



# PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

Department of Development  
2021 Annual Report

THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**

ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF  
DEVELOPMENT



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# The Columbus Comeback

The Columbus Comeback is well underway. Data from this Department of Development 2021 Annual Report shows that we are surging back from the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic fallout.

Fueled by commitments from The Ohio State University, Google, Barkbox, NetJets and others, 2021 was a record year for job creation in Columbus. Companies committed to create 13,800 net new jobs worth \$1 billion in annual payroll and promised \$4 billion to capital projects in our city. Cranes dot the Columbus skyline, from the University District to the Scioto Peninsula.

Our business climate is booming, and so is our population growth. The recent U.S. census showed that Columbus grew more than every other urban area in Ohio and was the only city in the Midwest to gain at least 100,000 residents over the past decade.

Although our local economy began growing again in 2021, our Department of Development has continued to help our neighbors navigate the numerous challenges stemming from the pandemic. In 2021 alone, the Department distributed more than \$23 million in emergency rental assistance and administered nearly \$20 million in grants for emergency shelter, rapid rehousing and economic security.

As we look toward a more resilient and inclusive future, we must also confront the realities borne by a highly competitive housing market, which is the direct result of our dynamic and growing economy. Our region continues to under-build the housing needed to sustain our population growth, and vulnerable families are feeling the financial pinch.

In 2021, we fully committed Columbus' \$50 million affordable housing bond, leveraging more than \$300 million in public and private sector support to create more than 1,300 housing units. Funding for affordable housing must be sustained, and coordinated, regional action will be needed to design a region where everyone has access to affordable housing, parks and reliable, affordable commutes.

Neighbors, we are on the rebound — but this won't be a return to where we once were. In 2021, we pursued development that fosters inclusive growth and creates additional pathways to prosperity for absolutely everyone in our city. This commitment will put us on a new trajectory toward an even brighter and more equitable future.



Andrew J. Ginther, Mayor  
City of Columbus



## Investing in Our Residents

Historically, growth in American cities has widened inequities experienced by residents. Rents and rates of homelessness rise, traffic congestion drives up transportation costs and worsens pollution, neighborhoods become unrecognizable to longtime residents.

But in Columbus, we're committed to channeling our growth to combat inequality.

In 2021, the Development Department worked to leverage the opportunities presented by growth to uplift Mayor Ginther's Equity Agenda and create opportunity for Columbus residents.

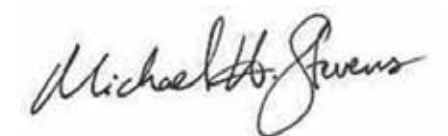
When the pandemic increased consumer reliance on online shopping and caused supply chain disruptions, many manufacturers began to increase domestic warehouse inventory and on-shore manufacturing operations, resulting in a boom for industrial space in well-located communities like Columbus. We capitalized on the opportunity, proactively abating industrial properties in and around the Hilltop, creating at-the-ready industrial sites in close proximity to residents ready to work.

When we invested with The Ohio State University in its \$1 billion Innovation District, we asked, "How do we ensure that the Innovation District attracts the best and brightest researchers and technologists — including those from our Columbus City Schools?" The question inspired STEAM Rising, a collaboration with Ohio State, Columbus State Community College and Columbus City Schools to train 500 science, technology, engineering, math and medicine teachers in the next five years.



When residential developers look to the city for property tax abatements, we ask them to apportion 20 percent of their units for individuals earning \$57,800 or less. And when Columbus voters approved a \$50 million affordable housing bond, we leveraged more than \$300 million in public and private sector support to create more than 1,300 housing units for individuals earning less than \$46,960 per year.

As people invest in Columbus, we're investing in Columbus' people. Our successes in 2021 demonstrate our commitment to directing our growth to create prosperity for all residents.



Michael H. Stevens, Director,  
Department of Development  
City of Columbus







# 2021 Development Year in Review

Investment by the Department of Development reached throughout Columbus in 2021, creating jobs, infrastructure and safe, affordable homes.

## Economic Development

- Signed 24 incentive agreements that will help create 13,848 new jobs and \$1 billion in new payroll and \$4 billion in private investment

## Housing

- Supported the creation of 1,300 affordable housing units through the allocation of the \$50M affordable housing bond
- Sold 89 Land Bank and Land Trust properties
- Provided home financing assistance to 20 households
- Conducted emergency repair on 239 homes

## Human Services

- Funded operations at 5 shelters
- Supported programming by 49 community agencies

## Planning

- Managed 82 community infrastructure projects





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

# Capturing Opportunity for Columbus Residents



With 13,828 net new jobs, \$1 billion in new payroll and \$4 billion in private investment committed, 2021 was a record-breaking year in job and opportunity creation in Columbus.

In 2021, the City of Columbus signed the city's largest job creation agreement with The Ohio State University for its Innovation District development. Dedicated to turning big ideas into reality, the Innovation District will be a collaborative space on the university's west campus where academic researchers, start-ups, Fortune 500 businesses and students will work in close proximity to share ideas, and turn them into marketable solutions.

Through its agreement with the city, the university committed to create up to 12,000 net new jobs, build 1,500-2,000 residential units — including at least 300 affordable housing units— and build 500,000 square feet of medical facilities and 4,000,000-6,000,000 square feet of labs and commercial offices. More than \$700 million in construction is already underway, with a commitment to award at least 30 percent of development contracts in the district to minority-and women-owned businesses.

Employers including Google, Barkbox, NetJets, SK Food Group and Hollingsworth also signed agreements with the City of Columbus in 2021, committing to create jobs for food service professionals, warehouse managers, maintenance technicians, software developers, logistics coordinators and customer service associates. Through incentives and various attraction efforts, the Department of Development continues to attract companies from diverse industries to the city. The diversity of industry and skills represented in Columbus' economy not only helped the city to weather the worst of the financial impact of the pandemic, but also positions the community — and our residents — well for continued recovery.

An annual review of the city's Tax Incentive Review Council (TIRC) showed that companies in receipt of City of Columbus incentives pursued significant investments in existing staff and facilities in 2020, with job retention and annual payroll creation exceeding commitments, despite the onset of the pandemic. While the TIRC found that job creation within the incentive portfolio slowed in 2020 (58% of goal), job retention (111% of goal), payroll growth (147% of goal)



and capital investment (100% of goal) all met or exceeded expectations. This cautious-yet-steady approach bodes well for a return to growth as the pandemic subsides.

While many companies steadily endured the uncertainty of the pandemic, many small businesses remained challenged. Together with Franklin County, the city awarded \$8.9 million in federal assistance to 980 small businesses, with grant funding prioritized for minority-, woman- and veteran-owned businesses that were disproportionately overlooked for Paycheck Protection Program loans in 2020.

Through its private sector partnerships and incentives, the Department of Development also capitalized on opportunities to guide equitable economic growth. Given the rise in online shopping and supply chain

disruptions brought about by the pandemic, market demand for manufacturing and warehousing facilities is at an all-time high nationwide. In 2021, Columbus had a pipeline of up to 12.2 million square feet of potential industrial expansions; whereas from 2006 to 2020, demand averaged 1.7 million square feet per year. Acknowledging the surging demand, the department partnered with Columbus City Council to proactively abate industrial properties in and around the Hilltop, creating at-the-ready industrial sites in close proximity to one of the city's opportunity neighborhoods.

From job creation and retention to small business support, the record-breaking economic development activity of 2021 helped to set the stage for equitable pandemic recovery and opportunity for Columbus residents throughout the city.

## 2021 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

24

incentive agreements

2,229

jobs retained

13,848

new jobs

\$166M

in retained payroll

\$1B

in new payroll

\$4B

in private investment



### COLUMBUS CRANE WATCH

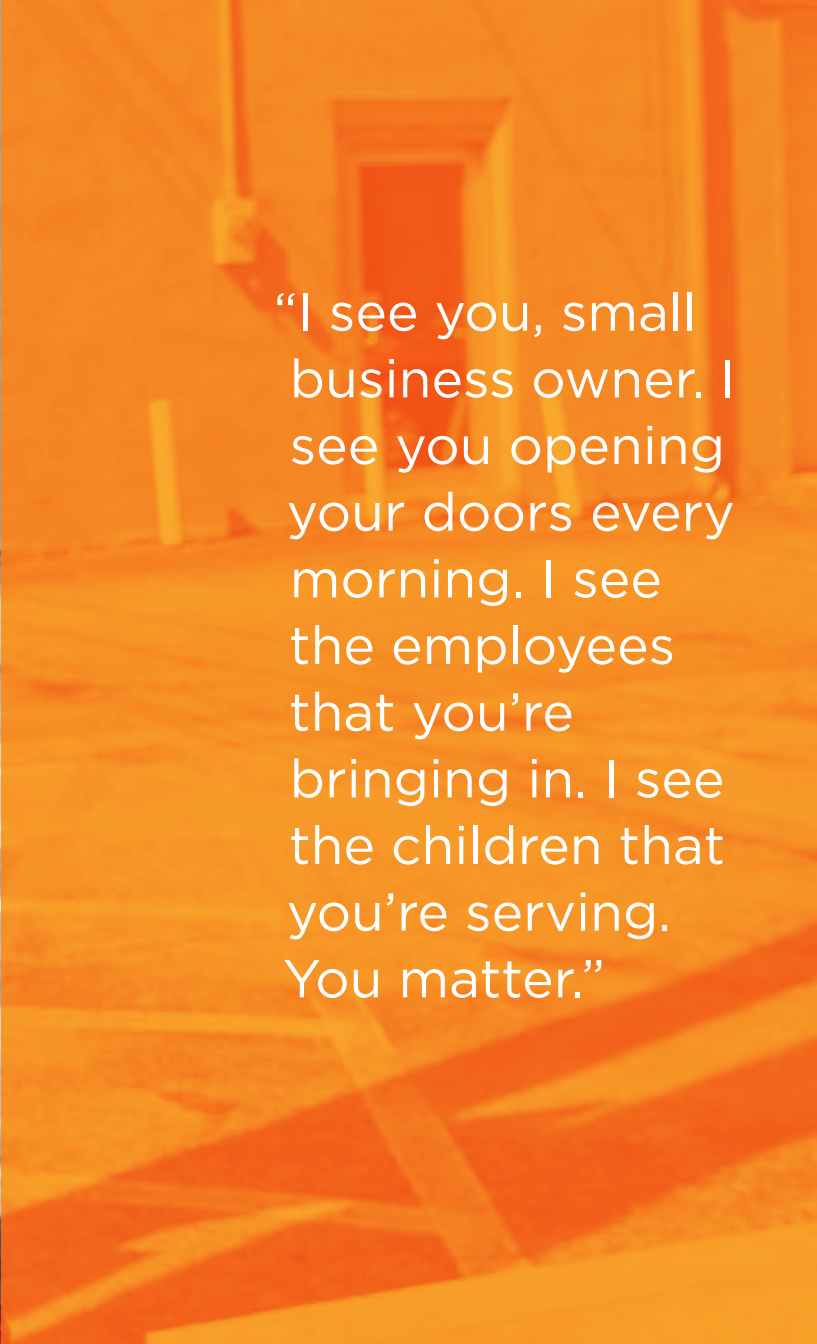
- OSU Innovation District
- The Peninsula
- North Market Mixed-Use Development
- Easton affordable housing
- Polaris mixed use areas

THE PENINSULA



### NORTH MARKET MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT





## JERZELL PIERRE-LOUIS

### Pandemic relief helps small businesses thrive

When COVID-19 shutdowns caused small business owner Jerzell Pierre-Louis to close the doors to Sprout Early Education Center and pause her plans for expansion, Jerzell was faced with uncertainty.

“As a small business owner, I really didn’t know what to do,” she shares. “I talked to my staff, I talked to my husband...was this a good time to close my business? Is this a good time to fight for my business?”

“I see you, small business owner. I see you opening your doors every morning. I see the employees that you’re bringing in. I see the children that you’re serving. You matter.”

“This grant is saying to me, ‘I see you, small business owner. I see you opening your doors every morning. I see the employees that you’re bringing in. I see the children that you’re serving. You matter.’ Prior to that, I didn’t know that in the big scheme of things, we mattered.”

Applying for the grant also opened up new pathways for Pierre-Louis. She’s now connected to the Small Business Council, the City of Columbus’ Department of Development and other organizations and programs that the city has for small businesses and Black-owned businesses. “I believe that I have partners in the community now who are here to work with me and support me,” she shares.

She began researching programs to support her small business and discovered the Columbus-Franklin County Small Business Recovery Fund, sponsored by the City of Columbus and Franklin County with federal recovery dollars to help central Ohio small businesses navigate the pandemic. Not only did the money help her keep payroll running, but it gave a sense of validation as a business owner.

Sprout rebounded from their temporary closure in 2020 without having to lay off a single staff member. Recently, Pierre-Louis was able to realize her dreams of expansion by opening a second location, Bloom Early Childcare Center. “I named my businesses Sprout and Bloom because of growth, and the development that you see in children. But for me, there has been a growth and a maturation as a business owner.”





## HOUSING & LAND REDEVELOPMENT

# Creating Space for Everyone as Our City Grows

Columbus' booming business growth is attracting new residents from across the state and the country. The census released in 2021 showed that Columbus' population grew to 905,758 residents in 2020, with 32 people moving to the city each day.

It is estimated that central Ohio would need to build 14,000 to 21,000 residences every year through 2050 to keep pace with this growth. In 2020, the region built 11,864.

The limited supply of housing has driven housing prices higher, and Columbus families are feeling the pressure. Prior to the pandemic, more than 54,000 central Ohio families paid more than 50 percent of their monthly income on rent and utilities – a burden experienced disproportionately by households headed by women and people of color.

The pandemic only compounded these challenges, and by 2021, thousands of central Ohio families were pushed to the brink of eviction. The Department of Development partnered with IMPACT Community Action and the Columbus Urban League to

distribute more than \$10.8 million in rental assistance to help 2,500 Columbus families stay in their homes in 2021. In August, the city awarded an additional \$12.2 million to 26 community organizations to help ensure an even more equitable distribution of rental assistance through the Stable Housing Initiative. The initiative partnered with community nonprofits to conduct outreach to communities that were underserved by rental assistance, including new Americans, seniors, individuals with disabilities, youth in transition and other vulnerable populations.

In 2021, the department also awarded more than \$1 million to Columbus residents through its home repair, lead remediation and senior assistance programs. Programs helped residents to fund necessary home repairs so they could remain safely and stably housed.

Department initiatives also supported wealth creation through home ownership. The department awarded \$43,000 in down payment assistance to 11 first-time homebuyers. In partnership with Franklin County, the Central Ohio Community



Land Trust also sold 11 houses to first-time homeowners. Since its creation, 76% of all Community Land Trust houses have been sold to minority homeowners. Through the Owner Occupant program, the city also sold six Land Bank properties to homeowners ready to renovate the properties into safe and healthy homes. The city's Land Bank also sold 54 abandoned parcels previously in foreclosure for the purpose of residential development.

The City of Columbus also took action to create additional housing units. Notably, the city fully committed the resources of the \$50 million affordable housing bond approved by Columbus voters in 2019. The \$50 million in public funding will leverage more than \$300 million in public and private sector support to create more than 1,300 new housing units. The units will be occupied by individuals and families whose income meets specific U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development thresholds. At 80% of Columbus' area median income, the incomes for occupants will be \$46,960 per year or less for individuals, and \$67,050 per year or less for families of four.

To spur development of additional affordable housing units, the Department of Development initiated a review of the Community Residential Area policy, which encourages the private sector to create housing units for families who would otherwise be priced out of a neighborhood of their choice. The policy review examined whether the city could leverage its residential tax abatements to ask developers to create more affordable units. Reforms to the policy are expected in 2022.

Looking to the future, the City of Columbus worked to foster regional collaboration to ensure that central Ohio's housing stock keeps pace with regional growth. Much as the region has managed the expansion of transportation and utility infrastructure, the region will also need to ensure that there is adequate and diverse housing supply to adequately serve current and future residents.

In support of this objective, Mayor Ginther hired the city's first Assistant Director of Housing Strategies, tasked with addressing the lack of affordable housing, encouraging the development of mixed-income neighborhoods and coordinating with community leaders to build a more inclusive and equitable Columbus.

Working in concert with regional partners, the City of Columbus is committed to ensuring that all residents can live and raise their families in a neighborhood of their choice without financial strain. Collaborative regional efforts to protect tenants, preserve affordable housing, foster equitable and diverse community growth, and build new residential units at every price point will continue into the future.



## AFFORDABLE HOUSING BOND RECIPIENTS

- Sinclair - 180 units
- Easton Place Homes - 100 units
- Mulby Place - 100 units
- Starling Yard - 97 units
- Meadows Renovation - 95 units
- West Broad Senior - 92 units
- Topiary Park - 90 units
- Central Ohio Community Land Trust - 84 units
- Jenkins Terrace - 60 units
- Lockbourne Greene - 60 units
- Touchstone Place -- 56 units
- Oakwood Apartments Renovation - 53 units
- McKinley Manor - 44 units
- Touchstone Place II - 44 units
- Linden Town Center Housing - 41 units
- 48 Parkwood- 35 units
- Scattered site rental - 73 units
- Emergency shelter repairs



## HEIDI KNOTTS

# COVID emergency rental assistance

Unforeseen circumstances can happen to anyone. Heidi Knotts can attest to that. In early 2021, her husband was in the process of switching jobs when her entire family contracted COVID-19. Unable to work due to being ill, the family fell behind on their rent.

“I’ve never been in this circumstance,” she admits. “I started praying, ‘Lord, what do I do?’” Her landlord gave her notice to leave the premises. That’s when Heidi reached out to Legal Aid and they connected her with Community Mediation Services, who leveraged the city’s emergency rental assistance provided by the federal government. A liaison quickly contacted her landlord and worked to assure Heidi that she and her family would have rental support while they recovered from COVID-19.

“They not only helped us with January’s rent, but they helped us with February, March, April and May,” Heidi shares. The program also covered their water bill, which allowed her family to focus on their health without having to stress over finances.

“They were there to help, and now I’m in a great place,” she remarks. “Everyone is healthy now. Everybody’s back at work. Everybody’s doing fine and everybody’s happy. We’re good.”







## HUMAN SERVICES

# Caring for Neighbors in Need

During the earliest days of the pandemic, Mayor Ginther directed the Department of Development to prioritize critical human needs. This focus persisted in 2021 as residents continued to experience the pandemic's adverse impacts to health, emotional well-being and economic security.

In 2020, employment among low-income individuals fell 25.6 percent, pushing vulnerable residents to the brink of homelessness. From July 2020 through June 2021, more than 6,600 individuals were served in Franklin County shelters, including nearly 1,200 children.

In response, the City of Columbus marshaled local and federal resources to support the local shelter system. In 2021, the city awarded \$10 million in emergency solutions grants and \$5.4 million to the Community Shelter Board for emergency shelter and rapid rehousing. The city also awarded \$1.87 million in COVID-19 support to help fund staff pay increases, signing bonuses, and cleaning supplies and services needed at Lutheran Social Services Faith Mission, Maryhaven Engagement Center, Southeast Men's Shelter, YWCA Family Center and YMCA Van Buren Center, as the shelters experienced increased need.

As the pandemic wore on, shelters also identified an increase in drug and alcohol use, violence, suicide attempts and deaths inside their facilities. In October, the city provided \$4.5 million to the Community Shelter Board to train and embed mental health specialists at local shelters to provide on-site crisis intervention services. This program will support shelter residents in times of crisis, while also creating workforce development opportunities for newly trained intervention specialists.

In 2021, the city also distributed \$4.6 million in human services grant funding to 41 community agencies. Grant funding was awarded to local nonprofits and community service organizations that work to enhance income through employment, ensure that residents enter and maintain high-quality jobs, improve workforce education and training, foster financial capability, and provide stabilization and resource support.

The grants benefitted local food pantries, workforce development training, financial life skills programs, substance abuse recovery programs, immigrant and refugee services and more, collectively providing services to thousands of residents.



**KIM CAMPBELL**

Financial literacy is about more than money

Kim Campbell talks about Franklinton Development’s financial literacy program with energy and excitement. “You can always learn something about money,” Kim chuckles, “even a millionaire.”

She had a few friends and family participate in the program, and after skimming over the books, she decided to sign up. Kim admits that while her finances were in good shape, she still learned quite a bit about money. She studied up on how to manage loans, mitigate debt, and create a budget before moving on to more robust subjects like financial coaching, mortgage counseling, and buying a home. The program, offered through funding support from the City of Columbus, also highlights free resources from resume help to legal aid that are accessible to central Ohio residents.

Empowered by the insights she gained from the program, Kim immediately brought her knowledge to her church, where she is a missionary and teaches Sunday School.

“This helps me show students how to get an apartment and how to budget – how to break down utilities, rent and added expenses.” Kim is a firm believer in the power of financial empowerment. “When you give out knowledge, you can empower other people and help them achieve their goals in life.” Kim adds, ““This isn’t something you’ll use once, it’s something you will use for a lifetime. This knowledge can be passed down for generations.”

“This helps me show students how to get an apartment and how to budget – how to break down utilities, rent, and added expenses.”







## PLANNING

# Designing Our Neighborhoods for Vibrancy and Opportunity

As Columbus grows, the Department of Development works to ensure that the city's built environment fosters vibrancy, safety and investment. Under the guidance of the Columbus Citywide Planning Policies and in collaboration with residents, the Planning division reviews proposed projects to promote development that creates healthy and complete communities, conserves economic and environmental resources, invites investment, creates opportunity and preserves the character of Columbus neighborhoods.

In 2021, the division reviewed 2,161 land use and development applications and collaborated with neighbors, developers

and 12 commissions, boards and panels to support quality development in Columbus. The division also welcomed 18 new members to these commissions and hosted a community walking tour series to help invite new and diverse perspectives to inform future development.

The division also managed 82 projects in 21 neighborhoods through the Urban Infrastructure Recovery Fund program. Driven by input from neighborhood residents, the program funded nearly \$20 million in sidewalk construction and repair, street tree plantings, park improvements and street lighting improvements in legacy neighborhoods.

In August, the city dedicated the most significant public art installation in Columbus history. A 200-foot crystalline sculpture in the Short North, "The Makers Monument" is inspired by and perforated with the shapes of items that have been made in the city throughout its history. Created by an Ohio-born artist Mark Reigelman, the sculpture showcases how Columbus is a city of great people making great things.

Development also partnered with the Division of Building and Zoning Services to commission and release an independent assessment of the city's zoning code, which was last comprehensively updated in the 1950s. The assessment found that the

current code will not satisfactorily foster equity in the built environment as the city continues to grow. With the support of Mayor Ginther and Columbus City Council, the departments plan to pursue a multi-year community engagement process to modernize the code to encourage affordable housing development, protect job centers and establish transit-supportive, mixed-use corridors that can help Columbus residents thrive.



**RALPH CARTER**

Fostering untapped potential through the Urban Infrastructure Recovery Fund

If the neighborhood of Linden could elect a Mayor, it would undoubtedly be Ralph Carter. When he walks through the doors of St. Stephen’s Community House – the anchor of the Linden area – he is greeted with a barrage of handshakes and hugs.

“Linden is a breeding ground for untapped potential,” Ralph shares. But one of the barriers in tapping into that potential was finding meaningful ways to connect with the community in order to provide more resources for the youth in that area. One summer, he decided to throw a simple block party with a grill and a foam machine he had from college. Neighbors showed up and brought their kids. Word spread, and year over year the gathering grew.

The block party sparked the desire to make the feeling of civic pride a movement for the entire area. As a result, We Are Linden was born with the single goal of making the community a better place for all. By embracing strong role models and illustrating the power of productive relationships, Ralph is paving the way to prosperity for many Linden residents. We Are Linden offers mentorship programs, jobs, and other resources for the youth and families in the area. Ralph and his community also partnered with the city through its Urban Infrastructure Recovery Fund program to identify and pursue improvements to help make the neighborhood more enjoyable and safe. Based on input from Linden neighbors, the city installed new street lights on Cleveland Avenue; improved the gazebo, walkways and vehicle safety in Maloney Park; and installed new playground equipment and a walking path and resurfaced the basketball court at Audubon Park.

He credits learning the importance of community from his mother, “She taught me these values early on,” he says. And he’s passing the legacy of community down to the children of Linden.



“Linden is a breeding ground for untapped potential.”









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