



MEMORANDUM

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Ben Williamson, City Manager
Date: 08/08/2025
Subject: ***Departmental Budget Requests, Rationale, and Communication of Funding Decisions for FY 2025–2026***

COUNCIL REQUEST

Please provide a comprehensive summary of departmental budget requests submitted for the FY 2025–26 budget cycle, including the rationale for each request, reasons for any denial or adjustment, and how funding decisions were communicated to both the City Council and internal staff.

RESPONSE

This memo provides a detailed response to the Council's request, addressing each aspect outlined below.

BUDGET PROCESS OVERVIEW:

The FY 2025–26 Budget for the City of Farmers Branch was developed through a transparent, inclusive, and community-informed process. Guided by the City Council's strategic direction, departmental business plans, and direct resident input, this budget represents a shared commitment to fiscal responsibility, high-performing and transparent governance, and long-term service excellence.

The City continues to be recognized for its financial integrity, evidenced by its reaffirmed AAA bond ratings, and remains a leader in open, accountable governance practices. Every decision in this budget cycle was made with intentional alignment to Council priorities and data-driven public engagement.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

The budget reflects clear alignment with the five City Council strategic priorities reaffirmed during the February 2025 Strategic Planning Retreat:

1. Public Safety
2. Infrastructure Modernization

3. Neighborhood Support
4. Economic Development
5. Transparent, High-Performing Governance

These priorities were operationalized through department-level initiatives and business plans. In addition, public feedback was central to this process:

- Together, the National Community Survey (Resident Survey 2025) and the Budget Priorities Survey provided a comprehensive understanding of community expectations, affirming resident satisfaction with core City services while highlighting strong public support for continued investment in public safety, infrastructure, and financial stewardship, alongside opportunities for growth in areas such as arts, public transit, and healthcare collaboration
- These insights were instrumental in shaping funding decisions and validating the City's ongoing investment strategy.

STAFF COMMUNICATION AND TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY:

On June 21, 2025, department heads were reminded of their critical role in delivering consistent, transparent communication to their teams. As outlined in the Department Messaging Expectations Memo, they are expected to:

- Explain not just decisions, but the rationale ('the why')
- Maintain message consistency across the organization
- Reinforce confidence in Council and City Management decisions

This unified communication approach ensures all employees understand and support the City's direction. The email sent to staff is attached.

DEPARTMENTAL REQUESTS PRESENTED TO THE CITY COUNCIL, RATIONALES, AND OUTCOMES

Department	Request	Rationale	Outcome
Police	5 new positions (3 grant-funded)	Strengthen public safety response, address traffic and community policing priorities.	Approved
Public Works	Streetlights, signals, striping, sidewalk assessment	Improve pedestrian safety and address Council concerns on neighborhood lighting and walkability	Approved (some components grant-contingent)
Technology	Blockchain/AI infrastructure study (\$100K)	Evaluate emerging technologies for innovation and efficiency	Approved

Facilities	Facility condition assessment (\$150K)	Long-term capital planning, asset maintenance	Approved
Economic Development	ED Fund increase (\$200K), TIF 2 engineering study (\$200K), Firehouse Theatre grant (\$50K)	Advance economic revitalization and cultural investment	Approved
Community Services	Minor Home Repair Program (\$75K)	Equity in neighborhood investment and safety improvements	Approved

REQUESTS ADJUSTED BASED ON COUNCIL PRIORITY

Item	Initial Request	Outcome and Reason
Employee Compensation	2% raise	Increased to 3% per Council directive
Event Expansion	Funding for new events	Deferred due to alignment concerns and budgetary impact
Technology Integration	System upgrades	Deferred pending infrastructure capacity and prioritization

CONCLUSION:

The FY 2025–26 Budget is a result of deliberate strategy, Council guidance, and staff collaboration. It delivers on public expectations captured through both the NCS and Budget Survey while advancing the Council’s strategic vision. There were no arbitrary cuts, only prioritized adjustments, and every effort was made to maintain fiscal strength while investing in the services that matter most to our residents and businesses.

Through this process, the City of Farmers Branch continues to demonstrate its commitment to excellence, transparency, and collaborative governance. Our AAA rating, solid reserves, and strategic investments position us for sustainable success.

ADJUSTED BUDGET ITEMS SUMMARY

In response to the Council's directive to provide a detailed account of adjusted departmental budget requests, the table below summarizes requests that were either partially funded, reduced, or reallocated based on alignment with strategic priorities, available funding, and operational necessity. All adjustments were made within the bounds of transparent financial management and communicated with relevant departments. Each decision was communicated with the staff during the budget meetings as well as the Budget Manager kept the staff informed.

Departments	Request Description	Requested Amount	Decision	Approved Amount
All	Hot spot & iPad		Keep either iPads or a hotspot – both serve the same purpose. Staff can use iPads as a hotspot.	
All	Travel & Training		Training aligned with the job requirements	
Fleet	Vehicles replacement	\$4,885,800	Break it down over the next few years so the city does not cover big amounts every few years.	\$2.8 MM
IT	Fiber Assessment	\$110,000	Fiber Assessment of \$110K removed after budget meeting 06/16/2025. Costs should be moved to Public Works in the current year (cover with existing budget).	\$110K in FY 2024-25.
IT	Drone	\$40,000	Use for GIS/Inspections. Has no licensed staff to use a drone. EMC already has a drone as well as the license and captures images using a drone.	-\$40,000
IT	Database administrator position	\$40,000	Department was granted 2.5 positions last year and the director was not aware of this request. Following discussion with the director, the request was denied.	-\$40,000

Community Services	Outsources Inspections (removing two positions)	\$400,000	2 positions being removed cost \$200,000. Provided direction to keep it budget neutral.	\$200,000
Public Works	Swag/give aways	\$1500	The department requested that swags be given away. Directed staff to use other departmental swags and giveaways given to the city from multiple agencies.	
Public Works	2 Laptops	\$3000	Cover from the existing FY. There is funding.	Use from the current fiscal year.
HR	Crucial Conversation	\$0.00	Added \$11,250 to train leadership staff on Crucial Conversation	\$11,250.

BUDGET PROCESS DIAGRAM

