

Reimagining The City of
Jacksonville's Budget

THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET

2024-2025



jaxtakesaction.org

THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET

REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY AND WHAT REINVESTMENT IN OUR COMMUNITY COULD LOOK LIKE

The Jacksonville Community Action Committee (JCAC) firmly believes that enhancing public safety in Jacksonville requires prioritizing our historically neglected communities through direct investment and enacting legislation that addresses the root causes of crime. Evidence shows that increased policing does not equate to safer communities; rather, increased opportunities, economic development, livable wages, and enhanced public services provide the stability needed for the people of Jacksonville to truly flourish.

Currently, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) Sheriff T.K. Waters is seeking a substantial budget increase that would bring their total budget to over \$640 million. Over the past decade, the JSO budget has consistently accounted for more than half of our city budget and has increased nearly every year, with an overall rise of over \$200 million since 2013. The budget request for next year alone calls for over \$33 million more. Additionally, there are plans for a new jail with projected costs exceeding \$1 billion, which will further increase spending on policing in the coming years.



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Imagine the transformative impact these funds could have if they were directly invested in our communities rather than in over-policing. A real People's Budget would prioritize underserved communities and reject failed strategies that have proven ineffective. The continuous increase in JSO's budget has shown that we cannot police our way to a better Jacksonville. Allocating these funds to community services would significantly improve the lives of everyday citizens far more than additional police officers and military-grade equipment ever could.

Increased spending on JSO means further divestment from our communities. We must ensure that the 2024-2025 City of Jacksonville budget prioritizes the community first, reinvesting funds where they can make the most substantial impact. It is imperative that the city invest in the future of Jacksonville by fostering safe, healthy, and thriving communities through a smart, community-focused People's Budget.



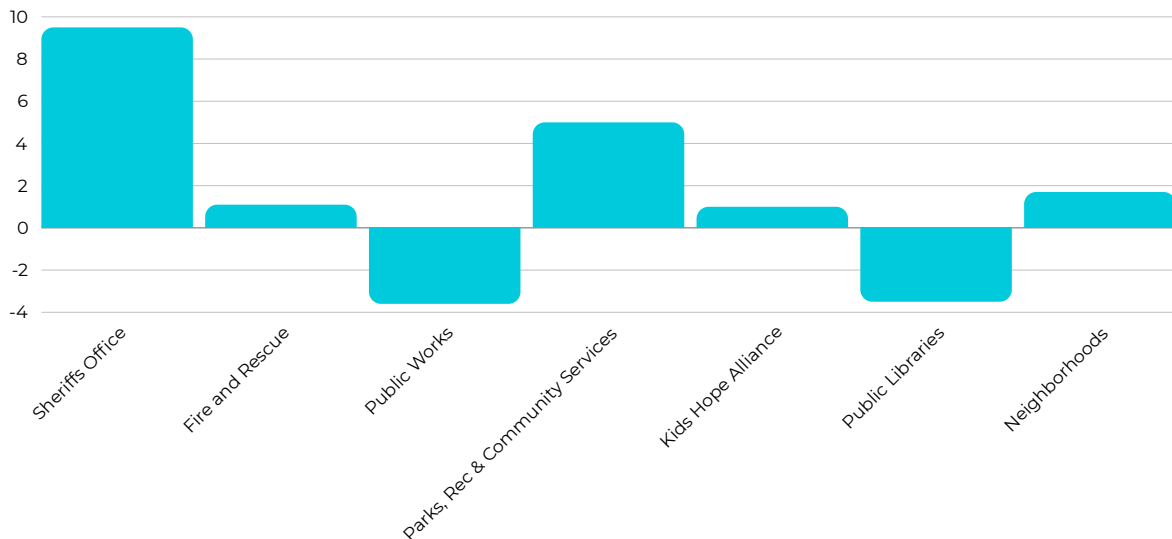
REALLOCATION AND REINVESTMENT

Community Benefits Agreement

The Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) is a \$300 million investment split evenly between the city and the Jaguars team. The city would invest \$150 million over the four-year stadium development, while the Jaguars would invest \$5 million annually over the 30-year stadium lease. The CBA would be one component of the \$1.4 billion stadium deal. The CBA is intended to invest in the following areas: Construction Workforce Development Programs, Jacksonville Small & Emerging Businesses (JSEB), Outeast neighborhood infrastructure, affordable housing, homelessness support, public parks and recreation, and Northbank development. On June 25, 2024, just days before passing the stadium deal, the City Council gutted the CBA. The City Council approved \$56 million for parks and explained that the remainder of the CBA would need to be approved in the city budget.

City leaders garnered support for this stadium by promising residents that the community would be prioritized, only to pull a bait-and-switch on their own constituents. The Outeast neighborhood is owed \$30 million. Additionally, \$50 million should be allocated to Duval County at large, along with \$1 million in funding for each of the 14 Council districts.

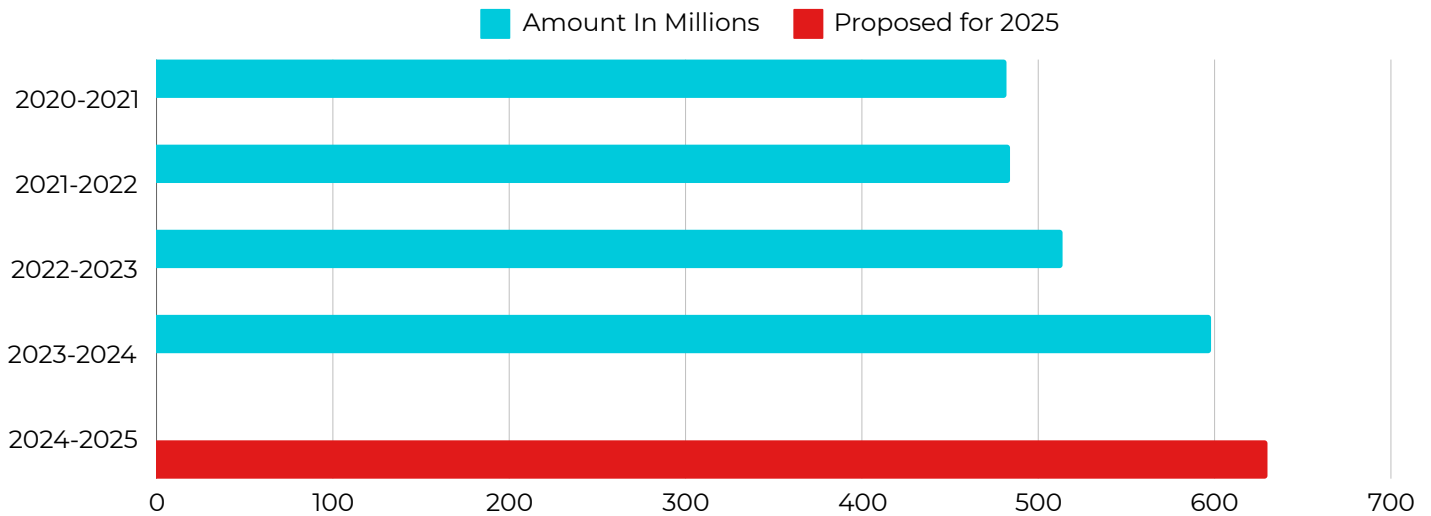
Jacksonville's 2024-2025 Budget - Top 10 Departments Budgets (By Percent +/-)



REALLOCATION AND REINVESTMENT

Sheriffs Budget Increase Past 4 Years

The Jacksonville's Sheriff's Office is requesting a \$33 million dollar budget increase. This will bring their overall budget over \$640 million for the 2024-2025 FY. This will include \$1 million to hire 40 additional officers.



The average cost of police academy training is \$6,500, but according to the National Police Foundation, the real cost is a minimum of \$100,000 for supervised on-the-job training and 18 months of probationary duty before an officer is ready for the job. In larger cities, it may take two or three years before an officer is considered fully trained. Some estimates put the total cost as high as \$240,000, according to the Florida Public Pension Trustees Association website.

The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office budget includes costs for 40 new officers, as well as increased taxpayer costs due to significant raises negotiated by the Deegan administration. If the current budget is approved with the proposed police wage increases, the JSO's share of the budget would total around \$680 million, an astronomical amount compared to other parts of the city budget.

REALLOCATION AND REINVESTMENT

In 2023 and 2024 thus far, 45% of murders in Jacksonville have gone unsolved. While JSO has failed to solve 45% of these cases, they have continued to collect overtime and engage in over-policing of Black neighborhoods. Additionally, as of this writing, at least ten JSO officers have been arrested in 2024 alone; their charges range from money laundering and sneaking drugs into the jail to domestic battery, driving under the influence, leaving the scene of a crash, and lewd sexual acts against a minor. The 40 new positions being added come with zero civilian oversight, despite the clear issue of training and transparency within JSO, as evidenced by the number of officers being arrested. This situation occurs amid the loss of dozens of inmates at the Duval County Jail due to neglect and a lack of scrutiny and oversight from city leadership.

Crime cannot be outpoliced, and there is no evidence that JSO's practices have been effective. To address the root causes of crime, we must tackle poverty and city-wide conditions. Instead of overfunding the police, we should allocate more resources to infrastructure, living-wage jobs, libraries, parks, public health, the arts, and education.



Action for Reginald Boston

DEMOCRATIZE THE CITY BUDGET: PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Currently, the city budget process is difficult for everyday working people to access and influence. Most City Finance Committee meetings are held during weekdays and working hours, and because the Neighborhood Bill of Rights is not in effect, City Council members are not obligated to hold town halls in their districts to discuss the city budget and gather input from the community. As outlined in our "People's Legislation," until we are able to codify the Neighborhood Bill of Rights into city law, we will continue to face issues with community input being heard in the city budgeting process.

The JCAC is proposing the inclusion of Participatory Budgeting as a means to democratize the city budget and give everyday working people in Jacksonville a real opportunity to influence how their tax dollars are spent.



WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING?

According to www.participatorybudgeting.org, Participatory Budgeting "is a democratic process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget. It gives people real power over real money that can make a difference in marginalized communities."

PB started in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989, as an anti-poverty measure that helped reduce child mortality by nearly 20%. Since then, PB has spread to over 7,000 cities around the world and has been used to decide budgets for states, counties, cities, housing authorities, schools, and other institutions.

Through Participatory Budgeting, the city should divert additional funding from policing and incarceration and instead allow impacted segments of the community—who are traditionally excluded from conventional budgeting plans—to decide how that money is spent. Dozens of cities, municipalities, school districts, and other entities have effectively used Participatory Budgeting to increase democratic input from communities.



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PEOPLE'S LEGISLATION

People's Legislation consists of potential laws, policies, and ordinance suggestions that the City of Jacksonville, the Mayor's Office, and the City Council should consider implementing, as recommended by the JCAC and its partner organizations.

CREATION OF A PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Jacksonville remains the largest city in Florida without any form of civilian review of police. HB601 was passed by the Florida Legislature in spring 2024, seeking to restrict civilian oversight; however, the Mayor still has the executive authority to create a Public Safety Committee or civilian oversight. Currently, dozens of cities in Florida have some form of civilian review, including conservative-run municipalities such as Sarasota and Ft. Myers. Studies show a drop in the arrest rates of Black residents in cities with civilian review. Mayor Donna Deegan has said she supports civilian review, while JSO Sheriff T.K. Waters has stated he opposes it.

ADDRESSING THE RACIST HISTORY OF REDLINING

This year, the Jacksonville City Council passed a resolution decrying the racist history of redlining, where Black residents were subjected to discriminatory housing and lending practices.

Predominantly Black neighborhoods such as LaVilla, Durkeeville, Mixon Town, Sugar Hill, Eastside, Long Branch, and Moncrief were deemed "hazardous" by the National Housing Administration in 1934. Redlining, combined with zoning practices that allowed for unrestricted or industrial development in what had been residential neighborhoods, significantly diminished the property values of homes in predominantly Black neighborhoods and led to diminished Black collective wealth, among other negative impacts.

With the City of Jacksonville already acknowledging this history, groups like the Red Alliance for Justice have called for additional city funding for those in redlined areas, which our People's Budget supports. Additionally, the city should prioritize providing more funding for housing vouchers and financial assistance to Black small businesses in areas historically affected by the racist practices of redlining.

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NEIGHBORHOOD BILL OF RIGHTS

The Neighborhood Bill of Rights for Jacksonville, Florida, established by the Jax City Council in 1995, has not been formally codified into law. Various groups have been advocating for its codification to ensure participatory budgeting and better communication with local representatives. Codifying the Bill of Rights would empower citizens to influence budget allocation and resource distribution in their neighborhoods, as well as enhance communication channels between residents and elected officials, promoting transparency and accountability. Efforts to codify the Bill of Rights reflect the ongoing campaign to strengthen community engagement and ensure equitable treatment of neighborhoods in Jacksonville.

DECRIMINALIZE MARIJUANA AND HELP STOP MASS INCARCERATION THROUGH ADULT CIVIL CITATIONS

Marijuana decriminalization will save taxpayer money and ensure that JSO's focus is on solving homicides and sexual assaults—not petty drug busts. Adult civil citations would also decrease the number of incarcerated individuals, saving millions in taxpayer money and alleviating overcrowding issues in the Duval County jail. We stand with the demands of community organizations like ICARE, which have called for the issuance of civil citations for low-level, non-violent offenses as a means of reducing mass incarceration. JSO Sheriff T.K. Waters has said he opposes both measures.

SUPPORTING LABOR AND WORKING FAMILIES

Only through strong labor unions can Jacksonville's working families flourish. The city should ensure that all city workers are paid a living wage. Additionally, the city can further support labor and working families by mandating a dedicated number of registered apprenticeships on city-funded projects and ensuring future city projects are carried out by local contractors, so taxpayer funding stays in our communities.

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DEAL WITH THE HOUSING CRISIS

We are calling for increased rental and utility assistance, action against predatory developers who inflate housing costs, and continued support for legislation advocated by housing activists.

FIGHT AGAINST FOOD INSECURITY AND FOR MORE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Additional funding should be reallocated to the Division of Mental Health Services to improve access to quality mental health services for the people of Jacksonville. This includes investment in affordable behavioral health services through alternative governmental or non-governmental agencies. Research in 2019 reported that 40 out of 173 census tracts in the City of Jacksonville were food deserts, where 23% of the population had low access to a grocery store or supermarket in 2015, based on the 1-mile definition. Of these low-access areas, 15 tracts, or 38% of the food desert tracts, are in the Northwest Area. The COJ should do more to address food insecurity, particularly in low-access areas.

STAND UP FOR HOME RULE

The City of Jacksonville must stand up to the Florida Legislature, which continues to pass legislation threatening the home rule of Jacksonville. The city must not fear the Governor and must fight for the right of Jacksonville to determine its own affairs.

CEASEFIRE AND DIVESTMENT FROM RACISM

Groups like the Jacksonville Palestine Solidarity Network have called on the City Council to take a stand for a free Palestine. The Jacksonville City Council should immediately pass a ceasefire resolution, calling for an end to the genocidal war on the people of Gaza. Jacksonville should divest from any city financial holdings with the State of Israel.

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TAKE DOWN WHITE SUPREMACY, HONOR OUR FIGHTERS

The JCAC supports Take Em Down Jax in its campaign to remove all remnants of white supremacy from public spaces in Jacksonville. We also support the campaign by the Northside Coalition of Jacksonville to rename "Confederate Street" to "Frazier Place" in honor of the late, great community leader Ben Frazier.

After the Dollar General white supremacist shooting last August, the JCAC called for the City Council to convene an Anti-White Supremacy task force to examine the root causes of the deadly white supremacist terror attack. We continue to make those calls and support further restitution to the families of Angela Carr, A.J. Laguerre Jr., and Jerrald Gallion.

SUPPORT REPARATIONS

Cities such as Detroit and Evanston, Illinois, have shown the path forward by forming reparation research committees through their city commissions and councils. These committees study the question of reparations, explore how to overcome historical wealth gaps, and collect data to understand the potential impact of addressing years of historical oppression caused by racism and discrimination against Black residents. The City of Jacksonville should take seriously its obligation to right the wrongs of the past.

HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

Additional funding should be given to UF Health Jacksonville, the city's new safety net hospital, to provide more care for lower-income residents and bridge the healthcare access gap. Additional funding also means more healthcare services for low-income communities. Unlike Jacksonville, other major cities in Florida have a dedicated revenue source for indigent healthcare.

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