

City of Mercer Island

**CITY'S FINANCIAL CHALLENGES:
"HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM"**



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Presented to: Mercer Island Rotary Club

Date: Apr 3, 2018

Did you know...

City of Mercer Island

- **Population = 24,210**
- **Full service city**
- **2018 budget = \$64.7M** (\$15.8M for capital projects)
- **208 employees** (includes 12 contract staff)
- **Lowest property tax rate** in King Co. (among cities >20,000 pop)
- **Clean audit opinion** received for past 23 years
- **Aaa credit rating** from Moody's (best possible rating)
- **Lowest violent & property crime rates** among full-service Eastside cities
- **85% of Islanders** think the City provides the right amount of services
- **66% of Islanders** think the City is doing a "good" or "excellent" job overall
- **Best place to live in WA state** according to Money magazine (Jan 2018)

Problem Statement

Operating Budget

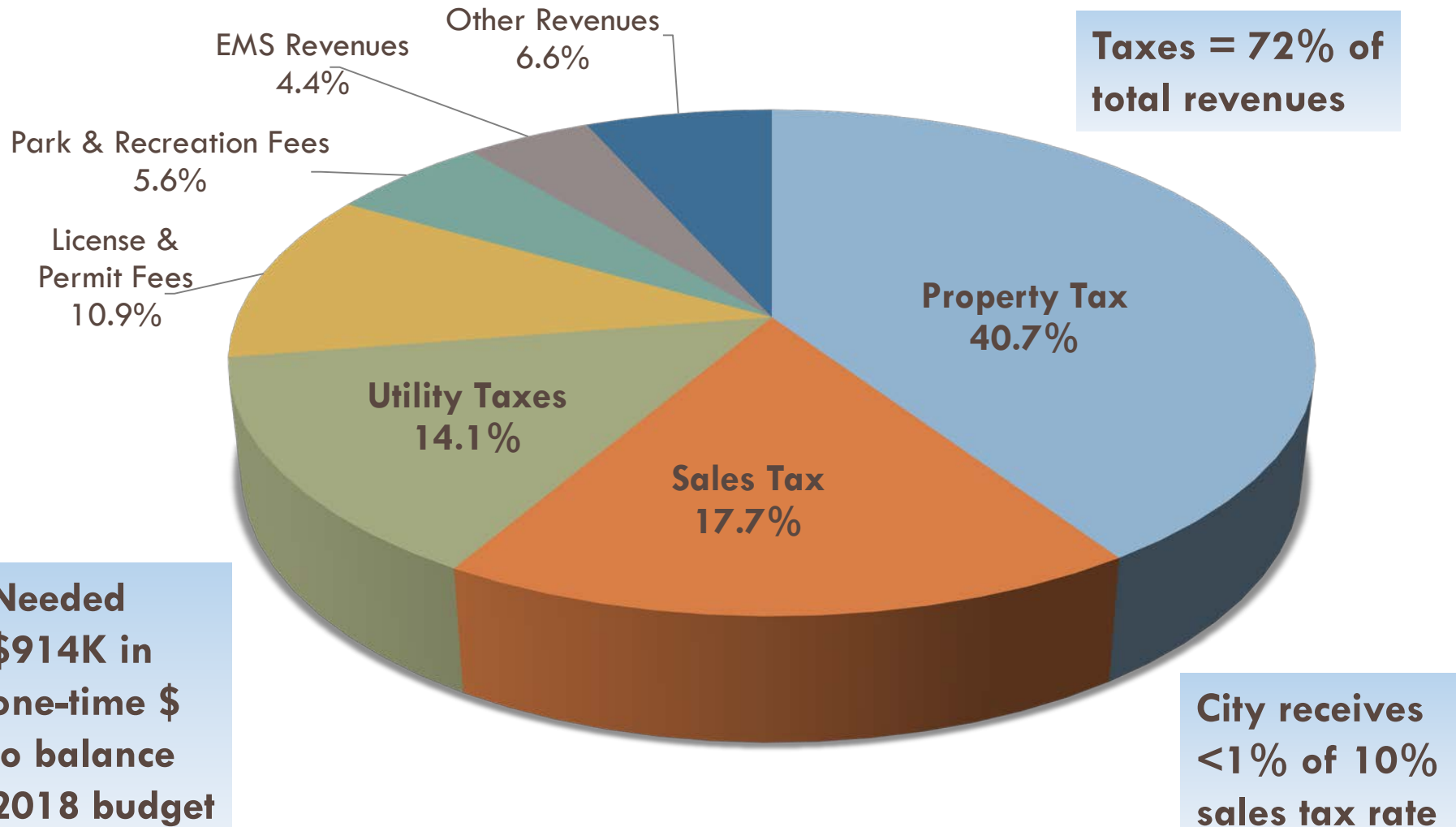
- The City had to use \$1.95M in one-time resources to balance its 2017-2018 operating budget
- Projected operating budget deficits in 2019-2024:

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
-\$1.80M	-\$2.54M	-\$3.50M	-\$4.53M	-\$5.64M	-\$6.84M

- To maintain current service levels, a new, ongoing revenue source is needed
- Otherwise, significant service level cuts will be required
- Note: Bellevue, Bothell, Kirkland, and Redmond are projecting operating deficits in 2019 or 2020

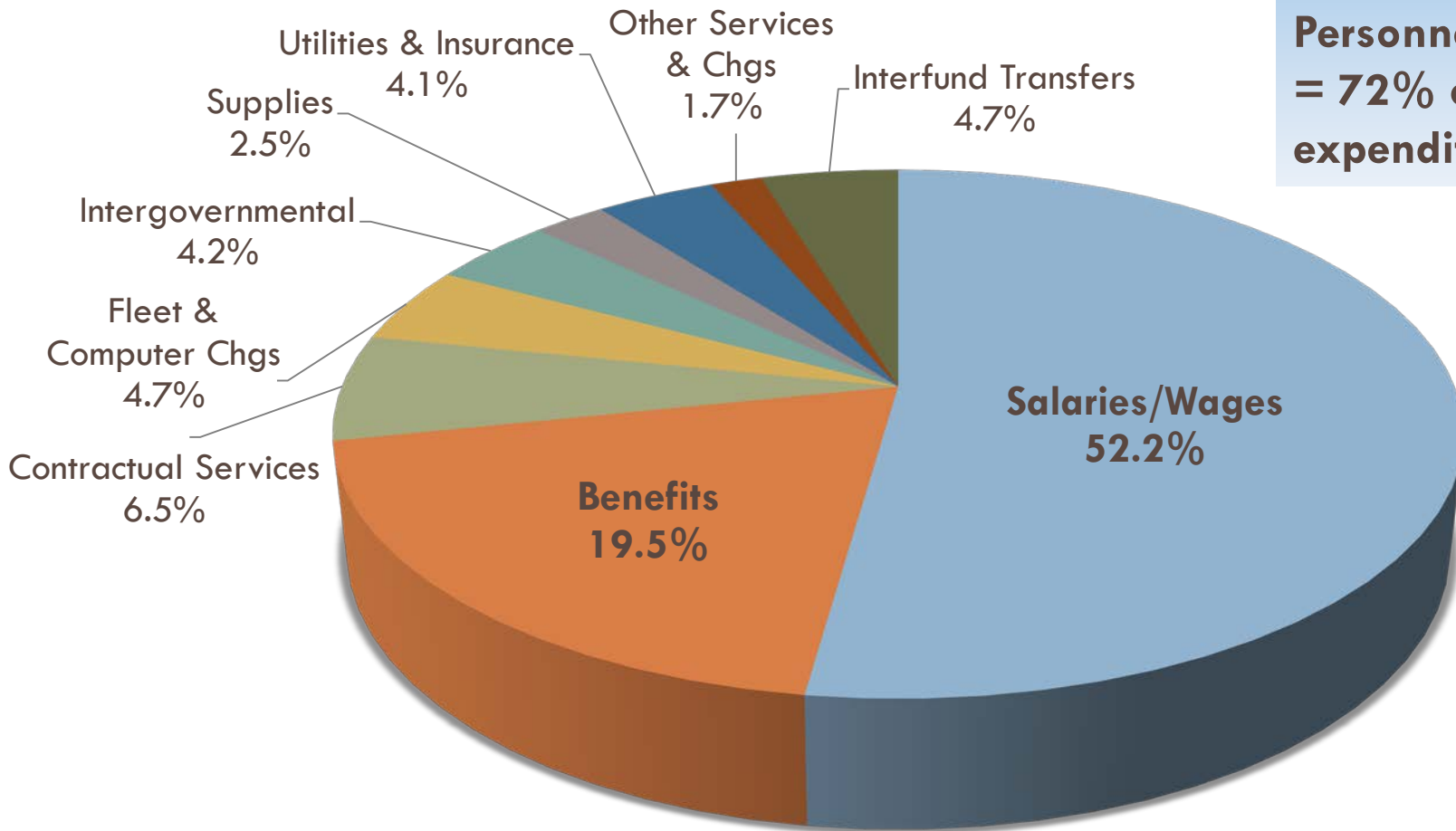
General Fund 101

Revenues (2018 Budget = \$29.9M)



General Fund 101

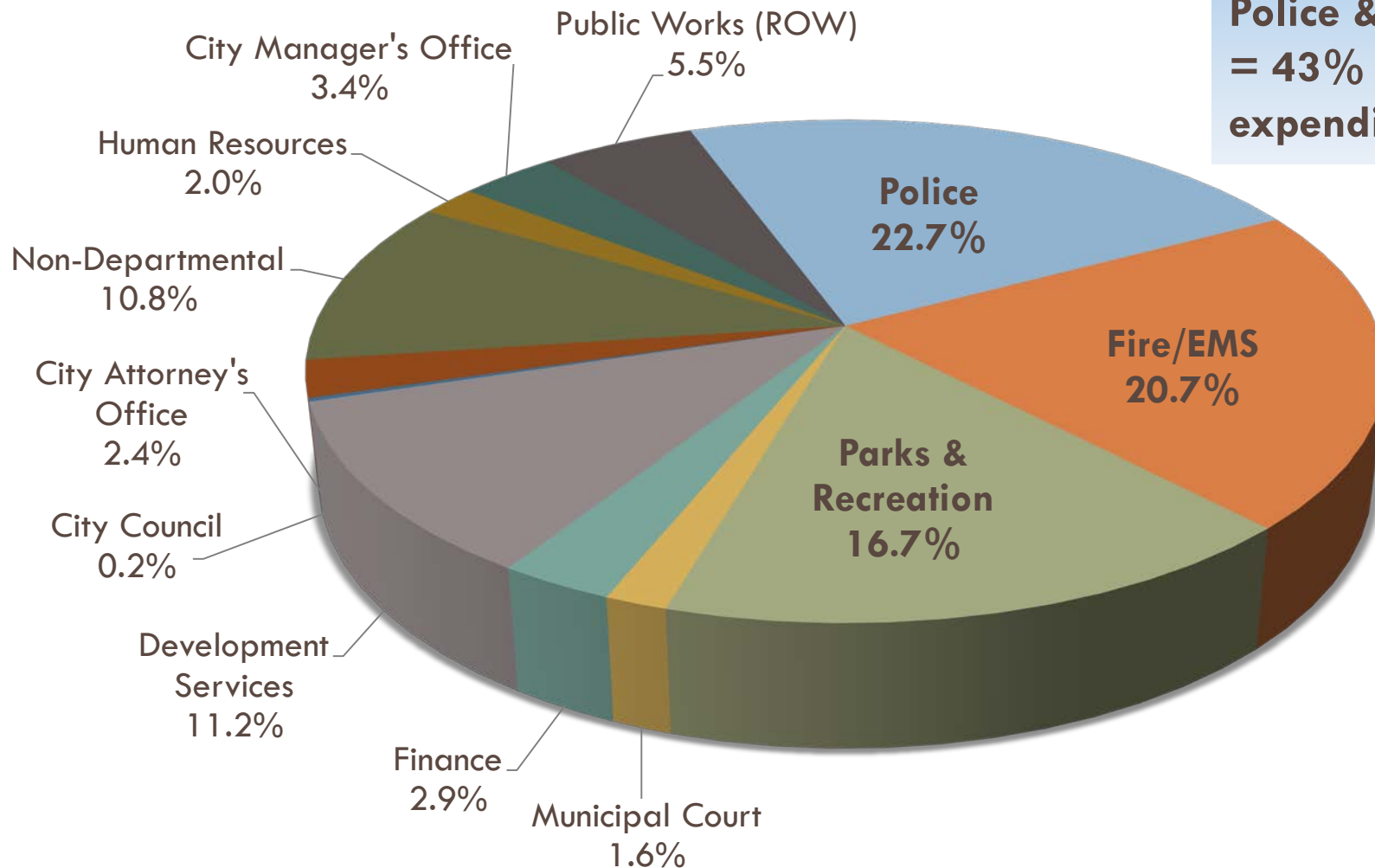
Expenditures (2018 Budget = \$31.0M)



**Personnel costs
= 72% of total
expenditures**

General Fund 101

2018 Budget by Department



**Police & Fire/EMS
= 43% of total
expenditures**

General Fund Projected Deficits

Primary Drivers

- 2019-2024 forecast (annual % growth)

General Fund	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total revenues	1.0%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
Total expenditures	4.1%	4.6%	5.1%	5.1%	5.2%	5.2%
Net expenditure growth	3.1%	1.9%	2.4%	2.4%	2.5%	2.5%

- Why?

- **Property taxes** (41% of total revenues)

- Capped at 1% growth per year + “new construction” (1%/yr average)

- **Permit fees & construction sales tax** (17% of total revenues)

- Projected to decline in 2018-2019 after all-time highs in 2016-2017

- **Personnel costs** (72% of total expenditures)

- Grow faster than inflation, which was 4.0% in Dec 2017 (Seattle metro)

Operating Budget Balancing Options

Expenditures

■ Reduce service levels

- 49 employees, or 24% of City's workforce, would have to be cut in 2019-2024 to balance the budget

Total Staffing Cuts	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Required each yr (\$)	\$1.73M	\$604K	\$776K	\$794K	\$813K	\$833K	\$5.55M
Required each yr (%)	5.0%	1.8%	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%	15.6%
Required each yr (FTEs)	16.5	5.5	6.8	6.7	6.6	6.5	48.7

- Most of the cuts would impact “non-essential” services provided by Parks & Recreation and Youth & Family Services
- After 2024, the City would have to continue cutting staff because of the ongoing structural imbalance

Operating Budget Balancing Options

Revenues

- **Economic development (sales tax)**
 - Wouldn't generate more than \$200K/yr in ongoing sales tax revenue because:
 - City sales tax rate is <1% of 10% total rate
 - Major retail businesses and car dealerships are already located near Mercer Island in Seattle and Bellevue
- **Utility tax (City's water, sewer & storm water utilities)**
 - Making temporary increase from 5.3% to 8.0% permanent would generate \$500K in 2019
 - Average water & sewer utility tax rate in WA state in 2016: 9.5%
 - Average storm water utility tax rate in WA state in 2016: 8.0%

Operating Budget Balancing Options

Revenues

■ **B&O tax**

- Combining Beautification Fund with General Fund would free up \$225K/yr beginning in 2019 (ordinance required)
- Increasing B&O tax rate from 0.10% to 0.15% would generate \$350K in 2019
 - Average B&O tax rate in WA state in 2016: 0.16%-0.21%

■ **Property tax levy lid lift**

- Voter approved mechanism (simple majority) for lifting the 1% growth lid on the annual property tax levy
- Best single revenue option given that property tax is the City's largest revenue source (41% of total General Fund revenues)

Property Tax Levy Lid Lift Scenarios

For Operating Budget

- Assumes 6 year levy lid lift
 - Typical for an operations and/or maintenance levy
 - Annual increase is not limited to 1%
- An operating levy lid lift is generally structured in one of 3 ways, which are equivalent over term of levy:
 - Based on actual annual funding need
 - Based on average annual funding need (fixed amount)
 - Based on smoothed annual funding need (in between actual and average funding need structures)
- 2 scenarios (based on revised 2019-2024 forecast)
 - Levy lid lift only
 - Smaller levy lid lift + new revenues

Scenario 1: Levy Lid Lift Only

*No Other New Revenues**

Based on Smoothed Annual Funding Need + 5% Annual Growth

Levy Lid Lift Rate & Annual Cost	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Avg
Levy lid lift rate per \$1,000 AV	\$0.275	\$0.288	\$0.303	\$0.318	\$0.334	\$0.351	\$0.311
Annual cost (\$1.20M AV home)	\$331	\$348	\$365	\$383	\$402	\$422	\$375

* Assumes following:

1. Beautification Fund is combined with General Fund.
2. No other new revenue sources.

Scenario 2: Smaller Levy Lid Lift Plus *Other New Revenues**

Based on Smoothed Annual Funding Need + 5% Annual Growth

Levy Lid Lift Rate & Annual Cost	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Avg
Levy lid lift rate per \$1,000 AV	\$0.211	\$0.221	\$0.232	\$0.244	\$0.256	\$0.269	\$0.239
Annual cost (\$1.20M AV home)	\$254	\$267	\$280	\$294	\$309	\$324	\$288

* Assumes following:

1. Beautification Fund is combined with General Fund.
2. Temporary utility tax rate increase in 2017-2018 is made permanent.
3. B&O tax rate is increased from 0.10% to 0.15%.

2018 Property Tax Levy

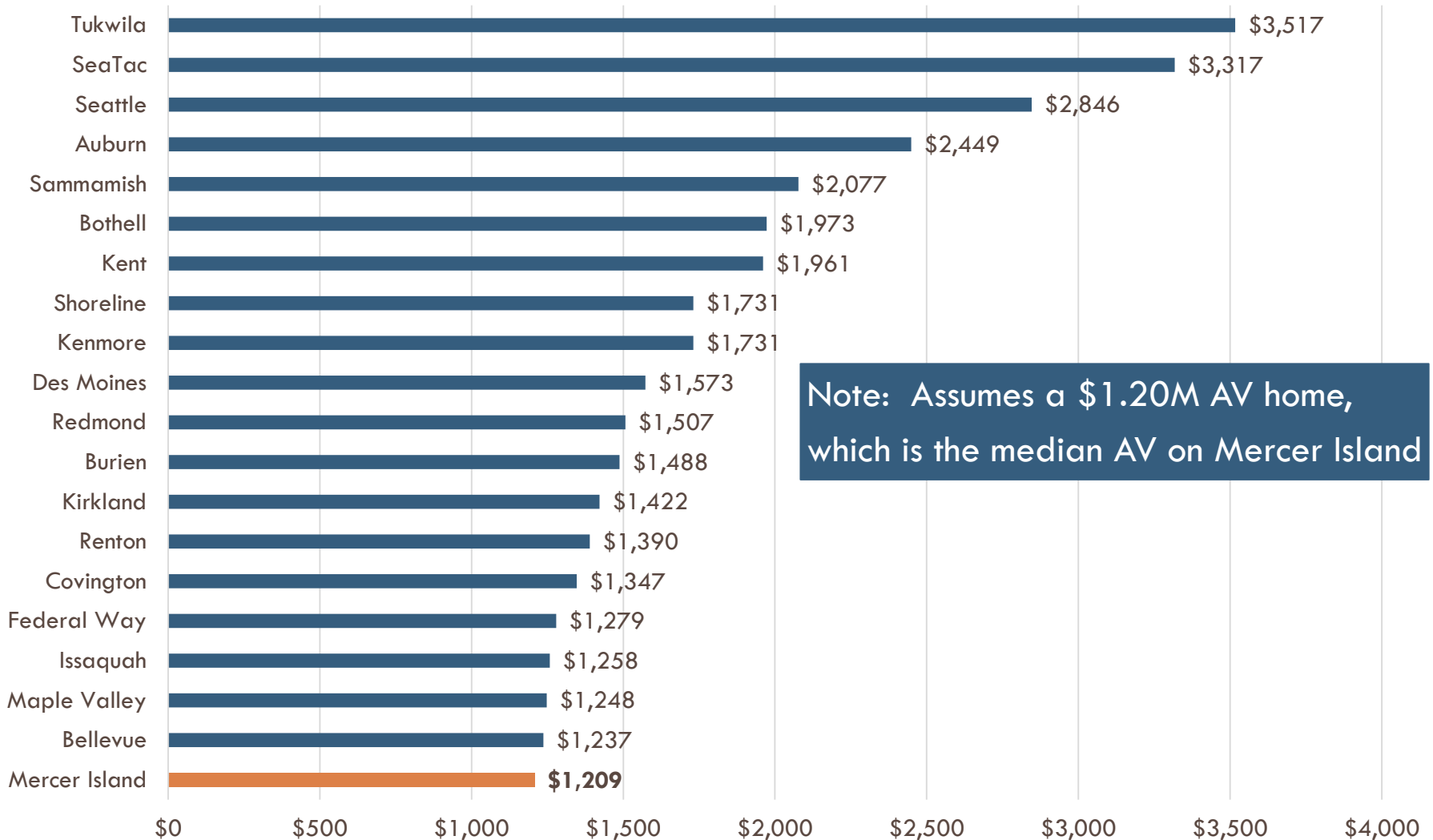
\$1.20M Median AV Home

Jurisdiction	2018 Levy Rate Per \$1,000 AV	2018 Levy Amount	% of Total	2018 Levy - 2017 Levy*
State School Fund	\$2.91820	\$3,516	33.7%	\$1,308
MI School District	\$2.30117	\$2,773	26.5%	\$157
King County	\$1.32735	\$1,599	15.3%	\$96
City of MI	\$1.00313	\$1,209	11.6%	\$38
Library	\$0.41190	\$496	4.8%	\$6
EMS	\$0.23940	\$288	2.8%	\$3
Sound Transit	\$0.22745	\$274	2.6%	\$2
Port of Seattle	\$0.13518	\$163	1.6%	-\$4
Flood Zone	\$0.10708	\$129	1.2%	\$1
Total	\$8.67086	\$10,448	100.0%	\$1,607

* 2018 median AV home (\$1.20M) vs. 2017 median AV home (\$1.09M)

2018 Property Tax Levy Comparison

City Levy Only (KC Cities >20,000)



Questions



Additional Information

- Key question regarding General Fund
- Key observations regarding General Fund
- 2017 total staffing ratio comparison
- 2017 administrative staffing ratio comparison
- Challenges of cutting staff by department
- Alternative service delivery options
- 2018 total City taxes vs. 4 monthly utility bills for a typical MI household

General Fund

Key Question

- Given the underlying structural imbalance, how did the City balance the General Fund budget in 2013-2018?
 - 10 FTEs were cut in 2011-2012 budget
 - High level of development activity in 2013-2017
 - Increased cost recovery targets for development services in 2014 & 2016
 - Instituted 3.9% utility tax on City's water, sewer & storm water utilities in 2013 & increased tax rate to 5.3% in 2014

General Fund

Key Question

- How did the City balance the General Fund budget in 2013-2018? (cont'd)
 - 1.0% property tax increase in 2013-2018 + “new construction” additions (1.3% per year on average)
 - One-time funding used to balance budgets in 2013-2014, 2015-2016 & 2017-2018
 - 1.8% average annual inflation kept salary & wage growth low in 2013-2017
 - 3.5% average annual growth in medical insurance premiums in 2013-2017

General Fund

Key Observations

- Property, sales, and utility taxes = 72% of total revenues
- Personnel costs = 72% of total expenditures
- **To maintain current service levels on an ongoing basis, taxes need to grow at the same rate as personnel costs**

General Fund

Key Observations

- Personnel costs (especially healthcare benefits) grow faster than inflation
- Unlike the private sector, the City cannot spread personnel cost increases across the number of widgets sold or the number of clients served, with very few exceptions
- From a cost growth perspective, the City is very similar to a law, accounting, or engineering firm whose costs are primarily tied to personnel

2017 Total Staffing Ratio Comparison

Full Service Eastside City	2017 Total # of Regular Employees	2017 Total Staffing Ratio ¹	Adjusted 2017 Total Staffing Ratio ²	Note
Redmond	672	10.81	10.25	No Municipal Court or civil attorneys
Bellevue	1,338	9.51	8.97	No Municipal Court
Issaquah	253	7.03	8.15	No Fire Dept or civil attorneys
Bothell	342	7.70	7.43	
Mercer Island	196	8.08	7.14	Only city with Social Services Dept
Kirkland	605	7.03	6.75	Major annexation in 2011; MI had a lower staffing ratio before 2011

¹ 2017 total staffing ratio = # of total staff (FTEs) in 2017 per 1,000 population.

² To create an “apples to apples” comparison, the following adjustments were made:

- 48 FTEs from Eastside Fire & Rescue were added to Issaquah (equals city’s share of EF&R FTEs)
- Social services, civil attorney, and Municipal Court FTEs, if any, were deducted from each city
- Advanced Life Support FTEs were deducted from Redmond and Bellevue

2017 Admin Staffing Ratio Comparison

Full Service Eastside City	2017 Total # of Admin Employees	2017 Admin Staffing Ratio	Note
Redmond	88	1.42	No civil attorneys (contracted out)
Bellevue	178	1.26	
Issaquah	38	1.05	No civil attorneys (contracted out)
Bothell	45	1.01	
Kirkland	85	0.99	
Mercer Island	24	0.97	

Note: Administrative staff includes the following departments/functions: Executive/City Manager's Office, City Clerk's Office, City Attorney's Office, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology (IT), Geographic Information Services (GIS), and Public Communications.

Challenges of Cutting Staff by Dept

Department	FTEs*	Description of Challenge
Police & Fire	67.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number 1 priority of government Subject to contractual minimum staffing requirements Eliminated Eastside Narcotics Task Force Detective in 2016
DSG	24.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly funded by development fees Taxes fund long range planning work and code enforcement
Public Works	35.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly funded by City's water, sewer, and storm water utility rates Taxes fund right-of-way maintenance & neighborhood traffic control During Great Recession, 2.5 FTEs were cut from ROW team
Parks & Recreation	30.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50-55% total cost recovery from recreation, ballfield & rental fees Taxes fund park maintenance & partially fund youth recreation programs
YFS	21.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly funded by \$1.6M in annual Thrift Shop sales Taxes fund \$400K/yr (63%) of mental health school counseling services
Other Departments	29.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes City Manager's Office, City Attorney's Office, Finance, Human Resources, Information & Geographic Services, and Municipal Court Lowest admin staffing ratio vs. 5 full service Eastside cities

* Includes regular and contract FTEs.

Alternative Service Delivery Options

- **De-annexing from King County Library System**
 - What if \$5.5M paid to KCLS was re-directed to the City and library services were contracted out?
 - Would reduce projected deficit in 2020 to \$430K, but would not solve the City's structural imbalance
 - 18-24 months needed to research options, engage the public, put two measures on ballot, contract with new service provider, and issue debt
- **Contracting out Fire/EMS services**
 - Staff is currently exploring this possibility with Bellevue and Eastside Fire & Rescue to determine if there would be any cost savings
- **Contracting out Marine Patrol services**
 - 2018 budget: \$510K total cost - \$211K revenues = \$299K net cost
 - Other service providers: KC Sheriff's Office & City of Seattle

Total City Taxes vs. 4 Monthly Utility Bills

Typical Mercer Island Household (2018)

\$1.20M Median AV Home & Family of 4

2018 Typical Monthly Cost For:	Amount	Note
Puget Sound Energy (electricity & gas)*	\$220	3,200 sf home with A/C
Xfinity (cable TV, internet & digital voice)*	\$215	X1 Premier Triple Play (after promotion)
Verizon (cellular telephone)*	\$200	Beyond Unlimited, 4 lines, no device payment
City taxes	\$182	Only includes taxes remitted to City
City utilities (water, sewer, storm & EMS)*	\$167	Includes King Co. sewage treatment

* Excludes federal, state, and city taxes/fees.

City taxes fund the following:

- 24/7 police, fire & emergency medical services
- Street, roadside, median & sidewalk maintenance
- Park, path, trail & public building maintenance
- Recreation program support for youth & seniors
- School-based mental health counseling services
- Comprehensive planning & code enforcement
- Public meetings, public communication & records mgt

City utility charges fund the following:

- Water storage, distribution & maintenance
- Sewer collection, treatment & maintenance
- Storm & surface water management
- Utility infrastructure replacement
- Staffing capacity (i.e. 4 firefighters) to respond to simultaneous EMS calls