



City of Sebastopol

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: ~~October 7, 2025~~ (Continued to October 21, 2025)

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To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Ana Kwong – Administrative Services Director
Subject: Receipt of Budget at a Glance Format and Authorize Staff to Post Such Document on the City Website

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the City Council formally receive the “Budget at a Glance” summary format and authorize staff to publish the document on the City’s official website. This will enhance transparency and accessibility for residents, businesses, and stakeholders.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Despite the economic uncertainties and operational challenges of recent years, the City of Sebastopol remains committed to responsible financial practices. The recently adopted budget reflects the City Council’s ongoing commitment to sound financial management and a disciplined approach to budgeting. The City remains cautious yet proactive in navigating the evolving economic landscape, ensuring that decisions are made with long-term sustainability and community well-being in mind.

BACKGROUND:

The Sebastopol City Council, guided by its goals and priorities, remains dedicated to serving residents, businesses, visitors, and one another with integrity and purpose. The Council reaffirms its commitment to operating as a full-service city, prioritizing:

- Community Vitality
- Public safety
- Infrastructure
- High Performance Organization
- Long Term Financial Sustainability
- Economic Development

This approach reflects the Council’s resolve to uphold core services while planning responsibly for the future.

DISCUSSION:

During the development of the FY25–26 budget, the concept of creating a summarized version of the full budget document began to take shape. While the format had not yet been finalized, the idea was to distil a 300-page budget into a concise, accessible summary gained traction. The goal was to highlight key elements and make it easier for the public to navigate and focus on areas of interest.

At the time, staff was uncertain how the summary would ultimately be structured or produced. However, during the FY25–26 budget deliberations, the City Council formally expressed support for the initiative, emphasizing the importance of such a document in promoting transparency and public engagement and it was part of the City Council goals and priorities.



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Recognizing the value of this effort, staff moved forward with developing the summary, laying the groundwork for what is expected to become an annual practice. While the initial compilation required a significant investment of time, the foundational framework is now in place—making future updates more streamlined and efficient.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

Staff reached out to the municipal finance listserv to request examples of “Budget at a Glance” or “Budget in Brief” documents, along with information on how those summaries were developed—whether created in-house or with the support of external design services.

Some agencies shared that they used internal staff and tools like Canva to design their documents. While Canva offers a free platform, it has limitations in layout flexibility and functionality. Additionally, staff is not familiar with the software, which is more suited for those with a graphic design background.

Given these constraints, staff made the decision to dedicate time over the weekend to compile and format the attached document using available tools. While the initial effort required a significant investment of time, the foundational work has now been completed. Moving forward, staff anticipates that updating the document annually will be more efficient and manageable.

BUDGET COMMITTEE REVIEW

This item was reviewed and discussed by the Budget Committee on September 15, 2025. The document was revised and acceptable to the Budget Committee as submitted to the City Council for acceptance.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS/PRIORITIES/ AND OR GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY:

This agenda item represents the City Council’s goals/priorities as follows:

Goal 5 – Long Term Financial Sustainability

Action Plan 4 - Publish Reports on Budget Illustrating Budget (Budget at a Glance)

A "Budget at a Glance" provides a concise overview of the financial plan. It highlights key financial metrics and summaries, making it easier for the public to understand the budget's main components without delving into detailed documents.

This agenda item represents the City Council General Plan Consistency (if applicable): Not Applicable

FISCAL IMPACT:

There’s no fiscal impact in accepting this budget at a glance format.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

This item has been noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting date. The City has also used social media to promote and advertise the City Council Meeting Agenda Items.

During the October 7, 2025 City Council Meeting, a member of the public raised concerns about the presentation of the Enterprise Fund in the *Budget at a Glance* document. Specifically, the individual noted difficulty reconciling figures between the first and last pages, suggesting a discrepancy in how the Enterprise Fund was represented.



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In response, we would like to clarify that the first page includes both operating and capital components of the Enterprise Fund, while the breakdown on the last page reflects only the operating portion. To address this confusion, the heading on the final page has been revised to explicitly indicate that it pertains solely to operating funds.

Another comment suggested that the *Budget at a Glance* may be intended to replace the full budget document, raising concerns about transparency. We want to emphasize that the *Budget at a Glance* is a supplementary summary designed to provide a high-level overview for those who may not wish to review more than 300-pages of the budget. It is not a substitute for the comprehensive budget document, which remains publicly available on the City's website since July 25, 2025 and contains detailed financial data and analysis. This is the weblink to the budget https://www.cityofsebastopol.gov/resource_library/city-budgets/

City staff remains committed to transparency and public engagement. We recognize that government budgeting and financial reporting can be complex, and we strive to present information in formats that are not only accurate and accessible but also easier to comprehend. Staff welcomes constructive feedback and we appreciate the opportunity to clarify and improve our communications.

As of the writing of this agenda item report, the City has not received any public comment. However, if staff receive public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this agenda item report, such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting.

RESTATED RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council formally receive the "Budget at a Glance" summary format and authorize staff to publish the document on the City's official website. This will enhance transparency and accessibility for residents, businesses, and stakeholders.

CITY COUNCIL OPTIONS:

Acceptance of the Budget at a Glance format and Authorize Staff to post the document on the City's website.

ATTACHMENTS:

Budget at a Glance Report

APPROVALS:

Department Head Approval: Approval Date: 9/8/2025

CEQA Determination (Planning): Approval Date: 9/8/2025

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines.

Administrative Services (Financial): Approval Date: 9/8/2025

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

Account Code (if applicable) _____

City Attorney Approval Approval Date: 9/29/25

City Manager Approval Approval Date: 9/29/25



BUDGET AT A GLANCE

Agenda Item Number 12

Annual Budget FY 2025-26

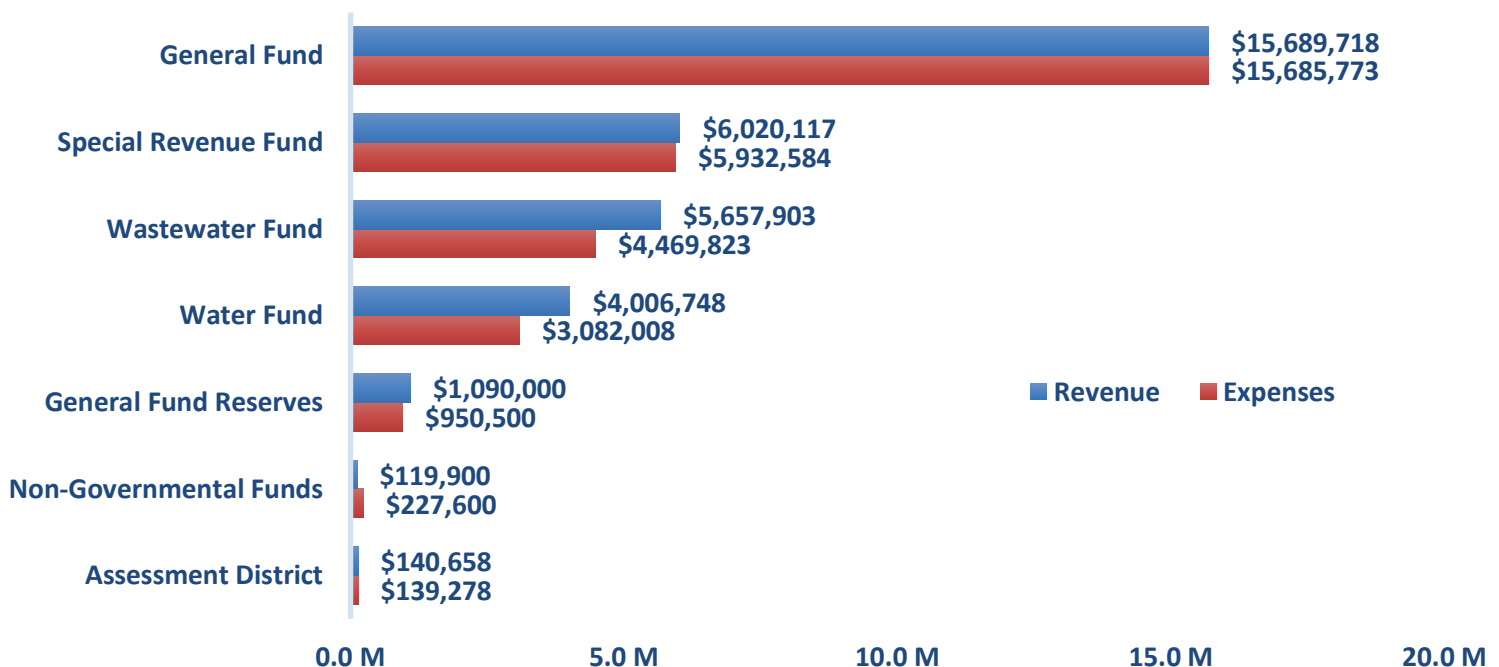
The City of Sebastopol Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-26 outlines the financial and staffing resources required to meet the City Council goals, maintain service levels, and carry out capital improvement projects

GOALS & PRIORITIES

On April 1, 2025, the Sebastopol City Council formally adopted its goals and priorities for the year. These strategic objectives serve as a foundation for guiding decision-making across the City. The FY2025–26 budget is crafted to actively support and advance these priorities.



CITY-WIDE BUDGET BY FUND





BUDGET AT A GLANCE

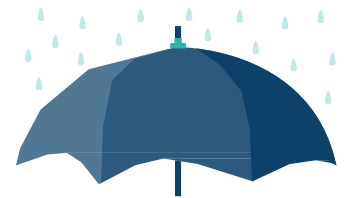
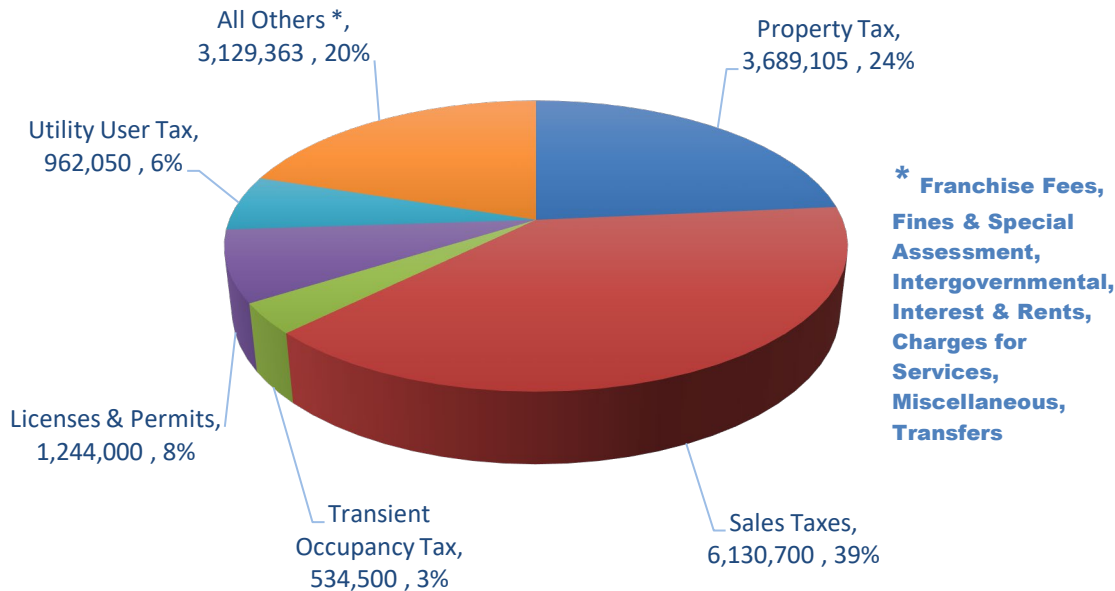
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Annual Budget FY 2025-26

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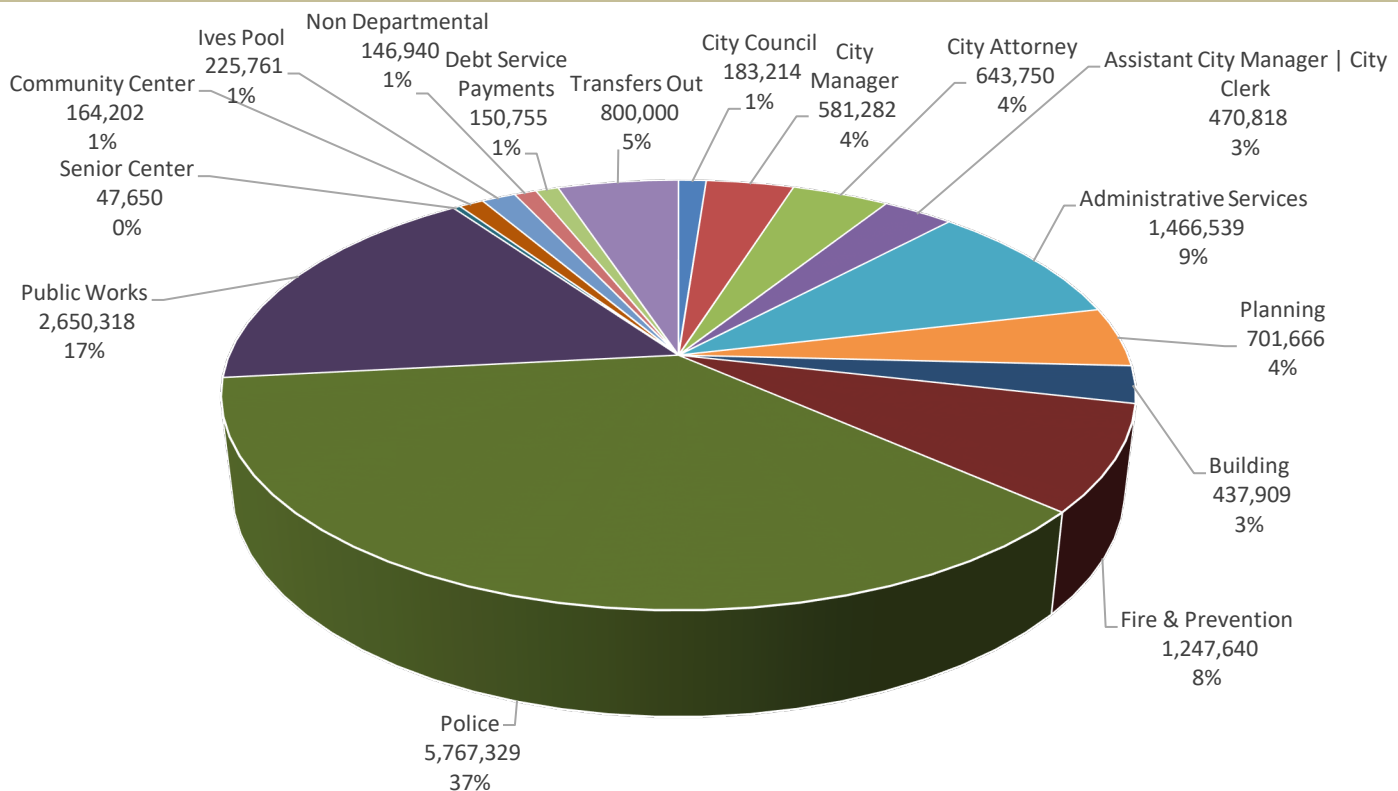
GENERAL FUND BUDGET

REVENUE BY SOURCE



**Contributions to the
GENERAL FUND
UNASSIGNED
RESERVES
\$3,945**

EXPENSES BY DEPARTMENT





BUDGET AT A GLANCE

Agenda Item Number 12

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MEASURE U

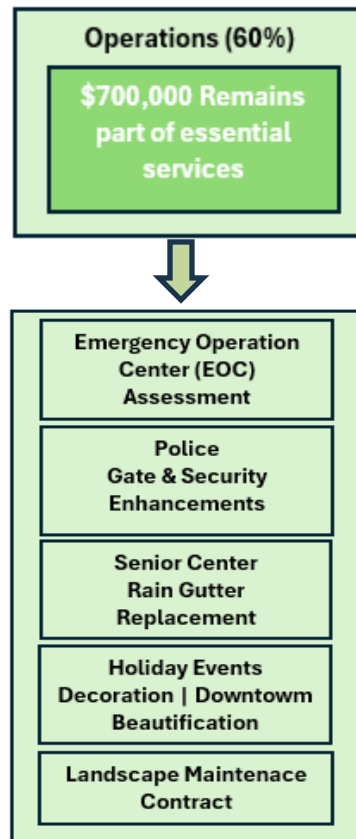
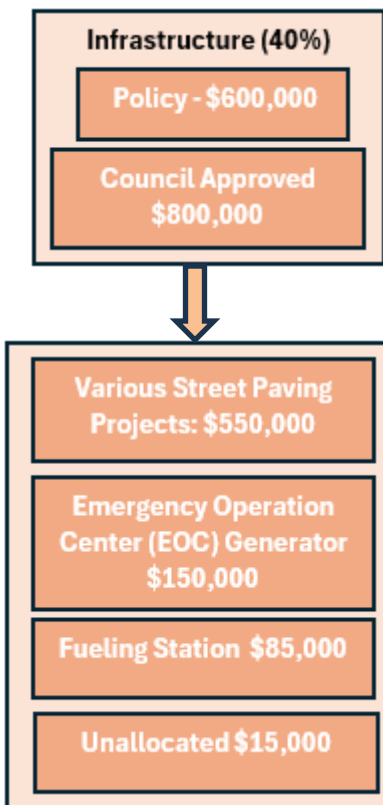
In November 2024 Sebastopol voters approved Measure U to authorize a new ½-cent (0.5%) local sales tax to generate approximately \$1.5 million annually to support basic City services. The tax will remain in effect for 12 years.

HOW IS THE MEASURE U TAX DOLLAR ALLOCATED?



40% City roads, streets, drainage, and parks, \$0.40

60% City service including public safety, senior center, attracting local businesses \$0.60

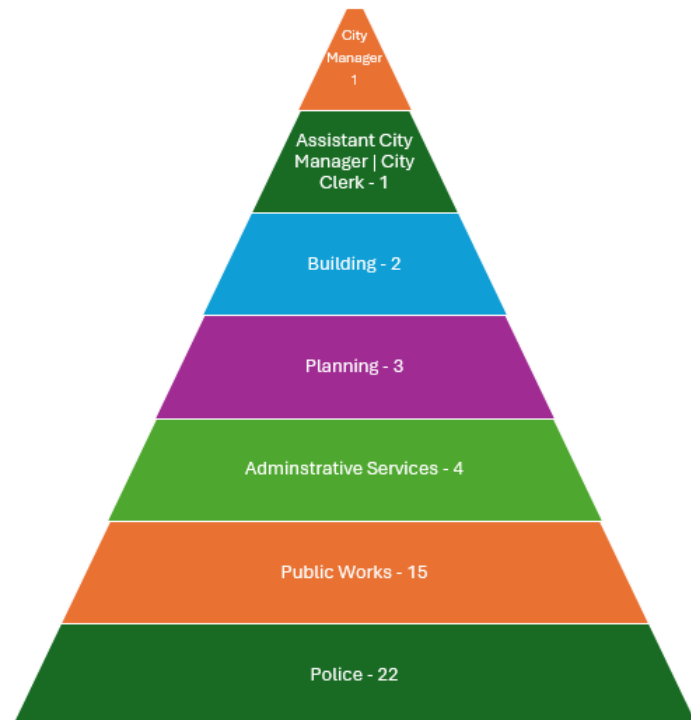


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NEW – FY25-26 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

- 1 Bike, Ped & Safety
- 2 Parks Projects
- 2 Paving Projects
- 2 Water/Wastewater Projects
- 2 Admin Projects

PERSONNEL - STAFFING





BUDGET AT A GLANCE

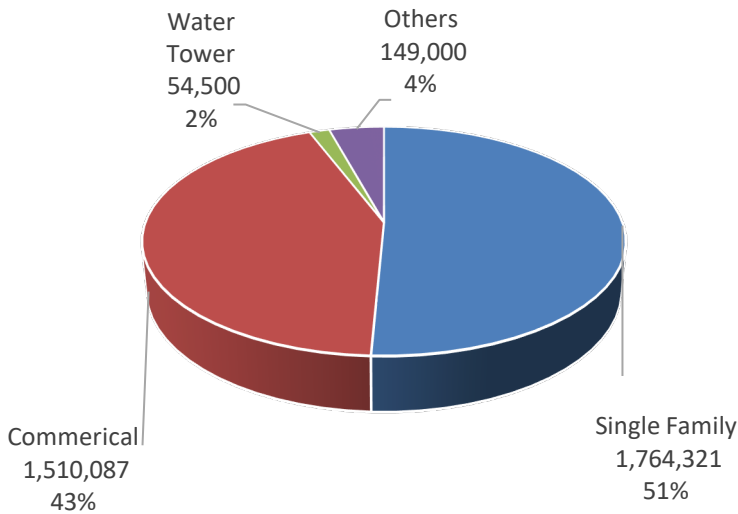
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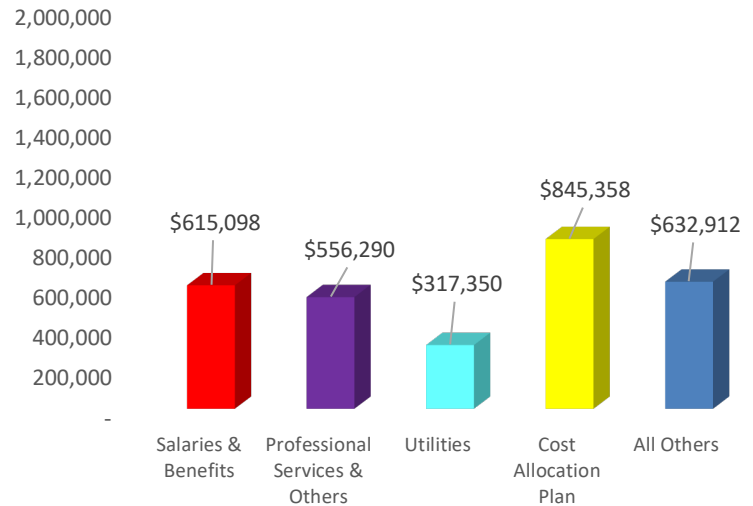
ENTERPRISE FUND OPERATING FUND ONLY

The City of Sebastopol operates its Water and Wastewater services through enterprise funds, which are structured to function similarly to private businesses. These funds are self-supporting, with revenues derived primarily from service charges. The enterprise fund model ensures that the full cost of providing water and sewer services—including operations, maintenance, capital improvements, and long-term liabilities—is transparently accounted for and funded by the users of those services.

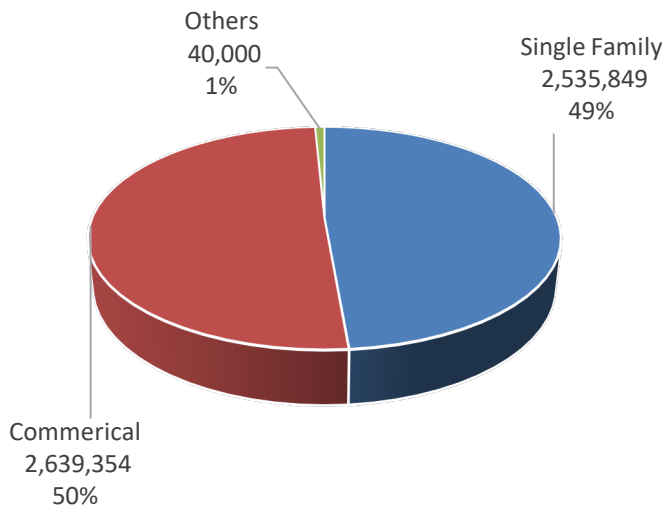
WATER FUND SOURCES \$3,477,900



WATER FUND EXPENSES - \$2,967,000



WASTEWATER FUND SOURCES - \$5,215,200



WASTEWATER FUND EXPENSES - \$4,282,800

