



COUNCILWOMAN MONICA RODRIGUEZ  
SEVENTH DISTRICT

April 28, 2025

Councilmember Katy Yaroslavsky, Chair  
Budget & Finance Committee  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Consideration of the Mayor's 2025-2026 Proposed Budget

Dear Honorable Budget and Finance Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Mayor's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. While the budget includes long-overdue investments for the Los Angeles Fire Department and funding for the Recreational Vehicle (RV) recycling program, it also proposes layoffs and significant cuts to essential departments that may have long-lasting effects on all Angelenos. Layoffs should always be a last resort when balancing the budget.

Los Angeles is already behind on delivering fundamental city services like tree trimming, street sweeping, and abandoned vehicle removal. We must take immediate action to avoid layoffs, properly fund critical services, and reduce or eliminate duplicative programs and no department should evade an introspective reorganization to ensure maximum service delivery to the people of Los Angeles.

The proposed layoffs and cuts in this proposed budget will have devastating impacts on service delivery. I urge the Committee to explore ways to realize efficiencies, create new revenue opportunities and leverage other funding sources. The Mayor's Proposed Budget has failed to explore all financial policies that can lessen the impact on the City workforce reduction.

Below, I outline my top budget priorities for your consideration.

## **Key Principles for Guiding Budget Changes**

### **Prioritizing the City Workforce**

To avoid layoffs and preserve institutional knowledge, the City must reduce its reliance on external contractors. City employees offer consistent labor costs and are essential for program continuity. For example, the \$30M annually allocated through the Willits Settlement for sidewalk repairs should be implemented by our own City workforce. Similarly, projects funded through the Active Transportation Program (ATP) should prioritize City personnel over contracted labor. Shifting towards a workforce-centered approach will support our employees and promote fiscal stability in the long term.

### **The Budget Stabilization Fund**

The Budget Stabilization Fund (BSF) is a financial reserve created to help the city navigate economic fluctuations by saving surplus revenues during times of strong economic growth. Its purpose is to soften the blow of revenue shortfalls during downturns, ensuring that vital city services remain uninterrupted. As a key part of the city's financial strategy, the BSF provides a safety net during uncertain times.

It is disappointing that the Proposed Budget has failed to activate the BSF during this critical financial crisis. The fund was specifically designed to protect the city from downturns like this, yet it remains untouched, leaving essential services vulnerable. At a time when Los Angeles is facing significant budget shortfalls, this missed opportunity only deepens the fiscal challenges we face. I urge the committee to avoid privatizing our city workforce by exercising every option, including using the BSF, that protects our city employees above contract work.

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### **Investments and Priorities to Maintain**

#### **Vehicle Recycling Program**

This Mayor's Proposed Budget includes a \$3M allocation to the Los Angeles Police Department to help remove RVs from City streets. For districts like mine, investments like this are critical in advancing the successful programs that I have implemented to help move individuals experiencing RV homelessness into housing, while permanently removing these vehicles from our streets. I ask that you maintain this important funding.

#### **Investment for the Los Angeles Fire Department**

The proposed budget also allocates critical resources for our Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) that, for years, have been ignored. Wildland hand crews, fleet maintenance staffing, new apparatus and APRU staffing, this budget gives our firefighters most of the resources they have needed for far too long to serve the residents of Los Angeles in the way they deserve. By investing in the LAFD, we show our constituents that we are prioritizing their personal safety and the safety of their communities. This support is critical for our LAFD and I ask that it be retained.

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### **Concerns About Cuts to Ongoing Projects and Programs**

The proposed budget misses the mark by cutting programs and projects that are well underway while not realizing savings in other areas, leaving youth, seniors, women and animals behind. This approach will waste city resources that have already been invested, leave communities behind that have been participating in project development and compound existing problems which the projects were initiated to address. I am concerned about the following items and ask this committee to restore funding.

#### **East San Fernando Valley Transit Neighborhood Plan (TNP)**

The East San Fernando Valley TNP seeks to develop an updated land use plan and corresponding zoning for the communities along the alignment of the East San Fernando Valley Light Rail project, a once in a lifetime \$3.5B transit investment currently under construction by Metro that passes through CDs 2, 6, and 7. Without this TNP, we will fail to maximize the number of housing units that can be produced along the northeast valley's prime transit corridor that has

some of the highest bus ridership rates in the county. The plan is being developed to exceed the housing capacity that the recently adopted Citywide Housing Incentive Program (CHIP) will create for this area. Moreover, this is a fully staffed work program that is at the 50 percent completion milestone. The project team has already implemented streamlining strategies that will save a significant amount of time and money, such as dovetailing the environmental review of this plan with the Housing Element. This is a project of major regional significance that has already commenced community outreach, and we must fund its completion if we are serious about addressing the housing crisis and building sustainable communities. I ask the committee to restore the three filled positions for this program.

### **LASAN Brownfields Program**

The Brownfields program is a critical environmental justice initiative that transforms contaminated and underutilized sites into productive community assets while improving the health conditions of those communities. 100 percent of their work is focused on Disadvantaged Communities (DACs), having brought in over \$12M in grants since 2022 for projects. Losing this team would impact active projects in multiple council districts, potentially reverting back about \$4.5M to grantors, and creating liabilities for the city where we have known contamination that we are required to address.

The deletion of this program directly affects a critical soil remediation project I funded through discretionary dollars for a vacant lot in my district on Sharp Avenue. Once clean, the lot is set to turn over to non-profit partners that will deliver an urban farm and community garden for public use, that portion of which is funded through an LA REPAIR grant to the non-profit partners. LA REPAIR projects were products of voting in the community budgeting process. Honoring the commitment made to our neighborhoods is the transparent and responsible path to take. Without this team of experts, we do not have alternative groups to take on this work. I request the restoration of the three eliminated Brownfields positions that are currently filled, and ask the CAO to explore stabilizing the funding source for this unit by reverting it back to special funds as it once was.

### **Maclay Street Reconfiguration Project**

The Maclay Street Reconfiguration Project includes the construction of approximately 250 linear feet of 10-foot wide concrete sidewalk, curb and gutter, retaining wall, curb ramps, AC pavement, and installation of street light poles bringing the freeway ramp in the middle of a residential neighborhood into compliance with current standards.

The project is fully funded, and, to date, the City has already invested in property acquisition and has entered into the bid and award phase. To defer this project to a later date would incur additional costs as material escalation increases and the design becomes stale. I request that the Committee restore the previously secured CTEIP funding for this project.

### **Oro Vista Stormwater/Flood Management Project SB1 Funding**

The Oro Vista Local Area Urban Flow Management Project is a critical flood prevention project the community has been requesting for decades, which LASAN is currently in the process of designing to also include stormwater capture, infiltration, and greening elements. This intersection is a source of constant flooding because the storm drain infrastructure was left incomplete decades ago, causing dangerous conditions for vehicles and students walking to the nearby elementary school. The conditions of this area and elements of the project make it a great candidate for grant funding, such as Proposition 4, but design needs to be completed in order to compete for those funds. I request the restoration of the SB1 portion of LASAN's request for this project (\$4M).

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## **Rightsizing Homelessness and Public Safety Investments**

### **CARE/CARE+ Funding**

The proposed budget outlines a reduction in CARE/CARE+ funding, eliminating 95 positions. As a result, the number of CARE/CARE+ teams will be reduced to 12—not even enough to maintain one team per Council District—to provide this important service for the City. We know from current and past experience that when encampments are not mitigated it results in larger issues for the City and the community. Unmitigated encampments can cause fires, encourage increased illegal dumping and contribute to overall sense of neglect placing commercial corridors and small businesses into financial hardship and creating an unsafe environment for residential communities. I ask that you restore funding for CARE/CARE+ teams, it will save the City money in the long-term.

### **Inside Safe**

The City has relied too heavily on Inside Safe as its primary tool to address homeless encampments. Though the program has only been in place for two years, it has become the default mechanism for moving individuals off the streets and into housing. Inside Safe has commandeered a significant share of interim housing resources for its exclusive use and has not been implemented across the City in a methodical manner. The proposed budget allocates almost \$104M for the program and does not take into account the County's recent decision to withdraw Measure A funding from LAHSA, nor does it reflect the concerns raised in multiple audits regarding LAHSA's ability to effectively manage public resources.

The City cannot continue to fund this approach, particularly as the City faces the possibility of layoffs. Now is the time to streamline our homelessness response, by creating a non-political, standalone department that can coordinate efforts with County-funded programs supported by stable and dedicated funding streams. We cannot continue to address this crisis through emergency measures and an ad hoc program like Inside Safe. This year's budget hearings present an opportunity to create a more cost-effective and sustainable model to house the most vulnerable individuals.

I ask that the funding currently allocated to the Inside Safe program be placed in the Unappropriated Balance while the Council works to develop a comprehensive and coordinated strategy for addressing encampments. Inside Safe would not halt abruptly; rather, it would allow for a transition from the Mayor's office to a department, during which the program can be evaluated, appropriately scaled, and restructured with clear goals, measurable outcomes, and transparent oversight of public funds.

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## **Youth Development: A Backward Approach to Department Consolidation**

The Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) program was established to provide the youth of our city with positive alternatives to gang involvement. It has proven to be a successful model, incorporating best practices that the City continues to replicate in our alternative response initiatives, such as peer to peer engagement and leveraging individuals with lived experiences to carry out day-to-day operations. However, I have long held the concern that GRYD is housed within a political office, rather than within a City department. It is my strong belief that GRYD

should be operated under the Youth Development Department. Facilitating this transfer would not only strengthen YDD as a stand-alone entity, but would also provide GRYD with the autonomy and accountability it requires to function most effectively.

I am deeply concerned that the proposed budget seeks to eliminate YDD without making significant structural changes to the GRYD program itself. We need to ensure that young people are not simply served by gang intervention services or sports programs, when they deserve to have a department that wholly focuses on their needs. I urge the Committee to transfer GRYD to YDD, and that YDD remain as an independent department, fully dedicated to serving the future of our city.

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While this is undoubtedly a challenging budget cycle, it also presents an opportunity for strategic reform. By preserving our City workforce, right-sizing costly programs, and identifying new revenue sources, we can emerge from this current fiscal crisis more resilient and financially stable.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Monica Rodriguez  
Councilwoman, 7th District

Cc: Councilmember Bob Blumenfield  
Councilmember Heather Hutt  
Councilmember Tim McOsker  
Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez