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Seattle City Council releases detailed, 5-year review of City budget

April 30, 2024 By [Jesse Franz](#)



The Seattle City Council released a first-of-its-kind 5-year review of the City of Seattle's budget today. The [224-page report](#) summarizes the budget by department to better



understand how city resources are allocated, how the budget has grown between 2019 and 2024 and what has driven its growth over time.

“It is critical to me that we examine and review our entire city budget to understand where growth has occurred and where savings can be found. The City Council has not taken this level of examination in over 25 years. By starting the Select Budget Committee in April instead of September, we are doing the analysis needed to make informed decisions on how to close our structural budget gap.” said Councilmember [Dan Strauss](#) (District 6), Chair of the Select Budget Committee.

“This Council is working with urgency to address our budget issues, and as Chair of the Select Budget Committee I am leading a process that is already in full swing. We are already releasing an unprecedented level of data from our Central Staff analysts. In years past we have only analyzed the incremental change in the budget year after year. This year, we’re taking critical steps to solving our budget holistically, instead of incrementally,” said Councilmember Strauss.

Key Findings of the 2019-2024 Budget Review

The City of Seattle faces an estimated \$240 million budget deficit starting in 2025, according to the most recent data. To prepare for that, the review investigated what has caused the City of Seattle’s overall budget to increase 29 percent over the past five years.

The review found the primary causes were:

- Base budget cost increases: Base budget cost increases, including inflation, accounted for about 79 percent of all growth to the General Fund;
- New and expanded programs: New revenue sources like the JumpStart Payroll Tax, which funds housing, contributes to the General Fund, and supports other new programs, accounted for 19 percent of the City’s total budget increase; and
- One-time revenues: City spending supported by things like federal COVID-relief funding increased the budget, but that was one-time funding that has or will expire.

About the review

The [Select Budget Committee](#) began meeting in April and has meetings scheduled every month from now until November, except for July and with two meetings in June. During the Select Budget Committee meetings between April and September, Central Staff and Councilmembers will review the 5-year look back, department budgets, incoming revenue forecasts and projections to address the structural budget deficit with best practices and budget reform.

“Our goal is to provide a higher level of services to Seattleites with the same amount of your tax dollars” said Councilmember Strauss.

This unprecedented review was led by Council Central Staff’s nonpartisan analysts. It provides an overview of changes made to the City’s budget over the past five years, both in totality and at the department level.

The review is intended to provide transparent information to Councilmembers, policymakers, and the community at-large ahead of the Council’s upcoming budget

deliberations.

What’s next?

The Select Budget Committee began its work earlier this month and will continue throughout the summer and into the fall.

This 5-year budget review will be discussed by the Finance, Native Communities, and Tribal Governments Committee on Wednesday, May 1 at 9:30 AM.

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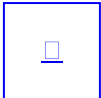
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