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Sales tax increases will be on ballot

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Aurora voters will decide in November whether to raise sales taxes for the first time since 1993 to help pay for infrastructure, transportation and public safety improvements.



The City Council cast a final vote Monday night to put three measures on the ballot. Several members of the public spoke to the council in opposition, specifically opposing putting money toward police facilities.

If voters approve the tax increases, the money will go toward “Build Up Aurora” to fund projects that include construction of Gun Club Road, updates to police and fire stations, and transportation safety improvements.

Aurora’s sales and use tax would increase from 8.5% to 8.825% in the part of Aurora in Adams County, and from 8% to 8.325% in the part of Aurora in Arapahoe County.

The conversation about raising taxes for infrastructure projects began after a task force identified \$2.08 billion in priority infrastructure project needs, including projects that exceed what the city can afford in its annual budget, according to Deputy City Manager Laura Perry.

The total needs cost includes \$596 million in transportation infrastructure projects, \$256 million in parks, recreation and open space projects, \$84 million in libraries, arts and culture projects, \$247 million in other city facility projects and \$900 million in public safety projects.

Task force members then narrowed down the list of projects to 65 that best address community needs, Perry said. City staff proposed a 2026 bond program to the council that would fund the facilities, transportation infrastructure and public safety projects.

The 65 projects cost \$264.5 million and the bonds will be supported by sales tax and use rate increases if voters approve them, Perry said. Three measures will go to Aurora’s November ballot and, if all three pass, the city’s sales and use tax rate would increase by 0.325%.

Transportation infrastructure projects include Gun Club Road construction, replacement of the city’s oldest bridge, sidewalk improvements, Aurora Reservoir transportation improvements and other traffic safety projects.

The public safety projects include capital improvements to police stations and the Aurora 911 facility, renovation of fire stations, and the construction of a new fire station.

The community facilities projects include seven neighborhood park renovations, Aurora Center for Active Adults renovation, recreation center capital improvements, a new recreation center and library remodeling.

On Monday, several people expressed opposition to the tax increases, saying they don't want more money going to police facilities.

MiDian Shofner, who has led protest efforts against Aurora police, said she understands the need for infrastructure improvements, but doesn't want police projects funded. She also criticized the public feedback process, saying the community was not involved like they should have been in deciding what projects should be funded.

"It seems you all are more worried about buildings that have aged 30 years than you are about the Jim Crow practices that are coming from the people working inside those buildings," Shofner said Monday. Councilmember Alison Coombs countered that city staff put significant efforts into gathering public input, adding that the project has been one of the city's most extensive community feedback efforts.

"I feel a little bit defensive about Connecting Aurora because it was a very comprehensive effort on the part of our staff to really talk to community across all wards," Coombs said.

Holly Cheng, an Aurora public health nurse, said the financial struggles of her patients make it clear to her that tax increases are not the best option. She also does not want her tax money funding police, she said.

"Three cents for every 10 dollars doesn't sound like a lot, but I have several patients who can't afford \$10 antibiotics when they're pregnant who live in Aurora," Cheng said.

Councilmembers voted unanimously to approve tax increase measures going to the ballot for community facilities and transportation.

The third measure, which will ask voters to increase taxes for public safety, also passed with one vote in opposition from Councilmember Alli Jackson.