

FY 2026 Proposed Operating Budget and Capital Improvements Program Follow-Up Information – Q&A

◆ = General document question

■ = Operating budget question

● = Capital budget question

Councilmember Van Grack (3/1/25 email):

1. ■ As I understand the Proposed Budget, \$12,000 will be proposed as a direct grant to the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department for the water cost subsidy; however the references to the \$250,000 allocation in the FY 2026 proposed budget “recommends” a \$250,000 allocation of General Fund reserves to provide an emergency response vehicle to the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department. Can you explain the parameters which would need to be met by the City in order for this \$250,000 allocation to occur? And assuming \$250,000 allocation is solely triggered upon “reserves exceeding the target,” can you provide data as to how often over the past 10 years the City has had that condition met?

The proposed budget recommends uses of reserves totaling \$2,080,000 for the following purposes:

- *\$750,000 for a subsidy to the Housing Opportunities Fund,*
- *\$280,000 for a Green Space Management Plan,*
- *\$250,000 for a contribution to the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department for the purchase of a new vehicle, and*
- *\$800,000 for a transfer to the Capital Projects Fund to fund the construction of the Senior Center Entrance (TA24) CIP project*


The city currently has sufficient reserves to commit these resources for the one-time needs specified. The budget projects that the reserve balance will exceed the target by \$3.7 million after reductions for the proposed commitments of reserves. This can also be found on page 65 of the proposed budget. Here is a schedule of how General Fund reserve balances have compared to the target for the last ten years.

Fiscal Year	Reserve Target	Ending Unassigned Fund Balance	\$ Over Target
FY 2015	10,558,200	19,916,594	9,358,394
FY 2016	14,918,000	21,039,026	6,121,026
FY 2017	15,384,000	19,643,296	4,259,296
FY 2018	15,938,000	19,092,844	3,154,844
FY 2019	16,484,000	22,733,031	6,249,031
FY 2020	16,848,000	22,022,347	5,174,347
FY 2021	16,921,000	22,869,949	5,948,949
FY 2022	17,296,000	26,446,411	9,150,411
FY 2023	18,664,080	27,588,751	8,924,671
FY 2024	20,325,110	31,231,793	10,906,683


Note: Target was 15% in FY 2015, and then 20% starting in FY 2016 and beyond.

2. ● The CIP Appropriation of Pedestrian Bridge Replacement: Horizon Hill Park (RB22) has been on hold for a number of years. My understanding is that with the FY 2026 Appropriation, this would be fully funded and construction can begin in FY 2026. Can you confirm if this is correct?


The timing of the pedestrian bridge replacement aligns with the results and recommendations included in the City's bridge inspection report conducted by a third-party structural engineering firm. The FY 2026 budget provides construction funding for the Horizon Hill Park pedestrian bridge. Construction is estimated to begin in FY 2026 and be completed in FY 2027.

3.  The CIP Appropriation of Pedestrian Bridge Replacement: Woottons Mill Park (RD23) has been on hold for a number of years. My understanding is that with the FY 2026 Appropriation, this would only be partially funded and, with additional funding next year, construction can begin in FY 2027. Can you confirm if this is correct?


The timing of the pedestrian bridge replacement aligns with the results and recommendations included in the City's bridge inspection report conducted by a third-party structural engineering firm. The FY 2026 budget provides design funding for the Woottons Mill Park pedestrian bridge. Construction is estimated to begin in FY 2027 and be completed in FY 2028.

4.  The CIP Appropriation of Scott-Veirs Drive Shared-Use Path (TA23) is critical for pedestrian safety, especially for students at Wootton High School and Frost Middle School. My understanding is that with the FY 2026 Appropriation, this would only be partially funded and, with additional funding next year, construction can begin in FY2027. Can you confirm if this is correct? Or do we need Federal funding for this to begin? Further, if we do not get Federal Funding, can the City consider fully funding this project itself?

The FY 2026 budget recognizes a \$200K Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant to support the design of this project. This grant has delayed the start of the design phase as the city is still waiting to execute the MOU to start the design. The construction portion of the project is estimated at \$1,000,000 and staff are actively pursuing grant opportunities with the expectation to begin construction in FY 2027. The city will evaluate options to self-fund the construction portion of the project if the grant applications are not successful. From a timing perspective, this would be something that would be evaluated with the FY 2027 budget.

5.  The CIP Appropriation of Hurley Avenue Bridge Replacement (TE16) has been designated as a need since 2016. I understand that the City's portion of the CIP (\$1,793,010) has previously been funded but it appears that only \$237,294 has been spent. Is that correct? Additionally, what is the status of the \$4,560,000 (which I understand is due from Federal funding), and do we anticipate construction beginning in FY 2026 (which is what staff has been conveying for the past 12 months).

Design completion and construction start is estimated to occur in FY 2026. City spending through 1/28/25 is \$237,294. The design phase is managed by Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) utilizing their on call structural design consultants. Staff is presently coordinating with MDOT SHA to authorize the federal funding for the final design contract. Staff anticipates that the construction contract will be managed by the city and that the federal aid will be formally authorized upon design completion.

6.  In the General Fund Expenditures by Department comparison between FY 2025 Adopted and FY 2026 Proposed for the Police Department (page 24), the percent change is only an increase of 2.2%. Is the 2.2% Police Department Expenditures increase using the FY 2025 Adopted figures before the August/September 2025 Pay Scale Increase for the Police Department (which occurred after the adoption of the FY 2025 budget) or after the August/September 2025 Post-Adoption increase?

The amounts shown for FY 2025 use the adopted budget at May 6, 2024, prior to the August/September pay scale increases.

7. ■ Similar to my previous Question, how/where is the August/September 2025 Pay Scale Increase for the Police Department (which occurred after the adoption of the FY 2025 budget) considered in the comparisons between Adopted FY 2025 figures and Proposed FY 2026 figures in the Police Department expenditure descriptions (beginning on page 199).

The best way to see the change to the pay scale is to compare the FY 2026 proposed police pay scale on page 378 to the FY 2025 adopted police pay scale. The changes to the police pay scale approximate 6% between the FY 2025 adopted budget and the FY 2026 proposed budget, which incorporates the 3.5% pay scale adjustment made in August/September and the 2.5% cost of living adjustment included in the FY 2026 budget. This 6% change is higher than the personnel changes shown on page 199 which includes changes for administrative staff within the department and is driven by actual salaries (including assumptions for vacancies).

8. ■ In the Police Department narrative (page 198), it states that the Community Services Unit “will expand outreach efforts.” Is this expansion through additional funding or different resource allocation. If through funding, how is that funding being allocated. If through different resource allocation, what is the adjustment?

The Police Department will continue to work within its allocated budget for Community Engagement. While the FY 2026 budget does not include increased funding for this effort, the Department will continue to seek community partnerships that enhance these events in a cost-effective way for the city, as was done through food donations for events during FY 2025, and will reallocate one-time savings if available for these events.


9. ● For the CIP Appropriation of Glenview Mansion Gardens Hardscape Preservation and Repairs (RB26), I understand that the only finding in FY 2026 will be the planning and assessment; however, will ADA accessibility be considered for the repairs to the retaining walls and paths to ensure?

The main purpose of the project is to repair and preserve the existing slate walkways, steps, retaining walls and archways. A secondary goal is, where practical is to add or improve access for all while maintaining the historical integrity of the site.

10. ● For the CIP Appropriation of David Scull Park Improvements (RA19), I understand that construction cost increased due to inflation; however, if so, why is there no cost allocation for that increase in FY 2026? Was that increase addressed in FY 2025? And if we’re addressing all of these increases in costs, why is construction completion being moved out to FY 2027?

The change in the construction cost is based on the original amount shown in the table (\$444,700 originally, now \$750,000). Inflationary adjustments were addressed with the FY 2025 budget. Additional design and construction costs were needed to satisfy city code requiring restrooms be connected to city water and sewer infrastructure. A bond bill that the city received during FY 2025 mitigated the impact of those added costs to the city. Staff expects that much of the construction will be completed in FY 2026 and that FY 2027 will mainly address project close out.


Councilmember Jackson (3/4/25 email):

11.  I am interested in how much we have in the budget for Community Empowerment Matching Grants and to where they were awarded this year. Could I get a list of awardees and those that were not funded?

The FY 2026 budget provides \$6,000 for the Community Empowerment Matching Grant program, but does not allocate this funding to specific organizations. The grant process for this program happens during the fiscal year. The FY 2025 grants are in the process of being awarded to the following recipients. All applicants received funding.


Program Name	Organization	Program Description	Funding Request	PANEL FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS
RHE FY25 - It Takes A Village	Rockville Housing Enterprises	RHE FY25 - It Takes A Village	\$1,000	\$1,000
Community improvement	Flint Ledge Estates Community Association, Inc.	Community improvement	\$1,000	\$500
Village Support Network (formerly RAVE)	RAVE- Rockville Area Village Exchange	Village Support Network (formerly RAVE)	\$2,000	\$1,350
Hospitality Program Expansion	West Rockville Connects Village	West Rockville Book Connection - West Rockville Connects Village Little Free	\$1,000	\$1,000
Lincoln Park Civic Association Outreach Initiative	Lincoln Park Civic Association	Lincoln Park Civic Association Outreach Initiative	\$750	\$750
Annual North Farm Community Day	The North Farm Citizens Association	Annual North Farm Community Day	\$500	\$500
Cambridge Heights Common Area landscaping	Cambridge Heights HOA	Cambridge Heights Common Area landscaping	\$900	\$900
FY 2025 TOTAL				\$6,000

Mayor Ashton (3/4/25 meeting)

12.  What are the changes to the taxable assessed property values by type for FY 2026?

The taxable assessed values increased 5.7% for FY 2026. This reflects increases in assessed values across all property categories as detailed below. These changes include the impact of new development that has been completed and occupied as of the time of the assessment.

Property Classification	% Change in AV (FY25 to FY26)
Commercial	2.0%
Industrial	5.0%
Residential	7.3%
Mixed Use	9.3%

13.  What new park shelters are being considered or are in the pipeline (aligning with the PROSE Plan)?

Park shelters in the pipeline are Dawson Farm structural repair (FY25), David Scull Park (new pavilion – FY26), and RedGate Park (three new pavilions – FY27). There are four pavilion Long Range CIP projects as well: (1) Outdoor Classroom Pavilion – Croydon Creek Nature Center (new pavilion - FY31), (2) North Farm Pavilion Replacement (FY33), Calvin Park Pavilion Replacement (FY34), and Hillcrest Park Pavilion Replacement (FY35).

14. ■ What is the city planning to do for financial empowerment in FY 2026?

HCD is taking a community-focused and data-driven approach to financial empowerment. In FY25, in partnership with Truist Bank, the department is hosting four workshops on: 3/12, 3/13, 3/19, 3/20.

In FY26, once a homeownership specialist is onboarded, HCD plans to hold regular workshops on: 1) homeownership, 2) how to apply for the MPDU program (rental and ownership), and 3) financial empowerment workshops through Bank On. HCD also plans to host a tax preparation assistance day and other activities through Bank On and its partnerships. These plans are still being developed, with a focus on developing community-based and data-driven program to provide the most benefit to the community.

15. ◆ Is the city planning a fourth composting site?

Staff is not currently planning to open a fourth composting site. A third site was opened at the Twinbrook Community Center in November of 2025 and a cart was added to the Senior Center to meet additional demand. In FY 2026, staff intend to monitor tons collected from each of the three sites, adjust site capacity when needed, and increase education to minimize contamination.

16. ◆ What is the status on the solar installations and is a third solar installation being considered?

MCPS contract delays and uncertainty in federal tariffs and tax credits are impacting the finalization of SPPAs to implement solar canopy projects at Rothgeb and 6 Taft Court. Federal funding from the Department of Energy (DOE) is currently paused, impacting the implementation of the third planned solar rooftop at Lincoln Park Community Center.

17. ◆ How many calls is the RCPD receiving for the Montgomery County Crisis Center?

In 2023, RCPD responded to 365 calls for service at the Montgomery County Crisis Center. In 2024, RCPD responded to 351 calls for service at the Montgomery County Crisis Center.

Councilmember Jackson (3/7/25 meeting)


18. ■ Who will we contract with for the expanded mental health services?

Staff anticipates contracting with a licensed and insured entity that provides mental health services focused on prevention, early intervention, and treatment. The city expects that they will be capable of taking insurance (and medicare), managing third party billing, and ensuring HIPAA compliance. The provider would deliver traditional individual counseling that is billable and, with city funding provide prevention and educational workshops, group sessions and programming.


19. ■ What do we estimate the refuse rates will be looking beyond FY 2026?

The FY 2026 budget proposes an annual refuse rate of \$565 per year. This rate applies to residential properties within the city, and appears on the annual property tax bill. Staff project that the refuse rate will increase an average of 4.4 percent per year through FY 2030, up to \$665 per year by FY 2030. The Refuse Fund is an enterprise fund which does not receive any tax revenues and relies primarily on the refuse fee to sustain operations (including personnel) and the costs of capital (which includes scheduled refuse truck replacements). For additional context, the current FY 2025 city refuse fee of \$535 is less than the \$594.59 paid by Montgomery County residents who do not have the benefit of a single stream recycling program.


Councilmember VanGrack (3/7/25 email)

20.  In the past few years, many members of the communities surrounding Woottons Mills Park (such as Rockshire, Glenora Hills, Horizon Hill, and Fallsmead) have requested a covered shelter at the park. What is the rationale for not having any covered shelters proposed in the FY2026 CIP Appropriations, including, but not limited to, a covered shelter at Woottons Mills Park?


The CIP includes new park pavilions for David Scull Park (new pavilion – FY26) and RedGate Park (three new pavilions – FY27). There are a number of existing pavilions that will require major renovations and repairs, and several are included in the Long Range CIP (see question #13).

21.  Do we have any potentially proposed years for the recommendation of a covered shelter at Woottons Mills Park?

UPDATED: Currently there is no planned construction of a covered shelter in Woottons Mill Park. Staff have not received this item as a Propose-A-Project for FY 2025 or FY 2026, but did receive budget survey comments and public testimony. Staff will plan to conduct outreach and engagement in the neighboring communities during FY 2026 and will include this as a Planned Improvement Project for FY 2027 to explore accessibility and potential locations.


22.  During the most recent Budget Briefing with staff, I was informed that the recommendations emanating from the Compensation and Classification Study (to be presented at the March 17, 2025 Mayor & Council Meeting) were not included in the personnel funding percentages and amounts that are in the Budget Booklet. Presuming that the City Manager's Office recommends increasing certain salaries based on the Compensation and Classification Study, can we receive updated personnel funding percentage increased from FY2025 and funding amounts?

The FY 2026 proposed budget includes capacity for compensation and classification adjustments in Non-Departmental. This is summarized on pages 365-367. In looking at personnel totals citywide the increase in personnel from FY 2025 to FY 2026 is 7.7 percent. The compensation and classification capacity is included the personnel totals by Fund (page 58) but are not allocated to each department. During worksession #3 changes between proposed and adopted will include the department allocations for the compensation and classification study implementation.

23.  For the CIP Appropriation of Senior Center Entrance (TA24), will the \$800,000 appropriation for FY2026 be the total estimated amount for construction of the entrance and pedestrian access areas? Additionally, is it anticipated that the construction will be completed in FY2026, and if not, when is the estimated completed date?

Yes, this includes both the entrance and pedestrian access. Staff expects the design to be completed in the fall of 2025. Construction will most likely start in Spring 2026 and will be completed in FY 2027.

Mayor Ashton (3/10/25 email)

24.  What is the average projected income revenue growth for FY26 for the City of Rockville? What is the total revenue projected from income tax? Given the projected changes at the Federal level (where so many families have/will be impacted in terms of job uncertainty) what do we anticipate will be the impact in FY26 and FY27. At the state level they anticipated 4.1 percent growth for individual income taxes in September 2024. However they have reduced the anticipated growth to 2.6% in March 2025.

The FY 2026 budget reflects citywide revenue growth of 4.5 percent and assumes income tax revenue of \$21,200,000 (a 4.4 percent increase over the FY 2025 adopted revenue levels). It is important to note that the FY 2025 year-to-date revenues are trending higher than what was anticipated. The FY 2026 revenue estimate is a 2.5 percent increase over the November 2024 payment, which establishes the base for the fiscal year. This revenue source is challenging to predict because it is based on individual income tax returns each year. Factors such as employment rates, capital gains, retirement rates, and wage growth all contribute to the amount of annual revenue. The forecast assumes a conservative 3.5 percent increase each year. The average annual increase to income tax revenue over the last 5 years is 5.8 percent. This is an area that will be closely monitored given the economic uncertainties associated with changes at the federal level.

Councilmember Jackson (3/10/25 email)

25. ■ Does the City analyze which programs have the lowest participation rates? Can some programming be consolidated?

Recreation staff utilize industry-wide best practices from the Learning Education Resources Network (LERN) to systematically evaluate program effectiveness, employing metrics such as participation trends, market responsiveness, and cost recovery analyses. Programs exhibiting consistently low participation or diminished interest are assessed for possible consolidation or discontinuation. Resources gained through these strategic adjustments are subsequently reallocated toward enhancing high-performing programs, introducing innovative offerings, and ensuring a comprehensive, balanced portfolio of recreational opportunities aligned with evolving community needs.

26. ■ We have had discussions from some neighbors in East Rockville wanting to update the neighborhood plan. It hasn't been updated since 2004 (pg51). Is this something that is needed and do we need to consider budgeting time and personnel and funds for it or is it not needed because the Comprehensive Plan incorporated much of what would be an updated neighborhood plan?

The Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2021, serves as an update to all city neighborhood plans, including Planning Area 2 for East Rockville. The Comprehensive Plan adopts by reference the 2004 East Rockville Neighborhood Plan, but also makes its own, newer recommendations for the neighborhood. Staff prefers that any updates to neighborhood plans or amendments to the Comprehensive Plan be considered after completion of the zoning ordinance rewrite (drafting to be completed by the end of Calendar Year 2025) since comprehensive planning staff is dedicating significant time to this project. The FY 2026 budget anticipates the completion of the zoning ordinance rewrite and this initiative will be a major focus area for CPDS in Spring 2026. Staff understands that the East Rockville Plan update may be targeted to identifying more areas in East Rockville for "missing middle" housing. If that is the case, staff could have some capacity to begin an evaluation of this project towards the end of FY 2026.

27. ● There is some concern that taking federal funds through the state would mean keeping Redgate Park as a Park in perpetuity. I believe the amount of funds was \$700,000 or so. Is that correct? Is that \$700,000 in this year's budget?

We believe you are referring to a Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant. Staff is working on this grant application and the grant application agreement will come to the Mayor and Council for approval. If approved by Mayor and Council, staff will proceed with the grant application due May 1, 2025. The city will request \$1.5 million in funding. This grant funding is not included in the FY 2026 budget, if Mayor and Council approve moving forward and the grant is awarded to the city, staff will include it in a budget amendment.

28. ■ Pg 66 – Why the huge increase in municipal infractions (2905.9%)?

The city anticipates an increase in municipal infractions revenue associated with the new Senior Zoning Inspector position which is included in the FY 2026 Proposed Budget. This position will implement the requirements of the new zoning ordinance which will include performing inspections, ensuring developments meet site plan requirements, and proactively addressing zoning violations (which results in this added revenue of approximately \$49,400).

29. ■ Pg 72 – why do we have a big increase in the Consultant spending category – 45.3% ? Likewise in the Credit Card charges – 43.7% ? And the non-city facility rental – 42.8% ?

FY 2026 increases to consultant services include funding for organizational development, a JEDI strategic plan, financial reporting software implementation, and consulting for the city's transition to WebEx calling (a cost saving transition). Credit card charges have risen consistently across all city functions, driven largely by online recreation registrations and online permitting functions. As shown on page 72, the FY 2024 ended the year even higher than what was budgeted in FY 2025 and volume continues to increase as customers prefer efficient web-based transactions. FY 2026 increases to non-city facility rentals includes added costs for Town Center condo fees and the lease costs for the city's new off-site disaster recovery location.

30. ■ Pg. 73 – What is the reason for a 1081.0% increase in the trophies and awards category? From \$10,000 last year to \$120,000 in the coming budget? Same question for Furniture and Equipment, Computer/Communication Equipment, SBITA and Lease Inception?

The FY 2026 increase for trophies and awards is a reallocation of health assessment credits and wellness rewards which were previously a component of the personnel budget (credits for health deductions). Employees will have more options on how they receive these wellness rewards going forward. The increase for furniture and equipment is largely driven by the CCTV modernization initiative and electric landscaping equipment that is included to prepare the city for county regulations concerning gas operated landscaping equipment. Increases to computer hardware includes expanded funding for the planned network refresh. Increases to the SBITA Expenses reflect a reclassification of these expenses from the software maintenance and subscriptions line, and the Lease Inception line is an accounting estimate that includes and equal offsetting revenue. This changes annually based on the timing of when new leases are executed.

31. ■ Pg 79 – Why did the Opioid Settlement Fund go from 15,690 to \$143,400?

The FY 2026 budget expands the use of the Opioid Settlement Funds to include providing funding to nonprofits who will provide substance use prevention, early intervention and treatment services for the Rockville community. This aligns with the State of Maryland Health Department approval of the city's opioid settlement spending plan, and their allocation of settlement funds to the city. The budget maintains funding for Rockville Goes Purple utilizing these special revenue funds and includes funding for community outreach efforts.

32. ◆ How are the performance metrics for REDI developed and implemented? Does the City Manager track them to ensure that they are on track to help Rockville? Can they be adjusted year to year? What happens if they don't meet the metrics assigned to them?

Per REDI: Performance metrics are tweaked from year to year and can be found in the annual report. The FY 2024 REDI Annual Report can be found [HERE](#). When a certain goal is not met, an

explanation is usually provided (for example, staffing vacancies that impacted output). The Rockville Mayor and Council are provided with an annual report and hold an annual joint meeting. REDI staff are open to additional metrics that might be tracked in the future. Proposed FY 2026 Performance Metrics can be found at [Attachment A](#).

33. ■ There was \$50,000 that I believe was in the budget to be used to look at REDI and economic development. Could we instead use those funds to look at our CPDS process and find ways to make it more efficient and speed up the process?

The FY 2026 proposed budget does not include funding to evaluate different economic development models. The budget does include an additional 4.0 FTEs which will allow for the rollout of a next day inspection program and lend itself to more timely and efficient processing of plan reviews and permits. This aligns with elements of the city's FAST 2 initiative. Page 141 of the budget notes that staff intend to implement 17 of the 33 FAST 2 action items during FY 2026.

34. ◆ What does it take to have a dedicated Housing Opportunities Fund that can only be used to pursue affordable housing, for example? I understood from our discussion that it can be touched for any reason and some people want to wall that off and maybe additional funds as well. Is that a bad idea?

After further discussions with the City Attorney's Office, staff will recommend that all General Fund contributions be segregated into the Housing Opportunities Fund and that all historical funds from developer contributions and MPDU sales be maintained in a Moderately Priced Housing Fund. Both of these will be subaccounts of the city's Special Activities Fund. This will provide a clearer delineation of where programmatic functions can occur, as it pertains to the city's housing initiatives while providing the flexibility to be nimble in an ever-changing housing marketplace and to meet the needs of tenants, developers, and other stakeholders.

35. ■ The \$250,000 for a fire department vehicle isn't in the grant program. Why did you do it that way? Wouldn't it be better to fund their grant at the requested level and then say it could be up to \$250,000 depending on conditions during the budget cycle? It seems to make it more difficult to budget for their own fiscal year due to uncertainty of receiving any or all funds. Pg 11 Also - how certain are we that the fire department will receive the \$250,000 and not a portion of it or \$0 dollars?

Staff recommend that the Mayor and Council commit reserves for the emergency vehicle as a one-time allocation. There are currently sufficient reserves exceeding the target that can facilitate all recommended reserves allocations, and still leave excess reserve balances of \$3.7 million. If the Mayor and Council commit these reserves the first budget amendment of FY 2026 will include a formal appropriation of these balances and the agreement will be executed. The adoption of the budget ordinance including this commitment will offer the RVFD full certainty of this funding in FY 2026.

36. ■ The proposed budget includes \$1.6 million allocation for REDI. How much of that \$1.6 million will be spent for economic development within Rockville and for Rockville businesses versus outside the city?

Per REDI: All economic development activities with the city's money are spent for the benefit of the city. The investment made in the MWBC is also spent within the city given all of the programming here and Shop Local. That being said – the nature of business attraction efforts is to build

relationships with businesses and partners outside of the city in order to raise awareness of the benefits of Rockville and direct businesses who are relocating or starting to consider Rockville.

REDI also received some funds from placemaking grants from the County over the last two years. Some programming was paid with those funds to businesses (small scale manufacturing) that might be outside of the city – but all of our efforts included providing prospects with information as to why choosing Rockville would be a good decision for their business.

37. ■ The budget allocates \$250,000 allocation to the HOF. And an additional \$750,000 allocation of general funds reserve to the HOF. A total of \$1,000,000. The stated goal is to promote the preservation and addition of affordable units, launch the employee homeownership assistance program and begin the development of a homeownership downpayment assistance program for the Rockville community. My question is really just the kernel of an idea – can we really do all that with \$1,000,000? Or do we need 5 or 10 or 20 times that to really have a robust HOF that can accomplish our goals? Pg 12

The \$1 million allocation for the Housing Opportunities Fund is a starting point and reflects the city's commitment to addressing housing needs. The General Fund forecast assumes annual General Fund contributions going forward which will help build upon this balance. It is also expected that as the programs are built out, resources will be funneled back into the programs over time, making them sustainable in the long term.

38. ◆ What kinds of uses has the HOF fund been used for since its creation in 1990? Pg 16. It does not have a consistent revenue source. What would staff recommendations be on the consistent revenue sources that might be adequate for all that is envisioned for the Fund?

Staff do not have access to the information on the uses of these funds going back to the 1990's. In the last ten years the funds have been used to provide grants and loans in collaboration with Montgomery County, to preserve affordable housing units within the city (ex. Fireside Park Apartments, Scarborough Square Apartments). The FY 2024 budget included a General Fund contribution of \$250,000 for an employee homeownership program, of which no funds have yet been expended. The General Fund forecast assumes annual General Fund contributions going forward.

39. ■ How much time will the City get from a mental health specialist from the County for \$30,000? Pg 14

Staff will initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) to outline the city's specific needs, service hours, billing requirements, and reporting expectations. Of the services listed in the description in the City Manager's Proposed FY26 Budget, the \$30,000 would pay approximately eight hours per week of the non-billable services such as educational support through psychoeducational groups/workshops, seminars and classes and direct services such as individual and group counseling for uninsured residents. It could also pay for the copay for Medicare and other insurances that a resident cannot afford the pay. Beyond the eight hours per week, additional billable services would be provided by the contractor which are individual and group counseling that is billable to Medicare, Medicaid, and other health insurance. Staff anticipate these additional billable services to account for approximately five to seven additional hours per week.

The city provided similar services in FY 2021 and provided mental health services to approximately 50 seniors for the year.

40. ● The Water Treatment Plant is to receive \$800,000 to design and construct perimeter security improvements – what does this include? Pg. 15

The Water Treatment Plant Security (UB24) CIP project can be found on page 355 of the budget document. The America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (AWIA) required that water utilities conduct a system wide Risk and Resilience Assessment and prepare an Emergency Response Plan for critical water infrastructure. The Risk and Resilience Assessment completed for the city's Water Treatment Plant (certified and submitted to the EPA in December 2020) identified security improvements that are included in this project. The FY 2026 proposed budget includes appropriations of \$880,000. This will provide improved perimeter security features such as enhanced fencing and gate systems.

41. ■ The budget anticipates a new position to promote the homeownership down payment assistance program. Do we enough money in the program to warrant having someone spend their time administering it? Pg. 16

The Housing Specialist position will work closely with the homeownership programs, but will also provide financial counseling services and financial empowerment programming to meet the city's goal of poverty alleviation. This position will also be cross-trained on all aspects of the MPDU program, and serve as an added resource for providing enhanced navigation services. The Homeownership Downpayment Assistance Program is only one component of this much broader role.

42. ■ REAP – it is anticipated that the region will undergo a recession in the near term due to Federal changes in workforce, physical footprints, changes in contracting, and changing grant criteria or even existence, not to mention the ripple effects of supporting businesses and firms. Do we feel that REAP is at an adequate level for the increased demand that a recession might lead to? How might we go about shifting funds in response to such a changed environment?

Staff are closely monitoring REAP usage and needs. Budget amendments are one mechanism to replenish and increase funding to REAP if there is increased community need. Staff bring forward 3-4 budget amendments each year and work closely with staff across the organization to identify needs. The FY 2026 budget provides \$125,850 in appropriations for REAP. In prior years there was discussion about moving cannabis tax to a Special Activities program. At the direction of the Mayor and Council, this \$40,000 could be removed from the General Fund to provide additional REAP support.

43. ◆ On page 17 there is a discussion of the creation of a JEDI strategic plan. Wasn't that created already? I recall it being discussed?

The Mayor and Council received a JEDI Workplan presentation on January 9, 2023. Among the next steps referenced in that presentation was retaining a consultant to assist in the development of a formal strategic plan. The Mayor and Council considered this for inclusion in the prior budget, but ultimately did not allocate funding for this purpose.

44. ◆ For the Community Empowerment Grants, in prior years what number of grants were awarded versus the number submitted?

In FY 2023, the city received 7 grant submissions and awarded 6 grants for a total of \$6,000. In FY 2024, the city received 8 grant submissions and awarded 8 grants for a total of \$6,000. All applications underwent a panel review.

Councilmember Myles (3/13/25 email)

45. ■ Why are we decreasing proposed expenditures for special activities and refuse?

The decrease in overall appropriations for the Special Activities Fund is largely driven by the expected refinancing of Scarborough Square which would have returned \$1.2 million to the city in FY 2025. This would have been a one-time event. The total expenditures from the Special Activities Fund are planned to increase in FY 2026. This can be seen on page 78 and 79 of the budget. A table showing planned expenditures by program is shown below, consistent with page 79 of the budget.

Special Activities Fund Expenditures by Program			
	Adopted FY 2024	Adopted FY 2025	Proposed FY 2026
Art in Public Architecture	89,000	140,000	95,000
Art in Public Places	157,500	180,080	182,000
Cable TV Equipment	355,810	355,810	355,810
Farmer's Market Eat Fresh Rockville	40,000	70,000	110,000
Forest and Tree Preservation	10,000	10,000	10,000
Friends of the Arts	10,000	10,000	10,000
Glenview Mansion	20,000	20,000	20,000
Holiday Drive	60,000	72,000	72,000
Housing Opportunities	-	-	250,000
Opioid Settlement Fund	16,280	15,690	143,400
Park Maintenance	125,000	125,000	125,000
Recreation Fund	40,000	60,000	70,000
Rockville Emergency Assistance Program	70,000	70,000	70,000
Senior Assistance	25,000	25,000	25,000
Transportation Improvements	221,260	259,290	259,290
Total (\$)	1,239,850	1,412,870	1,797,500

The decrease in overall appropriations for the Refuse Fund is largely driven by reductions in planned vehicle replacements, as compared to FY 2025. Refuse fleet replacements can be very expensive, though the timing and scale of the replacements will vary by year.

46. ■ Is staff proposing increasing building permit fees for the second year in a row?

Inflationary adjustments are proposed for building permit fees in order to keep pace with the cost recovery benchmarks for these regulatory programs.

47. ■ Why hasn't the tree removal permit fee changed since 2012 or parking/traffic enforcement fees (pp307) or traffic and transportation fees (pp307)?

The city understands that there are considerable costs associated with tree removals and looks to keep the permit fee reasonable for property owners. This \$5 fee is comparable to neighboring jurisdictions and this small fee helps minimize a barrier that could result in unauthorized tree removals. Traffic fines and citations are set by the State of Maryland and cannot be adjusted by

the city. The Public Works Traffic and Transportation Fees were last adjusted in FY 2019 and staff are waiting on the results of the fee study to inform future increases.

Councilmember Jackson (3/13/25 email)

48. ■ How will the Comp and Class study impact the 2026 budget and future budgets?

The FY 2026 proposed budget includes capacity for compensation and classification adjustments in Non-Departmental across all funds with personnel expenses. This is summarized on pages 365-367. The forecast includes these personnel costs in future years, with assumed increases for salaries. (See Question #22)

49. ■ The COLA is set at 2.5% for City employees in the 2026 budget. How much of a COLA are those on pensions slated to receive?

The FY 2026 budget does not include a retiree cost of living adjustment. Per the city's actuary, a 1% retiree COLA equals \$823,700. For context, retirees received a 1% adjustment in January 2025.

Councilmember Myles (3/14/25 email)

50. ■ p16 what can funds from the HCD special activities fund be used? Will this 250K be a recurring contribution? Could we make it a fixed percentage (like the Art in Public Places fund 0.1%; could be 0.15% for HCD)?

The General Fund forecast includes the \$250,000 as an annual contribution for the Housing Opportunities Fund. Please see question #34 on recommended adjustments for these Special Activities accounts. A fixed percentage contribution is something that could be explored if it is the desire of the Mayor and Council. With the number of new programs being developed it could be worthwhile to wait to evaluate program usage and community response in order to right-size future contributions under a fixed percentage methodology.

51. ■ p18 are the non fire/police FTE's absolutely needed? Are their jobs currently being done by others? In thinking about return on investment, which of the proposed FTE's will actually generate revenue and/or be cost neutral long term? Just want to make sure we're careful about adding FTE's when we may face precarious budgetary times. Additionally, it is noted that (p21), "Major cost drivers in the city's budget include personnel (60.7 percent)" making it even more critical that we are mindful about adding FTE's. There's also a \$5M increase in proposed expenditures for Personnel (pp64)

The new positions provide capacity to better support ADA compliance across the city; enhance communications and community engagement functions; improve development review, inspections, and permitting services in support of more streamlined economic development; and provide added resources to support enhanced housing programs. The new positions also provide capacity that will support public safety service delivery, ensure compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act, and expand programming at the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center. The 1.0 FTE Senior Zoning Inspector and the 0.5 FTE Program Specialist are revenue generating and the 2.0 FTE Codes Inspectors and 1.0 FTE Senior Fire Inspector support revenue generating permitting processes.

52. ■ p22 why did dental insurance increase so rapidly (27.1%)? Is it a new vs. Same insurance carrier that we've had in the past?

The city's dental insurance is with the same carrier as in prior years. Dental insurance coverage levels were increased for the dental plans and the FY 2026 costs align with those enhanced benefits that are now available to employees.

53. ◆ p43 can we move summer camps from Tier 3 to Tier 2 to improve access and affordability—particularly for communities of modest financial means? How much would it cost to make such a shift?

UPDATED: *Moving summer camps from Tier 3 to Tier 2 is ultimately a policy decision for the Mayor and Council. Doing so would reduce camp fees for all participants, but the cost to the City would be approximately \$61,680 in reduced revenue based on the FY26 proposed budget. While this shift improves affordability overall, it may unintentionally benefit higher-income families as much as, or more than, those with the greatest financial need.*

An alternative approach could be to focus on enhancing the Recreation Fund. For example:

- Increasing the income eligibility threshold would allow more modest-income families to qualify.*
- Boosting the individual subsidy amount would provide greater support to the most financially vulnerable.*
- A combination of both could be considered, though it would require further financial analysis.*

These options target assistance more precisely without reducing overall camp revenue or creating longer waitlists. In short, shifting tiers lowers costs for all but does not necessarily improve access for those who need it most. Strengthening the Recreation Fund may be a more effective and equitable way to meet the City's goals of access and affordability.

54. ■ p66 why do they propose a reduction in real & personal property tax (I'm unclear about the explanation given in the last paragraph of pp68)? Why do they predict an increase in highway user revenue given some of the pronouncements from Maryland's General Assembly about changes in some highway spending?

Real property tax is increasing \$2.8 million from FY 2025 Adopted to FY 2026 Proposed. Personal property tax is decreasing \$240,000 based on the current trends. Real property tax increases are driven by assessments, and the budget does not propose an increase to the tax rate. Highway user estimates are provided to the city from the Maryland Department of Transportation. The forecast includes significant reductions for highway user revenue beginning in FY 2028 (consistent with the current legislation).

55. ■ p72 (expenses) why are consultant & credit card charges increasing by so much?

FY 2026 increases to consultant services include funding for organizational development, a JEDI strategic plan, financial reporting software implementation, and consulting for the city's transition to WebEx calling (a cost saving transition). Credit card charges have risen consistently across all city functions, driven largely by online recreation registrations and online permitting functions. As shown on page 72, the FY 2024 ended the year even higher than what was budgeted in FY 2025 and volume continues to increase as customers prefer efficient web-based transactions.

56. [REDACTED] p75 16% increase? Please explain the reorganization & two department head expenditures further In addition to the matching Thrift plan, chartered employees and at-will employees receive an additional contribution consistent with their contracts. This contribution increased by \$45,730 to \$327,990 for FY 2026, and reflects the impact of the reorganization and addition of two new department directors.

The FY 2026 budget reflects an organizational restructuring which led to the creation of two new departments: Communications and Community Engagement (CCE) and Procurement. These functions were previously included in the City Manager's Office (CMO). This results in the addition of two new department directors who will receive additional retirement benefits, consistent with the other department directors in the organization.

Councilmember Fulton (3/16/25 email)

57. [REDACTED] (P118 of binder) The REDI line item shows an FY26 proposed budget of \$1,572,880 and an FY25 adopted of \$1,418,960. That is an increase of \$153,920 (10.8%). But the sidebar says there is an increase of \$203,920. Where is the extra \$50,000 (for marketing?) accounted for? And is my math right that if that is included, the total City expenditure for REDI in the proposed budget is \$1,622,880, an over 14% increase in spend on REDI over FY25? And the topline budget increase is only 3.9%?

There was a one-time life sciences branding project included in FY 2025 budget, which budget staff consider to be removed from the base for FY 2026. The total allocation for REDI between FY 2025 Adopted and FY 2026 Proposed is detailed below. This is a 10.8 percent change (\$153,920) in total.

	FY 2025	FY 2026
REDI Funding Levels		
Operating Costs	\$ 983,960	\$ 1,132,880
Incentive Program Funding	175,000	175,000
Small Business Impact Grants	150,000	150,000
MWBC	35,000	40,000
Rockville Rewards Program	25,000	25,000
Special Projects (Marketing)	50,000	50,000
TOTAL	\$ 1,418,960	\$ 1,572,880


Mayor Ashton (3/17/25 email)

58. [REDACTED] Please share what accounts for the special activities budget reduction on page 71 of the 3/17 agenda book. The reduction is noted as 36.7%

Please see the response to question #45.

59. [REDACTED] Please confirm that when you forecast the budget given the expansion on operating and ongoing expenses, as well as CIP, that you do not anticipate the need for a tax increase need. Please also note that the highway user revenues were previously anticipated to level off at 2.4 percent after FY27. Please look out at least 3-5 years. As noted in a previous response, the income tax increase that was previously in the Maryland state budget was forecasted down due to a potential downsizing in the Federal and contract workforce. If Rockville were to reduce the anticipated growth for FY26 to 2.6% (in alignment with the state income revenue forecasting) what impact would that have on our budget?


The General Fund forecast maintains the current property tax rate. The forecast incorporates General Fund transfers to the CIP and Debt Service Fund consistent with the planned capital spending and bond financing activities anticipated through FY 2030. As shared with the response for question #24 the FY 2026 revenue estimate is a 2.5 percent increase over the November 2024 payment, which establishes the base for the fiscal year. This means that the city's estimate for anticipated growth does align with and is even slightly more conservative than the State of Maryland.

60.  Carryover budget for Recreation and Parks and Transportation: Please confirm which if any projects that were scheduled to be completed in FY25 that have had to have carryover funds for FY26. If there are any delays, please share rationale. (Also noted in budget and on page 72 of agenda book). Can you please share what other major projects are being carried over due to delays (internal/external)


For budget purposes, projects that are not substantially complete by late March are held open through the next fiscal year to ensure that final payments and project closeout/punchlists can be fully captured within the project. This helps to ensure accurate project reporting. Capital projects that were initially scheduled to be completed in FY 2025 and are carrying over to FY 2026 include the following:

- King Farm Farmstead Electric Infrastructure (RB23) – The construction award for this project occurred in January 2025 which has delayed the original construction timeline.*
- King Farm Farmstead Fire Suppression (RB21) – This project requires coordination with WSSC and includes complex permitting requirements. Construction is expected to be substantially completed by June 2025 and FY 2026 work includes project close out*
- Lincoln Park Community Center Improvements (RA22) – The construction award for this project is occurring in March 2025 which has delayed the original construction timeline.*
- Outdoor Recreation Pool Renovations (RC18) – This project is expected to be substantially complete by May 2025. FY 2026 work includes project close out.*
- LED Streetlight Conversion (TA22) - The completion year changed to FY 2026 to allow for Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) grant agreement execution for Phase 3.*

As noted with the response to question #16 there are also delays associated with the city's planned solar installations.


61.  Regarding tax duplication, where will the additional funds we secured from the police reimbursement be allocated? Can we adjust to recognize this additional revenue before budget approval?

The adopted budget will show this additional \$473,400 in tax duplication revenue within the General Fund. The Mayor and Council will see this as part of the final balancing exercise and summary of changes between the proposed and adopted budget.

62.  Please share how much the City of Rockville has spent on outside consultants to develop strategic plans in the past 4-5 years.

Over the past five years the city has funded consultant support for one department-level strategic plan: the Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan (\$106,532, adopted in 2020). In addition to this strategic plan the city has utilized consultants to assist with more technical or objective components of city planning efforts including, but not limited to, the Comprehensive Plan (\$73,499,

adopted in 2021), the Climate Action Plan (\$23,500 adopted in 2022), and the RedGate Park Master Plan (\$118,356, adopted in 2022). In these cases consultants provided support to varying degrees, but staff were heavily or primarily involved in the plans' development.


63.  Where do we stand on exploring health insurance options for employees? The last few years there have been substantial increases.

Benefit renewals occur on the calendar year. The calendar year 2025 renewal rates were overall (based on employee participation among the two insurance carriers) below the national estimated average of 7% as follows:

Aetna: CY 2025 Renewal Increase: 7.0%

Kaiser: CY 2025 Renewal Increase: 3.8%


Overall Average: CY 2025 Renewal Increase: 5.8%

64.  Please share a history of total annual reserve funds over the past 5 years, and note percentage.

A ten year history can be seen with the response to question #1. A five year history with the total percentage is below. The city has consistently maintained reserve levels above the 20% target.

Five-Year History of General Fund Reserves

Fiscal Year	Reserve Target	Ending Unassigned Fund Balance	\$ Over Target	Ending Unassigned Fund Balance %
FY 2020	16,848,000	22,022,347	5,174,347	26%
FY 2021	16,921,000	22,869,949	5,948,949	27%
FY 2022	17,296,000	26,446,411	9,150,411	31%
FY 2023	18,664,080	27,588,751	8,924,671	30%
FY 2024	20,325,110	31,231,793	10,906,683	31%

65.  Please share more details on the rationale for the \$650K noted in association with the Shady Grove annexation. The narrative notes the rewritten zoning ordinance. Can this be done in-house?

The General Fund budget includes \$650,000 as an addition to reserves. This is the amount of revenues that exceed expenditures for FY 2026. This represents budget capacity that could be utilized for the additional personnel and operating costs associated with the Shady Grove Metro annexation. The city anticipates that an additional 6 police officers will be needed to manage the calls for service from the metro station with Year 1 costs approximating \$1 million. The forecast includes an additional \$400,000 in personnel costs beginning in FY 2027 assuming that the onboarding of additional officers would be phased in.

The zoning ordinance rewrite is well underway and the associated consulting costs were included in the FY 2023 budget.

66. ■ We know the refuse rates need to be reset. What is the rationale for the level of increase of 5.6%?

Please see the response to question #19.

67. ■ Can we leverage the portion of funds from tax duplication reimbursement that is not yet accounted for in this budget to support the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department public safety needs for the new safety vehicle. This would allow us to use funds from this general fund source instead of pulling from reserves.

This additional revenue will be part of the final balancing during the April 7th budget worksession. The Mayor and Council may direct any surplus capacity to replace the reserve recommendations, however staff would recommend maintaining the \$650,000 net addition to reserves to ensure sufficient budget capacity in the event that the elected body wishes to proceed with the immediate annexation of the Shady Grove Metro property.

68. ■ Please note that this question was originally asked on 3/4/25: Following our FY25, Montgomery County budget testimony related to the volume of calls at the Crisis Center responded to by Rockville City Police Department, it was shared that the County would implement some measures that would improve security and their handling of calls for service and transport. What is the estimated cost savings associated with this for the City of Rockville and how can those savings support future police and public safety needs?
- a. RCPD also requested a new mobile command center as the current one has outlived its usefulness. Is this planned for FY26/27?

Please see the response to question #17 regarding call volume for the Crisis Center. If Montgomery County takes over all calls for service this will provide the RCPD with additional bandwidth that will be directed towards direct response within the city. The estimated annual cost associated with the Crisis Center calls is \$37,550, which assumes that each call takes an hour and has two responding officers.

The Mayor and Council approved the new mobile command trailer with the February 2025 budget amendment, so this is already funded and getting underway.

69. ◆ How are we doing on hiring and remaining competitive to retain and attract officers?

The RCPD has 13 police vacancies with 14 police applicants currently in various stages of the hiring process. The signing bonus was recently increased to \$20,000 for entry level and lateral police hires. Staff have noticed an increase in the number of applicants over the last 2 months.

70. ■ The summary notes that the FY2026 budget supports funding for increased new hire bonuses for Police Officers, which will enhance ongoing recruitment efforts for the RCPD. The bonuses have been recently increased in FY25. Can you share an update on what is new?

This is new as compared to the FY 2025 adopted budget.

71. ■ There is a budget increase in the speed camera budget. Please share if there are additional speed cameras accounted for given the 5.4 percent increase or is this just an increase to cover the operating expenses. Are there plans to move the cameras throughout FY26 to areas where they may be needed more to support safety?

The operating expenditure category in the Speed Camera Fund is relatively flat compared to FY 2025 and does not assume more cameras within the city. The primary driver of the increase in total expenditures comes from the administrative fees. New speed camera locations can be implemented in order to support safety in FY26. RCPD just recently implemented a new location (Gude Drive) and is continually assessing safety needs related to automated enforcement.

72. ● It looks like the sidewalk construction is back down to \$200K per year. There are approximately 50 miles of sidewalk gap in the city and 458 different sidewalk gap segments. As part of Vision Zero (pedestrian/bike/mobility safety) and the outstanding missing segments, is sufficient? How long will it take to complete the missing segments that are feasible at this pace?

In FY23 DPW began implementing a new approach to sidewalk construction with a goal of increasing the pace of construction of missing sidewalk links. The approach is to tackle more than one or two sidewalk segments per year and instead take them in designated groups of 4-6 per years with each group going through a 3-year cycle (Year 1 – feasibility; Year 2 – design; and Year 3 – Construction). When fully implemented this will result in one group in each phase at any given time. In FY25, Group 1 sidewalks are being constructed.

In FY 25, DPW recognized the need to try to increase the pace further, but to do so needed additional staff. Therefore, the Department requested, and the Mayor and Council approved, and additional Transportation Engineer in the FY25 budget. Despite, several months of advertising and interviewing the Department has not been able to fill the position. This is consistent with the region-wide difficulty in hiring engineers. Additionally, as we begin completing the first group of sidewalks in FY25, we are beginning to obtain more data to advise the program moving forward. The percent of segments that move forward from feasibility, the cost of design and construction of the sidewalks. Previously, staff was choosing the highest priority sidewalks with a high likelihood of constructability, therefore we did not have feasibility rate data and the cost of design and construction was often more predictable and lower, given there were less conflicts and design issues. Beginning in the FY27 budget, we will begin to have better data to advise the pace and cost of the program moving forward (and hopefully have our new staff member on board).

There are two main reasons that only \$200k is requested in FY26 for the Sidewalk CIP project (TE26) despite staff ramping up the project. First, there is significant (\$2,157,492) prior appropriations still available to spend and second is that this amount includes \$965,000 that was previously appropriated by the City, but for which the City is now expecting reimbursement from the County Impact Tax Fund. This frees up the \$965,000 in City appropriations to be used for Group 1 and 2 sidewalks. Additionally, the \$3,707,259 in funding for FY21-25 includes a significant amount (\$1,395,040) of outside funding from grants, developer funds and the previously mentioned County Impact Tax funding. If the outside funds is removed from the FY21-FY25 funds, it leaves \$2,312,219. DPW is continuing to pursue outside funding, but does not recognize it in future years budgets until it is secured.

Therefore, it is likely that additional CIP funds will be needed, but until staff reviews the program over the next year or so, they will be able to better project the pace and cost of construction in future years.

73. ● What is the status of the Twinbrook Pedestrian Bridge? Given the significant time for this project, where do we stand on the working with WMATA to open up access? They currently close the station pathway at night and residents can't cross?

DPW staff are finalizing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to hire a consultant to conduct a feasibility study and 30% design and will send it for FHWA review in early April. After incorporating changes requested by FHWA, staff will advertise the RFP. One option to be assessed in the feasibility study is opening the tunnel 24/7. WMATA will be conferred with during the study.

74. ◆ Lakewood Elementary School Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge Access has been requested by RBAC. Can staff state feasibility of this effort/ update on review?

A connection between the Carl Henn Millennium Trail and the pedestrian bridge was identified as a shared-use path connection in the Pedestrian Master Plan that goes directly to the bridge entrance. The plan recommends evaluating the shared-use path (SUP) connection and was supported by RBAC and RPAC. Staff expects to identify SUP connections over the next year to evaluate for feasibility, including the Millenium Trail to the Lakewood Pedestrian Bridge and the Millenium Trail to Yale Place. These two locations are reasonably short connections, and staff can evaluate them with the current budget.

75. ◆ 2026 will be the 250th anniversary of our nation and Montgomery County. The budget does not note planning for this effort. Can the City work with our HDC, Recreation and Parks, Montgomery County, the state of Maryland, and other partners on this effort?

Staff recognizes the importance of the 250th anniversary of our nation and Montgomery County and is committed to celebrating this milestone through existing events and programs. While the budget does not include a dedicated line item for this effort, Special Events is internally funding enhancements to support the commemoration.

Staff will align efforts with organizations such as the HDC, Montgomery County, the state of Maryland, and other groups to promote this milestone through City events in 2026. This approach ensures that our community can participate in and recognize this historic occasion within the framework of our established programming.

76. ◆ Thank you for implementing Envisio to show our initiative progress to the public. In addition, we have a new FOIA system. During FY25 we discussed getting:
- Permitting on a system across planning and DPW. Has that been completed? If not, will that be accounted for in FY26?
 - A CRM (customer relations management) tool for Report a Concern so that we can better track, respond to, and see patterns of resident concerns and needs. This would also allow tracking on the progress and responses to resident concerns. Will that be accounted for in FY26?
 - Asset Management tool – Where does this stand?

As part of the FAST action item to create a virtual one-stop shop for all development related applications, DPW has begun working with CPDS to set up DPW permits in the MyGovernmentOnline (MGO) system. This is the same online system currently used for CPDS permits. This is covered under the existing agreement with MGO.

Procurement for an Enterprise Asset Management and Customer Relations Management software solution is ongoing. Nine proposals were received in response to the City's RFP and an interdepartmental evaluation committee are reviewing proposals, interviewing vendors and checking references. The committee expects to select a preferred vendor in spring, with contract award expected in summer 2025.

77. ♦ What additional ways do the efforts planned for FY26 support efficiency and transparency?

The ongoing development and expanded use of Envisio will be one of the key areas which promotes greater transparency into the status of various plans and projects across the city. The onboarding of the customer relations management and asset management tools will also provide added efficiencies in city operations. The FY 2026 addition of vehicle telematics (real-time GPS tracking) for snow and ice operations is another example of a tool that will result in efficiencies and added transparency, due to the public portal features. As the city launches its Pilot AI initiative, there is much interest in evaluating opportunities for automation which would also promote operational efficiencies.

78. ♦ How do our budget survey responses compare to last year in terms of number and representation? What is the increase in participation over the past 5 years?

As of mid-March the FY 2026 survey has received approximately 90% of the responses that it had this time last year on the FY 2025 survey. From the FY 2021 survey to the FY 2025 survey, we increased participation by approximately 400% (226 responses to 889 responses).

79. ♦ There is a significant participation from folks who do not live in the City. Is there a way to segment responses from those in the City and those who are sharing feedback from outside of the City? The outside respondent total is close to areas 1, 2, and 4. This would be particularly helpful for the comments section.

Staff will explore options to indicate which responses/comments are from respondents living outside city limits on the final report, to be provided after the public record closes.

80. ♦ What additional composting site will be added in FY26?

Please see response to question #15.

81. ♦ Is it possible to check on the Hungerford pond? There were some comments about maintenance.

Hungerford pond is a stormwater management facility that undergoes regular inspections and routine maintenance. Staff inspected the pond after receiving this comment, and confirmed that the pond is functioning as designed and that there are not maintenance issues that need to be addressed.

82. ♦ How are we doing on senior and youth programming? Do we have long wait lists? Can you share the wait list for the summer camps and how many are on them?

Youth Programs

The City's youth programming for FY2025 continues to be a strong and valued community offering, with high participation rates and significant interest across various activities categories. The City remains committed to providing diverse opportunities for youth engagement while also recognizing the challenges of space and staffing availability, particularly in nature and aquatics programs.

Key Insights:

- *High Demand and Participation: Youth programs continue to be well-utilized, with many participants across a variety of activities.*

- *Waitlists Indicate Strong Interest: Some programs, such as Learn to Swim, Summer Travel Camps, Nature Programs and Camps, have generated high levels of interest, reinforcing the need for ongoing evaluation of program capacities.*
- *Capacity and Resource Considerations: While the City strives to meet community demand, certain programs, particularly in nature, aquatics, and travel, are inherently limited by available space and staffing constraints. The department continues to work within these parameters to provide safe and high-quality programming.*
- *Program Utilization: On average, as a whole, youth programs are operating at ~90% capacity, with some exceeding enrollment expectations, demonstrating strong community involvement.*
- *The City's youth programming remains a pillar of community engagement and enrichment, and staff will continue working diligently to align resources with demand while maintaining program excellence.*


Summer Camps 2025

The demand for Rockville's summer camps outpaces supply, as evidenced by significant waitlists across multiple programs. This year (FY2025), the capacity of slots for camps is 5,644 and 4,621 registrations were successfully enrolled. To date there are 1,023 camp slots available. Many camps still have space in various programs just not always the preferred option.

Senior Programs

When comparing year over year participation rates for senior programs, registrations are a little higher year to date in FY25. Summer, fall, and winter program participation is slightly higher this year with approximately 200 additional registrations compared to last year at this time.


There are only a small number of in-person senior-filled classes with waitlists. Using Fall, (FY25), 8% of classes offered were filled with waitlists (293 classes offered, and 24 had waitlists). This year in the fall season less than three percent of the total number of registrants were on a wait list (105 people on wait lists, out of 3,700 people taking classes). Most of these wait lists are due to room size or bus size in the case of trips, and we physically cannot take additional registrants. In some cases, classes are offered virtually, so people on the in-person wait list can participate at home.

83.  Can you share an updated timeline for Phase I of Red Gate?


The design RFP solicitation is in final review and is expected to go out to bid within the next month. Once the design contract is awarded, staff anticipate the design process will take approximately one year.

84.  What would the total cost be to help support the development of a park in the Talbot Center?

The Talbott Street Park (RB25) CIP project was introduced with the FY 2025 budget and is estimated to cost \$950,000. This can be found on page 306 of the FY 2026 proposed budget.


85.  To follow-up on my questions on pavillions/ park shelters since 2022, please share the schedule of the park pavillion placements. We have areas of the City without them and they are important community gathering spaces.

Please see the response to question #13.


86.  What elements of the PROSE/ Park Strategic Plan are advanced through the FY26 budget? Can we schedule an update on this progress since it has been several years since the release of the plan?

R&P Strategic Plan Level of Service Standards identified needs with updates since the plan was adopted:


- Neighborhood Parks – need exists for additional 34 acres –In the LRCIP is a project to enhance a ten-acre property that is currently a city stormwater facility within the King Farm neighborhood and add paths and benches. This will be new park land.*
- Destination Parks – need exists for additional 25 acres – No progress in FY26 – Talbott Park identified in the CIP .16 acre in FY28 (will move up if State Bond Bill is awarded)*
- Multi-use Trails – need exists for additional 6 miles – Trails are identified in the RedGate Park Master Plan for implementation.*
- Natural Trails – need exists for additional 2.84 miles – Trails are identified in the RedGate Park Master Plan for implementation.*
- Park Shelters – need exists for additional 5 shelters – David Scull (1) FY26, RedGate Park (4 – one in Dog Park and three stand-alone pavilions) identified in RedGate Park Master Plan – also renovate 3-5 park shelters identified in LRCIP.*
- 90’ ball fields – need exists for additional 2 – staff does not recommend due to baseball enrollment decline and need for rectangular fields*
- Rectangular Multi-purpose fields – need exists for additional 5 fields – David Scull project will replace diamond field with rectangular field (FY26)*
- Outdoor Volleyball Courts – need exists for additional 5 courts – Courts have been renovated at Glenora, Woodley Gardens Park, College Gardens and Dogwood Parks and PIP is included in the FY26 budget to add four between 2027-2028 with locations to be determined.*
- Pickleball (dedicated) – need exists for additional 7 courts – Since the strategic plan was adopted Broome has added four dedicated pickleball courts. Staff is assessing locations for compatibility with park amenities and surrounding neighbors for additional dedicated courts.*
- Dog Parks – need exists for additional 1 dog park – Progress since adoption of plan has been to open the Preserve Parkway Dog Park and RedGate Park and Arboretum Dog Park.*
- Indoor Amenities: Recreation/Aquatics (Square Feet) – need exists for additional 57,612 square feet – In LRCIP King Farm Farmstead (~22,000 square feet), RedGate Park and Arboretum Visitor Center, PIP included for Montrose Community Center and Park Feasibility Study for FY27.*
- Special Use/Cultural Facilities (Square Feet) – need exists for additional 7,019 square feet – In LRCIP King Farm Farmstead (~22,000 square feet)*

87.  What is the status of soccer goals in Israel Park?

The soccer goals for Isreal Park will be installed by May 1. Staff is waiting on the delivery of the safety mechanism that prevents goals from tipping over.

88.  Can you please share whether the following projects are on schedule as they were previously included in FY25 are also in FY26: Lincoln Park Community Center Improvements (RA22), and F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre ADA Improvements (RA20)

There have been no changes to the project schedule for F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre ADA Improvements (RA20) as compared to the FY 2025 adopted budget. The construction completion timing was shifted out from FY 2025 to FY 2026 for the Lincoln Park Community Center Improvements (RA22). The award for this project is occurring in March 2025 which has delayed the original construction timeline.

89.  Quality neighborhoods is listed as a priority by residents. What are some examples of budget allocation listed to improve neighborhood quality?

The survey aligns quality neighborhoods with planning, property standards, code enforcement, tree and forest maintenance, and open green space. The FY 2026 budget includes enhanced funding for zoning enforcement activities, contract services to address non-native invasive species, the new neighborhood signage initiative, and grant supported tree planting. There are also significant increases to the Concrete Repair and Replacement (TC26) CIP project which is focused on ADA sidewalk reconstruction and is expected to be a benefit to neighborhoods across the city.

90. ■ Please note if the \$15K for neighborhood signs will be only for standards or can we move to implementation with these pilot funds?

The \$15,000 includes the installation of 3-4 new neighborhood signs.

91. ◆ There are comments about quality of housing. As a follow-up to our housing workshop, how long will it take to improve rental inspections so that it doesn't take 5 years to fully inspect a multi-family building?

Based upon the existing workload and staffing, additional resources would be needed to have all the units inspected in less than 5 years. The additional two building inspectors and fire inspector in this year's budget is to address building permit inspections.

92. ■ Will the distressed housing program be implemented in FY26?

If the "distressed housing program" is referring to CPDS's mitigation fund to financially support residents with addressing code enforcement items, then yes. The mitigation fund is included in the FY 2026 budget. The fund has been set up this year and will be implemented as well in FY 2026.

93. ◆ The rental license includes information about rental history. We discussed during our housing workshop developing a transparency initiative so that renters can see the history of rent increases as well as fees. Is the housing team able to get this implemented in FY26?

While this is not a stand-alone strategy, HCD expects to review this as part of the Chapter 18 rewrite. The department will be seeking input from the Mayor and Council during that process in FY 2026. The input received may influence the chapter rewrite, program development, and the FY 2027 budget.

94. ■ Can you share how the 2 requested additional FTEs will advance the housing initiatives requested by M&C during the housing workshop? What will their specific roles be?
- a. Part of the descriptions notes grants management. Grants management was previously managed by DHCD. Is staff shifting an FTE from the City Managers office and putting these responsibilities back to the housing department or is this truly a net new position?

The proposed budget includes the addition of 2.0 FTE positions that support the housing focus area. The new 1.0 FTE Collective Impact Manager position will work closely with the housing and neighborhood services team to ensure that there is alignment in strategy, consistency in data collection, continuous communication, and reinforced collaboration with community partners and grant recipients. The new 1.0 FTE Housing Programs Specialist position will promote the effective administration of the homeownership down payment assistance program, provide financial coaching services, and receive cross-training to support the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program. This position will also track and report program outcomes and participant progress, which will allow the Department of Housing and Community Development to continually assess and improve programs based on data and feedback. These are both new positions.

95. ■ Given some of the uncertainties for many families (i.e. federal workforce, contract, and grant transactions that impact available jobs in the region), do we have enough allocated in the rental assistance program? What about working with the state and county on foreclosure prevention to help families in need?

The Rockville Emergency Assistance Program (REAP) has funding of \$125,850 in the FY 2026 proposed budget. The city often uses budget amendments to provide additional resources to this and other need-based programs when an increase in program usage is identified during the year. During the FY 2025 budget process there was some interest in assigning the cannabis sales tax revenue as a funding source for REAP or the Recreation Fund. The FY 2026 cannabis sales tax revenue is estimated at \$40,000 and could be assigned as a REAP revenue source at the direction of the Mayor and Council.

Councilmember Valeri (3/17/25 email)

96. ■ What effect would the potential 3.5% property tax increase by County officials have on our budget?

This would have no impact on the city's budget. Any changes to the property tax revenue for Montgomery County is an impact to the Montgomery County budget.

97. ■ Special Activities Fund Expenditures by Program - Opioid Settlement Fund. This jumped significantly from FY25, from 15,690 143,400. Can you explain this a bit?

Please see the response to question #31.

98. ■ Given the length of time needed to fill the position, and the negotiating with the County on the contract, can we begin to set aside funds for a second mental health specialist to share the workload and assist with Victim Advocacy?

RCPD cannot justify the need for a second mental health specialist at this time; however, if demands on the current mental health specialist increase, the RCPD would expand the program and make the associated budget increase requests as part of the budget process (or through a budget amendment).

99. ■ RCPD has indicated that the current Mobile Command Unit is past overdue to be replaced. Where would this expenditure be placed within the budget? Can this be brought forward to Mayor and Council for discussion?

The Mayor and Council approved the new mobile command trailer with the February 2025 budget amendment, so this is already funded and getting underway.

100. ◆ Was an assessment done of the health insurance broker to determine if they are the best fit for the City's needs? If so, can this be shared with Mayor and Council?


The current benefits broker was selected through an extensive RFP and evaluation process based on the criteria set forth by the city, in 2020. USI provides the city with ongoing support throughout the year as well as targeted support and guidance through the benefits renewal process.

101. ■ Where are we on the LED conversion of City buildings? What cost savings are we not taking advantage of due to phased approach?


The following is the status of plans to retrofit 14 of the largest, occupied, and highest energy consuming facilities that total approximately 408,412 square feet (SF) of building space:

- 5 facilities are complete, totaling 127,374 SF of building space (Senior Center, Twinbrook Community Center, City Hall, Water Treatment Plant, Lincoln Park Community Center).*
- 4 facilities are currently being assessed by the lighting contractor for potential conversions in FY 2025, totaling 111,836 SF of building space (Thomas Farm Community Center, F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre, Croydon Creek Nature Center, and Rothgeb Maintenance Facility (Fleet, Stockroom and Carpentry Shop)). Although only Thomas Farm Community Center is budgeted for FY 2025, the contractor identified that several facilities are currently eligible for higher Pepco incentives. Staff is working with the contractor to determine if it is possible to accelerate conversions by using a combination of funds from the FY 2025 budget (\$92,000), Pepco incentive rebates issued to the contractor to reduce upfront costs (amount to be determined), and the \$63,000 MEA grant. Thomas Farm Community Center upgrades are estimated to generate \$16,144 in energy savings, while some areas at the Theatre/Social Hall may generate up to \$6,252 in savings. More information on the feasibility to implement these projects and the potential energy savings is expected in April.*
- 2 facilities are partially complete as part of phased renovations and facility upgrades, totaling 101,521 SF of building space (Swim and Fitness Center (indoor pools, locker rooms and parking lot complete) and 6 Taft Court (north wing complete)).*
- 3 facilities are identified for future retrofits but are not scheduled, totaling 67,681 SF (Police Station (constructed in 2012), Glenview Mansion (some historic lighting may be limited), Recreation Services (long range CIP plans renovations in 2033)).*


Additionally, the Streetlight LED Conversion (TA22) is partially complete. 1,900 lights in Phase 1 were converted, 650 lights in Phase 2 are anticipated to be converted in 2025, and 650 lights in Phase 3 are anticipated to be converted in 2026. Upon completion, electricity savings is estimated to be \$105,000, but is subject to future changes to Pepco tariffs.

102.  For CIP Sidewalks: FY26-FY30 (TE26) – the total funding is \$2.3 million. For the previous period (TE21) the total funding was \$3.7 million. Why is this decreased when Vision Zero is still a strong priority for Mayor and Council?

Please see the response to question #72.

103.  The Parking District tax rate has remained flat since 2017, not adjusting for inflation. Is there any benefits to keeping this flat?


The properties in Rockville Town Square pay the additional Parking District Tax which provides some support for the debt service payments associated with the construction of the Town Square garages. Changes to that tax rate would need to be considered as part of a broader discussion around Town Square and economic development activities.

104.  Unfulfilled yet still asked for by the community is the Community Walkable Dog Park in Twinbrook – located within a park on either the north or south side of Veirs Mill. This amenity is in line with the City's goal of creating more dog parks in various parts of the City. Would this qualify as a CIP?

Staff do not currently have any plans for a dog park within the Twinbrook community. Several years ago, staff were asked to identify possible locations. Staff looked at three; the Twinbrook

Community Recreation Center and two locations within Rockcrest Park. Challenges at these three locations include ADA access, parking, and proximity to residents. Rockcrest Park was the best candidate but the residents around the location were not excited about the area. R&P are happy to explore potential dog park locations in the Twinbrook area if identified by the community.

Councilmember Van Grack (3/17/25 meeting)

105.  How have police pay and benefits been adjusted to make the RCPD more competitive?

The city developed a Police Staffing Action Plan in December 2023 which included the following:

- 1. The creation of a Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) for Police Employees*
- 2. An updated and more generous final average earnings (FAE) pension benefit calculation for officers*
- 3. Salary adjustments allowing for new hire officers to come in at a Step 2 on the scale and lateral hire officers to come in between Step 2 and Step 7, creating more equity between officers and acknowledgment of career service. Equity adjustments were provided to all officers to reflect this realignment of hiring ranges.*
- 4. The commitment to the Compensation and Classification study*
- 5. Hiring bonuses of \$6,000 and \$10,000 for entry level and lateral hire officers, respectively*
- 6. A hiring referral bonus of \$5,000 for any officer that refers a new hire officer*
- 7. The addition of six (6) police officers to address the reduced support from the Montgomery County Police Department*


The FY 2025 Adopted Budget incorporated all of the above items and included a new police specialty pay differential for officers with specialized training and certifications.

Following these actions, the city took further steps in August 2024 by increasing all officer salaries by 3.5%. This compensation adjustment was provided in addition to the 2% cost of living adjustment and annual step increments included in the FY 2025 Adopted Budget.

The FY 2026 Adopted Budget will incorporate the results of the Compensation and Classification study. This includes an 8% adjustment to the police salary ranges, providing officers with more salary growth opportunities. In addition, hiring bonuses have been increased to \$20,000 per officer.

To compare the starting salary of a new entry-level officer from FY 2024 Adopted to FY 2026 (after Compensation and Classification Adjustments) please see the schedule below. From FY 2024 to FY 2026 the starting salary of an entry level officer will have increased 16.7%:

	FY 2024 Adopted	FY 2024 - Dec. Adj.	FY 2025 Adopted	FY 2025 - Aug. Adj.	FY 2026 Adopted
	PL110-1	PL110-2	PL110-2	PL110-2	PL110-2
Entry Level Officer	\$ 63,245	\$ 65,121	\$ 66,423	\$ 68,748	\$ 73,779

106.  How do the proposed building permit fees compare to the County and Gaithersburg?

A detailed building fee comparison was conducted leading up to FY24 which identified that Rockville was, in FY23, an average of 20% below Gaithersburg in our fees. We were also significantly below Montgomery County as stated in the March 17th meeting. So this proposed increase should not impact our competitiveness with nearby jurisdictions. Since the FY 2024 budget

the increases to building permit fees have been inflationary. It is also important to note that Gaithersburg has a different fee structure which can make the fee comparison more involved. There is a comprehensive fee study underway which will include benchmarking. This information will be used to support future fee adjustments

Councilmember Myles (3/20/25 email)

107. pp598 Is part of the increase to caregivers a factor of increasing the contribution in line with the inflationary target goal previously set?

The FY 2026 budget incorporates a 22.3 percent increase for community services and enrichment grants following a refreshed process that consolidated what had previously been two separate grant programs. This increase is more than the inflationary increases that have been allocated over the last few budget cycles. These increases reflect the refreshed grant program and the potential for expanded community needs in response to economic uncertainties.

108. pp610 why is there a decrease in the water cost subsidy?

The FY 2025 total for the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department included a one-time \$65,000 contribution for a vehicle. The water subsidy portion of the grant was \$12,000 consistent with the amount shown for FY 2026. The FY 2026 proposed budget does recommend a \$250,000 allocation of General Fund reserves to provide an emergency response vehicle to the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department (in alignment with the public testimony received on March 17).

Councilmember Fulton (3/21/25 email)

109. If base to base is 150, when/how was the 50k for branding allocated? Do I understand that it was a 50k additional to be spent in FY25 that was not in the adopted budget and does not carry into FY26?

The schedule below shows the FY 2025 Adopted allocations along with reductions for the one-time branding development initiative, and the additions as requested by REDI. The additions include \$100,000 for a Business Development Associate, \$48,920 for increases to operating costs, \$5,000 for fixtures and maintenance for Shop Local, and \$50,000 (ongoing) for marketing costs for implementing the new life sciences brand. No payments are distributed to REDI beyond what was included in the adopted budget.

	FY 2025 Adopted	Reductions: One- Time FY 2025 Items	FY 2026 Funding Enhancements	FY 2026 Proposed
REDI Funding Levels				
Operating Costs	\$ 983,960	\$ -	\$ 148,920	\$ 1,132,880
Incentive Program Funding	175,000	-	-	175,000
Small Business Impact Grants	150,000	-	-	150,000
MWBC	35,000	-	5,000	40,000
Rockville Rewards Program	25,000	-	-	25,000
Special Projects (Marketing)	50,000	(50,000)	50,000	50,000
TOTAL	\$ 1,418,960	\$ (50,000)	\$ 203,920	\$ 1,572,880

Councilmember Valeri (3/23/25 email)

110. ■ What is the total cost of landscaping at City facilities? In particular, the cost of annuals, non-native trees, and labor associated with annual planting.

Flowering Annuals:

- *Annual Cost: Approximately \$62,810, plus 450 labor hours.*
- *Details:*
 - *131 flower beds across the city, totaling around 98,000 square feet.*
 - *Plant Material: \$30,000*
 - *City Facilities Planting/Maintenance: 450 labor hours (in-house work).*
 - *Right of Way Planting/Maintenance: \$32,810 annually (contracted).*

Flowering Bulbs:

- *Annual Cost: Approximately \$12,500, plus 300 labor hours.*
- *Details:*
 - *Plant Material: \$12,500*
 - *300 labor hours*

Non-Native Trees:

- *Annual Cost: \$70,483 for non-native tree planting.*
- *Details:*
 - *On average, 460 trees are planted annually.*
 - *Average Cost per Tree: \$406 (includes plant material, planting, watering, pruning, mulching, and a 2-year warranty for replacements).*
 - *Native vs. Non-Native Planting: Approximately 50% of trees are native, while the other 50% are non-native.*

111. ■ Please provide a breakdown of the total expenditures, across all departments, for outside consulting. Ideally, a short sentence on what the purpose was for hiring an outside firm should be included.

Many of the items included in the consultant services line is considered routine and ongoing in nature. This includes, but is not limited to things like the city's state lobbying services, support for animal review hearings, third-party specialized inspection services, and facility energy audits. The major changes included in this line, as compared to last year is summarized with the response to question #29. The consulting services line makes up 0.6% of the operating budget and totals \$906,810 in the FY 2026 Proposed Budget. A summary of items included on the consulting line is provided in the table below.

Dept Name	FY 2026 PROPOSED	Purpose
City Manager	207,860	Community Survey, Emergency Operations Training, State Lobbying, JEDI Strategic Plan
Communications & Comm. Engagement	1,320	Translation Services
CPDS	14,530	Retreats and Leadership Development, Interpretive Sign Development, Master Plan Support
Finance	14,050	ERP Professional Support and Software Implementation Services
Human Resources	50,000	Organizational Development
Information Technology	135,500	ERP Professional Support, IT Research and Advisory Support, WebEx Calling Implementation
Mayor and Council	35,000	Internal Audits, Strategic Goal Setting
Non-Departmental	11,000	Ad-hoc Services
Police	13,150	Animal Review Hearings
Public Works	410,200	Consultant Inspection Services, Water and Sewer Modeling, Stormwater Drainage/Landscaping Review, Facility Energy Audits, Mosquito Management, Water Backflow Inventory Collection, Emergency Spill Cleanup, Underground SWM Facility Inspections, Site Surveys
Recreation and Parks	14,200	Health Consulting Services, Energy Consulting Services
TOTAL	906,810	

112. ♦ White respondents are greatly over-represented among respondents. Did staff monitor the demographic breakdown at the mid-way point? Were there efforts to correct this? What was done to correct this? How will this be corrected for next year's survey?

The community budget priorities survey is not a statistical survey. The demographic information is helpful in providing context on the ways in which the responses may differ from what would come from a statistical survey. Budget staff develop an outreach plan each year to promote the survey among those who are under-represented. For FY 2026 this included direct outreach to participants of city ESL classes, recipients of Rockville holiday drive packages, and outreach efforts in rental communities with an emphasis on Area 5 where responses were under-represented in the FY 2025 budget survey. After this survey closes, staff will evaluate under-representation of participants, and use this information to help plan outreach efforts for the FY 2027 survey.

113. ♦ After reviewing every survey respondent's comment, there is confusion regarding County vs. City vs. State when it comes to levying taxes. Can we include a short paragraph on the Budget webpage that outlines this distinction, and shares the last year that the City increased taxes?

The city maintains a page www.rockvillemd.gov/taxes which describes the city's property tax rates and how tax bills can be found. In addition, the city's Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) contains a wide range of helpful financial information about taxes including a graphic on how property tax is allocated between the State, County, and City. The full report can be found [HERE](#). The graphic from the PAFR is shown below. In addition, the Rockville Reports articles on the budget frequently state that the city has not raised the property tax rate since 1995.

Who receives my property tax?

Real property tax is assessed by the State of Maryland, Montgomery County, and the City of Rockville. For each \$1 paid by a Rockville resident, approximately 22 cents comes to the City of Rockville to fund municipal programs and services. Property tax revenue made up 44% of General Fund revenue in FY 2024, the largest single revenue source.



114. ◆ Can staff provide the survey responses broken down by Area? I would like to know which comments came from outside the City.

The survey report provides trend analysis for questions based on Area, when prevalent trends begin to emerge. It is difficult to break down the comments by Area. This is something that may require more review.

115. ◆ What does staff do with the submitted requests and ideas from the public? Are these ever integrated into the budget? What is the process used by staff to circle back with community members/organizations who have submitted an idea that would qualify as a CIP/PIP? What is the status of Vision Zero non-CIP feedback from last year's budget survey?

Staff review all the submissions from the Propose-A-Project process. All individuals/groups who make Propose-A-Project submissions are notified that their submissions will be included as public testimony with the budget and are encouraged to track budget discussions. The neighborhood signage initiative that is included in the FY 2026 budget was previously a Propose-A-Project. The comments that come from the survey primarily serve to inform the Mayor and Council given the timing of the survey running concurrent with the budget process. Staff are not developing action plans based on the survey comments but do look to see how the budget is aligning with high-level priorities.

116. ■ The following items were submitted by the public; they align with many of this elected body's goals and core values. Please share any information that staff have on the item, whether it was considered for CIP status, and whether they are considering inclusion of the item in the budget – either within their own department's budget or for consideration as a CIP/PIP.

- a) Safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure from surrounding neighborhoods to RedGate

Yes. The city was awarded the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program grant award last year. The project is to evaluate feasibility and prepare a preliminary design for a bike/ped facility from Maryvale Park to RedGate Park via First St and Taft Ct/St. While the grant

was awarded, the city has not received any agreement from FHWA. When staff last spoke with FHWA, they did not indicate that this program was cancelled, just that it was taking time to get moving (it is a new program for them).

b) Restrooms at parks – especially ones with playgrounds

Open restrooms in parks have long been an issue for the Recreation and Parks Department. The current practice is to lock bathrooms when there is no city supervision on site. Leaving bathrooms unattended in parks presents several risks, primarily related to safety, hygiene, and maintenance. Unmonitored bathrooms are more susceptible to vandalism, illegal activities, and damage to fixtures. They can also become unsanitary quickly, when not monitored. Overflowing toilets, broken plumbing, and inadequate supplies further contribute to unhygienic conditions, while trash and litter can accumulate without proper waste disposal measures. Unattended bathrooms pose privacy risks and can lead to environmental problems, such as water wastage and excessive trash. Without supervision, these bathrooms are also more likely to present physical hazards, like broken tiles, or slippery floors. Overall, leaving park restrooms open and unsupervised creates a negative experience for visitors and increases the likelihood of safety issues.

City code only allows the use of portable toilets for construction sites and special events, however portable toilets are movable and can be strategically placed in areas with higher foot traffic. These units are less prone to causing physical hazards and generate less opportunity for waste. Many surrounding jurisdictions utilize portable toilets, and this could be further evaluated if a code change is considered.

If a restroom facility were provided at every playground location, it would require additional review but could be approached as follows:

- Playground with an adjacent Rec Center or other city facility: 7 locations – These locations the visitor can use the restroom in the adjacent facility (no cost or change)*
- Playground with a closed shelter/facility: 18 locations – These locations have permanent shelters; however, they are locked. At these locations, staff would have to devise a way to lock and unlock the facilities, provide security check, and provide daily custodial services, including the weekends. (Costs will include custodial staff, security either through police, park ranger or private security, weekend coverage, technology for locking system)*
- Playground with no facility: 20 locations – These locations would require the construction of a restroom facility which will vary significantly by location. The cost for each facility would start at \$300,000 and require ongoing operating costs.*

c) Installation of Doggy Stations at entrances to all City parks

Currently the city has approximately 30 mutt mitt stations scattered throughout the park system, not including the units in the three off-leash dog parks. Each station averages \$500 per year. To install a station at every park entrance would require 120 stations with an initial cost of \$60,000. Recreation and Parks staff recommend residents be responsible for bringing their own bags. Theft of bags is common, and then the city receives complaints when the stations are empty.

d) Soccer goals for Isreal Park - *Please see the response to question #87*

e) Security improvements at City Hall – Metal detector

Staff will evaluate options for security improvements in connection with planned improvements to City Hall following the relocation of staff to the 6 Taft Court. As it relates to metal detectors, the installation of a metal detector would require that an officer be stationed at the entrance to respond whenever the detector is triggered. Current staffing levels do not include a dedicated security resource for City Hall or other city facilities.

- f) Invasive vine removal on City Property – including King Farm retention pond

An additional \$30,000 is included in the proposed FY26 budget to supplement existing funding for the management of all non-native species.

- g) Transitioning use of annuals (one and done plants) and non-native trees on City property to native plants and trees

Transitioning from use of annual and non-native trees on City property to all native plants is a policy decision. Current efforts to incorporate native plantings include the incorporation of new native plantings at City Hall and trials of new native street trees. Recreation and Parks staff is assessing changes to the Master Street Tree Plan to include more native species. Native perennials are also being trialed at two right-of-way flowerbeds this spring.

Pros and Cons of transitioning to Native Plants and Trees:

Pros: Environmental benefits - Native plants support local wildlife, pollinators, and ecosystems. Improved soil health, the promotion of biodiversity and the attraction of beneficial insects are all benefits.

Cons: Rockville's urban setting presents challenges for native plants to thrive, due to temperature shifts, increasing impermeable surfaces, and a large deer population. As an example, last year 56% of native trees were established successfully, compared to 79% of non-native trees. Perennial plants, while they can potentially be long-lasting, require just as much maintenance as annuals. The pool of native plants suitable for right-of-way planting is limited, as they must meet specific criteria related to roadway conditions. It is easier to plant native species in parks. Deer in the community present a challenge and they prefer native plants. In addition, when perennials get a pest or disease, it will require treatment.

- h) Deer mitigation strategy

This is a policy decision for the current Mayor and Council. Significant staff time and resources will be required to develop a mitigation strategy beyond what was directed in April of 2021.

Mayor and Council approved a pilot deer culling program which occurred on November 21 – 29, 2020, December 19 – 27, 2020 and January 9 – 16, 2021. Staff shared the results of the program with the Mayor and Council on April 26, 2021. Please refer to agenda item #15 from the Mayor and Council's April 26, 2021, meeting to view the staff report and recommendations: <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/04262021-6228>.

At that meeting, the Mayor and Council decided to end the culling portion of deer management efforts within Rockville. Moving forward, deer management in Rockville has included participation on the Montgomery County Deer Management Work Group; annual review of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife and Heritage Division annual report and

White-tailed Deer Management Plan; monitoring the results of the Howard County pilot tick study; and conducting an annual educational lecture on deer for homeowners held at the Croydon Creek Nature Center. For further information you can visit www.rockvillemd.gov/1084/Wildlife-Management.

The most informative study on managing White-tailed Deer was conducted by Cornell University - [Managing-White-tailed-Deer-Cornell.pdf](#). Pages 27-29 highlight the most common non-lethal measures, fences, changing plant material, and repellents up to less common fertility controls. There continues to be no silver bullet to managing urban populations of white -tailed deer.

If the Mayor and Council are proposing the use of fertility controls significant staff time, consulting, permitting and financial resources will be required to develop a strategy.

Councilmember Jackson (3/27/25 email):

117. ■ The \$50,000 for special projects (marketing) for REDI. Is that for the life-sciences branding initiative? Wasn't that supposed to be done by now?

The life sciences branding project was a one-time (\$50,000) effort included in the FY2025 allocation for REDI. The FY 2026 allocation replaces that funding with a new \$50,000 for marketing and deploying the newly developed brand. Additional information can be found with the response to question #109.

118. ◆ Do we have a way to update goals/outcomes for REDI? Obviously where we are now economically is very different than last year. Is there a mechanism for the City to reflect that new environment in the work REDI is tasked with doing?

Staff recommend coordinating with the City Attorney's Office to evaluate options for including goals and performance metrics for the amendment to the agreement.

119. ■ I know that the City talks about 20% in reserves and whatever is "excess" will go toward funding various projects. But isn't this a little disingenuous? We are including these projects in the budget. They just are the first ones to be cut or eliminated if the revenue doesn't perform like we expect – correct?


Consistent with the FY25 budget, any amounts approved for uses of reserves are appropriated on the first budget amendment of the year. These uses of excess reserves are not contingent upon the city's financial performance. The city currently has these excess reserves available. This is consistent with previous responses provided with question #1 and question #35.

120. ■ What is the purpose of the \$8,000 for the Women Who Care Ministries? Is it for a sponsorship of their annual luncheon or is it for programmatic uses as well?


Women Who Care Ministries provides more than 6,000 meals to low-income families and children according to their application. The funding supports their annual Restore The Joy Empowerment Luncheon/Conference. More information on the details of the request can be found in the grant binder.

121. ■ I'm confused over Peerless' \$125,000 ask and subsequent grant of \$95,000 – especially as their rental income is increasing by \$40,000. Would appreciate a little explanation.

The funding recommendation of \$95,000 was made by a panel consisting of 21 reviewers, 8 from boards and commissions (HSAC, HRC, Youth, Senior, Arts, Recreation and Parks) and 13 staff (from DPW, CPDS, DHCD, CMO, CCO, R&P). The grant allocations are subject to Mayor and Council approval. More information on the details of the request can be found in the grant binder.

122.  How do we “work with landlords, tenants, and common ownership communities such as condominium associations and homeowner’s associations to help resolve issues between landlords, tenants, common ownership communities and their members, and business owners”? Is it a formal process or informal? How much staff time is taken up by it? How many cases or disputes do we handle in a given year? This sounds very much like the description of the CCOC which common ownership communities pay a yearly assessment for similar services. Can you help me and others differentiate between the two or are the processes fundamentally the same?

This question is under review.


123.  I would very much appreciate some options for making the Housing Opportunity Fund better funded (like the County's Housing Production Fund) and able to do the work assigned but also to act quickly to take advantage of opportunities.

Strategies to consider include but are not limited to:


- o Gradual increases to the annual allocation to the Housing Opportunities Fund*
- o Considering excess reserves for allocation to the Housing Opportunities Fund*
- o Considering excess reserves for funding arrangements in support of preserving or expanding affordable housing units*

The County is a much larger organization than the City of Rockville, however the city’s proposed annual allocation of \$250,000 to the Housing Opportunities Fund is approximately three times as much as the County’s annual contribution to their Housing Production Fund, as a percentage of each respective total operating budget. Please see the responses to question #37 and question #50 for additional context.

Mayor Ashton (4/7/25 email):

124.  Regarding RedGate, can you share an update on where we are now that we are more than half-way through FY25. Are we on track? When is the design scheduled to be completed? When will the dog park that was constructed be opened? It was open and then closed, previously. When can it be reopened?

Design RFP is being finalized with the Procurement Department and we expect release of the RFP within the next month. Once the project is awarded, design is estimated to take 12 months. Construction of first phase park infrastructure, pathways, community garden, playground, arboretum signage and amenities would begin the following year. The dog park was reopened last spring (2024) and has been open ever since. Temporary accessible paths have been installed. The design will include permanent accessible routes and add shade, water line, and other amenities to the dog park.

125.  Regarding RedGate, when will the community garden be created? We currently have three community gardens, all of which are on the West side of the City, and have none on the East side.

The community garden is included in the first phase amenities to be constructed. We anticipate the community garden being constructed in 2027/2028.

126. ● Regarding RedGate, when will the educational markers for the 100K trees be placed so that the space can more fully become an arboretum?

Two signs (see below) have been installed along the path of the phase one plantings. Two additional signs will be planted at the phase two location in the near future. The signs are being fabricated with the new brand. Additional interpretive signage will be included during the design phase. The RFP identifies an arboretum specialist be retained by the design team. The arboretum specialist will provide guidance and recommendations on interpretive signage and the levels of an arboretum.



127. ● Regarding RedGate, has the City received the Park and Open Space money that is passed on from the state via the County?

The State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources Program Open Space (POS) funding designated for RedGate Park in the amount of \$2 million is scheduled to go to the State Board of Public Works in April 2025. POS funding is administered by M-NCPPC. The POS grant is a reimbursement grant. Once the city has spent the funding, staff provide the paperwork to be reimbursed.

128. ● Regarding RedGate, has the City marketed the tree and bench sponsor program to support the revenue that will be needed to support the Red Gate Masterplan.

Both the POS and the LWCF grant applications include benches and trees as part of the funding requests. We have not marketed the city's bench and tree memorial program for RedGate Park until a design is finalized. The design team will recommend locations and quantities for benches and trees throughout the park.

129. ● Regarding RedGate, what new activities beyond what was already included in FY25 is planned for FY26?

We are working to implement what was included in the FY25 budget – park infrastructure and first phase design. This process and associated activities will carry into FY26.

ATTACHMENT A**ROCKVILLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – PROPOSED MEASURES FY2026**

Performance Measures	Actual FY2022	Actual FY2023	Actual FY2024	Proposed FY2025	Proposed FY2026	Proposed Numbers w/Added BD Position
Number of strategically placed print ads in regional/national publications *	2	0	4	2	2	
Reach of REDI advertising/marketing communications	71,400	267,868	700,289	50,000	75,000	
Number of digital posts promoting Rockville as a place to do business	81	158	149	75	85	
Number of business visits/meetings	115	119				
Number of visits/meetings w/existing businesses			95	75	75	150
Number of business visits w/potential prospects			60	25	40	120
Number of new businesses attracted to the City (grantees)			13	15	15	30
Number of business expansions (grantees)			0	15	15	20
Business Incentive Grant recipients (Move/Expansion) and Small Business Impact Fund recipients	4	11	17	9	15	30
Square footage of new space leased by grantees	32,458	45,045	18,915	35,000	35,000	50,000
Aggregate average annual salaries for grantee firms	\$90,000	\$97,000	\$85,000	\$95,000	\$95,000	\$95,000
Number of full-time jobs added to Rockville through grantees	84	73	34	70	70	80
Capital Investments from Grantees	—	\$665,000	\$760,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$600,000

Number of Maryland Women Business Center (MWBC) workshops offered to entrepreneurs	73	107	128	120	125	
Number of MWBC workshop attendees	2,540	1,569	1,372	1,500	1,500	
MWBC Capital Infusion in Rockville*	\$2,600,000	\$1,360,000	\$1,400,000	\$750,000	\$900,000	
Minority Businesses assisted	493	418				
Montgomery County	330	246	214	250	250	
City of Rockville	65	53	166	83	100	
Number of Rockville companies promoted through social media	579	435	175	200	200	
Number of broker/economic development event sponsorships where REDI receives brand recognition	7	9	8	8	8	
Number of industry sector events hosted/promoted	34	25	15	20	20	
Number of external articles posted that share news about Rockville's industry sectors	69	92	60	75	75	

** Much of the funding received by MWBC clients in FY2022 and FY2023 was from the federal Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loans obtained due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and other available relief programs.*