



MAYOR DONALD R. GREBIEN
CITY OF PAWTUCKET

Good evening, Council President Mercer, distinguished members of the City Council, and the residents of Pawtucket.

I stand before you tonight to present my proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget for the City of Pawtucket.

This budget is a roadmap one that balances critical investments in city services, education, public safety, and economic development with the discipline required to protect our hard-earned financial stability.

I want to thank the Council for your leadership and your continued collaboration with my administration. While we may not always agree, we are united by a common goal: moving Pawtucket forward and ensuring our city remains a place where residents can afford to live and have the opportunity to thrive.

To understand where we are going, I'd like to briefly reflect on how far we have come together.

Sixteen years ago, Pawtucket stood at a crossroads facing the very real threat of state takeover or bankruptcy. We had virtually no reserves and a poor credit rating at the time.

Today, because of disciplined financial management, strong partnerships, and the support of this Council and our community, I am proud to say that Pawtucket stands on solid financial ground.

We now maintain strong investment-grade credit ratings — an A+ from Fitch and an A3 from Moody's.

Our reserves remain stable at approximately 10% of our operating budget.

That fiscal strength has allowed us to lead Rhode Island in modernizing our public school facilities, moving students and teachers out of outdated buildings and into 21st-century learning environments, while also continuing to modernize city government and improve the services we provide to residents.

And while we are proud of the progress we have made, we also recognize that there is still more work ahead — especially when it comes to continuing to support our students, teachers, and broader education community.

At the same time, Pawtucket is not immune to the economic pressures facing households across Rhode Island and across the country.

As we continue transitioning away from federal ARPA funding, we must confront the financial realities shaping this year's budget while continuing to protect the long-term stability and progress of our city

Two primary cost drivers are significantly impacting our finances:

First, like employers and municipalities across the country, we continue to see substantial increases in health and dental insurance costs.

Second, overtime costs within the Fire Department continue to exceed budgeted levels due to staffing demands, contractual obligations, and the need to maintain essential emergency response services throughout our community.

Our firefighters and first responders provide critical services to our residents every single day, and these ongoing budget pressures must be addressed in a responsible and sustainable way moving forward

Despite these challenges, we have worked diligently to keep this budget as lean and responsible as possible while continuing to protect the essential services our residents rely on every day.

However, after carefully reviewing every available option, these ongoing financial pressures require us to propose a modest tax adjustment for Fiscal Year 2027.

For Pawtucket residential homeowners, the proposed increase is approximately 3%, which translates to approximately \$12 per month for the average residential homeowner.

While no increase is ever ideal, every effort has been made to keep this adjustment as limited as possible while still maintaining city services, supporting our schools, investing in our neighborhoods, and preserving the long-term financial stability of our community.

And even as we exercise fiscal restraint, we will not compromise on the future of our children, our schools, or the continued progress of our city.

This budget includes an additional \$1 million investment in support for Pawtucket Public Schools as the School Department continues working to stabilize its finances and implement meaningful improvements.

This proposal fully funds the School Department's FY2027 request.

We also continue investing in our workforce, our infrastructure, and the equipment and resources necessary to keep our residents safe and our city moving forward.

And across Pawtucket, the results of these investments are visible every single day.

We see it in our new and renovated schools, including the new Pawtucket High School, which is now officially under construction.

We see it in the continued housing growth throughout our city, with more than 2,000 new housing units added since 2017 and another 1,200 currently in the pipeline.

We see it in the daily activity and connectivity brought by our commuter rail station.

We see it in ongoing investments in our roads, infrastructure, parks, and essential city services.

We see it at Centreville Bank Stadium, where Rhode Island FC has brought new energy and excitement to our community, and at Tidewater Landing, where more than 500 housing units and new retail space are continuing to take shape.

We see it in our business community — from The Cooley Group celebrating 100 years in Pawtucket, to Solid State Marine choosing our city for continued advanced manufacturing expansion.

We see it in our youth sports leagues, arts and cultural events, riverfront activity, and the growing recreational opportunities available for children and families throughout our city.

And more and more, people are not just passing through Pawtucket - they are choosing Pawtucket. Choosing to open businesses here. Choosing to invest here. Choosing to raise families here and build their future here.

This momentum did not happen by chance. It is the result of years of responsible decision-making, strong partnerships, and our shared commitment to putting Pawtucket residents first.

It happened because this community believed in itself during difficult moments, because residents stayed engaged, because city employees showed up every single day to serve this city, and because together, we made responsible decisions even when they were not always easy.

My Fiscal Year 2027 budget builds on that momentum while remaining disciplined, responsible, and focused on the future.

Before I close tonight, I want to thank our dedicated city employees, my directors and office staff, who continue to put in the early mornings and late nights in service to this community.

I also want to thank our police officers and firefighters, our School Committee, and the Pawtucket School Department administration and teachers for their continued partnership, commitment, and service to our residents.

To the members of the City Council, thank you for your continued partnership and the time and effort you dedicate throughout the budget process.

And most importantly, to the residents, students, families, seniors, and young people who call Pawtucket home – THANK YOU for your trust and continued belief in our city.

Every decision we make and every investment we prioritize is done with your future in mind.

This budget continues investing in our neighborhoods, supporting our families, creating opportunities for residents, and ensuring the next generation is proud to call Pawtucket home. Pawtucket's future is bright, but there is still work ahead of us. And together, we will continue moving our city forward.

Over the coming weeks, I look forward to working closely with this Council to finalize and pass a fiscally responsible budget.

Thank you.