

THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET

of Fort Bend County (for FY 2025)



DEXTER L. McCOY
COMMISSIONER

An English and Spanish survey was distributed and collected at various community events and online. It asked for demographic information and for participants to allocate \$100 amongst five key categories to help the office determine priorities for the 2025 Fiscal Year.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA FOR 210 SURVEYS COLLECTED

Precinct 4
126 surveys

Precinct 2
11 surveys

Precinct 3
29 surveys

Precinct 1
17 surveys

Fort Bend County
27 surveys

HEALTH: Behavioral Health Services, Ambulance EMS, Health & Human Services, Animal Control, Environmental Services, Health Department, Medical Examiner

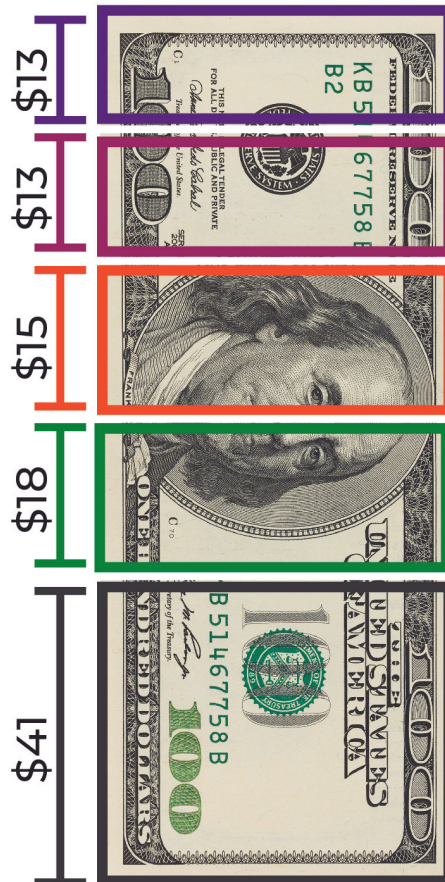
COMMUNITY SERVICES/SOCIAL SERVICES: Community Development, Veterans Services, Emergency Management, Parks and Recreation, Library, Fire Marshall

INFRASTRUCTURE: Road and Bridge, Drainage District, Public Transportation, Engineering

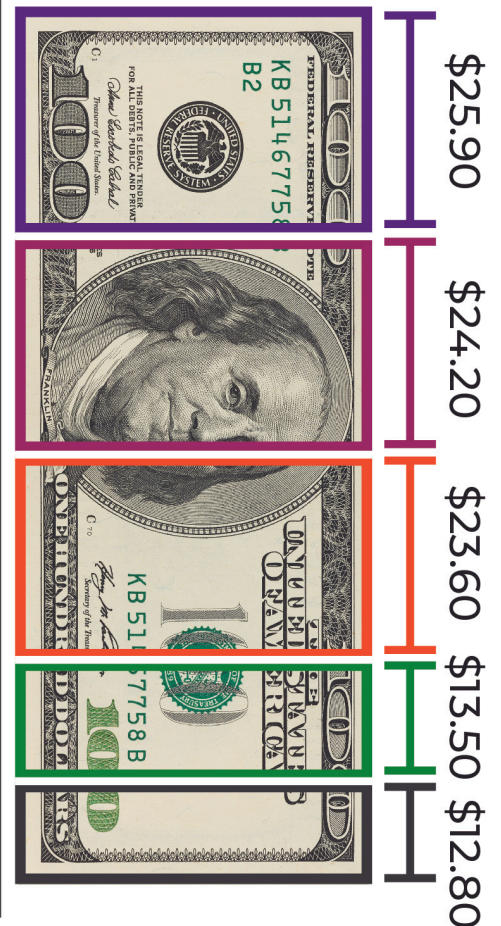
COURT SYSTEM SUPPORT: County Courts, District Courts, Child Support Enforcement, Justice of the Peace, County Law Library

CARCERAL SYSTEM: Adult Probation, Juvenile Probation, Sheriff Detention, Sheriff Enforcement, Detention Facilities, Constables

Adopted Fort Bend County Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Budget



The People's collective responses (average of 210 surveys rounded to nearest dime)



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PRECINCT 4 OVERALL POPULATION (2022)
Approx. 203,000

- Mission Bend - 19.5%
- New Territory - 5.7%
- Richmond - 6.1%
- Pleak - 3.5%
- Riverpark - 4.5%
- Rosenberg - 16.3%
- Beasley - 2.2%
- Kendleton - 0.5%
- Greater Richmond - 36.6%
- South Richmond - 5%

PRECINCT 4 PARTICIPATION

- Mission Bend - 11 surveys
- New Territory - 4 surveys
- Richmond - 33 surveys
- Pleak - 2 surveys
- Riverpark - 0 surveys
- Rosenberg - 25 surveys
- Beasley - 0 surveys
- Kendleton - 3 surveys
- Greater Richmond - 38 surveys
- South Richmond - 10 surveys

Responses to open-ended question
"What does Fort Bend County need to be safe and thriving?"

40 mentions of Health

23 mentions of Infrastructure

12 mentions of Court System Support

74 mentions of Community Services/Social Services

35 mentions supporting Carceral System

6 mentions critical of 2024 Budget for Carceral System

Samples of participant responses

"More support towards the Health and Community Resources/Social Services categories. Those areas are too large to get the smallest portions of the budget allocation. Imagine how much more you could do for citizens if those areas received just a \$5.00 bump in the budget. I know these other areas are important but almost half the budget going to the Carceral system. No wonder some areas lag behind."

"Less focus on retribution in the justice and carceral systems and more focus on rehabilitation, reducing the rate of recidivism, ensuring that formerly incarcerated people are able to successfully reintegrate into society with appropriate social nets"

"More access to outdoor spaces (not just those created by subdivision developers); opportunities for youth summer employment. Better traffic control and Infrastructure."

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Residents' Top Priorities: Health & Social Services

Residents talked about investing in health related services as critical to the improvement of quality of life. On average, residents desired the County to allocate over a quarter of its budget on mental health, animal services, and public health. Currently, Fort Bend County spends half of that.

Residents talked about investing in community and social services as critical to the improvement of quality of life. On average, residents desired the county spend over 24% of its budget on parks, veterans services, social services, libraries, and emergency services while we currently spend about 13% of County funds on such services.

The discrepancy between expectations and need versus reality helps explain the strain on the County departments performing health and social services, and why those departments are some of the most active in seeking revenue sources beyond the general fund in order to meet demand.

Survey and town hall participants voiced concerns over resources for animal services. Internal conversations and community comments align on the fact our animal services needs significant resources to reach a manageable, safe level for staff and animals.

The comments received from residents show a desperate need to expand public health and social services. Several Fort Bend County residents are struggling or know someone who is struggling, and access to support, such as rental assistance and healthcare, is insufficient.

A priority in our budget should be supporting resident-facing programs that provide a safety net for vulnerable populations.



Infrastructure

One resident pointed out that infrastructure drives the other county-provided services, which most of his peers at the Town Hall agreed with. On average, residents wanted to allocate \$23.60 dollars towards infrastructure vs. the \$18 we currently allocate, so we are investing 5% less in infrastructure than folks would like.

It's important to note that the county is able to spend more on roadway and park infrastructure through parks and mobility bonds. The infrastructure allotment in the budget discussed here is intended to support equipment and personnel related functions.

Few residents had infrastructure as their highest priority, yet it was very common to find it as their second or third. What this indicates is that it is seen universally as a pressing matter, but for most residents there is an issue they feel more strongly about.

We should invest more in infrastructure overall, but focus on ways that provide multi modal safety. Many residents also expressed a need for an easier way to contact the county about infrastructure concerns and regularly receive updates.

Court System Support

Residents who allocated monies for Court System Support recognized the need to move cases quickly and prevent backlog. They were also fans of Fort Bend's large amount of specialty courts and the desire to try treatment and support as ways to prevent recidivism.

Most residents who participated in the survey recognized that the court system is necessary for a functioning society and saw it as a priority, but not as high of a priority as other categories.

We should be funding the court system support departments in sensible ways that would allow the departments to better handle the increase in volume of cases that a rapidly-growing county faces.



Carceral System

Residents expressed concern for public safety with many advocating for increased resources for law enforcement. However, a vast majority of residents were surprised when they learned over 40% of Fort Bend County's budget went to law enforcement, probation, and the jail. This was a significantly higher allocation than the residents who advocated for more resources for the carceral system were even willing to allocate.

It is also important to note that advocates for more carceral system resources were mainly advocating for more detainee treatment and support. Most were interested in alleviating staffing shortages and investing more in community policing and treatment for inmates to prevent them from reentering the system.

After learning about the 2024 fiscal year allocations at the end of the exercises, residents were alarmed by the carceral system's use of the resources, as their initial impression was the system is underfunded. We should be reviewing the agencies' budgets to see how we can shift resources within departments in the carceral system for more efficient use, such as paying employees more, and investing in more treatment and community support programs

PRELIMINARY BUDGET REQUEST FOR FY 2025 (breakdown for every \$100)

NOTE: The final budget hearings are slated for July, so the allocations reflected here are not final.

