

CITY GARDEN COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERIES

How Finances Work at City Garden

A plain-language guide for families and staff

2026–27

Budget overview

What we'll cover in this session

City Garden's Community Education Series creates regular opportunities to understand our priorities, governance, and current work.



How the budget works

Where revenue comes from, where funds go, and how leaders make budget decisions.



Oversight and accountability

How staff and the Board monitor financial performance throughout the year.



Current financial landscape

The pressures City Garden faces now and the priorities shaping the next three years.



How our community can help

The roles families and staff play in City Garden's financial health.

The budget is our mission expressed in dollars

It answers four practical questions:

What must we protect?

Strong Montessori instruction, student support, and a stable staff.

What can public funding cover?

Most—but not all—of the education and services our students need.

Where are the tradeoffs?

Every staffing, program, and facility choice affects another priority.

How do we remain healthy?

Budget conservatively, monitor closely, and maintain reserves.

Our goal is to use limited resources responsibly and equitably, in service of excellent education for all City Garden students.

Budget priorities for the next three years



Academic progress

Accelerate growth for students with the greatest need. Clarify our integrated learning model and strengthen shared accountability.



Facilities

Develop a long-term plan for the Early Childhood Education Center, including the possible purchase of 1618 Tower Grove. Pay down financing for 4209 Folsom.



Risk management

Increase days of cash on hand so normal changes in revenue or expenses do not create organizational risk.



Long-term stability

Build reserves so City Garden can sustain its mission for years to come.

The FY27 plan balances investment with a firm financial guardrail

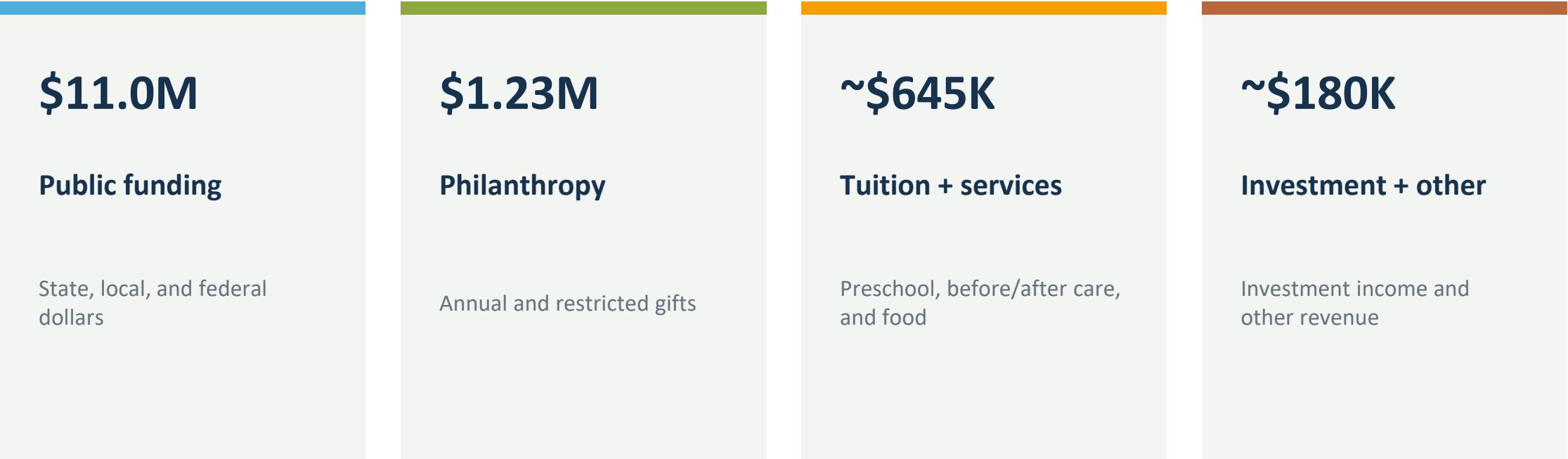
\$13.08M Budgeted revenue	\$13.32M Budgeted expenses	\$242.8K Planned deficit	\$1.34M Projected ending operating cash
---	--	--	---

10%

minimum fund balance City Garden is committed and accountable to maintain

A deficit budget is not ideal. This plan uses a portion of prior-year cash while preserving the required reserve. A critical priority for the board is to eliminate the deficit and increase the number of days of “cash on hand.”

Four sources combine to fund City Garden’s work



Public funding is the foundation. Philanthropy closes critical gaps and expands what is possible.

Enrollment and attendance directly affect public funding

State funding

WADA

**Weighted Average Daily
Attendance**

+

WAM

**Weighted Average
Membership**

FY27 formula: 80% WADA + 20% WAM

What this means

Enrollment matters

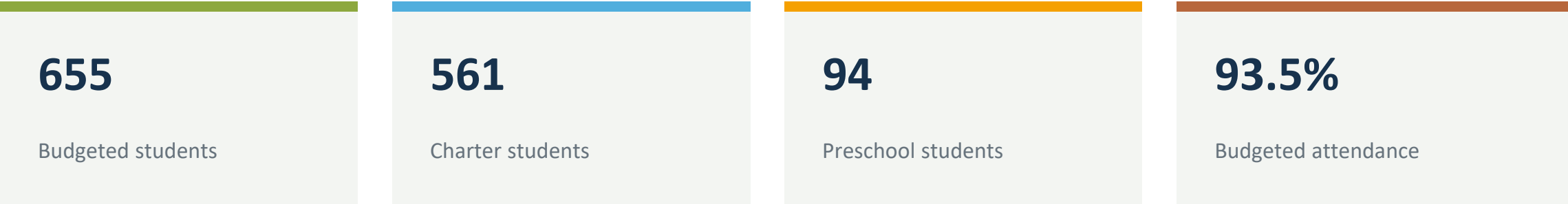
Funding declines when fewer students enroll than planned.

Attendance matters

Showing up supports learning—and strengthens the attendance-based portion of revenue.

Budget assumption: about \$15,358 per WADA
Revenue received per day of attendance, per K-8 student: \$85
(We don't receive these funds if students don't come to school)

FY27 enrollment assumptions are intentionally conservative

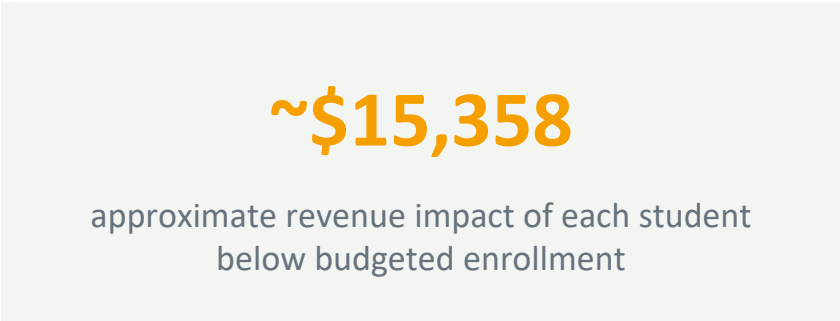


Why target more than the budget assumes?

City Garden’s budget relies on student enrollment and attendance. The school’s financial model aligns with the Montessori model, which often has larger than average class sizes with two adults and mixed-age classrooms in which students stay for three years. Prior to school expansion, lower elementary classrooms typically had 34 students; we reduced that to approximately 30 as we grew.

For many years we did not enroll students after 2nd grade, which left open seats at older grades and lower revenue. We now fill open seats at older grade levels, in order to increase access to our program and to eliminate the impact of attrition.

In 2026-27, City Garden’s enrollment target was 5% above the budgeted count to account for historic summer withdrawals and to reduce disruptive enrollment after school begins. For the past several years, we have not hit budgeted enrollment targets; other sources of revenue have helped make up the revenue loss; state revenue loss in 2025 made this a more critical challenge.



Attendance goal: 95%
Actual attendance in 2025-26: 93.4%

Philanthropy makes an accessible public Montessori model possible

FY27 operating fundraising goal

\$1,060,875

plus \$170,000 in grant funding for tutoring support

FY26 fundraising total: \$1,029,400

- Giving from individuals: \$293,379 (28%)
- Funding from foundations and grants: \$535,288 (52%)
- Funding from corporations and businesses: \$205,880 (20%)

Fundraising helps support:

- Preschool and before/after-care assistance
- Special education and family wraparound services
- Teacher training and Montessori materials
- Enrichment, breakfast and lunch
- Facilities and other gaps in public funding

Private Montessori tuition often exceeds what many families can afford, ranging between \$10,000 and \$23,000 annually. City Garden raises funds through philanthropy to in order to make our Montessori program socioeconomically diverse and accessible to families, regardless of income.

FY27 revenue and expenses per student

Revenue per student

\$19,970

State \$14,308

Federal \$1,246

Philanthropy \$1,879

Other local \$2,537

Expenses per student

\$20,341

People \$14,350

Services \$2,573

Supplies \$372

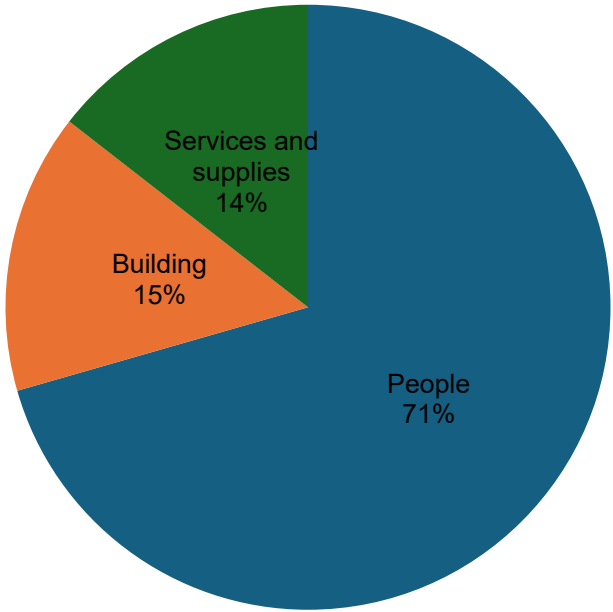
Building \$3,046

\$371

gap per student, in addition to budgeted philanthropy need

The annual budget closes most of this gap through prior-year reserves while maintaining the required fund balance.

People are 71% of the budget—because our people make our mission happen.



■ People ■ Building ■ Services and supplies

\$9.40M

salaries and benefits

\$2.00M Building expenses (ECEC + EAEC)
Rent, utilities, maintenance, insurance, and other occupancy costs.

\$1.93M Services + supplies
Food, contracted supports, learning materials, technology, and operations.

The budget continues a multi-year commitment to staff compensation

Phase 2 of 3

Lead and assistant guide salary scales are being phased in over three years.

\$56,424

Average lead guide salary

8.2%

Average raise for eligible lead guides in 2026

\$35,492

Average assistant guide salary, with retention bonus. Assistants salaries increased approx 11.8% in 2025-26.

3%

Increase for staff not on a guide scale

The plan also invests in instructional leadership, intervention, special education, family support, staffing and compliance capacity. In the past 2 years, 26 City Garden staff members have earned a degree or credential, and 12 staff members have been promoted into new positions that come with salary increases.

Some of our most essential services are not fully reimbursed

Special education	Needs are increasing; public reimbursements cover only a portion of costs. Projected cost of \$1.25 million for 2026-27 while revenue for special education is \$220,000.
Preschool access	Average cost per Student is \$21,918. Full price tuition is \$10,980; average tuition paid with sliding scale is \$6,183. A dedicated ECEC special education room reduces tuition capacity by about 20 students.
Food service	Breakfast and lunch costs substantially exceed reimbursement and fee revenue.
Facilities	ECEC needs a long-term facility plan; EAEC carries debt and occupancy obligations.

These are not peripheral costs—they are part of serving children equitably and well.

A planned deficit requires active management throughout the year

\$242.8K

planned gap between revenue and expenses

The guardrail

End the year with at least a 10% fund balance—projected at approximately \$1.34M.

Strategic plan goal is to increase days of cash on hand from 30 to 60 over next 3 years.

Days of cash on hand estimates how many days City Garden could continue paying its regular operating expenses using available cash if no additional revenue came in. For example, 30 days of cash on hand means the school has enough readily available cash to cover approximately one month of operations. More days provides a stronger cushion for unexpected expenses, delayed public funding, or revenue below projections.

What can improve the outlook

Revenue above budget

Higher enrollment/attendance, state funding, tuition or fundraising.

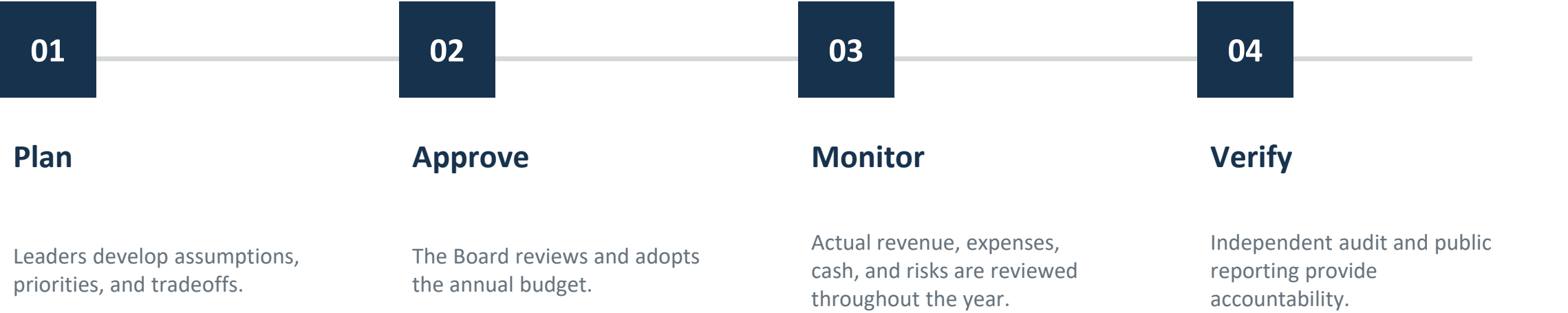
Expenses below budget

Careful purchasing, staffing timing, insurance, food and facilities management.

Timely course corrections

Leadership monitors results and adjusts when assumptions change.

Financial oversight happens before, during, and after the year



If revenue or expenses differ from plan, City Garden can slow spending, delay additions to the budget, revise forecasts, or identify new revenue.

Staff and families both influence financial health

Staff

- Plan purchases and use approved budgets
- Track commitments before spending
- Protect enrollment through a strong student experience
- Raise risks and needs early
- Use resources carefully without compromising essentials

Families

- Prioritize daily attendance and refrain from unnecessary absences
- Complete enrollment and re-enrollment steps promptly
- Pay applicable fees when able—or ask about assistance
- Participate, volunteer, and share City Garden’s story
- Give if and as your family is able, invite in others who may enjoy supporting City Garden

Financial partnership should always reflect people’s different roles, responsibilities, and ability to contribute.

The central idea

Our budget protects the people and programs students need, while keeping City Garden financially sustainable.

Call to Action

We *all* contribute everyday to making City Garden a vibrant and healthy school community. Continue to support your children's learning, bring your children to school each day, volunteer however you can, and participate in City Garden's finance and fundraising efforts in ways that work for your family.

Questions and conversation

What would you like to understand more fully?

Where would more information or context be helpful?