

2026

RECOMMENDED BUDGET

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Thank you for reviewing the 2026 Sedgwick County Recommended Budget. This \$624.7 million proposed budget was developed amid ongoing economic uncertainty, driven by reductions in state and federal funding.

During the budget retreat and the subsequent budget hearings, the Board of County Commissioners emphasized the following priorities for 2026 budget development:

Correct any structural imbalance of recurring costs and **bring in a balanced budget.**

Continue emphasis on staffing stability regarding reasonable compensation and benefits for employees.

Prioritize mission-critical county services, such as Emergency Communications, and look for service improvements.

Do NOT capture all available valuation increases and **reduce the county mill levy again in the upcoming year.**

This year's budgeting process revealed a roughly \$2.2 million structural imbalance of recurring expenses. To meet Commissioner expectations of reaching a balanced budget, this recommended budget suggests:

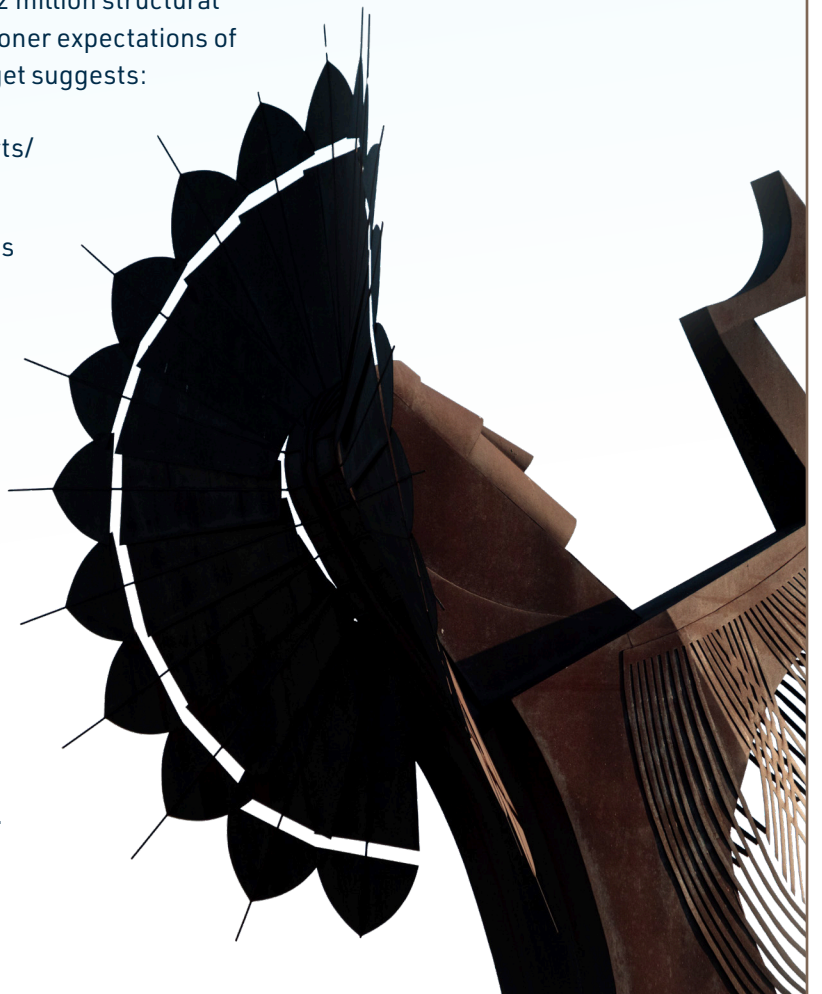
Decreasing crime prevention funds and culture/arts/entertainment subsidies by \$560,000

Transitioning COMCARE property tax-funded items to CCBHC funding redirecting almost \$366,000

Increasing revenue projections due to stronger growth in certain key areas by \$300,000

Raising valuation capture from 5.0 to 5.5 (\$950,000)

This recommended budget gives all county employees a salary increases in 2026 with a commitment of an additional \$10.3M toward compensation to help keep this organization competitive with nearby local governments and the State of Kansas government employees.



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It also recommends adding 20 call taker/dispatcher positions and one accreditation manager to the Emergency Communications Department to support the separation of "call taking" from dispatching and enhance service delivery to first responders in the field. This budget also recommends the addition of seven "Engagement Care Specialist" positions to COMCARE, one position to the Aging and Disabilities Department to support grants and financial management, and an additional part-time position to Strategic Communications to help ensure effective public service.

Finally, the recommended budget suggests NOT to capture the full 8.6% valuations growth and to reduce the mill levy by more than 2/3 of a mill for taxpayers.

The proposed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget includes almost \$10.3 million for drainage projects and infrastructure repair to county facilities – including an addition to the Regional Forensic Science Center.

Almost \$4 million of this amount is for Building Automation System and HVAC upgrades to the main courthouse complex, Public Safety Building, and other ancillary county buildings such as the K-State Research and Extension Center of Sedgwick County and the Historic Courthouse.

The CIP contains an additional \$24.9 million for road and bridge projects throughout the county to ensure sound infrastructure.

This proposed budget was formulated from the feedback we heard from our citizens and elected officials. Over \$10 million of decision packages recommended by county department heads and elected officials were not included in the recommended budget, to maintain a flat budget and reduce the property tax mill levy by not capturing all property valuations.

We have encouraged other government entities to take similar action in hopes of helping ease the property tax burden on our community.

