



# Modernizing Lawrenceville's Procurement System

*Updated Purchasing Ordinance and Governance  
Manual  
April 1, 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.**
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## 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

