

An Open Letter to Mayor Harrell and the Seattle City Council: SAY NO TO NEW TAXES AND FEES

The time has come for an honest conversation about taxes – and spending – by the City of Seattle.

We believe Seattleites deserve a budget that prioritizes its spending on voter priorities and supports a more vibrant, livable city. On that premise, the city is continuing to fall short on addressing city-wide concerns.

Given the rate of inflation, the cost of living, and after an onslaught of new taxes and fees, Seattle residents and businesses are feeling the cumulative effect of these increased costs. Research shows that affordability remains a top concern in our community, with nearly two-thirds of voters continuing to feel concerned about their personal financial situation given the current economic climate.

The Council's response: we're running at a deficit. And, we need more of your money to fix it.

A review of the city's own Revenue Stabilization Work Group findings indicate the city has a spending problem. From 2017 to 2023, general fund revenues increased 3.7% a year. At the same time, city spending grew at an even higher rate of 5.5% – and is projected to run a deficit of \$221 million in 2025, and \$207 million in 2026.¹

Again, don't take our word for it: That data is from the city's own research.

During this same time, city leaders approved an extra \$300 million in new annual taxes starting in 2021.²

Right now, the city is deliberating its 2024 budget and new taxes and fees – like a delivery fee and increased payroll tax – are being discussed. This leads us to wonder: How much is enough? But more importantly, will we ever see results?

According to EMC research data released last month, 6 of 10 voters think Seattle's taxes are too high for the level of services they receive. There is no clear plan to reduce homelessness, curb open drug use or increase the number of first responders – priorities shared by voters and businesses alike. A full review of the city's programs is warranted before adding any new taxes or fees.³

We urge the City Council to work with the mayor's office to make the same decisions many Seattleites do each month: prioritize spending, cut what's unsustainable and stop spending money you don't have. It's time for Seattleites to contact the City Council. Tell them to get real about their budget, focus on their responsibilities and stop piling on new programs and taxes.

**This great city deserves so much better than this, and, at minimum,
you owe it to Seattleites to manage tax dollars responsibly.**

Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce

Downtown Seattle Association

WA Technology Industry Association

WA Retail Association

WA Food Industry Association

TechNet—NW

Seattle Latino Chamber of Commerce

Seattle Hotel Association

Seattle Restaurant Alliance

WashingtonAlliance.org

Contact the Seattle City Council at council@seattle.gov

1: <https://harrell.seattle.gov/2023/08/09/city-of-seattle-revenue-stabilization-workgroup-completes-work-issues-report-with-options-to-address-seattles-revenue-gap/#:~:text=The%20City's%20General%20Fund%20expenses,and%20statutes%20of%20Washington%20state> 2: https://downtownseattle.org/app/uploads/2022/12/ECONW_Downtown-Seattle-Assoc_Nov22_UpdatedDec6_hi-res.pdf 3: https://www.seattlechamber.com/clientuploads/Documents/Advocacy%20Documents/23-8846_Index_V_Report_-_Fall_2023.pdf?t=1696948647