



CITY OF VANCOUVER

Newsletter

A QUARTERLY NEWS UPDATE FOR THE COMMUNITY

JUNE 2026 | VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 2

Building the City's budget

The City is currently working on the proposed budget for the 2027/28 biennium. We're dedicating most of the summer newsletter to information that will help you navigate the City's budget process.

LEARN MORE STARTING ON PG. 2



Inspire Vancouver opens new grant opportunities this summer

This July, Inspire Vancouver will open applications for new community grants supporting public arts, culture, heritage, and science. Funded through Vancouver's Cultural Access Tax, the program helps artists, nonprofits, educators, and community groups create experiences that bring people together, spark creativity, and expand access for everyone in the community. Grants range from support for new ideas and events to long-term programming and capital improvements.

Whether you're planning a festival, launching a creative project, or building cultural spaces, Inspire Vancouver wants to help bring your ideas to life. Learn more, review eligibility, and sign up for updates at [InspireVancouver.org](https://inspirevancouver.org) and be sure to follow @InspireVancouver on social media for news and events.

Plan for growth and development approved

Vancouver is expected to grow by 81,000 people by 2045. This means we need at least 38,000 more homes and 43,000 more jobs to help keep Vancouver livable and affordable.

On June 1, the City of Vancouver approved a plan to guide this growth: the updated Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code. These documents will influence where homes, jobs, parks, streets, and public services go and how they look and function. Changes will happen slowly over the next 20 years as property owners bring forward new projects and as the City puts the plan into action.

The updates were made with three years of community input — thank you to everyone who shared ideas and helped shape our city's future!

Learn more at cityofvancouver.us/comprehensive-plan.



Vancouver celebrates America's 250th birthday

From noon to 11 p.m. on July 3 at the Fort Vancouver Parade Grounds, the community is invited to celebrate America's 250th birthday. This free, family-friendly event, presented by the Historic Trust, the National Park Service, and the City of Vancouver, offers something for everyone.

The celebration includes live music, games and activities, and food vendors. Throughout the day, there will be tours of the historic Marshall House and demonstrations by the Fort Vancouver Historic Weapons Program. Admission to Fort Vancouver National Historic Site facilities will be free from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

MAJOR I-5 CLOSURE IN PORTLAND THIS FALL
SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2026

I-5 ROSE QUARTER

ALL LANES of I-5 southbound will be closed
24 hours, 7 days a week for up to 5 weeks

Learn more and sign up for alerts:

15rosequarter.org

The City of Vancouver newsletter is published quarterly for residents and those who receive services from the City.

Questions, comments, and suggestions can be sent to Laura Shepard at laura.shepard@cityofvancouver.us.

The information is current as of the publication date. Visit cityofvancouver.us to verify meeting dates and status of events.

Scan the QR code for translations in Español, Русский and Tiếng Việt.



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Vancouver, WA 98660-1995

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How the City's budget works

City budget 101

How public dollars become public services

Every day in our community, public dollars are at work. These dollars keep emergency responders ready, parks open, water safe, streets maintained, the local economy supported, the environment protected, and much more.

These services are supported by the revenue the City receives each year. That funding comes from several sources, and each one plays a specific role in maintaining daily operations and supporting longterm community needs. Some dollars can be used for a wide range of services, while other funds are legally restricted for particular purposes.

The City has three primary sources of revenue that support the General Fund: property tax, sales tax, and utility tax. The budget numbers in the following stories reflect 2025, providing a consistent view how these revenues support City services.

The City's biennial budget process determines how these resources are allocated and invested in the services and infrastructure that the community values and relies on. We're at the start of the process; the City Manager is working on the proposed budget, which is due to the City Council on Oct. 1. Once submitted, the City Council will deliberate and ultimately vote to adopt a balanced budget in November.

Adopted 2025–26 Budget for General, Street, Fire Fund

(In millions; excludes one-time transfers)



Property tax

\$161.6
26%



Sales tax

\$139.5
22%



Utility tax
(City operated utilities)

\$116.6
19%



Utility tax
(electric, gas, phone, cable)

\$36.0
6%



Misc, lease, transfers, court

\$76.7
12%



Fees

\$69.3
11%



Grants, state-shared

\$19.0
3%



B & O tax
(retail only)

\$5.3
1%

Quick guide to City funds

People often wonder why the City can't move dollars around as priorities or needs change. The City uses fund accounting to manage the taxes and revenue we receive to provide municipal services. Think of each fund as a separate bank account with its own rules, revenue sources, and approved uses. Each fund falls into two main categories: restricted and unrestricted.

Unrestricted funds: do not have a dedicated funding source or legal obligation (property tax, local sales tax, utility taxes, business and occupation taxes, etc.)

Restricted funds: have a dedicated funding source and legal obligations (grants, lodging taxes, gas tax, fees for service, admissions tax, cultural access sales tax, etc.)

The City has 75 different funds to safeguard that these resources are used in the right way. Here's a breakdown of some of the most common funds you'll hear about during the budget process.



General Fund

These are unrestricted funds and are the most flexible funds the City has. It is the City's main operating fund and is used for Police, Parks & Rec, Legal, City Admin, General Services, etc.



Special Revenue Funds

These are restricted funds and can only be used for specific purposes. A few examples include the Opioid Settlement Fund, the Cultural Arts Tax Fund, and the Business and Occupation Tax.



Capital Project Funds

These are usually restricted funds used for major construction and infrastructure projects like new fire stations, road reconstruction, park improvements, and water system expansions



Enterprise Funds

These operate like businesses and are supported primarily by user fees, with customers paying rates or fees that fund their operations. They are generally restricted funds. Examples include the Water Utility, Sewer Utility, Stormwater Utility, and Pearson Field.



Internal Service Funds

City departments are charged for the services they use from Human Resources, IT, Communications, Finance, etc., and the funds are unrestricted.

A new approach to a challenging budget cycle

In April, City Manager Lon Pluckhahn presented the framework for his first full Biennium Budget 2027/28 to the City Council. During the presentation, he shared that the City would face a \$29 million budget gap over the next two years.

Rather than immediately ask departments to identify services or positions to cut, he took a different approach. The City Manager and his team took a deeper look at the City's financial structure, analyzing legacy budgeting practices and the assumptions that shaped them with an eye to finding ways the City could potentially reallocate existing funds. As of our publication date, this work has made substantial progress towards closing a majority of the deficit for the next biennium. Watch the July 13 City Council Meeting to hear more about the specific changes and other factors that went into this work.

Identifying solutions to help close the 2027/28 deficit is an important step, but it does not free up additional funding for the City's ongoing priorities, new initiatives, or the increasing costs of maintaining essential services. As the budget process continues, the City will need to carefully prioritize its limited resources to meet community expectations while guiding Vancouver's continued growth.

What drives the recurring budget shortfall

The reason this issue returns every budget cycle is simple. The cost of running the city is rising faster than incoming revenue. Prices for materials and services such as fuel, equipment, construction supplies, and maintenance continue to rise. The City also needs to pay competitive wages to recruit, train, and keep the employees who provide our essential services. Even with careful budgeting, it costs more each year to maintain the services residents rely on at the same level.

Washington limits cities to 1 percent annual growth in property tax revenue. That limit does not keep up with inflation or the rising cost of providing services, creating a structural deficit—an automatic gap between costs and revenue.

It is similar to a household budget. If the cost of groceries, housing, and other necessities rises faster than your income, a gap forms that must be closed. Just as households make hard choices to stay within their means by focusing on their most important expenses, the City must make similar choices to ensure its limited resources support the community's priorities while providing essential services.

The 1 percent limit on annual property tax revenue growth was first approved by voters in 2001. After the state Supreme Court struck it down in 2007, the state legislature reinstated the same limit into law.

Washington is one of only two states that restrict local government funding in this way.

Learn more about the budget process by visiting the [City's website](#).

How the City invests one dollar of utility tax

Utility taxes support basic City services

Utility taxes are a major source of revenue the City uses to pay for everyday services. These utility taxes are collected on water, sewer, stormwater, and other utility revenue, which help support police, fire, streets, parks, and other basic services. In 2025, \$59.46 million in utility tax revenue was collected.



Where your property taxes go

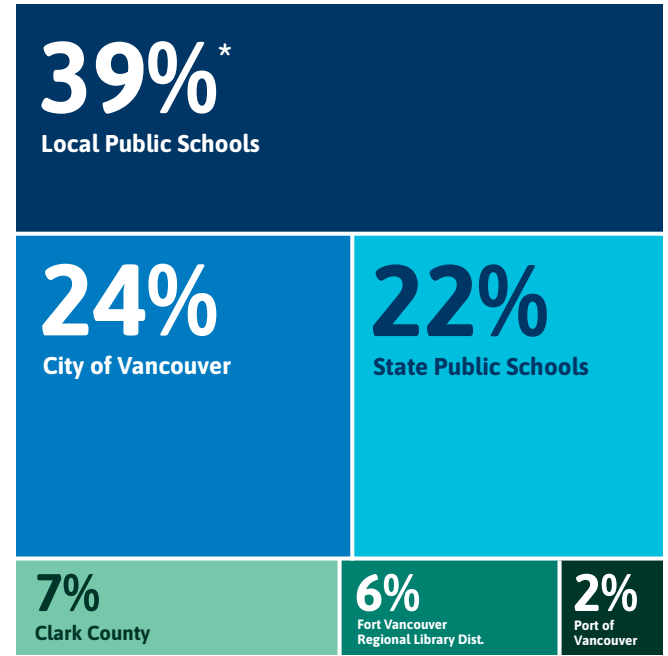
The City receives about 24 cents of every property tax dollar, which may surprise many people when they see the breakdown. In 2025, \$78.1 million in property tax was collected.

Most of the money on your tax bill goes to other public agencies that keep the region running. Each entity sets its own funding levels within the Washington state annual property tax growth limit. Your total bill is the sum of all those separate decisions.



Who receives your property tax dollars

How the City invests one dollar of property tax



*Local public school tax varies by district.

What drives the sales tax rate?

Retail sales tax in Vancouver consists of rates set by different governments. The state sets the largest share, and Clark County, the City of Vancouver, and regional agencies like C-TRAN can add their own voter approved or state authorized local taxes. All of these parts were added together to create Vancouver's 2025 retail sales tax rate** of 8.8 percent. In 2025, \$67.6 million in sales tax was collected.

How does retail sales tax revenue get distributed on a \$50 purchase?

Purchase	State of Washington	City of Vancouver	C-TRAN	Clark County	Transportation Benefit District	Total
\$50	\$3.25	\$0.60	\$0.35	\$0.15	\$0.05	\$54.40

How the City invests one dollar of sales tax



**Vancouver's 2026 sales tax rate is 8.9 percent.



Marshall Community Center

Unlock summer fun with the Youth Pass



Youth ages 18 and under get unlimited access to Firstenburg and Marshall community centers this summer for just \$54 (\$68 for non-residents). Everyone can enjoy the pools; ages 14+ can also use the gyms, fitness centers, game rooms, and more. Passes are valid June 1–Aug. 31 and can be purchased at the community centers. Don't miss out on summer fun!

Learn more and get your pass at cityofvancouver.us/summer-pass.



Waterfront Way

Step into summer with car-free weekends on the waterfront

Waterfront Way between Parkway Place and Esther Street is closed to vehicles on Fridays at 3 p.m. through Mondays at 5 a.m. through Labor Day, creating a safer, more relaxed riverfront experience.

A three-week spring pilot showed that a pedestrian-focused environment improves safety and creates a more relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. It also showed that reducing vehicle access helps deter unsafe driving behaviors, including street racing, creating a calmer and more predictable environment for everyone on the waterfront.

Additional closures on Main Street and West Sixth Street, adjacent to Esther Short Park areas known for high foot traffic and frequent events, are also planned over the summer.

Before you head out, make a plan

- Park Whiz website to access the more than 2,000 nearby parking spaces at the Waterfront Vancouver Parking Center and Terminal 1.
- Parking Kitty app to access more than 6,000 surface street spaces in downtown Vancouver.
- Residents and visitors can make parking plans using the Public Parking Map.
- Ride your bike and park it in one of the 152 bike parking spots downtown.
- Ride C-TRAN across the greater Vancouver area.



Scan here to learn more about [Waterfront Way](#).

Quarterly PFAS testing

Protecting public health and providing a safe water supply is our top priority. We remain committed to addressing PFAS with long-term removal measures.

View results: cityofvancouver.us/PFAS



INSIDE CITY HALL

City Council

Mayor and Council Office: 360-487-8629

Anne McEnery-Ogle, Mayor

Sarah J. Fox, Mayor Pro Tem | Bart Hansen | Kim D. Harless
Erik Paulsen | Diana H. Perez | Ty Stober

Call the City

Abandoned Vehicles	3-1-1
Building and Permits	360-487-7833
Business License	360-487-8410, opt 3
Community Liaison	360-487-8604
City Manager's Office	360-487-8600
Code Compliance	360-487-7810
Garbage/Recycling	360-487-7160
Homeless Assistance and Resources Team	360-487-8626
Operations Center (streetlights, potholes)	360-487-8177
Parking Services	360-487-8650
Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	360-487-8311
Public Works	360-487-8177
Utility Customer Service	360-487-7999
Vancouver Fire Department	360-487-7212
Vancouver Police Department	360-487-7400



Stay in the know, visit cityofvancouver.us for the latest events, meetings, updates, and services.

Prepare for wildfire season: advice from Vancouver Fire



Urban wildfires may feel unlikely in a place as green as ours, but conditions can change quickly. When east winds pick up, vegetation dries out fast, and a single spark — from burning debris, dragging chains, unattended campfires, or fireworks — can ignite a fire near homes and neighborhoods. A little awareness and preparation now help keep our whole community safer.

Protect your home now

Create defensible space around your home by clearing dry leaves, pine needles, and brush at least five feet from your home, including under decks and porches. Move firewood piles at least 30 feet away from your home and make sure your address is clearly visible from the street.

Follow evacuation alerts

Evacuation levels are designed to gather what you need and leave safely before conditions worsen. Level 1 means Be Ready. Level 2 means Get Set. Level 3 means Go Now. Delaying can put lives at risk.

What else should residents do to prepare?

[Sign up for emergency alerts](#), build a go bag, keep your gas tank at least half full, and make sure everyone in your household knows alternate routes out of your neighborhood and where to meet up.

Calendar of events

July

3 Vancouver Celebrates America 250
Noon to 11 p.m.
Fort Vancouver Parade Grounds
1501 E. Evergreen Blvd.

Movie in the Park
A League of Their Own
9:15 p.m.
Fort Vancouver Parade Grounds
1501 E. Evergreen Blvd.

Independence Day observed
All City facilities closed

4 Independence Day

9-30 Waterfront Concert Series
Thursdays | 6:30 p.m.
Vancouver Waterfront Park
695 Waterfront Way

July (cont.)

7/12-8/16 Sunday Sounds Concert Series
Sundays | 6 p.m.
Columbia Tech Center Park
17701 SE Mill Plain Blvd.

13 City Council Workshop
Biennial Budget
4 p.m.

City Council Meeting
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.

20 City Council Workshop
Biennial Budget
4 p.m.

City Council Meeting
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.

27 City Council Meeting
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.

August

3 City Council Meeting
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.

7-9 Vancouver Arts and Music Festival
Esther Short Park, 605 Esther St.

10 City Council Meeting
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.

17 City Council Meeting
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.

24 City Council Meeting
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.

September

7 Labor Day observed
All City facilities closed



See full calendar



View more information and other events at cityofvancouver.us/calendar.

