistency and because budget data were often unavailable online. Further, survey respondents were asked to provide the total budget amount inclusive of all funds, not just General Funds. This chapter is organized into the catalog's six major service areas: housing, planning, and development; public works and infrastructure; economic and workforce development; public safety; environmental stewardship; and recreation and parks.

HOUSING, PLANNING, AND DEVELOPMENT

Table 7 shows a summary of the survey results related to the budgets of the housing, planning, and development services. Specifically, it shows the minimum and maximum budgets reported for commercial and residential permits, code enforcement, planning, and rental licenses as well as the calculated averages and the averages of the budgets per 1,000 residents. As can be seen in the table, while the maximum budget for each service is over \$2 million, the average budget is much lower—between \$156,387 and \$265,513—and the average budget per 1,000 residents is between \$10,154 and \$22,681. Each service is discussed briefly below.

Table 7: Budgets for Municipal Housing, Planning, and Development Services, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Budget	Maximum Budget	Average Budget	Average Budget per 1,000 Residents
Commercial and Residential Permits	\$0	\$3,324,491	\$191,666	\$15,418
Code Enforcement	\$0	\$2,017,000	\$194,424	\$16,735
Planning	\$0	\$2,766,944	\$265,513	\$22,681
Rental Licenses	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$156,387	\$10,154

COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL PERMITS

Thirty-six survey respondents provided the budget for their residential and commercial permit services in Fiscal 2025. These budgets ranged from \$0 to \$3.3 million. The average budget was \$191,666. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$15,418 per 1,000 residents.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Thirty-five survey respondents provided their municipality's budget for code enforcement. These budget amounts ranged from \$0 to \$2.0 million. The average budget was \$194,424. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$16,735 per 1,000 residents.

PLANNING

Survey respondents were asked to provide the budget for their municipality's Planning Department or planning activities in Fiscal 2025. Thirty-one respondents provided their budget, and the responses ranged from \$0 to \$2.8 million. The average budget for the Planning Department or activities was approximately \$265,513. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$22,681 per 1,000 residents.

RENTAL LICENSES

Twenty-three survey respondents provided the budget for their municipality's rental licensing services. The amounts ranged from \$0 to \$2.0 million. The average budget was \$156,387. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$10,154 per 1,000 residents.

PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Table 8 shows the summary information from survey respondents concerning the public works and infrastructure services in this study. As can be seen in the table, there is wide range of spending on these services, especially on water and wastewater management systems. This is likely due to some survey respondents reporting the budgeted cost of regional water and wastewater systems as well as capital expenditures. Public works and infrastructure services are especially capital-intensive enterprises requiring investments from municipalities and the public end users. Each service is discussed briefly below.

Table 8: Budgets for Public Works and Infrastructure Services, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Budget	Maximum Budget	Average Budget	Average Budget per 1,000 Residents
Trash Removal	\$8,000	\$5,761,757	\$521,569	\$81,453
Recycling	\$0	\$1,272,000	\$189,147	\$50,518
Road Maintenance	\$500	\$2,982,338	\$491,758	\$117,873
Water Management	\$0	\$17,962,000	\$3,163,831	\$333,757
Wastewater Management	\$144,541	\$24,484,000	\$4,277,476	\$456,625

TRASH REMOVAL

Forty-six survey respondents provided their budget for trash removal. The amounts ranged from \$8,000 to \$5.8 million. The average budget was \$521,569. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$81,453 per 1,000 residents.

RECYCLING

Twenty-seven survey respondents provided the budget for their municipality's recycling service. These budgets ranged from \$0 to \$1.3 million. The average budget was \$189,147. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$50,518 per 1,000 residents.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Forty-nine municipalities provided their budget for road maintenance. These budgets ranged from \$500 to \$3.0 million. The average budget was \$491,758. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$117,873 per 1,000 residents.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Nineteen survey respondents provided the budget for the municipality's potable water management system. The budgets ranged from \$0 to \$18.0 million. The average budget was \$3.2 million. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$333,757 per 1,000 residents.

WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

Fourteen survey respondents provided the budget for their wastewater management system, and these budgets ranged from \$144,541 to \$24.5 million. The average budget was \$4.3 million, while the average budget when adjusted for population was \$456,625 per 1,000 residents.

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The summary budget information for the economic and workforce development services in this study—specifically, municipal events and job assistance—are shown in Table 9. Each is discussed briefly below.

Table 9: Budgets for Economic and Workforce Development Services, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Budget	Maximum Budget	Average Budget	Average Budget per 1,000 Residents
Municipal Events	\$0	\$1,500,000	\$95,949	\$16,754
Job Assistance	\$0	\$26,748	\$8,162	\$1,832

MUNICIPAL EVENTS

Forty-one survey respondents provided the budget for their municipality's public events. The amount of these budgets ranged from \$0 to \$1.5 million. The average budget for municipal events was \$95,949. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$16,754 per 1,000 residents.

JOB ASSISTANCE

Four survey respondents provided their municipality's budget for job assistance services. These budgets ranged from \$0 to \$26,748. The average budget was \$8,162, which was \$1,832 per 1,000 residents.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The summary information for fire and EMS services and policing is shown in Table 10. Only information on municipal contributions to local volunteer fire and EMS are shown, as there were no survey responses that provided information on the budgets of directly provided fire and EMS. Both services are discussed briefly below.

Table 10: Budgets for Public Safety Services, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Budget	Maximum Budget	Average Budget	Average Budget per 1,000 Residents
Fire & EMS (contribution to volunteer services)	\$900	\$1,013,918	\$137,106	\$21,811
Policing	\$86,259	\$50,754,126	\$5,431,790	\$470,844

FIRE AND EMS

Sixteen survey respondents provided the budgeted amount that their municipality contributed to local volunteer fire and EMS.⁷ These amounts ranged from \$900 to \$1.0 million. The average contribution was \$137,106. Adjusted for population, the average contribution was \$21,811 per 1,000 residents.

POLICING

Twenty-seven survey respondents provided the budget for their municipal policing services. These amounts ranged from \$86,259 to \$50.8 million. The average budget for policing was \$5.4 million. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$470,844 per 1,000 residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The combined budgets for the three programs comprising environmental stewardship—stormwater management, sediment control, and forest conservation—ranged from \$0 to \$4.6 million (Table 11). The average budget was \$604,080. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$58,672 per 1,000 residents.

Table 11: Budgets for Environmental Stewardship Services, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Budget	Maximum Budget	Average Budget	Average Budget per 1,000 Residents
Environmental Stewardship	\$0	\$4,633,306	\$604,080	\$58,672

⁷ There were no survey respondents who provided the budget for their municipality's direct provision of Fire and EMS.

RECREATION AND PARKS

Twenty-seven survey respondents provided the budget for their community centers and recreation facilities. These budgets ranged from \$4,500 to \$5.5 million (Table 12). The average budget was \$644,194. Adjusted for population, the average budget was \$57,638 per 1,000 residents.

Table 12: Budgets for Community Center and Recreational Facilities, Fiscal 2025

Service	Minimum Budget	Maximum Budget	Average Budget	Average Budget per 1,000 Residents
Community Center and Recreation Facilities	\$4,500	\$5,525,973	\$644,194	\$57,638

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

Before beginning the data collection process, the Schaefer Center’s research team consulted with MML to identify the service areas they were most interested in assessing. This discussion resulted in the 15 service areas covered in this report. The Schaefer Center then proceeded to collect the data on service provision, use, and budget that comprised this report using two processes: (1) internet data collection and (2) a survey of municipalities. Following data collection, the research team developed and implemented a verification process to ensure consistency and across the data sources. Each of these methods is discussed in greater detail below.

INTERNET DATA COLLECTION

The Schaefer Center’s research team developed an analytic framework to determine whether each of Maryland’s 157 incorporated municipalities provides the services associated with the major service areas. Using the findings and associated definitions outlined in Table 13, the research team applied this analytic framework to the internet-based data collection process. The research team consulted multiple online sources—including the [Maryland Manual Online](#) as well as municipalities’ individual websites, charters, budgets, social media pages, and other relevant online sources—to identify whether each municipality provides the specific services.

If the team found clear and credible evidence that a municipality provides a service, it was recorded as “Yes” in the dataset. When such evidence was identified, the team also conducted additional research to gather information on the service’s use and cost. Alternatively, if clear and credible evidence indicated that a municipality does not provide a service, it was recorded as “No.” When no conclusive evidence was available to determine whether a municipality provides a service, the finding was recorded as “No Evidence” or “Unsure.”

Table 13: Analytic Framework for Intern Data Collection

Finding	Definition
Yes	There is clear and credible evidence (e.g., official webpage, municipal document, or service listing) showing that the municipality currently provides or directly oversees the service.
No	There is clear and credible evidence showing that the municipality does not provide or oversee the service (e.g., explicit statement that the service is handled by another entity or not offered at all).
No Evidence	No reliable sources were found to confirm whether the service exists. In this case, the search produced no information either supporting or refuting the existence of the service.
Unsure	The information located is ambiguous or conflicting—such as unclear references, outdated documents, or incomplete descriptions—making it uncertain whether the municipality provides the service.

Through this process, the research team developed a comprehensive dataset on the provision, use, and cost of services for all Maryland municipalities. This dataset served as the foundation for the analyses presented in this report.

SURVEY OF MUNICIPALITIES

The second component of the data analysis consisted of an online survey of municipalities. The purpose of this survey was twofold: (1) to confirm the services provided by municipalities based on the internet data, and (2) to supplement any data identified as “No Evidence” or “Unsure” during the internet data collection process. In other words, the survey was used to verify the data the research team had already collected while also filling in gaps from that process.

The survey was programmed and administered using Qualtrics for online distribution. The survey link was distributed via email to MML’s membership list of city or town administrators or, if that email address bounced back, the respective city or town clerk.⁸ The survey remained open for responses from September 25, 2025, to October 22, 2025.

Multiple contacts were made to municipalities by both MML and the Schaefer Center to encourage participation in the survey. Specifically:

- Schaefer Center staff attending MML’s Summer Conference in June mentioned the upcoming survey to municipal representatives and encouraged them to respond to the survey email when they received it later that summer.

⁸ Two municipalities were not included in the list provided by MML.

- MML leadership distributed an email to the organization’s membership the morning the survey opened highlighting the importance of the survey to the organization’s work and encouraging members to respond.
- The Schaefer Center sent two reminder emails and made telephone calls to nonrespondents.
- MML staff reached out to municipalities that had not responded via telephone, email, or text messages in the final week that the survey was open to make a final personal push for responses.

Of the 157 incorporated municipalities, 58 (37%) completed the survey, and 19 (12%) responded to at least one question concerning the provision of services (Table 14).⁹ Seventy-seven municipalities did not respond to the survey or only responded to the consent question of the survey, one municipality refused to participate in the survey, and two were not in the sample provided by MML.

Table 14: Survey Response Summary

Response Category	Count	Percent
Nonresponse	77	49%
Complete Response	58	37%
Partial Response	19	12%
Not in Sample*	2	1%
Refusal	1	1%
Total	157	100%

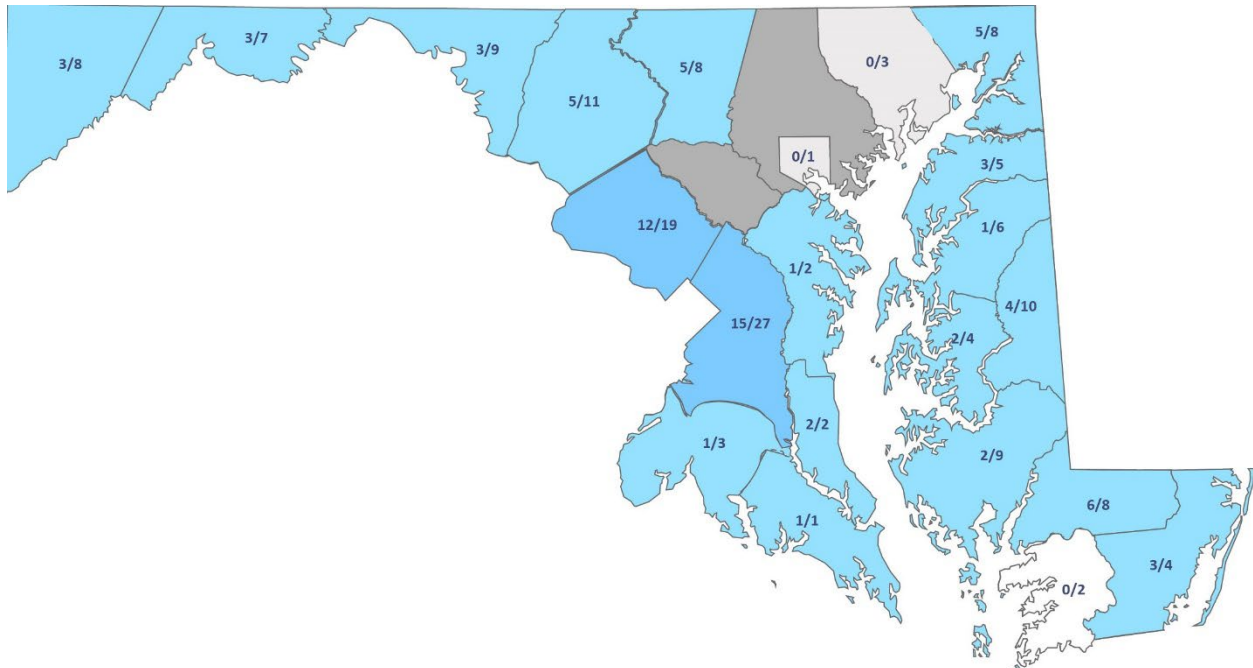
Note: Two municipalities were not included in the list provided by MML.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS’ MUNICIPALITIES

The 77 municipalities that participated in the survey represented 19 of the state’s 24 county-level jurisdictions across the state. As shown in Figure 11, nine counties had representation by 50% or more of the incorporated municipalities in that jurisdiction, including Calvert County and St. Mary’s County. While a plurality of respondents was from Montgomery County and Prince George’s County, combined, the municipalities from these two counties represented only 35% of responding municipalities. As shown in Figure 12, most of the municipalities represented by survey respondents were from small municipalities—almost 40% of the responding municipalities had populations between 1,500 and 5,000 residents, while 23% of respondents had less than 1,000 residents and 21% had between 5,000 and 10,000 residents. Less than 10% of respondents had more than 20,000 residents.

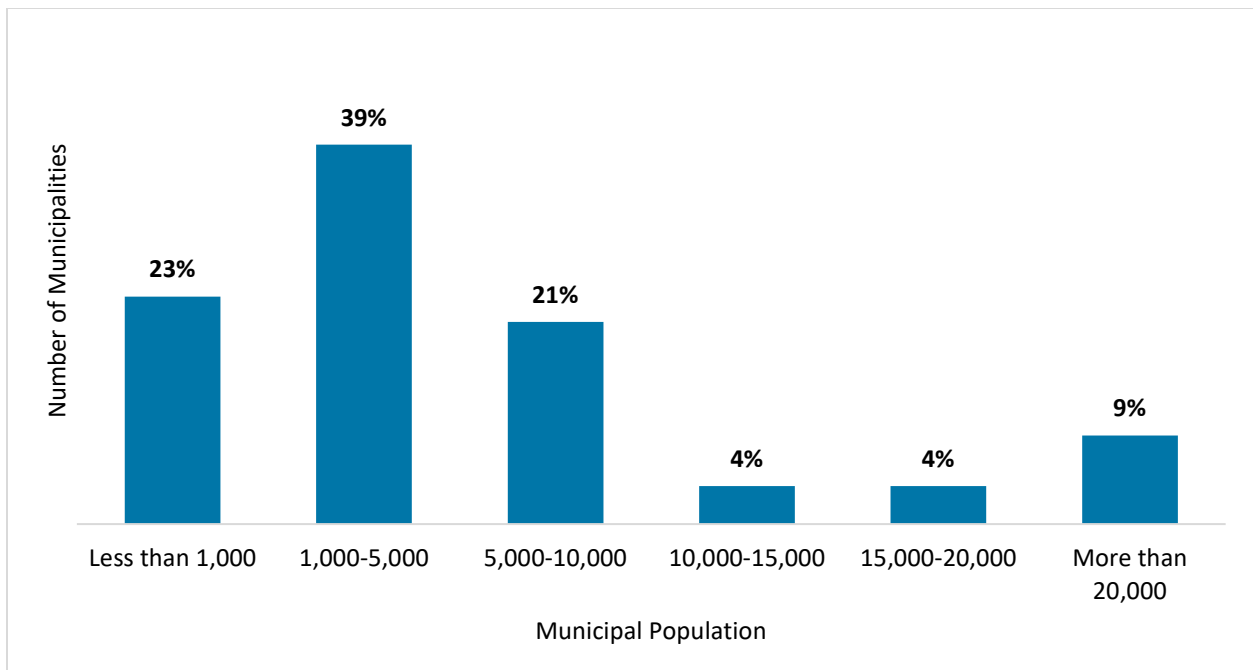
⁹ Two of Maryland’s four special districts that are members of MML also responded to the survey. Their responses ultimately were not included in the analysis.

Figure 11: Map of Survey Respondents' Municipalities by County



Notes: $n = 77$ for survey respondents; $n = 157$ for all municipalities. The first number in each county shows the number of responding municipalities, and the second number shows the total number of municipalities in the jurisdiction. Baltimore County and Howard County do not have incorporated municipalities.

Figure 12: Population of Survey Respondents' Municipalities



Note: $n = 77$ survey respondents.

VERIFICATION PROCESS

After compiling the internet and survey data, the research team implemented a structured verification process to ensure consistency across the data sources. As shown in Table 15, the approach prioritized survey responses when they were available, as these reflected direct input from municipal representatives. In cases where the survey and internet data aligned, no further action was required. When no survey data were available or when respondents selected “Don’t Know,” the research team relied on the information collected during the internet data collection process.

Table 15: Protocol for Data Consistency Verification Across Sources

Condition	Decision	Rationale
Survey and internet data are consistent	No additional verification required	Agreement between sources confirms data reliability
Survey and internet data differ	Use survey response as detailed below	Survey data prioritized as the primary data source in most cases
Case: Survey response is “No” and internet data is “Yes”	Use survey response	Survey data prioritized as direct input from municipal representative unless missing or uncertain
Case: Survey response is “Yes” and internet data is “No”	Use survey response	Survey data prioritized as direct input from municipal representative unless missing or uncertain
Case: Survey response is “Don’t Know”	Use internet data	Internet data adopted when clear and credible online evidence supported the information
No survey data exists	Use internet data	Internet data serve as the only available source of information

Ultimately, three individual survey responses were removed from the dataset after they were determined to be inaccurate and could not be verified with the survey respondent. These responses concerned use of road maintenance, water management, and wastewater management.