FIRST PRIORITIES

Each of these first four priorities delivers on our promise to get the basics right: lower taxes and better services. Together, we'll make Orange feel like the town we all love, only stronger than ever.

- Create an Economic Development Department
- Protect What Makes Our Schools Great
- Fix Fred Wolfe Park — Finally
- Get Answers Fast with "Orange Connect"

Create an Economic Development Department

Right now, no one at Town Hall is focused full-time on growing Orange's economy. This new town-run department will revitalize outdated commercial areas, aggressively secure public and private grants, and support our local farms and businesses. Our neighbors are already enjoying the rewards of having an Economic Development Department and we can't afford to be left behind.

How We'll Pay for It
- One full-time position plus basic department operations will cost approximately $150,000, which we will fund by making smarter use of existing resources—no tax increase needed
- By leading grant-writing and revenue-generating projects, this department will pay for itself

Why This Matters
- A stronger commercial tax base eases the burden on homeowners, helps fund our town budget, and brings more places to shop, dine, and gather
- Small towns across Connecticut are already moving forward with smart economic development strategies that enhance the culture and character of their communities

Create an Economic Development Department (continued)

Learn More
- [Orange Economic Development Corporation](#), [Amity Chamber of Commerce](#), and [Orange Economic Development Commission](#) all play key roles in our community, but dedicated and professional leadership from this new department inside Town Hall is needed to take our economic development initiatives to the next level
- [Trumbull](#) and [Milford](#) have dedicated Economic Development Departments and [North Haven](#) continues to expand its retail footprint
- [CT Main Street Center](#) helps small towns with economic development projects

Protect What Makes Our Schools Great

Our public schools are a cornerstone of our community. But national political agendas are creeping into local curriculum and funding decisions. Education is about children, not politics. Decisions should stay with local families, educators, and leaders—not outsiders with a politically charged agenda. Supporting our Orange and Amity Boards of Education is critical to maintain high academic standards, upgrade facilities, attract and retain our educators, and ensure every child has the support they need to succeed.

How We'll Pay for It
- Education already makes up 61% of the town budget
- Ensure long-term financial stability through smart local planning, advocating for adequate state funding, and applying for public and private grants to avoid further strain on taxpayers

Why This Matters
- Strong schools protect property values, attract new families, and keep our communities safe and vibrant
- Everyone benefits from schools where children are always the priority

Learn More
- This February, [Orange Republican Town Committee sent a politically charged letter](#) to the Amity Board of Education
- A recent lawsuit against [Guilford Public Schools](#) was funded by a national group

Fix Fred Wolfe Park — Finally

Let's start renovating the basics: roads, parking, and existing sports fields. These Phase 1 improvements align with the new master plan and won't impact any existing town-owned farm leases. This ensures that residents of all ages can enjoy this vital town asset and enables future upgrades like safe walking trails, bathrooms, and pickleball courts.

How We'll Pay for It

- We estimate this first phase will require $750,000 in bonding, a common financing tool for towns similar to a home mortgage, adding about $60,000 annually to our budget for the next 20 years
- We'll cover this expense by making better use of existing resources—no tax increase needed
- We will immediately start securing grants, sponsorships, and private donations to fund any remaining costs for this and future phases of the master plan

Why This Matters

- Upgrading the park strengthens property values, supports local businesses, and helps Orange remain a community of choice
- Every delay means rising costs and lost opportunities for funding — it's time to break ground

Learn More

- BL Companies will finish the [new master plan](#) in August → review their [community workshop presentation](#) for the latest updates
- [Cheshire](#) recently completed an $8M expansion of Bartlem Park
- Salt Meadow Park in [Madison](#) blends recreation and conservation

Get Answers Fast with "Orange Connect"

Today there's no easy way to report a pothole or get information from Town Hall. You dig through outdated websites, get bounced between offices, and post on social media until someone with insider knowledge finally helps. "Orange Connect" will change that, offering you a central place online or by phone for all non-emergency requests. This simple, modern solution enables our Town Hall to work better for everyone.

How We'll Pay for It

- A "[SeeClickFix 311](#)" add-on for our current website costs $25,000 annually
- We'll shift part of the technology budget to pay for this annual service contract—no tax increase needed
- This requires no new staff and will make our departments more efficient

Why This Matters

- Streamlined communication means faster service, more accountability, and less frustration
- When Town Hall works smarter, everyone benefits

Learn More
- SeeClickFix instructional video from [Yountville, CA](#) (population 3,300)
- [History of 311](#) non-emergency systems
- Nearby, [New Haven](#), [Glastonbury](#), and [Derby](#) offer similar centralized platforms

Excluding education, these first priorities will cost about $235,000 in the next town budget—just 0.25% of Orange's typical annual spending of $86 million.

Are we on the right track with these first priorities? [Tell us what you think → bit.ly/firstpriorities](#)