BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FUNDS USED IN BUDGET PROCESS

The City of Houston's financial management and accounting structure encompasses the ongoing operations and capital programs of twenty-three General Fund departments plus General Government and General Fund Debt Service, approximately forty-eight separate funds, and numerous independent entities or operations for which the City acts as trustee.

Governmental Funds

General revenues (i.e., property taxes, sales taxes, franchise fees, Municipal Courts fines, etc.) are budgeted and received in the General Fund for the support of most basic city services. Operations and services for public safety, financial services, libraries, solid waste management, health, most parks and recreation services, street traffic control, esplanade mowing and citywide administration are included in the General Fund.

Enterprise Funds

Three of the City's operating departments operate similar to private enterprises. Their operations and long-term debt are covered entirely by user fees or dedicated revenue sources.

The Public Utilities - Water and Sewer Fund is managed by the Combined Utility System. All maintenance, operation, reserve, and debt service requirements for Public Utilities are accounted for as an Enterprise Fund in the Public Works and Engineering Department. Capital equipment expenses for water and sewer services are recorded in the Public Utilities - Capital Outlay Fund. All capital outlay expenses for the Aviation Department is budgeted in the Airport System Capital Outlay Fund in full compliance with bond ordinances. Budgets covering maintenance and operations, reserves, and debt service for each of these funds are presented in the budget.

- Aviation Department
- Combined Utility System
- Convention and Entertainment Facilities

Special Revenue Funds

The proceeds of dedicated general purpose revenue sources are budgeted and received in several Special Revenue Funds. The following describes the City's Special Revenue Funds:

- The Asset Forfeiture Fund. This fund is administered by the Houston Police Department (HPD). The City receives forfeited funds resulting from HPD's role in drug-related seizures. This fund provides resources beyond HPD's General Fund budget for crime enforcement. Specifically, this fund is used to address the drug problem in a manner consistent with the department's Comprehensive Narcotics Plan.

- Auto Dealers' Special Revenue Fund. This fund is budgeted to collect the license fees paid by tow truck drivers and various automotive sales, repair, storage and salvage dealers to finance a portion of the Police Department's enforcement efforts regarding privately owned storage lots. This fund is also administered by the Police Department.

- BARC Special Revenue Fund. BARC (Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care) is authorized to receive funds from any source for the purpose of supporting the maintenance and operation of the City's animal shelter facilities and programs. This fund is administered by the Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department.

- The Building Inspection Special Fund. This fund includes all construction and building permit revenues and expenditures for inspections and permitting activities. Outdoor sign license fees are received in this fund for enforcement of the City's sign ordinance. This fund is administered by the Public Works and Engineering (PWE) Department.

- Cable Television Special Fund. This fund, under certain cable television franchise agreements with the City, receives contributions on a subscriber basis. This fund is used for public access cable television programming and related costs. The Mayor's Office is responsible for administering this fund.

- The Child Safety Fund. This fund is used to account for monies received for public, parochial and private school crossing guard programs. Revenues to the fund come from an assessment of Municipal Court fees on non-criminal municipal violations and a portion of each vehicle registration authorized by Harris County. The Houston Police Department administers this fund.

- Contractor Responsibility Fund. This fund is managed by the Office of Business Opportunity (OBO) and governed by Executive Order 1-7. Funds are collected through the implementation of the Pay or Play Program, which is administered by OBO. The revenue collected in the Contractor Responsibility Fund is used to offset the cost of uninsured citizens in the Houston and Harris County area.

- Dedicated Drainage and Street Renewal Fund (DDSRF). The fund was established in FY2012. The DDSRF provides a dedicated, pay-as-you-go fund for enhancement, improvement and ongoing renewal of Houston's drainage and streets, as well as traffic control operations.

- Digital Automated Red Light Enforcement Program. This fund tracks the financial and accounting balances from all penalties and fees collected and all costs associated with the operation and enforcement of the photographic traffic monitoring system. While no new tickets will be issued, this fund remains open while the City collects outstanding penalties and fees and pays the fund's expenses. This fund is administered by the by Finance Department.

- Digital Houston Fund. This fund is used by the City of Houston to build a citywide wireless broadband Wi-Fi mesh network that will provide affordable high-speed internet access for residents and visitors to Houston; thus creating a digital future for Houstonians through a digital literacy effort in support of achieving Houston's educational workforce and educational goals. This fund is administered by the Library Department.

- Essential Public Health Services Fund. This fund was created for the purpose of offsetting costs associated with the administration of Medicaid Transformation Waiver projects and to perform other essential public health services as defined by Chapter 121 of the Texas Health and Safety Code. This fund is administered by the Health and Human Services Department.

- Forensic Transition Special Fund. This fund was created for the transition of forensic services from the Houston Police Department to the independent Houston Forensic Science Local Government Corporation (LGC). Forensic examination covers multiple scientific disciplines to include: Biology/Serology, Controlled Substances, Firearms, Toxicology, Computer Forensics, Crime Scene Unit, Audio – Video and Latent Prints.

- Health Special Revenue Fund. This fund includes several programs that are supported by ordinances including ambulance permit, consumer-food and drug, vital statistics, international travel immunizations, Geriatric Dental Program and specific public health purposes. Ambulance permit fees collected are allocated to fund for inspection of ambulances and permitting of ambulance operators. Electronic monitoring system fees are collected from the requests of medallions for the operation of mobile food units, other than restricted operations mobile food units, licensed part vending units, or fixed location mobile food units as stated for the provision in the city fee schedule for the maintenance, operations and utilization of the electronic monitoring system. Vital statistics for certified copies of records, searches and amendment fees are expended for purpose of the preservation of vital statistics records maintained by the registrar. International travel immunization fees for each vaccination that is administered including any certificate provided shall be an amount equal to the city's cost of purchases of the vaccine plus $20 to cover the associated costs for providing the service and administering the vaccine. All revenue generated from the Geriatric Dental Program is directed to be used to defray the costs associated with the administration and operation of the program. This fund is administered by the Health and Human Services Department.

- Historic Preservation Fund. This fund is administered by the Planning and Development Department, which was established in FY2010 to utilize funds set aside from the sale of historic fire stations by the City in FY2009. This fund is used to promote historic preservation programs. It utilizes City funds as seed money to encourage private investment, attract grant funds, and support educational programs that will further preservation efforts in Houston.

- Houston Civic Events Fund. This fund is administered by the Mayor's Office. This fund was created to promote consistent quality, family-oriented entertainment to Houston citizens and visitors. It is used to enhance the image of the City and highlight Houston's diverse culture. In addition to event production, the Mayor's Office of Special Events processes requests for special events, parade and street function permits, evaluates event co-sponsorship on city property, and provides production assistance for sponsored, co-sponsored, or fee-paid events.

- Houston Emergency Center Fund. This fund consolidates the City's four separate emergency services (Police, Fire/EMS computer Aided Dispatch System, Radio System and Records Management Systems) into one state of the art facility. This fund is administered by the Houston Emergency Center.

- Houston TranStar Center Fund. This fund was established for the planning, design, operation and maintenance of transportation and emergency management operations within the greater Houston area. Funding is derived from revenue received from member agencies and is prorated based on occupancy and use of center facilities. This fund is administered by the Public Works and Engineering (PWE) Department.

- Juvenile Case Manager Fund. This fund was established FY2009 and is administered by the Municipal Courts Department. This fund includes expenditures for the salary, benefits, and operational costs related to the Juvenile Case Manager staff. Revenue is generated by the collection of a court fee for each paid conviction as allowed by State law. The mission of the Juvenile Case Manager Fee Fund is to partner with school districts within the City of Houston in an effort to increase school attendance and reduce truancy through early identification, assessment and prevention services, to enhance the accountability of students and families, and to limit a juvenile's exposure to the criminal justice system.

- Laboratory Operations and Maintenance Fund. This fund is solely designated for laboratory operations and maintenance for the retention of all revenue from laboratory fees. It pertains to Ordinance Amending Chapter 21 of the Code of Ordinance relating to laboratory fee. This fund is administered by the Health and Human Services Department.

- Maintenance Renewal and Replacement Fund. This fund is to provide funds needed to maintain and replace systems in buildings and assets as well as to protect the City of Houston's (City) investments. This fund recognizes the shared responsibility of the City and its departments to maintain, upgrade, or replace building systems as they approach the end of their life cycle. This fund also addresses development and maintenance of the physical infrastructure of these facilities. This fund is administered, in partnership, by General Services and Houston Parks and Recreation departments.

- Municipal Courts Building Security Fund. This fund was established in FY1997 and is administered by the Municipal Courts Department. This fund includes all security related contractual expenditures and additional security enhancements for the courts. Revenue is generated by the collection of a court fee for each paid conviction as allowed by State law. The mission of the Municipal Court Building Security Fund is to protect the health and welfare of civilians and employees by ensuring that adequate equipment, procedures, and personnel are present at all court facilities.

- Municipal Courts Technology Fee Fund. This fund was established in FY2001 and is administered by the Municipal Courts Department. This fund includes expenditures for hardware/software maintenance and support, and debt repayment for the court's current case management system (ICMS). The final debt service payment is planned for FY2014. Revenue is generated by the collection of a court fee for each paid conviction as allowed by State law. The purpose of the fund is to finance technological enhancements for the Municipal Courts and maintain systems to operate in an efficient manner.

- Parking Management Fund. This fund is responsible for managing and providing on-street parking alternatives to the citizens in the Greater Houston area. This fund is administered by the Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department.

- Parks Golf Special Revenue Fund. This fund was created to receive all City revenues derived from all City-owned golf facilities, whether operated by the City or private entities, including all related concessions fees, to be used exclusively for the maintenance, operating and improvements of any or all such golf courses.

- Parks Special Revenue Fund. This fund is used to account for revenues and certain expenditures related to operations of the City's municipal golf courses and youth programs. This fund is administered by the Parks and Recreation Department.

- Police Special Service Fund. This fund is used to account for activities that are not covered under the General Fund Budget. The activities include joint police operations, security and traffic control, undercover support services and use of HPD facilities. The Houston Police Department administers this fund.

- Recycling Expansion Program Fund. This fund was created to allocate dedicated funds to be used for the expansion and implementation of the City's Recycling Programs. Efforts include citywide tree waste recycling, additional neighborhood depository sites, curbside recycling and increased education and outreach. These efforts allow the City to improve its current landfill diversion rate. This fund is administered by the Solid Waste Management Department.

- Special Waste Fund. The purpose of this fund is to prevent the infiltration of fats, oils, and grease into the sanitary sewer, and to assure that the City's infrastructure and the health of the citizens are protected. All fees collected are expended only for the costs of permitting, inspecting, monitoring, controlling, educating and enforcing any violation pertaining to the management and disposal of city-regulated waste. This fund is administered by the Health and Human Services Department.

- Storm Water Fund. This fund receives revenue from the Combined Utility System Fund and Dedicated Drainage and Street Renewal Fund. Funds are transferred to this fund to support storm water drainage operation and maintenance activities. The core purpose is to provide the best level of maintenance to the storm water infrastructure with the resources provided and to maintain flow of storm water free of debris and foreign objects that cause flooding.

- Supplemental Environmental Protection Fund. This fund is used for the advancement of the goals of clean air and water and to enhance the community environment impacted by criminal environmental violators. This fund is administered by the Police Department.

- Swimming Pool Safety Fund. This fund receives proceeds from enforcing municipal, state and federal pool and spa safety standards. State and federal pool and safety standards apply to all pools and spas serving more than two dwellings; in accordance with the requirements, operators of pool and spas at apartment or condominium projects are required to obtain permits and to comply with the standards. The fees collected in pursuant of swimming pool and spa safety are used for the purposes of activities related to permitting, inspecting, monitoring, abating, controlling, educating and enforcement of municipal, state and federal standards. This fund is administered by the Health and Human Services Department.

Internal Service Funds

Internal Service Funds were established for the purpose of providing services to City departments on a cost-reimbursement basis. These funds are shown in the Internal Service Fund section of the budget document. Included are the following:

- Health Benefits Fund. This fund was created to account for the financial activity of the City's medical and health-related plans. Employee, retiree, and City premium contributions are budgeted as revenues. Medical and dental expenses, some self-insured medical claims, life insurance premiums, payments to employees for dependent care reimbursement, and health benefits program administrative costs are budgeted as expenditures. This fund is administered by the Human Resources Department.

- Long-Term Disability (LTD). This fund was established in FY1985 and is used to account for the long-term sick leave benefits for eligible city employees. The LTD Fund is funded solely by the City through premiums charged to the departments based on the number of employees covered by the plan. Such premiums cover the cost of all benefits (claims) to the employees and third party administrative fees. This fund is administered by the Human Resources Department.

Service Chargeback Funds

Service Chargeback Funds, previously known as Revolving Funds, are established to provide services to other City departments on a cost-reimbursement basis and are shown in the Service Chargeback Funds Section. Included are the following:

- Central Services Revolving Fund. This fund provides goods and services to operating departments. The receiving department's budget is charged for the actual cost incurred by the Central Services Revolving Fund, with the revolving fund revenue account credited by the same amount. As an example, citywide temporary personnel costs are budgeted in this fund.

- In-House Renovation Fund. This fund is used to capture the costs associated with the renovation and reconstruction of fire stations. All costs are charged to the revolving fund in anticipation of billing a bond fund, General Fund or Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant fund for reimbursement. This fund is administered by the General Services Department.

- Fleet Management Fund. This fund is administered by the Fleet Department, which is used to account for fleet maintenance for citywide departments.

- Property and Casualty Fund. This fund records the transactions of the City's self-insurance program for lost and personnel action claims. The Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department oversees the insurance functions while the Legal Department administers the claims portion. Revenue is generated from premiums assessed to other funds; premiums are based on projected expenditures.

- Workers' Compensation Fund. This fund was established to collect and report all costs of compliance to statutes related to Workers Compensation. The revenues are derived through charging the departments an administrative premium semi-monthly per employee plus all direct costs related to claim expenditures, which includes indemnity, medical and disability payments. This fund is administered by the Human Resources Department.

- Project Cost Recovery Fund. This fund is used to pay the costs of department employees who directly and indirectly work on CIP-related projects. These costs are then recovered from the appropriate CIP project fund. This fund is administered by the Finance Department.

Equipment Acquisition Consolidated Fund

The Equipment Acquisition Consolidated Fund supports the acquisition of durable capital assets for all General Fund departments and selected Special Revenue Funds. Historically, funding has come from issuing Commercial Paper for the purchase of such capital assets. Funding continues to come from the issuance of Commercial Paper and other sources such as capital lease financing. This fund is administered by the Finance Department.

Debt Service Funds

General Obligation debt is secured by and payable from the receipts of an annual ad valorem tax levied, within legal limits, on taxable property within the City. The City has covenanted to assess, levy and collect an ad valorem tax in each calendar year, within applicable limitations, sufficient to pay the principal of and interest on all outstanding obligations payable in such Tax Year. Such obligations include: (i) Public improvement bonds, (ii) Certificates of obligation, (iii) Certain obligations to fund a portion of the City's unfunded actuarial accrued liability to the City's pension programs, and (iv) General obligation on commercial paper notes.

The primary source of funds to make obligated payments is the General Fund, which annually transfers the legally required amount into the Debt Service Fund. The debt service fund accumulates the resources necessary to pay the principal and interest on all outstanding obligations payable in that Fiscal Year. The Debt Service Fund makes payments for arbitrage rebate and administrative fees to administer the debt program.

The City's tax rate for Fiscal Year 2014 (Tax Year 2013) was $0.63875 (per $100 assessed valuation), which includes $0.161665 for debt service. This debt service tax rate is what determines the amount of funds that the General Fund is legally required to transfer into the Debt Service Fund.

Trust and Agency Funds

Trust and Agency Funds are used to account for assets held by a government unit as trustee, or agent for the individuals, private organizations, other governmental units, and/or other funds. The City has created trust and agency funds for Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) since FY1991. As development occurs in each zone, taxes generated by the increase in value attributable to those improvements, or "tax increment", are captured in separate funds set up for each TIRZ. TIRZ funds are then used to pay for approved project costs. Examples of typical costs include: infrastructure improvements in water, sanitary sewer, and storm water systems, lighting, paving on public right-of-way, streetscaping, impact fees, and debt service on bonds sold for the same purpose. Contributions from other taxing jurisdictions participating in the TIRZ are collected by each respective jurisdiction and sent to the City for deposit in the TIRZ funds. The Mayor's Office of Economic Development/TIRZ administers the funds.

Capital Project Funds

Funding for major capital improvement projects, regardless of funding source, is presented in the five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Debt service requirements are budgeted in the General Debt Service Fund or Enterprise Funds where applicable. Funding for each capital project, including site acquisition, engineering and design, construction and initial equipment purchases (including environmental and civic art) required to make a facility operational are included in the CIP. Primary funding sources for the CIP are as follows:

- Commercial paper notes and Public Improvement Bond proceeds,
- Revenue Bond proceeds (e.g., bonds supported by Combined Utility System fees, Airport System revenues, Convention and Entertainment Facilities revenue/hotel occupancy tax),
- Operating funds or capital reserve funds (e.g., operating budget funds),
- Contributions from private or other public sources (e.g., local private developers, other local governments and authorities, and state or federal agencies) participating in City-sponsored projects.

- Grants such as CDBG.
- Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ).

The Finance Department administers these funds.

Other Financial Funds

Comprehensive budgets for certain entities are not included in the City's budget or the CIP due to City Council's limited authority to program expenditures. They are included in the City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

- Federal and state grants are accepted by the City and accounted for based upon each grant's respective fiscal period, which usually differs from that of the City (July 1 - June 30). If a grant requires a local match or fund payroll costs in whole or in part, the budget includes expenditures and revenues that pertain to these aspects of the grant in the receiving department or fund. These grants and contracts are approved by Council action at the time of the grant award.
- The City's three pension funds are governed by independent boards and are maintained separately from the operating, debt service, and capital funds. Contributions from both the employees and employer (City) are also maintained separately in the case of Deferred Compensation and Long-Term Disability programs.
- Other funds established by City Council or the City Controller to account for contributions from private individuals (e.g., Library Gift Endowment Fund; Houston Parks Board Trust Fund; Water Fund (Water Aid to Elderly Residents); Houston Economic Development; and the Battaglia Trust Fund) are dedicated to specific unbudgeted but public purposes.