| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Mayor**<br>Gabe Quinto<br>**Mayor Pro Tem**<br>Rebecca Saltzman | THE CITY OF EL CERRITO<br>**AGENDA** | **Councilmembers**<br>William Ktsanes<br>Lisa Motoyama<br>Carolyn Wysinger |

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**SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2026**

**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING (9:00 AM)**
Arlington Clubhouse - 1120 Arlington Blvd, El Cerrito CA
**This meeting will be held in-person only with no remote participation**

**Accommodations:** In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk at 510-215-4305. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable accommodations.

**Conduct:** This meeting shall be conducted pursuant to the El Cerrito City Council Rules of Order and Procedure, including adjourning by 11:00 PM unless extended to a specific time determined by a majority of the Council.

**Public Comments:**
1. In-person by submitting a request to speak to the City Clerk.
2. By Email to cityclerk@elcerrito.gov identified in the subject line as **Public Comments – Agenda Item #.**

Written comments received by **2:00 p.m. Friday, January 9, 2026** will be provided to the City Council and posted onlinein advance of the meeting. Comments received after the deadline will be provided to the City Council and will be posted after the meeting.

## 9:00 AM ROLL CALL - CONVENE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

## 1. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

*All persons wishing to speak should sign up with the City Clerk. Remarks are typically limited to 3 minutes per person and to items on the special meeting agenda only.*

**2. City Council Workshop Retreat**

**Action Proposed:** Conduct a facilitated City Council retreat focused on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-2027 Budget and Priority Setting
**Contact:** Karen Pinkos, City Manager, City Management; Nancy Hetrick, Facilitator, Raftelis

**3. ADJOURN SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

***The City of El Cerrito serves our diverse community by providing exceptional services that create a safe and resilient future for all.***

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

# SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA MATERIALS
# CITY COUNCIL MEETING
# January 10, 2026
# (revised 1/26/2026)

**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING (9:00 AM)**

**Public Comments (Not on the Agenda and Consent Calendar)**

**Agenda Item No.2 - City Council Workshop Retreat**

1. Presentation
2. Public Comments

**El Cerrito City Council Retreat Report - 2026**

CITY HALL 10890 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530
Telephone (510) 215-4305 Fax (510) 215-4379 http://www.el-cerrito.org

**From:** Cordell Hindler
**To:** City Clerk
**Subject:** Public Comments
**Date:** Tuesday, December 23, 2025 2:25:08 PM

Caution! This message was sent from outside your organization.

Good Morning Mayor Quinto, Council Members and Staff

I am Submitting the Following Comments for the Record:

1. I Do Have Concerns in regarding the Financial Outlook of the City of EL Cerrito

2. Also I would Hope that the Priorities would Involved Adding Positions

Sincerely
Cordell

| | |
|---|---|
| **From:** | Tom Schrey |
| **To:** | City Clerk; Tom Schrey; Laurie Schrey |
| **Subject:** | [UNKNOWN SENDER] Fwd: Saturday 1/10/26 Retreat City Council Meeeting |
| **Date:** | Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:22:26 PM |

PUBLIC COMMENTS, Not on the agenda

Hello, I wish to make a comment for the City Council meeting:

With all of the funding problems the City has, why are we paying a consultant over $15k to run a meeting? Can that not be done by the Director of Finance?
If not, why not, and what qualifications are lacking on their part? There seems to be little regard for the taxpayers of El Cerrito when the Council approves expensive measures with little oversight.
How much has been spent on the Library tax so far?
Where is the Senior Center?
What about a new fire engine?
We may be quiet but many of us are watching how the City spends money. And we do remember when it's time to vote.
Please be more judicious with expenditures.
Thank you,
Tom Schrey
El Cerrito

| | |
|---|---|
| **From:** | Ira Sharenow |
| **To:** | Holly Charléty; City Clerk |
| **Cc:** | William Ktsanes; Lisa Motoyama; Rebecca Saltzman; Gabe Quinto |
| **Subject:** | Items Not on the Agenda |
| **Date:** | Thursday, January 8, 2026 9:55:42 AM |



The council needs to fundamentally rethink its budget priorities. Several years ago, the council voted to rent out the senior center to Kensington, and the recreation budget has not kept pace with inflation. Meanwhile, economic development spending—particularly for housing—has grown dramatically with limited results to show for it.

**Stalled Housing Projects:**

According to the El Cerrito Plaza Transit-Oriented Development plan, this project envisions at least five phases of development:

- **Phase 1 (Parcel A South)**: 70 units of affordable housing. After multiple AHSC grant attempts, finally secured funding and construction has begun.
- **Phase 2 (Parcel B)**: Market-rate housing. No progress.
- **Phase 3 (Parcel C East)**: 84 units of affordable housing. Failed to secure AHSC Round 9 funding in December 2025 despite scoring 85 points and requesting $42.4 million. El Cerrito is not designated as a disadvantaged community, which puts it at a competitive disadvantage for these grants.
- **Phase 4 (Parcel C West)**: The proposed library

location. Has not yet applied for funding—a multi-year process.
- **Phases 5+**: Additional market-rate and affordable projects. No progress.

Beyond El Cerrito Plaza, there are additional stalled housing projects elsewhere in the city, bringing the total to approximately nine stalled projects.

**Problematic AHSC Grant Applications:**

The city and developer have made three AHSC applications (Rounds 7, 8, and 9) with varying components:

- **Round 7**: No award
- **Round 8 (Parcel A South)**: Awarded. Components included:
    - 70 affordable housing units
    - Over 1 lane mile of east-west bikeway
    - 2,350 linear feet of walkway on Richmond Street
    - Bus shelters and traffic calming
    - **BART Traction Power Substation (TPSS)** - contributing to 4.15% reliability improvement
- **Round 9 (Parcel C East)**: Not awarded. Components included:
    - 84 affordable housing units (family-focused, 49 units with 2-3 bedrooms)
    - Class IV protected bikeway on Richmond Street (Moeser Lane to Hill Street)
    - Class II bikeway on Pierce Street
    - Pedestrian improvements on San Pablo

Boulevard
- **Partnership with Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority to purchase two new BART railcars**

**Key Concerns:**

1. **BART Improvements in Other Jurisdictions**: The Round 8 winning proposal included a BART Traction Power Substation, and Round 9 proposed purchasing BART railcars. BART already has a dedicated funding source—Measure RR. Why is El Cerrito using its limited housing grant applications to fund regional BART improvements? Some bike lanes in these applications are located in Richmond, not El Cerrito.
2. **Lack of Transparency**: The city should present a detailed explanation of:
   - What bike lanes and improvements will actually be built
   - Why BART improvements are bundled with El Cerrito housing proposals
   - Total costs to taxpayers in terms of staff salaries, consultant contracts, and other expenditures for the Plaza project
   - Where the cost-benefit analysis is for this multi-year, multi-million-dollar effort
3. **Economic Development Results**: Many storefronts remain vacant in El Cerrito. The expanded Community Development Department budget does not appear to be producing economic development

results commensurate with the investment.

**Recommendations:**

1. Cut the Community Development budget and restore funding for a senior center
2. The Finance Department should lead budget discussions instead of relying on expensive consultants
3. The council should produce a comprehensive accounting of all costs associated with the Plaza project, including direct and indirect expenses

The residents of El Cerrito deserve transparency about how their tax dollars are being spent and clear evidence that this spending is producing results.

Ira Sharenow
El Cerrito, CA

RAFTELIS

# City of El Cerrito

## City Council Retreat

**January 10, 2026**

**9 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

# Welcome & Public Comment

- Mayor Gabe Quinto
- Mayor Pro Tem Rebecca Saltzman
- Councilmember William Ktsanes
- Councilmember Lisa Motoyama
- Councilmember Carolyn Wysinger

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

# Agenda

- Welcome and Public Comment
- Review Objective & Agenda
- Current Climate:
  National Community Survey & Celebrating Achievements
- Financial Update and Navigating Change
- Organizational Updates & Sharing
- Confirming Priorities for Next Year
- Next Steps & Closing

# Retreat Norms for Today

- Listen to understand
- Engage in conversations, stay focused, and share ideas
- Be open to new or different perspectives
- Look for opportunities to agree

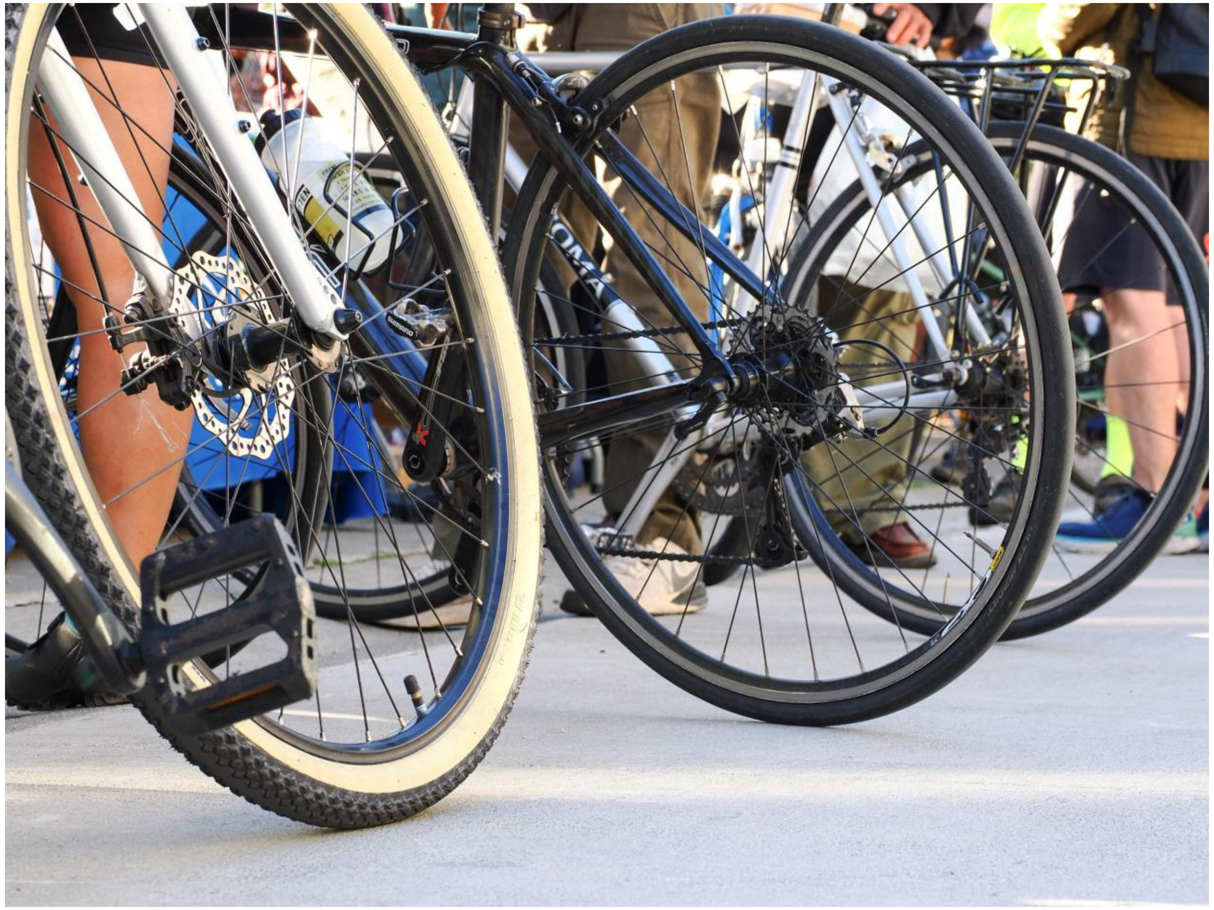
# Retreat Objectives

- Create a foundation for 2026
- Affirm priorities
- Spend time together

# Bike Rack

Things to discuss at another time will be tracked separately

Time management tool



# Expectations for our Time Together

# El Cerrito Time Capsule

Imagine it is December 31, 2026. We are burying a time capsule at the base of the Hillside Natural Area lookout point.

Looking out over the city toward the Bay, what one object would you put in that capsule to represent a successful year in El Cerrito?

You can only put **one physical object** in the capsule that represents a goal you want us to achieve this year.

**What is the object, and why?**

# Current Climate

# National Community Survey

- Results will be presented to City Council on January 20, 2026

- **Methodology:**
  - Polled 412 residents
  - Collected from September 15, 2025 to October 27, 2025

# National Community Survey: Key Findings

**90%** rate El Cerrito as an excellent or good place to live

**91%** recommend living in El Cerrito to someone who asks

**65%** rate El Cerrito's Public Information Services as Excellent or Good

- Up from 51% in 2019

# National Community Survey: Key Findings

- Several Governance items saw significant increases since 2022, including:
  - The overall **direction** the City is taking (50% to 63%)
  - The **value of services** for the taxes paid to the City (42% to 53%)
  - The job the City government does at **welcoming resident involvement** (45% to 55%)
  - Overall **confidence** in City government (44% to 55%)

# National Community Survey: Key Findings

**9 in 10 residents**

Feel **safe** in their neighborhood

**7 in 10 residents**

Identified building a **new library** as a high or medium facility priority

**9 in 10 residents**

Strongly or somewhat supported increasing **education** about the **street sweeping schedule**

# National Community Survey: Key Findings

- Exceed national averages in:
  - Valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds (82%)
  - Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds (77%)
- Highest priorities for the next two years
  - Fire safety and wildfire prevention (88%)
  - Maintaining a fiscally responsible city budget (86%)
  - Parks/facility maintenance (81%)

# Celebrating Achievements

## High-Performing Organization

- Reserve Levels over 40% of Expenditures
- S&P Increased Bond Ratings Two Steps
- Received Operating Budget Excellence Award & Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- Completed Cost Allocation Plan and Master Fee Study
- Undertook Citywide Service Delivery Study to be Completed this Spring
- Adopted First State Legislative Platform
- Processed Nearly 300 Public Records Requests
- Held Over 115 Public Meetings

# Celebrating Achievements

## Community Safety

- Adopted Hillside Natural Area Fire Resilience & Forest Conservation Plan
- Designated Fire Hazard Severity Zones and Established Defensible Space and Home Hardening Inspections at the Point of Sale
- Continued Red Flag Day Parking Pilot Program
- Reinvigorated Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program for Residents
- Hosted Wildfire Preparedness Day with Assembly Member Wicks
- Awarded $510,000 Grant to Reduce Fire Fuels
- Added E-bikes to ECPD Fleet
- + Stolen Vehicles and Burglaries at Lowest Levels in 10 years

# Celebrating Achievements

## Livability and Belonging

- Continued C.O.R.E. Partnership Enhancing Services to the Unhoused & Increased Housing Security Fund to Prevent Displacement
- Actively Supported Transit-Oriented Development including 69 affordable units in the Elora Apartments and 70 units breaking ground at the El Cerrito Plaza
- Recreation Recognized as a Winner of 9 Parents' Press Awards
- For Seniors: Expanded Senior Social Times and Introduced Coffee & Conversations Program
- Coordinated Signature 4th of July Event, Raising a Record $48,000 in Donations
- National Community Survey: 90% rate El Cerrito as an Excellent or Good Place to Live

# Celebrating Achievements

## Infrastructure and Amenities

- Substantially Completed the El Cerrito del Norte Complete Streets Project
- Conducted Extensive Outreach and Developed Designs for Richmond Street Complete Streets Project
- Completed 2025 Street Resurfacing Program
- Created Dedicated Pickleball Courts at Castro Park & New Arlington Park Tennis Center
- Initiated First Phase of Swim Center Renovations
- Added Safety Upgrades to Caltrans' Upcoming project on San Pablo Ave.

## Environmental Sustainability

- Received 2025 Platinum Beacon Spotlight Award from the Institute for Local Government
- Made Progress on Zero Emission Fleet Transition Plan
- Hosted First Ever Go Green Micromobility Fair
- Launched Climate Action & Adaptation Plan Dashboard and Internal Working Group

# What are you most proud of?

# Financial Update & Navigating Change

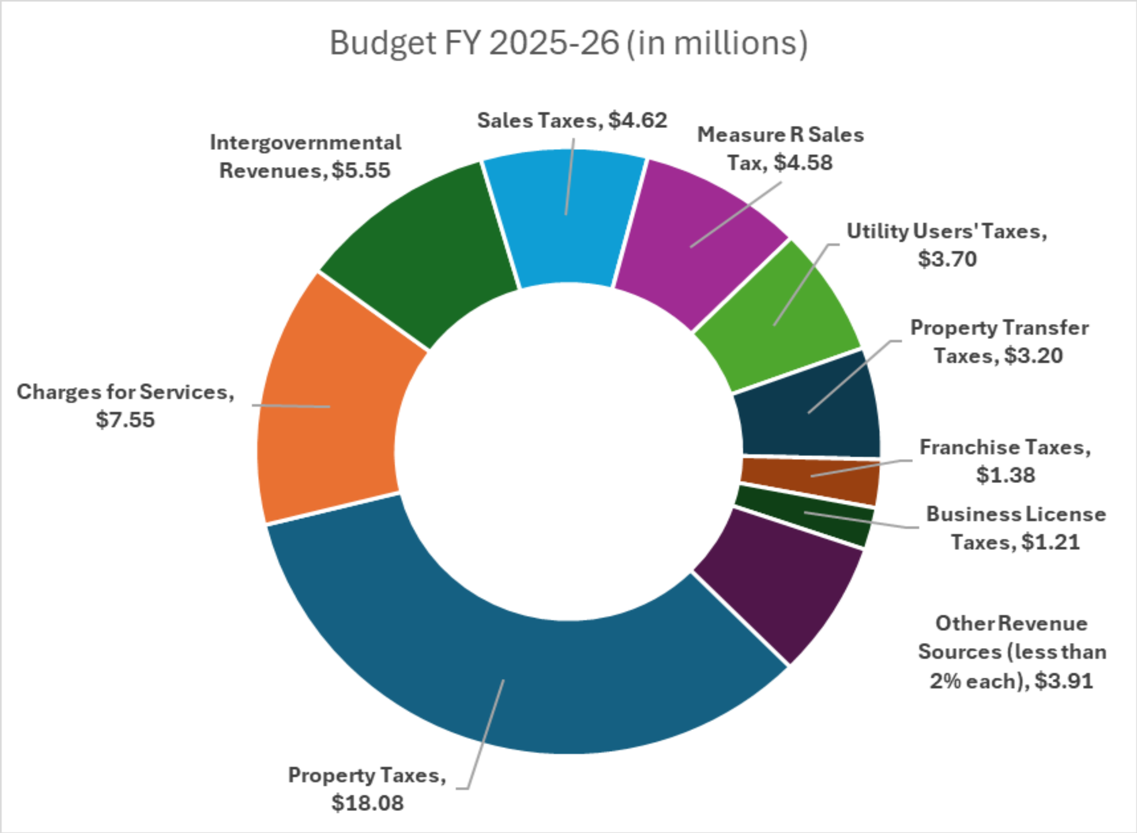
# Financial Update - Overview

- Audit for FY 2024-25
- General Fund update through November 30, 2025
  - Revenues
  - Expenditures
- Long-Range General Fund Forecast as of November 30, 2025
- What's Next
  - Budget Calendar
  - Major initiatives in progress
  - Next Steps

# FY 2024-25 Audit

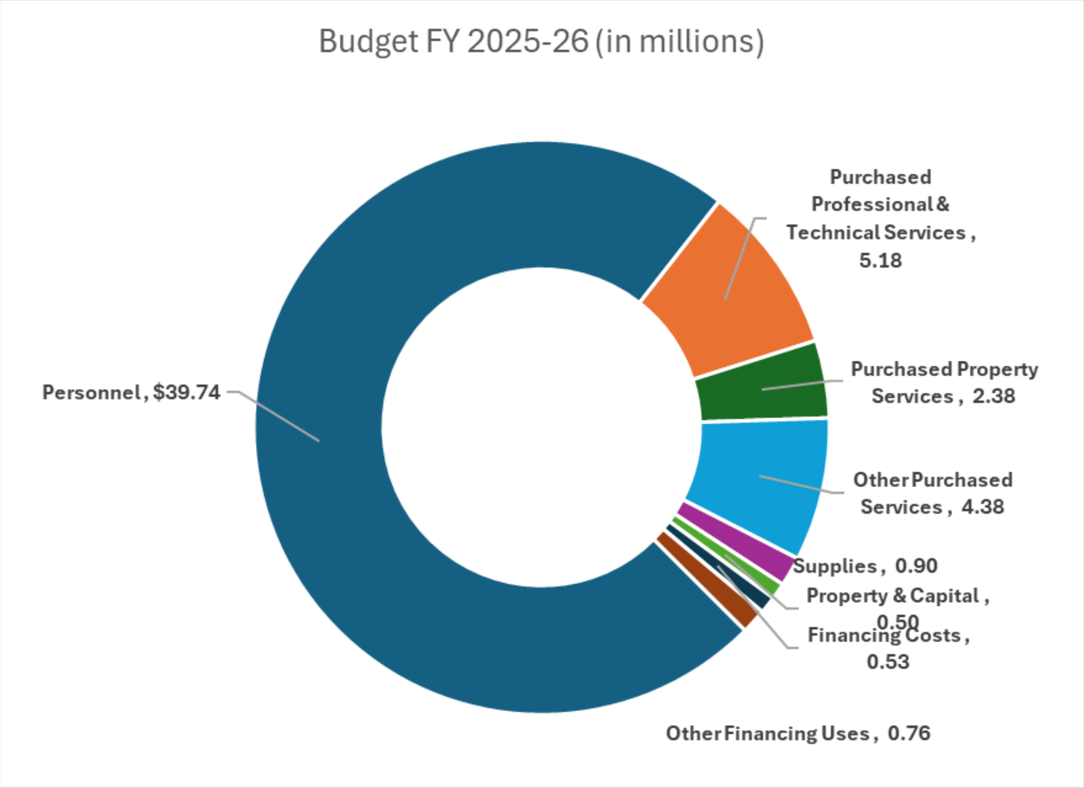
- Completed and published as of January 5
- Audit completed with an unmodified (clean) opinion
  - Indicates that the financial statements are presented fairly and in accordance with applicable accounting standards.
- The City's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) has been finalized and is now published on the City website
  - Available at elcerrito.gov/budget
- Presentation to Council by independent auditors (Chavan & Associates) on February 3

# General Fund Update - Revenues



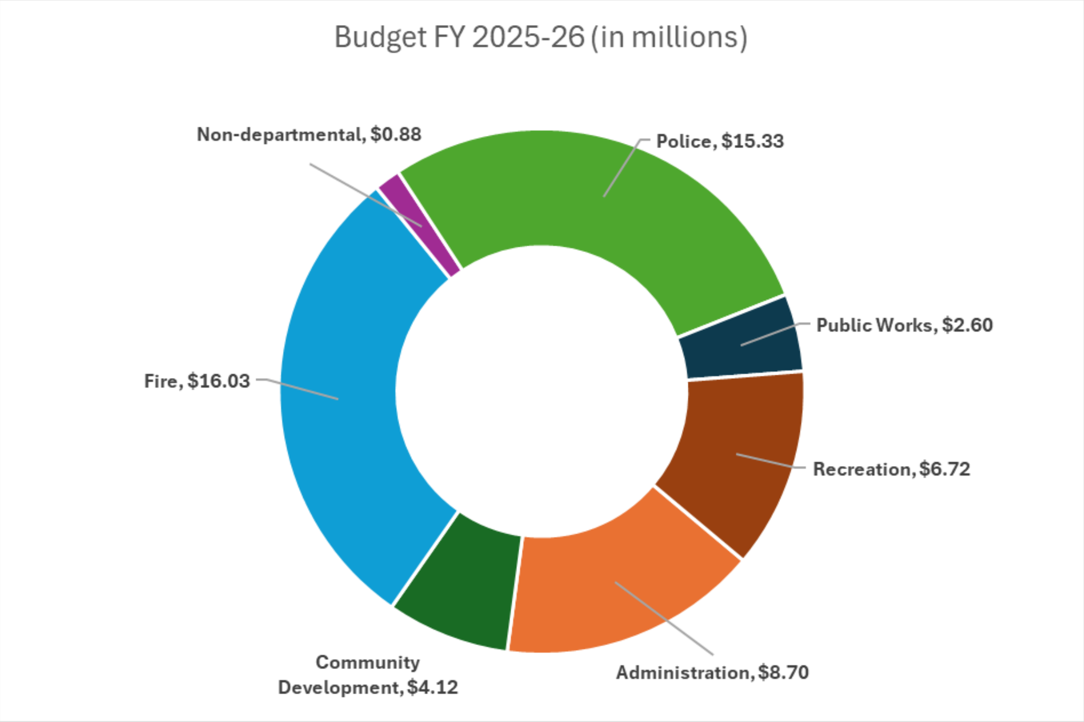

| Revenues by Type | FY 2025-26 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Amended Budget | YTD Actuals as of 11/30/25 | % of Budget |
| Property Taxes | $18.08 | $0.39 | 2% |
| Sales Taxes | $4.62 | $1.16 | 25% |
| Measure R Sales Tax | $4.58 | $1.05 | 23% |
| Franchise Taxes | $1.38 | $0.22 | 16% |
| Business License Taxes | $1.21 | $1.10 | 91% |
| Property Transfer Taxes | $3.20 | $0.73 | 23% |
| Utility Users' Taxes | $3.70 | $1.20 | 32% |
| Intergovernmental Revenues | $5.55 | $2.17 | 39% |
| Charges for Services | $7.55 | $3.65 | 48% |
| Other Revenue Sources (less than 2% each) | $3.91 | $1.83 | 47% |
| **Total** | **$53.78** | **$13.50** | **25%** |

# General Fund Update - Expenditures by Type



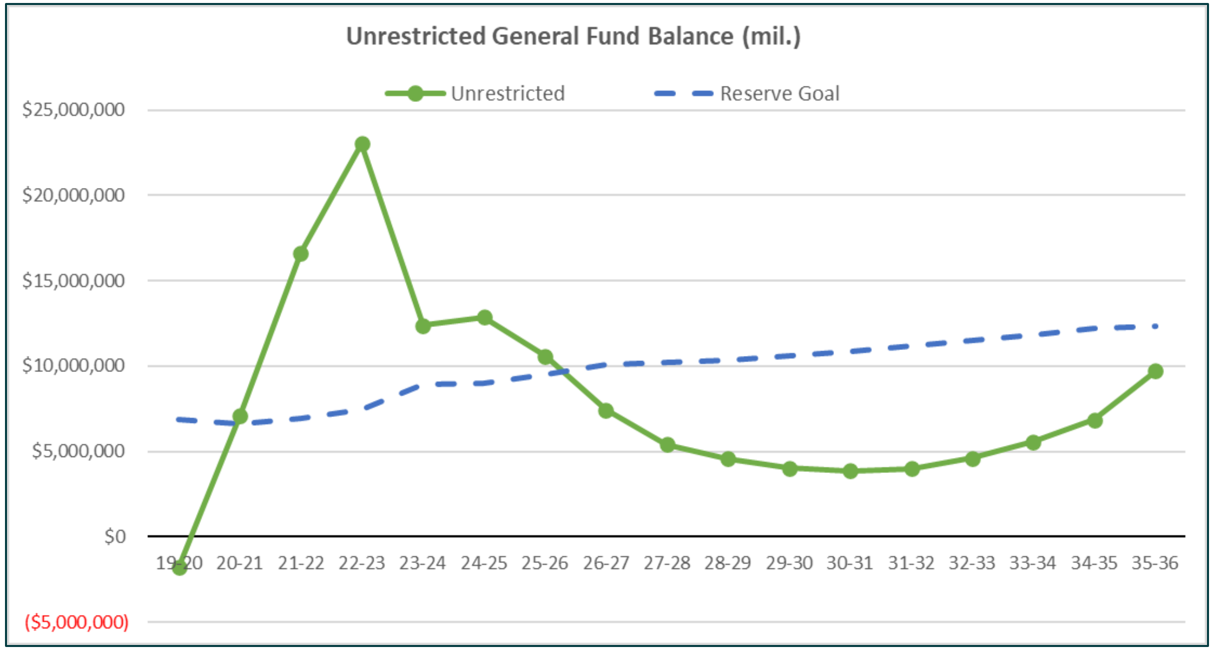

| Expenditure Classification | FY 2025-26 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Amended Budget** | **YTD Actuals as of 11/30/25** | **% of Budget** |
| Personnel | $39,736,669 | $17,688,291 | 45% |
| Purchased Professional & Technical Services | 5,180,936 | 1,881,737 | 36% |
| Purchased Property Services | 2,378,761 | 927,043 | 39% |
| Other Purchased Services | 4,384,411 | 3,194,387 | 73% |
| Supplies | 899,845 | 285,390 | 32% |
| Property & Capital | 499,942 | 65,146 | 13% |
| Financing Costs | 530,949 | 99,064 | 19% |
| Other Financing Uses | 761,735 | 380,868 | 50% |
| **Totals** | **$54,373,248** | **$24,521,926** | **45%** |

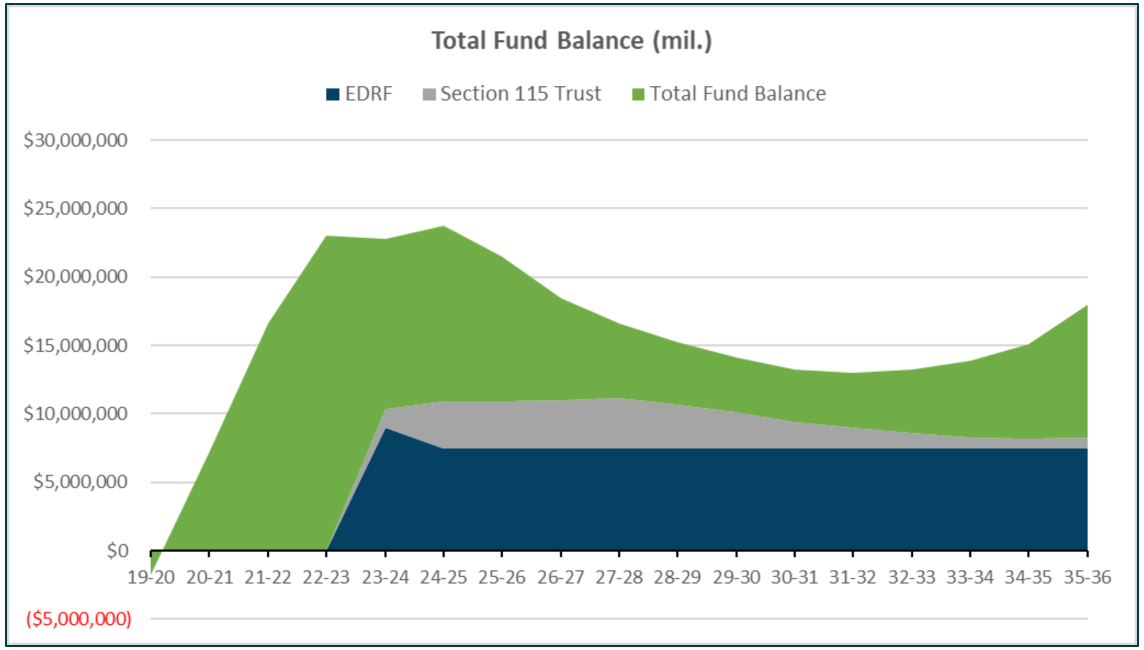
# General Fund Update - Expenditures by Department




| Expenditures by Department | FY 2025-26 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Amended Budget | YTD Actuals as of 11/30/25 | % of Budget |
| Administration | $8,700,991 | $4,820,796 | 55% |
| Community Development | 4,116,506 | 1,523,931 | 37% |
| Fire | 16,026,892 | 7,362,273 | 46% |
| Non-departmental | 882,374 | 319,373 | 36% |
| Police | 15,326,561 | 6,582,808 | 43% |
| Public Works | 2,604,358 | 958,099 | 37% |
| Recreation | 6,715,567 | 2,954,647 | 44% |
| **Total** | **$54,373,248** | **$24,521,926** | **45%** |

# General Fund Forecast as of November 30




- What this version includes:
  - Waterfall with FY25 actuals
  - Pool project
  - Fire engine
  - Council AV project
- What it does not (yet) include
  - Long-term asset replacement schedules
  - Capital budget beyond what is already listed and budgeted
- Future versions will present different scenarios based on how much funding Council wants to put towards deferred needs

# Public Meeting Calendar for FY 2026-27 and FY 2027-28 Budget

- January 10 – City Council Retreat
- February 3 – FY 2024-25 Audit Presentation
- February 17 – Mid-Year Budget Update
- March 7 – Community Workshop
- March 17 – Department Presentations
- April 7 – Council Budget Study Session #1
- May 5 – Council Budget Study Session #2 and Master Fee Schedule
- May 26 – FAB Budget Review
- June 2 – First Council Budget Presentation
- June 16 – Budget Presented for Adoption Consideration

# Major Initiatives in Progress

- Asset Inventory
  - Departments provided detailed lists of all major assets (vehicles, equipment, and technology)
  - Finance compiling and analyzing provided data to begin creating asset replacement schedules and estimates to **determine Internal Service Fund (ISF) funding needs**
- Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget
  - CIP budget in development
  - Implementing ClearGov CIP Budgeting system to provide a more **dynamic and detailed CIP budget document**
  - Finance and Public Works collaborating to develop long-range capital infrastructure lists to **determine capital funding needs**
- Service Delivery Study
  - Staff expect that the results will support **prioritization and planning of citywide programs**, operations, and infrastructure needs
  - Study results expected to be available in April

# Major Initiatives in Progress

Questions?

- Asset Inventory
  - Departments provided detailed lists of all major assets (vehicles, equipment, and technology)
  - Finance compiling and analyzing provided data to begin creating asset replacement schedules and estimates to **determine Internal Service Fund (ISF) funding needs**
- Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget
  - CIP budget in development
  - Implementing ClearGov CIP Budgeting system to provide a more **dynamic and detailed CIP budget document**
  - Finance and Public Works collaborating to develop long-range capital infrastructure lists to **determine capital funding needs**
- Service Delivery Study
  - Staff expect that the results will support **prioritization and planning of citywide programs**, operations, and infrastructure needs
  - Study results expected to be available in April

# Next Steps

- December month close in progress
- Mid-year budget update to Council on February 17
  - Any adjustments requested at that meeting will be urgent/time sensitive before June 30
  - All other budget changes will be included with the biennial budget process
- Continued progress on asset inventory, CIP budget, and service delivery study

# Budget Survey and Calendar

The Community budget survey is now live!

[elcerrito.gov/budgetsurvey](elcerrito.gov/budgetsurvey)

# BUDGET PROCESS

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

City of El Cerrito Fiscal Year 2026-27 & 2027-28 Budget Process

## Attend a Public Meeting!

| Date | Day/Time | Meeting | Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10 Jan | Sat 9AM | CITY COUNCIL RETREAT | 1120 Arlington Blvd, El Cerrito, CA |
| 17 Feb | Tues 6PM | MID-YEAR BUDGET UPDATE | 10890 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA |
| 7 Mar | Sat. 10AM | COMMUNITY WORKSHOP | 10890 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA |
| 17 Mar | Tues 6PM | DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS | 10890 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA |
| 7 Apr | Tues 6PM | COUNCIL STUDY SESSION #1 | 10890 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA |
| 5 May | Tues 6PM | COUNCIL STUDY SESSION #2 + MASTER FEE SCHEDULE CONSIDERATION | 10890 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA |
| 2 Jun | Tues 6PM | PROPOSED BUDGET REVIEW | 10890 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA |
| 16 Jun | Tues 6PM | BUDGET CONSIDERATION | 10890 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA |

DATES/TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE
Stay up to date at:
elcerrito.gov/budgetprocess

## BUDGET SURVEY

Not able to make a meeting?
Tell us your thoughts and ideas at:
elcerrito.gov/budgetsurvey

## Financial Advisory Board Meetings

City Council Chambers
10890 San Pablo Ave.

March 24, 2026, 6:30 p.m.
April 28, 2026, 6:30 p.m.
May 26, 2026, 6:30 p.m.
June 4, 2026, 6:30 p.m.

Review the agendas and find out about special meetings that may be scheduled at elcerrito.gov/fab

# Shared Success

What is needed to make informed decisions?

How can we maintain momentum in making changes?

How can we better prepare to face pushback?

What could get in our way?

# Brunch Break

# Updates & Sharing

# Department Head Speed Networking

- **Dept Head Quick Share:**
    - Challenges
    - Current Initiatives
    - Other updates
- **Council Questions and Dialogue**
- **10 minutes per round**

# Current Priorities & Initiatives

# Strategic Plan Goals

| | |
|---|---|
| **High-Performing Government** | Ensure the city maintains a strong financial position and a high-performing organization where employees feel a sense of inclusion and belonging. |
| **Community Safety** | Maintain public safety responsiveness and ensure community emergency preparedness. |
| **Livability and Belonging** | Promote a high quality of life and sense of community for current and future generations. |
| **Infrastructure and Amenities** | Advance climate focused, sustainable infrastructure efforts that have community benefit. |
| **Environment and Sustainability** | Promote environmental sustainability and stewardship by engaging in initiatives that reduce our carbon footprint, conserve natural resources, and foster a culture of environmental responsibility. |

# High-Performing Organization

*Ensure the city maintains a strong financial position and a high-performing organization where employees feel a sense of inclusion and belonging.*


- Preserve and expand revenue sources that provide sufficient resources to deliver services and programs to the community ***(In Progress)***
- Develop financing strategies for capital investments and deferred facility and other infrastructure needs as identified in the long-range financial plan. ***(In Progress)***
- Cultivate a positive organizational culture where employees experience a sense of belonging that results in teamwork, innovation, and outstanding services to the community ***(In Progress)***
- Increase public communication and engagement to ensure access to services and promote community events ***(In Progress)***
- Improve technology systems to increase automation and efficiency and strengthen cybersecurity ***(In Progress)***

# Current Initiatives
## High-Performing Organization

- **Developing Biennial Budget Through Robust Public Process**
- Completing Comprehensive Update to the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
- Developing New Internal Service Funds based on Centralized Vehicle, Equipment, and Technology Replacement Program
- Completing Service Delivery Study
- Planning for How to Address Needed Library and Swim Center Investments
- Coordinating Intentional Public Outreach Efforts
- Enhancing Online User and Customer Experience with Technology (e.g., Adding Recreation Registration on Mobile)
- Completing the Process for Anticipated Citizen's Initiative Petition
- Implementing SB 707 (Brown Act Revisions)
- Updating and Exploring Adding a Cannabis Operating Permit
- Actively Pursuing Grants and Working With Legislative Advocate

# Community Safety

*Maintain public safety responsiveness and ensure community emergency preparedness.*


- Maximize funding level for technology investments that promote efficient and effective public safety operations. ***(In Progress)***
- Align public safety services with community needs based on data-driven decision-making approach. ***(In Progress)***
- Strengthen El Cerrito's overall emergency preparedness capabilities, resources, and tools and implement changes as needed to ensure the City is properly positioned to respond to emergencies and disasters. ***(In Progress)***
- Evaluate options for a new Public Safety Center that is centered on community.
- Sustain and enhance climate-adapted resilience, forest conservation activities, and wildfire prevention in the Hillside Natural Area. ***(In Progress)***
- Ensure on-going training and availability of equipment to meet community needs. ***(In Progress)***

# Current Initiatives
## Community Safety

- Upgrading technology in Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- Launching New Software for Fire Inspections and Community Education
- Using Technology to Improve Police Operations
  - Dashboard Cameras
  - License-Plate Readers and Handhelds Streamlining Parking Enforcement
  - Piloting Facial Recognition Software to Solve Significant Crimes
  - AI-Assisted Report Writing for First Drafts
- Continuing focus on Vegetation Management and Fire Prevention Programs
- Exploring Permanent Parking Program for Red Flag Days
- Developing “Leave Early” Guidelines to Support Evacuation Readiness During Major Weather Events
- Increasing use of E-Bikes for Special Assignments and Routine Patrol
- Policing Focus on Traffic Safety and Retail Crime
- Completing Fire Department Upgrade to the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS)
- Pursuing Grants

**P.S. Community Policy Academy returning in 2026!**

# Livability and Belonging

*Promote a high quality of life and sense of community for current and future generations.*

- Leverage the City's pro-housing designation to attract new and infill development for all income types. ***(In Progress)***
- Support businesses and economic growth. ***(In Progress)***
- Advance the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan to create a livable, vibrant, and diverse corridor. ***(In Progress)***
- Update the General Plan to reflect and address current community values.
- Evaluate options for older adult services. ***(In Progress)***
- Develop a citywide equity plan. ***(In Progress)***
- Expand public art and cultural programs. ***(In Progress)***
- Create a downtown community hub anchored by the Plaza Transit-Oriented Development and a new library. ***(In Progress)***
- Improve parks and recreation facilities. ***(In Progress)***

# Current Initiatives
## Livability & Belonging

- Actively Supporting Plaza Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- Continuing Planning to Address El Cerrito Library Deficiencies
- Developing Updated Parking Management Program to Support TOD
- Completing Required Housing Element Zoning Ordinance Update
- Establishing Permanent Outdoor Dining Ordinance
- Continuing to Support Businesses in New Ways (e.g., Flavor Fest)
- Completing Residential Rental Inspection Program Update
- Expanding Public Art (e.g., Pavement Art on San Pablo)
- Continuing C.O.R.E. Program for Homeless Services
- Drafting Process to Lease Historic House at 1715 Elm
- Continuing to Expand the Variety and Reach of Recreational Programming For All Age Groups
- Developing Additional Senior Social Programs, Health and Wellness Offerings, and Learning Opportunities to Help Keep Seniors Active, Engaged, And Connected

# Infrastructure and Amenities

*Advance climate focused, sustainable infrastructure efforts that have community benefit.*

- Invest in the maintenance, rehabilitation and development of sustainable, climate-adapted infrastructure and community assets (i.e., electric vehicle infrastructure). ***(In Progress)***
- Conduct a facility needs assessment to evaluate and prioritize investment in city facilities, including updating and implementing the ADA transition plan.
- Improve sidewalks and connections to enhance safety, accessibility, comfort, and convenience. ***(In Progress)***
- Implement major initiatives associated with the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan (i.e., citywide trails and bikeway network). ***(In Progress)***
- Complete and implement major Public Works infrastructure improvements (i.e., the Storm Drain Master Plan Update and the Local Road Safety Plan/Comprehensive Safety Action Plan). ***(In Progress)***
- Complete construction of Complete Streets and Ohlone Greenway projects. ***(In Progress)***
- Identify funds to off-set General Fund contributions for infrastructure improvements (i.e., Landscape and Lighting Assessment District and clean water programs).

# Current Initiatives
## Infrastructure & Amenities

- Beginning Construction on Richmond Complete Streets Project
- Continuing Collaboration with Caltrans on San Pablo Avenue, the Central Avenue I-80 Undercrossing Pedestrian & Bicycle Path, and I-80/Central Avenue Local Road Realignment
- Completing Swim Center Phase I Improvements
- Completing and Implementing Local Road Safety Plan/Comprehensive Safety Action Plan
- Completing Storm Drain Master Plan Update
- Completing 2026 Street Resurfacing Project
- Conducting Planning, Outreach, and Design for Grant-funded El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD Active Transportation Improvements Including East-West Bikeways and Pedestrian Connections
- Evaluating Funding and Implementation of New Maintenance and Asset Management Software Systems to Improve Efficiencies
- Designing and Seeking Funding for Ohlone Uptown Improvements
- Pursuing Grants!

# Environmental Sustainability

*Promote environmental sustainability and stewardship by engaging in initiatives that reduce our carbon footprint, conserve natural resources, and foster a culture of environmental responsibility.*


- Update and implement the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and infuse it in all that we do. ***(In Progress)***
- Maintain and leverage the Recycling Center as a community asset. ***(In Progress)***
- Develop a plan to support the infrastructure needed to shift to clean energy vehicles. ***(In Progress)***
- Promote strategies that address the climate emergency. ***(In Progress)***
- Seek regional funding for environmental solutions.

# Current Initiatives
## Environmental Stability

- Implementing Climate Action & Adaptation Plan
- Completing Zero-Emission Vehicle Transition Plan
- Implementing New Clean Water Program Requirements
- Enhancing Earth Day/Month and Arbor Week Activities
- Focusing on Supporting Transit-Oriented Development and Active-Transportation Projects
- Increasing Communication and Education to Motivate Action

# Priorities Discussion

- What does success look like this time next year?
- Are changes needed?
- What is your highest priority for the next year?

# Next Steps

- Raftelis to prepare retreat report

# Closing Remarks

# Thank You!

## Nancy Hetrick
## Sarah Lentz

RAFTELIS

**From:** Tom Schrey
**To:** City Clerk; Tom Schrey; Laurie Schrey
**Subject:** [UNKNOWN SENDER] Saturday 1/10/26 Retreat City Council Meeeting
**Date:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:09:02 PM

---

Hello, I wish to make a comment for the City Council meeting:

With all of the funding problems the City has, why are we paying a consultant over $15k to run a meeting? Can that not be done by the Director of Finance?
If not, why not, and what qualifications are lacking on their part? There seems to be little regard for the taxpayers of El Cerrito when the Council approves expensive measures with little oversight.
How much has been spent on the Library tax so far?
Where is the Senior Center?
What about a new fire engine?
We may be quiet but many of us are watching how the City spends money. And we do remember when it's time to vote.
Please be more judicious with expenditures.
Thank you,
Tom Schrey
El Cerrito

# City of El Cerrito, CA

## City Council Workshop

January 10, 2026

RAFTELIS

The City of El Cerrito held a City Council Workshop on January 10, 2026. The workshop was planned and facilitated by Raftelis, in coordination with City Staff.

# Participants

The following members of the City Council and members of the City's Leadership Team actively participated in the retreat (additional staff were present for departmental updates):

| | |
|---|---|
| • Gabe Quinto, Mayor<br>• Carolyn Wysinger, Council member<br>• William Ktsanes, Council member<br>• Lisa Motoyama, Council member<br><br>*Mayor Pro Tem Rebecca Saltzman was sick and could not attend* | • Karen Pinkos, City Manager<br>• Alexandra Orologas, Assistant City Manager<br>• Sky Woodruff, City Attorney<br>• Holly Charléty, City Clerk<br>• Crystal Reams, Finance Director (presenter)<br>• Claire Coleman, Budget Manager (presenter)<br>• Will Provost, Assistant to the City Manager (presenter) |

***Facilitators:*** *Nancy Hetrick and Sarah Lentz, Raftelis*

# Workshop Objectives

- Create a foundation for 2026
- Affirm priorities
- Strengthen team building

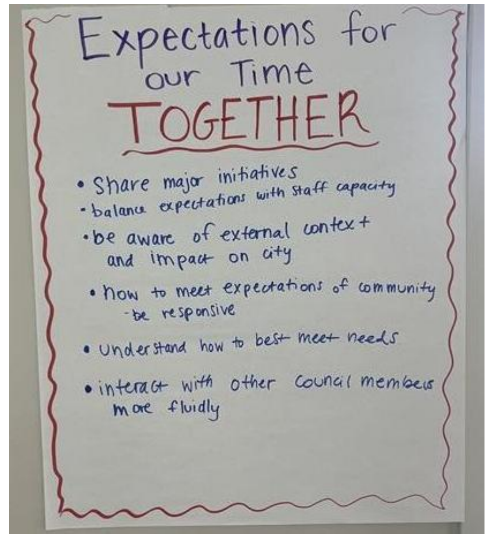
# Workshop Agenda

- Welcome and Retreat Overview
- Icebreaker
- Current Climate: National Community Survey and Celebrating Achievements
- Financial Update and Key Initiatives
- Organization Updates and Sharing
- Confirming Priorities for Next Year
- Wrap-up and Next Steps

# Welcome and Retreat Overview

The City of El Cerrito gathered on the morning of January 10, 2026, at the Arlington Clubhouse for a City Council workshop. Following public comments, the facilitator gave a brief overview of the workshop agenda, established workshop norms, and provided workshop objectives.

## Expectations for Time Together




Next, the facilitator asked each participant to share what they expect or hope to get out of the time together. The City Manager spoke on behalf of the staff and expressed the hope to share major initiatives with the Council as well as balancing Council expectations with staff capacity.

The four attending Council members then shared their hopes. Mayor Quito wanted to raise awareness of external forces (e.g., state and federal actions) and the impacts on El Cerrito. Council members Motoyama and Wysinger both shared in their desire to understand how to meet community expectations and be responsive to residents' needs. Council member Ktsanes hoped the workshop would allow Council members to interact more fluidly outside of the formal Council setting.

## Icebreaker

As an icebreaker, participants imagined burying a time capsule on December 31, 2026, approximately one year after the workshop. They were asked to identify one physical object to place in the time capsule that represented what they hoped to achieve in the coming year. The items and a brief explanation are listed below:

- **Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR)** to represent the financial health of the City
- **Handful of dirt from the groundbreaking of plaza development** to show progress on a promised project
- **Set of keys to the front door of the new Senior Center** to mark progress on a much-desired facility
- **Dry leaf or flower** to emphasize El Cerrito as a green City and its continued focus on the environment
- **Picture of El Cerrito High School state championship** to celebrate the football team
- **Video or audio clip** as proof of working AV equipment in Council chambers
- **Traffic cone from San Pablo Avenue** to represent the completion of the project

## Current Climate: National Community Survey and Celebrating Achievements

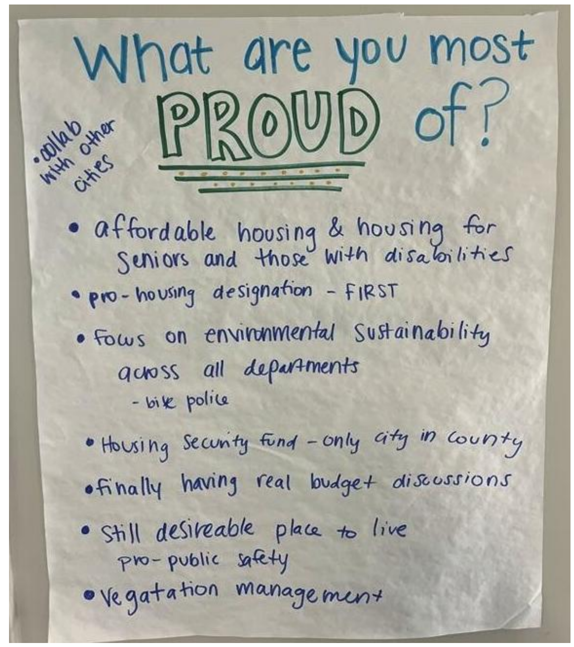
Following the icebreaker, Will Provost, Assistant to the City Manager, gave a brief overview of the current climate in El Cerrito, including summary results of the National Community Survey (Polco will provide the full set of survey results in an upcoming Council meeting) and key achievements from the past year.

## National Community Survey

The Assistant to the City Manager Provost highlighted a few key findings from the community survey, which showed El Cerrito's high quality of life, improvements in perspective towards City governance, performance beyond the national average, and community members' key priorities. The findings are presented in Appendix A.

## Celebrating Achievements

Next, the Assistant to the City Manager Provost highlighted key achievements across the five pillars in El Cerrito's Strategic Plan: High-Performing Organization, Community Safety, Livability and Belonging, Infrastructure and Amenities, and Environmental Sustainability.




After reviewing the many achievements, participants shared what they were most proud of. Multiple participants highlighted how El Cerrito stands out in the region and state in terms of housing, while others touched on environmental sustainability, finances, and community safety. Responses are listed below:

- Collaboration with other cities
- Affordable housing and housing for seniors and those with disabilities
- Pro-housing designation (first among other cities)
- Focus on environmental sustainability across all departments (e.g., bike police)
- Housing security fund – only City in the county
- Finally, having real budget discussions
- Still a desirable place to live; pro-public safety
- Vegetation management

# Financial Update and Key Initiatives

Next, the Finance Director and Budget Manager presented information on the year-end audit for FY 2024-2025, general fund trends through November, the budget calendar, and major initiatives

underway. These slides are presented in Appendix B. Council members asked a few questions for the Finance staff pertaining to procurement improvements and the use of an internal service fund.

The group took a quick break and reconvened to have a large group discussion reflecting on the financial update and considering how the Council body can move forward with shared success. In order to make informed decisions, the group agreed that they need good data and emphasized the importance of understanding when information/updates may be coming. Having good data helps to bolster trust with the public and increase transparency. Council members also highlighted the need for more dialogue and conversation among staff members, between Council members, and with community members.

Participants then discussed how to maintain momentum on major projects going forward this year. Council members agreed that they need to do better at communicating the story and context to the public, showing how certain actions fit into a larger plan. For example, while residents may only see the Richmond bike lane project as taking away parking, it is a part of a larger strategy to increase active transit. Council members identified that they act as trustees of decisions and long-term plans, and they need to communicate those actions to the public.

## Organization Updates and Sharing

During the next hour of the workshop, Council members were paired with department heads in a "Speed Networking" activity. There were four stations around the room corresponding to one or more departments:

- Public Safety (Police and Fire)
- Internal Service Departments (including CMO, Finance, and IT)
- Public Works & Recreation
- Community Development

At each station, the department head(s) gave a brief overview of the highest-level challenges, initiatives, and other updates from their departments and then invited the Council member to ask questions and engage in dialogue. After 10 minutes, the Council members rotated to the next station to hear from the other department heads. There were four rounds in total, so each Council member visited all four table groups. The activity offered space for Council members to ask questions and engage in discussion with department heads and get a high-level overview of what each department is working on. Community members who were in attendance were able to stand near the stations and listen in as well.

At the end of the four rounds, Council members reconvened and shared their key takeaways. All members enjoyed the time they spent with the staff and were impressed by the professionalism and amount of work they do. One Council member appreciated the opportunity to ask questions while they were fresh in mind, as Council members do not often get face-to-face time with department heads. Another Council member appreciated the activity and the fact that community members could still be engaged by listening to the small groups.

## Confirming Priorities for Next Year

In the final session of the day, Council members heard from Assistant to the City Manager Provost for a review of the current initiatives for each of the five Strategic Plan Goals. The Council members were invited to ask questions about specific initiatives as well as share overall thoughts on the current work of staff. A table summarizing the questions and comments for each goal area is below:

| Goal | Council Questions/Comments |
|---|---|
| High-Performing Organizations | • Community engagement process for parking plan for new plaza development<br>• Collaborate with other cities to ensure the success of First and Last Mile initiatives |
| Community Safety | • Shared experiences with the Community Police Academy and how beneficial it was |
| Livability and Belonging | • Clarify goals for senior programming and how to serve seniors of all income levels<br>• Continue expanding what culture looks like in El Cerrito and being welcoming to all residents |
| Infrastructure and Amenities | • *No questions or comments* |
| Environmental Sustainability | • *No questions or comments* |

### Additional Questions

Council members noted that the library project was not on the list of current initiatives but emphasized that it will be a major focus for staff and the Council in the upcoming year. The group discussed how the staff and Council will navigate this process and ensure that the community members and Council members are informed to make a decision. The City Manager agreed with inviting the community into the process and advised that a future Council meeting on January 20 will provide more information.

## General Priorities Discussion

After the Assistant to the City Manager Provost reviewed the initiatives for each goal, the facilitator led a larger discussion about the Council's priorities and what success could look like. Thinking ahead to the next year, Council members wanted to see success in the following ways:

- Desire for Council to have frank conversations about change
- More engaged Council setting with opportunities for engagement between Council members and community members
- Investment in youth programs and facilities
- Capitalize on the Plaza development project and increase revenue and commercial activity throughout the City

Overall, Council members were satisfied with the current set of key initiatives and agreed with the direction for the year. Two Council members expressed a desire for more innovation and openness when considering projects. Council members agreed that staff and Council should be open to different opportunities for people in El Cerrito and highlighted examples such as roller disco or pursuing an entertainment district to become the "West Hollywood of the north" to illustrate the point.

Beyond the initiatives highlighted by staff, Council members had additional priorities they wanted to bring to the group. These priorities relate to increased retail and economic development in the City, more support for youth programming, and engaging community members through volunteering. Specific priorities are listed below:

- Better recreation structures for youth
- How Council can help attract businesses to El Cerrito
- Safety education of lithium battery fires
- More bike police
- Integrating community volunteers into City operations
- Filling vacancies along San Pablo

Mayor Pro Tem Saltzman's priorities were captured through Council interviews prior to the session and included supporting transportation safety and public transit.

Finally, Council members were asked to share how they were feeling about the next year's priorities as well as list their number one priority out of all that were discussed. In general, all Council members expressed feeling hopeful and wanted to be realistic about what is possible.

The top priorities for each Council member are:

- Continued progress in fiscal management (Council member Ktsanes)
- Continued focus on livability and belonging (Council member Wysinger)

- End the year with a budget surplus (Goal of a $2.5 million) (Council member Motoyama)
- Financial responsibility and transparent communication from the City (Mayor Quito)

## Wrap-Up and Next Steps

To wrap up the session, the facilitator summarized the next steps, including the preparation of this workshop report. The City Manager shared remarks applauding the staff and Council for regularly punching above their weight and accomplishing a great deal with limited resources. The City Manager expressed gratitude for a Council that has holistic aspirations for the community and not for themselves.

In closing, participants were asked to share one word to describe how they felt after the retreat, going into the new year. The words shared are below:

- **Gratitude** to staff and community
- **Excited** for the City's potential
- **Appreciation** for briefings and communication from staff
- **Hopeful** because El Cerrito has an impact regionally and can get things done
- **Intentional** rather than reactive

## Bike Rack

A Bike Rack is a time management tool used to keep track of items to discuss at another time that may require additional follow-up or a more robust conversation before decisions can be made. *There were no items added to the Bike Rack during the retreat.*

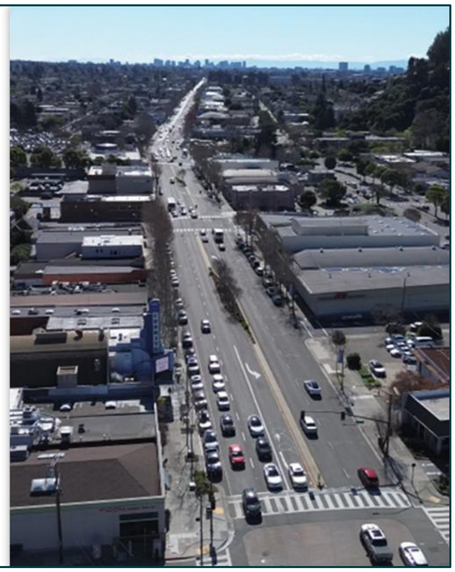
# APPENDIX A:

# National Community Survey Key Findings

# National Community Survey

- Results will be presented to City Council on January 20, 2026
- **Methodology:**
  - Polled 412 residents
  - Collected from September 15, 2025 to October 27, 2025

10



## National Community Survey: Key Findings

- **90%** rate El Cerrito as an excellent or good place to live
- **91%** recommend living in El Cerrito to someone who asks
- **65%** rate El Cerrito's Public Information Services as Excellent or Good
  - Up from 51% in 2019

11

## National Community Survey: Key Findings

- Several Governance items saw significant increases since 2022, including:
  - The overall **direction** the City is taking (50% to 63%)
  - The **value of services** for the taxes paid to the City (42% to 53%)
  - The job the City government does at **welcoming resident involvement** (45% to 55%)
  - Overall **confidence** in City government (44% to 55%)

12

## National Community Survey: Key Findings

**9 in 10 residents** — Feel **safe** in their neighborhood

**7 in 10 residents** — Identified building a **new library** as a high or medium facility priority

**9 in 10 residents** — Strongly or somewhat supported increasing **education** about the **street sweeping schedule**

13

## National Community Survey: Key Findings

- Exceed national averages in:
  - Valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds (82%)
  - Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds (77%)
- Highest priorities for the next two years
  - Fire safety and wildfire prevention (88%)
  - Maintaining a fiscally responsible city budget (86%)
  - Parks/facility maintenance (81%)

14

# APPENDIX B:

# Financial Update

# Financial Update - Overview

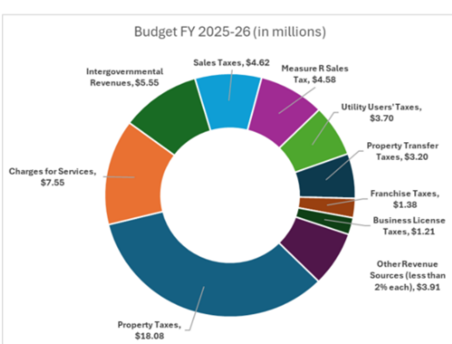
- Audit for FY 2024-25
- General Fund update through November 30, 2025
  - Revenues
  - Expenditures
- Long-Range General Fund Forecast as of November 30, 2025
- What's Next
  - Budget Calendar
  - Major initiatives in progress
  - Next Steps

21

# FY 2024-25 Audit

- Completed and published as of January 5
- Audit completed with an unmodified (clean) opinion
  - Indicates that the financial statements are presented fairly and in accordance with applicable accounting standards.
- The City's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) has been finalized and is now published on the City website
  - Available at elcerrito.gov/budget
- Presentation to Council by independent auditors (Chavan & Associates) on February 3

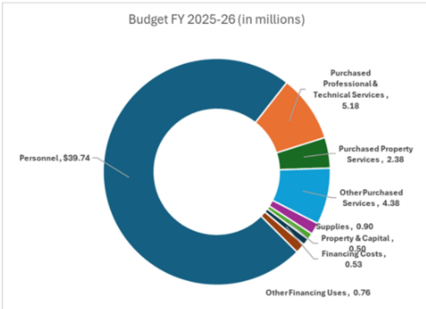
# General Fund Update - Revenues




| Revenues by Type | FY 2025-26 Amended Budget | YTD Actuals as of 11/30/25 | % of Budget |
|---|---|---|---|
| Property Taxes | $18.08 | $0.39 | 2% |
| Sales Taxes | $4.62 | $1.16 | 25% |
| Measure R Sales Tax | $4.58 | $1.05 | 23% |
| Franchise Taxes | $1.38 | $0.22 | 16% |
| Business License Taxes | $1.21 | $1.10 | 91% |
| Property Transfer Taxes | $3.20 | $0.73 | 23% |
| Utility Users' Taxes | $3.70 | $1.20 | 32% |
| Intergovernmental Revenues | $5.55 | $2.17 | 39% |
| Charges for Services | $7.55 | $3.65 | 48% |
| Other Revenue Sources (less than 2% each) | $3.91 | $1.83 | 47% |
| **Total** | **$53.78** | **$13.50** | **25%** |

23

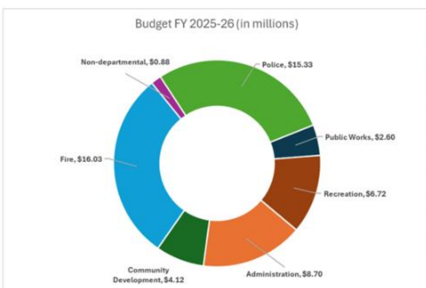
# General Fund Update - Expenditures by Type




| Expenditure Classification | FY 2025-26 Amended Budget | YTD Actuals as of 11/30/25 | % of Budget |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $39,736,669 | $17,688,291 | 45% |
| Purchased Professional & Technical Services | 5,180,936 | 1,881,737 | 36% |
| Purchased Property Services | 2,378,761 | 927,043 | 39% |
| Other Purchased Services | 4,384,411 | 3,194,387 | 73% |
| Supplies | 899,845 | 285,390 | 32% |
| Property & Capital | 499,942 | 65,146 | 13% |
| Financing Costs | 530,949 | 99,064 | 19% |
| Other Financing Uses | 761,735 | 380,868 | 50% |
| Totals | $54,373,248 | $24,521,926 | 45% |

24

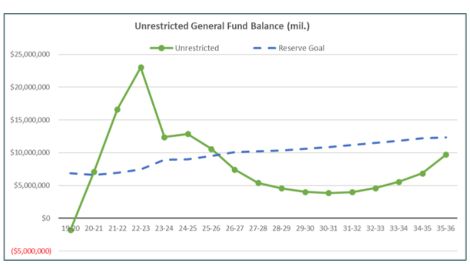
# General Fund Update - Expenditures by Department

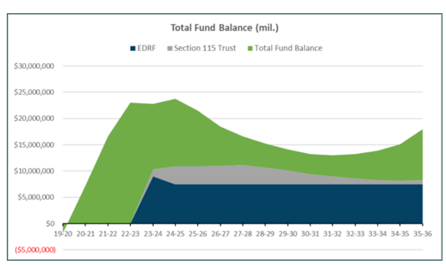



| Expenditures by Department | FY 2025-26 Amended Budget | YTD Actuals as of 11/30/25 | % of Budget |
|---|---|---|---|
| Administration | $8,700,991 | $4,820,796 | 55% |
| Community Development | 4,116,506 | 1,523,931 | 37% |
| Fire | 16,026,892 | 7,362,273 | 46% |
| Non-departmental | 882,374 | 319,373 | 36% |
| Police | 15,326,561 | 6,582,808 | 43% |
| Public Works | 2,604,358 | 958,099 | 37% |
| Recreation | 6,715,567 | 2,954,647 | 44% |
| Total | $54,373,248 | $24,521,926 | 45% |

25

# General Fund Forecast as of November 30




- What this version includes:
  - Waterfall with FY25 actuals
  - Pool project
  - Fire engine
  - Council AV project
- What it does not (yet) include
  - Long-term asset replacement schedules
  - Capital budget beyond what is already listed and budgeted
- Future versions will present different scenarios based on how much funding Council wants to put towards deferred needs

26

## Public Meeting Calendar for FY 2026-27 and FY 2027-28 Budget

- January 10 – City Council Retreat
- February 3 – FY 2024-25 Audit Presentation
- February 17 – Mid-Year Budget Update
- March 7 – Community Workshop
- March 17 – Department Presentations
- April 7 – Council Budget Study Session #1
- May 5 – Council Budget Study Session #2 and Master Fee Schedule
- May 26 – FAB Budget Review
- June 2 – First Council Budget Presentation
- June 16 – Budget Presented for Adoption Consideration

27

## Major Initiatives in Progress

- Asset Inventory
  - Departments provided detailed lists of all major assets (vehicles, equipment, and technology)
  - Finance compiling and analyzing provided data to begin creating asset replacement schedules and estimates to **determine Internal Service Fund (ISF) funding needs**
- Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget
  - CIP budget in development
  - Implementing ClearGov CIP Budgeting system to provide a more **dynamic and detailed CIP budget document**
  - Finance and Public Works collaborating to develop long-range capital infrastructure lists to **determine capital funding needs**
- Service Delivery Study
  - Staff expect that the results will support **prioritization and planning of citywide programs**, operations, and infrastructure needs
  - Study results expected to be available in April

28

## Next Steps

- December month close in progress
- Mid-year budget update to Council on February 17
  - Any adjustments requested at that meeting will be urgent/time sensitive before June 30
  - All other budget changes will be included with the biennial budget process
- Continued progress on asset inventory, CIP budget, and service delivery study

30