

A collage of various New York City scenes is arranged in a diamond pattern around the central text. The scenes include: a close-up of pink cherry blossoms; a view of the Manhattan skyline reflected in the water at sunset; a view of the Manhattan skyline from a high angle; a view of the Manhattan skyline from a low angle; a view of the Manhattan skyline from a high angle; a view of the Manhattan skyline from a low angle; a view of the Manhattan skyline from a high angle; a view of the Manhattan skyline from a low angle.

CITIZENS' COMMISSION ON ELECTED OFFICIAL COMPENSATION FINAL REPORT

APRIL 12, 2026

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LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Dear Members of Columbus City Council,

On behalf of the Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation, we extend our sincere appreciation for the opportunity to serve the residents of Columbus through this important civic responsibility. The work entrusted to this Commission by the City Charter carries significant responsibility, and we approached our charge with a deep respect for the public trust placed in both the Commission and the elected officials who serve our city.

In developing recommendations for the years 2030 through 2033, the Commission was guided by several core principles. Compensation should reflect the scope, complexity, and responsibility of the roles entrusted to Columbus' elected officials. Columbus is one of the fastest-growing cities in the United States and serves as the economic anchor of Central Ohio. The decisions made by the City's elected leaders affect not only the nearly one million residents within the city but also the broader region that relies on Columbus as a center of economic activity and public services.

The Commission benchmarked compensation levels against peer municipalities to understand Columbus' position within the broader public-sector marketplace. While structural differences between cities make direct comparisons challenging, this analysis provided important context for evaluating competitive compensation levels.

The Commission also considered the importance of ensuring that public service remains accessible to capable leaders from diverse professional and economic backgrounds. The responsibilities associated with elected office require considerable time, expertise, and accountability.

At the same time, the Commission remained mindful of its responsibility to act as a careful steward of public resources. Because these recommendations apply to the years 2030 through 2033, the Commission considered economic projections, anticipated inflation, and the challenge of forecasting several years into the future. The Commission recommends maintaining annual cost-of-living adjustments tied to the Consumer Price Index to ensure compensation remains responsive to economic conditions while grounded in an objective measure.

Through the course of its work, the Commission also identified observations that may benefit future Commissions. Commissioners found it valuable to invite elected officials or their representatives to present on the responsibilities of their offices and recommend continuing this practice. The Commission also discussed the structural challenge created when compensation adjustments occur primarily in the first year of the recommendation period and noted that future consideration could be given to allowing incremental adjustments across multiple years. Commissioners further observed that the Charter timeline provides a relatively short period for this work and that future review may consider whether additional time would allow for expanded research and public engagement.

Future Commissions may also benefit from expanding benchmarking surveys to capture additional information that strengthens comparisons across cities. Potential additions include questions regarding the existence and compensation of roles such as Chief Financial Officers or city managers; whether elected officials are considered full-time or part-time; whether outside employment is permitted; and how municipalities structure cost-of-living adjustments, including the use of CPI-based formulas, annual or multi-year calculations, and caps on inflationary adjustments.

Taken together, the recommendations contained in this report reflect the Commission’s effort to balance competitive compensation, responsible stewardship of public resources, and the long-term governance needs of the City of Columbus. We respectfully submit these recommendations to City Council with appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to this important process and with confidence that they support a strong and sustainable system of local governance for the years ahead.

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher Moses, Chair
Andrea Blevins, Commissioner
Liz Caslin-Turner, Commissioner
Alyvia Johnson, Commissioner
Monica L. Womack, Commissioner

Citizens’ Commission on Elected Official Compensation

Executive Summary

The 2026 Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation held nine public meetings between January 12, 2026 and April 12, 2026. The Commission is established in City Charter Section 15 and is tasked with making recommendations for the salaries of Columbus' elected officials four to seven years in advance. The 2026 Commission was therefore charged with making recommendations for the years 2030 to 2033.

As dictated by the Charter, two Commissioners were appointed by the City Council, two were appointed by the Mayor, and the Chair was jointly appointed. The 2026 Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation was comprised of:

- Christopher Moses, Chair;
- Andrea Blevins, Commissioner;
- Liz Caslin-Turner, Commissioner;
- Alyvia Johnson, Commissioner; and
- Monica L. Womack, Commissioner.

The Charter tasks the Commission with considering compensation rates for like positions nationwide, and so the Commission issued a survey to twenty-eight peer municipalities and received responses from twenty-three. The analysis of this survey data provided market rates and a helpful foundation for the Commission's deliberation and ultimate recommendations.

The Commission heard from all elected officials, or their representatives, during their process in order to properly understand the roles and responsibilities of each office. This further aided their ability to recommend compensation for like positions by better understanding what each elected official's duties are in Columbus.

In making their recommendations, the Commission was guided by some core principles that held true across their approach to compensation recommendations for individual elected officials. Undergirding these values was the reality of Columbus' ongoing and anticipated growth as a city. The Central Ohio region is expected to surpass a population of 3 million by the year 2050. The Commission anticipates that the scope of work undertaken by each elected official will expand as Columbus grows.

The values grounding the Commission's recommendations include attracting high-quality candidates, benchmarking against peer cities and the market rate, acknowledging the region's reliance on Columbus as a hub, accounting for the challenge of making decisions so far in advance, and responsibly stewarding City resources. These values and goals overlap and interconnect, but they provide a foundation upon which the Commission's individual recommendations build.

The Charter allows the Commission to recommend cost-of-living-adjustments in addition to increases in base pay. The Commission heard a presentation on Consumer Price Indexes (CPIs) and their relationship to cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs) as established in the Charter. The COLA recommendation cannot exceed the average of the previous four years of increases in the

CPI per the Charter, but there are many CPIs to choose from. The Commission recommended the maximum COLA for all four years (2030 through 2033) for all elected officials, to be calculated based on the “CPI-U: All items in U.S. city average, all urban consumers, not seasonally adjusted” index.¹

The Commission’s final recommendations for the compensation of Columbus’ elected officials from January 1, 2030 to December 31, 2033 are as follows.

City Auditor

Effective January 1, 2030 – 13% increase in 2029 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2031 – 2030 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2032 – 2031 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2033 – 2032 salary + COLA

City Attorney

Effective January 1, 2030 – 13% increase in 2029 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2031 – 2030 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2032 – 2031 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2033 – 2032 salary + COLA

Mayor

Effective January 1, 2030 – 18% increase in 2029 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2031 – 2030 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2032 – 2031 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2033 – 2032 salary + COLA

Councilmember

Effective January 1, 2030 – 32% increase in 2029 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2031 – 2030 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2032 – 2031 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2033 – 2032 salary + COLA

Council President

Effective January 1, 2030 – 32% increase in 2029 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2031 – 2030 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2032 – 2031 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2033 – 2032 salary + COLA

¹ The Commission advises that the formula laid out in Section 4 of Ordinance 2076-2022 is followed such that the base pay increase in the first year of recommendations is calculated before the COLA is calculated.

INTRODUCTION & PROCESS

The Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation is a function of the Charter of the City of Columbus, tasked with meeting every four years to determine recommendations for the compensation of the city's elected officers. Per the Charter, the 2026 Commission's recommendations pertain to the years 2030 through 2033.

Per Charter Section 15-2, Commissioners were appointed during the second meeting of the City Council in 2026, which took place on January 12. Two Commissioners were appointed by the City Council, two were appointed by the Mayor, and the Chair was jointly appointed. The 2026 Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation was comprised of:

- Christopher Moses, Chair;
- Andrea Blevins, Commissioner;
- Liz Caslin-Turner, Commissioner;
- Alyvia Johnson, Commissioner; and
- Monica L. Womack, Commissioner.

As required under Charter Section 15-4, this report is being submitted to the City Clerk within three months of the appointment of the Commission. To reach the recommendations within this report, the Commission held nine public meetings over the course of the three months. During such meetings, the Commission undertook tasks such as:

- Understanding their charge from the City Charter;
- Learning about best practices related to compensation;
- Determining which cities to survey to "conduct a review of like salaries in the public sector" (Charter Section 15-3);
- Hearing from Columbus' elected officials, or their representatives, regarding their roles and responsibilities;
- Studying and analyzing survey responses from the surveyed benchmark cities;
- Selecting a Consumer Price Index as a reference point for the cost-of-living-adjustment (Charter Section 15-4); and
- Deliberating on all the data and learnings to develop compensation recommendations.

The presentation materials and handouts are available on the Commission's website:

www.columbus.gov/Government/City-Council/Standing-Committees/Citizens-Commission-on-Elected-Official-Compensation. Meeting agendas, minutes, and materials are organized by meeting date at this source. Additionally, all video recordings of the Commission's meetings are linked in the same manner. All of the Commission's meetings were open to the public and were televised by CTV.

To better understand the roles and responsibilities of each elected official, the Commission chose to invite each elected official, or a representative, to present on the topic. These presentations are summarized later in the report, but the Commission wishes to thank the following presenters for their time.

- Megan Kilgore, City Auditor

- Darlene Wildes, Deputy City Auditor, City Auditor’s Office
- Eugene Borders, Human Resources Officer, City Auditor’s Office
- Zach Klein, City Attorney
- Elon Simms, Chief of Staff to the Mayor, Mayor’s Office
- Danius Williams, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Mayor, Mayor’s Office
- John Tannous, Chief of Staff to the City Council, Council President’s Office

The Commission offers a special thanks to the City staff who directly supported their work every week.

- Greg Beaverson, Compensation Manager, Department of Human Resources
- Mark Carter, Technology Liaison, City Council
- Kirsten Estose, Senior Legislative Analyst, Legislative Research Office, City Council
- Dave Hamon, Compensation Analyst, Department of Human Resources

Additionally, throughout the course of their work, the Commission received support and/or presentations from the following City staff and community members. The Commission offers its thanks.

- Lara Baker-Morrish, Chief Counsel, Deputy City Attorney, City Attorney’s Office
- Dr. Bill LaFayette, Regionomics
- Chris Long, Director, Department of Finance and Management
- Katelee Mata, Graduate Associate, Legislative Research Office, City Council
- The City Clerk and staff
- The City Hall Facilities Management team
- The Columbus Government Television (CTV) team

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COLUMBUS' ELECTED OFFICIALS

A challenge faced by previous iterations of the Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation was to "ascertain the responsibilities of each office based on the brief descriptions in the City Charter."² In an attempt to address this challenge, the 2026 Commission chose to invite each elected official, or a representative, to present on the topic of their respective roles and responsibilities.

Purely due to scheduling opportunities and availability, the order of presentations was as follows:

- Presentation from City Auditor Megan Kilgore, Deputy Auditor Darlene Wildes, and Human Resources Officer Eugene Borders (February 26, 2026);
- Presentation from City Attorney Zach Klein (March 5, 2026);
- Presentation from Elon Simms, Chief of Staff to the Mayor (March 12, 2026); and
- Presentation from John Tannous, Chief of Staff to the City Council (March 19, 2026).

Chief Simms provided a slide deck as part of his presentation, which is available on the Commission's website under the meeting materials from that day. Auditor Kilgore and Chief Tannous provided memos in addition to their presentation, which are both available in the Appendix to this report and on the Commission's website, organized in the same manner.

Here, the presentations and their key points are very briefly summarized. All presentations, including any discussion with and among Commissioners following, are available in the CTV recordings of these meetings.

Auditor Kilgore on the Role and Responsibilities of the City Auditor

Auditor Kilgore explained that across cities, the role of an auditor varies extensively and that the role in Columbus is particularly unique. She urged the Commission to consider the scope of the role rather than the title alone. In Columbus, the auditor is responsible for the ratings credibility of one of the largest cities in America and manages a multi-billion-dollar debt portfolio. As a result, the scope of financial reporting, debt management, and other functions and operations of the office is easily on par with a Fortune 500 company. Auditor Kilgore advocated for continued parity in the compensation between the roles of the City Auditor and the City Attorney and provided examples of the similarities between those two roles.

² "2022 Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation Final Report," <https://www.columbus.gov/files/sharedassets/city/v/1/city-council/documents/compensation-commission-2022/eocc-report-web-version.pdf>.

City Attorney Klein on the Role and Responsibilities of the City Attorney

City Attorney Klein covered the two branches within the City Attorney's office. The first half is the prosecutor's side, which manages about 100,000 cases annually, prosecuting all misdemeanors in the City of Columbus. On the other side, the City Attorney also manages what is comparable to a large law firm, providing general counsel to the thousands of city employees and including a tax section, labor employment section, the solicitor general's office, and more.

Chief of Staff Simms on the Role and Responsibilities of the Mayor

Chief Simms established the growing size and scope of the governance of the City of Columbus. The Mayor oversees an administration of 9,500 employees including 16 cabinet members to direct the 13 departments and 3 offices. Foundational to the operation, the Mayor manages a \$4 billion combined capital and operating budget. The Mayor is accountable not just to the 946,000 people living in Columbus but is also responsible for managing the economic center of a region of over 2.2 million people with an annual GDP of over \$180 billion. Chief Simms highlighted that since Mayor Ginther took office, key metrics have improved citywide. The presentation emphasized the breadth and depth of the mayor's role by providing examples of key initiatives from over the last decade.

Chief of Staff Tannous on the Role and Responsibilities of the City Council and the City Council President

Chief Tannous' presentation highlighted the expectation for Councilmembers to be accessible and responsive to the community, the additional responsibilities inherent to the role of the Council President, and the general value of reducing the financial need for Councilmembers to retain or obtain outside employment during their terms. The Councilmembers each staff at least one committee that oversees major policymaking, programming, and budgetary implications and responsibilities. While Councilmembers have a district-residency requirement, they are still elected at-large and are therefore accountable to the entire city. The Council President has all the responsibilities of a Councilmember, but also oversees the entirety of Council's operations, manages the weekly agenda for Council meetings, and often serves as the primary spokesperson for the City, second only to the Mayor.

THE CHALLENGE OF FORECASTING

Every Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation faces an inherent challenge of making decisions four to seven years in advance. The 2026 Commission's decisions pertain to the years 2030-2033. To request insights on projections for the City's economic forecast and to be informed stewards of City resources, City Auditor Megan Kilgore was invited to present on the City's revenue projections, revenue sources, and financial commitments.

The Auditor spoke to the recent strong growth in the City's income tax revenues but cautioned Commissioners not to assume that growth will continue, noting that an economic downturn is likely in the near future. While there are many factors outside of the control of the City that impact economic growth and income tax revenues, the Auditor shared a defensible assumption that the City's income tax revenues will grow 10-15% by 2030 and 15-25% by 2033. This was assuming a conservative, but realistic model, with continued stability among the city's major employers, with moderate wage growth in professional services, with no major changes structurally to tax policy in the state, and with at least one normal economic cycle occurring.

This addresses, to the extent possible, the economic forecast for Columbus. But the Commissioners also acknowledged that the efforts of the peer city survey to set a market rate for 2026 will change over the next four years, and so they are tasked with anticipating this as they make recommendations. Because the four-year average method of calculating the Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA) is lagging in its responsiveness to economic change, it is not effective at keeping compensation rates competitive.

The COLA could manage this better in a time of economic slowdown, but inflation is still largely the anticipated near-term forecast. Dr. Bill LaFayette's report to the Commission³ addresses this topic in more detail.

³ Appendix F, The Consumer Price Index

CPI AND COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS

The Commission selected the “CPI-U: All items in U.S. city average, all urban consumers, not seasonally adjusted” Consumer Price Index as the reference point for cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) calculations and recommends the maximum allowable COLA for each year of their recommendations (2030-2033). This section of the report discusses the background and rationale for this recommendation.

On March 26, 2026, the Commission heard a presentation from Dr. Bill LaFayette, an economist and owner of Regionomics LLC. Dr. LaFayette presented on the consumer price indexes (CPIs) and on the selection of a CPI in calculating COLAs for Columbus’ elected officials. Dr. LaFayette has presented to previous iterations of this Commission and is familiar with their responsibilities. His report to the Commission is included in the Appendix to this report.

The Charter, in Section 15-4, states that the Commission’s recommendations shall include “an annual cost of living adjustment which shall not exceed the average increase in the consumer price index, or successor thereto, during the preceding four years.” This calculation refers, then, to the maximum COLA the Commission may set. For example, in 2026, the CPI from 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 was averaged to determine this figure. The Commission does not have to set the maximum COLA, but any other COLA it might recommend (such as 2% annually) would still be subject to the calculated maximum allowable COLA for any given year.

However, there are over 10,000 CPIs. As a result, the Commission is naturally tasked with choosing a CPI as a reference point for this calculation. Dr. LaFayette advised the Commission in this process. Dr. LaFayette recommended choosing a national CPI, discussed the benefits and pitfalls associated with a chained CPI, recommended choosing a CPI that is not seasonally adjusted, and recommended a CPI that includes food and energy for the purpose of setting COLAs. Dr. LaFayette also advised, as he has to previous Commissions, that the Charter be changed to allow COLAs to be responsive to the change in the CPI over the previous calendar year rather than based on a four-year average. This advice is explained further in his report.⁴

Based on this advice, the Commission unanimously selected the “CPI-U: All items in U.S. city average, all urban consumers, not seasonally adjusted” index for the reference point for calculations from 2030 through 2033. The Commission also voted unanimously to recommend the maximum allowable COLA for each year under its purview. This means that, for example, the 2030 COLA would be calculated based on the average of the annual increases in the CPI for the years 2026, 2027, 2028, and 2029. This recommendation holds true for every elected position and is therefore not discussed in detail in the recommendations sections following.

⁴ Appendix F, The Consumer Price Index

SURVEY OF PEER CITIES FOR BENCHMARKING

The City Charter states in Section 15-3 that this Commission shall “conduct a review of like salaries in the public sector.” To accomplish this, the Commission issued a survey to 28 municipalities⁵ across the country and ultimately received responses from 23. The survey asks each city what their compensation levels are for their elected officials (or comparable appointed public servants, where applicable), but also gathers information on a wide variety of subjects including each city’s annual general fund budget, the existence and compensation of roles nonexistent in Columbus like city managers, full-time or part-time restrictions on electeds, non-cash benefits, and more.

In order to select which cities to survey, the Commission reviewed numerous factors. They considered which cities were surveyed by the 2018 and 2022 Commissions, a variety of Census data ranging from population to the percentage of the population with a high school degree, and geographic proximity to Columbus. A table of the data collected in this process is available in the Appendix. The datapoints considered included:

- Geographic proximity,
- Inclusion in previous Commission surveys,
- Population,
- Population of the surrounding Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA),
- Population percentage change, 2020-2024,
- Land area,
- Female persons as a percentage of the population,
- Attainment of high school graduation as a percentage of the population,
- Attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher as a percentage of the population, and
- Race and ethnicity demographics as collected by the U.S. Census.

⁵ While this report generally refers to “peer cities” or “benchmark cities,” some of the municipalities surveyed have a merged City-County form of government. This includes Charlotte, Denver, Indianapolis, and Nashville. This can be more clearly seen in the relevant documents in the Appendix.

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS IN DETERMINING COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The following considerations make up the breadth of compensation philosophies that ground the Commission’s recommendations. No one of these ideas was the ruling principle, and none can be taken alone without recognizing how it connects and balances with the others.

Attracting High-Quality Candidates

The Commission discussed a philosophical spectrum with the public-sector compensation that, on one end, emphasizes attracting the best and brightest to run for office and a recognition that minimal compensation can create a barrier to this. On the other end is emphasis on the “public servant” nature of the roles and assumes that such work comes with a financial sacrifice. On the whole, the Commissioners agreed that they all leaned more towards the former. As residents of Columbus who are considering compensation for their own future representatives in 2030 through 2033, it was important to the Commission to recommend competitive compensation that might not challenge private sector pay but that would allow elected officials to focus entirely on their responsibility to the City. The Commission’s recommendations are intended to further the goal of making it attractive and feasible for the best and brightest of Columbus to run for elected office. This is especially true as the Commission considers the ongoing and anticipated growth of Columbus and resulting added responsibility for elected officials.

This value was held together with the growth in Columbus and in the region, with the responsibility of the Commission to be good stewards as it makes recommendations, and with benchmarking against market rates.

Benchmarking Against the Market Rates

The peer city survey allowed Commissioners to understand where Columbus’ elected officials’ compensation currently sits in the market among their peers. These comparisons are very challenging for a number of reasons across each role. Without capturing the depth of the complexity, examples of the challenge of comparing apples to apples include the following.

- Cities have different forms of government, including merged forms with their encompassing county.
- Compared to Columbus, many city auditors or comptrollers have much smaller portfolios or more limited oversight responsibilities.
- Unlike in Columbus, many city attorneys are appointed, which can impact the public perception of compensation.
- Unlike Columbus, some cities are supported by a city manager, who takes on much of the work of the mayor and the mayor’s office.
- Unlike in Columbus, some city councils are more ceremonial in nature and do not require a robust time commitment.

The Commission must bear all this, as well as other differences such as population and land area, in mind when understanding the market rates for the elected positions. With that said, the

Commissioners did analyze and rely on the median compensation rates for the peer cities’ electeds, aiming to compensate at or above that market rate. This goal of compensating at or above the market rate established by the benchmark survey is especially appropriate when considering the ongoing growth of Columbus and its current population. Columbus is growing faster than 70% of the cities surveyed and has a larger population than 78% of the cities surveyed.

Table 1, below, summarizes the 2026 compensation of Columbus’ electeds and the market value established through the survey. This table does not take into account the many differences among cities highlighted above.

Table 1
2026 Compensation and Benchmark Compensation for Columbus’ Elected Officials

<i>Elected Official</i>	<i>2026 Compensation (Columbus)</i>	<i>Market Rate from Benchmarking Survey</i>
City Auditor	\$248,345	\$188,821
City Attorney	\$248,345	\$248,345
Mayor	\$273,063	\$170,026
Councilmember	\$96,453	\$78,707
Council President	\$116,032	\$94,311

The Commission’s recommendations further the goal of paying at or above market rate, especially after accounting for differences across the cities surveyed. This value was held together with Columbus’ growth and regional responsibility and with the challenge of forecasting and anticipated inflationary impacts.

The Extra-Local Scale of Public Service in Columbus

Another consistent theme throughout presentations to the Commission and in discussions between the Commissioners was the persistent impact of the region’s reliance on Columbus. Early on, the Commission sought to compare peer cities across MSA population and not just municipality population because of an understanding of these impacts. Columbus is the economic anchor of the Central Ohio region and of the state of Ohio. It is the capital of Ohio, supports twenty percent of the state’s jobs, and many of the city’s services reach far beyond its corporate boundaries.

Columbus’ elected officials are then inherently responsible not just for the well-being of the City of Columbus but for the county and region. While surrounding municipalities have their own governments accountable directly to their residents, Columbus’ leaders have a mandate to partner across city boundaries, school districts, and county lines to ensure the success of the region. Columbus’ elected officials often represent Central Ohio on a national and even global scale.

Auditor Kilgore had raised this point in her presentation on revenues, noting that the services of Columbus’ utilities extend well beyond the city boundaries. This fact impacts the scope of the role of the auditor and the other elected positions. Other City departments, including Columbus Public Health and the Department of Public Safety, directly serve other municipalities in the Central Ohio

region through contracts.⁶ The Commission observed that the scale of the region’s reliance on Columbus will increase as the population in the city and surrounding the city grows.

The Commission’s recommendations further the goal of ensuring that compensation for Columbus’ elected officials is commensurate with their responsibilities not just to the city but, inherently, to the Central Ohio region. This value was held together with that of responsible fiscal stewardship and with benchmarking against market rates where comparisons were available.

The Challenge of Forecasting

Addressed comprehensively in an earlier section of this report, the Commission is faced with the inherent challenge of setting compensation recommendations four to seven years in advance. The 2022 Commission recommended and Council authorized an annual COLA, so the 2026 Commission has less of a need to account for inflation in their recommended adjustments to base salary. But they cannot assume that the market value in 2026 will match the market value in 2030, even when accounting for these annual increases. The Commission cannot solely rely upon the market value obtained through the survey. Rather, it is likely that many of the cities surveyed are undergoing similar processes to keep compensation appropriate and competitive. Columbus is growing in population, and many of the cities surveyed are not.

The Commission responded to this challenge by recommending upward adjustments for all elected officials. An additional step taken by the Commission, which is in line with previous Commissions’ recommendations, is to recommend a percentage increase to take effect in 2030 rather than setting a whole number. This allows the recommendations to be responsive to the effects of COLA between 2026 and 2029 rather than attempting to overly predict the market value and competitive compensation figures for 2030 and beyond.

The value of properly accounting for inflationary impacts and the challenge of forecasting is held together with the work to benchmark against market rates and operate as responsible stewards of the City’s resources.

Responsible Stewardship

The Commission seeks to be a responsible steward of City resources. While the ultimate decision to accept the Commission’s recommendations falls to the City Council, the Commission sought to establish a foundational understanding of the City’s budget and revenues as they stand before deliberating on compensation for 2030 and beyond.

⁶ According to the City of Columbus website, “Columbus Water & Power provides water and sewer service to well over 30 communities in addition to Columbus through contractual agreements”. <https://www.columbus.gov/Services/Columbus-Water-Power/About-Columbus-Water-Power/The-Division-of-Water-Reclamation/Wastewater-Treatment/Water-Sewer-Contract-Communities>. Columbus Public Health operates as the public health department for both Columbus and for the City of Worthington. The Department of Public Safety serves over three dozen entities, including 25 townships and 6 cities, through mutual aid partnerships.

To that end, the Commission received data on City employee groups and how their compensation has changed in recent years through negotiated across-the-board increases. Director Chris Long of the Department of Finance and Management presented on the City's current budget, budgetary process, and the opportunities and challenges ahead of the City financially. Auditor Megan Kilgore presented on the current and projected revenues of the City, the City's primary revenue sources, and advised on related considerations. These presentations also reflected on Columbus' anticipated growth and the impacts that will have on the City's fiscal standing.

The Commission recommendations are in line with their value of responsible stewardship. They achieve this by making recommendations that they believe would lead to fair, competitive compensation for Columbus' elected officials, allowing electeds to fully focus on their public service and the responsibilities of their roles. This value was held together with all of the other primary considerations: attracting high-quality candidates, benchmarking against peer cities, the expansive nature of public service in Columbus, and the challenge of forecasting.

CITY AUDITOR COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS, 2030-2033

The Commission recommends the following compensation for Columbus' City Auditor beginning in 2030.

Recommendation: Effective January 1, 2030 – 13% increase in 2029 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2031 – 2030 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2032 – 2031 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2033 – 2032 salary + COLA

As noted in the "CPI and Cost-of-Living-Adjustments" section, the Commission recommends the maximum COLA, which is calculated using the average of the year-to-year change in the CPI-U over the previous four years. For 2030, the formula will be calculated as follows.

$$2030 \text{ COLA} = (2026 \text{ Value}^7 + 2027 \text{ Value} + 2028 \text{ Value} + 2029 \text{ Value}) / 4$$

The Commission recommends a 13% upward adjustment to the City Auditor's salary to take place in 2030. The current (2026) salary for this position is \$248,345, and annual COLAs will increase that figure incrementally between now and 2030.

Rationale

The Commission observed that the scope of the City Auditor's role and responsibilities in Columbus is uniquely broad and impactful compared to peer cities. According to Auditor Kilgore's memo on this topic: "In large U.S. cities, the responsibilities carried [out] by the Columbus City Auditor are often divided among several separate offices, such as a Chief Financial Officer, Comptroller, Finance Officer, Debt Manager, Revenue Commissioner, or [Chief Accounting Officer/Chief Operating Officer]." ⁸ Such responsibilities include those of accounting, auditing, revenue estimation, fiscal analysis, revenue and tax operations, payroll, debt management, and more. The Commission recognized that the breadth of the Auditor's work, the level of professional and technical staff in the office, and the operational impact on the City of Columbus justified above-market compensation.

As Columbus grows, the weight of the Auditor's responsibilities will only increase. Modernization efforts will require higher levels of expertise and technical knowledge, and a growing tax base will elevate the responsibility undertaken. This anticipated growth is another reason that the Commission recommended an upward adjustment for the City Auditor.

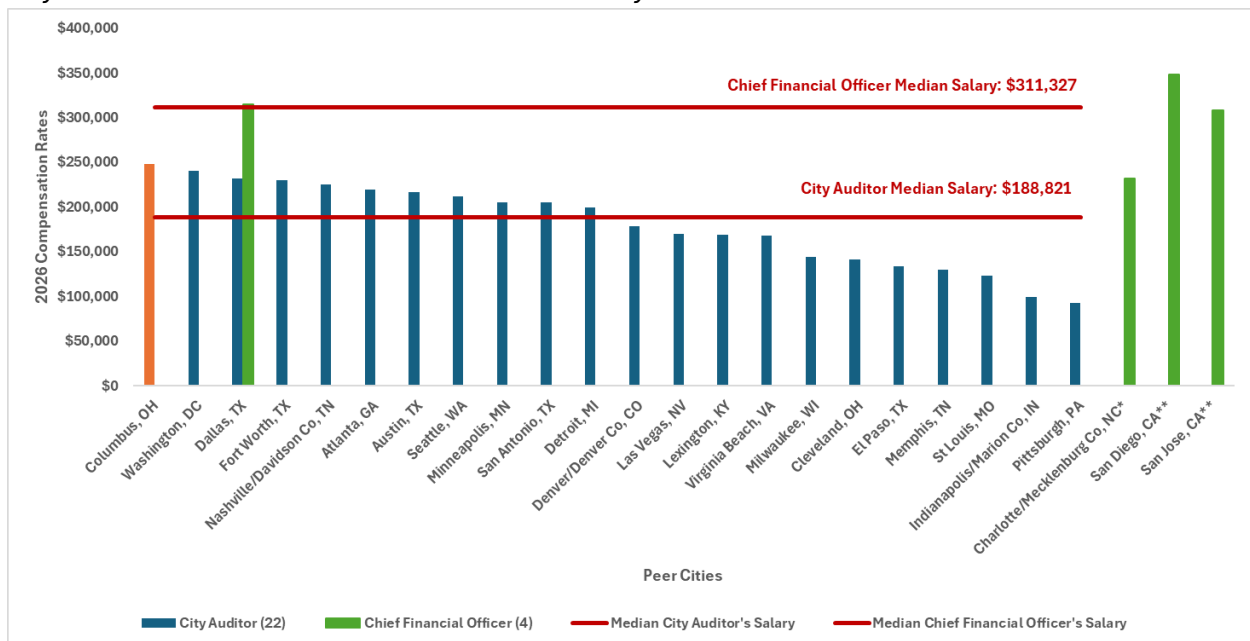
⁷ Because the CPI is the price of a basket of goods, the CPI itself is different from the percentage change in CPI over given periods of time. For compensation purposes here, the value for any given year is calculated as a percentage change from the previous year. Instructions for this calculation can be found on page 6 of Dr. Bill LaFayette's report on Consumer Price Index, Appendix F.

⁸ Appendix D, Memo from Auditor Kilgore

Lastly, the Commission recommends maintaining the precedent that the City Auditor and City Attorney be compensated equally. Both offices are independently elected, manage citywide risks on behalf of the City, and require and manage a highly specialized staff. As discussed below, the City Attorney is likely to fall below-market in compensation by 2030 without an upward adjustment. An upward adjustment of the City Attorney’s compensation necessitates an equal adjustment of the Auditor’s compensation to maintain parity.

Data Grounding the Recommendations

Figure 1
City Auditor and Chief Financial Officer Base Salary



Note: Charlotte, San Diego, and San Jose did not report compensation data for a city auditor or like position. Only “CFO” data is available from these municipalities. San Diego and San Jose were not in the original list of benchmark cities, see below.

As a follow-up to the initial survey of peer cities, six cities that have Chief Financial Officer positions were asked to provide the compensation for those roles. While only a small sample size was available, these numbers helped inform the Commission’s recommendations for the City Auditor, given the uniquely expansive scope of the role in Columbus. The median value of these four datapoints is \$311,327, which is 25% higher than the current compensation of the Columbus City Auditor.

CITY ATTORNEY COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS, 2030-2033

The Commission recommends the following compensation for Columbus' City Attorney beginning in 2030.

Recommendation: Effective January 1, 2030 – 13% increase in 2029 salary + COLA
 Effective January 1, 2031 – 2030 salary + COLA
 Effective January 1, 2032 – 2031 salary + COLA
 Effective January 1, 2033 – 2032 salary + COLA

As noted in the "CPI and Cost-of-Living-Adjustments" section, the Commission recommends the maximum COLA, which is calculated using the average of the year-to-year change in the CPI-U over the previous four years. For 2030, the formula will be calculated as follows.

$$2030\ COLA = (2026\ Value + 2027\ Value + 2028\ Value + 2029\ Value) / 4$$

The Commission recommends a 13% upward adjustment to the City Attorney's salary to take place in 2030. The current (2026) salary for this position is \$248,345, and annual COLAs will increase that figure incrementally between now and 2030.

Rationale

The compensation of the City Attorney is the most likely among those of the elected officials of Columbus to fall below-market without an upward adjustment in 2030. As seen in Figure 2 below, the Columbus City Attorney currently represents the market median, and it is highly likely that the market will shift upward over the next four years. The 2022 Commission recommended a 10% increase for the City Attorney, and only a 5% increase was approved, demonstrating that the need for an adjustment is a continuous trend and not an anomaly of 2026 data. Columbus' growth and the growth in capacity of the office warrant above-market compensation compared to the peer cities surveyed and in line with the compensation and recommendations for Columbus' other elected officials.

The Commission noted that much of the work of the City Attorney is relative to Columbus' scope and size. The office must provide general counsel to the City's 9,500 employees: as the City grows as an organization, the legal risk and responsibility taken on by the City Attorney will grow accordingly. The office is responsible for prosecuting all misdemeanors in Columbus: it's likely that its 100,000 cases a year will grow alongside the city's population. This is true across the office's many responsibilities, which includes the property action team, the mediation program, the domestic violence and stalking unit, and much more. The addition of the solicitor general in recent years has expanded the office's scope further through appellate litigation. This likelihood was discussed when the Commission met with City Attorney Klein to understand the role and how it will likely evolve in the near term.

Lastly, the Commission recommends maintaining the precedent that the City Auditor and City Attorney be compensated equally. Both offices are independently elected, manage citywide risks on behalf of the City, and require and manage a highly specialized staff. Therefore, an equal upward adjustment of 13% is recommended for both positions.

Data Grounding the Recommendations

Figure 2

City Attorney Base Salary



MAYORAL COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS, 2030-2033

The Commission recommends the following compensation for the Mayor beginning in 2030.

Recommendation: Effective January 1, 2030 – 18% increase in 2029 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2031 – 2030 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2032 – 2031 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2033 – 2032 salary + COLA

As noted in the “CPI and Cost-of-Living-Adjustments” section, the Commission recommends the maximum COLA, which is calculated using the average of the year-to-year change in the CPI-U over the previous four years. For 2030, the formula will be calculated as follows.

$$2030\ COLA = (2026\ Value + 2027\ Value + 2028\ Value + 2029\ Value) / 4$$

The Commission recommends a 18% upward adjustment to the Mayor's salary to take place in 2030. The current (2026) salary for this position is \$273,063, and annual COLAs will increase that figure incrementally between now and 2030.

Rationale

The Commission recommends an upward adjustment for the Mayor grounded in the lack of a city manager in Columbus; in the responsibility of representing Columbus regionally, nationally, and internationally; and in increasing the compensation of the chief executive officer of the City relative to the other elected officials.

In contrast to many of the surveyed cities, Columbus does not have a city manager. In Columbus, the work of a city manager is fulfilled by the Mayor and the Mayor’s chief of staff. Accordingly, the Commission took into account not just the market rate compensation for mayors among the peer cities, but also the median compensation for the city managers in the cities surveyed. Similarly, some of the cities surveyed have a council-manager form of government, which results in lower compensation rates for mayors.

The Commission also felt a responsibility to differentiate the compensation of the Mayor, who serves as the “chief executive officer”⁹ of the city, from the other elected officials. It is, in part, for this reason that the adjustment exceeds the 13% recommendation for that of the City Auditor and City Attorney.

Generally, the Commission also recommends an upward adjustment for the Mayor because of Columbus’ status on a regional, national, and global scale. Columbus cannot be compared to its Ohio peers alone, and its population and economic growth is outpacing nearly all of its peers. Nationally, if anyone is to answer for the well-being of the City of Columbus, it is the mayor. Chief

⁹ City Charter, Section 58.

Simms highlighted that by pointing to Mayor Ginther’s recent role as the “mayor of mayors” during his presidency of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The Commission’s recommendations reflect the importance of the mayor’s role on a national scale. This is even more so true due to Columbus’ historical, ongoing, and projected growth.

Data Grounding the Recommendations

Figure 3

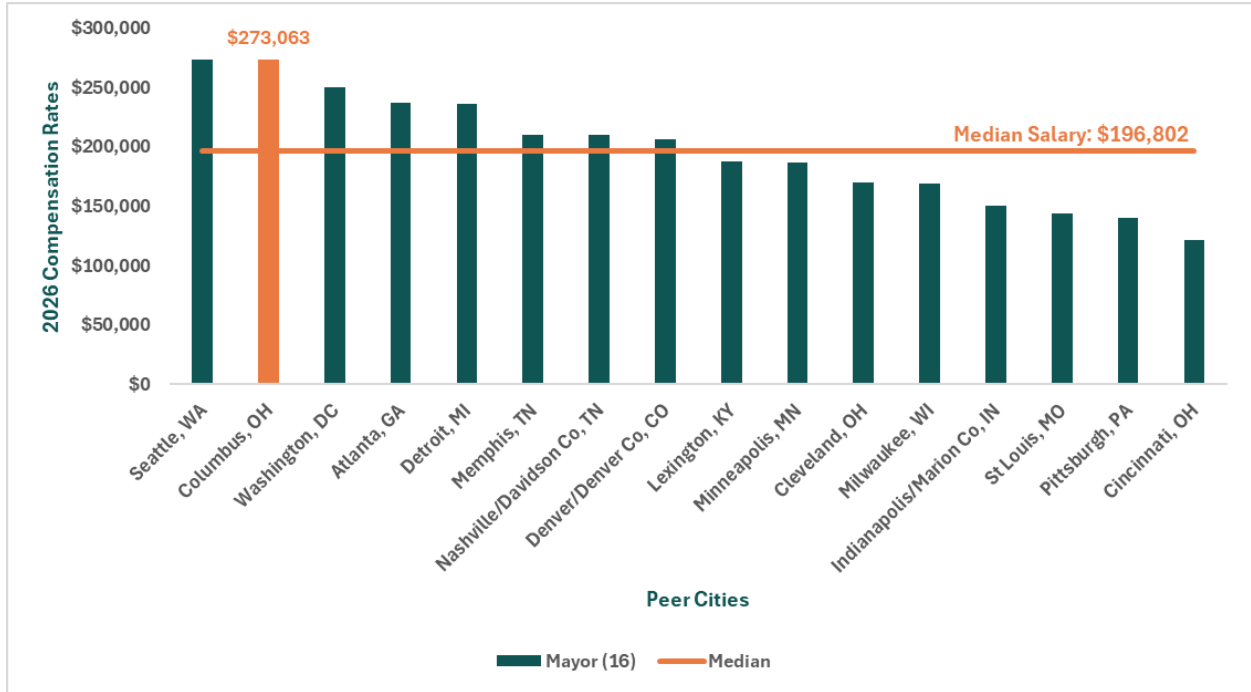
Mayor and City Manager Base Salary



Note: Dallas, Texas noted that their mayor’s office is currently vacant, and they did not provide compensation data as a result.

Figure 4

Mayor Base Salary, Excluding Council-Manager Forms of Government



CITY COUNCILMEMBER COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS, 2030-2033

The Commission recommends the following compensation for Columbus' City Councilmembers beginning in 2030.

Recommendation: Effective January 1, 2030 – 32% increase in 2029 salary + COLA
 Effective January 1, 2031 – 2030 salary + COLA
 Effective January 1, 2032 – 2031 salary + COLA
 Effective January 1, 2033 – 2032 salary + COLA

As noted in the "CPI and Cost-of-Living-Adjustments" section, the Commission recommends the maximum COLA, which is calculated using the average of the year-to-year change in the CPI-U over the previous four years. For 2030, the formula will be calculated as follows.

$$2030 \text{ COLA} = (2026 \text{ Value} + 2027 \text{ Value} + 2028 \text{ Value} + 2029 \text{ Value}) / 4$$

The Commission recommends a 32% upward adjustment to the City Councilmember salary to take place in 2030. The current (2026) salary for this position is \$96,453, and annual COLAs will increase that figure incrementally between now and 2030.

Rationale

While the Commission recognized that it is not within their scope to regulate whether elected officials maintain full-time or part-time employment, this historic debate was a foundational question for the 2030 compensation recommendations. The Commission's conclusion is that the role of the City Councilmember is not just full-time, but that it is in many ways a 24/7 job that demands constant access from the community.

It is the recommendation of the Commission that Councilmembers be compensated in such a way that supports a strong, deliberative legislative branch of the local government by compensating in line with the full-time nature of the office. Chief Tannous' presentation furthered this conclusion with the highlighting of the idea that "compensation shapes access to public service."¹⁰ This is closely related to the Commission's value of attracting high-quality candidates but broadens that idea by contemplating that aspiration to public service should be accessible to all Columbus residents, regardless of economic status.

The Commission believes that regardless of any future changes that may occur to the at-large and district residency model for Council elections, that Councilmembers will have a continued responsibility to an above-average number of residents compared to their peers, and factored this difference into their recommendations (see Figure 6). For the 2026 Commission, it is the compensation of the Councilmembers (and of the Council President, see below) that is most

¹⁰ Appendix E, Memo from Chief of Staff to City Council John Tannous

mismatched to their duties, necessitating a larger upward adjustment compared to peer electeds in Columbus.

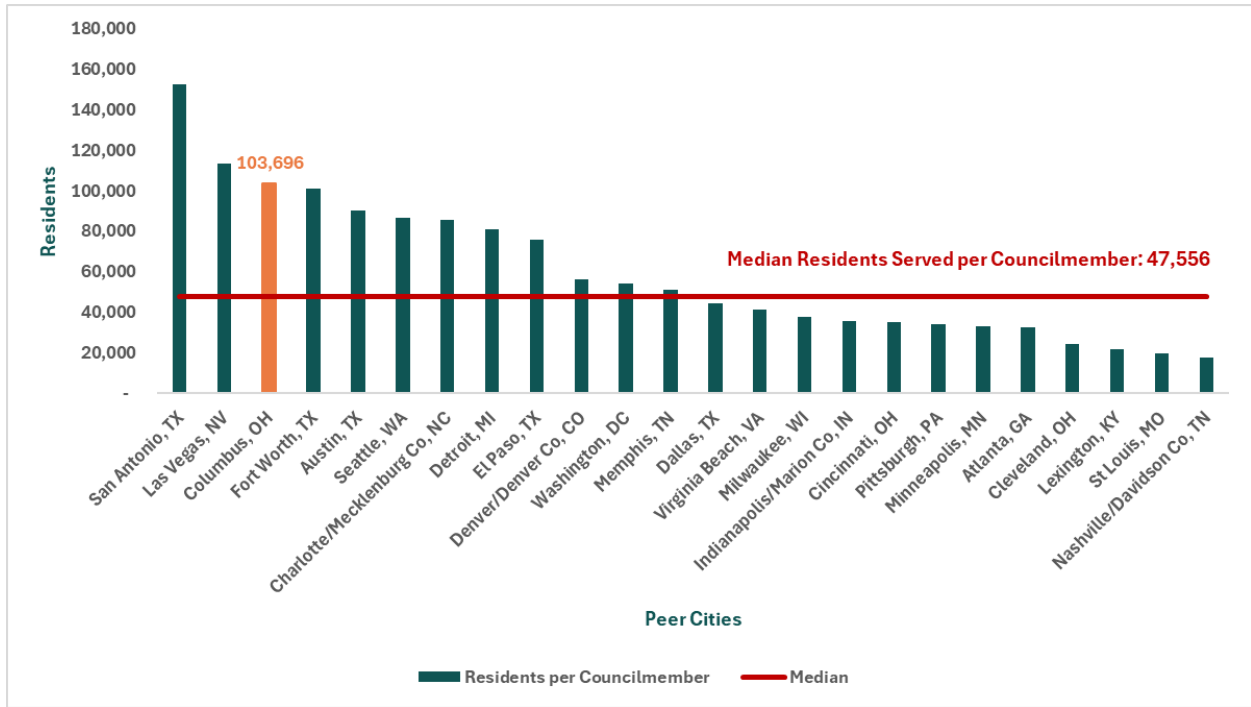
The scale of residents that Councilmembers are accountable to, the scope of their work chairing committees responsible for a large swath of policy matters, and the desire to have representatives for the public be fully focused on their service grounded the Commission’s recommendation of a 32% increase for Councilmembers.

Data Grounding the Recommendations

Figure 5
Councilmember Base Salary



Figure 6
Residents in Municipality per Councilmember



CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS, 2030-2033

The Commission recommends the following compensation for Columbus' City Council President beginning in 2030.

Recommendation: Effective January 1, 2030 – 32% increase in 2029 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2031 – 2030 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2032 – 2031 salary + COLA
Effective January 1, 2033 – 2032 salary + COLA

As noted in the "CPI and Cost-of-Living-Adjustments" section, the Commission recommends the maximum COLA, which is calculated using the average of the year-to-year change in the CPI-U over the previous four years. For 2030, the formula will be calculated as follows.

$$2030 \text{ COLA} = (2026 \text{ Value} + 2027 \text{ Value} + 2028 \text{ Value} + 2029 \text{ Value}) / 4$$

The Commission recommends a 32% upward adjustment to the City Council President's salary to take place in 2030. The current (2026) salary for this position is \$116,032, and annual COLAs will increase that figure incrementally between now and 2030.

Rationale

The Commission observed that the City Council President has all the same duties of a Councilmember in addition to the leadership responsibilities of being the Council President. The current (2026) differential between the Council President compensation and Councilmember compensation is 20%. The Commission hesitates to create too large a disparity between the two compensation rates, which contributed to matching the recommended percentage increase between the Councilmembers and the Council President. The Commission's recommendation of a 32% increase reflects the Council President's larger scope, the need to adjust compensation to reflect the duties of the role, and the value of not separating the compensation between the Council President and Councilmember too significantly.

On that final point, the Commission discussed that it is possible for a Council President to remain on Council but not be reelected by the Council to a leadership position. Should that occur, the individual in the role would experience a decrease in compensation, and the Commission agreed that it sought to avoid making such a decrease too economically jarring. This is one reason why the recommended increase for the Council President's compensation is not higher.

The Commission observed that like Councilmembers, the compensation of the role of the Council President requires an upward adjustment to reflect the scope of the work. In 2022, a 40% increase for the Council President was recommended, and only a 13% increase was ultimately approved. This demonstrates the ongoing need for a significant upward adjustment for the Council President and that such a recommendation is not due to an anomaly in the 2026 data or conclusions.

Finally, the Commission recognized that the role of the Council President comes with manifold responsibilities in addition to that of serving as a Councilmember. Chief Tannous articulated this in his memo¹¹ on the topic: “The President oversees the entire City Council operation... [and] establishes Council’s legislative agenda” in addition to other duties and expectations. Given these additional pressures and how they are likely to expand with Columbus’ growth, the Commission found an upward adjustment of 32% to be appropriate.

Data Grounding the Recommendations

Figure 7
Council President Base Salary



¹¹ Appendix F, Memo from Chief of Staff to City Council John Tannous

APPENDIX A

Columbus City Charter Provisions Related to the Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation

Sec. 15. Compensation of officers and employees.

Subject to the provision of this charter as to the salary of council members, the auditor, the city attorney, and the mayor, council shall fix by ordinance the salary or compensation of all officers and employees of the city government. The salary or compensation so fixed shall be uniform for like service. All such salaries and rates of pay shall be reported to the civil service commission forthwith. The salary of any officer, employee, or member of a board or commission in the unclassified service of the city who was elected or appointed for a definite term shall not be increased or diminished during the term for which the individual was elected or appointed, and all fees pertaining to any office shall be paid into the city treasury.

(Amended 11-5-85; 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15-1. Citizens' commission on elected official compensation.

The salary of all elective officers provided for in this charter shall be established by ordinance upon recommendation from a citizens' commission on elected official compensation.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15-2. Commission membership.

The citizens' commission on elected official compensation shall consist of five members, who shall be qualified electors of the city, shall not hold any other office or employment in the city government, and shall serve without compensation. Two members shall be appointed by the council, two members shall be appointed by the mayor, and one member shall be jointly appointed by the council and the mayor, such member serving as chair of the commission. Such appointments shall take place at the second regular meeting of council in 2018 and of each succeeding fourth year thereafter; except that the first commission shall be appointed at the second regular meeting of council in 2015. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as prescribed for the original appointment. The commission shall be considered a public body.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15-3. Commission duties.

The commission shall conduct a review of salaries for like positions in the public sector. The review shall be made for the purpose of recommending salaries appropriate to the duties and responsibilities of each elective officer of the city.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15-4. Commission report.

Within three months of appointment, the commission shall submit to the city clerk a report of recommendations for the salary of each elective officer of the city, including an annual cost of living adjustment which shall not exceed the average increase in the consumer price index, or successor

thereto, during the preceding four years. If the commission fails to timely submit the report, the council may compel a meeting of the commission to prepare and submit the same.
(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15-5. Council action to establish salaries.

After the report is submitted, council shall by ordinance either accept the commission recommendations or any portion thereof, or reject the same. If council rejects the recommendations, the salaries then in effect shall remain unchanged. In no event may council adopt an ordinance establishing salaries which exceed the recommendations of the commission.
(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

APPENDIX B

Columbus City Charter Provisions Related to Qualifications of Elected Officials

Sec. 4. Council members.

Each member of council shall be elected from one of nine districts by the electors of the city. All council members shall serve for a term of four years.

(Amended 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014; Ord. No. 0650-2018, § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 6. Qualifications of council members.

Members of council shall be electors of the city, shall have resided within the corporate limits of the city of Columbus and the district the member represents for not less than one consecutive year preceding the date of the regular primary election for such office, and shall, at all times during the term of office, maintain residence in the city of Columbus and the district the member represents as the boundaries of the district were drawn at the time of the council member's appointment or election. Council members shall not hold any other public office except that of notary public, or member of the state militia or any reserve unit of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. Any member who shall cease to possess any of the qualifications herein required shall forthwith forfeit the office and the vacancy shall be filled as provided for herein.

(Amended 11-5-85; 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014; Ord. No. 0650-2018, § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 10. President of council.

At the first meeting in January following a regular municipal election, the council shall elect one of its members president. The president of council shall preside at meetings of the council, determine the agenda for such meetings, appoint the chair and members of council committees, and perform such other duties as may be imposed by the council. If the president of council dies, resigns, is removed from office, ceases to hold any qualification for office, or the office is otherwise vacated during the term of office, the council shall elect one of its members president.

(Amended 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 58. Term and qualifications of mayor.

The mayor shall be the chief executive officer of the city, elected for a term of four years. The mayor shall be an elector of the city and shall, at all times during the term of office, maintain residence in the city of Columbus. The mayor shall not hold any other public office or employment, except that of notary public, or member of the state militia or any reserve unit of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. If the mayor shall cease to possess any of the qualifications herein required, the mayor shall forthwith forfeit the office and the vacancy shall be filled as provided for herein.

(Amended 11-5-85; 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 66. Election and qualifications. [City Attorney]

The city attorney shall be an elector of the city and shall, at all times during the term of office, maintain residence in the city of Columbus. The city attorney shall not hold any other public office except that of notary public, or member of the state militia or any reserve unit of the Armed Forces

of the United States of America. If the city attorney shall cease to possess any of the qualifications herein required, the city attorney shall forthwith forfeit the office and the vacancy shall be filled as provided for herein. The city attorney shall be elected for a term of four years. The city attorney shall be an attorney-at-law, admitted to practice in the state of Ohio.

(Amended 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 79. Election and qualifications. [City Auditor]

The auditor shall be an elector of the city and shall, at all times during the term of office, maintain residence in the city of Columbus. The auditor shall not hold any other public office except that of notary public, or member of the state militia or any reserve unit of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. If the auditor shall cease to possess any of the qualifications herein required, the auditor shall forthwith forfeit the office and the vacancy shall be filled as provided for herein. The auditor shall be elected for a term of four years.

(Amended 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

APPENDIX C

Census Data from Respondent Peer Cities in Benchmarking Survey

Table 2

Municipality Population, MSA Population, Population Change, Land Area, Density

City/County	Population (2024)	MSA Population	Population Percentage Change (2020 to 2024)	Land area in square miles, 2020	Population per square mile, 2020
Atlanta, GA	520,070	6,411,149	4.3%	135.31	3685.7
Austin, TX	993,588	2,550,637	3.3%	319.94	3006.4
Charlotte/Mecklenburg Co, NC	943,476	2,883,370	7.9%	308.29	2836.9
Cincinnati, OH	314,915	2,302,815	1.7%	77.84	3974.0
Cleveland, OH	365,379	2,171,877	-1.9%	77.74	4793.5
Columbus, OH	933,263	2,225,377	3.0%	220.04	4116.3
Dallas, TX	1,326,087	8,344,032	1.7%	339.58	3841.1
Denver/Denver Co, CO	729,019	3,052,498	1.9%	153.08	4674.3
Detroit, MI	645,705	4,400,578	1.0%	138.73	4606.8
El Paso, TX	681,723	879,392	0.4%	258.41	2626.9
Fort Worth, TX	1,008,106	8,344,032	9.7%	347.27	2646.1
Indianapolis/Marion Co, IN	891,484	2,174,833	0.4%	361.64	2454.5
Las Vegas, NV	678,922	2,398,871	5.1%	141.83	4526.0
Lexington, KY	329,437	533,366	2.1%	283.64	1137.3
Memphis, TN	610,919	1,339,345	-2.8%	296.98	2131.8
Milwaukee, WI	563,531	1,574,452	-2.5%	96.18	6001.2
Minneapolis, MN	428,579	3,757,952	-0.3%	54.00	7962.1
Nashville/Davidson Co, TN	704,963	2,150,553	2.2%	475.78	1449.1
Pittsburgh, PA	307,668	2,429,917	1.6%	55.38	5471.3
San Antonio, TX	1,526,656	2,763,006	6.4%	498.84	2875.9
Seattle, WA	780,995	4,145,494	6.0%	83.83	8791.8
St Louis, MO	279,695	2,811,927	-7.2%	61.74	4885.0
Virginia Beach, VA	454,808	1,794,278	-1.0%	244.72	1877.5
Washington DC	702,250	6,436,489	1.8%	61.13	11280.7

Minimum Value	279,695	533,366	-7.2%	54.00	1,137.30
Maximum Value	1,526,656	8,344,032	9.7%	498.84	11,280.70
Median Value	680,323	2,490,277	1.8%	186.56	3,974.00
Mean Value	696,718	3,244,843	1.9%	212.16	4,338.03
Columbus, OH	933,263	2,225,377	3.0%	220.04	4,116.30

Table 3
Female Population, High School Attainment, Bachelors Degree Attainment

City/County	Female persons, %	High school graduate or higher, % of persons age 25 years+, 2020-2024	Bachelor's degree or higher, % of persons age 25 years+, 2020-2024
Atlanta, GA	51.0%	93.4%	59.2%
Austin, TX	48.7%	92.3%	59.6%
Charlotte/Mecklenburg Co, NC	51.6%	89.5%	48.0%
Cincinnati, OH	51.6%	90.0%	41.8%
Cleveland, OH	51.5%	84.3%	22.4%
Columbus, OH	50.8%	89.7%	38.2%
Dallas, TX	50.0%	81.1%	38.2%
Denver/Denver Co, CO	49.5%	91.2%	56.5%
Detroit, MI	52.6%	83.3%	18.1%
El Paso, TX	50.7%	82.2%	28.1%
Fort Worth, TX	51.0%	84.7%	32.0%
Indianapolis/Marion Co, IN	51.4%	87.9%	34.9%
Las Vegas, NV	50.2%	86.1%	27.7%
Lexington, KY	50.7%	92.1%	48.3%
Memphis, TN	52.6%	87.2%	28.0%
Milwaukee, WI	51.6%	85.5%	27.4%
Minneapolis, MN	49.1%	91.5%	55.5%
Nashville/Davidson Co, TN	51.5%	90.8%	48.0%
Pittsburgh, PA	51.3%	94.4%	49.1%

San Antonio, TX	50.5%	84.6%	29.0%
Seattle, WA	49.1%	96.0%	68.4%
St Louis, MO	51.5%	90.8%	41.1%
Virginia Beach, VA	51.0%	94.7%	40.9%
Washington DC	52.5%	92.7%	64.2%

Minimum Value	48.7%	81.1%	18.1%
Maximum Value	52.6%	96.0%	68.4%
Median Value	51.0%	89.9%	41.0%
Mean Value	50.9%	89.0%	41.9%
Columbus, OH	50.8%	89.7%	38.2%

Table 4
Race and Ethnicity Demographics, Part 1

City	White alone, %	Black alone, %	Two or More Races, %
Atlanta GA	39.1%	46.0%	7.2%
Austin TX	55.0%	7.6%	19.3%
Baltimore MD	26.9%	59.2%	6.1%
Charlotte/Mecklenburg Co, NC	39.9%	33.6%	9.9%
Cincinnati OH	49.0%	36.5%	9.0%
Cleveland OH	35.5%	45.9%	10.5%
Columbus OH	51.7%	29.3%	9.1%
Dallas TX	35.0%	23.2%	21.8%
Denver/Denver Co, CO	59.3%	9.0%	18.1%
Detroit MI	11.6%	75.3%	6.0%
El Paso TX	29.8%	3.6%	46.8%
Fort Worth TX	43.4%	19.7%	20.4%
Indianapolis IN	51.3%	27.9%	9.7%
Las Vegas NV	45.1%	11.7%	19.0%
Lexington-Fayette County KY	68.4%	14.5%	8.9%
Memphis TN	23.8%	62.9%	5.5%
Milwaukee WI	34.2%	38.5%	14.7%
Minneapolis MN	60.3%	18.8%	9.9%
Nashville-Davidson TN	54.6%	24.9%	11.2%
Pittsburgh PA	62.7%	22.3%	6.8%
San Antonio TX	40.6%	6.9%	36.2%
Seattle WA	60.3%	6.5%	11.6%

St. Louis MO	45.5%	42.3%	6.5%
Virginia Beach, VA	60.8%	18.8%	10.2%
Washington DC	37.9%	42.1%	9.6%

Minimum Value	11.60%	3.60%	5.50%
Maximum Value	68.40%	75.30%	46.80%
Median Value	45.10%	24.90%	9.90%
Mean Value	44.87%	29.08%	13.76%
Columbus, OH	51.70%	29.30%	9.10%

Table 5

Race and Ethnicity Demographics, Continued

City	Hispanic or Latino, %	Asian alone, %	American Indian and Alaska Native alone, %	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, %
Atlanta GA	6.3%	5.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Austin TX	31.9%	9.1%	0.9%	0.1%
Baltimore MD	8.2%	2.6%	0.4%	0.0%
Charlotte/Mecklenburg Co, NC	17.5%	6.5%	0.5%	0.0%
Cincinnati OH	6.1%	2.7%	0.2%	0.0%
Cleveland OH	13.2%	2.6%	0.3%	0.0%
Columbus OH	8.3%	6.0%	0.3%	0.0%
Dallas TX	42.6%	3.9%	1.0%	0.1%
Denver/Denver Co, CO	28.0%	3.7%	1.0%	0.2%
Detroit MI	8.3%	1.7%	0.4%	0.0%
El Paso TX	81.2%	1.5%	0.9%	0.2%
Fort Worth TX	34.6%	5.5%	0.7%	0.1%
Indianapolis/Marion Co, IN	13.8%	4.2%	0.6%	0.0%
Las Vegas NV	34.7%	7.2%	1.1%	0.7%
Lexington-Fayette County KY	9.5%	4.4%	0.2%	0.0%
Memphis TN	10.4%	1.7%	0.5%	0.1%
Milwaukee WI	20.9%	5.1%	0.8%	0.0%
Minneapolis MN	10.1%	5.3%	1.1%	0.0%
Nashville-Davidson TN	14.1%	3.5%	0.5%	0.1%
Pittsburgh PA	4.5%	6.2%	0.2%	0.0%
San Antonio TX	64.6%	3.0%	1.3%	0.2%
Seattle WA	8.5%	17.6%	0.6%	0.2%
St. Louis MO	5.3%	3.5%	0.3%	0.0%
Virginia Beach, VA	9.1%	7.2%	0.2%	0.2%

Washington DC	11.9%	4.4%	0.4%	0.0%
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Minimum Value	4.50%	1.50%	0.20%	0.0%
Maximum Value	81.20%	17.60%	1.30%	0.7%
Median Value	11.90%	4.40%	0.50%	0.0%
Mean Value	20.14%	4.98%	0.59%	0.1%
Columbus, OH	8.30%	6.00%	0.30%	0.0%

Data Sources and Descriptions

Table 2 and Table 3 Data

- “Population Estimates, July 1, 2024”
 - Census (ACS) population based on July 1, 2024
- “Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2024”
 - The percentage change in a municipality’s population between the 2020 US Census and the 2024 ACS estimates.
- “Land area in square miles, 2020”
 - 2020 Census Data – land area in square miles
- “Population per square mile, 2020”
 - 2020 Census Data – population density
- “MSA Population”
 - 2024 Census Data – population of the Metropolitan Statistical Area surrounding and including the municipality
 - Note: Dallas and Fort Worth are in the same MSA
- “Female persons, percent”
 - 2024 ACS Data – the percentage of the population identified as female
- “High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2020-2024”
 - 2024 ACS Estimate - the percentage of the population age 25 or above who have obtained at least a high school degree in their educational attainment
- “Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2020-2024”
 - 2024 ACS Estimate - the percentage of the population age 25 or above who have obtained at least a bachelor’s degree in their educational attainment

Table 4 and Table 5 Data

- “Population Estimates, July 1, 2024”
 - Census (ACS) population based on July 1, 2024
- “White Alone, %”
 - 2024 ACS - the percentage of the population that identified as white and no other race
 - This does include some percentage of the population identifying their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino.
- “Black alone, %”

- o 2024 ACS - the percentage of the population that identified as black and no other race
- “Two or More Races, %”
 - o 2024 ACS - the percentage of the population that identified as two or more races
- “Hispanic or Latino, %”
 - o 2024 ACS - the percentage of the population that identified their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino
- “Asian alone, %”
 - o 2024 ACS - the percentage of the population that identified as Asian and no other race
- “American Indian and Alaska Native alone, %”
 - o 2024 ACS - the percentage of the population that identified as American Indian and/or Alaska Native and no other race
- “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, %”
 - o 2024 ACS - the percentage of the population that identified as Native Hawaiian and/or Other Pacific Islander and no other race

APPENDIX D

Memo from Auditor Megan Kilgore on the Scope and Responsibilities of the Office of the City Auditor

The following six-page report on the scope and responsibilities of the City Auditor was requested by the Commission on February 26, 2026 following Auditor Kilgore’s presentation on the roles and responsibilities of the office.

MEGAN N. KILGORE

City Auditor

DARLENE WILDES, CPA

Deputy City Auditor

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS

OFFICE OF MEGAN N. KILGORE,
CITY AUDITOR

March 11, 2026

To: Members of the Elected Officials Compensation Committee

From: Megan N. Kilgore, City Auditor

SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COLUMBUS CITY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Dear Committee Members,

At the Committee's request, this memorandum summarizes the scope and responsibilities of the Columbus City Auditor's Office. The goal is to assist the Committee in evaluating the role in a national context and to ensure that compensation comparisons reflect the full scope of responsibilities associated with the office.

The title "City Auditor" varies significantly across the country. In some cities, auditors are appointed rather than elected. In others, the role functions primarily as an inspector general or internal auditor. Many municipal auditors do not collect revenue, manage payroll, administer large-scale technology systems, maintain the official financial record, or oversee debt issuance.

In large U.S. cities, the responsibilities carried by the Columbus City Auditor are often divided among several separate offices, such as a Chief Financial Officer, Comptroller, Finance Officer, Debt Manager, Revenue Commissioner, or CAO/COO. In these cities, authority is distributed across multiple executive departments.

In Columbus, these responsibilities are largely consolidated within the City Auditor's Office, which functions as the City's central financial authority and the steward of the City's financial systems, financial records, debt management, and revenue administration.

For this reason, national comparisons should focus on scope of responsibility rather than title alone.

OVERVIEW OF THE COLUMBUS CITY AUDITOR'S ROLE

In Columbus, the Auditor's Office (the "Office") administers core financial and business operations of one of the largest cities in the nation.

The position is responsible for maintaining the City's financial record, managing its financial systems, overseeing financial reporting and audit functions, administering major revenue systems, and managing the City's presence in national capital markets.

In practical terms, the Office serves as the operational and strategic center of the City's financial infrastructure. The Office's work touches virtually every department and financial transaction across City government.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

Official Financial Record and Accounting Operations

The Auditor's Office maintains the official financial record of the City of Columbus and administers the City's accounting and financial operations.

Maintaining the City's official financial records is a required duty of the Auditor per the City Charter.

This includes operating the City's enterprise financial system and ensuring that all financial activity across departments is accurately recorded, reconciled, and reported.

Because the City's accounting system serves as the official record of municipal financial activity, it provides the foundational infrastructure for financial transparency, public reporting, and compliance with state and federal requirements.

Audit Functions

The Office prepares the City's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) and other required financial reports.

Columbus' financial reporting has consistently received national recognition for excellence, transparency, and speed of issuance.

The Auditor's Office also oversees the City's annual audit program, coordinating with independent auditors and ensuring compliance with governmental accounting standards and internal control requirements.

These responsibilities require maintaining strong internal controls, safeguarding public assets, and ensuring the integrity of the City's financial reporting.

Official Revenue Estimate and Fiscal Analysis

The Auditor's Office is responsible for producing the City's Official Revenue Estimate, which establishes the legal spending capacity of the General Fund and serves as the financial foundation for the City's annual budget. This estimate is one of the most consequential financial responsibilities within City government, as it determines the resources available to support public safety, infrastructure, neighborhood services, and other core municipal operations.

To develop the Revenue Estimate, the Office conducts rigorous revenue forecasting, fiscal monitoring, and economic analysis that provide City leadership with a forward-looking view of the City's financial condition. This work transforms complex economic data into actionable fiscal intelligence, enabling policymakers to understand emerging trends, anticipate shifts in revenue performance, and make informed financial decisions.

The forecasting process requires careful analysis of wage growth, industry composition, labor force participation, commuting patterns, remote work dynamics, and other structural economic factors that directly influence Columbus' tax base.

Because the City of Columbus relies heavily on income tax revenue, the Office continuously monitors regional economic activity and labor market conditions to identify changes that could affect revenue performance. This ongoing analysis allows the City to respond proactively to economic shifts while maintaining disciplined and responsible financial planning.

Division of Revenue

Through the Division of Revenue, the Office administers and enforces the City's major tax programs and revenue systems. In many large cities, tax administration is handled by a separate revenue department or tax department. In Columbus, these responsibilities are administered directly within the Auditor's Office.

These systems process billions of dollars annually and serve as a direct customer interface with residents, workers, and business owners.

Revenue programs administered by the Office include:

- Municipal income tax
- Business and corporate net profit taxes
- Admissions tax
- Hotel and motel tax
- Short-term rental tax
- Other locally authorized revenue programs (e.g., JEDDs, casino tax)

The Division of Revenue maintains hundreds of thousands of taxpayer accounts, processes large volumes of transactions each year, and operates the technology systems required for filing, compliance, and customer service.

The Office also works closely with federal agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service to maintain compliance and ensure appropriate information sharing where required.

Payroll Operations

The Auditor's Office administers the City's payroll operations and manages financial transaction systems that support day-to-day government operations.

These systems ensure employees are paid accurately and that departmental financial transactions are properly recorded.

These operational systems support the City's six collective bargaining units and multiple compensation plans covering nearly 10,000 employees and maintain the financial infrastructure necessary for City services to function reliably.

Because payroll systems are integrated with accounting, budgeting, and human resource systems, they form a critical component of the City's financial infrastructure.

Debt Management and Capital Markets

The Auditor's Office manages the City's municipal debt program, including the issuance and administration of bonds that finance major infrastructure investments.

Responsibilities include:

- Structuring and issuing various types of municipal debt
- Managing the City's debt portfolio and related systems
- Administering principal and interest payments to bondholders
- Collaborating with the City's financial advisor, bond counsel, and tax counsel on debt issuance
- Ensuring ongoing compliance with applicable state, federal, and IRS regulations
- Maintaining relationships with credit rating agencies, including robust rating agency communications, presentations, reviews, and analyses

Columbus currently maintains AAA/Aaa/AAA credit ratings from the major rating agencies, making it the largest city in the United States to maintain the highest rating from all three agencies. Maintaining this status requires disciplined financial management and consistent engagement with capital market stakeholders.

The Office also conducts investor relations, representing Columbus to institutional investors that purchase and hold the City's bonds.

SCALE OF FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

The scope of the Auditor's Office reflects the scale of Columbus' financial operations.

The Office manages:

- A multibillion-dollar municipal debt portfolio
- Revenue systems that collect billions of dollars annually
- Hundreds of thousands of taxpayer accounts
- Complex accounting, payroll, and reporting systems across the entire municipal government
- Oversight of a multibillion-dollar investment portfolio

In addition to internal financial management, the Office is responsible for maintaining the City's credibility in national financial markets.

In municipal finance, small changes can have meaningful financial consequences. For example, a basis point—0.01%—may appear small. However, when applied to large infrastructure financings, even a one-basis-point improvement in borrowing costs can represent millions of dollars in savings across the life of a bond issuance.

When these improvements are applied across billions of dollars in infrastructure financing, the savings compound and directly support investments in parks, safety services, roads, neighborhoods, and City personnel.

OPERATIONAL MODERNIZATION

Over the past several years, the Auditor's Office has significantly modernized its financial systems and operations.

One example is the transition toward electronic tax filing. When the current administration began, most tax returns were filed on paper.

Today, approximately 70 percent of returns are filed electronically.

These improvements have dramatically reduced processing times:

- Individual return processing reduced from 14 days to approximately 2 days
- Net profit return processing reduced from 50 days to approximately 12 days

Faster processing means revenue is deposited sooner, administrative errors are reduced, and the City can invest funds more quickly.

The Office is also implementing advanced auditing and analytics to identify non-compliance and reduce the municipal tax gap.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

The Auditor's Office employs highly specialized professionals whose work reflects the technical nature of modern municipal finance. Staff include:

- Certified Public Accountants (CPAs)
- Attorneys
- Public finance specialists (CPFO, debt compliance)
- Financial analysts
- Technology and cybersecurity professionals

Many staff members participate in national professional organizations and committees that shape standards in public finance, accounting, and government financial management.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND CHARTER STRUCTURE

The Columbus City Charter established both the City Auditor and the City Attorney as separately elected offices. This structure reflects the recognition that both financial and legal stewardship require independence and professional leadership (i.e., the City Attorney manages legal risk whereas the City Auditor manages financial risk.)

Both roles oversee complex professional organizations and are essential to the structural integrity and long-term stability of the City.

Please let me know if I can provide anything further.

Best regards,



Megan Kilgore
City Auditor, City of Columbus, Ohio

APPENDIX E

Memo from Chief of Staff to City Council John Tannous on the Roles and Responsibilities of Councilmembers and the Council President

The following six-page report on the Roles and Responsibilities of Councilmembers and the Council President was provided to the Commission in addition to the presentation that Council Chief of Staff John Tannous gave on March 19, 2026.

TO: Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation

FROM: John Tannous, Chief of Staff, Columbus City Council

SUBJECT: Roles and Responsibilities of Columbus City Council

DATE: March 19, 2026

The goal of this document is to explain the roles and responsibilities of the Columbus City Council and provide context for how those responsibilities relate to compensation. As prior Commissions have emphasized, this is not simply a question of salary benchmarking, but about:

- The scope and complexity of the public offices,
- The expectations we have for our elected officials, and
- Ensuring that public service remains accessible, effective, and representative.

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Executive Summary

- Columbus City Council is not a small-town part-time board—it is the governing body of one of the largest and fastest-growing cities in the country. As the City has grown in size, complexity, and prominence, so too has the scope and expectation of its legislative branch.
- Today, Councilmembers serve as legislators, policy leaders, and community representatives, all at once. The most visible aspects of the role (Council meetings and legislative votes) are only a fraction of the work. Behind each vote is the work of policy development, committee leadership, constituent services, communications, and community and stakeholder engagement.
- The work is continuous, multifaceted, and performed under constant public visibility and accountability. Each Councilmember is effectively responsible for a policy portfolio—such as housing, public utilities, or public safety—within a billion-dollar municipal organization.

- Councilmembers are expected to maintain a high level of accessibility and responsiveness, with evenings and weekend commitments not as exceptions, but as a routine part of the role.
- The position of Council President carries additional and distinct responsibilities. The President functions as both a legislative leader and an organizational executive—overseeing staff, setting the legislative agenda, appointing committee leadership, and representing Council publicly. The President is responsible not only for policy direction, but for the process of how those decisions are made.
- Over time, the role of City Council has evolved from what may once have been viewed as part-time and limited in scope into one that is effectively full-time in practice. As the city has grown, the job has grown with it. Previous Citizens' Commissions have tended to feel that compensation has not kept pace with the expanding responsibility of the role.
- Compensation shapes access to public service. If the role requires a full-time level of commitment but does not pay commensurately, it creates barriers. Public service should be accessible to individuals from all economic backgrounds, and pay levels directly influence who can serve. In this sense, compensation is ultimately about access, equity, and representation. Compensation also shapes available talent, and what quality of leadership and representation the City can afford.

What is Columbus City Council?

- **Columbus City Council is the chief policymaking body of the City.**
- It is analogous to Congress at the federal level, the Ohio General Assembly at the state level, or a Board of Directors for a large and complex organization.
- Under Section 3 of the City Charter: "The legislative powers of the city... shall be vested in a council, consisting of nine members elected from districts by the electors of the city."
- **The structure consists of nine members**, elected citywide at-large from districts, who serve **four-year terms**, with staggered elections, and are **led by a Council President**, who is elected by the Councilmembers.
- To understand the role of Council, it is important to understand the scale of the City. **Columbus is the 15th largest city in the United States**, the fastest-growing region in the Midwest, with a population of approximately 940,000 residents (2025). Council oversees a \$1.26 billion operating budget (2026), a \$2.9 billion capital budget (2025), a Triple-A bond rating and ~\$110 million in Rainy Day reserves, over 10,000 city employees, and 221.5 square miles of jurisdiction.

Responsibilities of City Councilmembers

- **The role of a Councilmember is simultaneously legislative, administrative, policy-oriented, and constituent-facing.** Councilmembers enact ordinances and

resolutions to take formal City action; approve and oversee the budget and spending; and establish programs, rules, and laws governing residents, businesses, and city operations.

- Council meets most Monday evenings at 5 PM for our regular meeting. In 2025, we held 64 meetings of the regular Council meeting and of the Zoning meeting (sometimes on the same night, so this works out to at least 35 distinct evenings). Monday evening meeting commitments last 2 hours and 30 minutes on average.
- At those meetings, Councilmembers sponsor, discuss, and vote on legislation annually. In 2025, that encompassed 2,339 ordinances, 50 policy-setting resolutions, 156 ceremonial resolutions, and 177 appointments. Some of these are as simple as authorizing the purchase of a piece of equipment or allowing a property owner to build something. Others are as complex as amendments to the city budget, the creation of new laws, or the development of new programs.
- **A defining feature of Columbus City Council is its committee structure.** Every Councilmember serves as a Chair or Vice Chair to lead at least two committees; some lead more. **Committee Chairs function as leaders of legislation, budgets, and policy for the departments and areas their committees oversee.** Standing Committees include:
 - Rules & Policy
 - Finance & Governance
 - Zoning
 - Workforce, Education, & Labor
 - Economic Development & Small and Minority Business
 - Housing, Homelessness, & Building
 - Public Safety & Criminal Justice
 - Public Service & Transportation
 - Public Utilities & Sustainability
 - Health, Human Services, & Equity
 - Neighborhoods, Recreation, & Parks
- Committees also conduct hearings, which are policy deep-dives. In 2025, Council held 41 hearings averaging one hour and 30 minutes each. So far this year, Council has held 13 hearings, so we seem on track to exceed last year's figure. These hearings are meant to engage community members and stakeholders and inform legislative decisions.

- **Beyond policy work, Councilmembers are expected to maintain a high level of accessibility and responsiveness.** That might mean responding to constituent concerns; attending community meetings and events; working with neighborhood organizations; and engaging with media proactively or as inquiries arise. For example:
 - In 2025, the Council Community Engagement team hosted ~45 events at City Hall or in neighborhoods. In 2026, they anticipate hosting ~65. Not every Councilmember attends each one, but they go to as many as they can.
 - In addition, on their own, most Councilmembers maintain an active scheduling of evening and weekend commitments in the community.
 - **Since the establishment of at-large districts starting in 2024, Councilmembers also spend additional focus and time on the neighborhoods within their District** and tend to receive more constituent feedback and inquiries from those residents. In one sense, they are each accountable to all ~940,000 residents, and then further accountable to ~100,000 of them in particular.
 - Columbus City Council and/or individual Councilmembers appear in hundreds of media stories a year.
- **Each Councilmember has two staff directly working for them: a Legislative Aide and a Legislative Analyst (formerly called Legislative Assistant).**
- City Council also appoints and oversees the office of the City Treasurer.

Responsibilities of the Council President

- Beyond all the roles of Councilmembers above, the Council President is elected by their colleagues for a two-year term to serve as the organizational leader of City Council.
- **While all Councilmembers share legislative authority, the President has distinct responsibilities that make the role substantially different in scope and greater in time commitment.**
- The President oversees the entire City Council operation, which consists of 48 full-time staff, across the offices of the City Clerk; Legislative Research Office; Communications; Community Engagement; Member Offices, and HR. Like any executive leader, the Council President oversees priorities, processes, strategy, etc. for the Council staff, but also exercises broad oversight for all City government and staff.
- The Council President leads every Monday meeting.
- The Council President establishes Council's legislative agenda:

- At a high level, the Council President appoints Councilmembers to their Committee leadership roles and directs the timing and prioritization of policy initiatives; shapes the policy direction of the city; drives Council-wide priorities; coordinates and mediates across committees, the Mayor's Administration, the City Auditor, City Attorney, and other intergovernmental and regional parties.
- Week to week, that means overseeing what ordinances and resolutions go forward, when, and in what committees, and facilitating deliberation, decision-making, and consensus across Councilmembers and staff.
- Just like every other Councilmember, the Council President responds to constituent requests, communicates with news media, and engages the community, sometimes with added visibility and workload.
- The Council President often acts as the primary spokesperson for the City Council – and to frequently, the City, to a degree second only to the Mayor.

Historic Debates about Part-time Status

- **Although not formally designated as full-time or part-time, the roles of the Council President and the Councilmembers extend well beyond standard business hours to include evenings, weekends, and emergencies.**
- The 2022 Commission concluded that, in practice, **the expectations of the role align much more closely with a full-time professional position than historic notions of a part-time ceremonial one.** However, they decided that was both a legal consideration for the Charter as well as a compensation consideration for this committee.
- **Going forward, Columbus will continue to grow and place more demands on Councilmembers and the body as a whole.** Issues like housing, infrastructure public safety, and economic development will only get more complex, while the public's expectation for transparency, responsiveness, and access will only enhance. Particularly under the new district-based system, residents expect direct and consistent engagement from their Councilmember.
- **It is desirable to reduce the need for Councilmembers to pursue outside employment, which can distract from public office and pose real or perceived conflicts of interest.** For example, Councilmembers might have work travel that causes them to miss meetings, or they might abstain from votes or policy conversations that intersect with the subject matter of their day jobs.
 - As of 2026, I believe that 4 Councilmembers maintain outside employment with standard hours, and another 3 Councilmembers have more flexible outside employment where hours and workload can vary.
 - Council President Hardin has not held outside employment since his election to that role, despite there not being a restriction on that in the City Charter. The approach of his predecessors varied.

- A Councilmember who does not need outside employment can arguably display greater effectiveness, with more time to spend on the job, and more independence, with fewer other priorities.

Historic Debates about Compensation

- Council isn't just a *job*. **Elected office is an aspirational community leadership role that we should allow every resident to equitably seek and hold. That means making sure people from all walks of life, age, and background can afford to be in public service:** not just retirees, people with wealthy spouses, people without caregiving responsibilities, people who had a lucrative career before public service, etc.
- **Moreover, we should want elected office to attract talented, skilled, energetic people who could likely earn much more in other lines of work.** Those in elected office have a tremendous impact on the direction of the community where nearly 1 M residents live. To put it bluntly, if “you get what you pay for,” as the saying goes, then we should want quality leadership. Moreover, many elected leaders in Central Ohio – both in the City and outside the City – previously served as Councilmembers.
- **It has been the consistent conclusion of past commissions that there is a gap between Council compensation and responsibilities.** Most recently, in 2022, the Committee recommended a 40% increase for the Council President and a 13% increase for Councilmembers. (Council only partially accepted the recommendation, accepting a 13% raise for both the Council President and Councilmembers). Moreover, their salaries are much lower than that of other city officials. For context, in 2026, the salaries are as follows:
 - Council President: \$116,032
 - Councilmembers: \$96,453
 - For comparative context: the Mayor earns ~\$273,000, the City Attorney and Auditor earn \$248,000, and municipal court judges earn \$161,000

APPENDIX F

Report from Dr. Bill LaFayette, Regionomics, on the Consumer Price Index

The following fifteen-page report on the Consumer Price Index was proffered to the Commission in addition to the presentation that Dr. LaFayette provided on March 26, 2026.

The Consumer Price Index

Bill LaFayette, Ph.D.
Owner, Regionomics® LLC

March 23, 2026



4926 Crestbrook Drive, Lockbourne, OH 43137
www.regionomicsllc.com

The Consumer Price Index
 Columbus City Council Compensation Review Commission
 Bill LaFayette, Ph.D., owner, Regionomics® LLC
 April 30, 2015
 Revised March 23, 2026

Columbus City Ordinances tie officials' compensation to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This is a summary of the CPI, what it measures, how it is calculated, and which CPI should be used to benchmark compensation.

Purpose and Calculation of the CPI

The CPI is one of several broad ways to measure inflation. Inflation is formally defined as a process of continuously rising prices – in other words, continuously declining value of money. In inflation, a dollar buys less than it did earlier. The point of cost-of-living pay increases is to give workers the same purchasing power as they had before inflation hit. The CPI is designed to measure inflation and how much the dollar's purchasing power has changed between two specific periods.

The CPI is constructed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) by measuring the price of a pre-defined basket of goods and services at a particular time and place. It is based on the prices of around 100,000 goods and services in urban areas nationwide. The prices of the items are weighted to approximate the purchasing patterns of a typical household. BLS surveys consumers' purchases to figure out what the correct weights should be. The result is the Consumer Expenditure Survey, which is useful in its own right.¹

A price index shows the path of price changes over time. The price level at a specific date (called the base date) is set to a particular value. This is usually 100 and it is 100 in the CPI, but it does not have to be. The date or period chosen as the base date is also arbitrary; it is currently a 1982-1984 average. The index value in each following month is based on the change in the value of the basket relative to the base month or period. Say, for example, the price of the basket at the base date is \$1,000. The price index is 100.0 (by definition). If the price of the basket the following month is \$1,002, the index is calculated as the current month's price divided by the base date price times the initial value of the index:

$$1,002 / 1,000 \times 100 = 100.2.$$

One year later, say the price of the basket has increased to \$1,050. The index is

$$1,050 / 1,000 \times 100 = 105.0.$$

In other words, you need \$1,050 to buy the same things that \$1,000 got you the year before.

The inflation rate is easy to calculate from the CPI. Inflation is typically measured from one year to the next or from one month to the next. (Monthly inflation rates are sometimes converted to annualized rates.) The inflation rate is calculated as the percentage change in the price index between the first and second date. If the index value at the first date is I_1 and the index value at the second date is I_2 , this is:

¹ See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Consumer price index. *Handbook of Methods*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/cpi/home.htm>

$$\frac{I_2 - I_1}{I_1} = \frac{I_2}{I_1} - 1.$$

In the example above, the change in the price index is $105.0/100.0 - 1 = 5.0\%$, which is the inflation rate. You can leave workers in the same position as they were last year by increasing their wages by 5%.

Actual values of the CPI over the last three Februarys are as follows:

- February 2024: 310.326
- February 2025: 319.082
- February 2026: 326.785

The resulting inflation rates are as follows:

- February 2024-February 2025: $319.082 / 310.326 - 1 = 2.8\%$
- February 2025-February 2026: $326.785 / 319.082 - 1 = 2.4\%$

Average inflation for a year is calculated the same way, using the average CPI for each year rather than that for a particular month.

Types of CPIs

There are 10,614 different CPIs. They fall into several major categories. The primary category is the type of consumer to which the index refers. These are Consumer Price Indices for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), which is the most commonly used category, and Consumer Price Indices for Urban Wage and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). The difference between these two categories is the weighting of the items in the basket. CPI-W is designed to reflect the purchasing pattern of a lower-income household.

A second dimension is according to the breadth of the basket. Some indices are based on all items, while others track various subsets of the basket. These include indices tracking specific categories of groups of goods and services (e.g., food, energy, services, and healthcare) and dozens of very specific items. Other categories exclude groups of items. The most common of these is All Items Less Food and Energy. This is called the “core CPI.” Prices of food and energy are especially volatile, so excluding those items removes some of the noise and allows policymakers and analysts to see the underlying path of inflation more clearly.

Indices can be measured as their calculated value or on a seasonally adjusted basis. Seasonal adjustment is a statistical technique that removes the impact of a recurring change in prices or purchasing patterns in specific months. Examples are the usual price increase in gasoline in late spring as refiners switch from winter blend to summer blend and the higher price for plane tickets around spring break or the holidays. Gasoline or airline ticket price increases during these periods mean less than they do at other times of the year. Because seasonal adjustment is a purely mathematical process, there is no need to figure out up front what forces are causing recurring pricing impacts. Sometimes you can look at the resulting seasonal adjustment factors and guess at the underlying forces, but not even that is necessary. If you are comparing different months, you *must* use seasonally adjusted values. Measuring inflation year-over-year, though, should be done

with the unadjusted numbers. Using the seasonally adjusted estimates would incorporate the shifting seasonal adjustment factors of different years.

Price indices also vary according to their geographical coverage. The broadest indices are U.S. city average. Other indices refer to broad regions of the country – Northeast, Midwest, South, and West – and to 25 metro areas (not including Columbus). A series of indices also track price changes by the size of the metro area. These are in four size classes. Size Class A is a population of 1.5 million or more; Size Class D is a population of less than 50,000. Regions are intersected with region size (e.g., Midwest Metros, Size Class A).

Finally, there is a series of 28 national-level “chained” CPIs that are designed to address a problem with the traditional CPI, discussed in the next section.

Problems with the CPI

As discussed above, the market basket used to calculate the CPI is based on the purchase patterns of a typical consumer. People in different places, different ages, different household types, and different income levels spend very differently. The CPI for wage-earners and clerical workers takes a stab at addressing this problem, but that is the only available attempt.

One problem arises from changes in quality of the underlying goods. The CPI basket includes a television, but at some point, that television changed from black and white to color, and at some point, it changed from a one with a picture tube to a high-definition flat screen and later to a smart television. The pace of change in technology-dependent goods, such as computers, is even faster. Each change may have resulted in a price increase, but households probably wouldn't see it that way because the new good delivers more satisfaction than the old. People have experimented with ways to address this problem. These fixes have been difficult to implement, though, so none ever has been. This means that you must be careful when looking at price changes over long periods, even four years. There is no practical way to fix the problem. You just must be aware of it.

A second problem is that purchasing patterns shift over time. Tastes change, new goods appear, and expenditure shares change. This means that the weights on the prices used to calculate the CPI become less relevant over time. The results of the Consumer Expenditure Survey are used to recalibrate the basket every two years.

Substitutions also happen much more dynamically as the price of goods and services shift relative to one another. If the price of margarine goes up or the price of butter comes down, people switch from margarine to butter. If the price of movie tickets goes up, fewer people go to movies and more people stream movies at home or go bowling. The fact that the price of margarine and movie tickets went up relative to substitute goods and services can cause people to shift their purchasing patterns. The higher prices of the items that are now less commonly purchased become less relevant. This means that the CPI with a fixed basket overstates the actual financial impact of changing prices on households.

The chained CPI is a response to the second and third of these three problems. The chained CPI is calculated like the traditional CPI except the weights on the goods and services change every month based on the results of the monthly Consumer Expenditure Survey. Because the chained

CPI includes the impact of households' attempts to minimize the impact of rising prices, you expect the chained CPI inflation rate to be lower than the traditional CPI inflation rate, and it usually (but not always) is. For example, the chained rate from February 2025 to February 2026 is 2.2% rather than the standard CPI-U's 2.4%.

The chained CPI sounds like the ideal solution to the problems of shifting purchasing patterns and substitution. The 2010 Simpson-Bowles Commission on Deficit Reduction recommended the use of the chained CPI in setting Social Security benefits in December 2010 – although that was more because the chained CPI's measured inflation rate is usually lower than because it is a theoretically better measure. Another point is that the chained CPI is not seasonally adjusted. As discussed above, statistics that are not seasonally adjusted cannot be used to compare any other than the same month from one year to the next.

There is a potentially serious practical problem with using the chained CPI to set compensation. The chained CPI values come out with all the others – about three weeks after the end of the month to which they refer. But because the Consumer Expenditure Survey only comes out with a three-quarter lag, the index values for the past year or so are preliminary and are revised a couple times before they are final. On the other hand, the unadjusted CPI values are final on their first release – unlike most other BLS statistics.² If a chained CPI is used to set compensation, it will be necessary to specify a formal process to adjust compensation after the fact – possibly downward, depending on how the initial estimates are revised.

Which CPI Should Be Used to Benchmark Compensation?

As noted earlier, there are several different measures of price changes, but the CPI probably is the best for this purpose. The problem arises in benchmarking pay increases to no more than a four-year average of inflation. This is unwise because it makes the pay escalation unresponsive to changes in inflation. It is what economists call “sticky.” If recent inflation increases, the wage adjustments increase much more slowly, and the officials lose purchasing power. If inflation declines, the average overstates current inflation.³

Which of the 10,614 CPI values should be used? It is better to use an all-items index than one excluding food and energy (the core CPI). Core inflation is more stable, which is why it is preferred by the Federal Reserve and other analysts. In real life, though, officials do have to buy food and energy, so is unfair not to reflect this. The chained CPI is at least theoretically better, but you must be comfortable with ambiguity and figure out how you are going to reflect restatement of the index and hence inflation rate. The rate for the past year (one-quarter of the wage adjustment) is likely to change. You need to decide how to handle this. Do you retroactively adjust people's pay for the incorrect initial rate, or do you leave it alone? In any case, using the chained CPI requires formally setting a date on which the CPI values are retrieved to avoid any conflict later on. This is not an important consideration with the traditional CPI because those values do not change after they are

² Seasonally adjusted estimates can be revised for up to five years after they are first issued because of incorporation of later data in lieu of earlier data in the calculation.

³ However, the ordinance states that the four-year average inflation rate is the *maximum* adjustment. If inflation is declining and the four-year average is significantly higher than the rate for the most recent year, there would no problem with recommending the most recent rate as the cost-of-living adjustment.

issued. An annual-average inflation rate requires the use of the non-seasonally adjusted CPI because annual averages are not defined for seasonally adjusted series.

As mentioned earlier, there is no CPI for Columbus, but there are for Cincinnati and Cleveland. These should not be used for Columbus, though, because the demographics, economies, and purchasing patterns in Cincinnati and Cleveland are different from those in Columbus. Also, individual city and regional indices are more volatile than national indices. For that reason, BLS recommends that the national index be used for cost-of-living adjustments. (See Attachment A.)

The annual average values of this CPI to obtain the inflation rates for the last four years yields the following:

Month	CPI-U, U.S. city average, not seasonally adjusted	Inflation
Feb. 2022	283.716	
Feb. 2023	300.840	6.04%
Feb. 2024	310.326	3.15%
Feb. 2025	319.082	2.82%
Feb. 2026	326.785	2.41%

It might seem that you would simply calculate an average of the four percentages – an arithmetic average. However, this gives an incorrect answer because a 2% decrease is not the same as a 2% increase. The correct approach is to calculate a geometric average⁴:

$$\sqrt[4]{(1 + r_1)(1 + r_2)(1 + r_3)(1 + r_4)} - 1 = \text{average rate.}$$

In other words, you add one to each of the four rates, multiply them, take the fourth root of the product, and subtract one from the result. In this case:

$$\sqrt[4]{(1.0604)(1.0315)(1.0282)(1.0241)} - 1 = 0.03426 = 3.43\%.$$

This is set up in Excel as follows. (Raising the product to the one-quarter power is the same as taking its fourth root.)

$$(1.0604*1.0315*1.0282*1.0241)^{0.25} - 1.$$

The 3.43% four-year average is much more than the most recent 2.41% rate. Inflation has slowed significantly. Under the ordinance, the 3.43% is a ceiling, so it would be permissible to use the most recent 2.41% rate.

The question, though, is whether this would fairly compensate officials for the cost-of-living increases that they will face during the coming four years. Each quarter the Philadelphia Federal Reserve surveys forecasters regarding their predictions for a variety of economic variables,

⁴ Section 15.4 of the compensation ordinance simply states that the annual cost-of-living adjustment cannot exceed the average inflation rate over the last four years. It does not specify an arithmetic or geometric average. Using the arithmetic average would be incorrect.

including headline CPI inflation.⁵ The most recent survey, released March 6, attracted 37 forecasts. This presumably incorporated the effects of the Israeli-Iranian war that began in June 2025 as well as the U.S. involvement that began February 28. Indeed, the median forecast is for an inflation rate of 2.7% from the fourth quarter of 2025 to the fourth quarter of 2026. However, the Congressional Budget Office's long-term CPI forecast is for decreasing inflation: 2.8% in 2026, 2.4% in 2027, and 2.3% in 2028 and 2029.⁶ The result is an average 2.36% inflation rate expected over the next four years, which suggests that the February 2025-February 2026 rate would be appropriate over the total period. However, officials would lose purchasing power this year, break even in 2027, and make up the loss in the final two years.

The two following attachments are first, BLS guidance for using the CPI for wage escalation, and second, a series of screenshots providing a step-by-step guide for downloading CPI values from the BLS website. Note that the BLS narrative includes a method for calculating inflation that is mathematically equivalent to the method outlined above, but that seems less straightforward.

⁵ See Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia (2026). Survey of professional forecasters. <https://www.philadelphiafed.org/surveys-and-data/real-time-data-research/survey-of-professional-forecasters>.

⁶ See Congressional Budget Office. (2026). Key budget and economic data. <https://www.cbo.gov/data/budget-economic-data>. Scroll down to Economic Projections and click on the most recent date. This downloads a spreadsheet.

Attachment A

How to Use the Consumer Price Index for Escalation

Source: <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/factsheets/escalation.htm>. Retrieved March 23, 2026.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the average change in the prices paid for a market basket of goods and services. These items are purchased for consumption by the two groups covered by the index: All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) and Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers, (CPI-W).

Escalation agreements often use the CPI—the most widely used measure of price change—to adjust payments for changes in prices. The most frequently used escalation applications are in private sector collective bargaining agreements, rental contracts, insurance policies with automatic inflation protection, and alimony and child support payments.

The following are general guidelines to consider when developing an escalation agreement using the CPI:

Define the base payment

Define clearly the base payment (rent, wage rate, alimony, child support, or other value) that is subject to escalation.

Identify which CPI series will be used

Identify precisely which CPI index series will be used to escalate the base payment. This should include the population coverage (CPI-U or CPI-W), area coverage (U.S. City Average, West Region, Chicago, etc.), series title (all items, rent of primary residence, etc.), and index base period (1982-84=100).

Specify reference period

Specify a reference period from which changes in the CPI will be measured. This is usually a single month (the CPI does not correspond to a specific day or week of the month), or an annual average. There is about a two-week lag from the reference month to the date on which the index is released (that is, the CPI for May is released in mid-June). The CPIs for most metropolitan areas are not published as frequently as are the data for the U.S. City Average and the four regions. Indexes for the U.S. City Average, the four regions, nine divisions, two city-size classes, eight region-by-size classes, and three major metropolitan areas (Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York) are published monthly. Indexes for the remaining 20 published metropolitan areas are available only on a bimonthly basis. Contact BLS for information on the frequency of publication for the 23 metropolitan areas.

State frequency of adjustment

Adjustments are usually made at fixed intervals, such as quarterly, semiannually, or, most often, annually.

Determine adjustment formula

Determine the formula for the adjustment calculation. Usually the change in payments is directly proportional to the percent change in the CPI index between two specified periods. Consider

whether to make an allowance for a “cap” that places an upper limit on the increase in wages, rents, etc., or a “floor” that promises a minimum increase regardless of the percent change (up or down) in the CPI.

Provide for revisions

Provide a built-in method for handling situations that may arise because of major CPI revisions or changes in the CPI index base period. The Bureau always provides timely notification of upcoming revisions or changes in the index base.

The CPI and escalation: Some points to consider

The CPI is calculated for two population groups: All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) and Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). The CPI-U represents over 90 percent of the total U.S. population and is based on the expenditures of all families living in urban areas. The CPI-W is a subset of the CPI-U and is based on the expenditures of families living in urban areas who meet additional requirements related to employment: more than one-half of the family’s income is earned from clerical or hourly-wage occupations. The CPI-W represents approximately 30 percent of the total U.S. population.

There can be small differences in movement of the two indexes over short periods of time because differences in the spending habits of the two population groups result in slightly different weighting. The long-term movements in the indexes are similar. CPI-U and CPI-W indexes are calculated using measurement of price changes of goods and services with the same specifications and from the same retail outlets. The CPI-W is used for escalation primarily in blue-collar cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs). Because the CPI-U population coverage is more comprehensive, it is used in most other escalation agreements.

The 23 metropolitan areas for which BLS publishes separate index series are by-products of the U.S. City Average index. Metropolitan area indexes have a relatively small sample size and, therefore, are subject to substantially larger sampling errors. Metropolitan area and other subcomponents of the national indexes (regions, size-classes) often exhibit greater volatility than the national index. BLS recommends that users adopt the U.S. City Average CPI for use in escalator clauses.

The U.S. City Average CPIs are published on a seasonally adjusted basis as well as on an unadjusted basis. The purpose of seasonal adjustment is to remove the estimated effect of price changes that normally occur at the same time and in about the same magnitude every year (e.g., price movements due to the change in weather patterns, holidays, model change-overs, end-of-season sales, etc.). The primary use of seasonally adjusted data is for current economic analysis. In addition, the factors that are used to seasonally adjust the data are updated annually and seasonally adjusted data are subject to revision for up to 5 years after their original release. For these reasons, the use of seasonally adjusted data in escalation agreements is inappropriate.

Escalation agreements using the CPI usually involve changing the base payment by the percent change in the level of the CPI between the reference period and a subsequent period. This is calculated by first determining the index point change between the two periods and then determining the percent change. The following example illustrates the computation of a percent change:

CPI for current period	232.945
Less CPI for previous period	229.815
Equals index point change	3.130
Divided by previous period CPI	229.815
Equals	0.0136
Result multiplied by 100	0.0136 x 100
Equals percent change	1.4%

The Bureau of Labor Statistics neither encourages nor discourages the use of price adjustment measures in contractual agreements. Also, while BLS can provide technical and statistical assistance to parties developing escalation agreements, we can neither develop specific wording for contracts nor mediate legal or interpretive disputes which might arise between the parties to the agreement.

Additional information may be obtained from the Consumer Price Index Information Office at cpi_info@bls.gov or 202-691-7000. Information on the CPI's overall methodology can be found in [the BLS Handbook of Methods](#).

Last Modified Date: June 8, 2023

Attachment B Retrieving CPI Values from the BLS Website

These instructions will retrieve annual average values for the CPI-U, U.S. City Average, All Items. Open the Bureau of Labor Statistics website, www.bls.gov and click “Data Tools” in the blue menu bar at the top. A drop-down menu will appear, as shown. Click “Data Retrieval Tools” in the upper left-hand corner of the drop-down (red arrow).

The screenshot shows the Bureau of Labor Statistics website in a Firefox browser. The main navigation bar is blue and contains the following items: HOME, SUBJECTS, DATA TOOLS, PUBLICATIONS, ECONOMIC RELEASES, CLASSROOM, and BETA. The 'DATA TOOLS' menu is open, displaying three columns of options:

- Data Retrieval Tools >>** (indicated by a red arrow):
 - BLS Popular Series
 - Series Report
 - Top Picks, One Screen, Multi-Screen, and Maps
 - Data Finder
 - Public Data API
- Charts and Applications >>**
 - Charts for Economic News Releases
 - CPI Inflation Calculator
 - Injury and Illness Calculator
 - Pay Measure Comparison
 - Demographic Data Sources
 - COVID-19 Economic Trends
 - Industry Productivity Viewer
 - Employment and Wages Data Viewer
 - Industry Finder from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
- Customized Tables >>**
 - U.S. Economy at a Glance
 - Regions, States & Areas at a Glance
 - Industry at a Glance
 - Text Files
 - News Release Tables

Below the dropdown menu, there are sections for 'All Urban Consumers (Current Series)' and 'Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (Current Series)', both showing '(Consumer Price Index - CPI)'. To the right of these sections are icons for 'TOP PICKS', 'DATA FINDER', 'ONE SCREEN', 'MULTI SCREEN', 'TABLES', and 'TEXT FILES'. A vertical red button on the right side of the page says 'Help improve this site'.

This brings up a page of data retrieval options. Click “One screen” in the second row to the left.

The screenshot shows the Firefox browser window displaying the BLS Data Retrieval Tools page. The browser's address bar shows the URL www.bls.gov/data/tools.htm. The page header includes the BLS logo and navigation links for HOME, SUBJECTS, DATA TOOLS, PUBLICATIONS, ECONOMIC RELEASES, CLASSROOM, and BETA. A search bar is also present.

The main content area is titled "Data Retrieval Tools" and contains a grid of six options:

- BLS Popular Series**: Allows users to quickly retrieve most commonly requested BLS timeseries data.
- Series Report**: Provides experienced users of BLS data with one of the quickest form of access to BLS time series data on our website. As input, the Series Report application requires a Series ID and date range.
- Top Picks**: Allows users to quickly retrieve BLS time series data from lists of those most commonly requested.
- One screen**: This application requires a JavaScript-enabled browser. Choose the data you want from BLS databases on a simple, one-screen form. (A red arrow points to this option.)
- Multi-screen**: A form-based query application which allows you to obtain BLS time series data based on choices you make.
- Maps**: An interactive application that allows users to obtain geographic economic data through maps, charts, and tables.

A vertical sidebar on the right side of the page contains a "Help Improve this site" button.

A page titled “Databases, Tables & Calculators by Subject” comes up, offering access to dozens of different BLS databases. The first entry on this page under Inflation & Prices is “All Urban Consumers (Current Series).” Click the green “One-Screen Data Search” button.

The screenshot shows the BLS website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, SUBJECTS, DATA TOOLS, PUBLICATIONS, ECONOMIC RELEASES, CLASSROOM, and BETA. Below this, a section titled "On This Page:" lists various categories such as Inflation & Prices, Employment, and Spending & Time Use. A red arrow points to the "One-Screen Data Search" button in the "Inflation & Prices" section. Below this, a table lists databases, including "All Urban Consumers (Current Series)" and "Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (Current Series)".

Database Name	Special Notice	Top Picks	Data Finder	One-Screen	Multi-Screen	Tables	Text Files
Prices - Consumer							
All Urban Consumers (Current Series) (Consumer Price Index - CPI)							
Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (Current Series) (Consumer Price Index - CPI)							

This opens a small menu screen. (You may need to enable popups.) Leave the radio button at the top, “Select items within an area” alone. Select “U.S. city average” as your area, then “All items,” then click on the “Seasonally Adjusted” checkbox to unselect it. Once you have made all three selections, the dark gray “Add to selection” button turns black. Click that button, then click “Get Data.”

Firefox File Edit View History Bookmarks Profiles Tools Window Help

One-Screen Data Search

data.bls.gov/PDQWeb/cu

Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U)

Help

Select how you want to view the data

View items within an area View areas within an item

1 Select an Area Search

- U.S. city average
- Size Class A
- Size Class B/C
- Size Class D
- Northeast
- New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA
- Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD
- Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH
- Pittsburgh, PA
- New England

2 Select one or more Items Search

- All items
- All items - old base
- Food and beverages
- Food
- Food at home
- Cereals and bakery products
- Cereals and cereal products
- Flour and prepared flour mixes
- Breakfast cereal
- Rice, pasta, cornmeal

3 Select Seasonal Adjustment

Seasonally Adjusted

Not Seasonally Adjusted

Add to selection Your selection : (1 series selected) NOTE: Select a maximum of 200 series.

U.S. city average All items Not Seasonally Adjusted : CUUR0000SA0, CUUS0000SA0

Get Data

Clear selection

Help Improve this site

By default, you get 10 years of data, not including annual averages. You need to click the “include annual averages” checkbox under the “Change Output Options” heading at the top of the page to get any annual averages that you need. (Using annual average is not necessarily recommended; see text.) While you are at it, you might also select 2022 in the first pull-down to eliminate all the years that you do not need. Click “Go.” You will end up with the second display below.

Change Output Options: From: 2016 To: 2026 include graphs include annual averages [More Formatting Options](#)

Data extracted on: March 23, 2026 (3:40:20 PM)

Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U)

Series id: CUUR0000SA0, CUUS0000SA0
 Not Seasonally Adjusted
 Series Title: All items in U.S. city average, all urban consumers, not seasonally adjusted
 Area: U.S. city average
 Item: All items
 Base Period: 1982-84=100

Download: [xlsx](#)

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	HALF1	HALF2
2016	236.916	237.111	238.132	239.261	240.229	241.018	240.628	240.849	241.428	241.729	241.353	241.432	238.778	241.237
2017	242.839	243.603	243.801	244.524	244.733	244.955	244.786	245.519	246.819	246.663	246.669	246.524	244.076	246.163
2018	247.867	248.991	249.554	250.546	251.588	251.989	252.006	252.146	252.439	252.885	252.038	251.233	250.089	252.125
2019	251.712	252.776	254.202	255.548	256.092	256.143	256.571	256.558	256.759	257.346	257.208	256.974	254.412	256.903
2020	257.971	258.678	258.115	256.389	256.394	257.797	259.101	259.918	260.280	260.388	260.229	260.474	257.557	260.065
2021	261.582	263.014	264.877	267.054	269.195	271.696	273.003	273.567	274.310	276.589	277.948	278.802	266.236	275.703
2022	281.148	283.716	287.504	289.109	292.296	296.311	296.276	296.171	296.808	298.012	297.711	296.797	288.347	296.963
2023	299.170	300.840	301.836	303.363	304.127	305.109	305.691	307.026	307.789	307.671	307.051	306.746	302.408	306.996
2024	308.417	310.326	312.332	313.548	314.069	314.175	314.540	314.796	315.301	315.664	315.493	315.605	312.145	315.233
2025	317.671	319.082	319.799	320.795	321.465	322.561	323.048	323.976	324.800	-[X]	324.122	324.054	320.229	324.000
2026	325.252	326.785												

X: Data unavailable due to the 2025 lapse in appropriations

Change Output Options: From: 2022 To: 2026 include graphs include annual averages [More Formatting Options](#)

Data extracted on: March 23, 2026 (3:50:39 PM)

Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U)

Series id: CUUR0000SA0, CUUS0000SA0
 Not Seasonally Adjusted
 Series Title: All items in U.S. city average, all urban consumers, not seasonally adjusted
 Area: U.S. city average
 Item: All items
 Base Period: 1982-84=100

Download: [xlsx](#)

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual	HALF1	HALF2
2022	281.148	283.716	287.504	289.109	292.296	296.311	296.276	296.171	296.808	298.012	297.711	296.797	292.655	288.347	296.963
2023	299.170	300.840	301.836	303.363	304.127	305.109	305.691	307.026	307.789	307.671	307.051	306.746	304.702	302.408	306.996
2024	308.417	310.326	312.332	313.548	314.069	314.175	314.540	314.796	315.301	315.664	315.493	315.605	313.689	312.145	315.233
2025	317.671	319.082	319.799	320.795	321.465	322.561	323.048	323.976	324.800	-[X]	324.122	324.054	321.943	320.229	324.000
2026	325.252	326.785													

X: Data unavailable due to the 2025 lapse in appropriations