

HENNEPIN COUNTY

MINNESOTA

March 26, 2026

Sheriff Bob Gualtieri
President
Major County Sheriffs of America
P.O. Box 81762
Rochester, MI 48308

Sheriff James Stuart (Ret)
Executive Director/CEO
Minnesota Sheriffs' Association
100 Empire Drive, Suite 222
Saint Paul, MN 55103

Dear Sheriffs Gualtieri and Stuart:

On behalf of the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, I acknowledge receipt of correspondence dated March 11, 2026 on behalf of the Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA), as well as the letter dated March 12, 2026 on behalf of the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association (MSA). Both letters offered perspective regarding the County Board's ongoing commitment to public safety in Hennepin County, made assertions regarding the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office's (HCSO) 2026 budget, and questioned the need for Hennepin County Board Resolution 26-097 that was approved during Committee on March 10, 2026, and ratified during Board on March 17, 2026.

This letter responds to both of the organizational letters addressed to the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, and all three letters will be published as formal correspondence in the next Board meeting on April 7, 2026. First, the letter clarifies Resolution 26-097. Then the letter provides facts and additional context to highlight the County Board's support for the HCSO and the HCSO's budget, which is structured in the following sections: operating budget, personnel, capital budget, and litigation costs.

Resolution 26-097

State law outlines county sheriffs' authority to execute a number of specific obligations (e.g. Chapter 387 of Minnesota Statutes), county boards' authority to set budgets for sheriffs' offices (see Minn. Stat. § 387.20), and the County Administrator's authority to implement the Hennepin County Board's decisions (see Minn. Stat. § 383B.101). This Board has been a strong supporter of public safety and the HCSO, which is quantifiably demonstrated through increased financial support over the years and usually at a higher rate than other departments. To clarify: Resolution 26-097¹ did not adjust the HCSO

¹ Resolution 26-097 is attached as Exhibit A.

budget; rather, Resolution 26-097 stated that the HCSO is not authorized to exceed its 2026 budget, directed the County Administrator to provide the Board with monthly updates on the HCSO budget, and put in place a system to ensure that only critical positions, as defined by the Sheriff, are filled if the HCSO's year-to-date budget exceeds authorized spend.

This Resolution aligns with other decisions from the County Board across the entire organization to increase financial transparency and to ensure accurate numbers are reported as early as possible. Specific to recent years, the HCSO has overspent its budget despite significant increases in its year-over-year approved budgets. In 2025, the HCSO overspent its budget by an estimated \$15.4 million or approximately 9%² (For reference, a 1% increase in the county's property tax levy equates to \$11.3 million), which then requires the Hennepin County Board to reactively use fund balance to cover unanticipated 2025 expenses. And so far in 2026, the HCSO is already running \$3.8 million over budget. This trend will require other departments to reduce their 2026 expenses in order to protect the financial health of the county and stabilize all services for residents. It is within County Board authority and resident expectations to seek financial transparency and manage budgets during a time of compressed needs.

HCSO Operating Budget

The Hennepin County Board has materially increased its support of the HCSO over the past several years. The HCSO adopted budget for 2026 is \$182,451,997. This is an *increase* of \$13.2 million over the adopted budget for 2025, which was \$169,245,647. In the last four years (2023-2026), the HCSO budget has grown from \$141.2M to \$182.5M (\$41.2M or 29.2% increase). The most significant funding source for this increase is property taxes levied by the County. In the last four years, property tax revenue budgeted for the HCSO budget has grown from \$122.5M to \$162.6M (\$40.2M or 33% increase).³ No other established county department has increased property tax funding at this level, and resident feedback regarding property tax pressures continues to grow.

The HCSO's property tax revenue increase has outpaced the County's overall increase in the levy. Over the last four years, the HCSO's use of property tax revenues has increased 33% while the County's overall levy has increased 23%.⁴ In addition to property tax

² In 2024, the HCSO overspent by \$8.6 million; in 2023 it was \$1.1 million; and in 2022 it was \$425 thousand.

³ Attached as Exhibit B is a chart showing the sources of revenue and the overall increase in the Sheriff Office budget over the past ten years.

⁴ Attached as Exhibit C is a chart that compares the Sheriff's Office property tax increases compared to the County's increase in the property tax levy.

increases, the County also dedicated its entire allocation of state Public Safety Aid (\$14.1 million) to the HCSO even though there can be other uses for this aid. Despite the continued increases, the HCSO has exceeded its budget for multiple years. This resulted in expenses covered with fund balance. This property tax trend is not sustainable for residents.

HCSO Personnel

Both letters raised concerns regarding the budget for HCSO personnel. The HCSO has an approved complement of 883 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. The adopted 2026 budget does not fully fund all of these positions due to normal lag time in filling open positions. This is a best practice recommended by the Government Finance Officers Association, and is a common budgeting practice followed by Hennepin County and peer counties across the country.

This pattern of turnover and lag time in filling positions is especially true for the HCSO. While the actual number of FTEs fluctuates with every pay period, the HCSO's average number of FTEs each year has generally been significantly under the adopted budget. In the past several years, this gap between actual FTEs and budgeted FTEs fluctuated between 32 and 106 in a given year. In 2022, the HCSO averaged 757 FTEs and was approved for 853; in 2023 the HCSO averaged 749 FTEs and was approved for 855; in 2024 the HCSO averaged 763 FTEs and was approved for 882; and in 2025 the HCSO averaged 851 FTEs and was approved for 882.

The HCSO has historically budgeted for overtime. Overtime expenditure has exceeded the budgeted amount in each of the last 10 years. Until recently, this over-expenditure in overtime was largely offset by under-spending elsewhere in the budget. In 2025, the HCSO significantly increased its number of hired FTEs (from 803.5 in January to 885.0 in December). There was an expectation that overtime costs would decrease as regular personnel replaced overtime from others. However, to date this assumption has not materialized. Instead, the HCSO has seen an increase in overtime costs and an increase in regular personnel costs. This is not a sustainable pattern, and Resolution 26-097 will ensure that the Board is aware of the HCSO's actual financial performance on a monthly basis in order to manage expenses and to be responsive to property tax pressures.

HCSO Capital Budget

In addition to increasing the HCSO's operating budget over the past several years, the County Board has approved significant capital investment for the HCSO that has

included new buildings and significant upgrades to existing spaces. The County has spent approximately \$100 million in the past decade on HCSO projects. Several recent major projects include a new Public Safety Services Headquarters in 2025 at a cost of \$41.5 million; new office space for Major Crimes and CISA in 2025 for \$5 million; and North Metro Regional Public Safety Training Center funding in 2023 for \$8.2 million. ⁵

Support for HCSO Litigation Costs

The last major area of financial contribution is through litigation settlements, which are approved by the County Board. While some of these settlement amounts come from the HCSO budget, many do not. Here is a list settlements exceeding \$100,000 and approved by the County Board between 2016 and 2026, excluding workers compensation cases:

Date	Case Name	Settlement Amount
2025	Simms v. Lissik, et al.	\$240,000
2025	Baggett, et. al. v. County of Hennepin	\$756,000
2025	Goyette v. Hennepin County	\$650,000
2024	Bellamy v. Omweri, et al.	\$1,700,000
2024	Sidlo v. Hennepin County	\$250,000
2022	Prosper v. Angrimson	\$1,150,000
2022	S.A.A. v. Geisler	\$500,000
2022	Bubb v. Hennepin County	\$165,000

In closing, thank you for your letters and your support for HCSO, and I extend my gratitude to you and all public safety personnel you represent.

The Hennepin County Board will continue to work with the HCSO to ensure that it has adequate resources to meet the public safety needs of Hennepin County residents and that the HCSO acts within its authorized budget.

Sincerely,



Irene Fernando
Hennepin County Board, Chair

⁵ Exhibit D is a list of capital projects from 2014 to current totaling \$129.8 million.

HENNEPIN COUNTY

MINNESOTA

300 South Sixth Street
Minneapolis, MN
55487-0240

Board Action Request

26-0097

Item Description:

Budget Compliance for Hennepin County Sheriff's Office - offered by Commissioner Conley

Resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office is not authorized to exceed the 2026 board authorized expenditure authority for their department or staffing complement, as measured by Full-Time Equivalents, without prior County Board approval; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in 2026 the County Administrator is directed to provide the County Board with monthly reports outlining monthly expenditures, staffing levels and total year-to-date expenditures compared to year-to-date budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in 2026, if the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office expenditures exceed their year-to-date budget, the County Administrator and Chief Human Resources Officer are directed to not authorize external posting for positions or hire new employees in the Sheriff's Office, except for Detention Deputies serving directly within the Adult Detention Center, Telecommunicator positions, and other positions critical for the HCSO to meet its statutory mandates; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in 2026, if the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office expenditures exceed their year-to-date budget, the County Administrator is directed to provide the County Board with monthly hiring updates that identify the positions the HCSO has been authorized to hire.

Background:

The County Board, under Minn. Stat. § 383B.111, is responsible for adopting an annual budget for the next fiscal year, which is to be a complete financial plan for the next year. In the last four years (2023-2026), the HCSO budget has grown from \$141.2 million to \$182.5 million, a 29.2% increase. During this period, the property tax revenue in the HCSO budget has grown from \$122.5 million to \$162.6 million, which is a 33% increase.

Minn. Stat. § 383B.112 mandates that the County's annual budget shall not include expenditures in excess of estimated revenues plus any surplus amounts deemed to be available at the end of each fiscal year. In 2025, the HCSO had an approved budget of \$169,245,647 and it is anticipated that the HCSO will exceed that budget by more than \$10 million. The HCSO's adopted budget for 2026 is \$182,451,997 and includes authorization for 883 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. The adopted budget for 2026 includes a 12.8% increase in property tax revenue from 2025.

In January 2026, total expenses for the HCSO were \$17.5 million. This is approximately \$2.3 million over the budgeted expenses for one month. Overtime expenses in January were \$1.3 million. This is approximately \$860,000 over budget for the month. Most, but not all of this, was due to Operation Metro Surge, which resulted in overtime costs of \$453,000 for January 7 - January 24, 2026. FTEs for the last pay period in January 2026 were 869.7, 13.3 FTEs under the budgeted amount of 883.0.

The 2026 budget includes a personnel vacancy factor of \$9.6 million or the equivalent of approximately 72 vacant FTEs for the entire year. This budget also includes an overtime budget of \$5.6 million for 2026. Projecting from the January 2026 personnel expenses for 869.7 FTEs (13 fewer than their complement) and January overtime expense of \$1.3 million, the HCSO could overspend its adopted budget by more than \$15 million if changes are not made.

Minn. Stat. § 387.20 subdivision 6 requires the County Board to adopt a budget for the Sheriff by resolution that provides for:

1. the salaries of deputies, jailers, matrons, bailiffs, clerks and other employees in the office of the Sheriff;
2. other expenses necessary in the performance of the duties of said office, including the reimbursement of the sheriff or a designee for necessary and reasonable expenses incurred in furnishing board, laundry and other services to prisoners in the county jail, provided that the county board may at its option provide for the furnishing of these services to the prisoners;
3. the payment of premiums of any bonds or license fees required of the sheriff or any deputy or other employee in said office; and
4. mileage allowances prescribed by the board and the board is authorized to appropriate funds therefor and for the salary of the sheriff.

The County's Administrative Manual policy on Budget and Financial Responsibilities outlines that the annual budget as adopted by the County Board is appropriated at the departmental level and that departments are responsible for containing expenditures within the total department allocation.

Recommendation from County Administrator: No Recommendation

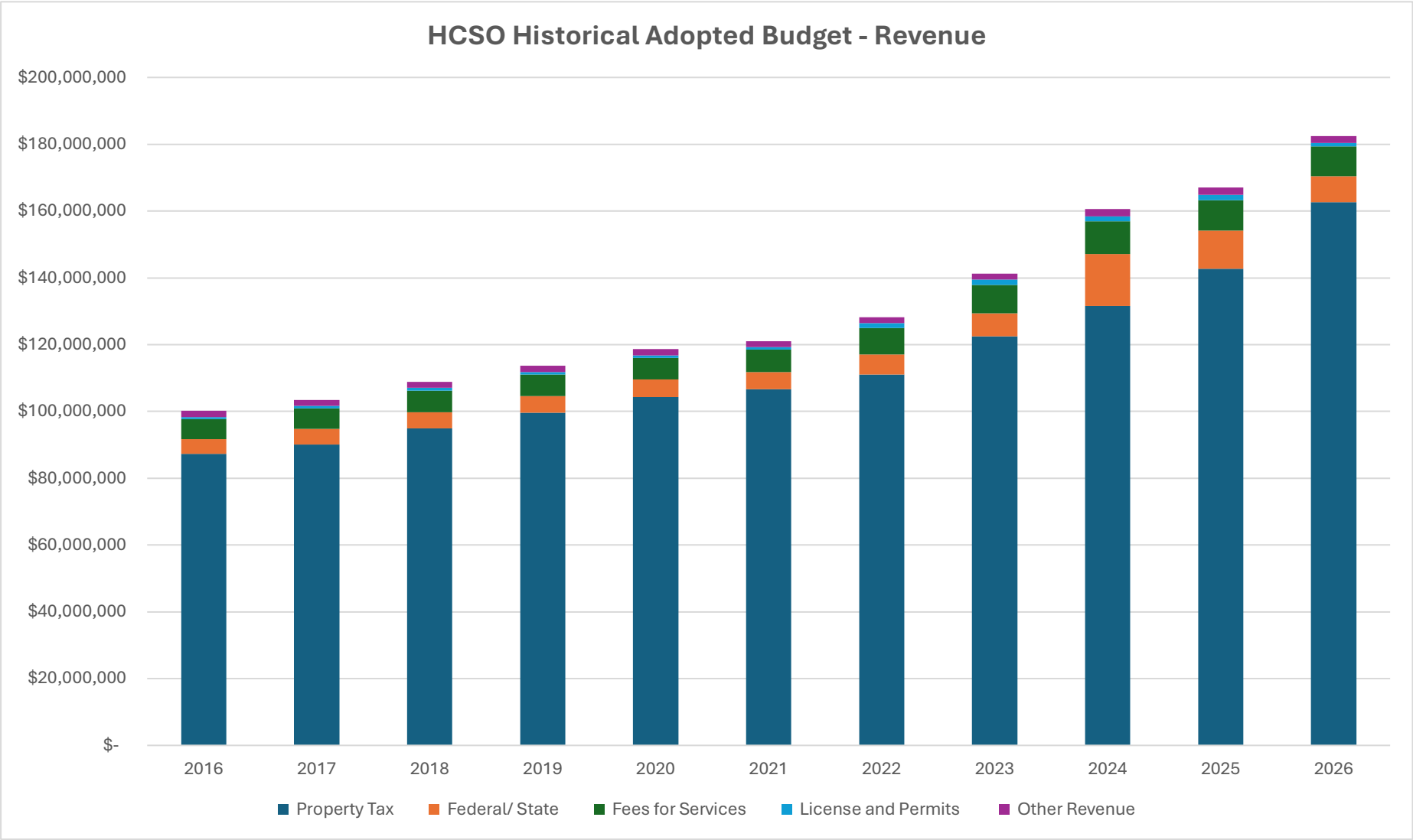


Exhibit B

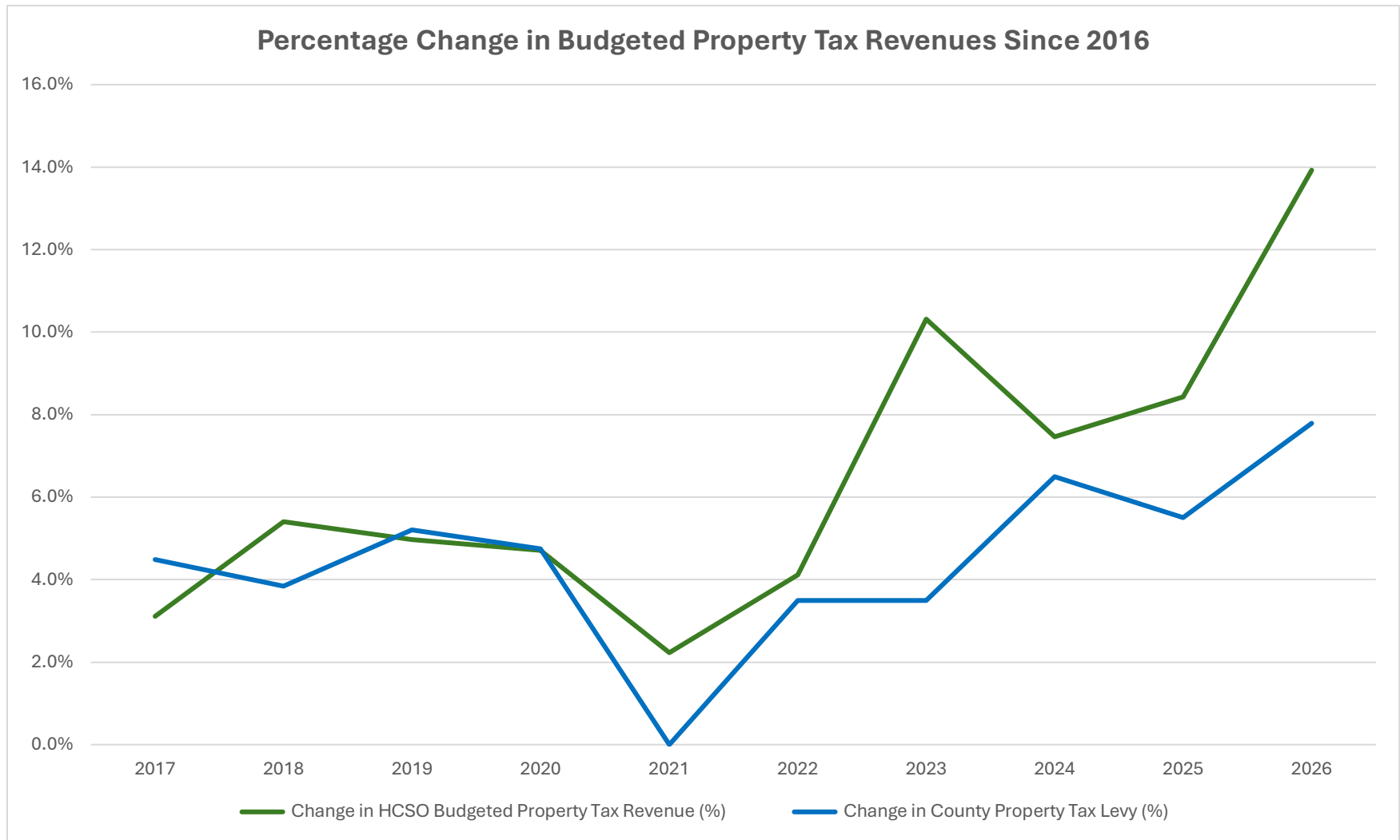


Exhibit C

Sheriff's Office Capital Projects

(2014-Present)

Building	Cost	Date	Description
City Hall Jail Medical Unit Expansion	\$3.4M	2026	Remodeling spaces on the Ground floor and 4th floor of the City Hall to expand clinical services for the Sheriff's Medical Unit and improve the functionality of the Sheriff's visitor entry.
Forensic Science Bldg DNA & Firearms Equipment	\$1.7M	2026	Modernization of the Firearms lab and DNA testing area through investment in new analytical instrumentation that uses advanced DNA sequencing.
Forensic Science Bldg Property Room Expansion	\$1.0M	2026	Remodeling and expansion of the Property Room in the Sheriff's Forensics Laboratory at the Forensics Sciences Building.
Sheriff's Furniture Upgrades	\$3.7M	On-going	Provides new ergonomic furnishings for Sheriff's office staff in county spaces that are not already scheduled for a capital project remodel.
City Hall Jail Furniture Upgrades	\$5.5M	Underway	Upgrade of cell bunks, flooring and other worn equipment and finishes needed to maintain jail operations in the Adult Detention Center (ADC) at the City Hall.
Sheriff PSF Equipment Replacement	\$6.0M	Underway	Replacement and upgrade of safety, security and general program equipment needed to maintain jail operations in the Public Safety Facility (PSF).
Public Safety Services Headquarters	\$41.5M	2025	100,000 square-foot high-performance facility housing Enforcement Services Division (ESD), including a 75,000 square-foot garage for Sheriff vehicles.

City Hall Community Outreach Remodel	\$2.1M	2025	Remodeled 9,000 square feet of space on the ground floor of City Hall for the Sheriff's Office Community Outreach and Public Affairs Division, including office space for the Professional Standards Division.
Sheriff's Jail Management System Replacement	\$1.5M	2025	Replacement of the Sheriff's Office Jail Management System, which provides provides initial criminal justice data to all partners within Hennepin County and District Courts through the Hennepin Justice Integration Program (HJIP).
New Office Space for Major Crimes and CISA	\$5.0M	2024	Renovation of 31,000 square feet in the 625 Building for Major Crimes and CISA.
City Hall Office Space Modifications	\$2.0M	2024	Remodeled 6,800 square feet of new space on first floor of City Hall for the Sheriff's Office's Finance and Civil divisions.
North Metro Regional Public Safety Training Center	\$8.2M	2023	Participated with other law enforcement agencies to expand existing firearms training facility in Maple Grove.
701 Building Wellness Center	\$0.2M	2023	Converted 3,400 square feet of space that was formerly the Be-Well clinic at the 701 Building into the Sheriff's Office Wellness Unit.
Sheriff Holding Area Security Modifications	\$5.5M	2022	Modifications to holding areas and improvements to the detention control systems at all county holding locations.
Sheriff's CAD Upgrade	\$3.0M	2022	Upgrade of the Sheriff's Office Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system.
911 Emergency Communications Center	\$32.5M	2014	61,000 square-foot facility to house Emergency Communications. Supporting twenty-one 911 terminals.
Other smaller projects	\$7.0M		
TOTAL	\$129.8 million		