

City of Lake City, FL - Budget Planning Framework

The City of Lake City Finance Department is preparing for the upcoming budget process and seeks to align financial planning with the priorities of the City Council. This framework outlines key considerations, questions, and steps to ensure a well-structured and transparent budgeting process.

As we approach the development of the next fiscal budget, there are several critical concerns we must address to ensure the continued growth and stability of Lake City, FL. These concerns will guide our discussions and help shape the priorities that will direct our budgetary decisions for the year ahead. We must consider how best to balance the needs of the community with available resources.

Infrastructure remains a top priority. We are seeing a growing need for upgrades to our roads and utilities, many of which are aging and require significant repair and maintenance. It is critical that we prioritize these infrastructure improvements to avoid costly repairs in the future and to maintain the quality of life for our residents. Failure to invest in infrastructure could lead to more frequent disruptions and potential safety hazards.

Public safety remains a top concern for the City. The recent increase in crime and the growing demand for police and fire services require us to find ways to allocate additional resources to ensure the safety of our residents. This may involve expanding personnel or investing in new technology, equipment, and training. Adequate funding for public safety must be considered in the context of our overall budget.

We must continue to support initiatives that foster economic development, such as incentivizing local businesses and attracting new investments. At the same time, we need to sustain services that directly impact residents' well-being, including parks, recreation, and social services. These areas, while important, will need to be evaluated carefully to ensure we are investing in the right programs without compromising essential services.

As we move forward in crafting the next fiscal budget, it is imperative that we make tough decisions, prioritize effectively, and work collaboratively to ensure that Lake City remains a vibrant, safe, and sustainable community for all its residents.

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

An increase in the Ad Valorem Millage rate would provide much-needed additional revenue to support vital infrastructure projects, such as repairing roads, constructing public buildings, enhancing public parks, expanding recreational programs, revitalizing community centers, and bolstering public safety efforts. Investing in our community's future starts with the resources we have today.

1. Would you consider increasing the Ad Valorem Millage rate?

The City's fire assessment program underwent its last update in 2023. As mandated every two years and to adapt to changes in fire assessment variables, the City has engaged Benesch to conduct a comprehensive Fire Assessment Study. It is essential that the costs are fairly and equitably allocated among the properties benefiting from these services, in accordance with Florida Statutes. Once the study is complete, Benesch will present the Council with a range of proposed rates that will enable informed decision-making. These fire assessment fees are crucial to ensuring the fire department is equipped with the resources needed to effectively protect our community, respond swiftly to emergencies, and maintain the vital infrastructure and equipment required for these essential services.

Currently, the General Fund allocates \$925,056.00 to the Fire Fund to balance its budget, but this is not sustainable given our rapid growth. Additionally, the Fire Department is urgently requesting six new positions to enhance our capacity and effectiveness in safeguarding our residents. Investing in these resources is not just beneficial; it is necessary for the safety and well-being of our entire community.

2. Would you consider increasing the Fire Assessment rate?

A stormwater fee is an essential tool for managing the challenges posed by rainwater runoff and ensuring that the community's stormwater infrastructure is properly maintained and upgraded. By charging a fee, municipalities can fund important projects that prevent flooding, reduce water pollution, and protect local ecosystems, ultimately making the community more resilient to storm-related challenges.

3. Would you consider implementing a Stormwater Fee?

4. Please identify the top capital/infrastructure priorities that you believe must be addressed?

5. Are there any new programs or enhancements to existing services, such as parks, recreation, or social services, that you believe should be included to improve the quality of life for our residents?

6. What initiatives would you support that foster economic development, such as incentivizing local businesses and attracting new investments?