Invest/Divest: Building a Nashville People's Budget



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The Nashville People's Budget Coalition is:

Black Lives Matter Nashville
Free Hearts
Gideon's Army
Music City Riders United (MCRU)
No Exceptions Prison Collective
People's Alliance for Transit, Housing, & Equity (PATHE)
Southerners on New Ground Nashville (SONG Nashville)
Workers' Dignity / Dignidad Obrera

About

The Nashville People's Budget Coalition is building a Nashville where public safety includes communities with fully funded education, access to housing and health care, and freedom from policing and jails. To make this future real, we are raising public awareness about the Metro Nashville city budget process and organizing community members to create a people's budget that invests in the wellbeing, health, and freedom of every community member. Our coalition encompasses organizations fighting for fair wages and safe, dignified workplaces, divestment from policing and jails, investment in restorative practices, and access to housing and transportation. We know that Nashville can be a city where every community member has access to the tools and resources they need to thrive if we are committed to investing public dollars into social goods and divesting from social control.

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Nashville needs a People's Budget

Budgets allocate the people's money. As such, budgets should reflect the people's needs & desires.

And yet, too often, budgets reflect the priorities of elected officials and power brokers who make decisions behind closed doors and pursue the interests of a few at the expense of our communities. But it doesn't have to be this way. It is possible for budgets to be built by the people and for the people's wellbeing, especially those who have been most impacted by social, economic, and racial inequities. To build such a budget, we must be courageous enough to ask serious questions — questions usually deemed off-limits — about the so-called "public safety" priorities reflected in our budgets year after year.

Mayor Cooper's proposed FY21 operating budget rests on the idea that "public safety" requires that we spend more of our collective money on policing and jails than we do on the social goods that we all need to live full, safe, & healthy lives.

As we show in what follows, the mayor's budget proposes spending more on the institutions that comprise the local criminal legal system – police, jails, and courts – than all of public health, social services, affordable housing, transit, infrastructure, libraries, parks, community centers, and rental and tax relief services combined. Moreover, in the midst of a budget crisis, after a tornado, and during a global pandemic, the mayor proposes to spend 6 million new dollars on police, jails, and courts, while cutting millions in spending for the public goods and services that we depend upon for our individual and collective wellbeing.

The vision of "public safety" undergirding Mayor Cooper's proposed budget is not the kind of public safety we deserve. And it will do little to keep our communities safe.

Multiple local studies and the experiences of Black community members – who are more likely to experience racist police violence – have made it clear that policing fails to keep all people safe in the same way. In fact, many community members experience the police as more of a threat than a means of protection. If we don't take these realities seriously, then we are saying that some people's lives matter more than others.

If policing and jails don't keep everyone safe, what does?

Communities are safe when people have what they need to thrive. Communities that have been cut off from the basic goods that they need to thrive are often communities in which people's sense of safety is compromised. True public safety is built on people having access to and control of the public and social goods – housing, health care, transportation, jobs, libraries, community centers – that truly foster healthy communities. A more holistic approach to public safety also requires funding grassroots, non-police de-escalation and mental health professionals to address and intervene in situations of community conflict.

Overpoliced communities are not safe communities. Thriving communities are safe communities. And communities thrive when they are well-resourced.

Trying to establish public safety by funneling more and more money into policing and jails while cutting spending on the public goods that actually promote safety is a fundamentally faulty calculus. Nashville has tried this approach for decades and we know from our own experiences, the experiences of our loved ones and community members, that this fails to create safe communities. To begin to repair centuries of deliberately designed social, economic, and racial inequities that make our communities unsafe, and to build the deep-rooted public safety we all deserve, we must find the courage to invest more of our public dollars in the social goods that foster our wellbeing than we do in the criminal legal institutions that do not keep us all safe, and that often put many of us in greater danger.

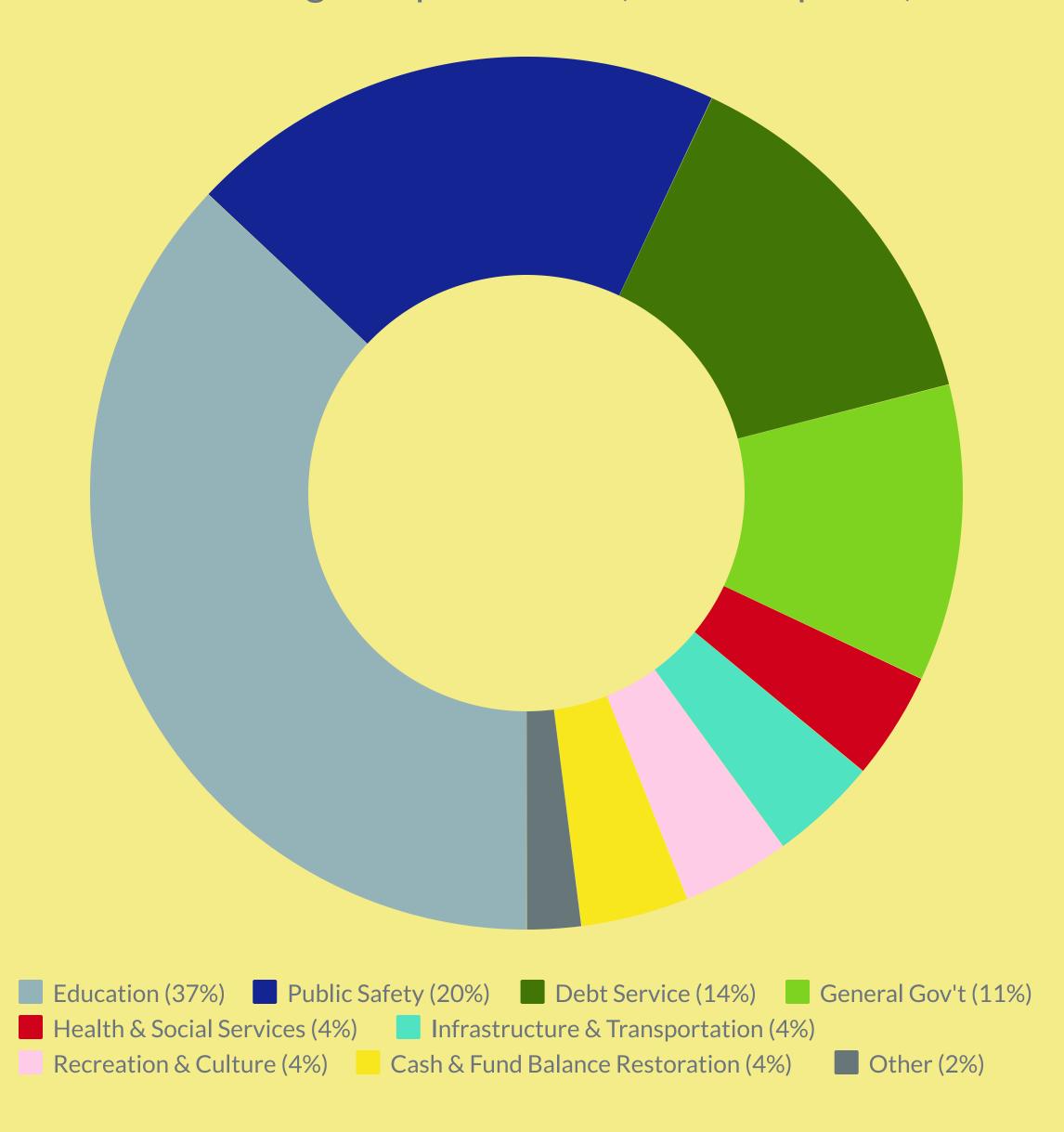
Investing in social goods will not only reduce our lifeendangering dependence on criminal legal institutions, it will further free our money to fund what matters most.

In mid-June, Metro Council will culminate another annual budgeting process – one with very little meaningful input from community members – when they cast their final votes on how to allocate our money over the next year. The difficult but necessary question that we must ask now and keep on asking every year is: will you use our money to fund a vision of public safety built on social goods or social control? If you don't choose wisely, we will. Our lives depend on it.

Public Safety & Criminal Legal System Spending

"Public Safety" would comprise 20% of spending for the mayor's proposed FY2021 budget, totaling nearly \$496 million, making it the second largest expenditure in the budget.

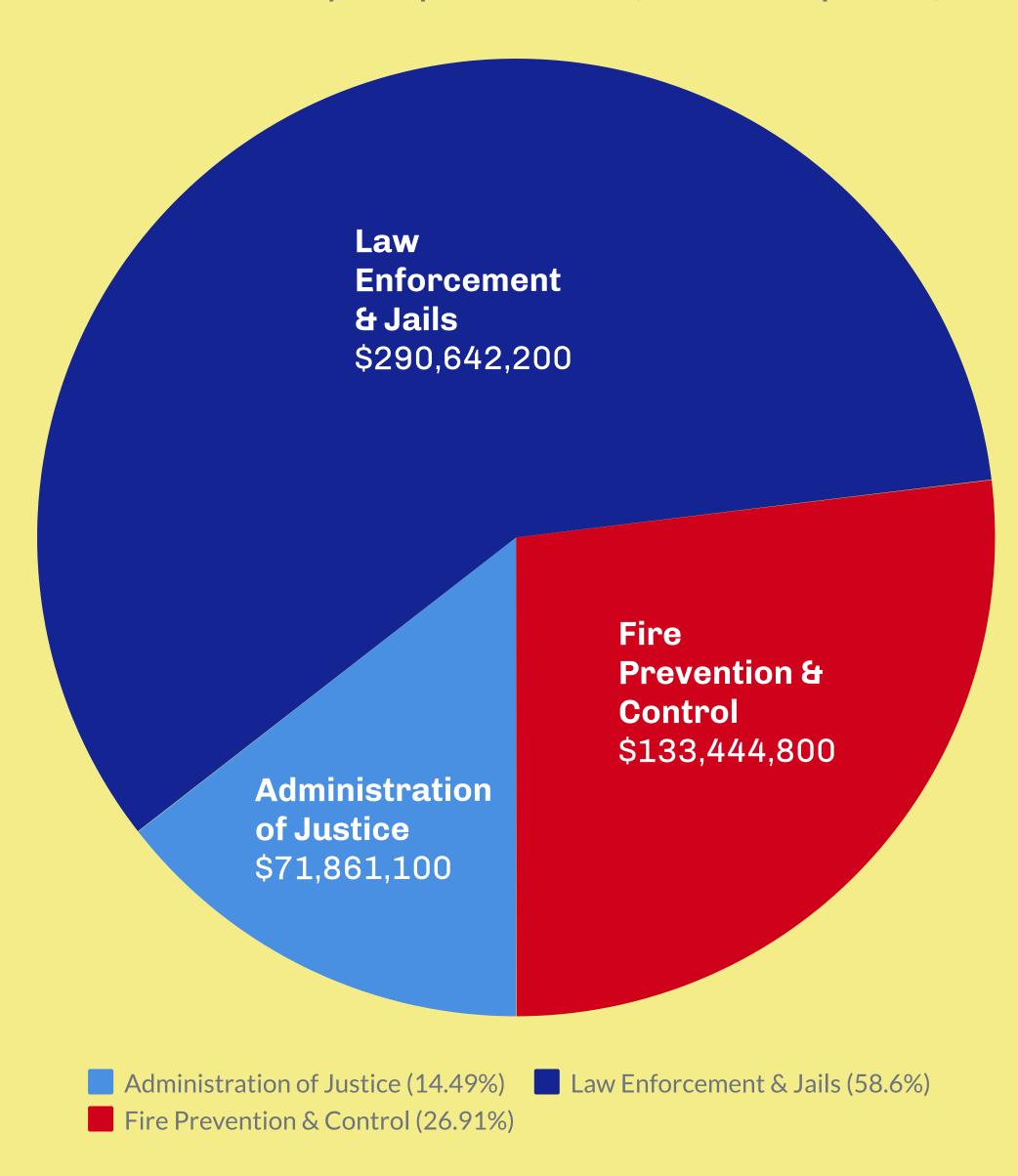
Total Budget Expenditures (FY21 Proposed)



Source: FY21 Recommended Budget Book

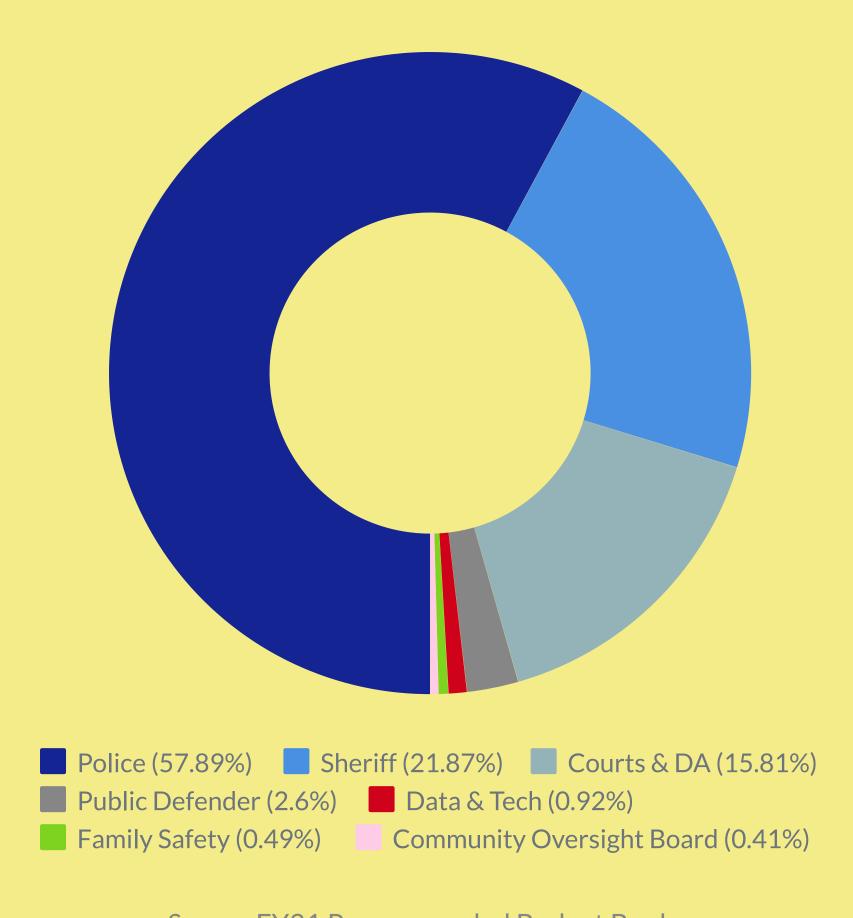
In the city's use of the term, "Public Safety" includes "Administration of Justice" (courts and related functions), "Law Enforcement & Jails," and "Fire Prevention & Control" (Fire Department and EMS Services).

"Public Safety" Expenditures (FY21 Proposed)



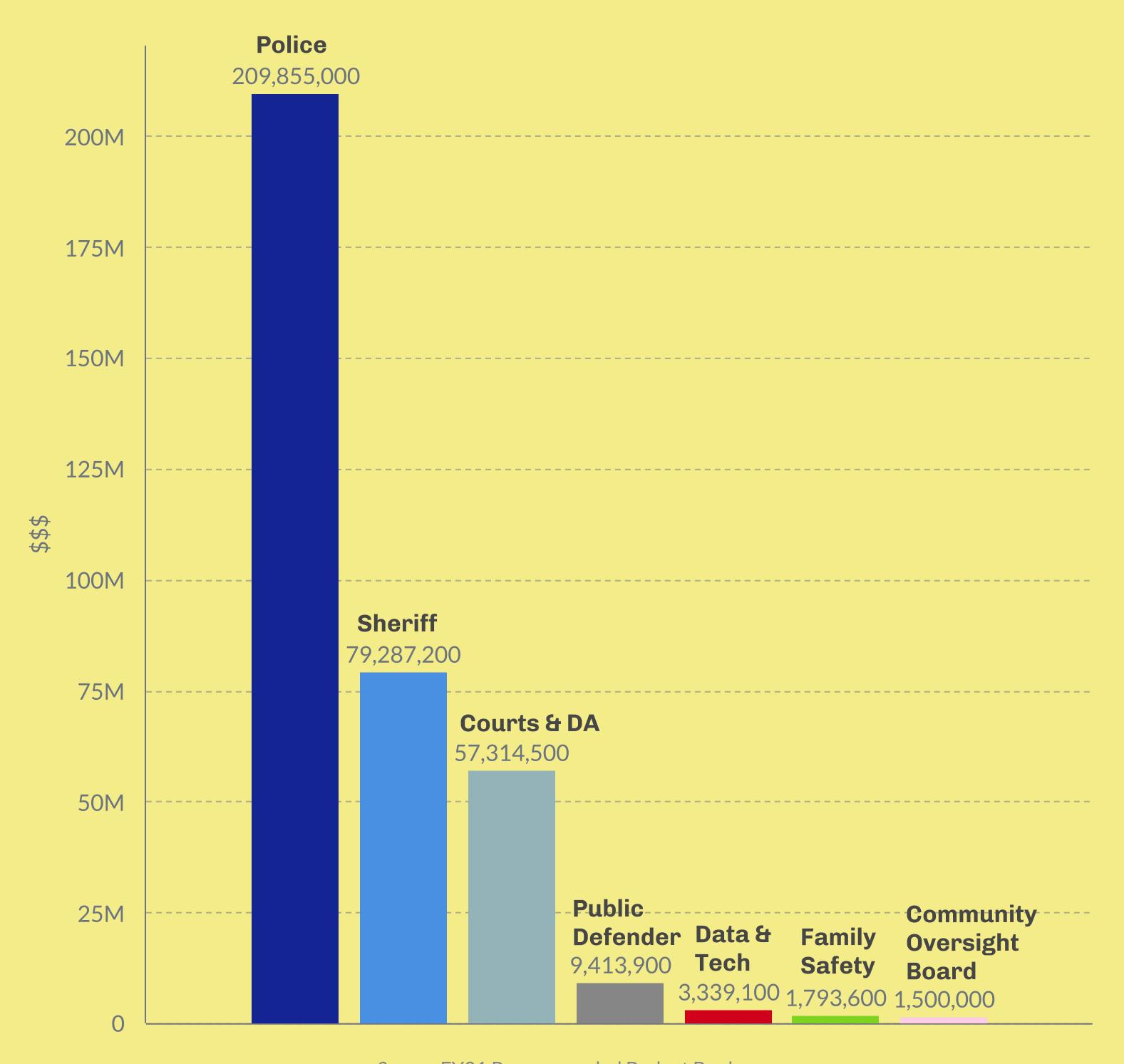
Approximately 74% of the Public Safety budget—a total of \$362.5 million—would fund the institutions comprising Metro Nashville's criminal legal system. This includes Police, Sheriff, Jails, Courts, & the District Attorney. The Public Defender's Office accounts for 2.6% and the Community Oversight Board 0.4% of the total proposed Criminal Legal System budget.

Criminal Legal System (FY21 Proposed)



Source: FY21 Recommended Budget Book

Proposed criminal legal system expenditures

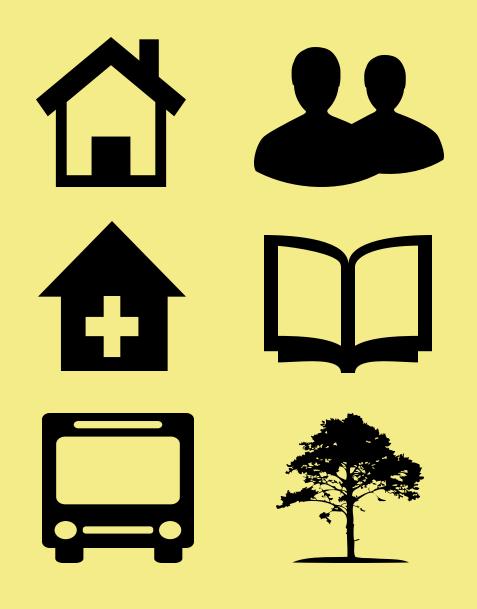


Comparing Expenditures: Criminal Legal System vs. Public Goods

Mayor Cooper proposes to spend more of **our money** on the criminal legal system than all of health care, social services, affordable housing, transit, infrastructure, libraries, parks, community centers, & rental & tax relief services combined.



\$362.5 million



\$292.9 million

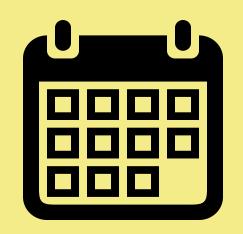
If the mayor's proposed budget passes, the city would spend approximately:

\$1 million a day surveilling, arresting, convicting, & caging Nashvillians.

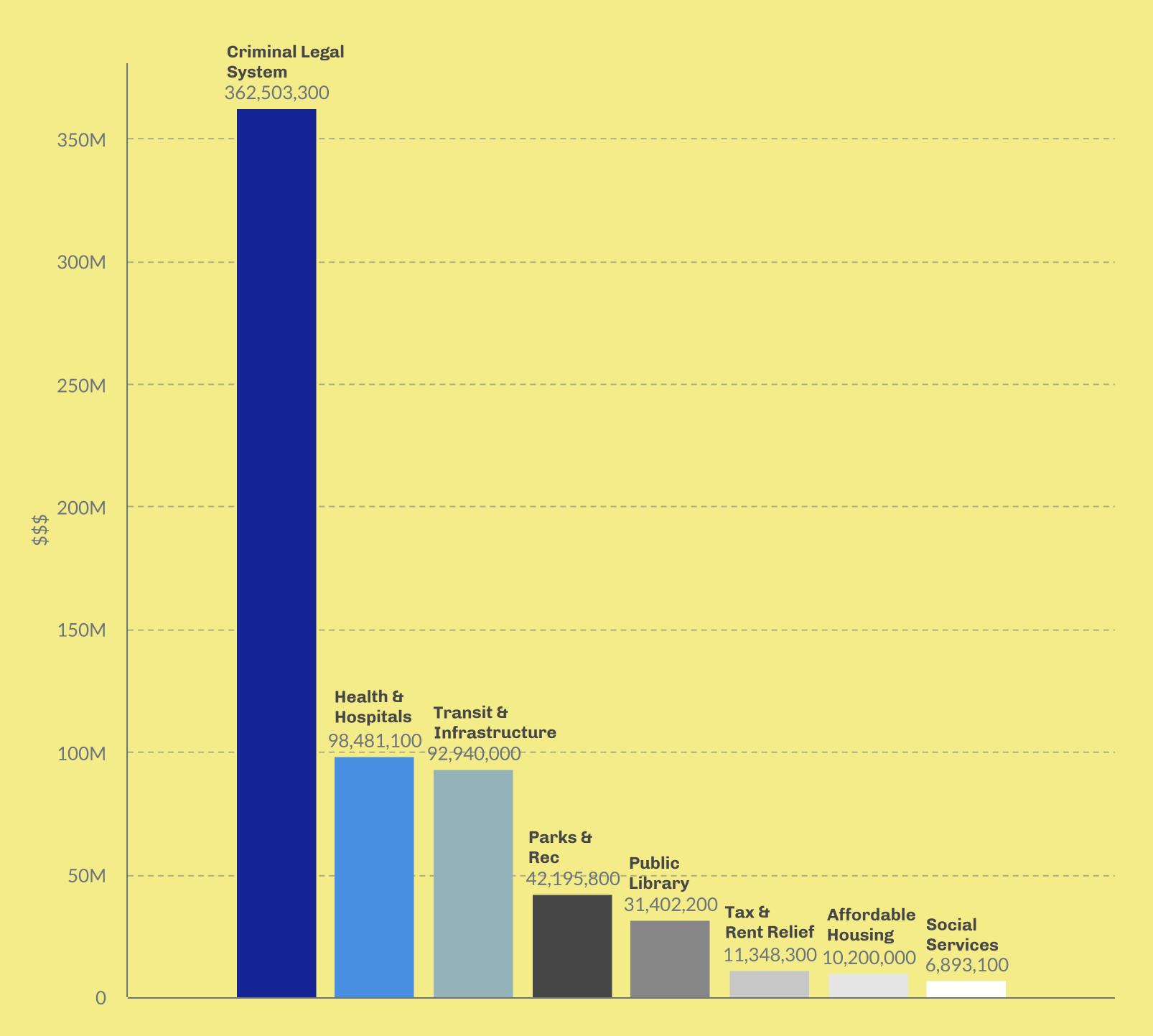


Meanwhile, the city would spend only:

\$800,000 a day meeting the health, housing, transit, economic, & community needs of Nashvillians.



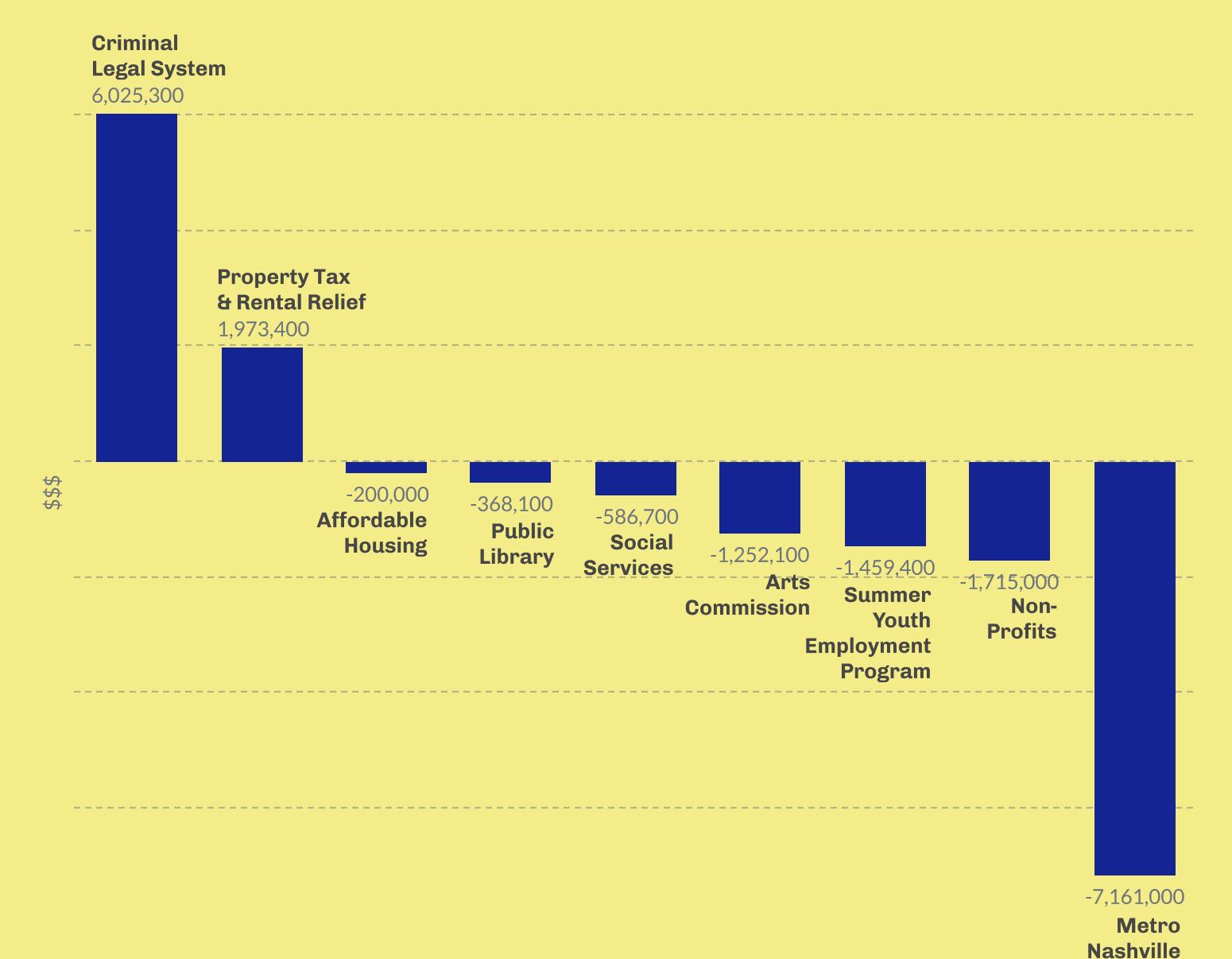
Proposed criminal legal vs. public goods expenditures



Source: FY21 Recommended Budget Book

Operating Budget Increases & Cuts

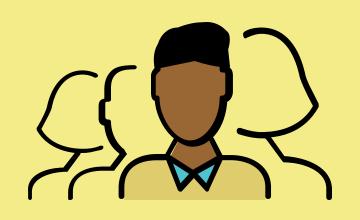
Metro Nashville is in the midst of a budget crisis. Mayor Cooper has proposed a revenue solution in the form of a 32% property tax increase. Meanwhile, he is proposing spending increases in criminal legal expenditures and spending cuts in almost all public goods categories.



Public

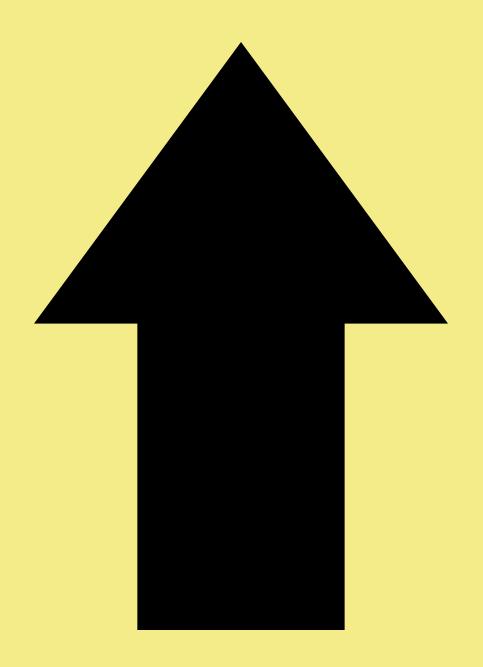
Schools

Implementing a 32% property tax increase without also implementing a massive and well-funded tax relief program will impose a significant burden on predominantly Black and low-income communities already burdened by decades of divestment from public goods, and by the presence of a police force that many experience more as a threat than a means of protection. This combination of measures increased taxes without adequately robust relief, increased spending on policing and jails, and cuts in spending on public goods - will not promote the deep-rooted public safety that we all deserve. It will undermine it.



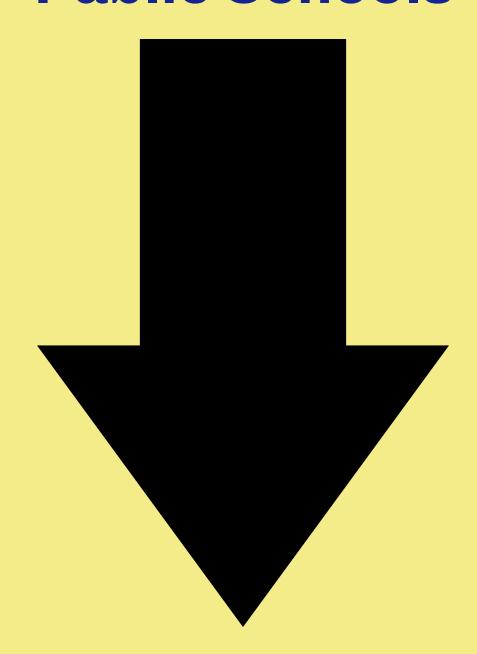
"There's always enough money to lock us up, but never enough to house or educate us."

Theeda Murphy, community activist



+\$6 million
Criminal Legal System
(Police, Jails, Courts)

-\$7 million
Metro Nashville
Public Schools



While it appears in the mayor's proposed operating budget that the **Barnes Affordable Housing Trust** Fund is receiving neither an increase nor a decrease, the \$10 million it is allotted in the proposed budget is in fact a decrease. In late 2019, Mayor Cooper cut nearly \$5 million from the Barnes Fund, promising to restore it sometime in the spring of 2020. Instead of restoring the missing \$5 million, the mayor's proposed budget simply sets the FY21 appropriation for the Barnes Fund at \$10 million.

Restoring the \$5 million cut in 2019 would mean allotting \$15 million for the Barnes Fund in FY21.

Even \$10-15 million, according to affordable housing advocates, is woefully below what our community needs to combat increasing gentrification and homelessness, especially in a time of mass unemployment.

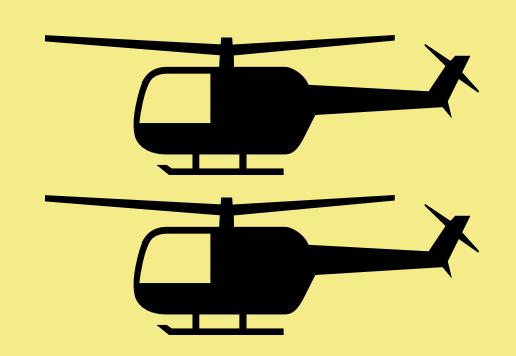


Capital Spending Plan: Criminal Legal System

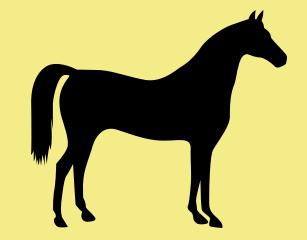
To further illustrate disparities in city spending, let's consider the 2019-2020 Capital Spending Plan, which Metro Council approved in mid-March 2020. While items in the Capital Spending Plan are funded largely through general obligation and revenue bonds, and not directly through the operating budget, taxpayers nevertheless contribute to their payment over time through debt service appropriations in the operating budget. Much like the mayor's proposed budget, the Capital Spending Plan devotes a significant share of overall dollars to the criminal legal system.

Capital Spending Plan: Criminal Legal System

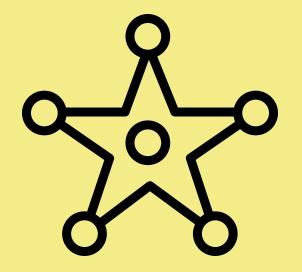
\$12million
2MNPD Helicopters



\$1.6 million
MNPD Mounted Patrol Barn

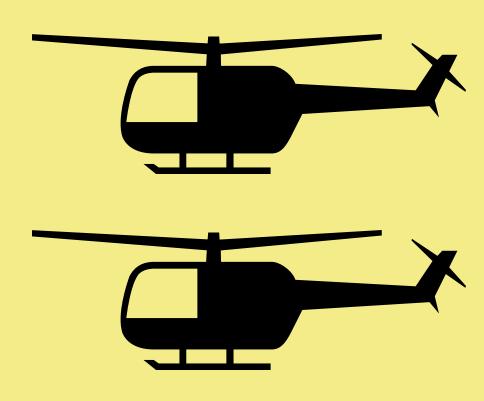


\$17.2 million New Sheriff's HQ



The two new MNPD helicopters approved in the Capital Spending Plan will ultimately cost the city \$12 million, which taxpayers will help pay over time through debt service expenditures. With only \$10 million, the Barnes Affordable Housing Trust Fund could leverage funds to provide affordable housing for more than 750 Nashvillians. Access to affordable housing is a foundation of healthy and safe communities. Helicopters are not.

\$12 million 2 Helicopters



\$10 million Barnes Fund Housing for 750 people



Nashville needs a budget that funds public safety through public goods, not policing and jails.

Nashville needs a People's Budget.

Appendix 1: Sources & Terminology

All budgetary figures cited and calculated in this report come directly from "The Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County Recommended Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2021," released by Mayor John Cooper's office on Friday, May 8, 2020. Most departmental funding comes through General Services District (GSD) General Funds, while some comes from Urban Services District (USD) General Funds. All figures in the tables found in Appendix 2 are GSD figures, unless listed as USD.

To view the mayor's FY21 proposed budget, visit:

https://www.nashville.gov/Finance/Management-and-Budget/Citizens-Guide-to-the-Budget.aspx

The "Criminal Legal System" as we name it in this report includes: Police, Sheriff (Jails), Courts, District Attorney, Public Defender, Data & Tech (Criminal Justice Planning and Justice Integration Services), the Family Safety Center, and the Community Oversight Board. It does not include the Fire Department and EMS Services, which are also grouped into "Public Safety" in the Metro budget classification system.

The terms "public goods" and "social goods" — used interchangeably throughout the report to signify non-privatized, tax-funded goods and services — includes affordable housing, public health and health care services, transit, infrastructure, social services, economic relief, parks, community centers, libraries, the arts, education, and more. We purposefully do not include police, jails, or courts in our usage of the terms "public goods" or "social goods" because we reject the premise that they are designed, equipped, or deployed to further the wellbeing of all people in the way that the above listed public and social goods are.

"Affordable Housing," as used in the graphs on pages 16 and 18, includes: the Barnes Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the Housing Incentive, and the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Pilot Program. For more on the Barnes Affordable Housing Trust Fund, visit:

https://www.nashville.gov/Mayors-Office/Economic-Opportunity/Barnes-Fund.aspx. Estimates of how many individuals could be housed through the support of Barnes Fund dollars (pp. 25-26) come from personal correspondence with a local affordable housing industry professional with decades of experience. For more information about Mayor Cooper cutting nearly \$5 million from the Barnes Fund in late 2019:

https://www.nashvillescene.com/news/pith-in-the-wind/article/21104277/mayors-office-cuts-affordable-housing-fund.

Appendix 2: Tables

Table 1 **Fiscal Year 2021 Proposed General Fund Appropriations Public Safety**

Department	FY20	FY21 Proposed	Difference	% Change
ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE				
District Attorney	\$ 7,958,100.00	\$ 8,241,200.00	\$ 283,100.00	4%
Public Defender	\$ 9,189,500.00	\$ 9,413,900.00	\$ 224,400.00	2%
Juvenile Court Clerk	\$ 1,950,100.00	\$ 1,936,400.00	\$ (13,700.00)	-1%
Circuit Court Clerk	\$ 3,465,400.00	\$ 3,429,800.00	\$ (35,600.00)	-1%
Criminal Court Clerk	\$ 6,453,200.00	\$ 6,399,200.00	\$ (54,000.00)	-1%
Clerk and Master - Chancery	\$ 1,649,800.00	\$ 1,655,900.00	\$ 6,100.00	0%
Juvenile Court	\$ 13,461,900.00	\$ 14,087,900.00	\$ 626,000.00	5%
General Sessions Court	\$ 12,368,500.00	\$ 12,411,800.00	\$ 43,300.00	0%
State Trial Courts	\$ 9,206,000.00	\$ 9,152,300.00	\$ (53,700.00)	-1%
Justice Integration Services	\$ 2,767,200.00	\$ 2,799,600.00	\$ 32,400.00	1%
Criminal Justice Planning	\$ 540,000.00	\$ 539,500.00	\$ (500.00)	0%
Metro Family Safety	\$ 2,359,000.00	\$ 1,793,600.00	\$ (565,400.00)	-24%
Total	\$ 71,368,700.00	\$ 71,861,100.00	\$ 492,400.00	1%
LAW ENFORCEMENT & JAILS				
Sheriff's Office	\$ 76,349,500.00	\$ 79,287,200.00	\$ 2,937,700.00	4%
Police Department	\$ 207,222,100.00	\$ 209,855,000.00	\$ 2,632,900.00	1%
Community Oversight Board	\$ 1,537,700.00	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ (37,700.00)	-2%
Total	\$ 285,109,300.00	\$ 290,642,200.00	\$ 5,532,900.00	2%
FIRE PREVENTION & CONTROL				
Fire Department and EMS Services (GSD)	\$ 60,341,300.00	\$ 60,570,200.00	\$ 228,900.00	0%
Fire Department and EMS Services (USD)	\$ 72,425,200.00	\$ 72,874,600.00	\$ 449,400.00	1%
Total	\$ 132,766,500.00	\$ 133,444,800.00	\$ 678,300.00	1%

Table 2 **Fiscal Year 2021 Proposed General Fund Appropriations Community Development, Social Services, Health**

Department	FY20		FY21 Proposed		ference	% Change			
REGULATION, INSPECTION, & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (Selected)									
Housing Incentive Pilot	\$ 300,00	0.00 \$	200,000.00	\$	(100,000.00)	-33%			
Barnes Affordable Housing Trust*	\$ 10,000,0	00.00 \$	10,000,000.00	\$	-	0%			
Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Pilot Program	\$ 100,00	0.00 \$	-	\$	(100,000.00)	-100%			
Nashville Entrepreneur Center	\$ 125,00	0.00 \$	-	\$	(125,000.00)	-100%			
Small Business Incentive Program	\$ 200,00	0.00 \$	-	\$	(200,000.00)	-100%			
Business Incubation Center	\$ 100,00	0.00 \$	-	\$	(100,000.00)	-100%			
Total (Selected)	\$ 10,825,0	00.00 \$	10,200,000.00	\$	(625,000.00)	-6%			
SOCIAL SERVICES									
Social Services	\$ 7,479,8	00.00 \$	6,893,100.00	\$	(586,700.00)	-8%			
Human Relations Commission	\$ 527,40	0.00 \$	514,900.00	\$	(12,500.00)	-2%			
Total	\$ 8,007,2	00.00 \$	7,408,000.00	\$	(599,200.00)	-7%			
HEALTH & HOSPITALS									
Subsidy Hospital Authority	\$ 43,112,1	00.00 \$	43,112,100.00	\$	-	0%			
Subsidy BLTC Mgmt Contract	\$ 3,500,0	00.00 \$	6,000,000.00	\$	2,500,000.00	71%			
Knowles Home Mgmt Contract	\$ 2,000,0	00.00 \$	2,000,000.00	\$	-	0%			
Correctional Healthcare	\$ 13,322,1	00.00 \$	18,048,600.00	\$	4,726,500.00	35%			
Forensic Medical Examiner	\$ 5,370,0	00.00 \$	5,713,000.00	\$	343,000.00	6%			
Health Department	\$ 23,950,0	00.00 \$	23,607,400.00	\$	(342,600.00)	-1%			
Total	\$ 91,254,2	00.00 \$	98,481,100.00	\$	7,226,900.00	8%			

^{*} Barnes Affordable Housing Trust Fund: As outlined on page 21 above, while it appears in the mayor's proposed operating budget that the Barnes Affordable Housing Trust Fund is receiving neither an increase nor a decrease – remaining "flat," as the budget puts it – the \$10 million it is allotted in the proposed budget is in fact a decrease. In late 2019, Mayor Cooper cut nearly \$5 million from the Barnes Fund, promising to restore it sometime in the spring of 2020. Instead of restoring the missing \$5 million, the mayor's proposed budget simply sets the FY21 appropriation for the Barnes Fund at \$10 million. Restoring the \$5 million cut in 2019 would mean allotting \$15 million for the Barnes Fund in FY21.

For more, see: https://www.nashvillescene.com/news/pith-in-the-wind/article/21104277/mayors-office-cuts-affordable-housing-fund.

Table 3
Fiscal Year 2021 Proposed General Fund Appropriations
Recreational, Cultural, Conservation & Community
Support

Department	FY	20	FY	21 Proposed	Di	fference	% Change
RECREATIONAL, CULTURAL, CONSERVATION & COMMUNITY SUPPORT							
Metro Action Commission	\$	5,474,900.00	\$	6,161,300.00	\$	686,400.00	13%
Property Tax Relief Program (GSD)	\$	3,550,000.00	\$	4,721,500.00	\$	1,171,500.00	33%
Property Tax Relief Program (USD)	\$	350,000.00	\$	465,500.00	\$	115,500.00	33%
Contribute Nashville Symphony	\$	15,000.00	\$	15,000.00	\$	-	0%
Contribute Adventure Science Center	\$	175,000.00	\$	25,000.00	\$	(150,000.00)	-86%
Contribute Humane Association	\$	12,500.00	\$	12,500.00	\$	-	0%
Misc Community Agencies/Service	\$	-	\$	900,000.00	\$	900,000.00	
Contribute Sister Cities	\$	80,000.00	\$	-	\$	(80,000.00)	-100%
Contribute Second Harvest	\$	200,000.00	\$	-	\$	(200,000.00)	-100%
Contribute Andrew Jackson Foundation	\$	125,000.00	\$	-	\$	(125,000.00)	-100%
Bridgeway Connections	\$	10,000.00	\$	-	\$	(10,000.00)	-100%
Justice for Our Neighbors	\$	50,000.00	\$	-	\$	(50,000.00)	-100%
St. Thomas Foundation - Safety Net Consortium of Mid. TN	\$	25,000.00	\$	-	\$	(25,000.00)	-100%
Sexual Assault Center	\$	100,000.00	\$	-	\$	(100,000.00)	-100%
Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC)	\$	50,000.00	\$	-	\$	(50,000.00)	-100%
Contribute Alignment Nashville	\$	150,000.00	\$	-	\$	(150,000.00)	-100%
Contribute Fifty Forward	\$	125,000.00	\$	-	\$	(125,000.00)	-100%
Nashville Civic Design Center	\$	125,000.00	\$	-	\$	(125,000.00)	-100%
Contribute In Full Motion	\$	250,000.00	\$	-	\$	(250,000.00)	-100%
Public Education Foundation	\$	275,000.00	\$	-	\$	(275,000.00)	-100%
Summer Youth Employment Program	\$	2,908,800.00	\$	1,449,400.00	\$	(1,459,400.00)	-50%
Nashville LGBT Chamber	\$	25,000.00	\$	-	\$	(25,000.00)	-100%
Nashville Black Chamber	\$	25,000.00	\$	-	\$	(25,000.00)	-100%
Tennessee Latin American Chamber	\$	25,000.00	\$	-	\$	(25,000.00)	-100%
Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber	\$	25,000.00	\$	-	\$	(25,000.00)	-100%
Nashville State Cmty College Fndtn - GRAD Program	\$	1,000,000.00	\$	500,000.00	\$	(500,000.00)	-50%
Agricultural Extension	\$	331,400.00	\$	327,100.00	\$	(4,300.00)	-1%
Parks and Recreation	\$	42,442,000.00	\$	42,195,800.00	\$	(246,200.00)	-1%
Arts Commission	\$	3,699,100.00	\$	2,447,000.00	\$	(1,252,100.00)	-34%
Community Education Commission	\$	521,600.00	\$	-	\$	(521,600.00)	-100%
Sports Authority	\$	846,700.00	\$	846,700.00	\$	-	0%
Total	\$	62,992,000.00		60,066,800.00		(2,925,200.00)	-5%

Table 4

Fiscal Year 2021 Proposed General Fund Appropriations Infrastructure & Transportation, Libraries, Schools

Department	FY20	FY21 Proposed	Difference	% Change
INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION				
MTA Subsidy**	\$ 48,635,900.00	\$ 28,135,900.00	\$ (20,500,000.00)	-42%
NCAC Nash Constr Readiness	\$ 630,600.00	\$ 315,300.00	\$ (315,300.00)	-50%
Public Works GSD	\$ 32,408,200.00	\$ 33,988,700.00	\$ 1,580,500.00	5%
Public Works USD	\$ 25,790,200.00	\$ 30,500,100.00	\$ 4,709,900.00	18%
Total	\$ 107,464,900.00	\$ 92,940,000.00	\$ (14,524,900.00)	-14%
PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM				
Public Library (Total)	\$ 31,770,300.00	\$ 31,402,200.00	\$ (368,100.00)	-1%
METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS				
Metro Nashville Public Schools (Total)	\$ 922,053,600.00	\$ 914,892,600.00	\$ (7,161,000.00)	-1%

** MTA Subsidy: As noted in the above table, the mayor's proposed budget recommends a 42% cut amounting to \$20,500,000 from its annual subsidy in support of the Metro Transit Authority (MTA). However, this deficit will be offset with federal dollars. As the mayor's office writes in its proposed budget, "One-time CARES Act federal funding has been awarded to Nashville MTA due to the COVID-19 pandemic for the purposes of keeping transit agencies whole during this pandemic crisis." While federal money will allow MTA to continue with the same services it has provided over the last year, it is critical to note the monumental disruptions that would ensue if Metro does not restore at least this \$20,500,000 for fiscal year 2022, when there will presumably no longer be federal dollars available.

This is how MTA officials summarize the matter in their questionnaire completed in preparation for the mayor's budget proposal process:

Due to the availability of one-time transit funding by the Federal Government under the CARES Act, there will be no immediate impact to customers, employees, the services provided by the MTA or the residents of Davidson County in FY2020- 21. However, if the \$20.5 million (plus two accumulated years of inflation) cannot be fully restored for the start of FY2021-22, there will be highly destructive service reductions and fare increases that will harm many of Davidson County's most vulnerable citizens. Because these draconian changes would require a lengthy public hearing, regulatory and advance preparation process before enactment; and because any delay in enacting them after July 1, 2021 will be impossible; the Authority will need to develop proposals to balance its FY2021-22 budget for public hearing by the end of January 2021 if there is not a commitment of funding restoration by Metro before that time. Depending on the level of funding that could be restored, the types of actions the MTA Board would need to consider include:

- · Elimination of remaining MTA Commuter Express Bus Routes.
- · Elimination of up to 7 additional bus routes based on lower levels of ridership relative to the remaining system.
- · Reduced availability of Access paratransit services, particularly in the outlying areas of Davidson County.
- · Reduced service span, and particularly weekend/holiday service.

The overall magnitude of service reductions would depend on the overall level of Metro Subsidy for FY2021-22. At the maximum level of service reduction, approximately 1/3 of all MTA employees' positions could be eliminated.

Source: https://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/Council/docs/budget/fy21/dept-info/MetroTransitAuthorityQuestionnaire.pdf

