



# News Release

Unified Government Public Relations  
701 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 620  
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

Mike Taylor, Public Relations Director 913.573.5565  
Edwin Birch, Public Information Officer 913.573.5544

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 12, 2018

## 2019 Unified Government Budget **Property Tax Cut Recommended for 3<sup>rd</sup> Straight Year**

The Proposed 2019 Unified Government budget unveiled today calls for a 5% cut in property taxes for KCK home and business owners.

The tax cut being recommended by County Administrator Doug Bach is on top of an 8.8% reduction over the last two years. At the time of the Unified Government consolidation in 1996, an owner of a \$100,000 house paid \$1,116 in city/county property tax. Over 20 years later in 2019, an owner of a \$100,000 house will pay \$884 in UG property tax. That's a reduction of \$232, or nearly 21% less taxes.

The budget moves the KCK property tax rate from 40 mills to 38 mills. KCK ranks 13<sup>th</sup> out of the 25 largest cities in Kansas, meaning 12 of those cities have higher property taxes than KCK. In 1997, KCK had the highest tax rate of the biggest cities in the state. The Wyandotte County property tax rate is 95<sup>th</sup> out 105 counties, meaning 94 Kansas counties have a higher tax rate than Wyandotte. For a majority of KCK residents, the UG property tax is less than half of the total tax bill at 44%.

The 2019 Budget is built on the Strategic Plan and Goals set by the Unified Government Commission as determined through retreats, a survey of thousands of Wyandotte County residents and operational studies. Many of the projects in the proposed budget are neighborhood focused:

- Mowing – Over \$726,000 in additional funds is proposed to increase mowing operations in the City.
- Securing vacant structures – A total of \$280,000 towards better securing identified vacant structures that pose a public safety risk and detract from the beauty of our community neighborhoods.
- Demolition – 242 abandoned properties and unfit structures are identified for demolition in the remainder of 2018 and 2019 at a cost of more than \$2.7-million. .
- Rehabbing vacant properties - The budget includes a plan to spend \$75,000 for a program that facilitates growth in private-sector investment for rehabilitating vacant properties, with the goal is to see quality rehabilitation and occupancy of 50 or more derelict homes.
- Park Drive neighborhood revitalization– The budget includes more than \$1-million for streets, curbs, sidewalks and park improvements.
- Strawberry Hill initiative – A focused neighborhood improvement and quality of life initiative seeking to capitalize on the unique opportunities identified in this area.
- Downtown grocery store – An initial agreement has been reached with a cooperative grocer to operate a downtown grocery store at 5th and Minnesota Avenue with total development project costs estimated at \$6 million.

The budget recommends a 2% cost of living adjustment for most UG employees with a 3% increase for Police and Sheriff personnel. The total proposed budget for 2019 totals \$376.4-million with more than half of the budget designated for public safety.

For complete details on the 2019 Proposed Unified Government Budget go to [www.wyocokck.org](http://www.wyocokck.org).

# 2019 Proposed Budget Initiatives

## **Streets \$20.5 million**

Major projects include reconstruction and improvements of **Leavenworth Road from 63<sup>rd</sup> to 78<sup>th</sup> Streets**. This project is a continuation of the major work completed on Leavenworth Road which started at 38<sup>th</sup> Street. Design and engineering of **Minnesota Avenue from 6th to 7th Streets** to integrate and connect the improvements and appearance previously completed on Minnesota Avenue from 7<sup>th</sup> Street to 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Other planned projects in the 2019 Budget include: safety improvements at Parallel Parkway and K-7 Highway; redesign of the intersection at 131st & Leavenworth Road; and Safe Routes to Schools projects.

## **Mowing and Property Maintenance \$3.3 million**

In addition to securing vacant structures and demolishing unrepairable structures, the Proposed Budget calls for funding of increased mowing and the Choice Neighborhood Grant as previously discussed.

## **Transit \$428,000**

The budget includes funding to implement a **Regional fares collection system** to improve Transit Services and new equipment for Meals on Wheels to ensure home bound seniors continue to receive daily meals.

## **Water Pollution Control \$142 million**

The 2019 Proposed Budget includes a **5% Sewer rate increase** required to meet the mandatory Environmental Protection Agency requirements to repair again sewers and funding to implement the **Kaw Point biosolids project**, which will make the handling of wastewater more environmentally sound.

## **Customer Service \$157,000**

The **MyResource Connection** is a regional collaborative with Johnson County which will make important information available to health service providers. The cost savings are expected to exceed the initial costs to start the system. Funding for the **KCK Police Athletic League program** which is a non-profit organization to provide after school and summer programs for children and teens.

## **Community Engagement \$250,000**

The **Central Avenue Area Plan** continues community work in this area of KCK, along with the innovative **Strong Towns** initiative.

## **Public Safety – Police \$1.8 million**

The budget funds **Mandatory tasers** for all KCK Police Officers in Operations which will offer a less lethal option than firearms. The budget pays for a forensic scientist to work with the **Johnson County Forensic Lab** which cooperates with KCK Police in solving shootings and other violent crimes.

## **Public Safety \$1.6 million**

This funding will assist the Wyandotte County District Attorney in upgrading record-keeping with electronic imaging, as well as software upgrades. It also includes **Security camera upgrade/replacements** and **Radio encryption software and equipment**.

## **Public Safety – Fire \$3.1 million**

The budget purchases **2 Pumpers and 1 Fire Quint** as well as **Laundry equipment, lockers and bunker gear** for the KCK Fire Department.

## **Parks and Recreation \$1.5 million**

The budget includes funding a variety of **City Park improvements and replacement of playground equipment**.