

Projects to Remove from 2026 Proposed Budget – Sept. 15, 2025 Budget Hearing

I have four projects that I'd like to see removed from the 2026 proposed budget.

1- Athletic Complex Design; 2 - River Balcony Design; 3 - River Learning Center Design

Reason: No new Parks facilities until maintenance backlog has been retired

In this year's submission of the Capital Improvement Board Committee Funding Recommendations (Pg.20), they acknowledged that the maintenance backlog for Parks has now grown to over \$235M (from \$100M when the 1% Sales Tax increase was proposed). No new Park facilities, including bike trails that add to this backlog, should be planned or built until the City demonstrates that they can maintain our existing facilities.

4 - Summit – Mississippi River Blvd to Fairview

(which includes building the first segment of the Summit Avenue Regional Bike Trail)

Reasons: NO FUNDING OR ACTION

- I. The City has now agreed to do an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the bike trail. No funding or action should be taken until the impact on the tree canopy and historic character of Summit Avenue is determined by the results of the EAW.
- II. The DEMAND FORECAST in the bike trail plan (Pg. 35) expected over a 9% population increase to fuel the usage growth of this proposed trail. The actual population growth since the 2020 census has been a NEGATIVE 1.13%. No funding or action should be taken until the projected use, justifying building this trail, is re-evaluated.
- III. No funding or action should be taken until the bike trail plan factors in how to incorporate the explosion of ebike and scooter usage. The plan does not mention ebikes or scooters anywhere in the 277-page plan document.
- IV. The flow of federal and state funds is drying up. This places a higher demand for local tax dollars to fund the critical, must-have needs of our city. Spending dwindling tax dollars on this project will leave other must-have projects unfunded. No funding or action should be taken until the effects of these economic changes are better understood.
- V. No funding or action should be taken until the City can explain why the first segment they are recommending, most of which was last rebuilt in 1979, has 20 more years of expected useful life based on the City's 65-year standard lifecycle for roads, while the oldest portions of Summit Avenue do not appear on the Five Year Plan.
- VI. Again, no funding or action should be taken because the City should not be spending tax revenues on new park facilities when they have a \$235M maintenance backlog for our existing facilities.

Repeated, annual property tax increases are an unrealistic and unsustainable scheme to address this growing backlog. Failing to contain spending that results in explosive increases in property taxes will continue to drive people and businesses away from our City.

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