

Lexington People's Budget Platform

The Lexington city budget is a political and moral document. The decisions local elected officials make in drafting the budget reflect what, and who, they value. All too often, these decisions get made behind closed doors without meaningful public input, especially from those who are most impacted by decisions about what does or doesn't get funded. The Central Kentucky Chapter of Kentuckians For The Commonwealth believes that everyone should have a say in the Lexington budget—especially those of us who have the most to gain from a budget that meets our community's most pressing needs: Black, Brown, poor, young, LGBTQ+, and disabled Lexingtonians. That's why we convened a diverse cross-section of Lexingtonians at a visioning session in March to discuss what priorities we would like to see reflected in the 2023-2024 Lexington city budget.

We are proposing a **Lexington People's Budget**, shaped by the conversations and principles that emerged out of our budget visioning session and subsequent conversations. The demands outlined below are our top-line priorities. Please [sign our petition](#) to show your support for these demands and for a Lexington budget that is reflective of the priorities of all Lexingtonians, not just the wealthy and well-connected!

We demand truly affordable housing as defined by the people, strengthened tenant protections, and homelessness prevention.

Lexington is experiencing a housing crisis and the city budget must reflect that.

- According to [one study](#), as of February 2023, rental costs in Lexington have increased by 8.6% over the past year. Lexington must take immediate action to address the affordable housing crisis tenants and others are facing. We support [BUILD's call for a dedicated annual \\$10 million funding stream for the Affordable Housing Fund \(AHF\)](#).
- We also know that all too often, the housing that the AHF subsidizes is not actually affordable to many Lexingtonians. Therefore, Lexington must also require a significant portion of the AHF to go toward housing that's affordable for Lexingtonians who make less than 50% of area median income.
- Not only do we urgently need to build more truly affordable housing, we must also strengthen tenants' rights in Lexington to ensure tenants are free from discrimination, rent gouging, and abusive or negligent landlords. We support [KY Tenants' call for a Lexington Tenants' Bill of Rights](#), and to that end Lexington must allocate budgetary resources toward establishing a universal right to counsel in eviction court, a permanent rental assistance program, and a landlord registry.
- Lexington must also increase its investment in emergency housing for people experiencing homelessness, as well as housing security for elderly and disabled Lexingtonians.

We demand a proactive approach to community safety that addresses the root causes of violence by investing in systems that support healing rather than harm.

Lexington must rethink its approach to addressing violence in order to ensure safety for all Lexingtonians.

- Year after year of increased police budgets have proven ineffective at addressing the violence affecting many communities in Lexington. Not only has our current approach been ineffective, but increasing police militarization and surveillance technology have disproportionately impacted and criminalized Black communities and other communities of color in Lexington. We need a new approach to public safety that centers the voices of those who live in communities most impacted by violence. To that end, Lexington must increase its investment in grassroots community organizations doing work on the ground in communities impacted by violence. Lexington must also invest in alternatives to the police like mental health specialists and social workers, as well as increasing its investment in the paramedicine program.
- We also need an approach to violence that addresses its root causes and is proactive rather than reactive. We know that communities where residents' material needs are met are safer communities for everyone. Therefore, Lexington must increase its investment in social services like after-school programs for youth, summer jobs, childcare, senior services, libraries, and mental health programs. We also support [BUILD's call to implement a group violence intervention program](#), which has proven effective at intervening in conflicts before they escalate to violence.
- Lexington must follow in the footsteps of [other cities](#) and undertake a full audit of the Lexington Police Department in order to root out corruption and ensure accountability.

We demand better public transportation, sustainable infrastructure, and energy efficiency.

Lexington must address the climate crisis by investing in public transportation, sustainable infrastructure, and energy efficiency.

- Lexington is very difficult to navigate for people who don't have a car. In order to increase economic mobility and decrease carbon emissions, Lexington must allocate additional budgetary resources to Lextran on top of the tax revenue Lextran receives directly in order to improve the frequency and reliability of existing bus routes and expand the Lextran network to better serve all of Fayette County.
- Decades of gentrification and rent gouging has pushed Lexingtonians, especially Black and low-income Lexingtonians, out of dense, walkable intown neighborhoods to outlying areas. We know that transportation and housing go hand in hand, so in order to reduce housing and transportation costs for Lexingtonians who don't have a car, Lexington must invest in building and preserving truly affordable housing in intown neighborhoods.
- Lexington must also redesign its roads to be safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other people who don't drive, especially [dangerous roads at the epicenter of the pedestrian fatality crisis](#).
- Lexington must take full advantage of opportunities in the Inflation Reduction Act to lessen the burden of utility costs, retrofit buildings to make them more energy efficient, and expand the use of renewable energy like solar.

We demand food security for all.

Access to fresh, healthy, affordable food is a human right and Lexington must commit budgetary resources to ensure food security for all Lexingtonians.

- Many Lexingtonians live in neighborhoods impacted by food apartheid, where access to fresh, healthy, affordable food is limited due to decades of redlining and segregation, our industrialized agriculture system, and racist practices by major grocery stores. Lexington must allocate resources toward increasing access to locally grown produce and community-controlled distribution systems across Lexington, but especially in the neighborhoods that don't have a full service grocery store.
- Seniors, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable to food insecurity. Lexington must increase its investment in food security for those who are most vulnerable.

NOTE: This is a living document. The wording may be changed to reflect new ideas and priorities that come up in future conversations, but the spirit of this document will not change. Please send any feedback on this document to quinn@kftc.org.