

**AUGUSTA GOVERNMENT  
TRANSPARENCY SITE  
USER GUIDE**

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide viewers of the CityWatch web site with guidance regarding the intent and practical use of the pages of the site and its various sub-sites.

## RESOURCES

There are a number of resources available to assist viewers with the website. These resources will be maintained and updated online at the following locations:

### About CityWatch

<http://appweb2.augustaga.gov/CityWatch/AboutUs.htm>

### CityWatch Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

<http://www.augustaga.gov/CommunityVoice/Ideas?initiativeID=CityWatch-Feedback-22>

Augusta will also be creating video files and other multimedia resources to assist viewers with the user of the product as it is enhanced. Stay tuned!

## ABOUT CITYWATCH

### FINDING CITYWATCH

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There are multiple ways to reach the CityWatch site.

- You can go to the city's main page at <http://www.augustaga.gov> and click the CityWatch slide on the rotating slide show.
- You can go to the city's main page at <http://www.augustaga.gov> and click the CityWatch link underneath the Citizen Resources section on the right-hand side.
- You can go to the city's main page at <http://www.augustaga.gov> and click the Open Government link on the left-hand side.
- Type in <http://www.augustaga.gov/citywatch> from your browser.

CityWatch has a great deal of information available to its viewers and it is fairly graphic-intensive, so it has been optimized for use on a desktop computer or a tablet. ***A mobile version will be released in the future.***

### WHY IS THERE A DISCLAIMER?

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There is a disclaimer on the site which exists to mutually protect the viewers and Augusta government. You must accept the disclaimer in order to proceed with viewing various components of the CityWatch web site.

In essence, the disclaimer exists because Augusta is providing the information on the Citywatch site in good faith in order to provide information to citizens, employees, and officials to use for general information purposes. Likewise, Augusta is pledging to maintain the information and update it regularly to keep citizens apprised of the status of projects. People who use the site should be aware that there is ebb and flow to projects during their various phases and that some projects will move faster than others. Updates may be few and far between, then suddenly surge as various tasks are completed. The inclusion of expected dates for project completion will help provide information to citizens who want to keep an eye on the projects.

To sum up the spirit of the disclaimer: *Augusta is going to work on getting this information to the citizens, but please exercise patience and exercise discretion when making decisions based on what you have seen.*

Once you have accepted the disclaimer, you can go to our other pages: BudgetWatch and ProjectWatch.

## **WHAT FEEDBACK DOES AUGUSTA WANT?**

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Augusta wants public input regarding the direction of the CityWatch web site. As the centerpiece of Augusta’s transparency effort, CityWatch is a tool that is expected to be enhanced over time to include more information about various topics. The site was developed using the guidance of the Augusta Commission and the transparency policies that were established in the autumn of 2016, which were primarily concerned with the allocation and use of Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds. Transportation Investment Act (TIA) projects are also included in the initial rollout, and the site will be expanded in the future to include other projects funded through the Stormwater fee and Utilities funds.

The viewers of the site can help direct future enhancements through offering constructive feedback. The term “constructive feedback” means that a viewer has looked at a page, determined that they would like to see something new, and then commented on the Community Voice page dedicated to CityWatch. The page requires the viewer to set up a login and password, and then offers the viewer the opportunity to contribute ideas of offer a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” for other ideas that they have seen on the page. It also provides Augusta staff with the opportunity to respond to customers so that dialog (two-way communication) takes place. In other words, the feedback does not just disappear into cyberspace – it will be reviewed, commented upon, and acted upon if and when it is practical.

### **Where Do I Go to Provide Feedback?**

Augusta utilizes a tool called “Community Voice”. The feedback links on CityWatch are pre-set to go to the CityWatch-specific pages. You can use Community Voice to suggest a new topic or to comment on existing ones. A login and password will be required, but you can set these up from the Community Voice site. The Community Voice site is moderated, and posts using inappropriate or offensive language will be removed.

### **Example of Good Feedback:**

*I’d like to see all of the purchase orders that have been issued to a particular vendor. Are there plans for the city to make this information available on CityWatch?*

This is “good” feedback because it provides specific direction about how the city should enhance the site. City staff can assess the viability of making this information available and perhaps even provide comments to the requestor about when their request might be satisfied. Based on the feedback that is received, Augusta may develop a “Coming Soon” site that will list the items that are expected to be added in the future.

### **Example of Bad Feedback:**

*These aren’t the projects I’m looking for...*

This is “bad” feedback because the customer did not identify what projects they ARE looking for, so it is unlikely that the city will be able to address their concern without further investigation.

## USING BUDGETWATCH

The BudgetWatch initiative enables citizens to search for information related to how the city makes use of its funds. BudgetWatch provides the ability to interactively search budgets and expenses for current and past years. For key budget figures there will be charts and graphs that provide important insight into the project without requiring the user to understand finance or accounting. The goal is to provide the public with a customer-friendly interface that is easy to use and understand.

### CHECK REGISTER

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The check register provides a link for people who want to look at a list of the checks that the city has cut for the past six months. The link currently takes the viewer to a page on which PDFs are located, but this will soon be replaced by a searchable interactive tool.

### BUDGET DASHBOARD

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A dashboard provides information in an easy-to-read graphical format as opposed to raw numbers. It is called a “dashboard” because of its similarity to a car dashboard since it provides a summary of information about a larger set of data. Augusta’s budget dashboard provides a look at the amount of budgeted expenses in several areas without requiring the viewer to look at the detailed city budget.

### CURRENT APPROVED BUDGET

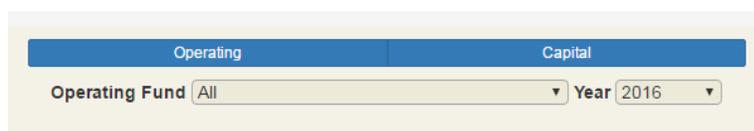
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For viewers that desire to see the city budget in its entirety, this link opens the approved budget for the current year. This is a large document that includes a great deal of information about how money is to be spent. Persons looking for an overview may be more comfortable with the Budget Dashboard which is also available from the BudgetWatch page.

### BUDGET INQUIRY

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Budget Inquiry (BI) provides the means for searching departmental budgets to see what the budgeted amount was for a given year versus the amount that has been expended. Viewers should be forewarned that city revenues are captured from various sources, many of which are required by law to be spent only for certain types of items. This means that there may not be a single budget item for a department, but that the departmental budget may be broken into multiple “funds”. The two major areas that BI is concerned with at present are Operating Expenses and Capital Expenses. Operating funds are used to pay for day-to-day operations, and Capital funds pay for projects and “big-ticket” items. Viewers can use the interface shown below to choose the expenses that they want to see and the years for which they would like to see them. For instance, a viewer can decide to look at Operating expenses for a specific fund for the year 2014 by clicking “Operating”, choosing a fund, and then picking a year.



The screenshot shows a web interface for Budget Inquiry. At the top, there are two blue buttons labeled "Operating" and "Capital". Below these buttons is a form with two dropdown menus. The first dropdown menu is labeled "Operating Fund" and has "All" selected. The second dropdown menu is labeled "Year" and has "2016" selected.

Based on your choices, the results will appear in the grid underneath the selection criteria.

## USING PROJECTWATCH

The ProjectWatch initiative enables citizens to eventually be able to search for information about most, if not all, of the capital projects administered by Augusta government. The goal is that each project page should include information describing the purpose of the project, the budget of the project, and its current status. For many projects there will also be media such as photographs, charts, and documents that provide insight into the project without requiring the user to understand financial or engineering concepts. The end goal of ProjectWatch is to provide the public with a customer-friendly interface that is easy to use and understand. The mission of the various City of Augusta departments is to keep project information up-to-date so that citizens will know within a reasonably short time frame when projects are expected to start and finish, and what major events are occurring as projects move toward completion. Project status and associated "narrative" information will be updated on an ongoing basis by the departments that are responsible for implementing projects, and project funding information will be updated on a quarterly basis in order to coincide with the release of quarterly updates to the Augusta Commission.

### LOCATING PROJECTS

When you click the ProjectWatch button, you should see the following graphic at the top of the resulting page. You can use these tools listed below to locate the projects that you are interested in.



The selection tools are:

- **SPLOST 6:** If you click the SPLOST 6 button, then you will see a list of SPLOST 6 projects.
- **SPLOST 7:** If you click the SPLOST 7 button, then you will see a list of SPLOST 7 projects.
- **TIA:** This button will pick projects that are being funded by the Transportation Investment Act (TIA).
- **Sort By:** This button gives you choices for viewing how the information is displayed in the project list.
- **Search for . . .:** You can type in a word or phrase in order to search for a specific project. For example, if you know that a project is related to Broad Street, you could type in **Broad**, then click Go!
- **Map:** The map button will let you see ALL of the projects, regardless of their funding source or type, on a map of the city (shown below). This map is interactive, meaning that you can zoom in and out. If you click on a project, you will see a description of the project pop up on the screen as shown. The legend on the left describes how the various project types are represented on the map.



- **Feedback:** This button will take you to the Community Voice page so that you can comment. This will require a login, which you can create from the Community Voice page.

## Important Notes:

- The icons in the center of the project list indicate what type of projects you're looking at. A penny represents a SPLOST project. A road is, of course, a TIA project. Visual cues like this will be added as new projects from other sources (such as Stormwater) are added to the list.
- Be aware that there are certain projects that are funded through multiple sources, so they may appear in more than one place and may have different information available!
- There are certain projects that can have "sub-projects". An example of this type of project is On-Call Emergency Design Services. These projects will not all be spent in one place, but can be applied to different locations based on need. Eventually the narrative for each project will make mention of where these funds were spent.

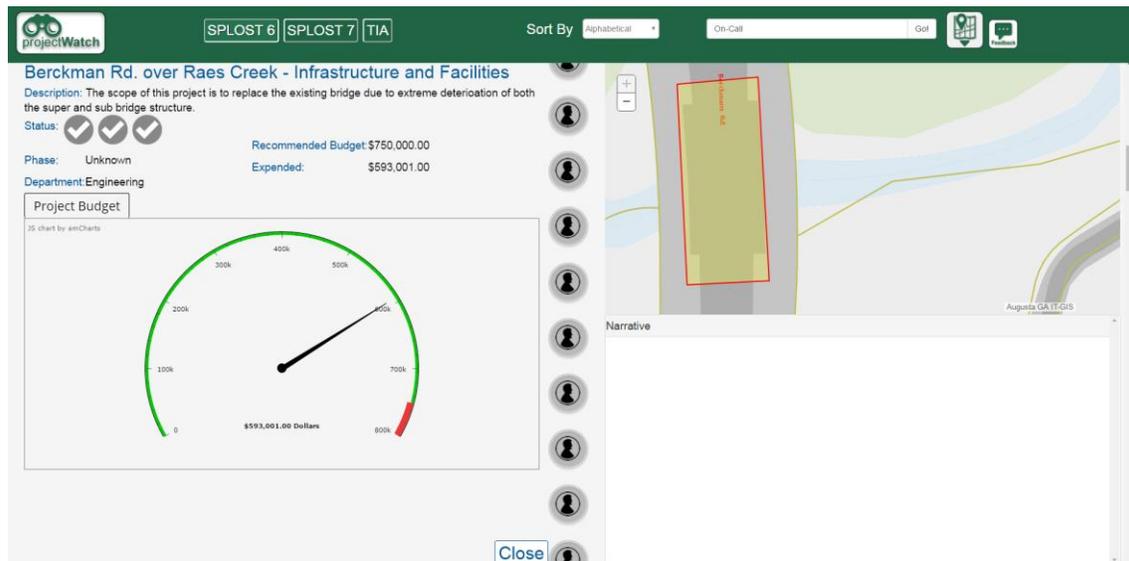
Once you make a choice, you will see a scrollable list of projects. The projects on this list will show the title, the category, the funding source, and the total budget, as shown below:



When you see the project that you want to look at, you can click the "Read More" button, which will take you to the project screen...

## THE PROJECT SCREEN

The Project Screen provides the viewer with a look at the details of a project, shown below:



The major components of the project screen are:

- **Descriptive Information:** Tells about the project, including the budget information.

- The descriptive information is usually going to mirror the language that was presented when the project was originally requested by the commission.
- Budget information is derived from different sources depending on the type of project. The financial data is also modified on a quarterly basis when the Augusta Commission receives updates from the finance department.
- Status: The project status is illustrated through three “checks” in circles. For general reference, the circles represent major phases of the project: “Pre-Construction/Pre-Planning”, “In Progress”, and “Complete”. When a circle is gray it means that no actions have taken place. When it is filled with blue it means that the project is in that particular phase. When it is green it means that the phase should be completed. This information has been generalized for a quick lookup because of the vast variety of projects and phases that will fall under the scope of CityWatch. This information is fed by the narrative supplied by the department that is running the project, and it will update to reflect the items and phases that they add in the Narrative section.

**NOTE FOR APRIL 2016: THE CITYWATCH PRODUCT IS NEW AND INFORMATION IS STILL BEING APPLIED FOR SOME PROJECTS. NARRATIVE UPDATES FOR SOME PROJECTS ARE IN PLACE, BUT OTHERS WILL FOLLOW SOON. AS THE UPDATES TAKE PLACE, THE STATUS WILL CHANGE TO REFLECT THE UPDATES!**

- Budget Tab:
  - Includes a gauge that shows how much of the project budget has been spent.
- Funding Tab:
  - Includes a graph for SPLOST 7 projects only that illustrates when the funding has been allocated.
- Pictures Tab:
  - Will include photographs in a gallery when they are uploaded by departments.
- Maps:
  - The map shows where the project is occurring. It is interactive and can zoom in and out.
  - Some projects are “citywide” in nature or cannot be tied to one specific location. These projects should zoom out to the county boundary when you view them.
- Narrative:
  - This section will supply more detailed information about the status of the project. Here, the city department can add verbiage about the procurement process, vendor(s) that have been selected, the expected start and completion dates, and if the project is meeting its schedule. If you are interested in seeing what is happening on a particular project, this will provide you with the details that you are seeking.
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## **IN CLOSING...**

***Augusta, Georgia looks forward to improving this product and working with the citizens and other interested parties as we move forward with our transparency efforts!***

***Thank you for your interest!***