



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

November 15, 2021

Dear President Hardin and Members of Council:

Today, in accordance with Section 26 of the Charter of the City of Columbus, I am pleased to present the 2022 Operating Budget, a balanced proposal that reflects the priorities of my administration and the residents of Columbus in what has continued to be a time of challenges and growth.

For the first time in the city's history, we have \$1 billion in operating funds. It is through the hard work of the Department of Finance and Management and all city departments that we are in a sound financial position, without having to contemplate a single layoff or cut in services. However, the impact of COVID-19 and remote work have erased two years of economic growth. The 2022 budget uses much of the Basic City Services Fund to continue to finance my commitment to closing existing gaps exposed by COVID-19, advancing equity and making positive gains on our community's highest priorities, including: safety, policing reform, affordable housing and neighborhoods.

In a year that has seen continuing gun violence and a record number of homicides, our largest investment is in public safety. Both police and fire have recorded greater than anticipated separations of officers and firefighters. The 2022 budget funds three classes bringing in a total of 170 new police officers and 125 new firefighters which also allows us to continue to expand diversity in both divisions so our safety forces reflect the community they serve. In addition, new police recruits will have extensive training in community policing, moving us closer to the goal

of a division that practices 21st century community policing.



While funding Public Safety remains a significant portion of the city's budget, the 2022 budget also reflects increased investment in Public Health, Recreation and Parks, and Neighborhoods to reduce the burden on police and to formulate a more holistic approach to public safety. The revamped Comprehensive Neighborhood Safety Strategy encompasses more than \$11 million in funds for efforts including the Alternative Response program that embeds social workers and mental health professionals with 9-1-1 operators, so residents receive the right response at the right time, freeing police officers to prevent violent crime. Funding will be used to expand the program's hours and personnel with additional social workers, paramedics and dispatchers from support services.

The city will continue to invest in the Department of Neighborhoods and neighborhood crisis abatement that addresses physical barriers to crime. Recreation and Parks will expand the hours and days of operations at its community centers, providing safe spaces and programming for residents across generations. Columbus Public Health will continue its trauma outreach through the CARE (Community Action Resilience Empowerment) Coalition and its VOICE (Violence, Outreach, Intervention and Community Engagement) program to create positive change in the lives of victims of violent crime and to stop the cycle of violence.



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The 2022 budget infuses money into the Hilltop Early Childhood Center which is scheduled to open in the fall with 240 students and wraparound services. The city will also continue to invest in our youngest residents, maintaining our commitment to CelebrateOne and our Future Ready initiative. We will continue our work to ensure all babies born in Columbus and Franklin County – regardless of race, ZIP code or family income – are able to celebrate their first birthday. And, we will continue to earmark funds for Early Start Columbus to ensure all children are able to enter kindergarten with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive.

The Department of Development will add additional staff to support our affordable housing efforts with a goal of leveraging the city's capital investments to expand the number of units available. As small businesses continue to struggle, Development will expand its capacity to help these businesses increase their resiliency. The needs of the human services sector remain greatly challenged in these uncertain times, and the city will pair \$5 million with American Rescue Plan dollars to make the most impact for critical community needs such as food security, emergency shelter and eviction prevention.

Refuse removal became a greater need during the pandemic as more people worked from home. To keep our city free of trash as well as to fight illegal dumping, Public Service is investing \$16 million in large scale refuse trucks and equipment. Meanwhile, the Department of Neighborhoods will lead our efforts to invest in the communities that make Columbus special and to implement strategies developed by Columbus residents and outlined in the One Linden and Envision Hilltop plans that focus on education, health, housing, safety and small business development.

The last two years have shown us the importance of the work of Columbus Public Health (CPH). CPH will continue to lead COVID-19 response through vaccine efforts, testing and education on federal and local orders to help

residents finally be released from the grip of this deadly virus.

Action to prevent the ramifications of climate change is critical, and the city is responding with a Climate Action Plan that will move the city toward being carbon neutral by 2050. It emphasizes the need to build a Columbus that is resilient to global climate change while mitigating future risks. The threat is clear. The stakes are high. And our obligation to our children, and their future, compels us to act now through these investments.

Equity remains an integral part of every decision we make. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) continues to aggressively implement recommendations contained in the 2019 Disparity Study, including a Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise program. The city has also been fully engaged in creating a financial empowerment center to provide free, professional one-on-one financial counseling as a public service to residents, particularly those in need as they deal with the financial impacts of COVID-19.

Balancing our operating budget for 2022 meant making tough choices, however we are planning a \$1 million deposit into the Rainy Day Fund. This deposit will allow us to achieve the goal of a \$90 million Rainy Day Fund balance nearly two years ahead of schedule. Our Rainy Day Fund remains robust and intact, as well as a testament to sound investing and financial discipline.

On the following pages, you will find additional details of my proposed 2022 Operating Budget. It is a balanced budget that addresses the needs of our community equitably while maintaining fiscal responsibility and securing the financial future of Columbus.