BOULDER MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

# Actions Before Taxes

*Five years of limited results on the 2021 Facilities Master Plan — and the case for accountability before Boulder voters decide in November.*

**$400M**

bond headed to voters Nov. 3

Prepared by Jan Burton and Terri Brncic | August 19, 2026

THE SITUATION

# What Council Sent to the November Ballot

| $400M | 75 | 7 | $650M |
|---|---|---|---|
| General obligation bond — the "Recreation & Safety Bond" | buildings in the city's facilities portfolio | highest-priority buildings the bond targets | maximum repayment cost incl. interest, over the bond's life |

*Council approved the bond referral of Ordinance 8758 unanimously on August 6, 2026 — sending it to voters November 3, 2026 (final ballot language confirmed Aug. 20).*

*Council also approved companion charter amendment Ordinance 8762 that raises the city's legal debt limit — switching the charter's 3%-of-value cap from assessed value to actual (market) value — an estimated jump from a **$152.7M limit to $1.55 billion**. Without that change, this $400M bond could not legally be issued.*

# Four Reasons This Isn't Ready for the Ballot

1

## The City Didn't Fund Its Own Plan

**<$1.6M / year**

"The city budgeted a fraction of the 2% CRV maintenance funding its own 2021 plan required – then asked for a bailout.

2

## The Analysis Wasn't Done

**2.6x cost increase**

$171M in 2021. $444M today. Same 7 buildings — no scenarios or ROI analyses behind the jump.

3

## Voters Aren't Sold

**45% support**

The city's own May 2026 polling shows this bond well short of a winning margin – only 31% firmly committed.

4

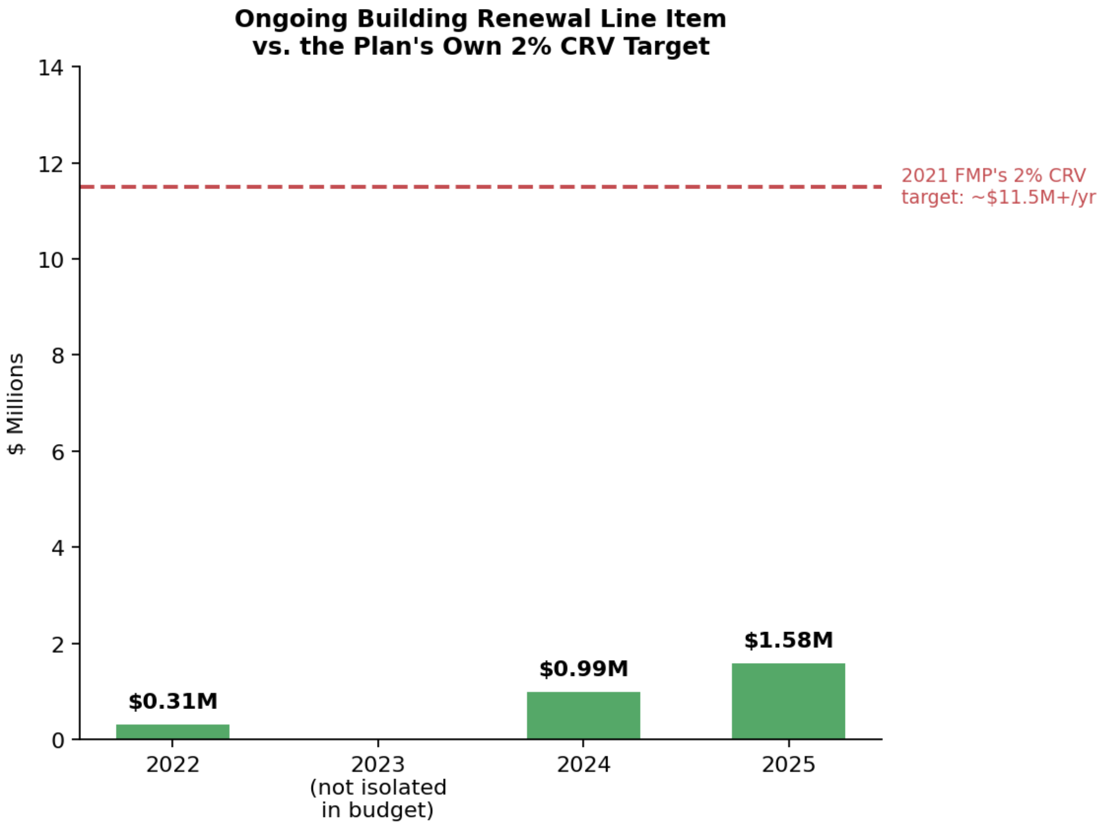
## The Bill Falls Hardest on Businesses

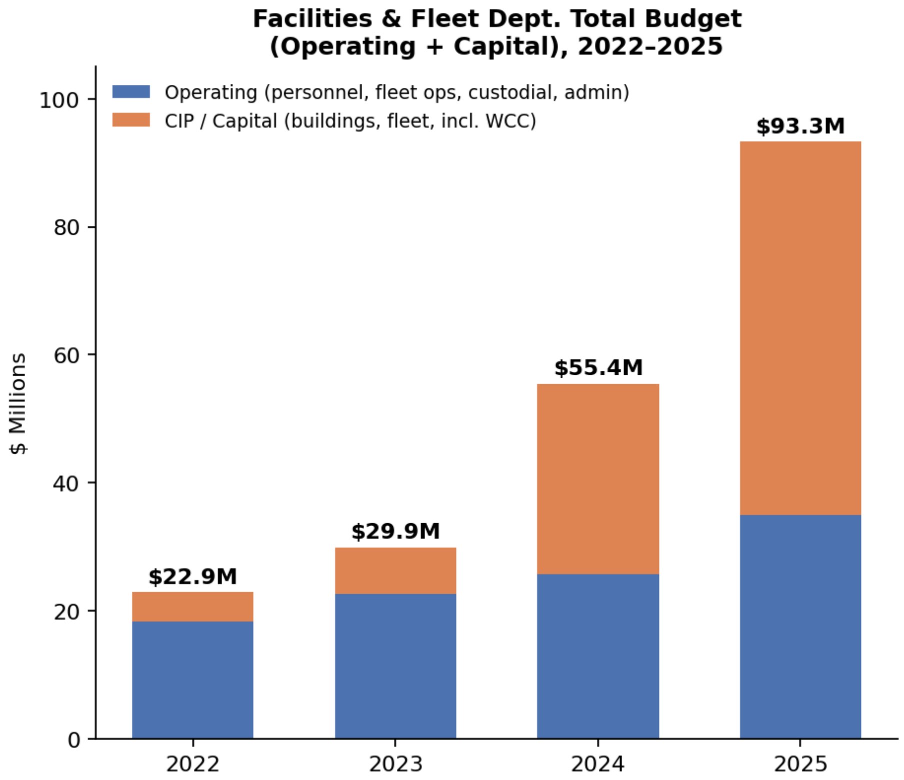
**4x residential**

Commercial property pays 4x what residential pays under this levy — landing hardest on small businesses already facing rising labor costs.

BROKEN PROMISE #1 — "MAINTAIN WELL"

# The Plan Called for $11-17M in budget. The City Funded ~10%.




*Total department budget nearly quadrupled — almost entirely one-time construction money. The ongoing maintenance line the plan actually called for (right) never came close to target, and both 2024 and 2025 budgets project it staying flat at $890K/year through 2030.*

BROKEN PROMISE #2 — CONSOLIDATION

# Two Campuses Were Promised. One Vanished, One Ran Over.

### EASTERN CAMPUS

✕

**~15 buildings**

promised to consolidate at the Municipal Service Center. Active in the 2022 budget. Absent from every budget since — no line item, no project sheet, no mention.

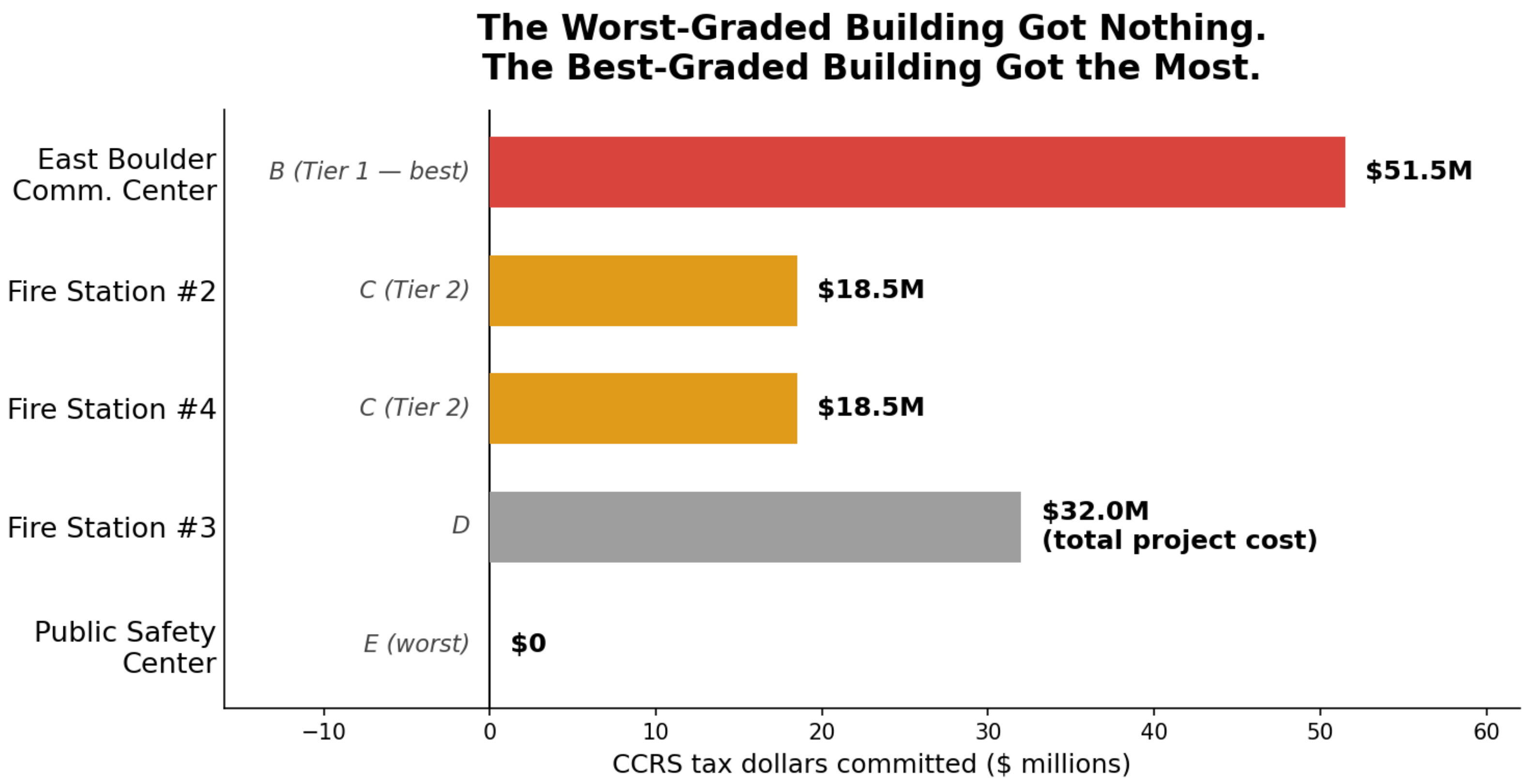
### WESTERN CAMPUS (ALPINE-BALSAM)

**$140M**

Budgeted — $100M of it borrowed adds another $90M in interest to project cost. Still unfinished, seven years after the plan was adopted. Estimated completion: 2028.

*Center Green lease was cancelled for $900K/yr in savings — then redirected to other programs instead of the maintenance shortfall.*

# The Worst Got Nothing; The Best Got the Most




*The Public Safety Center — literally an "essential building" and the worst grade in the entire portfolio — has received zero dollars from CCRS. Meanwhile, $17.5M in CCRS capital went to a park project outside the 75-building portfolio entirely.*

# A Process, In Reverse

## HOW CAPITAL PLANNING SHOULD WORK

✓

### 1. Assess Condition

Every building scored on condition, deferred maintenance, capital needs and critical use (2021 KPI framework).

✓

### 2. Build Scenarios

Low / Medium / High options for each building, each fully costed with ROI analysis behind it.

✓

### 3. Reach Consensus

Council and staff agree on the right-sized maintenance and upgrade scenario, building by building.

✓

### 4. Request Funding

City goes to voters with a specific, justified scope and price.

## WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

~

### 1. Assess Condition

No per-building deferred-maintenance amounts, updated replacement values or condition assessments are ever published.

X

### 2. Build Scenarios

High level alternatives shown for only 2 of 7 buildings with nothing provided for the remainder. Scenarios provided lack of granularity or ROI discussions.

X

### 3. Reach Consensus

No visible consensus step in the record to memorialize the alternatives selected and rationale for each approach.

X

### 4. Request Funding

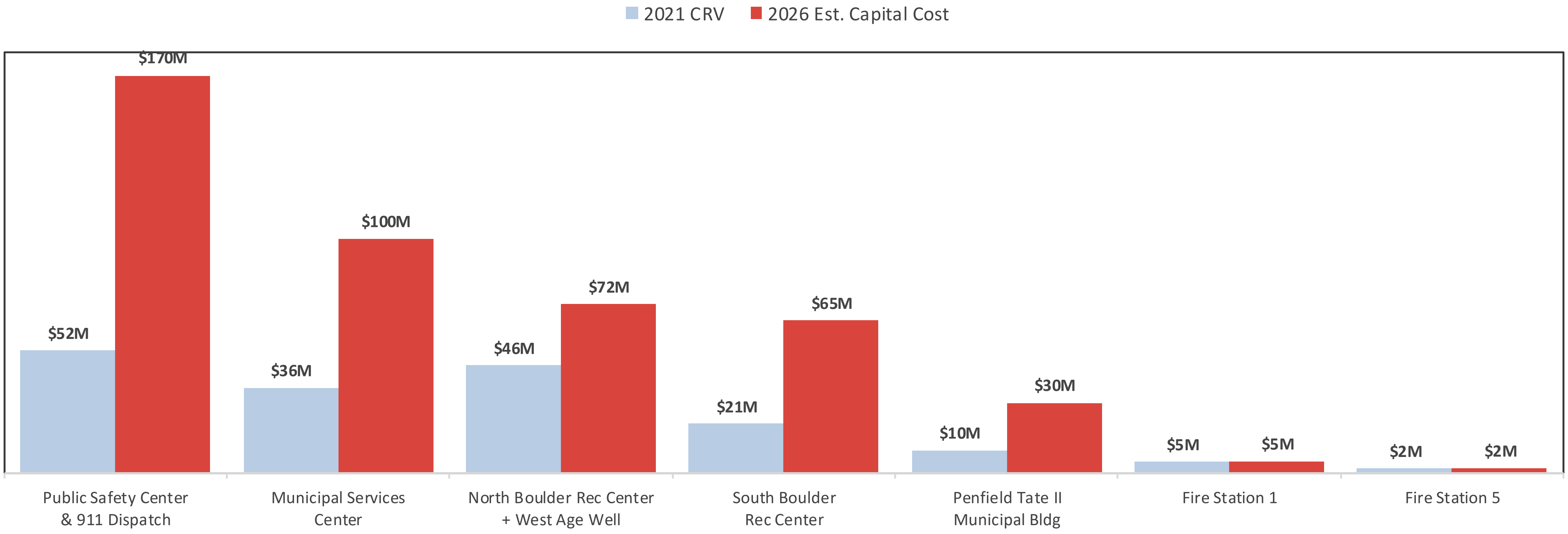
$400M bond requested based on maximum capital needed for each building with no commitment to specific project scope.

THE CITY'S OWN NUMBERS

# $171M to $444M — Now Just 7 Buildings

In 2021, the city estimated it would cost $171M to replace the 7 priority buildings identified in the bond measure using a metric referred to as Current Replacement Value or CRV. Now they are asking for $444M to upgrade or replace them — a 2.6x increase in capital costs in five years.

PER-BUILDING BREAKDOWN: 2021 CRV vs. 2026 ESTIMATED CAPITAL COST




*Note: "North Boulder Rec Center" includes the co-located West Age Well Center; "Municipal Services Center" includes Fleet Services and the MSC 'A'/'B' buildings.*

READ THE FINE PRINT

# Four Things the Current City Dashboard Glosses Over

Beyond the $444M topline: a funding gap the city plans to close with building sales, two projects that quietly became relocations instead of rebuilds, and a building whose renovation cost is tripling as its actual use shrinks to one meeting a week.

## $444M in Projects, $400M Bond Cap

**2021 CRV FOR THESE 7 BUILDINGS: $171.5M**

The 7 funded projects total $444M — 2.6x the 2021 baseline, and about $44M more than the bond authorizes. The city's plan: sell surplus buildings to help close the gap, and re-scope projects if sales don't cover it.

## Public Safety Center: $125M → $170M in 4 Months

**2021 CRV: $52.3M**

The April 2026 staff estimate grew $45M by the August dashboard — now 3.3x the 2021 CRV. The project also shifted from rebuilding at 1805 33rd St. to a new site, listed as “a different location.”

## Community Cultural, Resilience and Safety Tax

**Where is the remaining $162M of CCRS Tax, approved by voters in 2025?**

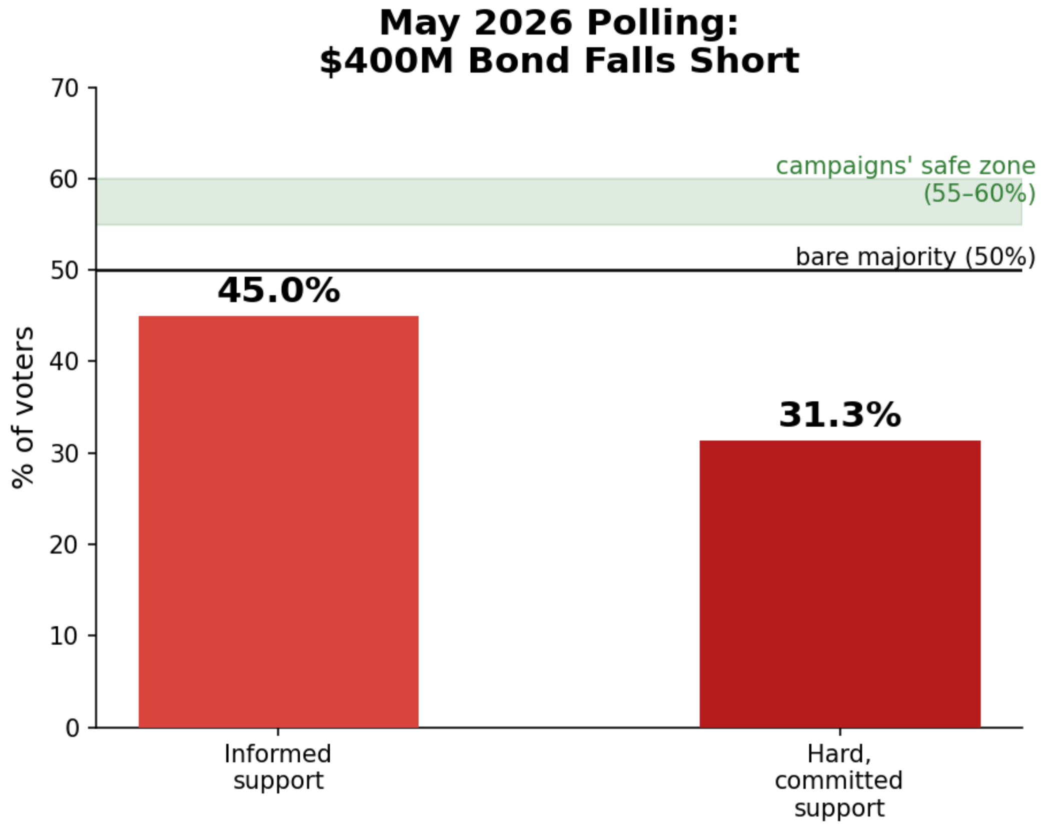
Couldn’t some of these projects be paid for from that tax, especially the rec centers?

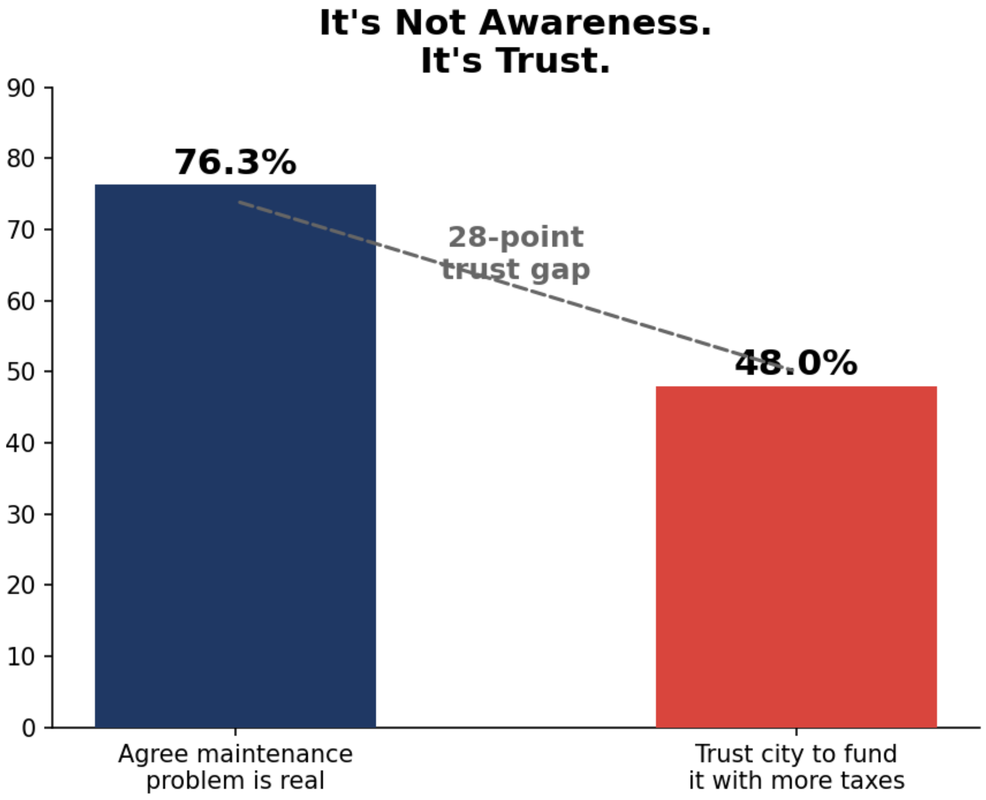
## Penfield Tate II: $30M Renovation

**2021 CRV: $9.7M (3.1x growth)**

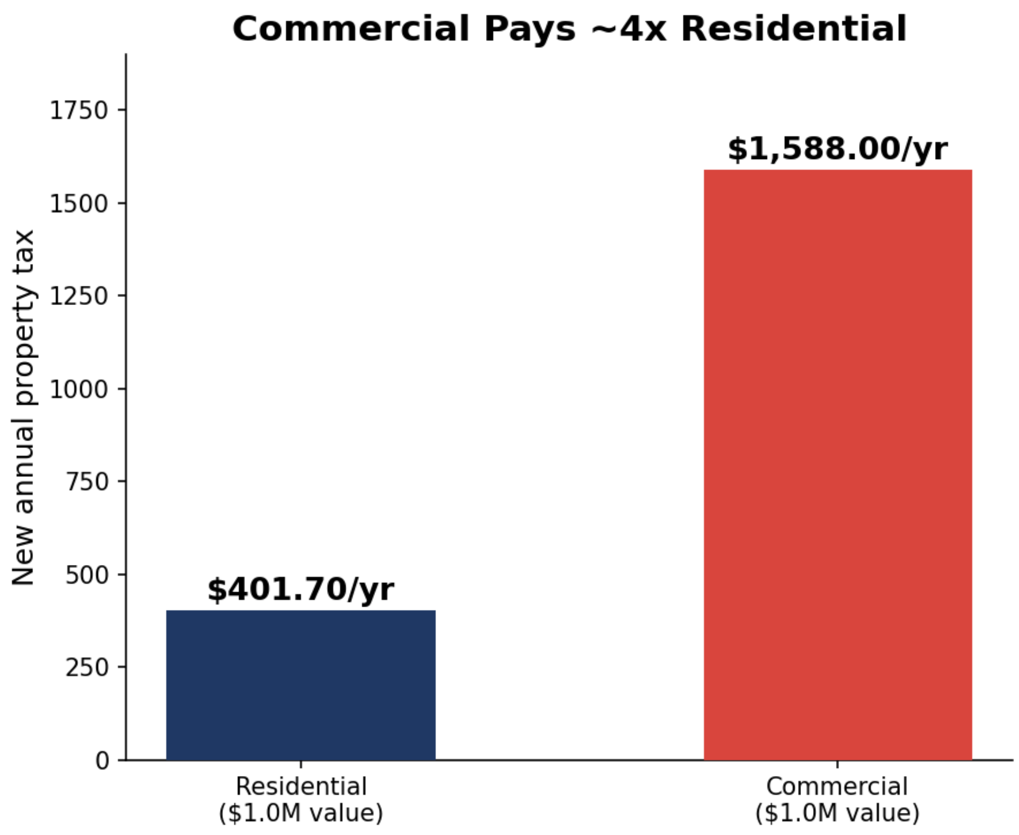
Most staff move to Alpine-Balsam by 2027. What remains: City Council, which uses the building for biweekly Thursday meetings — while its renovation cost triples.

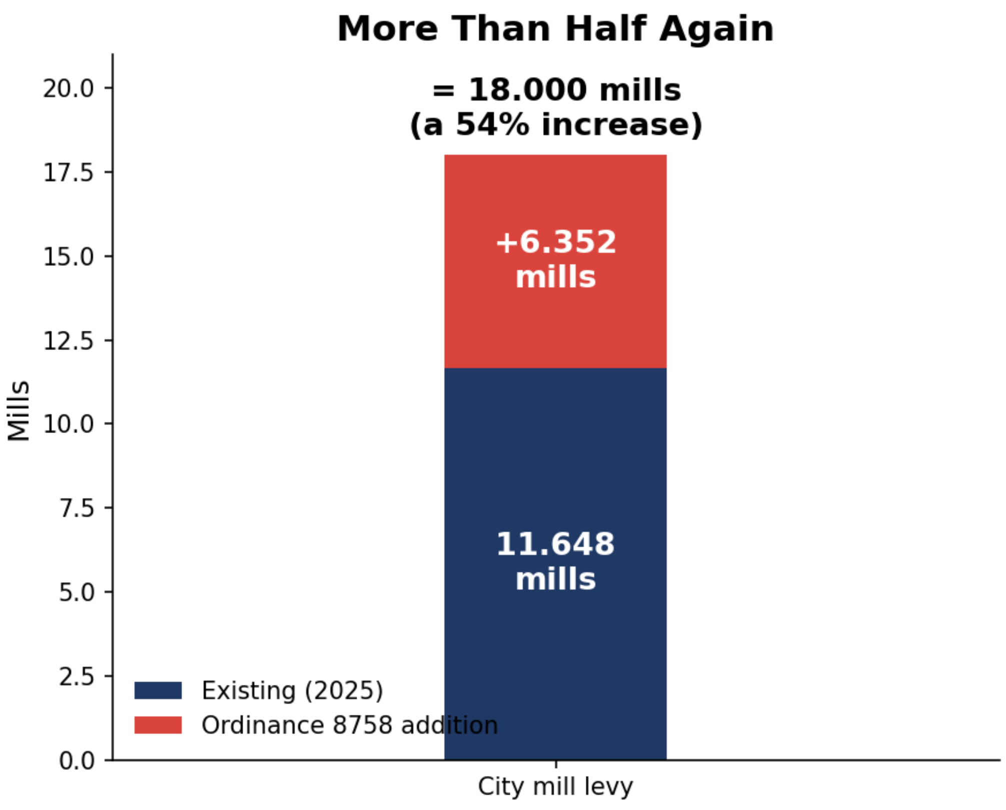
# Voters Aren't Confused, They're Skeptical



# Tax Is Greatest on Businesses/Stacked on Recent Increases



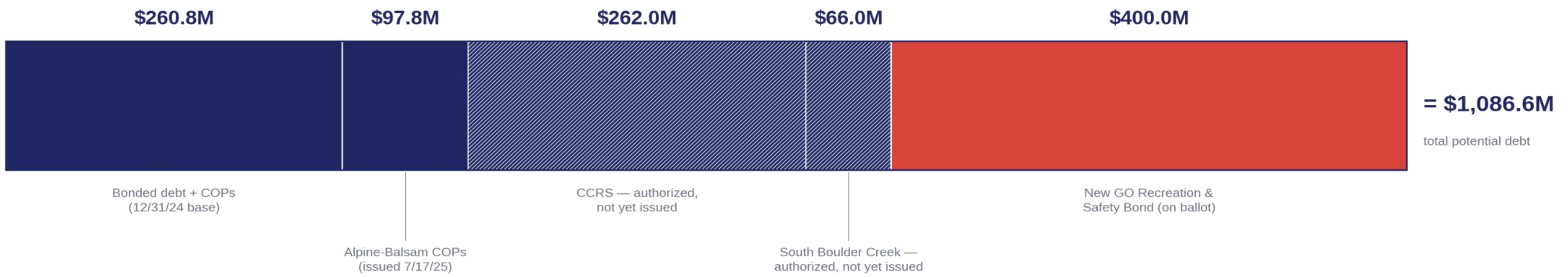




*This levy layers onto the CCRS sales tax (made permanent Nov. 2025) and the Library District mill levy (Nov. 2022) — with no offsetting relief for small businesses already facing higher labor costs.*

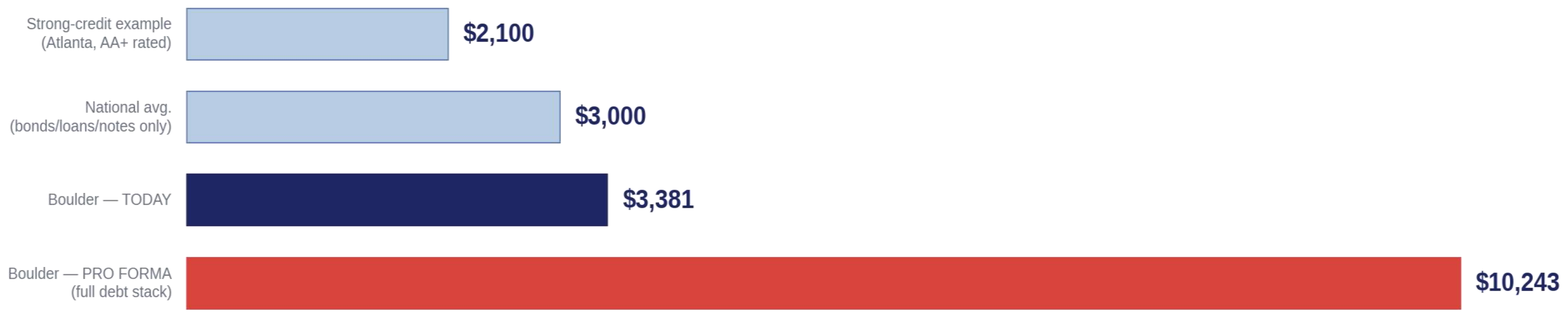
THE DEBT PICTURE

# The Debt Stack Tops $1 Billion

PRO FORMA DEBT STACK — BASE + PENDING + PROPOSED ($M)




DEBT PER CAPITA — BOULDER VS. BENCHMARKS



# What Council/Staff Should Do First

1. Fund the 2% CRV maintenance budget in 2027 — prove the discipline exists before asking voters to trust it again.
2. Publish comprehensive analysis of the Alpine-Balsam Western Campus project with details on building consolidation and anticipated deferred maintenance savings.
3. Provide a comprehensive analysis of 7 buildings with low, medium and high options and prioritization.
4. Educate the public on the real cost of an all-electric building mandate and hold a genuine ROI discussion.
5. List underused or surplus city properties for sale, including ones slated for demolition.
6. Set a regular public schedule of deferred-maintenance reviews and create an independent Performance Auditor office.

WHERE THIS LEAVES BOULDER VOTERS

# The Need Is Real.
# The Trust Hasn't Been Earned Yet.

Council voted unanimously to send this measure to voters, acknowledging weak polling but judging the backlog too urgent to wait. Boulder's buildings need investment — most voters already believe that. What the city hasn't earned is the benefit of the doubt this ballot measure asks for. Before November 3, Boulder should publish a transparent accounting, fix the scoring system, and show the discipline it's now asking taxpayers to fund.

**Weigh the record before you vote.**

SOURCES

# Every Figure Traces to City Documents


- City of Boulder, Facilities Master Plan, 2021 (Appendix D, pp. 88–93; pp. 54–61)
- City of Boulder, 2022–2025 Approved/Annual Budgets
- City of Boulder, City Council Meetings174 Packet, Aug. 6, 2026 (Ordinance 8758 & 8762, incl. debt limitation fiscal notes)
- City of Boulder, "CCRS Tax Summary," OpenGov Stories
- City of Boulder, LTFS Council memo, June 25, 2026
- City of Boulder, City Council Meetings, Facilities Meeting Packet, Apr 9, 2026
- https://bouldercolorado.gov/guide/recreation-and-safety-bond
- Probolsky Research, City of Boulder voter survey, May 2026
- Fund Our Future, Spring 2026 Engagement Report-Out
- City of Boulder, 2025 Budget in Brief, Sources & Uses Supplemental
- Boulder Reporting Lab, "Boulder City Council sends vacancy tax and $400 million bond to November ballot," Aug. 6, 2026; Boulder Beat; Engineering News-Record
- 2024 Boulder Annual Comprehensive Financial Report
- Reason Foundation State & Local Govt Finance Report