



## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

November 14, 2017

Dear President Klein and Members of Council:

Today, in accordance with Section 26 of the Charter of the City of Columbus, I am pleased to present the 2018 Budget, a balanced proposal that reflects the priorities of my administration. As I stated in my State of the City address earlier this year, the goals and priorities of my administration do not represent a one-year agenda, but rather a multi-year plan. This budget represents my ongoing commitment to these priorities, our continued investment in Columbus neighborhoods, and sound policies that will strengthen Columbus' financial position in times of increasing fiscal challenges.

Our city is experiencing a period of unprecedented growth. We are home to a diverse mix of 860,000 residents, spread over nearly 225 square miles. We are now the 14th largest city in America, and some estimate our population will double in the next 20 to 30 years. Columbus remains the fastest growing economy in the Midwest and our housing market is booming. The city's financial position is strong, and we continue to hold a Triple-A bond rating with all three major bond-rating agencies.

However, while two-thirds of the residents in this city are doing very well, about a third are struggling to make ends meet. As Mayor, I am committed to ensuring every

person in every neighborhood has the opportunity to succeed. The future of Columbus depends on making sure we have vibrant, safe, thriving neighborhoods.

Our most challenged neighborhoods have the highest rates of infant mortality, unemployment, poverty, and violent crime. What's more, the impact of violence, gun violence in particular, is having a disproportionate impact on our minority communities. The 2018 proposed budget seeks to reverse these trends by addressing the root causes of these challenges, and investing in the health and safety of our neighborhoods.

We are pursuing innovative ways to provide ladders of opportunity to residents living in some of our most challenged neighborhoods. My administration is laser focused on these "Opportunity Neighborhoods" and strengthening these

communities by building on their greatest assets – the people who live there.

An important part of these efforts centers on the work of the Smart Columbus team, which is leveraging federal, local, and private resources in a multiple year initiative to fuse technology and transportation in efficient, and innovative ways.

The City of Columbus' guiding Smart City principle is that mobility is the great



THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**  
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR



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equalizer of the twenty-first century. More specifically, equitable access to transportation is the key to opening access to jobs, healthcare, services, and opportunity. Columbus plans to use transportation, powered by holistic solutions and integrated data, to give our residents access to opportunities that empower them to live their best lives. Solving these challenges and creating a Smart City are integral to Columbus' future as a thriving city.

Public safety is the highest priority and single largest financial investment the City of Columbus makes each year. In 2018, more than two-thirds – or \$601.7 million – of the general fund budget is dedicated to the Department of Public Safety. This will allow Columbus to fund new police and fire recruit classes, and to invest in the tools and technology to keep officers, fire fighters, and residents safe.

Investments will continue to be made in priority safety and health initiatives to prevent violent, gang- and drug-related crimes, and opiate addiction. The city will continue to equip Columbus police officers with body-worn cameras and is on track to have 1,300 officers outfitted by the end of 2018. The successful Linden Community/Police Safe Streets Initiative will be expanded to other Columbus opportunity neighborhoods, utilizing bike patrols and officers familiar with the neighborhoods to reduce violent crime and improve community-police relations.

Another factor to this success is our commitment to diversity and inclusion. One of my first actions as Mayor was creating the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the position of Chief Diversity Officer. The goal of this office is to focus on supplier and workforce diversity within the city. To that

end, we have embarked on a disparity study within the City of Columbus to identify where disparity exists and find ways to correct it.

In addition to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, earlier this year we established the Columbus Women's Commission. The Commission works to dismantle barriers and reduce gender-based inequities to improve the economic position of women in our community.

We maintain funding in this budget to support CelebrateOne, which is committed to cutting infant mortality by 40 percent and racial disparity in such deaths in half by 2020. Early Start Columbus funding provides free or low-cost tuition access to high-quality, pre-Kindergarten education for qualifying families. Providing access and affordability to pre-K is key, along with ensuring that providers continue to innovate with the latest tools and data.

It is also my job to ensure that our city is financially sound. This budget supports my administration's commitment to a comprehensive review of city operations to identify inefficiencies and reinvest savings in critical city services and programs. And I am pleased to report that we continue to be on track of reaching our goal of a \$75 million balance in our rainy day fund by year-end 2018, and the new goal of \$80 million by the end of 2020.

I have proposed a 2018 General Operating Fund budget that is balanced, maintains our commitment to safety, diversity, and neighborhood development, and continues our commitment to fiscal responsibility. It is a budget that recognizes the changing fiscal landscape and puts our resources to their best use to ensure that Columbus remains on its track to be America's Opportunity City.