



Savage City Connection / November 2024

Election Day is November 5

Vote in-person.

The City of Savage has nine polling locations open on Election Day from 7 a.m. - 8 p.m. You must vote in the precinct where you legally reside. If you're in line at 8 p.m., you're allowed to vote. Find your precinct and polling location at mnvotes.org.

Register to vote

Voters must be registered using their current name and address. Voters who have moved or changed their name since the last election must update their registration. You can register or update your registration when you vote either at your polling location on Election Day or when voting early at City Hall; however, registering online before Election Day is encouraged. Visit mnvotes.org to learn more about the required documentation.

ICYMI: Meet the Candidates

Local candidate forums are available to watch at:

- SAVAGE TV, the City's cable government access channel (Mediacom channel 107.2 and Nuvera Channel 1018)
- Live streamed at savagetv.cityofsavage.com/CablecastPublicSite/watch-now
- Links to forums at cityofsavage.com/departments/elections/candidate-forums

The City of Savage does not endorse any candidate, and the views of the candidate are their own.

Community leaders "feel the heat"

On a recent Saturday morning, mayors, city council members, city managers, and other community leaders from Scott County got to become firefighters for a day. They geared up in 60 pounds of turnout gear and air tanks to participate in the first-ever Feel the Heat event, a hands-on interactive training designed to educate decision-makers on the realities and risks of being a firefighter.

As Minnesota transitions to more full-time fire departments, it is necessary to educate how these departments operate and the service they provide. Like citizen academies hosted by police departments, Feel the Heat was intended to enhance community leaders' awareness of what it takes to work for the fire department and why sufficient funding and equipment matter. Throughout the training, participants faced a series of realistic scenarios that a firefighter might encounter on any given day, including a live fire, rescuing a victim from a smoke-filled structure, a vehicle extrication, and performing resuscitation skills on a victim of cardiac arrest to highlight the importance of firefighter training, equipment, and resources.

"Our goal was to provide elected officials with the perspective of how crews operate, what it takes to respond, and the time-critical, labor-intensive, highly technical nature of the job," stated Savage Fire Chief Jeremie Bresnahan.



Photo: L to R City Administrator Brad Larson, City Council member Christine Kelly, Assistant Fire Chief/Fire Marshall John Burrow, Assistant Administrator Chris Swanson

Participants walked away hot, sweaty, and tired, with a greater appreciation for what firefighters and emergency responders do to keep our communities safe every day. "It was very eye-opening to put on all the equipment, breathe through a mask, and try to put out a fire or crawl through a building," commented Savage City Administrator Brad Larson. "I think this training gives decision-makers in Scott County a much more insightful perspective on how and why firefighters train the way they do."

This event was hosted by Belle Plaine Fire, Jordan Fire, Mdewakanton Sioux Community Fire, Prior Lake Fire, and Savage Fire.



Photo: Feel the Heat participants included mayors, council members, and city administrators from the City of Savage, Prior Lake, Credit River, Belle Plaine, Jordan, and Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

Things to know about the 2025 Proposed City Budget

Each year, the City Council approves a budget for day-to-day operations, capital projects like roads, vehicles, equipment, etc., and annual debt repayment. These funds ensure that residents, businesses, and visitors receive quality services at a good value. The 2025 proposed General Fund budget is \$24.5 M. (The 2024 General Fund budget was \$22.73 M).

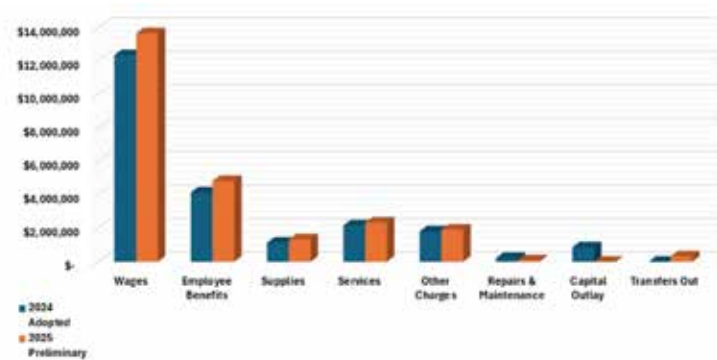
The budget process

The budgeting starts in July, with staff engaging in a comprehensive budget process to determine the costs of the services we provide. Based on guidance from the Council, departments were instructed to limit increases to 0.5% or less and include only necessary and unavoidable expenses to maintain current service levels—any new expense requests needed to support city council directives or strategic plan action items.

Did you know? Roughly 70% of the City's general fund budget is personnel costs.

2025 budget priorities

The most significant portion of the budget increase - \$1.4M - is for city employees' wages and benefits.



Annual COLA and Compensation Study

One of our 2022-2025 Strategic Priorities is to attract and retain a high-quality workforce. The 2025 proposed General Fund budget includes \$371,000 for annual cost of living increases (COLA) and \$260,000 for employee wage increases, as a recent compensation and benefit study recommended. While wages are certainly not the only part of a successful recruitment and retention strategy, ensuring wages are competitive helps keep good workers and shows support for our dedicated staff. "Our goal is to ensure that our employees are paid competitively and fairly," states City Administrator Brad Larson. "That way, we can continue to keep them, and when it comes time to fill positions, we can recruit appropriately."

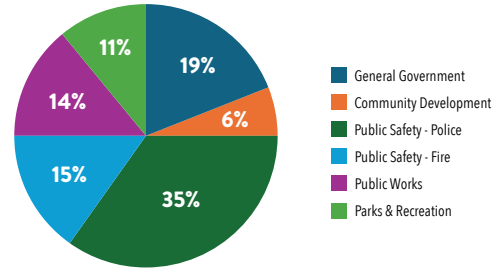
Addition of three full-time firefighters

The 2023 Standards of Coverage report identified the need to increase minimum staffing levels. The part-time firefighter model is proving increasingly unsustainable due to ongoing recruitment and retention challenges. These challenges limit our ability to maintain an effective response force and ensure the safety of firefighters and the community. To address this, the proposed 2025 budget allocates approximately \$430,000 to hire three additional full-time firefighters, raising the total to 12. With this staffing increase, the department will operate three shifts, each consisting of one captain and three firefighters, ensuring better coverage and a more effective response team. Fire Chief Bresnahan states, "At the current staffing level, we deploy two-person crews to calls, but overlapping calls or situations requiring more personnel compromise safety and service quality. Adding one more full-time firefighter per shift will help us better manage multiple calls at once, reducing reliance on part-time staff and improving our ability to respond quickly and safely."

Did you know? Approximately 50% of the City's budget supports local public safety services.

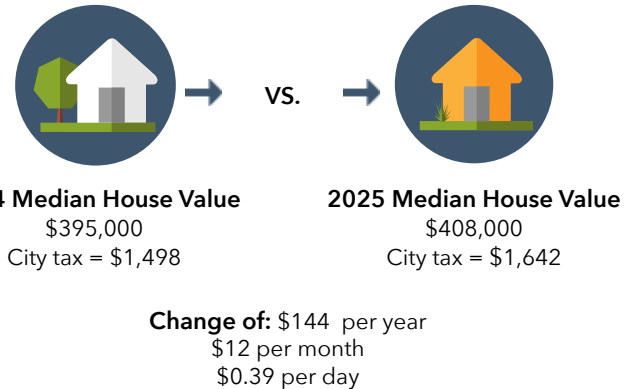
How is your money spent?

The pie chart shows how the City's current dollars fund the core Savage services.



What does this mean to you?

The impact on homeowners depends on how much your property's value changed from 2024. Scott County estimates an average increase of 3.3%.



Did you know? Only 1/3 of your property tax bill goes to the City of Savage.

Proposed 2025 Property Tax

When you get your property tax bill, keep in mind that your bill includes taxes from several jurisdictions, not just the City. Roughly 1/3 of the typical Savage residential tax bill goes to the City of Savage. The remaining taxes go to your school district, Scott County, and other special taxing districts such as watersheds, transit, mosquito control, etc.



Did you know? You can estimate your property taxes at scottcountymn.gov/422/Property-Tax-Calculator.

Next Steps:

Per direction from the Council, staff will continue to fine-tune the budget and levy to hold down taxes to the minimum necessary to provide high-quality city services. Residents are invited to attend the upcoming City Council meetings:

December 2: Truth-In Taxation Public Hearing at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Public comments are welcome at this time.

December 16: The 2025 final budget and tax levy are scheduled to be adopted by the City Council at 7 p.m.

Questions about the City's budget or tax levy can be directed to Savage Finance Director Matt Burt at mburt@cityofsavage.com or **952-882-2691**. Market value questions can be directed to Scott County at **952-496-8115** or their website at scottcountymn.gov/383/Pay-Property-tax.

Meet Sergeant Ashley Uthe

How long have you been a police officer, and how long have you been with Savage Police?

I have been a police officer since June 2012. Before that, I was a Community Service Officer (CSO) with the City for approximately nine months.

Why did you want to be a police officer?

Becoming a police officer has been a dream of mine since I was six years old. I've always wanted to help people and make a difference in my community. Plus, I love working outside and being active—it's the perfect fit for me! And let's be honest, my plans for the WNBA didn't quite work out, so this path feels right for me!!

What's the best part of your job?

One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is the dynamic nature of police work. Each day brings new challenges and experiences. I enjoy working outdoors, as I could not imagine spending my days in an office. Additionally, the camaraderie I build with my colleagues is invaluable, and the opportunity to make a positive difference in someone's life is what truly drives me.

If you had a superpower, what would it be?

If I could choose a superpower, I would want the ability to teleport. This would allow me to reach my destinations much more quickly and efficiently.

What do you like to do when you are not working?

In my personal time, I enjoy spending time with my family, camping (particularly RVing), ATVing, participating in sports/teaching my kids sports, staying active through workouts, and relaxing at home.

What is your favorite candy?

Reese's Peanut Butter Cup! I love the middle, so I always eat the edges first to save the best part for last.



Meet Assistant Fire Chief Chad Martin

Chad Martin has joined Savage Fire as our new Assistant Fire Chief. Martin brings a wealth of experience and passion for the fire service and has served with the Spring Lake Park Blaine Mounds View (SBM) Fire Department from 2009 to 2023 and the Coon Rapids Fire Department from 2023 to 2024. His lifelong association with the fire service began with his father, who served as a volunteer and later a full-time firefighter for the SBM Fire Department. Chad's career in the fire service started in 2009 when he became a volunteer firefighter with the SBM Fire Department and then transitioned to a full-time role in 2012. Over his years of service, he has held various positions, including firefighter, fire apparatus operator, lieutenant, captain, Chief of Training, Chief of Operations, and Assistant Chief of Emergency Management. "Chad is eager to bring his experience and knowledge to the City of Savage," states Fire Chief Jeremie Bresnahan. "He is excited to get to know everyone in the City of Savage and looks forward to becoming an integral part of the Savage Fire Department."



What does the Assistant Fire Chief do? As the Assistant Chief, I will work on department training and operations. Everything I have seen shows that this department is well-trained and has excellent equipment. I believe it is imperative that our training and equipment are maintained at that level, and I will continue to work with our captains to find ways we can improve to even higher levels where possible. My goal will be to continue to advocate and work towards reaching the Standards of Coverage recommendations to provide efficient, effective, and safe Fire and EMS service to the City of Savage.

What are you looking forward to? I am really looking forward to navigating our organization into the future. The fire service in the metro area has been asked to improve quality of services, training requirements for members, and to add staffing to meet the needs of increased calls and staffing shortages. I love being a part of the team, taking on these challenges head-on, and finding creative and effective ways to overcome them.

What is one of your fire safety tips? My biggest fire safety tip is to ensure that you and your family have an escape plan in the event of a fire in your house. Everyone should plan multiple ways to exit the home if there is a fire and identify a meeting location once you are out. We really want to ensure your safety first in a fire. If everyone is out and together in a designated area, you can quickly verify that everyone is safe.



Get your own cute K9!

Adorable stuffed animal Gunnars are available with \$20 donations to the Savage Crime Prevention Association (SCPA). The money raised will help fund Holiday Heroes, scholarships, training, and other Police Department needs. Stop by the Police Department, 6000 McColl Drive, Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. to get yours. Cash or check only.

EAB Update

The City continues to manage EAB in our community by identifying and removing trees in public areas infested with EAB. Removing infested trees is very important to slow the spread of the invasive species, help protect healthy ash trees, and mitigate potential public safety hazards in these public areas. City crews and contractors will remove approximately 43 trees in the east portion of the City this fall and winter. These trees will be marked with an "X" and removed at no cost to the resident/property owner. In accordance to the City's EAB Management Plan, trees will only be replaced in parks and open spaces. For more information on EAB, visit cityofsavage.com or contact Natural Resource Technician Jonah Reyes at jreyes@cityofsavage.com.



Happy retirement!

Congratulations to our long-time Public Works employee, Jay Lair, for 26 years of service. Jay started with the City as a seasonal employee, then became a Maintenance Operator and, most recently, Parks Foreman. What he's most looking forward to in retirement is being able to do whatever, whenever! Thank you for your years of dedicated service to our community.

Good News!

The brand-new artificial turf at the Savage Sports Center is complete! The state-of-the-art surface has transformed the facility, providing athletes with a year-round top-tier playing experience. The advanced turf promises improved durability, enhanced safety, and optimal performance, regardless of weather conditions. The drainage system under the new turf has also been completed and is designed to handle whatever Mother Nature will throw at it.



KEEP IN TOUCH:



Upcoming Community Events

Land Acknowledgment Unveiling

November 4 • 6 p.m.

City Hall lobby, 6000 McColl Drive

The City of Savage has installed two brass plaques in prominent locations at City Hall and the Savage Library, displaying the City's land acknowledgment adopted in 2023. The community is invited to attend the unveiling of the new land acknowledgment plaque at City Hall on Monday, November 4, at 6 p.m. The plaques will serve as a reminder to visitors who enter the buildings of the area's rich Indigenous history and allow an opportunity to educate residents about their connection to the places that make up Savage. There will be a short program with light refreshments. We hope you will join us!

Holiday Tree Lighting & Santa Cop Night

December 5, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

City Campus, 6000 McColl Drive

Help kick off the holiday season! Join Mayor Williams for hot cocoa and the countdown of the holiday tree lighting, then head to the Savage Police Department to drop off your unwrapped gifts for the annual Toys for Tots campaign and visit Santa and Police Chief Juell. Don't forget your camera!

FREE! Tree Lighting Ceremony: 5:30 - 6 p.m.

Santa Cop Night: 6 - 7: 30 p.m.

New Drug Drop Box

You can safely dispose of unneeded medication, prescription medication, illegal drugs, and drug paraphernalia in our drug disposal box in the vestibule of Savage City Hall at 6000 McColl Drive. This disposal box is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All deposits are made anonymously.

Items accepted include:

- unused/expired prescription medicine
- over-the-counter medications
- animal/pet medications
- liquid medications (must be in leak-proof containers)
- illegal drugs and drug paraphernalia (such as pipes and other objects)

*Needles/sharps are NOT accepted. Learn more about our drug disposal box online at cityofsavage.com/departments/police-department/drug-disposal.



City of Savage
6000 McColl Drive, Savage, MN 55378
Phone 952-882-2660
Fax 952-882-2656
Website cityofsavage.com

Mayor
Janet Williams 952-890-1669
Council members
Bob Coughlen 612-965-3999
Stacy Crakes 612-964-7893
Christine Kelly 952-226-2332
Matt Johnson 612-875-0367

City Administrator
Brad Larson 952-882-2660
Editor
Emily Gunderson 952-882-2655
egunderson@cityofsavage.com