



City of Richmond, Virginia

A ROADMAP TO A THRIVING RICHMOND

Community Impact Through Budget Town Hall Engagement

FY2027 Proposed Budget



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MAYOR and Council



**MAYOR
DANNY AVULA**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
ANDREW S. BRETON
DISTRICT 1**



**COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT
KATHERINE JORDAN
DISTRICT 2**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
KENYA J. GIBSON
DISTRICT 3**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
SARAH ABUBAKER
DISTRICT 4**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
STEPHANIE A. LYNCH
DISTRICT 5**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
ELLEN F. ROBERTSON
DISTRICT 6**



**COUNCIL PRESIDENT
CYNTHIA I. NEWBILLE
DISTRICT 7**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
REVA M. TRAMMELL
DISTRICT 8**



**COUNCIL MEMBER
NICOLE JONES
DISTRICT 9**



PORTFOLIOS

City Departments

Finance & Administration

Tanikia Jackson, DCAO

Operations

Al Wiggins Jr., DCAO

Housing & Economic Development

Sharon Ebert, DCAO

Human Services

Amy Popovich, DCAO

Police Department

Richard "Rick" Edwards, Chief of Police

Fire Department

Jeffrey Segal, Fire Chief

Emergency Communications

Stephen Willoughby, Director

Constitutional Offices

Commonwealth Attorney

Treasurer

Sheriff's Office

(For informational purposes)





MESSAGE from

Chief Administrative Officer



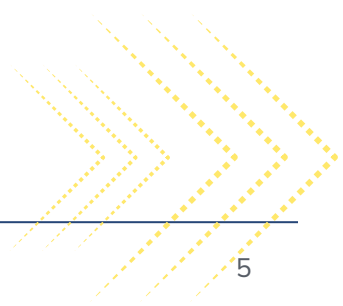
Greetings Team Richmond,

Every facet of City government belongs to our residents, businesses, and stakeholders. Engaging these constituents in how the city's resources are allocated is essential to building a transparent and responsive government. This year's Budget Town Hall process was intended to create meaningful opportunities for Richmonders to learn about the city's budget, the various considerations that influence prioritization, and provide them an opportunity to share their individual and collective priorities for how public funds should be invested.

I am thankful for the opportunity to introduce a variety of innovative processes in support of budget development and improved fiscal operations to the City of Richmond and our residents. Through the EngageRVA initiative, consisting of a series of town halls and community engagement sessions held across the city, residents participated in thoughtful conversations about the services and investments that matter most to our communities. The feedback from this engagement provides valuable insight that helped shape the development of the proposed budget, ensuring it reflects the voices and priorities of residents. I am humbled by the level of participation and feedback from our residents and stakeholders. Further, I am excited to share details on the outputs from this effort and the commitment of all participants who ultimately helped to shape one of the City's most complete budget proposals in recent history, despite uncertainty related to the availability of federal and state resources, and the current year assessment freeze. The FY2027 proposed budget truly reflects and aligns with the priorities of our residents, and as such, truly provides *A Roadmap to a Thriving Richmond*.

In Service,

Odie Donald II





COMMUNITY Budget Priorities



INTRODUCTION

Each year, the City of Richmond develops a municipal budget that determines how public resources will be invested in services such as schools, public safety, infrastructure, housing, and community programs. The annual budget serves not only as a financial document but also as a reflection of community priorities and values.

For the Fiscal Year 2027 budget cycle, the City introduced a new approach to public engagement designed to bring residents more directly into the budgeting process. For the first time, Richmond launched a citywide series of Budget Town Halls aimed at helping residents understand how the budget works and providing an opportunity for the community to help shape spending priorities.

This initiative, entitled *EngageRVA*, was introduced by the Avula administration, who emphasized the importance of creating a more transparent and participatory budgeting process. The town halls were designed to help residents better understand how tax dollars are allocated and to provide direct opportunities for residents to share their perspectives on how city resources should be invested. As explained during the launch of the initiative, the goal was to help residents see how their tax dollars translate into real services and investments across the city, while also ensuring that community feedback informs budget recommendations provided to Mayor Avula.

This engagement effort represented a shift in Richmond's budget development process, moving from a primarily internal budgeting exercise to one that actively incorporates community input earlier in the decision-making cycle.



WHY Budget Town Halls?

Municipal budgets are complex and often difficult for residents to fully understand. Budget town halls were designed to make the process more transparent and accessible while encouraging meaningful civic participation.

The goals of the town hall series were to:

- Improve public understanding of how the City budget works
- Provide transparency into how revenues are collected and allocated
- Give residents the opportunity to discuss spending priorities
- Gather community input before the Mayor's proposed budget is finalized
- Strengthen trust between residents and local government



City leaders also viewed the initiative as an opportunity to build a stronger relationship between Richmond residents and their local government. As officials explained during the sessions, the budget affects nearly every aspect of daily life, from public safety and education to housing, infrastructure, and economic development.

Media coverage described the initiative as part of a broader effort to increase public involvement in municipal spending decisions and allow residents to help shape priorities before the budget is finalized.





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BUDGET

Engagement Process

Budget Town Hall

Let's Balance the City Budget

Learn how Richmond spends money -- and help shape what comes next.

- Where does City money come from?
- What does it pay for?
- How do priorities get decided?

We'll walk through it together. No experience needed. Just curiosity and your voice.

Join a Budget Town Hall near you

Hosted by the City of Richmond
Free & open to the public.

The FY27 engagement process included several components designed to reach residents across the city and ensure broad participation.

Town Hall Sessions

A series of in-person town halls were held across Richmond between January and February 2026 at community locations including:

- Lucks Field Community Center
- Southside Community Center
- Huguenot High School
- Annie Giles Community Resource and Training Center
- Hickory Hill Community Center
- Richmond City Hall (Youth Town Hall)

These sessions were designed to reach residents in different areas of the city and included both evening and weekend events to accommodate varying schedules.

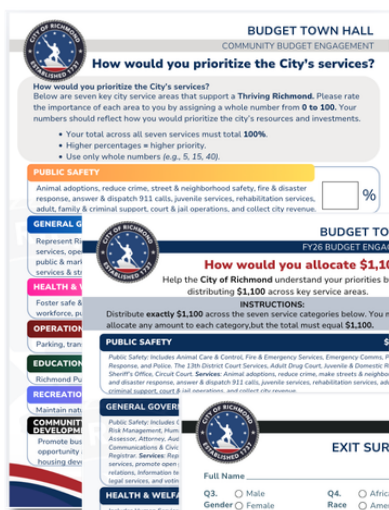
Interactive Budget Exercise

Participants engaged in a budgeting activity called “Let’s Balance the City Budget.” Residents were asked to allocate a hypothetical amount of funding across major service areas, including:

- Education
- Public Safety
- Infrastructure and Operations
- Health and Human Services
- Recreation and Cultural Services
- Community Development
- Government Operations

Budget Prioritization Worksheet

This worksheet allowed residents to identify and rank the areas of city investment they believe should receive the greatest focus in the upcoming budget.



BUDGET TOWN HALL
COMMUNITY BUDGET ENGAGEMENT

How would you prioritize the City's services?

How would you prioritize the City's services? Below are seven key city service areas that support a Thriving Richmond. Please rate the importance of each area to you by assigning a whole number from 0 to 100. Your numbers should reflect how you would prioritize the city's resources and investments.

- Your total across all seven services must total 100%.
- Higher percentages = higher priority.
- Use only whole numbers (e.g., 5, 15, 40).

PUBLIC SAFETY

Animal adoptions, reduce crime, street & neighborhood safety, fire & disaster response, answer & dispatch 911 calls, juvenile services, rehabilitation services, adult, family & criminal support, court & jail operations, and collect city revenue.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Payment for services, open public & market services, and staff.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Foster safe & workforce, public safety, and transportation.

OPERATIONS

Parking, train, and other services.

EDUCATION

Richmond Public Schools.

RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES

Richmond Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Promote bus opportunity, housing, and other services.

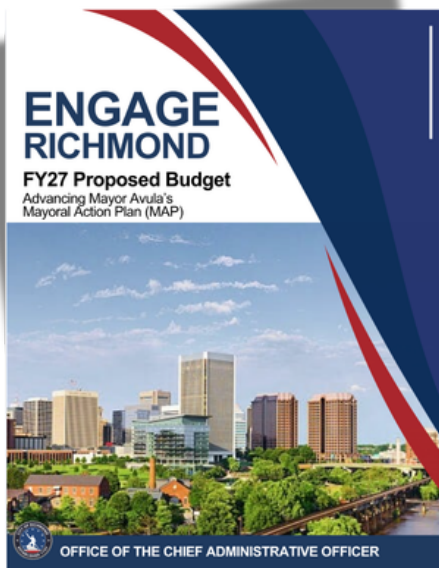
Service Allocation Worksheet

The service allocation worksheet asked residents to consider how the City's budget should be distributed across various services. Participants were able to indicate where they believed funding should increase, remain the same, or decrease.

Exit Survey

The exit survey was completed by participants after attending a town hall or reviewing the information online. It gathered feedback on the engagement experience, assessed how well residents felt they understood the budget process, and collected additional comments or suggestions to help improve future community engagement efforts.

This exercise helped residents better understand the constraints and tradeoffs involved in municipal budgeting.



Engage Richmond Booklet

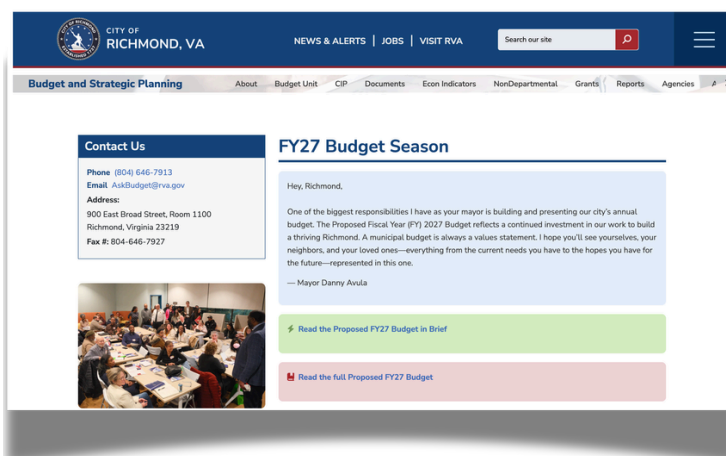
The Engage Richmond booklet was developed as an informational resource to help residents better understand the city's budget process, key service areas, and opportunities for public input. The booklet supported community discussions during the engagement sessions and helped advance Mayor Avula's MAP by ensuring residents had accessible information to participate meaningfully in shaping the city's priorities.

ONLINE Participation

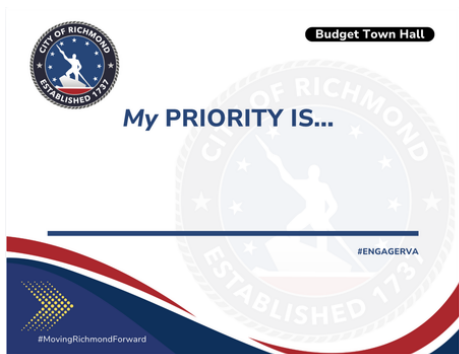
Online Participation

To ensure accessibility, the City also offered:

- Online surveys
- Virtual participation options
- Public information on the FY27 budget season website



Residents who could not attend town halls were encouraged to visit go.rva.gov/engage complete the online survey or participate in virtual engagement opportunities.



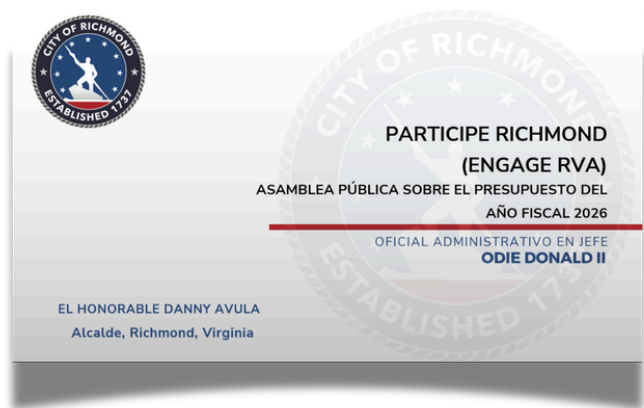
Social Media Cards

Interactive social media cards were created to encourage residents to share their top budget priorities publicly. They could fill in the prompt "My Priority Is..." and post the card on social media, helping spark broader community conversation about city investments while promoting the town hall process and encouraging others to participate.



ACCESSIBILITY

and Language Inclusion



Ensuring accessibility was a key priority for the engagement process.

Materials and online information were available in Spanish, reflecting Richmond’s commitment to inclusive civic participation. Spanish translation is particularly important in Richmond, where the Hispanic and Latino population has grown significantly in recent decades and represents one of the fastest-growing communities in the region.

The City’s website also includes language translation services and provides additional assistance through its language access programs to ensure residents can receive information in their preferred language.

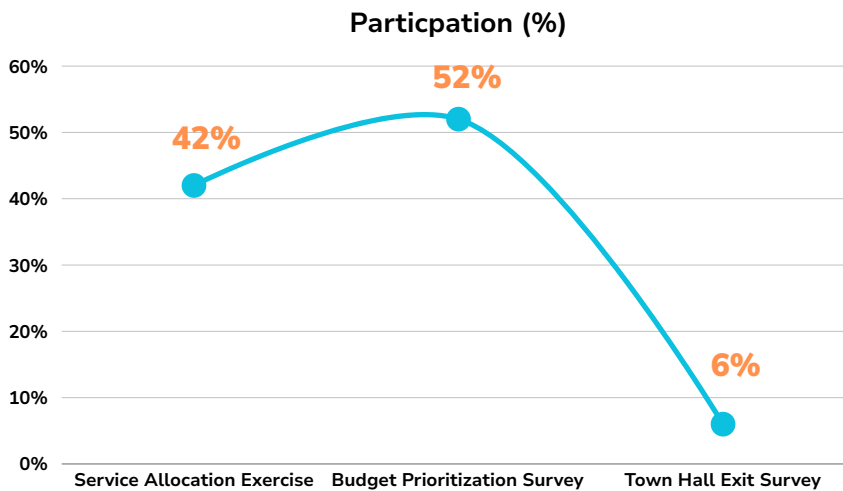
By providing translated materials and multilingual outreach, the City worked to ensure that language barriers did not prevent residents from participating in the budgeting process.



PARTICIPATION and Community Representation

Across all engagement activities, **1,004** residents participated in the FY27 budget engagement process.

The largest share of participation came from the Budget Prioritization Survey, which accounted for **518** responses, representing **52** percent of total participants. The Service Allocation Exercise, an interactive activity that asked residents to allocate a hypothetical city budget across major service areas, generated **426** responses, representing **42** percent of participants. In addition, **60** attendees completed Town Hall Exit Surveys, representing **6** percent of total responses and providing direct feedback on the town hall experience and the effectiveness of the engagement process.



These tools provided a comprehensive view of community perspectives on budget priorities while also helping residents better understand the complexities of municipal budgeting.

Participants represented a diverse cross-section of Richmond residents, including:

- Neighborhood association members
- Parents and educators
- Youth participants
- Local business owners
- Community advocates
- Residents from multiple districts across the city
- City of Richmond government employees

The Youth Budget Town Hall at City Hall was specifically designed to ensure that young Richmond residents had the opportunity to learn about the budgeting process and contribute their perspectives.



WHAT the Community Said

What We Heard from the Community

Across both surveys and town hall discussions, residents consistently emphasized the importance of core public services and community stability.

Two key priorities emerged clearly from the data.

Education

Education received the highest level of support from participants.

Residents consistently emphasized the importance of:

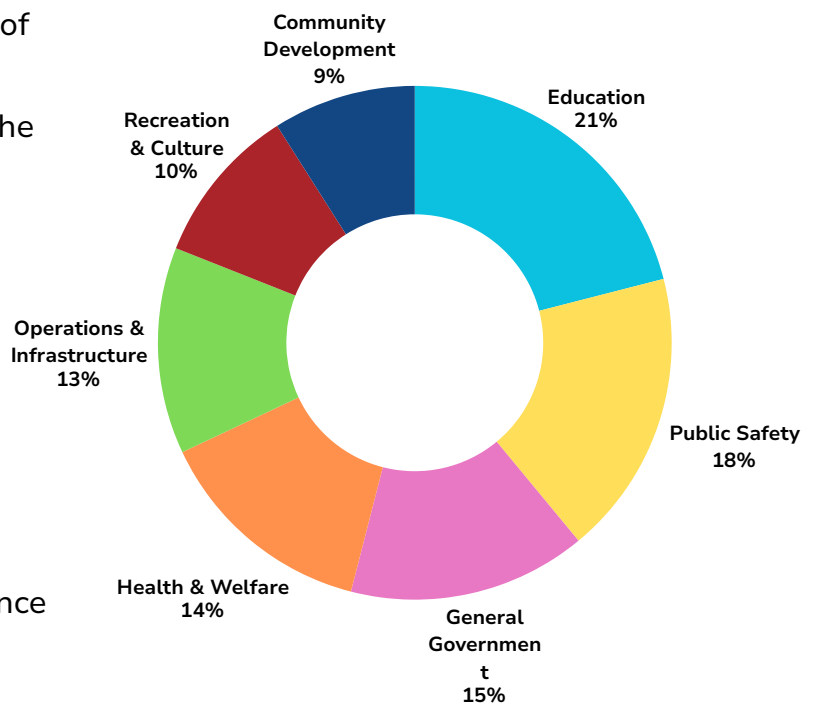
- Investing in public schools
- Supporting youth opportunity
- Strengthening educational outcomes across the city

Public Safety

Public safety ranked second among community priorities.

Participants highlighted the importance of:

- Emergency response services
- Neighborhood safety
- Effective policing and fire services.



Residents allocated nearly **39%** of their total budget priorities to education and public safety, signaling strong support for services that directly impact safety, youth opportunity, and community stability.

Administrative services and infrastructure collectively received **28%**, reflecting recognition that effective government operations are necessary to deliver core services.

Quality-of-life investments such as parks, culture, and economic development accounted for **19%**, indicating continued support for initiatives that strengthen Richmond’s long-term growth and livability.

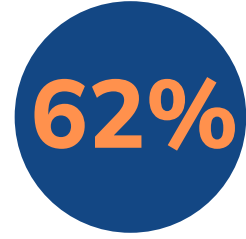
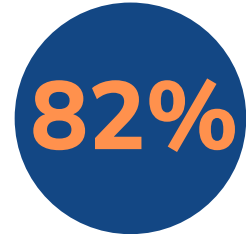
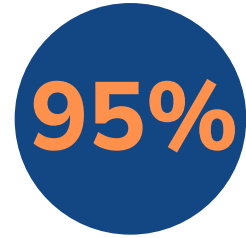
OUTCOMES of The Engagement Process

Exit survey responses from town hall participants showed strong positive feedback about the engagement experience.

Key findings included:

- 95% said the activities helped them better understand the city budget
- 82% said the event length was appropriate
- 62% said the experience changed how they think about city spending priorities

Many participants reported that the budgeting exercise, particularly the budget allocation activity, helped them better appreciate the complexity of balancing competing priorities within a limited budget.





HOW the Community Input Shaped the Budget

Public engagement results were shared with City leadership and informed discussions during the development of the Mayor's proposed FY27 budget.

Community feedback helped reinforce several priorities already under consideration by City leadership, including investments in:

- Public education
- Neighborhood safety
- housing and community development
- Infrastructure improvements
- Community services

The administration's budget proposal reflects these priorities while balancing fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability.

Municipal budgets ultimately represent a balance between available resources and community needs. By incorporating public input early in the process, the City strengthened its ability to align financial decisions with the values and expectations of Richmond residents.

Conclusion

The FY27 budget engagement initiative represents a significant step forward in Richmond's commitment to open government, transparency, and resident participation.

Through the Engage RVA initiative and budget town halls, more than 1,000 residents participated in shaping the conversation about how the City should invest public resources. This process demonstrated that when residents are given the opportunity to learn about government operations and contribute their ideas, they are eager to engage in meaningful discussions about their city's future.

The insights gathered from this engagement effort will continue to inform Richmond's financial planning and help ensure that the *Roadmap to a Thriving Richmond* reflects the priorities of the community it serves.



AFTER the Town Halls

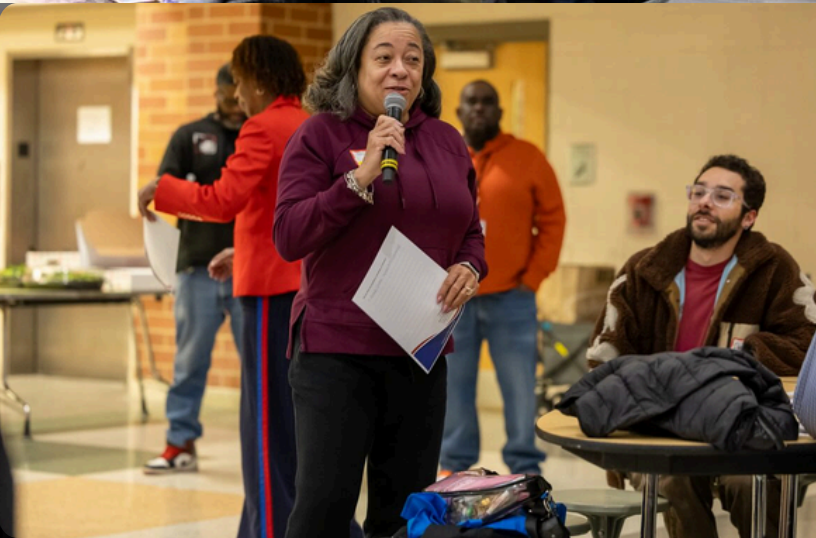
Learn About the Effectiveness of the Process

The City will continue evaluating the effectiveness of the Budget Town Hall engagement process by reviewing participant feedback, survey responses, and community input gathered throughout the FY27 budget season. Insights from these engagement activities will help inform improvements to future public participation efforts and ensure residents remain meaningfully involved in shaping Richmond's financial priorities.



Review the Proposed FY2027 Budget

Residents are also encouraged to review the proposed FY27 budget, which reflects both operational needs and the community perspectives gathered during the engagement process. The proposed budget will be made available through the City's budget website, where residents can learn more about planned investments, funding priorities, and the next steps in the budget adoption process. Public review and continued dialogue will remain important as the City moves toward final approval of the FY27 budget.





**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

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