City of Los Angeles Olivia E. Mitchell Youth Council
Budget Letter Final Summaries

Dear Mayor Karen Bass,

As members of the Olivia E. Mitchell Los Angeles City Youth Council, we engage in a variety of civic projects, including participating in policy and legislative action and budget recommendations to the Los Angeles City Council. We are a body of 30 diverse young leaders, ages 16-25, representing the youth of the 15 Council Districts of the City of Los Angeles. As the third cohort of the Youth Council, we are committed to building upon the work of our predecessors and ensuring that the 2025-26 Los Angeles City Budget reflects the priorities of more than 1 million young Angelenos.

Therefore, the LA City Youth Council has agreed upon and put forth the following policy and program priorities for the 2025-26 Fiscal Year for consideration by Mayor Karen Bass and the LA City Council. The priorities align with the Citywide Youth Development Strategic Plan and our collective position on essential initiatives to address the most pressing challenges affecting our communities. Furthermore, we express our strong support for the Youth Development Department's budget request, which will help achieve the successful implementation of the strategic plan and its goal of improving the lives of young Angelenos across the city. We hope the final budget will align with the recommended priorities described herein.

Housing:
Los Angeles Housing Department

For many young Angelenos, housing instability is a harsh reality. High rents force families to live in cramped spaces, relocate frequently, or even face homelessness. With more than 75,000 unhoused individuals in LA—3,000 of whom are youth—expanding access to affordable housing is of paramount importance. By addressing LA's pressing housing issues, we not only provide stability for our city's residents but also attract thoughtful, engaged individuals to LA, fostering greater diversity, economic opportunities, financial growth, and community. We request that the following project types be emphasized in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget through the Los Angeles Housing Department:

- Repurpose and renovate abandoned buildings to provide more housing units for youth on the streets. In Los Angeles, the average cost to build a one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment has surged to $600,000. We can allocate our available resources more efficiently if we focus our efforts on unused buildings with established infrastructure. In addition, fostering partnerships with landlords, hotel

& motel owners, and apartment directors would be a great way to increase temporary housing for Angeleno youth.
- Collaborate with nonprofits to guide first-time homebuyers and low-income families in navigating affordable housing opportunities, including application processes, housing vouchers, and resources to secure stable housing.
- Educate citizens through an advertising campaign to highlight the importance of increasing affordable housing options throughout the city. NIMBYs, those against such projects being created near them, often worsen this issue by preventing contractors from establishing affordable housing units. An educational campaign that emphasizes the pertinence of housing would combat many of the roadblocks preventing the city from providing this much-needed service to its constituents.

Education:
Los Angeles Department of Parks & Recreation and the Los Angeles Public Library

High-quality and culturally relevant education is not only a marker of a thriving community but of a bright future. Yet, many young Angelenos face a cavernous gap in accessing fundamental educational resources, harming their academic growth and socio-emotional development. We request funding for the following:

- Youth-designed mental health and wellness workshops, social media campaigns, and advocacy events in collaboration with K-12 schools, colleges, universities, local nonprofits, and health professionals. These initiatives will focus on practical resources for youth on topics like stress management, bullying, substance abuse, family violence, and suicide prevention.
- Restorative justice initiatives, such as peer mediation programs, will reduce punitive measures by offering sustainable, safe, and productive school climate models. These programs will collaborate with local organizations (e.g., Western Justice Center) to equip students with conflict resolution and mediation skills, empowering them to resolve conflicts through communication and empathy.
- After school programs, provided by organizations like the Watts Labor Community Action Committee, will increase youth engagement by fostering a sense of community, offering academic and creative support, and lowering delinquency risks (thereby reducing public safety costs). By utilizing facilities at the Department of Recreation & Parks and LA Public Libraries we can expand safe, supportive after school programming spaces citywide.
- Specialized programs and services for the neurodivergent community to combat their lack of educational resources, a problem exacerbated by persistent stigma and underappreciation of their potential. We advocate for increased investment and partnership in organizations supporting students with special needs, such as IGNITE! Collective, Verdugo Hills, and Divergent Fitness.

Environmental Justice & Transportation:
Los Angeles Sanitation & Los Angeles Metro

According to the LA County Youth Climate Commission's 2024 Work Plan, which surveyed thousands of youth across Los Angeles, the climate emergency is a leading priority for young people. Through our city's sustainability initiatives, such as the LA Sustainability pLAn, we hope to leverage the city's entertainment and culture sectors and prioritize equitable, safe transportation. As such, we request funding for the following:

- Developing green spaces—tree canopies and native plants—along city sidewalks and public transportation stations to reduce heat in dense areas, increase safety and well-being for commuters, and promote biodiversity within the city's infrastructure.
- Adopting ambitious environmental measures—such as eliminating single-use plastics and maximizing recycling efforts—to position LA as a leader in sustainability, inspiring both the nation and the world.
- Implementing LA Metro projects, such as The Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative, to prepare for the 2028 Olympics, and leveraging other global cultural events, such as the 2026 World Cup, to drive implementation of our city's sustainability plans and increasing efficiency of public transportation.
- Supporting programs that improve the ridership experience on public transportation, like the Metro Homeless Outreach Team and Metro Youth Ambassadors to promote more sustainable transportation practices.
- Improving safety measures in public transportation to encourage greater use by residents and visitors, supporting sustainability efforts, and developing permanent infrastructure that continually supports residents.

Closing

The Olivia E. Mitchell Los Angeles City Youth Council stands as a testament to the dedication to uplifting more than 1 million youth across Los Angeles. We are united in our vision for a city budget that meets the needs, addresses the challenges, and supports the aspirations of young Angelenos. With this budget request, we are taking a critical step toward ensuring that the city's youth have a voice in shaping the future of Los Angeles. By investing in these departments and programs, the city can become more inclusive and supportive, where young people feel empowered to thrive. We look forward to continuing our collaboration to ensure that youth priorities are reflected in the budget, creating a Los Angeles that champions its youth.

Sincerely,

The Olivia E. Mitchell Los Angeles City Youth Council Members