



Modernizing Lawrenceville's Procurement System

*Updated Purchasing Ordinance and Governance
Manual
May 13, 2026*



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Why This Matters

- Procurement affects every department and every dollar spent on goods, services, and construction.
 - Council action establishes the legal and governance framework for how those purchases are made.
 - This update is about stronger controls, clearer expectations, and more reliable execution.
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Why We Are Here Today

- The City initiated an independent procurement assessment after suspected purchasing improprieties were identified.
 - Leadership chose a citywide review rather than a narrow correction.
 - The result is a modernization effort designed to strengthen governance, compliance, and operational consistency.
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What the Assessment Reviewed

- Organizational structure and staffing
 - Policies, procedures, and governing documents
 - Centralized and decentralized purchasing activity
 - Internal controls, workflows, and technology
 - Five years of procurement activity, with added focus on the Natural Gas Department
 - Training, vendor oversight, and contract practice
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What the Assessment Found

- The issue was bigger than a single transaction. It was a system maturity issue.
 - Procurement practices varied significantly across departments.
 - The City relied on a largely decentralized model.
 - Existing documentation focused more on compliance thresholds than on operational guidance.
 - Training and reference tools were limited.
 - Contract management, ethics guidance, and vendor oversight needed strengthening.
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Current State in Plain Terms

- Different departments handled procurement differently.
 - Too much depended on institutional knowledge.
 - Documentation was not always standardized.
 - Controls existed, but the operating model was not yet where it needed to be for a growing organization.
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How the Assessment Framed the City

- Formally governed, but not yet fully optimized
 - Mauldin & Jenkins assessed the City's procurement function at Level 3: "Formally Governed."
 - That means the City has rules and structure in place.
 - It also means procurement has been operating primarily as a compliance function, not yet as a consistently strategic and performance-oriented function.
 - The goal is to move toward a more efficient, effective, and standardized model.
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What the Assessment Recommended

- Clearer governance and authority
 - Standard operating procedures and standardized documentation
 - Stronger ethics, conflict, and vendor communication controls
 - Better contract lifecycle management
 - Better internal controls in AP and P-Card processes
 - Citywide procurement planning
 - A more mature, best-value procurement environment
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The City's Response

- We are not patching around the issue. We are building a stronger system.
 - The City developed a four-tier procurement governance model.
 - Tier 1: Ordinance
 - Tier 2: Governance manuals
 - Tier 3: Standard operating procedures
 - Tier 4: Templates, forms, and tools
 - This structure turns broad policy into repeatable daily practice.
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What the Updated Ordinance Does

- Establishes a modern, transparent, ethical, and fiscally responsible procurement framework
 - Recognizes best value as a formal procurement principle
 - Strengthens internal control requirements
 - Clarifies thresholds, roles, and delegated authority
 - Establishes the governance foundation for the full procurement system
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What the Governance Manual Does

- Defines core governance principles
 - Clarifies roles and responsibilities
 - Establishes expectations for stewardship, competition, transparency, and ethics
 - Connects ordinance requirements to day-to-day operations
 - Supports annual review, version control, and consistent policy maintenance
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What Will Change in Practice

- Departments will operate under one consistent procurement framework
 - Method selection and approvals will be clearer
 - Procurement files will be more complete and audit-ready
 - Vendor interactions will be more controlled and transparent
 - Contract oversight will be more intentional
 - Planning will happen, reducing reactive purchasing
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What Will Change in Practice

Current System

Procurement decisions often focused primarily on:

Lowest price

Basic compliance with thresholds

Limited structured evaluation of vendor capability

Proposed System

Best Value allows evaluation of:

Price

Technical capability

Experience and qualifications

Delivery timelines

Service quality

Risk to the City

- Purchasing function was viewed primarily as an **administrative compliance checkpoint**
- This aligns Lawrenceville with national standards used by **GFOA and NIGP professional procurement organizations.**



What This Means

- More consistency in how City purchases are made
 - Stronger stewardship of public funds
 - Better documentation and clearer accountability
 - Lower operational and reputational risk
 - A procurement environment that better matches the City's growth and complexity
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What This Means

Current System

Procurement responsibilities were distributed across departments with varying levels of oversight:

Different interpretations of procurement methods

Limited guidance on quote standards

Inconsistent documentation across departments

Proposed System

The ordinance and governance manual establish clear authority and accountability:

Purchasing Director

- Determines procurement method
- Ensures vendor eligibility and compliance

Chief Financial Officer

- Oversees governance and internal controls
- Ensures financial integrity and segregation of duties

Departments

- Define operational needs and scopes
- Monitor vendor performance



Updates in the Ordinance

- **Clear Procurement Methods and Thresholds**
 - The ordinance establishes defined procurement methods and when each must be used, including micro-purchase, informal procurement, and formal competitive procurement.
 - **Competitive Procurement for Major Purchases**
 - Purchases above the formal threshold require sealed bids or competitive proposals to ensure fair competition and transparency.
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Updates in the Ordinance

- Delegated Approval Authority Structure
 - The ordinance establishes clear approval authority levels for Department Directors, Purchasing Director, CFO, and City Council.
 - Centralized Procurement Oversight
 - The Purchasing Director is given exclusive authority to determine procurement methods and manage competitive solicitations to ensure consistency citywide. Proposed Purchasing Manual Gove
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Updates in the Ordinance

- **Best-Value Procurement Authority**
 - The ordinance allows the City to evaluate vendors based on overall value—including qualifications, experience, and capability—not solely lowest price.
 - **Stronger Internal Control Requirements**
 - The ordinance reinforces segregation of duties, approval controls, and documentation standards to protect public funds.
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Updates in the Ordinance

- **Formal Procurement Planning Requirements**
 - Departments will prepare annual procurement plans to improve coordination, transparency, and scheduling of major purchases
 - **Vendor Ethics and Communication Standards**
 - The ordinance establishes rules governing vendor communications, conflicts of interest, and evaluation committee conduct.
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Updates in the Ordinance

- Expanded Documentation and Audit Readiness
 - Procurement files must document how purchases were made, how vendors were evaluated, and who approved the decision.
 - Modernized Procurement Framework
 - The ordinance establishes the legal foundation for a four-tier governance structure:
 - Ordinance → Governance Manuals → SOPs → Templates and Tools.
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Implementation Roadmap

- Phase 1: Stabilization — ordinance, manuals, SOP development, initial training
 - Phase 2: System buildout — workflows, databases, vendor tools, planning framework
 - Phase 3: Implementation and optimization — broader training, KPIs, audit sampling, continuous refinement
 - This is a 12-month modernization effort, not a one-meeting fix.
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Council Action Requested

- Review the updated procurement ordinance
 - Support the governance framework that operationalizes it
 - Enable the City to implement a stronger, more consistent procurement system
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Closing

- The City responded to a point of concern with a broader commitment to institutional improvement.
 - This update is designed to protect public resources, improve consistency, and strengthen confidence in how the City does business.
 - We will continue to implement, train, monitor, and refine this framework with stewardship at the center.
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Questions

