



# MAYOR'S BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## 2023-2024 BUDGET

*Community members giving of their time to review Renton's budgetary priorities and direction.*



# OUR PURPOSE AND PLAN

## THE MAYOR'S INVITATION

Early each year, the mayor and City Council meet to update the city's Business Plan. With that direction, the mayor then develops priority areas for the upcoming biennial budget. Mayor Pavone asked several key opinion leaders and stakeholders in the Renton community to participate in the Mayor's Budget Advisory Committee for the 2023-2024 biennial budget. Over the years, the advice of the Committee has helped to refine the city's efforts to improve efficiencies, cut costs, evaluate revenue options, and refine its focus. This Committee's oversight and advice is invaluable in the preparation of the city's budget.

As we start to see economic recovery from the pandemic, there are still many challenges that lie ahead that will be addressed in this upcoming 2023-2024 budget, including:

- Increasing demands for service that continue to require rigorous efforts to maximize our productivity
- Explosive rise in homelessness and homeless-related needs
- Shortage of affordable rental and owned housing in Renton
- Ability to adequately serve our increasingly diverse and aging population
- Preserving and expanding our transportation infrastructure to meet Renton's needs and effectively link with our regional transportation systems
- Deploying our public safety resources in ways that reduce crime and improve our sense of safety
- Incorporating improvements within our downtown core for renewed vitality
- Provide amenities the community desires and deserves with a special emphasis on downtown vitality

## THE PLAN: MEETING ONE

- Welcome and introduction of the mayor's priorities
- Review of the city's budget and financial position
- Update on public safety
- Review of downtown vitality initiatives
- Presentation of committee member survey results

## THE PLAN: MEETING TWO

- Business Plan review and roundtable discussions with Department Heads

## THE PLAN: MEETING THREE

- Feedback review from previous roundtable discussions
- Focus group conversations with Department Heads

## CONCLUSION

This report has been compiled by staff, with feedback offered by the Mayor’s Budget Advisory Committee members and delivered to the mayor to aid in the preparation and deliberation of the 2023-2024 budget.

## OUR MEMBERS

Brian Fife  
Enrique Gonzalez  
David Hoffman  
Kevin Iden  
Dr. Anna Jones  
Stan Kawamoto

Dr. Melody Kroeger  
Joann Lee  
Jim Poff  
Tim Searing  
Charles Seil  
Monique Taylor-Swan

Jay Townsend  
Duc Tran  
Teresa Vazquez  
Colin Walker

# MEETING ONE

## INTRODUCTION OF THE MAYOR’S PRIORITIES



Mayor Pavone has identified several priorities for the city. These priorities, in concert with the city’s Business Plan, will help to inform the city’s 2023-2024 budget. The mayor’s priorities are:

- **Communications**  
*Transparent communications and data driven decision-making*
- **Address the city’s appearance and reinvigorate the downtown area**
- **Reimagining the use of city assets**  
*Asset upgrades and improvements, long-range planning, and exploring revenue opportunities*
- **Fix, Create, and Maintain**  
*Human services strategies, Facilities updates, and technology innovations*

## CITY BUDGET AND FINANCIAL POSITION

Kari Roller, Finance Administrator, presented the city’s budget and financial position. Highlights included city statistics, annual budget figures and a breakdown of general fund expenditures, primary revenue sources, enterprise funds, and mitigation measures taken during the pandemic. Also emphasized was the city’s AAA Bond rating, and GFOA accolades (Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Finance Reporting and Distinguished Budget Presentation Award).

## UPDATE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Chief Jon Schuldt provided an update on the city’s public safety measures. Discussion focused on legislation and staffing; specifically, the difficulties that have arisen because of legislative rulings such as WA State vs. Blake, and staffing challenges that have developed through an ever-evolving community mindset toward policing.

## DOWNTOWN VITALITY INITIATIVES

Chip Vincent, Community and Economic Development Administrator, shared updates on downtown vitality activities. Highlights included efforts to bring patrons and businesses to downtown, civic core vision and action planning, current project lists and accomplishments, support for small businesses, art initiatives, and future planning.

## COMMITTEE MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

To solicit feedback and guide discussions, committee members were asked to complete a brief survey ahead of the first advisory meeting. The survey asked members to:

1. Rank specific government services in order of importance to them in the community.
2. Provide additional feedback on why they consider the most important government services to be a priority for the city.
3. Provide any additional comments related to government services.

The survey results identified the following top five priorities of the committee, which were focused on throughout the three advisory meetings:



PUBLIC SAFETY



BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT



HUMAN  
SERVICES

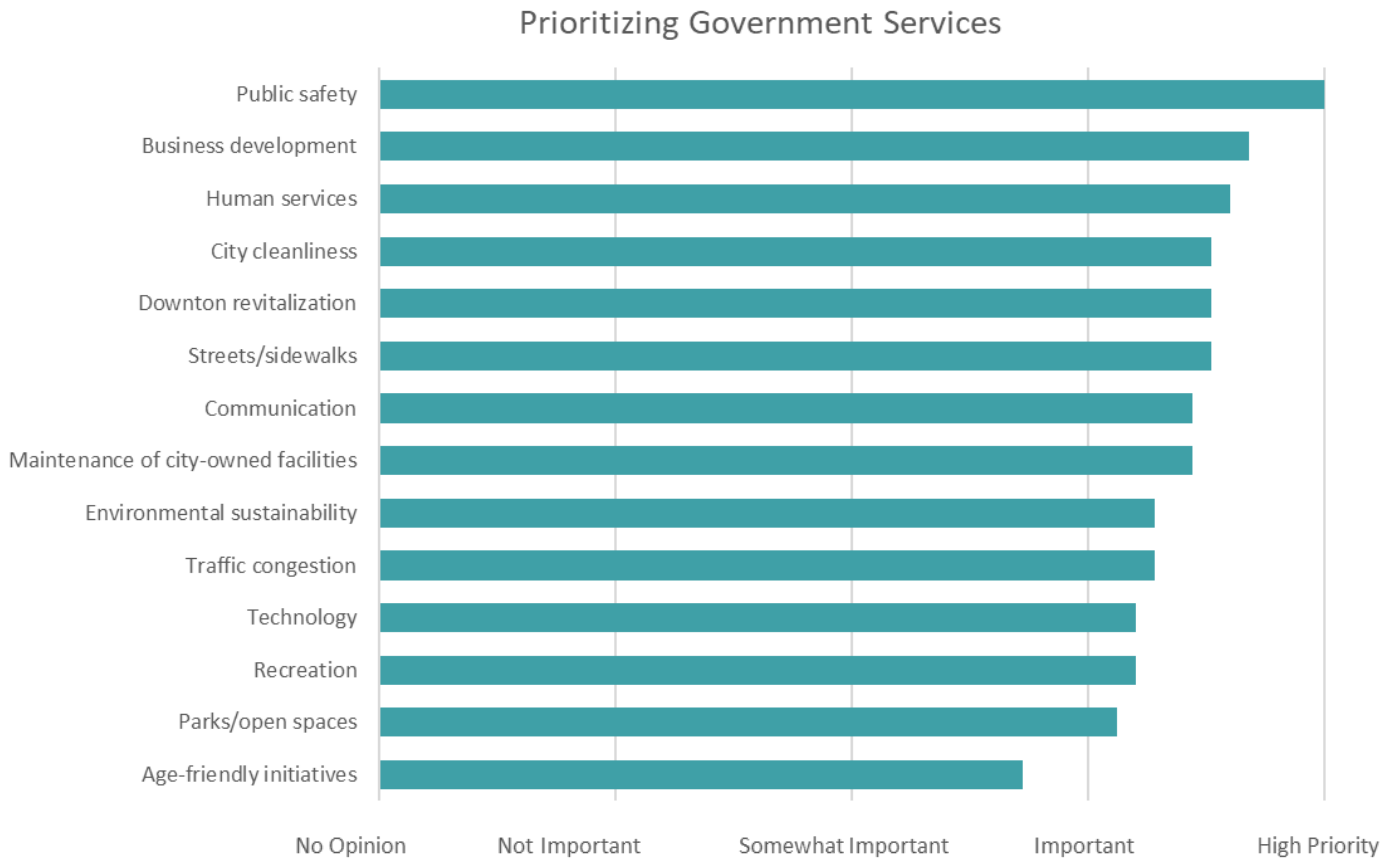


CITY  
CLEANLINESS



DOWNTOWN  
REVITALIZATION

## SURVEY RESULTS (continued)



## COMMITTEE MEMBER SURVEY COMMENTS

### Public safety:

- Public safety is a primary concern for all citizens of Renton, regardless of age, mobility needs, socio-economic status, and housing situation.
- People are reluctant to visit, shop, and dine downtown when they perceive the area to be unsafe.
- Attention to public safety should be the lead issue from which all other initiatives will follow.
- Public safety has become a priority recently, given the high-profile incidents that have happened in our community and our neighborhoods; Renton residents need to feel safe.

### Business development:

- Encourage job growth in Renton and retain local businesses. Foster the feeling of belonging in a great place for work alongside big and small companies already established here.
- Consider good lighting, public safety foot patrols, bicycle cops, attractive store fronts, floral baskets, and public art – it all contributes to a welcoming downtown neighborhood.



### Human services:

- Improve the quality of life of our most vulnerable residents, making children and youth feel safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school and in life.
- Age-friendly initiatives so that we have a better connection with our youth community.
- Provide stable housing for families.
- Mental health is a public safety concern. Renton could implement sustainable mental health recovery programs.
- Renton is a richly diverse place; let's make immigrants and newcomers feel welcome and help them navigate the resources that the city makes available for them.
- When it comes down to our parks and open space, we have plenty of that; we are definitely upgrading our parks but can definitely utilize the space by expanding shelters for the homeless.

### Recreation:

- Tuesday Farmer's Market is a positive event, bringing shoppers, farmers, and creators together in one place!

### Environmental sustainability:

- Improve areas that impact the future of our kids – air quality, lower energy consumption, wildlife preservation, and water conservation.

### General government:

- Performance of basic services should be evaluated first, if budget is constrained.

# MEETING TWO

## ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION GROUPS

Department Heads led small, rotating discussion groups focused on the city's Business Plan, the five priority areas from the committee's survey results and the mayor's priorities, and shared the city's work within these sectors to inform, solicit feedback, and encourage input from committee members.



## CITY COMMUNICATION

Martin Pastucha, Public Works Administrator, with Maryjane Van Cleave, Communications & Engagement Director, led discussions centered on the city’s Business Plan and communications to the public. Committee members were asked the following:

- How can the city better communicate the execution of its mission, vision, and goals?
- Do you feel heard?
- What tools have you used to communicate feedback to the city and what was the outcome? (i.e. See, Click, Fix; other tools?)

Based on the feedback from committee members, the following city communication priorities were identified:



MODES OF COMMUNICATION



BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS



LANGUAGE ACCESS & TRANSLATION SERVICES



STAFF AVAILABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY



OUTREACH EFFORTS

Committee members recommend the following suggestions to support city communication:

- Partner with local businesses, churches, and non-profits to disseminate information more broadly.
- Utilize multiple platforms and modalities to disseminate information: website, social media, email, text, apps, and traditional media.
- Develop and distribute a community newsletter to every household.
- Incorporate more visuals and less text into communications and translate to multiple languages; visuals and translations have a broader, more equitable reach.
- Provide better access to city staff; community members expressed difficulty locating or accessing appropriate city staff for assistance, especially during the pandemic.
- Accessibility options such as live chat on the city’s website and virtual meeting options for permitting.
- Consider the following content suggestions:
  - “City-in review” to share relatable accomplishments and opportunities for improvement with the public.
  - “Your tax dollars working for you” to share information on city investments and the benefits of the public’s contributions.
  - Announcements of new businesses and local events in Renton.
- See,Click,Fix and Renton Responds are not common knowledge for the community.
- Most utilized communication tools: Renton Responds, Mayor’s newsletter, direct emails to Mayor/Council.



## CITY CLEANLINESS

Kelly Beymer, Parks & Recreation Administrator, led discussions focusing on city cleanliness. Committee members were asked the following:

- What are your thoughts on city cleanliness?
- What can the city do better?
- Are there areas that you feel are worse/better than others?

Based on the feedback from committee members, the following city cleanliness priorities were identified:



LANDSCAPE CLEANUP



AGENCY PARTNERS &  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
PROGRAMS



HOMELESSNESS



FREEWAYS,  
VACANCIES, &  
TRANSITION AREAS



EDUCATION

Committee members recommend the following suggestions to support city cleanliness:

- Focus on understanding and meeting the needs of the homeless population; consider tiny homes or shelters.
- Address litter, garbage, and graffiti eyesores.
- Investigate partnerships with other agencies and educate citizens about recycling and garbage collection to keep the city and transition areas clean.
- Continue to focus on parks and recreation centers.
- Areas for improvement: vacant properties; Coulon amenities; paved trails; Rainier Avenue; neighborhood outreach programs; trimming trees on sidewalks.



Committee members did note they were thankful for the city's responsiveness to cleaning and maintenance requests and value the cleanliness of parks.



## HUMAN SERVICES

Ellen Bradley-Mak, Human Resources and Risk Management Administrator, led discussions centered on human services and city resources. Committee members were asked the following:

- Regarding human services, where do you feel we should focus our resources?
- How can the city better support those in need?

Based on the feedback from committee members, the following city human services priorities were identified:



COMMUNITY  
AWARENESS



LANGUAGE  
BARRIERS



HOMELESSNESS



POVERTY



CHILDREN &  
SENIORS

Committee members recommend the following suggestions to support human services:

- Improve and expand communication on public assistance:
  - Provide more informative communications to the community; ensure we are reaching underserved communities with resource information; residents may be unaware, don't feel comfortable or are afraid to participate in programs and services.
  - Expand communication access through partnerships with churches, post communications at parks, and broaden language access by reducing language barriers.
  - Offer equitable employment resources, such as how to inform residents of job openings and how/where to apply.
  - Add centrally located kiosks for information services.
- Expand access to Human Services:
  - Partner with food banks and school districts; offer food and lunch programs to combat food insecurity.
  - Invest in programs that pair seniors with kids to bridge the age gaps and provide support to both groups.
  - Offer support and home services for seniors, ensure the senior population group is aware of the programs that are available to them.
  - Normalize and provide access to affordable, preventative mental health services.
  - Identify ways to mitigate or slow skyrocketing costs to aid those in poverty.



## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Chip Vincent, Community & Economic Development Administrator, led discussions on:

- What are some potentially desirable enhancements (both physical improvements as well as new business development) that could improve downtown vitality?
- What improvements would you like to see in other areas of the city besides downtown?

Based on the feedback from committee members, the following city business development and downtown revitalization priorities were identified:



STREET  
IMPROVEMENTS



SAFETY &  
CLEANLINESS



BUSINESS  
RECRUITMENT



SPECIAL EVENTS



UTILIZING  
ASSETS

Committee members recommend the following suggestions to support business development and downtown revitalization:

- Access/wayfinding:
  - Expand two-way streets citywide and address overall street revitalization.
  - Increase walkability and bicycle use downtown; eliminate or minimize vehicle traffic; provide a safe pedestrian passageway to connect the downtown area to the outer areas of Renton.
  - Increase usage of city parking garage and awareness of public parking spots.
  - Implement wayfinding signs to help inform visitors.
  - Connect downtown through a greenbelt of parks.
- Events and business expansion:
  - Incorporate parklets and ensure they are roofed to allow for use in the rain/winter.
  - Attract more art and specialty businesses to continue bringing young professionals back to downtown.
  - Provide unique dining experiences; allow food trucks in vacant spaces.
  - Provide more kid and family-friendly events.
- Safety downtown:
  - Provide more officers to walk through the streets downtown rather than more patrol cars to provide a safe perception of downtown.
  - Address aging infrastructure as newer and retrofit buildings will protect us from earthquakes.
  - Address needs of those experiencing homelessness downtown.



## PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Chief Jon Schuldt facilitated discussion groups focusing on public safety and policing initiatives. Committee members were asked the following:

- Do you feel safe in Renton?
- What are we doing well, and what can be improved upon?

This topic highlighted the following public safety priorities:



TRANSPARENCY &  
COMMUNICATION



FOCUS ON ROOT  
CAUSE



COMMUNITY  
OUTREACH



OVERALL SAFETY



LAWS &  
LEGISLATURE

Committee members recommend the following suggestions to support public safety:

- Increase focus on the mental health aspect of policing.
- Emphasis on preemptive policing, getting services out to the populations in need, and highlighting all the services the city can provide, not just police services.
- Form partnerships with businesses in problem areas to work together to combat some of the issues (downtown Safeway).
- Increase statistics measuring programs, and have the mayor provide those statistics to the community.
- Educate the community on the legislative environment police are currently facing.
- Increase communication to the community on what programs the city has or is doing, and how those are being utilized in the community.
- Continue police outreach in Renton's schools to further improve community impact and engagement.



Committee members did note their appreciation for the police department's outreach at in Renton's schools and the positive impact that is having on the community.

# MEETING THREE

## DISCUSSION GROUPS

Committee members reviewed the previous meeting's feedback summaries and priorities, to ensure their comments and input were adequately captured. Small discussion groups led by Department Heads focused on future planning and investments, as well as to address any budgetary concerns.

## FUTURE OF RENTON

Committee members were asked the following:

- What is something we might recognize and start working on today that people in our community will thank us for more than 10 years from now?

Committee members recommend the following suggestions to support the future of Renton:

- Create a long-term funding strategy for more park acquisition, maintenance, trails, spray parks, and parking access.
- Invest in research through partnerships with local research institutions and consultants to address human services needs so that no one sleeps outside.
- Increase housing resources and substance abuse resources (i.e. tiny homes); work with those experiencing homelessness to reduce barriers to utilizing readily available programs and services.
- Continue downtown development with special events; make downtown a flagship of the city.
- Focus on rehabilitation of exterior streets and storefronts of downtown to attract new businesses.
- Focus on environmental sustainability.
- Model the Family First Center citywide; multi-purpose, multi-service community centers that include health, school programs, recreation, etc.
- Attract a new sports team (Sonics, Seattle Rain, sports practice facility).
- Create designated bike lanes for roads and trails.
- Make the city a HUB for collaboration and communication between other agencies/partners.

## DREAMS

Committee members were asked the following:

- If we had an extra \$2M and money was not an issue, how could we spend it?

Committee members recommend the following suggestions to support projects/programs using excess funds (if available):

- Enhance city beautification.
- Create a homelessness task force (case workers and homeless outreach coordinators).
- Enhance communications with everyone in the city.



- Expand business development.
- Create a spray park near the downtown Piazza.
- Provide additional human service funding for:
  - Support of health education, English as second language and general topics
  - Feeding the community
- Address sidewalk improvements, particularly in areas where pedestrian safety concerns exist.
- Provide funding for code enforcement through an equity lens.
- Create designated bike lanes.
- Expand park development; Carr Road is an example property.

## CONCERNS

Committee members were asked the following:

- Do you feel there are items missing from prior budget or any areas of concern?

Committee members recommend the following suggestions to address additional concerns:

- Increase support for Police by expanding presence in commercial areas to reduce vandalism; provide tools to assist police to respond to an ever-changing environment.
- Understand and address needs of those experiencing homelessness and vehicle camping.
- Provide programs for young adults (20-22 years of age).
- Enhance communication to the public for a better-informed community.
- Partner with businesses to:
  - Equip retailers with community bulletin boards to increase delivery of city messaging
  - Coordinate more of a partnership to help with the community needs
  - Promote newspaper, information mailers, and programs
  - Clean up streets and pick up litter
- Encourage a collective ownership mentality that the city and streets belong to everyone.
- Provide volunteer opportunities for city programs to encourage community participation and input.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## PRIORITY EMPHASIS: PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety should continue to be the city's priority. A safe environment will help to promote more visitors to the city, encourage new businesses to open their doors in Renton, and promote Renton as a desirable place to live. City cleanliness and compassionate assistance with homelessness will help the community to feel safe. Residents, business owners, church communities, and the city all have a part in keeping the community safe and clean.

## PRIORITY EMPHASIS: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Business development within the city should also be a focus to encourage, attract, and retain businesses. Effectively communicate new events within the downtown area to help attract visitors and residents. There is a citywide need to improve accessibility by increasing walkability and bicycle use through addition of sidewalks and bike lanes, additional wayfinding signage and expansion of two-way streets. Also, there is a need for greater awareness surrounding public parking availability. Lastly, provide a safe experience by emphasizing a clean downtown with police presence either on bikes or on foot.

## PRIORITY EMPHASIS: HUMAN SERVICES

Continue to prioritize and invest in human services support and more effectively communicate how to find the help that is needed. Encourage partnerships amongst all members of the community to be part of the change that is needed. Focus should be on homelessness, and behavioral and mental health, but also continue to expand assistance to seniors and children, as each have different needs.

## PRIORITY EMPHASIS: COMMUNICATION

The city should continue to use existing methods to get information out, but also be creative in finding new forms of communication by using neighborhoods programs, city-produced newspapers and newsletters, bulletin boards, and community partners. The city could also benefit by incorporating more visuals into their communications while reducing text. Translation is an essential element of the city's communications program, and removal of barriers to accessing information should be prioritized. Lastly, the city should increase accessibility to customer service platforms by considering additional technology platforms to disseminate information.