



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

November 10, 2022

Dear President Hardin and Members of Council:

Today, in accordance with Section 26 of the Charter of the city of Columbus. I am pleased to present the 2023 Operating Budget, a balanced proposal that reflects the priorities of my administration to meet the needs of the residents of Columbus as we continue to balance unprecedented economic growth with increasing challenges that accompany success.

Because of the hard work of the Department of Finance and Management, we are in a sound financial position. With this \$1.14 billion general fund budget, we will be able to focus on our community's highest priorities – neighborhood safety, affordability and expanding vital city services – while guarding against known and unknown threats – local and global – to the city's financial position. The full impact of remote work on local income tax revenue, the cumulative effect of inflation and the suggestion of a global recession all require careful and prudent decision making to ensure we are making the right investments today, and that they may be sustained in the future. That is exactly what this budget does.

Neighborhood safety remains my number one priority, and significant reductions in homicides and violent crime indicate our revised Comprehensive Neighborhood Safety Strategy is working. It is crucial that we continue to support these efforts. In 2022, we added more police officers than at any other time in recent history. The 2023 budget funds three more classes of police officers and firefighters, while also allowing for additional lateral transfers from other departments and reestablishing the police reserves. Increasing the number of police and fire classes not only helps put more officers on the street, it will also help us improve the diversity of our safety forces, increase opportunities for advancement for minorities and instill the latest training in community-based policing to ensure police and fire reflect the communities they serve.



All of our efforts in neighborhood safety do not lie exclusively with our divisions of police and fire. We continue to make investments in Public Health, Recreation and Parks and the Department of Neighborhoods to formulate a more holistic approach to safety. The 2023 Operating Budget includes \$3.5 million to expand the Right Response Unit that embeds social workers and mental health professionals with 9-1-1 operators, so residents receive the right response at the right time. We are also investing heavily in summer programming to make sure our young people remain safe and engaged.

To manage all of our safety measures, we will create the Office of Violence Prevention at the recommendation of the Columbus Board of Health. The Office will oversee all of the efforts for neighborhood safety that fall outside of the Division of Police, including the Right Response Unit, Columbus Violence Reduction and anti-violence programming in Recreation and Parks and Neighborhoods. Aligning these separate and distinct programs under the direction of one office will allow us to streamline resources, avoid duplicative efforts and more quickly recognize what is working best and what is not. The Office of Violence Prevention will also be responsible for gathering and analyzing data across numerous fronts, providing a clearer picture of our progress and making evident what more can be done to achieve a greater impact.

The past two years have been record setting in terms of job creation, but the pace of new housing construction has not kept pace with demand. Huge wins for the region including Intel and Ohio State's Innovation District at Carmenton will only increase the pressure on the housing market, driving up housing costs and making it harder for all Columbus residents to find housing they can afford. My 2023 budget



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includes funding for additional staff to support our Housing Strategy focused on preserving existing affordability, investing in and incentivizing affordable housing traditional financing can't support, and targeting these investments to support mixed-income neighborhoods to ensure no resident spends more than 30 percent of their income to live in safe housing in a neighborhood of their choice. At the same time, the Department of Building and Zoning Services will continue its work on revising the zoning code for the first time in over 70 years, including addressing internal processes to speed how quickly housing can come to market.

Core city services such as refuse and snow removal remain top priorities, and the 2023 budget invests heavily in them. In 2023 we will double our residential recycling efforts introducing for the first time ever weekly recycling. We will also expand refuse collection to include hot spot inspections for illegal dumping, continue replacing 300-gallon curb containers with 90-gallon versions and hire more staff as drivers for both refuse trucks and snow removal. In addition, we will open two convenience centers for people to properly dispose of hard-to-recycle items, food waste for compost, regularly scheduled hazardous waste collection and bulk item drop off. In doing so, we will send a clear message that our neighborhoods are not dumping grounds, and we will take another step forward in advancing our green initiatives and fulfilling our Climate Action Plan.

It is clear the ramifications of climate change are already apparent in our community with severe storms leading to power outages and flooding, and it is through the Climate Action Plan that we will move Columbus to being carbon neutral by 2050. That means continuing our efforts with Clean Energy Columbus to allow residents to opt-in to the City's 100% Ohio-based clean energy, as well as requiring electric vehicle charging stations in all new multi-unit housing projects.

Meanwhile, the Department of Neighborhoods will lead our efforts to invest in communities that make our city special. We continue to implement strategies developed by Columbus residents and outlined in the One Linden and Envision Hilltop plans, and in 2023, we will roll out a similar plan for the Eastland neighborhood, focusing on education, health, housing, safety and small business development.

Columbus Public Health continues to lead the way for a safe and healthy community. Their work in violence prevention and addressing racism as a public health crisis has been pivotal in moving our city forward. In addition, since 2020, they have given almost 250,000 COVID-19 vaccines and boosters, and in 2022, they also gave more than 6,000 monkeypox vaccinations to push back on a national epidemic.

Because of sound financial planning, during the pandemic, the City was able to weather the single biggest revenue loss in the City's history and maintain critical city services without eliminating a single position. Prudent fiscal policy also allowed the City to invest the vast majority of federal stimulus dollars - \$365 million – directly into the community, keeping residents housed, fed and their utility bills paid, and keeping small and minority businesses afloat and Columbus residents employed. These same federal relief funds helped our kids continue to learn through more than \$10 million in technology, internet connectivity, learning extension centers and expanded summer programming to keep kids safe and recover from learning lost. Through the 2023 budget, the remaining balance of federal stimulus will continue to be invested in basic needs, but also long-term, sustainable, systemic change that will disrupt the underlying causes of poverty to reduce the disparities that exist in our community and that the pandemic has widened.

Our economy is strong, and the City's financial position is secure, but we must continue to plan and prepare for the next possible crisis, whatever that may be. That is why we are replenishing the Basic City Services Fund with \$40 million to mitigate the potential sudden loss of revenue and increased cost of delivering services, while guarding the Budget Stabilization ("Rainy Day") Fund. At the same time, we are setting a new goal for the Rainy Day Fund, so that by the end of 2027 we will have 10 percent of the City's budget reserved for emergencies.

On the following pages, you will find additional details of my proposed 2023 Operating Budget. It is a balanced budget that addresses the needs of our community equitably while maintaining fiscal responsibility and securing the financial future of Columbus.