

For immediate release

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City Officials Announce 10-Year Reform Blueprint

Mayor Michael B. Coleman, Columbus City Council, City Auditor Hugh J. Dorrian and City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer today announced a comprehensive plan of government reforms and efficiencies that is expected to save the City of Columbus between \$100 million and \$150 million over the next decade. The plan includes new approaches to employee benefits, public safety reforms and strategic partnerships.

“These proposals demonstrate we are committed to renewing our city government and making it work more efficiently,” Mayor Coleman said. “Many of these reforms will take time, but we will accomplish them.”

The reform proposals unveiled today are part of a three-part plan that includes creating jobs and raising new revenue, to shore up the city's long-term economic future. They are the result of the recommendations of the Economic Advisory Committee, an independent panel appointed last year by Coleman, City Council and Dorrian to study the city's long-term finances.

“Having already taken measures to significantly reduce expenditures, we are forced to re-examine how City government is run as revenues continue to decline,” said President Mentel. “We are committed to a realistic plan that will be phased in over time, and the City will be in a better long-term financial position due to the decisions we are making today.”

Mayor Coleman said the public can hold the city accountable each year when Columbus produces a report of its progress on these efforts. Specifics of the plan and the city's past efficiency efforts are attached.

10 Year Reform and Efficiency Action Plan

(These reforms and efficiencies came from the work of the Economic Advisory Committee and will partially solve the structural imbalance in the General Fund; many of these efforts will need to be negotiated with the six city bargaining units)

	Initiative	Description
Employee Benefits	Phase-out pension pick-up	The practice of paying the employee share of retirement costs cannot continue. This benefit cost the City's General Fund approximately \$30 million in 2008 and contributes to the structural imbalance. The City should phase out the current benefit over time.
	Increase employee share of health insurance	Offset the cost of employee health care insurance by continuing to increase the employee contribution to the cost of coverage. The City should continue its successful strategies for holding down the cost of care, and at the same time reduce operating costs by requiring the employee to share more of the cost burden.
	Health Benefits Dependant Audit	To reduce premium costs associated with the City's health insurance plan, the City conducted a review of the plan's current enrollment to ensure eligibility of enrollees and to ensure that health care dollars are spent only on employees and dependents entitled to coverage.
Safety Reforms	Manage Overtime	Revisit overtime policies and establish new policies that discourage excessive overtime.
	Redeploy uniformed police and firefighters	A number of police and firefighters are performing jobs that could be done by civilians. Civilianizing these jobs could save money by filling the positions with less expensive personnel and redeploying specific uniformed personnel doing direct public safety work in the neighborhoods, with police patrol, and in the fire stations.
Efficient Management & Using Technology	Continue and expand energy efficiency measures	As part of the Get Green Initiative, the City has been incorporating energy efficiency in all its operations. Continued progress would include building weatherization, more efficient lighting, and HVAC system upgrades.
	Continue to improve the efficiency of Fleet Management	The City provides centralized Fleet Management services for all General Fund operations, significantly improving the efficiency of this support service. Continued progress involves better vehicle parts management and other cost-savings initiatives.
	Continue to improve the efficiency of Facilities Management	The City provides centralized Facilities Management services for most General Fund operations, significantly improving the efficiency of this support service. Continued progress involves better space management and more efficient maintenance, custodial and security services.
	Continue and expand on-line auctions for City asset sales	Recently, the City conducted an online auction for fire apparatus, generating a 40% increase in revenue over prior auctions. Expanding this tool to all surplus asset sales could significantly increase revenue to the City's Permanent Improvement Fund.
	Continue and expand the use of Technology	The City is currently in the process of changing the phone system to Voice Over IP which will allow greater functionality at a lower cost. This new phone system, a new Human Resource Information System (comprehensive payroll and human resource system), Telestaff (scheduling program for fire fighters), and Distance Learning (on-line training system in fire stations) will all result in greater efficiencies and savings. Technology should continue to play a role in planning for efficiencies in the future.
Partnership	Partner with Metroparks on Bikeways	Incorporate bike trails currently operated by the City Recreation and Parks Department into Metroparks' regional trail network. In addition to enhanced maintenance, Metroparks can also provide trail patrol services.

Total ten-year savings for these initiatives is estimated at \$100 to \$150 million.

The City of Columbus will research and evaluate the below initiatives.

Initiative	Description
Explore contracting out parking meter enforcement activities	The Economic Advisory Committee identified parking meter enforcement activities as an area to explore contracting out where the city might be able to save money and still provide the basic service.
Review EMS response protocols	Conduct a study to determine the benefits and expenses of using an Advanced Life Support (ALS) response protocol versus a Basic Life Support (BLS) response protocol on emergency runs. Determine whether an ALS system or a tiered ALS/BLS system would be most appropriate for the City.
Explore partnerships with other governments and organizations	The Economic Advisory Committee identified several areas (e.g., provision of primary health care and funding of our Neighborhood Health Centers, Weights & Measures, and Trash and Recycling Services) where the City, County, SWACO, jurisdictions within the region, and other organizations could benefit through new or expanded partnerships.
Review collection of delinquent income taxes	In cooperation with the City Auditor, prepare an updated analysis of the cost/benefit of a mandatory filing of tax returns by taxpayers.