

THORNTON
COLORADO

2025

City of Thornton

Annual Accomplishments Report

Government Finance Officers Association

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City of Thornton
Colorado

For its Annual Financial Report
For the Fiscal Year Ended

December 31, 2023

Christopher P. Morrill

Executive Director/CEO

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Meet our 2025-2027 City Council

Thornton is a home rule city operating under the Council–Manager form of government. The City Council consists of the Mayor, elected at large, and eight Council members, two elected from each of the City's four wards.

Mayor



Jan Kulmann

Ward 1



Justin Martinez



Cherish Salazar

Ward 2



Roberta Ayala
Mayor Pro Tem



John Alge

Ward 3



David Acunto



Devin Byrd

Ward 4



Chris Russell



Drew Morris

About This Report

This report provides an overview of the City of Thornton's accomplishments in fiscal year 2025, highlighting progress made in support of the community and Council priorities capturing key investments and advancements across City operations and programs. The report also reflects the City's work to establish and begin implementing the Five-Year Strategic Plan. The financial information presented is unaudited and in a summarized and condensed form and does not substitute for the City's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). The ACFR can be found at ThorntonCO.gov/government/finance/.

Letter From the City Manager



Residents of Thornton,

I am pleased to share with you the City of Thornton's 2025 Annual Accomplishments Report, a comprehensive look at the progress we've made together over the past year. This report highlights the significant strides we've achieved across various strategic focus areas, departments and initiatives.

Thank you for making Thornton an incredible place to live, work, and thrive.

Sincerely,

Tansy Hayward
City Manager

2025 Highlights

Who is Thornton?

Thornton is a diverse community with a strong commitment to quality of life. The community's location provides an ideal environment for business and recreation. Located in the North Denver metropolitan area, Thornton shares boundaries with Westminster, Broomfield, Northglenn, Federal Heights, and Commerce City.

Growth

Thornton is the sixth largest city in Colorado with a population over 154,000 across 38 square miles. Over the last decade, Thornton's population has grown by 25% and we are forcasted to continue growing. The median age of Thornton residents is 34, and median household income is $100,982.

Employers

Business services, retail, manufacturing, health care services, and construction comprise the largest share of employment locally, with major employers including Google, Murphy Company, Amazon, Sashco, Forge Nano, Allegro Coffee, and Solid Power.

The top ten employers include: Adams 12 Five Star Schools, Amazon, American Furniture Warehouse, Murphy, City of Thornton, North Suburban Medical Center, King Soopers, Main Event, Topgolf, and Walmart Stores.

Mission, Vision, Values

The Mission, Vision, and Values of the City of Thornton were reviewed and updated by City Council beginning mid-2024 and were finalized early 2025.

Mission

Our mission is to build a resilient and thriving Thornton by providing vital services that support safety and well-being for our community.

Vision

As one of the largest cities in Colorado, Thornton is a regional leader with a dynamic economy and safe, welcoming, and diverse neighborhoods focused on innovation, fiscal responsibility, and service excellence that enriches lives.

Values

Trust

We value the trust our community has in us to serve as stewards of resources to provide essential services. We make decisions in a selfless and professional way that prioritize the collective, evolving, and long-term needs of the organization and community. We build systems of communication and transparency that reinforce accountability for our performance and actions.

Collaboration

We demonstrate collaboration by recognizing that the needs of our community and our work extend beyond the borders of our departments and our organization. We engage internal and external partners to align our efforts and achieve common goals. By working together, we capitalize on new opportunities and identify creative solutions to problems.

Dedication

We serve with dedication by treating the public and our teammates with respect and compassion. We incorporate these values and practices into our work, recognizing that respect must be earned and maintained. We realize that our actions are a reflection on the City and we commit to listening to and supporting the community.

Excellence

We each take the initiative to pursue excellence by increasing efficiency, improving service, creatively addressing problems, and adapting to new opportunities and challenges in our work. We serve with a mindset to continuously improve our processes and raise our standards.

Strategic Planning

On October 14, 2025 City Council adopted the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, which provides guidance on advancing high-priority initiatives of City Council over the next five years. The 2025-2029 Strategic Plan is organized around four Strategic Focus Areas:

- Vibrant and Purposeful Development
- Connected Communities
- Safe, Supported, and Livable Community
- Organizational Excellence

Each of the Strategic Focus Areas are further defined by goals and actions, along with outcome measures to evaluate progress. The approved Strategic Plan includes 17 goals and 65 actions, with each action being led by an implementation team. Though implementation has just begun on the adopted actions within the Strategic Plan, the City was able to advance the goals laid out in the four Strategic Focus Areas in 2025.

Connected Communities 

The Connected Communities Strategic Focus Area is dedicated to reducing traffic congestion and enhancing safe multi-modal transportation options, including transit, cycling, and pedestrian pathways, to supporting active lifestyles, building inclusive communities, and expanding meaningful connections between neighborhoods, activity centers, and the region.

Safe & Smart Infrastructure

In alignment with the Vision Zero initiative, the City implemented data-driven technology to protect motorists and pedestrians:

- Traffic Signal Optimization: Launched Automated Traffic Signal Performance Measures (ATSPM) at five key locations to improve traffic flow and reduce idling.
- Automated Enforcement: Deployed red-light and speed camera programs to deter dangerous driving behaviors and prevent serious crashes.
- Proactive Enforcement: Partnered with regional agencies to prioritize traffic safety and reduce incidents caused by reckless driving.

Strategic Transit & Regional Planning

The City successfully advanced several high-priority projects identified in the Transportation and Mobility Master Plan:

- Corridor Improvements: Completed the 88th Avenue Corridor Study and secured federal funding for the widening and additional enhancements to 104th Avenue.
- Transit Expansion: Coordinated with RTD to extend Route 7 bus service along Washington Street to Grant Street and 140th Avenue, improving access to major hubs like the Denver Premium Outlets.
- E-Mobility & Multi-Modal Access: Deployed a new e-mobility hub at Denver Premium Outlets and expanded bicycle parking requirements to encourage alternative transportation.

Long-Term Connectivity & Maintenance

- Regional Priorities: Continued advocacy and advancement of Thornton's subregional transportation priority projects to ensure the City remains a key player in regional growth.

Organizational Excellence 

The Organizational Excellence Strategic Focus Area fosters a culture of accountability and continuous improvement that leverages technology, innovation, a focus on customer service, and intentional community engagement to respond to the evolving needs of the community.

Bolstering Cybersecurity & Resilience

To strengthen digital defenses, the City conducted a comprehensive cybersecurity tabletop exercise in partnership with its insurance provider. This cross-departmental simulation tested the City's readiness for a ransomware attack.

- Strengths Validated: The exercise confirmed robust capabilities in incident reporting, threat detection, and communication continuity.
- Future Enhancements: The City identified key opportunities to further harden resilience through refined crisis communication, clearer escalation protocols, and enhanced data recovery options.

Expanding Community Outreach

The City significantly increased its communication footprint through "City Voice" and digital media:

- City Voice Expansion: Doubled the publication size from four to eight pages, providing more space for departmental updates and community stories.
- Strategic Collaboration: Produced high-impact content, including the Police Department's Photo Safety Program announcement and a promotional video for Thornton Economic Development.
- Audience Growth: Video engagement surged across all platforms, totaling over 250,000 combined views on social media, YouTube, and Cablecast.

Enhancing Digital Experience & Accessibility

The City remains committed to an inclusive and user-friendly digital environment:

- Web Optimization: Redesigned several webpages, including Veterans Memorials, Open Space, and Seasonal Activities, to improve navigation, visual identity, and mobile usability.
- Accessibility Milestones: To ensure compliance and inclusivity for all residents, the City onboarded its first Digital Accessibility Specialist, implemented new document compliance tools, and established long-term remediation plans across all departments.

Safe, Supported, and Livable Community 

The goal of the Safe, Supported, and Livable Community Strategic Focus Area is to build a safe, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable community through exceptional and well-prepared neighborhood and public safety services, meaningful collaboration with social service partners, engaging community programs, and outstanding utilities.



Public Safety & Emergency Readiness

2025 marked a year of historic growth and modernization for the City's first responders:

- Emergency Operations Center (EOC): Completed Phase I of the EOC modernization, integrating advanced audio/visual systems and the new VEOCI Virtual Platform to enhance real-time coordination during crises.
- Fire Department Milestones: Graduated the largest academy class in department history (25 recruits) to support the upcoming Fire Station 8. Additionally, the Wildland and USAR teams provided critical aid to regional incidents, including the Palisade Fire and flood recovery in Kerr County, Texas.
- Police Department Innovation: Launched the City's inaugural POST Academy, graduating seven recruits in August 2025, and introduced the Blue Envelope Program to assist individuals with developmental disabilities during emergency interactions.
- Cold Case Resolution: Achieved a major justice milestone with an arrest in the 2003 Rosa Arguello homicide case following two decades of investigation.

Infrastructure & Essential Services

The City advanced critical long-term projects to support a growing population:

- Thornton Water Project: Successfully completed 33 miles of the 70-mile pipeline, with an additional 27 miles currently in design or construction.
- Fire Department Infrastructure: Broke ground on Fire Station 8, which will provide all-hazard emergency services to the northeast area, and continued preparations for the Ken Freiberg Fire Museum.

Inclusive Community

Engagement & Enrichment Programs for all ages saw significant expansion and increased participation:

- Active Adults (55+): Launched the "Golden Flames" Citizens Fire Academy and saw a 32% revenue increase in the Meals to Go program. Group fitness participation also rose by 12%, reflecting a high demand for accessible wellness services.
- Youth & Volunteerism: Expanded the CERT program to 34 volunteers and launched the Hook and Ladder youth academy. Large-scale "Days of Service" mobilized hundreds of residents to beautify local parks and honor veterans.
- Arts & Culture: Hosted the inaugural Dino Fest and the 9th Annual Dia de los Muertos, drawing thousands of residents. New pollinator sculptures were installed in Eastlake and Grange Creek Parks to support local ecosystems.

Accessibility & Sustainability

The City continues to remove barriers to ensure all public spaces are welcoming and planning for a sustainable environmental future:

- ADA Transition Plan: Advanced the City's accessibility goals by completing comprehensive assessments and upgrading ramps, restrooms, and sidewalks across parks and facilities.
- Inclusive Recreation: Hosted the Eggcessible Eggstravaganza and Dia de Pesca, specifically designed to remove barriers to outdoor recreation for underrepresented or differently-abled populations.
- Sustainability: Several sustainability planning efforts advanced, including progress on the Environmental Sustainability Master Plan (ESMP), with the completion of the greenhouse gas inventory, investments in PFAS treatment, and the adoption of the 2025 Water Efficiency Plan.





Vibrant and Purposeful Development

The aim of the Vibrant and Purposeful Development Strategic Focus Area is to actively pursue mixed-use and walkable development and redevelopment that include diverse housing choices. Attract commercial development with appealing amenities and economic opportunities that offer destinations for the community and visitors. Maintain inviting public spaces and facilities to inspire community pride and enjoyment.

Policy Modernization & Sustainability

The City overhauled its regulatory framework to encourage high-quality, innovative growth:

- New Development Code: Adopted a modernized code to streamline land-use processes and ensure better design standards.
- Electric Ready Code: Implemented Colorado's Model Electric Ready Code, requiring new constructions to be prepared for solar energy, EV charging, and full electrification.
- Housing Choice: Engaged a specialized consultant to develop the Housing Choice Code, aimed at expanding the supply of attainable and affordable housing by early 2026.
- Process Efficiency: Optimized CityView workflows to accelerate permit reviews and introduced a tiered water connection fee structure to lower the barrier for new developments.

Commercial Attraction & Job Creation

2025 was a landmark year for Thornton's economic profile, resulting in significant private investment:

- Primary Employer Growth: Attracted nine new primary businesses, representing 1,000 new jobs and the absorption of over 1.2 million square feet of real estate.

- Retail Destinations: Advanced major projects including Kentro Commercial, Dick's House of Sport, and Gordon Foods.
- Dining and Entertainment: Successfully recruited family-friendly venues such as Chicken N Pickle, The Picklr, and Malibu Jacks, activating vacant spaces and increasing daytime activity, along with other entertainment and dining options like Viewhouse, Billy Birch Pub and Yard, Someplace Else Brewery, Real De Minas Mexican Grill, and Crab & Grab Cajun Seafood & Bar

Redevelopment & Neighborhood Vitality

The City prioritized the revitalization of key sites to enhance community identity:

- Thornton Shopping Center: Advanced environmental cleanup, facilitated the NAIOP Real Estate Challenge to explore the art of the possible, and completed a redevelopment feasibility analysis to prepare the site for future negotiations.
- Strategic Reinvestment: Incorporated the Gateway District and Eastlake Grain Elevator into the Strategic Plan as future hubs for community gathering and revitalization.

Small Business Advocacy (ABAC)

The Alliance Business Assistance Center (ABAC) served as a vital resource for the local business community:

- Workshops & Counseling: Facilitated 25 workshops for over 500 participants and provided more than 400 specialized counseling sessions in legal and technical disciplines.
- Safety Initiatives: Launched the "Business Safety Lunch & Learn" series in both English and Spanish, focusing on property protection and safety.
- Direct Outreach: Conducted nearly 400 site visits to local businesses to strengthen retention and support.





Awards

The City of Thornton's commitment to excellence was recognized on local, state, and national stages in 2025. These awards reflect the City's dedication to fiscal transparency, innovative service, and community safety.

Organizational, Economic Development, & Financial Excellence

- **GFOA Triple Crown Award**: The City earned the prestigious Triple Crown from the Government Finance Officers Association. This honor is reserved for organizations that achieve excellence in all three major financial reporting areas:
    - Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting
    - Distinguished Budget Presentation Award
    - Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award (PAFR)
- **EDCC Larger Community of the Year**: The Economic Development Council of Colorado (EDCC) named Thornton the "Larger Community of the Year." Nominated by a peer community—a rare distinction—this award recognizes Thornton's success in business attraction, the Thornton Shopping Center revitalization, and our leadership in sharing best practices statewide.
- **National Video Programming Awards**: The Communications Department's video production team secured six national awards, including an Award of Distinction for "Thornton's Pothole Superheroes." Other honors recognized the City's excellence in public service announcements, humor, and community awareness.

Infrastructure & Design

- APWA Transportation Project of the Year: The Colorado Chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA) honored the York Street Bridge project. The award recognizes the successful replacement of an aging structure with a resilient, 100-year-storm-rated bridge featuring multimodal trail connections and utility upgrades.
- IIDA "BEST" Awards: The Thornton Community Center earned two "Brilliantly Executed Spaces & Thinking" (BEST) awards from the International Interior Design Association.
    - "Serve" Award: Recognized excellence in non-profit and community-based design at the Thornton Community Center.
    - DEI Award: Honored the facility's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through design at the Thornton Community Center.

Public Safety & Community Service

- Attorney General's Excellence in School Safety: Officer Couture received this prestigious honor from the Director of Safe2Tell Colorado for their exceptional dedication to protecting students at Stargate School.
- LEEPAAC Conference Success: The Thornton PD Explorers achieved a record-breaking performance at the 2025 Law Enforcement Explorer Post Advisor's Association competition, bringing home 16 trophies.





Grants

In 2025, the City pursued 52 grant opportunities totaling nearly $28.5 million, reflecting a strong commitment to bringing additional resources into the community. So far, 29 grants have been awarded, 14 were not selected, and 9 remain pending. These awards, totaling about $10.6 million, are helping advance projects in public safety, infrastructure, sustainability, housing, arts and culture, recreation, and parks and open spaces. Although the grant landscape has become increasingly competitive and regulations continue to evolve, City departments worked diligently to pursue high-value opportunities that support residents, strengthen services, and improve quality of life across Thornton.

Accomplishments Summary

In 2025, the City of Thornton made significant progress across all departments and all four Strategic Focus Areas, advancing long-term priorities while strengthening daily services that residents rely on. From major infrastructure upgrades and public safety initiatives to strategic planning, economic vitality, enhanced accessibility, and expanded recreation and cultural opportunities, each accomplishment reflects a shared commitment to delivering high-quality service to the community. Together these achievements, and the continuation of efforts of the new Five-Year Strategic Plan, position Thornton for continued growth, resilience, and innovation, and demonstrate the City's dedication to building a safe, connected, and thriving future for all residents.

Financial Data

Revenues

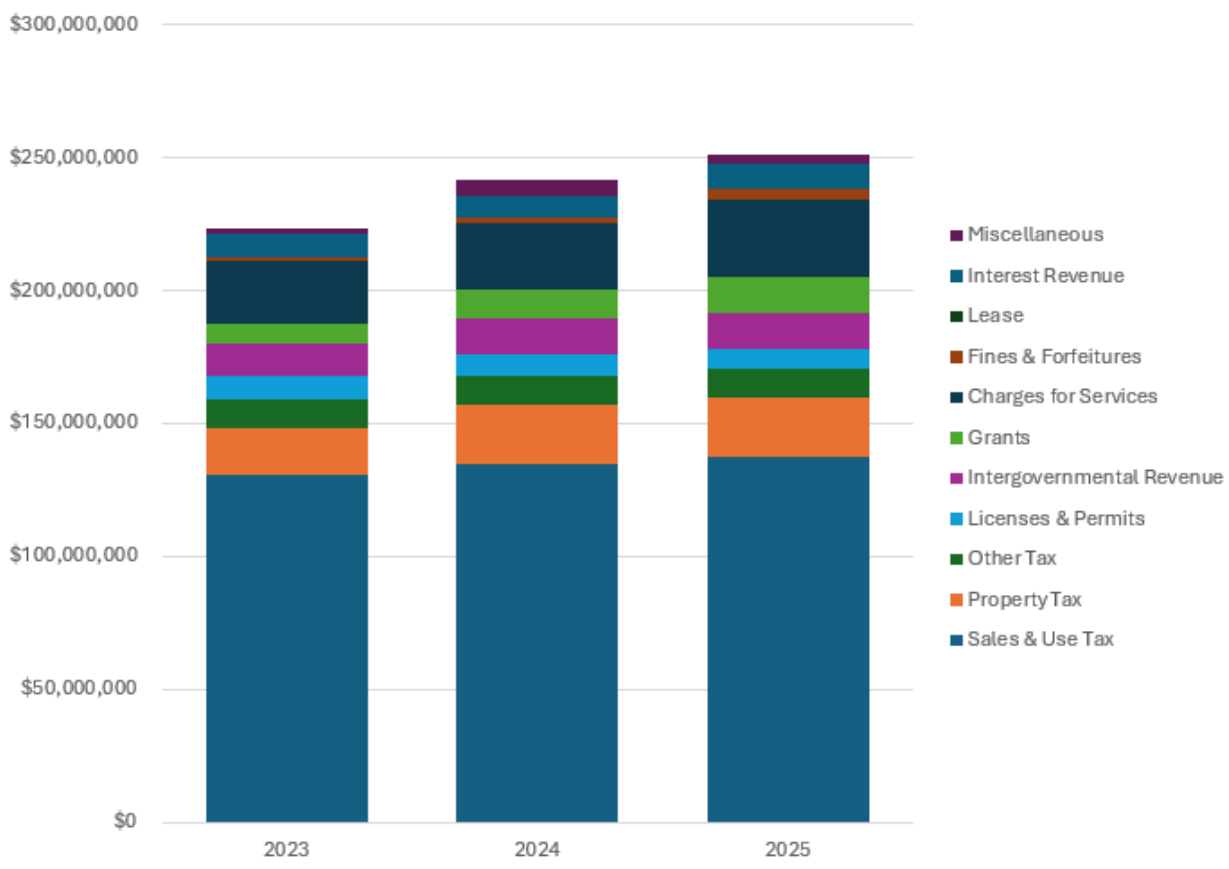
The General Fund and Government Capital Fund revenues demonstrated growth in 2025, with an increase of 3.7% over 2024, for a total of $250.7 million in both funds. This follows growth in 2024, resulting in overall revenue growth of 12.3% since 2023. The increase reflects continued economic activity, strategic development, and a diverse mix of revenue sources that support the delivery of essential services and community investments.

Sales and Use Tax is the City's largest revenue source, accounting for 54.9% of all revenues. This category increased by approximately 2.4% from the prior year, highlighting continued commercial activity and consumer spending within the community. Grant revenues increased by 21.7% from the prior year, helping fund a variety of community programs. Property Tax revenues remained stable but experienced a decrease of 4.4% from 2024, due to reductions in assessment rates and the implementation of partial exemptions, stemming from several significant bills recently passed by the State of Colorado aimed at reducing or stabilizing residential property taxes.

Charges for Service and Interest Revenue also experienced modest growth, contributing to the City's balanced and diversified revenue structure. Additionally, Fines and Forfeitures increased in 2025, reflecting an increase in revenue received from federal law enforcement forfeiture cases.

The City's revenue growth over the past three years has strengthened its ability to invest in infrastructure, maintain high-quality public services, enhance public safety, and support programs that improve residents' quality of life. By maintaining a diverse revenue base, the City remains well-positioned to address community needs while planning responsibly for future growth.

The following graph outlines the revenues by source for both the General Fund and Governmental Capital Fund. These two funds act in concert to provide general city services, including both operating and capital expenditures.



Core Services

Each year, the City Manager recommends a budget for Council's adoption. The proposed budget must be balanced, where ongoing revenues must meet or exceed ongoing expenditures. This budget considers feedback from the community as well as goals and policy direction from Council, while remaining fiscally responsible.

In 2025, the City invested $247.4 million in services, programs, infrastructure, and community improvements between the General Fund and Government Capital Fund. These expenditures reflect the City's commitment to maintaining high-quality public services, supporting a growing community, and making strategic investments that enhance residents' quality of life while maintaining a balanced budget. Year-over-year changes in expenditure percentages highlighted below should be considered in context, as capital spending can fluctuate significantly based on the timing of large, one-time projects and infrastructure investments. As a result, percentage changes may not necessarily reflect ongoing operational spending trends.

Public safety remained the City's largest area of investment. Combined Police, Fire, and Ambulance services accounted for about 39% of the total expenditures. Fire and Ambulance expenditures experienced an increase of about 24% from prior year, reflecting the City's continued focus on emergency response capabilities, staffing, and equipment. This increase was also influenced by one-time capital expenditures associated with the construction of Fire Station 8, which contributed to higher overall spending in 2025.

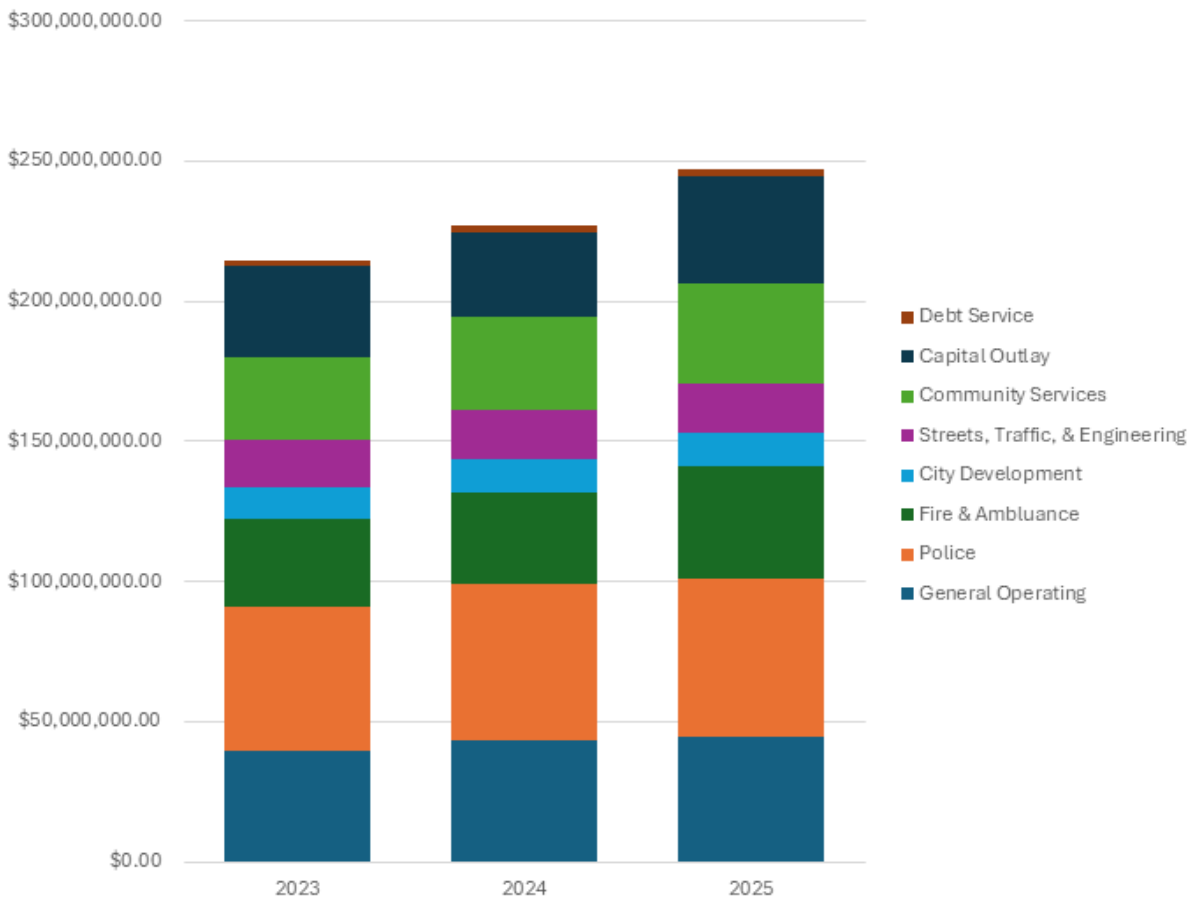
Community Services expenditures grew 14% in 2025, supporting parks, recreation programs, cultural amenities, and other services that contribute to a vibrant and connected community.

The City continued to prioritize long-term infrastructure investment, with Capital Outlay expenditures increasing about 16% in 2025. These investments support the construction, maintenance, and improvement of public facilities, transportation infrastructure, utilities, and other community assets that will serve residents into the future.

Streets, Traffic, and Engineering and City Development expenditures remained stable, demonstrating the City's ongoing commitment to maintaining transportation networks and supporting safe, efficient mobility throughout the community, development review, and planning initiatives that help guide Thornton's future growth.

Overall, City expenditures increased 9% in 2025, reflecting both strategic investments and the resources necessary to meet the needs of a growing community. Through these investments, the City continues to strengthen public safety, maintain critical infrastructure, enhance community amenities, and provide the high-quality services residents rely on every day.

The following graph outlines the expenditures by type for both the General Fund and Government Capital Fund, including operating and capital expenses.



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