



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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City of Riverside Approves Balanced Biennial Budget of \$1.45 Billion Per Year to Promote Financial Stability and Increase Quality of Life

Priorities include public safety, economic development, roads and reducing homelessness

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City Council on Tuesday (6/25) approved a biennial budget and capital improvement program for the next two fiscal years, directing roughly \$1.45 billion each year to crucial needs to promote financial stability and increase the quality of life in Riverside.

The budget prioritizes public safety; addresses the housing and homelessness through strategic investments in affordable housing, supportive services, and homeless prevention programs; devotes resources in the maintenance, improvement, and expansion of essential infrastructure; greatly increases road maintenance efforts; and invests in the city’s economy, job creation, and business development.

“This budget reflects a balanced approach to providing services our residents have made clear they want, while also addressing challenges we face as a city,” Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson said. “We welcome the accountability that comes with these increases and appreciate our residents’ expectations for responsible fiscal stewardship.”

Some of the critical needs addressed within the budget are:

- Replacing radios within the Police Department at a cost of \$5.3 million because the existing radios are reaching the end of their lifespan. The cost will be partially offset by \$2 million projected from the sale of two surplus police helicopters.
- Growing the Fire Department’s arson program with additional staff to improve the department’s ability to investigate and prosecute arson cases; and allocating nearly \$9 million to replace vehicles and apparatus, increasing that to \$30.4 million through 2029.
- Refreshing the One-Stop Shop in the Community and Economic Development Department (CEDD) with \$1.2 million in software upgrades to enhance customer service and streamline the permitting process; and funding an Economic Impact Study and Strategic Plan; Sports Attraction Study; and Convention Center Expansion Study, all to expand the City’s economy.

- Expanding staff at Library branches across the city to facilitate program expansions, enhance patron support and meet technology needs; and adding \$500,000 for materials, increasing the per capita budget from \$1.23 to \$2.80, which remains below the \$5.31 statewide average.
- Moving the Arts & Cultural Affairs Division from CEDD to the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department (PRCSD) to further promote arts and culture, and enhance the quality of life; expand recreation and aquatics programs throughout the City; and improve the landscaping and maintenance of the City's 68 parks and 16 facilities.
- Devoting \$2.3 million to landscaping at 450 acres of rights-of-way spread over 81 square miles, including freeway on/off ramps, historical avenues, the downtown pedestrian mall, landscape maintenance districts, citrus groves, fountains and 150,000 street trees.
- Creating a Marketing and Communications Department to promote civic engagement, foster community relations, and ensure effective dissemination of vital information to residents. A \$300,000 "Visit Riverside" campaign will promote tourism and create a distinctive City brand.
- Adding \$5 million annually to infrastructure, contributing to a total street maintenance budget of \$25.6 million annually, increasing funding for facilities capital maintenance, investing in technology improvements, and providing funding for a non-safety vehicle replacement plan.

The approval caps a nine-month process that began last October, when the City began seeking input by mailing a postcard to city residents, posting notices on all the City's social media platforms and inviting residents to attend upcoming budget workshops. The "Your Money, Your Voice" meetings elicited feedback to understand what services, programs, and facilities Riverside residents deemed most important, as did in-person and online surveys and a more extensive Quality of Life survey.

The budget is based on prudent financial planning and innovative strategies to address critical needs, strengthen the local government and position the City to catalyze transformation in the Riverside community and economy. It commits City staff to enhancing revenue through measures such as the recent fees and charges study to recover the true cost of providing services, and by making investments in the economy. The budget is bolstered by strong performance in property taxes from recent increases in assessed values, alongside new revenue sources such as those from the March JPA revenue sharing agreement and cannabis tax, enabling General Fund revenues to keep up with costs.

"This budget reflects hundreds of hours of work by the City Council and City staff to capture our community's desires, aspirations and values," City Manager Mike Futrell said. "It is a systemically balanced budget year over year while allowing robust investments in public safety, housing, homelessness response, park and library improvements, funding for the arts and community events -- everything that makes Riverside a great place to live, work, and raise a family. This budget reflects Riverside's strong economy and positions us well for the future."

These efforts will enable the City to maintain crucial services and buffer against potential future economic woes while planning for rising retirement costs, ongoing maintenance and infrastructure needs and increasing personnel costs. The overall budget reflects the rigor with which the department budgets were developed, using collaboration and foresight to align departmental priorities with overall City goals. Each department's budget reflects a commitment to delivering essential services, fostering innovation, and advancing the well-being of the Riverside community.