



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 2025

CONTACT:

Leslie Flynn
Communications Director
(262) 636-9266

Mayor Mason Presents 2026 Budget: Lower Tax Rate, Neighborhood Investment, and a Vision for Racine's Future

Racine, WI – Mayor Cory Mason presented the City of Racine's proposed 2026 budget to the Common Council, outlining a balanced financial plan that cuts no services, eliminates no positions, and reduces the property tax rate for the eighth consecutive year.

"This budget continues to build on Racine's foundation — investing in our neighborhoods, infrastructure, and people — while remaining fiscally responsible," said Mayor Mason.

A Balanced Budget with Historic Tax Reductions

The proposed 2026 budget totals \$275.9 million, with \$108.4 million for city operations and a property tax levy of \$62.9 million. The mill rate will drop from 12.10 to 11.75 per \$1,000 of assessed value, marking the lowest rate in 15 years, a 30% decrease since 2017. The typical homeowner will see a slight reduction in combined property taxes and fees from the City, totaling approximately \$2,447 on a \$175,000 home, about 22% less than in 2017.

Key Priorities and Investments

Mayor Mason emphasized five priorities shaping Racine's 2026 fiscal plan:

- **Building on Our Foundation:** Strengthening Racine's regional position through economic development projects like the Breakwater and new Woodman's store.
- **Investing in Our Neighborhoods:** Continuing the *Clean Sweep* initiative, launching \$5 million in home repair grants through neighborhood TIDs.
- **Fiscal Responsibility with Vision:** Consolidating laboratory and customer service functions across departments for efficiency.
- **Economic Opportunity for All:** Addressing workforce developments, small business support, and job creation – critical to diversifying our city's economy.

- **Quality of Life and Infrastructure:** Advancing the new King Community Center and Health Clinic, addressing road and water system needs, and expanding lifeguard coverage at Zoo Beach.
- **Preparing for Tomorrow:** Funding lead service line removal for 11,000 homes, modernizing operations through data-driven decision-making, and strengthening climate resilience.

Major Initiatives

- **Lead Pipe Replacement:** A five-year plan will remove over 11,000 lead service lines, protecting residents' health and maximizing available federal funding.
- **MARK Rail Project:** Racine, Milwaukee, and Kenosha will jointly seek federal funding to extend regional passenger rail service, a project Mayor Mason called "*our golden ticket to long-term economic growth.*"
- **Department of Community Safety:** Data-driven violence prevention strategies have helped reduce non-domestic homicides by 62% and non-fatal shootings by 60% since 2022. The 2026 budget provides city funding to sustain the program.
- **City Jobs for City Residents:** Expanding local hiring through the Youth Employment Program, CDL and Fire Cadet training, and a proposed Workforce and Recruitment Specialist position.

Looking Ahead to America's 250th

The City will celebrate the nation's Semiquincentennial in 2026 with events focused on unity, civic engagement, and community pride, including new park investments, tree planting, and a citywide time capsule.

"Every investment we make — in safety, clean water, opportunity, and neighborhood pride — is a seed for those who will inherit this city after us," Mason said. "That is the Racine we are building together."

Members of the Common Council will now review the proposed budget through its committee process. The public will have the ability to have input during the public hearing scheduled for October 30 at 6 p.m. in the Common Council Chambers.

The proposed budget documents are available at www.cityofracine.org/finance/proposedbudget

The recording of Mayor Mason's Budget Address can be found at www.youtube.com/cityofracine/streams

###