



THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor Sarno Announces Fiscal Year 2025 Budget – 10th Consecutive Budget Balanced without use of Reserves –

Springfield, MA – Mayor Domenic J. Sarno and Chief Administrative and Financial Officer (CAFO) Cathy Buono announced today the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget recommendation that will be submitted to the City Council for approval. The recommended FY25 budget totals \$928.7 million, which represents a 5.8% increase over the FY24 adopted budget. The School Department, which accounts for more than two-thirds of the total operating budget (\$627.3M), increased 6.7% overall. The city-side budget is \$301.4M, a modest increase of 3.9% from FY24. Mayor Sarno extends his sincere gratitude to all of the city’s Cabinet & Department Heads for their efforts in working to craft budgets that maintain the same level of services for our constituents, while also limiting growth given the uncertain economic times we are facing.

The Division of Administration and Finance and the Office of Management and Budget, under the leadership of CAFO Buono, has carefully monitored, reviewed, and navigated the fiscal terrain including the economic uncertainty surrounding potential state budget cuts. In a testament to Springfield’s commitment to strong fiscal discipline, the FY25 budget was balanced, for the tenth consecutive year, without the use of stabilization or ‘rainy day’ reserve funds. The city’s stabilization reserve account sits at \$69 million. This strong fiscal management has been recognized as Springfield has received the “Distinguished Budget Award” for the 17th year in a row and the “Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting” for the 12th consecutive year from the Government Finance Officers Association.

While the city is fiscally stronger than ever, Mayor Sarno’s administration is cognizant of the looming threat of a potential recession in the near future and the financial hardships many of our citizens are facing. To continue providing for the residents of Springfield, the FY25 Recommended

Budget maintains and supports all current programming, and places a continued emphasis on public safety, public education, economic development, healthy neighborhoods, and community services. The Sarno administration is committed to producing a budget that continues to fund and maintain services and personnel, while holding the line on additional investments in order to meet the needs of our community. Despite facing numerous natural and man-made disasters, as well as navigating through an unprecedented global pandemic, the administration remains steadfast in its efforts to ensure the dedicated residents, businesses, and visitors of our great city continue to receive the core services they deserve.

	FY24 Adopted Budget	FY25 Recommended Budget	% Variance
City	\$ 290,114,520	\$ 301,400,000	3.9%
Schools	\$ 587,798,386	\$ 627,300,000	6.7%
Total	\$ 877,912,906	\$ 928,700,000	5.8%

Stabilization ‘Rainy Day’ Reserve Funds
\$69,000,000

As part of the FY25 budget recommendation, and due to the impact of the booming housing market, Mayor Sarno is committed to continue providing tax relief as part of a strategic plan to reduce the tax burden on taxpayers that is financially responsible and sustainable.

In FY21 and FY22, Mayor Sarno was able to offset the tax levy by \$1 million and \$2.5 million, respectively. In FY23, the Sarno Administration capitalized on a once-in-a-lifetime free cash total, and committed \$10 million to offset the FY23 tax levy. This unprecedented accomplishment was a direct result of the city’s strong fiscal management, and its ability to hold the course and fight for the taxpayers in a decade-long property tax dispute with Eversource.

The city leveraged this success into future earnings by investing \$45 million from the city’s stabilization reserve account into 1-year U.S. Treasury notes, capitalizing on interest rates of approximately 5%. This brought the city more than \$2 million in returns to be directed towards lowering tax bills in FY24, providing financial relief for our citizens. The City of Springfield was the first community in the Commonwealth to take advantage of this innovative financial investment strategy, and Mayor Sarno is proud of the commitment we are able to make to our citizens without compromising our commitment to financial excellence. Mayor Sarno anticipates being able to use this successful strategy again for FY25, providing continued financial relief for our residents.

Additionally, in FY23, Mayor Sarno doubled the abatement amount from the Clause 41C for tax abatements for seniors from \$500 to \$1,000 and reduced the eligibility age from 70 to 65 years of age.

In addition to the proposed relief provided in the upcoming fiscal year, Mayor Sarno's administration has made a significant investment in property tax relief over the past four years, equating to more than \$20M. While much of this was provided from funding received through a settled property dispute with Eversource that had stretched on for approximately a decade, it was important given the unprecedented boom in the housing market to reduce the burden on taxpayers by offsetting the tax levy. While the administration knows that a reliance on free cash moving forward is neither fiscally responsible nor sustainable, Mayor Sarno and team are proud to have been able to make such investments when able to do so.

Mayor Sarno states, "I am proud that my administration will once again put forth a sustainable, fair and balanced budget that will continue to provide core city services continue to provide much-needed tax relief for our residents thanks to my innovative investment strategy and our sound fiscal management policies that have guided our city through numerous natural and man-made disasters, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the constant challenges of economic uncertainty. It is a testament to Springfield's commitment to strong fiscal discipline that the FY25 budget was balanced, for the tenth consecutive year, without the use of stabilization reserve funds. These sound and prudent financial measures that my dedicated and award-winning finance team take, do not mortgage our city's fiscal health and future by investing in unsustainable and unrealistic short-term items that would only compromise and hinder our ability to continue to invest in our neighborhoods and maintain key city services in the future, especially during times of economic uncertainty."

The City of Springfield, in balancing any potential budget shortfalls from the pandemic, supply chain issues, or possible economic recession and uncertainty, has never wavered in its commitment to responding to meet all of the quality of life, public health and safety needs for our residents and business community, while also assuring that all vital core services are maintained.

CAFO Cathy Buono stated, "Our goal under Mayor Sarno's leadership is to maintain core city services with an eye on fiscal sustainability. This FY25 budget is strong and we are proud of our long-term planning and creative investments made to keep our city moving forward while not mortgaging our future. As a testament to Springfield's commitment to strong fiscal discipline and sustainability, the FY25 Budget was balanced for the tenth consecutive year, without the use of stabilization reserve funds. Saving our reserves for future years will allow the city to weather a protracted recession, and sends a strong message that the city is committed to fiscal sustainability."

Mayor Sarno continued, "I am proud of our CAFO Cathy Buono and her finance team for doing their due diligence and being prepared to deal with 'the ebb and flow' of our local, state and national economic landscape. Our fiscal leadership and model have been recognized and acknowledged time and again, and I strongly believe that this budget reflects the outstanding fiscal

management during these challenging times. Our municipal bond rating has remained strong, is the highest rating in our city's history and we continue to maintain a strong and healthy reserve,"

Mayor Sarno added. "My Administration will continue to provide leadership for an efficient, effective, strategic and compassionate way to assure that city services continue to be provided for our residents and business community while balancing the needs for economic development opportunities to boost our local economy."

Some notable investments in the FY25 budget include:

Capital Asset Construction

- The City continues to collaborate with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to the tune of over \$750 million of new state-of-the-art and renovated schools (DeBerry/Swan and Brightwood/Lincoln) – the most in the state.
- Through the MSBA's Accelerated Repair Program, the city has been able to undertake numerous school renovation projects around the city over the past several years, including Brightwood-Lincoln School being awarded with the official LEED Gold certificate for its design, construction and operation of high-performance for energy efficiency.
- The city was proud to install state-of-the-art turf fields for the baseball, softball, and lacrosse sports complex added to Central High School.

Code Enforcement

- Funding for a full complement of administrative and inspectional personnel positions in both the Building and Housing Code Enforcement Divisions. This helps to ensure healthy neighborhoods and safe buildings throughout Springfield.
- Funding is also included for the continuation of Mayor Sarno's "Clean City" program.
- Funding for OpenGov, an enhanced software package that will allow for the permitting process to be fully accessible to the public online, including the ability to submit payments electronically. This relieves a significant burden to both the public and departmental staff, saving time and maximizing efficiency by eliminating the need to acquire permits in person. Excitingly, the design of this system will allow for other City departments to join the platform at no additional cost.

Department of Public Works

- Continued funding of the Sidewalk Crew: A great addition to DPW – now in its 7th year of operation. The crew completes routine sidewalk repairs in all neighborhoods throughout the City.
- Core Services: Trash, single-stream recycling, and yard waste pick-up will continue. Continuing to offer affordable bulk pick up for residents while adhering to all state requirements.
- Continued rollout of the Safe Streets and Roads for All safety upgrades to the most dangerous intersections in the City, stretching along 10 corridors and 15 intersections.

These improvements are designed to increase vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist safety through the implementation of bump outs, protected crosswalks, upgraded pedestrian signals, and improved lighting.

Economic Development

- Since the devastating tornado hit Springfield over a decade ago, significant economic development efforts have helped strengthen the community through the creation of many new jobs, the development of more market rate housing, and a nearly \$1B casino offering residents and visitors countless entertainment options to enjoy for years to come.
- While we have accomplished a lot, there is much more to be done to make Springfield a leader in economic prosperity. To that end, efforts to create the "Main Street and Convention Center Overlay District" continue to be underway. Designed to enhance development surrounding the MGM casino and MassMutual Center, the district will bring exciting new prospects to the area including market rate housing, restaurants & bars, entertainment venues and ground-floor retail, including the construction of a new Civic Center Garage by the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority.
- In FY24, we also saw the opening of Big Y Supermarket's downtown express location in the Tower Square Complex, bringing an additional grocery option to what has been long viewed as a food desert area for residents. Since opening, Big Y has seen great success.
- Homeownership is key to building home equity for residents, which is why my administration will continue to support our very successful First-Time Homebuyers program through our Office of Housing. We currently have 500 new units of multifamily housing in the pipeline, with an additional 40 for-sale affordable town homes in the city's South End at the old Gemini site. As well as soon to be constructed State Street corridor housing at the old School Department building and welfare office. Also, the recently opened historic market rate housing at 31 Elm Street and workforce development housing at the old Knox Firestone building are now open.

Education

- The School Department (SPS), under the leadership of Superintendent Dan Warwick, works tirelessly with teachers and administrators to ensure a safe and quality learning experience for all our students, expanding across more than 50 different schools. Despite lingering challenges from remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, the School Department rose to the occasion and not only kept students engaged, but also continued to improve graduation rates and decrease the number of students who drop out. The district's dropout rate was just 1.9% in 2021, representing an 81% decrease since 2012. This represents the highest dropout rate decrease in all of Massachusetts during the same timeframe. Additionally, the SPS 2021 graduation rate has reached 86%, which is an increase of over 7% compared to the previous year, and an impressive 32% increase since 2012.
- As a municipality, we are thrilled to continue offering the first full-day universal free Pre-K program of its kind in the Commonwealth. For years, the City has invested funds in early education programming through the school department's budget, and we plan to continue that trend. In FY24 we added an additional 17 preschool classrooms across the district to

meet the demand that we have seen throughout the City. The full-day program is invaluable for the growth of our youngest citizens, and will allow caregivers to return to the workforce and provide for their families. We are excited to continue this program in FY25 and witness the transformative effect this program will have on our children and residents.

- In collaboration with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), the Sarno administration has invested over \$750M into building new schools and rehabilitating and renovating existing schools, the most in Massachusetts. This includes the new state-of-the-art Brightwood-Lincoln School in the North End and the DeBerry-Swan School in our Old Hill and Upper Hill neighborhoods. Brightwood-Lincoln was awarded the official LEED Gold certificate for its design, construction and operation of high performance for energy efficiency.
- In FY25, we're also going to continue to study the eligibility and feasibility of rebuilding or replacing German Gerena Community School. This project would bring a new state-of-the-art school for students, teachers, and residents in the North End. This project will bring the total amount invested into building new schools and renovating existing ones throughout the city to over \$1B — the highest level of investment across the Commonwealth.

Elder Affairs

- Continued funding for the operation of a bus and minibus, purchased in FY20, which was used to deliver meals to homebound seniors during the pandemic who did not have available transportation.
- Fully funded to continue to provide hot lunches to seniors at senior centers.
- Transportation Coordinator position added in FY23 will continue to be funded in FY25 to transport our seniors and plan a number of trips with the new bus vehicle.
- All sites and programs for our seniors reopened, including Riverview, Hungry Hill, Clodo Concepcion Community Center, the Fitness Center in the North End (new senior fitness equipment was purchased) and the Raymond A. Jordan Senior Center with activities such as bingo, trivia, exercise programs, concerts and wellness checks, will continue to run.

Fiscal Responsibility

- We are pleased to announce that Springfield received the “Distinguished Budget Award” from the Government Finance Officers Association for the 17th year in a row. The City also received the “Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting” for issuance of the City’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the 12th consecutive year
- Maintained the highest bond rating in the city’s history
- \$69 million in the Stabilization ‘Rainy Day’ Reserve Fund
- Continues to aggressively fund our Pension liability: Appropriating \$67.5 million contribution towards pension liability; a 9.1% increase over the FY24.
- Honors all contractual obligations including collective bargaining agreements, and all agreements as necessary for the School Department, including the SPS food service contract

- Our Department of Technical Assistance and Compliance (DTAC) continues to support the City's Responsible Employer Ordinance, to ensure diversity in hiring practices and consistent compliance with all Federal and State rules & regulations for the City's construction projects. In addition, DTAC has recently implemented the Minority & Women Business Enterprise (MWBE) Certification Office, which is only second of its kind in the State of Massachusetts. The MWBE Certification Office will not only provide resources for small businesses to become certified city vendors, but will provide them access to purchasing and contracting opportunities statewide as well
- The FY25 budget was balanced funding all core services and personnel while continuously building up reserves to support the City's financial health to guard against future unknowns.

Health and Human Services (HHS)

- In FY24, we strategically invested in HHS, expanding the capacity of our Division of Environmental Health which protects the public health and environment of the City of Springfield through education, inspections, sampling and monitoring, and enforcing federal, state, and local codes as they pertain to public health issues. We will be continuing these investments in FY25 along with our outreach efforts through additional mailings and digital media outreach, to keep our residents informed through e-newsletters, web pages and blog content, and social media messages.
- Opioid settlement funds totaling \$7.2M over the next 16 years will go towards a wide variety of initiatives and programs that will enhance and expand the City's opioid response, and create systems in partnership with Springfield's Police, Fire and Health Departments, local nonprofits, health organizations and community stakeholders. Funding will also continue for the Office of Racial Equity, our Cannabis Compliance Program, the Office of Problem Gambling and Prevention, and Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response.

Libraries

- Funding for all neighborhood branches
- Continuing increased hours at the East Forest Park library
- Continue funding for community rooms at the East Forest Park Library and Mason Square Library for residents 4 nights a week.
- The City will continue to fund the Read/Write/Now adult literacy program
- In FY22, a 1-year grant-funded hotspot lending initiative was launched, allowing residents to borrow portable hotspots from Springfield libraries allowing free internet and Wi-Fi access from a personal computer, tablet or smartphone for up to 14 days per use. Due to the success of this initiative, these hotspots will continue to be funded in FY25 through the City's general fund.
- We are looking forward to the future expansion of the East Springfield Neighborhood Library as well.

Parks & Recreation

- Supports anti-litter campaign by complementing the city’s already successful Clean City initiative, the city partnered with ROCA Clean Sweep initiative with ROCA Western Massachusetts to respond to quality-of-life calls placed through the city’s 311 Call Center. ROCA is dedicating two five-member teams to respond to quality of life calls placed through the City’s 311 Call Center by residents to address litter throughout the City. FY24 was the first year the program was fully funded to complement our existing Clean City Initiative that was already in place to assist in responding to litter and trash concerns across Springfield. Based on the great success we’ve had this year, we are looking forward to continue funding for this program in FY25.
- Beginning in FY22 and continuing through FY25, in an effort to brighten the City’s neighborhoods, the Parks Department will work aggressively to remove tree stumps throughout Springfield. Removing these stumps is not only aesthetically pleasing to the eye, it will also create more space for residents to use after the areas are reseeded and grass is grown.
- Funding will also continue for the Downtown Crew, which maintains the downtown metro area parks including DaVinci Park, Emerson Wright, Riverfront Park, Court Square, Stearns Square, and Pynchon Plaza, and all neighborhood parks. This maintenance will also be provided for the 20 City terraces.
- Camp STAR Angelina will be fully open again for FY25. Additionally, all pools and splash pads will be open for families to enjoy during the summer.
- All recreational programs and activities will be up and running in FY25. This includes the After School & Evening Gym programs, the Summer Concert Series, and "Movies in the Park." These programs play a significant role in bringing the Springfield community together.
- Work is underway at Duggan Field for a new state-of-the-art athletic field and will be rededicated to former Springfield Trade (Putnam) Coach Ted Plumb.
- FY 25 budget will also fund continued maintenance and upgrades to our existing playing fields.
- Greenleaf Park will be transformed with improvements including an accessible playground, splash pads, and trails. This project will highlight green infrastructure design to mitigate heat island affects and increase our resiliency with tree planting, pollinator gardens, bioswales, nature-based stormwater treatment solutions, and culvert replacements.
- Enhancements are being made at Gurdon Bill Park now renamed “Gurdon Bill Bike and Skate Park.” by adding biking and skating elements to the park, youth and adults alike will now have the opportunity to engage in these fun activities. A splash pad will also be added, which is very popular among our kids.
- In FY25, Springfield Police Department and Hampden County Sheriff’s Crews will continue with the unique and innovative partnership to enhance public safety within our beloved Forest Park. Dedicated patrols will be led by the SPD’s motorized Trikke Defenders and the HCSC Mounted Patrol Unit of horses and will also include the Emotional Support Division of therapy dogs. Together, we look forward to another great season for residents and visitors in Forest Park.

Public Safety

Fire Department

- The Springfield Fire Department (SFD) will be hiring new recruits to stay ahead of attrition. While the department is currently at full staffing, it is proactively looking to manage attrition with plans to run at least one (1) academy in FY25. Recruits continue to be sent to the state-run academy program, which has been successful in graduating new firefighters to begin immediately working in the stations.
- The SFD's budget includes continued funding to replace, proactively, equipment such as firefighter turnout gear and SCBA air bottles, both of which are critical to ensuring the safety of our first responders. The new air bottles, which align with NFPA standards, hold an additional 15 minutes of air capacity, giving firefighters more time to handle fires without interruption.
- The department will also continue to deploy its health and wellness program, which aims at promoting the physical and mental health of first responders while reducing instances of on-the-job injuries.
- The FY25 Budget funds all contractual lease payments for fire apparatus', which the SFD has been replacing each year since FY16 to retire units at their end of their useful life and drive down the need for costly repairs.
- The FY25 budget also provides funding for two (2) tactical EMS (TAC) units. Now operating in a full-time capacity, the TAC units are equipped with the necessary equipment and medication to respond to any opioid-related incidents within the City. Through this unit, additional lives can be saved through the administration of medication such as NARCAN.

Emergency Communications/Dispatch

- The Springfield Emergency Communications (Dispatch) Department, which closely collaborates with the Police and Fire Departments, has also been provided with funding for several ongoing initiatives.
- The brand new Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Records Management Systems (RMS) came online in FY24, improving working systems for all public safety employees while also helping to ensure the safety of our community. We are excited to see the significant difference it will provide in aiding our community as we continue into FY25.
- The consolidation of Police and Fire dispatch services at a single location on Roosevelt Avenue, which was finalized in January 2021, has been a tremendous help in maximizing operational efficiency. The move has significantly enhanced cross-training efforts, while also ensuring ample supervisory coverage to address issues and provide feedback to call takers in real time.
- Providing our citizens with the resources they need to capitalize on the services the City offers is vital, which is why in FY25 we've continued funding for increased outreach

efforts to the community. These education initiatives will teach individuals the proper use of 9-1-1, and available resources such as text to-911 and Smart 911.

- The FY25 budget also maintains funding for all maintenance, equipment and software needed to manage daily operations in a highly efficient way.

Police Department

- Over the course of the next fiscal year, the Springfield Police Department (SPD) anticipates welcoming approximately 40 new Police Officers to the force. With these recruits anticipated to begin the academy sometime in the Fall of 2024, the Police Department expects a total of 429 officers; bringing the total complement to 514 sworn personnel and an overall staff of 605 FTEs. This level of staffing will help address departmental attrition brought on by upcoming mandatory retirements, and allow the department to focus on quality-of-life issues by supporting and enhancing neighborhood initiatives, such as the C3 policing units and the Ordinance Flex Squad.
- In FY24, the City received an arbitration award over their negotiations with the Springfield Police Supervisors union. The wage increases agreed upon in that decision are reflected in the FY25 budget.
- After the full rollout that was launched in FY20, the Police Department will continue its Body-Worn Camera Program. As the first city in the Commonwealth to employ this technology across its entire police force, the SPD is able to increase transparency and accountability while improving the safety of both officers and residents alike. Funding will be maintained for staff, led by a Police Lieutenant, to administer the program and ensure that the department is able to review and respond to requests for footage in an efficient manner.
- The Springfield Police Department will also continue to maintain funding for other ongoing initiatives. This includes the Gaming Enforcement Unit at MGM, the C3 metro unit, which increases police presence along Main St. and other neighborhoods; the Ordinance Flex Squad, Quebec Unit for the School Department, and the City's expanded Real Time Crime Analysis program.
- In FY25, any sworn individual holding a leadership role will have access to the highly successful B-AGILE training presented by Babson College, which continues to enhance the professional development training for SPD supervisors that aligns with the highest professional standards. This program is designed to help drive a culture of creativity and innovation in decision-making and leadership skills as well to foster better relationships with the community.
- We have continued investments in unique Police Department programs for our officers and our community. We will be continuing our Co-Response Program in collaboration with Behavioral Health Network. This program authorizes licensed behavioral health clinicians to respond at the same time as police officers to emergency calls involving mental health crises to de-escalate situations in real time and provide for better follow-up and jail diversion outcomes over the long-term.

- Continuing utilization of BolaWrap, a nonlethal restraint device to assist police officers in controlling unruly individuals that may be trying to harm themselves or others. The device helps to de-escalate situations and reduces the risk of injury to officers.
- The Police Department will also be continuing the Peer-to-Peer program established in FY21, which provides critical support to officers who have potentially experienced trauma due to critical incident response.
- Funding is included to maintain the department’s NARCAN program which has now been in place for the last five (5) years. This program gives officers the necessary tool to immediately address instances of drug overdoses. Already, Springfield Police Officers have administered more than 550 lifesaving doses of this medication.

TJO Animal Control

- The Thomas J. O’Connor Animal Control & Adoption Center will continue to maintain funding for essential operations, while also servicing our neighboring cities, Chicopee and Holyoke.
- In FY24 we reopened the Adoption Center, which had been closed to appointment only during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have continued funding for the Adoption Center, and for animal control purposes, to keep both the residents and pets of our City safe.

Veteran’s Services

- This department will continue to fully fund services to our veterans. The addition of newer staff in recent years has allowed this department to serve our veterans more efficiently, through proper case management efforts.
- In FY24, Veteran’s Services successfully placed 30 unhoused veterans into permanent housing. FY25 will continue to fund this initiative in partnership with various organizations.

“As Mayor, I continue to work tirelessly to ensure that Springfield continues to prosper and remains resilient in the wake of any challenge, no matter how difficult,” Mayor Sarno added. “My administration has been tested and true in the face of adversity and continues to rise to the occasion for the betterment of our city and the community that we love. I am proud of the efforts by the entire Springfield team from Cabinet Heads and Department Heads to our dedicated city employees who work hard for our residents and business community every day.”

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