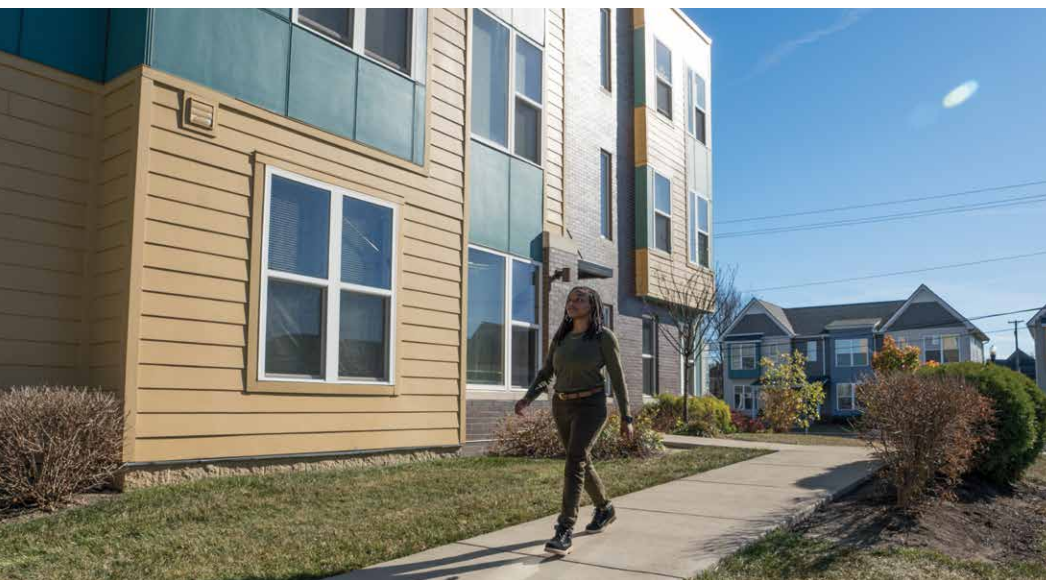


2023 ANNUAL REPORT

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS

ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF
DEVELOPMENT



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FROM MAYOR ANDREW GINTHER

Empowering Progress

As we usher in the new year, it is with immense pride and joy that I reflect on the accomplishments of 2023 – a truly exceptional year for Columbus, “America’s Opportunity City.” Throughout the past year, we witnessed remarkable growth, unwavering resilience and a shared commitment to building a city that embraces opportunities for all. From economic development milestones to housing initiatives, the heartbeat of Columbus resonates with the spirit of progress.

Home construction has taken center stage, emphasizing our dedication to providing quality housing for all. A total of 578 new housing units were constructed leveraging funding support from the city, ensuring that Columbus meets the current housing demands and lays the groundwork for sustainable growth in the years to come. As we prioritize home construction, we recognize that the accurate measure of our success lies in our ability to support the diverse needs of our residents. Hence, the strides taken with the zoning code update are designed to guarantee that Columbus evolves in a manner that serves our residents’ needs today and for the foreseeable future.

As we confront the housing crisis facing our community, we remain resolute in pursuing the Columbus Housing Strategy. This strategic framework compels us to BUILD, PRESERVE, INVEST and INCLUDE. The construction of new housing units is a step toward building a foundation for future growth. Preservation efforts ensure that every resident is stably housed, emphasizing our commitment to the well-being of our community. Our \$7.3 million investment from the American Rescue Plan funding demonstrates our dedication to investing in affordable housing, particularly for households earning less than \$50,000 a year.

Despite challenges, Columbus has emerged as a beacon of resilience and growth, with job opportunities rising, reflecting our collective commitment to economic opportunity. The partnerships forged between the public and private sectors have borne fruit, evidenced by the seven new business expansion agreements signed in 2023. These agreements are projected to create 504 new jobs, infusing vitality into our workforce and bolstering our city’s economic foundation.



Our commitment to supporting businesses of all sizes remains unwavering. From multinational corporations to single-employee small businesses, Columbus fosters an environment where entrepreneurship thrives. The diversity of our business landscape is a testament to our city’s economic vibrancy.

The Department of Development has actively supported the community in pursuing inclusive growth through the Accelerate Columbus program. This initiative, the Elevate! program, and the newest addition, Flourish ‘23, demonstrate our commitment to supporting small businesses and community organizations. Through these programs, we have invested in the community, directly impacting over 400 small business owners and contributing to the vitality of our neighborhoods.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2023, let us look forward to a future where Columbus continues to foster inclusive growth and creates pathways to success for all our residents. Our journey involves cooperation, innovation and dedication to building a city that thrives in every aspect. Together, we will continue to shape Columbus into a community where everyone can prosper.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew J. Ginther".

Andrew J. Ginther, Mayor
City of Columbus



FROM DIRECTOR MICHAEL STEVENS

Fostering Prosperity

As we reflect on the transformative year of 2023, it brings me great pleasure to share the collective achievements of the Department of Development in our ongoing efforts to foster a thriving and inclusive Columbus. I am excited to highlight the impactful strides made in housing affordability, economic development, land redevelopment, city planning and human services.

Housing affordability remains a top priority for the Department of Development. Throughout 2023, our team implemented innovative solutions to make housing more accessible to all residents. The initiatives undertaken reflect our commitment to ensuring that the diverse communities of Columbus have housing options that serve their needs. We recognize the fundamental importance of stable and affordable housing, and our efforts in this domain are directed toward creating a city that everyone can call home.

On the economic front, our Development team has been instrumental in creating new, high-paying jobs that contribute to the city’s economic prosperity. Through strategic partnerships and initiatives, we have attracted several industries to our vibrant city, bolstering employment opportunities for our residents. The commitment to generating quality jobs is not merely an economic strategy; it is an investment in the well-being and future of Columbus.

Our Human Services team, understanding the challenges residents face, worked innovatively to protect those struggling to stay in their homes. Through our partners, we implemented targeted programs that addressed the unique needs of our community, ensuring that vulnerable residents received the support they required. The focus on human services reflects our commitment to fostering a compassionate city where the welfare of every resident is prioritized.

In 2023, our department’s strategic allocation of resources was not just a financial endeavor; it was an intentional investment in the people who make our city great. Whether through innovative housing solutions, economic development initiatives, a zoning code update or human services programs, our actions were guided by the unwavering commitment to create prosperity for Columbus residents.

Looking ahead, the Department of Development remains laser-focused on investing in the residents of Columbus. Our vision for the future is one where everyone can access housing, high-paying jobs and the support needed to thrive. As we embark on the journey of 2024, we invite you to join us in shaping a city that not only grows economically but also ensures the well-being and prosperity of each and every resident.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael H. Stevens".

Michael H. Stevens, Director
Department of Development
City of Columbus

2023 Development Year in Review

The Columbus Department of Development promotes Columbus as a great place to live, work and prosper. Through investments, partnerships and innovative problem-solving, the department is creating jobs, assisting small businesses, advancing the construction of new affordable homes, supporting community infrastructure programs and funding nonprofit partners that support vulnerable neighbors.

Housing

- Sold or redeveloped 85 Land Bank and Land Trust Properties
- 22 American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI) homes sold to first-time homebuyers
- Renovated 47 homes through Lead Safe Columbus and Emergency Repair Programs

Human Services

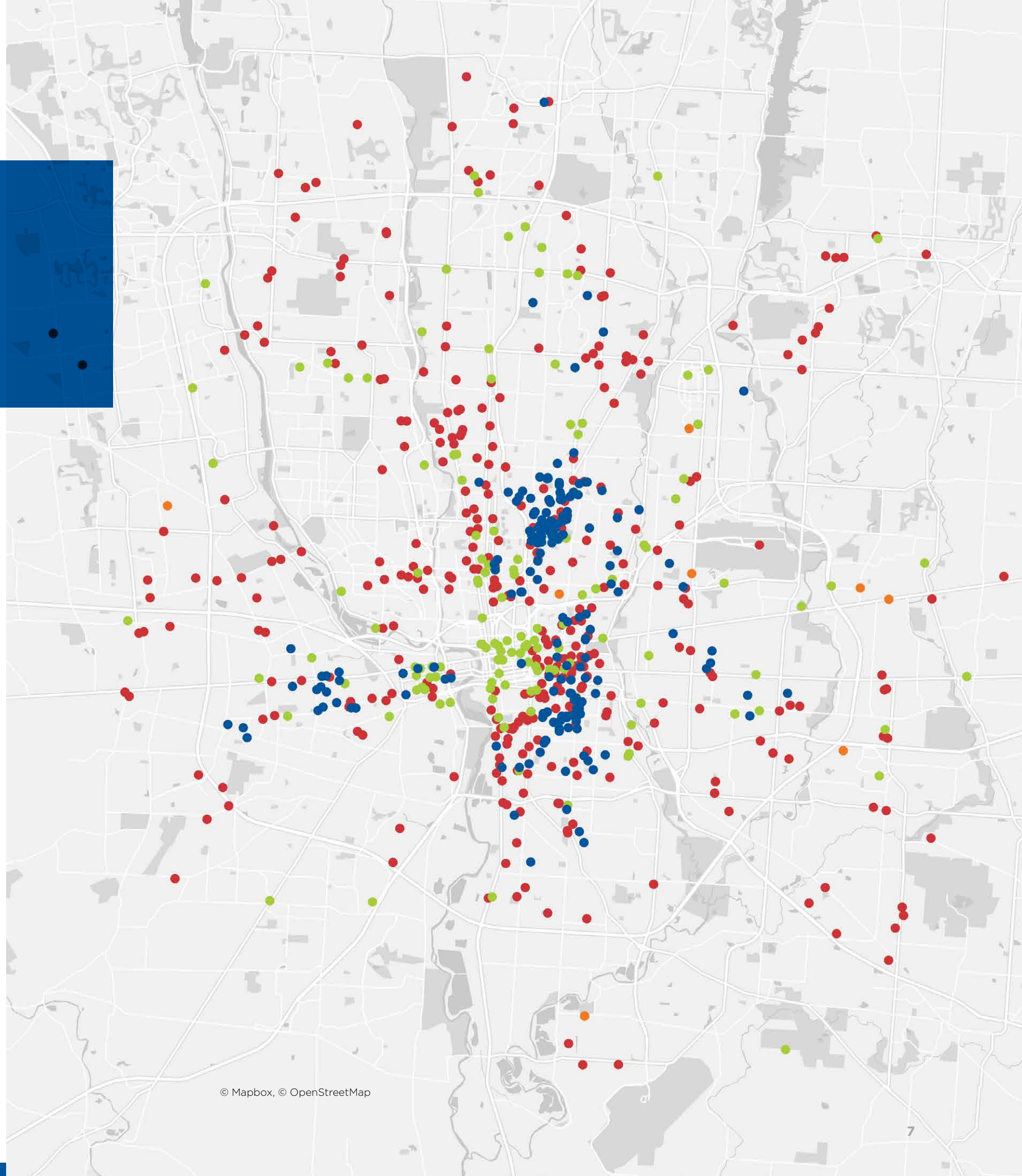
- Distributed Emergency Rental Assistance funding through 44 community organizations
- Funded 114 agencies through the Emergency Human Services Fund and Elevate! grants
- Supported 7 community emergency shelters

Economic Development

- 8 Enterprise Zones and Jobs Growth Incentives completed
- 526 new jobs
- 875 retained jobs

Planning

- 404 reviewed rezoning and variances cases



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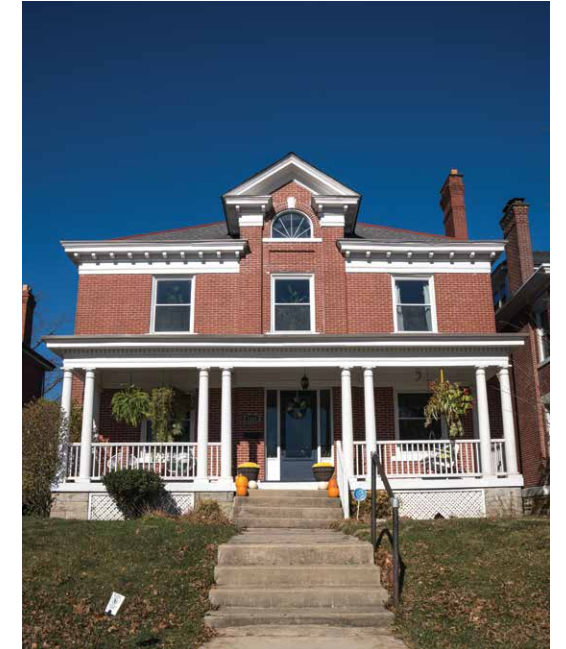
Building Bridges to Prosperity: Columbus' Triumphant Year in Housing, Land Redevelopment and Human Services



HOUSING

Columbus, a city known for its vibrant communities and diverse neighborhoods, faces a housing crisis that demands innovative solutions. In response, the City, under the leadership of Mayor Andrew J. Ginther, embarked on a comprehensive Columbus Housing Strategy aimed at addressing the pressing housing needs of the city and the broader Columbus Region.

The housing crisis in Columbus is multifaceted, affecting both renters and homeowners. Recognizing the situation's urgency, Mayor Ginther championed the Columbus Housing Strategy, focusing on four key areas: Build, Preserve, Invest and Include. The strategy aims to double the number of housing units built in the city over the next 15 years, ensure stable housing for every resident, provide funding for new affordable housing and promote economic diversity in all neighborhoods.



In 2023, Columbus made significant strides in implementing the Columbus Housing Strategy. A total of 578 new housing units were constructed with support from city funding, contributing to the goal of doubling housing capacity. Additionally, 126 existing units underwent rehabilitation, aligning with the strategy's emphasis on preservation.

One program contributing to the success of the Columbus Housing Strategy was the Critical Home Repair program. This initiative provided essential support to 36 homes, with a total investment of \$507,870. The program covered a range of critical repairs, including roof renovations for five homes amounting to \$59,552 in assistance, lead remediation in 37 homes totaling \$809,205 and safety support in 21 homes through the Healthy Homes program, representing an investment of \$146,838. The Chores program, dedicated to assisting seniors in maintaining their homes, successfully renovated 17 homes for \$43,460.





The American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI) promoted homeownership. In 2023, Columbus assisted 22 individuals in purchasing homes, with a city investment totaling \$127,500.

Furthermore, Columbus supported the creation and rehabilitation of 296 homes. Notably, 170 of these homes qualified as affordable units. This initiative was crucial in ensuring that residents had opportunities to live in economically diverse neighborhoods. With the creation of the Columbus Housing Community Reinvestment Area (CHCRA), areas of opportunity have been opened up for the creation of additional affordable housing units in the city.

Columbus remains steadfast in its pursuit of tackling the housing crisis head-on. The continued work of the Columbus Housing Strategy, coupled with targeted programs and initiatives, has not only addressed immediate needs but also laid the foundation for a more inclusive and sustainable housing landscape. As Columbus continues on this transformative journey, the collaborative efforts of the community and local government promise a brighter and more secure future for all residents.

ANTONETTE BURTON

American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI): Supporting First-Time Homebuyers

After renting for many years, Antonette Burton decided it was time to buy a house – a home of her own with a nice backyard where her grandchildren, ages 8 and 5, could play.

“I didn’t want to live in an apartment complex with two little grandkids running around,” she said.

Antonette has worked as a preschool teacher for nearly 15 years, but she wasn’t sure she could afford to buy a home. Then her real estate agent told her she could get help through the American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI) program offered through the Department of Development. ADDI coordinates with lenders to create homeownership opportunities in Columbus for low- and middle-income first-time buyers.

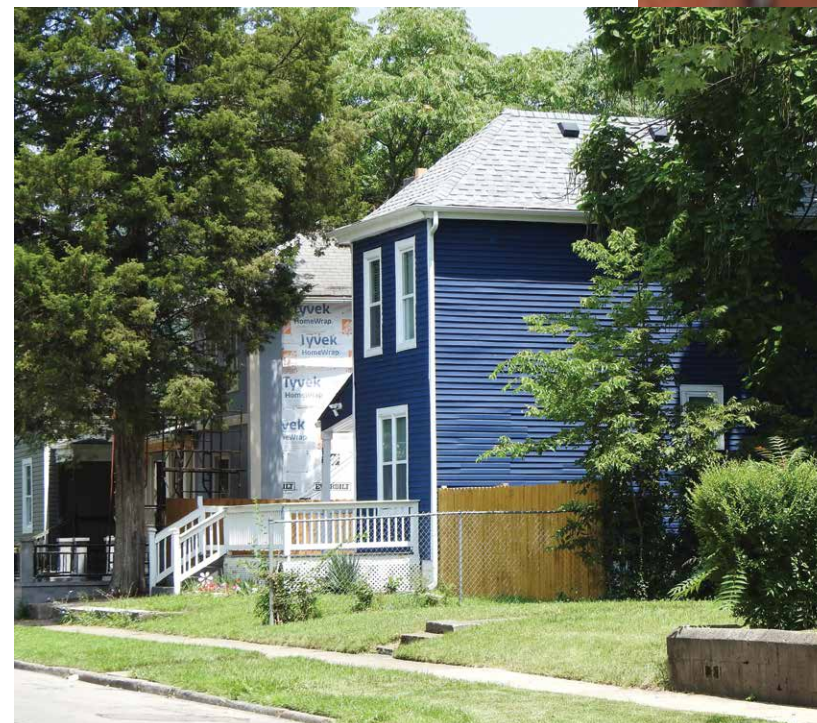
Even though she has been working for years, saving for a down payment on her own might have taken more time, Antonette said. Through the ADDI program, she secured a deferred, forgivable loan to cover her down payment and closing costs.

Her real estate agent handled the grant application, and she soon had the keys to a three-bedroom home on the east side of Columbus. Her home features a living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom and a basement along with a big backyard that includes a shed. Deer and raccoons are regular visitors. She also enjoys the driveway that allows her off-street parking.

Under the ADDI grant, Antonette must reside in the property for five years or repay the loan. Once she has lived in the home for five years, the loan will be forgiven and Antonette can sell, rent or transfer the property. Antonette will be invested in the booming Columbus housing market with the opportunity to build generational wealth.

Antonette says she prefers owning to renting. “There are no neighbors right next door like in an apartment complex,” she said.

But her favorite part about her home is much simpler, “It’s mine,” she said. “I love my home.”



“I didn’t want to live in an apartment complex with two little grandkids running around.”

LAND REDEVELOPMENT

In 2023, the collaborative efforts of the Department of Development, in partnership with the Central Ohio Community Land Trust (COCLT), have led to the creation of affordable homes, fostering a diverse and thriving urban landscape.

The Department of Development and COCLT successfully built and sold 28 affordable homes in the county in 2023. These homes were specifically tailored to meet the needs of families with an average income of \$54,000 annually. Notably, the initiative prioritized minority homebuyers and first-time homeowners, with 93% of units sold to Black or Hispanic families and 79% to those embarking on homeownership for the first time.

A key highlight of the year was the completion of Town Square Station, an affordable rental complex near Gladden Community House, Avondale Elementary School and Franklinton Farm's Patrick Kaufman Memorial Learning Garden. This complex, offering a mix of one and two bedroom units, is a testament to the commitment to providing accessible and quality housing options.



Simultaneously, the Land Redevelopment division, independent of COCLT, was crucial in empowering residents to initiate their home-building journey. Seventy land parcels were sold to individuals commencing the home-building process. Additionally, 37 lots were allocated for new affordable housing developments, facilitated through partnerships with organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Healthy Rental Homes. Two lots were designated for affordable housing renovation, contributing to the revitalization of existing structures.

Notably, 85% of all properties sold for redevelopment were earmarked for affordable housing, reflecting a steadfast commitment to addressing the city's housing needs and promoting economic diversity in Columbus neighborhoods.

The Land Redevelopment division's work supports equitable and thriving communities. The Department of Development, COCLT and various partners' collaborative efforts have provided affordable housing solutions and laid the groundwork for sustainable and inclusive urban development.

GETACHEW ABIELNEH

Columbus Land Bank Helps Fulfill the Dream of Homeownership

Getachew Abielneh was excited when, after working with the Columbus Land Bank, he was able to buy a 1,700-square-foot home on Ohio Avenue for a 50 percent discount. But he knew he had a challenge ahead: the home was not habitable.

“There was a big sign on the door that said ‘danger,’” Getachew recalled. The roof had partly collapsed. There was a large hole in the floor. The stairs to the basement had fallen.

After about eight months of renovations, Getachew transformed the dilapidated house into a gracious four-bedroom home that includes a welcoming porch and many nice details, such as wrought-iron banister spindles. He made countless repairs and upgrades, which included replacing more than 20 windows.

Getachew’s success reflects the mission of the Columbus Land Bank: making homeownership a reality for first-time buyers and others who do not own a home. The Land Bank offers a listing of homes and lots that are available for renovation or new construction without competition from investors. Participants receive a 50 percent price reduction if they commit to living in the structure for no less than five years. Getachew had no down payment since he committed to completing the work himself.

“The City was very easy to work with,” Getachew said. He visited the Land Bank’s office and the staff provided all the information he needed, step by step, to complete the process.

He is enjoying homeownership after years of renting. “It gives me freedom, and you don’t have to argue with a landlord,” he said. It also offers financial advantages: Getachew, who works as a software engineer, has no mortgage payment. That makes it easier for him to visit his family in Ethiopia – in the past he had to stay current with his rent.

He also has more space, which enables him to share his home with his father and sister. “I’m proud that I’m able to help them,” he said.

Getachew’s story highlights how, by promoting redevelopment and homeownership, the Columbus Land Bank plays a vital role in strengthening families and communities.

“It gives me freedom, and you don’t have to argue with a landlord.”



HUMAN SERVICES

In 2023, the City of Columbus demonstrated an unwavering commitment to human services, working collaboratively with organizations like the Community Shelter Board (CSB) to address the diverse needs of its residents. Under Mayor Ginther's leadership, Columbus' investments and partnerships have resulted in impactful initiatives to support residents facing homelessness, foster community well-being and provide critical assistance during challenging times.

Columbus' close collaboration with the Community Shelter Board was instrumental in supporting its most vulnerable residents. Columbus allocated \$1.2 million to CSB to support their warming center work. This initiative provided essential shelter and services for people experiencing homelessness, ensuring they had a warm and safe space to seek refuge while also receiving necessary support.



In a broader effort to uplift the community, Columbus awarded over \$10 million to more than 100 local nonprofits in 2023 through various initiatives. Elevate!, the City's flagship nonprofit grant program, aimed to strengthen the capacity of nonprofits serving Columbus residents through programs supporting infant vitality, workforce development, financial security, housing stability, homelessness, childcare, kindergarten preparedness and more. Flourish, the newest addition to the Human Services portfolio, granted \$350,000 to support innovative collaboration among Columbus nonprofits. This diverse support network ensured that a wide range of community needs were met, promoting overall well-being.

A significant milestone in 2023 was the distribution of \$39 million in emergency rental assistance by the City of Columbus and its partners. This funding played a crucial role in supporting housing stability during the challenging circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The assistance provided included support for renters facing evictions, financial aid, stability services and coverage of affordable rental and prevention activities.

Columbus' Human Services efforts underscore the City's commitment to fostering a compassionate and supportive community. Through strategic partnerships, financial investments and a multifaceted approach to addressing homelessness and community needs, Columbus has made significant strides in ensuring the well-being of its residents. As the city continues to grow, the collaborative spirit and innovative initiatives promise a brighter future for all Columbus residents.

Through American Rescue Plan funding, Columbus provided an additional \$7.3 million to CSB to establish compassionate care systems. These systems played a vital role in serving over 14,500 individuals in 2023. The comprehensive range of services included homelessness prevention, shelter accommodations, street outreach, rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing, reflecting a holistic approach to addressing the complex issues associated with homelessness.

WAHIDULLAH FAREEDZAI

Elevate! Grants Help Nonprofits Support Immigrants, Refugees

When Wahidullah Fareedzai arrived in Columbus in 2021 after leaving Afghanistan, he faced the challenges of finding work and sustaining a home while overcoming language barriers. He found his way, and today he's using that experience to help other new arrivals as a case manager and interpreter at Riverview International Center (RIC), a nonprofit in north Columbus that provides services for immigrants and refugees to help them adapt to a new culture.

In his role, Wahidullah welcomes visitors to the RIC and helps connect them with the services they need, such as English classes, computer training, homework help for children and many others. In addition to English, Wahidullah speaks Pashto and Dari, the most common languages in Afghanistan, as well as Urdu, which is common in India and Pakistan. He's part of a team of case managers who are fluent in eight languages to provide services to vulnerable populations.

Through the support of the Department of Development's Elevate! program, the RIC also offers temporary rent and utility assistance. One case stands out for Wahidullah: a single mother from Afghanistan with young children and no English skills or transportation.

"Her husband was stuck back in Afghanistan, and she was struggling," he said. "She came to the center seeking assistance paying her rent, but she needed help with the application."

Wahidullah connected the young mother to Our Helpers, another nonprofit funded through Elevate! that offers convenient application sites near immigrant communities. Wahidullah helped the mother get to the Whetstone branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library, where Our Helpers assisted her in completing the application.

"The people with Our Helpers and the library were really kind, and everything went smoothly," Wahidullah said. "She was approved for several months of rent support, which was a big relief to her."

Rent and utility assistance through Elevate! is just one example of services that reflect the RIC's mission of empowering New American neighbors by supporting individuals and families. Wahidullah is a good example of how, with some initial support, immigrants and refugees play a vital role in strengthening our community.

"Her husband was stuck back in Afghanistan, and she was struggling."





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Thriving Futures: Columbus' Economic Development Successes of 2023

Columbus, a city with a rich history and a vision for the future, outlined to experienced strong economic growth in 2023. The City's strategic initiatives and collaborative efforts have resulted in the signing of a number of new business expansion agreements, supporting economic opportunity for residents.

In 2023, Columbus entered into seven new business expansion agreements projected to create 504 new jobs. These jobs are projected to generate \$51.1 million annually in new payroll, showcasing the City's commitment to fostering job growth and financial stability for its residents. Furthermore, the agreements ensure the retention of 875 existing jobs, with a retained payroll of \$43.6 million, reinforcing the City's dedication to sustaining its current workforce.

One of the critical highlights of Columbus' economic success is the substantial private investment attracted during 2023. The City secured a remarkable \$154 million private investment, signifying businesses and investors' confidence in Columbus' economic climate. Wells Fargo is a multinational financial services company with a significant global presence operating in 35 countries and serving over 70 million customers worldwide, bringing at least 350 financial technology jobs to this area. The facility, located in Northeast Columbus and undergoing modernization, will open shortly. Meanwhile, Wells Fargo is already working to hire information technology positions and software developers, which will comprise the bulk of the anticipated hires.

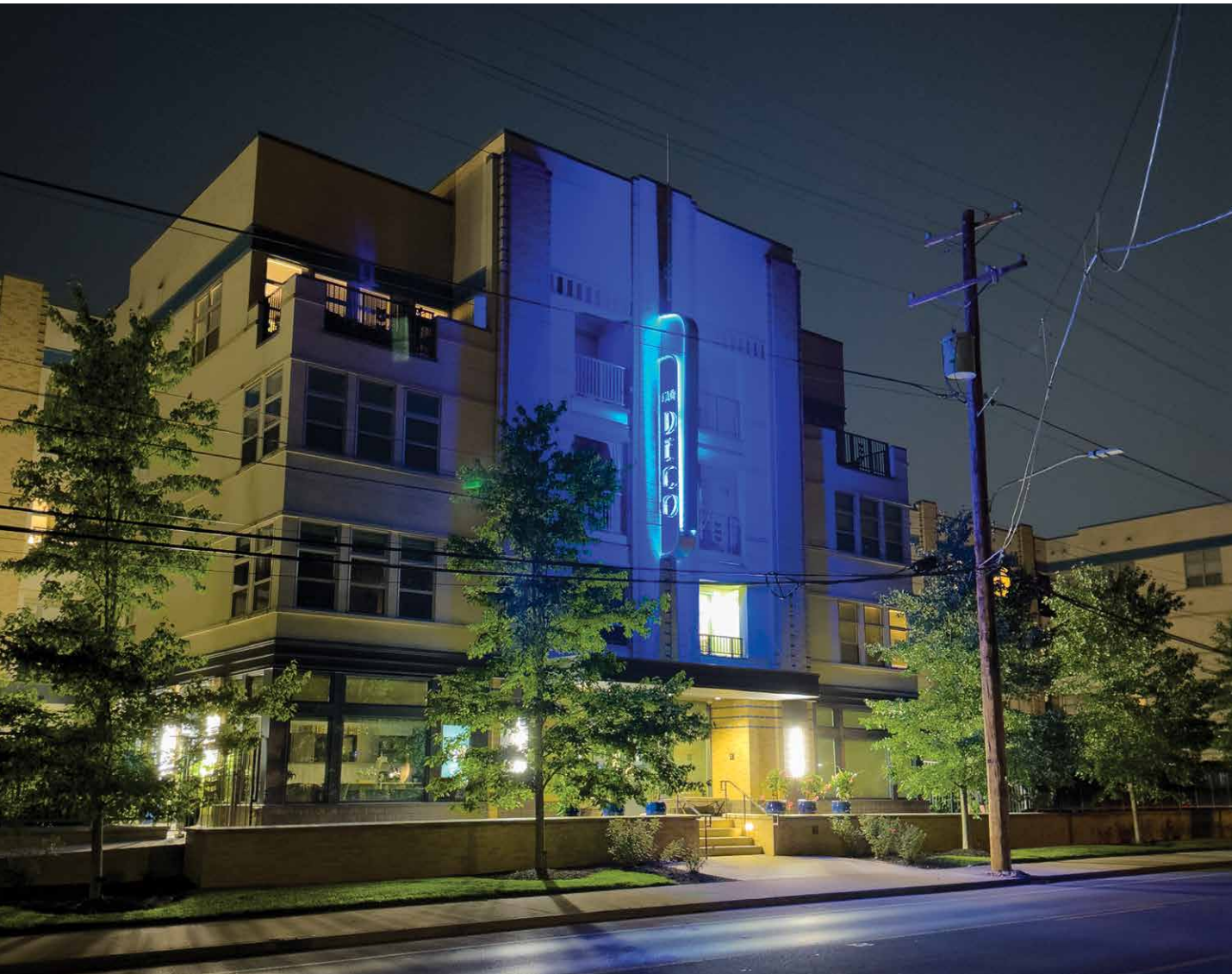
The broader context of Columbus' economic trajectory over the past five years is equally impressive. In this period, the city entered 116 new business expansion agreements. These agreements are collectively estimated to create a staggering 21,178 new jobs while also retaining 6,670 existing jobs. The cumulative private investment over these five years stands at an impressive \$5.5 billion, underscoring Columbus' status as a thriving hub for economic development.

In addition to large-scale initiatives, Columbus has recognized and celebrated the vital role played by small businesses in driving economic growth. The year 2023 saw the implementation of the Accelerate Columbus program, wherein the City invested \$674,000 into the community through nonprofit organizations and small businesses. This investment directly supported over 400 small business owners, providing them with expertise in areas crucial for success, such as social media, marketing, sales, business planning and personalized business advising.



A \$200,000 beautification grant allocated through the Power of One program further exemplified the commitment to community enhancement. This grant focused on enhancing exterior facades of small businesses. The execution of this concept was carried out in collaboration with a long-time partner, the Neighborhood Design Center, ensuring that the program aligns seamlessly with the City's vision for aesthetic improvement.

Columbus' economic development in 2023 is a testament to the city's resilience and commitment to fostering a vibrant business environment. The collaborative efforts of the public and private sectors, alongside the support for small businesses, have created a thriving ecosystem that supports economic opportunities for residents. As we reflect on the achievements of 2023, the future holds the promise of continued growth and success for the dynamic City of Columbus.



LUCIA HERRERA

Accelerate Columbus Helps Salsa Start-up Expand

As a girl, Lucia Herrera learned how to make salsa from her mother. As an adult, she and her family carried the tradition forward by making tasty salsas at home for friends and relatives. They always received praise – along with requests for larger batches.

Bored during the COVID-19 pandemic, Lucia, her husband, and her son decided to launch a start-up making nontraditional salsas using all-natural ingredients with no preservatives. Reflecting their spicy products, the family developed a fun, attention-grabbing brand based on Dante's Divine Comedy, a 14th century epic poem set in hell. They named their company Underworld Feast and developed nine "devilishly good" salsas to correspond with Dante's nine circles of hell.

They soon found advisors, lined up a commercial kitchen and were ready to begin selling products by June 2022. Within a few months, they were accepted by the highly selective Worthington Farmers Market. A few months later, Underworld Feast products were in Kroger stores throughout the Columbus area.

While self-funded through sales, the company needed better equipment to keep pace with demand. "We started to look for grants, but it was difficult to qualify," Lucia said.

Through a local women's business accelerator, Lucia learned about grants available through Accelerate Columbus, a joint initiative of the City of Columbus, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, and six additional Entrepreneur Support

Organizations. Accelerate Columbus provides access to capital, mentoring, networking opportunities and other services to help local businesses reach their full potential.

Lucia found it easy to get started. "The application for the grant was a very, very simple process," Lucia said. "We submitted a short proposal, and it didn't take long for a decision." The company received a \$5,000 grant that helped pay for a bulk filler machine that improved quality, reduced production time by more than half and enhanced worker safety.

Today, sales continue to grow as the company looks at potential expansion beyond central Ohio, Lucia said. It's a story that reflects the mission of Accelerate Columbus: helping local businesses succeed to drive the economic vitality of our community.



**“Devilishly good”
salsas to correspond
with Dante’s nine
circles of hell.**



PLANNING

A Strategy to Enhance Neighborhood Vitality and Inclusivity

The Columbus Planning Division spearheaded transformative efforts, shaping the city's future with foresight and inclusivity. Planning's comprehensive review of eight key areas, including the Brewery District, East Franklinton and the University District, yielded important results. This oversight supported over \$2 billion in new construction, underscoring the impact of thoughtful city planning on economic growth and vitality.



Recognizing the importance of diverse representation, the Planning Division appointed eight new area commissioners and conducted its inaugural member diversity survey with an outstanding 91.5% participation rate. The survey unveiled that 69.2% of area commissioners now represent diverse backgrounds, reinforcing the city's commitment to ensuring that commissions accurately reflect the rich diversity of Columbus.

The Neighborhood Investments Program, formerly the Urban Infrastructure Recovery Fund, was pivotal in enhancing Columbus' older neighborhoods. In 2023, the Planning Division successfully completed 73 projects across 38 communities. Notable improvements included pedestrian street lighting in Milo Grogan, enhanced neighborhood public parks and new curbs and streetscape along 5th Street. The tangible outcomes included 20,541 feet of new sidewalks, 4.25 miles of bikeways, 18 new or updated streetlight projects, enhancements to five public parks and planting over 1,000 street trees.

An exemplary project under the Neighborhood Investments Program is the 2nd Avenue streetscape initiative in Milo Grogan, which is currently under construction. With substantial progress in 2023, the project is slated for completion in 2024. Leveraging Neighborhood Investments funding, the Planning Division secured state-administered grant funding, significantly amplifying the project's impact beyond what was initially achievable.



The ongoing "Zone In" project, aimed at updating Columbus' zoning code comprehensively, continued to make meaningful strides. The initiative seeks to unlock development capacity by focusing on vital corridors like West Broad Street, East Main Street and Morse Road and commercial nodes like The Continent and the Eastland Mall site. This approach promises to deliver housing, mobility solutions and employment opportunities that align with community needs while ensuring economic and environmental sustainability.

The Planning Division has set the stage for a dynamic and resilient future through strategic reviews, transformative projects and a commitment to inclusivity. These achievements will help the city build upon this momentum, fostering an economically and environmentally sustainable community and one that enriches all residents.





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