



**City of Lake Forest Park
2026 End of Session Legislative Report
March 23, 2026**

Dear City of Lake Forest Park,

It was a pleasure to advocate on behalf of the City of Lake Forest Park throughout the 2026 Washington State legislative session.

The 2026 session marked the second year of the 2025–27 biennium and was largely defined by the Legislature’s responsibility to adopt supplemental operating, capital, and transportation budgets. Similar to previous years, this proved to be a challenging task. Lawmakers entered the short, 60-day session confronting a projected multi-billion-dollar budget gap driven by rising maintenance-level costs, caseload growth, inflationary pressures, and new obligations from recent policy expansions, even as revenue growth remained modest.

In response, the Legislature focused heavily on budget-balancing strategies, including targeted spending reductions, use of reserves, and adjustments to the tax code. A significant portion of the session was devoted to debates over tax fairness and affordability. Lawmakers also grappled with the downstream fiscal impacts of recent federal actions, as well as ongoing needs related to infrastructure, disaster response, housing affordability, and public safety.

Despite these headwinds, we were successful in advancing the conversation about the state’s obligation to maintain State Route 104 and have a plan of action to tackle during the interim months. Just as importantly, we worked to ensure the City’s perspective was well understood by legislators as they weighed difficult tradeoffs in an election-year environment.

With session now adjourned, legislators will turn their attention to the November 2026 elections, with all House seats and approximately half of the Senate on the ballot. This political dynamic will shape both the interim and the policy landscape heading into next year.

Looking ahead, the 2027 legislative session will be a 105-day session and the first year of the 2027–29 biennium. The Legislature will shift its focus to developing full biennial budgets and considering more expansive policy proposals. In an evolving fiscal and political climate, consistent, strategic advocacy will be essential. I look forward to continuing to work with the City of Lake Forest Park during the interim to advance its priorities, strengthen legislative relationships, and ensure we are well positioned for the 2027 session.

Thank you,

Shelly Helder
State Lobbyist
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A. Session Overview

The 2026 legislative session convened on January 12 and adjourned on schedule on March 12. During the 60-day short session, lawmakers focused on two primary responsibilities: adopting biennial operating, capital, and transportation budgets, and debating and advancing legislation.

From a city perspective, the results of the 2026 Session show there is still significant room for progress. During the session, the Legislature:

- Continued its pattern of passing land-use mandates without attached funding. However, in refining several proposals, lawmakers incorporated more city input than they have in recent years.
- Declined to offer broad financial support for cities facing budget pressures, though it did pass a modest fiscal-flexibility measure ([House Bill 2442](#)) that introduces a few new revenue options that may help a small number of municipalities.
- Preserved most, though not all, state accounts that share funds with cities, but did not fully compensate for the expected financial losses that will occur once tax exemptions tied to the millionaire's tax go into effect.

The session was largely defined by Democrats' push to overhaul the state's tax structure. That effort culminated in final legislative approval of [Senate Bill 6346](#), which imposes a new 9.9% tax on household income above \$1 million. The bill passed the Senate late on the final night of the session and now heads to Governor Ferguson, who has indicated he will sign it. Supporters argued the measure begins to address Washington's long-standing reliance on regressive revenue sources, while Republicans warned it could open the door to broader income taxation.

Democratic leaders also advanced a slate of bills aimed at insulating the state from shifting federal policies. Lawmakers approved measures restricting the release of voter data, prohibiting law enforcement officers from concealing their identities while performing official duties, and anchoring vaccine guidance to state-level health authorities rather than federal directives. Party leaders described these actions as necessary to protect civil rights and public health.

In total, legislators introduced 1,238 bills during the session and enacted 268 into law.

Despite declaring the short session largely successful, Democratic leaders acknowledged that several major issues remain unresolved and are likely to resurface next year. These include regulating data centers more comprehensively, managing rising legal costs facing the state, stabilizing funding for public defense, revisiting public school funding, and securing long-term funding for ferry construction.

For Republicans, the session was largely defined by opposition. With limited leverage as the minority party, lawmakers relied heavily on procedural tactics and amendment strategies to slow or challenge Democratic priorities. That approach was most visible during the marathon House debate over the income tax bill, which stretched more than 24 hours and ranked among the longest floor debates in state history.

B. Legislative Agenda Items

Lakefront Park

During the 2026 legislative session, the City used the development of Lakefront Park to demonstrate how combining multiple investments could bring to fruition a project that would otherwise have been out of reach for a small community. With a total project cost estimated at \$12.9 million, the City has secured more than \$10.7 million by layering funding from King County Parks, the Recreation Conservation Office, the State Legislature, and local and outside sources. The project stood as a clear example of how coordinated state, regional, and local partnerships made large-scale community investments possible. The City expressed deep appreciation for the State's \$1 million investment in Phase 1 and kept legislative partners informed of the project's progress as it pursues additional grants to close the remaining funding gap.

State Route 104: Complete Streets & Multimodal Connections

Complete Streets is a state-mandated approach that ensures safe access for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities, and since 2022 state law has required WSDOT to incorporate these principles into any state route project costing more than \$500,000. While WSDOT has identified SR 104 as needing maintenance, limited resources have delayed the work.

During session, the City took the opportunity to highlight the fiscal strain complete streets requirements places on projects during a public hearing on [Senate Bill 5581](#). The bill aligns state transportation statutes with a "safe system" approach by strengthening protections for trails and shared-use paths, clarifying roundabout rules, and expanding complete streets requirements to better integrate active transportation and transit facilities into state, local, and tribal transportation planning and projects. Councilmember Tracy Furutani shared support for safety and definitional updates for walking and biking, with the caveat that the unfunded \$500,000 complete-streets trigger on WSDOT projects has repeatedly delayed essential maintenance on SR 104 because required sidewalks and bike facilities would cost millions that neither the state nor the city currently has.

The supplemental transportation budget includes \$1.5 billion in new bond authority, sufficient to provide capacity for \$200 million in highway maintenance, and \$1.3 billion in highway preservation through the 2029-31 biennium. It will require active engagement from the City to request that some of those resources be used on State Route 104. The City's legislative delegation expressed willingness to support this effort. To maximize their efforts and time, there will need to be advanced work to gather information and equip them with facts and questions. This will be the emphasis of our work over the interim months.

City Financial Challenges

While the Legislature has been focused on establishing a more stable and progressive fiscal structure for the state budget, local government budgets have not received the same level of prioritization or attention.

During the first year of the legislative biennium, significant energy was invested in a proposal to lift the [1% property tax cap](#). However, at the very end of the 2025 legislative session, Governor Ferguson indicated that he was not interested in signing such a proposal into law. Instead, the Legislature approved a [councilmanic sales tax increase for public safety](#) (House Bill 2015). This change makes the local tax code more regressive and more vulnerable to the ups and downs of economic downturns and broader fiscal uncertainty.

During the 2026 legislative session, the Legislature continued this trend by approving yet another councilmanic sales tax increase—this time for children, youth, and families (House Bill 2442).

Additionally, if the proposed millionaire’s tax is upheld, several sales and use tax exemptions will take effect as the tax is implemented. While these exemptions are widely recognized as an opportunity to reduce cost burdens on low- and middle-income households, they will negatively impact local government revenues. The Legislature acknowledged this impact in a brief intent section that recognizes the potential reduction in local revenues and references \$200 million in mitigation funding in the four-year budget outlook. However, this amount would only partially offset the fiscal impacts of the proposal.

In the third and fourth quarters of 2026, cities will begin collecting sales tax revenues on services that became taxable under legislation enacted during the 2025 session. Many cities—though not all—will experience a modest increase in sales tax collections as a result. However, this revenue increase is temporary and will likely be repealed in 2029 if the millionaire’s tax is upheld.

C. Budget Summaries

Operating Budget

The 2026 legislative session commenced with lawmakers confronting a persistent multi-year challenge - balancing the state’s Operating Budget. Expenditures associated with state programs, many of which were expanded in recent years, continued to rise, while revenue growth softened. Additionally, changes to federal policies meant fewer resources were available for state services. The primary task of the short session was updating the 2025-27 biennial budget to account for these changes.

Although the February revenue forecast offered slightly improved expectations due to stronger-than-anticipated early collections from tax measures enacted in 2025, state economists cautioned that growth in K–12 education, health care, and long-term care costs continues to outpace projected revenues.

The supplemental operating budget authorizes an additional \$2.3 billion in spending, bringing the biennial budget to \$80.2 billion. To achieve a balanced Operating Budget, legislators relied on a combination of targeted program reductions, inter-account transfers, and new revenues generated by eliminating select tax preferences, including those affecting data centers, prescription drug wholesalers, and insurance carriers. The enacted budget uses \$880 million from the Budget Stabilization Account and transfers an additional \$375 million from the Public Works Assistance Account to the state general fund. It further assumes \$2.23 billion in new revenue over the four-year outlook from the recently adopted millionaire's tax and incorporates the fiscal impacts of repealing the estate-tax increase approved during the 2025 session. The Budget Stabilization Account is backfilled using funds from the LEOFF 1 retirement system. For a full list of account transfers and legislation impacting revenue, [click here](#).

Despite these adjustments, the state faces a projected \$878 million deficit in fiscal year 2027—a challenge for next year's legislature, pending updated revenue forecasts. This deficit would significantly expand if the millionaire's tax were invalidated by the courts or overturned by voters. The only reason the state is not required to have a four-year balanced budget is that it utilized the Budget Stabilization Account during this biennium, which temporarily exempts it from the statutory four-year balance requirement.

Local Government Fiscal Health

In the four-year outlook, the budget includes intent to transfer \$200 million from the state's general fund to a new account called Local Government Fiscal Health. The intent of this allocation is to help offset some of the local tax reductions from the implementation of the sales tax exemptions included in Senate Bill 6346, the millionaire's tax. The \$200 million would be shared between cities, counties and transit agencies.

Other notable expenditures in the supplemental operating budget include:

- Roughly \$1 billion to cover the state's self-insurance liability costs
- \$15 million for grants to permanent supportive housing providers for operations, maintenance and service costs
- \$25 million for Immigrant, Refugee, and New Arrival Supports
- \$18 million for state employee collective bargaining agreements
- \$82.4 million to the Disaster Response Account

To view the summary of expenditures and reductions included in the supplemental operating budget, [click here](#). To view the text of the supplemental budget, [click here](#).

Transportation Budget

Transportation Budget writers faced another challenging year in developing a balanced budget that meets the state's transportation needs now and into the future. In the 2025 session the Legislature adopted a 6-cent fuel tax increase and a variety of other fee increases. That resulted in an estimated \$4.4 billion increase for the next three biennia. However, in the last three revenue forecasts, that estimate has been lowered by \$843 million. In other words, 20% of the projected increase in resources from the 2025 session have been offset by decreases since

then. The primary reason for the lower projection is declining fuel consumption. Fuel tax collections represent 40% of the total forecasted revenues, which limits overall available transportation resources.

In developing the supplemental transportation budget, the top priority for both parties and both chambers was increasing investments in preservation and maintenance of the state's highway system. Additionally, to provide clarity and certainty for long-term planning, the supplemental budget plans for the next 3-biennia, through 2031.

The supplemental budget appropriates \$16.6 billion, an increase of \$1.2 billion over the biennial budget. Of the total, \$10.2 billion (61%) is dedicated to capital projects and programs and \$6.4 billion (39%) to operating programs. The budget includes \$1.5 billion in new bond authority, sufficient to provide capacity for \$200 million in highway maintenance, \$1.3 billion in highway preservation and \$28 million in ferries preservation through the 2029-31 biennium. Click [here](#) to access Supplemental Transportation Budget documents.

Highway Preservation and Maintenance

For the current biennium, the supplemental budget allocates an additional \$40 million for the WSDOT Highway Maintenance Program, \$300 million for the Highway Preservation Program. In addition to these amounts, there is \$65 million in federal funding for state highway flood recovery and \$45 million for local highway flood recovery (\$30 million for county and \$15 million for city). These funds are specified for transportation infrastructure damaged during the December 2025 weather events.

Ferries

The state's ferry system includes 20 marine terminals and 21 car and passenger ferries with an average age of over 33 years. The supplemental budget allocates an additional \$4 million for preservation of ferries in the current biennium and doubles that amount in each subsequent biennia, for a total of \$28 million over 6 years. The budget advances \$29 million of previously allocated Climate Commitment Act resources to complete the construction of new hybrid electric ferries, with the first ferry anticipated to be delivered by 2030.

In contrast to the Governor's budget which provided funding for three new ferries, the supplemental budget allocates \$750,000 to the Joint Transportation Committee to convene a work group to consider options for long-term, financially sustainable vessel preservation and replacement. The work group's initial report is due to the Governor and Legislature by December 15, 2026. The budget also includes \$500,000 for a feasibility study regarding the establishment of state owned or leased dry dock facilities which would enable WSDOT to control scheduling for maintenance of the ferry fleet.

Local Project Impacts

The supplemental budget makes relatively no new investments in capital projects at the state or local level. However, the budget includes intent to increase funding by \$107 million for the Regional Mobility Grant Program and the Rideshare Grant Program in the next two biennia. The application window for the Regional Mobility Grant Program is already open, and the signal of

increased investment means there will be additional funding awarded in the upcoming cycle. Click [here](#) to learn more about the Regional Mobility Grant Program.

The final budget also incorporates the budgeting tool referred to as “resource smoothing” which assumes a \$180 million underspend of the Local Programs project list for the current biennium. This amount is invested elsewhere in the budget.

Traffic Safety & Enforcement

The biennial budget reduced funding for the WA State Patrol (WSP) due to staff vacancies and the supplemental budget restores \$2.7 million of that reduction. An additional \$11 million is provided to WSP for capital and operational improvements. Other traffic safety-related investments include:

- \$250,000 for WSDOT to develop an implementation plan for a new Megaproject Safety Program
- \$234,000 to report crash data and wrong-way driving violations at locations where wrong-way driving prevention strategies have been implemented
- Establishment of an older driver reduced fee identocard program for currently licensed drivers aged 70 years or older who wish to replace their driver's license with an identocard or an enhanced identocard

Looking Ahead

The supplemental budget makes relatively few changes to the underlying budget and signals intent to make more sweeping changes in the 2027-29 budget. Minimal funding is provided to complete studies and provide recommendations on a variety of issues, including:

- \$100,000 for the Joint Transportation Committee to facilitate review of the long-term financial sustainability of the transportation budget.
- \$640,000 for the Joint Transportation Committee to continue to oversee a Climate Emission Reduction Account investments tracking tool.
- \$400,000 for a report on the state's maintenance and preservation needs, including recommendations for a sustainable and integrated delivery plan and a public education program on investment needs and options.

Capital Budget

The state's Capital Budget funds infrastructure and building construction for state and local communities through direct appropriations and grant programs. A percentage of the operating budget is dedicated to paying bonds issued to fund the budget. Of the three budgets, revenues in the capital budget were the most stable although not as ample as in previous years when there was an influx of federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The 2026 supplemental capital budget relies on debt limit bond capacity, Climate Commitment Act (CCA) accounts, and minimal other cash resources.

The supplemental Capital Budget authorizes \$889 million in new expenditures for a total of \$8.5 billion over the 2025-27 biennium. To help balance the operating budget, the capital budget transferred roughly \$1 billion in cash resources typically dedicated to capital purposes. These resources included capital gains, public works and higher education building accounts, described in more detail below. To view the supplemental budget and the associated project lists and grant programs, [click here](#).

Notable investments in the final Capital Budget include:

- The operating budget utilized \$375 million of the Public Works Assistance Account (PWAA) resources and the capital budget backfills the account with \$279.5 million of bond funding. There is \$100 million in existing bond backfill and the capital budget allocates \$10 million for emergency grants to local governments for public works projects impacted by the December 2025 flooding event. This brings the total amount of funding available in PWAA to \$389.5 million.
- An additional \$123 million in Housing Trust Fund investments which includes \$50 million for multifamily/rental units, \$40 million for preservation and \$55 million for homeownership.

D. Policy Positions

Affordable Housing

Local governments have consistently emphasized that meeting housing needs across all income levels will require significantly greater investment in housing serving households at 50% of area median income (AMI) or below.

The state's primary tool for funding affordable housing production is the Housing Trust Fund. In his capital budget proposal, Governor Ferguson recommended investing \$275 million in the program—an unusually large investment for a supplemental budget year. While the Legislature did not fully fund the Governor's proposal, it approved a substantial allocation to the program, reflecting continued legislative commitment to affordable housing development. Even with this investment, however, the Housing Trust Fund alone will not produce the level of housing needed for Washington State to meet its housing supply goals.

Several proposals were introduced this session that would have provided new local revenue options to support housing production. These included proposals to:

- Allow local governments to impose a tax on short-term rentals ([House Bill 2559](#))
- Authorize all jurisdictions to seek voter approval for an additional 0.25% real estate excise tax, similar to authority currently available to San Juan County ([House Bill 1480](#))
- Allow local governments to waive local sales and use taxes on affordable housing construction ([House Bill 1717](#))
- Modify existing incentives to support redevelopment of parking lots and underutilized sites into housing ([Senate Bill 5755](#))

While these proposals received legislative attention, none advanced during the short legislative session.

The Legislature did, however, provide additional flexibility in how existing housing-related revenues may be used. In recent years, lawmakers created two local-option sales tax tools to support housing investments:

- Establish a sales tax credit that cities can use to fund affordable housing ([House Bill 1406](#) from 2019)
- Authorize a local sales tax dedicated to housing and related services ([House Bill 1590](#) from 2020)

Both programs included restrictions on how revenues could be spent. This year, the Legislature approved [Senate Bill 6027](#) and [House Bill 2442](#), expanding flexibility by allowing these funds to be used for rental assistance, providing jurisdictions with additional tools to address housing affordability.

The Governor has also continued to advance his executive order establishing a Washington State Department of Housing. An advisory committee has been formed and has begun meeting to guide the development of the new agency, with the Association of Washington Cities serving as a participant. As part of this effort, a [survey](#) is currently being circulated to gather stakeholder input on the mission and role of the future agency. The survey includes several questions about how the agency should interact with cities in advancing housing policy, including topics related to land use and permit reform. Local governments are encouraged to participate and provide input.

Fish Culverts

The state must identify approximately \$5 billion to eliminate state-owned culverts and remove other barriers hindering fish passage, as required by a federal court ruling. It seems unlikely that the state will meet the court's 2030 deadline and is currently engaged in mediation with the Tribes who initiated the lawsuit. The ongoing mediation essentially eliminated this topic from discussion during the 2026 session. Neither the transportation budget nor the capital budget made new investments in fish barrier removal at the state or local level.

Neighborhood Cafes

A proposal to allow neighborhood cafés and small stores in residential areas gained early momentum this session, moving quickly through the Senate with bipartisan support. The bill, [House Bill 1175](#), sponsored by Rep. Mark Klicker (R-Walla Walla), reflected growing interest in encouraging walkable, neighborhood-scale businesses while maintaining local control over impacts.

Despite its swift progress in the Senate, that momentum did not carry over to the House. Once the measure crossed chambers, it stalled and ultimately failed to advance before the end of the session. Despite hearing from cities that actively supported the legislation, including the City of Lake Forest Park, the Chair of the Senate Local Government committee, Senator Jesse Salomon (D-Shoreline), opted not to schedule the bill for a public hearing. This is likely because the bill

still received mixed feedback from the broader city family since at its core, the bill preempts city authority.

E. Additional Policy Outcomes

Transportation

Lawmakers have been prioritizing policies that aim to increase safety for all road users. This session, the legislature passed [Senate Bill 6066](#), authorizing and defining crash prevention zones, and [Senate Bill 6110](#), addressing the increase of e-motos use and developing a workgroup to define e-motos. Introduced in 2025, [Senate Bill 5067](#) lowers the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit for the operator of a vehicle or watercraft from 0.08% to 0.05%. This effort continued into the 2026 legislative session, making its way through the Senate but ultimately stalling in the House.

To support communities with infrastructure funding, [Senate Bill 6262](#) increased the maximum weight of vehicles subject to a transportation benefit district fee from 6,000 pounds to 9,000 pounds. However, the bill did not pass. The Association of Washington Cities and others hope to see this bill reintroduced in the 2027 session.

Another concept that was debated but didn't make it over the finish line was changing the revenue distribution method for cities that operate traffic safety cameras. Current law says that cities must share 25% of net revenues from stationary cameras put in place after June 6, 2024. [House Bill 2711](#) would have changed it to require a city to remit \$5,000 annually for each device active in the previous 12 months, and an additional \$5,000 annually for each permanent camera that has been in place for at least four years. This shift was recommended by cities after a Senate concept proposed sharing 10% of gross revenues, which would have been far more costly to cities. This discussion was prompted by a desire for stable funding for the Cooper Jones Bicycle Safety Account, which is still needed. It is likely this issue will return in the 2027 session.

Public Safety

In recent years, legislative discussions have often been dominated by public safety issues. While the topic received considerable rhetorical attention during this session, relatively few significant policy changes were enacted.

Two bills passed this session with notable implications for public safety. The first, [Senate Bill 5974](#), establishes minimum qualifications for elected sheriffs creating background check requirements. The second, [Senate Bill 6002](#), regulates the use of automated license plate reader (ALPR) cameras, often referred to as "Flock cameras," which are increasingly used by local law enforcement agencies to investigate and prevent crime.

The Legislature also monitored—but did not take action on—the implementation of [House Bill 2015](#), adopted last year. That law created a \$100 million grant program and authorized a councilmanic sales tax to support local public safety investments. Several jurisdictions have expressed concern that the eligibility criteria and certification requirements established by the

Criminal Justice Training Commission have been burdensome and difficult to meet, limiting access to the funding. Approximately one month into the legislative session, the Commission approved the first jurisdictions for certification under the program. Click [here](#) to view the CJTC program page.

In recent years, the Legislature has also considered proposals aimed at reducing the number of individuals entering the criminal justice system, including efforts to decriminalize certain offenses or modify detention standards. Several such proposals were introduced this session but did not ultimately pass into law. One worth mentioning is [House Bill 2389](#), which expands alternatives to confinement and adjusts sentencing rules for juvenile offenders.

Land Use

The Legislature has continued its trend of preempting local governments in the name of increasing housing supply. During the first year of the biennium, lawmakers limited cities' authority to require housing developers to provide parking to reduce development costs. In the second year of the biennium, the Legislature advanced a similar proposal limiting cities' authority to require ground-floor retail or commercial space in new developments. The bill—requested by Governor Ferguson and Lieutenant Governor Heck—was supported by major employers such as Microsoft and Amazon, along with the Master Builders Association and the Sightline Institute. After several rounds of negotiations, the Legislature approved a final version of [Senate Bill 6026](#), which the Governor signed into law. While the bill limits local authority, the final version retained some ability for cities to require ground-floor commercial or retail uses in certain circumstances. Unless there is a significant political shift, legislative mandates affecting local land use authority in the name of increasing housing supply are likely to continue in future sessions.

For the second consecutive session, lawmakers considered legislation that would have significantly limited cities' authority to regulate or remove individuals occupying public rights-of-way, including individuals experiencing homelessness who are living in encampments. [House Bill 2489](#) was approved by the House Housing Committee but did not advance further in the legislative process. Despite not passing, the proposal generated significant attention and opposition. Each year this policy is introduced and debated, it draws substantial interest from local governments, advocacy groups, and legislators due to its potential impact on cities' ability to manage public spaces and address encampments within the public right-of-way.

The Legislature has also continued to focus on the regulation and siting of “step housing” types, including shelters, transitional housing, emergency housing, and permanent supportive housing. In 2021, the Legislature adopted [House Bill 1220](#), which required cities to allow these housing types in areas where hotels are permitted. The bill was influenced in part by events in Renton, where a Red Lion hotel was converted into a shelter and generated significant public debate about public safety impacts. At the time, cities were allowed to adopt reasonable occupancy, spacing, and health and safety regulations. However, local regulations adopted across the state have varied widely, and in some cases have been written narrowly enough to effectively prevent shelters from locating in a community.

To address these concerns, the Legislature adopted [House Bill 2266](#) this session. The bill modifies existing law by requiring cities to allow permanent supportive housing and transitional housing in all residential zones and requiring shelters and emergency housing in all zones where hotels are allowed. It also narrows the types of spacing, occupancy, and health and safety regulations that cities may adopt. One notable provision allows cities to impose additional operational requirements when a jurisdiction contributes general fund dollars or public land to a project. Proponents believe the bill will create greater statewide consistency in how these housing types are regulated.

In addition to land use mandates, lawmakers have also focused on local permitting processes. In 2021, the Legislature adopted [Senate Bill 5290](#), establishing permit review timelines for local governments. While jurisdictions may set their own timelines, they must meet statutory performance requirements. The law also requires the Department of Commerce to study permitting timelines statewide. Commerce released its first report shortly before the start of the legislative session, establishing baseline data and indicating that permit review timelines vary widely among jurisdictions.

This session, the Legislature adopted [House Bill 2418](#), which makes modest changes to local permitting requirements, including clarifying when an application is considered complete and requiring jurisdictions to designate a permit review office or point of contact. Lawmakers also considered [Senate Bill 5729](#), which would have required cities to accept architectural or engineering plans approved by licensed professionals, but that proposal did not advance. Governor Ferguson and other stakeholders have indicated that additional permit reform will likely be pursued in future sessions as part of ongoing efforts to reduce housing development timelines and costs.

Immigration

One of the major themes for the majority party this session was to respond to the actions of the federal government, particularly in relation to immigration enforcement. Democrats shared their goal of ensuring that immigrants and refugees, as well as all community members, feel safe in Washington state.

A slate of bills was introduced to make progress on this issue. Several bills were signed into law, including [House Bill 2105](#), which establishes immigrant worker protections; [Senate Bill 5855](#), which prohibits law enforcement at any level of government from wearing masks; and [House Bill 2165](#), which increases penalties for individuals who impersonate law enforcement officers. The legislature considered but did not approve many others including [House Bill 2464](#), addressing reporting requirements for private detention facilities; [House Bill 2597](#), strengthening immigration-related enforcement provisions; [House Bill 2641](#), updating standards for law enforcement hiring; [House Bill 2648](#), clarifying interactions between local agencies and federal immigration enforcement; [Senate Bill 5906](#), enhancing data and personal safety protections; [Senate Bill 6080/House Bill 2547](#), establishing new parameters for federal custody contracts; [Senate Bill 6109](#), concerning private detention investment restrictions; and [Senate Bill 6286](#), imposing fines on detention facilities, reflect ongoing legislative interest in regulating detention practices, increasing transparency, and setting clearer statewide standards

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for how local governments interact with federal enforcement systems, even though none of these measures crossed the finish line this session.

Liability Reform

The 2026 session brought heightened attention to an increase in liability exposure for the state and local governments. After concerns from the Governor and legislators about the tens of millions spent annually on liability claims, Senator Manka Dhingra introduced [Senate Bill 6239](#) which would have required arbitration for tort claims against the state and its subdivisions. Originally, this was the only bill being considered on the topic but as the session progressed, the bill was watered down and eventually died after victim advocates expressed concerns with the delay of justice for those harmed by state or local governments. While no major reforms were passed, the session marked a clear shift toward confronting the growing financial strain tort exposure places on both the state and local governments, setting the stage for deeper work in the next biennium.

To support that work, the final Operating budget directs the Office of Administrative Hearings to convene a committee to recommend changes to the process for claims against the state or its political subdivisions for damages arising out of tortious conduct. The committee will provide a report by November 1, 2026.

On the flip side of the issue, the Legislature considered several bills that would have increased liability exposure for governments. One example is [House Bill 2095](#), which would expand civil liability when vulnerable road users are struck by automobiles. Although intended to protect vulnerable road users, such as people walking in a crosswalk or riding bicycles in a lane, the bill would expand cities' exposure to potential damages and attorneys' fees even if no city driver or vehicle was involved. The bill was ultimately halted in the Senate but the sponsor, Rep. Reed, plans to introduce similar legislation next year.

F. Bill Tracking List

Below is the list of bills that the City took a position on during the 2026 session. This list includes the bills that died and those that passed into law.

Bill #	Abbrev. Title	Short Description	Status	Sponsor	Position
SHB 1015 (Dead)	Energy labeling/residential	Concerning energy labeling of residential buildings.	H Local Govt	Duerr	Support
E2SHB 1175 (Dead)	Small businesses/residential	Allowing small business establishments in residential zones.	H Rules 3C	Klicker	Support
HB 2233 (Dead) (2SSB 5965)	Retail bags	Reducing environmental impacts associated with bags provided to customers at retail establishments.	H Env & Energy	Parshley	Support
SSB 5798 (Dead)	Property tax	Concerning property tax reform.	S Ways & Means	Pedersen	Support

SSB 5855 (HB 2173)	Law enf. face coverings	Concerning the use of face coverings by law enforcement officers.	Del to Gov	Valdez	Support
2SSB 5965 (Dead) (HB 2233)	Retail bags	Reducing environmental impacts associated with bags provided to customers at retail establishments.	S Rules 2	Bateman	Support
ESSB 6002 (HB 2332)	Driver privacy	Concerning driver privacy protections.	Del to Gov	Trudeau	Support