

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: March 31, 2026 Dear Los Angeles Community Members, Stakeholders, and Partners, It is our privilege to present this year's Annual City Budget White Paper, a comprehensive overview of our city's financial priorities, challenges, and opportunities for the upcoming fiscal year. At a time when cities across the nation face increasing demands on public services, infrastructure, and community investment, transparency and accountability in budgeting are more important than ever. This report is designed to provide a clear and accessible understanding of how public resources are allocated, the rationale behind key funding decisions, and the long-term fiscal outlook for our city. The White Paper outlines our core priorities: maintaining essential city services, strengthening public safety, investing in critical infrastructure, supporting economic development, and ensuring responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. It also addresses ongoing structural challenges, including rising operational costs, deferred maintenance, and the need for sustainable, reliable revenue strategies. Importantly, this document is more than a financial report it is a roadmap for informed policy discussion and meaningful community engagement. We firmly believe that an informed and engaged public is essential to shaping a budget that reflects our shared values and collective vision for Los Angeles. We encourage you to review the report carefully, share your feedback, and actively participate in the ongoing dialogue about our city's future. Your insight and engagement are critical as we work together to build a more resilient, efficient, and equitable Los Angeles. Thank you for your continued leadership, partnership, and commitment to our communities. Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates Email: LABudgetAdvocates@gmail.com Website: www.BudgetAdvocates.org



Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates 2026 White Paper



*Los Angeles City Budget Merry-Go-Round:
Round and Round it Goes,
Where It Stops Nobody Knows*

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LOS ANGELES CITY BUDGET MERRY-GO-ROUND

Round and Round It Goes, Where It Stops Nobody Knows

The metaphor of the merry-go-round captures the City of Los Angeles's fiscal condition with uncomfortable precision. Every year, the City Council debates rising expenditures, moderating revenues, pension pressures, homelessness investments, infrastructure backlogs, and legal liabilities. Every year, a technically balanced budget is adopted. And every year, structural imbalances quietly persist beneath the surface, waiting for the next economic slowdown to expose them.

This cycle is neither inevitable nor irreversible. With disciplined fiscal reform, data-driven management, operational efficiencies, and the strategic deployment of technology and artificial intelligence, Los Angeles can stop the merry-go-round and create a sustainable, balanced budget that delivers equitable services to all Angelenos.

The Structural Reality: Expenditures Outpace Revenues

Los Angeles is a global city—economically dynamic, culturally rich, and socially complex. The City's budget has hovered around \$14 billion which includes the General Fund budget of \$8 billion. Approximately 75% of the Budget is consumed by personnel-related costs—salaries, overtime, healthcare, pension contributions, and workers' compensation. Public safety departments alone account for well over half of General Fund spending. Retirement systems such as the Los Angeles City Employees' Retirement System and Los Angeles Fire and Police Pensions require annual contributions of almost \$1.4 billion combined.

Liability payouts further exacerbate the problem. The City paid \$286 million in liability payouts in fiscal year 2024-25, but only budgeted \$187 million, creating a budget imbalance. The City needs to find a way to get control over this, particularly LAPD with its \$281 million liability payouts, 55% of the total

Homelessness expenditures add another structural component. The Homeless Budget is projected to be \$904 million. Funding is uncertain because of potential cutbacks from Washington and the viability of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

Infrastructure is another long-term pressure point. Deferred maintenance for streets and sidewalks is \$5 billion and \$26 billion for recreation and parks.

When budgets tighten, discretionary services such as street maintenance are often the first to experience reductions. These cuts disproportionately affect communities with fewer private alternatives. Equity suffers when fiscal instability drives uneven service delivery.

On the revenue side, Los Angeles depends heavily on seven economy sensitive taxes that contribute over 70% to the General Fund. Property tax contributes 37% of General Fund

revenue with the balance from the business tax, the utility users' tax, sales tax, hotel tax, the documentary transfer tax, and parking occupancy tax.

The True Cost of These Budgetary Positions

The consequences of inaction are evident, placing the City in a quagmire of deficits, defunding, fees, and taxation. The consequences of recurring structural imbalance are measurable:

- Hiring freezes delay service delivery.
- Infrastructure repair backlogs grow.
- Reserve funds are drawn down, weakening fiscal resilience.
- Underserved neighborhoods experience longer service response times.
- Public trust erodes.

The solution requires structural alignment between revenues and expenditures and truthful budgeting, not temporary adjustments.

The creative accounting we see from City Hall is short-sighted and doesn't serve the City well. The budget is claimed to be balanced, but we still see that budget allocations are exceeded, revenue projections run short, and core services are underfunded.

City Police (LAPD) are understaffed. Their equipment is past its expiration for reliable service. City Fire Stations (LAFD) have not been modernized or maintained. Too many fire trucks are inoperable, compromising public safety. Potholes, cracked sidewalks, and street lighting issues also jeopardize public safety.

Generous Labor Contracts always derail our presumptive balanced budget with each new agreement. Unfunded Pension liabilities exceed the City's ability to deliver our promises to future retirees.

The City Reserve Fund exists to protect the City during external fiscal pressures such as the Great Recession and Covid-19. It should not be used a piggy bank to balance a budget that was never really balanced.

Political dereliction of duty and irresponsible mismanagement of public funds perpetuate the wash-rinse-repeat cycle Angelenos live with.



NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL BUDGET ADVOCATES RECOMMENDATIONS

The Budget Advocates remain focused on last year's recommendations that can be read at https://drive.google.com/file/d/12RTEVWYORm9wOBWmvDhPPuu_Z-OFv3ZN/view?usp=drive_link. The following recommendations are in addition to those and provide added detail.

1. Institutionalize Five-Year Financial Planning

Los Angeles must embed a realistic and binding five-year rolling forecast into its annual budget process. This forecast should model labor contract escalators, pension rate projections, healthcare inflation (historically 5–7 percent annually), liability trend lines, and infrastructure maintenance needs. What is missing in the forecast is realism.

2. Revenue Diversification and Expansion

Increasing revenue does not automatically mean increasing taxes and fees. It means broadening and modernizing the base.

a. Economic Development Acceleration

Streamlining permitting through digital systems as is being piloted for victims of the Palisades Fire would reduce project approval timelines. Faster approvals translate into earlier property tax reassessments and job creation.

Targeted incentives for clean energy manufacturing, technology startups, and creative industries can expand the business tax base without increasing rates.

b. Asset Optimization

The City owns thousands of parcels and facilities. A comprehensive asset inventory, paired with Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven valuation modeling, could identify underutilized properties suitable for long-term lease or joint development. Councilmember Yaroslavsky recommends we create an Economic Development Corporation modeled on New York's implementation of the same. All ideas for getting the most from the City's assets need to be explored.

c. User Fee Modernization

Many City fees have not kept pace with actual service delivery costs. A biennial fee review tied to cost-of-service analysis ensures fairness and fiscal responsibility. Hardship exemptions can protect low-income residents while aligning commercial fees with actual administrative costs.

d. Public-Private Partnerships

Strategic partnerships in renewable energy installations, parking system modernization, and broadband infrastructure can leverage private capital while preserving public oversight. Carefully structured agreements can reduce upfront capital expenditures.

e. Grant Optimization

We recommend creating a centralized grant acquisition office supported by AI tools to track eligibility and deadlines

3. Operational Efficiencies Through Technology and Artificial Intelligence

Technology and AI are not luxuries—they are fiscal necessities.

a. Predictive Maintenance

AI-driven analytics can assess pavement conditions, fleet performance, and facility systems. Predictive models reduce emergency repairs by identifying deterioration early.

b. Automated Permit Review

AI-assisted plan check systems can flag code inconsistencies, reducing review time and staff workload. A reduction in permit processing time accelerates economic activity and reduces overtime expenses.

c. Claims Risk Modeling

Machine learning tools can analyze patterns in liability claims to identify high-risk activities or geographic clusters. Proactive intervention—training, policy revision—can reduce settlements.

d. Budget Analytics Dashboards

Real-time expenditure tracking platforms enable department heads and the Los Angeles City Controller's Office to monitor spending against projections. AI-based anomaly detection can flag overspending early.

e. Workforce Optimization

AI scheduling tools can optimize deployment of sanitation crews, emergency responders, and maintenance staff based on demand patterns.

f. Pension Sustainability and Labor Collaboration

Long-term sustainability requires collaboration with labor organizations. Options include:

- Adjusting benefit formulas for future hires.
- Increasing employee contribution rates incrementally.
- Exploring hybrid retirement models for new employees.
- Aligning overtime calculations with pensionable earnings reforms.

4. Strengthening Reserve Policies

The Budget Advocates recommend the best practice of maintaining reserve levels of 10 percent of General Fund revenues. Strengthening reserve targets during economic expansions prevents disruptive cuts during downturns. A disciplined policy requiring deposits during revenue growth years builds resilience.

5. Delivering Equitable Services

Fiscal stability and equity are inseparable. Data-driven resource allocation must replace historical precedent. If response times, street conditions, or park access differ significantly between neighborhoods, budget allocations must adjust accordingly.

AI-powered geographic equity mapping can compare service metrics across Council districts. Transparent dashboards can allow residents to track performance indicators.

Participatory budgeting pilots empower communities to guide localized capital investments. Equity is not achieved by rhetoric—it is achieved by measurable outcomes. The Department of Civil + Human Rights and Equity has a modest pilot with its L.A. REPAIR initiative.

6. Cultural Change and Accountability

Ultimately, reform requires cultural transformation. Department heads must be evaluated not only on program delivery but on fiscal stewardship. Long-term forecasting, meaningful performance metrics, and transparency must become institutional norms.

City policymakers face a choice. Continue navigating annual crises—hiring freezes, reserve withdrawals, deferred repairs—or adopt structural reforms that align expenditures with sustainable revenues.



CONCLUSION: Stepping Off the Ride

The 2025–2026 budget cycle presents both warning and opportunity. Personnel costs continue to rise. Unfunded pension contributions remain significant. Infrastructure demands grow. Revenue volatility persists. Without reform, the City will continue its predictable rotations. The City of Los Angeles possesses the economic scale, technological capacity, and civic talent to lead.

This is not austerity—it is stewardship. It is a commitment to intergenerational responsibility and equitable service delivery. It ensures that clean streets, responsive public safety, accessible parks, and efficient permitting are not luxuries dependent on economic cycles but reliable standards of governance.

Round and round it goes—unless we decide otherwise. The time has come for policymakers to be courageous, step off the ride, embrace structural reform, harness technology and artificial intelligence, and secure a fiscally stable, equitable future for every Angeleno.

INTRODUCTION TO REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTS AND BUREAUS

Fiscal Year 2025-26 was a year that produced a City Budget to respond to a nearly \$1 billion anticipated budget shortfall. The budget has impacted everybody who lives, works, and plays in this City and it is painful for all of us.

Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates produced reports from meetings with City Departments and Bureaus. These meetings included discussion of each Department's or Bureau's mission, services, revenue, staffing, budget outlook, successes, challenges, and new or expanded programs. Budget Advocates are making numerous recommendations in this document concerning service needs, staffing, procedures, and several recommendations outlining potential cost savings.

First, we list the totality of recommendations followed by the reports on Departments and Bureaus in alphabetical order.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2026 WHITE PAPER

Animal Services

Spay/Neuter and Population Control

- Fully fund the Animal Sterilization Fund and related spay/neuter programs; add an additional \$4 million over the amount requested by LAAS. [Substantial long-term cost savings for the City]
- Increase funding for the Citywide Cat Program an additional \$1 million over the amount requested by LAAS. [Substantial long-term cost savings for the City]

Shelter Operations, Staffing, and Animal Care

- Approve the full FY 2026–27 LAAS operational budget request of \$31,869,100 with no cuts (less than one fourth of one percent of the City budget).
- Restore staffing, including Animal Care Technicians (ACTs), Animal Control Officers (ACOs), veterinarians, Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs), and supervisors, to adequately and humanely care for stray, homeless, and surrendered animals; to enforce spay/neuter laws; and to provide safety in our neighborhoods.
- Continue full funding for Dogs Playing for Life (DPFL), to provide enrichment and exercise for the dogs as well as compile essential behavioral information to facilitate adoptability.
- Support the volunteer program with a dedicated Coordinator and Volunteer Liaisons, and safe staffing levels. Recruit additional volunteers to care for, socialize, and exercise the dogs, cats, rabbits, small animals, and large animal livestock (including horses). [Substantial long-term cost savings for the City]
- Fund critical shelter facility repairs, replacement, and cleaning, including continuous-flow kennel water bowls, HVAC systems, drainage, kennel repairs, and isolation medical space.
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- Fund critical shelter facility repairs, replacement, and cleaning, including continuous-flow kennel water bowls, HVAC systems, drainage, kennel repairs, and isolation medical space.
- Increase funding for food for the animals (see [Addendum for Food and Medical Supplies, https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee695ad62838751.pdf](https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee695ad62838751.pdf))
- Augment funding for medicine and medical supplies (see [Addendum for Food and Medical Supplies, https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee695ad62838751.pdf](https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee695ad62838751.pdf).)

Public Safety, Field Operations, and Community Impact

- Allocate funds to support LAAS' expanded role in coordinated field response with LAPD for dogs and cats in the Skid Row district, ensuring humane treatment, protection from abuse, and access to safe placement resources.

- Cause the State Fish and Wildlife Department to develop innovative programs to effectively and humanely deal with the significant increase of coyotes in residential neighborhoods
- Start the Reserve Animal Control Officer (RACO) program. [Substantial long-term cost savings for the City]

Building and Safety

- Increase the number of Code Enforcement Inspectors
- Implement a QR code system to help residents navigate department services
- Update the Plan Check and Inspection system to track the contract number for affordable housing covenants
- Fund temporary resolution authority positions for major events

Cannabis Regulation

- Expand enforcement action against illegal cannabis operations to protect legal businesses and recover lost tax revenue.
- Simplify licensing and compliance processes to support legal cannabis operators and improve efficiency.
- Provide financial and technical support to help Social Equity applicants launch and sustain businesses.
- Strengthen coordination with the Office of Finance to improve cannabis tax collection and transparency.

City Administrator and Homelessness Initiative

- Explore annually full cost recovery for services the City provides
- Educate the public on the ongoing need for full cost recovery
- Evaluate raising the hotel tax and other taxes
- Consider bond measures for Fire Department infrastructure and additional personnel
- Develop additional guidelines and provide training to prevent fraud

City Attorney

- Upgrade case-management technology to align with court systems, improve liability transparency, reduce duplication, and increase efficiency despite staffing shortages.
- Authorize targeted hiring of civil litigators to reduce caseloads, curb reliance on outside counsel, and limit growing legal and financial risk.
- Fund dedicated attorneys and support staff to meet state mandates, enforce affordable housing laws, and reduce City liability.
- Maintain outside counsel and liability reserves and pursue insurance options to protect the General Fund from costly legal claims.

City Clerk

- Add the Neighborhood Councils to the list of customers the City Clerk serves
- Share with the Neighborhood Councils the Memorandum of Understanding between the City Clerk and Department of Neighborhood Empowerment upon its completion

- Find a way to hold 2027 Neighborhood Council elections between the Neighborhood Councils, City Clerk, and Department of Neighborhood Empowerment
- Restore previous strategic plans to the City Clerk website along with all annual reports

City Council

- Identify the funding source(s) for each allocation in Exhibit G of the City's budget books.
- Add clarity to discretionary spending by providing the data on how much money each Council District has and where it comes from
- Include the City Council's share of the General City Purposes Fund the base budget for the City Council.
- Present the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) budget and staffing as a distinct line item, separate from the 15 Council District offices.
- Benchmark pricing for City purchases against market rates and adjust procurement/contracting to reduce expenditures where feasible.
- Inventory City-owned properties and publish a prioritized plan to improve utilization and/or generate revenue consistent with public benefit.
- Develop a more accurate estimate of liability expenses for each budget year by working with the Mayor and City Attorney

City Tourism

- Partner with the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Neighborhood Councils to create Neighborhood Tourism Districts
- Jointly collaborate with the Los Angeles Tourism and the Convention Board (LATCB) to expand their mission.

Civil + Human Rights and Equity

- Set aside some of the \$250,000 the Department generated for the General Fund to support at least some of the Department's budget needs
- Use the \$25,000 grant from the Weingart Center that went to the Mayor's Fund to cover some of the Department's activities
- Develop new merchandise to sell for the benefit of the General Fund and adjust prices to include shipping costs.

Community Investment

- Protect essential anti-poverty, youth, and aging services by maintaining level funding that advances the City's equity, public health, and economic stability goals.
- Sustain HUD compliance and interdepartmental coordination by maintaining level funding for HUD fund administration across 19 City departments.
- Stabilize funding to ensure continuity of services supported by restricted City General Fund, federal HUD, and County grant resources.
- Streamline consolidation by reducing administrative duplication and improving coordination without additional budgetary growth.
- Eliminate long-term vacant positions and redirect salary savings to offset cost pressures while preserving direct services.

Contract Administration

- Staff the Office of Wage Standards to ensure enforcement of wage theft regulations
- Assign sufficient staff to ensure the Convention Center Modification project and Olympic related projects are completed safely
- Expand the Community Level Contracting program to enhance outreach to local and small businesses

Cultural Affairs

- Activate neighborhoods City wide in preparation for major local, national, and international events, including the Cultural Program for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, while ensuring coordinated regional planning and lasting legacy programming.
- Expand strategic partnerships and creative job opportunities through murals, public art, arts grants, and the reopening and activation of renovated cultural facilities.
- Support community cohesion, youth engagement, and public-space revitalization through arts and cultural programs that build trust, increase positive activity, and enhance neighborhood safety.
- Invest in DCA's operational infrastructure to improve online accessibility, expand programming space, and strengthen the delivery of arts and cultural services citywide.

Neighborhood Empowerment

- Develop a set of core training videos and/or presentations that can be distributed to Neighborhood Councils (NCs) online to act as immediate "how to" guides on various facets of the City and Neighborhood Council System
- Collaborate with the City Attorney to expedite issues related to NCs and lack of compliance with Brown Act
- Establish a workgroup of Neighborhood Council Board Members to discuss NCs issues and concerns

Economic and Workforce Development

- Develop a set of core training videos and/or presentations that can be distributed to Neighborhood Councils (NCs) online to act as immediate "how to" guides on various facets of the City and Neighborhood Council System
- Collaborate with the City Attorney to expedite issues related to NCs and lack of compliance with Brown Act
- Establish a workgroup of Neighborhood Council Board Members to discuss NCs issues and concerns

Emergency Management

- Provide for a second General Manager position to support department leadership, continuity and 24/7 crisis coordination.
- Restore staffing capacity across preparedness, recovery, training, and coordination functions.

- Create dedicated public education and outreach positions so emergency responders are not diverted from operational readiness.
- Protect and expand General Fund match allocations to preserve and grow external grant funding including positions within the Climate Emergency Mobilization Office.
- Increase staffing within the Recovery Unit to ensure the City can manage simultaneous disasters without compromising response or recovery timelines.
- Expand overtime resources to allow for planning around major events and emergency activities.

Ethics

- Prioritize three (3) Auditor II positions to support Charter-mandated campaign audits, reduce audit backlogs, and ensure matching-funds reviews do not displace core enforcement work.
- Make permanent the \$250,000 allocation for outside counsel
- Add funding to expand investigative, audit, and enforcement capacity for complex land-use, development, and high-dollar lobbying matters.
- Codify an Inspector General-style function within or formally aligned with the Ethics Commission through Charter Reform to strengthen proactive oversight insulated from political influence.
- Carry forward unspent prior-year funds to cover first-year staffing costs, with ongoing funding incorporated into the FY 2026-27 base budget.

Finance

- Align ongoing expenditures with recurring revenues, avoiding one-time fixes, and strengthening reserve levels to protect against economic shocks.
- Prioritize funding for public safety, emergency response, street services, and infrastructure maintenance while limiting non-essential expansions
- Require departments to identify savings, manage vacancies strategically, and justify new spending through measurable outcomes and performance reviews.
- Expand multi-year financial forecasting, clearly communicate fiscal tradeoffs to the public, and integrate long-term liabilities into budget decisions

Fire

- Fully fund staffing and fleet readiness to maintain rapid response times and reduce overtime strain.
- Implement a focused major-events readiness plan for the World Cup and 2028 Olympics while expediting plan check services and strengthening interagency coordination.
- Invest in pre-deployment staffing, dispatch modernization, wildfire mitigation, and structured Palisades recovery efforts.
- Improve budget forecasting, ensure compliance, and retain institutional knowledge to support long-term operational reliability.

General Services

- Recognize the Department of General Services (GSD) as providing essential City services that support public safety departments and overall City operations.
- Approve requested positions related to Emergency Planning, Security, and Access and Credentialing to address increasing operational demands.
- Ensure EV infrastructure expansion includes funding for staffing and maintenance.
- Consider the Department's role in supporting City preparedness for major events, including the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, when evaluating funding priorities.

Housing

- Strengthen the monitoring of the Emergency Renters Assistance Program. The monitoring agency should upload copies of all applications awarded to tenants on the Los Angeles Housing Department's website file by geographical location.
- Assure that when tenants complain about landlord harassment, they bring evidence to the department before Housing sends letters to landlords about a potential court filing by the tenant.
- Adhere to the parking requirements (available parking spaces per development), but where parking requirements are reduced in affordable housing projects, require mandatory incentives to use public transportation.
- Keep the public updated on housing projects in the works via LAHD's website in order to address the frustration with the lengthy timeline for housing rental availability.

Information Technology

- Regularize the ten (10) currently restored temporary positions before July 1 to avoid layoffs.
- Restore two (2) deleted cybersecurity positions to maintain a baseline Zero Trust security posture.
- Add at least one (1) position dedicated to the MyLA311 service request system.
- Establish a dedicated, multi-year funding stream for obsolete equipment replacement.
- Prioritize updating 30+ year-old radio towers, 911-related systems, and core network equipment.
- Adjust base funding to cover rising software license, internet, and telephone costs that ITA pays on behalf of City departments.
- Clarify and document the division of responsibility between ITA and departmental IT/complaint systems.

Library

- Highlight dedicated capital funding
- Develop a systemwide book-recycling program
- Improve landscape communication and expand native-plant pilots
- Reinforce cross-departmental dependencies
- Protect literacy, education, and social-service roles already in place

Personnel

- Add workers' compensation claims analysts to reduce caseloads, accelerate claim resolution, and lower statutory penalties and long-term liability costs.
- Protect core Personnel Department positions from across-the-board cuts, recognizing Personnel as a citywide force multiplier that directly affects hiring, retention, and service delivery.
- Accelerate modernization of civil service exams and hiring processes to shorten time-to-hire for hard-to-fill and revenue-critical classifications.
- Establish permanent, funded emergency management positions within Personnel to support disaster service worker planning and deployment.
- Strengthen data tracking and reporting to document cost avoidance achieved through improved hiring, workers' compensation management, and safety programs.

Planning

- Expand and integrate digital planning platforms to streamline entitlement processing, zoning review, and permit coordination.
- Invest in cloud-based, interdepartmental data systems to improve real-time coordination with LADBS, LAFD, and other City departments.
- Regularize and strategically deploy staffing in high-demand and underserved areas, including South Los Angeles and the Harbor Area.
- Enhance grants management and fiscal oversight capacity to maximize external funding and protect General Fund resources.

Police

- Enhance staffing and fleet readiness to maintain rapid response times and reduce overtime strain.
- Implement a major-events readiness plan for the World Cup and 2028 Olympics while expediting plan check services and strengthening interagency coordination.
- Invest in pre-deployment staffing, dispatch modernization, wildfire mitigation, and structured Palisades recovery efforts.
- Improve budget forecasting, ensure compliance, and retain institutional knowledge to support long-term operational reliability.

Police Protective League

- Fund LAPD recruitment efforts fully to offset annual attrition
- Establish LAPD staffing targets that reflect public safety needs and operational realities, supported by sustained funding commitments.

Port of Los Angeles

- Align spending decisions with long-term operational and environmental priorities.
- Maximize zero-emissions investments by leveraging the \$500 million pass-through grant and Port-controlled funds.
- Establish a formal process for internal budget offsets and Board-approved reallocations from underutilized programs to higher-priority needs.

- Expand scenario planning to manage tariff-driven cargo volatility and longer-term shifts in trade routes and supply chains.
- Reinvest in Harbor District services and community priorities by sustaining essential City services and maintaining the 35% Public Access Investment Plan commitment.

Public Works

- Prioritize restoration of one Senior Management Analyst to strengthen program management, fiscal oversight, and performance reporting for Mobile Pit Stop, Mobile Shower, and Skid Row cleaning programs.
- Prioritize restoration of one Senior Management Analyst to coordinate CleanLA Jobs deployment, inter-bureau coordination, and performance tracking aligned with Citywide workforce and equity goals.
- Prioritize CleanLA Workforce Development staffing (up to 25 positions) to expand right-of-way cleaning and neighborhood beautification in underserved communities while strengthening workforce pathways.
- Strengthen community engagement by scheduling accessible, multilingual town hall-style meetings across the City and leveraging existing outreach channels; if incremental resources are required, cap new funding at \$75,000.
- Implement an online bidding and procurement platform to modernize contracting, increase competition and transparency, and reduce administrative cycle time.

Recreation and Parks

- Eliminate Full Cost Recovery plan.
- Pursue ballot measure to double charter mandated formula to 0.065%.
- Increase reimbursements from City related entities.
- Obtain financing from FIFA and LA28 for World Cup and Olympics events.
- Pursue naming and sponsorship opportunities.
- Develop outreach plan to promote Park Needs Assessment plan with Neighborhood Councils and others.

Sanitation and Environment

- Fund a dedicated enforcement unit and target illegal dumping hotspots to reduce blight and repeat violations.
- Prioritize sewer, storm drain, and water treatment plant maintenance—avoid deferring critical repairs.
- Continue key investments in Pure Water Los Angeles and groundwater replenishment.
- Track performance, staffing efficiency, and delivery of a projected \$200M General Fund relief.

Street Lighting

- Approve the FY 2026–27 Street Lighting Assessment ballot to update a funding structure frozen since 1996 and stabilize core operations and maintenance.
- Fully fund end-of-life LED replacements to address over 60,000 failing fixtures and prevent outages, safety risks, and higher repair costs.

- Expand copper wire theft fortification and circuit hardening to reduce outages, limit liability, and protect key corridors ahead of LA28.
- Maintain critical staffing and administrative support to sustain service delivery, ensure payroll compliance, and retain institutional knowledge.
- Invest in revenue-generating smart streetlight infrastructure (co-location, EV charging, fiber) to modernize the system and reduce General Fund reliance.

Youth Development

- Follow phased implementation of the Citywide Youth Development Strategic Plan (2024–2029), ensuring FY 2026–2027 milestones produce measurable, equitable outcomes for youth across all Council Districts.
- Require City departments that fund or operate youth programs to align initiatives with the Strategic Plan and provide standardized performance data and outcome measures to the Youth Development Department (YDD) for centralized tracking and evaluation.
- Establish a formal accountability framework, in coordination with the interdepartmental Working Group, that defines roles, benchmarks performance, provides regular reporting, and identifies service gaps and duplication.

Zoo

- Prioritize funding that protects animal welfare and AZA accreditation, recognizing these as foundational obligations of Zoo operations.
- Develop and present clearer cost and service trade-off scenarios, including the operational and fiscal implications of reduced hours, seasonal scheduling adjustments, or program modifications during low-attendance periods.
- Strengthen transparency around capital planning, including the sequencing, funding sources, and timing of major projects to better align expectations with available City resources.
- Clarify the Zoo's reliance on external funding partners, including the role and sustainability of support from the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA).
- Assess and mitigate operational impacts of the DWP solar carport project, including parking displacement, attendance effects, and potential offsets or credits to the Zoo during construction.

ANIMAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Meeting of October 21, 2025

ATTENDEES

Los Angeles Animal Services Department (LAAS): Annette Ramirez, Interim General Manager; Curtis Watts, Assistant General Manager for Administration; Sharon Lee, Senior Management Analyst

Budget Advocates: Jeffrey Mausner, Budget Representative and Shelter Volunteer; Michelle Cornelius, Shelter Volunteer; Lynne Chao, Shelter and Animal Advocate

RECOMMENDATIONS

Spay/Neuter and Population Control

- Fully fund the Animal Sterilization Fund and related spay/neuter programs; add an additional \$4 million over the amount requested by LAAS. [Substantial long-term cost savings for the City]
- Increase funding for the Citywide Cat Program an additional \$1 million over the amount requested by LAAS. [Substantial long-term cost savings for the City]

Shelter Operations, Staffing, and Animal Care

- Approve the full FY 2026–27 LAAS operational budget request of \$31,869,100 with no cuts (less than one fourth of one percent of the City budget).
- Restore staffing, including Animal Care Technicians (ACTs), Animal Control Officers (ACOs), veterinarians, Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs), and supervisors, to adequately and humanely care for stray, homeless, and surrendered animals; to enforce spay/neuter laws; and to provide safety in our neighborhoods.
- Continue full funding for Dogs Playing for Life (DPFL), to provide enrichment and exercise for the dogs as well as compile essential behavioral information to facilitate adoptability.
- Support the volunteer program with a dedicated Coordinator and Volunteer Liaisons, and safe staffing levels. Recruit additional volunteers to care for, socialize, and exercise the dogs, cats, rabbits, small animals, and large animal livestock (including horses). [Substantial long-term cost savings for the City]
- Fund critical shelter facility repairs, replacement, and cleaning, including continuous-flow kennel water bowls, HVAC systems, drainage, kennel repairs, and isolation medical space.
- Fund critical shelter facility repairs, replacement, and cleaning, including continuous-flow kennel water bowls, HVAC systems, drainage, kennel repairs, and isolation medical space.
- Fund critical shelter facility repairs, replacement, and cleaning, including continuous-flow kennel water bowls, HVAC systems, drainage, kennel repairs, and isolation medical space.
- Increase funding for food for the animals (see [Addendum for Food and Medical Supplies, https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee695ad62838751.pdf](https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee695ad62838751.pdf))
- Augment funding for medicine and medical supplies (see [Addendum for Food and Medical Supplies,](#)

<https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee695ad62838751.pdf>.)

Public Safety, Field Operations, and Community Impact

- Allocate funds to support LAAS' expanded role in coordinated field response with LAPD for dogs and cats in the Skid Row district, ensuring humane treatment, protection from abuse, and access to safe placement resources.
- Cause the State Fish and Wildlife Department to develop innovative programs to effectively and humanely deal with the significant increase of coyotes in residential neighborhoods
- Start the Reserve Animal Control Officer (RACO) program. [Substantial long-term cost savings for the City]

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles Animal Services Department ("LAAS" or "the Department") operates one of the largest municipal shelter systems in the United States, with six municipal shelters and additional leased facilities serving 60,000 animals annually and responding to approximately 20,000 emergency calls involving animals and public safety each year. LAAS promotes and protects the health, safety, and welfare of both animals and people.

Underfunding

Chronic underfunding remains the core cause of the current crisis in Los Angeles's shelter system.

This Report evaluates LAAS' Requested Budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. The [Budget Request for the Department of Animal Services for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 \(LAAS Requested Budget\)](#) was posted on December 1, 2025 at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/15AwucSr_yeTDLbZ_JozHUVzQW_pXt5yM/view. The Mayor, City Administrative Officer (CAO), and City Council ultimately determine what the budget of the Animal Services Department will be.

For fiscal year 2023–24, the adopted operating budget of LAAS was \$31,699,537, approximately one-quarter of one percent of the City's overall budget. That severely under-resourced allocation had to cover the care of animals in all six municipal shelters, field operations, medical care, food, licensing, and enforcement.

For 2025–26, the current fiscal year, the Adopted Department Budget for LAAS is approximately \$28.5 million in departmental funding (see LAAS Requested Budget, Fiscal Year 2026-2027, page 42). LAAS had requested more than that - the Department's requested departmental budget for 2025–26 had been \$34,884,699, meaning LAAS was underfunded by more than \$6 million. This persistent pattern of budget reductions has directly contributed to worsened overcrowding in the shelters, unnecessary deaths and suffering of animals, deteriorating shelter conditions, staffing shortages, reduced enforcement capacity, and public safety risks.

For 2026–27, LAAS is requesting \$3,371,685 in new departmental funding, resulting in a requested operating budget of \$31,869,100. This is close to the 2023-24 budget but does not take into account significant inflation and increase in animal intake at the shelters. **Dog**

occupancy in all six LAAS shelters has hovered as high as 150% of capacity (737 kennels holding up to 1,103 dogs), with shelters consistently operating between 120% and 150% over capacity on a daily basis. The 2025-26 budget did not include \$790,125 for funding for Dogs Playing for Life (which is being privately funded for six months); a reduction of \$307,535 for animal food (which should be restored and is essential); and \$307,535 for medical supplies (which should also be restored). So, it is clear that this very modest increase in requested operating budget from last year's adopted budget is both justified and necessary given the repeated reductions in previous fiscal years. Given sustained dog occupancy levels consistently ranging from approximately 120% to as high as 150% of capacity across all six LAAS shelters, the Department is operating well beyond its baseline service assumptions. When intake volume and length of stay shift to this degree and persist at extreme overcapacity, funding levels should be increased to reflect materially changed operational demands rather than historical baseline conditions. ***And this overcrowding should definitely never be an excuse for the City to kill more healthy adoptable dogs to make kennel space!***

Sustained extreme overcapacity amplifies disease transmission risk and places heightened demands on cleaning and sanitation procedures and systems. Under these conditions, **reliable, manufacturer-compliant daily cleaning and weekly deep remediation of plumbed continuous-flow kennel water bowls— specifically including Nelson Model 1200 Dog Waterers and including full internal cleaning when new dogs enter kennels—is critical** to interrupt new and reinfection cycles, reduce length of stay, and preserve lifesaving capacity. **Adequate funding is therefore necessary** to support the level of sanitation required under materially changed operating conditions.

Because URI transmission has persisted at the South LA shelter, **an initial manufacturer-compliant baseline cleaning of all continuous-flow kennel water bowls is necessary** to remediate accumulated contamination and establish a sanitation baseline from which consistent daily maintenance can be effectively performed. (*See Addendum: Manufacturer-Compliant Sanitation of Continuous-Flow Kennel Water Bowls*, <https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee695ad62838751.pdf>, for technical detail.)

The 2026-27 Non-Departmental request for spay/neuter is \$7,916,196 - \$6,516,196 for spay/neuter in the Animal Sterilization Fund and \$1,400,000 for spay/neuter in the Citywide Cat Program. This is less than was requested last year; last year's request for spay/neuter funding was for \$12.2 million - \$9.9 million for the Animal Sterilization Fund and \$2.4 million for the Citywide Cat Program. The Budget Advocates believe the 2026-27 request for spay/neuter is not sufficient. There has to be more funding and more effective enforcement of spay/neuter laws, because without sufficient sterilization, dogs, cats, and rabbits reproduce exponentially, driving up shelter intake, overcrowding, euthanasia, and avoidable municipal expense. Failure to adequately fund spay and neuter programs is the very definition of being "penny wise and 'pound' foolish." This short-sighted approach will cost the City far more - in both taxpayer dollars and animal suffering. It already has. See: [Failure To Provide Adequate Funding For Spay/Neuter Is "Penny Wise And 'Pound' Foolish"](#) October 14, 2024,

<https://www.citywatchla.com/animal-watch/29704-failure-to-provide-adequate-funding-for-spay-neuter-is-penny-wise-and-pound-foolish>

Crucial City Funding: Spay and Neuter Saves Money and Lives, December 2, 2019,
<https://www.citywatchla.com/369-budget-advocates/18933-crucial-city-funding-spay-and-neuter-saves-money-and-lives>

In summary, the total requested budget for Animal Services for 2026-27, both operational budget and non-departmental budget (spay/neuter) is \$39,785,296 (2026–27 LAAS Requested Budget, p. 43). The operational budget request is low but possibly the best that can be expected given the City’s current financial situation; the budget for spay neuter is insufficient. At the very least, nothing should be cut from the Requested Budget by the Mayor or CAO (City Administrative Officer). The Budget Advocates completely agree with and support the following statement in the Requested Budget: **“We recognize that the current budget instruction calls for budget requests to be cost-neutral through the use of offsets, but as a small Department with limited resources seeking to address a number of shortcomings, we do not have the capacity to suggest offsets at this time.”** (emphasis added). *The Mayor and CAO should keep in mind that offsets will result in the continued euthanasia of healthy, adoptable dogs and cats simply to make kennel space due to the already monumental overcapacity in the shelters in 2025.* As LAAS itself stated in its May 1, 2025 press release regarding dog overcapacity, “Without immediate help, healthy, adoptable pets are at risk of euthanasia simply due to lack of space.” That killing is taking place now.

Public Support

Public attention to the shelter crisis remains high. *CityWatchLA*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Daily News*, other media, advocacy organizations, and volunteers have repeatedly documented overcrowding; rampant URI (Upper Respiratory Infection) leading to pneumonia; resistant strains of URI; dogs confined for days, weeks, and even months due to illness without adequate exercise or enrichment; the resulting development of fear, anxiety, and stress (FAS) associated with prolonged kennel confinement; euthanasia of healthy, adoptable animals due to lack of kennel space; and failure to meet basic humane standards. City Councilmembers, Neighborhood Councils, and the public have called for increased shelter funding and reform. See, e.g., *Los Angeles Times: Mayor Bass Said She’d Save L.A.’S Shelter Animals. More Dogs And Cats Are Dying*, 11-22-2024: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-11-22/la-animal-shelters-more-dogs-and-cats-are-dying>

“The number of dogs euthanized in animal shelters run by the city of L.A. has skyrocketed this year. From January to September [2024], 1,224 dogs were euthanized at the city’s six shelters - a 72% increase compared with the same period a year ago, according to a Times analysis. ... About 1,517 cats were euthanized through September [2024] - a 17% increase from a year ago. ... The city’s euthanasia list, available on its website, shows that Jake and some other dogs are being sentenced to death not because they are seriously ill or arrive with severe behavioral issues but because the chronically understaffed and underfunded shelters cannot meet their

basic needs.”

According to LAAS’s animal welfare consultant Kristen Hassen, Los Angeles City’s Animal Services Department is among the lowest-funded large shelter systems in the country. *Id.* See also L.A. Times Editorial: *Let’s stop killing animals in shelters and get more of them adopted out*, 12-18-2024: <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2024-12-18/los-angeles-animal-shelters-overcrowding-euthanasia>: “Los Angeles Animal Services ... is one of the largest shelter systems in the country and shamefully underfunded, according to advocates and rescuers and some elected city officials.”

Community Impact Statements from Neighborhood Councils across the City, speakers at the Animal Services Commission, and other sources have supported stronger funding for LAAS, spay/neuter, and enrichment programs, and have urged the City to prioritize animal welfare and public safety in the budget. See last year’s [2025-26 Budget Advocate Report for the Animal Services Department](#) for citations to some of these sources, <https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee679d5f2fd26.pdf>; https://drive.google.com/file/d/12RTEVWYORm9wOBWmvDhPPuu_Z-Ofv3ZN/view; see also CityWatchLA, <https://www.citywatchla.com/search?q=mausner>, for articles regarding Mayor Bass’ failures in this regard.

Overcrowding and “Euthanasia” (Killing of Healthy Adoptable Dogs and Cats)

LAAS reports that rising intakes, longer stays, and lack of capacity continue to drive overcrowding at many shelters to 120–150% of safe capacity. Some dogs are double-kennelled in kennels designed for a single animal; some dogs are confined for weeks with limited exercise, enrichment, or behavioral support. **It is therefore essential to support Dogs Playing for Life (DPFL) and other enrichment programs**, since limited exercise and socialization contribute directly to behavioral decline and the development of fear, anxiety, and stress (FAS) in confined dogs.

The Department acknowledges that this has led to increased euthanasia, including killing of healthy, adoptable dogs, due to lack of space. Overcrowding also increases illness, kennel fights, and the risk of serious bite incidents. LAAS reported nine severe bite incidents in 2025, which increase City liability and harm staff, volunteers, and the public. Without additional funding, this pattern will continue or worsen. (See pp. 5–7 of Requested Budget.)

Staffing and Volunteers

Over recent years, LAAS has experienced an approximately 18% reduction in staff positions (Requested Budget p. 4). This reduction has severely impacted shelter operations, field response times, cleaning and maintenance needed to ensure animal health, and enforcement of spay/neuter and licensing laws.

To compensate, LAAS relies heavily on volunteers. The Department reports that volunteers provided over 137,000 hours of service in the 2024 fiscal year (Requested Budget p. 5), equivalent to roughly 66 full-time positions. Volunteers walk dogs, clean kennels, feed dogs,

cats, and rabbits, assist with adoptions, transport animals, and provide enrichment. While their contribution is invaluable and necessary, volunteers cannot and should not substitute for trained City staff, particularly given the high-risk nature of the work and the increasing behavioral challenges caused by disease-related sequestration of dogs for days, weeks, and sometimes months, as well as chronic overcrowding and prolonged kennel confinement. **The Budget Advocates strongly support the Department's requested staffing increases and recommend that all requested positions be funded in full**, including additional Animal Control Officers (ACOs), Animal Care Technicians (ACTs), veterinary staff, clerks, and supervisory positions for shelter oversight. Without staffing restoration, the Department cannot meet even basic operational and humane needs.

Equally important is funding for Dogs Playing for Life (DPFL). DPFL provides enrichment for dogs, taking them out of their kennels for play groups. This is essential for the well-being of dogs and their ability to be adopted. Dogs who do not receive this type of activity and are continuously confined to a kennel for days, weeks, and even months on end **develop fear, anxiety, stress (FAS) and are fast tracked to the Euthanasia List.** In addition to providing essential enrichment, DPFL also provides necessary behavior information for matching potential adopters and rescues with the right dog, such as whether a dog gets along with other dogs or should be the only dog in a household. DPFL also educates the public about dog behavior, performs risk assessments on certain dogs, assists the medical staff with dogs who are difficult to handle, and participates in the training of new Animal Care Technicians (ACTs). For a part of this year, DPFL was not funded by the City but funding was provided by ASCPA. That should not have to happen this year – full funding for DPFL should be provided by the City.

Spay/Neuter of Dogs, Cats, and Rabbits; Community Cat Program

Spay/neuter remains the key to reducing intake, overcrowding, and euthanasia. As noted above, **funding for the Animal Sterilization Fund and Citywide Cat Program must be increased.** Underfunding spay/neuter has always proven to be “penny-wise and ‘pound’ foolish,” as it increases the number of dogs and cats entering the shelters, perpetuates higher medical, food, euthanasia, staffing, infrastructure, and other long-term costs, and continues the cycle of overcrowding and preventable deaths. It is essential to address the source of the problem, not merely try to react to its consequences. See [*Failure To Provide Adequate Funding For Spay/Neuter Is “Penny Wise And ‘Pound’ Foolish”*](#). To reduce the rapidly growing stray population and achieve No-Kill in the shelters (i.e., no killing of healthy adoptable dogs for lack of space) **before the World Cup and Olympics, the City must begin by adequately funding spay/neuter now. As the world's eyes are on Los Angeles during these events, failing to meet humane animal welfare standards will create a significant public-relations crisis which will be extremely difficult to repair.**

Field Operations and Public Safety

Field Operations have been hampered by staffing shortages and increased demand. With fewer Animal Control Officers, LAAS struggles to respond promptly to calls involving dangerous dogs, injured animals, cruelty and neglect, and stray dogs in neighborhoods. Enforcement of the mandatory spay/neuter ordinances and illegal breeding laws is almost non-existent. The

Department's 2026–27 Budget Request includes additional positions for field services and oversight. Funding these positions is critical for both animal welfare and public safety. See Footnote 1, above.

Facilities and Capital Needs

The Department's Requested Budget details significant facility needs, including failing HVAC systems, cracked and uneven concrete, damaged kennels and fencing, poor drainage, and insufficient isolation and medical space. Also of particular concern are the continuous-flow water fountains in the dog kennels, which are not being cleaned according to manufacturer specifications - water collects beneath the metal plates and remains stagnant, creating algae growth. Algae and stagnant water can harbor bacteria and viral particles, creating a continuous source of pathogen exposure for dogs each time they drink, which is especially dangerous during URI outbreaks. These conditions contribute directly to the spread of disease, including URI outbreaks that progress to pneumonia, leading to preventable euthanasia of dogs, staff and volunteer safety concerns, and an overall decline in humane standards. The Budget Advocates support the Department's facility repair and cleaning priorities. **See Addendum regarding suggested cleaning procedures for water bowls, to prevent URI (Upper Respiratory Infection) and other diseases,**

<https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee695ad62838751.pdf>.

Coyotes in Our Neighborhoods

Past Budget Advocate Reports have detailed problems with coyotes in our neighborhoods. For years, the Budget Advocates have urged LAAS to work with the State Fish and Wildlife Department to develop programs that effectively and humanely address the increased presence of coyotes. See, e.g.,

<https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee679d5f2fdfd26.pdf>, pages 9-10.

There are daily reports of coyote sightings in densely populated areas in the San Fernando Valley; recently, there was a report of a pack of 7 coyotes. This poses significant risks to pets and public safety and warrants immediate coordinated response and mitigation efforts.

CONCLUSION

The Los Angeles Animal Services Department has been chronically underfunded for years. The consequences of that underfunding are now fully manifest in severe overcrowding, increased euthanasia of healthy adoptable animals, unsafe working conditions for staff and volunteers, and diminished public safety. The proposed 2026–27 operating budget request of \$31,869,100 is not sufficient but is realistically the best that can be expected. There should be no cuts from that! Any reduction to this request would further jeopardize humane care and public safety. The spay/neuter budget of \$6,516,196 for the Animal Sterilization Fund and \$1,400,000 for the Citywide Cat Program is insufficient and should be increased by at least \$4.5 million, to match the amount requested by LAAS last year. Please see above. This is an infinitesimal percentage of the City budget, to care for all of the animals in the City.

Staffing must be restored and expanded to address the 18% position loss, protect public safety, and provide humane care, given that the shelters have been 120% to 150% over capacity for

dogs. Facility and capital needs identified in the 2026–27 Request should be funded to correct dangerous and deteriorating conditions.

Failure to fully fund the Department’s operational request and failure to increase spay/neuter funding will prolong overcrowding and perpetuate the current crisis, increase euthanasia of healthy adoptable animals, intensify public safety risks, and lead to greater costs and liability for the City in future years. Fully funding the operational request and increasing spay/neuter funding represents not only a moral imperative for the humane treatment of animals, but also a fiscally responsible choice that will save money in the long run.

See Addendum which provides additional background, data, and documentation in support of these recommendations:

<https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee695ad62838751.pdf>. See also the

Addendum to last year’s report,

<https://www.tarzananc.org/assets/documents/1/committee679d5f2fd26.pdf>.

DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING AND SAFETY
Meeting of January 8, 2026

ATTENDEES

Building and Safety Department: Devin Myrick, Director of Government and Community Relations; Tony Paleaz, Chief Management Analyst; Ana Mae Yutan, Resource Management Bureau Chief

Budget Advocates: Kay Hartman, Barbara Ringuette; Budget Representative Sheida Ashley; Community Participant Philip Armstrong

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase the number of Code Enforcement Inspectors
- Implement a QR code system to help residents navigate department services
- Update the Plan Check and Inspection system to track the contract number for affordable housing covenants
- Fund temporary resolution authority positions for major events

Fees

- Mandate Code Violation Inspection fees uniformly by both Code Enforcement and Inspection Bureaus
- Waive Permit fees only for individuals impacted by the Palisades Fire who are rebuilding their own homes while maintaining fees for developer-invested projects
- Implement a graduated scale of fees and fines for repeat offenders

DISCUSSION

The mission of the Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) is to protect the lives and safety of the residents and visitors of the City of Los Angeles and enhance the quality of life, housing, economic prosperity, and job creation citywide. Through a timely, cooperative, and transparent process, the Department advises, guides, and assists customers to achieve compliance with the Building, Zoning, Plumbing, Mechanical, Electrical, Disabled Access, Energy, and Green Codes and local and state laws to build safe, well, and fast. LADBS provides services for Plan Check, Permitting, Inspection, and Code Enforcement.

Budget

The Department of Building and Safety's fiscal year 2026-27 budget request for \$167.1 million represents an increase of 11.9% over the fiscal year 2025-26 budget of \$149.3 million. This is based on the need for additional staff to support the increased workload due to the Palisades Fire rebuilding efforts, LA28 preparations, and the Los Angeles Convention Center modernization project.

Over 94% of the Department's funds come from the Building and Safety Special Fund, with 5.8% of the budget coming from the City's General Fund. The General Fund portion of the LADBS budget is \$8,657,479. The Special Fund portion is \$140,649,454.

The Department is primarily funded by its own revenue from fees paid into special funds known as the Enterprise Fund. The Department believes that this funding is sufficient for FY 2025-26. The number of permits in the past 2-3 years were 2000 less than previous years attributed to macro-economics. The Department is finalizing a case study to make sure fees are full cost recovery.

The Enterprise Fund's revenue comes from plan check and permit fees and can only be used for Department of Building and Safety services. Inspection fees are included in the permit fees. A project can last years and enough of the inspection fees have to be collected up front and have to be available to fund the future inspections. There is a reserve account in the Enterprise Fund for these kinds of eventualities.

To achieve the target of reducing reliance on the General Fund by 6% in the 2026-27 fiscal year, the Department proposes shifting six (6) positions related to elevator and pressure vessel permitting to the Enterprise Fund, saving the General Fund \$463,997.

City Council waived permit fees for rebuilding losses sustained in the Palisades Fire. The fees that would normally be paid by the homeowner are reimbursed to the Department from the General Fund. This gift of General Fund money should be limited to individuals who are rebuilding their lost homes. It should not be granted to developer-invested projects.

Code enforcement for buildings that are not under construction is funded by the General Fund. In the past, the Department responded to 70% of complaints within 10 days, however currently there is a Code Enforcement backlog, and there has been for several years. The speed with which the Department can respond is dependent on how much General Fund money it receives, which is expected to be cut further for fiscal year 2026-27.

The reduction in inspectors has resulted in a multi-year backlog of unresolved code violations throughout the City. The fees for many of these violations have not been assessed or collected, shorting the General Fund and giving developers the impression they don't need to follow the law. This uncollected revenue represents a preventable shortfall that must be addressed to restore both enforcement effectiveness and fiscal stability.

Some developers view fees and fines as the cost of doing business, if the fines are issued at all. The fines are too small to be meaningful. City Council should pass Council File 25-0600-S53 that creates a graduated scale of fees and fines for violators with repeat building code violations. This would provide two benefits: reducing violations and increasing revenue.

Work the Department performs for other departments is front-funded and then reimbursed. Some of the projects reviewed by the Department can take as long as 10 years to completion. Projects related to the Palisades Fire are keeping the Department busy. In addition, the Department is working on projects for the upcoming World Cup and Olympics.

LADBS budgets \$192,643 in costs related to liability claims. However, the LADBS total liability payouts in fiscal year 2024-25 were \$3.3 million, so \$192,643 covers 6% of the Department's liabilities. The Department reimburses the City Attorney's office in the amount of \$767,403 for one Deputy City Attorney II in Area Planning Commission Support and two Deputy City Attorney IIs in Land Use Support.

Staffing

The Department's current budget supports 342 staff, a reduction of 17 from the prior fiscal year. The budget eliminates eight inspection positions in the Department's Code Enforcement Bureau and one accounting position in the Resource Management Bureau. Additionally, \$200,488 in overtime, \$346,298 in as-needed, \$70,000 in printing and binding, \$60,000 in office and administrative expenses, and \$35,000 in operating supplies were cut from LADBS' fiscal year 2025-26 budget.

LADBS is requesting seven new positions for FY 2026-27 consisting of two Principal Inspectors, one Senior Building Inspector, one Senior Electrical Inspector, one Senior Plumbing Inspector, one Senior Heating/Refrigeration Inspector, and one Senior Fire Sprinkler Inspector.

The Mayor and City Council should fund temporary resolution authority positions for major events like the Olympics to prevent redirecting staff from daily operations.

Progress Obstacles

Hiring and filling Department vacancies continues to be a challenge for LADBS. However, the Department has made significant progress in filling positions for key functions supporting the development of affordable housing as well as the positions in the Zoning Review Section that were subsequently transferred to the Department of City Planning.

The elimination of Code Enforcement positions has impacted the Department's ability to respond to complaints and investigate Code Enforcement violations. Reductions in staff increase the workload per inspector, significantly affects response time, and creates a backlog. These Code Enforcement positions should be restored and staffed immediately.

The Inspection Bureau's current system lacks the technological capability to automatically generate standardized citation templates for Orders to Comply and assess the associated fees. As a result, the issuance of citations and the imposition of fees rely heavily on an individual inspector's discretion. This inconsistency has led to situations in which fees are not consistently assessed or collected. In some cases, the violation records are removed from the file per the inspector's discretion and are never entered into the Internet Document Imaging System (IDIS), resulting in incomplete official records and fee collection.

The absence of mandatory documentation and standardized fee assessment procedures undermines transparency, accountability, and equitable enforcement. The Department must mandate Code Violation Inspection Fees (CVIF) and Non-Compliance Fees to be uniformly issued by both Code Enforcement and Inspection Departments rather than using individual

discretion and this uniform process must ensure fee collection for both homeowners and developers. This needs to be corrected via Departmental policy change and/or related City Ordinance revision.

To make it easier for the public to navigate Department services, LADBS could implement a QR code system. The QR code can be displayed in many places including posted at construction sites for ease of code violation reporting.

Department Goals

For FY 2026–27, rather than expanding services, LADBS is prioritizing improvements to the efficiency of its existing operations. The Department is focusing on enhancing plan check and permitting processes through the implementation of innovative technology, expanded automation, and the continued development of self-certification programs.

LADBS plans to enhance its work by the following:

1. LADBS will increase the speed and efficiency of permit processing for housing development projects by implementing and promoting the architect self-certification program and by fully staffing the new Multi-Unit Residential Inspection Case Management program.
2. LADBS will promote public safety and seismic resiliency by enhancing the soft-story and non-ductile concrete tracking database for better reporting and proactive program progress monitoring and by working with the Los Angeles Fire Department to establish a citywide bulletin on the safe development of adaptive reuse buildings/projects.
3. LADBS will invest in infrastructure, automation, and online capabilities to provide services more efficiently to customers and reduce wait times by replacing legacy LADBS permitting systems with modern software; effectuate a comprehensive program study of LADBS's code enforcement operations with a focus on improving code enforcement efficiency and effectiveness; create an LA28 dedicated Plan Check and case management team that will expedite plans, permits, and support LAX modernization efforts as it relates to the 2028 Olympics.
4. LADBS will expand its efforts to develop equitable policies and innovations towards sustainability and a zero carbon footprint by integrating a building performance standards program in the City's existing Building Energy and Water Efficiency ordinance; collaborate with Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to identify and offer incentives and rebates to Angelenos to offset the costs of greening their buildings; prepare recommendations to help reduce embodied carbon emissions in the construction of buildings.
5. LADBS will work to institutionalize equity principles by offering various avenues to enter into City employment, particularly LADBS employment, by utilizing the City's various

hiring programs such as Targeted Local Hire, Bridge to Jobs, and Alternate Pathway for Part Time/Intermittent Employees; additionally LADBS will actively recruit staff at colleges and conferences including the Society of Women Engineers, the National Society of Black Engineers, and at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

6. LADBS will respond to catastrophic damage caused by the Palisades Fire by removing barriers to recovery and rebuilding. Actions taken to date include offering a centralized and expedited permit approval through the dedicated LA One-Stop Rebuilding Center through which LADBS collaborates with the Emergency Management Department (EMD), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles County, and Cal Fire to ensure owners of properties destroyed by the fires are provided access to the services they need.

To further bolster crisis response capabilities, LADBS will participate in mock emergency response exercises, provide training for inspectors assigned to examine buildings after a disaster, and replace and replenish emergency supplies for Department staff.

Performance Metrics

LADBS shares data with various departments involved in development services. The forthcoming LA City Permitting System is expected to provide a stronger, more unified platform to facilitate data integration, improve interdepartmental collaboration, and streamline development services citywide. The Department indicates that the LA City Permitting System will be made available for use by other departments to enhance coordination and transparency.

LADBS collects and tracks performance metrics across all core services, including plan check, permitting, inspections, and code enforcement. The Department maintains a set of performance indicators used to evaluate operational efficiency and progress. Historically, these metrics were available on the LADBS website and updated on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. They are now available on the Controller's website along with the performance metrics of the other departments.

Affordable Housing Covenants

One thing that is difficult for LADBS to track, is the covenants for affordable housing. For projects where a covenant is required, LADBS refers the paperwork to the Housing Department. The Housing Department records the covenant and returns the paperwork to LADBS, indicating that the covenant is recorded. The Plan Check and Inspection System (PCIS) currently used by LADBS does not have the ability to record the contract number for the covenant, thus the City loses an opportunity to have all required information in one place that is trackable.

CONCLUSION

The Department is largely self-funded through the fees it collects, placing it on solid financial footing. There are, however, performance challenges that are concentrated within the Code Enforcement Bureau, where staffing levels—primarily funded by the General Fund—have been

significantly reduced due to budget cuts, resulting in unresolved code violations and uncollected revenue. The fee assessment has been inconsistent and based on discretion rather than mandate.

DEPARTMENT OF CANNABIS REGULATION
Meeting of September 10, 2025

ATTENDEES

City Clerk: Michelle Garakian, Executive Director; Jason Killeen, Assistant Executive Director
Budget Advocates: Jay Handal, David Hunter and Mihran Kalaydjian

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand enforcement action against illegal cannabis operations to protect legal businesses and recover lost tax revenue.
- Simplify licensing and compliance processes to support legal cannabis operators and improve efficiency.
- Provide financial and technical support to help Social Equity applicants launch and sustain businesses.
- Strengthen coordination with the Office of Finance to improve cannabis tax collection and transparency.

DISCUSSION

The Department of Cannabis Regulation (DCR) develops and implements regulations governing cannabis activity in the City of Los Angeles in accordance with local and state law. The Department administers the application, licensing, renewal, and revocation processes for cannabis businesses and coordinates with City departments to ensure timely inspections, compliance monitoring, audits, and related regulatory functions.

The Department's Adopted Budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year is \$8,635,799, nearly ten per cent less than the prior year. The entire budget goes toward the Regulations and Licensing function. The largest expense \$719,436 is for development of Social Equity businesses.

Revenue

The Cannabis Regulation Special Revenue fund, derived from fees charged for services, provides nearly 90% of the Department's revenue. The City's General Fund provides the remaining 10%.

DCR continues to ensure that its fee structure accurately reflects the operational costs required to effectively regulate the cannabis industry. In 2025, the Department completed a comprehensive fee study for the second consecutive year and developed improved methodologies and analytical tools to regularly update licensing and regulatory fees. These efforts are designed to maintain full cost recovery, ensure responsible stewardship of public resources, and provide a stable financial framework that supports the Department's ongoing regulatory mission.

Staffing

The Adopted Budget supports 63 positions, five fewer than the prior year while five positions were added to the community engagement/public policy section. DCR must maintain adequate

staffing to support its growing regulatory responsibilities ensure efficient licensing, compliance monitoring, and enforcement across Los Angeles' cannabis market.

Proposals for 2026-27

The Department of Cannabis Regulation (DCR) proposes strengthening regulatory oversight, expanding social equity opportunities, improving operational efficiency, and supporting long-term financial sustainability. The Department aims to maintain a transparent and compliant cannabis market while assisting licensed operators and equity applicants navigating a challenging and evolving industry.

Key elements of the DCR Budget proposal include continued investment in the Social Equity Program (SEP), improvements to the licensing and permitting process, enhanced compliance and enforcement efforts, and administrative reforms to improve fiscal oversight and reduce long-term operational costs.

Priority Areas

A central priority of the Department is advancing Social Equity and Community Development. DCR continues to invest in programs that help create pathways to opportunity for individuals and communities disproportionately impacted by past cannabis enforcement policies.

Through the Social Equity Program (SEP), the Department provides access to capital, legal assistance, workforce development, training, and technical business support to more than 2,200 verified Social Equity Individual Applicants and over 300 licensed equity businesses. These services are designed to strengthen long-term business viability and help ensure that the benefits of the regulated cannabis market are shared more equitably.

DCR promotes equity and inclusion within its workforce through its Equity Inclusion Plan, which enhances workplace culture, strengthens professional development opportunities, and improves the Department's ability to recruit and retain highly qualified staff.

The Department is working on a more efficient and predictable licensing process designed to be more stable and streamlined. The new system will address transitions of temporary license holders into the annual licensing framework, and also address provisional licensing for social equity retail applicants consistent with extended State deadlines. This transition strives to provide an opportunity to refine internal procedures, establish clear standard operating practices, and improve application processing timelines.

DCR monitors its performance to ensure compliance with State regulations and the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC), while identifying opportunities to reduce administrative burdens for applicants and licensed businesses.

Additional priorities for 2026–27 are strengthening transparency, public awareness, and regulatory compliance. The Department's Compliance and Enforcement Division will continue implementing a progressive enforcement strategy designed to ensure that cannabis businesses

operate in accordance with City regulations. Investigations of complaints will be conducted promptly and thoroughly, while annual compliance inspections will be carried out to maintain industry accountability.

DCR remains committed to educating licensees and assisting them in preparing for inspections so that potential compliance issues can be addressed proactively without unnecessarily disrupting business operations. The Department will also expand outreach and public education efforts across Los Angeles communities to raise awareness about the legal cannabis market and the potential risks associated with unlicensed operations.

These initiatives position the Department of Cannabis Regulation to further strengthen oversight of Los Angeles' cannabis marketplace while promoting fairness, transparency, and sustainable industry growth.

Social Equity Program

The Social Equity Program (SEP) faces growing demand for services following the verification of additional Social Equity Individual Applicants (SEIAs) in March 2025. However, the program confronts significant funding uncertainty tied to the State's Cannabis Equity Grants (CEG) program, which requires a 1:1 local funding match. Without sufficient City matching funds, Los Angeles risks forfeiting a substantial portion of the potential \$3.5 million in available State grant funding intended to support equity businesses.

The Mayor's Office authorized the Department to request \$1.5 million for the Business, Licensing, and Compliance (BLC) Program. Approval of this request will ensure the City remains eligible to receive at least \$1.5 million in CEG funding, allowing DCR to partially leverage the available grant pool. Securing these funds is critical to addressing the most significant barrier faced by social equity businesses. These funds will enable the Department to provide direct financial assistance and business stabilization support to businesses in the Social Equity Program.

Licensing

The licensed commercial cannabis industry in Los Angeles continues to face significant economic instability. Legal operators must navigate a challenging environment characterized by limited access to capital, scarce real estate compliant with cannabis regulations, high local taxes, rising rents, and persistent competition from unlicensed operators who do not face comparable regulatory obligations or operating costs.

As a result, the legal cannabis market has contracted in recent years, with numerous businesses closing, downsizing, or delaying entry into the regulated market. This contraction reduces the number of active licensees and shrinks the applicant pool, placing greater financial pressure on remaining operators and on the Department's cost-recovery model.

Additional regulatory complexities are expected as DCR works to align its licensing processes with evolving State legislation, including AB 1775, and potential federal policy shifts such as the

possible rescheduling of cannabis under the Controlled Substances Act. AB 1775 expands the scope of activities permitted at licensed cannabis retail establishments, including the preparation and sale of non-cannabis food and beverages and the allowance of live music or entertainment in designated cannabis consumption areas.

These changes introduce new regulatory considerations and operational oversight responsibilities.

The discontinuation of the proposal for a retail licensing lottery (Council File 25-0591) has limited the City's ability to expand the licensed market and bring new operators into the regulated system. Without market expansion, regulatory costs remain concentrated among a smaller number of businesses, which contributes to continued upward pressure on fees and regulatory costs.

Compliance and Enforcement

The Compliance and Enforcement Division (CED) anticipates increased operational demands as temporary licensees transition into the Annual License process, substantially expanding the number of businesses requiring ongoing compliance inspections and regulatory monitoring.

The Department expects that legislative and market developments will introduce new cannabis business models and operational activities, increasing the complexity of enforcement oversight. These changes will likely require higher volumes of inspections, complaint investigations, and compliance monitoring responsibilities. Maintaining effective enforcement while supporting legitimate operators will require continued investment in staffing, training, and enforcement resources.

Administration

The Administration Division continues to manage increasing operational responsibilities while operating with constrained staffing and fluctuating workloads.

To maintain continuity of operations, the Division must often rely on limited overtime, as-needed staffing, and stable expense funding.

The Department is pursuing consolidation under DCR of functions currently provided by the Office of Finance, the City Clerk, and the Los Angeles Police Department. Consolidating these responsibilities would strengthen financial oversight, improve operational efficiency, and provide the Department with greater control over its regulatory and fiscal management functions.

CONCLUSION

The Department of Cannabis Regulation strives to deliver high-quality services for residents, businesses, and communities across Los Angeles while enforcing equity principles that expand economic opportunity for Angelenos. As the cannabis industry continues to evolve, the Department remains focused on maintaining a safe, transparent, and well-regulated

marketplace that supports legal operators, protects consumers, and promotes fair access to economic participation.

OFFICE OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR and HOMELESS INITIATIVE
Meeting of October 17, 2025

ATTENDEES

Office of the City Administrator: Matt Szabo, City Administrative Officer; Patricia Huber, Executive Officer; Edwin Gipson, Assistant City Administrator-Homeless Crisis, and Jacob Wexler, Finance Specialist V

Budget Advocates: Barbara Ringuette, Kay Hartman, and Pam Bingham

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explore annually full cost recovery for services the City provides
- Educate the public on the ongoing need for full cost recovery
- Evaluate raising the hotel tax and other taxes
- Consider bond measures for Fire Department infrastructure and additional personnel
- Develop additional guidelines and provide training to prevent fraud

Homeless Initiatives

- Drive a solution to problems around Los Angeles Housing Services Agency (LAHSA)
- Coordinate with County officials to ensure Mental Health services are provided to LA's homeless

DISCUSSION

The City Administrative Officer (CAO) is the chief financial advisor to the Mayor and the City Council reporting directly to both. The Office studies and makes recommendations City budget. The Office represents management in negotiating all labor contracts, coordinates grants, provides oversight of the City's homelessness response, and performs other duties required by the Mayor and City Council.

Budget

The 2025-2026 budget for the Office of the City Administrator is \$32,956,199 which is 31% more than the prior year. The largest amount, \$13,837,356 funds the Unarmed Model of Crisis Response. 91.7% of funding comes from the General Fund and 8.3% from 17 different Trust Funds.

Office Staffing

There are 164 positions within the CAO's Office, 18 fewer than the prior year. 20 Vacant positions and 10 filled positions were lost in the current budget. The 10 individuals were moved internally or to other City departments. The biggest loss was a reduction to the procurement function where 20 positions were reduced to three resulting in a pullback of services to City departments.

Extensive layoffs city-wide were predicted because of a deficit budget, but agreements with bargaining units created a longer offramp. Some staff may later be laid off or reassigned.

Revenue

The City is encountering headwinds to its revenue sources. Tariffs and inflation slow down the economy which affects revenues including sales taxes and hotel taxes as well as income generated by the Port and Airport. Property taxes, the largest source of revenue, were a bit higher in the fall even accounting for the Palisades Fire.

The CAO aims to fully recover costs for City services like stormwater fees to strengthen the budget. Fees should be addressed each year to reimburse the General Fund. Street lighting fees were last increased in 1996 while trash pickup fees were last raised in 2008. The City Council will either propose a ballot measure or bonds which are reserved for physical structures and paid for with property taxes. Also, there will be a measure to fund fire facilities.

Federal funds to reimburse the City's losses in the Palisades Fire are expected. The FEMA process is lengthy. The State advances the reimbursements, taking 10% off the top to allow for possible shortfalls in FEMA reimbursements. That 10% is restored to the City if FEMA reimburses all requested funds. Reimbursements of over \$1 million require approval from the federal Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional office. There is no requirement for LA to repay these funds.

The federal government provides no funds for the Homelessness Initiative. There is a small amount of funding for an Emergency Solutions grant. Nonetheless, the CAO Office is looking for grant opportunities which it forwards to the appropriate department.

Planning for Change

Beyond simply a financial return for the City, expanding the Convention Center benefits the City in creating jobs and opportunities for local businesses and the economy as a whole. Definitely the expansion will increase City debt as well as increase obligations from the General Fund.

The City is reviewing a proposal to consolidate several of the smaller, more recently established City departments. The CAO is working to finalize the motion that will go to the City Council for approval. A consolidation is not likely to generate cost savings, certainly not this year. Yet it makes rational sense for these departments to be working more closely.

The Procurement function has moved to the CAO Office to develop citywide policy and procedures improving accessibility for small businesses to do City business. New policies making opportunities more available to small business and easier to do will create economic benefit to the City. The General Services Department continues to do commodity purchasing.

Challenges

Standard and Poors (S&P), a bond rating agency, has downgraded the City's credit rating by one notch and downgraded DWP's rating by two notches. All rating agencies have placed the City on negative watch. This follows from a one-billion-dollar gap in the budget. When the City closes the gap in a structural way, rating agencies will remove the negative watch.

Homeless Initiative

LAHSA has developed a dashboard and has provided better data this last year. They are updating their data timely and utilizing more metrics to evaluate their services. LAHSA built an inventory system for interim housing which is not yet fully operational. Still workers must dial the agency to find an available bed.

LAHSA's funding comes from the City and State. The County has terminated its relationship with LAHSA except for the regional homeless count.

There simply are not enough beds to accommodate the number of homeless. The pipeline is not large enough. HHH funding can provide 8000 while there are 11,000 needing beds. The Mayor wants to reduce the number of homeless by 25% this fiscal year.

CAO staff believe the Alliance court settlement is fair, that a lot of well-meaning people are working on it. However, those involved may have lost track of the end goal – to get people off the street and stabilized. Complicating matters is that the Alliance looks only at the number of new beds created, not existing beds that are out of funding.

Interim housing costs \$32,000 to \$40,000 per person annually. Permanent housing costs less - \$24,309 annually. But there is not enough permanent housing. Section 8 vouchers which subsidize permanent housing are now limited to two years. Those eligible for a voucher pay one third of their income for rent.

There was a major fraud involving \$25.9 million that the state paid Shangri-La to purchase an interim housing site. The fraudsters bought a property, marked it up and sold it for a Project Homekey site. The Housing Department administered the sale. The fraudsters also stole from the organization where they were working. Criminal charges were filed. The City Attorney is involved. The Office of the CAO had no knowledge of the seller or the owner of the property.

There needs to be training for all departments involved in money matters to identify potentially fraudulent activities as a step in preventing further losses from fraud.

CONCLUSION

The City with the huge involvement of the City Administrator's Office is managing operations under the strictures of a tight budget. The Office of the City Administrator as well as the entire City is actively moving ahead to address the financial concerns and the Homeless Crisis.

CITY ATTORNEY
Meeting of January 16, 2026

ATTENDEES

City Clerk: City Attorney Heidi Feldstein Soto; Barak Vaughn, Managing Director, Business, Finance and Operations

Budget Advocates: Mihran Kalaydjian and Jay Handal

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Upgrade case-management technology to align with court systems, improve liability transparency, reduce duplication, and increase efficiency despite staffing shortages.
- Authorize targeted hiring of civil litigators to reduce caseloads, curb reliance on outside counsel, and limit growing legal and financial risk.
- Fund dedicated attorneys and support staff to meet state mandates, enforce affordable housing laws, and reduce City liability.
- Maintain outside counsel and liability reserves and pursue insurance options to protect the General Fund from costly legal claims.

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles City Attorney's Office provides high-quality legal services to the City with clarity and consistency; promotes public safety; advances justice and equity within the criminal justice system; protects the City's legal and financial interests; safeguards residents and neighborhoods from unlawful and unfair practices; and supports City operations with integrity, accountability, efficiency, and transparency.

The Office serves as legal advisor to the City of Los Angeles, prosecutes all misdemeanor offenses occurring within the City, and defends the City in civil litigation. It also initiates affirmative litigation to protect consumers, enforce laws, and abate nuisances impacting neighborhoods. These functions are carried out through four core branches: Municipal Law, Civil Litigation, Proprietary, and Criminal and Special Litigation.

Under City Attorney Hydee Feldstein Soto, the Office has strengthened governance and accountability by ending no-bid contracting and discontinuing developer-drafted ordinances. The Office has also emphasized responsible litigation management, noting that while settlements may appear substantial, they often represent significant reductions from the amounts originally sought—for example, resolving a \$38 million US Department of Housing and Human Development (HUD) matter that initially sought \$500 million.

Despite these reforms, the Office continues to face serious operational challenges due to prolonged hiring constraints and an estimated shortage of approximately 80 attorneys. These staffing gaps have contributed to elevated caseloads and increased pressure on existing staff. As a result, the strategic use of outside counsel remains necessary to manage litigation risk and maintain service levels. Continued investment in modern case-management technology is also

critical to improving efficiency, reducing administrative burden, and supporting the Office's ability to meet its Citywide responsibilities.

Budget

The proposed budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year (FY) is intended to stabilize core legal operations, manage litigation risk, and protect the General Fund rather than expand services. Continued reliance on outside counsel and liability reserves underscores the need for staffing stabilization and operational efficiencies, including technology modernization.

The Office of the City Attorney's FY 2026–27 proposed departmental budget is approximately \$214.6 million, reflecting an increase of about \$24 million over the FY 2025–26 Adopted Budget. The increase is primarily driven by rising litigation volume, staffing pressures, and operational cost growth.

Non-Departmental Legal Costs

In addition to the departmental budget, the City's FY 2026–27 proposal includes significant non-departmental legal cost allocations:

- Outside Counsel: approximately \$15 million
- Liability Claims Reserve: approximately \$300 million

These allocations reflect rising legal exposure and the ongoing risk of high-cost and unpredictable judgments against the City.

Staffing

The Office of the City Attorney is currently authorized for 894 positions. Despite this number, the Department continues to face significant staffing challenges due to prolonged hiring constraints and elevated vacancy rates. These shortages have contributed to high caseloads, increased operational strain, and continued reliance on outside counsel to meet core legal responsibilities.

Staffing shortages increase caseloads per attorney, delay case resolution, and elevate the City's exposure to higher legal costs and settlements.

Expense

The Office of the City Attorney's FY 2026–27 proposed budget totals approximately \$214.6 million. The majority of departmental expenses, over \$190 million, are attributable to salaries and benefits, reflecting the labor-intensive nature of Citywide legal services.

Remaining expenditures support core operations, including litigation-related costs, contractual services, technology and systems support, and administrative overhead. Rising litigation volume, increased case complexity, and staffing shortages continue to place upward pressure on expenses.

Investments in operational efficiency, particularly case-management technology, are intended to help control long-term costs and reduce reliance on higher-cost external legal services.

Legal Risk

The City faces continued legal and financial exposure from litigation and liability claims. For FY 2026–27, the proposed budget includes approximately \$300 million for the Liability Claims Reserve and \$15 million for outside counsel to manage complex and high-risk cases. These allocations reflect ongoing exposure to large and unpredictable judgments and highlight the need for effective risk management to protect the General Fund.

Successes

The Office of the City Attorney has strengthened governance and accountability by ending no-bid contracting and discontinuing developer-drafted ordinances. The Office has also improved litigation outcomes by effectively managing legal risk, resolving cases at amounts significantly lower than initial claims, and protecting the City from greater financial exposure. Continued use of strategic litigation management and operational reforms has helped maintain service levels despite staffing and resource constraints.

Challenges

The Office of the City Attorney continues to face increasing litigation volume and complexity, placing sustained pressure on staffing and operational capacity. Prolonged hiring constraints and elevated vacancy rates contribute to high caseloads and increased reliance on outside counsel. In addition, outdated case-management technology limits efficiency, while the growing risk of high-cost judgments continues to pose financial exposure to the General Fund.

CONCLUSION

The Office of the City Attorney plays a critical role in protecting the City’s legal, financial, and operational interests. The FY 2026–27 budget reflects continued pressure from rising litigation, staffing constraints, and increasing legal exposure, while prioritizing risk management and core service stability rather than program expansion. Sustained investment in staffing, technology modernization, and proactive risk management will be essential to maintaining effective legal services, limiting long-term costs, and safeguarding the General Fund.

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
Meeting of November 18, 2025

ATTENDEES

City Clerk: Sofia Anguiano, Neighborhood Council Elections and Funding Division Manager; Melvin Cañas, Neighborhood Council Funding Program Manager; Michael Lektorich, Election Division; Ed Moreno, Administrative Services Division Manager

Budget Advocates: Connie Acosta, Brian Allen, Garry Fordyce, and Kay Hartman

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Add the Neighborhood Councils to the list of customers the City Clerk serves
- Share with the Neighborhood Councils the Memorandum of Understanding between the City Clerk and Department of Neighborhood Empowerment upon its completion
- Find a way to hold 2027 Neighborhood Council elections between the Neighborhood Councils, City Clerk, and Department of Neighborhood Empowerment
- Restore previous strategic plans to the City Clerk website along with all annual reports

DISCUSSION

The mission of the City Clerk “is to facilitate and support City legislative processes and meetings, record and provide access to the City's official records, preserve the City's history, support economic development, and conduct elections with integrity.”

The City Clerk considers its customers to be the City’s elected officials, City departments and staff, the public, candidates and voters in the City, regional county and municipal governments, the business community, and community-based organizations. While Neighborhood Councils are not listed as customers, the Clerk’s Office agreed that this would be changed.

The City Clerk serves as the Clerk of the City Council and maintains the official record of Council proceedings. The Office maintains the City’s official records and archives, receives and records all claims filed against the City, and provides records retention management services for City departments.

In addition, the City Clerk facilitates the County’s conduct of municipal elections (candidate filing, petitions, etc.) and conducts Los Angeles Unified School District and internal City elections (LACERS, Fire and Police Pensions, etc.). The Office provides fiscal, administrative, and personnel services to the City Council and Mayor, provides staff assistance to City Council committees, and supports economic development initiatives, including administering the City’s Business Improvement Districts program.

Budget

The Mayor requested a 5% cut in the Department’s 2026-2027 fiscal year budget. The total cut is \$873,000. The base from which this figure was computed included a \$4.7 million one-time expense for election money. If that one-time expense is removed, the budget cut would be \$640,000 and the City Clerk is asking that this figure be used.

The department's adopted budget for fiscal year 2025-26 was \$18.67 million, \$1.41 million less than the 2024-25 fiscal year's budget of \$20.09 million.

In fiscal year 2025-26, the Department's primary source of funding was the General Fund (approximately \$17.48 million), about \$1.5 million less than the prior fiscal year. The second largest source of funding was the Business Improvement Trust Fund, contributing approximately \$1.04 million (about a \$76,000 increase from last fiscal year). This is followed by several smaller funds.

Municipal elections are the Department's largest expense. It anticipates spending \$11 million on the 2026 election with another \$4 million to send voter information pamphlets.

Staffing

The total fiscal year 2025-2026 budget covers 108 regular positions and eight resolution authority positions. The funding excludes the salaries of seven regular positions and five resolution authority positions from the fiscal year 2024-2025 budget.

The current budget crunch is having a large impact on the City Clerk's Office. Vacancies were swept. Senior manager and funding representative positions were swept. The remaining employees are having to do a lot more. Since there is not a Neighborhood Council election this fiscal year, the staff that supports the Neighborhood Council elections is helping with other tasks. The Office is still trying to figure out how to get their work done in this budgetarily constricted environment.

The City Clerk is working to absorb the reduction in funding. If the Office cannot identify sufficient offsets, layoffs may be necessary. Staff do not see how the Office can absorb another cut in staffing. The overtime budget is approximately \$20,000.

The Department has asked for two new Management Analysts for the next fiscal year. It proposes to fund one by eliminating an Executive Assistant vacancy and the other by keeping a Senior Administrative Clerk vacancy. This plan falls about \$50,000 short of covering the two new positions.

The Department implemented a reorganization where it combined Neighborhood Council elections and funding. This was the only reorganization in the last year and the Department plans to maintain its current organization in the next year.

Neighborhood Council Funding

The City Clerk's Office manages Neighborhood Council funding. The Neighborhood Council Special Funds are managed by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE). The City Clerk's Office does not have strong opinions about whether this is a good arrangement although they do say that the expertise lies with their Office.

Ideally, since the expertise lies within the Office of the City Clerk, it makes sense for it to manage Neighborhood Council funding including the special funds, but it is not exactly a black and white issue. The nuances of the move must be considered before a decision can be made.

The Office of the City Clerk is working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DONE and the City Clerk. It is important that the final MOU be shared with the Neighborhood Councils to ensure an understanding of how their funds are used.

Neighborhood Council Elections

The City Clerk's fiscal year 2026-27 budget request includes no funds for Neighborhood Council elections. This would save \$915,000, which the City Clerk proposes to reallocate to other uses. The request would postpone the 2027 Neighborhood Council elections until 2029.

The City Clerk is prioritizing resource realignment and strategic investments necessary to maintain mandated services, ensure administrative support for elected offices, and uphold the mission of providing equitable access to City government. Equitable access to City government must include Neighborhood Council elections each two years given the Neighborhood Councils are the most local elected boards in the City Charter.

While saving \$915,000 will help balance the budget, canceling Neighborhood Council elections seems short-sighted. The Neighborhood Councils need to work with the City Clerk and DONE to find a way to move forward with the 2027 Neighborhood Council elections even if the City Clerk does not participate.

The Neighborhood Councils are in the process of updating their bylaws. The City Clerk's Office will need to absorb the election-related changes in those bylaws by the summer of 2026 if they run Neighborhood Council elections.

Historically, the turnout for NC elections is higher for in-person voting than for vote-by-mail elections. A high turnout should be the goal, that is, in-person voting for the Neighborhood Council elections.

The City Clerk's Office is exploring conducting Neighborhood Council elections in two Service Regions at a time to avoid elections over the holidays. This would be a step forward.

The City Clerk's Office reports that moving Neighborhood Council elections into the municipal election cycle would be significantly more expensive. The County cites the difficulty of overlaying the 99 Neighborhood Council boundaries over other legislative boundaries.

Legislative boundaries differ at each level of government, and integrating Neighborhood Council elections into the municipal cycle will require additional mapping and administrative work. That challenge should be weighed against potential benefits such as improved turnout and fewer stand-alone election costs.

In 2010 the City Clerk attempted to fold the Neighborhood Council elections into the municipal elections. They were unable to make it work.

All of this suggests that the departments that support the Neighborhood Councils do not value the system.

Other Department Activities

The new City Clerk removed the strategic plan from the City Clerk website. It is understandable that she would want to set a new strategic direction now that she has shifted into this role. However, all strategic plans—current and past—should be available on the website, along with annual reports that provide insight into progress on those plans.

The City Clerk eliminated its Passport Application Acceptance program to focus on core functions. The people working on it were moved into positions elsewhere.

While the home page of the Council File Management System (CFMS) promises an upgrade coming soon, the \$40,000 budget for this change is repeatedly denied. It would be prudent to remove the promise from the CFMS web page.

CONCLUSION

As the City's recordkeeper and election administrator, the City Clerk plays a central role in civic access and local democratic participation. The Neighborhood Councils cannot be an afterthought for this Department. While the Department has a division devoted to Neighborhood Council support, this is not enough. The Office of the City Clerk needs some innovative thinking for solving budget issues around the Neighborhood Councils including, but not limited to, Neighborhood Council elections.

CITY COUNCIL**Council District 1 Meeting of October 16, 2025****Council District 3 Meeting of October 16, 2025****Council District 5 Meetings of November 6, 2025 and December 1, 2025****Council District 15 Meeting of November 21, 2025****ATTENDEES**

City Council District 1: Lyric Kelkar

Budget Advocates: Kay Hartman

City Council District 3: Jeff Jacobberger

Budget Advocates: Kay Hartman

City Council District 5: Kristen Pawling, Haley Martinez

Budget Advocates: Kay Hartman, Jack Humphreville

City Council District 15: Anissa Raja

Budget Advocates: Kay Hartman

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify the funding source(s) for each allocation in Exhibit G of the City's budget books.
- Add clarity to discretionary spending by providing the data on how much money each Council District has and where it comes from
- Include the City Council's share of the General City Purposes Fund the base budget for the City Council.
- Present the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) budget and staffing as a distinct line item, separate from the 15 Council District offices.
- Benchmark pricing for City purchases against market rates and adjust procurement/contracting to reduce expenditures where feasible.
- Inventory City-owned properties and publish a prioritized plan to improve utilization and/or generate revenue consistent with public benefit.
- Develop a more accurate estimate of liability expenses for each budget year by working with the Mayor and City Attorney

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles City Council serves as the legislative branch of City government, with 15 Council Districts (CDs), each represented by one elected Councilmember.

The Mayor is responsible for releasing the annual budget on or before April 20. Following this, the City Council's Budget and Finance Committee conducts hearings and typically makes only minor modifications before adopting the budget. The City Council must approve the final budget by June 1, after which the Mayor has five working days to sign or veto it. Overriding a mayoral veto requires a two-thirds vote of the City Council. Once finalized, the new fiscal year budget takes effect on July 1.

City Council Budget

The City Council budget for the current 2025-26 fiscal year is \$39.3 million, a 6% increase over the 2024-25 budget of \$36.3 million. The Mayor proposes the City Council budget for the next fiscal year, subject to City Council review and adoption.

Exhibit G is a table in the budget books that summarizes Departmental-related costs and allocations funded outside the City Council's direct budget appropriation. For the 2025-26 fiscal year, Exhibit G lists: Pensions and Retirement (\$5.5 million); Human Resources Benefits (\$2.5 million); Water and Electricity (\$1 million); Building Services (\$5.4 million); All Other Departmental Costs (\$7.2 million); Capital Improvements and Financing (\$8,720); and Other Allocations (\$25 million). In addition to the City Council \$39.3 million budget appropriation, Exhibit G shows \$86.9 million in direct costs of operation. These costs are funded from several sources including the General City Purposes Fund (GCP), the Unappropriated Balance, and Capital Projects. The GCP allocation is divided evenly among the Council Offices.

The exhibit for GCP funds previously had numerous line items, and a Council Office would be budgeted GCP funds depending on its needs. Historically, the various projects in the districts were spelled out in the GCP. Mayor Bass flattened the structure by removing several line items and now the budget allocates the same amount of GCP funds to each Council Office; in FY 2025-26, the amount allocated to Council Offices decreased. If each Council District is receiving the same amount of funds from the GCP, it makes sense to include those funds in the City Council base budget.

If a Council Office should run out of money, the Council District cannot turn to the General Fund to cover expenses. It must manage its money closely so this doesn't happen.

Discretionary Funds

Each City Council office has access to discretionary funds. Discretionary funds are money the Council Office can use for district activities. Other than the Street Furniture Revenue Fund, the funds are not distributed equally and depend on the assets of the district.

The monies from some of these funds have restricted uses and others do not. For example, the Street Furniture Revenue Fund may only be spent for street and sidewalk improvements while AB1290 Fund money may be used for any purpose. Some funds are specific to individual council districts. AB1290 is starting to wind down and that will lead to less discretionary money.

Discretionary funds are public funds and may only be used in accordance with the City Charter and Administrative Code.

GCP and AB1290 funds may be transferred to a City department at the department's request without a motion by the City Council; they are processed by the City Clerk. All other discretionary fund expenditures must be approved by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor.

Similar to the expenses documented in Exhibit G, discretionary funds are not presented in the budget books. At a minimum, the City budget should include estimates of the discretionary resources that may be available to each Council Office with an accounting, either in the Financial Status Report or as a table in the following year's budget, documenting the total in discretionary funds for each Council Office.

The Controller has a data site for discretionary funds. It documents the amount of discretionary funds each Council Office spent. It does not show the amount each Council District has available to work with, and it is not current; the last update was from FY 2023-24.

Staffing

The Council's adopted budget for fiscal year 2024-25 was \$37.2 million. Estimated expenditures are \$52.4 million. The major overrun was salaries. The FY 2025-26 budget allocates 108 employees to the City Council, including the employees for the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA). 108 employees is an unrealistic staffing number for the fifteen council offices and the CLA.

Council Offices may use their discretionary funds to pay for additional staff that is not covered by the budget, among other expenses. The number of staff in each Council District varies. Some offices need more staff based on the needs of their constituents. The number of committees on which the Councilmember serves or the individual committee assignments may dictate the need for additional staff. Density also plays a role in Council Office staff. Denser districts require more staff to adequately provide constituent services. Consequently, there are Council Offices with as many as 40 employees and while others with have as few as 18.

While there is variation in the size of the Council District Offices, staff in the Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) is stable. Its staff should be addressed separately in the budget to delineate the portion of the City Council Budget that supports the CLA.

The City Budget Deficit

The City is constrained by Proposition 13. The alternative is to adjust fees to implement a full cost-recovery model. Besides fees-for-service, there are also punitive fees such as the one documented in Council File 25-0600-S53 for developers who continue to violate the building codes.

The City has a sizeable infrastructure deficit. For any project, the City needs to consider what it will cost today versus waiting five years. When thinking about financing, the City needs to consider the cost of a loan versus the liability costs of ignoring a fix.

City of Los Angeles stakeholders should not expect infrastructure improvements in the next couple of years with the exception of spending centered around the Olympics.

If the City borrows money today, it ties the hands of future City Councils.

It's best to fix infrastructure as we go along. Streets require repaving every specific number of years. The City should have the discipline to have funds available when the time comes, but it doesn't.

Ideas for managing or resolving the budget deficit include establishing a public bank that could alleviate financial pressures. A public bank would allow the City to borrow from and invest in itself.

The City owns a lot of land. It could borrow against its real estate holdings and pay itself back with interest. It could use traditional banking operations to invest in itself.

The City could build right sizing into the taxes and fees it charges. For example, the business tax could be right sized, especially for multi-billion-dollar companies. Taxes could be more progressive.

The 2026-27 budget will be tighter than the 2025-26 budget. The City is over-spending its current budget by approximately \$80 million. Cuts in federal funding made the budget situation worse. There will be no opportunity to raise fees to full cost recovery in the 2026-27 budget.

There needs to be a hard conversation about what the City will and will not do. There's a real need for economic development somewhere. Will the City have a true economic development department, perhaps an Economic Development Corporation?

Revenue Generating and Savings

The City has properties that are under-utilized. The City needs to find ways to earn money from its properties. The County, for example, has been able to make money from Marina del Rey. The City pays a premium for its purchases. For example, renting a porta potty for a City event is a lot more expensive than for a private event. A comprehensive review and pricing realignment is in order.

The City Council created a Budget and Finance Advisory Committee (BFAC). The Budget and Finance Committee hoped the BFAC would be a source for revenue ideas. It has turned out not to be the case. Its members do not have experience running a budget as large as the City's.

Liability

For some of the City's liability issues, if we know the scope, we can work on a solution. Personnel-related liability is a more difficult problem. The City often settles questionable cases to avoid paying attorney fees at trial. In some departments, there's a culture of litigating work-place disputes. In response Police Chief McDonnell is considering tougher penalties for LAPD workplace misconduct to reduce the number of civil suits against the City.

Expected liability payouts are underestimated as they have been every year for the last several years. The City Council, Mayor, and City Attorney need to work together to develop a more accurate estimates of the liability payouts for each budget year.

City Council District Spending

City Council spending is documented in motions; however, this is not transparent. The public must comb through motions to understand spending by a given Council Office. There are ways to provide sunshine on City Council spending, but there appears little will among the Council Members to do so.

Labor Agreements

Labor agreements are negotiated and salary increases become effective after the fiscal year has already begun, not at its start. The result has been that the remainder of the budget year is in deficit spending. One possible solution is to modify the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) so the new salary structures align with the budget year.

That could be part of the solution, but there are additional problems. The City had difficulties recruiting and retaining police officers so it negotiated relatively large salary increases. The Fire Department said they had the same issue, and they, too, negotiated large salary increases. Then, the civilian employees seeing the police officers and fire fighters getting large salary increases, expected large increases as well. It's not a structural problem. It's a political problem as labor unions matter in elections.

The City has a policy assuming 3% raises over time. If the City were to assume 5%, the unions will want to start budget negotiations at 5%. It might make sense from a budget perspective, but not from a bargaining perspective.

Convention Center Modernization

In spite of the fact that the City is in a budget crisis, the City Council voted to proceed with the Convention Center Project. Those who voted in favor of the project to an increase in job creation not just from the Convention Center itself, but also to other businesses that may benefit from expanded convention events.

Paying off the debt for the project do not begin until 2029, long after the Olympics. It's doubtful the city budget will be fixed by then. The City Administrative Office estimates the City will pay \$4.78 billion dollars over a 30-year period.

3.5% of the 14% Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) is slated to go to the Convention Center.

According to an [article in the Los Angeles Times](#), when all new revenue streams are included, the City will carry an annual burden of \$43 million a year.

At one time, Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) agreed to fund the Convention Center expansion in exchange for a hotel on the premises. Council Member Price led the opposition that killed this deal.

Artificial Intelligence

The City is starting down an AI journey in the Departments of City Planning and Building and Safety (LADBS) to automate plan check, for example, to help the recovery from the Palisades Fire. The City is looking at AI, not as a means of replacing people, but reducing the workload so more can be done. For example, an idea is to use AI to optimize street sweeping.

CONCLUSION

The City Council has a big job on its hands trying to battle its way out of deficit spending. All ideas are needed as the City Council is going to need to work together with the Mayor to keep the City solvent.

DEPARTMENT OF CITY TOURISM
Meeting of October 17, 2025

ATTENDEES

City Tourism -Tigran Avetisyan, Director of Administration and Finance; Kim Nakashima, Director of Policy, Research and Master Plan Contract
Budget Advocates - Scott Wright and Connie Acosta

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Partner with the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Neighborhood Councils to create Neighborhood Tourism Districts
- Jointly collaborate with the Los Angeles Tourism and the Convention Board (LATCB) to expand their mission.

DISCUSSION

The Department of City Tourism advocates for Tourism Policy and oversees both the Convention Center operations that are privately operated and directed by the Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board, “an official non-profit organization responsible for promoting Los Angeles as a destination for tourism and conventions. It is a private, 501(c)(6) business association that works with over 1,000 local businesses to boost the city's tourism economy.” It acts as the official tourism marketing organization for the City of Los Angeles.

The Board’s Mission is to market and promote City of Los Angeles as the premier destination for leisure travel, meetings, and conventions, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of life for all Angelenos through the economic benefits of tourism.

The Convention Board and Bureau have been operating since 2019; they have a considerable budget, approximately \$20 million annually. They have strategic marketing packages for both national and international campaigns.

Budget

This year’s budget for City Tourism totaled \$1.83 million, a decrease of 11 percent from the prior fiscal year.

The Department’s budget is funded through special funds: (1) the Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau Trust Fund and (2) the Convention Center Revenue Fund.

Eight of the 12 budgeted positions currently are filled.

Convention Center Expansion

The City Council approved the Convention Center expansion project that would activate the downtown economy. The Bureau of Engineering will take the lead in the construction of the project with a completion date of July 1, 2029. Yet, the Tourism Department is aiming for March of 2029. The plan is to keep the building open through the renovation period, but pause the

construction by putting away all the equipment and cleaning the space, during the Olympics. The Department is not asking for additional staff to manage the convention expansion project.

The expansion will involve remodeling the interior, the four existing decks within the structure, not expanding outward. Rooms of different square footages will be added in the middle area, since there is expansion space between the existing building and the exhibition hall. The new built area will serve as a bridge between the buildings. The project will not expand outward, but stay within the footprint of the existing buildings. The project will involve three categories: (1) The expansion of the exhibition space will add room for big cabinet spaces for food events; (2) The addition of smaller rooms for breakout sessions with a new lobby in the middle to host events; and (3) The addition of a new ballroom on the rooftop for big events or a banquet. This will help increase competitiveness.

City bonds will pay for this Expansion, that the City Administrator Office and Bureau of Engineering will administer.

The Convention Center is 1201 S. Figueroa Street, CA 90015. It is tucked in the southwest corner of downtown Los Angeles. It is tightly surrounded by 110 Freeway on the South, and the 10 Freeway on the West,

Revenue

In spite of the Los Angeles wildfires, during the month of January 7 and January 31, 2025, there were large number in attendance at the Los Angeles Convention Center for their various activities. The total estimated regional economic impact generated during the month by the LA Convention Center was \$23.2 million.

The top activities were:

- Megabyte Nation - 4.5 thousand attendees
- SoCal Cup Open Championship Volleyball Tournament – 20 thousand attendees
- The Society of Thoracic Surgeons 61st Annual Meeting - 11.2 thousand attendees
- The FitExpo – 30 thousand attendees

Visitors

Canada and Mexico have been the Center's biggest markets; both have decreased lately. Asia and Europe are good markets as well. Annually, the Convention Center has 1 to 2 million visitors, while the County of Los Angeles as a whole has about 50 million visitors.

Neighborhood Improvement

The Tourism and Convention Board started is addressing crime, safety and cleanliness on surrounding city streets. They reported that neighborhood improvement associations are discussing hiring their own people to respond to street cleanliness and safety.

Neighborhood Councils need to advocate and work with City Council districts for the cleanliness of our urban sidewalks and parkways, including urban parks to draw in tourists and have them

enjoy their visits and motivate them to return to Los Angeles. This City is full of tourist attractions but the areas need to be clean, free of unhoused neighbors and trash. When visitors come to Los Angeles, our City General Fund increases which in turn keeps our City staffed.

CONCLUSION

The Convention Center is an economic engine for the City of Los Angeles and its local businesses, providing jobs that keep the economy on track. The City competes against venues in other cities to attract visitors. Updating facilities and ensuring safety for visitors is essential.

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL + HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUITY
Meeting of December 7, 2025

ATTENDEES

Civil + Human Rights and Equity: Capri Maddox, General Manager; Nicole Bryant, Principal Project Coordinator; Mayra Medel, Senior Project Coordinator; Francina Bent, Financial Director
Budget Advocates: Kay Hartman and Barbara Ringuette

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set aside some of the \$250,000 the Department generated for the General Fund to support at least some of the Department's budget needs
- Use the \$25,000 grant from the Weingart Center that went to the Mayor's Fund to cover some of the Department's activities
- Develop new merchandise to sell for the benefit of the General Fund and adjust prices to include shipping costs.

DISCUSSION

The Department of Civil + Human Rights and Equity is dedicated to promoting diversity, equity, and accountability within the City. Its mission is to reduce bias and injustices while fostering equal opportunities through community engagement, equity driven initiatives, and programs that support upward mobility.

Budget

The Department's budget for fiscal year 2025-2026 is \$3.908 million, a 24% decrease from the 2024-2025 budget of \$5.14 million. That represents a small reduction from the \$5.21 million budgeted in fiscal year 2023-2024 and a 19% increase from the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget.

For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the Department is requesting \$4.158 million, more than \$3.908 million in 2025-2026 yet still less than the \$5.14 million in 2024-2025, a partial recovery. The Department is asking to add two investigators, one public information director, and one new community affairs advocate. It is also asking for \$250,000 for software upgrades.

The Mayor requested the Department cut 5% from its budget, a total of approximately \$195,000. The new position requests are not included in the 5% cut they offered in their budget request. There were two retirees in this fiscal year so two of the new openings would be to replace these vacancies since the Department was aware these retirements were coming and had adapted before the fact. The 2025-2026 budget brought one layoff, an exempt position for an Assistant General Manager.

The Department's budget is always shrinking. It's not just this department. Some departments are having to return grant money because the City is not budgeting its share of the work.

The Department is entirely funded by the General Fund. To supplement this allocation, it is actively seeking additional funds through grant opportunities. A dedicated staff member is

focused on securing grants, though none have been awarded yet. The Weingart Center granted \$25,000 to the Department's work and that money went to the Mayor's Fund because it must go to a fiscal agent. That money should be made available for the Department's work.

Other Sources of City Revenue

The Department's Discrimination and Enforcement Division can levy fines on organizations who violate the City's Civil Rights ordinances. \$240,000 in fines have been collected, some remain outstanding. The Office of Finance is working on collecting those that are outstanding. The City Administrative Officer and the City Attorney are drafting a new special fund to which the fine payments will be directed. The money in this special fund will be used for General Fund needs.

The Department is now selling some of the swag from its campaigns. It has generated \$18,000 so far. The money goes into the General Fund. The Department can't afford to ship its posters. The Department has been using volunteers to deliver them around the City. A better idea would be to charge for shipping.

The Department is contributing just over \$250,000 to the General Fund. The Mayor and City Council should take this into consideration when establishing the Department's budget and use at least some of that money to support the Department's work.

Staffing

The Department is budgeted for 5 regular and 22 resolution authority positions in the 2025-2026 fiscal year. In the 2024-2025 fiscal year it was budgeted for 5 regular and 29 resolution authority positions, reflecting the decrease in the Department's budget.

Because the Department cannot offer promotions, employees who qualify for advancement often leave, resulting in attrition. The Department's employees are being poached making it difficult to plan.

Despite the small and decreasing budget, the Department's staff leans in. People help even when it's not their unit. Everyone is adding to their plates. Management is trying not to overwhelm the employees.

Commissions

The Department is supported by five Commissions whose members are not paid. The Commissions are Commission on Civil Rights, Human Relations Commission, Commission on the Status of Women, Transgender Advisory Council, and Reparations Advisory Commission.

There are 43 commissioners across the five Commissions.

Many of the commissioners had not served before so the Department devoted a lot of time to educating the commissioners. The fruit of that education is now realized in Commissioners actively moving the Department's mission forward.

Commissioners worked with Council District 15 to fund some of the remembrance of the 60th anniversary of the Watts Rebellion. They worked with Council Districts 11 and 14 for a

Transgender Day of Remembrance. They found Councilmembers to pay for the coffee and DJ for the launch of the Just Say Hello campaign. The Commissioners drove the Women of Impact Awards with the Department paying for the space and they are working with Cal State Los Angeles on a Status of Women event. Through the Department's Reparations Advisory Commission, the Department's report on reparations was released and can be found on its website.

Partnerships

The Department staff is nimble and it makes use of partners and volunteers. It relies on UCLA, USC, and Cal State Los Angeles.

To maximize its outreach budget, the Department seeks sponsorships from other City entities wherever possible. For instance, the Los Angeles Police Department sponsors the Young Adult program and since the Department cannot allocate funds for food, it relies on City Council contributions.

New partnerships include the Port of Los Angeles and Los Angeles World Airports who are participating in the Just Say Hello campaign. Rec and Parks is helping advertise Just Say Hello. The Weingart Center is also involved with this campaign.

The Department holds an outreach event once a month utilizing one of its partnerships. At these events, the Department promotes itself and an act of kindness.

The Red Cross and the YMCA participate in the Together in Service campaign. The Red Cross produces events like installing smoke detectors in the Repair Zones (nine most marginalized areas of the City). With the YMCA, a volunteer corps of 32 people has been created. Volunteers assist with tabling, reducing the need for staff overtime.

The Department partnered with the Community Investment for Families Department (CFID) and Cal State Los Angeles on a Know Your Rights campaign. As Together in Service partners, these organizations quickly launched a Know Your Rights campaign when ICE raids began in Los Angeles. The Department's Know Your Rights training is prompting people to seek immigration assistance from them. Immigration is the Department's biggest challenge. People are asking them to do more. There are a lot of requests for report backs.

During the Palisades wildfire, the Department was out in the community. They were at the Palisades Fire Service Center where the staff was able to provide resources and let people know about Civil Rights availability.

Pepperdine University offers free meditation services.

In the Department's beginning, it would purchase ads to make people aware of its campaigns. Now organizations are contributing ads.

L.A. REPAIR

The Los Angeles Reforms for Equity and Public Acknowledgment of Institutional Racism (L.A. REPAIR) Innovation Fund is a participatory budgeting process to allow participants in the nine Repair Zones to determine how to spend the specified funds allocated from the Covid Recovery Federal dollars.

The processing of the first cohort is at halfway mark. The Department has distributed the first half of the first cohort to the selected organizations. Invoices for the second half of the cohort will be coming soon. All L.A. REPAIR contracts are going to Mayor's office for approval.

Upward Mobility Program

The Department's Upward Mobility Program provides no-cost seminars on various topics to give attendees access to tools they didn't know existed or they didn't think they had access to.

Law Day, a virtual event designed to inspire and prepare the next generation of legal professionals, was held in 2025. Students gained exposure to lawyers, judges, and legal experts while learning about pathways to law school and careers in the legal field.

Medical Day, like Law Day, is designed to inspire people to enter the medical field.

Other activities include home ownership, housing fairs, and employment fairs. Behavioral Health Day is a new activity that will be unveiled soon.

Metrics

The Department has just started measuring its work. Creating a climate for a campaign is difficult to measure. Months can be measured (Black History Month, for example) but its impact cannot.

People opened over 2000 cases and \$240,000 in fines have been collected.

CONCLUSION

The Department of Human + Civil Rights and Equity is a small department with a small budget. Through partnerships, it delivers more than could reasonably be expected for its size. It deserves to be funded. The Department can increase its impact by increasing its focus on grant acquisitions.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT DEPARTMENT

Meeting of November 9, 2025

ATTENDEES

Community Investment Department: Abigail Marquez, General Manager

Budget Advocates: Jay Handal and Mihran Kalaydjian

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Protect essential anti-poverty, youth, and aging services by maintaining level funding that advances the City's equity, public health, and economic stability goals.
- Sustain HUD compliance and interdepartmental coordination by maintaining level funding for HUD fund administration across 19 City departments.
- Stabilize funding to ensure continuity of services supported by restricted City General Fund, federal HUD, and County grant resources.
- Streamline consolidation by reducing administrative duplication and improving coordination without additional budgetary growth.
- Eliminate long-term vacant positions and redirect salary savings to offset cost pressures while preserving direct services.

DISCUSSION

The Community Investment for Families Department is merging with several City departments to form the new Community Investment Department (CID). The consolidation is expected to improve service coordination and administrative efficiency. The following departments are being merged:

- Community Investment for Families Department (CIFD)
- Department of Aging (DoA)
- Youth Development Department (YDD)
- Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD)

The new department could save an estimated \$5.3 million annually beginning in the 2026-27 fiscal year.

CID administers federal HUD funding and coordinates compliance and program delivery across 19 City departments.

The Department funds and oversees a portfolio of prevention, protection, and stabilization services delivered through community-based organizations, including youth development, senior services, and survivor supports. Maintaining continuity during consolidation is essential because many programs rely on restricted federal and County dollars tied to compliance and reporting.

CID oversees Youth and Aging programs serving more than 50,000 residents across 19 service sites. The Department operates with approximately \$19 million in City funding and about \$11 million in County grants, and it administers the LAUSD College Savings Account Program (\$50

per student) to support long-term educational and economic mobility. Department data indicates significant service needs, including high rates of intimate partner violence among residents experiencing homelessness, reinforcing the importance of survivor services and safety-net supports.

CID also leads the City's "Know Your Rights" initiative and oversees programs addressing human trafficking, domestic violence shelters, and homeless shelter services. Consolidation creates an opportunity to streamline contracting, reporting, and performance tracking while maintaining continuity for vulnerable residents.

Proposed 2026-27 Budget

In its budget submission for the 2026-27 fiscal year, CID requests level funding and targeted fiscal, audit, and performance-management capacity to complete consolidation, meet HUD and grant compliance requirements, and sustain direct services.

This level of funding will protect filled direct-service positions while eliminating long-term vacancies and using salary savings to absorb cost pressures. Preserving funding across consolidated programs will avoid service interruptions for vulnerable residents during the transition.

To support consolidation, the Department requests approval of several resolution-authority positions, including:

- Chief Management Analyst roles for Youth Development, Senior Services, and Executive Officer to coordinate programs and track outcomes.
- Internal Auditor IV to integrate audit functions and strengthen compliance and reporting across funding streams.
- Senior Accountant I to strengthen fiscal oversight of expanding grant-funded programs.
- Principal Public Relations Representative to manage expanded departmentwide communications.

Challenges

The Department faces several challenges. First, the Department seeks to maintain budget stability during consolidation so service sites and community partners can continue operations without disruption while the new departmental structure, contracts, and reporting systems stabilize.

Accounting for General Fund pressures and limited flexibility in restricted HUD and County grants will likely require shifting unavoidable cost increases onto direct service contracts on which residents depend.

The Department must strengthen fiscal, audit, and performance-management capacity to meet expanded compliance and reporting requirements, protect HUD and grant reimbursements, and reduce the risk of findings or repayment. Ideally budget reductions will be sequenced after the

consolidation timeline and final organizational chart are approved, so efficiency measures target duplication and long-term vacancies minimizing cuts to frontline services.

The final approval of the proposed consolidation of departments was not received before the FY 2026-27 budget submission deadline. Therefore, the Department has requested an extension to submit its Budget Reduction Proposal.

Any required savings should prioritize eliminating vacant positions and capturing post-consolidation administrative efficiencies, while preserving critical direct services.

CONCLUSION

The new Community Investment Department will provide services to a wide range of families and individuals, providing some assurance that their needs will be met by one or more of the Department's programs. Administrative efficiencies are expected.

BUREAU OF CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

Meeting of December 2, 2025

ATTENDEES

Bureau of Contracts Administration: Dr. John Reamer, General Manager

NC Budget Advocates: Kevin Davis, Connie Acosta and Mihran Kalaydjian

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Staff the Office of Wage Standards to ensure enforcement of wage theft regulations
- Assign sufficient staff to ensure the Convention Center Modification project and Olympic related projects are completed safely
- Expand the Community Level Contracting program to enhance outreach to local and small businesses

DISCUSSION

The Bureau of Contracts Administration (BCA) is one of five Department of Public Works bureaus. It is responsible for inspections of any construction performed in the public-right-of-way within the City. BCA also checks projects under contract with the City. For example, when Streets LA needs additional personnel to work on large infrastructure projects, private contractors may be hired. BCA inspectors make sure the work is properly completed.

The Bureau's inspectors enforce contract compliance as they relate to government and City Council approved ordinances, such as labor safety compliance and business inclusion services.

BCA protects workers through the enforcement of wage regulations for construction workers, and the living and the minimum wage for any person working in the City. Where there is a wage complaint, the Bureau identifies the issue, works with the contractor, and 99 percent of the time the Bureau resolves the issue with the contractor.

The Bureau certifies small, emerging, local businesses, including disabled veterans, minority, and women owned businesses.

Budget

For fiscal year 2025-26, the Bureau's total approved budget was \$47.20 million, a decrease of \$4.2 million from the prior fiscal year's budget. The General Fund contributed 56 percent of the total operating budget while Special Funds contributed over 43 percent.

Challenges

From the start of Fiscal Year 2025-26, The Bureau's biggest challenge has been recovery from the reduction of staff and adjusting the workload that comes their way. In the final 2025-26 budget the Bureau has 388 positions after 41 positions were eliminated. Whenever the Bureau loses staff, that impacts work delivery. The Bureau recognizes that their most valuable asset is their people.

Presently the Bureau is pushing to expand Community Level Contracting. This is an effort to de-bundle large scale contracts into smaller contracts for small business procurement opportunities. In its early stages, this program has been successful according to statistics. There has been a good response from the community. Though, there are going to be large multi-million-dollar contracts that the Bureau won't be able to unbundle into smaller contracts. The challenge with the program is that it requires hiring staff to manage each de-bundled contract. However, the Bureau is committed to the task.

Accomplishments

Recently, the Bureau reached out to 1,100 local, small businesses to build a pool of certified small businesses; 66 responded and participated in the Small Business Academy. The intentions are to assist them in partnering with "larger businesses to get their feet wet in a bigger pool". This is an on-going effort.

The program started with sidewalk repairs. BCA pre-qualified 35 contractors of which 66 percent were 1st time bidders. 29 percent emerging businesses, 6 percent disabled vet businesses and 40 percent local, minority owned or small businesses. Of those 35 businesses, 31 were awarded contracts. The program was recently adopted by the Bureau of Engineering. BCA is encouraging other departments and agencies to adopt similar policies as well.

The Bureau has three key outreach programs used to build the pool of certified small businesses: Team With, Rise With, and Build With. These are designed to educate various groups on how to do things right the first time they bid on City contracts.

The 2026 World Cup provides greater opportunities for local businesses. BCA has been reaching out to other agencies in the region to expand the certification pool and to ensure all are using the same approach to certify businesses. This will allow business opportunities to be distributed more easily throughout Southern California

Housing

The Bureau supports the Mayor's Executive Directives that were put in place to expedite the construction of affordable housing units and reduce the number of unhoused people in the street. While residential projects are on private property, the Bureau's work is in the public-right-of-way where normally there's connectivity to the housing units such as utility amenities, sidewalks and driveway skirts. The Bureau's inspectors assist developers in getting a certificate of occupancy. From the number of permits pulled and certificates issued on file, the Bureau develops an idea on the number of projects that are in the pipeline

Pacific Palisades Fires

The fire impacted the Public-right-of-way first by damaging or destroying public property, and secondly by how the City responded after the fire. A lot of work that was done in the area impacted the streets and sidewalks requiring repair by city utility crews. Later, Bureau crews inspected that work for compliance.

Many homes were damaged and rendered uninhabitable. Debris was removed and the lots were cleared. These cleanups removed vegetation that served as a buffer to hold hillsides in place during the rainy season. To mitigate this, the Bureau was involved in watershed protection. Crews installed large concrete debris barriers to divert run-off gravel, mud and vegetation debris, washed down from the canyons during the rainy season into catch basins. This risk management system allows rainwater to run into the storm drain system, preventing floods as well as stopping mud from flowing to the ocean.

After the rain subsided, contractors cleared the catch basins of debris which can be quickly overwhelmed. BCA continues to inspect the work to make sure erosion control measures are put in place properly. Because construction projects tend to slow during the rainy season, inspectors can be redirected to this type of work.

Office of Wage Standards

As of November 2025, there were 158 open cases where contractors are out of compliance with labor laws. The Bureau is trying to resolve the situation expeditiously; however, inadequate staffing has made this enforcement challenging.

Technology and Innovation

Program Assistance Meeting (PAM) is a link for developers on the Department of Public Works website. PAM contains construction videos on how to get started on a project, to help the developer get across the finish line.

The Bureau is working to convert more payments from paper check to electronic deposits. This will especially help small businesses. The goal is to reduce the average turn-around time for payments from 30 days to 15 days. BCA seeks to go paperless in three to five years.

CONCLUSION

Because the Bureau collects fees to offset the cost of much of its work, it is not as dependent on the General Fund as other departments or bureaus. However, BCA is still dependent on General Funds to support key activities such as the hiring and training of new staff. The BCA's work in areas such as preventing wage theft provides indirect benefits to the City from increased sales tax revenue and income taxes.

With international events coming to town in the next two years, it is important that the Bureau has enough staffing to ensure that projects related to the events are completed safely both during and after construction. These reasons must be considered with deciding on the Bureau's budget for 2026-27.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
Meeting of December 5, 2025

ATTENDEES

Department of Cultural Affairs: Daniel Tarica, General Manager; Chris Concepcion, Assistant General Manager; Stella Belgarde-Scranton EAA and Commission Secretary; Alma Miranda, Administrative Services Director

Budget Advocates: Scott Wright and Mihran Kalaydjian

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Activate neighborhoods City wide in preparation for major local, national, and international events, including the Cultural Program for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, while ensuring coordinated regional planning and lasting legacy programming.
- Expand strategic partnerships and creative job opportunities through murals, public art, arts grants, and the reopening and activation of renovated cultural facilities.
- Support community cohesion, youth engagement, and public-space revitalization through arts and cultural programs that build trust, increase positive activity, and enhance neighborhood safety.
- Invest in DCA's operational infrastructure to improve online accessibility, expand programming space, and strengthen the delivery of arts and cultural services citywide.

DISCUSSION

The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is the City of Los Angeles's lead agency for advancing arts, culture, and creative expression as essential drivers of civic life, economic vitality, and community well-being. Through strategic investment, policy leadership, and community partnerships, DCA works to ensure equitable access to cultural resources across all neighborhoods of Los Angeles.

DCA supports artists, nonprofit arts organizations, and cultural institutions through City cultural grants, public art and mural programs, and the activation of City-owned cultural facilities. These efforts play a critical role in neighborhood revitalization, youth engagement, cultural preservation, and the activation of public spaces, while strengthening social cohesion and civic identity.

Budget

For FY 2025–26 DCA's adopted budget totaled \$26,031,743, representing approximately 0.2% of the City's total budget. These funds support grant programs, public art initiatives, facility operations, and departmental administration, benefiting hundreds of cultural organizations and artists citywide and contributing to Los Angeles's broader creative economy.

DCA administers competitive arts grant programs that invest directly in creative workers and community-based organizations. Key programs include the Cultural Grants Program, which supports public cultural activities and presentations with individual awards of up to \$80,000,

and the Arts Workforce Empowerment (AWE) Grant, which helps stabilize the arts sector by reimbursing salaries and benefits for eligible nonprofit arts organizations.

Organizationally, the Department of Cultural Affairs is structured into six core divisions: Grants Administration, Public Art, Community Arts, Performing Arts, Marketing, Development and Digital Initiatives, and Administrative and Support Services. Together, these divisions support program delivery, fiscal oversight, public engagement, and operational effectiveness.

As Los Angeles prepares for major international events, including the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, DCA is leading coordinated cultural planning efforts that engage artists, arts organizations, and cultural institutions citywide. The Department is focused on delivering inclusive cultural programming that reflects the City's diversity while creating a lasting cultural legacy beyond 2028. To support this work, DCA continues to invest in operational infrastructure, digital accessibility, and cultural programming spaces to improve service delivery and ensure arts and culture remain accessible, sustainable, and impactful across all communities.

Budget Constraints

The Department of Cultural Affairs plays a critical role in supporting the City's cultural ecosystem; however, ongoing budget constraints continue to limit the Department's ability to deliver stable and sustainable arts and cultural services on a citywide basis.

The Department's budget remains subject to volatility due to limited baseline funding growth and continued reliance on discretionary and one-time funding sources. The use of non-recurring funds to support ongoing programs presents structural risk and creates funding cliffs that impede long-term planning for artists, nonprofit cultural organizations, and City-owned cultural facilities.

The Department's current reliance on one-time funding has reached a critical point, exemplified by a 50% reduction in the Arts Internship Program and a \$600,000 cut to Organizational Grants for FY 2025-26, forcing the department to manage permanent Olympic legacy goals with dwindling temporary resources.

In addition, the scope of the Department's responsibilities, including grant administration, public art oversight, facility operations, and citywide cultural coordination, has expanded without a commensurate increase in staffing or operational capacity. These constraints increase the risk of delayed grant awards, contract processing backlogs, and loss of institutional knowledge.

Resource limitations also constrain the Department's ability to address equity and geographic distribution goals, particularly with respect to outreach, technical assistance, and support for smaller or emerging organizations in underserved communities.

Finally, limited investment in operational infrastructure and technology restricts the Department's ability to modernize systems, improve service delivery, and expand public access.

As the City prepares for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, these structural and funding constraints raise concerns regarding the Department's capacity to meet expanded cultural expectations while sustaining core services and legacy programming beyond 2028 without long-term, stable funding.

Staffing

The Department of Cultural Affairs is being asked to prepare Los Angeles for the world stage in 2028, yet its staffing stability remains precarious. The 2025-26 Budget authorizes approximately 70 regular positions, but the numbers on the page do not tell the full story of how these positions are funded.

While 10 vacant positions were restored in the final budget, the concern is how they were saved. These positions were not funded by the General Fund, but rather by one-time off-budget funds from the Cultural Affairs Department Trust Fund (CADTF).

Using six months of Trust Fund cash kept these seats from being swept, however, it is not a long-term staffing strategy. Relying on fluctuating tour admission prices and theater receipts to pay for essential personnel is a gamble the City shouldn't be making.

The Next Fiscal Year

The Department requests \$500,000 and one position to establish a new grants category dedicated to the 2028 Cultural Program. This funding would support virtual exhibition opportunities recognizing approximately 750 aspiring artists, with a particular emphasis on children, youth, and young adults, while advancing Olympic and Paralympic values of inclusion, excellence, and community engagement.

The Department cannot rely solely on the City's coffers to keep the lights on and the art alive. We urgently recommend adding a dedicated position for Fundraising and Grants Development to aggressively pursue outside capital. With the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games on the horizon, this role is essential to secure funding for major cultural programming, public art, and critical facility improvements.

As Los Angeles prepares for the global stage, appearances must be kept in order. We strongly support adding staff specifically to manage two massive Citywide initiatives: expanding the City's mural network as a legacy of the 2028 Games and overseeing the mandatory public art components of the Convention Center expansion. These initiatives are complex infrastructure undertakings that require dedicated personnel to ensure they are executed correctly.

CONCLUSION

The Department of Cultural Affairs has expanding responsibilities related to the upcoming major international events, including the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, as well as ongoing Citywide cultural services. The Department looks forward to ensuring that public investment in arts and culture results brings lasting, equitable benefits for communities across Los Angeles.

DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT
Meeting of October 14, 2025

ATTENDEES

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment: Carmen Chang, General Manager; Armando Ruiz, Managing Director of Administrative Services; John Darnell, Project Coordinator
Budget Advocates: Adrian Fernandez, Howard Katchen, Connie Acosta, and Jay Handal

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a set of core training videos and/or presentations that can be distributed to Neighborhood Councils (NCs) online to act as immediate “how to” guides on various facets of the City and Neighborhood Council System
- Collaborate with the City Attorney to expedite issues related to NCs and lack of compliance with Brown Act
- Establish a workgroup of Neighborhood Council Board Members to discuss NCs issues and concerns

DISCUSSION

EmpowerLA, also known as the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), is the partnership agency for the City of Los Angeles’s Neighborhood Council system. Established by the City Charter in 2000, EmpowerLA provides resources and training to volunteers, uplifting and amplifying the civic engagement and advocacy work of Neighborhood Councils across the City, and advocating for deeper and more expansive investment in the nation’s largest grassroots civic engagement model. EmpowerLA collaborates with other City departments, K-12 and higher education institutions, and local community-based organizations to better connect individuals to their Neighborhood Councils and to foster community investment.

Staffing

For the last two years, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment has struggled to maintain its staff. This fiscal year, the department started with a potential of layoffs. As a result - there were three vacant positions eliminated; four other filled positions were identified for layoff; while one position was saved by means of a trade-off with many of the needed operating expense accounts.

A staff member has already transferred to another city department while a second staff member is expecting to be transferred at any time. Both positions will earn salaries backed by other city funding. The remaining two marked for layoff will continue in their current positions until they are transferred to other city departments.

The Department’s operating budget in the expense account was massively cut. Presently, the Department is paying only for the required essentials with which to operate, such as payroll and office supplies. The Department eliminated licenses for software applications including Adobe and Microsoft; they are now using Google Sheets and Docs.

The ZOOM license for Department staff will carry the Department through the current fiscal year. Neighborhood Council board members wanting to use Zoom for their meetings as well as the Canva application need to reimburse the Department for each license. The Department will maintain the Zoom Administrative License account to make reduced pricing available to Neighborhood Councils.

Previously DONE cut the \$10,000 support it had provided for each of two events, Neighborhood Council Congress of Neighborhoods and Neighborhood Council Budget Day. The events have been relying upon contributions from individual Neighborhood Councils to produce them at City Hall.

Budget

The current budget for Neighborhood Empowerment is just over \$3 million, a 21% reduction from the prior fiscal year. The Department's only source of funds is the Neighborhood Empowerment Fund; the department receives no money from the General Fund.

The Department will experience a \$600 thousand shortfall on the salaries account at the end of this fiscal year. In the past the Department was able to shuffle a little bit from the extra funds in the expense, vacancies or the salaries as-needed accounts to balance the salary account, but now the Department is in a different situation. The Department will not be able to meet this shortfall internally. They may need additional funds from the General Fund or the Department's Unappropriated Balance account.

Staffing

The current DONE budget covers the salaries of 31 fulltime staff, a decrease of seven positions from the prior year.

Department personnel include Neighborhood Empowerment Advocates (NEAs) to support the 99 neighborhood council's board members out in the field. By the end of this fiscal year each NEA will be assigned to support eleven neighborhood councils, a total of about 200 board members. Five of the seven staff who were laid off were NEAs. The other two released staff were a senior manager analyst and a system analyst.

Expense

The current budget reduces office expense by 75% in three categories. This fiscal year, DONE's Expense budget totaled \$124 thousand, a reduction of about \$367 thousand from the prior year. Contractual Services and Office and Administration expense were cut the most.

Cornerstone Training

For the next fiscal year, the Department will not have \$20K to renew the Cornerstone license. The Department will still continue to explore alternatives. A couple options are: (1) charging a cost of \$10.00 for each neighborhood council board member per year to purchase a Cornerstone license, or (2) DONE posting trainings on YouTube and have each NC board

member self-certify that they took mandatory trainings. The department will continue to explore other possible avenues.

City Clerk

This fiscal year 2025-26, the Neighborhood Council Fund administered by the Office of the City Clerk received from the General Fund an appropriation of \$2.5 million. from which, the 99 certified NCs were allocated \$25,000 each for operations and neighborhood improvement purposes. The Clerk's Office together with the NC Treasurers and NC Boards administer and process the funds.

CONCLUSION

Neighborhood Councils are a valuable link between community stakeholders and our City Government.

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (EWDD)
Meeting of December 23, 2025

ATTENDEES

Economic and Workforce Development Department: Fred Jackson, General Manager

Budget Advocate: Thomas J. Norman

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Protect EWDD, an economic engine, from across-the-board cuts
- Expedite hiring for Grant-funded and compliance-critical positions
- Preserve workforce programs linked to anti-poverty goals
- Provide support for small and legacy business
- Improve interdepartmental coordination on disaster recovery and major events
- Strengthen data and evaluation capacity

DISCUSSION

The Economic and Workforce Development Department plays a central role in advancing job creation, workforce readiness, and inclusive economic growth across Los Angeles. EWDD administers a diverse portfolio of workforce training, youth employment, small business assistance, and economic revitalization programs, many of which rely heavily on state and federal funding.

The Department operates with approximately 168 authorized positions and a General Fund allocation in the range of \$24–25 million, supplemented by significant restricted grant funding. While vacancy savings help the City manage short-term budget pressures, persistent vacancies constrain EWDD’s ability to deliver programs efficiently and to fully leverage external resources.

EWDD should be treated as a core economic engine rather than a discretionary program area. Reductions in staffing or operating capacity risk forfeiting state and federal grant funds and undermine the City’s workforce, small business, and anti-poverty strategies.

Vacancies in grant administration, contract monitoring, and reimbursement processing increase the risk of delayed or lost funding. Accelerating hiring for these classifications should be a Citywide priority.

Workforce Initiatives

EWDD’s workforce initiatives, including LA RISE and the LA RISE Youth Academy, connect Angelenos facing employment barriers with paid work experience, training, and pathways to long-term employment. These programs are closely aligned with the City’s anti-poverty and economic equity goals.

The Department’s programs such as LA RISE, the LA RISE Youth Academy, and paid work experience initiatives should be sustained and scaled where feasible, as they directly support employment stability and economic mobility for vulnerable populations.

Continued investment in Business Source Centers, the Legacy Business Program, and Procure LA is recommended to stabilize neighborhood commercial corridors, support succession planning, and increase local participation in City contracting. These programs are targeted to sustain the City's small businesses.

Through Business Source Centers and Procure LA, EWDD assists small businesses with technical assistance, access to capital, workforce needs, and navigation of City procurement processes. These services are particularly critical for microbusinesses and businesses in underserved communities.

The Legacy Business Program supports long-standing businesses through succession planning and sustainability assistance, helping preserve local jobs and neighborhood stability.

Disaster Recovery and Major Events

EWDD should be fully integrated into disaster recovery planning and preparation for the World Cup and Olympic Games to ensure affected businesses and workers can quickly access economic relief and employment opportunities.

Data Collection

Strengthening EWDD's data and evaluation capacity will allow the City and the public to better understand program outcomes, return on investment, and the fiscal risks associated with under-resourcing the Department.

CONCLUSION

EWDD effectively delivers services despite structural challenges common across City departments. However, continued reliance on vacancy savings and administrative constraints increases fiscal risk by threatening grant compliance, reimbursement timelines, and program continuity.

Strategic investment in EWDD staffing and operational capacity represents not only support for economic development, but a prudent fiscal strategy to protect external funding, reduce long-term social costs, and strengthen the City's economic resilience.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

Meeting of December 29, 2025

ATTENDEES

Emergency Management Department: Carol P. Parks, General Manager; Cecilia Law, Executive Admin; Jon Brown, Assistant General Manager

Budget Advocates: Melanie Labrecque, Mihran Kalaydjian, Gabriel Avelar, and Elaine Alaniz

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide for a second General Manager position to support department leadership, continuity and 24/7 crisis coordination.
- Restore staffing capacity across preparedness, recovery, training, and coordination functions.
- Create dedicated public education and outreach positions so emergency responders are not diverted from operational readiness.
- Protect and expand General Fund match allocations to preserve and grow external grant funding including positions within the Climate Emergency Mobilization Office.
- Increase staffing within the Recovery Unit to ensure the City can manage simultaneous disasters without compromising response or recovery timelines.
- Expand overtime resources to allow for planning around major events and emergency activities.

DISCUSSION

The Emergency Management Department (EMD) serves as the backbone of the City of Los Angeles's emergency management system, functioning as the central coordinating authority for preparedness, response, continuity of operations, and long-term recovery.

The Emergency Management Department (EMD) provides for preparation for and recovery from Citywide emergencies by developing a Citywide emergency plan, reviewing and testing departmental emergency plans, coordinating Citywide emergency management training programs, providing community and emergency preparedness training for City employees, disseminating information and promoting emergency preparedness, and ensuring the readiness of the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Of concern is that FEMA's National Risk Index ranks Los Angeles County as the highest risk county in the nation. This designation underscores the urgency of aligning staffing capacity with real-world risk.

As the City's central emergency management authority, EMD's effectiveness is limited by staffing capacity. Without targeted investments to stabilize leadership and fill critical vacancies, the City risks slower responses, weaker coordination, and prolonged recovery during emergencies.

Strategic staffing investments in EMD are essential to protecting public safety and ensuring Los Angeles remains resilient.

Budget

The Department's budget for 2025-2026 totals \$5,042,411, an increase of 19% over the prior year. The General Fund provides 97% of EMD's funding.

Staffing

The current budget provides for 36 staff, an increase of five over the 2024-2025 budget. There are several areas where expanded staffing would better prepare the Department to meet its mandated functions.

Establishing a second General Manager position at cost of \$275,000–\$300,000 including salary and benefits would strengthen executive oversight, continuity of operations, and crisis coordination

To meet rising emergency demands and reduce operational strain, the Department should fill vacant and add positions across preparedness, response, recovery, and coordination functions. This would cost \$2.5 to \$3.5 million from the General Fund.

The Recovery Unit is understaffed. Current staffing is insufficient to carry recovery as a collateral duty, as demonstrated by gaps identified during the Palisades Fire. To support concurrent disasters and long-term recovery efforts increased staffing costing between one and \$1.5 million is required. This will ensure recovery operations do not undermine preparedness or response capacity.

The Department needs dedicated outreach, training, and stakeholder education positions totaling about \$750,000 to \$1.0 million to reduce reliance on operational responders for preparedness activities and improve community resilience.

The Department has State and Federal grant funding, including the Emergency Management Performance (EMP) grant, which leverages approximately \$600,000 annually in external funds. These funds are matched from the City's General Fund. Additional grant-funded positions support climate emergency mobilization and major event preparedness which require limited amounts, between one and two million dollars from the General Fund. Adding a senior grants coordinator would strengthen the Department's ability to secure, manage, and maximize external State and Federal funding.

The City's Emergency Operations Center requires \$1.5 to \$2 million to sustain 24/7 staffing, systems support, and operational readiness. During large-scale incidents, the Center provides rapid, coordinated response involving many City departments.

The Department would like to fully staff the Climate Resilience Division to advance climate preparedness, hazard mitigation, and implementation of the City's first Heat Action and Resilience Plan

Overtime

To prepare for major events and complex emergencies the Department must depend upon overtime resources. This is an unprecedented period of major global events and elevated emergency activity. Existing overtime funding is insufficient to support extended EOC activations, night operations, and multi-day coordination required to protect public safety and ensure successful delivery of major national and international events.

CONCLUSION

The Emergency Management Department is central to protecting public safety and sustaining City operations in an increasingly complex risk environment. As emergencies grow in frequency and the City prepares for major national and international events, EMD's effectiveness depends on sufficient staffing, sustained readiness, and stable funding.

ETHICS COMMISSION

Meeting of November 20, 2024

ATTENDEES

Ethics Commission: David Tristan, Executive Director; Heather Holt, Deputy Executive Director
Budget Advocates: Brian Allen, Mihran Kalaydjian, and Sheida Ashley - Century Glen HOA

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prioritize three (3) Auditor II positions to support Charter-mandated campaign audits, reduce audit backlogs, and ensure matching-funds reviews do not displace core enforcement work.
- Make permanent the \$250,000 allocation for outside counsel
- Add funding to expand investigative, audit, and enforcement capacity for complex land-use, development, and high-dollar lobbying matters.
- Codify an Inspector General-style function within or formally aligned with the Ethics Commission through Charter Reform to strengthen proactive oversight insulated from political influence.
- Carry forward unspent prior-year funds to cover first-year staffing costs, with ongoing funding incorporated into the FY 2026-27 base budget.

Communication Upgrades

- Launch a targeted social media presence to announce key meetings, deadlines, and educational opportunities.
- Use clear, direct language in official communications, avoiding vague phrasing when describing corruption risks and enforcement actions.
- Deploy AI-assisted compliance tools to automate disclosure reviews, flag irregularities, and focus staff time on investigations, audits, and enforcement.

DISCUSSION

The Ethics Commission exists to safeguard public trust and confidence in City government by enforcing ethics, campaign finance, and lobbying laws. While the Commission and its officers often emphasize preventing the “appearance” of impropriety, its true mandate is more direct and consequential: to deter, identify, and address actual misconduct that undermines democratic governance.

The Commission plays a critical oversight role, yet it has historically described its mission in indirect, perception-based terms rather than clearly asserting its responsibility to enforce ethical standards and hold violators accountable. Public trust is not sustained through messaging alone, but through visible, consistent, and credible enforcement.

Core functions include regulating campaign finance and lobbying; educating officials and stakeholders; providing transparency tools; and auditing, investigating, and enforcing violations.

The Commission has improved internal processes, but its workload has grown as the City has added new anti-corruption programs and reporting requirements.

To meet deadlines during city election campaigns, matching-fund audits of campaign contributions must be completed within a four-day window, forcing staff to pause other audit work. As participation increases, the Commission needs added audit capacity so matching-fund reviews do not displace other Charter-mandated audits and investigations.

Budget

The Ethics Commission's \$7 million budget is sufficient for current operations but inadequate to address escalating enforcement demands, particularly in complex land-use, development, and high-dollar lobbying investigations.

Allocating an additional \$2 million to expand investigative, audit, and enforcement capacity and establishing an Inspector General-style function would provide proactive, independent oversight to improve the Commission's functioning. This authority can be codified through Charter Reform to ensure permanence, operational independence, and insulation from political influence.

The Ethics Commission must maintain independent legal representation in addition to the City Attorney. When the City Attorney simultaneously represents City employees and advises the Ethics Commission, inherent conflicts of interest arise, particularly in enforcement and investigative matters.

The current \$250,000 allocation for outside counsel is a positive development. Permanent and expanded funding needed to ensure independence, credibility, and unbiased enforcement. Independent counsel is essential for investigations involving senior City officials and complex land-use matters.

The Ethics Commission's \$7 million budget is sufficient for current operations but inadequate to address escalating enforcement demands, particularly in complex land-use, development, and high-dollar lobbying investigations. Allocating an additional \$2 million to expand investigative, audit, and enforcement capacity and establishing an Inspector General-style function to provide proactive, independent oversight would improve the Commission's functioning.. This authority can be codified through Charter Reform to ensure permanence, operational independence, and insulation from political influence.

Artificial Intelligence

The Ethics Commission should deploy AI-assisted compliance tools to automate disclosure reviews, flag high-risk filings, and focus staff time on investigations and enforcement.

Staffing

The Ethics Commission is not allocated dedicated staffing to administer the public matching funds program. As a result, during each election cycle, existing auditors are diverted from Charter-mandated campaign audits to review and verify matching-fund contributions. This practice disrupts core audit functions and contributes to significant audit backlogs.

During the 2022 election cycle, 38 candidates participated in the matching funds program, requiring the audit of more than 29,000 contributions. Participation increased in the 2024 election cycle to 47 candidates, with nearly 9,000 contributions audited during the primary election alone. These demands effectively suspend traditional campaign audits for several months during each election cycle.

The Ethics Commission's staffing levels are already minimal relative to its legal mandates, and no existing positions can be repurposed to address this workload. Internal restructuring is not feasible. Moreover, while the Commission recovers certain costs associated with LAUSD elections and collects registration fees, late-filing penalties, and enforcement fines, it is not a revenue-generating department. Its responsibilities are driven by Charter mandates that apply regardless of revenues collected.

Despite these constraints, the Ethics Commission contributed more than \$1.0 million to the General Fund in the most recent fiscal year, demonstrating operational efficiency even as enforcement demands continue to grow. Three additional Auditor II positions would support timely compliance with the Charter's audit mandate, reduce audit backlogs, and ensure that matching-funds reviews do not continue to displace core enforcement work.

CONCLUSION

The Ethics Commission sustains public trust through independence, meaningful enforcement, and transparency. Ethics enforcement is data-intensive: campaign finance, lobbying, and disclosure systems require timely review, audits, and investigations. This work demands adequate staffing and resources.

OFFICE OF FINANCE
Meeting of November 18, 2025

ATTENDEES

Office of Finance: Diana Mangioglu, Director of Finance; Angela Beruman, Assistant Director Of Finance

Budget Advocates: Mihran Kalaydjian and Jay Handal

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Align ongoing expenditures with recurring revenues, avoiding one-time fixes, and strengthening reserve levels to protect against economic shocks.
- Prioritize funding for public safety, emergency response, street services, and infrastructure maintenance while limiting non-essential expansions
- Require departments to identify savings, manage vacancies strategically, and justify new spending through measurable outcomes and performance reviews.
- Expand multi-year financial forecasting, clearly communicate fiscal tradeoffs to the public, and integrate long-term liabilities into budget decisions

DISCUSSION

The Office of Finance serves the City of Los Angeles through efficient tax collection and enforcement, cash management, and the responsible investment of public funds. The Office reaffirmed its mission and its central role in ensuring the City's fiscal stability, promoting responsible stewardship of public resources, and supporting the effective delivery of essential services.

Finance formed a Project Steering Committee in Fall 2022 to guide the development of its Strategic Plan. The Steering Committee designed and oversaw a comprehensive and inclusive process to assess the organization's strengths, identify key challenges and opportunities, and evaluate potential solutions to support continuous improvement and long-term progress.

The Office highlights the value of transparency and long-term planning in strengthening public trust in the budget process. Finance staff supports expanding multi-year financial forecasting, improving the clarity and accessibility of budget documents, and enhancing public communication around fiscal trade-offs. These steps were viewed as essential to ensuring that the 2026-27 budget reflects sound financial management while remaining responsive to community priorities.

Budget

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2026–27, the focus remains on maximizing the impact of prior investments by completing key transformative initiatives, while preserving baseline operational stability. This approach is intended to ensure continuity of essential services, strengthen financial resilience, and optimize revenue performance in support of the City's long-term fiscal health.

Department budget requests submitted to the Mayor for Fiscal Year 2026–27 total approximately \$700 million, or roughly 13 percent, higher than the current year’s adopted budget, while anticipated revenue growth is projected at only about \$225 million, or 2.7 percent, signaling a significant structural funding gap across City departments.

As a result, the City is projected to face a budget shortfall exceeding \$250 million in Fiscal Year 2026–27, based on preliminary reporting and stakeholder analysis, placing increased pressure on the Office of Finance to ensure accurate revenue forecasting, effective cash management, and continued enforcement of revenue collection activities.

By comparison, the City’s adopted operating budget for FY 2025–26 totaled approximately \$13.9 billion, reflecting significant adjustments across departments, including public safety staffing and operational allocations, further underscoring the importance of the Office of Finance’s role in supporting fiscal stability during periods of constrained resources.

The FY 2026–27 Proposed Budget prioritizes initiatives that strengthen revenue collection, improve customer service, and support long-term financial stability.

LATAx Transformation Project

Continued funding is essential to fully implement the LATAx Transformation Project, which modernizes outdated legacy systems and reduces operational risk. FY 2026–27 represents the first full year of implementation, including the transition of annual tax revenues to the new platform. Completion of this project will improve compliance, enhance customer experience, increase staff efficiency, and reduce long-term City costs.

Citywide Revenue Maximization and Collections

During the FY 2025–26 budget process, Finance played a key role in stabilizing revenue and avoiding layoffs. With additional resources, Finance projected more than \$20 million in new and ongoing revenues—and is exceeding that target. Continued support will allow these successful revenue enhancement efforts to expand and deliver even greater returns.

Maintaining a Stable, Balanced Budget

After several years of staffing and resource reductions, Finance entered the current fiscal year with additional deficits caused by overlapping cuts and budget errors. Restoring baseline funding in FY 2026–27 is critical to sustaining core operations. Adequate staffing will allow the Office to focus on revenue collection and fund management, rather than addressing avoidable administrative gaps.

Anticipated Operational and Fiscal Challenges for the Office

Ongoing financial constraints continue to place pressure on the Office of Finance. The following operational concerns impact the Office’s ability to maintain balanced operations and are not fully addressed in the current budget request.

A nine percent salary savings rate imposed in FY 2025–26 is no longer achievable due to reduced vacancies. Finance requests a revised savings rate that reflects actual staffing levels to avoid creating an unbalanced budget.

The current budget for the Office of Finance provides for 342 positions, a reduction of 17 from the prior fiscal year. The total budget for the Office is \$50,314,377, about one million greater than last year. Approximately 95% of the Office revenue is from the General Fund and 5% from Special Funds.

More than 225 Finance staff remain displaced due to ongoing relocations from the Garland Building to temporary workspaces. These disruptions affect team coordination and revenue collection operations. Finance requests a permanent, appropriately designed workspace to support staff productivity and essential City revenue functions.

Reductions in Personnel Department staffing have left Finance with limited HR support, creating delays and compliance risks. Restoring adequate HR service levels is necessary to ensure timely personnel actions and reduce operational risk.

CONCLUSION

The Office of Finance's FY 2026–27 Proposed Budget prioritizes fiscal discipline, revenue stability, and operational reliability. The requested resources are essential to sustain core services, modernize critical systems, and protect the City's revenue base. This budget ensures Finance remains a strong, accountable steward of public funds and a dependable partner in advancing the City's priorities in the year ahead.

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT

Meeting of December 11, 2025

Los Angeles Fire Department: Jamie E. Moore, Fire Chief; Torres, Amabel, Senior Management Analyst II (Budget)

Budget Advocates: Mihran Kalaydjian and Jay Handal

RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: The four recommendations below refer to the Mayor's priorities: 1) Keep Angelenos Safe 2) Make LA Shine 3) Bolster Crisis Response 4) Strengthen Fiscal Stability

- Fully fund staffing and fleet readiness to maintain rapid response times and reduce overtime strain.
- Implement a focused major-events readiness plan for the World Cup and 2028 Olympics while expediting plan check services and strengthening interagency coordination.
- Invest in pre-deployment staffing, dispatch modernization, wildfire mitigation, and structured Palisades recovery efforts.
- Improve budget forecasting, ensure compliance, and retain institutional knowledge to support long-term operational reliability.

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) is responsible for protecting life, property, and the environment through fire suppression, EMS, wildfire response, disaster preparedness, hazardous materials mitigation, inspections, and large-scale emergency coordination.

Budget

The Department's Adopted Budget for the current fiscal year is \$897,786,218, an increase of 9.5% over the prior fiscal year. Nearly half of the budget goes to Fire Suppression while 27% funds Emergency Medical Service (EMS). The Adopted Budget supports 3968 staff, an addition of 59 over the prior year.

The Proposed Budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year reflects a department under sustained pressure from rising EMS demand, chronic understaffing, aging infrastructure, and climate-driven emergencies. The Department proposes a \$1.035 billion operating budget, a 15.4% year-over-year increase, to address these challenges.

While the proposed budget increases overall funding, LAFD continues to operate below national staffing benchmarks and remains dependent on overtime to maintain deployment levels. Long-term workforce stability will require sustained recruitment, updated retention strategies, deployment modernization, and clearly defined performance metrics to ensure improvements in response times and service delivery.

Approximately \$851 million, about 82% of the proposed operating budget, is allocated to sworn and civilian salaries, including overtime and bonuses. Employee benefit costs are budgeted separately and are not included in this number.

The LAFD supports improved long-range planning and transparency, however, key operational data and implementation plans remain outstanding. Without defined performance metrics and deployment strategies, it is unclear whether increased funding will meaningfully:

- Improve response times
- Reduce overtime dependency
- Stabilize recruitment and retention
- Modernize communications and dispatch systems

Adequate funding paired with measurable outcomes, clear benchmarks and accountability are necessary to ensure improved service delivery and public safety performance.

Proposed Budget

The 2026–27 Proposed Budget for the Los Angeles Fire Department addresses the growing demands placed on one of the City’s most critical public safety agencies. As Los Angeles faces rising emergency medical service (EMS) call volume, increasing wildfire risk, major global event preparation, and ongoing workforce pressures, the Fire Department must remain adequately staffed, properly equipped, and strategically positioned to respond in an all-risk environment.

While the proposed budget recognizes these expanding responsibilities, sustained investment must be directly tied to measurable improvements in response times, workforce stability, disaster readiness, and operational efficiency. The Department’s priorities are intended to strengthen frontline capacity, modernize emergency response systems, and ensure that public safety resources are aligned with both current demands and long-term resilience planning.

Public safety is the core municipal obligation. The City’s investment in the Fire Department must not only address immediate operational strain but also position Los Angeles for long-term stability, accountability, and preparedness. Rising EMS volume, persistent staffing gaps, wildfire risk, aging infrastructure, and preparation for major global events continue to test the Department’s operational capacity.

Staffing

More than 80% of the Department’s call volume is for Emergency Medical Services (EMS), resulting in over 600 daily transports. EMS continues to miss response-time benchmarks for a significant portion of its calls. The proposed budget adds ambulance resources, 24/7 EMS field supervision, expanded paramedic training and quality improvement staffing, and continued support for Mobile Integrated Healthcare services.

The Department proposes restoration of Emergency Incident Technicians, expansion of Advanced Provider and Fast Response Units in each Geographic Bureau, full hazardous materials staffing, and dedicated EMS and fire suppression personnel at LAX.

Additional dispatch personnel are proposed to expand 9-1-1 call-taking capacity and strengthen deployment coordination during high-demand periods and major incidents.

Major Event and Disaster Preparedness

The Department requests dedicated sworn staffing for Olympic planning, public assemblage inspectors and cybersecurity support, as well as wildfire mitigation personnel. A second Wildland Paid Hand Crew would be created. The additional staff will ensure readiness for the World Cup, 2028 Olympics, and also will address escalating climate-driven emergencies.

Recruitment

To offset attrition and vacancies the Proposed Budget calls for 179 firefighter recruits across three academy classes spanning through the 2027–28 fiscal year. Continued academy funding and essential in-service training will reduce reliance on overtime, address workforce fatigue, and ensure minimum staffing levels.

Aging Infrastructure and Technology:

Modernization of fire stations, apparatus, dispatch systems, and communications technology is critical to maintaining response reliability.

The proposed investments in the Los Angeles Fire Department reflect the City’s commitment to maintaining a capable and resilient public safety system. However, funding levels alone will not determine success. Measurable improvements in response times, workforce stability, operational efficiency, and disaster preparedness will be critical indicators of progress. Ensuring that these investments translate into improved service delivery, accountability, and long-term sustainability will be essential to protecting Angelenos and preparing Los Angeles for future challenges.

CONCLUSION

Public safety is the City of Los Angeles’s most fundamental responsibility. The Los Angeles Fire Department protects life, property, and the environment through fire suppression, emergency medical services, wildfire response, disaster preparedness, hazardous materials mitigation, and large-scale emergency coordination. As the Department faces rising demands, ensuring the Department is prepared is essential to keeping Angelenos safe.

DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

Meeting of January 16, 2026

ATTENDEES

City Clerk: Emily Mayeda, Assistant General Manager; Elizabeth Salumbides, GSD Finance
Budget Advocates: Mihran Kalaydjian, Jay Handal, Armando Huipe

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recognize the Department of General Services (GSD) as providing essential City services that support public safety departments and overall City operations.
- Approve requested positions related to Emergency Planning, Security, and Access and Credentialing to address increasing operational demands.
- Ensure EV infrastructure expansion includes funding for staffing and maintenance.
- Consider the Department's role in supporting City preparedness for major events, including the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, when evaluating funding priorities.

DISCUSSION

The Department of General Services (GSD) provides a wide range of operational services that support City departments. These include fleet maintenance, facility operations, custodial services, procurement and purchasing, warehouse and supply management, real estate administration, fuel operations, construction trades, printing and mail services, and materials testing.

GSD manages more than 600 City facilities and maintains a fleet of over 6,000 vehicles and equipment units. Department representatives noted that more than half of the fleet has exceeded its useful life and that many facilities are over 45 years old. Aging assets and deferred maintenance contribute to higher repair costs and operational challenges.

Over the past 15 years, staffing levels have declined by approximately 40 percent while service demands have increased. This has affected the Department's ability to maintain facilities, support fleet operations, and respond to urgent service needs.

The Department also plays a key role in emergency response and recovery efforts, including support for public safety operations and disaster response. GSD representatives emphasized that reliable infrastructure and logistics support are essential for City operations.

In addition, GSD will have responsibilities related to preparations for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, including facility readiness, fleet support, and logistical coordination.

Budget

The Department of General Services' budget request for fiscal year 2026-2027 includes approximately \$97.4 million in expense and special funding to support ongoing operations.

These funds are used for fleet fuel and maintenance, facility upkeep, custodial services, utilities, emergency repairs, warehouse operations, technology systems, and contractual services. Department representatives indicated that the request is intended to maintain current service levels and address existing operational needs rather than expand programs. Continued funding constraints may lead to deferred maintenance, service delays, and increased reliance on emergency repairs.

Staffing

The Department of General Services requests approval for a total of 123 positions in fiscal year 2026–27. These positions would support fleet services, facility maintenance, custodial operations, supply management, emergency response, real estate services, and construction forces.

Department representatives stated that staffing reductions over the past decade have created service gaps and increased workload pressures on remaining personnel. Restoring staffing capacity is intended to improve service reliability and support the Department’s ability to meet operational demands.

CONCLUSION

The General Service Department Employees are commended for their services and commitment to maintaining our City buildings 24/7 while the Department is underfunded and understaffed.

LOS ANGELES HOUSING DEPARTMENT (LAHD)
Meeting of November 3, 2025

ATTENDEES

LA Housing Department - Luz Santiago, LAHD Assistant General Manager; Emily-Zen Cervantes, Administration and Executive Officer of Finances.

Budget Advocates - Connie Acosta, Cindy Cleghorn, Mihran Kalaydjian, Scott Wright, and Philip Armstrong; Budget Representative David Hunter

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen the monitoring of the Emergency Renters Assistance Program. The monitoring agency should upload copies of all applications awarded to tenants on the Los Angeles Housing Department's website file by geographical location.
- Assure that when tenants complain about landlord harassment, they bring evidence to the department before Housing sends letters to landlords about a potential court filing by the tenant.
- Adhere to the parking requirements (available parking spaces per development), but where parking requirements are reduced in affordable housing projects, require mandatory incentives to use public transportation.
- Keep the public updated on housing projects in the works via LAHD's website in order to address the frustration with the lengthy timeline for housing rental availability.

DISCUSSION

The Mission of the Department is to finance the construction of Affordable Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing while pushing for the HHH Goal. LAHD met the financing goal last fiscal year for 10,000 housing units, however the construction phase is still in progress. The Department will continue to advocate for more affordable housing. LAHD supports a Dashboard for updates and progress of the affordable housing construction timeline.

The Department ensures that multi-residential Rent Stabilized Ordinance (RSO) units remain safe and livable throughout the city.

The City of Los Angeles's present structural budget deficit has a lesser effect on the Department because ninety percent (90%) of its programs are covered by Department fees: The Rent Stabilization Trust Fund (RENT), The Systematic Code Enforcement Fee Fund (CODE), Land use covenants, and grants. Lastly, 8% of the department's budget is derived from the General Fund for salary allocations to pay for the staff working with Non-RSO units or homelessness.

Budget and Staffing

The approved budget for LAHD in the current year totals \$106.8 million. The budget increased by about 10% over the prior year. Special Funds provide 93.7% of the budget while General Funds provide 6.3% of the final budget.

Contractual Services is the largest expense totaling \$6.15 million, a decrease of \$195 thousand from prior year.

The budget funds 886 positions, 66 more than last year.

Funding Sources

The largest and the most stable funding source, The Systematic Code Enforcement Fee Fund (CODE), totals \$38.3 million and makes up about 35.9% of revenues. It provides funding for the Interagency Housing Task Force to identify and to stabilize multifamily properties in substandard condition. Also, CODE funds the Multifamily Residential Code Enforcement Expansion to inspect multifamily units citywide.

The second largest fund, the Rent Stabilization Trust Fund (RENT) is \$12.3 M, about 12% of the Total Funds. RENT funds the program that administers and enforces the provisions of the Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO). Also, the program provides support for tenants and landlords of RSO multi-residential properties, providing education and awareness workshops on RSO updates.

The Accessible Housing Fund, totaling \$10.7 million, ensures that housing units for people with disabilities include wheelchair access as well as amenities for those with hearing or vision impairments. In the prior budget year LAHD certified 1,322 accessible housing units for people with disabilities.

LAHD Programs

Measure United to House LA (ULA) Is an ordinance requiring robust data collection and reporting mandates to promote transparency and accountability regarding its implementation. ULA's funding totals \$400M this fiscal year and is restricted for building affordable housing. This funding cannot be used to fill funding gaps in department programs. The Department must meet the housing goals that Mayor Karen Bass has set for this fiscal year.

The Department is developing additional dashboards addressing implementation of measure ULA; these will be updated as more reporting becomes available on ULA Revenue. Dashboards will address the Emergency Renters Assistance Program, and Income Support Programs (ISP), Eviction Defense, and Homelessness Prevention.

HHH has just enough funds to cover the cost of its staff. The Program is winding down. The HHA Pipeline Summary for October 2025 reports that \$910 million in HHH funds have been committed to 130 HHH projects, resulting in a total of 8,473 units excluding management units.

105 housing projects with a total 6710 units are in service or ready for occupancy; \$125 million of HHH Funding is for 20 projects that are in the construction stage; and \$23 million is for 51 projects that are in the pre-development stage. The latter projects are under review; loans have closed, and the developers are awaiting the issuance of notice to begin construction. The average HHH per unit commitment is \$108,818. However, the average total development cost per unit is \$622,023.

HOME is a federal and a main, though restricted funding source, to build affordable housing. Staff expenses account for 10% of the funding. Federal government funds require audits; a government agency will do a periodic review of how the funding is being used. Also, the state conducts desk reviews, requesting files and reviewing LAHD data. If they see red flags, they address the matter. Lastly, the Department is part of the Controller Auditor Program, a requisite of all the funding sources.

CONCLUSION

Despite the City's deep structural deficit, the Housing Department remains fiscally stable due to its robust Special Fund revenue streams, RENT and CODE. However, as the General Fund contracts, the Department must rigidly protect these special funds from being repurposed for unrelated Citywide obligations, ensuring they remain dedicated to affordable housing production and tenant protections.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AGENCY

Meeting of December 8, 2025

ATTENDEES

Information Technology Agency: Marina Sanchez, Executive Administrative Assistant to Ted M. Ross, General Manager and CIO

Budget Advocate: Cindy Cleghorn

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regularize the ten (10) currently restored temporary positions before July 1 to avoid layoffs.
- Restore two (2) deleted cybersecurity positions to maintain a baseline Zero Trust security posture.
- Add at least one (1) position dedicated to the MyLA311 service request system.
- Establish a dedicated, multi-year funding stream for obsolete equipment replacement.
- Prioritize updating 30+ year-old radio towers, 911-related systems, and core network equipment.
- Adjust base funding to cover rising software license, internet, and telephone costs that ITA pays on behalf of City departments.
- Clarify and document the division of responsibility between ITA and departmental IT/complaint systems.

DISCUSSION

The Information Technology Agency (ITA) remains the backbone of the City's technology infrastructure, supporting 41 departments with public safety communications, network operations, enterprise systems such as the Human Resources and Payroll (HRP) system, and resident-facing tools such as the MyLA311 service request system. Beyond standard IT support, the agency manages diverse services including the 3-1-1 Call Center, public safety radio communications for police and fire departments, and the city's cable television station (Channel 35).

Issues identified in prior years persist, now compounded by position eliminations and the risk of future layoffs. Ten critical positions have been temporarily restored and must be regularized to maintain basic capacity in infrastructure, applications, and customer engagement. Two cybersecurity positions were eliminated while recruitment was underway and now require restoration to maintain a reasonable level of protection for high-risk departments such as the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP), and Los Angeles World Airports (LAX). Also, the Agency ensures consistent training and standards through designated departmental IT/Customer Service Requests (CSR).

Historically, ITA relied on salary savings from vacancies to fund on-call coverage and other urgent needs; that workaround is no longer sustainable, prompting a request for dedicated funding for 24/7 support of public safety radio and network systems. Direct ITA and operating departments to develop and fund a plan to reduce or eliminate the MyLA311 ticket backlog and

to minimize or end the annual intake pause around March, which can leave stakeholders without full 311 access for two to three months.

Budget

The ITA's 2025-26 adopted budget was approximately \$93.3 million. About \$7.8 million was cut from the prior fiscal year's total budget. \$89.1 million or 95.5% was derived from the General Fund., while about \$4.2 million or 4.5% was derived from Special Funds

Two Special Funds contributed around \$1.6 million each to ITA - PEG Development Fund (Sch 20) and Building and Safety Building Permit Fund (Sch.40). Smaller amounts came from the Solid Waste Resources Revenue Fund (Sch.2) - \$824,000 (Sch.14), and Sewer Operations & Maintenance Fund (Sch.19) - \$156,000

Staff

The 2025-26 fiscal year's total adopted budget from the General Fund is paying for 291 regular positions and 6 resolution positions. Special Funds are paying for 31 regular positions. This fiscal year, the department lost 59 regular positions compared to the last fiscal year.

Expenditures

About \$29.40 million is allocated for Contractual Services, a decrease of about \$690,000 from last year's budget. This expenditure represents more than half of the Agency's budget for this fiscal year.

Infrastructure

A significant concern, especially where public safety is involved, is that much of the hardware on City radio towers is more than 30 years old, beyond manufacturer support and increasingly difficult to maintain. In the current year, ITA received no dedicated funding to replace obsolete equipment. ITA has had to divert funds from other projects simply to keep critical systems operating. At the same time, as systems migrate to a hybrid cloud model, ITA's costs are increasingly usage-based.

The Agency's base budget has not kept pace with enterprise cloud, license, internet, and telephone costs that support Citywide operations. ITA also seeks to replace lost grant funding for overnight cybersecurity monitoring to sustain a Zero Trust security posture and prepare for increased risks and demands, including those associated with the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

MyLA311

The Human Resources and Payroll (HRP) system is now live but remains under strain. MyLA311 has a significant, documented backlog. Certain service intakes are paused around March to catch up, effectively limiting 311 access for two to three months in some service areas. In addition to the MyLA311 system, many large departments and Council District offices operate their own IT-controlled systems and complaint portals. For example, ITA provides support

through designated IT/CSR points of contact and training for the Department of Building and Safety's complaint system and a similar platform in the Bureau of Sanitation.

This distributed model raises questions about integration, consistency, and accountability that merit follow-up: What it would take to eliminate the MyLA311 backlog and intake pause; how departmental systems align with and complement the MyLA311 platform; and whether standardized training, clearer governance, and better integration could improve service to stakeholders while reducing duplication and confusion. Targeted investments and policy attention in these areas is essential to protect public safety, improve resident service, and ensure that the City's technology infrastructure is robust, secure, and ready for the increased demands ahead.

CONCLUSION

The Los Angeles Information Technology Agency (ITA) is the City's central technology department, responsible for maintaining the digital infrastructure, networks, and applications that support 48,000 employees and 4 million residents. Their core mission is to deliver "Responsive, Responsible, and Excellent" technology to ensure Los Angeles remains a leading, securely connected "Smart City."

LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

Meeting of January 13, 2026

ATTENDEES

City Clerk: John F. Szabo, City Librarian; Madeleine Rackley, Business Office Manager; Heather Smith, Budget Director; Emily Wooten, Management Analyst
Budget Advocates: Aurora Corona, Elaine Alaniz, Quintus Jett

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Highlight dedicated capital funding
- Develop a systemwide book-recycling program
- Improve landscape communication and expand native-plant pilots
- Reinforce cross-departmental dependencies
- Protect literacy, education, and social-service roles already in place

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles Public Library's mission is to provide free and easy access to information, ideas, books, and technology so that all residents can read, learn, and connect. It exists to support literacy, lifelong learning, civic engagement, and the cultural life of Los Angeles through its collections, programs, and welcoming public spaces.

LAPL serves everyone who lives, works, studies, or spends time in the City of Los Angeles — from young children and teens to adults, seniors, immigrants, and unhoused or vulnerable residents. Its Central Library and 72 branches support neighborhoods across the city, as well as scholars, researchers, and visitors from around the region and the world who rely on its collections and services.

Budget

LAPL's operating budget is stable due to Measure L and the city charter formula, allowing reliable funding for core services, literacy programs, New Americans Centers, and social-service functions.

However, there is a major structural weakness: the library has no dedicated capital budget for major renovations, building expansions, or large-scale facility improvements across its 73 locations. Instead, LAPL relies on a small Alterations & Improvements line in its operating budget —only a few million dollars—to maintain nearly 1.5 million square feet, which is insufficient for the long-term physical health of the system.

Sustainability spending is spread across program areas rather than allocated as a single line item, and the former book-recycling vendor has collapsed, leaving no current systemwide recycling program.

In addition, roughly 36–37% (\$101.6M) of the total proposed budget (~\$280M) is costs paid to other city departments for custodial, engineering, sanitation, and maintenance services. As a

result, budget pressures or staff shortages in those departments directly constrain library operations despite LAPL paying for the services.

Staffing

Library leadership described a mix of stability and vulnerability in staffing. The internal budget team is small, consisting primarily of the budget director, management analyst, and business office manager, yet responsible for all budget planning, control, and compliance.

One area of strength is LAPL's social-service staffing. The library now employs eight social workers, along with trained Community Services Representatives, marking the first year the team is fully built out to support patrons in crisis.

Educational and literacy staffing is also strong, with staff supporting 22 Adult Literacy Centers and eight New Americans Centers. However, the library depends heavily on workers from other city departments for custodial services, building repairs, engineering, and sanitation. Cuts or staffing shortages in those departments can disrupt branch operations despite LAPL's payment for those services.

Additionally, many branch librarians are unaware of how to request landscaping or maintenance work, reflecting a communication and workflow gap, not a staffing cut. A recently added facilities/landscape oversight position aims to improve consistency and responsiveness across the system.

Dedicated Capital Funding

The Library needs a stable, long-term capital funding mechanism so it can renovate aging buildings, expand undersized branches, replace degraded infrastructure, and modernize facilities across its 73 locations.

Today, the library uses an Alterations & Improvements budget (\$7.5M)— about 2.8% of the total \$280M budget - to maintain nearly 1.5 million square feet of public space. This funding is operational, not true capital, meaning it can address broken irrigation or HVAC failures but not major renovations, seismic work, or expansion projects.

LAPL once benefited from a bond measure (1998), and Measure L protects core operating dollars, but there is no dedicated 10–20-year capital fund. The gap: without a capital mechanism (bond, revenue measure, or structured multi-year plan), LAPL cannot preserve its physical infrastructure or meet community expectations for safe, modern libraries. The system is vulnerable to deferred maintenance and uneven facility conditions.

Systemwide Book Recycling and Reuse Program

The Library needs a centralized, sustainable process for handling the 150,000 books it weeds annually. That process would ensure books are recycled, repurposed, or reused instead of entering landfills.

The library had relied on a private vendor that could recycle books and extract resalable material, but that company is no longer operating. Currently, LAPL offers weeded books to Friends groups for book sales, and some nonprofits collect small quantities. Yet there is no systemwide solution, leaving staff with inconsistent or burdensome branch-level workarounds.

The gap is both logistical and environmental. LAPL needs a city-coordinated partnership with Sanitation, nonprofits, arts programs, and bulk recyclers to manage volumes safely and ethically. Without a single city-supported contract, LAPL risks inconsistent practices, staff inefficiency, and preventable waste.

A unified program would align with community sustainability priorities and reduce operational strain across 73 branches.

Landscape Communication and Native-Plant Strategy

This recommendation calls for strengthening internal communication around landscape-maintenance budgets and supporting California native, drought-tolerant gardens as both a sustainability and equity strategy, with an added focus on education.

LAPL has a budget for landscape maintenance, and a newly hired facilities manager who oversees systemwide landscaping. Some branches, such as Arroyo Seco, have piloted native-plant landscapes in partnership with organizations like Theodore Payne Foundation. However, many branches may be unaware that they have funds or the authority to request landscape work or maintenance, leading to barren or severely degraded exteriors, especially where irrigation has failed.

LAPL needs clear, consistent communication so every branch understands its landscaping budget, the process for requesting maintenance, the expectations for upkeep, and opportunities for native-plant improvements.

Cross-Departmental Dependencies

LAPL depends on other city departments—General Services, Engineering, Sanitation, Information Technology, and custodial services. Cuts to those departments directly impair library operations.

Today, LAPL pays “related costs”, about 36–37% of its budget, for services provided by other departments. These funds support custodial teams, tradespeople, sanitation pickups, building engineers, and safety functions. Yet staffing shortages or budget cuts in those departments can leave LAPL branches without adequate cleaning, repairs, maintenance, or safety support, even though LAPL is paying for the services.

LAPL lacks the authority to ensure staffing availability in those partner departments, and city leaders may not fully understand the operational risk this creates. The recommendation urges advocacy for protecting cross-department staffing essential to library function.

Collaboration between LAPL and LA County’s Public Library system was discussed. Informal coordination exists between librarians of each system, however, there is no formal joint planning.

Protect Literacy, Education and Social-Service Programs

The Library would like to expand its adult literacy centers, English conversation classes, Career Online High School, New Americans Initiative, and social-service programs.

Currently, 22 literacy centers offer classes for English Language Learners (ELL) and basic literacy. Career Online High School has nearly 1,300 graduates enrolled with state-funded scholarships. Eight New Americans Centers provide citizenship classes and immigration assistance. Also, LAPL employs eight social workers and trauma-informed Customer Service Representatives.

These programs are high-impact, high-touch, and reach some of the city’s most vulnerable residents. They depend on a mix of operating funds, state funding, Library Foundation support, and Friends contributions—making them vulnerable to future cuts if revenues fluctuate or staffing gaps emerge.

LAPL needs stable multi-year protections, so that these programs remain free, consistent, and well-staffed—especially with rising demand related to immigration, workforce development, and social-service pressures leading into the 2028 Olympics.

CONCLUSION

The Los Angeles Public Library remains a high-performing system with strong operating programs, but the discussions revealed several structural gaps that must be addressed to protect long-term service quality.

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

Meeting of October 15, 2025

ATTENDEES

Personnel Department: Malika Billups, General Manager; Paula Dayes, Assistant General Manager; Lydia Ortiz, Assistant General Manager; Jenny M. Yau, Chief Management Analyst / Chief Budget Analyst

Budget Advocates: Thomas J. Norman, Ph.D., Dave Hunter, and Jay Handal

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Add workers' compensation claims analysts to reduce caseloads, accelerate claim resolution, and lower statutory penalties and long-term liability costs.
- Protect core Personnel Department positions from across-the-board cuts, recognizing Personnel as a citywide force multiplier that directly affects hiring, retention, and service delivery.
- Accelerate modernization of civil service exams and hiring processes to shorten time-to-hire for hard-to-fill and revenue-critical classifications.
- Establish permanent, funded emergency management positions within Personnel to support disaster service worker planning and deployment.
- Strengthen data tracking and reporting to document cost avoidance achieved through improved hiring, workers' compensation management, and safety programs.

DISCUSSION

The Personnel Department recruits, develops, and supports the City of Los Angeles workforce and administers civil service, benefits, workers' compensation, training, and emergency staffing functions. Although modest in size relative to the overall City budget, the department directly affects how effectively every other department hires staff, manages risk, and delivers services.

In FY 2024–25, the Personnel Department operated with an \$83 million budget, primarily funded by the General Fund, and supported over 600 authorized positions. Recent budget cycles shifted from vacancy-driven hiring challenges to structural deficits, layoffs, and constrained hiring through the Prioritized Critical Hiring process. These changes increased demand on Personnel while staffing levels tightened.

Workers' compensation represents one of the City's most immediate and controllable fiscal risks. The City processes thousands of workers' compensation claims annually, with average indemnity and medical costs that can exceed \$40,000 per claim when cases remain open for extended periods. Industry benchmarks suggest that claims analysts can effectively manage approximately 120 to 150 active claims at a time. Current caseloads within the City substantially exceed these levels, limiting proactive case management.

When caseloads rise, claims remain open longer, injured employees stay off work, and the City incurs statutory penalties for missed deadlines. Even modest delays can result in penalty payments ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars per claim. Across a large

portfolio of claims, these penalties and extended benefit payments can quickly exceed the annual cost of additional staff.

Adding a small number of workers' compensation analysts could generate measurable savings. For example, if five additional analysts each reduce active caseloads by 120 claims and shorten claim duration by even 10%, the City could avoid millions of dollars annually in extended wage replacement, medical costs, penalties, and overtime required to backfill injured workers. These savings recur year after year, while staffing costs remain relatively fixed.

Personnel also supports return-to-work and light-duty programs that help injured employees resume productive work sooner. These programs preserve institutional knowledge, reduce overtime, and improve morale, but they require sufficient staffing to coordinate departments, supervisors, and medical providers.

Beyond workers' compensation, Personnel supports emergency preparedness through disaster service worker coordination. Recent emergencies demonstrated the need for dedicated staffing to plan, train, and manage large-scale employee deployments without diverting resources from core risk-management functions.

Civil service reform remains essential to City operations. Personnel has streamlined exams and expanded hiring pathways, but sustained staffing and leadership attention are necessary to preserve progress during fiscal stress. Cutting Personnel capacity undermines the City's ability to hire, manage risk, and control costs.

CONCLUSION

The Personnel Department delivers high system-wide value relative to its budget footprint. Strategic investment in workers' compensation staffing, alongside sustained support for hiring and emergency management, offers one of the clearest opportunities to reduce long-term costs, lower liability, and maintain essential City services.

CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Meeting of January 16, 2026

ATTENDEES

City Planning: Kevin Keller, Executive Officer; Lisa Webber, Deputy Director, Shana Bonstin, Deputy Director; Arthi Varma, Deputy Director

Budget Advocates: Mihran Kaladjian, Jay Handal, Howard Katchen and Armando Huipe

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand and integrate digital planning platforms to streamline entitlement processing, zoning review, and permit coordination.
- Invest in cloud-based, interdepartmental data systems to improve real-time coordination with LADBS, LAFD, and other City departments.
- Regularize and strategically deploy staffing in high-demand and underserved areas, including South Los Angeles and the Harbor Area.
- Enhance grants management and fiscal oversight capacity to maximize external funding and protect General Fund resources.

Programs

- Hold accountable the affordable housing processing programs, including the Affordable Housing Services Section (AHSS), Transit Oriented Communities (TOC), and the Citywide Housing Incentive Program (CHIP).
- Maintain and regularize the Home-Sharing Program to preserve long-term housing stock and ensure compliance with short-term rental regulations.
- Accelerate comprehensive updates to the City's 35 Community Plans to ensure legal compliance, predictability, and alignment with housing and equity goals.
- Strengthen environmental services and urban forest management to address climate resilience, public health, and environmental justice.

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles City Planning Department (Planning) is responsible for creating and implementing the long-term vision for the city's physical development, which includes managing land use policies and the 35 individual community plans. They also review and process development applications to ensure all new construction and business activities comply with local zoning regulations and environmental standards.

Budget and Staffing

The Department's budget for the current fiscal year is nearly \$70 million, a reduction of 2.6 percent from the prior year. Revenue is from the General Fund and several Special Funds, the largest, nearly \$26 million from the Planning Case Processing Fund.

The Department has 536 authorized positions, 30 fewer than the prior year.

Technology

Expanding and integrating digital planning platforms remains one of the most effective strategies for improving operational efficiency within the Department of City Planning. Tools such as OAS, BuildLA, and Bluebeam Revu allow for electronic application intake, concurrent plan review, and transparent tracking of project status. These systems significantly reduce processing times by eliminating manual workflows, minimizing rework, and enabling staff to focus on substantive planning analysis rather than administrative tasks.

From a fiscal standpoint, improved processing efficiency accelerates fee collection and reduces backlogs that can delay revenue recognition. Over time, automation lowers operational costs by reducing printing, storage, and overtime expenses. Investments in digital infrastructure also mitigate future staffing pressures by increasing per-employee productivity, allowing the Department to manage increased workloads without proportional increases in staffing.

Cloud-Based Interdepartmental Coordination

Planning review is inherently interdepartmental, requiring coordination with LADBS, LAFD, Public Works, and other agencies. Cloud-based systems that support real-time data sharing reduce sequential review processes, eliminate duplicative requests, and improve consistency across departments. This coordination shortens project timelines and enhances predictability for applicants.

Operationally, shared systems reduce staff time spent reconciling inconsistent data and responding to follow-up inquiries. Financially, cloud-based platforms lower long-term IT maintenance costs and reduce reliance on standalone systems. These investments also strengthen continuity of operations during emergencies, reducing service disruptions and the associated financial risks.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing initiatives represent one of the highest-impact areas for both policy outcomes and fiscal efficiency. Programs such as AHSS, TOC, and CHIP directly support housing production by providing clear incentives and streamlined review pathways for qualifying projects. Dedicated staffing and consistent application of these programs reduce approval timelines, which in turn lowers development costs and improves project feasibility.

Efficient processing also supports the City's eligibility for state housing funds and grants tied to housing production benchmarks. Cost savings are realized through reduced appeals, fewer project revisions, and lower litigation risk. By prioritizing affordable housing programs, the Department advances equity goals while leveraging private investment to achieve public outcomes.

Home-Sharing

The Home-Sharing Program has demonstrated measurable success in reducing illegal short-term rentals and preserving long-term housing stock. Maintaining and regularizing this program

ensures consistent enforcement, protects residential neighborhoods, and supports housing availability without requiring new capital expenditures.

Because the program is largely funded through special funds rather than the General Fund, it represents a cost-effective approach to housing preservation. Stable staffing reduces turnover and training costs while maintaining institutional knowledge. Continued enforcement also protects transient occupancy tax revenues and reduces complaints that would otherwise require resource-intensive responses from multiple City departments.

Community Plan Updates

Updating the City's 35 Community Plans is essential to maintaining compliance with state housing laws and reducing legal and financial risk. Outdated plans create uncertainty, increase discretionary decision-making, and contribute to processing delays and appeals. Modernized plans provide clarity to applicants, communities, and staff, resulting in more efficient project review.

Strategic use of consultant services allows the Department to meet statutory deadlines without expanding permanent staffing. Maintaining plan currency also preserves eligibility for state funding and avoids penalties associated with noncompliance, representing both cost avoidance and revenue protection.

Environmental Services and Urban Forest Management

Environmental services and urban forest management play a critical role in advancing climate resilience, public health, and environmental justice. Early environmental coordination reduces costly redesigns later in the entitlement process and minimizes project delays. Urban forest initiatives mitigate heat impacts, improve air quality, and reduce long-term infrastructure and public health costs.

Although these programs require upfront investment, they generate long-term savings by reducing environmental remediation expenses and improving neighborhood resilience. They also align with grant-funded initiatives, allowing the City to leverage external resources while advancing environmental priorities.

Staffing and Equity-Based Resource Allocation

Regularizing critical positions and strategically deploying staff to high-demand and underserved areas improves service delivery and operational stability. Staffing shortages and reliance on temporary positions increase turnover, training costs, and service disruptions. Stable staffing improves accountability and preserves institutional knowledge.

Prioritizing services in areas such as South Los Angeles and the Harbor Area ensures equitable access to planning services and reduces backlogs that can lead to escalations and appeals. Operational efficiencies gained through stable staffing reduce overtime and consultant costs, resulting in long-term savings.

Grants and Fiscal Oversight

As the Department's portfolio of state and federal grants expands, dedicated grants management and fiscal oversight capacity becomes essential. Effective oversight ensures compliance with funding requirements, timely reimbursement, and accurate reporting. Failure in these areas can result in lost revenue, audit findings, or General Fund backfills.

Investments in fiscal oversight yield a high return by maximizing reimbursements and strengthening the Department's competitiveness for future grants. Improved coordination between program and fiscal staff also enhances budget forecasting and financial transparency.

CONCLUSION

Improving operational efficiency while advancing goals for housing production, equity, sustainability and resilience will ensure the Department remains a strong steward of Los Angeles's development and quality of life.

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT

Meeting of December 17, 2025

Los Angeles Police Department: Katerina Unzicker, senior public affairs leader
Budget Advocates: Mihran Kalaydjian, Jay Handal

RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: The four recommendations below refer to the Mayor's priorities to 1) Keep Angelenos Safe 2) Make LA Shine 3) Bolster Crisis Response and 4) Strengthen Fiscal Stability

- Enhance staffing and fleet readiness to maintain rapid response times and reduce overtime strain.
- Implement a major-events readiness plan for the World Cup and 2028 Olympics while expediting plan check services and strengthening interagency coordination.
- Invest in pre-deployment staffing, dispatch modernization, wildfire mitigation, and structured Palisades recovery efforts.
- Improve budget forecasting, ensure compliance, and retain institutional knowledge to support long-term operational reliability.

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) is one of the largest and most innovative law enforcement agencies in the world. It is responsible for providing police service to an area encompassing 468 square miles and 21 community areas, representing approximately over 4 million residents as of 2020.

Budget

The Department's Adopted Budget for the current fiscal year is \$1,986,961,261 a small increase over the prior year's budget. The Adopted Budget calls for 13,607 staff, 248 fewer than the prior year.

One half of the LAPD budget supports field forces. This program provides for the prevention, suppression, and investigation of crime through vehicular and foot patrol activities based in the Department's 21 Geographic Areas.

The Los Angeles Police Department's Proposed Budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year reflects a strategic response to evolving crime trends, operational demands, and the extraordinary security obligations of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Department requests \$358.8 million in supplemental funding prioritized to protect frontline operations, strengthen investigative capacity, and modernize critical infrastructure.

While continued economic pressures face the City, LAPD has aligned its budget request with fiscal realities and the Mayor's call for innovation and accountability.

LAPD has achieved measurable results. Violent crime, burglaries, and vehicle thefts have declined, and firearm recoveries have increased by 14 percent. Yet emerging threats, including organized retail theft and illegal large-scale events, require targeted investment.

This FY 2026–27 proposal seeks to advance the Department’s multi-year strategy for secure stable funding for its most critical public safety functions

In an environment of fiscal constraint, funding requests are aligned with critical needs and measurable outcomes.

The Department’s proposal addresses both immediate deployment requirements and long-term capacity building ensuring the Department remains fully prepared for routine citywide operations as well as large-scale events in the years ahead.

Personnel and Resources

The Department’s workforce is the backbone of public safety in Los Angeles. Every patrol response, investigation, 9-1-1 call, and community engagement effort depends on having adequate staffing levels and the resources to sustain them. Without sufficient personnel support, response times increase, proactive enforcement declines, and service delivery is strained.

To maintain minimum deployment levels and uninterrupted citywide coverage, the Department is requesting \$48.4 million in additional overtime funding, \$45.4 million for sworn personnel and \$3 million for civilian staff. This request is based on actual operational usage and reflects ongoing vacancies, mandatory training requirements, court obligations, and major event deployments. It also restores \$26.3 million in sworn overtime funding reduced on a one-time basis in the 2025–26 fiscal year.

Civilian overtime is equally essential to sustain 24/7 operations in communications centers, comply with state-mandated custody staffing ratios, and prevent backlogs in records, evidence, and forensic services.

This funding will ensure the Department can continue delivering core public safety services without disruption.

Recruit Training and Development

The Department is requesting \$4.1 million to fund 13 recruit academy classes of 40 officers each, a total of 520 new officers. This investment will stabilize the workforce, offset projected attrition, and rebuild sworn strength to meet rising service demands and major event security obligations.

At \$7,825 per recruit, the requested funds cover academy training including instruction, equipment, uniforms, and administrative support. Bringing recruits online will prevent further erosion of deployment staffing levels and restore the Department’s operational capacity.

Recruit training has been strengthened to meet the complexity of modern policing. Each academy class completes more than 900 hours of rigorous instruction, integrating enhanced scenario-based exercises, de-escalation tactics, constitutional policing standards, and expanded community engagement training. The training strives to prepare officers not only to respond to crime, but to lead with professionalism, accountability, and resilience.

Without sustained investment in recruitment and training, staffing gaps will widen, overtime pressures will intensify, and service levels will decline.

Vehicles and Aircraft

Operational readiness depends on reliable vehicles and aircraft. Today, 50 percent of the Department's 5,078-vehicle fleet exceeds recommended replacement standards, with patrol units averaging more than 100,000 miles and a decade of service. Aging vehicles increase maintenance costs, reduce response reliability, and directly impact officer safety.

Nearly half of the patrol fleet currently exceeds replacement criteria, making reinvestment urgent. To restore fleet integrity, the Department requests \$50 million for 791 vehicle replacements \$8 million from the General Fund and \$42 million through the Municipal Improvement Corporation of Los Angeles (MICLA) financing. This includes black-and-white patrol SUVs, traffic motorcycles, investigative vehicles, undercover units, specialized command assets, and electric vehicles to advance sustainability goals.

In addition, the Department seeks \$20 million in MICLA funding for two Airbus H125 helicopters to replace aircraft that have surpassed flight-hour and service-life limits. Air support is critical to search-and-rescue, suspect apprehension, and major incident response; aging aircraft present operational and safety risks.

Risk Management and Safety

The Department is prioritizing investments that protect personnel, safeguard individuals in custody, and reduce legal and financial exposure for the City.

Funding is requested to deploy biosensor wristbands for high-risk detainees, including individuals in administrative segregation and sobering cells. This technology provides continuous, real-time health monitoring and early detection of medical distress, allowing staff to intervene before emergencies escalate. The investment strengthens custodial safety, reduces preventable in-custody incidents, and mitigates liability risk.

Additional funding is required to ensure full compliance with State safety mandates. This includes protective equipment to reduce employee exposure to lead and excessive noise at firing ranges, while supporting mandatory firearms qualification for sworn officers, reserve personnel, and supervised security staff.

Olympic Technology Preparations

The Department is requesting \$46.1 million in technology investments to ensure operational readiness for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, one of the largest security events in the City's history. This funding will protect millions of athletes, dignitaries, visitors, and residents during this global event.

The request includes advanced command-post equipment to support real-time incident management and multi-agency coordination; additional body-worn cameras to equip surge personnel and ensure full accountability during large-scale deployments; critical upgrades to the Land Mobile Radio (LMR) network to maintain uninterrupted communications under peak operational demand; and strengthened cybersecurity infrastructure to defend against evolving digital threats targeting public safety systems.

These investments modernize the Department's technological base and ensure interoperability, transparency, and resilience under extraordinary operational conditions. Without these upgrades, communications reliability, situational awareness, and system security could be compromised at a time when global attention and risk exposure are at their highest.

This funding is intended not only to host the world safely, but also to deliver secure, accountable, and technologically advanced policing long after the Games conclude.

CONCLUSION

The core responsibility of government is public safety. At a time of staffing pressures, rising service demands, and global event preparation, the Department is focusing on personnel readiness, operational capacity, and modern infrastructure.

Public safety is essential for economic stability, community trust, and quality of life. LAPD strives to respond decisively, protect neighborhoods, and uphold constitutional policing standards across Los Angeles.

LOS ANGELES POLICE PROTECTIVE LEAGUE

Meeting of December 18, 2025

ATTENDEES

Los Angeles Police Protective League (LAPPL) - Craig Lally, President
Budget Advocates - Jay Handal

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Fund LAPD recruitment efforts fully to offset annual attrition
- Establish LAPD staffing targets that reflect public safety needs and operational realities, supported by sustained funding commitments.

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles Police Protective League (LAPPL) serves as the labor union representing over 9,000 sworn officers of the Los Angeles Police Department. Established in 1923, the organization focuses on negotiating salaries, benefits, and working conditions while providing legal representation for its members. Beyond labor relations, the League is a powerful political entity in California, frequently advocating for public safety legislation and officer rights within the local government.

Concerns remain around LAPD recruitment, attrition, and staffing levels within the Department. Improvements to the hiring process are acknowledged, while ongoing attrition and insufficient funding to hire new recruits need to be addressed.

The Los Angeles Police Department continues to experience staffing challenges driven by retirements, resignations, and other types of attrition. Recruitment efforts have improved through enhanced coordination with the City's Personnel Department; however, funding levels for new recruits have not kept pace with annual staffing losses.

Following intense lobbying by Mayor Karen Bass and Police Chief Jim McDonnell, in January 2026 the LA City Council approved a plan to hire up to 410 new officers this fiscal year. This was a reversal of an earlier decision to limit hiring to 240.

Attrition

LAPPL expressed satisfaction with the current hiring arrangement, noting that the process has become more efficient. Despite these improvements, the union identified two primary concerns:

Annual attrition continues to erode staffing levels faster than officers can be replaced. Despite the new hiring goal, the department expects to lose between **550 and 600 officers** to attrition this year alone. So, if all 410 positions are filled, the total force will continue to shrink.

Impact on Public Safety

Insufficient funding for recruits limits the department's ability to restore staffing levels they believe are necessary to maintain public safety. LAPPL emphasized that without full and sustained funding for recruitment, the department will remain understaffed, increasing risks to both community safety and officer workload.

While increased recruitment funding would require additional General Fund resources, failure to address staffing shortages may result in higher overtime costs, reduced service levels, and increased long-term fiscal and public safety risks.

Improvements to hiring processes alone are insufficient to address staffing shortfalls. Attrition must be fully accounted for in budget planning, and recruitment funding must be aligned with actual staffing needs rather than aspirational targets.

CONCLUSION

The Los Angeles Police Protective League (LAPPL) functions as a formal labor union that negotiates collective bargaining agreements to secure competitive salaries, healthcare, and retirement benefits for LAPD officers. Additionally, the League provides robust legal defense for its members and engages in extensive political lobbying to influence public safety legislation and disciplinary oversight at both the local and state levels.

PORT OF LOS ANGELES
Meeting of December 8, 2025

ATTENDEES

Port of Los Angeles Department: Jeffrey Strafford, Chief Financial Officer

Budget Advocates: Melanie Labrecque, Mihran Kalaydjian, and Connie Acosta

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Align spending decisions with long-term operational and environmental priorities.
- Maximize zero-emissions investments by leveraging the \$500 million pass-through grant and Port-controlled funds.
- Establish a formal process for internal budget offsets and Board-approved reallocations from underutilized programs to higher-priority needs.
- Expand scenario planning to manage tariff-driven cargo volatility and longer-term shifts in trade routes and supply chains.
- Reinvest in Harbor District services and community priorities by sustaining essential City services and maintaining the 35% Public Access Investment Plan commitment.

DISCUSSION

The Port of Los Angeles (Harbor Department) The Port of Los Angeles is the nation's busiest container port and operates as a self-funded enterprise of the City of Los Angeles. The Port retains and reinvests its revenues to operate and maintain Harbor facilities and infrastructure, support environmental programs, and fund Harbor-area City services such as Fire, Recreation and Parks, and the City Attorney.

The Port submits its annual budget to the City Council for transparency and review, but budget approval and day-to-day spending decisions remain under Port and Board governance, with City oversight focused on certain contracts and long-term agreements. Because the Port is a major gateway for trade, its revenues are sensitive to federal trade policy and global supply-chain conditions.

Budget

For the 2026-27 fiscal year, the Harbor Department's operating budget totals \$427.1 million, while the total expense budget (including \$148.7 million in depreciation and \$130.0 million in interest and other non-operating expenses) is \$705.8 million. Operating costs support cargo and vessel operations, facility and infrastructure maintenance, public safety services supporting goods movement, property and asset management, cruise terminal operations, and the evaluation and mitigation of environmental impacts associated with Port activities.

Zero-emissions Transition

The Port continues advancing its zero-emissions strategy, but the loss of federal clean-energy funding, including the Hydrogen Hub grant, increases reliance on Port-generated revenues and reduces long-term funding predictability. The FY 2026-27 budget emphasizes use of a \$500 million pass-through grant and Port-controlled funding to procure cleaner cargo-handling

equipment, replace diesel yard tractors, and expand charging infrastructure. Implementation timelines remain constrained by the pace of commercial availability of zero-emissions technology and the need for coordinated deployment with private industry.

Trade and Revenue Outlook

Recent cargo volumes have been influenced by tariff-related front-loading. After a temporary slowdown in February and March 2025, volumes rebounded following a pause in tariff actions, underscoring sensitivity to federal trade policy.

Longer-term risks include renewed tariff escalation, uncertainty in U.S. relationships with key trading partners (including China), and structural shifts such as routing more freight to East Coast ports or near-shoring to Mexico, which could affect West Coast throughput and revenue forecasting. Expanded scenario planning and stress-testing of revenue assumptions can help the Port manage volatility while maintaining core operations and commitments.

Internal Offsets and Community Reinvestment

The FY 2026-27 budget cycle requires internal offsets, including identification of underutilized or inactive programs and Board-approved reallocation of funds toward higher-priority operational and environmental needs.

In parallel, the Port must continue meeting policy obligations to fund Harbor District City services and to reinvest 35% of Port revenues through the Public Access Investment Plan to support community improvements, green space, and environmental mitigation projects throughout the Harbor area.

CONCLUSION

In this period of trade volatility and reduced federal support for clean-energy, the Port's FY 2026-27 budget reflects the need to sustain Harbor operations and Harbor-area services while advancing the zero-emissions transition. Clear reallocation controls, realistic scenario planning, and disciplined reinvestment can help the Port manage near-term uncertainty while delivering long-term operational, environmental, and community outcomes.

BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS

Meeting of December 15, 2025

ATTENDEES

Board of Public Works: Steve Kang, President; TJ Knight, Assistant Executive Officer
Budget Advocates: Mihran Kalaydjian; Scott Wright and Jay Handal

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prioritize restoration of one Senior Management Analyst to strengthen program management, fiscal oversight, and performance reporting for Mobile Pit Stop, Mobile Shower, and Skid Row cleaning programs.
- Prioritize restoration of one Senior Management Analyst to coordinate CleanLA Jobs deployment, inter-bureau coordination, and performance tracking aligned with Citywide workforce and equity goals.
- Prioritize CleanLA Workforce Development staffing (up to 25 positions) to expand right-of-way cleaning and neighborhood beautification in underserved communities while strengthening workforce pathways.
- Strengthen community engagement by scheduling accessible, multilingual town hall-style meetings across the City and leveraging existing outreach channels; if incremental resources are required, cap new funding at \$75,000.
- Implement an online bidding and procurement platform to modernize contracting, increase competition and transparency, and reduce administrative cycle time.

DISCUSSION

The Board of Public Works provides policy direction and contract and fiscal oversight for the City's Department of Public Works (DPW), including Contract Administration, Engineering, Sanitation, Street Services, and Street Lighting. The Board's Office supports public meetings, agenda and record management, and compliance with Charter and Administrative Code requirements to strengthen transparency and accountability.

Staff emphasized the need for dedicated program management capacity to track outcomes, manage budgets, and coordinate across bureaus for CleanLA and homelessness-related services (including Mobile Pit Stop, Mobile Shower, and Skid Row cleaning). Restoring senior analyst capacity would improve performance reporting and help target resources to the highest-need locations.

Budget Advocates also discussed improving community engagement and modernizing contracting. Expanding accessible, multilingual outreach - leveraging Neighborhood Councils and existing City communication channels - can better align service priorities with community needs, while an online bidding and procurement platform can reduce cycle times and increase competition and transparency.

Key Priorities

The Department's priorities emphasize preventive maintenance and climate-resilient investment in streets, stormwater and sanitation facilities, and street lighting to reduce long-term costs and extend asset life. They also emphasize maintaining sufficient staffing, equipment, and coordination capacity for emergency response and recovery.

Priorities also include strengthening sanitation and homelessness response programs, expanding workforce development through CleanLA, improving fiscal oversight and performance metrics, increasing transparency through community engagement, and strengthening governance and coordination across DPW bureaus.

Budget

The Board's FY 2026-27 budget proposal totals \$31.8 million: \$26.1 million General Fund (about 82%) and \$5.7 million Special Funds (about 18%). The largest item in the budget funds the Office of Community Beautification for \$15 million.

The Board projects \$63,952,242 in FY 2026-27 revenue, about \$3.5 million above FY 2024-25 actual receipts (\$60.4 million), largely from transfers of gas franchise income.

The General Fund provides for core staffing and Board governance functions required by the City Charter and Administrative Code; Special Funds cover cost-recovery and reimbursable oversight activities such as regulatory compliance and contract administration. Although the Board's budget is a small share of overall DPW spending, it is a key control point for accountability across DPW bureaus and for oversight of capital projects and service contracts.

Budget Advocates support targeted investments that improve outcomes without expanding baseline costs unnecessarily, including restoring senior analyst capacity for performance management of CleanLA and homelessness-related services, prioritizing CleanLA Workforce Development field staffing, limiting incremental costs for community engagement, and modernizing procurement systems to improve transparency and reduce cycle time.

These proposed uses of funds align with the Mayor's policy priorities related to public health and safety, sanitation and neighborhood cleanliness, emergency preparedness and disaster recovery, workforce development and equity, climate resilience and greenhouse gas reduction, and preparation for major events.

Spending is constrained by General Fund limits, rising operating costs, and expanding service demands. While the Board's proposal preserves core oversight functions, limited flexibility increases operational risk and elevates the importance of performance management and cost containment. The Board must absorb higher costs for staffing, contracts, regulatory compliance, and technology, while inflation erodes purchasing power. Striving to maintain service levels will require prioritization, process efficiencies, and disciplined contracting.

Staffing

DPW's budget currently allow for 174 positions, a reduction of 16 from the previous year.

Street Lighting

Street Lighting resources continue to be over-spent by repeated repairs related to copper wire theft, diverting funds from preventive maintenance and reliability improvements. Coordination with LAPD has increased, but ongoing replacement of stolen wiring remains costly and unsustainable.

Defensive measures such as sealing access points can deter theft but may increase routine maintenance costs. The Board should track theft-related costs and service impacts and coordinate a cost-effective prevention strategy that prioritizes deterrence, rapid restoration, and resilience.

CONCLUSION

The Board of Public Works remains central to maintaining Citywide accountability for all public works services amid fiscal constraints and increasing infrastructure and emergency demands. Targeted staffing and modernization actions will strengthen performance oversight, transparency, and community outcomes while containing long-term costs.

DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS
Meeting of January 20, 2026

ATTENDEES

Recreation and Parks: Jimmy Kim, General Manager; Matthew Rudnick, Executive Officer; Noel Williams, Chief Financial Officer

Budget Advocates: Jack Humphreville and Kathy Shreiner, Neighborhood Council member

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Eliminate Full Cost Recovery plan.
- Pursue ballot measure to double charter mandated formula to 0.065%.
- Increase reimbursements from City related entities.
- Obtain financing from FIFA and LA28 for World Cup and Olympics events.
- Pursue naming and sponsorship opportunities.
- Develop outreach plan to promote Park Needs Assessment plan with Neighborhood Councils and others.

DISCUSSION

The Department of Recreation and Parks has a \$359 million budget which includes \$298 million of charter mandated funding and \$61 million of other revenue. It oversees more than 16,000 acres of parkland across 559 park sites, providing a wide range of recreational, social and cultural programs in neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles, from the valley to the coast. RAP is responsible for maintaining and operating numerous facilities, including athletic fields, playgrounds, tennis courts, recreation centers, outdoor fitness areas, swimming pools, aquatic centers, senior centers, skate parks, golf courses, museums, and dog parks.

The Department has been starved for revenue because of the full cost recovery plan. Since 2010, the Department has reimbursed over \$1.2 billion to the General Fund to cover related costs such as pensions, medical benefits, utilities, and other costs. This policy applies only to the Department and the Library.

This year, the charge back amount was almost half of the charter mandated funding of nearly \$300 million, equal to 0.0325% of the City's Assessed Value. Hence, the call to eliminate the Full Cost Recovery plan. This would net the Department \$141 million and does not require a citywide vote.

Alternatively, the City could pursue a ballot measure to double the charter mandated funding to 0.065% of the City's Assessed Value. This would not require a tax increase, but a reallocation of resources that may result in opposition by certain unions. If approved, the measure would raise around \$300 million.

A ballot measure to increase the sales tax by a half cent that benefits RAP will be a tough sell because of competing measures and voter fatigue.

The Department should seek additional reimbursements from City related entities, including the Port of Los Angeles, special funds, the Greek Theatre and the Griffith Park parking lots, the Golf Special Fund, the Pershing Square parking facility, and various other services. This may require fee increases for services provided by these entities.

The World Cup and the Olympics will require the Department to make various arrangements to prepare for these high-profile events. The Department should be reimbursed in advance for any related expenditures.

Another potential source of revenue to pursue is funding from support groups for individual parks such as Griffith Park, Elysian Park, and numerous other local parks. The Department should also pursue limited time naming and sponsorships for its many local parks as well as advertising opportunities.

Develop a plan to promote the Park Needs Assessment (PNA) by reaching out to Neighborhood Councils, homeowners associations, and other organizations. The goals of the PNA need to be realistic and affordable.

CONCLUSION

Recreation and Parks, its 16,000 acres of parks, and its many programs are one of the City's most important and valuable assets. It and its 1,549 positions need to be properly funded. This, however, may be difficult because of the City's precarious finances and its declared state of financial emergency. This will require political will of the Mayor and City Council.

BUREAU OF SANITATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Meeting of January 29, 2026

LA Sanitation and Environment: Traci Minamide, Interim Executive Director and General Manager for LASAN, Sarai Bhaga CFO, Eva Sung, Division Manager, Financial Management Division

Budget Advocates: Kevin Davis, Jay Handal, Mihran Kalaydjian and Glenn Bailey

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Fund a dedicated enforcement unit and target illegal dumping hotspots to reduce blight and repeat violations.
- Prioritize sewer, storm drain, and water treatment plant maintenance—avoid deferring critical repairs.
- Continue key investments in Pure Water Los Angeles and groundwater replenishment.
- Track performance, staffing efficiency, and delivery of a projected \$200M General Fund relief.

DISCUSSION

The Bureau of Sanitation and Environment (LASAN) operates four primary programs: Clean Water, Environmental Quality, Solid Resources, and Watershed Protection. Through these programs, the Department delivers essential services including the collection, treatment, and recycling of wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste for residential, commercial, and industrial customers across Los Angeles and regional contract agencies.

LASAN operates four primary programs: Clean Water, Environmental Quality, Solid Resources, and Watershed Protection. Through these programs, the Department delivers essential services including the collection, treatment, and recycling of wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste for residential, commercial, and industrial customers across Los Angeles and regional contract agencies.

In addition, LASAN manages key environmental initiatives such as brownfields remediation and climate change programs, supporting both compliance and long-term sustainability goals.

Budget

The Bureau's Adopted Budget for the current 2025-26 fiscal year is \$421,639, 022, a one percent increase over the prior year. The largest funding distributions are over \$164 million for the Clean Water program, over \$154 million for Solid Resources, and over \$55 million for Environmental Quality. The budget supports a staff of 3612 positions, 21 more than the prior year.

LA Sanitation and Environment presents plans its Fiscal Year 2026–2027 Proposed Budget on maintaining core services, meeting regulatory mandates, and sustaining critical infrastructure under continued fiscal pressure. The proposal balances operational stability with the City's

public health responsibilities, while reinforcing commitments to workforce capacity and community equity.

Budget Priorities

As the City projects continued fiscal restraint over the next several years, the Bureau's focus remains on protecting core services while driving efficiency and reducing reliance on the City's General Fund. The vast majority of the proposed 2026-27 budget sustains existing operations that are essential to public health, environmental compliance, and neighborhood quality of life. LASAN is preparing for the upcoming Major Games, including expanding enforcement to combat illegal dumping. The Bureau is creating a full-time Illegal Dumping Enforcement Unit to remove the worsening conditions in key areas such as the Sepulveda Basin and along commercial corridors.

At the same time the Clean Water Program will increase its investment in sewer infrastructure, funded by the sewer rate adjustments passed by the City Council in 2024. These funds will support additional staffing, system repairs, and treatment plant operations critical to maintaining regulatory compliance and preventing costly system failures.

The proposed budget continues major capital investments, including the Groundwater Replenishment Project and upgrades at the Hyperion Wastewater Treatment Plant in line with the City's long-term Pure Water Los Angeles strategy.

Notably, the implementation of the new solid waste rates will generate sufficient revenue to eliminate the need for General Fund subsidies, producing an estimated \$200 million in savings in the 2026–2027 fiscal year. This is a critical structural shift at a time when the City faces ongoing budget uncertainty.

New Revenue

The rate increases, when implemented, must be tied to clear, measurable outcomes. New revenue should be prioritized for hiring and addressing deferred maintenance now before it escalates into far more costly capital projects. A renewed focus on improving wastewater treatment operations is essential to protect system reliability and regulatory compliance.

On the solid waste side, closer monitoring of revenue performance is critical. The current timeline requiring up to two years to complete the financial analysis for a rate increase limits the City's ability to respond quickly to changing conditions. This process must be better aligned with real-time financial and operational needs.

At the same time, ongoing litigation remains a significant and unpredictable risk, directly affecting financial planning and the timing of any future rate adjustments.

Ratepayers must see results. Increased revenues must translate into visible service improvements, reduced long-term costs, and stronger financial discipline, not delayed action or reactive planning.

Increasing Efficiencies

LASAN is moving to modernize operations, but progress must accelerate and deliver measurable results.

As for the solid waste program, expanded use of telematics and new onboard hardware is generating data to optimize collection routes. This is a necessary step—but data alone is not enough. The City must ensure data translates into real efficiency gains, reduced costs, and improved service delivery.

The development of a new asset management system is long overdue. Reliance on manual tracking of City assets is inefficient and unsustainable. Modernizing this system is critical to improving accountability, maintenance planning, and long-term cost control.

The proposed updates to the Low Impact Development (LID) ordinance, addressing stormwater mitigation requirements is raising concerns. Increasing the threshold for compliance with mitigation measures from 500 to 2,500 square feet may streamline permitting and reduce staffing demands, it risks weakening environmental protections.

While regional projects may provide broader water quality benefits, the City must ensure this shift does not come at the expense of local mitigation and accountability.

Claims and liability costs remain a growing financial pressure. The budget includes approximately \$5 million for sewer claims and \$3 million for solid waste claims, yet recent settlements—such as a \$9 million solid waste claim over three years—highlight the scale of exposure. LASAN has a team dedicated to reviewing and mitigating claims, yet staffing limitations continue to delay response times and increase risk.

Efficiency efforts should move beyond pilots and planning. LASAN must demonstrate faster implementation, stronger accountability, and measurable cost reductions—while ensuring that service quality and environmental standards are not compromised.

Homelessness and Encampments

LASAN's ability to respond to homelessness-related sanitation needs has been significantly weakened by the loss of 122 General Fund positions. As a result, the Bureau has been forced to restructure operations just to maintain a minimum baseline of two days of CARE and CARE+ services per council district far short of the original goal of five days per week.

Compounding this issue, overtime reductions have further limited operational flexibility, preventing crews from completing critical cleanups and responding to emerging needs in real time. In some cases, individual Council Offices have stepped in to backfill funding gaps—an unsustainable and inconsistent approach to delivering essential city services.

At the same time, illegal dumping continues to surge in high-impact areas such as the Produce District and the Sepulveda Basin, placing additional strain on already limited resources and driving up cleanup costs.

While LASAN has secured funding for 1,000 new public trash receptacles, this alone will not offset the broader service reductions.

Without restored staffing and operational funding, CARE and CARE+ services will continue to decline, particularly in the areas that need them most. The current approach risks normalizing reduced service levels at a time when demand is increasing.

CONCLUSION

LASAN strives to keep the City clean, safe, and environmentally responsible. With adequate resources to maintain operations, respond to emergencies, and meet evolving service demands, LASAN is positioned to protect public health, support sustainability goals, and deliver reliable services to all communities while upholding its commitment to equity and operational efficiency.

BUREAU OF STREET LIGHTING

Meeting of February 6, 2026

ATTENDEES

City Clerk: Meghan Hackney, Assistant Director and Executive Officer; Fabian E. Cheng, Assistant Director and Chief Engineer

Budget Advocates: Mihran Kalaydjian, Jay Handal

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Approve the FY 2026–27 Street Lighting Assessment ballot to update a funding structure frozen since 1996 and stabilize core operations and maintenance.
- Fully fund end-of-life LED replacements to address over 60,000 failing fixtures and prevent outages, safety risks, and higher repair costs.
- Expand copper wire theft fortification and circuit hardening to reduce outages, limit liability, and protect key corridors ahead of LA28.
- Maintain critical staffing and administrative support to sustain service delivery, ensure payroll compliance, and retain institutional knowledge.
- Invest in revenue-generating smart streetlight infrastructure (co-location, EV charging, fiber) to modernize the system and reduce General Fund reliance.

DISCUSSION

The Bureau of Street Lighting (BSL) is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and repair of the City's street lighting system, including light failures, damaged poles, and vandalism. The Bureau also designs, constructs, rehabilitates, and replaces aging infrastructure to improve street lighting citywide, ensuring public safety, reliability, and operational efficiency.

A persistent and growing challenge is the theft of copper wire and electrical power, which has become increasingly costly. These thefts create serious safety and liability risks and often result in system overloads that cause widespread outages and long-term infrastructure damage. Repeated vandalism leads to extended service disruptions, diverting crews from routine maintenance and emergency responses to repeatedly repair the same compromised locations.

Streetlights provide critical illumination for roadways and sidewalks, supporting safe vehicle and pedestrian movement. All City lighting is designed to meet national illumination standards that enhance visibility while reducing glare and sky glow, and all installations are tested for efficiency, safety, and long-term maintainability.

The Bureau's primary goal for FY 2026–27 is to keep streetlights operational and restore outages as quickly as possible to protect public safety. BSL continues to deploy surveillance tools, including cameras to deter wire theft. The Bureau coordinates with the Bureau of Sanitation to leverage existing surveillance systems to address related issues such as illegal dumping.

The Bureau maintains its own Information Technology (IT) division, which it seeks to expand. Increased technology demands and the transition to cloud-based systems have exceeded

current staffing capacity, requiring reliance on external contractors. Additional IT resources are necessary to improve system resilience, data security, and operational efficiency.

BSL has also initiated a pilot solar streetlight program in areas without shading from high-rise development. While solar installations can be effective in limited locations, most streetlights will continue to require wired power, and large-scale solar deployment remains a longer-term objective.

Budget

The Bureau of Street Lighting maintains 223,000+ streetlights citywide but relies on the Street Lighting Maintenance Assessment Fund (SLMAF), which generates only ~\$45 million annually, with nearly 90% of revenue frozen since 1996 under Proposition 218. This outdated funding model has driven deferred maintenance, aging infrastructure, and growing outage backlogs despite rising labor, material, and energy costs.

To restore baseline service levels, the Bureau is preparing a Property Owner Assessment Ballot in Spring 2026, assuming a future operating budget of approximately \$125 million, subject to Mayor and Council approval.

For FY 2026–27, the Bureau requests \$15 million to replace approximately 60,000 failing first-generation LED fixtures and \$5.52 million (\$5.16M Gas Tax, \$361K SLMAF) to address escalating copper wire theft, which frequently disables entire lighting circuits and increases public safety and liability risks.

Additional requests include \$1.8 million to deploy 75 new EV chargers and maintain 1,100+ existing installations, \$2.7 million to support lighting at 780 Urban Transit Amenity sites, and \$5.1 million in reimbursed funds for revenue-generating smart infrastructure such as co-location and fiber.

The FY 2026–27 budget does not expand services, but stabilizes a critical public safety system, reduces outages and liability, addresses deferred maintenance, and prepares Los Angeles for FIFA 2026 and the LA28 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Underfunding will result in longer outages, higher costs, and reduced public safety.

Strategic Revenue and Cost Recovery Initiatives

The Bureau of Street Lighting has identified several strategies to strengthen operations by leveraging existing assets, improving cost recovery, and expanding revenue-generating uses of the street lighting system.

Right-size permit and attachment fees and conduct audits to recover costs from unpermitted or underpriced attachments that degrade infrastructure and consume power without appropriate compensation.

Expand monetization of streetlight assets by supporting advanced technology attachments such as 5G, sensors, and lidar, enabling shared infrastructure models that generate subscription revenue and reduce Citywide ownership costs.

Accelerate conduct and fiber build partnerships with public and private entities, including the State of California, to create subscription-based infrastructure services capable of generating revenue even prior to full utilization.

Position streetlights as multi-functional safety and resiliency infrastructure by integrating sensors and fiber-enabled technologies that support emergency detection, seismic monitoring, and Citywide resilience strategies.

Modernize the banner program and related ordinances to allow greater flexibility in permitted uses, unlocking additional revenue while preserving community and nonprofit participation.

Public–Private Partnership Opportunities

The Bureau may explore targeted public–private partnerships that leverage existing streetlight assets to generate revenue or support service delivery using current infrastructure. These models could supplement City operations while preserving public oversight. Any partnership approach would require careful evaluation, policy review, and due diligence before implementation.

Financial Status

The Bureau of Street Lighting’s primary funding source is the Street Lighting Maintenance Assessment Fund (SLMAF), which generates approximately \$45 million annually from assessments on more than 550,000 parcels and supports the operation and maintenance of the City’s street lighting system. The Bureau also administers programs funded through other sources, including Transportation Grants, co-location, and electric vehicle charging initiatives, which are reflected in this budget. However, nearly 90% of SLMAF revenue has remained frozen at 1996 levels under Proposition 218, significantly limiting the Bureau’s ability to keep pace with rising costs and system demands.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (FY 2026)

The Bureau of Street Lighting (BSL) deploys electric vehicle (EV) charging stations using existing streetlight infrastructure, which is wired for alternating current (AC) service. As a result, installations are limited to Level 1 (120V AC) and Level 2 (240V AC) chargers.

Level 1 chargers provide low-power charging suitable for long-duration parking. Level 2 chargers deliver higher power but still require several hours for a full charge. DC fast chargers (Level 3) require direct current (DC) infrastructure, higher electrical capacity, and specialized equipment, making them incompatible with most streetlight poles and cost-prohibitive for widespread deployment.

EV charging installations are funded through the Municipal Improvement Corporation of Los Angeles (MICLA) and the Special Gas Tax Improvement Fund. While MICLA commonly issues loan financing, EV charging projects are supported through non-loan capital funding, with no repayment obligation to the Bureau.

Air Quality Monitoring Project (FY 2026–27)

The Bureau of Street Lighting (BSL) is continuing and seeking to extend an air quality monitoring grant originally secured through the Mayor’s Office. The project leverages streetlight infrastructure to deploy sensors that measure localized air quality conditions, enabling comparison between street-level exposure and elevated sensor placement on light poles.

To expand data coverage and improve geographic distribution, City libraries continue to serve as complementary sensor host sites, supporting broader data collection and analysis. This multi-site approach strengthens the City’s ability to assess neighborhood-scale air quality trends and supports data-driven public health, environmental planning, and climate initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The Bureau of Street Lighting continues to face significant financial and operational pressures driven by long-standing budget constraints, staffing limitations, and escalating security challenges related to copper wire theft. Despite these challenges, the Bureau is actively pursuing grant funding, strategic partnerships, and targeted initiatives, including projects aligned with 2026–2028 global events.

Closing critical gaps in information technology capacity, stabilizing staffing levels, and mitigating liability risks associated with prolonged outages will be essential to maintaining reliable, efficient street lighting services and ensuring public safety across Los Angeles.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Meeting of October 29, 2025

ATTENDEES

Youth Development Department: Lisa Salazar, General Manager; Ramon Covarrubias, Director, Division of Strategic Planning, Data, Research, and Special Projects

Budget Advocates: Mihran Kalaydjian, Scott Wright and Adrian Fernandez

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Follow phased implementation of the Citywide Youth Development Strategic Plan (2024–2029), ensuring FY 2026–2027 milestones produce measurable, equitable outcomes for youth across all Council Districts.
- Require City departments that fund or operate youth programs to align initiatives with the Strategic Plan and provide standardized performance data and outcome measures to the Youth Development Department (YDD) for centralized tracking and evaluation.
- Establish a formal accountability framework, in coordination with the interdepartmental Working Group, that defines roles, benchmarks performance, provides regular reporting, and identifies service gaps and duplication.

DISCUSSION

The Youth Development Department (YDD) serves as the City’s lead entity for coordinating youth policy, programs, and investments. Its mission is to advance equitable opportunities for young people by aligning City resources, strengthening cross-departmental collaboration, and promoting data-driven accountability.

YDD leads implementation of the Citywide Youth Development Strategic Plan (2024–2029), which provides a unified framework to reduce service fragmentation, improve access, and support youth—particularly those from historically underserved communities—through coordinated and equity-centered strategies.

YDD will continue advancing Strategic Plan milestones, strengthening interdepartmental coordination, and institutionalizing performance measurement systems. These efforts ensure that City investments in youth are outcome-driven, fiscally responsible, and strategically aligned.

The Department supports youth engagement and leadership development. Through the Mayor’s Young Ambassador Program, 42 youth participated in international exchanges this past year, bringing the total to 269 youth across 14 countries. Since 2021, YDD has raised \$2.96 million in philanthropic funding, including \$400,000 from the Hilton Foundation, to support the Earn Learn Play (ELP) program, the Peer Homeless System Navigator initiative, and other youth-focused innovation efforts.

The Department's strengthened coordination, standardized data reporting, and formal accountability structures improve service delivery, reduce duplication, and maximize the impact of limited City resources.

Budget

The current budget for the Department totals \$2,202,814, a reduction of over 31 percent from the prior year.

The current budget for the Department reduced funding by approximately 31 percent and cut positions from 19 to 10, that is, by 47 percent. These reductions significantly impact the Department's ability to coordinate youth-serving programs and fully implement the Strategic Plan.

The Department's budget position for the next fiscal year will focus on continued implementation of the Strategic Plan and strengthening oversight and cross-departmental coordination.

To support expanded coordination and external fundraising responsibilities, YDD proposes adding a Senior Project Coordinator to serve as a Grants Coordinator. This position would pursue federal, state, local, and philanthropic funding to supplement General Fund resources and expand youth-focused initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The Youth Development Department plays a central role in ensuring that the City's investments in youth are coordinated, equitable, and accountable. Sustained support is necessary to fully implement the Strategic Plan, strengthen oversight, and deliver measurable outcomes for youth across Los Angeles.

LOS ANGELES ZOO
Meeting of December 19, 2025

ATTENDEES

Los Angeles Zoo – Mei Kwan, Assistant General Manager and Deputy Zoo Director of Administration and Operations; Misha Body, Assistant General Manager and Deputy Zoo Director of Animals and Experiences

Budget Advocates – Thomas J. Norman, Ph.D., Jack Humphreville, and Howard Katchen

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prioritize funding that protects animal welfare and AZA accreditation, recognizing these as foundational obligations of Zoo operations.
- Develop and present clearer cost and service trade-off scenarios, including the operational and fiscal implications of reduced hours, seasonal scheduling adjustments, or program modifications during low-attendance periods.
- Strengthen transparency around capital planning, including the sequencing, funding sources, and timing of major projects to better align expectations with available City resources.
- Clarify the Zoo's reliance on external funding partners, including the role and sustainability of support from the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA).
- Assess and mitigate operational impacts of the DWP solar carport project, including parking displacement, attendance effects, and potential offsets or credits to the Zoo during construction.

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles Zoo provides animal care, conservation, education, and community access to nature as a City-operated enterprise department. Zoo operations are governed by professional standards, including accreditation by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), with the next review scheduled for 2027–2028. Maintaining accreditation and ensuring humane animal care are core responsibilities that require consistent staffing and resources.

Budget

Approximately 85% of the Zoo's operating budget is dedicated to personnel, reflecting the labor-intensive requirements of animal care, maintenance, guest services, and education. Revenue is generated primarily through admissions, memberships, and concessions, supplemented by limited General Fund support.

A proposed \$2 increase in admission fees is included in the FY 2025–26 budget. While this adjustment provides incremental revenue, it does not fully offset rising costs. Zoo operations continue to require City support to maintain service levels, particularly as personnel costs, benefits, and related expenses increase.

The Zoo's FY 2025–26 budget request totals approximately \$36 million, a 15.6% increase, with an additional \$16.9 million in related costs for pensions, medical benefits, and other centrally allocated expenses.

Infrastructure and Maintenance

Much of the Zoo's infrastructure dates back to 1966, and the most recent comprehensive master planning effort is over 20 years old. Deferred maintenance has resulted in growing concerns related to safety, animal habitats, visitor experience, and long-term cost escalation.

Zoo leadership described constraints on long-term planning arising from litigation involving Friends of Griffith Park and the Griffith Charitable Trust. In response, an Alternative 1.5 Zoo Vision Plan is being considered as a more incremental approach to modernization.

Operational Costs

Animal care costs remain largely fixed regardless of attendance levels. Reducing operating days or hours yields limited savings, as staffing and care requirements continue even when the Zoo is closed. Civil Service processes also affect Zoo operations, with specialized positions requiring extended recruitment and training periods.

Solar Energy Project

The planned 3.5-megawatt DWP solar carport project in the Zoo's north parking lot aligns with City climate goals but is expected to reduce parking availability during construction and may affect attendance and revenue. Addressing these impacts will be important to minimize unintended fiscal effects.

CONCLUSION

The Los Angeles Zoo is a valued public institution with professional obligations that limit short-term flexibility. Continued attention to transparency, prioritization, and realistic planning will help align Zoo operations with Citywide fiscal conditions while protecting animal welfare, public access, and long-term sustainability.