



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

November 14, 2014

Dear President Ginther and Members of Council:

Today, in accordance with Section 26 of the Charter of the City of Columbus, I present my 15<sup>th</sup> balanced budget, a proposal that reflects our commitment to the safety of our residents and the delivery of basic neighborhood services. This is a continuation budget that represents the fulfillment of our pledge to preserve our resources and keep our city financially sound in times of increasing fiscal challenges.

The 2015 budget allocates nearly \$546.3 million to support the Department of Public Safety. Classes are funded in the Divisions of Police and Fire to maintain the number of uniformed officers and firefighters in our neighborhoods protecting our residents. Funding is provided for the community summer initiative to target policing in areas and months where crime is most prevalent. We will continue funding for the Applications for Pride, Purpose, and Success program in order to build on its past success. We are proposing resources to continue civilianization within our safety forces to ensure that our police officers and firefighters are doing

what they do best, protecting the residents of Columbus. This ongoing effort effectively will allow us to be more efficient with our safety investments in years to come.



Last year, we made an unprecedented direct investment in the education of our kids. The 2015 budget continues that effort and allocates \$6.1 million for the Department of Education. We will use these city funds to leverage additional dollars from federal, state, and private sector sources to increase access to quality early childhood education, expand career readiness, and improve our schools.

Our job creation efforts are an essential part of an overall strategy to ensure financial stability for the city. These efforts continue in 2015. Our partnerships with Experience Columbus, the Greater Columbus Arts Council, Columbus 2020, COWIC, and TechColumbus will continue to receive support from the city in 2015. These programs and partnerships allow the city to attract and create new jobs while providing quality training for those eager to fill them.



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We believe all our residents deserve to live in neighborhoods that are diverse, safe, vibrant, and prosperous. The 2015 budget maintains funding for the city's Proactive Code Enforcement initiative. This focused approach has been extremely successful in reducing blight by targeting areas experiencing the greatest challenges. To compliment these efforts, the 2015 proposed budget includes more than \$1.25 million for weed abatement services and emergency demolition of vacant and unsafe structures. This budget also provides continuation funding to ensure that all our neighborhood recreation centers are open full-time and that our city parks are properly maintained. The successful citywide recycling and yard waste program is again funded and in all city neighborhoods. This program reduces the city's tipping fee expenses and extends the life of the Solid Waste Authority's landfill. The Columbus Next Generation Corporation receives continued funding to coordinate public and private resources and redevelopment efforts in some of our most challenged neighborhoods.

Funds are provided to maintain our commitment to uplift the city's most vulnerable residents who rely on essential community services to meet their basic needs. We maintain funding in this budget for social service agencies such as the Community Shelter Board. In addition, the city's subsidy to the Columbus Neighborhood Health Centers is funded in 2015 to ensure that needed health services continue to be available to uninsured populations within the city. In 2015, we will provide expanded funding to implement the recommendations of the Greater Columbus Infant Mortality Task Force. Funding will focus on the provision of direct services related to infant safe sleep strategies and prenatal care intake and referral services.

Our collective commitment to the city's long term fiscal health has again resulted in the maintenance of our Aaa bond rating. The City of Columbus is the only city of its size to receive a stable fiscal outlook and the highest rating from all three rating agencies. Even as we prepare for a more challenging financial future, we continue our commitment to the city's Rainy Day Fund. We propose to deposit an additional \$2.2 million into the fund. This will result in a projected balance within the fund of \$66.9 million by the end of 2015. These deposits keep us on schedule to meet the goal of a \$75 million balance in the fund by the end of 2018.

The final report of the City of Columbus Accountability Committee was issued in March of 2013. Current 2009-2019 savings are projected at nearly \$260 million, more than twice the savings originally promised by the city. Given the reality of flat or declining general fund resources, it is essential that our collective commitment to reducing costs through changes in employee pension and insurance programs, as well as realizing efficiencies in city operations, remain a top priority. The city's green initiatives, centered on reducing the city's carbon foot print, are not only sound environmental policy, but they also reduce costs. Compressed natural gas vehicles and green, high efficiency buildings reduce fuel and energy costs as well as carbon emissions.

I have proposed a 2015 General Operating Fund budget that is balanced, maintains vital neighborhood services, and continues our commitment to fiscal responsibility. It is also a budget that reflects the changing fiscal landscape, but continues the types of investments to ensure that Columbus continues to be the best city in the nation in which to live, work, and raise a family.